

TEXTURES AND EFFECTS

Inventive artists have always sought to create a wider armoury of textures and effects than is possible using conventional paintbrushes. Here is a selection of techniques that will help enrich your paintings.



GRANULATION

Granulation is a naturally occurring texture that imparts a beautiful subtle texture to a wash. The relatively coarse pigments in some watercolours settle in the hollows of the paper as the wash dries out.

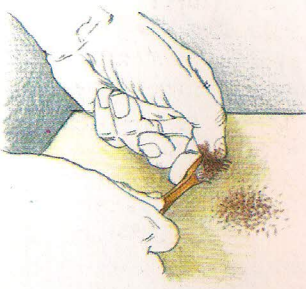


FLOCCULATION

A similar grainy effect is produced by pigments that flocculate. Instead of dispersing evenly, the pigment particles in some watercolour paints are attracted to each other.

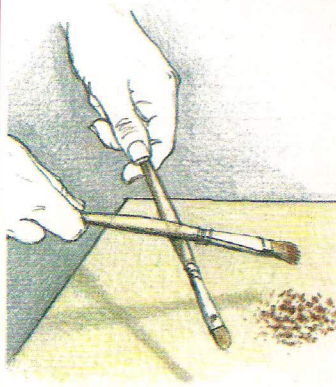
SPATTERING

Spattering (flicking paint onto a support) adds interest to a large area of flat colour. It is an effective means of suggesting textures such as sea foam, sand and pebbles.



Using a toothbrush

Dip an old toothbrush into fairly thick paint and, holding it horizontally above the painting surface, quickly draw a thumbnail through the bristles. This releases a shower of fine droplets onto the painting. You can use scrap paper to mask off parts of the painting.



Using two brushes

Load a paintbrush with colour and tap it sharply across your outstretched finger or across the handle of another brush. This produces a relatively dense spatter, with large droplets of paint.



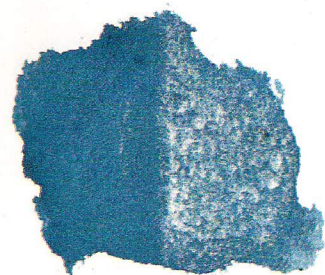
SCRATCHING OUT

Create fine linear highlights in watercolour by scratching through a painted surface when it is dry. You can use a razor blade or a sharp, pointed knife. Work gently to avoid tearing the surface of the paper.



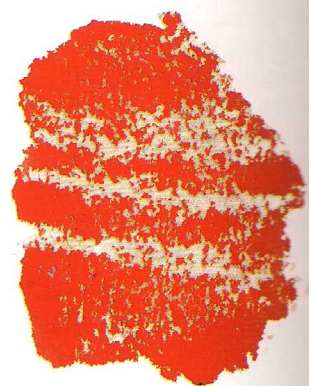
Pale highlights

Make paler marks by scratching paint that is not quite dry, using the tip of a paintbrush handle or a sharpened stick.



Diffused highlights,

To suggest reflections from moving water or ocean waves, scrape the painted paper gently with the side of the blade or rub the surface with a piece of fine sandpaper.



WAX RESIST

A broken texture can be created by drawing with a wax candle or coloured crayon, then overpainting with watercolour. The wash of colour is repelled by the wax (which coagulates in droplets), but it soaks into the unwaxed areas of the paper.



Oil resist

A similar but more subtle texture is created by painting turpentine or white spirit onto well-sized paper. Allow the paper to dry, then apply a wash of watercolour over the top. The paint and oil separate, creating an interesting marbled surface.



MAKING TEXTURES WITH SALT

Unpredictable textures can be induced by scattering grains of coarse rock salt into wet watercolour – as the salt crystals soak up the paint around them. When the picture has dried, brush off the salt to reveal a pattern of pale crystalline shapes.



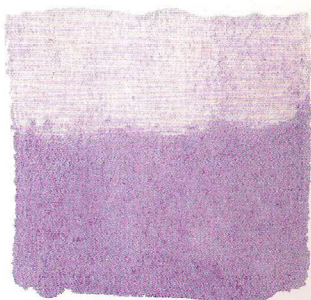
MASKING FLUID

Masking fluid is a rubbery solution which, when dry, resists overlays of watercolour. Apply masking fluid with a brush or dip pen where you want light areas or highlights to appear in your picture. Continue painting right over the masking fluid; then, once the washes have dried, rub off the masking fluid with an eraser to reveal the white of the paper or the previously laid colour.



