



Road Test

By Betsy Dillard Stroud

A Romance with Grey

Streamlined new brushes from Jack Richeson & Co., along with a warm grey toned disposable palette, prove more than ever that grey rocks!



ABOVE: All the colors in an *Iris with Greys* (acrylic on paper, 9x12) are greyed down, especially the ones around the iris; I created this piece in homage to these fabulous brushes.

BELOW: Grey Matters brushes

MOST COLORISTS AGREE that grey enhances the color in paintings and, to paraphrase John Ruskin, True art happens with the marriage of head, heart and hand. Enter the Jack Richeson & Co. new brush line, Grey Matters, which can join your painter's hand with your head and heart in a harmonic long-term romance.

Along with the Grey Matters brushes, I tried the Grey Matters Palette Pads, which consist of sheets of a neutral grey. Let's quote Stephen Quiller: "The warm (color temperature) disposable palette shows the actual paint color to its advantage."

Mixing colors on the Grey Matters palette allows you to see the actual colors of the pigments without the distraction of a white palette, which will naturally cast a slight white sheen on the paint, or a colored palette, which will distract from and distort the pigments on its surface, as all colors are affected by the colors around them.

For the same reason, the non-reflective bristles, ferrule, handle and neutral grey hair of Grey Matters brushes help to limit distraction, making the brush an effective instrument for assessing color accurately.





TOP: Working over a textured landscape with Grey Matters brushes is a dream. For *Canyonscape*, (acrylic on board, 12x15) I scumbled, used the filbert for special places, and easily brushed in an impasto sky with the big flats. I made thin, dramatic lines with the smaller brushes. Amazingly, the big brushes make very fine lines also. I used a big bright to paint transparently over the rock structure on the left of this painting.

ABOVE: Using a variety of brushes from the smallest to the biggest, I created two pages of lines and shapes to illustrate the scope of this brush line—and this is just a tip of the paint-berg!

Brush Bath Tip Lather suds in the palm of your hand, put the brush in and give it a bubble bath. Circle the brush in the soapy suds, round and round. Your brush is clean when the soap remains white. Rinse, then let the brush nap on a paper towel.

Brush-a-Thon

I still remember the tiny brush with one or two stiff black hairs that I used trying to copy Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* when I was 8 years old. (Stop laughing!) We've come a long way, baby! Now there are endless varieties of brush shapes, and each is designed to make the brushstroke of an artist easier. For example, a **round** brush is great for figures (the curve of a breast, the shadows under a cheekbone) or the thrust of a tree. A **flat** brush easily captures a sharp edge, anything geometric.

Finding the right brush takes a little time, but if you have the right teacher (Naomi Brotherton was mine), that makes it so much easier.

ONE CAVEAT: What works for one person doesn't necessarily work for another. For example, I love a brush with some spunk, a spring. I don't like brushes that just fold back when I'm trying to do a wash and, of course, it's important to try your brushes out before you buy them. There are filberts and brights, liners and riggers, and with each brush, a different type of hair: synthetic, bristle, sable and squirrel. Finding the right shape depends on your subject matter, the medium you work with and how you're trying to express your subject. I've worked in almost every medium, and I always try to buy the best brush I can. Sometimes that brush is synthetic; sometimes not.

When I paint in acrylics, I use **brights** when I need a lot of paint and **flats** when I don't need as much. I love a big **three-inch** synthetic brush to put on transparent washes.

MY ADVICE: Find the brushes that feel good to you, that serve your purposes, that help you express your vision.



As an acrylic painter, I additionally want three things from a brush: a good point in a round; a sharp edge in a flat and a variety of shapes that carry an ample amount of paint. Every painter needs brushes that feel like an extension of his/her hand. Every painter needs brushes streamlined to express emotionally, visually and expertly what he/she wants to say. To Grey Matters I definitely say "I do." ■

BETSY DILLARD STROUD's newest book, *Watercolor Masters & Legends*, is on sale in bookstores and at northlightshop.com.

ABOVE: For **Chasm** (acrylic on paper, 12x9) I used complements cadmium orange and cobalt blue with a little quinacridone azo gold squirted onto the palette. I "mushed" (my own verb for brushing on impasto) paint onto the paper using a flat brush. I added white gesso into pigments, creating opaques, and began to layer color with various brushes. I drew thin lines with the No. 1 "signing" brush, which slithered effortlessly, making a circular path through the thick, wet paint. I added other layers and greys with several small round brushes. The slim handles fit my small hand and made it easy for me to use the brush to draw into the paint.

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grey matters



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