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## ***Applications & Techniques:***

**Watermedia with Patti Brady, Director  
Working Artists Program**

The binder is the primary difference between watercolor and acrylic paints. Gum Arabic, the binder for watercolors, is a resoluble binder that allows the artist to lift out or rewet the paint. Acrylic paint uses a polymer emulsion binder that is not resoluble when dry. Both watercolor and acrylic have unique qualities, but there are some very interesting advantages for artists who want to explore the acrylic medium in a watercolorist fashion.

Most artists have experimented with tube acrylics thinned with large quantities of water to formulate a watercolor consistency, usually with disappointing results. Most acrylic paints are formulated to a heavy thick consistency designed to hold brush strokes with drag or resistance to the paintbrush or palette knife strokes. Acrylics were not originally formulated to dilute to thin watercolor consistencies. When adding water to tube acrylics they tend to resist being diluted, wanting to retain their consistency. The amount of water it does take to thin the acrylic to the consistency of watercolors causes a tremendous loss of pigment strength affecting the vibrancy of the color.

To counteract this effect, try using GOLDEN Fluid Acrylics. A very common misconception is that low viscosity paints are just tube color with lots of water added. Not so. GOLDEN Fluids are formulated quite differently with a low viscosity or consistency, but with rich highly concentrated pigment loads equal to the traditional tube color. Because they are already thin to begin with, they need very little water to use in a watercolor wash.

Here are some advantages to GOLDEN Fluid Acrylics:

### **Pigments are the Same**

The pigments used to manufacture both tube and fluid paints are essentially the same. Pigments, like Raw Umber, that typically granulate (those wonderful gritty speckled areas of color) in watercolors will perform in acrylic in a similar fashion, settling into the crevices of a watercolor paper. Staining pigments such as Quinacridone will stain more quickly because of pigment size. (They can infiltrate deep into a paper due to their minute size.) But the real issue is the rewetting, that cannot be accomplished with a dry acrylic paint film.

### **Multiple Washes That Won't Muddy**

When applying an acrylic glaze over a dry paint film you can achieve very clean bright glazes because the underlying acrylic layer will not lift and muddy as in watercolor. This also allows for more distinct sharp edges when painting over dried washes of color.

### **Save Framing Costs**

A great money saver: Acrylic paintings that look like watercolors do not need the expensive glass and framing to be protected because the acrylic is not as fragile as watercolors.

### **More Options of Surfaces to Paint On**

Using GOLDEN Acrylics will offer many more options for surfaces to paint on. Canvas, wood, fabrics, Papier Mache or sculptures may be painted on because acrylics offer a substantially more permanent surface, while still allowing a watercolor look.

### **More Intense Color**

One layer of a GOLDEN Acrylic wash will be much more intense than several layers of watercolor. This can make them much less expensive than watercolor, and quicker to create rich deep color.

### **Thicker Application of Paint**

Acrylics allow the possibility of applying the paint with thicker applications. Note: watercolors with thick applications will crack.

### **Can Apply Protective Varnishes**

Another unique advantage is that you can apply a protective Polymer Varnish with UVLS filters, affording protection from ultraviolet light and from surface dirt and dust. These varnishes can be applied over watercolor, but with great

difficulty because the varnish often causes bleeding of the watercolor. (Protective varnishes are important when using pigments in thin washes.)

### **How to Use the Acrylic**

The actual use is quite simple. Just put a small pool of color on your palette. You might want to use a paper palette instead of your watercolor palette. Dip your brush in clean water and then dip into the pool of color. Apply it to your watercolor paper as if you were using watercolors. Experiment with wet into wet, backwashes, all the tricks you use with traditional watercolor. Let these first layers dry, then go back over with another wet glaze of wash and watch how quickly you can build up rich densely pigmented washes that stay clean and do not mud.

GOLDEN does not add matting agents so the colors are closer to the expectations of traditional watercolorists.

### **Notes:**

1. Remember to keep your expensive Kolinskys and natural brushes away from acrylic. Use synthetic watercolor brushes.
2. Always keep your brushes wet when working with acrylic.
3. You will not be able to lift a dry paint film.

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