



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, we embark on a delightful journey to capture the essence of a bouquet of roses, a gift from a kind neighbor, in a painting full of joy and movement. The scene I chose to paint is inspired by the whimsical idea of a bouquet tossed into the air, capturing its beauty and spontaneity. Setting up the still life took me three hours, as I experimented with traditional arrangements before deciding on a more dynamic composition. I hung the roses on strings in my front doorway, allowing them to rotate gently in the breeze against a painted backdrop, and captured this dance with my camera. From these photos, I selected the most captivating moments to guide our painting. In this lesson, you'll learn how to use broken color and lyrical brushwork to convey the delicate hue shifts in the white roses and the magic of reflected light on petals, making them appear more lifelike. Together, we'll transform this fleeting moment into a joyful, lasting work of art.



"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.

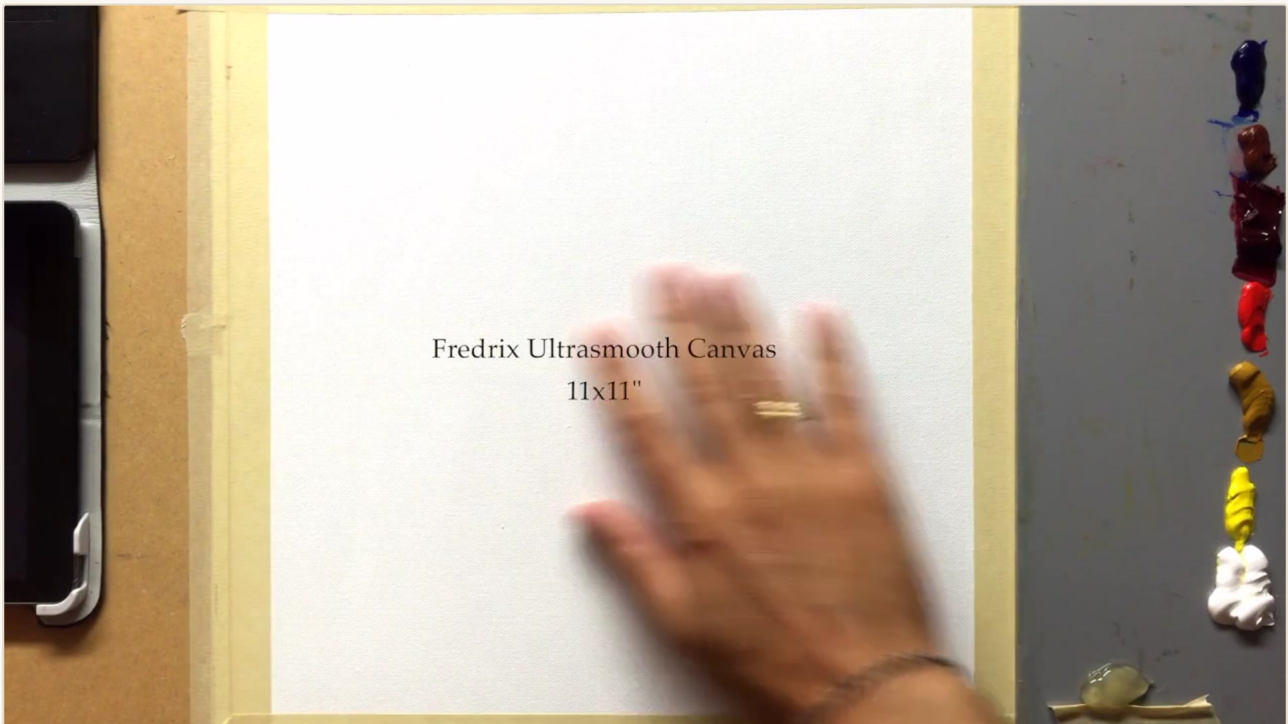
Materials

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



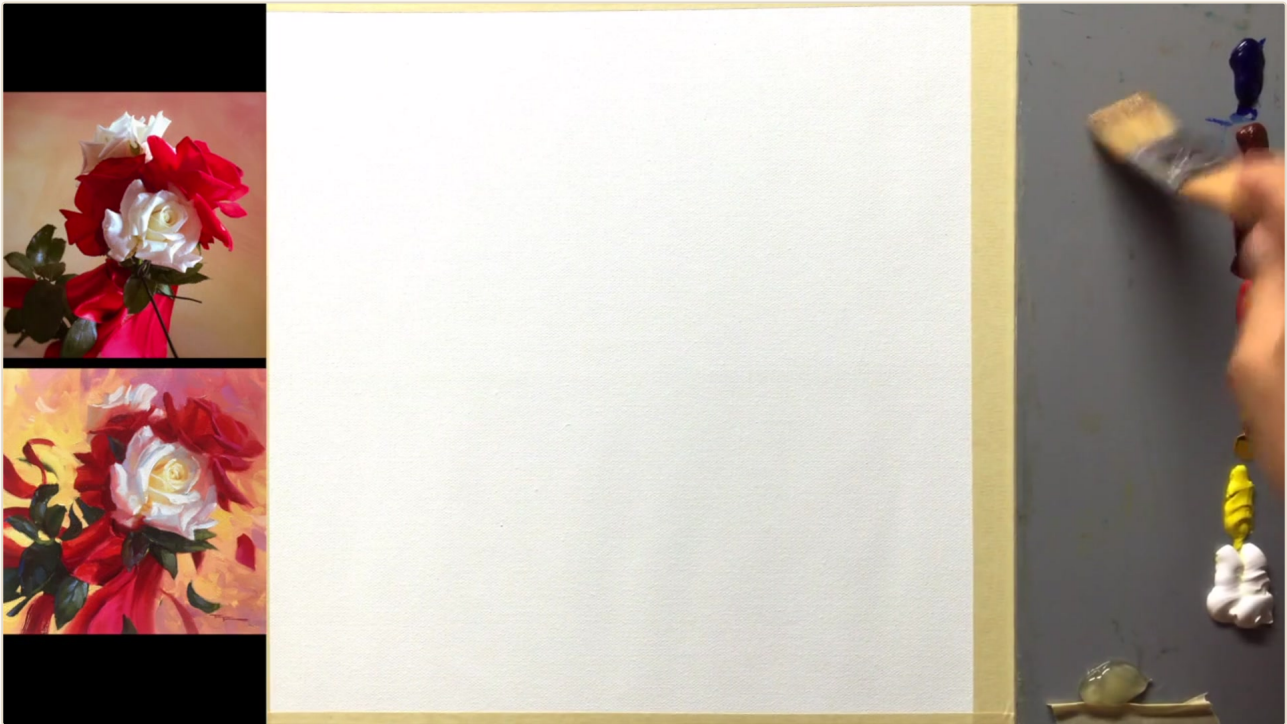
Prepare the Canvas

Tape out your canvas to define the painting area. Apply a coat of gesso to the canvas to improve absorbency and ensure the paint adheres better.

PRO TIP

Always use gesso to prime your canvas for better paint adhesion.

2 Painting the Background



Prepare the Brush

Dip a large brush into Gamsol to prepare it for the background wash. This will help thin the paint for a smooth application.

Apply the Warm Background

Select warm colors for the background and apply them thinly with the Gamsol. If the color appears too warm, adjust by adding a touch of blue.

Remove Excess Paint

Use a paper towel to gently remove any excess paint from the background. This ensures a smooth and even layer.

