



The American Institute of Floral Designers



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The  
AIFD

Education  
Experience

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# THE AIFD CONNECTION

# The Parallel Experience

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Floral design styles have been evolving for millennia, ever since man first began to place plant materials together into pleasing arrangements. Civilizations throughout history have all contributed to the styles that we see today, and just like every other medium of artistic expression, floral design continually changes in response to social customs, political climate, economic conditions, fashion trends, mechanical innovations and creative inspiration.

Fads may come and go while classic styles retain their timeless appeal, but the elements and principles of design are always in operation. The practice of ikebana contributed some of the first formalized guidelines for arranging flowers and many of our present-day ideas about floral design, such as balance, proportion and radiation had their beginning in the Buddhist temples of 15<sup>th</sup> century Japan.

## Parallel Systems Design

Parallel Systems design is a composition utilizing parallel stem placement in which groupings of stems are placed in the same direction as each other and always the same distance apart from end to end. Negative space exists between the groups. There are no major components that have radiating lines; however there may be some basing involved with slight radial stem placement. Parallel system designs are usually vertical, but can also be arranged horizontally or diagonally.

The distinctive qualities of a parallel systems design are the following:

- Parallel stem placement
- Groupings
- Negative space
- Basing techniques

## CREATIVE PROCESS SEQUENCE

When creating a parallel or new convention design there is a sequential process to consider when starting the development of the design. This step by step process is essential in creating any type of floral design. It is not required to follow these steps one right after another but to make sure each of these steps is included in the process of floral design development. These steps are as follows:

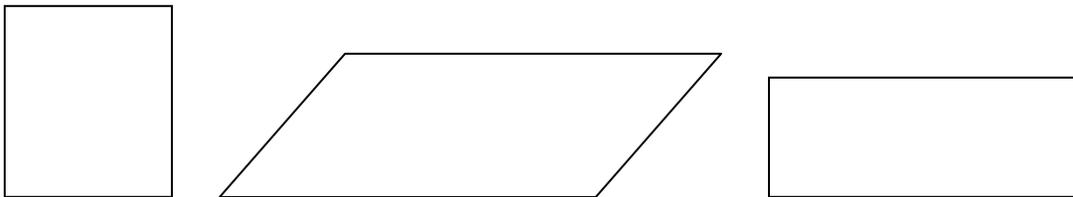
- **Determine the Form**
- **Selecting the Color Palette**
- **Gather the Flowers**
- **Applying Techniques**

### **Step one: Determine the Form**

**Form:** *is the shape or configuration of an individual component of the composition the overall, three-dimensional, geometric shape or configuration of a floral composition.*

**Geometric:** *shapes; structures, decorative patterns or designs based on geometric forms.*

A parallel design can only be in the geometric shape of a square. The lines applied are horizontal, vertical or diagonal creating the geometric configuration of a square.



**Square:** *an elongated four-sided parallelogram consisting of equal sides and right angles.*

Design forms can follow the design style shape suggested below:

- Cube: a form having six equal square sides.
- Rectangle: a planned composition in the form of a rectangle.
- Vertical: a tall narrow design that does not extend beyond the width of the container.
- Diagonal: a design pattern in which the primary axis lies on a slant of approximately 45 degrees.
- Horizontal: A composition in which the predominant line(s) are parallel to the plane of the horizon or the surface base.
- Obelisk: a planned composition in the shape of an obelisk.

### **Step two: Select the Color Palette:**

**Color** (the *visual response of the eye to reflected rays of light*) is probably the most influential element when it comes to choosing your flowers. Depending upon the occasion, the environment and the personality of the recipient also plays into the application. Color terminology that is important to understand is as follows:

- **Value:** *the degree of a color's purity relative to the gray scale.*
- **Warm/Cool:** *aggressive (red, yellow and orange) and recessive (blue, green and violet) colors*
- **Monochromatic:** *a grouping of different values of one hue which may include achromatic colors (black, white and gray)*
- **Analogous:** *a grouping of three adjacent colors on the color wheel: one color dominates*
- **Complimentary:** *a pair of hues directly opposite on the color wheel.*

### **Step three: Gather the Flowers**

Choosing flowers for the bouquet is a combination of factual information regarding time, place, conditions, etc., the best choices for the style and colors chosen. Professionalism and a strong knowledge of flowers, varieties available, characteristics of each variety and care and handling will help make the best selections.

See Flower Identification Chart – The Guide, page 140

See Care & Handling Glossary – The Guide, page 85

In selecting your product you must keep in mind the principles of **unity** (*oneness of purpose, thought, style and spirit, the organization of components into a harmonious whole resulting in a cohesive relationship of all parts*) and **proportion** (*the comparative relationship in size, quantity and degree of emphasis between components within the composition. It is the relationship of one portion to another portion or the relation of one portion to a whole*).

