



**Step-by-step
workshops from
professional
artists**

ARTIST'S PAINTING TECHNIQUES

EXPLORE WATERCOLORS, ACRYLICS, AND OILS
DISCOVER YOUR OWN STYLE
GROW AS AN ARTIST



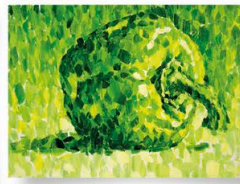
ARTIST'S **PAINTING** TECHNIQUES







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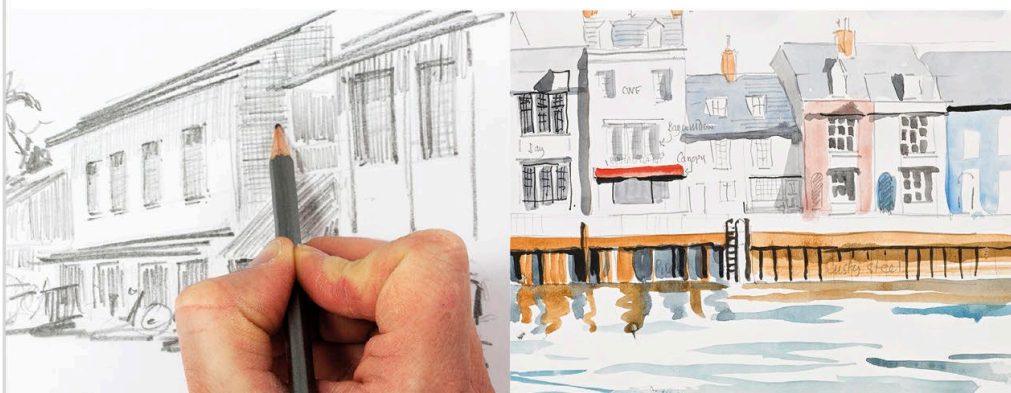
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The basics



Getting started

THE ELEMENTS OF A PAINTING

If you are new to painting or haven't painted for several years, it can be difficult to know where to start. One of the best ways to overcome any hesitancy in tackling a new painting is to choose a subject that excites and inspires you. That way, you are likely to feel compelled to express yourself, and your painting will be authentic and heartfelt.

If a scene, such as a breathtaking sunset or grand building, attracts your attention, your excitement will come across in the work. Paintings that are charged with feeling and that are personal to the artist often have the most impact on the viewer.

Exploring different techniques

Apart from the emotional impact of your subject, there are also technical considerations to take into account.

Familiarize yourself with the tonal relationships between various elements in your scene, and learn how to balance color to create harmonious paintings. Considered use of shape and composition will help to structure your painting, establishing a strong base on which to add layers of color.

Choosing a medium that appeals to you (see pp. 22–23), along with the correct brushes and supports, are important factors in creating the effect

you are seeking. An understanding of the medium, a feeling for your subject, and good planning will help you to create the best work you can.

Making a connection

Paintings that have an emotional impact often need to be handled differently from those in which the subject is paramount. Emotionally charged works may rely more heavily on, for example, the texture of the paint or the types of brushstrokes used. For works that prioritize subject matter above all else, the stylistic qualities of the painting are perhaps less important than conveying the essence of the subject simply and accurately. Either way, the possibilities across the three painting media are limitless.



Technical considerations

This work in oils uses the lines of the track, dark tones, and bright colors to draw the eye to the blue boat, and then beyond. The masts balance the horizontal lines of the boats and fence.

Imparting emotion

This scene, painted with acrylics, is filled with movement and feeling, conveyed by dynamic brushstrokes, the use of pure pigments, and strong contrasts. The artist imparts a sense of awe at the castle's monumental form shining in the sun.

Strong brushwork
conveys emotion



A successful painting connects with viewers and holds their interest. It may provoke discussion or represent a familiar subject in a new way. If the viewer is moved to reevaluate something familiar, then you have made a positive impact with your work. However, try not to be swayed by what other people think—after all, everyone has a different idea of what makes a good painting. The most important thing is to create work that inspires you. If you can convey your own feeling in a work, then the painting will be a success.



Choosing materials

Watercolor is an ideal medium for creating this subtle representation of a flower, with soft washes and light, unpainted areas of paper suggesting its form.

“If you have been able to convey your own feeling in a work, then the painting will be a success.”

Observational skills

THE ART OF SEEING

Observation is about more than simply replicating a subject with photographic accuracy. As an artist, you have license to move, alter, emphasize, or exclude elements of your choosing. For example, you might decide to exaggerate scale or experiment with perspective to create a more dynamic arrangement. The art of seeing is not only about capturing what is in front of you, but also interpreting it in your own way.

Honing your observational skills is the first step to creating a successful painting. With a good understanding of your subject matter, you will be able to depict it more convincingly.

Take your time

Spend time with a subject before you start to paint. Try to dispel any preconceptions you may have about how you *think* something looks. Instead, learn to concentrate on what you can actually *see* in front of you.

Notice where the light falls and which areas are in shadow. Look at the edges: are they crisp and well-defined, or blurred and indistinct? What shapes can you see? (Both the positive shapes of the object itself and the negative spaces between and around it.) Make sure you are viewing the subject from the best vantage point and that you have a strong composition (see pp. 16–17). Look for a good range of tones (see p. 20) and think about where to place the main focal points.

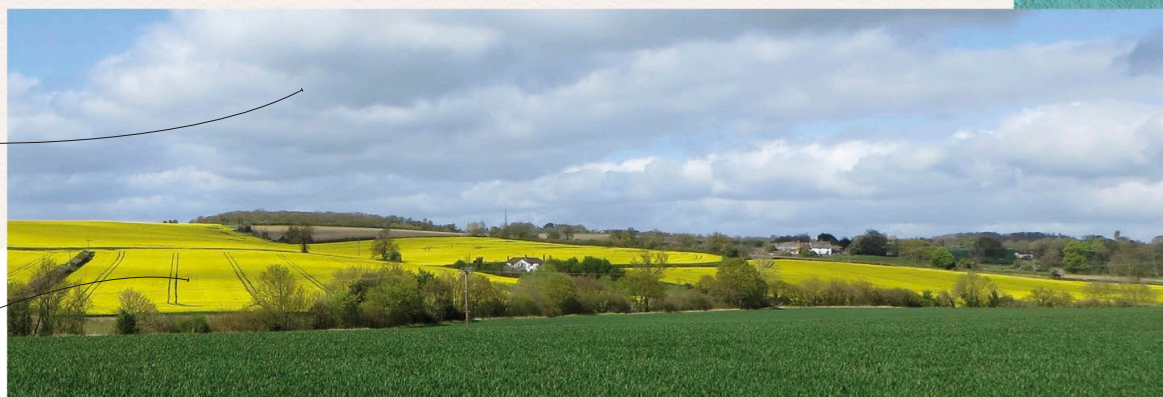
Objects are given form by light, so producing a painting is really a matter of rendering light, with the objects taking shape as a result.

Base measurement

Where accuracy is important, take a measurement from an element in the scene, such as the width of a house or the height of a tree. Then, compare other elements to this base measure to keep the proportions true. Another tip is to squint your eyes at the subject to

In the photograph, there is relatively little detail in the sky

The vibrant yellow looks fine in the photograph, but it would advance too much in a painting



Observation

Studying the landscape helps to identify key features and areas of interest, as well as which elements to omit or change, such as the color saturation of the background fields.

Interpretation

Artistic license was used to create a more dynamic painting. There is a greater sense of drama in the sky, and tones have been balanced across the work.



Measuring from life

Hold a pencil upright at arm's length and at eye level. Close one eye and look along your arm, lining up the top of the pencil with the top of the subject. Then use your thumb to mark off on your pencil the area measured. Transfer this measurement to your page.

Mark the measurement using your thumb



1—take measurement from life

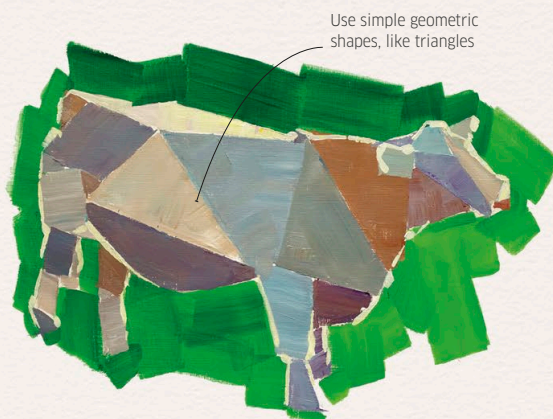


2—check proportions on page

“Spend time with your subject. Focus on what you can see in front of you rather than what you think is there.”

block out the detail. This will help you differentiate areas of light and shadow as you plan and get started on your painting.

You don't always need to copy a subject exactly or include every element. Keep sight of the final goal: conveying the scene in your own way. Remember that successful paintings are often the result of an artist's personal interpretation of a subject.



Use simple geometric shapes, like triangles

Shape and tone

Try to identify basic shapes within the subject. Use triangles, circles, and rectangles to construct form and establish proportion. This image also indicates tonal areas.

Expressive brushstrokes give the painting energy and personality

More cloud movement has been suggested in the sky, making it a key feature of the painting



Color theory

MIXING AND COMBINING COLORS

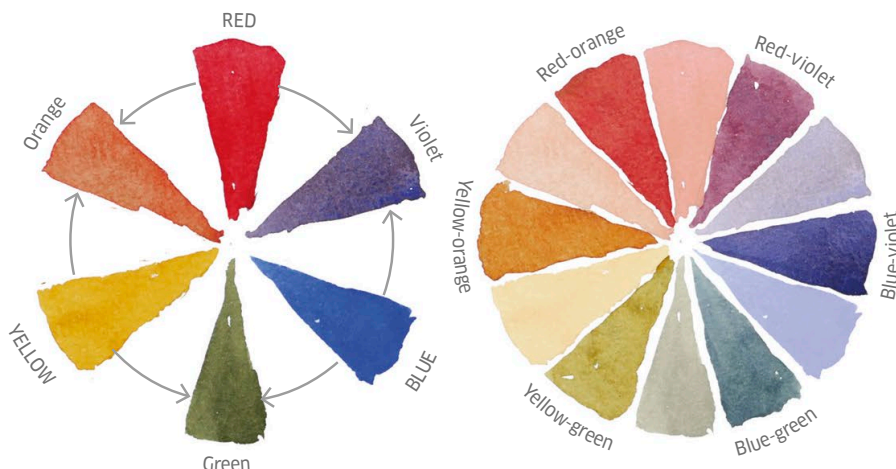
Exploring color is one of the most exciting aspects of painting. Understanding the relationships between colors will help you to create harmony, contrast, depth, and mood in your paintings, as well as mix paints.

■ The color wheel

The color wheel shows the relationships between colors. These diagrams demonstrate how primary colors can be combined to create the whole color wheel.

Primary colors

Red, yellow, and blue are primary colors. You can't create primary colors using other paint colors, but you can combine the primaries to create a huge range of other colors.



PIGMENTS AND HUE

Paints are made from finely ground, insoluble pigments that are suspended in a base such as water or oil. Qualities such as opacity, lightfastness, and granulation vary from pigment to pigment.

Natural pigments are either organic (from animal or plant sources) or inorganic (from rocks and metals). They can be rare or expensive to process, so synthetic pigments have been developed to match them. Many popular colors, such as cobalt blue and cerulean blue, are made from synthetic mineral pigments introduced centuries ago. "Hue" usually means the same as color, but on a tube of paint, hue means that the paint color is a blend or imitation of the original pigment. Paints with "hue" in the name are usually cheaper and may "muddy" quicker than a pure pigment, but they offer other qualities, such as lightfastness.



Cerulean blue pigment

Secondary colors

Orange, green, and violet are secondary colors; they can be made by mixing two primary colors. On the color wheel, each secondary color is shown between the two primary colors that create it—for example, the wheel shows that red and yellow make orange.

Tertiary colors

You can create tertiary colors by mixing a secondary color with one of its primaries, for example adding red (a primary) to orange (a secondary) creates red-orange. The tertiary color therefore has a higher proportion of one primary, which is shown on the wheel by its position next to that primary.

■ Saturation

The intensity or strength of a color is referred to as its saturation. A color straight from the tube will be more saturated than when it is diluted or mixed.



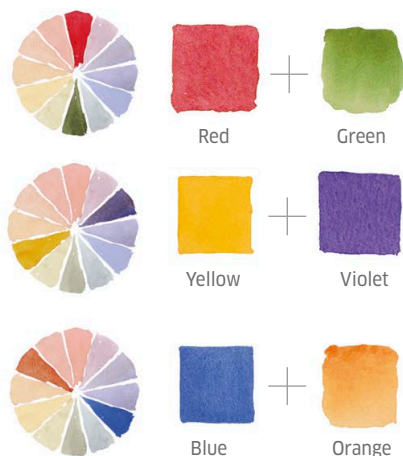
Watercolor swatches

■ Tints

Colors lightened with white are called tints (or gradations). Adding white changes the saturation of the original color, creating a pastel hue.

