## CAMILLA d'ERRICO

FELL

Inspiration and Techniques from the Pop Surrealism Art Phenomenon





# Inspiration and Techniques from the Pop Surrealism Art Phenomenon

CAMILLA d'ERRICO



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#### DEDICATION

I hereby dedicate this book to those who have put up with all my crazy artistic habits. You know who you are!

It goes without saying that my life has been a culmination of ups and downs, sorrows and joys, frustrations and elations, and throughout the roller coaster that is my life, you have stuck by me, even when I may not have deserved it. If I could, I would write a chapter on how to train an artist, but then it would be the only fictional part of this book. Because as you all know, that is impossible. Even though I'm still not housebroken and I may throw a few tantrums, obsess way too much over vampires and zombies, and paint outside the lines, I know that I have the foundation of your love and strength to tether me to the real world and keep me from scattering to the winds.

So this is for you Poe-hulk, Llama, Frosted Flakes, Bean, Mammacia, Pappalino, and Loki. Yes, even the dog gets an acknowledgment, since he's the only one that will let me dress him up in silly outfits that make me giggle.



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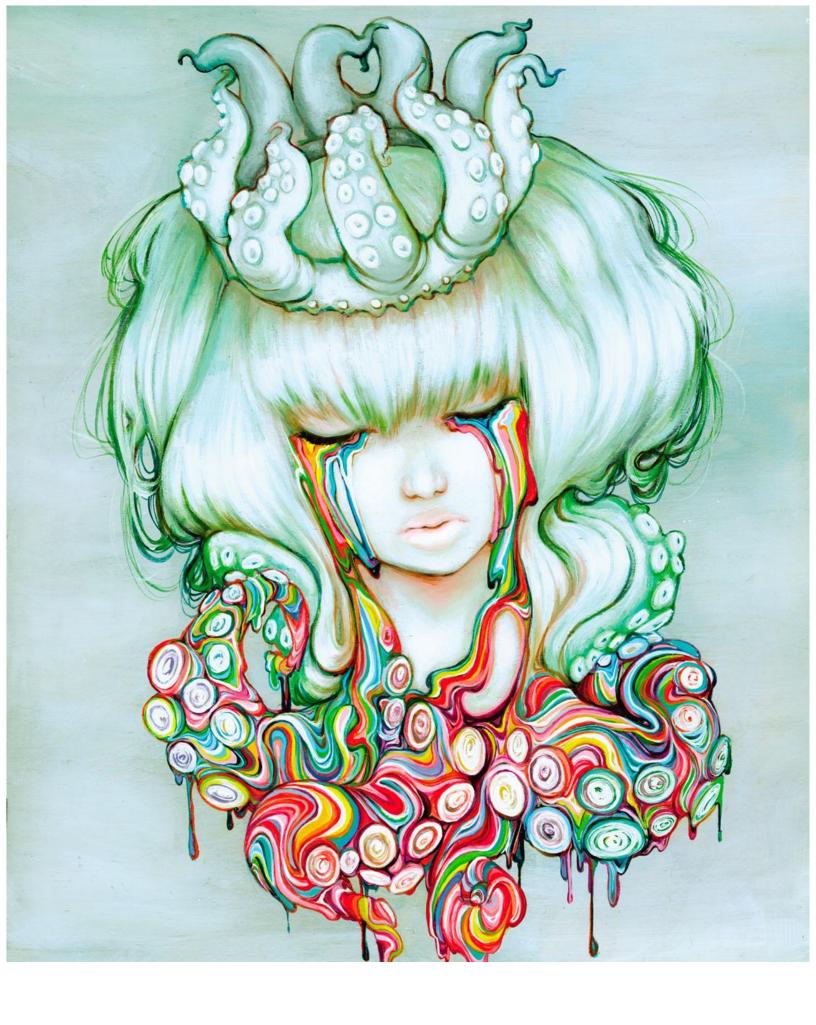


