
Turn Your Favourite Bloom Into A Flower Painting

Written by Theresa Evans
Thursday, 23 February 2006
Last Updated Friday, 13 July 2007

Most of us have a favourite flower. We plant them in our gardens, we buy them at the florist, we are given them as bouquets to celebrate a birthday, anniversary or to wish us a speedy recovery. Unfortunately, most blooms have a short life. I adore flowers and as an artist, I have learned to preserve something of their essence in a flower painting forever. If you have ever wished you could do this with a favourite bloom, then read on.

Flower painting has a wonderful history. Botanical art has been used to document numerous species of flowers and plants. There is something very satisfying and magical about painting a flower and preserving just what it was like forever. Of course, flower photographs can do the same but when you paint you have the added pleasure of carefully examining the curves and colours of each petal, stamen, stem and leaf. You have to observe the way the light catches the flower and use this information to give it a 3D presence on your paper. By painting flowers, you get to know them intimately.

I would advise anyone wanting to start painting to begin with their favourite flower, no matter how complex it might seem. By choosing your favourite, you will be motivated to try again to render it well. Your feelings have a better chance of being transferred into your flower painting too. When a flower painting makes you gasp, it is because it initially did the same for the artist and they have found a way of sharing that with you. It doesn't matter if your attempts aren't perfect. Each time you try you will become more familiar with its shape. It will seem easier to paint and you will notice more about the nuances of colour and the way light can affect it.

Of course, there are some useful techniques which might help you learn flower painting. Many excellent art books have been written about this topic and your bookstore will certainly have several. But be wary of simply copying another artists' techniques. You may be surprised to find that you are less satisfied with the results than you are with simply observing your favourite flower and perfecting your vision of it with each attempt.

Try drawing with different materials, have fun and keep all your attempts. You will be encouraged to see how your vision and skill improves simply by practise. I use pastels, both the soft powdery ones and the deliciously oily variety. I love them because of their beautiful range of colours, from very pale to vibrant hues. I can extend this even further by overlaying thin veils of colour, allowing the underneath ones to sing through. Or perhaps you could try watercolour? This has long been a favourite of flower painters and botanical artists and for good reason. The way you can allow one luscious colour to randomly bleed into another, just as it does in nature, is very mouth-watering!

As you can tell, I am fanatical about flower painting but I do hope I have managed to awaken a little curiosity in you. Have a go! What have you to lose?

Theresa Evans is a flower artist. Her flower paintings can be seen on her website <http://www.flowerportfolio.com> where you can sign up for her free e-course on flower painting. She is also available for commissions of a favourite flower.

