



artist daily
presents

PAIN'T THE FLOW AND MOVEMENT OF WATER:

Painting Techniques,
Methods, and How to Paint
Water with Power & Rhythm



The Comber
2010, watercolor, 18 x 24. Private collection.

Capture the Movement
OF WATER
Through Close Observation

NEW YORK ARTIST **GUY CORRIERO**'S LOVE OF THE OCEAN HAS LED HIM TO PERFECT A TECHNIQUE FOR PAINTING WATER THAT GIVES THE SEA A SENSE OF FORM AND POWER. **by Linda S. Price**

This content has been abridged from an original article written by Linda S. Price. This premium has been published by Interweave Press, 201 E. Fourth St., Loveland, CO 80537-5655; (970) 669-7672. Copyright © 2009 by Interweave Press, a division of Aspire Media, all rights reserved. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced either in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner.



Guy Corriero doesn't know the exact moment when he fell in love with the sea. Perhaps it was during one of the 12 summers he spent working as a lifeguard on Long Island, New York. He can, however, pinpoint the moment he became fascinated with painting it. It was 1970, and he was looking at the work on view in Grand Central Gallery, in New York City. A marine painting by Fredrick Waugh (1861–1940) caught Corriero's eye. "It took my breath away," he says, "and I kept going back to see it until someone bought it."

Shortly thereafter, Corriero learned that Waugh had painted on Monhegan Island, in Maine. "So," he says with a slightly embarrassed chuckle, "I left my wife with two children and no car and made a trip to Monhegan." Little did the artist know, he would go on to take this same trip every summer for the next 39 years. At first he painted the images that

most of the other artists were painting, such as fishing shacks, but then he turned his eyes toward the sea and hasn't turned back since.

"Painting the sea is essentially painting from memory," Corriero explains, "because the water is constantly moving and colors and light change with the time of day." Fortunately for the artist, the form and movement of the ocean are predictable. The same motion is repeated over and over; by observing closely, one can begin to understand the anatomy of the sea. "Water is volume," he says. "It's form—not just splashy stuff—and I treat it the same way I treat rocks." Corriero has taught painting extensively and shares his experiences with his students. He explains that the trick to painting waves is to think of them as being like receding mountain ranges: Like a mountain, the profile of a wave is essentially an equilateral triangle. As it approaches the shore, the shallow bottom causes the shape

Sailing off
Monhegan
2009, watercolor,
22 x 30. Collection
the artist.

of the wave to change—the shore side grows smaller while the trailing edge becomes longer. Eventually the top breaks off in a cascading motion. Foam is created when water mixes with air. It moves in layers and, as Corriero reminds his students, is three-dimensional, with halftones and shadow sides.

For the artist, foam is part of his illusionistic “bag of tricks.” It helps define the shape of the water beneath, it explains the way the sea is moving, it creates rhythm within the painting, and, compositionally, it leads the eye into the scene. The darkest part of each wave is at the top because it’s vertical and therefore reflects the least amount of light from the sky. As the wave curls there is a light streak at the top which helps separate it visually from the dark sea beyond and makes it pop. The troughs, or valleys, are horizontal, so they reflect light and color from the sky. Between the dark peaks and the light troughs are the halftones. This is where, as in any form, the local color is found, because it’s an area affected neither by light nor shadow.

Much of Corriero’s painting is done on-site, where he can observe the sea firsthand. He uses a lightweight half-French easel and works on watercolor blocks, preferably 18” x 24” so that he has space to swing his brush when he’s painting waves. His palette is a John Pike, and he prefers Winsor & Newton watercolors, with a few Holbein and Daniel Smith paints, as well. He squeezes out generous amounts of new paint on top of the old, letting the layers gradually mix. “Generous,” he stresses, adding that his students “sometimes think they can paint the huge sea with little piles of paint.”

