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THE ART SHERPA™



Acrylic  
April

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM  
PALETTE KNIFE PAINTING  
*TAKE ME BACK TO THE 80'S*

BY THE ART SHERPA

Name credit to Patron: Shae Cherie  
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](https://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.

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*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](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!*

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# Day 1: Paint and Tool Guide

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

---

## PAINT:

- Ultramarine Blue = UB
- Quinacridone Magenta = QM
- Phthalo Blue = PB
- Mars Black = MB
- Titanium White = TW
- Hansa Yellow Light = HYL

## BRUSHES:

- Large Synthetic Angle
- Large Hog Bright

## TOOLS:

- Trowel Palette Knife
- 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
- Finding Value
- 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.

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STEPS:	TIME:	DESCRIPTION:
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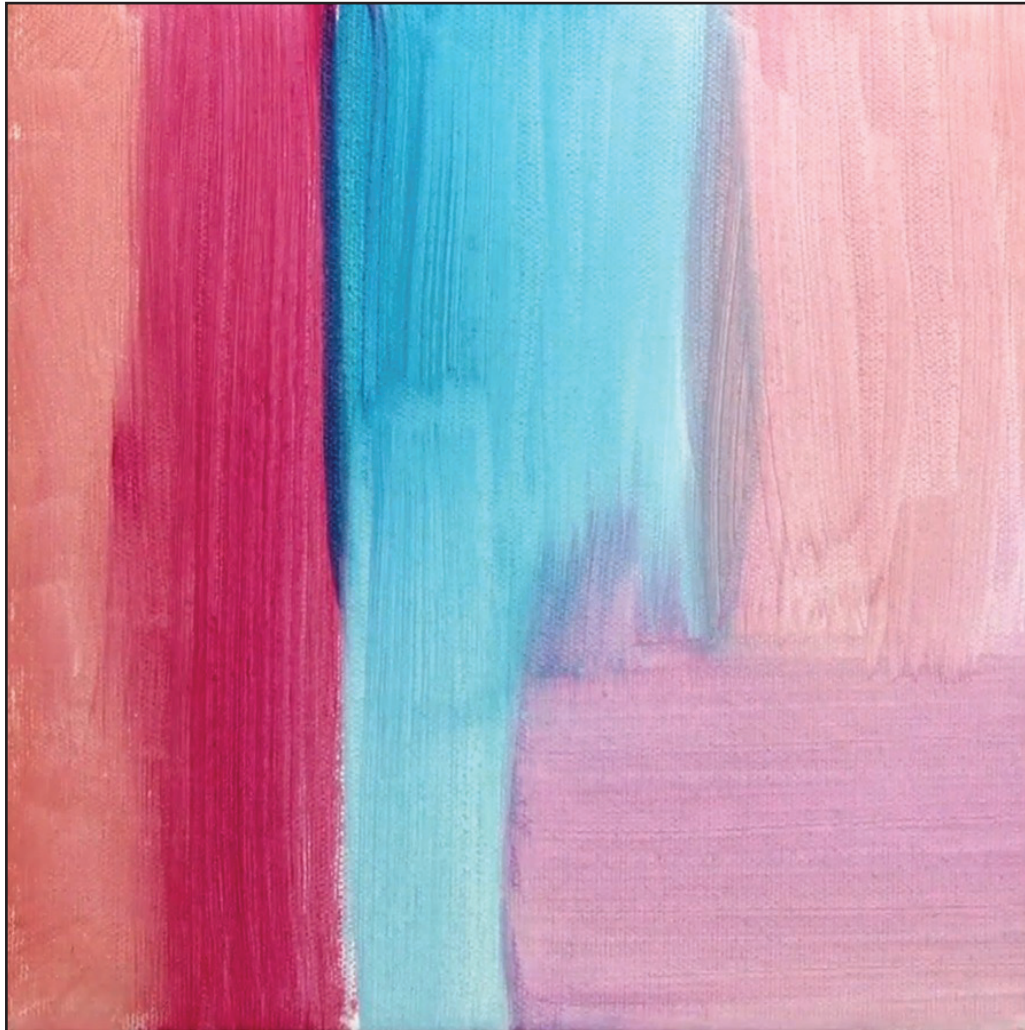
Intro	00:00	Intro
Step 1	2:58	Colored Background
Step 2	6:50	Purple Boxes
Step 3	11:05	White Streaks
Step 4	13:00	Magenta Mixing
Step 5	17:40	Blue Mixing
Step 6	21:50	Applying Black
Step 7	28:30	Sign



