

# Harnessing a Mercurial Medium

24 Oct 2013 by [Courtney Jordan](#)



The limbs of each figure is achieved with a quick stroke in this watercolor sketch by Wendy Artin.

When I think of gesture drawings or quick studies, I see myself with a pencil in hand—that's always just made sense for those kinds of spirited, nimble sessions. Looking at Wendy Artin's stunning watercolor painting sketches, however, has shown me new possibilities for how to paint a figure in a few minutes and with just a few strokes.

As I'll tell anyone, I really began to realize what watercolor could do as a medium when I came to Artist Daily. But until now I hadn't really seen an artist who translated the fluidity of the human body with watercolor. Watercolor can have a mind of its own and painting the human form is one of the toughest skills for an artist to master. But Artin makes it look effortless. With just a stroke or a pool of slightly-tinted paint she creates a limb, a belly, or an entire body. The works are simple but sophisticated, and, I think, really show what watercolor can do.

Artin usually starts a watercolor painting by working outward, fixing an arm or a head in place, and going from there, all the while keeping her eye moving around the whole figure in order to compare proportions. She is also very careful when blending any edges that she wants to soften. Artin likes to work wet-in-wet, but waiting until a painting has sufficiently dried is crucial for pulling edges back, so she always keeps a paper towel for blotting ready.



**Marzia Reaching** by Wendy Artin,  
2010, watercolor.