His brushes are large, and although he was once devoted to flats, he now prefers rounds. “Flats, with their square-pattern stroke, are great for barns and boats,” he says, “but I found that everything was looking the same and somewhat labored. When I began painting the sea, flats didn’t give me the variety of strokes I wanted. Now I mainly use a large round, size 30. My favorite is an inexpensive Princeton acrylic brush. I also use sizes 26, 24, 10 and 8, going as small as a 5. Once in a while I use a rigger.” His old Marine Corps canteen is clipped to his easel, and paper towels are folded individually in his pocket so that he can easily pull one out to clean off his palette.

When choosing a painting location, the artist looks for a safe, comfortable area where the sun isn’t shining on his paper or palette. He seldom uses an umbrella, because it tends to shake his easel when



the wind blows. “You’ve also got to know the tides,” Corriero warns before telling a story about how he once ended up finishing a demonstration when the water had risen to his knees. “I know I’m too close to the water if I feel one drop of spray.”

Once he finds a subject that excites him, Corriero explores the scene from different points of view and checks to see if it can be reduced to a simple and effective value pattern. He squints to reduce details and does a series of sketches using four values. Making value decisions in the middle of the paint-

ABOVE
Collecting Shells
2009, watercolor,
18 x 24. Collection
the artist.

TOP
Black Duck,
Monhegan
2009, watercolor,
18 x 24. Courtesy
Lupine Gallery,
Monhegan, Maine.



ing process, he warns, is apt to lead to failure. He also advises creating quick gesture drawings to capture the rhythm of the water. Once he commits to a given scene he's careful not to make changes, no matter what exciting and appealing things happen. "If you start chasing around after new effects, you'll have a mess," he cautions.

Corriero begins by drawing with an H pencil that is hard enough that it won't dirty the paper. After wetting the entire sheet, he applies a light wash of Winsor yellow and Winsor red to warm up the white. Over the sky area he uses a drier and darker wash of the same color, adding more yellow for warmth as the sky moves closer to the sun. He finishes the sky with a wash of Winsor red, Winsor yellow, and cobalt blue, predominately the latter. When adding clouds he cautions that edges that are too hard can make them look like giant boxes, and edges that are too soft give them the appearance of cotton

balls. He instructs his students to model the forms of the clouds—be aware that there are halftones and shadow sides—but to use a light touch. For the shadow side he mixes a cool gray.

Waves must also have form, and Corriero notes that if an area looks flat, it's because there isn't enough variation in values. He uses a light blue-gray for the shadow side of the distant waves to provide dimension, getting progressively darker for the splashing waves in the foreground. A touch of cobalt turquoise in the shadows offers contrast to the gray sky. He paints the sea with a mixture of cobalt blue and Winsor yellow, sometimes with a little red to gray it down. Or he uses Antwerp blue, aureolin yellow, and, if that's too green, adds a hint of cadmium scarlet. He lays in the darkest colors last, with as few strokes as possible. Corriero explains that although people admire his colors, they are much less important to him than values. As long as the value is correct, he

Late Afternoon
at Two Lights,
Cape Elizabeth,
Maine
2008, watercolor,
18 x 24. Collection
the artist.

feels comfortable using unusual colors—this is in part due to the fact that he has red/green color blindness. "Nature's colors, are very subtle," he says. He calls them "ish colors." That is, wet sand is reddish; tall weeds are greenish; sky is bluish. He paints most areas directly, achieving the desired colors and values initially and seldom layering colors.

When painting rocks, the artist advises squinting to see the big shapes, then gradually breaking them down into smaller shapes. "Be brave with color and strokes on the rocks," Corriero says, noting that he paints them with a combination of ultramarine blue and brown madder, adding a touch of yellow ochre to suggest seaweed and provide variation. Although reflected light is usually warm, he points out that wet rocks often reflect the cooler sky and surrounding



sea. Shadows on the rocks give them dimension, and drybrush gives them sparkle. The hardest edges in the painting are reserved for the rocks, thus making the surf look softer in comparison.

