

# Exploration of Watercolour in the Studio

This resource forms Part Two of "Exploring Watercolour at the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge with AccessArt"

After studying paintings from the collection at first hand, and identifying how various marks within the paintings may have been made, teachers were then invited to undertake their own exploration of working with watercolour, including colour mixing, paint techniques, and intention. This resource shares the processes and outcomes of the practical studio session.



Studying watercolour paintings from the Fitzwilliam collection

## To Begin

Teachers undertook a guided exploration of the **techniques described here**. Teachers were reminded that at this stage they were not painting a subject matter, but instead allowing themselves the freedom to explore what kind of outcomes they could achieve using the various techniques.





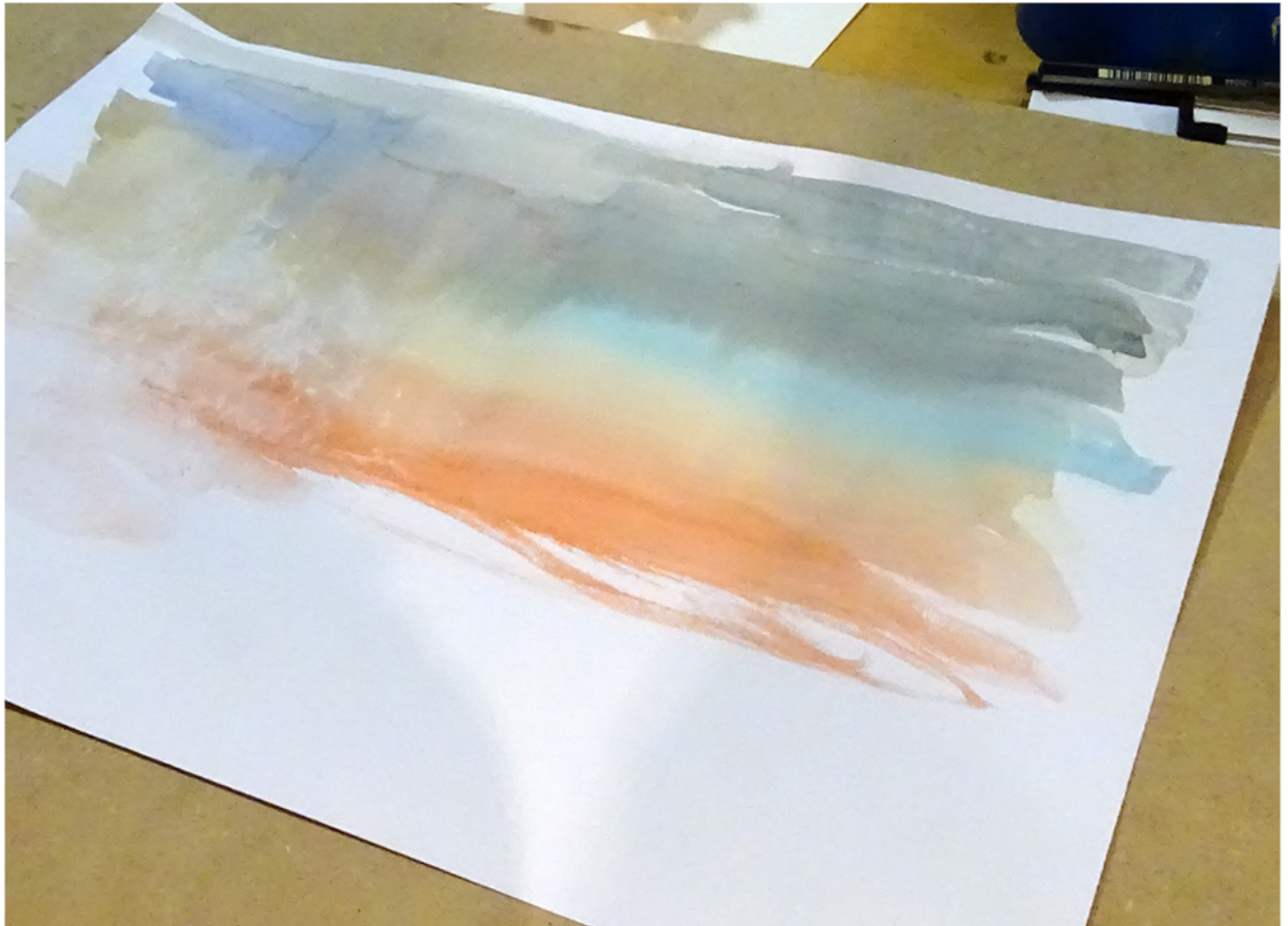
Guided exploration session

First of all teachers were taught how to **create watercolour washes**.





