Make a Watercolor Travel Palette with CBTV Live

Chapter 1 - Watercolor Travel Palette

Watercolor Travel Palette

(upbeat music) - Hey everybody, welcome to Creativebug. We're coming at you live, like we always do on Thursday. And we do a lot of watercolor here in the studio, me personally, and of course, on the creativebug.com watercolor is one of our most favorite mediums. And even someone who maybe has been playing with watercolor or is even familiar with it still may not understand all the capabilities for your palette. One of the questions that I get asked frequently is what is the difference between watercolor in a tube and watercolor in a pan or a hard cake? Sometimes people don't even know that they're called pans or half pans or full pans. So as you can see by all the beautiful things in front of me we're gonna talk about palettes and how to make your own travel watercolor palette. I'm gonna give you a few different options and feel free to ask questions. Allie will let me know if you have questions or comments. The first thing I wanna do is just kind of like run you through what's on the table. There are so many kinds of watercolor. You can go student grade, kid grade, which is really inexpensive, and then professional watercolor. And the price point will reflect the grade. And watercolor comes in a tube like this. This is Daniel Smith. These are made in Washington. Something like this is Holbein, this is made in Japan. You can see that these are different sizes. So sometimes they'll be five or seven milliliters, sorry, ounces, or a bigger size, 15 milliliter. And these would have different price points. There's also different price points based on the pigments. And depending on the brand and how they label things it will usually tell you the series, the light fastness of a pigment, which means if you expose it to light is it gonna fade or is it gonna keep its color? And all of this information is either on the label, on the box, or on the website of the company. So that's something to know about when you're selecting your tube watercolor. And then you can also buy watercolor in pans or half pans. So this is an example. This is Prima Watercolor, we've used these before. You can buy these at joann.com. So this is a really affordable little set of watercolor. This is called a half pan and half pans are usually pretty standard in size. Depending on the maker they might be slightly different, but they contain about the same amount of space. So these are all different brands of half pans. And you can fill these yourself with your own tube watercolor, which I'll show you in a little bit, or they can come preloaded with one of these hard cakes. The watercolor that is in a cake is the same as what's in the tube as far as the pigment and so forth. There might be an extra binder or something to keep it in the pan. I know, for example, some watercolors, like Sennelier uses honey to emulsify. And when you put it in a pan it never really dries fully, and so it can leak like this one. You can see I made my own set here. And I had to take this pan out, 'cause it leaked this kind of burnt sienna color all over my vintage palette that I made. I'm gonna show you how to do that. There are also what are called full pans. So this is a full pan, this is a half pan. I would say in most cases, because of affordability, a lot of travel watercolor sets that are preloaded with paint come with a half pan. But they also come in full pans, it's just pricier, because you have twice as much pigment in there. And of course, you can make your own. So even a watercolor that you purchase already loaded, like this is Daniel Smith. They make probably 200 colors in tube. They just started releasing these half pan sets. They have a very limited amount in half pan sets and they actually came out with these where this is like a blue tone and then they left these open, so you can fill in your own. Now of course, it's your own palette, so you don't have to fill the rest of these with Daniel Smith, for example. People ask me all the time, like what are your

