

Let It Snow

A Decorative Painting Pattern by Sheryl Thompson

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This is a beginner pattern and so I will not be assuming that the painter has a lot of previous experience. If you are a painter with previous experience, just skip portions that seem too basic for you.

Suggested Project Surface –

Wooden Heart Banner that you cut yourself. Outline and dimensions given in line drawing

Brushes –

Flat Shaders - #12, #10, #8

Liners - #1, #10/0

Paint – (Delta Ceramcoat)

2506 Black	2009 Seminole
2407 Candy Bar Brown	2049 Spice Brown
2133 Cape Cod Blue	2078 Straw
2574 Coastline Blue	2071 Terra Cotta
2096 Dark Forest Green	2098 Tomato Spice
2573 Dark Victorian Teal	2505 White
2416 Liberty Blue	

Misc. Supplies –

Wood Filler & a putty knife or other applicator	White & Grey Transfer Paper
Sandpaper (medium & fine grade) or two-sided sanding disk	Two containers for water – empty, well cleaned margarine tubs are what I use
1” foam brush	Paper towels
Piece of brown paper bag	Drafting Compass (handy not necessary)
Pencil	All Purpose Wood Sealer
Tracing Paper	Interior/Exterior Matte Varnish
Masking Tape	Decoart Star Lite Topcoat

Surface Preparation –

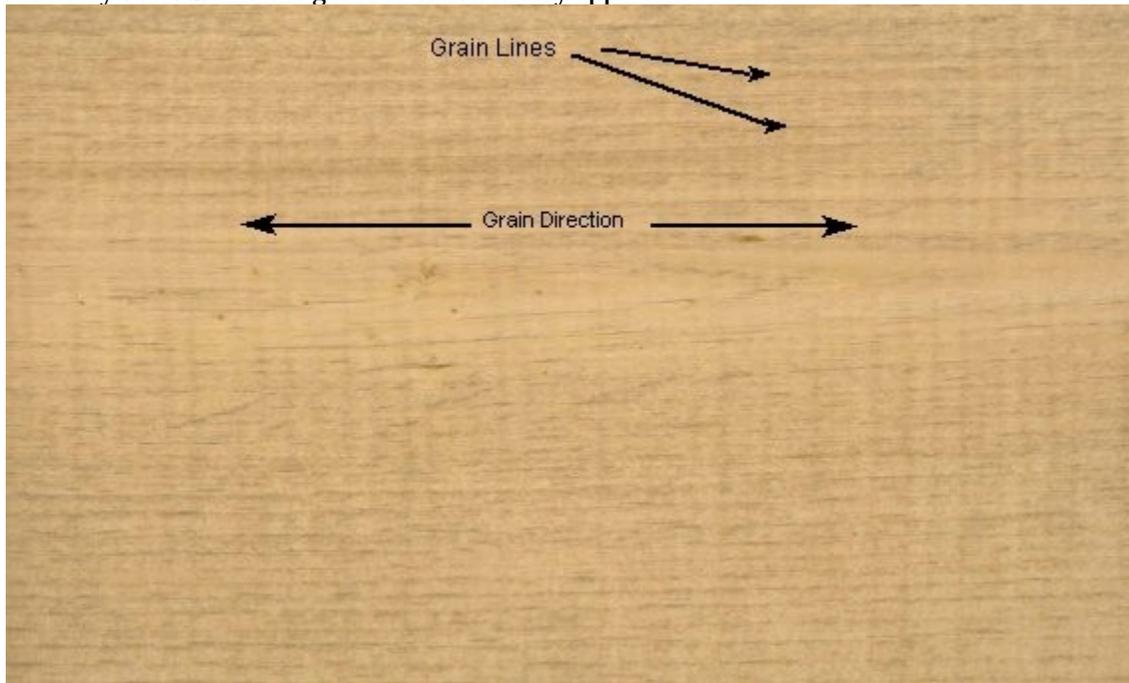
One of the most important steps in the painting process is the preparation of your project surface. It also can seem the most boring and the step that all of us would love to skip but just like when building a house....the foundation is the most important element!! A poorly and hastily prepared surface can lead to problems and difficulties later on in the project and cost valuable time and increase frustration. So as my Dad always told me, “Take the time to do it right and then you will only do it ONCE.” Okay, the lecture is over and on to the work. Examine your wood pieces carefully. Look for any dents, dings, holes or other imperfections and fill them with wood putty. This can be applied

with your finger, a palette knife, or a putty knife....even a tongue depressor. Let this dry and then sand the “puttied” area lightly. Occasionally there will still be a slight depression as the wood putty shrinks as it dries. If there is, fill this depression and let dry again. If everything appears to be filled and smooth, proceed with the sanding. If you are using a sanding double sided sanding disk (a great little item to have, by the way) it has two different grades of sanding surface on it.