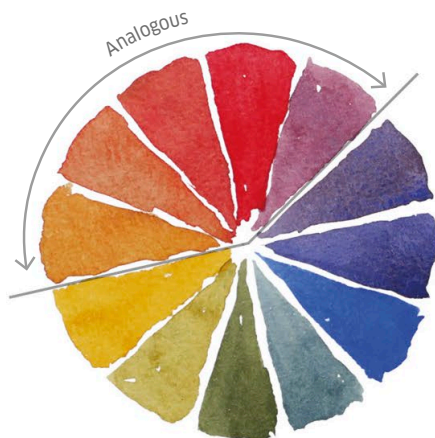


Acrylic swatches



Complementary colors

Opposite colors on the color wheel, such as red and green, are complementary. They brighten each other when placed side by side but dull and darken each other when you mix them, which creates interesting neutrals.



Analogous colors

Groups of three to five colors that sit next to each other on the color wheel are known as analogous. The close relationship between analogous colors means you can use them to create harmonious color schemes.



Color temperature

Colors have qualities that we associate with temperature. In general, the yellow-orange-red half of the wheel is considered to be warm, while the violet-blue-green half is considered to be cool.

“A little knowledge of color theory helps you create the effects you are aiming for in your paintings.”

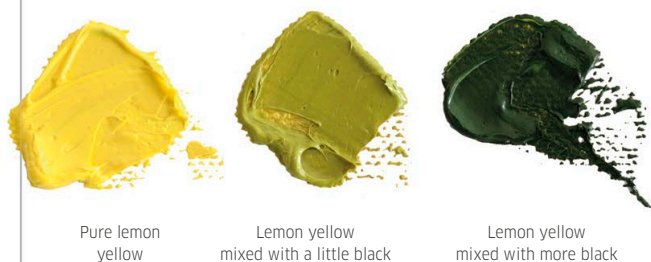


Color bias

There are warm and cool versions of every color because paints often have an undertone of another color—for example, you can buy a warm yellow with a red bias or a cool yellow with a blue bias. Bias affects how you use and mix a color.

Shades

Colors darkened with black are called shades. Blacks with color biases can affect hue; here, yellow mixed with blue-black creates greens.



Oil swatches

Tonal value

The relative lightness or darkness of a color is its tonal value. Establishing value relationships in a painting is important for creating the shape and form of the subject.



Tonal study of a cube

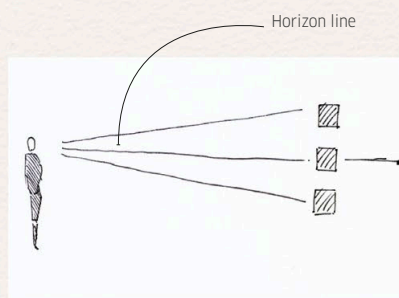
Perspective and composition

PORTRAYING THREE-DIMENSIONAL SPACE

Understanding linear perspective—whereby parallel lines appear to converge in the distance—is an important part of painting and drawing. It is key to portraying distance and three-dimensional space. Your distance from the ground determines your viewpoint and the position of the horizon line, which will be at your eye level. The point at which parallel lines in an artwork converge on the horizon is known as the vanishing point.

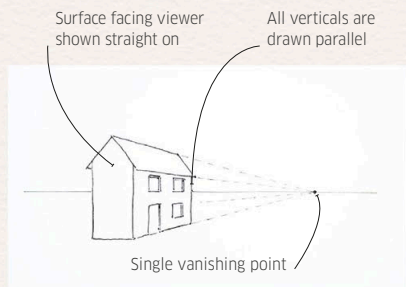
PERSPECTIVE

Some key points to remember regarding perspective are that all parallel lines appear to converge at the same vanishing point on the horizon, and that objects closer to you look larger than those farther away. An object's relationship to the horizon will depend on your location when viewing it.



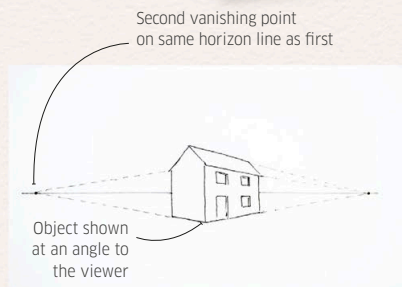
Viewpoint

An object you look down on appears to sit below the horizon line, while an object you look up at appears to sit above the horizon line.



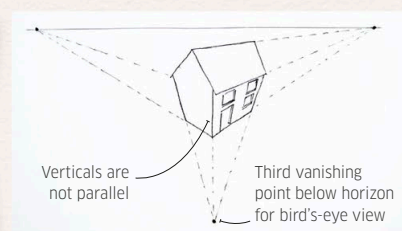
One-point perspective

The surface facing the viewer is seen straight on, without distortion. The object's lines should converge on one vanishing point.



Two-point perspective

Two vanishing points give a more realistic aspect. As the object is at an angle, both sides are distorted by perspective.



Three-point perspective

Use a third vanishing point for very high or low viewpoints. The closer it is to the work's center, the more dramatic the effect.



Aerial perspective

Where there are few parallel lines to show perspective, such as in landscapes, use other techniques instead. For example, use scaling (making objects in the foreground larger than those in the background) and aerial perspective (see pp. 68–69, 148–49, and 242–43).

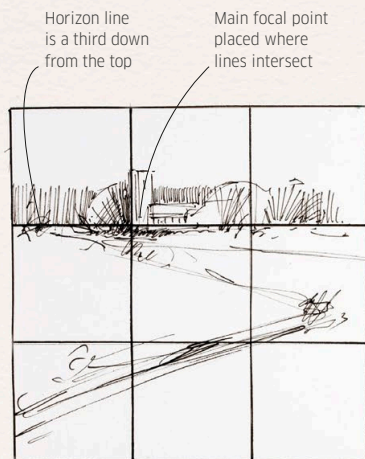
“Linear perspective is key to depicting distance in your work.”

COMPOSITION

The placement of the horizon determines your viewpoint and shapes the composition. Patterns in compositions can highlight aspects of a scene and help lead the eye to the focal point. Try sketching different compositions before deciding on one.

S-shaped

This composition leads the viewer from the start of the "S" in the foreground to the main focal point—the distant church. This shape is very effective in landscapes.



Rule of thirds

This is a popular technique for producing a balanced image. Divide the surface into thirds horizontally and vertically to create a nine-square grid. Place the horizon either a third up from the bottom or a third down from the top, and create focal points where the lines intersect.

Grass and tree form the "L"

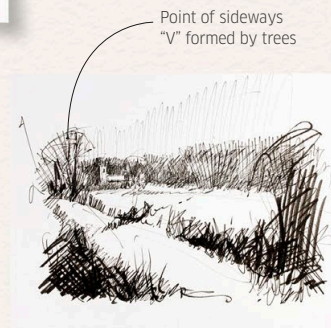


L-shaped

The image is framed on two sides by a horizontal and a vertical element. This directs the viewer's attention to the opposite side of the picture.

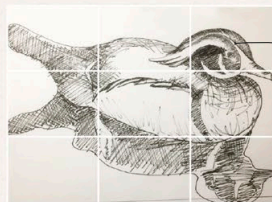
V-shaped

Exaggerating a sense of perspective and creating composition lines that lead to a single point are good ways to create a strong, dynamic image.



SCALING UP

When transferring initial sketches for a composition to the final surface, you can maintain the proportions by scaling up. Make a grid on your sketch and choose a support with the same proportions. Scale up the grid to fit your final surface and copy the detail of each square onto the new grid.



Pencil-drawing basics

TYPES OF PENCILS AND MARKS

Pencils offer a great way to create tonal images. There are different grades ranging from soft, dark pencils to hard, light ones, which can be used in many different ways. Pencils are perfect for sketching any subject matter.

TYPES OF PENCILS

Pencils are graded from hard "H" to soft "B," with "HB" and "F" between the two. Harder pencils create a lighter tone and are good for fine detail, whereas softer pencils create a darker tone and are great for shading. Although pencils from 9H to 9B are available, a 6B offers a dark enough tone, and a 5H offers a light enough tone for everyday sketching.

HARD



SOFT

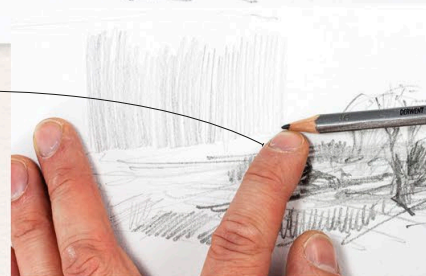


BRUSHWORK

Pencils are versatile tools for working on small to mid-sized areas, but they can be difficult to use over large areas because the tip is so small. There are, however, several techniques for overcoming this problem.



Use your finger as a stop



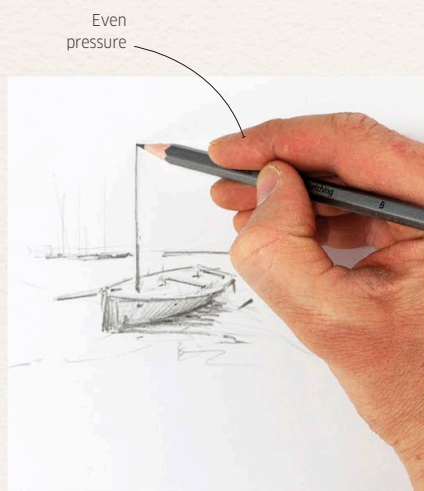
Broad shading

To block in large areas of tone, move the pencil back and forth without lifting it from the page. Keep the pencil tip flat against the paper to create a broader line. For accuracy, use the finger of your other hand as a stop, allowing the pencil to hit your finger as you move the pencil across the area.



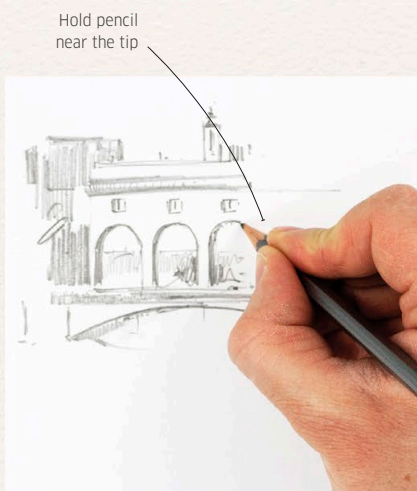
Hatching and cross-hatching

Hatching, in which many parallel lines visually blend with the white paper, is a good way to create tone. Crossing the lines (cross-hatching) creates a denser look and a darker tone.



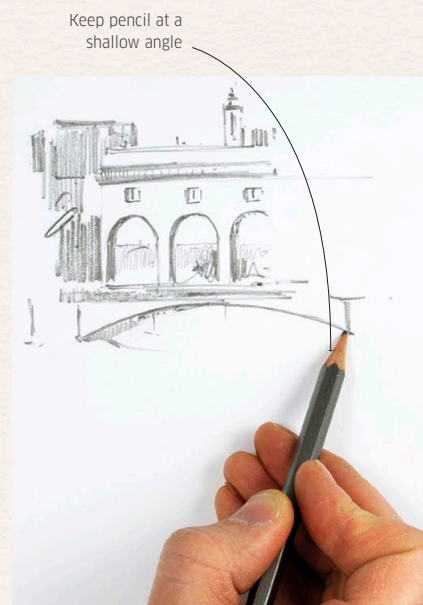
Fine line

To create hard lines, draw the mark in one pass, keeping the pressure even. Make sure you sharpen the pencil if it starts to become too blunt for the line you want to create.



Curved line—small

With your wrist resting on the paper, hold the pencil near the tip and keep it at a steep angle to the paper. Keeping your hand still, curve the line around using just your fingers.



Curved line—large

Hold the pencil farther away from the tip and keep it at a shallow angle to the paper. With your wrist resting on the paper, swing the rest of your hand around to create a large curve.



Stippling

Using the point of the pencil, stipple fine dots and marks onto the surface. The closer together they are, the darker the tone. Softer pencils are more effective for stippling.



Scribbling

Multidirectional scribbles create an interesting look and allow for subtle changes in tone. Use circular motions and darken the tone by going over an area several times.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

- **Pencil sharpener**—whether you're using pencils for preliminary sketches or finished pieces, you will need a pencil sharpener or knife to keep the points fine. Pencil sharpeners that collect the shavings will help keep your work area clean, while a knife will give you control over the length of graphite you wish to expose.
- **Blending stump and eraser**—use a paper blending stump or a tissue to soften pencil marks, and either a hard or soft eraser to remove unwanted areas of tone.
- **Paper**—use medium-weight cartridge paper for general work, and colored papers, watercolor paper, or tissue paper to experiment with texture and transparency in your final drawing.
- **Fixative**—a spray fixative will bond pencil marks to the paper, allowing you to work over areas without smudging.