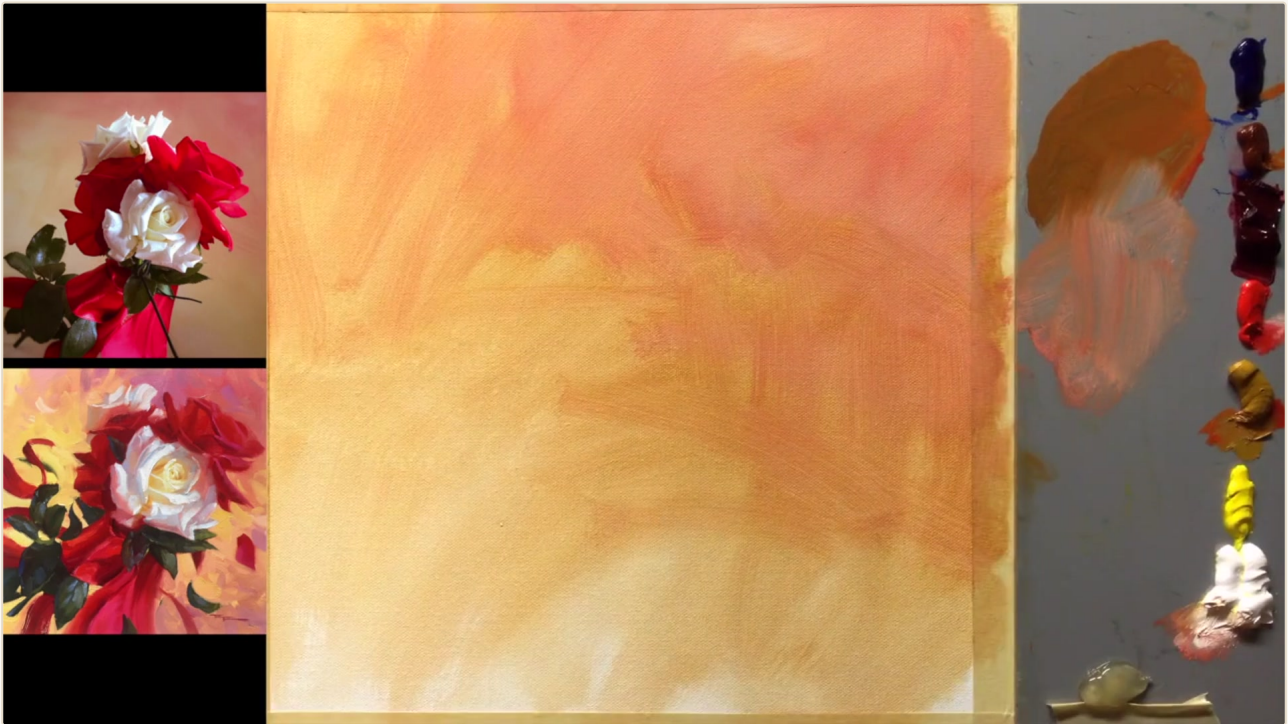
Add Pink and White

Introduce some pink into the background and experiment by adding a little white. Be cautious not to let this mix into the flowers to avoid muddying the colors.

PRO TIP

Use less Gamsol in the mix to prevent it from affecting the layer underneath.

3 Joyful Painting Philosophy



Capture the Feeling of Joy

Aim to convey a sense of joy in your painting by imagining a bouquet of flowers thrown into the air with petals gently falling. Focus on creating a lively and uplifting atmosphere.

Embrace Loose Brushwork

Adopt a loose painting style to express joy. This doesn't mean the drawing should be sloppy; instead, aim for brushwork that appears fast and lively, even if painted slowly.

PRO TIP

Create a joyful atmosphere by focusing on lively and expressive brushwork.

4 Using Broken Colour



Mix Mauve

Combine Alizarin Crimson with a little bit of blue to create a mauve color. This hue adds a joyful element to your painting by introducing broken color.

Maintain Similar Values

Ensure that the mauve, along with the oranges and pinks, all share a similar value. This harmony in value contributes to the overall joyful feeling of the painting.

Prepare the Flower Area

Avoid mixing existing white paint with your flower colors to prevent creating mud. Keep the palette clean to maintain the vibrancy of your colors.

PRO TIP

Keep your palette clean to avoid muddy colors and maintain vibrant hues.

5 Blocking in Dark Reds



Prepare Your Palette

Ensure your palette is clean to avoid muddy colors on your painting. Select a small brush for precision in blocking in the flower shapes.

Mix Dark Red

Start with a red that is slightly darker than pure red. Consider the most vibrant part of the flower and reserve the purest red for those highlights.

Block in Big Shapes

Squint at the flower to see the big shapes as if they are jigsaw puzzle pieces. Use your mixed dark red to block in these large shapes, focusing on mid values.

Adjust and Refine

Lighten the red slightly to add more depth and apply it to other areas. If the red appears too vibrant, mix in a touch of blue to tone it down. Don't worry about painting outside the lines; you can refine the edges later.

PRO TIP

Reserve the purest red for the highlights to maintain vibrancy in your painting.

6 Painting White Flowers



Begin with Big Color Shapes

Start by focusing on the large color shapes in the white flowers. Mix alizarin, a little yellow, and white with some painting medium gel. Apply this mixture to the middle of the flower, observing where else this color might be used.

Adjust Color and Value

Once the initial color is applied, compare it to other areas. Notice if the color needs to be lighter or darker. For example, if an area looks pinker, add more red and white to the mix to adjust the hue and value.

Capture Light Effects

Observe the stained glass window effect where light passes through red petals, casting red light onto adjacent petals. The closer the petals are to this red source, the more red they appear. Capture this effect by adjusting the color intensity accordingly.

Focus on Big Shapes

Squint at your subject to simplify the complex shapes into larger, manageable forms. Concentrate on these big shapes first before moving on to finer details.

Intensify Dark Areas

Switch to a smaller brush and mix yellow ochre with a little red to darken certain areas. If the color isn't dark enough, intensify it to make those parts pop more, but avoid adding the lights just yet.

PRO TIP

Squint at your subject to simplify complex shapes into larger, manageable forms.

7 Adding Lights and Details



Prepare for Light Details

Clean your brush thoroughly to avoid muddy strokes. Mix a cool light using white and blue, but don't start with the lightest shade. Gradually work your way up to the brightest light.

