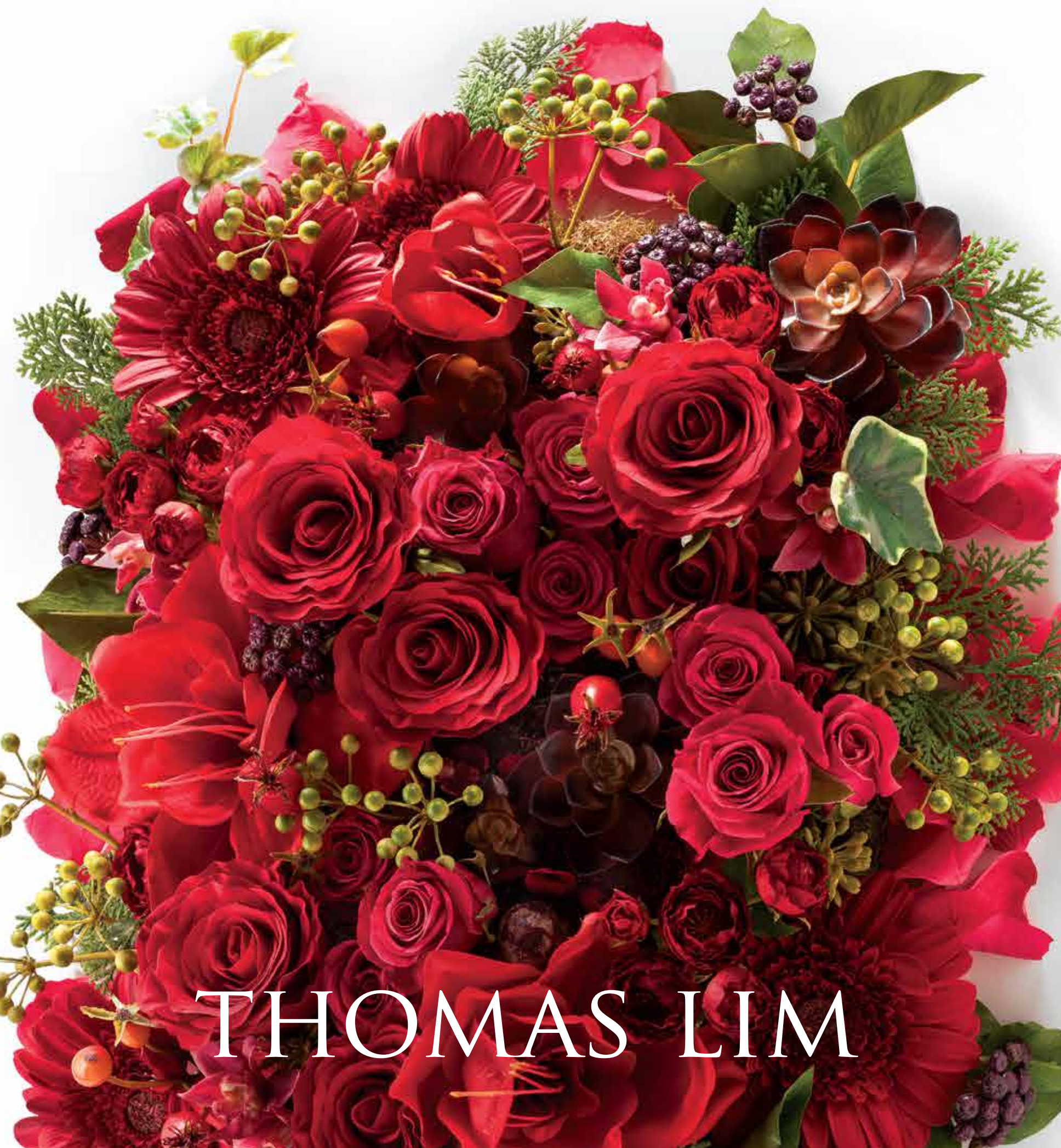


SEASONS



THOMAS LIM



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To my mum and late father,
for giving me the strength
to be tough and to go against
your will, and pushing me
to be the best I can be.

To Jan, my partner, for keeping
me grounded, being my biggest
supporter and always standing
by my side.





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INTRODUCTION

My parents wanted me to be an engineer. They believed that the only way to achieve greatness was to become a professional in what were considered 'respectable fields'. But I had different plans for myself.

After graduating from high school, I worked for an interior design firm in Singapore. I fondly remember working on a project for a new condominium on Orchard Road. I was assigned the task of putting the final touches—of breathing life, romanticism and warmth—into a beautiful yet otherwise sterile room. I placed several green plants around the room, and arranged a simple centrepiece of roses and chrysanthemums on the dining room table. At that precise moment, I felt a wave of achievement, a sense that I had found my true calling in life. Everything lit up from that moment on.

