

PAPER, FABRIC AND WAX FLOWERS FROM GUATEMALA CITY

Rosa María Álvarez A.*

Photo by Manuel Guerra Caravantes

1. INTRODUCTION

Like any folkloric fact, artificial flowers are influenced by time, technological advances and, in addition, by fashion. The changes are seen especially in the material, which offers greater possibilities to the popular artist. On the other hand, the plastic industry and foreign currents that promote certain crafts, have come to occupy a large part of the function performed by artificial flowers of popular tradition.

However, the tradition is maintained, and in the present work we tried to investigate to what extent and with what force. For this purpose, it was investigated in Guatemala City, since it is the accessible area for personal reasons, although I am sure of the existence of such handicraft work in other areas of the republic.

The research began in the flower shops, located in the shops of flowers and paper objects; also in the shops of objects of ornaments for certain ceremonies and festivities, such as the First Communion. These shops are part of the central market, located today in the Colón playground, zone 1, and on the 7th street between 10 and 12 avenida zone 1 (Calle del Sol).

After collecting these first reports, we sent to other areas of the city, such as 5 and 6, as well as to some settlements, such as La Ruedita (zone 3), 4 de febrero and La Carolingia.

* Degree in History. Professor of the University of San Carlos of Guatemala

2. THE PRODUCT

There are several types of flowers, especially:

Of paper

Of fabric

Of wax

2.1 Paper flowers: elaboration

The elaboration varies according to the paper used, which is basically bond paper, from China and crepe.

The materials used are as follows:

Paper

Flower wire

Cotton

Glue (called paste and made with yuquilla by the same artisan)

Wax

Thread

There are 3 basic ways of making:

by separate petals

by pieces

in one piece

To make them by separate petals, molds are cut on cardboard or wrapping paper, of 3 or 4 different sizes. With these molds, the petals that are considered necessary are cut, in a double form to make them thicker, although lately a paper has appeared that already comes double.

After cutting, they are given the required shape, stretching the center so that it takes a convex shape or rolling the edges of the petal.

The wire is cut according to the size of the stem, and at one end a small strips of yellow paper are placed, which will form the pistillo around it the petals are placed, securing them with thread.

To form a rose, for example, the petals of the center are placed inward forming a button and secured with several turns of thread: then the largest petals are placed, securing each one.

The stem is lined with a strip of green crepe paper, previously stretched.

To make them by piece, a circle is cut and the edges are cut in the shape of the petals. The flower is made by putting several circles of different sizes. Especially the daisy, the aster and others are made in this way.

Flowers that do not divide into petals, such as carnation and some roses, are made in one piece, by cutting a strip of paper, 4 or 5 centimeters long. The edges are trimmed to achieve the shape of the petals, and the strip is folded around an elaborate pistillo of yellow paper. The parts are secured with thread.

These flowers are also used to decorate, in the houses where some party will have to be celebrated, and in this case, instead of placing the wire stem on them, a thread is tied to them.

The leaves are cut with a mold and in a double shape. A wire is sheathed that is going to be partly stem and partly central vein and the leaf is glued on it. When it is already dry, the lateral veins are made, with incisions made with the tip of a scissors or some similar object.

Some petals, such as the one for Easter and the one for the lily, are made in the same way, that is, with wire in the middle.

Many times the molds are made based on a natural petal, other times, relying on the memory of the artisan.

2.2 Wax flowers

These flowers are made with "soul", that is with a cotton interior and then dipped in liquid wax, to form a kind of mold. Thus, for example, to obtain the button of an orange blossom, this one is made, putting a little cotton on a wire, and then, after immersing it in the mold, when removing it, the button remains.

It should be noted that this is the form that has disappeared the most, because it requires a lot of care.

2.3 Fabric Flowers

Materials: bright fabrics, such as satin or taffeta; transparent fabrics such as nylon, stamina, chiffon.

The procedure is basically the same as for paper flowers, that is, by separate petals or by pieces, although small heated iron molds are used to shape them, which are then printed on the petal.

The material for the leaves is, above all, velvet. However, plastic sheets have been used lately.

To make the material more resistant and give the flower a shiny appearance, it is customary to wax it, whether it is made of fabric or paper.

To do this, the petal or leaf is made; a small amount of wax is melted in a container over low heat, and when it is liquid, the petals and leaves are quickly immersed, then put to dry, and then the flower is “armed”.

It should be noted that this type of flower is disappearing, especially the enclosed fabric one, and the paper is only left for the dates of greatest sale, especially because it requires greater care and therefore the price rises.

3. SUMMARY

3.1. The making of these flowers is a feminine profession and the learning is traditional, for example and the practice, transmitted from mothers to daughters.

