

The background of the entire cover is a dense, colorful floral pattern. It features various flowers in shades of red, pink, orange, yellow, blue, and purple, interspersed with green leaves and stems. The style is painterly and expressive, with visible brushstrokes and a soft, watercolor-like texture. The flowers are of different sizes and are scattered across the entire surface, creating a vibrant and lively feel.

Painted Blossoms

CREATING EXPRESSIVE FLOWER ART
with MIXED MEDIA

CARRIE SCHMITT

Painted Blossoms

Creating Expressive Flower Art with Mixed Media

Carrie Schmitt



NORTH LIGHT BOOKS

Cincinnati, Ohio

CreateMixedMedia.com

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Introduction

Cultivate Creative Joy

It's your time to bloom. To pick up that paintbrush and unleash your creativity. The good news is that anyone can paint expressive flowers. They are organic, forgiving subjects. Each flower is unique; no one can say you painted it wrong.

We are going to approach painting as though we are designing a garden. We will learn the basics, observe what we like from other masters and experiment to create our own unique floral masterpieces. Be open to surprises and embrace imperfections with gratitude for their flawed beauty and carefree charm. Like gardening, creating art takes time, patience, faith, a solid work ethic and relentless perseverance. But most of all, it takes you to a place of deep joy and centeredness that washes away the stress of life.

By creating your own expressive floral designs, you are joining a universal love affair with flowers that transcends time, gender, age, language and cultures. Flowers have inspired creative expression for ages. Claude Monet said, "I perhaps owe having become a painter to flowers." Perhaps the same will be true for you!

Together, we'll explore how to create art that transports viewers to a realm where nature, imagination and the serendipitous collide. To do this, we will absorb inspiration from our surroundings, follow our intuitive spirit and honor our unique stories as we put paint to canvas.

We will also incorporate key design elements found in fresh bouquets and living gardens all over the world: line, texture, form, scale, pattern, balance, unity, contrast, color, rhythm and variety. With the insight of several talented artists, we will use these concepts to create drama, cultivate design, explore possibility and nurture your style because you are the secret ingredient to each of your paintings.

People often ask me how I create paintings that express such intense joy. The soulful practices in this book are the roots that nourish that joy in my work. In his book *Steal Like an Artist*, Austin Kleon says, "Write the book you want to read." This book is what I want to know—other artists' techniques and truths, as well as subtle practices that cause internal shifts and find expression in art.

In "Plant the Seeds," we will go over art basics, design principles and how to prepare the mind, body and soul for the joy-full art projects throughout the rest of the book. Scattered along the way are pages of inspiration and invitations to participate in soul work from our

contributing artists, aka the Flower Tribe. Consider these women your guides cheering you on in your journey. Invite their words, wisdom, art and stories into your life.

We will embrace the wild, the natural, the free. Let go. Mimic the rose with its many layers. Imitate the wild wisteria vine with its playful unpredictability. And admire the determined ivy for its tenacity and ability to make breakthroughs despite obstacles.

Anaïs Nin said, “And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.”

Today is that day. Let us begin together.





Plant the Seeds

plant | 'plant

: to put or set into the ground

seeds | 'sēdz

: beginnings which develop and grow

: that which provides inspiration for future endeavors

Just as a gardener prepares the soil so that flowers can blossom, as artists we need to prepare for the creative process by honoring our own personal landscape—our mind, body and soul. When I began living an artistic life, I was surprised to learn that most of the work that goes into a painting happens before your paintbrush touches the canvas. This is why creating has been a transformative experience for me—it has required a healthy lifestyle that includes self-care on a physical, emotional and spiritual level. I have included these practices in my painting technique book because they are an intrinsic part of my creative process. These are the roots and all the invisible underground nutrients that allow colorful flowers to bloom on my canvas.

While planting seeds is one analogy, another is to view this practice as a way to create offerings that attract creativity. I was marveling at the presence of a blue heron in our pond one day and felt so lucky to witness its graceful beauty. I love the idea of animal messengers and imagined what gift it was bringing me at that moment. I realized its presence was not luck but rather evidence that there was an abundance of fish in our pond—the conditions were ideal to attract the heron. Of course it appeared. That might seem obvious, but I also found it profound when applying it to my artistic life. Give yourself an abundance of opportunities and offerings that welcome and attract creativity into your life.

Whether you “plant seeds,” “fill the well” or “stock your pond,” the idea is the same—create an environment for your mind, body and spirit to flourish and beautiful things will come your way.

Like a flower we blossom when the conditions are right.

—Rita Said—

Art Supplies and Tools

Find art supplies that fit your unique style by experimenting with different sizes, shapes, brands and products. Each time I go to the art store, I pick one new item to play with while creating.

Below is a list of general art supplies used in this book. Before each exercise is a list of what you will need for that specific project.

CANVAS

Try a variety of shapes and sizes to discover what you like best. I always have several canvases in my studio so I can continue to paint while one is drying or just to move on if I need a break from a painting in progress. You might discover that you paint differently on a large canvas versus a small one. Usually, painting large feels the most natural and easiest for me.

The different sizes I use in this book are listed before each project.

ACRYLIC PAINT

I like to have a variety of colors that represent the color wheel—versions of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, white and black. Heavy body acrylics are thicker in texture, while fluid acrylics are thinner. I often use the heavy body acrylics for flowers and fluid acrylics for stems and when I use a spray bottle to make the paint run.

When I began painting, I used a cheaper student-grade version, but I found that I wasn't happy with the results. I realized if I was going to paint, I wanted to set myself up for success, which meant paying a little extra for quality paint that would encourage me instead of frustrate me. Give yourself as many tools as you can to have a positive experience.

When selecting colors, step outside your comfort zone. Some of my favorite colors to use while painting are ones I would never choose to wear or decorate my home with such as fluorescents. However, in a painting the effect they have on other colors is striking.

PALETTES

You can hold your paint on a variety of surfaces. I usually use palette paper, which is easy and requires no cleanup. Instead of throwing used sheets away, I use them for craft projects or wrapping paper and even frame them sometimes. They are works of art, too. I have also used old cookie trays and old thrift shop plates. I hang these on my walls when I am finished using them.



BRUSHES

Experiment and start with a variety. I use all different shapes and sizes, including flat and round, as well as foam brushes.

MARK-MAKING TOOLS

Bubble wrap

Food and beverage container lids

Masking tape

Scraping tools (I use palette knives, straightened paper clips or anything pointy that I can find but not too sharp to pierce the canvas.)

Shish kebab skewers

Stamps

Stencils

Stickers

Get creative and see what you can find around your house that can make a print or mark with paint.



COLLAGE MATERIALS

Chalkboard markers

Chalkboard stickers or chalkboard paint

Gel medium (glossy)

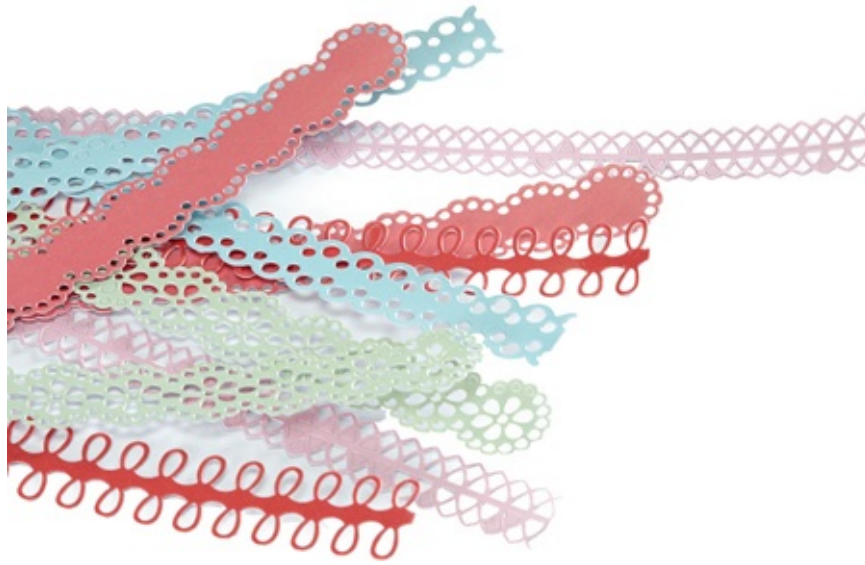
Old book pages

Photographs

Pressed flowers

Scrapbook or decorative papers

Vintage wallpaper scraps



MEASURING TOOLS

Pencil

Protractor

Ruler

STENCIL-MAKING TOOLS

Craft knife

Manila folders

Sharpie pen

STAMP-MAKING TOOLS

Rubber carving block

Rubber stamp carving tool



MISCELLANEOUS

Camera

There is so much beauty in the process of painting whether it is the stages of your painting, the palette, the brush jar, your smeared hands or the unexpected drips of color. I love documenting the painting process in its glorious mess. It is a story worth capturing.

Embossing gun or hair dryer

To dry your wet canvas more quickly. Just be careful not to hold it too close to the canvas.

Journal

For sketching, writing and participating in the reflective exercises in this book. I also keep a small portable bag in my car with a sketchbook, watercolor pencils, markers and pens to take when I am out in case inspiration strikes or I find some unexpected free time.

Objects of inspiration

Magazine covers

Photographs

Fabric

Natural objects such as flowers, shells, rocks, sticks, feathers, etc.

Whatever catches your eye

Paper towels

To dry brushes and for general cleanup.

Social media

A great place to find inspiration, information and support from the vibrant online art community! Join me and the Flower Tribe on Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook and other social media websites.

Spray bottle for water

Essential for making streaks, drips and surprises on the canvas.

Water jars

I usually set out at least three jars of water: one to wash brushes with cool colors (blues, greens), one to wash brushes with warm colors (reds, yellows, oranges) and one to wash neutral colors (light tones, white).

Wet rag

I use a wet rag to wipe any wet paint away that I do not like on the canvas and to wash my fingers after finger painting.



Design Elements

Before I began painting, I spent my days tinkering in the garden and evenings reading about flowers. I learned that master garden designers incorporate line, texture, form, scale, pattern, rhythm, balance, unity, contrast, color and variety to create gardens that stir the soul. By infusing these elements in our artwork, we can have the same powerful effect.

Our contributing artists are going to share how they use these principles of design to create dramatic paintings. When I begin a painting, I incorporate these elements without consciously thinking about them. I paint freely for as long as possible. I start to consider how to use these elements when I am ready to pull everything together and finish the painting.

These elements are part of your toolbox when you are unsure about what to do next. They can be useful but should never hinder you—take what is helpful and leave the rest behind. As landscape architect James van Sweden said, “Good planting design does not follow a formula. . . . As in all of the arts, the best garden designers take risks. Only by taking risks can you come up with something exciting and original.”

There is always room to break the rules. Taking risks is more important than any design element to me. These concepts should always free you to opportunities rather than restrain you from following your intuition.

The artist is the confidant of nature, flowers carry on dialogues with him through the graceful bending of their stems and the harmoniously tinted nuances of their blossoms.

—Auguste Rodin—



LINE

I'm amazed at how adding or subtracting a few lines can drastically change the overall feel of a painting. When I am stuck, I sometimes add lines to represent stems. They might be covered with paint eventually, but this trick allows me to see the painting differently. They define the visual space more clearly by carving it into sections, create new options to work with and sometimes allow me to see a composition that I hadn't noticed before. Lines can be fat, thin, straight, curvy, squiggly, horizontal, vertical and more.

TEXTURE

Texture is the surface of the painting, which can be smooth, rough, bumpy or glossy. These effects can be achieved through different types of paint, tools or paint mediums. Texture adds visual interest through depth and dimension, which can play with light and shadow.

FORM

Shapes can be organic or geometric. If you want something to stand out, a single object can have that effect, while a grouping of forms can add rhythm and repetition. Form can be used to create the mood or emotion you are trying to convey. For example, round forms can convey the feeling of softness, while jagged sharp lines might create a rugged feel, rapid motion or excited energy.



Portland On My Mind

24" × 48" (61cm × 122cm)

SCALE

Size matters. If something seems “off” while painting, I often look at the size of my flowers or leaves. I adjust the size of objects toward the end of a painting if I find a certain flower

distracts or takes away from the painting as a whole. My favorite paintings often have flowers of various sizes, which create a pleasant harmony.

PATTERN AND RHYTHM

Pattern can mean the repetition of a shape, motif or color and can be used to create a pleasing rhythm. You might not be creating a true pattern, but you can create the idea of a pattern by using balance and scale in your painting. This is another tool to make your painting feel cohesive and have a flow or movement to it.

UNITY

When a painting feels almost like two or more separate pieces, I often repeat motifs in the disjointed sections to create unity. This can be accomplished through color, such as adding a certain shade of pink throughout the painting or through shape, by adding a flower from one section to another to tie everything together.

BALANCE

If part of my painting feels overpowering or stands out in a distracting way, I balance this by making adjustments with color, scale or repetition. To me, balance is a feeling, so I trust my intuition based on what feels right and appeals to my visual senses.

CONTRAST

This is one of my favorite elements to use. When a painting seems “blah” or missing something, I often add contrast in color, such as positioning a warm and cool color next to each other. Or, a light and dark color. Adding contrast can drastically change a painting by incorporating color, shape, texture or other methods.

VARIETY

Like contrast, variety can really spice up a painting—even the smallest amount. Don’t be afraid to try something new. You can always paint over it if you do not like the result.



How'd You Get So Pretty?
24" x 36" (61cm x 91cm)

Color Basics and Color Secrets

Color is such an important design element to me that it deserves its own special page. A basic understanding of the color wheel is helpful, but most of what I have learned over the years is from playful experimentation. For the projects in this book, you will only have to know some basic information.

This is an oversimplification of color theory, which is the fascinating subject of many books if you are interested in learning more! We are going to take a playful approach to color rather than a technical one.

COLOR MIXING

Red + Yellow = Orange

Yellow + Blue = Green

Red + Blue = Purple

COMPLEMENTARY COLORS

Red and Green

Blue and Orange

Yellow and Purple

WARM COLORS

Reds

Oranges

Yellows

COOL COLORS

Blues

Greens

Purples

I like to use color to create contrast by pairing the following opposites next to each other:

- Complementary colors
- Light and dark
- Warm and cool

- Bright and dull

Confession: I have no training in color theory. If you are like me and didn't go to art school, you might feel intimidated by what you think you don't know. Luckily, those of us who did not receive a formal art education have allies: experimentation, fortuitous accidents and observation of color palettes found in art, fabric, textiles, photography and nature.

Most of the time my color choices are completely random, but sometimes I use the following methods as a starting point. I stay open to wherever the painting leads and have no resistance when it comes to changing direction with color.

Where I Find Color Inspiration

- Botanical Gardens. Grab your camera and sketchbook and enjoy the transformative power of nature. The colors, textures and aromas are not only inspiring but therapeutic as well. Even in the winter, I visit greenhouses and botanical gardens just to get a rush from the sights and smells of the flora and fauna.
- Wedding Bouquets. Floral designers create captivating bouquets of color that provide a lovely palette for you to begin your painting. (Pinterest is an amazing source for wedding bouquet images. I have my own Flower Inspiration Board just for these subjects.)
- Magazines. Home decor magazines are my favorite. The designers spend a lot of time making sure their covers are appealing with eye-catching color palettes.
- A Child's Spontaneity. My five-year-old has no color theory training, but she is a master with color. She usually helps me start my paintings. If you don't have a child on hand, paint in the mindset of a child with complete abandon and no awareness of anything other than that moment. It's hard to do but so rewarding.

Color Tips

- If I create a color that I like, I create a color swatch that almost looks like a math equation so that I can remember what I mixed. Blue + yellow + gray = this cool color.
- If you are mixing colors or creating layers that look too muddy and dull, separate your warm and cool colors. Also, let the paint dry at that point before continuing to work on the next layer of the painting.
- Colors are relational—they look completely different depending on what other colors they are paired with, so be playful and surprise yourself.



Photo By Larey McDaniel

Color is all. When color is right, form is right. Color is everything.

—Marc Chagall—

FINDING INSPIRATION

Gather Seeds

Inspiration is everywhere at a micro and macro level when we view the world as a source of creative abundance. On a daily basis, I collect tokens to inspire and encourage me when I am in my studio. These objects might have an intriguing pattern, design or color scheme. Quotes inspire me too, as well as a photograph that might recall a treasured memory or a handwritten card from a loved one. These objects reveal my natural artistic style because I am attracted to them in a purely aesthetic, emotional and intuitive way.

I pay attention to the energy I bring into my space through natural elements, which is why plants and flowers are my favorite studio companions. I recently bought a painting from a deeply soulful artist whom I admire. Her painting is infused with her beautiful spirit, and I enjoy her presence through that painting, as well as the connection I feel to her journey and our paths crossing. Even a piece of fabric or an image from a magazine tells the story of someone's artistic dreams coming true. All of this inspires me.

Recently, I had some new friends visit my studio for the first time. I immediately felt self-conscious. I became aware that I was baring my soul to them. The objects in the room were a reflection of my deepest longings and joys. I began to see how intimate it truly was. Perhaps that is why so many people decorate with beige and impersonal items. It takes courage to show the world our inner selves. Still, by doing so we encourage others to do the same. It's worth the slight discomfort whether sharing your art or space where you create. The world is waiting for you to be your true wild, wonderful self.

When I create, whether I'm writing or painting, it is always easier to subtract than add imagery. It is also easier to tighten up a painting than loosen one up a bit. That is why I start with a colorful mess in my studio and on the canvas. Whether I'm seeking inspiration, painting or writing, the creative process is the same. I start with abundance and selectively weed out what I don't want, as I make my way toward the finished product.

When you really gaze at something, you bring it inside you. When you do, it becomes part of you.

—John O'Donohue—

Studio Tour

For a complete tour of Carrie's studio, check out details for this book's e-companion at createmixedmedia.com/paintedblossoms.



One of my favorite ways to organize inspiration is by displaying objects in baskets and containers around my studio. Fresh and dried flora and fauna, fabric, magazine tear-outs, flowers, books, decorative papers . . . anything goes when it comes to inspiration! I can pick things out randomly and arrange elements next to each other. It feels like treasure hunting or ransacking your grandma's attic. It makes a beautiful mess, too!

Create Sacred Sights and Scents

Bring visible objects into your space that allow you to connect with invisible grace, magic, beauty, miracles—anything that stimulates your creative spirit and soul.

Aromas such as candles are another uplifting element that inspire and refresh me while creating. Rosemary-lavender essence body spray immediately energizes me as well.



An old garden gate holds memorabilia of joyful memories, experiences and inspiration.



An inspiration board creates beauty, records achievements and inspires me when I have self-doubt.



Time To Bloom

36" x 48" (91cm x 122cm)

Grow and Bloom

grow | ˈgrō

: to cultivate

: to transform

bloom | ˈblüm

: a flowering state

: rapid and excessive growth

: a state of beauty

Now that we have welcomed creative energy into our lives by gathering materials and reviewing elements of design, it is time to create!

First, I will share a few of my favorite mantras that encourage my creative process, followed by a warm-up painting exercise that demonstrates a few of my favorite flower shapes.

The sections that follow will begin with inspiring interviews from members of the Flower Tribe, who share valuable insights about their creative process. Using aspects of their artwork as inspiration, we will create unique floral art with step-by-step instructions. At the end of each project are invitations to do some “soul work” and reflection with encouraging words from wise women who have guided me along my journey.

Let’s bloom!

Artists are the seeds, brave enough to live and flower before humanity.

—**Rasun**—

Tend the Garden Within

We've discussed positive external ways to prepare for the creative process. Now, let's talk about some helpful internal practices and mantras to guide you on this journey.

When I began painting, I had no idea that creating art would lead to changes in how I live on a daily basis. I've had to align my body, mind and soul and tend to each in a loving and respectful way. There is immeasurable power in the simple act of caring for oneself. Yet, we are often so good at tending to other people's "gardens" while sacrificing our wholeness.

The most powerful element of creating is how it transforms you. The creative process is a divine journey that taps into the depths of your Self in ways that enhance your life. I've embraced the following mantras that have been revealed to me through the empowering act of painting.

Warning!

Practicing creativity can lead to feelings of empowerment, self-worth, ecstasy and connectedness to the sacred within and without oneself.



