NEW!

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO

WATERCOLOUR

LEARN TO PAINT WITH CONFIDENCE



STEP-BY-STEP PROJECTS

Simple techniques for great results

KELSEY media
9 772753 675002 01
£9.99



CAPTURE MOVEMENT AND ATMOSPHERE



CREATE MOOD AND DEPTH



BRING COLOUR AND DETAIL TO LIFE

CANSON®

MANUFACTURE DEPUIS 1557



SAUNDERS
WATERFORD SERIES

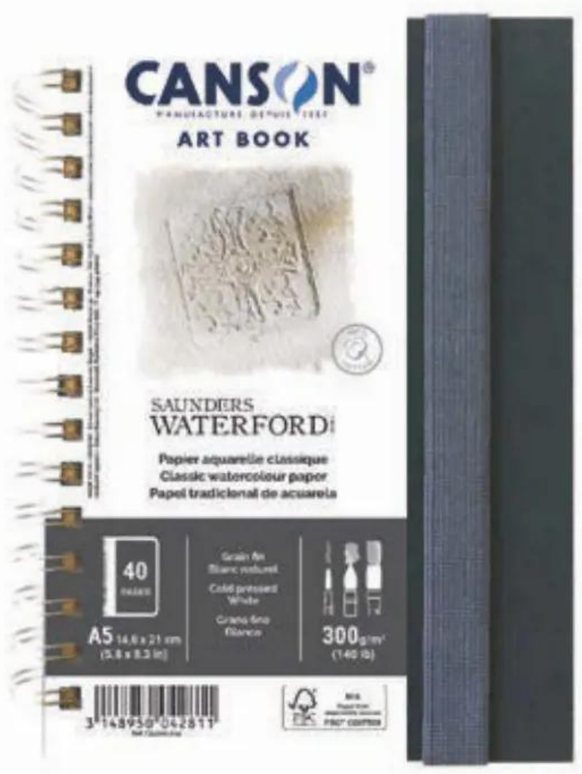
CLASSIC WATERCOLOUR PAPER

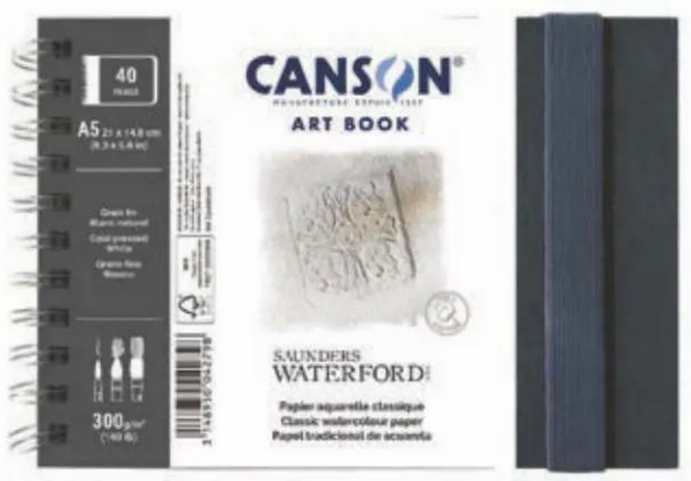
Canson x Saunders Waterford Art Book

Canson and Saunders Waterford have teamed up to create this exclusive Art Book.

It contains an exquisite watercolour paper, endorsed by the Royal Watercolour Society. It is traditionally made using 100% cotton.

Give free rein to your imagination with the watercolour art book.





INTRODUCTION TO WATERCOLOUR









Explore colour, texture and technique with the step-by-step projects in this book

Watercolour has a long and fascinating history, with artists using pigments mixed with water for thousands of years. The medium became increasingly popular in Britain during the 18th century, particularly for landscape painting. In 1781, William and Thomas Reeves introduced improved watercolour cakes, helping to make ready-prepared paints more accessible to artists. These were the forerunners of the watercolour pans we use today.

Watercolour paint is made from finely ground pigment mixed with a water-soluble binder, usually gum arabic. Other ingredients may be added to improve the paint's consistency, stability and handling properties. Some manufacturers use honey to help keep their paints moist and easy to rewet.

Water is the key to watercolour painting. Even slightly tinted water can muddy your colours, so keep a supply of clean water to hand. Learning to control the balance of water and pigment is one of the most useful skills you can develop. Adding more water dilutes the paint, allowing the white paper to show through and giving watercolour its characteristic luminosity. Applying wet paint to damp paper, known as wet-in-wet, produces soft edges and flowing washes, ideal for skies and atmospheric backgrounds. Painting on dry paper, or wet-on-dry, gives you greater control over edges and details. Watercolour can also be combined with ink, pencil and other media to create exciting mixed-media effects.

Whether you prefer loose, expressive paintings or a more detailed, controlled approach, watercolour offers endless possibilities.

In this book, we'll guide you through the essential materials and techniques before helping you put your new skills into practice with step-by-step projects. Experiment, enjoy the process and don't worry about making mistakes – every painting will teach you something new.

CONTENTS





Getting started

5 Choosing your paints

10 Understanding colour

14 All about brushes

18 Choosing your paper

20 Drawing made easy

22 Tone and contrast

24 Water control and washes

26 Understanding composition

28 Perspective made simple

Essential techniques

30 Granulation explained

32 The art of negative painting

51 Mastering masking fluid

57 Create texture with watercolour

83 Create texture with salt

Step-by-step projects

34 Sunlit grapes

38 Wildflower meadow

42 Artichoke

46 Blood oranges

52 Autumn leaves

58 Pheasant feather

62 Pansy pals

66 Spring blossom

70 Rose hips

74 Crossing the square

78 Old buildings, Fivizzano

84 The tool shed

Reference

94 Watercolour SOS

98 Watercolour A-Z







Pans are convenient and perfect for travelling

Paint

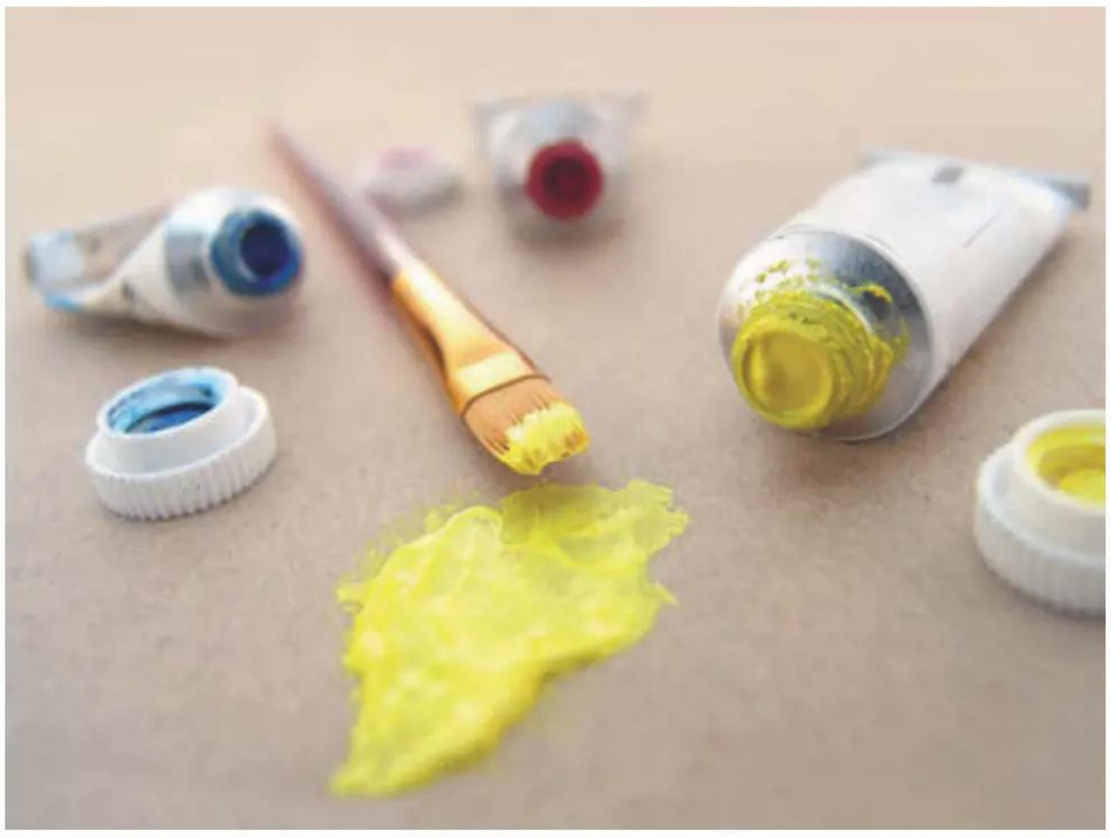
From the intensity and simplicity of colour, to the spontaneity of the results, watercolour is renowned for its versatility. However, there are many terms, features and qualities that can make it tricky to pick the right paint for your style

When you're starting out with watercolours, one of the first things you'll notice is that there are different ways to buy paint: tubes or 'pans'. So, what's the difference and which should you choose?

The good news is there's no hard and fast rule – it's down to personal preference. You can opt for either tubes or pans exclusively, or you can mix and match, depending on what works best for you.

Tubes

Watercolour paints in tubes are soft and moist, making it easy to mix generous quantities of colour for large washes. They are particularly useful when you need plenty of paint quickly, although pans can produce equally vibrant results. The most popular tube sizes are 5ml and 14-15ml.



Tube paints can be used straight away or squeezed onto a palette, left to dry and reactivated with water whenever needed. The consistency will vary with different pigments and brands but, on the whole, you can use the paint with very little added water for intense colour, or dilute it to create lighter, more transparent washes.

Small amounts can be squeezed out onto a palette and used while the paint is still wet, but there's very little waste, as you can let the paint dry on the palette and reactivate it when you need to simply by adding water with a damp brush.

Pans

Pans are convenient and perfect for travelling, as you can choose your favourite colours and put into a small travel pan palette box ready for use. Watercolour pans are typically sold as half-pans (approx. 19x15x8mm) and full or whole pans (approx 30x19x10mm).

Watercolour pans are made by filling small containers with paint and allowing it to dry. Some are filled in several stages, while others use formulations designed to remain slightly moist. The way a pan is made affects

how readily the paint reactivates with water, but both hard and softer pans can produce excellent results. Some colours may remain a little tacky due to the paint's formulation. A damp brush can be used to activate dried watercolours or pans, or you can add a little water to pre-wet the colours for faster loading of the brush.

Make your own

You can make your own pans by squeezing some paint from a tube into an empty pan. This is ideal for making your own travelling sets with colours you regularly use, rather than buying a pre-made set. You may find that some pigments will dry differently to others. This is because pre-made pans often have a different formulation to the tubes, depending on the manufacturer. Tube paints may contain ingredients such as glycerine or honey to help retain moisture and improve handling. Some colours may remain slightly sticky when dried in a pan, while others can crack or shrink. Test a small amount before filling an entire pan.

Over-drying and cracking, not evenly levelling in the pan, or separation from the binder can also happen. It's good practice to test with little dots of colour on a plastic surface to see which colours dry as you need them to for travel. These differences can affect how readily the paint reactivates, so it's worth testing individual colours before making up a travel palette.

Watercolour sticks are watercolour in a stick format. They can be used like a crayon directly onto the surface or wetted in the same way as you would a pan, by wetting your brush and lifting directly from the stick. Have fun and shave bits of colour onto a wet surface and see the effects. Because the sticks contain watercolour paint, they can be used alongside traditional pans and tubes to introduce different marks and textures.

Pigments

Pigments provide the colour in watercolour paint, while a binder, usually gum arabic, holds the particles together and helps them adhere to the paper. A paint may contain one pigment or a mixture of several. Single-pigment colours are particularly useful for mixing because their behaviour can be easier to predict, but multi-pigment paints can be equally valuable.

Different manufacturers use different recipes and pigments within colours, so many artists like to source the pigment information about their colours rather than rely on the name of the colour alone.

What are single-pigment paints?

As the name suggests, single-pigment paints contain just one colour pigment, rather than a blend of several. They are popular with artists who enjoy mixing their own colours, as their behaviour is often easier to predict.

Single-pigment paints are useful for colour mixing, giving you greater control over the results, but multi-pigment colours have their place too and can be just as valuable

However, multi-pigment paints have their place too. Many convenient ready-mixed greens, greys and special-effect colours contain two or more pigments. Mixing several colours together can sometimes produce dull or muddy results, particularly when they contain pigments that neutralise one another, but this isn't inevitable.





The pigment codes on this tube reveal that the paint contains three pigments: PY3 (yellow), PG36 (green) and PBr25 (brown), rather than a single pigment

To find out what's in your paint, look for the pigment codes on the tube or colour chart. These usually begin with P, followed by a letter indicating the colour family and a number, such as PB29 for Ultramarine Blue.

What is a 'hue'?

When you see the word 'hue' in a paint name, it usually means the colour has been formulated to resemble another pigment or traditional colour, but uses different pigments to achieve a similar appearance.

There are several reasons for this. The original pigment may be expensive, difficult to obtain, toxic or no longer manufactured. Modern alternatives can offer improved lightfastness or more affordable colours.

A hue isn't necessarily inferior to the original. Some modern substitutes are excellent paints in their own right. Check the pigment information and lightfastness rating rather than judging a colour by its name alone.

Lightfastness and permanence

Both terms indicate the longevity of the paint within your painting. Lightfastness, as it sounds, measures the level at which a colour will fade or discolour as a result of exposure to natural sunlight. Permanence describes how well the paint retains its original appearance over time, including under different environmental conditions.

Not all manufacturers have both these ratings, but instead choose to test on just one. You will see these measures on colour charts and paint tubes.

You may have heard people saying they won't use certain colours because they are 'fugitive'. A fugitive colour is one made from a pigment that is susceptible to fading or darkening over a short period of time when exposed to natural UV light and other environmental factors, like temperature and humidity.

Modern pigments can provide more lightfast alternatives to traditional colours that are prone to fading. For example, some manufacturers offer permanent alternatives to Alizarin Crimson and Gamboge. However, the names alone are no guarantee of permanence, so always check the manufacturer's lightfastness rating.

Transparency and opacity

Transparency describes how much of the paper or underlying paint remains visible through a layer of colour. Transparent watercolours allow light to pass through the paint layer and reflect from the paper, helping to create luminous washes. Opaque colours scatter or block more light and can obscure what lies beneath, particularly when applied strongly.

There are generally four measures of how opaque or transparent a colour is:

TRANSPARENT
SEMI-TRANSPARENT
SEMI-OPAQUE
OPAQUE

What is a staining colour?

Some watercolour pigments are more difficult to remove from paper than others. These are known as staining colours. They tend to remain embedded in the paper fibres, making them harder to lift once dry.

Lifting is a technique used to lighten an area, correct a mistake or create highlights. It involves gently loosening the paint with a damp brush or sponge and blotting away the colour.



Non-staining colours are generally easier to lift, while strongly staining pigments, such as many phthalocyanine blues and greens, can leave a noticeable trace. The results also depend on the paper, the strength of the wash and how long the paint has been allowed to dry.

Manufacturers often indicate staining properties on their colour charts. For example, Schmincke uses triangular symbols to distinguish non-staining, semi-staining and staining colours.



Above: Schmincke's HORADAM watercolours use triangular symbols to indicate staining properties: Vermilion Light (non-staining), Scarlet Red (semi-staining) and Cadmium Red Medium (staining)

Lifting preparations applied to the paper before painting can make some colours easier to remove. Adding gum arabic may also affect how a wash handles and lifts, but neither method guarantees that strongly staining pigments can be removed completely. Always test the effect on a spare piece of paper first.

Granulating watercolours

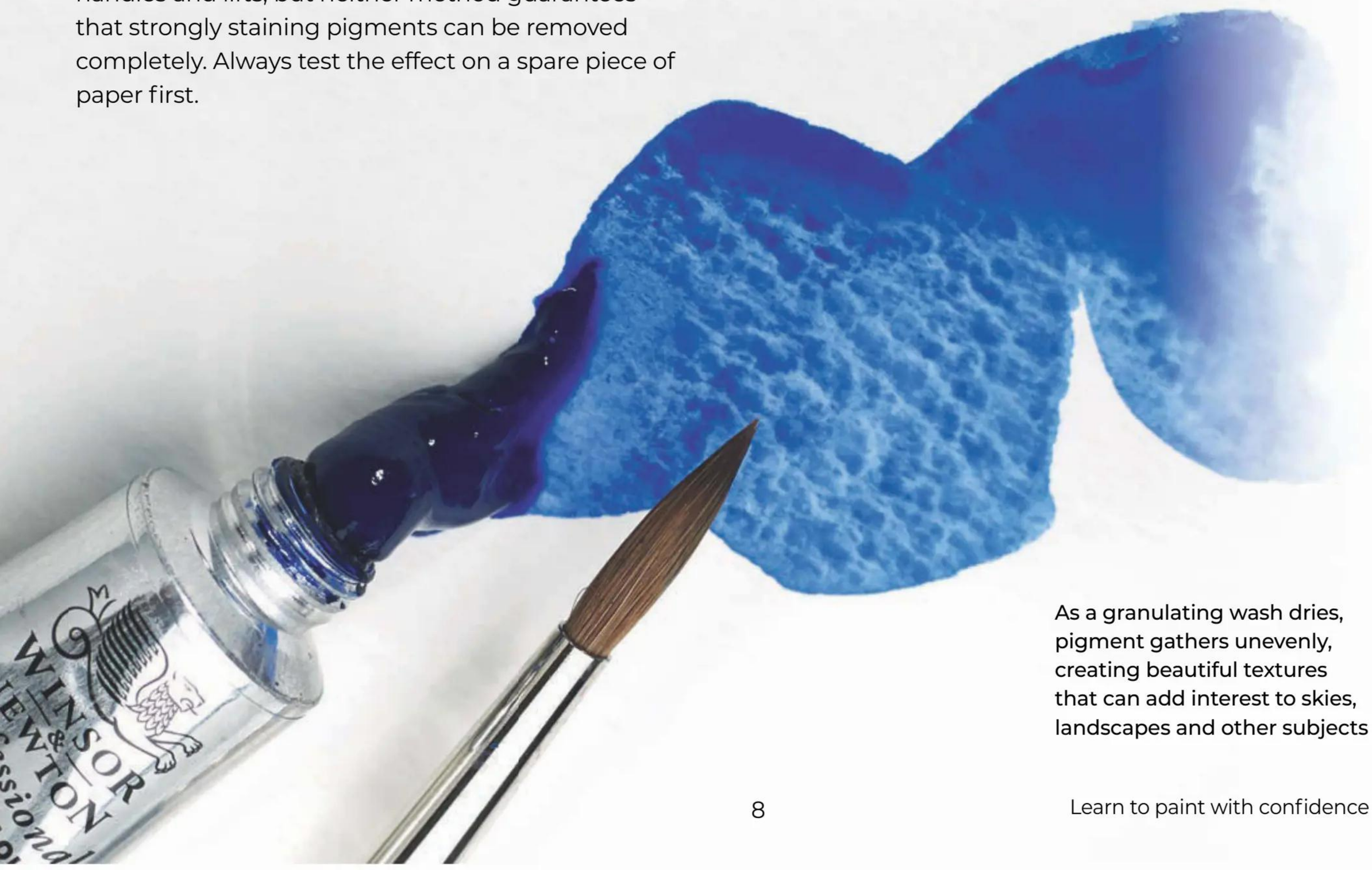
Some watercolour paints produce a distinctive grainy or mottled texture as they dry. This is known as granulation and is particularly useful for suggesting stone, foliage, skies and other textured surfaces.

Granulation occurs when pigment particles settle or gather unevenly as water moves across and into the paper. The effect depends on the pigment's physical properties, the amount of water used and the texture of the paper.

Some pigments naturally granulate more than others. Ultramarine Blue, Cerulean Blue and many earth colours are familiar examples, although behaviour varies between manufacturers and formulations.

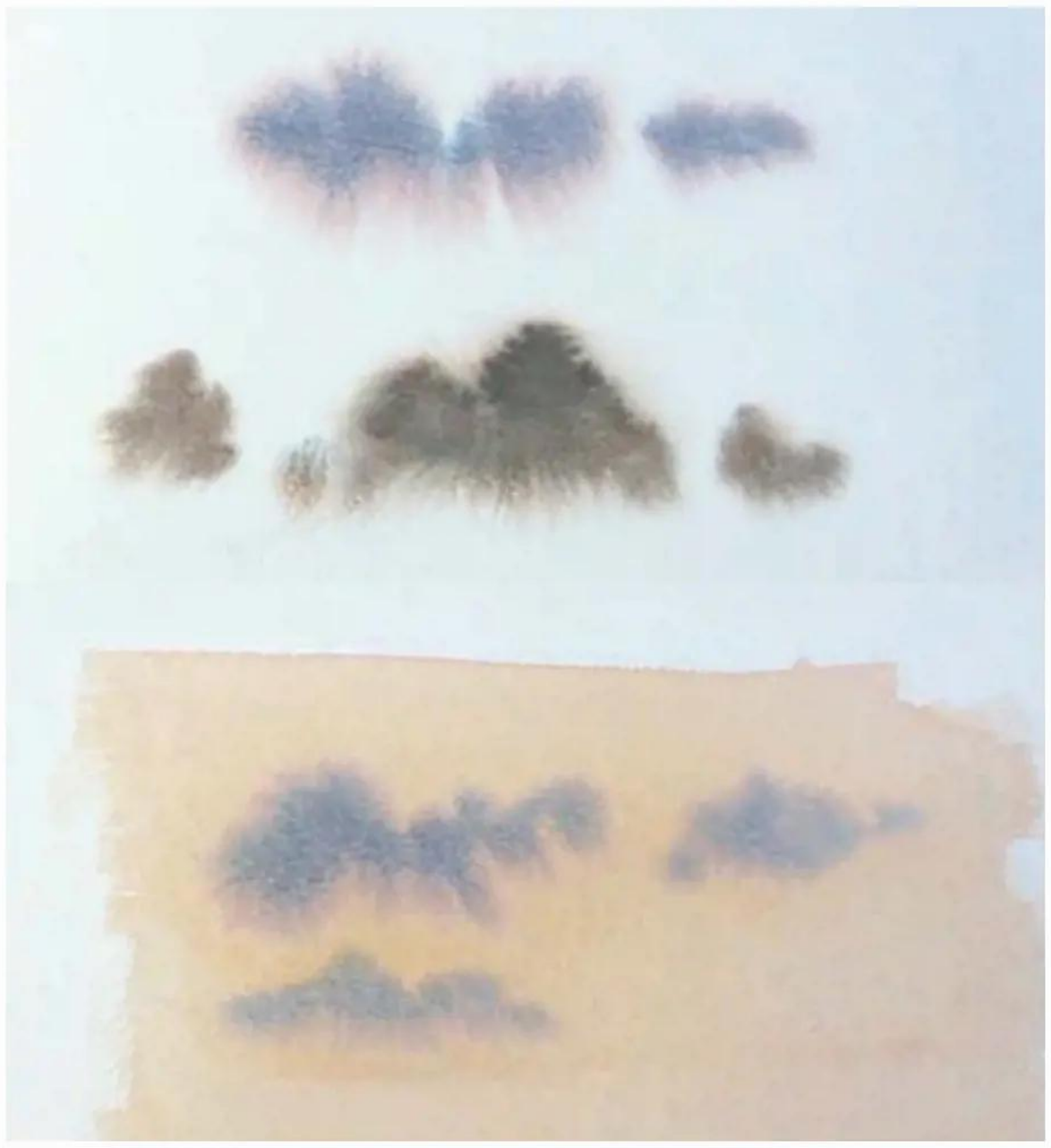
Granulation is often more noticeable on textured watercolour paper and in generous washes. Special granulation mediums can also encourage or enhance the effect.

Try making swatches of different colours on smooth and rough paper to see how their textures vary.



As a granulating wash dries, pigment gathers unevenly, creating beautiful textures that can add interest to skies, landscapes and other subjects

Supergranulating colours



Top: A mixture of Cerulean Blue and Cadmium Red produces varied textures as the pigments settle

Centre: Burnt Sienna and Cerulean Blue combine to create a muted grey-green, useful for natural subjects

Bottom: The same blue and red mixture, applied over warm earth colours, suggests the changing tones of a dramatic sky

Mixing your own supergranulating colours

Mixing two or more granulating watercolours can produce fascinating textures and colour variations. Different pigments may settle or spread at different rates, creating subtle shifts in colour as the wash dries.



TOP TIPS

1

If watercolour has dried inside a tube, you may still be able to use it. Carefully open the tube, transfer the dried paint to a suitable container and reactivate it with water

2

Allow wet paint to dry thoroughly before closing or storing your palette. This helps prevent trapped moisture and mould. Dried watercolour can usually be reactivated with a damp brush

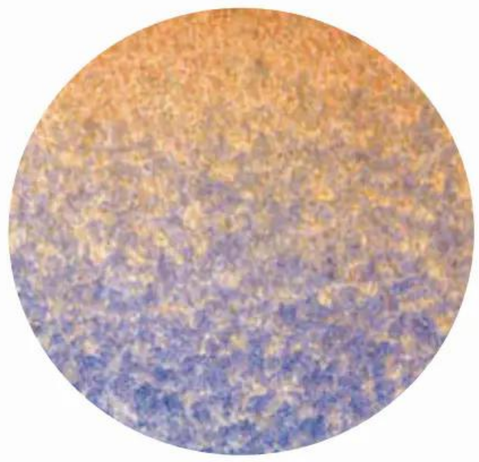
3

If a tube cap is stuck, wrap it in a warm, damp cloth for a few minutes, then gently try again. Avoid using excessive force or an open flame

Try combining colours with contrasting hues, such as a granulating blue and an earth colour. Apply the mixture in a generous wash and allow it to dry naturally without repeatedly brushing over it.

The results depend on the pigments, the mixing ratio, the amount of water and the paper you're using. Experiment with small swatches first to discover combinations you like.

Granulation mediums can also encourage pigment particles to gather unevenly, creating stronger textures. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and test the effect before using it in a finished painting.





Basic colour theory

Ali Hargreaves

I remember struggling to make purple from the red and blue powder paint I had when I was a child. Unbeknown to me, I was using a warm red and a cool blue; however much I tried, these were never going to make a lovely purple. All I got was a muddy, slightly maroony kind of brown. And it was extremely disappointing and frustrating! The following is a short introduction to the basics of colour theory.



The basic colour wheel is made up of the three primary colours, red, blue and yellow and the secondary colours, purple, orange and green. When the primary colours are mixed together, they make the secondary colours. However, creating a colour wheel by mixing colours is not as simple as it first appears. There are some key points to remember in order to make the colours work.

At their most extreme, warm colours are associated with warmth, like the sun and fire, mainly red, orange and yellow. Cool colours are associated with the cold, like ice and snow, mainly blue, turquoise and violet.

Warm versions of the primary colours

Warm reds: Cadmium Red, Vermilion
Warm blues: Ultramarine Blue
Warm yellows: Cadmium Yellow, Indian Yellow, Quinacridone Gold

Cool versions of the primary colours

Cool reds: Alizarin Crimson, Magenta, Carmine, Permanent Rose, Quinacridone Red or Rose
Cool blues: Cerulean Blue, Prussian Blue, Phthalo Blue, Turquoise
Cool yellows: Lemon Yellow

However, colours vary with different makes of paint – and there's a tremendous number of colours, so this is just a guide.

This wheel shows more diversity, with both warm and cool colours. We now have an orangey-yellow (warm yellow) and a greeny-yellow (cool yellow); a yellowy green (warm green) and bluey green (cool green); a greeny blue (cool blue) and a



purply blue (warm blue); a bluey purple (cool purple) and a reddy purple (warm purple), and a purply red (cool red) and an orangey red (warm red).

As you can see, it's possible to make both warm and cool versions of each colour by choosing colours from the same side of the wheel, for example, when mixing orange (the ultimate warm colour).

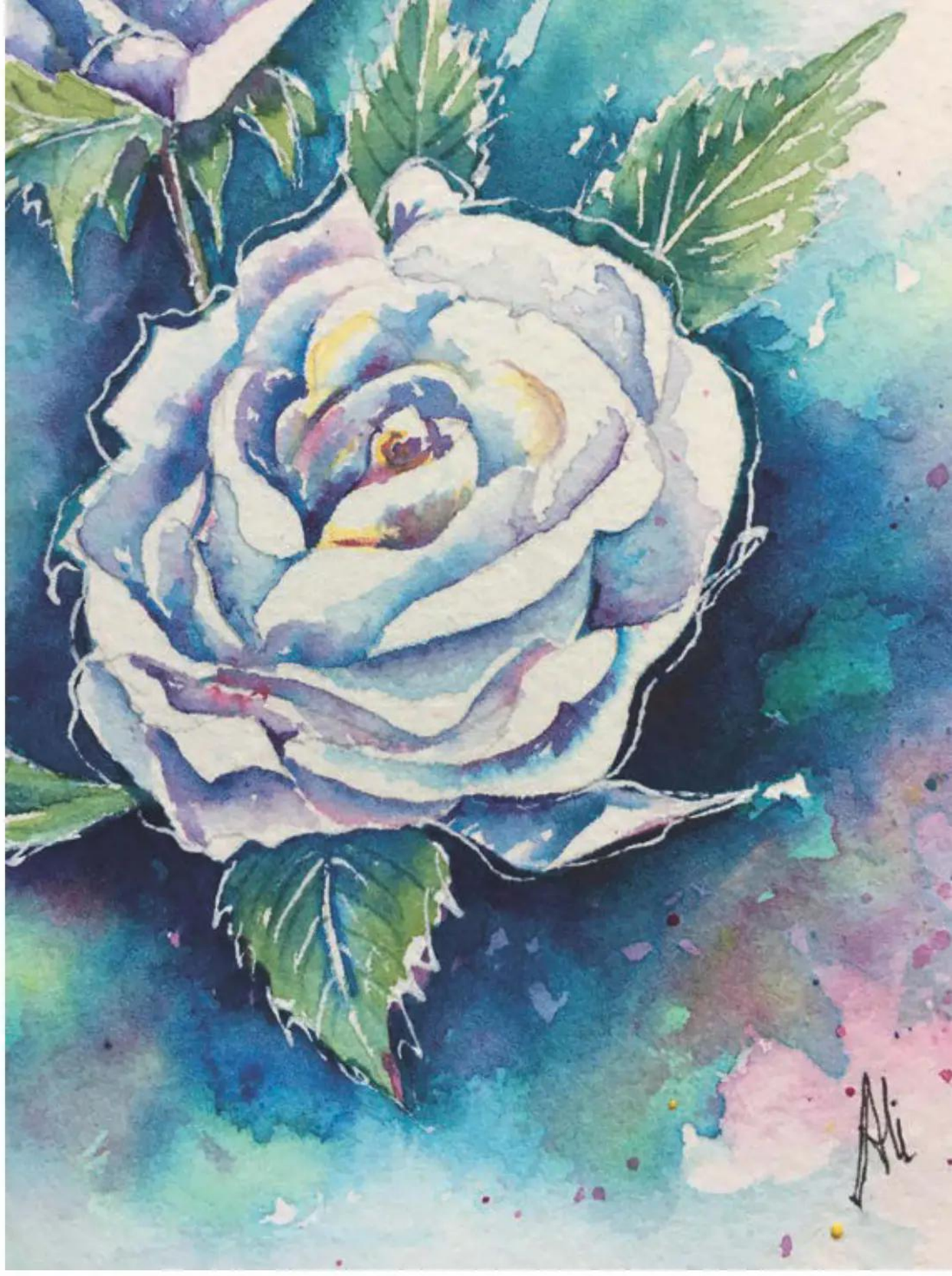
Put simply, red and yellow make orange. You need a warm red and a warm yellow to make the ultimate orange. Add more red to make a reddy orange and more yellow to make a yellowy orange. You can still make orange using Lemon Yellow and Cadmium Red, but it may be less vibrant because Lemon Yellow has a green bias.

If you are just starting out with watercolours, I recommend the following colours for your palette to begin with.

- A red with an orange bias for mixing orange – Cadmium Red
- A red with a violet bias for mixing violet – Magenta
- A yellow with orange bias – Cadmium Yellow
- A yellow with green bias – Lemon Yellow
- A blue with green bias – Cerulean Blue and/or Prussian Blue
- A blue with a purple bias – Ultramarine Blue

I also recommend adding two 'earth' colours to your palette – Burnt Sienna and Raw Sienna.





Related blues, greens and violets create harmony here

TOP TIP

Mixing complementary colours can produce a range of neutral greys, browns and near-blacks

The best thing is to experiment and make notes. Practice really is the best thing you can do!

Complementary colours

These colours are directly opposite each other on the colour wheel. For example, the primary colour yellow is opposite purple on the colour wheel. To take this further, a warm yellow (with a red bias) on the colour wheel is opposite a cool purple (with a blue bias), whereas a cool yellow is opposite a warm purple.

Analogous colours

These are colours that are next to each other. For example, yellowy orange, orange, reddy orange and red. These colours are all related to each other because of their close proximity to each other, so they are harmonious.

Neutrals

These colours include all the browns and greys. They are subtle and muted. Traditionally, these pigments came from natural clays etc, so they are called 'earth colours'. However, there are now many synthetic neutrals on the market. Classic neutrals are colours such as Burnt Sienna and Raw Sienna, Payne's Grey, Raw Umber and many more.

But neutrals can be mixed using the three primary colours. Mixing red, yellow and blue in varying proportions can produce a range of neutral browns and greys. The more red you add, the redder the brown will be. The more yellow you add, the more yellowy brown it will be; the more blue you add, the darker it will be. If the colour has a bias of blue and you use dark colours, then you can make what appears to be black.

If you mix the complementary colours opposite each other on the colour wheel, eg blue and orange, you can also mix neutrals. In effect, you're still mixing the three primary colours because the secondary colour is made up of two colours – for example, red (primary colour) and green (made up of blue and yellow).

30 shades of grey

Grey is made using the three primary colours, red, blue and yellow – brown is also a neutral colour made in the same way.

I always say you need a bias of blue in your mix to make either black or grey. More yellow in the mix makes a yellow-brown; more red in the mix gives a more reddy-brown, and the more blue in the mix, the greyer it becomes. If you use the cooler range colours (which are nearer to blue on the colour wheel), it is easier to make the greys.

I have made 10 tones for each colour mix, making 30 shades of grey. This is a really great exercise to find out how many different tones you can get with each mix. Of course, you could do less or more than 10 per colour. It's entirely up to you.

Experiment more

I encourage my students to experiment and explore all the time. I encourage them to put these experiments in their sketchbooks with notes. This way, they have a record, and it becomes the best reference ever because it has actually been experienced, not just read. This is how we evolve as artists.



MATERIALS

- Alizarin Crimson and Viridian
- Lemon Yellow and Ultramarine Violet
- Ultramarine Blue and Transparent Orange

METHOD

You will be adding water to make a range of shades (or tones) of grey.

1. Mix the pairs of colours using very little water to make what looks like black.

2. Paint a square using this dark mix.

3. Add a little water by dipping the brush into your water pot, and then paint another square.

4. Repeat this exercise until you have no colour left (I repeated this 10 times, but you can do as many as you like).



'Zebra', using lots of different colour combinations that make greys!

If you mix your own greys – particularly if you mix them straight onto your paper – your paintings will be really interesting.

Here are a few examples using my own mixed greys.







CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:

***'Sailing the great sea'*; *'Walking in the Scottish Highlands'*, pen and watercolour (Burnt Sienna and Ultramarine); *'Grey seal'* in Cadmium Red and Cerulean Blue**

If you are having difficulty mixing black or grey with the colour combinations, keep trying. A bias towards blue can help when mixing greys. Practice makes perfect!

Use other colour combinations eg Cadmium Red and Cerulean Blue, Phthalo Turquoise and Vermilion. Combinations such as the classic mix of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna follow the same principle. Burnt Sienna is a reddy brown, so by adding Ultramarine, you are adding a bias of blue.

Troubleshooting

- If your grey looks too green, it needs more red in the mix.
- If your grey is too orange, it needs more blue.
- If your grey is too purple, it needs more yellow (but not too much!).
- Mixing yellow and purple is the most difficult, and you may need to add another blue to make it greyer. Hence I chose Ultramarine Violet for my purple with a cool yellow (Lemon)
- If you can't make your grey dark enough, use less water



Brushes

From broad washes to the finest details, the right brush can make all the difference to your watercolour painting. Discover the different shapes, fibres and sizes, and learn how to choose and care for your brushes

To paint successful watercolours, your brush is one of your most important tools. In essence, a good quality brush should carry lots of water in a controlled way, keep its shape and, if cared for, last a long time.

Watercolour brushes tend to be soft and usually made from either sable or synthetic fibres – so what's the difference? Sable bristles are harvested from small mammals called martens (similar to a mink). Though hair from many types of animals can be used, sable, especially Kolinsky sable, is prized for its spring and ability to hold water. Natural brushes are considered to have better absorbency because the individual hairs have tiny scales, which increase the surface area allowing more paint to be held. Like a fountain pen, the belly of a brush holds a reservoir of paint that enables it to make several strokes before having to recharge it, which is essential for vibrant watercolours.

Synthetic brushes vary in quality, but many offer excellent water-holding capacity, spring and control. Brushes made of a sable and synthetic mix potentially offer the best of both worlds as they are harder wearing than pure sable brushes. The choice really boils down to personal preference and the size of your purse!

It is worth noting that a good quality large brush can offer enough control to create fine lines as well as sweeping washes

The brush head is the most important part of the brush as it carries the paint to the paper and determines the marks that are made – and usually gives the brush its name. A good brush should be flexible and allow you to change the shape of the stroke depending on the amount of pressure applied. Every brush is capable of such a variety of marks, and it is only by experimenting that you will decide upon your favourites.

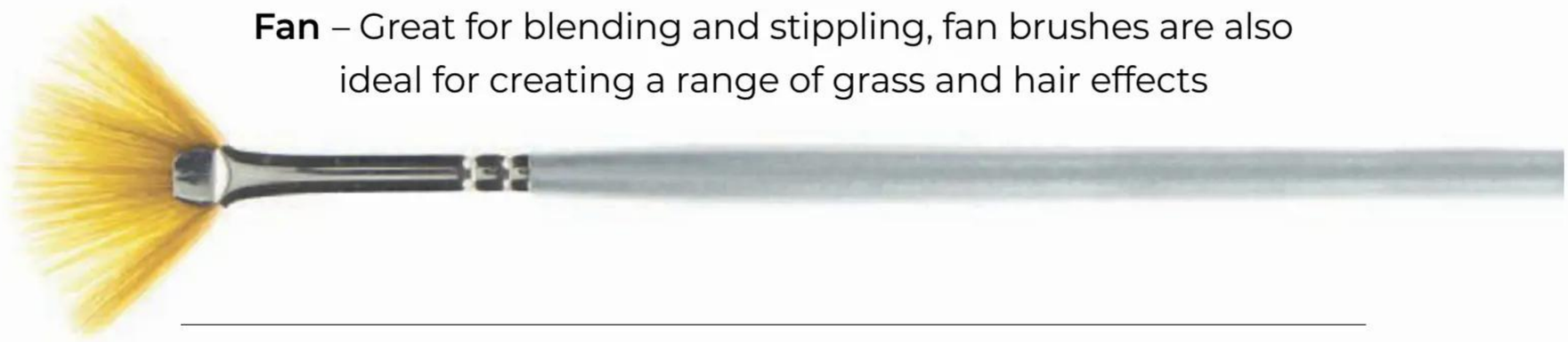
Brush sizes are numbered, with larger numbers generally indicating larger brushes within the same range. Many watercolour painters use a size 6 round, which is a good medium size. You can use smaller sizes for details and bigger sizes for larger, looser work.

Brush types

Dagger – The point can be used for detailed work, or it can be pressed to create a curved or broad stroke. Apply pressure when 'twisting' through the stroke to create grasses and petals. It creates sharp-edged, fine lines when used on the edge



Fan – Great for blending and stippling, fan brushes are also ideal for creating a range of grass and hair effects



Flat – Perfect for creating a wide range of marks and for use in various styles. Apply them flat on the paper for thick lines; use the corners to add detail and the edges for thin, delicate lines. Flat brushes are good for 'lifting out' paint.



Liner and rigger – These watercolour brushes have long, thin bristles that are good for botanicals like grass or reeds or for outlining your shapes in abstract pieces. Their long bristles hold plenty of paint, allowing you to create continuous fine lines.



Mop – Mop brushes are large round brushes that hold more water. Traditionally made from natural hair, they are also widely available in synthetic fibres. The shape of the bristles will change as you work, without snapping back into place when you lift the brush back up. Mop brushes can be more challenging to control, but they allow for a looser style of painting.

Mop brush sizes are different to regular brushes – a size 6 mop will be very large. Check the actual brush dimensions, as sizing varies between manufacturers





TOP TIP

Look for a round brush with a pointy tip for the finest lines

Oval wash – Oval brushes create regulated paint flow for washes and produce a soft edge with no point



Rake – Rakes are made with two different lengths of hair to create a range of effects, including grasses, fur, and general hair effects.



Round – These are the most common brushes for watercolour and are named after the round ferrule. They are great two-in-one brushes, with a pointed tip that can be used to create fine strokes and a wider belly that makes big strokes when pressed down on the paper



Swordliner – Beautifully tapered brushes with a very fine point. Traditionally used by sign-writers for lettering, they are perfect for creating sinuous, organic shapes



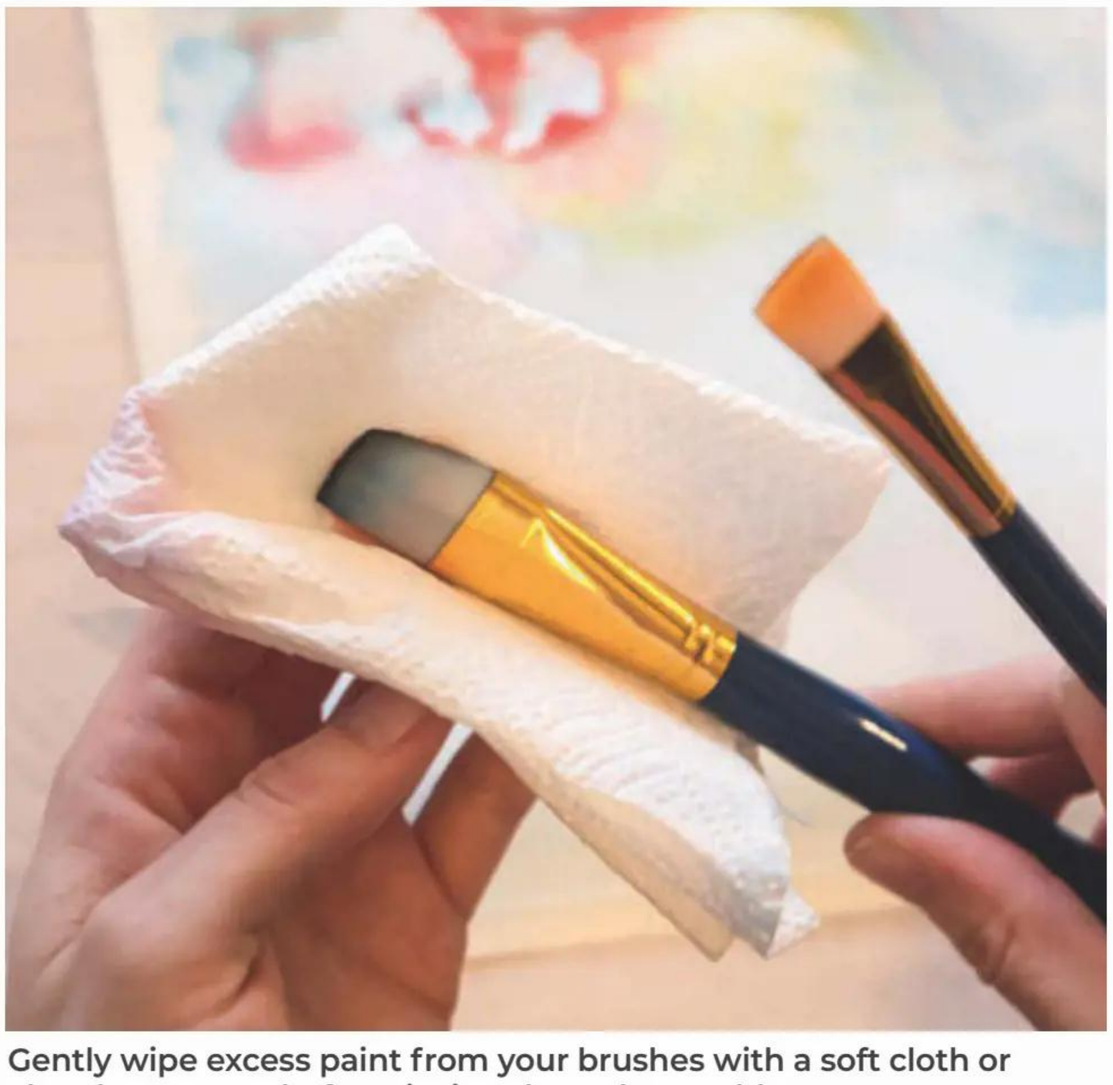
How to care for your brushes

Looking after your brushes is very important. Buying top-quality brushes can be expensive, so if you make that sort of investment, it needs to be worthwhile. However, the same care routine applies to all your brushes. By cleaning your brushes properly and thoroughly, you can ensure they will work better and last longer!

Cleaning tips

- When you finish using a brush, wipe off excess paint with a cloth or soft tissue
- Gently squeeze the bristles outwards from the ferrule using a cloth or your fingers; never pull them – even the best quality brushes can moult
- Rinse carefully in cool or lukewarm water. Avoid hot water, which can damage the adhesive holding the bristles in place
- Wipe again with a cloth, then wash using soap or a mild detergent, working up a lather
- Rinse and repeat until all traces of colour have gone from the bristles – if you leave any paint near the ferrule, the bristles will splay out as it hardens
- Gently reshape the bristles with your fingers and leave the brush to dry. Use a suitable brush protector for storage once completely dry
- Leave to dry at room temperature





Gently wipe excess paint from your brushes with a soft cloth or absorbent paper before rinsing them thoroughly

Storage tips

Although you should dry brushes by laying them flat or hanging them with the bristles pointing down, when they are fully dry, they should be stored with bristles upwards

- Never leave any dry brush standing for long with the bristles touching the bottom of a container; the head will lose its shape very quickly
- When storing brushes in a covered or airtight container, make sure they are properly dry first; otherwise, they may develop mildew
- Make sure dry brushes aren't resting against each other when you're not using them

And lastly, don't go anywhere near masking fluid with your favourite brushes – once dry, it's a nightmare to remove. Use old, tired brushes or cheap ones, especially for the job.



Paper, paper, paper

Where do you start?

As a watercolourist, the surface you paint on is of paramount importance – the better the paper, the easier it is for your paint to do its job!



The highest-quality papers are made of 100% cotton fibre (sometimes referred to as 'rag paper'), which is beaten into individual fibres, creating a soup-like consistency, and then moulded into sheets. These papers can withstand considerable reworking and, when properly stored, can last for centuries.

Other papers are made of cellulose or wood pulp or a mixture of these with cotton – these aren't always as hardy as the rag paper. Many affordable papers are also acid-free, although their durability and handling qualities can vary.

Treat yourself to the best watercolour paper you can afford – watercolour painting can be tricky, so the better the paper the more likely you are to have good results.

Take the rough with the smooth

Watercolour paper comes in three main textures:



Cold-pressed (NOT) – meaning 'not hot-pressed, this paper has a medium textured surface or 'tooth' created by a process of pressing the wet paper to smooth the surface very slightly before drying. This surface holds colour well, making it the most popular choice for both amateurs and professionals.



Rough or extra rough – this has a more pronounced texture; a result of letting the paper dry without pressing or smoothing. It's great for loose painting, where the paint skims over the paper and creates wonderful textures to enhance the overall effect.

Hot-pressed – this is very smooth and is made by passing the paper through heated rollers in the manufacturing process. It's ideal for controlled and detailed paintings such as botanical works and for sketching, drawing and pen and ink work.

Painting on larger sheets of paper allows flexibility – you can cut your paper to fit your finished painting, but you can't shrink your painting half-way through to fit your paper!

Weights and measures?

Watercolour paper is measured in grams per square metre (gsm). The higher the gsm, the heavier and generally more resistant to buckling the paper will be. A popular choice is 300 gsm, which is suitable for most watercolour techniques and often needs no stretching unless you're using very wet washes.

