

Flower Painting Tips

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There are several important concepts to understand when learning to paint realistic flowers.

1. Capturing the Texture and Translucency of Petals

The soft, ruffled petals of flowers such as the Iris, Peony, Gladiola, and Hibiscus can be challenging to paint realistically. To create the delicate, silky appearance of these petals, artists must understand how value, shape, and form work together. Careful observation of light and shadow helps convey the petals' softness, transparency, and graceful texture.

2. Understanding the Form of Flower Petals

Flower petals can be thought of as soft, flexible cylinders that bend and curve gracefully, almost as if they are dancing in the wind. As a petal lifts toward the light, it catches more sunlight and appears lighter in value. As it curves downward and away from the light source, less light reaches the surface, causing the value to become darker. Recognizing these subtle shifts in light and shadow is essential for creating the illusion of form and dimension.

Observe the way the flower petals curl over or under the cylinder shape



3. Creating Delicate Petals with Smooth Value Gradations

Smooth transitions between light and dark values are essential for keeping flower petals looking soft and delicate. Because petals contain many subtle rises and dips in their surface, a wider range of values is often needed to describe their form accurately. One way to achieve this is by "pyramiding" values—placing smaller areas of lighter and darker values within an existing light or dark area. These layered value changes create greater depth, dimension, and realism within the petal.

Painting Translucent Flower Petals

4. Creating the Illusion of Translucency

Translucent petals can often be painted by using less paint on the brush, allowing a small amount of the background color to show through in the lighter areas. This suggests sunlight passing through the thin petal and creates the illusion of transparency. The effect is especially noticeable along petal edges and areas where the light is strongest.

5. Using Veining to Suggest Thin Petals

Another way to convey translucency is by adding subtle directional vein lines within the illuminated areas of the petal. These delicate veins help suggest the thin structure of the petal and enhance the effect of light shining through it. Keep in mind that not all flower petals are translucent. Some flowers have thicker petals with a velvety or waxy outer surface, requiring different painting techniques to accurately represent their texture and character.

Painting Ruffled Edges in Flowers

Texture is another important characteristic to consider when painting flowers, especially those with graceful, ruffled edges.

6. Creating the Illusion of Ruffled Texture

Visual texture can be created by using the tip of a filbert brush. Begin at the outer edge of the petal and gently pull the brush inward, allowing it to leave behind a soft, streaky mark. These irregular strokes suggest the delicate folds and ripples found in ruffled petals. The amount of texture you add should always relate to the flower's role within the design.

7. Adjusting Texture and Detail for the Composition

Flowers placed in the foreground or focal area of a composition can support more texture, sharper edges, and greater value variation. Flowers in supporting or background areas should generally be painted with softer transitions and less detail so they do not compete with the focal point. As always, the level of texture and contrast should be guided by the natural characteristics of the flower and its placement within the overall composition.

Understanding The Form Of The Flower



Image 2



Image 3

Most individual flower petals are cylinder in shape, and the overall shape of the entire flower can be a sphere, cone or cylinder. Let's use an example of the rose; the petals are cylinders rolling forward or backward depending on the petals' position. The overall shape of the rose is a sphere as it has volume and resembles the shape of a ball. In order to create the volume, and dimension, the light and dark values should follow the placement of a sphere. Let's dissect the rose below to get a better understanding of the shape.

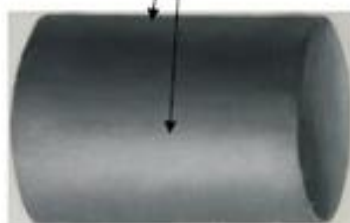


Image 4

The light source on this rose is coming from the upper right; therefore the lower left is in shadow demonstrating a crescent shape of dark value. The closed top of the sphere is missing but the shape and volume of the sphere is still there.



Image 5



Each individual petal is a cylinder shape lifting where the light catches the petals and darkening where the petal is rolled back receding from the light. Rose petals are paper thin and bendable as they roll up and down, in and out.

Flower petals are paper thin cylinder shapes rolling and flowing with the wind.