Secrets to Creating Realistic Waterscapes

IN MIXED MEDIA

Created exclusively for Craftsy by
Antonella Avogadro

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MEET THE EXPERT

Antonella Avogadro

Antonella is a fashion designer and freelance illustrator, with a soft spot for art history. She spends her days juggling her three passions: drawing, sewing and drafting patterns, while sharing her creations on her blog *Stardust Soul*.

GETTING STARTED:
Essential Mixed Media Supplies

Mixing media can be a very fun and experimental approach to painting, and discovering how different supplies and types of paint react to each other can create some wonderful effects. It is also a great way to create artwork if you have a limited amount of supplies. For example, I only have a small beginner's set of acrylics, so if there are any particular colors I can't mix, I can use watercolors, color pencils or gouache to expand my scope.

Before we begin drawing different forms of water, I wanted to share my favorite supplies that work really well together. They allow me to create realistic mixed media paintings, but they can work just as well for any other painting style, like illustration, abstract, etc.

5 Favorite Supplies Perfect for Creating Amazing Mixed Media Pieces:

1. Watercolors

Watercolors are one of the most versatile mediums. You can water them down to create very transparent layers or build them up to create thicker washes. Watercolor paints also mix very well with other mediums and their fast-drying properties allow you to layer things like pencils, gouache and acrylics over them.

2. Gouache

Gouache is my favorite type of paint. This paint is similar to watercolors but it is opaque instead of transparent. These paints mix very well with watercolors, just keep in mind that once they dry you can't "bring them back" by adding water, as you do with watercolors. They are great for adding light or white details over dark colors. The best part about them is that they come in very fun colors, like pastels and neons!

3. Acrylics

Acrylics are one of the most common and popular types of paint. You can apply them in thick coats, or water them down to mimic the look of watercolor.

One point I want to make is that you don't need fancy and expensive supplies to be an artist. Yes, the quality of paint can differ greatly within a certain price range, which can affect the longevity of your art. But if you can't afford the pricier brands, or you want to practice with something less expensive, there are options out there. You shouldn't

let cost get in the way of your artistic expression. The most important component of the equation is not having the best supplies and paints but improving your skills and putting in the time to practice.

4. Special Acrylics

Special iridescent acrylics are a fun medium for layering over things like gouache, acrylics or even color pencil. They will give the color a new iridescent sheen that you'll see only when the light is hitting it at a particular angle.

5. Color and Watercolor Pencils

Colored pencils are particularly great for adding details in mixed media drawings. The biggest advantage of watercolor pencils is that they give you more control over what you are painting.

These are just the supplies I like to use that help me achieve the realistic style I like so much, but don't feel limited by it in any way or think that these are the only mediums for mixed media paintings. The most interesting part about mixed media is exploring and creating new and original combinations, so don't be afraid to try something more out of the box.

HOW TO CREATE CRASHING WAVES

The majestic and tumultuous energy of the ocean's waves has captured the attention of artists' canvases for centuries. But, drawing water is tricky, and capturing the movement and beauty of water in motion can be even more difficult. Don't be intimidated. With a few notes and guidance, you can learn how to paint vibrant and expressive waves.

How to Render Ocean Waves in Mixed Media

Supplies you will need:

- Sketching paper
- Watercolor paper
- Masking fluid (optional)
- Graphite pencil and eraser
- Watercolor paint and brushes
- Color pencils
- White acrylic paint and liner brush

Step 1:

I always like to begin each piece with a thumbnail sketch of the painting. Make a small rectangle with the same proportions as the final paper you will be creating your artwork on. Take this opportunity to study the values of your subject and your painting's composition.

