

## Splash-Petal Cattleyas — Colorful Clowns of the Orchid World

FRANK FORDYCE

**A**LL THE WORLD LOVES A CLOWN! There is something immediately entertaining and acceptable to the entire world about a clown that breaks all barriers of language and culture. Only those possessing a uniqueness of character can truly qualify for this fascinating group, for a clown is called upon to be a comedian, tragedian, acrobat, juggler, mime, harlequin, fool, or, upon occasion, a dramatist. It requires dedicated talent to lose one's own identity and personality in the delightful make-believe world of clowns, who, through their dress, makeup and antics, capture the hearts of all who watch them.



Photography: courtesy of Frank Fordyce  
*Cattleya intermedia* var. *aquinii* 'Sao Paulo'

Even the world of orchids has its "clowns", with flowers that delight us with their mimicry and unusual forms. New excitement is being expressed as the splash-petal or peloric forms, take their place in the center arena to entertain us in a light-hearted fashion, so desperately needed in these serious times. I am referring to those somewhat rare clones, whose normal beauty is further enhanced by the reproduction of the labellum color onto the petal area in such a unique manner that it gives the appearance of a splash of color where it has not generally been seen before.

For many years *Cattleya intermedia* variety *aquinii* was the prime cattleya plant used by the hybridizer for the transference of the color of the labellum and throat, in distinct pattern, to the extremities of the petals. The novelty of such a transfer is capturing the attention of an increasing number of orchidists. The majority of the color combinations to this date have been white or cream-colored tepals with purple or cerise-purple splashes on the petal tips, but now more distinct and definite color patterns are appearing.

All this was a delightful departure from the norm, and while a few referred to it as bizarre combinations of color, others were pleased by its uniqueness. Unfortunately, when the *Cattleya intermedia* var. *aquinii* types were used, frequently there



Photography: courtesy of Frank Fordyce

**Laeliocattleya Colorama 'The Clown'**

(*Laeliocattleya* Arctic Snow X *Laeliocattleya* Peggy Huffman)

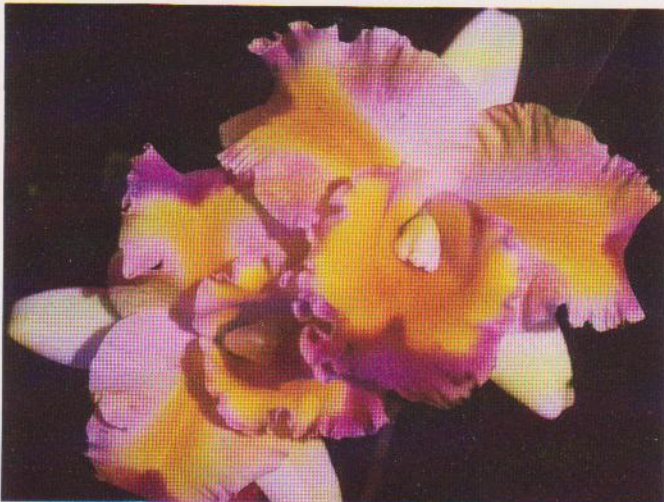
appeared in the progeny abnormalities that were not appealing. These abnormalities appeared sporadically, as the ruffling of the petals was unevenly transferred to some of the sepals, thereby giving an unbalanced look to the blooms. Another trait that plagues hybridists using *C. intermedia* var. *aquinii* is the problem of both the species itself, and its subsequent hybrids, frequently possessing petal formations that sweep forward, closing over the column, thereby giving the appearance that the flower is never fully open.

Fortunately, there are among hybridists those of us who possess an insatiable curiosity about such matters, and set out to find answers that are not yet evident. One such person is Mrs. Fred (Kay) Francis of Pasadena, California. Once an active member of the American Kennel Club and breeder of the Toy Pekingese

**Laeliocattleya Mime 'Court Jester'**

(*Laeliocattleya* Colorama 'The Clown' X *Cattleya intermedia* var. *aquinii*)

Photography: courtesy of Frank Fordyce







*Grower: Mr. and Mrs. P.G. Barnett*      *Photography: Richard Clark*  
**Laeliocattleya Prism Palette 'Rainbow'**, AM/AOS (81 pts)  
*(Laeliocattleya Colorama X Cattleya Horace)*

champion, Boi Pierrot, Kay won prominence among the breeders of dogs nationwide as her champion won twenty Toy-breed competitions and "Best of Show." Following these accolades, she sought additional fields of interest where her skills in breeding might be put to test. She found such a challenge in the hybridizing of orchids and began her collection, embracing a high level of quality in yellow, red and blue *Cattleya* hybrids.

