

THE ART SHERPA™

# HOW TO PAINT

IN ACRYLIC



TERENCE  
SEALY

BY: THE ART SHERPA  
NAME CREDIT TO PATRON JILL MCDUFFEE

STEPS: 9 | DIFFICULTY: BEGINNER | 1 HOOT








# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| SHERPA FORWARD.....            | 3  |
| PAINT AND TOOL GUIDE .....     | 4  |
| VIDEO CHAPTER GUIDE.....       | 5  |
| THE GOLDBLOCKS ZONE .....      | 5  |
| STEP 1 - SAVE THE ANIMALS..... | 7  |
| STEP 2 - BLOCK IN FACE.....    | 8  |
| STEP 3 - DARK VALUE LAYER..... | 9  |
| STEP 4 - FUR SHADOWS .....     | 10 |
| STEP 5 - NOSE AND MUZZLE ..... | 11 |
| STEP 6 - EYES LAYER ONE .....  | 12 |
| STEP 7 - EYE DETAILS .....     | 13 |
| STEP 8 - FUR DETAILS .....     | 14 |
| STEP 9 - WHISKERS.....         | 15 |
| TRACING METHOD .....           | 17 |
| TRACEABLE.....                 | 18 |
| GRIDDING INSTRUCTIONS.....     | 19 |
| TECHNIQUE REFERENCES .....     | 20 |







# 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 are included and more can be found at: [www.theartsherpa.com](http://www.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 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

## BRUSHES:

- Medium Synthetic Angle
- Medium Synthetic Round LH
- Medium Synthetic Round SH
- Small Hog Bright
- Small Hog Round
- X-Small Synthetic Round

## TOOLS:

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

## SYMBOL GUIDE:

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

## TECHNIQUES YOU WILL USE IN THIS PAINTING:

- Finding Value
- Color Theory
- Directionality
- Blending Wet into Wet
- Color Mixing
- Fur





## 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 | 02:34   | SKETCH THE IMAGE   |
| STEP 2 | 09:54   | BLOCK IN FACE      |
| STEP 3 | 18:41   | DARKER VALUE LAYER |
| STEP 4 | 24:22   | FUR SHADOWS        |
| STEP 5 | 32:17   | NOSE AND MUZZLE    |
| STEP 6 | 51:06   | EYES LAYER ONE     |
| STEP 7 | 57:22   | EYE DETAILS        |
| STEP 8 | 1:07:57 | FUR DETAILS        |
| STEP 9 | 1:10:40 | WHISKERS           |
|        | 1:14:43 | 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.

