Arch 424/524 Advanced Media: Transparent Watercolor Painting for Architects

Instructor: Jim Tice
Credits: 3
Meeting times: Tuesday and Thursday 4:00-5:50
Location: FBA 141
Prerequisite: Architecture Majors; Successful Completion of Arch 423/523

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 is allowed to reflect through one or more layers of watercolor pigments called washes achieving a kind of luminosity that is highly valued and distinguishes this medium from others. 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 is a highly prized method of painting requiring considerable skill that nonetheless has proven to be susceptible to sustained and applied practice over time.

The transparent method is sometimes called the "purist's" 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 (J. M. W. Turner) where it was employed to capture fleeting, atmospheric effects and the more precise, articulated design tradition of the Beaux-Arts, where watercolor was used as a medium for design presentation and 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. In addition 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 balance between in class studio painting and en plein air or out of door 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 assignments/exercises. Student evaluations for the course will be based on the both exercises for the duration of term and the class and homework assignments. Students are required to submit a portfolio of the term’s work. Special consideration, and commendation, will be given to the improvement and growing finesse and accomplishment of student work. It is hoped that the class work will result in a group exhibition.

Subjects that will be covered are:
Basic watercolor techniques: flat wash, graduated wash, variegated washes
Methods: dry brush, wet on dry, wet on wet
Presentation techniques
Field sketching and recording

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

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

Brushes
Flat 3/4”
Round #6, #12

Brush Holder
Inexpensive bamboo roll-up

Paint
M. Graham & Co., 15 ml tubes or equivalent
Alizarin Crimson
Cadmium Red
Aurcoulin Yellow
Cadmium Yellow
Cobalt Blue
Ultramarine Blue
Optional: Cadmium Orange, Yellow Ochre, Burnt Siena, Rose Madder-Genuine

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 Bags  Useful to protect your work and keep dry

Water Spray  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

**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

**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