



SW6 RESIDENTS AND garden designers Marcus Barnett and Philip Nixon have joined forces with a common interest in the themes of Modernism to create their garden for this year's Chelsea Flower Show. Their inspiration is the architecture of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and in particular, his creation of Farnsworth House, located in Illinois, USA.

Barnett (pictured, first from left) spent his childhood in the country and his passion for the outdoors was so great that he enrolled at the Inchbald School to study Garden Design. 'I am now thrilled to be fulfilling my childhood passion and I love the design challenges presented by both private commissions and show gardens.'

Former Bond trader Nixon spent 12 years working in the City, but according to him, 'spent most of that time plotting an escape.' On leaving the City, he volunteered as a gardener at the Chelsea Physic Garden at the same time as studying Garden Design, where he met Barnett. 'I love to design and make gardens,' he says. 'I know that my change of career – a big step – was absolutely the right decision.'

Having won an RHS Gold Medal in 2005 with their debut, 'Chic Garden', Barnett and Nixon were asked to return this year with a full-sized show garden. Together, Barnett and Nixon have paid homage to the clean lines of Modernism inspired by the way Farnsworth House sits within and relates to its surroundings. The building seems to fit perfectly in its setting, ironic considering its stark contrast with the natural landscape.

As local boys, Barnett and Nixon think that Fulham is an inspirational place to be. 'Working and living in SW6 suits me just fine – my place of work has just enough of a commercial feel to it but not too much and there is an air of purpose about the area,' says Barnett.

CASPAR GABB IS exhibiting at the Flower Show for the first time. 'I'm a Chelsea virgin,' he says happily, admitting that he is 'very excited and very nervous at the same time. It's a huge milestone for me.'

The 36-year-old landscape designer's exhibit is called The Green Room and is entered in the small city garden category. It was inspired by Gabb's travels, particularly walking in Australia, New Zealand and Madeira and will recreate the atmosphere of a clearing in a temperate to sub-tropical forest, with a contemporary twist on the English classics of a pergola and hanging baskets. Gabb laughs and says he is using 'two no nos' of modern gardening, crazy paving and hanging baskets but the paving will be subtle, reclaimed York stone and the baskets will be five 1.3m 'tower baskets' suspended from a sweeping rusty steel structure. Driftwood totems and a table base will 'provide an organic sculptural element'. It doesn't exactly sound like your average suburban garden. No, agrees Gabb, 'it's a very me garden – I almost feel like I've bitten off more than I can chew.'

Gabb got into the green-fingered profession 'by accident'. A rural Shropshire childhood and a love of the outdoors, plus a creative background – an interest in sculpture and a degree in architectural and interior design – just seemed to dovetail in gardening. 'It encompassed the lot with the hands-on element,' says Gabb. 'I just fell in love with it.'

