

Colour Me Floral

Art | 13 February 21

 Priya Kumari Rana

His floral sculptures the world over are the stuff of dreams, magically recreating majestic vistas and installations for billionaire weddings, the Swarovski family, and even the Beijing Summer Olympic Games. Award-winning Belgian floral artist Tomas De Bruyne tells us about the fairytale winter wonderland he's just created for the Phoenix Marketcity mall in Mumbai, his most extravagant installations, and how colour shapes a visual setting.



LIFESTYLE

Insider

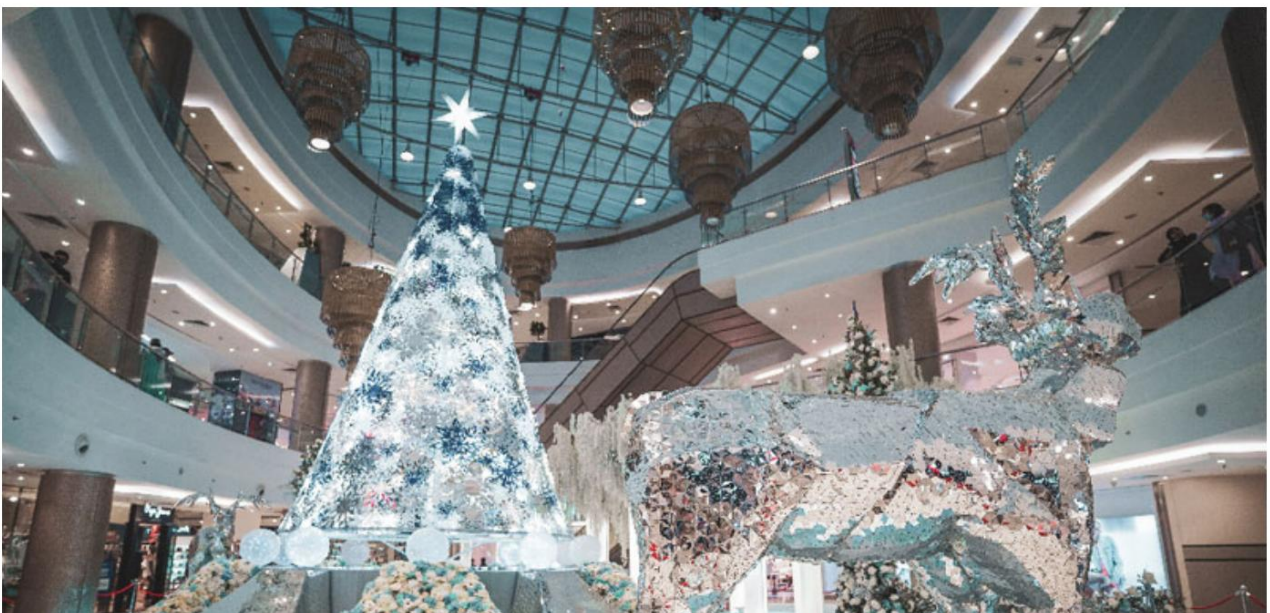
One of the world's most fêted floral design artists, Belgium-based Tomas De Bruyne's installations are nothing short of opulent, magical, gravity-defying sculptural pieces that combine the most vibrant colours, and flowers sourced from all over the world. Weddings, launches, private dos, even the Olympics - there's little he hasn't bedecked with blooms. Tomas De Bruyne has won multiple awards, is the author of over 15 books, and was honoured in 2005 with a new variety of Gloriosa lily flower which was officially named after him with Princess Nora, wife of HRH Prince Saud of KSA as patroness. He was in India recently to add his magic to the Phoenix Marketcity mall in Mumbai.

You've done some of the biggest weddings in India – and now The Winter Mystique, a wintry wonderland for a luxury mall... how has it been working at the Phoenix Marketcity mall, as compared to a wedding?

