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The Formalinear Experience

The Formalinear Experience

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 15th century Japan.

Of European origin, Formal Linear is a true Line Mass hybrid style of Eastern linearity and European mass. When an asymmetrical skeletal form or profile is created it reflects Ikebana in either placement or presentation of materials to display the linearity and unique form of the flowers. The mass of these forms creating lines and the resulting negative space is in strong contrast to distinctive specimen plant materials or materials radically different in degree of linearity or mass.

This generous use of space accentuates the individual flowers, leaves, stem angles, colors and textures. Often this composition is of relatively few well-organized materials, usually placed in groups, emphasizing bold forms and clean lines. Materials are used and they are usually placed in groupings. This strong contrast creates a tension within the design. There is a proportional mass and intricacy of finish to the base of Formal Linear. Organization and control but not necessarily manipulation of materials is essential to Formal Linear.

So where do we start? When designing a formalinear design there are many factors to consider. The conceptual thought is the accumulation of ideas thus forming various field of interest that affects the designer or artist's thinking.

For formalinear compositions, their history obviously plays a dominate role in their development. But it is extremely important to apply the elements and principles of design according to **The AIFD Guide to Floral Design Terms, Techniques and Traditions** as this creative process begins and ends.

We might follow these steps to accomplish the design:

- **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 formal linear bouquet can be any number of geometric shapes but keeping in mind the use of line and space. The geometric forms that are applied are either a:

- **Circle**
- **Triangular**
- **Square**

Circle: *a closed- plane curve consisting of points that are equally distant from a center point. A ring.*

Design forms can follow the design style shape suggested below:

- Round: a planned composition in the form of partial sphere using radial stem placements.
- Mound: a raised mass on a horizontal plane.
- Sphere: a three-dimensional round design; a globe, orb or ball.
- Oval: a broadly elliptical, egg-shaped design.
- Fan: a semi-circular, radiating design in which lines emerge from a center point much like spokes from the hub of a wheel.
- Crescent: a narrow curved shape that tapers to a point at each end.
- Hogarth: an elegant, elongated “S” shaped curve, often interpreted in design that is also known as the “line of beauty”. Named for the 18th century English artist William Hogarth.
- Conical: a three-dimensional geometric figure having a circular base and sides that taper evenly to an apex.

Triangle: *a plane figure with three sides and three angles.*

Design forms can follow the design style shape suggested below:

- Symmetrical: *an equilateral or isosceles triangle.*
- Equilateral: a design form in the shape of a triangle with all three sides of equal length.
- Pyramid: a solid figure having a square base and four triangular sides meeting at a point.

Isosceles: a triangular form where two sides are of equal length and the third side is a different length. Has symmetrical balance.

Asymmetrical: *without symmetry; not having a mirror image on both sides of a plane, axis or point.*

Right: an asymmetrical triangle-shaped arrangement with a vertical line perpendicular to a horizontal line forming a 90-degree angle within the triangle. Sometimes referred to as a L-shaped design.

Scalene: an asymmetrical triangular design in which all three sides are unequal in length.

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.

See Geometric Forms Chart – The Guide, page 135

See Derivative Designs Chart- The Guide, page 136

See Geometric Design Chart- The Guide, page 191

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.*

See The Artist's Color Wheel - The Guide, page 106

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)

See Flower Form Glossary – The Guide, page 139 -144

See Foliage Identification Chart – The Guide, page 146 – 148

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 formalinear 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. The lines may be straight, curved, or a combination. May be actual or implied. 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.

