

Thank you all for your nice words !

My workflow was kind of trial and error, trying to mimic the real-world watercolor workflow, that is :

- choose a nice textured paper
- draw a rough sketch showing the main outlines
- paint the large flat areas with a large soft brush and lot of water
- paint the details with a smaller brush
- bright areas almost receive no paint at all (the paper show through)

To recreate this in photoshop, I did the following :

1. Paper :

- create a layer and fill it with flat white
- add a Hue/Sat. adjustment layer to fine tune the paper color
- add a textured layer on top of all layers (overlay blend mode)

2. Paint and water :

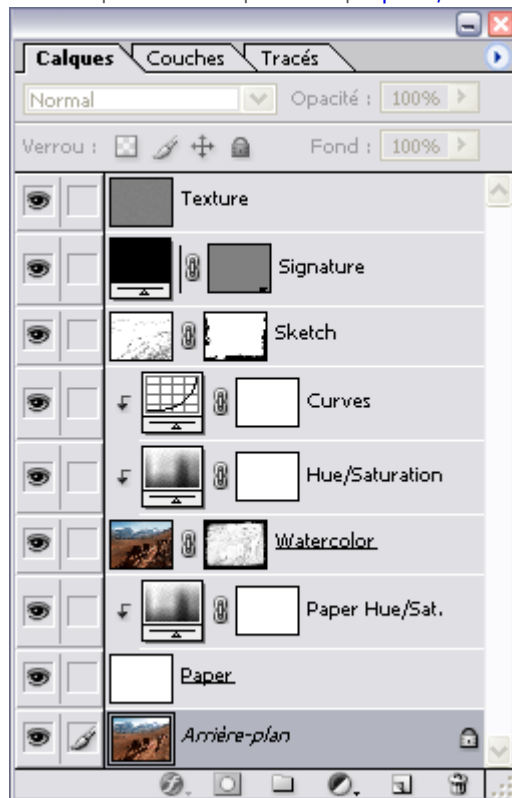
- duplicate the original photo and apply the watercolor filter
- add a layer mask to mask the whole layer
- add a Hue/Sat. and curves adjustment layers to fine tune the colors

3. Sketch drawing :

- duplicate the original photo and convert it to B/W
- apply an smart blur to the B/W, with edge detection
- invert the layer to get black on white strokes
- add a layer mask to clear the outer borders
- adjust opacity to make the outlines more or less visible

Here's a screenshot of the layers panel :

Image control: [Zoom out](#) | [Zoom 100%](#) | [Zoom in](#) | [Expand / Contract](#) | [New window](#)



When those layers were set up, I selected watercolor brushes and painted with white color in the "Paint layer" mask to reveal the colors underneath. The brushes I used are called (in French) "Aquarelle humide à pointe plate" and "Aquarelle à petite pointe ronde", which could be translated to "Flat wet watercolor brush" and "Small round watercolor brush" (don't know the names in english version of PS). The opacity of the brushes was set to 100%, but I made it sensitive to my tablet pen's pressure.

Try not to fill the whole painting with a flat and uniform layer, but rather work by adding up thin layers of "paint" as you'd do with real watercolors. If you've been too "heavy handed" on some parts, you can always fix it by painting back the layer mask with black.

Well, in fact, the workflow is simpler than it sounds. But for those who are frightened by all this stuff, I made an action (PS CS) which sets up all the layers automatically (with customization steps), so all that's left to do is select your preferred brush and begin to paint. While recording the action, I changed all the default names (new layers,...) because I work on a french version of PS. So it should run flawlessly on other language versions.

Here it is :

<http://ggw.online.fr/dpreview/Actions/ErickN%20Watercolor.atn>

Hope this helps,
Have fun !
Erick