



# Balcony in Bloom

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A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/60-Balcony-in-Bloom>

MY PAINTING CLUB

# Introduction

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In this chapter, we're diving into the vibrant world of painting with a focus on a stunning flowering balcony scene from Spain. This project is all about enhancing the vibrancy of colors to give the scene that extra 'oomph' it deserves. With just three synthetic brushes—a filbert, a long flat, and a rigger or liner brush from Rosemary and Co—you'll be equipped to tackle this classic subject. I'll guide you step by step, using Cobra water mixable oils from Royal Talens and walnut oil as the painting medium, to bring this balcony to life. You'll learn essential techniques such as drawing, creating interesting textures, and boosting colors to transform a potentially subdued scene into a lively masterpiece. This lesson is designed to help you focus on selecting a single subject amidst many options, and then enhancing its natural beauty with vibrant hues. Join me in this rewarding exploration of color and technique, and enjoy the process of creating your own vibrant balcony in bloom.





*"Balcony in Bloom" 10 x 13" Oil on Canvas by Richard Robinson.*





**REFERENCE PHOTO 1**

*The scene as Richard found it.*





**REFERENCE PHOTO 2**

*The scene as Richard found it.*





**REFERENCE PHOTO 3**

*The scene as Richard found it.*





**REFERENCE PHOTO 4**

*The scene as Richard found it.*



# Materials

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Gather these materials before you start. If you don't have the exact same supplies, use what you have and substitute freely.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- M. Graham & Co. Oil Paints
- Alizarine Crimson
- Phthalo Blue
- Ultramarine Blue
- Burnt Sienna
- Cadmium Red
- Cadmium Orange
- Yellow Ochre
- Cadmium Yellow Light
- Titanium White
- Painting medium
- M. Graham & Co. Walnut Alkyd Medium or Walnut Oil
- Solvent
- Gamsol
- Canvas
- Fredrix ultrasmooth canvas (Giving it a light sanding first helps the paint stick better).
- You could use a canvas panel or anything you prefer.
- Brushes
- [Rosemary & Co. Richard Robinson Brush Set](#)
- Palette Knife
- Paper Towels
- Container for solvent
- Container for painting medium



## 1 Choosing the subject



### Select Your Subject

Focus on choosing one subject to paint, even when surrounded by many options. Look for something that catches your eye, like a beautiful balcony.

### Enhance Vibrancy

Consider how you can enhance the vibrancy of your chosen subject. If the original scene lacks punchy color, think about how you might introduce more vibrant hues to bring it to life.

#### PRO TIP

*When overwhelmed by choices, focus on a small detail that stands out to you.*



## 2 Enhancing color vibrancy



### Enhance Color Vibrancy

Use a smartphone or photo editing software to increase the saturation of your painting's colors by about 50%. This will help you visualize a more vibrant scene. Adjust the values of the shadows slightly to add more light overall, removing gray from the colors and enhancing their vibrancy.

#### PRO TIP

*Increase color saturation by 50% to remove gray and make colors more vibrant.*

### 3 Perspective drawing



#### Understand Perspective

Examine the image carefully to understand the perspective. Notice how lines that would normally be horizontal slope down to vanishing points on the horizon, which is at your eye level. Recognize that vertical lines also converge to a point.

#### Draw the Center Lines

Begin your drawing by sketching a center line for the peak above the window using yellow ochre thinned with water. Continue to draw center lines for each part of the window, keeping in mind that each part has a slightly different center line.

#### Consider Drawing Options

Decide whether to draw freehand or trace/project the image onto your canvas. Freehand drawing can be challenging but is excellent practice for training your eye, as painting is essentially drawing with color.

#### PRO TIP

*Pay close attention to how perspective lines converge to vanishing points to achieve an accurate drawing.*



## 4 Adjusting composition



### Adjust the Balcony Railing

Lower the level of the railing on the balcony to reveal more of the blue reflection in the window and additional woodwork. This adjustment enhances the composition by showcasing these elements.

### Plan the Painting Sequence

Decide to leave the greenery until last. Begin by painting all the darks and shadows in the wall, overhang, and window beneath the balcony. This approach helps establish depth and structure.