I promptly quit my job at the interior design firm. For the next 30 years, my career would take me from my first flower shop near Orchard Road, to Hampshire in the UK, to California and to countless cities around the world in between.

I had found my true passion in floristry. In 1986, I took The Society of Floristry (now absorbed into the British Florist Association) examinations and graduated the following July. In September, I entered the symposium competition and won the title of Designer of the Year. In the same year, I created the Bridal Bouquet of the Year. 1991, too, was a good year—I won the Bouquet Innovation and Best Innovation Design competitions in The Silk Show, Las Vegas.

After my forays in the international circuit, I finally returned to Singapore in 1989, after my father's passing. I wanted to be near my mother, and was happy to find myself once again surrounded by my friends and family. I was featured as a homecoming hero in Home and Decor Singapore magazine, and I became the first Singaporean to be inducted into the American Institute of Floral Designers.

When it comes to floral design and interior design, my major inspirations come from nature and music. Finding beauty in everyday settings fuels my creativity. I like to imagine Mozart composing classical music in a grandiose, romantic setting. I love to walk in the woods, absorbing the shapes, forms, colours and sounds around me.

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

— *The Road Not Taken*, Robert Frost, 1916





In the same way summer melds into the riotous colours and textures of autumn, my career has been characterised by gradual transitions.

Working in an industry so closely intertwined with the movement of the earth around the sun, it is no wonder the influence of passing seasons has weaved itself into my working life. In the same way summer melds into the riotous colours and textures of autumn, my career has been characterised by gradual transitions—from Singapore to the UK and back to Singapore; from working with fresh flowers to silk. The passing of seasons symbolises renewal and growth; a beautiful and natural progression that, hopefully, is captured in this book.

I hope this book inspires and encourages you to reach for the stars and achieve your own perfection in flower arrangement. To me, floral design is more than just a hobby, and with the right encouragement, you can also achieve a long and beautiful career as a professional floral designer. Just remember to strive to be unpredictable, interesting, innovative and different.

With that, I present to you: a culmination of 30 years of professional floral design.

Thomas Lim



FRESH AS
SPRING



I often gave discarded flowers a second chance, using their bits and pieces to make beautiful arrangements, bouquets and centrepieces.

It was 1982. At the tender age of 21, after quitting my job at an interior design firm, I opened the doors to Autumn Florist—my first flower shop in Ming Arcade, near Orchard Road. Though business was booming, I felt stunted by the lack of professional training in Singapore’s floral design scene. Then, in 1983, I met Rona Coleman, an experienced and talented floristry teacher from Gloucestershire. Along with her husband Stanley, she has been an invaluable mentor who has always encouraged me to live up to my full potential. With their help, I continued my studies in English Floristry at the Society of Floristry (now absorbed into the British Florist Association) while working part-time at M&J Stevens, a flower shop in Hampshire.

PREVIOUS PAGE

This centrepiece was created by grouping two dozen hyacinths. The grouping allows for easy watering, prolonging the life of these vulnerable flowers. To complete the effect, moss, twining branches, vines and berries are wrapped at the base.

RIGHT

A topiary ball of delphinium florets draped with clematis vines and passiflora, accented at the base with snowballs and anemones.

I remember my time there fondly—the owners, June and Dave Evans, became my adopted English parents. They soon gave me full rein of the shop, and I often gave discarded flowers a second chance, using their bits and pieces to make beautiful arrangements, bouquets and centrepieces. I loved decorating the shop windows—often surprising residents of the small village. They'd stop and exclaim, "That bloody Asian boy has done it again!"

One of my fondest memories to date was the opportunity in 1988 to design a bouquet for the late Princess Diana, who was attending the opening of a new children's hospital in Hampshire. A pair of twin girls were to present her with the bouquet, so I created two half-bouquets to come together as one. In the absence of foliage I created ribbon tubes to form leaf-like shapes, but everything else was fresh. I still remember the sweet aroma of cream and champagne roses, tuberoses, freesias and alstroemerias.





LEFT

An arrangement of leftover florals from the design room, combined with berry vines, rose hips and petals, and eucalyptus leaves. The twig cover, bound with moss and hydrangeas, is the focal point, while tulips breathe life to the entire composition.

RIGHT

This irregularly-shaped porcelain vase is set with a base of moss, anthurium and celosia, allowing the painted wooden bird to sing along with the hyacinth and berries.



OVERLEAF, LEFT

Visual merchandising display of a springtime floral arch.

OVERLEAF, RIGHT

The white phalaenopsis orchid represents pure, distilled elegance. Here, kiwi vine is twined to create the illusion of natural movement.

Thomas Lim, one of Singapore's
premier floral and interior designers,
presents the highlights of his stellar 30-year
flower designing career.

