

MARY CLOUSE – WATERCOLOR ON YUPO PAPER

WELCOME! I am delighted to have you join me for a demonstration of watercolor painting on Yupo.

Yupo is a slick, synthetic surface where the pigment sits on top of the surface, sliding, blending and melding in very unique ways. This is in contrast to traditional watercolor paper where the pigment sinks into the paper fibers. Because the pigment sits on top, it tends to retain more color intensity since the paper fibers are not present to dilute the saturation. You will notice that colors tend to be brighter, denser and more vivid on Yupo. Many artists dislike Yupo because it can be difficult to control where the water and paint go, but I find it to be a collaboration between myself and the materials. It's a case of leaning into the process rather than fighting it!

I did my preliminary sketch on Yupo prior to today. When you draw on Yupo it's best to have your sketch underneath and trace it lightly onto the Yupo because using an eraser of any kind will leave a residue on the surface, making it very difficult for the pigment to stick. My drafting table at home has a glass top so I use this as my light table to transfer my design sketches onto my painting surfaces.

The first thing I will do is mask off a few areas to retain my whites. Preserving a few white areas is a key element in watercolor painting. The masking fluid will prevent any pigment from slipping into those areas where I want bright white and/or highlights. In nature, there really are very few

things that are true black or true white. Most blacks are a combination of colors being reflected with the reduction of light causing such heavy pigmentation that our eyes perceive it as black. You will see me creating blacks using dark pigments such as a mix of indigo and burnt umber, or Prussian blue and burnt sienna.

The same is true of whites. Outside, in bright sunlight, we can walk into shadow and take a photograph which will show a blueish cast to things we would otherwise categorize as white. This is a result of light reflecting off of various surfaces. I will apply that principle to the lighter areas, as well as the darker ones, using a combination of pigments that would be reflective of nearby surfaces.

Next, I will pour the background. Most of the time I use three colors to pour my backgrounds. Since our subject is blue jays in a winter setting, our subject color will be blue. I will use Prussian blue, Naples yellow and magenta as my background colors. Those same colors will be used with more intensity as I flesh in details. I start by mixing up my three colors in small cups so that I have a decent fluid amount. I wet my Yupo and begin to pour. I will use a straw, metal tipped tool and other objects to move the pigment around, as well as spritzing some areas with water to encourage blending. I may dab some areas up to create lighter sections. I will use the hard end of a paintbrush to craft branches, by scraping pigment away. I will continue working in this manner until satisfied.

Yupo takes a long time to dry since it is plastic, so patience and a hairdryer are helpful! Watercolor will always dry lighter than when it is wet.

Once my background is dry, I will begin to create details in the background, crafting branches and the like. Next, I will add washes to my birds. This will create a layered effect, giving variety to the colors of their bodies.

Once all of the washes are in and I am happy, I put in the darker colors. High contrast is what makes a painting, so it's important to put darks up against the whites and light areas to really create visual interest. I continue adding details. When I'm happy with all of that, it's time to remove the masking fluid by using a special eraser. At this point, I review the painting one last time, updating any areas that need attention. Then I sign it!

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