Absorbency

Unlike drawing and printmaking papers, watercolour paper contains sizing, a substance added during manufacture to control how readily water and paint soak into the paper. It may be applied internally, to the surface, or both. It reduces the absorption of paint into the paper itself, allowing the pigments to remain on the surface, so the colours retain their brilliance. Test this out yourself by applying a strong watercolour wash to drawing paper and another to your watercolour paper. Some artists choose to soak their paper to reduce the amount of external sizing and therefore increase its absorbency.

Watercolour paper comes in a wide range of sizes and formats and as well as crisp white, there is a range of tinted papers that can provide a warm or cool base for your paintings. Experiment to discover which work best for you.

Think about size

So, you've chosen your texture, and your weight – now you need to select the right size for your type of work.

The sizing of paper is not totally straightforward but as a rough guide:

- Full imperial = 76 x 56cm = 30 x 22" – a bit smaller than A1
- ½ imperial = 56 x 38cm = 22 x 15" – a bit smaller than A2
- ¼ imperial = 38 x 28cm = 11 x 15" – a bit smaller than A3
- ⅛ imperial = 28 x 19cm = 7.5 x 11" – a bit smaller than A4

Support

Whatever your medium, don't allow your painting to be constrained by the size of your support – if you work on small surfaces, your paintings will always be small; if you work on larger surfaces, your work can go either way. Allow yourself to try both – you may find the freedom of

TOP TIPS

1

Ask other artists for their recommendations and experiment to find what works best for you

2

Don't let the size of support determine the size of your paintings

3

Use cheaper paper to practise on, but for the final version buy the best you can afford

a larger support frees up your paintings and allows you to experiment with composition and cropping.

Stretching

Lighter watercolour papers may buckle or 'cockle' when wet, particularly with generous washes. Stretching can help keep the surface flatter as you paint. When a Full Imperial watercolour paper is soaked, it can stretch up to two centimetres each way – smaller sheets also stretch but to a lesser degree – so we stretch and tape it to hold the tautness.

To stretch paper, use a clean, waterproof board slightly larger than your sheet. Soak the paper until evenly damp, then lay it flat on the board and secure the edges with gummed watercolour tape. Allow it to dry completely before painting. The paper will tighten as it dries, helping to reduce buckling when wet washes are applied.

Don't use ordinary masking tape as a substitute for gummed tape when stretching soaked paper; it may not hold as the paper contracts.

Blocks

If you don't fancy pre-stretching your paper and don't want to risk your paper cockling, watercolour paper blocks can provide the perfect solution without the expense of a heavier paper.

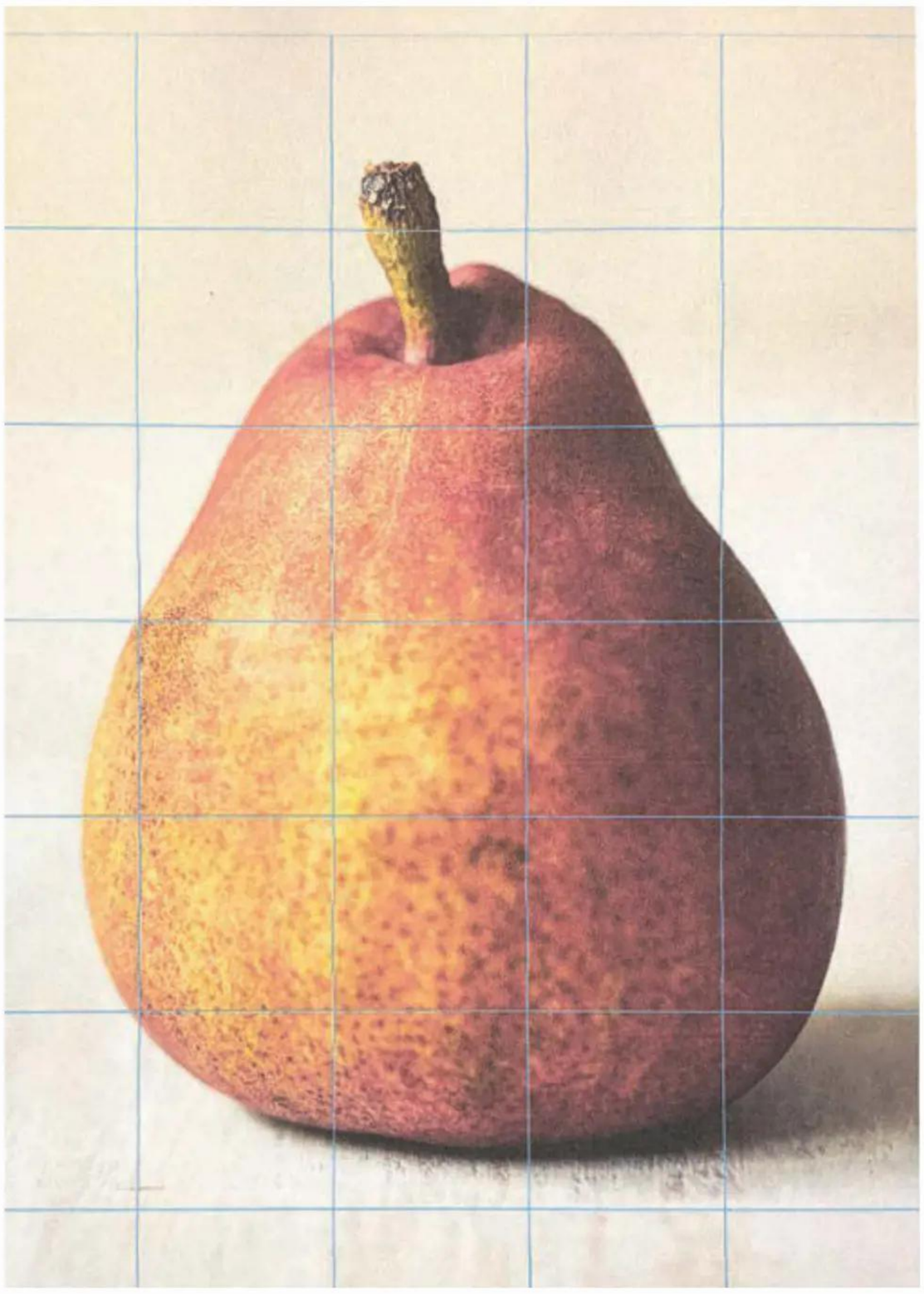
Drawing made easy

Drawing freehand is a valuable skill, but it isn't the only way to prepare for a watercolour painting. A grid helps you judge shapes and proportions one square at a time, while graphite transfer paper lets you move a finished outline onto watercolour paper. Tracing isn't cheating: the aim is a light, accurate guide, not a detailed pencil drawing. You can use equal-sized grids for a 1:1 copy or proportionally larger squares to enlarge the subject. Here, we're using a pear photograph and transferring the outline onto watercolour paper.

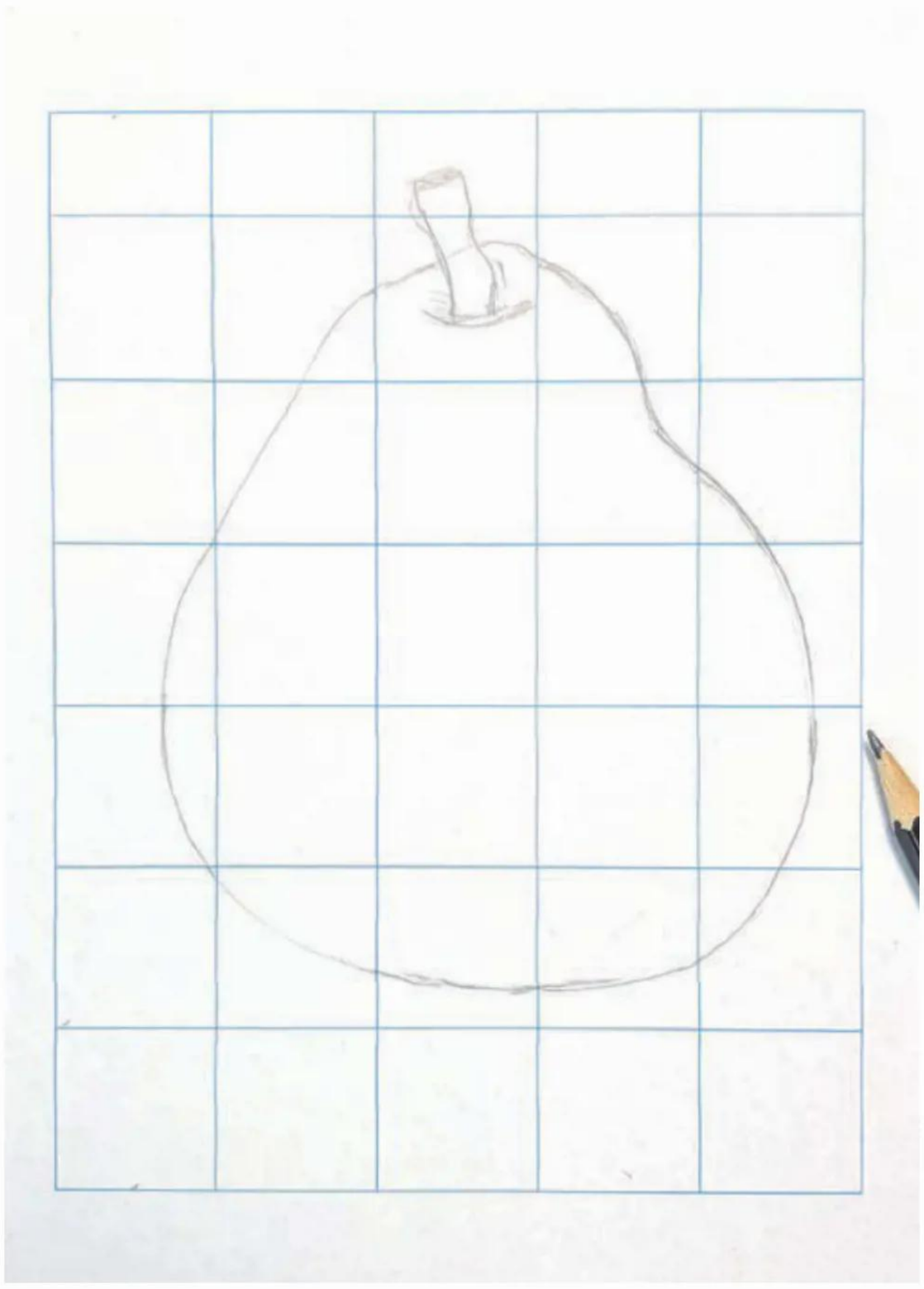
MATERIALS USED

- **Surface**: ordinary copy paper; watercolour paper
- **Other**: printed gridded reference photograph; pencil; ruler; graphite transfer paper; low-tack masking tape

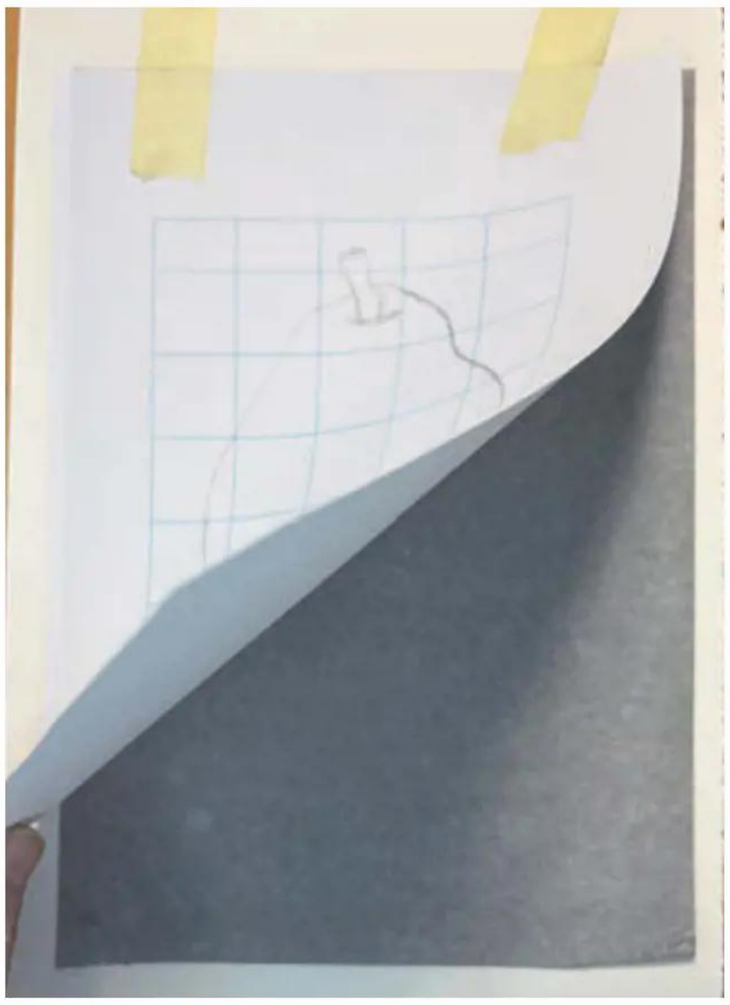
TOP TIP Use a light touch when transferring. Heavy graphite lines may show through transparent washes and can be difficult to remove later



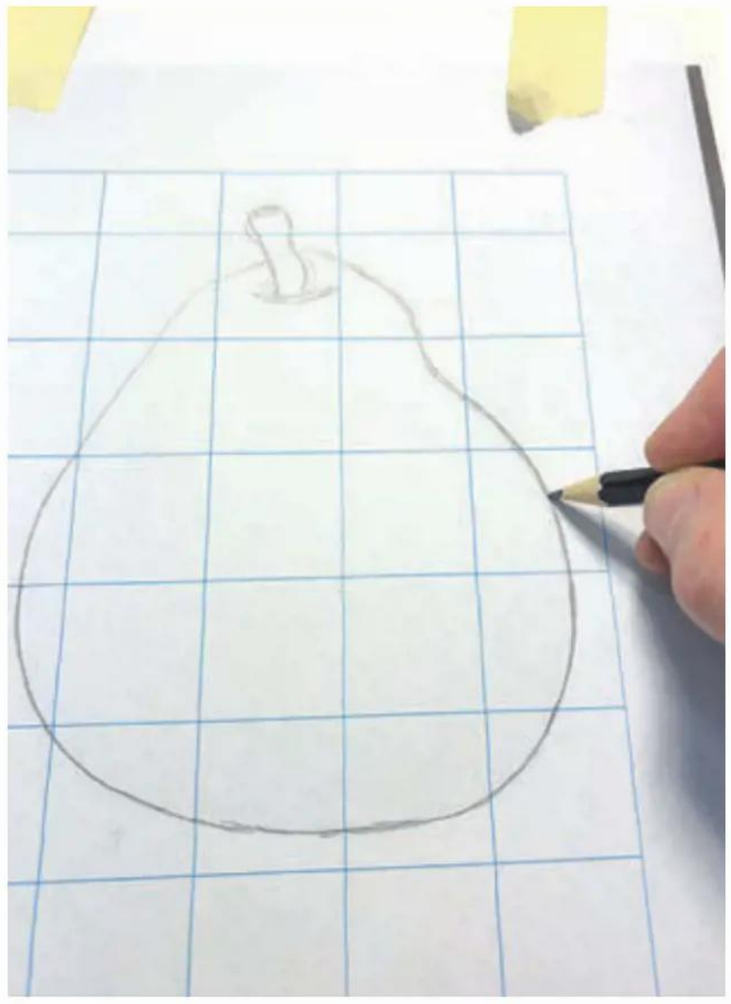
1 Start with a clear reference photograph and divide it into equally sized squares. Add the grid digitally before printing, as shown here, or draw it onto a print.



2 Draw a matching grid on copy paper. Work square by square, noting where the pear's outline crosses each line, then join the points lightly. Include the stalk, but leave out shading and surface detail.



3 Place graphite transfer paper coated-side down on your watercolour paper. Position the gridded drawing on top and hinge the upper edge with low-tack masking tape so the sheets can't slip.



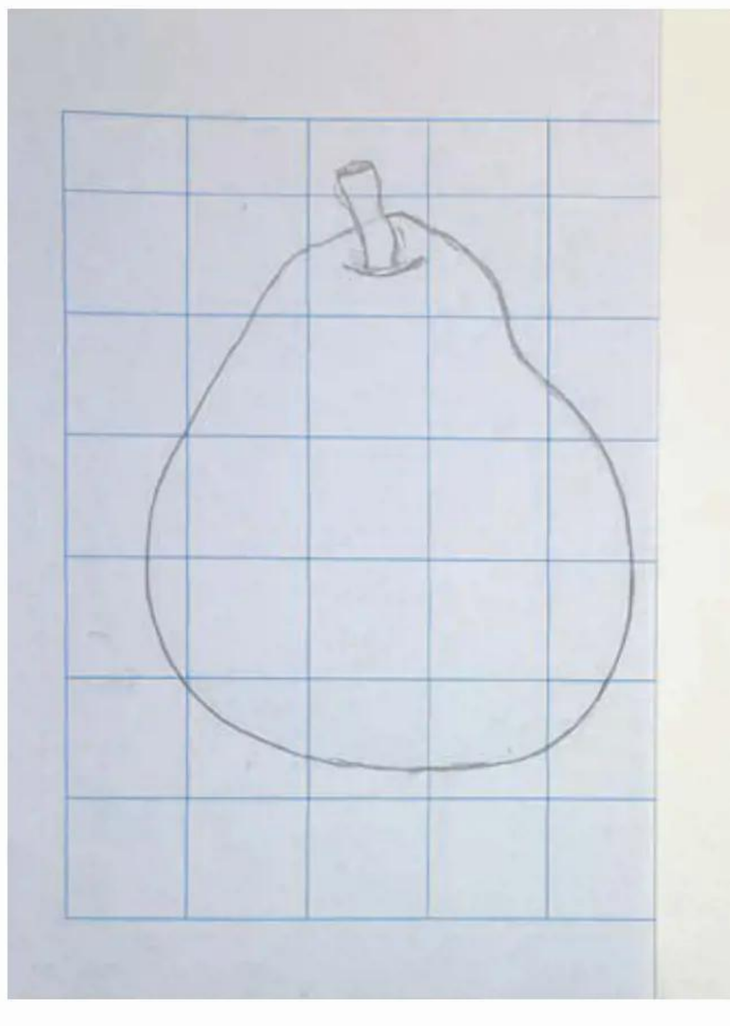
4 Trace the pear's outline with an ordinary pencil, using light, even pressure. Include the stalk and important details, but do not trace the grid.



5 Keeping the hinge in place, lift the drawing and graphite sheet to check the transfer. Lower them again and retrace any missing or faint sections.



6 Remove the drawing and transfer sheet to reveal the clean outline on the watercolour paper. Avoid unnecessary rubbing or heavy retracing.



7 Compare the gridded drawing with the transferred outline. The main shapes and proportions should match, but there are no grid lines on the watercolour paper.

TOP TIP You don't need specialist equipment to transfer a drawing. Tracing paper is useful for copying an outline, which you can then transfer by rubbing a soft pencil over the back and retracing it onto your watercolour paper. Alternatively, with thinner watercolour paper, you may be able to trace directly against a bright window or using a lightbox. Whatever method you choose, keep the lines light and avoid pressing hard enough to indent the paper

Make contrast count

Su Melville shows how differences in tone, detail and softness can create a focal point and give a painting greater depth and impact



With contrast distributed evenly throughout, the composition lacks a clear focal point

Why contrast works

Our brains are constantly searching for differences: light against dark, sharp against soft, detail against simplicity. Without contrast, everything can feel the same and the eye has nowhere to settle. Introduce contrast and the eye lands, pauses and begins to move. Contrast is one of the simplest ways to create focus. A light shape against a dark area will immediately become more noticeable; so will a crisp edge against a soft one, or a detailed passage surrounded by quieter painting.



Stronger tonal contrast, a changed horizon and a clearer pathway give the eye a route through the picture



Even a restrained range of tones can create atmosphere when the light and dark areas are carefully controlled

Create a focal point

Imagine a simple landscape in which everything is rendered with the same tone and level of detail. The result can feel flat because there is no hierarchy and no clear sense of importance.

Now introduce contrast. Darken the foreground, soften the distance and allow a lighter area or pathway to lead into the scene. The subject has not changed, but the viewer now has somewhere to look first and somewhere to go next.

Try this: the power of contrast

Draw a simple shape, such as a circle or a tree, in the centre of your page. Shade the entire background lightly so everything feels similar in tone. On a second version, darken one side of the background and leave the other lighter.

Notice what happens. The shape becomes clearer and your eye is drawn more strongly to one area. You have created focus without changing the drawing itself.

Look for the differences

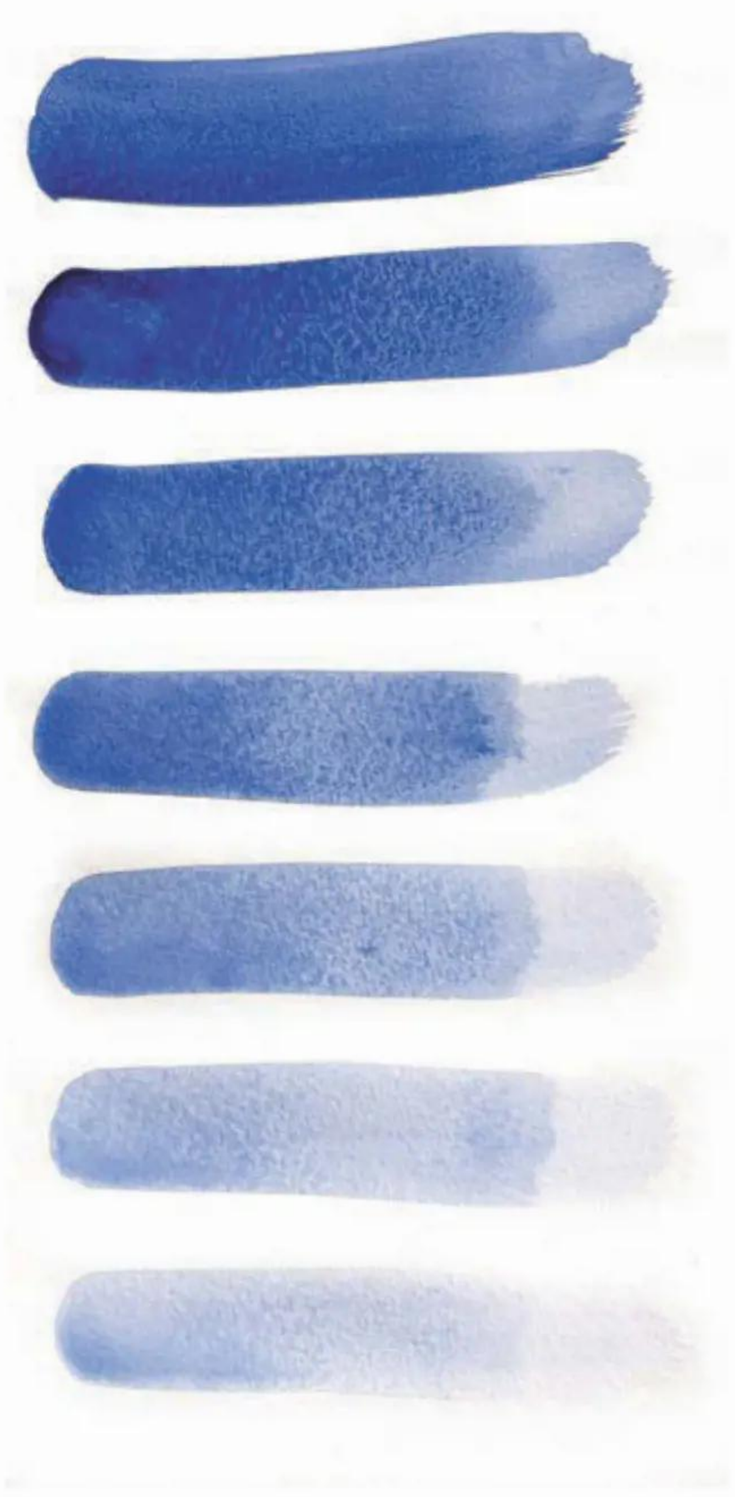
When a painting feels flat, ask yourself where the strongest light and dark are, where the sharpest edges sit and where you have put the most detail. If everything has equal emphasis, choose the area you want the viewer to notice and strengthen the contrast there while allowing surrounding areas to remain quieter.

TOP TIP Squint at your painting to reveal its main light and dark shapes. If everything looks equally grey, strengthen the contrast around the focal point and soften less important areas

Master water and washes

Learn to control the balance of water and pigment, discover how paper wetness affects your brushstrokes and practise three essential watercolour washes

Water is what makes watercolour so wonderfully versatile – and sometimes so unpredictable. The secret lies in understanding how much water is in your brush, your paint mixture and your paper. Once you learn to control all three, you'll find it much easier to create smooth washes, soft edges and rich, transparent colour.



Seven strengths of the same blue, from concentrated colour to a pale, transparent wash

Find the right balance

The more water you add to watercolour paint, the lighter and more transparent it becomes, allowing the white paper to show through. Use less water and more pigment for stronger, more intense colour.

Try mixing one colour at several strengths, from rich and concentrated to pale and watery. Paint a sequence of swatches, adding more water each time. Notice how the colour changes without adding white paint.

How wet is your paper?

Watercolour behaves differently depending on the moisture already on the surface.

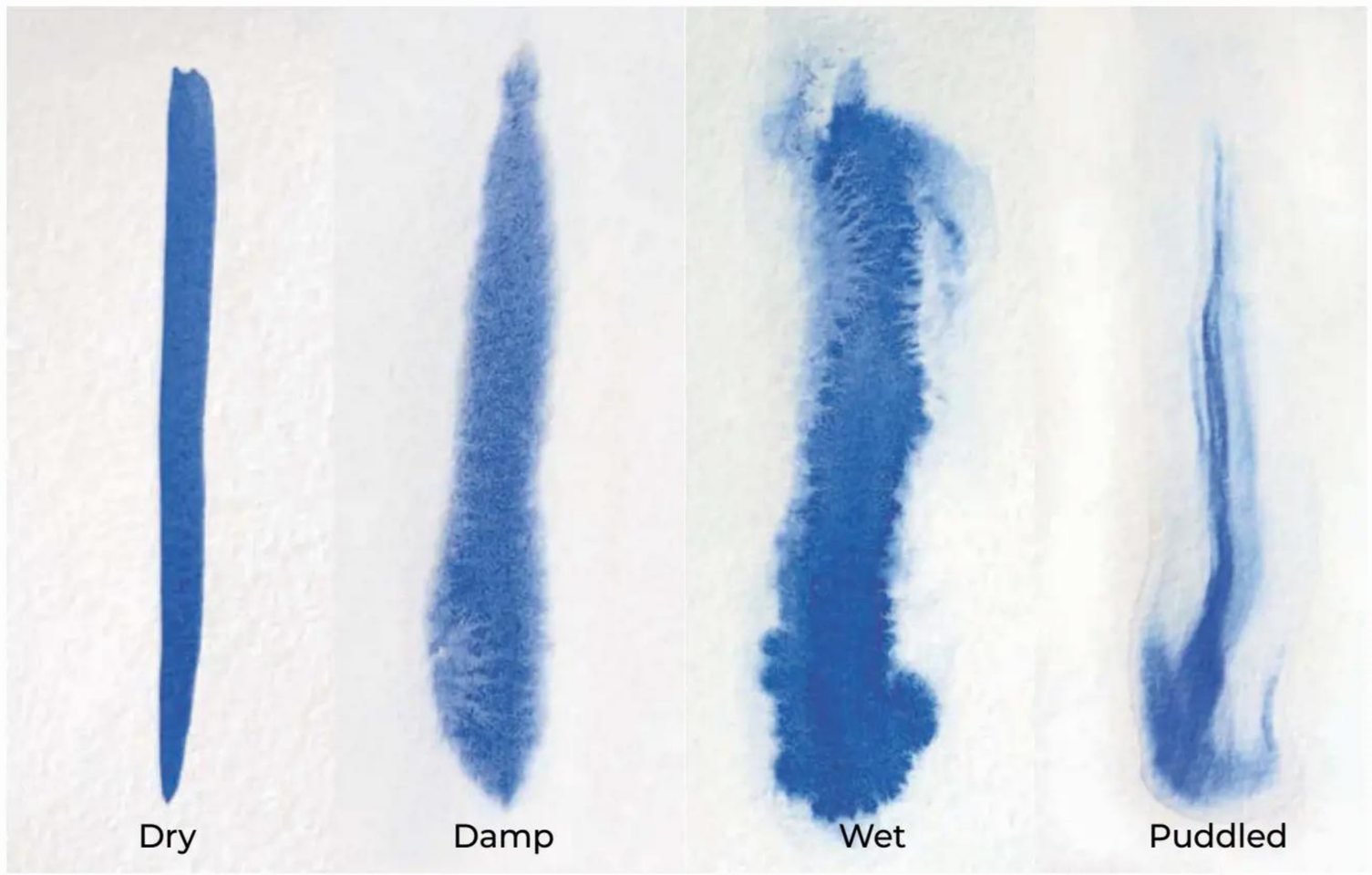
Dry paper: Paint stays relatively controlled, producing defined edges. This is wet-on-dry painting, ideal for details and precise shapes.

Damp paper: The surface has lost its shine but still contains moisture. Paint spreads gently, creating softer, less predictable edges.

Shiny-wet paper: A visible sheen of water allows pigment to flow and blend freely. This is wet-on-wet painting, ideal for soft skies and atmospheric backgrounds.

Puddled paper: Excess water causes pigment to move unpredictably and collect in pools. Blot standing water before painting if you want a controlled wash.

Compare how the paint behaves on each surface.



The same blue paint applied to dry, damp, wet and puddled paper shows how increasing moisture changes the edges and spread



An even flat wash, a dark-to-light graded wash and a two-colour variegated wash

Three essential washes

A wash is a layer of diluted paint applied across an area of paper. Practise these three techniques on separate rectangles.

1 Flat wash

Mix enough paint to cover the entire area. Tilt your paper slightly and work from top to bottom with a broad brush, overlapping each stroke while the previous edge is still wet. Aim for an even colour throughout.

2 Graded wash

Begin with a strong mixture. As you work down the paper, gradually introduce more clean water to your brush or mixture. The colour should fade smoothly from dark to light.

3 Variegated wash

Prepare two colours. Begin with one, then introduce the second while the first is still wet, allowing them to blend naturally. Avoid repeatedly brushing over the join.

When water takes over

If you introduce a wetter brushstroke into a wash that has begun to dry, the extra water can push pigment aside, creating a pale, irregular shape with darker edges. This is known as a backrun, sometimes called a cauliflower.

To prevent unwanted backruns, keep the wash evenly wet and avoid disturbing it as it dries. However, deliberate backruns can create lovely organic textures in foliage, clouds and other natural subjects.



Droplets of water introduced into a damp wash push pigment aside, creating pale centres and darker, irregular cauliflower edges

TOP TIP Keep two water containers beside you – one for rinsing pigment from your brush and another for clean water when mixing colours or wetting the paper

Composition that works

Su Melville explains how simple choices about placement, balance and visual pathways can guide the viewer's eye and make a painting more engaging



Three objects naturally create a triangular grouping that encourages the eye to move between them

How the brain sees interest

We tend to find odd numbers more visually interesting than even ones. Three objects can feel more dynamic than two, while five often feels more natural than four. This is why grouping in threes appears so frequently in art.

Our brains are also drawn to asymmetry. If a composition is split evenly in half, it can feel static. When one area dominates - for example, a 60/40 or 70/30 split between land and sky – the image often feels more natural and engaging.

Triangles can help too. Arrange elements so they form a loose triangle and the eye moves comfortably between them, creating both stability and movement. These are not rigid rules; they are ways of understanding how we naturally process visual information.

Leading the eye

A strong composition does not just have a focal point; it gives the viewer a route through the picture. In a landscape this might be a path, river or line of light leading into the scene. Once inside, changes in light and dark, detail and simplicity, and foreground and distance can guide the eye from one area to another.



Use lines within the subject to lead the viewer into the picture and towards the areas you want them to notice

Try this: thumbnail exploration

Using your sketchbook, draw six small rectangles to represent your canvas. In the first, sketch your initial idea. Then make a new thumbnail each time, changing just one thing:

- Move the focal point
- Adjust the horizon
- Shift an object
- Remove an element
- Change the balance of space

Keep each sketch quick and simple. This lets you explore composition through small adjustments rather than guessing, and makes it much easier to compare several possible arrangements before you start the finished painting.



Quick thumbnail sketches let you test different arrangements before committing to the finished painting

Guide the viewer

Before starting a painting, ask yourself where the viewer will look first, what will lead them into the picture and where their eye will go next. If the answer is unclear, try moving the focal point, simplifying an area or changing the balance of space. Composition is not about following strict rules. By using asymmetry, thoughtful placement and clear visual pathways, you can guide viewers – showing them not just what you have painted, but how to experience it.

Perspective made simple

Discover how a few simple principles can help you create convincing depth and distance in your paintings, from railway tracks disappearing into the distance to buildings viewed from unusual angles

Perspective is what gives a painting the illusion of three dimensions on a flat sheet of paper. It's why a distant building looks smaller than a nearby one, why a road appears to narrow as it stretches into the distance, and why tall buildings seem to lean together when you look upwards.

You don't need to master complicated technical drawing to use perspective in your watercolours. Understanding a few basic principles will help you recognise how objects change in size and shape according to your viewpoint, making it easier to create believable scenes.



Parallel railway tracks appear to converge as they recede into the distance, creating a powerful sense of depth

The horizon and vanishing points

The first thing to understand is the horizon line. In linear perspective, this represents your eye level, whether you're standing, sitting or looking down from somewhere high up. It isn't necessarily the visible line where the land meets the sky.

A vanishing point is the place towards which a set of parallel lines appears to converge as they recede into the distance. These lines don't actually meet, of course, but their apparent convergence helps create the illusion of depth.



The cyan lines follow the railway tracks towards a single vanishing point, marked in red. The dashed orange line shows the horizon, or eye level

In a scene containing horizontal surfaces, the vanishing points for horizontal receding lines lie on the horizon line. Depending on your viewpoint, they may be within the picture or well beyond its edges.

One-point perspective

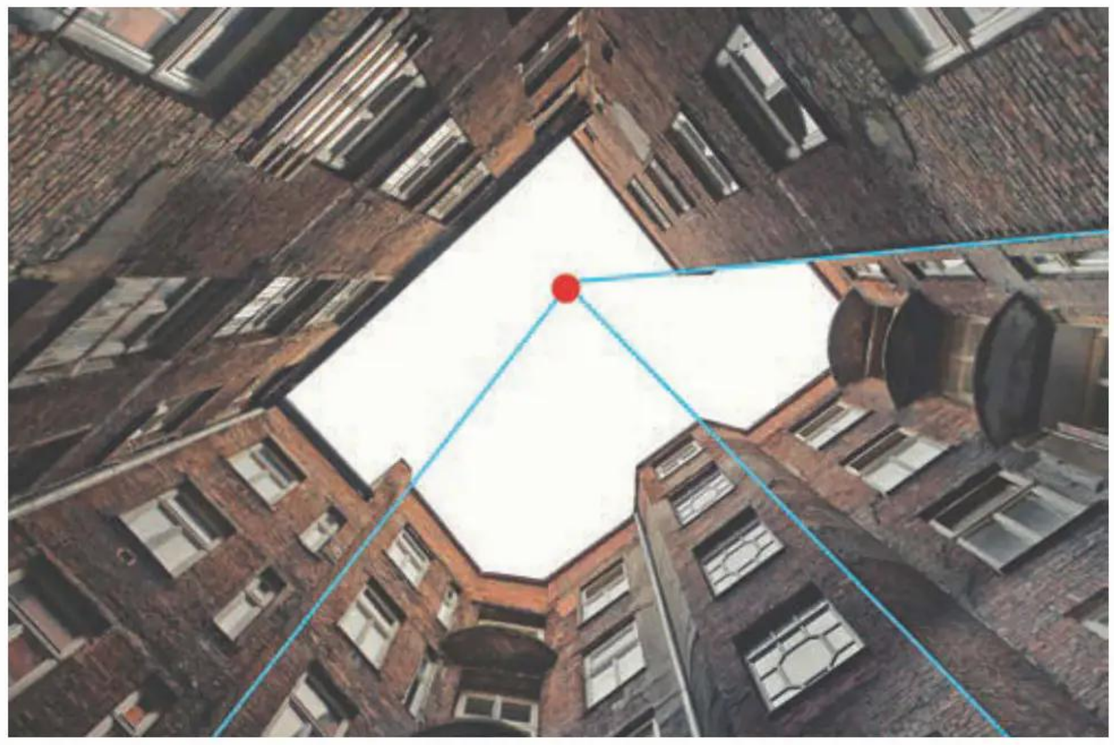
One-point perspective is the simplest form of linear perspective. It occurs when you're looking straight along a set of parallel lines, such as a straight road, railway track or corridor.

In our railway photograph, the rails are parallel in reality, but appear to move closer together as they recede. Follow the cyan lines and you'll see that they meet at the red vanishing point. The orange dashed line marks the horizon passing through that point.

Notice, too, how the sleepers appear progressively smaller and closer together in the distance. This change in apparent size reinforces the impression of depth. You can use the same principle when sketching paths, a canal or an avenue of trees.



The horizontal edges on either side of the cottage recede in different directions towards two separate vanishing points beyond the photograph



Looking almost vertically upwards, the vertical edges of the surrounding buildings appear to converge towards a third vanishing point, marked in red against the sky

Two-point perspective

Two-point perspective comes into play when you view a building or other rectangular object from an angle, so that you can see two adjoining sides.

Look at the black timber cottage. The corner nearest to us divides the building into two visible walls. The horizontal lines of each wall recede in different directions, as shown by the cyan guides.

If extended far enough, the lines on the left would meet at one vanishing point, while those on the right would meet at another. Both vanishing points lie on the same horizon line, although neither is visible within the photograph.

In conventional two-point perspective, the vertical edges remain upright and parallel in the picture, while the horizontal edges converge towards their respective vanishing points.

This is especially useful when painting cottages, sheds, beach huts and other buildings viewed from a corner.

Three-point perspective

Three-point perspective adds another dimension. As well as the two vanishing points associated with horizontal directions, there is a third towards which vertical edges appear to converge.

This effect becomes particularly noticeable when you look sharply upwards at tall buildings or downwards from a considerable height.

In our photograph, the camera is pointing almost directly upwards between several brick buildings. The cyan lines follow vertical architectural edges towards their shared vanishing point in the sky.

The resulting convergence creates a dramatic sense of height. The buildings seem to tower over the viewer, even though their walls are upright in reality.

You probably won't need to construct three-point perspective very often as a beginner, but recognising it will help you understand why buildings sometimes appear to lean in photographs and sketches.

Putting perspective into practice

The easiest way to become familiar with perspective is to look for it in everyday scenes.

Start with a photograph of a straight path or road. Identify two edges that are parallel in reality and imagine extending them until they meet. That gives you a vanishing point, and a horizontal line through it establishes eye level.

Next, study a building viewed from a corner. Notice how its walls recede in different directions. Sketch the main outline, checking the angles of the roof, windows and walls.

Keep your pencil lines light and concentrate on proportions rather than details. Once the shapes look convincing, begin painting.

Perspective isn't about mathematical perfection. Buildings can be irregular and roads can curve. Understanding the basic principles simply helps you paint what you see more convincingly.

TOP TIP When sketching buildings, lightly draw the horizon line first, then check the angles of receding edges against it.
If they don't converge towards the correct vanishing points, the building may appear distorted

Experiment with granulation

Find out why **Alison C Board** is addicted to colour and texture in both her subject matter and the materials she uses

Colour and texture are, if you like, my 'voice' and the elements that I always gravitate back to. Therefore, when I choose my watercolour paints, I look to those that are going to help me to replicate the surfaces of my subjects and, inevitably, granulation becomes a major factor, as my preferred subjects tend to be natural, weathered or viewed close up.

Granulation in watercolour paints is exciting, unpredictable and encompasses what watercolour paint can do for me, so rather than struggle to make my paint work in a particular way, I gravitate to those colours that will mean that I touch the paper as little as possible. This does mean, however, that I am a collector of tubes, in search of the ultimate colour that creates a unique texture and gives my paintings a reflection of my personality and the personality of my subject.

MATERIALS USED

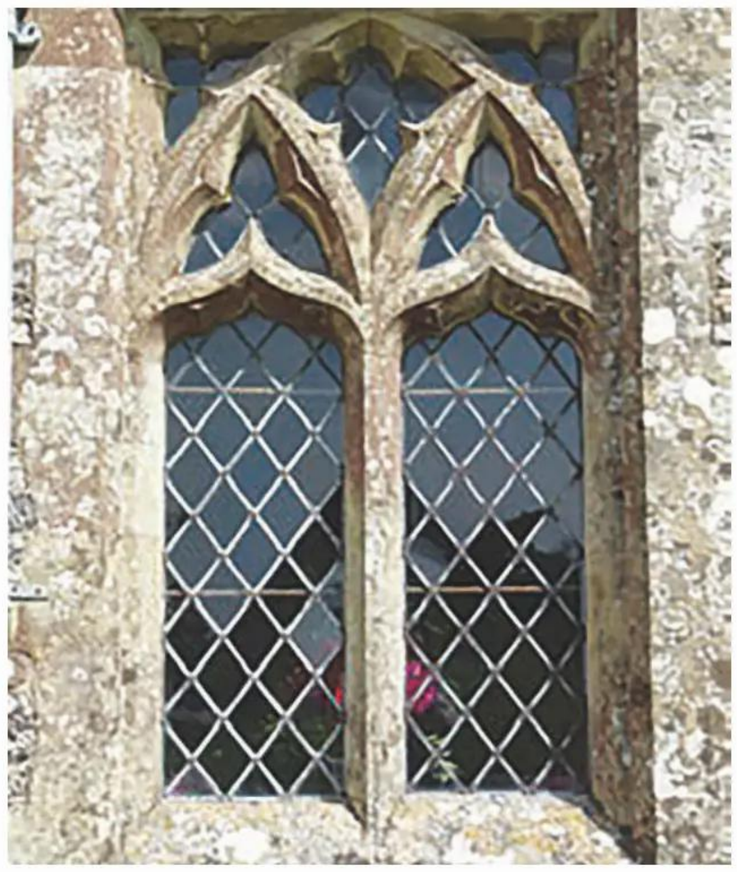
- **Surface:** 300 gsm cold-pressed (NOT) extra-white watercolour paper
- **Paints:** Lamp Black, Cobalt Blue, Cobalt Violet, Lunar Black, Hematite Genuine, Tiger's Eye Genuine
- **Brushes:** Round watercolour brushes, sizes 6 and 12
- **Other:** Pink masking fluid; ruling pen; palette knife; white gesso; masking fluid eraser

Granulation isn't for everybody – some botanical painters try to avoid it, preferring to use thin glazes of colour expertly placed and built up in layers. Similarly, landscape painters may wish to avoid it in their skies as it makes them too textured and brings them 'forward' too much.

If you prefer to avoid granulating pigments, there are plenty of alternatives. Granulation depends on the properties of each pigment, although many produce smooth washes. There are also other techniques that you can use to prevent granulation from occurring. Water chemistry may also affect granulation, although results vary with the pigments and paper used. My studio is on a chalk hill, where the water has a high mineral content, so this is something I'm interested in exploring. In some cases, a high ratio of water to pigment reduces granulation, as in the case of painting botanically. But if you prefer to 'drop' your colours into water as I do, then make sure you have a high pigment-to-water ratio and keep the board flat so that the colour is given a chance to pool and separate into



Lunar Black, Primatek Hematite Genuine, Cobalt Blue and Cobalt Violet.



the texture of the surface. There is, of course, nothing like experimenting, because different brands, qualities and surfaces will create different effects and painting is a little like handwriting; everyone will produce different results.

Favourite colours

I have lots of favourite colours but there are some that I return to regularly; Lunar Black made by Daniel Smith can often be found in my palette because it's a much softer black than others. Winsor & Newton's Cobalt Violet is also a signature pigment that I've been using for years due to its granular and luminous qualities. Cobalt Blue is another favourite, but my latest acquisitions are the colours that feature in Daniel Smith's Primatek range. These paints use pigments obtained directly from the ground and there is something very satisfying about using a pigment sourced from the earth to paint a naturally occurring subject such as a plant, stone or fungi. They are heavier-bodied than other paint and therefore offer the possibility to add lots of texture. This was my starting point for the painting 'Holy Trinity, Stourpaine', where I wanted to capture the variation in stone around the window with the weathering, and the lichen that has accumulated over the years.





1 One technique that I particularly enjoy when working with granulating pigments is to wash them over the top of a variety of textures laid down in advance. Here I prepared the surface with a combination of white gesso and spattered masking fluid. The gesso partly repels colour anyway, so I knew that dropping granulating pigments over the top was going to give me some interesting results. I applied the gesso with a palette knife so that it skimmed over the top of my watercolour paper; that way when the watercolour comes into contact with it (when it's dry) it will hit and miss and the granulation will be exacerbated. I carefully masked out the lead work in the glass using the ruling pen.







2 The first encounter with the colour was to mix up strong puddles of Cobalt Violet, Cobalt Blue, Hematite, Tiger's Eye and Lunar Black so that I could tackle the stone around the window and produce the 'lichen' effect I was looking for. I let the colour puddle and drip and tipped my board around to get it moving before leaving it flat to dry naturally. Using a hairdryer can alter the way granulating pigments settle, so I prefer to let them dry naturally. At this point, because I needed the glass to appear flat, I chose Daler Rowney's Lamp Black as it is a non-granulating colour, and gave the glass a smooth finish, contrasting with the textured stonework.

3 Once this was dry, I added in the rest of the stonework around the glass, using stronger versions of the colours I used for the outside of the window. Where the colour needed to be flatter I included the Lamp Black to counteract the granulation. I took care not to let this wash flood into the glasswork.

4 After my initial washes were all dry, I removed the masking fluid with a masking fluid eraser and used the Hematite and Lunar Black mixed together, to put in all the remaining shadows in the architecture. This constant experimentation with what colour can do for me is one of the driving forces of my work, after all, what's not to like about experimenting?



All in the detail...

Granulating pigments settle into the paper's texture, creating subtle variations that are particularly effective for weathered stone, lichen and other natural surfaces

Painting the spaces between

Discover how painting around a subject, rather than painting the subject itself, can create striking shapes, beautiful contrasts and a sense of depth in your watercolours

When you look at a flower, a tree or a collection of objects, your first instinct is probably to paint the things you can see. But what about the spaces between them?

These are known as *negative spaces*, and learning to recognise them can transform the way you paint. The objects themselves are called positive shapes. Negative space is everything around and between them: the gaps between leaves, the sky visible through branches or the background surrounding a vase.

Rather than concentrating entirely on the objects, you can use these surrounding areas to define their outlines. This is called *negative painting*, and it's particularly effective in watercolour.



The pale petals stand out against the surrounding pink, purple and turquoise washes, showing how the spaces around a subject help define its shape

Seeing shapes differently

Imagine a pale flower against dark foliage. You could paint each petal individually, carefully following its outline. Alternatively, you could paint the darker foliage around the petals, allowing their shapes to emerge from the unpainted areas. This approach encourages you to look at the spaces between objects as shapes in their own right.

It's useful when painting complicated subjects such as trees, flowers and foliage, where trying to draw every individual element can make a painting look stiff or overworked. Look at the floral painting above. The pale petals are easier to distinguish because of the deeper colours surrounding them. The contrast between light and dark helps give the flowers their form.

Negative space doesn't have to be white

One of the most useful things to understand is that negative painting doesn't necessarily mean leaving areas of white paper untouched. You can begin with a pale wash of colour, allow it to dry, then paint a darker wash around selected shapes. The lighter colour remains visible, creating the impression of objects emerging from the background. Successive darker washes create overlapping shapes and depth.

For example, a pale green wash



Pale tree trunks and branches stand out against deeper green, blue and violet washes, while the spaces between them help establish the woodland scene

might become the lightest leaves in a painting. A second, darker green wash can define leaves in the foreground, while another layer of deeper green helps separate them from the background.

Each layer reveals new shapes without needing to paint directly inside them.

Try it yourself: painting around circles

You don't need to be able to draw to experiment with negative painting. Simple circles are an excellent way to understand the principle before moving on to more complicated subjects.

