

# Flower Power with Stonehenge Paper

by Kevin Woodson

I love paper. I love the way it showcases paintings of flowers, my subject of choice. Paper and watercolor work together to capture the ephemeral nature of a flower.

Paper translates into cultures around the world and allows me to be present with my subject and viewers in a way no other medium offers. Everything is affected by paper choice: level of brightness, saturation, dimensionality – not to mention how it performs in the field and studio.

My paintings are done without pencil, face to face with the flower in the garden – in *plein air* – on paper that I have saturated with as much water as possible. The elements, whether they are roasting sunlight or a thick and wet fog, affect the painting so I need a paper that reacts consistently with my paints (primarily Daniel Smith) to minimize

separation and spreading. I also need it to allow me to control the density of the paint I put in the paper.

The paper I select must have three qualities. First is resilience; enough to take the stress I put on it in the field. Second is dependability; enough to experiment and push bounds. And third is consistence; enough to express my vision in complete collections.

I've chosen Stonehenge to create my current body of work. Stonehenge is consistent across a wide range of conditions. It accepts the color I put on the page in *plein air* and back in the studio, and it meets the high quality standards I've come to expect from a global paper leader. As I go forward with Stonehenge, I'll produce several collections of flowers using the paper to explore a contemporary



Moonlight Painting, Calla Lilies for Purim, Gardens at Lake Merritt 2017



Dahlias for Loss, California Dahlia Society 2016

vision of this classic subject.

In planning my next body of work, I've experimented with all the major paper mills and tested the degree to which the papers support my demands. Stonehenge holds up best to the task. My *plein air* experiences consist of extremes of temperature and weather – from the swampy tropical heat of Taiwan's rural Lotus gardens to the freezing coastal rain-fog of San Francisco's Golden Gate Park.

I've gotten excellent results while working out in the field and in my studio. Whether I find myself painting on small or large sheets, I'm able to continue working in high-stress conditions with Stonehenge for days and weeks at a time. The paint I put into a painting looks like paint: granulating, blending, and spreading on the paper in a very authentic way. I don't have to worry about wearing the paper out, over or under-saturation, or poorly-expressed colors. Stonehenge allows me to focus on the aspects of the painting I want to emphasize. It allows me to concentrate on elements not commonly expressed in *plein air* flower paintings, such as dynamic shadows, isolated colors, and nontraditional compositions.

I am now in the phase of modifying my approach and focusing my vision in paint to produce the next body of work. Stonehenge allows me to simultaneously try new things, while creating works that are sellable.

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Kevin Woodson ([kevinwoodson.com](http://kevinwoodson.com)) grew up in Illinois in the 1970s. His earliest memory is of venturing into his mother's flower garden where the zinnias towered over him. He has painted flowers exclusively since 2005. Under the guidance of world-class floral designer Matt Matsuyama, he has been painting close-ups of flowers in *plein air* as if the blooms were subjects sitting for their portraits.