

MARVELOUS MOUNTAINS

This is hands down one of my favorite paintings to teach. In part because the view of the mountains just never gets old for me and in part because this painting teaches so many skills.

In this painting we'll be exploring washes, gradients, lifting, and layering. In addition to that, you'll learn a little about perspective and depth by using the phenomenon of atmospheric perspective—where things that are farther away appear lighter in color and a bit more out of focus. By making the back layer of mountains lighter, we'll be able to help them appear as if they are farther away.



Supplies

Size 4 quill brush or size 12 round brush
Paper towel

Color Palette

Quinacridone Magenta

Prussian Blue

Paynes Grey

Color Mixing

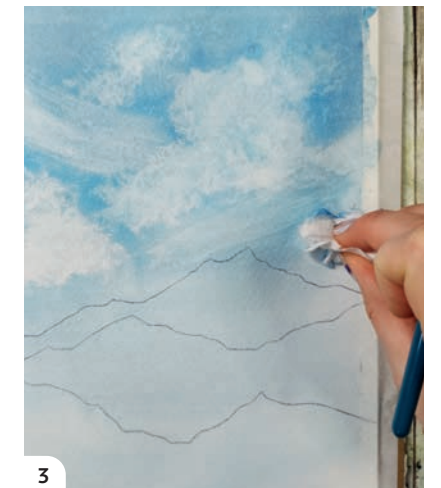
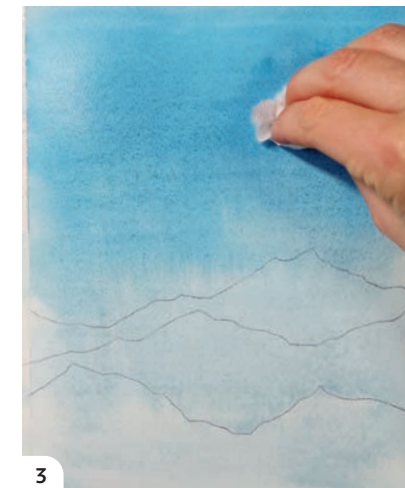
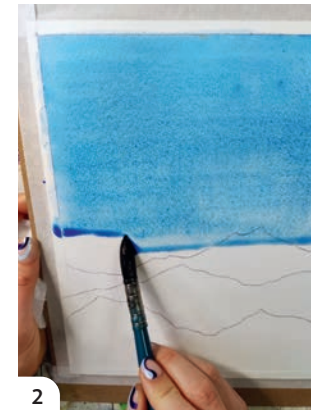
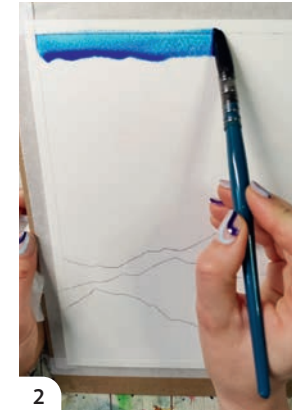
1ST LAYER: 70% Paynes Grey and 30% Prussian Blue at 20% saturation

2ND LAYER: Remainder of 1st layer color and add a little color to increase saturation to about 30–40% using about 70% Paynes Grey and 30% Quinacridone Magenta

3RD LAYER: Remainder of the 2nd layer color and add a little more color to increase saturation to 60–70% using about 60% Paynes Grey and 40% Quinacridone Magenta

Techniques

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Layering, p. 26



STEP 1

Tape down your paper. We're going to be adding a lot of water to this one, so it will buckle less if you do this step. We're also going to be exploring lifting, so grab a paper towel, scrunch it up, and tear it. The natural texture of the ripped edges will help us get fluffy clouds.

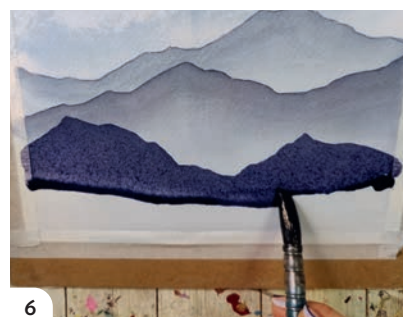
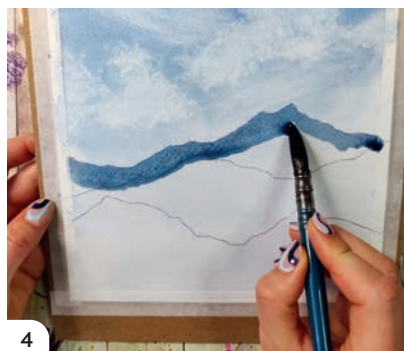
STEP 2

In this step you'll create a gradient wash. Mix Prussian Blue at about 40–50% saturation using clean water. You want to mix a decent amount of this, enough to refill your brush with it multiple times—err on the side of too much mixed color. Once you have the color mixed, use the drip line wash method, reloading your brush four or five times with the blue color until you're

about one-third of the way down the page. Then continue the wash to the bottom, dipping your brush into clean water so it slowly replaces the color in the brush with more and more water, creating a gradient over the mountain outline.

STEP 3

Quickly, before the wash dries, grab your ripped paper towel and start lifting out the cloud shapes as they call to you. To get a little variety in the shapes, twist your paper towel as you blot it on the wet color. If you want high wind clouds, swipe it across the page. Every sky you paint like this will look a little different. Let this layer dry or make it dry!



STEP 4

Mix the custom 1st Layer color. Fill your brush and follow along the outline of the back layer of mountains. Add about two lines of this color before rinsing your brush and washing this down to create a pretty drastic gradient. Rather than stopping abruptly, you are bringing each layer all the way to the bottom of the paper. Because watercolor is a transparent medium, you will see the final stroke you make and where it ends. Once you're finished with this layer, let this dry or make it dry!

STEP 5

Make sure that you have dried the previous layer well, which will create a nice, crisp top edge for the layered mountains. For the second and third layers, we'll increase the saturation of the color and make it a bit warmer by adding a larger percentage of the Quinacridone Magenta. The goal is to make sure each layer you add is a little bit darker to mimic the appearance of depth in the mountain range. Mix the custom 2nd

Layer color and repeat the steps from step 4 to wash this color down the middle-distance mountains. Let it dry, or make it dry!

STEP 6

Mix the custom 3rd Layer color and repeat the process from step 4 to wash this color down the mountains. Let it dry, or make it dry and you're done!

Mountains in action



This exercise is sometimes easier to do on a smaller scale. Scan the QR code to watch a video where I demonstrate the basic techniques shown here, but at a smaller scale and without any outlines so you can see how easy it is to create little mountain scenes.

