

# The Story of Watercolor Painting

Discover the history and concept behind the medium

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# Water Color Story



## What we will cover...

- Origin
- What it is
- Applications
- Artistic timeline
- How to tell YOUR story through watercolor

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# Origin Story

## Watercolor is a "water-soluble" method of painting

Watercolor has been around for thousands of years. It is one of the oldest types of pigment binders in history. Primarily using gum arabic, water and pigment, artists from as long ago as the cave painters of the stone age created pigments using this method.

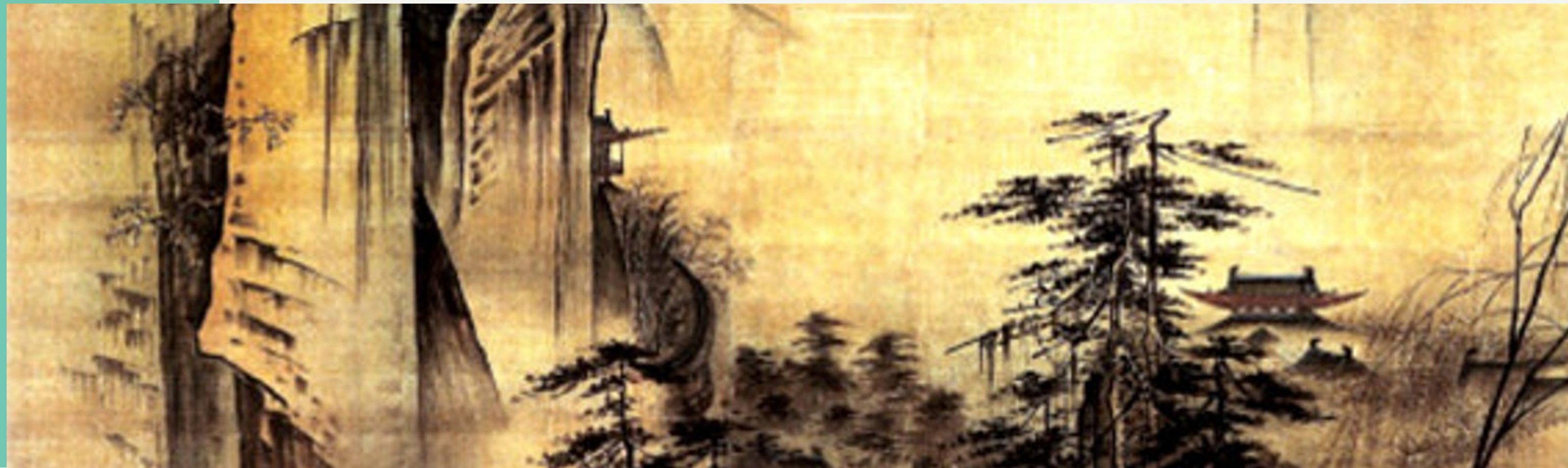


# Beginnings in Asia + Europe

## A variety of applications

Watercolor was a main medium of artists in China and Japan, where color mixed with ink was used to create brush script calligraphy and landscapes. In Egypt and Europe artists used watercolor to illustrate manuscripts in the Middle Ages.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watercolor\\_painting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watercolor_painting)



