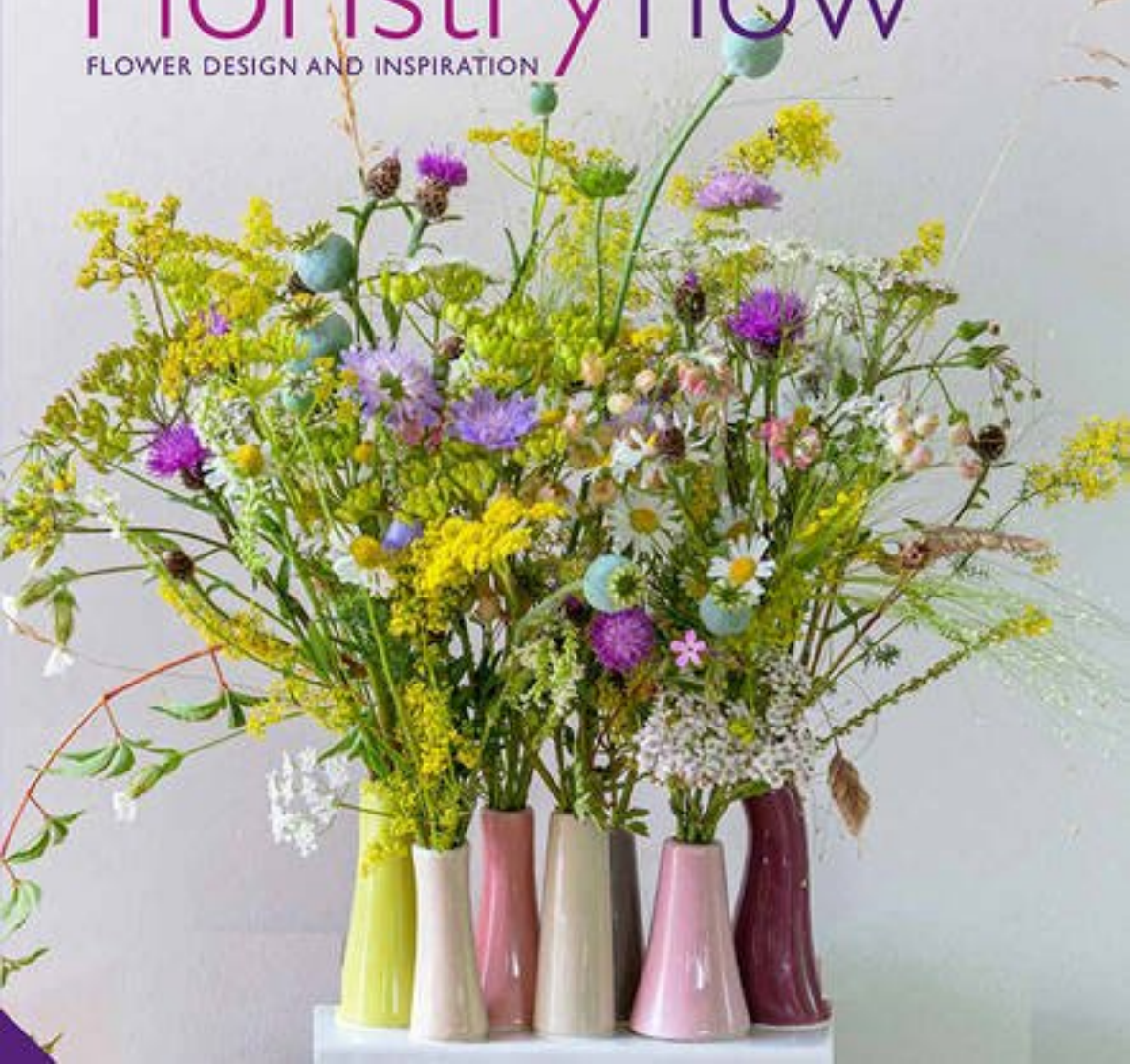


PAULA PRYKE OBE

# Floristry now

FLOWER DESIGN AND INSPIRATION







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**LEFT** *Sunflowers*, 1889, Vincent van Gogh. The rough beauty, distinct brushstrokes and the bold use of colour had far-reaching effects on 20th-century art.  
**OPPOSITE** 'Teddy Bear' sunflowers, a modern variety, have the same density of petals. Here they are mixed with *Viburnum opulus* berries.

**THE IMPRESSIONISTS** Later, in the 19th century, botanical adventurers who were bringing exotic plants from China and Japan influenced art. The impressionists sought not to make accurate copies of nature but impressions. Monet's famous paintings of his garden at Giverny are so inspirational for their colours alone. Monet, arguably one of the most significant painters of the garden, said he owed his painting 'to flowers'. The garden was an inspiration to Renoir, Cezanne and Matisse, and in turn their work inspires and informs my designs. Vincent van Gogh started to paint flowers in 1884 with *Vase with Honesty*. He wrote: 'I have lacked money for models...but I have made a series of colour studies in painting simple flowers, red poppies, blue cornflowers and myosotis.' After a visit to Arles in the South of France he took to sunflowers, and after a traumatic episode he ended up in an asylum in Saint-Remy, where he painted irises. His most famous flower paintings come from the end of his life. In the same way that the artists were inspired by the new flowers, florists are inspired by the new varieties that are developed each season. This gives us an ever-evolving palette of colours and textures to work with.