Coarse Side of Sanding Disk **Fine Side of Sanding Disk**

First, sand with the medium grade sandpaper. Sand in the same direction as the grain of the wood. Ah, how do I tell the direction of the wood grain, you ask? If you look at the picture below, you will see that there are wavy lines running through the wood. You will also see a black arrow that indicates the direction of the grain. In most lumber these lines are very obvious and the grain direction is very apparent.



if you were going to use oil based paint but acrylic paint and the mediums and varnishes used with it are water-b As a beginning decorative painter the wood types that you most commonly will come in contact with will be pine and poplar and their grain direction will be very easily discerned. But as you advance, and possibly start painting on “found treasures” such as discarded furniture, you may run into more confusing grain patterns. Try to always sand in the direction of the grain and never across the grain. After sanding with the coarse sandpaper, visually inspect the wood for rough areas and then, as an added precaution, run your hands over the wood feeling for any rough or ragged areas. Next sand with the finer sand paper, again, remember to sand with the grain direction. After sanding is completed, wipe the wood piece down with a damp rag. At this point, some people use a tack rag to wipe down the wood, and that would be fine ased products. Tack rags are treated with an oily, waxy substance that can leave an

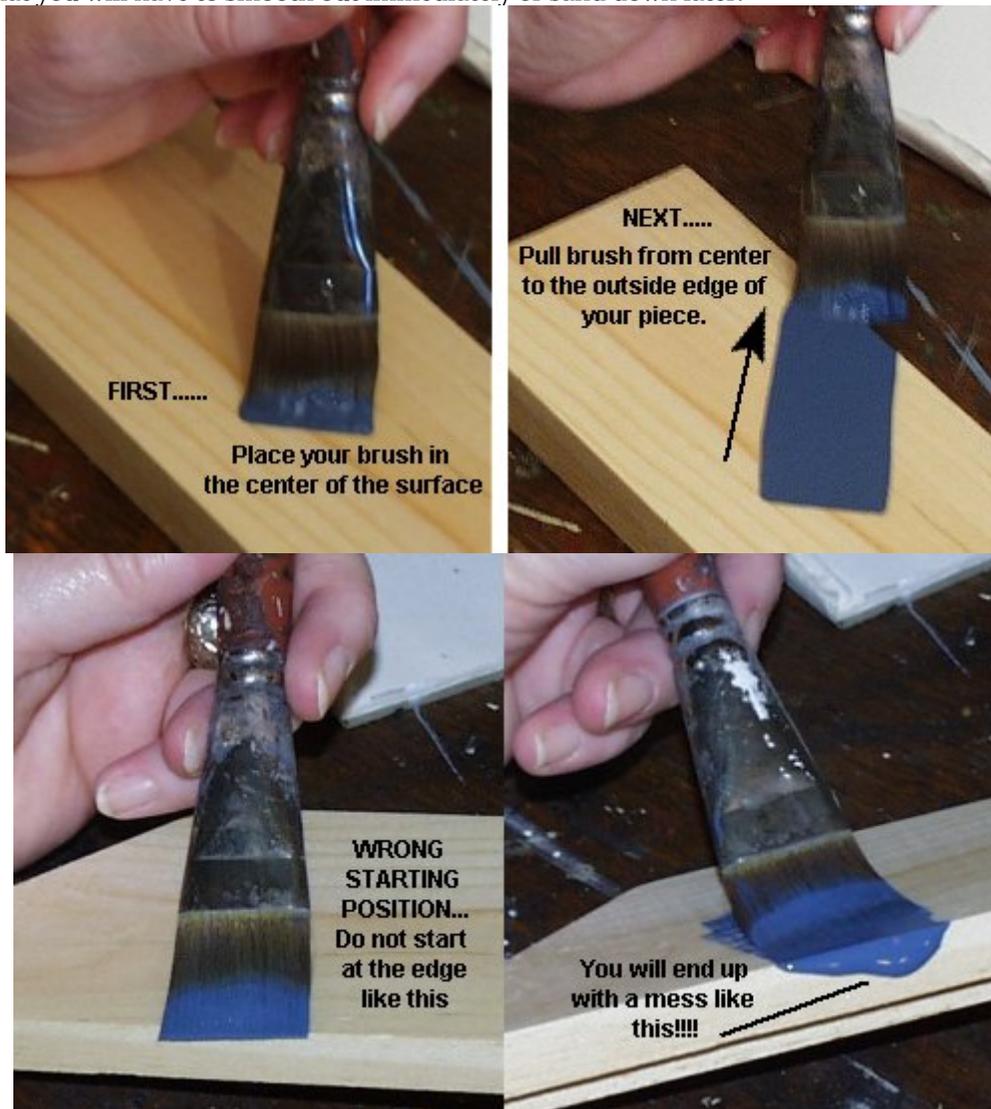
oily film on your wood. Remember that oil and water don't mix..... especially in painting with acrylics. There are two exceptions to this rule...you can base paint a design with acrylics and then paint over it with oil paint but the reverse (painting over oil paint with acrylic) will not work and the second is that you can use oil paint and oil based antiquing mediums for the antiquing process after all the water based painting and varnishing is complete. If you have an acrylic paint retarder medium in your painting supplies, you can dampen a rag with that and wipe off the sawdust. Keep the retarder-dampened rag in a closed airtight container and it will stay moist for use again and again.

