

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO WATERCOLOR FLOWER PAINTING



**From the
LULU BLUE STUDIO**



Welcome To The Lulu Blue Studio!

Hello my friend, I am so happy to find you here! I am honored to be your watercolor painting tutor, whether you are a beginner or you have already grabbed your brushes and are looking to improve your skills.

Supplies - In this guide I will give you a deep-dive into all the things you need to know about watercolor painting, starting with the supplies I recommend you to try. These are fundamental to obtain good results, even if you are a beginner!

Techniques - I will also take a moment to explain to you the two most important watercolor techniques, wet-on-wet and wet-on-dry. These are the essence of watercolor painting and the reason why, when you master them, you can obtain compositions that are stunning.

Color Values - I will also guide you in understanding color values - not only what they are, but specifically how to use them in watercolor painting.

Painting Flowers - If you are here, you probably know the subjects that I love painting in watercolor the most are flowers. I love flowers, in all of their shapes and colors! They instill in me a sense of beauty that no other subjects can do. And

painting flowers in watercolor helps me to reach that delicacy and grace that I love very much. Most likely, you love painting flowers too!

For this reason, I will also guide you through the path of understanding how to paint 3 types of foundational flowers in watercolor.

My goal is for you to understand the basics of watercolor painting and how to paint basic flower shapes that you can reproduce in your own loose style floral compositions.

Other Resources....

But, my guidance does not stop here! I have plenty of other subjects and topics I want to share with you!

My [Lulu Blue Studio YouTube Channel](#) is also a great resource for you to learn how to paint flowers and flower compositions in a loose style. Here, you can find tutorials and other videos where I talk about processes, supplies, and things I recommend doing when painting. I also listen to the voice of my community, and I often create videos where I answer questions that friends like you ask me. So, don't forget to check out my channel, and subscribe if you have not done so already!

The [Lulu Blue Studio website](#) is a place where you can find blog posts where I share my thoughts and ideas on watercolor painting. Beside these topics, I also share my experience as a business owner and ways you can earn money if you are an artist. So, if you also would like

to make some money as an artist, the website is the perfect place to explore.

Additionally, I keep all of my fellow watercolor artists updated on everything that is happening at the Lulu Blue Studio through my [newsletter](#). I know you already subscribed to it, so a BIG THANK YOU from my heart! Stay tuned for all the latest news!

Social Media - I engage frequently with my community through social media. I have an Instagram account (you can find me at [Lulu Blue Studio](#)) where I share reels, posts, and stories about my watercolor journey. Here, I also listen to the voices of fellow artists and I answer their questions.

I have a [Facebook page](#), too! So, don't be shy, come and say hello to me!

Last but not least, on my [Lulu Blue Studio Pinterest](#) page, I collect and share trendy ideas and mood boards that can help stir your creativity. So, if you feel the need for some fresh inspiration, check out my Pinterest page and let your creativity flow!

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About Me

Hey fellow artist, I am Luisa!

I am a watercolor artist born and raised in Italy and then I moved to Germany to be a professional Colorist in the chemical and fashion industries. Color has always been my passion, and I've been able to transform a profession as a chemist into my dream job as a watercolor artist.

I love teaching and engaging with the community of other watercolor artists. My voice speaks the loudest when I paint loose style flowers, as I feel color, beauty, delicacy, and grace all come together through intuitive painting.

I aim to inspire as many people as possible out there, not only fellow artists, but also people who just love to watch watercolor flowers being created.

I believe that watercolor flower compositions don't have to be perfect to evoke appeal in the eyes of the observer, and that's why my approach to create loose style flowers is very intuitive.

Intuitive watercolor floral painting is accessible to everyone! Are you ready to start YOUR journey?

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Supplies

In this guide, I will give you all of my top recommendations for essential watercolor painting supplies.

I believe that working with high quality supplies is already part of the success of a good watercolor piece.

I started my own watercolor journey with cheaper supplies and I noticed a huge difference in the quality of the outcome once I switched to these supplies I list down below.

All of the supplies are picked based on my own experience and considering that I love painting flowers the most.

So, let's start with brushes.

Brushes



There are many types of brushes and it can be quite overwhelming to understand which ones to buy first.

If I have to pick the 3 brushes I would only buy, these would be my choices:

Round Brush - Princeton Heritage 4050

I love this brush because it allows me to create fine and precise strokes with the tip of the brush, but also larger strokes with the belly.

