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Demonstration

Painting a Watercolor Portrait of a Child from Photo

Brushes and Colors

Brushes: #14 Round Sable, #6 Round Sable, 1/2-inch Flat Sable, 1.5-inch Flat Sable Watercolor Brush

Colors: Red, Blue, Yellow, Burnt Umber, Burnt Sienna



The initial drawing

For a portrait painting, I usually start from a good pencil drawing. This step is where I plan the composition. I sort out the perspective and relationships, the proportions and balance, the size and distance.

Start the first wash

I used a #14 round brush to start the wash from the top of the forehead and continued washing down. As I washed down to the chin, I added more red to my brush. By changing colors for different parts of the face and neck in the wash, I can create a soft blended base of colors for this child's portrait.

After a few minutes to let the paper absorb the water, I started painting the garment.

Painting the hair

When the area of the face had mostly dried, I started from the top with burnt sienna, and then introduced some burnt umber for the hair on the forehead.



Quickly, I lifted off some color from the hair on the forehead. Instead of leaving these areas white, this technique creates a soft and natural look. Next, I added a thin layer of glaze on the face and the hair on both sides, to form depth and dimensions.



Background

The background is an important part of the painting. It must work with the rest to present the personality. With a one and half inch flat brush, I first wetted the background area with clean water, and then I started the wash from the top of the paper. I laid down a yellow color, changed to blue, and then used burnt umber for the lower part. While the paper was still wet, I mixed burnt sienna and blue and blended it into the area behind the head.

Add dark colors

At this point, I like to add dark value colors to the painting to define the shapes. I started with the hair, moved to the eyes, and the corners of the mouth, finishing with the eyebrow areas. I mixed red and burnt umber for the areas around the mouth and nose. For the outer side of the face, I applied a little blue as these areas reflected cool colors from the surroundings. This is also the time to add darker color to the garment.

Proceed to the details

When I work in the details, I usually spend 10 seconds here, then 10 seconds there. My working direction is often like this: left to right for the face, the neck, the hair, and then the garment. Remember: it is important to keep your attention on the overall painting while you work in the smaller areas. After looking at the painting as a whole, I decided to tone down the background even more.



Things to remember:

1. Do not get into the details too early
2. Take a break and walk away. You will see something new when you return.

■ This demonstration is provided by Yong Chen. For more painting technique demonstrations, please visit our [online learning center](#). We love see your work, please email the picture of your artwork to friends@yongchen.com

Suggestions

Composition Workshop: Shapes

Provided by Yong Chen

Most artists are excited about our subject matter and paint and draw everyday. But after a while, we may find that something is missing in our artwork. If you asked me what was missing, I would ask you, how often do we think about composition before starting a painting?

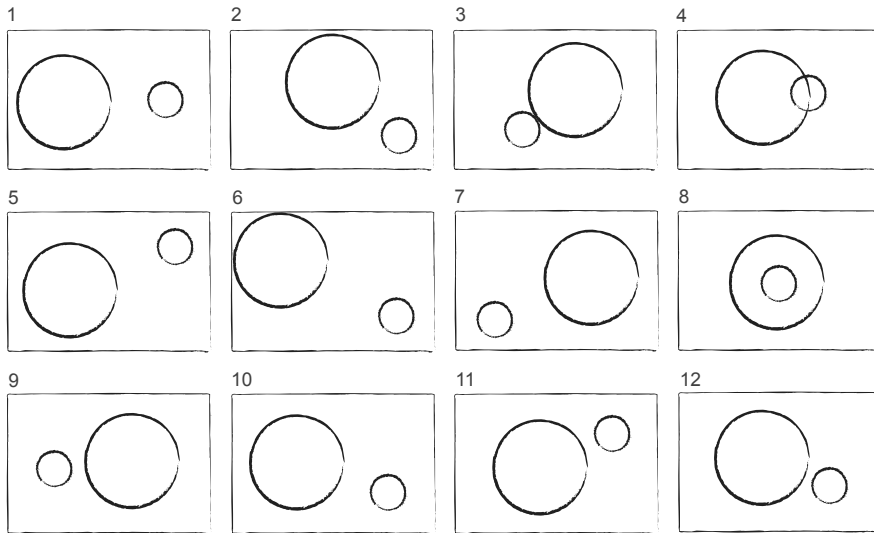
We learned about composition in school, but haven't thought much about it since. Often our creative process is more focused on the subject or style of a painting. If this sounds familiar to you, then this series of workshops is designed for you.

Let's start with the basics. What is composition? By definition, composition is the combining of distinct parts or elements to form a whole. However, what we are interested in is how we would combine the elements in our painting to form an interesting or meaningful message to our viewers.

Take two different sized circles, move them around, and play with arranging them as elements inside a rectangle.

Soon you'll see that there are hundreds of possible designs. Which ones appear more attractive and interesting to you?

Please come on by and tell us your answer. I will let you know what I personally like in the next issue of our newsletter.



What's New



Free desktop wallpaper for each month with a calendar.

Starting this month, and each month following, we will create desktop wallpaper with a calendar for you to download and use on your computer. Each month's wallpaper will be one of Yong Chen's original watercolor paintings of children and pets, evoking the holiday or spirit of each month. These paintings will be filled with happiness and life-celebration, making them suitable for both your home and office computers.

■ [Get this month's desktop wallpaper now.](#) And watch for a new one each month to come.

Instructions to Submit Materials for Critique

Send an email to: critique@yongchen.com

In your email, please state clearly your name, your age, and the medium of your art work. You must attach a digital picture of your artwork in JPG format (no smaller than 300 pixels by 200 pixels). The image you submit must be of an original work of art created solely by yourself.

We thank you in advance for your interest in our critique service, but we must also apologize because we simply can't critique every entry submitted. We do reserve the right to display all submitted works on our site without compensation or notification; however, you as the artist will receive full credit for works used on our site.

About the Artist: Yong Chen

Born in China, Yong Chen developed an interest in art at the early age of 4. A natural artist with a superb eye for beauty, Yong has been teaching painting techniques since the age of 13.

After graduating from college in China and teaching high school art for five years, Yong moved to Boston and studied illustration at the Massachusetts College of Art. Starting soon after his graduation until 1998, Yong taught Watercolor Painting, Watercolor Portraiture classes and workshops at the Massachusetts College of Art and Rivier College. Since then, Yong has been a successful graphic artist and corporate branding expert as well as a children's book illustrator. His published works include *Finding Joy*, *Miz Fannie Mae's Fine New Easter Hat*, *Starfish Summer*, *Swimming with Sharks*, and *Maria's Loose Tooth*.

Yong has also had several solo exhibits of his original artwork in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

In addition to painting and teaching, Yong works with fellow artists to promote their works in the global marketplace through www.worldgalleryonline.com.

To learn more about Yong Chen, he invite you to visit www.yongchen.com/chen