If you want to explore your subject a bit further, it is also very useful to create a quick watercolor thumbnail. Doing so will help you determine the colors you need to mix for your painting and it will also serve as quick practice of the techniques and brushstrokes you will need to lay down on your final piece.
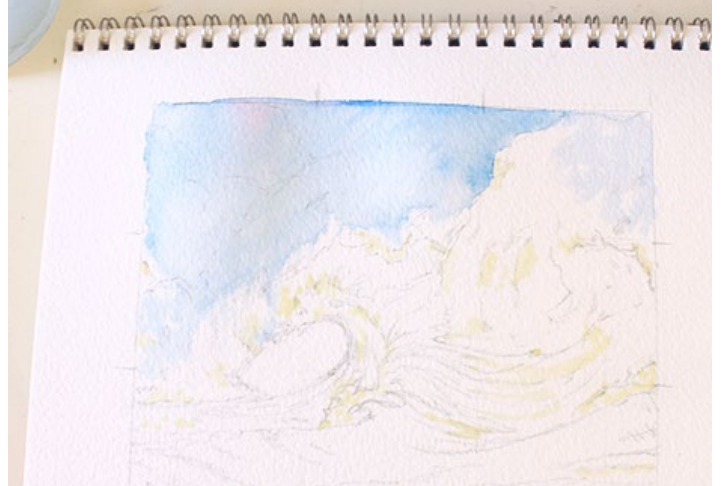
Step 2:

Next, we need to draw the waves on watercolor paper. To position your subject on the page, you can use the rule of thirds. To do so, divide the page horizontally into three and then divide it again in three vertically. Now draw the outlines of the waves and different areas of colors in each of the sections. This method is great for transferring the composition you chose on the previous step, and it also assures the proportions remain the same.

Step 3:

Now the fun part starts! We'll kick things off with a wet-on-wet watercolor technique. With a clean brush and fresh water, wet the top area of the paper.

Pick up some blue watercolor paint (I used pthalo blue) and place it on top of the wet area of the paper. The pigment will begin to spread outward. Use your brush to guide it around this area as you paint. Here, you can also begin to incorporate other colors and experiment a little.

While you wait for this area to dry, you can use masking fluid to cover up any white areas that will represent the foam of the waves. Those are the yellow bits you can see in these photographs. The masking fluid will protect these areas from any paint you place over it.

Step 4:

Continue to build up the colors and shapes with broad strokes. Let the brushstrokes find the curves of the waves and guide the shapes.

Step 5:

After the previous layers have dried, begin to add darker colors to keep building up the shadows, depth and vibrancy of the painting.

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Step 6:

Once you are happy with the watercolors you've added so far, wait for the painting to dry and carefully rub off the masking fluid from all the white areas we covered earlier.

Step 7:

Reach for your color pencils and start adding in small details, like individual shadows on the water or bubbly shadows on the foam of the crashing waves.

Step 8:

This is a great moment to remind you to always step back from your artwork for a while and take a small break. Get some tea, go for a walk or focus on any other task to get your mind off of it for a few minutes and then return with fresh eyes.

Step 9:

Now for the final touches. With a liner brush and white acrylics, paint small dots around the foam and crashing waves to accentuate their splashing and movement.

And... that's it!

Masterful Inspiration

Many painting masters, like William Turner, Ivan Aivazovsky and Vincent Van Gogh, all drew inspiration from these energetic bodies of water. And now, you can too!

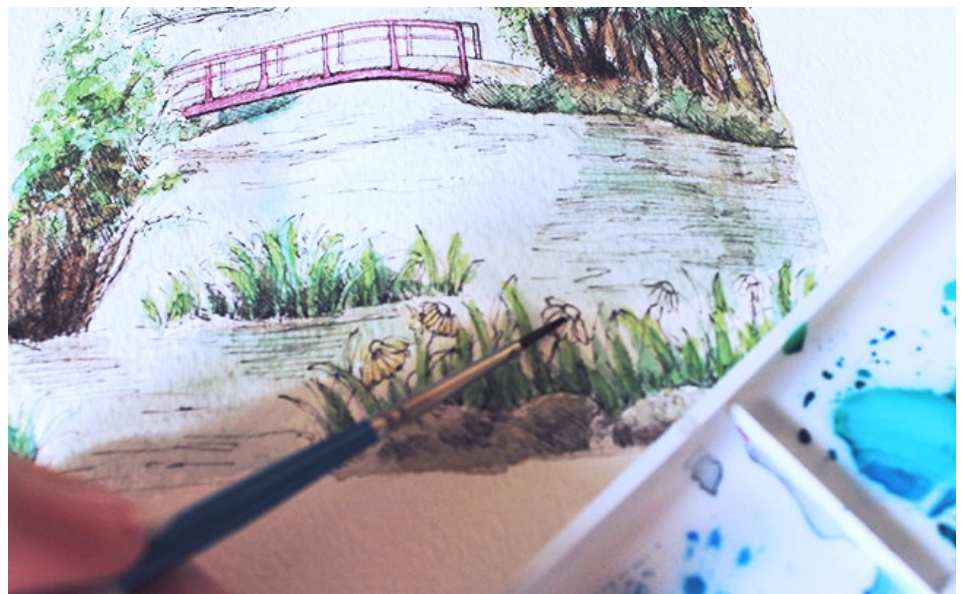*"Seascape at Saintes-Maries"* by Vincent Van Gogh via Wikimedia Commons

