

THE ART SHERPA™

# HOW TO PAINT

IN ACRYLIC



## WISHES

BY: THE ART SHERPA

NAME CREDIT TO PATRON: REBECCA LOVE

STEPS: 6 | DIFFICULTY: BEGINNER | 1 HOOT



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# SHERPA FORWARD:

I am resolved to do more to help teach art 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.

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

Keep 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.

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:

- Phthalo Blue = PB
- Mars Black = MB
- Titanium White = TW
- Fluid White Paint = FWP

## BRUSHES:

- Large Synthetic Oval Mop
- Medium Synthetic Bright
- Small Synthetic Round

## TOOLS:

- 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.)
- T-Square Ruler
- Plastic Wrap
- Chalk Pencil or Watercolor Pencil
- Optional: StayWet Palette

## SYMBOL GUIDE:

- > Less than previous amount
- < More than previous amount
- + Equal amount

## TECHNIQUES YOU WILL USE IN THIS PAINTING:

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



# 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.

STEPS:	TIME:	DESCRIPTION:
INTRO	00:00	INTRO
STEP 1	02:30	SKETCH IMAGE
STEP 2	07:05	SKY BLUE
STEP 3	11:27	OMBRE SKY AND CLOUDS
STEP 4	16:28	SILHOUETTE IN BLACK
STEP 5	24:34	SILHOUETTE HAIR AND DETAILS
STEP 6	38:16	WHITE GRASS AND DETAILS
	48:14	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 - SKETCH IMAGE Timestamp 2:30

## “THE BASE FACE”

### PAINT:

Phthalo Blue = PB

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Small Synthetic Round

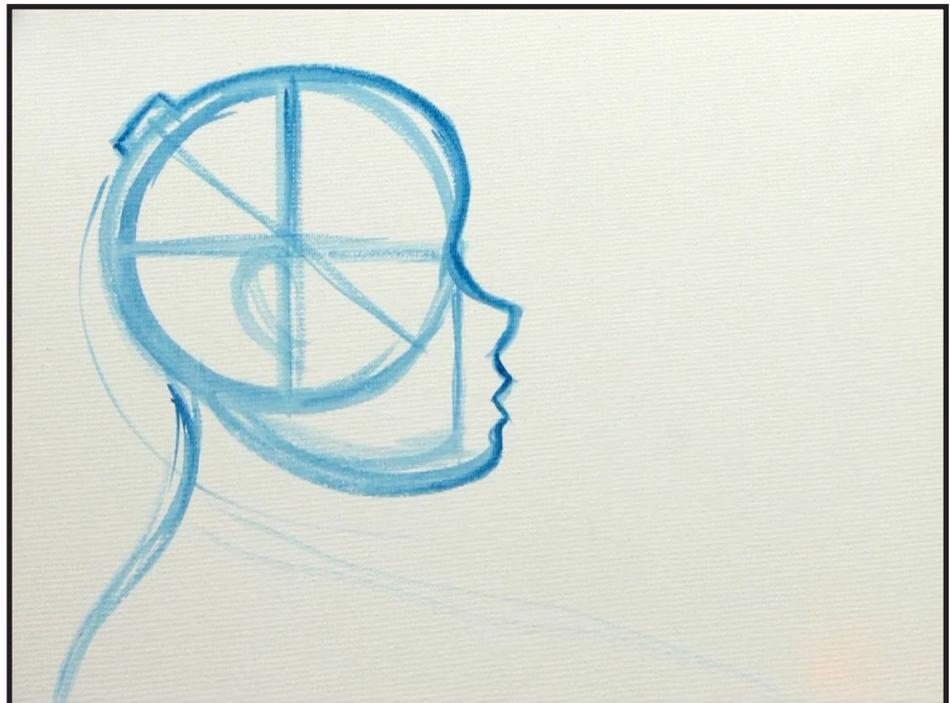
### STEP DISCUSSION:

• I chose to free-hand this image, but I have also provided a traceable image if you would prefer to use that method. There is no right or wrong way to get your image on the canvas, do whatever makes you the most comfortable. If you are free-handing, there are numerous references available to assist you. There is the picture that follows this step, as well as the traceable and grid reference at the end of this mini book. I drew in only the major objects. For a more visible image on video, I use paint to sketch this image onto the canvas. You should use a Chalk Pencil or Watercolor Pencil.

