
How to Make Watercolor Cards with Courtney Cerruti

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

(light music) - Hi, I'm Courtney from creativebug. I'm an artist and an author. And most nights I spend painting. And recently, I've been really in love with using watercolors, and it's a medium that people are intimidated by, I know even I am, even though I went to school for painting. But it's something that can also be used very loosely and can be very meditative and relaxing once you get the flow of it. We'll start off really easy, and I'm gonna show you how to use a stencil with watercolor so you still get that beautiful, soft effect of watercolor without a lot of painting. Second, I'll show you how to do some very simple brush strokes to create a botanical wreath. Finally, we'll do a painted pattern that you can use as both your card backing and as an envelope liner. We won't be cutting up our original paintings. I'm gonna talk about how you can photocopy all of these so that you can create an entire set of holiday cards for this season.

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- I have a lot of materials in front of me. It just depends on which kind of card you wanna make. You'll definitely need watercolor paper for all of our painting, and then you'll need some kind of card stock to make your cards with. You can also use premade cards if you have them, otherwise I'll show you how to make cards from your card stock. I also have decorative paper that's gonna coordinate if you wanna put a backing on your photo, and I have an envelope so that I can show you how to make a liner. So, gather your card materials and some flat watercolor paper. If you wanna photocopy things at a one-to-one ratio, you're gonna need 8 1/2 by 11 paper as a standard size, but you could also paint bigger and shrink it down. It just depends on your comfort level with using the photocopy machine. You also need the photos, if you're gonna make this a photo card. Double-sided tape, sharp scissors, glue stick, pencil, some kind of ruler. I'm gonna show you a technique using a stencil. This is a thin Mylar stencil that you can get at your craft supply store. And you'll need some removable or repositionable spray adhesive to use that with watercolor. And of course, because we're using watercolor, you're gonna need your paint. This is an inexpensive craft set of watercolor, and I also have a jar of water, brushes, and some paper towels.

Chapter 3 - Create Cards

Stenciling cards with watercolor

- The first technique we're going to cover is using a stencil and watercolor and this goes really quickly so if you're just making a few cards, you can make them all originals. And you can use store bought cards or you can use watercolor paper. If you want to make many, many cards and you just want to do one original and photo copy it, then work on your watercolor paper. If you're doing an A2 size, which when it's folded is about five and a half by four inches. Then you can fit two on an eight and a half by 11. And there will be a half inch border that you'll need to remove or trim after you make your photo copies. If you're working on a store bought card then there is a fold in the middle and that's not going to look good when you make a photo copy. So we're going to start on our original watercolor paper. I do want to make a mark for the center of this page so I know where my card is going to lie. I can of course use this as a template and just trace a line but if you don't

