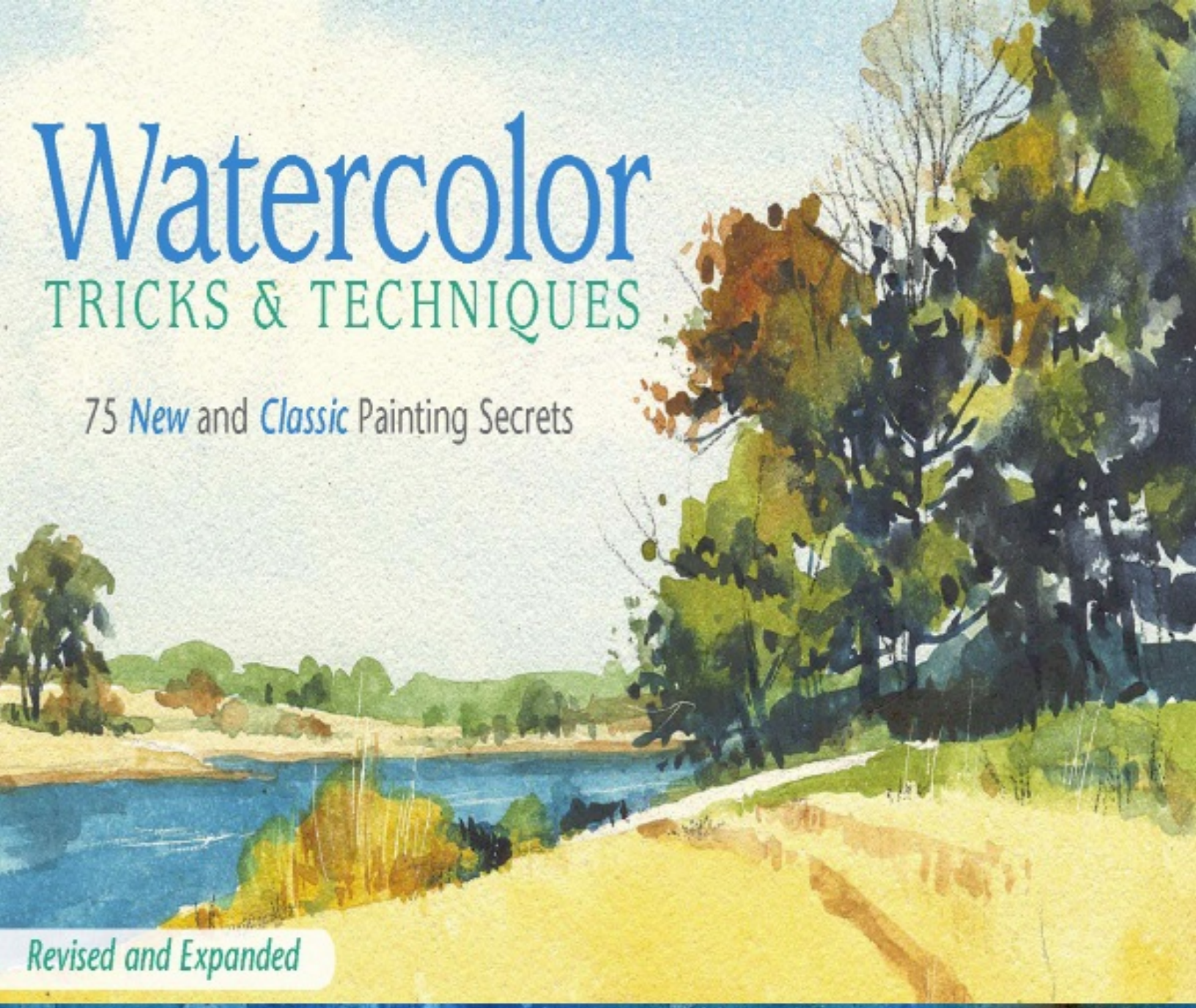
Watercolor
TRICKS & TECHNIQUES

75 *New* and *Classic* Painting Secrets



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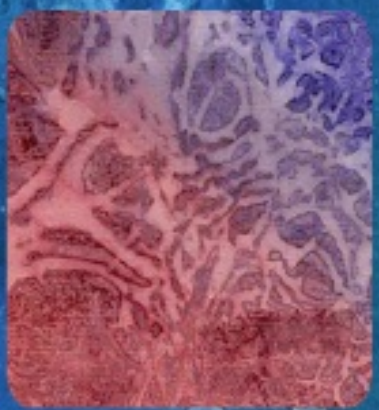

Cathy Johnson

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75 New and *Classic* Painting Secrets

Cathy Johnson

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Metric Conversion Chart

To convert	to	multiply by
Inches	Centimeters	2.54
Centimeters	Inches	0.4
Feet	Centimeters	30.5
Centimeters	Feet	0.03
Yards	Meters	0.9
Meters	Yards	1.1

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cathy Johnson has written 35 books, many on art and natural history. She has been a contributing editor, writer and illustrator for *The Artist's Magazine*, *Watercolor Artist*, and *Country Living* for over a decade, and was Staff Naturalist for *Country Living* during that period as well. Cathy wrote two books on art and nature for the Sierra Club, and spoke to their first international gathering in San Francisco in 2005.

Because of her interest in art and natural history, she started a popular group blog called Sketching in Nature; it can be found at http://naturesketchers.blogspot.com/ . Cathy teaches online workshops at http://cathyjohnson.info, where she also offers free art tips. Feel free to visit her blogs at http://katequicksilvr.livejournal.com/ or Cathy Johnson Fine Art Galleries at http://cathyjohnsonart.blogspot.com/ where you will find mini-tutorials.

She lives and works in a small midwestern town with her husband Joseph Ruckman and her cats.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author's name may go on the cover, but most books are the work of many, many people—it's a group effort in the best sense.

I owe my grateful thanks to Jamie Markle, Publisher (then-acquisitions editor) at North Light whose enthusiasm for this project was immediate and exciting; to my two wonderful editors, Kelly Messerly and Jennifer Lepore, who guided the book safely into harbor; to my online artist friends who helped me in ways too many to count; to my great friends in my sketchcrawl group, whose presence is invaluable; to family and friends who are always there when I need them; to my sister Yvonne and brother-in-law, Nevada artist Richard Busey, who understand and provide safe haven, complete with jazz and good food; to Karen Winters, Roz Stendahl, Jana Bouc, Bruce MacEvoy and especially Laura Frankstone, who read parts of the manuscript and offered suggestions on paints, pigments, and colors; and to my students, who never failed to encourage and suggest and ask truly brilliant questions.

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DEDICATION

To my Joseph, from the dawn of time.

Table of Contents

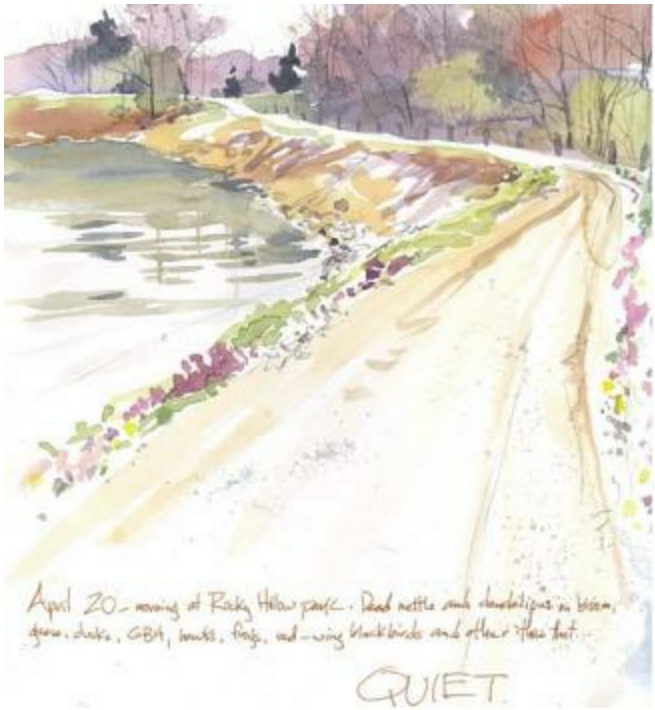
PART 3

Indispensable Tools

Broadly speaking, a watercolorist's "tools" include everything from paper and pigments to the artist's unique vision of the world. In this section, "tools" means those things you hold in your hand and paint with, mark with, scratch or scrape with, or otherwise use to cause an image to appear on your paper. In this section, you'll see a wide variety of tools and all the different effects they produce.

INTRODUCTION:

Watercolor Tricks & Techniques—for Today!



The original edition of this book came out more than 20 years ago, and reached a very responsive audience over a very long life. Now, with all the new tools, surfaces, materials and tricks available to the artist, it seemed time to bring it into the 21st Century and a new generation of artists. There are so many wonderful products with which to experiment, and so many new ideas! We tried to incorporate as many as possible in this book, while retaining the classics.

Watercolor is a wonderfully un-tameable medium. It's exciting, challenging, unpredictable and fun. Oh, sometimes we may think it would be great to corral it and gentle it to our bidding, but what would be the excitement in that? Best just to jump on and ride for all you're worth!

I admit to a fantasy on those days when I've been thrown by my favorite medium once too often. I imagine it would be wonderful if I could find the perfect balance between technique and vision so I could express what I see and feel, exactly the way I want to.

We all see a vision in our heads, but it seldom is just the one that evolves on paper. I sometimes play with the thought that if I could only learn enough and practice enough I'd be able to nail that vision. Every time.

But that's not the way watercolor works; it's alive, with a mind of its own. It can do the most exciting things, things I never dreamed of or dared hope for—these are the "happy accidents" you've read about. It's also not the way human nature works, at least when it's operating somewhere near capacity.

I may think I want control, predictability—perfection—but I don't. Not really. I'd stagnate and become bored, and my paintings would show it. In fact, I love the dance between intent and intuition, initial vision and inspiration. I love the way a painting unfolds, suggests things to me, surprises me and invites me to try something new.

You may have fallen into a rut as we all do from time to time. Some time back, "my" brand of

watercolor paper, imported from Italy, was discontinued. I was at a loss for a while, frustrated and angry. I could *paint* on that stuff. I knew what it would do. I knew its surface, its texture, its sizing. I knew just how much it would buckle under a wet wash. And I loved it.

But as luck would have it, I was forced to experiment, to try new things, new surfaces, new effects. I tried Japanese rice paper, rough and hot press paper. I learned my way around a variety of paper surfaces and learned just what I could expect of each. I had enlarged my repertoire. I had grown, in spite of myself, and breaking out of my comfortable rut helped my work.

Now I've learned to appreciate experimenting and the excitement of discovery. Sometimes it works for me, sometimes it doesn't, but the ride itself makes me feel alive. We've included some of those new surfaces here, to encourage you to break out, as well. Try painting on Yupo, or Claybord, or a surface prepared with gesso—it's fun!

How to Use This Book

The book is divided into three sections: Liquid Aids, Dry Helpers, and Indispensable Tools, with plenty of demos and inspirations salted throughout. I have explored the various techniques in a number of ways, while trying not to create hard and fast applications. Instead, I'd like this book to suggest a variety of intriguing possibilities. I wanted to avoid the tendency to see any technique in my way and my way only, so I've tried to keep the samples open-ended, as broad and varied as possible while still showing some of the ways I've chosen to use them.

Tricks vs. Techniques

Of course, tricks are no substitute for solid technique and basic skills. You'll still need hard work and planning to produce a work of art. You'll need to learn how to handle your medium and how to express yourself in your own unique way. It's a natural, instinctive process, a product of the right side of your brain—your creative subconscious. It is learning how to see as well as how to paint.

It is discovering what excites you about the world you live in and learning step-by-step how, with your paints and brushes, to make that reality live for you. There's no shortcut. Special techniques are only there to help you see and react in new ways.

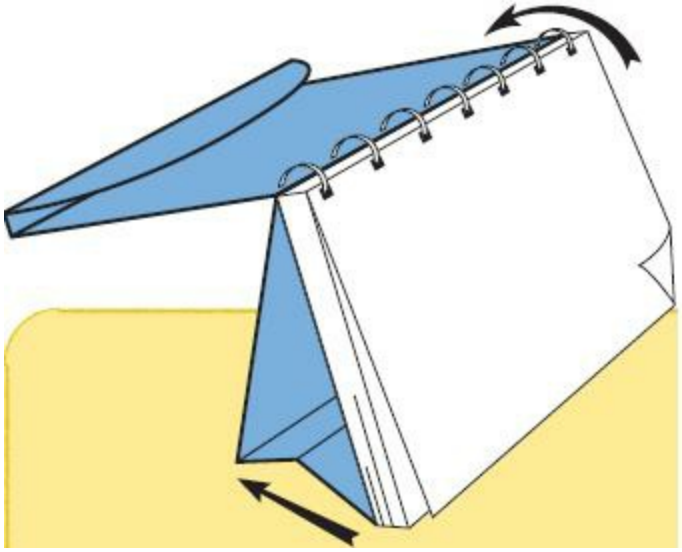
One word of caution: It's easy to get carried away with a good trick, or a whole bundle of them. Not all the tricks in your bag should (or even can) be used together at one time. And, no one trick should overpower your painting. Pick and choose carefully, with restraint. For instance, plastic wrap can be a useful tool for texturing; used with care and discernment, you'll find it exciting and satisfying.

When a trick becomes "tricky" (facile or obvious, flashy or too universal), it detracts from your painting. Save your "ammunition" to use where it counts. Eventually, you'll settle on a handful of tricks or special effects that fit your personality or approach. For the purposes of this book, I show several techniques that I normally don't use. Others I save for special occasions when only the perfect trick will do.

Throughout the book, you will see my favorite tricks used more than once; others may not appear at all except in the sections where they are discussed. Although I included rough paper in the section on "Dry Helpers," for instance, you won't find too many examples done on this surface. It's just not me; rough paper has a mind of its own, and so do I.

What you will see are a variety of paintings that reflect my own use of special effects. The effects you choose may be entirely different; that's what makes watercolor the fascinating medium it is.

Have fun! Experiment, create and climb out of your rut, if you've fallen head first into one. And then, enjoy the challenge of incorporating new tricks and techniques into your repertoire, making them all your own.



This Book Stands on Its Own

Flatten the folded piece of cover opposite the binding to stand the book on its own. Flip the pages over to view the following page. Turn the book 180 degrees to view the book's second half.

PART 1

Liquid Aids

Techniques involving liquids seem the obvious place to start this book, since watercolor is itself a liquid medium. Moving and flowing, splashing or spattering, dripped, drizzled, or daubed, liquid aids complement watercolor in a special and most natural way.

This section covers the various ways to incorporate liquid aids into your paintings, exploring their effects as you go along. Some of these you may already have tried, some are old standbys, while others may be new to you—the new materials and supplies constantly being introduced in the marketplace keep us on our toes and give us new avenues to explore.

Use these tricks and techniques judiciously. Don't let them take over your work, but remember to have fun! Keep an open mind as you give the ideas here a try, and perhaps they'll spark something entirely new and different.

Tube vs. Pan Colors

Some artists feel that tube colors are somehow better than artist-grade pan colors, but usually they are of comparable quality. It's more a matter of how *you* work.

At times, manufacturers will tell you their paints won't work as well if you let them dry on the palette and re-wet them. I have not found that to be true in practice, but you should make your own decision.

The main advantage to using tube paint fresh from the tube, for some artists, is that they feel more able to mix a large wash quickly. If I pre-wet my pan paints, however, I can mix a wash very easily, and often more smoothly than with freshly-squeezed tube paint.

Artist's-Quality vs. Student-Grade Paints
The quality of your paints is just as important as the transparency, opacity, brilliance, staining properties, or anything else, and perhaps even more so. Cheap, student-grade paints may fade, be difficult to lift or mix, flake, change color, or otherwise disappoint you. Other student-grade paints (bottom row, above) may be perfectly satisfactory—you should experiment, but to save money, I suggest starting with a few artist-grade paints (top row, above) in colors you prefer.

Pan Color

I moistened the pan colors on the left and used them immediately. For the colors on the right, I pre-wet the pans half a minute before starting to paint. What a difference in intensity and saturation!

Tube Color

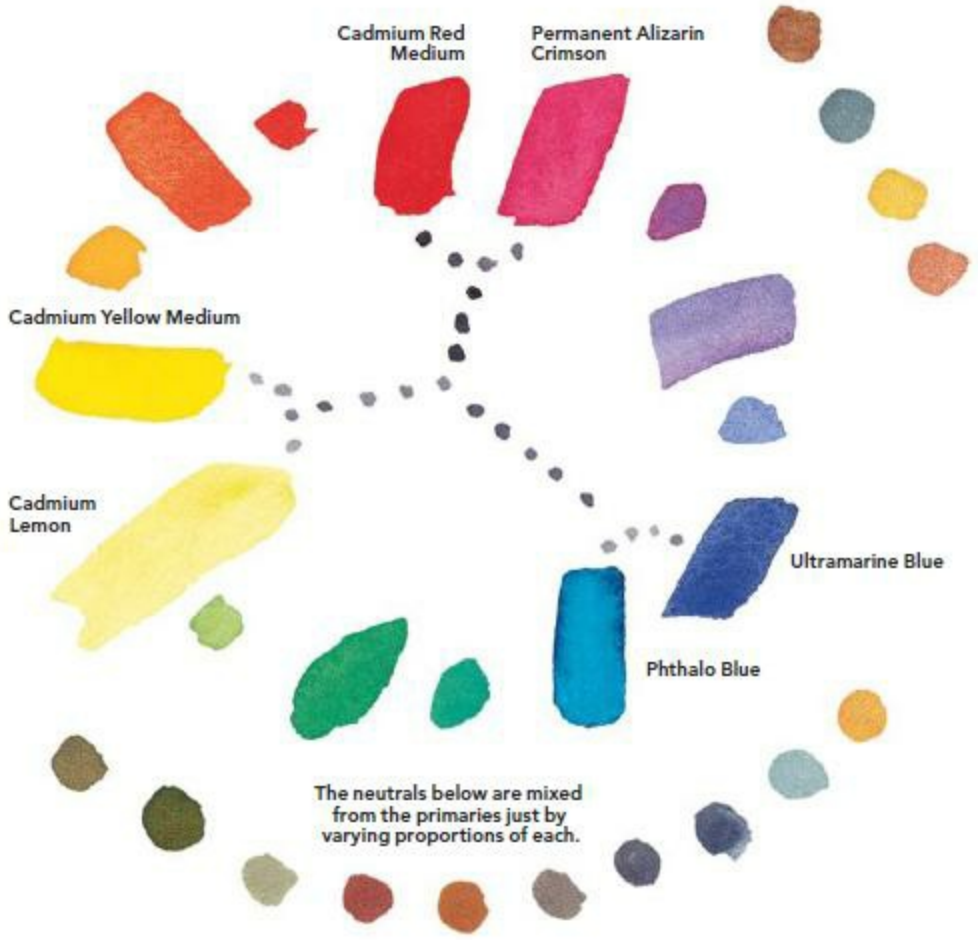
Here I let my tube colors dry on the palette. Then, for colors on the left, I moistened the color and applied it immediately. I pre-wet the colors on the right before applying them. As you can see, in both pan and tube colors, pre-wetting a moment or two before painting produces a much richer, more saturated color.

PAINT CHARACTERISTICS

Know Your Paints

Perhaps the first order of business is getting to know your paints; this will allow you to work some very subtle and effective tricks and techniques. Learn the properties and possibilities inherent in your paints, and you'll have more confidence with any new technique you may want to try.

My advice is to keep it simple, at least to begin with. Choose a few basic paints and learn what they will do, alone and in combination. A warm and cool of each primary color (the primaries are red, yellow and blue, from which all other colors can be mixed) will see you through nearly any situation. With the judicious addition of a few of what I consider convenience colors (a couple of earth colors, and perhaps Payne's Gray, Indanthrene Blue or Indigo) and a green or two, you'll be able to paint anything.



These are four of the "convenience colors" I often include on my palette: (top to bottom) Burnt Umber, Payne's Gray, Yellow Ochre and Burnt Sienna.

Make a Color Wheel With Your Paints

This is a simple, basic color wheel palette that's plenty to start with or stay with! You can always add new colors, one by one, as you discover effects you want to try. (If you buy sets of paint, of course, the colors are already chosen for you. I prefer to buy tube paints or individual moist pans and get exactly what I need.)

Here are the main warm and cool primaries on my palette with the secondary colors mixed from those basics shown in between.

Warm vs. Cool Colors

By warms and cools, I mean those versions of a color that lean toward one temperature or the other on the color wheel. For instance, a Cadmium Red Medium or similar hue leans more toward orange (warmer), while Quinacridone Red and Permanent Alizarin Crimson lean toward purple (cooler).

Being aware of temperature makes color mixing much more versatile, as well as simpler. Colors can be more intense, cleaner, or fresher when warms are mixed with warms, and less intense, more subtle, or grayed when warms and cools are used together. Get to know the possibilities.

For More on Paint Properties...

For more detailed information on paints and their properties, check Bruce MacEvoy's comprehensive Handprint site at www.handprint.com.

Compare Paint Brands

Learn about all your chosen paints. Understanding their unique properties will help you make the best possible choices for *you*. Even the brand can make a difference. At first, it may be best to settle on one manufacturer and stick to it unless you can remember which company makes what paint or color you prefer. For instance, three samples of paint with the same name from different manufacturers can vary substantially, even though all have the same pigment.

Take time to become fully acquainted with each new tube you buy—put it through its paces, and review your old colors while you're at it. Make color charts to explore the range of tints (light) and shades (darker) each paint is capable of, glaze one color over another, drop some paint onto wet paper to see how it diffuses, and try lifting color from the paper with a damp brush and clean water. If you've never played with your paints before, now is the time! And it *is* play—you'll discover some delightful properties; fresh, new effects; and a world of possibilities.

Yellow Ochre:
Winsor & Newton, Schmincke Horadam

Burnt Umber:
Winsor & Newton, Daniel Smith

Ultramarine Blue:
Daniel Smith, M. Graham, Schmincke Horadam

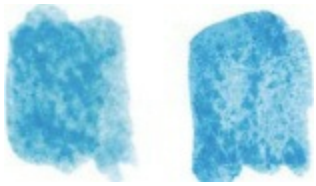
Cadmium Orange:
Winsor & Newton, Schmincke Horadam

Burnt Sienna:
Winsor & Newton, Schmincke Horadam, Kremer Pigments

Phthalo Blue:
Winsor & Newton, Daniel Smith, Schmincke Horadam

Cadmium Red:
Winsor & Newton, Schmincke Horadam

Raw Sienna:
Kremer Pigments, Maimeri Blu



Manganese Blue Hue:
Winsor & Newton, Holbein

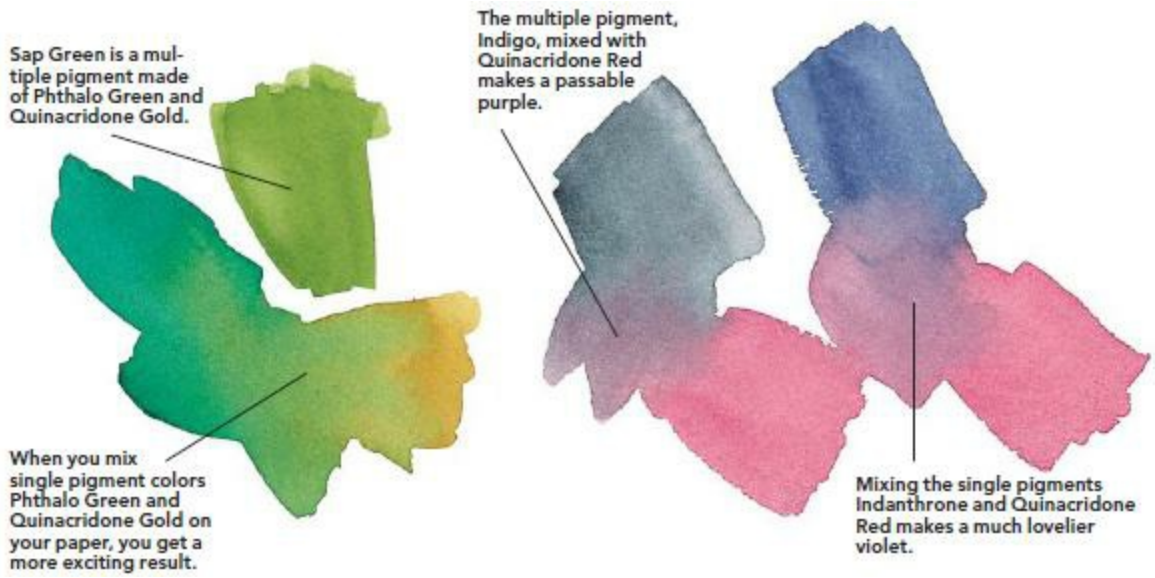
Brand Comparisons
This chart gives you an idea of the variety possible from brand to brand. If you have several brands on hand to explore, make a similar chart to familiarize yourself with their differences. I was astounded particularly by the differences between the various brands of siennas, umbers and blues I owned. Such diversity is not too surprising, though, when you consider that the various companies may choose different ingredients or combinations of ingredients to make their paints (or may get ingredients from different sources or locales that can affect color and handling properties). For example, “Sap Green” may be made from seven or more different pigments, depending on the manufacturer (though normally each manufacturer chooses two or three from these possibilities), so you see that the color name is sometimes not enough to go on.

The Importance of Pigments

Pigments (and dyes, which appear in some liquid watercolors) are what make up your paints, whether they be watercolors, acrylics or oils. Pigments are finely ground raw materials which can be made into usable paints with the addition of a binder or vehicle like gum arabic, honey or sugar, plasticisers, humectants and other ingredients. Pigments don't dissolve in water; they are suspended in the additives that help them disperse in liquid and adhere to your paper. (Think of silt particles suspended in a muddy river to picture this suspension.)

Pigments are organic or inorganic, and may be classified as natural or synthetic. Both types are useful to the artist and essential to some of us. When you know what makes up the paint you choose, you have a better idea of how that paint will react and how best to use it in your paintings.

Grinding Pigment Into Paint
Daniel Smith's Natural Sleeping Beauty Turquoise was used here. Most of us are familiar with this gemstone; it's recognizable in all its forms and makes a lovely color when ground into paint.



The Differences Between Single-and Multiple-Pigment Paints
Some artists prefer to stick to single-pigment paints—those with only one code. Paints made by mixing pigments will have multiple codes. It doesn't bother me if two (or more) pigments have gone into the tube, since I'm going to be mixing them anyway. However, sticking to

single-pigment paints will allow you to choose more consistently from brand to brand, and may help you achieve cleaner mixtures.

Different Paint Names, Same Pigments

Pigment designations are found on most tubes of paint and on manufacturers' charts. Look for the name and identifying pigment code (e.g. "Pigment: Cobalt Blue, PB28" which stands for Pigmen Blue 28). Even if paint names vary by brand, all brands use the same code for specific pigments.

Earth Colors

Earth colors refer to the range of browns, ochres, siennas and umbers (as well as a few others) that are made from ground earth pigments—mineral-rich soil, clay and so on. They are usually inorganic (Van Dyke Brown, a fugitive color that's liable to fade, is an exception) and not so saturated or intense; they have a low tinting strength. (Think dirt, but highly refined dirt!)

Of course, there are many more possibilities than are shown here—that's left for you to explore. Work with these paints to discover which paints diffuse most on damp paper, which "crawl," which stay pretty much where you put them and which settle smoothly, so you can decide how to use the various properties to create effects all your own.

Practice Painting Wet-Into-Wet and Direct
Here I tested how earth colors diffuse on wet paper. When that dried, I made two strokes of pure color directly on top. Painting witl earth colors produces diverse effects although a bit unsaturated.

Test the Staining and Opacity

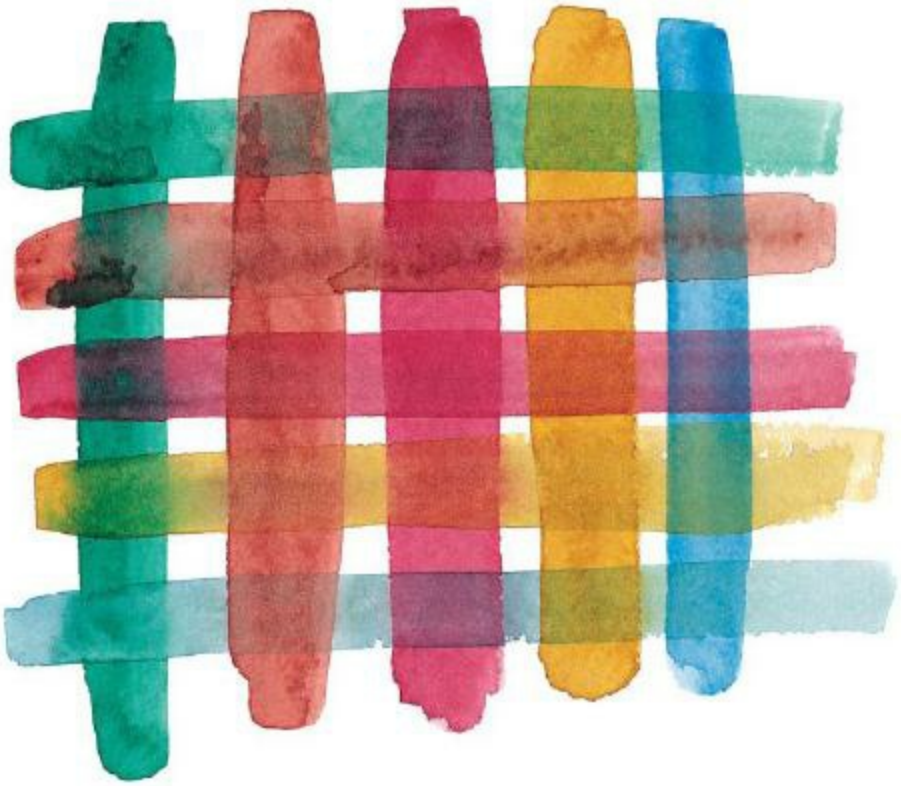
The colors I've used here are (top to bottom) Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Yellow Ochre, Burnt Umber and Venetian Red.

PAINT CHARACTERISTICS

Carbon Colors

The **carbon compounds** are organic and usually transparent and staining; use with care and you'll enjoy their unique properties. They include Permanent Alizarin Crimson, Phthalo Blue, Phthalo Green and the quinac-ridones. Artists often erroneously refer to carbon colors as dye colors because of their tendency to stain, though technically they are not true dyes.

Test the Transparency
Carbon colors are quite transparent as you can see when they are painted over a strip of waterproof ink. I tried lifting the color on the right side; I was surprised at how well the Phthalo Green lifted!



Gorgeous Glazes

Because carbon colors are so transparent, you can glaze one over another and still see the color below. To prevent mixing, it's best to let the first layer dry thoroughly before adding the next color. Use these colors where you want strong, transparent color, or thin them for very subtle color alterations, such as a shadow on a flower.

PAINT CHARACTERISTICS

Essential Mineral Colors

The **mineral colors** include the cadmiums, Ultramarine Blue and Cobalt Blue. These are essentia colors on many artists' palettes. These traditional pigments are very useful when you want a good, strong color. You can also use them to glaze over other colors, but while they are brilliantly colored, they can be rather opaque. Experiment with these old favorites to learn their capabilities and what they can do for you.

Test the Transparency
Mineral colors are quite opaque as you can see when they are painted over a strip of waterproof ink.

Cadmium Orange Adds Brilliance to a Winter Scene
Cadmium Orange really captures the slanting light of this winter sunset. It is a somewhat opaque, heavy color, and when used wet and dropped into a damp wash, it pushes that wash back to create a nice edge. You can see this most clearly in the bottom edge of the tree at the far right.

Practice Painting Wet-Into-Wet and Direct

Here I tested how the mineral colors will diffuse on wet paper. When that dried, I stroked on a swatch of direct color. Then, when tha
dried, I lifted color with clear water.

PAINT CHARACTERISTICS

Novelty Mineral Colors

There are a number of *new* mineral colors on the market—Daniel Smith's PrimaTek line, Joe Miller's Signature Series, and Natural Pigments all offer new paint possibilities for paints made fron minerals. Some are older, historical pigments that are given a new look, while others are completely new. In many cases, the pigments are ground from semi-precious gemstones, and they can give your art a new dimension. You owe it to yourself to experiment with at least a few of these colors.

Beautiful Granulation Qualities
This little sketch shows some of the possibilities of the 8-pan Natural Pigments set. This set is modeled after the eighteenth-century artis John Robert Cozen's palette. Here I mostly used the rich red browns, browns and blacks, which granulate nicely to suggest foliage.

Purpurite Genuine

Rhodonite Genuine

Natural Sleeping Beauty Turquoise Genuine

Minnesota Pipestone

Natural Amazonite Genuine

Serpentine Genuine

Zoisite

Tiger's Eye Genuine

Bright Minerals
Some mineral paints are quite subdued in color, but they don't have to be! Those made from semiprecious stones can be quite colorful. Here are swatches from the Daniel Smith paint line.

Try Painting With the New Bright Minerals
In this painting I used some of the brighter of the new mineral colors in several different ways—applying paint wet-into-wet, as glazes and as direct painting.

Explore Your Paints

Again, getting to know your paints and the pigments that go into them help you get the effects you want. You can make them do amazing things, if you know which ones to reach for on your palette! From bold and bright to the subtlest of neutrals, all these are at your fingertips with a bit of experimentation and practice.

Test Any New Colors You Add to Your Palette
Here I was trying out a new tube of Indigo in my journal, mixing it with other colors on my palette. This kind of "play" is fun and instructive, and suggests fresh alternatives to your usual tried-and-true color mixes.

Test Your Pigments' Permanence

If you're just playing or working in a journal that will normally be closed, lightfastness (the permanence of the colors you choose) isn't such a big issue. If you're doing paintings intended to be framed and hung where they will be exposed to light, however, you should definitely keep

permanence in mind.

Student-grade paints have a tendency to fade even if not exposed to direct sun. Even some artist-grade paints have this same issue.

To test pigments on your own, make a strongly saturated stripe of each of your colors and label them with the name (and brand, if you like), then cover half with a piece of thick, opaque or black paper. Put this setup in a sunny window for three to six months, then check back to see which colors have faded.