## FOREWORD

Where do I begin with Camilla? It wasn't so much of a battle or much of a fight. And no, it wasn't with her; it was with a couple ninjas who happened to be kicking it at the bar we were all going to meet up at. You might be saying "NINJAS!?!," but it isn't really that strange. The bar looked like the cantina at Mos Eisley, full of stormtroopers, Alf, a couple Smurfs, and Panthro from *Thundercats*. Yup, DragonCon was happening. It was my first time at the show (and to Atlanta as well), and I had no idea how into cosplay people got. I apparently wasn't welcome in my nifty blue jeans and plain white T-shirt. I am no stranger to a ninja fight and welcomed the exercise, but it was over before it began when Camilla came flying in with a jumping roundhouse kick that took not just one, but both of the dark assassins out. Amazed, I asked her if she was a superhero and she said, "Yes, obviously. I'm Camilla d'Errico."

I had been well aware of Camilla's work by the time we met. My good friend Alex Pardee had turned me on to her work many years previous, and Camilla had even participated in my curated exhibition *INLE*, contributing a very beautiful piece that I am still very fond of. I have always been amazed at how well-rounded Camilla's talents are and how her drawing skills enable her to freely express herself in her paintings. All the pencils for the beautiful comic books she has rendered have definitely burned there way into her muscle memory, making her storytelling that much more pleasing to the eye. The girls she paints invite you into their playful existence and dare you to weave crazy things into your hair as well. I have been an admirer of Camilla's work for some time and assume you are as well. Now we both can share some enjoyment in this book.

-GREG "CRAOLA" SIMKINS



## INTRODUCTION

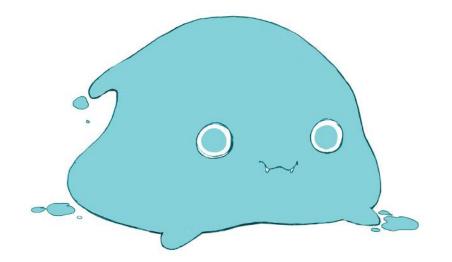
My mamma once told me that when I was born, one of the first things she noticed about me were my hands. She said that I had the hands of an artist. (Years later, she showed me a picture of myself as a baby and I realized that one of the first things she probably actually noticed about me was my radical troll mohawk!) Just like my hands showed my mamma my path, my heart told me that I was going to be an artist.

Since 2005 my paintings have been shown in galleries throughout the world—from New York to Tokyo, and a few places in between. I contribute to a movement the art world refers to as "Pop Surrealism."

As a Pop Surrealist, I've learned over the years that I have a lot to offer others even as I grow as artist. With this book, I'm super excited to answer all the questions that I've been asked about my painting techniques and about what it's like to be a working professional artist. I'll do my darnedest to give you as many tips and tricks that I've learned along the way, to help guide you, and to show you how to have fun painting!

I'm ready to bare my soul to you, expose my secrets, and help you dive into the world of Pop Surrealism. I'll show you the techniques that have helped me define myself as an artist in this incredible movement. I can teach you my techniques and how to express emotions in your paintings, but never forget that painting is an expression of yourself. I want you to create paintings that mean something to you, using my lessons as your guide!

In the chapters ahead, I'll show you what I've learned, teach you some fun tricks, and give you a peek into my world.

