

Watercolor Basics Part B

Dream Paintings with Marc Chagall

Key Words

- Resist Painting: use of a media that repels the paint.
- Flat Wash: a painting technique that tries to get a “flat” look.
- Wet on Wet: a painting technique that layers wet paint on wet paint.
- Dry Brush: using a brush that has very little moisture to get a specific texture.
- Graduated (gradient) Wash: transitioning to a less saturated color.
- Hydrophobic: repels water.
- Hydrophilic: attracts water.
- Modernist Painting: rejected past art techniques in favor of abstraction.

About Marc Chagall

A bit of background for you, the teacher, to have some context about the artist and the time period he was working in.

- Born in 1897 died in 1985.
- Born in Belarus, which was part of the Russian Empire at the time.
- He was Jewish and living in France in the 1930s.
- He didn't realize how intense the war was getting until France fell in 1940.
- He was arrested shortly after, but his daughter convinced the German authorities to let him go to avoid embarrassment as he was quite well known.
- Chagall lacked the financial resources to escape to America, the only place he was able to run to, but his daughter pressed to have he and his wife accepted into a program that brought over notable artists, writers, etc.
- It was only after, in 1943 that he learned about concentration camps, and the devastation of the town he grew up in.
- He moved back to France in 1947.
- Through the years that follow he made theater sets, stained glass windows, designed tapestries, and made ceramics. But, he largely painted, and that's what he is mostly known for. He's considered a Modernist painter.



This is "The Fiddler", one of his paintings.

This painting, like a lot of his paintings, blends fantasy, folklore, and dreams with everyday life from his memories as a child.

To discuss with students:

- What do you notice about this painting?
- What are some of the little details in it? Some are almost hidden.

The Fiddler, 1913 by Marc Chagall

1 Drawing it Out

Using a permanent marker, I sketched out a picture that had a face and what could be a thought bubble next to it. In the bubble I drew some symbols of my home, a cat, nature, and a pencil to symbolise drawing. These are symbols of important aspects of my life right now.



2 Resist Painting

Because the permanent marker is dark and not water soluble, and the watercolor paint is transparent, the marker lines still show up underneath the paint.

The red marks on the flower and the green marks on the tree are crayon. Crayons repel watercolor paint, this is called resist painting. It uses wax's hydrophobic properties.





3 Think it Out

As I continue to paint, I'm paying attention to how wet the spaces next to where I'm painting are. I left the house until the green dried so that the paint wouldn't spread into my green background. But, it was okay with me if the yellow from my flower spread into the green. It looked like yellow flowers.

4 Analyze and Discuss

See the example below for a breakdown of the different techniques I used in this painting.

This is a great time to have students discuss at their table what techniques they used on their paintings and why.



Gradient Wash

Flat Wash

Dry Brush

Wet on Wet



Wet on Wet for adding interest to the green, like subtle hints of yellow flowers. It also worked well to give my cat some nice, diffused spots

Graduated Wash for the head, it made it look like a blue sky.



Dry brush worked well to add leaves to my tree and texture to the pathway.

The final step I took was to add salt to the head. It is completely optional, but it's fun and students usually enjoy it.

Salt is hydrophilic, and soaks in the water, which in our case is mixed with pigment (paint) and as a result leaves some interesting textures.

