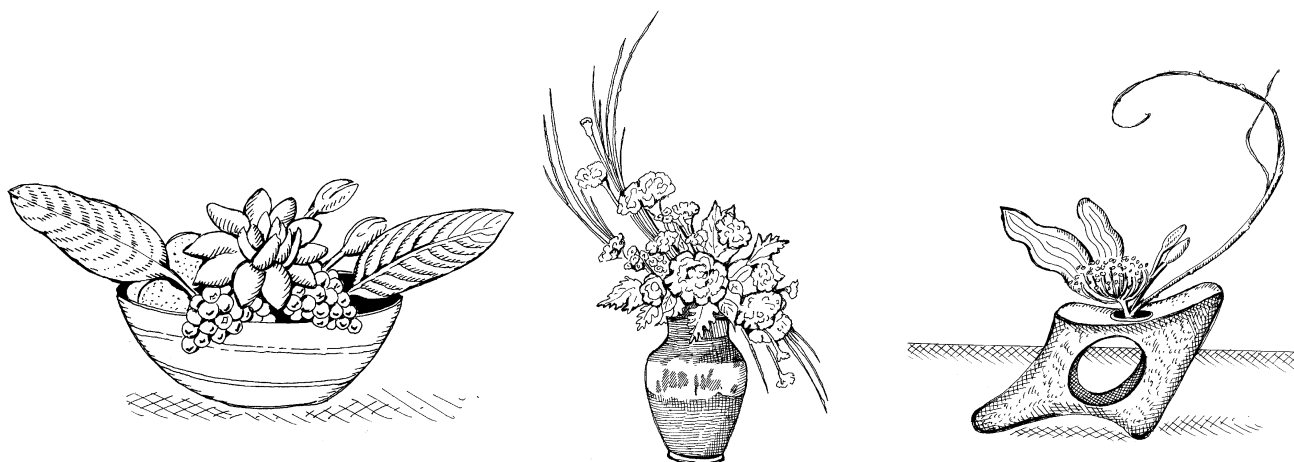

A WORLD OF HISTORICAL INFLUENCE ON FLORAL DESIGN

During a wedding consultation, the bride tells you that her Victorian style gown belonged to her great-great grandmother. What flowers will you select and what style of bouquet will you suggest she carry for her wedding? Today's professional floral designers must be knowledgeable about the history of floral art to create attractive and appropriate designs for their clients.

Since humans have inhabited this earth, the beauty of nature has enriched their lives. Traditions and ceremonies of humankind have involved and included the use of flowers for decoration and adornment. Each historic period of floral design has influenced and contributed to today's contemporary floral design* styles.



Floral art and design has evolved over the centuries and continues to change in the future.

From ancient times to today's global marketplace, floral design styles are continually changing. Explore historical designs and gain a wealth of ideas for today's contemporary styles and future trends. Turn back time and discover how various civilizations included flowers into their daily lives and festivals.

INFLUENCE OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS

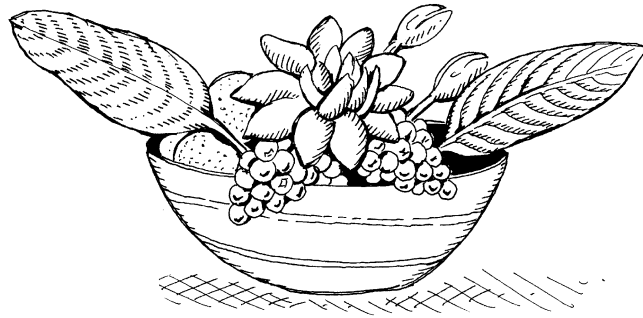
Ancient civilizations included the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. These civilizations influenced the art of floral design in their uses and arrangements of floral materials.

The Egyptians (2800 – 28 BC)

Artifacts found in ancient Egyptian tombs record how that civilization used flowers. Egyptians used flowers for personal adornment, gifts, and for decorations and offerings during festivals and religious ceremonies.

*Underlined words are defined in the Glossary of Terms.

