

Taster Session – Wonderment



Supplies:

Two 9X12 sheets of 140lb Mixed Media paper (I used Strathmore series 400) or watercolor paper

Watercolors in blues, greens, browns, and a pink (I used Daniel Smith Prussian Blue, Indigo, Sap Green, Hookers' Green, Deep Sap Green, Transparent Brown Oxide, Burnt Umber, Raw Sienna, Quinacridone Coral, and Manganese Blue)

Large round brush, large flat brush, selection of smaller round brushes

Palette, Water Container, Paper Towels, Tissues, Sea Sponge (optional)

Board to tape the paper to

Art tape

H, HB, and 2B graphite pencils

Tracing paper

Kneaded eraser

Ruler

Stylus or ball point pen

Krylon spray workable fixative

Matt Gel Medium (I used Liquitex)

Fine and medium tip white opaque pens (I used Posca)

Pen for the text - I find an 05 black Micron pen or a fine white Posca pen will work well



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Line drawing of the mouse



The arrows on this drawing show the direction in which the mouse's fur grows. Your texture line on your drawing should conform with the direction the mouse's fur grows.

Instructions:

Prepare the papers:

1. With the H pencil, lightly mark an 8" x 10" rectangle on one of the pieces of Mixed Media paper, and a 5" x 7" rectangle on the other.
2. Using the tracing paper and H pencil, trace the line drawing of the mouse and dandelion.
3. Turn the tracing paper over and, using the 2B pencil, scribble over the lines you traced.
4. Turn the tracing paper back over and tape it in place over the 5" x 7" rectangle.
5. Go over all the lines with the ball point pen or stylus. After you trace a few lines, gently lift the tracing paper to check that your transferred lines are neither too dark or too light.
6. Remove the tracing paper. If any of your lines are too dark, gently lighten them with the kneaded eraser.

Add the pencil detail:

1. Begin with your H pencil and draw fur lines, and the rest of the details.
2. Switch to the HB pencil and add more fur lines and detail in the darker areas. Your objective is to begin to bring form and texture to the mouse.

Paint the backgrounds:

1. Mix a medium tone wash of Indigo and Prussian Blue. Mix about a 3" puddle.
2. Begin with the 8" x 10" rectangle. Using the large flat brush, dampen the entire rectangle.
3. Use the same brush to cover the rectangle, beginning with horizontal strokes across the top of the page and moving downwards. Don't worry if the paint isn't an even color. This will most likely happen. Rather than trying to achieve an even wash, we'll create plenty of texture. Lightly lift color here and there with a tissue. Drop clear water here and there and after it sits for about ten seconds, blot it with a paper towel.
4. Repeat the previous step until you have a depth of color you're happy with. On the last pass, spray lightly with clean water and let it sit.
5. If you still need more texture of depth of color, dampen the sea sponge, wring it out, dip it in your wash, and blot over the paper.
6. Let the 8" x 10" rectangle dry thoroughly.
7. Switch to the 5" x 7" rectangle and paint the sky area in the same manner as you painted the large rectangle. This doesn't have to be quite as dark as the larger rectangle. **IMPORTANT:** On ALL layers, use a tissue to blot the paint from the area of the dandelion seed head, or paint around it and then soften the edges with your brush dipped in clean water.
8. Mix a medium-light tone wash of sap green, deep sap green, and a bit of Hooker's green. With a medium size round brush, paint the ground area. After the wash is dry, continue adding washes in the darkest areas until you have the depth of color you want.
9. Let the backgrounds dry thoroughly.

Paint the mouse:

We'll paint the mouse's fur in layers. First, we'll use brown, building up the color in successive layers. The first layer will be fairly light and cover all the brown/gray fur but we'll keep it really light in the highlight areas. Subsequent layers will concentrate in successively dark areas. At this point, your mouse should be brown (except for the white fur, nose, feet, tail, and inside the ear. Then we'll repeat the process with a gray we mix from our brown wash and indigo.

1. Make a medium-light wash of brown. I used Transparent Brown Oxide and Burnt Umber.
2. Use a #6 round brush to paint over the brown areas of the mouse's fur. Paint each area (back, side, and near leg; rear leg; head and far ear) of the fur separately. Hold your brush so the point of the brush is pointing to the outside of the area. The point of the brush leaves a sharp edge while the base side of the brush leaves a graded edge. As soon as you finish an area, use a clean brush loaded only with

water, and paint the water along the outside of the area, slightly softening the hard edge left by the point of your brush. If necessary, lift a little color from the lightest highlight areas before the paint dries. Let the paint dry (doesn't have to be bone dry, but dry enough so the paint doesn't move any more).

