

THE ART SHERPA™

# HOW TO PAINT

IN ACRYLIC



THE ART SHERPA PRESENTS

## JOYFUL ABSTRACT POPPIES


STEPS: 6 | DIFFICULTY: BEGINNER | 1 HOOT





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# SHERPA FORWARD:

## JOYFUL ABSTRACT POPPIES

The purpose of this taster lesson is to introduce you to how fun acrylic painting can be. As you learn joyful abstract techniques, you will also gain fundamental skills you can apply to other areas of your creative life. These joyful abstract poppies will establish a foundation of painting for the experience, rather than for the outcome. All of this being said, I think you'll be surprised at how easy it is to create beautiful art and learn that creating abstract art doesn't need to be complicated or mysterious going forward because we're going to discuss what the artist's mindset is and our real creative intentions when we paint.

I am resolved to do more to help teach art rather than demonstrate how to paint art. 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 and is best viewed in outline format to allow for ease in navigation between sections.

This tutorial is not an extremely difficult one and it is abstract art, which means that the image representation will be a slight, partial, or complete departure from reality.

The brushes I used for this project are:

*#30 Extra Firm Simply Simmons Bright Brush*

*#8 Extra Firm Simply Simmons Filbert Brush*

*#4 The Art Sherpa Round Brush*

*(If you can not locate a #4 Extra Firm Simply Simmons is good too)*

In order to paint the background, you'll need a large brush, a filbert medium brush, and a sharply pointed round brush. I will discuss the specific brushes I use and if you use craft or student paint, you don't require a stiff brush. If you choose to paint with heavy body paint, such as the kind you see in tubes, you may find a firmer brush gives you better results.

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; am I using 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.

*Grab your paint, get your brushes and let's go!*



# PAINT AND TOOL GUIDE:

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

## PAINT:

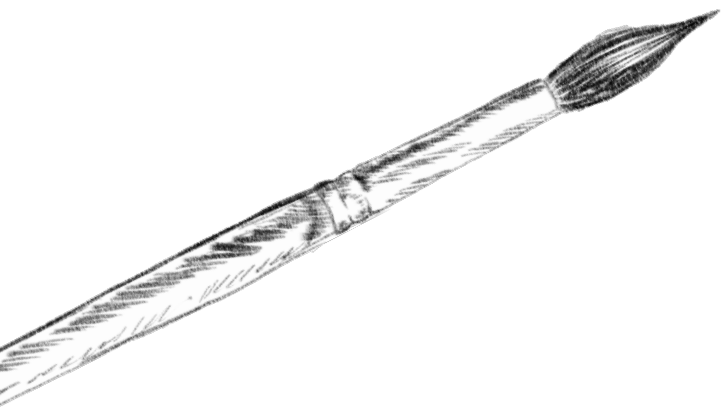
- Cadmium Red Medium = CRM
- Cadmium Yellow Medium = CYM
- Phthalo Green = PG
- Mars Black = MB
- Titanium White = TW
- Yellow Ochre = YO

## BRUSHES:

- X -Large Synthetic Bright
- Medium Synthetic Filbert
- 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.)
- Paper Towels
- Cups of Water
- Pallet for your paint or, and entirely optional, A StayWet Palette



## SYMBOL GUIDE:

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

## TECHNIQUES YOU WILL USE IN THIS PAINTING:

- Implying Foliage
- Expressive Painting Strokes
- Being Painterly and Loose
- Finding Value
- Color Theory
- Directionality
- Blending Wet into Wet
- 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. 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
Q&A #1	03:57	HOW DOES PAINTING SUPPORT YOUR HEALTH AND WELL BEING?
Q&A #2	05:20	WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU AS AN ARTIST?
Q&A #3	06:15	WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST STRUGGLE AS AN ARTIST AND HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH IT?
Q&A #4	09:17	WHAT IS A SKILL, NEW OR EXISTING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO DEVELOP MORE?
Q&A #5	11:00	WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE STRUGGLING ARTISTS TO KNOW?
STEP 1	13:43	COLORED BACKGROUND
STEP 2	16:34	FIRST FOCAL FLOWER
STEP 3	21:49	REMAINING FOCAL FLOWERS
STEP 4	23:32	CENTERS AND CIRCLES
STEP 5	31:06	STEMS AND OUTLINES
STEP 6	38:27	FINAL POPS OF GREEN
	41:42	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.