- First, use a round brush with Phthalo Blue to size in the round part of the head. Make a circle in the upper left quadrant that is about 1 inch from the top and 2 inches from the side. Divide the circle in half, both vertically and horizontally.
- Next, use the T-square

ruler and draw a line off the front face of the circle, down a little bit past the bottom of the circle. Then, curve the jawline back to meet the bottom of the circle, just past the vertical guideline.

- Features will be close together on a younger face, so exaggerate the forehead and dip into the horizontal guideline on the circle. Then, bring out a pronounced young nose from that same line, and at the tip of the nose, turn it a bit down and inwards. After that, swing out the upper lip, indent the mouth and bring out the lower lip. At that point, indent the bottom of the lower lip slightly, and round out the chin. Carry the jawline back to the circle again, adjusting as needed.
- Draw a diagonal line across the circle from the lower right to the upper left. Set the ponytail at the top of the line.
- Imply the neck coming off the bottom of the circle, just behind the jawline and curving down to the bottom of the canvas. Rinse the brush.
- Dry the surface well before continuing to the next step.



## STEP 2 - SKY BLUE Timestamp 7:05

### “THE SKY IS THE LIMIT”

#### PAINT:

Phthalo Blue = PB

Titanium White = TW

#### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

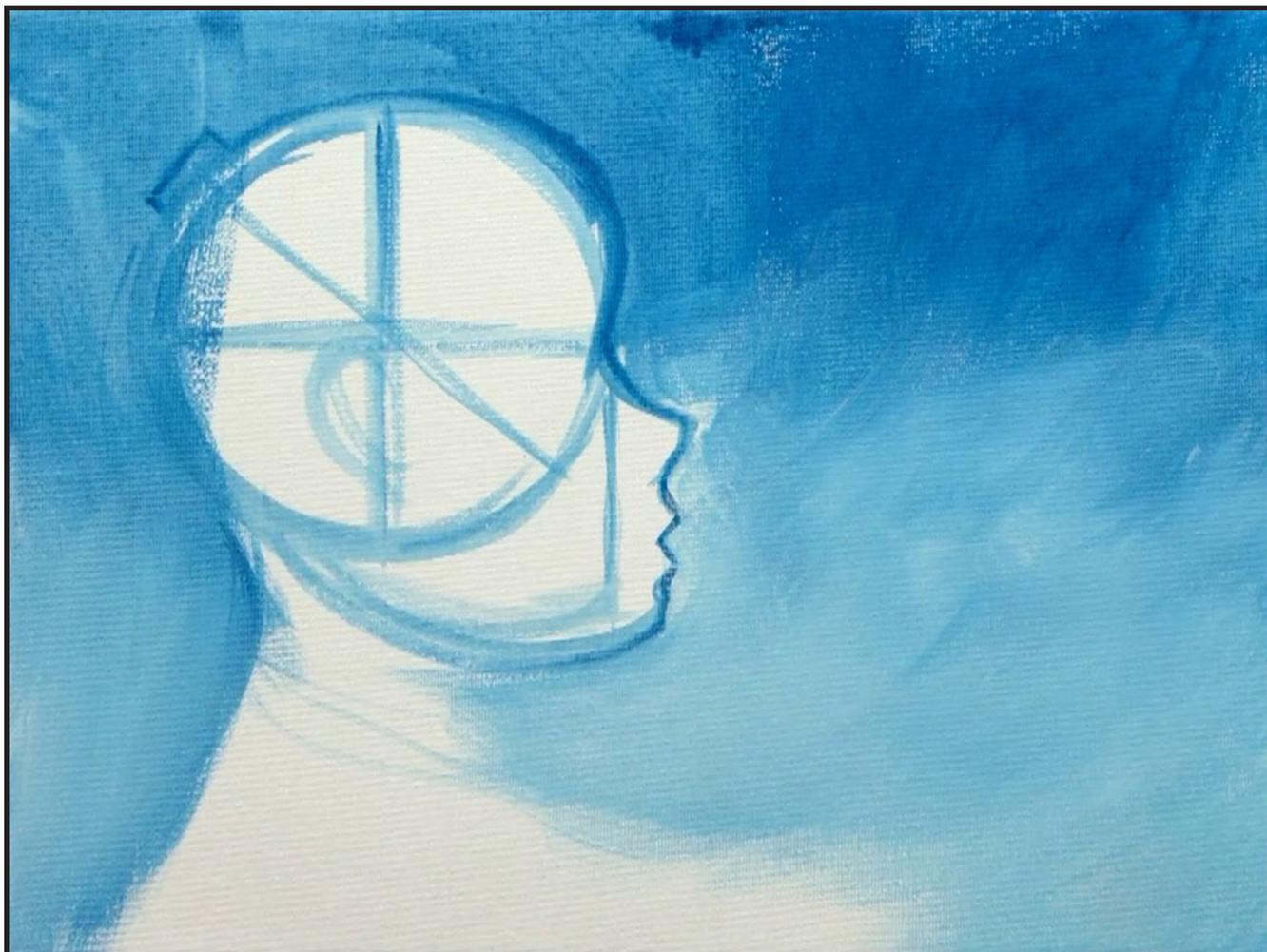
Large Synthetic Oval Mop

#### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Load Phthalo Blue on a lightly dampened brush. Roughly paint the left side of the canvas, then come around the top and paint about halfway down the right side. Leave the bottom around the nose and mouth alone for the

moment. Wipe the brush on a towel, leaving residual paint.

- Then, load Titanium White on the dirty brush, and paint this upward, starting at the bottom of the right side of the canvas. Blend it in wet into wet, being extra careful around the mouth, nose, and chin. Carry this now-tinted white towards her neck as well. Add a bit of Titanium White on the bottom-left, behind the silhouette, and blend it in.
- Next, load more Titanium White, and starting at the bottom to just above mid-canvas, imply some faint, distant clouds. Blend them wet into wet. Rinse the brush.
- Dry the surface well before continuing to the next step.



# STEP 3 - OMBRE SKY AND CLOUDS Timestamp 11:27

## “A NOT-SO CLOUDY DAY”

### PAINT:

Phthalo Blue = PB

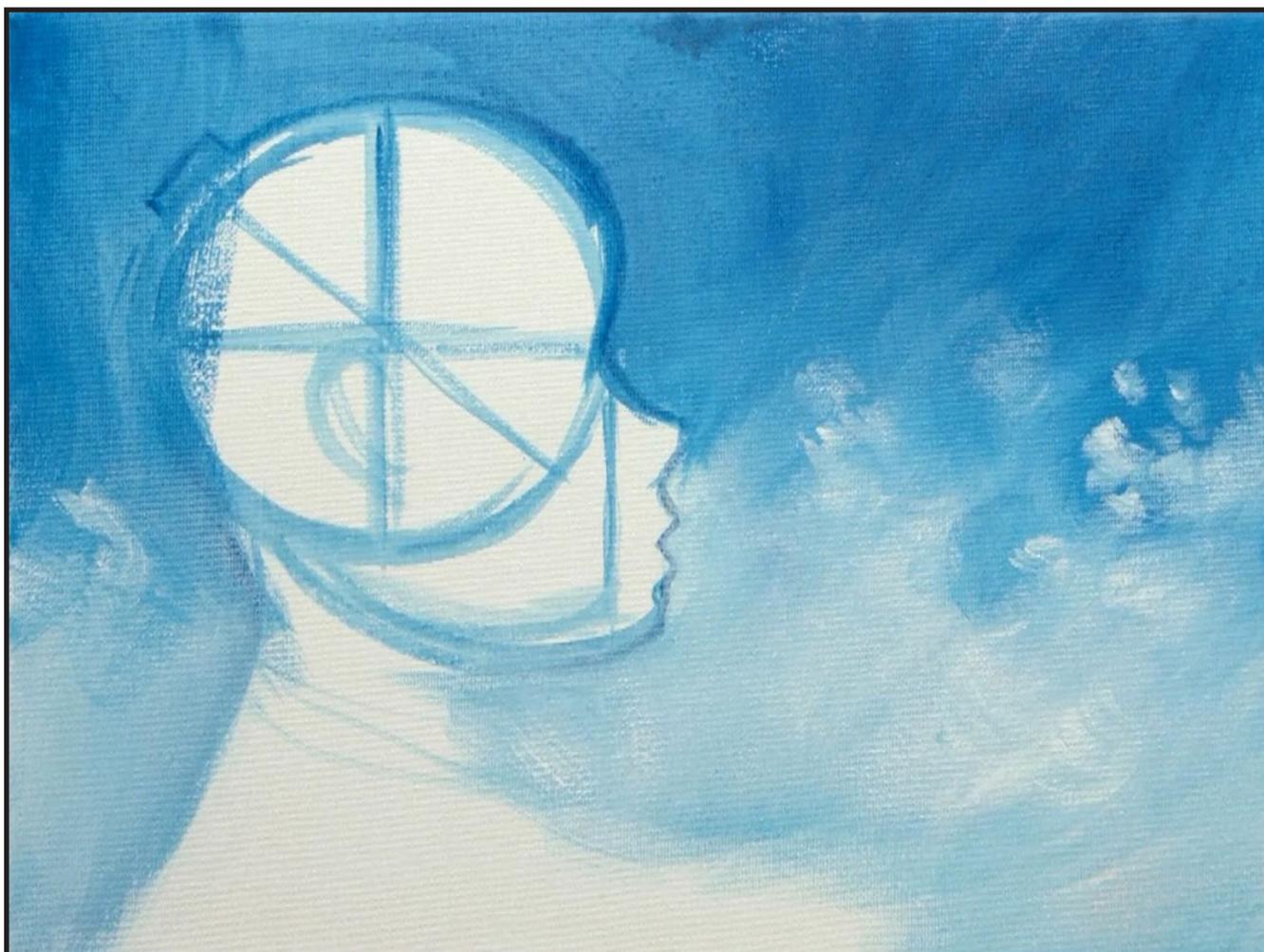
Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Large Synthetic Oval Mop

