



The Still Life Course

'There are always flowers for those who want to see them'
- Henry Matisse

Module 1: Drawing

This course starts off with a focus on components of what it is that we are to paint in the course: flowers.

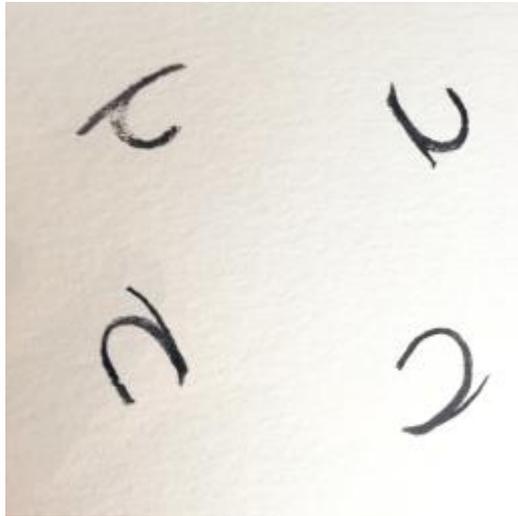
The drawing projects provide information and resources for the course's painting projects, and much besides. The exercises are simple in concept, and this is where the magic lies. The key ingredients for the drawings are letter shapes, hand written letter shapes; all 26 letters of the alphabet are then turned into floral shapes.

At the start of this painting course I want to dedicate some time to the creation of drawings that will be central to the painting modules. Drawing is vital for pinning down visual thoughts so to speak, to reproduce a basic vision of our observation. It is the beginning of great things; the nucleus of our own interpretation and originality. I believe that art cannot develop without drawing being central to it. There are three exercises to create imaginary flower and foliage shapes; it is an important step to ease you into the creative process of this course

'Creativity is a continual surprise' - Ray Bradbury

Alphabet floral and foliage drawings

What? Little drawings, with big potential; the individual letters of the alphabet are turned into floral and foliage shapes. By using the hand 'drawn' individual letters, you will create twenty-six different flowers for the first project, and twenty-six leaf shapes for the second project. Start small, with letters about the size of your thumbnail.



Create the drawings straight after you have written out the alphabet in a large sketchbook or paper. Explore what the different letter shapes can lead to? Drawings are to represent floral shapes in the widest sense, these are imaginary flowers, play, and explore. Simple or elaborate and fantastical, all good! If you get stuck, just move on until you have the whole alphabet completed. Do the same exercise with the letters turned upside down. Pick a few letters and write them rotated in different directions, then make more drawings. What are you discovering? Once you have drawn a few sheets, maybe try doing the drawings with a paintbrush and thinned down black fluid paint (50/50) ink or watercolour paint.

Why? If you had been asked to draw 26 flowers without any visual stimulus, it would probably have become rather tricky and repetitive after the first ten or so. By creating drawings in this way the task of 'creative problem solving'

shifts. All of a sudden you have lines and shapes that you might not have thought of to use for creating floral forms. Working in this way will add interesting new options and is a simple way to develop your own creativity. Rather than drawing flowers from life, and trying to emulate them, this is a way to look at your own imagination for guidance. Of course it is very important to draw real flowers as well! See video for guidance on the creative process.

“You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.” — Maya Angelou

Fruit and Vegetable Imaginary Floral Drawings

Moving on from the warming up exercises to a bigger drawing project: Creating flowers and foliage from fruit and vegetable shapes.

What? Observational drawings of fruit and vegetables used to discover shapes and patterns as the objects are cut up.

Why? It is an alternative way of finding interesting shapes and forms to become components of floral drawings. Rather than drawing flowers from life, the idea is to create imaginary flowers from the drawings created by using the different shapes found in the fruit and vegetables. The emphasis is on observing and quick drawings, not pretty or perfect. This is an exercise, not an Artwork.

How? Use two to three fruit or vegetables. Bell pepper, tomato, mange tout, any squash or small pumpkin, cucumber, sugar snaps, bean, pear, apple, citrus, kiwi or structural fruit or vegetables are to be cut up as per instructions on the video tutorial.

Draw with any medium including pencil BUT no erasing (rubbers) just freehand drawing. It might be helpful to draw with a pointed paintbrush and the black fluid paint (dilute 50/50). This will be a bit like opaque watery ink.

Alternatively use water colour paint or ink. Watercolour paper is ideal for this but thick cartridge paper is also good. Create quick drawings with a focus on **strong clear lines, if it looks 'wrong' just draw over it again; this is part of** observing and learning. Perfection is not important, just draw and explore what you see.

Once the different shapes are drawn, use the elements and turn them into floral and leaf shapes. Look at these elements from all directions; sometimes it is more interesting to rotate the shape to be used. Draw something you have not yet seen, but have the components arranged to resemble a flower or a leaf. Repeat this process a few times. Be playful, try not to think too hard, enjoy the process of discovering your imaginary flowers.

See video tutorial for guidance

Additional Notes

Make the letters separate, but as if writing connectively, in other words, they

appear more cursive than print. It is important to keep the writing natural, the way you would normally write, so not too curly not like calligraphy.

Write the whole alphabet spaced out on a sheet of paper, not too big at first. Turn every letter into a flower of some description; it is not important what kind of flower, as long as it has petals and the basics of an imaginary floral shape.

In the same way as you have your own unique handwriting; you will create your own flower shapes by using the lines you drew. The purpose of this exercise is to create a selection of drawings that is representative of how you draw and make marks.

Once you have drawn 26 flowers, repeat the process, once you have written the letters, turn the page around, so your letters are the wrong way round. Now create more flowers, you can repeat this on the side and different floral shapes will be created.

Imaginary Foliage

The same process is to be repeated, but this time draw foliage, leaves, stems and growing green things that you will find on plants.

Spend some time on these two exercises, it is a bit like doodling, so try it a **few times, enjoy the process. Don't try too hard to 'see new shapes' just focus** on the shape you are turning into a flower or leaf and see where it leads.

Don't worry if you get stuck on a few. If you create a small selection you like out of the 26 letters, then it is good.

“The principal mark of genius is not perfection but originality, the opening of new frontiers.” — Arthur Koestler