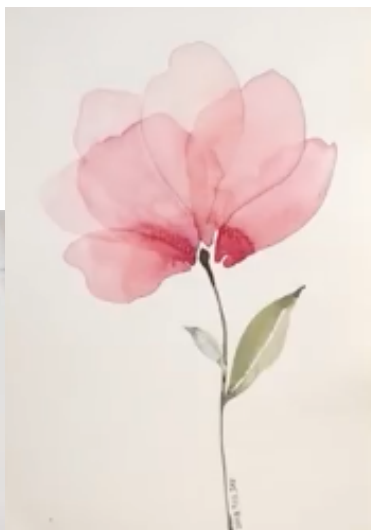


COLOURWHEEL Art Classes

Monochrome Watercolour



Shayda Campbell



JayLee Painting

In this tutorial we're going to look at using monochrome watercolour. The word monochrome comes from the Greek meaning 'having one colour' and painting in monochrome means painting in only one hue varying the shades of a single colour from dark to light. Watercolour is the perfect medium to explore this in, as it forces us to look purely at the tonal values we see and we can build up layers of watercolour to help to describe this. Painting in monochrome also helps to learn one of the key techniques in watercolour – being able to control tone through the use of water.

Some of the benefits of using watercolour in a monochromatic way includes:

- you can become more familiar with using tonal values for impact;
- you have automatic harmony in your painting as there are no colour clashes; it takes the worry about colour out of the equation;
- it's useful for studying light and shadows;
- it's useful for learning how to use the glazing process.

Warm Up Task One – Creating a Tonal Scale

As tonal values in watercolour are controlled through the amount of water added to the paint, a useful place to start is creating a tonal scale of nine sections, with your pure pigment from the tube being at one end and then graduations in colour leading down to white.

To have a go at this, first draw out nine boxes and squeeze a little of your desired colour into a palette. Have a look at the main activity and choose a colour that will be useful to you in this section.

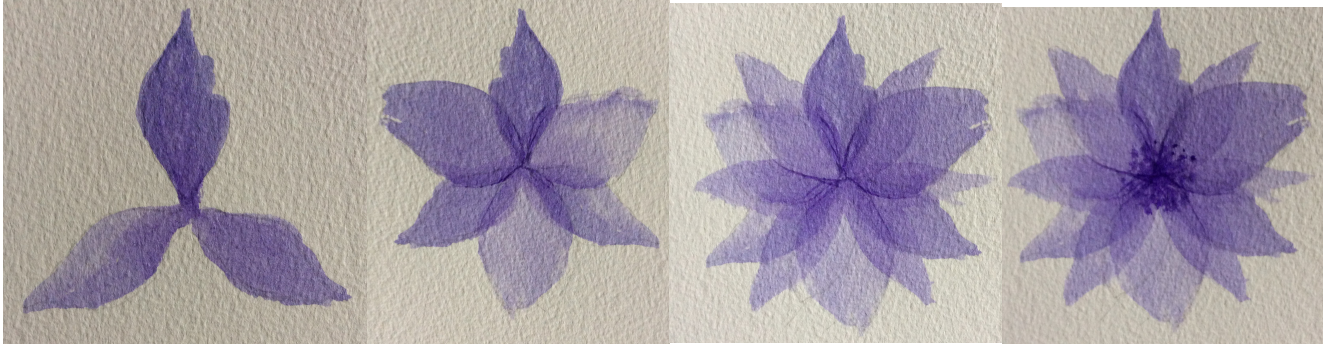
Paint a box at one end with the darkest value, straight from the tube, and then add a little water into this. Clean your brush before painting in the next box. Repeat, keeping the same puddle of colour but adjusting it with clean water each time until you get to the last box which you want to simply leave white. Do remember to clean your brush before painting each new box so residue paint still isn't on your brush.



Warm Up Task Two: using glazes to create transparent petals.

A glaze is the term for a thin, transparent layer of paint. Glazes are used on top of one another to build depth and modify colours in a painting. It must be completely dry before another is applied on top, so that the colours don't physically mix. In watercolour painting a glaze is often called a wash.

This second exercise shows how one value of wash can be built up to create form. Note – the underlying wash must be dry otherwise the overlying wash will dissolve into it creating blooms and lifting the wash below. If you do want a layer to 'bleed' and merge on the page, allow the layer below to dry and then swipe the area you want this effect with clean water before adding your paint.



Squeeze your chosen colour into your palette and dilute with water to create a light value. You may draw out three petals or simply go for it with your paintbrush – see image one. Allow to dry.