Transparency and Opacity

Sometimes it is important to know the transparency or opacity of colors. After all, when you just want to lay in a transparent glaze to alter mood or color, you'd be disappointed to end up with a foggy veil instead, and when you want to cover something with a strong opaque or add that subtle, smoky look, it's frustrating to have your overglaze disappear as if it had never been. The cadmiums are quite opaque and can be used as bright "jewels," touches of pure color, even over a fairly dark preliminary wash. Make a handy chart of all your colors to help you see the transparency/opacity of all your colors for future use.

The Perfect Subject for Bold Opaques
This quick sketch of a friend's Schnauzer shows the bold granulating and opaque qualities that make Kremer paints so interesting.

Make a Color Chart for Transparency and Opacity

Anytime you try out new colors, it's always a good idea to test the transparency and opacity to see how they will react when you go to paint with them. To do this, lay down a strip or two of black India ink and let it dry thoroughly. Then, simply paint a strip of each of your pigments over these black bars. Some colors will almost cover the black (these are more oaque), and some will seem to disappear (these are more transparent).

On the left, I've tested the Daniel Smith, Winsor & Newton and Schminke colors normally on my palette. On the right, I've tested relative newcomer to the field, Kremer Pigments. Kremer colors are richly pigmented, somewhat grainy and more opaque than some of the other brands, but great fun to experiment with.

Staining and Sedimenting Paints

Staining and sedimenting are two interesting properties you may want to explore. Some colors, by the nature of their pigments or the ingredients used, will sink into the paper and be harder to remove; some have larger pigment grains that settle into the grain of the paper to make interesting texture (see the Schnauzer sketch).

A manufacturer's paint chart will tell you which paints stain and which granulate or sediment. Combining these two types of paint in a single painting can produce interesting effects.

Mix Staining and Sedimenting Colors for Exciting Effects
Here I applied Ultramarine Blue at upper left, Zoisite in the center, and Manganese Blue Hue at upper right; all dropped into a wash c Permanent Alizarin Crimson. Often you will get a kind of halo as the heavier sedimenting color settles into the grain of your paper and the staining color diffuses. I've accentuated the effect here by tipping my paper back and forth and allowing the Permanent Alizarin Crimson to flow, to help you better see the effects. This technique could be useful in any number of ways, to depict a foggy morning or a soft sunset, or to suggest shadows on flesh.

Apply Sedimentary Paint Over Ink

An ink underdrawing can give you a wonderful framework on which to float sedimenting colors. Allow them to flow and settle in interesting ways. Tipping your paper back and forth while the wash is wet will encourage maximum settling. This technique works best if you are using a paper with some texture, such as cold press or rough. Here I've used Cobalt Blue and Venetian Red in various mixtures.

Mixing on the Paper vs. Mixing on Your Palette

It makes a huge difference whether you mix your chosen pigments on the palette or on the paper; the contrast can be dramatic. If you are after a smooth, homogenized blending for flat or especially subtle effects, mix on your palette. For exciting, varied effects, try mixing directly on your paper.

Mixing on the Paper for a Foliage Effect
Here I drew the spiderweb with liquid mask, then dropped in blues and yellows and allowed them to mix mostly on the paper. I sprayed some with clear water and spattered with more of the colors used for a soft, varied effect that suggests distant foliage.

Paper vs. Palette
Mixing Sap Green, Yellow Ochre and Cobalt Violet on the palette (top) produces a uniform tone, neutral in color and a bit muddy.

Mixing the same colors on paper instead of the palette (bottom) produces a much more varied effect. Of course, you can mix somewhat more thoroughly than I have done here—this is an extreme example. Normally, I just introduce little “jewels” of pure color here and there in an area of the painting.

Mixing Grays and Neutrals

It's not necessary to buy gray in tube form, unless you just want to. Mixing grays and neutrals can give you some wonderful color choices. I like to mix my grays with earth colors or use a "palette gray," the gray that results from mixing all the colors left on your palette. Try both approaches as each has its use.

Full-Palette Grays
Grays mixed from whatever colors are on your palette at the time can be very luminous, especially if you've used no sedimenting colors. They can be warmed or cooled according to the puddle of paint that you draw your brush through. Here Phthalo Blue, Ultramarine Blue Permanent Alizarin Crimson, Cadmium Orange, Sap Green and Raw Sienna were variously mixed to produce the grays you see. Thes lovely grays work well with people, florals, and interiors, or any place you want a subtle, luminous, or light-filled gray.

Burnt Umber and Ultramarine Blue

Burnt Sienna and Ultramarine Blue

Burnt Sienna and Manganese Blue Hue

Raw Sienna and Cobalt Blue

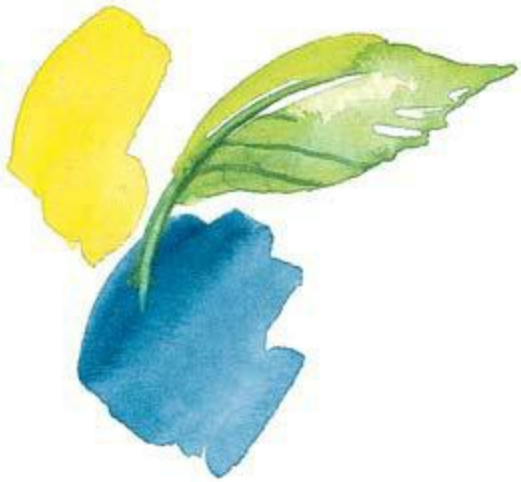
Earth Grays

The sedimenting earth and mineral colors produce atmospheric, grainy grays, wonderful for painting the details of nature. In this sample, I've mixed my warms and cools to offer some suggestions. Some are rich and dark, others lighter in value, like the mix of Raw Sienna and Cobalt Blue here. Notice how the colorsseparate and make their own nice, grainy textures as the heavier pigment particles settle into the texture of the paper.

Mixing Greens

Many artists have an aversion to certain hues—colors they just can't tolerate. For a long time, I disliked green. I used to complain about painting in the summer because of all the unvarying, everlasting greens. So I tried mixing greens from all the blues and yellows on my palette (oranges and warm browns can also act as yellows) and discovered my favorite deep rich green, which is made from Phthalo Blue and Burnt Sienna.

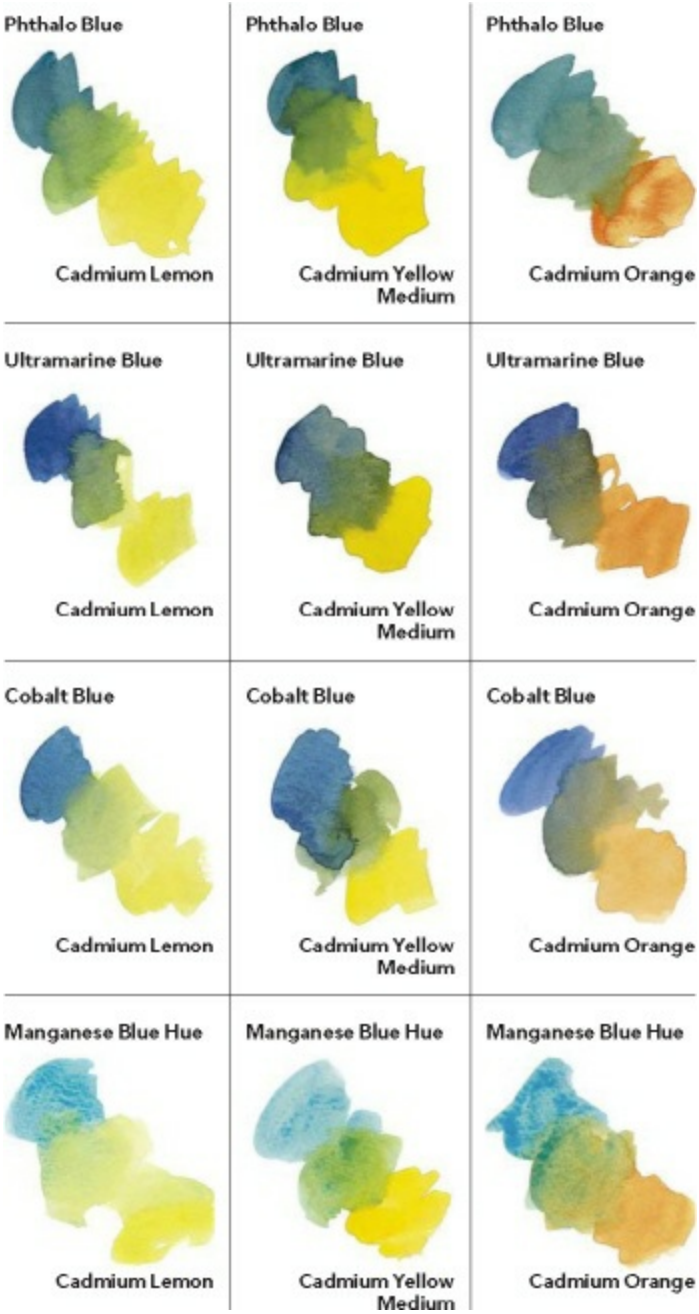
Olive Hue



Fresh Spring Green

Think About the Color Wheel When Mixing Greens

Be aware of the color wheel you explored, when going for the greens. Phthalo Blue and Cadmium Yellow Light or Cadmium Lemon wil produce a fresh spring green, while Cadmium Yellow Medium and Ultramarine Blue produce a more olive hue.



Mix a Range of Greens Using Your Palette of Colors

Try mixing all the blues you own with all the yellows and see what a wonderful variety you achieve. These greens are made the old-fashioned way, mixing yellows and blues. Phthalo Blue, Ultramarine Blue, Cobalt Blue and Manganese Blue Hue are my blues Cadmium Lemon, Cadmium Yellow Medium and Cadmium Orange are my yellows. There are any number of other choices, of course Try Indian Yellow, Transparent Yellow, New Gamboge, Yellow Ochre, Raw Sienna, Naples Yellow or any other yellow (or blue) that you normally use. The point is to get acquainted with the colors you have and what they will do.

Experiment Further

Try altering your tube greens with browns, blues, yellows and reds. You may find new and exciting greens that you look forward to using whenever possible.

Don’t Be Afraid of Mixing Darks

You can get wonderful rich darks with watercolor—don’t be afraid to mix up bold washes. You can make lively, velvety blacks, wonderful shadow colors and rich pine-greens, all without resorting to tube blacks.

Practice Mixing Darks

Here are some possibilities for mixing great, bold darks. Try combinations of your own, and be sure to keep notes!

A Phthalo Blue + Burnt Sienna

B Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet + Ultramarine Blue

C Burnt Umber + Ultramarine Blue

D Phthalo Green + Permanent Alizarin Crimson

E Indigo + Burnt Umber

Use Darks to Portray Stormy Skies

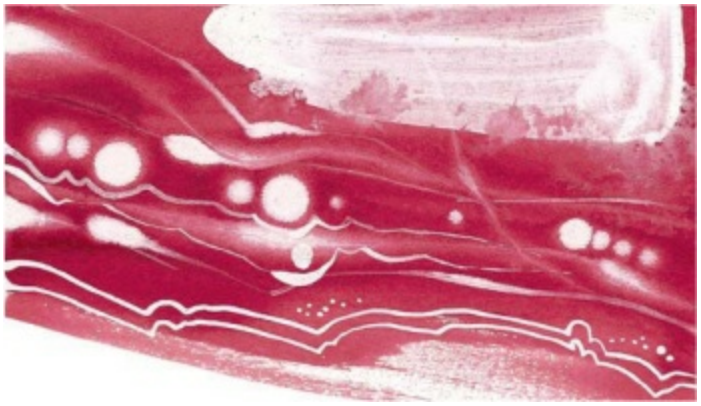
Here I used Indigo, Payne's Gray and Burnt Sienna in the sky, and a rich, dark mix of Phthalo Blue and Burnt Sienna on the left for th cedar tree.

Mixing Large, Dark Washes

If you need to mix up a large amount of color, use a small cup rather than your palette. Then test the color on scrap paper to make sure it is as dark as you want.

Gouache and Opaque White Watercolor

Opaque white or gouache is handy stuff and has been used by artists for generations. However, these days, the use of opaque white with transparent watercolor is considered by some to be in a class with spitting on the flag or taking your martini stirred rather than shaken; I admit to a bit of that prejudice myself. But when I give in to it, I remind myself that what I'm trying to do is produce a painting, a work of art, not necessarily a pure transparent watercolor.



Retouch White and Ink
This sample shows white ink and retouch white (a bleed-proof white paint originally used by graphic designers to correct mistakes on pen and ink drawings) on top of a dried wash of Permanent Rose.

The bottom two lines are retouch white. The retouch white is a bit more opaque than the ink, and fed more smoothly from the pen nib I was using to apply it. It needs only to be thinned a little before charging your pen nib.

The rest of the whites were done with white ink, which has varied transparency, depending on how much water you mix in. In the large, top wash of ink, I thinned my mixture by about half with water, then spattered the lower edge with clear water.

Wet-Into-Wet Opaque White Paint
Opaque white reacts interestingly with water. Try it in a wet wash to produce a soft "vapor trails" effect as seen here. Notice that I've also used a bit of wet-into-wet spatter; it reminds me of altocumulus clouds—high and patchy.

Opaque White Makes a Great Highlight
A tiny touch of opaque white ink can give a wonderful sparkle of life to an animal's eye. Here my cat Oliver's astounding multicolor

mosaic eyes really lit up when I added the opaque white.

Spattering With White Gouache

There's no better way to suggest falling snow than with a bit of opaque spatter when your painting is all but finished. Thin down opaque white to a light-cream consistency, but not so thin that it is no longer opaque. Spatter on from a stiff bristle brush or an old toothbrush. Try to vary the size of the droplets for interest, and keep them somewhat clumped to give the feeling of snow flurries.

Working With Opaque White and Color

Using your favorite watercolors to tint opaque white is a handy way to get a strong opaque. This type of treatment can give your work new layers and dimension. Painting with opaque color also allows you the opportunity to work on new surfaces—like tinted paper—which gives a whole new effect to your paintings. (Be aware that opaque whites range from warm to cool, and translucent to opaque. Zinc White is a warm, translucent white, whereas Titanium is a cool, more opaque white.)

Multi-Colored Opaque Spatter
The handiest and least noticeable use of opaque is in spatter. Here I've suggested a field of wildflowers by spattering judiciously with white, pink and yellow, made by mixing opaque white with my palette watercolors.

Gouache on Toned Paper
Gouache pops on toned paper. To paint my light-colored cat on this brown background, I combined opaque gouache paints with opaque white in the lightest areas. A tiny dot of opaque white creates the perfect highlight for the cat's eye. (Be aware that you may need to restate your lights with additional or stronger washes, as opaque colors dry differently than you may expect.)

Gouache Alternatives

If you don’t want to invest in tubes of gouache paint to begin with (they are rather expensive), stick with a tube of opaque white or use a product like retouch white or correction white. Many artists prefer to use white acrylic for spatter, but remember, it is permanent when dry.

Using Gouache to Paint a Moody Portrait

DEMONSTRATION

You can get some wonderfully subtle and sophisticated effects using gouache on paper you tone yourself. I'll show you in this painting of my youngest godchild, Nora.

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

Acrylics: Burnt Sienna,
Ultramarine Blue
Gouache: Chinese White

Brushes

1-inch (25mm) flat
nos. 6 and 8 rounds

Surface

140-lb. (300gsm) cold-pressed watercolor paper

Other

White colored pencil

1 **Tone the Paper**

Use Burnt Sienna and Ultramarine Blue acrylic, thinned to a watercolor consistency, to make a loose, abstract background with your flat brush. This background wash will serve as the middle values for the painting.

Sketch in the simplest of beginnings with a white colored pencil as guidelines for your portrait.

2 **Develop the Subject**

Add more details to your subject with Chinese White gouache. Then mix Chinese White witl Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna to create a dark, opaque color for the eyes. A no. 6 round offers control for details.

3 **Develop Form**

Work back and forth with lighter and darker versions of the acrylic/gouache mix from step 2, adjusting the likeness and the light across her face. Allow the background wash to continue to provide middle values.

4 Make Final Adjustments

Adjust some areas for greater accuracy, washing back and lifting away some of the gouache if needed to model the cheek and mouth. Add final details such as the definition of shapes on the lips, and refine the eyes. Then add more fine, silky strands of hair with your no. 8 round, spreading the brush hairs and painting with a dry-brush effect.

Old Master Tricks

The Old Masters mixed Chinese White gouache with each color on their palette for a soft, moody look. Just be sure not to apply these mixes too thickly as they can crack when dry.

Have Fun With Specialty Paints

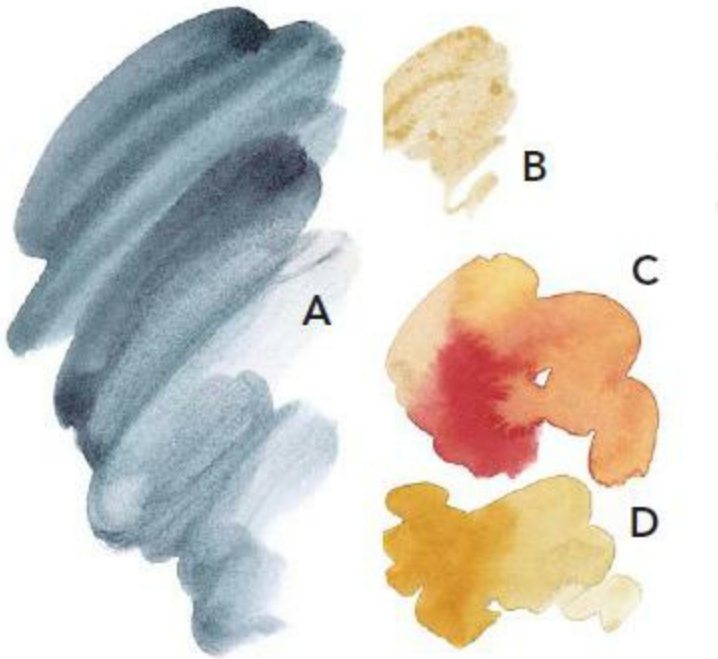
There are lots of new (and not-so-new) specialty paints out on the market—experiment! Some of these are considered to be novelty paints; you may not want to use them in a serious piece you plan to enter in a show.

Duochrome colors combine two color notes. Viewed from one angle they appear as one color, while from another angle, they look like a different color entirely.

Interference paints are similar, though they usually appear quite pale on the palette. Where you stand when you look at them makes a difference in their appearance. These pigments are often created with a fine, metal-oxide-coated mica powder with a variety of grain sizes that account for the color change (they are both reflective and refractive, which means they can bend light). Originally, the shimmer of interference paints came from the scales and bladders of whitefish, like herring.

A more familiar standby with a much longer history, **iridescent paints** reflect light directly and don't depend on where the viewer stands. This classification includes golds, silvers, coppers and pearls.

Try all three specialty paints on one subject!



Try Mixing Specialty Colors With Your Favorite Colors
Specialty paints can be used straight from the tube or mixed with other paints to create subtly shimmering washes.
A Pearlescent mixed with Permanent Alizarin Crimson and Phthalo Blue

B Iridescent Gold

C Iridescent Gold mixed with Hansa Yellow and Cadmium Red

D Iridescent Gold mixed with Quinacridone Gold

Use Specialty Paints on a Dark Surface for the Best Pop!

Duochrome, interference and iridescent paints work best on a dark surface where they can add shine to your work.

Ink and Watercolor

The practice of doing an ink drawing and applying color with washes of watercolor has been around for hundreds of years and is enjoying a renaissance today.

There are many ways to apply ink, including dip pens, brush pens and fiber-tipped pens. Working with ink and watercolor together is interesting no matter how you choose to do it!

Apply Ink Wet-In-Wet

When applying ink over wet watercolor, the ink blooms and spreads and goes all over the place. It can be more or less controllable, depending on how wet your preliminary wash is and on the brand or kind of ink you buy.

Apply a rich wash of watercolor, and try a few ink application techniques. Here I dragged the ink bottle stopper over the wet wash, drew into it with a pen nib and dropped ink off the end of a brush.

Wet-into-wet also allows for loose effects that work well in landscapes. It is great for grasses and reeds.

Apply Watercolor Over a Dry Ink Sketch
I sketched this scene with a Pentel Pocket-brush pen (which has a nice variable brush tip) and waterproof India ink, and let it dry. Then I washed watercolors in loosely. Rembrandt often used this technique with wonderful results. Instead of watercolor, you can complete your scene with washes of ink diluted with water for a monochrome effect.

Apply Ink Over a Dry Watercolor Background
Let a loose wet-into-wet wash suggest a subject, then add ink. Here, a fresh mix of blue, green and brown created a moody background. Once it dried, I added the subject with ink.

Colored Inks

There are many wonderful colored inks available with their own very special “special effects.” Sepia is my favorite—I like it for its atmospheric moodiness and its subtlety, but you may like blue, orange or purple instead.

Try them all!

Sepia Ink on a Wet Wash

Here I’ve applied Sepia ink with a nib onto two wet pigment types, staining Permanent Alizarin Crimson and sedimentary Ultramarine Blue. The ink is a bit more active in the staining wash, but it displaces the sedimentary pigment, leaving a lighter, haloed line. I was very generous with the ink on the dark line at the right. It was quite juicy; you can see how it spread like a centipede! The pressure of the nib made a fine line down the center of each squiggle—this effect could be avoided by painting it on with a brush.

While these samples look abstract, this technique can be used in a number of ways. Use it to suggest a woodsy background, create patterns in ice or create flowers; it’s very versatile.

Bright Colors on a Wet Wash

Here I’ve worked a few of the available inks into a wet, pale Phthalo Blue wash. Where the pen had a lot of ink in it, you see wild spreading of color. The more controlled lines result from less ink in the pen or a faster stroke (applying ink from a pen slowly will allow more of it to leave the pen).

You will also get different effects according to what your base wash is, so you may want to try this out on a small sample sheet before using it in a painting.

Use Two Colors of Ink in One Painting
The brown ink on the peppers and onion keeps them inside the darker black ink basket.

Clear Water

The simplest liquid aid of all is plain old H_20 (clear water). It's as basic to the watercolorist as paint. I often try to keep two containers of water, one to clean my brush and one for mixing fresh pigment washes, this one staying clean and unsullied, instantly available for all kinds of special effects.

A Sprayer for Every Occasion
I found this little sprayer in the travel section of my local discount store. You may also find one at art or beauty supply stores in a variety of sizes, but I couldn't beat the price of this one. It can also act as my water supply when painting on the spot.

Spattering and Blotting Water
Here I've suggested a rock form with Burnt Umber, Burnt Sienna and Ultramarine Blue, mixed primarily on the paper rather than on m palette. As the basic wash began to lose its shine, I spattered on clear water from a stencil brush (any small, stiff brush would work as well) and also hit it, here and there, with a fine spray from a pump bottle of fresh water. I blotted occasionally to heighten the effect. I scraped in a few lines and spattered on a bit of Burnt Sienna for further texture.

Use Blooms and Backruns to Your Advantage
Of course, you can also make juicy washes in a lighter value and let them make deliberate backruns, as well. That's what I did here tc suggest the early spring trees against the darker blue sky. While the sky was still damp, I dropped in "blooms" of a pale green wash.

That wetter color pushed the blue pigment back and made soft-colored spring trees.

Dripped and Spattered Water on a Wet Wash

In this sample I dripped and spattered clean water into a rich, wet wash of Ultramarine Blue, causing large “explosions.” Notice how the pigment crawls at the edge of each drop. (This is called a “bloom,” and usually happens in a painting by accident. But, why not do it on purpose? It can be a very effective trick.)

I spattered smaller droplets into the wash as it began to lose its shine.

This looks a bit galactic to me. Maybe it’s that deep blue “sky” wash.

Clear Water *continued*

Let the Weather Work for You

Sometimes Mother Nature provides the H2O. In this case, I was painting on the spot when a drizzle started, landing in the damp sk wash. The effect worked so well, I decided to let it be. I could not have done it better myself!

Suggest Trees With Water-Sprayed Paint

This is a very useful technique, whether on a forest or a single tree. Here, I laid down Phthalo Blue and Burnt Sienna in a rich splotch c color, which I then hit judiciously with a sprayer. I suggested the limbs and twigs by pulling paint from the wet wash down into the dryer part of the paper using the tip of a sharp pencil.

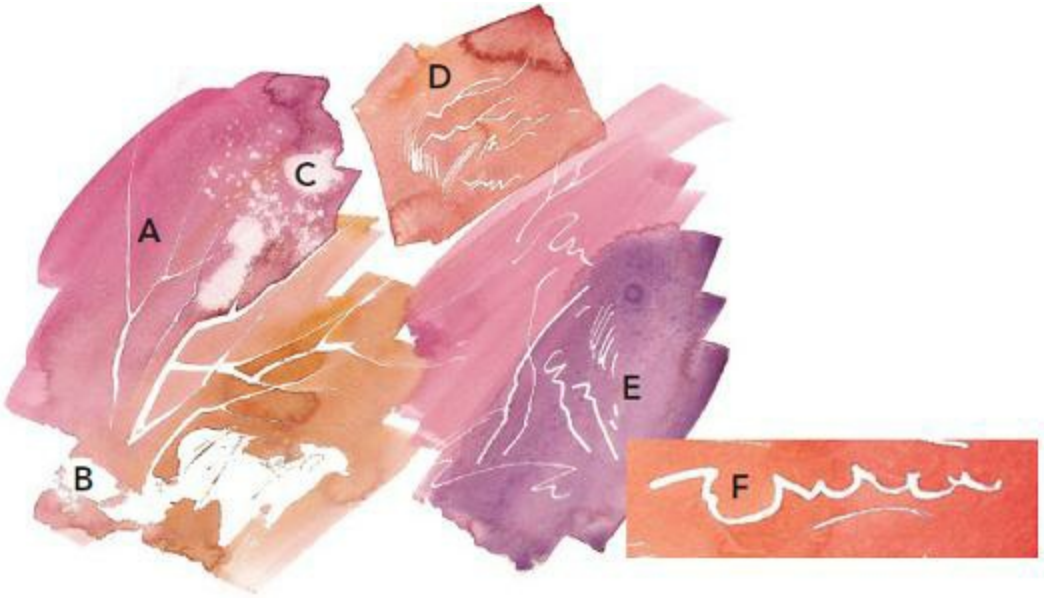
Suggest an Entire Landscape With Water-Sprayed Paint

Here I suggested landforms with juicy washes of Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet and Indigo. While they were still wet, I hit selected area with water from a small sprayer. It made the pigment follow the shape of the spray to create lovely foliage-like effects. A flock of crows feeding in the wintry field completes the scene.

Liquid Masking Fluid

One of the most useful tools watercolorists can use is a resist that helps preserve the white of the paper, or saves an underlayer of paint while additional layers of paint are added on top. Resists repel liquids, allowing us to dash in loose, colorful washes or thunderous darks and still have the brilliant contrasts possible when the lightest lights are revealed.

The most common masking agent today is liquid masking fluid, also called mask, masque, drawing gum or liquid frisket, among other things. It's available from different manufacturers in either white or tinted form; the latter helps you to see where the resist has been applied.



Several Ways to Apply Liquid Mask

A Feed tree-limb-like lines from the edge of a palette knife.

B Spread the creamy liquid with the flat of a palette knife.

C Spatter mask into a damp wash to make soft edges.

D Apply mask with an old-fashioned dip pen.

E Apply mask with a bamboo pen, a wooden skewer, twig, or drinking straw for even more linear effects.

F Use an Incredible Nib to apply mask. It's a double-duty tool with a point on one end and a chisel-like nib on the other that allows a great deal of versatility. It's easy to clean—once the mask dries, you can roll it right off the nib.

A bamboo pen works well to lay in thin lines of mask.

Tips for Using Liquid Masking Fluid

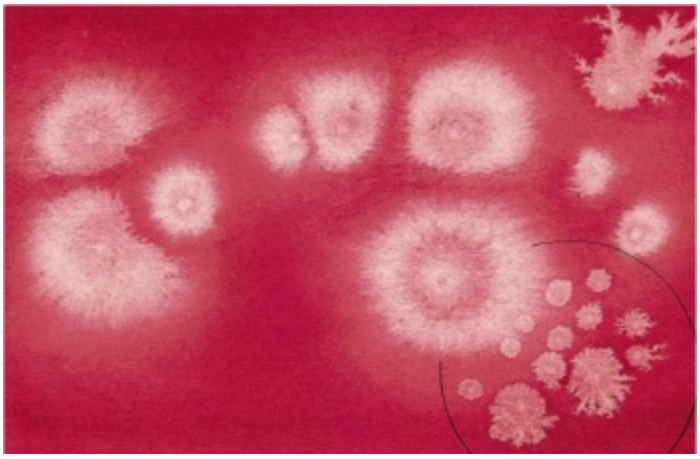
- Don't shake it. That will make bubbles that can pop and let in paint where you don't want it.
- You can thin liquid mask with water. Just use a little at a time to avoid thinning too much.
- Don't apply it with a good red sable. Use a nylon brush, an ink pen or a stick instead.
- Whatever brush you use to apply the liquid mask, wet it first with a bit of soap or detergent so it will rinse clean easily.

• Let liquid mask dry naturally. Drying it with heat can bond the masking agent to the paper, making it more difficult to remove.
• If you spatter liquid mask somewhere you don't want it, just let it dry and peel it off before you paint.
• Once you remove the resist, you may want to use clear water to soften the harsh edges left behind to avoid a pasted-on look.
• You can use a mild liquid resist on an area of your painting that is already painted to protect a color instead of the white of the paper.

Liquid Masking Fluid *continued*

When you really need to preserve a white or a particularly difficult-to-paint-around shape, liquid mask is your friend! (Imagine trying to paint the spiderweb without the use of liquid mask.) It can certainly be done, but why not take advantage of the technology that exists? Watercolorists often need all the help we can get.

Protect Delicate Details With Liquid Mask
For this soft, misty self-portrait, done wet-into-wet, I just needed to protect a few tiny details—light-struck hairs, details of glasses and the like. I applied the mask with a masking fluid pen and let it dry thoroughly before starting.



Try Dropping Mask Into Your Wet Paint
Here I dropped liquid mask into a wet Permanent Alizarin Crimson wash from the end of my brush. In the lower right circle, I made the cluster of smaller spots by dropping the liquid mask into the wash after it had lost its wet shine. I've used this technique to suggest seed heads or stars in a winter sky. Allow the wash to dry completely before trying to remove the mask.

Practice Different Ways to Apply Mask With a Brush

The strokes at right were protected by using a normal round watercolor brush loaded with mask. I made the larger spot in the middle with the side of the brush, and the small dots on the left by spattering on mask.

Removing Liquid Masking Fluid

- To remove liquid mask with the least damage to your paper's surface, rub it lightly with a fingertip to start an edge, then pull off as much as you can at an acute angle to your paper.
- You can also use a rubber cement pickup (a square of India rubber), instead. Be gentle; don't scrub!
- And, some artists swear by removing mask with masking tape. Press the tape gently to the surface of the liquid mask and lift.
- If you splatter mask in a place you don't want it, just wait for it to dry and peel it off before you paint.

Paint a Landscape With Spattering and Liquid Mask

DEMONSTRATION

I loved this little building so much, with its deep stone foundation set into the hillside. All of the textures in this scene lent themselves to using a variety of techniques and materials.

Gather Your Reference Material
I sketched this scene quickly on location and shot a photo from the same spot.

1 Sketch in the Scene
Sketch in the roughest of guidelines with a pencil, then use a dip pen with a fine nib to lay in liquid mask and protect some of the trees and branches in the background.

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

- Burnt Sienna
- Burnt Umber
- Cadmium Yellow Medium

Indigo
Phthalo Blue
Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet
Ultramarine Blue

Brushes

½-inch (12mm) flat
nos. 3, 5 and 8 rounds
Oil painter's small round bristle brush
Sharpened brush handle

Surface

140-lb. (300gsm) hot-pressed paper

Other

Craft knife
Dip pen with a fine nib
Liquid mask
Mechanical pencil
Palette knife
Small water sprayer
Sponge (natural)

2 Apply First Washes

Use a no. 8 round brush to apply a varied mix of Cadmium Yellow Medium and Phthalo Blue as the lightest washes in the grass and trees. Flood rich mixtures of Cadmium Yellow Medium and Indigo into the shadow areas. Use a mix of Burnt Sienna and Ultramarine Blue for the tree trunks.

Paint the first washes on the building with Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet mixed with a bit o Ultramarine Blue; a ½-inch (12mm) flat works well. Use a round brush to add more details in the

building, using a mix of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna. Use a redder version of this mix, and apply a light, dry-brush application on the roof to suggest rust. Use variations of this mix on the stone wall as well, applying the paint roughly, spattering and blotting color.

3 Warm Up the Greens

To warm up the scene, dance a rich mix of Phthalo Blue and Burnt Sienna around the tree area using just the tip of your no. 8 round to suggest leafy areas. Make a rich wash of Indigo, Phthalo Blue and Burnt Sienna for the dark foliage, and drybrush and sponge it in the trees. Then spray clear water into the dark green wash to push back the paint and make rough-edged foliage masses.

Add in more trunks and branches with the same mix from step 2. You can drag smaller limbs out with a sharpened end of a brush handle, pulling the paint out of a rich, wet area in wonderfully calligraphic lines.

Use a no. 5 round to add more details in the stonework and on the roof and building, using various mixes of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna. Spatter a reddish version of this mix with the round bristle brush to give added texture to the stonework. Blot with a sponge to suggest stone.

4 Remove Mask and Add Depth to Trees

Once everything has dried from step 3, remove the mask and continue to develop the foliage using previous green mixes from steps 2 and 3; your no. 3 or no. 5 round will work well here.

Mask Protection

This detail shows you how clean the tree trunks and limbs remain when you remove the mask.