This is a synthetic brush with a great capacity to hold color.

Once you lay the brush on the paper, the color is placed smoothly and the brush has a good ability to snap back to its original shape.

I suggest buying a small size round brush and a large size one. My preferred sizes are 6 and 12.

I love using this brush in particular to create leaves in my flower compositions.

For example, I would create large leaves with a round brush in size 12 and I would add smaller details and contrasting brush strokes with the size 6.

The fine tip of the size 6 allows me to create precise centers of the flowers I paint as well.

[Round Brush - Princeton Heritage 4050 Size 6](#)

[Round Brush - Princeton Heritage 4050 Size 12](#)

Filbert Brush - Pro Arte Prolene Plus 009

The filbert is a flat brush with the hair rounded into an oval.

This is by far my most favorite brush to use when painting flowers. I find this brush easiest to use to paint the petals and to give them different orientations.

I painted for a long time with a filbert brush from the Da Vinci brand ([Brush FIT Synthetics Filbert Brush](#)) which is inexpensive and has great usability.

But, if I had to pick my current favorite filbert brush, it would definitely be the [Pro Arte Prolene Plus 009](#). I recommend it in size 8 and 10 if you like to paint big floral pieces, similar to mine.

TIP: If you paint on small pieces of paper or if you love to add smaller floral details on your watercolors, I recommend the [Princeton Select Filbert](#). I use it in size 8 for smaller floral pieces.

Mop Brush - Paul Rubens Mop Brush

Mop brushes have 2 main characteristics: they have big bellies and they hold a lot of water. They are usually made out of squirrel hair and they are a bit more difficult to control compared to round brushes.

I think they are fun brushes to try to use, and I love to create very loose style leaves with these ones.

In [this tutorial](#), for example, I use the mop brush to create all the leaves around the Rhododendron flowers. So check out this video to see the mop brush in action!

The [Paul Rubens mop brush](#) is a great investment for your watercolor collection. I would recommend size 4.

So these 3 types of brushes (round, filbert, and mop) are the ones that I would recommend you trying if you are a beginner watercolor artist.

You would get a feeling of what you can achieve with these brushes and, in the meanwhile, you can also develop your own style, based on how you like painting the most.

Throughout my painting journey, I have been testing and using many other brushes, too. I have a complete list of all the brushes I use at the Lulu Blue Studio on my website, under the [Resources page](#).

I still use all of the brushes mentioned on the Resources page, depending on what I am painting and what I want to achieve,

but I recommend the ones on this list if you are just starting out!

Watercolors



Now let's talk about what everyone thinks of when looking at a painting: watercolor paint!

Watercolor paints are a main ingredient of your painting recipes, and as for the brushes (and the paper, too, we will see!), its quality will have an impact on the outcome of your painting.

There are different types of watercolors out in the market, and my recommendations here come from my experience.

Student VS. Professional

Based on the budget and what you can afford, I would recommend you to buy watercolor paints in tubes.

The best quality is achieved with the professional watercolor paints, but if they are too expensive for you, just invest in the student-level watercolor paints.

Watercolor paint is basically a mixture of pigment with some binding agents and fillers. Based on the type of these pigments, watercolor paints can be of higher quality (and therefore more expensive, such as the Professional watercolor paints) or of lower quality and therefore less expensive, such as the student-level ones.

Tubes VS. Pans

I suggest watercolor in tubes because you can choose how to create your color palette. You can just buy a few tubes to start with and add colors as you go.

You could also buy watercolor paints in pans (the quality of the pigments does not change between tubes and pans, if the category professional/student is the same), too. I love using pan sets, especially when I travel.

In my studio, I prefer to work with tubes as I feel I have more freedom and space on my color palette to mix and match.

I have the feeling that paints in pan sets are too close and sometimes it's a bit messy when using big brushes.

Brands

There are so many brands of watercolor paints out there!

Based on my experience, two great brands are [Winsor & Newton](#) and [Schmincke Horadam](#).

When I started my own watercolor journey, I bought tubes from [Winsor & Newton](#), the [Cotman series](#), where the

load of pigment is reduced compared to their professional-level.

As my love for watercolor grew, I decided to invest into the professional-level of these paints, but I found them hard to find in the local stores in Germany (and I don't want to rely only on Amazon deliveries!).

So, a few months into the journey, I started to test other brands and the one I fell in love with is [Schmincke Horadam](#).