Broken:	a line which is interrupted in its path or direction.
Continuous:	an uninterrupted succession of lines.
Contorted:	a line which bends severely; a twisted shape or expression. (e.g. curly willow)
Curvilinear:	a continuous line consisting of bends and arcs that flow in more than one direction.
Diagonal:	a line on an angle that is not vertical or horizontal, but slants.
Dynamic:	an energetic line that visually creates a feeling of motion and force, in contrast to a static line.
Hanging:	a cascading line that appears to be weighted. (e.g. fruit bearing branch)
Helical:	a curving, coiling line that spirals as though on a surface of a cylinder or cone, creating a three-dimensional configuration.
Horizontal:	parallel to the horizon (earth) or the baseline.
Implied:	an imaginary or invisible line created in the mind's eye by connecting two or more physical points within a composition.
Interactive:	lines that reciprocate, which usually play off or respond to one another, creating a sense of activity.
Primary:	the most predominant line in a composition.
Radiating:	a group of lines that extend outward from a central point.
Self completing:	any line within a composition that encircles and returns to its original starting point.
Static:	a stationary, non-energetic line, vertical or horizontal.
Vertical:	a line at a right angle or perpendicular to a horizontal line. Upright.
Zigzag:	a line that moves the eye in a sharp alternating directions.

Line is created by the stem placement of the products you are applying. Techniques which are commonly used in the formal linear design style is often created by that stem placement. Some of the commonly used dominance techniques are:

- Insertion position: the stem placement into the composition directly affecting the dominance of the composition.
- *Shadowing: the close placement of one material directly behind the primary material, giving a three-dimensional appearance. Resulting in a shadow or echo affect of the primary.
 - *Facing: the turning or directing of a flower head in a certain way in order to increase interest and visual movement within a design.
 - Mirroring: the placement of materials in a composition such that one appears to reflect the other.
 - **Sheltering: placing one or more materials over or around another, lightly enclosing the materials within, to create an impression of protection.
 - Veiling: layering light materials over more solid forms creating a light, almost transparent screen. Often used in the water-fall design.
 - Spiraling: to circle around a central point in a flat curve that is constantly increasing or decreasing in size; to coil in one plane.
 - Gradation: a design technique of placing flower or foliage in an ordered progression, from largest to smallest or darkest to lightest.
 - Sequencing: placing flowers and materials in an orderly succession.
 - Framing: using branches or flowers to enclose or showcase the material within. Defines space and may bring special attention to the focal area of a composition.

Space is another element of design which is generously applied to a formalinear composition.

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, foliages and other objects.
- Negative space: the planned area in a design devoid of flowers, foliages and other objects, yet essential to the composition.
- Composite: plant materials wired and or glued together forming a new flower. Reassembling detached plant parts to form a new interest.

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.

Formalinear design contains a very dominate focal area.

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.

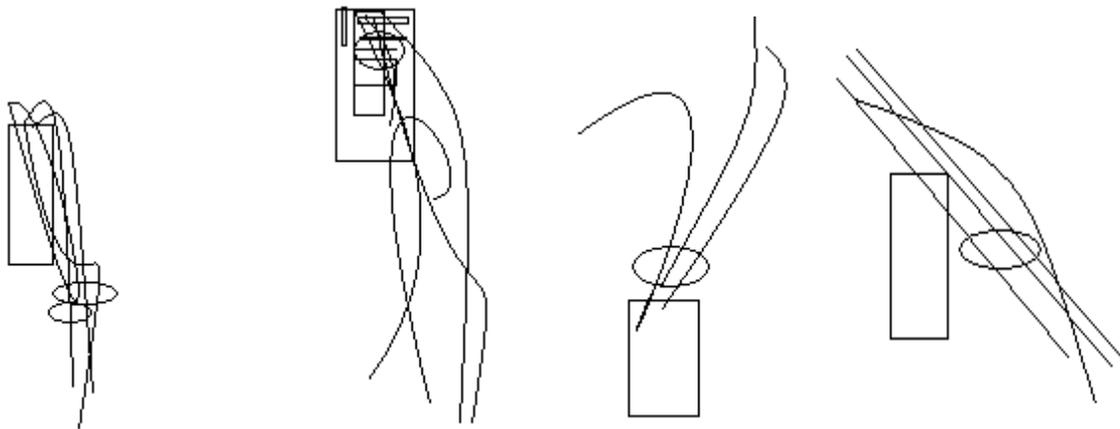
Focal areas can be selected to draw that attention to any part of the composition.