Use watercolour paper, a round brush and two or three strengths of green paint. The photographs show the exercise after the initial pale wash has dried.

1 Begin with a pale wash

Cover a small area of paper with a light, even wash of green and allow it to dry completely. This will become the lightest colour in your finished exercise.

2 Paint around a circle

Imagine a circle on the paper, or lightly sketch one in pencil if you prefer. Using a darker green, paint around its outline, leaving the pale wash inside untouched. Continue the darker colour into the surrounding area.

3 Introduce another shape

Once the second wash is completely dry, imagine another circle overlapping the first. Paint a further wash around the shapes, preserving the lighter areas you want to keep. The overlapping circles will begin to separate visually.

4 Build depth with darker colour

Apply another, deeper green wash around both circles, allowing the previous layers to remain visible. The increasing contrast strengthens the outlines and makes the shapes stand out.

From circles to paintings

Once you've tried this exercise, look for opportunities to use the same principle in your own work.

You might paint around the gaps between leaves, preserve pale branches against a darker woodland background, or use surrounding colour to reveal the shapes of flower petals. Start with simple, recognisable shapes. As you become more confident, experiment with overlapping forms and additional layers.

Remember that negative painting isn't about filling every available space with colour. It's about choosing which areas to paint and which to preserve.

Sometimes, the most important part of a painting is the bit you leave alone.



Paint around a circle, preserving the pale green wash inside rather than painting the circle itself



A second circle introduces overlapping shapes and a further contrast between light and dark



Successive darker washes around the circles strengthen their definition and demonstrate how negative painting builds depth

TOP TIP Allow each wash to dry before adding the next. If the underlying paint is still damp, the colours may bleed together and you'll lose the clearly defined edges that make negative painting effective

Sunlit grapes

Jola Sopek captures the translucent glow of sunlit grapes, using delicate washes, subtle colour mixing and salt to create texture in the leaves





MATERIALS USED

■ **Surface:** 300 gsm cold-pressed, 100% cotton watercolour paper block

■ **Paints:** French Ultramarine, Phthalo Blue, Pyrrol Scarlet, Quinacridone Rose, New Gamboge, Hansa Yellow Light

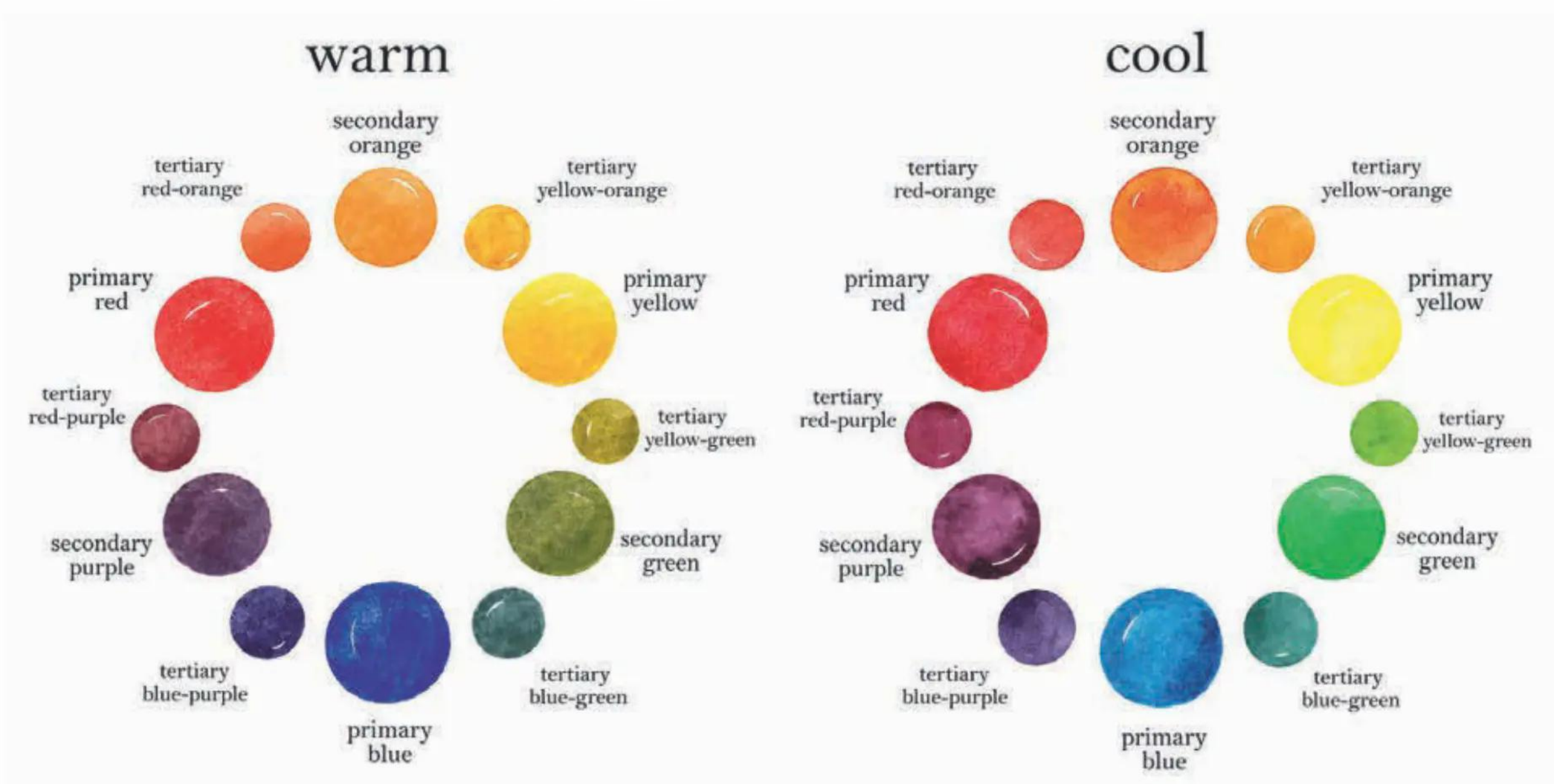
■ **Brushes:** Size 2 synthetic mop brush; small synthetic round detail brush

■ **Other:** Soft pencil, kneadable eraser, fine table salt, three water jars, kitchen paper

Mixing your greens



The limited colour palette makes this photo a little challenging, as it forces us to accentuate subtle tonal differences and mix paints carefully, while maintaining the subject's general lightness and the transparency of watercolour. I like to use six paints to mix all my colours – primary red, blue and yellow, with warm and cool versions of each. Mixing complementary colours can produce muted or neutral tones. For example, if you want to darken yellow, add a tiny bit of purple. You can mix colours across temperatures too, to achieve even more varied tones!









1 Using a soft pencil, outline your composition. Mine is a loose composition; you can draw yours however you prefer, but keep it fairly simple to avoid overcomplicating the illustration.

2 Load the mop brush with a generous amount of water and lay down a wash within the borders of the first leaf. Make sure you don't create puddles or leave any areas too dry; the sweet spot is to have the area wet but still be able to see the paper's texture underneath.

3 Load the brush with a rich green colour (a mix of warm blue, cool blue, warm yellow, and a touch of cool red), then drop the paint onto the wet area, but make sure not to cover the entire leaf with the same colour. I like to drop the darkest tones in the corners.

TOP TIP When drawing a sketch outline, make your pencil lines as soft as possible so they don't show up underneath the transparent watercolour layers

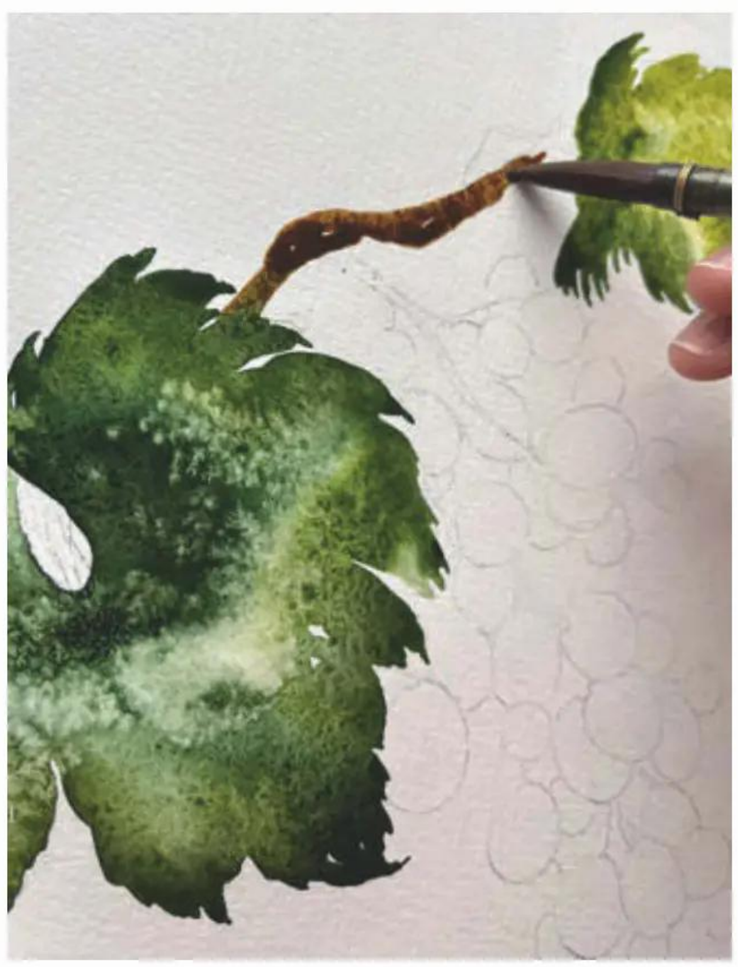


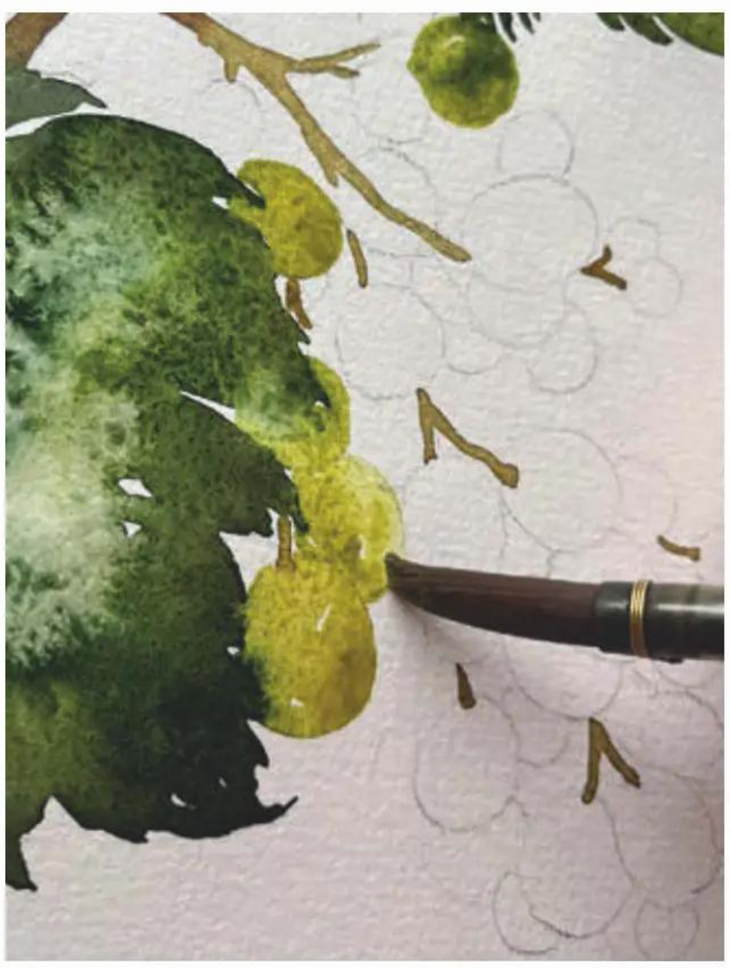


4 Quickly switch to a warmer green (add some warm yellow to the dark green mix) and fill in the leaf with the two-tone greens, leaving some areas pigment-free to preserve luminosity. Using the tip of the brush, paint the spiky edges of the leaf.

5 While the paint on the leaf is still wet, sprinkle some fine table salt on the foliage. Leave it to dry completely before doing anything else. In the meantime, paint the second smaller leaf. I chose to use more warm yellow in the second one to change it up.

TOP TIP Fine table salt creates delicate textures in wet watercolour. Coarser salt produces different effects, so experiment to see which you prefer



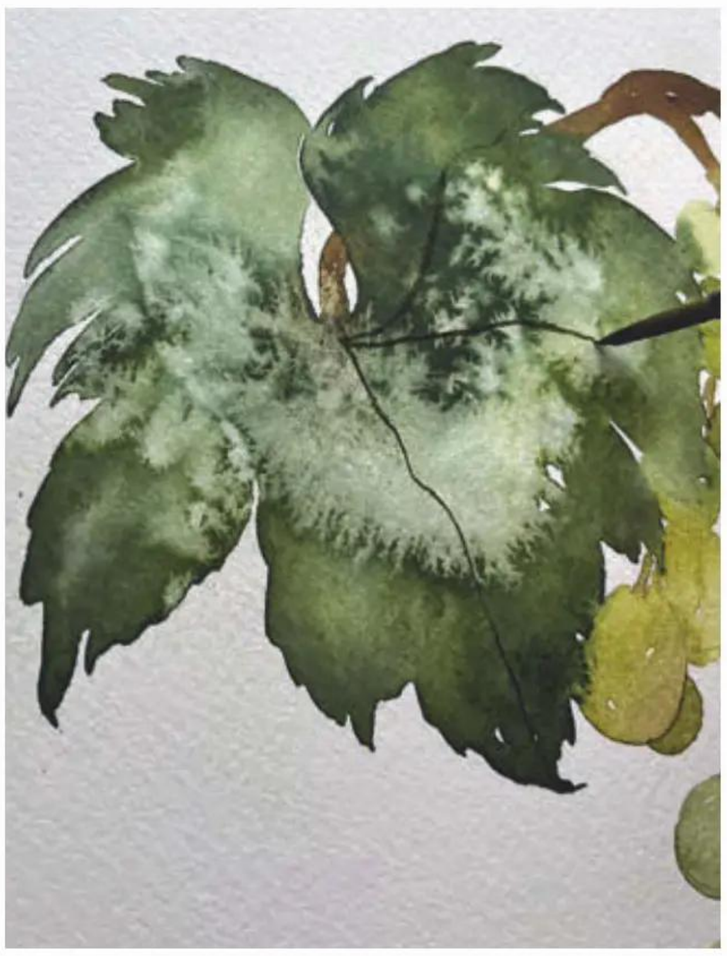




6 Wash the green from the brush and switch to a warm, yellowish brown. While the second leaf is still moist, paint a small stem connecting the leaves so that the brown blends with the green.

7 Add a little more yellow to the mix to lighten it further and paint the tiny stems across the grape bunch. Then switch to a muted yellow mix to start painting the grapes. I begin with the ones next to the first leaf so the pigments merge lightly.

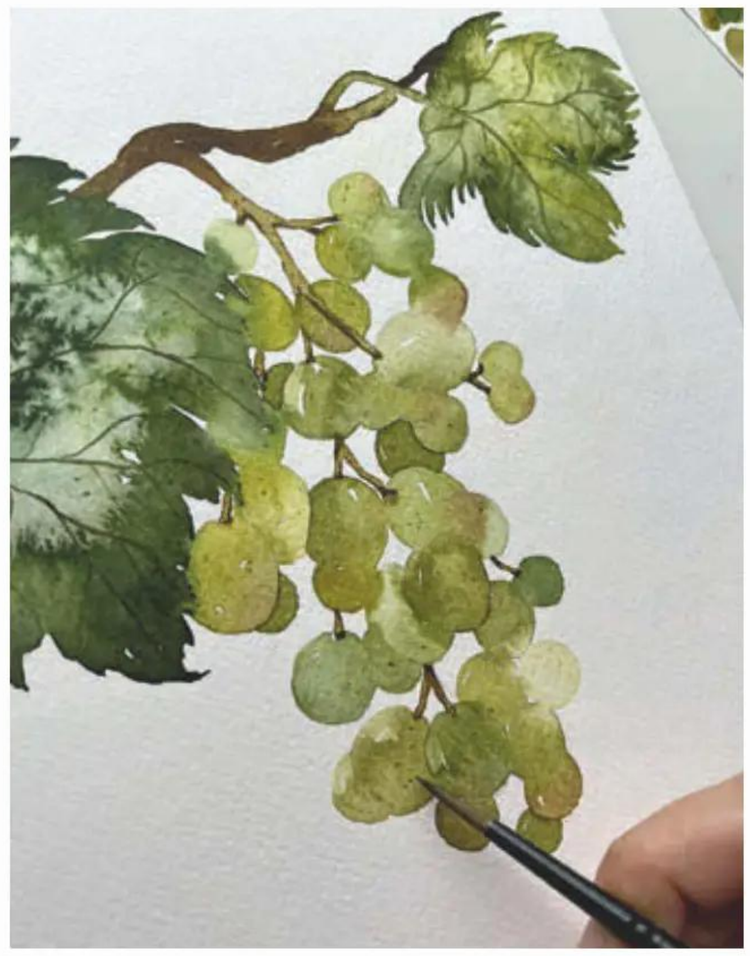
8 Continue painting the bunch of grapes. I constantly adjust the saturation of the paint mix by adding water, removing pigment, then adding more pigment, and so on. You want the grapes to be of varied sizes and saturations. Subtle colour changes will work a treat too – I like to drop a little warm red into the muted yellow mix for some of the grapes.



9 Let everything dry completely. Using clean fingers, remove excess salt from the leaves. Now switch to the detail brush and, using a dark brownish-green, paint some leaf veins on both leaves.



10 Switch to dark brown and add some texture and contrast to the stems and branches.



11 Using some greens and muted yellows (not too pale or too dark), add subtle texture to the grapes and leaves – I like to paint tiny, scattered, irregular dots to achieve that.



12 When I feel an illustration is finished, I like to get up and take a proper look at it from a distance. Sometimes I may feel like I need to add a little grape or two, or perhaps another small leaf here or there. It is up to you – sometimes it can be tricky to find the right spot without overdoing the composition, though!

Summer Meadow

Harriet de Winton brings a field of wild flowers to life

For years, I've been sketching the landscape, and summer presents such an exciting riot of colour, with wildflowers appearing everywhere you look. This project attempts to capture the full palette of a wildflower field drenched in a hazy sunlight whilst keeping your watercolour tones bright and fresh. This is painted largely in a loose watercolour style, with finishing touches of detail, featuring flowers such as *Achillea filipendulina* 'Cloth of Gold', Imperial poppies, cornflowers, grasses and wild daisies.



MATERIALS USED

■ **Surface:** 23x18cm (9x7in) cold-pressed watercolour paper

■ **Paints:** Payne's Grey, Permanent Rose, Alizarin Crimson, Cadmium Red, Cobalt Blue Deep, Winsor Blue, Cobalt Turquoise, Green Gold, Sap Green, Burnt Sienna, Cadmium Yellow, Yellow Ochre, Cadmium Orange, Moonglow, Imperial Purple

■ **Brushes:** Pointed Round size 8, 2, 0 and 4/0; size 6 mop brush; size 0 rigger brush

■ **Other**: Masking fluid; masking fluid applicator; HB pencil; eraser; low-tack masking tape (optional)

Mixes



Poppy: Permanent Rose, Alizarin Crimson



Cornflower: Imperial Purple, Cobalt Blue Deep



Gold: Cadmium Yellow, Sap Green, Moonglow, Burnt Sienna



Grass: Yellow Ochre, Moonglow



Rust: Cadmium Red, Burnt Sienna



Hazy: Imperial Purple, Payne's Grey, Burnt Sienna, Cobalt Blue Deep



Fresh: Green Gold, Cobalt Turquoise



Green: Sap Green, Green Gold, Moonglow



Shadow: Yellow Ochre, Moonglow, Sap Green, Payne's Grey





1 Draw some faint pencil stems for the grasses and poppies of your piece. Add scattered ovals for the daisy centres across the bottom half. Paint masking fluid petals around those daisy centres and leave them to dry fully.





2 With the mop brush, wet the entire painting area. While still wet, with the size 2 brush, apply dabs of wet Cadmium Yellow, Cornflower Mix and Poppy Mix to build up a soft-focus field of flowers. As it slowly dries, add streaks of Green Mix and Hazy Mix 'grasses', in and around the flower dots to build a pale meadow backdrop. Allow to dry fully.







3 In the bottom half of your piece – the foreground – add dabs of Cadmium Yellow to the yellow spots in the wash to turn them into Achillea filipendulina flowers. While still wet, add dabs of Shadow Mix around the lower edge of each flower to create a 3D effect. Paint slender, dilute Shadow Mix stems down to the bottom edge of the wash with a rigger brush.

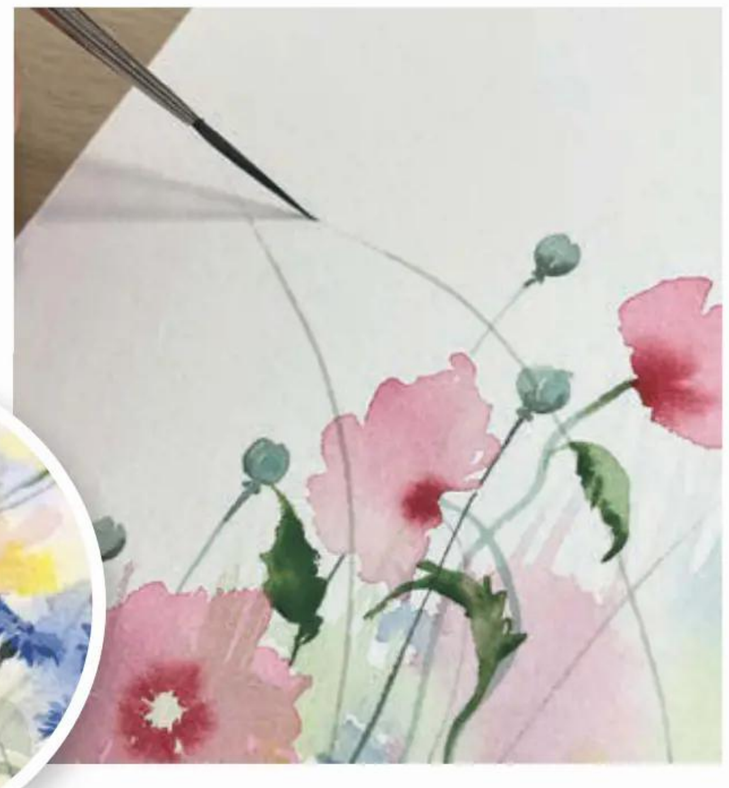
4 Fan the size 2 brush to create rough-edged poppy petals with dilute Poppy Mix. While still wet, add a dab of concentrated Alizarin Crimson to the poppy centre. With the size 0 brush, paint Green Mix poppy seedhead spheres and stems that fade and disappear into the bottom of the piece. Add a sweep of concentrated Shadow Mix along the bottom curve of the seedhead for a 3D effect.

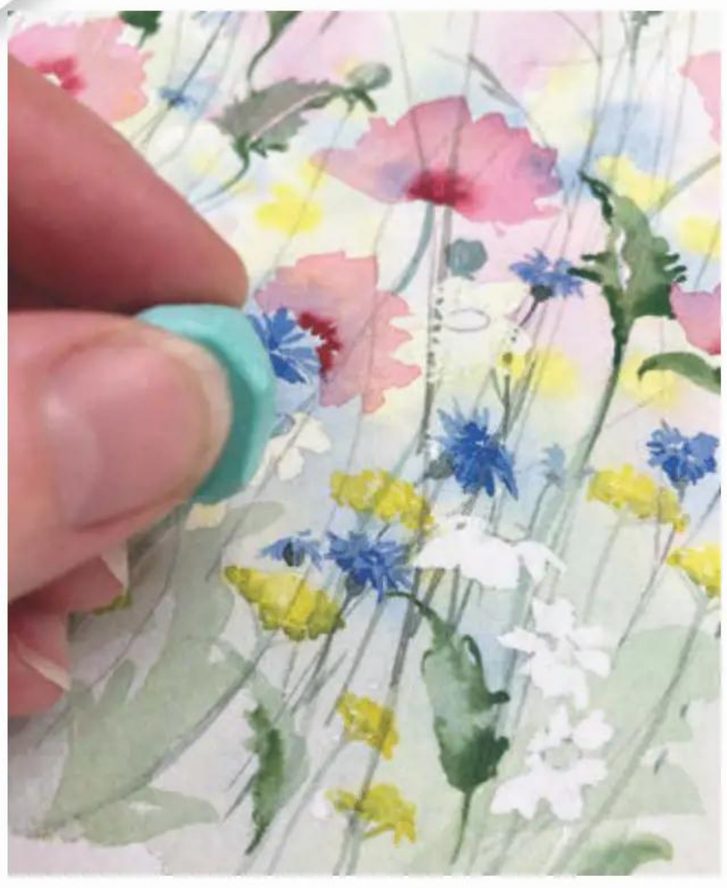






5 With the size 2 brush, paint curved leaves on the poppy stems in Green Mix. While still wet, add sweeps of Sap Green to create gnarly, serrated edges on the leaves.
With the size 0 brush, paint starburst dashes of dilute Cornflower Mix on top of any blue dabs in the background mix in the bottom half of the piece. Once dry, add Cobalt Blue Deep darker accents to the flower centres and edges. Paint fine line stems in Shadow Mix with the size 4/0 brush. Dilute the Green Mix and paint larger, less defined leaf shapes with the size 8 pointed round brush along the bottom edge of the piece.





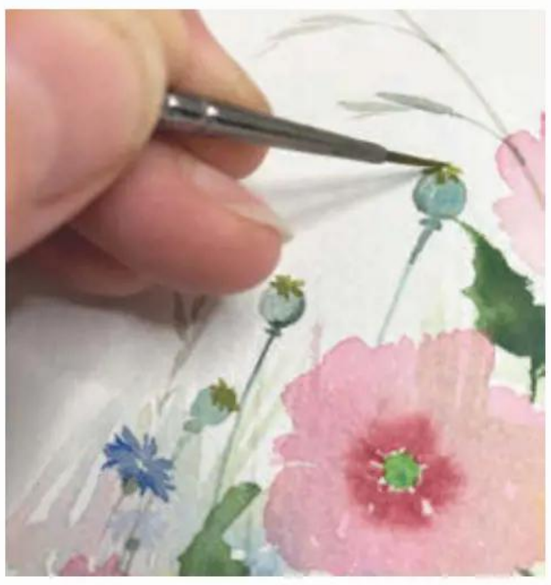


6 With the rigger brush, paint tall, slender stems for the grasses using Grass Mix. Add dashes at the end of each stem with the size 0 brush. While that is drying, peel away the masking fluid. You can use a hard eraser or your fingers to do so.





7 All with the size 0 brush, paint dilute Shadow Mix dashes along the white daisy petals. Once dry, paint Cadmium Orange centres, and Sap Green stems and leaves. Once the orange centres are dry, add a few dabs of concentrated Rust Mix for texture.





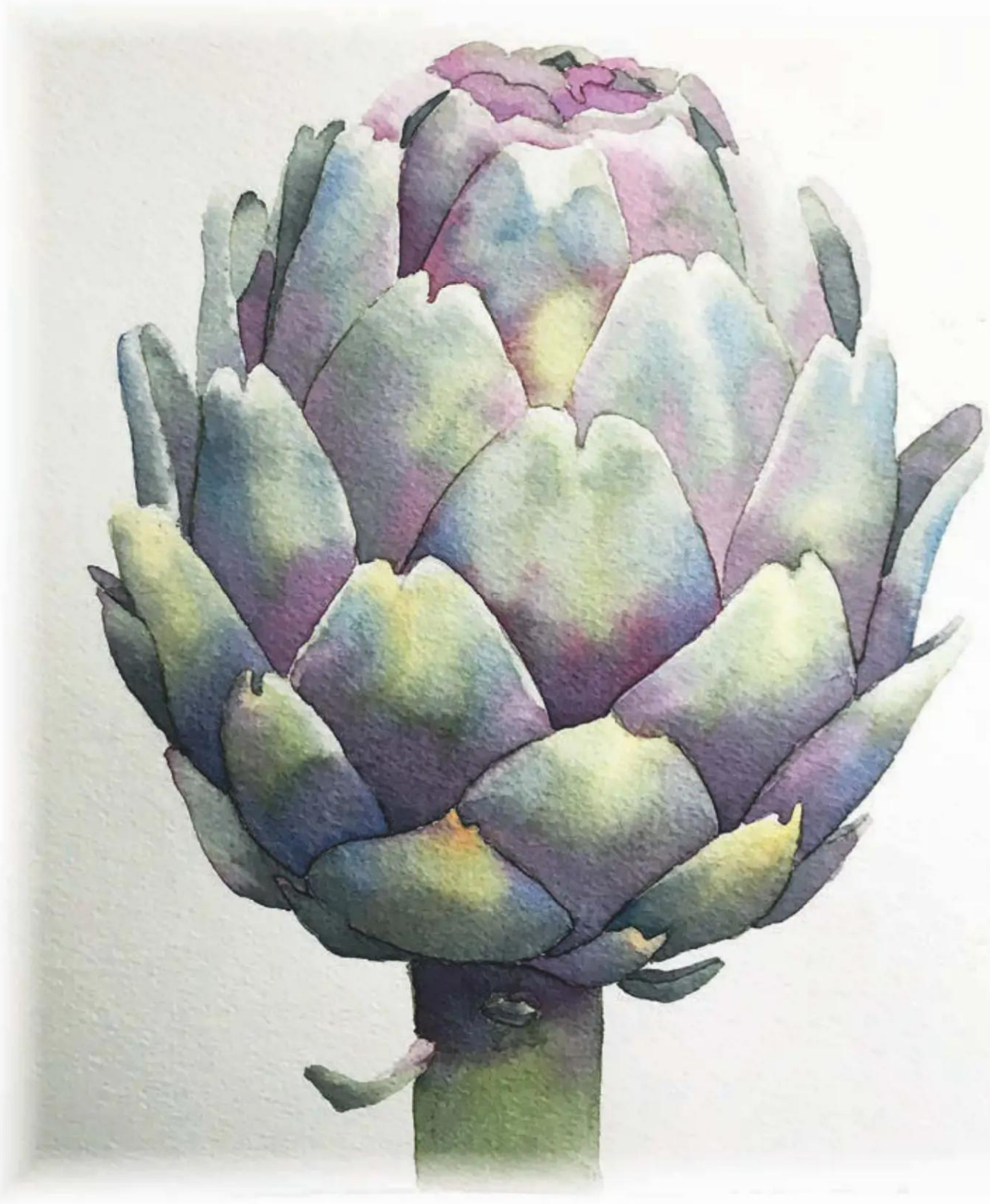

8 With the 4/0 brush, paint a concentrated Yellow Ochre star on top of each poppy seedhead. Once dry, add a low light of concentrated Shadow Mix. Paint a Fresh Mix centre in the open-faced poppies and a dab of Cobalt Turquoise while still wet. Allow to dry fully, and then add a concentrated Cobalt Turquoise star surrounded by a halo of Cadmium Yellow dots.




9 Finish each cornflower centre with some dabs of concentrated Payne's Grey with the 4/0 brush. If some stems feel like they are floating, add a few more loose leaves in dilute Green Mix with the size 8 brush along the bottom edge of the piece to ground the plants.

Modern botanical

Tracey Bengeyfield creates a study of a globe artichoke using wet into wet blended colour



MATERIALS USED

■ **Surface:** 20 × 16 in (51 × 41 cm) 300 gsm cold-pressed (NOT) watercolour paper

■ **Paints:** Chromium Oxide, Olive Green, Cobalt Blue, Ultramarine, Violet, Quinacridone Lilac, Quinacridone Rose, Payne's Grey, Raw Sienna, Lemon Yellow, Yellow Ochre, Hansa Yellow, Raw Umber

■ **Brushes:** Round brushes, sizes 6 and 10; liner brush

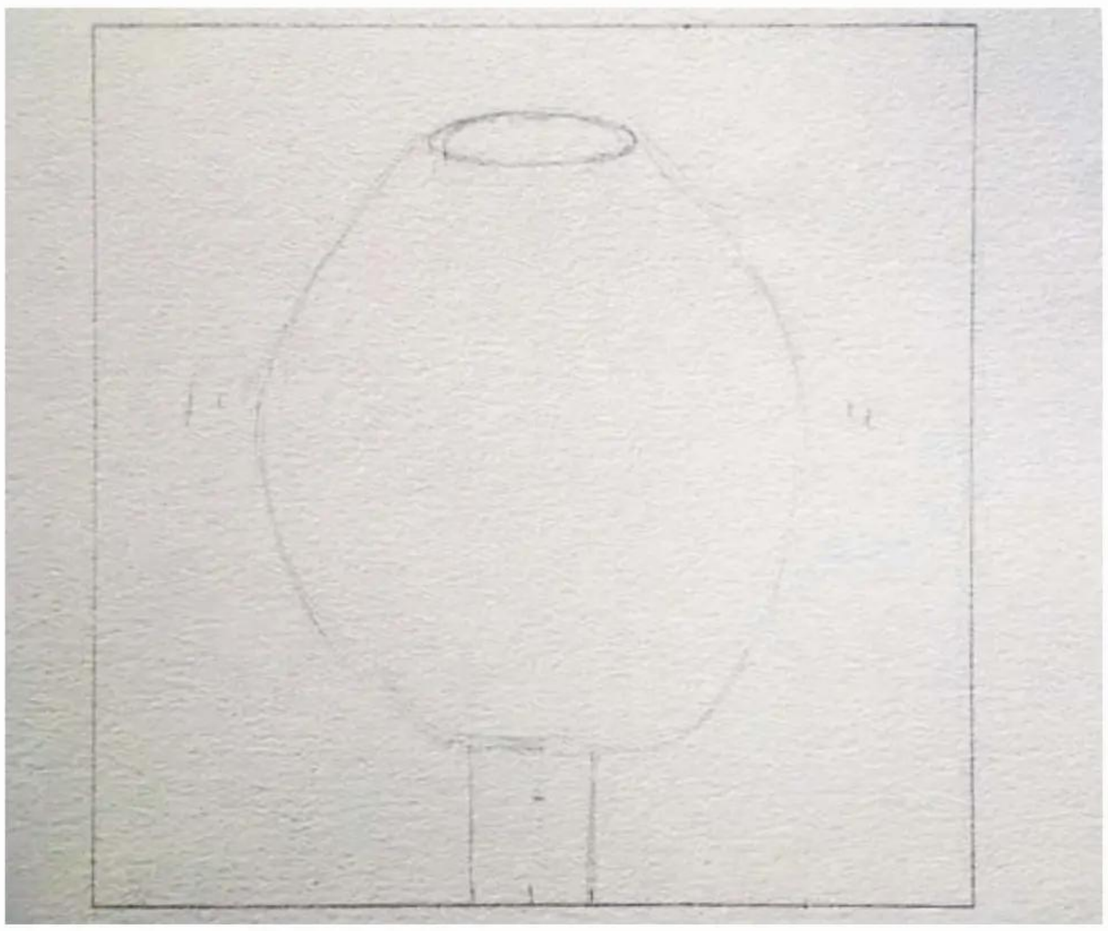
■ **Other:** HB pencil; masking fluid and applicator (optional)

ALTERNATIVE COLOURS

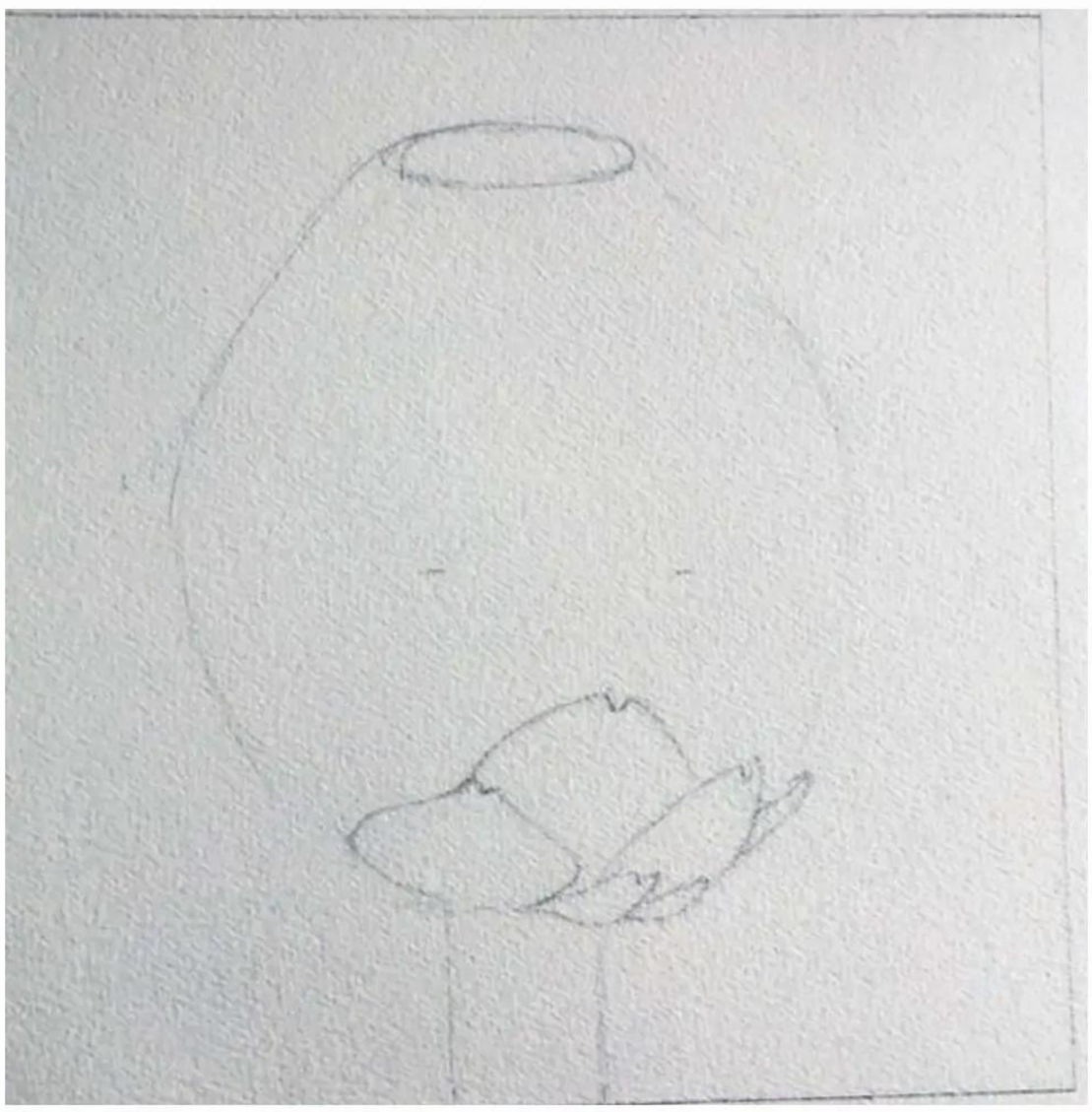
■ Chromium Oxide: Terre Verte + Cobalt; Sap Green + Yellow Ochre + touch of Payne's Grey
■ Hansa Yellow: Cadmium Yellow
■ Violet: Ultramarine + Alizarin Crimson
■ Quinacridone Rose: Permanent Rose, Opera Rose or Alizarin Crimson
■ Quinacridone Lilac: Quinacridone Rose + Violet or Ultramarine
■ Olive Green: Sap Green + Yellow Ochre
■ Payne's Grey: Burnt Sienna + Ultramarine

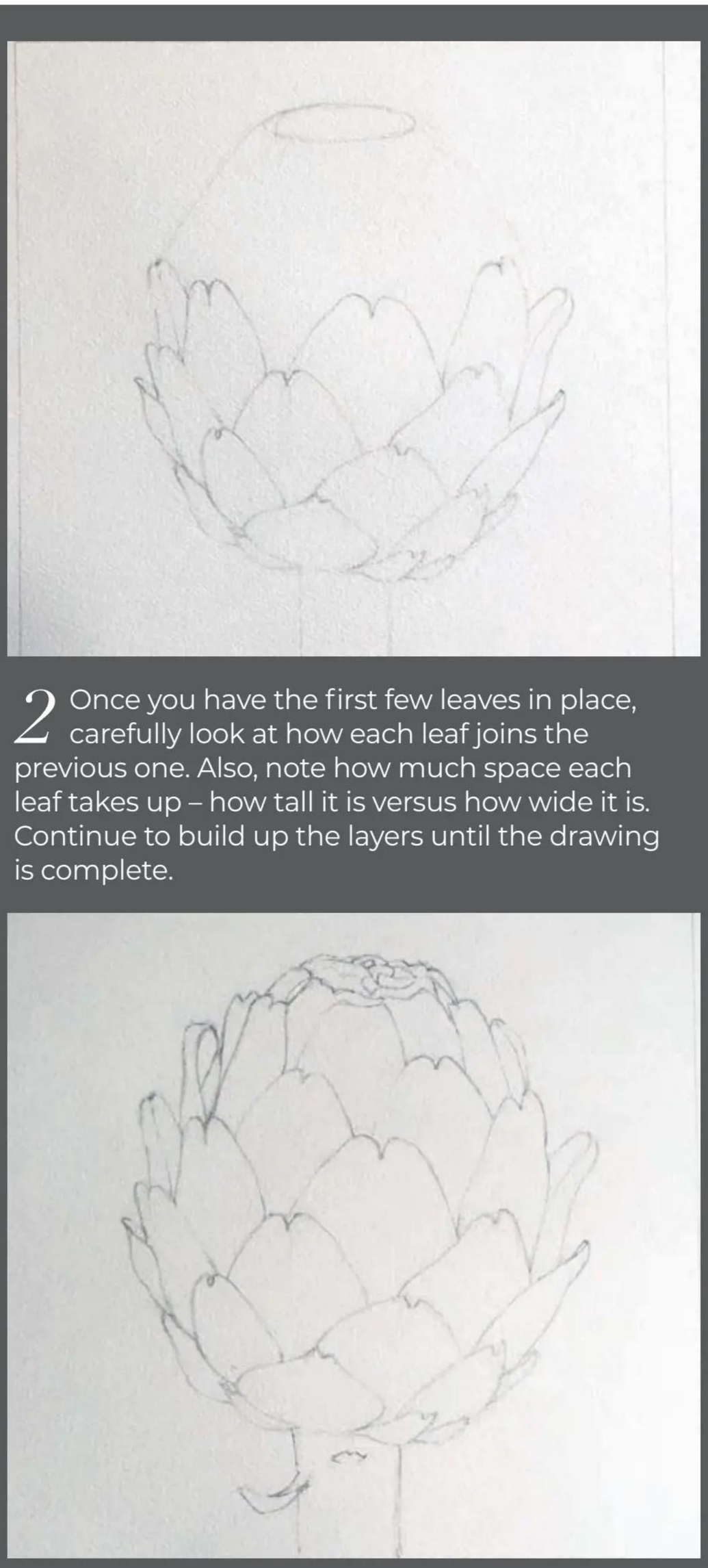
Before you begin your artichoke, think about how you would like your finished painting to look. If it helps, you can sketch out a few ideas. Remember, you don't always have to copy exactly what you see in a photograph. You can take your favourite shapes and create your own composition. I wanted to create a striking, modern botanical look rather than a traditional painting that would include the artichoke and the background. I enjoy painting using a square format, so with this in mind, I created my own composition.

Once you have decided on the composition, use an HB pencil to draw your artichoke. I have drawn a pencil frame for each of my artichokes as I wanted a square format. Feel free to skip this step if you are using the same format as the paper.
Next, look closely at how the artichoke is made up of different layers (a bit like a pinecone). Each 'leaf', or bract, overlaps the next to form the artichoke's recognisable globe shape.



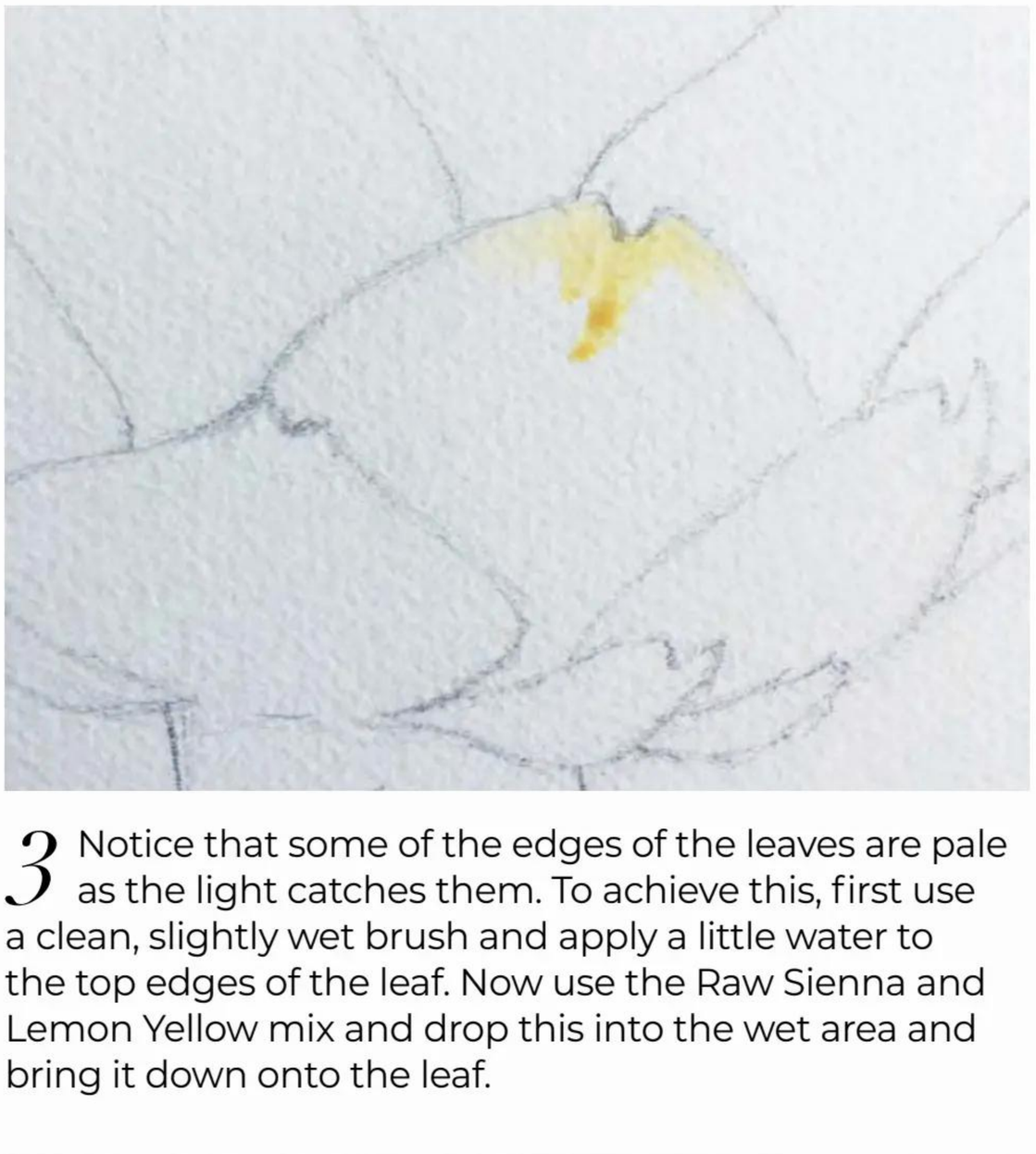
1 Start by drawing the rough outer globe shape of the artichoke. Indicate the flattened top with an ellipse. Try to get the proportions correct so that the leaves will fall into place. If the globe is too tall and narrow, you will need to elongate each of the leaves to fill the space. Alternatively, if the globe is too short and round, you will have to squash the leaf shapes as you might not have enough room to place them all!





2 Once you have the first few leaves in place, carefully look at how each leaf joins the previous one. Also, note how much space each leaf takes up – how tall it is versus how wide it is. Continue to build up the layers until the drawing is complete.