To ensure a variety of edges between breaking waves, water, sky, and rocks, he prewets select areas or softens hard edges by rewetting and lifting color with a stiff brush. Except when painting the sky, he doesn't work on wet paper.

Corriero depicts the sea largely through negative space, carving it out from the rocks and waves. Dark, distant water carves out the white foam, and bold, dark rocks shape the foreground sea. If an area isn't working, he sometimes paints over it with casein, perhaps applying watercolor over that. He also finds that casein—a medium he learned to use during his days as an illustrator—is good for creating the effect of sun shining on the water.

Drama in Corriero's seascapes derives not only from contrasts in value, color, shape, and temperature but also from the difference between the churning water in the foreground and the soothing waves in the distance. The artist paints the sea at eye level to catch the ominous quality of a crest coming toward the viewer—a wave like those Corriero would dive into during his lifeguarding days. ■

TOP LEFT
Black Duck,
Monhegan
2009, watercolor,
18 x 24. Courtesy
Lupine Gallery,
Monhegan, Maine.

TOP RIGHT
Gathering
Mesquite
Wood, Mexico
2009, watercolor,
18 x 24. Collection
the artist

ABOUT THE ARTIST

GUY CORRIERO grew up on Long Island, New York, within sight and sound of the sea. After taking classes at the School of Visual Arts, in New York City, he majored in fine arts at Long Island University. He joined the United States Marine Corps after graduation and was assigned to the Marine Corps Gazette magazine. After leaving the Marines, Corriero worked as a commercial artist for five years before beginning a long teaching career at the State University of New York at Farmingdale. He then moved to upstate New York, where he helped start an art program at Herkimer County Community College. His teaching skills were recognized with The Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Since retiring, he has been painting full time, as well as teaching occasional workshops and producing instructional videos. He is a signature member of the American Watercolor Society, Central New York Watercolor Society, and Knickerbocker Artists. He is represented by several galleries in Maine: Camden Falls Gallery, in Camden; Dowling Walsh Gallery, in Rockland; Lupine Gallery, on Monhegan Island; and the Wiscasset Bay Gallery, in Wiscasset. For more information, visit his website at www.guycorriero.com.

**TURN THE PAGE FOR TWO
DEMONSTRATIONS** →

DEMONSTRATION: POUNDING SURF OFF PROUT'S NECK



Step 1 & 2

Corriero began with a value sketch of the scene, simplified to four values: white, light gray, dark gray, and black.

After soaking his rough-pressed 300-lb Arches paper for 40 minutes, the artist stapled it to a piece of sealed plywood and let it dry overnight. He then drew in the main shapes with a hard pencil.



Step 3

He wet the paper and then laid in the sky with a wash of cobalt blue and Winsor yellow, to which he added a touch of Winsor red. As he started on the waves, he was careful to leave a lot of white space for the foam.



Step 4

The artist next proceeded from the background water to the less turbulent water in the foreground, using the same colors of cobalt blue, Winsor Yellow, and very small touches of Winsor red in areas that appeared too green. He then painted the rocks with combinations of brown madder and ultramarine blue. Corriero was careful to vary the edges between the water and the rocks.



Step 5

Corriero then added the lights of the foreground rocks, using various mixtures of brown madder, yellow ochre, and small touches of blue, all mixed directly on the paper. He painted dark shadows on top of the lights with ultramarine blue and brown madder, giving form to the rocks and emphasizing the direction of the light. He added final touches of white and light-yellow watercolor pencil to the highlights on the waves.



THE COMPLETED PAINTING:
Pounding Surf Off Prout's Neck, Maine
2010, watercolor, 22 x 30. Collection the artist.

DEMONSTRATION: ROUGH SEAS AT CHRISTMAS COVE, MONHEGAN ISLAND



Step 1

With a soft 6B graphite pencil, Corriero drew a value sketch of the scene, simplifying it into four values—white, light gray, dark gray, and black.