### Layer Lights and Details

After completing the dark areas, paint the lights on top. Then, add the greenery, flowers, and small details to finish the painting. This sequence ensures clarity and vibrancy in your work.

### Maintain the Drawing

Continuously draw as you paint, checking angles, shapes, and spacings. This practice helps maintain the composition and improves accuracy.

#### PRO TIP

*Continuously check and adjust your drawing as you paint to maintain accuracy and composition.*

## 5 Painting darks and shadows



### Warm Up the Color

Add some red to your paint mixture to warm up the color. This will be used for the woodwork and the door areas.

### Apply the Dark Thinly

Mix in a fair amount of walnut oil to ensure the paint is thin enough to cover the canvas without leaving gaps. The dark areas should be applied thinly to avoid canvas texture showing through.

### Enhance with More Red

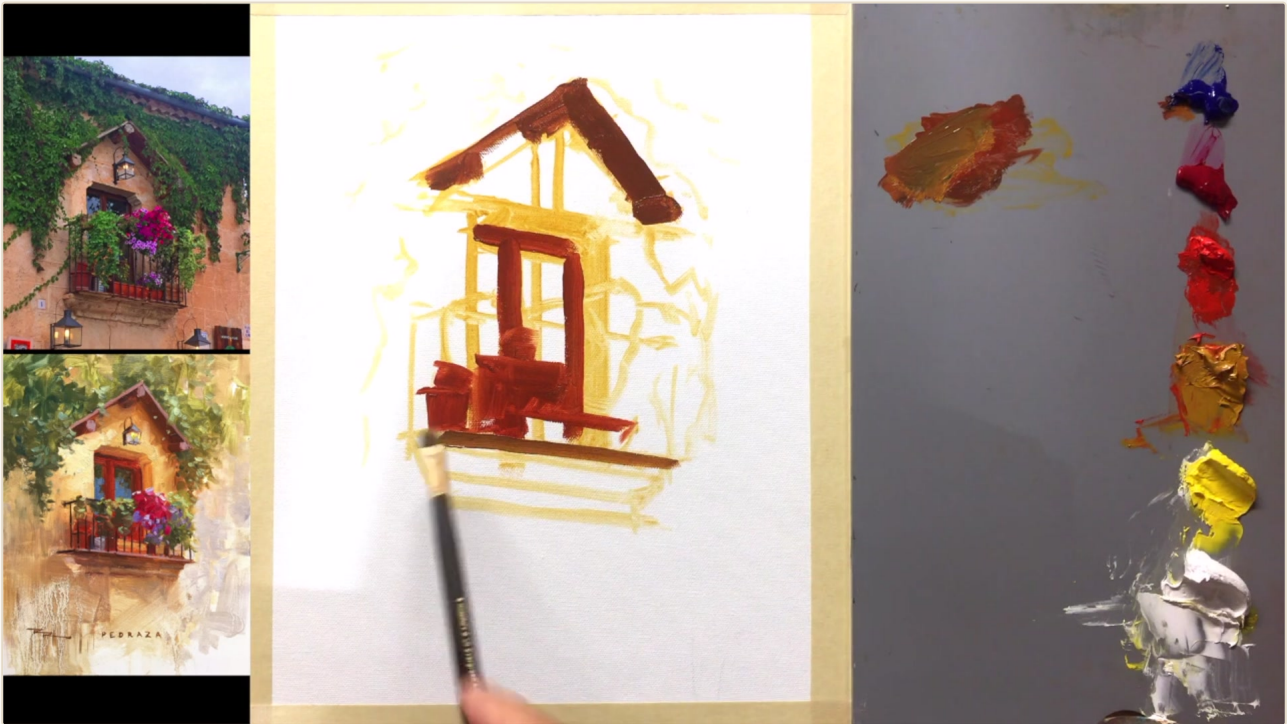
Add a little more red to the mixture to start indicating the pots. This will help to bring out the warmth and detail in those areas.

