

Still Life with Roses and Paintbrushes

Tia Barr

My painting entitled 'Still Life with Roses and Paintbrushes' features a large pink and white bouquet of flowers with vases of paintbrushes and an olive-green cloth intertwined around the base. Its dimensions are 60cm x 80cm and is an acrylic painting on canvas with a satin varnish finish.

I was inspired by traditional still life works and was influenced mainly by Paul Cézanne's paintings and his use of compositions and subject matter. I also took inspiration from Emma Fuss's and Jessica Brilli's use of colour and the rule of thirds.

The chosen subject matter has much personal meaning. The roses were sourced from my garden and arranged with help from my mum. As mum's favourite flower, we have over 75 rose plants, colours ranging from white, pink, yellow, red, and orange. The large white vase is my favourite, so I really wanted to incorporate it into my painting, and it paired perfectly with the flowers. The terracotta-coloured vase is again one of my favourite vases and its purpose is to hold my larger brushes. I added it as it would complement the rest of the image and I felt that the arrangement needed a third object. The smaller vase in the front was made by me using polymer clay. I love its imperfections with rough edges and dents, made it for the purpose to hold my smaller brushes. The brushes symbolize my love for art and creativity.

I wanted my painting to be a modern take on traditional still life, with the composition, flowers and use of space align with traditional still life paintings, whereas the brushes and use of acrylic instead of oil is contemporary.

I used both flat and filbert brushes in different sizes for the larger sections of the painting, such as the background, cloth, and majority of the vases, whilst smaller round brushes were used for the detailed parts, like the roses and brushes. I used a range of acrylic paints and finished with a satin varnish spray.

After using the projector for sketching onto the canvas, I focused on painting in sections. I started with the cloth, blocking the highlights and shadows, then adding layers, refining and blending. The same process was used with the background. I proceeded to paint the smaller vase, then its brushes, and the bigger brushes, then the terracotta vase. I left the detailed parts for last, the white vase, the leaves, then finally the roses.

I've employed so many new processes and techniques with this painting. Firstly, using a projector to project my reference image onto the canvas produced an accurate sketch with the correct proportions, proving an effective method that I will use again. This artwork was the first time I've painted in such detail, particularly painting the roses and though it was time-consuming, this painting was a success, accurately communicating the subject matter. I have also learnt and applied the rule of thirds and the use of arranging elements in a triangle shape to create a pleasing image. I have taken this directly from Paul Cézanne's works where he applies both. Previously I hadn't painted to this scale, usually keeping to an A3 size or smaller. but now that I've painted at this 60cm x 80cm size, I have learnt that the larger canvas allows for a more detailed painting.

I am extremely pleased with the outcome of my painting as I feel it meets the criteria of a visually pleasing, traditionally-inspired, contemporary still life.