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Stephane Chapelle

Stephane Chapelle was an original member of the elite cadre of designers at L'École des Fleurs almost 20 years ago, where he was known as the king of the *grande bouquet*. Now, with an enviable clientele, his large-scale designs grace some of the most prestigious venues in Paris. During our visit, he encouraged budding designers to "lead with their strength" and "never do what everyone else is doing," guidance he received early on from his mentor Tortu. As a case in point, he suggested that every other designer I met in Paris was no doubt creating bouquets of garden roses and peonies—the quintessential seasonal combination of May. Smiling, he proceeded to whip up a striking bouquet of yellow tropical flowers and grasses that stood out in every way from those of his compatriots. After a tour of his elegant shop, we continued our conversation at the nearby Le Nemours café, where he waxed poetic on everything from the benefits and pitfalls of social media to the future of floristry. How lucky we are, he mused, to work in a profession that is not only our hobby but our *raison d'être*.

