
Resist Painting Techniques with Watercolor with Yao Cheng

Chapter 1 - Overview

Overview

(upbeat pop music) - Hi, my name is Yao Cheng, and I'm a watercolor artist and designer. For the last few years, my painting has turned into my full-time business, where I create a line of art prints, greeting cards and textiles for the home. What I love about watercolor is how fluid and versatile the medium is. It can be incredibly opaque or incredibly translucent. As well as it works really great with other mediums, such as liquid resist. In this class I'm going to show you how to use masking fluid by itself, to create a pattern, And then go over it with a wash of watercolor. (upbeat music) We'll switch from using a brush to a knit pin where we can be more free to draw with it, before laying down watercolor. And finally, I'm going to show you how to capture realistic textures, like grass and waves. (pop music)

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- For supplies you will need your basic watercolor kit. Which includes a pallet with paint already prepared in its individual wells. Paper towel. A block of Arches 140 pound watercolor paper. Two buckets of water. One for cool colors and one for warm. In addition, for resist painting we will need the following supplies. You'll need some inexpensive brushes. I prefer the ones that are called script brushes. They have a longer bristle. These are in size twos and fours. You'll need at least four or five of these brushes as you're painting. We'll be using a basic nib pen, some larger size brushes such as this mop brush and a size 14 and 24 in round tip. For the actual masking fluid, we will be using Winsor & Newton. This one comes slightly tinted. You can get it either clear or slightly tinted. I prefer this kind that's pigmented because you can see more or less where you're laying down the masking fluid. This drawing gum from Pebeo is really great for using the nib with. It has a slightly different consistency from the masking fluid. So I just prefer to use that when I'm drawing with a nib pen. You'll also need this plastic container with a lid as well as a rubber pickup. This rubber pickup is designed to use with masking fluid. And lastly, we're gonna need a totally separate jar with soapy water. This part is really important. You must have a jar filled with soapy water. About this much in soap sud next to you at all times. You can see with this jar that I've been using for the last few years that after a while, the rubber part of the resist paint builds up on the side of your jar, so it tends to ruin whatever container you're using. So just make sure that it's not one you're really attached to.

Chapter 3 - Resist Painting

Introduction to using masking fluid as a resist

- To begin, we're going to pour our masking fluid into our small container. You wanna shake up your making fluid a little bit before you begin, just so everything is nice and even. Again, we're using a pigmented masking fluid here, you can also get it in clear. I'm not gonna be pouring a lot in. Notice that it does come with a smell that's not very pleasant, but as long as you keep it away from you, it shouldn't really be a bother. The reason why I'm not going to be pouring a lot in is because this dries pretty quickly, so we're just gonna be using a little bit at a time. We're gonna be painting something like this where you can see that these areas that are white or the paper color is actually what we're gonna be painting first. I'm gonna have a couple of these brushes on my left hand just for easy

