

## MASKING OUT

Masking out means isolating certain areas of a painting by covering them up with a paint-resistant surface, so that they can be freely worked over without marking the surface. This serves two main purposes. First of all, it protects finished areas of the painting from random splashes of paint while work is still in progress in other areas. For example, if you are using an "action painting" technique such as SPATTERING in one area of a picture, you would be wise to cover up those areas not to be splattered, since the paint tends to fly in all directions.

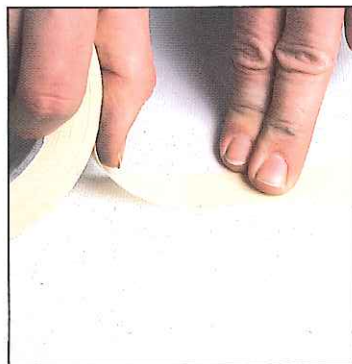
Secondly, a mask or resist is used to block off specific areas of shapes in order to retain the color of the support or the existing surface. Once an area has been safely masked off, you are free to carry on with the rest of the painting, unhampered by having to paint carefully around fiddly shapes, because you can paint right over the mask. When the painting is completed the mask is removed to reveal the areas underneath.

There are various masking devices available to the artist, ranging from a simple sheet of newspaper to film with a slightly adhesive surface, to a more sophisticated latex solution. What you use depends on the medium you are working with, the size and type of support, and the kind of effect you are aiming for.

### Masking tape

Masking tape is a strong, self-adhesive tape which attaches firmly to paper, board or canvas, but can be peeled off easily. The tape works well on canvas or dried paint, but can sometimes lift off the surface of soft papers; use it only on strong, well-sized paper.

Masking tape is most often used where a linear or geometric design is desired, as in the hard-edge paintings of Mark Rothko (1903-70) and Bridget Riley (b 1931). Because it always leaves a hard edge, it is unsuitable for masking out soft, organic forms.

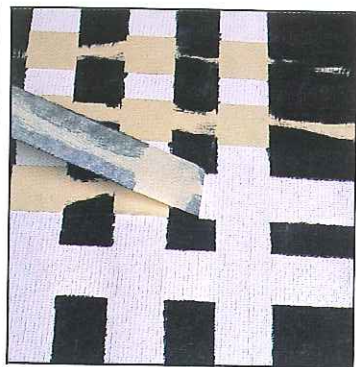


### Masking with Tape

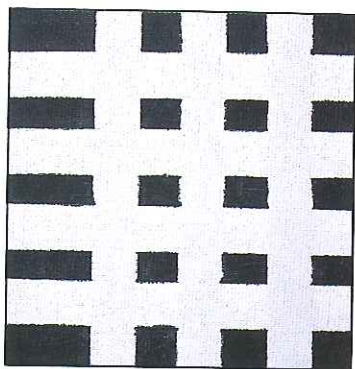
1 Masking tape gives the best results where a clean, sharp edge is required. Make sure the support is perfectly dry before sticking the tape down firmly in the chosen position.



2 Here, acrylic paint is being applied over and away from the edges of the tape. Painting over the tape insures that there are no ragged edges when the tape is peeled away.



**3** Allow the paint to dry thoroughly, then lift one corner of the tape and peel it back carefully.



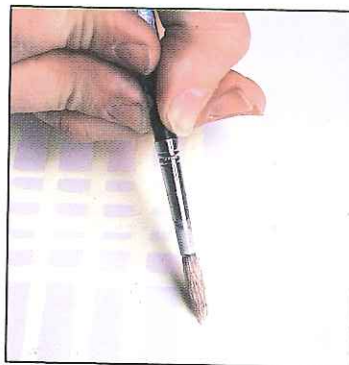
**4** The finished result is a pattern of well-defined, clear-cut lines.

### Masking fluid

Because of the transparency of watercolor, it is impossible to paint a light color over a dark one; the artist must plan where the light or white areas are to be and paint around them, which can be a fiddly problem. An effective solution is to paint over the areas to be preserved with masking fluid. This liquid, rubbery solution is applied with a brush, just like paint, and dries within a few seconds to form a water-resistant film which can be painted over without affecting the paper underneath. When the painting is completely dry, the rubbery mask is easily removed by rubbing with the finger.

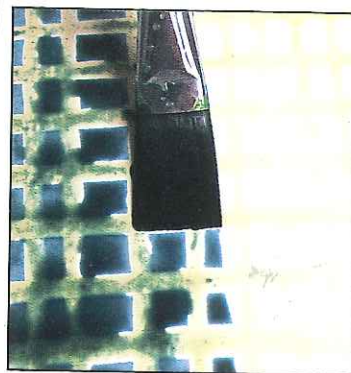
The advantage of masking fluid is that it can be applied in any shape you desire. It forms a firm, waterproof resist, and doesn't have to be held in place manually on the support. The one disadvantage is that areas treated with masking fluid always have a hard edge, which may not be compatible with the rest of the painting.

Always use an old brush to apply masking fluid, and wash it in warm, soapy water immediately after use, to prevent the rubber solution from drying hard and clogging up the bristles.