Also pay attention to the elements of **texture** (*the surface quality of materials as perceived by sight or visual or by touch or tactile*) and **fragrance** (*a sweet or pleasing order, perceived by the sense of smell*).

The **form** of the flowers as well as the overall bouquet is also very important. Flower and foliage form is observed by the predominate dimensional qualities with regard to its shape, structure and usage within a composition. The **inflorescence** or the arrangement of the flowers on the axis determines the categories of the forms. Some examples of these forms are:

Filler flower: *any open form inflorescences that is branched or clustered and used to fill space.*

( i.e. Gypsophila, wax flower, limonium)

( foliage i.e. tree fern, smoke tree)

Form Flower: *any inflorescence having shape as its most distinctive characteristic.*

( I. e. iris, heliconia, calla)

( foliage i.e. monstera, silver dollar eucalyptus)

Line Flower: *any inflorescences having a spike-like or linear form or featuring an elongated stem.*

( i.e. gladiolus, liatris, larkspur)

( foliage i.e. scotch broom, equisetum)

Mass Flower: *any closed form inflorescences having a single, dense, rounded head at the top of the stem.*

( i.e. carnation, dahlia, chrysanthemum)

( foliage i.e. camellia, aspidistra)

Renegade Flower: *a term sometimes used to describe an inflorescence which may fall into more than one flower form.*

(i.e. bird of paradise)

( foliage i.e. ti, flat fern, myrtle)

The end result of your product choice must be a pleasing composition that compliments the design style and occasion.

One of the dominant elements in a parallel design is that of line. Static line is either vertical or horizontal creating strength and stability. Dynamic lines maybe curving, slanted or meandering creating liveliness and energy.

**Line:**            *Element of Design*

The vital visual path that directs the eye movement through a composition. Selecting the lines have a direct correlation with the form of the design you select to create. Examples are:

Static line: this line is either vertical or horizontal. Creates strength and stability in a floral composition and as the name implies are seen as being rigid, unchanging and without much energy or motion.

Dynamic line: may be curving or slanted, zigzag, contorted or meandering, They move in more than one direction relative to the vertical/horizontal axis and consequently are seen as more lively and energetic.

Lines may be actual: creating a physical presence or implied : created in the mind's eye when it visually links 2 or more physical points together. The most common lines used in a parallel design are:

- Diagonal: a line on an angle that is not vertical or horizontal, but slants.
- Horizontal: parallel to the horizon (earth) or the baseline.
- Vertical: a line at a right angle or perpendicular to a horizontal line.  
Upright.

Space is another element of design which is generously applied to a parallel composition. the groupings of the products used in this type of design are equally spaced through the composition end to end.

**Space:**            *Element of Design*

The area in and around and between the design. Defined by the three-dimensional area occupied by the composition.

Positive space: the planned area in a design occupied by flowers, foliage and other objects.

Negative space: the planned area in a design devoid of flowers, foliage and other objects, yet essential to the composition.

**Negative Space and Parallel Design**

Some amount of space typically exists between each separate group and is always the same distance apart from end to end. Negative space exists between the groups. Negative space is the planned area within a composition that is devoid of any materials, essentially, empty space. It is negative space that allows individual materials in a design to be seen clearly. The term “void” is used to describe empty space that serves to visually separate areas of positive space.

**Dominance:**

*Primary Principal of Design:*

The visual organization within a design that emphasizes one or more aspects. When one element is emphasized, others are subordinate.

**Focal Area/Point :**

*Secondary Principal of Design*

Areas of greatest visual impact or weight, centers of interest to which the eye is drawn most naturally. Emphasized are within the area of dominance.

Focal areas can be selected to draw that attention to any part of the composition.

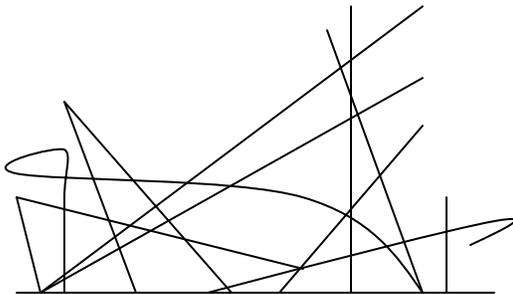
**Emphasis:**

Area(s) in a composition given special attention. They create attention by Importance, Stress, and Weight. The foundation of the design is where the emphasis of detail is applied. In parallel design the emphasis is drawn to the stem placements creating the vertical line of the groupings of flowers, the space definition and the basing techniques for the focal emphasis.

