Design Course

Acrylic Painting

Rendering Style for Illustration

by
Prof. Phani Tetali and Samidha Gunjal
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:
http://www.dsource.in/course/acrylic-painting

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Introduction

Acrylic colors are basically polymer based paints that came in market as house paints, which later caught attention of painters in 1950s. This was around the time when artists had just begun exploring movements and forms such as pop art, abstract expressionism and photorealism.

Given its advantages and potentialities, there was a new wave of creativity and possibility with regards to acrylic paints in the modern art world. The strong influence of this medium can still be seen on today's trends and art forms.

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History

From the very beginning, man always had urged to express himself through different modes of expressions. And, Painting is one of the most artistic modes to express creativity. The pre historic man started painting approximately 40,000 years ago and captured his creative vision in the form of cave paintings. The meanings and purpose of some of those paintings are still unknown. These are some cave paintings from the ancient world portraying animals, beasts, hand impressions and some abstract patterns.

Bhimbetka Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka,
_Rock paintings, Stone Age, India*

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The ancient artwork found inside 11 caves
in Northwestern Spain*

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Bison, in the great hall of policromes,
Cave of Altamira, Spain*

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Cueva de las Manos (Spanish for Cave of the Hands) in SantaCruz province, in Argentina, c.550 BC*

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But, acrylic paintings have a very brief history compared to other visual art mediums like watercolor and oil because it evolved in the late 1940s. Before that artist mainly used watercolors, oil paints, fresco, tempura colors for realistic paintings.

An acrylic paint was a new medium, which was easy to use, quick drying, bold and could be transparent or opaque depending on the amount of water or oil that was used for dilution. It was easy to mix, provided different textures and consistencies when mixed with sand, water and other elements in the paint. It became an ideal medium for bold art that sought hard-edged flat images and distinct use of line.

Acrylic paints. *Reff- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_painting

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Painters - Acrylic Paintings

When acrylic painting came in picture many contemporary artists chose acrylic for experimentation and innovation.

Here are some famous artists and their artworks from 20th century who initially experimented with the acrylic colors.

'Campbell Soup Can'
_by Andy Warhol.For More information visit
https://www.artsy.net/artist/andy-warhol

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Electric Chair, Published Edition
__by Andy Warhol.

Michael Jackson
__ by Andy Warhol.

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Turquoise Marilyn
__ by Andy Warhol.

'Elegy to the Spanish Republic 110'
__ by Robert Motherwell.

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Acrylic on canvas
__ by Larry Poons.

'Could You Love me One More Time'_acrylic on canvas
__ by Larry

Canyon
__ by Helen Frankenthaler.

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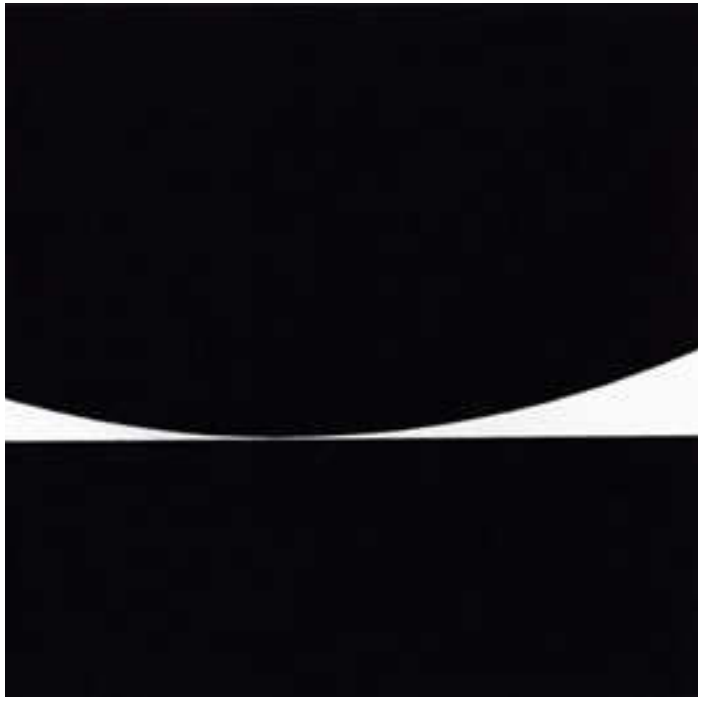
Into the West, 1977, acrylic on canvas
__ by Helen Frankenthaler.



'Kiss' Acrylic on Linen
__ by Bridge Riley (1961).

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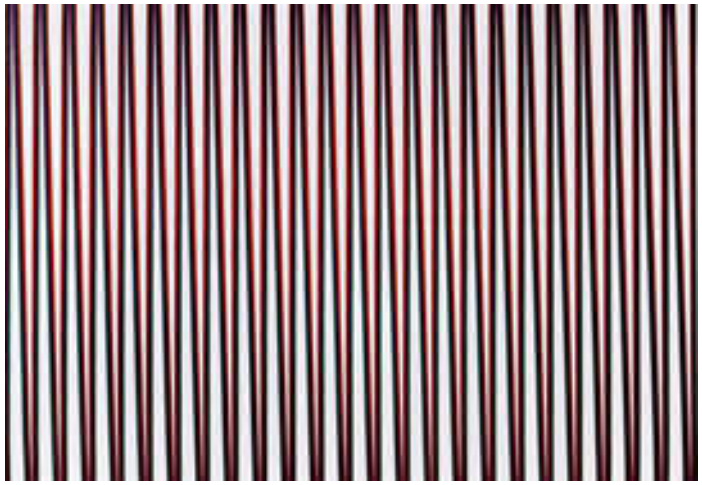

'Orient 4' Acrylic on Canvas
__ by Bridge Riley (1970).

'Two deck chairs' acrylic on canvas
__ by David Hockney (1972).

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Painting Mediums

To start with painting, introduction to different types of mediums and tools is a necessary thing. There are many different mediums used by artists all over the world like, oil, acrylic, watercolor, ink, fresco, gouache, enamel and many more. Sometimes artist prefer using only one of these or may mix the mediums, totally depending on their choice, expertise and style. Each painting medium has its own characteristics and methods to achieve the desired effect.

For novice painters, using acrylic paint is comparatively easier because the medium is flexible and durable. Acrylic paints are fast drying paints, which are easily available at any stationary store near you. These are easy to use water-soluble colors and become water-resistant when dry. Depending upon how much color is diluted in water or oil; a finished acrylic painting can resemble a watercolor or oil painting, or have its own unique characteristic. The quick drying nature of the acrylic colors makes it is easy to work with in terms of storage, especially if you are working on a canvas as you can just roll up the canvas without the fear of paint being cracked or damaged.

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Tools and Materials

Painting is a process of applying paints on a surface with the help of different tools.

An acrylic paint can be applied on dry and wax free surfaces like vessels, clothes, walls, etc. For application of this paint many tools like, brushes, knives, spatulas can be used. There are many types of papers, canvases, and boards available in the market.

Below are some of the tools and materials used for painting:
- Paint colors
- Brushes
- Canvases
- Knives and Spatulas
- Mixing palette
- An Easel

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a. Paint Colors:
To start painting, you need few basic colors like titanium blue, black, ultramarine blue, crimson red, yellow ochre. With the combination of these hues, most other paint colors can be made easily.

Now a days there are many pre mixed colors readily available in the market.

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Acrylic paints come in several ranges from beginners to professionals and are available in bottles and tubes. At the beginner's level it is preferable to buy small quantities in bottle or tubes, each bottle or tube might cost around 20-200 rupees each. There is not much of a difference between bottled and tube colors.

