

BY DESIGN

FLOWER ARRANGING STUDY GROUP



LEATHER *E-laced*

*article by Barbara Hamachek,
Seattle Garden Club, Zone XII
photographs by Tod Hamachek,
Sally Barnett and Mary Raymond*



Hog Wild in Wisconsin ~ the *Art en Fleurs* show in the Harley Davidson Museum intrigued me. Hard surfaces, shiny metal, rugged garb and decorated leathers seemed such an anomaly for a flower show, I decided I had to enter. And, I did while waiting for an airplane.

When I returned home, I discovered our rural area had only a motorcycle repair shop.

Off I went, dragging my husband, not exactly sure what I would find. A few dumpster dives later, the perfect shape appeared: a shiny, smashed snowmobile exhaust pipe!

How to mount it was my next hurdle. The metal worker was my next destination. A gas canister, lurking in the back of his studio revealed the perfect answer. After he cut off the bottom, we lifted the exhaust pipe onto the base. It rested perfectly, nestling into the small divot in the middle of the canister bottom. While I steadied it, and averted my eyes to avoid the damage of the flame, the metal worker welded it into position. It was a perfect sculptural piece – solid as could be!

There were two pipes extending from the exhaust pipe I could use for my flowers but neither would hold water. The metal worker had a recycle bin outside. We located a tin can and cut it to fit one pipe. The other, he cut another metal tube and welded the ends.

Since the pedestal and wall of the garage were to be white, I felt the sculpture should be off set by a black base. The cabinetmaker was next, where I asked for a piece of ½" thick wood to be cut the size of the pedestal.

My next step in the process was a trip to the painter. I needed the wood piece to be painted black and

the base of the sculpture painted to match the exhaust tube. The painter welcomed the job, and immediately put the sculpture into his paint chamber.

When I excitedly returned home, I hefted the behemoth onto the kitchen counter (my studio) and reread the schedule. Oh No! I'd signed up for the class "Leathers," not a "Basket Case."

A few expletives erupted ~ fortunately within the earshot of our painter, who worriedly asked what was the matter? Tearfully, I



In the beginning, there was a snowmobile exhaust pipe.

explained my plight..."where was I going to find leather, and how was I going to use it? My lovely base was of no use for "Leathers!"

"Hold on," he said. "My son was gifted a pair of Harley-Davidson chaps that are way too big for him. Perhaps he'd consider selling them to you."

Just in case, that night, I also ordered two different skins of black leather from Amazon.

As soon as both arrived I began to fiddle, and redesign, but the shape of the exhaust kept tickling at my brain. In frustration, late one night, I draped the chaps over the

exhaust and went to bed.

The next morning I realized I was on to something! At last, after continued manipulation and wrapping, I had my direction.

Now, how to make them stick? First, I tried spray auto glue, but it wasn't strong enough, so my next idea was to visit an upholsterer. He had a wonderful product, called Barge Cement. While I held the leather, he helped glue the Amazon skin where I needed it. What's even nicer - he gave me the leftover tube of glue.

My lovely, shiny metal was ready for the chaps.

I wrestled them into position, placing the zipper so it appeared the chaps were coming unzipped. I glued and clipped to hold them solidly and let them sit. Once dry, I cut excess fabric and re-glued. The entire process took several days.

I also wanted to have a bit of leather and silver studs, like the Harley-Davidson saddlebags, so I cut and glued a horse bridle with silver studs around the base.

Next, I needed to select the flowers. I felt they should be white, which would offset the drama of the black sculpture.

Because the arrangement needed to last three days, I considered Phalaenopsis, Lilies or Anthurium as my options. Our local florist had all in stock, and I fiddled with them.

Daily, I'd walk by the sculpture and question which of the principles and elements it fulfilled and which would be a potential "yoo-hoo." The volume and predominance of the base kept leaping out as a major concern. I began rummaging through all my storage places looking for remnants of past FASG workshops. I found a woven cream-colored middollino from one of Hitomi Gilliam's workshops and plunked it into the top opening of the exhaust. The

other end, I wove into the edge of the zipper. And there it was: the balance I needed plus lots of negative space!

The cream colored midollino interrupted the design's rhythm. I needed black midollino and to pick up the theme of the zipper, silver wire.

I was leaving town for three weeks and only had a few days upon my return to get everything off to Milwaukee. Fortunately, a dear friend found the midollino and promised to have it shipped, so it would arrive in time. The local florist had the silver wire, so I was off.

Before departing, I ordered my flowers. To my dismay, I learned the florist only received their tropicals on Tuesdays. I would have to order them for the week ahead and HOPE!!!!

Three weeks before the show, I received notice our class pedestal heights had changed from 36" to 40." Four inches is a lot; my focal center had to change. Egad, what next?

Upon my return, I set about shaping the midollino, only to find I'd bungled my FASG notes. Online videos confused me even more. In desperation, I called a friend, who refreshed my memory with great "how to" instructions.

Because my husband had board meetings in Oregon prior to the show, I needed to ship everything ahead of schedule. Fortunately, friends in Milwaukee said I could send the base to them.

I took the base, extra midollino, silver wire, tools and tape to the UPS store and explained my need for an on time arrival. Then, I packed the rest of the black midollino in my suitcase, wrote TSA a note explaining all the materials were for a flower show, and hoped they wouldn't break it if they decided to



search my luggage. (How many of us have written notes to them explaining our glue guns, scissors and wire cutters?)

While my husband was in board meetings, I sat on our hotel room floor and wove midollino. In fact, I wove midollino in the back seat of the car wherever we were going!

