Watercolor

Winter Scene Using Wet-into-Wet

Yong Chen

An EnjoyingArt Publication

The instructional video "Watercolor Winter Scene Using Wet-into-Wet"

can be viewed on https://yongchen.gumroad.com/l/cijpf

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Thank you to Lauri Shaw, my editor, for helping with the text and to Brenda Menzel for proofreading.

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Watercolor Winter Landscape Using Wet-into-Wet

Contents

Materials I Use in Painting Watercolors

I desire to make watercolor painting as simple as I possibly can. Therefore, I limit both my palette and my brushes. My palette has just three primary colors – Winsor Yellow, Winsor Red, and Winsor Blue: Green Shade. (Prussian Blue can be used in place of the Winsor Blue: Green Shade.) I have found these paints are a good balance between a warm and a cool hue for each color. I mix these primaries to create the other colors I need. For example, mixing yellow, red and a little bit of blue makes different shades of brown. Infrequently, I will add Winsor Blue: Red Shade when I need a clear purple color. (French Ultramarine Blue can be used in place of the Winsor Blue: Red Shade.)

The two brushes I use are available through www.enjoyingart.com/brushes. The first is a 1-inch, natural goat-hair flat brush. I use this to cover large areas, for lifting, for softening edges, and for blending. The second is a high-quality calligraphy brush, also made of goat hair, which I use for painting details and other fine brush work.

For my watercolors, I use Arches cold-pressed, 140-pound, 100% cotton paper. It is sold as a pad or a block. The block is more expensive, but because three sides are glued together, it can be easier to use, as it tends to remain flat while you paint. If you use Arches paper from a pad, you can use ½ inch, white artist's tape to secure the paper to your work surface.

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Step 1 - The Composition

Before you begin a painting, your story can be a strong influence on your composition. This snowy scene is very simple, but it has the possibility of evoking a lovely winter tale. Before I pick up my brush, I ask myself what can make this a stronger painting? Where should the horizon line be? What if I make the trees shorter so they don't dominate the house, but, instead, support it? Do I keep the second, small structure, or is it a distraction pulling the eye away from the children and dog playing in the snow?

This is an important time for thinking and experimenting before you begin. Many artists draw thumbnail sketches to see if one idea for the composition is better than another. Now is the point when you want to edit. Not half way through the painting process.

I am thinking I will have the far horizon line a little higher than the reference, have the bottom of the trees 1/3rd of the way from the bottom, and the tallest tree almost to the very top of the paper. I will delete the small structure and everything to the right of it.

Step 2 - Creating Texture Before Applying A Wash

Instead of starting with a pencil drawing, I am going to use my watercolor paint in a very light color to indicate the outlines of objects. I am thinking about not only determining placement, but creating texture to enhance the softness I will build into the scene.

I use some little marks to show where the house will be and then, I continue to add light texture in the middle and on the left. I want it to remain after I do a wash – the wet-into-wet technique I am using to create the softness I want in the painting.

Step 3 - Doing the Bones Before the Flesh

In Chinese painting, there is a technique referred to as doing the bones before the flesh. This is the proper method for making this painting. First, I build texture behind all the trees. I draw the roof, always considering perspective. The darkest tree to the left of the house should not be solid. To keep it open, I use a dry brush and lightly add a brownish texture in the background there. Then I add a very light blue color to the area that will be behind trees located behind the house and to the right, being sure to leave a white space for smoke coming from the chimney.

It looks unorganized, but this is only the start of the painting. Now, I wait for everything to dry. If I didn't wait, it would all disappear when the wash is applied.

Step 4 - The Wash

Now the paper is ready for me to start the wash. I use red, yellow and blue to make the color. I add a little more blue. I think about value contrast. How dark do Iwant the wash to be? I start with a lighter color, painting with lots of water from left to right. As I come down the paper, I add more red. Coming further down, I add a bit more blue. I am using the red-shade blue instead of my usual green-shade. At this point, I am coming around the rooftop. I again change the color with the same blue and more red so it is not as bright a shade. I may do this several times to make it darker in certain areas. Then, I remove most of the wet from my brush and soften the color at the top of the paper and to the right-hand side.

Step 5 - Using the Calligraphy Brush

I take my damp calligraphy brush, spread the hairs and make some texture in the distance using the very dry brush. I want only a hint of trees in the far distance.

With the same brush, I work into the trees in the foreground. There is a tree in front of the house and some small brush. I soften them. I want no sharp edges. I add suggestions for trees, leaving little gaps and using the red and blue to have the trees appear a bit more gray.