**LEFT** Constance Spry designed her own range of vases in the mid 1930s and these were made for her by the Fulham Pottery in west London. The Pottery followed these with further ranges designed by their in-house designer WJ

**OPPOSITE** The garden was an important source for Constance Spry's arrangements, as it is for me. These garden pickings include pinks, *Prunus* 'Royal Burgundy', American pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*), Cecile Brunner shrub roses, pink *Lathyrus ororatus* 'Banty' and the everlasting sweet pea *Lathyrus grandiflorus*.

**CONSTANCE SPRY** The famous British author, educator and florist was best known for arranging the flowers for Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953. She opened her first shop in 1928, called Flower Decoration, and wrote her first book with the same title in 1934. Later she went on to establish a domestic science school at Winfield Place in Berkshire. When I was deciding to change careers from teaching history to secondary school pupils, I enrolled on a Constance Spry flower arranging course in my long summer vacation. Constance had died at Winfield in 1960, the year I was born. However, the staff who remained at the school remembered her very fondly in 1985 when I was a pupil, and they referred to her as Mrs Spry as if she was omnipresent. Constance could see the value of flower arranging to ordinary people who were living in austere conditions following the Second World War. She championed the use of arranging one thing in a vase, such as lilac, and keeping it simple. She also encouraged people to think about using kale and items from the vegetable patch in their arrangements. Her arrangements were natural and she encouraged the use of wild flowers and sprigs from the hedgerow. She wrote many books on flower design and lectured in the United States as well as at home and was the single most important figure in floristry and floral design in the 20th century.

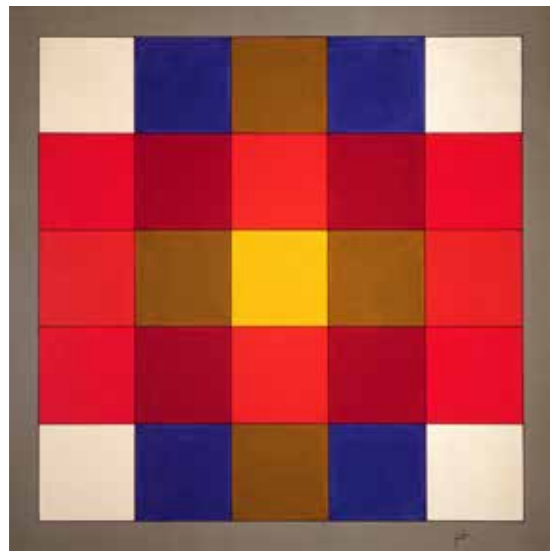




**THIS PAGE** This Fulham Pottery vase design – the FMA – was used frequently by Constance Spry. In tribute to her I've filled one with Constance Spry, Classic Kate, Dorothy Perkins, Savoy Gardens, Carey and Romantic roses, *Achillea millefolium* 'Paprika', valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), everlasting sweet pea, (*Lathyrus grandiflorus*), loosestrife, (*Lysimachia ciliata* 'Firecracker'), borage (*Borago officinalis*), *Daucus carota*, *Chasmanthium latifolium*, perennial cornflower (*Centaurea montana*), *Thlaspi* 'Green Bell', dill (*Anethum graveolens*), violets, canterbury bells (*Campanula medium*), clematis trails, the variegated leaves of *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost' and branches of small green apples.







**LEFT** *Subliminal Yellow Cross* by Peter McClure demonstrates how proximity affects colours.

**OPPOSITE** Playing with graphic forms, I arranged multicoloured square ceramic vases in a grid then filled them with individual heads of different dahlias, achillea, scabious, valerian, dill, clematis, miniature sunflower, echinops and pink bergamot, along with assorted succulents and a trail of bright green jasmine. Arranging them in this way really helps you appreciate colour interaction.

**GRAPHIC ART** Another art form that has influenced some of my work is the graphic forms of the 20th-century modern art movement, those based more on line and colour. There is lots to be learnt about using blocks, groups or swathes of colour from these art works. Non-representational art has a purity of form that allows you to concentrate on the colours and their effects. You can really appreciate how one colour alters the strength of another colour simply by being placed next to it. The works of Piet Mondrian, for example, started by being inspired by the landscape but ended up being grid-based, very abstract representations of the spiritual order underlying the visible world. For me, Paul Klee is also a very interesting artist and he wrote and thought a lot about colour theory. He had been inspired by Robert Delaunay's bold use of colour. Henri Matisse also produced very bright and inspirational colour themes. He said, 'It is not enough to place colours, however beautiful, one beside the other; colours must also react on one another. Otherwise, you have cacophony.' This is equally applicable in garden design and flower arranging.