Below container

In the container

Above the container

Beside the container



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. Basing techniques accomplish this task.

Basing: finishing the foundation of the composition with intricate, textured details, which provide a decorative surface from which the composition of a design emerges.

Layering: covering the surface with foliage or other materials by overlapping individual units with little or no space between them creating an impression of being one layer thick. Sometimes producing a scale-like appearance.

*Clustering: placing 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. No individual identity.

- Collaring: completely encircling 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.
- *Grouping: the placement of identical materials within a specific, limited area, with each material maintaining its individual identity. There is space between groupings.
- **Terracing: placing like materials in stair-step fashion, creating spaced horizontal levels, used to achieve depth.
- Stacking: placing like materials of similar size on top of one another without space between each component, in an orderly and vertical fashion.
- *Sectioning: segregating types of materials within a group.
- Tufting: radial clustering or bunching of short elongated stems at the base of a design to emphasize color and texture.
- Zoning: confining like materials to specific areas within the composition.
- Pillowing: a tightly organized radial placement of clustered materials in a composition. They may range from tight basing to taller dimensional contours with emphasis on texture and color. Creates a rounded or dome-shaped flower or material grouping.

Physical application

- Abstracting: removing parts or pieces so as to distort; to alter the surface. To place plant material in unusual ways.
- Airbrushing: applying paint from a pressurized source.
- **Detaching: removing a flower’s petals to give the flower a new shape.
- Massaging: bending or curving of a branch or flower stem by applying gentle pressure and warmth with the thumbs, fingers and hands. Working with plant materials at room temperature facilitates this process.
- Reflexing: rolling back the petals of a flower to create a more open look.
- Pruning: selectively removing branches, foliages, florets or petals to create a designed negative space and produce materials that appear to be more sculptural. Pruning reveals a stronger line and more interesting shape.
- **Tailoring: the modifying or altering of a material’s appearance by trimming, gluing, or stapling.
- Tipping: painting the edges of flower petals or leaves.
- Hana-kubari: the use of natural mechanics such as twigs, branches and rocks. This creates a design that has an aesthetically pleasing mechanical alternatives to foam.

The application of detail creates an interesting completion to a formalinear design.

Accent:

Secondary Principal of Design:

Detail added to a design to provide additional interest, affecting the totality of the design.

Detailed Design Techniques:

- Tying: securing or fastening materials together with cord, rope, straps etc...
- Wrapping: covering a single stem or bundle of stems from end to end with decorative materials such as ribbon, raffia, wire, etc...
- Structuring: something composed of interrelated parts forming an object or structure.
- Bunching: a gathering of several similar materials together and inserting them into an arrangement as one. Labor- saving technique.
- Piercing: using a sharp, pointed material to pierce the tissue or fiber of another component in a design.
- Sewing: fastening or gathering materials together using wire, thread, staples, straight pins etc... Threading decorative string, ribbon or wire for decorative purposes.
- **Binding: tying together materials, primarily mechanical.
- Baling: compressing and tying plant material into an overall geometric shape, simulating a bale of tied grasses or hay.
- Detailing: making precise and refined placements to complete a composition.
- Leafwork: the process of creating a surface by applying foliage in an overlapping manner to give texture and /or form to a container or surface by sewing, gluing, stapling, etc...
- Petaling: the covering of a surface with petals using a floral adhesive.
- Bundling: firmly tying similar materials together forming a radiating pattern above and below the binding point.
- Braiding or plaiting: a decorative technique of interweaving strands of fiber, ribbon, foliage, etc...by braiding, folding or pleating.
- Weaving: the interlacing of materials to create a new dimensional or sculptural form.
- Constructed: the building of a structure as an integral part of the design.
- Hair pinning: mechanical attachment of materials by using a "U" shaped wire at the binding point.
- Air taping: wrapping tape to itself without wire and attaching to the composition.
- *Banding: ornamentally encircling material in concise and consecutive ring drawing attention to a particular component.

See Design Techniques Glossary – The Guide, page 151 for complete list