Step 2

After soaking his 300-lb, rough-pressed Arches paper for 40 minutes, the artist stapled it to a piece of plywood and let it dry overnight. He then drew in the large shapes with a hard pencil.



Step 3

Corriero applied masking tape along the horizon line to make painting the sky easier. After wetting the paper, he laid in the sky with a wash of cobalt blue and Winsor yellow, to which he added a touch of Winsor red. He painted the sky darker along the horizon line to give a sense of light to the water.



Step 4

He then painted the shadows in the water with cobalt blue mixed with yellow. He wet the paper where the cool, distant cliffs met the sky so that the edges would be soft.



Step 5

The artist began to lay in the rocks using a combination of cobalt blue and cadmium scarlet. As he painted the foreground water, he was very conscious of the direction of light, and he used lights, halftones, shadows, and cast shadows to create form.



Step 6

Corriero laid in the darks with a combination of ultramarine and brown madder. Where that became too purple, he added a green mixture of ultramarine blue and yellow ochre or raw sienna. He finished by adding a touch of yellow to the whites in the water to warm up the piece.



THE COMPLETED PAINTING:
Rough Seas at
Christmas Cove,
Monhegan Island
2010, watercolor, 22 x
30. Collection the artist.



Red Boat With Lobster Pots
2004, oil on panel, 11 x 24. Collection the
Artist's Loft Gallery, Brattleboro, Vermont.

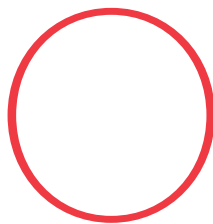
Painting the Flow, Color, & Rhythm of Water

INTERESTING AND CONTRASTING COLORS ALLOW ME TO CREATE THE UNDULATIONS OF FLOW, REFLECTION, AND REFRACTION THAT MAKE THE DEPICTION OF WATER SUCH A POTENT COMPOSITIONAL TOOL. **by William H. Hays**



Standing Up
to the Sea
2004, oil, 28 x
38. Collection the
Artist's Loft Gallery,
Brattleboro,
Vermont.

Note how the rocks
beneath the waves
shape the flow of
the incoming sea in
this image.



ne of the most beautiful and entrancing elements of landscape scenes is light passing through and reflecting on water. Whether depicting the sea, a lake, or a stream, water presents one of the most challenging aspects of a landscape for a painter to master. I have made the different “moods” of water an important part of my approach to landscape painting for more than 30

years. For me, there are three basic elements I consider when painting water: flow, color, and rhythm.

Let's start with flow. Water is constantly moving from the influence of wind, wave action, and its own mass responding to gravity. The flow of streams and rivers is subject to the terrain over which it courses. Starting in the early stages of the painting, I try to envision what is below the water's surface. Deep water generally flows slower, with a smoother surface. Its reflections are marked by a



Pikes Falls
2004, oil, 38
x 28. Courtesy
Elaine Beckwith
Gallery, Jamaica,
Vermont.
This painting took
shape over the
course of seven
years. The final
modification was
the addition of
the clear pool of
water. Colors in
the water were
then carried into
the landscape to
unify the light in
the painting.

gentle, repeating sweep, grabbing the colors of the sky and the immediate surroundings. Shallow waters ripple and course their way over stones, sand, and debris on the bottom. The result is a more complex swirling of broken reflections—curling dashes and slashing strokes of paint. What happens below the surface creates both the reflective qualities of the surface and the refractive qualities within the water itself.

The next element I consider is color. In nature, water is almost never pure and

therefore has a tint that is greener than pure water. Additionally, the depth of the water creates its own color and is subject to the light of the day. A clear overhead light creates a dominant blue in clean water describable with ultramarine blue combined with other color notes. The clear water of the North Atlantic is predominantly ultramarine blue and rather dark. A lake, river, or stream generally tends to be greener. Particles suspended in the water also reflect additional light, creating an overall lighter tone in shal-

low water. As depth increases, the value of the blue-green decreases, and the hue gets darker. In shallows, the bottom exhibits the higher and warmer notes of the palette. Yellows, oranges, and reds figure prominently in sunlit and shallow areas raising the values to within the higher range in the highlights. This is all underwater, not on the surface.