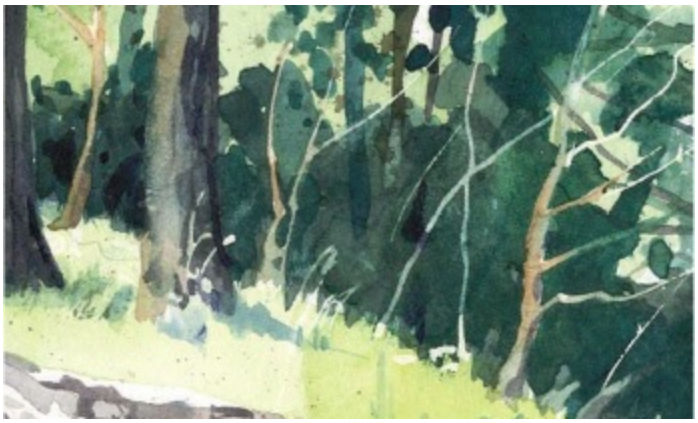
5 Add Final Details

Use the round bristle brush to make jabbing or stabbing upward marks or use the sharpened end of a brush handle to add grassy details.

Add a few unifying glazes with a thin wash of Phthalo Blue or Ultramarine Blue grayed with a bi of Burnt Sienna.

Add an old fence with Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Umber. A lighter or darker version of this same mix works for small twigs (try painting them with a palette knife), the shadows on the foreground stones and the small, sharp details in the building.

Finally, scratch out a few light-struck twigs and blades of grass with a sharp craft knife.



Softening Masked Areas

When you remove liquid mask you're left with hard-edged white lines. You can create a more natural effect if you paint over these lines with a light glaze of color, and soften some edges with clear water, blotting up excess pigment. This will keep the trees from looking pasted on.

Permanent Masking Fluid

There's a new addition to the traditional liquid mask choices—Winsor & Newton's Permanent Mask. This new mask doesn't get removed, so you won't be able to paint over the lights it protects or soften an edge, but it can be useful when you know you want to retain a sharp-edged white with no alteration.

Applied too thickly, it will leave a shine which is also permanent. Experiment to find just the right degree of wetness on your brush, and be sure to wash the brush well immediately after applying the mask, or you'll ruin it.

Practice Working With Permanent Mask and Your Paints
You can even mix the permanent mask with your paints instead of water, as I did here with the orange and yellow squiggles on the right. You may need to do a bit of cleanup with clear water once everything dries, as paint will sit on top of the masked areas (you can see this on the left in the blue, orange and red areas). I used a damp cotton swab to remove some of the dark paint from the yellow swatch.

White Glue as a Permanent Mask

You can also use white glue or school glue as a permanent mask or textural element in your paintings. Squeeze the glue right from the bottle onto your paper (it will destroy a brush if allowed to dry in it) and let it dry overnight. Then apply your washes of paint over the raised glue lines. The paint will puddle somewhat beside the glue lines; that's part of the effect.

Melted Wax

Whatever you protect with wax stays white forever since it resists water. Historically, though, artists used wax as resists before liquid mask or rubber cement became available. If you are familiar with the art of batik, using melted wax with watercolor produces much the same effect, except that you can never completely remove the wax. This means, of course, that you can't paint new color over it.

The batik tool called a "tjanting" is very useful in making wonderful, even lines with wax. A brush is an acceptable substitute and can make wonderful wave or surf forms with wax. Be sure not to use one of your good watercolor brushes though, as you won't be able to remove all the wax.

Stroked on Wax
In this sample I applied strokes of melted wax with a bristle brush and allowed it to dry. Then I painted over them with Cadmium Yellow and Phthalo Blue. I like the way the watercolor washes bead on the waxed areas—it adds another nuance of texture.

Dripped on Wax
Now I've gone for a more controlled effect. Wax was dropped from the end of my brush and painted on in knob-ended lines. I was able to remove the majority of wax by putting the watercolor paper on a thick pad of newspaper, covering it with paper towels and melting the wax with a warm iron, but I still couldn't paint over it with watercolor.

Melting Wax

Be careful when melting wax; it is extremely flammable. It's best to use a double boiler. Remove it from the heat as soon as it is melted. This watery, liquid wax feeds easily through the tjanting—simply load it into the small receptacle with a spoon or other tool. If the wax is still liquid and hasn't

begun to cool and thicken, it will sink into your paper's fibers with no need for later removal; if it does begin to thicken, you may want to pop off the hardened wax residue before continuing with your painting.

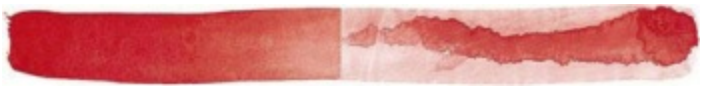
Gesso

Gesso is a handy tool borrowed from the acrylic painter's repertoire—it is usually used to prime a surface before painting on it. You can coat your watercolor paper (or canvas or board) with gesso to make an unusual surface for watercolors.

The purpose of using gesso in a watercolor painting is to make your paper surface impermeable—your washes will sit on top of the surface and make interesting textures of their own. They will puddle, bubble and flow in unexpected ways that can give your work a fresh look. Your colors may look more intense on a gessoed surface, too.

Gesso can also be used to create unexpected textures for an abstract background. And, since the gesso allows you to lift almost back to white, you can work forward and backward, lifting and adding paint to get the likeness or effect you're after. Working with gesso is almost like sculpting, and allows you to refine the image nearly indefinitely.

Collaging With Gesso
I painted a layer of gesso onto my watercolor paper, then attached paper towels, tissues, crumpled wax paper, wood chips and cornmeal to the surface with more gesso. (I typically recommend not using edibles in your tricks—see Wine. But, the cornmeal here is enclosed in a layer of acrylic gesso, similar to paintings I did using this technique thirty years ago, which are still untouched by insect damage.) When the gesso was completely dry, I added loose watercolor washes. This technique could inspire an abstract handling or part of a landscape.



Cadmium Red Medium

Phthalo Blue

Manganese Blue Hue

Ultramarine Blue

Quinacridone Gold

Raw Sienna

Burnt Sienna

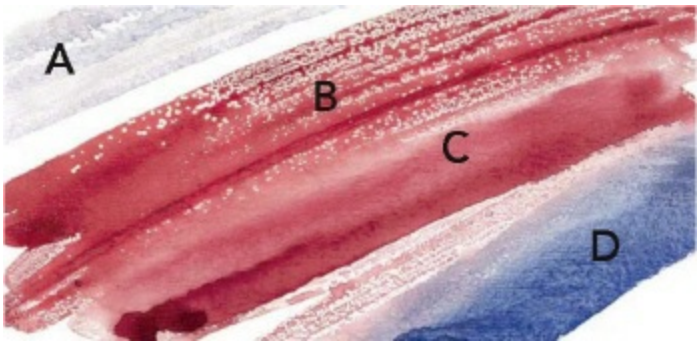
Watercolor on a Smooth Gessoed Surface
Here I've begun each stroke on cold-pressed watercolor paper and finished it on the same paper with a coat of gesso. You can see the difference in how the surface accepts the washes.

Tips for Using Gesso

- Apply it as a smooth wash, then let it dry and sand it to a hard, fine surface to allow the paint you apply on it to puddle and run.
- Scratch or stamp into it when wet to create impressions, then paint over it when it dries.
- Apply it in a loose, scribbled manner for linear texture.
- Use different colored gessos or add your favorite colors to gesso to tint it.

Gloss Medium

Gloss medium resists watercolor washes, if they are quick and light. If the watercolor is darker or applied vigorously, it will overcome the medium, allowing a bit of polymer texture to show through—this can be a handy trick.



Painting on Smooth Gloss
Here Permanent Alizarin Crimson and Ultramarine Blue are contrasted on gloss medium for their staining and sedimenting qualities.

A A light wash of Ultramarine Blue is painted with a bit of Permanent Alizarin Crimson sneaked in.

B Permanent Alizarin Crimson is painted lightly and quickly on the surface.

C Permanent Alizarin Crimson is painted on thickly and with a degree of force over a layer of dried medium.

D Here I painted a strong, overwhelming wash of the Ultramarine Blue over the dried medium.

Painting on Scumbled Gloss
This time I scumbled on the gloss medium with loose strokes; you can see the subtle texture as it shows through the overwashes.

Painting Over Heavily-Textured Gloss
If you apply the gloss medium thickly and paint over it, the result will mimic impasto. Here, I used a variety of strokes and applications such as patting and scratching. I let the gloss medium dry, then painted on Ultramarine Blue and Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet to emphasize the textures in exciting ways. You can even rub off some of the paint with a damp tissue to bring out the texture of the dried

medium, but be advised you will have some shine in these areas.

Lifting on Gloss Medium

Painting over a thin, smooth wash of gloss medium lets you lift even staining watercolors fairly easily, removing the color almost back to pure white.

Apply the gloss medium in a light layer with a wide, soft brush and allow it to dry, then add watercolor on top. Lift while the paint is still wet, or allow it to dry, then lift it with a clean, damp brush to loosen pigment and blot with a clean tissue.

Gel Medium

You may be familiar with the old acrylic painting standby—gel medium. It can be used in the same way as gesso, with the advantage of being transparent when dry. The only disadvantage of this medium is that it, like all polymer products, can be hard on your brushes and must be washed out immediately after working.

Apply Thick Texture
In this sample I built up various thick textures using gel medium, stamping into it with my hand (upper left) and jar lids (bottom left), and drew into it with the end of a brush (right). I then allowed it to dry overnight and washed color over top of the dried texture, wiping some color off here and there with a soft tissue. The gel medium resists the overpainted wash slightly, like gloss medium.

Add Texture to the Medium
Create effects either subtle or bold by mixing something textural such as sand or sawdust into the matte medium before painting it onto your paper.

Here I added marble dust (used by pastel painters to prepare a ground) to the gel medium and painted it roughly onto the paper then allowed it to dry thoroughly. It looked like a rough adobe wall to me, so that's what I painted on top of the textured surface.

Use Matte Medium for More Subtlety
Polymer gel medium in the matte formula is a bit more subdued than the gloss; it's not as obvious or intrusive.

Thin Your Paint With Gel Medium
You can see distinct brushstrokes in this sample, thanks to thinning the paint with gel medium instead of water. I used a fan brush with longer strokes to create an initial grassy feel. Then I used the same brush to make short, choppy, upward strokes below.

Texture, Granulating and Impasto Mediums

There are a number of new mediums on the market, and most of them, unlike polymers, are watersoluble.

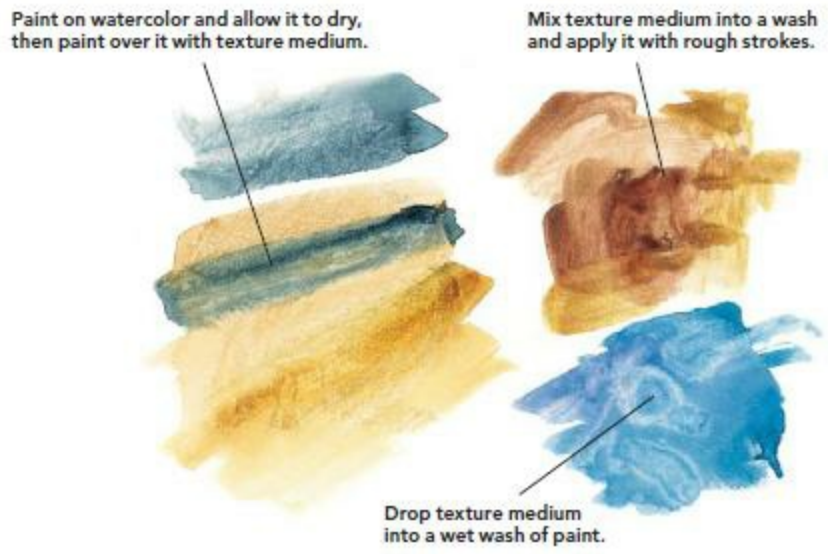
That means different handling and different effects.

For most of these, you'll want to have a dedicated palette, a dedicated water container and even a dedicated brush, as these mediums tend to lift back up into your wash and can be transferred back to the regular paints on your palette (a year later, my Permanent Alizarin Crimson still has a shimmer from my initial experiments with iridescent medium).

Many of these new mediums are novelty items, but they can offer some very interesting effects and are worth exploring.

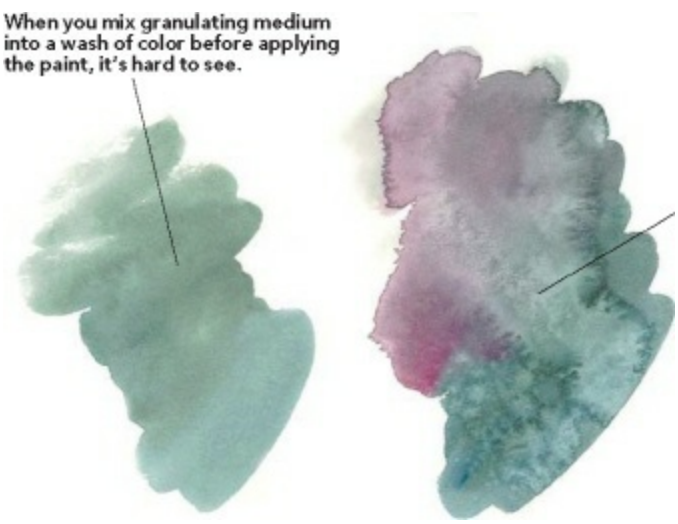
Impasto Medium

There are several impasto mediums on the market meant to preserve brushstrokes or give a bit of texture to your ground. You can definitely see the brushstrokes here. I mixed color in with the impasto medium and brushed it on. I also did some finger-painting into and with the damp color.



Texture Medium

This product creates an effect similar to gesso or gel medium, especially the more textured stuff. It has a somewhat gritty texture, but depending on how you apply it, you can get a little or a lot. Mix it with your paint or paint it onto your paper first and allow it to dry. It will lift during subsequent washes, though, so experiment with a light touch, and remember not to allow it to get mixed back into the paint on your palette.



Granulating Medium

Granulating medium is said to make any paint into a granulating or sedimenting paint. It works better to drop it into a wet wash than to mix it into the wash. And in practice, it works best in dark or rich mixtures.

Using Texture Medium to Portray a Rough Surface

DEMONSTRATION

I was enthralled by all the textures present at a historic adobe structure site I visited. It was so gorgeous, I could have painted there for days! I decided this would be a perfect subject on which to try out texture medium.

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

- Burnt Sienna
- Cobalt Blue
- Phthalo Blue
- Raw Sienna
- Ultramarine Blue
- Yellow Ochre

Brushes

- ½-inch (12mm) flat
- no. 6 round

Surface

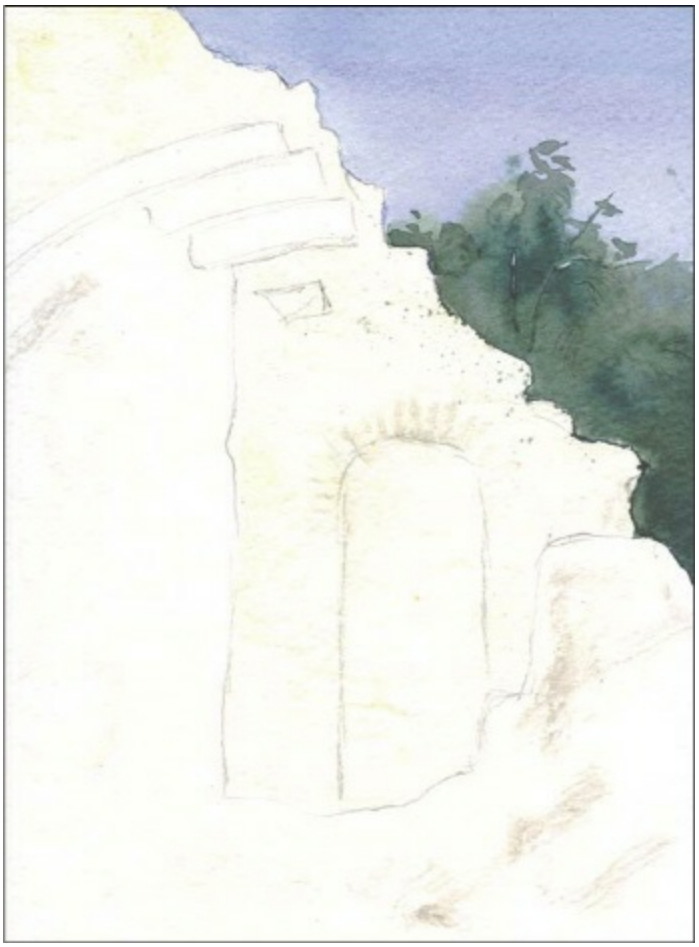
- 140-lb. (300gsm) cold-pressed watercolor paper

Other

- Texture medium

1 Sketch and Apply Medium

Apply texture medium to the adobe brick areas and to some of the smoother parts, but not in the sky or background trees. In this rough sketch, the slightly tinted areas you see are where the medium has dried.



2 Lay in Background

In the areas untouched by medium, lay in quick, bold washes of Cobalt Blue with your ½-inch (12mm) flat for the sky. Use Phthalo Blue and Burnt Sienna to paint in the trees.

3 Add Color to the Adobe Structure

Add the finer foliage with a no. 6 round and the tree colors from step 2. Paint the building with Raw Sienna, Yellow Ochre and Ultramarine Blue. The result is a nice contrast between the smooth and rough areas, but the medium lifted when I added shadow washes and additional glazes, so the finished painting didn't end up with quite the texture I had planned on.

Lifting Medium

This is a nifty product that you paint on the paper before you start to work. Let it dry in place, paint as usual, then even if you've used a staining pigment for its transparency, you'll be able to lift most of it if you wish.

Practice Using Lifting Medium With Various Colors
Here I painted on Permanent Rose, Cadmium Yellow and Indigo after painting the paper with the lifting medium. I was able to lift all the colors easily with a brush dampened in clear water to loosen the pigment, then blotted it up with a tissue and added a few new details.

Gum Arabic as a Lifting Medium

In generations past, artists used gum arabic as a lifting medium, and so can you! You can apply it over your entire painting surface or you can paint small details with gum arabic. Let it dry thoroughly, paint over it, then lift just those areas.

You may want to draw in the smaller shapes you wish to lift with a pencil because it's difficult to see where the slightly shinier gum is under the dried paint; the pencil lines help!

Iridescent Medium

Iridescent medium is a watercolor medium with tiny flecks of shine. You can mix it with your watercolor wash or paint it on once the watercolor is dry, but like other new mediums, you'll want to have not only a water source and brush dedicated to use with this product, but a palette as well, or you'll have shimmers in everything you do afterward! I usually use a small, white plastic plate for a palette when using one of these products.

Practice Different Ways to Apply Iridescent Medium
I used iridescent medium in place of water when applying the colors on the left. On the right, I allowed three strong washes to dry ther painted full strength iridescent medium on the colors in strokes and spots. This medium is more obvious when seen on a dark color.

Try Using Multiple Mediums in One Painting

I experimented with a lot of the new mediums here. Most of them can be a bit tricky or tempermental, but they are fun to play with. Since most of these are novelty tools, it seemed appropriate to paint a dragon worthy of a fantasy tale!

I used **texture medium** on the mane and the front of the neck to create a scaly effect. I used **lifting medium** on the back of the neck,

so I could lift out a scale pattern. I used **iridescent medium** on the lower part of the neck, both mixed into the deep Indigo Blue and then painted over once that was dry.

In the background, I spattered **liquid mask** before painting, allowed it to dry and painted over it, and while the wash was damp, I dropped in more liquid mask, as well as **granulating medium** and allowed everything to dry before lifting the mask.

On the dragon's face, I used **permanent masking fluid** for the highlight in the eye, and regular masking fluid on the cheek, nose and ear.

Using Gesso and Iridescent Medium in a Portrait Painting

DEMONSTRATION

Gesso makes a versatile ground when painted on your watercolor paper and allowed to dry. It's a fairly impervious surface, so you can lift watercolor back to its pure white. Using gesso is fun and feels almost like sculpting, while iridescent medium adds sparkle and pizazz!

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

- Burnt Sienna
- Payne's Gray

Brushes

- ½-inch (12mm) flat
- no. 6 round

Surface

- 140-lb. (300gsm) cold-pressed watercolor paper

Other

- Gesso
- Iridescent medium

1 Create a Background With Gesso and Paint

Apply gesso generously and texture it with your hand for a semirough surface. Allow it to dry, then splash on rich, deep colors and some spatter of iridescent medium. I used a ½-inch (12mm) flat with Payne's Gray and a bit of Burnt Sienna for warmth.

2 Lift Out the Portrait Basics

Lift out some of the lights in the forehead, nose and eye area with a no. 6 round, so you can begin to explore a likeness. Add some darks and move back and forth between lifting and painting, adding a darker value back in if you lifted too much, and vice versa.

3 **Add Final Details**

Create lost and found edges so your work doesn't look pasted on. You can see a soft, lost edge on the shoulder and the lower lip. Hard edges can be seen at the forehead and cheek. Strengthen shapes and shadows. Be aware that the surface is a bit delicate, and your work will need to be framed under glass or otherwise protected, so the medium doesn't lift or get scratched.

Soap

A bar of soap is useful for more than cleaning up after a painting session. It has also been used for generations to give definition to your strokes as you paint to keep them distinct and obvious.

This is not the place for scented, colored or deodorant soaps; the purer the better. I use a cake of plain, white Ivory soap in my studio.

This technique is useful for painting a grassy field (each stroke suggests a blade or clump of grass), weathered wood, rusty textures, hair or anything where you want your individual strokes to stand out. It gives somewhat the same final effect as painting on hot-pressed paper but more controlled.

Texture Effects of Soap
Here I've tried to suggest a rusty texture with my soapy brush. The effect varies with the direction of the brushstrokes, the degree of manipulation (I textured it with the side of my hand and spattered in color from the brush) and the pigment color you choose.

Working With Soap and Paint
Soap lends a bit of body to the pigment, almost like working with a slight impasto. You can see each overlapping brushstroke, even though they were all painted wet on wet. (Normally, strokes painted wet on wet would run into each other and all have the same general hue.)

Here I mixed paint wth a little bit of wet soap, varying the color mixes a bit so you can better see the effect. There is a sense of depth and layering as the later strokes seem to come forward. There are bubbles in some of the strokes, which can provide extra texture. If you want to avoid this though, mix very gently, or allow the soap mixture to stand until all the bubbles burst before you paint.

Coffee

While the long-term effects of coffee acids on watercolor paper may be an issue down the road, once in a while it is just plain fun to paint with coffee. If you're stuck somewhere sketching without a source of water (but your thermos is full of coffee), go for it! It'll mix up into a wash just as well as watercolor and clear water.

You can use strong tea for a similar effect, but as with coffee, the tannic acid in tea may not go the distance, over time.

Achieving Values With Coffee
Unless you've gone for some seriously stout espresso, you'll want to build up layers to get good depth. Let each layer dry thoroughly before the next, and you'll be able to get a decent dark. With patience, you should be able to get a good strong value.

Coffee Sketches

Here I used about 3 or 4 layers of coffee (black, no cream or sugar), and managed to produce a nice effect, painting the coffee washes over blue-gray watercolor pencil sketches.

Wine

Using wine has the same fun-factor as coffee, with the same long-term permanence issues as coffee and tea due to the acids. But painting with wine can be interesting, and it gives you something to do in between sips!

Achieving Values With Wine

Unless you've gone for some seriously old merlot, you'll want to build up layers to get good depth, the same as with coffee. Let each layer dry thoroughly before the next and you'll be able to get a decent dark. With patience, you should be able to get a good strong value.

Wine Sketches
It helps to choose a full-bodied red wine like this merlot. I painted this flower with about 3 glazes, allowing each layer to dry thoroughly before adding another.

Consider the Permanence of Additives

It may be tempting to see what ketchup (or other edibles) might do in a wash, but resist that temptation! Mold, mildew, acid and hungry bugs might make your work nothing more than a memory. Even some paints will fade or otherwise degrade with light or time.

LIQUID ADDITIVES

Turpentine

You've heard that oil and water don't mix; nowhere is it more true than in watercolor painting. You can put that truism to work in your paintings, though, for atmospheric or abstract effects that can be gained in virtually no other way. (And eventually the turpentine odor does go away!)

Mixing Turpentine With Watercolor
This is the result of first mixing a puddle of watercolor, then dipping my brush in turpentine. It starts out watery, like a normal wet-into-wet wash, then becomes nicely textured and scratchy at the end of the stroke.

Painting Over Turpentine
Here I've first wet my paper with a clean brush and turpentine, then painted over it with watercolor. The effect is wonderfully streaked and bubbled—it would be good for somewhat abstract background effects. (Smelly for awhile, though. And remember the flammability factor—read the warning label.)

Rubbing Alcohol

Rubbing alcohol is delightfully unpredictable, like watercolor itself. Because it has a different chemical makeup than water, it resists the water in your wash. At the same time, it soaks into the paper more deeply than water does.

Depending on how you choose to apply this liquid aid, you may suggest bubbles underwater, flowers in a field, texture on an old rock, stars in an evening sky or simply interesting textural effects. You may want to use the effects in an abstract way. Rubbing alcohol works well for many applications; practice to get the feel of it.

Try Different Application Methods

Here I applied rubbing alcohol with a bamboo pen. I like the effect, though it is quite unpredictable. At the beginning of a stroke, more alcohol spreads into the wash. I especially like the frosty look of the thinner strokes. I can see this used to depict frost-touched weeds, sun-struck grasses, or just interesting linear effects for a background.

Try Alcohol on Different Colors

Just to find out how two different blues might react with alcohol, I painted a wash of Ultramarine Blue on the left and Phthalo Blue on the right and dripped in rubbing alcohol. To my surprise, I found the alcohol had a more noticeable effect on the intense staining Phthalo Blue than on the sedimenting Ultramarine Blue. Apparently Ultramarine Blue is too heavy for alcohol to easily move it out of the way.

Layering With Rubbing Alcohol
You can make very rich, complex surfaces with rubbing alcohol applied within layers of paint. Here I painted a mix of Sap Green and Phthalo Blue and allowed it to dry. I then painted a wash of Ultramarine Blue over the top, and while it was just losing its shine, I dripped, spattered and scribed rubbing alcohol into it. Then I spattered color over that. This could be undersea, or perhaps a granite wall in a shady canyon.

Rubbing Alcohol and the Three Bears

Just like Goldilocks, you'll need to find that "just-right" time to add alcohol into your wash of paint. If your wash is too wet, the alcohol you drop in will look wonderful for a second, and then it will simply fill back in, losing most of its effect. On the other hand, if your wash is too dry, the alcohol will have no effect at all. That in-between time is the one to shoot for to achieve fabulous effects.

PART 2

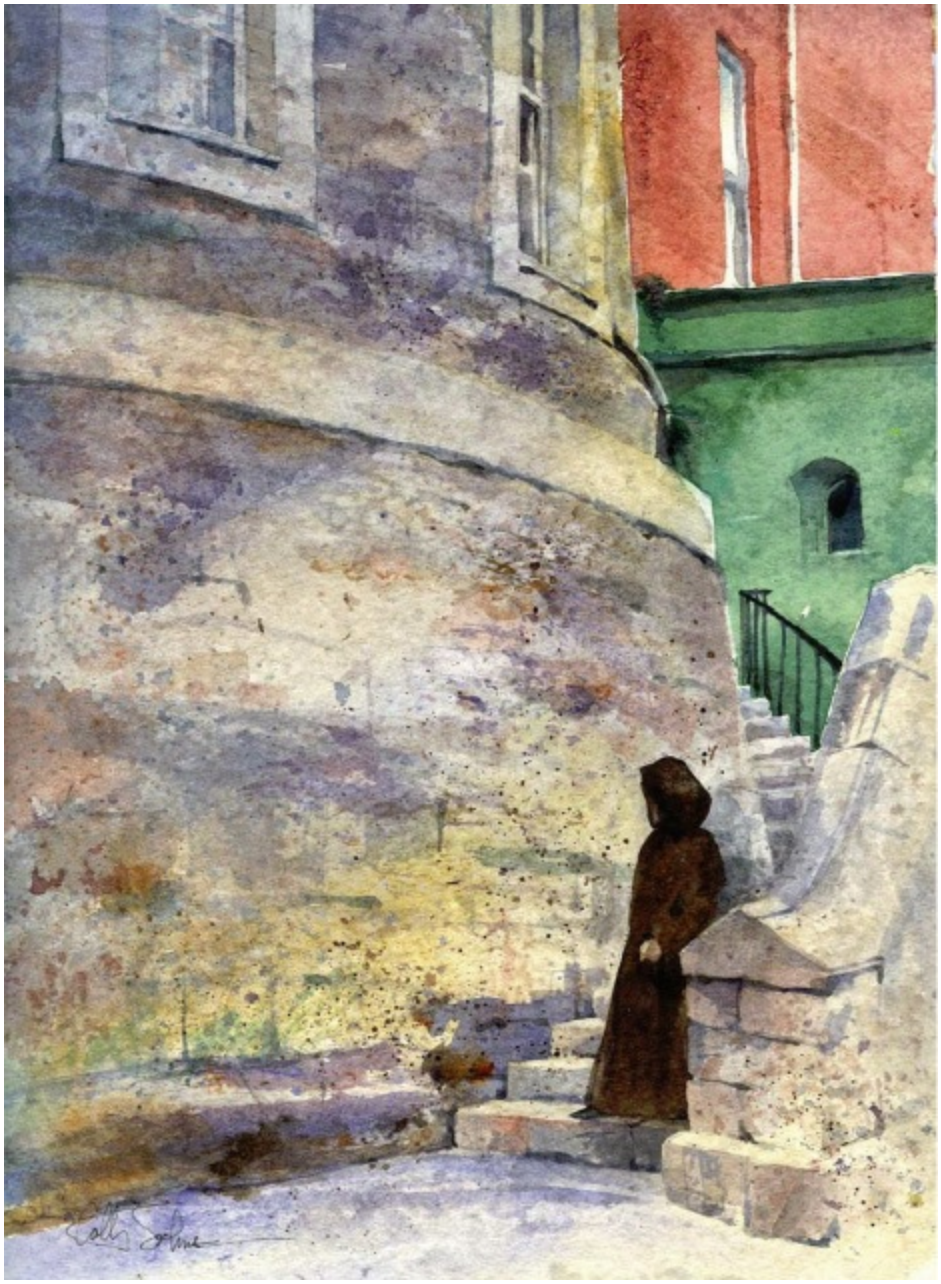
Dry Helpers

There are a number of nonliquid aids that can help add life, color, texture and an individual stamp to your work. Experimenting to find the ones that work best for you can be a creative adventure!

Dry helpers include the watercolor paper or surface itself, as well as drafting and masking tape, tissues and paper towels, aluminum foil, wax paper, plastic wrap, salt and more. Your imagination is the limit.

These aids, happily, are usually less tricky to use than some of the liquids. You won't have to worry about permanence, spillage or liquids getting away from you, at least not as much as with the wet helpers in Part 1.

These tools and materials are for the most part readily available. Your own kitchen may supply you with some of them, and a trip to the grocery, the hardware store or the pharmacist will round out your collection of dry helpers.



PAINT

Dry Pigment

Several companies make dry pigments these days. You can mix your own watercolors using pigment, gum arabic, glycerin and water. Handmade paints may be more intense, saturated and granular than you are used to, especially if you don't grind the pigments long enough (an hour is considered the minimum). And different pigments will require different percentages of this or that ingredient added to make the paint work—no wonder premixed paints cost what they do!

You can also use dry pigment sprinkled as is into a wet painting for a more experimental approach. Go outdoors and tap your paper from the backside when dry, to remove the excess.

Intense Handmade Paints
I made my own paints here. At the top, you can see the colors are opaque—look almost like tempera paints—but you can thin them with water to achieve whatever strength or transparency you wish.

Painting With Dry Pigment
The sky here is an intense, pure, handmade Ultramarine Blue. For the rocks, I used traditionally mixed colors, then dropped in dry powdered blue and earth pigments and dragged them through the wash to create fine linear effects.

The earth colors and Ultramarine Blue are among the safest pigments, so I enjoy playing with them using only the basic precautions.

Sprinkle on Pigment
Here I applied a thin coat of gum arabic to the paper to make sure the powdered pigments stayed put. Then I sprinkled on Burnt Sienna Indian Red, Ultramarine Blue and Cadmium Yellow and dragged the pigments around with a damp brush for some interesting granular effects.

Use With Caution

Pay attention to the manufacturer's warnings about dry pigment use, and take proper precautions. Wear thin rubber gloves and always use a respirator or dust mask for maximum safety. Don't eat, drink or smoke while mixing dry pigments, and be sure to wash your hands thoroughly afterward.

You may want to choose only nontoxic pigments. And keep in mind that the metal-containing pigments require special care—in addition to the cadmiums, that would be chromium, cobalt, manganese, nickel or zinc.

For complete instructions for making your own paint, see www.handprint.com or www.paintmaking.com.

Dry Pigment in Action

DEMONSTRATION

Dry pigments allow us to work in ways very similar to our forebears, when the artist, apprentice or a "color man" mixed the paint fresh each time. Used dry, powdered pigments offer subtle, delicate effects.

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

Powdered Pigment: Burnt Sienna, Indian Red, Ultramarine Blue

Brushes

½-inch (12mm) and 1-inch (25mm) flats

Surface

140-lb. (300gsm) cold-pressed watercolor paper

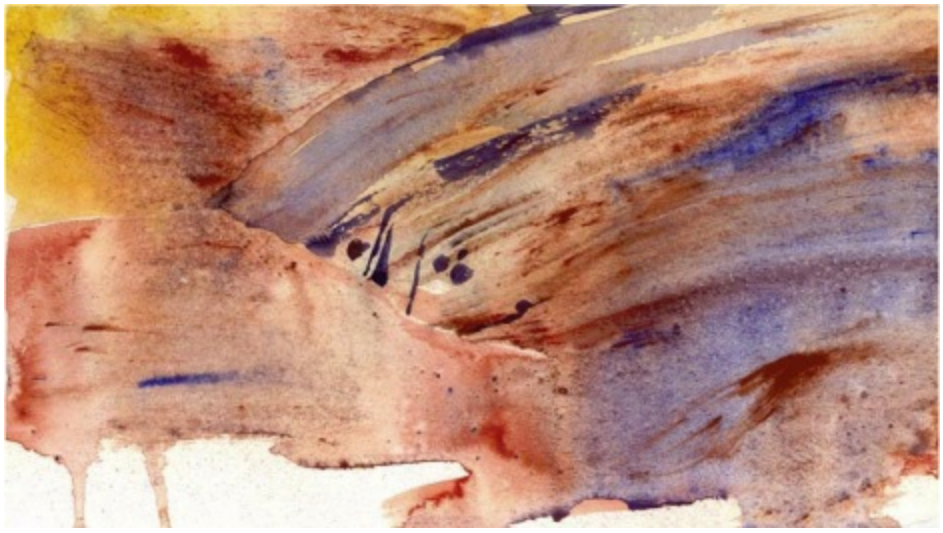
Other

Gum arabic

Spray bottle

1 Lay in Base Color

Apply an initial layer of well-thinned Indian Red with a 1-inch (25mm) flat, mixing the pigment with gum arabic and water. While still wet, sprinkle in a very small amount of Ultramarine Blue and Indian Red dry pigments.