Now using the 1" foam brush, to apply a coat of All Purpose Wood Sealer to the banner and the heart. Let this dry. After it dries, you will notice that the wood will feel rough again. The application of the sealer raises tiny "fuzzies" on the wood. Take the piece of brown paper bag and lightly rub it to remove the "fuzzies". The key word here is LIGHTLY! We do not want to highly polish the surface for some "tooth" is necessary for the paint to adhere to the wood. Our project piece is now ready for paint!!!!

Base Painting The Wood Pieces –

The next step is to base paint our woodpieces. The foam brush or a large wash brush will work best for this step and save your decorative painting brushes from the abuse of applying lots of paint. Load enough paint in the brush to apply a nice even coat but not so much as to leave ridges. If you get a little ridge in the paint on either side of your foam brush as you apply the paint, you have too much paint in the brush. It is better to have two to three well-applied coats of paint than to have one heavy uneven one. Base paint the banner on all sides with Liberty Blue. Base the sides and the back of the heart with Liberty Blue and the front with White. Be careful and watch for runs and buildup along the edges.

I find that it is easiest to start with your brush in the center of a piece and pull it to the outside edge. If you work from the outside to the center, you will be drawing your brush across the edge and will create a paint buildup along the side edge that you will have to smooth out immediately or sand down later.



Try to work neatly but quickly...don't play with the paint too long. Acrylic paint dries quickly and if you keep stroking with your brush as it begins to "set up", it will peel off in tiny sheets and leave little craters or "pock marks" in the surface. Apply it, smooth quickly if necessary, and let it dry. Then go back and apply another coat if necessary. Work in long, smooth strokes....don't "pitty pat" with the brush as this will give you uneven coverage also. Depending on your application method and the color, most base coats require at least two coats. Be sure to let the project dry thoroughly between coats. The easiest way to tell if a coat of paint is dry is to place your hand on it and feel. If it feels cool to the touch it isn't dry yet...the evaporative process is still taking place hence the coolness. If it feels room temperature then the evaporative process is over and it is dry.