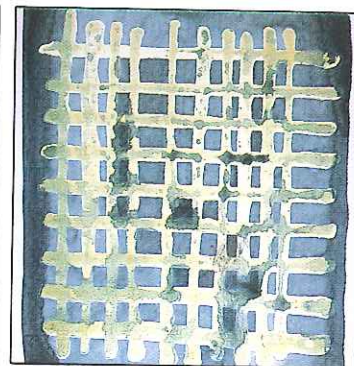


### Masking with Fluid

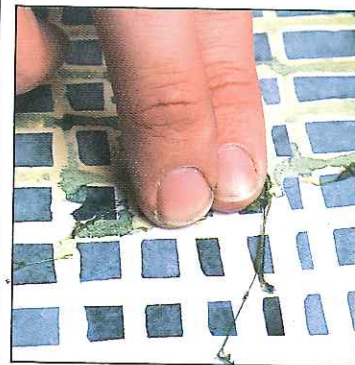
**1** Using a soft brush, paint in the area you intend to leave white and allow it to dry hard. The fluid must be fresh or it will yellow the paper. Wash the brush out immediately to prevent the fluid from drying on the bristles.



**2** When the fluid is dry, you can brush washes freely over the surrounding area without having to be careful to avoid the white shapes.



**3** It is essential to let the watercolor dry before continuing.



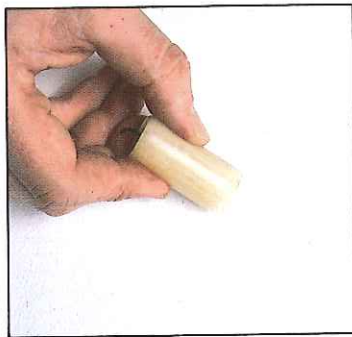
**4** Remove the dried masking fluid by gently rubbing with your fingers or a soft kneaded eraser and peeling it away. If the paint is not dry the color will smudge.



## Wax

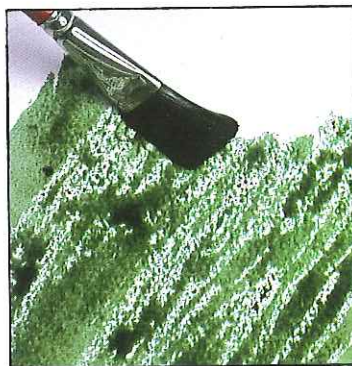
An attractive, broken effect is achieved by masking with wax, especially when used on rough paper or canvas. Use either a white candle or a white wax crayon and skim it across the paper so that it touches the high points but not the indents. When the painting is completely dry, the wax can be removed by covering it with absorbent paper and pressing with a warm iron.

The speckled, broken appearance that waxing gives is perfect for suggesting textures such as tree bark, or the sparkle of sunlight on water.



### The Wax Resist Method

**1** Rub a dry wax candle (or a wax crayon) over the paper as desired.



**2** Paint over the wax and the surrounding area. The wax will reject the watercolor and protect the paper underneath. Allow the wash to dry thoroughly.



**3** To remove the wax, lay a sheet of absorbent paper over the area and press with a cool iron until the wax is absorbed by the paper. You may have to repeat the process two or three times to remove all the wax.



**4** Because the wax skips over the raised tooth of the paper and misses the indents, the watercolor is not completely resisted. The resulting shapes give an interesting batik effect with broken, textured edges. For a more pronounced texture, use a rough paper.



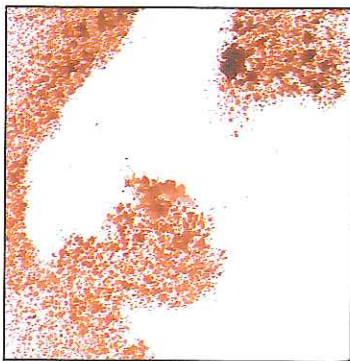
**1** Take a small piece of absorbent cotton and tease it out until it is fairly thin. Lay the cotton on the paper, pulling and teasing it into the desired shape.



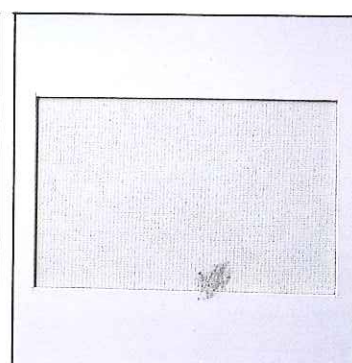
**2** Holding a stiff brush a few inches above the surface, spray color onto the area surrounding the mask by running your finger through the bristles of the brush.



**3** Wait until the paint is thoroughly dry before removing the absorbent cotton.

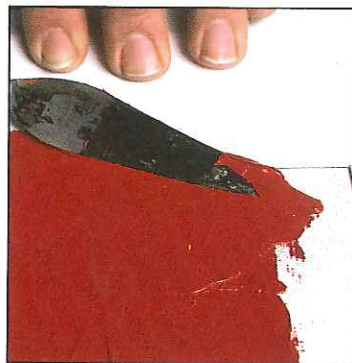


**4** The soft edges of the cotton mask have allowed the spattered paint to seep under it in places. The finished shape has a softer, more natural outline than that achieved with other masking techniques. This method could be used in painting natural subjects such as trees and clouds.



### Masking with Cardboard

**1** A mask can be made from a piece of heavy cardboard. Draw the shape on the cardboard and cut it out with a craft knife. The mask can be either a positive or a negative shape. Here the artist has cut out a negative shape — a rectangle — and placed the mask over a sheet of paper ready for painting.



**2** Hold the mask firmly in place or stick it down with masking tape. Here the artist uses a knife to apply a thick layer of cadmium red acrylic paint inside the cut-out shape. If the paint is too wet it will seep under the edges of the mask. Keep it thick, and work away from the cut edges of the mask.





**3** When the paint is completely dry remove the mask to reveal the shape.