

A mixed media botanical illustration featuring two prominent daisy flowers. The daisy in the upper right has a bright yellow center and white petals with subtle blue and purple shading. The daisy in the lower left is similar but with a more pronounced yellow center. The background is a textured wash of colors including teal, purple, and green, suggesting foliage and sky. The overall style is artistic and painterly.

Creating Flowers in Mixed Media

5 BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION TUTORIALS



Created exclusively for Craftsy by
Antonella Avogadro, Jessie Oleson Moore,
Sandrine Pelissier & Sara Barnes



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01 How to Draw a Flower in 4 Simple Steps
- 04 Build a Beautiful Bouquet With Watercolor and Colored Pencils
- 08 Illustrating Flowers With Pen, Ink and Watercolor
- 12 Painting Water Lilies in Mixed Media
- 17 Experimenting With Paper Collage and Acrylic Paint
- 22 Special Offer!
- 23 Meet the Experts

HOW TO DRAW A FLOWER IN 4 SIMPLE STEPS

By Antonella Avogadro

Flowers are a beautiful subject that can be explored on so many different levels. With a little instruction, you too can draw stunning floral blooms — the possibilities are endless, your only limitation is your own creativity.



Flowers can be the sole component of a painting, they can be used in a composition within an illustration, like in the example to the left, or they can be used to create a simple or complex pattern for fabric designs or wallpapers, like the example above.

In this step-by-step tutorial, I'll show you four easy steps to follow whenever you draw flowers. This is the first step to unlocking a garden of possibilities. Practice these same steps with different types of flowers, from roses and peonies to gardenias and carnations, and you'll find yourself mastering all kinds of floral arrangements in no time!

How to Draw a Single Flower

Note: The way I like to break down this 4-part drawing process is: proportions, contour, details and shadows. Maintaining this structure with any type of flower will provide a simple and easy-to-remember guide to help you create beautiful drawings.

Let's begin!

Step 1: Proportions

To start off the drawing, block in the basic shapes of the flower, making sure you maintain all vertical and horizontal correlating proportions between all the parts of the flowers. Usually, all flowers can be summed up into a circle or oval due to their naturally organic and curvaceous shapes. In this case, we are drawing a carnation, and the sum of its petals can be represented by an oval.

Step 2: Contour



In this step, focus on finding the contour of the flower on your page. Begin to give those loose geometric shapes more defined lines and start drawing the outside lines of the carnation with slightly more detail and precision.

Step 3: Details



Now that we have arrived at a basic proportional outline of our flower, we can start adding details on the inside of the drawing. Have a good look at the layer of overlapping petals and start drawing them from the bottom up. Begin by drawing the petals closest to the stem, working your way up to the top of the flower. This will help you focus on one small area at a time and prevent you from feeling overwhelmed by so many intersecting and overlapping sets of petals.

Step 4: Shadows



Once you finish drawing all of the major details of the flower, it is time to move on to shading your drawing. Throughout this whole process I have been using a 2B pencil, an ideal option both for drawing and for laying the most important shadows. This is the step that will start bringing your drawing to life. Remember that well rendered shadows can make any drawing pop right off the page.

Continue shading all of the petals on your flower. At this point, it is a good idea to bring in a second pencil to add some of the darker shadows right under the front petals. In this case, I used a 4B pencil to add a slightly darker tone of gray on the stem, under the whole set of petals and right underneath the front petals of this carnation.



There you have it, four stages you can follow with all your favorite flowers to create simple and beautiful floral drawings.

BUILD A BEAUTIFUL BOUQUET WITH WATERCOLOR AND COLORED PENCILS

By Antonella Avogadro

Now that you know how to draw a simple flower, let's expand on the technique by building a beautiful mixed media bouquet using graphite pencils, watercolors and colored pencils. This combination of materials is perfect for painting detailed subjects.

How to Build a Mixed Media Bouquet

Step 1:



This first step is one you could skip. But, I really like sketching the flowers I am going to paint to get comfortable with the shapes, proportions and get acquainted with the lights and shadows. This is also your chance to work out the composition. For this step you can use anything from your sketchbook or sketchpad to regular printer paper.

If you want to make the experience even more fun, you could go out with your camera and take plenty of reference photos of plants and flowers for you to work from.

Step 2:

After sketching the flowers and deciding on size and composition, draw the basic outline on watercolor paper or Bristol board.



