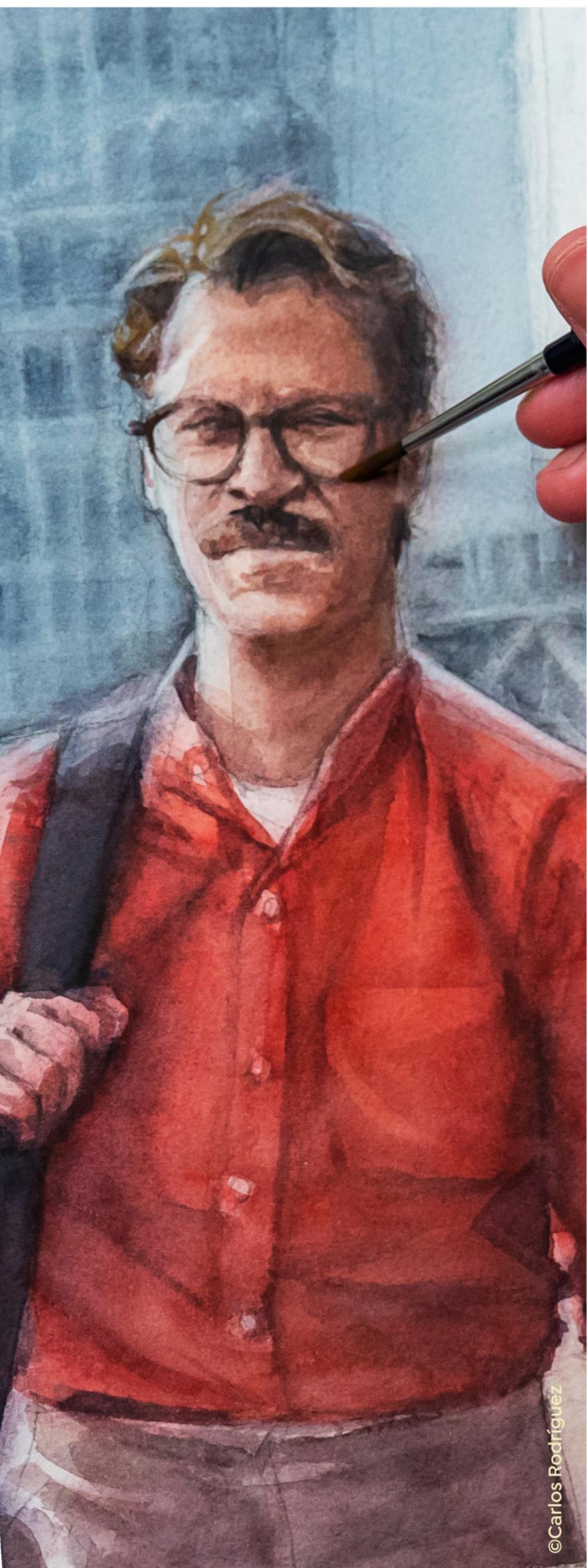




# Watercolor eBook

A Beginner's Guide  
to Watercolor

**DOMĚSTIKA**



## INTRODUCTION

# Why You Should Get Started in Watercolor Painting

Regardless of your creative or professional background, watercolor painting can be a key to unlocking your creativity. Maybe you want to try a new medium for your illustrations, or you want to try a new hobby. Watercolor painting will teach you how to become aware of your artistic potential and express it to reflect your style and personality.

In the following pages experts will introduce you to the basics of watercolor so you can get started right away. Learn about its peculiarities and why so many creatives are drawn to it. Get the answers to beginners' most common questions and get inspired with different styles and techniques.

ARE YOU READY TO START?



## GETTING STARTED

# What is Watercolor Painting?

Watercolor painting is an ancient technique used to apply color onto paper or cardboard using pigments soluble in water.



The technique is based on the overlapping of transparent layers while using the white of the paper to achieve touches of light and effects. Tones in watercolor are achieved by adding or removing water using brushes, sponges, and cloth. Starting out in watercolor is simple; however, the results that can be achieved with this painting technique can be as complex and rich as the history of this art.

## Why Did Artists & Art Lovers Favor Watercolors Historically?

Like today's Polaroid photos, watercolors enabled artists to reproduce what they saw swiftly and delicately. Furthermore, thanks to the medium's versatility, the artists achieved faithful representations of reality with its colors, hues, and depths.

The technique was also favored by travelers who set out on early expeditions to faraway lands. Nowadays, you can have the same experience at a very accessible price, exploring the themes you enjoy the most: portraits, nature, architecture, or even abstract painting.