Creating a watercolour wash



Experimenting with adding different colours into the wash



Creating a wash - and remembering that water is a key element of watercolour!

## Colour Mixing and Mark Making

Teachers then went on to explore colour mixing and mark making with watercolour.

Whilst colour mixing is often approached in schools in quite a formal way (i.e. by drawing a colour wheel and carefully mixing and painting in the colours), in this session we wanted to offer the teachers an alternative, more intuitive method. Using the regular school watercolour palettes, we invited the teachers to choose just three colours and limit their palette to the colours they could mix from these colours.





Range of colours in a school watercolour palette



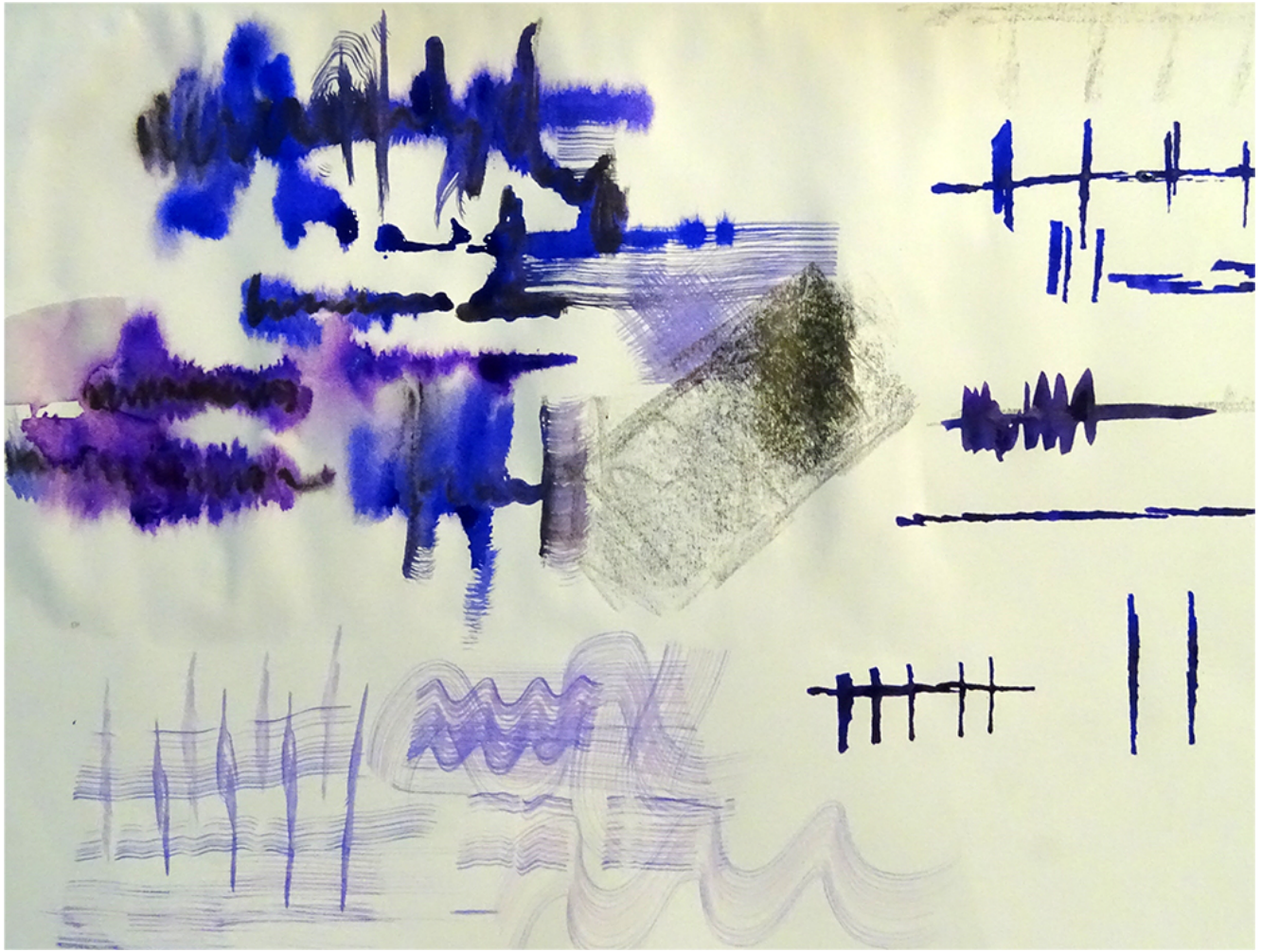
Limiting your palette to 3 colours. In this case, Vandyke Brown, Prussian Blue and Yellow Ochre

