

Title: Watercolor Techniques

Age/Prerequisite: All ages, How to use a paint brush lesson.

Concept: Watercolors flow more freely than tempera and acrylics paints and require more control. Painting with watercolor is a quick way of working with paints. The colors generated by watercolor paints are transparent and unlike tempera paintings, the watercolor paints remain clear, glowing and vibrant even when the painting is dried. The following lesson gives some techniques to use with watercolor.

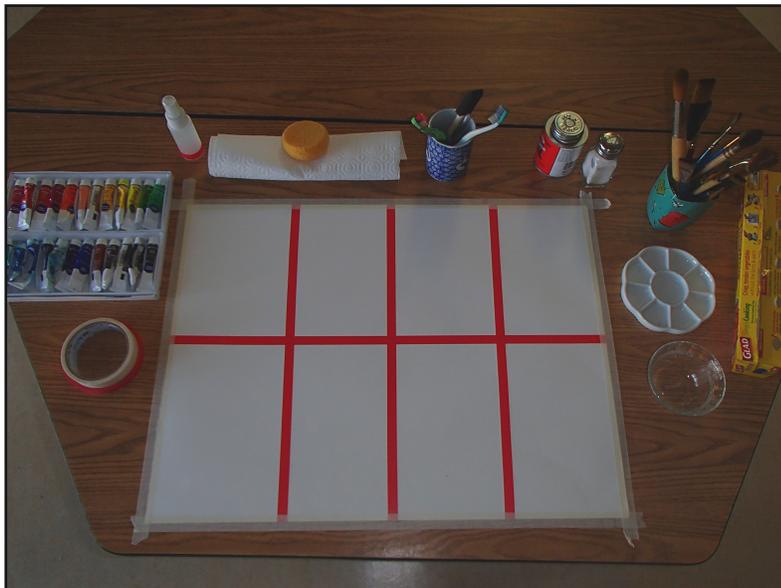
Materials: Watercolor tubes preferably, a variety of watercolor brushes including a dry brush, marked in some way to ensure they will only be used with watercolor, a palette, masking tape, small sponges, cotton tips, rubber cement, water container, salt, toothbrush, a brush holder, crayons, plastic wrap, and liquid frisket which is a masking liquid and can be used to mask off areas. Frisket is a yellowish latex based paint. It can be applied with a nib or a brush and it dries in seconds.

It is best to use paper that was meant for watercolor paints. Try out the various sheets of rough, textured papers on the market. Try out a few handmade papers that come in various weights, 200 lb. is a good starting choice. For many of the beginning projects, it is good to use a cheaper paper and tape it down to keep it from wrinkling.

Prints: Turner, Durer

Lesson:

“Today, we will learn some techniques on how to use watercolors. First, set up your painting station with brushes, watercolors, water container, sponge, paper towel, a piece of watercolor paper taped into several squares. Take a piece of paper and using masking tape, divide the paper into 6 to 8 squares depending on the size of the watercolor paper. Now, tape the watercolor paper to the table, this will keep it from wrinkling.”



“Now we are going to fill our palette with a few colors, You will only need a very little bit of paint in three of the depression on your palette. You can choose any colors you would like. We are using watercolor paint, so we do not need as much actual paint. Just put a dot of each color. (Demonstrate this as children tend to use large amounts of paint as they are use to tempera or acrylics.) Watercolor paints leave a transparent mark. This means the paint allows light to pass through. It is a fast medium and at times, you have less control; you have to go with what the paint is doing.”

Wet-On-Wet *“We are going to start in the first square with a wash. Washes are the primary tool of all watercolor, it really takes advantage of the transparency of the paints. The most common problem of a beginner is to not use enough water, so the wash comes up short. Also, be ready for the many accidents that will certainly happen with watercolor. Using a wide brush and plenty of water, brush freely across a square. Make sure you cover the square with strokes of just water. Try painting your strokes in the same direction. Now with a wet brush, dip it into one of your colors and paint a stroke on the top of the square, watching what happens to the paint. Experiment by pressing on the brush a little more heavily to achieve a gradual wash. Now add a bit more paint and drop it into the wash letting the water do the work. Experiment with color mixing right on the paper. The most important thing to remember is to have enough water.”* The children can do a square to experiment.