One of the best things about watercolor is how easy it is to start practicing. The materials are easy to source and they can be as inexpensive or professional as you wish. If you are starting out, you don't have to get the expensive materials right away. You can use any set you have laying around your home.

To get started you'll need these materials:



## Basic Materials for Watercolor Painting

# 01. PAINT

# 02. PAINT PALETTE

# 03. PAPER

# 04. BRUSHES

# 05. EXTRA MATERIAL

Choosing one format over another will depend on your preference and needs. It typically comes in either pans, tubes or liquid containers. The pans are easier to carry around.

You will use this to mix the paint with water and to mix new colors. You can work with plastic palettes similar to those that come with watercolor sets, or use a ceramic one.

It's best to work with a watercolor pad, as the paper is prepared to handle the heavy loads of water you'll be using. It's also advisable to use paper under 250 grams.

The brushes have soft, natural, and synthetic bristles. If you're just starting out, a good tip is to get a fine brush (n°1), a medium brush (n°4), and a thick brush (n°6) to help you to familiarize yourself with the different strokes.

To help you prepare your work, round up graphite pencils for sketching, an eraser and sharpener, water containers, napkins or cloths, and soft masking tape. Some artists use colored pencils and black and white and black for finishes.



### Alex Hillkurtz's Picks

**Mechanical pencils and graphite.** They offer a very consistent and fine line. He uses various types that have different leads, which create different lines and textures. Graphite offers a somewhat hazier and more textured effect.

**White china markers.** Also known as grease pencils, these are a great way to add highlights to a final piece or create watercolor-resistant areas before painting

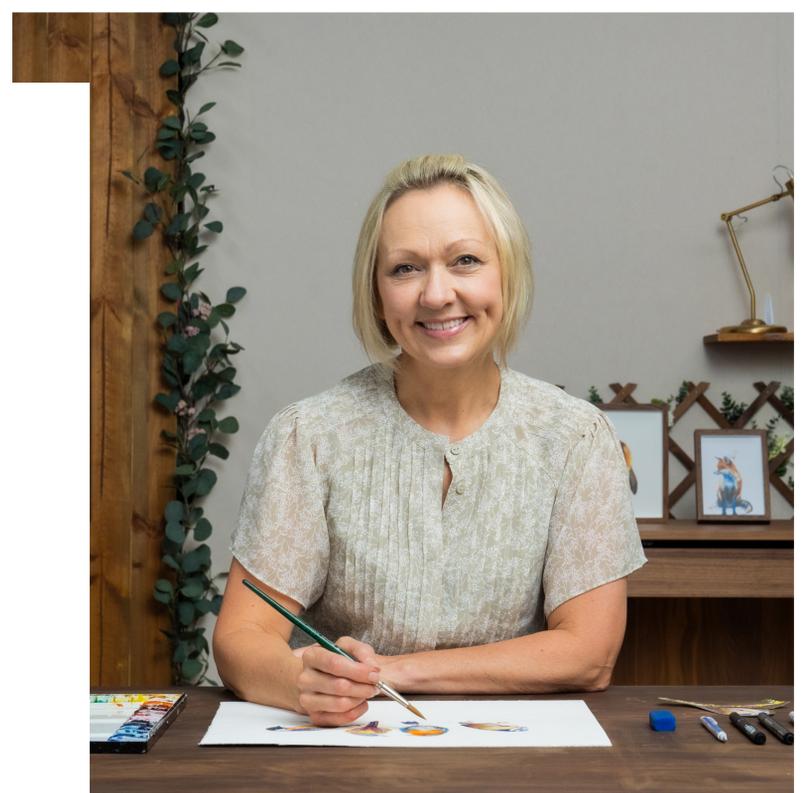
**Sketchbook.** You can create preparatory sketches, which means you won't have to work on the drawing too much when it's on the watercolor paper and can avoid making extra pencil or eraser marks that will show in the final piece.

## The Experts' Favorite Materials

### Sarah Stokes' Picks

**Pens.** These are useful for finishing details. You can choose from a variety of models of gel pens and graphic pens. A good idea is to have a fine point pen and a thicker one, like a 0.8 and a 0.2.

**Acrylic paint.** This is also good for final details, such as splashes and scratchy marks if you apply it with a dry brush.