"American Shipping off the Rock of Gibraltar" by Ivan Aivazovsky via Wikimedia Commons

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HOW TO PAINT
A PICTURESQUE POND

If you enjoy sketching sceneries and landscapes from life, this mixed media technique with pen, ink and watercolor is perfect for capturing what is right in front of you quickly and easily, without sacrificing details.

Here, we'll show you how to draw plants and water with ink and pen and then give vibrancy and energy to the scene with watercolor paint.

This technique is particularly wonderful to use during your travels to fill your sketchbook with special memories from all the places you've seen!

Follow along as we create a mixed media illustration of a pond using graphite pencil, ink pen and watercolors.

Supplies you will need:

- Sketching paper
- Watercolor paper
- Graphite pencil and eraser
- Watercolor paint and brushes
- Ink and pen

Step 1:

To start off creating this mixed media art, draw a small value and composition study of your subject on sketching paper. This thumbnail sketch will help you get your idea on paper and organize the elements on your page.

Step 2:

Once you are happy with your composition, you can move onto the watercolor paper. Sketch the basic shapes of all the elements on the paper.

Step 3:

Now begin to add some light shading to guide you once you add ink to your painting. You can also start sketching more details while still maintaining the style loose and quick.

Step 4:

Once you are happy with your sketch, reach for your ink pen and begin to draw the contours of your subject. Focus on the more structure and linear elements first, like the pond's outline, the bridge and rocks. The rigidness of these lines will help you get started and ease you into later drawing the more organic shapes like the plants and flowers.

Create texture to represent the leaves of this plant by drawing dots and loose squiggles.

Step 5:

Finish inking the whole drawing in the same manner, making use of squiggles and lines to create textures.

Step 6:

Now it's time to add some depth and volume to the piece by drawing shadows. To shade your drawing, use parallel lines over the darker areas and use cross-hatching for the darkest spots, like the bottom of the tree trunks and deepest parts of the leaves. Create slight movement in the water by drawing lines that curve slightly like the ones you can see above.

Draw straight lines over the water to represent the reflection of the plants and bridge.

Step 7:

Now we can start painting. Reach for a big round brush and paint the water with a light translucent layer of watercolor. Using a thin liner brush, paint the basic structure of the bridge.

Step 8:

While you let the paint over the pond dry, try color mixing — combining some different shades of green and brown — to paint the plants.

Step 9:

Let the previous layer dry and keep adding thicker layers of green paint on top to create more depth and add vibrancy to the painting.

Step 10:

Continue building up the colors and shadows until you are happy with the result. Use a liner brush to paint small details, like the flowers on the foreground.

And there you have it – a beautiful serene water scene!

HOW TO DRAW A CASCADING WATERFALL

As we've already discussed, rendering water, in any form, is a difficult skill to master. Waterfalls are no exception. But you can learn to create these beautiful, cascading streams. I'm going to show you how to use mixed media for a wonderful waterfall work in a fun, illustrative style!

Follow along this tutorial to paint a set of waterfalls with mixed media, using graphite pencil, ink pen and watercolors.

Supplies you will need:

- Sketching paper
- Watercolor paper
- Masking fluid (optional)
- Graphite pencil and eraser
- Watercolor paint and brushes
- Ink pen

Step 1:

