For Beginners and Beyond:
Art Materials, Techniques and Picture Making

Complete
Watercolour

☞ *Paint & Brushes*
Choosing Papers
Understanding Pigments
Reading Paint Labels
Holding a Brush
Choosing Colours

Methods of Mixing
Making a Tonal Scale
How Much Water
Wet on Wet
Wet in Dry
The Perfect Wash

Tinted Backgrounds
Drybrush
Using Masking Fluid
Sparkling Highlights
Author **David Webb**

Gradated wash

Having mastered the basic flat wash (see page 50), you will soon realise that there are limitations to its use. The gradated wash allows you to change the strength of the tonal values while you are applying the wash, so that it gradually becomes lighter as you work your way down the paper.

The way to achieve this effect is to begin your wash at its fullest strength, or darkest tone, and then to gradually dilute it as you are painting. As you add more water to your wash, it becomes less concentrated and paler in tone, allowing more of the light to be transmitted from the paper surface. This can have many applications in picture making. When you are painting skies, for instance, it may appear that they are darker overhead, gradually getting lighter as you get closer to the horizon.

As with the flat wash, it is vital to have your board at an angle to enable the wash to flow down the paper. The gradated wash can be applied to dry or damp paper; practise both methods to see which suits you best.

The results of the gradated wash can be unpredictable, and I find that it is almost impossible to replicate the same effect twice. It is a useful technique to master, though, as there are many instances in landscape and seascape painting where a gradual change of tone is required.

Statue of Fortune at Dawn, Grand Canal, Venice

DENIS RYAN

In this painting a gradated background wash has been applied first. The sky area is actually light at the top, getting steadily darker in tone towards the foreground. This effect can be achieved either by adding stronger tones as you work down the paper, or by working light down to dark and then turning the paper around once the wash has dried.

MATERIALS

Pre-stretched watercolour paper on board

Your chosen colour of paint

Mixing palette

Water

Large watercolour brush

Gradated wash at actual size

Colour & tone as compositional devices

Both colour and tone can be used as compositional tools. Your choice of colour palette and where you place colours can greatly improve the composition of your paintings, as can the careful use of tonal values. Colour and tone can also be used to create a pathway through a painting.

The way we arrange the colours in our paintings, and give greater emphasis to some than others, is an important aspect of composition. There are a variety of schemes and strategies for using colour in art, some of which are shown here. However, you shouldn't feel that these have to be followed precisely or that the proportions of one colour to another need to be calculated exactly.

If you do, you may risk your painting becoming nothing more than a technical exercise.

Complementary colours

Complementary colour schemes use colours that are opposite each other on the colour wheel — red/green; blue/orange; yellow/purple. If you place two complementaries near or next to each other in a painting, the colours seem very intense and can make your painting more dynamic. Even just a hint of a complementary can lift a painting and bring it alive.

Many countryside scenes, for example, are dominated by one or more forms of green, which can be a little overpowering. By adding a little red, which is the complementary of green (for example, a few red flowers, or red-tiled roofs), some balance is achieved.

The same applies to any of the other colours on the wheel. For example, a seascape that is dominated by blues can be balanced by a beach or rocks in complementary oranges or siennas.

Analogous colours

A less vibrant but, nonetheless, pleasing scheme is to use analogous colours — colours that occur alongside each other on the colour wheel. Invariably, the dominant colour will be either a primary or secondary, supported by two tertiaries. For example, you may have a dominant green, with yellow-green and blue-green tertiaries in lesser amounts. This kind of colour scheme creates a very calming effect, as all the colours used are closely related.

It is also important to remember that you do not necessarily have to imitate exactly the colours you see. As artists we are free

The theory of colour

The colour wheel (see page 32) sets out the relationships between colours and can help you establish why your painting is (or isn't!) working.

Examples of complementary colours used in the paintings opposite. It's not absolutely essential that the colours be the exact opposites on the colour wheel for the results to be effective.

Analogous colours are close neighbours on the colour wheel, and can be used in quiet areas to provide harmony. In *Imagine*, opposite, a range of analogous blues and greens have been used in the water.

warm colours

cool colours