



mountains and rivers without end

alec finlay - matthew wilson
international festival des jardins - jardin de metis 2025



**mountains and rivers without
end**

after Hsieh Ling-yün

*the mountain is a wave
a line only visible*

*so long as I stand still
against the sky*



Our borders begin in natural formations: the nouns of mountains make walls; the verbs of rivers form barriers; paths and bridges are the grammar by which we form our journeys, as solutions. Rivers form in and slowly erase mountains, washing life-giving minerals downstream.

How do borders inflect ecologies? The border is a reminder of the restraint and containment of the classical garden. Flora are peoples which have homelands. They feature on our flags, insignia, and clan badges. But flora are also a cross-border populations, eluding the fixed identities of state and passport. Flora offer us recognisable colours, shapes, scents, and fond forms, capable of translating us between tongues and eluding border-controls. Flora wander, like the river, flowing wherever earth, water, and light allow.

In the garden a trellis creates another border. *Trellis*: the word crossed from Middle English, old French, and Latin, *tri* & *licium*, threads. These border walls make support, shade, seclusion, shelter, and seating.

This garden proposal is a playful rendering of mountains and rivers in trellis form, creating physical borders through which flora grow and wander. Here scale is imaginative and borders in flux. Here rivers flow through the air, dangling roots and fronds below them, inviting us to meander our heads through a liminal realm. Here rivers expand into estuaries or floods and riverbeds dry up. Here skylines are broken. The forms suggest flood and drought, a drowned world, and fluid space of delight.

In this garden we make passage through the decorative barriers of mountain skylines, rendered in a sun-ray trellis – a fan of struts and hollows our eyes can slip through, seeing into the beyond of another country; through which we can reach a hand to touch a leaf or bloom. The plants grow through, around and beyond, eluding the fixed status of national bordered identities. Here flora are post-state vagrants, at liberty to grow on or through the slopes of the hill, or float down and below the great river.

The open mountain trellis forms were conceived by poet and artist Alec Finlay, as part of an ongoing survey of mountain culture, htopianism, and ecopoetics. The skylines are an invitation to view and, as you wander through the garden, see the horizon alter. The companion river trellis and plantings were devised by Matthew Wilson and flow from his many years of study into the wild homes of garden plants and the relationships between ecology, landscape and gardens.

Alec Finlay - Matthew Wilson

October 2024

The benches will feature poems by Alec, in this style.

mountains behind of us,
obstacles all around us:
friend, sit tight

*

'a last walk among old pals'

everyone who wishes should be granted
a last day of access to the mountains
before they die

*

a bed may feel like an immense landscape
a mountain may be hidden with one hand

*

the meaning of a mountain
doesn't reside in its peak

*

there will come a day for each of us
when we find ourselves on the mountain
waiting to be rescued