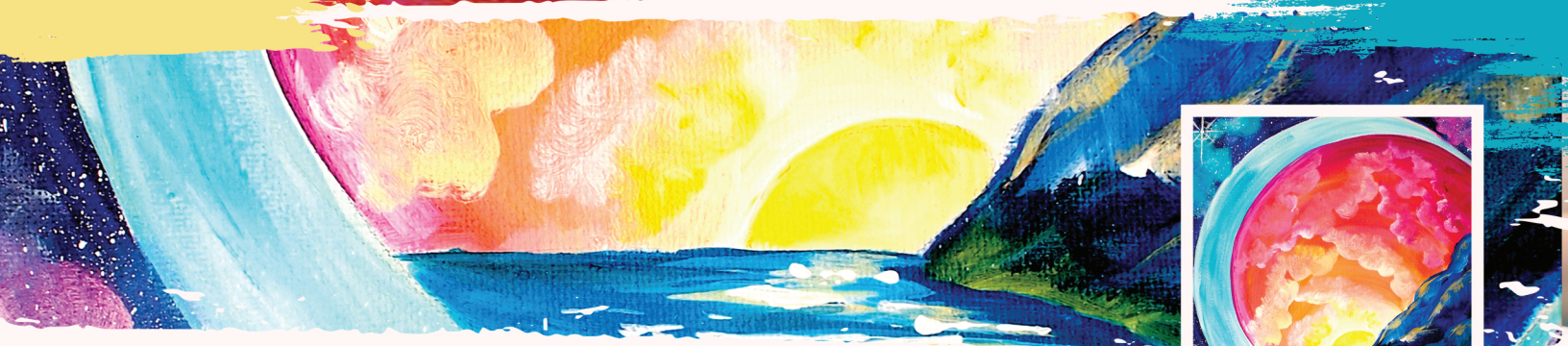


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# STEP 1 - SAVE THE ANIMALS

## "SKETCH THE IMAGE"

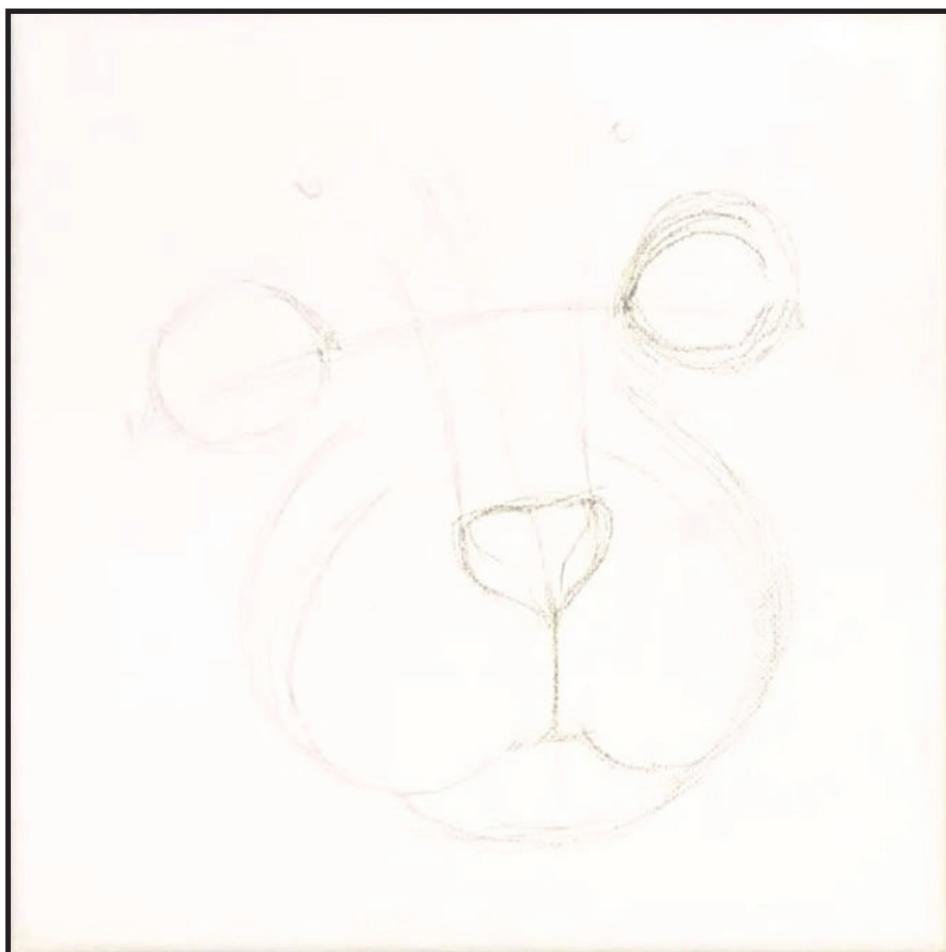
### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Chalk Pencil or Watercolor Pencil

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- I chose to freehand this image but I have also provided a traceable if you prefer to use that method. There is no right or wrong way, you can grid, transfer, or freehand, whatever makes you the most comfortable. If you are free handing, you have numerous references to assist you. There is the picture that follows this step, the traceable, and the grid reference. 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.
- Make a mark approximately 1 inch from the left side and 3 ½ inches from the top and then create a second mark approximately 1 inch from the right side and 2 ½ inches from the top. Draw an upward curving line between the two marks.
- In the lower half of the canvas sketch a rather large circular shape for the muzzle.

