

# BEST PRACTICES



Thousands of living flowers were mounted directly into the aluminum-framed wave structure at the show's entrance.

## FLOWER POWER

The Philly Flower Show goes Hawaiian

**G**MRdesign principal Gary Radin knows the Philadelphia Flower Show inside and out—he's handled creative for the huge (think 270,000 attendees!) event for years. But each year brings a new theme and new challenges, and 2012's "Hawaii: Island of Aloha" theme inspired him to go big.

"In the early concepts, we wrestled with what the visitor would expect to see, what would represent Hawaii and what we could do to deliver something unexpected. We like to add an element of surprise, not just delivering kitsch or what attendees might expect to see," Radin says.

GMRdesign wanted to represent the 50th state's cultural aspects, in terms of native Hawaii and some of the history of that culture tied into how the islands were formed. The inspiration of the ocean was also figured big into the design.



Designers took cues from the story of Pele, the Hawaiian goddess of volcanoes and fire.



“Water and surf served as inspiration, and decided that a more modern and unexpected approach would work best, with the incorporation of technology and projection,” Radin says.

**GRAND ENTRANCE.** The entrance piece is the central feature that visitors walk through when they get to the show, and every year Radin tries to make a lasting impression with its design. This year visitors were immersed in an undersea experience right from the get-go.

The entrance was enveloped by a 40-foot wide, 50-foot-deep aluminum spine structure designed to emulate the shape of waves. Stretched between that was stretch fabric used as a projection screen.

Radin used the structural elements as attachment points for floral material. Cut white orchids and Anthurium flowers housed in individual water tubes lined the interior of the structure, suspended above visitors’ heads as they entered. Over 5,000 flowers were mounted in the five spine waves of the structure.

Between the flower-lined spines was stretch fabric where images of moving water, surf and sea creatures were projected using four projectors. The effect left visitors feeling as though they were under the ocean looking up toward the sunlight above, while audio of Hawaiian music, water and surf sounds played in the background.

“Orchids are very prominent in Hawaii, and white was chosen to help take on the light and integrate with the projection. People were really drawn in to come and stand under it, and watch and experience what was happening because it was such an immersive environment,” Radin says.

Klip Collective handled the media presentation, and leveraged projection mapping to map out the irregular surface and project the content accordingly, so the projected content was displayed on the screens and not on the other spaces.

**PELE’S GARDEN.** Pele is the Hawaiian goddess of volcanoes and fire, and she is a prominent figure in Hawaiian culture and folklore. Radin took inspiration from her story and created an oasis on the show floor, replete with a 25-foot waterfall, tiki hut and more media presentations.

Radin designed a volcanic rock structure, which integrated the water feature. A lagoon pool was placed next to the tiki hut area, and the entire display was covered in tropical flowers.

The hut was bamboo pole structure with a thatched roof—a traditional Hawaiian building. Projection was used on the roof of the hut, creating the illusion that a thatch was opening, with different characters popping out to surprise visitors.

The area also featured space for a live presentation on Hawaiian history and hula dancers. Every 30 minutes, a light and music show brought the environment to life through embedded LED lighting in the landscape, trees and waterfall, as well as lighting from above. Lightweight foam material was used to create much of the environment. The foam was carved to look like volcanic rock, then painted and treated with a hardcoat shell.

Over 3,000 tropical plants and over 3,000 Hawaiian orchids were designed into the environment, many of which were mounted up high. Maintenance had to happen during the show, and there was at least one significant mid-week plant watering, so everything was designed to accommodate that.

“Once you add in all of the plants, that’s the really unusual part of the event. They can only come in so soon, because early in the week it’s colder on the floor than it would be during the show, so you can only plant so far out in advance to keep everything fresh,” Radin says.

A transitional area between the two zones was dubbed the Tropical Immersion, which served as a bridge between the two main areas. 🌿