

ARTISTIC DESIGN

Definition | Elements of Design | Scale of Points

Approved by the AIS Board of Directors, April 13th, 2021

The artistic design division of an iris show adds distinction and another dimension of beauty. Artistic design exhibits attract many exhibitors and visitors whose interest is in this particular art form. The rules, conditions of competition and judging in this division are applicable to all shows seeking American Iris Society (AIS) awards. Refer to the show schedule which will contain the rules for an iris show, including specific design rules.

I. ARTISTIC DESIGN DIVISION JUDGES

The artistic design division should be judged by those who are trained and experienced, and therefore, are qualified in this specialized field. Some societies are lucky enough to have an AIS judge who is also certified by the National Garden Clubs, Inc., or a state garden club association. It is highly recommended that at least one judge on the panel be an AIS judge because this exhibition is about iris.

II. JUDGING ARTISTIC DESIGNS

The following scale of points may be used unless the local show committee wishes to set up a different scale of points. The committee might want to place emphasis on color, interpretation or scale, for example, miniature and small designs.



SCALE OF POINTS

Artistic Design

1. Conformance to Schedule			10
2. Design			35
	a. Balance	5	
	b. Proportion	5	
	c. Scale	5	
	d. Rhythm	5	
	e. Dominance	5	
	f. Contrast	5	
	g. Unity	5	
3. Color Use			20
4. Creative Expression			20
5. Distinctiveness			15
TOTAL			100

1. Conformance to Schedule - 10 points

The schedule is the law of the show and sets forth the requirements for each class. Judges should evaluate the design and determine if the interpretation of the exhibitor conforms to the title of the class. If the requirement is ignored, judges should take off an appropriate number of points for nonconformance, according to the requirements of the class. A designer should avoid interpreting the theme in such an overwhelming manner so as to detract from the overall design. The theme should be carried out in a creative, but subtle way through plant material forms, containers, etc. A card of explanation should be placed to one side of the design by the exhibitor to assist judges and interested viewers with an interpretation. An accessory that is correct in proportion, scale, and contrast, placed by the designer, can also assist in interpretation.



 Andi Rivarola

2. Design - 35 points

The principles and elements of design are the same in all art disciplines regardless of the medium used. Plant material is the medium used in iris artistic designs with the emphasis on the iris flower. The principles of design are a set of rules to follow for creating visually attractive floral compositions. The principles of design make up an important part of the point scale. The elements of design offer a guideline to follow so that all designs are judged by the same standards. If there is a lack of understanding in

either the principles or elements, an iris design will not appear appealing and energetic. The elements of design are explained following the point scale.

The principles of design are balance, proportion, scale, rhythm, dominance, contrast, and unity.

a. Balance (5 points). Balance is the visual and physical stability that results from placing equal weight on opposite sides of an imaginary vertical axis. The design, therefore, stands sturdy and upright in place, rather than looking as if it will tip over. Balance should be evident when viewed from top to bottom, side to side and back to front (in mass designs). Balance can be affected by choice of a dark color (heavy) versus a light color (light). Since a mass of color creates a visual balance, it can obtain or destroy the designer's desired effect.

b. Proportion (5 points). Proportion is the relationship of areas and amounts to each other and to the whole. All proportions are relative. Amounts of plant material should be offset by pleasing amounts of spaces. The traditional golden rule for proportion of plant material to a container, is that the design should not be smaller than one and one-half times (1.5 times) the height or width of the container. When the rule of proportion is not met, the judge should take off points. If designs are cut in half, meaning the container is the same width or height of the design, all points should be taken off. The more modern trend, today, is to use even greater ratios, such as two to two and one-half times (2.5 times) the height and width of the container. Using greater ratios can create designs that are more interesting and distinctive. Proportion eliminates the overpowering of any part of a design and enhances the overall unity of the design.