reach because I'm only gonna be able to use each brush for about 15 to 20 seconds before it needs to be rinsed out in the soapy jar again. So I'm gonna dip my brush into the masking fluid. And this can really be whatever you want. I'm gonna create easy shapes that will sort of repeat into an oliver. So these will be stripes where every row is the same. So you just saw that I dumped this right into my soapy water, and I'm stirring it around. The soapy water will wash away whatever masking fluid is still on your brush. I'm gonna go right into my second one. Like the other ways that I use watercolor, I use resist, I paint pretty quickly with resist. The only reason is because there is a time limit here. You can see here that I'm using the tip of my brush as well as the side. I'm kind of starting with the tip and then ending with the side. This is a great way to play with different coverage of paper, how much of the white you wanna show through. Again, you can do this with any sort of pattern. I'm doing one here that's pretty easy and approachable. But you can go as complex as you'd like. This is the technique that's very similar to batik fabric dying, except instead of using batik, we're using masking fluid. Now that all of my brushes that I've been using have been in the soapy water, I'm just gonna dry it off with my paper towel. If there's a lot of soap still left on your brush, you can always rinse it again in clean water before we start painting again. No matter how well you take care of your brushes, these are gonna go in a couple of months if you use resist pretty regularly. It's just, after a while, the masking fluid will just start build on the bristles, and once they do, they're pretty much done for. So you really wanna make sure you use cheap ones. I'm gonna stop here with this painting. Now this has to dry completely before we go back on top with watercolor. So I'm gonna let this sit. I'm gonna show you a different painting that uses a similar technique that I just showed you. This painting here was created using the handle of my brush. So this is kind of a creative way to use your brush without really using the typical side of your brush. But I found this to be a really great way to create circles and dots. And the more you put it on your paper, the smaller the dots gets, so you also get kind of a fading effect. I also like this technique 'cause it's pretty mindless. You can kind of do this without thinking too much about what it is you're actually doing. It's very repetitive. I find it very relaxing, but you may feel differently. Or you may find it just as relaxing as I do. It's also a great way to control the brush stroke. So we don't have to think too much about how hard we're pressing down on our brushes. We're sort of just letting the tip do its thing. Now while this dries, let's do two more patterns. You can see here that what is actually used with the resist are these outlines of these half hexagon shapes. And the way that I did this is I actually used my pencil to draw out the outline of these shapes first before I went over on resist. I usually don't use pencil when I'm doing watercolor, but this is an exception because where I'm laying down the pencil, say the middle of these brush strokes here, it's not really gonna matter in the end because, after the resist is picked up by the rubber pickup, I can go over and erase the pencil lines. So we're gonna take our pencil, and feel free to use a ruler if you feel more confident that way. I've drawn this shape a couple of times before, so I'm just gonna freehand it here. You wanna use a pencil that won't press too hard into your paper, it won't leave any sort of indent. One of my favorite things to draw and paint are geometric shapes. I'm not sure why, but it's always a huge influence in my work. There's something about how mathematical it is, it's a very structured subject matter to create. But I like that I can break out of that box if I need to. So here, I'm not using a ruler. It's still a structured shape, but by freehanding it, you get a little bit more of an organic feel. I roughly have an idea of where my resist is gonna go. I'm gonna go ahead and go back to my brush. Now this part you do have to be careful to make sure that your resist goes over the pencil lines, or else when you put watercolor over pencil lines, you won't be able to erase it afterwards. I'm gonna stop here and rinse out my brush. And I'm gonna put in some more liquid. I like to keep this jar

about a quarter of the way full at any given time. Just to make sure I'm not using too much and I'm not wasting or, then if it spills, it gets crazy. Here's another cool thing about painting and drawing with resist. If you mess up and say, whoops, you know, if a drip accidentally happens, or you make a line or shape that you don't like in the end, or maybe you'd go through this whole drawing that I'm doing here and you decide, well I don't know, not really feeling it; you can actually just let it dry completely and take away the entire thing with your rubber pickup, and it's like nothing was ever there. Don't be afraid to mess up or try new things, 'cause you can always take it all away if you change your mind. Oops. Yup, there's a drip there. The only tricky part about that is, if I wanted to pick that up because I didn't want that drip in the end, that one is gonna be really hard to pick up because all of the rubber, once they're connected, they all kind of act like the same piece. So if you try and pick up just that little bit of a circle, you'll end up pulling away the other parts that you had laid down. So in that case, I'm just gonna let it be and say, well, maybe I meant for that to be there and it's fine. Using resist to create blades of grass and landscapes is one of my favorite things to do. You can get some really cool textures here where the brush was a little bit dry with the resist, so it really picks up the tooth of the paper. And other areas, when you have a lot of resist on your brush, it creates these really solid but really crisp lines here. You can also create really thin ones like this if you use your brush really lightly. So let's try something like that. I am gonna go ahead and rinse out my brush in clean water, just so there's no soap residue on there. We're thinking about the motion of the blades of grass. We're imagining that wind is blowing through, maybe the grass are all blowing this way, they're hanging over like this. And then we're thinking maybe it turns a little bit, maybe gets a little bit shorter and then turns over. And here, see how I'm pressing down really hard? I really wanna get the tooth of the paper. I know that there's not a lot on my brush and that's fine, that's the effect that I want. Okay. Again, rinsing out my brush, that's really, really important. Here, I'm using it really lightly. I'm barely touching the paper, going in really swift motions to create thin lines. These drops are gonna happen. Just something that happens with resist, so don't worry about it, just go with it. Let's let that dry for about 15 to 20 minutes.