“Painting is an extension of drawing,
so pencils are the best place to start.”

Using a pencil to create tone

CREATING SHADING AND HIGHLIGHTS

You can create a range of tones or values with a single pencil just by varying the amount of pressure you apply—use a light touch to cover an area with soft shading, or apply more pressure to create a harder, darker mark. You can also create a range of tonal effects using an eraser or a blade, or through blending.

■ Tonal study

Creating a tonal sketch from a photograph or from life will help you plan your final painting. Identifying deep shadows and highlights early on in the process means you can pitch the painting in a suitable tonal key. Use a pencil to experiment with tone, making decisions about where to use strong contrast and so create focal points, and where to use tone more subtly.



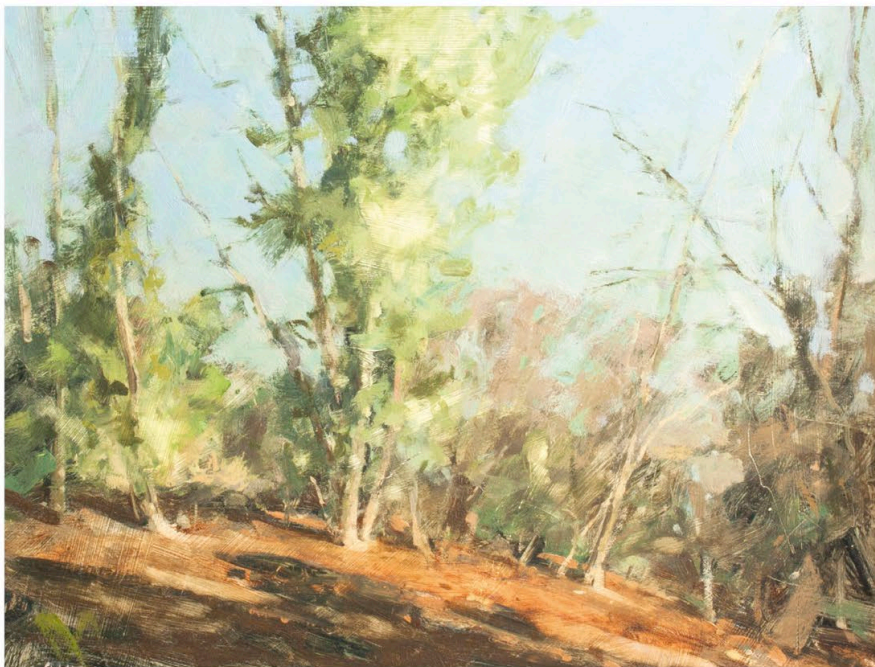
1 Reference photograph

There is a wide range of tones in this woodland scene, with the light sky providing a good backdrop for the foreground trees.



2 Pencil sketch

This initial reference sketch establishes the main tones, with areas of high contrast at the base of the tree.



3 Painted work

Using the sketch for reference, the dark area of shadow on the right of the original photograph has been lightened in order to draw attention to the main tree.

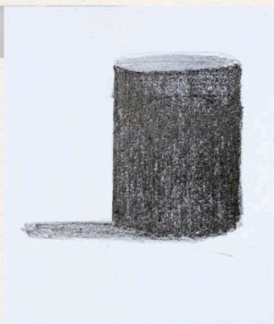


4 Black-and-white image

Looking at an image of the painting in black and white will help you to assess the tonal balance of the finished piece.

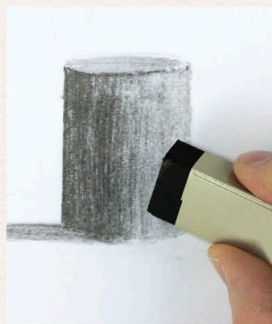
CREATING TONAL EFFECTS

With these simple techniques you can create a range of tonal effects in your drawings. Starting with a simple pencil drawing, try using erasers, blades, or paper blending stumps to adjust the tone and create highlights. This will help you get the most out of your sketches and finished drawings.



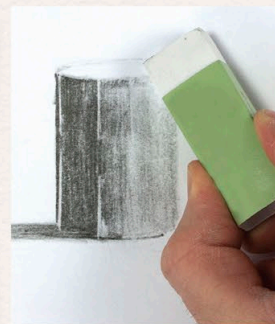
Tone too dark and flat

Use erasers to blend and lighten the tone of an area of pencil shading, particularly if the tone is too heavy.



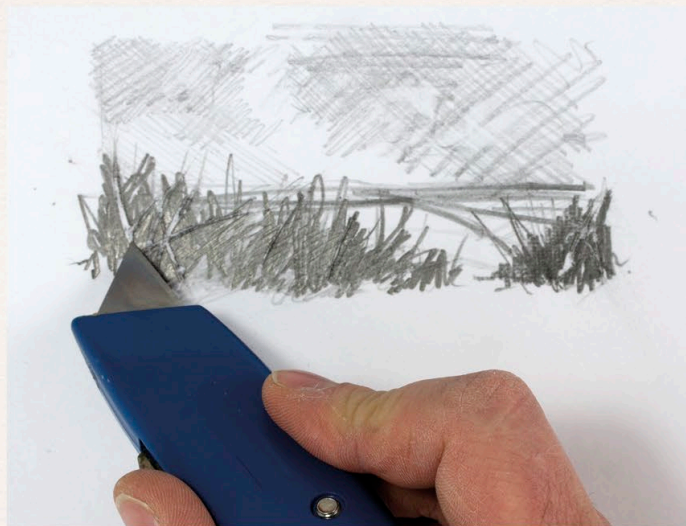
Using a hard eraser

A hard eraser will create clean lines and can be used to wipe complete sections back to paper.



Using a soft eraser

A soft eraser will lighten tone while blending the surface. Keep the eraser clean to avoid smudging.



Using a blade

Scratching the surface to create white marks in an area of pencil shading is a good way to achieve crisp lines in a dark tone. The blade will alter the smoothness of the paper, so use this technique sparingly.



Second piece of paper placed over sketch

High-contrast paper mask

To achieve a crisp edge between tones, use a piece of paper to mask between the two areas. Shading over the paper will leave a definite line where the two tones meet.

Blending

You can use your finger to soften edges or blend tones. However, natural oils from your skin can affect the pencil marks, bonding them to the surface and making them harder to erase. For finer detail, use a paper blending stump or piece of tissue paper instead.



Choosing a medium

WATERCOLORS, ACRYLICS, OR OILS?

When you are choosing a medium, it can help to look at other artists' work—you may be inspired by their use of a particular type of paint. Some artists use mixed media, while others are known for their paintings in one medium. Their choice often depends on factors such as drying time, how easy the paint is to use, and scale. If you are interested in work with a certain feel, identify whether the medium has played a part in creating the image.

WATERCOLORS

Watercolor paints are diluted with water, making them easy to clean up and use. They remain dilutable even after the paint has dried, meaning fresh colors can be blended into dried color. Washes can be used to cover large areas quickly.



Watercolors—pros and cons

PROS

- Relatively inexpensive to buy
- Very quick to dry
- Techniques such as washes, splashing, and dripping can create expressive paintings

CONS

- Watercolor techniques can be difficult to master
- It is harder to correct mistakes
- Fragile—just one drop of water can damage a painting

ACRYLICS

Acrylic paints combine many of the advantages of oils and watercolors, such as a fast drying time and the fact that you can build up multiple layers quickly. They can be mixed with water, so there is no concern about paint fumes or special cleaning materials.



Acrylics—pros and cons

PROS

- Can be applied in thick layers or thin washes
- Dries in minutes
- Can be used on a range of materials including canvas, paper, wood, plastic, and metal

CONS

- Fast drying time means you must work quickly to blend colors
- Colors can change as they dry
- Can be tricky to work with over a large area

OILS

Oil paints have a long tradition and are popular due to the richness of colors available. They have a thick, sculptural quality, and techniques such as glazing, impasto, and layering can be used to produce work from dynamic abstract paintings to hyperrealistic depictions.



Oils—pros and cons

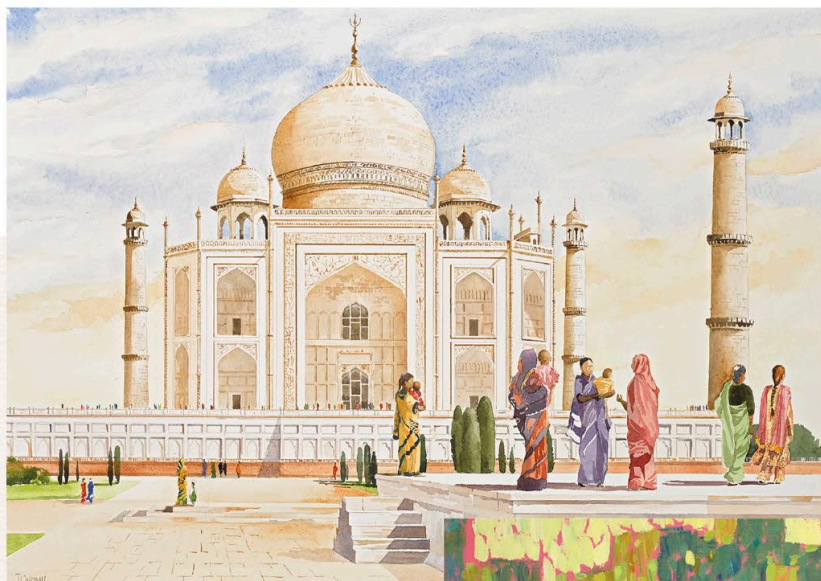
PROS

- Longer drying time means oils are more flexible to work with
- Colors blend together smoothly
- Can be used in thick layers to build texture

CONS

- Canvases must be primed before use
- Special cleaning materials such as turpentine are needed
- It can be more difficult to create clean lines because the paint stays wet for longer

“Subject matter and where you paint may influence your choice of medium. An outdoor landscape painter and an indoor portrait painter may have different requirements.”



Watercolor washes

This painting shows the range of techniques that can be achieved using watercolors, from delicate washes in the sky to clean lines and white highlights in the foreground.

Bright acrylics

Acrylic paints can be used to build up vibrant layers of color, with rich tones giving depth to a painting. This striking image features small, even brushstrokes and dabs of color to build up the layers.



Oil techniques

In this painting, softly blended oil colors create the sky, while the detail on the boats showcases the richness and texture that oil paints can offer. Rougher brushstrokes and layers of color add depth and interest.

Choosing a subject

HOW TO DECIDE WHAT TO PAINT

Getting to know your subject will help enormously when trying to paint it. For example, if you know how something behaves, how heavy it is, or how fast it moves, you will have a better chance of being able to portray it accurately. The best way to get to know a subject is to spend time observing and drawing it. Then, once you have a good understanding of perspective, color, and value, you can begin to experiment with your paintings.

Different subjects can suit different styles. Large, geometric subjects may demand a bold approach, while fine, detailed paintings will suit more intricate subjects. Start by identifying what interests you in both style and subject. Try to pick appropriate subjects to match your style and medium, then

get to know your subject by sketching it. This will give your work a solid foundation.

Refining your painting

To help discover how finely detailed you want your work to be, it is a good idea to develop a painting through

gradual refinement. This means starting from an impressionistic, even abstract, starting point, and then adding more and more detail. The process is an easy one with acrylics and oils, because you can add layers to adjust value and color, but it is still possible with watercolors. Use opaque white paint to add light



Sketching

Make multiple sketches to help discover different elements of a subject. Some areas may be more interesting as cropped images or as a small part of a larger piece.





Still life

Still life paintings can be easily set up at home. You can adjust the lighting and choose a subject matter that suits the technique you want to practice. It is a great way to refine your tone and brushwork in the comfort of the studio.

areas back in, or plan ahead and use lighter initial washes so that you can achieve a layered approach.

Knowing when to stop

Working around the whole painting, rather than concentrating on one area at a time, will mean you can stop at any

point and the painting can be considered “finished.” Artists often find it difficult to know when to stop painting, and it can be tempting to keep on adding more to your work. It is important to take a few steps back from the painting from time to time to assess your progress. Putting too much into a painting can spoil its impact and leave it looking overworked. If you find yourself struggling to decide whether you have finished, take a break and come back to it later with fresh eyes. You could even do a little more research about your subject, perhaps with some more sketching and studies, to help you analyze the work you have already done. Then you can decide whether any areas of your painting would benefit from further refinement.



Landscape

The vastness of a dramatic landscape can lift spirits and emphasize power and scale. Landscapes offer a huge variety of subject matter, and time constraints and changing light can provide an exhilarating challenge.



