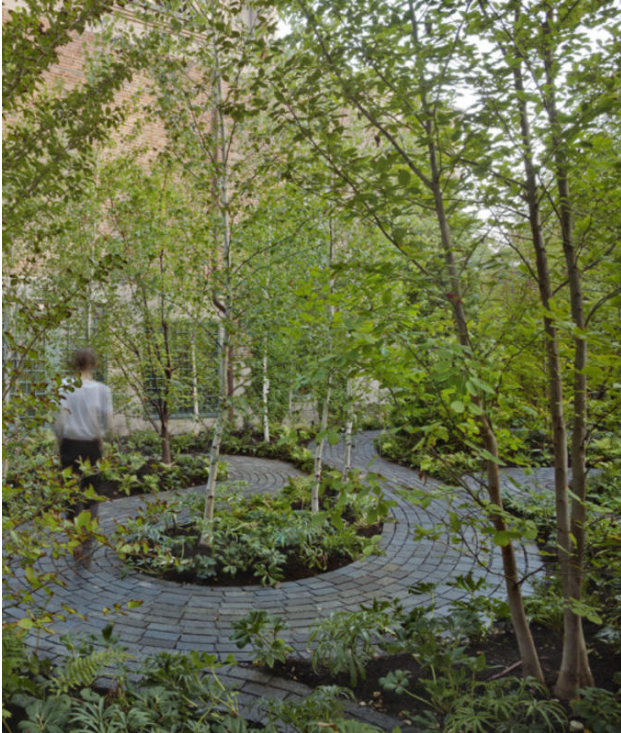


ENTERTAINMENT

## State of the Arts

# Follow the Black Brick Road: Redesigned Monks Garden at ISGM opens tomorrow

Jill Radsken Tuesday, September 17, 2013



Credit: Courtesy

Photo by Elizabeth Felicella

Michael Van Valkenburgh isn't one to mince words. The landscape architect behind the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum's redesigned Monks Garden said the outdoor space, enclosed behind a tall brick wall, reflects the famed patron's own mad sense of design.

"Not to be mean, but she never got the garden right," he said, in a morning press conference and tour of the garden.

Located off the cloistered first-floor interior, Monks Garden features some 7,000 plants, 60 new trees and a circuitous path comprised of black brick and schist stone. The path has a whimsical, Yellow Brick Road feel to it. Which Van Valkenburgh says is precisely the point.

"It's not about getting from here to there. Maybe it's not about getting anywhere," he said. "Paths not being straight and rational is what the garden is all about."

The 62-year-old designer runs his namesake firm from New York City, but his career roots are decidedly Boston (and he still summers on Martha's Vineyard). He started his career at Carr Lynch in Cambridge, and counts the replanting of Harvard Yard as among one of his biggest early projects. "I don't honestly know if I've ever had more fun," he said