Over the top of your first set of petals, using exactly the same puddle of paint, paint three larger petals. Note in image two that where the paint crosses over the edges of the first, the value becomes darker and gives the illusion of transparent, overlapping petals. This is glazing in action.

Once dry, again with exactly the same puddle of paint, paint a third layer of petals – see image three. This will enhance the illusion of transparency even more as further overlaps in the paint are created.

You may want to add a little detail to your flower so add a little more paint into the one you've been using to create a darker value. Using a stippling effect, create the centre of the flower. Note that as the paint moves away from the middle, the stipples become less dense and are spaced apart more – image four.



Once the centre is dry, add a little more paint into your mix, again to make it darker, and repeat the previous step to add a little more definition into the centre- see image five.

Finally, you may wish to paint in a stem.

Main Task

This mini project was greatly inspired by all of the beautiful spring flowers around at the moment. If orchids aren't your thing, think about cherry blossom and daffodils which would work just as well. In the summer why not try roses and hydrangeas.

Equipment: watercolour paper, masking tape, a tube of watercolour paint – in this tutorial I've used crimson but the colour doesn't matter, size 6, 8 or 10 round brush, a palette preferably with wells but you could improvise and use a plate, HB/2H pencil, a sheet of kitchen paper, two jars of water (one to wash your brush and the other for clean water), black pen – this could be a fine liner or a biro pen an additional extra.

Main Task: Monochrome Watercolour Flowers



Step 1: Begin by taping your watercolour paper down to your board or surface to prevent your paper buckling. Squeeze a small amount of your chosen watercolour into your palette. Using your HB or 2H pencil, map out your composition lightly. I've pressed on a little harder than usual so that it is visible in the photograph.



Step 2: Scoop a little of your watercolour into a new well or part of your palette and dilute it with water. In watercolour we work light to dark and need to think about preserving any areas we wish to keep white. Think back to the tonal strip exercise. You're aiming to make a hue of the colour closest to the light or low light end of the scale. Do remember that watercolour will dry lighter so you may want to take this into account. Using an eraser, knock back some of the pencils lines as you don't want these to show through. Clean your brush and start to paint in the petals of the orchids. Feed the paint into the areas of the petals that are slightly darker first and then use the brush, with more clean water if necessary, to drag this to the edges. The edges of the orchard are sharp so use the tip of the brush to define these. **Tip:** notice how the white of the paper has been left in the centre of the orchids and around some of the petal edges. This will help to define the shape.

Paint in the stems. In the image they are the darkest part so take another scoop of watercolour paint and this time wet your brush but not the paint. Using the paint virtually neat from the tube, paint in the stems, keeping the lines sharp as you want a contrast between these and the flowers. Allow this first layer to dry.



Step 3: We now need to begin to darken using the glazing technique to begin to add some definition. Taking one flower at a time, sweep some clean water into the area, one petal at a time, that you want to begin to darken. Squeeze the excess water out of your brush and going back to the initial puddle of watercolour mixed, pick some up on your brush and feed this into the area just wetted. This will create a lovely, soft effect and the paint should only spread into the area with clean water. **Tip:** if the paint moves where you don't want it to, use a clean brush to lift it off the paper or move around. At this stage it is also worth giving your stems another coat of the undiluted paint to darken them further if needed. Let this layer dry.

Note: an extra stem has been added to the right of the image to balance the composition.



A close up from step 3: note how putting down clean water and then adding your paint can create soft edges. Also note what happens if you don't knock back those pencil lines! A deliberate mistake!



Step 4: repeat step three on any areas of the petals that you feel could be darker still. Squint at the reference image so that the very darkest parts of the flowers stand out to you.

For the centre of the flowers, take some of the watercolour paint and don't dilute this too much. Dampen your brush and paint in the darker parts of the centre of the flowers. Try to see these in the simplest shapes that you can so that you don't overwork them. Again, check to see if you need to darken the stems.



Step 5: Now for an additional extra. If you'd like a little more definition and line work. Take your biro or fine liner. Begin to work around the whole painting as you don't want to work too much into any one area – less is definitely more at this stage. Think about any areas that you want to describe a little more and that would enhance the paint work, for example, any frills in the petals. I always find that a loose sketchy line works best.

Using different pressures and thickness of line (harder and thicker lines for darker areas; lighter and broken line for lighter areas) begin to add some pen work over the top of your watercolour.

Note that on the stems, I only added pen marks to one side.

Keep working around your painting until you feel you have balance – remember: not too much black pen!

A close up of pen work



It really is amazing what can be achieved with one tube of watercolour and a little pen. Hope you have fun with this one and as ever, we're looking forward to seeing the finished results.

Reference Images