People

Portraits, figures, and crowds offer a great chance for the viewer to interact with a painting. We recognize emotion in faces, and a portrait can trigger different reactions in people. Figure drawing is a useful way of developing techniques to give objects a sense of identity, weight, and balance.

Working outdoors

THE RIGHT MATERIALS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

If your main source of inspiration is nature and the world around you, then drawing or painting from life is the best place to start. Working outdoors, also known as *plein air* painting, is particularly good for small landscapes and capturing quick impressions of a subject. Studio work, on the other hand, is better for larger paintings or those created over several sessions. There are pluses and minuses to working both outside and in the studio.



Working directly from life is the best way to really study your subject. You can also capture fleeting light effects, movement, and a sense of energy. Working in this way helps you to do more than simply replicate a subject—you can also create an emotional interpretation of what you see.

On a practical level, time is a major factor when painting outdoors. Light fades and weather conditions change, so the less time you spend setting up, the more time you have

to sketch and paint.

Travel light: use a limited palette of colors and restrict yourself to just a few key brushes.

Oil painting outdoors

Your easel should be able to withstand the wind, but not be too bulky to carry. If you use an easel instead of a pochade, you will also need a wet panel carrier—a box that safely holds wet paintings.



Wet panel carrier and folded box easel



Box easel

This portable easel has a compartment for storing art supplies and folds down to a compact box, making it ideal for outdoor painting.

“Travel light when working outdoors, and consider what you can realistically achieve with the equipment and time you have available.”

Camera backpack

A camera backpack is useful for stowing a tripod (see right) and other supplies. Carry half-empty paints to reduce the weight.



Camera tripod easel

You can convert a camera tripod into an outdoor easel by attaching a bracket to hold a board or sketch pad, and a metal shelf for the paints and water holder.



Working outside can be messy, so squeeze paint sparingly onto the palette and carry hand wipes. Store wet rags or discarded paper towels in small plastic bags, keep your equipment clean, and be as organized as possible.

WORKING IN THE STUDIO

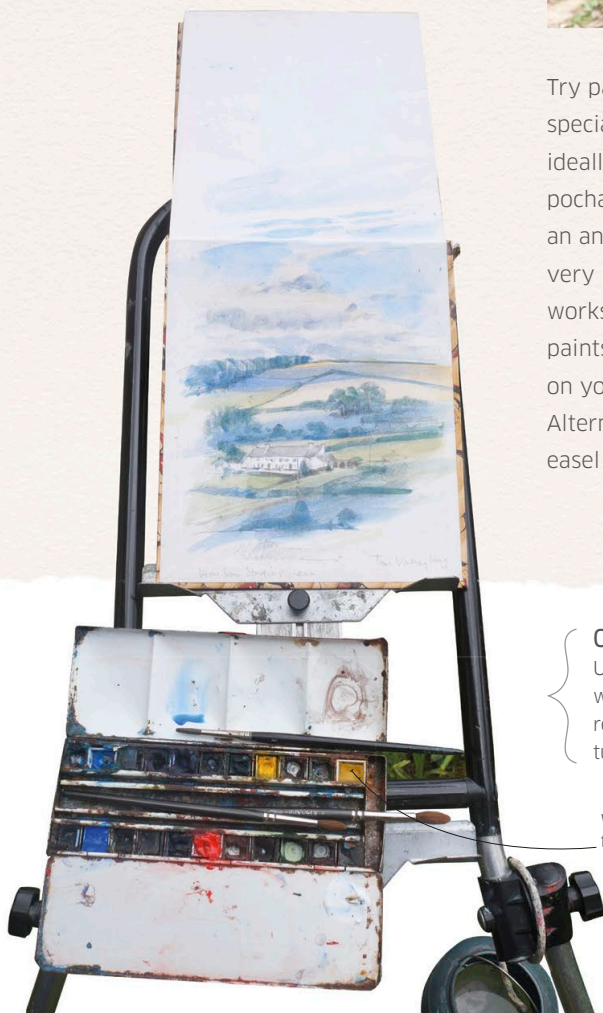
Apart from the convenience of having heat, shelter, and your materials at hand, working in the studio has other advantages. It makes it easier to work on large paintings, you can revisit a painting over several sessions, and the lighting is consistent. Being in a studio may also allow your imagination to flow—without being restricted by what you see in front of you, your work may become more personal and exploratory. However, it is still useful to have access to multiple sources when painting in the studio, such as photographs, notes, color sketches, and preliminary drawings made on location.

Try packing your supplies into a specialist camera or fishing backpack, ideally with an attached stool. A pochade—a box with a lid hinged at an angle that acts as an easel—is also very useful. It has storage for your wet works of art and a compartment for paints and brushes. Place the pochade on your lap or attach it to a tripod. Alternatively, you can use a portable easel that includes a storage area.

Outdoor easel for watercolor

Use a portable easel and a field palette with plenty of mixing space, a water reservoir, and pan colors (rather than tubes). Secure the pad with elastic bands.

Watercolor field palette



Studio easel with crankshaft



Mounting and displaying work

SHOWING YOUR ART

If you want to display your artworks in public, they will benefit from being properly mounted and framed. Take them to a professional framer, or create frames yourself using specialized equipment. Once your artwork is well presented, and you have some experience exhibiting in local or national shows, you might consider approaching galleries.

One approach for oil paintings and unglazed acrylic paintings is to frame smaller works in wider frames and larger works in narrower frames. Watercolor paintings are usually best presented in a mount behind glass, surrounded by a thin frame.

Inner frames and mounts

Although fashions change, it is usual to include an inner frame, or slip, of a lighter color than the frame, which will help balance and enhance the painting. Use gold with caution as it can be overbearing, although a little gold around the moulding of a frame can be effective. There is a wide range

of colors available, but it is usually best to choose subtle, light colors that complement and lift your work. Avoid frames or mounts that distract from—or even conflict with—your work. You can also use more than one mount, leaving a small gap between them to lead the viewer's eye into the painting.

Framing practicalities

You can frame your work at home, although you will need to invest in some specialized equipment. For example, you will need a miter cutter to create smooth, accurate corners at 45-degree angles, V-nails to join the frame corners, and an underpinner for fixing the nails.

Alternatively, you can instruct a professional framer to make up finished frames to your specification, or ask them to create barefaced (untreated) wooden frames, which you can finish at home using a good emulsion and furniture wax, a matte or satin varnish, or even gold leaf.

Displaying your work

Look for opportunities to show your work at local art societies, and both regional and national juried shows. For more consistent exposure, consider approaching a gallery. Always do your research and prepare your artwork first (see below).

APPROACHING GALLERIES

First, assess and prepare your work. For example, does it have a recognizable style? Galleries usually want consistency and a unique selling point. List your exhibitions, juried shows, and experience, and assemble a small portfolio of original, well-presented, “ready for sale” pieces.

Choosing a gallery

- Do you have a similar experience and ability to other artists at the gallery?
- Will your work fit in without being too similar to other artists on its books?
- Are your prices in line with the paintings displayed at the gallery?
- Be consistent when setting your own prices and find out how much commission they charge.

Negotiating with a gallery

- Don't cold call—make an appointment and find out what the gallery would like you to bring.
- Listen to the staff—they know their business.
- Clarify terms before committing to work.
- Discuss their requirements and decide whether you could keep up with the work.
- Understand that the commission they take pays for running the gallery, publicity, client lists, and their reputation.



Exhibiting work

You will need to demonstrate a consistent and stylistically coherent body of work to appeal to galleries.



Venice in the sunshine (see pp.96-97)



Marie, seated (see p.199)



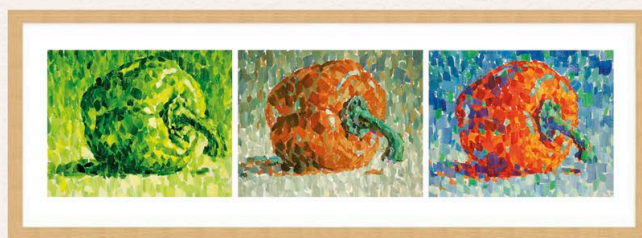
Sailing boats (see pp.72-73)



Yellow tram (see p.273)



Still life with fruit (see pp.266-67)



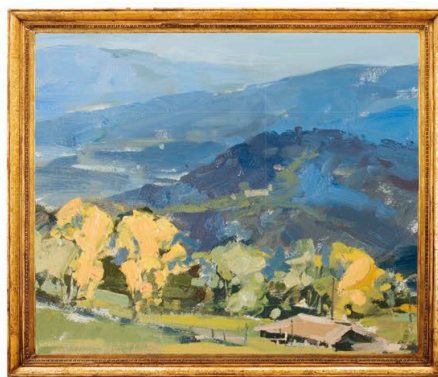
Peppers (see p.182)



Rainy day (see pp.188-89)



St Michael's Mount



Mountain scene (see pp.242-43)



Miniature Schnauzer
(see pp.280-81)



Watercolors



Painting with **watercolors**

Watercolors are popular with artists of all abilities because they are versatile, easy to use, portable, and affordable. With a translucency that allows the white of the paper to show through, they have a luminosity that imbues paintings with a sense of light. The spontaneous, fluid nature of the paint allows you to create a range of expressive strokes and textures.

On the following pages, you can find out about the paints and materials needed to get started. Then, practice and develop your skills with more than 30 watercolor techniques, grouped into three sections of increasing sophistication—beginner, intermediate, and advanced. A showcase painting at the end of each section brings all the techniques together.

1 Beginner techniques

■ See pp. 40–61

In the first section, find out about color mixing and warm and cool colors, experiment with brushstrokes, produce a range of tonal values, paint three-dimensional objects, and learn about wet and dry applications.

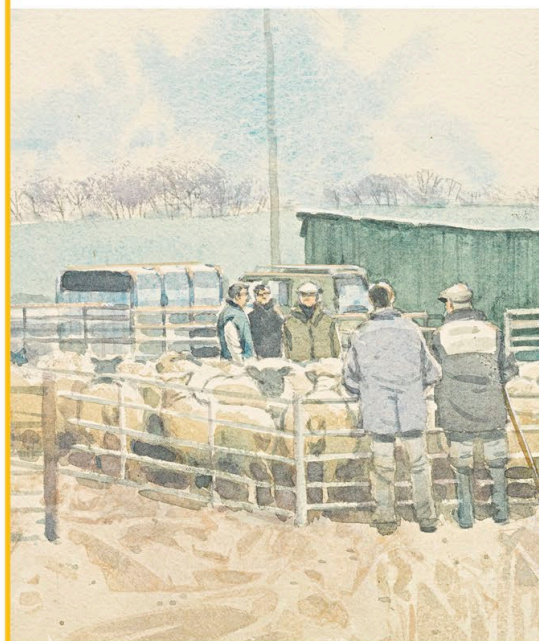


Beginner showcase painting (see pp. 60–61)

2 Intermediate techniques

■ See pp. 62–89

In the second section, see how to lay flat and graduated washes—core watercolor skills—use aerial perspective to create depth, and find out how to correct minor errors or incorporate them into your painting.



Intermediate showcase painting (see pp. 88–89)

Although water-based paints have been used for millennia, watercolors as we know them were first used during the 14th century. At the time, oils and tempera were the predominant media, but watercolors grew in popularity during the 17th century, mainly in England where the landed gentry commissioned paintings of their country estates. As a portable medium suited to outside work, watercolors came to the fore during the Romantic period of the 19th century, when there was a growing love of landscapes and the natural world.

Water-based pigments

Watercolor paints comprise pigments bound with water-soluble binders. The pigments are either dyes that dissolve, or minute particles that form a suspension in water. Paints may also include other additives to prevent them from drying out, improve color, and add body. Natural pigments are usually easier to remove from your paper with a wet brush, while dyes tend to stain.

As watercolors are transparent, the color and surface of your paper will have an effect on the final painting.

White paper is traditionally used to maximize the luminosity of the paint, although creams and other off-whites are also popular choices.

Watercolors are easy to apply, but as they are unpredictable and difficult to correct, they require practice to perfect. They are best applied quickly and boldly, with economy, to bring out their clarity. With this fluid medium, you can make subtle blends when working “wet-in-wet,” or work “wet-on-dry” to create shimmering layers and precise detail.

3 Advanced techniques

■ See pp. 90–117

In the final section, find out about granulation, glazing, painting skin tones, and the value of gathering source material and trying different compositions and tonal studies before committing to a final painting.