c. Scale (5 points). Scale is the size relationship of the parts within a design. These include the relative size of the flowers to each other, width, and length of the leaves to each other, the size of plant material to container, and size of accessories to other materials. Scale is a big part of keeping proportion in a design.

d. Rhythm (5 points). Rhythm is the dominant visual path through a design, achieved by repetition or gradation. Examples of rhythm can be a sequence of gradual changes

in size, color, or density in a linear direction, in traditional types of design. The exception would be with creative design types, which may or may not use gradation of materials. Successful rhythm makes a design flow and makes it appear to be lively, rather than static. The amount of rhythm incorporated into an exhibitor's design will be determined by the designer's interpretation of the class title.



 Andi Rivarola

e. Dominance (5 points). Dominance is the use of one characteristic of an element more than another, so that it attracts the eye. This can be achieved by using more

curved lines, more round forms, or more than one color. In iris designs, the iris must always be the dominant plant element to warrant the five points. Therefore, placement of the material should draw the focus to the viewer's eye. Dominance implies subordination and gives character. It adds visual interest and relieves monotony.

f. Contrast (5 points). Contrast helps to create an emphasis on one or more elements in a design. It calls attention to and stimulates interest in elements that are completely different from one another in texture, color, size or form. However, too many equal amounts of contrast divide attention and/or create confusion, which detrimentally can affect overall unity or harmony.

g. Unity (5 points). Unity is defined as “the state of being one, united or complete”. It is all about the compatibility that is created throughout the design. All parts of the design should blend in harmony with one another. If this principle is not contained in the design, it will not be a solid piece, enjoyable to view. An added way to create unity, in addition to following the other six principles, is by adding an accessory beside the design. An accessory can complete, in the viewer's mind, how all parts of the design fulfill the interpretation of the class. Points should not be taken off, however, if no accessory is used, as long as harmony leads directly into unity. Likewise, if an accessory leads to confusion in the judge's mind, if it does not seem “to fit” with the design or overpowers the design, through size or color, for example, points should be taken off.

3. Color Use - 20 points

The use of color has a powerful effect on artistic design, so it is scored separately. The maximum number of points should be given for harmonious use of color and how it affects the balance of the design. Color must also conform to class requirement and interpretation of the class title.

Color is a visual sensation in which vision responds to the wavelength of light reflected from a surface. Color is very faint where there is little light and intense where light is strong. Lighting in the area where designs are staged is very important and should be considered by the judges as enhancing or detracting from the design.



 Andi Rivarola

The principle of color is the one that evokes an immediate emotional response, even though judges may not be aware of it. The warm, stimulating colors of yellow, orange, red, purple, and black will create a dramatic effect that stands out in a design. The cool colors of green, blue, and lavender will retreat from the eye in a design. White, grey and some tans and browns are considered to be neutral, and usually have minimal impact. White and yellow, however, can dominate a design, especially if a large, shiny

container or very large iris are used. A background in a value lighter or darker will enhance a color in a design that is retreating, by creating a frame of reference. If the show schedule requires that a backdrop of board or cloth is to be staged behind the design, color must be carefully considered by the exhibitor, to create harmony with the design's colors.

4. Creative Expression - 20 points

Creative expression is defined as the ideas in a person's mind that are shaped and executed in an original and imaginative way, rather than through the traditional or conventional approach. Creative expression in designs includes originality in the use of materials and unusual interpretation. A successfully expressed new idea should be scored highly, and a design that communicates this creativity to the viewer should receive high points. The card of explanation, provided by the exhibitor, will help judges with the interpretation.

5. Distinctiveness - 15 points

Distinctiveness means marked superiority, or a clear, unmistakable, positive impression. Therefore, in artistic design, distinctiveness means to construct or fashion according to a plan. It denotes HOW material is used, not WHAT material is used. This quality is achieved through superb craftsmanship, mechanical control and expert handling of materials, resulting in a neat, clean appearance. Condition is also important, in the way of freshness and grooming of flowers and plant material and overall cleanliness of the design. In addition, overall errors in design principles lessen marked superiority and will affect distinctiveness according to the severity of each infraction.



