

Wendy  
Artin

# THE SOFTNESS OF EVERYDAY OBJECTS

COMBINING ELEGANCE AND FINESSE AND SUGGESTING WITHOUT BEING TOO DESCRIPTIVE, WENDY ARTIN'S STILL LIVES CONSTITUTE A PLAY OF FORMS IN WHICH THE WHOLE TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER DETAIL. SHE REVEALS THE INS AND OUTS OF HER APPROACH TO WATERCOLOUR.

HALF FIG IN MOROCCAN BOWL.  
2019. WATERCOLOUR ON ARCHES PAPER  
15 X 15 CM.

*"When figs are in season here in Rome, my poet neighbour gives me some as a gift as a tribute to life and their irresistibility."*



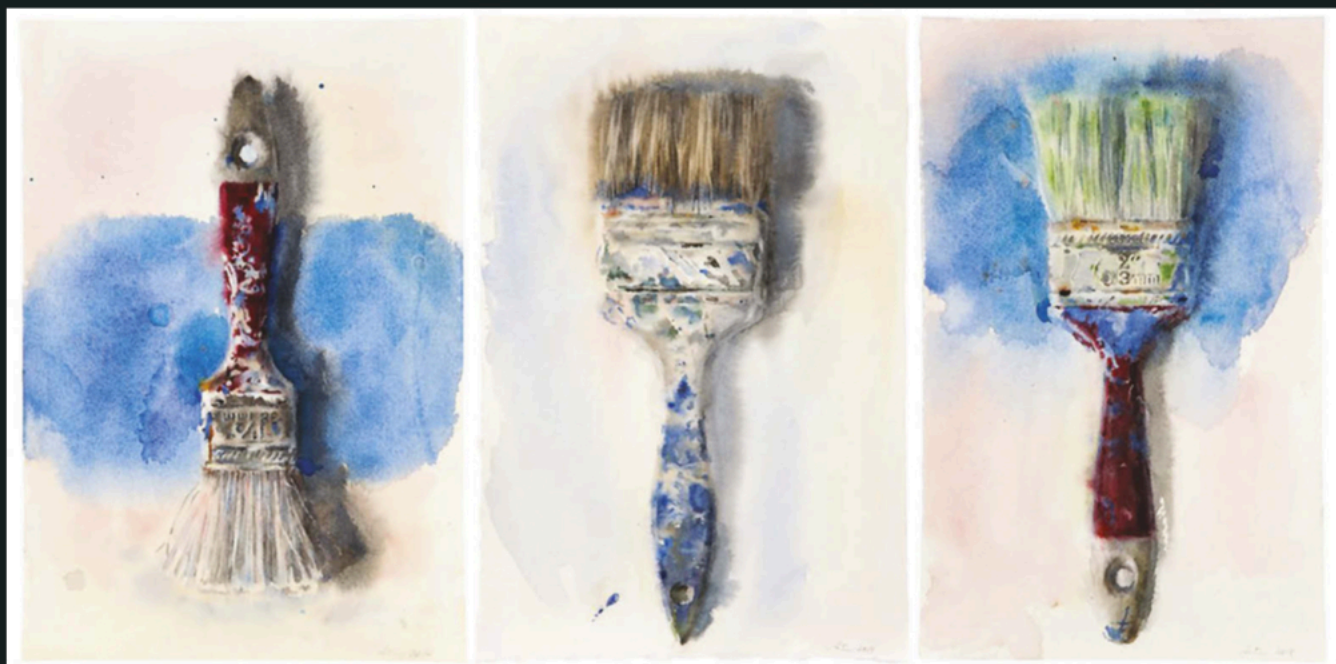
How to: Paint tonal values from dark to light • The importance of sketches



YELLOW ROGA PENCIL. WATERCOLOUR, 10 X 14 CM.  
 CADMIUM YELLOW TUBE. WATERCOLOUR, 9 X 11 CM.

*"When I paint with watercolour, I try to make each mark count, to make each stroke of the brush describe what I am looking at, to get the right puddle on the paper and capture life."*

*“A painting is always about the paint,  
the pigment that stains the surface, the emergence  
of an image where there was none before.”*



THREE BRUSHES. 2014. WATERCOLOUR ON ARCHES PAPER, 17 X 26 CM (X 3).