# Step 1 - Colored Background

## COTTON CANDY COLORS

Timestamp 2:58



Use the **Pink mix** and paint a darker stripe next to this one. No need to aim for perfection. Using the edge of the brush and this darker color, apply a more structured vertical line, about 3 inches from the left. Then, fill it in, blending it slightly into the salmon stripe. Add water to improve flow as needed. Rinse the brush thoroughly.

Paint another stripe about an inch wide, and about two thirds down the canvas, using the **Sky Blue mix**.

Then, add the **Icy Blue mix** to

the brush, and blend it in towards the right. Rinse the brush. Beside the pink stripe and below the blue area, continue the blue strip, with the **Icy Blue mix**. Although, this strip is only about 1 inch wide, and flows off the bottom of the canvas. Rinse the brush.

Add more Titanium White to the **Pink mix** to paint the bottom right corner, applying both vertical and horizontal strokes here. Then, paint the right side, up to the top corner with the **Salmon Pink mix**, using a vertical stroke. Rinse the brush

Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.

*Sherpa Note: This is a very non-objective abstract, which means it is not based on anything from the visual world.*

### PAINT:

- Quinacridone Magenta = QM
- Phthalo Blue = PB
- Titanium White = TW
- Hansa Yellow Light = HYL

### BRUSHES:

- Large Synthetic Angle

### COLOR MIXES:

- Salmon Pink = HYL + QM + TW
- Sky Blue = PB + TW > HYL
- Icy Blue = TW > PB
- Pink = QM + TW

### STEP DISCUSSION:

Begin on the left side of the canvas. Paint up and down vertical strokes, on the flat of the brush, using the **Salmon Pink mix**.

