

February Instructions
Willem van Aelst Study
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Lesson 2 Grisaille

[Full Length Video Lesson Link- February Lesson 2- Grisaille](#)

February Lesson Video in 4- 30 minute parts

[Lesson Link Video Part 1 of 4](#)

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With this lesson we will start the first grisaille of the painting. We will be using 2 techniques to start the painting. 1 will be mass tone painting and 1 will be grisaille.

Grisaille

Grisaille pronounced Grizz-eye is used as the “first painting” or under painting by an artist for many reasons.

1. It establishes harmony for the painting by giving all objects in the painting a common color.
2. Establishes the first chiaroscuro of the painting allowing the artist to adjust the light and dark of the painting until the desired effect is achieved.
3. The use of light under painting allows lower quality pigments to “show-up” better on the piece. Light colors underneath reflect more light through the pain layers which allow low quality pigments to actually look brighter in a painting. The pigments in all cases however should be semi-transparent or transparent.
4. When using the under painting to establish form, the artist does not have to mix as many colors together which helps keep the glazing and washing techniques done in later layer more pure, thus increasing the intensity range of colors. For example, when you add black to Ultramarine Blue to darken it you also opaque it a lower the reflective qualities of the Ultramarine Blue. If you glaze Ultramarine Blue over a dark area, the blue will only tone slightly but because the dark color and Ultramarine don’t mix, the color stays transparent and the object will appear to have more depth. In another example if I add white to a yellow, the yellow will lighten but it will also reduce it intensity because the addition of white to any color will lighten but also tone. When an artist glazes the yellow over a light area, the color lighten but does not reduce its intensity because the white is not mixed directly with the yellow. So, many artists through the Dutch mannerism period of art used grisaille techniques and glazes of colors so that the colors did not have to be mixed with white and black. In the 18th century with the invention of newer higher quality pigments the grisaille technique became less popular among artists.

5. Cost...In Dutch painting, the grisaille not only allowed the artist paint form, but also allowed the artist to “save” more expensive pigments for glazes and washes. Rare pigments were expensive and difficult to obtain. If an artist achieved the form and first dimension through the use of common greys, the later layers would use less colors and expensive pigments.
6. Warm grisaille. Later artists found that by varying the warm tones of the grisaille the artist had a greater control over temperature in later glazes of colors. The use of a warm grisaille color in the highlight area resulted in less glazing required to warm the grey (cool) grisaille.

We will be working on the grisaille technique for the next few lessons. The grisaille under painting must be as accurate as possible however, we will not be adding this accuracy for several months. You want the flowers to have life and interest so to accomplish this, the flowers will be painted very “casual” the first few months then slowly defined and refined as we progress though the lessons. For the forward flowers to have the greatest impact on the painting, their edges and structure must not compete with flowers in the back of the design. Today, many artists use the term lost and found edges to describe bringing objects or elements forward or making them recede in a painting. Found edges or detail brings an element forward in a composition. Lost edges or “fuzzy areas recede an element or object. In this painting we will be starting all objects “fuzzy”, and then making them come forward by defining certain areas.

Mass Tone

We will also be using a technique called mass tone. Mass tone is the application of tones to a large area of a painting without painting detail. You paint the object in mass and not specific areas. For example, an apple and a rose are both round objects. To paint the apple, you would base with a value, shadow the sides and highlight the center. This will make the apple look round. To paint a rose using the mass tone technique, you will do the same thing. Base with middle value then put in the general light and shadow side of the object. This is all done without the petals. Once the general shape and “tone” of the rose is in place, we will then begin to add movement to the petals and the general shape of the petals.

To start we will find the general value of the “mass” of each object. We will then use value to add a general form or roundness to the object and after that, slowly refine it, adding petals and more precise light and dark values.

Supplies Needed

- Brushes- You can use old brushes for this step.
 - 4, 6, 8 Filberts
 - 4 and 6 Shaders or long flats, no chisel blenders or shorts.
 - 3 round for small areas if desired or use the chisel of brush.
- Paint- Grisaille Technique- JansenArt Traditions
 - Titanium White
 - Carbon Black

- Burnt Umber
- Medium Beige
- Medium White
- Light Value Grey
- Medium Value Grey
- Dark Value Grey
- Raw Umber

Suggested Technique

Step 1- Pattern

The pattern for this painting is very complicated. For this lesson I will apply the pattern in a slow methodical manner picking out the most forward and interesting objects first, painting them in place, then transferring the next layers of the painting. If you are comfortable with the pattern, you may transfer all the basic lines of the objects the first time. If the pattern seems a little confusing, just follow along with the video as we apply each layer working one flower at a time.

The first part of the video shows 6 elements that I chose to paint first. They are the top Hollyhock, left hollyhock, large center leaf, center marigold, large right rose and left chrysanthemum. Please transfer those for the first step.

Step 2- First Grisaille



For this first basing in, we do not want any texture in the paint. Use lots of water. The grisaille will dry about 1 value darker. Keep this in mind as you base the flowers.