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favorite paints? I like to work with lots of different things. So here is a palette I made. I think in this case I had this tin, I like bought it at a, maybe a garage sale or I bought in the store, I can't remember. It did not come loaded. I bought the half pans separately. And then I just loaded all of my own pigment. And you can see, some of these will, depending on the type of pigment, they can dry out and sometimes they fall out. That's fine, you can just shove them back in there with a little bit of water. Some of them are glossier than others. Some of them look creamier and that just depends on the brand and the pigment. So I've got my little cheat sheet here. I've got an Irodori antique rose for example, Windsor & Newton scarlet lake, Sennelier, they're the ones that I mentioned emulsify with honey, and you can see how flat that is, because it's so liquidy, that when it dried it really settled out. Whereas some of these other ones kind of stayed in their round shape when I squeezed them out of the tube. Da Vinci, I've got Daniel Smith, a lot of Daniel Smith, Schmincke, which I love, Holbein, Sennelier, M. Graham, that's another United States based watercolor maker. So this is kind of like my cheat sheet, so I remember what my colors are. And another thing that is sort of newish, for me anyway, Daniel Smith also makes watercolor sticks. So this is, it looks like a crayon or like an oil pastel, it's the same formula as the tube or pan paints. So these are not super cheap, these are $10 a stick or $12 a stick depending on the color. It does not come in their full range of colors, there's just a selection of I think about 20 or 25. And I made a little tiny palette. This is a chocolate tin. And I made a little tiny travel palette with that. And I'll show you how to make that as well. - [Allie] We have our first question. - [Courtney] Yeah. - [Allie] First question comes from Phil. - [Courtney] Hey Phil, nice to hear a question here. - [Allie] And Phil is asking if you can recommend a really pigmented metallic gold watercolor. He says all the ones that he has are very delicate. - Phil, that's a great question. Phil is asking, can you recommend a very densely pigmented gold watercolor? Yes and no. So yeah, gold is one of those tricky ones. Metallics can be very tricky with watercolor. Sometimes you get something that's really rich and beautiful and sometimes you get something that's like very flat and looks yellow or gray or sort of bronzy and doesn't give you that shimmer that you're looking for. That's also one of my frustrations. And to combat that I've got a couple recommendations for actual watercolor, but I also like to use sometimes an ink. A water-based ink can work well. Often the metallics are best when they are oil-based, but there are a few exceptions. So one of my favorites is Finetec. This is a German handmade watercolor company. We sell them at my shop, which is how I know about them, but you can find them in other places too. And you can see in their palette they do these round pans that fit into this. And that is kind of custom to them. So like you couldn't buy this palette and put some other person's pan in there, because it's specifically made for the way that they make their watercolors. These run about six dollars for an individual pan and you can kind of customize your own set. I don't have my gold set here, but their gold is amazing. And it works really nicely on both white and black papers. So you can see this is like my cool set of theirs. And let's see, do I have the Prima? Another company that I've run across recently, they sell this online, at Jo-Ann, I've see at paper stores. This is Prima watercolor. Prima's based in California. I'm not sure where, I think their paints are actually made in Korea or in China. And this is like a similar thing and they have pretty intense, rich colors. It's, I wouldn't say it's less in quality necessarily, it's definitely a more affordable paint, but it's not filled as much, so you can see that the pan is about half filled. So you have to think about that when you're working with it. But it works really nicely on both white and dark paper. So depending, I know you're in the UK, so I don't know what is closest available to you. You can play with the Prima, the Finetec is in Germany, so you can definitely get that in the UK. You can order it online. You also might try like Windsor & Newton makes an ink that's really nice. There's a, no, I think

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it's actually, I think it might be a Chinese, it's either Chinese or Japanese, I can't remember, because I don't have one now, but I found it at the Blick Art Supplies store and it comes in a round sort of porcelain palette and it is a gold that is really, really dense and rich and I really like that too. You're also gonna wanna see if you're using it with other watercolors how it interacts with other things, 'cause sometimes the way pigments work they can be denser and kind of push away other colors and that's true for all watercolor, but depending on what metallic you use you wanna see how it plays with your other watercolors. So you just have to experiment. Let me know if you find the perfect one there in the UK. Good question. Do we have any other questions before I show? - [Allie] We do, we do. Okay, Shannon wants to know, which two paints are the best for making your own palette? - Oh, Shannon's asking what are the best paints or two paints for making your own palette? I would say that I tend to kind of move around and use a variety of brands based on the color. So I'm obsessed with who makes the best opera rose, which is basically the neon pick version of watercolor. I really like to test all my indigos, because I love indigo. I'm really into neutral tint and I like Daniel Smith's neutral tint color right now the best. So I don't stick to one brand in particular, I'll kind of pick based on color and which one I like best. To be honest, I never look at light fastness, I'm not worried as much about the longevity of the work, because I'm mostly working in a sketchbook and if my work's not here in 100 years I'm not that concerned about it. But I would say that Sennelier or things that are mixed or emulsified with honey tend to be runnier and even when you let them dry it can be tricky to get them to stay in the pan. Like I mentioned, the one that leaked all over my backpack and all over this palette I was making, I can't use that one again no matter how much I let it dry. It just never really fully sits in the pan without running. So I've got this little set here that I made. This is like a vintage, it could be a cigarette tin, I'm not really sure actually. But I just liked the tin. You can pick these up at antique sales, garage sales, et cetera. I just shoved as many half palettes in there, half pans rather in there. So you can see some of them are going vertically and some are going horizontally. Here's the missing one, because of the leakiness. So I haven't replaced it yet. And then here is my little cheat sheet. So the color that did not stay was Sennelier, that's my little abbreviation for Sennelier, S-E-N, quin gold, they're a French paint maker. Their shop is still on the Seine in Paris, which it's been for like 200 years. The main paints for van Gogh. An amazing place to visit. I do actually love their paint, but I would not put it in my travel palette, because it ran all over the place and I like wasted maybe 1/4 of a tube of paint. So these will last you a really long time. There's another little palette called a pocket palette. This is essentially like a business card holder that has these tiny magnetic removable little tins here. And they, it holds really quite a lot of paint. And I actually took this to France with me. This is I think all Daniel Smith watercolor. And just a variety. There's that neutral tint I mentioned that I love so much. You can see that there's no opera pink in there, which is my hot pink, so I was definitely very sorely missing that. So why don't I show you how to make a couple of palettes and then we'll go from there. Let's start with the watercolor stick, just because I have this tiny little slide palette. You can find empty tins, you can use Altoid tins, you can look in beauty supply places or art supply stores at the variety of kinds of tins that are out there. So I like this one. I think you find stuff like this for lip balm. And I happened to get this at our (mumbling) local art supply store. And you will need some kind of knife. You could use like a bread knife or a kitchen knife. Do be careful. You wanna cut down as straight as you can and I like to cut from the edge that does not have the name, like the color name, because I wanna cut this way, so that I maintain that color name, so that I can make a note of what I'm putting in my palette. And sometimes I'll just roll it. They tend to be a little sticky. And this is one of those things it's like when you cut book board or anything heavy duty, instead of just jamming your knife in and trying to get it

