Contemporary garden festivals provide a laboratory for landscape designers to experiment with materials, methods, and design concepts that can be adapted to their larger urban works.

Experimenting Landscapes focuses on the Métis International Garden Festival in Québec, Canada, which has presented more than 150 temporary gardens at the cutting edge of garden design and environmental art. Despite its remote location, the festival has attracted up to 1,000 visitors per day to experience the work of both emerging design practices and renowned designers including Diana Balmori, Ken Smith, Snøhetta, Topotek 1, and Michael Van Valkenburgh.

The book features a selection of 25 projects as well as essays and reflections from festival designers to explore how the garden can challenge our assumptions, provide new meanings, and change how we see even the most familiar things.
**TREE STANDS**
relais Landschaftsarchitekten
2010–2011

**Abstract**
*Tree Stands* appropriates a traditional European hunting infrastructure to create a treetop perch where visitors can contemplate the sensations of the boreal forest.

**Method**
As woodland hunters wait silently in the trees, they develop a heightened awareness of their surroundings. Every smell, every sound, and every movement is amplified. This installation offers festival visitors the same sharpened focus on the local environment as they sit 3 metres (or 6 metres if they dare) up in the trees. From this elevated perspective, people will feel connected to the winds of the St. Lawrence River as the trees bend and sway beneath them, they will tune in to the shrill call of the white-throated sparrow, and will suddenly become very aware of the absence of civilization around them.

Without explicit directions, visitors will happen upon this curious collection of ladders in the forest and can choose whether to climb one of the two 3-metre-high stands or one of the four 6-metre ladders. From there, they can create their own experiences as they connect with the environment. Some visitors scramble up and down as many ladders as they can, others rest in one place, silently taking in this new perspective.

**Result**
By simply offering a different way to occupy the forest, *Tree Stands* provides visitors with an intensified awareness of the environment around them.

**Materials**
Trees cut and harvested on site
Visitors discover a collection of ladders in the forest and can choose to climb the 3-metre high stands or the 6-metre high ladders.
"From this unusual position, you are almost obliged to feel what is happening around you."

Gero Heck

Rope ladders are added for the 2011 edition of the festival.