

Tip #105



Painting Flowers

Obviously, there are almost as many ways to paint flowers as there are artists wanting to do so – and much depends on the day’s particular inspiration or mood! There’s no right or wrong – loose, juicy semi-abstracts can be wonderful, as can quick gesture sketches or tight, clean botanicals that follow a set of traditional rules. Given their subject, they’re all beautiful.

Many people enjoy botanicals; they’re a delight to the eye, beautiful framed, and they’re a real challenge to do. You might like to investigate artist and teacher (<http://artinstructor.blogspot.com/>) Cynthia Padilla’s Yahoogroup, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/botanicalart> – lots of inspiration and instruction there!

Art 105-1, Flower Studies

My own work is more casual than a classical botanical illustration, but I do enjoy working on the spot from direct observation. The one on the left was done by quickly sketching the little bouquet in ink and adding simple watercolor washes. The geranium was painted quickly as I sat on my porch swing, swatting at mosquitoes! There’s no preliminary pencil sketching on this one, just wading in with marks and colors.



Art 105-2, Bloodroot, step 1 and 2

The bloodroot was all over the little park near here, and I wanted to capture them during their brief blooming period. At (1.), you can see I've sketched in the shapes, paying careful attention to the way the leaf hugs the stem. You may be able to see that I made a pale, rough oval where the daisy-like flower head will be, and then painted the pistils and stamens and the vari-colored stems. At (2.), I've started adding the palest washes and describing the shapes of the white petals and their shadows.



Art 105-3, Bloodroot, step 3



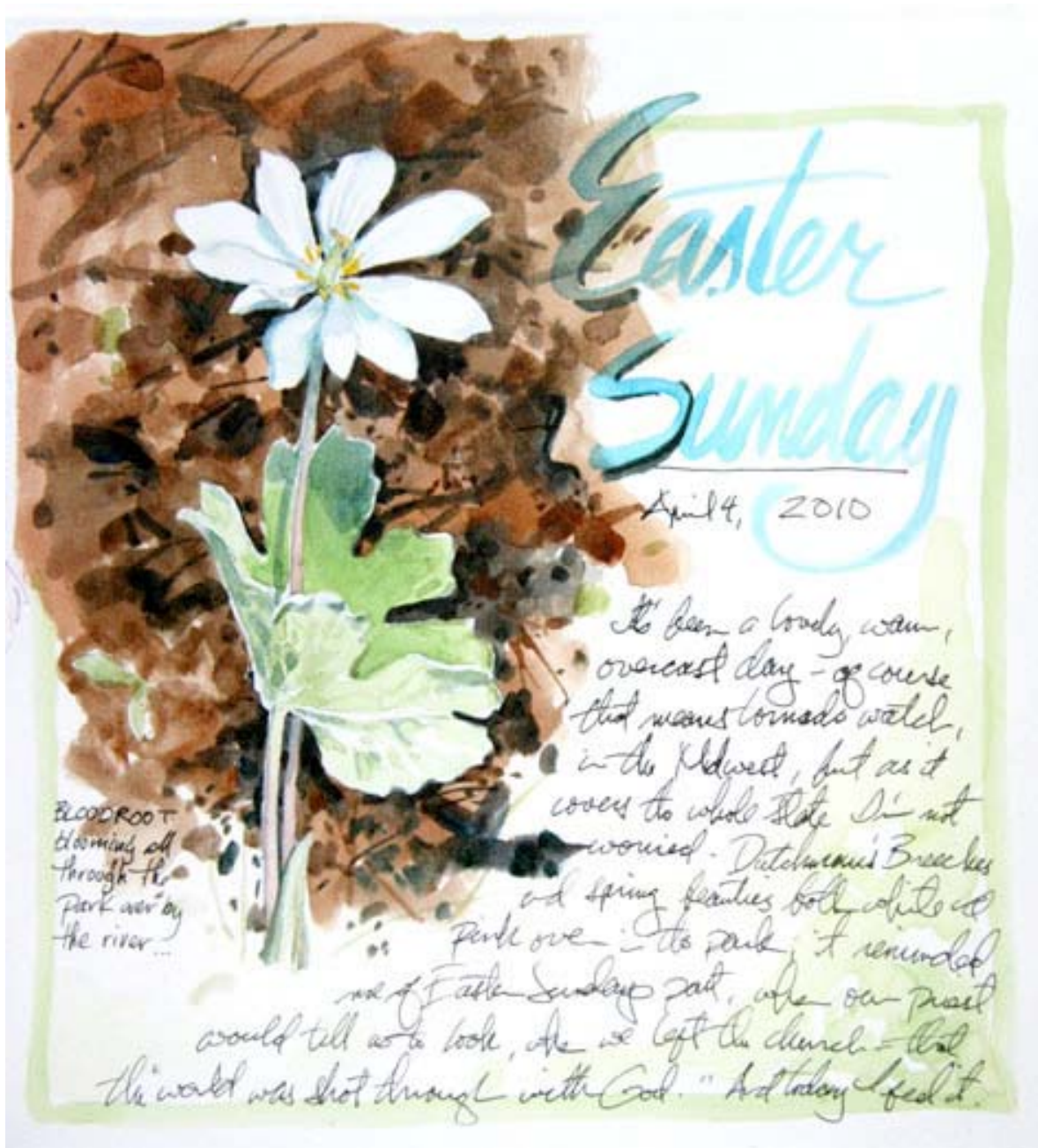
I continued to develop the leaf and shadows; in this photo I included the flower itself, along with a bit of my palette and one of my favorite waterbrushes, by Niji. These brushes are very handy for small, on-the-spot sketches like this—no need for a separate water supply, since the water's right in the handle.

Art 105-4, Bloodroot, step 4



What really made these delicate spring flowers stand out like stars in the night sky was the rich background of damp leaf litter. I mixed up a wash of burnt sienna and ultramarine, varying the amounts of each back and forth, and carefully painted around the flower. I used several different Niji brushes for this, from the flat one for large areas to the smallest one for details.

Art 105-5, Finished



Since this was in my journal, I added a border, a header text, and some notes...

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