Again, create a simple thumbnail sketch to get your idea on paper and put together all of the elements of the painting.
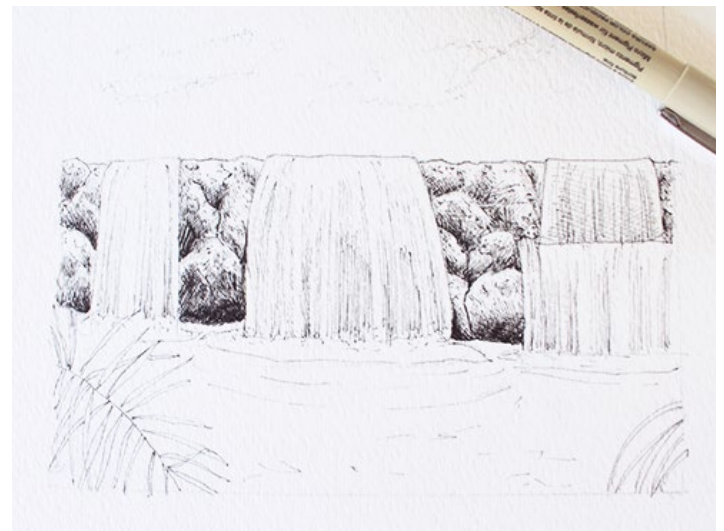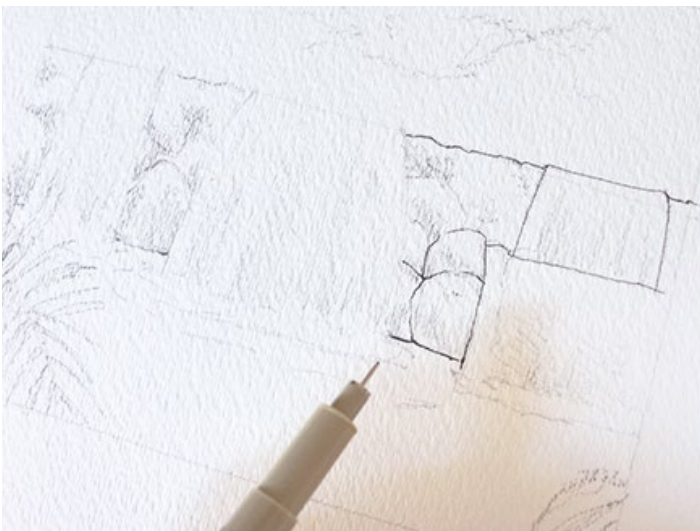
Step 2:

Once you finish sketching the thumbnail, we can move onto our watercolor paper for drawing the basic sketch of the painting. Block out the waterfall areas as well as the rocks in between, the peeking palm leaves and the clouds.
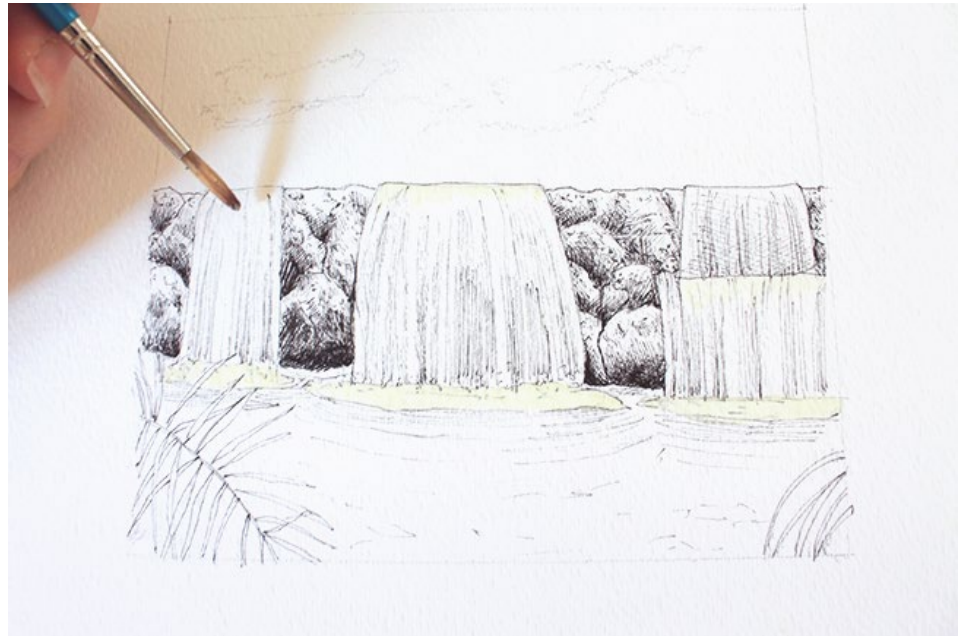
Step 3:

Now, with your ink pen, begin to draw the contour lines over the pencil sketch.

