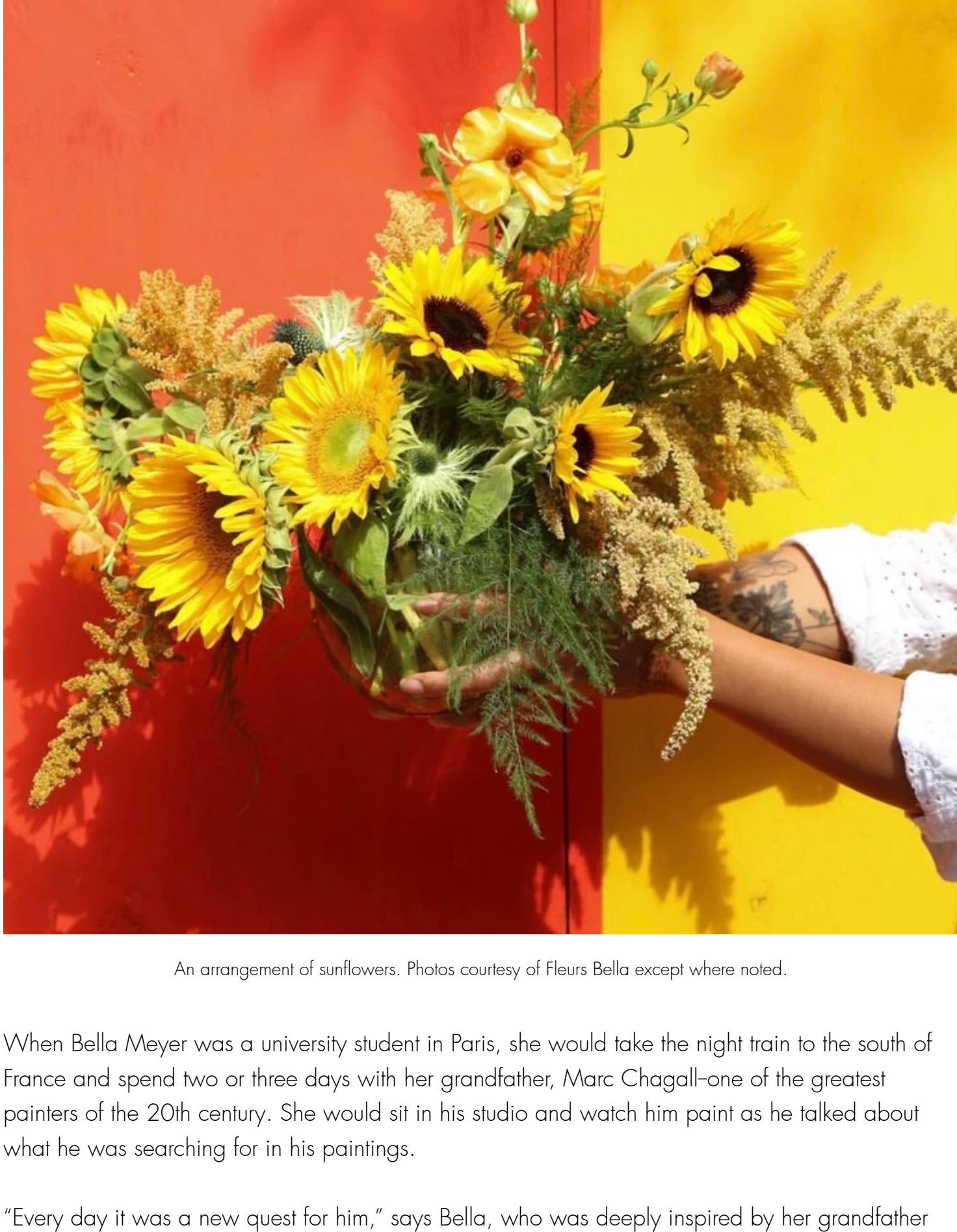


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Learn How to Arrange Summer Flowers Like Master Florist Bella Meyer, Marc Chagall's Granddaughter

By Bart Boehlert



An arrangement of sunflowers. Photos courtesy of Fleurs Bella except where noted.

When Bella Meyer was a university student in Paris, she would take the night train to the south of France and spend two or three days with her grandfather, Marc Chagall—one of the greatest painters of the 20th century. She would sit in his studio and watch him paint as he talked about what he was searching for in his paintings.

