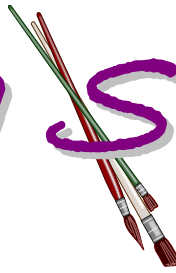




# Brush Strokes



By Mary Baumgartner

January 2016 Vol. 9 No. 1

## TAKE TIME FOR BABY

All new babies need bathing. But most of them will put up a struggle. In this case the mother is helping it to make up its mind.

This was a very difficult and time-consuming piece of work. There was so much to consider: what will the composition be like and how can it be made better? What colors should be used and how do I paint elephant skin? Those are just a few things to think about when designing and painting a sketch of a new work.



Ruth DeBusk has done a fantastic job with this painting. It could be anywhere there is water and a few wild animals. In this particular case the subject matter is so touching and so understandable. This little elephant baby has probably never seen water before and no doubt wonders what is about to happen. Testing the water with its little foot is the first step. Due to its size, no doubt it isn't but a few days old.

When Ruth first presented the fact that this was going to be her next painting, there's no way I was going to discourage her. I only asked that she draw it smaller first and work out all the painting difficulties before transferring it to her half sheet Arches paper. After drawing it smaller on watercolor paper and playing with the colors, she transferred it and the harder work began. The first job was to determine what colors to mix for elephant skin and she could only determine that by coloring the sky, the faraway hills and some of the rocks. Then the greens had to be painted in and a little of the water. This does not mean any of these areas were finished—just cover the whites of the paper to estimate the color of the animals.

The mother elephant and baby had to be different colors, and of course the light source was a major part of this composition as well. Also the color of the water as it contrasts to the rocks above was a very special result of Ruth's style. The reflections of the animals were exciting as well. The wrinkles in the skin of both elephants were critical and Ruth handled the whole thing with skill, imagination and desire to make the painting a "show stopper." She named it "Baby's Bath Time."

2016 brings in a new year of challenges for all artists and encouragement is needed from every source. Think about what YOU want to paint, what subject and the way it speaks to you. My job is to teach you how to achieve your goals. I would strongly recommend that you work out your composition before you ever place a brush full of paint. Erasures on the surface of the final paper can show up in the painting and if a hard eraser is used, it can even score or leave marks on the paper. When planning a new piece lay out the plans first on a separate sketch pad in pencil only. Good advice for 2016.