



This is one of those subjects that are great fun to paint, the drawing is simple, the colors vibrant and the results always pleasing. Because of the simplicity, it is also a subject that begs you to experiment. Rather than simply copying what is in front of us we will exaggerate detail in some areas and eliminate it in others to put more interest into a static, geometric subject.

What You Will Need

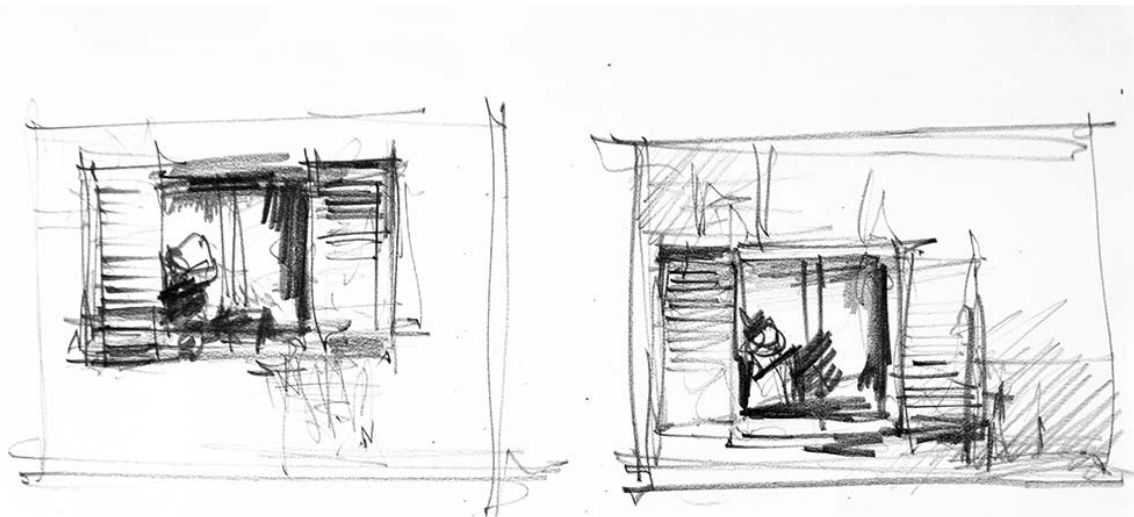
For this project, all we need is a 1/4 sheet of medium or rough 300gsm paper (I'm using Arches 300gsm medium), 5 colors plus white gouache and Gesso, a pastel or charcoal pencil, #1 Rigger brush, 1 inch flat brush, a 1/2 inch Bristle Brush for most of the work and a 2 or 3 inch Hake to adjust the Gesso glaze. We will also use a pen and Burnt Sienna pigment ink.





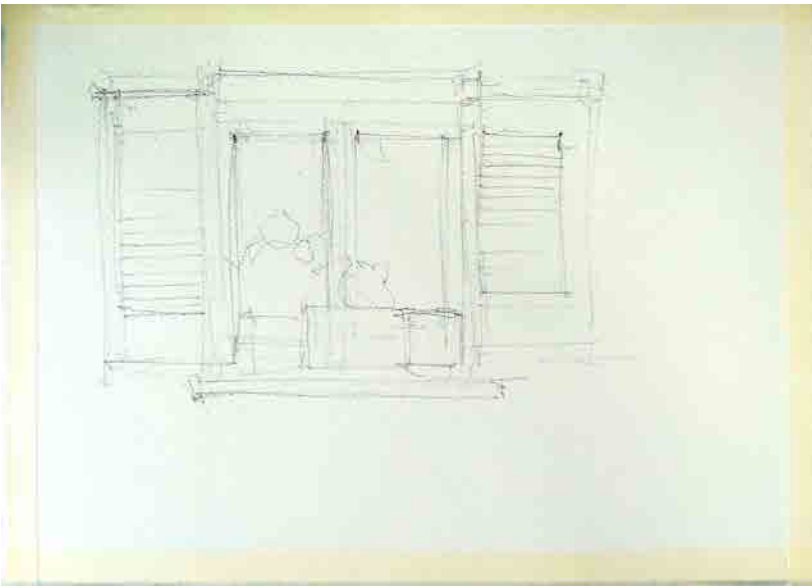
Our subject is interesting, but it appears very stiff and formal and, because of the symmetry, the eye jumps all over the place.