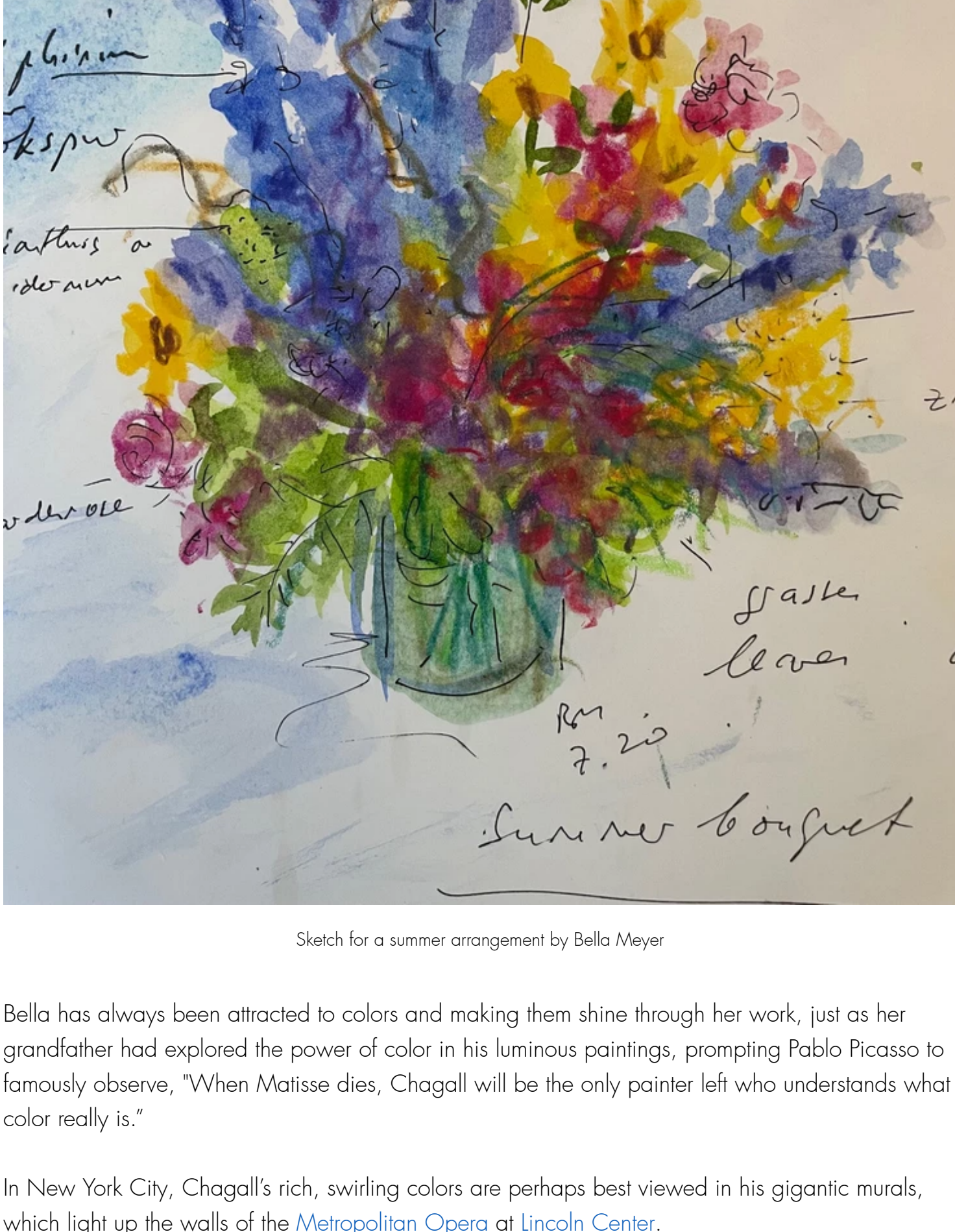
“Every day it was a new quest for him,” says Bella, who was deeply inspired by her grandfather and now operates the popular floral design studio [Fleurs Bella](#) at 55 East 11th Street.



Roses, cosmos, and zinnias

Bella was born in Paris with a twin sister; her mother Ida was Marc Chagall's daughter. The family moved to Switzerland, where Bella's father was the director of the art museum in Basel. As a child, she enjoyed visiting her grandfather. “I had no idea he was famous or known,” she says. “I listened to every word he said. Being very shy I never asked him any questions.”

