

Garden Club of Virginia  
Interpretive Floral Design

Not a formal floral design style, an Interpretive arrangement is an expression - a communication to the viewer - evoking a specific theme, a selected mood, a stated occasion, or an insight arising from the designer's interpretation of another designated piece of art. Employing essential elements of color, texture, pattern, size, form, line, space and light and utilizing them following design principles of balance, dominance, contrast, rhythm, proportion and scale, the designer conveys an intended message. Statements of Intent are especially valuable in Interpretive designs to share directly with the viewer the vision of the arranger.

Interpreting a Work of Art - *The Wall Street Journal*



THE INSPIRATION: 'Sita and Sarita,' 1893-1894.  
PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

PURRRR-FECTLY PLACED Painterly protea petals evoke the subject's dress, foliage alludes to the cat's green eyes and the black background seen through the arrangement suggests the feline's ebony fur. PHOTO: MEREDITH HEUER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, FLORAL STYLING BY LINDSEY TAYLOR (ARRANGEMENT), VESSEL: DAVID MOLDOVER

By Lindsey Taylor

Dec. 20, 2018 10:22 am ET THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

**IN SEEKING** an inspiration to riff on for this month's arrangement, I was drawn to "Sita and Sarita," a transfixingly intimate 1893 painting by American artist Cecilia Beaux (1855-1942). While the original

lives in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, visitors to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., can see a 1921 replica the artist created. In her prime, Beaux was known for her in-demand society portraiture in a style similar to John Singer Sargent's. Her cousin Sarah Allibone Leavitt sat for this painting, and some say the cat (look closely) nods to Edouard Manet's "Olympia" (1863), in which a similarly obscured cat eyes the viewer.

I chose a vessel from Newburgh, N.Y., ceramicist David Moldover to represent the milk-chocolate brown of Beaux's backdrop. To hug the vase's rim and pick up the hues in the sitter's face and dress, I cut short stems of blushing-bride protea, with its painterly petals and soft pink and warm white tones. Delicate, pale blue larkspur and a deeper hit of blue thistle mimic the airy pattern in the armchair's fabric, and the foliage of wax flower became the piercing green of the cat's eyes. To suggest the presence (or non-presence) of the nearly invisible cat and give the arrangement movement and interest, I made sure to allow for some negative spaces. By Lindsey Taylor\_Dec. 20, 2018 10:22 am ET

THE INSPIRATION Ramon Casas's 1899 'Decadent Young Woman. After the Dance.'

PHOTO: RAMON CASAS, "DECADENT YOUNG WOMAN. AFTER THE DANCE" 1899., MUSEUM OF MONTSERRAT. ABBEY OF MONTSERRAT

By Lindsey Taylor\_Jan. 24, 2019 10:20 am ET THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



**ON MY INSTAGRAM** feed, up popped a painting by an artist unfamiliar to me: "Decadent Young Woman. After the Dance" (1899) is the work of Ramon Casas (1866-1932), a Spaniard known for portraits of the intellectual elite of

Barcelona, Paris and Madrid. His portrayal of a woman succumbing to the exhaustion too much revelry brings felt appropriate as inspiration for my January, post-holiday-frenzy arrangement.

I selected a footed vessel with a wide opening that would let a large, horizontal bouquet cascade heavily over its rim, mimicking the woman's splayed posture. To support that many stems, I fashioned a reusable "floral frog" by bunching up a piece of floral chicken wire and securing it in the urn with waterproof tape.

I created an overall structure with the foliage of scented geranium plants that I winter indoors. The leaves had all the shifts in green I wanted, and their soft texture and frilly edges nod to the luxuriant sofa. They also smell refreshingly pungent and herbal. In the garden, I found a few early blooms of white hellebore to insert in front, encouraging them to droop like our hedonist's hand. For her hair's autumn tones: raspberries on stems. For the blues of her dress: viburnum berries and the thistle-like Eryngium. Yellow poppies stood in for her book, and rich orange ranunculus echoed the corner of the carpet. Making these arrangements, I focus on crucial textures and colors in the art and don't try to find an equivalent for everything. That would get too strained.



Caspar David Friedrich's 'Morning in the Mountains' (1823)\_PHOTO: HIP/ART RESOURCE, NY\_By Lindsey Taylor\_Updated April 11, 2016 2:53 pm ET THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

**EACH SPRING**, trees appear to go from bare limbs to full flower to mature leaves faster than you can sing "Little darling, I feel that ice is slowly melting." If you don't pause to appreciate the landscape, you can miss the lime-green leaves furtively unfurling, the red haze of maple trees in bloom.

As I cruised up the parkway from Manhattan to my upstate life recently, the rolling vistas framed by trees in transition reminded me of the contemplative landscapes by German romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich. It seemed only right to choose his "Morning in the Mountains" (1823) as the jumping-off point for this month's arrangement—to, if I could, capture the painting's mossy greens and moody amethysts and the almost imperceptible shift from mountains to sky.