Nurture your soul with positive thoughts and internal happiness will blossom before your eyes.

—**Melanie Koulouris**—



LOVE THYSELF

For me, painting means to love myself again. To live a creative life requires self-love and unwavering faith. To believe in your innate creative ability and overcome self-doubt that flares up from time to time. To feel worthy of investing the time and money in yourself. To have the confidence that you have something meaningful to offer the world.

Living an artful life has been a slow process of replacing a pervasive feeling of guilt for indulging myself with a feeling of worthiness that I deserve to lead a full life and act on my heart's desires.

Care for yourself as you would a garden—nurture yourself and embrace your uniqueness. In the wise words of Hannah Marcotti, “When we step into the deepest level of care for ourselves, meaning we claim it, the dreams we never believed could come true start falling as though stars from the sky. Magic. Fierce, fierce magic.”

Believe.

To paint is to love again.

—**Henry Miller**—



ASK AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE

Whether you call it prayer or meditation, one practice that continues to work for me as an artist is imploring the universe for help. I have been on the verge of literally throwing my paints out the window for a myriad of reasons—frustration, financial stress, lack of time, doubt. Each time, I have begged the universe to send me a comforting sign. I silently say, “I could use a little encouragement right now.”

The first time I did this, I was contacted by a company to license my art for wall décor. Other times, a kind note appeared in my inbox, a painting sold or some other good news came my way.

Celebrate all your blessings no matter how big or small! I hold them close to my heart as I continue to walk this path with an awareness that I need to be a blessing for someone else on their path as well. And, most importantly, I practice deep, deep gratitude for everything that comes my way. As Anthony Robbins says, “When you are grateful, fear disappears and abundance appears.”

Give thanks for unknown blessings already on the way.

—**Native American proverb**—

A flower does not think of competing with the flower next to it, it just blooms.

TRANSFORM NEGATIVE ENERGY

I used to get envious when I looked at other artists' work to the point where my own creativity would become paralyzed. Now, I acknowledge this feeling as a helpful tool and ask myself, *Why? What am I specifically drawn to in this work?* By finding what exactly is striking to me, I can incorporate this specific element in my artwork without copying the artist's style.

We will do this in the painting demos by borrowing techniques from our contributing artists. If you continue to seek out artwork that inspires you, you can add depth to your own paintings and constantly grow as an artist. When I started painting, I was worried that I would never develop my own style. From the inward growth gifted to me from this journey, I realize this worry was due to undervaluing who I was and what I had to offer. Everyone naturally has her own unique style within. By trusting what you like and incorporating it into your own intuitive art, you will uncover and develop your style, which the world is waiting to enjoy.

SURRENDER AND LOSE YOURSELF IN THE MOMENT

As you read the Flower Tribe interviews, you will notice common themes that emerge. Many artists rely on their intuition and reach a transcendent state while painting. In our culture, we are not taught to honor this part of ourselves, and for many of us getting to this place is a challenge.

Release control, practice faith and let go. Try to avoid thinking about the painting for as long as possible. This means not consciously making any decisions or opinions about what is happening on the canvas. This can be challenging, but my best paintings happen when I stay in this absent, nonjudgmental state of mind for as long as possible and stay completely open to intuition, instinct and impractical whims.

These are just a few of the art mantras that permeate my daily life, giving me a joy that cannot be contained. Embracing these practices has helped me along my art journey from the act of painting to making a living as an artist. I hope they can help you, too!



Reflection

Being aware of your path and truths that have been consistent in your life opens you up to creativity and being receptive to your true calling. When you imagine your own path, what truths, practices, beliefs shape you? Pay attention to what truths are revealed to you when you create and embrace an artistic lifestyle.



You don't always need a plan. Sometimes you just need to breathe, trust, let go and see what happens.

—Mandy Hale—



Demo One

Fresh Picked Bouquet

What is the best part of painting expressive flowers? You cannot mess up. They can be any size, color and shape that you choose without apology or explanation. Step one is to let go of any anxiety, fear or insecurity you have. You are painting your dream garden, and it can look any way you choose.

I paint the *idea* of flowers. What interests me is not the specific type of flower, but the impression of flowers to convey emotion. I use flowers as a starting point to play with color and express joy, lightness and wonder.

In this warm-up exercise, I am going to share the basic forms I use to create floral designs. I encourage you to be creative and respond to any impulses you have while painting. You can use any colors, shapes and designs you want.

When you are stuck, go back to the core components of design. Ask yourself, “Can I use a line or texture to make the piece more interesting? Can I add contrast to make the colors pop?” Usually, if you are stuck and incorporate one or more of the design elements, you can jump-start your painting again.

CREATIVE PRACTICES

- Have confidence in your creative ability.
- Let go of any negative self-doubt or criticism.
- Do what makes you happy.
- Trust your instincts.

WHAT TO GATHER

acrylic paint

Aureolin Hue • Indian Yellow Hue • Light Ultramarine Blue • Light Violet • Naphthol Red • Primary Magenta • Prussian Blue Hue • Quinacridone Magenta • Sap Green • Teal • Titanium White

canvas, 20" × 20" (51cm × 51cm)

chalkboard markers

chalkboard sticker or chalkboard paint

paintbrushes

paper towel

ruler

stencil

tape

Imperfect

Resist trying to make your art perfect. Perfect can read as boring sometimes! Much of the art I am drawn to has something a little edgy or “off” about it. This can bring a surprising and imaginative element to your art. Leaving a trace of handmade is a beautiful thing in today’s digitally enhanced world of perfection and predictability.

Flower Style

Observe other real and painted flowers and experiment to find what style feels most natural and most aesthetically pleasing to you. The possibilities are endless with flowers!

In the garden, everyone is an artist without apology or explanation.

—Louise Beebe Wilder—



STEP 1: Cover the canvas with a layer of white paint. Let dry.



STEP 2: Measure approximately 5" (13cm) from the bottom of the canvas at three points across. Note: I usually just eyeball this and don't actually use a ruler.



STEP 3: Connect these points by drawing a line with a chalkboard marker or pencil to create the tablecloth space, or freehand it, which is what I usually do.



STEP 4: Tape above the line to separate the tablecloth area from the rest of the painting. Position a stencil on the canvas. Paint with a dark blue color over some spots of the stencil. Mix dark blue with white on your palette and paint over other parts of the stencil to create color variations in the design.



STEP 5: Carefully remove the stencil. Let it dry before you stencil the next section of the tablecloth. You can use a heat gun to dry the paint more quickly.

Repeat with the stencil until finished. Don't worry if the stencil isn't perfect. I prefer the imperfections that give it a carefree, handmade quality. You can also cover spots you don't like with fallen flower petals later. Let dry.



STEP 6: Tape beneath the tablecloth line to avoid overlapping colors.

Paint the background using a large brush with a light yellow. I mixed Indian Yellow Hue and Titanium White. Use your finger or a brush to further blend the colors.



STEP 7: Freehand sketch a vase. You want be careful not to make the vase too tall so you have plenty of room for the flowers. Paint the vase any shape and size you like. I made a soft turquoise color by mixing blue, green and white together.



STEP 8: Paint five or six stems coming out of the vase in a random way. I always start with thin lines knowing that I can make them thicker later. Use one color or several colors, such as green, blue, teal, or mix colors to create new shades. Keep a wet paper towel nearby to wipe off anything you don't like.



STEP 9: Start by painting a few large flowers. Stay loose and don't strive for perfection. We are not painting a realistic painting; rather, we want an impressionistic quality. Start loosely and gradually build the flowers in layers. Using magenta, create loose circle flowers, or one of your favorite flower shapes.



STEP 10: Using paint that you have on your palette, blend the colors directly on the canvas.



STEP 11: Using mixes of colors—red, magenta and yellow—paint dahlia shapes with small pointy petals. They can be open or drooped over.



STEP 12: Paint open petals using a mixture of yellow and white or whatever color is calling you.



STEP 13: Use white paint to create daisies.



STEP 14: Use yellow for the daisy centers. Use violet to create coneflowers.



STEP 15: Use blue to paint buds with your finger. These finger dots are an easy and effective way to fill in space and transform the painting.



STEP 16: Connect stems to the buds with a thin fine-tipped brush.



STEP 17: Paint leaves of various shapes and sizes using shades of green, blue or any color you like to fill in areas.



STEP 18: Add details to the leaves, such as vein lines, using a detail brush.



STEP 19: Add details to the insides of the flowers and leaves. Use a variety of paint mixtures, whatever you have on your palette that works well for the insides of the flowers. I sometimes like to use my finger for this.



STEP 20: Be imaginative with your details; not all leaves need to have veins; dots are fun, too.



STEP 21: Continue adding final details to the flowers in any way that makes you happy.



STEP 22: Touch up areas of the tablecloth with white paint if there are any parts along the edge that you find distracting.



STEP 23: Add small details to the vase and any other areas that need another layer of paint.



STEP 24: Add a few colorful strokes on the table area to give the impression of fallen petals. This works especially well to cover any imperfection from your stencil.

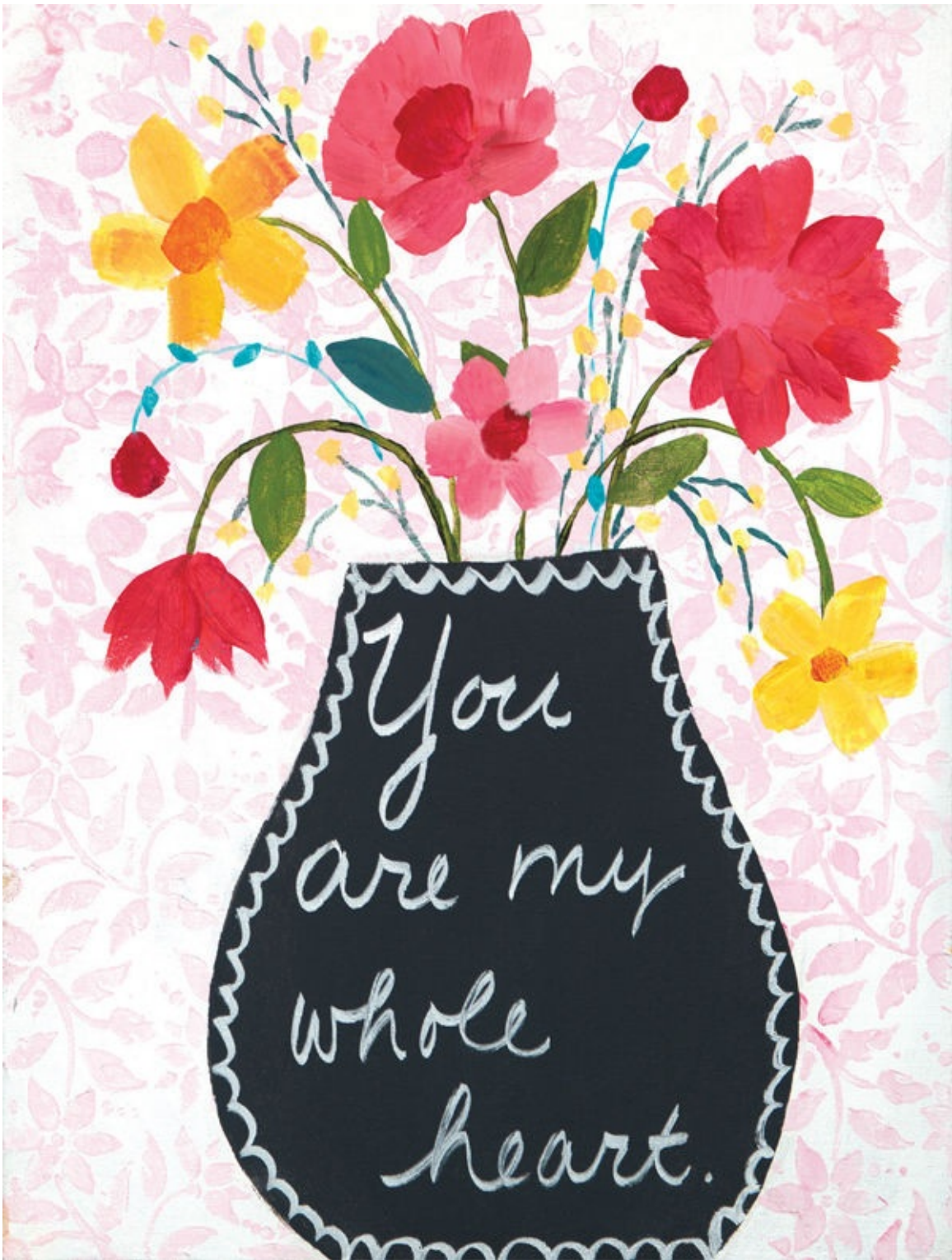


STEP 25: Stick a chalkboard sticker onto the vase or use chalkboard paint to create a label. Pick a word that is calling to you, and write it on the label.

Reflection

Note how you felt while you were creating. Were you able to relax and let go? What did you enjoy the most? What felt most natural? Lean into what you love while you are creating and go with what feels good to you.

This painting is just a starting point for exploration! I encourage you to alter the colors and shapes of the flowers and vase to really explore what is possible. Perhaps you can paint a scene with many vases. You can create interesting background textures and designs that we will explore in upcoming chapters.



Here is a variation of this painting. I used chalkboard paint for the entire vase and added one of my favorite quotes from my five-year-old daughter. I also used a color palette of mostly reds and yellows mixed together.

Soul Work

Create Your Own Art Manifesto

Carrie's Art and Life Manifesto

I believe...

- ...Our intuition is more powerful than we realize.
- ...There is beauty in imperfection.
- ...To create is to believe that everything is going to be all right.
- ...Children can teach us to connect with our creative source.
- ...Stating intentions is what sets them in motion.
- ...Creating leads to awakenings and feelings of worthiness.
- ...The world needs us all to shine.
- ...There are no mistakes.
- ...Art heals.
- ...Each painting is a spiritual journey that connects us with the depths of our souls.
- ...We are better together. Making soulful connections with others is what makes me feel most alive.
- ...Creativity lies within all of us.

I believe in...

- ...Taking at least one step each day in the direction of my dreams.
- ...Listening to my inner voice.
- ...Trusting signs from the universe.
- ...Relentless persistence.
- ...Going for the long shot.
- ...Surrendering to the current of life.
- ...Being gentle with oneself and others.
- ...Trusting the process no matter where it leads.
- ...Excavating the wild within.
- ...The transformative power of beauty.
- ...You.



Your own words are the bricks and mortar of the dreams you want to realize. Your words are the greatest power you have. The words you choose and their use establish the life you experience.

—Sonia Choquette—



Kelly Rae Roberts's Manifesto.

Artist, author and possibilitarian Kelly Rae Roberts has been one of the most profound guides for me since I began painting. Her soulful choices in her life and art business have provided a roadmap for me on this journey. She creates uplifting art, including manifestos that reflect her own unique experiences as an artist, woman, mother, dreamer and more. She is a treasured example of the power in following your bliss. I highly recommend her insightful creative business and online art courses.

Kelly Rae, why do you create manifestos?

For me, creating personal manifestos is a chance to silence the chatter in our heads, lean into our lives, listen to our whispers and hear the parts of ourselves that are wise, brilliant and deeply aware of our own unique truths. Most of the time, we know who we are—what we stand for. But sometimes the noise of everyday life can leave us feeling lost and confused. Having a personal manifesto is like a magnet back to home. It pulls us back to our power.

Like Sonia Choquette, I deeply believe that when we are intentional about choosing our words and our manifestos, we are in wise co-creation with our highest selves. Collaborating in this way gives us a chance to dive into the depths of our very own inner wisdom—the parts of ourselves that are most true, most authentic—and excavate a treasured gift of clarity that we can offer up to ourselves in times of struggle and even triumph.

Our manifestos come from the inner soul excavation work that we all do. They heal. They lift. They inspire. They remind us of what is true. And they become the sacred ground and foundation from which we can do and be great things.

What tips do you have for writing a manifesto?

Find a quiet space with your journal. Answer the following prompts and discover what personal statements emerge. Remember to have fun but also dig deep. Listen to your most authentic, true, wise voice. It may be a whisper, but it's there. Using your answers, create a list of "I believe" statements. Voila! You've just written your own manifesto.

When it comes to courage, I believe _____.

When it comes to love, I _____.

When it comes to joy, I'm discovering _____.

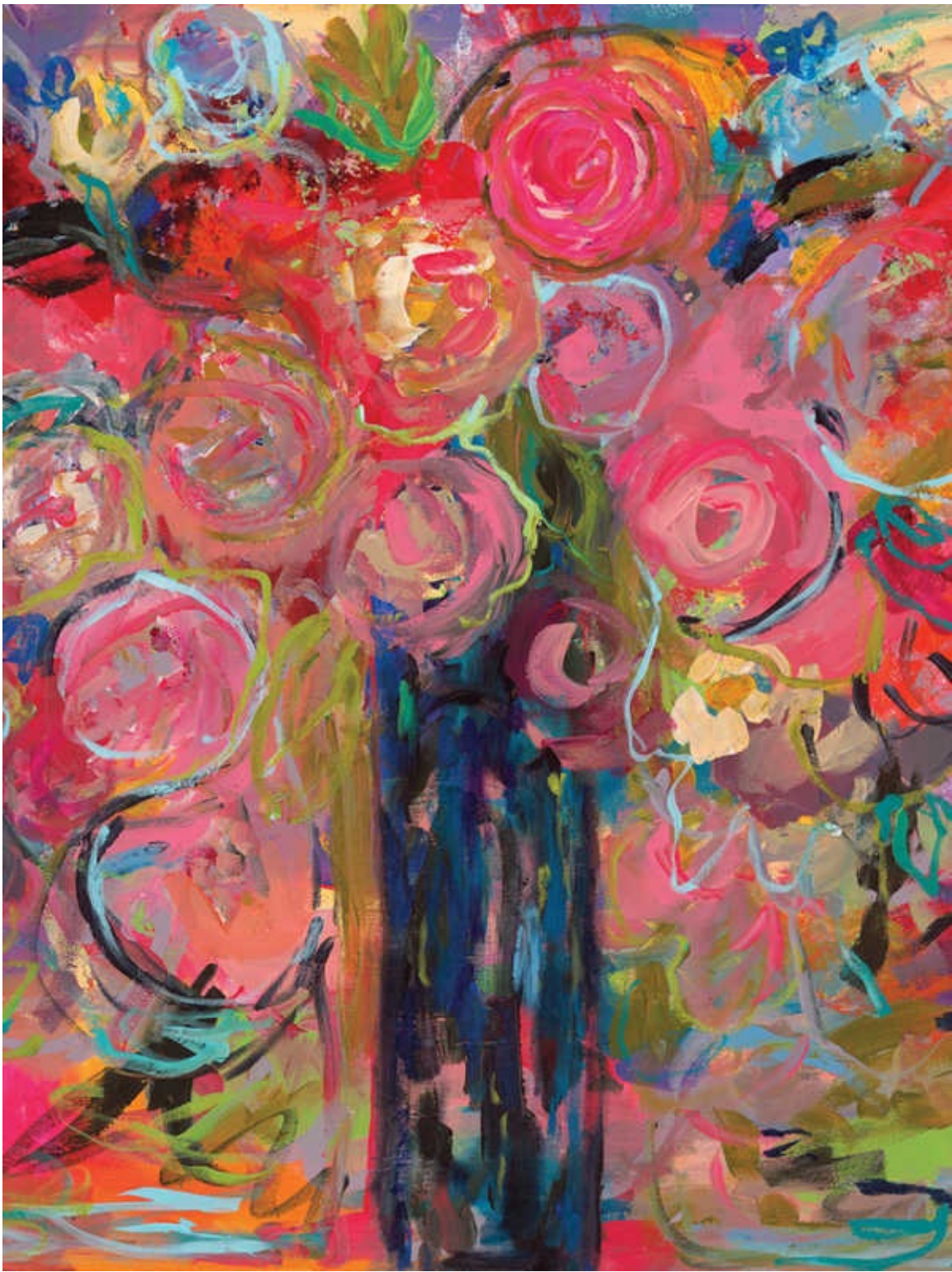
The thing about faith is that it _____.

What I most love about hope is _____.

In my heart of hearts I deeply believe _____.

