



1-1-2018

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Recommended Citation

Palmer, Alexandra (2018) "On Rites and Watercolors," *Inscape*: Vol. 38: No. 1, Article 7.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/inscape/vol38/iss1/7>

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On Rites and Watercolors

by Alexandra Palmer

I used wet-on-wet to tint windows,
erect buildings, and pigment neon signs.
Umber and terracotta bled together
and congealed into *via della Conciliazone*.
Dry-on-dry came after for texture:
The bister paint stained into thinning
bristles, I dragged each hair by the spine,
scratching out roads and
soot on bricks—each sidewalk
scuffed, each wall scored,
each glass pane smeared in grime.
Now, you should know, wet-on-wet is
not the same as a wash. A wash
plucks eddies, sprays rivers, drizzles lakes,
mists estuaries onto paper before ever touching
dye. To begin with a wash
is best, but having overlooked it before,
I better use it now. My splotched sheet undulates,
steaming from warm breath and water exuding
from the brush. The grout etched between
each brick has already begun to settle
into puddles on the pavement,
a bath of gum arabic and tap.
Each edifice blanches, and mortar, stone,
and cement curl under the baptism wash.

Alexandra has always loved poetry, but she only recently began studying contemporary poetry. She is an undergraduate student at Brigham Young University. She spends her free time outdoors with her husband rock climbing and hiking and eating lots of bread.