

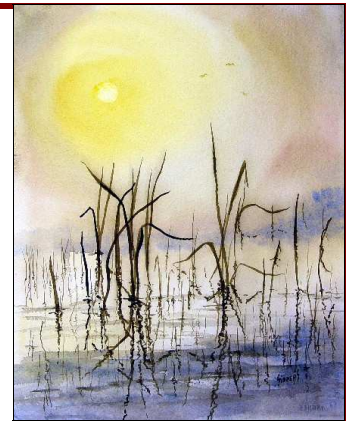
# COMMON WATERCOLOR TERMS & TECHNIQUES



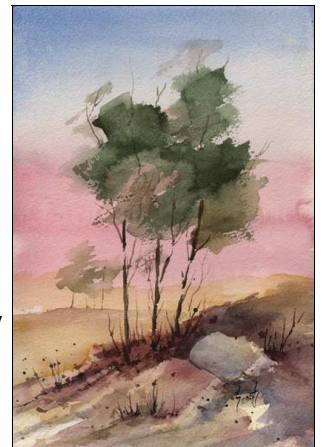
*A brief look at a few of the terms and techniques that you will encounter in books and discussions about watercolor painting. There are many, many more, but these are the most common.*



**WET ON WET** – This is just exactly what it sounds like. It simply means applying wet paint to wet paper. The outcome of this technique depends on the wetness of the paper. It can range from blurred lines to large, soft irregular shapes. The wet on wet technique is most commonly used in the early stages of producing a painting for the purpose of blocking in large areas. However, it can be used over previously painted washes providing that they are thoroughly dry. Multiple washes using the Wet on Wet process works very well for creating soft, subtle backgrounds on which to build a painting composition.

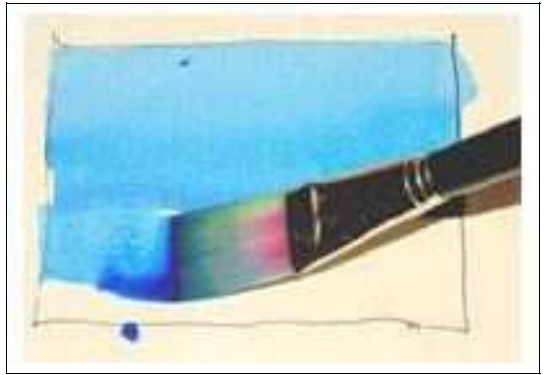


**DRY BRUSH** (or as it is sometimes called) **WET ON DRY** – Again, this is just what it sounds like. The process is to apply wet pigment to dry paper. A brush loaded with pigment is dragged over completely dry paper. This causes crisp, hard edges and is usually used in the area of the painting that is to become the center of interest. Although, the term is “Dry Brush”, the wet paint can be applied to the dry paper in a variety of ways. Using a natural sponge to apply the paint will result in a good representation of foliage or trees. The pigment can also be applied using a plastic card (credit card) or a scrape of matboard. The sky is the limit here! I have painted with all of the above as well as razor blades, twigs, q-tips, and many other items. Use whatever gets the job done!

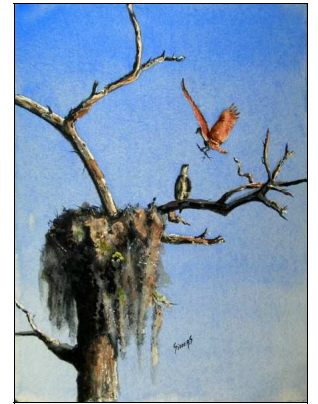


## Common Watercolor Terms and Techniques

**FLAT WASH** -The most basic watercolor technique is the flat wash. A flat wash is one that is a solid color from the top to the bottom of the page or area in which you need a flat color. It is produced by first wetting the area of paper to be covered by the wash, then mixing sufficient pigment to easily fill the entire area. The pigment is applied to a sloping surface in slightly overlapping horizontal bands from the top down. After completion, leave the wash alone to dry and even itself out. DO NOT try to work into a drying wash, as the result will not usually be pleasing.