Step 4:

Using dots and lines, begin to shade the darker areas and shadows of the painting. Use cross-hatching in the darkest shadows over the rocks. Use straight vertical lines over the waterfalls to represent fluid movement. Draw small dots right where the waterfall meets the foam to represent crashing water.
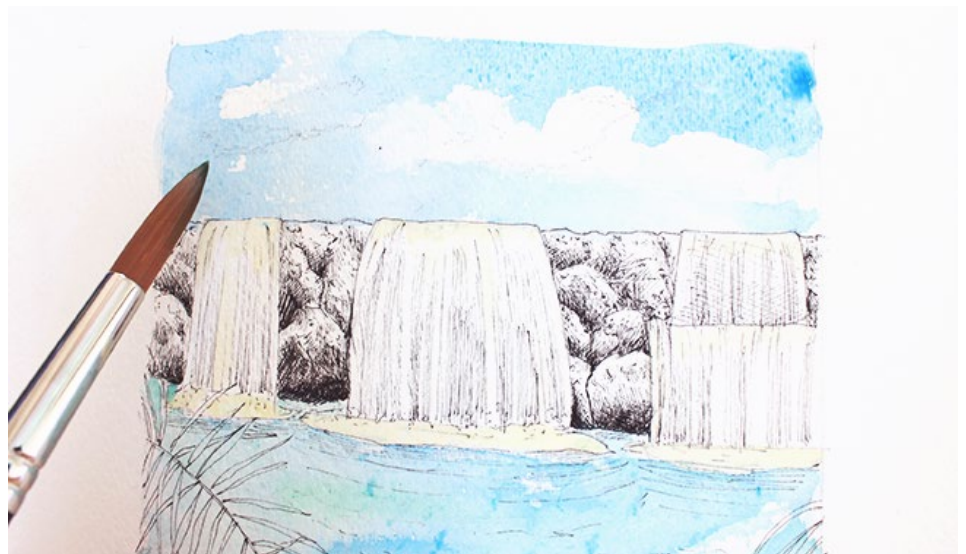
Step 5:

Before we begin to paint with our watercolors, use masking fluid to cover up the white areas of the painting: the top of the waterfalls and the foam at the bottom.

Step 6:

Using a big round brush, lay a translucent layer of blue watercolor all over the water area of your painting. Take advantage of the paper's texture, and use it to create white areas in the water, representing foam.

Step 7:

Repeat the same painting technique for the sky, making sure you paint around the clouds.
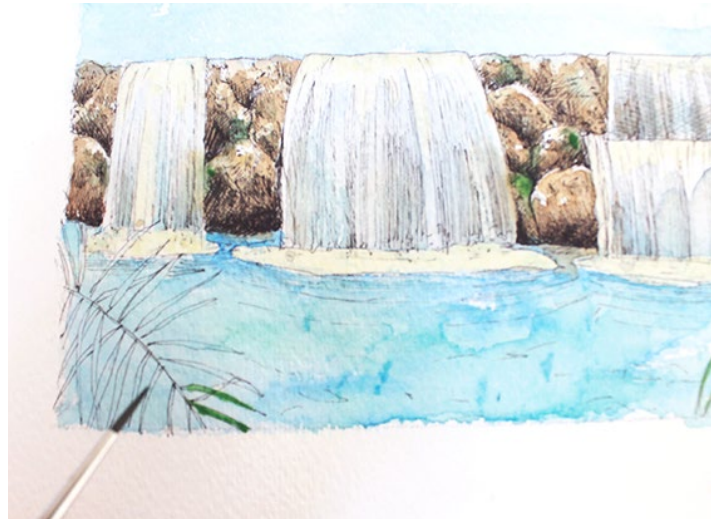
Step 8:

Using a watered down grayish blue, paint the waterfalls, leaving some

lighter areas unpainted. Wait for the first layer to dry and then paint over some of these sections again to intensify the color a little.

Step 9:

While you wait for the previous layer to dry, mix a bright ochre brown color to paint the rocks. Incorporate some mossy green over the rocks while this layer is still wet.

Step 10:

For this step, make sure the water section of the painting is completely dry. Using a line brush, paint the palm leaves.