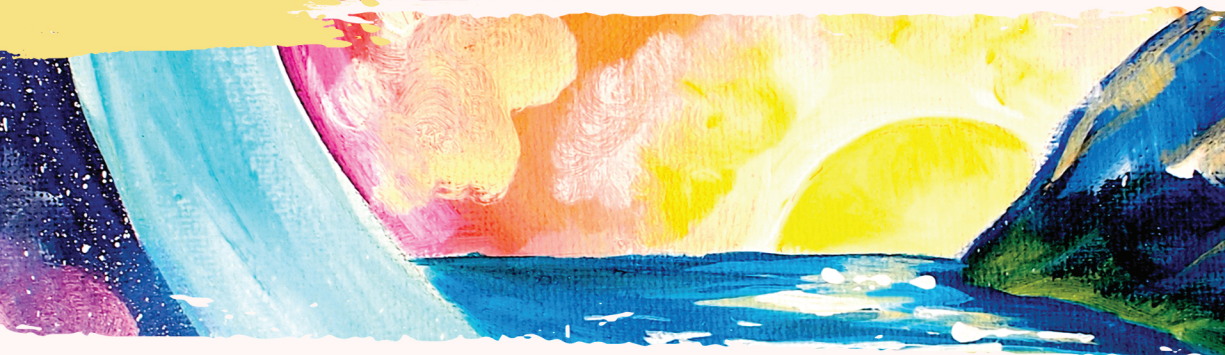


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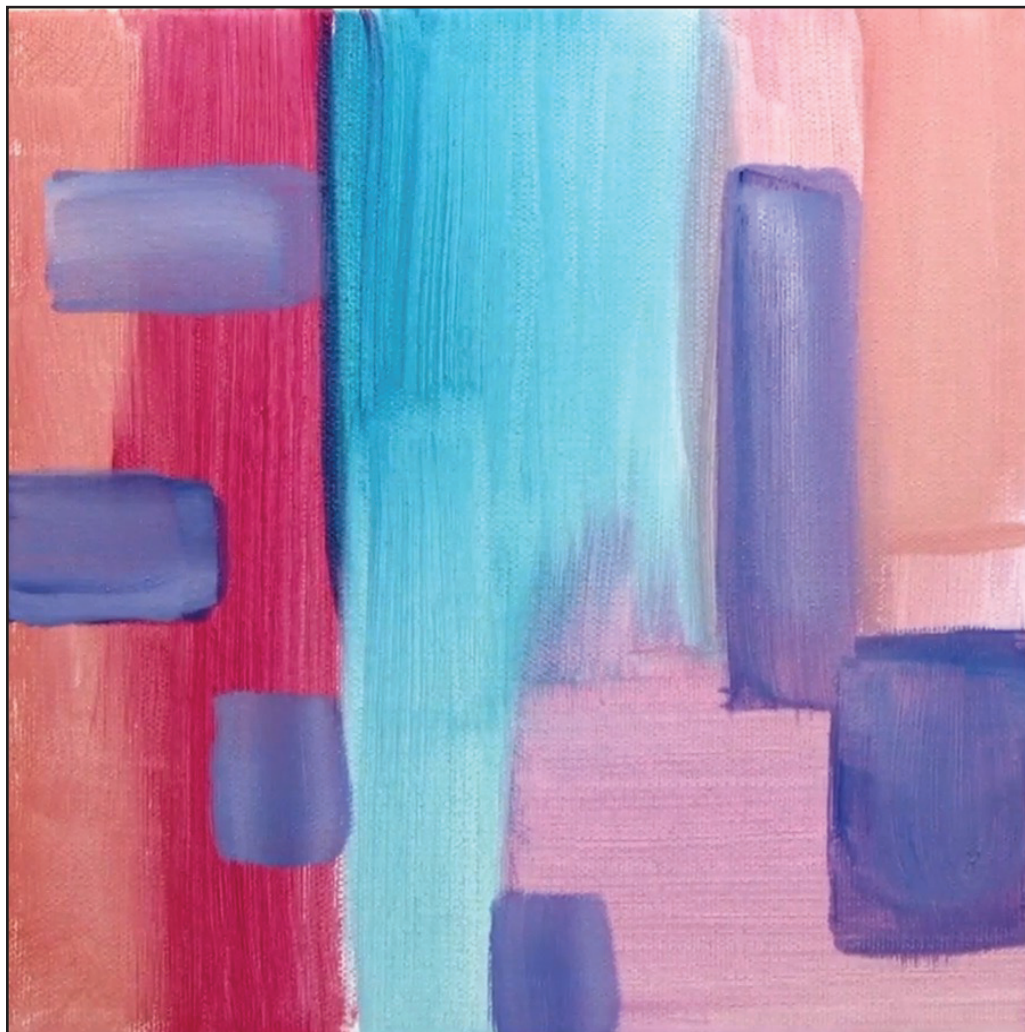




## Step 2 - Purple Boxes

Timestamp 6:50

### BOXES EVERYWHERE



Moving to the right, paint a purple strip right next to the salmon strip, using the **Cool Purple mix**. This shape starts about an inch from the top, and continues to about inch below the midway point. Then, layer the **Warm Purple mix** right over top.

