

# Flat Wash Exercises

A flat wash is simply one color painted over part or all of the paper. While it is one of the most basic techniques used in watercolor painting and seems easy enough, it's really quite tricky to lay an even flat wash. Gravity must be on your side. Since you want the paint to flow gently in the direction toward which you are painting, it is crucial that you tilt your Coroplast work surface to about a 15° angle.

## *House and Hills*

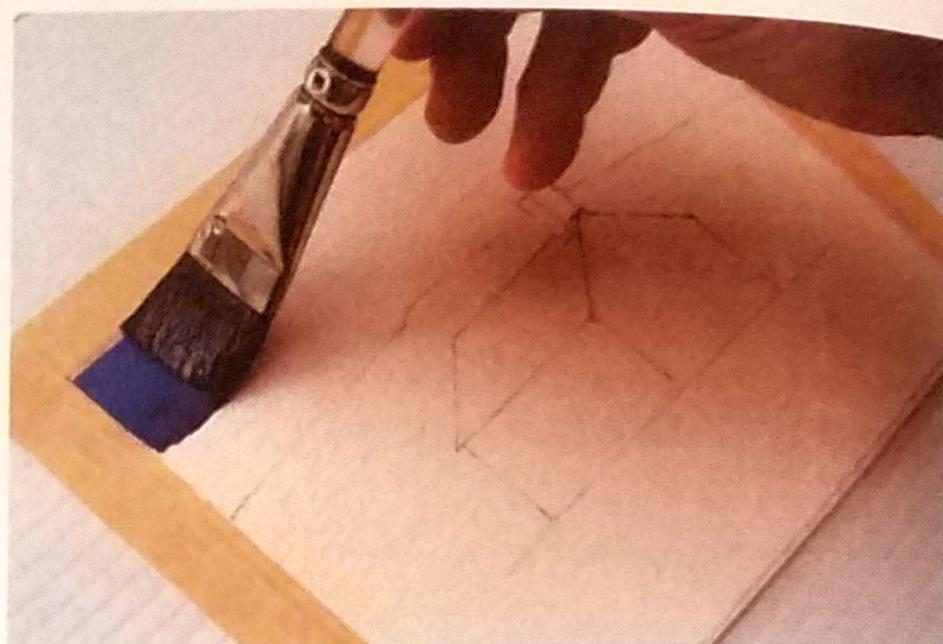
Tape a 5½" × 7½" (14cm × 19cm) piece of 300-lb. (640g/m<sup>2</sup>) rough-surfaced paper to your Coroplast, and make sure the work surface is tilted gently toward you. This slight angle will draw the paint downward. Draw a pencil sketch of house and landscape like the one below, and then just follow the step-by-step instructions.

Because we use the glazing technique, painting color on top of color after each wash is completely dry, we will end up with a picture that has three values, even though we will use only one color. Since this is your first attempt at a flat wash, don't get too discouraged if you blow it. Tape several pieces of paper to your Coroplast and try the exercise again and again until you succeed. You'll get it sooner or later.

First, use a mixing bowl and a 1-inch (25mm) square brush, mix a medium value of Ultramarine Blue. (*Value*, which we will discuss in the next chapter, is the strength or intensity of a color.) Always mix more than you think you'll need; it's very frustrating to run out of paint halfway through a wash.

### Palette:

Ultramarine Blue



### Step 1: The Flat Wash

With the board at an angle, load your 1-inch (25mm) square brush and drag it across the paper beginning at the upper left-hand corner. Don't lift your brush until you've run off the other side of the paper, and don't go over it twice.