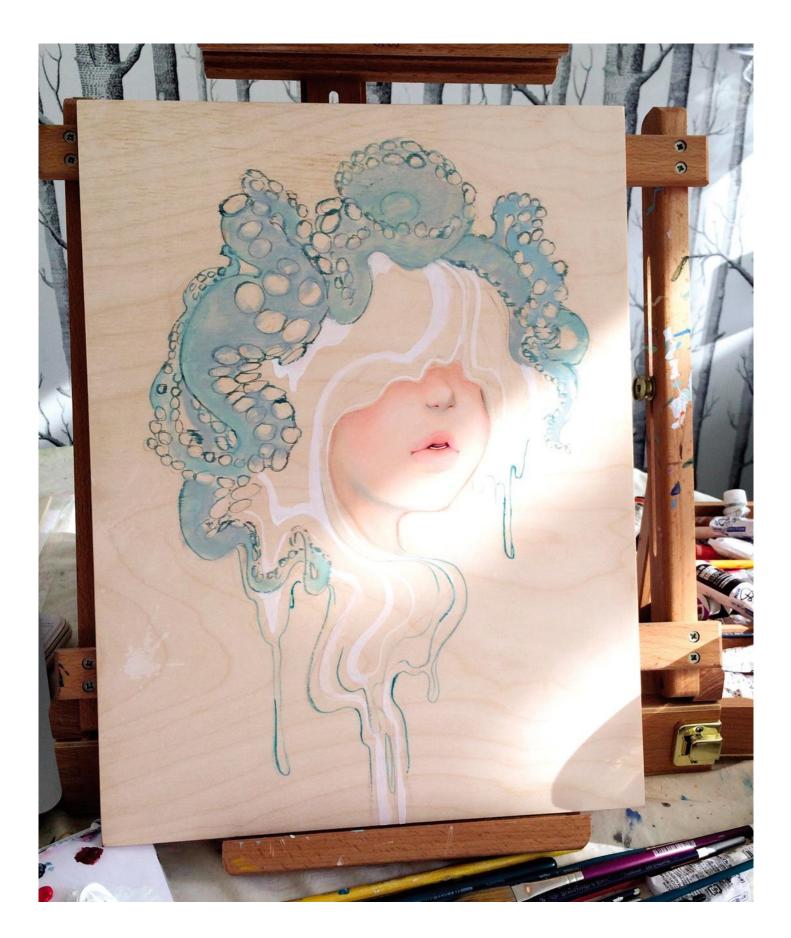


Hey there folks! I'm Zu. You may know my cousin, Inku from *Pop Manga*. He is my third cousin twice removed on my mother's great-uncle's side. We have a few things in common and poking fun at Camilla is one of them, ha ha. I'll give you some tips and make things a little more fun, just like my cousin Inku did in Camilla's first book *Pop Manga*.



### PART 1

## CREATING POP SURREALISM





## <sup>1</sup> POP SURREALISM: WHAT IS IT?

Art movements are created in hindsight—we reflect on what happened and that's how we are able to label and identify them. For those artists like myself, Mark Ryden, Audrey Kawasaki, James Jean, Camille Rose Garcia, and others, working within the movement, creating art before there was even a label, we didn't pattern our art after something that we saw, but rather created it on the precipice of defining the style, giving the movement its foundation. My fellow Pop Surrealists and I actively created the art without being consciously aware of what we had to do in order to be Pop Surrealists.

People ask me whether I like being labeled as a Pop Surrealist, whether I like being defined in such a way. I don't mind it at all, because I don't limit myself to it. I create art for myself; whether or not it fits within the confines of the definition of Pop Surrealism is up for interpretation. However, I believe that artists within the movement dictate what Pop Surrealism is, simply by breaking boundaries and continuously creating new and diverse art.



## THE EVOLUTION OF POP SURREALISM

Wikipedia would say that Pop Surrealism came from Low Brow art, and that it is an interchangeable label. However, I disagree. Although Low Brow art shares similarities with Pop Surrealism, there is a very distinct difference between the two for me. Low Brow artists began mixing comics characters and other pop culture elements into their paintings in the 1970s, creating artwork that featured low-end imagery that could be placed in high-end galleries. But where Low Brow moves in a dark and underground direction, Pop Surrealism has a brighter, more whimsical, and more playful nature, often containing elements of both humor and bizarreness. Yes, Pop Surrealism may have a connection to Low Brow; however, I believe that Pop Surrealism has taken on a life of its own and expanded beyond its Low Brow roots.

When I think of Pop Surrealism, I think of it in the following manner: *Pop* refers to pop culture and the *Surreal* part to the Daliesque nature of the imagery. In my paintings, gravity doesn't exist, animals blend into fruit, and time and space are not concerns. Pop Surrealism is about bending the rules of physics and mixing in characters viewers will recognize from cartoons, history, and fiction to create a whimsical, playful image. (That is my definition and I'm sticking with it!)

