

THE ART SHERPA™

# HOW TO PAINT

IN ACRYLIC



## A CHRISTMAS WISH

BY: THE ART SHERPA

NAME CREDIT TO PATRON: SHONDA CHRISSENBERRY

STEPS: 11 | DIFFICULTY: BEGINNER | 1 HOUR



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# SHERPA FORWARD:

I have been resolved in 2021 to do more to teach art rather than demonstrate how to paint art and this document is a step by step written description of brushes, colors and mixes, techniques and explanations taken directly from the tutorial. It is provided to you as a resource to assist you in your art journey. It is best viewed in outline format to allow for ease in navigation between sections. We hope to prepare a printed version of all of those documents that you will be able to purchase which will include technical resources not available to you at this time about color mixes, techniques, brushes, materials, and all things art.

In November 2021, my community undertook a month-long painting journey entitled "Beginners Acrylic Paint Course" which consisted of almost daily premiers on YouTube and Facebook, followed by a live Q&A session. It was a true beginners art course and taught all a beginner needs to know to be able to paint my beginner, 1 Hoot, paintings. If you are a beginner painter and

did not take advantage of that course, which culminates with a Certificate of Completion, I highly encourage you to do so.

<https://theartsherpa.com/BeginnerAcrylicPaintingCourse>

Traceables and grid resources for this tutorial can be found at [theartsherpa.com](https://theartsherpa.com).

Bare in mind that brush sizes are not standard across the art brush industry. The most important thing to look for is not the brand of brush I use, but the shape of the brush head, it is a bright, or a filbert, or a hog. Brushes get bigger as the numbers get bigger, and it is not uncommon for beginners to fear using too big of a brush. Use what you have, what is most comfortable for you, explore your options, don't fix what isn't broken, and learn what works for you.

This tutorial is not a very beginner friendly painting to undertake during The Art Sherpa's "12 Days of Christmas" 2021. Your end result will probably be by using this document as well as following the tutorial step by step. If you are a beginning painter and want to attempt this, I recommend that you take advantage of all the available free resources I provide.

I chose to take a look back at some vintage pictures from Christmases past this year, but I have done numerous holiday themed tutorials in years past that can be found on my website if you would like to see them. If there is something you don't like in the reference, you won't like it in the painting. Remove it or change it. I have also added the color Yellow Ochre to the 2021 palette for this one to aid in the skin tones.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy your experience with The Art Sherpa and look forward to seeing your completed paintings. Please do not hesitate to contact us at [support@theartsherpa.com](mailto:support@theartsherpa.com) if you require assistance.

You can join the The Art Sherpa Official group at and please post your paintings there:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TheArtSherpa>

Grab your paint, get your brushes and let's go!



## PAINT AND TOOL GUIDE

Use this paint legend below to understand the symbols that I use to give you important painting information.

### PAINT:

- Cadmium Red Medium = CRM
- Cadmium Yellow Medium = CYM
- Phthalo Blue = PB
- Phthalo Green = PG
- Burnt Sienna = BS
- Dioxazine Purple = DP
- Titanium White = TW
- Fluid White Paint = FWP

### BRUSHES:

- Large Bright Brush
- #8 TAS Cat's Tongue
- TAS Dotting Tool

### TOOLS:

- Chalk Pencil or Watercolor Pencil
- 8 x 8 Canvas (If you notice that your canvas started to warp, as sometimes happens, just turn the canvas over and put it back side forward on your easel, then mist the back of the canvas. It usually resolves itself. Let dry before you proceed.)
- Optional: StayWet Palette

## TECHNIQUES YOU WILL USE IN THIS PAINTING:

- Painting a Silhouette Landscape
- Implying Foliage
- Expressive Painting Strokes
- Being Painterly and Loose
- Atmospheric Perspective
- Finding Value
- Dry Brushing
- Color Theory
- Directionality
- Blending Wet into Wet
- Color Mixing



# VIDEO CHAPTER GUIDE:

Below are the timestamps chapters we inserted in the tutorial video so that you can easily coordinate using the book and the tutorial video simultaneously. The actual timestamps will be provided after the tutorial goes live on YouTube. A revised version will be made available after it is revised.