**GRADED WASH** – A variation on the basic wash is the graded wash. This technique requires the pigment to be diluted slightly with more water for each horizontal stroke. The result is a wash that fades out gradually and evenly.

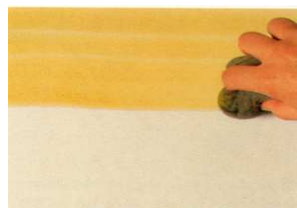


**VARIEGATED WASH** – A variegated wash is simply a wash using two or more colors. It is commonly used in painting sunsets, clouds, etc. I use it primarily for clouds and skies. It is done in the same manner as a GRADED WASH, but by alternating or changing colors with each stroke.

The brush strokes can also be done unevenly to create interesting effects.



**SPONGE WASH** – A Sponge wash is a FLAT WASH painted using a sponge. It is a quick and easy way to cover a large area evenly and with no brush marks.



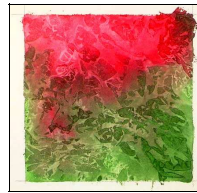
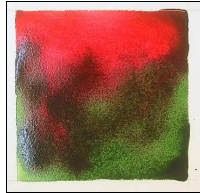
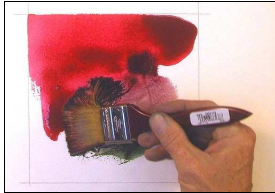


## Common Watercolor Terms and Techniques

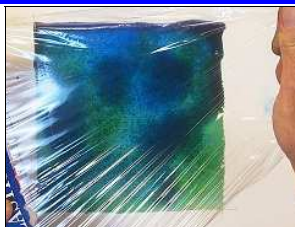
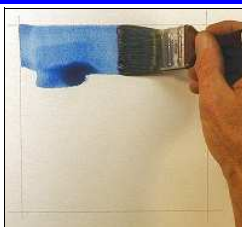
**GLAZING** – Glazing is a term that is sometimes used to describe a thin, transparent wash that is applied to a painting or area of a painting that has dried. It is a means of adjusting the color or value of the previously painted area. It is best to use transparent pigments such as Rose Madder (or Permanent Rose), Cobalt Blue and Aureolin for glazing. They do not stain and several layers of these colors can be used to get the effect that you are after. I often use a mixture of Cobalt Blue and Burnt Sienna for glazing purposes in my landscape paintings. Be sure each layer is thoroughly dry before applying the next.



**TISSUE PAPER TEXTURE** – This is a method of creating an interesting texture to areas of a painting. It works great for rocks, leaves, etc. and it also makes an excellent background texture for still life or figure paintings. Start by wadding up a single sheet of tissue paper and then flattening it out again. Mix up a fairly strong wash of whatever color you are planning to use. Wet the painting surface and using a wide wash brush,



Wet the painting surface and using a wide wash brush, proceed to lay irregular washes. Using more than one color will provide very interesting effects. Experimentation will be required to determine what colors you want to use. Allow the colors to mix on the paper rather than on your palette. Rinse your brush frequently to help keep the colors separated until they flow together on the paper. The surface should be wet and saturated with watercolor paint in strong colors. Spread the tissue over the wash and gently press down. Do not press the tissue entirely flat. This allows the folds and creases to do their job. Now allow the surface to dry, **ALMOST. DO NOT ALLOW IT TO DRY COMPLETELY** or the tissue will become glued to the painting surface. Lift a corner of the tissue to see if the design is set and when it is, gently pull the tissue off.



**PLASTIC WRAP TEXTURE** – This is a variation of the Tissue Paper texture idea. But instead of using tissue paper, a piece of kitchen plastic wrap is used. The process is about the same, with the exception that the plastic is left in place until the paint dries completely. It can then be peeled away, leaving a bolder texture that is usually achieved with the tissue. Plastic grocery bags can also be used effectively.



