

Common Watercolor Techniques



Scraping and Scumbling

Scraping is a technique artists use that involves using a knife or thumbnail to scrape away dried pigment and expose the paper below. The artist J.M.W. Turner created the bright white highlights on the waves using this technique in his painting *Longships Lighthouse, Lands End*.

Scumbling is a technique that artists use to build a textured, layered surface that creates depth. It involves applying paint in a rapid figure-eight or circular manner to the colors below.

He used his thumb nail to scratch at the surface of the watercolor paper to remove the darker color. When using this technique, it is important to work while the paper is damp or wet.



Layering

Layering the paint in thin translucent watercolor washes creates depth and sense of movement. J.M.W. Turner later added the warm earth colors to define the waves and added opaque areas of white gouache to create the bright highlights on the waves.



Blotting and Wet on Wet

Blotting involves removing wet pigment with a sponge or a rag. In this painting, artist J.M.W. Turner used blotting to create the flickering illumination from a distant lighthouse at the middle left.

Wet on Wet involves wetting the paper before applying color with a brush.

Turner used wet-on-wet technique to create the atmospheric effects on the left-hand side of the watercolor.