Collect Words

I was introduced to the idea of a "word palette" in Elizabeth Murray's book, *Living Life in Full Bloom*. In addition to your own thoughts, keep a list of words and phrases that inspire you. You can add these words to your artwork such as the vases we just created or use them as a title for your painting. Murray suggests looking through poetry, art or old garden books. Keep a journal with you to record anything you come across in your everyday life that might inspire art, mantras or your manifestos.



Release

30" x 30" (76cm x 76cm)

Create Dramatic Beauty

create | krē `āt

- : to form by imagination
- : to make something new
- : to bring into existence

dramatic | drə `ma-tik

- : affecting emotions greatly
- : that which attracts attention
- : striking in appearance or effect

beauty | `byü-tē

- : brilliant, extreme attraction
- : graceful
- : pleasure to the senses or the mind

My favorite pieces of art are dramatic. They take my breath away, create an emotional response, captivate my senses and add powerful energy to the space. After hearing reflections from two of our Flower Tribe artists, Autumn Rose and Iris Scott, we will create our own dramatic art through the practice of letting go and taking chances while we paint.

Creativity is inventing, experimenting, growing, taking risks, breaking rules, making mistakes and having fun.

—**Mary Lou Cook**—

Blossoming



Beaucoup Blossoms
by Autumn Rose

How does your personality influence your art?

My art is me—bold and expressive. When it comes to my artwork, it is important for me to make a statement. My personality is carefree yet I am outspoken and bold. I have always felt that this is reflected in my work. It is very difficult for me to paint something with neutrals, beiges and browns especially when they are not contrasted by a bold pop of color. That is why you will seldom see an Autumn Rose painting that does not have vibrant color and lots of it!

How do you use color to infuse emotion into your paintings?

I love color. It really moves me and stirs my emotions. At times I can be shopping and see a color or pattern that makes me want to rush home to paint. My artwork is all about color and how it makes me feel. I really want other people to see my work and feel happy, excited, intrigued. You'll find that my work likes to show off a bit. I love to use something bold like tomato red and contrast it with something softer or cooler like seafoam green.

I choose color based on the mood I am in. I also feel that color experimentation is very important for my art. Sometimes a color combination that I normally would not choose becomes something I really appreciate. When a work evolves through the painting process, the layering of colors and their contrasts can become a bit of a surprise, and I often find that inspiring. It is often said that humor can be defined as the unexpected element, and my work is often expressive of humor and whimsy.

How do you incorporate other design elements into your work?

I really enjoy playing with balance—a heaviness versus a lightness, an impasto texture juxtaposed with smoothness. I also enjoy using delicate line work and contrasting it with a rich vibrant stroke. This creates a multidimensional element that I find truly captivating.

What artist has taught you the most about using design elements?

One of my greatest inspirations as far as line, scale and contrast comes from the great master of abstraction, Wassily Kandinsky. It was reading and learning about him that made me want to paint. Studying his work helped me appreciate the need to play with balance and create a dimensional effect with depth and contrast. I also learned to use organic shapes and lines, which makes art more interesting, gives it variety and makes it engaging to me. Creating a sense of visual rhythm—like a dance with color, motion and light—is important to me.

Autumn Rose's Tips

- Use a variety of brushes.
- Use strokes of paint in varying directions.
- Experiment with color.
- Don't give up, even when you don't like what you are doing at first . . . if you keep painting you may change your mind.
- Experiment with different mediums. You may not like heavier bodied acrylic, but you might really enjoy the freeness of watercolor.



Sea Blossoms

by Autumn Rose

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I have always thought of myself as an artist. It is a vital part of who I am because I was raised to see beauty and drama in even the most ordinary places.

—Autumn Rose—

Reflection

1. Describe your own personality with words or think about how others would describe you. How can you infuse these qualities into your work?
2. Who inspires you? Find an artist who inspires you and note what you are drawn to in his or her work.

Blossoming



Artichoke Bloom

by Iris Scott

How did you discover finger painting was your calling?

I stumbled upon finger painting by a stroke of lucky laziness in 2009 while living in Taiwan. I was renting a room in a communal space but could only afford to air condition my small bedroom/studio. With all my brushes stained blue, I was frustrated with the need to leave the cool room to step out into the sweaty hallway and kitchen. Rather than brave the heat and pause, I began painting with my fingers.

It was a painting of yellow flowers, and those first strokes I made achieved an effect that blew my mind. I remember just staring at the painting that night, befuddled. I couldn't believe

how much more dynamically this technique could manipulate oils. My heart was racing. I literally could see my whole life before me. I knew instantly that finger painting would become everything. I could see how far I would take it. I have not used a brush since.

How long does it take you to create a painting?

Each canvas is painted in one day. This usually means about a twelve- to fifteen-hour workday. It's exhausting, thrilling, effortless at times, and sometimes panic-infused. Since I work only wet oil paint into wet oil paint, the effect is a luscious, watery, swirly and fluid stroke style. Colors collide with other colors mixing right on the canvas.

Accidents are everywhere. Much of the paint's action is unexpected and welcomed. Oil develops a faint skin in about 12 hours, which can tear when touched, so my racing of the clock forces me to make quick decisions and finish what I have started. If I cannot pull the painting together in one day, I am forced to scrape all the paint off and wipe it totally clean.

This time limitation is a blessing and a curse. I get to have a painting finished the same day it's started, but I don't get the luxury of time to work through a problem or come back to the painting days later.

Iris's Tips

- Don't let the bumpiness of the canvas show through. Add just enough paint that your fingertips don't feel the sandpaper-ish texture of the canvas.
- Finger painting with thick paint is all about discovering accidents and choosing which ones to keep.
- Pay very close attention to how beautiful colors are colliding. Watch for beautiful accidents on the micro level. See if you can discover accidental flowers in the swirls and then KEEP them. Don't keep touching them.



Dahlias

by Iris Scott

How do you suggest experimenting with color?

My best advice on how to become an amazing colorist is to start very simply. As a beginner painter, try the following exercise: Cut out color swatches from any and everything. Then with the colors you already own, work to match the swatch samples so precisely that your painted swatch disappears when placed upon the target color swatch.

If you cannot match the hue exactly, do NOT say to yourself, *Oh well, close enough*. Seize this moment to go buy a color or two more from the art store so that “close enough” becomes “perfect match.” Be insanely precise about matching colors and buy new colors until you can match practically any color you’re given.

Put a tremendous number of hours into practicing this game and quite soon you will be amazed at what you can automatically do. There are no tricks to color. In fact, I don’t believe in color theory whatsoever.

Reflection

Accidents are a beautiful element in art making. There is a carefree, one-of-a-kind quality in something created without intention that cannot be replicated when attempted. Pay attention to these joyful, unexpected moments in art and life. As Confucius said, “An inconvenience is an unrecognized opportunity.” Consider how you can turn the unexpected into an opportunity for fun, joy, humor or growth in painting and life. Next time you face the unexpected, shift your view that this is an opportunity and see what happens.

Being an artist is like being able to see a parallel universe. When you’re a painter a sidewalk isn’t just sidewalk, a tree isn’t just a tree, a rain-saturated road becomes a composition and a painting waiting to be. Art is everywhere. I see the world through paint-covered glasses.

—Iris Scott—



Demo Two

Flowing Flowers

We are going to create dramatic “drippy” flower paintings by combining Iris’s finger painting technique with Autumn’s dreamy, loose style, which she achieves by incorporating watercolors into her work. We will mimic this by watering down our acrylic paint. Just as an accident led Iris to a breakthrough in her art, we will embrace accidental collisions of color and form.

You can always paint over what you don’t like, so take chances and experiment. Building layers will only add to the richness and depth of the finished piece. I encourage you to experiment with colors and see how they blend together. My favorite drippy paintings are the result of choosing colors randomly to create unusual combinations. If you don’t know where to start, you can always go back to your inspirational collections or a fresh bouquet.

CREATIVE PRACTICES

- Play with color mixing and dripping
- Take risks and make bold choices
- Experiment with layers
- Celebrate accidents as opportunities

WHAT TO GATHER

acrylic paint, fluid: any colors you want

acrylic paint, heavy body: Titanium White

canvas, 16" × 20" (41cm × 51cm)

fine-tipped brush (optional)

paintbrushes

spray bottle full of water

Mix Things Up

Use different sizes for your flowers to add variety, which will make the painting interesting and eye-pleasing! Also, try using colors you wouldn’t normally use.

Fresh Paint

If the blended paint gets too muddy, wait for the painting to fully dry. Then cover areas you don’t like with fresh paint. You can always cover it with white paint or a light color and start again.

Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.

—**Scott Adams**—



STEP 1: Our flowing flowers take center stage with a quiet, soft background. Squeeze a few drops of fluid acrylic paint, such as magenta and green, onto the canvas. Smear on some heavy bodied Titanium White as well.



STEP 2: Let the colors mix in a random way to cover the canvas. Play with the texture of the thick paint. Let the paint dry.



STEP 3: Using your fingers, paint some loose circles on the canvas in various sizes and colors.



STEP 4: Spray the wet circles with water for a watery, drippy effect.



STEP 5: Again using your fingers, add a few more flowers of various sizes. Experiment painting wet paint into wet paint. Some of the most interesting and unexpected colors I create are from accidentally mixing colors while painting this way. If you don't like the color that results from mixing, you can always let it dry and paint over it.

Continue spraying the wet paint with water as you work.





STEP 6: Repeat another layer of circle flowers and paint over any area you don't like. You can use white paint tinted with a color to completely block an area and start again if you want; that's the magic of the process!



STEP 7: Add leaves and stems if needed with a thin, fine-tipped brush.



STEP 8: Add a few additional stems with a brush in between the drip stems.



STEP 9: Using your fingers, add some extra details and flourishes. Add centers to the flowers and any other fun final details.



STEP 10: You can also drip fluid acrylic paint directly onto your canvas for a dramatic effect.



C'est La Vie

16" × 20" (41cm × 51cm)

I experimented with color and was happy with how the painting unfolded from randomly applying paint with brushstrokes, finger painting and spraying water on the canvas.

Getting Stuck in the Mud



Flower Tribe wisdom is designed to support you when you are feeling frustrated or lost, which happens to all of us on this creative path sometimes. When you need a little pick-up from your girlfriends, read over these pages and feel the communal energy and power in strong souls bravely following their dreams. Ira Glass eloquently explains how when you first start creating there is a gap between what you want to create and what you are creating. He says, “It is only by going through a volume of work that you will close that gap, and your work will be as good as your ambitions It’s normal to take a while. You’ve just gotta fight your way through.”

There are ups and downs in the creative process, just like there are in life. Giving yourself the emotional tools you need to succeed is just as important as having paints and brushes.

Sometimes I want to give up. I’ve come really close many times. But I don’t. Despite the ebb and flow of my creativity, I show up. The beginning is exhilarating to me—my favorite part. I usually reach a point where doubt, frustration and fear creep in. But if you keep going, you will prevail! This is why creating is an empowering act. You push yourself to your edge and

surprise yourself by doing what you didn't think you could do. The aftermath is empowerment, gratitude and bliss.

You are always growing. “Better every day” is one of my mantras that I have embraced as an artist. With each painting, I know that I am getting better and this encourages me. I often wonder what my art will look like five to ten years from now and enjoy working toward the goal of growing as an artist. There is no bottom of the well—your creativity keeps going and going. Think about that when you get down.

When I am stuck with a painting, I try to create a shift, or change energy, somehow on the canvas or in me. That might mean turning the canvas upside down or choosing a completely new color to add, or painting over most of it with a completely new approach or design. Another approach is to call a friend and paint while we talk. This distracts me from consciously thinking about what is happening on the canvas, allowing me to work intuitively and without judgment. If I am in a bit of a painting rut in general, one of my favorite practices is to perform random acts of kindness. Talk about a positive energy rush!

Sometimes, I let an unfinished painting sit for months until I feel drawn to pick it up again. I feel as though these paintings are waiting for me to learn something and develop my style—they are simply not ready to be born yet. I've surrendered to this reality and do not let time dictate when a painting should be finished. The Old Masters worked years on paintings. So relax. What's the rush?

Curious what the Flower Tribe has to say about getting stuck? Read on!

No mud, no lotus.

—**Thich Nhat Hanh**—

What do you do when you're stuck creatively?

“I just go on. If you just go on with what is in that very moment, you will never be stuck. In another way being stuck can be an aspect of going on.” —**Lia Porto**

“Set your intentions as an artist and let the universe guide you. Try to let your subconscious take over as much as possible. Sometimes we get stuck in a rut, and letting go of old patterns is a great start.” —**Brooke Wandall**

“I work on a number of paintings at a time. I think it is important to look at and review what you've done, let it sink in, not feeling obliged to finish in a rush. I like to look at books for

inspiration, visit galleries and museums. Drawing regularly in a sketchbook is a useful tool to keep hold of ideas.” —Este MacLeod

“When I get stuck, there are many things I do to shift my energy. I stop painting and take a break. Often I turn on some music and dance, have a snack, go for a walk or do some yoga. Getting fresh air and taking deep breaths is always good for me. I do things that bring me back to my center and allow for a creative flow.

“I try to remember that we all get stuck at times. It’s important to be gentle with ourselves and understand how the creative process ebbs and flows.” —Megan Jefferson

“It varies. Sometimes I just need to step away and get a fresh perspective the next day, but usually I end up doing something really wild and different than what is already happening on the canvas. I turn the canvas upside down, add brand new imagery or completely change the color scheme . . . or all three! Other times, I just move my body, change my music, move on to a new painting or take a quick walk around the block.” —Flora Bowley

“I always get stuck at least once during a painting. Love is blind. As I paint I’ll begin to fall in love with the process, and I’ll lose sight of what’s simply not working. An outsider can come into the room and immediately notice a problem spot. I listen to people, and I encourage other artists to do the same.” —Iris Scott

“My favorite thing to do when I’m stuck, is paint over an old painting. It’s so liberating to watch the old, uninspiring image disappear under a fresh layer of bold paint! It reminds me that painting is supposed to be fun—first and foremost—and gets me out of my head and into a space of play again.” —Jessica Swift

“One thing I do is to choose to work with a color that I actively DO NOT like. This is a practice for me to let go, embrace my own resistance and get out of a creative rut.” —Lynzee Lynx

“Stop painting! Take a break, no matter how long it is until you feel ready. If you have anxiety and are just avoiding painting because you don’t want to deal with not knowing how it will turn out, then you have to keep painting. You will paint a bunch of terrible, ugly things. But sometimes you have to just get it all out. I have spent a whole day before just getting it out of my system.” —Michelle Armas

“When I come up against something like that, going outside or looking for inspiration in my visual files and books helps to break through. I acknowledge that I can’t force inspiration. If it’s not coming, that is a sign for me that I am neglecting areas of my life that probably need attention before I can proceed.

“When I get stuck, three tricks help kick me out of it.

- 1. Writing it out: This helps me to see what thoughts and ideas are most compelling right now.*
- 2. Allowing play! This is so basic, I return to it again and again.*
- 3. Plan time to be creative: I started doing this after I had children, when I realized that if I didn’t plan time, it was just not going to magically happen.”*

—Faith Evans-Sills

“When I get stuck I walk away and take a break. For me this can mean that I am tired and need to rest or I need more inspiration or input. Going on a walk helps a lot. When I receive more reasons to become inspired, I have more to put out.”

—Alena Hennessy

Reflection

How do you get past being stuck in your paintings and life? Make a mental note about what helps you so you can utilize these methods again.



Wild Divinity
36" x 46" (91cm x 91cm)

Unleash Joyful Spontaneity

unleash | un-ˈlēsh

: to allow something powerful to happen

: to remove a leash from so one can move freely

joyful | ˈjoi-fəl

: delightful

: happy

: blissful

spontaneity | spän-tə-ˈnē-ə-tē

: abandonment

: ease

: naturalness

: lightheartedness

: uninhibited

Joyful Spontaneity—what a wonderful combination of sentiments! After interviews from artists Jessica Swift and Este MacLeod, we are going to embrace these qualities to create art that takes us on a journey into the unknown. The artwork will reveal itself to us while we practice patience and have faith in the creative process. We will unleash our joy, play with wild abandon and enjoy the present moment rather than focus on any preconceived desired outcome.

When you do things from your soul, you feel a river of joy within you.

—**Rumi**—

Blossoming

Jessica's Tips

- Shish kebab skewers make wonderful tools for scratching into your paintings! The blunt end is also great for creating tiny dots.
- Make sure you step back from your painting frequently, so you can see the big picture. It's easy to get caught up in the small details of the painting and not notice how the entire painting is working as a whole.
- If something isn't working, be bold, be brave and paint over it. This is my very favorite trick ever!

Describe how you create your gorgeous, colorful paintings.

My painting process is very intuitive. I begin with a blank canvas or wood panel and start covering it with patches of color without thinking about it too much. The goal is to quickly cover all the white space. I use a combination of medium bodied acrylics and fluid acrylics, spraying the fluid acrylics to create drips. I often create a lot of these patchy, drippy backgrounds at the same time, working quickly to cover many canvases with color.

The next step I often take is to stamp a repeating pattern using one of my hand-carved rubber block stamps. The backgrounds look so pretty to me at this point that sometimes I have a hard time painting on top of them in the next step! But once this patterned layer is dry, it's time to start painting on top of the first layer.



Celebration

by Jessica Swift

What do you do if your painting is not going smoothly?

I let the process guide me, constantly asking my painting what it needs. I step back and look, and wait until the next move presents itself.

I often paint over areas that are not working, and I layer lots of shapes and patterns and colors on top of one another. Sometimes I scratch or paint words onto the surface. The painting is in charge, not me. One of my favorite ways to work is painting over an old painting that I don't like anymore. The fun surprises that come when I leave pieces of the old work poking through are so exciting. These are often my favorite paintings.



Go In Between

by Jessica Swift

How do you make colors sing?

My paintings are nothing BUT color! From start to finish, my paintings are composed of color upon color upon color. Putting certain colors next to one another can make them sing; using complementary colors is one of the easiest ways to achieve this type of resonant song. Red next to green, orange next to blue, etc.

It gets really interesting when you think of all the infinite types of each complementary color that you could combine. How would a rusty red and a lime green look next to one another? What about a vermillion red and a forest green? I think about these types of color questions often when I feel like my painting is missing something. I ask myself, *What is the*

most unusual color I could add into this palette right now? Unusual color combinations add so much visual interest to a painting!

If you want to get a little more daring with your color, go to an art supply store and buy a color you would never think to buy. Then mix it with the paints you currently have and see what interesting colors you can come up with. Try not to use paint straight out of the tube—you can create so many interesting colors with the paint you’ve got, and it’ll make for much more dynamic paintings.

You’re a surface pattern design diva. How do you incorporate pattern in your paintings?

I often stamp patterns onto the backgrounds of my paintings, pieces of which I leave poking through the final painting. I love how it adds some depth and texture to my finished paintings. I also layer lots of hand-painted patterns into my paintings, often one right on top of the other. Dots, fingermarks, triangles I paint a lot of repetitive shapes into my work. Sometimes I use stencils and spray paint! Using patterns within my paintings is definitely part of my signature look.

Reality doesn’t play much of a role in my paintings—I love creating images that are beyond the ordinary. I don’t stick too close to reality in the shapes within my paintings, so the forms sometimes create an element of fantasy or whimsy. They create JessicaSwiftLand!

—Jessica Swift—

Mini Demo

Carve Your Own Stamps

Jessica carves her own stamps by hand. With her help, I've discovered that this process is fun, relaxing and a great way to create one-of-a-kind designs.

WHAT TO GATHER

- acrylic paint
- craft knife
- high-density rubber block (Speedball)
- paintbrush
- paper
- paper towel
- pen or permanent marker
- soft block carving tool



STEP 1: With a pen or marker, draw a unique design directly on a high-density rubber block.



STEP 2: Use a carving tool to gently carve into the block, etching out the top of your design. You don't want to press too deeply at first to avoid tearing into the block. This repetition of the carving process can be a meditative one as well.



STEP 3: When you are finished carving, trim off the excess rubber with a craft knife. Rinse off the excess rubber with water and blot dry with a paper towel.



STEP 4: Paint directly on the stamp with a brush and acrylic paint.



STEP 5: Firmly press the rubber stamp to paper and pull back to reveal!

