

HOW TO PAINT IN ACRYLIC BY THE ART SHERPA

THE SNOWBIRDS



STEPS 14 | DIFFICULTY: BEGINNERS

MATERIALS - ACRYLIC PAINT

- Cad Red Medium (CRM)
- Yellow Ochre (YO)
- Cadmium Yellow Medium (CYM)
- Titanium White (TW)
- Mars Black (MB)
- Phthalo Blue (PB)
- Phthalo Green (PG)
- Burnt Sienna (BS)
- EXTRA - Fluid White Paint for splatter (FWP)

MATERIALS - BRUSHES

The Art Sherpa = TAS

- Large Brush (background)
- #8 TAS Cats Tongue
- #4 TAS Round
- Assorted Acrylic Bright Brushes
- Sponges
- TAS Splatter Tool
- Dritz Tailor Chalk Tool and/or Chalk Pencil
- 16 x 20 Canvas
- T Square Ruler

TECHNIQUES YOU WILL USE IN THIS PAINTING ARE:

- How to mix color with a limited palette.
- How to block in.
- How to be painterly and loose.
- How to paint wood texture
- How to have good value.
- How to imply feathers
- Expressive painting strokes.
- Splattering and sponging for snow.
- It is important to note when a color mix is heavy or predominant in one color. Use this paint legend below to understand the symbols that I use to give you important painting information.

PAINT COLOR & MIXING LEGEND:

- Cad Red Medium = CRM
- UltraMarine Blue = UB
- Cadmium Yellow Medium = CYM
- Titanium White = TW
- Mars Black = MB
- Phthalo Green = PG
- Burnt Sienna = BS
- EXTRA - Fluid White Paint (for splatter) = FWP
- Even 1 to 1 Mix: =
- More of this color: >
- Less of this color: <
- Add tiny smidge of this color: LC-
- Colors bias is in the order they are written, left to right.
- First color is the primary and strongest color. Colors that follow are descending in amount.



SHERPA'S NOTES:

YOU are an artist, not a copy machine. YES, you are. A key to success is not to rush. Follow the steps, breath and be relaxed with yourself. I will demonstrate a concept in a step and you should duplicate that concept before moving to the step. At the end of all of the steps, we will both have beautiful paintings, though they will not be identical. I truly believe that everyone can learn to paint but that some art skills take time to master. Be kind to yourself and give yourself time to be a beginner. Your time of being "new" is shorter than you think, so enjoy the discovery process. Don't waste time beating yourself up over mistakes. Be present and mindful of your successes. Pay attention to the elements of

painting that are fun and unexpected. Remember that the steps in this booklet match the steps in the video. These are set up to go together so you can quickly refer to the video demonstration and the book together. It is my deep belief that the marriage of these two teaching methods will result in a higher enjoyment rate for you, my community student.

Included with this step by step illustration are technique references at the end so that if you do not understand a technique I am referencing, you can refer to it.

Use the Color Key to help check your mixes.

STEP 1 - THE BACKGROUND

COLORS:

TW > PB < MB < LC-

- With a large brush freely paint your canvas with a thin layer of TW. Before the white is dry add a small amount of PB and MB to your brush. Using loose brush strokes, going from the top of the canvas to the bottom.
- Dry.



STEP 2 - SKETCH IT IN

COLORS: WATERCOLOR PENCIL OR TRACEABLE

- Once your surface is completely dry apply the subject matter to your canvas using either the traceable method or freehanding with a water soluble pencil or chalk. I used a Creta Color watercolor pencil to freehand my fence and birds in. It is also fine to use a piece of chalk or yellow saral paper with the tracing method and your traceable.



STEP 3 - BLOCK IN FENCE

COLORS:

MB> + BS<

- With a larger brush, paint in the fence loosely using your color mix of a very dark brown.
- Dry.



STEP 4 - FENCE AND WOOD

COLORS:

MB<+BS<+TW< LC-

- Using the same brush again Loosely mix very deep colors of your MB, BS and TW. Dry brush on the fence using strong and bold angles to help imply the texture of the wood and the shape of the fence. Notice in the reference where the brushstrokes change direction to imply the wood is cut or shaped. Notice where the brushstrokes imply the texture of wood and how the color is mixing on the canvas and on the brush to do so. Also be aware that you want to leave a bit of shadow where the horizontal fence post is cut through the vertical fence post.
- Dry.



STEP 5 - MORE FENCE

COLORS:

YO < + BS < + MB < + TW LC-

- Once again using the same brush, we are going to dry brush a texture and value layer to the fence. We are changing the mix to have a strong yellow ochre bias to further imply the varied color of weathered wood. It is also a good idea to come back and enforce the shadows of the fence with more black in the mixture around the places where deep shadows belong. You can also take this deep color to add wood grain during the painting process. All of this should be done in a dry brush method. You can switch to a smaller brush to get control over detail where necessary.