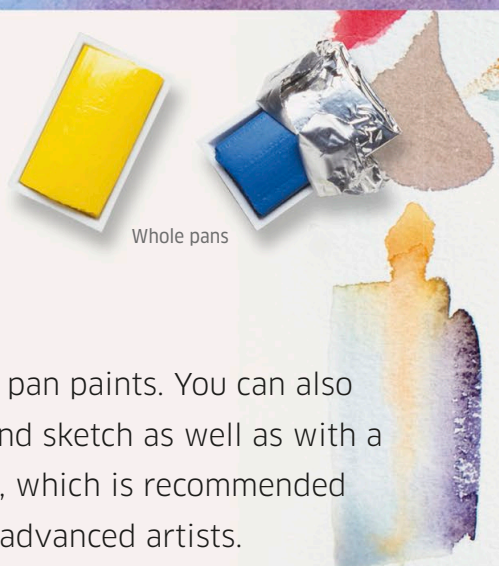


Advanced showcase painting (see pp. 116–17)

Paints

CHOOSING WATERCOLOR PAINTS

There are two main forms of watercolor: wet tube paints and dry pan paints. You can also buy watercolor “sticks,” which are dry and can be used to draw and sketch as well as with a brush. These paints are available in two qualities: student quality, which is recommended for beginners, and more expensive artist-quality paints for more advanced artists.



Whole pans

All paints are available individually or in sets of preselected colors. If you're new to painting, it's best to start with one of these color sets. As you progress, you can then buy individual colors to suit your own preferences and style.

Tube paints

Usually available in 5ml or 14ml tubes, these have a semi-liquid consistency and are quick and easy to mix. Since you can squeeze out as much paint as you need, tube watercolors are ideal for mixing large batches of color for

washes and large-scale paintings. For the same reason, it is easy to achieve intense color saturation (see opposite) with tube paints—you can even use them undiluted for the most vibrant color. Tube watercolors will dry out if left on a palette, but can be used again if wetted. They can also be used to replenish a pan paint (see below) if left to dry.

Pan paints

Dry, cakelike pan paints are convenient and portable—perfect for working *en plein air*. Since you pick up the color a

little at a time using a wet brush, they are great for small paintings and sketches. Use a damp cloth to wipe the pans clean after use to prevent contamination—pans tend to absorb colors from a dirty brush.

Pan paints are available in two sizes: half pans and whole pans. Buy whole pans for the colors you use most frequently. For example, if you specialize in landscapes, you might decide to buy whole pans for blues (skies) and earthy colors such as burnt sienna and burnt umber. Buy individual pans to customize a set.



Cadmium yellow

Yellow ochre

Cadmium red

Burnt sienna

Burnt umber

Sap green

Cobalt blue

Neutral tint

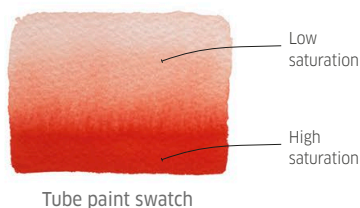
Lamp black



Quality and saturation

Artist-quality paints have a higher proportion of pigment to filler than the more affordable student-quality versions. The pigments are more finely ground, which results in a richer paint, and they are more lightfast and consistent from tube to tube or pan to pan. However, as a beginner you should stick to student-quality paints (the same goes for other materials) until you gain confidence with the basic techniques and are sure that you want to continue with watercolors. As you progress, buy the best-quality paints you can afford.

Watercolor paints offer a range of effects in terms of saturation and transparency. Tube paints can give an intense effect because you can apply lots of pigment, whereas pan paints will create a relatively transparent effect unless they are built up in layers.



“As you develop your skills as a watercolor artist, tailor your palette of colors to suit your own style.”

Basic palette

This sample selection of colors (shown here in tube form) is a good basic palette for the beginner. Add or substitute colors as you become more familiar with the medium.



Additional colors

Explore the range of paints available as you progress. For example, all of these colors are used in the techniques in this chapter.

Opaque white

Although it is usual to allow the white of the paper to show through, white watercolor paint is also available for a more opaque color.



Chinese white

Brushes

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR BRUSHES

A wide range of brushes is available, but round, soft-hair brushes are the mainstay of watercolor painting. You can create a wide range of brushstrokes with a small selection of round brushes. Other brush types, on the whole, lend themselves to specific tasks, such as washes or fine details. Add them to your collection as you need them.

Brushes are available in various materials, qualities, shapes, and sizes. High-quality brushes can be very expensive, but you don't need to spend a great deal. Whichever fiber you choose, a round brush should be supple, have a pointed shape, and be able to carry plenty of paint in its belly.

Brush fibers

Sable brushes are the traditional choice of watercolor painters, as the hairs are springy, keep their shape, and hold plenty of water and paint.

However, they are expensive (especially the larger sizes) and do wear out. The best quality are those made of kolinsky sable (a member of the weasel family); pure sable and red sable are less good, but still of high quality. When buying in a retail shop, ask for some water, wet the brush, and ensure that it comes to a perfect point before purchasing. If you buy online, you run the risk of buying an imperfect brush.

Squirrel and goat fibers are very soft and suitable for large washes, but won't give you enough control

for detailed work. Ox hair is suitable for flat brushes, and hog hair, or a synthetic equivalent, is stiff and good for scrubbing out mistakes.

There are also blends of sable and synthetic fibers, which can be a good compromise. Synthetic brushes are cheaper than sable, will last a lot longer, and are perfectly good for just about all watercolor work.

Types of brushes

Brushes are available in numerous shapes, each suited to its purpose. For most brushstrokes, a round

Round brushes

For watercolor painting, round brushes are the most frequently used type of brush. Their shape makes them versatile, suitable for detail and delicate lines, but also for applying washes and broader strokes. It is worth investing in a good-quality round brush as you will use it the most.



Wash brushes

Natural-bristle brushes hold and distribute paint very well, so are ideal for applying washes. The square, mop, and hake (an oriental-style wash brush) are all good for laying large areas of color, as well as absorbing excess paint. The mop is also suitable for blending.

Holding your brush



Mid-handle hold

To paint washes, hold your brush in the middle of the handle and move your entire lower arm.



Close pencil hold

To paint details, hold the brush like a pencil. Place your little finger on the paper to steady your hand.



Upright hold

Paint sweeping lines with the brush tip, keeping your wrist fixed and moving your arm from the shoulder.



Flexible pencil hold

Hold the brush like a pencil halfway down the handle to increase your range of movement for flowing lines.



End-of-handle hold

Grip the brush at the end so that you can flick your wrist—perfect for fine, delicate lines.

shape that comes to a fine point is best. Large, square brushes or large, oval mop brushes are good for applying washes to larger areas. A flat brush is suitable for strong lines and linear strokes. Wash brushes are simply larger versions of these.

Liners and riggers are long and narrow, with long hairs and pointed tips. These are ideal for painting very fine lines. Very tapered brushes, sometimes called swordliners, are also good for fine detail. For blending, fan-shaped brushes are useful.

Sizes

Brush sizes are designated by numbers from 000 (the smallest or finest) upward. If you are a beginner, start with three round brushes in sizes 03, 05, and 08. Intermediate and advanced artists can extend their collection to suit their personal style and needs.

Brushstrokes

You can use the tip, side, or edges of your brushes to make brushstrokes. Square, flat brushes produce strong, angular lines. Round brushes create loose, expressive lines when used on their side, and fine lines using their tips.



Flat soft-hair brush



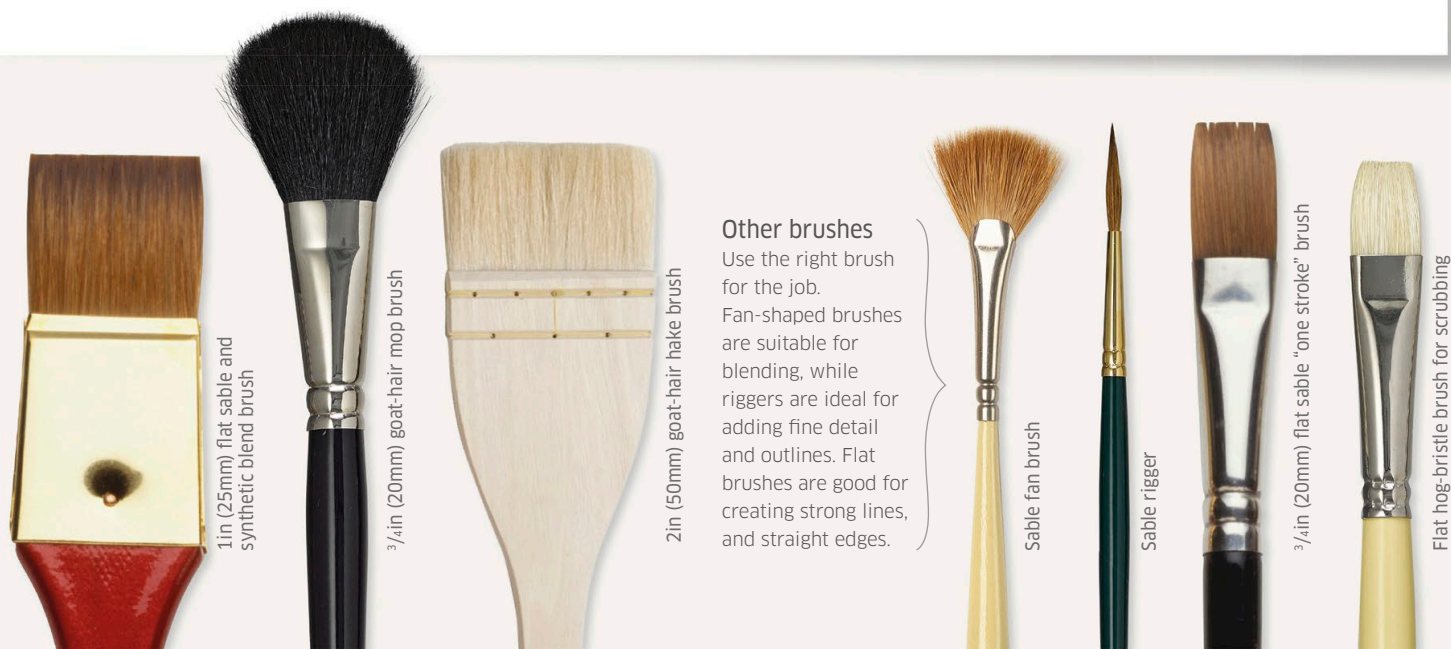
Rigger



Round soft-hair brush



Flat-bristle brush



Other brushes

Use the right brush for the job. Fan-shaped brushes are suitable for blending, while riggers are ideal for adding fine detail and outlines. Flat brushes are good for creating strong lines, and straight edges.

Supports and other materials

CHOOSING A SURFACE TO PAINT ON

The primary support, or painting surface, for watercolors is paper. It is manufactured in many different ways and has many different properties, colors, sizes, and weights (thicknesses). You can buy paper in several forms including individual sheets, rolls, bound sketchbooks, and prestretched watercolor blocks.



Different textures and weights of paper will create different effects in your finished paintings. It is advisable to experiment and think about the effect you want before choosing your paper. Buy single sheets of paper until you have decided which type you prefer.

Sketchbooks

Sketchbooks are essential for all artists and are bound in various ways. Spiral-bound sketchbooks are the most useful because the pages lie flat. Sizes vary. If you are using them outdoors, 11x17in is probably the largest manageable size.

The type and quality of paper in sketchbooks also varies. Choose a medium to heavyweight paper that won't buckle when wet. Lighter papers are suitable for pencil or pen work, as is rough-textured drawing paper. Sketchbooks made from watercolor paper will take washes better than drawing paper.

