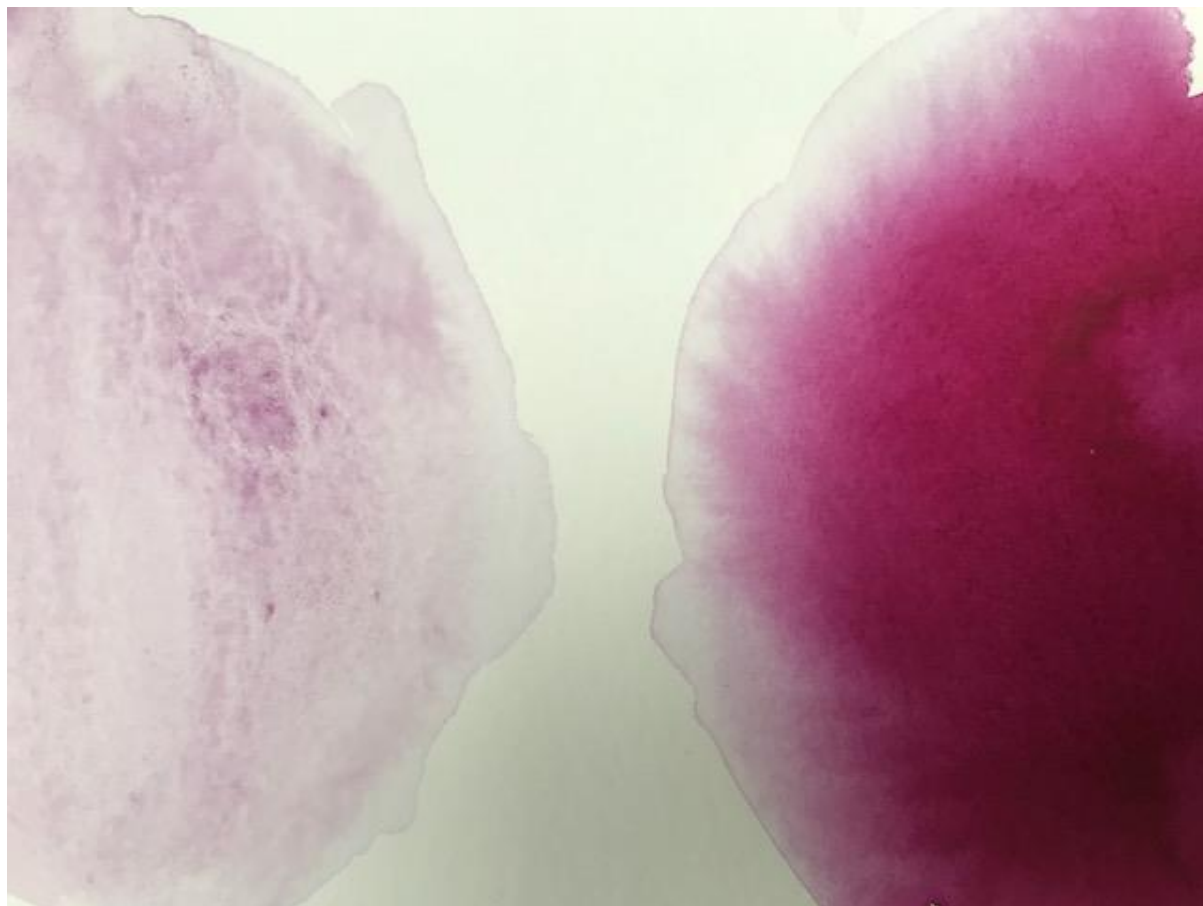


## The many uses of Gum Arabic in watercolour



I have a deep reverence for this lovely amber liquid in a bottle, having tried when at Camberwell to make it myself, following Ralph Mayer's seemingly simple recipe. I left the studio that evening with my Gum crystals suspended in water, shrouded in muslin, expecting a clear, beautiful, amber liquid the next day. Instead, I was met with a sticky spawn gooped to the cloth. The clear dispersion I was expecting, took a while.



So, my guilty pleasure is a perfectly clear, purchased solution.

Watercolour is made up of pigment, Gum arabic and glycerin, which Winsor and Newton introduced in 1835 to moisten watercolour as we know it today. Being the main ingredient that binds pigments together to make watercolour I became very interested in its additional uses in watercolour. One of the key features when adding it to your water, is its ability to disperse the pigment to create a softer edge. Just a few drops added to your water jar encourages a feathering at the edge of your marks. It does not matter whether the pigment is granular like the cobalt violet on the left, or, whether it is an extremely fine pigment like the Quinacradone Magenta on the right. It draws the pigment in this particular way, out to where the wetted mark ends.



Just a few drops added to your water for mixing and washes, can make all the difference.



On dry paper

On wet paper

On wet paper with gum arabic

Using gum arabic in your water also allows you to lift any unwanted colour more easily when working. You can re wet the colour and remove, using a wetted brush or cloth, even with staining colours such as the magenta and Winsor violet pictured.



With water

With water and gum arabic

It makes an effective masking fluid. A far softer edge can be achieved than with usual masking fluids.



Apply undiluted to the area you wish to mask. When dry, you can paint over it.

When your painting is dry, simply remove the gum arabic with clean water and a brush.



Combining the effects achieved; with its flow and dispersion and being able to create softer masked areas, it is an incredibly versatile medium.

Whilst encouraging the flow, gloss and transparency of your paint it does not compromise the drama found in colours with a deep mass tone, such as Prussian blue.



It is a wonderful medium to experiment with in watercolour as well as its invaluable use in lithography and emulsions.

Stephanie Nebbia  
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