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Water:

1.Flat and level water:

Where the water meets the horizon or touches a bank, it needs to be level.

Always make sure the horizon line is straight and not wobbly.

Use strong horizontal strokes to make the water lay flat.

Waterways - Use sharp angular lines rather than rounded curves.

Avoid curved lines unless you are specifically painting ripples or waves.

2. Reflections:

Reflections change the color of the water.

Rule of Opposites: Darker objects reflect lighter in the water (ie. trees) – lighter objects reflect darker in the water (ie. sky).

Vertical Alignment: Reflections should align directly beneath the object being mirrored.

Objects reflecting in the water will angle the reverse of above. (ie. trees)

The reflected image will get softer and degrade as it moves from the horizon or the source of the reflection.

3. Transparency:

Think of layers of transparency. The bottom layer will be the ground under the water. Middle layer is the surface of the water including reflections. While the top layer is the action of the water. (ie. ripples or lines of disturbance)

Shadows often can make the water transparent as there is little reflection of the sky. (ie overhanging trees).

Refraction – Objects bend as they submerge. The submerged objects change in color and value.

4. Color of the Water:

Water is rarely blue but reflects the colors above, adjacent and underneath.

Look for shifts of values or areas of contrast.

To create depth use warmer, lighter, and more detailed colors in the foreground. Use darker and more subdued colors for the background or distant water.

The value of the water will change from back to front.

Shadows will change the color and value of submerged objects.

5. Movement:

Ripples, currents, and wind on the water all create movement on the surface creating broken colors and lines.

In rivers, look for the channels or the flow of the water. The water will be deeper in the channels changing the value of the water.

Movement is often indicated by lines of disturbance.

6. Highlights and Lines of disturbance:

Lines of Disturbance are white water, lines of movement, ripples, waves, foam.

“Light Seams” (Clint Howard) - Light seams are horizontal bands of lighter value at the edges of the land or rocks. They are always broken, not a solid lines.

To create sparkle or glare spots use sharp, high-contrast lines of light values.

Lines will get thinner and closer together as they vanish into the distance.

Recommendations:

Frits Thaulow (1847-1906) Norwegian Impressionist painter

Josh Elliot – Modern oil painter

Painting Brilliant Skies and Water in Pastel – Liz Haywood Sullivan