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Dampen your brush and wipe it off on a towel to control the amount of water in your paint. After that, use Titanium White, and starting from the bottom, begin implying a lighter cloud base. Because the blue is already there, it gives depth to the sky. The paint can be a little thicker in some places, and the brush strokes can be very random in their direction. Paint this lighter value all the way down to the base.
- Add Phthalo Blue as you move up towards the top of the canvas. To get a nice coverage, work the blue into the wet edge of the lighter color. This technique will make the piece look very finished and well-rounded. Your canvas should be a deeper blue at the top and lighter towards the bottom. Rinse the brush.
- Dry the brush out well on a towel, then load Titanium White onto it. Using the corner of the brush, create distinct, curvy little marks on the right side of the canvas that imply clouds. Rinse again.
- Dry the surface well before continuing to the next step.



# STEP 4 - SILHOUETTE IN BLACK

Timestamp 16:28

## “SHAPING UP”

### PAINT:

Mars Black = MB

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Small Synthetic Round  
Medium Synthetic Bright

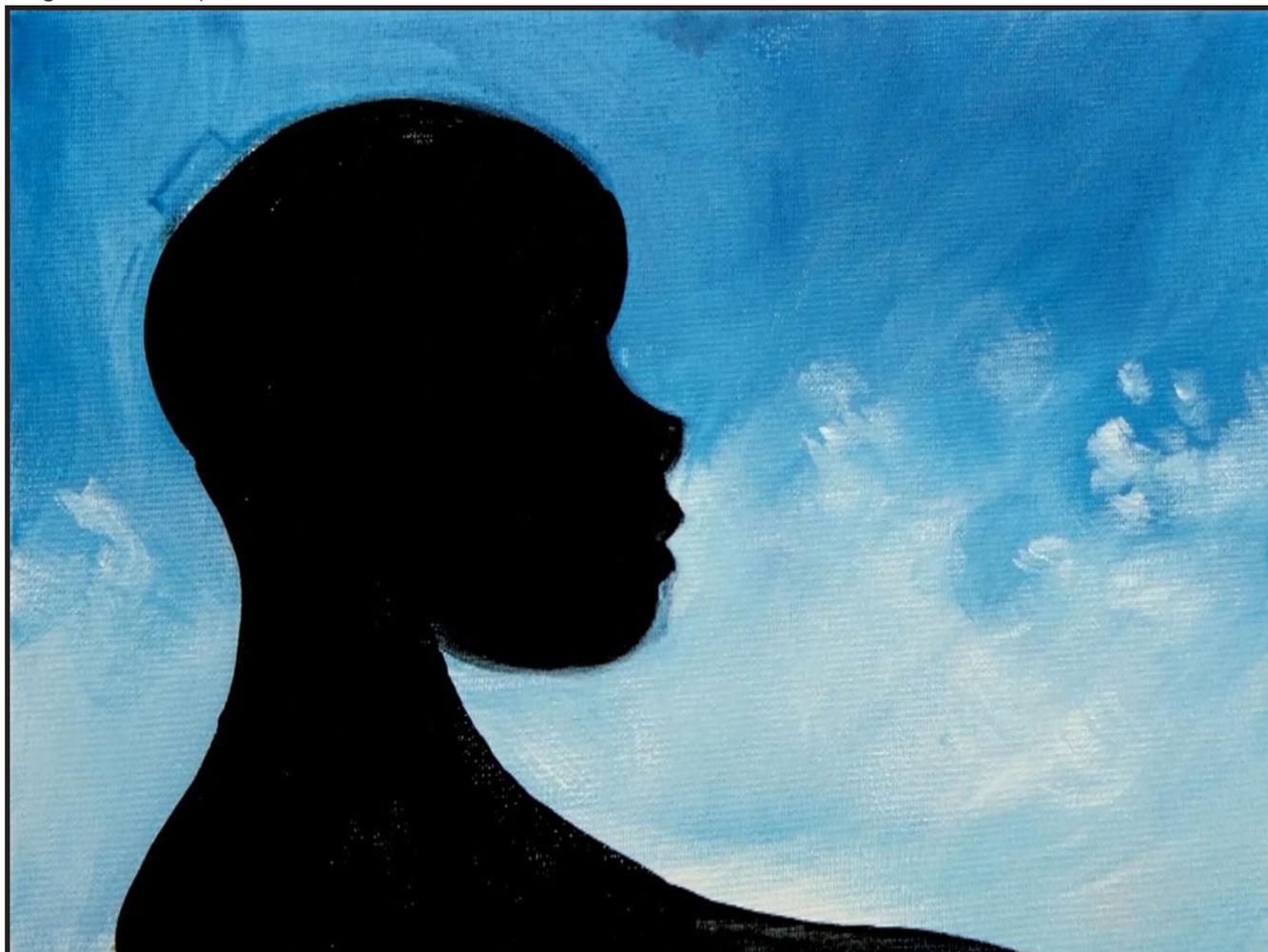
### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Use the Round brush and thin some Mars Black onto it. Carefully paint the outline of the forehead, nose, mouth, and chin. Line the top of the head as well.
- Use the Bright brush and paint the inside of the figure. We will paint the

hair later, but there is no reason not to give a nice shape to the head now. It will actually help set a better hairline.

- Then, switch back to the Round brush to adjust and shape the nose and mouth to your liking. Rinse.
- Switch back to the Bright brush and paint the neck right down to the bottom. Accuracy is not essential because the hair will be blowing forward, but do not go too far past the chin at the bottom of the canvas.
- Make a hint of black going forward to the bottom-right of the silhouette, this will be that little landscape. Do not go all the way to the right edge. Rinse.
- Dry the surface well before continuing to the next step.

*Sherpa Tip: Whenever you are using black paint or doing a silhouette painting on a canvas, it is important to know that it is easier to add black than remove it. So, it is better to err on the side of caution and build up your silhouette carefully rather than have to take it down.*



