

painting a watercolor peony

WITH HELEN DEALTRY

MATERIALS:

- 3 watercolor paints
 - ultramarine blue
 - lemon yellow
 - magenta
- 1 filbert brush—size 1"
- 1-2 jars for water
- 1 pipette
- 1 roll of paper towels
- 1 watercolor pad of paper
- 1 palette (or a plate)
- 1 roll of masking tape
- 1 pad of scratch paper

PREP YOUR SPACE

1. Place your pad of paper in front of you. If you have single sheet paper, add a little masking tape to each of the four corners to keep it in place on the table.
2. Arrange your inspiration in front of you, whether it is imagery or flowers in pots or vases.
3. Set up your palette, brush, water jars, and paper towel within your dominant hand's reach. Add in a pea-sized blob of each ink color onto your palette. Leave a little space between them so you can mix more colors in the spaces.
4. Take a little of each of your colors and add to a new place on your palette. Using a pipette or your brush, add some water to dilute it into a lighter wash color.

PAINT THE FLOWERS

5. Wet your brush. Dip into the light wash of pink color to lay down a soft silhouette of petal shapes using the flattest part of the brush. Turn the brush on its side to use the thinnest part of the brush to create some different shapes. Leave a space in the center, so you can add detail to the middle part of your flower with another color. This takes a little practice so experiment with the marks your brush can make ahead of beginning this painting on a piece of scratch paper.
6. While your soft layer is still wet, dip into the saturated pink color and add in some deeper areas of color on top. This will give a little more depth to your flower shape. Let the paint spread and move through the lighter layer underneath adding depth to what you have. Use whatever is still on your brush to create another flower or bud nearby.
7. Mix yellow with a little of the magenta red to create an orange/yellow. Using the tip of your brush, create little dabbing marks to paint the centers of the flowers.
8. Load up the brush with magenta for another flower applying similar movements to step one, simply change the way the flower is facing. Add in the center of the flower, as above.

PAINT THE LEAVES

9. Mix yellow and blue to create green and add water, so you have a light wash of green. Paint in the stems using loose, gestural dashes. Mix a darker green, which is just a higher blue to yellow ratio. Add on top of your stems in places to create depth. Use both light and dark greens for leaves. To paint leaves, touch the tip of the brush to the paper and add pressure and then less pressure as you lift off. This takes practice, so don't forget to have your scratch paper to the side to test and repeat.

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STEP BACK AND FINISH

10. Sometimes it's a good idea to step away from your painting, pin it on a wall, look at it with a fresh eye, and maybe add in a few final touches at a later date.
11. Try the same painting again, but change the palette or layout. You can use these techniques of layering up color for any flower you may be painting. It's all about practice!