

# Literary Still Life

Week 2:      Content Focus:              Irony  
                 Technique Focus:          Batik Process with Masking

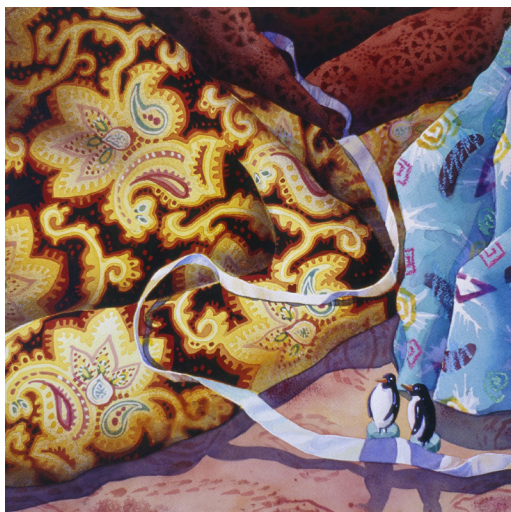
When something is ironic, what seems to be doesn't gibe with what *is*. The underlying meaning is at odds with the surface meaning. Example: I once saw an article about saving baby seals in the newspaper. Right next to this article was an advertisement for fur coats. In art, and in still life specifically, irony can be created when the objects we choose for our still life setup appear to have one function but suggest quite a different, and perhaps opposite one. Or, the irony might simply be created because of the context or environment in which the objects are placed.



*"Dangerous Crossing", watercolor by Ellen Fountain, image 22" x 30"*

*I used sequential masking and glazing to create the patterns in these 3 pieces of fabric. Other fabric patterns are created with stencils and traditional washes of color.*

*The "irony" in this piece (if there is any) is that I am using common, everyday objects—the stuff of life—and declaring it is valid as subject matter for fine art. None of these things are beautiful or valuable...pieces of fabric, seam tape, plastic pigs from a game, T-pins and pinking shears. None of them carry any symbolic meaning other than what I've chosen to give them..*



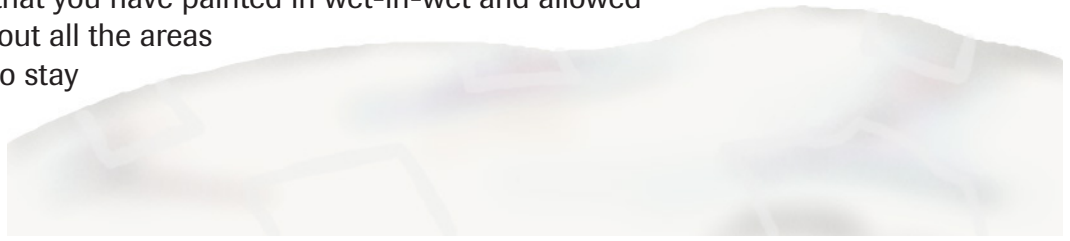
*"Reconsidering Paisley", watercolor by Ellen Fountain, image 14-5/8" x 14-5/8"*

*The masking fluid with glazing process was used to create the pattern in the paisley fabric. The blue fabric, and the red fabric in the far background are just washes, selectively glazed over each other with either stencil or wax crayon resist patterns.*

*This piece started as a challenge to a painting class. I was telling them that any "accident" that happened during the painting process was an opportunity. If we are open to a variety of outcomes as the painting progresses, almost anything that occurs can be incorporated. In this instance, I asked the students to "spill" paint on my paper. They got to choose the color. (They spashed red in the lower part of the painting). After they'd finished, I had to come up with some way to use their "accident" in the finished painting. This is a good problem to give to yourself...deliberately begin a work with a splash or "spill" of paint and then work your way out of that in a creative way so that the "accident" ends up looking deliberate and part of the painting.*

## Masking Fluid Resist and Glazing Exercise

Plan a simple four-color pattern (white, yellow, rose, and blue) for a piece of fabric with no complex folds, just soft shadows that you have painted in wet-in-wet and allowed to dry thoroughly. Mask out all the areas of your pattern that are to stay white. You can see them subtly shown in the first illustration.



When the masking fluid is dry, paint the first wash. Let it dry completely. Don't use a hair dryer. The areas you masked out now show as white lines.

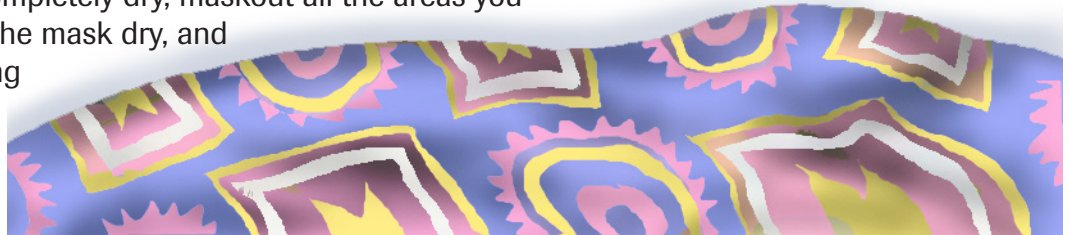


When the yellow wash is dry, mask out all the areas you want to remain yellow. Don't remove any masking fluid at this point. When the fluid is dry, paint the second color (red) in a dilute wash over everything. Let this second glaze of color dry.

The white and yellow areas should now show up clearly. Depending on how saturated you got your red and yellow washes and what red you used, the red color will vary from peachy orange to warm red.



When the red wash is completely dry, mask out all the areas you want to remain red. Let the mask dry, and then paint over everything with blue. Since this will be your final wash for this exercise, you can get it fairly saturated.



When the paint is completely dry, use your rubber cement pickup to remove all the masking fluid. Your pattern is now revealed. You can soften the edges of the masked pattern shapes if you wish, or alter their color with more thin washes.

I have created very complex patterns using this technique. It takes patience to wait for each layer of masking fluid and paint to dry, but you can work on other things while you wait. Just remember to remove all the masking fluid as soon as possible after your last wash is dry, and never use a hair dryer to speed up the drying process. Heat will bake the masking fluid onto your paper and you will not be able to remove it.