Apply Light Strokes

Twist a sharp-edged brush to create calligraphic strokes for subtle details. Focus on areas where petals curve and catch more light, enhancing realism.

Enhance Realism with Reflected Light

Identify areas where petals have a thin strip of reflected light, especially on the left side of curling petals. This detail helps to turn the form and adds a three-dimensional effect.

Simplify Secondary Elements

For roses that are not the center of interest, use fewer brush strokes. This keeps the focus on the main subject while still depicting other elements.

PRO TIP

Squint to better see subtle color changes and avoid getting lost in the details.

8 Painting Red Flowers



Prepare Your Palette and Brushes

Clean your palette and brushes thoroughly to ensure no residual colors mix with the reds. This is important to maintain the purity of the red tones.

Add Dark Accents

Mix alizarin crimson with a little red to create dark accents. Apply these with soft edges, as they represent shadow areas and should blend smoothly.

Mix Highlight Colors

Combine magenta with white to create a vibrant highlight color. Magenta has a purer color and stronger tinting strength than alizarin, resulting in a more vivid and lively hue.

Use Lyrical Brushwork

Apply the paint with swishy, calligraphic strokes to mimic the natural shapes of roses. This technique adds a poetic, cohesive feel to your painting.

PRO TIP

Use magenta mixed with white for a stronger, purer highlight color compared to alizarin.

9 Painting Green Leaves



Prepare Your Palette and Brushes

Clean your palette and brushes thoroughly to ensure pure colors for your greens. This will help you achieve the desired tones without contamination from previous colors.

Mix Mid-Value Greens

Combine blue and yellow ochre to create a mid-value green. Apply these mid tones first to establish the base for your leaves.

Add Dark Accents

Use a mixture of blue, Alizarin, and a touch of yellow to create a dark green. Thin this mixture with Gamsol to ensure the darks sit back in the painting, allowing the lighter colors to stand out.

Paint Leaf Shapes

Use calligraphic brushstrokes to suggest leaf shapes with a single, confident stroke. This will create dynamic and varied leaf forms, avoiding repetition.

PRO TIP

Thin dark greens with Gamsol to help them recede and let lighter colors stand out.

10 Refining Background and Edges



Add Cool Light Highlights

Mix blue and white with green to create a cool light color. Apply this mixture on top of the existing lights, but remember this is just the start of the highlight, not the final highlight.

Introduce Green Highlights

Add a few small green highlights to areas that need more definition. Consider placing a darker accent to balance out darker areas in the composition.

Refine Background and Edges

Mix warm background colors and work into the entire composition. Adjust the edges of shapes, softening and sharpening as needed to define the spatial relationships between elements.

Enhance with Broken Color

Add punchy blue and mauve to areas for vibrancy. Mix magenta with white and a touch of blue to create a beautiful mauve, matching the existing value, and apply it to the background for a shimmering effect.

PRO TIP

Adjust edges to define spatial relationships, using crisp edges for foreground elements and soft edges for background elements.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by preparing your canvas with a coat of gesso, ensuring a smooth and absorbent surface for your colors. As you lay down the background, use warm tones and a touch of Gamsol to create a harmonious base. Remember to keep your palette clean to maintain the vibrancy of your hues, especially as you introduce broken colors like mauve to add depth and joy to your composition.

As you move to the main subject, focus on blocking in the dark reds and defining the large shapes of your flowers. Use a clean palette and precise brushwork to capture the essence of the bouquet, reserving the purest reds for highlights. When painting white flowers, observe the interplay of light and shadow, and simplify complex shapes by squinting to see the larger forms.

In the final stages, refine your painting by adding lights and subtle details, ensuring that your brushstrokes convey the natural elegance of roses. Use calligraphic strokes to suggest the delicate forms of petals and leaves, and adjust the edges to enhance the spatial relationships within your composition. By the end, your bouquet of roses should exude a sense of joy and vitality, capturing the beauty of nature in your unique style.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Always use gesso to prime your canvas for better paint adhesion.
- Use less Gamsol in the mix to prevent it from affecting the layer underneath.
- Create a joyful atmosphere by focusing on lively and expressive brushwork.
- Keep your palette clean to avoid muddy colors and maintain vibrant hues.
- Reserve the purest red for the highlights to maintain vibrancy in your painting.
- Squint at your subject to simplify complex shapes into larger, manageable forms.
- Use magenta mixed with white for a stronger, purer highlight color compared to alizarin.
- Adjust edges to define spatial relationships, using crisp edges for foreground elements and soft edges for background elements.



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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!