



Bouquet of Roses

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/63-Bouquet-of-Roses>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

In this chapter, I invite you to join me in the delightful exploration of painting a bouquet of roses, a subject that is both challenging and immensely rewarding. As we delve into this lesson, you'll learn how to infuse your floral paintings with joy and vitality, capturing the delicate beauty of roses with broken color and lyrical brushwork. We'll focus on the subtle hue shifts in the white rose, a task that requires a keen eye and a gentle touch. You'll also discover the magic of reflected light, which brings an added dimension of realism to the petals, making them appear almost tangible. This scene offers a wonderful opportunity to practice and refine your skills, as it combines the complexity of floral forms with the simplicity of a harmonious color palette. Whether you're a seasoned painter or just starting out, this lesson will enrich your understanding and appreciation of floral art, leaving you with a piece that radiates joy and elegance. Let's get started on this creative journey together!



"Bouquet of Roses" 11 x 11" 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

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 Canvas Preparation

Apply Gesso

Apply a coat of gesso to the canvas to improve absorbency and help the paint adhere better. This additional layer ensures your painting surface is well-prepared, enhancing the final outcome of your artwork.

Tape the Canvas

Secure the canvas in place using tape to keep it stable while you work. This step is crucial for a smooth and uninterrupted painting experience.

2 Painting the Background

Apply Background Color

Dip a big brush into Gamsol and start applying the background color using warm tones. Adjust the warmth by adding a bit of blue if it appears too warm to achieve the desired balance.

Thin and Smooth the Background

Apply the background color thinly with Gamsol, then use a paper towel to remove any excess. This ensures a smooth and controlled application.

Experiment with White

Add a little bit of white to the background wash to see what effect it has on the overall look. This can add an interesting dimension to the background.

Maintain Clean Edges

Be careful not to get any background color into the flowers to avoid muddying them. Maintaining clean edges between the background and the flowers is crucial for a vibrant painting.

Use Less Gamsol

Use less Gamsol in the background layer to prevent it from affecting the layer underneath. This helps maintain the integrity of the painting's layers.

3 Joyful Painting Philosophy

Embrace Joyful Movement

Aim to convey a feeling of joy in your painting by imagining a bouquet of flowers thrown into the air, with petals coming off. Capture a sense of joyful movement and spontaneity in your brushwork.

Adopt a Loose Painting Style

Use loose brushwork to create a beautiful, quick impression in your artwork. This approach allows for a sense of joy and spontaneity without being sloppy.

Balance Detail and Spontaneity

Incorporate details if that aligns with your personal style, while maintaining a joyful and spontaneous feel. Even detailed work can convey speed and joy when executed thoughtfully.

4 Using Broken Colour

Mix a Mauve Color

Combine Alizarin Crimson with a little bit of blue to create a lovely mauve shade. This color can add a joyful element to your painting.

Understand Broken Colour

Use colors of a similar value that are somewhat separated on the color wheel. This technique can create a sense of joy, as seen with the use of oranges, pinks, and mauves.

Maintain a Clean Palette

Keep your palette clean to avoid unintentional color mixing, which can result in muddy colors. This is crucial when preparing areas for specific elements like flowers, where vibrant and distinct colors are desired.

Avoid Muddy Colors

Ensure the area where the flowers will be painted is free from unwanted color mixing. Mixing flower paint with other colors on the palette can dull their vibrancy.

5 Blocking in Dark Reds

Start with Darker Reds

Begin by using a darker red to block in the main shapes of the roses. This allows you to reserve the purest, most vibrant red for the highlights, creating contrast and depth later.

Mix in Blue for Shadows

Add a touch of blue to your red to create a darker, more muted shade. Use this mixture to paint the shadow areas, enhancing depth and contrast within the flower.

Simplify Shapes by Squinting

Squint your eyes to simplify complex details into larger shapes and values. This helps you focus on the big shapes, much like fitting together pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

Paint Beyond the Edges

Don't worry about painting past the edges when blocking in shapes. This allows you to capture the overall composition without getting bogged down in details too early.

6 Painting White Flowers

Establish Big Color Shapes

Mix Alizarin with a little yellow and some white, adding a bit of painting medium gel. Use this combination to establish the big color shapes in the flowers.

Adjust Colors for Depth

Place initial colors down to easily compare and adjust them. Observe how colors change in different areas, adding more red and white if they appear more orange or pink. This helps in understanding the necessary value changes.