# STEP 1 – COLORED BACKGROUND

## PAINT:

Titanium White = TW

Yellow Ochre = YO

## BRUSHES & TOOLS:

X-Large Synthetic Bright

Cups of Water

## COLOR MIXES:

Parchment = TW > YO

## STEP DISCUSSION:

- Roughly paint the entire canvas with the **Parchment mix** then slightly smooth the surface by running the brush strokes from side to side in both directions. Rinse.

- Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.

***Sherpa Tip:** To allow better coverage of the canvas, load both sides of this brush.*





## STEP 2 – FIRST FOCAL FLOWER

### PAINT:

Cadmium Red Medium = CRM

Cadmium Yellow Medium = CYM

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Medium Synthetic Filbert  
Paper Towel

### COLOR MIXES:

Bright Red = CRM > CYM

Orange = CYM + CRM

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Begin painting the petals of the first flower in the upper left corner with a very loose combination of the **Bright Red mix**. Place the brush onto the canvas and with medium firm pressure, curve the stroke downward. At the end of the stroke turn the brush slightly and release the pressure while lifting it off the canvas. Thicken the petal by repeating this stroke next to the first.
- Continue adding paint in this same manner, curving the strokes in various directions to create the petal shapes. Some petals are bigger so they will have more of the curved strokes. Add definition to some areas of the petals by adding Cadmium Yellow Medium, loosely on the dirty brush, to create a variegated **Orange mix**. This flower is facing

the viewer so it will have a circular shape once all the petals have been added.

- Rinse the brush.
- Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.

***Sherpa Tip:** To ensure my brush gets clean when rinsing, I use two cups of water, one for a first and another for a second rinse.*



## STEP 3 - REMAINING FOCAL FLOWERS

### PAINT:

Cadmium Red Medium =  
CRM

Cadmium Yellow Medium =  
CYM

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Medium Synthetic Filbert

### COLOR MIXES:

Yellow Orange = CYM > CRM

Bright Red = CRM > CYM

Orange = CYM + CRM

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Use the **Yellow Orange mix** to begin the flower in the upper right corner. Use the same method as before, curve the first stroke, downward and to the right. Then add three more strokes to thicken the petal but curve them toward the left.
- Use the **Bright Red mix** to paint a small petal to the left. This flower is facing away from the viewer so it will only have one more petal showing on the right. Paint four strokes curving upward for this petal.
- Use the **Bright Red mix** for the first petal on the flower in the bottom right corner. Curve three strokes up from left to right. For the second petal use a loose mix of the **Orange mix**. Curve four strokes downward from left to right. For the third petal, use the **Yellow Orange mix**, curving two strokes downward from right to left.

To finish that petal, use the **Bright Red mix** and curve two or three more strokes downward in the opposite direction, from right to left.

- Rinse the brush.
- Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.





# STEP 4 - CENTERS AND CIRCLES

## PAINT:

Titanium White = TW

Cadmium Red Medium =

CRM

Cadmium Yellow Medium =

CYM

## BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Medium Synthetic Filbert

Small Synthetic Round

## COLOR MIXES:

Orange = CYM + CRM

## STEP DISCUSSION:

- Thickly load Titanium White onto the Filbert brush and use the edge of the brush, on a slight angle, to create four small comma strokes at the center of the upper right flower. Next, just to the right of those strokes, change the angle of the brush and paint a few slightly larger strokes in the opposite direction.
- The center of the bottom right flower has comma strokes of various sizes and directions, painted in the same manner as the top one. Rinse the brush.
- Switch to the Round brush and Cadmium Red Medium. Starting in the upper right corner of the canvas, begin painting circles. Create different size circles and use some of the **Orange mix** on the dirty brush to vary the colors. There are groups of three circles in each corner

with the exception of the lower right, which only has one. Rinse the brush.

- Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.

**Sherpa Tips:** When painting thickly, the brush may start to get gummy. If this happens just add a little water and wipe the brush on the paper towel.

When loading a round brush, add a little water. Use a downstroke to load the paint and then roll the brush to bring the paint to the toe.