Having been intrigued by a few splashed-petal blooms, Kay became especially interested in such superior clones as *Laeliocattleya* Myrtle Johnson 'Emmett Kelley' (*Lc. Integrity* X *C. intermedia* var. *aquinii*) and *Cattleya trianaei* 'Mooreana.' She was most fortunate to become acquainted with another hobbyist who had in his collection the most distinctly different splashed-petal clone that had been seen to date.

**Laeliocattleya Prism Palette 'Kay'**

*Photography: courtesy of Frank Fordyce*





As orchidists are wont to do, she set her sights upon its acquisition and eventually received the entire clone of *Laeliocattleya* Colorama 'The Clown.' This hybrid was made by the late Franklin Gamble when he crossed a pure-white albino, *Cattleya* Arctic Snow (Estelle X Souvenir de Louis Sander), with the white-with-splashed-petal *Laeliocattleya* Peggy Huffman (*Lc.* Princess Margaret X *C. intermedia* var. *aquinii*). The feature that makes *Laeliocattleya* Colorama 'The Clown' most distinctive is the transference of the bright yellow of the throat of the labellum to the central petal area, while the royal purple of the lower labellum found its way to the extremities of the petal tips. The overall appearance is most pleasing, as the brilliant yellow splashes appear in harmonious contrast to the medium purple of the balance of the flower, all this framed by the royal-purple petal tips.

Kay found *Laeliocattleya* Colorama 'The Clown' easy to grow, producing blooms of standard size with pleasing form and stance. Substance is very good, with blooms lasting very well; stem length and floral spacing are excellent. Blooms do



Photography: courtesy of Frank Fordyce

(*Brassolaeliocattleya* Golden Slippers X *Laeliocattleya* Colorama 'The Clown') 'Borneo Gal'

not fold forward as in *Cattleya intermedia* var. *aquinii*. Another good feature is its winter-spring blooming habit. Fortunately *Lc.* Colorama 'The Clown' hybridizes easily and has an excellent habit of transferring its tricolors to its progeny. With selective hybridizing, it does not dominate progeny form but allows the other parent plant to express that feature. Most of its progeny bloomed to date possess tricolor patterns and have been harmonious, not blotchy or bizarre, in these color patterns. Although color is not transferred as a splashed-petal type in each and every seedling bred from 'The Clown', its dominance is very high when used selectively.

As a young orchid company just beginning business in the 1960's, it was my pleasure to work with, and learn from, Kay Francis, and to acquire some of the future "clowns" of the orchid world in hybrid crosses made by her. While some primary work in splashed-petal types was being done in other areas of the world, at that time Kay felt that most fell short of her desired goals of a blended, harmonious combination of colors; so, as a result, she made the following crosses:

*Laeliocattleya* Mime (*Lc.* Colorama 'The Clown' X *C. intermedia* var. *aquinii*)

*Laeliocattleya* Prism Palette (*Lc.* Colorama 'The Clown' X *C.* Horace 'Maxima', AM/AOS)

Photography: courtesy of Ernest Hetherington

**Laeliocattleya Bella Simpson  
'Nancy'**



**Laeliocattleya Platinum Sun** (*C. Francis T.C. Au* X *Lc. Colorama* 'The Clown')

**Brassolaeliocattleya Color Equation** (*Blc. Iliad* 'Golden Glow', AM/AOS X *Lc. Colorama* 'The Clown')

**Brassolaeliocattleya My Souvenirs** (*Blc. Mellow Vista* X *C. intermedia* var. *aquinii*)

**Brassolaeliocattleya Pride of Salem** (*C. intermedia* var. *aquinii* X *Blc. Lorelei* 'Siren')

**Brassolaeliocattleya Sea of Gold** (*Blc. Pride of Salem* X *Blc. Mellow Vista* 'My Oh My')

(*Lc. Colorama* 'The Clown' X *Blc. Mellow Vista* 'Beautiful Beautiful')