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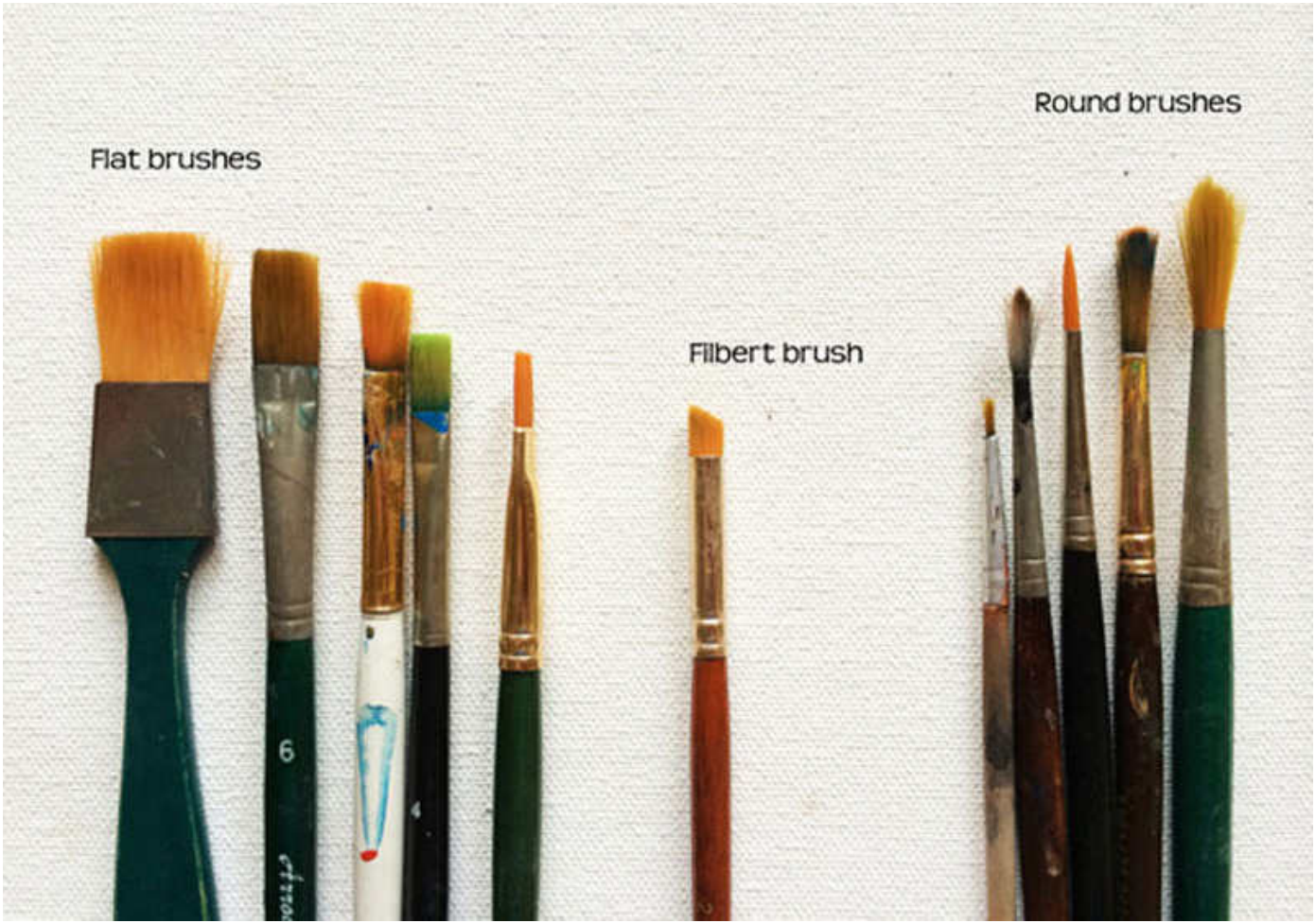
b. Brushes:

Choosing paintbrushes is a very important step in painting because it can totally change the look and feel of the painting, quality of strokes and texture. In the market there are many types of brushes available. They are mainly categorized into three types-rounded, flat and filbert brushes, depending upon the shape of the brush tip. Many different materials are used to make paintbrush bristles, the most common are synthetic and boar hair.



It is easier to use synthetic brushes in the beginning, as they are softer, finer, cheaper, and easy to clean. It is better to have different shaped and sized brushes depending on the painting requirement. For example 0 and 1 size round brushes are good for drawing fine outlines and detailing, where as flat brushes are useful in filling wider areas in a painting.

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c. Canvases:
To start painting you will need a surface to apply paint on. Acrylic paints can be used on just about any surface you like. They provide nice visible textures on canvas. Canvas is available in many shapes and sizes and forms like canvas rolls, pads, boards and frames. Canvas pads and boards are comparatively cheaper than framed canvas. These canvases are already treated and processed and can be directly used for painting. Paper is also an easily available material around us, but for durability, longevity and quality it is better to use canvas for acrylic paintings.

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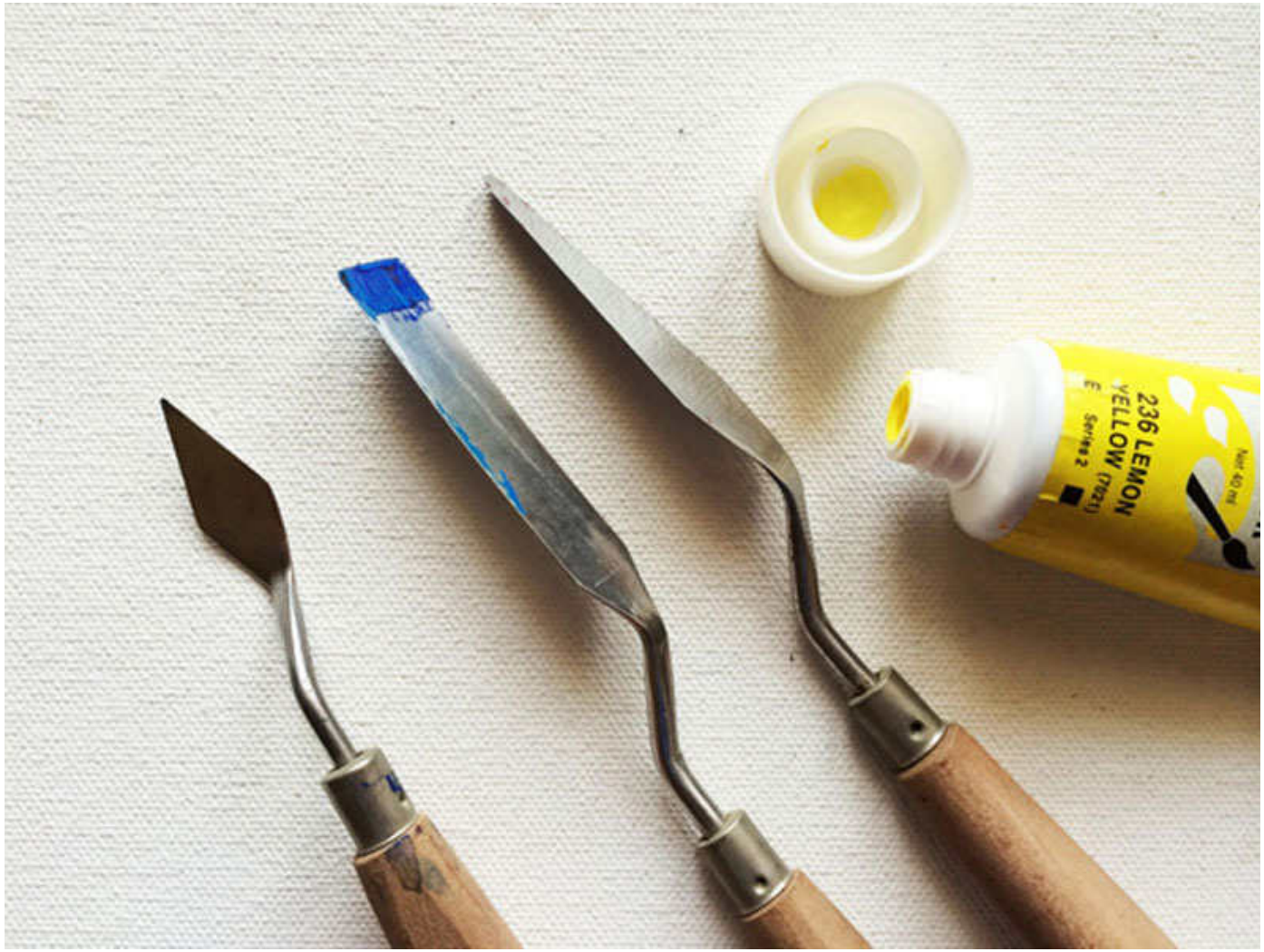
d. Knives and Spatulas:
Palette knives are made of very flexible steel blade with no sharpened or cutting edge and have a wooden / plastic handle. They are used to mix colors and mediums.



Spatulas are comparatively blunt and less flexible steel blades with no sharpened cutting edge and wooden / plastic handle. They are used instead of a brush to apply paint directly on painting surface like canvas. They are available in many shapes, sizes and styles that give different effects and textures.

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e. Mixing Palette:
While painting you will need something to mix paints on or to store them for future use. For this any plastic or wooden plate or any wide, flat and clean surface can be used as mixing palette.

f. An Easel:
An Easel is a wooden upright support stand specially made for mounting a canvas board while painting.

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Getting Started

Once you have all the required material and tools for painting, you need to find your spot and decide on your subject of painting.

