

THE ART SHERPA™

# HOW TO PAINT

IN ACRYLIC



## YESTERYEAR'S TREE

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NAME CREDIT TO PATRON: DIANA CONNELLY


STEPS: 11 | DIFFICULTY: INTERMEDIATE | 2 HOOTS





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

SHERPA FORWARD .....	3
PAINT AND TOOL GUIDE .....	4
VIDEO CHAPTER GUIDE .....	5
THE GOLDBLOCKS ZONE .....	5
STEP 1 - BACKGROUND.....	7
STEP 2 - IMAGE.....	8
STEP 3 - HALO .....	9
STEP 4 - FOREGROUND .....	11
STEP 5 - 1ST LAYER OF TREE.....	12
STEP 6 - 2ND LAYER OF TREE .....	13
STEP 7 - ORNAMENTS .....	14
STEP 8 - TWINKLE STARS .....	15
STEP 9 - HIGHLIGHTS .....	16
STEP 10 - UNDER TREE REFLECTIONS .....	17
STEP 11 - STAR .....	18
TRACING METHOD.....	19
TRACEABLE .....	20
GRIDDING INSTRUCTIONS .....	21





# 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 an extremely difficult one to paint on Day 2 of 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
- Quinacridone Magenta = QM
- Cadmium Yellow Medium = CYM
- Phthalo Blue = PB
- Phthalo Green = PG
- Mars Black = MB
- Titanium White = TW
- Fluid White Paint = FWP
- Golden's Acrylic Gloss Glazing Liquid = AGL

### BRUSHES:

- 1.25" Hog Cutter Brush
- #4 TAS Round
- #1 Monogram Liner
- #8 TAS Cats Tongue
- ½" Angle Brush
- TAS Dotting Tool
- Cotton Swabs

### TOOLS:

- Chalk Pencil or Watercolor Pencil
- 9 x 12 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
- T-Square Ruler

### TECHNIQUES YOU WILL USE IN THIS PAINTING:

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





# 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.

STEPS:	TIME:	DESCRIPTION:
INTRO	00:00	INTRO
STEP 1	3:01	BACKGROUND
STEP 2	9:23	IMAGE
STEP 3	12:32	HALO
STEP 4	18:00	FOREGROUND
STEP 5	24:45	1ST LAYER OF TREE
STEP 6	33:36	2ND LAYER OF TREE
STEP 7	49:40	ORNAMENTS
STEP 8	55:30	TWINKLE STARS
STEP 9	1:00:56	HIGHLIGHTS
STEP 10	1:05:52	UNDER TREE REFLECTIONS
STEP 11	1:11:19	STAR SIGN



