LESSON 10
LEVEL B
WATERCOLOR
TECHNIQUES

ADVENTURE
under the SEA
A Wet-into-Wet Graded
Wash Painting

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:
making a graded wash with one or several colors

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:
something to use as a drawing board: a tray, cookie sheet, etc.; watercolor paint box; #12 brush; container of water; 2 pieces of white drawing or construction paper about 23 x 30.5 cm (9"x12"); scissors; paste or glue; paint rag or paper towels.

"TIPS": Think about how the color of water in a lake or the ocean becomes darker as a diver goes down, away from the surface light. Think about how a wash of watercolor could show that effect by gradually changing from a pale blue-green to a blue-violet tone at the bottom of the sea. This is called a graded wash. It helps the strokes blend together if your paper is tilted a bit. You can put a book under your "drawing board."

Jules Olitski   Tin Lizzie Green 1964
Museum of Fine Arts Boston

Getting Started: In this lesson, you will make a graded wash for an underwater scene. While it dries, you will paint some fish, seaweed plants, shells, a diver, and maybe even the bottom of the diver's boat. Maybe you will add some ideas of your own, too. Then you will put everything together to complete your picture . . .a sunken ship wreck? a treasure chest? What else?

1. Put a few drops of water on each of the colors you plan to use to show the shallow-to-deep sea. You will need green, blue, and violet for sure, and

perhaps some yellow and brown for the sandy bottom. Now paint the entire paper with clean water. Load the brush each time and drag it from one edge to the other. . .but don't scrub!

2. While the paper is still shiny wet, dip your brush into more water, pick up a brushload of your lightest color and paint a stroke across the top of your

page. Continue, using more paint and less water, for the next 4 or 5 strokes. Let the paint blend. Add some blue, then more blue, and finally some purple and blue. Save a strip across the very bottom to paint in *later* with a sand color.

3. Put your graded wash aside to dry. On another paper, paint some things that grow under the sea. . .fish, plants, shells, and so on. If you prefer, you can draw these things with a crayon outline and then fill in with paint.

Adam   Age 9

4. Switch back to the sea paper and paint the sand layer.

5. Cut out your "sea inhabitants" as they become dry and arrange them to make a balanced composition. Paste them down, lifting one piece at a time.

CLEAN UP: Wipe your paints with a moist sponge or paper towels. Wash and point your brush. Clean your work area and don't forget yourself. Or are you so neat you didn't get *any* paint on yourself?

TALK ABOUT IT: What objects did you paint that probably no one else would think of? Does your wash look like an undersea setting?

MORE IDEAS: In an art book at the library, look at the skies, especially, in paintings by the modern artist, Jules Olitski or Martin Johnson Heade. Check your library or search on the Web for Jules Olitski. Look on the web site: http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/heade_martin_johnson.html Notice the gradual change of colors. Could you paint a graded wash sunset sky? A graded wash is also a good background for an adventure in a space picture. What other kinds of pictures could you make using a graded wash?

CONNECTIONS:

1. Read a sea adventure story such as Jules Verne's <u>20,000 Leagues under the Sea</u> with a grown-up.

2. Visit an aquarium.

3. Find out about recent oceanographic research such as in the trench near Monterey, California.