STEP 6- BLOCK IN BIRDS

COLORS:

CR>MB<

- With a TAS cat's tongue #8 and a TAS #4 Round paint in the three birds. Leave the birds feet, face and bird beaks unpainted. Change brushes as needed to be able to comfortably paint in the birds.
- Dry.



STEP 7A - FACES

BEAKS

MAIN COLOR AND SHADING - CY>CR

HIGHLIGHT - CY>TW

- Using a TAS detail liner, paint a fine line dividing the upper and lower beak. Dry. You may want to paint other steps in this step waiting for your paint to dry or use a hair dryer.
- Paint in the beaks with a mixture of CY and CR in a mid-orange. The bottom beak can be a slightly darker orange than the top beak.
- Dry and add a highlight of light orange followed by a highlight of yellow and white.

FACE AND FEET

COLORS: MB

- With a TAS #4 Round or a TAS Detail, carefully

paint in the face markings and the feet of the birds. The birds have three front toes but sometimes a toe may be hidden behind another toe.

Face and Feet

EYE

COLORS: MB PURE

- Paint in the eyes.
- Dry.

EYE HIGHLIGHT

COLORS: PB>TW LC-

- Using PB that has been barely lightened with white, paint in a highlight reflection in the eyes.
- Dry.

STEP 7B - FINAL HIGHLIGHTS

COLORS:

TWF

- With your fine detail brush create a brightest spot on the eye and outline the eyes to imply wet and reflection.



STEP 8 – FEATHERS

BIRD FEATHER SHADOW COLORS: CR>MB

- Using a TAS #4 Round and TAS #8 Cats Tongue, begin to brush in the shape and texture of the feathers where the darker color is shown in the reference. The wing feathers are painted with long strokes that layer over each other to imply each individual detailed feather. Most of these mixes should bias stronger to the CR where you wish it to lighten and deeper to the MB where you wish to darken it. Rely on the reference to know where these changes might occur. As an artist, imagine the light falling on the shape of the bird's body. Where would the least light be likely to fall? These areas will be darker. Also think about the markings of the bird's feathers and where the color changes to be a deeper color and where they tend to be a lighter color. For places where the feathers are short and tight, use similar brush strokes where they are long and defined. Let your brush strokes be expressive. Where you're not sure lean back on the reference.

BIRD FEATHER HIGHLIGHTS COLORS: CR>CY<

- The highlights on the feathers are done with the same brushes and the same strokes. We will reserve pure CR for later in the steps, but you will want to know how much red and yellow is mixed to create your highlights. These brighter colors are at the top of the head, the chest and focal points as reflections on some of the feathers. Again in your artist's mind you can think about the shape of the bird and the way light would affect it as well as its markings. Where are you not sure lean on the reference.



ART TIP:

The tail that is hidden by the wood can be difficult to paint with the long smooth strokes required unless you create a “resist” or mask using tape. You will see in the reference where tape has been used to help with this effect. I prefer artist tape or low tack tape so as not to damage the surface of the painting but remember that tape should only be applied to dry paint. Remove the tape the opposite direction that you placed it down.

STEP 9 – FINAL FEATHERS

FEATHERS | COLORS: CR CR>CY

- Using your favorite detail brushes and round brushes, paint the final layer and highlights of the feathers. This is a great time to add delicate details and CR where you want strong vibrant color. When this paint is dry you can remove your tape. As in all things, try to visualize in your artist's mind what your painting is and why you're painting it.

FEET | COLORS: PB> TW<

- Using a fine detail brush, add a delicate highlight to define the feet of the birds.



STEP 10 – SNOW ON FENCE

SNOW FIRST LAYER | SPONGE COLORS: PB>TW

- With a barely damp sponge, dab on a bumpy texture of snow on top of the fence using the reference to know where to apply. Pay close attention to the contour lines created with your sponge to make sure your snow appears as natural as if it just collected overnight.
- Rinse out sponge.

SNOW HIGHLIGHT LAYER COLORS: TW

- Using your sponge, apply a highlight layer of TW.



STEP 11 - GREEN WINTER BRANCHES

COLORS: PG< +BS< (DARK GREEN)

ADD YELLOW TO GIVE A SECOND, LIGHTER GREEN TO THE WREATH.

PG< +BS< + CYM< (LIGHT GREEN)

ADD WHITE TO THE MIXES TO CREATE A FINAL HIGHLIGHT.

- Using TAS #4 Cat's Tongue, paint a spray of wintergreen branches. Your mixture of paint should be loosely mixed on the brush and you will be working wet into wet during this technique. There's no need to allow each layer to dry unless you were having trouble getting value transitions.
- Once the basic form of your winterbranch is painted in, layer in highlights and lighter values. I like to have at least three or more to create an interesting effect with lots of visual interest. There is going to be a large red bow on top so it's important to realize where that will be so as not to put too much effort into something you're about to paint over.
- Allow to dry completely.



