Simply Watercolours

Brushes and Water

Now we have all our materials it is time to get to know them. We will start with some simple watercolour techniques. You need to practice these techniques over and over until you become as much at ease with them as you can.

Simple Techniques

These techniques will help to familiarize you with your material - how to use your brushes, how much water, how much paint. It takes time, even to learn these seemingly easy techniques.

As you do this exercise, please write down each thing you do in your note book, so you have it as a reference. It is a good idea to do this throughout the course.

Prepare with a Raphaël round brush or petit gris size 4, a piece 140 1lb or 300 gm cold pressed fine watercolour paper, your palette and paint, along with a jar of water and a cloth or kitchen towel. We are ready for ‘Wet on Wet’.

Wet on Wet

Put a puddle of water into one of the squares in your palette and add a generous amount of yellow, red or blue.

Mix well, then clean your brush well. You will have a puddle of colourful water.

Fill a clean brush with clean water and slightly stroke the tip of the brush on the water jar.

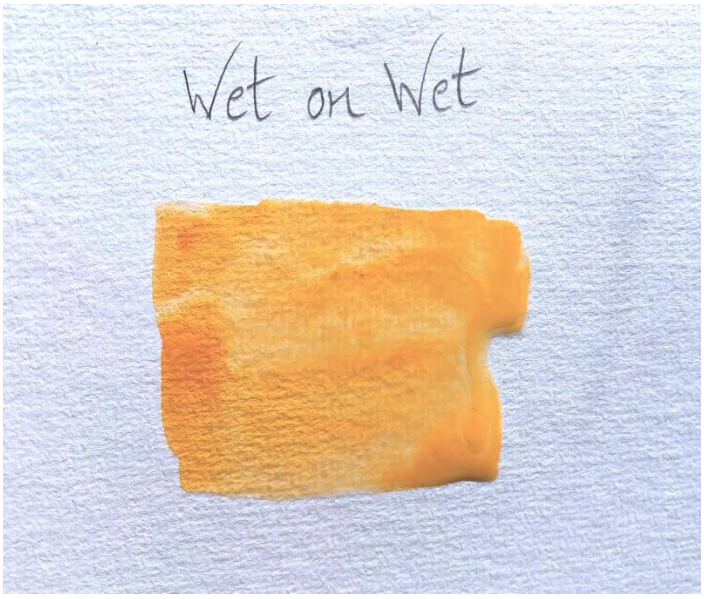
Wet on Wet is exactly what it says it is. Paint a square of water on your paper.

Squeeze out your brush then soak it with the colour you have mixed, then add it to the square.

You can have varying degrees of Wet on Wet and it is a good idea to practice this, so you become accustomed to the amount of water and pigment you require in your painting.

These squirrel hair, paint brushes hold a lot of water, which is wonderful when you are mixing a lot of any colour. Particularly useful when painting backgrounds and you need the same colour for a large area.

Having to remix the exact same colour can be tricky. I always use cadmium orange for these demonstrations, it is colour that spreads fast and beautifully.



Wet on Dry

For wet on Dry, just add more pigment to the already mixed colour in your palette with your round brush. Then rinse and clean your brush removing any excess water.

Soak up the vibrant colour in your palette and paint another square on your paper. You will see an immediate difference in colour strength and you will find you have more control with your brush strokes.

