

AN ARTIST'S HANDBOOK

Materials and Techniques

Margaret Krug

This practical reference book introduces basic materials and techniques for drawing and painting.

Featured techniques include:

- Drawing
- Watercolour Painting
- Encaustic Painting
- Egg Tempera Painting
- Fresco
- Oil Painting
- Acrylic Painting

Each technique is clearly explained and discussed from its historical roots to contemporary practice. Students are encouraged to explore the methods from scratch, encountering the work through preparation of the wood panel or canvas, the mixing of pigments and the application of the paint.

Richly illustrated throughout with over 400 images – historical and contemporary works as well as photographs of studio practice – this book is an indispensable reference for students and anyone engaged in finding out about drawing and painting materials and techniques.

Margaret Krug is a painter with an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has exhibited in Mexico, Italy and throughout the United States. She is Senior Lecturer at the Whitney Museum of American Art and Adjunct Professor of painting and drawing at Parsons School of Design, and has also taught painting at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She created and teaches a painting programme at the Castello di Spanocchia in Italy.

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GENERAL TECHNICAL SUGGESTIONS

Paint as directly as you can, and then paint indirectly when you notice that the colors don't mingle and become muddy. Lay the light tints first, then the darker washes, darkest tones next, and finally the accents. Do not complete one area at a time. Keep the whole painting going so you will be able to adjust values more accurately. One of the most important aspects in watercolor is to keep it fresh and spontaneous, so do not go over an area more often than it is necessary, and do not try to show every detail and slight gradation of tone. Suggest and indicate instead of overworking in a busy manner, catching the life and spirit of the subject in a light, unlabored way. Always use a test sheet to apply colors before use on the painting, which will help ensure the freshness of the final piece.

While the watercolor paint is still fluid, to bring in the light (provided by the whiteness of the paper) you can make corrections or remove paint by blotting with a sponge, blotter, or tissue. Although traces of color will still remain, you can lighten areas of dried paint by lightly scrubbing them with a sponge dampened with water and squeezed, then by blotting the areas with a tissue. You should not roughen the paper surface with these manipulations.



Charles Demuth
Outing on the Lake
1910
Watercolor on paper
16 1/4 x 12 1/4 in. (41.7 x 30.8 cm)
Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York

To bring in light and volume to the forms, and to obtain diagonal tones, Charles Demuth blotted out color with a blotter or sponge. This can be accomplished when the paint is still damp with a blotter or sponge, or when the painting is dry with a damp sponge.

With heavy papers, small highlights can be scraped out with a very sharp utility knife, craft knife, scalpel, or pen knife. If you plan ahead, you can also use small pieces of masking tape, masking fluids, or rubber cement to preserve areas of light. When your painting is dry, remove the masking by peeling or rubbing it with a clean, dry cloth. As with drawing, be aware that in a delicate method such as watercolor, when you touch the paper, your hands will release oil that will change the way that the materials on the paper will respond. The oil can absorb material and create a more saturated color, a deeper value, or a bloomish.

Exercise: direct painting or alla prima painting

With no preliminary drawing and broad strokes, you can create a quick, fresh response to what you are looking at or to a fleeting idea, impulse, or memory. However, do not paint too thickly, or the paint may crack. Passages can be revisited and refined at a later stage.



Create a direct painting—painting wet into wet from nature. Broken colors were created by color complements and near-complements combining white wet.

With watercolor, as with some of the methods that follow—such as oil and acrylic painting—the direct and indirect methods can be combined. For example, you can create a very loose, pale sketch in pencil, instead of a full study, as a subtle guide for a very free, loose, plain air (open-air) painting sketch. You may lay down a color and wait for it to dry before laying down another color for an optical mixture. In another passage in the same painting, lay down a color, then, without waiting, you may lay another color directly into the wet wash. Direct and indirect painting techniques can come together in watercolor without fail, if you are working and using whatever is necessary.



Paul Cézanne
Fruit Basket
1891
Watercolor and pencil on paper
17 1/4 x 22 1/4 in. (44.8 x 56.8 cm)
Museum of Modern Art, New York

SEE MORE COLOR PAINTING

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Exercises to encourage seeing and drawing

Gesture

Materials: indigo, iron gall, and other inks, crow quill pen, feather quill pen, bamboo reed pen, sable brush, large ringer paper for quick sketches, various papers such as mulberry and penmanship, and handmade antique paper.