The Egyptians wove flowers, foliage, and fruit together to create wreaths and garlands. Chaplets were garlands or wreaths worn in the hair. Vases, bowls, and baskets of flowers, fruits, and vegetables decorated banquet tables and were used for offerings.



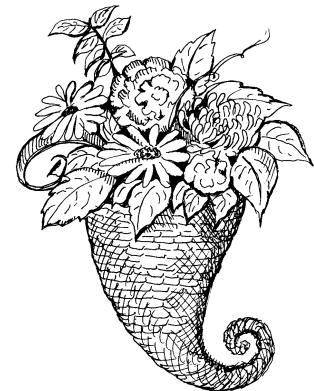
The Egyptians selected flowers and plant materials that flourished in the Nile Valley. These included gladiolus, iris, rose, lily, narcissus, and the sacred lotus. Other plant materials included ivy, palm, and papyrus. Vivid primary colors of red, yellow, and blue were the predominant colors the Egyptians chose for their simplistic, repetitious, and orderly design styles.

Greeks (600 – 146 BC) and Romans (28 BC - 325 AD)

Influenced by the Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans used flowers in similar ways. All three cultures used flowers primarily for religious and civic events to honor gods and heroes. They also used flowers for personal enjoyment.

The Greeks wore wreaths upon their heads and garlands around their necks. They employed professional wreath makers to make the wreaths and garlands.

During banquets and festivals, the Greeks did not display their floral decorations in vases. Instead, they scattered loose petals around the area. The Greeks placed flower garlands in baskets and trays. They arranged loose flowers, fruits, and grains in upright cornucopias. They delivered these cornucopias as offerings or gifts.



Today, the cornucopia is often called a horn of plenty. Associated with abundance and autumn harvest, it has become a symbol of the American holiday of Thanksgiving.

Both the Greeks and Romans valued flowers for fragrance and symbolism. Colors of flowers, although secondary in importance, included vibrant sky blue, maroon, terra cotta, rose, and violet.

Flowers and foliage representing this period of history included crocus, daisy, grains, honeysuckle, hyacinth, iris, and lily. Roses, violets, fragrant herbs, ivy, laurel, myrtle, olive branches, and oak leaves were additional types of plant materials used during this historical period.

Byzantine Culture (320 – 600 AD)

For a time after the fall of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine culture continued Roman traditions. The Byzantines continued to use the same flowers as the Greeks and Romans.

However, some variations occurred in the use and arrangement of flowers. Garlands during the Byzantine period consisted of narrow bands of fruit and flowers, alternated with foliage.

The Byzantine culture contributed to floral art through the introduction of symmetrical, tree-style designs. Foliage arranged in containers resembled conical trees. Flowers and fruit existed at regular intervals throughout the designs.



WEALTH OF EUROPEAN TRADITION

European culture has had a tremendous impact on floral art and design. Through the centuries, the Europeans used various styles to arrange and display their floral materials.

Middle Ages (476 - 1400 AD)

Little is known about floral design during the Middle Ages. The only known reference to floral design during this time exists in Persian art. Floral paintings show flowers arranged in vases in an informal and naturalistic style. The vases of Chinese porcelain are highly decorated with birds, lions, and dragons. Oriental influence is also seen in the color schemes of the floral paintings.

During the Middle Ages, wreaths and garlands continued to serve as decoration and personal adornment. In addition, emphasis and interest in plants and flowers during this period focused on their uses in drinks, medicines, fragrances, and food.

The Renaissance (1400 – 1600 AD)

The Renaissance was a time of rebirth and change. During this era, passion for gardens and gardening spread from Italy and throughout Europe. People cut flowers from their gardens and arranged them for everyday occasions, not just for religious ceremonies.

During the Renaissance, people began to appreciate the beauty of flowers and their symbolic values. Many of the symbolic traditions associated with flowers began during this time. Today, people continue to give roses as a token of love and use white lilies as a symbol of purity.

Design styles during the Renaissance ranged from a simple, single stem of white lily in a jug to massed, symmetrical arrangements in urns. Compact, conical arrangements included a variety of flowers with bright colors and distinctive forms. Flower stems were often not visible in the arrangements.

