



Brush Strokes



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THE MYSTIQUE OF COLOR CHARTS

When I started painting, the most boring homework was to make charts—it was even boring in the classroom. However, realizing new students needed some guidance in mixing color; I realized charts were a necessity.

So began the charts found on pages 30-36 of my book *Wonderful World of Watercolor*. I labored over the design and direction these charts were to take and spent most of a day's work for about a week on each of the 11 charts found in my book.

The word “mystique” is interpreted by Webster as “the special esoteric skill essential in a calling or activity.” This is the best definition I’ve ever seen that describes color charts.

By the time I had finished all 11 of the charts and my students in California had begun to create them from the blanks I gave them, they started begging for more. The actual mixing of the colors gave them a security they had not realized until they started painting on their next big work.



Mixing color has been a mystery for a long time, especially transparent watercolor. So many of the colors can only be applied layer after layer, with drying time in between. But unless you know the basic primary colors you really can't successfully add layer over layer. The most successful paintings are the ones that visually show layer upon layer and you can actually see through these transparent colors to the layer you have applied before.

The charts in my book include instructions on how to mix greens with a little square where you can apply it after you have mixed it. I mention greens first because they are so hard to mix to get a variety of cool and warm greens, dull greens and bright, happy greens. Also included are a shadow chart and an off-white chart because we don't want our shadows or light colors to be just gray. There's really no such color as gray because it should include more than one color to make a warm gray or a cool gray.

Get a copy of the book and look at the charts and decide whether or not you want to be better at mixing color. The most exciting result of making these charts yourself is the ability to make many hundreds of colors from the charts as they appear in the book. There are so many gradations of the colors, along with new mixes that you can come up with yourself when you become comfortable mixing color.