# STEP 5 – SILHOUETTE HAIR AND DETAILS Timestamp 24:34

## “LONG HAIR ON A WINDY DAY”

### PAINT:

Mars Black = MB

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Small Synthetic Round  
Medium Synthetic Bright

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Use the Round brush with Mars Black and paint a small rectangular shape at the top-back of the head to imply where the ponytail gathers. Then, at the crown of the head, paint in some strands of hair for the bangs. The pressure is heavier at the beginning, then releases and feathers out at the end so that we get a nice, delicate fringe. A few can even curl out as if they are blowing in the wind.
- At the back of the head, curve a line out to the left, and then back towards the head. This will preserve a little of the sky between the back of the head and the front of the ponytail. Then, give her a nice and healthy, thick ponytail. Curve it back in towards the neck, blow it back out a little, and then capture the silhouette of the hair. Rinse the brush.
- Switch to the Bright brush and paint in the large areas. You may have to repaint some areas occasionally because the white of the canvas can pop through as it dries.
- Next, switch back to the Round brush and thin the Mars Black with water, and roll the brush to load everything on the tip. Add some hairs coming down the back of the ponytail, leaving a little bit of blue sky to add to the silhouette effect. Then, lightly paint “S” curves at the front of her neck for the hair that is blowing to the right. Finally, add flyaway hairs at the top of the ponytail.
- Imply grass at the bottom of the canvas, flicking the strokes upward.
- Then, paint the circular bulb of the dandelion to the right, below the lip line. Then, curve the stem down and to the right, avoiding the hair. Add a few little flowers to the grass for a bit of variety.
- After that, paint two guidelines on the dandelion bulb, about ½ an inch long, where you want the opening of the fluff to be. Very lightly add dots to create a round shape. Tap dots at the top of the bigger dandelion puff, curving it around. Then, start adding the puffs around the perimeter. Flick the radial stems outward to fill it out, and add a couple of layers of fluff at the ends to thicken it.
- Finally, paint a couple of stems in the open area of the dandelion that are just barely hanging on. Add several curved stems in the sky that fly off the canvas to the upper right. Flick the fluffs at the ends of the stems in a fan shape. Rinse the brush.
- Dry the surface well before continuing to the next step.