## 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.



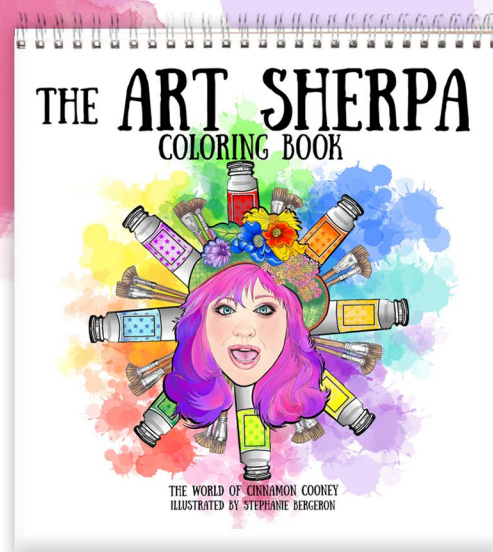


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# STEP 1 - BACKGROUND

## "A SIP OF ROOT BEER ON ONWARD WE GO"

### PAINT:

Cad Red Medium = CRM

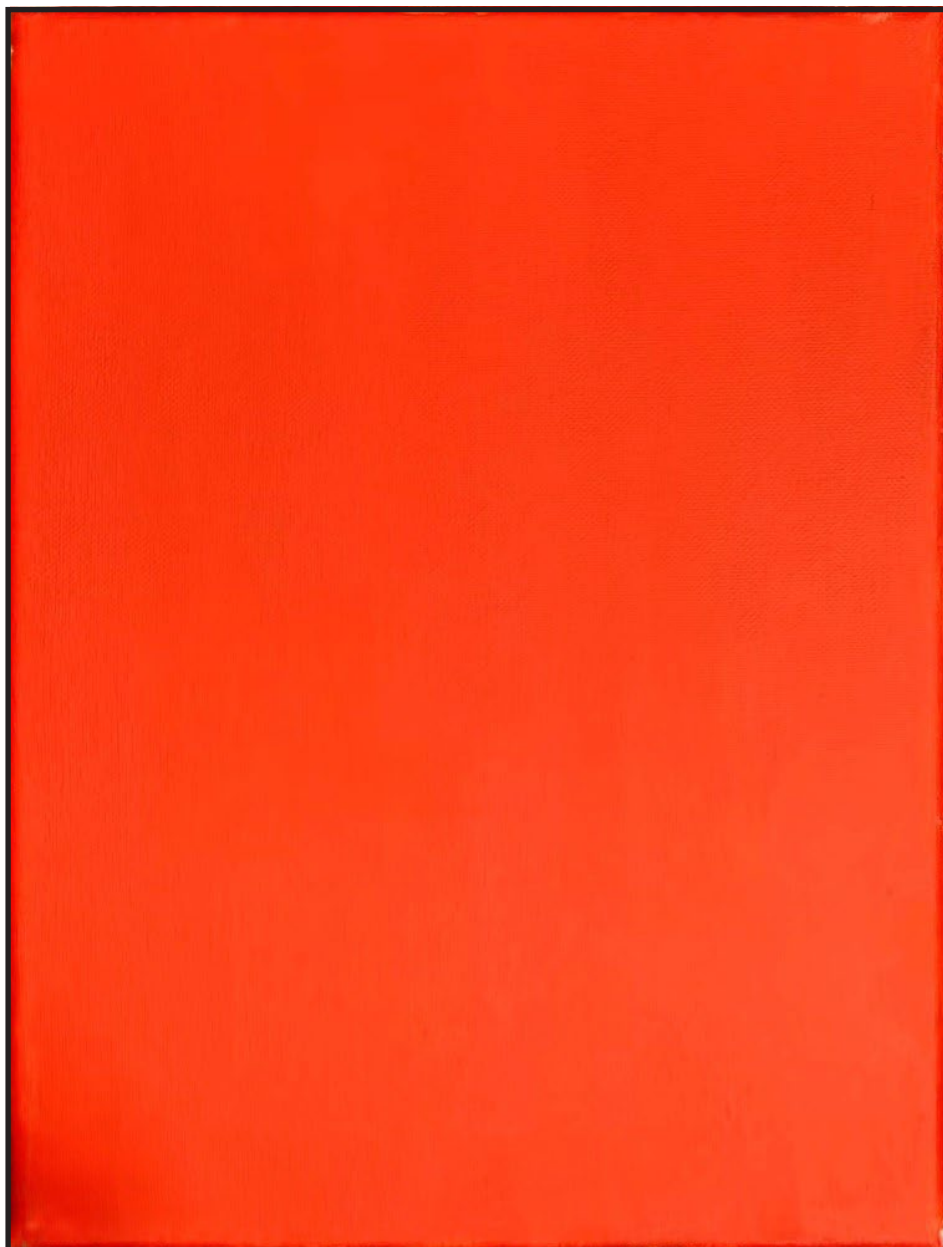
### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

1.25" Hog Cutter Brush

### STEP DISCUSSION

- For the background, grab a mid size hog cutter brush and paint the entire surface with CRM. If you are not intending to frame this, go ahead and paint the sides. Just apply the paint to the canvas at this point, make it red. Don't hesitate to add some water to the brush to improve the paint flow, but remember a hog loves to hold water that you don't see. You don't want drips.
- Dry.
- For the second coat, you do want to end with your brush strokes going up and down and the canvas should be in portrait orientation.
- Dry after the second layer before you move on. Red can be transparent and we want this background to be rich in depth.

