

Tip #22

Tricks and Techniques

Sometimes we all need to try out something new to get us to open our eyes to new possibilities. I'm not a big fan of tricks for the sake of tricks, or of ones that look TOO tricky-they can be overworked or overused-but occasionally we can get some wonderfully evocative textures using unexpected materials. Besides, it's fun! I've even been known to press my palm or the side of my fist into a watercolor wash or an area of acrylic paint that hasn't had a chance to dry. I'm usually a mess and may look as if I've been working on my Jeep, but my painting has some interesting textures!



Of course I'd never suggest throwing away your brushes-for the most part these techniques are only meant to supplement your painting skills, enhance your paintings and serve as accents. Some of these tricks are like short-hand, symbols for textures that might otherwise be tedious to paint and tempt us to overwork an area-that can lead to mud!

There are literally dozens of great little shortcuts you can use-I covered a lot of them in my North Light book, *Watercolor Tricks and Techniques*. (It's out of print, but see www.amazon.com or your library for this one.) In future issues we'll cover some of these tricks-sponges, stencils, tape, resists, inks and more. Today, we'll look at a few of the materials you can press into wet washes to create textural passages-depending on your timing and what you use, it can be as bold or as subtle as you like.

Art 22-1, Timing is Everything!

Here, crumpled plastic wrap was pressed into a damp watercolor wash...on the left, it was allowed to get almost dry, and on the right, the plastic wrap was lifted almost immediately - the effect is much softer.



Art 22-1

Plastic Wrap...



Art 22-2

Art 22-2, Branching Out

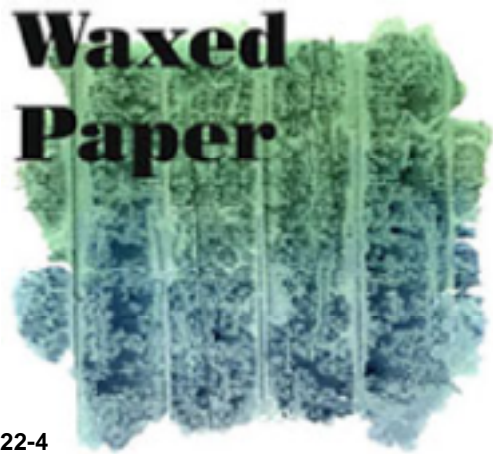
You may find the colors here more inspiring, if you're aiming for a naturalistic effect. Burnt sienna and ultramarine blue were laid down in a varied wash, then the plastic wrap was crumpled and pressed into it. This suggests rocks, dried clay, or just an interesting abstract effect to me.

Art 22-3, Look at the Leaves -- it's magic!

Aluminum foil will hold tighter, more complex shapes than plastic wrap-again, I made a varied wash of watercolor and pressed the crumpled aluminum foil into it-I'd made a tight wad of foil, then unfolded it somewhat before texturing the wash. This could be autumn foliage, sandy earth, an interesting fabric, curly hair, you name it! Your imagination is the only limit.



Art 22-3



Art 22-4

Art 22-4, Line It Out

Waxed paper will fold nicely-I did an accordion fold on this piece, sharply creasing the edges, then pressed it into a wet wash as usual and let it sit for a while. The texture of the watercolor paper is accentuated between the folded stripes. With different colors this could suggest rugged siding, a weathered fence, or again, just an interesting abstract.



Art 22-5

Art 22-5, Test Drive Textures!

Here, I used waxed paper and plastic wrap very unobtrusively, where you see the red arrows-give it a try!

You'll find my original artwork on new products in my Cafepress store, at http://www.cafepress.com/cathy_johnson.