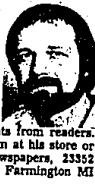


Accept the challenge of 'terrible' watercolor

This is another in a series of lessons on art and drawing by special columnist David Messing. He has taught for eight years and operates an art store, Art Store and More, 18774 Middlebell, Livonia. Messing encourages questions and comments from readers. You may write him at his store or c/o Observer Newspapers, 2452 Farmington Road, Farmington MI 48024.



By David Messing
special writer

We own a parrot named Sidney. He (or she) is beautiful, all blue, green and red, but he has the personality of a snapping turtle.

He is usually OK with me and my 4-year-old son, Adam, but if anyone else is in the family or friends try to handle him, he is terrible at worst and unpredictable at best. And this is my introduction to watercolor. "Terrible at worst, unpredictable at best."

You see, much of getting along with Sidney is learning how to handle him, knowing what to expect from him and never forgetting how unpredictable he can be. Some readers are probably thinking, "Terrible? . . . how can watercolor be terrible?"

WELL, IF YOU have ever clocked in several hours on a watercolor and an accidental flick of your brush sent a sprinkle of paint across your paper (and there was little or nothing you could do to fix it . . .) then to me that is terrible.

Or perhaps one wet color got too close to another wet area and your beautiful "Sunrise over Silver Lake" turned into "Sunset over the La Brea Tar Pits" then you, too, might mutter, "How terrible."

Now, let's consider "unpredictable." Several months ago, I painted a cute little snowshoe rabbit all huddled in the snow.

AS A FINISHING TOUCH, I painted a shadow across his back. I am not sure if the shadow was too dark or the paint was too wet, but I know it was too late and, it was just too bad for the rabbit. I sat there with eyes glazed, mouth opened, and palms sweating as a gray wave devoured my bunny in slow motion. Even though I handled the medium correctly to produce the rabbit, the unpredictable nature of watercolor caught me unaware.

And caught me, it did, because watercolor is my favorite medium.

I OFTEN TELL my students that

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they can brag about their own watercolors because much of the time it was out of their control. If, for example, you paint a blue wash into an already wet area, there is little you can do to control the spread of color.

Even though you guide it along, there is still little you can do to control it. How good it is if it all flows together into a pleasing painting.

I was once standing near one of my paintings in an art show when I overheard a teacher pointing out to his students how I washed an area, allowing certain colors to flow together, adding colors here and there, etc.

OF COURSE, I was flattered, but in truth I, myself, was delighted and somewhat surprised at the outcome. This is why I am fascinated with watercolor.

Most media you can do over and over with repeated success. If I drew 10 pencil or pen-and-ink drawings, most of them would be successful. If, on the other hand, I painted 10 watercolors, maybe five would end up at the bottom of Sidney's cage.

Now, I don't want to frighten any away from watercolor. I just want you to know that it is a definite challenge.

SO HERE IS the best way to start. First, draw your picture on cold press (rough) or hot press (smooth) watercolor paper with an "H" or "2H" pencil.

Then draw over your pencil lines in pen and ink. After your ink is dry, erase your pencil lines with a kneaded eraser or a white rose eraser.

Now, with clear water and a brush, wet the area you wish to color. As the water begins to dry, it will turn glossy to a satin sheen.

At this point, you dab in your brush full of color. The color will flow quickly out of the brush and bleed toward the outer edge of the area you previously wet with clear water.

THE WATER THAT you painted first is the carrier (vehicle) for the color. The color cannot flow any further than the clear water boundary.

This technique allows you to control the flow of color and the pen's ink gives your work a definite structure. If you are having trouble seeing where you are painting with the clear water, simply add a light tint to the water similar to the color you wish to paint.

One of the first problems with watercolor is structure. In the beginning you have water dripping off your elbows, your paper looks like a geology relief

map, and your palette looks like the bottom of a sign painter's paint box.

SO IT IS very helpful to have some pen and ink to structure your first few works.

For an interesting effect, instead of using permanent ink for your outlines, try using watercolor ink as in a fine-line felt-tip pen.

Then, when you add your watercolors over the ink, it will bleed into the color and thereby soften the effect of the line. If you wish the ink line to bleed a great amount, use the Pilot razor point (90 cents). If you wish the line to bleed only slightly, then use the fine point system (\$1.25).

Watercolors come in pans or tubes. Pans are little cakes of dried watercolors. Most manufacturers of watercolor package both.

PANS, HOWEVER, ARE much less popular than the tubes — probably because people mistake pans of high quality for children's watercolor sets.

Come to think of it, I have had a few customers take a backward step or two when they see what they thought was a child's set of 18 colors cost \$16.75. The truth is, pans are very intense in color, portable and clean to work with.

A minute or two before you begin painting, simply moisten all the pans with a wet brush and soon you have a fine palette full of a variety of rich colors to work with.

Tube watercolors offer a great variety of colors to choose from and a tube of paint is presently about \$1.40. What I recommend you do with watercolor tubes is first of all buy whatever assortment you desire.