- Draw a line that starts at the center, bottom, of the muzzle and curves upward and slightly to the left, intersecting the center of the line for the eyes.
- At the top of the muzzle, sketch in a shape that resembles a shield for the nose.
- Approximately 2 inches below the bottom of the nose, draw a straight line for the mouth. Then on either side of that, round out the muzzle and carry a curved line up above the nose. Draw the bottom of the chin with another curved line.
- Detail the nostrils by mirroring two upward lines inside the nose, that curve outward. Draw two more upward lines for the bridge that start on either side of the nose and end above the line for the eyes.
- Sketch the large circular eyes. The head is slightly turned so the right eye will appear closer to the nose than the left eye.
- Make any adjustments in the sketch you feel is necessary.



## STEP 2 - BLOCK IN FACE

“THE TRACEABLE IS EASIER, BUT...”

### PAINT:

Mars Black = MB

Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Medium Synthetic Angle

Medium Synthetic Round LH

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Paint the canvas and clean up around the outside of sketch lines using the Angle brush and Titanium White. Rinse.
- Switch to the Round brush. Lightly paint the outlines of the face with Mars Black using the toe of the brush and adjusting the lines as needed. Rinse.
- Use Titanium White to clean up the pencil lines inside the face area. Rinse.
- Switch back to the Angle brush and touch up the paint around the outside of the face with Titanium White. Rinse.
- Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.

*Sherpa Tip: Babies have bigger features that are also closer together, so use the Titanium White to paint over any areas that may need those adjustments.*





## STEP 3 - DARK VALUE LAYER

“TAKE THE TIME FOR THE DETAILS”

### PAINT:

Phthalo Blue = PB

Mars Black = MB

Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Medium Synthetic Round SH

### COLOR MIXES:

Dark Gray = TW + PB + MB

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Paint the outline of the eyes using the **Dark Gray mix** on the toe of the brush. Then fill in the nose, and outline the mouth.
- Create indications for the whisker pores using short marks that curve in lines along the muzzle. Add a few whisker lines above and in between the eyes. Rinse.
- Once the marks on the muzzle are dry, glaze the chin and muzzle using the **Dark Gray mix** thinned with water. Rinse.
- Paint the eyes using pure Mars Black. Rinse.
- Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.



# STEP 4 – FUR SHADOWS

## “THE SEAL JOKES SHOW UP IN CHAT”

### PAINT:

Phthalo Blue = PB

Mars Black = MB

Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Medium Synthetic Round LH

### COLOR MIXES:

Light Gray = TW > PB > MB

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Paint the light fur again with pure Titanium White. The transparency of the paint allows you to brush over the darker lines on the bridge of the nose and still be able to see them.
- Add the shadows that curve around the right side of the muzzle and under the right eye with the **Light Gray mix**. Then use the side of the brush, while the white paint below is still wet, to blend the shadows into the fur, wet into wet.
- Continue creating the shadow values under the chin, beside the bridge of the nose, above the eye and on the muzzle by blending and alternating between the **Light Gray mix** and Titanium White. Mixing and blending, wet into wet, as needed.
- Add a bit of shadow at the top of the nose bridge.

- Repeat this process on the left side using the same methods. Rinse.
- Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.