*“I try to see the light as white and so the light becomes the sheet in a way. The more white there is in the painting, and therefore the more light there is, the more the painting breathes; it's then easier for me to get into the creative process and get into the illusion game of painting.”*



BROCCOLI. WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER, 20 X 28 CM.

*"The space to breathe has always been for me the white of the paper, which weaves in and out of the brushstrokes like a path. Painting with watercolour is a bit like dancing with a partner: you have to dip and turn as things flow and dry – sometimes you are together, sometimes not – it is always an adventure."*



PEAR. WATERCOLOUR, 25 X 18 CM.

*"Whether I am working quickly, or for months on a single tiny drawing, I try to have the images emerge from the paper with information that is just the right amount, almost there, or suggested, allowing for imagination, for breath, for relief."*



RAGGEDY ANN. WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER, 56 X 37 CM.

*"I want my images to be like the impression you have when you have seen something that grabs you for just a moment, that you want to see again."*



DOLL. WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER, 35 X 35 CM.

*"Can the drops of paint on my paintbrushes tell you about my treasured moments? Despite my doubts, maybe they can – maybe they can tell of the starry intense blue skies around my children's beds, of the gigantic Christmas tree that is rolled up every year with its paper chains of mermaids and pirate ships."*



OPEN POMEGRANATE. WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER, 17 X 17 CM.

*"My painting is inseparable from my family life, one feeds the other. One cannot be imagined without the other."*



# INTERVIEW

**The Art of Watercolour: How do you achieve such a precise, yet at the same time, allusive rendering of your subjects?**

Wendy Artin: I paint with great concentration, trying to get as much information down in one wash as possible, so that the watercolour breathes and stays as much on the surface as possible. There is a lot of calibration, waiting for things to dry to the right extent before adding some darker paint or blurring an edge. I always paint with a paper towel in my left hand and control the amount of paint/water on the brush. I quite enjoy painting repetition and detail – the beauty lies in the small variations.

**TAW: Is your vision dictated by what you see or by your artistic instinct?**

W. A.: How can a painting be a faithful rendering of nature? A painting is always about the painting, the pigment staining the surface, the emergence of an image where there was none. Yes, my vision is absolutely dictated by what I see – the wealth of information that is in nature is far greater and gives me far more inspiration than anything I could imagine. What my artistic instinct dictates to me is what I want to look at, how I want the painting to come out, i.e. with a certain freshness of paint, luminosity, slashes of shadow, a wide range of edges and marks.

**TAW: You painted a series based on your children's toys. How much inspiration do you draw from your personal life?**

W. A.: The toys were a wonderful way of painting something that the children would love. I painted their toys, my childhood toys, the favourite toys of many many friends. It was for me a very lovely, sweet, nostalgic series of paintings. But actually, my children also love the nudes, particularly the large ones (they strike the same poses). I cannot separate my personal life from my painting, so do not know how much inspiration comes from my personal life!

**TAW: You are also known for your monochrome watercolours of Roman ruins and nudes. How does your painting process differ when you paint with colours? Do you think less in terms of values and more in terms of actual hues?**

W. A.: The flatter the subject, I find, the less important the values – in the wall paintings, or the fish mosaics I start right off with the colours, working wet on wet. As far as the still lifes are concerned – fruits, birds, toys, vehicles – the values remain pretty fundamental for the volume. For these, I often start with a monochromatic underpainting and then go on to the colour. The underpainting in them is fairly light, so as not to kill the subsequent colours.

**TAW: One of the reasons your watercolours are so appealing is (as April Gornik wrote) because you draw with the paper itself as well as having excellent spatial understanding and the ability to “break down” any given form. Would you agree?**

W. A.: I think that the thing I try consciously to do is to see light as white, so that the light becomes the colour of the paper. When the white of the paper is the light in the painting, the more there is of the light/white, the more the painting breathes, and the easier it is to see the process of creation as it goes from white paper to illusion created by paint.

## KEY FACTS

Wendy Artin was born in the United States and lives in Rome. She holds a B.A. in French literature and fine arts from the University of Pennsylvania and a B.F.A. in painting from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts School and Tufts University. She studied for two years at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Wendy Artin was a visiting artist at the American Academy in Rome. She exhibits regularly at Gurari Collections in Boston, USA. Her work is included in several public collections, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Boston Public Library Prints and Drawings Collection.

[www.wendyartin.com](http://www.wendyartin.com)