

SUSIE'S WATERCOLOR TECHNIQUES - TIPS AND TRICKS!

Instructions creating textured tree trunks using a plastic card (credit card)

My watercolor tricks and techniques can be used to create a variety of Winter Landscape Cards.

Please refer to this outline for information on "how to" paint texture on the scraped tree trunks as well as trees created by using this method. I suggest you set up an assembly line and have several cards ready for painting. As you paint 4-5 (or more!) cards you will get more ideas on what you can add to jazz them up and make them interesting. Many of my cards have a large area reserved for writing special greetings in the foreground at the bottom of the card. Interesting elements like an icy stream or a fallen tree can be added to the bottom of your cards to make each one unique and different.

If you are using generic card stock test it first to see if you can watercolor on it. Some surfaces will not hold moisture and others will soak it up. There are several brands of blank cards made specifically for working with watercolor and they come with envelopes included in the package. Check with your local art supplier to see what's available in your area. Most art stores carry Strathmore or Canson blank cards. And of course you can use your regular watercolor paper cut to size also.

I like to use Daniel Smith's Ultramarine Blue, Quinacridone Burnt Orange (or Burnt Sienna) and Quinacridone Violet for painting these trees. This triad makes a variety of cool soft grays and browns found in trees and rocks.

How to paint a tree using a credit card type plastic card

I suggest you start by testing your plastic credit card on a piece of scratch paper or a test card of the same paper you will use for making your cards to see what type of marks it makes. If the edge of the card is too smooth it may need to be roughed up some with a file or a piece of sand paper or an emery board. Rubbing it on a sidewalk works too! A smooth edge often makes a solid line rather than the broken random texture we are striving for.

OPTION ONE:

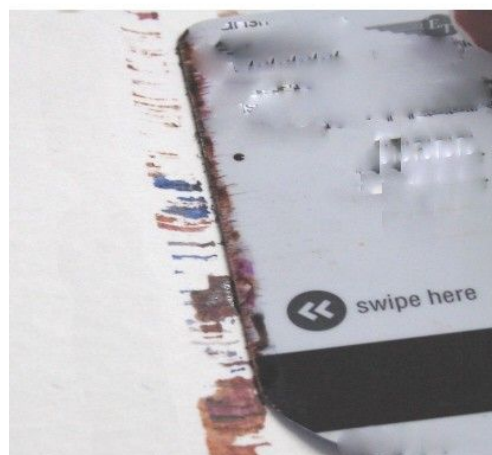
This is the technique for creating tree trunks on dry paper.

Step 1: Start by preparing the watercolor paint in your palette. Thicker concentrated paint works best for this technique. I like to use the paint from the puddles that have dried in the mixing area of my palette. You do need some moisture or the paint won't transfer from the credit card to the paper.

Step 2: Dip the credit card in water then drag it across the dried puddle of paint. Less water is a big factor for success. You'll know if you have either too much moisture or not enough by the type of mark you make. Adjust accordingly. You may use both the long and the short side of the card but I've found I have better luck with the shorter side.

Step 3: Vary the angle of the card for different effects too. I make the best marks when I position the credit card at an angle almost parallel to the paper (15 degrees or so) allowing only the edge with the paint on it to make contact. Too much pressure won't make a good mark.....use a very light touch. I reload my credit card tool as often as needed to create each tree. You might have to do some practice to find out what works best for you and for the type of paper you are using. I'm right handed, so I touch the card to the paper and pull it from left to right until I get the width I want for each tree. Some of my closer trees are up to 3/4th inch wide and some of the smaller ones are barely 1/8th inch. I try to leave quite a bit of white unpainted bark for Aspens and Birch Trees. Of course you can make all types of trees that range from light to dark.

Step 4: When you have your group of trees in place allow your card to dry completely.



COMPOSITION TIP: Variety will give you the best results. (i.e. some thicker trees vs. some thinner trees; and the space between your trees should be unequal, like this || / ||\| not this |||||). Odd numbers of trees seem to look more balanced than even numbers.

Step 5: When your trees are dry use a round brush loaded with clean clear water, starting at the base of each tree brush the clear water up the width of each tree. The concentrated paint from the previous step will bleed into the clear wash tinting the "white" bark.

Step 6: Allow each card to dry again.

Step 7: Add some details to the trees, such as branches and twigs etc. If you want your trees to be in the snow paint a snow pocket at the base of each tree to anchor them. If you don't want it to be in the snow you can paint grass or rocks. The rest is up to you! You might add a blue sky by painting between each tree and /or add some darker evergreens behind and between the white tree trunks for more contrast.

OPTION TWO:

(On dry paper) Instead of allowing the paint to dry after you apply the tree trunk texture, smear it in places with a damp brush to create a variety of soft and hard edges on each tree.

OPTION THREE:

(On dry paper) You can also get a softer look by wetting the tree shape first with clear water (damp works better than shiny wet) then add the credit card texture in the same way to the damp area. The thick paint on your credit card will blend and bleed into this damp tree trunk.

Here are some credit card tree ideas I've used for my cards:



Happy Painting!

I'd love to see your cards....email me a jpg of your card(s)
susie@susieshort.net

For more Winter Holiday Card ideas visit my website
<http://www.susieshort.net/holidaycards.html>

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