

Watercolor a cool summer project



artifacts
David Messing

WHEN I think of summer, I think of our swimming pool, but there are a few things that the owner's manual never warned us about. We knew we would spend money on chemicals but the potato chip and pop bill caught us unaware.

Everyone, whether invited or not, leaves the swimming pool stare as we feed them. Everyone leaves behind at least one pair of underwear, usually one sock and a towel. That is why the Purple Heart organization loves our fall donation of sundries.

And everyone loves the free sun-tan lotion.

Here are some questions that any pool owner could ask at sometime ask:
Who are those kids in our pool?
Whose swimsuit is that hanging over the?
Could someone dive down there

and get Uncle Bob's upper plate? Are we out of chlorine already? I didn't invite them! Didn't you invite them?
But really we do enjoy our pool and the guests it attracts in the heat of summer.

When I think of summer and artwork, I naturally think of watercolor. It is a wonderful medium for location work, and if you work on the porch or patio, there is no odor, as in oils, to contend with. Remember to buy a larger watercolor palette with many wells in it.

Make your selection of watercolors in tubes. Then squeeze a good portion of one tube into one well of the palette.

One color per well and then smooth the paint with a toothpick or ray on the palette to make each color settle into each well.

IN ABOUT A DAY, the colors begin to jelly, and you have a great palette for studio or travel. If you buy a palette, make sure it has a cover to protect your colors from getting dirty.

If you don't want to buy a palette, use ice trays or mini-ice trays to hold the colors and a white plate to mix your colors.

One great part about watercolor in the summer is that you only need a few brushes. Many of our watercolor students believe you only need one brush.

It is called a black squirrel pointed mop by Raphael. This brush tapers to a pin point for details and flattens out to a beautiful wide stroke for washes.

Along with this staple brush, I like to carry a script liner and a few Bexart Artists brushes by Grumacher. Many companies make all-syn-

thetic brushes and mixtures of sable and synthetics. Many years ago the synthetics were terrible.

One reason brushes made of hair work so well is that each individual hair tapers, holding onto the paint better. The early synthetic fibers were straight and consequently dumped all of its color the second the brush hit the paper.

Well, somehow manufacturers now taper the synthetic fibers and they work quite well, especially the synthetic/hair mixtures.

Always ask what percentage of real hair a brush contains. Some displays of brushes that are really cheap say, "A mixture of pure sable and synthetics."

But I think it's like one hair stuck in a synthetic brush or maybe even two hairs. Sable Essence is a nice brush. It is a mixture of 40 percent sable and 60 percent synthetic.

SO WHAT DO YOU paint on? Well, a few years ago you could simply reply: "Watercolor paper, of course."

But now there are other wonderful surfaces for the watercolorist to enjoy. Most companies package their brand of watercolor paper in blocks.

A block is a pad of paper with its edges sealed all the way around and is, in a sense, already stretched. Blocks are, without a doubt, the most popular way to buy watercolor paper.

Although I most often use a block, I also enjoy painting on Crescent's watercolor board. This is a beautiful lightly textured acid-free rag paper mounted to a heavy board.

Speaking of boards, there are several illustration boards that are great for watercolor. Crescent's 100 Cold Press is a heavy board with an acid-free, all-rag paper that has an ivory color. Then there's Crescent's 310 Cold Press, which is a similar board with a bright glow to it.

Both boards have a slightly textured surface and holds up well to sanding, scratching and repairs.

There is a technical illustration called Line-Kote, which has a slick, coated surface. The colors never really set into the surface so you can easily remove most or all of a color. This board is full of surprises and is totally fixable, but I don't know about its longevity.

Try water color this summer — and if you go to someone's pool, bring your own bag of chips.

Isolate details for high impact



photography
Monte Nagler

Often a small area of a building, such as an ornate doorknob or ivy-colored window ledge, will create a photographic composition much stronger than the whole.

The intimacy of a flower petal or the patterns of a breaking wave on the beach are often missed in the desire to concentrate on the totality of the subject.

Short shots

There will be displays of new and used equipment and Alan Lowy will conduct a workshop on photographing models in studio settings with special lighting and backdrops. Show hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. Admission charge.

Lansing Art Gallery is sponsoring its 11th photography competition during July. It is open to those 18 and older. No specific theme is required, but all work must be framed and ready to hang with wire. \$5 entry fee to gallery members, \$7 for non-members. Artists may submit no more than three entries.

Work must be hand-delivered to the gallery 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday and Friday, July 7-8 and 1-4 p.m. Sunday, July 10. Cash prizes will be awarded at the reception 7-9 p.m. Thursday, July 14.

The non-profit gallery is at 425 S. Grand Ave., Lansing 48933. For information, call 517-374-6109.

Details of pattern, form and texture and tell us much about the subject. Isolating detail will give new perspective and impact to your picture. Details don't come through when shooting the whole.

Any environment contains an inexhaustible supply of fascinating detail. For example, in nature photography, try moving in close to isolate the texture of bark instead of shooting the whole cluster of trees.

Photographing the lake in its entirety will give you a nice scenic picture, but don't overlook the delicate reeds and lilies at water's edge. Overall winter scenes are dramatic, but isolating that one icicle will give you that special shot.

In architecture, the supply of detail is endless. Isolate a pattern of unusual brick work or look for colorful window shutters. Move in close on a section of peeling paint. Churches offer details in statues as well as the many colors and patterns of stained glass.

Can you do the same with people? Of course. The hands of the elderly or the foot of an infant will produce photographs of special, personal impact.

Other than a keen eye, no elaborate equipment is needed to isolate detail although a viewing mask will be an invaluable aid in composing your shot. At times, close-up filters will help you to move in close and a tripod will maximize sharpness and depth-of-field.

But the important ingredients in isolating detail are your vision and insight. Your aim in photographing detail should be to obtain a complete picture in itself while at the same time maintaining the flavor and essence of the whole.

Monte Nagler isolated a small section of this wall in Rothenburg, West Germany and came up with a meaningful, impact-filled photograph that carries a typical European flavor.



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