



David Wiseman's bronze and porcelain branch.

branching out

Stumped on the style front?
Simple flowers, making guests welcome,
and fab stationery are key

By Carlos Mota



Family photos in Beth Buccini's New York apartment.

Why ruin a good thing? I ask myself that every time I scour the flower market for **branches and buds to decorate rooms**. When I see an orchid embellished with curly willow or moss, I cringe. A bamboo rod and raffia tie will do the trick, or even better, request a Lucite pole that won't detract from the bloom's splendor. I visited Kelly Klein in Wellington, Florida (to style her apartment for this month's feature story "Best in Show," page 184), and she told me point-blank: "I don't like color." But she does admit to liking orchids. At Orchid Acres near her place, Klein and I were bowled over by the plants, and she said, "This is the only way I bring color into my home." So, we bonded because orchids are my favorite flowers in the world. Then we added these **little touches of vibrant color** to her otherwise white, white, white rooms.

By the way, when it comes to faux flora, I'm absolutely crazy about artist **David Wiseman's bronze branches** sprouting porcelain blossoms. Available as light fixtures, too, they're just amazing. Check out this young talent's work at dwiseman.com.

Recently I was at a dinner party where

the hostess requested that I take off my shoes. Now, I don't care if you're the Dalai Lama, don't try that with me. As a host, your job is to **make your guests feel comfortable**. And that won't happen if they're forced to expose their socks or feet. Why go to a party if you have to shed part of your well-planned ensemble? At the very least, you can **offer some colorful Moroccan slippers**. But let's be honest—floors and carpets are for walking on!

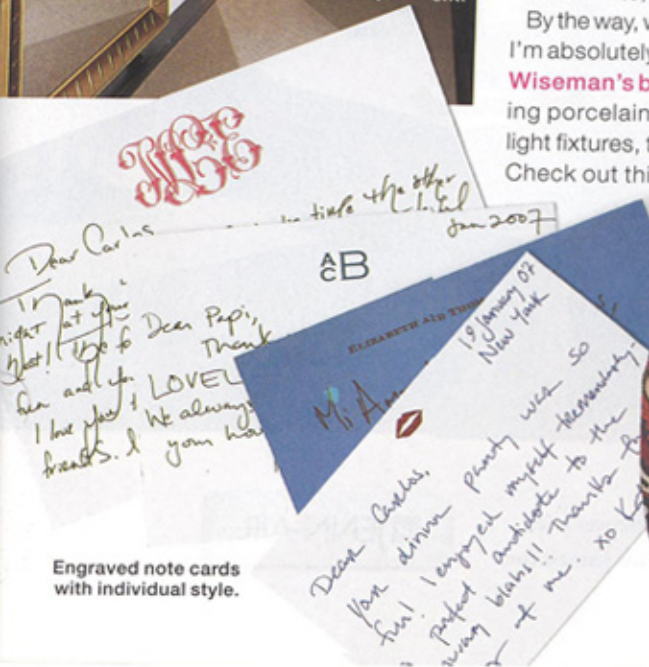
And another thing: **Don't let family photos overrun your home**. No one wants to see snapshots of your dear Aunt Jean five times over (unless they're shot by Bruce Weber, in which case, let them all hang out). Pick a small space, like an entrance hall or stair landing, as the designated area for family photos. For extra impact, mount them in identical frames; it doesn't matter if they're wood or metal, but keep it uniform.

I don't collect many things, but I always hold on to **my stash of handwritten notes**. I love fun thank-you cards—they say so much about the correspondent's style. I've had my stationery forever: It's heavy cream stock and embossed with my name, but if I were going to start fresh, I'd **pick a fun color or try an oversize font**. One friend's initials are done in modern serif lettering in a deep turquoise. Another's are in sassy hot-pink script. Instead of initials, why not use the name of your house (give it one if you have to) or a favorite animal. Most stationery shops will create a custom icon—all you need is an idea.

For me, **the fundamental rule for being stylish is consistency**. Whatever you do, do it all the time. If you like black, then wear black. I have an old friend who has worn the same perfume for as long as I've known her. Each time we meet, she smells so wonderful, and the fragrance is so her—she owns it. Me, I **love purple**. So I painted my walls lavender, and I buy purple clothing and flowers. Friends tell me that when they see that hue they think of me. Style is about making a choice: love it, use it, enjoy it! ■



An orchid, simply displayed.



Engraved note cards with individual style.



Moroccan slippers from Sheherazade in New York.