<b>STEPS:</b>	<b>TIME:</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION:</b>
<b>INTRO</b>	<b>00:00</b>	<b>INTRO</b>
<b>STEP 1</b>	<b>3:07</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b>
<b>STEP 2</b>	<b>7:54</b>	<b>IMAGE AND SNOW</b>
<b>STEP 3</b>	<b>11:53</b>	<b>TREE BASE</b>
<b>STEP 4</b>	<b>16:33</b>	<b>MID TONE GREEN</b>
<b>STEP 5</b>	<b>20:53</b>	<b>GREEN HIGHLIGHTS</b>
<b>STEP 6</b>	<b>24:16</b>	<b>BLUE SNOW ON TREE</b>
<b>STEP 7</b>	<b>27:39</b>	<b>YELLOW GLOW</b>
<b>STEP 8</b>	<b>29:53</b>	<b>RED LAYER</b>
<b>STEP 9</b>	<b>33:12</b>	<b>WHITE DOTS</b>
<b>STEP 10</b>	<b>36:23</b>	<b>TOUCH UP LAYER</b>
<b>STEP 11</b>	<b>39:23</b>	<b>SNOW HIGHLIGHT SIGN</b>



## THE GOLDILOCKS ZONE

In painting, every technique or process has what I call a "Goldilocks Zone". As an artist, you will be constantly seeking this space to achieve maximum results from any project you're doing. Much like Goldilocks, you will go into each technique and try to find a space that is just right for you. When you're loading your brush, sometimes you will have too much water, sometimes you will have too little water, and sometimes you

will find the amount of water is just right. When applying strokes to the canvas, you may find that you have too much brush pressure, too little brush pressure, or that your brush pressure is just right. The Goldilocks zone changes for every technique and every process. You will know you have found it when something that seemed difficult suddenly becomes much easier. A little goal I'd like to set for you is to notice when you have found yourself in the Goldilocks Zone so that you can locate it again easier the next time you come across a particular technique.





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Brunell's  
CRETACOLOR

Artist Studio

watercolor

pencils

included!

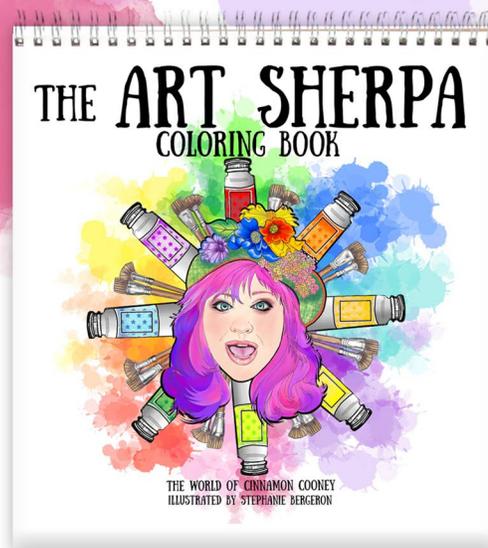


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# STEP 1 - BACKGROUND

## “ABSTRACT CHALLENGE”

### PAINT:

Phthalo Blue = PB

Dioxazine Purple = DP

Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Large Bright Brush

### STEP DISCUSSION

- Step 1 is very easy and pretty fun, so grab a large, damp, bright brush. Load it with PB + DP and paint it horizontally on the canvas. Allow variance in the color of this sky. Sometimes the surface of the canvas is thirsty, so don't hesitate to add water as you need to. Cover the whole canvas. If you are not intending to frame this but want to hang it, go ahead and paint the sides of the canvas with this color too, but paint the sides up and down, not side to side.
- Dampen the brush again and add TW, to the dirty brush then, at the top of the canvas, brush side to side, creating an interesting personality in the sky. Continue until about 2/3 down the canvas.
- Dry.