On the surface, shadow areas from objects immediately adjacent to the water tend not to reflect the object, but rather offer a window to what's under



Beach
Meadows I
2004, oil, 28
x 38. Courtesy
Charter Oak
Gallery, Fairfield,
Connecticut.

the surface. This effect occurs because the object is blocking the reflection of the sky. The sky's reflection dancing on the surface is mostly a deeper version of what is seen in the sky itself. If you assume that it is a clear, blue-sky day, the value of the blue must be at least a shade darker than the sky itself and should be more intense.

The value contrasts between the water and the reflection are the crucial elements that reveal the painted reflection as light bouncing off of water's surface. The reflected light is usually much lighter than the refracted light within the water. For sky reflections, I will often choose a mixture of ultramarine blue and cobalt blue—an exquisite combi-

nation with maximum intensity. The reflections of the sky define the rhythms of the surface.

Rhythm is the goal and regimentation is the pitfall when depicting water. Rhythm, through brushstrokes, adds texture and motion to the composition. The rhythms of blades of grass in a field, for example, are a perfect demonstration of this process. A quick, thin stroke will define a blade of grass. The repetition of that stroke will define a field. But if the brushstrokes are done the same way again and again, the repetition becomes regimentation, and that takes the life out of a painting. Repeated strokes become a pattern rather than a rhythm. The trick is to find the descriptive stroke



Carters Beach Rocks
2004, oil, 38 x 28. Private collection.
Here, I concentrated on painting the transparent and reflective qualities of water.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

William H. Hays lives and works in Brattleboro, Vermont. He and his wife, Patricia Long, spend their summers in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, where Hays paints maritime scenes. He is also an accomplished portrait painter. Hays is represented by Elaine Beckwith Gallery, in Jamaica, Vermont; Charter Oak Gallery, in Fairfield, Connecticut; Golden Door Gallery, in New Hope, Pennsylvania; Lambertville Gallery of Fine Art, in Lambertville, New Jersey; and the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, in Halifax, Canada. View more of the artist's work at www.theartistsloft.com.

and repeat it slightly differently each time to create interest within the rhythm.

When depicting the surface of water, remember that its rhythms can range from simple and elegant to very complicated and multilayered. In all cases, these rhythms should reflect and define the flow of the water. A calm day in deep water produces undulations that I often approach with a dry-brush technique. I push the shadows and highlights around so that they flow into one another and gently take the viewer's eye into another part of the composition.

Note that the reflection is broken up in water that ripples and flows over obstacles. The rippling surface picks up much less of the sky reflection; in fact, the sky and the reflections of objects defining the surface motion in rippling water may be shown with a few select daubs of color. I like to approach this type of reflection with a filbert or flat that is at least twice the size I would naturally choose. Turn or rock the brush while pushing it across the surface, letting the edges and the end of the brush do the work for you. Don't get caught up in details; let the brushstrokes happen with confidence. See what they can accomplish when you don't get caught up in specifics. Step back and let the painting tell you what is working and then build on it.

Given the important role that surface reflections play—defining the flow and suggesting the physical depth—it is important not to overwork them. When adding reflected light, apply strokes with economy. Step back frequently and note the effect of these strokes; by doing so you can minimize their use while maximizing their effect.

