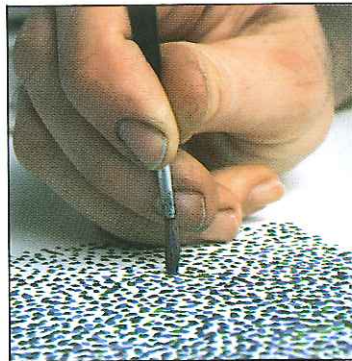## STIPPLING

Stippling is the technique where colors, tones, and textures are built up randomly with a mosaic of fine dots applied with the tip of a small, pointed brush. Stippling can also be used to provide texture or tone in small areas, alongside or on top of a wash. In a beach scene, for instance, a few stippled marks can be used to suggest small stones and pebbles.

Stippling works well with all media, including pastel (when the stick has been sharpened to a point) and is particularly suited to egg tempera painting. It is a fairly demanding technique, requiring plenty of patience, but the results are usually well worth the effort, especially when two or more colors are used together to create scintillating color effects.

With stippling, you can achieve beautiful, subtle gradations of tone simply by varying the density of the dots: a dense concentration creates a darker or more solid tone, whereas a light tone is the result of leaving bigger spaces between the dots.

Because each dot is separate, the colors appear to shimmer and sparkle when viewed from a distance. This is due to the way in which tiny dots of color vibrate on the retina of the eye. In addition, the color of the ground plays a part in the overall effect, serving as a dark, middle, or light tone.

Stippling with a brush
1 Shading and texture can be achieved by building up a mosaic of fine dots using a small, well-pointed brush. Hold the brush almost at a right angle to the painting surface and repeatedly touch the tip to the surface without pressing too hard. Try to space the dots evenly and make them about the same size. Paint for stippling should be quite fluid, but not too runny; shake the brush to remove any excess moisture and avoid drips and runs.
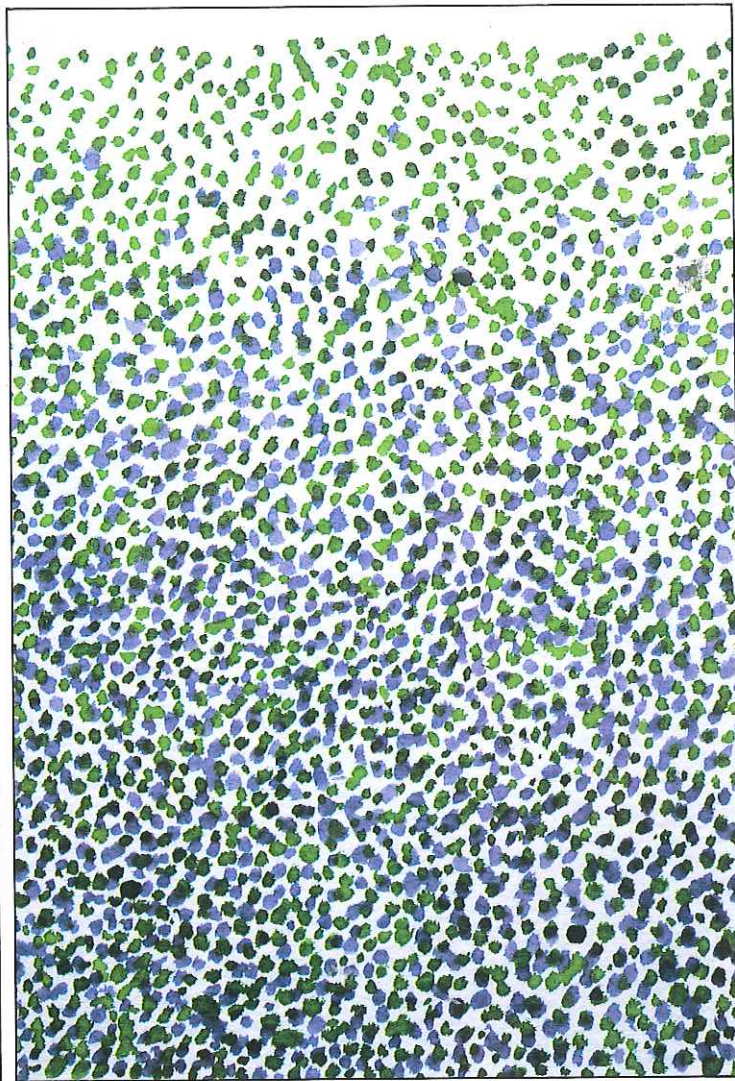
2 Stippling produces an area of color that appears lighter and brighter than the equivalent color applied in a flat wash. The overall effect can be extremely soft and subtle, especially when used over a wash of color. If you wish to increase the density of tone in an area, apply more dots but do not increase their size. Experiment by intermixing two or more colors; graduating from one color to another; and applying a stipple over different-colored washes.
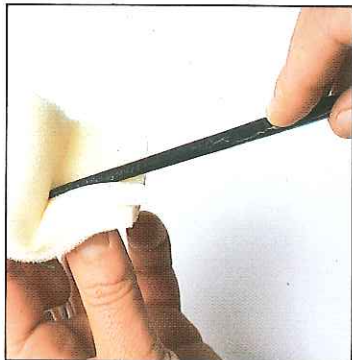
Stippling with a round bristle brush
Here the artist is using a round stippling brush to apply tempera paint. Each of the stiff hairs leaves a tiny dot of color on the panel, enabling a large area to be covered fairly quickly.
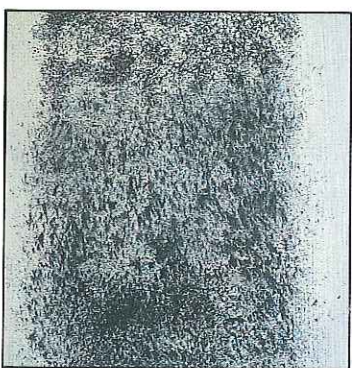
Stippling with a Sponge
1 You can also stipple with a small, round sponge — synthetic ones will produce a more regular pattern. For small areas, make a stippling tool by wrapping a piece of sponge or foam rubber round the end of a paintbrush. This will give you greater control over the technique.

3 Moisten the sponge and dip it into fairly stiff paint, then apply with a press-and-lift motion — don't scrub.

Stippling with a nail brush
Stippling doesn't always have to be done neatly with the tip of the brush. Different types of brush will produce different types of stipple. Here the artist is using an old nail brush and semi-liquid color; this is faster than the painting brush method, and produces a slightly more ragged stipple, which is just as attractive as the traditional method.

Stippling with a decorator's brush
The softer hairs of a decorator's brush produce a slightly blurred, more irregular stipple. A worn, ragged paintbrush with splayed hairs is also useful for stippling.

2 Make sure the wad of sponge is thick enough to prevent the sharp point of the brush handle sticking through, and tape it firmly in position.

4 Keep dabbing and lifting, overlapping the patterns until you achieve the density and texture that you want. Try dabbing one color into another, or producing graded tones by altering the density of stipple.