We will break up the symmetry by establishing a diagonal band of interest through the painting, and by relocating the focal point of red geraniums.



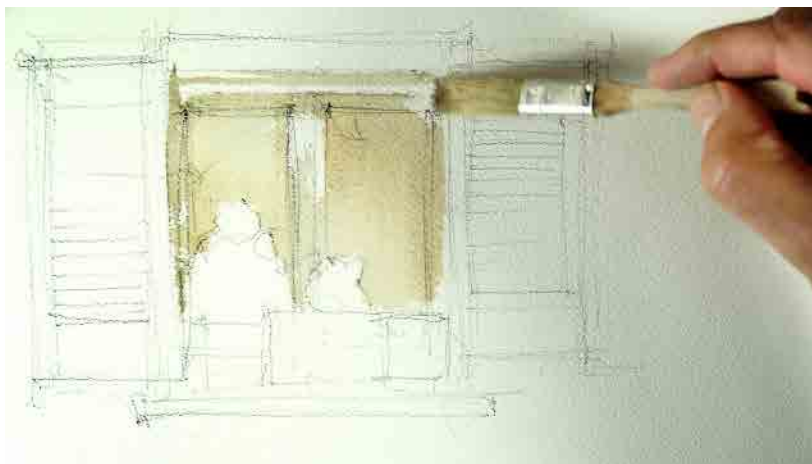
Thumbnail Sketches

A couple of quick thumbnails allow us to try out different compositions to get the most out of the subject. I prefer the first sketch, moving the focal point of the red geranium out of the centre of the composition and exaggerating detail in the diagonally opposite corners of the shutters. This emphasis from lower left to upper right will break up the symmetry of the subject.



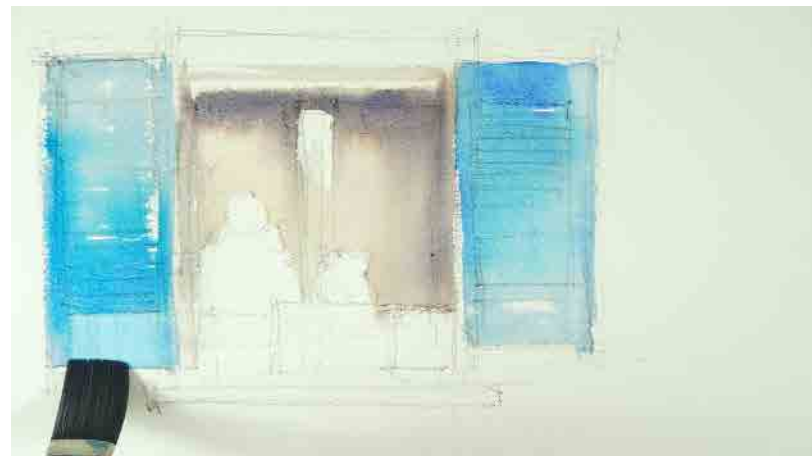
Drawing

The first task is to lightly sketch the composition onto our watercolor paper with a pastel or charcoal pencil. Note the position of the window and the spaces surrounding it.



First Wash

Our first wash over the window is a mixture of Quinacridone Gold and Alizarin dulled slightly with a touch of Ultramarine. Put it on with your 1/2" bristle brush, then before the wash dries mix some more Ultramarine into the mixture on your palette and put a shadow across the top and down the right hand side of the window.



Blue Shutters

For the shutters we will mix some Phthalo and Ultramarine Blue together. Make the right hand shutter stronger at the top and the left hand shutter stronger at the bottom. Before the blue washes dry out, use your damp 1" Flat brush to lift out some geometric shapes suggesting the various timber panels in the shutters



Lintel and Foliage

While we have the blue mixture on our palette we can paint in the lintel above the window. Let the lintel dry, then mix a grey by adding some Ultramarine and Alizarin to the blue on your palette. Use this to paint a grey shadow over the lintel.