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to go through you might wanna make lots of little cuts. So I actually just kind of roll a couple of times. And pressing down and then it kind of comes off. So that's my first one. I know that that's going to be serpentine. This is sodalite. And I just, I'll start to cut away the label as I go further down. This is, I don't know about the size of like, it's bigger than a Smarties candy. It's maybe about 1/4 to 1/2 of an inch. But honestly I'm just kind of going where the label is as a first rule. You can always add more. And this is the same formula as is in the tube and in the pan. So it's just as pigmented, just as concentrated, so you get quite a bit out of a single stick. And for me, if you are interested in doing this like grab a friend or two and buy the sticks together, so that you can make a few different palettes. And then that way you can kind of test. And you can do that too for tube watercolor. It's fun to make little sampler sets for your friends. I definitely, Christina, who I own the shop with, and lots of my friends who are watercolor painters we'll make little sets for each other. They're like, oh you have to try this. You can also do a dot chart. I don't have a picture of that or a dot chart out here, but you can do a little sample dot chart. So non-name side of the stick. - [Allie] Our next question comes from Debs, and Debs wants to know, Courtney, how many palettes do you have in total? - Debs, you caught me out. Are you really gonna ask me that question on live shoot? Debs wants to know how many palettes I have. Um, I don't know if I should be embarrassed about this, but probably like 30. I'm really, I'm obsessed with watercolor and I love testing the different kinds. I also really love antique palettes or old palettes and sometimes I just use their tins and repurpose them. But I recently, like I bought this set online to try this brand. This is called Renaissance. And it's actually like a Polish brand of watercolor that I had not tried before. And I found someone on Etsy who actually sells this little plastic palette with these colors preloaded in it and it was about $30. And if I were to buy all of these tubes, it's a high quality watercolor, so it would be $10 a tube. I don't know how many colors there are here, like 14. Let's see, three, six, nine, 10, 20 colors. That would be a fortune, right? That would be over $200 dollars worth of tubes. And then what if I didn't like it? So I like these little testers and I was happy to find that someone on Etsy was making and selling these, because then I can try this brand of paint and then decide whether or not I wanna invest in tubes. So probably 20 palettes, I don't know, maybe more. They're really fun. And I'm, actually I switch what I paint with pretty regularly. Sometimes it depends on the size and if I'm traveling with a palette or sometimes I'll just stick with one for a long time, because it has like the right color combos or maybe because I'm being lazy and it's just like what I have out on my table at the time. All of those reasons factor into what I use when I paint. Okay, so those are my colors. I'm gonna kind of keep them in order here. And then arrange them in this little tin here. Now before I stick them down I may wanna change their order based on their color. Like I may wanna put the blues and greens together. Sodalite genuine's gonna be at the end, that's my darkest color. And then I'll probably put the phtalo there. It's already there. And then serpentine genuine there. And quin gold, because it's my yellow and so they're sort of like in the rainbow order. That's what I like. All right, so to stick these down it's actually super easy. I need a brush, here's my brush. And I need a little bit of water. Let's use this cup of water here. And actually I would normally also make my chart while doing this. So I've got a sketchbook that has a lot of charts in it. Also paintings of Notre Dame. And you just decide which side is gonna go down, so I like to have the flattest side down in the tin. And get it wet and stick it down. If it doesn't stick right away it may just need a second to dry, that's fine. And because I've got that paint on the edge of my brush I'll also make my cheat sheet here for what color this is. And then I would label it. But I did not bring a pencil up here. So that is quin red. I'll make a note later. All right, so next one, quin gold. Quin gold. Thank you. - [Allie] All right, next question comes from Janet. Janet says, a friend of hers saw an antique watercolor tin