#### PRO TIP

*Ensure the dark paint is thin enough to cover the canvas without leaving gaps.*



## 6 Shadow and light edges



### Mix Shadow Colors

Underneath the balcony, mix a little blue, yellow ochre, and a touch of white to create a gray tone. This will help the color sit nicely in the shadows.

### Create Soft Shadows

Add a touch of yellow ochre to the gray mix to paint the soft shadow under the overhang. As the shadow moves into the light, lighten it slightly.

### Adjust Shadow Lightness

To lighten and warm the shadow as it moves into the light, add bright yellow and a little white. If the color is too dark, use it for the shadow inside the door frame instead.

### Define Shadow Edges

Create a soft edge where the shadow inside the door frame meets the wood of the door. Use a sharp edge where the shadow meets the light on the outside wall.

#### PRO TIP

*Use soft edges where shadows meet shadows and sharp edges where shadows meet light to add variation.*

## 7 Creating texture with brushwork



### Grey Down the Warm Color

Add a little bit of blue and a little bit of white to the warm color around the bottom of the window. This will grey it down slightly, allowing the vibrant colors in the flowers and window reflection to stand out.

### Apply Thin and Gestural Brushwork

Apply the mixed color thinly and as gesturally as possible. Aim for a texturally interesting area by allowing your hand to move freely, creating random brushwork.

#### PRO TIP

*Practice letting your hand move freely to create random, gestural brushwork for added texture.*



## 8 Adding depth with dark accents



### Add Dark Accents

Enhance the depth of the window by adding a few dark accents in the shadowed areas. This will create a more dynamic and realistic appearance.

### Apply Reflected Light

Introduce a touch of reflected light under the balcony to suggest subtle illumination. This small detail can add a sense of realism to the scene.

### Create Textured Stone Effect

Lightly drag the brush across the canvas surface to allow the stroke to break up with the canvas texture. This technique mimics the look of old stone, adding authenticity to the painting.

#### PRO TIP

*Lightly drag the brush to let the canvas texture create a stone-like effect.*

## 9 Painting light areas



### Prepare the Light Area

Rub off some of the existing paint in the light area above the window to avoid excessive thickness. This will prepare the surface for a fresh layer of color.

### Mix and Apply the Base Color

Mix yellow ochre, primary yellow, and white to create a better color for the light area. Apply this mixture thickly without using any walnut oil or painting medium to achieve a rich, textured effect.

### Enhance with Lighter Tones

Add a lighter tone in the corner by piling on more paint. This will create a thick, textural quality that enhances the light effect.

#### PRO TIP

*Rub off excess paint before applying a new layer to prevent unwanted thickness.*



## 10 Working with grays



### Create a Light Wash

Mix the wall color with a bit of water or thinners to lighten and gray it slightly. Apply this as a very light wash on the wall area. Use a paper towel to dab the wash, creating a loose textured effect.

### Paint the Post Ends

Use thicker paint to apply a fairly neutral gray to the ends of the posts. Ensure the gray matches the correct value for the area. Adjust the gray to be warmer or cooler as needed.

#### PRO TIP

*If you can't identify a color, it's likely a gray; focus on matching the value first.*

## 11 Painting foliage shadows



### Prepare the Brush

Load the paint onto the very tip of your brush to create fine lines. Consider using a rigger brush for more precision if preferred.

### Mix the Shadow Green

Combine nearly every color on your palette, except for magenta, to create a dark muted green. This will serve as the shadow color for the foliage.

### Apply Shadow Colors

Lay down all the shadow colors first, using the dark muted green. This will provide a foundation for the foliage shadows.

### Build on the Shadows

After establishing the shadow colors, layer lighter greens on top to develop the foliage.

#### PRO TIP

*Use a rigger brush for more precision when painting fine lines.*



## 12 Foliage shapes and highlights



### Create Large Foliage Shapes

Paint large, interesting shapes to form the main body of the foliage. Focus on making these shapes varied to add realism.

### Add Flicks for Variety

Add small flicks to the edges of the large shapes. These flicks provide variety and enhance the realism of the foliage.

### Avoid Overworking

Place the flicks carefully and then leave them. Avoid fiddling with them to prevent the colors from turning muddy.