While observing the figure, make a few 15- to 30-second gesture drawings. Make a few three-minute gesture drawings. Use large-format paper.



Capture a gesture with a feather quill pen—playing with wet materials....



...and with a brush and wash.

Exercises to encourage seeing and drawing

Shape and volume

Materials: pencil, tortillon, charcoal, eraser, and 90 to 185 gsm Fabriano Artistico hot-pressed paper.

While observing a head, a squash, or a pumpkin, represent the height, width, and depth of a form.



This drawing of a squash conveys a sense of volume.



A successful gesture drawing captures the essence of a subject in a few lines.



Auguste Rodin
Cartoon for Dante
1890
Graphite and watercolor
10 1/4 x 10 1/4 in. (26.8 x 26.7 cm)
Museum of Art, Paris

In 1904, royal donors of King Sweafor of Cambodia came to Paris to perform. Rodin had the opportunity to draw them for a few days before they left for Cambodia.



From Ferns de Chastillon
Study of a Woman's Head
c. 1860-70
Pencil on buff paper
6 1/4 x 5 1/4 in. (16.1 x 13.6 cm)
Painting and Sculpture Class Art Institute,
Wellesley, Massachusetts

While emphasizing shape and volume, Ferns de Chastillon simplified and minimized the facial features to forms that suggest a classical ideal of perfection.

METHOD

Cartoon and transfer

What you will need:

Paper and tracing paper
Stylus or pouncing wheel
Terra posca or raw umber pigment in a muslin pouch tied with a string
Muslin
Charcoal



Method of transfer. From left to right: creating a muslin transfer, pinning the



tracing paper with a pouncing wheel, soaking brushes.



Transferring a cartoon to a painting coat, from left to right. Muslin with charcoal—tracing cartoon—charcoal transfer



brushed, cartoon traced without charcoal, cartoon transferred to paper at an example of pouncing.



While you are waiting for the intrinco to be ready, prepare your cartoon for transferring to the painting surface and soak your brushes in clean water for half an hour.

Create a cartoon or use one that you have created ahead of time and then trace it onto thin muslin or use one that you have created ahead of time and then trace it onto thin muslin with light coming through. For the pouncing method, trace your cartoon onto a piece of tracing paper to create a golvono (a secondary cartoon created to preserve the original). Then place your golvono on top of a piece of folded muslin to create a cushion and run the pouncing wheel (a small spiked wheel) over the lines. For the pouncing method, take a small square of muslin, fill it with an earth pigment such as raw umber or terra posca, and tie it with a string. After you have let the painting coat dry out

for up to half an hour, see if it holds a slight indentation, made by gently pressing a fingertip into the surface. Then, if the surface is ready, transfer your cartoon by pouncing (see Chapter 3, p. 80, and opposite) or inking.

For the inking method, lay the muslin face up on the fresh intrinco and follow the lines with the stylus (small, pointed, pencil-shaped instrument) to leave an incised line in the plaster along the drawing lines. I prefer to have a faint charcoal line as well as the incised line. To achieve this, you must reverse your cartoon image by taping it over on the light table before you proceed to transfer it to the muslin. Then lay the muslin face down on the intrinco and follow the lines with the stylus. For the pouncing method, lay the perforated cartoon on the fresh intrinco and gently run the pouch filled with pigment over the lines. The pigment will sink into the intrinco to make faint dotted lines, reproducing the design of the cartoon.

Painting into wet lime plaster with pigment pastes

What you will need:

Fresco brushes: use light, soft hair brushes, such as sable and squirrel, and fine soft synthetic brushes, soaked in water for half an hour before use

Bristle brushes for miscellaneous uses

Pigment pastes

Glass palette

Glass jars or dishes, and porcelain palette

Distilled water

Glass dropper (pipette)

Glass wand

Glass spoon

Palette knife

Water atomizer for spraying surface and moistening colors in the mixing jars or cups



Fresco painting setup: brushes, pigment pastes, palettes, and tools for fresco painting.

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