Tip

Because of all the shavings, this can get a bit messy. I like to carve my stamps outside and over paper for easy cleanup.



Float Softly Upwards
by Jessica Swift

Blossoming

Este's Tips

- Try a different colored background to start from to avoid the blank canvas to work from.
- Think of negative and positive space. Make a negative paper cutout/stencil of a shape you would like to use in the painting, and move this around over areas painted already, blocking out some areas.
- Work with colors that you have an affinity for, and see how this works in combination with others, even ones you do not like as much. I hardly ever paint with a color straight from the tube. I like to mix it up—when colors are too pure it can be a bit jarring on the eye. Experiment with toning down, combining and mixing small amounts of color together. It is wonderful to see what develops when you do this and is the best way to learn. Happy accidents are very much part of the way I work.
- Be careful painting with black. I use a deep Payne's Grey, Burnt Umber, brown or blue for outlines, shading or blending.



Midsummer's Day

by Este MacLeod

How do you start your paintings?

I often start my paintings on a black gesso background. I add dabs of color spontaneously. I will have a basic idea as to what is to be painted, but the outcome is mostly led by the process and discovering options. Painting in this way creates a level of surprise and opportunity.

How do you create depth and interest in your paintings?

I often use printing techniques, such as textured polystyrene sheets, embossed wallpapers, a potato stamp or tissue paper, to soften shapes and break down colors or to add subtle color texture. I also layer colors, scrape back, sculpt and define shapes to create fine lines. I use palette knives and thicker paint also.

I always work with painting mediums, creating various effects. I might create an impasto effect by using thick gel or use very thin glazed layers that have a longer “open time” by adding a slow-dry medium. This creates an oil-like feeling to paintings.

How has painting with your child influenced your process?

When my son was younger, he used to paint with me. I learned quite a lot from his spontaneous, unreserved attitude toward color and application. The beautiful lines he applied so freely and his use of colors (that I would not have chosen) opened up new ideas. There is an energy in marks made in such an uncontrolled and specified way, and I've adapted this in the way I work.



Summer's Day **by Este MacLeod**

To create a bit of interest and variation, I make marks with my eyes closed, turn the painting upside down midway through making marks and randomly splash my brush after cleaning it off on the canvas. One can always eliminate what does not work, but it is a brilliant way to get started and remove the trepidation felt when confronted with a blank canvas.

Reflection

Este learned a lot about spontaneous playfulness from her son. Make a list of ways you incorporate play into your life. What are some playful practices you would like to embrace?

Using colors that are in harmony, and by highlighting and building up layers, a simple pattern or shape can become rich and evolve into a visual feast.



Demo Three

Surprise Garden

This technique demonstrates how I most often begin a painting—applying random brushstrokes and marks without thinking about what I am doing. I stay unattached for as long as possible to what emerges, which means I do not judge what is happening on the canvas. I try not to be too precious about keeping what I like or too critical about any areas that I don't like. I just keep going.

Surprise Gardens are paintings that reveal themselves to me through several layers of paint and mark making. Instead of having an idea in mind about what I want to paint, I wait for the painting to reveal itself. We are going to incorporate Jessica's use of pattern, mark making and stamping with Este's technique of masking off areas and cutting in over layers of paint to create forms. Let the flowers appear to you naturally. You can paint as many layers as you want. Keep painting until shapes begin to emerge that catch your eye. Play, have fun and let the magic unfold.

CREATIVE PRACTICES

- Paint with wild abandon.
- Remain unattached to what you like or don't like.
- Play like a child.
- Leave design to chance.
- Let the painting reveal itself to you.

WHAT TO GATHER

acrylic paint
warm and cool colors
Bubble Wrap
canvas board, 18" × 24" (46cm × 61cm)
foam brush
paintbrushes (optional)
scraping tools
stamps
stencils
stickers or tape

Release Attachment

Sometimes you have to let go of something you like to create something you love.

Try Repetition

If you create an element that you really like, repeat it somewhere else on the canvas to create unity and pattern through repetition.

Easy Camouflage

Is there a spot that you don't like on your painting? That might be the perfect place for a leaf. Is there an awkward edge where paint colors shift? Use a stem or leaf to separate the space.

There will always be flowers for those who want to see them.

—**Henri Matisse**



STEP 1: Randomly apply warm colors (reds, oranges and yellows) to cover your canvas.



STEP 2: Be playful and apply paint with abandon using your fingers or paintbrushes. Do not worry about what it looks like at this point. The messier and more chaotic, the better.



STEP 3: Enjoy experimenting with different design elements such as color, shape, contrast and form. Let the paint dry.



STEP 4: For your next layer, work with cool colors (greens, blues, purples). Leave sections of the first layer visible. Continue adding layers in this way until you begin to see images such as flowers emerge or intriguing sections that catch your eye.



STEP 5: Now it is time to play with our tools. One option is to randomly and firmly place stickers or tape on the painting to preserve what is underneath as we create more layers. Paint over these as you continue to paint.

Scrape into the paint with a sharp object such as an embossing stylus, palette knife, edge of a paper clip or shish kebab stick.



STEP 6: Press on a variety of stamps to add fun marks to your painting. Some of these designs will get covered up as you continue to layer. Repeat the stamp throughout the painting to create continuity and repetition.



STEP 7: Paint directly on a piece of Bubble Wrap with a foam brush and stamp directly on the painting in a few areas.



STEP 8: Loosely paint through a few stencils.



STEP 9: You'll create great texture regardless of how clean your application is.



STEP 10: Now it is time to bring it all together into a cohesive painting. I use a mixture of teal, green and white paint to outline the flowers, stems and leaves around sections I want to keep. I call this "cutting in" or "simplifying." These shapes can be as realistic or abstract as you like. By creating a contrast of quiet spaces, you are able to highlight the beautiful designs you have created with your layers of paint.

While cutting in, continue to scrape designs with a pointed-edge tool into the wet paint to reveal the dry layers underneath.



STEP 11: Press a few buds onto the surface with end of your finger.



STEP 12: If needed, add more flowers by repeating the elements that you love. Here I add some small pink and red flowers with a brush and some smaller buds with my fingers—both with various mixtures of magenta and white.



STEP 13: Remove the stickers using your fingers, tweezers or any sharp scraping tool. You might also choose to leave the painted stickers on the painting permanently if you like the textural effect they give the painting.



STEP 14: Continue adding stems and leaves, as well as other elements to complete the painting.



Dreamscape

16" × 20" (41cm × 51cm)

I was able to let go, remain unattached to the many layers and stay playful with this piece for a long time. I especially like how scraping into the flowers with a paper clip added interesting line and texture. It turned out to be one of my favorite Surprise Gardens because I was able to add richness and depth that come from staying loose, being willing to cover up sections of paint and experimenting with color and form.

Seeking Inspiration

Earlier, I shared what inspires me and how I surround myself with inspiration in my studio. Now, the Flower Tribe shares how they welcome inspiration, a word with origins meaning “inhalation of divine guidance.”

“Nature is a consistent theme in my work. I hold a deep reverence for botanical forms. Sailboats, animals, patterns, sparkle and fluid colors found in sunrises and the ocean also inspire me to create. Mostly though, I start out by moving paint and playing for the background, then I allow that process to show me where to go next.”

—**Alena Hennessy**

“My ideas come from my surroundings, the mountains, the valleys, the flowers. I paint from my dreams, too. My muse often leaves me with beautiful images in my dreams that wake me up and get me painting to capture the image.”

—**Brooke Wandall**

“I’m actually inspired by the process of intuitive painting more than any tangible source of inspiration. I find the process both challenging and invigorating because I never know what will happen from layer to layer. Working in this way keeps me engaged, curious and slightly out of my comfort zone—an important part of the creative process.

“That said, there is so much inspiration around us in every given moment, but often we have to choose to see life through this kind of lens in order to really SEE. I often find inspiration on my daily walks around my neighborhood, dreaming in my bathtub and riding my bike around Portland . . . usually accompanied by a good playlist.”

—**Flora Bowley**

“I derive my inspiration from ethnic textiles, travel photography, certain music and patterns in the natural world. Also Savasana (a corpse pose in yoga) often leads to my favorite ideas. And, physical activity encourages ideas to rain down upon me. That’s my main motivation to run!”

—**Lynzee Lynx**

“I am very inspired by the natural world. There’s endless inspiration in organic shapes! I’m also simply inspired by color, and I get excited when I discover color used in unusual ways. But I’m most inspired by the process of creating. I never start a painting with a plan. I start with a blank canvas, some paint and a blank mind. The plan presents itself as I work on the

painting. The fact that we are human and can create something out of nothing, day after day, is fascinating to me. I never wait to be inspired—you can create your own inspiration just by getting started.”

—Jessica Swift



“I am inspired by interiors so I absorb blogs, magazines, Pinterest, anything that is nice to look at. I see composition and color everywhere I look: on a walk, in the trees, in the sky, everywhere. One color that I see can inspire so many paintings because I keep thinking about pairing that color with others, and each time it creates a different look and feel, and I love living inside of different paintings and feeling them differently.”

—Michelle Armas

“Painting is a language that is not directed by the mind. Everything that’s part of myself is reflected in the pictures, even in codified ways. I usually say that my main inspiration is nature. It always gives me fresh power to create and I use organic shapes. I take from nature a rhythm, a rhythm to give natural harmony to each painting. Everything that is part of your perception will affect the painting. For me this includes my kids, the green grocery, flowers, daily meals, dogs or cats, birds, ice cream, the wind, yoga postures, a coffee in Nucha, travels, many mantras, magical cities like New York or Rio and more.”

—**Lia Porto**

“Each of my pieces is an expression of a relationship. I use birds, butterflies and other woodland creatures as characters in a drama that is really about human experience. Some of my pieces are filled with emotion, some are more lighthearted, but each resounds with a reflection of what it means to be in relationship with the world around me. These days I learn most directly about the world around me through my closest relationships—through my husband and my children—so that is often what I am expressing in the work.”

—**Faith Evans-Sills**



If we look at the world with a love of life, the world will reveal its beauty to us.



Blossoming

12" × 16" (30cm × 41cm)

Honor Your Sacred Path

honor | ˈä-nər

- : to fulfill or live up to
- : to treat with admiration and respect
- : to give special recognition to

sacred | ˈsā-krəd

- : worthy, holy
- : highly valued and important
- : deserving respect or dedication

path | ˈpath

- : a way of life, conduct or thought
- : a course, a route
- : that which lies before someone moving

Honoring my sacred path has meant listening to my heart and letting that inner voice guide my decisions, whether I am creating art or making life choices. After hearing from two soulful artists, we will create art that celebrates our past, honors who we are right now and manifests our dreams for the future.

Every artist dips his brush in his own soul and paints his own nature into pictures.

—**Henry Ward Beecher**—

Blossoming

Brooke Wandall



Blue Terrarium

by Brooke Wandall

Your art is so textural—I want to reach out and touch it. How do you achieve this?

Every painting is its own experience held together as a series by similar marks and colors. I've been finding such unique ways to call a painting my own—scraping, digging, pushing, letting the paint drip and experimenting with different mediums.

How do you create meaningful art?

I'm really in love with the process. I love moving the medium around, especially house paint. It covers quickly and moves with ease. Oils are great for surprising patches of color.

Reworking and making a painting come together is a joy. I don't have a plan in mind when I am painting. They usually find me as long as I am open to that.

Your terrariums are such a unique concept; how did you come up with that idea?

My terrariums are abstract flowers in a transparent container. Each one has a life and energy all its own. They are about origins and the beginning of life and how fragile the woman as a container becomes as she matures in life and allows herself to be more transparent as a mother and as a human.

Tell us how you use color to convey sentiment in your art.

I use color to suggest fragility and beauty in subtle ways with surprising patches of bold colors. Let the colors mix together as much as possible before the mix turns to grey. Don't just shoot it out of the tube and let it lie; mix them and create colors that inspire you. Let it be surprising!

How do you choose your color scheme?

I choose my palette from mostly pastel colors that are subtle yet quite intriguing close-up. I like to make colors surprising upon closer inspection. Then sometimes I throw in a bright or bold color to balance things out and uplift the other colors. It's about balance.

Brooke's Tip

Meditate and start using affirmations. Open a space in your mind and heart for new things and new ideas.



Hollyhocks
by Brooke Wandall

When I paint, I become a completely different person; all the chaos in life fades away.

—Brooke Wandall—

Blossoming



Magic Lives Here

by Alena Hennessy

How do you create soulful art that has a dreamy, ethereal feel?

I work mostly in an intuitive-based process. I work from guideposts that I create in a free style of painting to direct my style and subject matter. Acrylic, ink, paper, glitter, paint pens and other forms of mediums make up the eclectic mix of my paintings. I enjoy work that is a tad abstract, expressive and has the intention to convey a feeling of magic and the free spirit, along with strong use of the elements of art.

How do you use design elements in your art?

Oh how I love to create contrast! It has become increasingly more important to create contrast in a work. I love doing this through color (blacks and lighter hues—the black makes every color shine out more) or through loose and fluid brushwork with tighter, more illustrative details on top of it.

Rhythm is another principle of art that I cannot seem to get enough of. Repeating certain marks and shapes throughout a work helps me to create a sense of rhythm in a painting. It's really that simple.

Line—I have a deep love for this element as well. I think the use of line adds elegance in simplicity that I look for in a painting. It is expressive and helps tie and unify parts of a work together.

Tell us how you use mixed media.

Throughout my years of painting I have come to discover that working with paper and paint are very compatible. I so enjoy this process of painting and encourage you to experiment with it as well. Along with various forms of soft paper, ink and acrylic, I also like to use various art pens and other mediums to create my layered work. The paint can be applied using a clean flat brush and thin coats of liquid medium (matte or glossy), both under and on top of the paint. You can then seal the painting with an entire coat of varnish at the end using a flat brush or spray.

Alena's Tips

- Trust yourself.
- Allow your inner voice to shine out as you create your own unique visual language.
- Know what you love and be true to that. People will feel and respect that authenticity in your voice. Simply put, be true to you. You are your own unique artist. Practice helps with this immensely. There is no other way to discover than to paint as often as you can.



Living Forest Full Of Songbirds **by Alena Hennessy**

Activity

Pay attention to lines and edges in your surroundings. Notice how they define and impact space. For me, lines are sculptural elements that carve space into captivating forms.

Color creates the feeling and mood of a painting like no other element can. It sets the tone and all the other elements dance out from the color theme that is chosen.

—Alena Hennessy—



Demo Four

Sacred Terrarium

Consider this painting autobiographical and incorporate symbolism that has special meaning to you, especially when you are stuck or unsure what to do next. At each phase, ask yourself, *What do I love and cherish?* This is a great way to find your unique painting style. Whenever I don't know where to begin or what to do next, I think about what motifs, objects and colors I naturally gravitate toward.

Brooke's representation of a container as a sacred vessel of motherhood inspires me to consider what is sacred in my own life. Using Alena's mixed-media technique of collaging decorative paper in her work, we are going to create a terrarium that celebrates what we hold sacred.

WHAT IS BLOOMING IN YOUR LIFE?

What extraordinary or everyday events in your life are significant to you? Are there recurring themes that emerge? What family history and stories do you love to tell?

Take out a sheet of paper and write all the images and memories that pop into your head: places, people, memories, events or feelings. You might need to think of symbols to represent these things. Once you do, look for decorative papers, photographs or magazine clips with related imagery to collage into your artwork.

Set this list aside to use in the following demo as inspiration. Below is my list.

CREATIVE PRACTICES

- Value your unique life story.
- Infuse your sacred self into your art.
- Play with symbolism.

WHAT TO GATHER

acrylic paints

in colors that hold significance for you

canvas board, 12" × 16" (30cm × 41cm)

gel medium

paintbrushes, variety of sizes

scrapbook and decorative papers

special objects of meaning: collage papers, old photos, vintage papers, etc.

stamps

stencil

wet rag

Typewriter (I love to write), birds or halos—guardian angels (I believe in them!), cricket (my nickname), tea, paintbrushes, seashells, seal, raindrops, cowgirl boots (wanted to be Annie Oakley as a child), marble (family business), old newspaper clippings, mermaid (my daughter was born in the water), maps, light blue/dark blue (ocean, night), lemons, shamrock (Irish heritage).

All gardens are a form of autobiography.

—**Robert Dash**—



STEP 1: Cover the canvas with paint and let it dry. I am using white and parchment-colored paint, inspired by a distressed armoire in my bedroom. Choosing colors can be as simple as asking, *What do I like?*



STEP 2: Use a stencil to create detail to your background. I have green, teal and white on my palette.



STEP 3: Use a mixture of these colors on the stencil so there is variation instead of one solid color. There is a good chance this might get painted over later; just focus on creating layers of interest. Let the paint dry.



STEP 4: Sketch in your terrarium, any size and shape you want, using paint. Because I like an imperfect look, my shape is not completely symmetrical.



STEP 5: Fill in your terrarium with a thin wash of color, leaving parts of the stenciled paint visible. Because I am letting what is meaningful to me guide my choices, I'm using a light blue to represent my love for the ocean and water.



STEP 6: With paint and a fine-tipped brush, write the names of loved ones, a favorite quote or words that have meaning to you. Because the theme of my terrarium is what is sacred in my life, I wrote the names of my family members and ancestors, whom I feel are always watching over me.



STEP 7: When the paint is dry, it is time to collage. Add decorative papers with meaningful imagery or words or just lovely designs by covering the back with gel medium and sticking them to the canvas. Do not think about where to put them. Just go with your instinct.



STEP 8: Paint a layer of gel medium over the papers to seal them to the canvas.



STEP 9: When the gel medium is dry, paint your favorite flowers or plants on top and around the collage elements using your fingers or a paintbrush. In honor of my grandmother's adoration of roses, I'm painting the idea of roses and other things important to me.



STEP 10: With your fingers or a brush, blend the edges of the papers into the rest of the composition by rubbing them with paint.



STEP 11: Continue to add additional collage elements where needed, and add a few stamped images for additional interesting textures.



STEP 12: Add stems and leaves using various shades of green.

Quick Fix

Keep a wet rag nearby to make adjustments to your canvas as you work. You can also use the rag as a mark-making tool. You can also dip your fingers in water to help blend the paint.



STEP 13: I'm constantly asking myself how to add meaning and personal imagery. I paint flowers growing outside the container because I love all the symbolism they suggest—hope, possibilities, breaking boundaries, unlimitedness, the mystical divine.



STEP 14: At this point, the painting can be considered finished and you can see the full version of what I completed at this stage on the following page. However, like me, you might decide you want to use contrast to define your terrarium and make it stand out.

I used several shades to break up the space and I incorporated some of the green from within my terrarium to tie the two areas together.