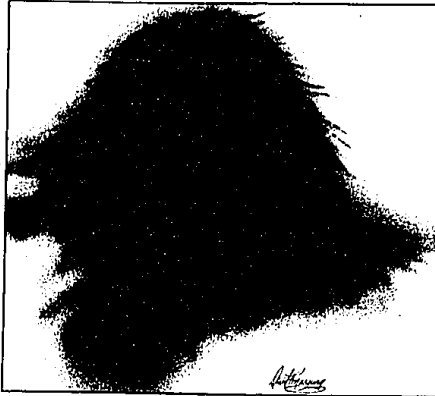
THEN, BUY a palette with many deep wells and squeeze out each tube into each well. After these wells of paint dry, you have in effect made your own pans of the colors you prefer.

As to what is the best brand of watercolor I couldn't say, or wouldn't say, that is, "The 'best' is what you like the best."

I haven't seen any brand that would make me throw away my Grumacher set. I prefer the "standard" line, which is less expensive than the "finest" series. In any media, it is best to buy the middle grade and then upgrade if or when you feel the need.

I have to close this article today but will continue on watercolors in the next installment of Artifacts.

ARTFUL HINT: If you have trouble blending color pencils together or the texture of your paper shows too much, moisten a cotton swab or paper towel with lighter fluid or rubber cement, thinner. Then simply blend as you would blend a painting. The fluid will melt the color pencil, mix the colors and push the color into the texture of the paper.



Q. Could you please explain to me what is an airbrush?

A. An airbrush is nothing more than a glorified paint spray gun. The difference is that an airbrush can spray a line about the size of a pencil stroke. It also can open up to spray a pattern from 2 to 3 inches.

There is nothing like it. An airbrush makes your work so soft and shaded that it is a temptation to use it in every media. As a matter of fact, it works so well in sprucing up your artwork, it's almost like cheating.

I feel the best all-around airbrush "for the money" is the "V.L. Paasche," which comes in a kit for \$78.

exhibitions

● CANTOR/LEMBERG GALLERY

Saturday, Aug. 13 — Exhibit of works from Multiples, New York publisher of prints and multiples, includes works by Art Schwager, Basell, Frankenthaler, LeWitt, Oldenburg, Paladino, Rothenberg, VanElk and Westelman. There are examples of various printmaking media with strong emphasis on the woodcut. Gallery hours are 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 538 N. Woodward, Birmingham.

● SIXTH STREET GALLERY

Selected works by gallery artists, paintings, prints and jewelry by Richard Robinson are on display through Sept. 24. Summer hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday, 214 W. Sixth, Royal Oak.

● MAIN STREET PLACE GALLERY

New gallery in Royal Oak includes the studio of painter Jean Zelds on the second floor of the old house along with exhibit rooms featuring the work of a variety of local artists along with a special show of art by Waldorf Institute faculty and students. Exhibit continues through September. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday, 903 North Main, Royal Oak.

● WDIV GALLERY

Black folk art on loan from Hill Gallery of Birmingham is on display through Aug. 26. It runs concurrently with the larger exhibition of Black Folk Art in America at Detroit Institute of Arts. Visiting hours at Channel 4's new building, 550 W. Lafayette, Detroit are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday.

● HALSTED GALLERY

"Michigan Photographers" is the name of the show which includes works by Amy Kahn, Martha Mardiroian, Joe Ruland, Bill Rauhauser, Larry Seider, Fae Heath Batten and Richard Shirk. Show continues through Sept. 17. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 560 N. Woodward, Birmingham.

● MEADOW BROOK ART GALLERY

Tablecloths/Wall Hangings, painted and decorated by more than 50 regional artists are on display through Friday, Aug. 12. Visitors may place bids on the works which will be sold as a benefit for the gallery. The open auction will be held at the festive "Sheets and Champagne" picnic the following Saturday. Gallery hours are 1-5 p.m., Oakland University, Rochester.

● SOMERSET MALL

Thursday, Aug. 11 — "Linda Solomon Focuses on the Famous — Chapter Two," is an all new show of celebrity photographs by the local woman, who has become as famous as those she catches with her trusty camera. Continues through Aug. 20. Open to the public at no charge during regular mall hours. Big Beaver at Coolidge, Troy.

● MULLALLY MATISSE GALLERIES

Paintings by gallery artists of boats, lakes and meadows along with new work by Clifford B. West and new art glass by nationally known artists continues through the month. Summer hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 1025 Haynes, Birmingham.

● GALERIE DE BOICOURT

Gallery selections are being featured

through Aug. 17. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Thursday evenings during concerts in the park, 250 Martin, Birmingham.

● ALLEY ARTS & ANTIQUES

Oil paintings by Sharon Soehnle will be on display through August. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 32800 Franklin at corner of 14 Mile, Franklin Village.

● CADE GALLERY

New paintings by Ann Arbor artist, Kristin Hermannson under the theme "Hotels" continue through Aug. 20. Hours are noon to 7 p.m. Wednesday-Sunday, 8025 Agnes, Detroit.

● DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

"Black Folk Art in America: 1930-1960" continues through Oct. 2. There are more than 400 paintings, sculptures and drawings by this group of little known 20th century artists. Free public tours daily at 1 p.m. Museum hours are 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday. Free admission, 5200 Woodward, Detroit.

