

Tip #44

Working in Weather



If you enjoy plein air painting, working on the spot-as I do-you're going to encounter weather of one kind or another at some point. Knowing how to deal with it can make the difference between a delightful painting excursion and a miserable failure!

- Of course, painting in heat requires WATER, and not just for your paints. Make sure you have plenty of drinking water with you, and remember to replenish yourself often. It's all too easy to get caught up in what you're doing and forget, and heat exhaustion is no joke. If you stop sweating, you're already in trouble ... so take plenty of water. (Beer or other alcoholic drinks and those with caffeine only contribute to dehydration. Water's usually the best choice.)
- Painting in heat, particularly with wind, will also dry your palette much more quickly-you may want to keep a small spray bottle on hand to refresh your paints often-both the mounds of pigment and your wash area.

Art 44-1, "A variety of outdoor painting supplies, ready for any weather"

- Sunscreen, a wide-brimmed hat, and a pair of polarized sunglasses are a big help in the sun, too...and you can shield your paper from the direct rays-and that awful, blinding glare!-by positioning your body to shade the paper.
- Painting in the wind is tricky-you may want to keep your watercolors smaller, so they don't act as a sail and blow away if a sudden gust kicks up! A watercolor block may be a good choice, as they're both sturdy and a bit heavier-loose pages in a watercolor pad may suddenly blow shut, ruining a wash or putting a permanent bend in the paper. If you prefer pads, a large rubber band on the loose side or a nice big bulldog clip will help hold the sheets together!



Art 44-1

You can find a little sprayer like this at your discount store-buy two, cut the bottom off one, and you have a nesting water cup to tuck into your field kit with the sprayer.

- Painting in the rain, mist, etc. will require shelter, of course, but also be aware how much longer your watercolors will take to dry in these conditions ... this may be the perfect place to try that wet-in-wet technique, because you'll have plenty of time!

Art 44-2, "Rainy Day"

- If a thunderstorm blows up, don't shelter under a tree or put up your umbrella ... it's a good time to call it a day and get back in your car. Lightning strikes can be fatal, and that will really mess with your painting!

- Painting in cold weather may require a few more tricks! Bundle up well, of course, and take advantage of layers and warm, lightweight fabrics like Polar fleece, but also consider mittens with slots that will let your fingers out to work, then allow you to pull them back in to warm up! (Fingerless gloves just make me colder, it seems!)

- A bit of vodka in your water container will help keep it from freezing (yes, you can still paint with it!), but remember that alcohol you drink only makes you feel warmer for a bit, then makes you colder still. It's easy to get too cold too fast, so reserve your hot toddy for later!



Art 44-2

It was very misty the day I did this - it seemed to work best to take advantage of the moist air and work wet in wet in the background and foliage, then keep foreground washes small and distinct, separated from each other.

But the most important thing is, don't wait for the perfect weather to get out and paint, or it will never happen. Just be prepared, be safe, and have fun!

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