 Andi Rivarola

III. ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

The elements are important because they are interwoven into the principles to develop a finished iris artistic design. The elements are: light, line, form, color, texture, pattern and size. They are taken for granted, but if a problem occurs in the design, it could simply be too much, too little or the lack of one of these elements. In every design, the elements are evident.

Light: Illumination is necessary for vision, and it is either natural (sunlight) or artificial (manufactured). The type of light source used for floral designs can affect the overall end product by brightness, dullness, incandescence or fluorescence of the light. Colors change according to the light source, whether being dramatized and enriched, or lost in shadows by the light's direction. Moods and emotional impact can be lost or gained by lighting. It is important to consider that when a show is staged for horticulture and design, the lighting should be noticed by the judges.

Line: This is the element that creates the visual path throughout the design and establishes the rhythm and structural framework for it. Line can be long or short, strong or weak, bold or delicate, and thick or thin.

Form: The three-dimensional shapes or outlines of the plant material used in a design are called form. Placement of forms, by turning them at interesting angles, adds depth to the design and enhances it. Form is significant to avoid a static, one-dimensional design.

Color: This element was discussed previously. However, color is always affected by the amount of light present. It is one of the most expressive elements because of the emotional response that its quality causes.

Texture: This is the feel, appearance, or consistency of a surface or substance. So, everything used in a design has a texture, and it can be tactile or visual. Examples are rough, smooth, coarse, fine, shaggy, velvety or shiny. Judges are not allowed to touch

any part of a design, except for the card of explanation beside the container, but different textures are usually visually evident. The combination of textures adds interest and overall impact to the design.



 Andi Rivarola

Pattern: A pattern is an arrangement of lines or shapes, many times repeated. All the components, from the container and accessories to the plant materials and different colors and forms, make up the pattern of a completed design. Every design has a pattern, many of which are geometric or circular in form, and it should be evident to the judges.

Size: The overall dimensions or magnitude of anything is size. Therefore, the lines, shapes, forms, and spaces, as well as the total designs, have size. The ratio of plant materials in relation to each other and to the whole was discussed previously.

IV. TYPES OF DESIGNS

There are two main types of artistic floral designs: traditional and creative. Both must conform to the point scale. Emphasis in both types must be on the usage of iris. Both types have physical components: plants, container, background, mechanics, accessories and explanation card. Both types have actual arranging equipment, such as needlepoint holders, oasis, picks, tape, water tubes, etc., that are to be discreetly hidden within the design, so as to not distract viewers. Either type of design is to be judged the same, without bias toward one or the other type of design.

Traditional: The traditional floral type typically refers to all those designs originating worldwide prior to the twentieth century. These designs conform to a more traditional criteria, based on a single pattern from one of the geometric forms such as sphere, cylinder or pyramid. Usually, the center of interest is located near the focal point, where all materials emerge or radiate from the center of the design. Little or no abstraction is used and there are no intentional crossed lines. Plant material is displayed in a naturalistic way (stem down, flower up). Part of the lip of the container should be covered with material in the design.

Creative: Creative designs evolved in the modern era, and place a strong emphasis on angular components, with angles not limited to one type, and all components angular so as to create pleasing contrast. More original methods of placement within the design achieve more creative concepts. More than one container may be used. There may be two or more rhythms, rather than one, creating a different movement. Any degree of

abstraction and more than one focal point is acceptable, and a “stretch component” may be used to connect more than one container. Use of space is a strong factor and restraint of plant materials is apparent. A show schedule, calling for a creative design, should allow designer’s choice for plant materials and components to be used.

Components are to be used solely to incorporate space and create NEW images, so they may be placed upside-down, sideways, moving, clustered, etc., to create new forms.