Into the grey paint on your palette, mix some Quinacridone Gold and a little Phthalo blue. Stir it up and adjust the color by adding Alizarin until you end up with a dark, dirty brown/green for the foliage. Paint in an area of dirty dark green then quickly add some Quinacridone Gold to your brush and apply it around the dark color. Let the two colors bleed into one another. You can also drop in some pure Quinacridone Gold while the foliage is still wet. The aim is to get an interesting variation of tone and color into the mass of foliage.



Pots

After the foliage has dried mix a cool grey (Ultramarine, Quinacridone Gold and Alizarin) and paint in the left hand planter boxes. Mix a darker version of the same color and add some shadows around the shutters, under the window sill and across the top and down the side of the window. Put these shadows on then, with a clean damp 1" flat brush, soften the outer edges.

You can now mix a terracotta color with Alizarin, Quinacridone Gold and a little Ultramarine. The grey puddle on your palette probably has enough Ultramarine in it, so all you need do is add the Alizarin and Quinacridone Gold. Use this color to suggest the right hand pot.



Shutter Detail

Let everything dry then work some pure Phthalo Blue over the shutters. Increase the detail and color strength in the diagonally opposite corners. While you have this color on your brush, splash some into the bottom of the foliage.



Geraniums

The next step is to put in the red geraniums. Make sure everything is dry then mix a little water into pure Permanent Rose and paint in the three flowers. Make sure you vary their size and spacing.

More detail can be added to the shutters and window frame with some fine dark grey rigger lines.



Embroidered Pattern

Use a dark grey to model the folds in the curtains. Paint in the vertical shadows with your bristle brush then soften them with your 1 inch flat brush

The embroidered pattern can be added to the curtains once the shadows are dry. Use the same color as the shadows and carefully suggest the stippled oval shapes with the tip of your rigger brush. So the pattern doesn't look too blatant, soften it in a couple of spots with your clean, damp bristle brush.



Foliage Detail

While we have this dark color on our rigger brush we can suggest some detail in the foliage. I made my grey mixture a little darker with a spot of Phthalo Blue to enhance the green of the foliage. Use the same dark color to define the pot shapes then dampen some of the edges with your 1/2 inch bristle brush.



Lifting Out

In order to get more contrast into the window, we can lift out some of our first wash. To get maximum contrast we need a crisp, hard edge. To do this:

- Mask around the area to be lifted out
- Press down the edges of the tape adjacent to this area
- Wash out the pigment with your bristle brush



Ink Lines

To keep the painting interesting we want a variety of different lines. We have already put in some thin rigger lines, now for contrast we can add some ink marks. Spraying the marks with a fine mist of water before they dry will give us interesting feathery marks that add to the character of the window.



Rigger Lines

A few more fine rigger lines around the window and shutters, mainly in the upper right and lower left to build up the diagonal emphasis.



Suggested Bricks

To further encourage the diagonal band of detail we can add a subtle suggestion of bricks under the left hand side of the window. Use your 1 inch flat brush and place the brick shapes close together with the joints staggered one above the other.



Line Detail

On the right hand side of the window we can put in a broken line to suggest detail such as electrical cable or plumbing pipes. Dont make a single straight line, but include a couple of breaks and wiggles to make it interesting.



Curtain Shadows

To increase contrast and add to the diagonal emphasis we can darken the shadow at the top right of the curtain. When every thing is dry a glaze of gesso can be worked over the lower right and upper left of the shutters.



Gesso

Apply the gesso straight from the pot, spread it on the painting with your bristle brush, then dip the brush in water and thin the gesso out. Move it around so that the gesso becomes evenly diluted, then wash your brush clean and grade out the edge of the gesso. Once it looks evenly graded use your dry hake brush to gently smooth out the glaze. Pull the hake from the dry area of the painting back across the gesso, drying it between every couple of strokes. As soon as the wash looks nice and even, stop.



Gouache

The last step is to add some more bricks to the upper right then break that hard, uninteresting line across the top of the window. To do this is a simple matter of wetting the area to be softened and dropping in some white gouache. Make sure the break in the line is not right in the middle.



Final Bricks

A few more subtle bricks on the upper right and we have finished.

Options

The two photos below, while not being as symmetrical as the painting we have just done, can be treated in a similar way. Decide on a focal point then work out what details to play down and what to exaggerate. Do a couple of quick thumbnail sketches first to work out your composition.

