

## Tip #95

### *Artist Trade Cards and ACEOs*



ATCs are "artist trading cards," and that's how the phenomenon started out -- but many people who were *not* artists wanted to be able to collect these little jewels, too. So ACEOs were born--they're still the size of a playing card, but "artist cards, editions and originals" to meet this need. Some ACEOs are prints and some are still original, as are most of mine.

I've been fascinated by these tiny paintings for several years, and because of their small size and affordability, have been able to own original paintings from several artists whose work I admire a great deal. I've found people enjoy owning mine, too, and in these tough economic times, that's a real plus!

There are a lot of ways to go about creating these, including making exquisite miniature paintings from scratch on 2-1/2" x 3-1/2" paper. We'll explore a few here, including creating unity for a series, but I know you'll think of a lot more!

*TIP: If working so small bothers you, consider a goose-neck magnifying glass or even magnifying goggles--I own a pair!*

## Art 95-1, ACEO/ATC surfaces



Several companies now offer playing card size surfaces, just for this purpose. These are from Strathmore, one of my favorite paper sources. Here, cold press watercolor paper and an assorted pack, with vellum and smooth bristol, canvas, illustration board and more ... you can even buy tiny canvases!

**Art 95-2,**  
creating with a theme



*Create a  
surface  
you like...*



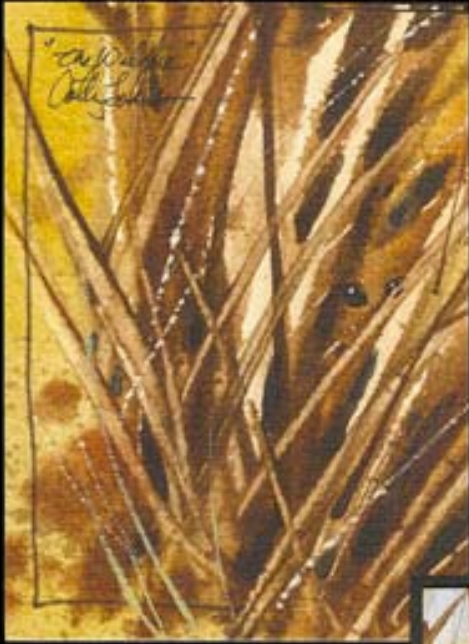
*and let  
it inspire  
you!*



One of my favorite ways of working is to stain, texture, or otherwise prepare a surface for use with ACEOs. For this series, I painted watercolor paper with rough strokes of gesso and let it dry thoroughly, then splashed it with a rich wash of Payne's gray. When that was dry, I wiped it here and there to accentuate the texture, then cut it to size and let the surface texture suggest the subject matter. Each one was different, but they went beautifully together because of the common color and texture which created a theme ... and happily, they all went to a good home from my gallery blog, <http://cathyjohnsonart.blogspot.com>!

**Art 95-3, rescue mission**

*Rescue Mission...composing  
with scissors!*



*then, add,  
tweak, &  
embellish*



Ever have a painting that just didn't quite get it for you? It had some nice places, some you were even excited about, but taken as a whole you just weren't satisfied.

You can compose with your paper cutter, scissors, or a straight-edge and sharp craft knife! Make yourself an ACEO-sized window in a piece of heavy paper, and move it around the painting to find those places you DO like. Experiment, try vertical and horizontal placement, whatever. Then, mark the corners and cut to ACEO size. You can add more details or tweak them any way you like until you're happy with them.

These will have a unity or harmony, too. This set was originally all part of a demo I did some time back that just had some problems-the fence post was centered and the whole just wasn't working. I isolated the places I liked, cut the painting apart, and then continued to work until each was its own tiny work of art!

One of them has sold already, but you can see the other two at <http://cathyjohnsonart.blogspot.com/2009/09/autumn-aceos.html>.

Add a border, collage elements in place, do some calligraphy-whatever you like to create the small, jewel-like painting YOU want.

People are collecting and displaying these tiny paintings in ingenious ways--framed and grouped together, piled in baskets, in scrapbooks--however they want!

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](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>!

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