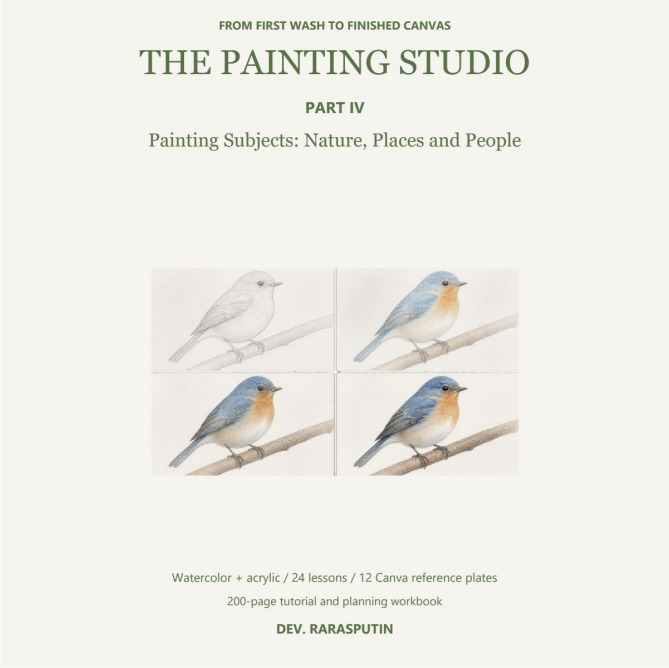
FROM FIRST WASH TO FINISHED CANVAS

The Painting Studio

Part IV / Painting Subjects: Nature, Places and People



Watercolor and acrylic learning through observation, paint tests, guided projects and review. 24 lessons / 12 new Canva AI reference plates / 200 numbered pages.

First edition / 2026

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Choose a manageable painting practice

Part I introduces both media. Part II concentrates on watercolor and Part III on acrylic. Part IV applies the methods to subjects; Part V develops complete projects and a practice portfolio. Follow the medium label on every lesson. Do not transfer an acrylic correction method automatically to watercolor.

Each eight-page lesson contains a principle, a specific four-step sequence, a Canva reference plate, a worked diagnosis, a color-and-surface test, a focused experiment, a project plan and a review. Two lessons revisit each of twelve subjects with different aims.

The 200 pages include substantial planning, comparison and reflection space. This is not 200 pages of continuous prose, a video course or a fillable form. Do actual watercolor painting on suitable watercolor paper and acrylic painting on a compatible prepared support. Printed workbook paper is for dry notes and planning, not a recommended painting surface.

Start with small studies and a palette you can manage. You may substitute available colors after testing their actual behavior. Completion is a learning milestone rather than a guarantee of professional ability or income.

One skill and a practical study size for this volume

MATERIALS AND SURFACE TESTS

Two media, different working habits

Watercolor starting kit

Suitable watercolor paper, a round brush and a wash brush if available, transparent watercolor paints, a mixing palette, clean water and a blotting cloth. Test paper sizing, pigment staining and the wet-to-dry value change on a matching scrap. Reserved paper white and dry-separated glazing are core methods; lifting is conditional.

Acrylic starting kit

A prepared acrylic painting surface, suitable synthetic brushes, acrylic paints, palette, water and an optional compatible acrylic medium. Keep drying paint out of brush ferrules. Use the product instructions for dilution, additives, support preparation and later finishing. Surface dry and fully cured are different conditions.

Keep the systems distinct

Use separate clean water and tools as practical. Do not mix ordinary watercolor into acrylic to improvise an untested durable paint film. Later projects compare the media; they do not require layering incompatible materials on one support.

My actual paper/support, paint labels and brush sizes

CANVA AI REFERENCE GUIDE

Use the illustrations critically

Twelve new subject plates were generated in Canva AI for each volume. They provide a light drawing and illustrative color-development treatments. They are not photographs documenting a real painter completing measured stages. Some plates use different proportions or include a title treatment, and intermediate treatments may be more developed than the written first-layer instructions.

Follow the written process and your actual paint tests. Do not infer drying times, pigment formulas, layer counts or material compatibility from an AI image. Anatomy, perspective, lighting and object details may vary between panels. Verify uncertainty against real objects, an appropriate reference or a consenting adult sitter.

Use the plate as a study prompt rather than a guarantee of physical results. Record an AI-reference study honestly, distinguish it from observation from life, and retain your own progress notes. The original diagrams and color strips explain relationships schematically; screen and print colors cannot substitute for physical pigment tests.

A reference detail or paint behavior I will verify

LESSON 01 / WATERCOLOR / UNDERSTAND

Construct a bird before adding feather marks

A small bird is easier to paint when its body, head and tail form a connected construction. Begin with the body tilt and the branch contact, then compare the beak direction with the head. Feather texture is secondary. If an AI plate gives uncertain feet or wing attachments, simplify and consult a suitable real bird reference before copying the detail.

Subject and purpose

A small songbird perched on a plain branch. Establish and test.



Original schematic planning diagram. Test the actual subject and physical paint rather than matching the printed shapes or colors exactly.

Look for evidence

The pose and body tilt remain clear without an inventory of feathers

LESSON 01 / WATERCOLOR / GUIDED PROCESS

Work through the paint sequence

Step 1

Draw the body axis and a small head mass before the contour.

Step 2

Place the tail direction and the two branch contact points.