*This abstract piece will challenge you by not letting it get away from you and not overworking. Stop at each step and observe as you go.*

***Sherpa Tip:** Keep a paper towel between your water cup and the canvas in case your brush gets too wet; you can dry it off.*



# STEP 2 - IMAGE AND SNOW

## “DON'T GET DEEP INTO THE SNOW”

### PAINT:

Phthalo Blue = PB

Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Chalk/Watercolor Pencil

#8 TAS Cat's Tongue

### STEP DISCUSSION

- I told everyone to get a Cat's Tongue, or a round or filbert, and then I decided to use chalk first. Draw in the sloping hill, starting at four fingers from the bottom. Make a vertical line for the tree, it's almost a teardrop shape from the top to the bottom. The tree is about  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the top.
- Get PB + TW on the Cat's Tongue and start sweeping arcs of this color into the ground beneath the base of what will be the tree. Add more TW on the toe of the dirty brush and wiggle in brighter snow from the top of the bank and down a bit; skip a space, then sweep in a line to about center. Do the same on both sides of the snow bank.
- Very loose, very abstract. Try not to overwork it.



# STEP 3 - TREE BASE

## "A POLL ON A POLL"

### PAINT:

Phthalo Green = PG

Burnt Sienna = BS

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

#8 TAS Cat's Tongue

### STEP DISCUSSION

- Mix BS + PG to a dark green. Then, using the edge of the Cat's Tongue, start applying paint at the pointy top of the tree. Give it some tiny little branches. Skip a tiny space and start adding in branches to the right and branches to the left, using that teardrop shape you drew to help you place the branches. The middle of the tree is almost completely dark, but the middle to the tips of the branches show spaces against the night sky. At the bottom, piece the branches in and try to curve up a bit. It's all in the shape and feel of the tree.
- Don't dry and don't take a break - move on to the next step.

*I found a wonderful image by a Canadian artist I would like to do. Maybe I'll do a poll to see if you want to do it.*

*John - Cinnamon, if given the option, would do a poll to see if you'd like to do a poll on the poll.*

*John, it's a train.*

*John - I think we should take a train.*





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# STEP 4 - MID TONE GREEN

“JOHN PREFERS A WILD, PLUMP, HAPPY LITTLE TREE”

## PAINT:

Cad Yellow Medium = CYM

## BRUSHES & TOOLS:

#8 Cat's Tongue

## STEP DISCUSSION

- We want the paint to be slightly damp still, so with the Cat's Tongue, dampened, get CYM + the brown-green tree mix, for a lighter color. At the top of the tree use flicking strokes of this lighter color but do not paint out the dark of the tree.
- Then, use a push pull stroke on this messy tree, but sometimes you need a messy tree to process other things.
- Vary the direction of your lines and vary the color in the mix. Relax with what's happening on your canvas.
- Curve the strokes in the center and make them a bit longer.



# STEP 5 - GREEN HIGHLIGHTS

## “AS THE GREEN DO”

### PAINT:

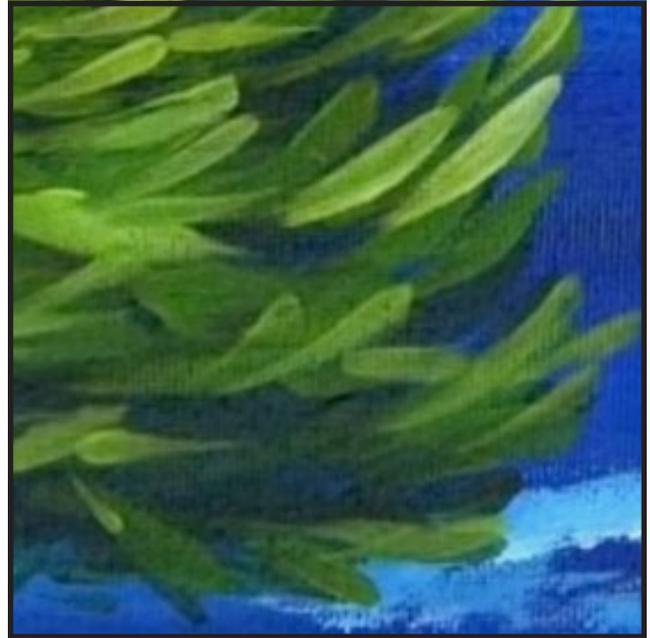
Cad Yellow Medium = CYM  
Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