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in a vintage shop. Would the watercolors still be good? Or is it just a cool collectible? - That's a great question, Janet. Janet's saying like if you run into a watercolor palette, like a vintage one somewhere, is it still good? Technically, yes. Watercolor once it dries out is not no longer usable, because that's exactly what we're doing in these half pan sets, right? Now depending on the quality of the watercolor, let's say it was a really, like a kid's watercolor, it may have some kind of binder that is not as long lasting, the pigments may have settled in a weird way, so you might wanna try it. I think those things can be fun decorative items, but often they will actually work. The tubes do tend to dry out over time. The paint inside is still good, but it's very difficult to get out of the tube. And I myself have done this where I've like bought something in an estate sale and been like, oh, I really wanna try the watercolor and then cut it open with a knife like this and it's actually kind of more of a pain than it's worth. So that's up to you. But in the palette form you can definitely still paint with those. That's not true for other types of things. Watercolor's really the only thing that works when it's dry and then you can wet it. Gouache you can also make palettes out of, but it acts very differently, even though you can reactivate it with water it tends to get more flaky and it acts more like a watercolor than gouache, which is what it's meant to do. So that actual I think works better right out of the tube. All right, this is quin gold. I love this color so much. Quin gold. This is quin red. And I'm gonna make a note that this is Daniel Smith. Now I would also probably make a little cheat sheet that goes in or on top of my palette at some point too. That quin gold is very powerful in pigment, so now I just wanna make sure my brush is really thoroughly cleaned off. Oops, that's where my label goes, that's fine. This is the serpentine genuine. Actually I'm gonna add a little more water to that to get it to stick. And if, for example, anything falls off at any point. Let's say you're traveling with your palette, you just stick it back down with water, with more water, that's what makes it so nice. All right, so here's my phtalo turquoise. A little bit of water, stick it down. Give it a little press to my color. Oh, that color is great. Phtalo turq, and serpentine genuine. I have my own like little notes and a lot of people will probably do this. Quin is short for quinacridone, that is hard to spell and hard to say. G-E-N is for genuine. There are a lot of genuine pigments in the Daniel Smith line. Turq for turquoise. I think phtalo is even actually an abbreviation. I think it's actually phthalocyanine or something like that. Okay, and last one in this particular set is my sodalite genuine. I love, they're like little tablets. My friend Alesha always is talking about things in terms of how edible it looks and I think that these look pretty edible. I love this color, it's like a steely blue gray. Okay, so that's my little travel palette here. And you could like glue in a sponge or sometimes I'll just roll like a little bit of paper towel in there, so that I have something to, like I'm doing here with my towel, like just rinsing and wiping. Sometimes I'll put something in. These are really fun, 'cause like look how tiny that is. You can just throw that in your backpack or my friend Karen, who we just saw at arch, she was like why don't you just magnetize it to a Bulldog clip and then clip that at the top of your sketchbook. So that is really fun. You just need a super strong magnet. You could actually epoxy it on, but you could just use it as is, like the magnet is really strong. Probably so strong I won't be able to get it off of here. Let's see. Uh, okay. Right. I might actually use two, so it doesn't move as much. Let's try it. These are great little hacks for when you're in the field, painting in the field. Oh, those guys are so strong, let's put two on there. Now sticking to everything. (laughs) Oh, not to itself. One more time. They're really, really strong. Here, let's do them there, there we go. Like that. - [Allie] Ready for the next question? - [Courtney] Yeah. - [Allie] Next question comes from Adrian and she's wanting to know, do you have any advice for choosing brushes for a travel set? - Adrian's asking, what about travel brushes, since we're talking about travel watercolor? That's such a good question. You know, obviously I didn't bring all of my watercolor supplies. I wanted to,