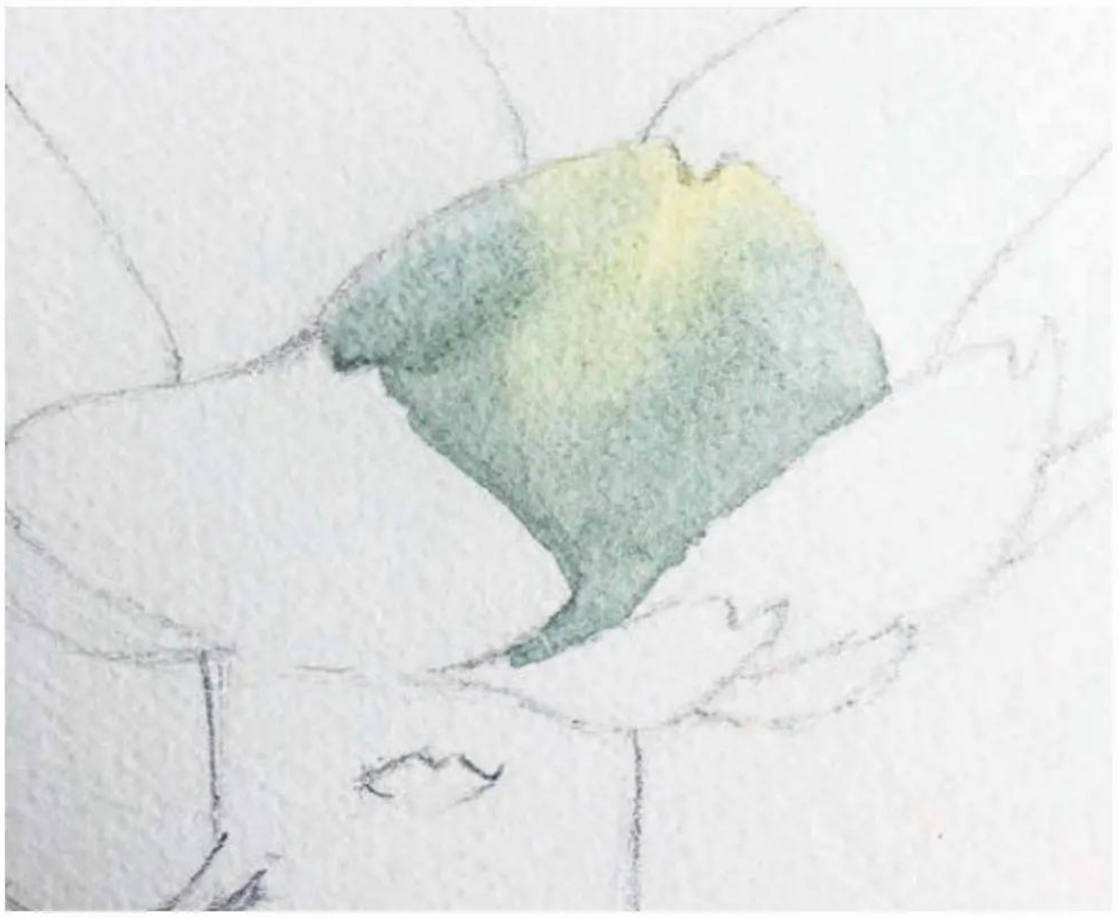
You will tackle the leaves using the same basic technique. Start by mixing the colours you will need. You will mainly work onto dry paper to apply your colour but add subsequent colours while the others remain wet (so that the colours merge on the paper). Have your colours ready before starting, so the paint on the paper doesn't dry before you can blend it.
Start by mixing a pale warm yellow using Raw Sienna with a touch of Lemon Yellow. Make a medium-pale mix of Chromium Oxide, then a separate mix of Yellow Ochre and Cobalt to create a blue-green hue, a light mix of Quinacridone Lilac, and a pale mix of Violet and Quinacridone Rose.

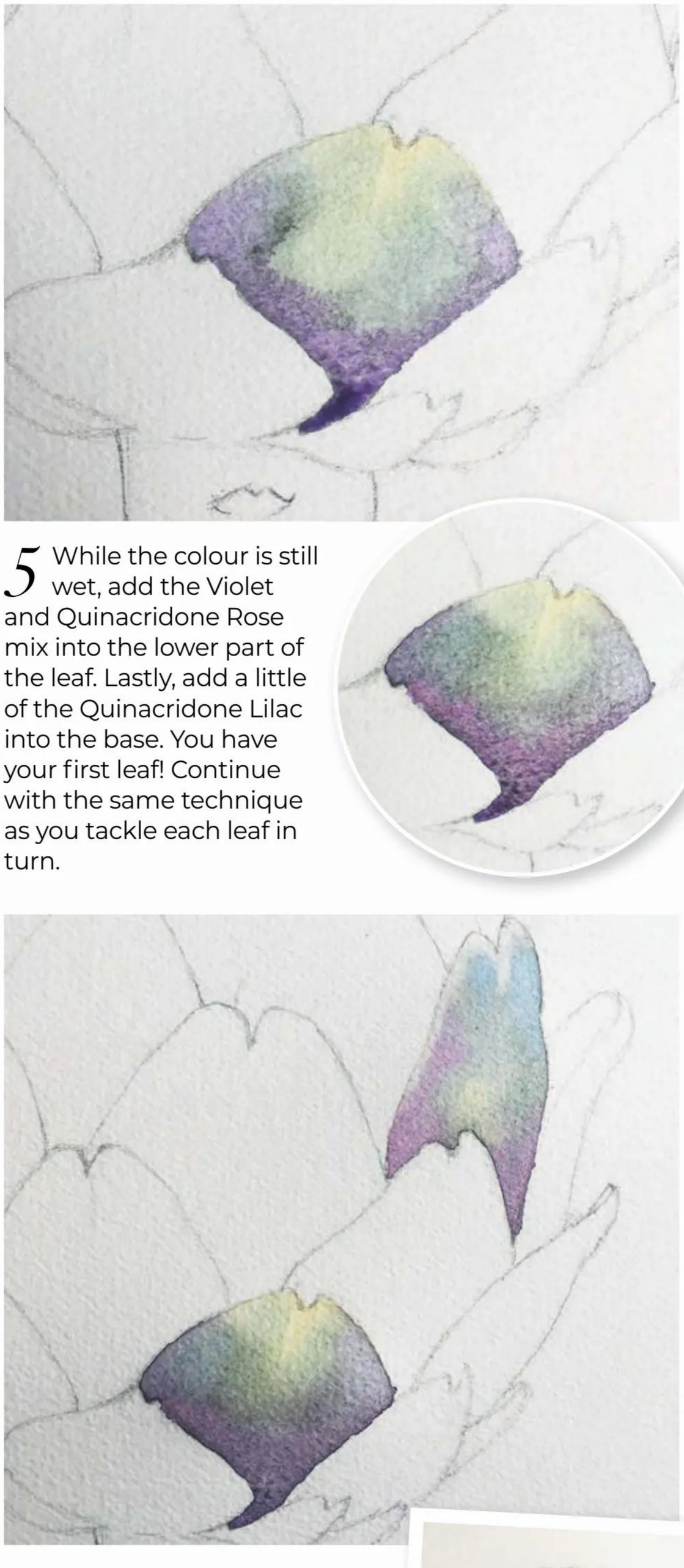


3 Notice that some of the edges of the leaves are pale as the light catches them. To achieve this, first use a clean, slightly wet brush and apply a little water to the top edges of the leaf. Now use the Raw Sienna and Lemon Yellow mix and drop this into the wet area and bring it down onto the leaf.



4 While the colour is still wet, use the Chromium Oxide and apply it to the edges of the yellow so that the colours merge on the surface of the paper. Next, use the Yellow Ochre and Cobalt mix to bring the colour across the remaining area of the leaf.





5 While the colour is still wet, add the Violet and Quinacridone Rose mix into the lower part of the leaf. Lastly, add a little of the Quinacridone Lilac into the base. You have your first leaf! Continue with the same technique as you tackle each leaf in turn.



6 For the next leaf, choose one that doesn't share an edge with the first, otherwise the two wet washes may bleed together. Repeat the same process with the new leaf, but remember to keep looking at your photograph so that you can replicate the colour combinations – these will alter slightly across the surface.



7 Once you have completed as many non-touching leaves as you can, you can go back and fill in the missing gaps.



8 When all the leaves are complete, you can turn your attention to the stem. Paint the stem wet-on-dry using Chromium Oxide, then touch on a little of the Yellow Ochre and Cobalt mix underneath the globe to create a slightly darker hue.



9 While it's still wet, add a little of the Violet and Quinacridone Rose colour to create a deeper shadow under the globe. Allow the paint to dry completely, then erase any unwanted pencil lines.





10 Once your artichoke is complete, create more depth by adding some shading. Start by mixing a shadow colour using a pale Payne's Grey with a touch of Quinacridone Lilac added. Make sure it is not too strong, or you will obliterate all your hard work. Use a clean wet brush and apply water all over one of the leaves. While the paper is still wet, use a smaller brush to drop in the shadow colour, just into the base of the leaf.

Make sure that you work into leaves that don't touch each other (as you did with the first layer) and remember to keep looking at the amount of shadow in each leaf and how it changes as you travel across the surface. Note that the leaves on the underside of the globe are mainly in shadow, and less so as they move towards the top of the artichoke. Use the same colour to shade the stem just beneath the globe. You're done!

Blood oranges

Jola Sopek uses vibrant washes and delicate details to capture the rich colours and juicy textures of freshly sliced blood oranges



MATERIALS USED

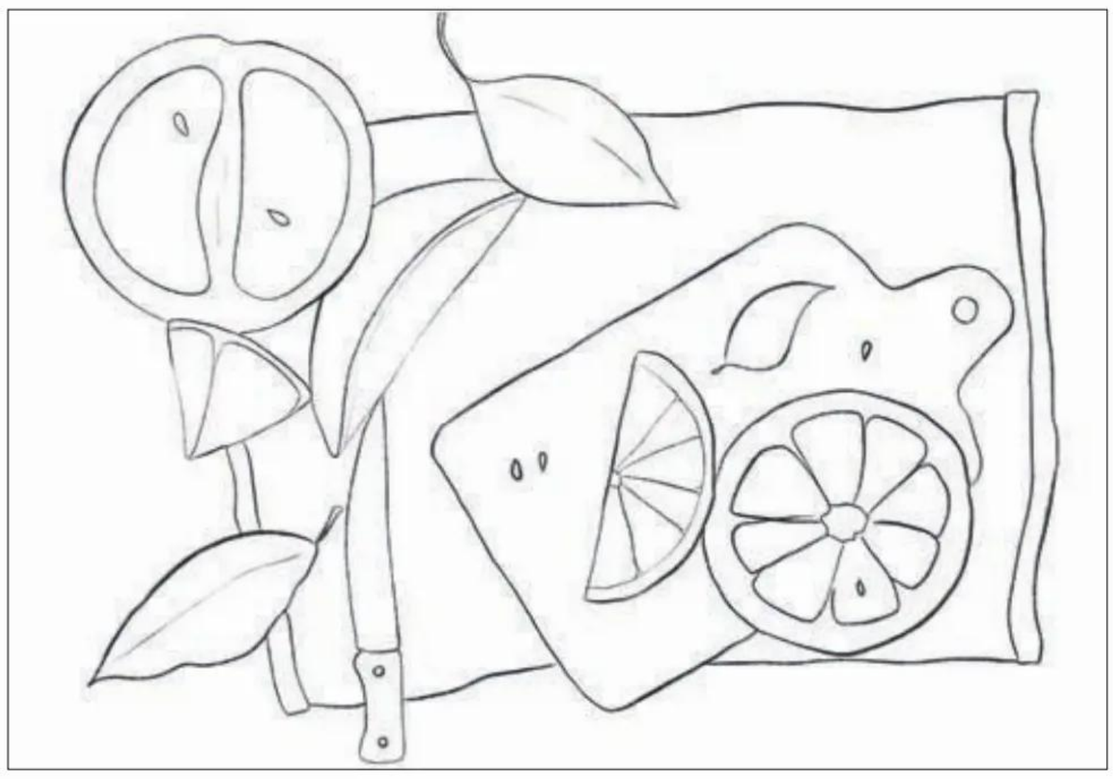
■ **Surface:** A4 300 gsm cold-pressed, 100% cotton watercolour paper

■ **Paints:** Etchr Lab 24-colour watercolour pan set (see colour chart opposite for equivalents), Sap Green, Cerulean Blue and Burnt Umber

■ **Brushes:** Size 2 synthetic mop brush; size 10 synthetic angular flat brush

■ **Other:** Soft pencil; kneadable eraser; water jars; kitchen paper; scrap paper for colour testing; reference photographs

Colours in the Etchr palette with colour index and equivalents
Pure White PW6; Lemon Yellow PY3; Just Yellow PY35 (Cadmium Yellow); Mighty Ochre PY42 (Ochre); Llama Orange PY150 (Nickel Azo Yellow); Soft Orange PO20 (Cadmium Orange); Simply Red PR108 (Cadmium Red); Rogue Red PR177 (Alizarin Crimson); Sweet Red PR123 (Perylene Red); Pretty Pink PV19 (Quinacridone Magenta); Royal Purple PV23 (Dioxazine Violet); Lime Green PG36 + PY74 (Phthalo Green + Hansa Yellow); Leaf Green PG17 (Chromium Oxide Green); Emerald Green PG7 (Phthalo Green Blue Shade); Ocean Turquoise PY101 + PB17 (Yellow + Cyan); Ultramarine Blue PB29; Prussian Blue PB27; Sky Blue PB15.3 (Phthalo Blue); Cobalt Blue PB28; Umber Brown PR101 + PBr7 (Indian Red + Burnt Sienna); Brick Brown (Red Oxide); Burnt Sienna PBr7; Dark Brown PBr7 + PBk7 (Burnt Sienna + Carbon Black); Power Black (Carbon Black)





1 Arrange your objects, then make a pencil sketch of the still life composition, filling the entire page. Ensure that your pencil sketch is as light as possible – avoid pressing too hard with the pencil onto the watercolour paper, which is a delicate surface. Watercolours are a transparent medium, so pencil lines tend to show underneath the paint if the sketch is too hard.





2 Prepare the size 2 mop brush; we will be using it all the way up until the very last step, when we will switch to the flat angular brush for the final strokes.

Pre-mix the colours you will be using on a mixing palette; this will save time when you are in the middle of painting!

Start with a mix of Lemon Yellow, Cadmium Yellow, Orange and a tiny bit of Cadmium Red to paint all the orange fruit skins. Vary the ratio of pigment to water, so that some parts of the skin are a deeper orange, and others are a paler, more transparent value. Clean the brush.



3 Here we are working with Cadmium Red, Rogue Red, Orange, Magenta and Purple; switching quickly from one to another to paint the vibrant blood orange flesh. Vary the ratio of pigment to water to achieve more transparency in some parts of the fruit. I like to apply the denser colours to the edges of the fruit triangles. Make sure you leave out small empty spaces between brushstrokes, to achieve the effect of highlights – this imitates the light reflecting off the flesh and creates an interesting texture to the fruit. Clean the brush.

4 Without waiting for the fruit flesh to dry, load the brush up with a very diluted pale grey to paint the knife blade (I like to mix a tiny bit of Carbon Black and Cerulean Blue). Start your stroke at the sharp tip of the knife, barely touching the orange flesh, and pull the pigment down with the brush. Touching the fruit will ensure that some of its pigment will seep into the pale grey of the knife, which gives off the effect of juice covering the blade.



Clean the brush and swiftly load it up with a deep brown to paint the wooden knife handle (mix Umber Brown, Dark Brown, and some Yellow Ochre). Try to lift off some of the dark brown from the very middle of the handle to ensure some variety in the tone of brown. Clean the brush.



5 Load the brush up with a vibrant mix of green (Sap Green and Emerald Green, plus a touch of Royal Purple to make it richer) to paint all three orange leaves. I paint each leaf in the same rhythm – paint the first half with a darker, deeper shade of green, then dilute the pigment with some water, and load the brush up with a little yellowish green to paint the remaining half. This gives the leaves variation in colour and tone. As usual, vary the ratio of water to pigment to achieve lighter values in the middle of the leaves. This will help avoid making the leaves seem flat. Clean the brush.



6 Here, you can wait for the leaf that is on the chopping board to dry a little – but it doesn't have to be completely dry. Load the brush up with a light, warm brown (Yellow Ochre and Burnt Umber) to paint the wooden chopping board underneath the two oranges and the leaf. Make sure you leave the three small empty teardrop-shaped gaps, these will become orange pips later.

As you are putting down the wash of brown, vary the ratio of water to pigment – I like to try to preserve shadow areas just beneath the fruit and the leaf by applying a darker mix of paint, and I do the same to the very edges of the chopping board. I then dilute the paint with some more water to make the brown lighter for the rest of the surface. This helps achieve a more nuanced texture. Clean the brush.



7 Load the brush up with a light pale blue (Cerulean Blue, Ultramarine Blue and the tiniest bit of Orange to tone the blue down) to paint the kitchen towel underneath the fruit and the chopping board. Vary the ratio of water to pigment – again, preserve shadow areas just beneath the fruit, knife and chopping board by applying a darker mix of paint. I dilute the blue a bit more for the rest of the towel.

Once the light blue surface is painted, load the brush with a darker value of blue (Ultramarine Blue, Royal Purple, Prussian Blue) to paint the two dark edges of the towel. The combination of light and dark blue makes for a more varied look. Clean the brush.



8 At this stage, let the paper dry properly before moving on. We will now be adding finer details to our illustration, which can easily get lost – that's why we need the surface to be dried completely.

Let's start with the orange pips – two on the left-hand side orange, three on the chopping board, and one on the right-hand side orange slice. Load the brush up with a light mix of Dark Brown and Carbon Black (very diluted pigments, so they aren't too dark) and using the very tip of your mop brush, delicately fill in the empty teardrop shapes with the light brown. Leave a tiny unpainted gap to suggest light reflecting off the pips and give them more dimension.

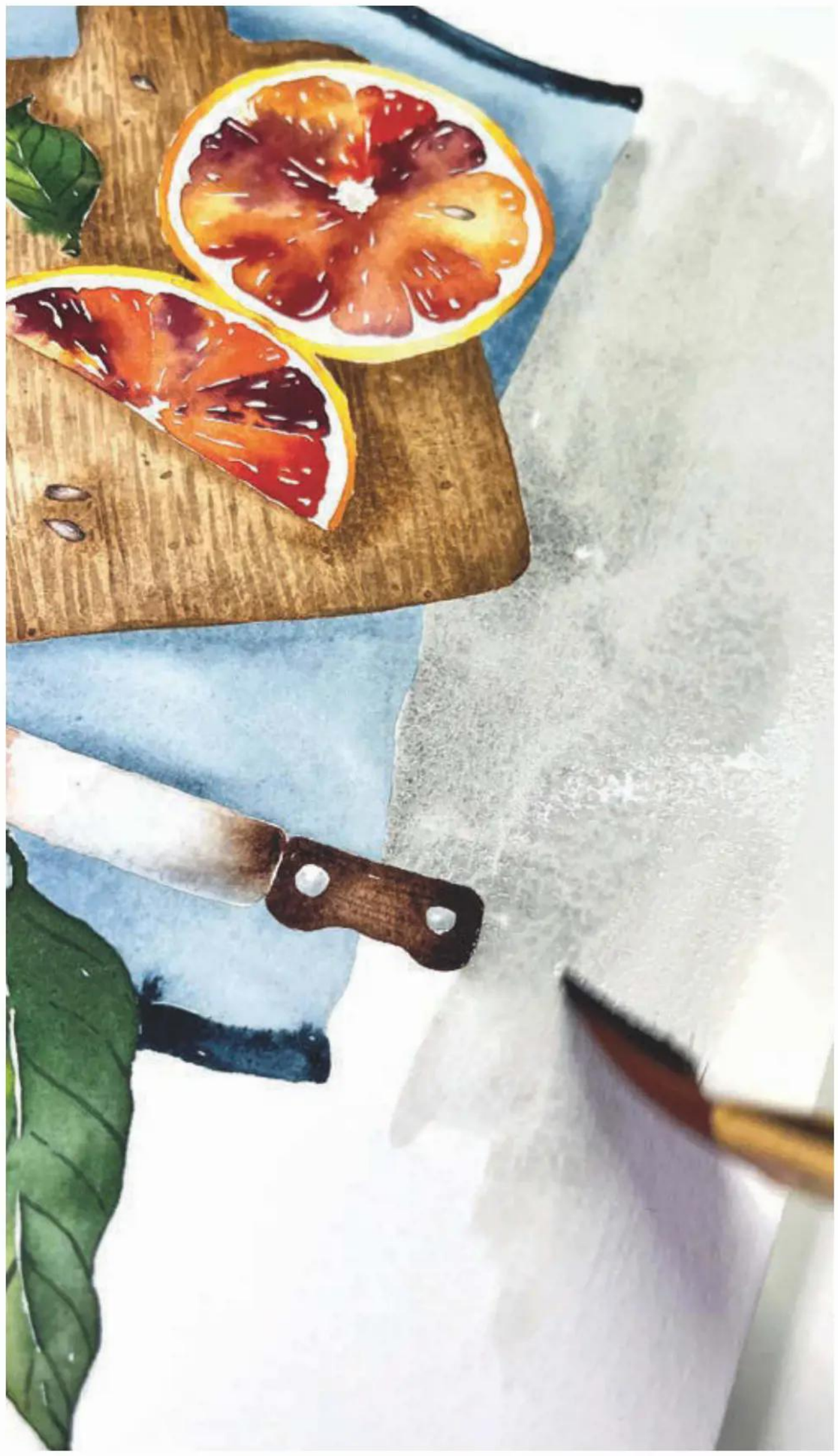
You can use the same colour mix to paint delicate wood texture on the chopping board. Hardly pressing down with the tip of the brush, paint parallel lines to create the wood lines. You can also paint tiny dots to vary the texture. These strokes should not be too perfect, to illustrate the randomness of the wood textures.



9 Clean the brush and load it up with a very pale watery mix of light Umber Brown/Cadmium Yellow/Yellow Ochre. You can now paint the delicate texture of the white citrus rims. Scatter a few random dots and lines in the white areas of the oranges.

Clean the brush again, and load it up with a very dark, and dense value of green (Sap Green, Emerald Green, a tiny bit of Royal Purple to darken). Using the very tip of the brush, paint some leaf veins on top of the green foliage. This adds a new dimension to the leaves' texture. Clean the brush.

TOP TIP The 'sweet spot' of the water-to-paint ratio in watercolours, when painting wet-on-wet and merging colours on paper, is to still be able to see the texture of your watercolour paper underneath a layer of paint. Too little water and your pigments won't flow and mix freely, too much water and you will create puddles



10 It is time to switch brushes – put the mop brush away and pick up the flat brush. Load it up generously with a watery mix of very pale grey (a bit of Carbon Black, Cerulean Blue, some White for a milky look, and a tiny bit of Yellow Ochre) to paint the backdrop of the illustration. Don't be afraid to make the strokes loose; the quicker you paint the background wash, the more even and dynamic it will look. Vary the ratio of water to pigment here again a little, although we do want the grey to remain as pale as possible. The background is meant to give the illustration a base of sorts, but it should not dull down the main characters of the illustration.

SAA: JOIN THE WORLD'S BEST ART CLUB



SAA membership is for anyone with a **passion for creating**, whether your artistic journey revolves around painting, drawing, mixed media, or simply exploring new creative techniques. No matter your experience level, from complete beginner to accomplished artist, you'll find inspiration, encouragement, and opportunities to grow.

Join the SAA's vibrant community of **over 30,000 members** and discover a network filled with meaningful connections, exciting opportunities, and shared creative passion.

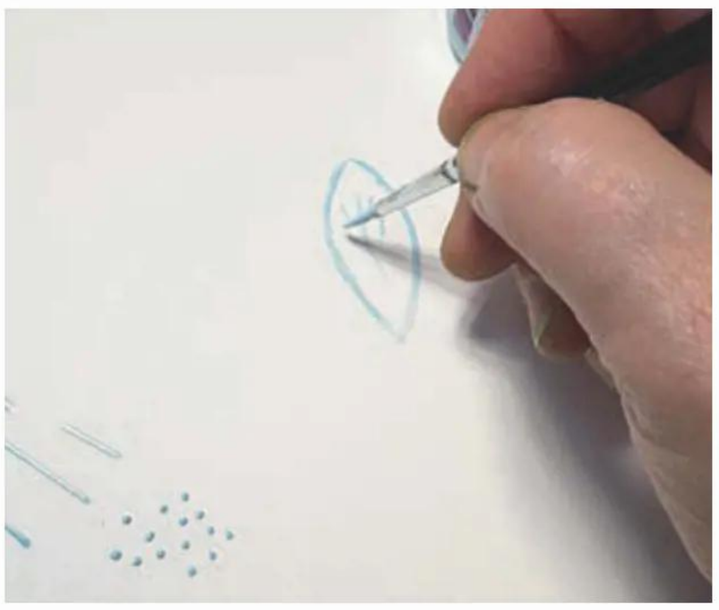
JOIN TODAY AT SAA.CO.UK/SAA-MEMBERSHIP

SUPPORTING ALL ARTISTS SAA

Full membership T&C's apply online: www.saa.co.uk/terms-conditions.

Masking fluid: keeping the white

Masking fluid protects areas of white paper while you paint freely over them. Once the wash and paper are completely dry, remove the fluid to reveal crisp, untouched highlights. It's especially useful for fine lines, flower details, sparkling water and small shapes that are difficult to paint around.



1 Apply masking fluid to dry paper to reserve fine lines, dots and larger shapes

Apply masking fluid to completely dry watercolour paper using a dedicated masking-fluid brush or ruling pen. Try fine lines, dots and larger shapes, such as leaves. A ruling pen is particularly useful for controlling line thickness and making small dots. Allow the fluid to dry completely before painting.



2 Brush a wash over the dry masking fluid without having to paint around each detail

Brush a generous watercolour wash over the protected areas. The masking fluid resists the paint, allowing you to work freely across the surface. Leave the wash and paper to dry thoroughly before removing the masking fluid.



3 Rub away the masking fluid gently once the paper is completely dry

Use a clean fingertip or a specialist masking-fluid eraser to rub away the dried fluid and reveal the white paper beneath. Work gently rather than scraping or pulling, particularly where the fluid was applied thickly.



4 A strong red wash makes the reserved white details stand out



5 The same technique with a paler wash produces a softer result

Compare the finished effects: the stronger red creates bold contrast, while the paler wash gives a more delicate appearance. Vary the thickness of the masking fluid and strength of the paint to create everything from fine lines and tiny dots to broader white shapes.

TOP TIP A dedicated masking-fluid brush or ruling pen makes application easier. An old brush can also be used, but masking fluid may damage its bristles. If using one, dampen it and work in a little washing-up liquid first, then clean it promptly according to the manufacturer's instructions. Always test masking fluid on spare paper of the same type, and avoid leaving it on longer than necessary

Falling autumn leaves

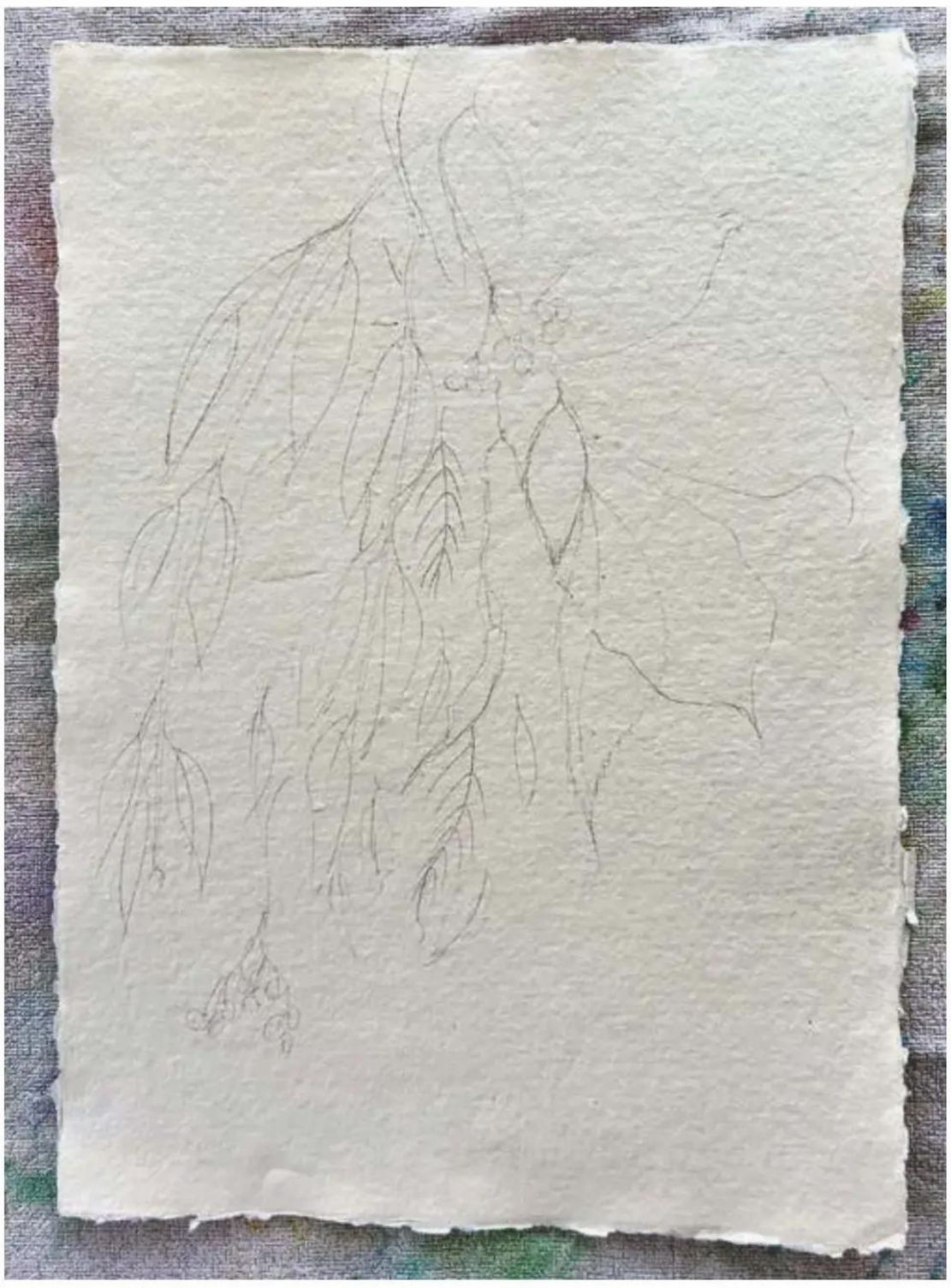
Emer Beattie demonstrates several different techniques in this autumnal watercolour

The subject matter for all of my work comes either from my garden or the farm around us. We are lucky enough to live in a beautiful part of the world and the tree-lined avenue that leads to the farm includes ash, beech, horse chestnut, oak and sycamore. The variety and depth of colour are always a joy (and a challenge!) to paint.

Hopefully this tutorial will help show you how to paint an autumnal image that uses a mixture of washes, negative painting, wet-on-wet and some detailed wet-on-dry techniques.







MATERIALS USED

■ **Surface:** A3 320 gsm handmade cotton rag watercolour paper

■ **Paints:** Cadmium Yellow, Raw Sienna, Cadmium-Free Red Deep, Quinacridone Magenta, Hooker's Green, Ultramarine Green Shade

■ **Brushes:** 3in wash brush; size 12 round brush; size 10 round brush; ¾ in flat brush with bevelled scraper handle; size 0 rigger brush; ¼ in sword brush; size 2/0 detail brush; masking fluid brush

■ **Other:** masking fluid; masking fluid eraser; small spray bottle; toothbrush

1 Compose the initial sketch using freshly gathered leaves as a guide, arranged as you find interesting. Please do not go further than this step if you are not happy with your composition – it will never work out if you don't like it in the beginning.

You want to think about

- The main colours you want to use, and where to place them
- A mix of foreground, middle ground and background
- A balance of light and dark across the painting
- A sense of movement, helped by natural, curved lines
- The rule of thirds, even if you use it loosely

Also, as every single leaf is different, I'm never completely bound to their layout on the paper – either the shape or the colour. Sometimes, some leaves don't even make it onto the sketch, or from the sketch into the painting. I like to add berries in my paintings as well – because there are always berries somewhere in autumn, but also, they add a lovely pop of colour to dark areas of the painting.

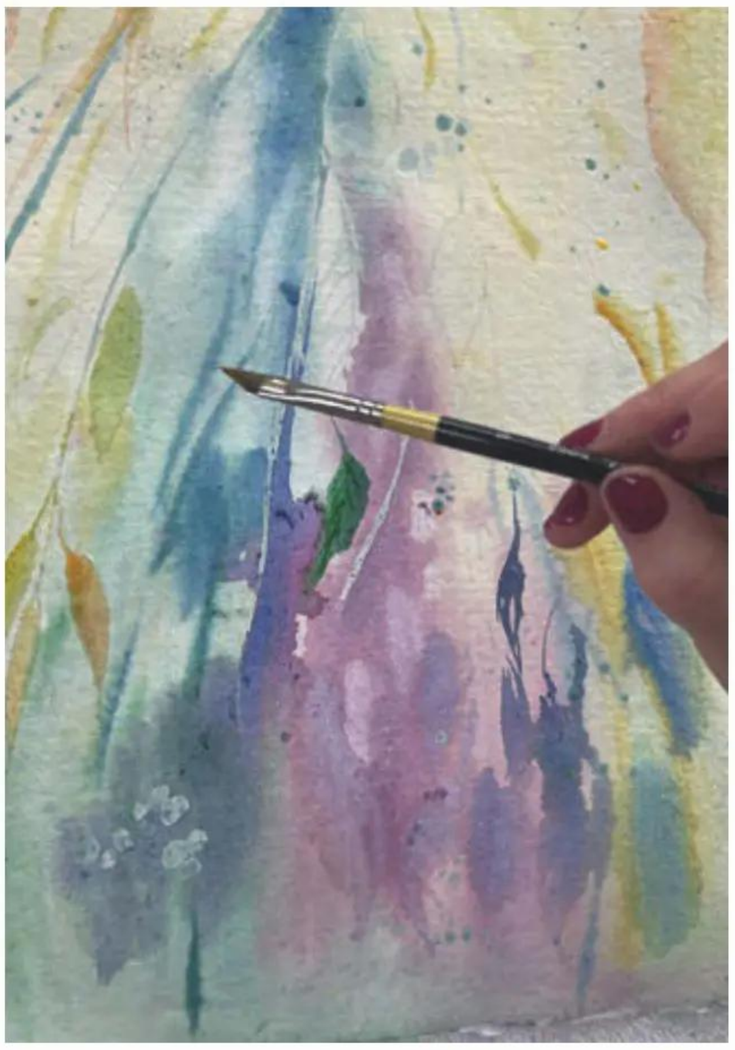
TOP TIP Make sure you're happy with the layout of the leaves before you go any further



2 Using the masking fluid brush, paint the masking fluid over the branches and berries and then splatter wherever you feel looks natural and good. When using natural cotton rag paper, I place a towel on a board, lay the paper on top and use a large wash brush to wet the whole sheet. It takes plenty of water, so allow it to soak in before painting. While waiting, mix your paints so that you have lighter and darker versions of your greens and yellows, as well as purple.



3 When there's a lovely sheen on the paper, add your Cadmium Yellow where the sun is coming from with the size 12 brush. With the size 10 brush, add some lighter and darker green lower down (mixing the Hooker's Green with Cadmium Yellow or Ultramarine GS), and some purple (Cadmium Red, Ultramarine GS and Hooker's Green) in the middle sections to give the impression of depth and shadows. Extra falling leaves and Raw Sienna grasses can be added in as the paper is drying. Some darker abstract leaf shapes can be added now as well. I use my sword brush for the grasses and either that or the size 10 for these leaves. While the paper is still wet, dab the main leaf shapes dry with kitchen roll. Keep an eye on these as the paint can seep back in again.



4 You should still be able to see the outline of your drawing, so now paint in your leaves – maybe the least important ones first until you gain confidence – using a variety of shades of your paints – some a little more yellow; some with a little red and Raw Sienna mixed in to create a lovely warm orange, and then some light green. Always paint the leaf shape with clean water first and then add the paint. Again, the sword and size 10 brushes are my favourites at this stage.



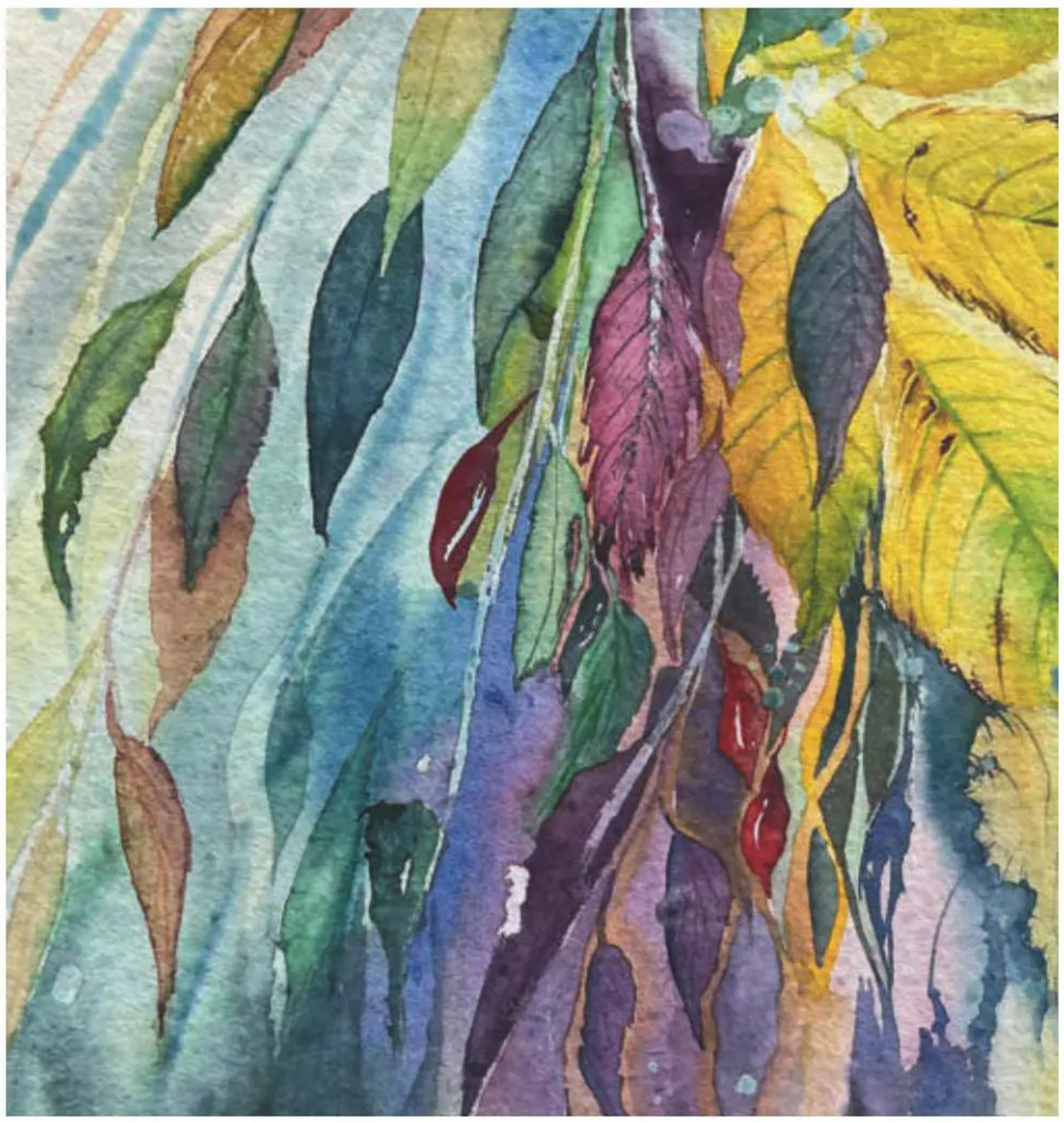
5 This is where you can add in indentations for the stem, midrib and veins. I use the bevelled scraper end of my brush handle, but you could also use a twig, the edge of a credit card or a pen lid.

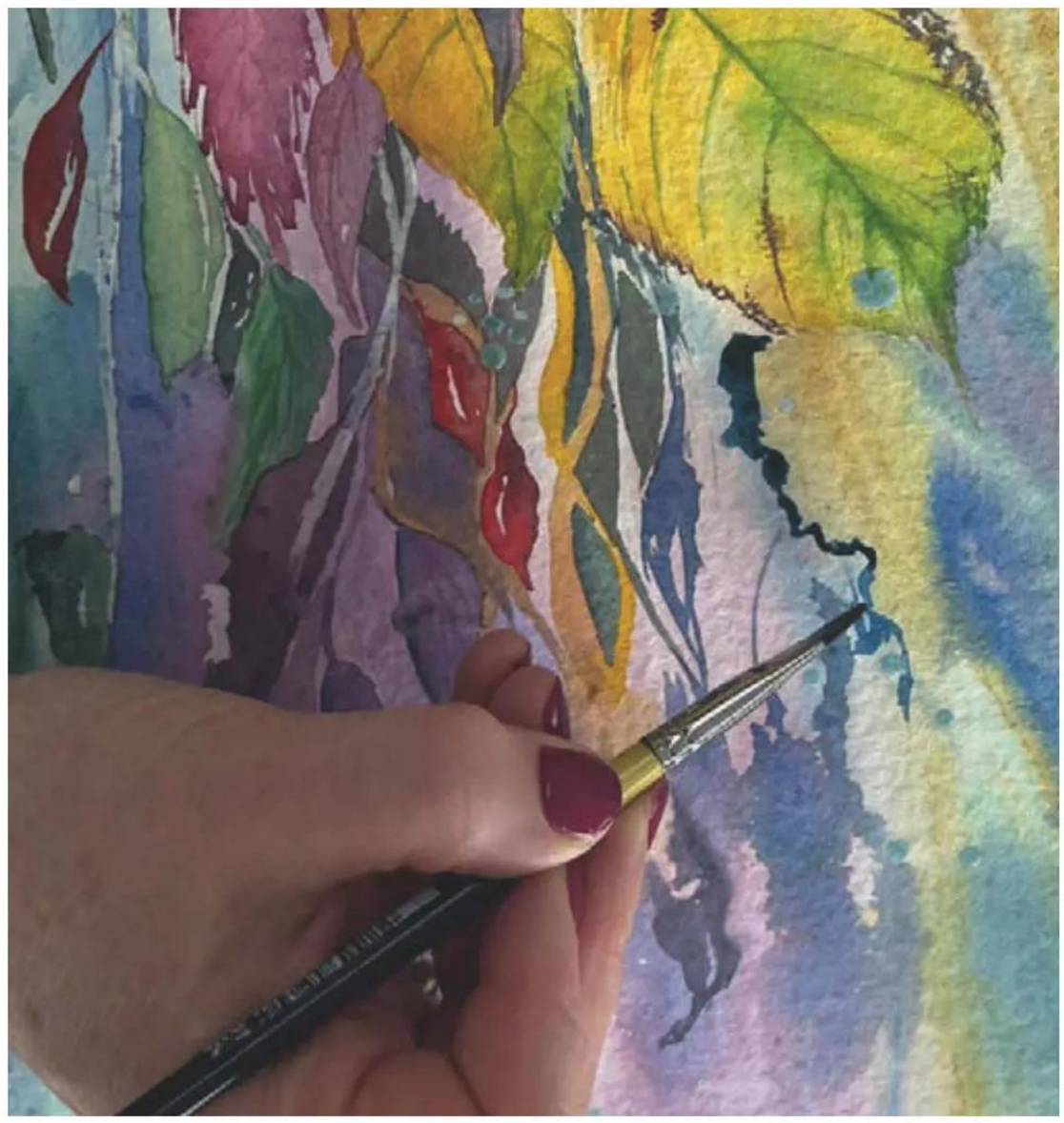


6 While the leaves are still wet, drop in your secondary colours onto each leaf. Most autumn leaves will have at least two or three colours. In the photo you will see I've dropped some Quinacridone Magenta along the side and Hooker's Green at the base of a leaf using my sword brush so I get a nice sharp entry point before blending them in. Depending on the leaf and the colours, these colours can be mixed on the paper as well.



7 Make sure that you change your water before going from painting darker leaves to yellow or any lighter ones. I painted these horse chestnut leaves by wetting the leaf shape first and adding the Cadmium Yellow with my size 10 brush. I find I have to paint in the detailing on horse chestnut leaves in several rounds, getting darker each time. At this stage I am using Raw Sienna mixed with Cadmium Red, Ultramarine GS and a hint of Hooker's Green, using my rigger. Also continue painting the falling ash and other leaves using the sword brush by wetting each shape first, adding the main colour, then dropping in secondary colours.





8 Time now to strengthen the background by adding shading behind leaves – I usually use my sword brush to keep a fine point – and then blending the paint into the surrounding background with the same brush or my size 10 or 12.
I check around my masked areas and darken them up if necessary, or just intensify the colour to enhance the contrast once it is removed. This can sometimes mean painting a lighter colour over a darker colour – like the hint of orange in behind the five purple leaves near the bottom, which just throws them out a bit more.



9 I use the masking fluid eraser to gently rub off the masking fluid. Once it is all removed you can see if any areas need to be finished off before starting to paint in the white.



10 I try to wet even the thin branches before painting them in Quinacridone Magenta and then adding some red or purple if needed for shading. I paint in the fine line details with either my sword, rigger or fine detail brush once the paint is dry. I also paint in the berries – either red or orange but do not wet the paper for these, to keep a sharp reflection spot.



11 This is where I have to be very careful not to overdo things.
I finish off any final fine lines on all the leaves and simply paint in the stalks for berries.
I like to fill in some or all of the masking fluid splashes – thankfully there is no right or wrong.
Sign your name before you do too much!

CARAN D'ACHE

Genève



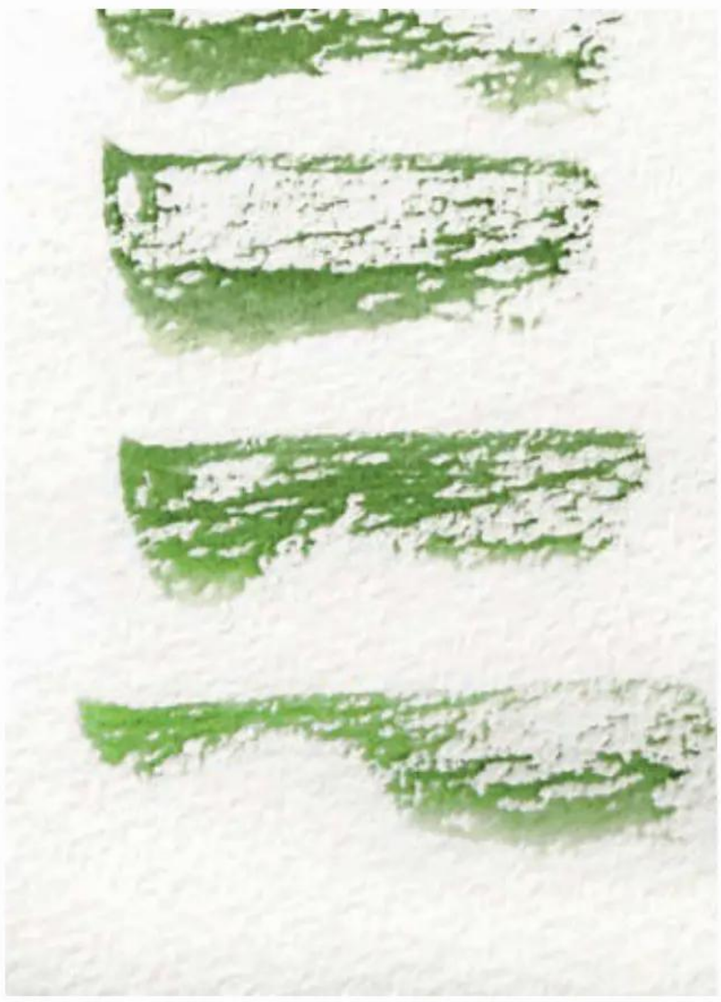
NEOCOLOR® II AQUARELLE

The NEOCOLOR® II water-soluble wax pastels will accompany you on all your arts and crafts journeys, thanks to a unique formula that is rich in pigments both for wet and dry applications. Discover the smoothness and vibrancy of the 84 shades and enjoy countless drawings on different materials, including paper, cardboard, wood and terracotta. Made in Geneva, they are available in assortments of 10, 15, 30, 40 , 84 and are also sold individually.