You'll want to keep these lines light and simple. I made the lines on this drawing darker, so that they would come up on the camera, but later erased them a little using a kneaded eraser.

Step 3:

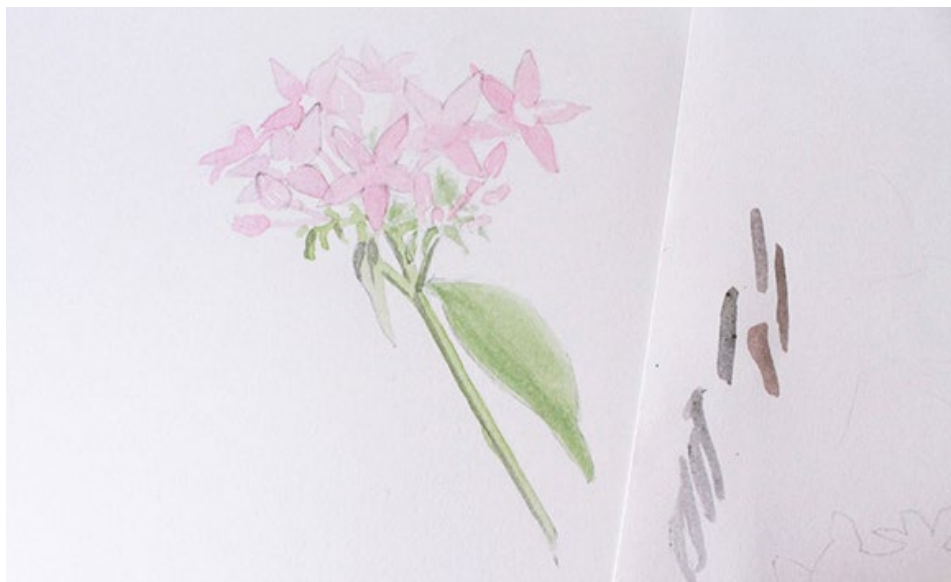


Now you are ready to paint your first watercolor brushstrokes. The key to this technique is: layers, layers, layers. You should start with a thin, watered-down layer of watercolor and build up the color with thicker paint each time. Remember to let every layer dry completely before you move on to the next one.

Use green paint to block in a light wash of the stem and leaves.

While you wait for this layer to dry you can move on to painting the base wash of the flowers.

Step 4:



After the first layer dries completely, begin adding subtle layers. At this point you can mix a couple of gray colors to start creating some depth. Don't worry about it looking flat because you have plenty of time to add more shadows and create more dimension.

Step 5:



Continue to build up the color of the leaves with watercolors. Paint some of the undertones and continue shading. After this new layer dries completely, you can reach for your color pencils. For this tutorial I used Faber-Castell Polychromos, but you can use whichever pencils you have and/or prefer.

Use your pencils in small circular motions over the area you want to color. This will allow all of the color already on the paper to blend together nicely. Keep building up both colors and shadows simultaneously.

Step 6:

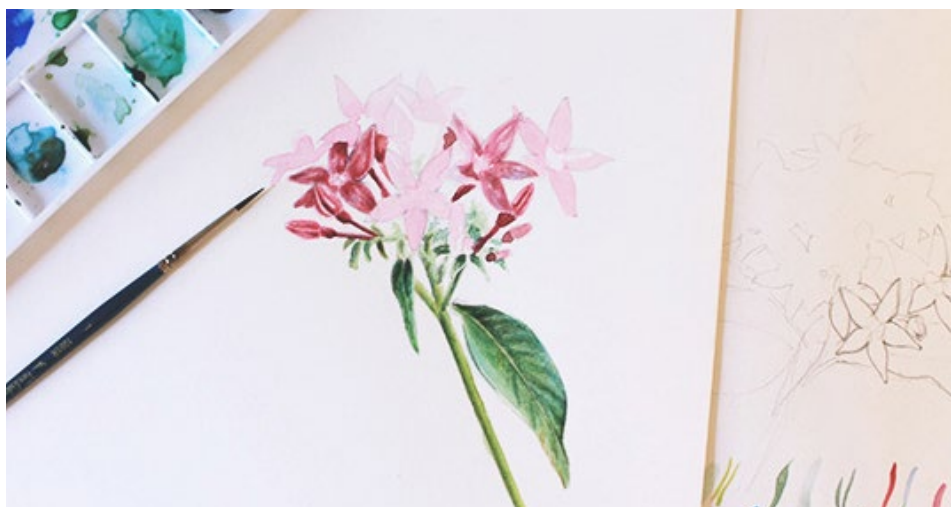


Now you can go back to watercolors. Using a liner brush or small round brush, paint all of the small details on the stem and leaves.