She grew to share her grandfather's love of art and went on to study Medieval Art History in Paris, earning a PhD in the subject. Bella later moved to New York City and worked in costume design and puppet design.



Sketch for a summer arrangement by Bella Meyer

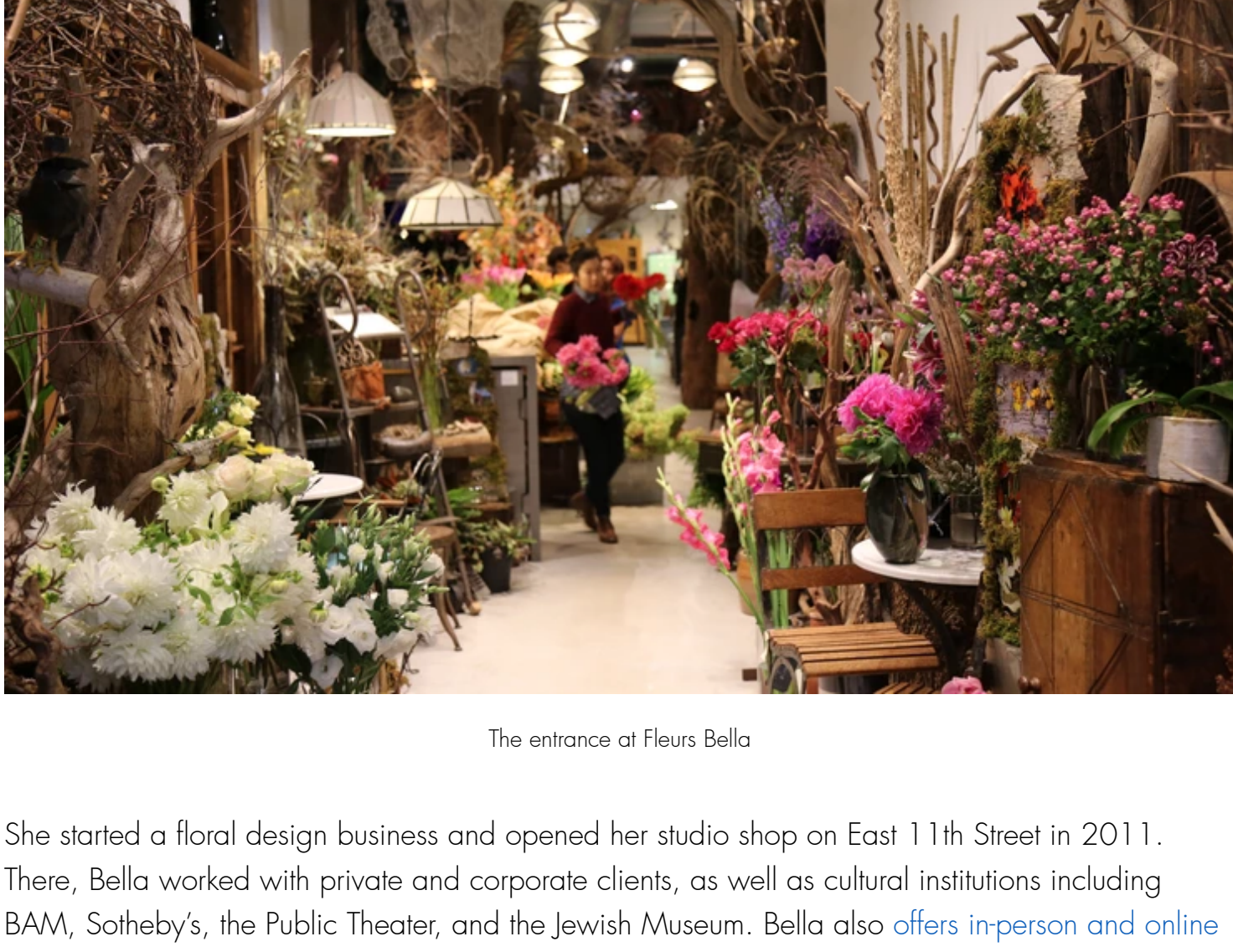
Bella has always been attracted to colors and making them shine through her work, just as her grandfather had explored the power of color in his luminous paintings, prompting Pablo Picasso to famously observe, “When Matisse dies, Chagall will be the only painter left who understands what color really is.”

