

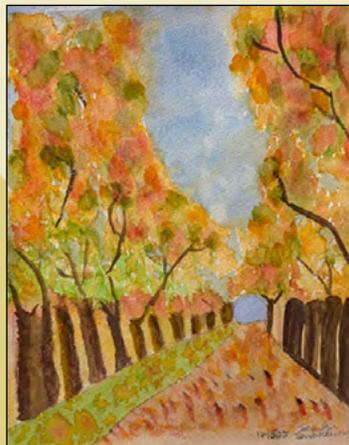


Community Outreach — Oakland Veterans

Exploring Watercolor as a Suggestive Medium

The new year brought veterans together to explore watercolor as a suggestive medium, using an image of a ginkgo-lined street as inspiration. Fallen leaves, in yellows, greens, and golds, glowed across the ground. The scene's abundant texture, with trunks, branches, and foliage, offered a perfect opportunity to apply the "less is more" principle.

CWA volunteers ensured each veteran's palette included clean pigments: yellow, lemon or aureolin yellow, cadmium orange, cobalt blue, and a red pigment. After a quick sketch, planning the trees' and street's boundaries and the overhead branches, some painters squared off the oblong reference image, while others exaggerated the vertical format, creating interesting variations. Throughout planning, a clear focal point was discussed.



Once the painting was under way, Pat introduced salt for texture, and Michael demonstrated dry-brush techniques. The project highlighted watercolor's suggestive power. Fine detail was not necessary; a few partial leaves or broken shapes allowed the viewer's imagination to complete the scene.

Conversation flowed easily as they painted. Someone mentioned a coyote swimming to Alcatraz; others discussed coyotes howling in the hills. One veteran shared a story about a bear encounter.

Time passed quickly. The session ended with the paintings lined up, revealing striking results: glowing washes of yellow, green, and gold. Though some pieces were unfinished, the power of suggestion was clear. The elongated compositions, in particular, worked beautifully. The shared act of painting created a relaxed space for conversation, connection, and time well spent.

Sheila Cain

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