



Brush Strokes



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March 2014 Vol. 7 No. 3

Steps to Success

- COMPOSITION
- CENTER OF INTEREST
- COLOR AND VALUE
- COMPLETION

Can you imagine painting the creation shown here without following the above steps? Success or failure must be defined during the preparation. With good planning all one has to do is execute. Even last second changes can be made with greater ease if the planning in the first place has been precise.

This painting is titled “Umbrella Beach” and Susan Bedwell is the artist. It was a real beach scene she enjoyed with her husband and while there the idea for painting it was born. Susan rearranged, added and subtracted some of the items shown in order to get the best composition, and obviously the center of interest is the lady with the hat and the very large umbrella. However, Susan added waves breaking, birds flying, sailboats and children playing both in the water and out of the water.



Handling a full sheet of cold press paper with this skill was a tremendous job. She actually painted it twice and drew it several times before painting it. We had many consults along the way as so many parts of it were very tricky to undertake. If it could be reproduced full size in this article, the readers would see how many pitfalls lurked within the painting to trap her along the way. It took several trips to class to complete this painting but it is a total success.

And while on that subject, think of all the paintings you have tossed simply because you made a big mistake in the beginning. Did you realize that many of these mistakes can be fixed? I was just thinking about how one got to be the “Fix-it Doctor” and realized that I am one of those and self taught. My art career followed the path of several years training: art school; art workshops; continuing classes; plein air painting; and finally going into commercial art for a few years. I think that stint in commercial art was the chapter in my life that taught me how to change things. If a commercial art piece can be changed before going into print, certainly a watercolor should be receptive to change.

Recently in class a student brought in a painting that took on a transformation before she could toss it into the trash bin. I should have taken a “before” and “after” photo, but just want to point out the changes came about through using Winsor colors (paint with the word Winsor in front of the color) to glaze over areas that weren’t working. All the Winsor colors we use in class: Winsor Yellow, Winsor Red, Winsor Green, Winsor Violet, and Winsor Blue can be used for correction. Remember, they stain the colors they cover, but they are so powerful that you have to know what you are covering first. The previously painted area will show through but will be transformed.