Using a pen nib with resist

- Now let's switch from using a brush to using a nib. We're gonna be using this with our drawing gum. You can get really fine details with the nib. Let's start by shaking our drawing gum. This is similar to the resist where I'm only going to be filling about a quarter of the way up. Maybe a little more. This also doesn't smell really great, so make sure it's not right under your nose or anything during the time that you're using it. We're gonna create a painting like this, where it's a lot of drawing with the nib. You can see really fine details here, where I was using the tip of the nib, and then areas here where I actually went back in and filled in the entire shape. Let's get a liberal amount of drawing gum onto our nib. This may take a little bit of practice, because sometimes the flow of the masking fluid on the nib can change where you'll get a huge chunk of it on the paper by accident, so just watch out for that. You can see here I'm doing... Right here I'm pressing really lightly, and here I'm gonna press a little bit harder, and you can see that I'm getting thicker lines. This is a little bit like doodling in a sketchbook, as if the nib that I'm using is a micron or a pen that you're using. It's very much the same. Just keep in mind that whatever it is that you're drawing with this drawing gum is going to stay white. You can see that I can go pretty far in range with every stroke. This nib is pretty typical in size and it usually comes with a handle. For this piece, my main shape that I'm using are triangles in which I then divide into other triangles. I'm staying very geometric and abstract. I want a variation of really fine details like I'm doing here. Maybe this one

has more of a hash mark to it. With other ones, where it's a little bit bigger and also thicker in lines. I'm choosing to do this because I know in the end where I'm laying down with the masking fluid here is all gonna be white, and I want, I don't want it to just be white. I want the white to be more of a color than just a background space. So some areas are gonna be a lot of white and some areas are gonna be a little bit of white. This gives a little more play and interest to your work. You'll notice here that I'm not dunking this nib into my soapy water. This is because I'm not as worried here. Once this dries on the nib, I can just peel it off and continue. We're gonna let this dry, and while that happens I'm gonna show you how to do this with ocean waves. In this painting here, I'm still using a nib. I'm using it in a little bit of a flow, more of a fluid motion than I was with the geometrics. I'm paying attention to heavier lines versus thinner lines to create, again that motion of ocean waves. This is not a realistic depiction of ocean waves. That's not what I'm going for here. I'm going for the motion, the movement, the energy of waves crashing, that's what I'm trying to capture. In addition to the fine lines, you can also see that there are larger areas of white space here. It helps bring the eye to these specific areas that are rolling around, that are crashing into each other. I'm gonna wipe this off and peel away any of the drawing gum that has dried on my nib. You can be pretty forceful here. Again, it's just metal underneath, so you don't have to worry about breaking anything, but I do want to make sure that I don't have any excess rubber that's dried on there. So I just make sure I get it all off. Alright, that's pretty good. I'm gonna be working in this area here. Again, I like this size nib because it gives me more of a range in how long my lines can be. You can see right there that I was pressing down harder than when I began. You can even go back. My work is very much inspired by nature, but it is also really inspired by patterns and repetitive motions, so one of the things I really enjoy about drawing waves like this. I'm using pattern and repeats to depict a feeling, a certain energy in nature without actually being realistic about it. In this area here, we can see that I'm starting with a thicker line and then I'm going to a thinner line. Now I'm gonna change it up a little bit. I'm gonna say, maybe... Maybe it's gonna go in the other direction. Now, I'm not saying that you have to draw your ocean waves like this. What I'm showing you is just one way to interpret ocean waves. You, of course, are allowed to have your own interpretation, your own perspective on what you feel and want your ocean waves to be. What I hope you can take away from this is a certain set of techniques and ways of looking and thinking about a landscape. It's not that you have to do it the specific way. In fact, I encourage you to start with this. Practice with it, get a handle on technique and structure, but then break away from it, you know? Try it your own way. Try it with something that you feel excited, inspired by. That's what it's all about. At any point, if your resist becomes too fummy, feel free to open a window, let in some sort of ventilation, because this stuff is really strong and it does have a very distinct smell. Sometimes I find that I have to open a window when I'm working with it too long. While this dries, I'm going to lay down a wash of watercolor in this upper corner here, and I'm gonna show you how to use resist on top of that layer of watercolor, and that way you can really layer with it. I'm using a 24 round here. You can also use a mop brush for this. Whatever color you choose, make sure it's a light color, because again, you have to think that this layer, whatever color you're putting down, is going to be the color that the resist will protect. We're gonna let this entire page dry for about 15 to 20 minutes so that everything on this page is dry, the watercolor and the drawing gum, and then we'll come back to it.

