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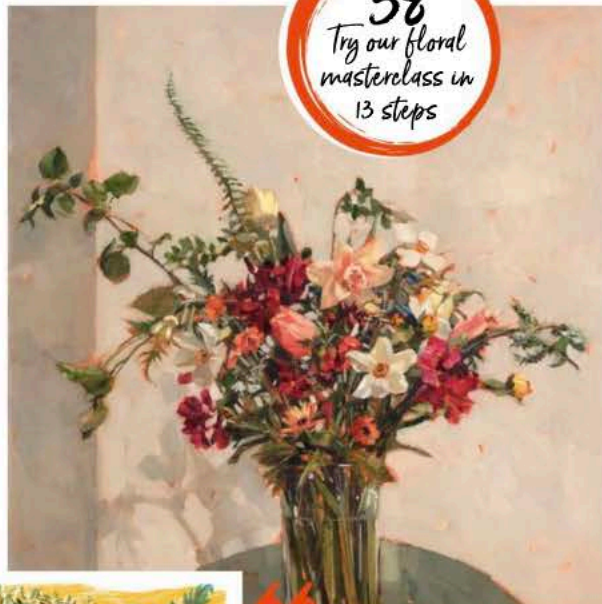
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When you paint from photos rather than live models, the paper choice can be really key

— KIRSTEN BRITT, PAGE 68

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Letters

LETTER OF THE MONTH

SHOW YOUR WORKING

I always read Laura Boswell's *The Working Artist* columns. Laura is a very accomplished printmaker and artist. I enjoyed the topic about mistakes being an important part of the creative process [Issue 431]. I wish we could see Laura's print which she describes as "taking a wrong turn" with a description of her thought process.

We can easily become precious about our work, valuing the outcome over the process. If we always work in this way, it may stifle creativity and further development. I would like an article about artwork deemed not good enough with an analysis from the artists – how they moved on and what they learned. This would be very encouraging.

Gill Nicholas, via email

I think you've just given us a wonderful idea, Gill. Keep an eye out in a forthcoming issue very soon...



PICKING A POCKET

In response to Steve Pill's comments on "cherry picking" [Editor's Letter, Issue 431], I'd just like to say that I've been doing just that for a number of years now. After reading the magazine, I take out articles and artwork that particularly resonate

with me. I now have several files of material in poly-pockets. When in need of inspiration, or perhaps a kick up the nether regions to get me going after a blank patch, I can dip into this collection for a much-needed boost. It never fails.

Maggie Bolton, Kilmaurs, Ayrshire

HOME COMFORTS

My family and I returned to the UK a year ago, after living and working abroad for more than 10 years. We did not anticipate that we would be moving during a global pandemic. Thankfully, I had invested more time into painting and drawing as a means to reflect and channel grief in anticipation or our imminent move. Drawing special places, foods and people became a balm of comfort in the midst of the changes. Upon returning to the UK,

I soon came across your magazine. It has sustained my interest and fuelled my passion further.

Since February this year, I started sharing my passion for art by offering Zoom art classes to teenagers. It has been a wonderful journey of inspiring them to find their unique artistic voice. Your article on David Hockney [Issue 430] sparked an idea of sharing some of his paintings with the children during a class on painting landscapes.

Recently, my 15-year-old son, who is studying art GCSE, spotted the article on Curtis Holder in the same issue. As the style appealed to him, he included Curtis' work and style in his art portfolio.

So, a big thank you to the whole team for putting out such inspirational content.

Veronica Williams, via email

STUDIO JOY

I was so inspired by your piece about the artist Ingrid Sanchez [In the Studio, Issue 431], her work is full of joy. After reading the article I went to my Derwent Inkstone blocks and let loose. I then went digital in [iPad illustration app] Procreate to complete my piece. It was a complete contrast to my usual art style, but I really enjoyed making it.

Thank you for introducing me to this fabulous, joyful art technique and artist.