Teachers were shown the **main watercolour techniques** (wet on dry, wet on wet, watercolour over pencil, pen over watercolour, and resist) and were invited to try out these ideas on exploratory sheets, choosing and mixing just 3 colours from the palette.



Exploratory mark making and colour mixing





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Exploratory mark making and colour mixing

## **Developing Imagery Through Exploration of Media**

As teachers began to feel familiar with using watercolour, they were offered prompt cards which acted as "challenges" to guide or focus their exploration further.



## Using prompt cards

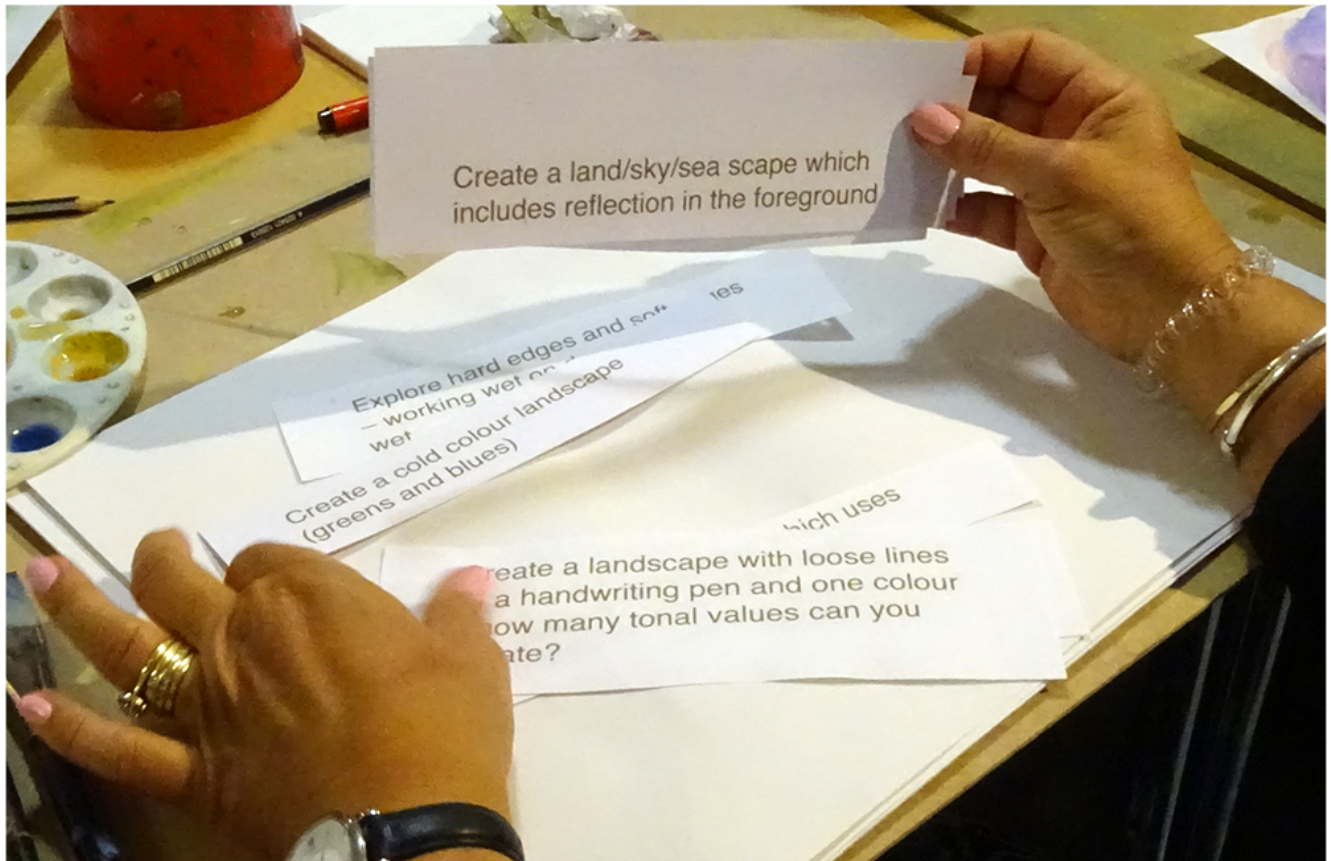
The prompt cards combine ideas about using watercolours with ideas which should help trigger landscape-based imagery:

