

COLOURWHEEL Art Classes

Black Ink: Cats

Endre Penovac is a Serbian artist who works in black ink to create these beautiful cat paintings. Ink and water is difficult to control and it's well worth spending a little bit of time experimenting with ink to water ratio. Endre Penovac works with the medium, making the most of its unpredictable nature, to produce these almost ghostly paintings of felines. The paintings are reminiscent of Chinese artwork, another good source of inspiration. If you're not a cat person, why not try this out with dogs or even birds instead. If you can't get hold of black ink, try this one out with watercolour – just be aware that although ink does dry a little lighter, watercolour dries even lighter!



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Experiments



I wouldn't recommend jumping straight in to trying to draw your chosen subject without experimenting first, especially if you're new to using ink. The looseness of ink is something that I really like but this takes practice. The ink which I use frequently is Frisk Drawing Ink, available from shops such as Hobbycraft and Amazon. It holds its colour well and is good value at around £3 for 150ml. As with watercolour, paper is important when using ink and you will not achieve the effects that you wish on cartridge or rough paper. In this tutorial I am using a Daler Rowney, cold pressed watercolour paper. After you've experimented, do take the time to have a look back at Endre Penovac's work to try and identify how he has used ink using some of these techniques.



The wet-on-wet technique can create some lovely effects, some of which resemble fur. It's a fun way to work and is a good technique to teach us how to accept and go with those mistakes or the unpredictable nature of ink.

Above Left Image: Using clean water, paint a large circle on your paper. Using either a paintbrush or a pipette, drop some ink into the water whilst it is still wet and leave it alone to spread.

Above Middle Image: As before, begin by painting a circle of clean water. Drop ink into the centre and whilst it is still wet, lift your paper and swirl it around gently to let the ink spread.

Above Right Image: As in the first image, ink was dropped into a circle of clean water but this time the end of a paintbrush was used to pull the ink out of the centre.



Ink dries more quickly than watercolour – both a pro and con. One of the pros is that you can work a lot more quickly, without a long wait between layers drying; this can also be a con as if you don't work quickly enough, you can be left with harsh lines you didn't want.

In the image above left, a horizontal wiggly line has been painted and whilst this is still wet, vertical wiggly lines have been painted over the top. The lines in this instance are seamless.

In the image above right, the same horizontal line has been drawn but allowed to dry. Vertical lines are then painted over the top. These joints are visible and resemble the glazing technique used in watercolour.



Retaining White/Highlights

As with watercolour, it's important to consider areas that you wish to keep white or retain highlights. Bleach works very well with ink but do use this sparingly!

Above Left Image: A patch of black ink has been painted onto the paper and whilst the ink is still wet, a small round brush has been dipped into everyday household bleach and strokes made into the wet ink.

Above Middle Image: As before, a patch of black ink has been painted but this time left to dry. Again, a small round brush dipped into bleach has been used to paint strokes – note that this is the exact same shape as painted into the first patch. Be patient! Depending on the type of ink and the type of bleach used, white stripes may not appear immediately. Give it a couple of minutes; if you still can't see anything, repeat over the top.

Above Right Image: This time a patch of ink has been painted but whilst the ink is still wet, a clean, damp paintbrush has been used to lift out some of the ink.

White ink is available to buy, which can be painted over black. As an alternative, you could use white acrylic paint or even a tippex pen.



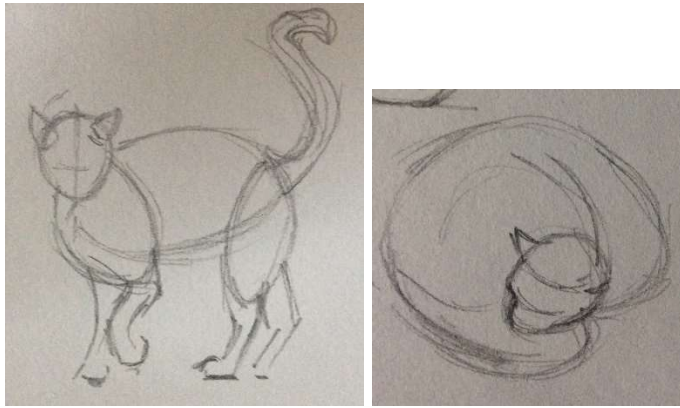
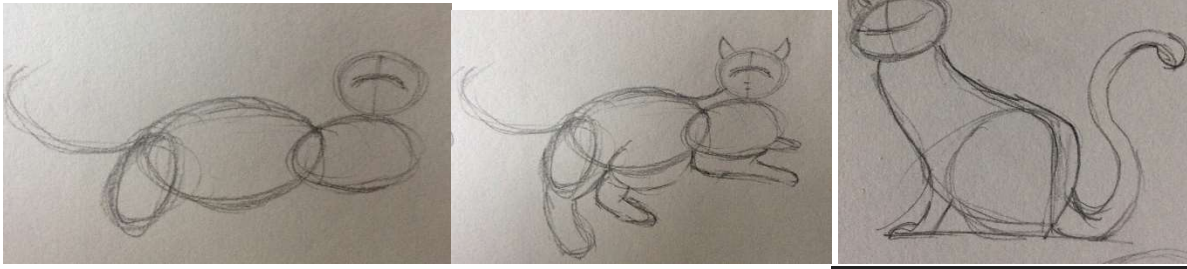
Just like watercolour, you will be controlling tone through the use of water so do experiment with how to achieve a range of tone. Use the tonal value strip above to try and match your tones. Another experiment in controlling tone is to dip your paintbrush into a small amount of ink and draw a wiggly line, allowing the ink to run out on the brush. Also experiment with changing the amount of pressure applied.

