

# Phoebe Unwin: Conquering a Canvas

Whitechapel  
Gallery

Phoebe Unwin is a London based painter (b.1979), she works in all types of paints, using pastels, chalks and pencils on paper and canvas.

She never works from photographs or direct observation, she only works from memory as she wants to capture emotions in paint and conquer the blank space of the canvas.

Her work is about, space, memory, imagination and perception.

She was a nominee for the [Whitechapel Gallery, Max Mara Art Prize for Women 2015-17](#)

Table, 2010 Acrylic and oil on linen



Quotes from Unwin;

*'I want to paint what something feels like, not what it looks like'*

*'Both the paint and the subject matter are just as important as each other'*

*'imagination; ordinary things, familiar things that you have experienced'*

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Mary Heilmann was born in North America in 1940 and is still making work today. She creates paintings, ceramics, chairs and films. She's inspired by the environment around her, popular culture, [music](#) and her own experiences.

Her work has been described as [insouciant](#).

[Mary Heilmann: Looking at Pictures](#) is on display in the Whitechapel Gallery 8 June- 21 August 2016



Installation detail



Mary Heilmann Portrait. Photo by Philip Mauro web

Quotes from Heilmann about her work;  
*'my painting is very basic'*  
*'in 1970, everybody hated painting, especially me!'*

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Phoebe Unwin sets you a task to conquer the canvas using paint. Creative influences can be found in everyday objects, scenarios and actions. These steps act as a starting point for your own painting.

Equipment; stencils (old packaging materials are best), acrylic paint, paper, brushes, glue

Use your imagination to think of an ordinary, everyday, important feeling that you have experienced. e.g. looking at your phone, drinking water, getting out of bed.

select a piece of paper

select one colour of paint

select a stencil

occupy a space on the paper with the stencil

paint round the stencil

select a printing medium (brush, scrunched paper to print)

Use your imagination to paint/draw into your painting an important, ordinary feeling, a familiar thought, an experience that you have experienced.

cut a piece of paper out and use it to 'edit' an area of the painting that you feel could be improved/deleted and paint over the top.

**Tip:** Use a stencil as a printing object

**Tip:** Scrunch a ball of paper up, dip in paint and use to print interesting textures.

**Tip:** Try using other objects instead of a paint brush to add the paint to your painting.