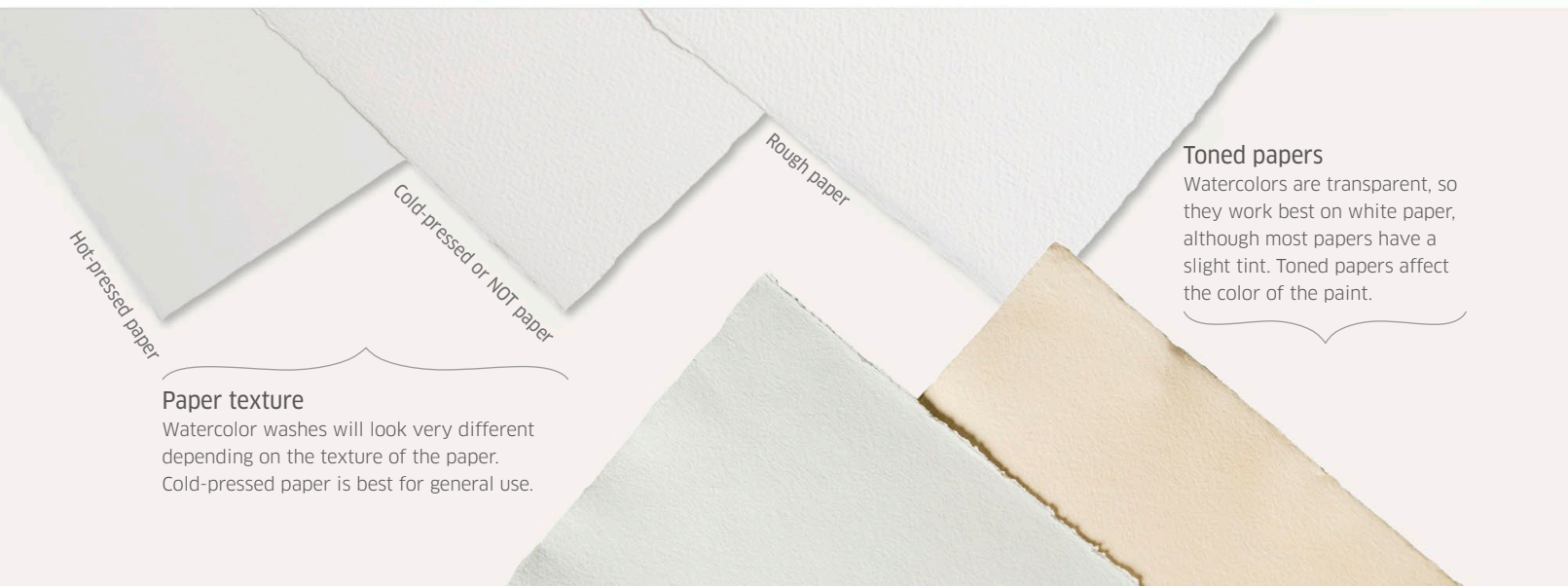
Watercolor papers

Watercolor papers come with different surfaces: rough, cold-pressed, and hot-pressed. Rough paper has a very textured finish, while cold-pressed paper has a relatively smooth surface.

Hot-pressed paper is run through rollers to make the surface very smooth.

Although watercolor papers are generally white, the tone of the paper can vary according to the manufacturer, ranging from brilliant white to nearly cream. The whiteness will affect the luminosity of the painting. Watercolor paper has a "right" and "wrong" side.

The right side has a watermark, but you can paint on both sides of most good papers. Paper is also treated with size when it is made, to control its absorbency. Manufacturers create different surface qualities in their



Hot-pressed paper

Cold-pressed or NOT paper

Rough paper

Toned papers

Watercolors are transparent, so they work best on white paper, although most papers have a slight tint. Toned papers affect the color of the paint.

Paper texture

Watercolor washes will look very different depending on the texture of the paper. Cold-pressed paper is best for general use.



Sketchbooks

Small sketchbooks are easy to carry for outdoor sketches and studies.

Palettes

Palettes should be white and preferably ceramic. Plastic palettes tend to stain over time. You will need at least one palette with several wells for different colors and one larger palette for mixing washes.



Well palette



Ceramic palette

sizing processes, which affect how paint behaves. Paint will not be absorbed by a highly sized paper—it will “slide” across the surface. Less sized papers will absorb paint washes quickly and the paint will sink into the surface. If paper is too highly sized for your needs, stretch it to remove some of the size (see below).

Paper sizes and weights

Individual sheets of paper come in various sizes, the largest of which is 30 x 22in (76 x 56cm). Half and quarter sheets are also available.

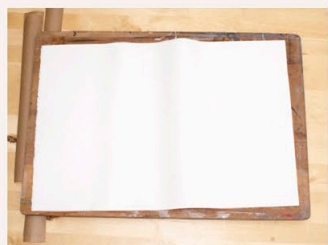
Should you require larger sizes of paper, you can buy paper on the roll. Weights of paper are generally 90-pound (200 grams per square meter), 140lb (300gsm), and 300lb (640gsm). You can use the heaviest-weight papers without stretching them, but they are expensive. It is also difficult to roll heavier papers, for example if you want to send a painting to be framed. It is much easier to roll 90lb and 140lb papers to store them or send them in a cardboard tube. However, you will need to stretch these weights

of paper before use or they will buckle when washes are applied.

Watercolor blocks

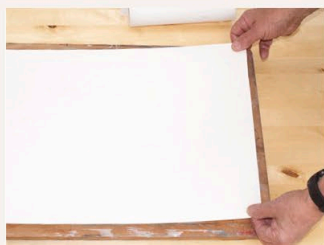
Watercolor blocks are made up of smaller sheets of paper that are glued down. The top layer of the block acts as the painting surface. When your painting is complete, you can simply lift it off the block, exposing the next layer. Blocks are good for use outdoors, as they provide a sturdy surface for you to work on and you don't need a separate drawing board.

Stretching paper



Step 1

Soak the paper thoroughly with water on both sides using a sponge. Lay right side up on a strong board.



Step 2

Stick one edge of the paper down with gum strip and gently pull the paper to remove buckles.



Step 3

Glue the remaining edges of the paper down with the gum strip.



Step 4

Leave the paper to dry (this will take several hours). Keep the paper on the board while painting.

Color mixing

USING COLOR THEORY TO MIX WATERCOLOR PAINTS

Exploring color theory will help you learn how to mix your own colors and create the hues, tones, and shades that bring your work to life. However, watercolors dry noticeably lighter than the wet color you see on the paper, so you'll need to practice making your mixes stronger to compensate for this.

WET MIXING METHODS

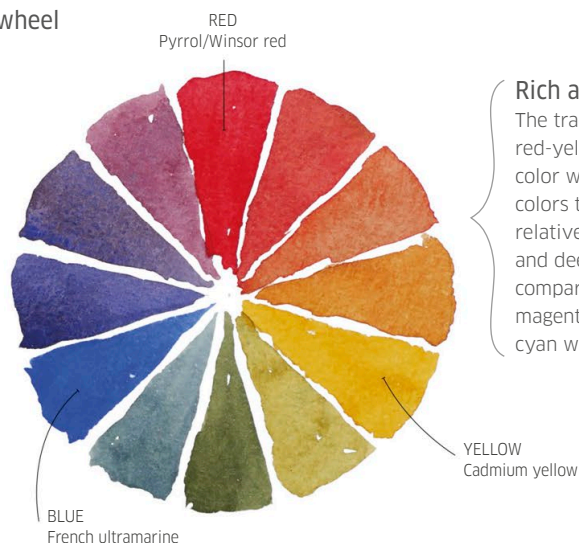
You can mix wet paints together in a palette or combine them “wet-in-wet” directly on the paper, as shown in these examples with French ultramarine and aureolin. Don't rinse your brush between picking up colors—rinsing adds water and dilutes the mix, making it impossible to achieve strong colors.

Traditional versus modern color wheels

The primary colors, traditionally blue, red, and yellow, are capable of creating many other hues (see pp. 14–15). There are warm and cool variations of every color, however, so your color mixes will vary depending on which versions of blue, red, and yellow you choose. A modern approach is to use cyan, magenta, and yellow as primaries. These are cooler than the traditional primaries, and create vibrant secondary and tertiary mixes.

As the studies opposite show, neither traditional nor modern color wheels create a fully comprehensive range of colors. However, using colors from both systems will allow you to mix warm and cool primaries to create a huge range of colors, both muted and bright.

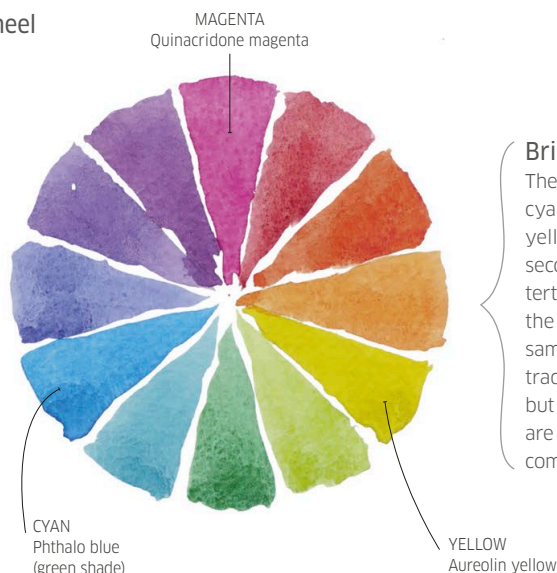
Traditional color wheel



Rich and warm

The traditional red-yellow-blue color wheel creates colors that are relatively warm and deep compared to the magenta-yellow-cyan wheel below.

Modern color wheel



Bright and cool

The modern cyan-magenta-yellow wheel creates secondaries and tertiaries by mixing the primaries in the same way as the traditional wheel, but the colors are cooler by comparison.

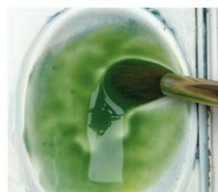
Mixing in a palette
Using your brush, place some water in the palette, then pick up the first color and blend it with the water. Without rinsing your brush, pick up the second color and blend it with the first. This creates an evenly mixed color.



1—Blend paint with water



2—Add second color

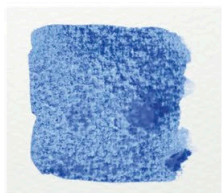


3—Blend colors together

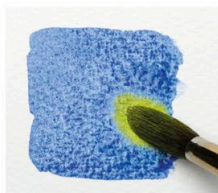


Produces even color

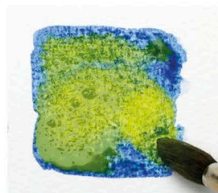
Mixing wet-in-wet onto the paper
Apply a wash of the first color to the paper. Add the second color while the first wash is still wet. The result will be a partially mixed color with a variegated appearance.



1—Apply first color



2—Add second color



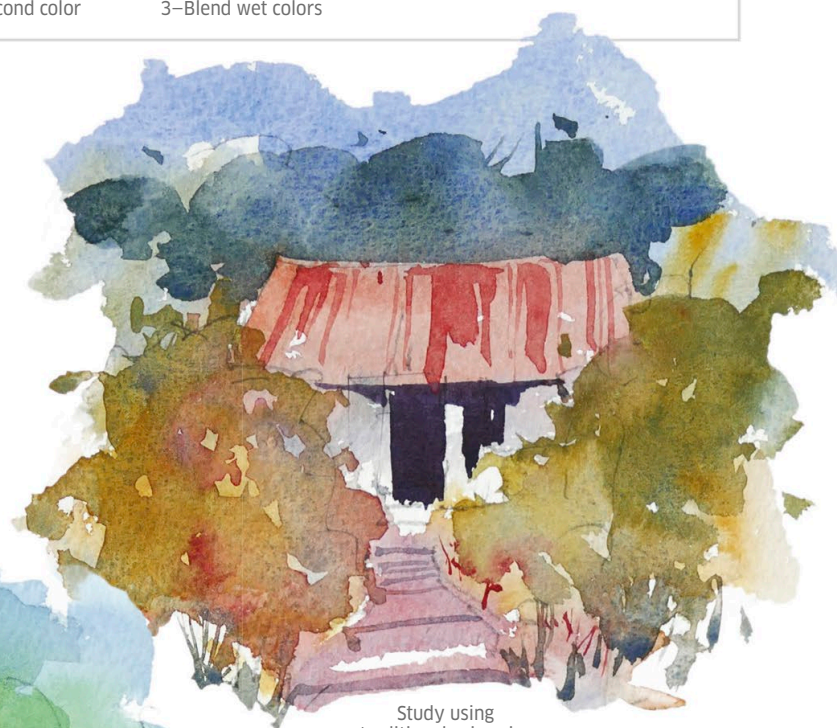
3—Blend wet colors



Produces variegated color

■ Mixing traditional primaries

This study of a house was painted only with the traditional primary colors of red, yellow, and blue. The secondary color mixes made with the traditional primaries look quite earthy and muted compared to those created by the modern primaries (see below).



Study using traditional primaries



Study using modern primaries

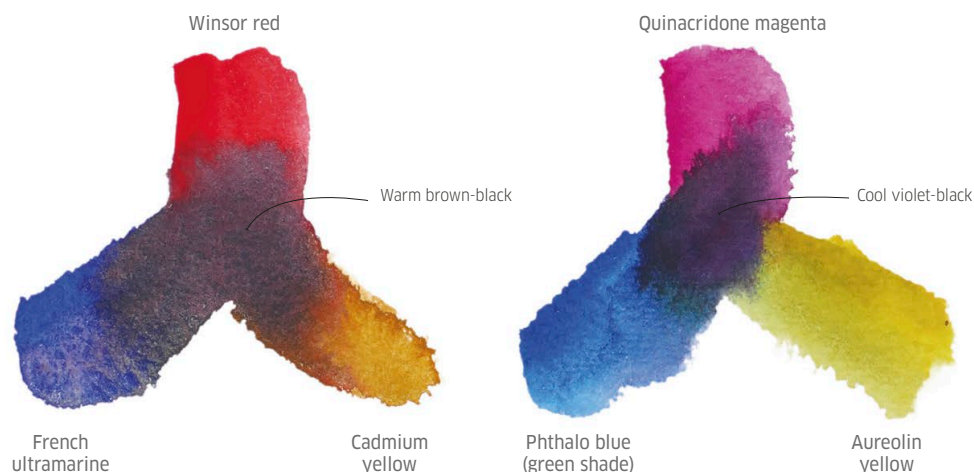
■ Mixing modern primaries

A trio of modern primaries was used for this study—magenta, yellow (aureolin yellow), and cyan (phthalo blue—green shade). The resulting secondary color mixes are vibrant but a little brash and unnatural compared to the secondaries created by the traditional primaries (see above).



