

TINTA, A DYE-YOUR-OWN WEARABLE ART EXPERIENCE Case Study

Lourdes Still, Masagana Flower Farm

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This case study is featured in the first part of the *Destination Dialogues 2024 Report: ReThinking and Crafting Experience Development in Canada's Destinations* by [Celes Davar](#). The report delves into the key concepts and learnings presented in [Destination Dialogues 2024](#), a virtual event organized by Destination Canada, to inspire, inform and empower rural destination development professionals. While Davar facilitated the virtual event, [Lourdes Still](#) was featured as a speaker and Canadian experience host.

Lourdes Still is the founder of [Masagana Flower Farm & Studio](#), a seasonal flower farm, natural dye studio and experiential tourism destination in southeastern Manitoba, between Richer and La Broquerie. She is also the creator of Tinta, a dye-your-own wearable art experience, inviting guests to her family farm to create naturally dyed silk scarves and cotton shawls, using her hand grown flowers and plants.

While there are many fabric artists or natural dyers, there is no one like Lourdes, whose immersion in the geography and climate of rural Manitoba has enabled her to hand grow her blooming farm of flowers.



Lourdes is a new Canadian, bringing both her Filipino heritage and business acumen to the development of her flower farm and Tinta. She feels that being an experience guide is her role and Canada has become her second home.

Her journey begins back in 2013, when she was a flower buyer and wholesaler. She wondered if there was something similar to the Slow Food Movement for flowers.

Sure enough, there was a Slow Flower Movement, as Debra Prinzing, founder of the Slow Flowers™ Society, explains.

“Slow flowers is all about inspiring growers, florists and buyers to use and grow blooms that are local, seasonal and sustainable,” says Debra.

In 2017, Lourdes was introduced to the Living Prairie Museum in Winnipeg, which preserves a small pocket of tall grass prairie. This is where she started to learn more about the disadvantages of having lawns compared with planting a prairie meadow.

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This was the beginning of my gardening journey. As I was tending to plants to take root in the gardens, I, too, was getting rooted.

- Lourdes Still

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In 2018, Lourdes and her husband moved to a rural property and registered Masagana Flower Farm as a business, using a word that means bountiful, plentiful and prosperous in the language of the ethnic Tagalog people in the Philippines.

Since then, Lourdes has transformed 446 square metres of lawns to gardens beds in their front yard. A lightbulb moment came when she learned about a fibre farm north of the property, in Ste-Geneviève, where they raise sheep for yarn and grow flowers to use as dye. This gave Lourdes the idea that she could extend her business activities by diversifying to include natural dyeing. The idea for an on-farm experiential workshop started to form.

Lourdes knew this could differentiate her business from other flower farms.

This is a critical realization that many new experience hosts have during the experience development coaching process. They begin to understand the significance of their own personal story and their differentiators. They understand that their activities are driven by their own passion, desire and interest, growing ever more personalized to their values, geography, climate, and physical, mental and personal boundaries. This is why it is not often possible to duplicate or copy an experience.

THE STORY OF TINTA

As guests arrive, Lourdes is clear that Tinta is not a workshop. She asks each of them to tell a short story about their first garden memory. She explains that this enables her guests to get to know one another. Then, she leads a sharing circle with a meditation to connect her guests to a sense of place, preparing their minds and spirits to participate in this new experience and to be present for the next three to four hours.

The focus of the experience is on creating wearable art by going through the garden, learning how Lourdes turned her previous lawn into a flower farm. Guests start picking flowers themselves to use in designing their own silk scarves.

Moving into the studio, they steam the flowers onto the silk scarves. While the flowers are steaming, guests share lunch in the Filipino tradition of *salusalo*, a Tagalog word that means getting together with friends and family to have a banquet or feast.

After lunch, everyone learns about indigo dye, the plant used and surface design techniques before proceeding to dye a cotton shawl with indigo. The whole experience is closed by sharing the reveal of everyone's scarves and shawls.

Lourdes launched Tinta in 2021, with 160 participants paying \$160 each. In 2022, she raised this price to \$252 and welcomed 75 participants. In 2023, she increased the price again to \$295 and 80 guests took part in the experience. This provided about \$24,000 in summer/ fall revenues in 2023. At the time of writing, in 2024, the price remains \$295. Updated prices can be found on the [Masagana Flower Farm & Studio website](#).





What is significant about this, is that Tinta is not yet Lourdes' full-time business. However, it is adding new revenues to her other income sources. This is how tourism in rural Canada can be successful, through incremental growth that is sustainable, fits into the entrepreneur's lifestyle and location, and fosters business-to-business collaboration.

Perhaps this testimonial from one of her guests captures how Tinta is not just about art, flowers, or even being with Lourdes—this is a wellness experience in a rural setting.

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As a nurse, it's been a hard couple of years. Arriving at Lourdes' beautiful flower farm was like stepping into a different universe. I instantly felt relaxed and happy.

Lourdes is incredibly detail oriented and an amazing host—she looked after us like we were her family. Not only did I learn how to dye fabrics, but the experience left me feeling like I had just been on a vacation!

From the beautiful flower farm to the outdoor studio where the 'magic happens', it was one of the most beautiful spaces I have ever been in. I went home with two beautiful creations I made myself and will be proud to use daily.

I would recommend this to absolutely everyone. Lourdes makes the process very accessible to everyone—no need to have any prior knowledge about flowers or fabrics. Lourdes' love for her art is contagious. She makes me excited to learn more about natural dyes and flowers.

Thank you, Lourdes for an incredible evening I'll never forget!

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What is important to realize from the development of this one experience, is that it launched several innovations and variations of the experience, as well as a new studio.

Lourdes now has five experiences that she personally offers, the original full-day Tinta Experience, as well as four much shorter experiences, at a lower cost:

- Floral dyeing on silk
- Floral dyeing on cotton by hammering flowers
- Indigo dyeing on cotton shawl
- Floral dyeing on silk pillowcases

Following the success of the initial Tinta Experience in 2021, Lourdes applied for grants and loans, and launched a Kickstarter campaign, which was fully funded with 117 backers. This all enabled her to build her new Studio in the Woods in 2023.

The studio is now a hosting space, a production space and an artist studio. Lourdes has been able to use the space to make retail, ready-to-wear pieces to be sold at craft fair and holiday shows, create DIY kits and process wholesale orders.

Creating the Tinta Experience enabled Lourdes to figure out the infrastructure she would need to help sustain the experience all year long, not just in the summer months. As she says herself,

“The studio has so much potential to grow the business.”



CONTACT INFORMATION

Website: <https://www.masaganaflowerfarm.com/>

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