# STEP 5 – NOSE AND MUZZLE

## “BABY SEAL HAIR & SHADOWS”

### PAINT:

Phthalo Blue = PB

Mars Black = MB

Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Medium Synthetic Round SH

Small Hog Round

Small Hog Bright

### COLOR MIXES:

Blue Gray = MB + PB

Medium Gray = MB + PB > TW

Light Gray = TW > PB > MB

Dark Gray = TW + PB + MB

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Begin with the Hog Bright and Mars Black to paint the nose and center mouth line. Occasionally add a little **Blue Gray mix** to create value.
- Along the nose on the right side, flick short strokes outward to imply small hairs with the **Medium Gray mix**. Use this color on the edge of the brush to deepen the darker curved dotted areas of the muzzle. Rinse. Blend Titanium White back in the area between the dotted spaces.
- Reinforce the mouth and chin by scrubbing in some Mars Black. Then highlight the chin with **Light Gray mix**.
- Repeat this process on the left side of the muzzle. Blend in the **Dark Gray mix** closer to the center lip line. Add Titanium White on the dirty brush and apply a second layer of highlight on the chin. Rinse.
- Use pure Titanium White to highlight the bridge of the nose and then use short strokes to highlight the small hairs along the outer edges of the muzzle. Tap in some **Light Gray mix** along the mouth. Rinse.
- Switch to the Hog Round and the **Blue Gray mix** and, using the toe of the brush, paint the dots back in on the muzzle for the pores of the whiskers.
- Highlight the outer edges of the nose and the nostrils with the **Medium Gray mix**. Tap in some of this highlight on the top of the nose between the nostrils. Also highlight either side of the center lip line. Vary the mix slightly as needed.
- Use the **Dark Gray mix** to round out the shadows on the inner sides of the muzzle, on either side of the center lip line. Rinse the brush as needed to clear out any build up of paint.
- Add another layer of highlight to the outer edges of the nose and the nostrils with the **Light Gray mix**. Rinse.
- Switch to the Synthetic Round and thin the Mars Black with water to deepen the shadows of the nose and center lip line. Use the toe of the brush to lightly paint in the fine hairs at the corners and above the nose. Add a little Titanium White to the dirty brush as needed. Rinse.
- Mix a tiny bit of the **Light Gray mix** to Titanium White and paint a brighter highlight on the nose. Use this color to paint in the hairs on the chin and along the bottom of the muzzle and the top of the lip. Adjust as desired. Rinse.

*Sherpa Tip: Wash any hog brush thoroughly before using it to prevent it from shedding onto the canvas.*



# STEP 6 - EYES LAYER ONE

“SOULFUL EYES SEAL THE DEAL”

## PAINT:

Phthalo Blue = PB

Mars Black = MB

Titanium White = TW

## BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Medium Synthetic Round SH

## COLOR MIXES:

Dark Gray = TW + PB + MB

Medium Gray = MB + PB + TW

Blue Gray = MB + PB

## STEP DISCUSSION:

- Starting with the right eye, use the **Dark Gray mix** to paint the lids.
- Line the inside of the eye with the **Medium Gray mix** using the toe of the brush. Then blend this color into the right side of the upper lid.
- Add more **Dark Gray mix** under the eye as needed.
- Apply the **Blue Gray mix** in the deepest creases of the upper and lower lids.
- Fill in the pupil with pure Mars Black.
- Repeat the process on the left side while being aware of the scale of the eyes. Add water to improve flow and rinsing as needed.





# STEP 7 – EYE DETAILS

## “THE GATEWAY TO THE SEAL SOUL”

### PAINT:

Phthalo Blue = PB

Mars Black = MB

Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Medium Synthetic Round SH

Small Hog Bright

### COLOR MIXES:

Light Gray = TW > PB > MB

Medium Gray = MB + PB > TW

Blue Gray = MB + PB

Dark Gray = TW + PB + MB

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Use the Hog Bright and the **Light Gray mix** to blend and shape around the left eye. Then use the **Medium Gray mix** on the inside corner of the eye. Adjust and refine this eye alternating between these two mixes. Rinse.
- Brighten the left side of the muzzle and the bridge of the nose using Titanium White. Blend in some of this color around the outside of the left eye.
- Repeat this process on the outside of the right eye.
- Mix a touch more Phthalo Blue to the **Medium Gray mix**. Paint the outer reflection of the left pupil. Repeat this reflection in the right pupil. Blend in the **Blue Gray mix** to refine the deeper areas of the pupil. Rinse.

- Switch to the Synthetic Round and mix a touch more Phthalo Blue to the **Light Gray mix**. For a bit brighter reflection, add two slightly curved lines followed by two small dots along the outer edge of the left pupil. Then add two smaller opposing lines on the inside edge of the same pupil. Apply a similar reflection on the right pupil, adjusting as desired.
- Wipe the brush out slightly on the towel and add more Titanium White. Add another highlight to the tops of the previous outer reflections and to the inside corner of the eye.
- Then add pure Titanium White as the brightest wet reflections in the pupil and outer lid. Adjust the upper lid with the **Dark Gray mix**.
- Mirror this process on the right eye adjusting as needed. Rinse.