*John - We don't want partial red in here. If it takes three, paint three, it probably depends on whether or not you are using heavy body or student or craft paint.*



# STEP 2 - IMAGE

## "NO SHAMING ZONE"

### PAINT:

Cad Red Medium = CRM

Titanium White = TW

Golden's Acrylic Gloss

Glazing Liquid = AGL

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

TAS #8 Cat's Tongue Brush

Chalk Pencil

or Watercolor Pencil

T-Square Ruler

### STEP DISCUSSION

- I chose to illustrate freehand but I do provide a traceable if you are just not ready to draw yet. No drawing shame in the Sherpa World.
- With the T-square and chalk, come up three fingers, approximately 2" from the bottom and draw a line across the canvas. Leave a little space at the top for the star, maybe 2", and mark the center of the surface with a dot. Draw a soft line from that dot to the bottom line. Then about two fingers, or 2" in from each side and draw a triangle.
- You will feel more comfortable by having these guidelines for building the tree. It will help you pay attention to the branch details.
- Add some AGL to your palette, Golden's is the only one I recommend. Then mix AGL and a little TW and CYM and fancy up these rays using the toe of the Cat's Tongue brush.
- The step reference in this step does not really allow you to see the lines I drew in or see the rays. Please refer to the photo reference in Step 3 for a much clearer view and also use the traceable as a reference.
- Dry.





# STEP 3 - HALO

## "HOGS LOVE WATER"

### PAINT:

Cad Red Medium = CRM

Quinacridone Magenta = QM

Cad Yellow Medium = CYM

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

TAS #8 Cat's Tongue

### STEP DISCUSSION

- On your Cat's Tongue, glaze in some QM with a back and forth stroke across the canvas, starting at the bottom and coming up to the line we drew in.
- Mix CRM to CYM and create a halo effect by flicking brush strokes out of that center dot we drew in. Paint radiating lines all around the top and sides of the tree.

*At first, I tired the hog brush, but I could not get the effect I needed because it was holding too much water, so I switched to the TAS #8 Cat's Tongue.*







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# STEP 4 - FOREGROUND

## "NO SHIFTY PAINT, PLEASE"

### PAINT:

Cad Red Medium = CRM  
Quinacridone Magenta = QM  
Phthalo Blue = PB  
Titanium White = TW  
Golden's Acrylic Gloss  
Glazing Liquid = AGL

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

TAS #8 Cat's Tongue

***Sherpa Tip:** Remember  
not to use heat, just  
cool air.*



### STEP DISCUSSION

- With QM and a touch of PB, on the Cat's Tongue, glaze the bottom area by brushing down some shadows that reflect the shape of the tree. The broadest part of the tree starts at the line and narrows as it goes toward the bottom of the canvas. You want irregular lines. You can use my photo reference to help you with this placement.
- Dry.
- Take TW to CRM and add a little AGL, then in that same area, paint some downward, sporadic brush strokes. Then cross-hatch some TW in places.
- Come back with some QM in places.
- Don't get too intense worrying here; just enjoy the process and learn from it.



# STEP 5 - 1<sup>ST</sup> LAYER OF TREE

“TAKE IN THE TOTALITY OF THE WHOLE”

## PAINT:

Cad Red Medium = CRM

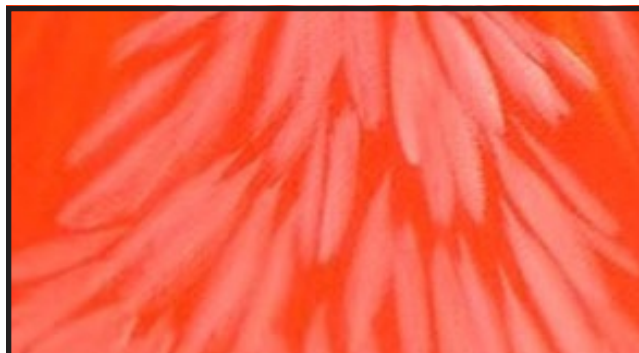
Titanium White = TW

## BRUSHES & TOOLS:

TAS #8 Cat's Tongue

## STEP DISCUSSION

- With the Cat's Tongue, or a filbert brush, take a smidge of CRM to TW. We are going to layer branches starting at the bottom and going up to just below the top of the tree, much like one would layer scales on a dragon that was not in Game of Thrones. I know you are asking yourself, do I mean RED, and I do.
- On the tip of the brush, with a touch pull stroke, start building up the bottom layer of branches and go all the way across the base of the tree.
- The chalk guide we put in will help you to focus on building the tree. I tend to switch from the right to the left, or from the left to the right; anyway, I alternate sides when building trees. Don't forget to build up the center of the tree too. Building this tree takes time and patience. The branches are close, but you do want to see red between them.
- Dry.