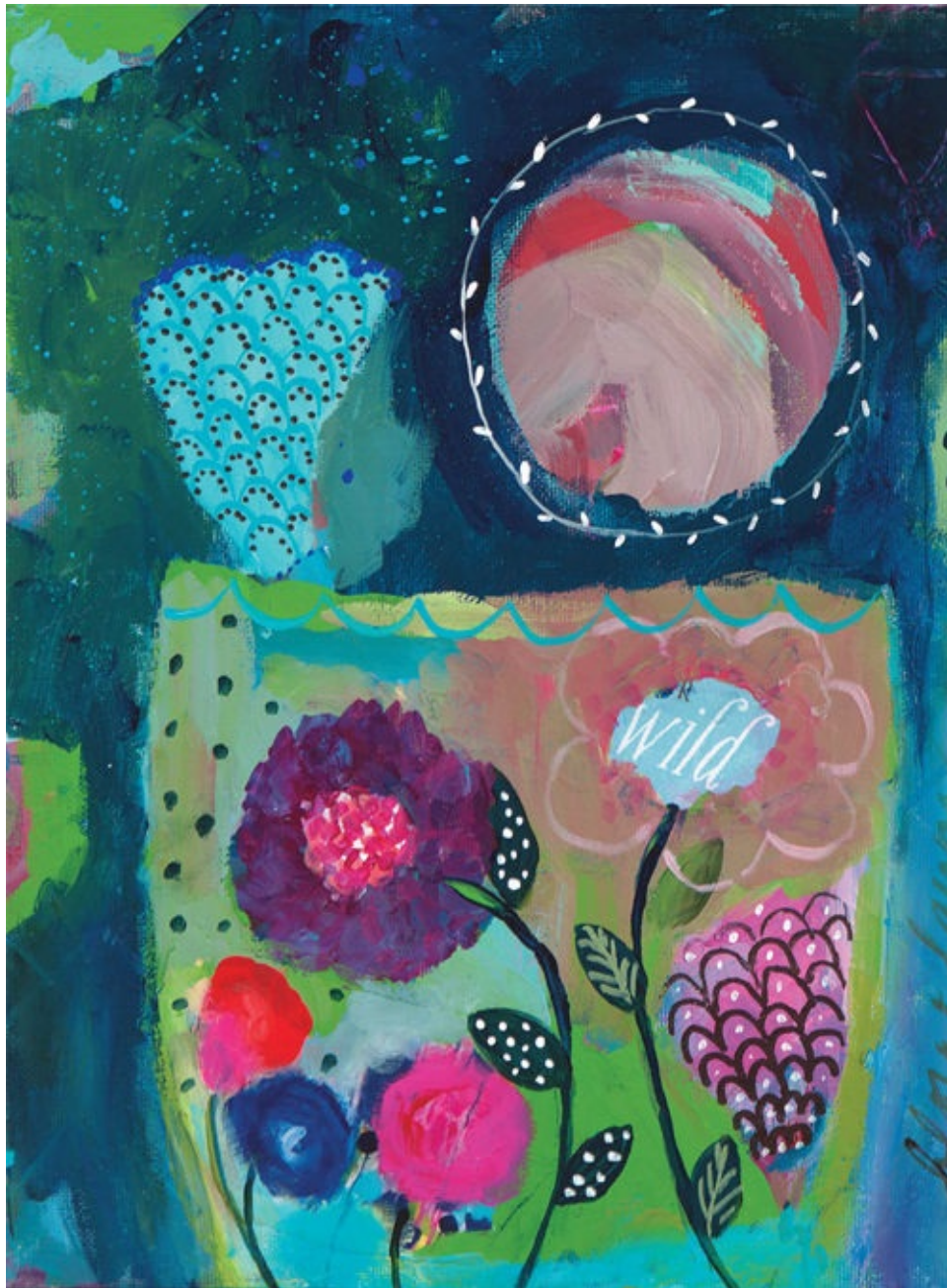
STEP 15: I used dark colors to suggest night, which to me has always represented security, “a blanket of comfort,” the moon and a maternal, feminine nature.

Lastly, I decided to add white dots to represent the mysterious celestial powers that we are all connected to—the unknown, the vast expanse of possibility!



Above: shows what the finished piece would have looked like if I hadn't decided to add the darker blue background.

Dream Your Passions Into Life



Mermaid Dreams

11" × 14" (28cm × 36cm)

We just created lovely terrariums that celebrate the stories of our lives. Let's not stop there! Envision what objects, themes and experiences you would like to add to your sacred container in the future. What do you desire to welcome into your life? What dreams do you want to manifest? Let's create a terrarium to hold symbols of our hopes and dreams.

First, let's talk about the power of dreaming. A few years ago, I participated in the life-changing online course, Mondo Beyondo, which is about giving yourself permission to dream. One exercise is to write down your dreams—from the small ones to the most

outrageous ones that you didn't even know were inside—to set them in motion. I was a skeptic but decided to try it. Shockingly, it worked. Everything on my list came true, including this book even though I had just started painting!

There is tremendous power in believing that once you declare your soul's intentions, the universe will come to your side. I am still an avid list-maker and find this phenomenon continues to work. It is a good way to check in with myself and develop an awareness of what my soul is calling me to do. I believe that as long as I am doing the work and putting my energy toward my passions, good things will happen. One of my most important art practices is to take one step every day in the direction of my dreams.

Andrea Scher, the coleader of Mondo Beyondo, has some tips for us when it comes to following your heart's whispers and wildest longings.

What is Mondo Beyondo?

Mondo Beyondo is an e-course where we usher people through a process of creating a list of their deepest dreams that are in alignment with their values and passions, and we explore what it takes to make those dreams come true.

Why is dreaming powerful and transformative?

I believe that our dreams pull us toward the most alive version of ourselves. In the end, I'm less concerned with *if* your dream came true and more concerned with *who you became* in the process of pursuing it. Did you become a braver version of yourself? Do you feel more alive? How did you grow?

Dreaming is also powerful because we learn to trust ourselves. We learn that we can create our lives. We can imagine something outrageous and wonderful and manifest that vision. It builds our confidence and allows us to continue to imagine even more. In a way it's like getting back to a more childlike state where everything was possible.

How does Mondo Beyondo work?

Mondo Beyondo begins with a list of the most outrageous and wonderful things you can imagine happening in your life in the coming year. I encourage people to capture things that feel impossible like living for three months in the south of France, meeting Bruce Springsteen or learning to cook from Alice Waters. Once you start letting your imagination run wild, you will surprise yourself with the ideas that emerge. You will begin to see dreams that have been covered over for years start to float to the surface—books that want to be written, experiences you are longing to have, healing of relationships.

Whenever I write a Mondo Beyondo list, it gives me permission to expand my sense of what's possible and reveals where my hungers are at that moment.

Now it's your turn to create your dream terrarium. After you make a list of your dreams, go back and think of symbols to incorporate into you ar that represent these dreams. They don't have to make sense to anyone but you.

I incorporated symbols into my dream terrarium to reconnect with my true, wild self as represented by mermaid-tail flower shapes, the words *Flora+Fauna*, which is what I want to someday call my dream studio/storefront, the circles to represent women's circles and gatherings I want to create, and collaged pieces of my painted flowers as a reminder of my dream to have my art on textiles. See my list, below:

- Reconnect with my true, wild self. I've become increasingly aware of how subdued I've become over the years. (Symbol—mermaid tail which reminds me of my water-loving child-self)
- Open a studio/storefront called "Flora+Fauna." (Write those words on my canvas)
- Create textiles with my art. (Collage my printed art onto the canvas)
- Host women's retreats and gatherings. (Symbol—circles, moon, reverse triangle)

Words are powerful energies that, once released, can create the conditions and circumstances of your life, like magic wands.

—**Sonia Choquette**—



City In Bloom

16" × 20" (41cm × 51cm)

Welcome Creativity With Ease

welcome | ˈwel-kəm

: to receive or accept with happiness or pleasure

: a warm greeting

creativity | krē-ā-ˈti-və-tē

: imagination, ingenuity, inventiveness, originality

: the ability to make something new

ease | ˈēz

: lacking pain, trouble or difficulty

: comfort of body or mind

When I first began painting, the process was more challenging than it had to be, because I thought it should be difficult to create beautiful art. I also resisted painting flowers because I thought it wasn't original enough. Since then, I've realized that the way I paint flowers is unique because I infuse my one and only soul. I also have found that following the path of ease while painting not only makes it more enjoyable but also allows my unique style to find expression. It's about not fighting who you are and allowing your natural whims to lead the way. Louise Gale and Faith Evans-Sills find their natural paths through meditative practices that quiet the mind, welcome creativity and allow curious exploration to lead the way. After they share how their art is influenced by mandala making, we will create our own mandalas with ease and enjoyment. We will take deep breaths and let creating be as simple and instinctive as breathing. Inhale inspiration. Exhale creativity.

When you are in harmony with yourself, everything unfolds with grace and ease.

—Panache Desai—

Blossoming



Cosmos

by Faith Evans-Sills

How is the act of creating a spiritual experience for you?

When I am in painting mode, the only way that I can describe it is as meditation, in which I have access—however briefly—to the deepest part of myself. I always work to keep myself loose and brave, trying not to get attached right away when I see something that I like developing.

In each of my paintings, as well as in my life as a wife and mother, I am searching for the balance between spontaneity and design, the decorative and the profound, the body and the soul. For me, making art is how I worship God and honor the divine spark within me, and when I do it, I feel that I catch glimpses of a connection with something that I do not fully understand.

How does color affect your art and daily life?

Color is such a huge part of my work and my life. Living in a colorful home makes me feel most alive and vibrant, and this energy definitely carries over into my work in the studio. I feel my moods shifted by color.

That said, I have felt the beginning of a transition in the layering with my paintings in which I am bringing more white back into the top layers of my work. There is a beautiful, delicate subtlety to the use of white that has been really speaking to me, and I'm excited about seeing where that goes in my work. So far it is manifesting as white flowers and detailed paisley forms in layers that dominate large areas of the paintings. Color isn't going anywhere in my work, though—far from it—but it is taking the form of a grounding element to the neutral elements of my most recent work.

How does harmony help you achieve a finished piece of art?

I'll know when a painting is finished when I can step back and feel a pleasing sense of harmony and balance. With each painting the timing may be different. With some I've achieved this balance after only a couple of layers, but with others I can keep working for months until I find it.

As with any intuitive process, I always just know when I've achieved what I need to in each piece; there is a moment when I survey the whole—the mark making, the imagery, the open areas of color—and it just feels right to me. That's when I stop working on a piece. I'll put it aside and then I'll come back to the piece in a few days, a week, or even a few months with fresh eyes, and if I still feel that sense of balanced harmony, I know that I am done.

How do you make time for creativity in your busy life as a mother, wife, artist and more?

My most helpful tricks are things that I use all the time to keep myself ready and primed with creative energy so that when I have time I can jump into my work.

As a mom of three young children I have been required to weave my creative process into the very details of my life, keeping me constantly inspired and ultimately appreciating life more as a result. As my children grow, they will have a strong call to pursue their dreams,

and the best way that I can prepare them is by showing them that I am actively pursuing those things that make my own heart sing.

To keep myself constantly on my toes I always make sure that I have a camera with me to snap shots of our everyday life, simple beauty that we encounter in the natural world. Whatever it is that I'm photographing helps me to stop and step back, seeing the magical within the everyday.



Still Point
by Faith Evans-Sills

Reflection

Because of time restraints, Faith began creating quick fresh flower mandalas as a way to stay connected to creativity. Consider how you can incorporate creativity as a ritual and practice in your everyday life in ways you have not yet considered.

More Mandalas

You can learn more about Faith's international Monday Mandala Project and how she creates mandalas from objects found in nature in the e-companion to this book. Go to www.createmixedmedia.com/paintedblossoms to learn more about the e-companion.

There is a lot of work that I call “silent work” where I am absorbing information, gathering inspiration and settling myself down to work. . . . I find that the more open I am, the more I see inspiration.

—Faith Evans-Sills—

Blossoming

Louise Gale



Blue Mandala
by Louise Gale

Why do you paint mandalas?

Creating mandalas to me is a complete meditation experience. It calms me, slows my breathing and allows my unconscious mind to take over to draw intuitive shapes and patterns.

What materials do you use to create mandalas?

I love to use a variety of mixed media—mostly watercolor pencils, acrylic paint and collage. I sometimes use pressed flowers in my artwork, too.

Where do you find inspiration for your mandalas?

I look to nature for inspiration such as the macro detail of a center of a flower and the vastness of the universe in cycles of planets and stars. There is so much inspiration in the natural world around us.

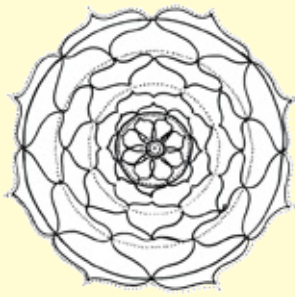
I keep a little journal full of doodles, drawings, favorite motifs and shapes. I recommend starting a little mandala-motif book to collect these so you can always refer to them when you need a little inspiration. One of the other activities I love is to go outside into nature and photograph circles, patterns and shapes that inspire me.

Louise's Tips

- Mandalas are very personal; there is no right or wrong way to create them.
- Tune into the type that speaks to you most—a loose doodle that grows from the center; a more structured mandala with eight points or multiple sections to it; or a completely freestyle mandala, which is not at all symmetrical.



Pink And Orange Mandala
by Louise Gale



A Doodle in a Circle

I usually draw out a circle with a compass or draw around a round object like a cup or bowl and simply doodle motifs or shapes that grow from the center outwards. These are usually very free-form, hand-drawn and not measured out at all! I keep to four or eight repeats or sometimes just repeat a motif or shape and see what happens.



A Structured Multipoint Mandala

I draw a circle or different sized concentric circles and then use a ruler to divide it into eight sections, sixteen or more. This provides structure and a template to play with. I then choose one motif to repeat around the initial section in the center (repeating the motif within the sections), then a new motif to draw the next section, moving from the center outward into each band that is created as part of the concentric circle templates.

I love to see the mandala grow and flourish. I let the images and patterns flow, rather than be attached to an end result of what I want the finished drawing to look like. There is something so satisfying when you see your mandala come to life in the circle, and sometimes I surprise myself with new motifs and shapes.

—Louise Gale—



Demo Five

Flower Mandala

The mandala is a universally sacred symbol that represents perfection within all living beings. The forms vary but all are symmetrical and have a central focal point. According to Suzy Chiazari, “By concentrating on this form it acts as an aid to prayer and meditation, promoting a feeling of wholeness and at-oneness with the world. . . . Flowers are natural mandalas.”

Like people all over the world, Faith and Louise make mandalas as a way to meditate and stimulate creativity. The simple act of creating is a practice of self-care for them to express their experiences and emotions. In this exercise, we are going to honor Faith’s love for creating mandalas with real flowers and Louise’s practice of creating art by tapping into our subconscious. We will use mandala making to get to that place where we create from our quiet, peaceful inner depths rather than the chatty noise of our minds.

The possibilities when creating flower mandalas are endless. I’ve created mandalas with just acrylic paint, as well as other mixed media such as dried flowers, which we will do in this exercise.

Pressed flowers are as stunning as freshly picked flowers and give your art an attractive organic element that infuses energy into the piece. You can press your own through a variety of methods or buy them online. (Etsy has a wonderful selection!) You can also use scrapbook paper, paint, stickers or any mixed media to create a flower design for your mandala.

CREATIVE PRACTICES

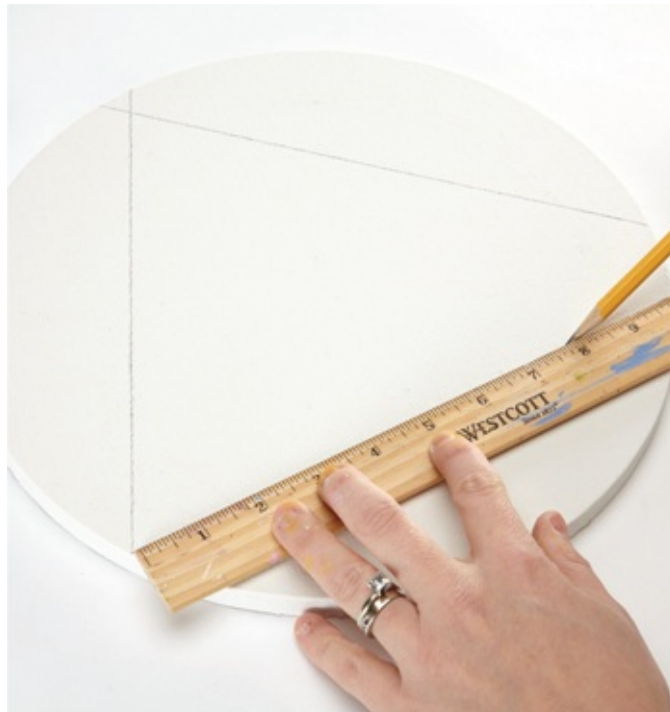
- Be open and surrender to whatever inspiration comes to you.
- Let your hands be guided by your impulses in an effortless way.
- Stimulate creativity by practicing creativity.
- Enjoy the meditative state of the creative process.

WHAT TO GATHER

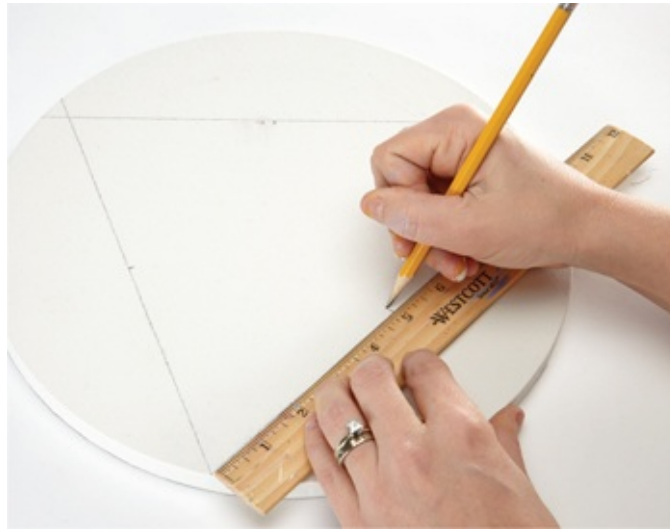
acrylic paints
two analagous colors of your choice plus white
camera
circular wood or canvas, 12" (30cm)
gel medium (glossy finish)
paintbrush
pencil
permanent marker
pressed flowers and leaves
protractor
ruler
stencil
wet rag

It's not just about creativity, it is about the person you're becoming while you're creating.

—Charlie Peacock—



STEP 1: To find the center point of the circle, begin by drawing a line with a ruler from one edge of the circle to another. Repeat this two more times for a total of three lines. (It doesn't matter where the lines go, or if they meet up at any point.) I am making a 10" (25cm) line because it can easily be divided in half, which we'll do in the next step.



STEP 2: Mark the halfway point on each line (5" [13cm] on my lines).



STEP 3: Using a protractor, mark one point that is 90 degrees perpendicular to the midpoint of each line you have just drawn.



STEP 4: Connect the perpendicular mark you just made to the midpoint mark on your line. Repeat this on all three lines.



STEP 5: The center of your circle is the point where all three of these lines meet.



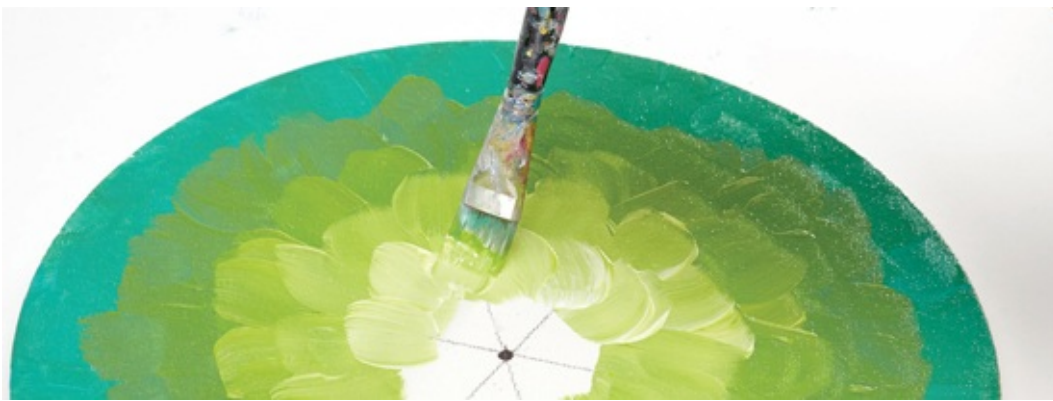
STEP 6: Mark the center with a permanent marker.



STEP 7: I am using an ombré-inspired design to create a simple background that imitates a bursting flower with many petals and layers. Starting on the outside of the circle, use a dark color and apply carefree loose strokes that resemble petals to cover the outer edge.



STEP 8: Paint just inside this color with a second color. Overlap these petals slightly.



STEP 9: For the next circle of petals, add a little white to your paint so it is a bit lighter than the last ring. Continue brightening the paint with white for each ring until you have painted the inside of the flower burst.



STEP 10: A symmetrical stencil is a great way to easily divide the circle into equal sections. However, here, instead of using it as a stencil (which you can do), I'm going to adhere the stencil itself to the canvas using gel medium because I like how it looks with old layers of paint on it.



STEP 11: Experiment and arrange your pressed flowers and leaves in a way that feels pleasing to you. Enjoy the sacred meditative process of playing with your hands and creating pattern by arranging petals. Stay attuned to how your body feels. Does your body relax? Do you lose sense of time?



STEP 12: When you are satisfied with the composition, snap a photo to help you remember the placement of the leaves and flowers.



