

A simple watercolour technique to get you started

Wet in wet within shapes (gem painting)



Fig 1



Fig 2

The learning points of this project

- To improve the malleability of your paint use and begin to use the paint at a wetter consistency.
- Begin to observe the different properties of the various pigments.
- Help you control your brush use and improve accuracy.
- Understand the importance of letting the paint mix on the paper, so that the colours remain vibrant and luminous.

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Materials you will need for this project

Paper

140lb Hot Pressed paper (I use Saunders Waterford)

6" x 8" if you choose to make a card

6" x 4" if you wish to paint a study

Brushes

My Classic round (or No 10/12 round with a good point)

Half Rigger or Pointer brush

Watercolours

Use any colours you choose

Whatever watercolour paints you currently have, enjoy using all of them, in order to understand more about their qualities.

Fig 1

This finished painting uses the edge-to-edge version of this technique.

These colours work well together; despite their brightness they still give a soft finished appearance. The design element of the subject is strongly enhanced by using this technique.

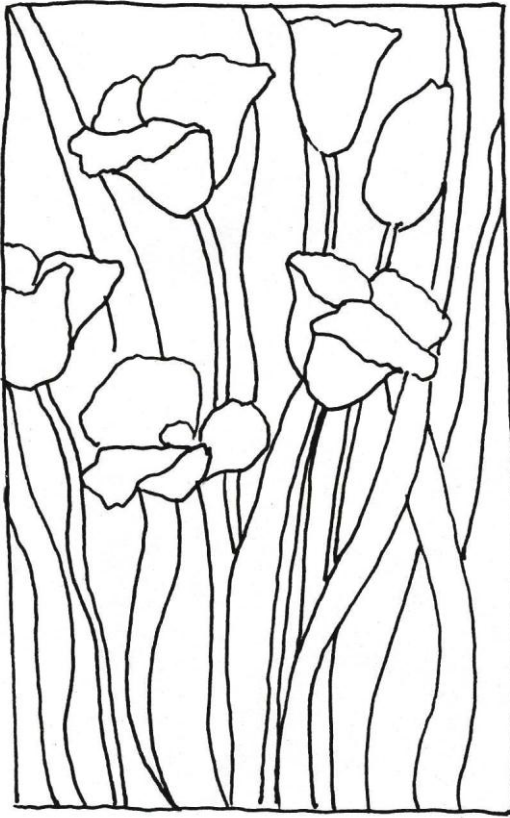
Fig 2

This finished painting uses the alternative approach, that of leaving spaces between the shapes. Leaving these white spaces gives an almost stained glass effect. The impact is best if the spaces are small, so you may need to practice going as close as possible to your lines. Using alternative colours will also help you develop a better understanding of how the colours work together.

I particularly like the luminosity in this technique, and the vibrancy and brightness of the watercolours always excite me.

Step 1

The line drawing.



Either lightly trace or copy this line drawing onto your watercolour paper keeping the same scale.

TIP - If you choose to make a card from your painting place the layout onto the centre right side of the folded piece of hot pressed (HP) watercolour paper.

You are now ready to begin painting.

Fig 3 our layout

Step 2

Beginning to paint.

It is always exciting to open my paint box and anticipate mixing those lovely colours. For this project we will apply small sections of watercolour extremely wet, the paper will become so saturated in this small section that the suspended pigment settles into the paper rather than the more traditional painting consistency where the pigment dries on it's surface.

Allow each section you paint to dry naturally. Avoid accelerating the drying time by using a hair dryer, as this will affect the colour mixing when using this technique.

A drying line will remain around each shape created, there are no soft edges, although if we use more than one colour there will be a merging of colour within each shape.