These watercolor paints cover the whole spectrum of colors and the vibrancy is stunning.

Also, their color fastness (resistance of a color to change) is as good as the Winsor & Newton professional watercolor paints, so for now Schmincke Horadam are the colors I keep using in the studio and I would fully recommend.

Travel set



If you love painting also when traveling, keep in mind that there are travel sets available from all brands.

The paints are in small pans and usually these sets are light and comfortable to keep in your bag.

I used my Winsor & Newton Professional travel set when I traveled to Paris.

I found a cozy and lovely spot to paint in the Luxembourg Gardens and there I let my creativity wander.

You can check out [this video](#) to see what I painted en plein air and why I am in love with Paris!

I have a list of all the watercolor paints I currently use on my website. Check out the [Resources](#) page to find out all of the colors on my palette at the Lulu Blue Studio!

Paper



Choosing the right watercolor paper depends, as it does also for the brushes and the paints, on what YOU want to achieve.

There are many types of paper suitable for watercolor painting, and in this section I talk about which type of paper I love using the most.

Paper is probably the most important aspect to consider when painting in watercolor.

Based on its quality, you can obtain beautiful or awful color blends (that is the magic of watercolor, and I think the reason why many of us are attracted to this medium).

So, picking the right paper is very important.

I remember that in my early days of watercolor painting, I bought cheap paper. When I switched to a higher quality one, I immediately noticed an improvement in my artwork.

Texture of paper

There are mainly 3 types of watercolor paper in the market:

1. Cold-pressed
2. Hot-pressed
3. Rough

Cold-pressed paper is my preferred choice. Basically, its surface is quite smooth, but with a fine texture that allows water and pigments to stay put where you place them.

Hot-pressed paper has a much smoother surface compared to cold-pressed paper. For this reason, when working with a lot of water, you might find this type of paper a bit hard to work with, since water and pigment may “travel” more than you want to.

Rough paper is the most textured paper on the market. Due to its rough surface, you might need to use more water to obtain a result that looks smooth, and this might not be what you want in the beginning.

TIP: If you are just starting out, I would recommend cold-pressed watercolor paper, 100% in cotton.

Yes, 100% cotton paper is the one that will give you the most desirable results!

Color of the paper

Usually the color of the paper is advertised as bright white, white, or cream.

I have tried all of these papers and there isn't one that I would not recommend.

It basically depends on the final effect you want to achieve.

Usually, bright white papers help brighten the watercolor pigments, but I have to say I really like the effect on creamy papers too.

Size of the paper

Watercolor paper can be bought in blocks, loose sheets, pads, and in some

shops, they can also cut the paper from their rolls.

My preferred choice is to use blocks, because they offer me a good size for what I want to paint and they are easily accessible.

Also, blocks are glued on all the sides and this prevents the paper from warping when painting.

Sometimes, when I want to paint smaller floral pieces, I may even cut the paper in half.

When I do so, I then tape the paper to the desk to avoid any movement.

This said, there are 2 brands of papers that I like using the most:

- [Saunders Waterford](#)
- [Arches](#)

So, generally, these are my recommendations for watercolor supplies.

Overall, if you cannot afford the professional level supplies, please go ahead and buy brushes, paints, papers you can afford.

The most important thing is that you can express yourself through watercolor painting in any way possible, so don't let the budget stop you in your watercolor journey.

Watercolor Techniques

So, now that we have covered all the supplies we need, let's talk about techniques.

Wet-on-Wet (W-O-W)

Wet-on-wet is a watercolor technique where you use your brush with water and paint (or just water) to touch another area on your paper that has a wet brush stroke.

When you use this technique, part of the wet pigment layed on the page tends to blend with the wet brush stroke you place next to it.

The effects can be stunning, but it takes time to master this technique.



Don't worry, in all of my YouTube tutorials, I explain how to improve this technique and how to play with it.

Additionally, in the video [Basic Watercolor Techniques for Beginners - Wet-on-Wet Explained](#), I show you how to paint beautiful roses and how to use the wet-on-wet technique to add beautiful blending effects.

I love using the wet-on-wet technique especially when creating petals of the flowers.

The process of creating more concentrated petals, laying next to them brush strokes of only water, and seeing the blend effect, is what I like the most about watercolor painting.