STEP 12 THE BOW

COLORS: CR<MB

- Using a TAS #8 Cats Tongue with a mix of deep red using CR and MB, paint the contour and underpainting of the bow blocking it all in.
- Allow it to dry.
- Create highlights that have more red in them painting the highlighted areas of the bow. Switch to a round and come back with a shadow mix and paint the folds and shadows of the bow. Continue to do this until your bow is to a place that both pleases you and looks somewhat like the reference.



Optional: At this time it can be nice to look at how the snow on your fence stands out and shows up. I took the time to add a shadow using a glaze of MB and BS

STEP 13 – BOW HIGHLIGHTS

COLORS: TWF

- Using a detailed brush and TWF, paint in high reflective highlights on the bow to give the effect of the fabric being shiny and bright. These lines are delicate and often broken to also imply the effect of light reflected.



STEP 14 – SPLATTER

SPLATTER TOOL COLORS: FWP

- Using a Splatter Tool, flick a layer of snow over the whole canvas. I very much enjoy adding falling snow on my subject. I find it makes my winter paintings feel full of holiday cheer. I also find that splattering can be stressful. Be sure to check your splatter on a scratch piece of paper to make sure that it's not too wet or stringing or too large. I have videos on splatter technique and if you really want to try it but need extra help I would suggest checking those out. Don't hesitate to put something under you, like a puppy pad, before you begin to splatter.
- Sign. Frame. ENJOY



TECHNIQUE REFERENCES:

BLOCKING IN

Paint in the Shape with a color but no detail is required.

CONTOUR

Following the outer lines of an object or subject with your brush or tool.

DRY BRUSH

A brush with little or no water.

LAYERING

To place new layers of color over previous layers of color.

PAINTERLY

Brush strokes that are free flowing and expressive. A painterly expression of art generally allows the medium and the brush strokes to show instead of hiding them through blending and careful placement.

S CURVES

Brush strokes with curves that imply form shape and texture.

SPLATTER

To create a random texture of paint by propelling thinned paint via a tool or painting method.

UNDERPAINTING

Loose large fields of color that future layers of painting will build on.

WET INTO WET

Brush and blending paint into a field of already wet paint on the surface.

RESOURCES:

- The best resource for this book is to use it with the YouTube video. Additionally, I have many

resources to help new painters achieve their dreams of being creative. I've made over a thousand videos and chances are I have a video that will help you with your specific challenges.

- Be sure to check out the "Where to Start Acrylic Painting with the Art Sherpa" playlist on Youtube.
- Search for videos on the website.
- Use the traceable - it is NOT cheating.
- Join the Art Sherpa Official Facebook group for support.
- Come to live streams and ask questions.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR FINISHED PIECE

As an artist, and, yes, you are an artist, because you have created a painting. But there's still a lot to think about.

Do you varnish? Believe it or not, varnishing is optional with acrylic painting. In my opinion it's best only to do so in good weather in a dust free space following the instructions of the specific varnish for acrylic painting exactly. Varnish is good because it does protect and unify the finish of a painting. But it is not required.

Allow your painting a few days to cure and harden. Acrylic paintings do dry quickly but they still continue to cure a few days after you're finished even with thin applications of paint. Taking the time to allow your paintings to cure will help them be more resilient through the framing and hanging process. These days you don't need to be a professional to frame or hang your paintings. Frames and ready to hang options are available at your local craft and art store.

In our example, we have a painting hanging above a fireplace. Something you might not know about acrylic painting is that when it's warm, it gets soft, so when painting is near the warmth of a fireplace you wouldn't want to add decorations that would touch it because they could leave an impression. It's perfectly fine to hang your artwork over the fireplace and change it out seasonally like I do. It's just important to be aware of hazards

and fire safety. Also knowing that acrylic paintings can become a little softer when they're warm will prevent you from accidentally having a boo boo. Perhaps your Elf on the Shelf doesn't need to sit on the edge of the frame or lean against the painting if your art is in a warm spot. Properly cared for, acrylic paint will never become wet again or lose its cure and it will always remain finished and dry this is just a nature of plastics.



A FINAL THOUGHT



Thank you for supporting this video by buying the step-by-step. I truly hope that the step-by-step aided you in your painting experience and helps you succeed in making something you're truly proud of. Please feel free to reach out with feedback suggestions and ideas by contacting us through support@theartsherpa.com. John and I love making art education and we would like these step by steps to go with future videos. I imagine that, like our channel, this will be a collaborative process with our community. If you are discovering this step-by-step in later years take a moment in your mental time machine to enjoy looking back at these early days!!

THANK YOU!