

Wonderful International Win by Ontario Floral Designers

The 11th World Flower Show 'A Floral Odyssey' was held in the historic city of Dublin, Ireland from June 18-22, 2014. Many floral designers from Canada attended this wonderful show that is organized every three years by one of the member countries of the World Association of Flower Arrangers. This year, there were four designers from Ontario who won awards with their class entries. Each designer is a member of the Garden Clubs of Ontario (GCO), an affiliate organization with the OHA. The following gives a brief outline of each of their designs, with some insight into their experience at the World Association of Floral Artists (WAFA).

Susan Suter entered Class 17 titled "Illusion" and won the Gold Award (1st place) for this magical piece which was viewed from all sides, with the front, back and sides of the design revealed very different optical illusions. There were 17 people in the class with the other winners coming from the UK and South Africa. This was Susan's first entry at WAFA and her first win. In addition to the Gold Rosette, Susan was given a beautiful Irish linen tablecloth.

All work had to be completed on site with the exception of a minimal amount of prepared material allowed that could not be completed within the time constraints permitted. In Susan's case, this was the very time consuming process of hand painting ground reindeer lichen onto her design as well as hand tooling a spiral pattern onto balls on a lathe. Susan's use of the black and white op-art segments in her design really made this design "sing". Her placement of the green lichen in some of the op-art circles provided more plant material and picked up the colour of other plant material.

Upon arrival at the show, she opened her box of pre-ordered eight dozen peonies to discover that they were completely destroyed by black mold. With only three hours to create her design and no where to turn for fresh flowers, she quickly improvised with the Allium and Ric Rac, which were all astonishing in their size, quality and freshness. Many months of planning, trial and error went into the final product. Her children were thrilled when all was packed up because they were finally able to eat at the dining room table again.

Susan found out about her win at the Gala evening preview. She was so shaken by the surprise of seeing the gold ribbon on the floor beside her design. When she realized that she had won the Gold Award, she was completely overwhelmed by the experience. Susan is a member of the Haldimand and District Horticultural Society and a student in the GCO 7th School of Floral Design for Judges. She attended WAFA with her mother, Dawn Suter, who did the demonstration for Canada at WAFA Japan.

Celia Roberts was one of the 20 designers who entered the "Imposed" Class 12 titled "Conundrum" and won a Silver Award (2nd place) for her delightful design. Other winners were from New Zealand, South Africa and the UK. In an imposed class, entrants do not know what material will be available until they arrive in the floral hall. Everyone is provided the same material and supplies that may be used in whole or part. The only tools that can





be brought in by the designer are a stapler, wire cutters, flower cutters and a knife. With only four hours from first viewing the materials until the completion of the design, there is a quite bit of pressure undertaking this type of class.

Celia had a look at her materials and then decided to go to the café for a cup of tea and spend a short period of time reflecting on how she would use the plant material. After returning to the flower hall, she decided to use four calla lilies, two pieces of cork-screw hazel, all 15 pieces of flex grass plus two limes and some of the accessories.

Judging took place right after the closing of entry time on the Wednesday. Several of the Canadian designers met for dinner that evening across the street from the Royal Dublin Society, where the WAFSA show was held. One of the Canadian judges who came to the same restaurant for dinner pointed to Celia through the restaurant window, signalling to her that she had won a 'Silver'. Her friends applauded her achievement, as did others in the restaurant. As Celia told me, "It was all rather exciting."

This is the second time Celia has entered the World Show and her first win. Celia is Co-Chair of the Cloverleaf Garden Club Flower Shows, a Director of the Oakville Horticultural Society, a Past Director of OHA District 6, an accredited GCO Floral Design Judge, an accredited RBG Horticultural Judge and a member of the Toronto Garden Club where she is Chair, Canada Blooms Staging Committee and a member of the Canada Blooms design Committee. She is also the chair of the Garden Clubs of Ontario Education Committee as well as being co-Principal of the GCO 7th School for Floral Design Judges, Instructors and Exhibitors.

The next winner was **Audrey Van Holst** in Class 22 titled "Defining Line" where she won the Silver Award (2nd prize) for her most creative design. There were also 20 people in this class, with the other winners coming from Pakistan, the UK, New Zealand, Kenya, the USA and Ireland. Audrey's all fuchsia-coloured design integrated purple-heart wood from South Africa in the shape of a flat circle, a cone and a thin cylinder, delicately balanced to support two rounds of dried scabiosa painted fuchsia, with another round leaning against the bottom of the cylinder. This simple but dynamic design put me in mind of a delicate performance by the famous Cirque du Soleil.

Audrey is a member of the Lambeth Horticultural Society, the St. Thomas and District Horticultural Society and the Garden Club of London. She is also a student in the GCO 7th School of Floral Design Judges. This was her first entry and first win on the International flower show circuit.

Our final winner was **Rosemary Passafiume-McLean** who entered Class 6 titled "Spontaneous Approach" and received a Commended award (Honourable Mention). This was also an imposed class like the one entered by Celia Roberts, so the same rules applied here. There were 20 people who entered this class, with other win-



ners from Kenya, New Zealand and three from South Africa. This was Rosemary’s first international win. The style of design was completely open, with the design staged on a table 70cm from the floor and a background colour of dark grey. Each designer received a surprise package of material that included fresh roses, mums, fresh foliage, foam, containers, wire, and a few decorative items like pins and coloured wire, so everyone started with a level playing field.



Rosemary travelled to Ireland by herself but met many floral friends once she arrived. She found out about her win through a friend who had a very early view of the show. Rosemary is a member of the Garden Club of Toronto and a student in the GCO 7th School of Floral Design Judges.

Her whole experience at Wafa was delightful, from meeting so many interesting and enjoyable people, to viewing the outstanding design work by experts from around the globe. Rosemary felt it was an honour to participate and represent Canada. In addition, she remarked that the Irish Wafa Committee had done a brilliant job on organizing every detail of the show and the programme to make it a perfect experience for all participants.

Should you meet any of these ladies in your floral travels around the province, please let them know how pleased we all are about their accomplishments on the world stage of floral design. When the 12th Wafa Flower Show is held in Barbados in 2017, we will be wishing all of our Canadian floral designers the best of luck at that event.

Anne Clark-Stewart
Member, GCO Judges’ Council



Photo credits:

- 1.Susan Suter’s “Illusions” - photo courtesy Wafa Ireland
- 2.Celia Roberts’ “Conundrum” – photo courtesy Wafa Ireland
- 3.Audrey Van Holst’s “Defining Line” – photo courtesy Wafa Ireland
- 4.Rosemary Passafiume-McLean’s “Spontaneous Approach” – Photo by Ursula Eley
5. Susan Suter receiving her award
6. Celia Roberts receiving her award
7. Susan Suter’s ribbon