

# Watercolor

Painting a Boy in Three-quarter View



Yong Chen

An EnjoyingArt Publication

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First published 2023

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Text set in EB Garamond 12pts.



## Painting a Boy in Three-quarter View in Watercolor

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## 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.) View all materials at [www.enjoyingart.com/materials](http://www.enjoyingart.com/materials)



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 - Composing and drawing with the calligraphy brush



First, determine how much space to leave for the main object and how much for the background. Use 1/3rd of the paper for the background and 2/3rds for the face. Leave a space at the bottom of the face for the neck and the shirt. The collar is approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the way to the top of the paper. Draw the face using the calligraphy brush and a light gray paint. When you are drawing the outline, ignore everything inside the face.

Keep your mind open. Paint lightly at this time in case you decide to make changes to the composition. When you finish the outline of the face and the chin, put in a few lines for the clothing.

## Step 2 - Finding the facial features



The location of the eyebrows is very important. Use the same gray color and draw in the left eyebrow and the top of the nose line. The point halfway between the eyebrow and the chin is the bottom of the nose. Paint the angle of the tip of the nose. Put a straight line up from the tip to meet the line of the nose coming down from the eyebrow. Paint the nostril and the side of the nose. If a line is not quite right, you can erase it with water.

With red paint, begin to draw the upper lip. The lower lip is a softer red color. Leave the highlighted area of the mouth white. With this method, you are drawing and painting at the same time.

### Step 3 - Working on the shadows



Above the mouth, paint a little gray for the shadow under the nose. Use the same color to paint the shadow on the chin, the far corner of the mouth, and the shadow on the far side under the nose. Clean the brush. With the damp brush, soften all the shadow areas.

## Step 4 - Adding simple details to the eye area



Move to the second eyebrow, noting the angle of the eyebrows. Paint the second eyebrow even though most of it will be covered by the hair. Look at the placement of the eyes. Use the same angular measurement as the eyebrow for the eyes. Squint your eye to see the location of the eyelashes and the iris. Then paint working around the highlight and the eye-white. Give some definition to the iris, leaving the highlight and the eye-white alone. A mark on the inside of this eye is a warmer color. Add a little red to the gray color you have been using, and paint that corner eye area. Darken the eyes by painting another layer of the gray. Add the fold under the eye and the line above the eye to show the double eyelid.

Bring more definition to the nose by painting in the shadow with a warm brown color. Then with a little more red, put another layer on one side of the upper lip. Use a soft red on the lower lip.

## Step 5 - Using the flat brush for the large areas



Look for the areas that have the bigger contrast in colors first. Don't worry about the middle tones yet.

Switching to the 1-inch flat brush, mix the red color with a little blue. Paint the cheek on the shadow side with this color.

Begin working on the background. Mix a yellow and blue color with a little red. Paint the upper left corner with a very strong value of color. Make some dark purple color using a mix of the red and the blue. Add the dark color at the bottom of the green where you can see it in the reference. Below this, add some red color to the background. Look carefully at the reference before using the edge of the brush to bring the background color up to the edge of the face. Focus on the edge. Move slowly and carefully. Where the face touches the shirt, use the red to make a softer edge. You don't want the face to turn too quickly. Paint a lot more red into the background.

Rinse the brush and at the very bottom of this area, next to the shirt, use yellow to fill in the color. Move to the area you painted at the top and use the yellow here to make it softer.

## Step 6 - Working around the face



Using the very dark red/blue color, start at the top of the painting, and paint the hair on the left side of the face. Then paint the hair on the right beginning on the forehead. Keep in mind the shape of the head. Remember it is rounded. Make sure the color is dark enough. Paint around areas in the hair for the highlights.

Mix a mid-tone orange color of yellow and red for the neck area. It should have a little more red in the mix. Add the color to the bottom of the chin in the shadow area.

## Step 7 - Beginning the second round



Look at the whole face, Use the red-orange color in the cheek area. Pay attention to the shape. Connect it to the neck area. Notice the value of the color of the forehead. Add a bit of blue to the red-orange before painting a second layer on the forehead. Bring it down the shadow side of the nose. Soften it and blend it into the cheek area. Put a second layer of color under the nose where there is a shadow.

## Step 8 - Using the calligraphy brush



Note the versatility of the calligraphy brush. When it is closed, the tip is very fine and can produce thin lines. When it is opened, it can be used as a small flat brush. If you use the side, it can make a feathering stroke.