## STEP 5 - STEMS AND OUTLINES

### PAINT:

Mars Black = MB

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Small Synthetic Round

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Paint circles on the bottom of the two flowers on the right and the center of the flower on the left, using the Mars Black.
- From the center of the circle on the top right flower, curve a long stroke for a stem that flows off the canvas at the bottom and thicken it, as desired. Use the toe of the brush to make little curled strokes coming off the stem.
- Begin outlining the white centers and petals, using light pressure to create a fine line. Use loose painterly lines that are not always touching or connected to the flower. Create movement by painting a few comma strokes starting just outside of the petals and decreasing in size. Outline the circles in the top right but not completely.
- Add a stem to the bottom right flower and continue outlining the petals and creating expressive marks where desired and then add a few black circles.
- Imply some stems in the bottom right corner,

curving them from left to right, to create balance.

- Now, outline the petals and circles of the top left flower and add further energy with more reducing comma stroke, as needed.
- Rinse the brush.
- Dry the surface before continuing to the next step.





## STEP 6 - FINAL POPS OF GREEN

### PAINT:

Phthalo Green = PG  
Titanium White = TW

### BRUSHES & TOOLS:

Small Synthetic Round

### COLOR MIXES:

Mint = PG + TW

### STEP DISCUSSION:

- Using the **Mint mix**, line the left side of the stem on the upper right flower and continue adding this surprise color along the stem curls.
- Use the press and release stroke to imply small leaves in the bottom left corner. Add more Titanium White to the mix to vary the color, if desired.
- Continue adding playful marks and implied leaves where you think they are needed, but without overwhelming the piece. Rinse the brush.
- Sign.



## THE TRACING METHOD

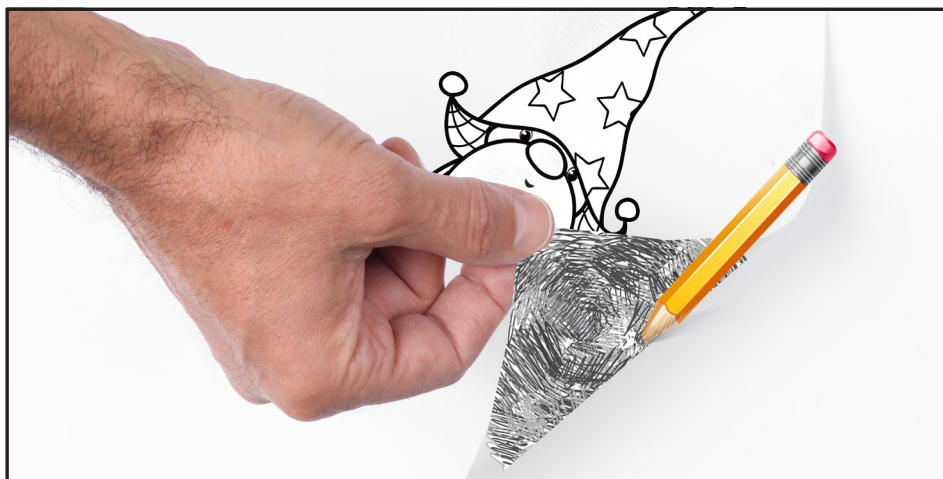
- Adjust the size to fit your surface and be sure to check your printer settings to see if the final size reflects the size you need.



