



Constable Study of Clouds

Again, this is especially noticeable in flat-bottomed cumulus clouds – their heaped meringue-like tops appear brilliant white, while their shaded bases are grey. If you are working in oils or acrylics, try using impasto techniques to capture the sunlit tops of clouds, as this really brings out their fluffy forms. With watercolour, leave the paper unpainted to create the brightest white.

Also, don't forget the effects created by atmospheric perspective which applies as much to the sky as to the land. Clouds above you, and therefore closer



Turner - Seascape Study

to you, appear more sharply defined than those near the horizon.

Cloud types that are less well defined require less modelling. These include cirrus clouds – thin, wispy plumes made up of ice particles – and stratus clouds, which form a thick blanket across the landscape and let little sunlight through.

Work the sky as a whole

Treat clouds as an integral part of a composition, not as features to be added once the rest of the sky has been established. Note how in the three step-by-step

exercises here, the artist has continually worked across the entire sky area, rather than concentrating on one section at a time. Think in terms of establishing general tonal variations rather than individually rendering each billowing form. When using wet media, employ blending and smearing techniques to suggest amorphous clouds.

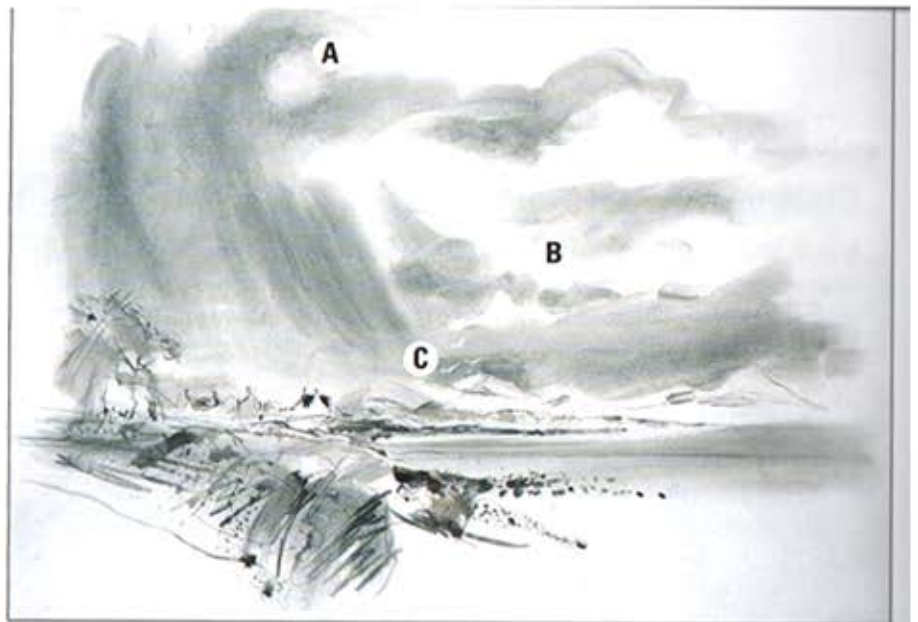
Another aspect to consider when painting heavily overcast skies is colour. At first glance, leaden skies may appear uniformly grey, but look more closely and you might pick out shades

such as brown, purple, yellow and indigo. Indeed, these are all colours employed by the artist in the step-by-step exercises. Make sure, though, that you are subtle about it. Unless you are intentionally going for an expressionist approach, don't use pure alizarin crimson or pure cadmium yellow. In wet media, use these colours in mixes to neutralize their impact; in dry media, use them in semi-transparent veils.

A sense of movement

To really bring a cloudscape to life, also think about conveying the movement of the clouds. Cumulus clouds might look impressive when they are sharply defined, but to convey the turbulence of a stormy sky work more loosely.

Look at the cloudscape worked in graphite powder, on the right. The artist has applied the powder with swift, sweeping strokes, creating the impression of a strengthening wind and the imminent arrival of a heavy rainstorm.



▲ Applying graphite powder with the fingers is a great way to create a fast-moving, stormy sky. The powder can also be removed to create special effects in the sky. Here, graphite powder provides a light grey colour for the large masses of cloud. By contrast, the 8B pencil, charcoal and ink used in the foreground give much denser tones, suggesting the solidity of the land against the insubstantial nature of the clouds.

- Ⓐ The flat side of a craft knife, rubbed over the paper surface in a circular motion, removed powder to create a pale sun. (It is best to use thick paper for this technique.)
- Ⓑ Small, individual clouds were added by pressing pigment on to the paper with the finger or thumb, forming prints.
- Ⓒ The sharp corner of a putty rubber was used to lift off the powder to create the three seagulls in the centre of the picture.