A black-brown earthenware vessel from my collection grounded my floral landscape. First, I used nandina branches—green with yellowing undersides—to establish a strong, undulating and horizontal form. I tucked in rosy pink heather to break up the greens and introduce a certain mistiness. Finally I nestled in two shades of lavender hyacinth in varying degrees of openness to mimic the tones and swells of the distant mountains; for the photo, a pale blue background served as sky. As always for this column, I challenged myself to look carefully but work quickly, to create something fresh that appears to come from the same world as the work of art but has its own personality.



THE INSPIRATION Edouard Vuillard's "Buste De Femme Assise (Misia Natanson)" (c. 1898). PHOTO: CHARLES PORTER/FRANCES LEHMAN LOEB ART CENTER, VASSAR COLLEGE\_ By Lindsey Taylor\_May 31, 2018 THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

**JUNE FLOWERS CAN** bring out the girlie in me, with all the soft pinks and pastels of roses and peonies at their peak. To inspire this month's arrangement, I wanted an equally feminine, subdued work of art and found it in "Buste De Femme Assise (Misia Natanson)" (c. 1898) by French painter Edouard Vuillard (1868-1940)—a portrait that had stuck in my mind since a visit to the small but wonderful Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

The meditative, seemingly preoccupied woman, her ornate clothes and the interior décor blur into a nearly monochromatic canvas. To imitate Vuillard's darting brush strokes, I went for an arrangement busy with many varieties of flower but all close in color. I tend to stick to seasonally logical blooms, but here I threw that tenet out the window to do something a little more "floristy," pulling flowers from the market that would never bloom concurrently, or even in June. Standing in for the woman's hair are brown-toned sweet peas; for her dress and complexion, blush-colored ranunculus, white lilac and soft pink roses; and to reflect the interior, Queen Anne's lace, check-patterned fritillaria and—unexpectedly—mustard-yellow orchid speckled with maroon. In a low, wide and footed dark-brown vessel, I set the stems of the horizontal bouquet so no flower assumed greater importance, the overall mushiness alluding to the way the subject and setting in the painting blend nearly into one.

THE ARRANGEMENT A similarly toned riot of species, from roses to orchids, echoes the low-contrast palette of Edouard Vuillard's 'Buste De Femme Assise (Misia Natanson)' (c. 1898). Vessel, designer's own.



Interpreting a Work of Art - The Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Fine Arts and Flowers 2022

SASH / VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ART, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 2021  
Shelley Roberts, Peyton Wells, Tuckahoe Garden Club of Westhampton



BROAD COLLAR, EGYPTIAN / VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ART,  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 2021  
Meredith Lauter / Tuckahoe Garden Club of Westhampton

*Anchored by a grapevine crescent form, fashioned to echo the semi-circular collar shape, vivid blue hydrangea suggest the faience beads that comprise the body of the piece worn by royalty and the elite in ancient Egypt. The texture and color of green seeded Eucalyptus and gray Spanish moss add the mottled composition of the faience stone, while stems of dried magnolia pods create the linear pattern of the woven bottom edge. The rounded beads at both ends are left to the imagination in the negative space of fanciful inward-curvaceous kiwi branches.*



SHAWL / VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ART, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 2021  
Anne Vanderwarker, Joanna Davies, and Gail Parrish  
Dolley Madison Garden Club





FREEDOM CLOTH / VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ART, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 2021  
Lois Spencer and Jan Schuler / Garden Club of the Northern Neck



**Collection of**  
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

**Description**

Dial met the quilters of Gee's Bend in 2001, just prior to the opening of their first exhibition and subsequent rise to fame. Over the next few years, he created a number of tributes to the women and their triumph over poverty and obscurity. In 2005, he created a sculptural homage titled *Freedom Cloth*. The piece is an assembly of bird figures with outstretched wings roosting on a giant mound of wire, fabric, artificial flowers, and plant fronds. The birds, fashioned from rags, symbolize the women of the community whose transformation of castaway cloth into quilts afforded them expressive freedom and, more recently, the respect and admiration of a wide public audience. With that recognition, there also came new social status, economic opportunities, and financial independence. Throughout Dial's work, such birds, modeled after the bald eagle on the U.S. dollar, signify the freedom to transcend social and historical disadvantage and to aspire to the bounties of the American dream. Here, the high-soaring creatures signal not only the transcendent possibilities of old cloth, but the hope for human liberation as well.

