

Tip #109

Playing with Yupo



109-1, Yupo stuff

Have you heard of Yupo, the new plastic surface that's like downhill skiing for a watercolorist? Wild and unpredictable, it can also be fresh and fun! It's non-absorbent, so the paint sits on top – it also takes longer to dry, since none of it soaks in. (If you're the type who needs to feel in control at all times, read no further! You probably wouldn't like it.)

Yupo doesn't need stretching or other preparation, other than perhaps wiping off with a damp cloth or rubbing alcohol – if the oil from your hands has adhered to the surface, the paint won't!

And be advised, paint's hold on this stuff is not tenacious in any case—it sits on top of the polypropylene surface. That's both the bad news and the good news, because you can lift and move and tweak to your heart's content with Yupo, lifting all but the most staining of dye colors almost back to clean white surface, but it DOES mean that you'll want to protect a finished painting ASAP. If you spill on it or sneeze on it, it can damage your work. Frame it, slip it into a plastic bag, or spray with fixative—that last carefully!



109-2, Yupo examples

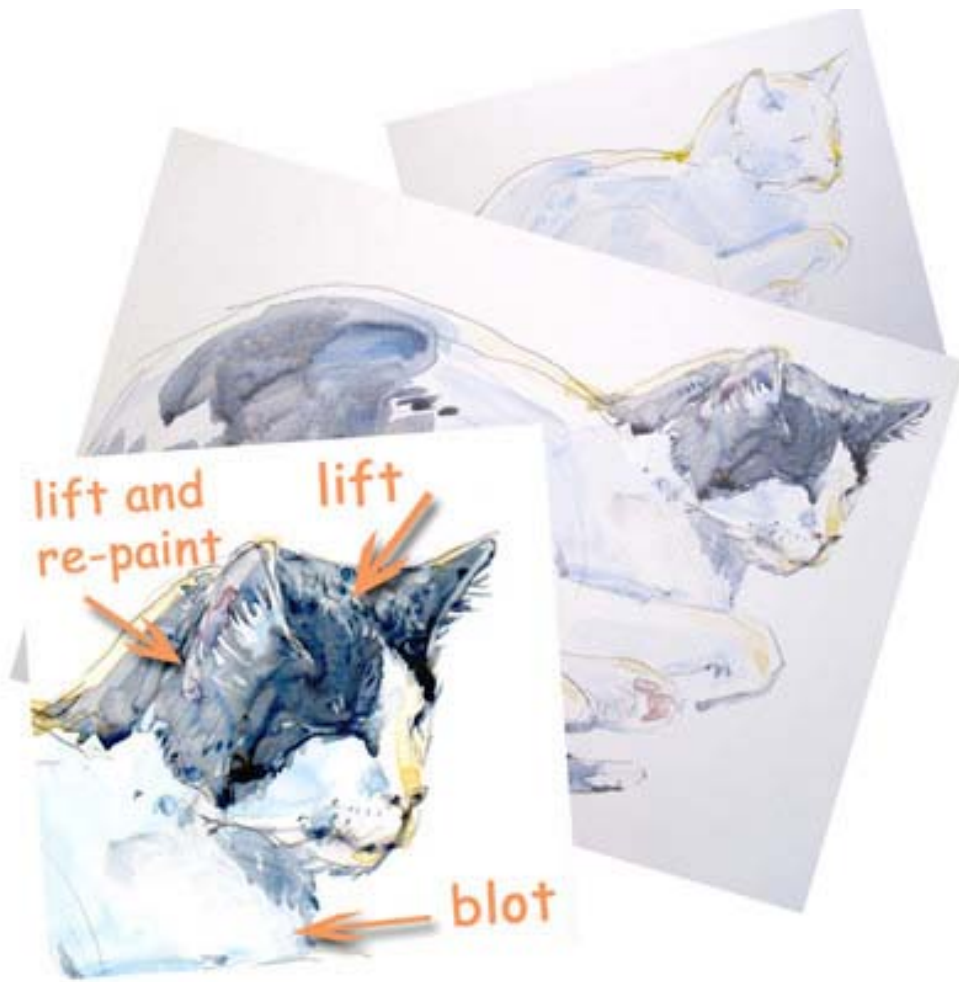
It makes a big difference in how you apply the paint, what results you get ... of course that's true of ANY watercolor application, but perhaps moreso with Yupo. The swatch at left was applied very wet – it was quite uncontrollable, but interesting. (When it was dry, I could lift back to the clean surface with a damp brush, though.) In the middle the paint was dryer and thicker, and on the right, I used an almost dry brush for the most controllable effect.



