

DRYBRUSH

In the drybrush technique, a small amount of thick color is picked up on a brush which is skimmed lightly over a *dry* painting surface. The paint catches on the raised "tooth" of the paper or canvas and leaves tiny speckles of the ground, or the underlying color, showing through. The ragged, broken quality of a drybrush stroke is very expressive, and there are many subjects that lend themselves to drybrush treatment. The technique can be used to portray the coarse texture of the weathered surfaces of rock, stone, and wood for example. Loose drybrush strokes convey a sense of movement when painting delicate subjects such as grass, hair, or the foam of a breaking wave.

Drybrush allows you to suggest detail and texture with minimal brushwork; in waterscapes, for example, a deft stroke of dry color that leaves the white ground showing through can convey the sparkle of sunlight on water with the utmost economy. This quality is particularly useful in watercolor painting, which relies on freshness and simplicity of execution (though drybrush works equally well in all media).

Never labor drybrush strokes: use quick, confident movements. The technique works best on a rough-textured ground which helps to break up the paint.

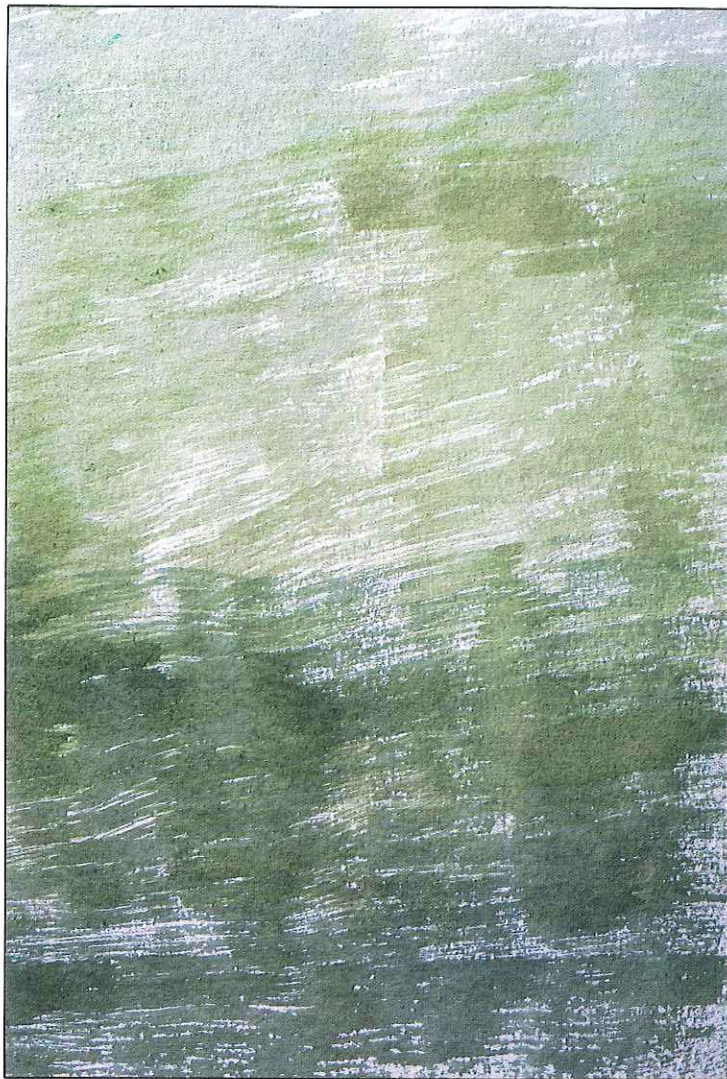


Drybrush • Watercolor

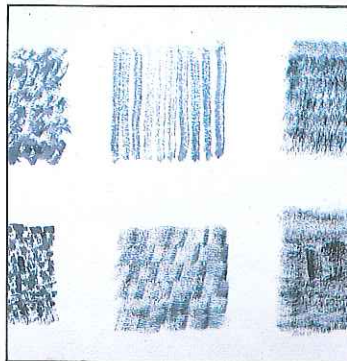
1 To produce a drybrush stroke, moisten the brush with very little water and load it with fairly thick paint. Flick the brush lightly across a piece of blotting paper to remove any excess moisture.



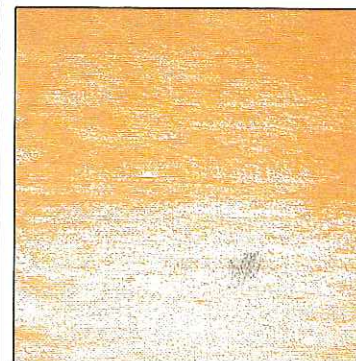
2 Use a chisel-shaped brush or, if using a round brush, fan out the bristles between your thumb and forefinger. Hold the brush at an angle of 45 degrees and drag it lightly and quickly across the surface of the paper. This technique works best on a rough or medium-rough paper; the pigment picks up the raised tooth of the paper, producing rough, irregular strokes.



3 Drybrushing with more than one color or tone can create highly expressive effects, particularly when used in conjunction with washes; the underlying hue breaks through the drybrush to produce a fascinating optical mixture. Always work quickly — drybrush is a technique that looks best when handled freely and loosely.



4 By dragging, scrubbing or smearing with the brush, you can produce a whole range of patterns and textures from delicate lines to heavy, broad passages. Experiment with rough and smooth papers and see how the character of the stroke differs with round and flat brushes.



Drybrush • Oil, Acrylic

The rough texture of canvas lends itself well to drybrush painting. Here the artist uses a loaded brush, moving from left to right with a rapid scrubbing motion. As the paint is depleted, the drybrush strokes become fainter. This method produces rough, lively gradations of tone and color. Notice how the texture of the canvas determines the texture of the drybrush strokes.

In acrylic painting, blend a little matte medium with the tube color. Gel medium will produce even more pronounced drybrush strokes.