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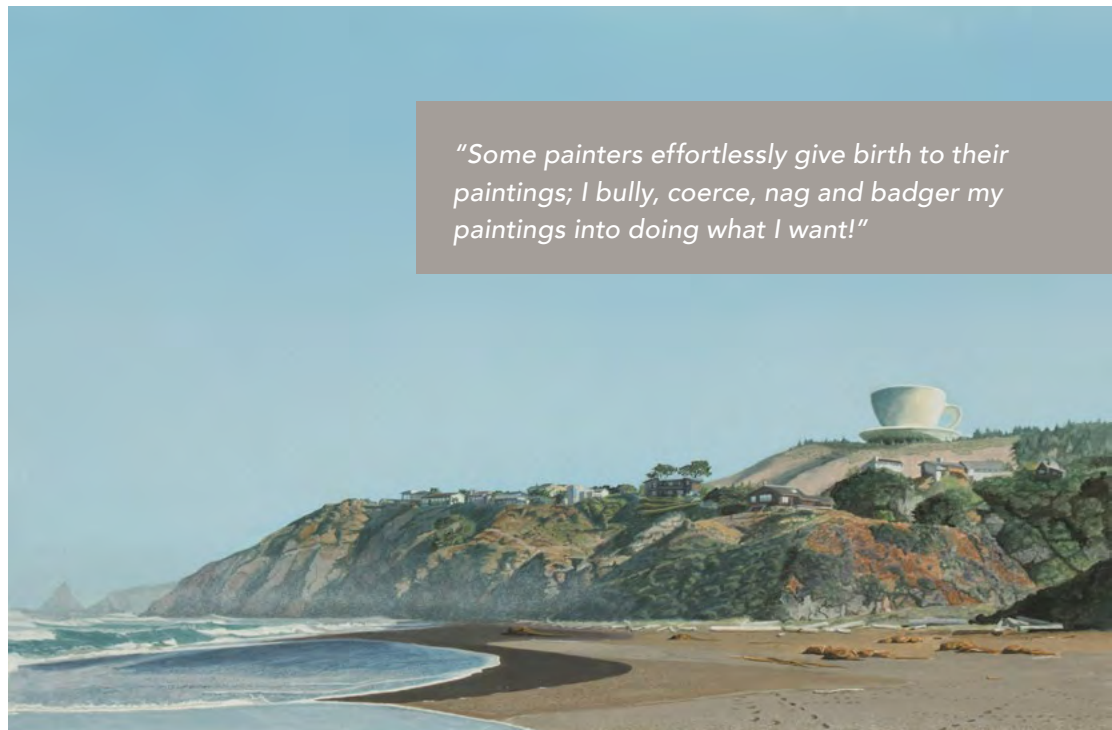
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MAIN FEATURE

**Watercolor Realism**

By Peter Carey



*Coffee Hill*

*"Some painters effortlessly give birth to their paintings; I bully, coerce, nag and badger my paintings into doing what I want!"*

Firstly, I'd like to thank Strathmore for taking an interest in my paintings. I hope you, the reader, can get something out of this article. Because of my mother, I have always had art around me. She started painting when I was a little boy and continued until she was 90! She always encouraged me.

I try to paint in a realistic style, which reflects my roots in photography. I use watercolors in an opaque style; I mix white paint with almost everything and I layer on black paint again and again until I get a velvety black. Some painters effortlessly give birth to their paintings; I bully, coerce, nag, and badger my paintings into doing what I want! My paintings can take anywhere from 50 to 100 hours to complete. I am self-taught.

**Selection:** I usually start with an idea or a photograph. If it's an idea, I will try and accumulate photos to cut and paste into the general shape. An example of this would be *Coffee Hill* which is from a dream

I had. An example of approach #2 would be *Swinging Tahoe* which is pretty much a straightforward watercolor rendition of a photo. When I am choosing what to work on next, I look for images that "pop." This can mean they have charm, exciting colors, or that they possess meaning to me. I try to



*Swinging Tahoe*

have some kind of twist in all of my paintings - something a little different that separates them from the run of the mill.

*continued*



**Drawing and Editing:** If I'm painting a version of a photograph, I make a black and white enlargement of the photograph the correct size for the end painting at a local copy shop. I trace the black and white enlarged copy using Strathmore Tracing

painting, usually on a small scale. Colors, the size of the components in the picture, etc., all get changed at this point.

