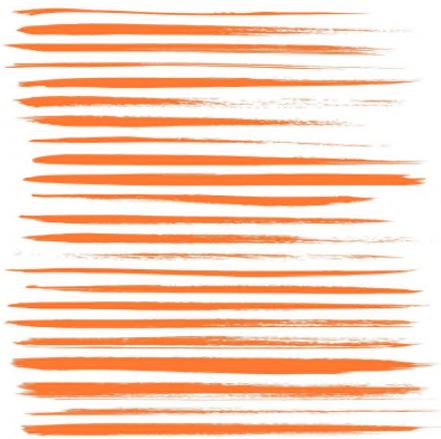## Basics of Watercolor Painting

"Drawing is the mother of Painting" – Most watercolor artists draw a picture of what they want to paint first. With watercolor paint, you must think before you paint, because once you apply certain watercolor paint colors, they cannot be removed from the canvas.

Some artists use the "grid method" of transferring and/or enlarging photos or drawings to a piece of drawing paper first, while others draw directly onto the canvas.

There are two different ways to apply watercolor paint to the paper.

Painting Wet-on-Dry: The term wet-on-dry simply means that wet paint is applied to dry paper. This method is to make sharp edges and fine detail.

Painting Wet-on-Wet: The term wet-on-wet means that wet paint is applied to a canvas that has been wet down and this method means that the colors will spread into one another, with soft edges and blending.

Watercolor Paper

There is a difference between the two sides of a sheet of watercolor paper, with one side usually slightly smoother (less textured) than the other. The smoother side of a paper is better for painting a lot of detail, while the textured side is better if you're wanting to build up color by using use lots of layers.

Watercolor paper can be bought in "blocks", which are where all papers are stuck together into one block of paper. After you paint, you remove the painting from the block. Paper can also be bought in separate sheets, and these sheets must be "stretched" before you can paint on them. If you paint on an unstretched sheet of watercolor paper, it will curl up like a leaf. After a paper is stretched, it will stay flat and rigid after it has been painted on.

Any paper less than 300# weight is bound to warp so using a 400# weight paper is best. To "stretch" (or actually shrink) the paper, soak the paper in a pan of cool water for several minutes until the corners are limp. The corners of the paper should easily bend when the paper is ready. Lay the wet paper on a clean board and gently smooth the paper to remove any excess water. You can then staple this paper every 2 inches to a base, such as a piece of plywood. Or you can use butchers tape to tape the paper to the board. The size of the board should allow at least 4-6" of exposed board around the edge of the paper. It takes about 8 hours for a paper to dry completely.

Beginning Watercolor Techniques

When painting with watercolors, you always start with light colors and then introduce dark colors as you go. Painting is done in layers. If you want to save space as white paper, you can use dish soap and masking fluid. This will prevent any watercolor from penetrating the paper. You peel it off when you are done.

Prepare for painting by putting a small dab of tube paint on the pallet. Use the center of the pallet to mix a small amount of the paint with water. Keep adding water until you get to the desired shade.

You must let the paper dry after applying the watercolor, so that you can build up layers of color and also so that you can paint fine lines. "Glazing" is when you paint a transparent layer on top of a dry layer. A watercolor painting can be a combination of wet-on-wet (diffused colors) and wet-on-dry (fine edged lines) techniques, as shown below.

Painting with Watercolor Paints:

There are warm and cool colors of watercolor paints. Warm colors are usually used for summer and warm scenes, while cool colors are used for winter scenes.

Warm Colors	Cool Colors
Cadmium Yellow	Cobalt Blue
Cadmium Red	Cerulean Blue
Alizarin Crimson	Winsor Green (BS)
Permanent Rose	Winsor Yellow
Olive Green	Viridian
Permanent Sap Green	Payne's Gray
Yellow Ochre	Winsor Violet
Raw Sienna	French Ultramarine
Burnt Sienna	Ivory Black
Burnt Umber	
Winsor Blue (GS)	

Watercolor paints are made from either natural pigments found in the earth; clay, minerals, etc., or from synthetic pigments, which have been finely ground down and then held together with a water-soluble based "gum" binder.

Transparent is just as the word describes. Transparent watercolors allow the light to shine through to the watercolor paper and in turn lets the white of the paper reflect back. These pigments are light in texture. Some transparent and semi-transparent colors are Scarlet Lake, Cerulean Blue, Raw Sienna, Rose Madder Genuine, Cobalt Blue, Viridian, Hooker's Green (H), and Sap Green (H).

Opaque colors block the light from coming through to the watercolor paper. Instead, the light bounces off the pigment. All cadmiums are opaque. Some opaque and semi-opaque colors are Cadmium Yellow, Cadmium Orange, Cadmium Scarlet, Cadmium Red, Cobalt Violet, French Ultramarine Blue, Horizon Blue, and Manganese Blue (H).
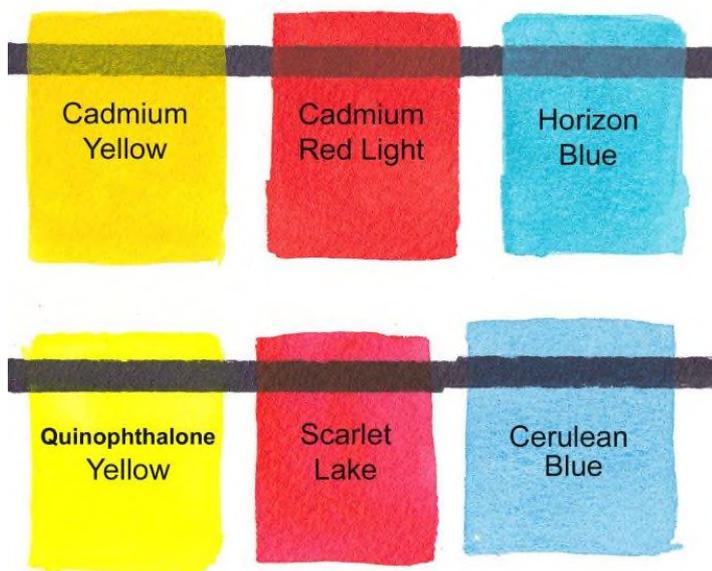
A way to tell if a paint is transparent or opaque is to draw a black line with a permanent marker. Then paint on top of it.

If the paint seems to be on top of the black line (top row) it is opaque.

If the paint does not affect the black line (bottom row), it is transparent.

Non-Staining and Staining

Non-Staining watercolors will settle on the surface of your watercolor paper after the water has evaporated. These colors, once dried, allow you to lift the pigment off the surface to reveal the white of the paper underneath.

Staining watercolors will immediately absorb into the first few layers of the watercolor paper before the water has had a chance to evaporate. These colors, once dried, are difficult to remove from the paper. Examples of staining colors are Winsor Yellow, Scarlet Lake, Winsor Red, Permanent Alizarin Crimson, Winsor Violet, Winsor Blue and Winsor Green.

How to Grip Your Brush – The Classic Grip
The Classic grip for holding a watercolor brush is much like the way you hold a pen or pencil for drawing. The only difference being that you grip the brush further from the end.

Technique to Lift Wet Paint

- Wad up some tissues and use them to dab and blot up excess paint.
- Use a natural sea sponge to dab excess paint for a different texture.
- Paper towels give a more angular texture as you blot the paint.
- A rinsed clean and blotted dry brush can be used to remove color.
- Spray water to wash away areas of color.