In summary, the relative success of depicting a landscape with water is dependent on a lively portrayal of that water. Lack of contrast, or an uninspired use of color, can cause the most beautifully rendered surroundings to fall flat. Look below the surface of water while painting. The depth of a scene is strengthened when an artist includes this constantly moving and rich space. The undulations of flow, reflection, and refraction provide the artist with a rich compositional tool that embraces viewers and leads them through a painting. ■

**TURN THE PAGE FOR A
DEMONSTRATION** →

DEMONSTRATION: STICKNEYBROOK BRIDGE



Step 1

The light and shadow areas of the painting were first blocked in to create the basic composition. I started with the sunlit areas, laying down a thin underpainting of yellow ochre. Shadow areas began with cobalt blue mixed with raw umber. Notes of terra rosa carried reflected light into the shadow areas. The bottom of the streambed was tinted with cerulean blue, permanent green, and raw umber. I used terra rosa for the brighter shadows in the water. I painted the dark fissures and ledges on the streambed with irregular strokes using a flat brush that I twisted and turned while drawing it across the canvas. I worked very fast, without paying much attention to details. The water flowing over the streambed breaks up any clearly defined structures below the surface.



Step 2

At this stage, the overall tonal qualities were taking shape. I fleshed out the shadow areas in the rocks with a warm and cool—primarily terra rosa and an ultramarine—and cobalt-blue mixture. The gray violets added life in the shadows on the rocks in the warm. Terra rosa and yellow ochre added depth and warmth to the downward slopes of underwater rocks.



Step 3

At this point, I was still painting the bottom and the depth of the water. I then depicted the churning of air in the water and the overall flow with a grayed-down tint of cerulean blue and permanent green light. In shadow areas I used a blue version of the same tint for the light-colored foam on the water. I continued to develop the shaded areas of stones with different tints of terra rosa and yellow ochre.

DEMONSTRATION
➔ **CONTINUED...**



Step 4

The addition of foliage in the trees rounded out the mood of painting while bringing the landscape closer to the viewer. The warmer colors, and the layering of the middle ground and background colors, gave depth to the upper-left center by bringing the woods in the upper right closer to the viewer. The colors of the foliage were brought down onto the ground litter, unifying the scene.

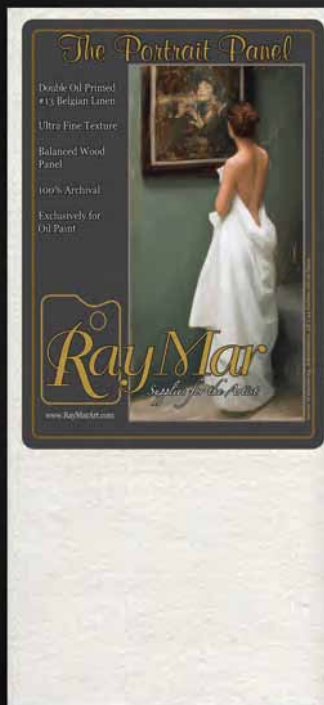
Step 5

Finally, I added surface reflections, with a tint of yellow ochre for the brightest highlights. Churning white water in the shadow was tinted a gray-blue. For the reflections of the sky, I used a mix of ultramarine and cobalt blue dragged over the surface quickly in discreet strokes that followed the flow of the water. The addition of these combined highlights focused the composition and gave the water depth.



THE COMPLETED PAINTING:
Stickneybrook Bridge
2004, oil, 28 x 38. Private collection.

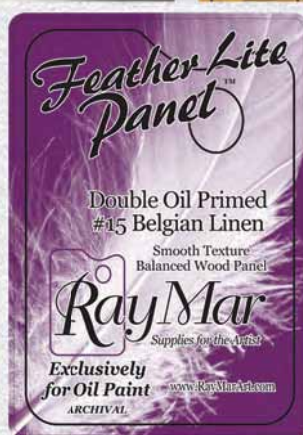
A PANEL FOR EVERY PAINTING STYLE



Claessens #13 Linen Portrait Panel



Canvas Landscape Panel



Claessens #15 Double Primed Linen Feather Lite Panel

RayMar supplies archival cotton and linen panels to support every imagination. Available at RayMar & fine retail stores.

www.raymarart.com

RayMar Art
Supplies for the Artist