Painting Station

Choosing Subject

Decide Colors

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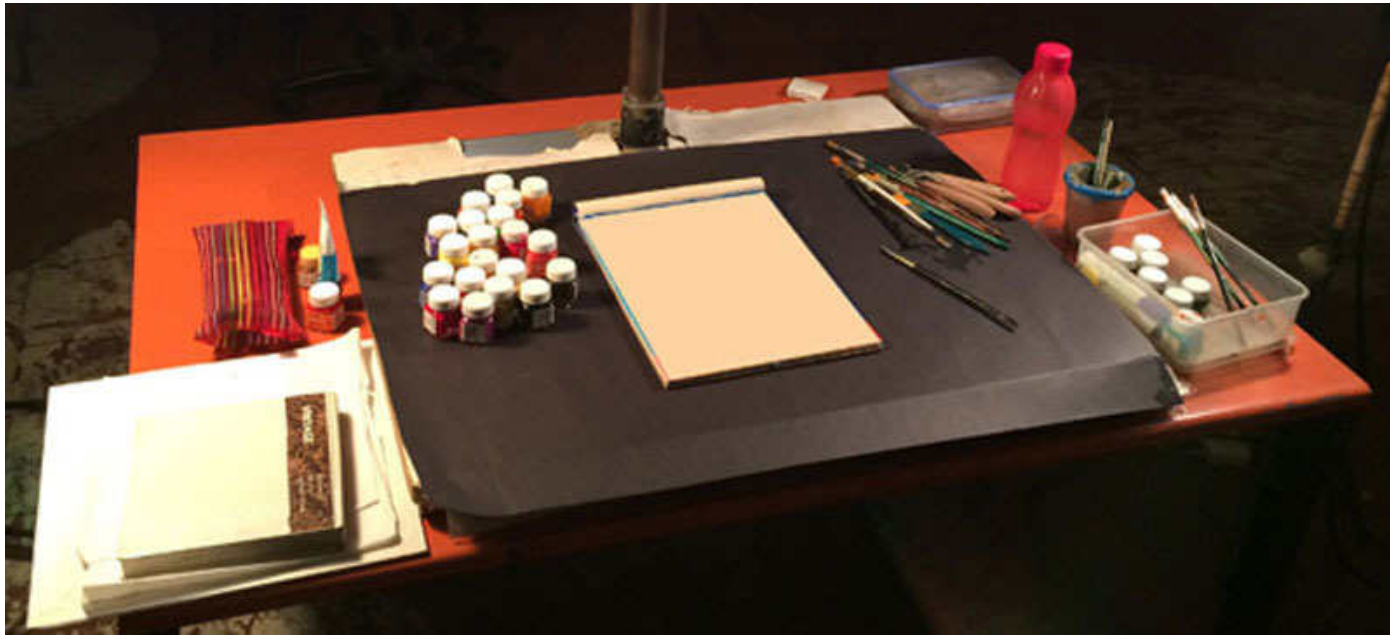
Painting Station

Setting up Painting Station:
Before you start painting you need to find a place where you can sit and paint peacefully where there is plenty of natural light available. Set up your painting station near an open window, a room with plenty of natural light or a balcony.



Every artist has their own way of setting up their workstations and it is preferable to place all your painting materials, and tools before you start painting. Fill your water tumbler with fresh water; get out all the paints and brushes you want to use. You may also want to put on an old t-shirt to avoid color stains.

Don't forget to put on some nice music for nice rhythm.

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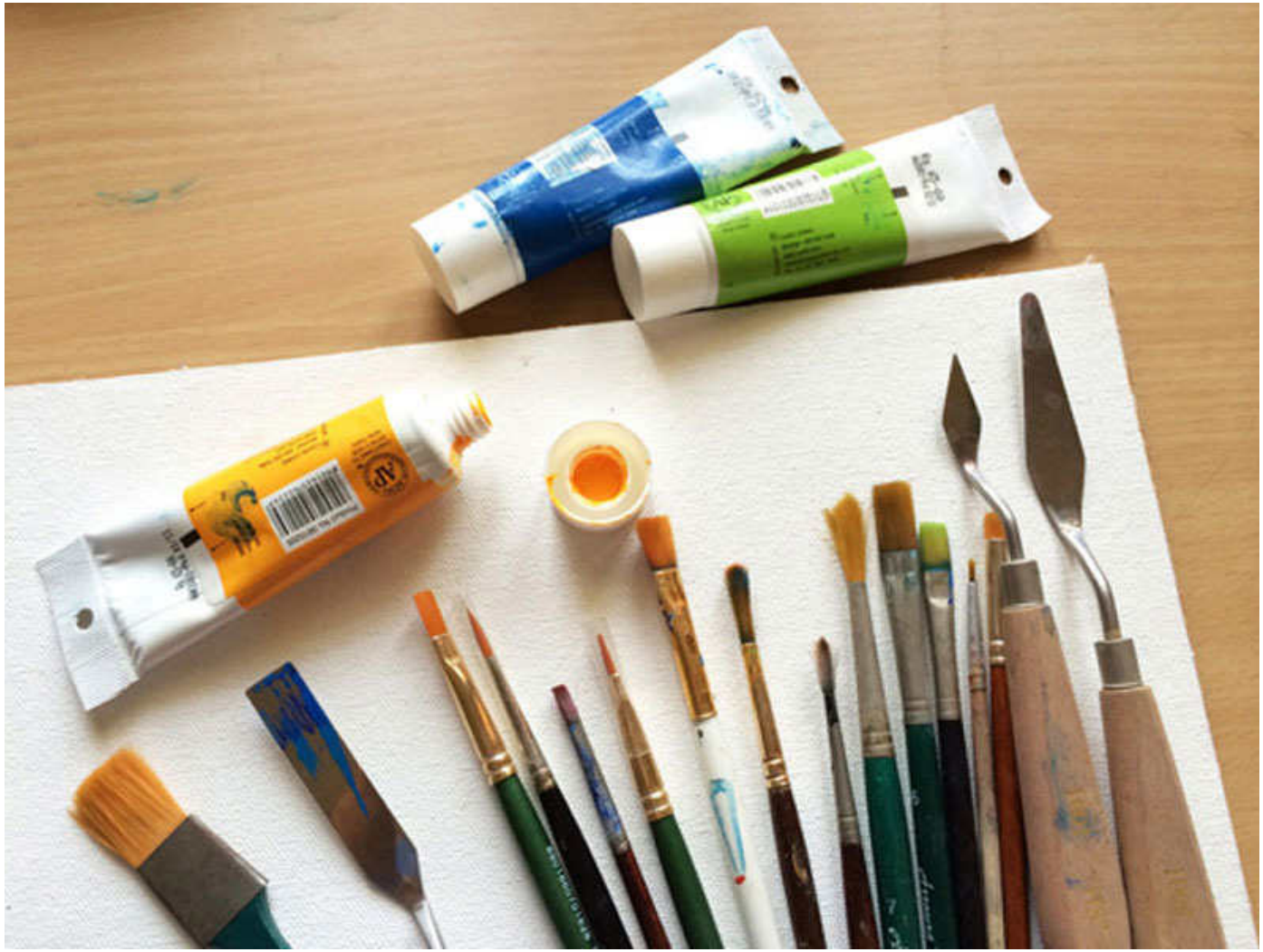
Choosing Subject

Subject for Painting:
As a beginner you may start with painting simple subject like fruits, flowers, simple objects in an abstract or realistic way. You can also take an image or photocopy as a reference of the subject. Make rough sketches of the subject using regular pencil on paper. Once you have finalized the idea, roughly draw the outline of the subject directly onto the canvas.



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Decide Colors

Decide Colors:
While drawing a rough sketch on canvas, decide all the colors that you want to use for the paintings. Arrange them in an order you want to use them. It is helpful to refer to the color theory and color charts that are easily available online.

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Process

Once you have all the required material and tools for painting, you need to find your spot and decide on your subject of painting.

Reference

Rough Drawing

Applying Base Coat

Shades and Highlights

Finishing

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Reference

Frieda Kahlo is one of my favorite artists; her work has always inspired me. So I have decided to make a portrait painting of hers. She had a very distinct personality and is one of fashion icons as well. Her dressing style was very vibrant, colorful and iconic like her paintings. I choose to make a simplistic and not so realistic painting of her in my simplified style.

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First I took some photographs of Frieda for reference and decided on all the features I wanted to include in my painting. Then I made a rough sketch of what I am planning to paint in my sketchbook, I also decided on what colors I would like to use.

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Rough Drawing

Once my sketch is done, I drew roughly on the canvas pad and sketched an outline for my final artwork.

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Applying Base Coat

Base coat is applied to the following areas:
- Skin tone
- Hairstyle
- Eyes
- Background

Skin Tone:
Generally I start with flat base coats first, here I am using readily available Flesh tint for skin color and I have kept blank spaces for eyes, nose, lips and hair.

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Hairstyle:
Frieda's hairstyle is a little complicated to paint so I have come up with this idea of drawing lines showing hair direction first in black color and then I will apply the darkest brown on top of it. Acrylic color gives transparent effect if diluted with water and can be used to achieve different effects. Also I have applied base colors for flowers in her hair and then added shades and highlights to give it a 3D effect.