- Take a soft pencil and draw a single line to trigger a landscape. Remember the one third two third rule (or break it!). Use watercolour to build your landscape.
- Build a wash to form a sky. Use resist. How far down the page might the sky come? How much land will there be?
- Make a painting using gravity. Let the watery paint drip down the page. How does watercolour used like this help describe landscape / weather?
- Use a big brush and a little brush. Use each brush in many ways.
- Mix Media: Paint a loose landscape and let it dry. Use pen over the paint to help define the landscape.



- Create a warm colour landscape (reds, browns, yellows, oranges).
- Create a cold colour landscape (greens and blues).
- Create a stormy seascape. Pour your energy into it. Make the painting standing up. How can you create energy (think gravity, splatter, loose, turning page through 90 degrees...).
- Explore hard edges and soft edges – working wet on dry and wet on wet.
- Use aerial perspective (the idea that objects in the distance become more faded than items in the foreground). How does this help you create a sense of distance.
- Create a land/sky/sea scape which includes reflection and foreground.
- Create a one colour landscape. How dark can you get the darkest part of your painting (tip: use less water or let it puddle)? How pale can you get the lightest part? Consider leaving the white of the paper to come through too.

**You can print out the prompt cards [here](#).**



Using prompt cards



Imagery created using a prompt card: Charcoal sketch under



watercolour



Imagery created using a prompt card: Charcoal sketch under watercolour, with wax resist



Imagery created using a prompt card: Wax resist





Imagery created using a prompt card: Mixed Media Landscape



Imagery created using a prompt card: Using Gravity





Imagery created using a prompt card: Using Graphite over Watercolour





Imagery created using a prompt card: Using Two Colours: wet on dry, wet on wet

The session ended with a group crit to look at all work produced in the one hour 30 minute long session.



## Group Crit

Many thanks to Kate Noble and the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge, Andrea Butler from AccessArt and the teachers who attended the session.

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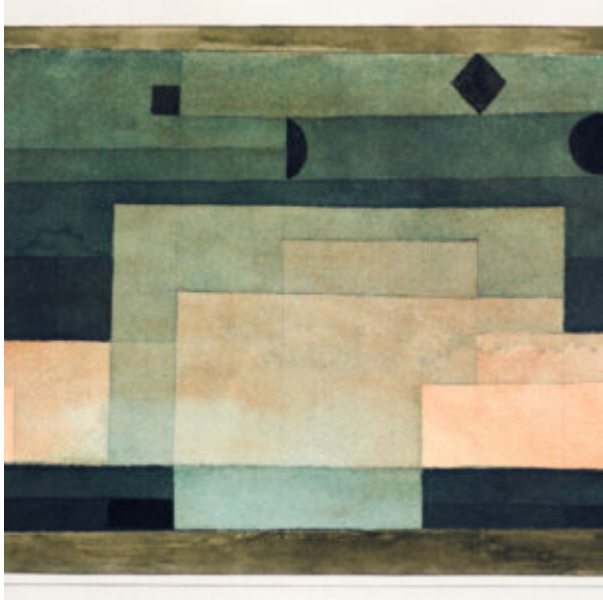
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