SWISS MADE

Create texture with watercolour

A few simple tools and techniques can transform flat washes into convincing foliage, rough surfaces, sparkling highlights and atmospheric effects. Experiment with these four easy ways to add texture to your paintings



Dry brush

Load a brush with fairly concentrated paint, then blot it on kitchen roll to remove excess moisture. Holding the brush at a shallow angle, drag it lightly across dry watercolour paper. The bristles catch on the raised texture, leaving tiny gaps where the white paper shows through. Vary the pressure and direction to suggest rough bark, weathered stone or grasses. Cold-pressed or rough paper gives the most pronounced effect.



Spattering

Load a round brush with fluid paint and hold it above dry paper. Tap the handle against your finger or another brush to release a scattering of droplets. The amount of paint and the force of the tap determine their size. Use a smaller brush and less paint for fine speckles, or a larger, wetter brush for bolder splashes. Protect surrounding areas with scrap paper if necessary. Spattering onto damp paper produces softer, more diffuse marks.



Sponge printing

Tear a small piece from a clean natural or household sponge to create an uneven surface. Dampen it, squeeze out most of the water, then dab it into paint and blot off the excess. Press lightly onto dry paper, turning the sponge between impressions to avoid repeating the same pattern. Begin with a light green, then add a darker shade to suggest shadows and depth. Leave some white paper showing through for a natural, airy effect.







Lifting colour

Lifting removes some of the pigment from a wash to reveal a lighter area beneath. While the paint is still damp, draw a clean, slightly damp brush across the surface, rinsing and blotting it between strokes. This produces soft highlights suitable for clouds, reflections and shafts of light.

For a more irregular effect, gently press crumpled kitchen roll onto the damp wash and lift it away. The folds absorb pigment unevenly, creating broken, organic patterns. Avoid rubbing, which can damage the paper surface. Some pigments stain more strongly than others, so the amount of colour you can remove will vary.

Pheasant feather

Tracey Bengeyfield captures the textures of this feather perfectly with clever brushwork and a combination of techniques

I sometimes wonder if my DNA would reveal that I am actually part pirate and part magpie, with a little bit of meerkat thrown in for good measure! The reason is that I'm always on the lookout – not because I fear being swooped upon by a large eagle, but because I'm always searching for treasure!

A feather, a pebble, a beautiful leaf and even, on occasion, a piece of old string (one man's treasure is perhaps another man's shoelace)! Each one gives me a thrill upon discovery and brings a smile to my face when I rediscover it in the bottom of my handbag six weeks later. Dotted around my studio are lots of these tiny treasures, sitting in pots, bottles and jam jars (I collect those, too!). So in this tutorial, I thought you might like to discover how to paint one of my feather treasures. You never know, it might inspire you to start your own collection!





TOP TIP

- Really look closely at the reference photograph. The more you look, the more you will see
- Don't try to capture every single minute detail; you are trying to capture the overall essence of the feather
- Test your colours on a spare piece of paper. If working wet-on-wet, test your colours on damp paper, too!

MATERIALS USED

■ **Surface:** 36x25cm (14x 10in) 300gsm cold-pressed (NOT) watercolour paper block

■ **Paints**: Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Burnt Umber, Sepia, Cobalt Blue, Raw Umber, Quinacridone Rose

■ **Brushes**: Size 6 round brush; liner brush; 9 mm rake brush

■ **Other**: HB pencil; masking fluid; italic-nib dip pen; scalpel blade

1 Start by drawing the gentle curve of the central shaft (spine), followed by the outer edge of the main feather shape. Note: don't draw as heavily as shown in the photograph (this is just to allow you to see the image). If your drawing turns out too dark, use a putty eraser and gently roll it across your drawing to remove some of the graphite.

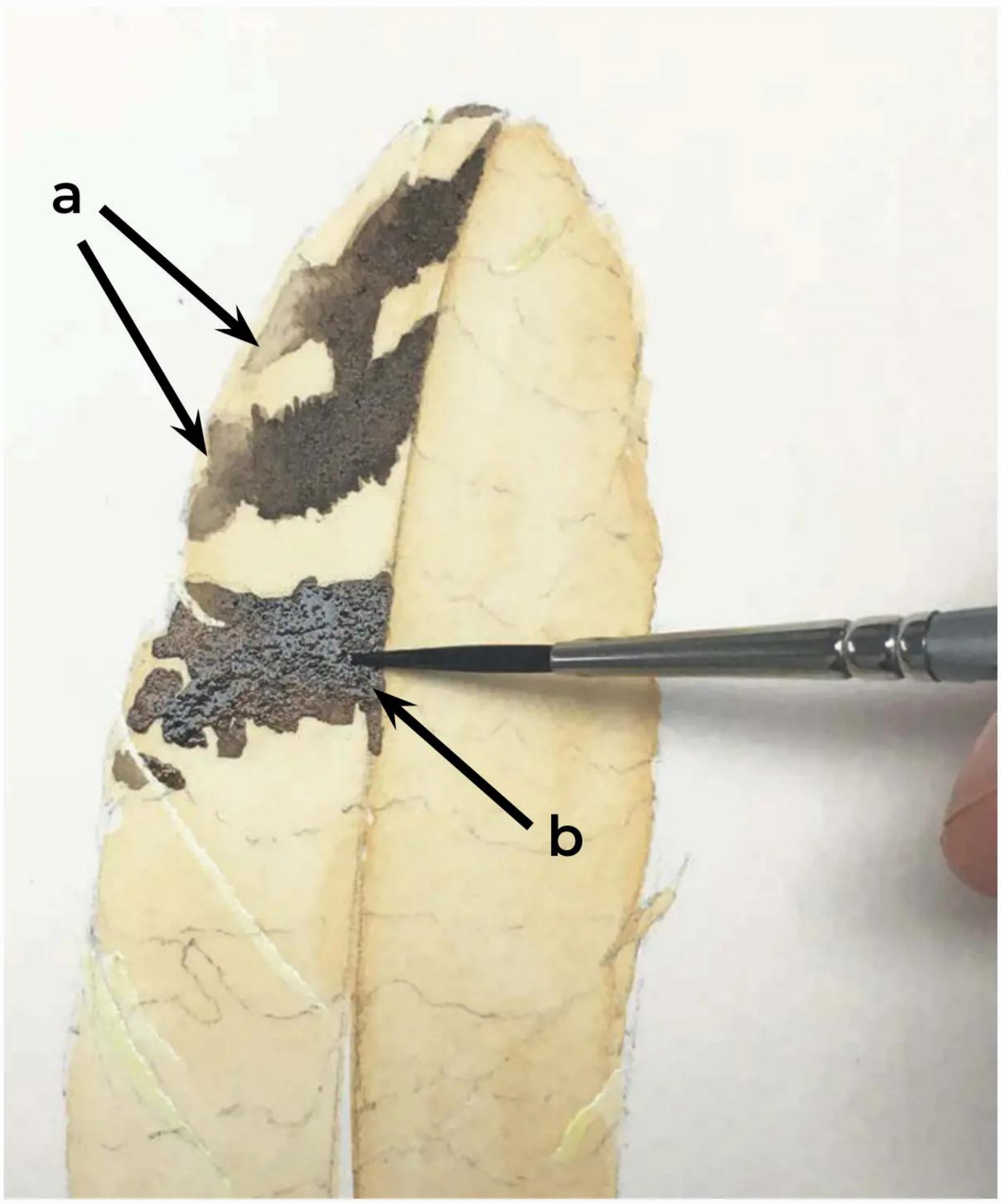
Once the outline is complete, draw in the darker pattern shapes. As you draw, notice how the dark bands meet along the shaft. Sometimes they meet at a point; elsewhere, they're slightly offset. Look at how the feather occasionally splits and disrupts the pattern.

Tip: Looking closely will help you to achieve a more believable and natural shape.

Once your drawing is complete, use masking fluid to reserve the white of the paper anywhere the barbs have separated – don't worry about masking any areas by the fluffy section at the base, though. **Tip: use an italic dip pen to achieve a lovely thin line.**







2 While the masking fluid dries, mix pale Raw Sienna with a touch of Burnt Sienna. Apply this colour onto dry, across the main body of the feather using a size 6 round brush, leaving the thicker section of the spine free from paint.

3 While the base colour dries, mix the colour for the darker bands. Use mid Burnt Umber with a touch of Sepia. Apply this onto dry to achieve a crisp edge. Then, use a clean, damp brush to soften the colour a little at the edges (a).

While the darker colour remains wet, drop in a stronger Sepia towards the shaft with the liner brush (b). Use the same brush to add any delicate edges, too.

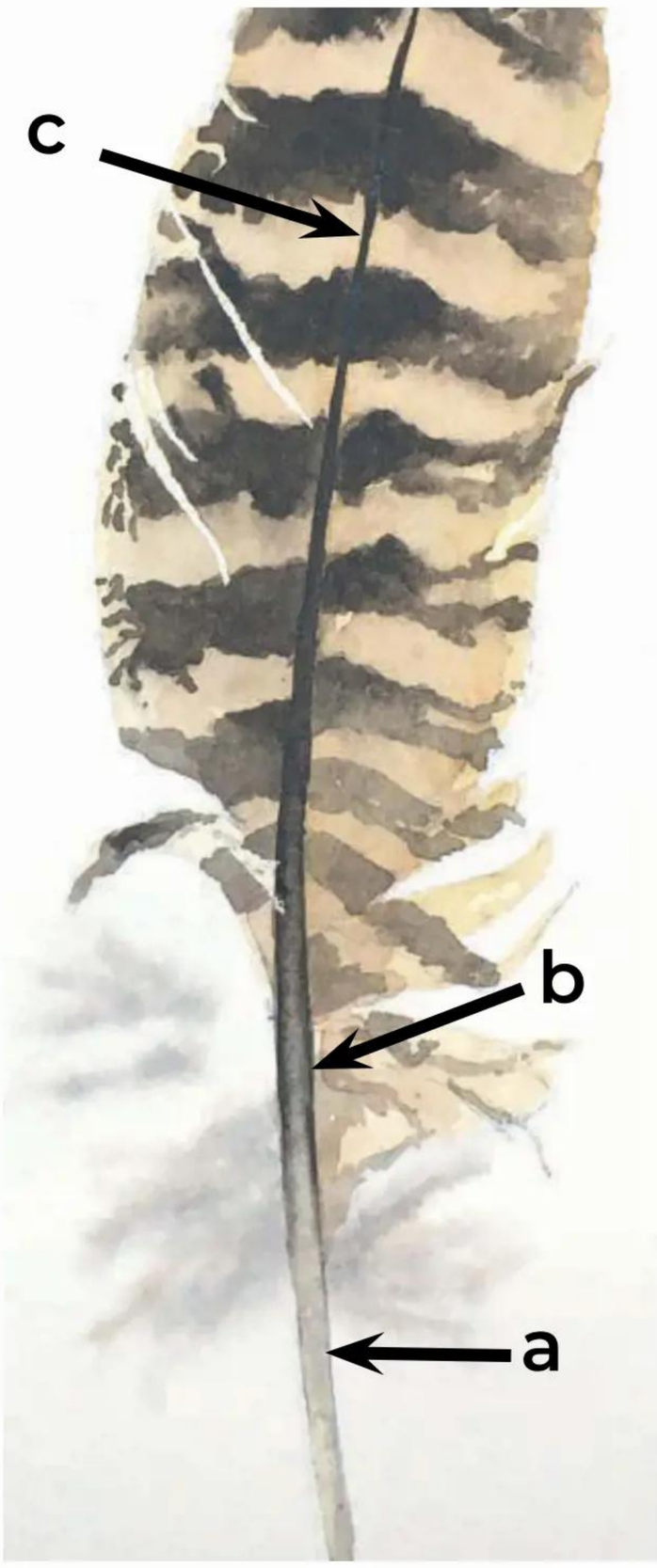


4 Continue to paint all of the coloured bands using the same technique.

TIP For greater realism, don't forget to look closely at how the colour slightly changes within each of the sections – try to mimic this by varying the light and dark tones. When you reach the base of the feather, notice how the colour becomes paler. Take a little of the Burnt Umber and Sepia mix into a separate well and water it down a little so it becomes paler. Then, add a touch of Cobalt to make it slightly more grey. Apply this paler colour on the bands that appear towards the base of the feather using the same technique as before.

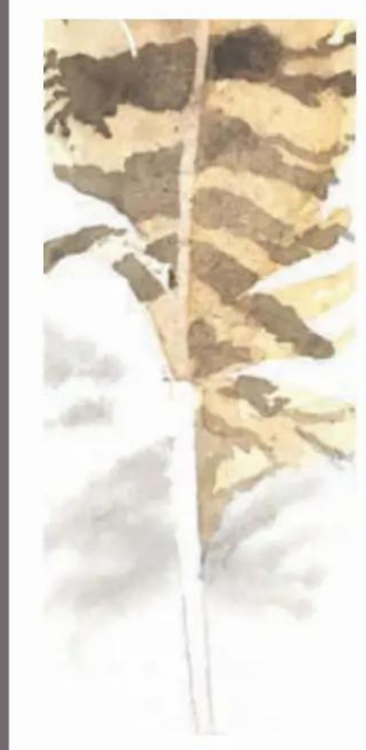


5 Complete the remaining coloured bands as before. Notice that the right edge appears paler in places, so don't forget to use a clean, damp brush to lift off a little of the colour.



7 Next, add colour to the quill and shaft using pale Raw Sienna (a). While it remains wet, use your liner brush to touch a little mid Sepia along the outer edges of the shaft so that it merges into the Raw Sienna (b). Complete the thinner, upper section of the shaft with your liner loaded with dark Sepia (c).

6 Once both sides of the feather are complete, add the fluff at the base. To do this, first mix a grey/brown using pale Cobalt and a touch of Burnt Umber. To achieve a fluffy, diffused line, you will work onto wet paper. Use beautifully clean water and a super clean brush and apply it along the left side of the quill – taking the water further out than where you intend to add your paint (this is so your paint doesn't find the dry edge and create a hard line). Apply the Cobalt and Burnt Umber Mix onto the wet paper using a liner brush. Draw individual lines and notice how the painted line expands as it mixes with the water on the surface. The wetter the paper, the more diffused the line will appear. Draw a number of individual lines, making sure some overlap and curve in different directions. Repeat the same technique on the right side of the quill. **Hint**: try not to include every single separate barb you can see; try to aim for the general shape of the fluff.



8 Add a little more definition to the fluffy base of the feather by painting some delicate, wispy lines on top of the fluffy ones. Use your liner brush to paint them onto dry using the same Cobalt and Burnt Umber mix from before. Really try to echo the direction of the previous fluffy lines with your slightly stronger, wispy lines. Then, soften a few areas with a damp brush.





9 Once your feather is dry, remove the masking fluid. Then, carefully use the tip of a scalpel blade to scratch the surface of the paper so some of the previously masked areas extend into the painted areas. This will help them to appear less solid. Feel free to scratch in a few more lines where you want to break up any solid-looking areas.

TOP TIP This is an exciting and effective technique that can easily allow you to get carried away, so try not to overdo it!



10 Lastly, add a little more detail to show the angle of the individual barbs. Use a small rake brush loaded with pale Raw Umber. Remember to keep an eye on the angle of the barbs – they change as you reach the top of the feather.
Hint: look closely at the angle of the barbs, and don't make them too strong or solid.
If the feather colours appear too bright and you would like to mute them a little, you could use a very pale wash across the main section using Raw Umber (with a touch of Quinacridone Rose if desired). You're done!



Pansy pals

Julia Trickey demonstrates how delicate washes and fine brushwork can capture the velvety petals and intricate markings of colourful pansies



TOP TIP Watercolour uses two elements – water and colour. By using these in different proportions, you can create different effects. For botanical art, these techniques can range from wet washes to dry detail. Different artists favour different approaches, with some working almost exclusively using dry brush marks. I like to start with wet-in-wet layers to create initial form and then reduce the amount of water in the mix to create drier puddles of paint that I use for dry brush detail. Sometimes there is the need for something in-between, which I label 'damp brush'! Pick up some of the wet paint with your larger brush, then dab it on a cloth or kitchen paper so that it's just damp rather than wet. Use the side of the brush to apply this damp paint to any areas that need building up or over detail that needs blending in



MATERIALS USED

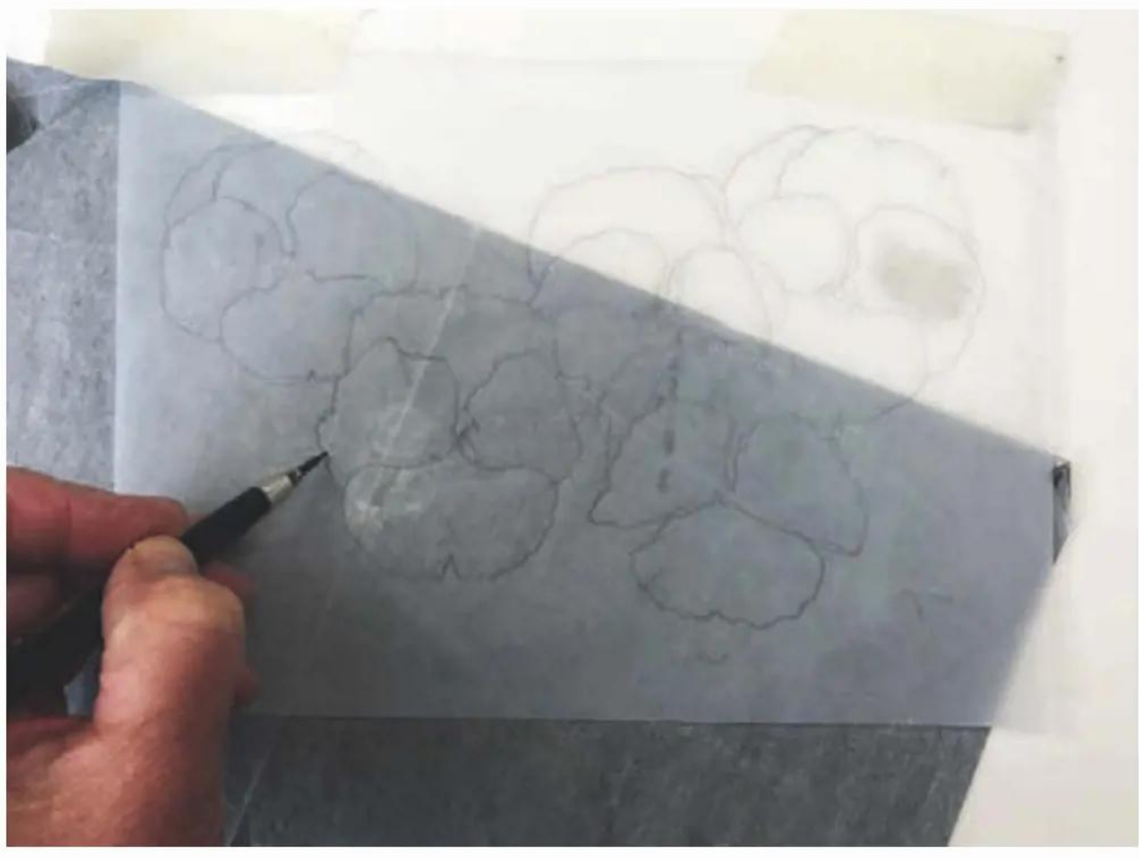
■ **Surface:** 300 gsm hot-pressed watercolour paper or gummed pad

■ **Paints:** Winsor Blue (Green Shade), Winsor Yellow, Quinacridone Magenta, Winsor Violet

■ **Brushes:** round brushes, sizes 2 and 0

■ **Other:** tracing paper; HB or 2H pencil; kneadable eraser; graphite transfer paper; cloth or kitchen paper; white china plate (if using paint tubes); low-tack masking tape





1 I bought a tray of bedding plants for this painting and studied each flower separately before deciding on a composition. Choose individual flowers that attract you, and draw them as line drawings on tracing paper. It's important not to rush this drawing stage, as once you start painting, it's harder to correct mistakes. Botanical art takes a more meditative approach than other ways of painting flowers in watercolour. It is fine to slow down while you examine the features of your flower and how the petals fit together or overlap. Drawing on something other than the watercolour paper allows you to be relaxed about making mistakes and keeps the watercolour paper pristine.

2 Cut out each of your flower drawings and try some different compositions. For this painting, I wanted the impression of a group of flowers, each jostling for attention. Using tracing paper for the initial drawing means that you can see how the flowers overlap. Once happy with the arrangement, either redraw your pansies straight onto the watercolour paper, or use graphite transfer paper.

Use the individual drawings or redraw the whole arrangement and place the transfer paper between these (secured with small strips of low-tack masking tape) and the watercolour paper. Draw over your outline to transfer it onto the watercolour paper. New transfer paper can be quite messy (mine is many years old), but you can use a cotton wool pad to remove any excess graphite, if needed. If the drawing is too dark, dab your final drawing with a kneadable eraser. The pencil line needs to be just visible, but not so that it will be obvious in the final painting.







3 Whatever colour the pansies are – purple, dark or pale – they all seem to have a yellow centre. Start by painting this on each flower using a size 2 brush and a small amount of Winsor Yellow. Do this at the beginning of the painting stage while your paint, brush, and water are all still clean, so the yellow goes on clearer. Also, if you leave it until later, you may cover this area with another colour by mistake.

4 Having mixed the colour for your chosen flower, paint the first layer, a petal at a time, with the size 2 brush. Wet each shape with clean water until you have a good sheen, but not a lot of surface water. Dab in the petal colour and tease it into place. While it's still wet, you can add stronger areas and soft lines to create undulations. Once the petal starts to dry, you need to stop. You can always repeat this process to strengthen or correct areas at a later stage.

5 Repeat this wet-in-wet process on each petal. Don't work on adjacent areas or you will get some bleeding from one damp shape to the next. If you have dark, rich-coloured flowers, see if you can sense any underlying colour. I have used a wet-in-wet wash of Quinacridone Magenta as the first layer on a couple of my pansies. This takes advantage of watercolour's transparency, allowing the magenta to glow through the later purple layers.





6 Once the first layer on each pansy is dry, assess whether you need to repeat this in any areas, being careful to retrace your steps with the water to avoid unwanted tidemarks. Any dark, velvety pansies can now have a second layer in the appropriate colour.

7 For the markings in the middle, you can either paint a patch of colour or use the wet-in-wet technique again. The advantage of the latter is that you get soft edges to the painted shape, which looks more natural. Wet the whole petal, even if you only want the colour in the centre, as a small amount of pigment tends to travel to the edges of the damp shape. If you paint this patch of colour without wetting the paper first, you will need to soften the edges of this shape at the next stage.





8 Now we are going to use drier brush techniques. This means using less water and swapping to the size 0 brush if that helps. (If your larger brush has a good point, you can keep using that, if you prefer.) Picking up a small amount of damp pigment, use the brush upright to 'draw' on the veining detail that runs from the yellow centre outwards. This is most obvious on the bottom and two side petals. If the paint appears to be too wet – it should dry almost instantly on the paper – use less water or dab any excess on a cloth or kitchen paper. Although you are reaching the end of the project, I recommend that you don't do this and the next detailed stage if you are feeling tired or in a hurry. Painting these details as well as you can is what makes your flower portrait convincing.

9 Continue to use the smaller brush and small amounts of paint to add colour and detail to the centre of the pansies. You may notice the two side petals have a fuzzy 'collar' where they meet in the middle. To recreate this texture, you can use small lines and dots of grey paint (made by mixing all three colours) or, if you find it easier, use a pencil.





10 You need to add some stems. I use a sheet of tracing paper over the painted flowers to plan where these go. Don't make them too straight or they will look like stiff lollipop sticks. Once you're happy, mix a pale green using Winsor Yellow, Winsor Blue (Green Shade) and a touch of Quinacridone Magenta. Wash this over the stem using the size 2 brush.

These stems are four-sided and square, rather than round. Show this by running a darker green down the right-hand side of the stem, and add some ridging detail with the tip of your small size 0 brush. (You may also notice two small, pale bracts partway down the stem. Include these if you can.)

Spring blossom

Nicky Hunter is well-known for her expressive floral watercolours, and here she demonstrates a spray of apple blossom





Use a large oval wash brush to wet the whole sheet with clean water, aiming for a thoroughly damp rather than soaking-wet surface. While the water settles into the paper, mix the various paint colours required for the background wash in a palette with good-sized wells to make generous washes, so you have plenty of paint to be fluid and liberal with the application. Aim for a semi-skimmed milk consistency of Transparent Yellow, Cobalt Blue (with a hint of Burnt Umber) and a half-and-half mix of Cobalt Blue and Cerulean Blue. Also mix a Permanent Rose and a couple of greens using Cobalt Blue, Transparent Yellow and a touch of Burnt Umber in a whole milk consistency for the foliage and the blossom buds. Make one green that is yellow-dominant and another thicker-consistency green that is darker and a more blue dominant hue. Adding a little Burnt Umber mutes the hues and helps colour harmony throughout the painting, as greens can have a tendency to take over the pretty floral hues if they are too bright.

MATERIALS USED

■ **Surface:** 300gsm (140 lb) rough, high-white watercolour paper, quarter imperial (38x28cm)

■ **Paints:** Transparent Yellow, Cerulean Blue, Burnt Umber, Permanent Rose, Cobalt Blue; white gouache

■ **Brushes:** 18 mm oval wash brush; size 12 round brush; size 10 round brush

■ **Other:** B or HB pencil, drawing board, low-tack tape



TOP TIP Don't feel you have to copy every detail in the photo. Alter things to make it your own



2 Wet just the background area once more, avoiding any floral shapes that will be white.

This double wetting method allows more working time, resulting in paint that melts into soft edges, so the floral shapes integrate gently with the background rather than harsh positive and negative shapes.

Using the large oval brush, apply a wash of Transparent Yellow with sweeping brush marks from the top right corner to the centre of the page; this injects warmth and the feeling of a sunny haze into the painting. Immediately apply a variegated wash of Cobalt Blue and Cerulean Blue over the rest of the background, avoiding the white floral shapes. The hue may seem too intense at this stage, but be quite bold as there are two layers of clear water already applied to dilute it, so the background will dry considerably lighter. The aim is to get that vibrant wash laid down in one wash.

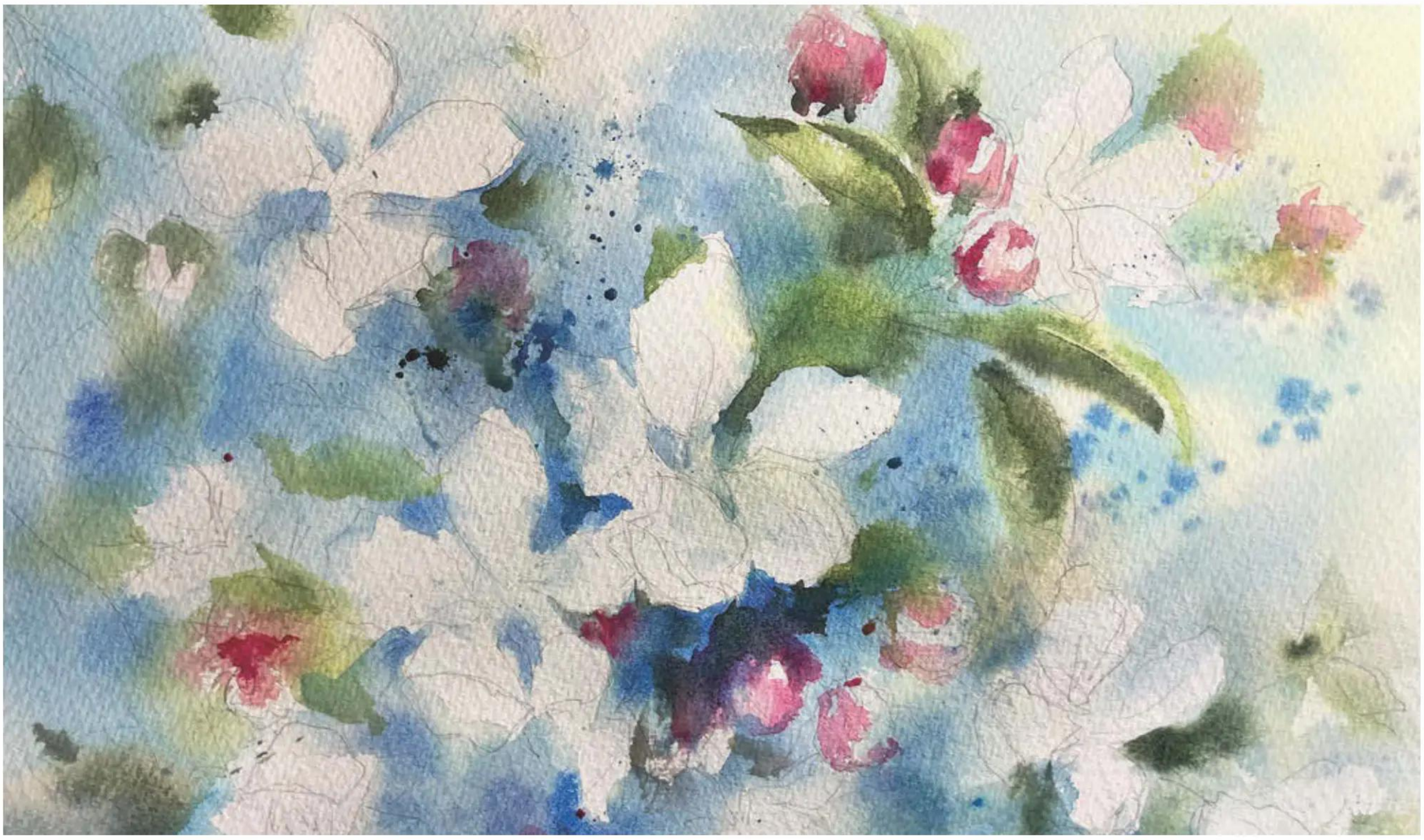
Use the size 10 round brush to flick a few splatters of thicker consistency Cobalt Blue paint into the background while it's damp to add a little more texture and interest.

1 Start by taping a dry sheet of watercolour paper to a board; just attaching the corners is fine. Use a rough surface, high white, to allow the clarity of colours to glow through. A quarter sheet is a good size for this delicate floral painting.

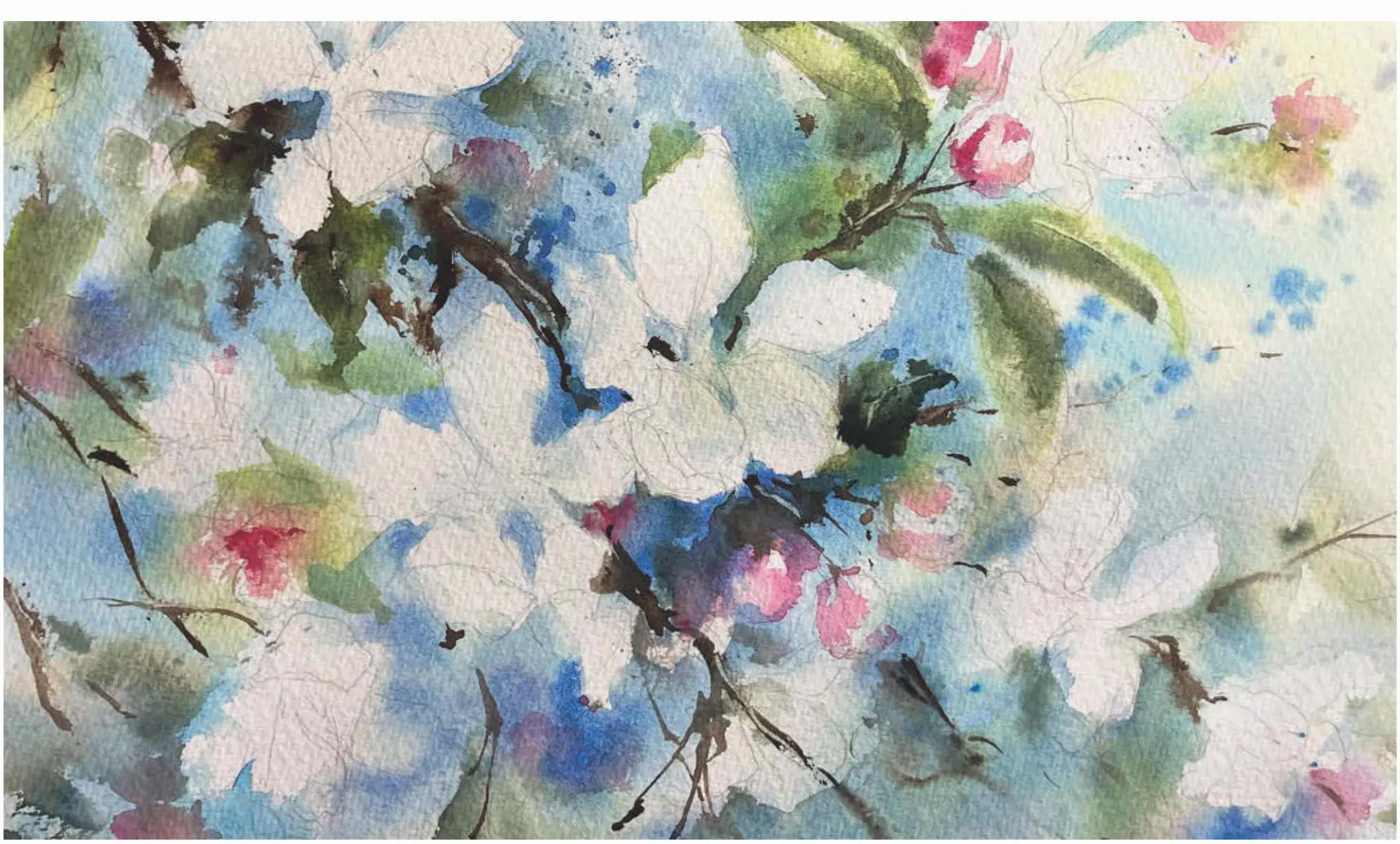
Lightly sketch the floral shapes using a B or HB pencil. It is useful to refer to a photo for inspiration for the flower shapes; however, feel free to use artistic licence to alter the position of the florals, foliage, and stems to create flow or fill the spaces more effectively in the artwork if the photo isn't giving you a completely satisfactory composition. Reducing the thickness of the branches or changing the angle from a harsh horizontal to a soft diagonal can help make the painting easier on the eye.



3 While the background is still damp, add foliage shapes using the large oval brush; first, apply yellow/green strokes in 'leaf type' shapes, adding more definition with the thicker, darker blue/green paint. Create foliage shapes with as few marks as possible to keep the brushmarks dynamic and the colours fresh. Identifying the shapes as ovals, pear drops, or bunny ears can help you break shapes down into simpler formats. Avoid laboriously copying each leaf in the photo, to achieve a loose, expressive feel. Aim for an overall cluster of recognisable leaf shapes rather than individual botanical detail. If the colour is flooding rather than melting, wait a little while, as it is still too wet to work on.

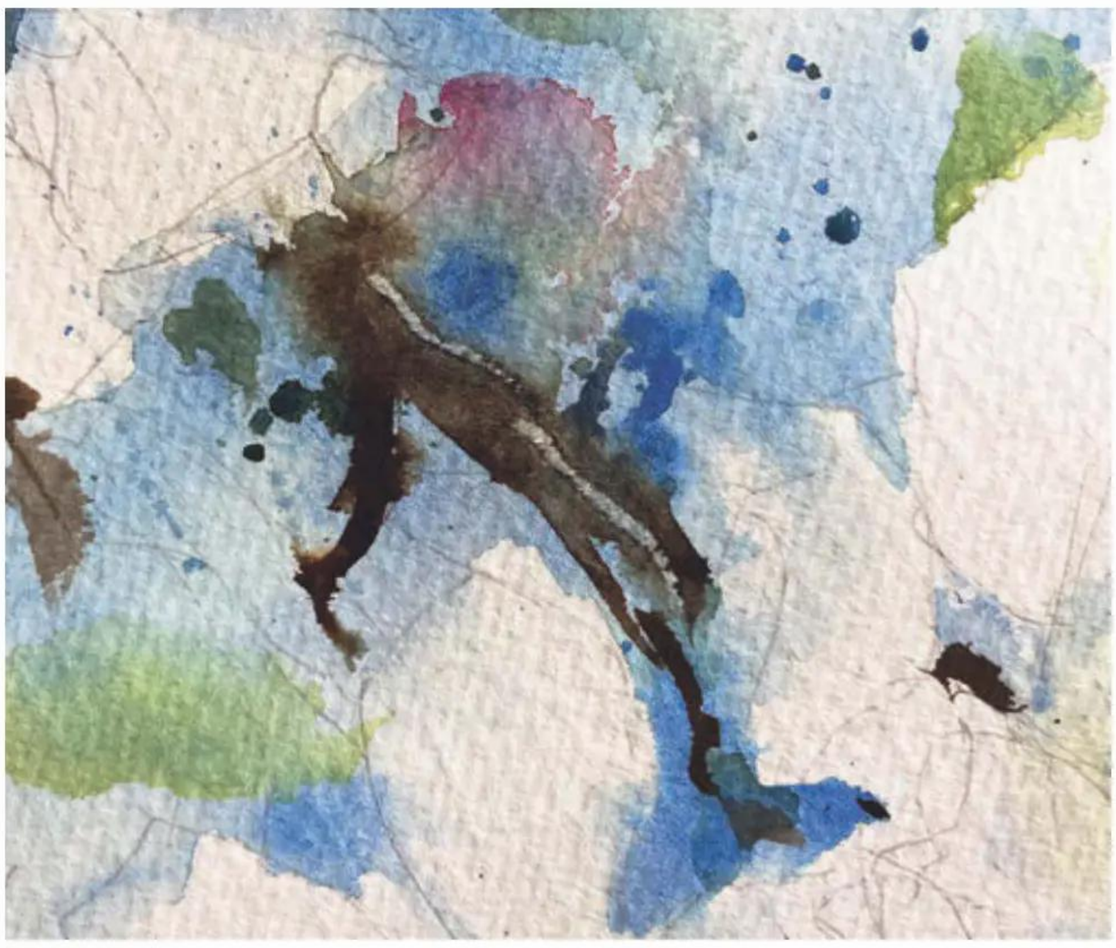


4 Clean the brush thoroughly and load with Permanent Rose, then create small spherical shapes that represent the blossom buds. At this stage, the paper should still be damp so the pink paint can melt partially into the background and the foliage where they touch, to create soft blends.



5 The paper should be less damp now, but there is still an opportunity to add the branches.

Using the size 10 brush loaded with Burnt Umber, add the stems. Working from the top left corner to the bottom right works well, using mainly the tip of the brush, especially where the branches taper to thinner stems. If you can achieve some dry brushwork where the brush skips the paper's surface, that is a great effect to represent textured branches.



6 While the paint is still damp, it is quite effective to use your fingernail to scratch out a highlight on the top of the stem, here and there.



7 Mix up a very liquid consistency of a light shade of greyish-mauve using Permanent Rose and Cobalt Blue with just a touch of Burnt Umber. Use the size 12 round brush with gentle strokes, working from the inside of the petal outwards to subtly define the curve of the petals. Squinting your eyes to see the delicate tonal changes in the photo can help, as this can be tricky when painting white areas.



8 Use the size 10 brush for final details. Add the centre of the flowers with Transparent Yellow for the stamens and a few dots of Permanent Rose and Transparent Yellow mixed to a vibrant orange colour. A few little dark strokes with the Burnt Umber add further depth to the flower centres.

Finally, add a few bits of detail with Permanent Rose to give definition and some brighter pops of colour to enhance the outer petals of the flowers that form the focal point in the centre area of the painting.

If some highlights are required, use white gouache to add a couple of strokes here and there on some leaves and buds; less is more with gouache, as it can easily look too white and overworked.

Stand back and admire your painting of a pretty spring apple blossom!

Rose hips

Dianne Sutherland shows how delicate layers of colour and carefully controlled highlights bring a cluster of rose hips to life



Painting a single rose hip in a botanical style is usually achievable for artists with some watercolour experience. However, when several hips overlap, new challenges appear. We must decide which parts should be lighter, darker, stronger, or softer in order to create separation and convincing depth.

MATERIALS USED

■ **Surface:** 300 gsm (140 lb) hot-pressed watercolour paper, approximately A4

■ **Paints:** Quinacridone Magenta, Quinacridone Red, Permanent Carmine, Cobalt Blue, Indanthrene Blue, Winsor Yellow

■ **Brushes:** miniature round brushes, sizes 1, 2 and 4; small flat brush for colour swatches

■ **Other:** tracing paper; HB pencil; putty eraser; small practice sheet of the same paper; dividers; hand-held magnifying glass

TOP TIPS

Before you start

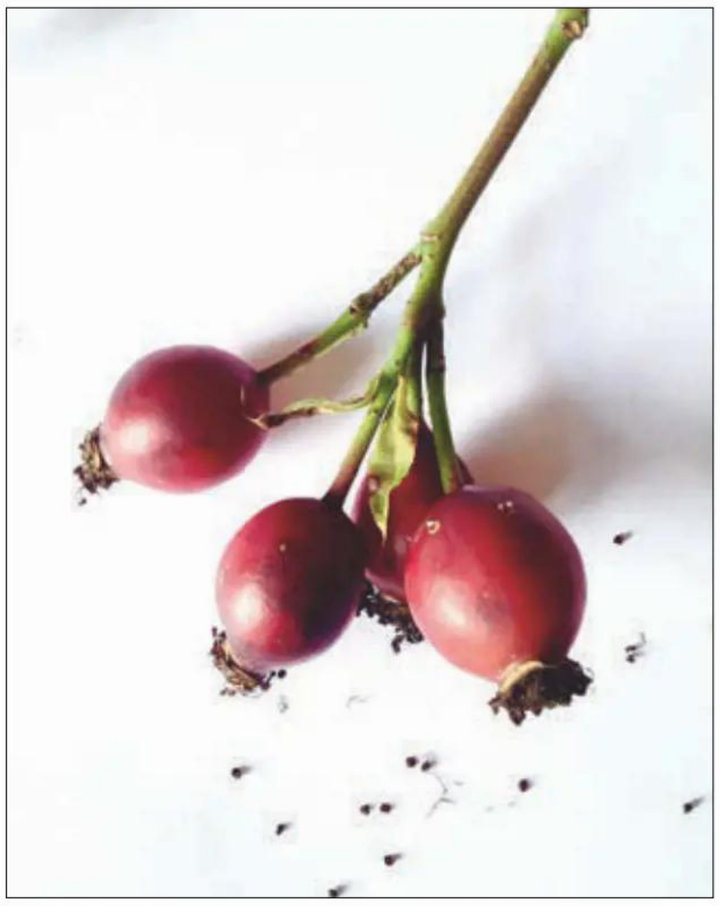
How to make parts look near or far

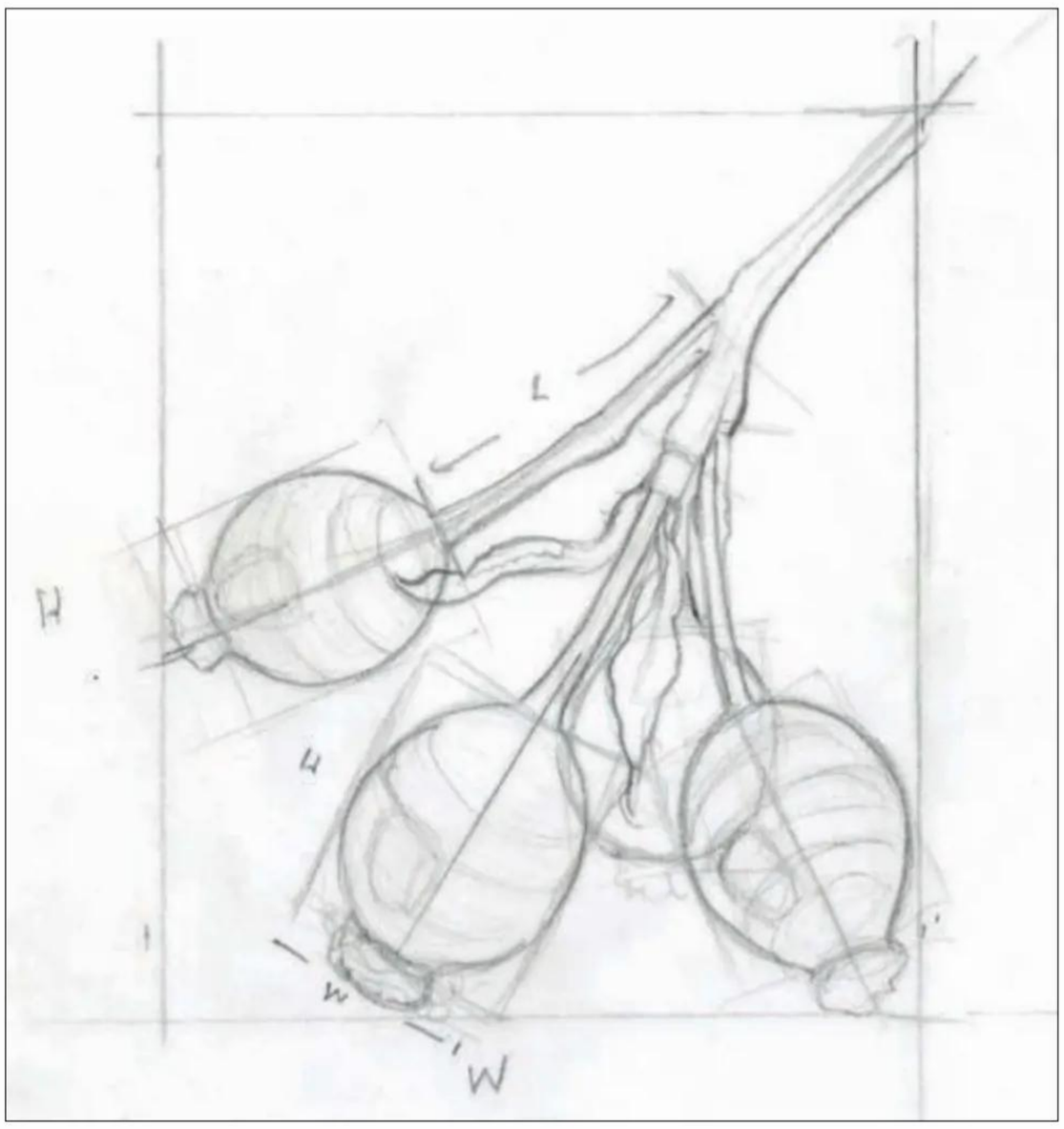
A simple guide for depth

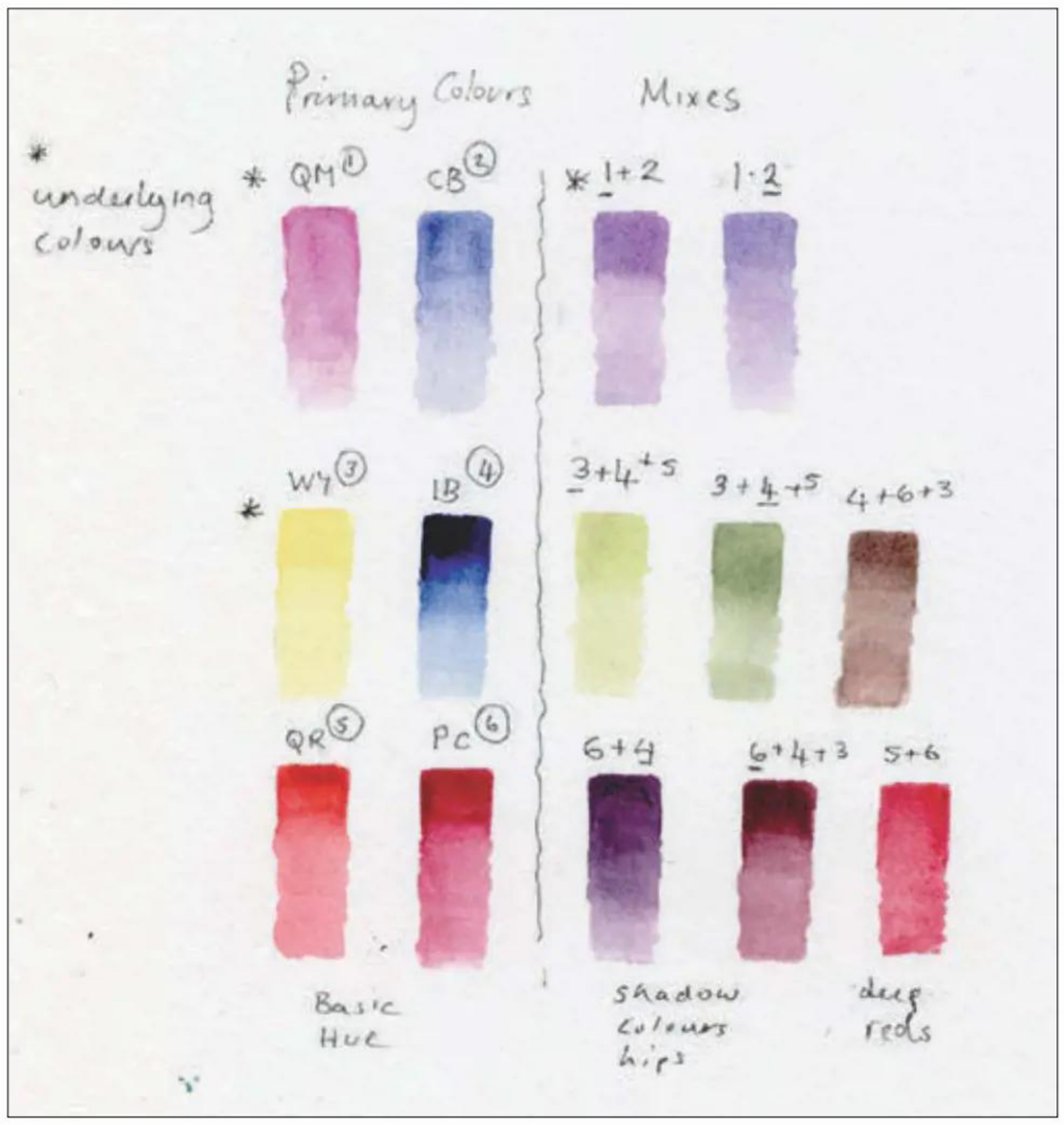
■ Nearer parts should appear stronger, richer, and more saturated
■ Distant parts should appear lighter, softer, and less saturated
This difference isn't always obvious in real life, but artists can use changes in colour strength and softness to suggest depth.

