



Tip #7

Masking Tricks

When painting in pure watercolor (i.e., using no body color, gouache, opaque watercolor, whatever you want to call it), we need to preserve the sparkling white paper that acts as our whitest white. This CAN be done by painting around, of course, as I did in the plein aire painting of Dutchman's Breeches, but that's a bit tricky - and tedious! It can require a very steady hand, if your whites are small and delicate.

Art #7-1

Dutchman's Breeches

Artists use a variety of masking-out tricks to preserve those vital whites. You can even use - surprise! - masking tape, though drafting tape is less tenacious and less likely to damage your paper surface. Cut or tear it to shape, burnish it down with your fingernail, and paint over it. Let it dry *thoroughly*, then remove the tape very carefully, pulling back at an acute angle to your paper to avoid distressing the paper's surface. (If you do, you can use a burnisher - or again, your thumbnail - to smooth the paper surface again.)

Many artists prefer liquid maskoid, like Winsor-Newton's. Apply it with an inexpensive brush, a sharpened stick, a bamboo pen, or even a palette knife. (Use the flat, the tip, or the edge for a variety of effects!)



Art #7-1

Art #7-2

The Four Seasons - Summer

Here, liquid mask was applied with a brush for the tiny sky-holes in the background, and with a palette knife for the trees and delicate limbs.

Spatter your liquid mask on for tiny light bits. Paint it on with an old paintbrush, if you want broader areas, but be sure to rinse your brush immediately, it WILL set up in the ferrule and ruin the brush. You can prepare the brush by running the bristles or hairs over a bar of soap before dipping into the maskoid to further prolong its useful life.

Allow the liquid mask to dry thoroughly, however you plan to apply it, then paint over it with your watercolor washes. Let THAT dry, again completely, and carefully remove the mask. Try to find a crepe-rubber maskoid remover, or what used to be called a rubber cement pickup. This will work better than rubbing over your work with a finger. Get it started, then lift up to pull the mask off the paper, as much as possible.



Art #7-2

After you've removed the mask, you can leave the whites as is, soften some edges with clean water and a stiff brush so the whites don't look pasted on, or paint over them, then-if you want-mask again, remove, and paint again. The possibilities are endless.

For much more information on using masks, you may want to see my North Light book, just out in paperback, *Creating Textures in Watercolor; How to Paint 83 Textures from Glass to Fur*. (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0891344179/102-0703375-7169748?v=glance>)

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