

# *Watercolor Techniques* with Cathy Johnson

from Watercolor Magic (now Watercolor Artist) Magazine,  
reprinted by permission

Please visit the Watercolor Artist blog at  
<http://watercolorblog.artistsnetwork.com/>

for much, much more!

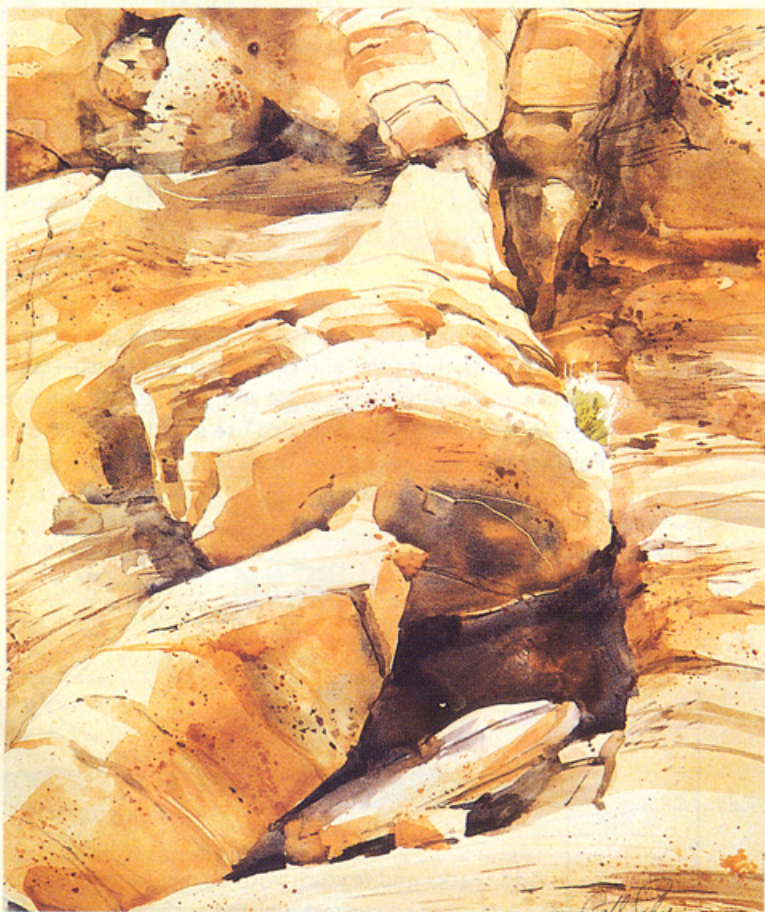
© Cathy Johnson  
all rights reserved

Tips and Techniques from the Workshops of Cathy Johnson,  
Ann Pember and Frank LaLumia.

# Watercolor Handbook

We asked three of our favorite artists to give us all a refresher course in some basic watercolor techniques. You'll discover simple yet convincing ways to paint common varieties of rock and brush up on the effects you can get when you handle hard and soft edges correctly.

## Painting Rock and Rock Formations by Cathy Johnson



### Look Closely

When painting rocks like the sandstone formations in *Redstone* (watercolor on paper, 15 x 22), be sure to pay attention not only to overall form, but to the effects of light and shadow and the ways they describe texture. A logical approach can make even the most complex rock form easy to capture on paper: Look for the backbone form first, then worry about detail. Use color to give a sense of place—for example, Nevada's redstone formations are very different from the lichen-and-moss covered limestone of northern Missouri.

Turn the page for more rock painting tips. And for even more of Cathy Johnson's easy-to-follow watercolor tips check out her book *Creating Textures in Watercolor* (North Light books).