I have collaborated with Phoenix Marketcity multiple times and over the years, the destination mall in Kurla has celebrated all the seasons and festivals with the most exquisite offerings of designs and aesthetics, creating memories for all those who have set foot there.

Whether it is a wedding, a product launch event or a shopping mall installation, it all evolves around the concept of 'giving people a meaningful and unique experience'. There is no real room for comparison, as you ask. Certain elements are different, the desired impact is always changing, so does the space or the story, but ultimately the common ground of every project I take on is that it comes from the same creative mindset: coming up with the best possible outcome for my clients.

My job is to best convey the message of my clients through floral design and that is why creatively, I view all events from this standpoint. Of course, each design and implementation process has its own particularities and challenges, but technicalities like that are easily manageable with a good team, the right partners and a good deal of experience, I might add. But at the end of the day my goal in any event is to make that unique experience a reality.



LIFESTYLE

Insider

Could you tell us how you combined mirror (the reindeer), acrylic (snowflakes), and flowers to create this stunning set?

As a designer we don't use only tools as lines, shapes and objects to visualize our ideas. We have the ability to use different materials, techniques and combinations of the two to convey the message and building a rapport with the viewer. We integrated "selfies spots" in the middle of the scene as I wanted the visitors to be a part of the Winter Mystique, not just a spectator on the outside.

It all starts from the concept, and the concepts at Phoenix Marketcity are unique and very thoughtful. We create a story from the works of art we make which has the emotional impact that expresses the message that was intended. Traditional holiday seasons asks for a traditional approach, as for example a Xmas tree and a reindeer, but it is truly up to us, as designers, to give it a tweak to make it special. This particular installation had a 'innovative' look, yet is still recognizable and relatable to. The story of a snowflake used as inspiration gives it more depth and includes the visitor into as part of the scene.



LIFESTYLE

Insider

Do you sketch out the space and work with architectural software when designing for spaces – please could you elaborate on your working process?

It all starts with a little seed, the idea, which I plant in my head and you give it some time to grow. My input in developing that original idea has to meet the expectations of your client, so before I start working on a design, I always clarify the answers to the basic W questions: Who? For What? Why? When? And Where? This is beautiful process to witness being a creative, I truly enjoy it, as it provides valuable information that later translates in the final outcome.

What follows is actually a dialogue between my hand and my creative mind, as I roughly sketch the concept, followed by contours, without detailing. That is the place where I can do whatever I want, I can try any idea and play limitlessly. I get to decide how and where to place the elements, what's the best visual impact, and how it translates into emotions, where is the flow of people coming from, angle, magnitude, features as interior elements, light and so on. Once I settle on a concept, I have to translate that intimate, personal sketch into a presentation, to showcase to my clients. This is where technology truly helps. There is a huge advantage to use architectural software to implement big events or massive floral installations. It is a valuable tool to use for one-self, but also to create a good flow of communication with the clients, the partners and subcontractors and the team.

What kinds of flowers have you used, and where do source your other materials from?

As you can imagine I was not able to use fresh flowers, since the installation has to stay for three months. My focus was not as much on the variety of the flower, but as its colour, since colour is the strongest visual language we have on the planet. I went for a mysterious and challenging colour scheme made of blue in combination of a snowy white background, including bright and bold pastels like aqua, as the latter prevail the right set for a Christmas Scene. Its shades of grey and blue gives one the feeling of being surrounded by a comforting winter landscape and a nurturing scene of the outdoors.

This is actually a true Indian approach for using flowers, as your culture did in the early days: creating walls, opulent entries decorated with flowers - and this mostly for the effect the fragrance and colour of the flower imparts us with, not the flower itself. Travelling around the world and getting in touch with so many cultures cultivates me to become a better designer with a holistic, conscious creative mind. And that is what I am showing through all my works, no matter how different they "look" from one from the other.