# STEP 6 - 2ND LAYER OF TREE

## "A GROOVALICIOUS PEACEFUL PROCESS"

### PAINT:

Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

#8 TAS Cat's Tongue

### STEP DISCUSSION

- Rinse your brush and change your water.
  - Load the Cat's Tongue with TW and start at the bottom, using that same stroke, add brighter branches on top of the first layer. Don't totally cover up that first layer. Don't make patterns, try to be irregular, Agent Chaos.
  - You don't want your brush too wet, so rinse and wipe it a few times. As you add the second layer, your branch's needle bits get thicker and closer together, you should still see red between them.
  - The teardrops are bigger in the center and smaller on the sides. As you get to the fourth layer of branches, the strokes will get smaller.
  - As you get to the top, you will be painting over the rays we put in earlier and the branches are getting very small and close. Before I get to the top of my trees, I switch to the unpainted top dot of my tree and paint the branches down to meet the body of the tree. It's just easier for me, but you be you.
- Step back away from your painting and really observe it. Is there a space that needs a branch before we move on.
  - Dry.

*Big shout out to all my Patrons, you guys are what makes it possible for John and I to share our art like we do.*

*Sherpa Tip: I am painting left to right because I'm right handed; if you are left handed, you might want to paint right to left.*



# STEP 7 - ORNAMENTS

## "NO TWINKLING ZONE"

### PAINT:

Phthalo Green = PG

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

TAS #4 Round Brush

Cotton Swabs

### STEP DISCUSSION

- With a damp button swab, and PG, put some green ornaments on your tree. I did not think they were big enough, so I enlarged them using a Round Brush. You could skip the cotton swab step, but I have found that this trick helps me with placement before I paint something larger.
- Dry it before we twinkle.





# STEP 8 - TWINKLE STARS

## "NOW WE TWINKLE"

### PAINT:

Cad Yellow Medium = CYM

Phthalo Blue = PB

Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

#1 Detail Brush

### STEP DISCUSSION

- With a round detail brush, take a little TW to PB and paint in some simple line star shapes in places; you can vary the mix of the colors on these to add dimension.
- Rinse out all the blue in your brush, then add a touch of TW to CYM for some simple stars of yellow.
- Rinse and dry.
- Dry.



# STEP 9 - HIGHLIGHTS

## "HIGHLIGHTS AND CENTERS"

### PAINT:

Cad Yellow Medium = CYM

Phthalo Green = PG

Fluid White Paint = FWP

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

#1 Detail Brush

Dotting Tool or Toothpick

### STEP DISCUSSION

- Get FWP, or white craft paint, and a dotting tool or toothpick, and dot the centers of the stars. Dot both the blue and the yellow stars.
- Above the top of the tree make a little bigger dot.
- Switch to the detail brush and add a touch of PG to CYM. On the left side of the green ornaments, make a curved highlight stroke on each ornament.
- Then add dot highlights in places on some of the green ornaments using FWP.
- Dry.

**Sherpa Tip:** You could also thin your acrylic white with water and use it.





# STEP 10 – UNDER TREE REFLECTIONS

“ATTENTION MUST BE PAID”

## PAINT:

Cad Yellow Medium = CYM

Phthalo Green = PG

Titanium White = TW

## BRUSHES & TOOLS:

½" Angle Brush

## STEP DISCUSSION

- Under the tree there are some reflections that must be paid attention to, so with the ½" angle brush, loaded with TW, tap down some narrow single highlights beneath the tree. They don't have to all necessarily be vertical or horizontal, but should be irregular because the lights are probably twinkling and they are just reflections on the floor of the movement of light.
- Rinse out.
- To get a bright green, mix CYM to PG. Add some of this color to the reflections you just put in, to say that maybe the green ornaments are being reflected also.
- Rinse out thoroughly.
- Bring in some CYM in that area.