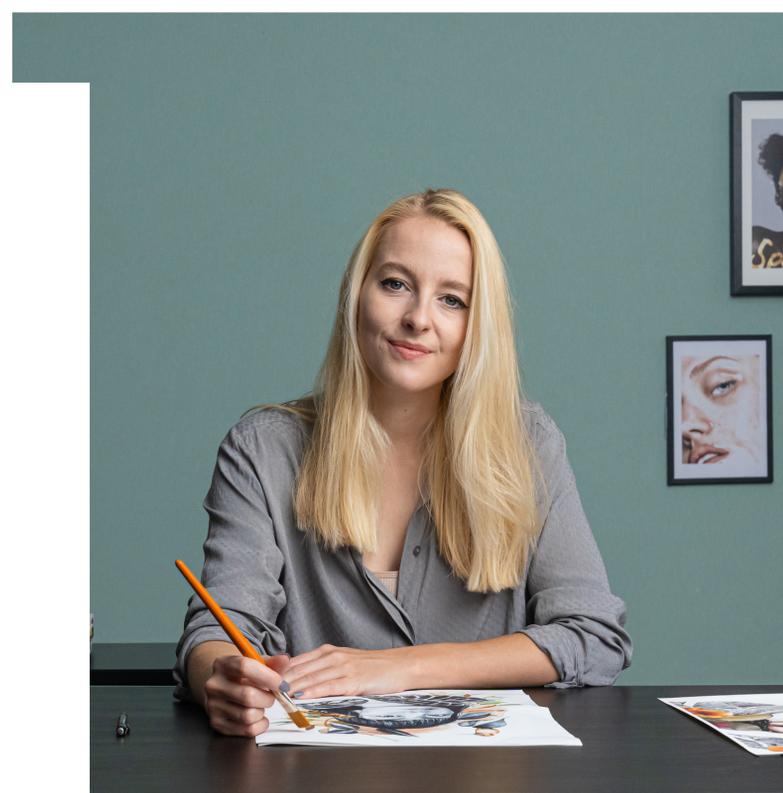


# The Experts' Favorite Materials

## Amy Pearson's Picks

**Lightbox.** You can use this to help you while sketching the piece, if you want to trace from an existing image.

**Fix spray.** This is useful for avoiding smudge marks from the pencil sketch. Amy prefers to use hairspray to achieve the same result.



# Tips for Taking Care of Your Brushes

The brushes will be your most used tool when practicing with watercolors. To learn how to take care of them and make them last longer, follow these tips by illustrator Beatriz Romo, also known as Naranjalidad:





**Don't leave the brushes soaking in water.** This is a common mistake that can deform the bristles. After you rinse the brush, place it horizontally on a cloth that will absorb the moisture.

**Use soap for dirty brushes.** Some older brushes hold old paint and water alone won't clean them. Put some hand soap in your hand and softly rub it into the brush before rinsing it.

**Use your fingers to coax the brush back into its natural shape.** When the brush is clean but still damp, use your fingers to get its natural shape back. When dry, the bristles will no longer be deformed.

**Always dry horizontally.** This will evenly distribute the weight to avoid loss of shape. Never dry brushes vertically with the bristles facing down or you could ruin the brush.

**Air dry.** If you have the time, let your brushes air dry. The second best option is to use a dry cloth.

## TUTORIAL

# Three Ways to Mix Watercolors

One of the many reasons for watercolor's popularity is the freedom and experimentation that it affords. Beyond the technique you use when putting brush to paper, the way you mix your colors offers an opportunity to add your own personality to the page. Storyboard and watercolor artist Alex Hillkurtz shows three easy methods for mixing watercolors to create different colors and effects.



©Alex Hillkurtz

## 1. Mix colors on your palette.

This is a great method for creating custom colors that you can continue to use and mix and match later on. In your palette, wet your two original colors before mixing them together with your brush. Adjust as needed by adding more water or more of either paint color.

“ With watercolor you can do things that I don't think you can do in other mediums. It has a life to it. You're not always in charge. You're not always in control. ”

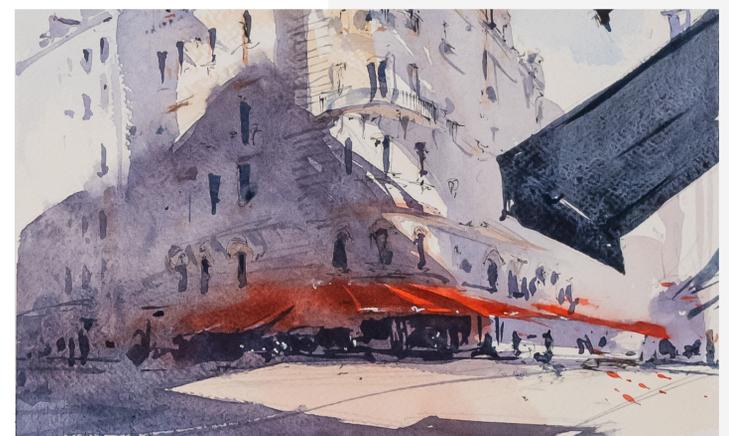
ALEX HILLKURTZ, WATERCOLOR PAINTER  
& STORYBOARD ARTIST



