art Challenge

All the Prize Winners in our *International Artist Magazine* Challenge No. 150

FLORALS & GARDENS

Paul Baldassini Connecticut, USA

Little Climbing Beauties, oil, 24 x 31 ½ (60 x 80 cm)

Grand Prize



Showstoppers

These days, Connecticut-based artist Paul Baldassini finds himself most captivated by floral subjects, especially peonies and roses in the deep, golden light of late morning. While the artist also paints landscapes, his crisp, vivid florals—which he has been painting for more than a decade—are the true showstoppers. His particular style of realism, he says, is influenced by the 16th-century Flemish master painters, notably Peter Paul Rubens and his contemporaries.

"Except for flowers and some exotic species of birds, amphibians and marine life, nature is pretty much devoid of saturated colors. It's mostly a grayed down tableau. I'm not able to photograph those colorful creatures, but flowers are everywhere," says Baldassini. In addition to his own garden, the artist explores various public and private gardens near his studio where there is an abundance of flowers to photograph.

"In my floral work, I methodically seek to reveal the intricacy and elegance of their design. Every blossom, bud or leaf has its own identity, [and] no color or shape is ever exactly the same or repeated in nature or in my paintings," he says.

Baldassini continues, "Since I am a realist painter concerned with light effects, the underpainting technique greatly facilitates both the realization of a compelling composition and accurate depictions of light and chromatic subtleties. The design and composition are completed in advance so I can concentrate on color mixing when painting."

Watch the artist in action on his YouTube channel by searching Baldassini Fine Art.

My Inspiration

Most of what I paint these days are floral subjects, peonies and roses in particular, photographed in situ under late morning light. I believe painting should be the representation of natural appearances on a flat surface, and I strive to capture the intricacy and elegance of their design. Each flower is wholly unique, and I don't have to travel very far to find them: many private and public flower gardens are just a short drive from my studio.

My Desgn Strategy

The paintings I create are based on a composite of many images. Like much great art, they are a combination of fact and fiction. My sketchbook is a digital camera with a macro lens, which I use to create compelling compositions that combine variation and rhythm that I can traslate into convincing light and shadow effects with oil paint. As a professional designer and master image editor for more than 40 years, I use digital technology to capture, examine and edit the floral subjects I photograph, spending hours exploring design and composition possibilities before I put brush to panel or linen.

My Working Process

After creating a compelling composition using digital techniques, I transfer my design to the panel, then apply a raw sienna imprimatura. Next, I begin the underpainting much like a watercolor, using burnt umber and solvent-free fluid, adding and removing paint as necessary. When dry, I begin the overpainting working a section at a time, with each new section seamlessly blended into the previously painted section. This method allows me to focus completely on color mixing to achieve the right combination of color, value and temperature to model forms, create depth, and accurately render nuances of light and shadow.

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