

Tip #65

Painting with Gouache

Gouache is a funny word that basically means opaque watercolors - and some people just call it that. Some brands are known as designer gouache because the paints have been heavily used by commercial artists and designers, and colors were often fugitive - but before that, European watercolorists knew the versatility and usefulness of these paints. If you choose lightfast colors you're in good shape for a very long time to come!

Pronounced "gwash" - like squash - this medium feels like a delightful combination of the properties of watercolor and acrylics. You can paint dark to light, as you can with acrylics, but you can also re-wet areas of your painting, lift and blend colors even after they're dry, use the color nearly straight from the tube or thin it, as well as using the dried paint on your palette simply by moistening it before painting-just like watercolors and unlike acrylics!

Many people find it easier to control than traditional watercolors, and it certainly can be liberating. Use it to paint an entire painting or combine it with transparent watercolor when you just want to regain a lighter value.

Art 65-1, Gouache is wonderful for flowers ...

Use as much or as little detail as you want - working on toned paper, particularly black, would be impossible with transparent watercolor, but gouache paintings really pop!



Art 65-1



Art 65-2

Art 65-2, Combine with regular watercolors for a bold effect ...

You've seen this painting before, if you've gotten my tips for a long time-it was in one of the first, on punching sky-holes. It's easy when you're using an opaque medium like gouache! Just pay attention to where the branches and trunks would be, and add a bit of opaque sky-color. (This one is on green-toned paper.)

Art 65-3, It's great for working plein aire, on the spot ...



Art 65-3

This little painting was done on the spot, in the garden at Olde English Garden Shoppe in Excelsior Springs, MO. There's a more complete tutorial on it in my Flickr album, here, along with other examples of working with gouache: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/25146557@N00/sets/72057594048423937/>.

Tip: I hope you enjoy trying out a new medium-but if you just want to get your feet wet, try mixing a bit of Chinese White with your normal watercolors and see if you like the effect, first...

You can see more examples of painting with gouache in my *Sierra Club Guide to Painting in Nature*, available here, <http://www.cathyjohnson.info/books.html>.

© Copyright Cathy Johnson Graphics/Fine Arts
All Rights Reserved
Website: <http://www.cathyjohnson.info>
Email: graphicart@epsi.net