#### PRO TIP

*Be loose when painting towards the edges of the canvas to maintain a natural look.*

## 13 Reflections and light families



### Paint Foliage Reflections

Use a very dark blue-green to represent the reflection of the foliage in the window. For the reflection of the sky, apply a pure darkish blue. This will complete the shadow families for the foliage.

### Add Light Families

Paint the light families on top using thicker paint. Incorporate more blue into these colors to reflect the overcast day, giving them a bluish tinge.

### Vary Light Colors

Vary the color of the lights slightly for each different plant. This variation will add depth and interest to your painting.

### Maintain Clean Highlights

Apply only a few brush strokes before cleaning and reloading your brush. This technique keeps the highlights clean, prevents muddiness, and ensures sharp edges.

#### PRO TIP

*Vary the light colors for each plant to add depth and interest.*



## 14 Painting flowers



### Apply Shadow Color

Use magenta or alizarin crimson to apply the shadow color for the flowers. This sets the foundation for depth in your floral arrangement.

### Add Dark Accents

Use pure magenta to add dark accents to the flowers. This enhances the contrast and gives the flowers a more vibrant appearance.

### Highlight the Flowers

Mix magenta with a little bit of white and apply it on top of the flowers to create highlights. This step brings out the lighter areas and adds dimension.

### Paint Purple Flowers

Create a beautiful violet using ultramarine blue, magenta, and white. Apply this mixture for the purple flowers, adding more white for the highlights.

### Shape the Foliage

Use a darker green to add dark accents to the foliage, shaping it and adding depth. Include a few thicker highlights to enhance the texture.

#### PRO TIP

*Use pure magenta for dark accents to enhance contrast in the flowers.*

## 15 Foliage detailing



### Maintain Clean Brushwork

Ensure your brush is clean before each new stroke. Reload it with fresh paint to maintain vibrant colors and precise detailing in your foliage work.

#### PRO TIP

*Keep your brush clean and reloaded between strokes to achieve crisp and vibrant foliage details.*



## 16 Color interpretation



### Understand Color Interpretation

Recognize that the colors in a painting don't have to match the photo exactly. Focus on capturing the essence and mood of the scene rather than exact color duplication.

### Raise Color Saturation

Consider increasing the saturation of colors in your painting. This can enhance the vibrancy and impact of your artwork, making it more visually appealing.

### Choose Your Approach

Decide whether to closely follow the photograph's colors or to interpret them more freely. Both approaches are valid, so choose the one that aligns with your artistic vision.

#### PRO TIP

*Enhancing color saturation can make your painting more vibrant and visually striking.*

## 17 Using broken color



### Add Cooler Gray to the Wall

Introduce variation to the warm wall by adding a cooler gray. This technique, known as broken color, enhances the painting's depth and interest.

### Match the Gray's Value

Ensure the cool gray matches the value of the area you're painting. For darker areas, use a slightly darker gray, and for lighter areas, use a slightly lighter gray.

### Create a Shimmering Effect

Achieve a beautiful shimmering effect by balancing warm and cool colors. This effect, favored by the impressionists, adds vibrancy and movement to your painting.

#### PRO TIP

*Use a cool gray that matches the value of the area to create a harmonious balance between warm and cool colors.*



## 18 Creating texture with form



### Wipe Off Excess Paint

Remove some of the paint to start fresh and create a base for new texture. This helps in building layers effectively.

### Create and Break the Form

Shape the form with your brush, then disrupt it slightly to introduce organic texture. Repeat this process to achieve a balance between accuracy and looseness in your painting.

### Blend with a Dry Brush

Use a dry brush to soften and blend the textures you've created. This technique helps in integrating the textures smoothly into the painting.

#### PRO TIP

*Alternate between forming and breaking the form to develop natural texture.*

## 19 Final details and railings



### Create Random Texture

Dip a fan brush into Gamsol, which is an odourless thinner. Lightly splatter it onto the painting. Allow a few minutes for it to dribble down and eat away at some of the paint, creating a nice random texture.

