

Tip #110

Painting Moving Water, Part 1



I'm often asked how to paint or draw moving water...all it really takes is careful observation. Ask yourself what's causing the water to act as it is...if it's a waterfall, how far does it fall? Is it rocky at the top or bottom to cause a lot of turbulence and whitewater? If it's a stream or river, is it moving rapidly over a smooth, pebbly bed (in which case there are usually no recognizable reflections; they're broken by the movement of the water) or does it part to move around or over large rocks? Pay attention to what's going on, and graph or map that out for yourself.

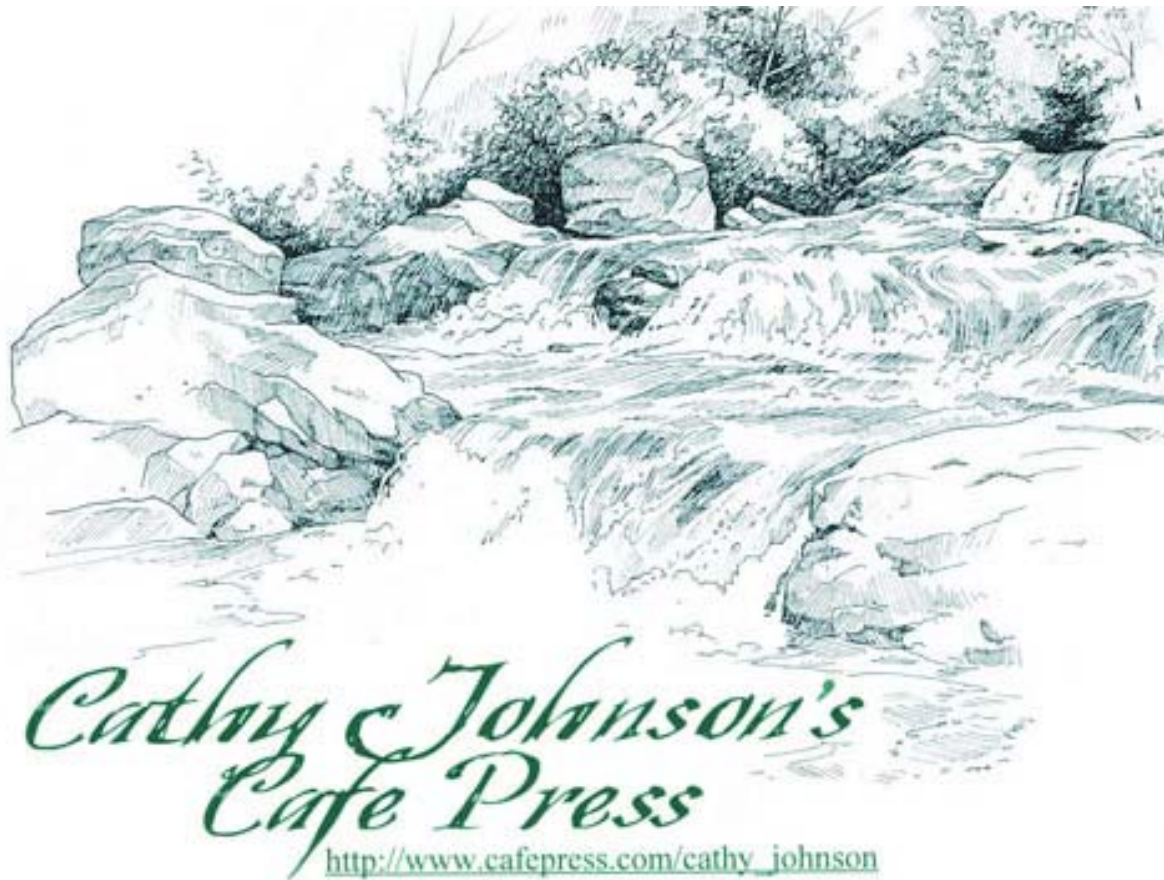
110-1, graphing water's movements



Whether it's the ocean, a waterfall, a fast-moving river or a small stream, the principles remain the same. Water repeats motions. It moves over and around obstacles; if it moves with sufficient force, it's aerated and white. Quick sketches will help you to see what's going on, and if you need to, add those arrows!

These are from my books, *The Sierra Club Guide to Sketching in Nature* (the ocean sketch), available at <http://www.cathyjohnson.info/bookpages/sketching.html>, and *The Sierra Club Guide to Painting in Nature* (the waterfall), available at <http://www.cathyjohnson.info/bookpages/painting.html>.