In New York City, Chagall's rich, swirling colors are perhaps best viewed in his gigantic murals, which light up the walls of the [Metropolitan Opera at Lincoln Center](#).



Marc Chagall, L'Atelier à Saint-Paul-de-Vence, 1967. © 2021 - Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

Bella was introduced to the flower market in New York City when she offered to build a chuppa for friends who were getting married. “I saw the extraordinary colors of the flowers. It was the richest world of colors I had ever seen. I thought if I really was to understand colors, I had to use these beautiful flowers. I was very much wanting to share them.”



The entrance at Fleurs Bella

She started a floral design business and opened her studio shop on East 11th Street in 2011. There, Bella worked with private and corporate clients, as well as cultural institutions including BAM, Sotheby's, the Public Theater, and the Jewish Museum. Bella also [offers in-person and online Zoom classes](#) in floral arranging.

Memories of her grandfather continue to inspire Bella. “He said, ‘Love is the most important thing,’” she recalls. “He always wanted to know if we found love. When he first met my future husband, he looked at me with such joy and said, ‘Now you understand my paintings.’ What my grandfather said day after day in his paintings is that in our existence we have only to love. Follow your passion, follow your love, follow your inspiration. To create and give—that's what has become very important to me.”



Bella Meyer at work

Bella Meyer's Tips for Arranging Summer Flowers

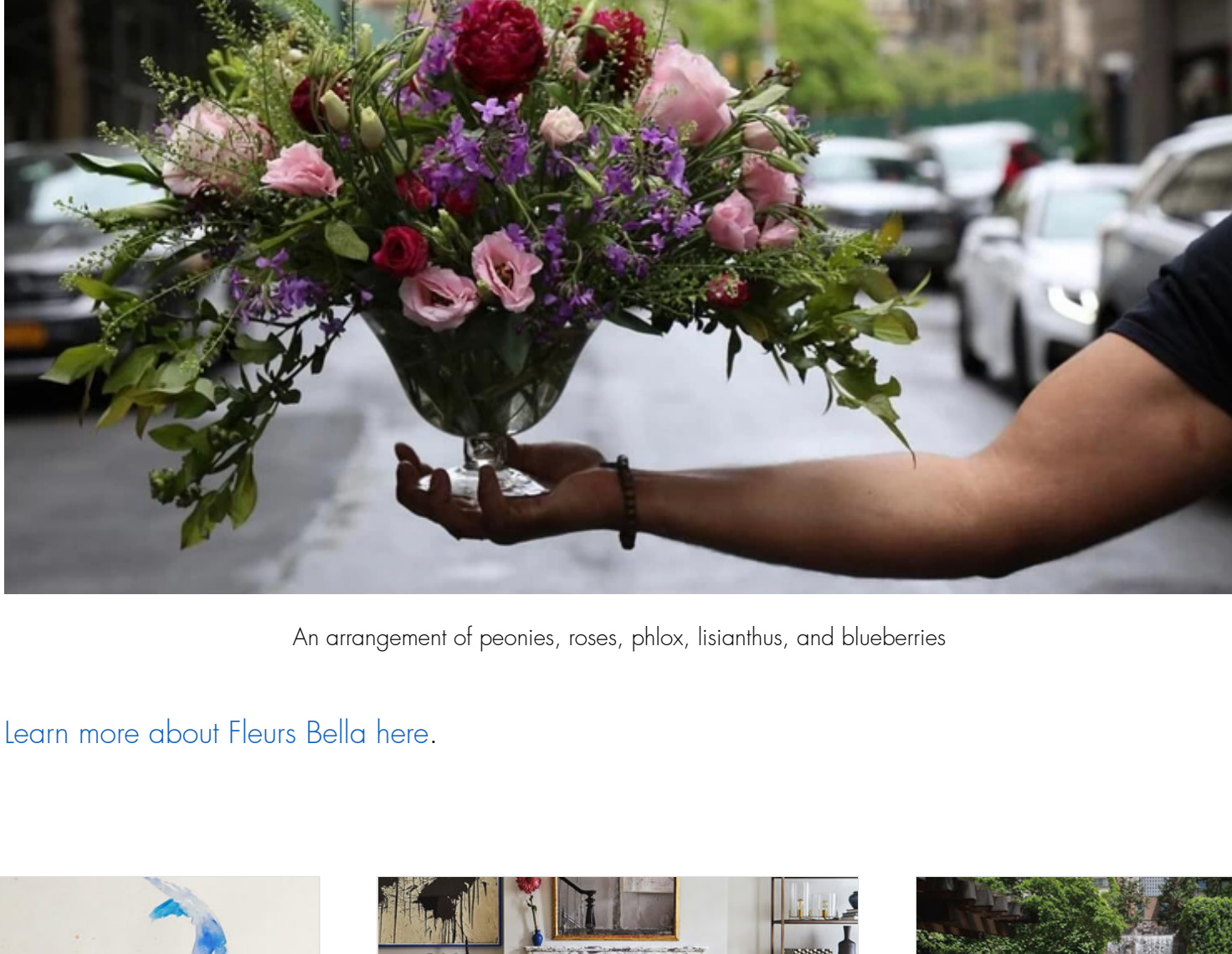
Think big. Many summer flowers grow very tall because the sun is strong and there is so much light. These include delphinium, hyacinth, larkspur, snap dragons, sunflowers, big hydrangeas, and even daisies. So in summer, think big!