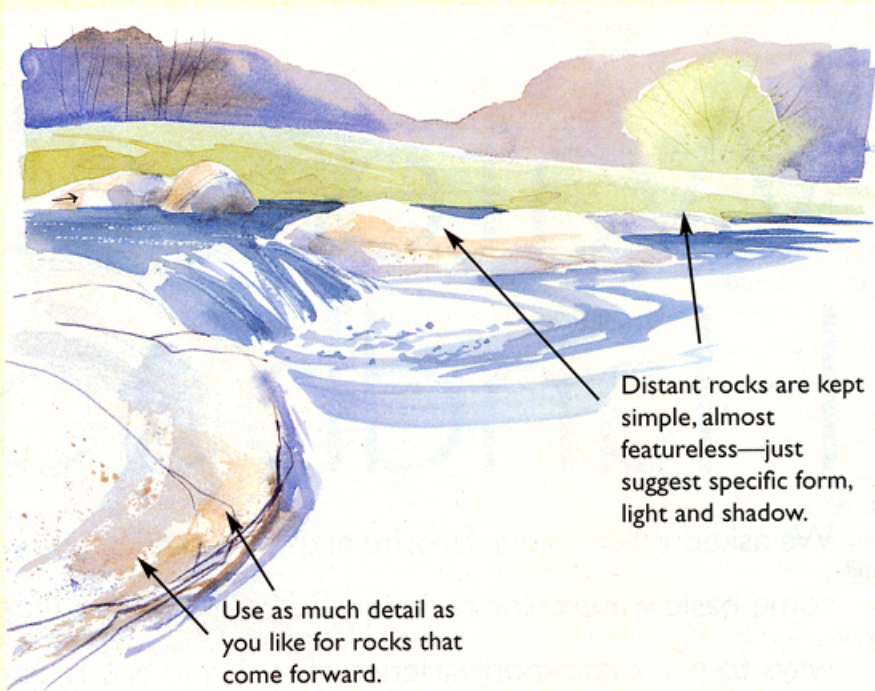
## More Rock Painting Tips from Cathy Johnson

### Rocks from a Distance

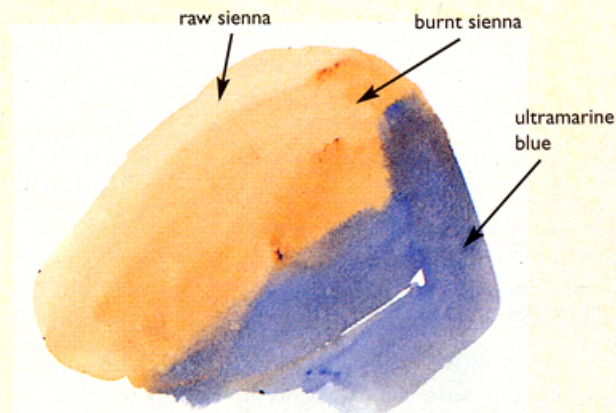
Observe the scene carefully in order to capture the overall shape of the rocks. Use negative space to suggest spaces between rocks.

#### Keep In Mind:

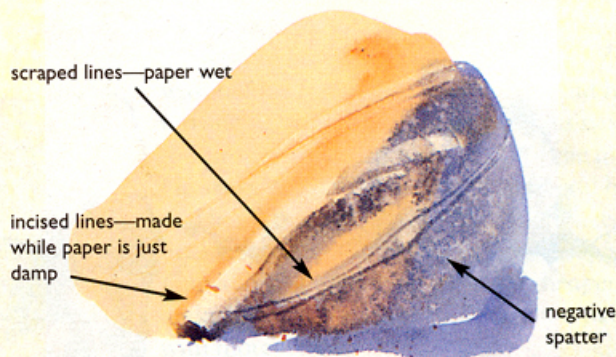
- ◆ Look closely—particular texture depends on the type of rock you're painting.
- ◆ You can paint wet-in-wet, stamp, incise the paper or use spatter to create texture.
- ◆ As you mix your washes, remember to keep your colors lively.



### Boulders or Rocks



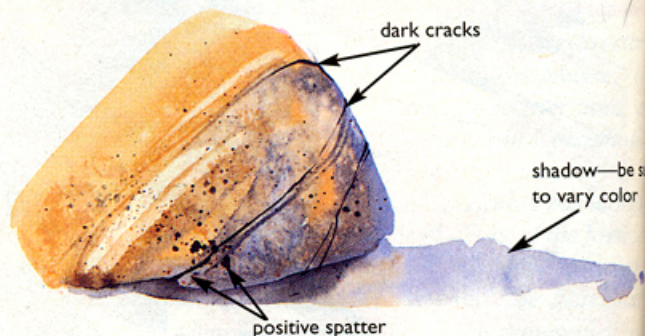
**Step 1:** Lay in variegated base wash wet-in-wet (wet paper first with clear water-only wash, follow with diluted paint washes).