Mixing three primary colors to create darks

Combining all three primaries together creates dark colors. The results are close to black, rather than pure black, and usually look less jarring in your painting than black paint. You can vary your choice of primary colors and the proportions in which you mix them to create a range of useful darks.



Traditional primaries

Combining roughly equal quantities of blue, red, and yellow creates a brown-black.

Modern primaries

In this mix, magenta and cyan (phthalo blue) dominate to create a violet-black.

Mixing complementary colors to create darks

Complementary colors sit opposite each other on the color wheel. When they are mixed together, they create a wide range of dark colors: brown, blue, gray, black. Many painters find this a better method of mixing darks than using primaries.

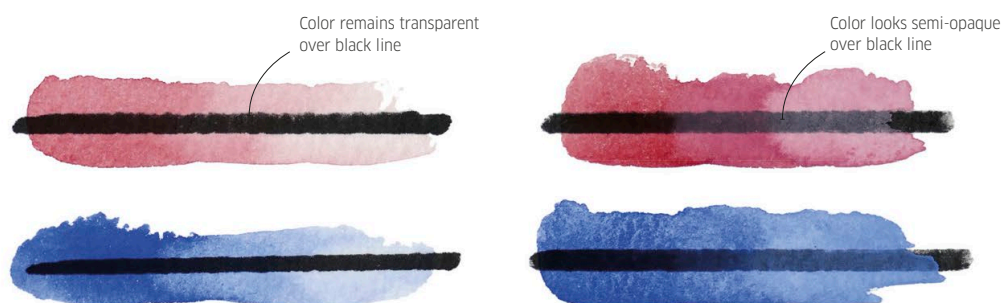
Combining complementaries

French ultramarine and its complementary burnt sienna (a dull orange) create a very wide range of darks. Phthalo green and magenta (substituting red) create cooler darks. Yellow and violet create a duller neutral that is less successful.



Lightening colors

In watercolor, colors are lightened by adding water to make them more transparent. Adding white paint creates pastel tones but also makes the color more opaque. Adding too much white can make colors look chalky.



Lightening with water

Diluting makes the paint more transparent; this allows the paper to show through, which lightens the color optically.

Lightening with white

Adding white changes the color and makes the mix more opaque. When the paint is well diluted, the opacity is not very noticeable.

■ Pigment staining and transparency

All pigments are staining or non-staining; and either transparent, semi-transparent, semi-opaque, or opaque. Manufacturers may classify similar pigments differently, so check when you buy. Staining pigments leave some color on the paper if you remove them. Opaque pigments become transparent when diluted, so you can mix them without fear of creating muddy colors.



French ultramarine (non-staining)



French ultramarine (non-staining)



Phthalo blue (staining)



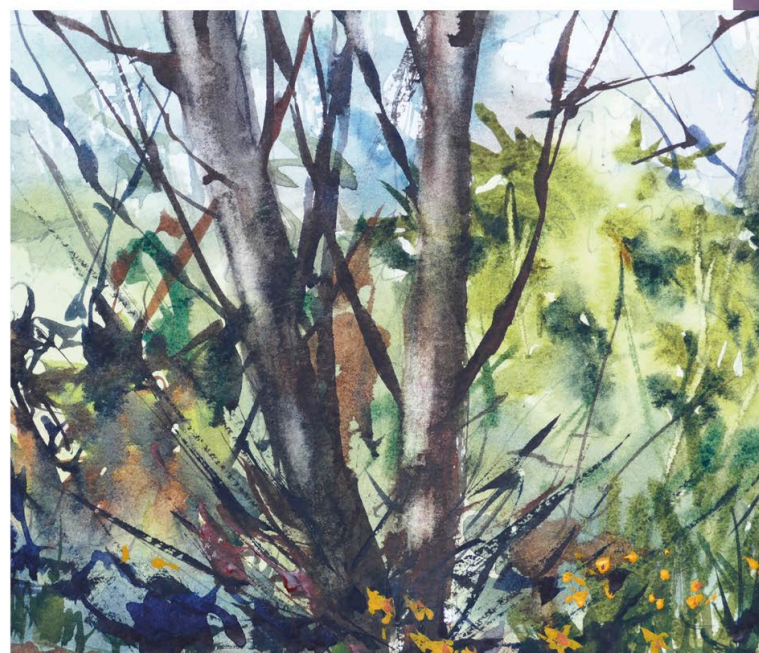
Phthalo blue (staining)

Staining – dry color

Dry paint swatches were wetted and scrubbed to lift out the paint. The staining pigment does lift out but leaves a little more color.

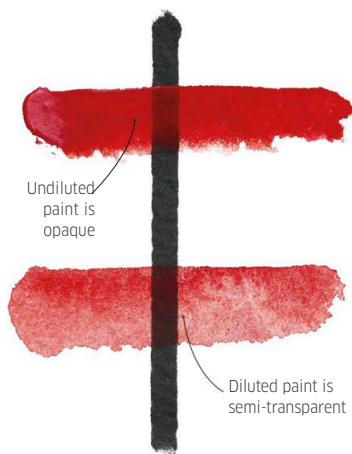
Staining – wet color

Wet paint was lifted from these swatches with a tissue. There is a slight difference between the staining and non-staining results.

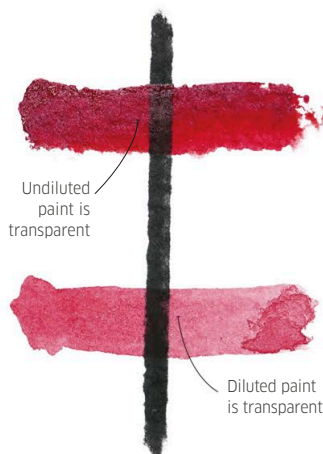


Lifting out staining pigments

Staining pigments can be removed enough to create highlights, as seen on the trunks of these trees.



Cadmium red (opaque)



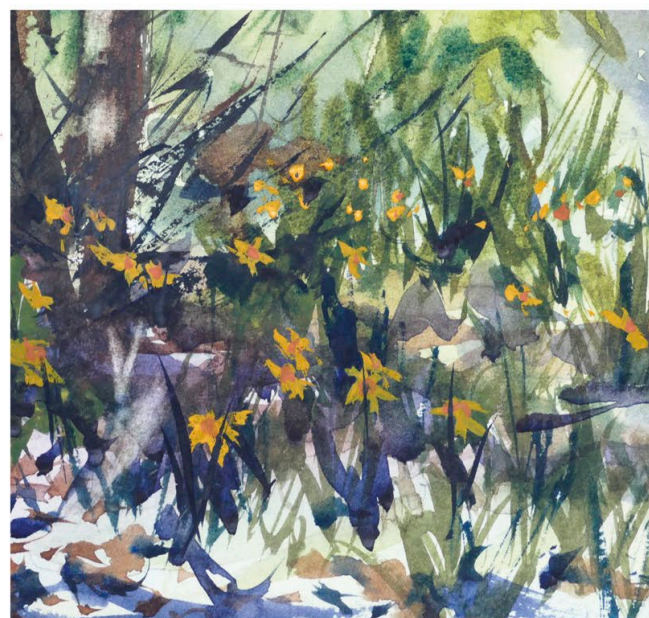
Alizarin crimson (transparent)

Opaque pigment

This color is opaque enough to cover black when it is undiluted but is almost fully transparent when diluted for washes.

Transparent pigment

Some colors are transparent even when they are undiluted. Transparent pigments remain bright when they are layered.



Using opaque pigments

One of the benefits of opaque pigments is that you can apply them over a dark background, as with the undiluted cadmium yellow used here to paint daffodils.

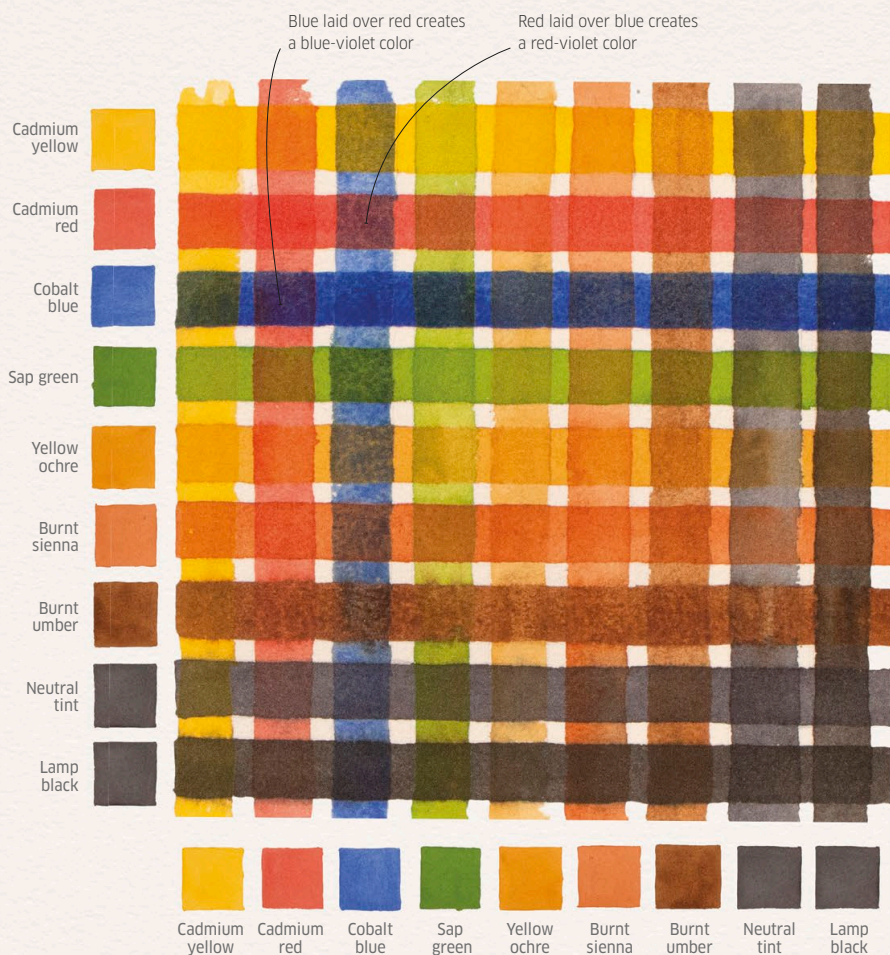
Color charts

PRACTICING COLOR MIXES

Making color charts is a great way to practice color mixing, and you can keep them as a reference for subsequent projects. You can mix watercolors by painting washes of color over dry layers (wet-on-dry), adding one wet wash to another on the paper (wet-in-wet), or mixing paints in your palette. Try making color charts using each of these methods so that you can observe the different results.

WET-ON-DRY COLOR CHART

In this exercise, let the first layer of colors dry before adding the second. Use all the colors in your collection; the chart below uses the colors recommended in the basic palette (see pp. 34–35).



You will need

- All the colors in your collection
- Medium-size round soft-hair brush
- Jar of water for rinsing
- Cold-pressed watercolor paper

1 Making a grid

Draw a grid on your paper in pencil, labeling all the columns and rows so that each of your colors is listed both horizontally and vertically.

2 Painting the lines

Paint the columns first. Once the columns are completely dry, paint the rows over the top. Aim for the same saturation level for each color.