Wiping Out *“In the next few squares, we are going to try out a method called ‘wiping out.’ Because watercolor is inherently transparent, there is no white paint you can use except gouache, which is an opaque paint. So the artist uses a variety of techniques to*

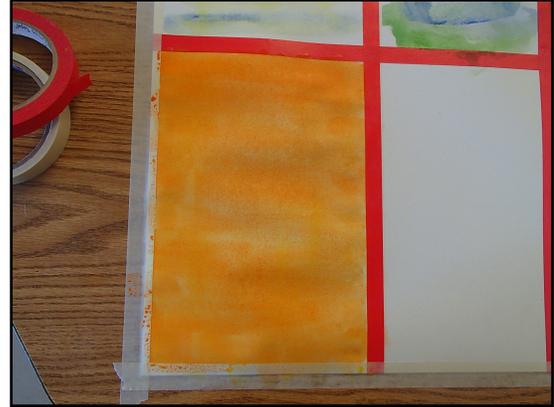
create the same effects: the simplest is painting around the spaces which are intended to be white and letting the paper work for you. The other is wiping out the paint using a brush, a sponge, a paper towel or a cotton-tip. We are going to try this by painting the next square in a wash of any color. Remember the key is to use the right amount of water. Then, using your sponge, paper towel or cotton tip dab off the paint or lift the color off the paper. Experiment to see how each tool works. In the third square, make a design using the masking tape, rubber cement and liquid frisket. Let the glue and frisket dry before painting over with the watercolor paint. After the paint is dry, rub off the rubber cement gently. You can also paint over another color that has been painted on once it is dried. You can add some stripes of masking tape and paint over what you have already painted. You can also do a quick drawing with crayon and paint over it. The wax in the crayon stops the paint from absorbing into the paper.”



Dry Brushing “Another technique is called dry-brushing and you need a stiff bristle brush or a large dry brush. First, paint the square a solid color. Begin by loading the dry brush with a medium amount of pigment and as little water as possible. Now, move your arms in large sweeps; this gives the paint time to fade out gradually so that each stroke is more textured. Try two colors and move in different directions.



Layering or Glazing “This is another technique used with watercolor and it takes time. Many artists use this technique such as Durer and Turner. A layer of wash is painted on the paper and allowed to dry before the next layer is painted on top. The second layer can be a different color. This contributes a shadow of its color to the whole, which gradually builds up.”



Stippling “Dot stippling is done by painting or spotting with a brush in a regular manner. Color flecks and dots mix optically to produce tones; so the colors mix in your eye and not on the paper. Another type of stippling is called spattering and it can be done with an old toothbrush. You need to make sure your working space is clear and that you have tried the technique on scratch paper to see how to control the paint. Make sure the paper is flat and mix fairly thick paint, dip the toothbrush in along its length and then, holding up a card along the line you want to keep free of the dots, flick your thumb against the bristles. It is better to go lightly at first and repeat the process. Practice on one of the squares. You can use your paint brush by flicking it also.”



Salt “Adding salt to watercolor creates an interesting texture. First, paint a square with ample color. Then, add some salt and watch what happens. The salt will absorb the water and pigment leaving an interesting texture.”



Plastic Wrap “To use this material lay down a wet wash as strong as you like. Lay on a sheet of plastic wrap and crumple it. Let it dry in place, or remove it after a few moments.”



This exercise is to expose the children to the materials and to the many ways it can be used. There are a few extensions for creating projects with certain techniques, but the children can now use the technique that works best for their ideas. They can come up with their own techniques as well. When they see what is possible, they are excited by what they can do with the materials.



Evaluation

“What techniques were the most exciting to you?”

“How do you think you will use the techniques in your own work?”

Extension: Painting Trees with Watercolor

Materials: Pictures of trees of all different foliage. You can find these in magazines or online. Small pieces of watercolor paper, or one large piece depending on the child's preference. Watercolors, (tubes preferably,) a variety of watercolor brushes, marked in some way to ensure they will only be used with watercolor, palette, masking tape, small sponges, cotton tips, rubber cement, water container, salt, toothbrush, a brush holder, crayons, plastic wrap, toothbrush, liquid frisket.

Have a group of pictures of different kinds of trees with a variety of foliage patterns.



“Using what we just learned, we are going to do a series of mini-paintings finding the best technique for each tree. This is an exploration which can give you ideas to use in

your own creations. Choose a picture of a tree and looking at your watercolor chart decide which technique would work best for that tree. You can do a light sketch or start painting if you feel that a better way to get the technique you want ”



Evaluation

Hang all the results and discuss how they used the various techniques or what they made up their own. This is an exercise that they can use to do a landscape on their own.