

UNDERSTANDING WATERCOLORS

Drawing is the Basis

Watercolor, the name tells us what this medium is all about, is color pigments that can be soluble in plain Water. Now unlike Acrylics (or water-soluble Oils) that are also soluble in water, once watercolors dry can be reactivated with water also, acrylics once they dry they are permanent. Another aspect of the watercolor is that it is transparency or translucency; in other words, you can apply a wash over a dry painted surface and the background color will still can be seen. This ability of the watercolor could be very advantageous when we are trying to create some effects in our pieces. Now, there are some watercolor that are opaque, which means that the translucency is inexistence or very limited to the amount of water added.

We can't treat watercolors like we paint with Acrylics or Oils... In Watercolor we need to go from light to dark, because once the color is set in the paper, to introduce lightness into it, is extremely hard and sometimes impossible. Now we can lift pigment after been applied by scrubbing with simple water in the brush, but this technic could damage the surface of the paper and if that happen the art is completely ruin. Believe me, it has happened to me more than once. In my younger years, like over 40 years ago, my mother set me up with an Oil Master that use to live in Puerto Rico at that time and I spend some years studying, later in my teens I studied acrylics and that was my prefer medium till 2006... And I discover the Magic of Watercolors and since then I was hooked.... And believe me Watercolor is totally different and unique, and I love it.



So, in simple words I can tell you that Watercolors takes more planning than with any other medium I have used. That means that Drawing is an important aspect, or step, when you want to adventure into the world of watercolors. Yes, I use the word WORLD, because watercolor is a complete separate medium that does not have any association to any of the other mediums, watercolor has his very own classification... Or like the YouTube artist, Steve Mitchell, that has named his channel: "The Mind of Watercolor". I really believe that is a brilliant way to explain watercolor, because looks like watercolor have a mind of his own. By the way, I do encourage you to see his videos in YouTube, if you are very serios on learning watercolor technics. He is "superb".



Now you can do what Steve calls: "Spontaneous Watercolor Painting", and He is a master of this technic; which simply means that you just start to place washes and manipulate the medium without a define drawing behind it. Something like painting Abstract with Acrylics or Oils. Personally, this technic is difficult for me to handle, just because I am a natural planner, as an accountant, my mind is been train under the planification rule of thinking. I need to plan in order to achieve anything. I am a firm believer that without planning there is no way you can be ready for the inconveniences that life will bring you down the road. And believe me, Inconveniences and bad moments will come without no doubt. So, a piece will have much more probability

of ending wrong if you do not plan your path into it. I am not saying that those who wants to do the Spontaneous Watercolor Technic are wrong; I am just saying that is not for me.

Now, based on what I have already said, drawing is an important step to watercolor painting. By having a detail drawing, not pressing your pencil marks way too hard over the watercolor paper, is the way to get the idea ready for coloring. One thing that many artists do is the use of the transferring technic of the drawing to the Watercolor Paper either using a light box or by simply tracing the drawing into the watercolor paper. Let me explain....

Because the watercolor paper surface has a sizing that can be damage in the drawing process just by using way too much the erasing of lines and shadows to correct, is much better and safe first to draw in a sketch paper the idea. Once the drawing is finished to the point of our satisfaction, then we proceed to transfer it to the Watercolor paper. I use a light tablet that I have purchased on eBay...



I place my drawing over the surface of the tablet and the Watercolor Paper on top of it, use masking tape to fix both to the surface of the tablet and turn the light. I can see now the drawing through the watercolor paper and I start to trace very softly the drawing into the watercolor paper. With this technic I can avoid significantly the use of erasing over the surface of the watercolor paper. Believe me. I have done it, every time you erase over the watercolor paper some of that sizing is damage... I have notice that Arches is one of the toughest and best paper in the market, and still with too much of erasing it can be damage. Also, when you use a 100% cotton paper, the watercolor just flows the way it should be...

I have heard many saying that tracing is a way of cheating in art. I tell you all, tracing is a fantastic way to train your hand in the aspects of drawing. Remember that drawing is an act of connecting what your brain is interpreting through the eyes into you hand. These needs practice over practice, and over practice. By tracing what you want to draw, unconsciously you are making the right connection between the Brain and your hand, your extremity is being train to follow the instruction of the brain. So, tracing is not cheating is just an important tool for your drawing training. Once you have practice enough your drawing skills, then is time to enter into the color theory, but that will be another blog to discuss. But Drawing will not only bring you knowledge on the figure, but also on light and shadows... So, by mastering the drawing your knowledge of values and tones will dramatically increase and it will be easier to understand the implications of light, shadows, tones and values into the Color world.