You can go as detailed or painterly and abstract as you wish. It all depends on your personal style and which final look you prefer.

Step 7:

After finishing all of the green areas you can move on to the flowers. Mix the watercolors you will need for these and slowly begin to layer some shadows as we previously did with the leaves and stem.



You will soon begin to notice the flowers taking shape and gaining depth. Continue painting all of them until you feel like moving on to the details with pencils.

Step 8:



As always, remember to let the watercolor paint dry. Afterward you can start painting the details with your color pencils.

Step 9:

Keep painting with pencils until you are happy with your piece. You can also go back to watercolors and paint another layer if you feel like doing so. This is a very versatile technique that doesn't demand the layers to be applied in a specific order. Let your artistic expression come through the painting and adapt this technique to your own aesthetic.



ILLUSTRATING FLOWERS WITH PEN, INK AND WATERCOLOR

By Jessie Oleson Moore

If you're looking for inspiration for your next mixed media masterpiece, look no further than your garden. Flowers are a naturally fantastic artistic muse. There's a reason why flowers have been the subject matter of great artists for centuries. As subjects go, flowers are practically perfect: They have interesting shapes, beautiful form and vibrant colors. Plus, they don't have much trouble staying still.

While there are many ways to render flowers, a mixed media approach with pen and ink and watercolor is an easy, accessible, and fun method of painting flowers.

Before you get started, find some inspiration:

It's helpful to choose reference images. For this drawing, an assemblage of student projects from Craftsby course [Photographing Flowers](#) were chosen:



Although you can see aspects of the reference flowers in the finished piece, they were used more for inspiration and proper cues on shape and color as opposed to a guide to simply copy.

And prep your palette:

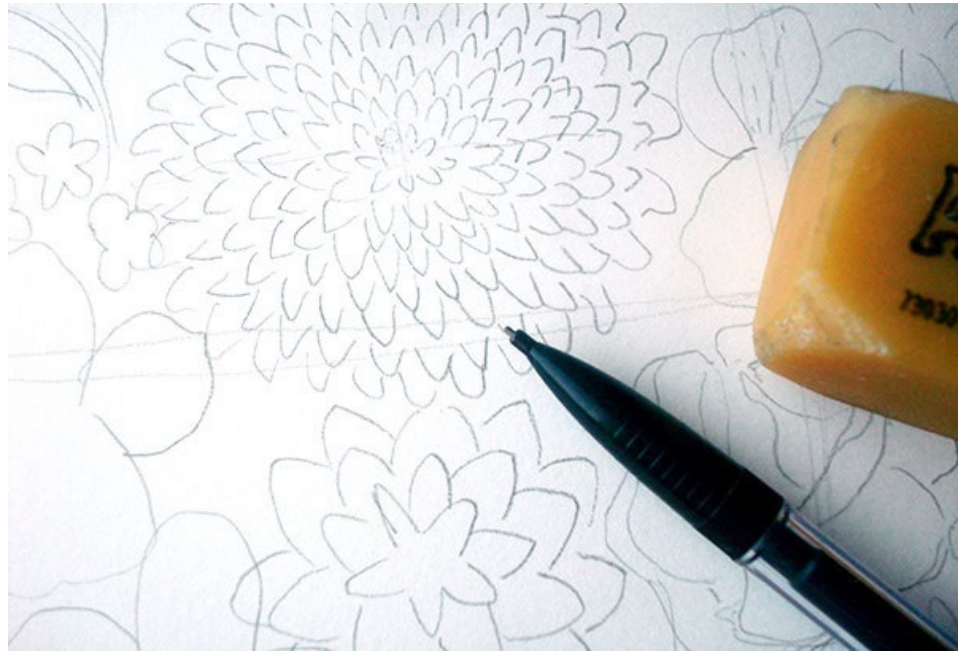
It's a good idea to have a few colors pre-mixed for your flowers. Once you get to know your palette, you can keep a basic palette of watercolors with "go-to" colors ready to go. Simply re-wet and you've got paint.

