



DESIGNS FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Make the French style of opulence you own with this room setting for a silver wedding anniversary.

Turn a baby show into something extraordinary with these two table centres with Svetlana Chernyavsky.

Three table arrangements from Canadian designers that will take very little time but will create a big impression.

# THE FRENCH STYLE

PHOTOGRAPHY AND INTRODUCTION CHRIS AND PETER DE HOUWER WORDS TRICIA LEGG



Versailles has always been a progressive urban town with exceptional gardens. It has an average of 167 sq. metres of green space per inhabitant compared to 20 sq. metres in Paris, with 106 playgrounds and more than 20,000 trees. (Have you ever counted those in your town!)

There is the castle of course but the town is the main point of this story. To celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary, homage is being paid for the whole of 2013, with numerous urban projects, shows and garden creations.

It is home to prestigious architecture and horticultural colleges and Versailles likes to be seen as the perfect marriage between town and country.

The Show, 'A La Française' with the National Floral Art Society of France, fitted perfectly with the year long celebration of Le Nôtre.

The floral event in Versailles was called 'A la Française' celebrating the 400th anniversary of the birth of André Le Nôtre. He was a French landscape architect and the principal gardener of King Louis XIV of France. He was responsible for the design and construction of the park of the Palace of Versailles and his work represented the height of the French formal garden style. The exhibition took place in the Hôtel de ville of Versailles (the city hall). Nearby is the Palace of Versailles and the gardens which are just as glorious today. Organisers were the Floral Art department (Section d'Art floral) although many other organisations were also involved.





# Dung, Van, Huong and Vi at the drawing board.

# 1: The planning

As with all successful designers, Van and her team started with a planning meeting in her Swiss studio. Over cups of tea and large pieces of paper, the pencils came out and the ideas were thoroughly discussed.

They wanted to reflect what was in the gardens at Versailles and the strong, clean lines, materials and reflective ponds the original landscape gardener, André Le Nôtre, had used.





The foam blocks were sitting on a thick paper board painted grey. We found the solution to fix them on the board by using steel hooks. There is nothing ready made!

We calculated the angle in order to see the reflection of everything in the mirror as everything was on







#### 3: The innovation

A parterre design was cut out of paper as a stencil and laid over the green underlay. Using cold glue the lichen was placed precisely in the holes. Once the stencil was carefully removed the design was revealed. In the final piece, when in Versailles, the green underlay had been covered with small white pebbles to provide a stronger contrast.

# 4: The practice Aspidistra and mirrors covered the floral foam blocks and the

small cones were hidden under conifer. Bound in place, it keeps the shape of the cones tidy and precise. Spheres were treated in the same way as they were destined for one side of the arch. The final decorations of pebbles and cellophane around the base and flowers up one arch completed the stunning piece.







# 2: The Mechanics

It always takes some modification when pencil marks are interpreted into floral design. The large rectangular blocks were positioned over the mirror and secured so each block would stay in place. Tinfoil took the place of the mirrors temporarily so the reflections could be analyzed. More floral foam was cut into cone shapes

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"We spent time both in design and technique in these two garden and perspective arrangements. For the perspective, we calculated them with the depth, the weight...in order that everything was solidly fixed without showing all technical points. We love this kind of challenge, a combination of art and technique!" ~Van



By creating a mock up of the idea on paper, using waste cardboard the team could get an idea of scale as well as how and if the concept was going to work. They had to work out how the frames were going to be attached to the wire netting, what was going to cover the netting and if the conifer would adhere to that covering. The design itself was also modified and the large pole at the back was not included in the final piece.



### 2: The Mechanics

What was going to be used for the frames was the next concern. The first pairings were too heavy, the second too wide to be in proportion to the cones.

A further mock up with the whole team holding all the components in place helped to make the final decisions about height, width and the plant material for the final design.

"We designed then tested with several solutions" said Van, "then chose the one we liked the most then practised completely from A to Z at home. In Versailles, we did them from the beginning with fresh materials. The structures were already prepared."





The final frames were made in three different sizes to add to the illusion of depth.

Van explained further,
"There are 2 frames each
time (front and back)
which are fixed together
on the top but the bottom
was separated by a foam
board of 7 to 10 cm width.
This board was fixed to
the wire netting cone."

Enjoy an 8 minute video interview with Van as she explains more about these two designs to Chris De Houwer.

Click here if you are viewing on ipad, iphone or ipod.



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# 4: The practice

The bottom parts of the cones were wrapped in green plastic. Three foliages were used, one for each cone: Boxwood, Cypress and Fagus (Beech).







floral design 1