Eyes:
Eyes are the most important and crucial feature if you painting a portrait because the focus of the portrait painting is usually on the eyes. Here I have used 2 shades of brown and yellow ochre, diluted with water to achieve transparency and depth.

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Background:
In all kind of paintings, background is also evenly important as it enhances the beauty of the main character in the painting. Here I am using shades of blue for the background because of two main reasons. First Frieda lived in a house, which was painted in blue, and second it is in contrast with the colors I am using for portrait.

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Shades and Highlights

Once the entire flat base coloring is done, I started painting on top of it with the darker shades just to enhance the facial contours. On top of it I have also added details like eyebrows, lipstick and earrings. For her dress I started with flat orange color at the base and added small flowers on top of it with some highlights.

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Finishing

After completing all the details in the painting I made a fine outline to enhance the details with the help of a 0 number round brush and allowed it to dry completely. Then I applied a protective coat of transparent varnish easily available in market, just to protect the painting from dust and other wearable factors.

Now the painting is ready to be exhibited! If you are using a canvas pad or canvas board you can frame it and now your acrylic painting is ready for display!

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Things to Remember

Few things to be remembered:

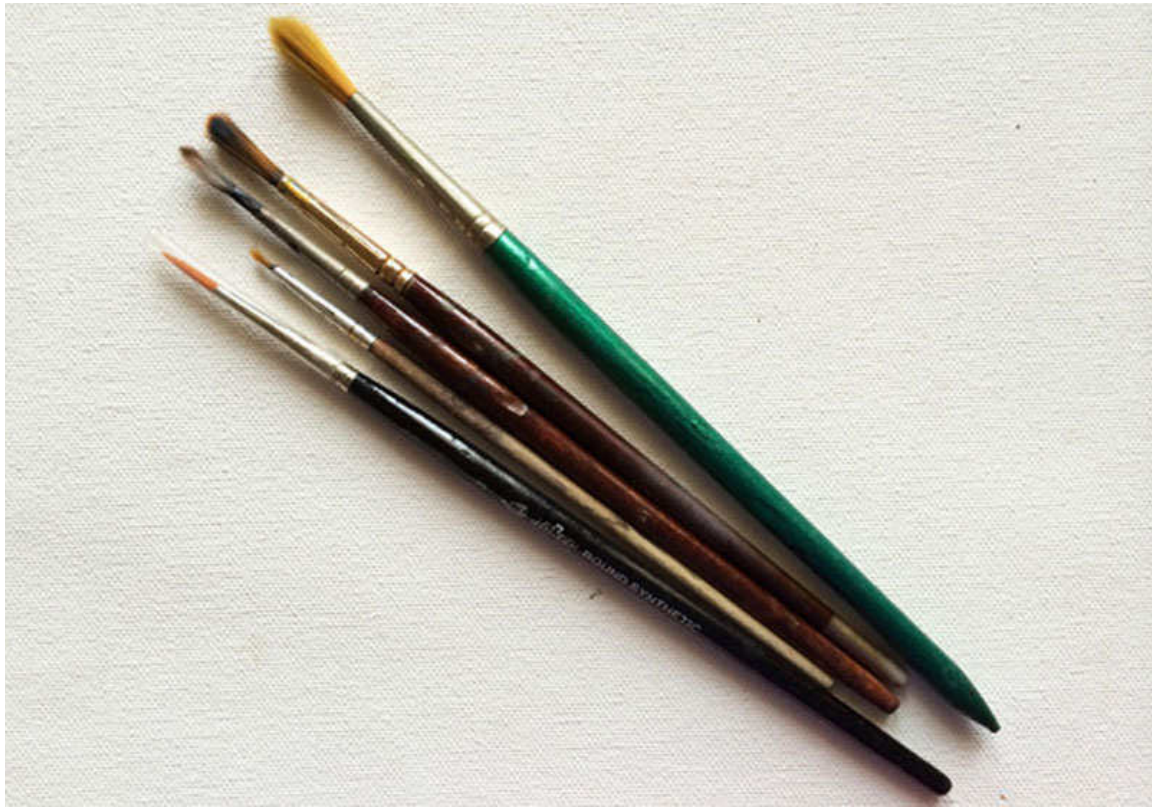
• Practice is the only way to master any kind of art. Don't be afraid and keep drawing, try different ways and styles that you find easier.

• Keep learning and try to adapt advanced techniques, add depth by shadowing, lighting and texturing.

• Don't be scared of mistakes, in art nothing is right or wrong. Keep experimenting.

• Try to use colors based on what and how you feel or what on the kinds of feelings you wish to portray in your painting. Read about color theories and how colors can express feelings!

• And don't forget to clean your brushes and pallets after completing the drawing.



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Slide show

Slideshow of the complete process of acrylic painting:

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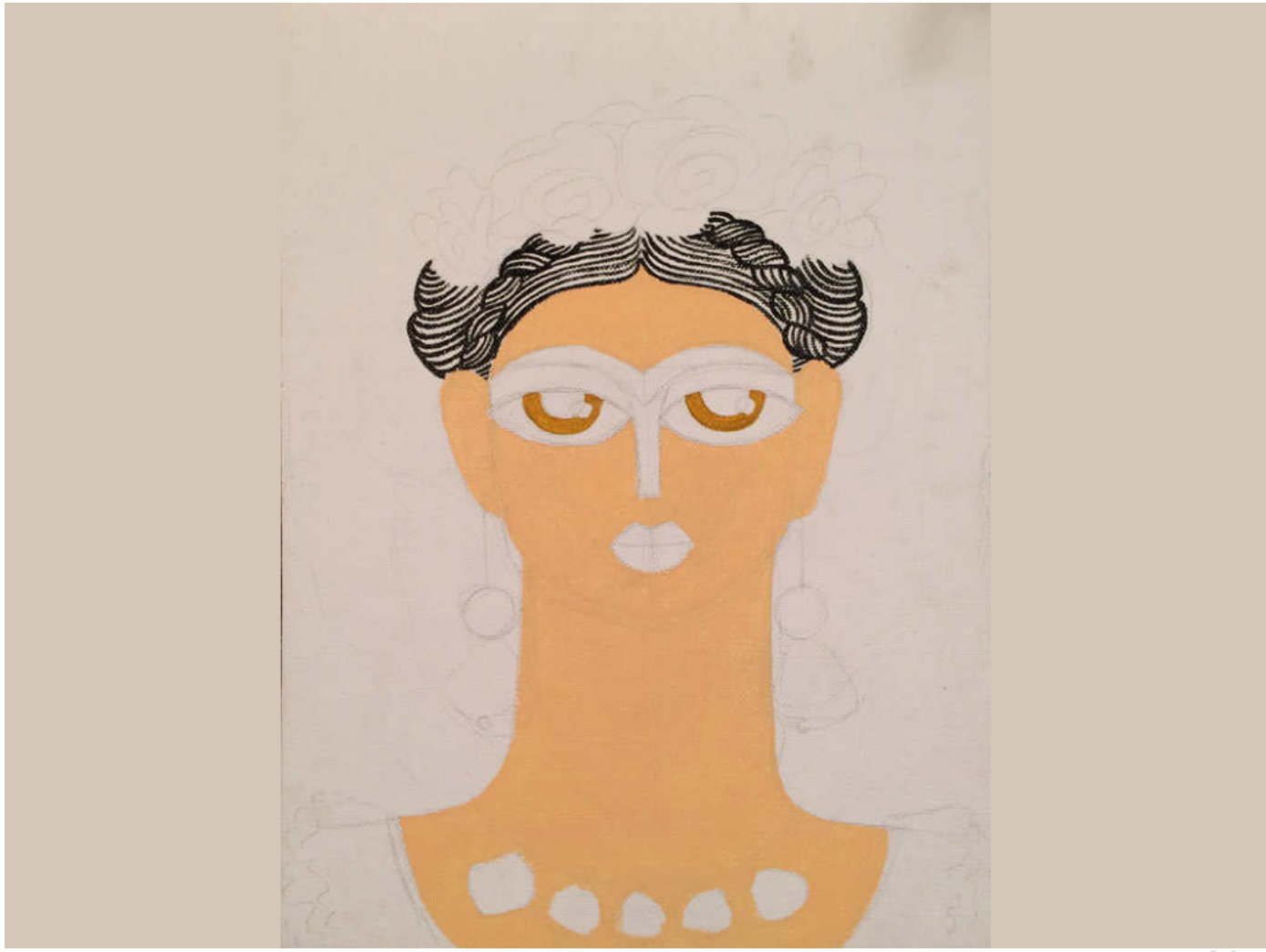

