



Community Outreach

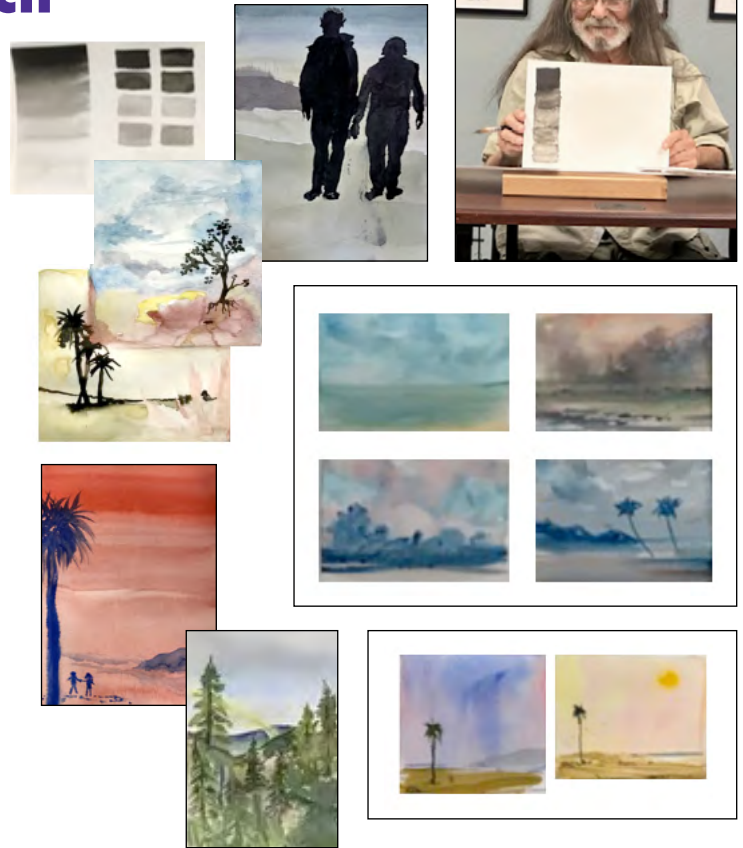
We've Got Values!

This group of veterans is extra special. New vets are welcome, but the core group has been together for more than 25 years. CWA has been painting with them for over seven years. We know each other's stories and, when the chips are down, we've got each other's backs. Painting together allows our minds freedom from some otherwise dark places. People who may look rough around the edges show their big hearts with us. Kindness and empathy are just a few of the values I've witnessed.

Values as a concept in paintings sound so simple, but can become elusive especially when working in color. The May Veteran Center gathering began with two exercises to further our knowledge of values; then went on to create a ground/figure painting.

The first exercise was a gradated wash with the goal of creating five distinct gradations. Michael worked his wash on Zoom and for the class by moving thick to thin...dark to light. He mixed a thick puddle of pigment and lay that down on the paper making sure there was a good size bead at the base of his stroke. Then he added water to his brush, and back to his paper overlapping the bead of water/pigment. Back to the puddle he moved down the paper. Using a steep angle on his painting board, and adding water-thinned pigment, a beautiful dark-to-light wash flowed down the page.

I had just taken a workshop from Uma Kelkar, so I followed her method and worked from thin to thick and light to dark. Starting with a medium mix of pigment and working into a section of damp paper, I added pigment as I moved down the page to darker and thicker. Both techniques are worth practicing as different situations demand different techniques.



Both techniques require the board to be angled in order for gravity to pull the pigment/water mixture down the paper.

Having completed the gradated wash, we noted where values 1-5 appeared with a pencil in the margin. For the second exercise, we drew six 2 x 2-inch boxes. Then, like a bingo game, I called out randomly one of the numbers between 1 and 5 and everyone painted that value in a box they had drawn. This lesson was learning how to shift from value 3 to 1 to 4 rapidly as one would have to when painting a painting. (Once again, courtesy of Uma Kelkar.)

The final project was a ground/figure painting. As Michael explained, a ground/figure composition is one in which the figure (subject) stands out clearly from the ground (background). Often the figure stands out due to the value contrast. We had refreshed our knowledge of values and were ready to paint.

We all washed in a background and let that dry. Then worked on the figure, and subject. For some the figure was palm trees and people; for others, a forest was the figure; and still others people were the figures. When finished all the works were taped to a white board and we talked about the work.

This had been a challenging fast-paced class, and we were happy and surprised by our success. Everyone left looking forward to our next adventure in watercolor and holding those of us whose chips are down in our hearts.

Sheila Cain

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