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

The Storyteller  The Innovator  The Creative  The Tactician
During 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 Měnín, 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 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.”

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**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.”

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**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](http://FTDWorldCup2019.com).
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Mary Westbrook is the editor in chief of Floral Management. mwestbrook@safnow.org

The Creative

Vincenzo Antonuccio
Representing Italy, on behalf of Interflora

设计风格。“一种明确而清晰的方向，一个干净的概念和精确和决断的线条——这些是始终标志着我工作的事情。我的早期经历和我对家具的研究引导我为许多著名品牌工作和设计，包括Brummel Interiors, Aston Martin Interiors and Mercedes Benz. 给予这些公司艺术性建议既加强了我的工作，也塑造了我。现在，我找到了这种新的设计方法，将艺术、设计和花卉艺术结合起来。”

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