#8 TAS Cat's Tongue

### STEP DISCUSSION

- Pretty easy step - this.  
Put a lot of CYM into the green mix then, add a lot of TW. Artfully place little touches of a brighter highlight as you continue to work on your tree. We are not covering what is already there, we are adding thoughtful highlights. As the green do.
- Dry.
- Observe - do you see the tree bending up from the bottom to the top, do you see shadows and highlights? Are you happy with your abstract tree?



# STEP 6 - BLUE SNOW ON TREE

## "NOW YOU MAY TEACH"

### PAINT:

Phthalo Blue = PB

Phthalo Green = PG

Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

#8 TAS Cat's Tongue

### STEP DISCUSSION

- With the Cat's Tongue and PB + PG + TW, loosely mixed, add touches of this color, starting at the top, almost like you are flocking the tree. We still want to see the many previous layers. Vary up the loose mix by adding touches of PB or PG or TW as you go.
- Don't dry.

*We have a new Discord account; it's kind of like hanging out at the office cooler chat place of yesteryear. About 100 of our community members are already there.*



# STEP 7 - YELLOW GLOW

## "JUST A LITTLE BIT OF GLOW"

### PAINT:

Cad Yellow Medium = CYM  
Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

#8 TAS Cat's Tongue

### STEP DISCUSSION

- Mix CYM + TW with the Cat's Tongue and make dots, starting at the top of the tree, to simulate areas where it might be lit. These are placed very randomly here and there; just a little bit of glow on the branches. The strokes are shorter and pulled out a bit.
- I am using a professional paint, if you are using a craft or student paint and your yellow is transparent, add more TW to the mix.
- Don't dry.



# STEP 8 - RED LAYER

“DON'T OVERPAINT A POETIC MOMENT”

## PAINT:

Cad Red Medium = CRM

Cad Yellow Medium = CYM

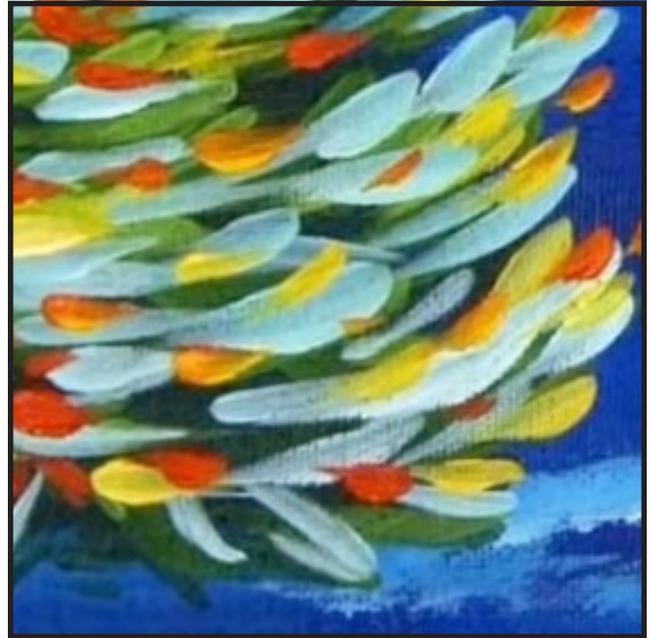
Fluid White Paint = FWP

## BRUSHES & TOOLS:

#8 TAS Cat's Tongue

## STEP DISCUSSION

- With the Cat's Tongue, mix CRM + CYM to a marbled color. Add some dashes of this color here and there. There is no roadmap for how or where to place these various colors, I do provide a photo reference at the end of each step to help you see where I placed mine. They are not symmetrical, the placement should lead the eye of the viewer through the canvas. Don't paint out poetic moments that have come before. This piece will help you develop your artistic eye which is what artists rely on to help them make these decisions.
- Put out some FWP on your palette.