Use this color to paint a square in the bottom right corner. Leave about 1/2 an inch of background showing above it, and 1/2 an inch below it. Still using the same mix, paint a small horizontal rectangle on the left side, about

### PAINT:

- Quinacridone Magenta = QM
- Ultramarine Blue = UB
- Titanium White = TW
- Hansa Yellow Light = HYL

### BRUSHES:

- Large Synthetic Angle

### COLOR MIXES:

- Light Salmon = TW > HYL > QM
- Cool Purple = UB > QM > TW
- Warm Purple = QM > UB > TW

### STEP DISCUSSION:

Load the thoroughly mixed **Light Salmon mix** onto the brush. Then, paint a very solid, structured stripe starting in the top right corner, down to the midway point, approximately 1 inch wide. Rinse the brush.

mid canvas. Lighten the mix with more Titanium White and layer it over top of that last rectangle.

Add yet another square with this color. Position this one in the bottom left corner, along the left side of the bright pink strip, and above the bottom of the canvas.

Continue using this color to paint the next square, coming off the bottom-middle of the canvas.

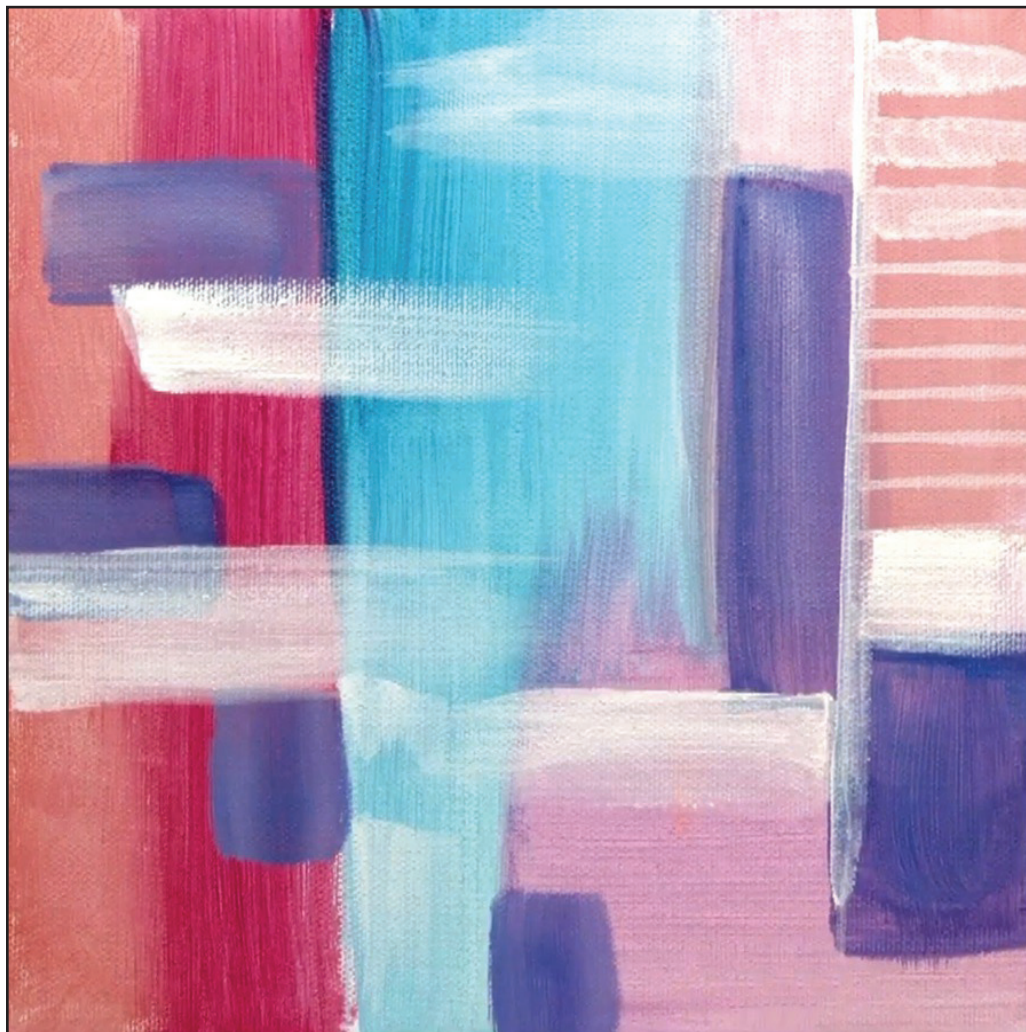
Lighten the mix, again with more Titanium White, and paint the final horizontal rectangle in the upper left corner. Position this shape along the left edge of the pink stripe, moving towards the left, but stopping short of the edge. Rinse the brush.

Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.

## Step 3 - White Streaks

Timestamp 11:05

### LINES IN WHITE



#### PAINT:

- Titanium White = TW

#### BRUSHES:

- Large Synthetic Angle

#### STEP DISCUSSION:

Load Titanium White onto the brush, and paint a small solid square on the top of the purple rectangle to the right. This square has the same width as the purple shape.

Using horizontal strokes, paint another white area that begins above the tall purple shape in the upper right corner. Carry the paint to the top of the canvas, and to the left across the blue area. Allow it to feather out at the end.

Add another rectangle that is located below the tall purple shape in the upper right corner, and just to

the left of the first square shape. Allow it to feather out at the end, as well.

Tap a couple of small downward strokes just to the right of the purple square in the bottom left corner. And two horizontal rectangles of white, under both of the purple rectangles, in the upper left corner.

Use the edge of the brush to paint a thin white line between the pink and the purple rectangles in the upper right corner. Carry this line down to about an inch from the bottom. Then,

add horizontal bars of white at the top of this salmon strip. Finish filling in this salmon strip with thinner horizontal lines.

Ensure you have nice coverage on the white shapes. Rinse the brush.

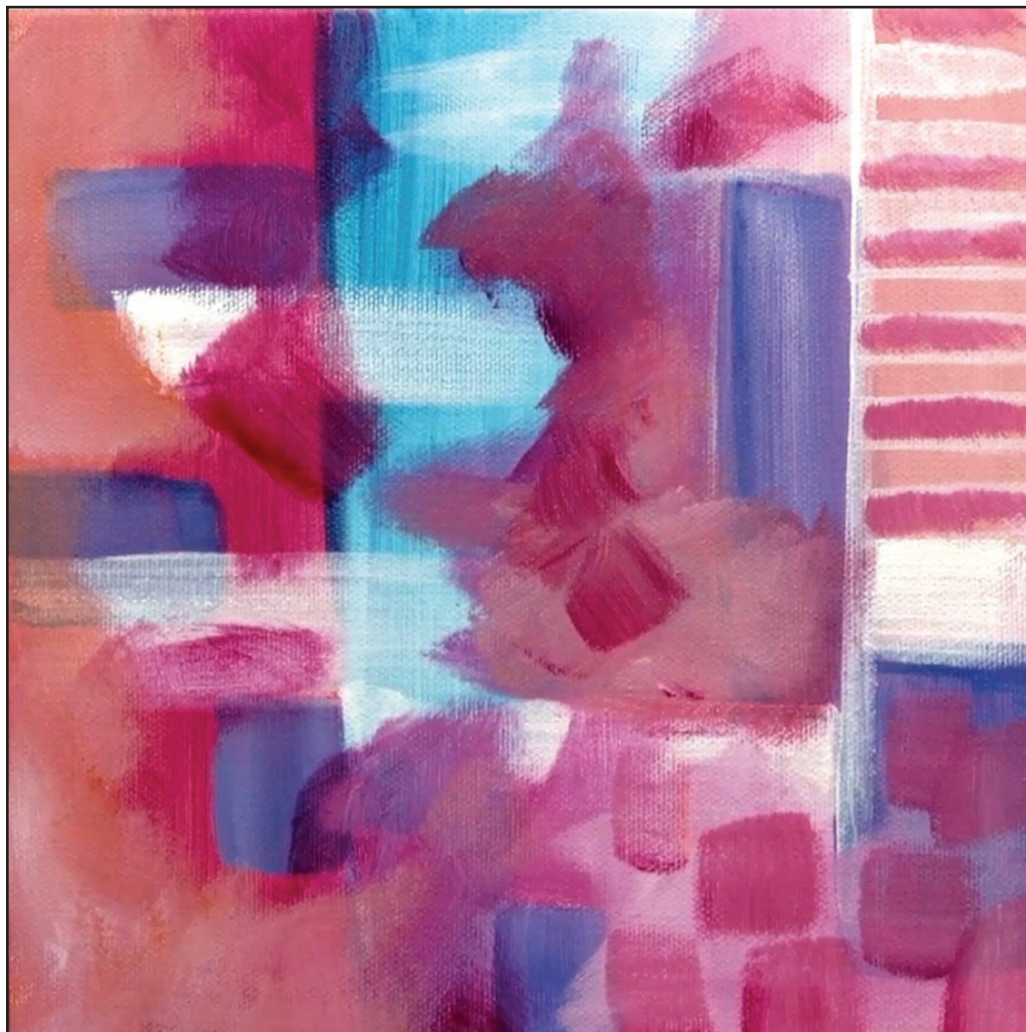
Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.