**Step 2:** While the paper is still damp, scrape and incise lines and highlights. (I use the end of an aquarelle brush—it's specially made with a long angle and you can use the sharp edge or broad edge. You can also use a cut up credit card.) Positive and negative spatter work well to indicate texture.

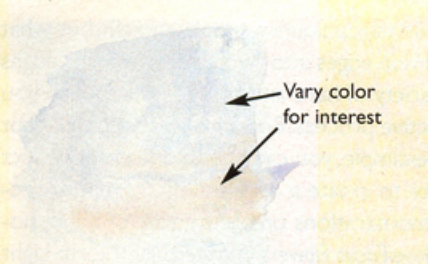
#### Watercolor Terms Defined

- ◆ **Positive spatter/splatter:** Dip a stiff brush (stencil brush, tooth brush, etc.) into paint, then run your finger or another object over the brush to create a textural, uneven spotted pattern.
- ◆ **Negative spatter:** Same as paint spatter, but use masking fluid before you apply wash.
- ◆ **Variegated wash:** On wet paper, apply consecutive washes of different colors, letting one run into another.



**Step 3:** Add cracks and texture with strong (undiluted) paint. Use positive spatter to suggest a pitted surface. I used a bit of stamping or printing with a wad of tissue (you might also try your finger or thumb—whatever works for you).

## Limestone Rocks



**Step 1:** Lay in a variegated wash created with combinations of ultramarine blue and burnt sienna or burnt umber. Blot here and there to vary color. Let wash dry.



**Step 2:** Start to add cracks and fissures with a darker mixture of the same color combinations (less water will give you a darker color).



**Step 3:** Add shadows using variations of warm and cool washes to create tension. Use drybrush (dry paper and undiluted paint) to add more fissures.

## Volcanic Deposits



**Step 1:** Start with a diluted gray wash of cobalt blue, burnt sienna and raw sienna. Let dry. Begin to suggest form by layering over the first wash with a darker wash of the same color combination.



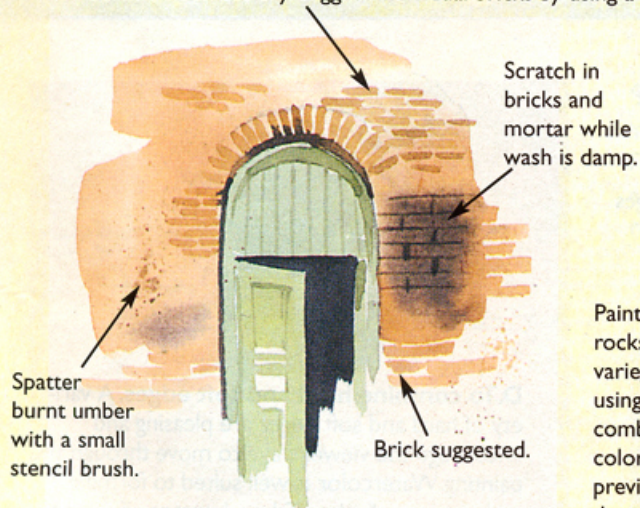
**Step 2:** Continue suggesting form by creating shadows with a mixture of ultramarine blue and burnt umber. Also begin to suggest flow lines.



**Step 3:** Develop details with a fan brush, a liner or a fine round red sable. Vary color and spatter. Vary concentration in color mixtures.

## Rock Walls or Buildings

Lay in a light underwash mixed using quite a bit of burnt sienna with a bit of ultramarine blue and burnt umber. Let dry. Suggest individual bricks by using a darker version of same wash.



Scratch in bricks and mortar while wash is damp.

Brick suggested.

Spatter burnt umber with a small stencil brush.

Paint individual rocks with small, variegated washes using various combinations of colors used in previous rock demonstrations.

Lay in rock shapes with a light wash.

Use spatter to create texture. Use drybrush to suggest mortar lines.

### Workshop Tip

Granulating colors like burnt sienna and burnt umber are good for creating very textural surfaces like rock.