

INSPIRED BY . . .



BEETHOVEN . . . BY TOM STUART-SMITH

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"I rarely listen to music while I'm working since I cannot concentrate. But instead, some musical phrase takes up permanent residence in a chamber of my mind and accompanies me through the day. In one very facile respect music is like a garden, with its contrast between form and content. The formal structure of music is often quite rigid, as with sonata form, which is then contrasted with the embellishment of detail. With Beethoven's late quartets and piano sonatas, contrast is taken to an extreme: an almost savage starkness and sparse construction is set against passages of eloquent lyricism or gaping silences. If this music depicts anything, it is a succession of emotional experiences. Perhaps this is like a garden, with its crescendos and diminuendos, its sudden bursts of energy and silences — all set within an overriding architecture. Doesn't the garden at its best become an abstract expression of man's connection to the world beyond himself? Like music . . . but just a little less turbulent than Beethoven."

Tom Stuart-Smith is a landscape architect based in London. Website: <www.tomstuartsmith.co.uk>.