Masking white paper

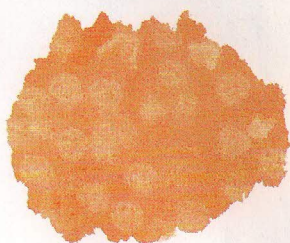
Before you start painting, paint spots of masking fluid onto the paper. When the paint has dried, rub the surface to reveal the white paper.



LIFTING OUT

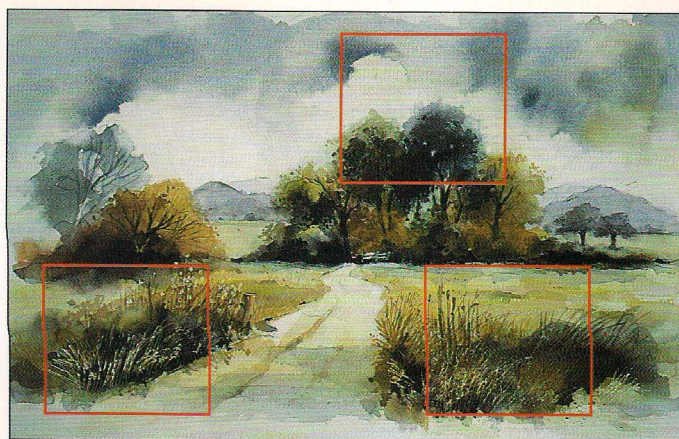
Soaking up watercolour while it is still wet creates soft diffused highlights. Apply a generous wash of colour, and then lift out areas of colour with absorbent tissue paper or a damp sponge, or a paintbrush dipped in clean water then squeezed out.

Lifting out is a technique that's often used by landscape painters to suggest soft billowing clouds.



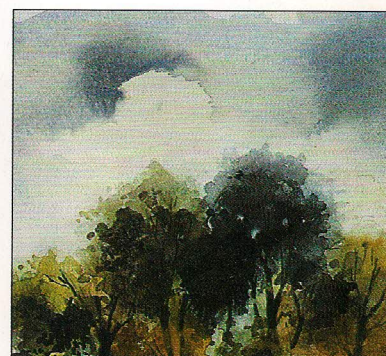
Lifting out dry paint

Lift out dry watercolour by gentle coaxing with a damp sponge, brush or cotton bud.



Putting texture to good effect

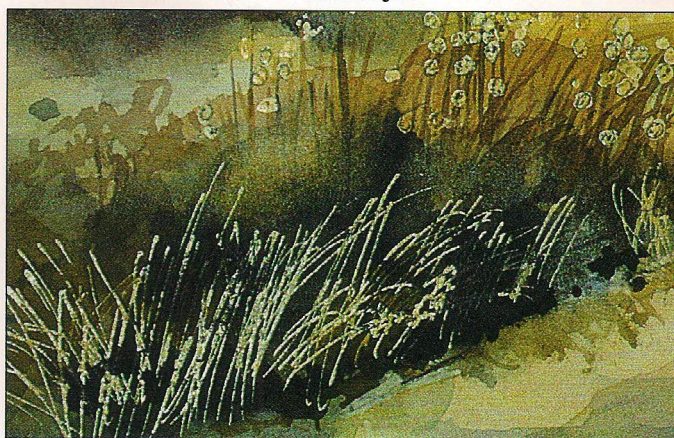
Here we see a watercolour painting in progress. The artist is employing a variety of techniques to add textures to the picture and create the illusion of depth. The top illustration shows the painting about half finished. The detail, top right, shows how absorbent tissue can be used to lift out colour from areas of the sky. Texture has been introduced to the foreground (detail bottom right) by scratching through the paint surface with a knife. The detail below shows how masking fluid can be used to delineate flowers and grasses, as in the left-hand foreground of the painting. (See also pages 88–93.)



Lifting out



Scratching out



Masking-fluid technique