How to Create Mixed Media Flowers

You will need:

- Pen and ink
- Pencil
- Eraser
- Wellum Bristol board
- Watercolors

Step 1:



Assemble some reference images and start sketching. Once you've settled on a design that you like, render it in pencil on your working surface. Evaluate the drawing: If there are any changes you'd like, now is the time. Pencil is erasable, but the pen you'll be using next is not.

Step 2:

When you're happy with it, start using ink to finalize your drawing. This style is quite bold and linear. However, the style you choose to use is up to you. You can use more delicate lines rather than strong ones, or employ methods such as cross-hatching. Once the ink has been laid down, let the ink "set" for several minutes. This will keep the ink from smearing when you erase the lines.

Step 3:

Erase the pencil from under the ink. Double check in clear light that there aren't any ghostly pencil lines lingering.

Now, grab your watercolors.





Step 4:

Paint the flowers, being careful not to let different colors of ink touch while they are still wet. In this painting, elements on far sides were painted, so that they wouldn't touch. If you add two different colors of paint too close to one another, they can bleed, like in the picture to the left.

To a certain degree this is inevitable, and one or two spots like this looks artsy. But, too many of these "bleeds" and your work will look messy. It might seem like a pain, but if an area of paint seems too close to where you want to paint next, err on the side of caution and wait, or lightly heat the area with a hair dryer to hasten the drying process.

Note: Sometimes, this effect can be used artfully, as on portions of petals that have colors that blend. By applying the yellow paint on top of the still slightly wet pink paint on these filler flowers, a nice, dimensional gradient is attained.



Step 5:

Once you have all of the flowers colored in, it's time to add some detail. See how the painting still looks pretty "flat"?



You remedy that by continuing to work with your paint: refine the color by adding another layer, add shadows or highlights of color, or even small details in pen and ink, which will accentuate the work. You can refer to your reference images again for ideas on shading and adding highlights of color.



Once you're satisfied, let your piece dry completely. You've just created a beautiful illustrated bouquet!



PAINTING WATER LILIES IN MIXED MEDIA

By Sandrine Pelissier

Water lilies are simple and beautiful, symbolizing peace and wellness. They boast delicate blooms have inspired many artists, including the great Claude Monet. You too can learn to render these lovely flowers in your own works of art. Here's a step-by-step guide to creating a water lily mixed media painting, using watercolor and ink!

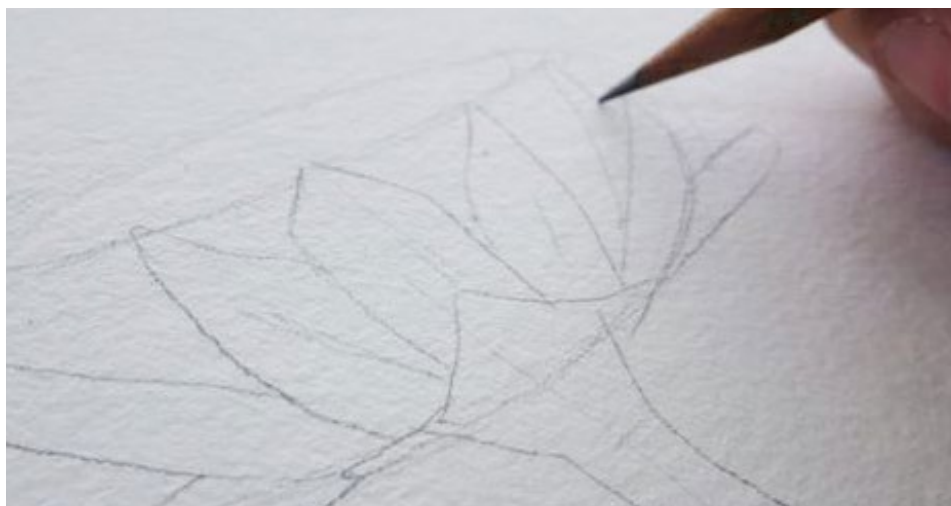
How to Paint Water Lilies

You will need:

- Watercolor paper
- A pencil and eraser
- Watercolor paint (I used Alizarin Crimson, Viridian and Sap Green, Yellow Ochre, Burnt Sienna, Ultramarine and Cyan Blue)
- Brushes
- Masking fluid and an old brush or a silicon brush
- India ink
- Ink pen

Note: I worked from a reference picture of a water lily, but took some artistic license, simplifying some of the elements. I didn't want the painting to be realistic, but more like an illustration in style.

Step 1:



Start by drawing a rough outline of a water lily and lily pads as well as a few reflections on the water, working from a reference picture, while simplifying the details.

