

# Painting a Young Girl in Watercolor



**Yong Chen**

An EnjoyingArt Publication

The 3-hour instructional video “Painting a Young Girl in Watercolor”

<https://yongchen.gumroad.com/l/ubgss>

Or join <https://patreon.com/yongchen>

# Painting a Young Girl in Watercolor

Yong Chen

An EnjoyingArt Publication

Thank you to each of my patrons who have supported me through their membership subscriptions and by purchasing my videos and paintings.

[www.patreon.com/yongchen](http://www.patreon.com/yongchen)



Copyright © 2022 by Yong Chen  
First published 2022

[www.enjoyingart.com](http://www.enjoyingart.com)

Drawing a Young Girl with Charcoal

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means-graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or information storage and retrieval systems-without the written permission of the author.

Text set in EB Garamond 12pts.



## Painting a Young Girl in Watercolor

This is part of the EnjoyingArt Member Learning Challenge of November 2022.

# Contents

Materials I Use in Painting Watercolors	6
Step 1 - Drawing Composition with Watercolor	7
Step 2 - Washing into the Large Areas	8
Step 3 - Adding Shapes and Lifting	9
Step 4 - Creating Shadows and Cast Shadows	10
Step 5 - Painting the Skin Tones	11
Step 6 - Defining the Body Anatomy	12
Step 7 - Deepening and Enriching the Background Colors	13
Step 8 - Adding Texture to the Wood Door	14
Step 9 - Preparing the Head for Detailing	15
Step 10 - Adding the Details to the Face	16
Step 11 - The Final Balancing	17
Recommended Lessons on Gumroad	18
Yong's Story	19
The EnjoyingArt Community	21

## 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 is almost the same color as 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 is almost the same shade as Winsor Blue: Red Shade.)

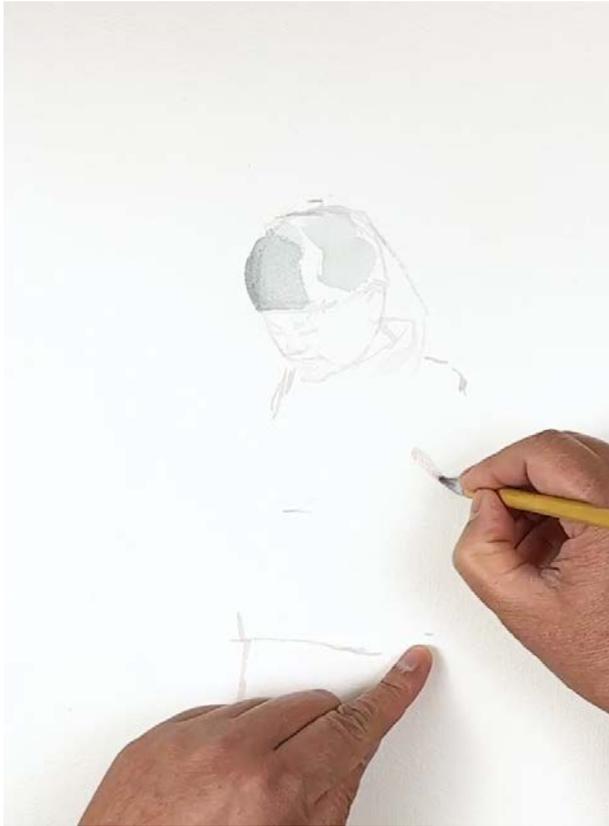


The two brushes I use are available through [www.enjoyingart.com/brushes](http://www.enjoyingart.com/brushes). The first is a 1-inch, goat hair flat brush. I use this to cover large areas, for lifting, for softening edges, and for blending. The second is a high-quality calligraphy brush, also made of 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 paper from a pad, you can use artist's tape to secure the paper to your work surface.

