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THE ART SHERPA™



*Acrylic
April*

ABSTRACT FIRE:
ESSENCE AND ENERGY
ERUPTION

BY THE ART SHERPA

Name credit to Patrons: Kika Zacharczuk Kurywczak/Marilou Tognarelli

Steps: 6 | Difficulty: Beginner | 1 Hoot

2023

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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.

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.

It is abstract art which means that the image representation will be a slight, partial, or complete departure from reality.

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 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!

Day 17: 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
- Ultramarine Blue = UB
- Mars Black = MB
- Titanium White = TW

BRUSHES:

- Large Hog Bright
- X-Large Synthetic Bright
- Medium Hog Round

TOOLS:

- Diamond Palette Knife
- Chalk Pencil or Watercolor Pencil
- 8x8 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 it dry before you proceed.)
- Optional: StayWet Palette

SYMBOL GUIDE:

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

TECHNIQUES YOU WILL USE IN THIS PAINTING:

- Color Theory
- Expressive Painting Strokes
- Being Painterly and Loose
- Atmospheric Perspective
- Finding Value
- Dry Brushing
- Directionality
- Color Mixing
- Implying Motion

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	01:49	Colored Ground
Step 2	04:14	Smoke
Step 3	07:01	Smoky Highlight
Step 4	10:47	Flame Edges
Step 5	12:30	Red Interior
Step 6	15:32	Bright Center
	21:05	Outro

Step 1 - Colored Ground

Timestamp 1:49

A DEEP BACKGROUND VALUE



PAINT:

- Mars Black = MB

BRUSHES:

- X-Large Synthetic Bright

STEP DISCUSSION:

Load the brush with Mars Black, then roughly paint the entire canvas. We are just ensuring that all the white of the canvas is loosely covered. Smooth the paint by brushing long strokes across the canvas, both vertically and horizontally. Rinse.

Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.

Step 2 - Smoke

Timestamp 4:14

LYRICAL CALLIGRAPHY-LIKE STROKES



PAINT:

- Ultramarine Blue = UB
- Mars Black = MB
- Titanium White = TW

BRUSHES:

- Large Hog Bright

COLOR MIXES:

- Smoky Grey = UB + MB + TW

STEP DISCUSSION:

Begin in the bottom right of the canvas using the **Smoky Grey mix** on the edge of a dry brush. Use light pressure and the edge of the brush vertical as you create a continuous, curving line of "S" curves that wanders up to the left, and off the top of the canvas. Create a similar, calligraphy-like line that also begins in the bottom right, crosses over the first line, and flows off the top of the canvas. Then, double those lines with parallel strokes to thicken the smoky effect. Pay attention to the angle of the brush when deciding how much of it will connect to the surface.

Without rinsing, add Ultramarine Blue to the brush to dry brush inside of the doubled lines, using light pressure.

Add another "S" curve on the left side, still using light pressure, and double it by looping it back on itself. Rinse the brush.

Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.

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Step 3 - Smoky Highlights

Timestamp 7:01

DIMENSIONAL SMOKE



PAINT:

- Ultramarine Blue = UB
- Mars Black = MB
- Titanium White = TW

BRUSHES:

- Medium Hog Round

COLOR MIXES:

- Smoky Grey = UB + MB + TW

STEP DISCUSSION:

Use Titanium White on a dry brush to highlight some of the edges of the smoke, and to play with the continuity of the lines. Create dimensionality by refining some of the filigree lines and “S” curves. Occasionally dip in water to improve flow, but get only a tiny amount of water on the tip of the brush. Scribble in a couple of “Z” marks in the outside edges of the smoke.

Use a dry brush to scumble the **Smoky Grey mix** underneath, and around the smoky lines in the bottom half of the canvas. Blend it back with some of the Mars Black if needed.

Adjust, trim and improve anything that needs it with the Mars Black. Rinse the brush.