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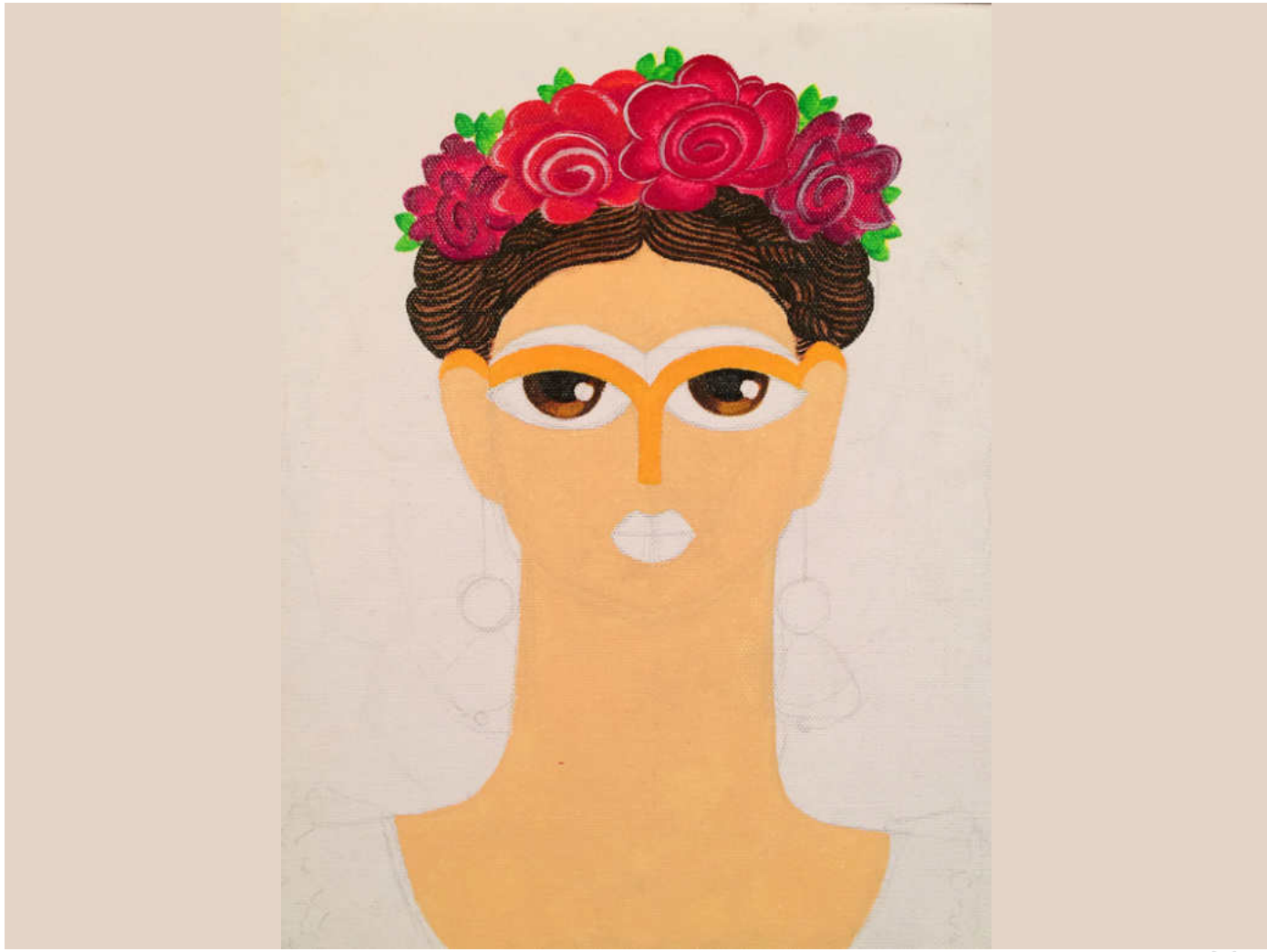

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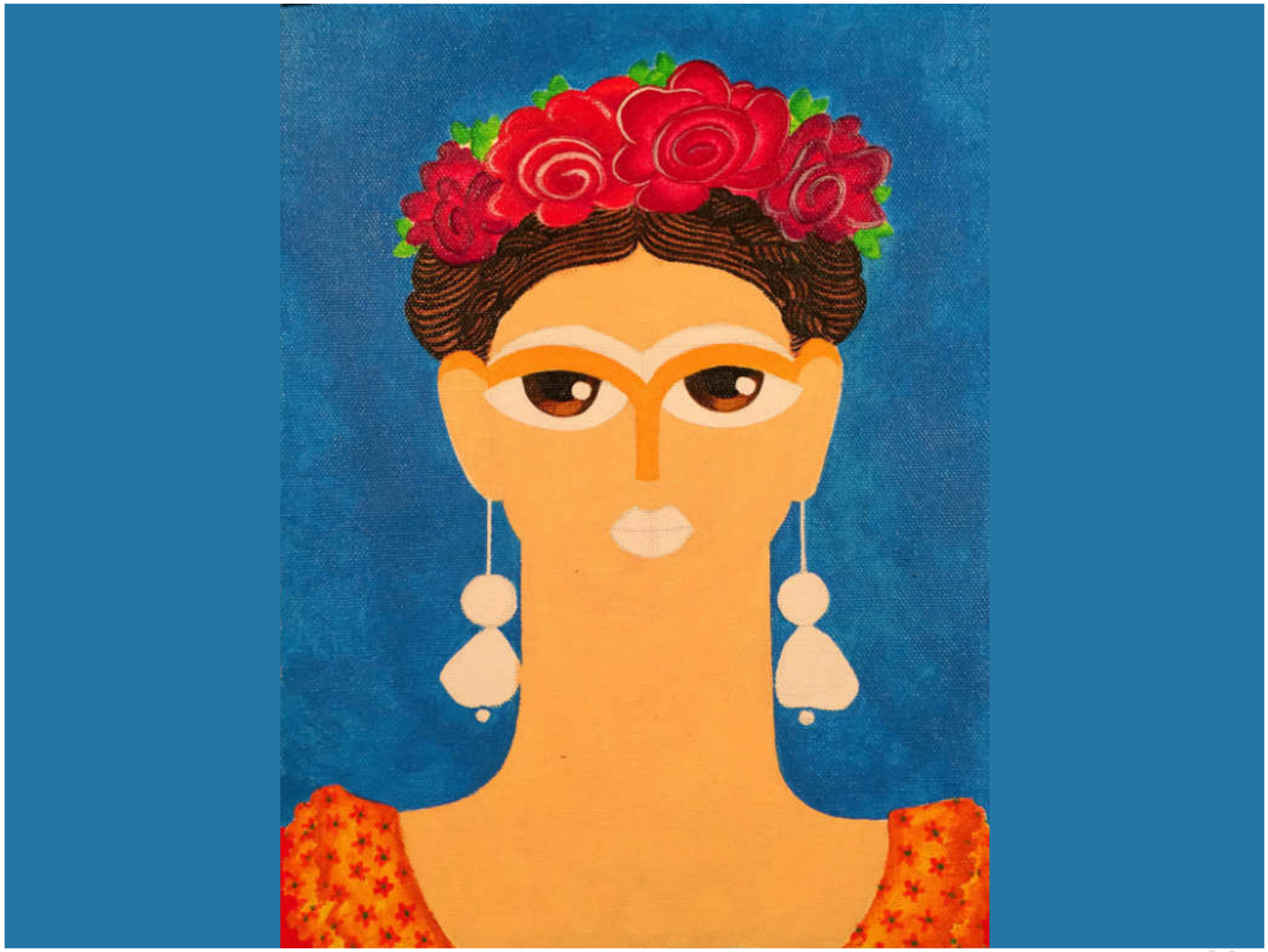

