

Exploring Impressionist Flowers

In this activity, inspired by the Spanish Impressionist painting of Joaquín de Sorolla y Bastida and the exhibition *Glory of Spain: Treasures from the Hispanic Society Museum & Library*, explore how artists set up canvases outside to capture the brightness of flowers lit by natural sunshine.

Time: 30 minutes

Difficulty level: Moderate

Messy level: Moderate to high



To view an image of this work and to hear from Helga Aurisch, curator of European art, [click here](#).

Investigate the Work of Art!

1. Look closely at the painting. Where is the lightest part of the painting? Where is the darkest area?
2. How is painting flowers outside in the sunlight different than painting them inside with the light from electric lightbulbs?
3. The man in this painting is well-known American designer Louis Comfort Tiffany, who was friends with the artist. How would you paint one of your friends?

Let's Make Some Art!

Gather These Art Materials

- Large canvas board or large piece of cardboard
- Two or three paintbrushes of different thickness
- A variety of acrylic paint colors
- Water container
- Palette or paper plate to mix the paint
- Palette knife or plastic knife
- Paper towels
- Regular pencil



Step-by-Step Artist Instructions

First, Sketch Your Scene

1. Find an outdoor garden or area with flowers, bushes, and trees. It could be at your home, in your neighborhood, or even a garden somewhere around the city that you love.
2. Set up an easel or a chair in front of the scene you are going to paint.
3. Lightly sketch your image with a pencil. Don't worry about getting all the details, an outline is good enough.

Next, Set Up Your Palette

4. Once you have your sketch finished, pour a dime-size drop of the paint colors you will need around the edges of the palette.
5. In the middle of your palette, mix some of the main colors that you will need. For example, mix three or four shades of green using the following colors: green and white for light green, green and yellow for a medium green, and green and purple for a dark green.

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Front: Joaquín de Sorolla y Bastida, *Louis Comfort Tiffany*, 1911, oil on canvas, New York, the Hispanic Society of America, A3182.

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Finally, Start Your Painting

6. Paint the background:

- A) Use large brush strokes.
- B) Don't over blend your background.
- C) Allow the streaks of different colors to show through.

7. Paint the foreground:

- A) If the plant you are painting has big leaves, use a larger paintbrush.
If the plant has smaller leaves, then use a smaller paintbrush.
- B) Try to imitate the shape of the plant with your brush strokes.
- C) Be sure to let the brush strokes be seen! Impressionist artists captured the overall impression of what they saw, not necessarily every detail.
- D) Impressionists were so interested in light that their shadows are often not super dark. Add in shadows under your plant and wherever there is less light.
- E) Add the highlights by dabbing on white and yellow paint. Look at the lightest parts of the scene, where the sun is reflecting the most brightly.

8. If bugs and bits of nature end up in your artwork, don't worry! This is very common when painting outside.