I add more color to the tree to the left of the house. It is the darkest tree. After the area has dried, I will use the flat brush to soften it. It should not be too dark, but I put a bit more color here. I draw the tree trunk, then the branches, looking for groups and then gaps. I keep from painting the area where the smoke is coming out of the chimney. Then I refine the corner of the roof.

Step 6 - Controlling Wetness

Back to the tree to the left of the house, I make the bottom area darker. Then, I begin working on the other trees behind the house and to the right. I am careful to not apply too much paint. The amount of water in my brush is critical. I want to make the tree shapes softer, appearing more shadow than defined.

 Right now, this is an exercise in controlling wetness. First, I paint the tree trunks. I don't want them too dark. I will add smaller shapes later. I look where I want the top of the tree trunks to be. I paint each of them very slowly, controlling their width and value. The trunks are painted before I paint the branches, remembering I don't have to have too many branches. I am not trying to reproduce the photo.

Step 7 - When to Let Go of the Reference

Art is not about being a slave to the reference. From the very beginning, you paint only what supports and enhances the story you have in your mind before you begin. I add the branches, controlling the tip of my brush so they are very thin. I take time to observe before I paint. Look. Then paint. Look. Then paint.

I connect what I am painting with the texture I made before the wash. If the branches are too clear or the texture is too dark, I can always soften it. I draw clear, simple lines. If I have difficulty making the thin lines I want, I practice on a piece of scrap watercolor paper until I am confident that I have the control necessary to make the branches properly.

I work from inspiration. I may experiment with something. If it doesn't work, I wash it off. The texture I painted earlier really helps to create the atmosphere I want. The trees make a nice impression. I use a little more blue on the tree to the left of the house, closing up some of the gaps. I paint the tree's cast shadow and then paint a little shadow under the rest of the trees. I squint while I paint to see the larger relationships I am creating, even when I work on a small area.

Step 8 - Taking in the Painting's Tone

The painting is getting better and better. I apply more water to the bottom and to the left side of the painting where it has become too dry. I add a little blue to the area to create dimension. I squint, looking for ways to develop better balance and harmony.

I keep everything soft. My painting has a quiet ambiance created by all the softness. I use the large brush in the tree area, spreading color softly to make the trees a little darker. I clean my brush and make everything softer still. I am careful to remove wherever there is too much texture.

Step 9 - Lifting with the Flat Brush

I want to soften the tops of the trees. To do so, I use only the corner of the damp 1-inch flat brush. This is a time for a delicate touch. I strengthen the illusion of smoke rising from the chimney. The corner of the brush can define the light shape. I am careful not to make the smoke too wide. I extend it higher into the trees. I also lighten the area where the trees are behind the house so that they don't appear too solid. I want the area directly around the house to appear lighter. Softer.

Step 10 - Painting Figures in the Distance

It is time to paint the people and the dog. I think about how big I want them to be. I look at the size of the house as a comparison. The figures add life to the painting and are important supporting elements to the painting as a whole.
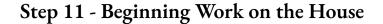
I decide where I will locate each of them and paint the boy's jacket with a little purple color. This is the person closest to the house. The right arm stretches out and down. I don't paint the cap or pants until the jacket is dry. The legs appear unusually short because the snow is quite deep.

I paint the little girl higher and to the left of her big brother. I paint her coat a blue color, but not too bright or too dark because that will make the coat color too dominant. Both her arms are spread wide as if she is running.

Her hat and her pants are a darker color, but I will have to wait to paint them because the coat is still wet, and the paint colors will flow into each other. Even though the figure is farthest away from us, I don't want to create that lack of definition.

The boy is dry enough that I can paint his red hat. The boy's pants are much lighter than his jacket, and I want to indicate that one leg is in front of the other – that he is walking forward toward his sister. So, I paint each leg one at a time, making the leg on the left shorter than the one on the right. I imagine he walks instead of running because he is taller than his sister.

Now it is time to paint the suggestion of the family dog running after the children. I use a light gray for his body. If you need to, practice painting the dog on a piece of scrap watercolor paper before you paint on the painting itself. Think about how big the body of the dog is and how much closer the dog is to us than the children are. Also, compare the size of the dog to the size of the house. Add the dog's tail last.

Step 11 - Beginning Work on the House

I start with the roof of the house using the calligraphy brush. There is snow on the roof, but part of the roof is visible on the right. I want the snow to be blue, but not too dark while the roof itself will be a gray color. I will paint the front wall of the house

once the roof is dry. While I wait, I use a very dry brush to add a soft feeling to the darker tree on the left, and in the area under the other trees, to paint the underbrush.