Step 11:

We are almost done. The final step is simply rubbing off the masking fluid we applied in Step 5. As always, remember to make sure that the whole painting is dry before you attempt to remove the mask.

There you have it! A lovely completed waterfall illustration!

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A FOOLPROOF TECHNIQUE FOR PAINTING REALISTIC WATER DROPS

Water drops are one of those subjects that seem more difficult and intimidating to paint than they truly are. In reality, they are very simple and rather quick to paint too. Especially, when you know this very easy-to-follow method for painting them.
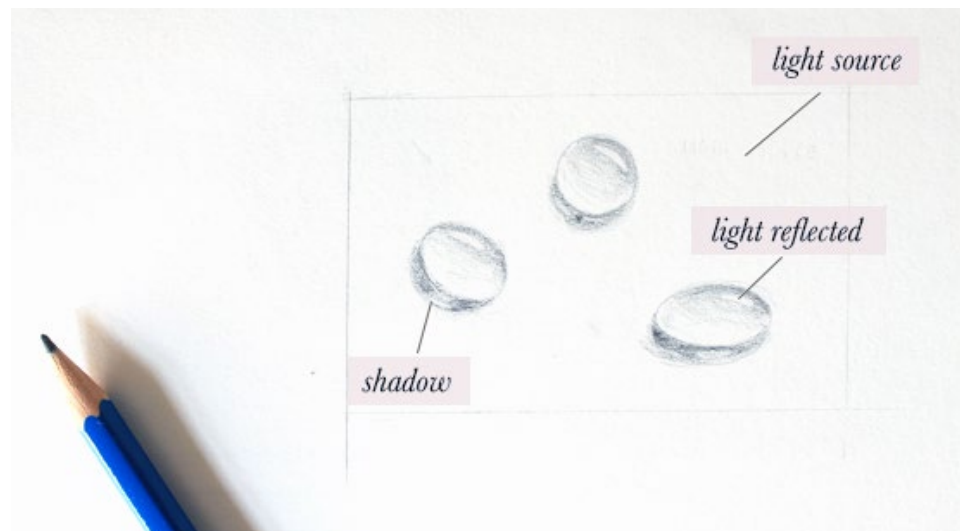
Ready to learn how to paint drops of water? Let's begin!

One of the most common places where you will find water drops is resting on top of plants and flowers on a dewy morning, right after a refreshing tropical rainfall or fresh after a watering. This is why in this tutorial you will learn how to paint water drops on three colors commonly found in nature: green, pink and brown.
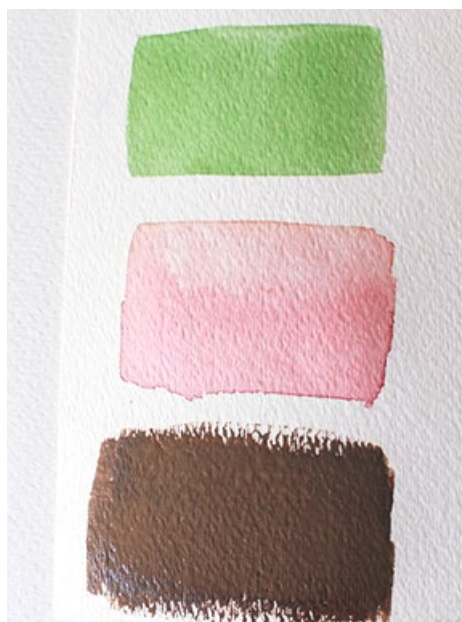
But this method is so convenient, you can apply it for drops on any other surface — you only need to change the background color!

Anatomy of a Water Drop

First, let's analyze the structure and composition of a drop of water. This allows you to become familiar with all the parts that make it look like such, and simplify the painting process.