# STEP 11 - STAR

## "STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT"

### PAINT:

Fluid White Paint = FWP

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

#1 Detail Brush

### STEP DISCUSSION

- With the detail brush and FWP, make a straight line up from the dot above the tree. Make lines at each side of the dot coming out and fading into the background. Come down from the dot and add two lines on both sides of the top of the tree. Add the mid radials between the longer radials of the star.
- Imply some circular glows between the radials using a dry brush stroke.
- Sign.





## THE TRACING METHOD

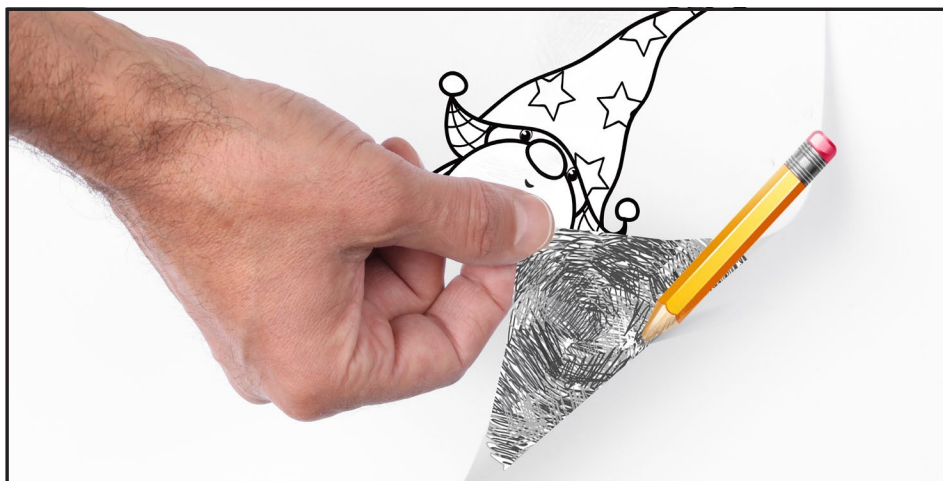
- Adjust the size to fit your surface and be sure to check your printer settings to see if the final size reflects the size you need.