3.2. Artificial flowers have a variety of uses, although plastic flowers have come to supplant them as an object of decoration. The following uses persist:

- As an ornament at parties and celebrations.
- As arrangements that are placed on the graves of close relatives on All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day (November 1st and 2nd, respectively),

In this case, the flowers are placed in a round frame called a crown, or in the form of a cross. For both cases, paper flowers are preferred, waxed or not. Fabric and wax flowers are used as ornaments on dresses and to form crowns that are placed on the heads of girls, during the first communion ceremony. They are also used for crowns and bridal bouquets, although this use has recently been occupied by other types of non-folk crafts.

3.3 The flowers are specially made to be sold. In Guatemala City this trade takes place in the central market, in the shops that after the earthquake of 1976 were located in the Colón playground and in which implements for the ceremonies are sold, such as dresses, veils, rosaries, etc., next to the flowers and coronitas.

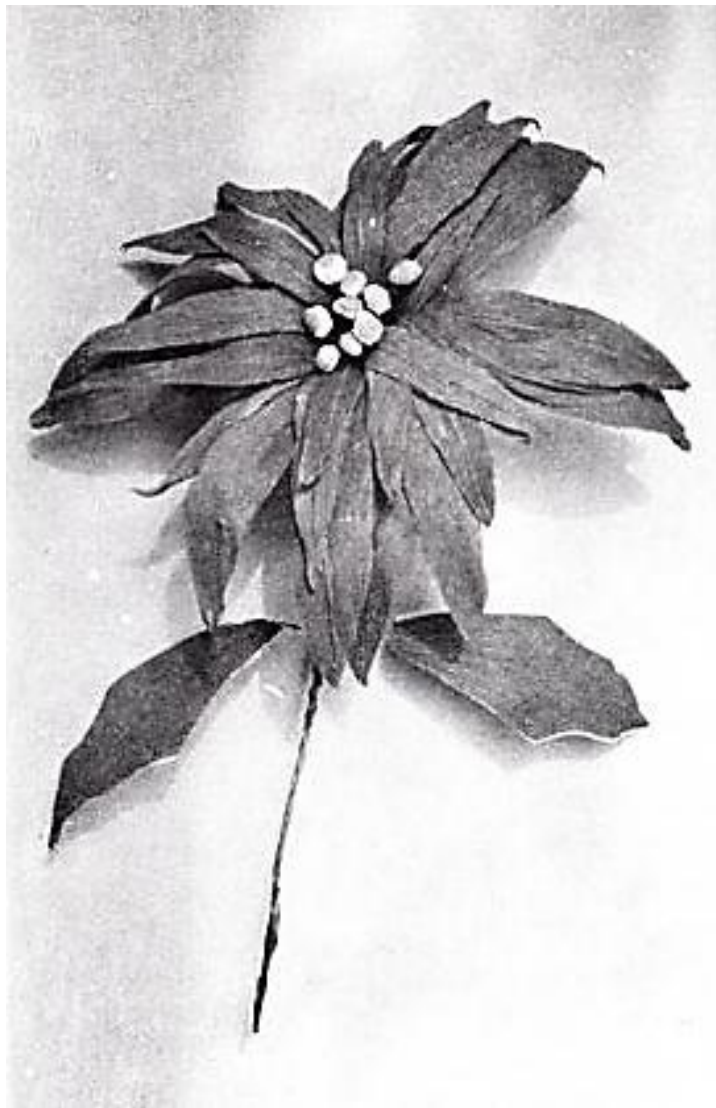
Or, piñatas and other ornaments are sold next to the paper flowers.

The prices vary according to the size, type and quality of flower; also according to the date. So, for example, in the month of September, a white crepe paper nun comes to be worth Q. 1.00.