STEP 13: Working in small sections at a time, coat the space on the canvas with gel medium where each flower will be placed. Because the flowers are fragile, press gently when you lay the flowers on the canvas and periodically wipe your fingers on a wet rag so your sticky fingers don't tear the flowers.



STEP 14: Seal by spreading a layer of gel medium over the tops of the flowers. Let the gel medium dry.



STEP 15: Using gel medium, you can layer more flowers on top of the sealed flowers and then cover with additional medium. In areas that seem a bit too bare, I'm adding more flowers to fill in.



STEP 16: When the gel medium is dry, you can paint on top of the flowers. Draw pattern designs such as dots, arrows, dotted lines, triangles, feathers, butterflies or any motif that makes your heart sing.

Soul Work

Illuminate Your Divine Spark

Painting is a meditative act where we are often able to lose ourselves in the process of creation. Other types of meditation help me stimulate creativity and lose myself so I am able to find myself—the self that makes me feel most alive. Listening to what emerges in silence can have a profound effect on your paintings and life. As Adrian Calabrese says, “When you have achieved a state of deep meditation, you unlock the door to your subconscious mind. That is where your power to create the life you desire lies.”

When I finally began listening, my entire life shifted internally, career-wise and even geographically with an unexpected move across the country. One of my favorite ways to honor the sacred within me and around me is to welcome quiet and stillness into my daily life. Yoga and meditation allow me to feel deeply centered to expand to new possibilities and feel passionately alive.

One of my favorite simple breathing meditations uses the imagery of light and flowers to cleanse, heal and rejuvenate, which clears a space in your head and heart to create. I do this when I am feeling stuck while painting or in everyday life situations where I might be physically or emotionally drained.

A favorite meditation: Close your eyes and relax your body starting at the top of your head and consciously releasing any tension all the way to your toes. Then, imagine a light, your divine light, all around you. Breathe in. Imagine sending that love light into each cell in your body with your breath. Exhale the charcoal residue within. Feel cleansed and refreshed with each breath. Let go of anything that does not serve you. For example, breathe out fear, breathe in power. Breathe out anger, breathe in peace. Breathe out anxiety, breathe in confidence.

I continue my quiet reflection with Elizabeth Murray’s meditation from *Living Life in Full Bloom*: “Now imagine your heart and see any little cracks. Picture love coming down like liquid gold, pouring from the heavens to fill your heart, making it stronger and more beautiful with radiance. Imagine the flowering of all the love you have cultivated in your life blooming in your heart. Breathe into that. Envision love flowing like liquid gold into your heart from all the sources of nourishment in your life, strengthening it with an enormous, expanding capacity to hold more love, feel your heart bloom with flowers in profuse abundance.”

There is a voice within you that no one, not even you, has ever heard. Give yourself the opportunity of silence and begin to develop your listening in order to hear, deep within yourself, the music of your own spirit.

—John O'Donohue—

Reflection

Inhale what you need and exhale what doesn't serve you. Notice how this makes you feel. Are you more attuned to creative energy within and without? Working from a positive place is powerful and helps deflect any self-criticism and doubt.

I smile with inhale, flowers bloom in my heart.

—Elizabeth Murray—



Rose Tree

by Elizabeth Murray

I wanted to ask Elizabeth Murray some questions about meditation.

What does meditating mean to you?

Meditation can be anything that opens a channel to allow a clear flow for receiving. It is not just sitting with your eyes closed, although I do that sometimes. It can be taking a walk, ironing, cooking, watering your garden or sketching. Driving can be a meditation where we remain alert but focus our mind on something such as love. One of my favorite ways to meditate is by arranging fresh flowers, which allows me to quiet my mind and focus my awareness.

How can meditation help us tap into our creativity?

Personally, meditation helps me clear the clutter in my mind so inspiration can stream in. It is like driving on a clear road instead of in bumper-to-bumper traffic. Meditation clears the creative pathway for beauty to come in and find its way out.

What are some of your favorite ways to meditate?

I love to meditate with others. My good friends and I meditate every week on the phone together. We talk or sometimes we read something inspirational and then meditate in silence. I also meditate by myself in my garden and while doing mundane jobs around the house. Even chopping vegetables and making soup with love and creativity for my students is a meditation.

Reflection

What does meditating look like to you? How can you incorporate daily meditation into your life? If you already meditate, can you try something new, such as meditating with a group or incorporating movement with a walking meditation?

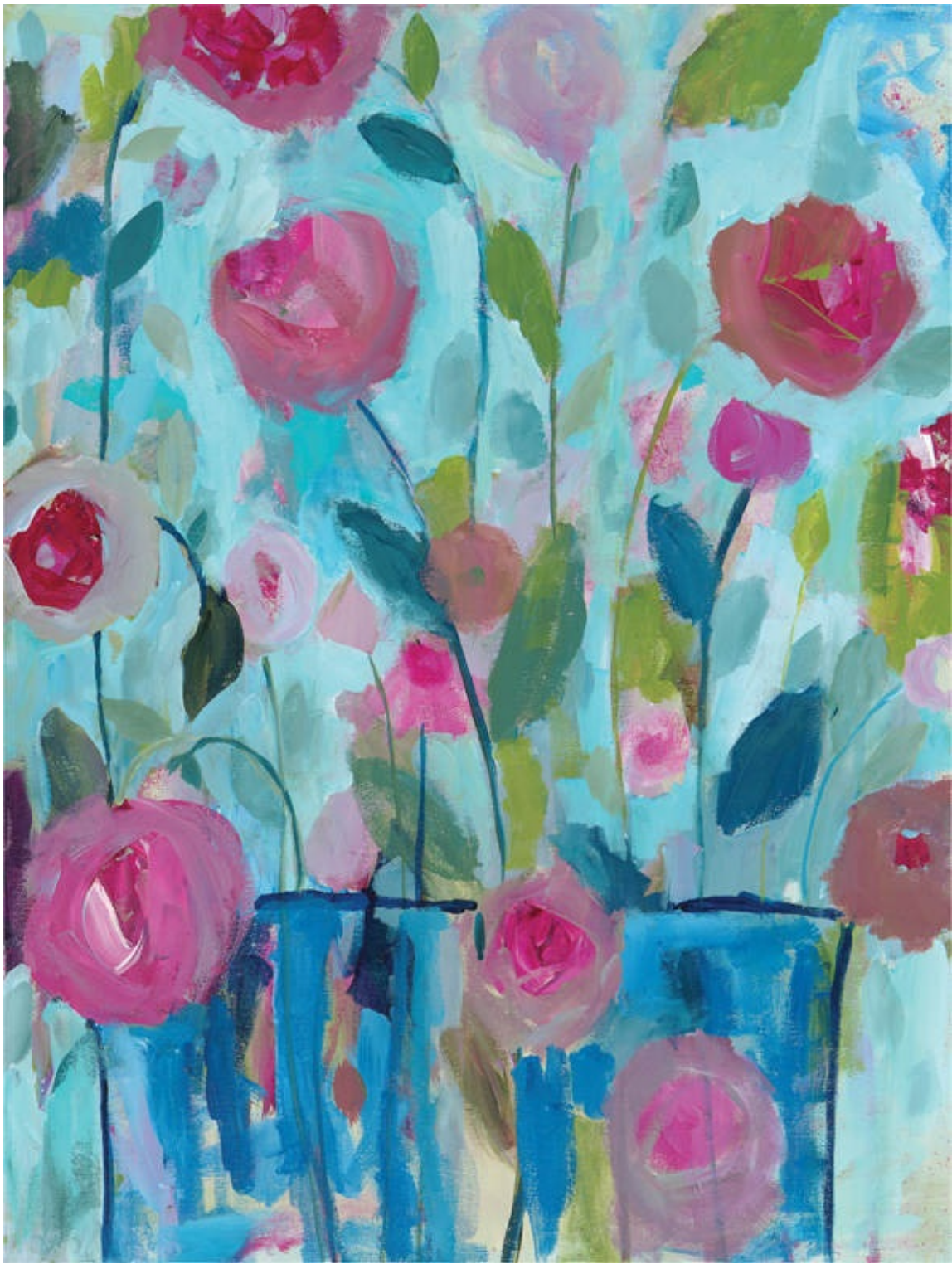
Reflection

While I walking on the beach at sunrise on New Year's Day, the phrase "May the light shine on me and within me," popped into my head as though my inner voice were sending me a message to be a giver and receiver of light. My friend Heather Pasqualino says that recently her intuitive voice has been repeating to her while she paints to "Let go," and "Trust yourself." What phrases or mantras pop into your head during the silence of meditating or creating that connect you with your divine center?

Today I stretch down my roots into the rich darkness, trusting that I have all I need to bloom. I will gradually seek the light, emerging and unfolding to my own fullness.

—Affirmation

by Elizabeth Murray—



Falling For You

18" x 24" (46cm x 61cm)

Cultivate Intuitive Design

cultivate | 'kəl-tə-vāt

: to grow and care for

intuitive | in-'tü-ə-tiv

: a natural ability or power that makes it possible to know something without any proof or evidence

: quick and ready insight

design | di-'zīn

: the arrangement of elements or details in art

: a decorative pattern

Abstract artists use design elements without recognizable imagery in a way that appeals to our senses. Abstract artists Megan Jefferson and Michelle Armas both trust their intuition and describe their process as having a conversation with the painting. Like dancing with a partner, they often let the painting lead the way, which is the art of practicing surrender and releasing control. After their interviews, we will create a loose floral painting by working quickly without judgment as we intuitively react to what is happening on our canvas. We will incorporate design elements to achieve visual balance and harmony.

Make visible what, without you, might perhaps never have been seen.

—**Robert Bresson**—

Blossoming

Megan Jefferson



Dreaming Of Spring
by Megan Jefferson

How do you begin an abstract painting?

I generally begin an abstract painting by dividing up the canvas with lines and shapes. Doing this creates a loose composition and gets the process started. A blank canvas is exciting, full of so many possibilities. However, it can be a bit intimidating, too. By putting lines on it, I am able to start the process in a loose, organic way.

Explain why you describe your art as a “conversation” or “dance.”

As I work, I respond to what’s created as if conversing or dancing with what is happening on the canvas. I direct the painting in a certain way, but then step back, look and feel the

movement, line and colors. These components reveal and suggest ways that I can respond. When I react intuitively it feels right, and I am happy with the emotion and outcome of the piece. For me, staying flexible, open to change and free of expectation during the creative process are all crucial to creating authentic, beautiful works of art.

How do you decide the composition of a painting?

I make a linear composition. I generally create large paintings, so I draw in a way that feels good. I let my arms make large sweeping motions, make long lines or a pattern of quick small marks. I step back and take it in. If the composition feels right, I continue on; if it doesn't seem balanced, I break up the space with more lines.

How do you decide on the color palette?

Color is one of my favorite things ever. I usually feel like painting in the mood of a certain color. When I begin, I mix that color with all sorts of other colors, applying the paint to the canvas. Colors start to form two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes. I respond with more color and an understanding of color theory.

I make time to paint often, so I have a relationship and understanding of the paint I use. I often put dots of bright color on my work in progress to see how it responds to the color that is there already. If it works, I will use more of it; if it doesn't, I paint over it.

I also take photos of color combinations I see that inspire me. I have these around me in my studio to guide and persuade my color choices.

Reflection

When do you feel connected to your intuition? Are there times in your life where you followed your intuition and times when you didn't? What were the outcomes?

How do you connect to your intuitive spirit?

Connecting takes practice. The more time I spend in the space where intuition resides, the more comfortable I become acting on the direction of those vibes. I believe intuition is the source of an all-knowing truth, and I desire to pay close attention to that energy.

I can sense when I am not connected to my intuition. Doubt creeps in, my inner critic's voice is loud, and my thinking mind is in overdrive. When I create from an intuitive space, the marks and colors flow, and I lose track of time.

Recognizing my intuitive voice, whether it is a physical feeling (a fluttering in the stomach, etc.) or becoming aware of a sign or signal and having an “aha” moment, acknowledges its presence and allows me to incorporate it into my life more.

How do you get into the flow?

I feel connected to my intuition when I practice meditation. Those moments when my thinking mind is quiet, there is a comfortable, loving, all-knowing presence of peace in a vast space—intuition’s home. The more practice I spend just being, not thinking and not doing, the easier it is to access intuition while doing things, like making decisions or creating art. It is from this connected, centered place that I create paintings that feel right, flow with ease and grace, and visually convey emotions of joy, peace and gratitude. When I practice quieting my mind, it feels like magic.



Spring Wonder
by Megan Jefferson

A big part of creating in an abstract way is to be able to ground oneself and connect to one's intuitive spirit.

—Megan Jefferson—

Blossoming

Michelle Armas



Pamela

by Michelle Armas

How would you describe your art and process?

Big saturated fields of color intersected with lines and scribbles and splotches of paint or chalk. It's totally random and I paint purely by instinct.

Michelle's Tip

- Find a photo that you really like. It can be anything at all. Consider the composition and the color. Then paint it. Mimic the shapes and the colors, which will teach you about hierarchy and how to mix color. It's a good exercise if you are starting out or if you need to bust through a block.

How do you create what you refer to as “color cousins”?

I like to create new colors using the colors I already have on the canvas. For example, if I am doing blue and then decide I need green, I just add orange to the blue until I get green, then I

use that green and add red to make brown. A painting looks harmonious if the colors are all cousins. I never use color straight from the tube, but it takes time to learn what pigments to mix to create what you are looking for, and the only way to learn is to experiment!

Tell us how you use lines in your paintings.

I love to scribble on my paintings. A few times I have had concerned clients alarmed by thinking that their children defaced the paintings with pencils, but for me it is an important part of the composition. I like to see them layered under and over paint, intersecting large areas or creating a jumble of tension wherever I want it.

How do you accomplish paintings so rich in texture?

I love to consider texture when I am thinking of a painting in a room. I love how chalk can look velvety, how metallic paint reflects light and how oil pastels layer over the rough canvas in little scales, like a snake. It is as much about how the color reflects light or stands off the canvas as the color of the pigment itself.



Antonia
by Michelle Armas

Looking at any abstract painting, the viewer always is seeking balance. It is what makes you subconsciously feel at ease when you look at a painting. The artist's job is to walk the fine line between the symmetry and balance and the tension that you feel when a composition is off balance. It is like a conversation with the canvas, adding and taking away until it is balanced perfectly.

—Michelle Armas—



Demo Six

Intuitive Flora

Just as Michelle finds inspiration from photographs, one of my favorite ways to start a painting is by finding inspiration from home decor magazine covers. A professional design team has carefully considered the layout, composition, color scheme and details. This is an excellent starting point to expand upon by following your intuition as you listen and “dance” with the painting like Megan does.

Use your inspiration piece as a guide without getting too attached to it. There is a balance of finding inspiration and using it to create your own original art by following your impulses. You can go in your own direction and depart from the magazine cover at any point. Just follow your heart and see what happens. I suggest working quickly without thinking or worrying about what your composition looks like.

CREATIVE PRACTICES

- Explore and see the world as an artist by looking at things as lines, shapes and compositions rather than as what they are, such as a couch or a lamp.
- Take an idea and expand upon it to make it your own.
- Listen to the painting; imagine you are having a conversation or dance together.

Work Quickly

Work quickly to add elements. If you don't like what you are creating, don't give up! Keep painting wet-into-wet, adjusting and adding elements. If at any point you feel like you might be muddying the canvas, take a deep breath, then a break and let the canvas dry.

The job is to seek mystery, evoke mystery, plant a garden in which strange plants grow and mysteries bloom. The need for mystery is greater than the need for an answer.

—Ken Kesey—



STEP 1: Looking at what you're deriving inspiration from, ask yourself, What do I like about this? What attracted me to pick this up? Take notes and make a list of elements that draw your attention. Don't think too much—just write whatever pops into your head.

Now that you have made your list, circle words from your list that you can apply to your painting such as light to dark, vertical lines, horizontal blocks, watery, tasseled, bumpy, round texture, diamond pattern.



STEP 2: To capture how the space is arranged, block out sections with paint. For my cover, I created a green mixture with teal, white, yellow and blue for the main background. You don't have to try to match the color exactly; just mix paint until you have a color you like.



STEP 3: Continue blocking the bottom half of the magazine cover. I am not painting the couch, just blocking it in with a similar color. Squint your eyes to help you focus on the overall composition rather than the details of the magazine.

Magazine Inspiration Notes

- Color scheme—bold emerald green, darker green, yellow, pops of pink and turquoise, teal, shades of greenish-blues, light blue, black, neutral tans, soft whites, cobalt blue (Now I have my color palette.)
- Composition—large block of green on top with gradation from light to darker, neutral space (couch and floor), dark vertical lines of coffee table, horizontal teal lines of coffee table, horizontal blocks from black, blue and cream books
- Details—pops of shades of pink, soft, watery look of flowers on pillows, tasseled edge of blanket, bumpy, round texture of vase, woven fabric of chair, diamond pattern on pillow, lime green lettering



STEP 4: Study the cover and add some elements, such as colors and shapes, that capture your interest. I am loosely painting a diamond pattern from one of the couch pillows and black lines that mimic the base of the side table. I also begin indicating some floral bud shapes with blue.

I add pinks and other colors from the magazine cover. At this point, I am aware I may paint over the entire thing, so think of this as a starting point. Paint stems and leaves to ground the flowers and draw the eye with vertical lines.



STEP 5: Because I don't know what to do next, I step back and look at my painting in a different way. Often when I am stuck, I will see if the painting would look better with vases holding the flowers. This quickly transforms the piece and is a great way to contain and preserve areas you like while painting over other areas to quiet down the painting a bit.



STEP 6: At this point, your canvas may be feeling a bit chaotic. Continue to quiet the areas that are distracting, while leaving some areas of the background intact. Here, I am going around the vases with a light paint color to define them and help them pop.



STEP 7: Step back often to see the painting as a whole. I never plan to paint vases, but it's an element I like to use to shift the painting's look and feel. It's working for me as I paint this piece.



STEP 8: If you cannot decide what details to add, go back to your list to find what elements you liked about the magazine cover and start adding those small details to the piece. Because I am drawn to the lime green color of the typography on the magazine cover, I'm adding a lot of that color as flower buds.



STEP 9: If you feel stuck at any time, refer to the magazine. However, if you like, you can also use it as a starting point and freely paint. Add details to pull everything together and create a finished piece.

Soul Work

Welcome Positive Energy



Photo By Carmen Phoenix Photography

For almost all of the Flower Tribe, nature holds great power and inspiration. For me, connecting with nature by having flowers and plants in my studio is an act of self-love, a way of remembering my connection to the mysterious dimension of the universe, of feeling vibrations of life around me, of honoring simplicity and slowing down my body and breath to inhale divine inspiration.

When we paint, write or create intuitively, there is a clarity and energy that draws people in. Others sense our passion and are able to connect to us in a powerful way. One way to tap into your passion is to lean into your intuition and allow your innate creative whims to find expression. Self-nurturing (through acts of self-love) and self-awareness (through reflection and meditation) are tools to follow your intuition with confidence and trust.

Let the wild inside you bloom on the canvas! For me, creativity has meant surrendering my self-consciousness and remembering who I am to allow my authentic self to emerge in fullness.

But how do we tap into this, unique, wild part of ourselves that for many of us has been silenced, forgotten or hidden under piles of labels, judgments, opinions of others, etc. for so many years?

Rachel Maroudas, a sacred ceremonialist, visual artist and flower essence intuitive reader, spends a lot of time communing with flowers and immersing herself in the natural world to tap into her intuitive energy. She shares how you can use flowers as a source of power, how self-love enhances creativity and how to celebrate the sacred in daily life.

Reflection

- What ways can you bring flora and fauna into your life on a daily basis? (Bring a houseplant into your space and witness the external transformation of your space and internal transformation of your mood.)
- How do you connect with the sacred in the ordinary?
- What ways can you practice self-love?
- How do you greet yourself in the morning? Can you create a mantra to practice self-love to say to yourself when you awake and when you need it throughout the day?

How can flowers enhance our creativity?

You can communicate with flowers through meditation and intuition. Our ancestors used techniques to communicate with plants as a daily ritual. You can ask a flower's life force to help guide you within your healing process and self-inquiry.