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but my bag was already full. So you can do a few different things. I, there's like a little tiny Cotman set of watercolor that's student grade, people are kind of divided on that. It's like a $25 set. It comes with the tiniest little travel brush and I actually used that for years and I really liked it. And there are lots of companies that make their version of travel brushes. In the like very most basic there are two things that you can do. You can get a brush roll, which I don't have in front of me, but it's basically a piece of canvas or fabric that has little slots for your brushes with a piece that folds down and then it just rolls up like this. And it protects everything pretty well. Sometimes you can also find tubes that are made for brushes. I tend to find that my brushes will slide to the end and that will damage them, so I don't really use tubes. But I do use a brush roll pretty regularly. You could use a water brush where the water's actually in the barrel of the brush. This is not one, but I'm just kind of using it to point. And the quality of those brushes is decent, but it is not a fine quality. Those are usually between $8 and $12 apiece. But they're good for travel, because they're very convenient, because the water goes into the handle of the brush. I am loving this Escoda travel brush. I think Carolyn Gavin and both Jenn Orkin Lewis use them. Those are both painters on our site. And I have it in I think a two, a six, and a 10. It's a round brush. It's the Versatil, but there are other types of travel brushes. And it goes into this little sexy metal tube here. And I'm obsessed with these. And I love, love, love, love this. It's not cheap though. So these can run $20 or $30 per brush. But you don't need a lot. You can start with just one brush, like the size 10. Because this is a round it comes to a fine point, but then when you press down you can get a really thick line. So it does give you, a round watercolor brush does give you some flexibility and then you can just invest in one size and then when you have a little extra money or it's your birthday or whatever you can buy another one. So it just depends on your budget. That's a really good question, 'cause it's definitely something that like we all have to deal with, what about our travel brushes? I think it's a, let's see here, I also have this little guy. This is Da Vinci and I think I picked this up it was like at the register at some art supply store. I was like, oh, that's cute, I love cute, tiny things. But it doesn't have any way to protect the tip. It wasn't that expensive though, it was probably like a $5 brush. And so I just throw it in this bag here that goes with my pocket palette, which is this one. And that all just fits in here and I will stick this in here sometimes too. And then that's it and it's really small. And I don't mind if the little $5 brush gets a little bit bent. If your brushes are not holding up when you travel and they kind of need to be retired, because they're bent or they're not giving you a fine tip or something. Use those brushes for mixing your color and keep your really fine brushes for just your painting. So when you're trying to mix big batches of color use the kind of more damaged brushes for that. It's a good question. Um, oh, I really wanna make one of these out of this vintage compact case. How cute is this with this little button closure? So cute, I love it. And let me just show you how to do a tube in a half pan. So that'll be kind of my final thing. I mean, I could talk about this stuff for like five hours, but you probably don't wanna see it for five hours, so I'll stop at some point. All right, here are two little tins, sort of like an Altoid tin, but with no graphics or anything. And this has half pans. These half pans I put little magnets on the bottom. These are just sticky on one side and you can cut your own or sometimes you can order these half pans that already have the magnets on the bottom. You can also play with using Velcro. This is called Dual Lock. It's sort of like a Velcro, but do you know how Velcro has like a fuzzy side and a poky side? This is all the same kind of, it's not quite fuzzy and not quite poky. And it sticks to itself. So you only need one kind, you don't need the two kinds, which is really nice. I'm gonna use my scissors that have the Teflon that are like anti-stick. And you just kind of like roughly see how big this is. It's about 1/2 inch wide. So it doesn't have to be perfect, no one's gonna be looking at the bottom of your pans. At least that's what I'm telling myself. And