## Step 4 - Magenta Mixing

### GETTING BUSY

Timestamp 13:00



Lighten the mix with some Titanium White here and there. Come up the middle of the canvas, using multi directional strokes, while leaving bits of structure peeking through.

Loosely add the **Salmon mix** along the left side, followed by some of the **Light Salmon mix**.

Use the **Pink mix** and add some structural lines back in. Paint between some of the bars in the upper right corner. Then, add some bright checkered marks in the bottom right corner.

#### PAINT:

- Quinacridone Magenta = QM
- Titanium White = TW
- Hansa Yellow Light = HYL

#### BRUSHES:

- Large Hog Bright

#### COLOR MIXES:

- Salmon Pink = HYL + QM + TW
- Light Salmon = TW > HYL > QM
- Pink = QM + TW

#### STEP DISCUSSION:

Begin the process of painting around and over some of your previous work. Use the **Pink mix** and paint out some of the objects along the bright pink area on the left. Scumble loose brush stroke in various directions, allowing bits of the structure below to show through.

Add more Titanium White to the **Pink mix** and brush around lightly, keeping your strokes energized to add interest. Rinse the brush.

Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.

## Step 5 - Blue Mixing

Timestamp 17:40

### BABY BLUE



well. Be careful not to take this too far, you are just trying to find balance.

Use Titanium White and begin adding powerful little scribbles on the left side of the canvas. Then, add some structural white checkered patterning in the bottom right corner. If you feel you need to reel any of these white elements back, just use the **Sky Blue mix** on the dirty brush and blend it back while it is still wet. Rinse the brush.

Use the **Cool Purple mix** and reinforce some of

### PAINT:

- Quinacridone Magenta = QM
- Phthalo Blue = PB
- Ultramarine Blue = UB
- Titanium White = TW
- Hansa Yellow Light = HYL

### BRUSHES:

- Medium Hog Bright

### COLOR MIXES:

- Sky Blue = PB + TW > HYL
- Cool Purple = UB > QM > TW

### STEP DISCUSSION:

Loosely add the **Sky Blue mix** throughout the center of the canvas. Add color here and there, all around the canvas. Vary the mix slightly by adding more Titanium White, then add that in a few places as

the structural marks already there. Add a few more checkered marks in the bottom right corner with this color as well. Then, layer a small purple square or two on top of some of the other colors. Rinse the brush.

Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.



## Step 6 - Applying Black

### STRONG CONTRAST

Timestamp 21:50



#### PAINT:

- Mars Black = MB

#### BRUSHES:

- Trowel Palette Knife

#### STEP DISCUSSION:

Begin with a right-side load of Mars Black. Roll a bead of paint onto the edge of the knife, leaving a little bit almost hanging off. On the upper left side, angle the knife and barely touch the canvas while applying your stroke. Allow the paint to break up as you move downward. Go back up and use the left hand side of the knife and stroke upward in order to continue breaking that mark into more of an irregular shape.