By simply holding a flower to your heart and breathing in its vibrancy, you allow a connection to take place with a plant ally. Each flower holds its very own vibration while containing its own remedies for healing. Flower essences assist in the balancing of one's well-being, whether it is emotionally, physically or spiritually. A flower knows how to connect us to our highest good. Flower essences offer ways to work with the healing benefits of flowers.

How do you practice self-care and nurture your creative soul?

Self-care starts as soon as I awake to the morning, lying in my delicious bed, speaking out to the universe all that I am grateful for in the present moment. I then send out the magic of intention and ask to be filled with powerful loving experiences within this day. I ask for the guidance I wish to receive, and I imagine a beautiful warming force of love sweeping over my body and holding me tightly, blessing all that I am and giving me courage and strength to

go forth into a day of mystery. I sweetly speak easy to myself as if my existence here on Earth were the most sacred love story ever told.

Why is this practice of self-love an essential daily practice?

It is powerful to be your own divine lover, mother, father and best friend. Showing up for this daily practice with conscious awareness is a mighty task that opens the day for my creative soul. Art, friendship, yoga, play, catching the setting sun, expressing in a journal, vibrant nutrition that makes you glow, singing, making love, surrounding myself in beauty and honoring my authentic nature are all on the glistening agenda of self-love and self-care. The more I give myself to this practice daily, the more I'm able to honor myself along this journey called life.

What's your advice to artists on a journey that can be full of highs and lows, self-doubt, frustration and the daunting unknown?

Love yourself completely as much as you can and honor your own unique process! Self-doubt can be a path to emerge into one's self-worth, acceptance and sight into the gift that you are. The so-called lows can be the exact remedy that your soul is seeking in order to discover your truest strengths.

I see artists as creators, being masters of taking a blank canvas and transforming it into a tapestry of depth, a body of energy that holds power to awaking senses, stirring emotions and uplifting the soul.

How do you connect with the sacred in your life?

I like to call that which brings me joy "my church"! Whether it be in the sanctuary of nature, slowing down to feel the breeze, listening to the natural hymns of wildlife, breathing in the lushness of the forest, or whether it be dancing with a friend in the city lights, staring into a lover's eyes, swimming within the nearby river, finding the center of an exotic flower, adorning myself in the sweetness of beauty, holding ceremony and space for healing.

Speaking to the sacred through prayer, self-love and mantras, touching into what makes me feel vibrant and alive are all acts of discovering the sacred. I find the sacred existing in all things natural or manmade. I see the sacred within hardship and blissful ease. Most important, knowing that the sacred is the very force creating my heart's expressions here on this page, the sacred is not separate but a collective of you and me. We are each temples of love here on Earth, and getting to chose what we wish to infuse into these beautiful temples is our

birthright! We are divinity in the flesh, the sacred in which we seek exists here and now from all shades of love.

The path of an artist is the path of the unknown itself. So why not dive nakedly into the unknown and embrace the wild mystery of creativity?

—**Rachel Maroudous**—



Persistence

11" × 14" (28cm × 36cm)

Explore Infinite Possibilities

explore | ik-'splɔr

: to reveal, unearth, discover, search, dig, examine

infinite | 'in-fə-nət

: bottomless, boundless, endless, limitless, measureless

possibilities | pä-sə-'bi-lə-tēz

: something that can develop or become actual

: capabilities

Now it is time to pull together and share our flower art experience with another brave creative soul. After our final Flower Tribe interviews, we will create collaborative art that incorporates all our art techniques and soulful practices. The magic in combining your creative energy with another's is powerful and can lead to breakthroughs in your own art and self-confidence. We have discussed *being open* throughout this book, and this is another strong practice of opening to all the wonder and possibilities that await you. This is one of my favorite practices as an artist, and I can't wait for you to experience the joy and adrenaline rush for yourself!

Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you.

—Oprah Winfrey—

Blossoming

Lia Porto



Gatas Peludas

by Lia Porto

How have your physical surroundings influenced your art?

I was born in Patagonia, so I spent my early years in a very special place and almost in a never-ending winter. The experience of that silent and mysterious landscape is a background that appears in many of my works, in a non-evident contrast that is behind the colorful layers.

Since that time I have a very special relationship with what I call “treasures.” I have always been a treasure hunter and, in a way, that is also part of my paintings because in them I put together everything that somehow has special value for me.

I believe that art gives us the chance to materialize the energy with which we contact. It is one of the channels that can be used to decodify something that is in the air and that belongs to everyone.

The first way I found to express this energy was writing. I wrote a lot—a novel and two poem books—but I realized that what I really wanted to communicate was not in the field of words, and then painting appeared.

What role has abundance played in your art?

I love abundance, and I make contact with it in my journey. I paint a lot—I go to my studio every day, which is eight minutes from home. In each painting the universe that manifests is profuse . . . and so is my life.

I'm attracted to the nutritive, the affluent, the gorgeous. The nature re-created is attached to the plenitude and to the interrelationship between things. This is then translated into a complex process that escapes from emptiness in the search of saturation and simultaneously the imbrication of images.

How do you create an “artificial” natural world with paint?

I use a wide range of colors in every work, even when I restrict colors to experiment with a limited palette. I feel more comfortable with a wide range.

My work is organic and takes elements from the natural world, but the nature I re-create is an artificial one. I work with nature as a kind of fiction and with the palette I emphasize this aspect. Saturated colors, fluorescents and gold or silver in all their versions are very welcome!

Describe your painting process.

My process of painting is complex. I spend many days and weeks on each work. Even with the small ones, I keep going and going on the same surface, adding more and more elements. Normally plain surfaces develop into non-plain spaces. As the complexity of the image increases, it is necessary to balance with the selection of color. Maybe this is one reason for the wide range of the palette.

Another direct influence in the process of choosing colors is the imbrication of images. As everything is related and vibrating at the same time, it is necessary to find color differences to keep individuality in the whole.

Your art is so abundant, plentiful and detailed. How do you create unity and cohesiveness in your paintings?

I work over the surfaces as if they were fields in which a profuse universe appears and develops. It's like an embroidery, where the idea of homogeneity is given by connections, even when in the details of the whole, particular events are simultaneously occurring.

How is color a tool for you?

I have established a very spontaneous relationship with color. The palette arrives naturally while painting. At my studio I have three or four tables where I organize my acrylic paints. I classify them by color so it is easier to find what I need in the middle of the process. One of my favorite groups is the gold/silver and all the brilliant versions of traditional colors.



Me Desvelo
by Lia Porto

Lia's Tip

- Be fully focused on the work and very connected with what is happening and with what the painting itself is asking for.

There is a rhythm, a movement, like in the water or the air. Something that repeats, leaving traces in the canvas. Traces that evidence the search, the joy, the tension, the balance.

—Lia Porto—

Blossoming

Flora Bowley



Held And Healed **by Flora Bowley**

How do you let go and be brave with your art?

I consider myself a brave intuitive painter with a passion for color, spontaneity and the natural world. I use layers of acrylic paint in a way that is very organic and fresh. I let go of preconceived ideas before I begin and allow my paintings to unfold intuitively. I incorporate imagery, shapes and colors, both spontaneously and from a place of “working with what is working.” I also make a point of moving my body and staying connected to the simple joy of creating without a plan. In the end, my creations tend to be very vibrant and soulful, which is definitely a reflection of my creative process.

Your art is so colorful yet balanced. How do you do this?

I rarely find myself holding back when I’m working with color, although I usually quiet down my colors at some point to bring my paintings together in a more cohesive way. I don’t plan my palette out before I start. Instead I allow it to evolve naturally through a process of experimentation, play and risk taking.

It's always a great moment when my palette starts to gel. To hone in on a specific color scheme, I often choose one or two colors to act as the most important colors, with a couple of other colors playing a more supportive role. Beyond that, I let myself add as many accent colors as my heart desires.

I am most interested in how colors work together, so I get really excited when I find color combinations that are surprising or unexpected in some way. I'm always buying new colors and mixing up my own colors to play with.

Although color is one of the most important aspects of my painting process, I try to keep it simple. I don't get bogged down with color theory or needing to understand everything about how color works. I'm much more interested in what a painting FEELS like when I step back. This is why trust, intuition and experimentation play such a big role in my work.

What are your favorite ways to incorporate so many design elements into your art?

I use line to add variation to my paintings by adding imagery and/or abstract shapes. I also use lines to "carve up" my canvas as I explore new compositional options. I often use complementary colors next to each other as a way to work with contrast. I also use stark darks and lights together to achieve powerful value contrast. I use many different kinds of mark-making devices such as fingers, vegetables, stencils, stampers and foam brushes to bring life to my paintings through variation.

My paintings rely heavily on both contrast and variation for similar reasons. I'm always interested in how I can make my paintings pop and come alive through unexpected colors, compositions and imagery. As a result, I'm always experimenting with new ways of making marks and applying paint. I also turn my canvas around a lot as I decide on the orientation—always a great way to stumble upon unexpected imagery and composition.



Honor East

by Flora Bowley

The concepts of letting go and being brave are at the heart of my approach to the creative process. Letting go of what a painting is supposed to look like creates space for endless creative possibilities to emerge, and letting go of negative self-talk makes room for intuition to be heard. Being brave allows artists to operate outside the box, take risks and come up with unique ways of painting.

—Flora Bowley—

BLOSSOMING

Lynzee Lynx



1



2



3

Collaborative work between Lynzee Lynx and Flora Bowley

1. *Sun Kissed*
2. *Supportal*
3. *Unfold*

Lynzee's Tips

- Change the color palette.
- Put on loud music.
- Stop for a yoga asana break.
- Try adding a new medium.
- Work with a color you hate.
- Listen to an inspiring podcast or TED talk.
- Incorporate a sacred or meaningful symbol into the piece.
- Write a word(s) on the piece.
- Add a layer of stencils.
- Turn the piece upside down and see something new.

Explain your love affair with color and its similarity to cooking.

Often I find myself obsessed with a color. You know, falling in love with a certain color and unraveling a romance with it. That happens in my world often. So I find that ONE, and then I figure out all the other ones that look really fab with it. It's like cooking! Finding a new ingredient and figuring out what I can make with it. I usually work with a certain color centrally for a time period, then tire of it and move on. This is a place where I let my multiple love affairs exist. Sometimes, just sometimes, they go together, and then there is some real magic. That color always remains in my work, even if it's more of a highlight or a lowlight later on.

What if you and a color just can't get along?

Sometimes I make things or combinations that I do not love at all. That's perfect! I can always layer over them. It's important to try things and take risks. Also, it's important to have some go-to colors that can make all the rest of the paintings look like your own.

In fact, I often choose colors that I don't like, just to see what I have to learn there. Color combining can be so fun. It takes some bravery and experimentation. This is a practice for me to let go and embrace my own resistance. It's a great exercise for getting out of a creative rut.

If you love a color, you must see what happens to it when you mix it with other related colors as well as black and white! Often I find an even better color by doing some modification. Mix your own! Don't just use the colors in the tubes—create your own signature color by color mixing. When you do that, immediately write down what went into it so it can get made again. Don't copy another artist's palette. It's so fun to make your own! Also it sets your work apart in just such an awesome way!

What design element tricks do you use to create your unique artistic style?

When I'm working on a piece, and I come to a stopping point where I may feel stuck, I often jazz the piece up by adding lots of lights or lots of darks. Or adding both! My use of contrast is often adding some black to my favorite color in the piece or adding just a little of a color to a blob of white. This is like adding garlic or salt or lemon juice to my cooking project!

It is my deep soul yearning to share something that is or feels important to voice in the world. And, sometimes it's about following my aesthetic compass to discover new shapes of beauty and delight. My artwork comes from my deepest place of discovery and joy.

—Lynzee Lynx—

The Joy of Collaboration



Continuum

by Lynzee Lynx and Flora Bowley

Flora, why do you collaborate?

I started painting collaboratively a couple years ago with my friend Lynzee Lynx, and it quickly opened up a whole new way of creating for me. I now weave collaborative painting into my workshops and other personal projects, and it continues to feel exciting, daring and a perfect way to practice and demonstrate all the important tenets of my painting process.

I find that working collaboratively is the ultimate form of letting go. Allowing your marks and choices to be covered up or transformed by someone else takes trust, courage and a deep sense of non-attachment. Luckily the rewards are great. Collaborating not only allows you to broaden your creative scope and learn new techniques, it also gives you the opportunity to

soften your edges, disrupt your habits and open your mind as you make space for someone else's ideas—all great ways of developing as an artist while keeping the practice fresh.

Lynzee, how do you collaborate?

When Flora and I first collaborated, it was better than either of us could have imagined. All of a sudden, I felt like I was in a visual band! Like I had been playing guitar all these years, and she playing drums, and when we came together we got these wild new songs that thrilled us!

Collaborative painting is way more than $1 + 1$. It's like 2^2 or some magical math equation that exponentializes our creativity and brings us both out of our usual moves and inspires us to listen to the painting, listen to another's visual voice (as well as our own) and to make more mindful movements. We take pauses throughout our process to see where the piece is going.

When one of us really likes something that has emerged, we communicate that to the other so we know not to go over or destroy that part. We also give each other ideas from time to time. For example, "Can you do some of your fine line work in this portion?" or "Would you bust in some of that blackberry color over here?"

We also often switch places so that we don't rest in one section too long. We also often flip the painting around to keep the fluidity of the emergence.

Collaborative painting is so much like being in a band. Each person brings such a different set of skills and specialties to the picture. It is important to give loving, supportive words during the process. When we like something the other one is doing, we tell them. We also stand up and keep moving our bodies to stay open and active during the process.

Mini Demo

DIY Stencils

Lynzee Lynx has been cutting and using her own stencils from an early age. She says, “It’s so fun and easy! It’s a great way to expand and deepen a piece—just add a layer of stencils on top of a background and see what happens. I prefer to use old manila folders and a craft knife. I often find that I most enjoy repeated patterns when it comes to stencils. The cool thing about stencils is that you can make them as simple or complex as you want.”

WHAT TO GATHER

- acrylic or spray paint
- craft knife
- manila folder
- pencil or writing utensil
- stencil brush (recommended) or paintbrush
- stencil tape or masking tape (optional)



STEP 1: Draw your design on a manila folder. Shade in the areas that you are going to remove.



STEP 2: Using a craft knife, cut out your design. Clean up any edges as needed.



STEP 3: Lay your stencil flat on your canvas. You can use stencil or masking tape to hold the stencil in place if needed. Paint over your stencil with a stencil brush. (Lynzee spray paints her stencils outside while wearing a mask.)



STEP 4: Carefully peel the stencil back to enjoy the image you have just created.



DEMO SEVEN

Collaborative Magic

As Flora and Lynzee explained, collaborating is the ultimate act of stepping into the unknown, taking risks, being brave and opening to possibilities. My dear friend and Flower Tribe artist Megan Jefferson and I are going to demonstrate how collaborating takes us to new levels of creativity.

We incorporate Lia's way of painting in fields as an "embroidery" by dividing the canvas into sections. We will bring these individual sections together by repeating details, such as color and markings, throughout the painting. Lia is like a sponge absorbing her surroundings and experiences, and her art reflects her ability to absorb the intricacies of life around her. She swirls these stories around in her paint and creates a fantasy world rooted in reality. We will use several sources of inspiration to create a similar world.

The first time Megan and I collaborated on a painting I was nervous and aware of my insecurity as an artist. What if she didn't like what I painted? What if I offended her by painting over something? Overcoming fear is an essential practice in art and, of course, life. Often there is absolute ecstasy on the other side of fear. You just have to cross the threshold. The more you push yourself toward your heart's desires and away from your fear, the easier this life-affirming practice becomes.

WHAT TO GATHER

acrylic paint
color of your choice
canvas, 24" × 36" (61cm × 91cm)
heat gun
inspiration tray—beads, photos, fresh flowers, natural objects such as shells, fabric, magazine cutouts, decorative paper, pattern books
paintbrushes
scraping tool
spray bottle
stencils
stamps

CREATIVE PRACTICES

- Bring all our techniques, inspiration and experience together.

- Step out of your comfort zone.
- Experience the power and magic of collaboration.
- Practice nonattachment to what is happening on the canvas.

Communicate

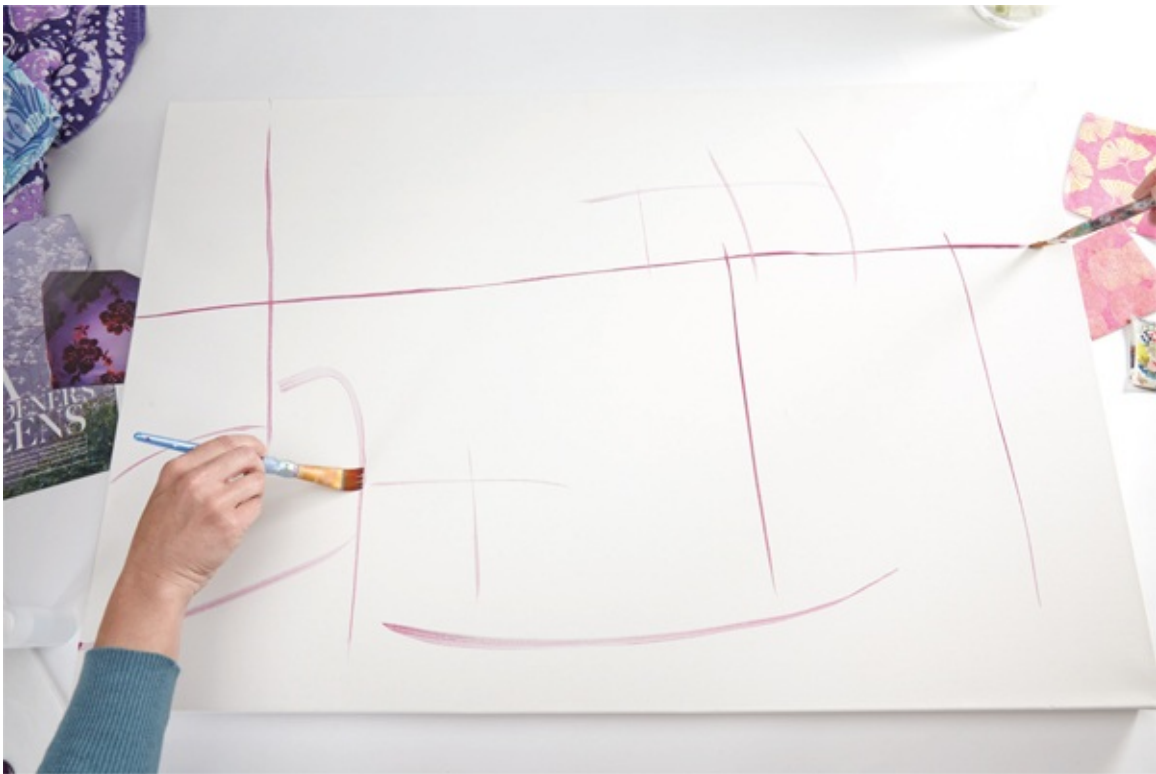
Remember to communicate while you work about what you like or don't like in the painting. Ask for help if you need it. If you are stuck, switch places.

Expand Your Palette

Don't be afraid to mix colors. If you are struggling with color, add a new color into a color already being used on your canvas to create a different tone.

The best part of any creative venture is the collaboration with others. An artistic project in any form unites ideas and brings out talents that might otherwise lie dormant.

—Amy Butler—



STEP 1: Gather your objects of inspiration and select your individual color palettes, which do not have to coordinate in any way. Megan and I picked a colorful vintage tablecloth, origami paper and magazine cutouts with designs and colors that appeal to us for inspiration as we paint.

Divide your canvas into fields with painted lines like a quilt or embroidery. This doesn't have to be perfect because it will be painted over eventually.



STEP 2: Together, begin blocking in the background to cover the white space of the canvas.



STEP 3: Switch sides and place the canvas upright to spray water on the wet paint. I use a fine mister while Megan uses a large spray bottle.



STEP 4: Continue blending wet-into-wet. Spraying the canvas with water really allows the quality of the materials and the essence of the paint to show through. Let dry (or dry areas with a heat gun) to avoid creating a muddy painting when you switch sides again. As it is drying, you can smooth out thick areas of paint with your finger or a brush.