**Masking:** I mask areas of the painting using a variety of masking media. One product I



Carmel Dog



Highway 152



Southwest Over Malibu

*"When I am choosing what to work on next, I look for images that 'pop.' This can mean they have charm, exciting colors, or that they possess meaning to me. I try to have some kind of twist in all of my paintings - something a little different that separates them from the run of the mill."*



Idaho Truck

paper. Then I rub the tracing onto Strathmore 500 Series Illustration Board. The reason that I have been drawn to this product is that I use a mouth atomizer for my skies. The mouth atomizer gets paper so wet that it buckles and waves; the Illustration Board is far sturdier, can tolerate a lot of water and has excellent whites. When drawing, I use a very light pencil mark and I erase all but the faintest marks just before

I paint. At this point I will edit the photo. For example, in *Swinging Tahoe* the chains supporting the swing seat were bright yellow. I changed them to silver so that they wouldn't distract. I frequently do a mock-up

use for masking is called "Frisketfilm" made by Artool®. Also, I use a combination of masking tape and scrap paper that is cut out and taped onto the Illustration Board, to protect the future whites from splashes and flicks. I carefully preserve the whites of the paper for my highlights. I have never found a white paint that is as bright as paper.

**Skies:** I blow areas (usually skies) onto to the Illustration Board using a mouth atomizer. The atomizer gives me the smooth gradients I love. An example of this would be the surface of the car and window in *Carmel Dog*. An example of an atomizer sky is the sunset in *Highway 152*. For more information on how to use a mouth atomizer, please go to my [blog](#). Or go to my [website](#) and click on *Exhibition* and then press the big "W" icon.

**Painting:** When it's time to paint, I use small brushes and mix my paints in a variety of plastic palettes. I refer to my work area as "the homeless encampment," because it looks like a disaster area. I have friends

*continued*



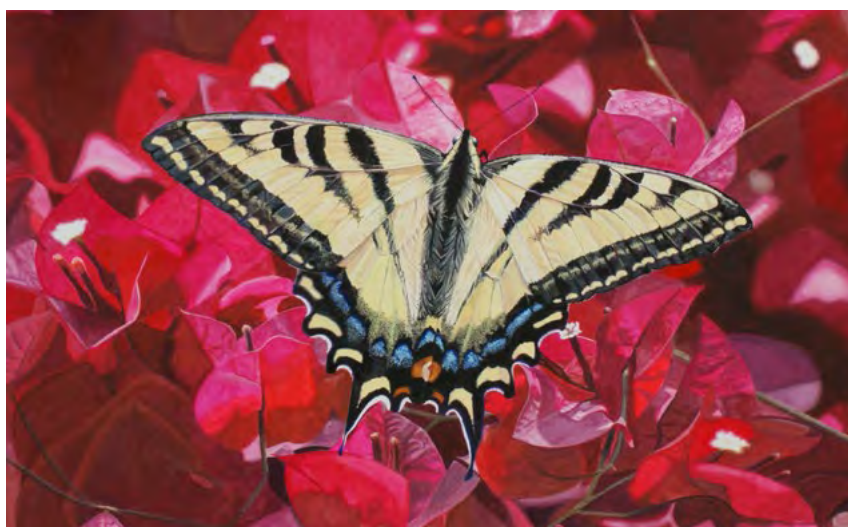
Underwater



Pienza



Five Wounds



Anise Swallowtail

continued

whose work areas are so clean they could safely perform surgery in them. Whereas around my drafting table, I have dishes of mixed paint from 5 paintings ago! I match the colors of my paint to the photo as follows: I mix the paint as closely as I can, and then daub a tiny bit onto the edge of some scrap white paper. I compare the little daub to the photograph, and I can usually tell at that point

*"I frequently do a mock-up painting, usually on a small scale. Colors, the size of the components in the picture, etc., all get changed at this point."*

what the mixture needs. When the edge of the scrap paper gets full, I fold it, and start again. Sometimes I have to remix 20 or 30 times to get it right. I am currently using M. Graham® watercolor paints, except for white. For white I use Fresco brand liquid poster color from a plastic bottle. As I mentioned before, I save the virgin Illustration Board for my highlights.