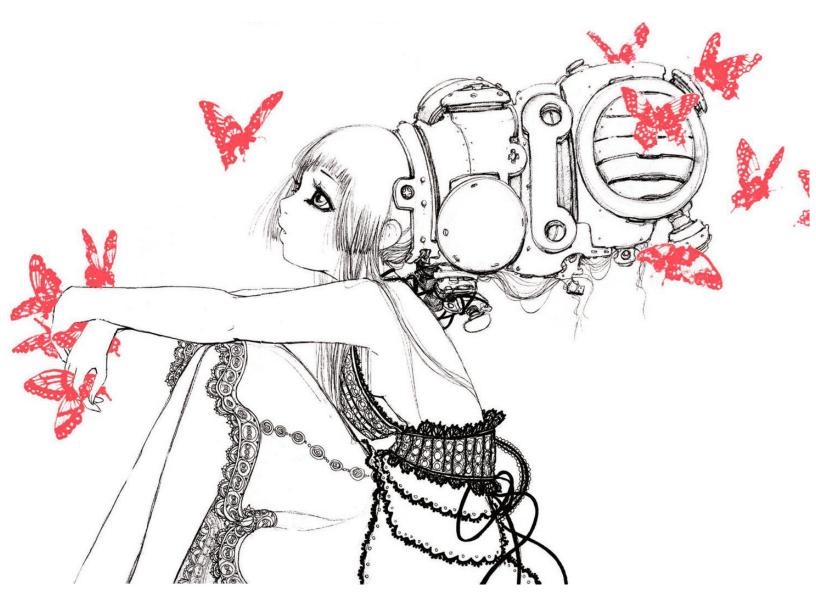


Got an idea? Great! Now imagine it defying physics, logic, and convention, and you've basically got yourself a recipe for Pop Surrealism.

You might look at my art and ask, "If it's based on pop culture, why don't all of your paintings have Hello Kitty or He-Man in them?" In truth, I don't always use characters from pop culture in my paintings, and not all the artwork in the movement contains this type of imagery. I and the other artists within Pop Surrealism have created a genre in which we can play with a variety of iconography and imagery, where we can create freely and wildly without having to continuously add in pop culture references.

The Pop Surrealism movement grew because of galleries that support the style. Galleries such as Corey Helford, The Ayden Gallery, Thinkspace, Merry Karnowsky, and Jonathan LeVine are just a few that have embraced and set the stage for Pop Surrealism's expansion. Additionally, magazines like *Juxtapoz* and *Hi-Fructose* are a huge part of what makes this sensational art movement widely accepted and represented in North America and internationally. Even celebrities have embraced it. Lady Gaga wore a meat dress so similar to Mark Ryden's painting *Incarnation* that there is no doubt in my mind that she was inspired by the godfather of Pop Surrealism.

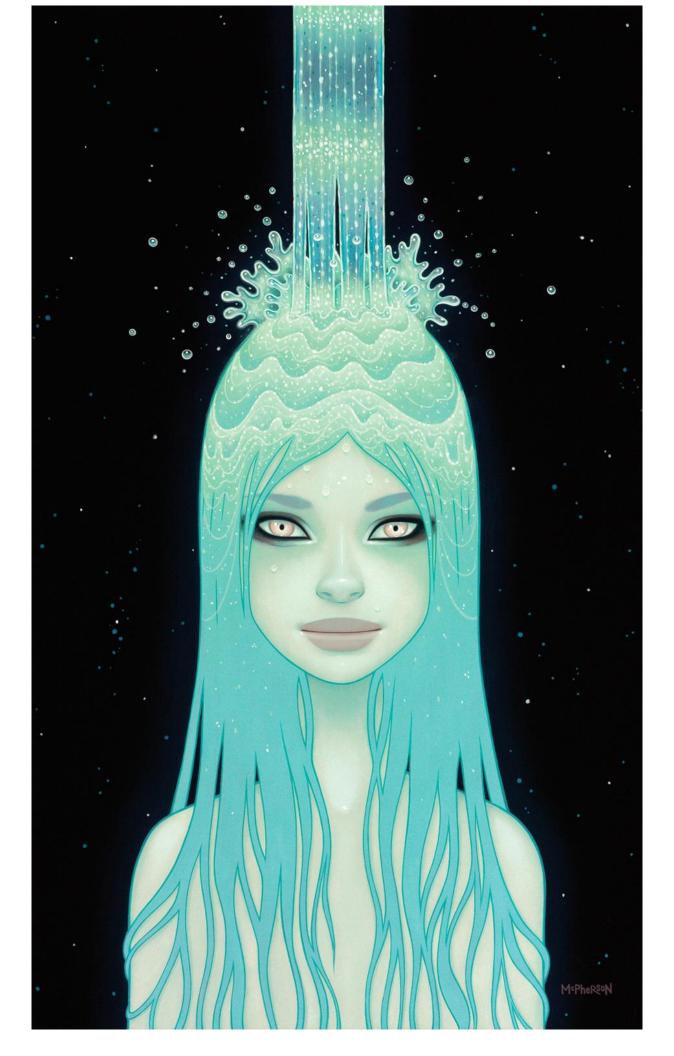
There are so many artists in the movement. In addition to the ones I've already named, there's Ron English, Lola, Gary Baseman, Sylvia Ji, Charlie Immer, and so many more—all doing an incredible variety of paintings using lush and bizarre imagery. The only thing they have in common is the surreal nature of their subject matter.



