Watercolor Painting Techniques

- **Wet on Wet** - wet the entire area of the paper in one window with water. Load your brush with a color wash and stroke or dab it on the wet paper. Repeat this with as many colors as you want rinsing your brush after each color. Watch interesting effects as the colors bleed together.

- **Alcohol Drops** - drip isopropyl alcohol into a damp wash and light value rings and spots will appear.

- **Alcohol Texturing** - dip a round brush in isopropyl alcohol, blot and stroke through a damp wash. Pigment will push aside.

- **Salt for Texture** - carefully place pieces of course salt on a wet wash in one window to get a rough crystal-textured look. Do not remove the salt until the wash is dry. After the paint has dried brush off the remaining salt into the trash.

- **Resist** - use wax crayon, oil crayon, paraffin, and/or tape in one window in order to resist the paint. You can use a flat wash or a graded wash or a wet on wet technique using a variety of colors to paint over the resist materials. When the paint is completely dry remove the tape to expose the white paper.
• **Water Spotting**- drops of water dribbled or flicked into a wet wash will create flow designs and puddling.

• **Bruising**- draw lines with a stylus (bamboo or metal skewer) through a wet wash bruising the paper surface. Pigment will gather in the slight indentations.

• **Blotting**- pressing a crumpled facial tissue or paper towel into a moist wash creates a textural effect by removing pigment.

• **Flat Wash**- a wash is a thin layer of color often used for covering large areas. First, create a puddle of paint on your palette by mixing a color with enough water to make a flowing paint. Prepare enough for the entire window. Next, dampen the window thoroughly with a brush or a clean sponge. With your brush stroke the color onto the paper in even horizontal lines until the area is completely covered. Let it dry.

• **Graded Wash**- dampen one entire window of paper being careful not to leave any puddles of water. Mix some paint with water to make a wash on your palette. Stroke one line of the wash across the top of your paper. Rinse your brush. Then mix some more water with the color and stroke on a
lighter line right under the first. Continue in this manner, rinsing your brush between strokes, until the entire area is covered.

- **Lifting**- stroke a clean damp brush across a moist wash to collect and lift pigment.

- **Layering Color/Value**- begin by painting a light wash of color in a damp window. Dry this with a hairdryer. Next add a second layer without covering the first layer completely. This second layer should be *slightly* more concentrated color or darker value. The value transition of each layer should be subtle. Continue to add layers drying each layer before painting the next one. You can have several different layers of paint. Just make sure that the previous layer is dry before painting the subsequent layers.

- **Highlights/Clouds**- highlights are created by the white paper showing through the transparent watercolor. To create clouds, first dampen your paper. Then stroke watery blue washes onto your paper, making sure to leave certain areas white for the clouds.

- **Wet on Dry**- in one window use each of your brushes to dab and stroke wet paint on to a dry surface. Use a variety of colors with each of the
brushes to see how many different mark-making techniques you can achieve.

- **Dry Brush** - work with the bare minimum of paint on the tip of your brush. Lightly stroke it over the paper so that it catches on the raised grain but does not sink into the paper as a wash does. To ensure that you don’t put too much paint on your brush, dip the tip of the brush into the paint mixture and then dab it lightly on a paper towel or test strip of paper. It takes practice, so experiment on your test strip.

- **Sponge for Texture** - coat an edge of a damp sponge with paint and press onto a dry surface. Layered sponge prints make good background foliage of “happy little trees.”

- **Spattering** - spattering is one of the final stages in a painting. Mask all areas of the rest of your work to avoid spatter going where you do not want it to go. Load the tip of a toothbrush with color heavy in pigment, not watery. Hold the toothbrush a few inches from the paper, and run your thumb or the handle of a paintbrush quickly along the bristles to release a spray of paint onto your paper. This technique is another form of layering and can be used over a dry flat wash to create texture. Practice on your test strip before using the
technique to fill a with at least three analogous colors.

- **Stenciling**- place a leaf in the center of a dry window. While holding the leaf in position with one or two fingers of one hand paint radial strokes of wash starting in the center of the leaf and radiating out to the dry paper surrounding the leaf. Repeat this technique two or three times in one window depending on the size of the leaves. Add a small amount of wash to the edges of the window where the paint hasn’t yet reached to create a framing effect.

- **Printing**- add a very small amount of liquid hand soap to your pigment to thicken the paint. Then paint a leaf with a thick moist coat of the watercolor/soap mixture and press the leaf to a dry surface in one window. Repeat this several times changing the color each time. Fill the space of the window leaving only minimal negative space.

- **Gathering Pigment**- put a piece of crumpled plastic wrap into a wet wash, weight it down and leave it until the paint is dry, preferably overnight. Gathered pigment will create a darker image or design.
• Alcohol Drops - drip isopropyl alcohol into a damp wash and light value rings and spots will appear.