As far as materials are concerned, I rely a lot on the expertise and the quality of the services provided by the partners I choose to work with. I have had only the best experience with the people I have collaborated with in India, and I'm always impressed with their ability to provide massive quantities of material, if needed, and still be attentive to the smallest details of the work.



LIFESTYLE

Insider



Tomas De Bruyne - CEO and founder Bespoke Floral Experiences Worldwide

LIFESTYLE

Insider

What was your concept when you set out to create this space – how much area did you have to work with?

Connecting with a client who has the right space and the means to support an oversized floral installation is always an ideal circumstance for any creative. Collaborating with Phoenix Marketcity, Kurla to design this installation has been a fantastic experience for me. In this partnership, we complement each other with mutual respect. The mall in itself is spacious and tastefully designed, it's permissively lent me the means to enhance my aesthetic vision seamlessly and complemented the installation perfectly. There's a common goal: creating that personal experience that touches people's hearts.

I do realize and respect that it's not only about my floral installation but how it is perceived in this particular context given by the interior, influenced by architecture, lighting, measurements, features, shapes and forms and the well-chosen warm crème colour of the wall. One should blend with the other and that was my mission, to enable that synergy to occur. One of my strengths is being a space designer, meaning using the negative space, which is the space not physically filled by my installation, as part of the whole outcome. This way the visual impact is even bigger and has more grandeur.

What went into the making of the giant tree?

The tree of Prosperity was planned only to stay for two months but stayed for six months, and eventually moved to another shopping mall, so I would say it had quite an impact. The connection between the tree and the audience was authentic. Following the burst of Covid-19, I redesigned the tree and renamed it the 'Tree Of Hope'. The installation was placed in the Phoenix Market Centre Pune. This was done as a gift for a country that gave me so much and that I cherish dearly.

Coming back on its initial purpose, 'The Tree of Prosperity' was actually inspired by the Sacred Tree, where people gather underneath the branches and find healing, power, wisdom, and security. I wanted to touch the hearts of the visitors. This floral feast was done to bring people together, to enjoy the magic and happiness of life itself.

LIFESTYLE

Insider

You have done so many weddings and events in India – which ones have been your most memorable in terms of the decor?

I was very fortunate and grateful to work with the elite of event companies in the Indian wedding industry. They brought me in to lift up their events by adding my touch of flowers and conceptual way of thinking. This brought me to scenes where I could express my floral architectural approach at its best. I remember one I keep dear in my memory was in Jaipur. A whole wedding-city was built from actual stones, hills, and ponds reflecting the scenery of the 1700s, the period when Jaipur was born. The story set a new benchmark for creating a culturally rooted city. The wedding theme was inspired from the pre-British era in Rajasthan, celebrating its vibrancy, festivities, colours, and crafts. Under a marvelously opulent tented cap, the guest were welcomed on the wedding by the couple and their families. I even integrated fire and fountains in my floral installations.



LIFESTYLE

Insider

Which has been your most extravagant request from a client in India, in terms of the flowers?

That's by a mile, from the Ambani Family. Their eye for detail and perfection came into play when I came up to scene to do a backdrop with millions of flowers for the wedding ceremony. It had to be made in a perfect colour story, as it would be taken from a nature scene. The challenges set out by the magnitude of the installation and our work to achieve perfection were overcome by working with the right people, as we had to execute a two-dimensional design giving it a three-dimensional feeling.

Whether a private one or a massive wedding, every Ambani Family event is extravagant, challenging, and absolutely uplifting for me creatively. So, coming back to the previous question, I would add these two to the list as well. These unique experiences are lifting me up creatively, and I just love that.

Where do you source your flowers from?

This depends entirely on the project. There are things I consider when choosing a vendor, like what's the desire of the client? Are we going for exclusive flowers? What is the budget? and so on.

I do remember a wedding where I was working with 1,00,000 local carnations as a base, and the finishing touches were added with flowers imported from Holland. The most stunning cymbidium - length, colour, and form wise. I mostly work directly with growers as I know many of them and their quality of flowers, as well as the variety and exclusiveness of botanicals.

