MODULE 3

The Watercolor Workshop

Application Techniques

What is explored in this module?

In this module, we'll look at a several common techniques for applying watercolor to a surface. Twelve techniques are covered in this module, however an endless number of techniques could be used in a painting. You are only limited by your imagination and how willing you are to "break the rules".

The polarity of water makes watercolor painting a truly unique medium. The polar bonds that are found within the water molecule result in a painting medium that cannot be completely controlled. Ironically, it is these polar bonds that result in a wider variety of techniques.

For many, it is the uncertainty - the spontaneity of the medium, that is most attractive.

Common Application Techniques

Flat Wash

Flat washes are used for developing a solid area of color.

The area is first washed with clean water.

Color is evenly applied while the surface is still wet using either horizontal or vertical strokes.

The result, when dried, is a solid area of color.

Common Application Techniques

Gradation

A gradation or gradient can be created to transition from one color to another, or from concentrated color to less concentrated color.

Again, the area is first washed with an application of clean water.

Color is applied in a higher concentration at first and then allowed to become less concentrated to create a transition.

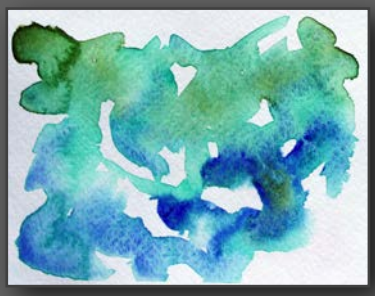
The result, when dry, is a transition of color.

Wet on Wet

Applying wet color to a wet surface can produce a variety of interesting patterns and color mixtures. Some control is sacrificed using this technique.

Clean water is first washed into areas where color is desired. The color applied will stay within the confines of these initial applications.

Wet watercolor is added. The pigment will be pulled by the water on the surface creating patterns and mixtures.



The result, when dry, produces a variety of patterns and gradations of color.

Common Application Techniques

Wet on Dry

Perhaps the most common application technique is applying wet watercolor onto a dry surface. In this case, we are applying it over a solid area of dry color.

Wet watercolor is applied over a dry surface. Brush strokes are easily controlled.

Watercolor is transparent, so the colors underneath will show through.

Wet on dry results in clean edges and defined brush strokes.

Dry Brush

By absorbing some of the water from the brush prior to applying color, a variety of textures can be created.

Color is first wiped away from the brush using a paper towel or a rag.

With less color on the brush, the surface texture or "tooth" of the paper plays a role in the resulting stroke.

Different brush types will produce different textures. Experimentation is encouraged.

Common Application Techniques

Dry on Wet

A “dry” brush can be used on wet surfaces. The color stays where applied but edges are blurred as some “bleeding” occurs.

A liberal wet application of color is applied.

A dry brush is used to apply color while the surface is still wet.

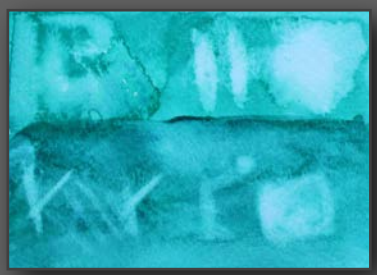
The result, when dry, is defined brush strokes with soft edges.

Lifting Color

Color can be removed or “lifted” after it has been applied. This technique can be used to fix mistakes, lighten values, or create textures.

Water is applied to areas that are to be lifted. Heavier applications of water will “lift” more color.

Color can be removed using a brush, paper towel, cotton swap, or any other absorbent material.



The areas where color is lifted are lighter and less intense. The resulting texture will vary depending on the material used to remove the color.

Common Application Techniques

Applying Salt

Salt can be applied to wet applications. As the paint dries, the salt will soak up the water and along with it, the color.

Salt is applied to areas that are wet. Table salt or sea salt can be used. (Sea salt will soak up more color.)

When dry, the salt is removed using a finger.

This technique produces interesting textures that can be used for many applications.

Scumbling

Scumbling occurs when a dry brush is used over areas of color. The color underneath shows through affecting the perceived color/value of the area.

A dry application is applied over an area of color that is completely dry. The application does not fully cover the color underneath.

Textures can be varied by using different types of brushes and concentrations of color.

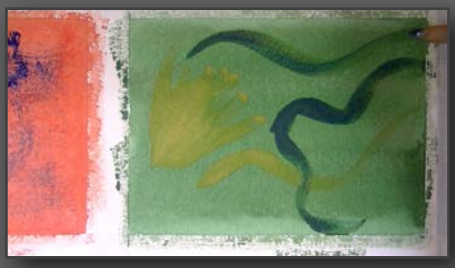
Textures and color variations are produced by this technique.

Common Application Techniques

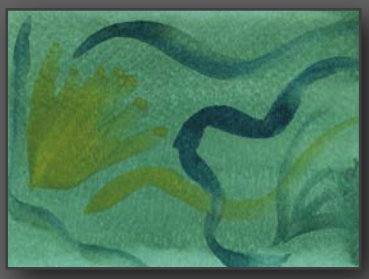
Glazing

Wet, translucent washes can be applied over areas of color that have completely dried. Colors underneath visually mix with the colors layered on top.

Translucent washes are added over a solid area of color.



Multiple layers can be applied, allowing each layer to dry before the next layer is added.



Layers of colors visually mix which can lead to complex combinations of color and depth.

Using a Sponge

Textures can be created by applying the color using a sea sponge. The resulting textures are organic and can be used for a variety of applications.

Color is applied by dabbing the surface with a sponge loaded with color.

The texture of the sponge plays a role in the resulting textures and patterns.

The resulting organic textures can be used for creating foliage or interesting textures and patterns.

Common Application Techniques

Scratching/Indenting

The surface of the paper can be manipulated to affect the resulting mark. Paper can be indented to “pull” color into the grooves, or scratched away to allow the color of the paper to show through.

Any tool that can be pressed into the surface can be used to create indentions while the surface is still wet. The grooves produced will pull the water and pigment creating heavier concentrations of color in these areas.

A sharp tool can be used to scratch away the surface of the paper allowing the color of the paper to show through. Be careful not to cut through the paper.

The result of manipulating the paper can produce variations in value, color intensity, and texture.