

# WATERCOLOUR DEMONSTRATION

## STRAWBERRIES

By Karl Fletcher



Reference Photo

This is the reference photo I chose to use for my painting, some strawberries freshly washed and arranged on my worktop to provide a variety of angles. In particular, I like the way the stalks and leaves point in different directions and the way it leads the eye to different parts of the photo.

I decided to position the lighting above in order to create a cast shadow (you can see the base of my light to the right of the picture). I've decided that I want to create an expressive rendition in the painting - I don't want the strawberries to look sterile like they were mass produced and something I bought from a supermarket (which I did). I want them to be vibrant and juicy, something you want to pick up and eat!

## Materials

I've decided to use four colours and to mix them interchangeably to achieve the various hues I see represented in the photo. I'm using:

- Cad Red
- French Ultramarine
- Cad Yellow
- Burnt Sienna.

I'm using Winsor and Newton Cotman series. I'm also using Bockingford 140lb rough watercolour paper and the size is half imperial (15 x 11 inches). Additionally, I'll be using a 5B pencil (I find I don't have to press as hard and mark the paper with softer lead) and I'll use 2 brushes - a number 12 and number 4 round (both are made from sable). I usually prefer to tape the paper to a drawing board with masking tape.

## Stage One

I loosely sketch the strawberries using a contour (outline drawing). I want to get the angles and shapes on the drawing to more or less match the photo.



I decide to introduce an extra strawberry where the photo cuts one in half and to make the leaves a little more interesting by varying the shapes. Once complete, I use a diluted wash of cad yellow to begin under-painting the strawberries. I apply this using my number 12 round brush. I want this to show through as I can see lots of tiny yellow seeds in the fleshy skin.

## The First Wash

When I'm using the cad yellow I'm careful to leave some white of the paper in places. I want to have some whites and some yellows in my finished painting that still appear, in order to provide interest.



I indicate the larger highlights on the strawberries by again using the white of the paper. I soften back the edge of the yellow paint with water so that I don't get a hard edge of yellow where the highlight begins (I want the edge to blend). I finish all the strawberries and leaves in the same way. I then let the paint dry.

## Using Cad Red And Creating Highlights

Next, I take the cad red and apply the first wash. I paint in such a way that I create the impression of the seed-heads. I allow some of the underpainting to be visible. I know I will only have a few seed-heads visible in my finished work, so I allow ample at this stage, in order to increase my options at the later stages of the painting. I apply this to all the strawberries and allow the paint to dry



### **Applying the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cad Red Wash**

Still using the number 12 round and once the painting is dry to touch, I apply a 2<sup>nd</sup> wash of cad red to the parts of the strawberries I can see in shadow on the photo.

I don't cover the whole strawberry again, just the areas that I need to darken.

### **Using Two Mixes Of Green For The Leaves**

Next, I mix cad yellow and French ultramarine to make a fairly dilute light green and taking the number 4 round I begin to paint over the yellow wash on the leaves. I do this lightly as I want the yellow to appear in places, but only just. I then allow this to dry.

I then mix a stronger green. I use thicker pigment from the cad yellow and add a touch of burnt sienna (hardly any) to take the blue out of the green and begin to paint in the shadows I see on the leaves.



### **Creating The Cast Shadows**

Now that I have my under painting complete, I want to paint the shadows I see that are really drawing me to the subject. I mix cad red and French ultramarine again into a light and dark shadow wash.

The light wash is more dilute and for the darker wash I use more pigment and less water. I add just a touch of burnt sienna to “knock back” the purple these two colours can so easily produce. I then apply the lighter, more dilute wash to give the strawberries their shadows using my number 12 brush.

While the first wash is still wet I paint in the darker areas of shadow using the thicker mix I prepared earlier. I have to do this quickly, which is why it’s always good to have both mixes ready, and more than enough, if you can remember.

I move on to my next washes while the strawberries are still wet.



## Painting The Background

I've decided I want to use the full range of the 4 colours I've chosen for the painting when I portray the background, so I make up mixes of cad yellow with burnt sienna, French ultramarine with cad red and also French ultramarine with burnt sienna (this gives a really dark blue brown which I like). I also mix some pure cad red, cad yellow and ultramarine as well.

I begin by laying in a wash of cad yellow. As you can see below, the wash begins to pool around the leaves.



To avoid any runs into the still wet painting I turn my drawing board upside down for the remainder of the washes. I use both brushes interchangeably at this stage as I paint into the detail of the leaves with the number 4 and paint the large washes with the number 12.

I drop in the mixes I've prepared allowing the pigments to mingle in the water on the paper.



### **The Foreground**

While the background is still wet, I take the same cad yellow and burnt sienna mixes and lay in the foreground.

This time I'm concentrating on giving depth to the painting with my brushstrokes. I want to leave some areas of white for interest and contrast and I want to create lines to lead into the painting so it doesn't look "flat" or one dimensional .

The lines and brush strokes come out at angles from the strawberries to show they are on a surface. I only want to suggest this. I mingle wet into wet brush strokes of French ultramarine and the mix of burnt sienna and French ultramarine to show the real dark areas. I use quick, deliberate, broad brushstrokes with the number 12 and fine darker lines with the smaller number 4.

I strengthen some of the darks on the strawberries to give more form and touch in under the leaves where necessary to give more depth to the shadows.



### **The Finished Painting**

I wait for the painting to dry and remove the masking tape. The colours have lightened slightly as they've dried and the masking tape provides a perfect white border to my lively rendition of the strawberries...



## About Karl Fletcher

Karl is passionate about watercolours and paints regularly to commission and for private exhibitions. Watercolour isn't his only medium of choice - you'll often find Karl working with oils and acrylics with a particular interest in spiritual art.

See Karl's full profile at:  
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