I am always interested and impressed to see local floral varieties as well, and I have to say that India has progressed a lot, including the supply of a reliable cold chain; the lack of it in the past was a true challenge to tackle.

LIFESTYLE

Insider



LIFESTYLE

Insider

Which are your favourite flowers to work with, and why?

Flowers are emotions!

First, I come up with a story, followed by the concept, and when those are settled, only then do I go for my favourite flowers to uplift the story and the design.

My favourite flowers are determined by the story I tell; the colour, shape, form, and texture. The flowers don't make my story they merely help me communicate it. I always analyze the character of all flowers and use them to the best by exploring their potential. My focus is on determining the best selection of flowers, merging them together into a desired outcome. That's why I don't work with just random wholesalers or growers; I always go for the passionate people who really understand their medium. There is a significant difference between a yellow garden rose and a yellow rose, for example, and not all people see the impact that has on large-scale designs.



LIFESTYLE

Insider

India is famous for its marigolds – we use this flower in all our celebrations – do you like to work with it and how have you reworked the marigold?

They are common, yes, but at the same time so unique in many ways. Even when I worked in Mexico, I loved using them. Besides their strong visual colour impact, they are perfect to work with because of their longevity. They are easy for care and handling, tonnes of them are available on the market to be implemented in a floral installation, and you can even find them in white. They have a special character with their tough, but yet elegant and fragile image, due to their curved sensual petals.



LIFESTYLE

Insider

I discovered my love for this flower as I had to use them for a wedding in Jaipur. The client requested me to focus on two elements: LOCAL and SUSTAINABILITY. For this, I had created a flower-carpet with over 600,000 of them; every single one of them was pierced with a wooden skewer; and they remained in a good condition for three full days. It's an amazing botanical.



LIFESTYLE

Insider

Which is your favourite species of rose – can you give us an example of how you have used it recently?

Without any hesitation, I say garden roses. You can imagine, a floral installation with these outstanding roses is hard to beat for the sheer exuberance of the flower and its fragrance. In Ahmedabad we built a Victorian-style pergola in cooperation with Sumant Scenography, and we covered it completely with those garden roses. They looked like they had been picked from a lush, blooming English garden some 150 years ago. In front of the guests, just before the dance the groom took a rose from the pergola and went on his knees to present to the bride. It was such an emotional moment, which only shows the strength of a single stem to stand out, though it's placed in a sea of flowers. At that same event, right at the centre, we placed a fountain decorated with 300 glass spheres, each filled with just one garden rose. It is such a strong, yet delicate flower, it truly stands out.



LIFESTYLE

Insider

Which are the colour trends for 2021 – and what are the floral arrangement trends for this year – what is most in demand?

The colour trends for 2021 in general are not linked to a certain demographic, culture, or country. That is saturated, juicy colours in combination with paler hues, more in the background as to make the juicy colour pop with more intensity. Combined with the pale pastels and creamier tones, this creates an intriguing contrast that really makes sense in today's world. These colours are a perfect reflection of the positivity people are longing for. These deliciously and rich colours also give us the rejuvenating and uplifting effect we all need. Flowers used within this trend will express joy, by being arranged in a more open and natural way.



LIFESTYLE

Insider

If we talk about colour, we should mention Pantone's Color of the year as well, actually the duo of Ultimate Gray and the Illuminating Yellow. Ultimate Gray, yellow's supportive partner, quietly reassures and symbolizes solid and dependable elements. Shapes and forms of the floral arrangements will be more focused on the geometric, towards Surrealism, giving the look of digital - clashing and energetic.

Third, I would refer to the analog palettes, an expression of the search for harmony, so valuable to people in 2021. Palettes that easily blend into each other express unity and togetherness and that will extend in colour trends as well. Some colour palettes are even made up by tints and shades of one hue or at the most two analog hues.