109-3, Yupo cat



Here you can see I sketched in my neighbor's cat and laid in the first loose washes in the shadow areas, plus added a bit of warm yellow where the light was hitting him – that's the sketch on the bottom of the stack. When that was almost dry, I added a slightly wet, darker wash and began to suggest fur and paws. Finally, I added small, dark details and blotted some, below the chin. I used a small, pointed brush to lift hairs and model the ears a little, and added warm color to the ears.



109-4, Yupo book

Of course you can use this surface for complete paintings, too ... this is the final two images of a demo in my newest North Light book, *Watercolor Tricks and Techniques*, <http://www.cathyjohnson.info/bookpages/watercolortricks.html>



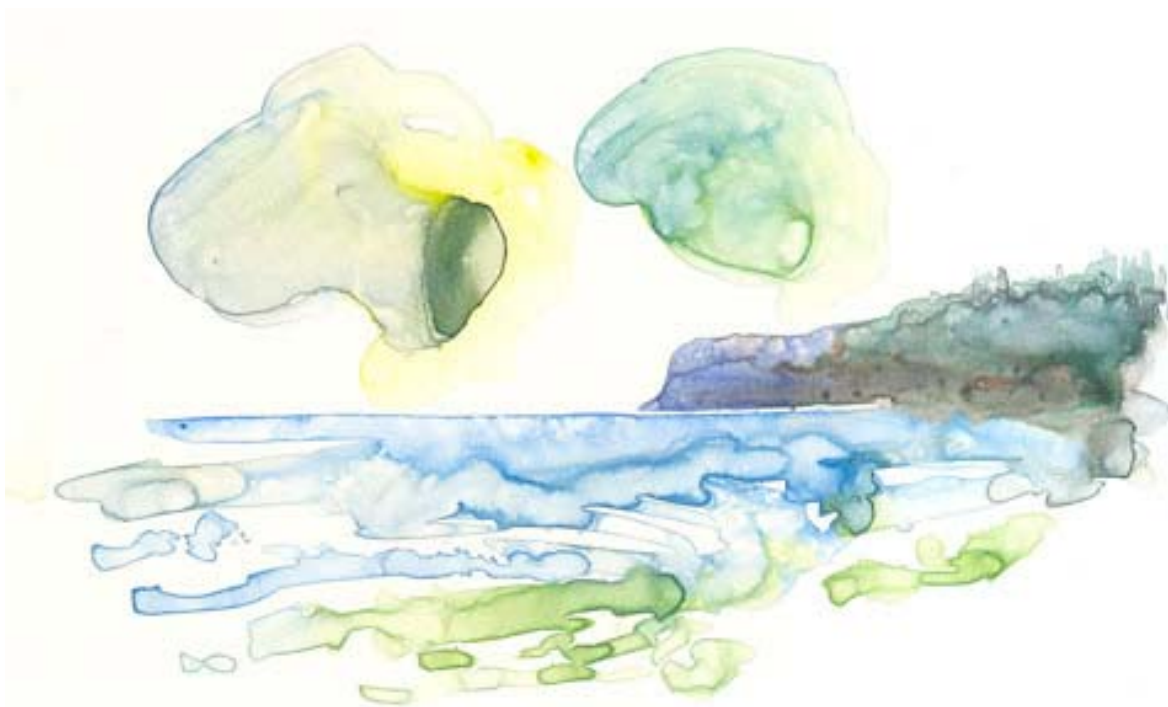
4 Add Darker Values
 Let everything dry thoroughly, then return the shadow areas if you like with a bit more pigment. A favorite is a bristle or steel brush in contact foreground.



A Yupo page from my newest North Light book!

5 Add Final Details
 Lift the shapes of the bare, weathered trees almost back to the white surface using a no. 8-round dampened with clear water, blotting up the extra pigment. Then flood in a bit of warm brown to keep them from being too stark. Scratch in some sharp lines for tree branches. A no. 10 round and a dark mixture of Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Sienna works for the details in the trunks and small shadows. A black watercolor pencil suggests the smallest, darkest branches—no need to wet it. Add final details like birds and tree trunks with the no. 8 round.

109-5, Yupo play



You can see several techniques I was playing with in this little seascape – scratching through the lighter trees, spraying with clear water and blotting to give texture to the distant bluff ... Yupo is very versatile. But again, you can see this looks quite juicy and fresh ... and somewhat uncontrolled!

There are several good resources for painting on Yupo, online ... check these links, <http://www.squidoo.com/PaintingOnYupo>.

Here's Mark Mehaffey, courtesy of The Artists Network, with a video on using Yupo, here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFvNv5fvoVE>.

And a batch of paintings for inspiration, here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2b4XGQYQTJk&feature=related>.

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