

## DEAR ERIC COLUMN - JUNE

### BREAKING WITH TRADITION

Dear Eric

**Do you always start your painting with the lightest washes, like the sky, as is traditional for watercolor painting?** *Karen from Vermont*

Karen,

You are right in saying that traditional watercolor painters would begin a painting by laying down the lightest washes, such as the sky, first. Usually that wash would be run through the portions of the painting that would eventually be darker. This harmonizes the color temperature of the painting and unifies it by eliminating any "halos", or visual discomforts of white patterns surrounding shapes. Watercolor also is a medium, as you well know, that lends itself to working from light to dark.

However, there is one problem with the aforementioned -- I may not know what I want to do with the lighter values as I begin the painting. It doesn't make sense for me to insist on a procedure when it seems inappropriate. Instead, I will leave the light areas of my painting the white of the paper and aggressively attack the mid tones. The darks may follow, with the lights being resolved at the very end. I also find that the sky, or any other light patterns, are usually a supportive statement to the rest of the painting--the best way to support the rest of the painting is to leave their execution for the last.

Essentially, I think it is the wisest -- and most freeing -- to begin a painting by addressing the easiest, simplest, largest shape first; regardless of the shape's value and a traditional procedure. Why make it hard for ourselves?

Keep your brush wet!

Eric



*AWS 2012 Gold Medal of Honor Award*