## Step 1 - Drawing Composition with Watercolor



I start drawing the composition directly onto the watercolor paper with the calligraphy brush. See purchase information on <https://enjoyingart.com/brushes>

With a light color mixed from the three primary paints (Yellow, Red, and Prussian Blue), I start defining locations for the top of the head and the bottom of the apron. With the comparative measuring technique, I gradually mark other key locations of the figure and the background, from large to small.

Most people appear to be afraid of using watercolor to define their composition, choosing to use a

graphite pencil instead. If you watch me going through this process, you will understand why I choose painting directly with watercolor right from the start, and the benefits of doing so.

First, when it's wet, very light watercolor paint is actually easy to remove from your paper. Use a soft tissue paper to dab on it, and the wet paint will be totally lifted away. Even after this light paint has dried, you can use your brush and clean water to loosen it. Then use a soft tissue paper to lift it off. Most of the time, I don't need to remove any marks because they are so light, and they will be covered by darker colors later on.

Second, using paint to start means you don't need to worry about pencil marks. Erasing pencil marks can be very annoying after the painting is dry.

I encourage you to attempt this process. Start using the technique on something easy and gradually move up to a more complex painting.

## Step 2 - Washing into the Large Areas



In this step I create the foundation for a balanced painting. I use the 1-inch flat brush (part of the 2-brush set) with big loads of water to wash color into the large areas.

I start from the left side of the composition, painting a medium gray color for the door. I then skip the door frame area because I don't want the color of the frame to bleed into the dark background behind my central figure. I lay the color down for the skirt and then begin painting the background.

In the background, I use wet-into-wet to let the paints merge into each other creating

soft edges. This creates feelings of dynamics and balance which are very important parts of the painting expression. Some artists rotate the painting to determine changes – to add or remove paints to achieve a harmonious balance.

Using the 1-inch flat brush will keep you focused on the large shapes in this step. Timing is a very important part of this process. If you get distracted on completing a small area, even just for a few minutes, other parts of the painting may dry and you lose the connection of those parts to the whole.

When something doesn't come out the way you wanted, just ignore it. Let it be. Continue to work on the large shapes. After all, these "mistakes" may become good features of the painting.

### Step 3 - Adding Shapes and Lifting



When the paint on the left, and the paint in the dark background behind the girl have dried and are stable, I then use the flat brush for the warm mixture color I will use on the skirt by adding a bit of yellow into the mixture I originally created for the shape of the skirt.

A tip on mixing new paints: I don't always mix my colors from fresh primary paints. Instead, I compare the next color that I have in my mind with the colors that are already in my mixing plate. I start by analyzing how much I need to add to existing mixes – more yellow, more red, or more

blue. I found this speeds up my mixing process. It is much faster and more efficient than starting from scratch.

I also use lifting with the flat brush to remove some paint in the background to lighten some areas. The lifting technique allows the edges of the light shapes to remain soft. As the large dark area is broken up by these shapes, it now looks more relaxed and interesting.

## Step 4 - Creating Shadows and Cast Shadows



Now I use the calligraphy brush to add cast shadows below the apron and shapes for the folds in the skirt, in the sleeves, the front of the jacket, and in the apron.

Be aware of both local colors and the values of each of the groups. For example, all the colors in the white apron are lighter than the colors in the jacket, and the darkest color in the apron is lighter than the dark color of the background, et al.

Having different value ranges for each large group will give a more pleasant, comfortable feeling to the painting as a whole.



For example, use the value of 2 to 4 for her jacket, 3 to 7 for the skirt, 1 to 3 for the apron, and 3 to 8 for the background.

Arranging the values in a painting is an important design process. Spend some time to listen to your feelings.

## Step 5 - Painting the Skin Tones



I start laying some light warm color for the part in her hair. That is the color of the skin of the skull. It is much lighter and cooler than the face. I also see more blue there.

I continue to paint down the forehead. Then paint the rest of the face. Three areas I leave paper white: the nose, the middle of the cheek on the light side of the face and the bottom of the ear. This step is only to create foundational skin tones. We will paint the details of the face in the later step.