2 **Paint With Dry Pigment**

When the washes lose their shine, pull the pigment particles into linear shapes with a clean, damp ½-inch (12mm) flat to create rocky formations, spraying here and there with clear water while still damp to make a sandy texture. Let dry.

Creating Texture With Powered Pigment

You can get some surprisingly delicate effects by pulling powder with a brush through a damp area—the lines follow the direction of your strokes.

3 Build Form and Texture

Strengthen areas you wish with Ultramarine Blue, grayed a bit with Burnt Sienna. You can pre-mix these with water and gum arabic in a small container

Spatter a strong mix of these same colors to add texture.

When dry, lift here and there with clean water on your ½-inch (12mm) flat, blotting away the excess pigment. This technique really captures the desert sandstone look!

Watercolor Paper

The granddaddy of all dry helpers for the watercolorist is the very ground you work on: your paper. Getting to know your chosen surface (or surfaces!) will set you free to choose effects and techniques never before imagined.

There's no one right paper or surface, just keep trying till you find the ones you like! Many companies offer samplers to allow you to explore. Just don't cheat yourself by trying to use cheap, lightweight paper, as it will only lead to frustration!

Good watercolor paper is alive; it's beautiful and varied and sometimes as unpredictable as the medium itself. Consider and try out all the possibilities: surface texture (rough, cold press, hot press), handmade or mouldmade, heavily or lightly sized, color (pure white or creamy traditional) and weight (300-lb. [640gsm], 140-lb. [300gsm], 90-lb. [190gsm]).

Stretching Lightweight Watercolor Paper

Paper that is 90-lb. or lighter will buckle if used larger than 5" x 7" (13cm x 18cm) if you don't stretch it. There are commercial paper stretchers on the market; if you choose one of these, follow the directions. To stretch it on your own, follow these steps:

1. Soak paper thoroughly with a hose or by putting it in a tub or sink of water.

2. Remove it from the water and lay it flat on a piece of plywood, non-marine Masonite (the marine type is oily, which you want to avoid) or Plexiglas, and sponge excess water off the surface.

3. Use a gummed paper tape (the kind you wet), and tape the paper onto the surface on all four sides. Overlap the paper's edge by at least ¾" (19mm) on a large sheet or ½" (13mm) on 9" x 12" (23cm x 30cm) or smaller. (If you use plywood, staple the edges closely all around, then cover the staples with gummed tape.)

4. Keep the surface flat and allow your stretched paper to dry thoroughly.

5. Finish your painting completely before cutting it loose from the stretcher.

The Weight of Watercolor Paper

- 300-lb. (640gsm) or heavier papers allow you to paint very wet. They're more expensive, but they don't buckle under juicy washes.
- 140-lb. (300gsm) paper works well for most applications. Especially if you tape it down until your painting is dry, it usually requires no stretching. (This is my most common choice.)
- 90-lb. (190gsm) paper can also be used if you stretch it before working, or if you use it in smaller works with dryer washes of paint.

Rough Watercolor Paper

Rough watercolor paper has noticeable “peaks” and “valleys,” allowing the texture of the paper to become an integral element of the painting. You can take advantage of that texture to make sparkling, broken effects with drybrushing, or allow sedimenting pigments to settle in the valleys by using a juicy wash.

Practice Direct Painting on a Rough Surface
In this sample, the top swatch of color shows the effect of holding a flat brush at a right angle to the paper’s surface. This wash of color is smooth as the paint settles into all the little valleys in the paper.

The bottom shows what happens when the brush is held nearly flat to the paper and a rapid dry-brush stroke is made with the body of the brush. It is very open and sparkling. On rough paper, drybrushing allows paint to hit the peaks of the paper without going down into the valleys.

Painting on Rough Paper
I utilized the texture of the paper to suggest the lacy foliage on the old cedar trees and on the vignetted foreground, skimming the high points of the paper with my brush.

Play With Mixing Color Directly on the Paper's Surface
As the colors mix, they settle into the valleys of the paper and blend in interesting ways.

SURFACES

Cold-Pressed Watercolor Paper

Cold-pressed watercolor paper is one of the most popular choices among watercolorists. It has just enough surface texture to create interesting effects, yet is smooth enough to not intrude or distract from the painting.

Practice Direct Painting on a Cold-Pressed Surface
Here I've made two straight strokes. I made the top stroke with the tip of a flat brush, which drives paint into the texture of the paper for a smoother wash.

I did a dry-brush stroke on the bottom. On cold-pressed paper, the "peaks" and "valleys" aren't as pronounced as on rough paper, so the paint goes on smoother when you drybrush, with fewer jumps and gaps in color.

Painting on Cold-Pressed Paper
The soft blending of colors on this toddler's skin creates a silken texture. Painting the background with muted wet-into-wet washes keeps it from competing with the subject. I let the shadow washes on her neck and shoulder puddle a little to keep them fresh.

Play With Mixing Color Directly on a Cold-Pressed Surface
Watch as your paints blend together on the paper's surface. Be aware that backruns and "flowers" are more frequent on this paper than on rough paper.

Hot-Pressed Watercolor Paper

This paper is made by literally pressing the paper with a hot, smooth iron plate—hence the name. Painting on hot-pressed paper is just plain fun! The surface is so smooth that the paint flows on unpredictably and can produce flowers, backruns or hard-edged puddles.

Practice Direct Painting on a Hot-Pressed Surface
Here I've made two straight strokes. I made the top one with the tip of a flat brush.

I made the bottom one with a drybrush technique. On hot-pressed paper, the strokes are nearly alike, because there are no "peaks" and "valleys" to affect the openness of the stroke. In order to get any dry-brush effect at all, it is necessary to literally dry your brush on a piece of tissue before making a stroke.

Painting on Hot-Pressed Paper
On hot-pressed paper, paint tends to puddle and enhance small, crisp washes. This can create a very nice, fresh effect that works well with subjects such as florals.

Play With Mixing Color Directly on a Hot-Pressed Surface

The paper is so smooth that when you mix colors on the surface of hot-pressed paper, they flow with a mind of their own and may not mix entirely or may even repel and backrun into each other. The graininess you see here is the sedimenting colors themselves.

Oriental Paper

The beautiful Oriental papers are as varied as you can imagine, depending on their basic ingredients as well as any sizing or additives. You may prefer rice paper for its absorbent whiteness, but do try others. Some kinds are nearly as thick and stiff as regular watercolor paper; others are thin and delicate and come in long scrolls, allowing you to cut whatever size you need. Some interesting papers have bits of dead leaves, petals or threads as a texturing additive in the body of the paper. Work with this texture or work around it for unusual effects.

Goyu Paper
This paper has much more sizing than you might expect; it behaved more like Western watercolor paper than the absorbent sumi-e papers I was used to. Experiment on a small corner first, so you know what to expect.

Mulberry Paper
Absorbent mulberry paper encourages a traditional technique. I painted this cat very quickly, with no previous sketching. I like the way the strokes overlap in the striped pillow behind Miss Lara.

Rice Paper
Available at virtually any art supply store and by mail from any of the larger art suppliers, this paper is extremely absorbent; each stroke sinks right in (there's no lifting on rice paper!). You can get nice soft effects with this paper that are unobtainable any other way.

I took my time with this sample, and used multiple layers of strokes. Thicker, dryer paint tends to stay put. I added the fine details of fur, eyes and whiskers last.

Experiment With Paint Strength

Since some of these papers are so absorbent, your strokes will look darker as you lay them down. As the paper dries, however, they may lighten significantly. Learn to compensate for this by being bolder and darker in the strength of your washes, and adding small, crisp accents with a drier brush.

Toned Paper

Colored or toned papers give a whole new dimension to watercolor.

The color you choose to work on can add a halftone or midground aspect to your work. You may also use the color of your paper to affect the overall mood of the piece or to express time of day, weather, ambience, temperature or any number of other factors.

Consider papers intended for use with pastels or printing; just be sure they have a neutral pH if you plan to use them for a lasting work.

Painting on Amber Colored Paper
I captured this wintry twilight scene with watercolor and watercolor pencil on amber drawing paper. If you keep your brush on the dry side, this lightweight paper will accept light watercolor washes.

Painting on Green Colored Paper
I used transparent watercolor mixed with a bit of opaque white gouache throughout the whole painting to give me a wider value range, and to make the flowers really come forward on this medium green paper.

Understand the Value of Your Paper

Working on nonwhite paper can change the values of your work, and unless you employ opaque pigments, your lightest value will be the paper itself.

For that reason, I usually add a bit of gouache to my watercolors when working on a colored ground, to make my subject pop.

Toned Paper *continued*

You can tint your own paper, too, with watercolor or thinned acrylics.

Paper Toned With Acrylic
I prepared several pages in my journal ahead of time, tinting them with acrylics thinned to watercolor consistency. The Raw Sienna paper tone worked beautifully to complement the tortoiseshell coat of my old cat, Moggy. Burnt Sienna, Ultramarine Blue and a touch o opaque white captured her tricolor look.

Paper Toned With Watercolor
I made a generous puddle of well-thinned Phthalo Blue and washed it over the entire paper surface, laying in the soft, lavender clouds while it was still wet so I would have soft-edged clouds. I added the distant hills with a strong mix of Phthalo Blue and Cobalt Blue adding a little Burnt Sienna to the mix closer to the winter wood. When that was dry I glazed on Yellow Ochre and Raw Sienna t suggest the grassy foreground.

Watercolor Canvas

Watercolor canvas is a true canvas, specially treated with an archival finish that will allow you to paint on it with watercolors. It is tough; it won't tear or buckle like paper can, so you can lift, scrape, scratch or use other aggressive techniques with less fear of damaging your painting surface.

You can use watercolor canvas direct from the pad or tape or staple it to a rigid surface. You can also buy watercolor canvas in rolls and cut it to size or stretch it. It also comes in board form, prebacked with a rigid surface!

Painting on Watercolor Canvas
In this painting on watercolor canvas, you can see the individual brushstrokes, puddling and some lifting, especially on the tree trunk. If you look closely, you can also see the texture of the canvas.

Lifting on Watercolor Canvas
When you paint directly on watercolor canvas without wiping or pre-wetting, your paint will lift very easily. Even the staining Phthalo Blue I used here with the green came up without a problem. To lift, just use a damp brush, blotting away the loosened pigment with a clean tissue. You can even sponge off your whole painting and start over!

Pre-Wetting Your Canvas

You may wish to wipe the canvas with a damp cloth before painting to remove any grease, dust or oil which might repel your washes; some people use rubbing alcohol for this step. When you do this, you don't get the resist-like effects, and lifting isn't quite so easy anymore.

Sculpting With Paint

The easy lifting quality of watercolor canvas makes it fun to push and pull your values. Here I made a blob of color in a middle value and allowed it to dry, then lifted with a small bristle brush and clean water, blotting away the loosened pigment. I added darker values here and there and lifted a bit more. It was almost like sculpting!

Canvas Paper

This coated, textured paper looks much like canvas. It was originally meant for oils or acrylics, but it works nicely with watercolor, too. It's very similar to working on watercolor canvas, but the surface is not quite as tough!

Lifting on Canvas Paper
Like watercolor canvas, you can lift easily on canvas paper, even with staining colors. The paint resists settling down into the surface and can create a highly sparkled effect, especially if there is any dust, dirt or oil from your hands on the paper.

Pre-Wetting Your Canvas
Here you can see how much better the paint took when the surface was cleaned first. And you can still lift color quite easily.

Tips for Painting on Coated Surfaces

Be aware that many of the newer nonpaper surfaces are also nonabsorbent. The paint may sit on top,

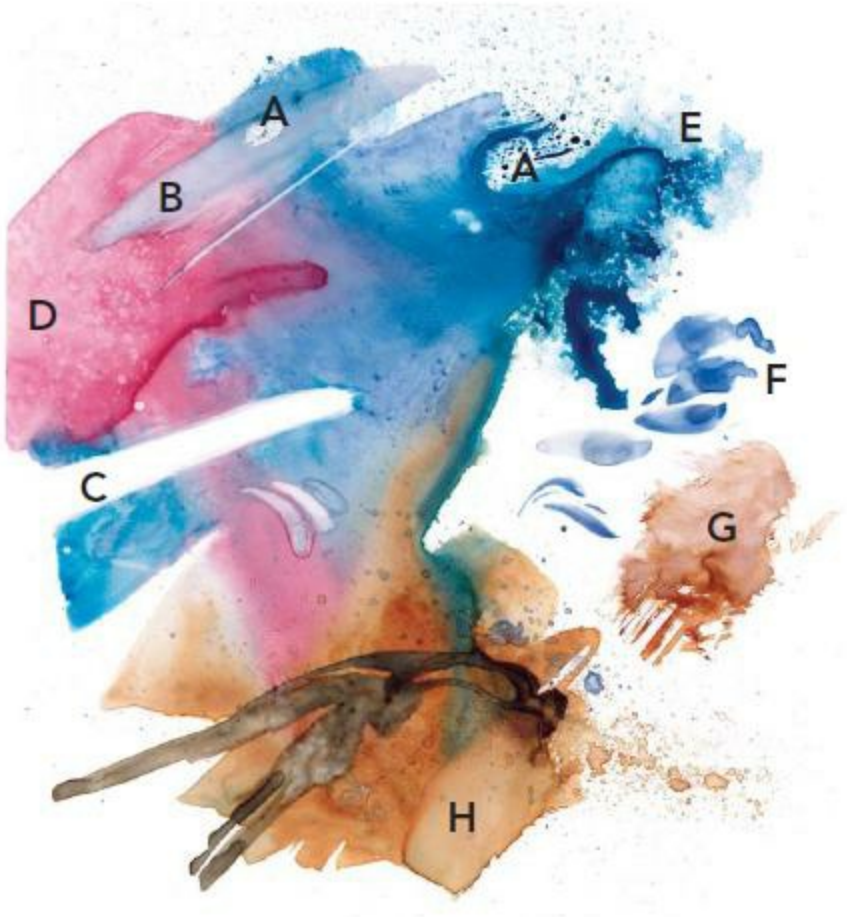
which can make lifting a breeze, but it also means the paint can take longer to dry.

- **If you use a hair dryer to speed drying, be sure to keep it moving** on low speed at least 12 inches (30cm) away from your painting surface.
- **The painted surface of canvas paper will be more delicate than traditional papers, since the paint doesn't soak into the surface but sits on top**. You'll want to use a quick, light, sure touch when adding additional layers of color, or subsequent washes may lift, muddy or disturb the earlier washes. Some artists use their watercolors as thick as oils or acrylics when painting on this surface to avoid that!
- **Try not to let a drop of water fall where you don't want it**, or it will leave a mark. Of course, that's one of the best texturing tools, too: a spritz of water on a dry or nearly dry wash, quickly blotted, will give you wonderful surface illusions.

Yupo Paper

This surface is not really paper at all; it's actually 100% polypropylene and comes in a variety of thicknesses, translucences and surfaces. For watercolor work, you may be happiest with the 74-lb. (157gsm) surface available as single sheets or pads. None of the Yupo surfaces will buckle under washes since they don't absorb moisture (remember, they're not really paper), but the thicker surface just feels nicer to work with. The surface color is a whiter white that will allow you to judge your values more accurately.

Painting on Yupo is much more like painting on a very hot-pressed or ultra-smooth watercolor paper; be prepared for puddling and lifting. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to get a smooth wash, but that's not why you choose this surface. The puddles and textures are exciting and fresh, and the free-fall effect can be exhilarating!



Playing With Yupo

Playing with Yupo is really the best way to learn how to use it!

A You can lift some color without wiping away the loosened pigment for a neat effect.

B Smear the color as you lift.

C Lift back to the clean, white surface.

D Spatter clean water into a wash when it is almost dry.

E Spray clear water into a very wet wash to make a lacy edge.

F Dab on puddly brushstrokes.

G Paint on color roughly, then lift a bit.

H Spatter and layer colors, allowing previous layers to dry first. When you do this, work quickly and lightly to avoid lifting.

Yupo Tips

- Wipe the surface with a cotton ball soaked in rubbing alcohol before beginning. This will remove any dirt or oils that would act as a resist as you paint.
- You can use a hair dryer to speed drying, but keep the temperature on medium and keep the dryer 12 to 18 inches (30cm to 46cm) away from your painting until you see the puddles have lost their shine—that means they are mostly dry.

Paint a Landscape on Yupo Paper

DEMONSTRATION

You'll need to work fast with Yupo. Since the paint sits on the top of the surface and is easily lifted, muddied or damaged, most artists try to get as much done in one go as possible. Then let it dry, and come back in with quick, light washes or other effects to complete the painting. It's a good, creative experience to see what these first, sometimes wild, effects suggest to you, and go from there.

1 **Lay in Background**
Wipe the surface with rubbing alcohol to remove dirt and oils, and let that dry. Then wet the surface and use your ¾-inch (19mm) flat to flood in the light, hazy sky with a pale, delicate wash of Phthalo Blue. The distant hills here are varied mixtures of Raw Sienna and Phthalo Blue, painted in very quickly with a light touch.

2 **Paint the Foreground Grasses**
Use a ¾-inch (19mm) flat to paint in the rich, darker washes of Raw Sienna and Phthalo Blue as beautiful olive greens in the foreground. While still wet, stroke in some foreground grasses with a strong mixture of Yellow Ochre. This will lift and displace some color, while laying down the heavier opaque ochre. You can also use your fingernail or the end of your brush to scrape some more light grasses out of the damp paint.

3 **Develop the Trees and Foliage**
A no. 10 round with a mix of Phthalo Blue and Burnt Sienna works well for the trees; add a touch of Indigo for the cool shadow areas underneath.

A natural sponge dipped in the Phthalo Blue/Burnt Sienna mix and applied with a pouncing motion suggests the lacy leaves at the edges of the foliage mass. A light spray of clear water will further break up the foliage area and make the trees sparkle.

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

- Burnt Sienna
- Indigo
- Phthalo Blue
- Raw Sienna
- Ultramarine Blue
- Yellow Ochre

Brushes

- ¾-inch (19mm) flat
- nos. 6 and 10 rounds
- Bristle or stencil brush

Surface

- 74-lb. (157gsm) Yupo paper

Other

- Black watercolor pencil
- Natural sponge
- Rubbing alcohol
- Spray bottle

4 Add Darker Values

Let everything dry thoroughly, then darken the shadow areas if you like with a bit more Indigo. A bit of spatter with a bristle or stencil brush in varied colors gives texture to the foreground.

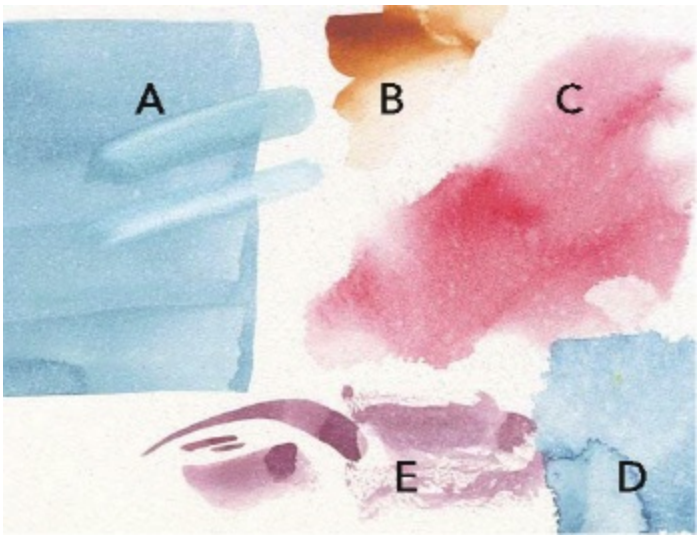
5 Add Final Details

Lift the shapes of the bare, weathered trees almost back to the white surface using a no. 6 round dampened with clear water, blotting up the extra pigment. Then flood in a bit of warm brown to keep them from being too stark. Scratch in some sharp lines for tree branches. A no. 10 round and a dark mixture of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna works for the details in the trunks and small shadows A black watercolor pencil suggests the smallest, darkest branches—no need to wet it. Add final details like birds and tree trunks with the no. 6 round.

Aquabord

Aquabord is an archival, clay-coated board that is absorbent (it used to be called Claybord Textured). It feels very much like fine watercolor paper, but like Yupo and watercolor canvas, you can often lift back to white or wash off the entire board if you want. And colors can be quite vibrant on this surface.

You can also still buy Claybord Smooth, which is much like working on a very hot-pressed surface. This surface will produce a variety of effects, from lovely, loose puddles to fine, sharp detail, depending on how you work.



Practice Painting on Aquabord

Because of its absorbency, you may find it difficult to get a smooth wash on Aquabord unless you wet it down first.

A Paint on color with a ¾-inch (19mm) flat brush, and you can see where the strokes overlap and make backruns. Try lifting with a damp brush and clear water, blotting to remove loosened pigment.

B Add strong color and soften immediately with a brush and clear water.

C Wet the surface with clear water, then lay in a wash of color. While it is still damp, spray it lightly with clear water to give it texture.

D Paint on color then spray it with clear water while it is still quite wet to make lacy edges.

E Practice strokes with a round brush. Try dragging it over the surface for a dry-brush effect.

Painting on Aquabord
In this rich, little landscape, I made good use of scratching techniques to create texture in the water and grasses. Lifting worked well in the sky area for the clouds, and I used a sharp watercolor pencil for the small twigs on the trees.

Frame Without Glass

If you spray your completed work on Aquabord with finishing spray, you can then frame without glass.

Scratchboard

Scratchboard is a clay-coated paper used mostly by illustrators to produce sharp black and white drawings. Since it is very slick, washes cannot be painted on smoothly. It's a bit like using hot-pressed paper, only more so, since the clay coating is also somewhat absorbent. Still, you can get interesting results if you experiment.

India ink is commonly used to paint or draw a design on scratchboard. After it is thoroughly dried, you scratch through the ink's surface to the white below to add details or texture. (You can buy pre-inked board that comes completely covered with ink if you plan on only a little white line work that you'll tint with watercolor later.)

Tint Your Scratchboard Drawing With Watercolor
Here I painted the owl with India ink and allowed it to dry. I then scratched in the details and added watercolor washes.

If you use the heavier earth pigments or the cadmiums, some of your color will remain on top of the ink and affect its value and purity. If you use staining colors instead, the ink will stay pure black and the color will seem to have been applied only to the white areas.

Some artists use an airbrush loaded with transparent watercolor to get a smoother effect when tinting these drawings, but I prefer the looser, washier effects of paint applied with a brush.

Paint With Watercolor on Un-Inked Scratchboard

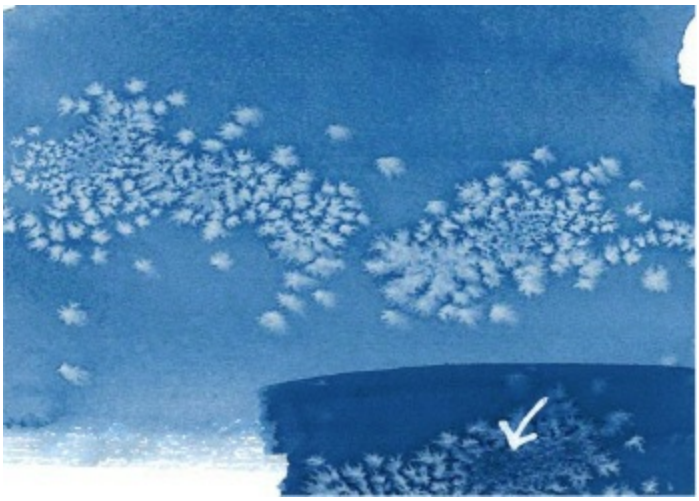
Experiment with watercolor pigments alone on an uninked scratchboard surface.

You'll get the best results with this technique if you stick to nonstaining pigments, as the staining colors sink into the clay coating and discolor it far below the surface, causing you to lose the effect of the scraped white lines.

TEXTURE TOOLS

Salt

Salt has become quite ubiquitous in the watercolorist's toolbox. It works in watercolor because it repels pigment. While attracting moisture, it pushes the color away from itself, creating lighter spots in your wash. Be careful; it's in danger of being overused by its very usefulness in creating texture. Try it sparingly and only where it counts.



The Effects of Salt
Salt has more or less effect, depending on the type of pigment you choose. Here I placed salt into Ultramarine Blue of two varying strengths. With the heavier, sedimenting pigment, the effect of salt is not so great.

Make Salt Flow
Tilt your paper to make the salt flow with gravity. This sample shows a mixture of Permanent Alizarin Crimson and Phthalo Blue. I tipped the board at an acute angle, making the bluer area stay wet longer. Notice how the salt traveled in this area. I'd use these frosty effects on an icy puddle, a winter window pane or a snowbank.

Sea Salt

Table Salt

Try a Variety of Types of Salt
The wetness of the wash and the type of pigment seem to control the size of the salt's effect more than the type of salt, though. I have the best luck with plain old table salt or sea salt.

Handy Salt Tips

• Use it sparingly.
• Don't clump it in one spot.
• Don't space it out too much or too evenly.
• Apply it when you see your wash has begun to lose its shine. If your wash is too wet or too dry, you'll lose the effect of the salt.
• Try a variety of different kinds of salt, both fine grain and coarse.
• Experiment with salt on different surfaces.
• Using salt can affect drying time due to its attraction of moisture, so make sure to brush it all off once the painting is thoroughly dry.
• You can also use sand in the same way as salt, with slightly darker results.

Salt *continued*

Salt can suggest starry skies, flowers in a field, sandy ground or simply an interesting texture. Like many tricks, if it is too obvious, it becomes jarring, so do use it carefully and don't become dependent on it for texture. Some artists are concerned about long-term damage to the paper; if that bothers you, skip salt and use another texturing agent, like clear water.

Try Using Salt as a Background Texture
Salt can add a subtle texture to your background, especially if you keep the color subdued as I did in this floral sketch.

Salt Can Suggest Stars and Snow

The sky in this night scene is a mixture of Phthalo Blue and Indigo. I waited for the wash to begin to lose its shine, then used salt t suggest stars. I painted the foreground snow with Cobalt Blue, and added the salt while the paint still had a shine, to give it a bit of icy sparkle.

Plastic Wrap

Plastic wrap as a texture tool can be great, or it can be too obvious, obtrusive and overused, so try to use it judiciously and in a way that makes sense to your subject. Combine it with other techniques in a nonrepresentational way, if you like. (I use it in less abstract ways, since that is how I have evolved as a painter.) To make the best use of this enticing tool, lay the plastic into bold, wet washes of color.

Layering With Plastic Wrap
For a neat, layered effect, puddle Permanent Alizarin Crimson on your surface and texture it with the wrap. When that dries, lightly floa on a second wash of Cobalt Blue over the first, making sure not to lift too much of the initial crinkled wash. Apply plastic wrap to this new wash and allow it to dry. This effect is transparent and has a kind of depth that could be useful.

Rough Press

Cold Press

Soft Press

Hot Press

Experiment With Different Surfaces and Lengths of Time

The paper surface you use can give you different effects with plastic wrap. See the results yourself by adding a wash of color onto various strips of watercolor paper.

On the right of each sample here, I added plastic wrap into a wet wash and kept it there for mere seconds, then pulled it away, leaving soft-edged marks on the paper.

On the left of each strip, I placed the plastic wrap onto the wet wash and allowed the paint to set up for several minutes, but not long enough to dry. You get much more emphatic marks this way.

Plastic Wrap *continued*

Plastic wrap also works well as an actual painting tool rather than something affecting the pigment after it is applied.

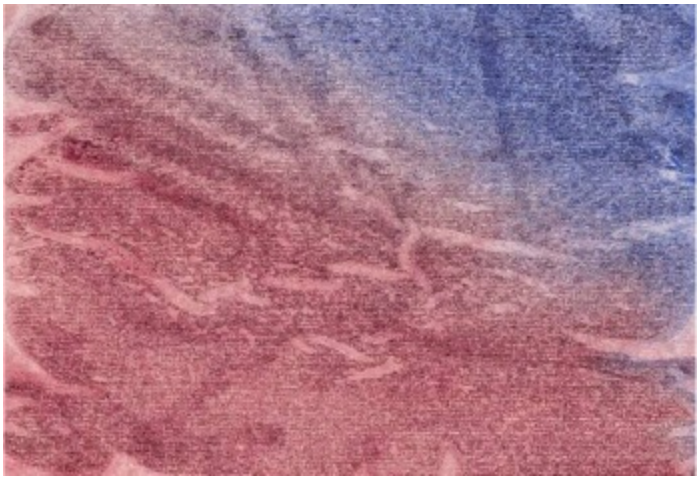
Painting With Plastic Wrap
After painting a rock shape, I crumpled a piece of plastic wrap dipped in warm and cool darks and stamped it here and there. I was pleased enough with the results to add cracks and shadows. You can see that this would be useful to paint rough earth, a sandy shoreline, short grasses or any number of textures.

Using Plastic Wrap in a Painting

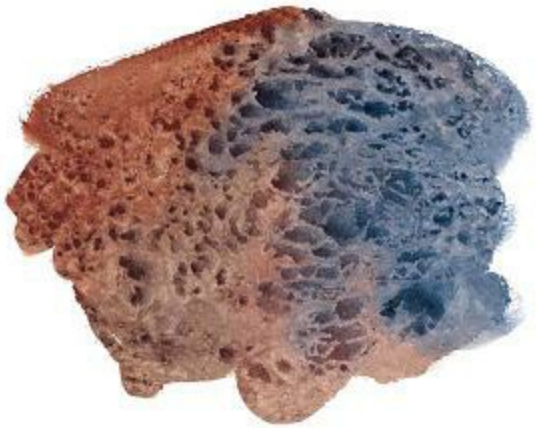
To add texture to these castle walls, I laid plastic wrap into the shadow areas and let it rest until the paint began to set up a bit. I removed the plastic, then used a wad of the same plastic to stamp with, dipping it into the paint on my palette.

Wax Paper

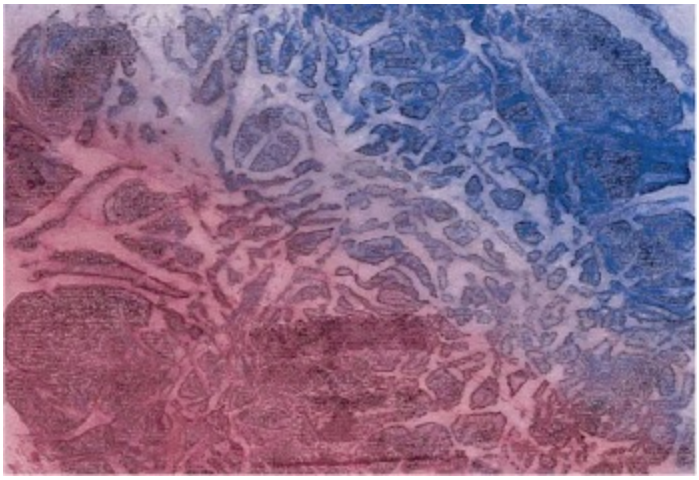
Wax paper is very similar in use to plastic wrap, but with somewhat softer and more subtle results, as well as a few tricks unique to the paper. I like it even better than plastic wrap.



Accentuate the Texture of Your Surface With Smooth Wax Paper
Lay down a wash of color, then apply a flat, smooth piece of wax paper on top and allow it to dry in place. The paper may wrinkle just a bit as it dries, making subtle, hazy effects. This technique might make a nice sky effect or a soft fabric. The cloth-like effect of this paper is played up where the wax paper was pressed tightly against it.



Achieve Soft Textures With Wax Paper
Lay crumpled wax paper in a wet wash and pull it off after a few minutes. The texture is soft and hazy. It reminds me of wet sand by the beach.



Add a Lot of Texture With Crumbled Wax Paper

Crumple a sheet of wax paper and apply it to a wet wash of color. Place a weight on the paper to maintain contact. Lift the paper after 24 hours. Notice in this sample how the blue pigment puddled somewhat along the edges of the wrinkles. And, some of the wax stuck in the red areas of the wash. I polished these areas with a soft cloth to smooth the surface.

Wax Paper *continued*

Wax paper also works well as a resist in addition to being a handy texture tool.

Stamping and Burnishing With Wax Paper
I made the lines in the lower right by laying wax paper over my untouched watercolor paper and drawing through the overlay with a pencil point. It laid down a fine line of wax, which then resisted the subsequent wash.

In the center, I've stamped my crumpled wax paper into the colors still on my palette and briskly dabbed them onto my paper into wet and dry areas.

Using Wax Paper as a Resist
To get wide areas of resist, you can burnish over wax paper with a dull butter knife, a burnishing tool or the back of a spoon before you paint. Remember, you will not be able to make pigments stick to burnished areas, so be sure you want them to remain white.

Using Wax Paper Resist in a Painting

Here I drew lines through a sheet of wax paper to deposit a thin wax resist, to suggest the vertical blinds behind the beautiful Rachel. I also masked out her face so I could paint the background freely. The wax paper gave just the right amount of structure to the rich background, and added interest and texture.

Paint a Textured Wall With Wax Paper

DEMONSTRATION

I loved this old mission (now a museum and historic site) and could have stayed there for days, painting. This is the entrance to one of the rooms that opens onto a courtyard beyond, with a few people lingering in the dark room. I knew the old adobe walls would be a perfect subject for the soft textural effects achievable with wax paper.