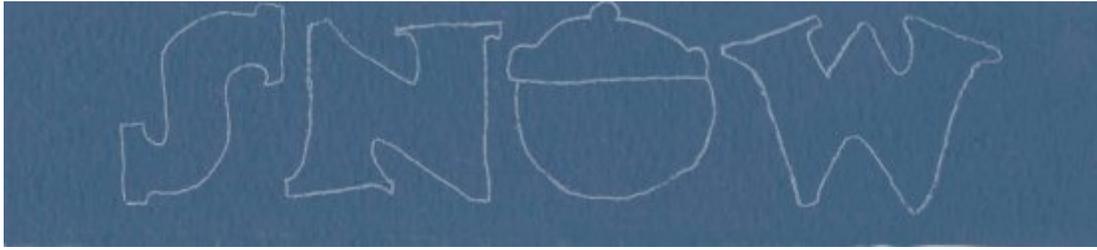
Tracing and Transferring the pattern-

The wonderful thing about Decorative Painting is that you do not have to be able to draw or come up with ideas of your own to create your own wonderful work of art. There are thousands of books, pattern packets, and magazine article designs for painters to use. Your painting is accomplished by tracing the image, applying it to the item to be painted, and then following the instructions to apply the paint. Place your line drawing under a sheet of tracing paper and using your #2 pencil, trace all the lines of the pattern. I tack the two sheets together with a piece of masking tape to keep the pattern from shifting as I trace. Some painters want to skip this part of the process and think that they are saving time so they take the line drawing and attach it to the surface and transfer. Not a good practice and a bad habit to get into for a couple of reasons. Tracing the pattern allows you to get familiar with the design elements and will actually help you to develop drawing skills. And with more advanced patterns (and with the pattern in this class) you will be required to apply the elements of the design in stages. You will not be able to realign the pattern unless you use the tracing paper. Now if you really want to save time and you are determined to cheat, you can take a sheet of tracing paper and put it in your printer, and print the design on that.☺ (Teacher is frowning at this short cut....LOL)

We will start painting the lettering on the banner first. Once your surface is dry, tack the pattern on to the surface with a couple of pieces of masking tape. Be sure to leave one end or side of the pattern open so you can slide your graphite transfer paper underneath with the graphite side down. With the graphite in place, start to lightly trace the pattern. LIGHTLY is the key word here. Most of the wood you will be working on is softwood like pine. Too much pressure on the pencil will actually mar the surface by placing a groove in it.

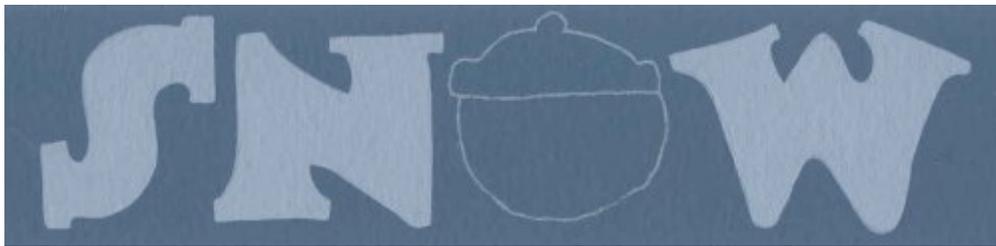
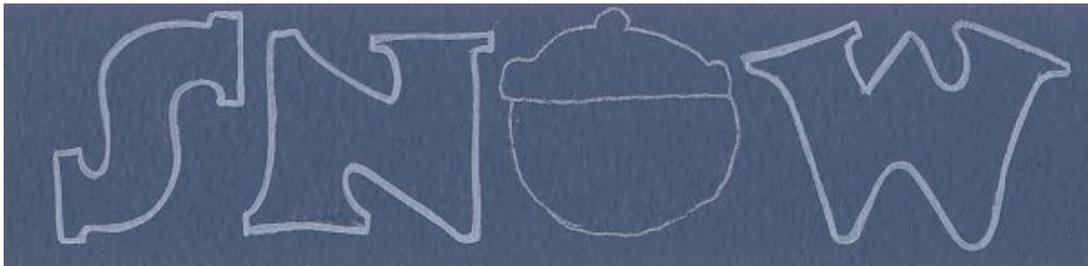


Make just one mark and then lift the transfer paper and tracing and peek underneath to be sure that the design is transferring. Even after years of painting, I will sometimes get the transfer paper upside down (especially with the grey) so I always do this just to check myself. Transfer the outline for all the letters and just the outline of the snowman's hat and face (Letter "O" in snow). I would use the white graphite transfer paper for this.



Step 1 – Base the lettering

I have limited the number of brushes so a beginning student does not face excessive costs in trying to complete this project. If you have a wider variety of brushes and want to use others that you are used to, feel free to make substitutions as you see fit. When I do “fat” lettering such as we have in this project, I outline the letters using a liner brush and then base them in with a flat or filbert afterwards. In this case I am using a #1 liner, loaded with Coastline Blue, to outline the letters and a #8 flat brush to fill them in. When doing liner work, always mix a **little** water with the paint on your palette so that the paint is an inky like consistency.

