



Cap hed to come When painting still lifes, I connect like flowers as much as possible. In *Roses* (watercolor on paper, 30x36) I especially simplified the dark foliage mass by doing the majority of it in one big wash. I focused on the outside pattern to carry the character of the leaves.



Cap hed to come Water is a wild card when it comes to assigning a value to its mass. Water typically becomes even lighter in value as it recedes than ground does, and even darker as it comes forward. In the distance water picks up the lighter reflection of the sky; in the foreground the darker value of the depths are realized. Generally speaking though, the value should fall somewhere around a number two, as it does in *The Derelict* (watercolor on paper, XXXXX).



Cap hed to come In this painting of a popular recreational activity on our beaches, very little detail is used to show the planes of the beach, sky and water. I made the sandbar darker than the sky so it would lie flat and used an even darker value for the figures (vertical plane) so they would appear to rise up from the sand (ground plane). The sky goes up and over because it is the lightest value in *Clamdiggers* (watercolor on paper, 18x24).


ceiving the full impact of the overhead sun, the value is a step darker than the ground plane.

The darkest value in this example (number four) is reserved for the tree masses. As light shines down from overhead, it hits the ground and then bounces onto the body of the tree mass, where it gets absorbed and dispersed. Assigning a dark value to the trees makes them appear vertical. Understanding how this principle works, you can make a large dark mass look like a row of trees without putting in a single branch.

Here's a little test to see how well you've assimilated these tips for assigning values to landscape planes: Which is darker, a black asphalt road or a white house in shadow? The white house in shadow is, because the asphalt is a horizontal plane receiving the most light and the house is in shadow, receiving reflected light from the ground.

As in the case presented above, the answers

in real life painting situations aren't always obvious, so you'll need to think through your value plan before you start. The best way to see these value mass relationships is to go out and observe them from life. Squinting makes masses easier to see. Since nature can be complex, deviations from the model I've outlined do happen, especially when the sun is not straight overhead. A sun low in the sky, for example, can easily make the ground plane lighter against angry thunderclouds.

In the end, painting loose involves more than a flick of the wrist. Understanding good shape construction by painting through the boundaries of objects and creating new shapes, defining the character of an object by focusing on the perimeter of the shape, and assigning the proper values to the landscape planes have kept me from falling into the niggling detail habit. With a little practice, you can use these concepts to loosen up, too. 



Watch Eric Wiegardt demonstrate his painting process at www.watercolorartistmagazine.com/wiegardt.