David Rankin's
Watercolor Eyes Recipe

davidrankinwatercolors.com

1 Draw the eyes.

2 Lay an "Island Glisten" over everything but the colored portion of eyes.

3 Paint-into-Wet middle value browns around light areas. Dry!

4 Paint "Near-Darkest Darks" around colored eye shape. Start with a broken stroke over eye.

5 Complete dark markings around eyes.

6 Brush wet mixture of Indian Yellow around the highlight in eyes.

7 While yellow is still wet, brush Hookers Green into the upper portion and thin with yellow below to create a gradation.

8 While this is still wet, take Burnt Sienna or Indian Red, and just touch the corners of the eye to add some subtle reddish blotches to blur into the wet yellow.

9 Dry the eye and then carefully erase any pencil still in the highlight. Brush a weakened blue into the highlight but stay in the lines.

10 Now the magic Step! Brush a weakened mix of Neutral Tint across top of eye. Work it down and around highlight about half way. Then, quickly wet the brush in clean water and thin the neutral tint out over the lower half, creating a nice gradation that pops the highlight and creates an illusion of depth in the eye.

11 Do the other eye the same as the first.
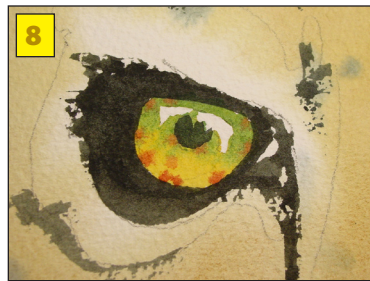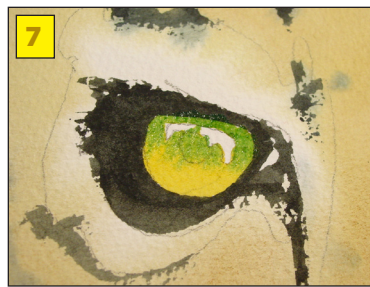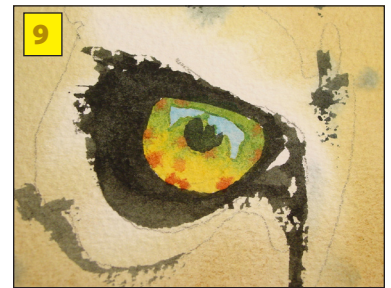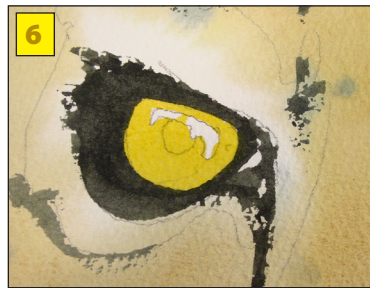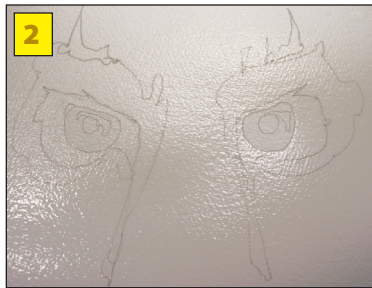
Practice assembling these simple recipe steps as shown.

David Rankin's "Cheetah Vision" Workshop Training

Evaluating and executing correct visual value relation-ships in transparent watercolor is the single most trouble-some issue painters deal with. Beginners tend to make their lights too light, and their darks aren't dark enough.

Intermediate painters tend to make their lights too dark, and the darks still aren't dark enough. To correct this problem I have created these precise Value Recipes that can be used with any subject or medium.

Value Recipes

The trick is to force all subjects into just 3 visual planes and then assign a relative value to each distinct plane!
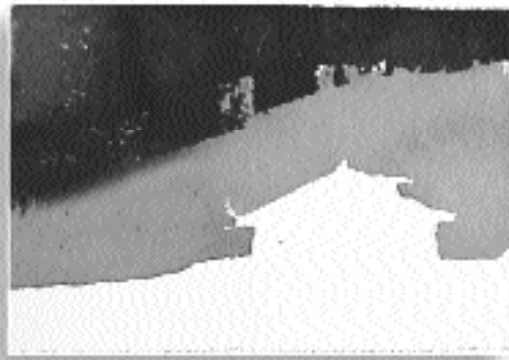

Light Distance

Gray Middle

Darkest Foreground

Most Common – This one is easily observed & studied as it is everywhere in Nature, especially in pre-dawn light.

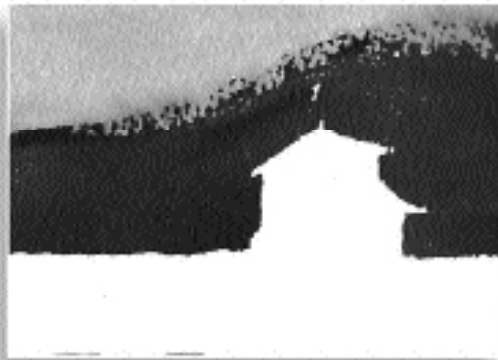Gray Distance

Lightest in Middle

Darkest Foreground

Afternoon – When the sun gets low in the west it darkens the foreground and illuminates the middle distant plane.

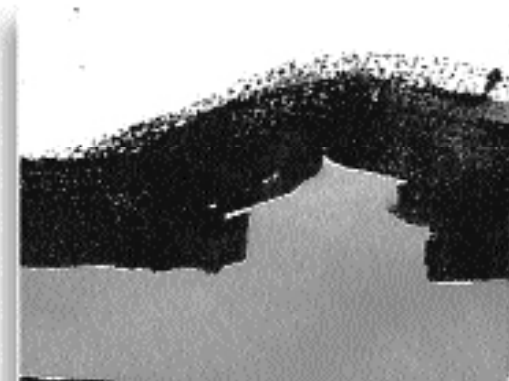
Darkest in Distance

Gray Middle

Light Foreground

Distant Thunder – Approaching rain with strong sunlight in foreground creates this dra-

Grays in Distance

Darkest in Middle

Light in Foreground

Rain Cloud– Bright mid-day light where a cloud overhead casts deep shadows over the middle

Lightest in Distance

Darkest in Middle

Gray Foreground

Sun Rise – Typical values as the sun begins to peak over the middle distant hill.

Darkest in Distance

Lightest in Middle

Gray Foreground

Last Light– Just before sunset strong light in middle distant with a darker evening sky in dis-