have a card then I'll show you how to measure. Using your ruler, this is the 11 inch side. We're just going to mark this at the center point, which is five and a half. And just kind of remove the pencil marks. This would be your cut line anyway. I just don't want it to be quite as dark. That's all the set up we need for this page. You do want to remember that you'll be folding the card here and here so this is like the front and the back. But I like to do an all over pattern so I'm not really worried about that. We're going to use our stencil next. Because we're using watercolor with the stencil, we need extra tight contact between the stencil and the page so you need to use some kind of repositionable adhesive. You don't want something super sticky because you don't want to permanently adhere your stencil to your paper. And we're going to spray this over a trash can or over a drop cloth like I'm doing. Just give it a light spritz and then I'm going to lay this down on my card. And how do I want this to lay? I think I just want to get the berries on this side. So press that down and then before we actually paint, I'm just going to use some plain water with my pointed brush and I'm just going to paint with clear water where all of the berries are. And this is going to allow the pigment to move really smoothly in just a minute when I add it. I'm just going to grab just a tiny bit of pigment. I want to keep this pretty light. And I'm being super loose with this. I'm just kind of scribbling almost with my paint brush. You can add more water if you need it. You don't want to over saturate it but you do want to use a good amount of water. You could of course just keep everything blue but I like to add maybe a little bit of red in there. We'll get some really pretty secondary and tertiary colors with the mixing. We can even add in some kind of oker here. And I'm just going to peel this away. And you can see you get a really lovely watercolor feel. And you didn't have to have to know how to paint berries and stems. If you need to clean anything up, like this looks a little messy, you can just kind of round out your shapes using your paint brush. Without having to respray this, we can lay this back down. And then this time let's include the bird. We'll actually line that up sort of evenly. Sill give it a good press. Remember you have water floating on the top of the stencil because you just painted so just be careful. And I have a little bit of pigment on my brush still so I'm just going to do this first wash with whatever pigment is already in the brush. This is just very free form. I just want to make sure I am getting into the actual stencil there, like where those little feet are. And again, we'll just add a little bit of pigment. I'm going to keep it light. I can always go back and make things a little darker. If I want, I'll do those berries. You can see how quick I'm being, this is not precious. Add a little bit of blue. That actually makes a really pretty sort of gray color in the mix. Maybe a little yellow in there. If I want some really dark spots I can. Some darker berries. And again, just lift. If you need to clean anything up, you can or you can leave it. This is supposed to look hand made, that's why we're using the watercolor. If we were using acrylic paint and something with a stencil brush, you would have really harsh lines and it would have a totally different feel. If you're just doing a few cards, you could of course continue to just paint original ones in the same manner. You could play with different types of stencils, try different color palettes. You could also take this and photo copy it. And because we set up our dividing line, we're working on eight and a half by 11 paper. That means you can copy it at a one to one ratio. So you just put it on the copy machine. It would be nice to load the copy machine with some card stock. You can even choose a card stock that has a little bit of texture so it looks like a really watercolor card. Either way, if you are using the original painting or you're using a photo copy, let me show you how to turn this into two cards. We already have our dividing line and we would just cut on that. You can also use an X-ACTO Knife and a ruler if that makes you more comfortable. And then remember I said there's a half inch here that we need to remove to make this into an A2 card. So let's mark off our half inch. And then I'm going to flip this over and mark the half point. So this

should measure eight and the half point would be four. This is where our fold is going to be. And instead of marking a line, I'm just going to use my finger nail and score a line. You can use bone folder if you have it. I'm just using my finger nail and then that's where we're going to fold our card. So now you have a really sweet, little water card. You can make an entire edition of these. You can use the original paintings as a really special gift as part of the card or you can even use a photo copy.

