

All the World's



FTD World Cup 2019 kicks off in March during the PHS Philadelphia Flower Show — bringing the prestigious competition to the United States for the first time in three decades.

BY MARY WESTBROOK

a Stage



The Storyteller



The Innovator



The Creative



The Tactician

Wuring the final round of the FTD America's Cup design competition last summer, Katharina Stuart, AIFD, CCF, had reality TV on her mind — namely the fast-paced cooking contest "Chopped."

"I kept thinking of how the contestants transform their basket of ingredients," said Stuart, who moved to the United States from Switzerland 20 years ago and now lives and works in the San Francisco Bay area. "In our final challenge, we were given a crate to work with, and I started to take mine apart to turn it into a different kind of vessel — then, I just kept working from there."

Stuart's ingenuity paid off in a big way when she was named the winner of the contest, held during the American Institute of Floral Designers' annual Symposium in Washington, D.C. The win meant that Stuart will be representing the United States next month during the FTD World Cup competition at the PHS Philadelphia Flower Show. It's the first time since 1985 that the United States has hosted the prestigious competition.

Twenty-three countries will be represented at the event, and the excitement is palpable, said Emily Bucholz, director of marketing, communications and events at FTD.

"I truly believe hosting this event in the U.S. will bring the entire floral community together," she said. "It is a great opportunity for everyone to see the top floral designers from around the world on one stage in Philadelphia."

This month, we reached out to four contestants, including Stuart, to find out how they're prepping for this career-changing competition.



The Storyteller

Přemysl Hytych

*Representing the Czech Republic,
on behalf of Fleurop*

Design style: "I like to explore original, nontraditional elements. I focus a lot on creating symbolic

works with a story in them. I want my work to speak to the audience."

Inspiration: "Nature. I grew up in Měnin, a small village. As a kid, I would spend practically all my time outside. As long as I can remember I've always wanted to create things that motivate and inspire people or make them think. That's why I design. I put all of myself into my work, my feelings, emotions, thoughts. What I'm trying to do is to show these feelings to my audience and encourage them to respond with emotions or ideas of their own."

Competition Prep: "It's a long process that takes up a lot of time and energy: looking for interesting materials to use, consulting with construction makers. There are so many things to think of and manage. When I'm preparing for a competition, I basically don't do anything else. Preparing competition pieces is to me like the birth of a child."



THE COMPETITORS

Twenty-three countries will be represented by some of the world's most creative floral designers at this year's competition:

- Bart Hassam, Australia
- Paul Jaras, Canada
- Wei Yao, China
- Kelvin Lee, Chinese Taipei
- Přemysl Hytych, Czech Republic
- Kristine Gudiksen, Denmark
- Pirjo Koppi, Finland
- Hervé Frézal, France
- Stephan Triebe, Germany
- Solomon Leong, Hong Kong
- Tamás Mezőffy, Hungary
- Vincenzo Antonuccio, Italy
- Kazuhiro Sugimoto, Japan
- Myeon Oh, Korea
- Leopoldo Gómez, Mexico
- Hans Zijlstra, Netherlands
- Elin Susan Havreberg, Norway
- Natalia Zhizhko, Russia
- Lina Roig, Spain
- Sofie Danielsson Söhr, Sweden
- Laura Leong, United Kingdom
- Katharina Stuart, United States of America
- Nam Bao, Vietnam



THE SKINNY ON THE COMPETITION

The FTD World Cup 2019 is being held in Philadelphia, at the PHS Philadelphia Flower Show. Five design tasks will take place on the main show floor.

The first day of the preliminary round will be during the Flower Show's Member Preview Day on March 1. (The Flower Show is open to the public starting on March 2; however, tickets are available for the March 1 events.) The semi-final round will be on the main show floor on March 3.

The 10 semi-finalists will complete a surprise package design task on the main show floor. The competition will conclude with a ticketed gala event on March 3 featuring the five finalists, who will create a surprise design on stage followed by judging and a trophy presentation.

View the full schedule and find out more about tickets at FTDWorldCup2019.com.



The Innovator

Kristine Gudiksen

Representing Denmark, on behalf of Interflora

Why I design: "I've always enjoyed assembling things in a creative way and playing with textures. Growing up, I wanted to be a police officer. My father was a firefighter, and I wanted to follow in his footsteps. That didn't work out [for various reasons], and instead I was exposed to the world of floral design. That turn in the road shaped me into the person I am today."

Design style: "I am very playful. I enjoy seeing materials used repeatedly in different forms throughout a project. My designs are grounded within simplicity but topped with a twist. My aesthetic has evolved throughout my career to encompass a larger range of materials, and I often look to other industries for inspiration. It's about being open to new ideas."

Advice for new designers: "First, try a lot of things. From there, you can start to find your direction and style or application of materials. There will always be points in one's career that are challenging. These are periods when one can develop and grow as a florist and designer, and hopefully become a better person. If there is a will, there is a way."



The Tactician

Katharina Stuart

Representing the United States of America, on behalf of FTD

Why I design: "I was always drawn to plants and flowers. I really wanted to work in a nursery and grow plants, but that didn't agree with my health at the time. So, I decided that floral design was the next best thing. I completed my apprenticeship in Switzerland in floral design before I moved to the United States."

Design style. "Over the years, I've gone through phases. There was a rusty metal phase, followed by rustic wood elements. Now, I am doing more that's softer, with paper and fabrics. It's the same with colors, from a very colorful phase in my youth to pastels and, now, so many neutrals. I think it is very important for a floral designer to stay up to date on the latest trends in fashion or interior design. Styles change over time."

Competition prep. "Although my everyday work challenges me, competing is a different level. It's almost as if there is a different set of gears that need to be started for the competition. For me, the most important aspect of a competition is the mental part. I am working with a coach on things like mental attitude and positive thinking. As for the floral design aspect, I am practicing new techniques, studying the principle and elements of design and learning about design trends."



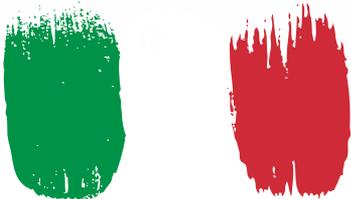
The Creative



Vincenzo Antonuccio

Representing Italy, on behalf of Interflora

Design style. "A strong and clear direction, a clean concept and a precise and decisive line — these are things that have always characterized my work. My early experiences and my studies of furniture led me to work and design for many famous brands, including Brummel Interiors, Aston Martin Interiors and Mercedes Benz. Giving those companies artistic advice has both strengthened and shaped me. Now, I have found this new approach to design by combining art, design and floral artistry."



Competition prep. "I am continually rehearsing and looking for better synergy between time and effect in my works. I look to manage my nerves as I want to treasure every moment of this experience. Meditation is something that I do frequently; dedicating time to purify the mind is important to me. Of course, the time I spend playing with my two little girls is the most marvelous thing that gives me great joy."

World Cup motivation. "To represent my country in the discipline that I love absolutely gives me immense honor and pride and surely will open many new doors and opportunities." 🌸

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