Flowers used in designs during the Renaissance era included carnations, columbine, daisies, lily, marigold, and pansies. Other flowers included roses, stock, violets, and garden flowers. Boxwood, laurel, and olive branches were also common in floral designs during the Renaissance era.

Baroque Period (1600 – 1700 AD)

The Baroque style of floral design also originated in Italy. The concepts of this design style later spread into Europe, especially Holland and Belgium.

Baroque style arrangements began as symmetrical, oval-shaped designs. They were characterized by heavy ornamentation that included cherubs and scrolls.

Later in this period, floral design styles became asymmetrical and featured a sweeping “S” curve. This characteristic “S” curve, also known as the “Line of Beauty,” was named the Hogarth curve in honor of William Hogarth, an 18th century English painter.



Flemish - Dutch Period (1550 – 1700 AD)



The Flemish – Dutch period was an age of discovery in horticulture. Merchant marines from Holland and England brought back plant materials from their journeys to other regions of the world. During this time, diverse plants such as chrysanthemums, cacti, nasturtiums, and sunflowers became introduced to Europe.

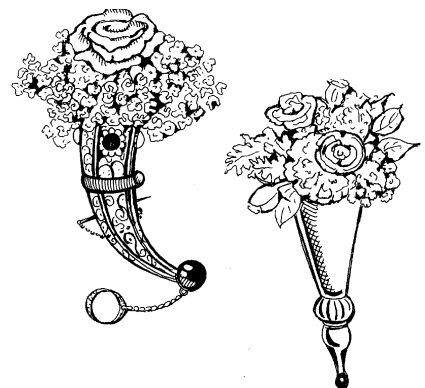
Artists of this era painted floral masterpieces that included many varieties of flowers. The floral arrangements of these paintings often existed only within the imaginations of the artists, not from actual floral models.

Floral designs captured in Flemish paintings consisted of an elaborate mix of flowers. Some paintings showed floral arrangements that consisted of flowers from all seasons. The flamboyant design style of the Flemish often included accents of fruits, shells, nests, and additional flowers at the base of the container. Arrangement height varied from two to three times the height of the container.

English – Georgian Period (1700s AD)

The English loved flowers and gardening. English - Georgian floral arrangements were symmetrical in form and usually triangular. Designed in a rich, dignified, and restrained style, floral pieces reflected the stately and formal culture of this period. Floral pieces often consisted of one kind of flower, or variations of one color.

Fragrance was an important factor in selecting flowers. The English believed the fragrance or perfume from the flowers would rid the air of infectious diseases. Both men and ladies of this era carried small, hand-held bouquets of flowers known as nosegays. The nosegay, or tussy mussy, provided relief from the odors of unsanitary conditions that were common during this period.



Victorian Period (1830 – 1890 AD)



The Victorian Era, also known as the Romantic Era, was very important in the history of floral design. During this time, design and techniques were formulated. Floral design was taught and recognized as a professional art!

The Victorian Era is often referred to as the battle of styles because so many styles were adapted and initiated during this era. Baroque, classic, and rococo design styles influenced floral designs of the Victorian Era.

The Victorians preferred two design styles. One design style consisted of large, compact, and overdone masses of flowers. The other style included light, open, and informal arrangements.

Designs associated with the Victorian Era are often overstuffed and cluttered. Neither spaces nor a center of interest are distinguishable within the compact nature of Victorian designs. However, a distinct feature found in Victorian floral designs is the use of trailing plant materials to create a romantic touch.

Foliages included in Victorian designs were effective for developing texture and contrast. In addition, the type of foliage used in a design expressed a symbolic meaning or tradition.

Hand bouquet holders or posy-holders for nosegays were fashionable for Victorian ladies to carry to social gatherings. A tradition from the Victorian Era occurs even today in the custom of presenting flowers to ladies to wear or carry to proms and other special events.