Finally, remember that you don't always have to use a paintbrush! The lines opposite have been created using a range of twigs and branches.

Fine liners, biro's and dip pens can be used in conjunction with more traditional painting techniques which allow for a little more control.



Simplifying Shapes



Endre Penovac allows the medium of ink to do the work and if you're after a similar style, it's important to get to grips with your subject matter by trying to sketch it out, initially using a series of basic shapes. This can be easier said than done! If you struggle to see past the detail, try laying a sheet of tracing paper over the top of your image and drawing out the big, basic shapes that you see. If you can do this in less than six shapes, all the better!

Main Task: In this demonstration, I wanted to experiment with masking fluid to show you a different way to think about retaining the white of your paper – please don't worry if you don't have this. Simply draw out your image so that you know where your highlights will be and/or consider one of the other methods of retaining the white of the paper or achieving highlights. I also wanted to demonstrate how equally as effective it can be if you simply draw the head rather than the whole body. As mentioned earlier, if you don't have black ink, substitute this for watercolour, but just take into consideration that this will dry even lighter.

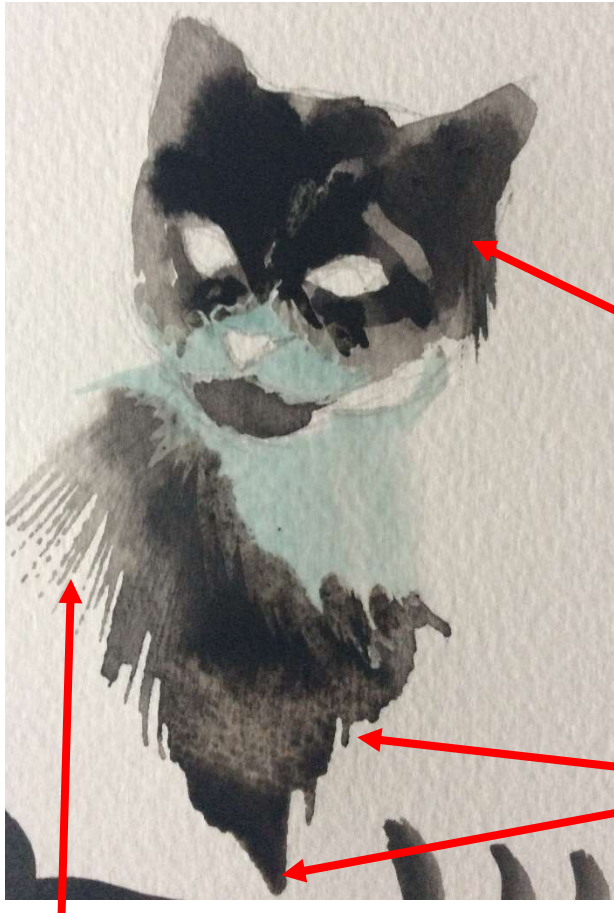
Equipment: 2H/HB pencil, black ink, watercolour paper, bleach, round brush – I used a size 8 and a size 0, biro or fine liner

Additional extras: masking fluid, chunk of soap, yellow ink or watercolour



Begin by sketching out your image using a 2H/HB pencil. Do this lightly and knock back any harsh lines before you start as you don't want these pencil lines showing through at the end.

If you are using masking fluid, dip a round brush into water and swipe it all over on a piece of soap – this will prevent the masking fluid from clogging up your brush. Dip this brush into the masking fluid and paint in any areas you wish to remain white. Note: the masking fluid I like to use is Pebeo's drawing gum. It's blue rather than the traditional white so I can see where I've gone. Let this dry. It should take approximately ten minutes. You'll know it's dry when you gently touch it and it doesn't come off on your finger, but may still feel slightly tacky.



Once dry, you can start to work in with your ink. Do think about those experiments and which will work best for different areas.

Clean water was painted into the head area and black ink fed into the areas which were the darkest with a size 8 round brush. Some of the ink was allowed to spread on its own whilst others areas were helped along with a clean, damp brush.

The paper was lifted up whilst the ink was still wet and allowed to run down the page. If you have a small spray bottle, you could also consider using this.

The end of a paintbrush was used to drag some of the ink out.

Once your ink is thoroughly dry, peel off the masking fluid, by rubbing with your finger or a clean eraser to reveal the white. The beauty of using masking fluid is that it allows you to paint into the white if you need to.

Using a small round size 0 brush, the nose was painted in and areas such as around the eyes darkened up.



You could keep using a paintbrush if you like but I've taken a fine liner and added the pupils and some whiskers (these were white on the original image but since these wouldn't show up, I used artistic license and changed these to black).



I watered down some of my black ink with water and added some grey tones over the nose and under the chin. Tip: have a piece of scrap paper to test your tones out before committing them to your paper. I also added further darker tones, particularly around the ears.

When the black ink was dry, I dropped some yellow ink into the eyes – watercolour paint would work just as well.

I had to stop myself fiddling at this point. I was going to go in further with my 0 brush and fine liner but stepped away to keep the finished piece loose! I was tempted to add a few ink splatters by tapping a paintbrush over the image.

When I have some spare time, I'm going to fill the page with these studies in ink of cats in various poses.

Reference Images

Here's some images to get you started but do feel free to substitute for your own pets or images