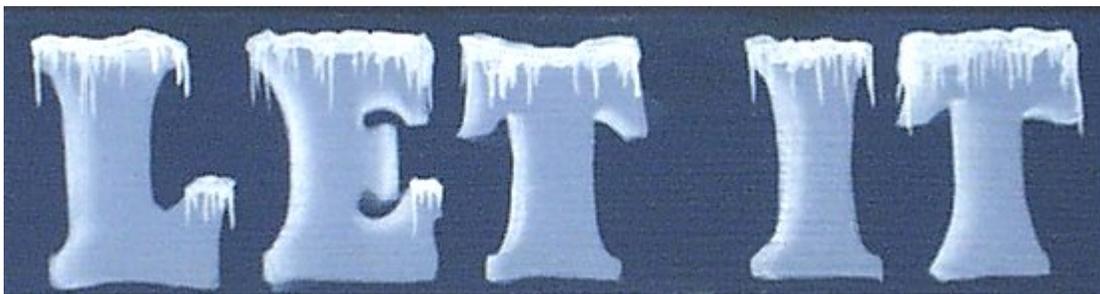


Step 2 - Highlight the lettering

Sideload the #10 flat brush with White. Referring to the photos, highlight the letters. When sideload your brush, you want to just dip one corner of the flat brush into the paint and the blend, blend blend on your palette.

Step 3 – Detail the top of the letters

Load your #1 liner brush with White. Paint along the top of each letter creating the look of snowdrifts on the letters. To create the icicles, load the brush with an inky-like consistency of White and align the brush in the “snow” and pull the brush in a downward motion while applying slight pressure at the beginning of the stroke and lessening the pressure so that you end with a fine point. Remember to make your strokes slowly and deliberately. If you try to rush them the brush will not have the opportunity to come back to a fine point, and your icicles will have a blunt end.





Step 4– Base the snowman

Using your #10 flat base the entire snowman head shape in White including the area of the hat. Because the final colors for the hat are Tomato Spice and Seminole Green, both transparent colors, underpainting in White allows for fewer base coats and for the true hue of the colors to show through. After the White paint has dried, align your tracing and transfer the line for the bottom of the snowman's hat.

Sideload the #10 flat brush with Cape Cod Blue and with the paint edge of the brush against the hat, float shading across the snowman's "forehead". Let this float dry thoroughly. With same brush again sideloaded with Cape Cod Blue, float shading down the right side of the snowman's head continuing halfway under his chin. Let dry.

Step 5 – Transfer the snowman details

Transfer details of the snowman's face, i.e. eyes, nose, and mouth, using grey graphite paper. Transfer only the details that you really need and make the lines as small and light as possible. This will make for fewer graphite lines to remove after the painting process is done. In the case of the eyes, transfer just a dot to give you placement. For the nose, transfer a single line from the base to the end, running down the center, because the nose will be painted in one single stroke. You will not have to worry about painting to cover the outline. For the mouth transfer a very thin light line or freehand it if you feel comfortable with that.

Step 6 - Paint the snowman face details

Load the #1 liner with Black and paint in the ovals for the eyes. Now mix a little water with the Black paint to make it an inky-like consistency. Load the #1 liner with this inky-like Black and draw in the lines for the eyebrows and the mouth. Remember to stay up on the point of your liner brush to get nice fine lines. The snowman's carrot nose is very easily freehanded in one stroke using the #1 liner.

Load the #1 liner with Terra Cotta. Align the brush at the base of the nose applying enough pressure so that the brush spreads out the width of the nose. Now pull in the direction of the nose tip and as you do gradually release the pressure on the brush so that at the end of the nose you are just touching the tip of the brush. This will end the carrot nose in a nice fine point. Load the 10/0 liner with just a speck of White and put tiny highlights at 1 o'clock in the snowman's eyes.

Step 7 – Detail the snowman hat

Base the hat in Tomato Spice Red. This will take two coats of paint. Sideload the #8 flat with Candy Bar Brown and with the paint edge down against the rolled brim of the stocking cap, float shading across the hat. Load the #1 liner with inkylike Tomato Spice and draw the pompom on the top of the snowman's hat in. Again stay up on the point of the brush to get nice fine lines. Load the #1 liner brush with Seminole Green and draw in the lines on the hat.



Step 8 – Sparkle glaze the snow

Load the #1 liner with Decoart Starlite Topcoat and varnish over just the snowman's face. Load the #1 liner with Decoart Starlite Topcoat and glaze the icicles and snow on the top of the letters. After completing this step, clean your brushes thoroughly to get rid of any "sparkle" particles and also empty and thoroughly rinse your brush cleaning water container, so that no unwanted sparkling will be carried in to the next steps. This completes the banner portion of the project so set it aside and we will proceed with painting the scene on the heart.

Painting the Heart

Step 1- Base the sky

Align your traced pattern on the wooden heart. Transfer just the line to indicate where the forest meets the snowy field.