Painted holiday wreath cards

- Painting something sort of representational like plants can be really terrifying, but actually the brush is gonna do all the work for you, so let me just show you some quick ways to use a pointed brush. I'm using a size eight round. And a round brush will come to a nice point, and that's what we want. I'm just gonna pick up a little bit of paint. I've got like a big puddle of water there, and that's fine. If you use the brush on it's tip, you get a nice, fine line. And if you start on the tip and then press down and lift again, you get something that looks-- Oh, look at that. Really similar to a leaf shape. So you can practice this. That's pretty much the only movement we need to know is that sort of leaf shape. I'm just picking up a little bit of paint and I'm working larger than my card is gonna be. I feel like it's easier to work bigger for this. And you can always reduce it down in your photocopy. And to start, if this is your first time, it might be nice to just roughly give yourself a circle to work with, like super rough, kind of like a sketch. This can be part of your design. You can always go darker. Getting a lot of water, gonna do this in blue, just gonna add a few leaves. I'm putting some on the inside of the circle and some on the outside of the circle. I'm sort of evenly dispersing them. I'm using the brush more on its tip to give some of these finer lines. Let's add some green in here so it's not just all icy blue. Again, lots and lots of water. Let the water and the paint interact, just adding little tiny leaves. And you can make this really dense or more sparse. Maybe just add some darker pigment in there. And while this is wet, I'm not worried about it drying or anything, I'm just gonna add a few berries using red. And this, I'm not gonna press down and make a leaf shape because they're berries. I'm gonna use it kind of more like a pencil. Just loosely creating a little berry shape. You could do two there, maybe have one here. Get more pigment when you need it. Let's add maybe another one there, do a little group of three. We could just have one here. You can even rotate this. One there. Don't have to actually be coming from anything. This is more an abstracted version of a wreath. If that bothers you, you can always go back in, just draw some little tiny vines or branches. So I have one, two, three, four groupings. Let's add just one other berry somewhere, so that we have an odd number. Let's just add one single one there. If there's any part that you want to pick up, you can use your paper towel and just blot. Don't worry too much about puddling or mixing of colors, that's the beauty of watercolor. Also you have to remember this is going to dry a little lighter. And when you make a photocopy, it most likely will be even a shade lighter, as well. So a little darker is better 'cause you can always adjust it on the photocopy machine. If you're using your originals, that's fine too. Just know that it will dry a tad lighter, as well. Once your painting has dried, you can add a photo to the center and then photocopy them together. I already have a printed photograph. Just using some double-sided tape, I'm gonna add this photo of my friend's little boys right to the center. And then I can actually photocopy this all together and then play with the size. Already this is a square card, which I really like. If you are doing square, that requires extra postage, but you could also shrink this down and put it on a five-by-seven card and then have text at the bottom. I have a couple photocopies I've made. Here's one at 100%, so I painted this wreath at that size. And then here's another one at 80%. So you can play with the photocopy machine and get the

sizing that you like. Again, photocopy it on card stock and then cut it down.

Variations and envelope liners

- A type of card that's really popular, especially to put a photo on top of is a flat card which means it's not a card that opens, it's just a single backing, and it usually has a photo on it and then something like happy holidays and your family's name. The common size for that kind of a card is a five by seven or an A7. So I have an eight and a half by 11 watercolor paper that I've just marked out with two five by seven squares, so I can get two cards out of this. I'm gonna show you how to paint and these lines will be your cut lines, if this is your original or if it's your photo copy. This time we're gonna try something a little more fun and loose than the wreath that we did earlier. I'm gonna show you how to do like, a really simple and easy snowflake pattern. I'm gonna start with a light blue. And I'm just gonna make really loose sort of star shapes. And I'm painting over both cards at once, and I'm gonna go right off the edge. This will make this look like an all over pattern. You don't want anything that looks like you just kept everything right in the center, we're trying to make an all over pattern, like a printed piece of paper. These are just little Xs or stars. Let's do a new color. And then for a snowflake, we're gonna do an X. Like we've been doing. Yep. And then we'll add one more line so that you have those six little illustrations. And then using just the tip of your brush, you're going to paint from that center line out just these little tiny wisps. And do another one over here. You can practice with how much you press, how much water, how much pigment, these are really super free form, which is what makes it fun to paint. Let's do a really tiny one here. Just a little guy. Just want to give that feeling of snowflakes. And every snowflake is different, so that's gonna help you when you're painting. Not be attached or make you feel like things have to be perfect. Let's try another shape, and be careful not to smear your hand across anything that might still be wet, so you can rotate the page if that helps. This one I'm gonna do kind of like a little V, and we'll do another one facing that. And one coming off from the side. And another one, and you could fill in the middle if you wanted, leave it open, and then we'll just add a vertical stroke, another stroke there, and then add like, little crosses coming off of these. And let's add two more little strokes to fill in those spaces. What's nice about these snowflakes is you can just kind of paint from the center out, so if you want to add another stroke, you can mirror it on the other side. It's very easy. Let's do one more shape, and remember as you're painting, to just kind of like, sprinkle these throughout and make sure they go over the page, make sure they cross your lines. It's gonna give you something that looks really cohesive and not like you just centered everything in the center and were kind of afraid to paint, your photo's going to go over the center anyway. This one's gonna be like, a little flower. And then add a cross. And then just little like, hatch mark. Let's try another one over here. Flower. So just a four petal flower, very loose. Little vertical out from in between each petal. And then like a little cross. And just kind of fill in any spaces, until you have a pattern that you're happy with. You can just set that aside to dry, and I'm gonna show you how to do these really easy Vs that are a cool pattern but they also remind me sort of like a knit stitch so it's very cozy and really, really easy to paint. So add some water, pick up some pigment, and just starting at the edge, I'm not gonna go over the edge because sometimes it's hard to paint this V shape over the edge, so we'll probably trim away there and that's fine. And we're just literally doing like U or a V shape and you don't have to pick up more pigment right away. Just kind of as it's getting too light, then you can come back and get more pigment. They can bleed into one another, you can switch your blues as you go, pick up a new blue. Mix them, it's just a super fun, such a quick motion. You can even do like a little pop stitch. Like, let's say do three little ones in red. And then go back to your blue after, and that's fun

