

How I got Started Painting with Watercolours by Sheila Hogge.

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*Inside La Mezquita, Córdoba,
watercolour (45.5 x 31.5cm)*

I was steered away from 'the Arts' at school - "as one can always paint or learn a language", I was told. I only continued drawing as part of my science studies, and later, by producing plans and designs and personalised greetings cards for family and friends.

I had often been inspired to paint by beautiful scenery, especially since moving to Spain. I had bought transparent watercolours on a visit to the UK as the medium is rarely seen here. However, I did not realize how difficult I would find it to start painting.

After a break of more than 30 years, my New Year resolution for 1999 was to start sketching seriously, as I believe an acceptable painting could only result from a good drawing, and to start painting before 2000. But I didn't enjoy sketching with graphite pencil at all. One day, after finishing a greetings card for which I used coloured pencils, I tried these instead. It was a revelation! I really started to enjoy drawing, I worked hard and improved rapidly. Once I started painting I realised I had learned a lot about colour too. When Paul Parker, an artist I had met from the Isle of Man, visited Spain, my husband and I showed him our favourite places. There was not much time for painting talk but over just a few hours he demonstrated basic techniques to me, filling my head with lots of information and emphasized the importance of using good quality watercolour paper.

Paul said that my drawings were excellent, so asked why hadn't I started painting? He gave me the confidence and encouragement I obviously needed and I haven't looked back. Only six months after I picked up my paintbrush I painted a watercolour that gave me the tremendous thrill of winning a prize in a competition organised by *'the Artist'*.

This proves that anything is possible if you work hard at it and that a little encouragement goes a long way.