As we already know, the volume and three-dimensionality of any object is shown through light and shadow. Water drops are no exception. In fact, these are the two most important elements, even making color pretty much irrelevant. This is because you can apply the same lights and shadows that we will analyze below over a background of any given color, and it will still be identifiable as a water drop.
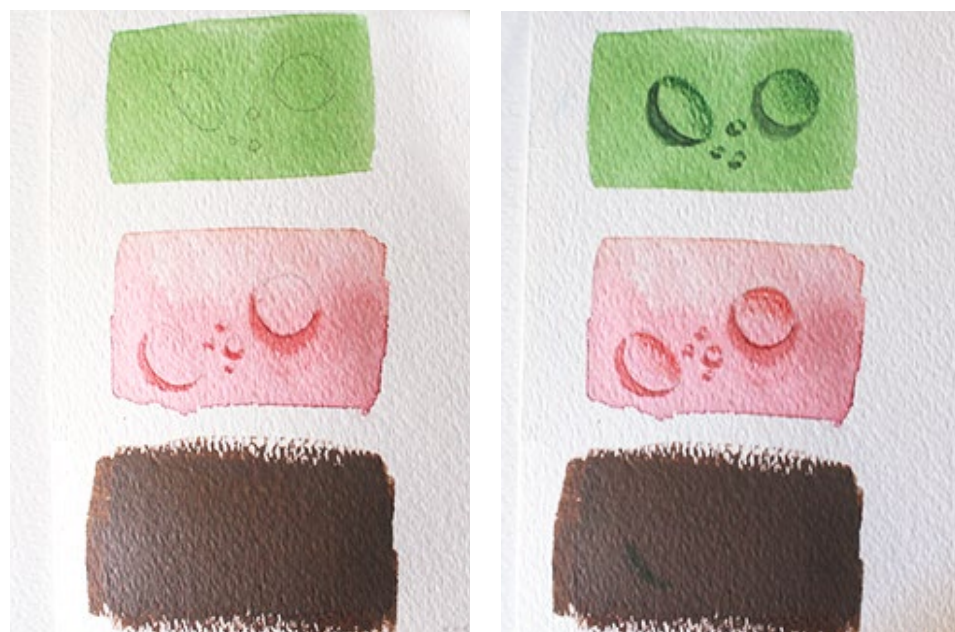
Step 1:

Begin by painting the background surface over which you will be painting the water drops. This can either be a solid color like in the image to the left, or a flower petal, leaf, tree trunk, etc. Feel free to choose whichever medium you like.

Here, the first two swatches are watercolor and the third is acrylic (you could even use color pencils, if you'd like). One thing you want to keep in mind when working with mixed media is determining which supplies you will be using on top of your background surface. If you are using acrylics, gouache or color pencils, remember that you won't be able to paint layers of watercolor on top of it. For layering, the most versatile is watercolor, but you shouldn't feel limited by this in any way.

Step 2:

Draw the shape of your water drops with pencil over the background color. Using watercolor, color pencil or any other medium, paint the shadows of the water drops by mixing a darker color than the background.

Step 3:

Use watercolor or watercolor pencils to paint, in a darker color than the background, the side opposing the drop's outer shadow, as shown above.

Step 4:

If you used watercolor pencils in the previous step, you'll want to use a clean brush and water to paint over the pencil. Make the area closest to the drop's edge darker than the inside and paint a gradient.

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Step 5:

Mix a light colored gouache with your background color to lighten the edge of the water drop that is closest to the outer shadow.

Step 6:

Using a white gel pen or white acrylic, paint the whitest spot on the drop to represent the reflected light.

Step 7:

You can also add a very faint hint of the lighter color over the outer shadow as shown on the green drops.

To recap, the top two mixed media drops were painted with watercolor, watercolor pencils, gouache and gel pen.

The third set of water drops was painted with acrylics and gel pen. I invite you to try out this technique using as many different mediums in one drop as you can come up with. Do you have some oils, markers or even puffy paint around the house? I dare you to get creative and try to come up with new mixed media combinations.

This is truly just the beginning! Enjoy more in-depth, step-by-step guidance from expert artists on the techniques you love most with Craftsy's growing selection of mixed media classes.

In *Mixed Media: Pen, Ink & Watercolor*, professional illustrator Matt Rota shares secrets to making your illustrations standout with luminous watercolors.

And in *Mixed Media Drawing: Colored Pencils & Ink Wash* with Robert Kogge, you'll discover how to create a stunning still life using two captivating mediums and unique techniques.

Or, for a fun, no-rules approach to creativity, check out *Mixed Media Essentials: Color, Design & Texture*. Expert instructor Tracy Jacobs will show you how to combine simple techniques and fun materials to create three radiant works of art you'll be proud to hang in your home.

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