# STEP 8 - FUR DETAILS

“SEALS ARE FOND OF ‘ART ART ART’”

## PAINT:

Phthalo Blue = PB

Mars Black = MB

Titanium White = TW

## BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Medium Synthetic Round

## COLOR MIXES:

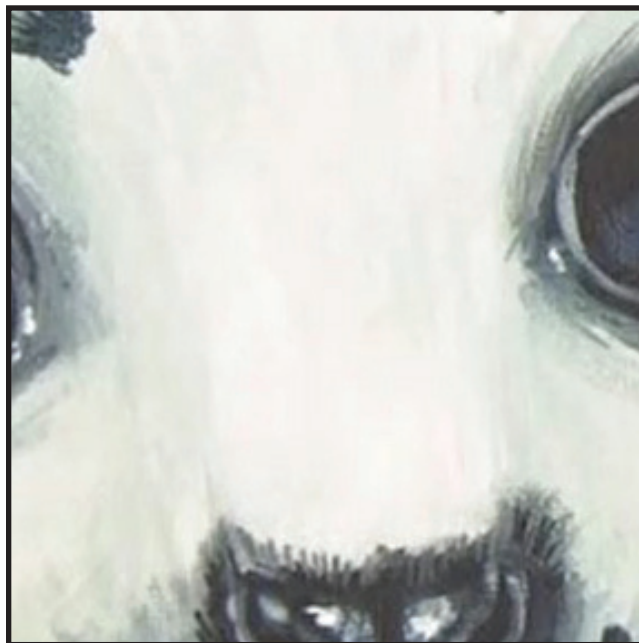
Light Gray = TW > PB > MB

Medium Gray = MB + PB > TW

Blue Gray = MB + PB

## STEP DISCUSSION:

- Add a little **Light Gray mix** around the eyes. Then highlight the fur on the muzzle and nose bridge with Titanium White.
- Brighten any other light fur areas as desired. Rinse.
- Paint a bright pop of highlight on the nose with pure Titanium White.
- Apply a few hair strokes around the eyes using the **Medium Gray mix**.
- Use the toe of the brush and the **Blue Gray mix** to paint a few eyebrow hairs, above the inside of both eyes.
- Make adjustments as desired using the various mixes as needed. Rinse.





# STEP 9 - WHISKERS

## "SEAL HIM WITH A KISS"

### PAINT:

Mars Black = MB

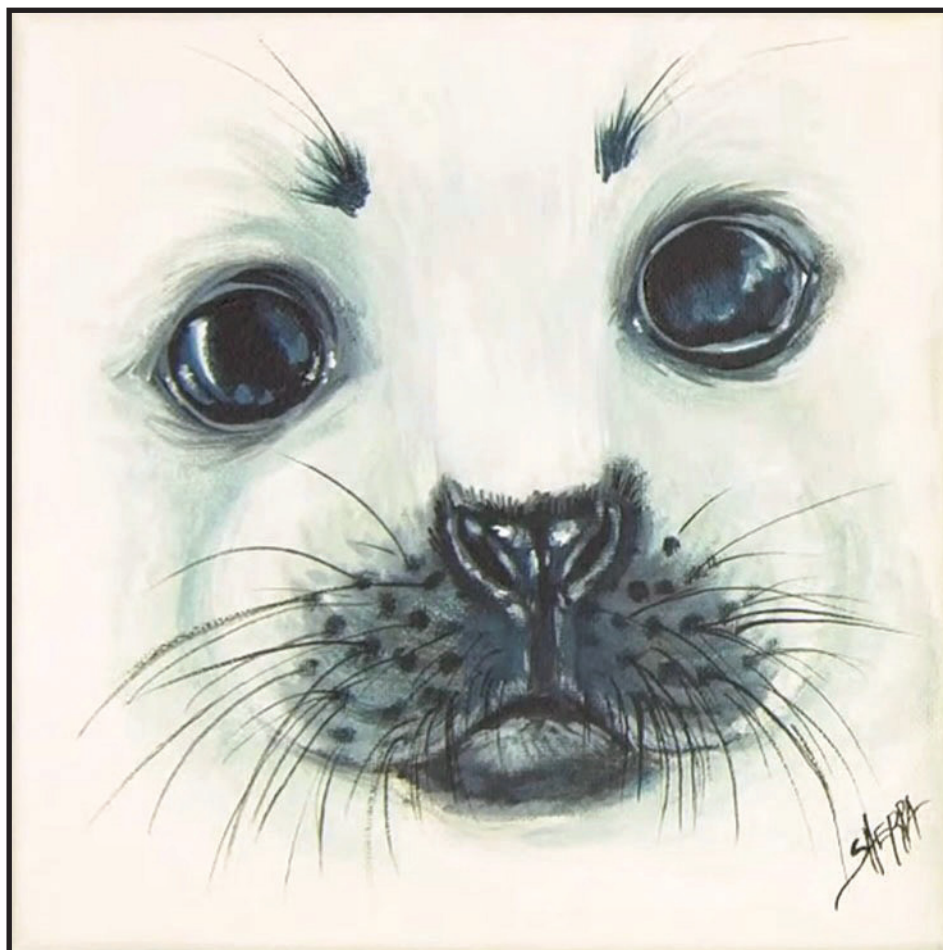
### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