Load your #12 flat with Coastline Blue and base the sky in Coastline Blue. Base paint, starting at the top using smooth horizontal strokes and work your way 2/3 of the way down the section of the heart above the graphite line. Let dry.

Step 2 - Paint the clouds

Clouds towards the outer edge of the cloud, in a ruffling motion, in one direction and taper off. Then I go back to the highest point again and go in the other direction gradually tapering the ends. After the first layer of the cloud is painted just drop down and repeat. Continue to drop down and overlap them. Have a light touch so that some of the blue from the sky shows through providing shading. You can go back after they are dry and just highlight the top edge of the cloud with a little more white. are not difficult to freehand so don't put any marks on the sky. I sideload my #8 Flat brush with White and with the painted edge up I start at the highest point of the cloud and lightly push the brush

Step 3 - We paint the background forest – transfer graphite lines

Transfer a few random lines to indicate the height of the forest. I don't transfer a complete line, as I like to freehand this step. Too many lines will tend to make you paint this too stiffly...remember loosen up!!!!

Step 4 - Background forest

I use a very quick and easy technique to paint conifer filler trees in a forest background. Take your #12 flat and load it with Dark Victorian Teal, holding the brush so that the chisel edge is vertical and at a 90-degree angle to the snowy field. Move the brush up and down, creating the row of spruce treetops. Base paint in the lower portion of the forest with the same color. It usually takes two coats to achieve an opaque coverage

Step 5 – Individual Deciduous Trees at the edge of the field

Next we paint the individual trees at the edge of the field. These deciduous trees are easy to freehand. Just practice some on a scrap paper before you do them on your painting. If you feel a little unsure in freehanding, then transfer the tree lines using your pattern, but remember the fewer lines you transfer, the less you have to clean up and remove if you don't cover them all. To paint these trees I use a #10/0 Liner to draw in the trees and I water down the White paint to an inky-like consistency so it will flow easily from the brush. The important thing to remember about this type of tree is that the trunk is thicker where the tree meets the ground and then as it travels higher to the sky it gets narrower. It is the same with the branches...they are thicker where they attach to the trunk and gradually get thinner as they extend out from the trunk. Start at the base exerting pressure on the brush and then as you draw

the tree up toward the sky, gradually lessen the pressure till you are just riding on the tip of the brush getting the thinnest possible line. The branches of deciduous trees, like maple and birch extend upward as if reaching arms up to the sky.