### Add Finishing Details

Apply a few finishing details to the pots and surrounding elements. Ensure these areas are complete before moving on to the railings to avoid painting around them later.

### Paint the Railings

Use a maul stick to steady your hand while painting the railings. This will help you maintain control and precision for these fine lines.

#### PRO TIP

*Use a maul stick to steady your hand for precise details like railings.*



## 20 Painting fine lines



### Prepare the Brush

Use a liner or rigger brush for this step. Add a bit of gamsole or your preferred thinner to the dark mixture to ensure it flows smoothly off the brush.

### Paint Fine Lines

Reload your brush for each stroke to maintain a consistent flow of paint. Aim to complete each line in as few strokes as possible to prevent the paint from becoming muddy.

#### PRO TIP

*Thin down your paint mixture with a solvent to achieve smooth, fine lines.*

## 21 Painting the light fixture



### Position the Light Fixture

Place the light fixture in the center of the window. Use perspective by finding the center of the space with diagonals, then run a vertical line through the middle to locate the center accurately.

### Paint the Glass

Use a light grey to paint the glass of the light fixture. Keep the brush strokes minimal to maintain simplicity and clarity.

### Add Dark Strokes

Apply dark strokes on top of the light grey, ensuring they follow the perspective lines. This will help maintain the structure and depth of the fixture.

### Create the Glow

Paint the light itself with thick strokes of white and bright yellow. Avoid painting a dark line through the light area to preserve its glowing effect.

#### PRO TIP

*Use perspective lines to accurately position elements in your painting.*



## 22 Finishing touches



### Add Final Flowers

Add a few more small flowers to enhance the composition. Focus on areas that need a touch of color or detail to balance the painting.

### Sign the Painting

Sign your painting in a subtle yet visible area. Consider including the name of the village, 'Pedrata', for a personal touch and to provide context.

### Remove the Tape

Carefully pull off the tape to reveal clean edges and a finished look. This step adds a professional touch to your artwork.

#### PRO TIP

*Include the name of the location in your signature for added context and personalization.*

# Summary & Key Takeaways

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Embark on your painting journey by selecting a subject that captivates you, such as a vibrant balcony scene. Enhance the vibrancy of your colors to breathe life into your composition, and carefully consider the perspective to lay a strong foundation for your artwork. As you progress, adjust the composition to reveal interesting elements and establish depth by painting darks and shadows first.

Move through the painting process by skillfully managing light and shadow, using texture to add interest, and incorporating depth with dark accents. Pay attention to the interplay of colors and textures, allowing your brushwork to create dynamic and realistic effects. As you add foliage and floral details, focus on creating varied shapes and highlights to bring your scene to life.

In the final stages, refine your painting with precise details and fine lines, ensuring each element contributes to the overall harmony of the piece. Embrace the freedom to interpret colors and textures, enhancing the vibrancy and mood of your artwork. With each stroke, aim to capture the essence of the scene, creating a visually striking and cohesive painting.

## LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Focus on a small detail that stands out to you when choosing a subject.
- Increase color saturation by 50% to remove gray and make colors more vibrant.
- Pay close attention to how perspective lines converge to vanishing points.
- Continuously check and adjust your drawing as you paint to maintain accuracy.
- Ensure the dark paint is thin enough to cover the canvas without leaving gaps.
- Use soft edges where shadows meet shadows and sharp edges where shadows meet light.
- Practice letting your hand move freely to create random, gestural brushwork.
- Use pure magenta for dark accents to enhance contrast in the flowers.





*"Balcony in Bloom" 10 x 13" Oil on Canvas by Richard Robinson.*



# Student Critiques

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Club members painted their own versions of this scene and I critiqued each one. Their paintings — and my feedback — are a wonderful way to see this lesson's ideas in action.

**"Blooming Balcony" by Ana Murza**



*"Blooming Balcony" 10x13" Watercolour on 300gsm Arches Paper by Ana Murza*

Wow this is fantastic Ana! Beautifully done. Great colour and drawing and I especially love the fading out of the foliage at the top and the long soft shadow cast under the balcony. Congratulations on a painting well done - there's nothing I'd change.