We also see monochrome with one added colour, meaning one expressive bold shade that takes the design into the world of colour, without making it too colourful. This reflects a modern way of thinking: keeping things simple while being excessive at the same time. This is the most difficult palette to work with flowers because it's all about the subtlety of colours. Forms and shapes can go from geometric to organic; the focus is on the play of colours.



LIFESTYLE

Insider

And last, but not least, the colour palette that is easy on the eyes - the soothing colours. That's the natural trend with natural colours as green, greys, soft blue, olive green, crème, and so on. One of the biggest colour trends coming our way is this last one, where the colour palette emanates a pleasantly quiet feeling and connects us to a peaceful, caring, suave experience. In this trend the colour palette is more about natural, crafted, and more focused on the eco-friendly approach, the sustainability, biodegradable effect and nature preservation. In fact, this last trend is more about the meaning behind the colour than the visual effect of the colour itself.



LIFESTYLE

Insider

When you create a space it becomes magical – what are the ingredients for a perfect setting?

Of course there are a lot of elements we consider when we put together any installation, but if I were to sum it up in a phrase, I would say the one ingredient that is absolutely necessary to create the perfect setting is to see the whole picture as actually the message. This mindset allows the design to become a “perfect setting”, rather than just a compilation of individual decorations scattered here and there.



LIFESTYLE

Insider

As I always say, it's never about the flowers, colours, shapes and forms, but about the interaction among all of those elements, conveying a message and giving the spectator an experience. You have to start with a great story to tell, then guide your focus to the right place: seeing the general outcome and the effect it will create; starting from the big picture, and then adding the details, instead of vice versa. And then, knowledge; knowing and experience come into place. You have to know the power of colour, as this is the strongest visual language there is. You have to use the strength of space, enhancing it, instead of only being concerned on the object you place into a particular place.

With special thanks to:

Scenografia: Scenografia Sumant - (India)

Eventplanner: E-Factor Entertainment

Eventplanner: The Wedding Design Compagny

Phoenix Marketcity Mumbai

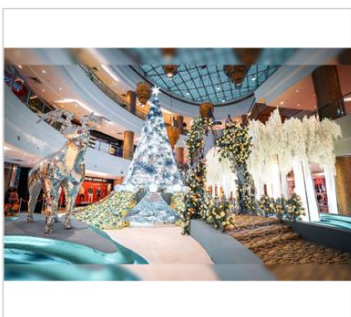
Photo's: Tanuj Bhatia (India)

LIFESTYLE

Insider

HOME | FASHION & BEAUTY | WATCHES & JEWELLERY | GOURMET | SPIRITS | ART & DESIGN | TECH | TRAVEL & WELLNESS | CELEBS | CARS, JETS & YACHTS

Art



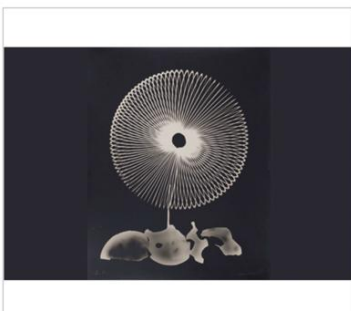
 **PRIYA KUMARI RANA**

ART 13 FEBRUARY 21

Colour Me Floral

His floral sculptures the world over are the stuff of dreams, magically...

[READ MORE](#)



 **TEAM LI**

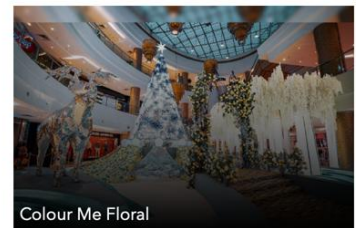
ART 10 FEBRUARY 21

Snapshots of Surrealism

Christie's is auctioning a treasure trove of works by Surrealist...

[READ MORE](#)

TRENDING.



Colour Me Floral



Blade Runner



Virtually Incredible!

CATEGORIES.