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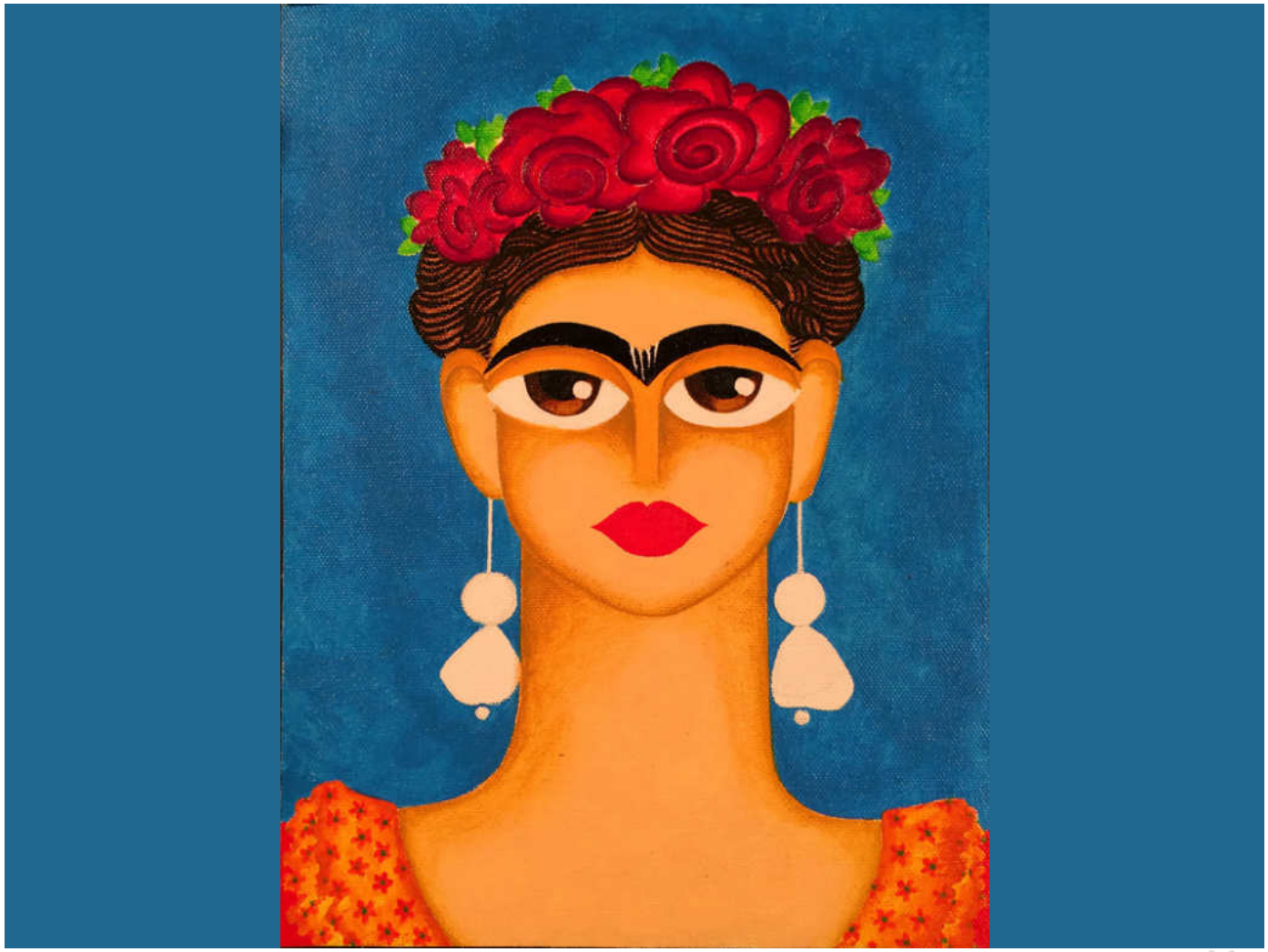

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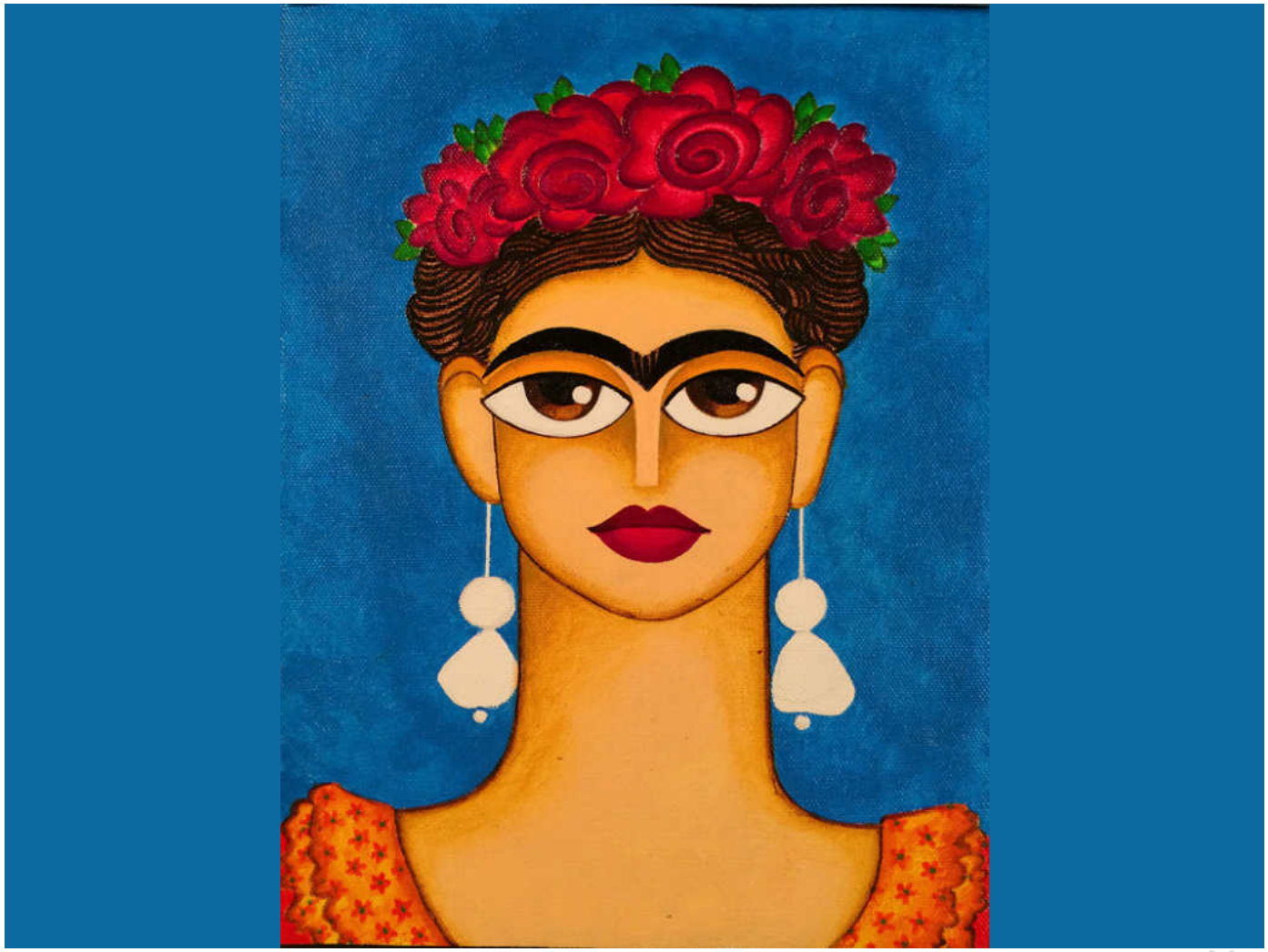

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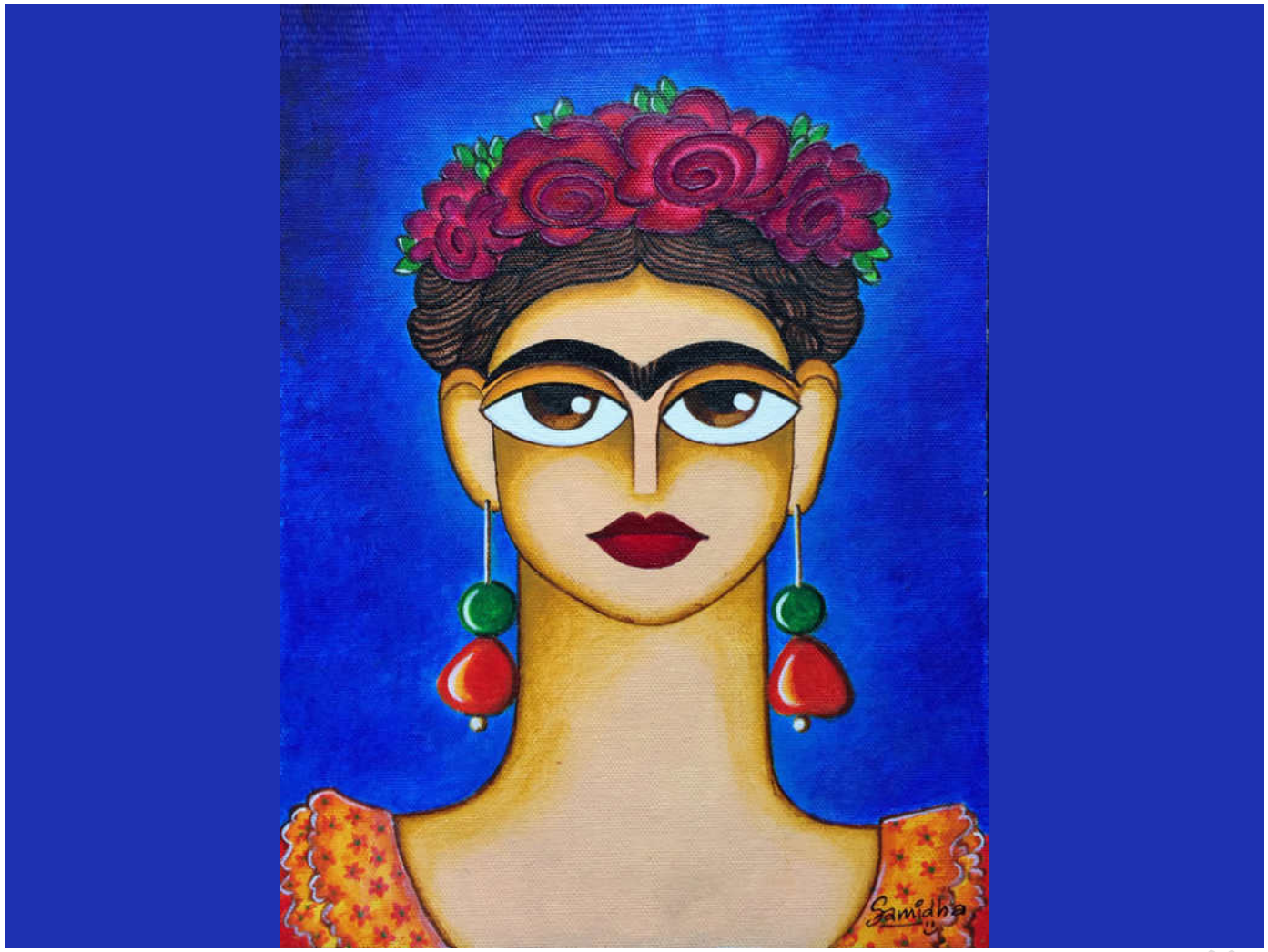