Because the

human head is a sphere shape, we use value contrast to suggest the rounded form. Therefore, the lower area is darker, while the area at the top of her face is lighter.

After the face, I analyze and paint the hands, determining the difference in skin tone from the face. The skin tone of the hands will be different as it is affected by its surrounding colors. And each separate hand will be a different shade for that reason. The amount of light on them also affects how light or dark each hand will be.

## Step 6 - Defining the Body Anatomy



Often we get distracted by colors and clothing and forget to see the forms and shapes they cover.

After I have the large colors and values in balance, I start adding and sometimes removing lines that emphasize the anatomy underneath clothing.

I start by working in the skirt. Underneath the skirt, I know there are two legs. On the left side, I use the calligraphy brush to add some representing folds. On the right, you can see the knee of her left leg, so I use the flat brush to soften and lift some color out in that area in order to indicate the form of the slightly forward

knee.

Then I add some small folds to depict the arms' positions and movements, and I add the shadow shape at the side next to the arms to give the feeling of the roundness of the arm.

## Step 7 - Deepening and Enriching the Background Colors



Now it's the time to evaluate the dark area of the painting. Not every painting needs to have a very dark area. Some painters desire to keep an overall soft feeling to their work, so the darkest color may only be 6 or 7 on the value scale.

For this painting, I want to make the background darker as this may help to make the girl stand out more.

I use the flat brush to apply the second mixture of red and blue to the background right behind the girl's head, this will make a greater contrast between the background and her hair color,

and her face will become more important. Then I continue to paint the dark color to the right side. I also blend red color and green color to the right side in the background to give subtle emotional touches to the painting. This will make the whole painting richer and stronger.

## Step 8 - Adding Texture to the Wood Door



The next area to address is the door frame on the left.

I use the calligraphy brush to paint some dry strokes with various brown colors (All the colors I use, including different shades of brown, are mixed from the three primaries). The texturing technique adds a new element of interest to the painting.

As you see, a painting is created from working in many levels of development, step by step, layer by layer. At every stage of the process, we make decisions from basic and foundational to more and more complex in order to

maintain the sense of balance while solidifying our initial impression.

## Step 9 - Preparing the Head for Detailing



To prepare for painting the details of the face, I add some darker color to the lower area of the face, the shadow on the left side, and the area behind the ear.

This step is finalizing the sphere shape of the head and making it ready for painting the details.

I paint the base color of the hair, both at the top of the head and on the braids.

Then I add the small darker shapes and lines to the ear.

## Step 10 - Adding the Details to the Face



With the calligraphy brush, I start by painting the eyebrows.

Remembering the head's sphere shaped, I compare the position of the two eyebrows making sure they sit on the same curved line around the face.

Then I continue moving down to the eyes, the nose, and then to the mouth. In this round, I only paint with about half of the final value. This step is to prepare each area for my next step. I then come back with darker paint to finish painting in the dark colors such as her red lips and her black eye lashes. Then I add darker colors to the hair.

## Step 11 - The Final Balancing



In this last step, I return my attention to the painting as a whole. It is time to focus on balance. The balance of a painting is composed by these dynamic elements:

- Different sizes of shapes
- Different directions of lines
- Rough and smooth textures
- Light colors and dark colors
- Different intensities of colors
- Warm colors and cool colors

After my assessment, I decided to add a darker brown color to the background next to the face. I add some details to her braids, modify some colors to create greater intensity and drama, and add the

print pattern to the jacket. You can continue to spend time to increase or decrease dynamic contrasts to create a better balance.

If you are a member who supports Yong Chen on Patreon ([www.patreon.com/yongchen](http://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](http://yongchen.gumroad.com)).



## Recommended Lessons on Gumroad

To further study watercolor portrait 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.



[Use this link to visit the lesson](#) on Gumroad.



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](http://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

Come join us today - <https://patreon.com/yongchen>