X-Small Synthetic Round

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Thin Mars Black with water and begin creating the smaller whiskers that curve in and downward, along the bottom of the muzzle. Layer another row over top.
- The whiskers begin directionally, curving outward and sideways and then finally upward as they grow along the edges of the muzzle.
- Add the few whiskers that grow above the eyes.
- Adjust the dark line around the eyes where needed.
- Sign.

*Sherpa Tip: Alternatively you could use a Posca pen for the whiskers.*





# 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

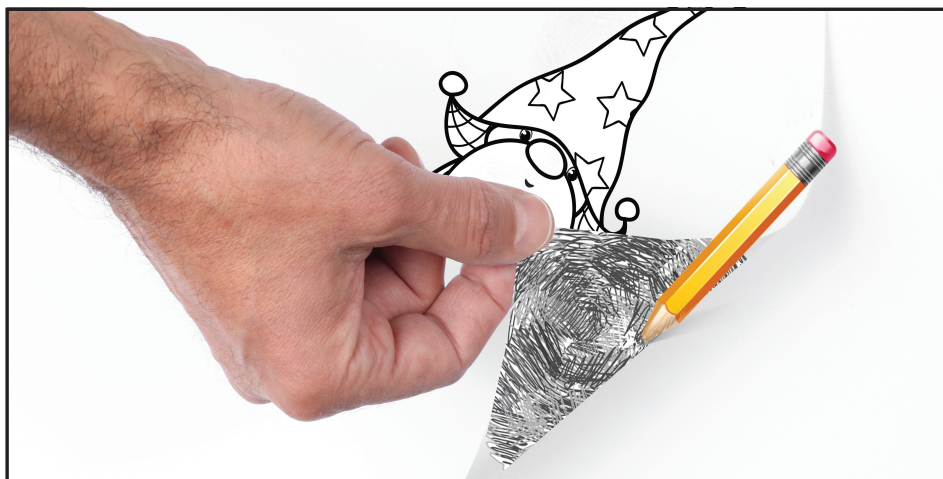
- Adjust the size to fit your surface and be sure to check your printer settings to see if the final size reflects the size you need.



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





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 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.

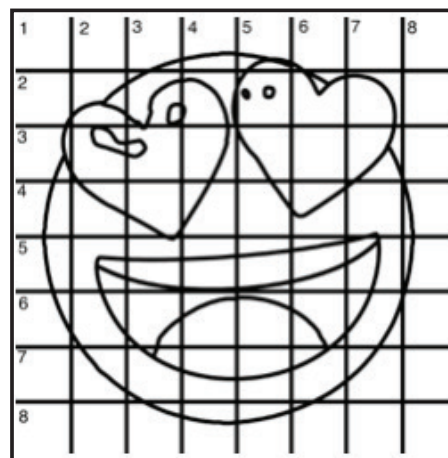
Number your columns 1 - 8, left to right, and your rows 1 - 8 from the top to the bottom.

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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#STEPBYSTEPPAINTING  
#ACRYLICPAINTING

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