# April Showers Bring May Flowers

As this popular refrain promises, flowers always follow the storm. Literal flowers, hidden away during the long dark winter, emerge and bloom after the first spring rains. This yearly phenomenon reminds us to hope for better days ahead and to look for the beauty that can grow through the adversity of life's inevitable storms. How especially splendid this spring will seem after a year of social distancing and quarantines! Let's look at three seasonally inspired works from the MOA's permanent collection.

Find the first work in *Treasures from the Collection* on the MOA's lower level. *Still Life* by Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer represents the artist's scientific observation of flowers and his meticulous attention to the minute detail of every single species.

- *How many kinds of flowers do you see?*
- *Do you know what the meanings of each flower?*

Many of us had to be 'still' this last year. Hopefully, in our stillness we found opportunities to observe more of life's details

- *How can being still affect your viewing of this painting?*



Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer, *Still Life*, c.1650, Oil on canvas

John Henry Twachtman's *The Flower Garden* (*Treasures from the Collection*) reminds us that sometimes it is hard to discern the good things that have come into our lives. Often times they are just impressions or feelings that some thing has changed, and much of it is a matter of perspective. Look at the painting. You may be aware of the colors, the warmth of the sunlight, or the movement of the tall grass and flowers as they sway in the breeze... or you may complain that you cannot discern the detail of the flowers.  It's a matter of perspective!



John Henry Twachtman, *The Flower Garden*, c. 1900
Oil on canvas

- *Impressionists were famous for their quick brushstrokes and interest in the way sunlight effected color. Identify three different types of brushstrokes used to create this garden scene.  Now, identify areas of sunlight and shadow. What colors are used to indicate light/shadow?*

Find the final work in *Becoming America* on the MOA's main level.
 *The Valley*, by Edward W. Redfield, is an unbiased record of spring in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.  Carefully move in close to look at a small section of the painting. Now slowly step back  and see how the small, nonsensical spots of paint begin to relate to one another.  Together every small brushstroke creates a larger picture: the distant mountains, the comfortable home, and the budding trees.



Edward W. Redfield, *The Valley*, Oil on canvas

- *How does this activity reflect your experiences of the past year?*
- *Alone we might feel insignificant --like a spot of paint. How can we look beyond ourself and be part of something larger?*
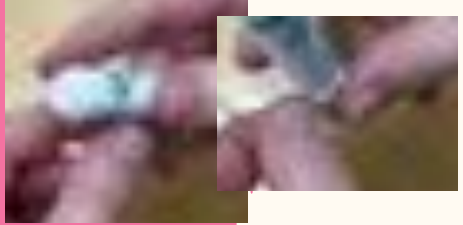
# May Flowers

Materials Needed
- 20-gauge wire or florist wire
- wire cutters
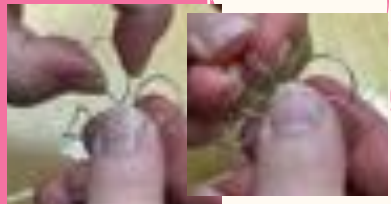- marker
- various nail polish colors

1. Take the end of the length of wire (about 18") and wrap it around the middle of a marker and spin the marker to create and close a loop.

2. Repeat this action to create 5 petals then pull the end of the wire down to create the stem.

3. Lightly press the wire to shape your petals. You can also lightly bend the petals to an organic petal shape.

4. Time to paint! Take your nail polish brush and coat the wire of one petal.

5. On the same petal, place a well-loaded brush at the interior point of the petal and drag the brush across the wire S L O W L Y.
Be sure to maintain contact with both sides of the petal. Repeat on the remaining petals.
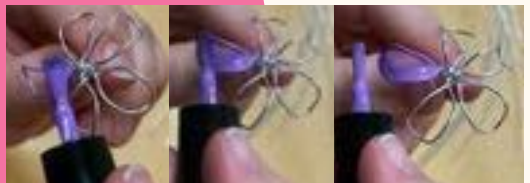
# Tips!

## The Wire Frame:



The initial twist should look like a "unicorn horn". Wire should be twisted several times to secure the petal.



The next petals should be close to the first.



Don't worry about making sure all the petals are exactly the same, because you will shape the petals at the end.

## The Enamel Petals:

The key here is patience!
Paint one petal at a time, being sure to cover the wire with nail polish first.

When filling in the petal, be sure the brush touches BOTH sides of the petal and pull the brush SLOWLY.

If working form the interior point of the petal to the exterior point isn't working, try doing the reverse.