Consider temperature. If you like to cut wildflowers or flowers in your garden, do so in the morning when it is cool. After you cut (or buy) flowers, it's important to put the flowers in a cool place and in cool water as soon as possible. Prepare whatever vases you are going to use and fill them with cold water as well.

Prep well. Prep each flower by clearing the stems that are going to touch the water of any leaves, as they can quickly create bacteria. Condition them by cutting the stems diagonally.

Create a nest. Now, it's time to start arranging. Begin with a structure that will surround the arrangement, such as branches or stronger stems. [I love using curly willow to form a nest inside the vase to create a grid or base to put the stems in.] Or use several stems to crisscross inside the base and build from there.

Follow the flow. Think about where you will put each flower. Then cut the stem diagonally once more, if needed, before placing it in the vase. I like to work with groups of colors. But don't choose too many colors. Make it simple, to start. Look at the flower or branch and see where it wants to go. Follow the flow of the flowers. The movement and feel will let the blooms shine.

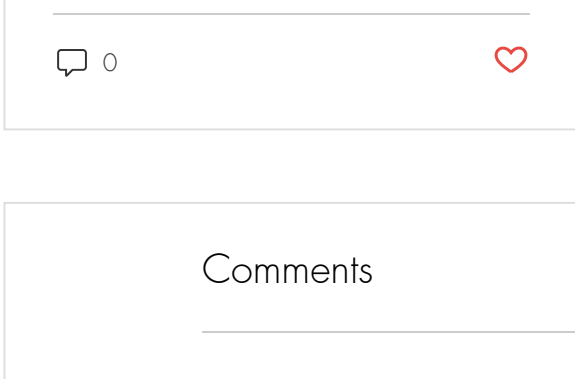


An arrangement of peonies, roses, phlox, lisianthus, and blueberries

[Learn more about Fleurs Bella here.](#)

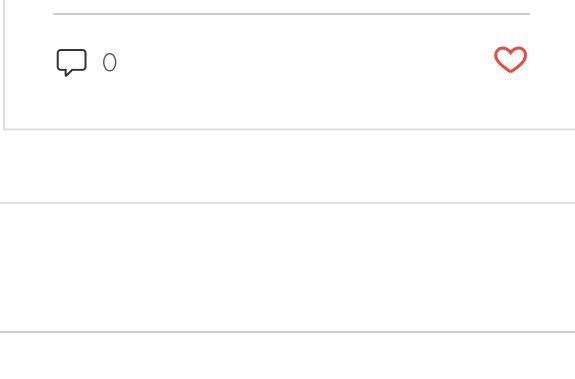
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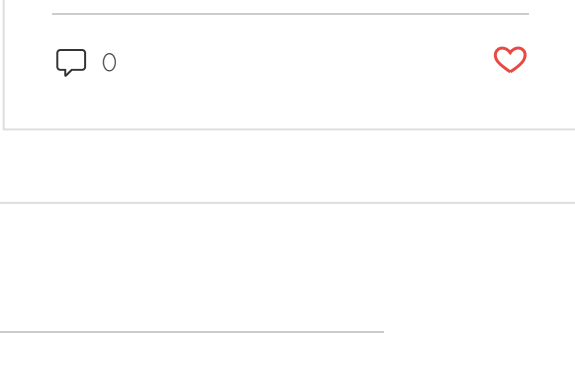
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