

Let Loose with Watercolor

(Even if that's not how you usually work)

By Katie Woodward @ramblingsketcher





Tools:

- Scale up brushes so you can do larger washes and cover more area easily. If you don't have larger brushes, scale down your work to match the size brushes you do have
- For your palette, you want to have large enough pans and mixing space to accommodate the brushes you are using. If your palette is too small, you can squeeze some paint onto a plate and use that (though make sure it's one you are happy to retire, it will no longer be food safe after you put paint on it!)
- For this workshop, we are doing a quick, loose sketch with colored pencil rather than graphite. The closer to the colors of the paint, the less likely it will be to show through at the end. With that in mind, you can choose your colored pencil color to either blend in or stand out! Stay loose when drawing with it, and have a second pencil on hand if you make any big mistakes so you can use the second one to edit, since you won't be able to erase (and the lack of erasing is part of why the colored pencil is good when you are trying to stay loose). You can also use markers for this, just make sure they are using waterproof ink.

Technique:

- Being loose starts with the line layer: try to only block in big shapes, no details. Try to do as much as possible without picking the pencil up off the page.
- When you work standing, you can use your whole arm and whole body while you work. That movement helps keep the brushstrokes fluid. You can lock your elbow to your body and move your body, or move your whole arm. Holding the brush closer to the end rather than the bristles also helps you loosen up and with quality of line.
- We're aiming for an impression of the reference photo, not a replica of it. When painting, we want overlapping strokes, but not as much true layering. Try to get everything the value and color you want in one go! The imperfections make it interesting.
- Don't be afraid to let the white of the page show through in spots. This can happen when you're painting loose and adds to the effect in the end.
- As you move from bigger sections to smaller detail, remember to keep the looseness of line. Doing these parts quickly can help you keep from being too literal with your lines. Can you give an impression of the detail using dashes, dots and squiggles? This loose mark-making helps to suggest details without replicating them.
- Know when to stop! If you feel yourself getting too caught up in detail, walk away! You can always come back with fresh eyes later. Err on the side of doing less, because you can always add more but once the paint is down, it's down.
- Remember to have fun! It's just a painting. If you don't like it, you can always try again.