

## **The technique of indirect painting: the art to create an atmosphere by pouring colors- Stéfanie Vallée**

### **A revelation**

I discovered the technique of indirect painting in 1994, thanks to the book *Watercolor Color and Light*, of the painter watercolorist Roland Roycraft. My first reaction, when I found this book in store, was one of surprise. By going through of this book, I realized that it was about a new technique in watercolor which I did not know and which seemed to me very interesting. Indeed, the sensational colors, the harmonious nuances and the quality of the realism charmed me at once. I experimented at first this technique by means of the book then, some years later, I deepened my knowledge with the very boss, Roland Roycraft. I took part his summer workshop for four years consecutive, in Michigan. Now, I teach his technique in Quebec and in summer 2007, I shall headteach for the first time in Michigan, accompanied with Roland Roycraft. Because of his advanced age, he chose to teach no longer and gave me the place so that continues the education of its technique, which allows to express itself by pouring colors on the paper.

### **Stage 1 : the sketch**

The first stage to be crossed consists in looking not at the world which surrounds us, but rather the space out which coats it : the holes of sky between the branches of trees, foliage which surrounds a water source, etc. The sketch serves for illustrating these spaces, by creating masses of forms and uneven proportions. This is called by Roland : breaking the space. Each masse has to be the expression of a pure pleasure either by its funny, elegant or dramatic shape, or by its disposal on the white sheet. It must create a rhythm, in the same way as musical notes would make it on a music staff, all attached together. The sketch is also the moment when we agree of the light source emplacement, which will stress the realism of the painting. Roycraft tells the importance of the sketch so : "your painting will never look as good as your sketch if your sketch is incomplete 1".

1. Roland Roycraft's quote words, pronounced in a workshop given in Michigan, in June, 2004.

### **Stage 2: the liquid frisquet**

(...) The drawing and the masked zones serve as realism, whereas the transparent colors, which poored freely on the paper, capture the light and the atmospheric colors. 2"

2. Extracted from the book Watercolor Color and Light, Roland Roycraft, Published (Edited) Broquet, p. 24. (free translation from the french version)

The technique Roycraft makes use abundantly of some liquid friquet, a rubbery liquid which, once dried, protects whiteness of the paper which is next size down. The masking is a part of the picture's preparation. The planning and the precision are necessary in the execution of this task for two reasons. At first, each shape created by applying this rubber liquid is definate. Then, because every shape congealed by the gum is final, what does not mean as far as the gum was a part of the picture(board), on the contrary. We have to remove her(it), when the effusion of colors is ended (see stage 4).

The masses to be covered and foreseen(planned) in the sketch are in fact the reflections of the light on the water or on the snow, the foliage and the branches of trees in positive, as in negative. The progressive transitions between the positive and the negative are desirable to contribute to the harmony of the forms and the colors. Also, we have to mask a character or quite other subject stacked in a mass. This scene represents a skier in the powdery. The sky, the lights of light on the snow, the character and the texture of the foliage were notably masked. A small trick to apply this liquid frisquet : use a small branch of tree, a twig, the extremity of which you will have cut in bevel as a feather. The previous scene, with the gum to be masked, photographed and inverted in positive to allow to show the effect of the wished lighting.

### **Stage 3: the effusion of colors**

Once the sketch and the masking have been planned well, made with pleasure and rigour, it is the moment to get to pouring, the favorite part of many people. This stage is the one of the atmosphere's creation. At this stage, we downright snap finger at the sketch and the only point of reference is the place of the light source which we have previously chosen.

But there is another aspect which we do not have to take into account, either at this stage, or generally in all the process of creation; it is about real colors of the objects which are in the composition of the painting(cloth), because the atmospheric light transforms everything, so as to harmonize the landscape. " The atmospheric light modifies the colors of every thing. (...) Early in the morning or late the evening, when the solar disk levels the horizon, the warm light colors the grey facade of a building of red, orangy and yellow shadows. 3 " This insures a better unity of the painting, a balance which only the water manages to make by transporting pigments colored with modest one contribution of the artist naturally!

3. Extracted from the book Watercolor Color and Light, Roland Roycraft, Published(Edited) Broquet, p. 22.

The only purpose, when we pour colors, thus is to help the water to make its work of carrier of colors to obtain beautiful nuances, pure, and reduce any direct intervention of the artist on the paper (where from the name: indirect painting). The primary colors, the yellow, the red and the blue, are alternately poured on the paper, from a plate in which we beforehand mixed the pigment with a sufficiency of water, or from the palette of the artist. This one does not have to have of compartments. The ideal is to have what was formerly of use to the butchers to transport the cut meat, that is a big white butchcertray with edges. Before every effusion, an uneven evaporation of clear water on the paper is necessary to receive the diluted color and allow it to run freely on the sheet. Between every effusion, a complete drying of the paper is necessary.

#### **Stage 4: the texture**

Once depiction in the stage of the texture, there is only twenty percent of the work to be realized. It is however the stage which can set up to eighty percent of time to assign to create a work, according to your experience. By removing the gum to be masked by means of a rubber detail made by residues of dried gum, we obtain, every whites and virgins, the forms masked beforehand. The filling of these masses is made by means of a paintbrush. Several conventional techniques in the watercolor allow to obtain from the texture, as the gum to be masked, but also the salt, the scratching and the spatters. Roland Roycraft developed it two others, which are in fact techniques of correction and which give a particular effect when we use them in the other purposes: The sweetening of the outlines of the masses from which we removed the gum to be masked with a point in the felt-tip called Incredible Nib and the use of personalized stencils, in the style of a stencil, to remove from the color and harmonize the forms. The work ended time: powdery of the end of day - Malbaie, watercolor 22X30 po. Stéfanie Vallée