Step 2:



Paint a light blue wash where the water will be using your lightest blue color, painting around the flower and the pads.

Step 3:



Then apply masking fluid on that light blue wash to preserve a few highlights on the water area. A silicon brush works great to apply masking fluid: It will easily peel it off the brush once dried.

Note that masking fluid should not be dried with a hair dryer, as the heat causes it to adhere to the paper, making it almost impossible to remove. Once it has air dried, you can then use a hair dryer to dry the paint.

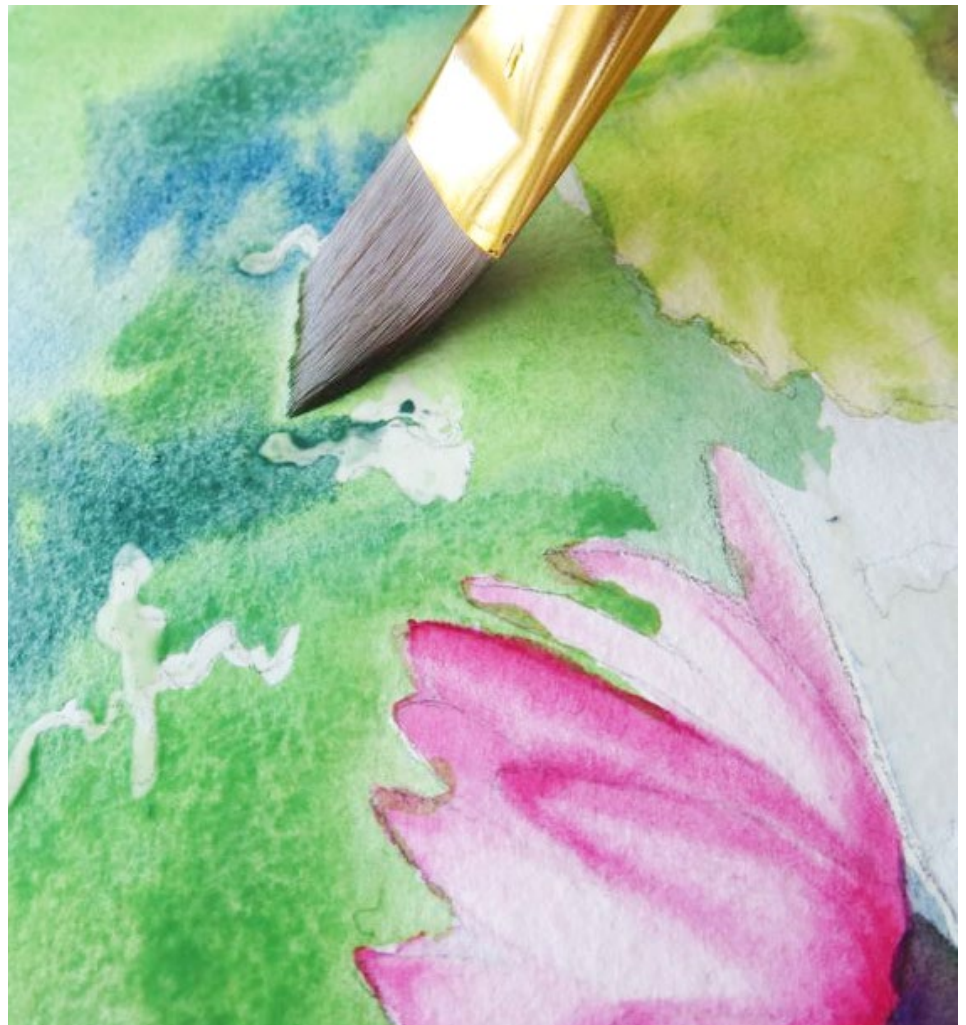
Step 4:

Now begin to add color to the water lily bloom. I recommend painting the water lily with a wet-on-wet technique, so the pigments mix and edges remain soft. Here, I used Alizarin Crimson, a lovely pink hue.



The lily pads are also painted with a wet-on-wet technique, with tones of green-yellow and brown.