Wet-on-Dry (W-O-D)



The other watercolor technique you need to know is wet-on-dry. As the name says, in this technique, we add brush strokes of wet paint on a layer that has already completely dried.

This is a watercolor technique I use very often on flower compositions to create layers and add depth and contrasting strokes.

I use the wet-on-dry technique both on petals and leaves of my compositions, depending on the effect I want to achieve.

In the video [Basic Watercolor Techniques for Beginners - Wet-on-Dry Explained](#), I show you how to practice this technique on roses.

Also, I made a fun experiment and compared the same floral composition in the video [A Reflection on Watercolor Loose Flowers Style - Best With or Without Layers?](#), with and without layers (which means comparing the results using only wet-on-wet, or adding also further layers through the wet-on-dry technique).

Properly using the wet-on-wet and the wet-on-dry techniques will allow you to achieve any result you can imagine.

Remember that it takes time, patience, and practice to see any progress.

So, don't be discouraged if your first results are not what you expect.

Color Values

At this point, I cannot avoid spending a few words on color values. By only understanding color values, you will be able to achieve the best results, in

combination with wet-on-wet and wet-on-dry.

Color values are basically the lightness or darkness of a color.

Since, in watercolor, we don't usually use white paints, we are able to achieve lighter or darker colors (read, values) through the amount of water we use.

When we use, for example, a red pigment with a little amount of water, we achieve the darkest value of that red color.

The more water we add and the less pigment we have on the brush.

Therefore, we obtain lighter color values of this red color.



Color values are fundamental to create depth in your compositions, whether they are floral pieces or landscapes.

In the video [Practice Color Values in Watercolor Loose Style Florals](#), I explain what color values are and I also put to

practice the theory by painting a floral piece using just one type of red color.

These are some of the floral compositions you can obtain playing with the W-O-W and the W-O-D techniques, together with using different color values.



Let's Paint Flowers!

So, now that we have spoken about supplies and we understand the basic techniques, let's start painting, shall we?!

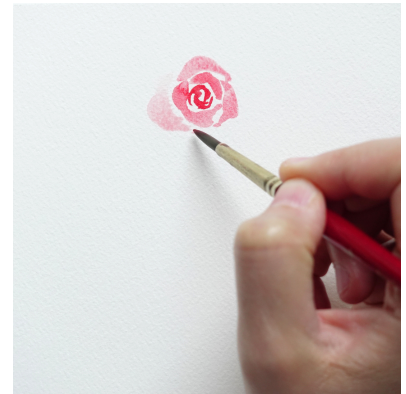
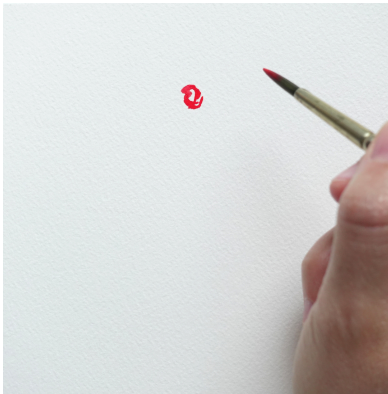
In the next few pages, I will guide you through the process of painting a rose, a peony, and some filling flowers.

These are basic flowers that you can add to your floral compositions and you can combine with other flowers you like.

My aim here is to show you the basic brush strokes I use to paint these flowers.

I will use the W-O-W and W-O-D techniques, and I will play with the color values to show you how to create depth and movement.

ROSE - Round brush Princeton Heritage, size 6. Paint: Schmincke Horadam Scarlet Red, Sap Green.



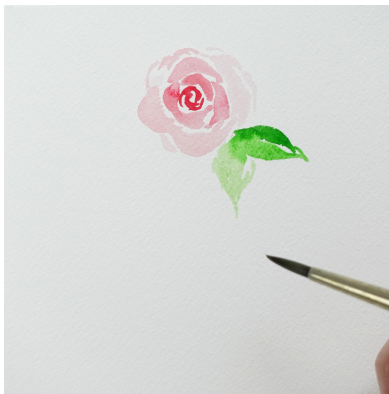
1. Start by creating small C shapes with the tip of your brush in a dark value of red. Leave some white space between the Cs.
2. Keep creating C shapes in larger sizes, using the belly of your brush. Remove some pigment in the cup of water to paint with different color values.
3. Keep removing pigment to work with lighter color values, use the belly of the brush to create larger petals.