# 15–16th Century



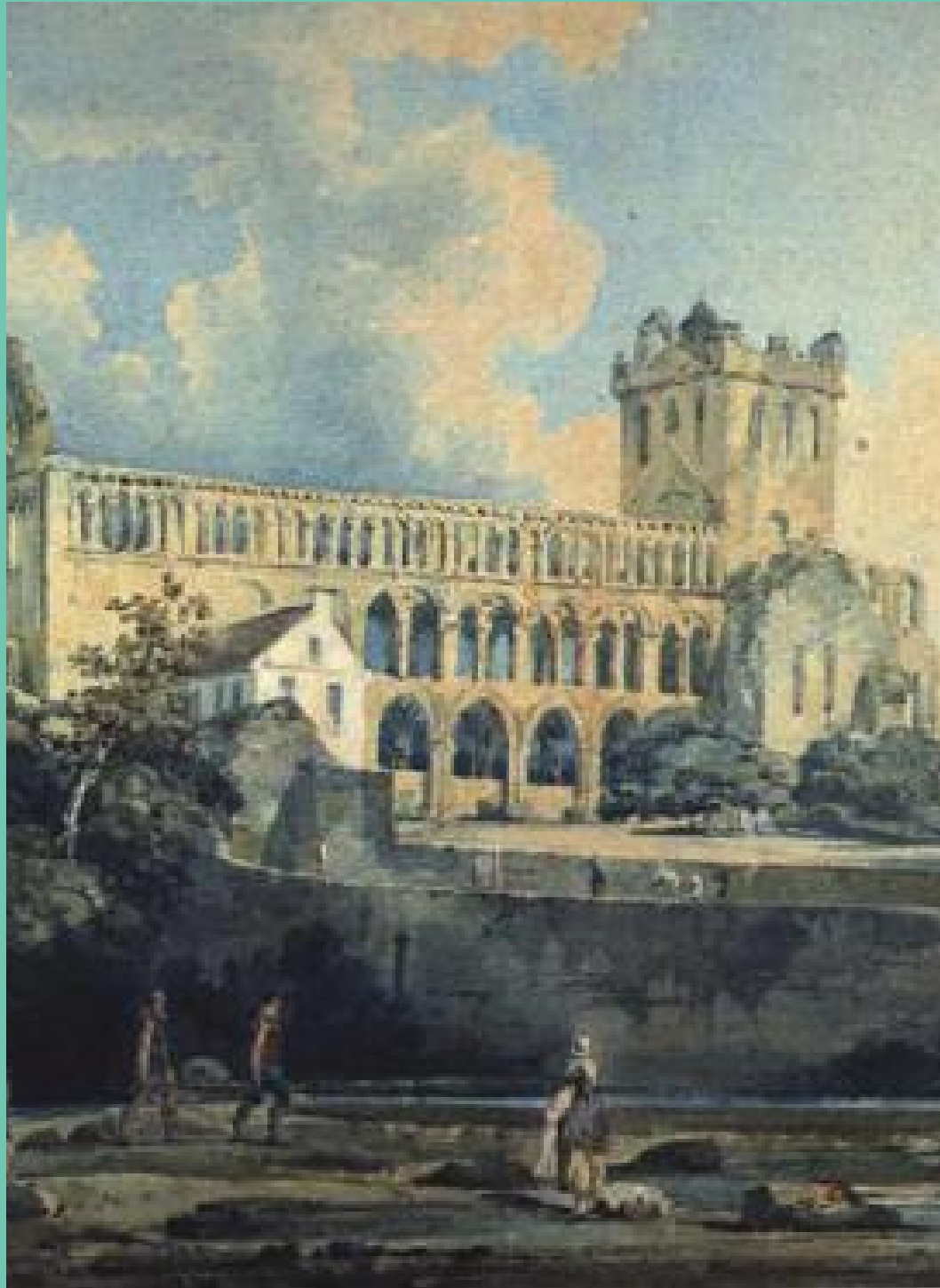
## Persian Miniatures

Artists in Persia and India used watercolor for exquisitely intricate paintings of life, religion and landscapes.

## Albrecht Durer

Prior to the Renaissance in Europe, artists like Albrecht Durer used the medium to beautifully render botanical and animal illustrations as a main material.





Thomas Girtin, Jedburgh Abbey

# Watercolor History

## Renaissance and later

# As a sketching tool for "master paintings"

## Claude Lorraine

Painters such as Claude Lorraine used the expressiveness and spontaneity of watercolor to sketch scenes en plein aire before creating larger master works in the studio. They also used watercolor to hand color woodblock prints.





# 19th Century

In the United States particularly, watercolor became a popular medium for artists. Botanical and animal illustration was one of the primary uses for watercolor as it could be used for "on the spot" observations as well as more intricate studies and details in the studio. Artists such as John James Audubon popularized the medium.

In Britain, William Blake the poet, painter and printmaker used watercolor primarily for literary illustration and experimented with washes of grey tones first, before laying over the color, almost like "tinting" black and white photographs. Blake worked from the late 1700's through the mid 1800's and created quite a large collection of beautiful examples of the medium.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, artists like Paul Cezanne, Paul Klee and John Marin used the beauty and spontaneity of watercolor to create glazes of color. Their renderings of landscapes show the beginnings of Modernism.

# Late 20th Century and Contemporary

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Artists using the medium of watercolor are sparse in the contemporary art scene. Above is Eric Fischl, a figurative painter working in monotype and watercolor. At left is Andrew Wyeth who famous paintings of everyday objects, rooms and scenes from the middle of the 20th Century were done primarily in watermedia like gouache and egg tempera and watercolor. These artists show that the media can truly stand on its own.

# How to tell Your Story through Watercolor

## **Transparency**

Watercolor has a great capacity for transparency and thinking about this as an asset for your work can be useful.

## **Spontaneity**

This medium can be taken almost anywhere and cleaned up easily so consider how you can use it to get your ideas out quickly and safely.

## **Delicacy and Detail**

Watercolors can be very vibrant or very subtle. They can be used with very fine brushes and can achieve a great detail, which makes them perfect for illustration.

## **Expressiveness**

The fluidity and unpredictability of the medium can give a very expressive quality to a painting. Use it to your advantage.

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