*Sherpa Tip: For this step, it is very important to dry your canvas well. Not only does black paint tend to take longer to dry, but we also have it everywhere around the canvas, making it easy to smudge if not dried thoroughly.*



# STEP 6 - WHITE GRASS AND DETAILS

Timestamp 38:16

## “FLORA IN BLACK AND WHITE”

### PAINT:

Fluid White Paint = FWP

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Small Synthetic Round  
Chalk tool

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Use the chalk tool to plan out the dandelion puffs in the black silhouette. Make a half-button shape just below where the ear would be, and make the puff with an opening towards the right. Then, sketch another little depleted puff, just under the jaw that is facing the left. Sketch a line from the bigger dandelion towards the front of the face as a guide for the flyaway puffs coming out.
- Load the Fluid White Paint onto the toe of the brush and repeat the grass effect at the bottom of the black silhouette. Flick the brush in various directions, and taper it off on the right to mimic the black. You can add a few more little flowers as well.
- Tap dots at the top of the little depleted dandelion button, then curve a little stem down and add the little tendrils that are at the bottom of the dandelion.
- Then, tap more dots at

the top of the bigger dandelion puff, curving it around slightly. Paint in the stem, and then start adding the puffs around the perimeter as we did on the black dandelion. After that, add the radial stems outward.

- Paint the curved stems of the flyaway puffs in various directions, and add their fan-shaped fluffs.
- Finally, make little dots going past the front of her mouth, going up and off the canvas towards the upper right. Highlight some of the fluff and stems going out to add dimensionality. You can even highlight a couple of places on the silhouette which will help clean up some lines on the face. Rinse the brush.
- Sign.



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CHILL OUT  
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## 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:



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## 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 8 x 8 canvas and the example is based on a one-inch square grid with everything of equal ratio. On your 8 x 8 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.

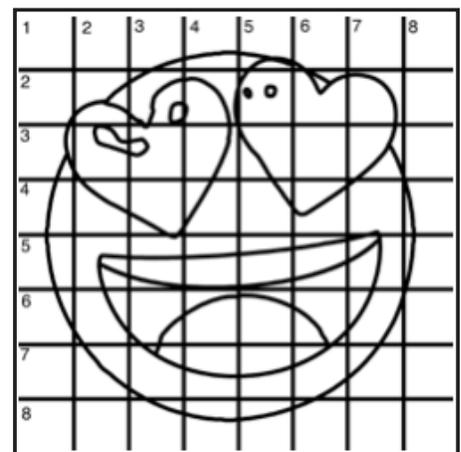
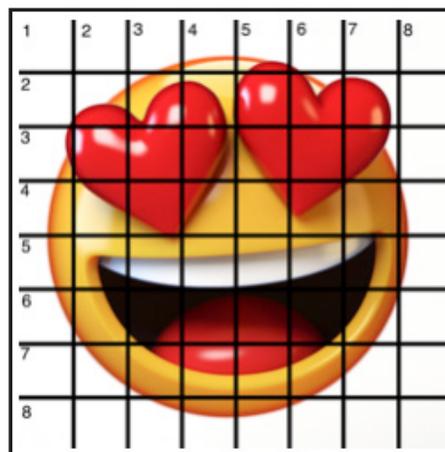
Number your columns 1 - 8, left to right, and your rows 1 - 8 from the top to the bottom.

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.