3 Observing the effects

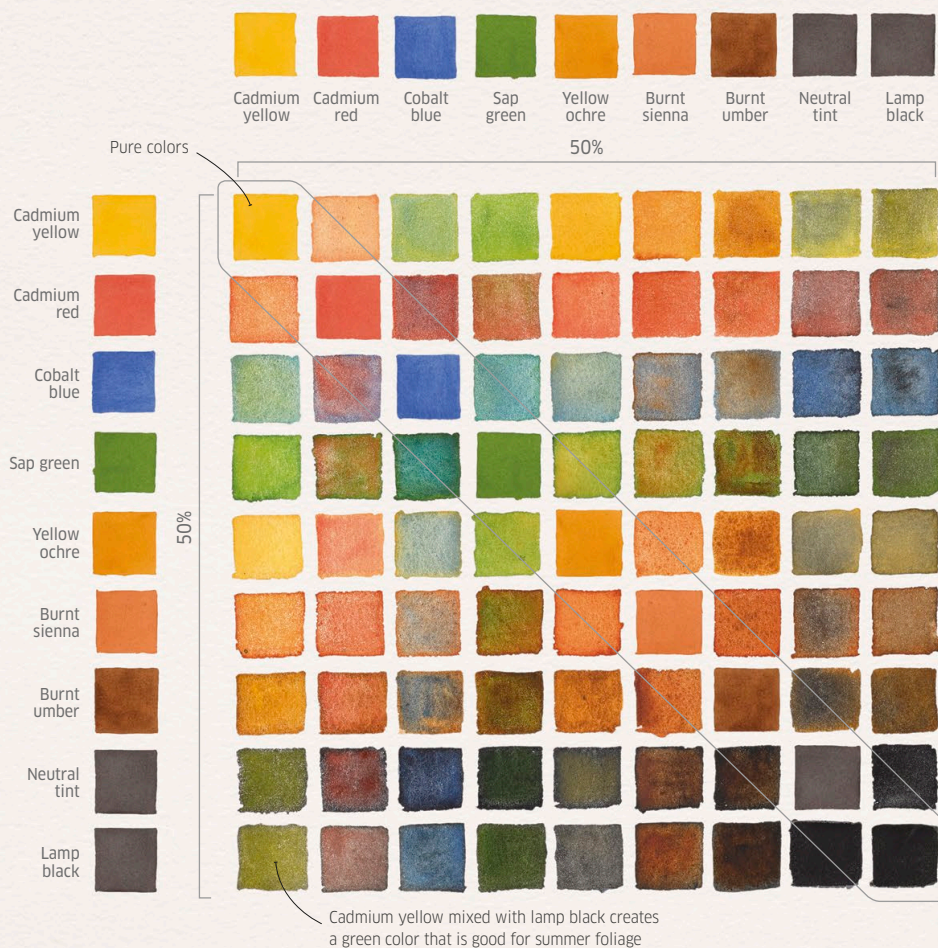
When the chart is dry, observe how the colors have been modified by layering. The effect depends on the hue, density of pigment, and order in which the colors were painted.

CHART OF COLORS MIXED IN YOUR PALETTE

This exercise involves mixing two wet colors together in your palette and painting them on a grid to record the result. Use all the colors in your collection. These charts show 50:50 and 70:30 ratio color mixes, respectively.

You will need

- All the colors in your collection
- Medium-size round soft-hair brush
- Jar of water for rinsing; jar of clean water for mixing
- Cold-pressed watercolor paper



1 Making a grid

Draw a grid with spaces to list each of your colors along the top and down the side of the grid.

2 Plotting unmixed colors

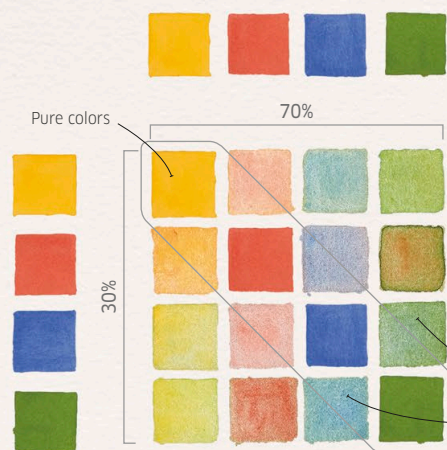
Before you begin mixing, paint pure colors on the diagonal axis, where the horizontal and vertical lines for each color intersect.

3 Mixing colors 50:50

Add equal amounts of two colors to your mixing well for a 50:50 ratio. Don't rinse your brush before picking up the second color; otherwise, your mix could be too weak and diluted.

4 Plotting mixed colors

Paint the mixes in their corresponding squares on the chart. Rinse your brush before creating each new mix. Let the chart dry and keep it for reference.



5 Mixing colors 70:30

Create other charts to see how changing the ratio of one color to another extends the range of hues you can mix. The chart on the left was created with 70:30 color mixes.

30% cobalt blue mixed with 70% sap green

70% cobalt blue mixed with 30% sap green

GREENS

Green can be a difficult color to mix successfully. For this reason, you may want to include several bought greens in your palette so that you always have a suitable green on hand.



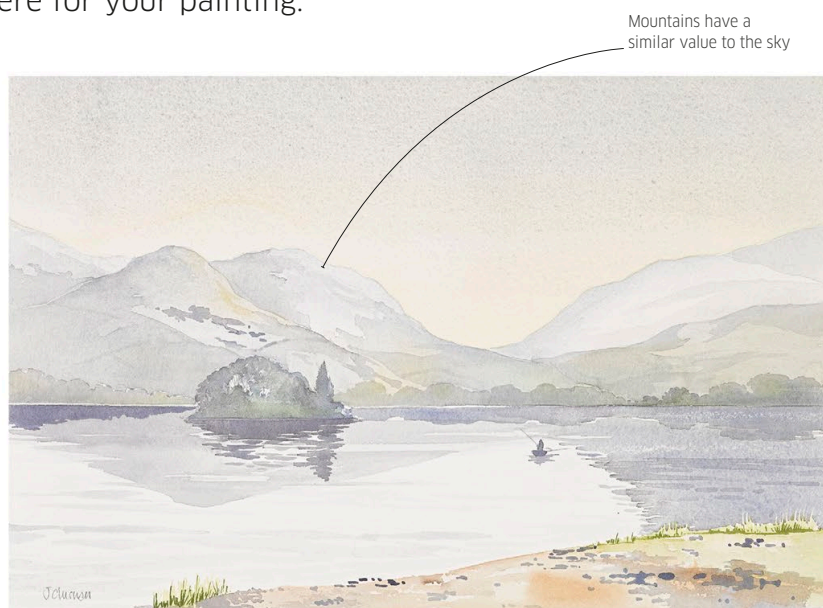
Value exercises

CREATING ATMOSPHERE AND FORM

Value describes the lightness or darkness of a color. With watercolors, this relates to the density of paint. Paint straight from the pan or tube is as dense as it can be and the darkest value for that hue. By adding more and more water, you can create lighter and lighter values. You can use variations in value to create form (see pp. 56–57), and to suggest an overall atmosphere for your painting.

■ Form and mood

You can use graduations of value to convey the form of a three-dimensional object by creating shadows, highlights, and a range of values in between. You can also use value to create atmosphere, and so evoke an emotional response in the viewer. For example, paintings with a narrow value range tend to suggest a soft or subdued atmosphere, while paintings with high contrast are generally more vibrant and upbeat.



Narrow tonal range

In this landscape, there is very little tonal difference between the different elements. The painting aims to evoke a quiet, reflective response in the viewer, which suits the peaceful scene.

Wide tonal range

This painting of a fishing village bathed in sunshine has a wide tonal range. There are strong contrasts in value between the dark shadows and bright highlights.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

These exercises, the first in black and white and the second in color, are a great way to come to grips with value. By starting off with simple value charts, you can practice creating individual swatches of value before blending them in a simple still life.



1 Black-and-white value chart

Draw a grid comprising five squares. Paint the darkest value first, using black paint straight from the tube or pan. Next, dilute the paint to create the middle box. It will then be easier to judge the value for the adjacent squares. For the final, lightest value, leave the paper white.



2 Graduated value chart

This time, draw a long bar with no segments. Load a no. 2 soft-hair brush with undiluted paint and block in one end. Apply water, a little at a time, and blend the paint from dark to light in a gradual transition.



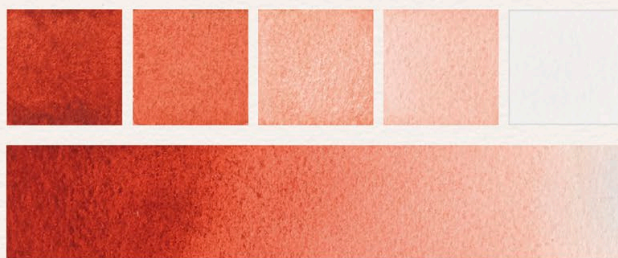
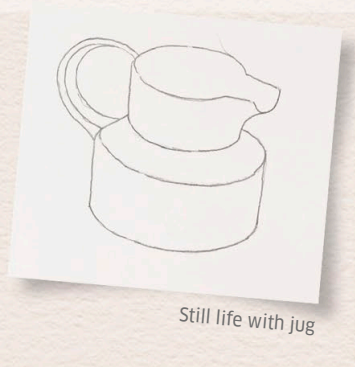
3 Black-and-white jug

Sketch a simple, curved object, such as a jug. Look at how the light falls on it, then, using a no. 4 soft-hair brush, apply values to create a three-dimensional effect. Use the darkest values for the shadows, gradually blending lighter values toward the highlights.

You will need

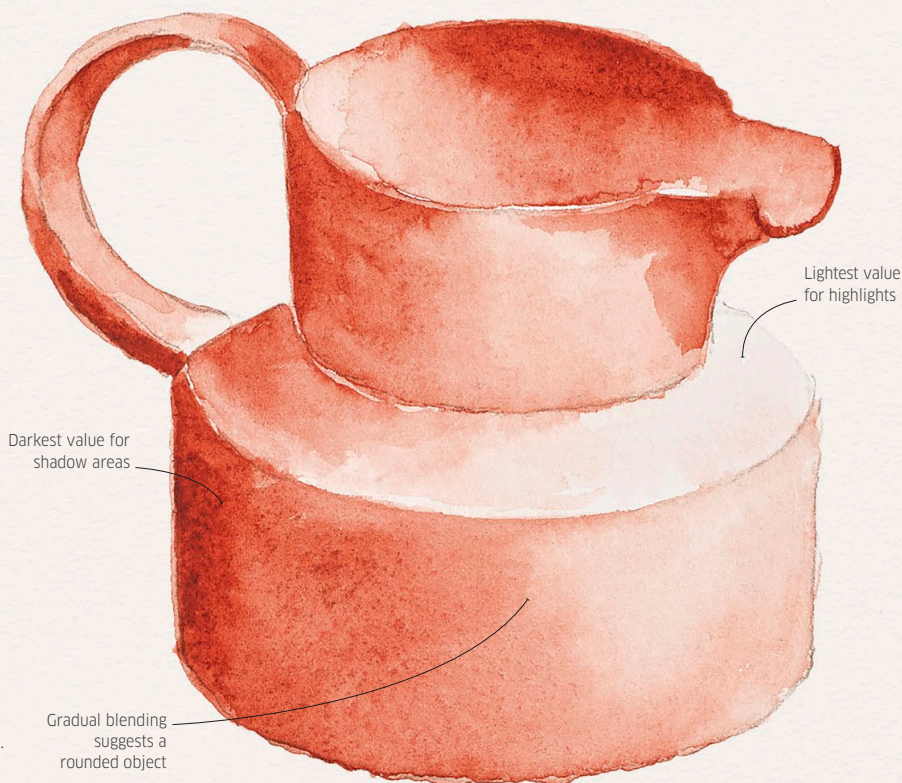


- No. 2 round soft-hair and no. 4 round soft-hair brushes
- 10 x 12in (25 x 30cm) rough watercolor paper



4 Color value chart

Repeat steps one to three but with a range of colors to test the density of different pigments. Here, brown madder was used.



Warm and cool colors

BALANCING COLOR TEMPERATURE

Colors have qualities that we associate with temperature—some colors, such as red, are considered to be warm, while other colors, such as blue, are cool. Using these traits can be a powerful way of conveying mood, depth, and harmony in your work.

■ Characteristics of color temperature

Visually, warm colors appear to come forward in paintings whereas cool colors appear to recede; this illusion is very useful for creating a sense of depth. Warm and cool colors are also associated with certain emotions, which you can use to convey mood.



Warm colors

Reds, oranges, and yellows are generally grouped in the warm half of the color wheel (see pp. 14–15). A picture painted mostly with warm colors suggests a happy or energetic mood.



Cool colors

Violets, blues, and greens are generally grouped in the cool half of the color wheel. Including a lot of cool colors in a picture suggests a calm or subdued mood.

■ Creating color harmony

Color harmony helps you to create visually satisfying pictures. Limiting your palette to a small range of colors, or using analogous colors, is one way to achieve a unified scheme. You can also use a common, or “atmosphere,” color throughout a painting to tie elements together. Balancing colors doesn’t necessarily mean using equal amounts of warm and cool—one can dominate while the other provides a pleasing contrast.

Atmosphere color

You can use one color as a unifying theme throughout a painting. In this painting, burnt sienna is used in various tones in the background, middle ground, and foreground to create a harmonized color scheme.



Balancing a cool scheme

This snowy scene calls for a cool, blue-toned palette, but the brown-gold trees and building in the background, and the bright pheasant in the foreground, provide some warmth for balance.



Balancing a warm scheme

An equal amount of warm and cool is generally unsatisfying, so in this painting the figures are mostly wearing warm yellows, oranges, and reds with only one or two cooler blues and violets.