## Common Watercolor Terms and Techniques

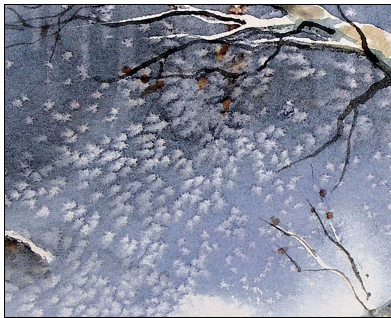


**Splattering** - Splattering paint is a technique that can be very effective in watercolor painting. It can be used to provide a variety of effects or simply to help soften an area that is too stark or harsh. There are several ways to apply the splattering technique. A toothbrush, dipped into paint, can be used by scraping your thumb on the bristles to let the paint splatter onto the paper. Be sure to cover everything that



you don't want painted when using this method!

Another method is to dip a moist brush into a mixture of color, and splatter the paint onto the paper by tapping the brush over a finger on your other hand. A round brush is commonly used for this, but I prefer to use an old, worn-out, fan-blender bristle brush. Use drier pigment for small splatters and more water for larger spots. (DO NOT OVER USE THIS TECHNIQUE) If the splattered area becomes too "Busy", soften some area by stroking a wet brush through it.



**Sprinkling salt** - Sprinkling a bit of table salt onto damp watercolor paint creates an interesting effect. The salt crystals cause the pigment to move away from them. This leaves small, delicate light areas with darker color around each crystal. The result works great for leaves, flowers, snow, etc. It can also be used to soften foreground or background areas or to add interest in areas that seem to need something, but your just not sure what it is that they



need!

This technique is a bit unpredictable and the salt doesn't always work the way you want it to. It involves the right pigment at the correct dampness and the rate of speed that the paper dries. However, it is this unpredictability that makes this technique fun and exciting. The technique requires some experimentation, but the following steps will give you a place to start:

1. Wet a piece of watercolor paper with clean water.
2. Paint the area where you want to use the salt.
3. Wait for the paper to become damp, but still shiny.
4. Take a pinch of salt in your fingers and sprinkle a few grains. Don't over-do this step!
5. LEAVE THE PAPER ALONE, and let it dry completely.
6. When it is completely dry, brush away the salt.

(Different types of salt will produce different effects )



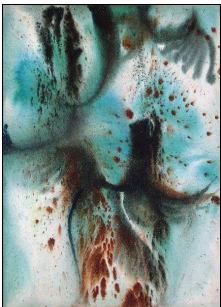
## Common Watercolor Terms and Techniques



**LIFTING OUT (Wet Paint)** - One of my favorite painting tools is a hand full of facial tissues. I like to wad them up and use them to blot areas of wet paint. Facial tissues are very absorbent and work very well to soften paint edges. Gently blot and twist the tissue to create interesting effects. This method is good for creating soft, puffy clouds in a dark sky. Avoid trying to “scrub” with facial tissues, as they will usually come apart, creating an unwanted mess in your washes. A natural sponge can be used if scrubbing is necessary, but be careful not to damage your painting surface by scrubbing too hard. The natural sponge can also be used in place of the tissue to lift out color. However, it will usually leave a more textured result. Using paper towels can remove a lot of paint very quickly. I prefer



the softer, more absorbent towels, such as VIVA, to the more coarse, less expensive towels. However, it depends on the effect you are trying to achieve. Your brushes can also be used to lift paint. Wet a clean brush and squeeze out excess water. Then use the damp brush to pick up the wet paint. Skin can pick up color too. Finger tips pressed into damp paint will make interesting light areas. Scraping damp areas with various brush handles or plastic cards will also make interesting light areas.



**DROPPING IN COLOR** – This is nothing more than introducing a color into an already wet area on your painting surface, allowing it to bleed. This allows for effects that can't not be achieved by pre-mixing colors on the palette.



**TERMS** – This list of Terms contains just a very few of the terms that you will come across in studying watercolor painting. But, these are some of the most commonly used and this brief list should give the beginning painter a little more insight in what to expect in the fantastic world of watercolor!

**TECHNIQUES** – Again, only a very few of the very basic techniques are listed here. There is NO END to the methods of applying watercolor paint. And, I encourage you to try whatever means you feel might work to accomplish the goal or achieve the effect you are looking for!

***Most of all, HAVE FUN WITH IT !***  
***and “PAINT UP A STORM”***