Take control and build colour slowly

Begin with light washes and build the painting gradually.
Later, use a dry brush with tiny, controlled hatching strokes, applying a sparse amount of paint to increase richness and build shadows. This technique makes it easier to control highlights and receding edges while adding vibrant, textured colour.







1 Using an HB pencil, make a sketch taken directly from the live subject. Use dividers to measure the key dimensions while holding them in front of the specimen.
Mark a bounding box for the overall height and width.
Break the subject into simple shapes – ovals for hips and small cylinders for stems, measuring each part carefully.
Once the proportions are established, add contour lines to the hips to clarify the 3-D form and show where highlights and shadows fall.
Drawing from life avoids camera distortion (which can enlarge near areas or stretch shapes at the edges).
For this demonstration, the subject was enlarged to one and a half times its actual size.. After refining the drawing, it can be transferred to watercolour paper using a light pad or tracing paper to create a clean, light outline.

2 Match colours to the live subject in natural daylight. Photographs can help understand the placement of light and shadow, but shouldn't be used for colour matching.
Make simple swatches of the primary colours and the mixes used in the painting. Paint the swatches from saturated to diluted using a small flat brush and label the colours used as shown.
Identify:
■ Underlying colours (violets, yellows)
■ The basic hue (the main warm red of the rose hips)
■ Shade colours (deeper versions of the basic hue)
Colour tricks:
■ Pale blues can make highlights appear brighter.
■ Violet adds depth to receding edges.
■ Underlying yellow warms and intensifies red – especially where colour is brightest.



3 Begin with the underlying violets, mix Quinacridone Magenta and Cobalt Blue.
Lightly dampen each area with clean water using a size 4 brush.
On the light side, apply a blue violet; on the shadow side, use a magenta-biased violet.
This acts as the 'receding edge', which is a visual illusion that increases the sense of roundness.
Paint the three front hips first and let them dry completely.
Add the rear hip last – this one will remain softer and paler to create depth.
At this stage, all hips may look similar in value, but this will change as layers build.



4 Continuing with the same brush, add Winsor Yellow beneath areas where the red will be most vibrant.
Painting yellow under red creates glowing warmth that can't be achieved by mixing the colours together on the palette.
Lightly dampen the selected areas and paint the yellow mainly toward the centre of each hip, where the colour will appear warm, bright, and golden. Allow to dry.



5 With the same brush, dampen the area again with clean water, then apply the first wash of the basic hue, Quinacridone Red.
Allow the red to blend gently into the violet without flooding up to the outer edge of the rose hip.
Leave the highlight slightly larger than needed; you can refine it later, but once lost, it cannot be recovered.
Leave the rear hip untouched, so that it remains paler than the others. Allow everything to dry thoroughly.



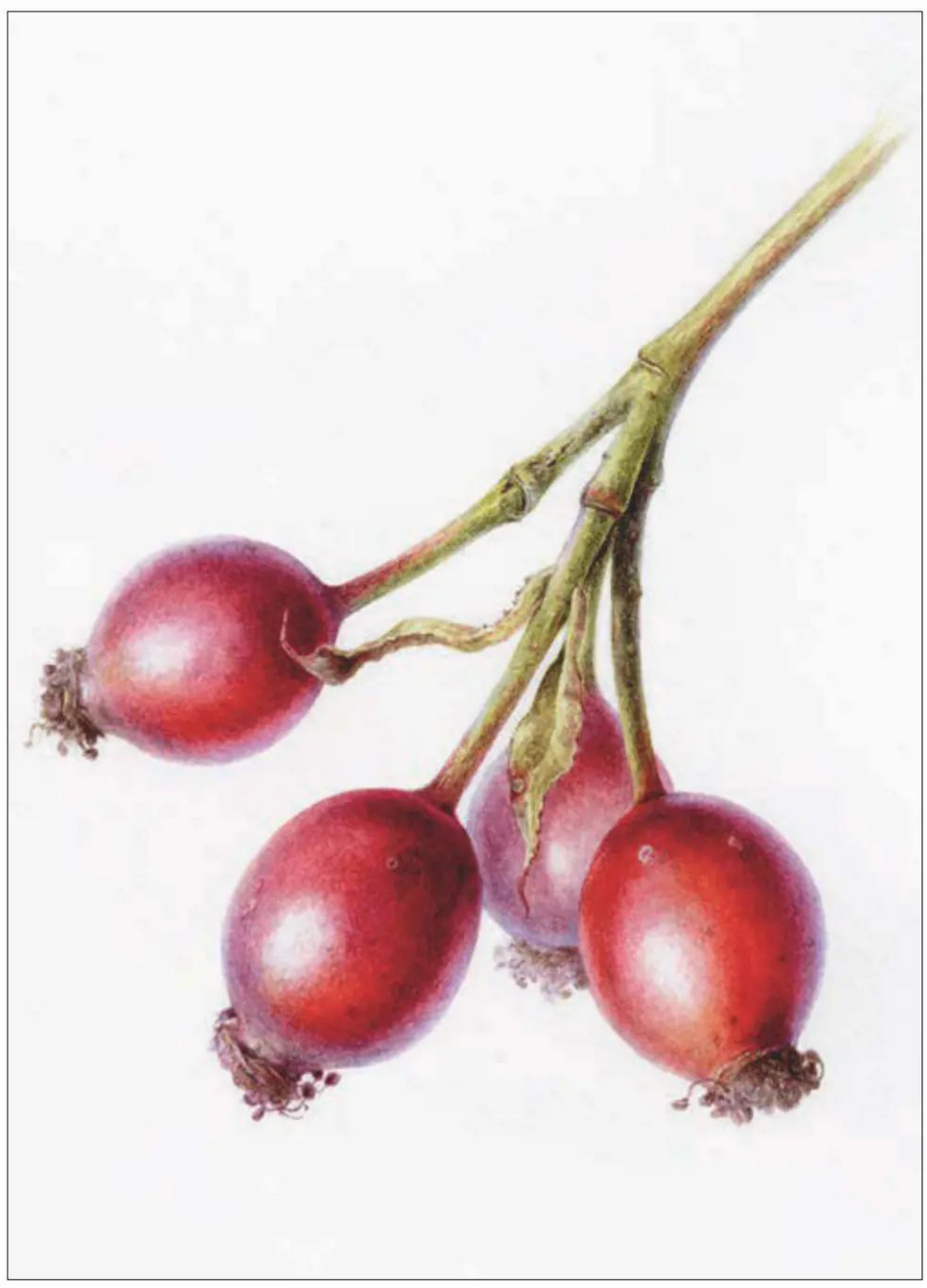
6 Add another layer of Quinacridone Red, dampening first with clean water and adding it only where a deeper red colour is needed. Carefully observe the light and shade on the hip and at the outer edges to see which areas need to be harder or softer, and add paint accordingly. This selective addition of colour preserves the tonal variations at this early stage of the painting, and the 3D form starts to emerge.
Now add the first greens: Using a size 2 brush, apply a little diluted Cobalt Blue on the lighter side of the stems first. Next, mix a light green using Indanthrene Blue, Winsor Yellow, and a touch of Quinacridone Red.
A small amount of red can be added to the rear hip, but it must remain lighter than the others.





7 Use a size 1 or 2 brush with a creamier but fairly dry consistency of Quinacridone Red to build the colour. Lightly dampen the brush, pick up the paint and remove any excess on spare paper. Using the tip of the brush apply tiny, lightweight hatching strokes, similar to using a pencil.
Hatching can be applied to a slightly damp surface for a softer finish, or to dry paper for a smooth or subtle texture. This technique keeps colours vibrant because they sit on the surface of the paper, so less water and paint are needed. Dry brush also allows smooth transitions into lighter and darker areas by easing pressure as you approach the highlights, helping you to grade into them.
For the deepest reds, mix Permanent Carmine and Quinacridone Red. For darker red shadows, add a touch of Indanthrene Blue to Permanent Carmine and a tiny amount of Winsor Yellow.





8 At this stage, review and add more colour and detail. Deepen green shadows on the stems on the shade side of the painting, with a darker green mix made by adding more Indanthrene Blue to the mix. A size 2 brush can be used for this.
If the highlights are too large, carefully reduce them by dry-brushing around the edges with a little diluted red, then scumble texture into the highlight with diluted Cobalt Blue.
Mix a brown using Indanthrene Blue, Permanent Carmine, and Winsor Yellow, and use the size 1 brush to paint any markings and details on the stems, as well as blemishes on the hips. Check edges and details using a magnifying glass and rectify any untidy areas if required.

Crossing the square

Hazel Soan demonstrates how viewing figures from above allows you to flatten the scene, use strong cast shadows, and create a clean, confident composition



I am a figurative painter, but I tend to 'see' the flat pattern of a painting in terms of shapes and tones before seeing or observing the actual real-world subject. I then use the subject to paint the watercolour rather than watercolour to paint the subject. One of my favourites is the view of figures moving through an open space from an elevated perspective, because looking down on something takes the horizon line above the top of the paper and allows for a flatter, more abstracted compositional pattern, while the subject remains obviously figurative.

MATERIALS USED

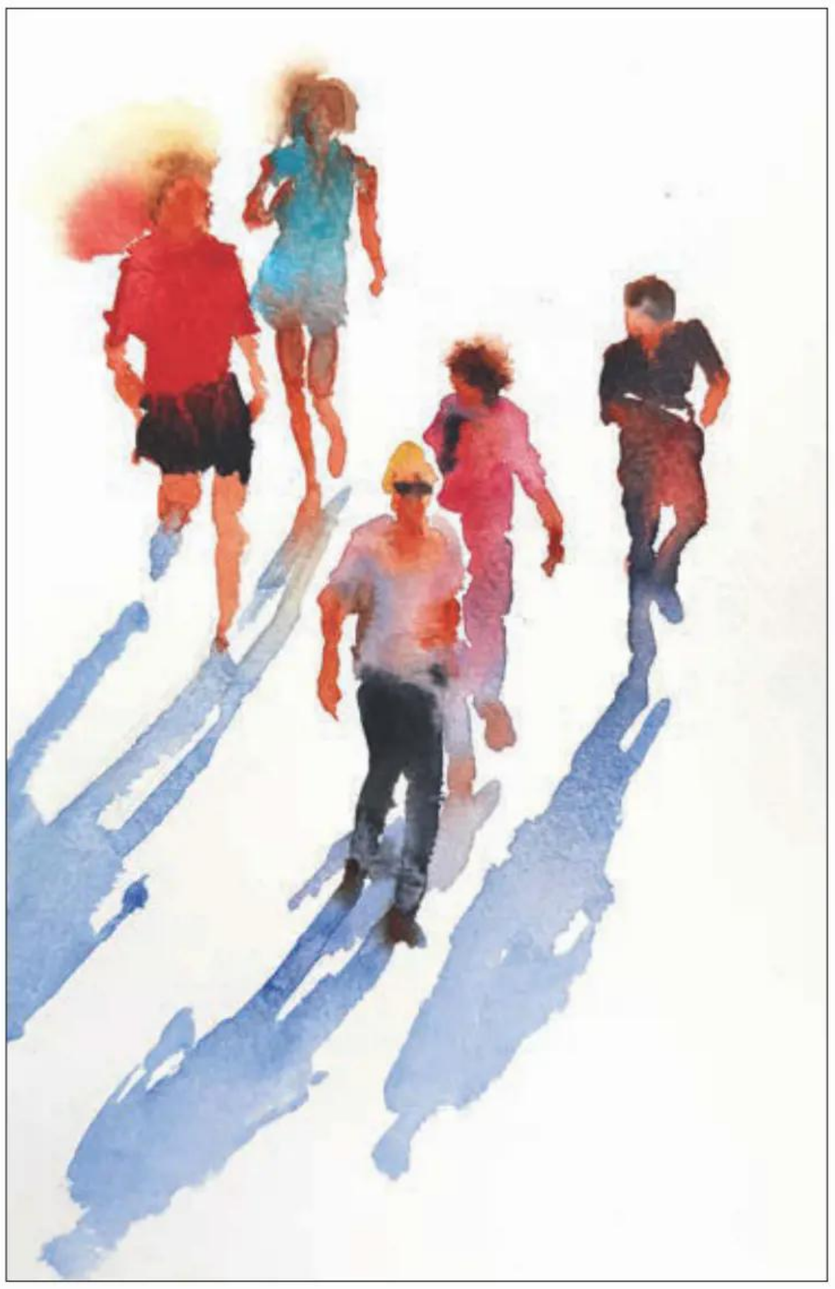
■ **Surface:** 640gsm rough watercolour paper, 22x18in (56x46cm)

■ **Paints:** Ultramarine Finest, Yellow Raw Ochre, Transparent Sienna, Raw Umber, Cadmium Red, Aureolin, Transparent Orange, Cobalt Cerulean, Prussian Blue, Ruby Red, Alizarin Crimson

■ **Brushes:** round sable brushes, sizes 10, 8 and 6

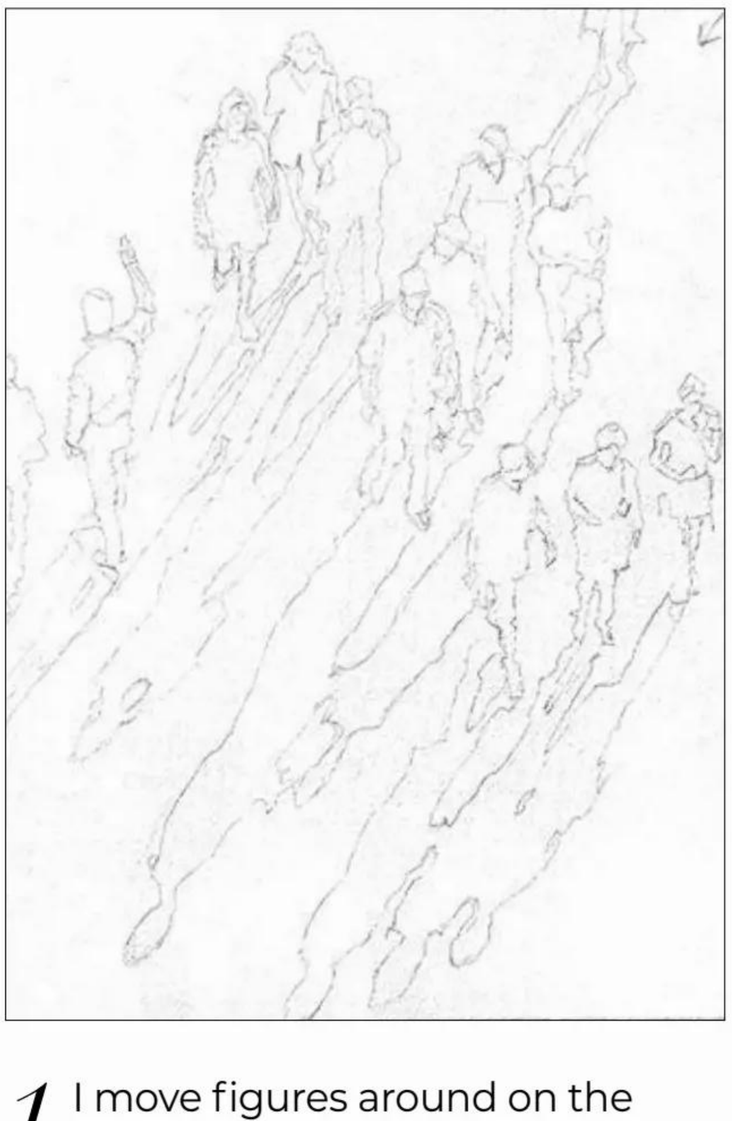
■ **Other:** pencil; eraser; ruler; clean water containers

TOP TIP Work wet-in-wet to keep the colours linking softly and to avoid hard edges. Let one wash bleed into the next — the soft blends suggest movement and give the composition a more fluid, cohesive feel





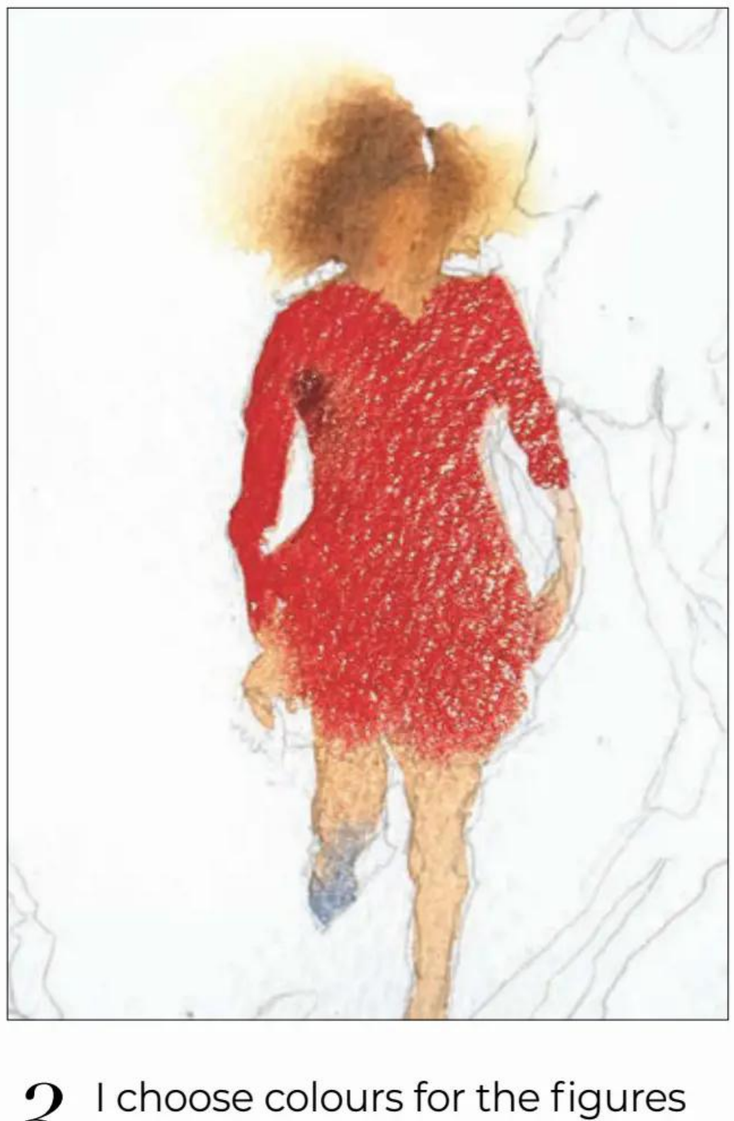
The sketch, painted from the Campanile Tower in St. Mark's Square, is the starting inspiration for this composition, along with figures and groups taken from previous paintings and copious photographic references, which I lay out on the studio floor. I decide on the best light direction for the cast shadows to enhance the dynamic of the painting.



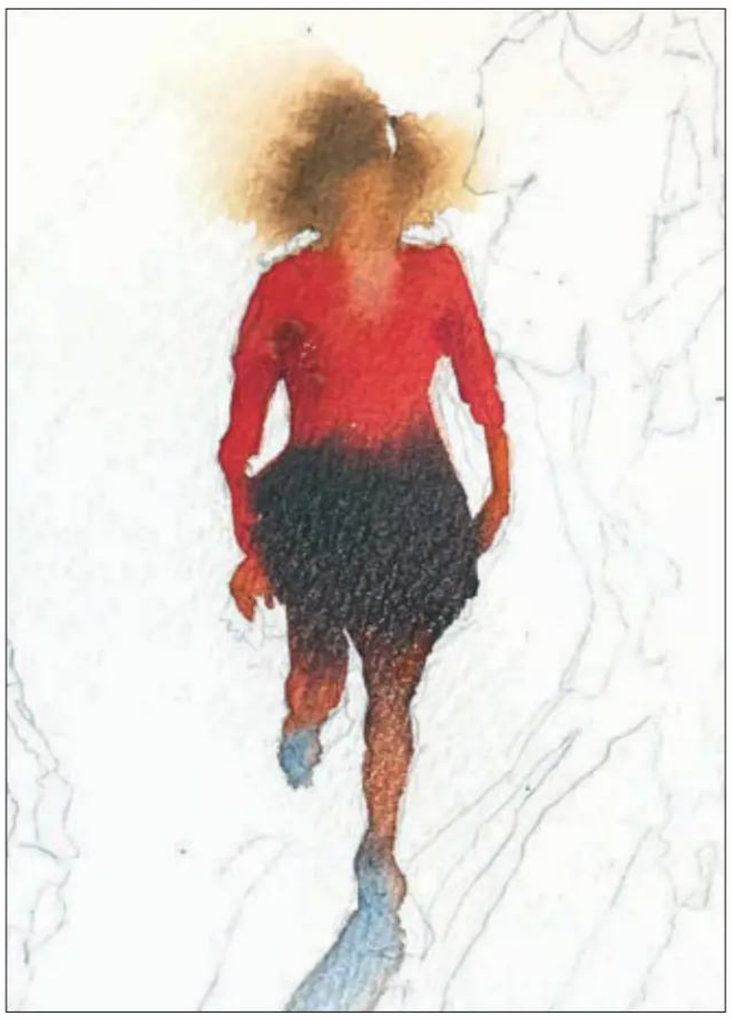
1 I move figures around on the paper until I have what seems to me to be an effective pattern of people and shadows, drawn with a very light touch and scant detail, because I will later rub out the drawing in the lit areas before I paint. In this painting, I bring the people mainly from the upper left diagonally across to the lower right, casting the shadows in the opposite direction. The shadows are just as important as the figures.



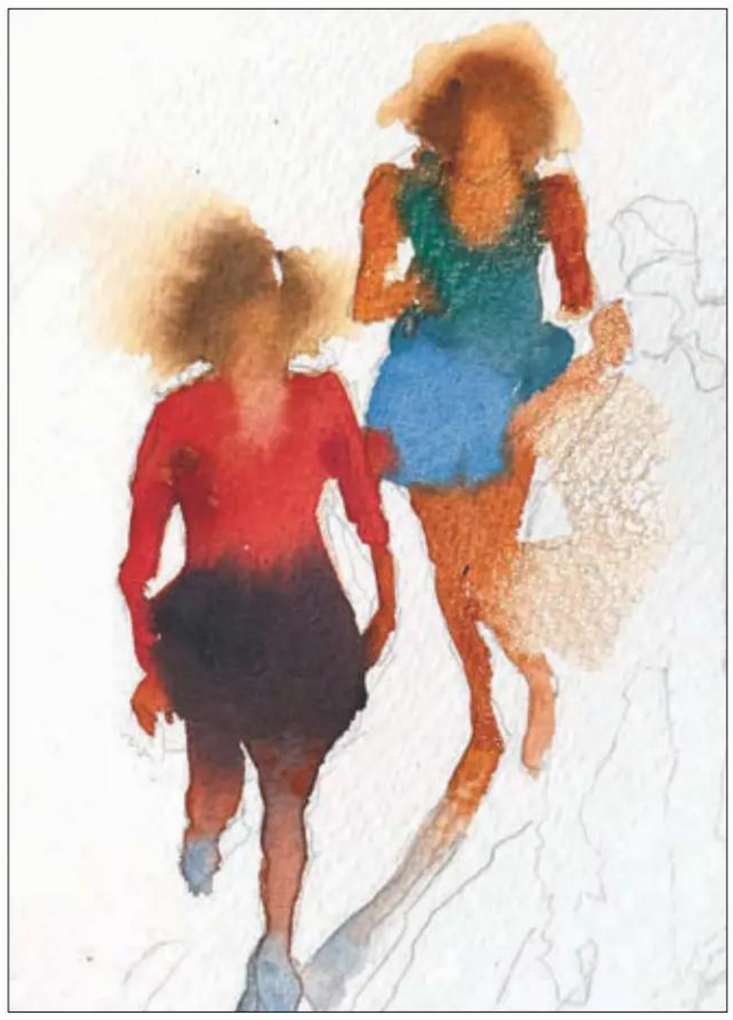
2 Since there is no overall linking colour to bind the composition as a whole, I work from the top of the paper downward, figure by figure, as shown in these details, here wetting the first figure shape with a pale wash of Transparent Sienna, using a a size 10 round brush, followed by a size 8, letting the girl's hair bleed outward into dampened paper.



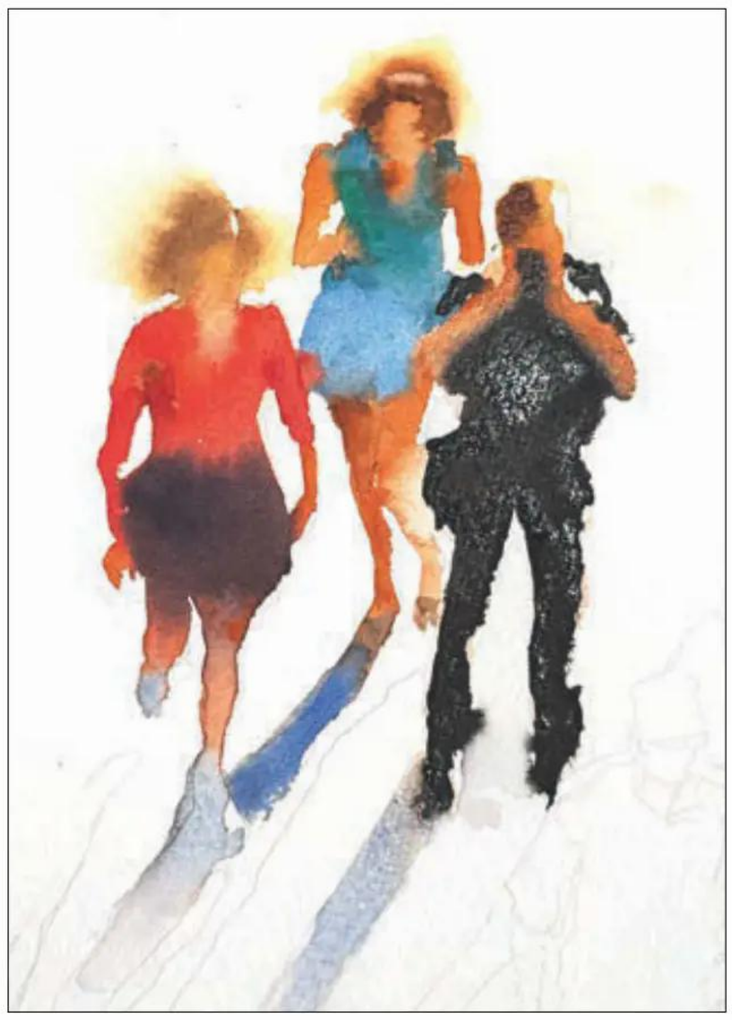
3 I choose colours for the figures that I think will have maximum impact alongside each other. For the first figure, I have chosen red and black, which worked well in a previous painting. I drop neat Cadmium Red into the still-wet paint with a size 8 round brush and include all the clothing.



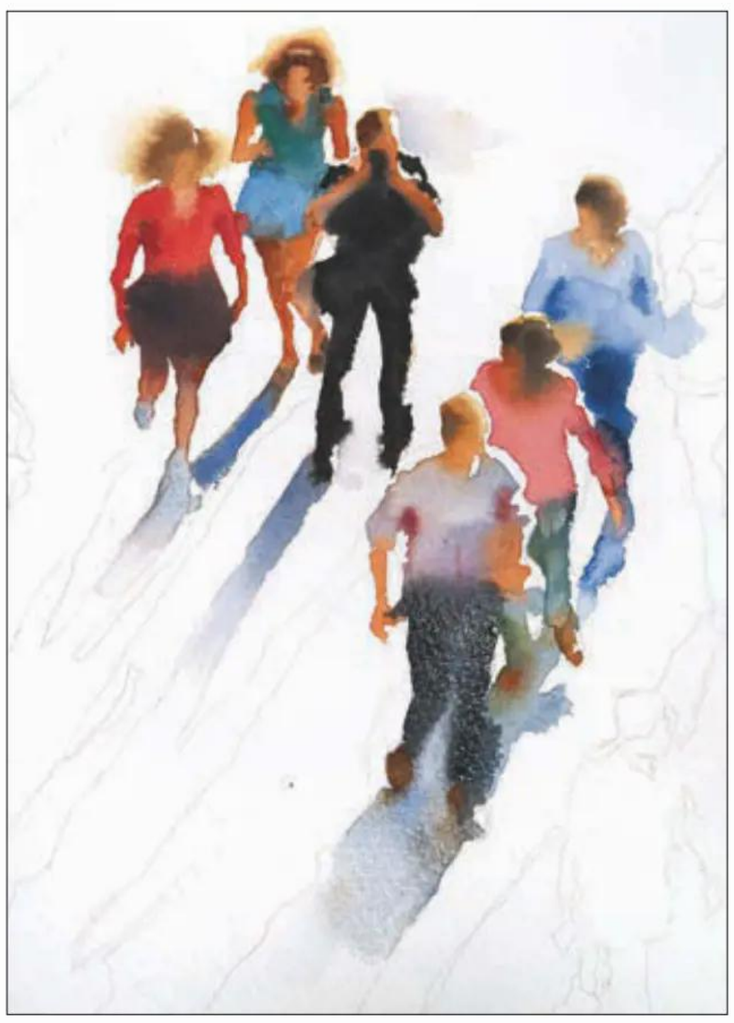
4 Then add a neat black mixed from Ultramarine Finest and Transparent Sienna into the damp red wash with the size 8 brush for the shorts, so the colours link at the waist in a soft blend. The aim is to avoid hard edges within the figures, in order to suggest movement.

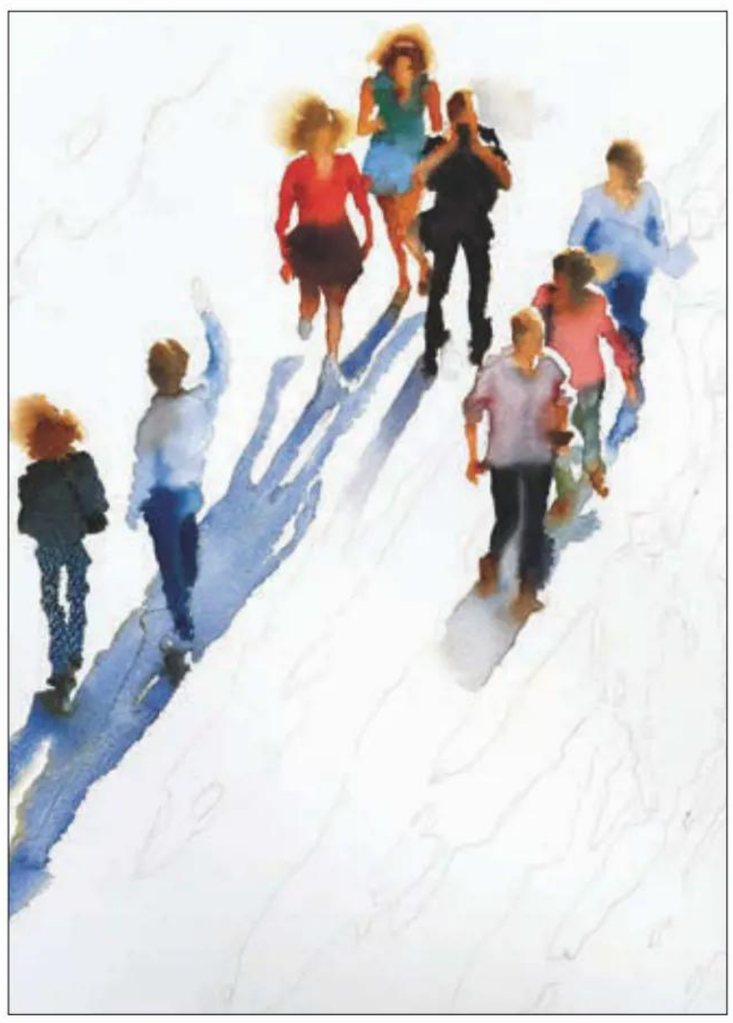


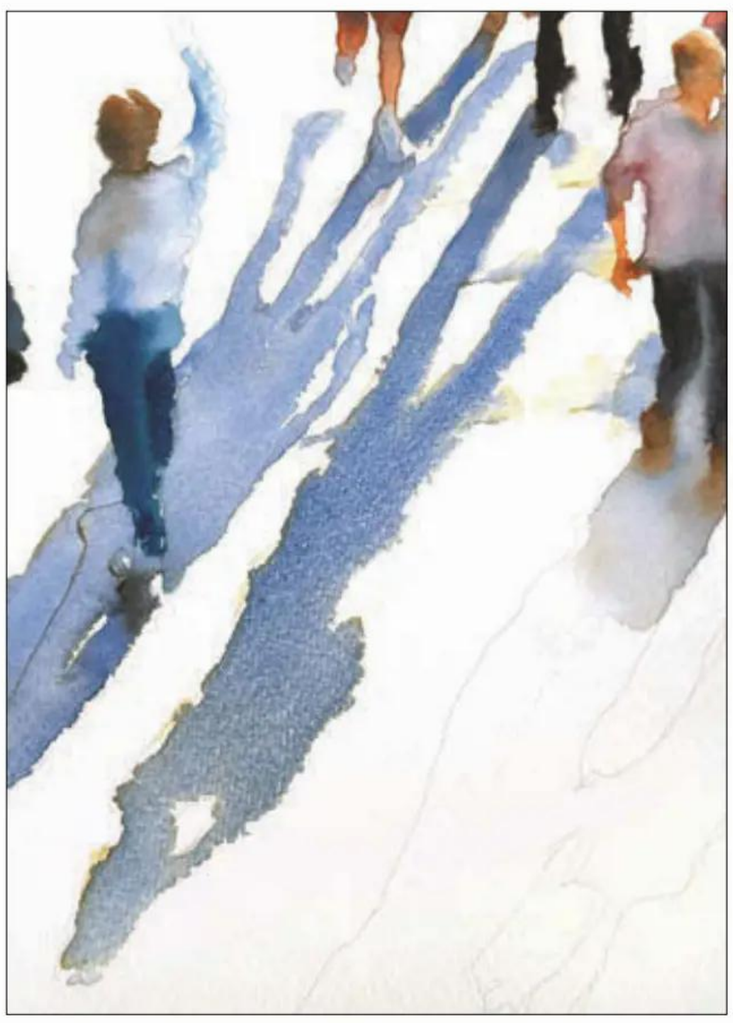
5 I repeat the same process for the next figure in my composition: laying a pale dilute wash first, then adding in richer colour wet into wet once I am happy the figure shape 'works'. To contrast with red, I dress the second figure in Cobalt Cerulean and a green mixed by adding Aureolin to Ultramarine. As you can see, I do not follow my drawing lines too closely, allowing the brush to dance on the paper in the hope of creating interesting edges to the shapes.



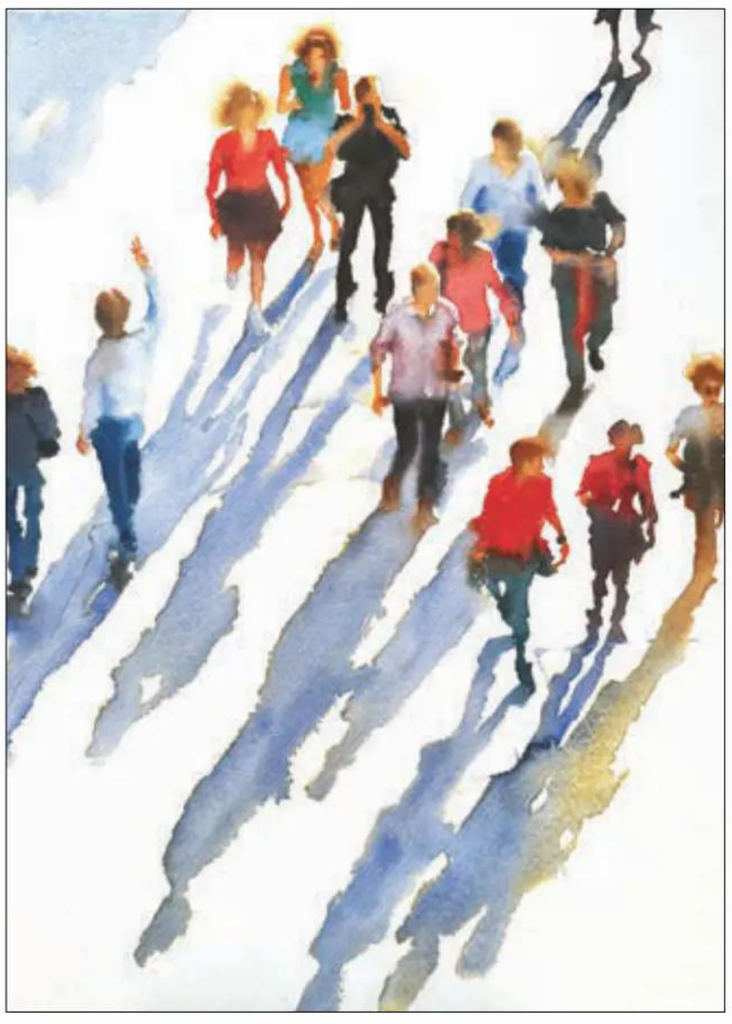
6 I pay close attention to gaps and spaces between figures and limbs, trying to see the set of three figures as one overall shape. In the third figure, I went for neat black, mixed again from Transparent Sienna and Ultramarine Finest and laid it into the dampening pale Transparent Sienna first wash with a size 8 brush.

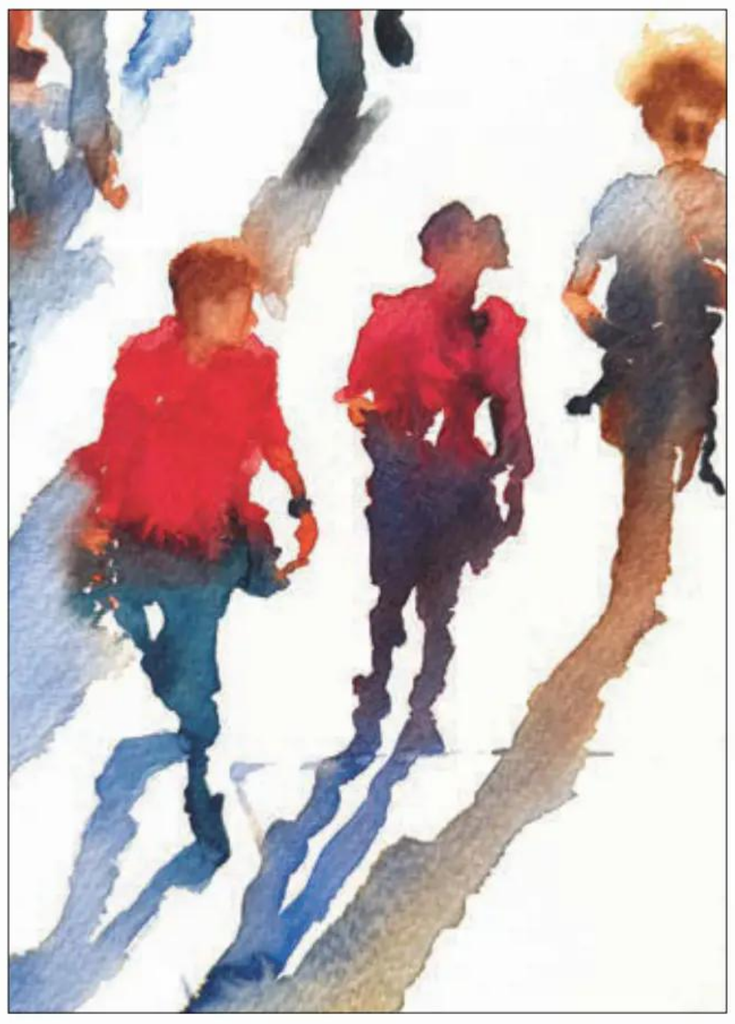


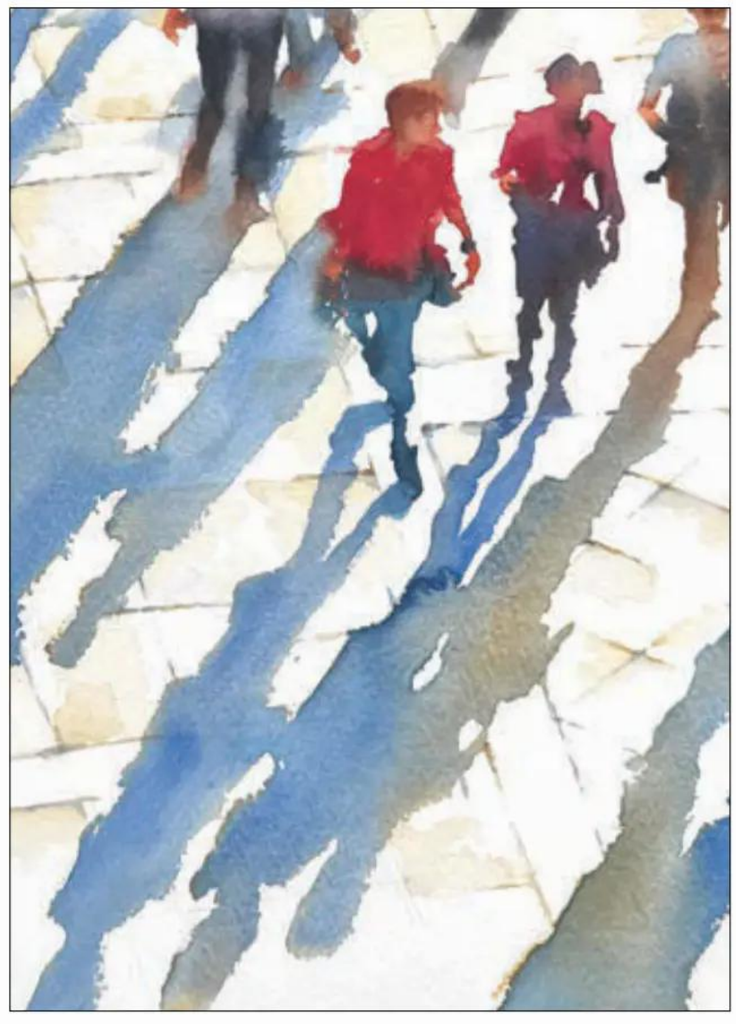




7 I continue adding the figures in the same manner – a pale wet wash followed by intense colour added wet into wet – and start to bring in the shadows with dilute Yellow Raw Ochre and then a subsequent darker wash of Ultramarine Finest, delivered with a size 10 brush.







8 The last three figures are painted, along with their shadows, using the size 8 and size 10 brushes, and reintroducing the Cadmium Red and some Alizarin to balance warmer colours across the composition. At this point, I step back to check the overall composition and make a few minor adjustments to shapes and colours.

9 To create the setting, the 'background' paving, I use a ruler and pencil to mark out the pattern of paving stones in the square. I then pick a few paving slabs to tint with dilute Yellow Raw Ochre, Raw Umber and occasionally Ultramarine Finest and emphasise some of the joints, corners and lines with the intention to unite the overall pattern.

TOP TIPS

Don't be afraid of letting the paint bleed into other colours or beyond the edges of the brushstroke: the subject will be read as figures by default, so let the brushmarks dance and the paint blur to aid and enhance the sense of movement

Make sure you have clean water available at all times so you can dampen the paper cleanly ahead of any brushmarks you want to allow to spread

Only step back to view the composition from a short distance after you have all the main elements in place. Everything in the painting is relative to everything else, so it is not a good plan to pre-judge whether some part is right or wrong, say, in colour or tone, until all the main elements are in play

Have fun, never be afraid to experiment!



Old buildings, Fivizzano

Roger Jenkins uses pen and wash to show the detail and 'grittiness' of old buildings in Tuscany



The subject is one of several photos I took during a visit to Fivizzano, Tuscany. I liked the massing of the building forms against the background and the interplay of light and shade, particularly the contrast of the darks with the bright colours. This is a complicated scene, so it is essential to simplify it.

I'm using Inktense paints, which work like watercolour but become permanent once dry, so earlier washes won't lift when you add more colour.





MATERIALS USED

■ **Surface:** 300gsm cold-pressed (NOT) watercolour paper

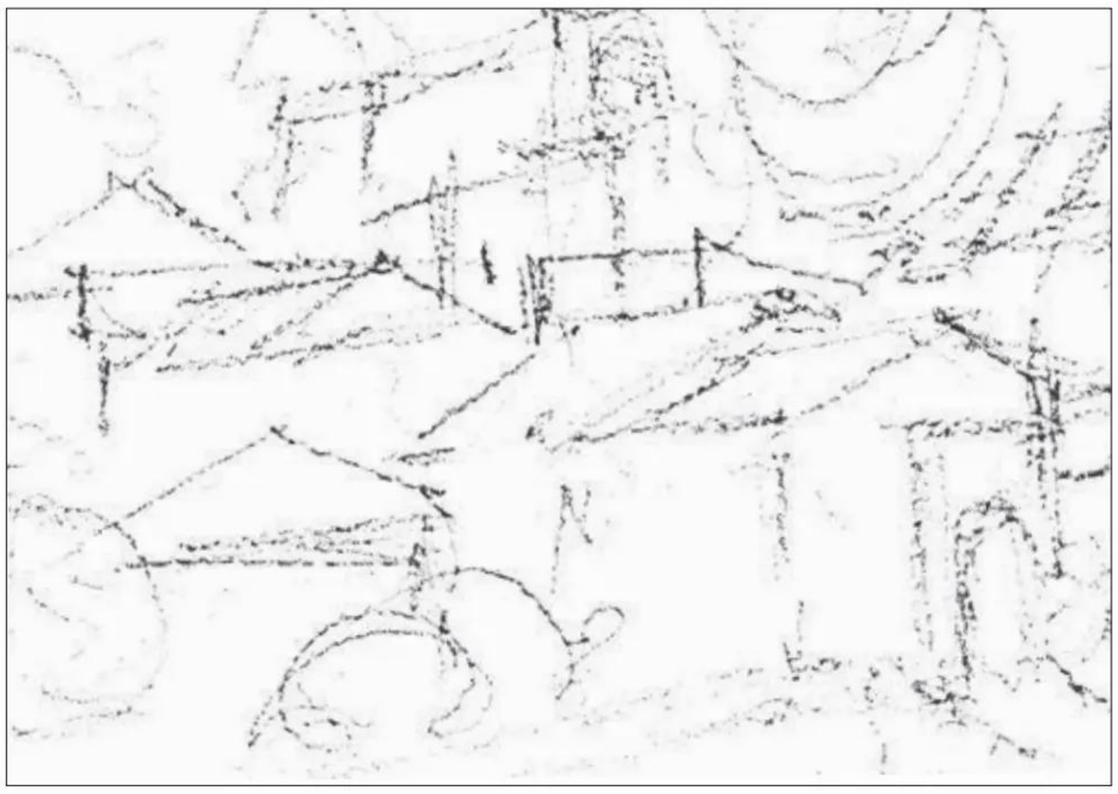
■ **Paints:** Inktense paint pan set: Sun Yellow, Mango, Poppy Red, Dark Plum, Mid Ultramarine, Bright Blue, Teal Green, Racing Green, Kiwi, Burnt Yellow Ochre, Natural Brown, Ink Black

■ **Brushes:** size 12 sable mop brush; pointed round brushes, sizes 0, 1, 4, 6 and 8

■ **Other:** H pencil; waterproof fineliners, 0.05-0.8mm; black brush pen; eraser







This image has been darkened to show the faint pencil lines.

