

## Watercolour Techniques (2)

by Jan Colbeck

More watercolour techniques to help you create some exciting pictures. It is very rare for the techniques to use in isolation, normally you will find many techniques used in a single picture. The best way to start is to practice some of these techniques on their own, watch what actually happens then you will be able to choose what will be the most effective for your picture.

### Textures

- **Wax Resist** ~ a simple idea that can yield some quite magical results, if you draw or lightly scribble over paper with wax and then overlay this with watercolour washes the paint will slide off the waxed areas. Use either an ordinary household candle or wax crayons.

Wax under watercolour can give a quite unexpected speckled effect which you can vary according to the pressure applied and the type of paper used. It is one of the best methods for imitating natural textures such as those of rocks, cliffs or tree trunks.

With wax crayons you can suggest a hint of pattern on wallpaper or fabric in a still life group or background for a portrait. Vibrant textures and colours can be achieved with more detailed drawings with further variety achieved by scraping back into the wax.

- **Salt** ~ fascinating effects can be achieved by scattering salt crystals into wet paint, these will vary according to how close the crystals are to one another, the type of salt you use and how wet the wash is. Lay down a wash, scatter over some salt then leave the wash to dry completely before gently brushing off the salt. Elaborate textures can be achieved by building up several layers of washes and salt scattering, however, make sure that each one is completely dry before you start another. This technique is useful for weathered rocks, snowflakes in a sky, mottled under leaves or to suggest forest floors.
- **Soap** ~ mixing paint with soap is a less predictable method than salt scattering, however some exciting effects can be achieved by experimenting with different types of soap. The soap thickens the paint without destroying its translucency. The soapy paint stays where you put it instead of flowing outwards which allows you to use inventive brushwork to describe textures and forms. The thick paint will hold the marks of the brush very well and the bubbles will leave pronounced rings and blobs when they dry off.
- **Sponge** ~ glorious textures can be achieved by dabbing paint onto paper with sponges over flat washes but be careful not to overdo it if you want to achieve texture. A fine sponge lightly dabbed into paint then lightly dabbed on the paper to suggest leaves on trees can be very effective. Squeezed out almost dry and dragged will give a slightly striated effect to give a suggestion of ripples on water or hair in a portrait.

I find that sponges are essentials in my watercolour kit, apart from being very useful for mopping up unwanted paint, tidying up hard edges and making correction they can also be used instead of brushes, some artists prefer to use them to lay in flat washes, they are also useful for 'lifting out'.