

# Flourishing In Creativity & Adding That Floral WOW Factor!

By Deirdre Michalski



A colorful canopy soars above festive decorated tables at a baby shower in the garden of client's home

## Looking back on his almost 40-year career,

Floral Designer *extraordinaire* Derrick Vasquez reflects on the years with fond memories. He almost cannot believe that this many years have passed. As the time has gone by so quickly, he is certainly not resting on his laurels, as he rattles off a long list of projects he has currently underway.

Derrick began his floral career quite by accident. While in college, a friend suggested they take an art class of some sort. They signed up for a three-week floral class with Alba May, and he discovered he had a real flair for flower arranging. It seemed almost effortless and one thing led to another. He worked for a floral shop owner, owned his own shop, and eventually he became so busy with special events and expanding



his offerings that he jumped “all in” to create “Events by Derrick.” He was inducted into the American Institute of Floral Designers in 1984 and has served in numerous leadership positions within AIFD, including National President. Most notably he was selected five times among California’s Top Ten Designers by the California State Floral Association and holds many more accolades.

When discussing his passion for special events and floral design, Derrick describes an inner creativity that is boundless; taking his clients’ dreams and designing memorable events that bring it all to life. For many of his clients, he has earned the title of “Mayor of the Event” and oversees every single detail. He leads the effort—from the theme, to the invitations and even the venue selection. As the event develops, he oversees decisions on the menu, bar program, lighting and music, custom cakes, tablescapes, and of course, all of the floral and decorative features that take all of his events over the top. Everything



From top:  
Christmas Tree Lane gala

An elegant wedding reception featuring shimmering chandeliers and opulent table arrangements

“Day of the Dead” themed display at George Lopez’s Chingon Kitchen restaurant in San Manuel Casino





Setting the stage for the Loma Linda University Hospital Employee Recognition Gala

is thought of—from dramatic floral arrangements and greenery, to the candles, shimmering chandeliers, color palette, welcome gifts, signage and so forth. “Events by Derrick” has chosen not to advertise and is honored to enjoy a great following of repeat customers. His clients trust him to execute not only what they have requested but his ability to go beyond their wildest dreams.

Most recently, Derrick described a birthday party for a very important client’s son who is a cancer survivor. The event was truly a double celebration! The son loves retro-music, so Derrick envisioned the event as an upbeat “rock-and-roll” party to honor him. Derrick got to work and arranged to hold this party at the Fox Event Center in Redlands. They hired vendors to bring in the indoor bars, iron tables, up-lit floors, balloons and

lots of dramatic blue and purple lighting. They transformed the space, to say the least, and the flower arrangements were gorgeous. The client and their family literally gasped when they entered the room. They were extremely impressed and joyful for this special celebration. Derrick had once again created a truly memorable event.

An organization that Derrick has worked with for many years is Loma Linda University Hospital. He oversees all aspects of their philanthropic Annual Children’s Hospital Gala, as well as their Employee Appreciation Dinners which are filled with drama and elegance. These events are held at Loma Linda’s Drayson Center Basketball Gym.

Derrick also designs for many birthday parties, baby showers, holiday parties, corporate themed events, receptions and even restaurant openings. Recently, he was given creative license to create a “Day of the Dead” themed opening for celebrity George Lopez’s new restaurant at Chingon

*"I am most proud of being able to bring joy to my clients...in both happy and sad times. Using beautiful flowers and my natural artistic abilities, I enjoy seeing my clients have their breath taken away when they enter the room. That is my greatest accomplishment and truly my reward."* — Derrick Vasquez

Kitchen at San Manuel Casino.

Derrick has amassed a loyal group of vendors and partners that he has hand-selected over the years. He only works with the most dependable, punctual and creative resources available. "There is only one chance to make a first impression," as my mother used to say. Nothing is left to chance in Derrick's world.

His industry friends from around the globe are so jealous about the tremendous array of florals we enjoy here in Los Angeles. It is the best in the world! Hold on to your corsage, but on shopping days, Derrick arrives at The Original Los Angeles Flower Market at 4:00 am. Doing his homework ahead of time, Derrick and his assistant know approximately how many stems they need for a given event. He has a thought in mind, but is open to being swayed by the inventory he sees. With clipboard in-hand, they do a quick pass-through, making copious notes. Then they dive in and place their orders. Purchasing is actually



Top: Dramatic floral displays abound at a Moroccan themed gala in Loma Linda

Below: A look at the dining area for the Loma Linda Employee Recognition Gala





conducted rather swiftly. Their morning is complete.

When asked what new guests should know when visiting, Derrick shared four “insider tips” for shopping at The Original Los Angeles Flower Market. He suggests:

- 1) Arrive at various times to see the changing inventory and pricing.
- 2) Avoid purchasing right away. Show some restraint and walk the aisles first.
- 3) Have an accurate list of what is needed. This will help avoid over-purchasing.
- 4) He suggests developing a few vendor relationships so that in the future one can make a phone call first.

In terms of trends, in recent years he sees more containers made of stoneware and more of a minimalistic style to floral arrangements for residential. Derrick’s work tends to be much more detailed and ornate. Chuckling as he says it, one trend that he would gladly like to say goodbye to is the use of mason jars as containers.

When asked about his favorite flower, Derrick mentioned the Gardenia without hesitation. The dark green leaves with bright white flowers float elegantly in a crystal bowl of water or as a vi-



An elegant floral arrangement for a Rock & Roll themed birthday party at the Fox Event Center in Redlands, California

Right: Music themed elements accentuate a child's Rock & Roll birthday party

Below: A Rock & Roll themed birthday cake is highlighted by dramatic blue and purple lighting



brant floral display. The scent is captivating and was his mother and grandmother's favorite bloom.

Super creative individuals tend to have a process as to how it all comes together—from the first formulated ideas, to the reality that one can touch and feel. For Derrick, he draws inspiration from fabrics, art, lighting and nature. He lets the theme of the event and the flowers he has selected be the driving force. Everything else is really a complement to that. From the greenery to the containers and florals, it all exudes from that initial focal point in his mind. It unfolds in a surprisingly natural way as he works his magic.

[www.eventsbyderrick.com](http://www.eventsbyderrick.com)