Use the calligraphy brush to soften the edges you have just painted, starting on the chin and moving to the cheek. Then soften under the nose. The brush should be clean and damp as the colors are still wet.

Use a very soft red color to paint the tip of the nose and the wing, painting around the highlights. Paint the length of the nose, looking for the value as well as the color. Connect it to the eyebrow.

If the paint on the chin is difficult to soften because it has dried, switch to the large brush, and use the corner of the brush to soften the color on the chin.

Go back to the calligraphy brush. Paint the outside of the left cheek under the eye using the red color. Near the mouth on the left side, add a bit of blue to the red for a gray color. Put some of this same color under the nose.

Look at the eyebrows. Use the hair color to darken the eyebrows. Rinse the brush. With red paint on the tip of the brush, emphasize the line coming from the eyebrow to the nose. Paint the wing of the nose with a dark red and then soften the color.

Add a little blue to the red to use under the tip of the nose where the shadow is. There is a brown color by the eye on the shadow side of the face. Paint the line to show the second eyelid and then soften the brown color between the second eyelid and the eyebrow. Mix a light orange and paint under the eye on the shadow side. The additional color improves the painting. Add another layer of red onto the cheek. Each additional layer makes the shadow side darker and darker. Wet the brush to work on softening the paint on the shadow side of the nose.

## Step 9 - Softening the face with the flat brush



Rinse the calligraphy brush and change to the 1-inch flat brush. With a little clear water, work on softening the color on the light side of the face. Soften the top of the nose and up to the eyebrow. Then add a light orange color to the forehead between the bangs. Soften the hair on the left. Move to the bottom of the hair on the right and add a second layer of the dark color, using a corner of the brush to paint the hair into the neck line. Add a layer of red color to the cheek next to the hair you just painted,

blending the color into the hair. Adjustments will be made later when the area has dried. Using the red color, add the edge of the face and the neck. Blend the color into the hair. Layer a blue wash over the top of the hair, bringing the color low enough to reach the red color you just applied.

## Step 10 - Using the calligraphy brush for edges



The edge of the cheek next to the background is very sharp and harsh. Using the damp calligraphy brush, soften it to keep it from being too dominant. While you are softening the edge, bring a little bit of the background color onto the cheek to make the face look more rounded.

Still using the calligraphy brush, put a little of the red-gray color on the outside edge of the eyelid next to the background. Soften it. On the other eyelid, add the red-gray color to lessen the contrast around the eye and the forehead. Use the red/blue color with more red and paint the nostril. With just the red color, put a second layer on the mouth. Paint around the highlight on the lower lip. Paint the corner of the mouth with a gray color. Adjust the gray color by softening it. Move the edge of the face slightly closer to the mouth.

## Step 11 - Painting the clothing in the second round



Use the gray color to paint the area where the shirt touches the face. Add more blue. Begin working on the shirt. Closer to the background, paint a darker blue on the clothing so there will not be as great a contrast between them. Note the darkest fold in the shirt and paint it. Add a little of the red-gray color to the neck where you see the shadow. Soften and connect the color to the red area.

## Step 12 - Building the eye



Use a darker gray to paint in the lines around the eye before painting the iris. Indicate the eyelashes as you paint the lines. Paint another line for the upper eyelid in a light gray. On the other eye, use a warmer gray to draw the corners of the eye. Paint another layer on the eyelid fold in brown. Paint a soft red line under the eye. Add a blue color to the eye-white area for the shadow. Then, soften it. Use the dark red to paint the transition from the top of the eyelid fold to the eyebrow. Soften the edge of the eye area by the nose with a little blue. The darker area by the inner corner of the eye creates a sense of the turning of the form there.

## Step 13 - Fine-tuning the details



Looking at the nose, paint another layer of the red color on the wing of the nose. Soften the area of the nose just above the wing with a little red. Paint a small “v” shape under the tip of the nose in a light purple color.

Add one more layer of red to the upper lip and another layer to the bottom lip, softening it. Glaze a light color in the area above the lip.

Modify the edge of the face near the mouth area, bringing the red from the background in a little bit more. Use a little blue to enforce the shape of the chin. Paint a little red on the clothing below the chin to make it feel like a reflection from the face. Paint the cast shadow on the neck with the dark red/blue color. Use the same color to define the shape of the jaw. As you come up on the jaw, turn your brush to the side to create a natural blending, dark to light, with the existing colors.