STEP 5: Switch sides frequently. Keep your style loose as you work into the semi-wet canvas in a carefree and noncritical way. Use a scraping tool to add interesting detail and reveal the colors layered underneath.

Encourage your partner to build upon each your painting elements. While painting, we ask each other questions, such as “Is there anything you really love here you don’t want me to touch? I think a nice dark color in the upper right will help the colors pop. Are you inspired to do any drips? What do you think about this large circle space in the bottom right? Is it okay as is or can it be painted over a bit?”



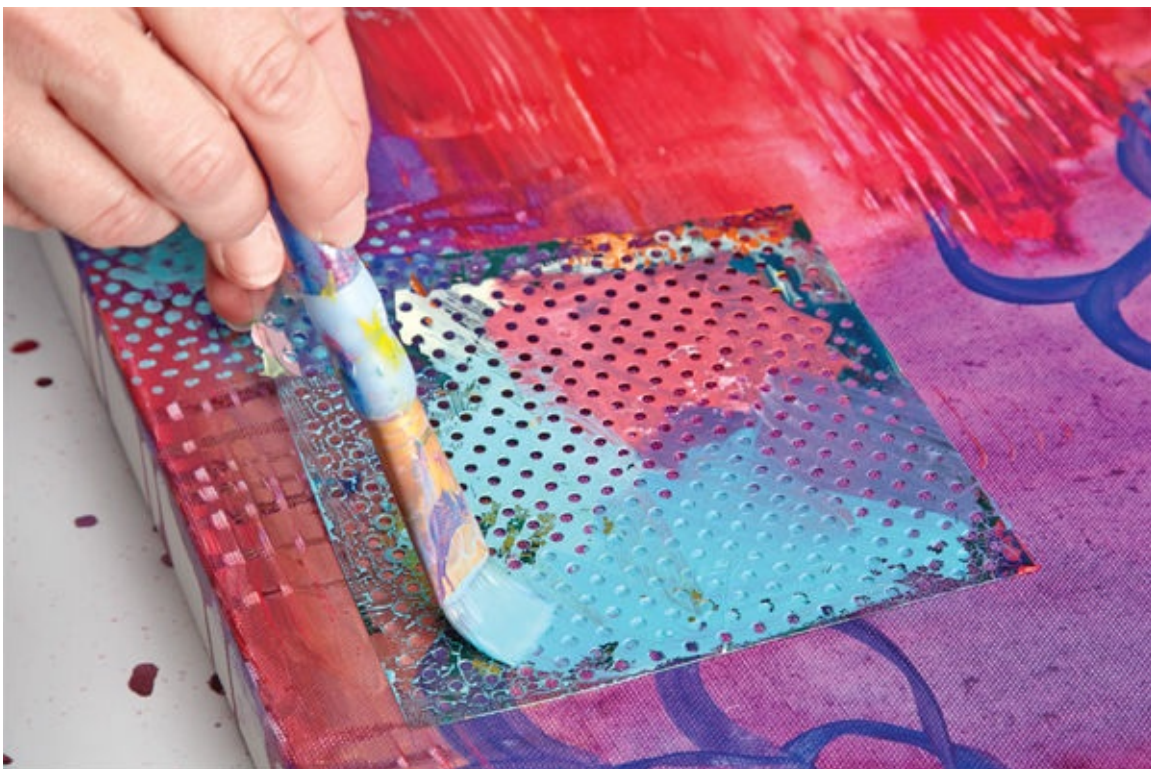
STEP 6: Make marks inspired by your objects of inspiration.



STEP 7: Scrape into the paint with any mark-making tool that inspires you. (One of my favorite is this Catalyst Wedge available at art supply stores.)



STEP 8: Block in areas to quiet the painting as you bring it all into cohesion.



STEP 9: Repeat a stencil pattern throughout the painting to create more variety and detail.



STEP 10: A stamper is a quick and easy way to add repetition and transform a space.



STEP 11: Keep switching places with your partner and adding detail inspired by what is already happening on the canvas or from your inspiration tray. Get lost in your joy and feed off the energy from your co-creator!



STEP 12: Continue layering the painting by cutting in, laying stencils, scraping, stamping and brushing on leaf shapes.



STEP 13: Details, details, details. Simple marks that reflect your signature style make great finishing marks. Keep going until you are both happy with the piece!



See the stepped-out version of this second collaborative example in the e-companion. (Go to createmixedmedia.com/paintedblossoms to learn more.)

A Blessing and an Invitation



Blessings and gratitude for taking this journey with me. Creating beauty through art is a joyful and fulfilling practice that has the power to positively affect your life on a daily basis and allow deeper connections with your soul-self and others. If you look back over the Creative Practices in each chapter, you will find that most of these are really mantras for life as well. That is the power of creating—it transforms your life in the most mysterious ways. Enjoy wherever the creative magic leads you!

My wish for you is that you . . .

- Take at least one step each day in the direction of your dreams.
- Listen to your inner voice and trust signs from the universe.
- Go for the long shot.
- Practice persistence.

- Surrender and let magic into your life.
- Set intentions and believe fiercely in them.
- Be gentle with yourself. We are all works in progress.

May our heart's garden of awakening bloom with hundreds of flowers.

—Thich Nhat Hanh—

YOU ARE INVITED!

Join me to celebrate you and your beautiful art!

Who: Our Special Online Art Community

What: Join me to create a supportive and celebratory space on social media to share our art and musings with each other.

Why: Social media has been one of the most powerful tools to keep me motivated and inspired to create. The community is so encouraging and magical.

You and your art might be featured on my blog and Facebook business page!

How: Post pictures of your artwork inspired by this book.

Facebook: [facebook/paintedblossoms](https://www.facebook.com/paintedblossoms)

Instagram: Use [#paintedblossoms](https://www.instagram.com/paintedblossoms)

Website: carrieschmittdesign.com

Live more mindfully, write a new chapter in your life, reclaim your wholeness and feel reverence in your heart, for by planting these seeds you will create a beautiful garden that will bear fruit to sustain your soul and nourish your spirit for eternity.

—Michael Teal—

The Flower Tribe



Michelle Armas started painting a few years ago to battle the stress of her corporate branding job. (OK, she was an intern, but it was still really stressful.) She has a Bachelor of International Relations and a postgraduate degree in Graphic Design and Branding from the prestigious Portfolio Center in Atlanta. Michelle paints in acrylic and oil, large and small, abstract and sometimes portraits, too. She lives in Atlanta with her husband, daughter and two sweet doggies. Michelle works out of a studio in Decatur, Georgia, and loves to have visitors. You can find Michelle's work in several galleries as well as in her very own shop. In Atlanta, she is represented by Gregg Irby Fine Art. michellearmas.com

I have gathered here an offering of other people's flowers, bringing to them of my own only a thread to bind them with.

—Montaigne—



Faith Evans-Sills is a painter, wife, mother, teacher and doula. With over twenty years of personal painting experience, she enjoys inspiring others to manifest their most heartfelt ideas through creating art. Her art has been exhibited widely, included in multiple publications, and she recently began offering creative workshops.

When Faith is not in the studio, you'll find her zipping around on her sea green bike, heading to the beach or farmer's market with her family and constantly revamping their

garden and home. She makes gathering inspiration through travel a priority and maintains a close connection with nature through frequent trips to wild places. faith-evanssills.com



Photo by Tara Mossis

Flora Bowley is an internationally recognized painter, teacher, author and inspirationalist. Her transformational approach to the creative process celebrates brave intuitive expression and honors the connection between body, mind and spirit. Blending over twenty years of professional painting experience with her background as a yoga instructor, massage therapist and lifelong joy seeker, Flora's art and offerings are infused with a deep sense of soul, passion and generosity.

Flora's book, *Brave Intuitive Painting* (Quarry Books, 2012), is an inspiring guidebook enjoyed by both novice and seasoned painters and has sold over thirty thousand copies. Flora spends her time living among a vibrant community of artists in Portland, Oregon. To see Flora's art, read her blog and find out more about her, visit florabowley.com.



Photo by Navyblur

Louise Gale is a British artist with a passion for color, nature, pattern and energy. She lives in Spain overlooking the ocean. Louise spends her days creating, running creative workshops and assisting other creative souls with their businesses. Louise spent eight years living just

outside New York City where she found the courage to leave her windowless office corporate job and pursue a life filled with more creativity and freedom. She walks barefoot in the sand every morning as the sun rises and has a secret obsession for sacred geometry.

Louise's mixed-media series *Sew Hoboken* is in the permanent collection at the Hoboken Historical Museum in New Jersey, and her work has been featured in many publications, including *The New York Times*. louisegale.com



Photo by Steve Mann

Alena Hennessy is an artist, author of *Cultivating Your Creative Life* and *The Painting Workbook*, and hosts workshops around the United States and abroad inspiring others to create intuitively through painting and mixed media. Her work has been featured in numerous publications, including *Dwell*, *The Washington Post*, *Spirituality & Health* magazine and *Natural Health* magazine. Alena also holds a deep passion for flower essences and other plant spirits, along with being a Reiki master and energy healer. Alena lives in the beautiful town of Asheville, North Carolina, with her champagne fox, Mimi Simone, and many other gifted playmates. She is ever grateful to do what she loves and share it openly and authentically with others. alenahennessy.com



Photo by Zipporah Lomax

Lynzee Lynx is an interdisciplinary artist who merges colors, cultures, techniques and styles. Hailing from Portland, Oregon, she is steeped deeply in the rich lineage of artists who merge spiritual practice, social action, world culture and healthy living. After studying film and touring around the world as a performance artist, she found deep soul love with painting. Collaboration is one of her favorite methods of magic making. Working with a myriad of amazing humans, including her five-year-old son, yields the most amazing outcomes. Lynzee lives in a co-housing community, teaches yoga asana, makes jewelry and creates all kinds of art. lynzeelynx.com



Megan Jefferson is a painter who has been actively creating work ever since receiving her BFA from Miami University (Ohio) in 1998. She has exhibited extensively and sells her work to designers and individual patrons. Megan's work shifts in theme depending on the series. She loves to create pieces that have a focus on color-based abstraction.

Megan describes the process of her work in this way: "I let the process define the artwork and describe my working process as a dance and conversation. I place down some color, and as certain areas and shapes evolve, I will answer those happenings with additive or subtractive methods. This dance continues until each painting feels right. The result is thoughtful, intuitive, spontaneous and reflective." jeffersonartstudio.com



Photo by Paul Burch

Este MacLeod, primarily a “colourist painter,” was born in Pretoria, South Africa, in 1968. After five years of training as a textile designer, she started to work as a freelance designer and applied her design specialism to ceramics. In 1999, Este relocated to the United Kingdom, and her art shifted to painting and sculptural figurative ceramics. She continued to study and obtained a BA Honours degree in Ceramics and Glass in 2008 and an MA in Contemporary Crafts from the University for the Creative Arts in Farnham in 2012.

Este lives in Berkshire, England, and exhibits in the UK and abroad. Her paintings and sculptures are in public and private collections around the world. estemacleod.com

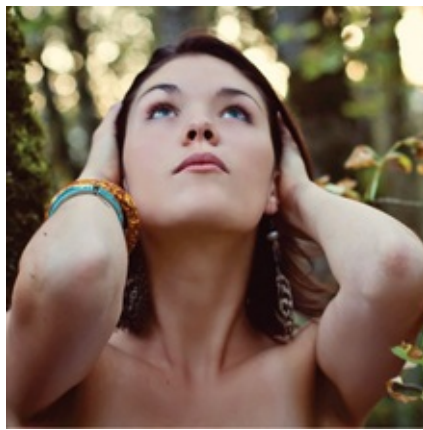


Photo by Carmen Phoenix Photography

Rachel Maroudas is an artist and intuitive counselor who specializes in flower essence therapy and intuitive guidance and stands profoundly as a sacred ceremonialist. She offers the language of flowers, connects us to the healing remedies of the plant kingdom while helping to weave the energies along the path of self-discovery and beloved empowerment. Essence of the Mother is Rachel’s unique line of flower essences infused with blessings and healing energies. essenceofthemoth.com



Photo by Lucila Podesta

Lia Porto is an Argentina-based artist and writer who works in mixed-media painting and collage. Her work is influenced by travel and is characterized by a deceptively sophisticated brightness of color and light. Lia's art has a complexity of mark making, diverse technical application of paint and uniqueness of composition that takes the artwork beyond the realm of decorative abstraction and into the imaginary world of the artist's mind. liaporto.com



Photo by Craig Lovell

Elizabeth Murray is an artist, speaker, workshop leader and author of *Living Life in Full Bloom: 120 Practices to Deepen Your Passion, Creativity and Relationships*. She is passionate about nature and creativity because they connect her to her soul. Her goal is to celebrate beauty, connect to spirit and inspire others to weave a personal commitment to what they love, bringing purpose and meaning into each day.

She is best known for her work helping to restore Monet's gardens and photographing them for thirty years. Elizabeth's passion for nature and appreciation for beauty has inspired her dedication to diverse projects around the world. Learn more about Elizabeth and her work at elizabethmurray.com.



Photo by Vivienne McMaster

Kelly Rae Roberts decided just a few short years ago to set aside her sensible career as a social worker and pursue a thoroughly impractical dream: to become an artist. Millions of dollars in licensed artwork sales later, it's safe to say that her tender style of truth telling and possibility-driven approach to life, work and art has paid off. Today, she's the bestselling author of *Taking Flight: Inspiration & Techniques to Give Your Creative Spirit Wings* and creator of well-loved online e-courses. Her online presence is a source of inspiration that celebrates the collective journey of our messy, complicated, yet deeply beautiful lives. She genuinely believes that anything is possible if you take one baby step of bravery after another. kellyraeroberts.com



Photo by Lisa Newman

Autumn Rose went to school to become a graphic designer, but she soon found the need to express herself through the vivid mediums of paint, ink, palette knife and large, open canvases. “I LOVE color,” she says, “and I am not afraid to use it.”

She draws from a unique palette of inspiration, both in nature and nurture, and has lived fueled with support from her family including a romantic-minded grandmother, a literary aunt and her own mother who is a naturally gifted artist. Whether she paints love, yearning, drama or laughter, Autumn Rose brings a fresh approach and playful spirit to a blank canvas. Autumn sells her artwork all over the world and has had her paintings featured in *The New York Times*, *The Nest*, *StyleBlueprint Atlanta* and *TechNewsWorld*. artbyautumnrose.com



Iris Scott is leading a revolution in the world of artistic mediums and currently resides in New York City. Finger painting is fine art at her hands as she squeezes oils straight from the tubes onto her fingertips. She likens the technique to piano: “Imagine you learned to play the piano with a paintbrush, and then one day you set the brush down and began playing with all your fingertips simultaneously! Finger painting has been like finding new technology,” she says. “It’s so much easier and more dynamic. I’m baffled that everyone is not painting this way.” Iris paints any and everything around her and says that ideas are indeed everywhere.
irisscottfineart.com



Photo by In Her Image Photography

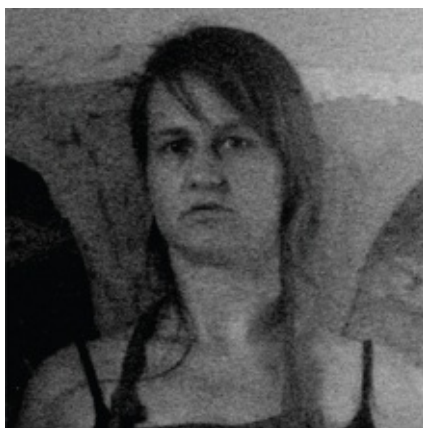
Andrea Scher is an artist, online workshop teacher and big believer in the transformative power of creativity. Through her e-courses, Superhero Photo and Mondo Beyondo, Andrea inspires us all to live authentic, colorful and creative lives.

Best known as the author of the award-winning blog Superhero Journal, she is passionate about the sweet spot where creativity and personal growth intersect. She is also the coauthor of the book *Expressive Photography*. Andrea lives in Berkeley, California, with her husband and two sons. superherolife.com



Jessica Swift, a full-time artist, surface pattern designer and writer, is on a quest to inspire everyone on the planet to pursue their wild and colorful dreams and never give up. Her magically uplifting and colorful artwork is licensed by companies and manufacturers for iPhone cases, fabric, stationery and much more.

Her art and products are designed to serve as tokens of happiness—reminders that you need (and deserve) to feel good in your life. Her first book (coauthored with Michelle Ward), *The Declaration of You!*, was published in June 2013 by North Light Books. Jessica lives in Portland, Oregon, with her husband and two adorable cats. You can find her colorfully creating and blogging online. jessicaswift.com.



Brooke Wandall is an abstract painter from Scranton, Pennsylvania. She creates paintings in a variety of styles ranging from mixed-media landscapes to abstract nudes. Her artwork can be seen in private collections all over the world. Brooke began painting in high school and earned a BFA in painting from Marywood College and a Saint Luke Medal for Excellence in Art in 2007. brookewandall.blogspot.com.

About Carrie



Photo by Noelle Johnson

My first childhood memory was hiding behind my mother's back while apologizing to our neighbor for picking all the flowers from her garden. I knew in my heart what we sometimes forget as adults—to behold a flower is to connect with sacred beauty and energy that delights our soul. One of the perks of being an artist is viewing the world through a child's eyes again and living each day as a source of inspiration and wonder.

I must have flowers always and always.

—Claude Monet—

I wasn't able to do this until I thought I was dying. In 2009 I developed a life-threatening allergy to heat. I was barely able to move without having an anaphylactic reaction to my body's own heat. Since I felt that my life was over, I decided to finally surrender to what my heart had always secretly wanted to do—create art.

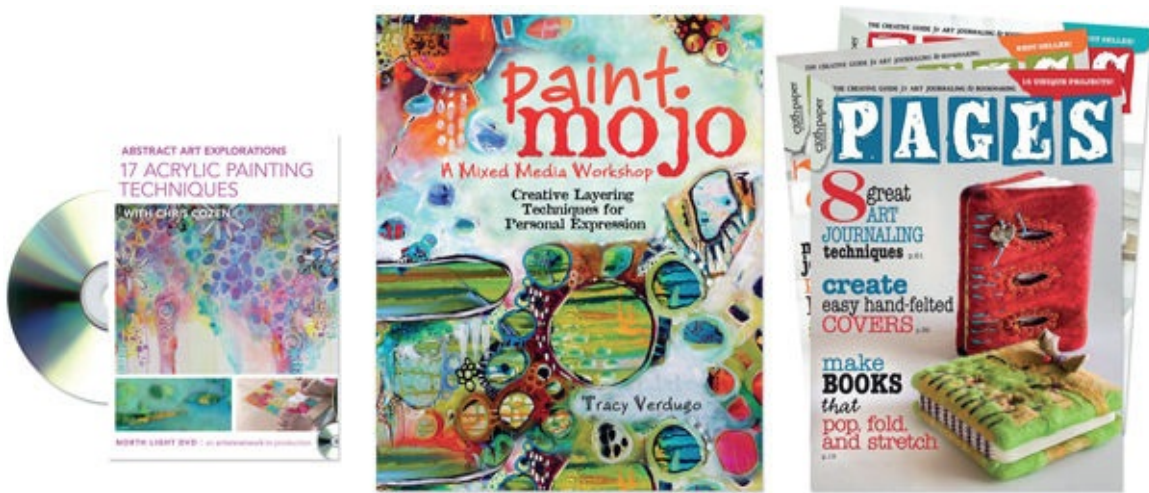
No longer able to spend time in my beloved garden in the humid Midwest, I began painting flowers instead of planting them. Painting became my therapy as I dealt with my new limitations. In 2010 my family and I relocated to the Pacific Northwest for its temperate climate. I'm at home among the towering evergreens, rampant moss, misty mountain air and limitless shades of green.

Today, I paint daily in our mountain farmhouse, my art is licensed on products worldwide, and I feel more alive than ever before from the constant expansion of my heart, mind and soul by following my passion wherever it leads. My heat allergy has lessened in severity, and I am able to be more physically active. While writing this book, I even began doing yoga, which has expanded my art and life in the most luminous ways. It turns out my dreadful heat allergy realigned my life and led to all my dreams coming true.

The takeaway message? Don't wait until you think your life is over to do what you love. Listen to your heart's whispers. Start today.

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