Step 5:



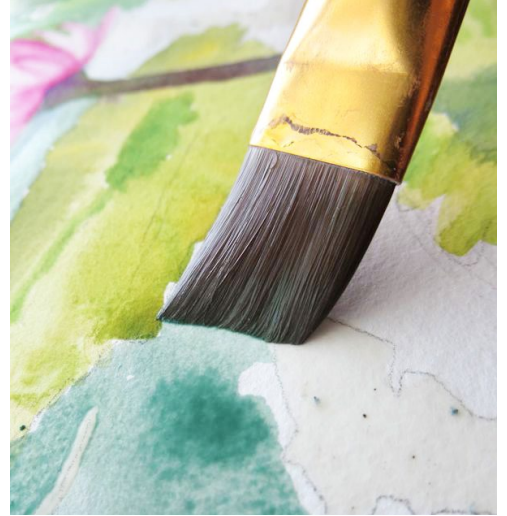
Looking at your reference picture, try to paint the colors you see in the water, letting the colors mix wet into wet. On my picture, I used both blue and green in the water.

Step 6:

You can protect the flower and pad you painted with masking fluid before working on the background. However, because the contours were simple enough in this case, I decided to paint carefully around the flower and pads without masking them.

Step 7:

When you're done painting your background, let it dry completely.

Step 8:

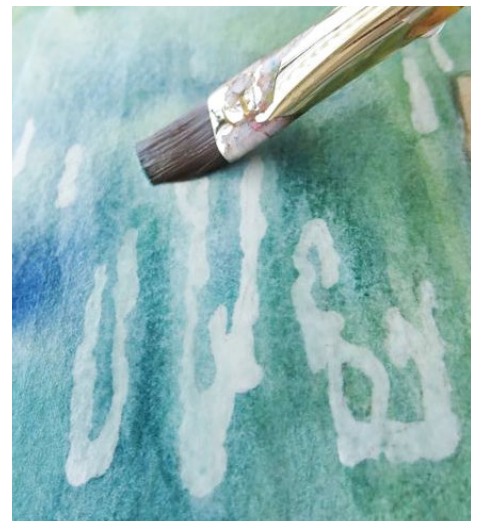
Once everything is dry, you can peel off the masking fluid. Some paper reacts better than others with the masking fluid. I recommend buying high-quality paper, as it is quite annoying when your finished work is damaged because of masking fluid.

Step 9:

Once you peeled off the masking fluid, check if the preserved areas appear to look too stark or if the edges look too hard. In that case, you can blend some of the background color in the preserved areas just by moving a bit of the pigments with water and a brush.

Step 10:

The next step is adding a touch of contrast with ink. I used a pen dipped in India ink for my painting.



Step 11:

There are a few things you can do with ink on top of watercolors. I chose to outline the contours, adding a few shades and later adding patterns on the water area. Another thing you could try is to add other patterns, like zentangles, on top of the watercolor paint.

Step 12:

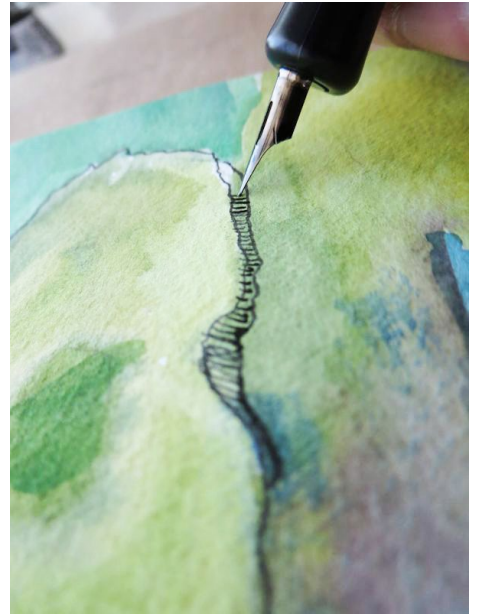
You can outline the water lily petals and add a few shades on the petals to really play up the illustrative feel of the work.

Step 13:

When I completed the outlines and shading, the painting looked like this. While I like how it looked at this point, I still wanted to achieve more contrast among the different elements, so I decided to add more ink patterns.

I decided to go with straight lines, drawing them on the water covering almost the entire painting, with the exception of the flower and lily pads.

Below is the finished painting:
Water lily with watercolor and ink.



EXPERIMENTING WITH PAPER COLLAGE AND ACRYLIC PAINT

By Sara Barnes

Paper collectors, this one's for you — we're experimenting with paper collage and acrylic paint!

Using scissors, paper and paint, we'll create a multi-faceted image that captures the natural beauty of gerbera daisies!



Of course, you don't have to use gerbera daisies, but that's what I've chosen. You can use any flower, roses, lilies, whatever bouquet sparks your imagination and creativity!