Using the dark red/blue color, paint some suggestions of shadows and turn on the clothing. Use the dark color to define the interesting shadow cast by the collar on the left. Paint a little blue by the neck on the fold of the shirt.

Move to the hair, and using the dark red/blue color, paint the movement of the hair with long, soft strokes. There is a thin hair that can be seen on his cheek. Look, then paint. Make the hair near the top of the paper softer to show the form of the head.

Return to the eyes. Mix a brown color to paint the iris area. Using the dark red/blue color, define the eyelashes and paint the pupil for each eye. The painting is finished.

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 with students in the classroom

Yong Chen is a painting professor from Boston, Massachusetts. He is an accomplished painter, author, and illustrator, as well as a signature member of National Watercolor Society (NWS). His paintings have been exhibited in art galleries and museums in both China and in the United States.

Yong has been passionate about art and teaching since his childhood. He graduated from the University of Hartford in the US with a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Illustration and has 40 years of watercolor teaching experience. In addition to using a limited color palette in his classes, Yong teaches his students a step-by-step and systematic approach to art while also bringing out creativity and making the process more simple and relaxing. Yong strongly believes that everyone can become an excellent artist if one has the interest to learn the process of thinking and art-making.

Yong is also an accomplished illustrator and author, as his watercolor paintings are used in many picture books and stories. Those book publishers include Little, Brown and Company, Boyds Mills Press, and HarperCollins. Yong is not only an expert with watercolor painting, but also excels in Chinese traditional painting, acrylic, gouache, oil, and digital art covering all subject matters.

Yong is the founder of EnjoyingArt, an artist community, where he is teaching, coaching, and supporting members from across the US and more than 21 other countries. He encourages his students in their pursuit of artistic expression through the use of live lessons, instructional learning videos, painting events, and partnerships with other art communities.

## Yong's Story

When I was four years old, my father brought me to an artist's house. I was amazed by his beautiful drawings, oil paintings, and sculptures. It motivated me to start drawing every day, and I went back to the artist's house weekly for new assignments. New homework.

Later, I dreamed about becoming an artist myself, but at the time, I wasn't clear what that even meant. I had so little experience. What exactly is an artist? I just knew that it was something that I was really attracted to. It was something I really wanted to be. This dream was the part of my life that made me want to draw and paint every day, and I started teaching art to other people around me.

Hello, I'm Yong Chen. I'm an artist. I'm an illustrator. I'm an art professor. As a teacher, being able to identify directions of growth for each of your students is a huge challenge. Every student is at a different stage of their life and their art.

For some of them, they don't even know what they want. They can't answer the question of what should be their direction? Being a professor and an artist, I am able to share with them my own experience and point them in the right direction so that they don't spend years wandering around, trying to figure it out on their own.

With my own experience and professional knowledge, I know what steps they need to take to become what they can be, what they want to be.

They come to you because you are the teacher. They sit down and listen to you, and they want to work with you. They go through a journey to define their own course to becoming a happy and fulfilled person. As a teacher, you know that if you feel good and you're doing the things that you like to do every single day, that's all that matters.

These days my students come from different cultural backgrounds, from different places, different countries. They have different beliefs and different personal experiences. But we all share something in common: an appreciation for art. Twenty years ago, I couldn't imagine that this would be my future because at that time, the only people I could help were those right next to me – because of my work schedule, because of limited time, because of my geographical location. These are no longer barriers to reaching others.

In many parts of the world, people can't get to a city. They don't know who can teach them. They don't have access to an art school. If someone loved to draw and paint, how could they see their progress year by year? Without a teacher and a community, chances are they would drop art all together, even if they experienced regret and felt a disquieting dissatisfaction at having done so.

Now, because of the advancements in technology, those people can get to see real progress every week, every month. They can share their artwork in a global art community. And they're passionate about helping other people to have the same opportunity.

There is no such thing as an end to studying art. In fact, the time came when my motivation was no longer to be just a good painter. It was more than that. I wanted the whole world to enjoy the love of painting.

If I went back in time and started over again, I'd probably still be who I am today. The only difference is I lived in more places, I worked more jobs, and I met more people.

There is really no difference in what I was when I was twenty years old. It is no different from what I was when I was thirty. I think I was always meant to help other people and to share my love of art with them.

To learn more about Yong, visit [www.yongchen.com](http://www.yongchen.com)

