

## Painting Ideas for Botanical, Natural history, General subjects

In General it's very useful to collect stimuli via taking your own photographs, collecting postcards, magazine cuttings, greeting cards, useful books etc, of interesting subjects/ compositions/ techniques you might like to do in the future - to build up your own 'image bank' of inspiration. If you keep your eyes open around you it's amazing what can crop up to stimulate you. Jotting down your ideas can be invaluable for future use.

Note: Flowers/plants can be sourced from the garden or a florists, non protected species from hedgerows, and illustrated books and the internet can be used for reference when putting together your own compositions.

Note: animal drawings and paintings should be done from your own photographs when possible, or if using others photographic reference, you're fine if you change the pose/composition a little or place the subject in a different scene (wildlife photographers are protective of their copyright)

### Plants/Natural History

Quick guide: cultivated flowers, non protected wild flowers, herbs, shrubs, climbers, fruits, vegetables, grasses, ferns, lichens, mosses, fungi, leaves, tree branches and related parts moving through the seasons, exotic plants, seed heads, stones, shells, driftwood, sand, feathers, animals in their natural habitats

Florals with rich/soft wet in wet colour backgrounds for atmosphere – flower painting style

Bold floral studies filling the format

Seasonal themes for a series

Plants growing in pots will keep very well for convenient use and you can use them from different angles

Monocotyledons(bulb plants) usually have parallel veined, streamlined leaves, a good option for strikingly bold portraits with unfussy venation

Single plant with roots/tubers/bulb shown – botanical style

Single plant with main areas/parts in colour, but with some leaves/stems set behind the main subject or alongside (as additional depth or information respectively) – these areas in pen and ink or painted monochrome eg greys, sepias

Sprawling, wandering stems, asymmetrical diagonals eg. Honeysuckle, clematis, ivy

The addition of butterflies, insects, birds etc, related to the plant species you've chosen

Use of tinted watercolour or pastel papers, using watercolour and gouache with Japanese asymmetry and simplicity evocative of silk paintings

Elongated panels of vertical or horizontal composition to suit the plants depicted eg a row of tulips

Full monochrome studies such as tonal sepia, or pen and ink black and white work

Cropped off components for dramatic visual effect or for practical reasons eg where showing the whole length of a leaf or stem wouldn't be feasible. Stems leading directly off the base of the composition.

Paired or grouped plant compositions, for shape or colour contrast, maybe with a seasonal connection

Plant set into its natural habitat showing a landscape behind it.

Simplified plant forms as silhouettes (seed heads good for this), with decorative grounds - textile-like

A close up section of a hedgerow – all that lovely intertwining of plant stems!

In a mixed flower composition, the incorporation of pebbles, stones, mosses, twig or rocks to give a grounded setting

Flora from an exotic/foreign country, maybe stimulated by visiting an inspiring place on holiday

## Animals

Shown in the wild in their natural habitat, in a particular season

Decorative and stylised eg cats, birds, hares, exotic animals with decorative patterned grounds

Pet portraits

Flamboyantly coloured birds: from peacocks to parrots

Don't forget the non furry, non feathered animals eg frogs, geckos, tropical fish

## Landscape

Local landmarks

Farming landscape

Wilderness

Favourite places

Townscapes

Architectural studies

Seascapes and beachscapes

Garden corners, rural corners, gables and gates

Abandoned overgrown places

Interesting doorways, windows, man-made structures

Pathways of 'mystery' diminishing into the horizon or round a corner

Holiday places

## Still Life

Interesting objects that mean something to you or relate to one another in some way.

Perhaps incorporating some of the following : plates, jugs, fabrics, lace, fruit, utensils, tools, bouquets in vases, urns, or specimen collections of objects such as shells, pebbles, cones.

Consider the use of rich colours and grounds – grounds can be fabric, wallpaper, gift wrap, trays, mix of different patterns etc

Best to set up the still life at home with good directional lighting, but you can bring some photographs and one or two of the objects to the class for working on

## Abstracts

Close-up enlargements of textures from nature eg stones, leaves, seed heads, water patterns.

Montage of related textures from nature or a location, juxtaposed or overlapping

Interpretation of a particular mood or feeling - using shape, colour and texture to evoke it

Landscape idea: shapes of field boundaries, plantations, maybe with a wide angle curvature, or an unusual viewpoint

Capturing of the essence of a place in a non representational way

Fantasy landscapes using blown inks and other techniques

## Techniques

Strong wet into wet washes, with backruns etc see below

Masking off main structures, or using wax resist or pva glue for raised textural interest, then working the grounds quite freely

Non-permanent ink plus watercolour wash – gives atmospheric blurring

Tonal pencil work for detailed observation of lighting and structures

Technical pen hatching, stippling of plants, animals, landscapes – with optional watercolour washes

Pencil, charcoal or coloured pencil worked into with watercolour washes and vice versa. (You can fix the pencil/charcoal first, or leave it to bleed and blur more freely)

Use of creative textures eg salt, backruns, spattering, blowing, stencil patterns and printed patterns from found objects

Mixed media possibilities can be endless – using addition of sand, wax, fibres, beads etc