Step 3

Reserve a few light feather groups and paint a pale first body wash.

Step 4

Let the wash settle before placing the wing's larger darker shape.

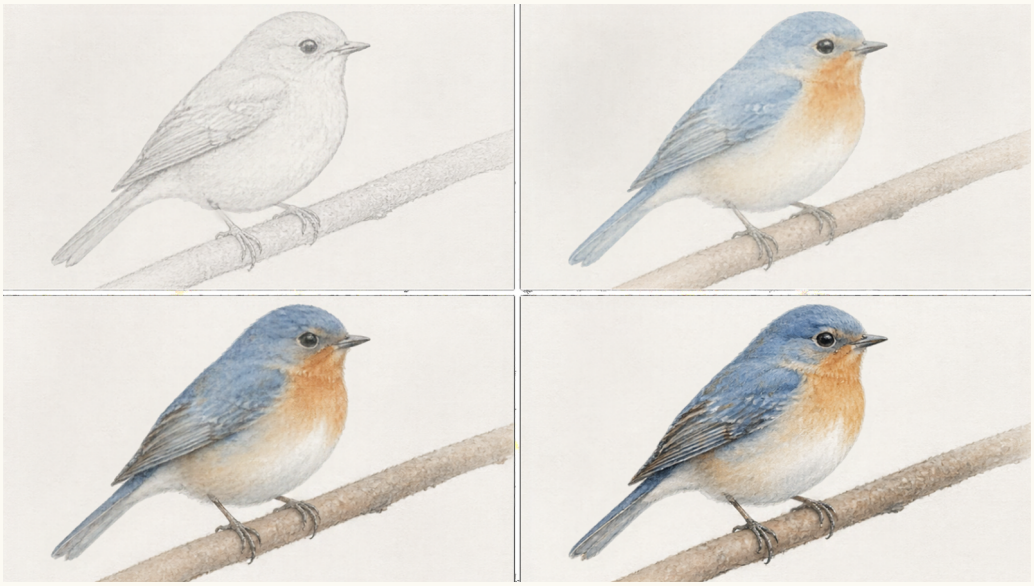
Before the next layer, check the matching test strip and the actual surface. For watercolor, distinguish glossy wet, evenly damp and dry. For acrylic, avoid dragging new strokes into tacky paint; follow material instructions for later layers.

The surface condition that changed my next decision

LESSON 01 / WATERCOLOR / REFERENCE

Compare the illustrative treatments

Reference 01 / WATERCOLOR



Canva AI-generated practice art. Drawing and color-development views are illustrative; they may differ and do not document a verified physical painting process.

Apply this lesson focus

The pose and body tilt remain clear without an inventory of feathers

LESSON 01 / WATERCOLOR / WORKED CORRECTION

Diagnose before repainting

A plausible failure to investigate

Rows of repeated feather marks obscure the bird's volume

A purposeful response

Return to the large body and wing masses, then use fewer varied accents

First compare the whole study with the intended light pattern and structure. Name whether the main conflict is drawing, value, color, edge or surface handling. A texture problem should not be repaired by changing a sound silhouette, and a structural error should not be concealed with more small marks.

For this watercolor passage, try any lifting or additional glaze on a matching painted scrap first. Stop if the surface roughens or the test fails; a fresh study with better reserves is a useful correction.

Evidence I can point to / one correction I will test

LESSON 01 / WATERCOLOR / COLOR LABORATORY

Build a useful mixing and surface test



Original schematic color relationships only. Printed/display colors are not exact pigment recipes or calibration targets.

Use the same paper as the painting. Prepare three strengths of one mixture and let them dry. Compare a dry-paper stroke with one on evenly damp paper. Keep pigment choice and brush load as consistent as practical so the difference you observe has an identifiable cause.

Connect the test to this subject

Construct a bird before adding feather marks. Name the passage that needs this test before painting it.

Mixture / label	Surface / condition	Dried result

Actual pigment names, additions and dried observations

LESSON 01 / WATERCOLOR / PRACTICE

Run a focused experiment

Paint three bird silhouettes with no feather detail before completing one colored study

Use a small suitable art surface for each painted trial. Keep the subject arrangement, palette and size consistent unless this exercise specifically changes them. For a second pass, change one named variable and keep the first attempt available for comparison.

Plan A / dry sketch or notes

Plan B / one deliberate change

Prediction / actual result / what stayed constant

LESSON 01 / WATERCOLOR / PROJECT

Plan a complete small application

Project subject

A small songbird perched on a plain branch

Make one small watercolor study that demonstrates: construct a bird before adding feather marks. Use the four-step sequence as the starting route, then adapt to the actual surface and pigment behavior. Choose a study size you can finish without rushing the required drying stages.

Two observable completion checks

The pose and body tilt remain clear without an inventory of feathers. Also verify that the main shapes and contact points remain coherent before adding surface detail.

Value / composition plan

Edge / layer plan

Palette, support, layer order and a stopping condition

LESSON 01 / WATERCOLOR / REVIEW

Keep the evidence of learning

Compare the attempts

The pose and body tilt remain clear without an inventory of feathers

Place the dry studies beside the plan. Describe one visible improvement and one unresolved relationship. If the new attempt is weaker, record what changed rather than concealing it. Choose a next exercise that isolates the remaining problem.

Subject source / real observation or AI reference / date

One strength supported by a visible relationship

One correction and the evidence that would show it worked

Next practice / medium / surface / variable to test