Even though traditional designs are different from creative designs, they have just as much creativity. Whereas creative designs show unusual organization of materials, traditional designs create beauty, harmony and unity through plant selection and placement.

Traditional designs are art forms IN space, so an amount of space is given for the design, while creative designs are art forms OF space in their placement.

V. DESIGN STYLES

There are three recognized styles of designs in association with the two types of designs: line, line-mass and mass. Within traditional and creative designs are different ways or styles that show how the flowers and plant materials are arranged in the container.

Line: This design style is the most popular today. It uses much more restraint in plant material and other components within the traditional or creative design type and allows the exhibitor room to create a more bold, dramatic effect. Line style can be described as “a one-dimensional visual path through the design.” Lines may be vertical or horizontal, but the judge should realize that the line may be implied, too, through a line of dots or other forms lined in a row, rather than an obvious solid line. A line design should have good depth and proportion by placing plant materials from front to back and sideways, allowing visual depth from different directions. Line designs have the most open spaces of the three design styles.

Line-Mass: This design was a new style, developed in the 1930's in the USA and based on geometric forms. It has one focal point and an uneven number of any one plant material. The line is still equally important, but additional material is added to strengthen and enhance the line and less open spaces are evident, in conveying the exhibitor's interpretation of the class. This style can be closer to a mass design, but the linear quality predominates. Line-mass designs follow vertical, horizontal, crescent and triangular directions of line designs. Traditional line-mass designs, then, are "open forms", where plant material does not completely fill the geometric form on which the design is based. The trend now, however, is toward more airy, open spaces to allow iris to be more visible.

Mass: This is a design style that has a completed form overall and should have depth from all directions, since it is to be viewed from all sides. More material is used and placed in an upright way, creating a traditional type of design. The defined linear pattern is still evident, though, through the skillful placement of the forms. The silhouette is closed, so no large spaces exist on the outer edges of the design. However, more airy, less compact designs are the trend, to allow for the flower forms to be more visible. Geometric forms still must be apparent in the outline of a sphere, triangle, oval, etc., as well as rhythm, to lead the judge's eye. It is not just a willy-nilly thrusting of all plant material in the container.

VI. ETHICS FOR DESIGN JUDGES

The show schedule is the law of the show and should be based on the current Handbook for Judges and Show Officials. Judges should be familiar with the Artistic Division Scale of Points before the day of the show.

Judges serve by invitation only and must not solicit assignments. If judging is needed to fulfill show requirements, the show chair or designated individual should solicit and issue invitations for judges. After receiving an invitation to judge, an immediate response is expected as a courtesy. Judges may accept reimbursement for travel, in the way of mileage, plane fare, hotel stay, and meals, but must not ask for monetary payment for judging. A judge may accept any additional gifts from the show host, as a thank you for judging.

Designs are to be judged from a distance of three feet and directly in front of the exhibit. However, glancing at the sides of the exhibit to determine depth and mechanics of the design, and at the back of a mass design, is part of the judging. Judges may also pick up the card of explanation to read it, but no other part of the design may be touched.

Judges should not accept an artistic design assignment for which they are not qualified.

Judges should point score the exhibit if asked to do so by the show chairman. Comments, written on the back of the card of explanation or paper provided by the show chairman, are always helpful to the exhibitors. Constructive remarks that are given by a judge, that will help the exhibitor understand how to improve the design, without having to remake it, are important in influencing future exhibitor participation.

The work of other judging panels should not be criticized.

Judges should not mingle with exhibitors or watch them working on their designs.

New ideas and unusual or unique creativity in designing should be openly accepted by judges and not viewed as faults or fallacies.

Handbook For Judges and Show Officials



Edition 8.0

Note: This chapter and others from the *Handbook for Judges* are available online. It is recommended that judges and other readers check out the Introduction and Table of Contents in the full version of the *Handbook* in order to know the full list of available resources, e.g., Glossary, essays, Judge's Activity Record, etc.
