

MESSAGE FROM ERIC

– February –

SQUIRREL MOP BRUSH: MAKING IT BEHAVE

The squirrel mop brush is the most used brush in my quiver. Yet when I was in art school I wondered why anybody would use it. It's floppy and therefore hard to control when used like a traditional round. However, when used correctly, it is masterful.

The squirrel mop's beauty is that it holds a tremendous amount of water, and therefore, it unloads juicy washes of color almost effortlessly. I always have moist pigment, fresh from the tube—or if it is several days old, it still needs to be of the same consistency—or else the brush will not pick up adequate amounts of the pigment with its soft hairs. Unlike a sable or a synthetic brush it does not have the stiffness to penetrate sticky, let alone hardened, pigment.

I have found that students in my Zoom Mentoring classes have some difficulty in achieving dark washes with the squirrel mop. It will work great for the darks; the key is to extract most of the water from the brush prior to loading it with pigment. Otherwise the resulting wash of color will likely be a mid-tone.

To achieve a rich dark loading of the brush, first rinse out the brush from the previous application and then unload the bristles' water on a sponge. I vigorously wipe the brush back and forth several times while pushing the bristles firmly against the sponge, to achieve the desired dampness I want in the bristles. It will take some practice to get a feel for this. Then I load up the brush with the fresh pigment, do a swipe on the palette, and if I need a bit more dampness, I may touch the brush to the water.

Students have a tendency to have too much water in the squirrel mop when trying to load the dark pigments. Get most of the water out first. Then, after loading the brush with pigment, add back in a small amount of water, if needed.

Keep your brush wet,

Eric



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