©Alex Hillcourtz

### 2. Layer colors on the paper.

Paint directly on your paper to set a solid layer of a single color and allow it to dry. Then add a layer of your secondary color. Because watercolor is translucent, you'll see the base color through the second layer.



©Alex Hillcourtz

### 3. Blend colors on the paper

To create more of a gradient effect when mixing colors, paint half of your shape in one color, and the other half in another, leaving a small gap in between. Then, slowly pull them towards each other, allowing them to merge and blend.

## INSPIRATION

# Get Your Inspiration and Creativity Flowing

When thinking about watercolor painting, you probably picture a landscape with a colorful sunset. However, contemporary artists use this medium for many other purposes and incorporate their style into each piece. Get inspired with some of their work:



ARCHITECTURAL  
ILLUSTRATION



ANIMAL ILLUSTRATION



PORTRAIT ILLUSTRATION

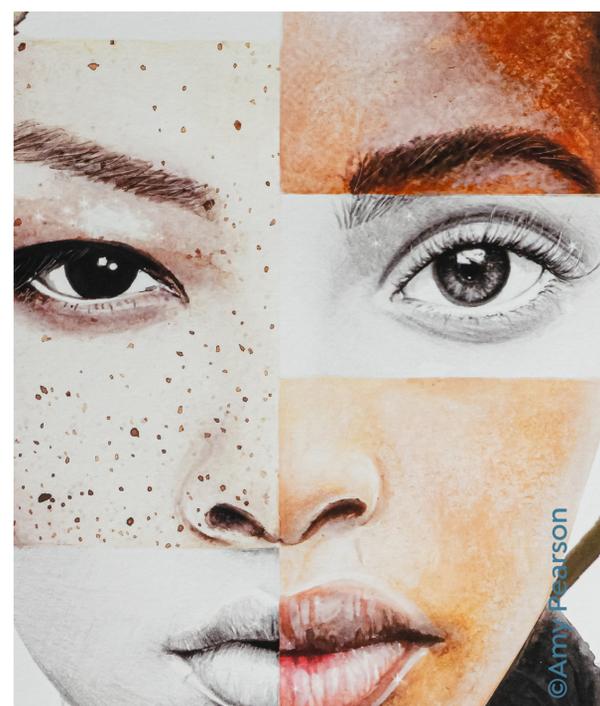


ILLUSTRATION  
WITH JAPANESE INFLUENCE



BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION



CONTEMPORARY STILL LIFE





*“ Watercolor is one of the most fantastically diverse mediums. I love the way it splashes, it runs, how the colors combine together, and I also love the strong pigments you can get. Watercolor doesn't have to be dull or boring, it can be bright, and vibrant, and playful. ”*

SARAH STOKES, ARTIST

Ana Victoria Calderón is a painter and illustrator who uses watercolors as her primary medium. She creates art for Hallmark, Papyrus, Demdaco, and Galison, and editorial work for Glamour, Vanity Fair, InStyle, and Elle. Below, she answers some frequently asked questions about watercolor materials and techniques:



CLEARING UP DOUBTS

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Is it better to start with the background or the objects?*

If you have experience painting in gouache or acrylic, you need to know that watercolor works differently. Generally, in watercolor, you work in transparencies, i.e., you add layers to create darker tones. Therefore I would not necessarily start with the background, but rather work from light and transparent elements to darker ones.

*Do you need to know how to draw to paint in watercolor?*

It is not necessary to know how to draw. As for other mediums, you can create abstract paintings, lettering, or other artwork that does not require advanced drawing skills. The beauty of watercolors is that you can simply paint blobs of color on paper and create exciting textures and effects. Watercolor is more than just drawing, so give it a go!

*What should I do if I experience a creative block or don't know what to paint?*

When I'm feeling uninspired, I like to try out other techniques I want to learn. For example, I take ceramics classes. I recommend experimenting with something new. Books are another major source of inspiration: You can use them to find exercises to create new projects.

