



She says she always had an interest in art as well as science and, from her perspective, landscape design neatly combines the two disciplines. She gained a diploma from the Pickard School of Garden Design and studied computer-aided design (CAD) for landscape designers at Pershore College in Worcestershire. Then she started her own business. Her first commission in 2002 was to design a garden for the inaugural Westonbirt International Garden Festival in Gloucestershire. It seemed a natural step for Facer Hoffman to create a genetics garden, using plants and hard landscaping to represent genes and DNA.

"I chose DNA because I was interested in it at the time," she says. That first garden established Facer Hoffman's trait of turning each prevailing scientific preoccupation into a symbolic and metaphorical art form that runs through clients' gardens.

Her own estate at Througham Court, where she lives with her husband Anthony, covers 55 acres, of which six comprise a cultivated area incorporating Jewson's original Arts & Crafts garden, and Facer Hoffman's exploration of theories and ideas in various outdoor "rooms".

They include The Cosmic Evolution Garden, which she designed after reading a book called *Just Six Numbers* by Astronomer Royal Martin Rees. The premise of Rees's book is that the origins and existence of the universe depend on six numbers in physics. Facer Hoffman has inscribed each number on to sandstone spheres representing planets. A seat for visitors represents a black hole.

"When a star dies it [can] form a black hole with such gravitational force that nothing can escape. So this seat is designed to be very comfortable but very difficult to get out of."

whose work in fields including epidemiology and immunogenetics earned her international recognition. But a few years later, she decided that "life was too short for doing one thing" and trained to become a landscape architect. Her gardens became a new outlet for her abiding fascination with science.

The DNA of landscape design

Gardens | A former haematologist has used her fascination with science to create some extraordinary spaces. By *Sharon Smith*

At first glance, Througham Court appears to be in perfect harmony with its setting, deep in the rolling hills of the Cotswolds in Gloucestershire. The Grade II*-listed traditional country house dates, in part, from 1610, and later additions include a dry stone terrace designed in the 1930s by Arts & Crafts architect Norman Jewson.

Yet fixed to Jewson's wall are two rows of letters denoting the mirror DNA sequences from the male Y chromosome. And the floor of the terrace is made not from mellow, honey-coloured Cotswold stone, but a series of stark, asymmetrical shapes in red, black and white. The polygons' reflective surfaces are interspersed with mirrors and a rill in which the water has been dyed black.

This is the garden that Througham Court's owner, Christine Facer Hoffman, has developed over the past two decades: a garden based on mathematical formulas, medical science and cosmic theory.

When Facer Hoffman bought the property in 1995, she was a haematologist

(Clockwise from above) Christine Facer Hoffman at Througham Court; banners by Shona Watt; 'Synthetic Biology playing God?'; Cosmic Evolution Garden—lizzy de Wattripont for the FT