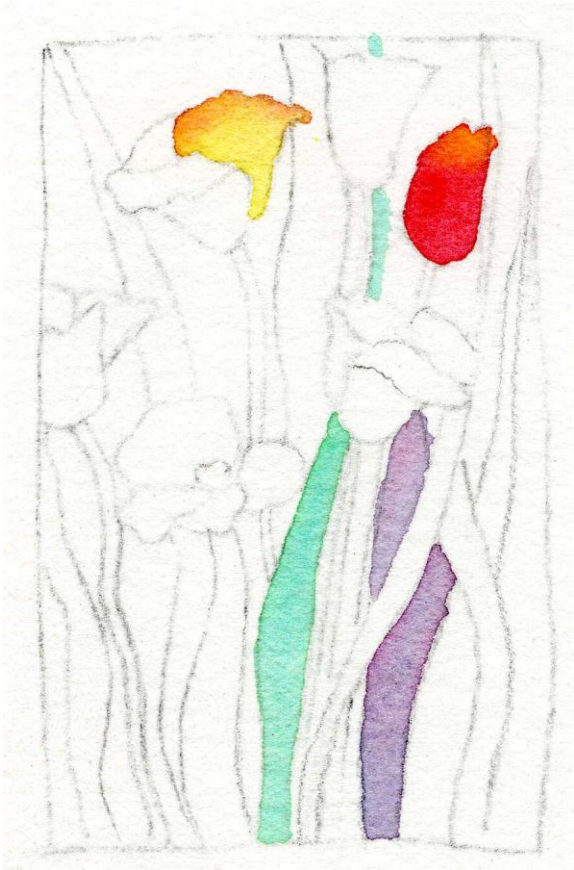


Fig 4

You must work flat for this technique so that the colours dry undisturbed.

You may begin anywhere you wish; there is no particular starting point. The aim is to apply the paint with your Classic brush, so wet, that it should appear almost like a droplet standing proud of the paper. When it dries it then leaves a lovely descriptive line around each shape you create.

The marvellous surprise is sometimes in the colour of the drying line; it can be **one** of the mixed colours, rather than a mixture of them.

Fig 4 painting the first shapes



Fig 5 detail - drying lines

Fig 5

Here I began by using Winsor blue then I mixed in raw sienna to create a soft green, notice the drying line is a very different colour from the soft green created within the shape.

Each time you paint a shape, gently touch the paper with the tip of the loaded brush, this releases more paint and therefore creates a wetter shape.

Step 3

Dropping in strong pigments.



Fig 6

Once you have your first chosen colour on the paper, use your rigger brush to 'drop in' another colour, make sure the pigment is strong, remember it will be diluted on the already wet surface.

Fig 6 detail - dropping in colour

This is where the excitement happens as the colours blend on the paper. You need to be patient and let the paint mix slowly, don't be tempted to help it along with a few prods, I know it's tempting, but avoid it as this will create a flat colour rather than a shape containing two or three colours, which is far more interesting.

Once you have painted your first shapes you can now decide how to proceed. You have the following two choices.



Fig 7

You can wait for each small wet section to dry before proceeding onto the shape next to it, and paint right up to the drying line previously created.

This creates a beautiful natural outline defining all the painted shapes

TIP – You will need a very light pencil drawing for this technique to avoid any lead showing on your finished piece.

Fig 7 edge to edge



Fig 8 leaving spaces

Fig 8

Alternatively you can paint a shape then leave a very narrow space between that one and the adjoining one, so that the drying lines have a tiny gap between them. This will leave white 'outlines' around all of the shapes you create. It also means you can work logically in a section not having to wait for the adjoining shape to dry. TIP – *if you paint up to, but not touching your pencil line, you will get a wonderful clean result when you rub the lines out at the end of your painting.*

Both techniques are equally lovely; you need to decide which you prefer, you may choose a different techniques depending on your subject matter, so I recommend you have a go at both.

Always keep the two techniques separate, mixing the two styles within the same painting can look very odd.

You will find that your brush skills greatly improve and you will become more accurate as you work up to a desired edge.

TIP – when painting up to an edge always make sure you can see the point of your brush, even if you have to invert it.

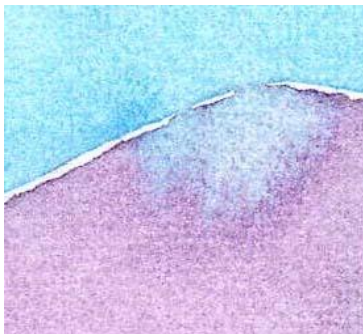


Fig 9 bursting colour

Fig 9

If you touch a wet edge the colour will burst through into the adjoining section as shown.

I rather like this effect, don't worry if this happens, that is the beauty of watercolour. Accept it and move on, avoid blotting it or trying to push it back, the paint will always win!

Step 4

As you progress with your picture you will become aware of how pigments react differently. Some colours will 'rush' across the wet shape, others will 'sit' on the surface creating a blob of colour, and others create 'fingers' of colour.

If you begin to understand and remember the different properties of the pigments in your box, you will also understand how to control your watercolours more.

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By painting different colour schemes you will also increase your understanding of which colours work well together, as well as how the colours react with one another.

Once you have finished your picture, and it has dried, remove the pencil lines with a soft putty rubber.

TIP these studies make wonderful cards. This technique scans and prints well if you have a computer.