Arrangements Fact Sheet

Arrangements highlight the DAM’s vast and varied collections by spotlighting groupings of artworks from all over the world and across time that embrace the flower as subject matter. From the top floor of the North Building to the atrium of the Hamilton Building, visitors will encounter three- to four-piece arrangements with fascinating floral themes like romance, personal adornment and the meaning of flowers. A brief description of each of the Arrangements is provided below.

Delight of a Single Bloom–North Building, Level 7, Elevator Lobby

When an artist treats us to a single bloom, he or she invites us to experience the strength and delicacy of the flower and to consider its origin and symbolism. Like a lover who offers a solitary rose, the artist makes a strong and simple statement.

A single flower can be represented in a variety of ways that challenge our perception. Masanori Umeda merely suggests a flower with his chair, Imogen Cunningham offers it in such extreme close-up that we lose its identity, and Keith Edmier confronts us with a flower so large and imposing, we may feel as though we are the ones being plucked!

Floral Adornment–North Building, Level 6

Flowers have been used throughout history as a means of personal adornment. From the ancient Egyptians to the hippies (or “flower children”) of the 1960s, women have decorated their hair with flowers. Hats festooned with flowers were a fashionable choice for women in the 1800s, while men of the 1700s embellished their court coats with extravagant floral embroidery.

Two contemporary works here incorporate flowers in unique ways. Kristen Hatgi Sink has photographed a young woman as a virtual bouquet, while Daniel Brown places the viewer within an idealized world of flowers under his—and the viewer’s—control.

Gardens in Bloom–North Building, Level 6, Landscape Gallery

Flower gardens. Victory gardens. Secret gardens. Few spaces capture the imagination and inspire passion in the same way. Often a symbol of paradise in art and literature, gardens remind us of the effortless perfection of nature and the cycle of life.

When depicting people in gardens, artists often blend the figures with the environment, dissolving the difference between subject and setting. And like a garden that mixes plants and flowers from different regions, the objects here reflect influences from many cultures.
Check Out These Stems!—North Building, Level 6, ADG Gallery

We might not notice the stem of a flower hidden among others in a vase or garden where the bloom is the main attraction. We might also overlook the legs of a chair, when bright upholstery or elaborate carvings steal the show. But chair legs carry clues to changing styles, construction methods, and materials across time and fashion. In this gallery, take time to examine the chairs from the ground up.

Focus on the Lotus—North Building, Level 5, Buddhist Traditions Gallery

Emerging from muddy waters in the morning light, the lotus bud opens its gloriously large, star-like bloom. It emits a delicate fragrance until it closes at midday and disappears again beneath the water surface. It will open and close a few more days before the flower petals begin to fade and its fruit ripens and drops off, leaving only the central pod behind as a reminder of its beauty.

Because of its ability to rise above the mud and renew itself, the lotus has inspired cultures throughout the ages as a symbol of life, rebirth, strength, and beauty. You will see many representations of lotuses around you in this gallery.

Love in Bloom—North Building, Level 4, Mexico Gallery

Flowers, particularly roses, have long been associated with love. The wedding headdress from China includes flowers made of glass and blue kingfisher bird feathers that symbolize the romantic love between a couple. Other flowers in this area are also associated with romance. The overturned vase with a rose in the still-life painting implies a broken heart. And the red carnations in the hand of the person in the photograph, presumably about to be presented to the woman—is this a romantic gesture? Or an apology?

Not all forms of love are romantic. The small embroidered cloths covered with flowers are keepsakes given to friends, and the inlaid chest symbolizes religious love.

Fleetingness of Life—Hamilton Building, Level 2

Throughout our lives, from birth to death, flowers give voice to our feelings and play a role in traditions, ceremonies, and gatherings. The fleetingness of a flower’s life parallels our perception of own lives: a bud about to burst, a petal wilted, all within the span of a few days. The lidded vessel topped with a water lily invites you to the underworld, dancing skeletons rejoice among the roses, and blooms frozen in silver would have adorned an altar regardless of the season, for they will never wilt.

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