

Sail Away With Your Brush: *Painting Aboard Sky Pond #4* *I've Painted Clouds from Both Sides Now*

by Roxy Podlogar

(#4 of 4-part series: for Parts 1, 2 & 3 see Spring, Summer, and Autumn Hot Press 2024)

Bula from Fiji!

We have visited five island nations since sailing from Mexico to the South Pacific in March 2022. Each island has unique weather patterns due to its geological makeup, location to the equator, and the influence of easterly trade winds. These variations require careful observation to paint cloudscape convincingly.



As with most islands in the South Pacific, the eastern (windward) side, receives the majority of rain due to the wet easterly trade winds colliding with an island. In contrast, the western (leeward) side is dryer (rain shadow effect). Understanding this helps me paint complete scenes.

We explored a remote Fijian atoll, Kadavu. While waiting out a storm, we anchored behind an islet on the windward side. The rain poured down in sheets. From the protection of our cockpit, I captured the low clouds and wall of rain. Arches Hot Press paper served me well. First, I used broad brushstrokes resembling rain torrents. Then, I used my water bottle to spray the paper, holding it vertically and letting it run. Lastly, I dried it at an angle.



Sheets of Rain – Kadavu Fiji

Volcanic island chains, like the Marquesas and French Polynesia, present tall, densely-carpeted, dark domes. Water-laden nimbus clouds cling to the rims of these giants and cast shadows on the villages tucked in below. Misty mornings are typical in these islands and, to capture this, I prepare well before daybreak. The light and colors evolve quickly. I mount several papers and work on each in unison. Usually, one captures the scene, but certainly not all of them!



Dormant Giant – French Polynesia

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The active volcanic islands of Vanuatu continuously emit clouds of ash and smoke that are carried by the trade winds, blanketing the hills downwind. The volcano's heat disrupts local cloud formations, merging their dense gray clouds with the surrounding cloud systems.



Vanuatu Active Volcano

Island countries like the archipelago of the Tuamotus are comprised mainly of atolls; enclosed coral reefs that capture ocean water. This creates a lagoon, which can span miles between its reef. Here, cumulous clouds form on the edges of the reef and intermix with high cirrus clouds accompanying the trade winds. High-altitude white clouds reflect brilliant, evolving colors throughout the day.



Tuamotus Atolls

Clouds also reflect the water and land beneath them. Some bays have dark black volcanic sand subduing the reflected light, like this bay in Raiatea, French Polynesia.



Black Sand Raiatea – French Polynesia

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The large Fijian island of Viti Levu creates a rain shadow for the smaller islets west of it, providing conditions for dry cumulus clouds that build throughout the day as the warm island air mixes with the cooler sea air. When the sun sets, it casts intense orange, pink, and violet on the cloud columns. Until I experimented with Holbein's Jaune Brilliant, Lilac, and Lavender, my usual pallet pigments faded and failed to convey the delicate colors.

As a sailing artist, I have learned to interpret the unique atmosphere of each island and to capture the magic of my surroundings. Understanding the meteorology of a location can enhance the quality of a painting by creating a compelling cloudscape that connects seamlessly with the land. Don't just approximate the sky; take the time to truly understand it.

Vinaka! Thank you!



Fijian Sunset #1



Fijian Sunset #2

GEAR & GIZMOS

Silver Brush Tips for Brush Care



New brush? Loose hair? What to do with that really great brush you spent half your paycheck on?? HOW ANNOYING!! There are a few simple steps you can take to smooth your artists' brush hairs back into place. From a June 2, 2020 Facebook live event where Silver Brush Limited founder and owner, Dee Silver, shared some of her best brush care tips and tricks in, "How to Fix Fly-Away Brush Hairs."

See <https://youtu.be/rq47orwFaf4>