How to Make a Paper Collage Bouquet

Here are the materials I'm using:

- Paper scraps
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Mod Podge® or acrylic matte medium
- Acrylic paint
- Paintbrushes
- Water

Step 1: Sketch it out and make a game plan.



The key to a successful collage, I've found, is to make a detailed sketch. It will act as your blueprint when you're working and give you an idea of what shapes to cut out and brushstrokes to make. Don't bother adding shading or anything like that — a pencil outline will do.

Step 2: Begin with paper.



Once you're comfortable with your sketch, it's time to move on to the good stuff — the paper! Because you have an idea of the shapes you'll cut out, begin working in layers. Assess what the "bottom layer" of the piece is. Here, we can see that it's the stems. It's what holds the blooms together. Cut out the green shapes you drew in your sketch. Don't worry about any of the smaller details, like depicting the folds in the leaves. We'll paint that in later.



If you're having trouble making your shapes look the same as how you rendered them, here's my trick: Take your sketch and color the back of it in graphite. Flip it over and lay it on top of your collage paper. Trace over your lines. When you lift up the sketch, you'll see it's transferred to the new paper! You can then cut around it and piece it together like a puzzle.



Trace, cut, paste and repeat. Do this until you've crafted a lovely, colorful flower.

Step 3: It's time for Mod Podge!

Before we move to the next part of this tutorial, we'll first seal the collage. This is important so we're able to paint freely on top of it without ruining the paper underneath. Using a brush or sponge, gently apply a thin layer of Mod Podge® to your collage. Smooth out any excess of the medium, and make sure it's even. Let it dry.



Step 4: Paint in the details.



After your collage is dry to the touch, we'll start to add the details. Grab some of your favorite acrylic paint, water and a brush; mix the colors you see in your flowers. You'll use the paint as a way to shade and apply accent color to the paper underneath.



Here, I've added green for the leaves and stems and orange and red for the petals. I've even included a little brown for the pollen. Since the paper has been "sealed" with the matte medium, we can paint on it no problem. So, use a little color to add definition and create a more visually complex image. It's up to you how detailed or stylized you want to make your flowers.



So, that's it! The great thing about collage is that it's fun to experiment. If you want to try making an image that's less realistic and more decorative, go right ahead. This technique is perfect for it. But, if you want to stick to realism, you can do that too. You'll probably want to spend more time painting details into your work.

This is truly just the beginning! Enjoy more in-depth, step-by-step guidance from expert artists with Craftsby's growing selection of online mixed media classes.

SPECIAL OFFER!

Click here to enjoy up to 33% off your next mixed media class from Craftsby!

[Click to Save!](#)

Learn how to capture the incredible beauty of flowers and plants in intricate detail in *Botanical Illustration With Watercolor & Colored Pencils*, taught by award-winning artist Adele Rosetti. You'll explore the structure of plants before learning how to create a proportional outline sketch, conquer perspective challenges and transform your artwork from flat to fully dimensional, using colored pencils, vibrant watercolor washes and soft, seamless blends.



Explore all of Craftsby's online [drawing classes](#) and [painting classes](#) for even more inspiration.

Get better at what you love to do.



MEET THE EXPERTS



Antonella Avogadro

Antonella is a fashion designer and freelance illustrator, with a soft spot for art history. She spends her days juggling her three passions: drawing, sewing and drafting patterns, while sharing her creations on her blog [Stardust Soul](#).



Jessie Oleson Moore

Jessie Oleson Moore honed her illustration skills at the prestigious Pratt Institute in New York City. After many years of working in the greeting card industry, she combined her illustration skills with a love of writing and sweets to found [CakeSpy](#), an award-winning dessert website. She's published two books: *CakeSpy Presents Sweet Treats for a Sugar-Filled Life* and *The Secret Lives of Baked Goods*.



Sandrine Pelissier

Sandrine Pelissier is a watercolor, acrylic and mixed media artist from Canada. She has been published in art books and magazines including the *Splash*, best of watercolor series, the mixed-media book *Incite*, *The Artist's Magazine*, *Watercolor Artist* magazine and *International Artist* magazine.



Sara Barnes

Sara Barnes is a creative person, fraternal twin, and dessert enthusiast based in Baltimore, Maryland. She is the lady behind [Brown Paper Bag](#), a daily art blog that catalogs the visually delightful work that she finds.