Our background is a value 4. White which we will be using as a highlight is a value 10. We want to establish light in the top and through the middle of the design. We also need to leave some value 10 for final highlights. It is a good idea to start with the lightest flower which will be the top hollyhock and establish about a value 8 highlight. This will leave us some room for value 10 highlights later.

To start the top hollyhock, mix the warm Medium White with a touch of Titanium white to lighten to a value 8. Mix with lots of water and wash in the shape. Let the colors puddle on which will add interest later. I used a # 8 filbert for this technique. See the video.

Wash in the second Hollyhock with Medium White about a value 7. This is just the base, it does not need to be perfect at this time. Wash in the shapes and let the color puddle a little.

Add a little Medium Beige to the Medium White and wash in the first Chrysanthemum. Make this color a little darker than the 7 down to about a value 6. Again, you do not need to be perfect.

Base the rose in with the same color as you used for the Chrysanthemum. It could even be just a little darker with a touch more Medium Beige. Swirl a little in for the center throat of the rose.

Add a touch of Dark Grey Value 3 to this color which will make about a value 4. The grey will also cool the color down. Use this color to wash in the Marigold and the center leaf. They will not remain this color but this will help us find the shapes.

Dry well.

Step 3- Adding a Light Grisaille

Using the same colors as you did to wash the shapes in, repeat the light sides of the flowers. See photos for place. This color will look like a highlight because more of the



background has been blocked off allowing the light to show up more.

Dry well.

Step 4- Additional Elements

Trace on the additional parts of the design as shown in the step photo or on the video.

I started the back top Hollyhock with a Medium Grey Value 6 + a touch of Medium Beige. The value needs to be a little darker than the left side of the first Hollyhock we painted. As you wash it in you want it to be a little darker. The values will dry about 1 darker so if you are

a little darker it will dry even darker still. Wash in then a little more in the center area for roundness.

For the next Hollyhocks on the left side, you need to start darker than a 7 which we based in so start near a 6 or 5. Make from warm and cool colors. Lighten or make the color a little heavier in the middle areas.

For the second Chrysanthemum we want to use a Medium Beige + touch Dark Grey Value 3. You want a value around 4 to 5. If it looks about the same as the first Chrysanthemum, then it will dry darker and you will have the correct color.

For the second Marigold, we need to increase the dark and cool. Mix Dark Grey Value 3 + touch Medium Beige. You want a darker cooler color.

Add additional lights to the second Mum if needed and any area to bring forward.

Step 5- Additional Leaves

Start the first leaf under the second mum. Use a value made from Medium Beige and Dark Grey Value 3, make about a value 4. Use this color for the leaves under the rose. This is just a base color we will refine the value later. You want this a little darker. If you look at the leaves they are in a progression for top to bottom. Add more Dark Value 3 Grey as you base in the other leaves.

Dry well. Mix Medium Beige and Medium Grey Value 6 about 1 to 1. This will make a value 5 medium temperature. Use this on the leaves we just painted to add a little movement. This will all glaze down later to the final position.



Step 6- Container, Mouse

Using Dark Grey Value 6 + touch Medium Beige base the container and the mouse. For the mouse I added just a touch more grey. You really don't have to do the mouse at this point. We really need to do the first hounding to push the background back. I like the mouse so I added him now. Artist choice. If you want to wait until the first hounding is done, that will work also.

Dry. Use the same color + touch more Medium Beige to lighten the center through the container. This does not need to be perfect, all this will cover up. This step just helps us see the design.

Step 7- Additional Center and Background Objects

Trace on a few smaller leaves and Marigold bud on, add the small crossing leaf to the bottom leaves we did in step 5. Base this leaf a little lighter than you did the value 4 leaves in step 5. You can also trace on the rose buds, you do not need their sepals, just a mass to show where they are. You can also transfer the center stem to the Hollyhocks. Transfer the top area back Hollyhock.

Mix Medium Beige + value 3 Dark Grey and base in the objects in the center. Lighten just a few areas to help separate the objects. Their values are not important right now, just as long as they show up on the background and they are not as light as the object we have put in so far.

Step 8- Hollyhock buds on top and left.

Transfer the Hollyhock buds on the top and the left side. Starting with buds on top, start with about value 5 grey made from Medium Grey Value 6 and Medium Beige. Base in the first one. Add Value 3 Dark Grey as you go up through the smaller buds darkening them as you go up. The exact value is not important at this time.

Repeat this for the Hollyhock buds on the left side.

Step 9- Mass Tone Shadow



Using lots of water and your Value 3 Dark Grey, wash in some grey shadow areas around the design to help separate the elements. I like to use the large $\frac{3}{4}$ inch oval watercolor brush because it puts on a gentle wash without many brush marks.

Dry the piece well. If you think your center areas is a little too light because the value 4 or 5 look too dark, you can darken with some Raw Umber + Burnt Umber before the next lesson. Cover up and save your paint. You are ready for lesson 3.