**Finishing:** When I am nearly done with the painting, I will lean it up against a wall and come back later. Frequently I can see what's missing. Usually my values are wrong and part of the painting needs darkening.

**Inspiration:** I am lucky enough to be able to travel. *Underwater* was from a photo I took of my wife snorkeling in Hawaii. We went to Italy where I took 2,000 photographs! I took two of those photos and combined them into *Pienza*. When I came home, I started

reading books about frescoes - how they were made, who painted them, etc. I have a favorite I would like to share with you.

It's by a little known artist called Altichiero. It's called *The Funeral of St. Lucy*. If you go to the link, scroll to the bottom and click on the picture marked "detail," you will see it. This was painted in 1380! And yet the face of the man wearing dark burgundy with the red scarf is brilliant and completely modern!

I hope you found something useful here. Please feel free to [email me](#), visit my [Facebook](#) page, or check out my [website](#). I look forward to hearing from you!

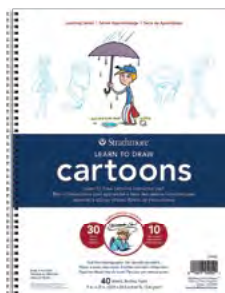


make something easy

# the Learning Series from Strathmore®

Learning to draw can be intimidating to new artists or experienced artists trying a new style. The NEW Learning Series from Strathmore is like having your own personal art instructor by your side. Each pad features quality Strathmore drawing paper with step-by-step lessons, developed by popular art instructors. Corresponding online video tutorials make learning a new style fun and easy!

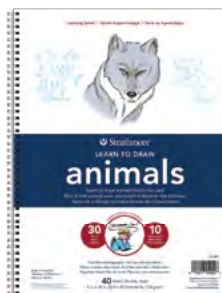
Each product features a:  
**40** sheet pad of drawing paper with  
**30** step-by-step drawing lessons and  
**10** online video tutorials



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LEARN TO DRAW  
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new  
video  
series!

## Intro To Gouache With Artist Minnie Small



We worked with London-based Artist Minnie Small to bring you a 3 video series on gouache. They show the tools needed to use it, tips and techniques to get started, and a demonstration of creating a gouache painting with narrated steps along the way.

### What Is Gouache?

Gouache is often described as opaque watercolor. It is a water-based paint and is similar to watercolor but has a higher density and higher levels of pigment. It can be layered and creates bright, vibrant colors. The paint has a lovely matte finish and quick dry-time. It can be reactivated by adding water which is handy for reworking a painting that has dried or reactivating dried paints on your palette. You can add varying amounts of water to gouache as you're painting to achieve different levels of opacity.

### What Is It For?

It's bold, matte colors make it great for illustration and fine art painting. Many calligraphers also enjoy using it for brush lettering.

### What Tools Do I Need?

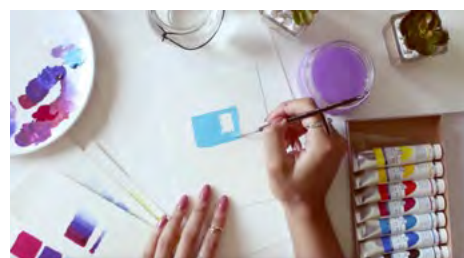
If you've painted with watercolor, it's likely you already have the tools needed to use gouache!

- **Gouache:** High-quality gouache paints work best to achieve full opacity and solid, even finishes that aren't streaky.
- **Paint brushes:** you can use the same brushes you'd use for watercolor. Brushes that are smooth and flexible work best.
- **Palette for mixing paints:** our **300 Series Palette Paper** contains removable sheets of a palette surface for easy disposal and a fresh new palette surface each time you paint.
- **Watercolor or Mixed Media paper:** Using heavier weight papers that are manufactured to handle wet media such as a mixed media or watercolor sheet is best. Papers in the sketch and drawing family are not manufactured to handle water, and therefore won't stay flat. Cold press (textured) or hot press (smooth) watercolor papers both work well and depend on your preference. Minnie uses **Strathmore 400 Series Watercolor Cold Press** paper and **Strathmore 500 Series Ready Cut Watercolor Hot Press** paper in her gouache videos.

