

Lecture given by
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TON TER LINDEN - PICTORIAL HARMONY

In the refined colour designs of Ton ter Linden in Ruinen a further step towards a purely pictorial essence can be found.

Here, "naturalness" is sought not so much in an ecological as in a pictorial sense. Above all, ter Linden is a painter - and a very sensitive one at that. For years he has been engaged in the making of pastels and water colours. His love for gardening and nature brought him to the country and once there he immediately sought ways to realise "paintings" with living material. By trial and error he finally succeeded in developing gardens with fine tracery and flowing colour patterns. In detailed and inexhaustible ton-sur-ton gardening Ton tries to reach as much sensitive depth and subtlety as can be reached. It is the highly lyrical and elaborate texture -extremely delicate, but in the same time fully coherent- in which his borders can reach an almost unknown quality. Emotional surrender is what is searched for - the deepest possible satisfaction of a need for pictorial experience.

One element, though, would be a hindrance to our willingness to surrender. Weakness is a menace. An inner equilibrium in Ton will bring about counter-accent; contrasting marks are set as soon as something in the design seems to flow away in sentimentality. Not only straight, dark green hedges and strictly shaved lawns do the work. Complementary and contrasting colours of a strong, sometimes surprising and even shocking character play their part. In a subtle border of blues, mauves and lilacs -supported by tones of grey- all of a sudden the striking dark red of *Antirrhinum* 'Black Prince' will pop up. In a filmy, cobwebby composition of *Panicum virgatum* and *Stipa gigantea* a heavily coloured *Hemerocallis* catches the eye in an almost shameless way. Never a design will slide

down into a conventional matter of course - never into something obligato. A living and exciting experience must always be the aim - harmony and surprise in one grasp.

In all their unmistakable artistry the borders in Ruinen provide us with a surprisingly natural impression. Their delicate structure, their subtle and wellbalanced rhythms, their outspoken but mutually softened colour patterns, the inner coherence of all their elements - it all fills us with a sense of highly natural harmony.

In his early year, notably in the fifties, Ton ter Linden was a regular visitor to the Amstelveen heemparks, in which, day after day, he withdrew to concentrate on making pastel-drawings. In those days, too, he was confronted with the special technique of "selective weeding" developed in Amstelveen. In his own gardens, Ton later proceeded along this line and he gradually came to what can now be called "creative weeding". Self sowing as a rule is permitted in Ruinen; as is the deteriorating of stalks and flowers heads. Especially in the annual borders each spring a careful selection takes place of spontaneously sprouted seedlings that can be left -and even can lead the way- and plants which should be planted to add to the attractiveness. This approach of half spontaneous, half deliberate composition leads to fluctuating, ever surprising patterns - which of course change each year. One of the post cards that show the garden gives a good impression of what can be achieved. Concerning annuals, much more artistic and satisfying applications seem possible than we have known until now. At the same time, the pictured border gives an enlightening example of the refined texture which is envisioned by some of the new dutch gardeners.