Create a Stained Glass Effect

Aim to create an effect similar to a stained glass window by allowing light to pass through the red petals, casting red light onto nearby petals. The closer the petals are to the 'stained glass,' the more red they should appear, adding depth and interest.

Depict Petal Form with Half Tones

As the petal curls over, transition into a half tone using a cool grey. This transition helps depict the three-dimensional form of the petals.

Simplify Complex Forms

Squint at your subject to better see and focus on the big shapes. This technique simplifies complex forms into a more manageable 'jigsaw puzzle,' aiding in maintaining the overall composition and balance.

Define Shadows Before Lights

Avoid putting in the lights initially. Focus on defining shadow shapes and intensifying colors first, planning to add lights later as you refine the drawing. This methodical approach ensures a balanced and dynamic composition.

7 Adding Lights and Details

Simplify the Scene

Squint to simplify the scene, focusing on major shapes and values. This helps avoid getting lost in the details, especially with complex subjects like a bouquet of roses.

Maintain Vibrant Colors

Clean your brush thoroughly if it picks up unwanted paint. This prevents muddy strokes and keeps your colors vibrant and distinct.

Create Dynamic Lines

Twist a sharp-edged brush as you paint to create calligraphic strokes. This technique adds dynamic and expressive lines, enhancing finer details and realism.

Capture Light on Petals

Observe how light affects rose petals, creating variations in brightness along curves. Capture these subtleties to enhance the realism of your painting.

Use Reflected Light for Depth

Add a thin strip of light in shadowed areas to create a three-dimensional effect. This contrast helps turn the form and adds depth to your painting.

Focus on the Focal Point

Be less exacting with non-central parts of the painting. This allows you to concentrate detail on the focal point, guiding the viewer's eye and maintaining balance.

8 Painting Red Flowers

Prepare Your Palette and Brushes

Clean your palette and brushes thoroughly before starting to paint red flowers. This ensures that the colors remain pure and vibrant, avoiding any dulling from leftover colors.

Mix Dark Accents

Use alizarin crimson with a little red to create dark accents for the red flowers. These colors help form soft edges in the shadows, giving a natural look to the painting.

Enhance Highlight Colors

Add magenta to your highlight color mix to improve vibrancy. Magenta, when mixed with white, creates a stronger and purer color than alizarin, providing the punch needed for highlights.

Understand Magenta's Versatility

Recognize magenta as the primary red due to its ability to mix with bright yellow to produce cadmium red. This makes magenta essential for achieving a range of red hues.

Apply Lyrical Brushwork

Use lyrical brushwork to create swishy, calligraphic shapes that enhance the natural beauty of roses. This technique helps the painting come together like a cohesive piece of music.

9 Painting Green Leaves

Mix Dark Green

Combine blue, yellow ochre, and occasionally a touch of Alizarin and yellow to create a dark green. This mixture will provide the various shades needed for the leaves.

Apply Mid Values

Start by applying the mid values of green to the leaves. This will serve as the foundation for building depth and dimension.

Add Dark Accents

Use a mix of blue, Alizarin, and a touch of yellow to create really dark darks. Apply these to add depth and contrast, enhancing the three-dimensionality of the leaves.

Finish with Light Accents

Finally, add light accents to the leaves to make them stand out. This will create a balanced and dynamic composition.

Create Unique Leaf Shapes

Use varied brush strokes to ensure each leaf has its own unique character. Avoid making two leaves the same to add interest and individuality to your painting.

Use Gamsol for Depth

Thin out the darks with Gamsol so they sit back in the painting. This allows the light accents to stand out more prominently, creating depth and contrast.

10 Refining Background and Edges

Create Initial Highlights

Add blue and white to the green to create the initial highlights. This step is just the beginning of the highlight process and not the final highlight.

Balance with Darker Accents

Introduce darker accents to balance out the darkness in certain areas of the painting. This is crucial for creating depth and contrast within the composition.

Refine Background and Edges

Refine the background and edges to define and either soften or sharpen the shapes. This makes the composition more interesting and dynamic, helping to clearly situate elements in space.

Inject Rhythmic Brushwork

Add rhythmic quality to your brushwork to make the composition more dynamic. Avoid painting uniformly by introducing variety and movement in the brushstrokes.