## “Provencal boutique with balcony” by Jessica Futerman



*"Provencal boutique with balcony" 30x40cm Oil on Canvas by Jessica Futerman*

Lovely painting, Jessica, brimming with life and colour. Great to see you employing a range of contrasting brushwork from dainty to bravura, needle to broom. The green and red make a nice counterbalance. Nice too, to be able to walk into the shop and explore a little.

There are just two things I might look at changing if this were mine:

1. Break the hard line of the balcony across the middle of the canvas by allowing more wall on the right and solidifying some of the drapping foliage. This would give the eye easier paths to follow from top to bottom.
2. Consider the quality of the light more. I would expect to see soft shadowing beneath the balcony and window ledge and possible soft or cast shadows on the main green sign from the plants overhanging it.

Beautiful!

## "Balcony in Bloom" by Jan Duarte



*"Balcony in Bloom" 33x25cm Oil on Canvas by Jan Duarte*

"For some reason I thought it would be a good idea to finish using up some old student grade paints I had laying around and after trying out artist quality paints, I realized I had made this exercise 10 times harder.

I'm quite happy with the texture I achieved at the bottom but I'm aware that my brushwork needs many more years of practice to avoid muddiness, just haven't quite learned how much oil to use with my stiff paints." - Jan

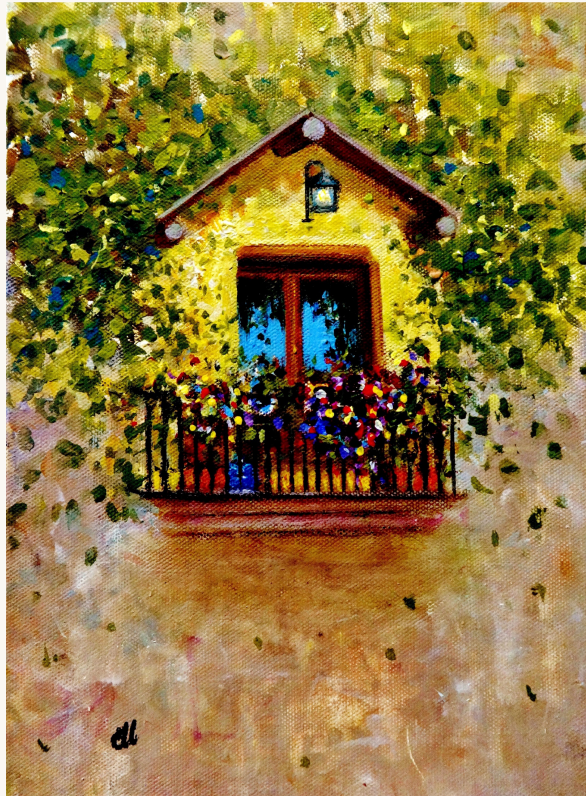
Hi Jan you've done a great job of your drawing, brushwork and your colour work despite using student grade paints. I really like the way you've massed the wall creepers and lightened them off to the right to add some depth. A few things I would like to see done better:

1. The shadow under the roof could be softened and the right pole connected better to the wall by rounding it there and shadowing it.
2. You could have used more flowers to add more strong colour.
3. The texture at the bottom needs more work to add interest there. You can still add this once it's dry. Go crazy with it! You've really got to cut loose to get interesting texture. Some faint hint of blockwork to the sides might be nice too.

Overall a great result with a little more work to take it to the next level. Nicely done!



**"Waiting for you.." by Cristina Mihailescu**



*"Waiting for you.." Oil on Canvas by Cristina Mihailescu*

Nice to see you coming up with something slightly different here Cristina - the painting is now much more about the bright yellow wall and the scattering of falling leaves as if the scene itself is being dissolved from the ground up, or a sprinkling of fairy dust. As a design this works really well.

Architecturally, your flattening of the horizontals has made the balcony seem more frontal whereas the window and roof appear to be at a different angle. The central roof pole meets the wall is off centre too, so there are quite a few issues with the drawing, but apart from that it still looks beautiful. Good job.