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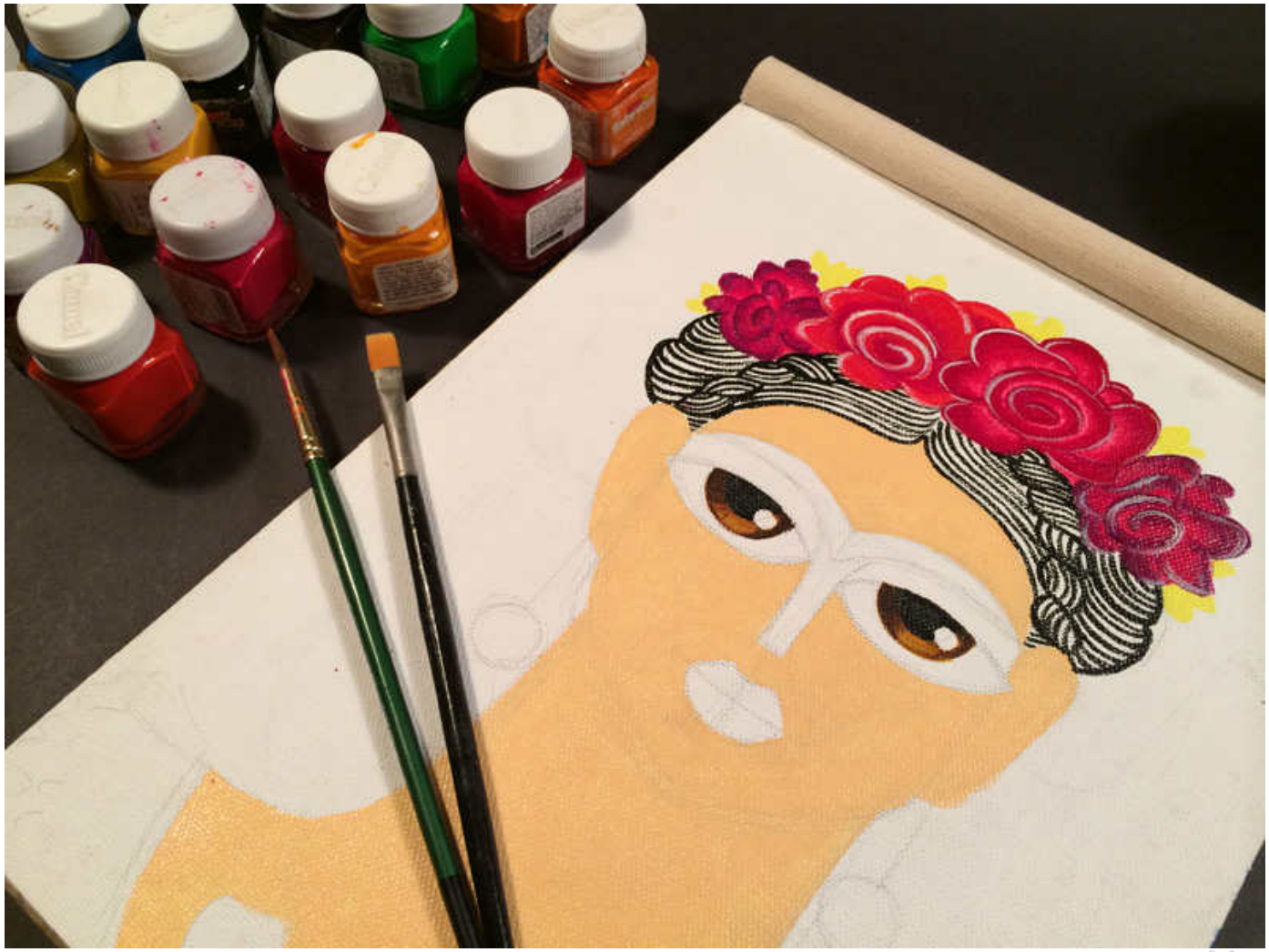

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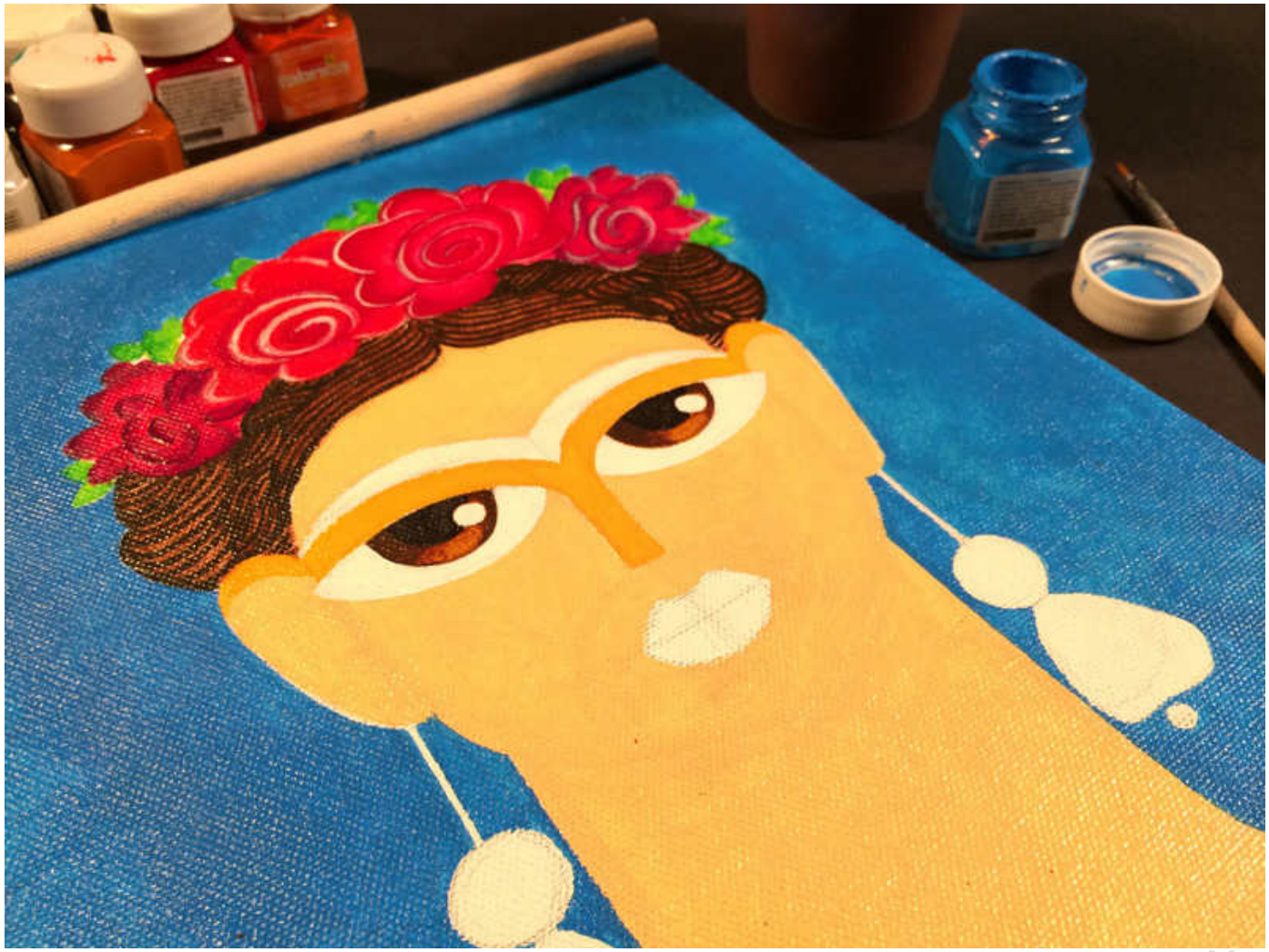