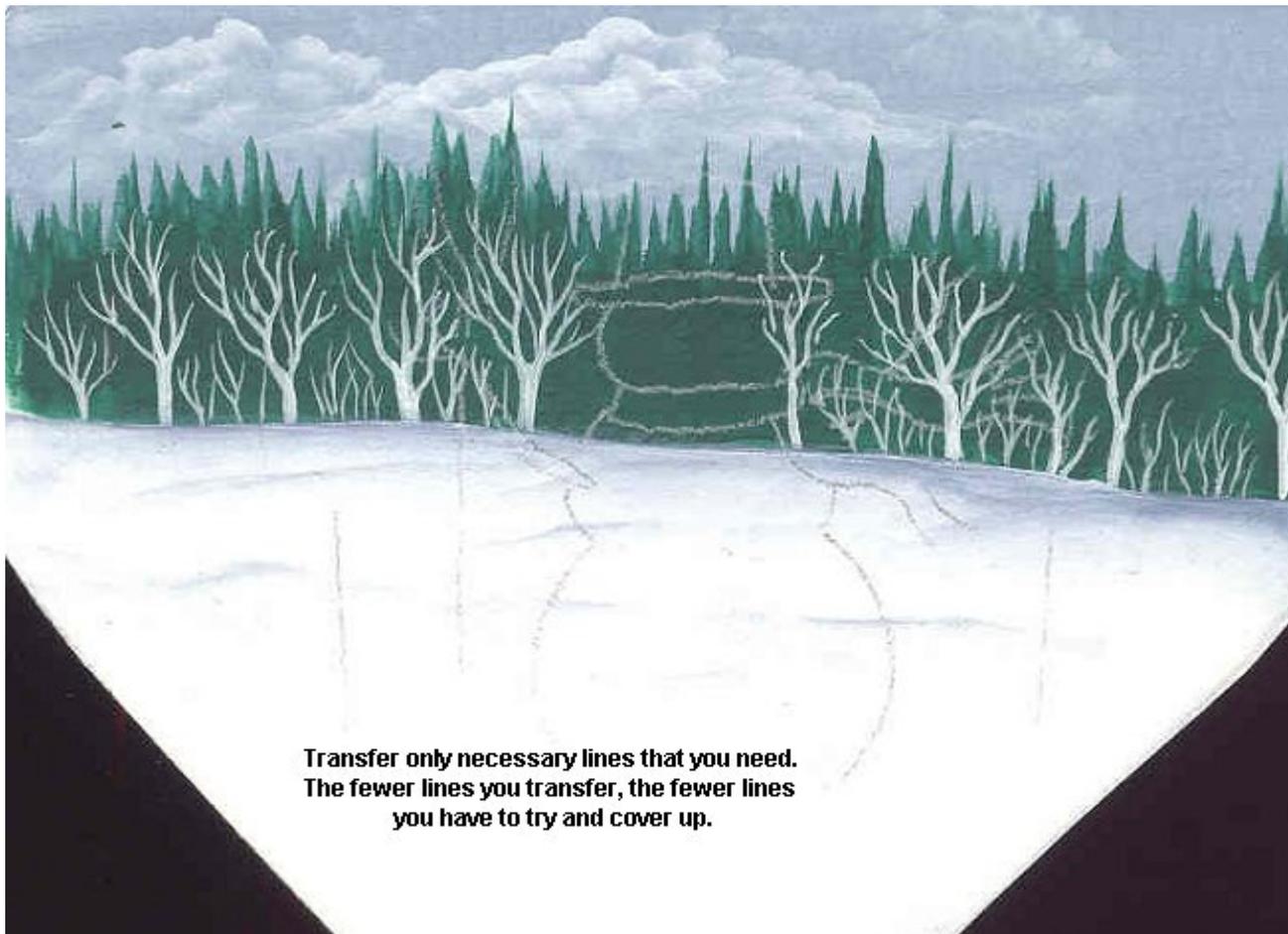


Step 6 – Shading the snow

This is our first float on the snow. I can emphasize enough how important subtlety is here. Be sure to sprinkle some clear drops of water on your palette like I did in the video. Now wet your #12 flat brush in the water/color float. Blot it on your paper towel. Stick just a corner of the brush in the puddle of Cape Cod Blue. Now blend on your palette, back and forth in the same spot. Don't just blend once or twice quickly and jump to the project. This requires patience and is not a step to be rushed. Proper blending is an incredibly important part of the floating process. Take another flat or a medium sized mop and dampen that with the water/color float mixture. Keep this handy, right next to your palette. Now with the paint edge of the sideloaded #12 flat up against the trees and the water edge downward, float the Cape cod Blue all the way across the painting. If your float leaves a "watermark"(a crisp edge of faded pigment on the water edge of your float) just take your mop and gently blend that edge away.... Use the mop like an eraser. Take a look at the project photo and take note of the different areas where you see the snowdrifts accented with blue shading. Snow is never flat and white. It drifts in the blowing wind creating mounds particularly around buildings, trees, bushes, and even elements that lie under the snow, like rocks or fallen trees. To indicate these in your picture, sideload the #12 Flat brush with Cape Cod Blue and float along the top of the drifts with the paint edge of the brush toward the top of the painting. There are drifts under each of the spruce trees in the field, under the snowman, and randomly placed in the open area of the field.

Step 7 – Transfer more details

Align your pattern tracing and using both grey & white graphite, transfer the snowman outline including his hat, arms, and broom. Transfer two small center lines for the "trunks" of the spruce trees.



Step 8 – Paint the snowman

Base snowman in White. This will take two to three coats. Be sure to properly load your brush....not too much paint.... and use smooth shape following strokes. When base painting with acrylic paint be sure you don't overwork the surface. Acrylic paint dries quickly and if you work with it too long, as it begins to dry, you will lift small sheets of acrylic from the surface leaving craters or "pock marks". Apply one thin coat quickly and smoothly. Let dry. Apply any additional coats the same way. Patience is key here. Don't try to get it done in one or two hastily, poorly applied coats. At this point I underpaint the portion of the scarf that falls over the forested area so that the Tomato Spice scarf will be consistent in hue when painted. Reds are very transparent colors and it would take many coats of Tomato Spice to even out the color over the entire scarf. This avoided by simply underpainting the scarf White. Sideload the #12 flat brush with Cape Cod Blue. Float shading on each side of the snowman. Continue floating some shading under the snowman to "anchor" him in the picture. Also use the brush to scrub in a shadow at the base of the snowman. Now sideload the #8 flat with Cape Cod Blue and float shading under the hat and across the bottom of each section of snowman.

