

# Fluid Nature

TEP Exhibition: *Utah Watercolor Society*

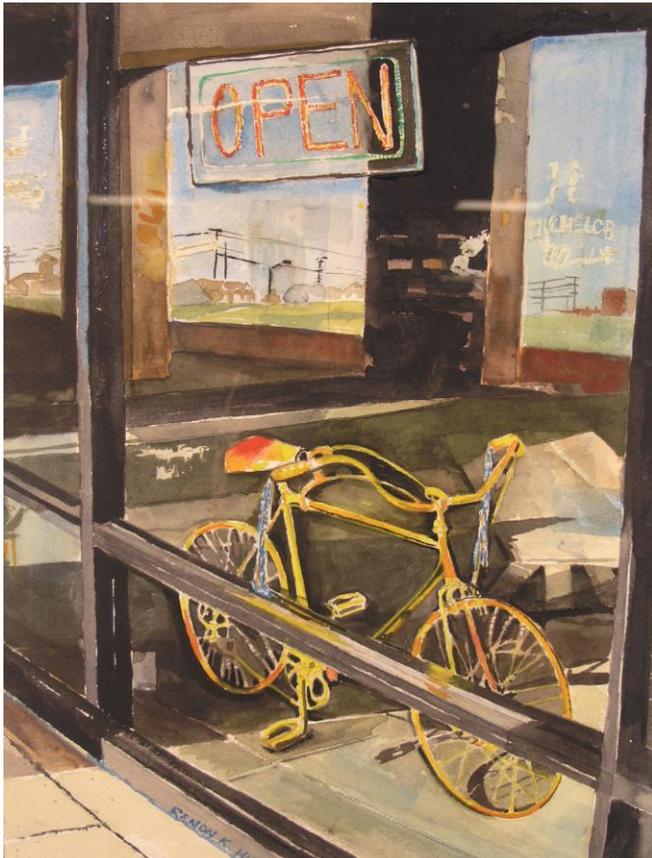
## Intentions

- Students will experiment with a variety of basic watercolor techniques and paper types in order to begin to understand the nature of the media.
- Students will examine the way in which artists use specific media types to convey an idea (see artist examples).
- Students will create an idea for a non-traditional method of watercolor painting, whether combining with other media, or trying the media out on a non-traditional surface.

## Materials

- Various types of watercolor paper with varying textures, weights and tints (for example textured to smooth will affect the way the watercolor behaves on the paper)
- A variety of brush shapes and sizes (flat and round)
- School-grade watercolors
- Cups for water
- Alternative materials for experimentation if available

## Backdrop



As students learn to work with a variety of artistic media, a critical part of the conversation is how choice of media can contribute to the meaning of the work as well as the formal qualities and the presence of the artwork. Having an understanding of media and process, and their associations and properties, are important considerations when creating a work.

The practice of watercolor is a media that is often associated an older generation of painters and is often stereotyped as a genre dominated by women. It can conjure images of landscapes and still lifes. Many new artists are choosing to work with these preconceptions and are utilizing the media of watercolor to explore new territory, as its unpredictable nature is part of its appeal.

Watercolor is unique in that it's a fluid media, but its properties can vary widely. It can be used in many ways and can require masterful skill. The fact that watercolor is transparent lends itself to a layered approach that can be combined with other media such as pencil, pastels, or pen and ink.

## Activity

Experiment with the following list of techniques to grasp how watercolors behave and the effects they create.

1. **Washes:** A wash is a technique used to create an overall tone or color to your work. They are usually a broad area of color created using multiple overlapping brushstrokes. Try creating both even and [graded](#) washes. Try these on both dry and damp paper to discover the effects. Overlap strokes as you work your way down the paper and experiment by adding or reducing water.
2. **Layers:** After allowing a wash to dry, begin to add layers of other colors by gradually layering them and finding what results after each layer dries. Abstract shapes and patterns are a great way to try this out. Watercolors will behave differently if your paper is dry vs. wet. You can begin to add representational figures in if you like.
3. **Back Runs:** [Back Runs](#) can be accidental but also create interesting effects intentionally. This occurs when water is dropped into an existing color, or two colors that are still damp run into one another, or splash.
4. **Highlights:** Highlights in watercolor are most often achieved by leaving parts of the white paper blank. Try creating compositions with highlights that are composed from blank areas of the paper. Again, basic 3-D shapes are a great way to explore this.
5. **Adding media:** Try creating compositions with ink, pen, markers or pencil. Experiment to see which run or blur, and which can create fine outlines. Try adding on top of dry watercolor, and before adding watercolor on top.
6. **Brushes:** Experiment with different brush strokes using varying amounts of water. Try layering strokes once the watercolor dries as well as. Examine the effects of square vs. round brushes.
7. **Alternative surfaces:** If you have access to additional resources, try using watercolors on alternative surfaces such as fabric, wood, plastic, or leather.



Wash



Back Runs



Highlights

*These lessons are intended to be adaptable for all ages. For younger students you can structure the exercises around color mixing and shape creation.*

**LINKS WE LIKE:** [WATERCOLOR TUTORIALS AND DEMOS @ WATERCOLORPAINTING.COM](#)

[Marlene Dumas](#) and [Luc Tuymans](#) are two artists living today that often work in watercolor and utilize its formal qualities for its expressive potential. [Vasily Kandinsky](#), who is often credited with creating some of the first abstract art, created many of his works in watercolor.

### Links to the Core

#### Visual Arts:

- Explore a variety of art media, techniques and processes.
- Experience the expressive possibilities of art media, techniques, and processes.

#### Language Arts:

- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.