

## **A Novice Look at Design**

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For me, creating a design is similar to my taking a blank canvas and creating a painting. This is what I did in my efforts to learn about making arrangements or the art of design. My suggestions are to “read, look, and listen.” There are many good books on arrangements in the public libraries. There are also wonderful books at the half price book stores, which I often frequent. I read and re-read the old African Violet Magazines as Hortense Pittman can attest to. It’s a wonder she didn’t get tired of me asking to borrow her old issues.

Next, I attended shows where there were arrangements. I drove to Austin to visit their shows and also went to the local garden center for their shows. And last, I listened every time I heard the word design or the subject of arrangements come up. I spent numerous hours at Liz and James Curtis’ home talking about design. There was even a show on arrangements on the education channel I taped and watched and listened to over and over again.

As you can tell, I take design very seriously. Every lecture given at national or state I show up in the audience. But because I take it seriously, doesn’t mean I am good. Every convention has been a learning experience for me. I have won the tri-color rosette for Best in Show Design at our state show and our local shows. But, I have also had red and white ribbons, and even some “elimination from consideration” from judges. So, remember, don’t ever give up – always remember persistence.

I do not profess to be an expert in this area, especially with the multitude of talent in AVSA. I am very humble when next to people like Liz Curtis, Alma Hummer, Dea Johnson, Hortense Pittman, Bob Green, Bill Foster, Hugh Mackey, Anne Nicholas, L. T. Ozio, and so many more. But I would like to share with you some of my helpful hints on design.

1. Always, always study the schedule (read and fully understand every specification). This is very important.
2. Select classes which ignite your imagination. Visualize in your “mind’s eye” what you want to portray.
3. Decide what mood you want to create; i.e., happiness, religious, glamour, courage, etc.
4. Make a working niche out of cardboard to the size specified in the schedule.
5. Sketch your design on paper. This doesn’t have to be perfect, just a rough draft, and only for your eyes.
6. Background – decide what draping you will use. Always use a drape unless specified not to in the schedule. It adds so much to your design.
7. Containers – set the mood, but don’t overpower.
8. Line material – what to use to create height; L-shaped, Hogarth Curve (“S” curve), horizontal, vertical, etc.
9. Blossoms – They need to stand out and be the center of attention.
10. Create your picture with plant material.
11. I place my design in a place I see every day, usually on my dining room table. (My husband can always tell when convention time is close at hand, because the dining room table is cluttered.) Anyway, when I am satisfied with it, I ignore it for a time (several days or up to a week), and decide if I want to change anything. If I am still happy with the design, I enter it. Go with your first instincts. The times when I have fought these instincts have ended with a poor showing.
12. Color – I cannot express the importance of color. Color is perhaps the most dominant of all. Used wisely, it can make a design a rare beauty. Each color produces a certain effect on us. It may attract, stimulate, or subdue. I have listed a chart called color symbolism developed to deal with colors. I hope you find it as useful as I do.

Above all, don’t get discouraged. Remember, BEAUTY is in the eye of the beholder. Just because a judge does not see what you are trying to portray doesn’t mean you are wrong. Also,

keep in mind what works for one person may not work for another. Have faith, keep trying and don't give up. Remember persistence.

Color	Feeling	Meaning	Effect	A Symbol of
Red	Vitality Warmth	Action Courage	Excites Stimulates	Passion Danger Patriotism Liberty
Orange	Warmth Compelling	Fire Flame	Not as strong as red or as light yellow; combination of both	Marriage (orange blossoms)
Yellow	Sunny Cheerful Penetrating	Spring (light green and yellow) Anguish (pale yellow) Benevolence (orange and yellow)	Cheerfulness Buoyancy	The Supreme Wisdom Goodness Light Sun
Green	Restfulness	Freshness Repose Dignity Faithfulness Constancy (dark green)	Relief Coolness	Vegetation Life Immortality Youth
Blue	Coldness Space Illusion	Quietness Modesty Tranquility Dignity	Restraint Formality Serenity	Sky Truth Constancy Charity Justice Religion
Violet	Warmth (red-violet) Coldness Dignity	Seriousness Solemnity (darker near black) Delicate Refinement (lavender) Hope Aspiration (red-violet)	Restfulness Quietness Spirituality	Empire Power Half- mourning Loyalty Patience

**Direction of Lines:**

**Vertical Line** – Suggests height; it is dramatic, even theatrical.

**Horizontal Line** – Suggests repose, calmness, and peace.

**Diagonal Line** – Suggests movement.

**Curved Line** – Suggests rhythm (may be gentle or forceful – great power).

**Zigzag Line** – Suggests nervous jerks; not a pleasant line.