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

- Burnt Sienna
- Burnt Umber
- Indanthrene Blue
- Indigo
- Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet
- Ultramarine Blue

Brushes

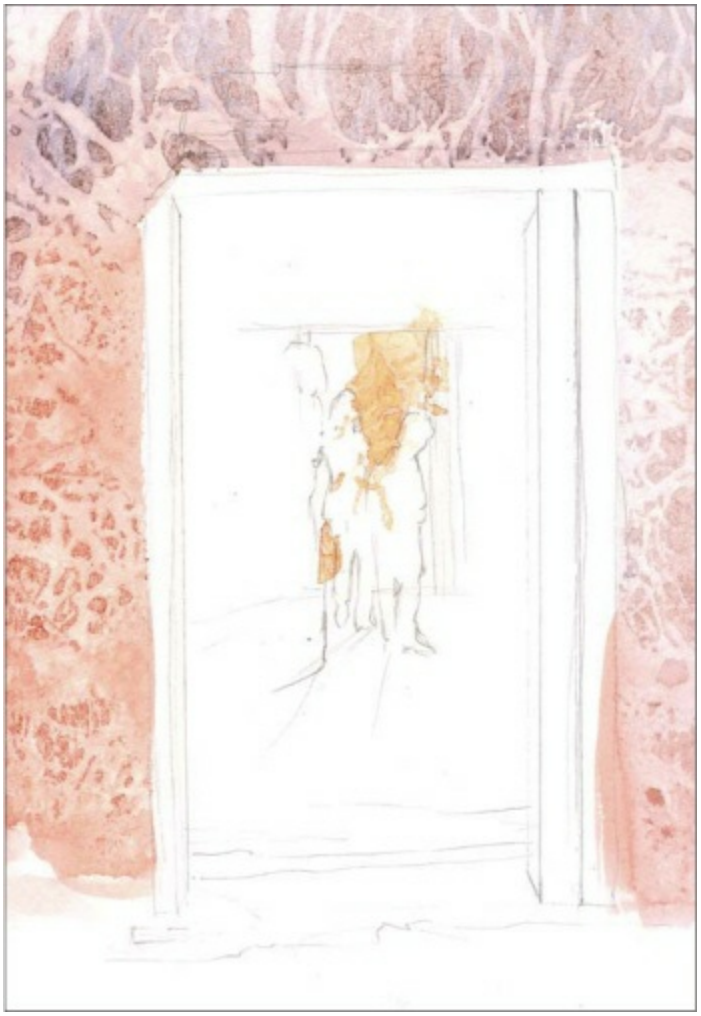
- 1-inch (25mm) flat
- no. 6 round
- Stencil brush

Surface

- 140-lb. (300gsm) paper

Other

- Mechanical pencil or stylus
- Wax paper



1 Establish the Texture

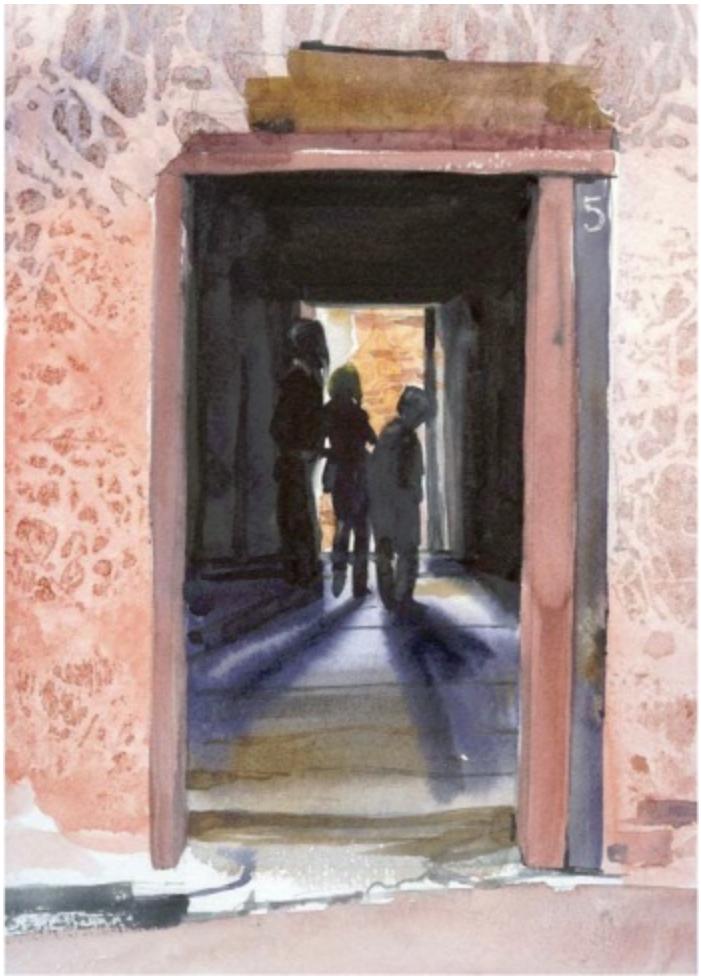
Once you've drawn in the subject, mix a varied wash of Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet and Ultramarine Blue with just a touch of Burnt Sienna, and splash it on the wall area with a 1-inch (25mm) flat, around the opening and on the back wall beyond the next room. Keep the color warmer on the back wall, where the sunlit courtyard lights the wall.

While the paint is still quite wet, lay crumpled wax paper down on the wash and weigh it down. Lift it up after 15 minutes or so.

2 Develop Depth

Once the wall wash dries, use your no. 6 round to add a strong wash of Indanthrene Blue, mixed with Burnt Sienna and a touch of Indigo to the rich shadow area inside the building.

Apply a graded wash of these colors on the floor, using more Burnt Sienna in the foreground to bring it forward. While that is still damp, add in soft-edged shadows on the floor, keeping them darker closest to their objects.



3 Add Figures and Add Detail to the Doorway

In keeping with this realistic portrayal, draw the building number (5) on the doorjamb area to the right of the entrance by burnishing through wax paper with a pencil. Paint over this doorjamb area using the no. 6 round with Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet mixed with a bit of Ultramarine Blue to gray it When it dries, suggest the exposed beam above the door with Burnt Umber.

Carefully paint the silhouettes of the people with more of the rich, dark wash used for the shadows in step 2.

4 Add Final Details

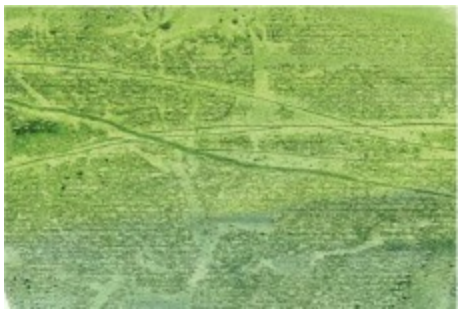
The exposed adobe bricks, tiled floor and other details can be painted with a no. 6 round, varying the color for interest. Almost pure Burnt Sienna works well on the bricks, and you'll find that a mixture of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna makes a thunderous dark for additional shadow areas Finish it all up with a little spatter here and there, using a small round stencil brush to flick paint onto the paper.

Aluminum Foil

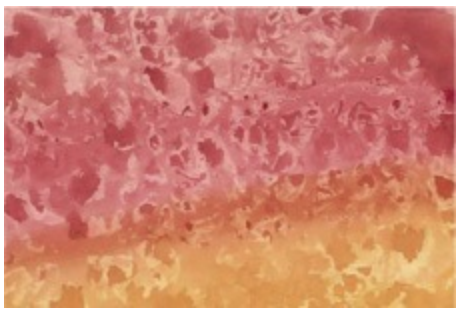
Aluminum foil can be pressed into a damp wash to texturize it, similar to wax paper and plastic wrap. Depending on whether you lift it quickly or leave it in place until the paint is set, you can get softer or sharper, more fractured effects.

If you are branching out into acrylics as a water-based medium, you can even collage foil onto your paper and paint over it for a metallic shimmer.

Using Aluminum Foil in a Painting
These huge granite rocks juxtaposed against the soft, delicate spring grasses fascinated me. I used aluminum foil to create the mottled texture in the rocks, crumpling it and pressing it into the damp wash, then allowing it to set a bit. Once the initial textured shapes were dry, I added in the painting's details and spattered color for added texture.



Accentuate the Texture of Your Surface With Smooth Aluminum Foil
Place smooth foil in a wet wash, and scratch in a few lines here and there through the foil with a blunt knife. Let it dry in place.



Create a Rough Texture With Crumpled Aluminum Foil
Lay crumpled foil in a wet wash and lift after a few minutes.

Fold the Foil for Added Interest
For a grid or line effect, you can fold the foil before you lay it in your wash. Since foil holds its shape, you can somewhat control the textures or lines that you create.

Found Objects

Look around your studio and home to see what might be on hand. Perhaps you received a package with plastic bubble wrap...that and the corrugated cardboard itself are terrific texturing tools. If you have old rags in your paint box, do something with them besides wiping your brushes—use them as texture tools. Natural objects work great, too!

Small Bubble Wrap
The small bubbles of some bubble wrap remind me of a bee's honeycomb. Paint a double wash of Quinacridone Gold. Then paint a darker color directly onto the bubble wrap and press it to the paper for texture. (I couldn't resist adding the bee!)

If you leave the bubble wrap in place, weigh it down and allow it to dry, you'll also capture the texture of the wrinkles in the plastic (see top right of painting).

Large Bubble Wrap
A single large bubble cut from a piece of bubble wrap can be used to print with. Dip it into paint and press it firmly to the paper. It reminded me of stylized lacy trees, so I added fine trunks and branches. There are dozens of other applications for bubble wrap—an aerial view of an orchard, clouds.

Cardboard
Strip the smooth face from a cardboard carton and stamp the corrugations into a wet wash, then allow it to sit with a weight on it for about 10 minutes.

The darker, narrower diagonal lines at the lower left of this sample were made by painting directly onto the corrugated cardboard before pressing it to the paper.

Kitchen Cloth
On the left I stamped and blotted on a wet wash with a kitchen cloth. The gray pattern in the center is the mark made by laying a piece of the cloth flat on my palette, then applying it to the paper. On the right I stamped on color with a wadded piece of cloth.

Found Objects *continued*

Leaves
You can stamp or press leaves into a wet wash, or paint the leaf first, then stamp it on top of a dry wash for another layer. Use the leaves as a mask or stencil by painting around their shape.

Beads
Lay small or large beads in a wet wash. Dot them with pigment after you drop them into the wash. This will build up a small dam of color around each one, so that it dries with a sharp demarcation line.

Tape
Masking, painter's or drafting tape are all great masking tools. You can use tape to mask large areas, or cut and tear shapes to mask smaller details.

Here I've left some of the masking tape pieces in place, so you can see how well they work to mask whites out of a watercolor wash. Tear or cut pieces, and paint directly over the tape. Let your wash dry and peel the tape off carefully, leaving a sharp, white edge. This technique is great for fence posts, windows or even a sailboat's hull.

String

Dip yarn and string into concentrated mixtures of paint, lay them on your paper, and press them into place with another sheet of paper just like you used to do in school. You may find you need to paint directly onto the string to get a strong-enough effect—it's messy, but it works! (You can also try this technique with rubber bands.)

Paint a Building With Painter's Tape

DEMONSTRATION

Masking tape has been around for decades as an artist's tool, as well as a house-painter's old standby. In this case, I found painter's tape a bit gentler than masking tape on my paper—not as likely to tear or damage the surface when removed. In this demo, you'll use painter's tape to mask off large areas with good, sharp corners and crisp lines, so that when your washes are dry and the tape removed, you are left with pure white paper.

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

- Burnt Sienna
- Burnt Umber
- Phthalo Blue
- Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet
- Quinacridone Gold
- Ultramarine Blue

Brushes

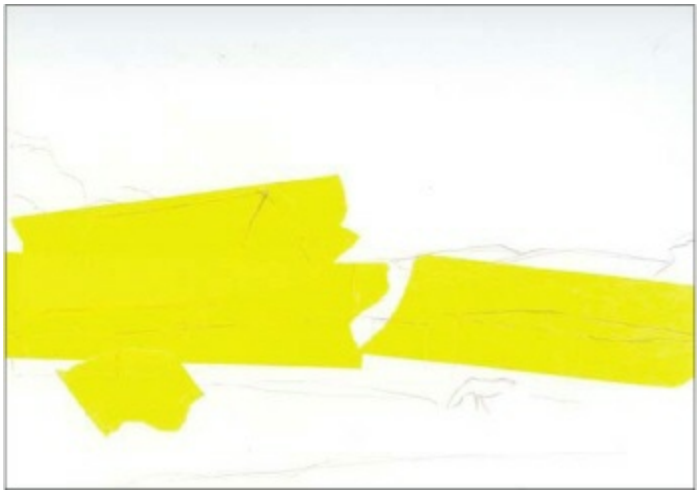
- ½-inch (12mm) and 1-inch (25mm) flats
- nos. 5, 6 and 8 rounds
- Small, stiff brush

Surface

- 140-lb. (300gsm) cold-pressed watercolor paper

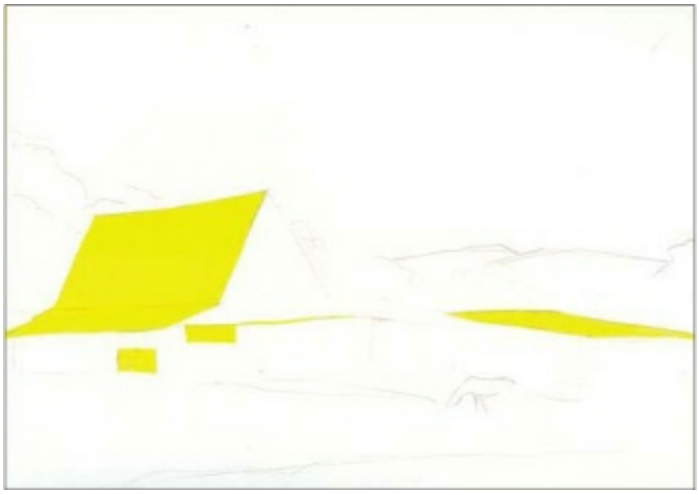
Other

- Craft knife
- Facial tissue
- HB pencil
- Liquid mask
- Yellow painter's tape



1 Draw and Mask Your Subject

Draw your scene with an HB pencil and apply a general mask to the buildings with yellow painter's tape. This type of tape is thin enough and light enough in color to let your guidelines show right through it.



2 Refine the Mask

Cut carefully, using a very sharp craft knife with a new blade, pressing just hard enough to go through the tape, not all the way through the paper (it's ok if you cut the top surface, but do not cut through the paper). When you pull away the excess tape, you have nice sharp-edged protected areas. Burnish over the tape with your thumbnail to assure a good seal. Protect the sunlit back of the horse in this scene with liquid mask applied with a no. 5 round, and let it dry.

3 Paint Initial Washes on Sky

Apply Phthalo Blue to the sky, adding a thin, wet mixture of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna to suggest clouds—a 1-inch (25mm) flat works well to give you a broad, soft, sky effect.

4 Paint Initial Washes on Hills and Grasses

Wash the distant hills with a darker value mix of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna, using your no. 6 round.

Start on the grassy area with a ½-inch (12mm) flat and a mixture of Phthalo Blue and Quinacridone Gold. With the tape in place, you can splash your paint in freely and paint right over the edge of the tape.

5 **Paint Initial Washes on the Midground**

Add the midground trees behind the barns with rich mixtures of Quinacridone Gold, Burnt Sienna and Phthalo Blue using your no. 8 round and a dancing, irregular stroke that suggests foliage.

6 **Paint the Buildings**

Lay in the shapes of the buildings with a ½-inch (12mm) flat and a mixture of Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet and Ultramarine Blue. Let this dry, then remove the tape from the barn roofs.

7 **Develop the Shadows**

Add shadows to the buildings with a mix of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna using your no. 5 round.

Use a mix of Ultramarine Blue, Phthalo Blue and Quinacridone Gold to create deeper shadows in the tree area to give it depth.

8 Add Final Details

Wash in the rest of the foreground grasses with the same colors from step 3 and your ½-inch (12mm) flat.

Use your no. 6 round and varied mixtures of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna to add details to the barns—rust on the roof, vertical boards, windows and gates.

Add the stone fence using your no. 5 round to apply Burnt Sienna and Ultramarine Blue in a rough dancing fashion, blotting here and there to suggest individual stones. Then spatter on additional texture with the same colors, and add a few smaller, sharp details using a richer mix of these same colors for unity.

Paint the grazing horse with a no. 6 round using Burnt Sienna darkened in the shadow areas with Burnt Umber. Paint it directly, then blot the upper edge with a tissue to give form and volume to the horse.

As a final touch, use a small stiff brush and clear water to lift some of the pigment around the edge of the flat roof in the center of the scene and the fence on the right; this will result in a soft highlight not achievable with masking or scraping.

Paper Towel and Tissue

Disposable and always clean, paper towels and tissue make great paint rags and lifters. Try holding a tissue or paper towel in one hand and a brush in the other. That way you can instantly adjust a wash, soften an edge, blot up a spill, lift excess moisture from the bead of a wash or from your brush, or even lift out or add texture.

Lifting and Stamping With a Damp Paper Towel
I did the same thing here with a paper towel as with the tissue. As you can see, paper towels can give you a different effect. At the bottom, I rubbed the paint off to resemble cirrus clouds without the paper towel falling apart on me. I also dipped the wad of towel into wet paint and printed with it at lower right.

Lifting and Stamping With a Damp Tissue
Here I laid a graded wash of Phthalo Blue and used a damp tissue to lift cloud shapes. Notice the soft edges on this sample. Stamping with the paint on the damp tissue creates a soft, crinkled effect.

Lifting and Stamping With a Dry Paper Towel
Using a dry paper towel to lift and stamp creates much harder edged shapes.

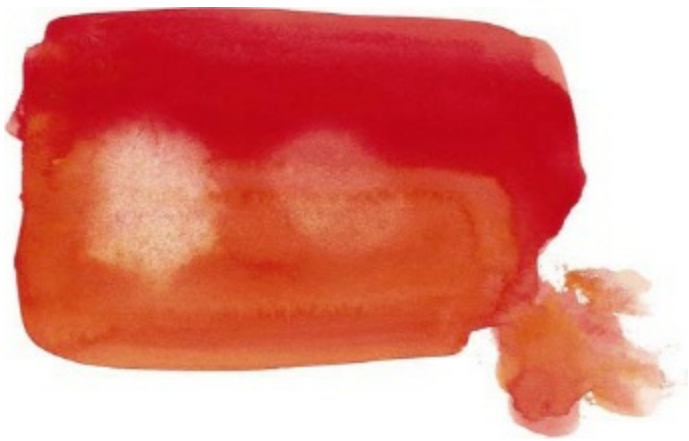
Lifting and Stamping With a Dry Tissue
I laid another graded wash of Phthalo Blue here and this time used a dry tissue to blot this wet wash in the shape of a cloud. The edges of the cloud forms are hard because a dry tissue is less absorbent than a damp one. Stamping with the paint on the dry tissue creates a hard, crinkled effect.

Cotton Balls

Cotton balls can be used in ways similar to towels and tissues, but surprisingly, are not as absorbent. They are strong and sturdy, though, so you can get a lot of use out of a single cotton ball before you have to throw it away. Be careful about dipping cotton balls into the moist paints on your palette—they leave more fibers than a shedding cat!

Practice Lifting and Stamping With Cotton Balls
I tried lifting color away from a still-damp Quinacridone Burnt Orange wash with a cotton ball and clean water at upper right. I then allowed the flat wash to dry completely and wiped it with a cotton ball and clear water at left. That lifted fairly efficiently, too, but not as cleanly as when the wash was still damp. I also stamped on color with a cotton ball.

I switched to Phthalo Blue to make the tree at lower right, dipping into the paint and pressing the cotton ball onto the paper with varying pressure.



Wet vs. Dry Cotton Balls
A wet cotton ball holds a lot of water, even if you think you've wrung it out well. The large amorphous shape at left is the result of

blotting quickly with such a dampened ball. Next to it, you can see what I mean by lack of absorbency—a dry cotton ball hardly lifted a thing. They are fun for stamping with, though, as you can see at lower right.

Paint a Cat With Lifting and Stamping

DEMONSTRATION

I combined a number of the techniques and materials from this chapter to make this portrait of my cat, Scout. She looked so sweet, curled up asleep on the Double Wedding Ring quilted pillow almost as if she knew she mirrored the ring. The calico cat and the calico patchwork just seemed to fit as well...I knew I'd have to paint this!

For this demonstration, choice of paper is key—start with a sheet of strong, durable 140-lb. (300gsm) cold-pressed watercolor paper for texture and durability (you'll be doing some lifting and scraping, so this strong surface will serve your needs well).

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

- Burnt Sienna
- Burnt Umber
- Cobalt Blue
- Manganese Blue Hue
- Quinacridone Red
- Raw Sienna
- Ultramarine Blue
- Yellow Ochre

Brushes

- ½-inch (12mm) and ¾-inch (19mm) flats
- nos. 4 and 6 rounds

Surface

- 140-lb. (300gsm) cold-pressed watercolor paper

Other

- Facial tissue
- HB pencil
- Liquid mask
- Paper towels
- Plastic grocery bag

1 Draw Your Subject and Apply a Base Wash

Plan your composition and draw in the shapes with an HB pencil, adjusting the shape of the patchwork in the quilted pillow to suggest perspective. Apply liquid mask where the lightstruck hairs of the cat will be silhouetted against a darker background, or where white and darker hairs meet in her fur.

Mix Cobalt Blue, Ultramarine Blue and a touch of Burnt Sienna for a subtle, moody first wash on the pillow, applying it with your ½-inch (12mm) flat, gradating darker on the left, away from the light source.

While the wash is still wet, lay a plastic grocery bag into it to suggest the texture of quilting and folds. Keep it in place for a few minutes to get soft, expressive "wrinkles," then remove it. The granulating blues look perfect with just this subtle bit of texture.

2 Establish the Background and the Quilt

Lay in strong washes of Burnt Umber, Burnt Sienna and Yellow Ochre for the wooden desktop with a ¾-inch (19mm) flat, adding a bit of Ultramarine Blue to your colors in the shadow areas surrounding the quilt. You can stamp with the edge of a rolled up paper towel in the upper left

wooden area to suggest the spiral shape for a motif that repeats in the quilt.

Paint the border of the quilt using a ½-inch (12mm) flat with a mix of Cobalt Blue and Manganese Blue Hue, blotting here and there with a tissue to give it dimension.

Add matching blues to the wedding ring pattern, blotting with a tissue while damp to lift lighter lines that suggest quilting.

3 Develop the Cat and the Quilt

Use a no. 6 round to add the calico on the cat with a strong mixture of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna for the darkest areas, and Burnt and Raw Sienna in the brown patches. Overlap the shapes where the hairs are protected with mask, working wet-into-wet for soft blending in the shadows, and to give form and volume.

Develop the quilt with a variety of pinks, blues and mauves in the patchwork pattern—use Cobalt Blue and Ultramarine Blue for the blues, Ultramarine Blue mixed with Quinacridone Red for the soft mauves, and straight Quinacridone Red thinned with water for beautiful clear pinks. Blot here and there to suggest the tiny folds in the fabric.

Allow the cat and the quilt to dry.

4 Refine the Cat and the Quilt

When everything is dry, you can remove the mask and continue to develop the pattern in both the cat and the pillow with the same mixes you used in step 3, paying attention to the myriad small prints, and developing and strengthening the patterns of fur. Use your no. 4 round for added control when painting the tiny calico prints.

Add in lighter values of Cobalt Blue and Burnt Sienna for the shadows in the body of the cat itself.

5 Add Final Details

Continue to develop the fur on the cat, softening here and there with a damp brush. Lift and restate darker areas on her fur where necessary to refine her form and shape.

Suggest shadows where the cat's body presses into the quilt, using a strong mix of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna.

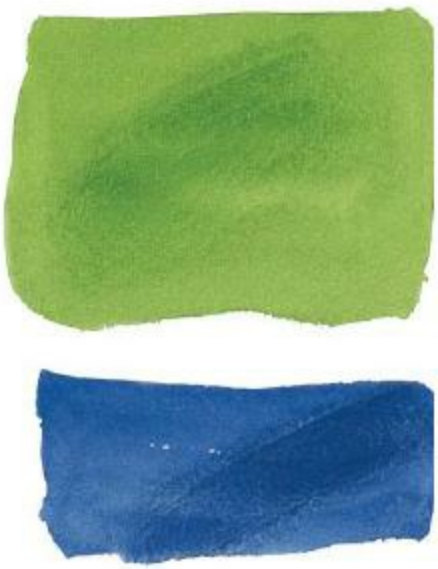
Add a few tiny stitches to the pillow here and there with the same mix of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna and your no. 4 round.

Then work on finishing the desktop by adding the grain with mostly Burnt Umber and Burnt Sienna applying it with a no. 6 round with the hairs spread apart for a drybrush effect. The same colors also work well for the cracks and shadows on the desk.

Scratch a few fine white lines in for stray hairs and whiskers, and voila, you're done!

Sandpaper

Sandpaper can provide a dark, roughened area or a bold texture. You can even take your paper back down to clean white with help from sandpaper. Try a variety of sandpaper grades for different effects.



Use Sandpaper Before You Lay Down Color for a Dark Effect
Sand your paper before you paint, then lay on color to make dark textured areas.

Use Sandpaper on a Dry Wash to Lift and Remove Color
Paint on a wash of color and let it dry, then lift or lighten with sandpaper.

Using Sandpaper in a Painting

I used a rather coarse wet/dry sandpaper to regain the white paper in the midground here, to suggest steam rising on an icy morning. The slightly granular effect at the edges of the sanded area made me think of ice crystals in the air. (See Paint a Snow Scene With a Variety of Indispensable Tools for complete instructions on how to paint this scene.)

Collage

Using the techniques of collage and watercolor together magnifies the possibilities of texture in many exciting ways. By building a surface with your watercolor and added objects, you can create many layered and textural effects.

Collaging With Rice Paper on Your Watercolor Painting
This little painting combines straight watercolor technique with a bit of collage for spice. I painted the cat and windowsill with watercolor on heavy watercolor board (a heavier, thicker support works best with collage). When it was dry, I moistened a piece of textured rice paper with polymer medium and placed it on the painting, partly veiling the cat. I worked out bubbles on the paper by brushing more medium over the top. I added a few more layers of rice paper to suggest folds in the sheer curtain. As a finishing touch, I added a few white dots and lines directly over the dried rice paper for a sort of a textured-fabric effect.

Collaging With Rice Paper and Foil on Acrylic
In this example, I applied a wash of acrylic on heavy watercolor board. I textured this watery wash with folded aluminum foil and let i dry. Since it is acrylic, you don't have to worry about this nice texture lifting as you work. I painted rice paper and foil squares with polymer medium and placed them in the painting, brushing over and beyond the squares with more polymer medium to get out bubbles.

Try Collaging These Objects Into Your Next Watercolor Painting

The only limit to what you collage is your imagination and the permanence of the materials used.

Mediums

Use polymer medium (gloss or matt) or gel medium to attach your collaged objects. The gel medium works better on heavier objects.

Paper-Thin Objects

Rice paper, stenciled letters, light-weight wood, metal pieces, thread or yarn, ribbon or lace, foils

3-D Objects

Nails or washers, feathers, straw, sticks or stones

PART 3

Indispensable Tools

Broadly speaking, your "tools" include everything from paper and pigments to your own unique vision of the world. In this section, I have tried to narrow down the term to mean those things we hold in our hand and paint with, mark with, scratch or scrape with, or otherwise use to cause an image to appear on our paper.

Here you'll see a wide variety of tools and all the different effects they produce. Of course, the real magic when using any tools occurs when you use your own vision as well.

Brushes

First and foremost among watercolor tools are, of course, brushes. They are basic to our work as painters; they're versatile and easily available in any art supply store. Experimenting with how and when to use them will allow you to create very nearly any effect you want.

We all have our favorite brushes, old friends that we reach for first, so don't feel you must spend a fortune on a whole quiver full of brushes in order to paint, just use what you like.

Play with all of your brushes to learn what they are capable of doing. Even if you're an old hand at watercolor, it never hurts to go through a few exercises to warm up. There's always the chance you'll discover a bold new stroke you didn't know your old brushes could pull off!

Any time I buy a new brush—even in a familiar form—I put it through its paces. Start with the obvious strokes, if you like, but then push, pull, dab or otherwise work with your brushes until you are thoroughly familiar with what they can do. You'll know then, when you want a particular effect, just which brush to grab for and what to do with it.

Keep in mind that the effects you make with your brushes will vary with your surface. Choose the brush and the paper you want to create your own special magic.

My Favorites
My most-used brushes are (left to right) my old no. 12 red sable, a manmade no. 10 and no. 8 round, a 1-inch (25mm) and a ¾-inch (19mm) flat with aquarelle handles for scraping, an ancient stencil brush for spattering and rough effects, a barbered fan brush, and a rigger I've used for years. I find I use the no. 10 and no. 8 synthetic brushes most often.

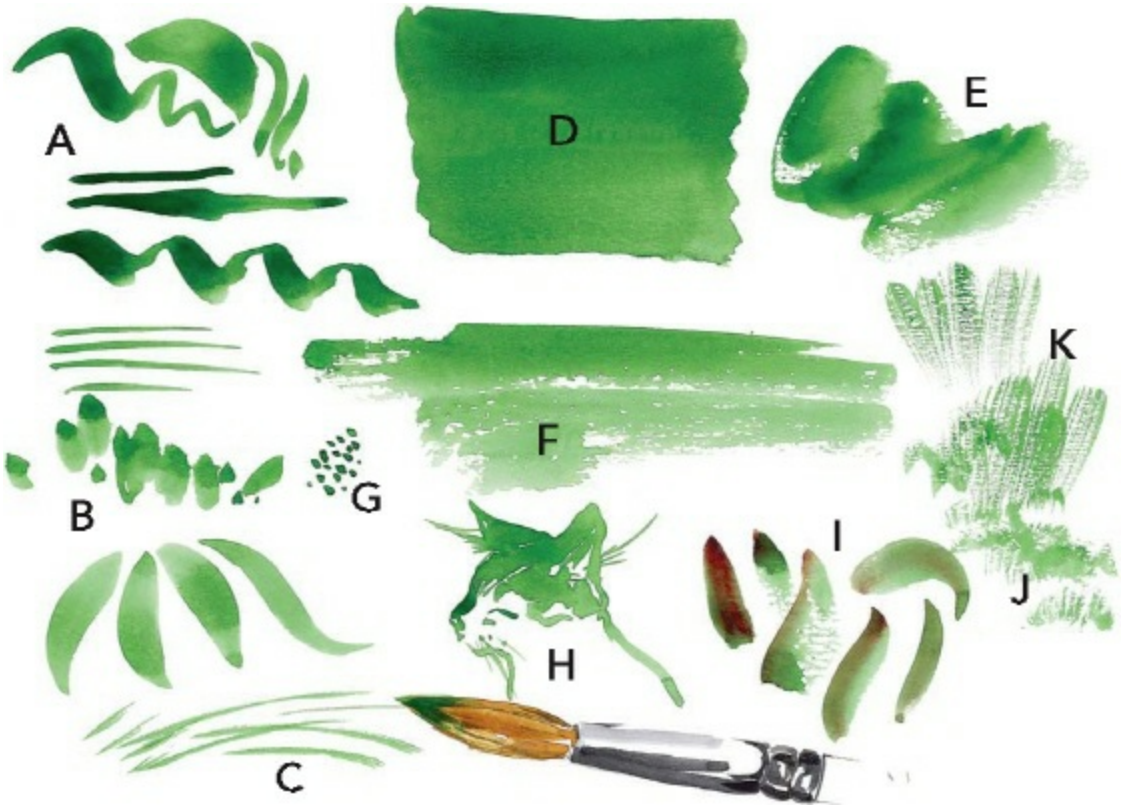
Sable vs. Manmade

Sable is a premier luxury and one you owe yourself, if you can swing it. But sable isn't a necessity of life. No brush, no matter how magical, will make us better painters—we do that ourselves, even if we have to work with a sharp stick!

Manmade brushes have improved dramatically over the years. Sable blends, “white sables,” nylon, Taklon, goat or ox hair brushes are all fine compromises if you are working on a limited budget. Synthetic fibers seem to hold a bit less pigment than sables, but they’re strong and sturdy, and much more affordable—and you wouldn’t feel as bad if you lost one when traveling!

Rounds

Round watercolor brushes come in sizes from 000 to size 16 and up. These brushes hold a lot of paint in their deep bodies and should come to a good point when shaken briskly. If your old beloved round has lost its point, don't despair and throw it away; it's still a dandy tool for a lot of rough effects you wouldn't wish on a fine new sable.



See What Your Round Brushes Can Do

A Paint various shapes with the tip of your brush.

B See what happens when you hold your brush lightly and just touch the tip to your paper. Then bring down the body of the brush into full contact with the paper.

C How fine a line can you make when you use just the very tip of the brush?

D Lay a flat wash.

E Make strokes with the entire body of the brush.

F Lay dry-brush washes.

G Make small dots with the tip of the brush.

H Try a sketch with just the tip of the brush.

I Use the full brush shape again, this time loading the brush with one color, then dipping the tip into another pigment.

J Try loading your brush, then dry it somewhat and spread the bristles, jabbing upward with them.

K Make grassy strokes, lifting up on the end of the stroke to thin out the distribution of paint.