● OAKLAND COUNTY GALLERY

An exhibit of photography, "Genesis 1:3" by William E. Dwyer continues through the month. His work illustrates his interest in light — reflections, shadows and values. Presented by the Oakland County Cultural Council. The Gallery is on the second floor of the Executive Office Building, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac. Open during regular business hours, Monday-Friday.

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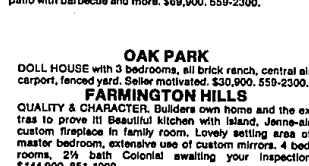
IMMACULATE RANCH

THREE BEDROOM home with neutral decor. Newer carpeting, finished rec room with W. bath. Enclosed porch for all year use. Beautifully landscaped, move-in condition. \$73,900. 477-1111.



SPRAWLING RANCH

THREE BEDROOM brick home with 2 1/2 baths. Beautifully landscaped, family room with wet bar and lovely woodwork. Many built-ins and appliances set. Fireplace, central air, patio with barbecue and more. \$69,900. 555-2300.



OAK PARK

DOLL HOUSE with 3 bedrooms, all brick ranch, central air, carport, fenced yard. Seller motivated. \$30,900. 555-2300.

FARMINGTON HILLS QUALITY & CHARACTER. Builders own home and the extras to prove it! Beautiful kitchen with island, Jennie-Air, custom fireplace in family room. Lovely setting area off master bedroom, extensive use of custom mirrors. 4 bedrooms, 2 1/2 bath Colonial awaiting your inspection. \$144,900. 851-1900.

MEADOWBROOK HILLS. Breathtaking 1/2 acre wooded private lot. 3 bedroom ranch, many remodeled features, executive type home. \$110,000. 455-7000.

4 BEDROOM, 1 1/2 bath Colonial located on prime lot with privacy! Large mature trees, beautiful yard, warm, neutral decor, remodeled kitchen, central air. Home in excellent condition. \$79,900. 477-1111.

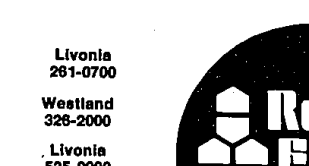
COUNTRY LIVING close to everything! This 3 bedroom, 2 bath home features a family room with fireplace (fieldstone) and an above ground pool. Priced to Sell \$83,000. 477-1111.

FARMINGTON BEAUTIFUL OLDER HOME completely redone inside and all aluminum outside. Beautifully decorated with gorgeous hardwood floors, custom window treatments, built-in corner desk and china cabinet, large pantry. \$74,900. 477-1111.



WONDERFUL LOCATION

THREE BEDROOM HOME decorated in earth tones and has terrific dining room, central air, private patio, gas grill. Assume land contract. \$29,900. 477-1111.



Livonia

261-0700

Westland

326-2000

Livonia

525-0990

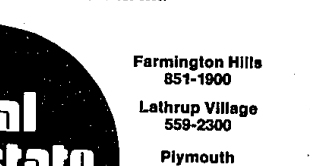
Farmington

477-1111



CONVENIENT LOCATION

LOVELY 3 bedroom brick home. Large country kitchen with no wax floor. Space in basement for 4th bedroom possible, with full bath. \$43,900. 525-0990.



Farmington Hills

851-1900

Lathrup Village

559-2300

Plymouth

455-7000

Northville

348-6430



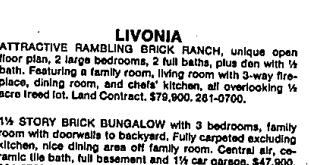
SHARP RANCH

BRICK RANCH WITH 3 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, central air, fireplace and large bar in beautifully finished rec room. 2 1/2 car garage with power opener. Appliances and recreation furnishings included. \$44,900. 525-0990.



DESIGNED FOR HAPPY LIVING

MOVE RIGHT INTO this lovely 4 bedroom Quad with neutral decor, fantastic family room with fireplace, beautiful private back yard. Washer/dryer, oven, refrigerator, refrigerator. Extra special shed for extra storage. Highly Motivated Seller. \$76,500. 555-2300.



LIVONIA

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EXCELLENT land contract terms, 3 bedroom, family room, rest, well kept. Park-like atmosphere in rural setting. \$49,900. 525-0990.

COUNTRY ATMOSPHERE, close to the city. Backs up to the park area. 3 bedrooms, 1 1/2 car garage, large dining area. Land Contract terms. \$49,500. 261-0700.

LOVELY, clean, 4 bedroom home in mint condition. One room is made into a bar. Must see! \$44,500. 326-2000.

BEAUTIFUL Golf course view from this 4 bedroom, 2 1/2 bath brick ranch. Central air, loads of storage. Livonia schools. Very unique layout. Must See! \$66,000. 326-2000.

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PLYMOUTH PERFECT starter or retiree home. 3 bedrooms, family room with fireplace (huge), attached car garage, all on approximately 1/2 acre. Clean as a pin. Only \$45,900. 455-7000.

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