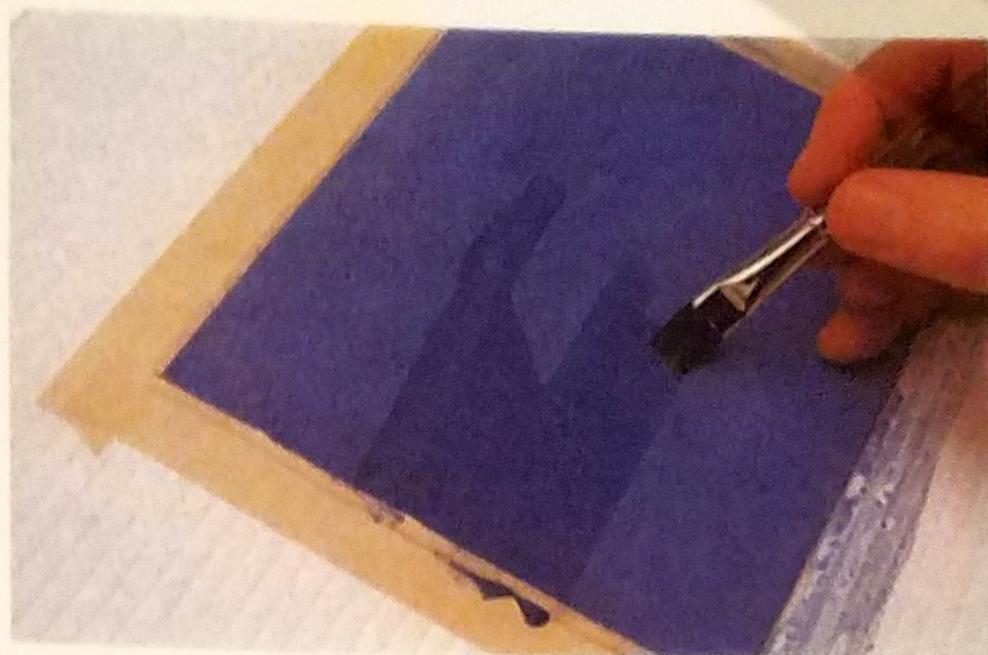
### Step 2: Overlapping

Thanks to gravity, excess paint collects along the bottom edge of the line you just painted. Remove the excess by overlapping the bottom edge of the first pass with the top edge of the second, and so on till you've finished the entire paper. Reload your brush after each pass. When you have painted the whole area, wipe your brush with a clean tissue, then run it along the bottom edge if there is a bead of paint there. Now, lay your painting flat and let it dry, either naturally or using a blow-dryer. If you use a blow-dryer, hold it about 18" (46cm) away from the paper so the force of the air won't disturb your wash.



### Step 3: Glazing

After the wash is dry, load your ½-inch (12mm) square brush with the same value of Ultramarine Blue and do another flat wash, using the same overlap technique as before, and paint in the mid-

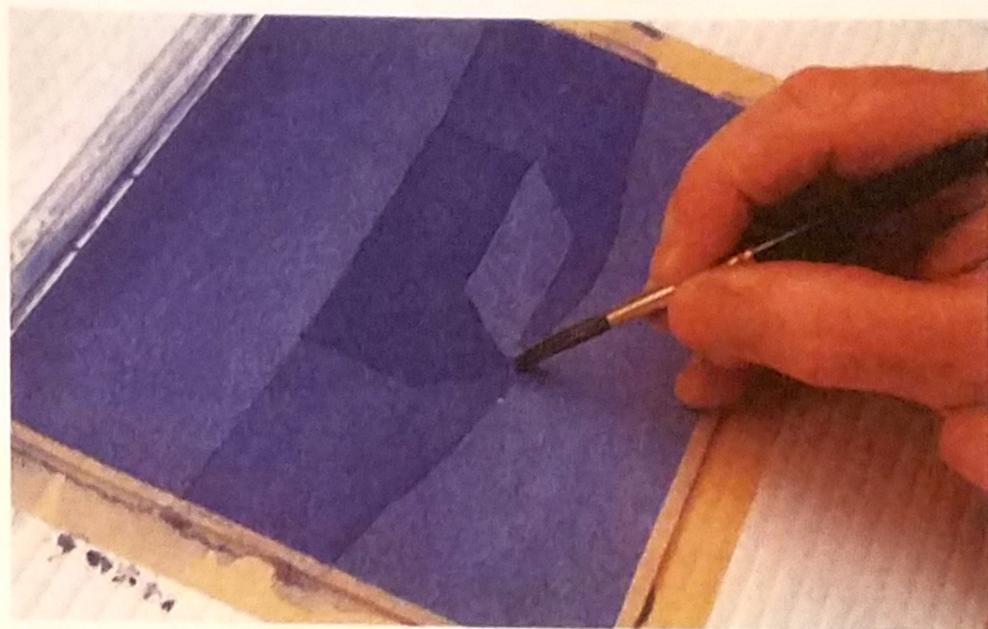


dle area, with the exception of the house's exposed roof. Since it is going on top of an existing flat wash, we call it a *glaze*—a coat of transparent paint that modifies the underlying tone.



### Step 4: The House

Again, using your ½-inch (12mm) square brush, apply a flat wash to the barn, remembering not to paint the sunward roof and following the lines of the pencil drawing precisely. Don't be afraid to rotate the picture this way or that in order to make the act of painting more comfortable. You'll notice that by glazing over an existing wash we have increased the color's value—without changing the value of our mix. Glazing causes increased value.



### Step 5: Finishing Up

Use your Sho-Card brush to wash in the chimney. It's much easier to tickle in small square objects with the Sho-Card than any other brush. Notice how I rotate the paper to get better access to the area I want to work on.