# Inspired by trends

Fashion is in love with flowers at the moment; flowers are sexy again. Floral prints are enjoying a revival, and colour trends convince growers to invest in new varieties, so the colour palette of cut flowers is continuously evolving. Trends in gardening also influence production. Plants prevalent in the show gardens of garden design shows soon appear in gift bouquets and flower decorations.



**LEFT** English seasonal hydrangeas with a small selection of my arsenal of jugs, vases, pots, urns, bottles and vessels for flower arranging on any scale.  
**OPPOSITE AND OVERLEAF** Jugs always look in style. This enamel pitcher is filled with a glorious mix of *Alchemilla mollis*, 'Blackberry Scoop' scabious, sweet peas, fountain grass, *Thlaspi perfoliatum* 'Green Bell', *Daucus carota*, valerian, cotinus, viburnum berries, *Achillea millefolium* 'Pink Grapefruit' and Wedding Bells, Combo and pink standard Titanic roses.

**VINTAGE** I have always felt a strong connection with the past and grew up in a small medieval town in a district with many antiques shops. The East Anglia of my childhood was steeped in medieval history, and consequently history was my favourite subject at school and I went on to study it at university. When I studied floristry at the Constance Spry school, there was a big connection with the heritage and antiquities that Mrs Spry had amassed over the years. When I began my interest in floral design, Kenneth Turner was the top London flower decorator. He had a flower shop in Mayfair with an Islington antiques dealer called Keith Skeel, and it was so perfect to see these wonderful flower arrangements in antique urns and pots. The used and weathered pots told a story, and the recycling of old items mirrors the rebirth of nature each year. The influence of the past dips in and out of fashion, but we all get some inspiration from what has gone before us and it informs our creative processes.



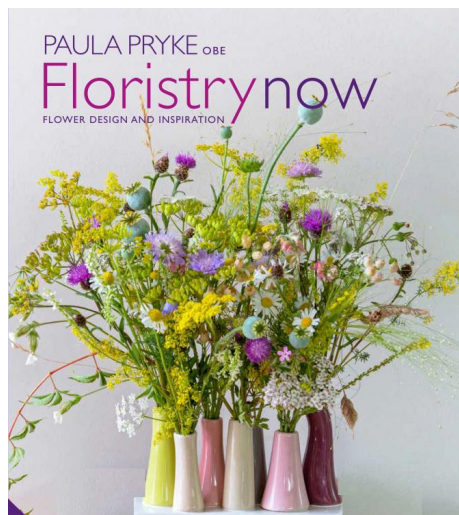


## FLORISTRY NOW

### FLOWER DESIGN AND INSPIRATION

#### By Paula Pryke

- Paula Pryke has been creating beautiful floral designs for nearly 30 years, and her daring and innovative use of colour and structure has been acclaimed since the outset of her career.
- In this invaluable book, Paula shares her design secrets. Above all she shares her many wonderful designs to inspire and inform the reader.
- Analyses how to understand individual flower shapes and structures, and how they interact to create vastly different effects.
- Includes step-by-step instructions to create stunning, colourful displays.
- Featuring ideas for flowers around the home, for giving, and for special events, this book is a comprehensive guide to all aspects of flower design.
- Recently awarded an OBE for her services to floral design, Paula Pryke is one of the most famous and respected florists in the world.



The defining characteristic of Paula Pryke's work is her consummate use of colour and structure – her bold colour choices first brought her to attention when she started out, and throughout her career she has never failed to challenge and excite. Where Paula leads, others follow.

In this invaluable book Paula shares her design secrets. Above all, she shares her many wonderful designs with the intention to inspire and inform the reader:

'Over the years I have worked with flowers, I have trained a lot of staff and taught many who wanted to work with flowers. Most people just love and have a passion for flowers, and imagine that a life spent with flowers will be utopia. In fact, working with flowers is a lot more complicated than it first appears. It requires many skills beyond just being artistic and over time I have tried to define what it is to be a great floral designer. In this book I examine the way you need to see flowers to truly understand them and to create flower arrangements that don't just look great, they make someone's heart skip a beat.'

#### Author Information

In 1998, Paula Pryke had a dream of opening a little flower shop in Islington, London. From these humble beginnings she changed the face of British floristry and has become one of London's top florists.

Paula published her first book in 1993 and has now published 18 flower books, which have been translated into as many languages. Initially Paula's style was embraced in Japan and America but more recently she has been working and influencing floral design in Korea, China, India and South America, establishing her reputation globally. Recently awarded an OBE for her services to floral design, Paula Pryke is one of the most famous and respected florists in the world.  
[www.paulapryke.com](http://www.paulapryke.com)

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