The roof is dry already. So, I add the chimney shape and then use a medium gray to paint the roof line on the side of the house. Again, I wait for things to dry and use a light gray to paint the front wall. I will come back later to make the little shapes of the windows on the front wall and to add the details of the foliage in front of the house.
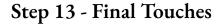
Step 12 - Adding Details

I want the house to look warmer, so I add a little red to the color of the wall. I wash the red color over the gray color that is already there. I paint carefully because I don't want to lose the suggestion of the tree and the outline of the windows. I indicate with a light, perpendicular line the right side of the house that is visible.

I give more shape to the tree and to the smaller bushes in front of the house. Using a light blue-gray, I paint more shapes and a few lines into the foreground to appear as more growth. As the paper gets drier and drier, I can create shapes with clearer

definition. I am going to emphasize the tree trunks a little more by adding more blue color and creating cast shadows. Then, I soften them.

I add a darker gray color on the roof. I decide to put more red on the wall. It is an accent that makes the painting more interesting. I put lines indicating the underbrush to the left of the house. It creates a better balance, and I add a few on the right as well.

Step 13 - Final Touches

I darken the area at the bottom of the house. I add horizontal, dark lines on the wall and put a shadow on the chimney. The dark tree to the left of the house has a little yellow color in it. I apply it and then soften it. Keeping everything soft is the big thing. Can I make the house more interesting? I try making the smoke more clear, but it might be too clear, so I soften it again. I think the painting is complete. It conveys the feeling I wanted to create before I first picked up my brush. It is a good painting to celebrate the winter holidays. You can have a lot of fun painting it your way.

If you are a member who supports Yong Chen on Patreon (www.patreon.com/yongchen), you can view the full video of this lesson as one of the many benefits of your membership. If you are not yet a member, you can purchase, stream and watch the drawing video for this painting on Gumroad (yongchen.gumroad.com).

Recommended Lessons on Gumroad

To further study watercolor painting, here are some good lessons which can be found on Gumroad:

(Members can view all full lessons in the Member Learning Center)

Use this link to visit the lesson on Gumroad.

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Yong Chen is a signature member of the National Watercolor Society. He is a professor of art in Boston, Massachusetts. He is also an accomplished author, illustrator and painter having held exhibits in multiple countries. His works are found in private collections both in the US and abroad. He is the founder of EnjoyingArt, an on-line artist community, where he is teaching, coaching, and supporting members who come from across the US and from more than 21 countries around the world.

Yong earned his Master of Fine Arts in Illustration from the University of Hartford and has 30 years of teaching experience. He promotes relaxed art-making, using a systematic, yet creative process of drawing and painting in many mediums. He is not only an expert with watercolor, but with oil, Chinese calligraphy, acrylic, gouache, digital art and other mediums covering all subject matter.

Yong's Story

Yong's journey as an artist began when his father brought him to the house of an older gentleman in the village. The house was filled with beautiful drawings, oil paintings, and sculptures. Yong soon became his student, drawing and painting every day.

After finishing his degree in art in the US, he began to teach at the college level. Being able to identify directions of growth for his students was a huge challenge, but offered great satisfaction. It required understanding where each one of them was as an artist and showing them what steps they needed to take to become what they desired.

The technological age has meant that Yong has the ability to teach people anywhere in the world. His students can see their progress every week, every month. They can share their artwork in a global art community, and they can help other people to have the same opportunity.

Asked about his own dreams, Yong said, " I think I was always meant to help other people and to share my love of art with them. I want the whole world to experience a love of drawing and painting."

To learn more about Yong, visit www.yongchen.com

The EnjoyingArt Community

EnjoyingArt is an artist community with a primary focus on teaching art to people around the world over the Internet and in local classes.

The members are part of an international art community which supports their pursuit of artistic expression. Through the use of instructional videos, member-led clubs, community support and encouragement, members improve their artistic ability and work toward their individual art-related goals.

Available Memberships

Associate Member

- Access to the Basic Learning Library on drawing and painting fundamentals.
- Traceables and photo references for upcoming demos when available.
- Being able to share your artwork on a private Discord channel

Member

- Access to the Full Learning Center
- Join Member clubs on Discord and art events on Zoom
- Use Discord for interactive conversation

Companion

- Includes all Member level benefits, plus
- Monthly group critiques
- Special lessons
- Access to recorded videos on the listed activities for Companions

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