too. Just to do a little accent. And you would just keep painting until you have the entire page covered in your little knit stitches. And you can use the originals for this or you can make a photo copy and then cut it down to your five by seven size if you want to make an A7 card. We've got a couple here that I did. Here's a photo copy of my snowflakes, and here's a knit stitch that I did vertically because I'm gonna show you how to make that into an envelope liner. You want to do the horizontal if you're making cards, and something vertical for an envelope liner. So working with these, let's cut out one of our A7 cards, just gonna cut down my photo copy that I printed on card stock. And that's gonna be our backing for our card. And I have my photo here. And if you like, you can take a contrasting color and mount your photo on that first before attaching it to your card. I'm just gonna use some double sided tape, place that on the back of the photo. And just kind of eyeball, probably something like between an eighth and a quarter inch. You could, of course, use your paper trimmer if you have one, you can hand cut this, whatever you're most comfortable with. Your inclination might be to put it right in the center but I actually would move it up into the top half of the card, that way you have room at the bottom to hand write your message, and you can attach it in the same way, just using your double sided tape. And you can just write your message there. I want to show you one last thing. To add an envelope liner, you can use a solid paper for this but it's also really fun to use one of those patterns that you've painted. I've got an A7 envelope and a copy of our knit print. On the vertical this time, because we need something the length of our envelope. And it's not printed on a heavy stock, so not a card stock, just the regular photocopy paper, it's a bond paper weight. And you don't need a template for this, but you do need the envelope you plan to use for your mailing. Every envelope label has a different shape, so you need to make a liner that matches the envelope you're actually gonna use. Flip your paper over so that you're drawing on the back side. And then you're just gonna trace your envelope. Again, this is super loose, we're not doing anything really fancy here. And I'm gonna cut about a quarter of an inch all the way around, but in from the line that we just drew so it'll fit inside and that you'll have room for that adhesive on the actual envelope label to still show. And your liner doesn't have to go all the way down to the bottom of your envelope, but you do want it to be in there at least a third or two thirds of the way so that it doesn't pop up when someone pulls out a card. Just make sure that fits. That's totally fine. And this part's easy, you're just going to shimmy your liner inside. And line it up. With both layers, nothing's attached yet, but with both layers you're just gonna fold down your label. And then this has this perfect fold in it. Use your glue stick and just run some glue along the label. And then place it back down. And that'll keep everything in, there's no need to glue the bottom, it's just that upper label that you're gluing in. And then you can tuck your card inside, perfect! Here's another one where I just did a solid red liner in this aqua card, and this one has a matching card and envelope liner. Again with the border. What's so rewarding about this process is that the watercolor is really freeform, but when you photocopy it and cut it and layer it all together you have these really beautiful cards that totally have that hand made feel even if you've made dozens of copies. And they're really special to receive in the mail and yours is gonna be the best one on the fridge.