

“Watercolor Breakthroughs”

Watercolor workshop with Stephen Blackburn

Here's a suggested material list:

Paper

I use a number of different surfaces for my paintings – mostly 300# weight paper. Any paper that can take frisket (masking solution) will be fine – I use Arches or Twinrocker cold press and hot press papers. Some of the softer papers like Lana or Winsor Newton may not work with the frisket – if you have a different paper or board make sure frisket works on it. I have also used Crescent Hot Press Watercolor Board, but I no longer recommend that for workshops, because it sometimes buckles and wrinkles with all the water we use.

You should also bring some small pieces of watercolor paper for practice and color studies.

Materials for Pouring

Windex spray bottle or equal (Important!)

Containers to pour the paint from with lids (Baby food jars, tupperware, etc.)

Plenty of paper towels, kleenex

Old brushes

Frisket – Pebeo brand is best. Winsor and Newton Yellow is great also. The white frisket will not work as well (since it's hard to see it).

Brushes

1" Flat

3/4" Flat

#10 Round

#6 Round

Paint

I use many different brands - Winsor & Newton professional grade, Holbein, Daniel Smith, etc., but any transparent watercolors will be fine.

Suggested colors:

Permanent Rose *

Cobalt Blue *

Cadmium Orange, Red Orange or Scarlet

Cerulean Blue

French Ultramarine

Alizarin Crimson or Quinacridone Rose
Aureolin *
Hansa Yellow or Winsor Yellow
Cadmium Red or Winsor Red
Winsor Blue (Green Shade) or Pthalo Blue *
Pthalo Green (or Winsor Green)
Hookers Green (Holbein) *
Viridian
Permanent Magenta *
Ultramarine Violet *

Note: We won't be using all of these colors – it's hard to guess what colors your painting will call for. That's part of the fun! But . . . the paint colors with an asterisk are the ones I use the most (usually that means they are the most transparent).

Additional Materials

Drawing Board
Masking Tape
Large Palette or Mixing tray
(2) Large water containers
Large sponges
Paper towels
Sketch pad
Notebook
HB Pencils (Be ready to do some drawing!)
Photographs of close-up subjects in analogous colors (Important!)
“Incredible Nib” or other device to move frisket around

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Notes on Materials:

These paints, paper and other materials in my list are what I normally use, and as such are only **suggested** materials. I would never insist that a student only use the same materials that I use. I would much rather see you stick with most of the materials, such as paints, brushes, etc. that you normally use. An exception to this would be a new technique that I might introduce that you have not seen and that uses completely new materials to you. For instance, it would be best if you stayed with the colors that you usually use, and maybe just introduce one or two interesting new ones to the mix. I will be teaching a lot about color theory, and most of the time what I am teaching can be used right away with your current palette of colors. You may notice some colors on the color wheel as I teach that you need, and then you will need to either get that color or mix it from your colors. Sometimes a student relies too much on an instructor's suggested new color, when you could actually learn more by substituting or mixing it from your colors. **Note:** I may not use all the colors on my suggested colors list, or I may use one not on the list, but that list will give you a pretty complete palette to choose from.

One material that is crucial to the pouring technique that I use is the Windex spray bottle. This can be hard to find, but the best one is the smaller Windex bottle with a top-button trigger. By this I mean you push down on the trigger, not pull toward you like some of the larger bottle. What will not work is the smaller bottles that just "mist" the spray. This is because you will use the bottle as almost an extension of your arm to move the water around the painting. Actually, a bigger spray bottle with more force is better than the little "mist" ones. I have found some good ones at art supply stores or catalogs recently that are made for this purpose.

I used to work with the Crescent watercolor board for my pouring process, but now I usually stick to Arches paper. I like the watercolor board for my poured painting because the poured frisket can sometimes be quickly absorbed into regular watercolor paper. However, I have had issues lately with the watercolor board buckling and even coming apart with all the water we use for pouring. Your best bet is to use Arches 300# paper for the workshop (either hot or cold press), and I will probably demonstrate on both hot and cold press paper during the workshop. I recommend the heavier 300# paper because I start out by pouring with frisket (masking solution) and the lighter-weight papers don't work as well with this process - the frisket can sometimes sink into the paper if you're not careful.

The best size for a class is either a half-sheet (15"x22) or a quarter sheet. The size is up to the student, but please try to cut it before the class. You should also bring other pieces of watercolor paper for color studies. 140# cold press paper is fine for these, although it can sometimes be better to use the same paper as you plan on using for your painting. The color studies are a big part of my success with painting - I do a quick one for almost every painting.

I use a large enamel butcher's tray for my palette, and usually put out just the paints that I will be using on the current painting. I like Fresh Paint! The palettes with the pools for paints are fine, as long as you have a large area to mix paint. One of the keys to a vibrant painting is using enough paint!

One of the keys to the poured paintings is having the right subject matter to work from. It will work best when done from photos or other pictures of close-up subjects, such as florals or leaves, in analogous colors. That's why sunflowers work great (analogous yellows and greens), but red water lilies do not (red and green don't mix in this class). Subjects that are far away do not work as well as close-up subjects, because we will be working with negative shapes and spaces. The shapes of the subjects are important, also - round shapes, such as a rose, do not work as well as sunflowers or orchids with their more interesting and arbitrary shapes. Take a look at my web site (www.stephenblackburn.com) to view some of the shapes in my paintings, both negative and positive. Some rounder shapes might work if you bunch them together to create interesting negative spaces. I often use several photos to build my own composition - it can sometimes be difficult to get a good composition from one photo.

Some other subject ideas - close-up shots of antiques or old weathered machinery, still lifes (if they are bunched together to create interesting shapes), small household items, rocks, animals, sea life. Or you can do abstract shapes to try the pouring technique.

Have Fun at the Workshop!