# STEP 9 - WHITE DOTS

## “AGENT OF CHAOS PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE”

### PAINT:

Fluid White Paint = FWP

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

TAS Dotting Tool

### STEP DISCUSSION

- Use the Dotting Tool, or the back of your paintbrush and load on some FWP. Add little random dot reflections here and there, in some of the orange and yellow glows. Continue to be an Agent of Chaos because this is abstract. Chaos is our friend. Vary the size of the dots and don't neglect the top of the tree. It needs some dots too.
- Dry or the little dots will turn into smears.



# STEP 10 - TOUCH UP LAYER

## "WE NEED MORE SNOW"

### PAINT:

Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

#8 TAS Cat's Tongue

### STEP DISCUSSION

- Standing back and observing the tree, I decided that while I have great depths and great highlights, I need more snow. So, using the Cat's Tongue, I got into TW and added more snow to the tips of some of the branches.

**Sherpa Tip:** *This abstract piece will challenge you by not letting it get away from you and not overworking. Stop at each step and observe as you go.*



# STEP 11 - SNOW HIGHLIGHT

“HE’S LIVING HIS BEST TREE SELF”

## PAINT:

Cad Yellow Medium = CYM

Phthalo Blue = PB

Titanium White = TW

## BRUSHES & TOOLS:

#8 TAS Cat's Tongue

## STEP DISCUSSION

- Let's add a glow to our ground snow because the lit tree would cast reflections. Refresh any colors on your palette that you might need.
- Using the Cat's Tongue, pull out some TW. It's ok if there is a touch of PB in it, then whiten up the drifting snow banks. Add some CYM on the dirty brush for a touch of yellow glow in the snow. Just play with brighter white and yellow glows in the snow under the tree.
- If you like, you can take TW + PB to lighten the snow a bit in front of the reflections. Make this snow world your snow world.
- Brighten up the top of the tree with yellow for maybe an abstract star glow.
- He's living his best tree life.
- Sign.



## THE TRACING METHOD

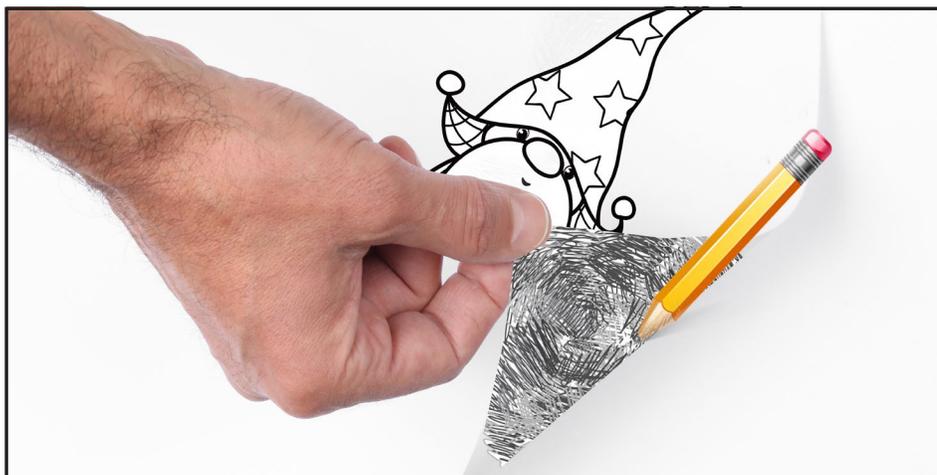
- Adjust the size to fit your surface and be sure to check your printer settings to see if the final size reflects the size you need.