Step 4 - Flame Edges

Timestamp 10:47

WHERE THERE IS SMOKE, THERE IS FIRE



PAINT:

- Cadmium Red Medium = CRM
- Mars Black = MB

BRUSHES:

- Diamond Palette Knife

COLOR MIXES:

- Dark Red = CRM + MB

STEP DISCUSSION:

Load the **Dark Red mix** onto the right edge of the palette knife. Scrape energetic, upward strokes that radiate outward from the bottom right corner.

Create some of these same marks with Mars Black along the bottom edge, and the right side of the canvas. Use a right load to scrape left or down, and use a left load to scrape right or up. Rinse and clean the knife. Allow the colors below to peek through in places.

Dry the surface enough to accept another layer of color on top.

Step 5 - Red Interior

Timestamp 12:30

THE ENERGY OF FIRE



Continue adding these energetic scrapes out and upward, towards the top left corner. Sometimes use the edge of the brush to scrape lines of color. As you near the upper left corner, wiggle the knife while you lightly scrape upward so the paint randomly catches as it skips over the canvas.

Right load the **Orange mix**, and very lightly skim touches of this in the bottom right corner. Because we are going right over the previous wet paint, very delicately add this layer so that

it does not pick up the color below. As you near the upper left corner, wiggle the knife while you scrape upward to create random marks of paint, allowing the colors below to peek through in places. Wipe the knife on a towel.

Lighten the mix slightly by adding a bit more Cadmium Yellow Medium. Then, very gently layer this light orange color on top of the previous colors. Clean the knife.

Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.

PAINT:

- Cadmium Red Medium = CRM
- Cadmium Yellow Medium = CYM

BRUSHES:

- Diamond Palette Knife

COLOR MIXES:

- Orange = CRM + CYM

STEP DISCUSSION:

Right load the Cadmium Red Medium onto the palette knife. Scrape energetic, upward strokes that radiate outward from the bottom right corner. Take care not to press too hard over the paint below. Bring touches of this color along the bottom, and right side as well. Periodically wipe the knife off on a towel to clean it.

Step 6 - Bright Center

Timestamp 15:32

FEEL THE HEAT



Load Cadmium Yellow Medium onto the knife, and very carefully add strokes of this color, mostly concentrated in the bottom right quadrant. Load this color onto the toe of the knife to lightly touch some of the orange dots, and some of the centers of previous colors to highlight them. Add more touches of this color using the edge of the blade and upward strokes in a few places.

Carefully layer the **Light Yellow mix** in the bottom right quadrant. This brighter layer implies

the hottest area at the core of the piece. Add some sparks of this color, here and there, to brighten some of the previous colors.

Use pure Titanium White as the brightest highlights at the very hottest centers of the flames. Clean the knife.

PAINT:

- Cadmium Red Medium = CRM
- Cadmium Yellow Medium = CYM
- Titanium White = TW

BRUSHES:

- Diamond Palette Knife

COLOR MIXES:

- Yellow Orange = CYM > CRM
- Light Yellow = CYM + TW

STEP DISCUSSION:

Load the toe of the knife with the **Yellow Orange mix**. Add dots of this color, here and there, along the upper edges of the fire. Then, add touches of this color on top of all the previous colors that are in the bottom right, allowing the colors below to peek through in places. Wipe the knife clean.

WATERCOLOR WEDNESDAYS

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7:00PM EST

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ALL skill levels welcome.
Bring your watercolors
and let's

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CHILL OUT
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THE TRACING METHOD

