

## Classic Sensuality

With a bow to Old World richness, grandeur, and decadence, Nancy Liu Chin explores, in her work, a bygone era of fine art, handsome architecture, elegant cuisine, and great music.

BY Susan Hart Hellman

Photography Arrowood Photography

DESIGN Nancy Liu Chin Designs

With a bow to Old World richness, grandeur, and decadence, Nancy Liu Chin explores, in her work, a bygone era of fine art, handsome architecture, elegant cuisine, and great music. "When I was told the topic was sensuality," Nancy says, "I kept thinking about all the historical fiction that seems to be the rage for novels, movies, and television." She finds herself captivated by productions such as Rome and The Tudors, so it was only natural that these should inspire her event design, "Cardinal Sin and Gold Bullion."

Nancy's concept for her design began with color. "I design by color, and when I get my initial creative wave of inspiration, my mind focuses toward color elements," she explains. So her first step was to search through her linen books for inspiration among the many textures, colors, and fabrications. There, deep reds and rich golds called out to her, and she chose a Monaco Red linen with Bijoux Cooper Overlay and Lamoure napkins from Classic Party Rentals as the design foundation.

"I kept thinking about jewels, brocades, corsets, velvet, draperies, stones, and candlelight," Nancy recalls, and her next task was to select a venue that would accentuate the drama of her concept and her lush design choices. She found such a venue in the Julia Morgan Ballroom at the Merchants Exchange, a good fit with its floor-to-ceiling arched windows and honeycomb mahogany octagonal ceiling.

The Ballroom's 20-foot stone fireplace was another deciding factor; Nancy wanted her table situated near a fire. "How sexy and sensual is a fire?" she comments. Wanting a more "feminine look" for the table, she asked Classic Party Rentals to provide an oval-shaped table fitted with chairs in luxurious fabric by Chameleon Chair Collection.

For the tabletop, she chose opulent elements such as rich gold urns, jeweled brocade trim on burgundy candles, and layers of gold fabric over rich, crinkly, deep-red linen. For the chairs, fabric in champagne and gold were then arranged to resemble the back of a dress.

For the china, Nancy chose a classic "Majestic" red dinner plate with gold border, a gold plate with trim, and gold lacquer chargers. The stemware used was from the "Magnificent" line of goblets, with a gold brocade trim, and she chose the "King Arthur" gold flatware.

Nancy then was further inspired. "I kept thinking about the theme of "Cardinal Sin" and about forbidden fruit, and then it hit me! A gold tree! For her, this represented both the Tree of Life and a tree of forbidden fruit. "It's good and wicked, all in one!" she says.

In keeping with this dual theme, Nancy used "Cherry Love" and "Black Magic" roses. Her other florals included gold-sprayed manzanita branches and burgundy dahlias and dianthus.

Nancy then began development for the paper products. "I worked with the designer of Alia Designs, to create place cards, invitations, and menu cards that were sexy, like a corset." The gold, corset-shaped invitations featured a cherry-red band and gold threading. These products tied together the many aspects of her theme for a very grand and elegant look.

Event and Floral Design: Nancy Liu Chin Designs

Photography: Arrowood Photography

Location: Julia Morgan Ballroom at the Merchants Exchange

Rentals: Classic Party Rentals

Chameleon Chair Collection

Invitations and Place Cards: Alia Designs