When we arrived in Milwaukee a few days ahead of the show, I picked

up the flowers. To my dismay, the Lilies were the wrong color and the Anthurium were too small. Fortunately, the orchids looked good. One of the sales people suggested I use a product called Hawaiian Floral Mist—she assured me the orchids would be fine, and they were. We turned the hotel room heat to "cold" and I diligently sprayed the flowers three times a day.

The day before the show, we were allowed to place our structures so that the morning of was less hectic. Still, some of the leather had come unglued and the midollino wouldn't stay positioned. I spent a good portion of the arrangement time working on mechanics. When I began placing the flowers, I fussed and fussed, put too many in, took too many out and then just like Goldilocks found the right combination. I stepped back, took photographs, gathered my materials and left the floor.

It was an exciting moment when I learned of my awards! Having had two years of "nothings," I was thrilled.

Barbara Hamachek's entry in "Art en Fleurs: Hog Wild in Wisconsin" received a blue ribbon and won the Fenwick Medal. Barbara would like to thank the many people who supported her and her project, including the Motorcycle Repair Shop, her woodworker, upholsterer, metal worker, painter and his son, her daughter, Bliss Clark, Ann Crumacker, Sherry Dumke and most of all her husband, Tod!

FENWICK MEDAL

BARBARA HAMACHEK

*Seattle Garden Club, Zone XII
Class 4 - Leathers*

Citation: The utilitarian is combined with sinuous sophistication and beauty. This design zipped up the Fenwick.

*Detail photographs of
Barbara's arrangement
on this page by Mary Raymond*

Part II: Anatomy of a Design Weaving Midollino:

How To by Barbara Hamachek
Photographs by Tod Hamachek



1. The materials you will need are glue dots, midollino, 12 gauge wire, and silver bullion wire. The length of the 12 gauge wire and the amount of midollino you select will be determined by the size of the arc you wish to achieve. I used approximately 27 pieces of midollino.



2. The 12 gauge wire you select should be equal to the length of your midollino. It's a good idea to shape the arc in the wire before you begin attaching the midollino.



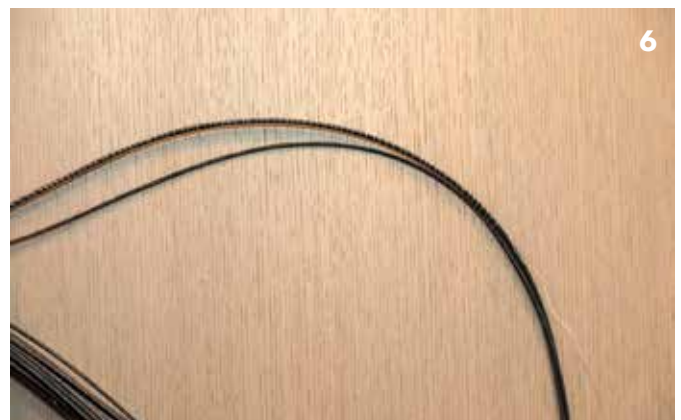
3. Select 3-5 pieces of midollino. Position them parallel and under the silver wire, making sure the wire is on top. Then affix with a small piece of a glue dot, so it doesn't show.



4. At one end of the aligned 12 gauge wire and midollino, begin winding the bullion wire securely around both. Be sure you pull it tightly, but not so tight you break the bullion.



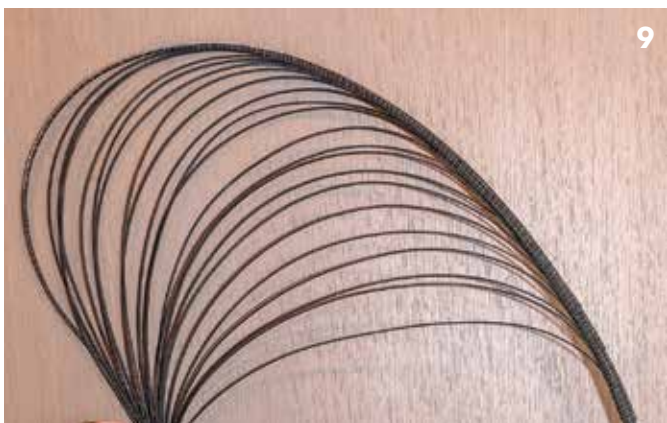
5. Once you have bound about a 1/2", add another 3-5 midollino. If you wish, you can use another small piece of a glue dot.



6. This allows for the illusion of a slight point. Some skip this part and bind all the midollino at once.



7. Continue following steps 3 & 4 until you've added all the midollino.



9. Next, take one strand of the midollino and pull it towards the master, forming the arc size of your choice. Wrap the bullion wire around the end of it and the place you chose on the master wire about 5 times (the number of wraps between the midollino strands depends on the spacing you want between your midollino). I chose 5 wraps.



11. At this point, you will need to add more midollino to complete the tail of your arc. To avoid a bulge, I added a new piece of midollino as the last few original midollino is bound. You should end up with at least 3 midollino reeds under the wire at the end.



8. Then chose three strands of midollino (the ones closest to the silver 12 gauge wire). Begin wrapping the bullion wire around these strands until you've reached the distance of the arc you'd like to form. I call this your "master wire." Mine was about 24".



10. Continue step 8 until you've used all the midollino you originally selected.



12. The result will be an arc with a tail. Both ends can be inserted into forms or attached to one another to create whatever you'd like. Or, you can add more metal and make a longer tail.

13. I ended up having to twist my form to fit in my suitcase which helped it retain its shape. You could do the same with elastics or twine.

Important! The entire process requires attention to detail. The spacing between the wraps should be uniform, and the 12 gauge wire needs to be perfectly aligned on the top of the midollino.

How much time did it take? More than I thought it would! Good Luck!

~ Barbara Hamacheck