Video 1: Intro to Gouache



Video 2: General Gouache Techniques



Video 3: Gouache Time-Lapse Painting



QUESTIONS FROM OUR WEBSITE:

**What is the difference between Bristol, Bristol Boards, and Illustration Boards?**

Bristol and Bristol Boards provide a stiff, strong surface to work on without the need for mounting. Strathmore's Bristol and Illustration Boards are similar to each other but come in variations of weights and finishes.

Bristol generally describes drawing paper that is pasted together to form multi-ply sheets. It derives its name from the early days of European papermaking when mills would send their finest paper to Bristol, England for pasting.

**Bristol and Bristol Boards**

The terms Bristol and Bristol Boards generally mean the same thing and can be used interchangeably. Our **300 Series Bristol** is a single-ply, board-weight sheet that has the weight and caliper (thickness) of a 2-ply Bristol. It is 100 lb. (270 g/m<sup>2</sup>) and comes in multiple pad sizes, sheets and rolls. Our **400 Series** and **500 Series Bristol** are available in multiple plies and a variety of pad and sheet sizes. Both 400 and 500 Series Bristol are available in 2-ply, 3-ply and 4-ply. The 2-ply Bristol is 2 sheets of drawing paper pasted together. The 3-ply Bristol is 3 sheets of drawing paper pasted together, and the 4-ply is 4 sheets of drawing paper pasted together. The more plies, the sturdier and thicker the Bristol board.

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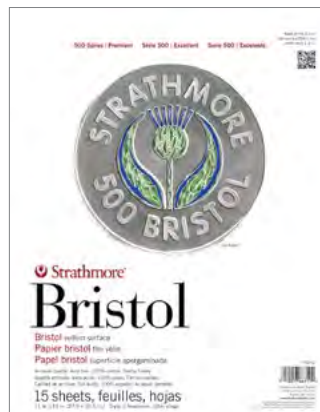
**300 Series Bristol Smooth and Vellum**

Both surfaces available in tape bound pads, sheet stock, and rolls.



**400 Series Bristol Smooth and Vellum**

Both surfaces available in tape bound pads and sheet stock.



**500 Series Bristol Plate and Vellum**

Both surfaces available in tape bound pads and sheet stock.



**500 Series Illustration Board Dry and Wet Media**

Both surfaces available in sheet stock only.

### Illustration Boards

Our Illustration Boards are 100% cotton fiber drawing paper laminated to each side of one or multiple acid free, heavyweight fiber boards. The center board provides strength and stability. Lightweight boards contain one piece in the center and heavyweight boards contain two. The thickness of an Illustration Board is usually expressed in thousandths of an inch (mils) using the term points. Our Illustration Boards are available in the following thicknesses:

- 500 Series Illustration Board for Dry Media Lightweight Vellum - 42 point
- 500 Series Illustration Board for Dry Media Heavyweight Vellum - 72 point
- 500 Series Illustration Board for Dry Media Heavyweight Plate - 68 point
- 500 Series Illustration Board for Wet Media Heavyweight Vellum - 78 point

### Bristol Surfaces

In addition to understanding the difference between the weights and plies of Bristol, it is equally important to understand the difference in their surfaces. Our Bristols are available in vellum, semi-smooth, smooth, and plate surfaces.

**Smooth:** Also known as hot press, has a very satiny, hard finish. This surface is especially good for pen and ink, marker, mechanical layout, and airbrush.

**Vellum:** Also called regular, medium or kid finish, this surface has a tooth or roughness, making it excellent for use with dry media including pencil, colored pencil, charcoal, pastel, and oil pastel.

**Semi-Smooth:** The perfect in-between surface that is more textured than smooth, but less than vellum bristol. The Slightly textured surface is suited for pen and ink tools, pencil, specialty pens, and markers.

**Plate:** A unique, uniformly smooth finish is created on the surface of the sheet through a special process. Sheets of paper are interleaved with highly polished metal plates to make a stack or "book". The "book" is then pressed repeatedly between steel rollers under great pressure, imparting the smoothness of the metal plates to the paper's surface. This surface is ideal for pen and ink, marker, mechanical layouts and air-brushing.

Learn more about our Bristol and Bristol Boards, [here](#). Learn more about our Illustration Boards [here](#).