With #1 liner loaded with inky-like Black paint in top hat, outlining the hat and filling it in. With the 10/0 liner loaded with Black, paint the eyes, mouth, and coal buttons after transferring whatever details you feel you need.

Load the #10/0 liner with Terra Cotta and draw in the carrot nose the same way we did on the snowman head on the banner. This time do not use as much pressure on the brush at the base of the nose. This nose is smaller. Keep it in proportion to the snowman.

Load #1 liner with Spice Brown and draw in broom handle and arms. Load #1 liner with Tomato Spice and paint in scarf. Load #10/0 liner with Straw and draw in broom bristles. Load #10/0 liner with Spice Brown and add tie on broom bristles.

Step 9 - Paint the spruce trees

Take note of the spruce trees on either side of the snowman. These are easily freehanded. Load the 10/0 liner brush with an inky consistency of Dark Forest Green. I start to paint a spruce tree by making a series of dashes vertically that indicate the trunk. I use these marks for a guide so that I keep the tree straight and somewhat symmetrical. Notice I do not use a solid line for the trunk.... it is easier to hide the trunk with the technique that I use, if you use

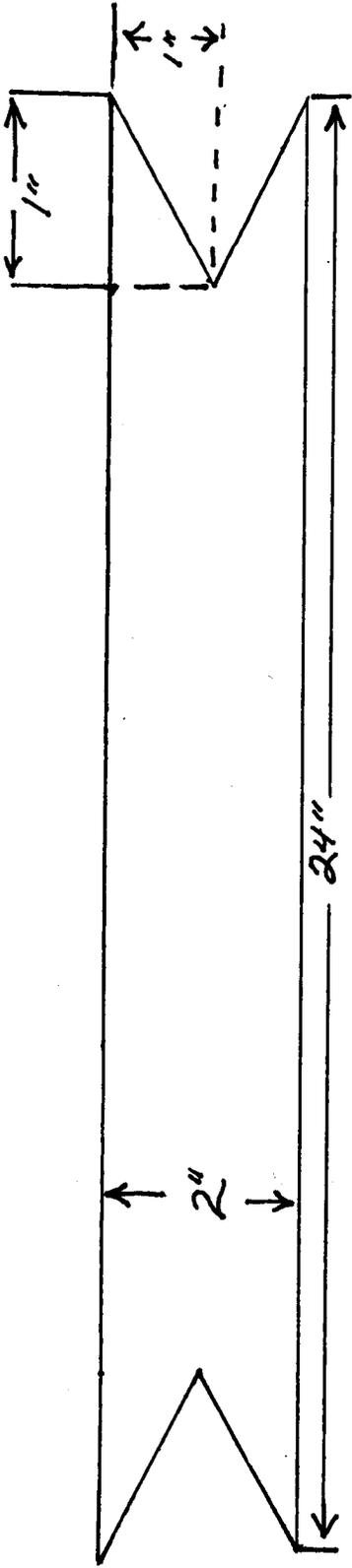
dashes. You do not want the trunk to be obvious and at all costs, be sure to avoid the "fish skeleton" look. I start at the top with my #10/0 liner (still loaded with inky-like Dark Forest Green). I draw in the very top branch of the tree, a straight vertical line. Then I start the top, side branches. These branches tilt upward at about a 45-degree angle...that natural plant tendency to reach for the light source. As you make the lines that indicate longer branches as you travel down the trunk, notice that as they get a little longer, they are pulled to a more horizontal angle because of gravity. The really long branches toward the base of the tree actually slant downward because they are larger and the pull of gravity is even greater. These strokes are done in short strokes in a choppy staggered pattern. In a winter scene like this the white from the background that shows through looks like snow on the branches. Side load your # 8 flat and go in and add more floated shading under the trees and add a shadow for the broom.

Step 10 – The outside border for the heart

There are two ways to approach this step. You can align your tracing to the heart shape and transfer the border using grey graphite paper. My preferred method is to use a drafting compass. My reason is that in the process of cutting and sanding the heart, the shape can vary from the original design. A consistent width looks best and the compass can be set to that width and will scribe a very nice guideline for the border. Paint the border in Liberty Blue. Sign your painting and varnish the wood pieces.



When dry assemble by gluing the heart in place.



LETTERS

