

- Have you always loved flowers? What is your earliest floral memory?

More than flowers, I've always loved Nature, first of all trees, plants, lawn grass. Flowers started to capture my curiosity when I was child. I remember being fascinated by Lunara at my grandmother's house, intriguing and mysterious. It was hard for me to believe it was a flower: I realised flowers could look like paper, velvet, crepe paper, silk, plastic .. since then I never stopped touching them.

- How did you get into floral arranging? And how did you learn it?

I started accidentally: as soon as I got my degree in Garden and Landscape Architecture, I started a small garden design studio with a friend. We got contacted by a small old flower shop in Rome (my hometown) to work on some centrepieces. Coincidentally this was a shop in my neighbourhood where I used to go as a child. We made the centrepieces on my terrace, since the shop was too small for us to work at. I immediately felt in love with the profession. Since then my passion grew consistently and I kept learning by working for many talented florists. I gathered experience traveling and working around Europe and the continuative experience over the course of ten years alongside the talented Belgian set designer Daniel Petzel (one of my masters), consolidated my skills. I always keep my imagination awake by reading books, manuals, blogs (and more) about flower and plants and by doing a lot of iconographic research.

- In what year did you start your business?

I started as a freelancer immediately after getting my degree in 2009. I opened La Fioreria Cuccagna in 2015 and in 2017 Irene, another boutique atelier, which consequently became my design studio.

- In 3 to 4 words, how would you describe the style of arrangements you make?

Romantic, delicate, refined, seasonal.

- (For example, wild, romantic, otherworldly, lush, minimal, tangled, etc)?
- What do you look to for inspiration when making bouquets? (For example, a piece of art, an 80s movie, your mother's garden, etc).

I drag inspiration for color combinations and proportion, geometries and lines from visual arts.

I watch many films and series set in the past, I leaf through vintage manuals for florists or for the cultivation of plants. I do a lot of image research from the beginning of the last century until the 1980s. My approach is quite historical. If I see combinations in the gardens that I visit that I like, I keep them in mind and I observe the distribution of flowers on plants: nature always has a harmonious randomness, it's always perfect. I started mixing dried with fresh flowers 6 years ago, inspired by the observation of botanic cycles.

- How does your city or country inspire the arrangements you make?

I'm really interested in churches and places of worship: I visit them and draw inspiration from them often.

My style isn't attributable to a particular country, but I buy local and seasonal as much as possible, so in my work I try to bring the neighbouring places.

- Where do you source flowers from? Do you buy them from a local grower or market? Do you forage for any of them?

I buy from the city flower market, mainly Italy and Provence. I grow part of the flowers I use directly inside Cascina Cuccagna, where I have my shop, and I do a lot of foraging near Milan, in particular on Lake Como, which is where my partner's family has a vacation house.

In the future I would like to extend the cultivation of my flowers to achieve a real slow flower.

- What kinds of bouquet/arrangements will you be making this summer? Please describe the colors and name the flowers.

Summer is for me the time for Buddleias: In the passed years I've planted different varieties and colours in a flowerbed next to my shop. They are generous plants, tireless in flowering, fragrant and the flowers are very durable.

I like to mix purple lilac shades with burgundies, pinks and greens. With Buddleias I use carnations (which I love very much), roses, oleanders, artichokes, gladioli and Achilles from my garden.

- If you use any sustainable materials or methods, please describe them here.

I buy every day little amounts from the local market, in order to have very few waste. I leave to dry flowers that exceed the daily needs or that were used for photo

shootings and sets. I always dismantle my arrangements to ensure the correct disposal of materials and I recycle everything, even wires.

I take home to my terrace and rescue plants that have faded. I give them time and nurture for them to recover.

I don't use foam sponges, I've never liked it, but I use chicken wire and kenzan instead.

I don't throw the soil away, but mix it with nutrients in order to re-use it.

I don't use plastic for packagings, but if needed to wrap vases or other delicate objects I look into the recycle bin. I print my bags on my own with a roller and tempera paint and I use stamps a lot to brand products.

- What is your process like when putting a bouquet together? How do you know when complete?

Generally I have a flower that I want to use for its beauty, I try to enhance it by combining something complementary, not antagonistic. I leave a lot of space and I try not to load it down or add too much. I like to use a vertical element on one side of the bouquet to make it more dynamic, make it breathe also vertically and give it depth.

Composing with flowers is an impulsive gesture for me, the less premeditated the better. When I'm asked to work on a set design or an event I think more in terms of colours and I start pairing flowers into a color chart.

If you choose colours that match well and you dose textures and proportions is difficult to make a mistake.

A bouquet is finished when it brings you to smile. When you honestly think within yourself that it's nice, probably it's when you are done.