

Southwold Lighthouse



My reference photo

Materials you will need

Bockingford 140lb watercolour paper
Classic round brush
Winsor blue (green shade)
Cadmium Scarlet
2B Pencil

Techniques used

Simple line drawing
Colour mixing
Laying flat washes

Most people will have access to a street scene, not necessarily a distant landscape, so I have chosen a compact view for this tonal painting. The key to success is to look for 5 tones.

This is a really great project to get you looking at tonal values.

Preparation

Begin by lightly drawing the shapes onto the watercolour paper, avoiding all details. My rule is: if I can't see it I don't draw it.

Look at the picture through half closed eyes and make a note of the 5 tones.

Mix two wells of colour. Winsor blue (green shade) and Cadmium Scarlet to the strength of tone 2. Make sure you mix enough blue paint to use for a second wash.



Begin by painting a traditional wash covering everything that isn't tone 1 (which is left white paper) using the blue. This ensures that everything is darker than the lightest areas of the picture, which can serve to unify the painting.

Let the painting dry.



Using the same mix of blue, wash over everything that is not tone 1 or 2. Notice how the lighthouse appears to be in sunlight even before any further tones are added. Let the painting dry.



Using the mix of Cadmium Scarlet paint over the lighthouse window then wash over the chimneys and roof, then cool the colour by adding a little of the original blue and continue to wash over the foliage whilst the roof is still wet. Paint in the block at the side of the house, this creates the wall of the house. Finally paint the tree in the right of the picture. Think of the shapes as one large area rather than becoming distracted with details.

Let the painting dry.



Using a flat mixing surface, mix Cadmium Scarlet with Winsor blue (green shade) to create tone 5. Start at the top of the lighthouse by painting the diamond shapes then the windowpanes, the chimney pots and the roof. Vary the mix in order to get an interesting blend of the two colours, by adding either a little of the blue or a little of the orange. Then add the tree trunks, lower windowpanes and finally the tree on the right.

I think this is such a simple yet effective painting.

If you have enjoyed this project perhaps you would benefit from my book 30 minute Watercolours. It has a whole section on tone with a project similar to this but painting tree shapes.

This technique forces you to simplify things down to their minimum so that once you get the idea of how tone works, your paintings will then improve.

Good luck with your painting.