110-2, Johnson Shut-ins, southern Missouri



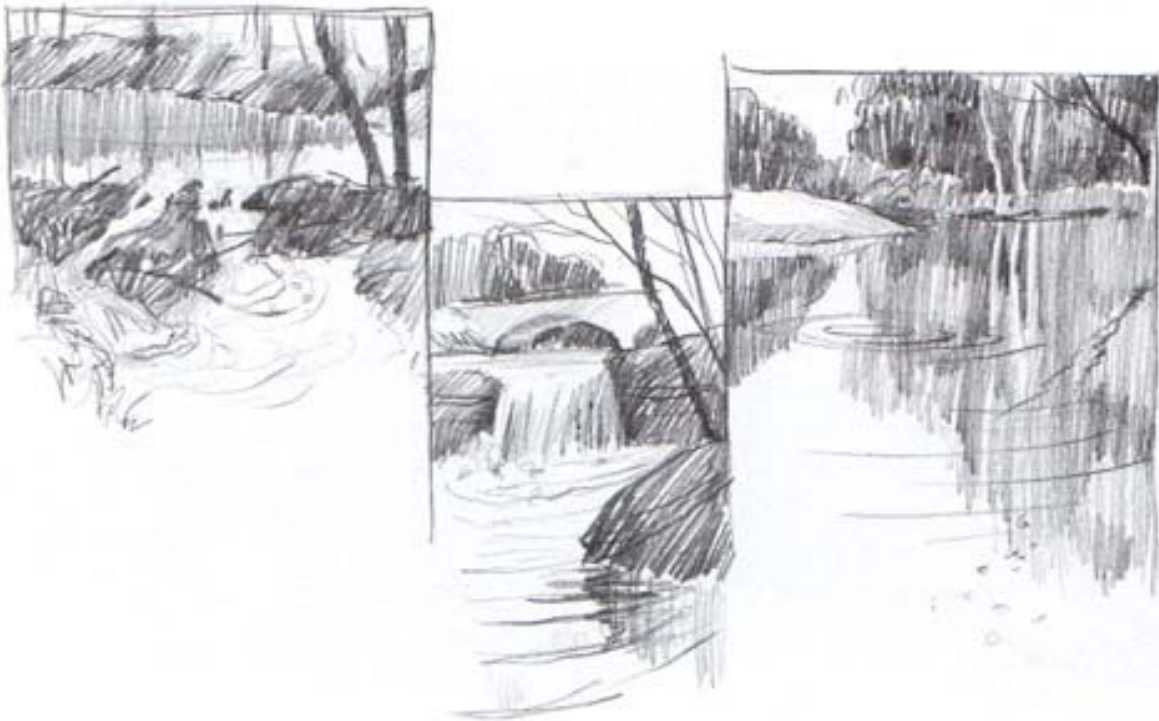
That's what I did on this section of rapidly moving water in the Ozarks ... paid attention to what was causing those shapes. It was done for a book I did with a good friend, Patti Delano, on traveling in Missouri, *Missouri Off the Beaten Path*, available at <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0762748745?ie=UTF8&tag=httpcathyjohi-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0762748745> – I ended up using this on some of my CafePress offerings, I liked it so much. What a delightful place!



110-3, Tryst Bridge

Here, the water going over the little falls was fairly sparse ... it just made sparkling lines that I painted around and added a bit of scratch work with a sharp blade. Notice that you can barely see reflections other than areas of color.

110-4, However much the water is moving, you can observe, analyze, and track it!



Or just let it speak to you, sit there quietly and notice—pay attention for a while before you ever pick up your pencil. Now... sketch!

110-5, Bennett Springs

I sat by the water at Bennett Springs, just down from where it rushes over large rocks and creates turbulence ... I paint this area every time I'm there, it seems. It draws me as much as I draw it!



Surf's up!

Water often returns to the same configuration, especially in the case of surf. Wait a bit, sketch quickly, wait again, sketch a bit more ... that's what I did on this bit of ocean near San Francisco. If you go to my Flickr image, located here <http://www.flickr.com/photos/cathy-johnson/86883078/>, you can mouse-over the notes to see my various suggestions!

Please drop by my artists blog, <http://katequicksilvr.livejournal.com/>, my fine arts gallery blog, located at <http://cathyjohnsonart.blogspot.com/>, where I often offer mini-demos, my CafePress store, located at http://www.cafepress.com/cathy_johnson, where you can find instructional CDs for artists, or drop by for a visit on Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/cathy.johnson1!>