1 I begin with a few simple pencil lines to establish the basic shapes and make sure the composition fits the paper! I keep these to a minimum, often dispensing with pencil work and beginning with fineliners – the lines should be kept as brief and unobtrusive as possible.

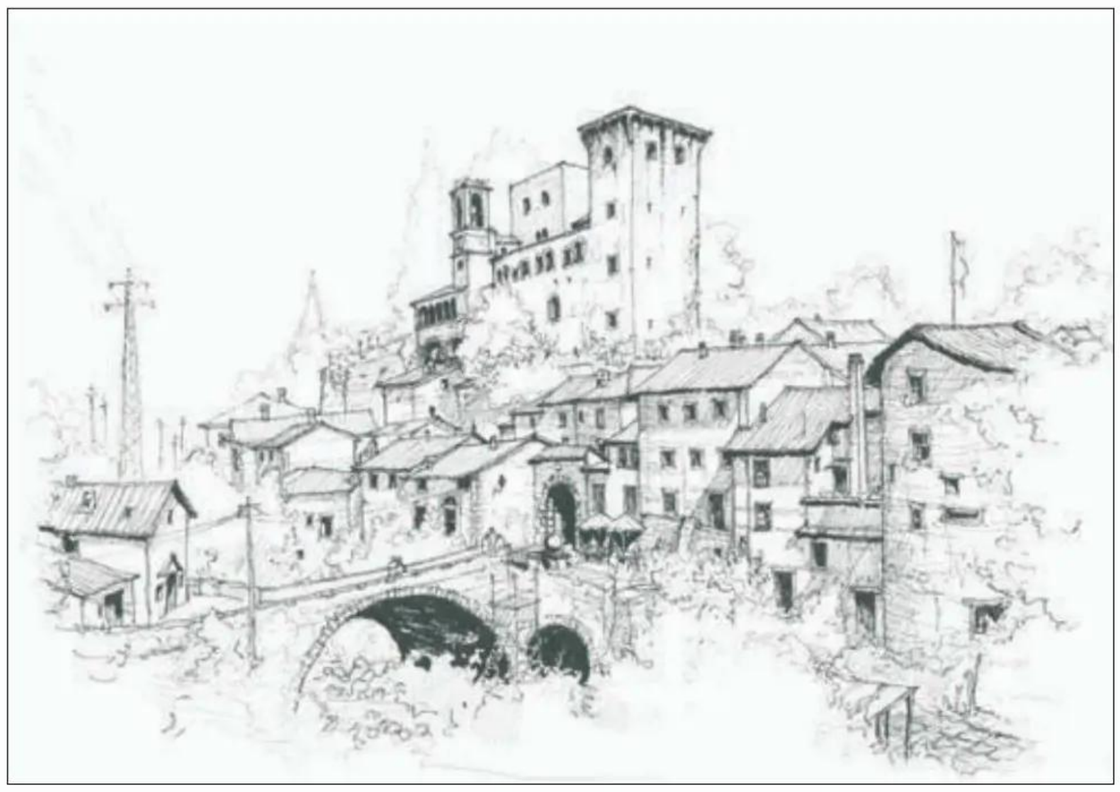
TOP TIP Don't be too 'precious'; this is a painting, not a photograph; you are creating an atmosphere and a sense of the place

2 I then begin the drawing in earnest, going over the whole illustration with the 0.05mm fineliner – I use this thickness as one would use a pencil. You can be loose with the lines and not worry too much about making mistakes – as the lines and shapes are developed with heavier lines, these initial marks essentially 'disappear'.

I initially concentrate on keeping the shapes simple, and developing the detail later, once I have established the overall composition. I tend to enhance the perspective and slightly distort some of the buildings to create a sense of interest.

If any original pencil marks show through, I erase them with a soft rubber.







3 Using the range of fineliners, I work up the various shapes, concentrating on maintaining the thinner lines for the background, and enhancing the mid and foreground with the thicker, heavier lines; this creates a sense of depth and perspective simply by using different pens – much as you would when drawing with pencils or painting in watercolour. Work up the 'darks' to establish the values across the drawing.

Look for things that can add interest and contribute to the finished work; it is always a good idea to encourage the viewer to really look into the painting.

At this stage, you end up with essentially a monochrome rendition of the picture, albeit without the added subtleties of some of the tones – cross-hatching some of the shaded areas helps at this stage, enhancing the sunlit 'white' areas (again, much as you would do with watercolour).





4 Start adding some colour. I begin with the sky, and, keen to show a bright Italian summer sky, I start with Bright Blue with a touch of Mid Ultramarine added in places, to give variation. For this, I used the size 12 mop brush.

While the sky is still wet, I drop in the distant hills using a mixture of Dark Plum and Racing Green, using the size 8 pointed round brush. It is important to get a soft transition between the hills and the sky, as this is essentially the background – or perhaps it's better to call it a 'backdrop'! This colour mix ensures that the hills recede into the distance.

TOP TIP In this situation, keep the sky simple, as the main subject matter is very 'busy'. Having both a busy sky and a busy scene is confusing and lacks harmony.

5 Next, when dry, drop in the background trees and some mid-ground trees, being careful to cut around the buildings; for this, I use Racing Green, varying its intensity and texture by dropping in more pigment or adding water in places – to give a more solid 3D effect. For this, I use the size 8 and 6 pointed round brushes.

Using this colour, a really dark green, doesn't make the trees come forward too much, and also acts as a good backdrop to the buildings. A bit of 'spatter' here and there adds to the looseness of the effect I am trying to achieve.



6 Next, I paint the roofs, using a combination of Poppy Red, Mango, and Burnt Yellow Ochre, in varying strengths and mixes, to emulate the pantiles. It is a good idea to vary the basic paint mix each time you return to your palette; the roofs are all very individual in terms of colour and texture, and doing this enables the right effect to be achieved.

Then, I add some Mid Ultramarine on the shadow side of the buildings. Nothing too intense, just enough to enable the sunlit faces to come to life – much as you would with a conventional watercolour painting.

TOP TIPS Enhance the lights by increasing the darks; using a muted blue is a good complement to the terracotta roof colours. You may notice that the use of shading like this gives form to the round tower at the front right of the painting. When all this is dry, I enhance some of the cast shadows with a stronger Bright Blue/Dark Plum paint mix, using a combination of the pointed round brushes, sizes 8, 6 and 4.

I framed the foreground shrubbery with some heavy darks using Racing Green, which helps to stop the composition from leaching out at the edges



7 On the home straight! It's time to add the foreground trees and bushes, all done very loosely with warmer, brighter paint colours, used in various mixes of Sun Yellow, Kiwi, Racing Green, and even some Poppy Red. This is done using a wet-into-wet technique, avoiding hard edges and allowing the various elements to blend and merge where they interconnect.

All this is interspersed with areas of Mango and Burnt Yellow Ochre for pathways and so on. The warmer, brighter colours bring all of this forward, which is important in your composition – remember the big three 'fore-, mid- and background'.

When everything was dry, I added some sparkles of colour using Poppy Red, Mango, and Bright Blue for elements like the umbrellas, the figures and a few flowers; finally the flag, using Poppy Red and Teal Green, using the size 0 and 4 pointed round brushes for the fine detail. A final look around, and it's ok to go! Complete!

DALER ROWNEY



STAND OUT. BE BOLD. PAINT LOUD™.

PAINT LOUD™ is more than a tag line, it's an invitation. It's a call for artists of all levels and techniques to stand out, be bold and express themselves without limits.
Whether you're a beginner or a professional artist, Daler-Rowney is here to provide the colours, surfaces, brushes, and tools you need to bring your vision to life.

Join The Movement!
daler-rowney.com/paintloud

Painting by Naomi Edmondson
Created with System3 Acrylic Original
& System3 Acrylic Brushes
@survivaltechniques

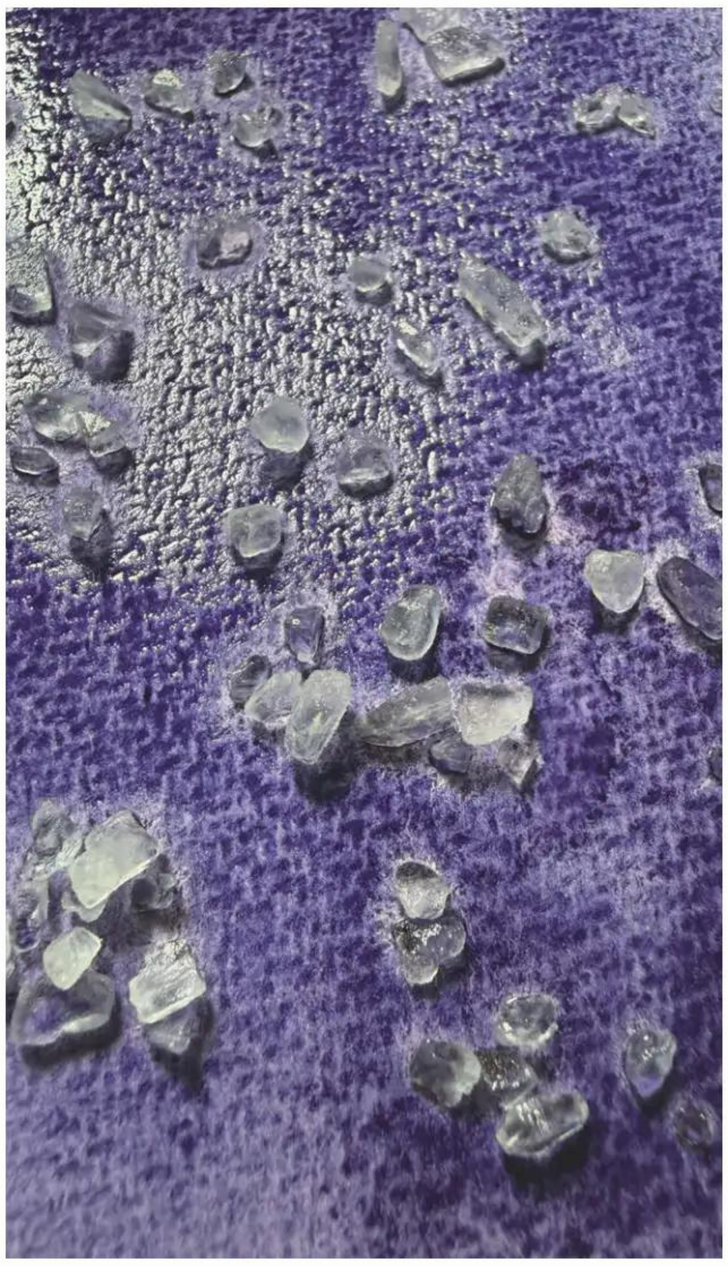
Create texture with salt

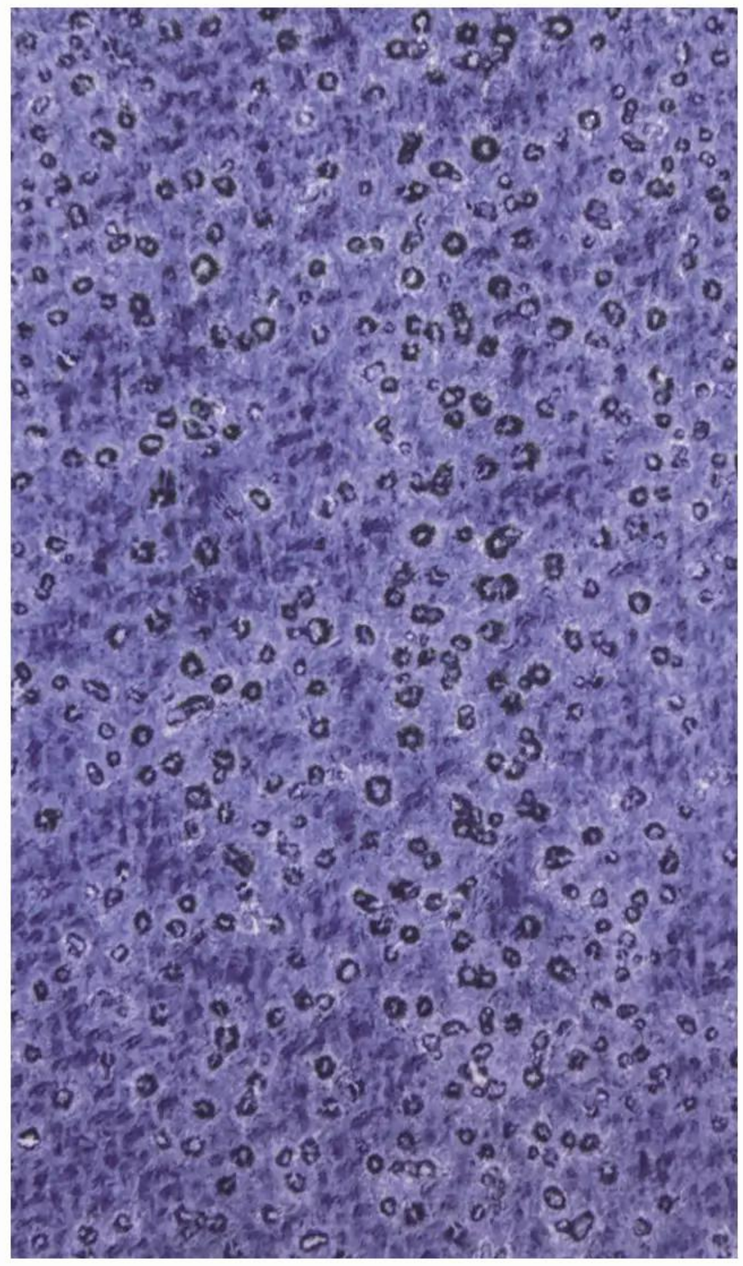
Sprinkling salt onto wet watercolour is a simple way to create delicate, unpredictable patterns. As the wash dries, the salt draws moisture towards the crystals, redistributing the pigment and leaving mottled marks, pale spots and darker outlines. It's a useful technique for suggesting frost, foliage, stone and other natural textures

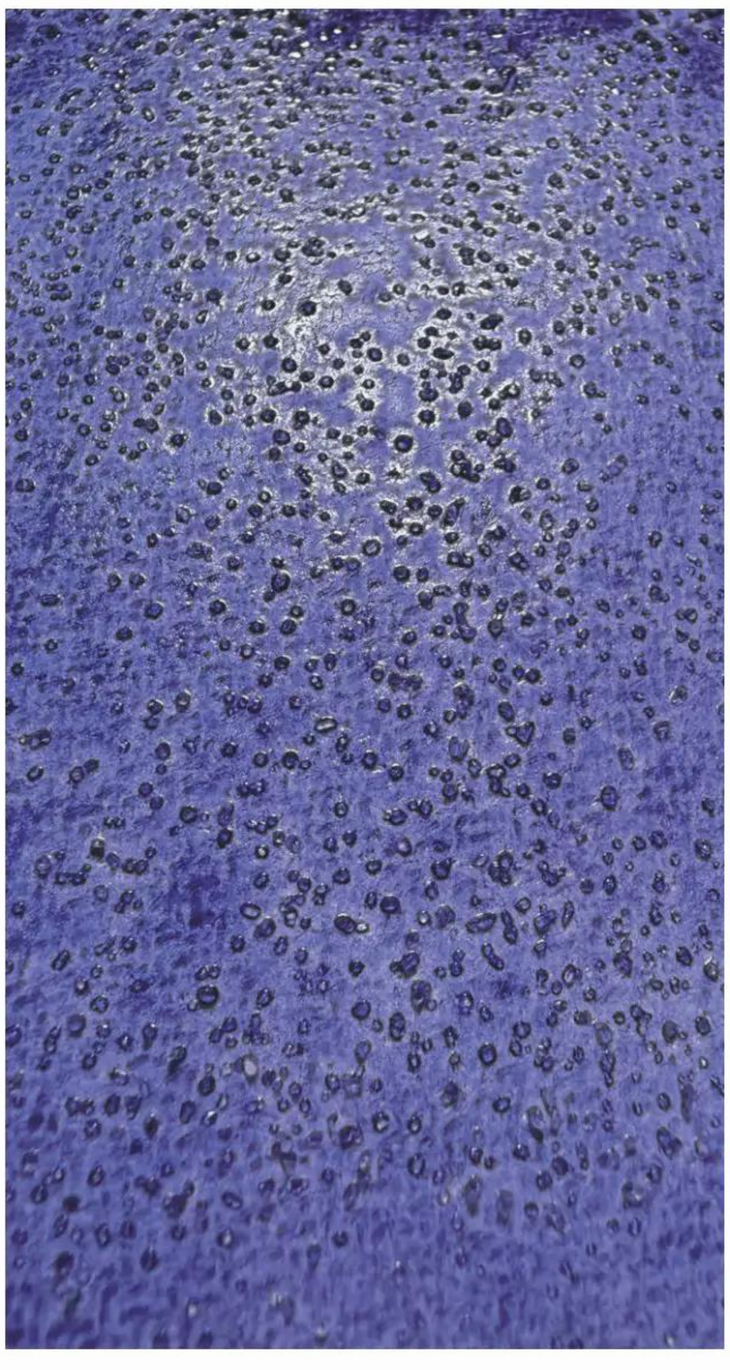
WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Watercolour paper
- Watercolour paint and a large brush
- Fine table salt
- Coarse sea salt
- Two small dishes for the salt

1 **Paint a wash**
Apply a generous, even wash of colour to your paper. Choose a medium or dark shade so the resulting texture will be easy to see. The paint should be wet enough to remain workable, but not swimming in puddles.







2 **Sprinkle on the salt**
While the wash is still damp and has a slight sheen, sprinkle a little fine salt over one area. Leave some gaps between the grains rather than covering the entire surface. Avoid touching or moving the paper once the salt has been applied.

3 **Try coarse salt**
On a separate area of wet wash, scatter a few grains of coarse sea salt. The larger crystals generally produce broader, less densely packed effects, although the results depend on the amount of moisture in the paint.

4 **Leave to dry**
Allow the paper to dry completely without disturbing the salt. As moisture moves towards the crystals, pigment is displaced or concentrated around them, creating irregular patterns. Don't try to speed things up with a hairdryer, as this can interfere with the effect.

5 **Reveal the texture**
When the paper is thoroughly dry, gently brush away the salt with a clean, dry brush or your fingertips. You'll discover a pattern of tiny rings, pale patches and darker edges where the pigment has moved.

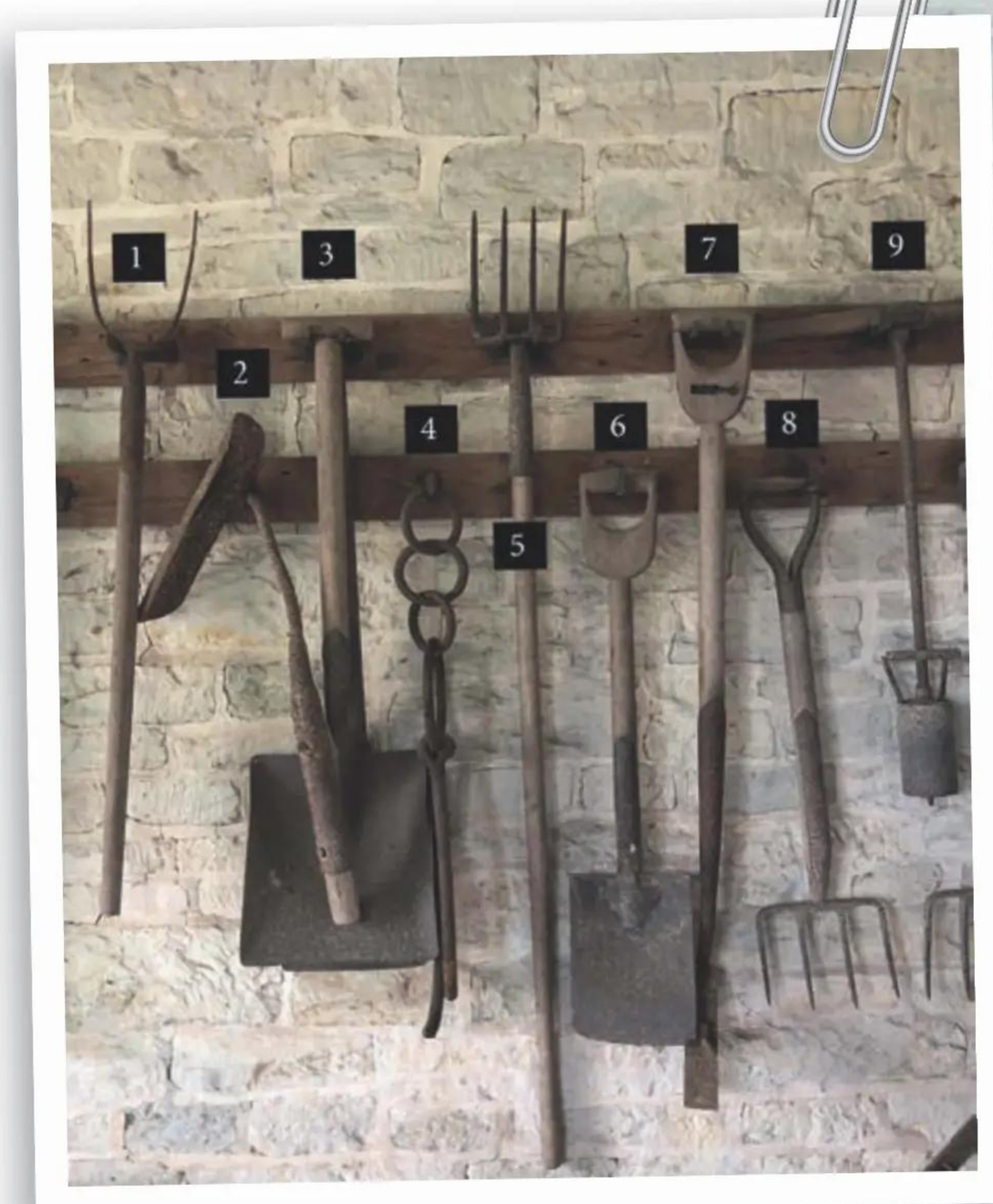
TOP TIP Timing makes all the difference. If the wash is too wet, the salt may dissolve and produce indistinct marks. If it's almost dry, very little will happen. Experiment with different moisture levels, salt sizes and pigments to discover the effects you like best

Extended tutorial
The tool shed

Tracey Bengeyfield uses a limited palette to capture the weathered textures of vintage gardening tools, from rusty metal to aged wood and stone

In this painting, we will be working on an amazing collection of vintage gardening tools that can be seen at Parham House and Gardens, West Sussex. You will create a range of different textures, including rusty metal, stone and wood grain, as we recreate each of the different elements. We will look at the subtle changes of hues and use a limited palette to achieve a timeworn appearance. Not being a gardener, I can't identify all the tools (please let me know if you can!). Therefore, I've numbered them and will refer to those as we paint them. Note: if you decide to paint all the tools, this will be a very labour-intensive painting! If you still want to tackle all the techniques but in less time, you could reduce the number of tools. You could also opt to leave the stonework and have a plain background. Alternatively, you could select your favourite tools and rearrange them to create your own composition.





STEP ONE: TOOLS

Get your image down whichever way you'd like, then we'll make a start on painting the tools. We will be using a similar technique for all of them, so feel free to start with whichever one you like.

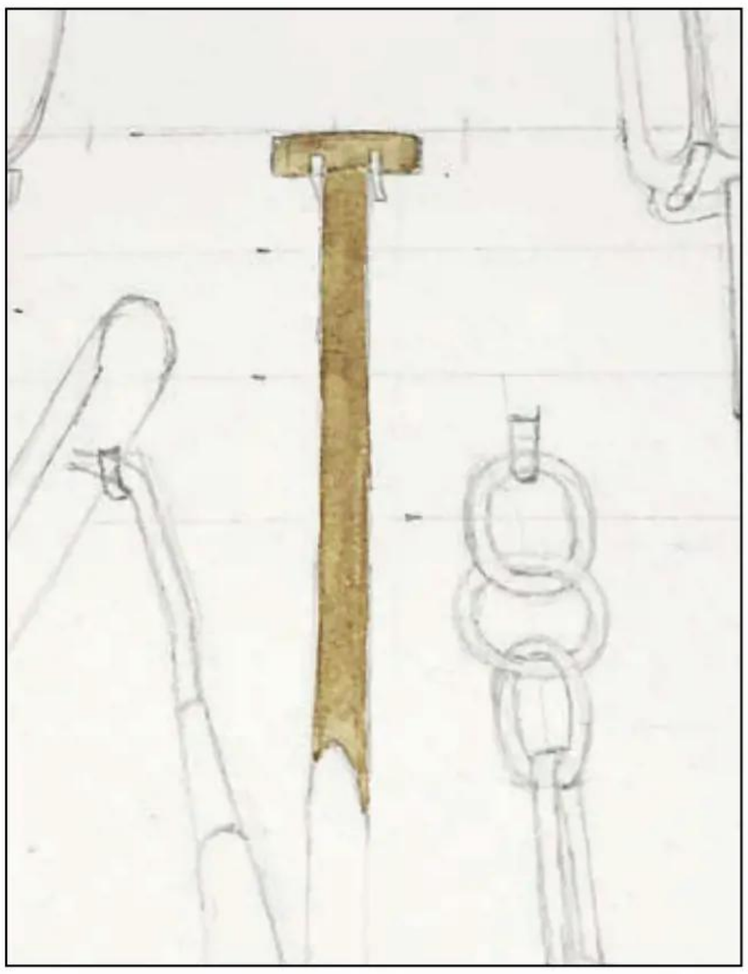
MATERIALS USED

- **Surface:** 300 gsm (140 lb) cold-pressed (NOT) watercolour paper block, 16x12in (41x30cm)
- **Paints:** Raw Umber, Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Sepia, Burnt Umber, Quinacridone Lilac, Payne's Grey, Ultramarine Blue, Cobalt Blue
- **Brushes:** round brushes, sizes 6 and 10; size 2 liner brush
- **Other:** HB pencil; salt; paper towel

Alternative colours

- **Sepia:** Burnt Umber + Payne's Grey or Black
- Quinacridone Lilac: Permanent Rose + a touch of Violet or Manganese Violet
- **Payne's Grey:** Ultramarine + Burnt Sienna

WOODEN HANDLES AND SHAFTS





1 Start by adding a base colour to all the wooden sections of the tools. Mix Raw Umber with a touch of Burnt Umber and apply this onto dry paper to the handle of the short shovel (No.3). Add a touch of Payne's Grey to the mix and use this colour for the remaining tools. Note: this includes the top of the short fork (No.8) and the handle on the Auger (No.9), which I later noticed were also wooden! More detail will be added once dry.

RUSTY METALWORK

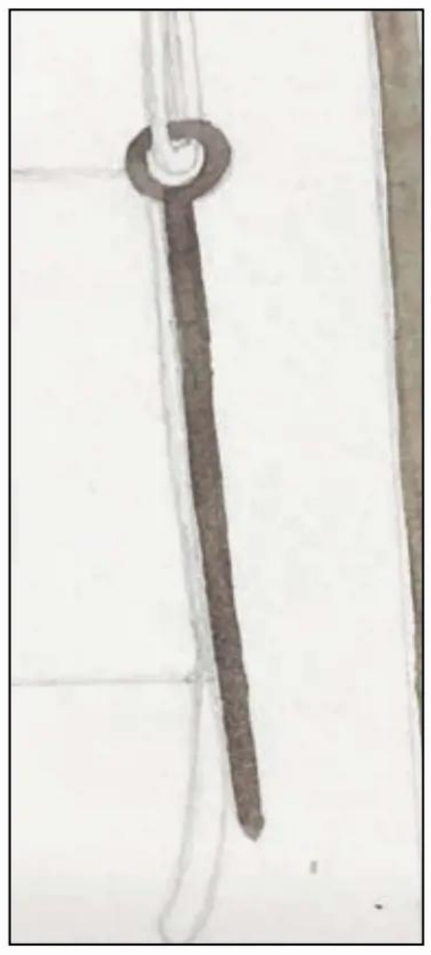
Next we'll apply colour to the metal parts of the tools. Most of these are quite old, so they have a deep brown rusty surface. Again, start with any of the tools – but look closely at the different hues – some may be darker, greyer or even more red in appearance

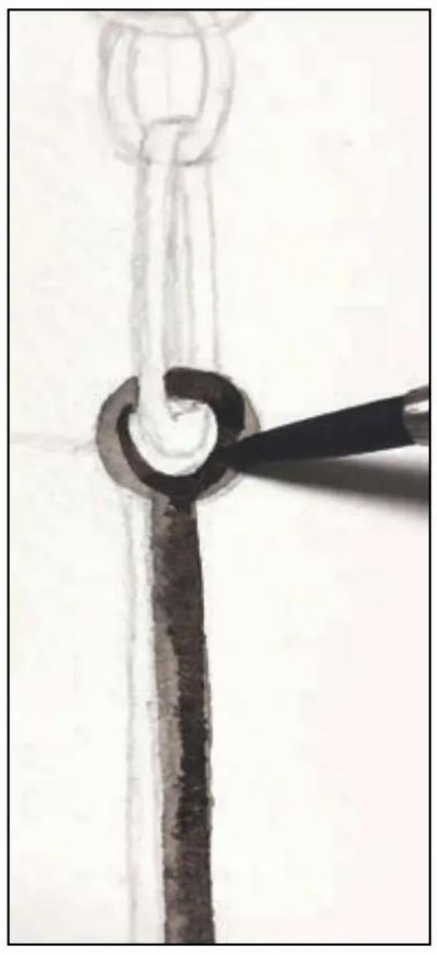
LINK CHAIN TOOL (NO.4)

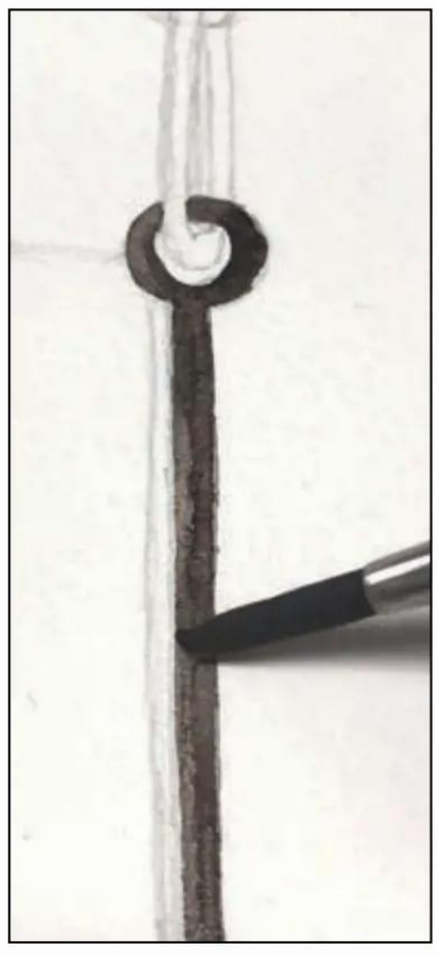
For this curved, iron tool mix a mid Sepia and apply it to dry paper. While wet, drop in dark Sepia. Soften the edge with a damp brush if there are hard edges, then sprinkle with a little salt. Continue to use the same technique as you add colour to the rings. Feel free to drop in areas of Burnt Umber or Burnt Sienna.

Tip: work into each half of the ring, one at a time and don't forget to sprinkle in the salt each time you add colour. Complete the rings so you aren't working next to one that is wet, as this will help to keep the shapes separate. Lastly, mix a dark Sepia and apply this to the second prong that sits behind/next to the shovel.

For most of the remaining tools, the techniques will be similar. Feel free to alter the base colours of the rusty metal areas if needed, and to change the colours of the rust speckles.

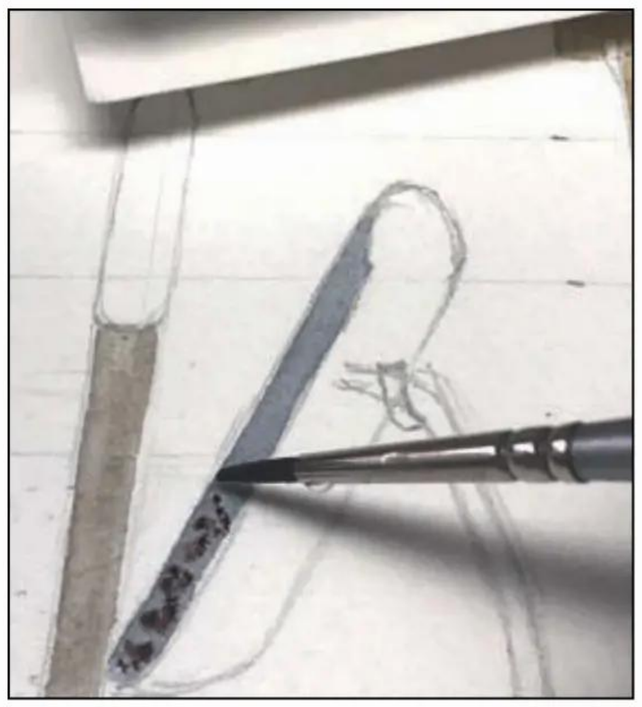






DRAINAGE SPADE (NO. 2)

Mix pale/mid Payne's Grey and a separate mix of Sepia with a little Quinacridone Lilac. Start by applying the Payne's Grey onto dry paper to just the curved edge. While the paint remains wet, use the liner brush to dot on the Sepia and Quinacridone Lilac mix. Make sure the dots join in places, so the rust doesn't look too spotty! While wet, sprinkle on a little salt. Use the same technique into the handle – don't forget the salt. Return to the head to complete the inside and the collar/ socket using the same technique, and sprinkle with salt. Drop dark Sepia right along the edge of the curve to create the illusion of form.

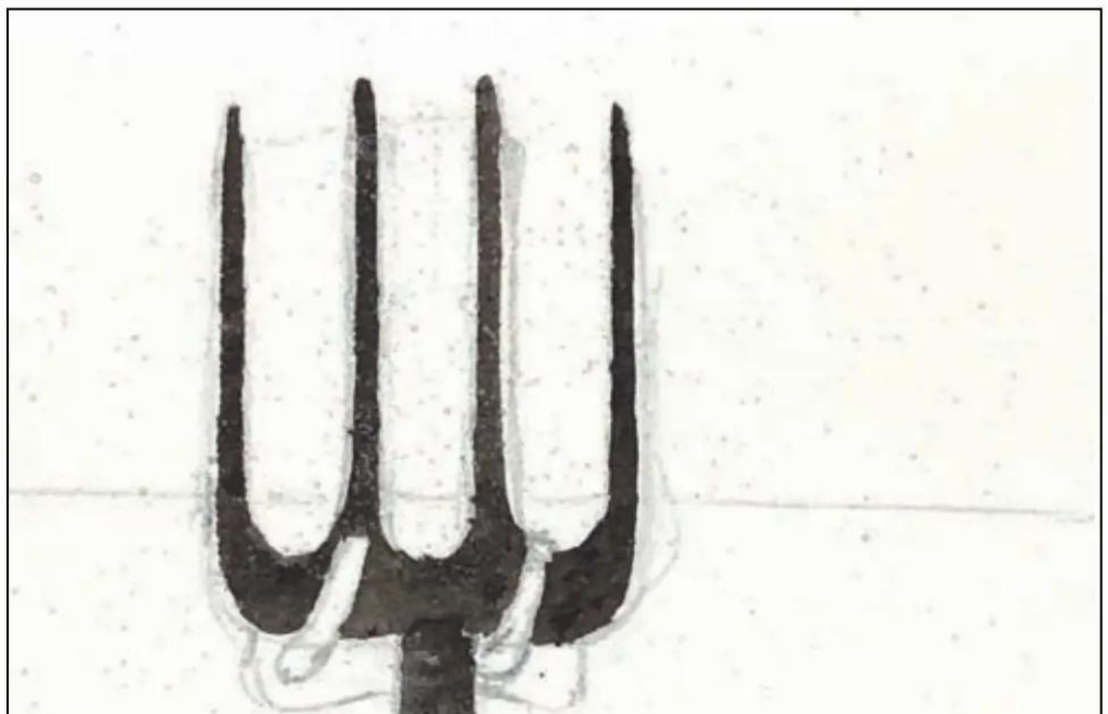




LONG-HANDLED FORK (NO.5)

Start by applying a mix of pale Payne's Grey onto dry paper, just to the metal collar/ socket, then dot on the rust speckles using a mix of Burnt Umber and Sepia. Add Sepia and Quinacridone Lilac mix along the right edge of the collar so the darker rust appears more solid. Sprinkle with salt. Then add the tines using dark Sepia followed by salt.

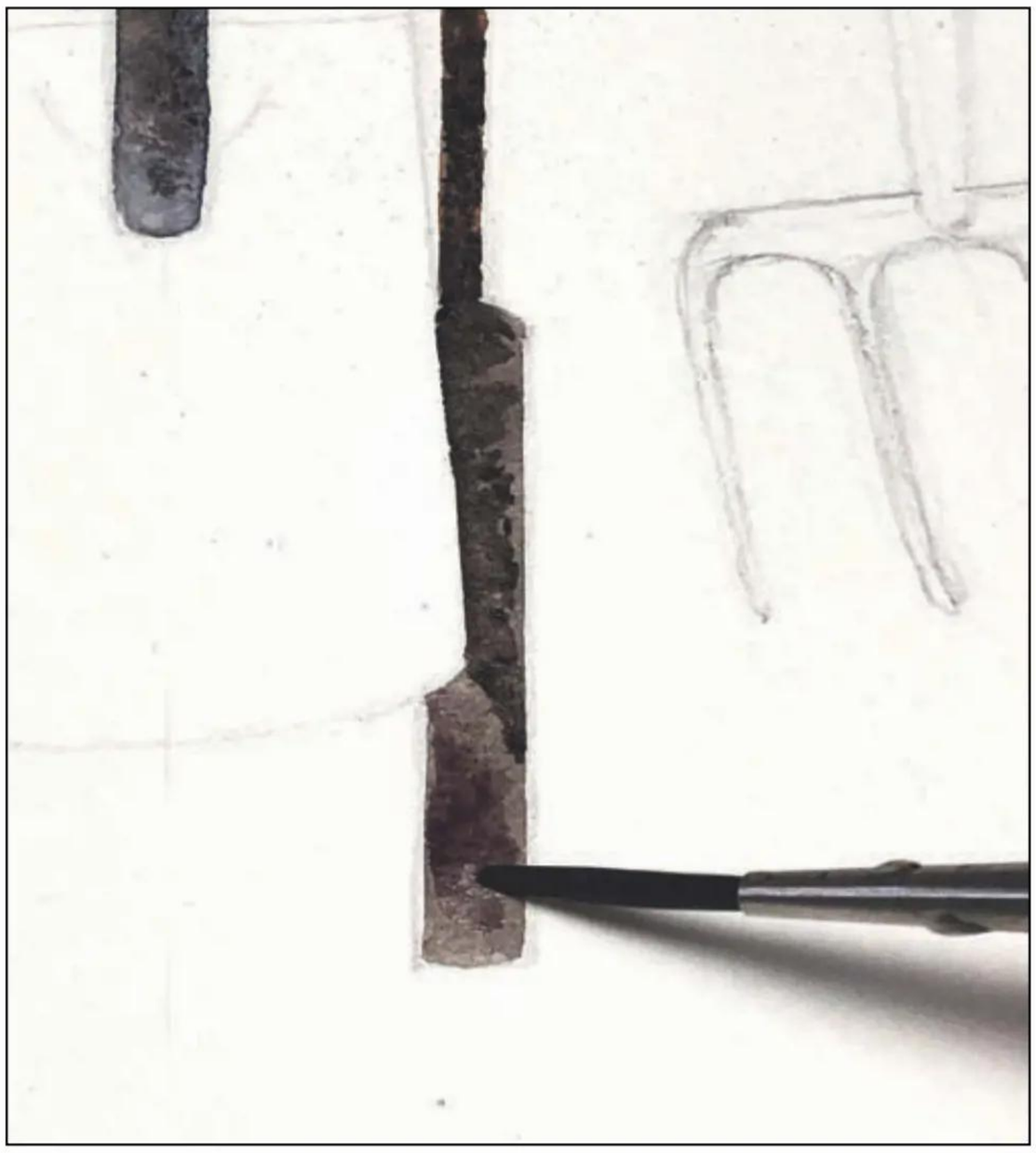




LONG, NARROW TOOL (NO.7)

Use Burnt Umber as a base colour for the collar/ socket, and while wet, drop in speckles of Sepia and sprinkle with salt. For the narrow head, use a mix of Sepia with a touch of Payne's Grey as the base, then add the darker rust shadow using a mix of Sepia and Quinacridone Lilac. Sprinkle with salt. Use a little Sepia on the end of the head and soften in a few places with water. See the end of the instructions to see the completed tool.



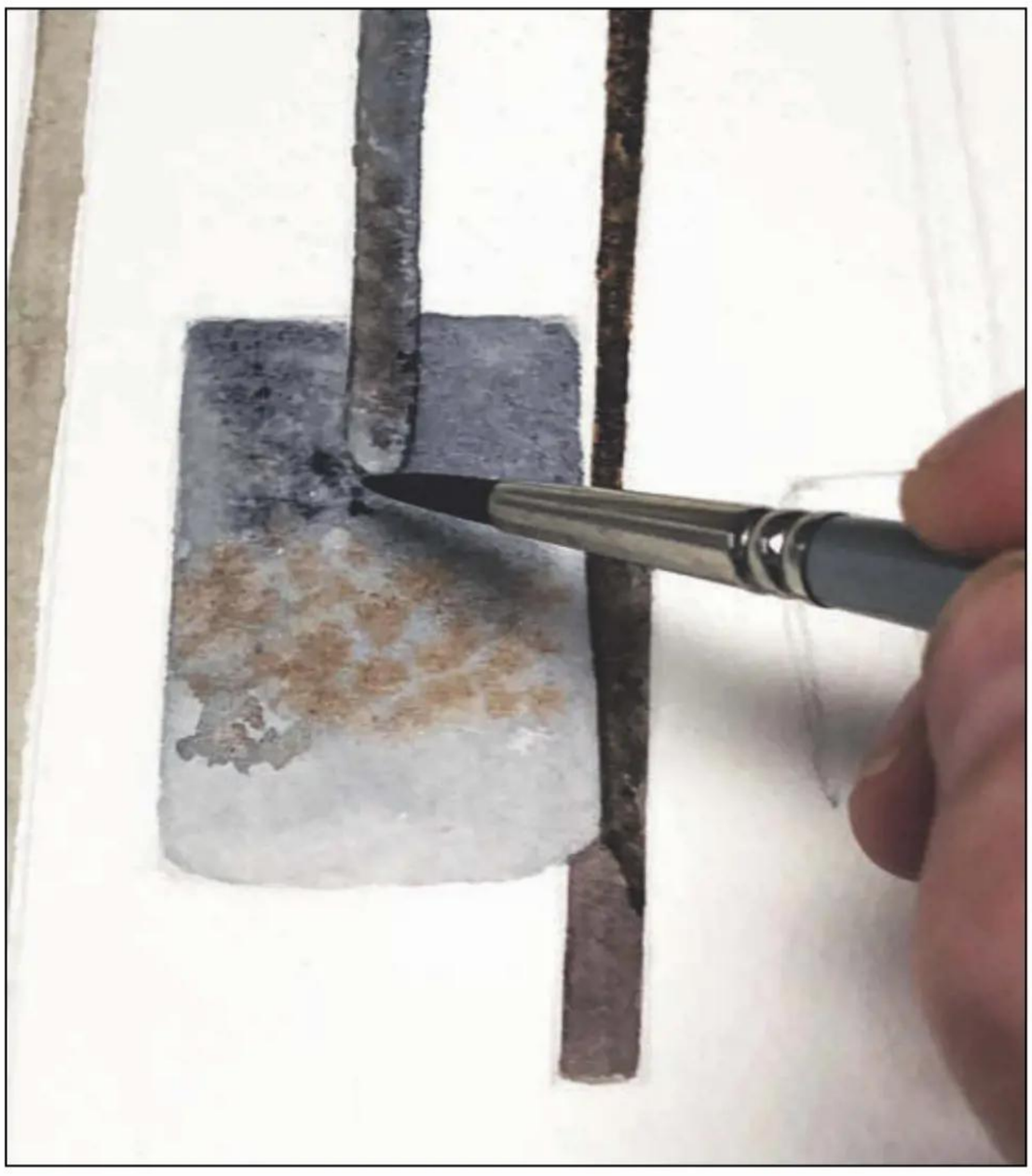


SPADE (NO. 6)





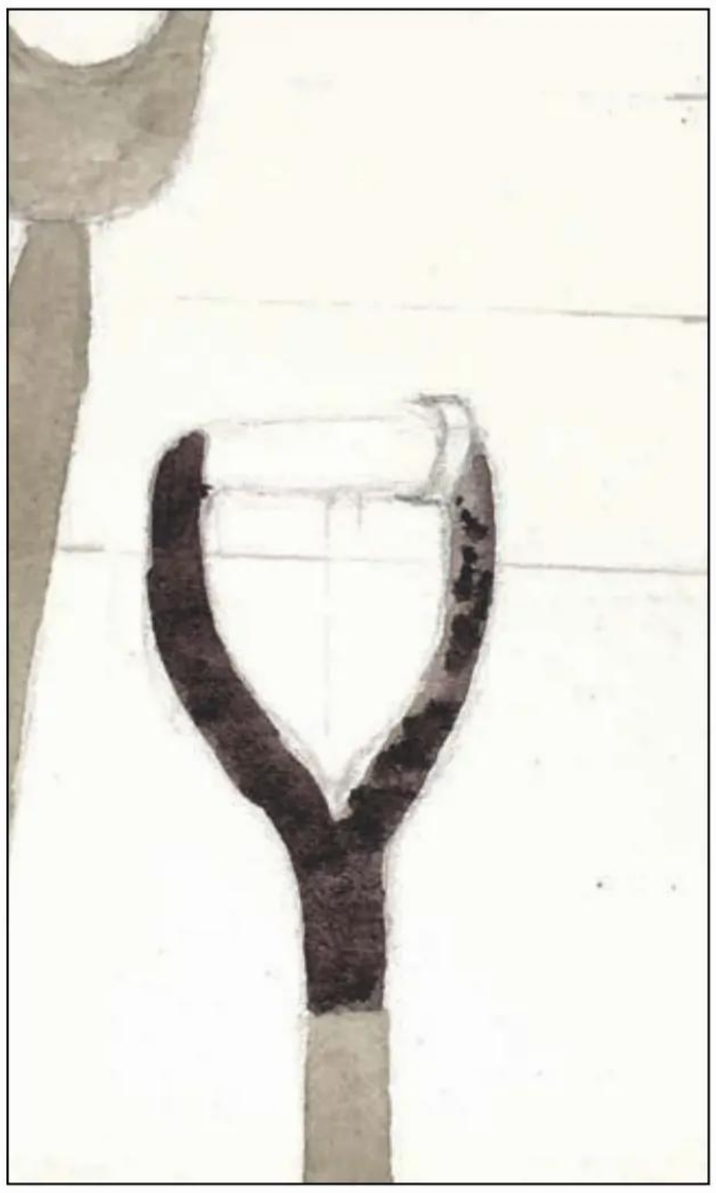
First apply a pale Payne's Grey onto the collar/socket of the spade, then drop in a slightly darker Payne's Grey along the right side to create the illusion of form. Drop in a few dabs of Burnt Umber, followed by some darker areas of Burnt Umber and Sepia mix. Lastly, add some stronger colour to the right side (if needed) using a mix of Payne's Grey and Quinacridone Lilac. Sprinkle with salt.
Next, apply colour to the head of the spade. First apply pale Payne's Grey and while the colour remains wet, dot on the rust speckles using Burnt Umber into the mid section. Use the Sepia and Quinacridone Lilac mix into the darker areas at the top.
If needed, first wet the lower edge of the spade with clean water, then add more rust speckles using the Sepia and Quinacridone Lilac mix, then continue to add the same colour into the central area of the spade. If the surface has already dried, use a damp brush to add a little water around the edges of the paint to soften them. Lastly, add a few more touches of the Payne's Grey and Quinacridone Lilac mix where desired, and sprinkle with salt.