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

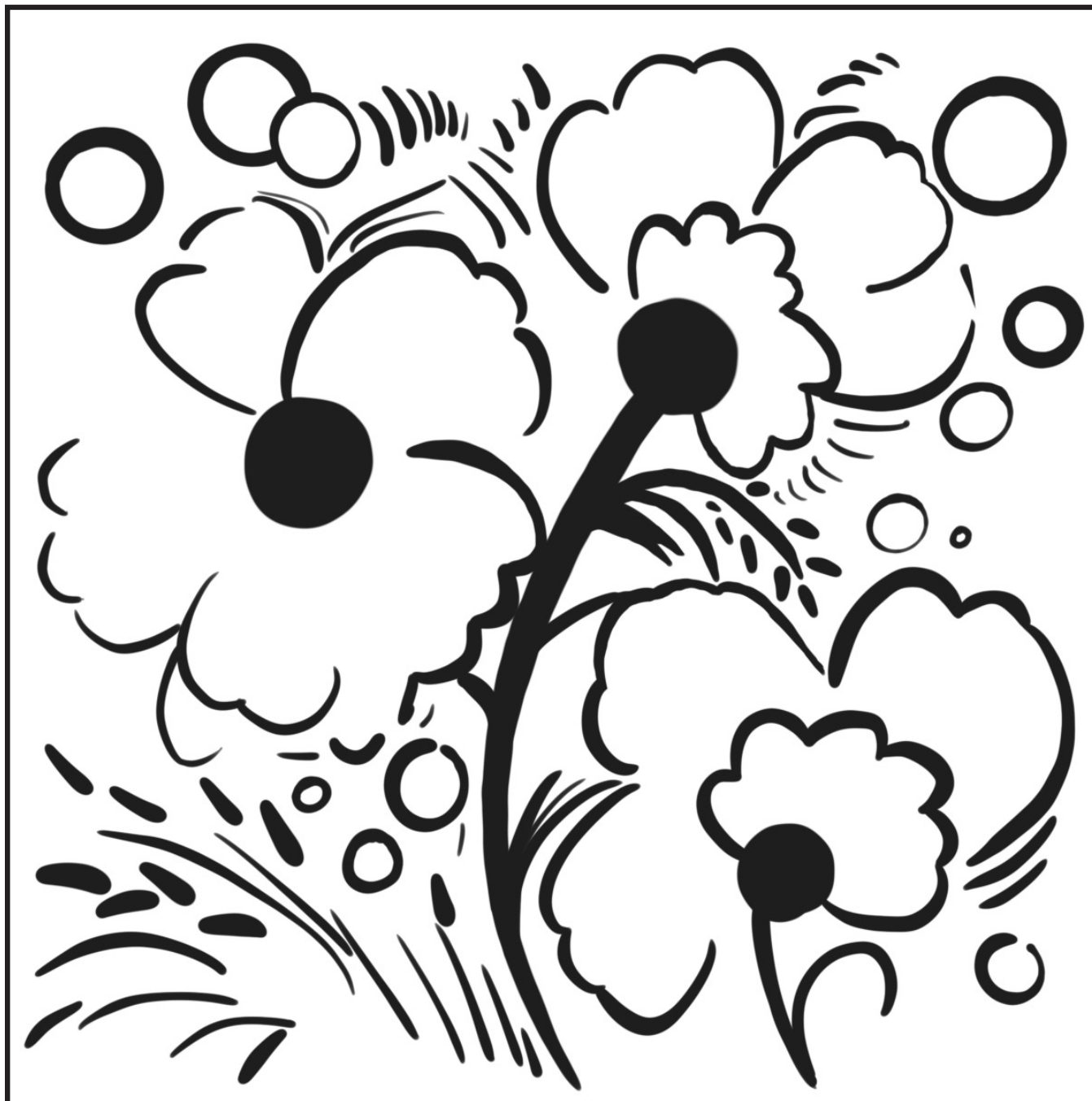


- Rub the back with graphite or use Saral paper and skip this step.
- Be sure to rub the back of your paper on the side without the lines drawing using a HB pencil.
- Hold up to window light to make sure graphite covers all the lines of the subject drawing.
- Test your Saral paper to make sure the color you are using is going to show on the canvas.
- Tape your paper on your surface to transfer with tape to keep it from moving. If you are using saral paper make sure you have both sheets taped down and the transfer side of the Saral paper will be facing your surface. Carefully, with medium pressure, redraw over every line. You can lift one corner of paper to





TRACEABLE:



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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.

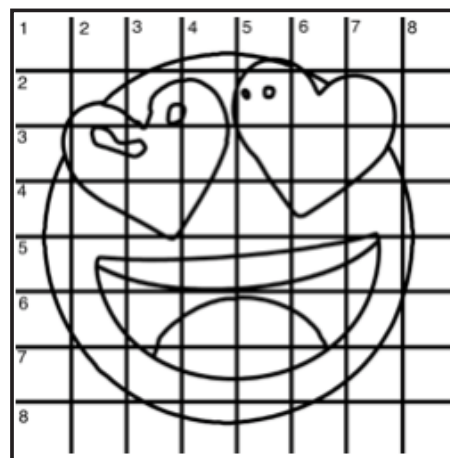
Number your columns 1 - 8, left to right, and your rows 1 - 8 from the top to the bottom.

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 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

## TECHNIQUE REFERENCES CONTINUED:

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.*