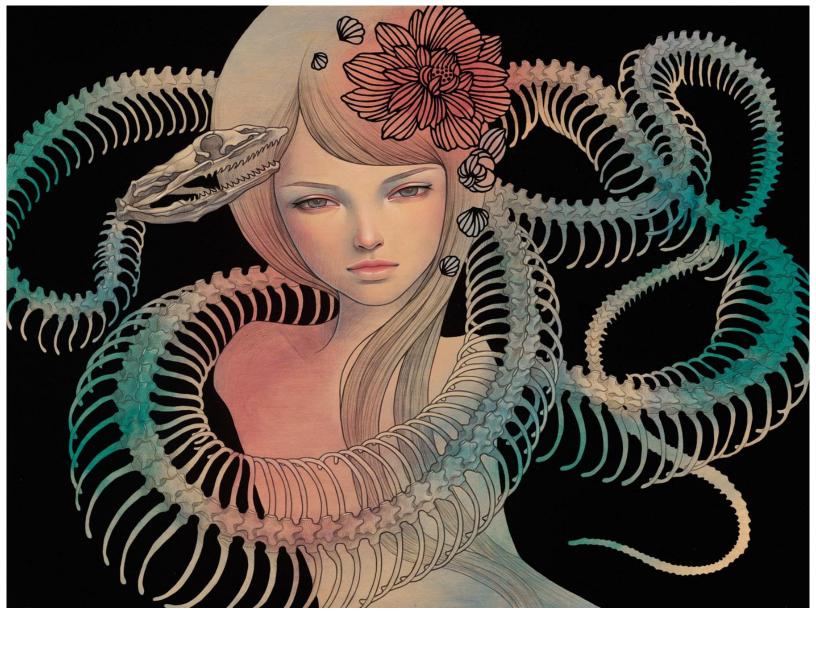
### POP SURREALISM-BE INSPIRED!

I think it's important to see what kind of art is being created by some of the top Pop Surrealist artists in the industry. So have a look at these incredible paintings by Travis Louie, Tara McPherson, Hikari Shimoda, and Audrey Kawasaki. I hope you'll be inspired to try your own style, to let go of any preconceived notions of what you should paint, and just produce whatever comes into your mind.











## <sup>2</sup> ORIGINALITY, INSPIRATION, AND INTUITION

You are born an original, so don't die a copy.

Part of being an artist is yourself, who you are and what inspires you, which is why it is so important for you to be original and follow your intuition. Taking someone else's ideas or style does nothing to show how you see the world. So even though other artists may inspire you, be true to yourself and never plagiarize someone else's artwork.

I know it can be hard to invent original ideas and put them out in the world without comparing yourself to others. In fact, comparisons will be something that you'll have to deal with often. Most people look at artwork and try to identify why they like it or dislike it based on something they've already seen, which is why I get a lot of people comparing me to artists like Audrey Kawasaki and Terada Katsuya. We may have things in common and vaguely similar styles, but when it comes down to it, my art is my own and I never look at other people's artwork as a source to base my own work on.