Dry on dry

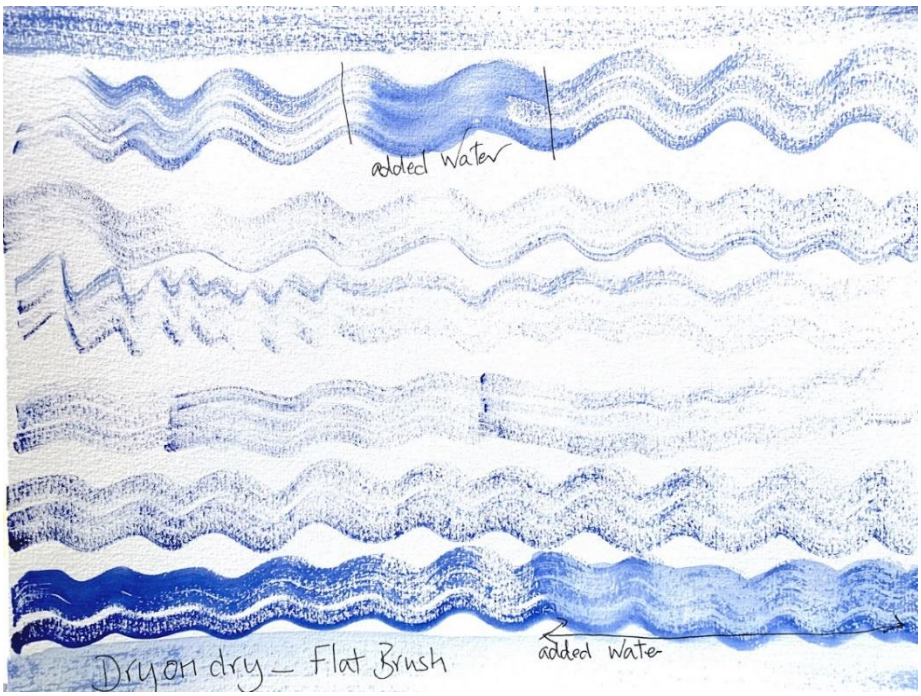
This technique can be used for all sorts of painting. It is a very useful technique to master. It is very versatile; for example, you can use it for mountain crags, seascapes, landscapes, material, textures, bark.

Take your moistened brush and brush it into your moist pigment, neither your paint nor your brush should be wet, only damp enough for the brush to gather enough paint. I often use my flat brush size 18 for this exercise.

Brush the paint onto your paper, the pigment will be strong but broken.

If you want to soften or blend some of the marks you have made, take a clean wet brush and paint the water onto the areas you would like to soften and blend. It really is quite magical.

You need to make friends with your brushes. Practice over and over.

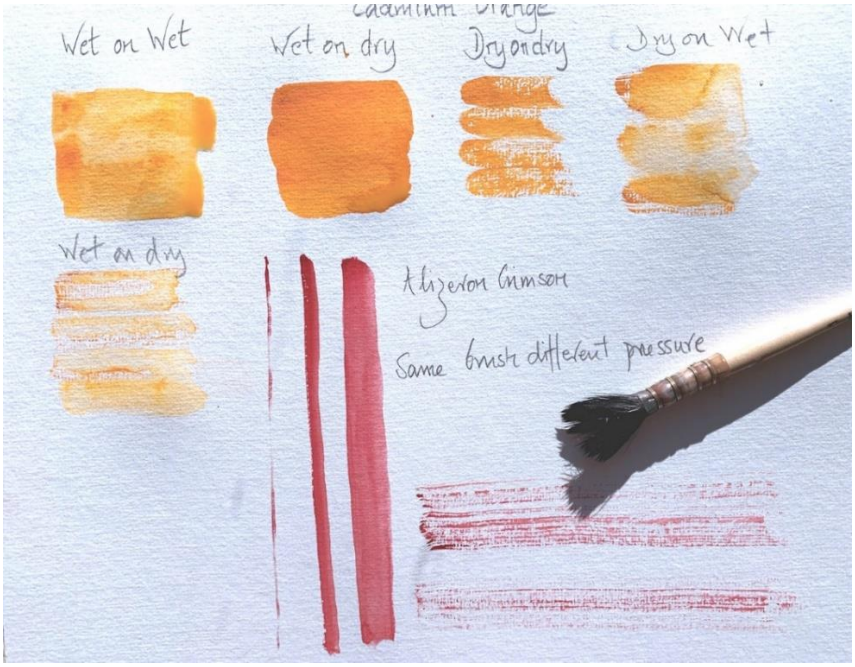


Lines

You can achieve a wonderful straight line with great ease. Take a rigger brush, using a little water and any colour paint you choose make a nice strong colour, fill your rigger with the colour (it mustn't be too wet!).

Brush firmly in hand as if you were holding a pencil or pen, put your fist on the paper. Then pull your arm down from the shoulder, so your hand is pulled down by your arm. Voila, a straight line.

Practice making lines with all your brushes and go from very little pressure to quite a bit. With virtually no pressure on the brush you will create a very fine line, with much more pressure your line will become quite thick.



Sponge work

First you need to wet your sponge and then squeeze out every last drop of water. The sponge will be moist but not dry.

Squeeze a tiny bit of the sponge between your fingers and press into the cadmium orange.