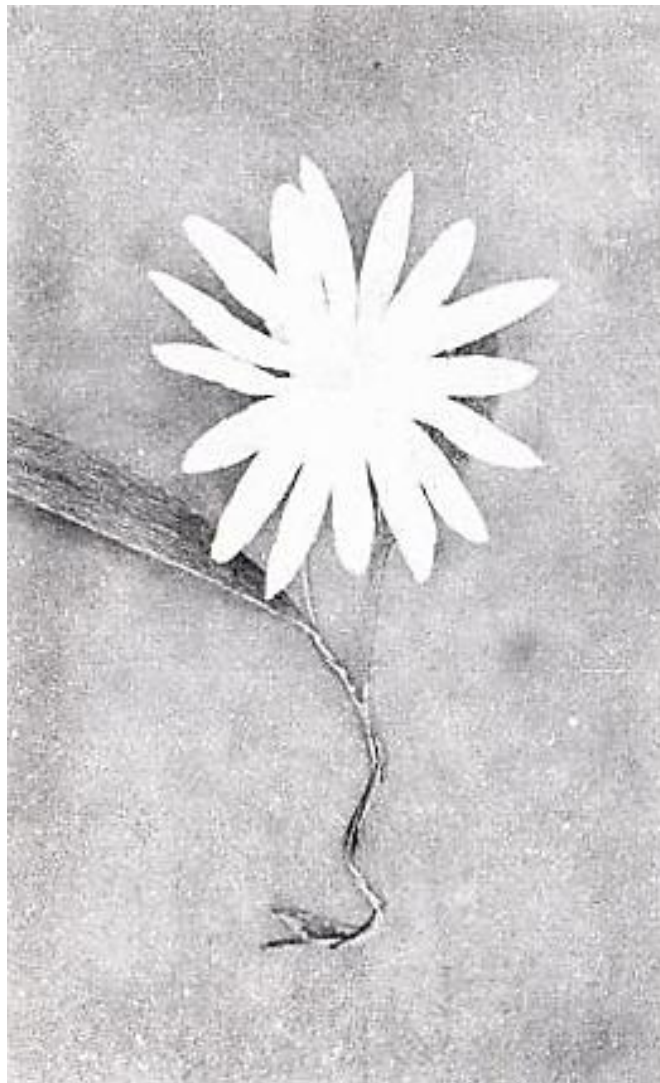
They are usually sold by the dozen or by the unit, at a price ranging from Q. 2.00 and Q. 5.00 a dozen.

This trade is mostly for sale, because the artisans sell their product to the owners of the shops.

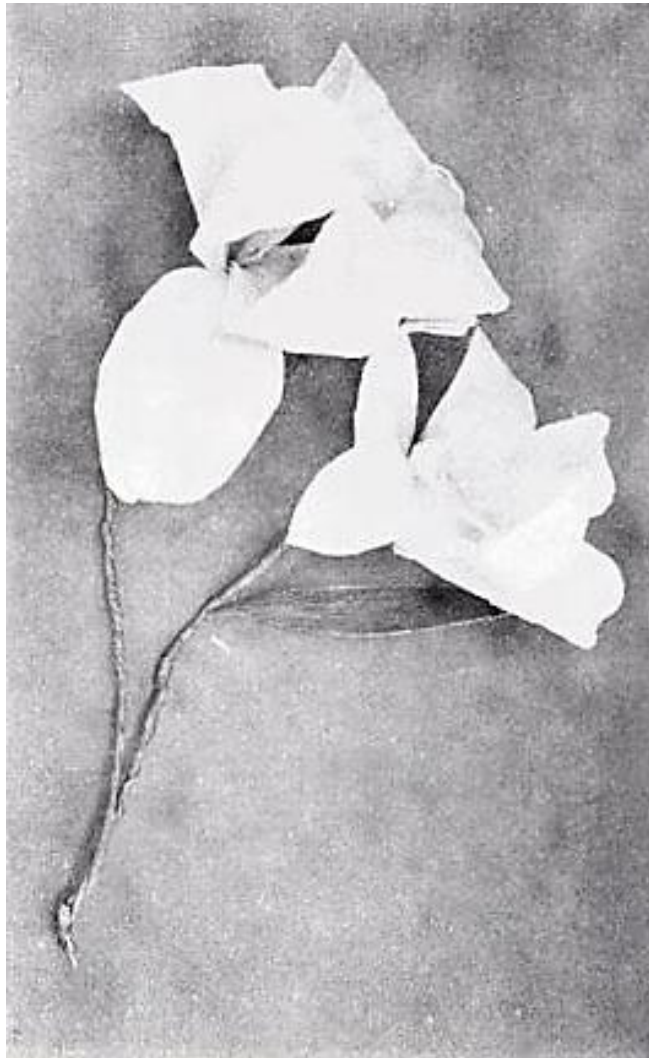
The biggest sale date is November. Since, as mentioned, paper flowers participate in a celebration with deep popular roots: All Saints' Day and the Day of the Dead.



