

Tip #93

Who says you can't fix a watercolor?



We often hear that it better be RIGHT when you put it down when talking about watercolor - there's no fixing it and there's no going back. This is one time I'm happy to be able to say-- **WRONG!!**

I did an article years ago for *The Artist's Magazine* on a variety of ways to fix a watercolor that's gone wrong-I'll recap a few of those here, and add a few new ones.

If you're painting light to dark and your painting appears wimpy or uncertain to you, that's an easy fix - just add a few bold darks or rich colors. Try adding mixed media-colored pencils, ink, collage, what have you, to punch things up a bit.

Scratch, scrape, or sand your paper to reclaim lights.

Sometimes you have a COMPLETE disaster on your hands - my old friend, watercolorist Jim Hamil, told me about taking the garden hose to one of his, and virtually starting fresh - you can do this if you use good, tough paper that will take a bit of a beating!

Tear or cut up a painting that doesn't quite work for you and use it as elements of a collage - that can be very exciting!

I've made ACEOs - 2-1/2" x 3-1/2" "artist cards, editions and originals" from paintings that I liked parts of and not others, [like these here](#) (the rest of the painting became bookmarks!) To see more ACEOs, just click on the ACEO tag under the entry. Composing via paper-cutter WORKS!

Art 93-1, Owl ACEO

In this case I'd just been playing with gesso as a painting ground, and chose several areas of the original sample to finish up as these tiny playing-card size paintings, <http://cathyjohnsonart.blogspot.com/2008/12/winter-owl-aceoatc.html>



Art 93-2, Lighten up!



Of course you can do a LOT with a painting without resorting to scissors! If something looks too muddy to you, a bit boring, or you simply don't like the focus, don't despair! You can lift a LOT with clear water and tissues. This painting of the waterfall at Tryst Falls was OK, but just didn't seem to get it for me. The yellow hillside drew the eye too much, and everything else just looked muddy...

Art 93-3, Vignette it

Here, I sprayed around the edges with clear water, lightly scrubbed at the paint with a Mr. Clean Magic Eraser almost back to white paper, and blotted away the loosened pigment with a tissue. I lifted a bit near the waterfall, too, to suggest foam and spray. I added a bit more bold color, and now the focus is on the waterfall, where I wanted it!



Art 93-4, A decent start...



This was as far as I got at a local art demonstration-it had possibilities, but really wasn't what I was after...the far bank was too dark (though it really was in the photo I had to work from), and it just looked too hard-edged to me.

Art 93-5, ...and a better finish



I ended up masking just below the distant bank and washing that back, then adding in a more colorful sky while that area was still wet. I removed the masking tape, punched up the color in the water, softened the reflection, defined the near bank, and lifted the light rays with a stiff brush, a sponge, and a clean tissue to lift the loosened paint. Might as well be a whole different painting! (This will be on an upcoming tutorial CD, with all the steps in between, in my CafePress store, http://www.cafepress.com/cathy_johnson - watch for it!)

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