Arch 423/523 Media for Design Development: Watercolor Sketching

Instructor: Jim Tice  
CRN: 33797, 33874  
Credits: 3  
Meeting times: Tuesday and Thursday; 4:00 – 5:50 PM  
Location: 278 Lawrence  
Prerequisite: Architecture Majors

Transparent watercolor is a painting technique that employs the white of the paper surface as an essential aspect of the painting. Either the white of the paper is 'reserved', meaning that it is simply not painted upon and thus left in its pure state, or it reflects through one or more layers of watercolor pigments called 'washes' achieving a luminosity that is highly valued and distinguishes this medium from other media. This approach can be contrasted with opaque painting methods where the medium is designed to cover the painted surface such as oils, gauche, and acrylics. In these latter methods highlights are APPLIED rather than RESERVED. The transparent watercolor technique requires considerable skill that nonetheless has proven to be susceptible to sustained practice.

This transparent method is sometimes called the 'purist' approach to painting in that applications of white are discouraged (or strictly forbidden!). It has a long and distinguished history as evident in the work of the English Landscape School (for example, J. M. W. Turner) or the American School (for example, Winslow Homer and John Singer Sergent) where it was employed to capture fleeting, atmospheric effects as well as the architecture and urbansim of specific places. In the more precise rendering design tradition of the Beaux-Arts, watercolor was used as a medium for design presentations and also for documenting and accurately reconstructing historic monuments.
The primary reason for this course will be to develop transparent watercolor techniques as a design medium for architects and designers to both study and present architectural designs primarily through sketching. The course will explore means by which one can observe and document buildings and landscapes with a verisimilitude toward color and light. In the process we will strive to develop what Paul Klee calls the “thinking eye” which implies a knowing method of observation, documentation and design. Color and light will be the elements that will provide focus for our studies.

The course will be conducted as a series of workshops that will alternate between in-class studio painting and *en plein air* or on site painting, weather permitting. Reviews will occur during most classes as a pin up at the end of the session. Students will be asked to bravely 'bare their souls' for the criticism (and praise) of their fellow students and instructor. In addition there will be regular weekly homework assignments/exercises and selected readings. Student evaluations for the course will be based on both in class and out of class exercises for the duration of term. At the end of the term students are required to submit a complete digital portfolio their work. Special consideration, and commendation, will be given to the improvement and growing finesse and accomplishment of individual work over the course of the term. It is hoped that the class work will result in a group in-person exhibition for the final review.

Subjects that will be covered are:

- Materials: pigments, brushes, paper
- Basic watercolor techniques: flat wash, graduated wash, variegated washes
- Methods: dry brush, wet on dry, wet on wet
- Field sketching and recording methods
- Some important presentation techniques

**MATERIALS**

(a packet will be available at the campus bookstore in March that includes most of these materials at considerable cost reduction)

This list below constitutes a basic working set of materials for your watercolor projects. You are encouraged to expand these materials as your personal watercolor interests develop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brush</th>
<th>Flat 3/4”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Round #8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Round #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brush Holder</td>
<td>Inexpensive bamboo roll-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigments*</td>
<td>M. Graham &amp; Co., 15 ml tubes or equivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alizarin Crimson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cadmium Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aureolin Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cadmium Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cobalt Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ultramarine Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Viridian (Green)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional:</td>
<td>Cadmium Orange, Yellow Ochre, Burnt Siena, Rose Madder-Genuine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Paper: Canson Watercolor Paper Montval, cold pressed, 140 lb. 9”X12”

Sketch Pad 5”X7” (heavy weight desirable)
Palette Inexpensive plastic palette supplemented with plastic sheet or butcher’s enamel tray
Tape Drafting Tape (NOT masking tape) 3/4”
Painting Surface Masonite or Gator Board 17”X24”
Water 1/2 gallon plastic bucket for clear wash
Container smaller plastic container for mixing (use clear or white containers so as to see colors clearly)
Sponge Common house-hold sponge squares 2 or 3 pieces; smaller natural sponge the size of a golf ball
Pencils #314 or equal with white eraser and kneaded gray eraser and sharpener
Carrying Kit Any inexpensive plastic tool box or fabric carry-all with multiple pockets (diaper bags work well)
Lifting/Cleaner Paper towels, tissues, cotton swabs
Plastic Freezer Useful to protect your work and keep dry
Bags

Spray bottle Small plastic spray device for wetting and re-wetting surfaces
Folding Stool REI, GI Joe’s and other sports equipment stores have inexpensive stools for under $15

*Less expensive “student grade” watercolors typically reduce the pigment content making it less intense; cheaper watercolors can also have negative unexpected defects in that they may be “fugitive” meaning that they fade over time. The color blue is particularly vulnerable.

** Good quality paper is essential! The Canson Montval is an excellent surface in that it can take considerable abuse with 'scrubbing out' paint and reworking which is a highly useful technique at times. This paper also absorbs the paint in a uniform manner but not so quickly that it is difficult to work with, especially on low humidity days or when using multiple washes.

GRADING AND EVALUATIONS
Your grade will be determined as follows:
Quality and timely completion of work during in class exercises and out of class assignments
Your overall progress and improvement as shown by the final portfolio and class review
Your ability to respond to criticism from both instructor and class peer reviews
Your initiative to do more than the assigned work

Final Review
There will be a final review/exhibition of student work on Friday, June 12 at 8:00 AM. Students must be present for the entirety of the review to pass the course.

REQUIRED TEXT
* Watercolor Sketching; by Paul Laseau, W. W. Norton, NY, 2012

REFERENCES
* Painting Solutions: House and Buildings, by Hazel Harrison. Studio Vista
* Color: In sketching and Rendering, by Guptill. Reinhold
* Watercolor School, by Hazel Harrison. Reader’s Digest Association Inc., Pleasantville, NY