One thing we need to understand is that art, any kind of art, requires intention, information, training, practice, but above all requires to be persistence and a desire that burns your emotions and thoughts. You know, only humans are capable to produce art. Animals cannot, because art requires emotions, logical way of thinking, and things that only humans are capable of experiencing. So, a chimp can imitate somethings, but will never be able to perform art, never less to enjoy art like we do. I know that many believe in the THEORY of evolution and really think that we are close related to primates, but evolution is simply a theory that have never been totally proven and never will be; the link between

primates and human do not exist, only in the minds of those who wants to undermine the Creator. But this is a discussion for another day and another forum.

Obviously, everything I have written on this blog is my very own ideas and experiences on my journey in Art and especially into the use of Watercolor as my prefer medium of art expression. Watercolor actually have provided me with experiences that other mediums never did. I simply can set up my watercolor station anywhere, with a minimal amount of supplies and just my hands, I can seat anywhere and anytime an do my art... Watercolor is freedom of coloring expression in the palm of my hands. But, I AM NOT A PRO, I am and always will be an amateur in the learning process.

Watercolor is an exiting adventure into Colors, so simply start to do it and do not worry of what others think or say... Is your adventure, enjoy it and HAVE FUN!!! Every time you take the brush and start spreading the watery colors on the paper, you are expressing your soul's desires and the Creator's Gift of ART in to your Life. Be Happy and ENJOY. And be a part of Doodlewash site, is a dramatic help to develop your skills because it pushes you to discipline yourself and to do art every day... Remember practice over practice, and more practice will bring you the improvement you are looking for. And the information you can access in Doodlewash is simply amazing, and all related to that thing we love the most – WATERCOLORS.



UNDERSTANDING WATERCOLORS

The Basics of Colors and Mixing



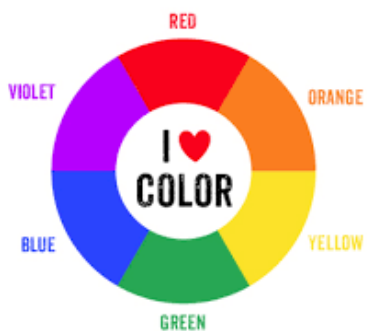
I am not going to start talking about the chemistry, or the pigments specs of the colors just because we are not scientists, we are just regular people that love to do art. So, I will start by telling something that you should already know. The 3 Basic Colors where all the others will come from are: Yellow, Red, and Blue. I can't get more basic than this... Now there is an App for android phone that I download, that is simply an amazing help on this matter. Real Color Mixer, you can download it for free and if you want to purchase it to avoid ads and do some other stuff, the cost is only \$2.99. But you can create your palette, which I suggest: Yellow, Red, Blue, White, Black; and start mixing colors right on your phone and save the results for later use. It's a good tool and I recommend it.

But for now, here is the Basics:

Yellow with Red = Orange in equal amounts. The more yellow the more yellowing orange and the more red into the mixture the more reddish orange.

Yellow with Blue = Green in equal amounts. The more yellow the yellower green we get, the more blue the bluer green we get.

Red with Blue = Violet in equal amounts. The more red the more reddish violet, and the more blue the bluer violet we get.



So, Orange, Green and Violet are considered then secondary colors, and Yellow, Red, Blue are the Primaries.... And we can mix also the secondaries and get other colors; like Green with Red will give us the Brown tones, and when we add blue to these brown tones we have created we have greys....

The most amazing grey I have achieve is mixing the Brown Sienna (which is like a reddish brown) with the Ultramarine Blue; and just add a touch of Chinese

White to dull it a little bit. But we need to be very careful when mixing colors, because we can create a muddy color mess that will destroy your intentions... It has happened to me more than once. So, one thing is the Theory and another is our reality when we are mixing. I always start with just a little and built from there, little by little, observing what is going on in my mixture. Also, when mixing your colors, try to have a white background, either a white plastic tray or a porcelain one. I just love the porcelain because it does not stain like some plastics do. The problem is that Porcelain Pallets are normally expensive

when we compare to plastics. But I have found that Hobby Lobby have these Master's Touch Porcelain little pallets, that have 7 cavities to mixed for under \$8.00, so I bought 2 of them... These are my mixing porcelain pallets. For just minor mixings I use plastic ones and because they are so cheap, normally I replace them every time I needed to. Also, another great tool I use a lot as a reference is the Color Wheel, and you can get it almost anywhere. This tool is full of information and great visual examples of what you should get when you mix colors.

One thing we need to understand is that we will have a variety of blues, reds and yellows in our pallet. So, Cobalt Blue and Lemon Yellow will give us a different type of green than the Ultramarine Blue with Lemon Yellow... So, I always test my mixtures on pieces of watercolor paper that I have prepare just for testing, before I use them into my art piece. I always test, because is totally impossible to hit the exact same mixture all the time unless you use a more precise method of measuring then your hands and eyes; so, I always recommend to test on a paper the mixture you have created. When I tape my watercolor paper into my board I always tape also a strip of paper next to it... That way I will always test my color before place it on my art piece.