(*Lc. Colorama* 'The Clown' X *L. purpurata* var. *werkhauseri*)

(*Lc. Colorama* 'The Clown' X *Blc. Francis First*) = *Blc. Clown Francis*

(*[C. intermedia* var. *aquinii* X self] X *Blc. Mellowglow* 'Linda Vista', AM/AOS)

(*C. Suavior* 'Aquinii' X *Lc. Colorama* 'The Clown')

(*Lc. Myrtle Johnson* 'Emmett Kelley' X *Blc. Mellow Vista* 'My Oh My')

(*Lc. Myrtle Johnson* 'Emmett Kelley' X *Sophrolaeliocattleya Anzac* 'Orchidhurst', FCC/RHS)

(*Lc. Myrtle Johnson* 'Emmett Kelley' X *Lc. Telegraph Hill* 'Linda Vista', AM/AOS)



**Laeliocattleya Excellency 'Orchidglade'**  
(*Laeliocattleya Lustre* X *Cattleya Suavior*)

Photography: courtesy of Ernest Hetherington





*Photography: courtesy of Ernest Hetherington*

**Laeliocattleya Bangkok Bazaar 'Oriental'**  
(Excellency X Princess Margaret)

Most of these hybrids were given outright to commercial growers who had expressed interest in Kay's work.

As previously mentioned, *Laeliocattleya* Colorama 'The Clown' was hybridized by Mr. Franklin Gamble of Mill Valley, California, a man who, like many of his hybrids, was very distinctive and often controversial in his viewpoints. Although Mr. Gamble passed away many years ago, he left behind some of the most exciting hybrid breeding lines in the novelty type of cattleyas that exist today. As it is our nature, too many of us tend to laugh at, dismiss, or criticize hybridizers whose efforts we either fail to understand, or who do not meet the criteria or standards that we ourselves set forth in hybridizing. As is true in all walks of life, there must be a pioneer that risks the first step into the unknown, and leads the way for others to

**Laeliocattleya Bangkok Bazaar '#1266'**

*Photography: courtesy of Ernest Hetherington*



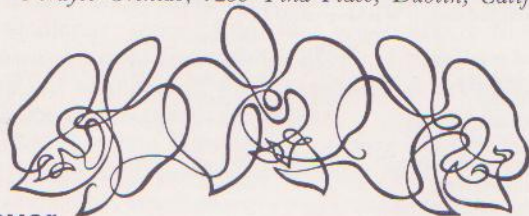
follow. We must recognize that each and every step we take in a planned hybridizing effort may not achieve a pinnacle of success. That individual step may have established a certain feature in a hybrid that will lie fallow for years until another hybridizer discovers the key to its use and continues to establish a complete breeding line that survives the element of time, and is accepted as a standard by the trade.

While not everyone enjoys the clown of the circus, I think you will agree that they do have a universal appeal. It is my hope that the distinctive line of breeding involving *Laeliocattleya* Colorama 'The Clown' may bring pleasure and happiness to all who grow orchids by allowing them to lose themselves amongst the beauty found in these unusual color combinations.



Photography: courtesy of Ernest Hetherington  
*Brassocattleya Sonia Clark*

Speaking for the orchid world, thank you, Kay Francis, for adding tremendously to our pleasure in the growing of orchids by presenting the "happy clowns" of the cattleya world! — *Fordyce Orchids, 7259 Tina Place, Dublin, California 94566.*



## The Front Cover

*EPIDENDRUM CNEMIDOPHORUM* makes for a dazzling November front cover, its inflorescence an explosion of bright color on the printed page. Nicely grown by Mr. Raymond McCullough, *Epidendrum cnemidophorum* 'Chiapas' won the unanimous approval of a team of A.O.S. judges at the Mid-America Orchid Congress in Nashville, Tennessee last March to be awarded a Judges' Commendation: "Commended for attractively spotted and intensely colored blooms on large racemes." Edwin S. Boyett, Jr. artfully captures the beauty of this Mexican species in the dramatic front cover photograph.