*Can you make a living out of painting watercolors?*

Yes! I started by selling my pieces in bazaars and art and design fairs. After a lot of practice, I began to find my own style, and I was able to open my shop online. I now collaborate with publishers, I license my art to be used in different ways, I have published several books, and I teach courses and workshops, such as the ones for Domestika.



© Laura McKendry

LEARN TODAY

# Online Watercolor Courses You May Like

“By nature, watercolor is hard to control and unpredictable, and can really force us out of our comfort zone. I encourage you to try it and relax with it, and let yourself go, not to get too worried about whether it looks perfect or not, because the nature of it is imperfect.”

LAURA MCKENDRY, ILLUSTRATOR &amp; ARTIST



# Architectural Sketching with Watercolor and Ink

A course by Alex Hillkurtz, Storyboard Artist

In this course, Alex will show you his approach to capturing the depth and feel of a place using watercolor and ink and translating that onto your page. It's one thing to depict a scene accurately and another entirely to portray the character and mood of a place. Learn Alex's process and infuse your paintings with new life.

[See Course →](#)

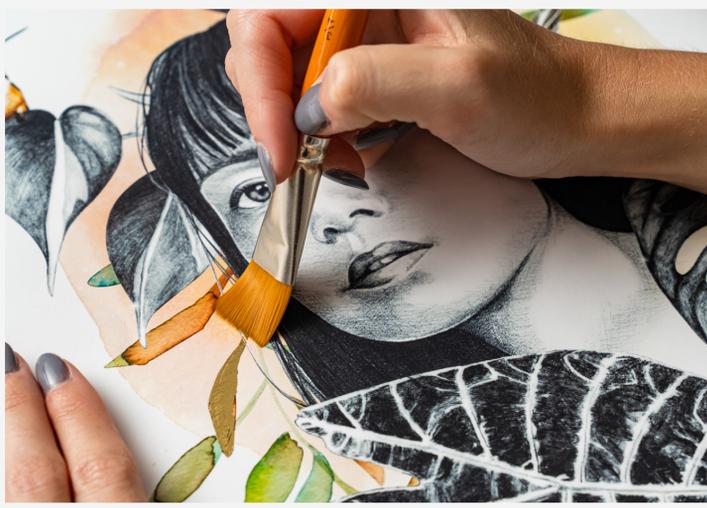


# Artistic Watercolor Techniques for Illustrating Birds

A course by Sarah Stokes, Artist

In this course, Sarah guides you through her step-by-step process for creating an expressive wildlife composition using modern watercolor painting methods. Start from the basics, adding artistic techniques to the flow of your paintbrush to create expressive wildlife compositions.

[See Course →](#)



# Portrait Illustration with Analog and Digital Techniques

A course by Amy Pearson, Artist & Illustrator

In this course, Amy teaches you how to make captivating portraits that combine a variety of analog and digital techniques. Guiding you from initial sketch to finished work, she helps you discover how the blend of hand-made pencil drawing, watercolor painting, and Adobe Photoshop has the ability to create stunning images full of color and character.

[See Course →](#)



# Illustrating Nature: A Creative Exploration

A course by Laura McKendry, Illustrator & Artist

In this course, Laura shows you how to experiment with watercolor, ink, and other mixed media of your choice to create three pieces inspired by the natural world. Discover the techniques she incorporates into her work to expand your creativity and find your own unique way to depict nature.

[See Course →](#)



## Urban Sketching: Express Your World in a New Perspective

A course by Lapin, Urban Sketcher

In this course, Lapin teaches you how to tell the stories of your everyday life using fineliners, watercolors, and most of all, your own unique perspective. Learn how to sketch from observation, discover the curvilinear perspective, and express your original stories with depth and feeling.

[See Course →](#)



## Creative Sketching: Fill Your Illustrations with Life and Detail

A course by Mattias Adolfsson, Illustrator

In this course, Mattias shows you how to master composition techniques and organize your sketches and ideas into one detailed figurative piece. Create artwork filled with intricate ideas while maintaining balance and harmony, and learn how to merge all your sketch ideas into a single scene with a balanced and intriguing composition.

[See Course →](#)





# Modern Watercolor Techniques

A course by Ana Victoria Calderón, Illustrator & Painter

Together with Ana Victoria, learn how to master watercolor step by step and use it in a fun way to create amazing results. There are times when the technique itself, due to its nature, takes on a life of its own. In this course, you will discover how to take advantage of these unexpected “mistakes” for your own benefit. Study the basics and then go beyond traditional watercolor by experimenting with different materials and a modern approach.

[See Course →](#)

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Create, learn, share