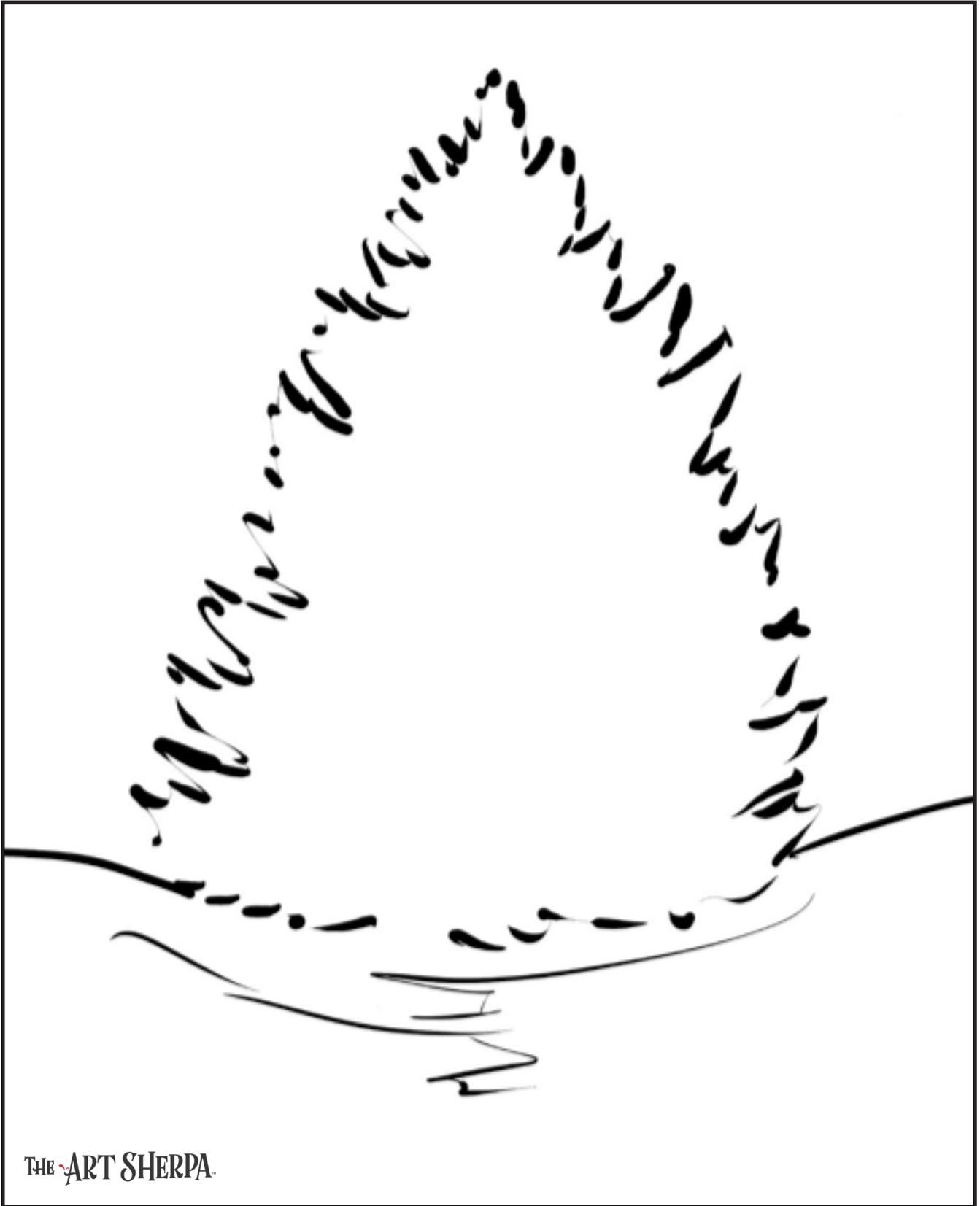
see that your transfer is happening. If not check if your rubbing is too thin or that your pressure is not too light. After you are done tracing the lines, remove your traceable and you should have a copy of the line art on your canvas.