4. Create as many petals as you like. Remember to keep some white space between them. Also, not all the petals need to have the same shape and size. Create a variation of petals.

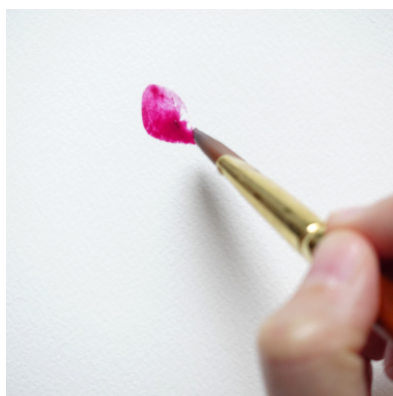
5. Add a leaf by pressing the tip and then the belly of the brush on the paper. Release the tip of the brush. Half of the leaf is created.

6. Create the second half of the leaf with the same movement (press and release the pressure of the brush onto paper). Remove part of the pigment in water to paint with a different color value.

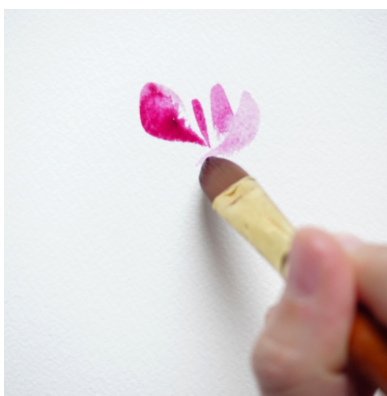


7. If you touch the first leaf with a watery brush that is concentrated in pigment, you will have some pigment blending in the second leaf. This is the wet-on-wet technique.

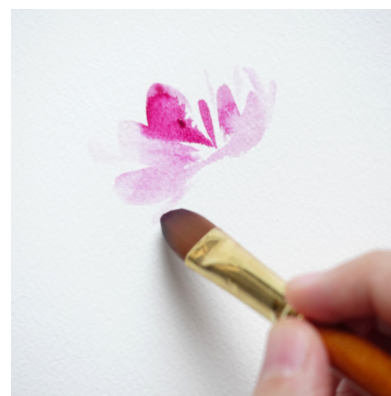
PEONY - Filbert brush Pro Arte Prolene Plus 009, size 8. Paint: Schmincke Horadam Quinacridone Magenta, Sap Green, Cobalt Green Dark



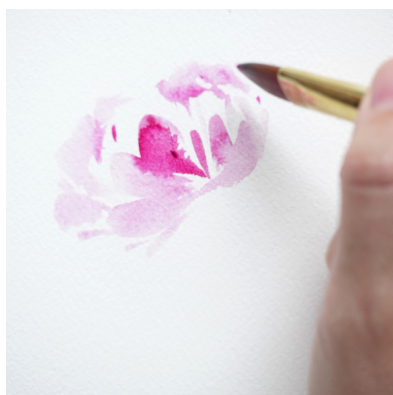
1. Create the first petal with a very concentrated amount of pigment on your brush. Use a slanted hold of the brush and press the tip and the belly of the brush on the paper.



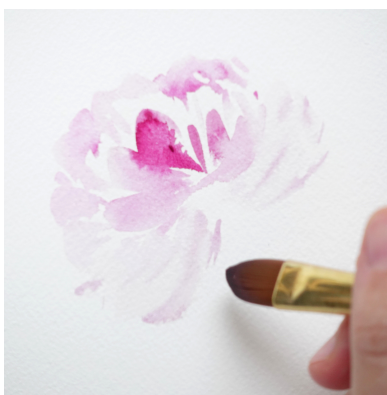
2. Remove pigment in water and keep adding petals next to the main one.



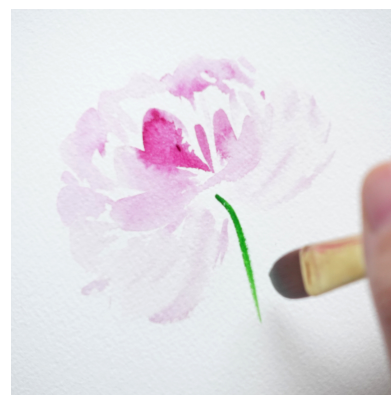
3. Add petals, changing color values every time. Petals can have different sizes, use the belly and the side of the brush to obtain different ones.



