We were delighted back in October 2018 when award-winning garden designer Helen Elks Smith asked us to design the lighting for her 2019 Main Avenue garden at Chelsea Flower Show – for Warner’s Distillery.

This was Helen’s first garden on main avenue and the design work began immediately.

**Pallett**

The first step was to assess the pallet of textures, features and planting that would make up the garden. Helen’s design drew on the landscape of the home of Warners – Falls Farm, with it’s undulating flower meadows and botannicals used in the making of Warner’s gin. The hard landscape elements referenced Frank Lloyd Wrights iconic masterpiece Falling Water whilst also referencing materials found at Falls Farm & in the gin distillery – stone, copper, stained glass and gin clear water falls.

**Design**

A show garden is a small piece of gardening perfection and is free from the usual constraints of a residiential garden – there’s no need to light doorways or paths for instance, so our task was to distill the design down to key elements that should be focussed on during the evening.

Together with Helen we decided on the stained glass, the moving water and the key planting feature; the juniper tree.

The stained glass window was a complicated feature to light – we particularly wanted to pick out the tiny air bubbles in the glass panels – created by the amazing Wendy …….

The next months involved working with Dan Riddlestone of Bowles & Wyer, who were building the garden, and Helen, to test & re-test the lighting with every feature.

BUILD

Chelsea gardens are built on site over just a few weeks – beginning with a square plot of earth. Every few days in the run up to show opening we were in Chelsea over seeing the installation by the excellent team at Bowles & Wyer.

SHOW WEEK

Finally the garden was finished and the doors opened for HM the Queen and other members of the Royal Family & VIPS. It was incredibly exciting that the Queen personally visited the garden, and Helen was able to meet her – and have very interesting conversation about juniper trees.

TV

The BBC featured Helen & the garden nearly every day during the week including a long feature on the build by Sophie Raworth & Monty Don presenting from the garden.

Most exciting for us, Adam Frost presented a piece on the lighting on the Friday evening BBC1 show.

Thanks go to designer ; Helen Elks Smith, Tom & Tina from Warners Distillery, Dan Riddlestone & his team from Bowles & Wyer; Wendy Newhofer; and Richard Bloom photography.

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