Louise Broome, via email

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Anne-Marie's materials

•Paints

Lemon Yellow Hue, Cadmium Yellow, Permanent Rose, Rose Madder Genuine, Alizarin Crimson, French Ultramarine, Cobalt Turquoise, Terre Verte, Prussian Green, Sap Green, Olive Green, Naples Yellow Light, Naples Yellow, Yellow Ochre, Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber, Davy's Gray, Indigo, Payne's Gray and Titanium White, all Winsor & Newton Artists' Oil Colour; Lemon Yellow, Michael Harding

•Support

Bird & Davis primed fine linen canvas, 70x70cm

•Brushes

ProArte Series 32 Polar Nylon flat brushes, sizes 1/4", 3/8", 1/2", 3/4" and 1"; a decorator's paint brush, 1.5"

•Winsor & Newton Galeria White Gesso primer

•Zest-it Oil Paint Dilutant

MASTERCLASS

FRESH flowers

Faced with a bunch of newly-cut blooms, **ANNE-MARIE BUTLIN** wanted to capture some of that freshness and optimism in the way she painted them – here's how she did it

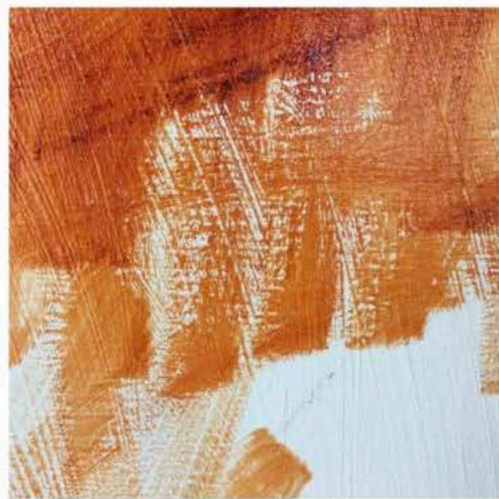
My recent work has been inspired by gardens and garden flowers, and reflects the movement towards more naturalistic, seasonal planting. I signed up to receive a monthly bucket of flowers from an organic, sustainable local cutting garden, Wolves Lane Flower Company, and my very first delivery was unexpectedly lovely – a glorious tangle of spring blooms.

There was a nice simplicity to this composition. I just felt really compelled to capture the beautiful flowers in front of me as quickly as possible.

Those first flowers of spring had a certain symbolism: new growth, fresh beginnings, and hope for the future. I wanted my painting to convey a sense of this optimism and energy. They also had a rather old-fashioned look, which tied in quite well with my painting style. I liked the idea of very traditional subject matter painted with a modern sensibility.

Anne-Marie's next exhibition runs 5-22 October at Thackeray Gallery, London.
www.anne-mariebutlin.com





1 Compose carefully

I began by taking photos of the arrangement in my house. I used the square-format option on my phone's camera as I played around with the composition. I then worked in my studio, drawing from both the photo and directly from life, taking the best bits of each.

I painted my primed linen with a fairly thick layer of acrylic gesso to give it some tooth. Once dry, I used the large decorator's brush to apply a thinned down layer of Burnt Sienna as a ground.



2 Scrub in the basics

I used a thicker mix of Burnt Sienna to loosely draw out the composition. My plan was to work really quickly so that all subsequent layers of paint would merge with the wet ground and give the whole piece a feeling of warmth and unity. I also wanted to leave little patches of this underlying colour showing through the subsequent layers to give the painting a glow, though I took care to ensure that these patches were balanced across the canvas and didn't overpower.



5 Develop the composition

I felt the dark panel to the left of the flowers and the rounded tabletop were key parts of the composition, so I added those in. I also vaguely suggested the shadow, exaggerating the tone, as this simple shape provided a foil to the complex tangle of foliage. The shadow consisted of a subtle mix of greys and echoed the small amount of blue in the flowers. Burnt Sienna proved itself to be a good choice for the ground here, as it mixed effectively with all the applied colour to give the whole piece a feeling of warmth.



6 Keep it loose

At this point my left hand was juggling brushes loaded with the key colours. I kept the paint thin in this initial drawing stage and used fairly large brushes to keep the marks loose and gestural.

I wanted to capture a general impression of the tone of the flowers here and often I don't move much beyond this early stage of the drawing. Sometimes an initial response can't be improved upon so tightening up the drawing is not particularly helpful.

Top tip

When mixing, remember to use complementary colours – those that appear on opposite sides of the colour wheel. Tiny touches of red, for example, can take the edge off a green that looks too bright.