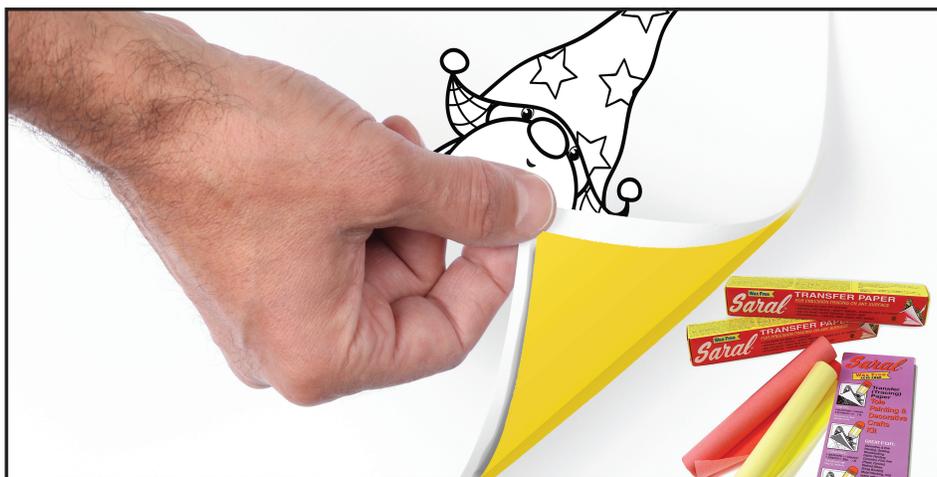
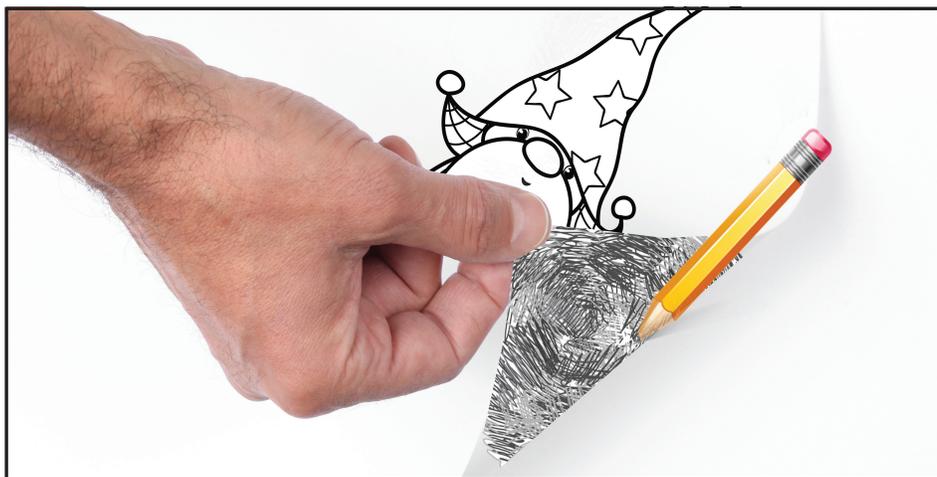
- Adjust the size to fit your surface and be sure to check your printer settings to see if the final size reflects the size you need.



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



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.

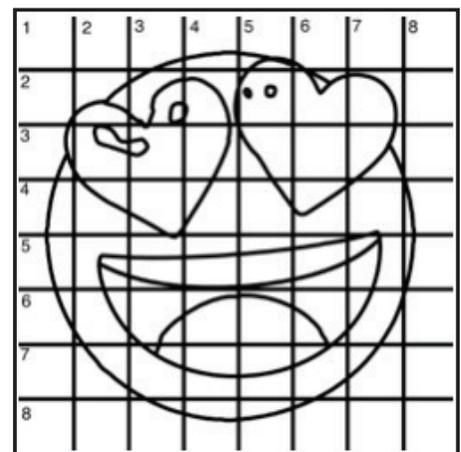
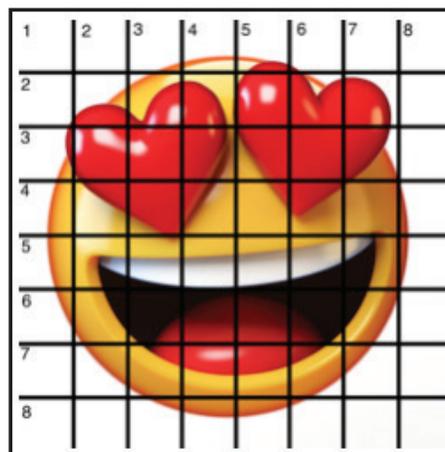
Number your columns 1 - 8, left to right, and your rows 1 - 8 from the top to the bottom.

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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