Then press sponge onto your paper in the shape of a happy round tree.

Repeat this process using both red and blue on your sponge then onto the tree on your paper.

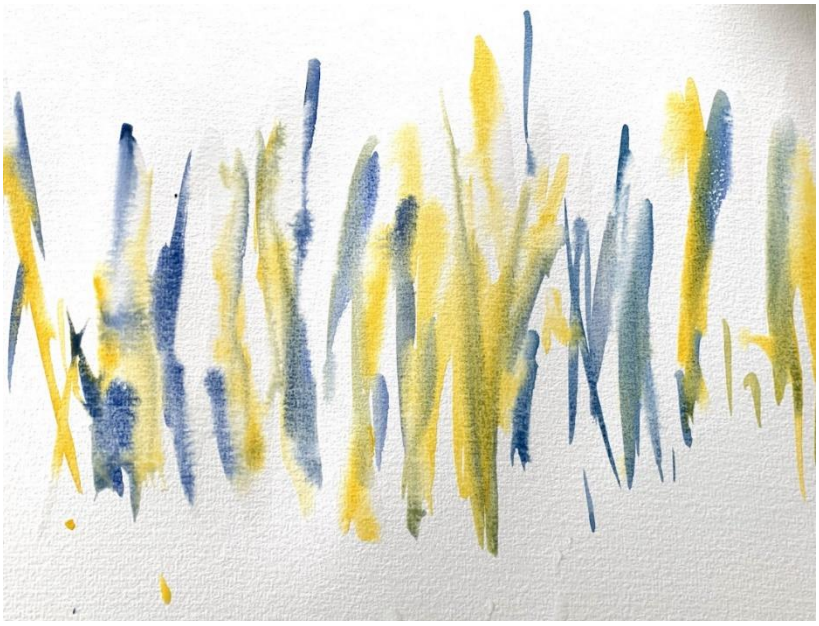
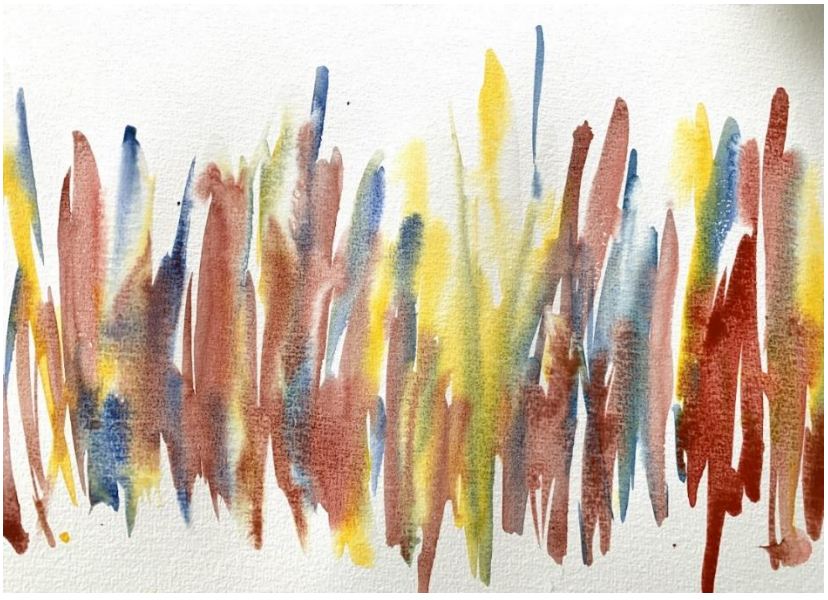
Then mix a brown, using the exact same colours.

Paint a tree trunk in delicately, add a few small branches within the sponged colours. Then with a clean wet brush, blend some of the paint on your tree to create depth and shadowy and airy parts. It is great fun! Enjoy!

Grasses

Wet and dry. Using your number three or four round brush, fill it with water and make imaginary fluid marks of tall grasses swaying on your paper in the wind. Then with an almost dry brush, just damp enough to pick up some pigment. Perhaps a yellow to start with.

Just touch the water on your paper with the tip of the brush and then watch it spread.

Repeat this randomly with up and down flicks of your brush.

Add a different colour, red maybe then add a blue and soon you will find you have beautiful colourful grasses, like these examples.