

## Tip #69

### *The Humble Sponge*

You may think of sponges only as tools to wash your dishes or your car, but for an artist, they've got dozens of uses! Here are only a few - let me know your favorite use, and we'll include it in a future newsletter!

Use one to clean your palette - a quick swipe and your mixing wells are ready for brand new, fresh mixtures.

Carry a slice of a manmade sponge in your palette - if you keep it dampened, you can wipe your brush across it to remove excess moisture, or if your palette has a lid the bit of damp sponge will keep your pigments moist and malleable longer.

Try out the new Mr. Clean Magic Eraser sponges-they seem to have a number of uses! Be sure to get the original one, though, not the one with built in detergent. If your plastic palette is stained with Thalo blue or one of the other staining pigments, the Magic Eraser can bring it almost back to its original pristine state.

#### **Art 69-1, Sunset on Fourth Lake**



Art 69-1

Or use the Mr. Clean to carefully remove an area of your watercolor that may have been overworked - dampen a corner or cut a small piece you've cut from the whole and stroke carefully, picking up the loosened pigment with a tissue. Often you can get back to clean paper! I did that with this painting, when I discovered after I got home that I had a drip of dark color in the sky-it had dried completely, but the Magic Eraser took it out and you'd never know it was there!



Of course other sponges work well for that lifting thing too-try a regular manmade sponge, or a natural sponge, just be sure to keep removing the loosened pigment, and be gentle! You can make a hole in wet paper; it's more fragile when wet.

### **Art 69-2, Tupper Lake Sandbar**



Art 69-2

Paint with a sponge - the rougher natural sponges, the better! They make wonderful foliage, as in this painting of New York's Tupper Lake, done from a sandbar in the middle of the cove. Pat with the sponge to suggest sand, or do quick, upward strokes to suggest grasses or weeds - it can be lots of fun!

Some of the manmade sponges have interesting textures, too, almost like masonry - see my North Light book, *Creating Textures in Watercolor*, available at <http://www.cathyjohnson.info/bookpages/creatingtextures.html>, or *Watercolor Tricks and Techniques* for lots more ideas on using sponges!

Or watch for my upcoming book, *Creating Nature*, due out in November - it's in pre-order status at Amazon, available at [http://www.amazon.com/Creating\\_Nature\\_Watercolor\\_Artists\\_Guide/dp/1581809131/ref=sr\\_1\\_4/002\\_7163737\\_5056829?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1181581960&sr=8\\_4](http://www.amazon.com/Creating_Nature_Watercolor_Artists_Guide/dp/1581809131/ref=sr_1_4/002_7163737_5056829?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1181581960&sr=8_4).

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