


SWS March 2025 Challenge Paintings – Hard Edges and Soft Edges

(Also known as **Lost**/soft and **Found**/hard Edges)



Above painting by John Lovett

One of the most important aspects of watercolor painting is the control of edges. Every mark we place on our paper bears some kind of edge - from the hard contrasting edge of dark paint applied to dry paper, to the soft edge of pale pigment dragged across a wet wash.

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Watercolor Edges | John Lovett - Artist



These 3 paintings are by Thomas Schaller.

Note how he uses **HARD Edges** to define space and lead your eye.

Note how he uses **SOFT Edges** to keep you in the picture but not command your attention **AND** how he uses soft edges to direct you to the center of the subject.

He also uses **GLAZING** (from the February Challenge) to create some of his **SOFT Edges**.

Hard edges (also known as *Found Edges*), are used to **define an area**, where an object begins and where it ends. Hard edges **draw your attention** to that specific area by creating a sharp contrast. They **command the viewers attention** helping to lead the eye around the painting.

Soft edges (also know as *Lost Edges*), are used to **soften an area, create depth**, and in some cases, **hold your interest** (see the art work of Thomas Schaller).

Creating Hard edges is very easy, use a hard line, light and dark/contrast and usually done with wet on dry.

Creating Soft edges is usually done with wet into wet. However, you can soften a Hard edge after it is painted by running a wet brush next to it, brushing it with water and a stiff brush if the paint is really dry or if it is still wet, smudge it with your finger. Creating Soft edges can also be done with Glazing (See February Challenge Painting).

A side note: I am always amazed at how Thomas Schaller uses light and dark, and hard and soft edges to guide the viewers eye around the painting and to the focal point. He is a master of the light and dark as well as hard and soft edges and glazing.