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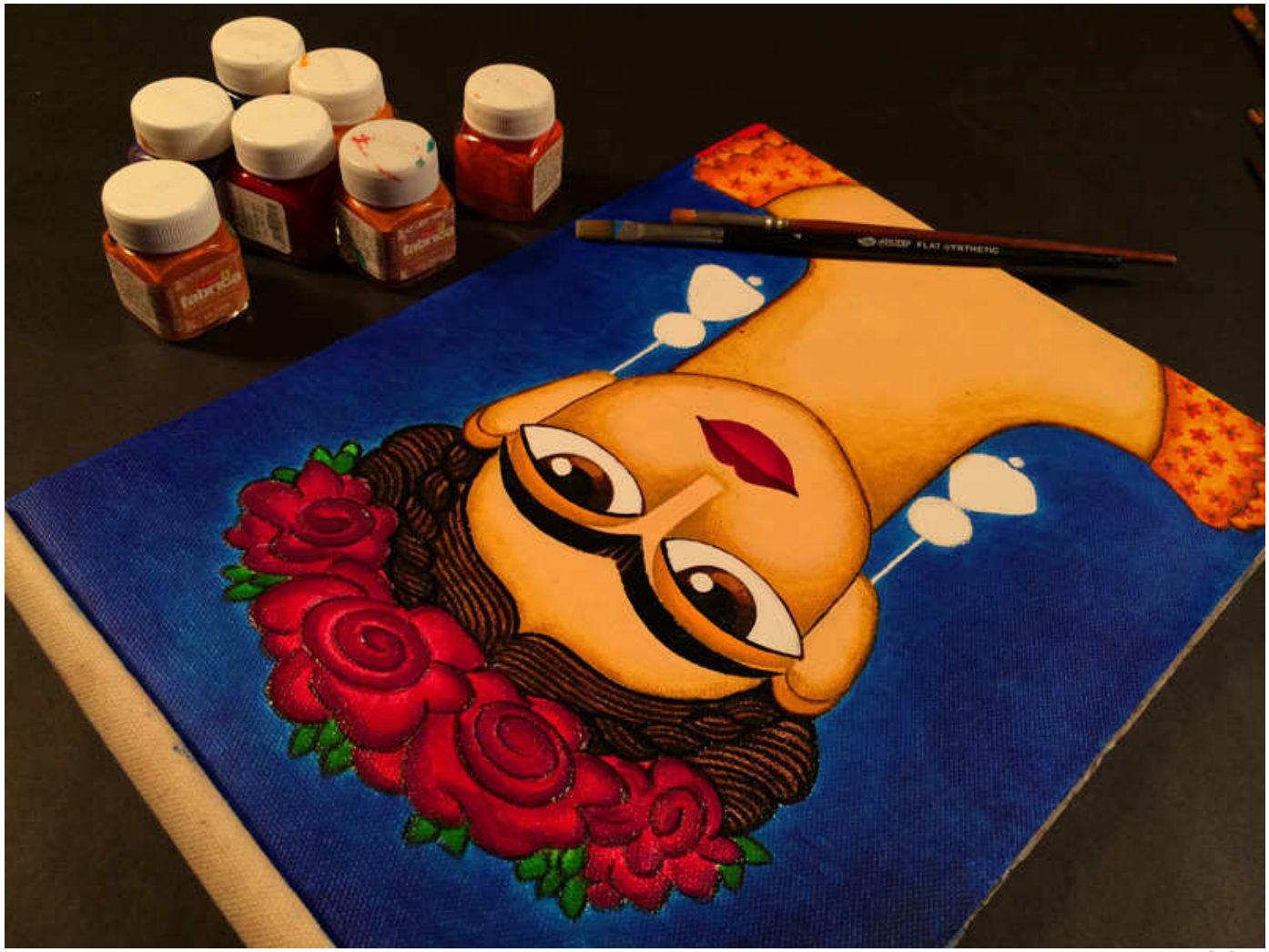

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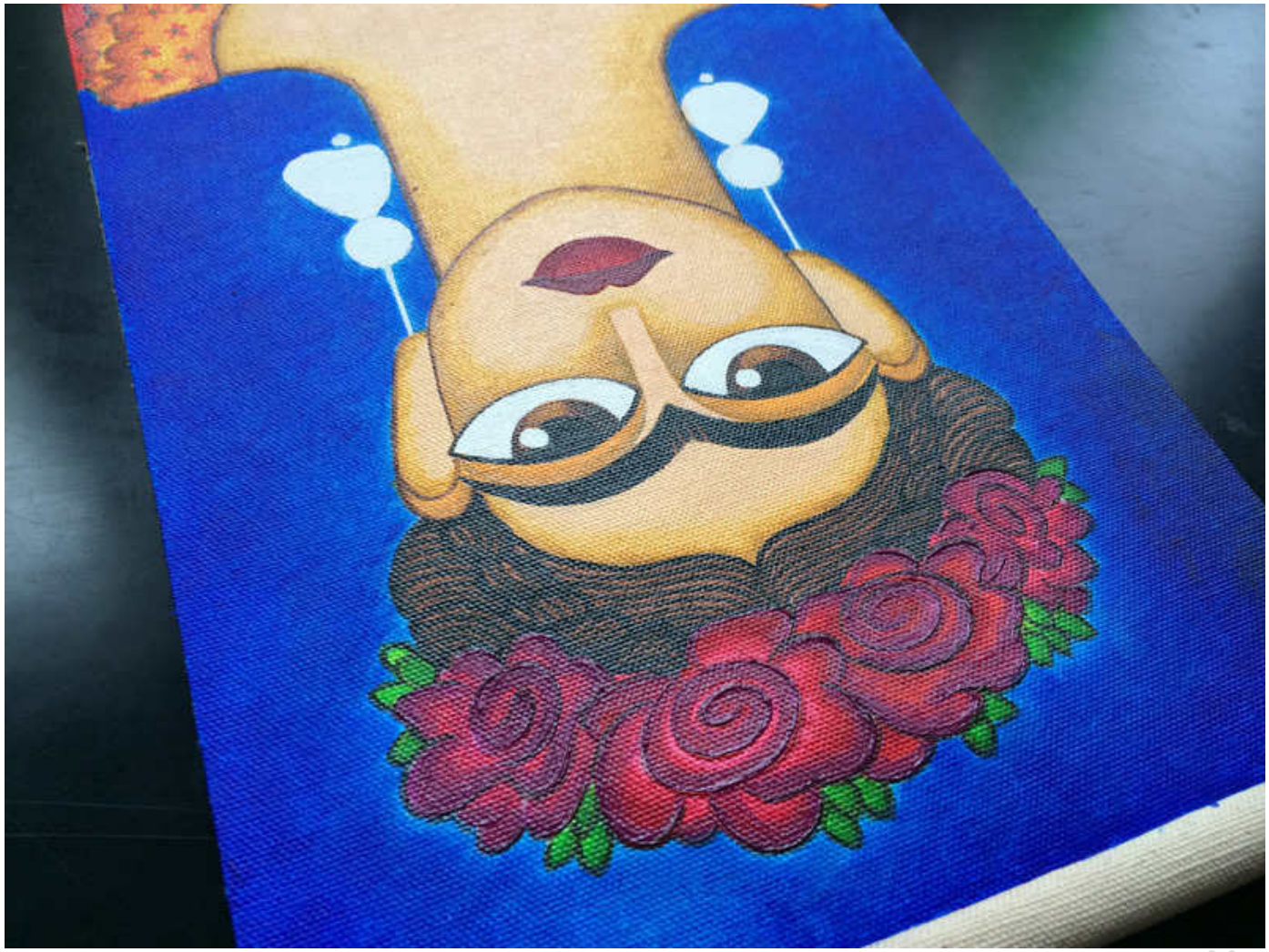

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Video:

Acrylic Painting - Part 1

Acrylic Painting - Part 2

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This documentation was done by Professor Phani Tetali and Samidha Gunjal at IDC, IIT Bombay.

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