

Art-Post #3



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A Beginning Watercolor Lesson

Basic Watercolor Techniques – Part 2

In Art Posts #1 and #2, we experimented with adding different amount of water to the pigments and learning that paint flows in wet areas, but not into dry areas. Here are a few more watercolor techniques for you to experiment with. Art Post #4 will teach how to paint a complete painting.

FLAT WASH

The most basic watercolor technique is the flat wash and can be used as an underpainting for more layers or over dry painted areas to adjust colors or values. When thin paint is painted over dry paint to darken and adjust colors, it is called glazing.

The most important thing about planning a flat wash is to have enough paint. So mix up a large batch of paint on your palette. If you have a really large piece of paper, mix up your paint in a cup or bowl. The worst problem you can run into is to run out of paint while you are painting your flat wash. Don't worry about wasting paint!

Experiment:

1. For a flat wash you can either work on dry paper or prewet the paper until you have a matt surface.

2. Use a large flat wash brush and load it with the paint. Start at the top of the paper and paint a broad stroke across the paper.
3. Tilt the paper so that the wet paint pools at the bottom of the brush stroke, load your brush, and paint the next stroke catching the bottom edge of the first stroke.
4. Continue to the bottom of the paper and when you are done, lay the paper flat to dry.

GRADED WASH

A graded wash is painted the same way that you paint the flat wash. But instead of loading your brush with more paint, add water to your brush to dilute the paint as you work towards the bottom of the paper. How much water to add does take some practice, so don't be



discouraged. You can always layer another graded wash over the first one if you have to. Just make sure that the paint is completely dry and that could take up to twenty-four hours. Watercolor painting is not always fast, fast, fast!

Experiment:

1. For a graded wash, it is often easier to work on prewet paper with a matt surface.
2. Use a large flat wash brush and load it with the paint. Paint a large brush stroke across the top of the paper.
3. Tilt the paper so that the wet paint pools at the bottom of the brush stroke.
4. Dip your brush in your water, but be careful about adding too much water. Now paint the next stroke catching the bottom edge of the first stroke.
5. Continue painting to the bottom of the paper, adding more water with each stroke. When you are done, lay the paper flat to dry.

GLAZING

Glazing is a technique used in all the painting media: oil, acrylic, and watercolor. To glaze, you paint very thin layers of paint over paint that has dried to adjust colors and values. One of my favorite watercolor painters glazes over 100 layers of paint to get subtle atmospheric effects. And yes, this means it takes months to complete a painting. But you must make sure that the paint underneath is completely dry and for watercolors that may take 24 hours. Oil paint can take days to dry for glazing!



In order to glaze your watercolor, first check to see if your paper is dry by touching it. If it is cold that means the paper is still damp and your glaze may pick up the paint that is already on the paper. You can dry it with a hair dryer, but be patient and make sure the paint is really dry and not just warm from the hair dryer. Often you will have to let the paper dry overnight for the best effects. Paint the glaze very quickly and it should not disturb the paint underneath. But if you overwork it, you may lift up the bottom layer of paint!

PAINTING DARKS

The last thing you need to do when finishing a painting is to add your darkest darks. The darks will create drama in your work. If your paper is dry, you will have the most control and your paint will

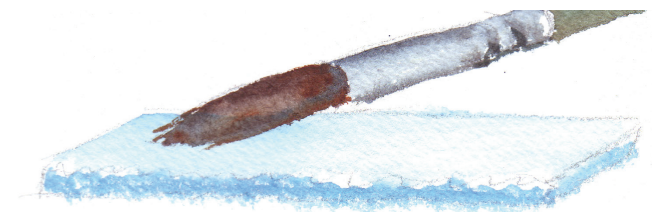
stay where you put it. Plus any brushstrokes will have nice crisp edges. In order to make your darks, you will need sticky paint and paints with strong pigments.

Here are three examples using the three colors that we have been working with. The top one is a cool dark mixing blue and red, with the blue dominant. The middle color is a warm dark with the red dominant. The bottom uses all three pigments, but only a touch of the yellow. That will create a grayed, neutral dark.

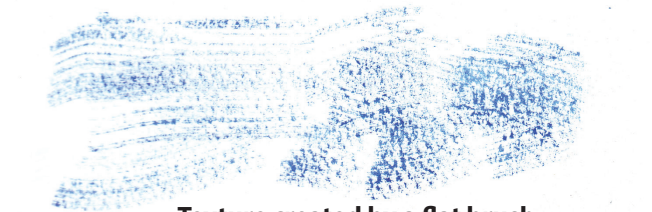


DRYBRUSH

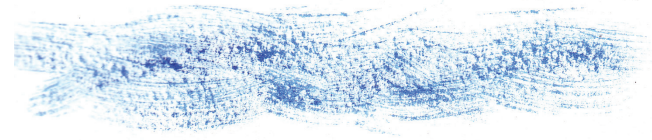
Dry brush is a method of creating texture in a painting. For example, it can be used to create moss texture on rocks or to mimic wood grain. When the paper is dry, mix up sticky or creamy paint. Dry your brush on a paper towel or a cloth and then load it with paint. Split the bristles apart, hold the brush at an acute angle to the surface of the paper, and pull it lightly across the top of the paper so that the paint catches on the top of the paper texture. You may have to experiment with the feel of this technique. I practice on a piece of scrap paper before I add the texture to a painting. Experiment with different brushes and on different papers.



Hold the brush at an acute angle to the surface of the paper.



Texture created by a flat brush.



Texture created by a round brush.