

Flowers are the new art. So says the luxury interior designer Charu Gandhi, founder of the interior design studio Elicyon. Gandhi has designed, among many international projects, 14 of the 85 apartments at one of London's most expensive addresses, One Hyde Park.

Forget original Hirsts on the wall, the super-wealthy want whimsical arrangements of seasonal blooms in artisanal vessels; succulents in the kitchen, greenery in the bathroom, bowls of petals on coffee tables. Even artificial flowers are popular, especially those that are fragranced. Many are so realistic that it is hard to tell whether or not they were once growing in the ground.

"We find more clients are happy to invest in the cost of regular floral arrangements, sitting down with us to talk through a 'floral strategy' for their home," says Gandhi. Many are inspired by flowers that they have seen in a particularly beautiful hotel room. "And their requests are becoming more detailed, ranging from very structured monochromatic arrangements to informal, almost magical, combinations that make visitors look closer, asking, 'What variety of flower is that?'"

For one of her Hyde Park clients Gandhi created a "post-completion floral arrangement service", which is split into three categories: platinum, gold and silver. Platinum is for elaborate arrangements, while silver involves more low-key flowers for day-to-day life. She keeps a calendar of when her clients will be in residence, on which dates they will be hosting friends, family or business associates, have an official event or are throwing a party, and agrees what level of service is needed for each month.

Artificial flowers are placed in four wall-hung, hand-blown glass vases when residents are not at home, and fresh arrangements are made in a downstairs storage unit and brought up in a special trolley that fits the vases to avoid mess when they are swapped over.

For another client, who owns homes in London, New York and Los Angeles, Elicyon created a bespoke floral style, consistent across all the properties, which focused on arrangements at the entrance of the home.

"For our nomadic clients, a beautiful floral artwork is their 'welcome home'," she says. "Flowers are ephemeral, delicate objects, but they are strong indicators of style when placed within a space. We use them to convey everything from a corporate brand to a statement on how someone lives."

Lucy Currell, an interior designer at Studio Iro, likes to incorporate vases of eucalyptus in her projects. "It smells amazing, looks beautifully grey-green



Freddie Garland of Freddie's Flowers, which delivers seasonal blooms to your door

# Forget Hirst. Flowers are the new artworks

and it lasts because it dries well and stays in its form. I also like monstera leaves in vases; it adds height and a minimal design aesthetic."

Natalia Miyar, whose interior design atelier spans London and Miami, thinks flowers help to create a "happy space" in certain rooms — on a bedside table, say, where she always has roses, "so classic and romantic that you can't go wrong".

She also loves peonies and flowering branches. "Peonies' papery quality is such a gorgeous texture and can look delicate or beautifully blousy. From soft shades of whitish pink through to hot pink, they work well anywhere in the house. Flowering branches always remind me of the first signs of spring. I put them in very tall vases to complement rooms with high ceilings and particularly like to have a pair of tall vases on a dining table."

When using florals to enhance an interior, consider what to put them in. Miyar brings character to a space with texture, and uses a variety of vases. "I particularly like textured ceramic or ceramics with rich glazes that are very beautiful with soft-coloured peonies," she says. "I don't use glass vases as I prefer not to see the stem. I love the way that a



NICK ROCHOWSKI

An apartment in the Burlington Gate development and, inset left, One Hyde Park, with interiors by Elicyon

vase made from a heavy material, such as concrete, works as an anchor and reveals only the top of the flowering beauty."

Gandhi likes low bowls for coffee and sidetables, and mix-and-match arrangements using a variety of vases of different heights. Mid-century modern studio pottery is also on trend.

While floral arrangements are cheaper than an original artwork, you need an Elton John-sized budget to employ a floral arranger full-time. Gandhi's clients want their flowers checked, changed and spritzed at least once a week.

Alternatively, you could sign up to a flower-subscription service. Freddie's Flowers was set up by the appropriately named Freddie Garland, who used to work for the veg box delivery company Abel & Cole. For £22 a week, Freddie's Flowers delivers fresh seasonal flowers to your door, along with advice on vases and tips for arranging them, to help you to make the most of your blooms.

Alice Strange, meanwhile, combines floristry and interior design. You order one of four styles of arrangement depending on your decor — Manhattan, Soho, Scandinavian or Traditional. She delivers a hand-tied bouquet weekly, and can arrange them in your home.

Laura Whateley



Interior designer Natalia Miyar says that peonies work well anywhere in the house