Painting over resist with watercolor

- Now that we've set this aside for 15 to 20 minutes, you wanna make sure that it's completely dry. The way that you can tell it's dry is if the center, especially these dots here where there were a lot of

resists placed down, the circles should be completely dark and that's how you can tell that it's dried. Now that we have laid down all of the details and done the hard work, we're going to just go crazy with watercolor and really enjoy it for what it is. I'm going to choose a coral-y red for this piece. That's my overall palette that I'm gonna be sticking with. I'm taking my size 24 round and really trying to cover my brush with lots of paint here. And just a little bit of water. In large gestures and broad strokes. All I'm worried about now is laying down color. I don't have to think about protecting white, being sure I have my negative space figured out. I don't have to think about any of that. I'm simply enjoying the techniques of blending, pulling, dipping paint back in where areas that are wet to create darker areas. Maybe rinsing my brush every so often with just water and pulling with that to create lighter areas. You can dab away with your paper towel in some spots if you like the texture or to take away color. You're really at liberty and freedom here to do whatever. As long as the overall page is wet still, you can pretty much do whatever you want. And the next one, same thing. The darker color you pick, the more you can really accentuate where the resist's laid down. So I'm gonna choose a really dark indigo here. Resist painting usually goes by pretty quickly. There's not a lot of layers involved. The most labor-intensive part is putting down the first layer of resist. Everything afterwards is pretty easy. Watercolor using this technique really mimics batik dyeing with fabric. Some areas are darker and some areas are lighter. It feels more like a hand-dyed piece than something that was done by a machine. Lastly, I'm just gonna drip some water in some areas. Now, what this will do is this water is gonna push away some of the color that was put down here and it's gonna create this really interesting ridge along wherever it stops. And this part in the center here will be the lightest. Okay, let's put this aside to dry. Moving on to the third one that we laid down. This one I'm choosing that every shape is gonna be a different color. I'm using my resist here as, sort of like a divider between each shape and color. I'm reaching for my size 14 round for a little bit more control. You can refer to a color palette that you've assembled before, but for this, I'm just gonna go with something really simple. I'm gonna be working with yellows, turqs, and blues, maybe a little bit pink, we'll see. We'll see what happens. This reminds me of in kindergarten, you know, how your teacher will say, "Color inside the lines." Well, this resist really helps you do that. It prevents you from going outside the lines. The only thing I'm thinking about here is the choice of colors I'm gonna be using. I don't have to worry about my outside edges because the resist is doing that for me. I'm gonna add just a little bit of pink. I always like to have a mix of warms and cools in my palette. It feels more complete, more balanced. Before we move on to the next painting, I just wanted to show you how, once the resist had dried, you are at liberty to remove anything that you don't want to be there in the final painting. I have these little drips here that I don't want to appear in the final piece, so I'm just gonna quickly move them away. Alright, moving on to our grass. Again, broad strokes and going crazy with watercolor. I'm just gonna be using shades of green. Maybe some areas have darker greens than others. I know it could be a little distracting that, ya know, these areas covered with resist is a slightly tinted yellow. The more you work with it, the more you'll get used to that color. You'll know that, in the end, it's not actually a tinted yellow. It's just there so that you can see when you're putting it down. See how fast that was? We did all of the work, the detail work, beforehand. And with watercolor it was really quick, a minute, two minute, coverage and done. Now, let's move on to our nib-drawn resists. In this geometric, again, same thing. If this was the outside edge of my painting, maybe I want this to be a more gestural edge. I don't want a clean edge that I would get with masking tape. I want it to be a little bit more organic. How cool is that? You can just let the watercolor do what watercolor does best. This is a great technique to do, also, if you're still trying to get to know watercolor, how it flows, how it bleeds, how you really can't

have control over it in times like this. Doing this exercise will help you appreciate watercolor for what it is. It's really beautiful when you just let it do what it wants to do, and not try and control it. In this case, we've already controlled our motifs and shapes using the nib and the drawing gum, so we don't have to worry about anything else. The last thing I'm gonna do here is I'm just gonna drip some water and let it bleed. Moving on to our ocean waves. I'm gonna do this in a purple-y blue. Usually when I'm doing a painting like this, I do have masking tape bounding the edges. That way it makes the waves feel more continuous, whereas right here, it's weird that it just stops right on this edge. But for this demonstration, I'm not gonna worry about it. Waves are a little more involved, as far as laying down the watercolor. I like to distinguish a little bit between each section of the waves, so I'm imagining that this part is underneath this part here, so maybe I want this to be darker than this wave here. Moving pretty quickly here, I'm gonna add just in this area some darker blues. And the resist is great because it bounds this area from blending too much into here, that I want to stay lighter. Maybe moving into some greens. Now we're gonna-- Let's tie the green back with the blue. Now this is gonna look really awesome once it dries. Remember that wash of watercolor we put down first, right here? Now, this has had time to dry, and we're gonna go back on top with our masking fluid. I'm gonna have two brushes on hand here, to switch in between. This one, the masking fluid is just gonna be accents. Now, we're gonna let all of this sit until it's dry to the touch.