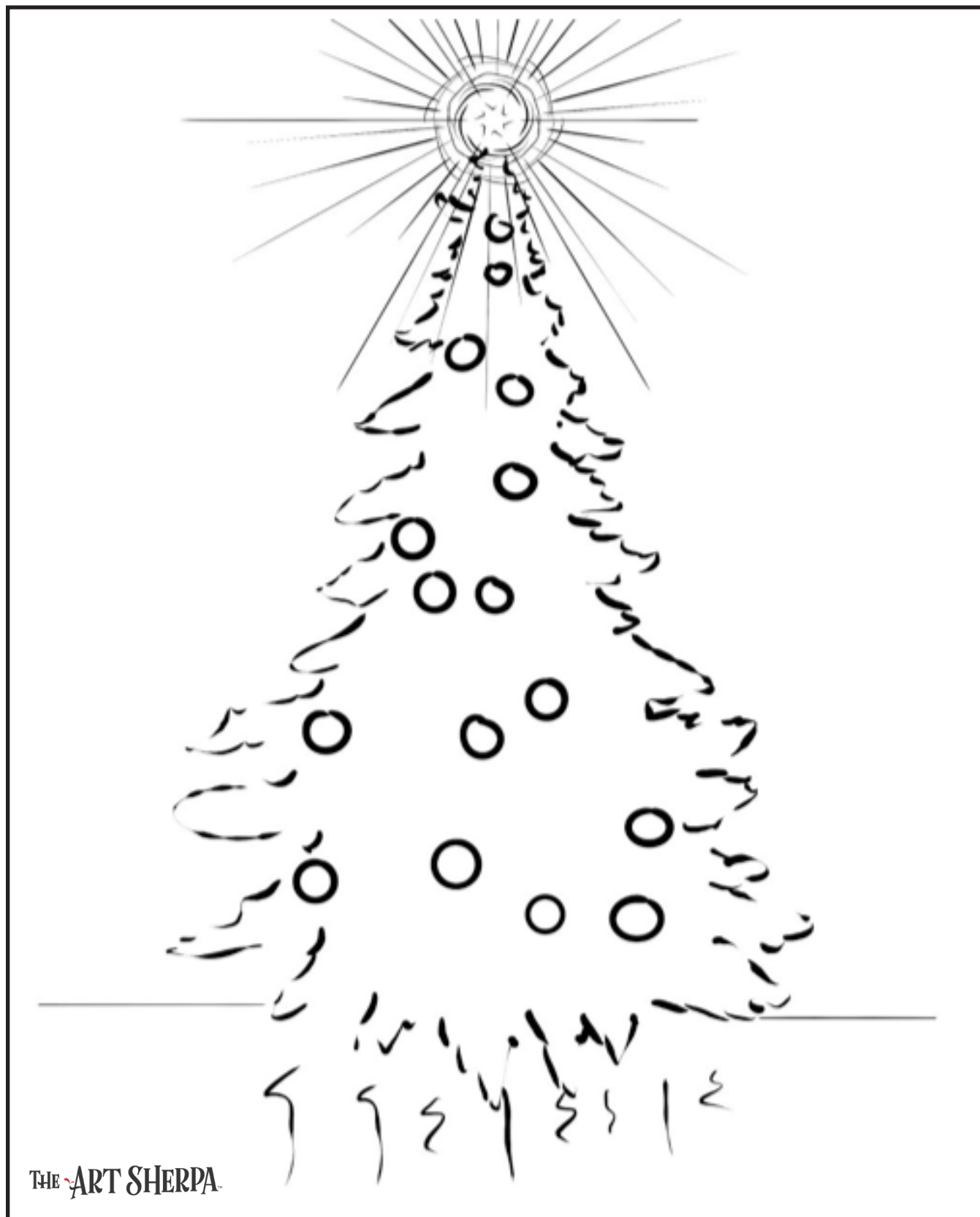
see that your transfer is happening. If not check if your rubbing is too thin or that your pressure is not too light. After you are done tracing the lines, remove your traceable and you should have a copy of the line art on your canvas.



- 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.

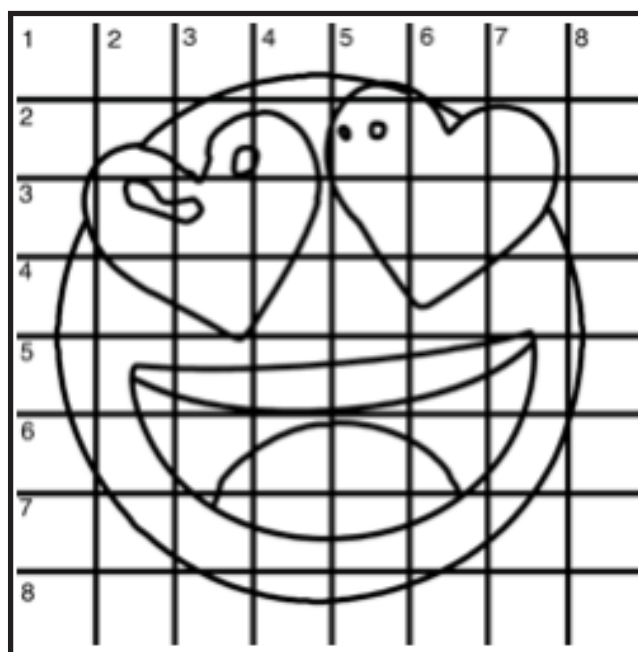
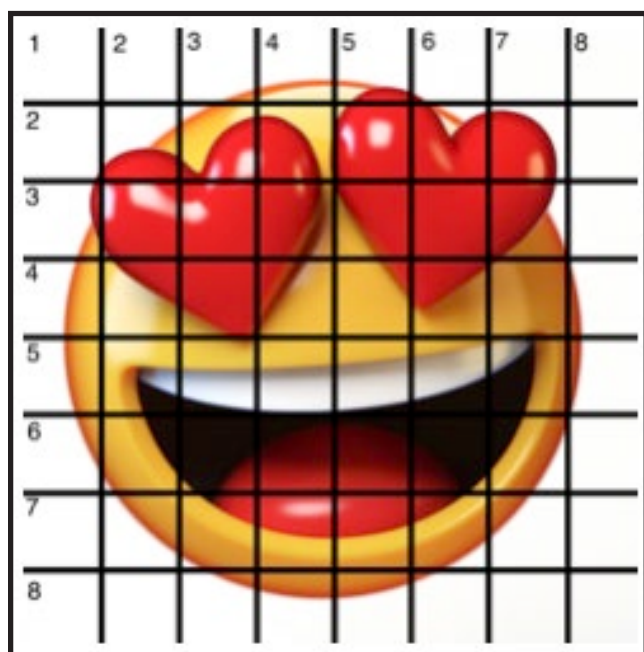
To draw the grid your canvas must be dry and it's advisable that it is also cool. You should use chalk that is wax or oil free. It must be pure chalk. I use a Dritz fabric-marking tool because it does fine lines easily and removes well from the canvas. There are also chalk pencils available or you could 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.**