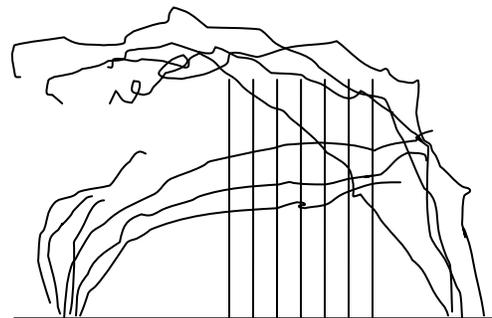
**STEM PLACEMENT TECHNIQUES:**

Stem placement is a process of positioning plant materials into a design. There are three basic stem placement techniques, each clearly expressing a different method of design construction. These are abstract, radial and parallel. Integrated is the use of two or more different stem placement end techniques into one composition. In a Parallel System Design, parallel stem placement is essential. These stem placements are placed in groupings and are always in the same direction and are equal distance apart from end to end.

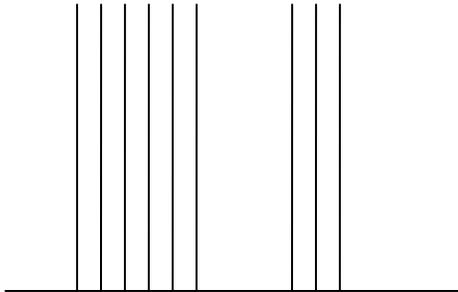
Abstract



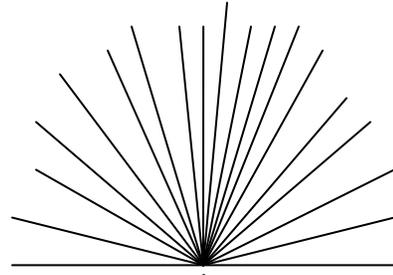
Integrated



Parallel



Radial



### **SPECIFIC AREA PLACEMENTS TECHNIQUES**

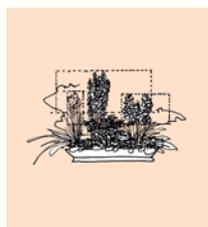
In parallel design the applications of groupings or creating areas of growth of identical flowers and foliage is very important. These specific area terms are:

#### **Groupings**

Another characteristic technique applied to parallel designs is the technique of grouping. Groupings are created by placing identical materials within a specific limited area, with each material maintaining its individual identity. In Parallel Systems Design the space between these groupings are always equal.

**Sectioning:** the process of isolating like materials within their own specific areas or segregating types of materials within a group.

**Zoning:** the process of segregating like materials to specific levels or three-dimensional areas within the composition. In a vegetative design for example flowers of identical variety are positioned so as to suggest a natural growing habit, each extending to a similar height within the composition.



*Have the students create each technique with their product in a piece of floral foam as you talk and explain about each technique. They will then take these techniques and add it to their parallel design for design one.*

## **Basing Techniques**

In parallel design development there are no major components that have radiating lines. Radiating stem placement is having the stems arranged like spokes or rays emerging from a common center. However, there are some basing techniques involved with slight radial stem placements. Basing techniques are applied when finishing the foundation of the composition with intricate, textured details, which provide a decorative surface from which the composition of a design emerges. Examples of these techniques are as follows:

### **INDIVIDUAL STEM PLACEMENT BASING TECHNIQUES**

**Layering:** covering the surface with foliage or other materials by over lapping individual units with little or no space between them creating an impression of being one layer thick. This sometimes produces a scale-like appearance.



**Collaring:** when product completely encircles a flower, bouquet, or container edge with foliage or other decorative materials creating a finished appearance.



**Pave’:** using parallel or surface contoured insertions which create a uniform area with little or no variation of depth. A term borrowed from the jewelry making industry.

**Terracing:** is placing like materials in stair-step fashion, creating spaced horizontal levels. This is used to achieve depth.



## **RADIAL STEM PLACEMENT BASING TECHNIQUES**

**Clustering:** is lacing a collection of small, textural flowers and or greens of a single kind close together so that the individual component becomes indistinguishable from the mass. There is no individual identity. They function as a single unit.

**Tufting:** is the radial clustering or bunching of short elongated stems near the base of a design to emphasize overall color and texture of the bunch rather than the individual materials. Each tuft essentially becomes a design component in itself.

**Pillowing:** is the process of clustering rounded or dome-shaped flowers or other materials into a tightly organized pattern of placement on a composition. Clusters may range from low, tight groupings used for basing to taller, more predominate mounds. The result is a cushion base, which resembles clouds, pillows or rolling hills with depressions in between. Pillowing emphasizes the colors, textures, and shape of the whole group rather than individual flowers.

### **New convention design**

New convention design is a variant of parallel systems design, having groupings of horizontal stem placements emerging from the base of the composition at 90-degree angles to those in the vertical positions. The horizontal groups may extend from all four sides of the arrangement and are composed of the same materials as the vertical groups, implying a sense of reflection.