—Joanne Cubbs

*Born of the need for warmth in the cold slave quarters on a cotton plantation in Gee's Bend, Alabama, women created quilts from any fabric available - old clothing, feed sacks and discarded items. Quilting remains an integral part of the women's lives to this day. Sales of the multidimensionally designed patterns has contributed to the economic stability for the descendants of the original residents. These creations are excellent examples of traditional and modern folk art and have been exhibited in museums around the United States.*

*We have used plant materials native to South Alabama to evoke the muted colors and linear designs of the early quilts. Patches of red brighten the otherwise monochromatic quilts.*

*No floral foam was used. Instead, biodegradable blocks of basalt wool were used. The entire design is compostable.*



VENUS AND LOVE/ VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ART, RICHMOND VIRGINIA 2022 / Bachelet

Elise Pitts and Mary Lou Johnson  
Harborfront Garden Club

*The shape, movement and beauty of Bachelet's "Venus & Love" give the inspiration for this contemporary arrangement. The sculpture is an expressive interpretation of the mythological birth of Venus, the Roman goddess of love, beauty, and fertility. When Saturn castrates his father, Caelus, his blood spills into the sea and Venus rises from the sea in a strong upward thrust with stretched arms elevating a child lovingly held above her head. The sensuous beauty of the calla lilies, which mean life and fertility, form the bold upward movement of Venus rising from the bloodstained sea foam which is represented by ti leaves and dusty miller. The variation of the calla lilies color moving from burgundy to white interpret "Out of evil erupts love and life". The pink rose represents birth, the child cradled over Venus's head.*



**MECHANICS:** We envisioned a curved upward thrust using the obvious calla lily for this interpretation! However, VMFA flower rules strongly discourage using calla lilies in oasis.

Sooooo ..... we started with 3 large glass arranging tubes of varying lengths. Using zip-ties we added stiff but supple clear tubing ( different diameters are found in rolls in the plumbing department ) with brass plugs at the bottoms of each tube for more points of emergence. A toilet flange ( also from the plumbing department ) is secured with stick'em. The tubing cluster was placed in the center of the flange stuffing oasis around the tubing for more security. Arranging frogs were added for attaching the lower flower materials.



THE MELTON HUNT  
GOING TO DRAW THE  
RAM'S HEAD COVER /  
VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF  
FINE ART, RICHMOND,  
VIRGINIA 2022 / Sir  
Francis Grant, Scottish

Linda Holden and Marie  
Thomas  
Augusta Garden Club

CHRYSANTHEMUMS / VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ART, RICHMOND,  
VIRGINIA 2022 / Charles Ethan Porter

Laura Francis and Victoria Alexander  
Hunting Creek Garden Club

*The boldness and intricacy of the frame surrounding this artwork warrants attention; therefore, we created a botanical reference to it in our arrangement.*

*In the painting, a sense of whimsy and irony, especially from the viewpoint of flower arrangers, called out from the disheveled and unfinished "portrait" of a flower arrangement. Recognizing the precarious and fleeting nature of floral arrangements, we felt humor and empathy for the arranger interrupted while designing. One of the outcomes of her efforts may very well have been the tipped vase and scattered flowers we chose to represent our impression of the painting.*

*The pervasive Asian influence in the painting is reflected in our asymmetrical design, the use of an Oriental ginger jar and in the use of chrysanthemums, a flower with significant meaning in East Asian culture.*



## Interpreting a Mood or Theme



THEME: "Lions and Tigers and  
Bears, Oh My!"  
Recreate the fantasy world of the  
Wizard of Oz

Matilda Bradshaw  
Mill Mountain Garden Club

THEME: "Spring  
Forward"

INTENT: *When  
COVID lets loose  
its grasp, the world  
will spring forth with  
revelry as if from  
Gabriel's trumpets.*

Laura Francis  
Hunting Creek  
Garden Club





THEME: "Into the Woods/ Out of the Woods"

INTENT: *Foraging treasures from local woodlands helps one's eye to peer more closely and appreciate the often-overlooked wonders of nature.*

RoseMarie Bundy and Meredith Lauter  
Tuckahoe Garden Club of Westhampton



THEME: "Battle of the Crater", Petersburg, VA 2009

*The 48th Pennsylvania Infantry (former coal miners) tunneled 510 feet under a Confederate battery and blew up 4 tons of gun powder. In the confusing aftermath, the South counterattacked turning it into a Confederate victory. An Abstract arrangement depicting the battle.*

Peyton Wells  
Tuckahoe Garden Club of Westhampton



THEME: "Oysters and Crabs"  
Assemblage

Molly Trapani  
Garden Club of Norfolk



THEME: "Oh Shenandoah!" *Witnessing much of the devastation of the Civil War, the Shenandoah River could tell many stories of this dark chapter in our history. The burning of bridges and destruction of crops and livestock along the banks caused the river to shed many tears. Create an **Abstract Arrangement** that evokes the sadness associated with these events.*

Matilda Bradshaw  
Mill Mountain Garden Club



THEME: "March of the Trumpets - Parade of Blooms"

Garden Club of the Eastern Shore