- Rub the back with graphite or use Saral paper and skip this step.
- Be sure to rub the back of your paper on the side without the lines drawing using a HB pencil.
- Hold up to window light to make sure graphite covers all the lines of the subject drawing.
- Test your Saral paper to make sure the color you are using is going to show on the canvas.
- Tape your paper on your surface to transfer with tape to keep it from moving. If you are using saral paper make sure you have both sheets taped down and the transfer side of the Saral paper will be facing your surface. Carefully, with medium pressure, redraw over every line. You can lift one corner of paper to



TRACEABLE:



## GRIDDING INSTRUCTIONS:

The gridding method allows you to dip your toe into drawing without being in the deep end of the drawing pool on day one. For our purposes, the gridding method has been worked out for you. In this example, we have an 9 x 12 canvas and the example is based on a one-inch square grid with everything of equal ratio. On your 9 x 12 canvas, you will make a mark using your chalk tool and a T-square ruler at every 1 inch point both horizontally and vertically. The T-square will help ensure that your lines are straight.

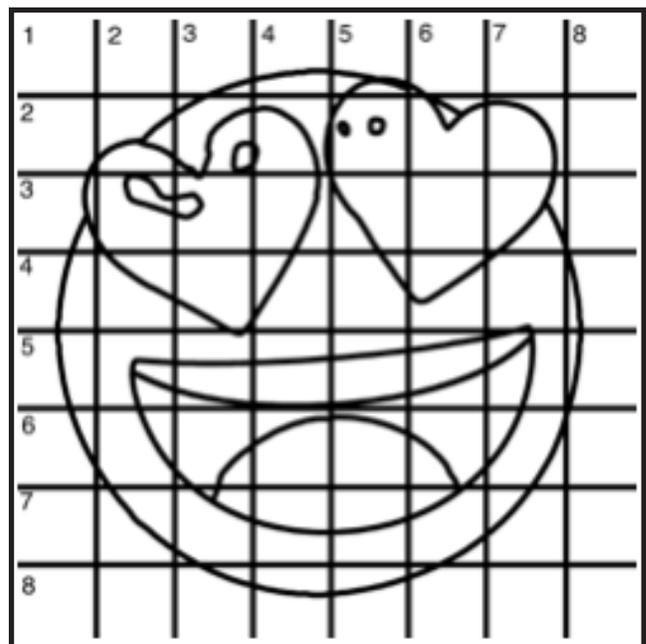
To draw the grid your canvas must be dry and it's advisable that it is also cool. You should use chalk that is wax or oil free. It must be pure chalk. I use a Dritz fabric-marking tool because it does fine lines easily and removes well from the canvas. There are also chalk pencils available or you could use chalkboard chalk. While I will always share with you the tools and equipment that I am using, you are welcome to deviate from that any time you feel something else is best for you.

Something that I have learned especially with complex images is that it can be easy to get lost in the grid. If you find yourself unsure, go back and check to make sure that the square you are marking on matches the square in your reference. After you master this method, you will be able to use gridding to transfer any image from a reference to your canvas.

Number your columns 1 - 12, left to right, and your rows 1 - 9 from the top to the bottom.

Find the first row that the contour line of your image enters and exits and duplicate only what you see in that one single square. Continue through the entire image square by square transferring, the contour lines of the subject with chalk on your canvas. When you have duplicated the subject from your reference to your canvas, you will be done.

**HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF A 8 X 8 CANVAS; YOU CAN DO A 1" GRID ON ANY SIZE CANVAS.**



## GRIDDING INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED:

You can remove chalk easily by taking a soft brush and getting it damp with clean water. Gently brush over the lines you wish to remove and they will lift.

If you prefer a different size there are many great resources out there that involve math about how to scale. I do not teach math for many good reasons

and I could count them all for you, but that would be doing math. The resources out there for that information and those mathematical formulas exist online in copious amounts. Explained beautifully and if you are choosing to paint different sizes than we are utilizing in this mini book, I highly recommend finding one of those formulas and mastering it. Short of that, buy a 9 x 12 canvas to match the free grid for this project.

## GRID REFERENCE:



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