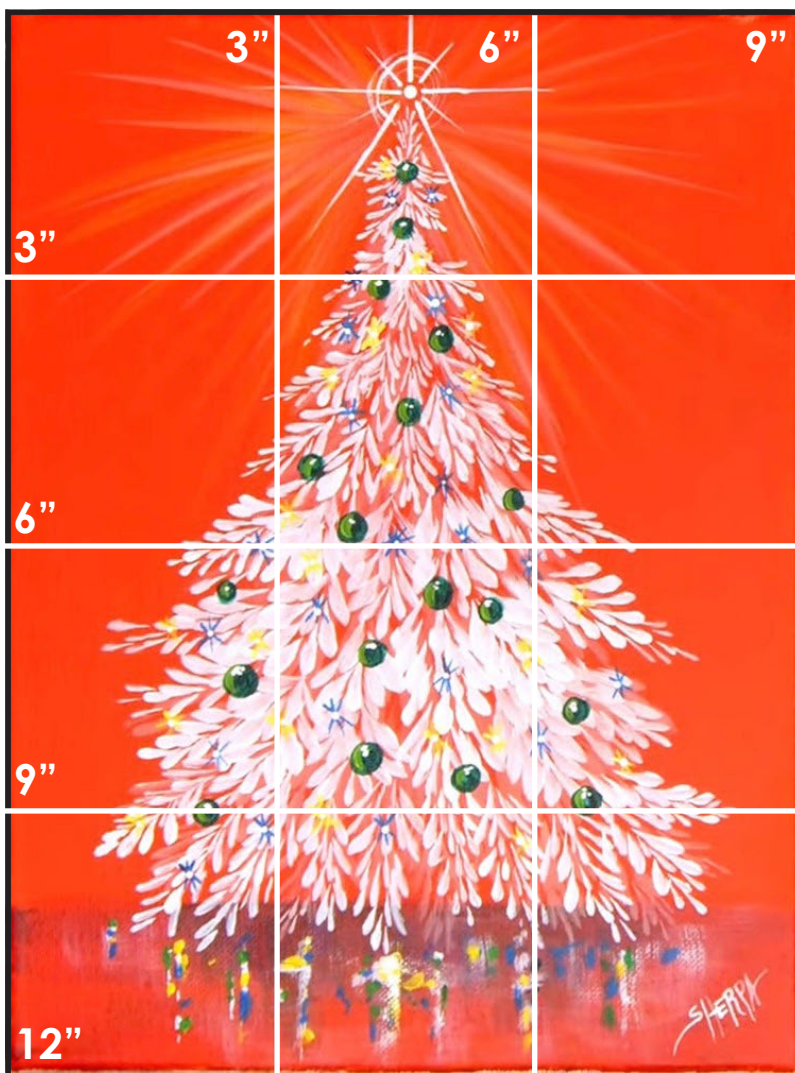
## GRIDDING INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED:

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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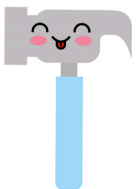
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