

From the Museum Collections

Watercolor painting is extremely old, dating perhaps to the cave paintings of paleolithic Europe, and has been used for manuscript illustration since at least Egyptian times but especially in the European Middle Ages.



AVM #2013.16.33

Painted by Muriel O. Harding

Watercolour is a painting method in which the paints are made of pigments suspended in a water-based solution. Watercolour refers to both the medium and the finished artwork.

In East Asia, watercolour painting is done with inks, called brush painting or scroll painting. In these areas the painting is most often in monochrome black or browns.

The traditional and most common

watercolours are painted on papyrus, bark papers, plastics, vellum, leather, fabric, wood and canvas. Watercolour paper is often made entirely or partially with cotton. This minimizes the distortion when the paper is wet.

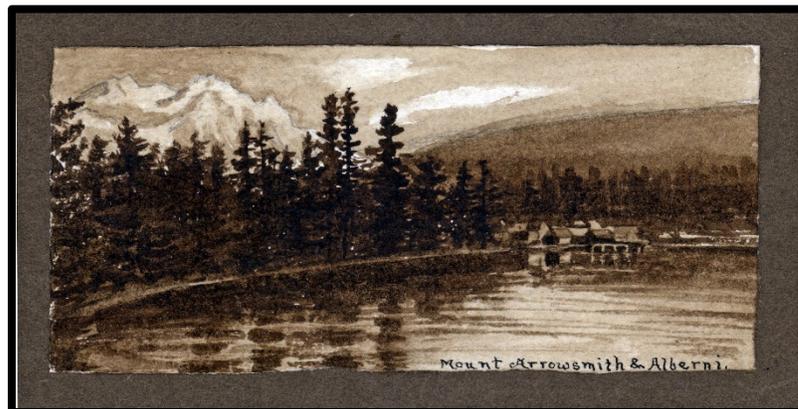
Watercolours are usually translucent but can be made opaque by adding Chinese White (zinc oxide).

American artists in the early 19th century seemed to regard watercolour primarily as a sketching tool in preparation for the “finished” work in oil or engraving.



AVM #2013.3.1

Painted by Joan Ackerman



AVM #1971.78.40

Painted by Mary Collinge

Use the attached sheets to paint a watercolour or design one of your own.