

WILLIAM VRSCAK
WATERCOLOR WORKSHOP
MATERIALS LIST

Most watercolor painters use the same kinds of materials with some exceptions dictated by personal tastes. Since this is a workshop based on helping students improve upon their current level of accomplishment, more experienced painters may bring whatever materials they already have and are comfortable with. Anyone wishing to experiment with materials that are new to them is welcome to bring whatever materials they wish. Listed below are materials I use regularly and recommend to anyone who may need help in that direction.

PAPER

More than any other medium, watercolor is greatly affected by the surface upon which it is applied. A good quality paper, although expensive, is essential. A good painting may sometimes be painted on a lesser quality sheet, but this is the exception, not the rule. *Economy may be practiced in other areas, not paper.*

Any 100% rag (cotton), 140 lb. weight watercolor paper is fine. Student-grade papers with 50% or 25% rag content will suffice for beginning watercolorists, but those papers will never produce the same effects that 100% cotton paper will. For this workshop I use and recommend any of the following:

Fabriano	140 lb. Cold pressed
Arches	“ “
Waterford	“ “

I also use:

Arches	140 lb. Hot pressed
Winsor Newton	“ “
Fabriano	“ “

Arches	140 lb. Rough
Fabriano	“ “
Waterford	“ “

These papers can usually be purchased in blocks of various sizes already attached to a hard backing and are convenient for traveling.

Some artists regularly use 300 lb. paper. Its advantage is that it does not buckle during use and can be heavily worked, but its cost can seem extravagant and intimidating to less experienced painters. I personally prefer using 140 lb. paper.

PAINTS

Tube Colors are recommended because they allow for large intense washes.
Pan colors may be used for small paintings.

Professional grade colors by Winsor Newton, Holbein, Grumbacher, M. Graham and others are recommended, but may seem expensive for the beginner.
Less-experienced students may use Academy or Cotman brand student-grade colors but will always be encouraged to upgrade to professional-grade colors as soon as possible.

Whatever brand is preferred, painters should keep **fresh** wells of colors on their palette. Although it's true that dried up pigments can be reactivated by water, they will generally produce weaker washes because of the extra water required to activate them.

There are endless possibilities for color palettes but it's a good idea to have at least one warm and one cool of each of the primaries, (yellow, red, and blue).

I use a limited palette of six colors, consisting of a warm and cool of each primary, as indicated here in bold face with asterisks, (almost any warm and cool will suffice). I may often supplement these colors with one or two other colors or I may substitute one of these colors with another for experimental purposes, but that is only a temporary exception, not the rule. I always maintain this base of six colors and do almost all of my work with them.

- ***Aureolin** (or Cadmium Lemon or Hansa Yellow) (Cool)
- ***Cadmium Yellow Medium** (Warm)
- ***Permanent Alizarin Crimson** (or Permanent Rose or Rose Madder) (Cool)
- ***Cadmium Red Medium** (or Winsor Red or Cadmium Scarlet) (Warm)
- ***Thalo Blue** (or Winsor Blue, Green shade or Holbein Marine Blue) (Cool)
- ***Ultra Marine Blue** (or Cobalt Blue) (Warm)

Specific colors don't matter much as long as you have a warm and cool of each primary. I personally enjoy experimenting with different combinations.

However, if you are happy with your own palette of colors, by all means, bring and use them.

BRUSHES

Brushes should be long-bristled, soft and springy and dense enough to hold a good amount of water. Synthetic brushes using white nylon bristles work well and are much more affordable than kolinsky sable. I use and recommend synthetic bristle brushes myself. Students should have a wide flat brush, at least 1-inch, for larger washes, and a series of progressively smaller brushes, round or flat, according to preference. My brushes are mostly flat, but this is a personal preference influenced by early painting experiences.

My brushes:

2" flat 1-1/2" flat 1" flat 3/4" flat 1/2" flat 1/4" flat 1/8" flat

#2 or #3 rigger

*These flat brushes come in bristles of two different lengths. I recommend and use the longer lengths for watercolors. They hold more water and so allow for fresher washes in the end.

The shorter length bristles are fine for acrylics or oils.

PALETTE

Any plastic palette with adequate spaces for colors, a large mixing surface, and preferably a cover to keep colors fresh while not in use will suffice. Some artists who like to work big use large, flat butcher trays or pizza trays.

BOARD

Necessary support for paper. Should be large enough to allow paper to be attached on all sides (I use staples or masking tape, depending on the size of the painting I will be working on). I use 3/8" plywood for stapling large sheets. It is inexpensive and portable. I also recommend 1/2" Gator Board. Many people prefer to use clips to hold the paper while they work. Some don't attach the paper at all. Do whatever works best for you.

PENCILS and ERASERS

No harder than #2 or HB. I prefer 2B and 4B. I prefer a kneaded rubber absorption eraser because it doesn't crumble. Pink Pearl or Art Gum will suffice. It's a matter of personal preference.

WATER POT Wide-mouthed, plastic or metal.

MASKING TAPE (or staples or clamps, whichever is your personal preference)
to attach paper to board if necessary.

PAPER TOWELS OR FACIAL TISSUES

HAIR DRYER: Not absolutely essential but does facilitate drying