3 Pin down the drawing

Olive Green is a rich, neutral colour so I used it to pin down the various elements. Drawing freehand gives the painting a sense of energy and I can make small adjustments if necessary. I worked from my photo, but also looked carefully at the arrangement in my studio, adding and moving flowers to make the best possible composition.



4 Block in key colours

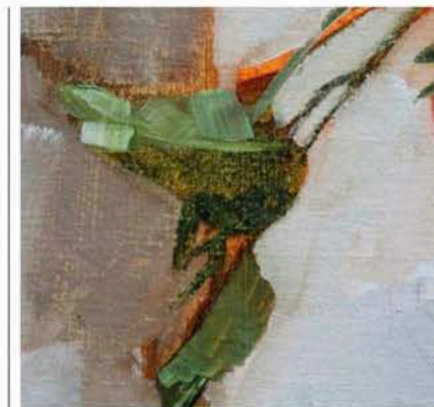
It had become difficult to see the marks clearly, so it was helpful to put down some blocks of colour that would provide a structure to work around.

The white of the narcissi was a good initial focal point. With that in place, I was then able to pitch other colours against it. I also established the darkest pink of the wallflowers from which I could then work up to the lightest pink. By contrast, the greens were kept really dark at this stage.



7 Refine from the back

I was keen to contrast the pattern of the foliage with a distinctly lighter background, so I carefully mixed a light grey with Titanium White, Davy's Grey and Yellow Ochre for warmth. I used the 1" brush to roughly apply the paint in different directions and continually remixed the colour, slightly differently each time, to give a sense of depth and movement to this area. I also used this as a chance to refine the drawing of the gorgeously intricate shapes of the leaves and flowers on the edge, and most satisfyingly, all the little gaps in between.



8 Mix up greens

I focused on accurate colour mixing here. It's taken me a long while to find ready-made greens that work best for me: rich Prussian Green; brilliant, translucent Sap Green; opaque, blue-tinged Terre-Verte; and deep, cool Olive Green. I mix many colours with them. Indigo is useful for dark areas; Naples Yellow Light and the very pale Michael Harding Lemon Yellow for lighter leaves. >



9 Build outwards

Blocking in the rest of the background gave a better sense of the whole painting. I began to lighten the grey in the left-hand panel and I refined the greyish-teal tabletop, which was becoming a key colour in the piece. All the tones were still intentionally quite dark, giving a good foundation on which to gradually build up to the lighter areas. The Burnt Sienna ground seemed to be creating a sense of cohesion too.



10 Blot the painting

The paint got a bit thick in places, so I used newspaper to blot much of the painting. This can create some lovely effects and squash the colours together while bringing out some of the ground beneath. It also picks up the grain of the linen or the brushmarks of the gesso primer. I find this method works particularly well with my greens, which are translucent and glow nicely when thinner.



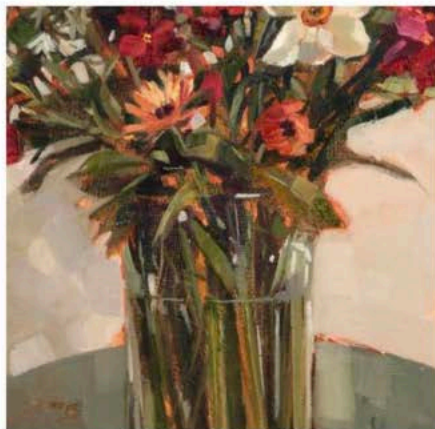
11 Find a focus

Parts of the painting needed to be in tighter focus, while a few flowers would be more effective if left much looser. I carefully worked on the most prominent of the Pheasant's Eye narcissi which felt like a key focal point. This flower was painted using a range of soft greys, Titanium White mixed with Davy's Grey plus hints of Lemon Yellow.



12 Add highlights

I gradually added all the lighter tones, building up to strong highlights that refined the drawing of the flowers. I added blues and greens to take out the sweetness of the pinks and to describe the shadows. Rose Madder Genuine added tinges of brownish pink and Naples Yellow Light worked very well to describe the daffodil and tulip highlights.



13 Know when to stop

I took time to paint the flower stems in the glass jug. I simplified the shapes, leaving carefully blotted areas and some ground showing through, and then applied lighter greens and strong white highlights on top. I then forced myself to stop, resisting the urge to tighten up the drawing in order to maintain a feeling of spontaneity. ●