

SCHOOL OF VISUAL PHILOSOPHY

WATERCOLOR PAINTING



Exercise #2

UNDERSTANDING TRANSPARENCY

WATERCOLOR PAINTING

EXERCISE #2

An exercise designed to help you see the way watercolor transparency works in a hands-on way. Building up layers is the best way to understand how colors can mix optically through washes of paint.

Step 1: Choose your reference

You can use a photograph, a 3-dimensional object, or something from your imagination. It should be singular without a lot of visual noise around- so if you choose an apple, place it on a white piece of paper or on something without distractions.

Step 2: Choose your color palette

You can assess what basic colors to choose based on your subject. If you chose a red delicious apple, your main colors will be red, its complement (green) or blue and yellow to mix in order to create green. You can also get fancy and choose another color scheme if you are feeling bold!

Step 3: Create a light under-sketch

In order to create an accurate rendering of your subject, I suggest creating an under sketch using a hard pencil. Just lay out the basic contour, outline and some interior reference points so as you paint, you can refer to the lines as a guide.



Step 4: Start Painting!

In order for this exercise to work, you will need to lay down transparent washes of paint over one another. This will require some drying in between layers, so having some patience, time to wait or a hair dryer will help.

With watercolor, it is easiest to start with the palest or lightest value and build up to dark values. So find the lightest value color on your subject that is not white and mix that color- adding a lot of water to get the palest tint you can. **Let that layer dry completely!**

Then you can proceed to the next value or color hue and start layering. You will notice that even if you don't change the value that much, by layering over another color, the subsequent color will appear richer or darker. This is the nature of transparent washes. Also pay attention to how the complementary colors are working together- creating neutrals or shades when layered over each other.