3. Repeat the previous step, but in each area, leave the lightest areas unpainted.
4. You may need a third layer to get the shadow areas dark enough.
5. Make a medium wash of gray by mixed some indigo into your brown wash and repeat the previous three steps to turn the fur gray. Watch the color carefully as you proceed. You may need to adjust the was to get the 'mouse color' you want.
6. Make a medium wash of French Ochre, Quinacridone Coral, and a little Burnt Umber. Use this 'skin' color to paint the nose, inside the ear, the feet, and the tail.
7. If you need additional washes of your 'skin' color to get the color deep enough. When you're satisfied, lightly add a bit of Burnt Umber to the shadow areas.
8. With a very light wash of Prussian Blue, paint the shadow areas: the lower edge of the upper lips; the chest below the head; the white fur on the lower body.

Additional touches:

1. Add a wash of Sap Green to the highlight areas of the ground.
2. Add more of your green wash to deepen the color of the shadow area beneath the mouse's feet, tail, and body.
3. Add a very pale wash of Quinacridone Coral to the area just above the ground behind the mouse. This bit of pink, along with the Sap Green on the highlight parts of the grass, brings the piece to life.

The Final Layer of Pencil and Pen:

Be sure your painting is thoroughly dry (overnight, or a good session with a hair dryer) before you proceed.

1. Use the HB pencil to reestablish the texture of the brown fur and to outline the animal, then add some 2B pencil strokes in the darkest areas if needed. Add a little bit of texture to the shadow areas on the white fur with the H pencil.
2. Use the micron pen to add black to the eyeball, avoiding the white highlight. Also, add a tiny bit to the nostril, the corner of the mouth, and the deepest part of the inner ear.
3. With the fine tip white Posca pen, add a few strokes of fur to the highlight areas of the mouse's fur, and a tiny highlight in the eye.
4. Spray both your painted pieces with Krylon Workable Fixatif. Use two coats to cover thoroughly. This is what seals the paint for the final steps. Although it may seem dry after a half hour, let it dry overnight.

Finishing:

Now for the most fun part (at least for me)—putting the pieces together and the final finishing.

1. Trim the excess from the 5" x 7" rectangle with the mouse. You may need to mark it again if your painting has obscured it. I like to use one of these three methods:
 - a. Cut with scissors
 - b. Fold and tear
 - c. Use a kraft knife and ruler to cut partway through the paper along the pencil lines, then tear the margins away. The cuts you made prevent you from tearing the top, painted layer. If you use this method, you may want to paint lightly over the white edges with one of the blues you used for the background. If you do this, you need to seal the edges with Krylon Workable Fixatif.
2. If necessary, re-mark the lines of the 8" x 10" rectangle, then mark a 5" x 7" rectangle centered within the larger one. We can use this center area to practice making dandelion seeds and decide what pencil or pen to use for the handwriting.
3. To paint a dandelion seed, draw the tiny seed at the base of the fluffy parachute shape with the HB pencil. It looks like a long narrow 'V' point end down. With the fine white pen, draw a line upwards from the upper tip of the seed. With the medium white Posca pen make a cluster of dots just above the top of this line then quickly pat them with your fingertip to blur them. Add a few white dots back over the center of the white, then switch to the fine tip pens to add tiny dots around the edge.
4. Try out a few pencils and/or pens and decide which one you want to use for the handwriting.
5. Cover the back of the mouse piece and the inner 5" x 7" rectangle of the large piece with a coat of matt gel medium (the adhesive) to glue the mouse piece on the center of the background piece. Let it dry thoroughly.
6. Add the handwriting. The placement can be tricky, and perfect centering is hard to achieve. You can write first lightly with an H pencil, then cover the pencil with pen, but it's difficult to cover it just right. I prefer to just write and accept the results as being charmingly 'organic.'

Final Thoughts:

This little mouse is the essence of innocent wonder. What an amazing state of being that is, when we suddenly appreciate the commonplace as the amazing miracles they truly are. In those moments, we're free of care and worry. We're outside of ourselves, experiencing that delicious realization that we're part of a fabulous whole.

I hope creating this piece and now enjoying it, brings you peace and joy.

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