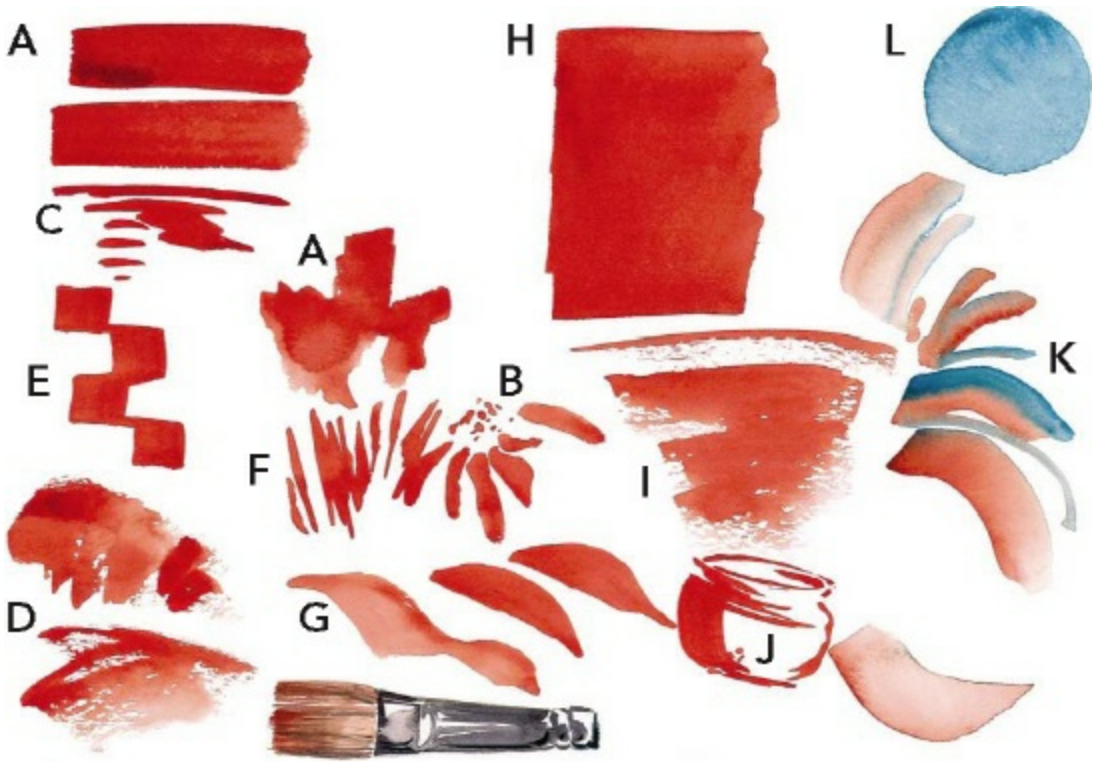
Rounds in Action

A round brush captured the variety of shapes here beautifully. The point was perfect for the calligraphic stems and shadows, and the body of the brush worked well for the larger negative shapes between the leaves.

Flats

Flats are among my favorites for everyday painting. I like the slightly puddled washes I can pull with them and the unexpected effects. I like their versatility, too. Don't think because a brush is square on the end that your strokes have to be, too. Paint with the end of the brush, the corner or the side. Manipulate the body of the brush for varied strokes. Scrub it into your paper. Push up; pull down. Jab and poke your brush at the paper for new effects. (I know this sounds terribly hard on a good watercolor brush. You'll be happy to find how much less expensive the flats are than the round sable brushes—something to do with ease of construction, I expect. Even a nice big sable flat is much less expensive than a round in comparable size.)

Flats in Action
I used a flat brush not only in the broad, geometric shapes of the building, but in the soft sky, the sweeping foreground, and to suggest the telephone pole that gives some life to the old abandoned farmhouse. (A fan brush, worked well to suggest the bare branches against the sky.)



See What Your Flat Brushes Can Do

A Lay flat strokes with the ends of the bristles. This could be useful to depict anything from a slanted roof to barn boards to wood grain.

B Use a corner of the brush to make tiny dots and small strokes.

C Make strokes with just the tips of the bristles.

D Use the outside edge or side of the brush to create broken, dry-brush effects.

E Try shapes that take advantage of the shape of the brush itself.

F Stamp on color with the ends of the bristles.

G Turn the brush this way and that using the side and tip at once.

H Lay a flat wash.

I Make dry-brush effects with the side of the brush.

J Do a small sketch using just the corner of the brush.

K Dip one side of the brush in one color, and use a different color on the other side.

L Try to create a round shape by dragging your brush in a circle.

Fans

A fan brush is meant mainly for oil painting and is often called a blender. I trim the end of mine in a close approximation of what I did to my bangs when I was four, making a jagged edge. This keeps the marks from becoming too mechanical. It also helps to vary how you hold and apply your brush.

See What Your Fan Brushes Can Do

A Try a jagged-cut fan brush to make downward strokes.

B Apply paint with a pouncing motion using just the brush tips.

C Long, graceful, dry-brush strokes can suggest hair.

D Try long strokes with a wet wash.

E Create dry-brush texture with a rough, scrubbing stroke.

F Jab just the tips of the bristles to suggest short grass, mosses, lichen, rock texture, gravel and more.

G Use the edge and tip of the fan with a slightly longer upward stroke to suggest longer grassy forms.

H Pouncing, dancing little strokes can suggest lichen, sand, loose earth—you name it.

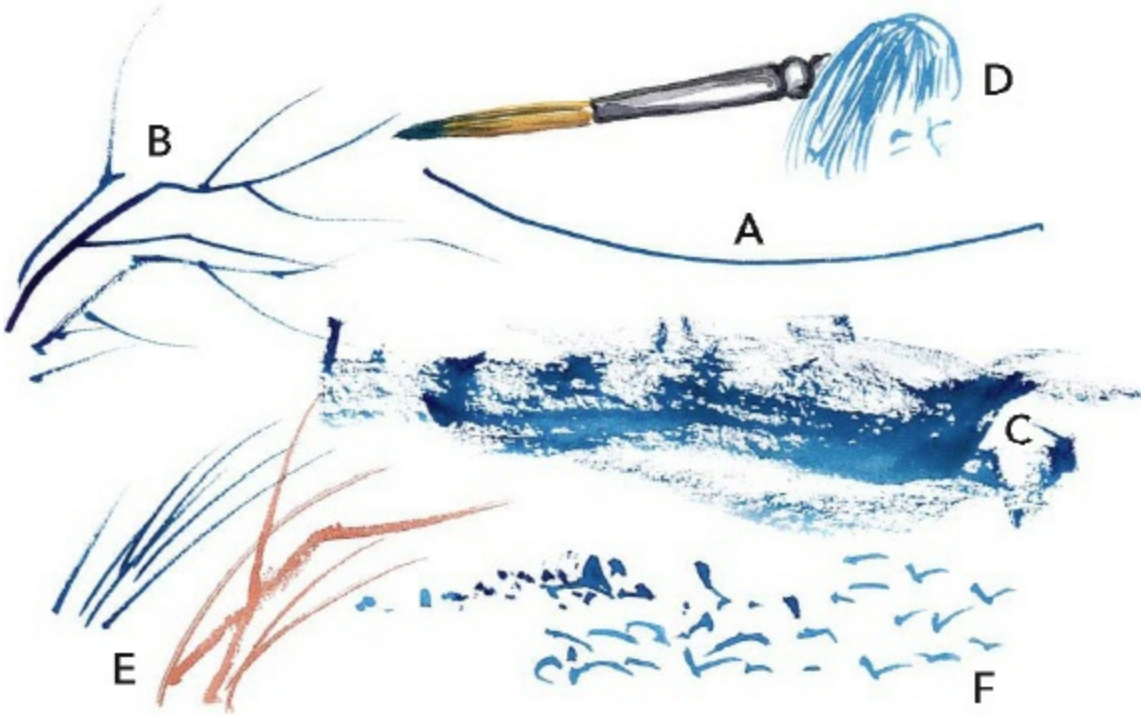
Fans in Action

A small, soft nylon fan brush worked here to suggest the texture of the wood on the boat and on the dock. This is a more subtle effect than if I had used a larger bristle version of this same brush.

Riggers or Liners

Riggers may look bizarre, with their long, thin shapes, but looks can be deceiving. Give them a try! Riggers are so called because artists once used them to paint the rigging of ships—you may find them useful for all kinds of things. Anyplace you need the paint to feed more or less evenly over a relatively long period is a good place to reach for your rigger brush. Power lines and fences are obvious places. The lines will become thinner as you lift, so you can paint some very believable limbs and twigs with a rigger, too. Hair's also good, or long grasses. Play with your rigger and see!

Riggers in Action
A small travel rigger brush worked wonderfully to capture the limbs on the bare tree at left, and on some of the foreground grasses. The way the brush dances and angles makes interesting and natural-looking lines.



See What Your Riggers Can Do

A See how well a rigger or liner brush will make uniform, sweeping lines.

B Use the rigger or liner to paint bare twigs—the line fairly dances as you change direction.

C Practice achieving a dry-brush effect with the side of the long rigger bristles.

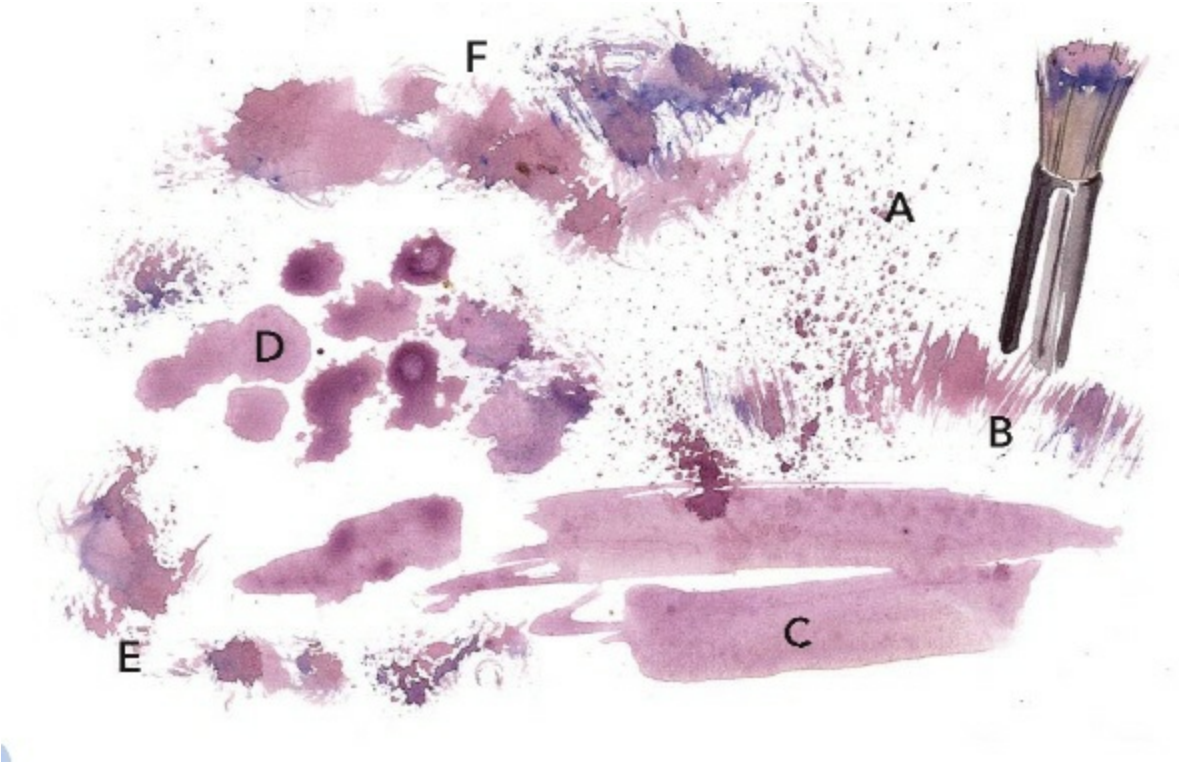
D Linear effects can suggest hair and small details.

E Long weedy grasses look natural painted with a rigger.

F You can paint short dots and dashes with the tip of the brush, too! Here, my dots begin to look more like birds in flight.

Stencil Brushes

You may not have thought of using stencil brushes with watercolor, but they're marvelously versatile tools. They're inexpensive, readily available in art supply stores, craft stores, and even discount and hardware stores, and they come in a variety of sizes. Use them for spattering, paint with them, even scrub out color you want to lift. They are great at helping you achieve a feeling of texture without the temptation to overwork.



See What Your Stencil Brushes Can Do

A My favorite use for my stencil brush is to spatter on texture. I run the end of my thumb over the bristles to make the spatters fly off my brush, aimed at the paper at a variety of angles for more interesting effects. Clump your spatter for variation of placement and values. Try this technique for old boards, a sandy beach, rough soil or sparkles on water.

B Try jabbing upward with the ends of the bristles to suggest short grass or the rough hair of an animal's coat, whatever.

C In a pinch, you can cover broader areas with this brush. Here I used the side of the brush for the most uniform coverage.

D Pounce on the surface with the loaded end of the brush. These strokes will became more rough and open as the brush runs out of paint.

E Experiment with applying paint using the tips of the bristles.

F You can even paint with your stencil brush just as you would any other, for rugged effects. I was going for pine boughs here (so perhaps green would have been a better color choice).

Loose Effects With a Stencil Brush

I spattered color into a wet wash here for softer effects and continued to spatter as the wash dried, blotting here and there to assure a variety of values. I spattered clear water into a wet wash in the grassy area for more variations in texture. Blotting with a tissue will play up the blotched effect.

Controlled Effects With a Stencil Brush

For more controlled effects, when you spatter, just protect the areas you don't want spattered with a torn or cut paper mask. Here the spatter really approximates the pattern of the owl's feathers.

Bristle Brushes

A bristle brush is normally used to paint oils or acrylics, but it can be a very handy tool with watercolors as well. Look beyond the obvious for solutions to your painting challenges!

Texture Effects With a Bristle Brush
My little bristle brush worked great for the lacy foliage of the rough cedar tree and for foreground spatter that suggests weeds and grasses.

See What Your Bristle Brushes Can Do

One of my favorite tools for my plein air kit is an old round bristle brush meant for oil paints. It's small and lightweight, as well as inexpensive. It has a rather ragged head with stiff hairs, so it's wonderful for spatter and a variety of texturing effects. I've also sharpened the other end in a pencil sharpener, so I can use it for scraping, incising, or painting—just dip it in a puddle of wash and draw with it, like a pen!

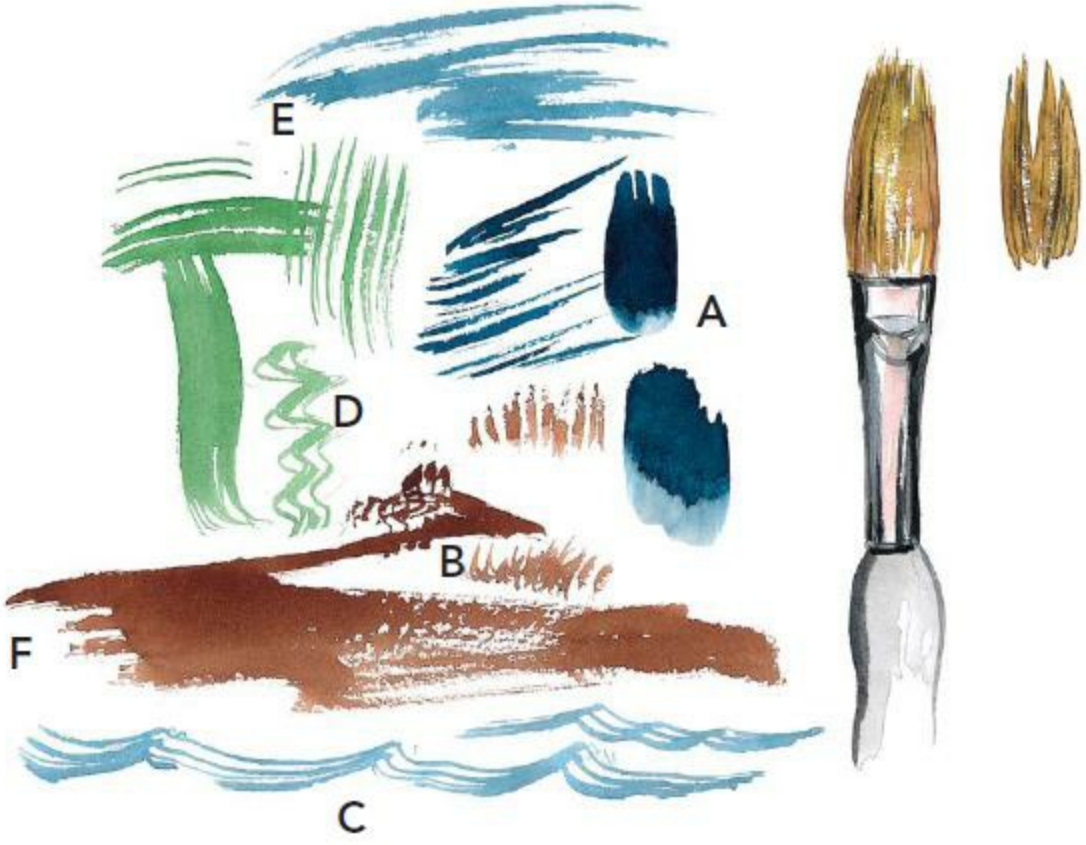
Another Handy Travel Brush

This may sound like blasphemy for a watercolorist, but for travel brushes I also enjoy the short-handled, colorful kids' brush sets you may find in your local discount store. You can usually get a whole variety of brush types for under $5—look in the school supplies or scrapbooking section.

There are several brands, some with round handles and some with triangular ones that won't roll off onto the floor. They're all nylon bristles, but quite handy and affordable!

Texture and Wire Brushes

These two brushes may look odd and are not be your typical painting tool, but they work wonders for adding marvelous texture to your work.



See What Your Texture Brushes Can Do

One of the newer specialty brushes out there is called a "texture brush"—that's what they called it in the store, honest! It has a rather oval tip, and the hairs are slightly jagged for a variety of linear effects. It's versatile, despite its odd look.

A Try laying on color with the whole body of the brush, flat on the paper.

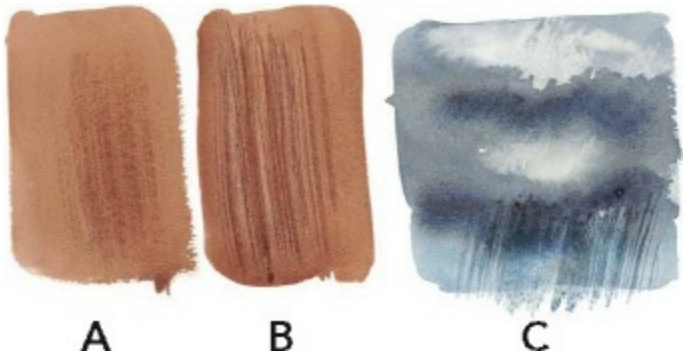
B Make short strokes applying the paint with just the tips of the brush.

C You can make waves...

D ...or squiggles,

E ...or long grassy lines.

F You can achieve a dry-brush effect with the body or side of the brush.



See What Your Wire Brushes Can Do

Small, brass-or steel-bristled brushes used for cleaning your barbeque grill or other chores make for handy painting tools. Some have a scraping edge that makes them doubly useful—you can lift or push paint around with that edge.

A Scratch the surface before painting to bruise the paper slightly and produce subtle lines.

B Scratch into a wet wash to get bolder lines.

C Here's one possible use for the wire brush—falling rain. You might also use it to suggest grass, hair, wood grain, or simply as texture in an abstract composition. Try crosshatching into a wet wash for a fresh look. Suggest a linen weave in a portrait subject's clothing. It's a handy brush.

Using a Thirsty Brush

A “thirsty brush” does not imply that you should take your supplies out for a drink. In case you are unfamiliar with the term, it simply means a brush that you rinse in clean water, then blot with a paper towel or tissue; if you prefer, wring out the excess moisture between your thumb and forefinger. A thirsty brush will absorb a lot of pigment and will allow you more control in a smaller area than many of our other lifting tricks. You will be able to pick out a highlight on a light-struck eye, describe the shape of a petal in detail, push your pigment around and generally manipulate your painting. A thirsty brush will soften an edge instantly.

Waterbrushes

This terrific new sketcher’s tool holds water right in the handle, so there is no need for a separate water container. Waterbrushes are made by several different companies in a variety of configurations and sizes, all of which are pretty small, so while they are not really for larger works, they are delightful for sketching on the spot where your whole kit isn’t practical. Keep a tissue or rag handy and touch the brush to it when you want to change colors. Most of the paint will wick out, and a quick squeeze will flush out the rest with clear water. Let a few drops fall onto your palette to mix your colors—très convenient!

Manganese Blue Hue

Phthalo Blue

Ultramarine Blue

Cobalt Blue

Lifting With a Thirsty Brush

These four swatches will give you an idea of the effects you can expect using a thirsty brush; some pigments will move much more easily than others. The staining pigments, for instance, will move while wet, but are virtually impossible to influence very much when dry. Know your pigments as well as your technique to develop a degree of control.

On the left in each color sample, I've lifted pigment while still quite wet with a well wrung-out brush. The effect is very clean on the Manganese Blue Hue and Ultramarine Blue, but less so on the others.

On the right, I've let the washes dry completely, then lifted with a dampened bristle brush and blotted away the loosened pigment with a clean tissue. All of the samples lifted well except that stubborn, staining Phthalo Blue.

Controlled Lifting

In this painting, I painted the clouds and layered mountain ranges directly, paying attention to values and color. Then I lifted the rays shining through the clouds with thirsty brushes of various widths, blotting up the loosened pigment to get the lightest lights. This approach gives you maximum control and let me put the rays exactly where I wanted them.

Lift Small Details With a Thirsty Brush

DEMONSTRATION

You can get a great variety of effects with a thirsty brush, depending on the size and type of brush you use. One of my favorite tools is meant for oil painters—it's a stiff nylon bright brush called Artisan, by Winsor & Newton. This short, flat bright can pick up delicate areas of a painting.

My cat Merlin ends up being my model rather frequently, and this closeup of his eyes provides the perfect chance to use this small, stiff, thirsty brush.

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

- Burnt Sienna
- Burnt Umber
- Indigo
- Phthalo Blue
- Quinacridone Gold
- Ultramarine Blue

Brushes

- ¾-inch (19mm) flat
- nos. 6 and 8 rounds
- no. 4 bright

Surface

- 140-lb. (300gsm) cold-pressed watercolor paper

Other

- Salt
- White gel pen

1 Draw in the Subject and Lay First Washes

Draw in the shapes of the eyes and nose and lay in a light blue underwash with a ¾-inch (19mm)

flat. Add some Burnt Sienna and Ultramarine Blue wet-in-wet with a no. 8 round to suggest his interesting tabby-Siamese markings. A bit of Quinacridone Gold flooded in on the left looks sunny. Paint around the shape of the eyes, leaving an irregular white shape around the rims of the eyes for the highlighted fur areas. Let this dry.

2 Add First Wash to Eyes

Lift with the no. 4 bright to correct form if needed; I lifted a bit of color to reshape his nose, which looked crooked.

Add the first wash in his eyes, also wet-in-wet, using Phthalo Blue and Ultramarine Blue in his left eye, and Quinacridone Gold, a touch of Burnt Sienna and that lovely Phthalo Blue in his right eye painting around small areas of highlights. A no. 6 round gave me the most control when painting these eyes. The way the light strikes his right eye makes it look as if it has gold in it...it doesn't, but the effect is too gorgeous not to try! A tiny bit of salt in that golden eye gives the illusion of sparkle.

3 Refine Merlin's Left Eye

Refine and emphasize the dark shapes around the blue eye using Indigo and Burnt Umber with the no. 6 round.

4 Add in Pupils

Paint in the dark pupils with a mixture of Burnt Umber and Indigo and allow it to dry. Then lift the details with a damp no. 4 bright, blotting immediately to remove the loosened paint. You can see where I lifted highlights and lines in the iris on the blue eye to give it depth and shine.

I also lifted some tiny light hairs on the cat's fur with the same brush, then added in a few darker hairs and markings with a mixture of Burnt Umber and Burnt Sienna.

5 Add Texture to the Fur

Use the sharp edge of the no. 4 bright to lift more of the individual hairs around Merlin's face, softening and integrating edges. The sharp edge of the same brush can also work to paint the fine, dark whiskers. The no. 4 bright softens some of the light fur around Merlin's eyes, too.

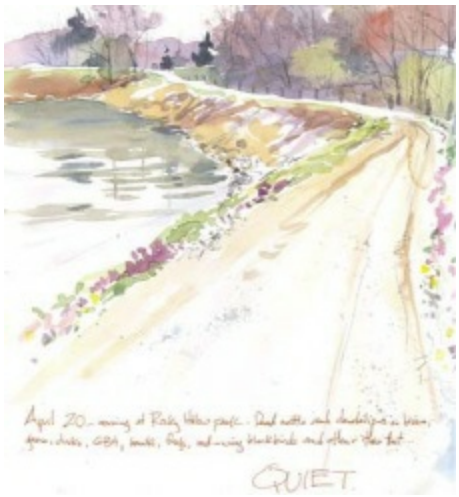
6 Add Final Details

Finish by adding in thin strokes with a white gel pen to suggest the light whiskers.

PENCILS

Graphite

Pencil and watercolor work well together in several ways. I often use pencil to do preliminary sketching before beginning to paint; the lines can add a nice touch if they are left in place rather than erased or covered. You can also draw with pencil on top of a wash to add detail and texture to your painting.



Using Pencil as a Guideline
Pencil lines can just act as guidelines, as they did here in my journal sketch where the lines themselves are almost invisible.

What you can see, however, is a handy technique I use often, drawing back into a damp wash with the tip of a mechanical pencil. This bruises the paper and will create fine, dark lines that are marvelous for suggesting bare trees and limbs, as in the background here.

Establish Form and Framework With a Pencil
In this painting, the pencil drawing forms the framework for the painting, but a range of values in the washes give it shape and volume. This combination of pencil and subtle washes reminds me of the drawings of Hans Holbein the Younger.

If you prefer to erase your pencil lines, erase them after the first, light washes of paint are down. If you wait until later, you may lift some of your pigment as you erase. (In practice, though, even a light wash often serves to fix your pencil lines in place—usually I don't worry about removing them.)

Using Pencil With a Single Wash

Incorporating graphite pencil into your painting seems to work best if washes are kept simple and somewhat high in key, providing a mood while helping set the pencil lines; think of the beautiful watercolors of Auguste Rodin or some of Picasso's drawings onto which he applied washes of color. They have a simplicity and honesty I like.

Here I used a single, simple wash over a drawing of my husband done with a mechanical pencil with an HB lead. The blue captured his mood perfectly.

More Pencil Facts to Keep In Mind

Hardness/Softness: Both wood and mechanical pencils come with a range of choices from very soft leads (good for bold value sketches and places you need good darks) to harder leads that work well for light, delicate underdrawings where you don't want your lines to show. (Beware of washing color over the softer leads, though, as they have a tendency to smudge and may muddy up your color.)

Inexpensive: While you can purchase expensive versions of both wood and mechanical pencils, the inexpensive types work just as well with your watercolor washes.

Washing Color Over a Graphite Portrait

DEMONSTRATION

This little girl is a beauty; I had to paint her! I used a mechanical pencil to sketch in the basic shapes and tried for a likeness, then washed on paint to develop the value and color of the painting.

1 **Establish Form With a Pencil**

Using a pencil before you paint will help you capture the form and structure of your subject. This becomes particularly useful when painting a portrait, as you'll want to make sure to capture the likeness of your subject as best you can. Here I chose an HB pencil for its range of values.

2 **Add First Washes**

Protect the "jewels" in her crown with tiny dots of mask. When they dry, paint the crown with Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna using your no. 10 round. Lay in the first delicate flesh colors

using Quinacridone Red and Cadmium Orange with the same brush. Wash on color right over the drawing.

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

- Burnt Sienna
- Cadmium Orange
- Indigo
- Quinacridone Gold
- Quinacridone Red
- Raw Sienna
- Ultramarine Blue

Brushes

- nos. 6 and 10 round
- Small, stiff brush

Surface

- 140-lb. (300gsm) cold-pressed watercolor paper

Other

- HB pencil
- Liquid mask

3 Develop Your Values

Mix up a rich wash of Quinacridone Gold and Raw Sienna with a touch of Burnt Sienna for the hai —a no. 10 round with a good point is perfect for this. When you have a mask in place, you can paint right over it—you can see Fiona's hair laid in here.

Stronger washes of the flesh color mixture work as shadows on her skin, paying attention to their shapes but still keeping everything soft and subtle. (When you're painting children, you need to work

toward freshness.)

Add the first layer of eye color with your no. 6 round and Ultramarine Blue grayed with a touch of Burnt Sienna.

4 Build Up Color

Paint in hair on the smaller version on the left in the same way as you did in step 3.

Then add washes of Quinacridone Red to her shirt using your no. 6 round. Add pupils to her eyes using Indigo with Burnt Sienna to make a rich dark mixture, using the same small brush for maximum control.

Start removing the mask on the crowns (this step shows mask still present on the smaller areas of the crown on the large version of Fiona on the right). Add color to the large jewels with the no. 6 round and Quinacridone Red mixed here and there with Ultramarine Blue for dark, rich facets.

5 Refine and Add Final Details

Make any adjustments to the likeness as needed. I realized that adding the light line of her eyelid on the right made that eye look a lot bigger, and that I'd gotten her ear too small on that side as well. Time for damage control! I lifted the upper edge of her ear with a small, stiff brush and repainted it when that was dry. I then worked on the eye so it's closer in size to the other.

Add a bit more detail in the shadows of her skin with Quinacridone Red and Ultramarine Blue using your no. 6 round. Then use these same colors to make a beautiful, clear lavender for the gauzy skirt, laying it in with your no. 10 round, and call it done.

You'll find that most of your original pencil drawing is hidden within all the washes of color. Here you can still see the pencil within the image on the left. This is a nice touch that adds to the freshness of the subject and to the feeling of movement created with the montage composition.

PENCILS

Colored Pencils

An increasingly popular medium, colored pencil is wonderfully versatile and mixes beautifully with watercolor. I prefer the soft, buttery, wax-based Prismacolor pencils (though there are other brands of wax-based pencils that you can try to see what works best for you); they stay put when you add watercolor on top, without lifting or muddying the washes, and they don't smear as you draw. Unfortunately, in my experience, the newer oil-based colored pencils tend to smudge if you inadvertently rub your hand over them, and they may lift when wet. They just don't work as well with watercolor.

Use Colored Pencil to Work Fast
Painting over a colored pencil sketch is a great technique for working fast—you can keep the basic sketch bold and simple, and add only as much color as you need. A fast, loose sketch like this still provides plenty of framework for your washes.

Wash Color Over a Wax-Based Colored Pencil Sketch
I often use a dark gray wax-based colored pencil when working on the spot. Then when I return home, I add watercolor washes over the sketch. I find this helps me train my color memory—it also lightens the load I carry with me to the field! Any dark colored pencil will work well with this technique though. Try Indigo, Dark Umber, Tuscan Red, Black Grape or any strong, rich color; they will add a beautifully subtle vibration to your work. (Of course, you can go wild and use a bright red or blue, too!)

Use Colored Pencil to Emphasize Mood

Choose a different hue for your basic colored pencil drawing to emphasize the mood you're after—here I was tired and a bit contemplative, so I used an Indigo colored pencil for the basic sketch, then added quick washes. As when you do the preliminary sketch with graphite pencil, this underdrawing gives you a framework to hang loose watercolor washes on—I like the freshness of this approach.

Colored Pencils *continued*

Although not my favorite method of working, some artists use colored pencils to add spark or details to their finished paintings, or to correct areas that have become dull, to avoid the danger of making the painting muddy with too many overwashes.

Rework a Painting With Colored Pencil

There are times when a painting just isn't satisfying—especially, it seems to me, when dealing with the many challenges of working in the field. Nature can be confusing, and I often find myself trying to include too much; my painting gets away from me. Rather than rip i up and throw it away, it's worth playing with, using my colored pencils.

In this detail of a larger piece, I added a bit of sparkle in the form of highlights on the water and rocks, to what had become a rather muddy, uninteresting painting.

You may prefer to plan ahead for such an effect; it doesn't have to be a last-ditch afterthought! And these mixed-media paintings are receiving increasing acceptance at shows; they have their own special energy.

Use Colored Pencil for Details, Texture or Contrast

Here I experimented with several different colored pencils, using various colors and values against a variegated wash.

PENCILS

Watercolor Pencils

Water-soluble pencils allow the artist to work in watercolor without the necessity of toting tubes, large palettes, and water containers into the field. These pencils are watercolor pigment and binders in pencil or crayon form—just add water!

Be Aware of the Lightfastness of Your Pencils

Just like with regular watercolors, some pigments are more lightfast than others. A good brand will rate their pencils, allowing you to choose. Some of the new, exciting types of watercolor pencils have some serious issues with fading. Check online for research on what brands or colors tend to fade most, or do your own tests.

I did this painting in 2005 with Derwent Graphitints (which are a mixture of watercolor pigment and graphite), and so far it's resisted fading very well.

Pencil Brands

Get acquainted with the effects of each pencil (some become almost garish when wet). Try an open-stock pencil from several different brands and work with each to see how they stroke on color and look when wet. I prefer Faber-Castell's Albrecht Dürer watercolor pencils—they're buttery soft and richly pigmented. You may like a harder pencil, though, so shop around. Purchasing a few open-stock pencils will let you experiment before making a decision, without too much of an investment.

Hot Press

Cold Press

Rough

The Paper You Use Makes a Big Difference

The paper you choose is particularly important with watercolor pencils—can make all the difference between whether you love or hate them!

Choose paper with a hard, well-sized surface, like Strathmore Imperial, and you'll be able to deposit more pigment and dissolve it with your brush without damaging the paper surface. Some artists prefer to use a hot-pressed paper with watercolor pencils as it is easier to control your pencil lines on a paper without a lot of texture.

Watercolor Pencils *continued*

I enjoy sketching with watercolor pencils, but you can also use them to create entire paintings. Many artists like these pencils for the greater control they offer, whether for whole paintings or just a strong sharp detail here and there.

Adding Color to an Ink Drawing With Watercolor Pencil
The scene was carefully drawn in non-water-soluble black ink, and the color was added later, with watercolor pencil.

Layering With Watercolor Pencil
When painting with watercolor pencils, you put down color, wet, allow it to dry, then add another layer of color—just as you do with regular watercolor washes. Here a quick ink sketch with muted watercolor pencil primaries let me cut supplies to the bone while still allowing for a satisfying range of colors.

Linear Effects With Watercolor Pencil
Take a single watercolor pencil to sketch with in the field, and add washes either there on the spot or later, when you return to the studio—the effect can be subtle or bold, depending on the colors you choose!