Clarify Spatial Relationships

Use crisp and soft edges to show spatial relationships. For example, make a leaf come out in front of a ribbon by giving the leaf a crisp edge and the ribbon a soft edge.

Add Vibrancy with Broken Color

Enhance vibrancy by using broken color, such as punchy blue and mauve. Mix magenta and white with a touch of blue to create a beautiful mauve that shimmers.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by preparing your canvas with a coat of gesso, ensuring a stable and absorbent surface that enhances your artwork's outcome. Begin with the background, using warm tones and careful application to maintain clean edges around your focal point, the bouquet of roses. As you progress, embrace a joyful painting philosophy, allowing loose brushwork to convey spontaneity and movement.

Explore the use of broken color to add vibrancy and depth, keeping your palette clean to avoid muddy colors. Block in the dark reds to establish the main shapes of the roses, reserving the brightest reds for highlights. As you paint the white flowers, focus on capturing the play of light and shadow, much like a stained glass window effect, to add dimension and interest.

In the final stages, refine your painting by adding lights and details, using dynamic brushwork to enhance realism and guide the viewer's eye. Pay attention to the unique character of each leaf and flower, using varied brush strokes and colors to create a lively and cohesive composition. Conclude by refining the background and edges, using crisp and soft edges to clarify spatial relationships and enhance the overall depth and clarity of your painting.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Apply a coat of gesso to improve paint adhesion and surface preparation.
- Use a paper towel to remove excess paint for a smooth and controlled background application.
- Use loose brushwork to create a quick impression, allowing for spontaneity and joy in your painting.
- Keep your palette clean to maintain vibrant and distinct colors.
- Squint at your subject to simplify complex forms into manageable shapes.
- Twist a sharp-edged brush to create dynamic, calligraphic strokes for finer details.
- Add magenta to your highlight mix for a stronger, purer color.
- Ensure each leaf has its own unique character by varying brush strokes and shapes.



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Student Critiques

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.

'The Bouquet' 12 x 12" acrylic on canvas by Jess Paskel



'The Bouquet' 12 x 12" acrylic on canvas by Jess Paskel

Great design, Jess. The drawing is excellent with clear shapes and you've handled the modelling of the form well, except for the red rose which looks like it's made from a folded napkin. You dropped the ball on that one. Also, I think your grey background feels a little dead and that grey has seeped into the colours in your flowers and left them muddled in a few spots. I wondered for quite some time about how I might enhance this if it were mine, and what finally came to me I illustrate in the photoshopped version below, where I've done three things:

1. Intensified some of the reds in the pink and red rose.
2. Added a red wash over the background to harmonise the whole painting. I also tried it with a grey/green gradated background.
3. Soften a few edges off to add more variation and interest to the painting.

I hope that helps a little. Great work!

“x 10” by **Marcia Hodges**



'Roses and Ribbons' 8" x 10" oil on linen panel by Marcia Hodges

Hi Marcia, what beautiful brushwork and colour! Makes me want to try my one all over again! I like use of the red/green complementary colour scheme, your attention to detail in the centre of the roses with all their complex reflected and glowing light effects, your treatment of sharp edges versus soft edges. I do feel that some of the leaves could have been dealt with more deftly. Richard Schmid says the real test of a floral painting is in the handling of the leaves, I expect because they're rarely just where you want them, are very complex often with multiple overlapping depths and with few visual keys to their form in this case because they're so dark. The artist must also battle with their own feelings of, 'the flower's more important so I don't really care about the leaves'. I certainly experience that in all my flower paintings.

You've made an outstanding job of depicting the form of the main flower especially. Love it! Keep up the good work.

'White Roses and Others' 30 x 30cm oil on canvas by Elena Sokolova



'White Roses and Others' 30 x 30cm oil on canvas by Elena Sokolova

For a second there I thought I was looking at my own painting Elena! Wow - I can see the great effort you focused on this one going step by step and not letting the drawing slip as you often do when you start painting with abandon. Great job! I hope you learned a lot - it sure looks like you did.

'Rhapsody in Bloom' 12 x 12" oil on canvas by Luba Robinson



'Rhapsody in Bloom' 12 x 12" oil on canvas by Luba Robinson

Beautifully and subtly crafted, Luba! The contrast of sharp, clear shapes and the softly modelled colour transitions within them is a real pleasure to dwell on. The design is solid, the colour transitions in the painterly background nicely handled. Great work!