

## Stylistic Influences

No artist works in a vacuum. We all are influenced by what is going on in the "real" world of our daily lives, and also, to a greater or lesser degree depending on interest and inclination, to what's going on in the world of art (what other artists are doing and have done). In other artists' works, we discover kindred spirits, find inspiration, and sometimes have an "aha" moment that leap frogs us into a better place than we were before in our own work.

American watercolor got its own "jump start" in the late 1800's and early 1900's through the inspired work of two American painters — Winslow Homer and John Singer Sargent. The former was a master of the wash, and the latter a virtuoso of brushwork.



John Singer Sargent, *Gourds*, ca.1908, transparent and opaque watercolor over graphite on rough paper. 14x20 inches.



Winslow Homer, *The Turtle Pound*, 1898, transparent watercolor over graphite on rough paper. 14-15/16 x 21-3/8 inches.

Others working during the same time or later in the 1900's also contributed to the popularity of the medium — John Marin, Maurice Prendergast, Childe Hassam, Georgia O'Keeffe, Arthur Dove, Charles Demuth, and Milton Avery among them. Some of these artists were not strictly watercolor painters (but then neither were Homer or Sargent). Many were influenced by European art movements (Cubism and Impressionism), but some eventually distanced themselves from these movements and created art that was both uniquely their own, and that had a quality that could be identified or categorized as distinctly *American*. Along with Sargent and Homer, these artists also helped to firmly establish watercolor as a medium in its own right by using it for finished works rather than just to paint studies for oil paintings.

### Exercise:

Trade paintings with someone. Redo their painting as YOU would paint it had it been yours. Bring your own personality, painting approach, color use, etc. to bear as you do this.

### Exercise:

Research one of the above named artists, and redo one of your paintings "in the style of" that painter. Study their paintings to see what specific things you can identify that they were doing to make their work unique. Try to replicate those things (whether brushwork, choice of colors, treatment of subject matter, etc.) in your painting.



Milton Avery, *The Wave*, 1948, transparent watercolor and gouache on paper. 22-1/4 x 30-1/8" inches.