Chapter 4 - Finishing

Finishing your painting and more resist ideas

- Let's go back to that painting where we laid the Resist down as the second layer. We're now gonna go back on top and layer over that with some watercolor shapes. This is great way and an easy way to add complexity to your painting. Another reason why I chose a really light wash for the first layer is because I don't really want it to interfere with all of the colors that I'm putting on top. Especially with these warms that I'm putting down. There is a little bit of blue that comes through but it's really not apparent. You can do this with an all over pattern that I'm doing here. Opp, that one bled. That's pretty interesting accident so I'm just gonna leave it. You can do this with an all over pattern like I'm doing here or you can choose to do this in a composition like a landscape. Whenever I'm painting over Resist, I feel like I'm when you're exposing photos in the dark room I feel like it's that sort of a magical process where you can't really see it until you put paint over where the Resist was. I really enjoy that experience. Again, the way I paint watercolors is all about the process. I'm noticing and enjoying what happens when watercolor goes over Resist, when it blends together, all of that. It's just as much about the in between part of making the actual painting than it is about the end result. Also it takes pressure off of feeling like I need to make the end painting this perfect piece that's gonna hang in a museum or my home. There's more value to it than that. Even if the end result is not perfect or exactly how I envisioned it. I still think it's a valuable thing to do because I learn something during the process of creating it. That's looks great. Now let's set this aside to dry and I'll show you how to take off the masking fluid with your rubber pick up. I like to start with a corner of the rubber pickup. You don't have to put a lot of pressure. This thing kind of does it for you if you just guide it along, rubbing it back and forth just like I would with an eraser. I'm gonna just pull away. You can do this pretty quickly once you get the hang of it. Sometimes I even like to do broad sweeps like this. You can always go back over if there's still some areas left over, you can rub it with your finger as well. Just make sure every once in awhile to pull away the excess rubber. See how it's no longer yellow. The brush really picks up these beautiful raw edges here. Continue removing all of the masking fluid with the rest of your paintings. You can see

that I'm being pretty aggressive here with my paper and my rubber pick up. This is why you really need to make sure that you're painting is completely dry. Or else your rubber pick up can really chew into your painting. Remember in this painting how we laid down the pencil first, now we're gonna go back and erase the lines. Let's see what effect this one has where we layered the Resist in between. Now the effect here is pretty subtle. I chose a really light background color. You can obviously go much darker. Just make sure whatever watercolor you layer on top of that is darker than the background wash. That way you can always contrast the foreground with the background. What is so rad about this painting here is that you get these really beautiful organic textures that only happens with watercolor. It doesn't look crazy because you have on top these really structured detailed motifs layered in. You get a juxtaposition of both. I'm gonna show you some finished pieces that I've done previously using this technique. This one is very similar to the one that I was just showing you in blue and green. I pretty much did the exact same thing except I finished the edges with a raw edge. This is another interpretation of ocean waves where instead of using a __, I used brush strokes. I was able to get these really dry textural marks here that can only happen with a brush. As well as these larger areas where I really pressed down with the tip of my brush. I made these rounded strokes to depict the white foam, the sea foam that happens when ocean waves are crashing together. This is the painting I did exclusively for Minted. In this one, I used Resist as a decorative element. It was more of an accent than what the main piece is about. I was looking at Moroccan architecture. In the end it looks a little more like suitcases stacked on top of each other. But the colors and shapes was inspired by Moroccan architecture. Where I placed on the Resist was more to show the decorative elements on the buildings. This painting called Blue Waves is a second painting I ever did for my own business. It was a really simply idea. It was all about using one shape, repeating it throughout. With the Resist here I was trying to show the character of waves where there are divisions in between, as well as I used it here to divide between each motif. Here's another painting where I used Resist to divide between each shape. This one was a little more complex in that I also layered on top of these shapes with each other so there was just a little bit of transparency in between. This abstract painting is really interesting. I was trying to show forest during the winter. So I abstracted the forest by using triangles. The after drawing the triangles, I went back and added in these dots to depict the snow. This last one I'm gonna show you is a landscape piece where I used the Resist for the blades of grass as well as these little textures in the road. This really came together though Resist worked together with the rest of the landscape. They each had a job where the Resist was showing movement. Whereas the rest of the landscape that's painted with watercolor really gave you a sense of space and depth. Even though I've been painting with watercolor for many years now, I still love using Resist as much as I did the first time I used it.