### WHAT INSPIRES ME

So where do my ideas come from? The question I'm most frequently asked is, "What's your inspiration?" It's a simple question with a complicated answer.

People are very curious to know where my ideas come from. Where do I get the idea to put a huge helmet on a girl's head or to mix octopuses with lovebirds, or why do I paint girls crying rainbows? I can't tell you where my ideas come from because it would be like my knowing why teal is my favorite color, or why I like apple pie so much, or why I dreamed that I was Spider-Man. I *do* know, however, the importance of the question and the significance of the answer, so I'll do my best to unlock the secret to my inspiration.

## **FINDING INSPIRATION**

So where does inspiration come from? In truth, I love many things, as a result much of the world inspires and feeds me creatively: nature, photography, fashion, literature, and art that ranges from the classical works by Raphael and Alfonse Mucha to Range Murata, James Jean, and Banksy. I'm inspired by the idea of breaking boundaries. One of the things that inspires me the most is trying to figure out people—the origin of emotions, human imagination, and how people view the world. I have grand inspirations, but small things inspire me, too. Textures, phrases, eyes, and the detail of a flower petal are a few of the little things that excite me. I love eyes the most, and I probably make a little more eye contact with people than I should, which is likely why I'm so obsessed with the actor that plays Damon Salvatore: his eyes are so bright and blue—they are hypnotic!

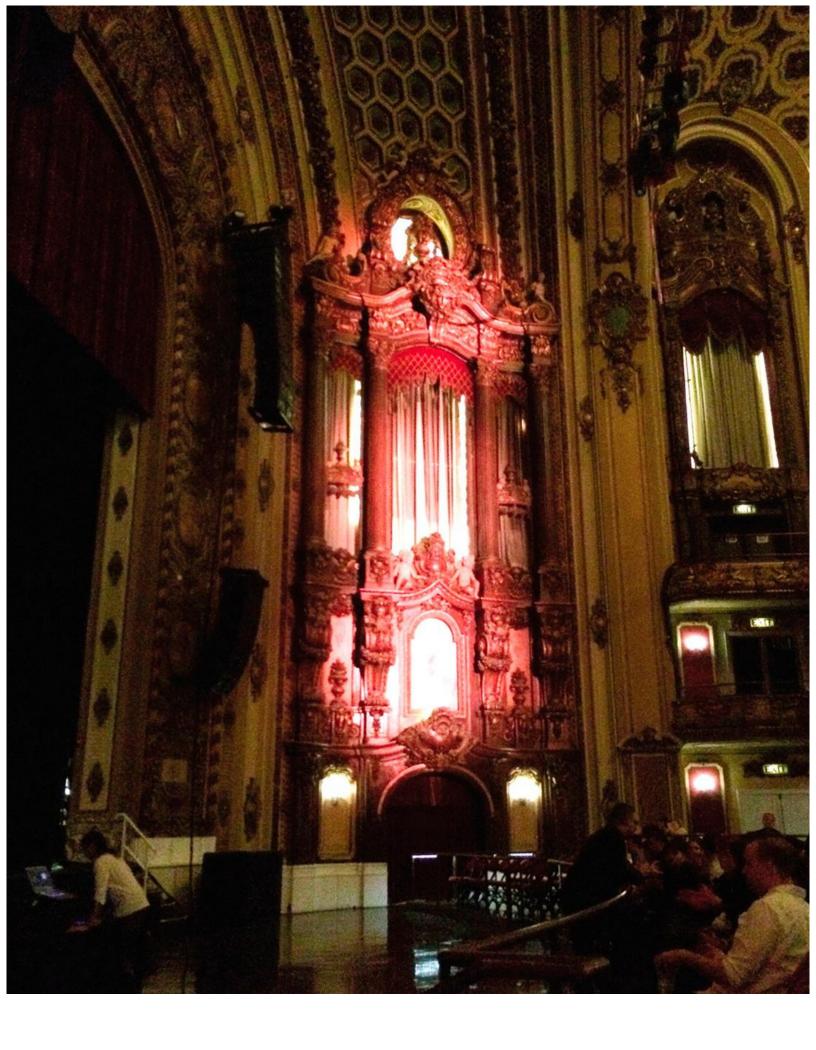
A big difference between artists and the rest of the population is that an artist will see the world and the subtext behind it. Being imaginative is being open to interpretations and exploring and expressing ideas and emotions in ways that challenge the ordinary and present them in extraordinary ways.

