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A De Kooning-Inspired Flower Arrangement

A vase in sync with the Abstract Expressionist's vital style begets a bouquet by floral designer Lindsey Taylor



THE ARRANGEMENT | Savage smears of color in Willem de Kooning's painting 'La Guardia in a Paper Hat, 1972' are represented by relatively well-behaved tulips, ranunculuses and peonies. Ceramic Vessel, donnagreenceramics.com, Stephen Kent Johnson for The Wall Street Journal, Styling by Lindsey Taylor

Lindsey Taylor
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SOMETIMES IT'S THE VESSEL that inspires an arrangement. When I first saw the work of New York ceramic artist Donna Green, I was taken by its boldness, scale, gestural quality and in-your-face confidence. Her pieces, covered in vigorous brushstrokes of color, fluctuate between the figurative and the abstract. There's nothing precious about her forms, made by compressing layers of clay coils, then scraping, pushing and prodding them. "The play between the ugly and beautiful is what intrigues me," said Ms. Green, who counts Italian painter and sculptor Lucio Fontana among her inspirations.



THE INSPIRATION | Willem de Kooning's painting 'La Guardia in a Paper Hat, 1972' © 2014 The Willem de Kooning Foundation/Artists Rights Society, (ARS), New York

Ms. Green agreed when I mentioned that some of her pieces evoked the canvases of Abstract Expressionist painter Willem de Kooning (1904-1997), the subject of an ambitious new biography, "A Way of Living," by Judith Zilczer (Phaidon). So, for this month's arrangement, I decided to bring the two artists together, using de Kooning's "La Guardia in a Paper Hat, 1972" as a starting point and one of Ms. Green's ceramic pieces (18 inches high) as my vessel.

With the vase standing in for the lower part of the painting, I selected salmon-colored French long-stem tulips, single yellow tulips, densely petaled yellow-and-green ranunculuses, candy pink peonies and branches of the early chartreuse viburnum blooms. My goal was simply to bring to life de Kooning's—and Ms. Green's—sense of energy and freedom.