

Jan Works'

WORDS

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Gardenia Studio

Poetic Inspirations in Floral Design

Although Gardenia Studio is not your typical neighborhood flower shop, as its two proprietors readily admit, they do share their love of flowers and a passionate commitment to their customers with other Los Angeles-area floral retailers.

The difference is their focus – strictly on personalized floral design for customers ranging from corporate accounts to film studios, salons, boutiques, hotels and individuals who contract for weekly delivery of unique, one-of-a-kind arrangements to their homes and offices.

Ilga Ziegler and Andrea Roth operate their two-year-old business in an airy mid-Wilshire studio flooded with natural light from four large skylights. The space formerly housed an art gallery and its high-ceilinged walls are perfect display backdrops for large abstract paintings by Los Angeles artist Marjam Oskoui. Gardenia Studio represents the artist, says Andrea, because she and Ilga feel that her

paintings are very complementary to both the studio space itself and their floral designs. The paintings are available for sale or rental to their clients.

Ilga and Andrea have been long-time friends, they explain, sharing a common vision for a business built around artistic floral design and the way such a business should work. Both previously worked for other floral design companies. "It has been kind of a natural evolution," says Andrea. "It was inevitable that we would go into business together."

Marion Davies would approve

They chose the gardenia as their floral signature because it invokes elegance and femininity and is associated with the glamorous decades of the 1920s, '30s and '40s – a time period they say inspires them. "Those were remarkable years in fashion and in décor, and we try to infuse our designs with their romantic appeal," Ilga explains.

Many of the photographs in their display albums and on their Website (www.gardeniastudio.com) depict lavish cascades of blooms reminiscent of days

gone by. "We're inspired by the past, but we very much live in 2002," Ilga continues. "We do a modern interpretation of what you might have seen in the fashion and home décor magazines of the day."

Present-day realities also influence their design work according to what is available at the Los Angeles Flower Market. Ilga visits the Market twice a week and makes the rounds before deciding what to purchase for their long-standing weekly orders. She explains that Wednesday is her favorite day at the Market. "Everyone is getting ready for the weekend's parties. That's when I find the best and most unusual flowers to choose from ... it is very inspiring!"

On the day of our visit, buckets of freshly cut cymbidium, lush lilacs in every shade of cream and lavender imaginable and full-bodied roses of pink and white stand ready to be fashioned into springtime-themed bouquets. Ilga and Andrea will choose from their unusual selection of vases, many of them antiques, in the shape of shells, Oriental figurines, animals and geometric profiles. Their customers rarely ask for specific arrangements, but trust them to deliver flowers that reflect the season and fit comfortably into their design environment.

Never the Same Thing Twice

Andrea and Ilga also claim inspiration from the seasons of the year, although they don't have a favorite one. "We're

happy that they are always changing because it brings us new ideas based on the flowers and foliage that are available to work with," says Andrea.

Sometimes their arrangements consist of just one or two varieties of blooms because as Andrea says, "a beautiful vase full of all one type of flower can make a very strong impression."

"It's a thoughtful process we go through in our work," she continues. "We never, ever do gimmicks and we don't mass produce our designs, even if it seems easier, because it would be boring to repeat ourselves."

That inclination away from sameness has enabled them to build a solid clientele. "We have repeat clients all over Los Angeles who come to us year after year for their party flowers, weddings, special occasions or just to dress up their homes," Andrea says.

Their designs have also found their way onto Hollywood film sets for commercials and movies, most recently in scenes from the action-detective thriller "Minority Report" starring Tom Cruise that opened June 21.

Andrea was raised in Los Angeles, Ilga in Bavaria, Germany. Both appreciate the support of their families. Ilga came to Los Angeles more than a decade ago. "LA is a wonderful place for flowers," she says. "People here really appreciate them!"