Move slightly right, load a minor bead on the right side, and angle the knife towards the lower right corner. Push in towards the left and come back to

the right. The way the paint lands on the surface and creates broken shapes is almost like dry brushing with the palette knife. Add another dark shape the bottom left quadrant.

Load the knife and from that last shape, push the stroke upward.

Make little upward scrapes in the upper canvas just right of center, using the toe of the knife. A touch and release method can create an interesting shape. Then, make a very strong shape to the right and towards the bottom of the

canvas. Use a right load and a downward scrape.

Position the knife in a vertical position and push some of the paint in this shape upward. Change the direction to a horizontal position, and at the bottom of this same shape, scrape it to the left. Move up slightly and pull some paint from this shape, and over to the right.

Use a rightload on the edge of the brush and push a thin line upward, along the left side of the pink bars. Create upward thin strokes that radiate outward, while pivoting from the bottom of the first thin line. Wipe and clean the knife.

Sign.

*Loading the Knife: When loading a knife on the right side, apply the strokes on the flat of the knife downward or right to left. When loading on the left side, the strokes are applied left to right or upward. The knife will also allow for thin lines when using the edge.*



# WATERCOLOR WEDNESDAYS

**FREE** weekly watercolor  
live stream virtual art class!

**7:00PM** EST

Watch directly from TAS Facebook  
page each week.

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

RELAX &  
CHILL OUT  
TOGETHER





## THE TRACING METHOD

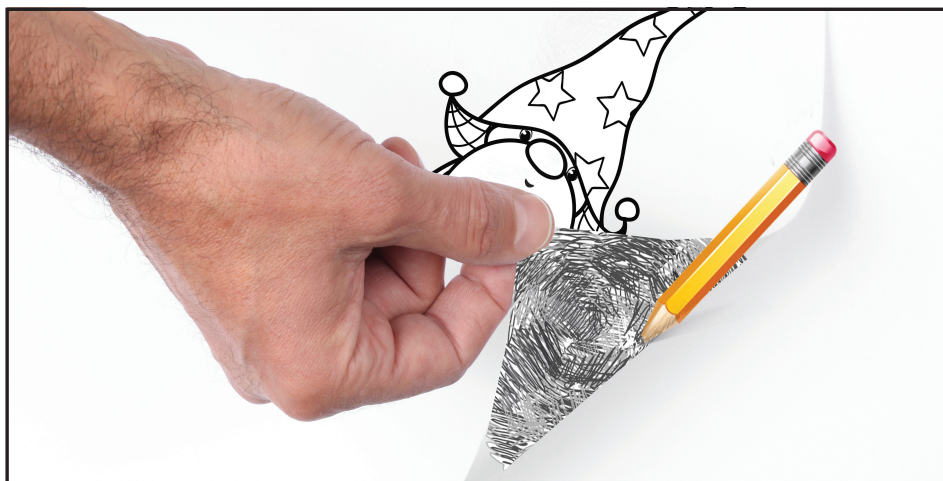
- Adjust the size to fit your surface and be sure to check your printer settings to see if the final size reflects the size you need.



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.

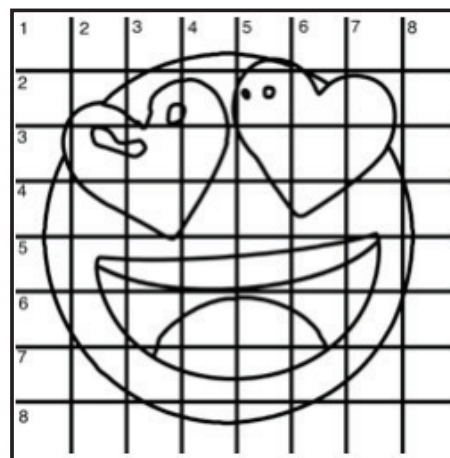
Number your columns 1 - 8, left to right, and your rows 1 - 8 from the top to the bottom.

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 pigmentmented 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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