

Mechanics of Watercolor Painting, Unifying Washes and Edges and Understanding Textures

How you **begin** to apply the paint in any watercolor painting has a great bearing on how the final painting will appear. The goal is to end up with a unified overall surface and not a collection of completely separately painted (hard edged ?) parts. Sometimes it is possible to seamlessly connect all these part together along the way, but very often in watercolor that is not the case.

One way to avoid this situation is to **try to visualize how the painting could look when it is finished**. Not just how the photograph/scene looks in reality, but what you are going to add/change/leave out along the way to make it your own interpretation.

Notes: In general, it is a good idea to paint the largest areas first, followed by the middle sized areas, then the smaller areas and finally the details. In this way the white paper is covered more quickly and then you are able to see the correct tones more clearly.

In landscapes, working from the sky forward allows easier overlapping of the various elements.

For this session your challenge has two parts

Part One - Paint Application

The first part of this challenge is to work out, before you start to paint, how you might be able to use large overall washes to unify the painting as quickly as possible.

Rather than paint the individual parts, think about how many of those parts could be linked together (by tone) and covered by an initial wash of different colors (which of course would be painted around selected white areas).

Working from light to dark you can then continue to paint the middle sized shapes and finally the smaller areas before thinking about the final details.

Part Two – Edges, Lost and Found

Hard (found) edges command more attention in any painting and soft (lost) edges allow your eye to travel around the painting. Lost edges are easily achieved with a damp brush while the paint is still damp. Found edges will occur every time you put wet paint on dry paper.

In this part of the challenge you will need to consider as you apply the washes where the hard (found) and soft (lost) edges of your subjects will need to be in the finished painting and address them as you go.

Being aware of the type of edges you are making as you work through a painting is critical in watercolor. Remember it is always easier to adjust or soften sharp edges while the paint is still damp on the paper.

Creating Textured Surfaces –

Texture is the surface description of the subject- whether it is a tree, fabric, cobbled street, china, skin, bark, etc.

Every subject will have relatively rough, smooth or in-between textures.

Overall, texture depends upon light and dark tones, the more contrast there is in the subject and the more space there is between the light and darker areas, the more textured that area will appear.

Sharper edges can also increase a textured feel, whereas softer edges can minimize the feeling of a strong texture.

In watercolor we can use a few specific techniques to create textures e.g., spattering, water spray, sponging, scraping, dry brush, sharp and soft edges, brush calligraphy and different brushes.