More Linear Effects With Watercolor Pencil

I drew these buildings as mostly outlines, with just a bit of interior work, then painted clear-water washes over the shapes to blend the colors. The swatches on the right are where I tested the colors I planned to use to make sure they'd give the effect I wanted.

Painting a Landscape With Watercolor Pencil and Watercolor

DEMONSTRATION

We had gone for a drive in the country on a cool, cloudy summer day, and I found a small lake in a nearby town. My journal sketch was hampered by the rain that began to fall moments after we arrived (you can see the pattern of droplets on the page below), but it was inspiring enough that I wanted to try this scene again under more favorable circumstances. I decided on mixed media, watercolor and watercolor pencil for this demo.

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

Watercolors: Burnt Sienna, Cobalt Blue, Phthalo Blue, Quinacridone Gold, Ultramarine Blue

Watercolor Pencils: Blue Gray (Derwent), Burnt Sienna (Albrecht Dürer), Green Gold (Albrecht Dürer), Prussian Blue (Albrecht Dürer)

Brushes

¾-inch (19mm) flat

no. 4 round

Small, stiff nylon brush

Surface

140-lb. (300gsm) cold-pressed watercolor paper

Other

Tissues or paper towels

Journal Sketch

1 Lay First Washes

Watercolor is a good choice for areas where you want smoother transitions and broader effects. Paint Burnt Sienna, Ultramarine Blue and Cobalt Blue wet-in-wet with a ¾-inch (19mm) flat brush in the sky and reflected lake area.

When that is dry, use a small, stiff nylon brush to lift out the falling rain—be sure to lift loosened color quickly with a tissue or paper towel.

A simple wash of Phthalo Blue mixed with Quinacridone Gold makes a wonderful green for the grassy areas. Apply the green watercolor with the ¾-inch (19mm) flat—larger brushes help create smoother effects than dabbing away with a small one!

2 Draw in Trees With Watercolor Pencil

Watercolor pencils are lovely for adding smaller details. Derwent makes a beautiful Blue Gray that may turn out to be essential in your kit—it is in mine! Adding squiggles of this color where the trees will be puts down a cool layer that will suggest distant trees on a rainy day. Give closer foliage along the bank a layer of Green Gold or a similar color.

3 Develop the Foliage Areas

Wet the watercolor pencil areas with your no. 4 round brush for greatest control and let them dry. Then add more squiggles where the larger trees will be. These can be more energetic since you'll want them to have a bit more detail.

4 Continue to Develop the Foliage Areas

Wet the trees using the same small brush. A slightly scrubbing motion will mix your watercolor pencil pigment right on the paper. Light touches of Burnt Sienna watercolor pencil along the bank and under the trees on the far shore warm things up a bit. Blend these with clear water as well; blot if you like, here and there, for a bit of variation.

5 Add Final Details

You can lift color directly from the pencil tip with a damp brush for details like these cattails on the near shore, or shave off bits of the color into a small palette. Here, the Blue Gray and Green Gold pencils made a nice rich green, with a touch of Prussian Blue added. Mix with water to achieve the color you're after, and paint it on with a no. 4 round brush. A bit more Burnt Sienna along the edge of the lake and in the cattail heads provides unity.

Watercolor Crayons or Blocks

These are like watercolor pencils, but not encased in wood. While some of the pencils are also all pigment with no wood, they're still reasonably firm, whereas crayons feel waxy or oily. They're softer than pencils and tend to lift with water more readily, often with intense or brilliant effects. Explore a bit to see which ones you like best.

Crayon Brands
Test-drive watercolor crayons to make sure they perform in a way that meets your needs. Try making a bold scribble on your paper, then pull it out with a brush and clear water to see how it mixes, flows and thins. Some brands and types dissolve much more readily than others. Here are two of my favorites, Neocolor crayons (left) and a couple of samples of Lyra Aquacolors (right).

Play With Your Color

Some of the crayons spread like crazy, almost exploding across your page! I was surprised at the vibrant effects in this sketch of my old cat, Oliver. I used the crayons in a very sketchy way, laying down a loose drawing and then wetting and blending. Play with your crayons under a variety of circumstances to learn what to expect.

Refreshing Your Crayon's "Liftability"

If you're lifting color directly from the tip of the crayon with a damp brush instead of drawing on paper and then blending, you may find that you're not getting enough color. Your crayons may have gotten hard with age or temperature changes. Simply scribble color onto a piece of rough or cold-pressed paper to refresh the "liftability" of the crayon.

That bit of color is not wasted—you can use the scribbled color as if it was a pan of paint on your palette. Some artists make lightweight "portable palettes" this way on purpose for travel.

Ballpoint Pens

Ballpoint pens are almost universally available. More than once I've found myself wanting to sketch but with no official "art supplies" with me. Someone is always willing to lend me a ballpoint pen, though, and I've done some of my favorite sketches with these ubiquitous tools. You can get some very subtle effects, from bold lines to soft halftones, and with watercolor washes, the effects can be lovely.

Sketching With a Ballpoint Pen
You can do as much or as little detail as you want with your pen; I enjoy both quick sketches and more complete studies, like this one.

Adding Watercolor to Your Ballpoint Sketches
I usually keep washes simple, with very little detail beyond the drawing itself. Here I used permanent black ink, so there was no lifting as I added washes. I blotted my wet washes here and there to add contour and texture.

Have Fun With Colored Inks

Sometimes red or blue can provide an interesting vibration—if that's all that's available, don't let it keep you from sketching!

Tips for Using Ballpoint Pens

- Test your pen line with clear water to find out if it is water soluble. Even if it isn't, using it with watercolor can produce lively, unexpected effects.
- Make sure the pen starts smoothly without blobbing or skipping, or otherwise making for a frustrating sketching process.
- Be aware that many ballpoint inks will fade over time.
- Try using colors other than black for different effects. I use brown ink when I want an aged, subtle effect.

PENS

Water-Soluble Fiber-Tip Pens

Another ubiquitous tool you may not have thought of using with watercolor is the fiber-tip pen (we used to call them felt-tips). These tools can be quite unpredictable when paired with watercolor—and fun! Of course, the lines are perfectly well-behaved if you draw over dry washes, but why not see what will happen when you use it wet?

Using a Pen to Sketch and Add Value
I did this quick sketch with the only tool I had available—a blue water-soluble fiber-tip pen. Later I added a touch of color with a watercolor wash and let the pen lines soften and blend to create a range of values.

Adding Water to Your Pen Lines
When I used a brush to apply clear water to my lines on the right, they tended to run uncontrollably, sometimes almost washing away. On the left, I lightly sprayed clear water on the lines. I then sprayed water heavily on the right for a nice washy effect.

Try Colored Inks
You don't even have to use water-soluble fiber-tip pens with watercolor—you can use them alone. Simply draw on your paper, using as many colors of ink as you like, then wet with clear water. (Bear in mind that many of these pens are not lightfast and may fade in time.)

Painting With Pens on Hot-Pressed Paper

In this sketch of a fallen tree, I tried Pilot Razor Point fiber-tip pens on hot-pressed paper. The lines tended to stay put, only softening when wet with warm brown watercolor washes. Using these pens is handy and effective for on-the-spot sketching or studio works. They are available in black and a variety of colors.

PENS

Permanent Markers and Technical Pens

I use these pens often whether drawing people, animals or architecture. They're terrific for landscape as well; draw as much or as little detail as you like, then lay in your watercolor washes for beautiful effects. Micron Pigma, Zig Millennium and Staedler Pigment Liners are all good choices.

Sketch Quickly With Pen
Sketching with ink and adding color later can be a very fast way to capture the moment. Here, the ink lines are really relatively simple, and so are the washes, but together they captured the feeling of my little cat, Scout.

Create a Sense of Mood With Colored Ink
Here, the Burnt Sienna ink in my technical pen feels like a warm summer day. The lines provided just enough framework to encourage and allow loose, fresh washes of watercolor.

Create Clean, Crisp Line Work
I drew this sweep of mountains using simple line work with a permanent pen and then added watercolor washes to define the rugged shapes.

Things to Know About Permanent Pens and Markers

- Permanent markers are water-insoluble.
- Some permanent pens are rather smelly and may change color with time. Look for archival, neutral pH information when you want your work to last.
- Permanent pens come in an array of colors. Black is still gorgeous with washes applied, but you can get 64-color sets if you want.
- Technical pens can be purchased in the traditional Rapidograph style where you fill it with color on your own, or you can buy them prefilled and disposable to avoid the mess and cleanup.

Gel Pens

Gel pens are relatively new to the market, but they can be lots of fun for sketching. They come in a wide variety of colors, including metallics. Look for acid-free, archival pens. Some are smear-resistant, some are not; test yours or enjoy the tendency to lift.

My current favorite is the white Uni-ball Signo gel pen, good for adding sharp details or crisp white lines on toned paper or dark watercolor washes—it's a linear effect I've not been able to get any other way. I often use gel pens for highlights in an eye, cat whiskers and similar details.

Enhance Your Subject With Line Work
Here I added white gel pen lines on top of an opaque watercolor sketch of a cauli-flower. The pen work is very lacy and linear, and helps capture some of the complexity of the vegetable.

Add Small, Subtle Details
You may prefer more subtle effects with the gel pen. Here I used a white gel pen to detail fur in the ears and for the whiskers of the cat.

Try Out Colored Gel Pens for Fun Effects

You can sketch with colored gel pens, just as you would with a technical or ballpoint pen. This little gargoyle is done with a burgundy metallic pen, so I decided to use iridescent medium in my watercolor washes to give him a magical shimmer.

Bamboo Pens

Bamboo pens are inexpensive, fun and interesting; they can be very versatile. Actually, about any kind of dip pen works well with watercolor—think of some of Rembrandt's or Da Vinci's sketches. A bamboo pen is relatively inflexible; the ink or watercolor lines become narrower and fainter as the pen runs out of fluid, making it perfect for a number of naturalistic applications. I enjoy the variable line when painting florals; you may find the strong linear effects handy in any number of ways. These pens are also great for applying liquid mask.

Use Bamboo Pens to Apply Liquid Mask
These pens are great for applying liquid mask either before painting or into a damp wash. At left, I mostly applied the liquid mask before adding color—those are the clean, crisp light lines. Once it dried, I added color and while that was still damp I touched the nib of the pen with mask on it to the surface to make the roundish white shapes. In the Phthalo Blue sample at right, I drew into the wet wash with liquid mask on the pen and touched the nib to the paper to make the roundish shapes.

Use a Bamboo Pen for Line Work
This quick sketch of an iris was done with liquid dye watercolors and a small bamboo pen. I then added loose washes using regular tube watercolors and a brush.

“Paint” With a Bamboo Pen

You can use the pen itself to “paint” with and leave out washes altogether. This can be especially effective if you change colors of ink or liquid watercolor to do each design element. If you prefer regular tube watercolors, mix a juicy wash in a small container deep enough to dip into, or load your pen from a rich wash of color loaded into a fat, round watercolor brush.

Add Linear Details to a Watercolor Painting

I painted this bright sunfish with liquid watercolors, then used a bamboo pen for the lines in the tail and fins. (You can see the bubbly effect of rubbing alcohol in the boldly colored water.)

PENS

Brush Pens

Brush pens have the color or ink right in the barrel of the pen. They're extremely convenient for sketching or travel. Some have nylon hairs while others are fiber-tips that are shaped like a brush. I find the hair type more pleasing for the way I work. Some are black ink and take a cartridge, others are full color—you can buy primary sets, landscape sets, or huge sets with all the colors you'd ever want! And you can even find some that are permanent.

Practice Your Pen Strokes

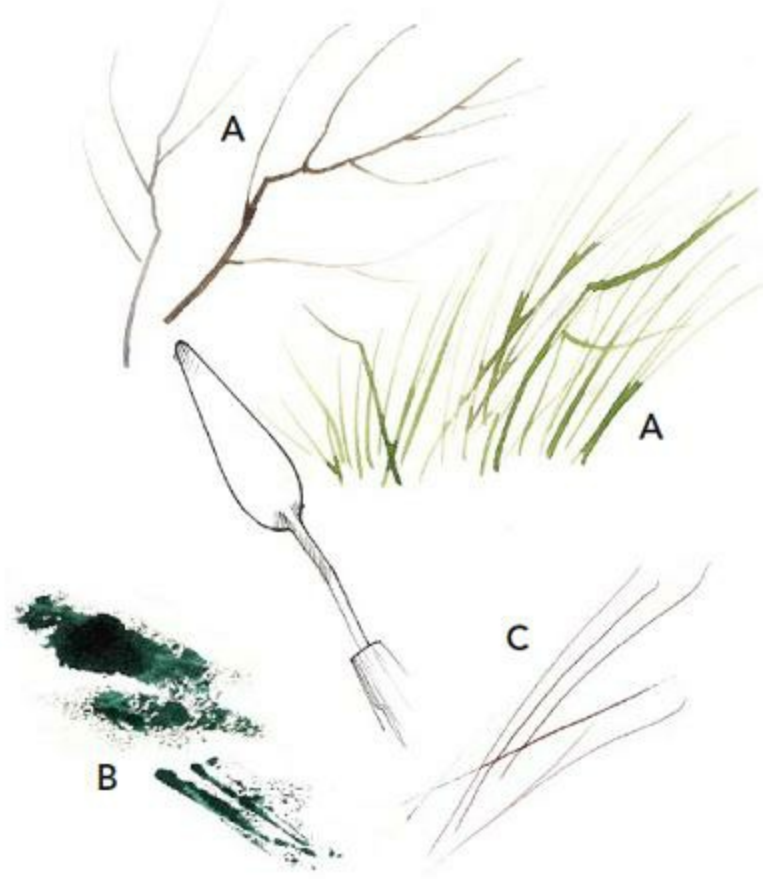
You can find brush pens made for kids in your discount store, and artist-quality pens in your art supply store. Here I'm using Elmer's pens, and they're FUN. Everyone from Lyra to Faber-Castell to Crayola seems to make these now; read the label to find out abou lightfastness, if that's an issue. The color may be too saturated for you, but you can still thin with water or mix them, as I have here, by pulling out the color with a wet brush.

Sketching With a Brush Pen and Watercolor

Brush pens make interesting, varied lines, whether you choose the hair or the fiber-tip option. Like regular fiber-tip pens, the ink used in some of these brushes is highly unpredictable when wet, unless you've chosen the permanent type. The flexible tip of this tool makes marks like those possible with a round watercolor brush. Here I used a black Sakura Pigma Brush Pen, one of the fiber type, and allowed the ink to dry before adding watercolor.

Palette Knives

Palette knives are not made just for oils or acrylics; I use mine almost exclusively for watercolor techniques. Buy one with a good flexible tip, slightly rounded as shown below; you'll find this is a very useful tool to apply your watercolors.



Practice Palette Knife Strokes

A Paint will flow off the tip of your palette knife in much the same way as it did off the bamboo pen, with somewhat finer and sometimes more controllable results. As you paint, the lines become thinner, making this a very useful technique to suggest the diminishing diameter of twigs or grasses.

B Use the knife in a manner similar to that used in oil painting—use the flat of the blade to "scumble" paint onto your paper's surface. This suggests the texture of distant grasses, or perhaps evergreen foliage.

C Use a palette knife if you need to apply thin lines of liquid masking fluid or super-thin lines of paint.

Preparing Your Palette Knife for Painting

The metal on a palette knife generally comes with a thin lacquer coating to protect it from rust or abrasion. Before watercolor will adhere to the blade, this coating will have to be removed.

Sand it off using a very fine sandpaper or use lacquer remover, or hold the blade in an open flame for a few moments to burn it down to bare metal. Now you're ready to paint!

If you travel a lot, you may find plastic palette knives avoid problems with

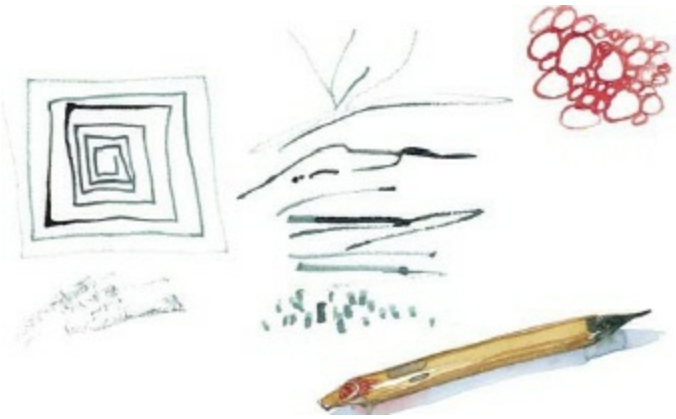
airport security. Sand the blades with very fine sandpaper to encourage them to accept watercolor. (Of course, if you're using a plastic palette knife, you'll definitely want to skip the open flame and the lacquer thinner!)

Making Do—Painting With a Sharp Stick

Of course, you don't have to have official brushes, pencils or pens in order to make art. Some of my favorite tools have been the result of those lightbulb-over-the-head moments when you suddenly think, "I wonder how THAT would work?" One that's stayed with me for years is simply a sharp stick. You can paint with it, draw with it as if it were an ink pen and scratch lines into a damp wash—it's a handy (and often free) tool.

Look around you. That tree or bush nearby might have a good painting tool growing on it. Break or sharpen a dowel rod—or several of them, in different diameters. Check the grocery store; I have two sizes of bamboo skewers in my art kit that make wonderful tools. The bamboo seems to be just porous enough that it holds paint, especially if you soak it in your paint water for a bit. And they come in a package of one hundred for very little money!

Combine Brushes and Sticks
Here I combined brushwork with a large no. 8 round watercolor brush and line work with the bamboo skewers. You can use sharpened sticks to apply liquid mask (at left), drag out limbs and trunks (as in the little evergreen tree) or just draw with them. The bit of red in the lower right was done with a broken-off skewer; the way bamboo grows makes it leave long fibrous strings when you break it. It's almost like a very rough brush.



Practice Mark Making

This is my favorite 3/8" (10mm) dowel rod, sharpened on one end in the pencil sharpener and on the other to a nib-like shape with a pocketknife. It's wonderfully versatile!

Here are a few of the effects I've used my dowel rod tool for. The spiraled squares show how much color it can hold before it runs out. Try it for yourself; make a variety of marks and experiment with how you might use them.

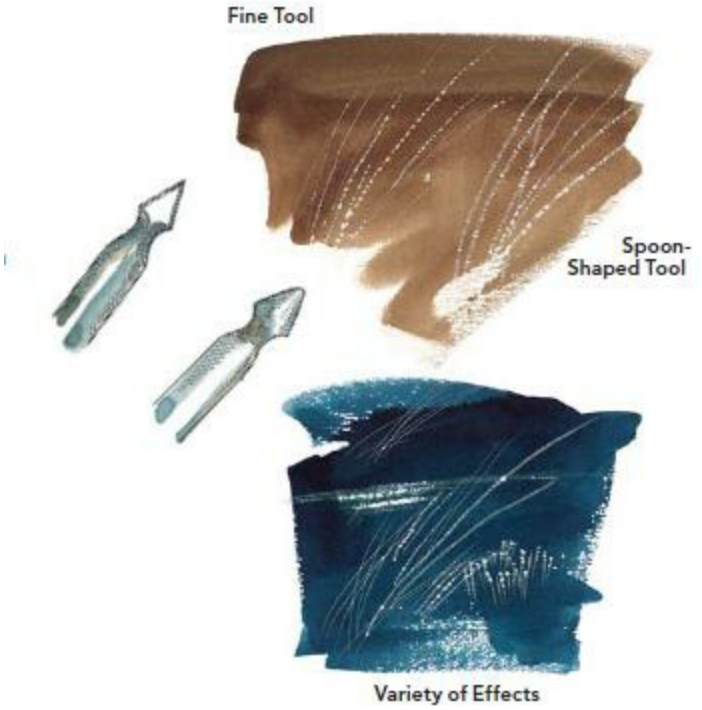
Use a Stick in a Painting

There’s something appropriate about painting sticks and small limbs using a sharpened stick. I mixed a strong wash of Indigo and Burn
Sienna for the limbs silhouetted darkly against the lake and used the sharp stick to draw them. The paint feeds off the tip and becomes
lighter and more delicate, just like a twig or branch.

SCRAPING TOOLS

Scratchboard Tools

These tools, as their name implies, are meant to be used with scratchboard, that clay-coated board we experimented. However, they can also be used on watercolor paper of any weight to scratch through washes. There are a lot of ways of regaining lost whites when painting with watercolor, and scratchboard tools are one of my favorite ways to get those small or narrow whites back. If you work into a wet wash, you will incise darker lines where you have bruised the paper fibers, as you can with sharp sticks or pencil points, but if you wait until the wash is dry, you can get nice, linear, light-struck effects with these tools.



Practice Mark Making

There are two types of scratch-board tools, which give slightly different effects. One is a small, pointed tool with a flat blade. Its effects are more jagged and spotty since that sharp point bites into the paper. The other is a rounded, spoon-shaped tool that makes softer effects, thanks to its rounded tip. You can make rather delicate, controlled marks with this tool—try it out and see how versatile it is!

Initial Painting

I did this painting at an art crawl; I didn't have a lot of time and the lighting was poor, but I was happy with it overall. I realized after getting home that although the trees at the top of the hill on the left looked fine with their drybrush handling, those on the right looked altogether too solid.

Recover Whites With Scratchboard Tools

I recovered the whites with my spoon-shaped scratchboard tool. Since everything was fully dry, it was easy to scratch through the paint to achieve just the right amount of laciness in the trees.

I did a bit more scratching in the foreground and added some spatter to the road and foreground, and called it done!

Craft Knife

I use my craft knife for more than cutting paper and matboard; it is a handy tool for regaining whites in a watercolor. It can be used like the sharp scratchboard tool or in more controlled ways, to cut and lift away the top layer of your paper for a perfectly white area. It is difficult to paint on this white, though, since it is rougher and more absorbent than the original surface.

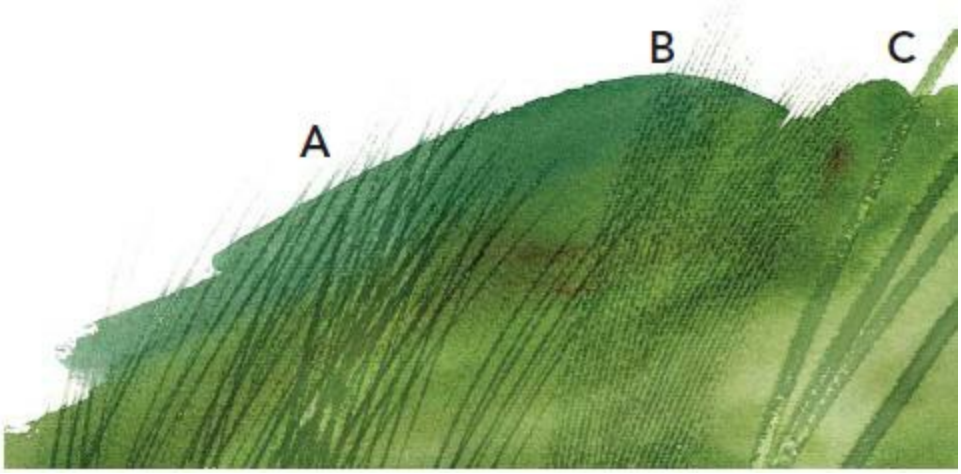
Practice Working With a Craft Knife
On the left, I made scratches through a lavender wash with a sharp craft knife. On the right, I've used the point of a very sharp craf knife to cut through the top layer of my paper to recapture the pure whites of the sail and the window. This underlayer will have a rougher surface than the original, but if you burnish it a bit with the flat of your fingernail or a burnishing tool, it will become a little easier to paint on.

Initial Painting
I did this quick little sketch and managed to get the perspective a bit off.

Make Adjustments With a Craft Knife
A bit of judicious trimming with the craft knife and peeling away the top surface of the paper let me bring this sketch closer to a correct perspective! Adding a few stronger darks here and there helped the effort along and also made the cat a bit more believable.

Kitchen Knives

Knives of all sorts are handy in creating a variety of textural effects. The blunt edge of a butter knife works well to lift or push pigment as our other tools did, but you can also create a number of incised effects by bruising the paper fibers with a knife.

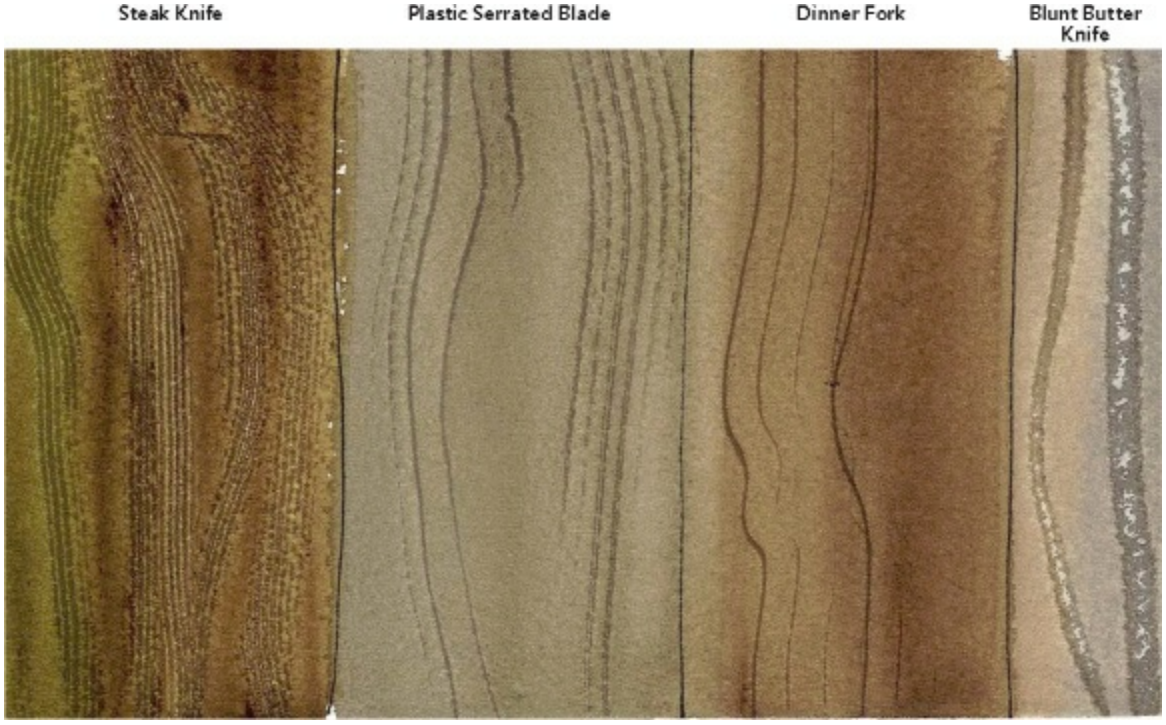


Practice Making Marks With Knives

A These marks are made by a widely serrated plastic knife of the sort you'd find at a picnic dinner. I keep one handy in my daypack.

B These finely spaced lines are the result of dragging a finely serrated steak knife through a wet wash. It's a bit too regular to use for naturalistic effects, but it would be very useful in a more abstract situation.

C I've roughly pulled the tip of a rounded butter knife through my wet wash here. The pressure was great enough to push the paint in the middle of the stroke out of the way while bruising a darker area along the sides.



Create Natural Wood Textures With Knives

Here I've created a variety of wood effects by simply incising with a variety of knives (and a fork) while the wash was wet.

Modeling Nibs

Also known as “color shapers,” these tools are relatively new and come in a variety of shapes intended for all kinds of uses. Some are very soft while others are stiffer (the stiff ones work best as a scraper tool). Some have a modeling nib on one end and a brush on the other. Some are rather expensive and others quite affordable, almost giveaways. Some are advertised for kids (that would be you and me, if we’re “young at art”!) and are said to be a good bridge between finger painting and brushes. They’re usually meant for oils or acrylics, but pastel painters like them for blending...and who says we can’t find a use for them with watercolor? I did! Try them and see how you like them.

Experiment With Soft and Firm Color Shapers
I let my wash begin to lose its shine, then scraped through with a soft color shaper (left) and a firmer one (right). You can see there is a big difference between the two effects, so choose the scraper that fits your needs!

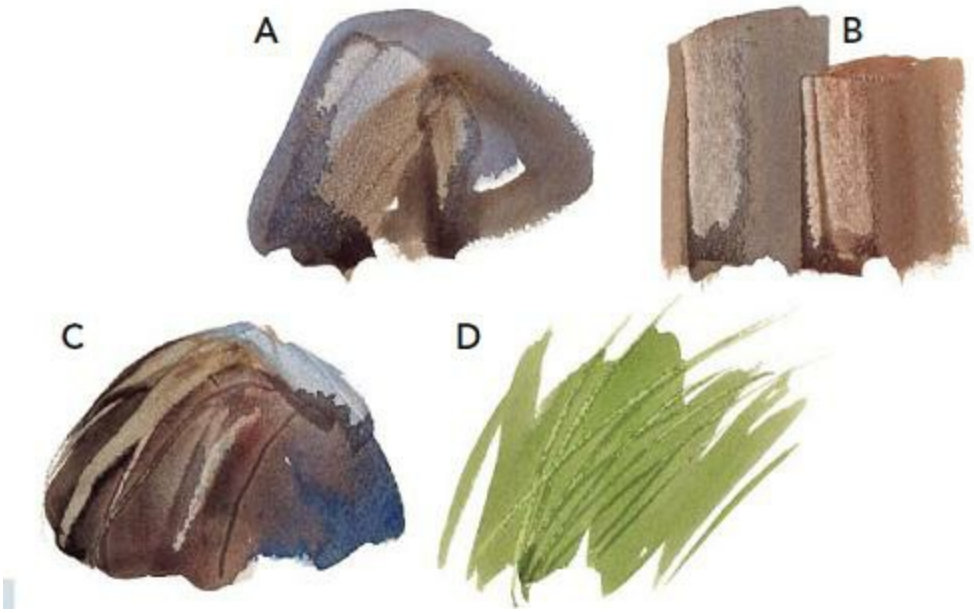
Practice Mark Making With a Modeling Nib

On the top, I tried painting directly with one of the firm color shapers; it was pretty versatile. On the bottom I used it to apply liquid masl using a variety of strokes—it worked well and was extremely easy to clean the mask off—just wait till the mask is dry and rub it off!

Other Nifty Scrapers

There are times when you don't want to scrape all the way back to white; you just want to create a texture or suggest a lighter area. The trick to using scraping or lifting tools is in the timing. If you scrape when the wash is wet, you will be able to make areas darker than your body wash, since you'll be bruising the paper's surface. By waiting until your wash begins to lose its wet shine, you'll be able to push the pigment out of the way to make lighter areas. Depending on the tool you choose, these areas can be as small and narrow as the stem of a weed, or as broad as a granite boulder. I have seen whole buildings suggested with a single stroke of a lifting tool.

Scraping Out Paint
I scraped this building out of the dark background while it was still damp, using the shorter edge of a cut-up credit card.



Experiment With Scraping and Incising Tools
These effects can be valuable when suggesting the texture of fur, grasses, rocks, buildings in the distance, or simply lighter forms. Try using a single-edged razor blade as a scraper too—just be careful of the sharp edge!

A A kitchen spatula

B An old credit card

C The end of a round watercolor brush

D Your fingernail

Custom-Shaped Credit Card
I cut my old credit card into an irregular shape of various widths to use for lifting and scraping.

Wax

Batik artists have known for centuries that wax repels waterborne dyes—why not use that knowledge as watercolorists? In the section on Liquid Aids (see Melted Wax) I covered a more truly batik-like technique; here I'll explore ways to use the dry form. A block of paraffin, a tiny birthday candle, a child's wax crayon—these all make great masking agents and can be used instead of traditional masking agents to retain whites in your painting. You can even purchase a wax resist in crayon form.

Since wax resists further washes, be sure to apply it only when you are sure you want the effect, either before painting to maintain a white, or at any stage in between to protect the color of an underwash.

Try a variety of strokes coupled with a strong, boldly colored overwash—you'll find wax really makes those whites pop. Old candles are useful for creating fine lines. A block of paraffin can give you as bold and broad a light as you could wish. You can get more delicate effects using the broken edge of a paraffin block or a well-sharpened white crayon.

Incorporate Wax Into a Painting in Layers
I put down the white trees and branches on my paper first (the broad trunk with the side of a candle and bark scars with the sharper edge). Then I flooded in a warm golden wash and let it dry, adding a swipe of cool shadow down the side of my big trunk.

Next I added more branches and leaf shapes over the gold with another layer of wax and added a darker, warmer wash. This technique would be good to use on a finished painting—just remember, you won't be able to make any dark lines stick over the wax lines and shapes, so plan carefully.

Use a White Candle as a Resist

Here the edge of the candle was used in a linear motion; obviously I was thinking of a placid lake glittering in sunlight. Washing on Permanent Alizarin Crimson and Phthalo Blue played up the placid-lake effect.

You might use a candle to retain lights on a rain-slick street, the shine of a young girl's hair or highlights on foliage; try it with rich darks or warm colors.

Kids' Crayons

A box of kids' crayons are a delight to combine with watercolor effects. Use them to suggest graffiti, to capture the effect of light-struck leaves or as a design element in mixed media techniques (you may have difficulty entering such a piece in a pure watermedia show, but don't let that stop you from experimenting and enjoying it).

Use Crayons as a Design Element
Here, I've applied a variety of light to medium value crayon colors on top of a variegated watercolor wash. Notice how the crayons stand out; some even seem to fluoresce. On the flower I've used a single color as an outline strictly as a design element; I know of no flower in nature that looks like this, but the contrast is irresistible. For the leaf form on the right I used more naturalistic handling, with yellow crayon as the outline and veining, and watercolor washes on top.

Incorporating Writing Into Your Art With Crayon
Graffiti is fun with white or colored crayons; if you use a color, just be sure you choose a color that will show up against your overwash. I played it safe here with white crayon under my Burnt Sienna and Ultramarine Blue, but yellow, orange, red and light blue crayon would also work well. I once did a painting of an old doorway in the city (well-marked with the sentiments of the neighborhood teenagers) using crayon-resist graffiti (I cleaned up the wording a bit, though).

