

REAL ESTATE | FLOWER SCHOOL

A Bold, All-Red Bouquet Based on a Scarpitta ‘Bandage Painting’

Fruit-laden Ilex branches ally with roses in floral designer Lindsey Taylor’s year-end riff on a moody, monochromatic work of art by Salvatore Scarpitta



THE ARRANGEMENT Ilex-berry branches, tiny matte rose hips and spray roses mimic the one-color topography of Salvatore Scarpitta’s 1960 ‘Mailbox’ (below). Donna Green Red Earthenware Vase, similar works available at McClain Gallery, 713-520-9988 PHOTO: STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, FLORAL STYLING BY LINDSEY TAYLOR, PROP STYLING BY CARLA GONZALES-HART

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WHEN IN DOUBT or flummoxed by choice, I turn to my go-to flower-arrangement solution: monochrome. Disparate flora can produce a decisive, chic bouquet if united in shades of a single color.

That approach was the natural choice when it came to this month’s inspiration artwork, a one-color piece by Italian-American artist Salvatore Scarpitta (1919-2007) that’s currently part of a show at New York’s Luxembourg & Dayan Gallery. When his art studies in Italy were interrupted by WWII, Scarpitta served as a U.S. Navy sailor—one of the “monuments men” who rescued art stolen by the Nazis. His battle experience informed his art, including pieces known as “bandage paintings,” wide strips of cloth wrapped around stretcher bars to create shadows and texture. These works speak of both wounds and healing, themes that seemed right for a floral arrangement marking the end of a conflict-filled year. The color of 1960’s “Mailbox” also seemed appropriate for a “festive” bouquet, though red is not normally my first choice for garden or cut flowers.

I started with a red-glazed ceramic vase from New York artist Donna Green, then filled it with glossy red Ilex-berry branches, tiny matte red rose hips and deep red spray roses in various stages of openness. By using the last two elements sparingly in an asymmetrical cluster, I was able to form peaks and shadowy valleys like those the eye travels across in Scarpitta’s piece. The confident monochromatic approach might be a simple mood shifter, welcome at this time of year.

The Inspiration



Salvatore Scarpitta, Mail Box, 1960, Bandages and mixed media, 30¼ x 23¼ in. PHOTO: ANDREW ROMER, COURTESY LUXEMBOURG & DAYAN, NEW YORK, © STELLA ALBA CARTAINO

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