Now, returning to our color theory theme, the secondary colors will be the complementary colors to each one of our primary colors... The complementary color for red will be green, for blue will be orange and for yellow will be violet (purple). The complementary colors are used in art to create vibrant contrast, also when a color look to loud in paint, you can knock back the color by mixing it with the complement to the point that will neutralize it. Mixture of complementary colors will produce neutral colors, by theory you can knock back a Green that is too harsh by adding a little Red, or vice versa.

How to set up the Paint Palette could be difficult, especially today, because there are a vast variety of color choices in today's market. Manufacturers has come with ready mixed colors that could make the life of artist easier, but also can confuse the beginner on the selection of colors to choose for his basic palette. My suggestion to this problem is to start with the basics and then you will add variety to your palette as you discover limitations in your mixings. But remember that from the primary colors you will need a minimum of two of each: Red, Yellow and Blue.

My Suggestion: Cadmium Red Light, Deep Red, Alizarin Crimson, Cadmium Orange, Yellow Deep, Lemon Yellow, Yellow Ochre, Yellow Green, Hookers / Sap Green, Ultramarine Blue, Protohalo Blue / Cyan, Purple, Brown Sienna, Brown Umber / Sepia. I will add the White, A little Mars Black, and Payne's Grey. Obviously, that's my choice of pallet, but I do believe that this will brings a good basics to the painters need.

All paint manufacturers produce color charts to help you make choices. These charts can be very useful, but remember that printed colors are slightly different from the real pigment color inside the tube or the pan. So, always is a good practice to see the actual color to make decisions, especially with watercolors, the colors could look very brilliant when they are wet but believe me, they will turn lighter once they dry.

In order to lengthening a color, is not that hard to do, you just add water into the puddle color and test on a paper until you see the intensity you desire. If I want to obscure the

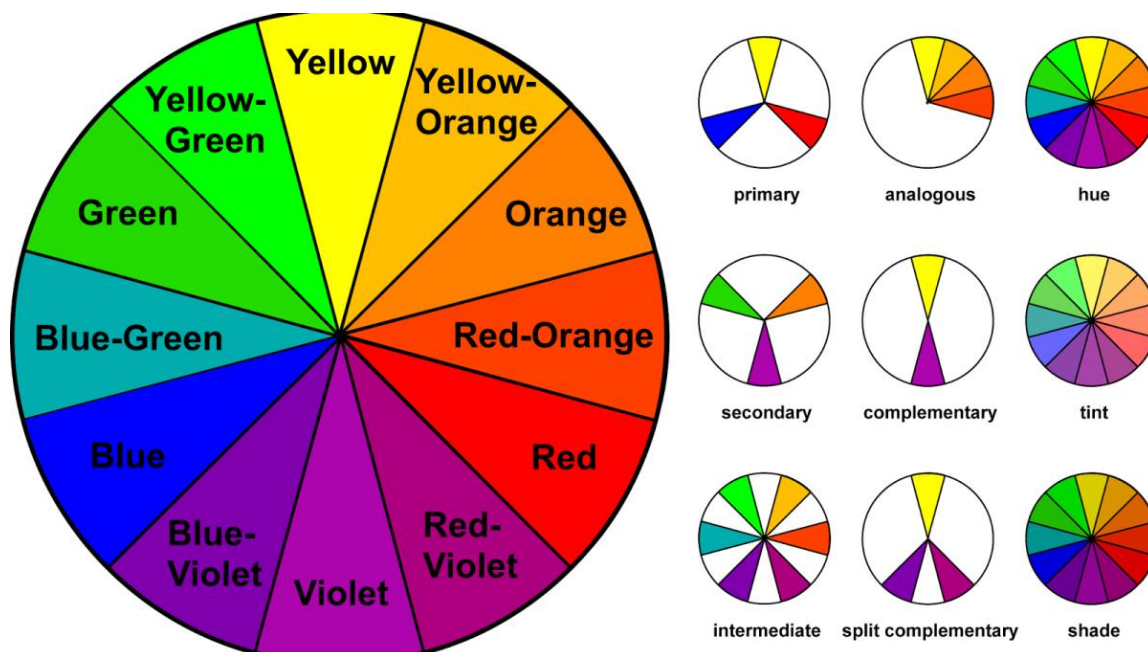
tone of a color I will never use black, instead I use Payne Gray or Sepia on my mixing, remembering always that water will soft the intensity of the pigment. The uses of Black not always work the way we expected because it can change the hue of the color. For example, Yellow and Black will generate some kind of Olive-Green, while white added to Red will generate a Cool Pink. So be thoughtful of this when mixing. For example: Lemon Yellow, which is a pale tone of yellow, can be use with darker reds to lighten the red. And yellow by itself can be darkening by using one of the browns.

