

July 1, 2026

### History of Watercolors

Various forms of watercolor painting have existed around the world since the paleolithic period. The actual makeup of these early “watercolors” could vary dramatically. Some involved vegetable pigments, others used ink or soot. But the common factor, as you might guess, was always the use of water for dilution and application of the paint.

Watercolor paint that’s closer to what we would recognize today, emerged in Europe during the Renaissance and Baroque periods. However, at that time it was mostly used for sketches and copies, or nature studies. These works were often either in preparation for the “real” artwork or matters of scientific documentation.

Later, in the 18th century, watercolor paints became popular with mapmakers and engineers who found it useful for depicting terrain and project plans. At the same time, it became a fashionable pastime for the well-to-do, and seen as an attractive skill indicative of a good education.

Watercolor paint in fine art also began around this time. The artists generally credited with establishing watercolor as a mature painting medium are Paul Sandby, Thomas Girtin, and Joseph Mallord William Turner. These artists (among others) developed and refined various techniques, creating a number of incredibly popular works, and infusing watercolor painting with new prestige.

The watercolor paint that we’re most familiar with today, however, was developed in the early 19th century. This type of paint is primarily composed of a pigment, gum Arabic, a binder, and an additive (like glycerin) to fine-tune the consistency. This paint is then mixed with water when used – thus the watercolor pallets we’ve come to know and love.

*(Excerpt taken from <https://prang.com/get-inspired/find-inspiration/inspiration-reader/a-brief-history-of-watercolor>)*



### Watercolor Landscapes

#### Materials:

- water color paper
- watercolors
- hard surface
- paint brushes
- water
- masking tape (optional)

1. Open up your packet and check out all your materials.
2. Find a space to work. Could be inside or outside.



3. Grab a cup of water.
4. Using masking tape, adhere your watercolor paper to the table or a clipboard or something hard and flat.
5. Parents – There is a great, quick YouTube video that can give your kids some simple tricks before they get started. You can find it at Watercolor for beginners! (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeFaqls1xTk>)
6. Get busy painting. You can paint what you see in front of you or you can paint something that you really enjoy. The goal is to practice and experiment with watercolors.
7. Be proud of your creation! Put your name and age on the back of your piece and bring it back to Old Town Square next Wednesday so that we can hang it up in our kiosk!
8. Don't worry, we will return your artwork after it has been displayed.

### **About the Art for the Heart Program**

**Art for the Heart is a program of the Fort Collins Downtown Development Authority and NOLA Creative Company.**

**All returned projects will be displayed in our outdoor kiosk located in between Coopersmith's Pub and Poolside restaurants. All projects will be returned to you the following week after they have been displayed.**

**Each art project returned will earn you a punch on our "Frequent Artists" punch card. Artists with consistent participation (5 punches or more) will be awarded a t-shirt at the end of the program.**

**You can find all of our past projects and more information about the program at <https://downtownfortcollins.org/art-for-the-heart/>**

**Follow us on Instagram @nola\_creative\_company as we will be featuring artwork from each week. We will not use full names or identify your children in any way other than using their first name in order to give credit.**