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 8 x 8 canvas to match the free grid for this project.

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



## TECHNIQUE REFERENCES:

### BLENDING WET INTO WET

Create transitions from one color to another, or one value to another, in acrylic painting, by blending colors together with the brush on the canvas while both are still wet. Mastering a blend like this is also essential for acrylic painting. In general, blending requires a soft pressure with a bit of urgency because it must be accomplished before the paint is dry. If you are in very dry studio conditions, such as air conditioning or dry heating in winter, your paint may dry out faster than you can blend it. No worries...there are mediums called retarders that you can add to the paint to slow the drying time.

### BLOCKING IN

Paint in the shape with a color, without detail.

### CONTOUR

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

### COOL COLOR

Colors on the cool side of a color wheel. Blues, greens and purples. These colors shouldn't visually feel cool to the eye. They often make up objects in our real world that are cool like ice or the green in nature. These colors tend to recede visually and give a sense of distance.

### CONTOUR PAINTING

Use the brushstroke to define the outline of the form. The brushstrokes are long and smooth and help us express the form and line of the object.

### FEATHERED BLENDING

Create a softened edge by gently brushing on the toe of the head of the brush allowing the bristles to feather out visually defusing the stroke.

### FINE LINE WORK

Taking paint that is made more fluid and a fine line brush to create brush Strokes that are delicate and elegant in nature. This is often used for hair, delicate grasses or natural elements, edged highlights.

### GLAZING

Taking thin transparent coats of paint over another coat of dry paint. The transparency of the paint allows the color from the paint underneath to affect the paint on top. This is another way for artists to make transitions with acrylic paint. Some paint is naturally transparent because of how pigmentated it is. Colors like quinacridone magenta or phthalo blue are very transparent. Opaque pigments can be made transparent using a medium for glazing.

### LAYERING

This is a very important part of acrylic painting. You can layer wet paint over wet paint. You can layer dry paint over dry paint. You can glaze over dry paint to layer also. Layering can help you build texture and depth in a painting. Understanding that techniques are built up in layers will help you move away from the magical brush thinking. You remember seeing cartoons paint a tunnel in one stroke with a single brush? As regular humans we can't do that to get these effects, we need to layer the paint. Once you embrace this thinking, the depth of your painting will improve greatly.

### LOOSE, EXPRESSIVE AND PAINTERLY

When you paint showing the brush stroke. The painting has a freshly captured feel. This technique gives the impression of capturing a moment in time. It has qualities where the color stroke in texture defines the artwork instead of line.

### LOOSELY MIXED

Taking two colors and mixing them together with both colors still evident in the mix and brush stroke.

### PAINTERLY

Free flowing and expressive brush strokes. Painterly expression of art generally allows the medium and the brush strokes to show instead of hiding them through blending and careful placement.

### S STROKES

Being able to create compound curves as strokes is

a very important technique in painting. Most of the natural world will require your ability to execute it as a stroke. It's a good idea to practice making bold S strokes and delicate S Strokes.

## SCUMBLING

Scumbling certainly has some dry brushing to it but involves a more randomized circular brush stroke. Be careful when you scumble, you don't want to press so hard that you break the heel of the brush. In scumbling, just like in dry brushing, we won't be using a lot of water in the brush. We are going to want to move the brush around in a random and circular motion creating no sense of a particular line or direction.

## SMOOTHLY BLENDED OR TIGHT PAINTING

This is when you smooth the paint and try to hide the brush Strokes and transitions. When you hear an artist talking about a particular painter being tight, what they're speaking of is the way that this artist is able to hide the medium method of the painting. Acrylic blending is one of the more frustrating techniques for new artists.

## THOROUGHLY MIXED

Take two colors and thoroughly incorporate them so they make a smooth, even secondary color with no sign of the two colors used to create it.

## TRANSITIONAL MIXING

There are many ways to blend acrylic paint creating tonal and value transitions through the hues. When you have two very different colors you can create hues that are half shades by mixing them together and biasing the mix to create a subtle transition.

## UNDERPAINTING

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

## WARM COLOR

These colors are on the warm side of the wheel such as red, yellow and orange. Warm colors remind us of things like fire and sunlight. They tend to come forward visually and pull the viewer in.

## 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 FINISH PIECE

*As an artist, 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.*

*When acrylic paint is warm, it gets soft, so when a 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 the nature of plastics.*

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