You need to remember that watercolors are transparent by nature, so if you use them over other color that is already dry, you will have an extraordinary effect, that what we called darkening by overlapping. Many artists use this technique very often.

Painting is a journey through experiences, so take your time and enjoy every moment of it. Watercolor is a medium that need to be paint step by step, Wash over Wash, building up the art from the light to the darkest. It's wise to wait until the first washes to dry before adding other washes or other color into it, unless you are trying to get a special effect by mixing colors right into the paper while painting. But you need to be careful with this because you can end up creating a mud. And also, when adding extra washes on top of others, be gentle because you might end up lifting what you have already painted. But one of the most important things you need to remember with watercolors is that the color that you just applied will end up lighter when its dry...

Above all the information and knowledge we can acquire on Color Mixing, the most important thing I have realize that helps me the most, has been developing Patience in my art stile. I always will take my time and will not let impatience to rule in my art. Art is a process of creativity and should be slow and smooth, it should be joyful and full of peace. Most of the times I love to play some classical music in the background to ease my mood and my temper, it has helped to the process more than I can explain.

Color Mixing and understanding will come with practice, and will also bring you to the point of improving your art in general. So, don't worry too much, by making mistakes we learn, by continuing practicing we master our technique... Paint and Enjoy the journey.



UNDERSTANDING WATERCOLORS

Handling Painting

Don't matter what other people say about watercolor, the medium is not an easy walk in the forest... I have worked with Oils, Acrylics, Pastels, Color Pencils; but watercolor is not so easy, but once you understand it and learn how to work with it instead of pushing your way, is not that hard and literally is a lot of FUN. Yes, Watercolor sometimes could be unpredictable and could give the impression that it has a mind of its own, but in reality, the issue is that water is the essence of the medium.

I remember that my Grandfather told me long time ago: "Mankind can change the course of a river, but when nature decided to, it will turn back to its original course with a quake..." And is true, Water will always flow following the path that offers the less resistance; and we need to remember this basic law of physics to understand the medium. So, when you are applying a Wash, if you do not want the water to run down to fast on you, then be sure to watch the inclination of the board where the paper is taped. I always place my paper almost flat on the desk when applying washes, with just a little inclination so that the water flows slowly and with some kind of control.



Another thing is that I always start to paint with light washes, and then applying a little darker wash where is necessary, always once the original wash is dry. Sometimes I will not wait to the wash to dry just because I want to mix colors over the paper instead that in the pallet. But we have to be careful with this, because is easy to create a MUD color y we are not careful. Now, once the basics of my painting are laid out in various washes, where the basic values pf the painting are already in place; now is the time for details.



With a set of smaller (specially kolinski sable) brushes, I start detailing the painting, and normally I take my time on this. One thing I like of these brushes is that they hold a lot of water and pigment, which give me the ability to work the details with ease and care; and on this process I use mostly numbers 0,1,2,3 and in some cases I might go to the 6th, but rarely. I do have some brushes 00 and 000 that I will use for very fine detailing. Now when I am sketching, normally I am not so detailing in my painting...

The main problem with watercolor is that once you have placed the dark colors in, is extremely hard to introduce a highlight over it. Sometimes when I need a minor highlight I can use Titanium White gouache, sometimes I will a White Pen to do the marking. But, even with these technics will take multiple passes because when the highlight dry, they

will merge with the dark color if you have not let the dark to dry complete. Now if I need a larger area to be in white, like when working with skies, I will be sure that these areas will not be touch by a color, or sometimes I will use the Masking Fluid.



When using the masking fluid, we need to be sure that the paper we are using is strong enough to handle it, because some papers will be damage by the masking fluid. Another thing to remember is that applied we need to wait until it dries... then you the area and wait to the paint to dry totally before out the masking fluid. You can use the tip of your finger to out, but be gentile in the process.



once is
will paint
taking
take it

I have found that watercolor is a fun medium that when you understand it properly, you will be able to amazing technics with it. Also, the transparency of the colors it brings a beautiful brilliancy to the art piece. You can tell just by the way I express myself about watercolor that I LOVE It. Even dough it could be frustrating sometimes, I will never call it frustration, I do prefer to think that is just another learning opportunity that the medium is providing me, and enjoy the ride.

Remember that not all the time we will have masterpieces in our hands, many times we will not be too satisfied how the piece has turn to be. Never dispose a piece of art that you have notice that did not came out the way you expected. Is part of your learning process and you should keep them for future references, so write notes on the back of what you have done during the process of producing the art piece and save it. Down the road you will experience the same situation and you will have a way to explore your past notes and visualize what was wrong before... That's the way of learning this medium and any other medium alike.



So, just Learn and Enjoy the process of mastering watercolors, it's an exciting journey.

Walt.