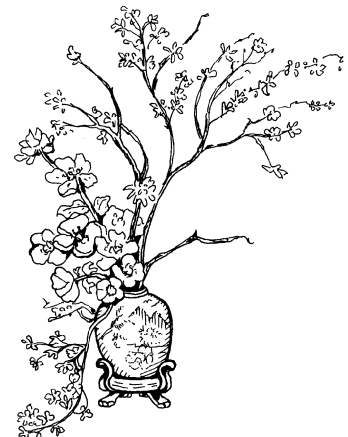
ASIAN INFLUENCE

Western or European floral art styles have greatly influenced the American style of design. However, Asian, Eastern, or Oriental styles have impacted both American and European design styles. Western floral art emphasizes massed arrangements. In contrast, Asian floral art focuses on line, simplicity, and symbolism.

Ancient Chinese (500 BC – 100 AD)

The ancient Chinese used flowers and plant materials for religious ceremonies performed by the Buddhist priests. A few branches and flowers placed in containers represented the seasons of the year. After visiting China in 621 AD, a Japanese Buddhist priest took the idea of presenting floral offerings at Buddhist altars back to Japan.

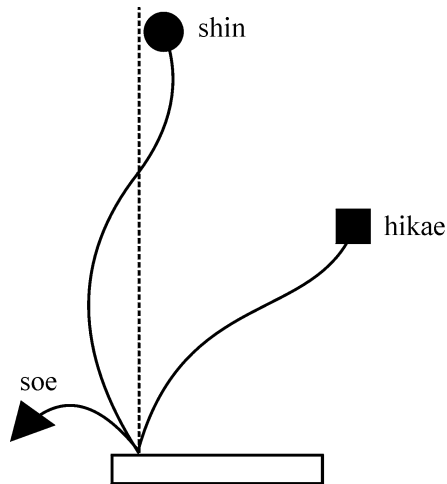
In comparing the differences between Chinese and Japanese design styles, Chinese arrangements are less carefully planned and stylized than those of the Japanese. Chinese arrangements placed in ornate porcelain, bronze, or pewter containers are large and made with few varieties of plant materials. Emphasis in Chinese designs is on naturalism and not stylized design.



Japanese Influence (621 AD – Present Day)

The introduction of Buddhism from China to Japan in the 7th century greatly influenced Japanese floral design. Ikebana, the Japanese art of floral design, has been practiced as a studied art form since 1470 AD. In contrast to the Chinese style, the Japanese style adheres to strict rules of construction and is highly stylized.

Traditional Ikebana uses flowers and plant materials as they appear in nature, with respect to season, growth habit, and color harmonies. Major schools of Ikebana, including Ikenobo, Ohara, and Sogetsu have greatly influenced the floral styles of Ikebana.



Ikebana designs feature three main line placements: shin, soe, and hikae or tai (heaven, man, and earth). Simplicity and negative space in Japanese designs emphasize these three main elements. Filler flowers and other plant materials placed in these designs also help to strengthen the three primary elements.

Japanese Ikebana style offers several ideas for naturalistic use of plant materials and the use of space, simplicity, and rhythm in design. The Japanese influence has greatly contributed to the development of contemporary line and line mass arrangements.

AMERICAN DESIGN STYLES

Early American colonists struggling for survival in a new land had little time for the decorative arts. Once settled, the early colonists began placing native plant materials in household containers.

In the 18th century, known as the Williamsburg period, flowers and arrangements became more common in the interiors of colonial homes. American design continued to be greatly influenced by European styles, especially those of the Victorian era.

A distinctive American style of design began to evolve after World War II. This design style was influenced by the floral arts of the East and West, giving rise to the term “line mass.”

The American style combined the traditional massed arrangements of Europe and the line of Ikebana. This design style became known as Western Line.





Oriental Influence

+



European Influence

=



American Western Line Style Design

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

Flowers and floral design have served important roles in religious decoration and personal enjoyment throughout the centuries. Today, people continue to include floral arrangements in the furnishings of their homes and offices.

Floral arrangements are also a major part in the celebration of religious events and life's events from birth to death. Each design carries a legacy of floral history.

Researching the history of floral design reveals the traditions and origins that have influenced today's contemporary styles and impacted current floral customs. Studying the diverse styles of the past helps contemporary designers become more creative and professional. Professional designers must stay current of new trends arising from our global community that continue to influence floral design styles.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Definitions for terms in this glossary are taken from *Book of Floral Terminology*, developed by the Education Committee of the American Institute of Floral Designers.

