



LEFT Charlotte Verity, *White Rose, White Wall*, oil on canvas, 61 x 81cm. BELOW Mia Tarney, *White Anemones*, oil on linen, 147.5 x 143cm, and *Peonies* (bottom), oil on linen, 137 x 152.5cm

## In the frame: Botanical

In the first of a new series focusing on buying art for the home, EMILY TOBIN looks at the ever-popular genre of botanical art, and some of its most interesting practitioners

This is the first in a new series on art for your home, where artists will be profiled according to their particular expertise. This month, we focus on artists who depict plants and flowers. The term 'botanical' is perhaps a little too restrictive, as it conjures notions of scientifically accurate illustrations of the type popularised by Pierre-Joseph Redouté and W H Fitch in the early nineteenth century. Instead, these artists are less concerned with capturing the minutiae of a particular specimen than with creating beautiful works that evoke an emotional response from the viewer.

Charlotte Verity trained at the Slade School of Art and, for almost three decades, has painted her Camberwell garden. The pear tree, lilac and snowdrops that grow in this well-tended patch of south London have been captured in all their mutability and fecundity. The images shift according to 'season, time of day or what I might be reading at the time', she explains.

Charlotte's paintings are unruffled and lucid; they quietly delight in the everyday - a notion that was played out in her year-long residency at the Garden Museum in Lambeth in 2010. Her brief was simple: to assimilate herself in the seventeenth-century garden and paint what she saw - lichen, moss, medlar fruit, snow-covered graves, a vermilion scatter of Virginia creeper.

Her work is as concerned with the space around her subjects and the atmosphere they create as it is with the actual reality of petals, leaves and fruit. 'I try to see things with a sense of wonder and always paint what is dear to me,' she says. A shop-bought pear would simply not find its way into Charlotte's studio. Her latest work consists of a series of sepia watercolours depicting

plants from the garden, either brought inside or observed from her studio window. In several, road markings are visible, bringing these delicate images of lilac boughs and winter blossoms into a startlingly urban context.

While Charlotte's paintings are infused with a certain calmness, Mia Tarney's are a more robust depiction of the same subject matter. Based in Richmond, London, Mia also works from home; she paints on vast linen canvases, enlarging tulips and peonies to colossal dimensions. Mia attributes this preoccupation with the monumental to postmodern American art. 'There's impact and drama with such epic proportions,' she says. 'If my front door were bigger, I'd be painting larger canvases.' In fact, one of her paintings had to be lowered out of a fourth-floor window because there was no other route out of the building.

Mia places great emphasis on composition, using a battery of tweezers, tape, clamps and sticks to tame disobedient arrangements. Without a

garden to raid, she sources flowers primarily from florists and markets, but she has been known to knock on a stranger's door after spotting a stunning magnolia. 'Fortunately, they were very accommodating,' she recalls.

Mia aims to 'create a wall of life, a landscape of the beauty and energy of flowers'. With their raw linen backgrounds and gentle colour shifts within the petals, her paintings suggest the subtle dynamic between the force and the delicacy of plants.

To see more of Charlotte Verity's work, go to [www.charlotteverity.co.uk](http://www.charlotteverity.co.uk); prices start at approximately £2,250. Mia Tarney's work can be viewed online at the Lucy B Campbell Gallery ([www.lucybcampbell.com](http://www.lucybcampbell.com)), and prices start at approximately £16,000.

## Other artists

Look out for Sarah Graham ([www.grahamgallery.co.uk](http://www.grahamgallery.co.uk)), who tackles plants and flowers on an enormous scale. Her botanical art has an almost sculptural quality, which, she explains, reflects her fascination with the 'esoteric and elemental force of nature'. At the other end of the spectrum is Louise Walker ([www.louisewalker.info](http://www.louisewalker.info)), whose delicate watercolours are very evocative of traditional botanical illustration. Sophie Coryndon ([www.sophiecoryndon.co.uk](http://www.sophiecoryndon.co.uk)), whose work is distinctly bold in style, is another artist to watch □