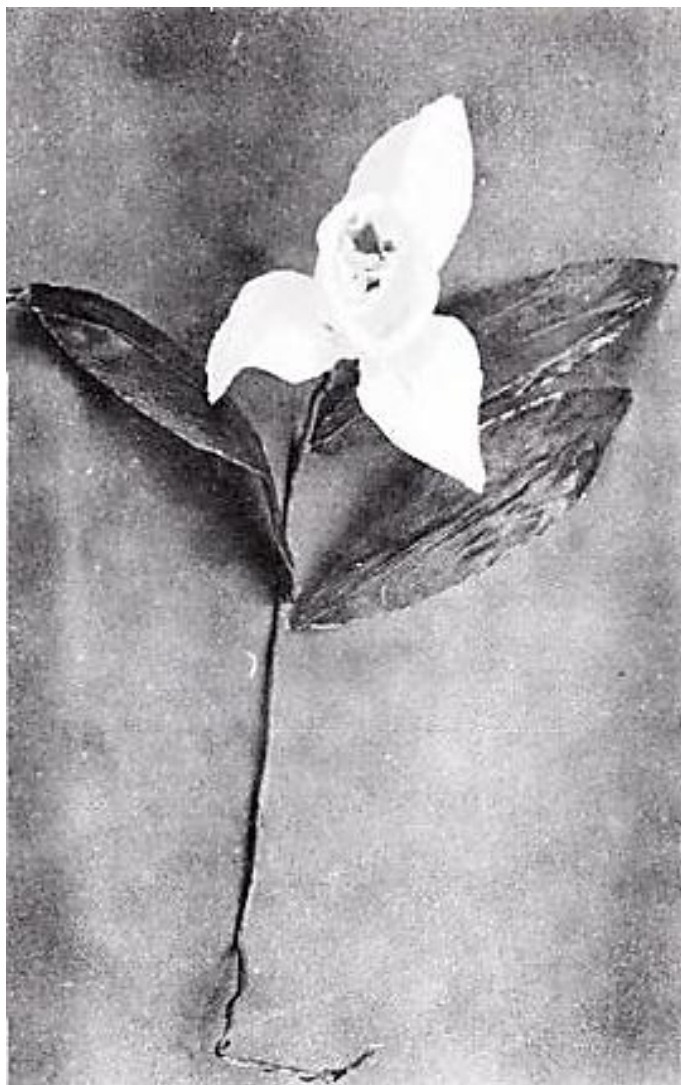
Poinsettia flower. Crepe paper, Comes from La Chácara, zone 5, Guatemala City.



Margarita. Bond paper. It comes from The Little Wheel, Zone 3. Barrio marginal, Guatemala City.



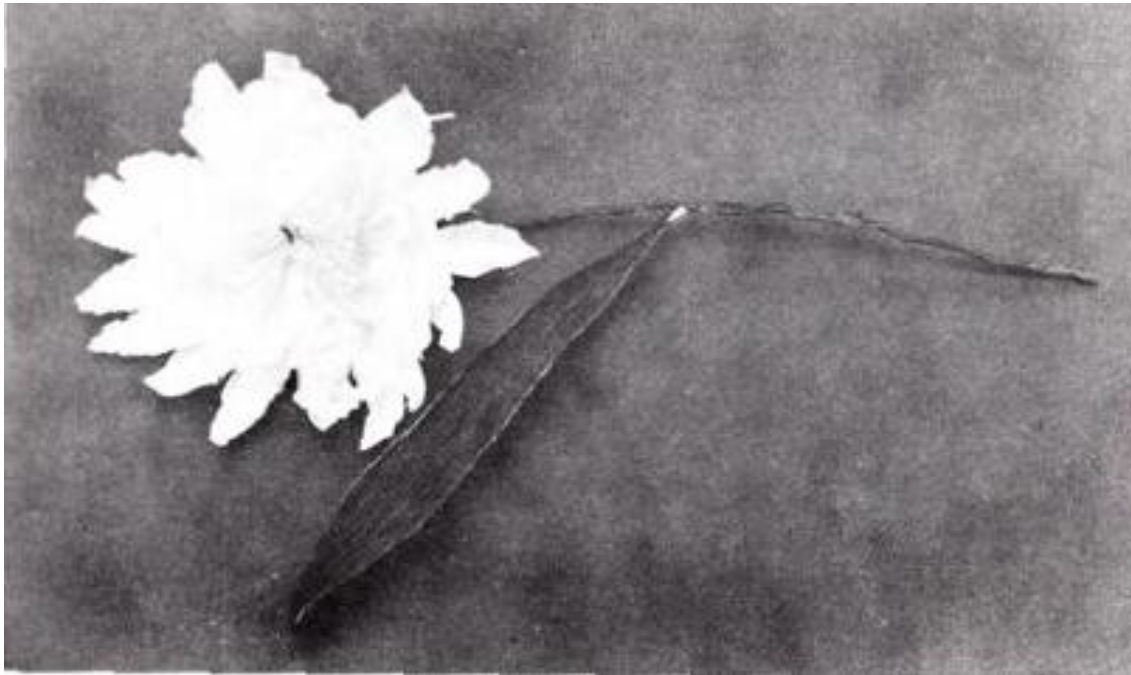
Lily. Waxed crepe paper. Made in the Little Wheel, zone 3. Barrio marginal, Guatemala City



White Nun. Crepe paper. It comes from La Ruedita, zone 3, Guatemala City.



Coffee flower. Crepe paper. Waxed flowers. Made in La Chácara, zone 5, Guatemala City.



Aster. Bond paper. It comes from de La Chácara, zone 5, Guatemala City.

FOLKLORIC PROJECTION