Contemporary floral design – A generic term for a floral design that is up to date or currently favored.

Cornucopia – A container, usually a basket, shaped like a goat's horn or cone and overflowing with fruits, flowers, foliage, and grains.

Garland – A chain of interwoven flowers and/or foliage.

Hogarth curve – An elegant, elongated S-shaped curve, known as the “Line of Beauty.”

Ikebana – The Japanese art of floral design, which literally means “to arrange flowers.”

Negative space – The empty areas between the flowers and foliage in an arrangement.

Nosegay – A hand-held, fragrant cluster of flowers designed as a small bouquet. (Also called a tussy mussy.)

Rococo – An asymmetrical floral design style, popular in the 1700s, characterized by “S” curves and “C” scrolls.

Western Line – A general term for symmetrical, asymmetrical, L-shaped, horizontal, vertical, crescent, and pointed oval floral arrangements. (These arrangements are characterized by an established focal area near the base of the container. All stems appear to radiate from this base. The height must be at least one and one half to two times the height or width of the container.)

Cultural Influence on Floral Design

American Colonial
Baroque
Byzantine
Chinese
Egyptian
English Georgian
Flemish
Greek

Japanese
Middle Ages
Modern American
Renaissance
Roman
Victorian

A Q H T W Q T F I P G Z V V Q K D M P T U N O T H
O E B H Q W H K Y X B E T J I E V Z O H U I C C R
K I H P E K T W K H K C T T N V A O J N G Q F A P
D G H M I T N V S L O U V U N A F O Z H T X E Q A
B I A Y K E X A P M H L Z A C Y H T J P Q P X E T
U G J X M Y M J I J A A C I W A G N F T Y I P R R
U Z H E C W Q E K G J I W T B W F X W X Y R B B N
A W D H S H N F J D R N C E T D O F B K Y B O F P
M P N C E Q J J X E E O A K Q C M X P G L G A O G
M C P D L R Y B M E F L E M I S H P T T D X B W F
Z F H R W Y T A M T Y O A G O E F V R T G G W J L
K L B I A W N R B A T C N G H R Y X K O F J X D T
U X Y Q N R H O L X D N N B V S P M N L F K K V X
P X G R E E K Q S E G A E L D D I M Z R M E C V P
Z L S D V G S U K H L C W N R R D L M X N U N E M
G K O G B U L E I E N I T N A Z Y B G E T F N R A
J M E U M W L K N A I R O T C I V K R N X M K W K
X G O S E K C W S A W E E G L E T A X L E M J Q L
P J U O G R E S N M P M E G P V Z P E T T T S M W
K J Q F D G I G J Q R A D B E E Q X Y M M R G T E
Q Y K C R A Z F T N L V J O K M L X H G W C R P E
N C V P N W P S D A T O G C M N S Q P Q E X Q M I
W T Z E V B H F Y G B X W J Q J A C H R G I A T W
D A R V X Q T P E Z N G Z K A C X S O W T G H J D
V N H P B J T B M I B U V V H U C O B S V I P V F

CONCEPTS TO CREATIVITY

- Invite to class an Ikebana enthusiast. Ask the person to demonstrate one of the Japanese styles and explain the placements and the mechanics.
- Visit an art museum and study art from various periods of history. Sketch a floral arrangement that would compliment a specific art piece.
- Contact a local florist and ask to visit a design show at a professional florist meeting. Identify the historical styles.
- Use the Internet and find various commercial floral designs that are being promoted by the wire services. (i.e.: www.teleflora.com; www.afs.com; www2.ftd.com; etc.) Print off several of the designs and identify the historical styles.
- Research several flowers on the Internet. Learn about the lore, legend, and symbolism of the flowers. Use those meanings to convey a message in a nosegay created from garden flowers.
- Gather several flowers, foliages, and accessories that could be used in a Flemish style floral arrangement. Have the class, as a group, create a Flemish style bouquet.

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