4. Add petals in the back of the flower, using mainly the tip of the brush.



5. Add more petals in the foreground, always changing the color values and using the belly of the brush for bigger petals. For finer petals, use the side of the brush.



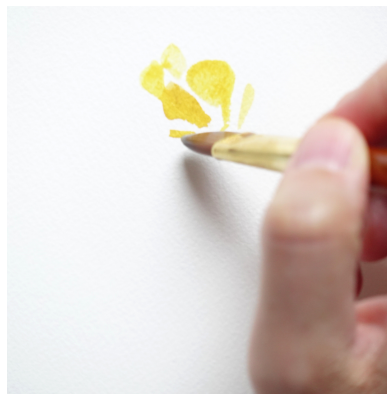
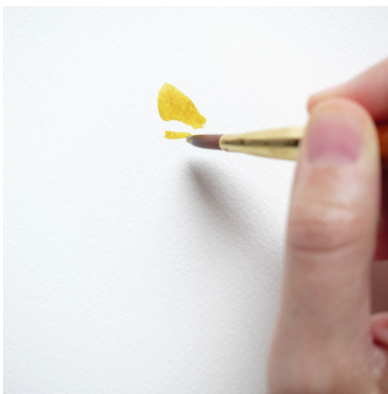
6. With the tip of the brush, create the stem with a light pressure on paper.



7. Create the leaf using the side of the brush, by adding pressure and releasing the pressure.

8. Place some contrast on the leaf by adding some darker green, through the wet-on-wet technique.

FILLING FLOWER - *Filbert brush Pro Arte Prolene Plus 009, size 8. Paint: Schmincke Horadam Lemon Yellow, Yellow Ochre, Sap Green, Cobalt Green Dark*



1. Start creating a few petals with a very concentrated pigment. Use the belly of the brush and the side of the brush to obtain different sizes of petals. Keep some white space between brush strokes.

2. Keep adding petals with a different color value, obtained by removing part of the pigment in water.

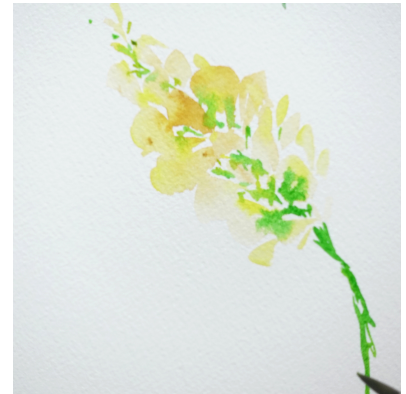
3. Work on the shape of the filling flower, adding as many petals as you wish. Remember to keep white space between most of the petals.



4. To give contrast and movement to the flower, use the wet-on-wet technique to add a few brush strokes in a different color (here in Lemon Yellow).



5. With a round brush, let's start to add the center of the flower!



6. Use some green paint and add the stem between the petals you have created. If the yellow paint is still wet, the green will bleed into it. If you don't like this effect, wait for the yellow paint to be completely dry.

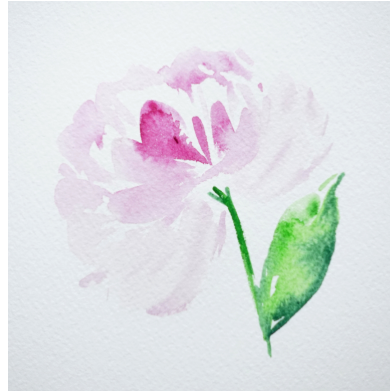


7. Add a few contrasting strokes on the stem with a darker green. Use the tip of the brush to obtain a subtle effect.

And here we have our 3 flowers! You can create entire flower compositions with these 3 flowers, changing their colors, sizes, perspectives, and shapes!



Rose



Peony



Filling Flower

If you want to practice how to paint more flowers in a loose style, check out my mini-series on YouTube called the [20 Day Flower Creation Journey](#). Here, I will show you how to paint 20 different flowers, step-by-step! These tutorials are not only great in themselves, but they also support you in discovering new flowers to paint.

I hope this watercolor guide has cleared some of the doubts you had and has inspired you to embrace your watercolor journey!

I would be honored to continue to be your watercolor teacher!

Check out my [YouTube Channel](#) for new tutorials every week, and come back to the [Lulu Blue Studio website](#) for fresh content, not only on watercolor painting, but also on business topics, life as an artist, and many other topics that can inspire your own journey.

See you then! Happy painting!

Luisa