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then I might just wanna put one strip directly into the tin here. Just make sure it fits, yep. You could round your corners if you wanna be extra fancy about this, so that it really nestles into the side. And it just has a sticky back paper that you remove. And this goes in here. It is really sticky, so try to get it right the first time. Yeah, that's pretty good. And then these can go on the back of your pans or half pans. It's called a Dual Lock, it's made by 3M if anybody is just joining us. And I'm using it to stick my pans or half pans into my little sort of Altoid tin to make my own travel watercolor set. And the nice thing about the magnets or these is then you can switch it out. Like let's say you're going to the desert and you wanna have the certain kind of range of colors and then the next week you're going to like some lush mountainscape or some snowscape or whatever. You might wanna change out your colors. So then you can customize your palette, so you don't have to carry all of them. Like you don't have to put this into your backpack, 'cause it gets heavy after a while. You can just do a little tiny guy and then switch it up. So now this just sticks in here. You can hear it like kind of lock. And it's really, it's really in there, but it's also easy to remove. So that's super fun. And then the way that you fill these is it's just easy. You just take open your tube. If it's a brand new tube, like these guys are, sometimes there will be a lot of binder at the top, it'll look kind of clear and liquidy. That is not the case for the opera pink, as you can see. Make sure there's no dust in there, and then you just squeeze. Squeeze from the bottom. I like to knock it down a little bit. Sometimes it'll settle on its own. I also like to do the same thing to my tube, so that I don't get that happening all the time where it's coming out. When it's hot or if you fly with your paints it'll more likely come to the surface and then that's wasted paint that you don't wanna waste, 'cause this is like hot pink, this is like precious. So you can stick that in there. One thing you do wanna do, and I like to actually do it before I fill the tube with paint, is I'll take a little fine tip Sharpie and write the color on the side, so I'll remember. I'll also make my little cheat sheet chart that I'll lay into the top of this. And then you wanna let this dry with the lid open probably overnight at the very least and sometimes two nights depending on what paint you're using and how much it's settled into the pan and so forth. You can help it along with wetting your brush and kind of poking the paint into the corners, but I never do that. But you could. If I had like one little tip that's sticking out over like where my tin closes maybe I'll do that. But I never like to waste too much of my precious paint. You can also play with something like, of course, I went to Daiso and bought things like weird pill carriers to see if I could make palettes out of those. And you can also buy these like little makeup sort of like spatulas, they're like makeup spatulas, and you can use that to kind of transfer or help you get paint into places if they get kind of messy. But ultimately, this is something else that people ask me, is like what happens when your colors mix? It's fine, that's part of painting. So if you're like really concerned, because your yellows are no longer yellow, then take a clean brush and kind of wipe them away. And the paint that you have on your brush then put in your sketchbook, it can become like an abstract background later on. But you are gonna get mixing and that's fine. Like I use colors unevenly. You can see that my sepia I'm totally almost out of and clearly that's my favorite color in here, that and my red. Whereas like the greens, I don't use that much. And I'm not worried if they get messy. I don't clean these off all the time. Like if I'm trying to get a skin tone and everything is green then I might clean off one little section with a paper towel. But part of being an artist and part of your painting practice is being a little messy, so it's totally fine. Yeah, we have time for like one or two more questions if there are any. Sounds like you guys are rushing to your local art supply store to buy your half pans or pans and all of your paints, or maybe you already have them at home. This is one of my most favorite things to do when I'm trying to be creative or feel like I want a creative outlet and I'm not really sure what to paint, sometimes I'll just make a new palette, I'll play with my

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color combinations, I'll make my charts and see about mixing. So if you look in my sketchbook here you can see that I've kind of played with color combinations. I talk about this in my living a more creative life, I'm not sure which day it is, but the living a more creative life daily challenge, how to make these color charts. And it's one of my most favorite things to do when I'm kind of bored or, like I said, wanting to be creative, but don't really know where my inspiration's gonna come from or what I'm gonna work on. So working with the paints that you have in front of you can be actually a really nice way to get in there and work and not feel the pressure of having to paint a portrait or a landscape or something. If you happen to make a travel sketchbook or rather a travel watercolor palette for your sketchbook, post a picture on your Creativebug profile or put it on Instagram, tag us or hashtag us and we'll check it out. Thanks so much for joining us on the live shoot and we'll see you next week. (upbeat music)

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