SHORT-HANDLED FORK (NO.8)



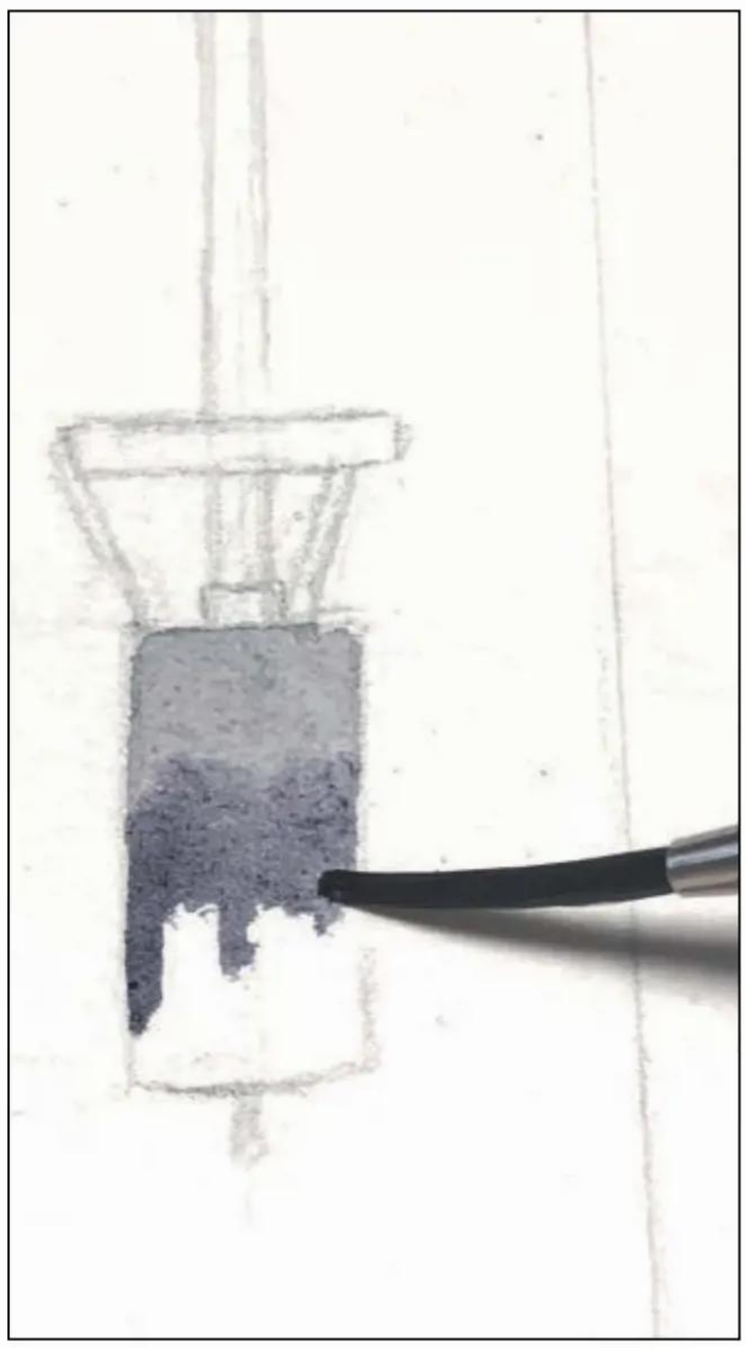




Start with the metal collar/socket using pale Payne's Grey. While the colour remains wet, drop in the rust speckles using the Sepia and Quinacridone Lilac mix, then use the pale Payne's Grey onto the tines and drop a little of the Sepia and Quinacridone Lilac mix into the edges of the tines and along the top edge. Add some rusty speckles too, and sprinkle with salt. Repeat this for the other side of the tines. Next, add the metal handle using pale Payne's Grey, followed by Sepia and a sprinkle of salt. Feel free to add darker touches of Sepia too. Notice that I forgot to add the wood colour on the handle. Add this using the same mix used in the other wooden sections.

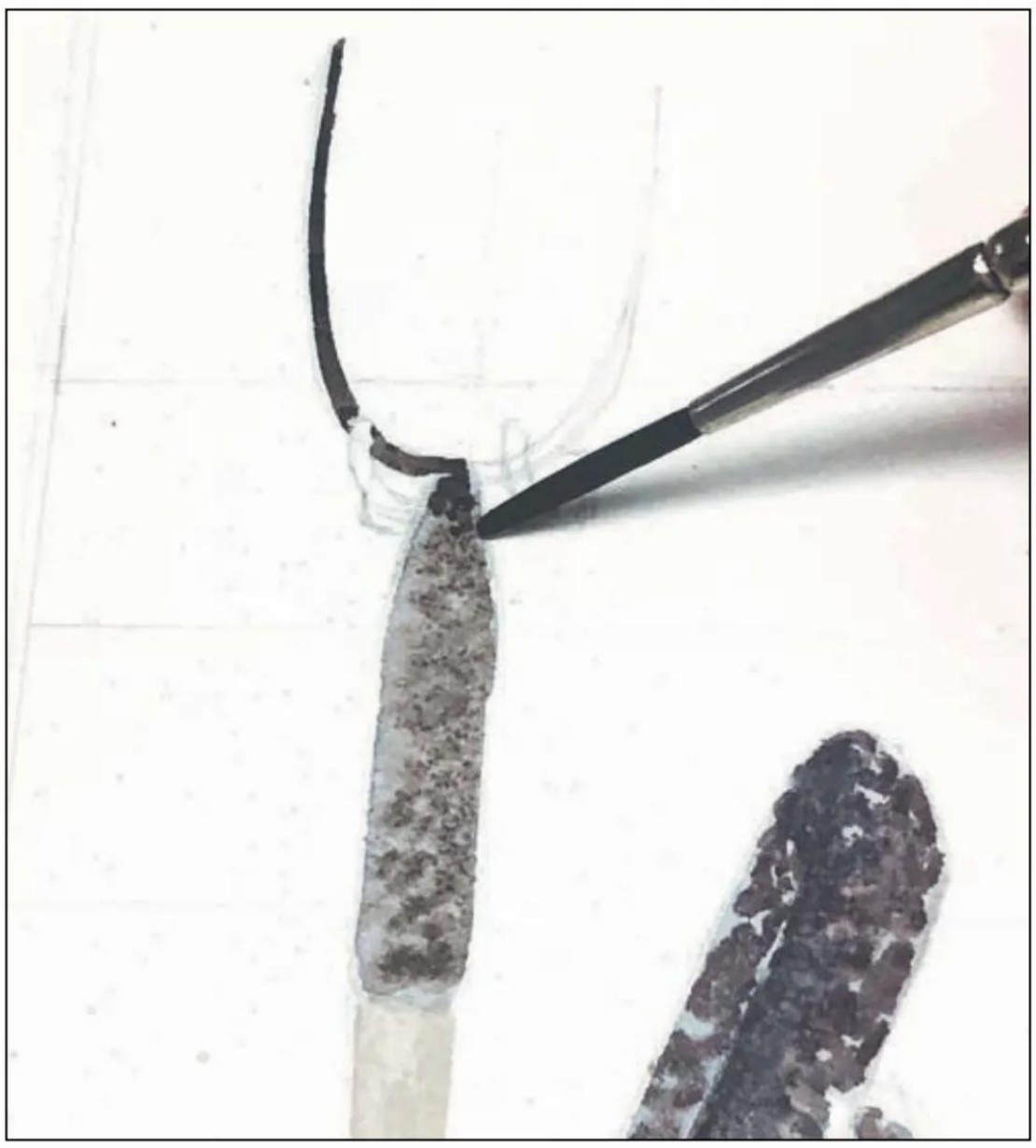
AUGER (NO.9)

Start with the cylinder, using pale Payne's Grey to paint the top half, then drop in Payne's Grey and Quinacridone Lilac mix into the lower edge of this so the two colours blend. Bring the colour down to the bottom of the cylinder. Next, dot on the rust using Sepia and Quinacridone Lilac mix. Note: the base colour is probably dry by now – soften the speckles by dabbing on small touches of water and add a sprinkle of salt. Use the pale Payne's Grey into the remaining metal parts, then touch on the Sepia and Quinacridone Lilac mix to add the rust, followed by the salt. Add the top of the long shaft using Sepia, then drop in darker Sepia to the base and the collar. Use Payne's Grey to add a base colour to the shaft, and speckle on the Sepia and Quinacridone Lilac mix.





PITCHFORK NO.1

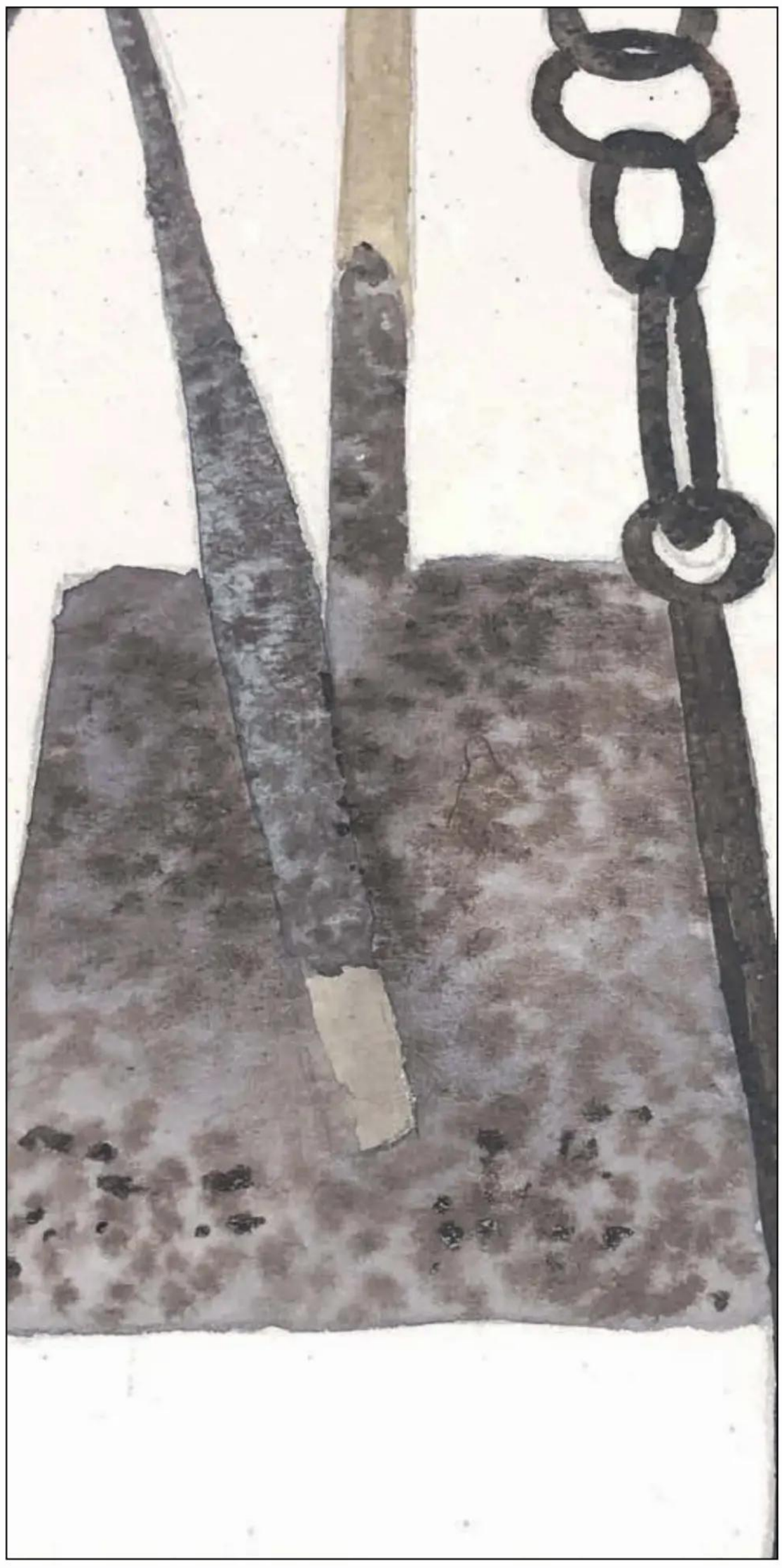


Use the pale Payne's Grey for the collar/socket. While wet, dot on touches of Burnt Umber to describe the rust. Drop in other colours too, as needed. Use the Sepia and Quinacridone Lilac mix – and touches of Burnt Sienna too, if you like, then sprinkle with salt. Mix a dark brown for the prongs using Burnt Umber with a touch of Sepia/Payne's Grey.



SHOVEL NO.3

To allow for slightly longer working time, first apply water over the head of the shovel, then apply Payne's Grey. While the colour is wet, dot on the rust speckles using the Sepia and Quinacridone Lilac mix and sprinkle with salt. Feel free to go back to any areas that have very large rust spots (which occur on very wet paint) and touch on a few smaller ones as the base colour dries off. Use the same technique and colours onto the collar/ socket of the head.
Once the main parts of the tools are complete, turn your attention to some of the smaller details. Add mid Payne's Grey to the hook brackets along the top row of tools. For the smaller, rounded hooks (used on the bottom row of tools) use the Sepia and Quinacridone Lilac mix just onto the plates.



STEP TWO – WOODEN PLANKS

Mix Raw Umber with a little Raw Sienna (and a touch of Burnt Sienna if you like) and apply this onto dry, in and around the tools and allow to dry. Mix Burnt Umber with a little Sepia to use for the darker wood grain patterns.
Use the liner brush on dry paper to draw the grain lines, then soften the edge with a clean, damp brush. Continue building up the wood grain using the same technique until the two planks are complete. Add the dark knots using a mix of Burnt Umber and Sepia, and soften with a damp brush.



STEP THREE – SHADOWS

Once your painting has completely dried, brush off the salt. This will allow you to add the shadows on top. Currently, most of the shapes still look completely flat. The addition of shadows will help to give the illusion of form.

Start by adding shadows to the wooden sections of the tools. You can either work onto wet and drop the colour in where needed or work onto dry and blend the dry edge. Mix Raw Umber with a touch of Payne's Grey – it should be a little darker than the original handle colour. If working onto wet, first wet the length of the handle with clean water, then drop in the paint along the right side of the handle. Notice how the colour bleeds across the handle. You can use a damp brush to push the colour back if it bleeds too far. If needed, drop a little more of the same colour into the right edge to darken it further or use a pale/mid Payne's Grey. Use the same technique into all of the long handle shafts. In other areas such as the spade handles you might want to achieve stronger colour and shape. To do this, work on dry paper to add the darker right and inside edges. Repeat this technique onto the face of the handle where needed, then soften and blend the hard edge with a clean, damp brush. Repeat the same technique for the auger handle.

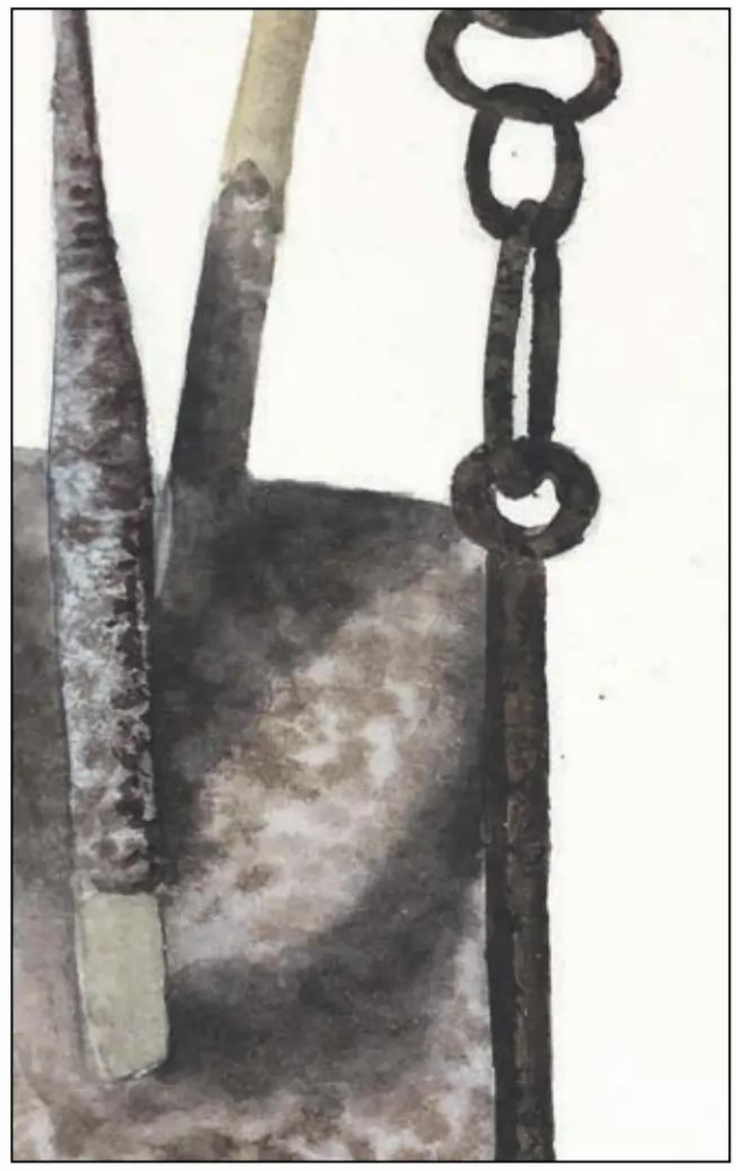


Once all the wooden handles have shadows, add shadows to the metal parts. Mix mid Payne's Grey with a touch of Quinacridone Lilac, then wet the spade with clean water and drop in the paint where needed. Use a clean, damp brush to push the paint back if it spreads too far. Use the same colour and technique into the right side of the auger and along the collar/socket and into the tines of the short fork. Next, add a little Sepia to the mix so the colour has more of a brown hue. Use this onto wet to the inside of tool No.2 and use the same colour for the shovel. Start by wetting the right side of the shovel face (right up against the handle which crosses it – apart from the very top, where there is a small sliver of light showing). Drop in the Payne's Grey, Quinacridone Lilac and Sepia mix along the handle. Take the colour around the patch of light and up the collar/socket, then bring it onto the head of the shovel, creating a slight arc as you take the paint towards the top corner.

Continue using the same colour as you build up the shadows. Wet the shape of the lower curve with a clean, wet brush, then paint the curved shadow. Bring the colour



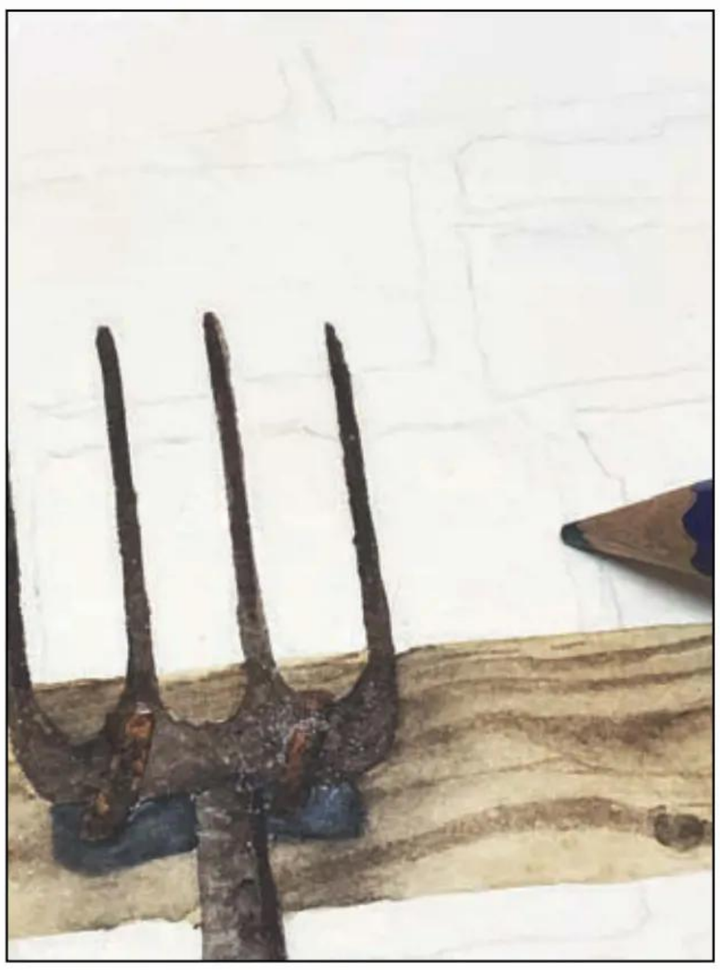
down the spade to create the correct shape and soften the lower edge with a clean, damp brush. Wet the left side of the shovel and drop in more of the same colour. If needed, use a strong Sepia to add even more depth. Work either onto wet (allow the painting to dry completely before applying the next layer) or



apply onto dry and soften the edges with a damp brush. Here I have used the same technique and dark Sepia to add more form to the iron chain links, the spade handle, the long-handled fork, the handle of the drainage spade, and the cast shadow onto the curved head.

STEP FOUR – STONEWORK

Note: if you're short on time you could choose to leave out this step and keep the background white – just go to the 'Cast Shadows' step to add more depth.
Mix Raw Umber with a little Raw Sienna and a touch of Payne's Grey. Mix a separate very pale Payne's Grey. Wet small sections with clean water and drop in the Raw Umber, Raw Sienna and Payne's Grey mix quite roughly so it appears mottled, then drop in a few touches of the pale Payne's Grey. Repeat this in small sections until the wall is complete.
Once the background wash is completely dry, use an HB pencil to draw in the individual blocks. Look closely at the different block shapes and how they fit together. If you have spaces that are too large, fill these in by adding a few extra blocks. Next, mix colour for the stone blocks; pale Payne's Grey and a touch of Cobalt, pale Sepia and a touch of Payne's Grey, and Payne's Grey with a touch of Quinacridone Lilac.
Working inside one of the blocks, dab on a little water so there are areas of wet and dry, then dab on a few touches of the pale Sepia and Payne's Grey mix, followed by a few touches of the Payne's Grey and Cobalt mix.
Use a damp brush to move the colour around to fill the space as desired, then sprinkle in a little salt. Continue working inside each block, painting two or three at a time – just make sure the paint doesn't dry before adding the salt or you won't create the texture. Look closely at how the blocks change in colour across the wall and alter your colour combinations to match. You might also like to use the Raw Umber, Raw Sienna and Payne's Grey mix (used for the background wash), or the Payne's Grey and Quinacridone Lilac mix.







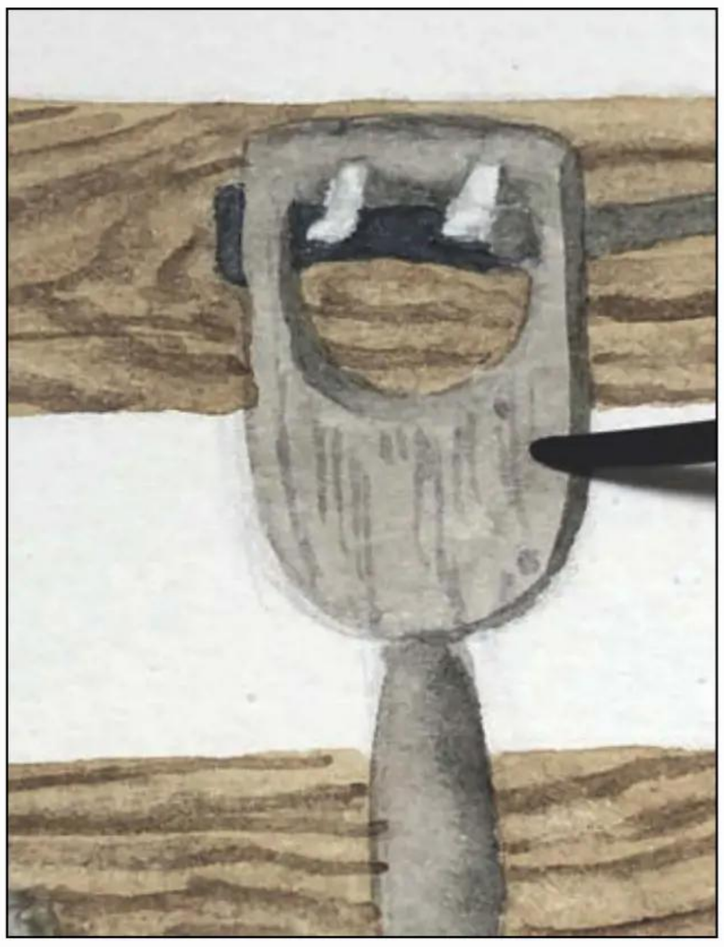
STEP FIVE – CAST SHADOWS

Once the background is dry, brush off as much of the salt as possible. Then mix a colour for your shadows using a blue/grey. I used pale Sepia with a little Cobalt added, but you could use just Payne's Grey.
Start by adding simple shadows to the right side of the long-handled tools such as the forks, shovel, spade and auger. Use clean water along the edge of the handle, then use your shadow colour to paint a thin line just to the right of the tool so it softly bleeds. Use the same technique on top of the wooden planks too. Make sure you add the shadow of the cylinder and the struts. Use the same technique to the right of the other tools. Look closely at the shapes of the shadows (squint to see them more clearly) and don't forget the inside of the fork handles and tine shadows. Use the same technique under the wooden planks and for the iron links. Look closely at the shapes of the links and the long metal prongs. You might want to paint the links first before wetting the area for the prongs. If the paint spreads too much, use a damp brush to shape the shadows. Continue with the same technique for the remaining tools.



FINISHING TOUCHES







Complete the hooks on the top row using Burnt Sienna dappled on, followed by touches of Sepia, then sprinkle with salt. For the smaller hooks on the bottom row, dab on Payne's Grey, followed by Sepia, then sprinkle with salt.
Add a few more shadows onto the wooden planks using a mix of pale/mid Sepia with a touch of Payne's Grey. Work onto dry to create the desired shape, then soften and blend the edges with a clean, damp brush. Repeat along the top and bottom planks.
Add wood grain detail into the wooden shafts and handles using pale Payne's Grey and the liner brush to add uneven vertical lines down the shaft and soften in a few places with a damp brush.
To add more texture to the stone, you might like to add small edging lines of Payne's Grey onto the stones using the liner brush. Work on small areas at a time, then use a piece of paper towel to scuff/dab the paint and create uneven edges.
You're done!



Watercolour SOS



Streaky washes, muddy colours and unexpected blooms are all part of learning to paint with watercolour. Before you abandon a painting, discover what caused the problem, what you can do about it and how to prevent it happening again

PAINT AND COLOUR PROBLEMS

● **Why is liquid coming out of my paint tube?**

Watercolour paint contains finely ground pigment suspended in a binder, usually gum arabic. Sometimes the pigment settles and a little binder separates, particularly in tubes that have been stored for a long time. Certain colours, including some ochres and cerulean blues, can be more prone to separation.

THE FIX: Squeeze a little paint and binder onto your palette and mix them together. Gently kneading the closed tube may also help redistribute the contents. If the paint has hardened or become persistently lumpy, try rewetting a small amount on the palette; discard it if there are signs of contamination or an unusual smell.



Liquid separating from tube paint is usually the binder, not a sign that the colour has gone bad

● **Why have my colours turned muddy?**

Muddy colours usually result from mixing too many pigments, repeatedly working over an area or building up layers until the colour loses its freshness. Mixing complementary colours can create useful neutrals, but uncontrolled mixing often produces dull results.

THE FIX: Stop painting and let the area dry. If the colour is still too heavy, carefully test whether a little pigment can be lifted with a clean,

damp brush. Don't keep scrubbing. Sometimes the best solution is to adjust the surrounding colours rather than disturb the muddy passage.

● Why has my painting become too dark?

It's easy to underestimate the strength of a freshly mixed colour, particularly when using paint straight from the tube.

THE FIX: If the paint is still wet, gently blot it with clean kitchen roll. Once dry, try lifting a little pigment with a damp brush, testing a small area first. Staining colours may resist lifting.

NEXT TIME: Test your mixture on scrap paper before applying it, and build darker tones gradually.



Uneven coverage and visible brush marks can result from a drying edge, insufficient paint or repeated brushing over the same area

● Why do my colours look paler when they dry?

Watercolour often dries lighter than it appears when wet. As the water evaporates, the pigment settles into the paper and the surface reflects light differently. The amount of colour change depends on the pigment, paper and binder.

THE FIX: Allow the wash to dry completely before judging its strength. If necessary, apply another transparent layer, provided the underlying paint is stable.

WASH DISASTERS

● Why are my washes streaky?

Streaks appear when neighbouring brushstrokes dry at different rates, leaving visible joins. A brush that's too small, insufficient paint or working too slowly can make the problem worse. Paper also matters: differences in surface texture and sizing affect how readily a wash spreads and settles.

THE FIX: Let the wash dry completely before deciding whether to correct it. A second light wash may help even out the colour, but it can also disturb the first layer, particularly with easily lifted pigments.

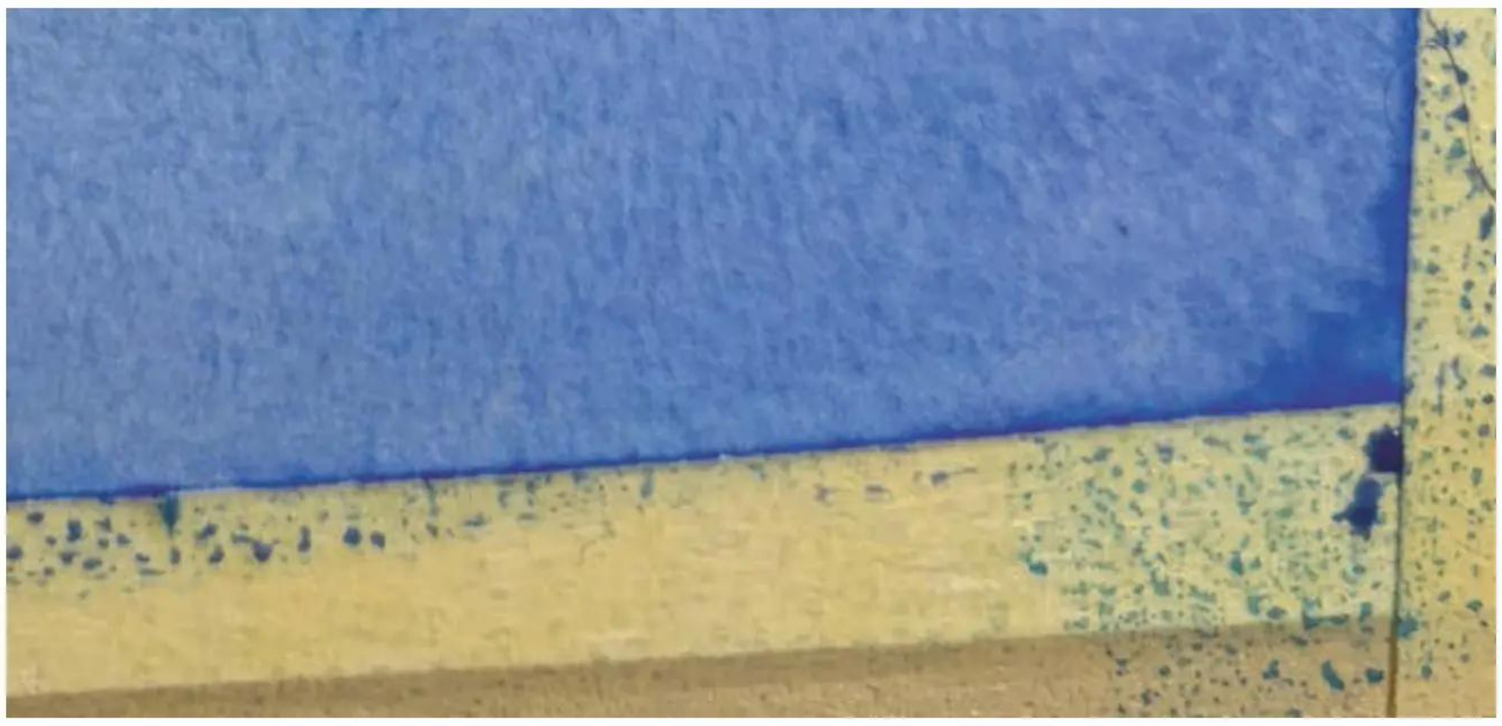
NEXT TIME: Mix more paint than you think you'll need and use a large, well-loaded brush. Work steadily down the paper, maintaining a wet bead of paint along the advancing edge. A slight tilt can help the wash flow evenly. Try the same wash on different papers; smoother, consistently sized paper may make even coverage easier, though rough paper can also produce successful washes.

● Why have dark lines appeared around my wash?

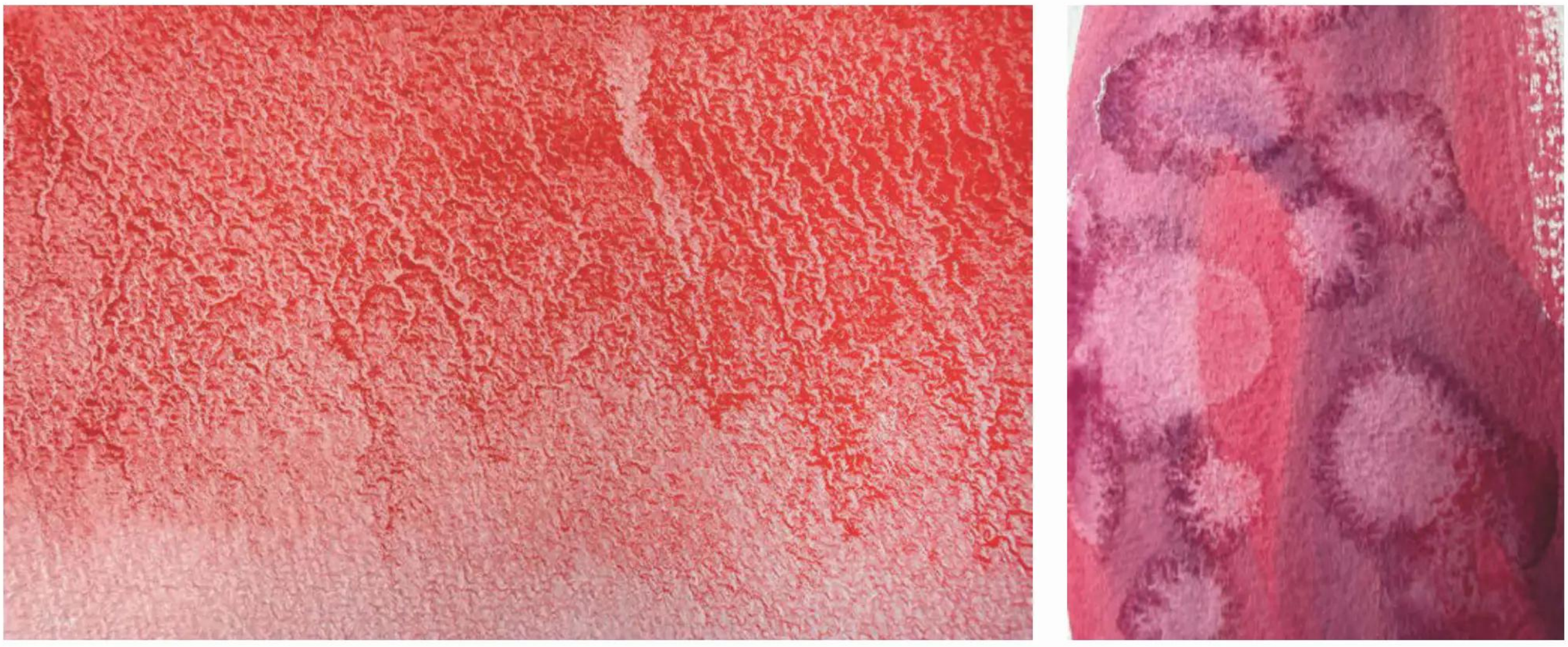
These marks, sometimes called tide lines, occur when pigment accumulates at the boundary of a wet area. They can also appear when a damp brush softens the centre of a shape but leaves its edges untouched.

THE FIX: Once dry, gently soften the line with a clean, damp brush, working slightly beyond the edge. Blot away loosened pigment. Some staining colours will leave a permanent mark.

NEXT TIME: Avoid leaving puddles on the paper. Remove excess moisture with a clean, almost-dry brush before it dries.



Pigment collecting at the edge of a wash can leave a pronounced dark line



Branching backruns form when wetter colour spreads into a wash that has begun to settle

● **Why does my paint spread everywhere?**
If paint races across the paper rather than staying where you put it, the surface may be wetter than you intended. On very wet paper, pigment moves freely and edges become diffuse.
THE FIX: Wait until the surface loses its glossy sheen before adding further details. For sharper edges, work on dry paper.
NEXT TIME: Learn to recognise the difference between wet, damp and almost-dry paper. Each produces a different effect.

BACKRUNS AND DIFFICULT EDGES

● **Why have cauliflowers appeared in my wash?**
Cauliflowers, also called backruns or blooms, occur when an area of greater moisture pushes into a less-wet area, displacing pigment and leaving a distinctive branching outline.
THE FIX: If the wash is still wet, leave it alone rather than trying to chase the spreading mark. Once completely dry, you may be able to soften the edges gently with a damp brush. Alternatively, incorporate the shape into your painting.

NEXT TIME: Keep moisture levels consistent and avoid adding a very wet brushful of paint or water to a wash that's beginning to dry.

● **I've made a hard edge where I wanted a soft one. What can I do?**
Hard edges appear when paint meets dry paper or when a wash dries before neighbouring colour can merge with it.
THE FIX: Once dry, run a clean, slightly damp brush along the unwanted edge and gently draw the loosened pigment into the surrounding area. Rinse and blot the brush frequently. Avoid repeatedly brushing the same spot.
NEXT TIME: For soft edges, work while the adjoining paint is still damp or lightly pre-wet the area where you want the colour to spread.

● **I've made a mistake with a dark colour. Can I paint over it?**
Sometimes, but transparent watercolour isn't like opaque paint. A lighter wash applied over a dark passage will usually allow the underlying colour to show through.
THE FIX: First decide whether the mistake can be incorporated into the composition. If it can't, test whether the colour can be lifted. An opaque medium such as gouache can cover some areas, but it changes the character of the painting.

● **My paper has started to go fuzzy. Have I ruined it?**
Repeated scrubbing can disturb the sizing and damage the paper fibres, leaving a rough, absorbent patch that behaves differently from the surrounding surface.
THE FIX: Stop working on the area and allow it to dry. Minor surface disturbance may be less obvious once the painting is finished, but damaged fibres cannot reliably be restored to their original condition.
NEXT TIME: Use good-quality watercolour paper, avoid excessive scrubbing and allow layers to dry before working over them.

● **Can I rescue a painting I've overworked?**
If repeated washes have left your painting dull and heavy, adding still more transparent paint is unlikely to restore its freshness.
Try strengthening a few carefully chosen dark accents to improve the tonal balance, or consider introducing an opaque medium such as gouache to recover selected highlights. Don't attempt to cover every problem.

Sometimes the most useful outcome is discovering what to do differently next time.

LIFTING AND PREVENTION

● **I've painted over an area that should be white. Can I get it back?**
If the paint is still wet, gently touch it with clean kitchen roll to absorb the pigment. Don't rub.
Once dry, try moistening the area with a clean brush, allowing the water to soften the paint briefly, then blotting. Repeat cautiously if the paper is holding up well. Some pigments lift readily; others stain the fibres and may never return to white.
NEXT TIME: Plan important highlights before painting. Leave the paper untouched or protect small areas with masking fluid.

● **Why does my paper buckle when I paint?**
Water causes paper fibres to expand. If the sheet becomes unevenly wet, it may cockle or buckle, allowing paint to collect in the hollows.
THE FIX: Let the painting dry completely. Minor buckling may reduce as the paper dries. If necessary, flatten the finished sheet using a suitable method for watercolour paper, protecting the painted surface from moisture and abrasion.
NEXT TIME: Use heavier paper, secure the edges or stretch suitable paper before painting. Even heavyweight paper can buckle if saturated.

● **Why won't my masking fluid come off cleanly?**
Masking fluid may become difficult to remove if it's left on too long, exposed to heat or sunlight, or applied to unsuitable paper. Removing it before the paint is dry can also damage the surface.
THE FIX: Wait until everything is completely dry, then gently roll the masking fluid away with a clean fingertip or a suitable rubber pickup. Never scrape aggressively.
NEXT TIME: Test it on your paper first, follow the manufacturer's instructions and remove it promptly once the painting is dry.

● **Why does my brush leave dry, scratchy marks?**
A brush that's carrying too little water or paint skips over the raised surface of the paper, leaving broken marks.
THE FIX: Reload the brush if you want a continuous stroke. For a smooth wash, use enough fluid paint to move easily across the surface.
NEXT TIME: Remember that this isn't always a mistake. Dry-brush marks are useful for suggesting grass, bark, stone and other textures.

● **Why has my second wash disturbed the first?**
Some watercolour pigments lift easily when rewetted. Repeated brushing, heavy pressure or too much water can loosen the underlying colour.
THE FIX: Stop brushing and allow the area to dry. A further glaze may be possible, but only if the surface remains sound.
NEXT TIME: Apply transparent glazes with a soft brush and as few strokes as possible. Let each layer dry thoroughly.

● **When should I stop trying to fix a painting?**
When each correction creates another problem, it's time to put the brush down.
Allow the painting to dry and look at it again later. A backrun may suggest foliage, an unexpected colour mixture may add atmosphere, and an irregular edge may be exactly what the composition needs.
Not every accidental mark is a mistake, and not every mistake needs correcting.
REMEMBER
Watercolour rewards observation as much as control. Before attempting a rescue, identify what has happened, consider whether it really needs fixing and choose the gentlest possible correction. Sometimes the best decision is simply to leave the paint alone



Press folded kitchen roll gently onto wet paint to lift unwanted colour without rubbing

Watercolour A–Z

A handy guide to the terms and techniques you'll encounter as you learn to paint. Keep these pages close by whenever you come across an unfamiliar expression

■ Backrun (or bloom)
A cauliflower-like mark formed when extra water flows into a wash that has begun to dry, pushing pigment outwards. Sometimes accidental, but useful for creating texture

■ Bead
The small ridge of wet paint that gathers along the lower edge of a wash. Keeping it moving helps you achieve an even result

■ Blending
Softening the transition between colours or tones so that they merge gradually rather than meeting at a hard edge

■ Buckling (or cockling)
The warping or rippling of watercolour paper when it absorbs moisture and expands unevenly

■ Cold-pressed paper (NOT)
Watercolour paper with a moderately textured surface, traditionally described as NOT because it has 'not' been hot-pressed. A versatile choice for washes, detail and general painting

■ Colour temperature
The relative warmth or coolness of a colour. Reds and yellows often appear warm, while blues tend to appear cool, although every colour has warmer and cooler variations

■ Complementary colours
Colours opposite one another on the colour wheel, such as red and green. Used together, they create contrast; mixed together, they can produce muted neutrals

■ Dry brush
Using a brush containing relatively little water. The bristles catch the raised surface of the paper, creating broken, textured marks

■ Flat wash
An area of colour painted as evenly as possible, without deliberate changes in tone

■ Glazing
Applying a transparent layer of colour over a completely dry wash to alter its colour or deepen its tone without obscuring the layer beneath

■ Granulation
The tendency of some pigments to settle into the hollows of the paper, creating a naturally speckled or grainy appearance

■ Graded wash
A wash that gradually changes from dark to light, light to dark, or one colour to another

■ Gum arabic
The natural binder used in traditional watercolour paints. It holds pigment particles together and helps them adhere to the paper

■ Hard edge
A clearly defined boundary between a painted area and the surrounding paper or another colour. Usually formed when paint dries without being softened

■ Hot-pressed paper (HP)
Smooth watercolour paper with very little surface texture, particularly suitable for fine detail and controlled brushwork

■ Hue
The basic identity of a colour, such as red or blue. On paint labels, 'hue' identifies colours made to resemble those produced by other pigments

■ Lifting
Removing or lightening paint using a damp brush, sponge or absorbent paper. Some pigments lift more easily than others

■ Masking fluid
A liquid resist applied to dry paper to protect selected areas from paint. Once the fluid and surrounding paint are completely dry, it can be gently removed to reveal the paper beneath

■ Negative painting
Painting around a shape rather than painting the shape itself, allowing the unpainted or previously painted area to form the subject

■ Opacity
The degree to which paint conceals the surface or colour beneath it. Opaque paints cover more completely than transparent ones

■ Palette
The surface used for mixing paints, or the selection of colours chosen for a particular painting

■ Pigment
The finely divided coloured material that gives paint its colour. Different pigments have different properties, including staining, transparency and granulation

■ **Rough paper**
Watercolour paper with a pronounced textured surface. Particularly effective for expressive washes, granulation and drybrush effects

■ **Sizing**
A treatment applied to watercolour paper to control absorbency, helping paint remain workable rather than soaking immediately into the fibres

■ **Soft edge**
A blurred or feathered boundary between colours or tones, created by allowing wet paint to merge or by gently softening an edge with a damp brush

■ **Spattering**
Flicking or tapping paint from a loaded brush to create scattered droplets. Useful for suggesting foliage, sand, spray and other textures

■ **Staining pigment**
A pigment that penetrates or bonds strongly with the paper fibres, making it difficult to remove once applied

■ **Stretching paper**
Wetting and securing a sheet of watercolour paper before painting to help minimise buckling as it dries

■ **Texture**
The visual effect of a surface, created through brushmarks, granulation, spattering, lifting or other techniques

■ **Tint**
A lighter version of a colour, produced in transparent watercolour by diluting the paint so that more white paper shows through

■ **Tone (or value)**
The relative lightness or darkness of a colour. Strong tonal differences help create depth, contrast and a convincing sense of form

■ **Transparency**
The ability of a paint layer to allow the paper or underlying colours to remain visible through it

■ **Underpainting**
An initial layer of colour or tone that establishes the foundation for subsequent layers

■ **Variegated wash**
A wash containing two or more colours that blend or flow into one another

■ **Wash**
A layer of diluted watercolour applied over an area of paper, either evenly or with deliberate variations in colour and tone

■ **Wet-in-wet**
Applying wet paint to an already damp or wet surface, allowing colours to spread and merge with soft, unpredictable edges

■ **Wet-on-dry**
Applying wet paint to dry paper or a completely dry painted layer, giving greater control over shapes and edges

■ **Working from light to dark**
A common watercolour approach in which the lightest areas are preserved and progressively darker layers are added to build depth and form

THANK YOU
A special thank you to the talented artists who shared their knowledge, creativity and expertise

■ Alison C Board
learningtopaint.co.uk

■ Emer Beattie
emerbeattie.com

■ Tracey Bengeyfield
traceybengeyfieldart.com

■ Harriet de Winton
dewintonpaperco.com

■ Ali Hargreaves
alisart.co.uk

■ Nicky Hunter
nickyhunterart.com

■ Roger Jenkins
rogerjenkinsart.wixsite.com/roger-jenkins-art/bio

■ Su Melville
sumelville.com

■ Hazel Soan
allsoanup.com

■ Jola Sopek
jolapictures.com

■ Dianne Sutherland
diannesutherland.com

■ Julia Trickey
juliatrickey.co.uk

© Kelsey Media 2026. All rights reserved. Kelsey Media is a trading name of Kelsey Publishing Ltd. Reproduction in whole or in part is forbidden except with permission in writing from the publishers. The editor cannot guarantee a personal response to all letters and emails received. The views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Publisher. Kelsey Publishing Ltd accepts no liability for products and services offered by third parties.
Kelsey Media takes your personal data very seriously. For more information about our privacy policy, please visit https://www.kelsey.co.uk/privacy-policy/. If at any point you have any queries regarding Kelsey's data policy, you can email our Data Protection Officer at dpo@kelsey.co.uk.
Kelsey Media, The Granary, 1–2 Downs Court, Yalding Hill, Yalding, Maidstone, Kent ME18 6AL. Tel: 01959 543747

Editor: Rachel Graham | rachel.graham@kelsey.co.uk

