

Watercolor Marker Review

Product Review

Approximately 500 words.

*Originally published in Urban Sketchers of Kansas City blog (2019),
a local arts and culture website.*

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Review: Faber-Castell Albrecht Dürer Watercolor Markers

At the Kansas City Zoo meetup a few months ago, I won the raffle for a phthalo blue Faber-Castell watercolor marker. Since the majority of my watercolor work is done with pan colors, I was excited to experiment with something new.

The first thing I noticed was the design of the marker tube itself. Small ridges on the caps prevent rolling on flat surfaces and make it easy to store the marker horizontally, which is ideal for double-tipped markers. One side of the marker is a brush tip and the other is a bullet nib, both of which are stiff enough to allow for precise marks. The label also clearly indicates the level of the color's lightfastness with one, two, or three stars, with one star being "good fade resistance" and three stars being "maximum fade resistance [of] 100+ years".*

The watercolor itself is highly pigmented, going down vivid and blending smoothly – as long as you have thick enough paper. Because of the intensity of the pigmentation, paper choice is even more important than usual with this marker. Anything less than 300 GSM can lead to streaking and staining, as the watercolor will completely permeate thinner sheets before you have time to blend it out.

That said, as long as you're working on thick enough paper, the marker is incredibly versatile. You can dip one of the nibs in a small bit of water, blend wet-on-wet, mix with other colors on your palette, and generally use it the way you would use any brush loaded with watercolor. (Be careful not to overload the nib with water though, as it will quickly displace the ink within the marker.) I preferred to use a small synthetic water brush alongside it, both to lift pigment directly from the marker tip and also to blend on paper. And of course, the watercolor marker can also be used directly on paper with no additional water, like any regular marker, and this method creates the richest hues.

If the pigment is left to dry on paper without the addition of water, you can later go back and activate it with minimal stain outlines. This also means you can create your own compact palette for later use by drawing squares of color on cardstock and letting it dry. However, once the pigment has been activated by water and then left to dry again, it will barely react to additional attempts to reactivate it. While this means you have to work a little faster than with other watercolors, it also makes layering colors much easier, since dried layers are less delicate than traditional watercolor. The marker also plays well with other watercolor media such as pencils, crayons, and the like.

The list price is \$5.99 per marker, the same as Winsor & Newton, which is at the top of the price range for watercolor markers. But discount art supplier Blick (www.dickblick.com) currently sells them for \$3.73 each, or as a starter set of 5 for \$16.99, which is much more attainable. At that price, they are definitely worth a look.

References:

* <http://support.fabercastell.com/support/solutions/articles/25000009298-maximum-lightfastness-is-indicated-as-on-the-product>