Use Crayon as a Resist

This doll's clothing was made of flowered flannel, and rather than have to paint around the white flowers or use a mask that would have to be removed later, I opted to try making the flowers with a white crayon, leaving a spot in the center of each for that blue middle. Then I could apply the overall base color washes much more freely, though I waited to apply the other colors when the jumpsuit was dry.

Paint Sunlit Leaves With Kids' Crayons

DEMONSTRATION

Here you'll paint a landscape using crayons as both a resist and a design element in the painting. An autumn day in Nevada was my inspiration for this painting; the leaves were like sunlight made solid. The waxy crayon will resist watercolor washes, giving this scene all-around sparkle!

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

- Burnt Sienna
- Phthalo Blue
- Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet

Brushes

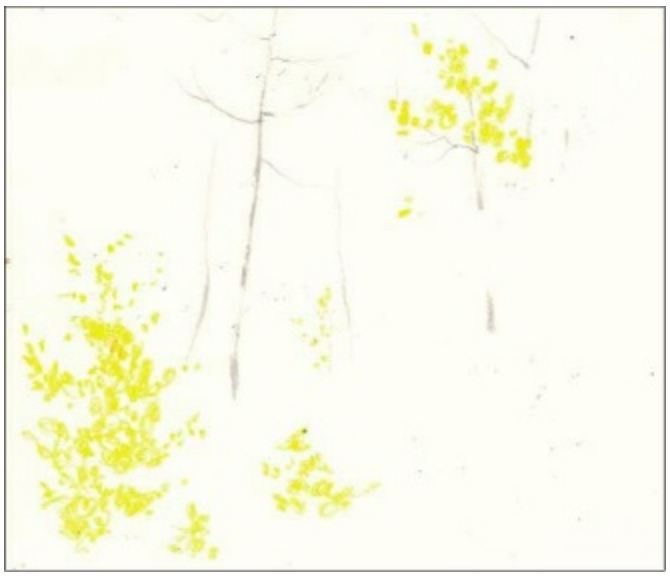
- ¾-inch (19mm) flat
- no. 6 round

Surface

- 140-lb. (300gsm) cold-pressed watercolor paper

Crayons

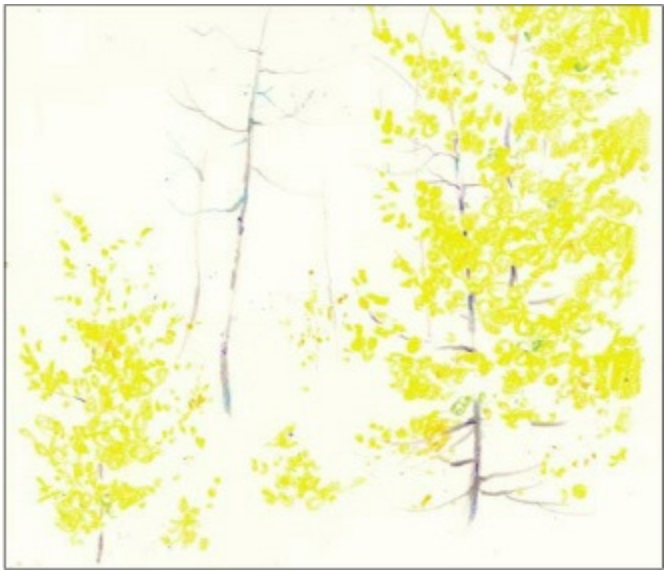
- Gray
- Light Gray
- Light Green
- Light Orange
- Yellow
- Yellow-Green
- Yellow-Orange
- White



1 Establish Trees With Crayon

Draw in the trunks and a few of the branches with a white crayon (which of course doesn't show here on white paper). Then add light touches of light gray for the trunks' shadowed areas.

Apply dots and dashes for the foliage using a variety of yellow, yellow-green, light green and light orange crayons.



2 Build Color With Crayon

Continue to add yellow and yellow-orange colors to the foliage, and use a light gray to help give the trunks volume.

3 Add the Background

Since the foliage and trunks were done in crayon and crayon works as a resist, you are free to splash in the background forest without worrying about covering up the light-colored details.

Splash in shades of Phthalo Blue mixed with varied amounts of Burnt Sienna and Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet for rich greens; the ¾-inch (19mm) flat works well here. Spatter and scrape here and there to add texture that suggests the high mountain forest. A few limbs can be added with a rich mixture of darks and the no. 6 round.

China Markers

These are fat crayonlike wax pencils wrapped in paper—you “sharpen” them by pulling away a long spiral of the paper. They’re said to write on just about anything, with their waxy makeup; and one other thing they do fairly well is work as a handy, portable resist. For a resist, you’ll want to use a white china marker—they come in white, black and red. The pressure you apply and the surface of your paper may make some difference in how much of a resist you actually achieve. You may see more effect on a smoother, hot-pressed paper.

A Quick Resist
In this quick sketch, a squiggle of white china marker protected the stormy-looking clouds over the soybean field. On the hot-pressed paper, the lines of the marker stand out against the dark sky.

A Planned-Out Resist
Here I drew the surf carefully and slowly before painting. You can see the effect in the lines of breakers heading for the shore. When the initial wash was dry, I added more white china marker on top to capture the effect of seafoam.

Pastels and Soft Chalk

Pastels or soft chalks can be used as a resist or design element in your paintings for a mixed media effect. They will somewhat resist washes of paint and also can be applied on top of color for a vibrant effect.

Adding pastel or soft chalk lines after you have painted gives a look similar to that of using crayons.

This creates a fascinating, linear effect, useful for an all-over design. Or use these tools in more realistic ways. One artist I know uses chalk lines as lively outlines that can give an especially vibrant feeling to her watercolors.

Use Pastels or Soft Chalk as a Design Element
Here I did a somewhat abstract floral with watercolor washes, then added chalk lines for spark; think how this effect might be used when painting landscapes or people. It is more difficult to control the larger pastels or soft chalks though—you may prefer to use pastel pencils. Of course you will need to use a fixative spray or frame your work to protect the delicate pastel work.

Use Chalk as a Resist

You can use chalk as a resist, as Winslow Homer and other early watercolorists did. Crush a piece of white chalk to powder (a mortar and pestle works fine) and mix with water, then paint it onto your watercolor paper where you want to protect the paper. Let it dry thoroughly and paint over it using a light stroke, then let your wash dry as well. Curl your paper once you've removed it from the support to pop loose the chalk, or dust it off with your fingertip or a stiff brush, then continue to paint.

Here I painted white chalk cloud shapes on the paper. When it dried, I painted over this with Cobalt Blue at the top and Phthalo Blu at the bottom to show how well this technique works for skies. It doesn't work like liquid mask, but it has a charm all its own!

Erasers

Erasers are good for more than obliterating mistakes when you are writing or drawing. You can use them to lift washes to reestablish whites. If you are careful and use a fine eraser, you can even paint back over the area you have lifted. One artist I know erases back an arc in his skies, then draws or paints in a soft rainbow when everything is dry; it's a nice, subtle way to handle what often becomes a garish mistake.

There are all kinds, types and sizes of erasers—check out your office supply store as well as the art supply store. I have an invaluable old electric eraser that will lift back to white paper, if needed. (Of course it was rather expensive, and if I didn't also do a number of pen and ink illustrations, I might not have invested in this tool.)

Erasing as a Design Element
In this painting, I used a stencil I cut myself from flexible plastic sheet to erase and lift out the quarter moon in the background of this little, slightly surrealistic painting.

Practice Mark Making With a Variety of Erasers
I laid down a wash of staining Permanent Alizarin Crimson plus two sedimenting colors, Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Umber, and allowed them to dry thoroughly then practiced lifting color with different erasers.

A An ordinary pink eraser on the end of a pencil is a bit rough on watercolor paper, but it does manage the lift.

B A soft vinyl eraser has almost no effect, although it might eventually lift a bit more if you go at it for a while. It might be useful for modeling subtle areas.

C A white eraser in pencil form is less effective than a pink eraser, but is easier on the paper.

D An electric eraser and eraser shield make it easy to lift almost back down to white paper.

E An ink eraser is very effective at removing pigment, even the staining color, but it is hard on the paper.

LIFTERS

Sponges

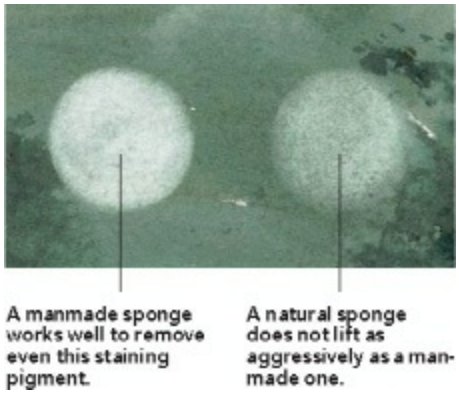
Sponges are extremely handy for watercolorists and have more uses than could ever be covered here. One of the handiest is to use the sponge as a lifter. Whether lifting a mistake or intentionally bringing back the white of the paper in your painting, natural and synthetic sponges are your friends.

Initial Painting

Sometimes a painting just doesn't get it for you. This one was done on the spot on a rather colorless day, and when I finished, I realized that about all I actually liked was the waterfall. I let it rest for a while before deciding what to do with it (besides consigning it to the circular file, that is).

Create a Vignette by Lifting With a Sponge

Since I had nothing to lose and basically was pleased with only the center section, I decided to re-wet the outside edges and use my soft manmade sponge to turn the painting into a vignette. Ah ha, improvement! So I used a small sponge to soften and lift areas on the rocks and the spray from the waterfall, and flooded in a few touches of livelier color. A bit more sponge work, painting directly with a natural sponge this time in the distant foliage, and I was much happier with the completed painting!



Practice Lifting With Different Types of Sponges

To lift a controlled shape from your painting, try cutting a stencil from heavy, coated paper like a postcard, card stock or thin plastic. Use a damp sponge and rub lightly over your paper. Blot to remove loosened pigment. When you remove the stencil, be sure to gently blot up the water that managed to work its way under the edge, too. Then when everything is dry, you can go back in and paint whatever you want in the clean spot!

Common Uses for Sponges

- Use them to uniformly wet your paper before beginning a wet-in-wet passage.
- Use them to wet the back of a watercolor board that has begun to warp.
- Keep one handy by your palette to adjust the amount of paint or water on your brush; a sponge will soak up the excess instantly, allowing you to get perfect dry-brush effects.
- One quick swipe of a sponge will clean your palette so you have an unsullied mixing area.
- Use sponges to pick up spilled paint on your floor, your table—or your painting.
- Adjust painted areas that have become overworked with a soft sponge and clean water, then blot with a tissue.
- Use them to paint but beware—painting with a sponge is easily overdone, and when the results are too uniform and predictable, it can be disastrous.

Use Lifting to Create a Dramatic Sky

DEMONSTRATION

The effects of lifting with a sponge or eraser can be understated or bold. For this painting demonstration, I wanted everything to work together to capture a feeling of peace and space, so I kept things very subtle throughout.

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

- Burnt Sienna
- Cadmium Orange
- Quinacridone Red
- Ultramarine Blue

Brushes

- ½-inch (12mm) and 1-inch (25mm) flats
- no. 8 round

Surface

- 140-lb. (300gsm) cold-pressed watercolor paper

Other

- Natural or manmade sponge

1 Establish the Design and Paint the Sky

Sketch in the shape of the mountains, then lay in wet-in-wet washes of Ultramarine Blue mixed with Burnt Sienna to suggest the clouds, painting right down over the distant peaks with your 1-inch (25mm) flat. Use Cadmium Orange and Quinacridone Red in the warm areas of the mountaintops. Le dry.

2 **Paint the Mountains**

Add a light wash of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna from the distant mountains right to the bottom of the page. I wanted the mountains on the left to look as though the clouds partly obscured them, so I softened that edge while it was still wet, using clear water on a round brush. Before the wash dries completely, lift the lighter orange spot in the far mountain pass with a damp sponge to show where the last light of the day struck the mountain. Let dry.

3 **Continue Mountain Glazes**

Add two progressively darker glazes to the mountains with the same colors as in step 2, letting each glaze dry before adding the next. Paint quickly and lightly so you don't disturb the underwash. Let dry. Don't worry about the hard edges or any "flowers" that form at the bottom because these will be covered with subsequent washes. The ½-inch (12mm) flat offers control and crisp edges.

4 Add Perspective and Texture to the Mountain Range

Paint still darker glazes over the layers of the mountains. As the washes lose their shine, drop in clear water with a round brush and a bit of Cadmium Orange and Burnt Sienna mixed in. Work fast! The wetter wash of warm color will push back the cool, sedimenting wash and suggest lighter trees.

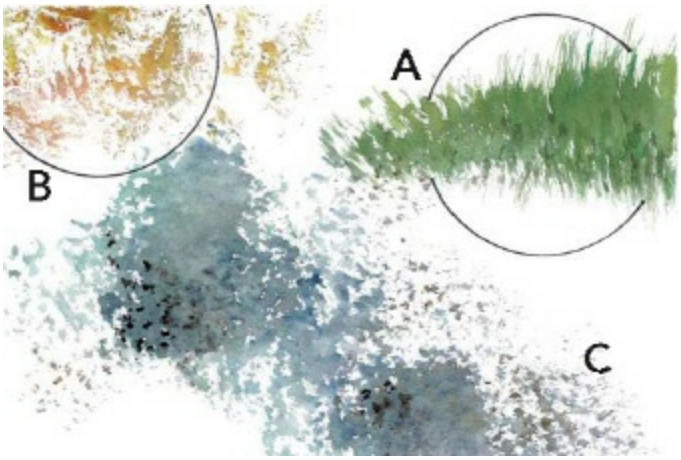
Go even darker on the foreground mountain, dropping the watered-down mix into this area too, as well as scratching, scraping and using your fingertips to pat into the damp wash to suggest those thickly forested slopes.

5 Rework the Sky

Use a manmade or natural sponge and clear water to soften the edges of some of the clouds, lifting a bit more light in the upper sky, and suggesting a cloud obscuring the mountain on the right. Blot quickly, but don't scrub hard enough to lift back to a truly light value—just enough for softness and subtlety.

Natural Sponges

Natural sponges are best for most paint applications. Twist and turn your sponge and use different areas of its surface to get more interesting, varied effects. Look for the raggediest sponge you can find; a hardware, discount or auto parts store may be a good place to look.



Practice Mark Making With a Natural Sponge

A Create a grassy effect with a short, upward stroke repeated several times.

B Make foliage or a lichen-like effect by jabbing the sponge on your paper while continually turning the sponge to expose a new surface. Try for color variation when you use this technique; dip or dot your sponge into several colors or values. You may even want to paint directly onto the sponge or dip it into the mound of paint on your palette.

C It's easy to fall in love with the loose, free effects of a big natural sponge.

Use a Natural Sponge for Foliage

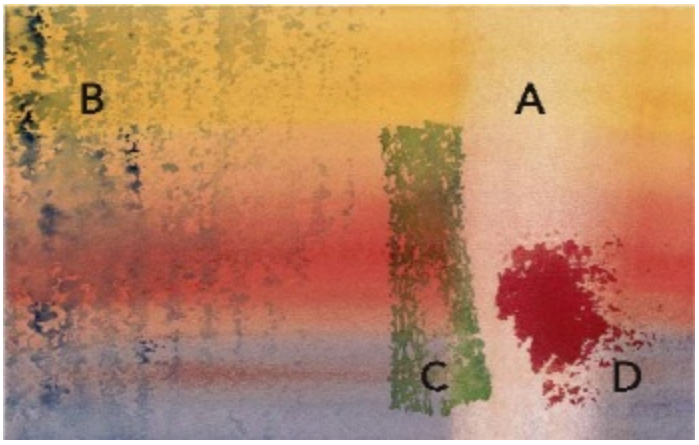
The effectiveness of a ragged bit of natural sponge is easy to see here in the tree at the right. Practice dabbing and light, lifting strokes to see what kind of marks you can make.

Carry a Natural Sponge With You on Your Painting Trips

I carry a small scrap of natural sponge in my field kit—I find it very handy for suggesting foliage when painting en plein air. I painted this scene from a canoe in the middle of a lake!

Synthetic Sponges

Synthetic sponges can be useful to paint with, too. Some come with a regular texture on one side that can be used for stamping or try painting with an edge. Some synthetic sponges have a "pot scrubber" side; this will make interesting textural effects if used in moderation.



Practice Mark Making With a Synthetic Sponge

A Use a wet synthetic sponge to remove paint back to the white paper (unless you are trying to remove a staining color as I have here) or to change or modify an area that is too strong, too busy or overworked. Load your sponge with clean water, scrub out color and blot often with a tissue or paper towel.

B Use the sponge to stamp over preliminary washes for abstract texture. Some sponges have regular or even bricklike surfaces that create great textures.

C Use the smaller edges of sponges as stamping tools. This one had a nice large-holed texture.

D This sponge had a pot-scrubber surface on one side—I picked up Permanent Alizarin Crimson with it to deposit over my paper's surface.

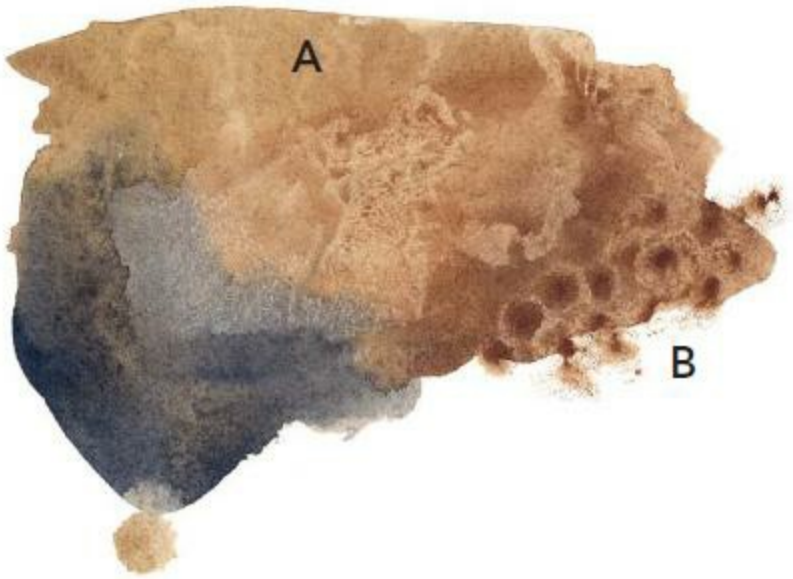
Take Advantage of the Texture of Your Sponge

Manmade sponges come with a variety of surface textures: some resemble brickwork, with a linear configuration, while others are more versatile.

Here I used a sponge with a texture of random holes that worked well to suggest both foliage and rough old stonework.

Finger Painting

Your own fingers and fingernails can make handy painting and scraping tools to incise dark lines into a damp wash, push pigment out of the way for a lighter line, or pat a pattern into the paint. (I'm assuming you don't mind getting dirty to get the effect you want!)



Practice Mark Making With Your Hands and Fingers
You can make interesting textures using your hands, too—remember fingerpaint-ing? Here, it's all grown up.

A Push wet paint with your hand.

B Pat the wet paint with your fingers.

Have Fun With It!
Try out silly, funny shapes just for the fun of it. Your fingers can be quite wet with paint or almost dry (that gave me the effect of the bare winter tree's twigs and small branches; all I had to do was suggest the connecting limbs).

Stencils

The use of stencils with watercolor is a bit like stamping—anything goes, and you can create an amazing variety of effects, as uniformly or as loosely as you choose. Stencils may be bought commercially or you may make your own from tag board, cover stock, plastic sheets and even thin sheet brass. Many office supply stores carry interesting letter or number stencils that work well with an abstract concept.

Practice Painting With Different Stencils
I've used a number of stencils and nonstencils here as idea starters. Some are authentic Victorian stencils while others are office-supply store letters meant to label mailboxes, and on the left, I've even used an eraser shield as a stencil. Oddly enough, I found that paint applied with a stencil brush didn't work as well as that applied with a soft watercolor brush.

Protect Your Work With Stencils

For a less mannered or informal effect, try tearing a loose stencil from paper and using it to protect areas of your work you don't want painted, then either sponging or spattering paint through the hole. I've even used my hand for a "stencil" or mask in this way, protecting the paper where I don't want the spatter to go; those fingers are always handy, and I'll wash. Here, by using a stencil as a shield, I was able to spatter on foliage for this tree while still retaining a white background.

Spray Bottles

Some sort of spray bottle should be a part of your permanent tool kit. They come in all shapes and sizes and degrees of portability. Try an empty household-cleaner bottle (well washed) or an industrial sprayer with a trigger handle that makes a nice, fine spray. My favorite is a tiny travel atomizer that will perform just about all the same tricks as a larger spray bottle, but is much more portable—beauty stores have small spray bottles too. Look around your studio, kitchen or bathroom; I'll wager you'll find something close to home!

Spray With Water in a Slightly Damp Wash
I allowed the blue and green wash to lose its shine, then hit it with droplets of water from a spray bottle.

Spray on Paint With a Spray Bottle
I loaded my spray bottle with a pale Permanent Alizarin Crimson wash and gave it a spray. It's a bit less delicate than the effects you can get with an airbrush (all right, a lot less delicate) but it could be handy, and it's a lot less expensive as well.

Spray With Water in a Wet Wash
While this red wash was still quite wet, I sprayed the lower edge with a couple of shots of clean water. The pigment bled down into a new shape and made interesting lacy edges—it would make a nice bit of foliage if it were green.

I sprayed the wet red wash again and blotted quickly in the center—this made a dramatic change in value.

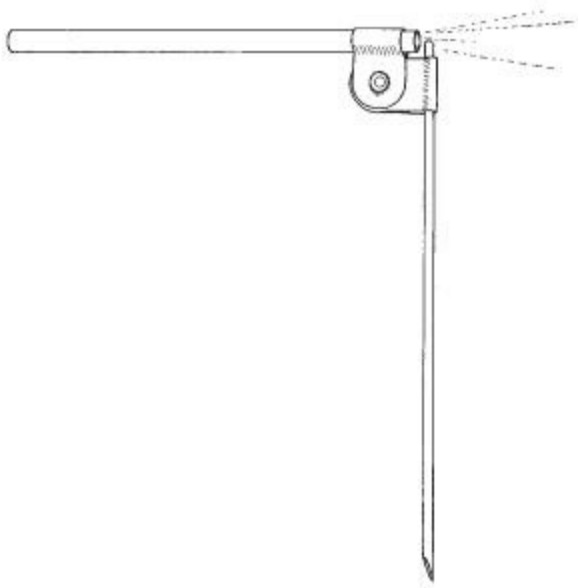
I then dropped two identical drops of red paint beside my big red swatch in the small circles. I just blotted the top one with a damp tissue, but on the lower one, I sprayed the droplet first with clean water, then blotted to lift—it came very nearly clean. I once saw artist Jim Hamil save a painting in just this way—it's too good a tip not to pass it on.

Nifty Uses for Your Spray Bottle

- Re-wet moist pan pigments or mounds of color that have dried on your palette.
- Dampen your paper for a wet-in-wet effect before painting. Just hit your paper all over with a clear-water spray, then spread the water lightly with a brush.
- You can also fix mistakes, or keep an area damp that threatens to dry too soon.
- Straighten out a warping watercolor board. If your watercolor board begins to warp, making your washes threaten to run off at the sides, get out your sprayer and spray the back of the board with clean water; it'll straighten right up, since the back side will stretch to counteract the curve of the front.

Fixative Sprayer

An old-fashioned device, the fixative sprayer is much less expensive than an airbrush, and if you don't plan to use it often, it may be just the trick to spray paint onto your surface. If you are windy enough, the force of your breath will blow liquid paint evenly over the paper you're aiming at. Hold the paper closer to get interesting "flowers." If you suffer from emphysema or asthma, though, forget it—it takes a lot of lung power to move the paint and keep it moving evenly.



Proper Sprayer Position
A fixative sprayer has two metal straws hinged together, one slightly smaller than the other. Drop the smaller straw into a small jar or bottle of fixative, water or paint, and blow into the larger one, which you've bent to form a right angle with the small straw. Don't ask me why it works—I'm no physicist—but your breath blowing past the hole in the small straw draws up the liquid and sprays it on your surface.

Practice Mark Making With a Sprayer

To achieve these airbrush-like effects with a fixative sprayer, I mixed up a small wash in a little container and sprayed it onto my paper from varying distances. The “flowers” were made by spraying less than 3" (8cm) from my surface; softer effects are possible if you move further away from the paper. The harder you blow, the finer the particles will be.

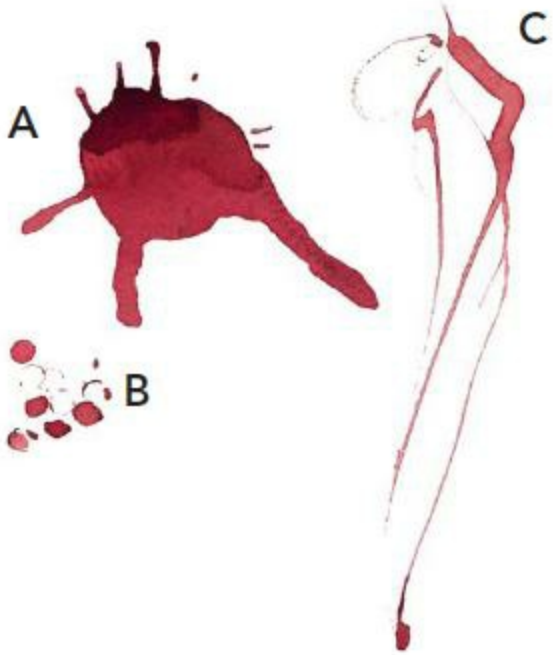
Have Fun!

Of course, you’ll probably use this tool more for backgrounds and impressionistic uses, like these quick suggestions of flowers. You don’t have a lot of control, but you can get some nice abstract effects as well.

Drinking Straws

Ordinary soft drink straws are handy for painting in several ways. You can blow a puddle of paint around in nice amoebic shapes; you can paint directly from the end of the straw by filling the tube with a wash, then holding your thumb over the end until you want to release it; or you can stamp or print with the straw.

Have Fun Painting With Straws
You can't really have complete control with straws, but they're fun sketching tools, especially if you've forgotten your brushes or pens! Here I drizzled some paint from the end, spread it around, blew through the straw to push up the tall trees, and drew back into the damp wash with a straw I had cut to an angle to form a point, like an ink pen's nib.

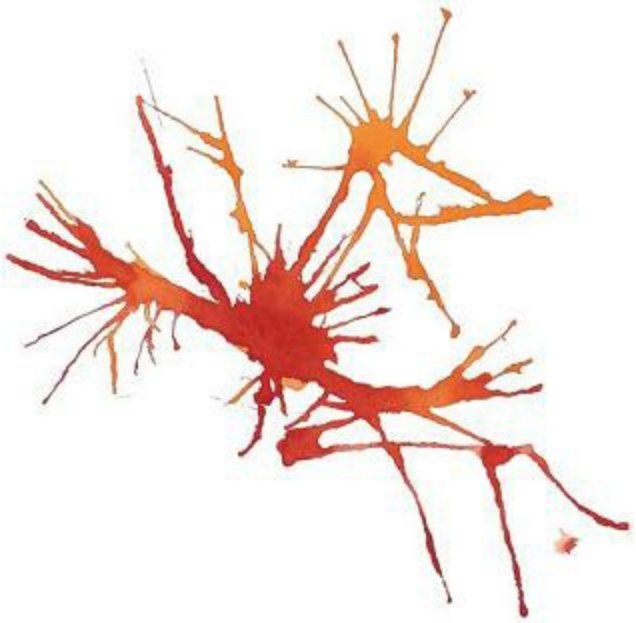


Practice Mark Making With a Straw

A Push a juicy wash of paint around by blowing through a straw, changing direction at will. This creates shapes useful for rough textures such as tree bark or rocks. You can have more or less control, depending on how hard you blow.

B Stamp on paint with the end of the straw.

C Draw with the straw as if it were a pen. If you're steady-handed, you can cut a nib in the end of your straw in the way that our forebears used to make quill pens.



Just Pucker Up and Blow!

Blowing with a straw creates fun, interesting effects. One artist I know created beautifully abstract flowers just like this!

Paint a Snow Scene With a Variety of Indispensable Tools

DEMONSTRATION

You can use a variety of tools together to create a painting—just be careful not to overdo. Keep it subtle, or keep it appropriate to the subject. Having an arsenal of tools at your disposal will set you free to create effects you might not even have imagined before! Have fun, play, practice and discover which tools work best together, and which work best for you.

In this painting, the view of the steam rising from my neighbor's house on an icy winter morning was too beautiful not to attempt to paint. It was a challenge, but my tools helped me create the effects I was after.

MATERIALS LIST

Pigments

- Burnt Sienna
- Cadmium Red
- Cadmium Yellow
- Cobalt Blue
- Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet
- Quinacridone Red
- Ultramarine Blue

Brushes

- 1-inch (25mm) flat
- nos. 6 and 8 rounds
- Rigger
- Round stencil brush
- Small, stiff brush

Surface

- 140-lb. (300gsm) cold-pressed watercolor paper

Other

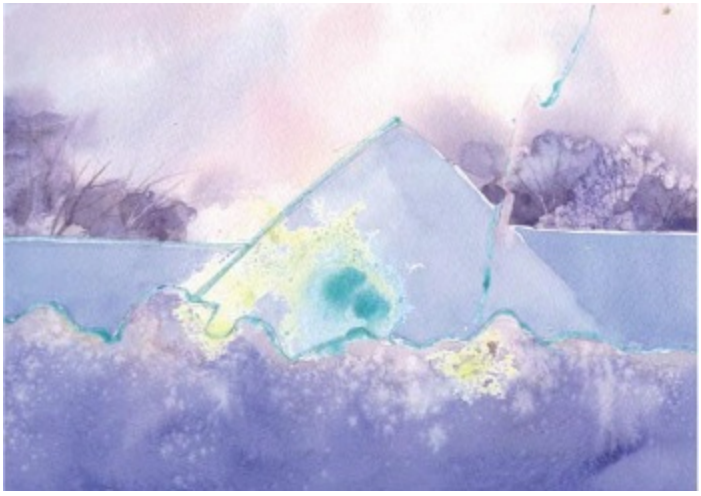
- Liquid mask
- Palette knife
- Salt
- Sandpaper
- Sharp stick (optional)
- Small squeeze bottle

Spray bottle

1 Establish the Design, Apply Mask and Paint the Background

Draw in the shape of the rooflines and the snow-covered fence, then protect the upper edge of each using mask from a small squeeze bottle (these are the blue lines you see along the roof peaks and the top of the snowy fence). Use liquid mask to protect the steam in the center, spattering it on with a round stencil brush and then hitting it quickly with a spritz of water to make it spread in unexpected ways. It also served to soften the edges a bit.

Use a 1-inch (25mm) flat watercolor brush to paint a strong wash of Cobalt Blue on the snowy roofs. Let this dry. Mix Cobalt Blue and Quinacridone Red with just a touch of Cadmium Yellow for the sky, and while this is still wet, add salt near the blue roofs to suggest distant, frosty trees.



2 Paint the Foreground and Develop the Background

Darken the area of the background trees with a mix of Ultramarine Blue and Quinacridone Burn Scarlet, scraping in bare limbs with a sharp stick or the end of a brush.

Paint the foreground snow on the fence with a clean mix of Cobalt Blue, Ultramarine Blue and Quinacridone Red. The sun is shining through the upper edge of the snow, so keep it a lighter, slightly warmer color—wait until the wash begins to lose its shine, then hit it with a spritz of clear water to give the top portion of the snow an icy sparkle. Let dry.

3 Remove the Mask and Work on the Details

Paint the bare background tree with a no. 6 round brush and a rigger. Let this dry, then remove the mask, taking care not to damage the paper. Soften the edges of the masked lines with a small, stiff brush and clear water.

Lift out a couple of tree trunks with a thirsty brush and give the snowy fence line some definition with the same brush and clear water, blotting away the excess pigment.

Use medium-grit sandpaper to bring back the white of the paper on the edge of that bright cloud of steam, just enough to punch it up a bit!

4 Paint in the Darks

Paint in the trunks and limbs of the main tree and the lower area of the fence with a dark mix of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna—use a no. 8 round brush for the larger trees and fence area, and a rigger and palette knife to suggest the smaller twigs. Be careful to paint around the snow.

Darken the snow on the main tree with a strong mix of Cobalt Blue and a touch of Burnt Sienna.

5 Add the Final Details

Work back and forth over the whole painting, softening here and there, adding more definition to the snow shapes, adding a few branches, and for a little added life, paint in that bright red cardinal with Cadmium Red and your no. 6 round.

Conclusion

We've explored literally dozens of techniques, materials and supplies in this book, and you've no doubt discovered a few special techniques that have found a permanent home in your artistic lexicon.

Some new tool feels like magic in your hand; an unfamiliar pigment or surface delights and surprises you with an effect you'd never before achieved. That's the joy of exploring!

I hope you've enjoyed trying your hand at this or that, and that you've discovered your very personal vision, your own artistic voice along the way.You'll find that your "style" develops naturally, as you hone your skills and lean toward this approach or that one, this palette of colors or another.

As we've said, you won't use all of the ideas in this book in a single painting, or even a half dozen of them; you will have chosen only those that say exactly what you want for a particular effect. Next time, for that unborn painting that's only a spark in your imagination today, your needs may be different—but you've gained an encyclopedia of creative possibilities that will enrich your vocabulary for years to come.

I wrote the first version of this book more than 20 years ago. Some essentials from the original book are still part of my tool kit (and still found their place in this current edition), and many more have come on the market or entered the realm of possibility since. Some have even come and gone in a brief two decades!

The interesting thing about all this is that we know the possibilities will continue to expand; new tricks, new techniques, new materials and supplies appear, just begging to be tried out. There's always a surprise around the bend or over the horizon—perhaps something brand new, perhaps a traditional technique we suddenly see with new eyes. Creativity may be a series of "ah-HA!" moments...

Art is a journey; we need never be bored once we step onto that road. As Frodo quoted his uncle Bilbo in *Lord of the Rings*, "there was only one Road; that it was like a great river: its springs were at every doorstep, and every path was its tributary." Perhaps for us, art is that road.

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