Emotions and events in my life inspire me to express significant emotional milestones in my art. Experiencing heartbreak and loss, finding love, and being happy, angry, and lonely all provide fuel to the artistic flame that drives me creatively. The most inspiring of these emotions, of course, is sadness; however there is nothing quite as powerful as love. Being in love and losing love are equally inspiring.

### USING INTUITION: GO WITH YOUR GUT!

I've imagined so many paintings in my life that sometimes it's a little daunting to know just which idea I should paint. This is where intuition comes into play. If you have a sketchbook full of ideas and dozens upon dozens of drawings to choose from, go with your gut instinct! A lot of times I will draw a series of paintings, and then months will go by before I suddenly feel like painting one of them. As an artist, paint what you feel and go with your gut!

There are times, though, when I've begun a painting and halfway through lost my steam on it. I don't abandon it—I've very rarely left a painting unfinished—instead, I'll take a step back and leave it for a few days. If I come back to paint and I still don't like what's going on, I'll change some of the elements! Never paint against your intuition—your gut knows best.













### CHOOSING COLORS INTUITIVELY

Choosing the colors in a painting is often the most time-consuming and difficult part for me. Since my sketches are all done in black and white, I don't see my ideas in color—well, sometimes I do, but more often than not, I decide the colors as I'm drawing on the wood panel. Occasionally I visualize the painting fully rendered—that's part of the intuition of choosing colors. You'll imagine them flowing together harmoniously. But if you have trouble deciding on colors, start with one element in the painting and work from there. Or you can decide on an overall color theme and work from that point. So if you say "I want my painting to be blue," then use blue and consider using complementary colors for balance.

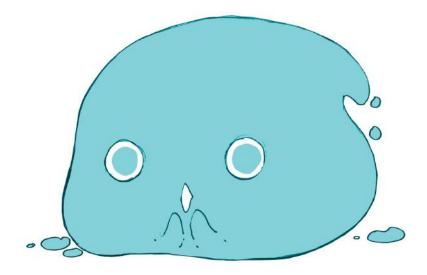
Basic color theory can help you choose colors that go best together. Blue and orange, yellow and purple, and red and green are complementary colors because they are on opposite sides of the color spectrum and will give you the most contrast possible. Green and blue, yellow and orange, and red and purple are on the same side of the color spectrum and will work harmoniously together. Cold and warm tones give you good contrast as well, like blue and red, or yellow and blue. One of my favorite uses of contrast is with eye color. In *Canadian Tiger*, I used reds and whites throughout the entire painting, but then for contrast, I made the girl's eyes ice blue. This one element stood out but also focused the viewer's attention to the center of the painting and the surrounding elements. Intuition plays a big part not only in choosing colors and elements but also in choosing titles for my paintings.

#### **CHOOSING TITLES INTUITIVELY**

The trickiest part of a painting for me is naming it! I've come up with hundreds of names over the years. Searching for them may seem like fishing in an infinite creative ocean, but finding the right name is like casting a reel into the water and hoping a fish bites. The best way to come up with a name is to just use your intuition: study the painting and what it means to you, and then decide on a name based on what you *feel* from the painting. Alternatively, put a bunch of words into a hat and pull some out and see what you get. My favorite title that I ever came up with was *A Tickle on a Dull Doomsday*, and I literally pulled the name out of a hat.

#### **BECOMING A BETTER ARTIST**

Staying open to the seeds of inspiration and intuition, to new things and ideas, will allow your creativity to grow—although truthfully, sometimes it doesn't even feel like those seeds are germinating. That's okay! Don't wait for inspiration or intuition to punch you on the nose: get interested in things, ask questions, investigate, and be adventurous and original! All of these things will help you become a better artist.



Camilla will never admit it but I know I'm her muse! Ha ha!



# <sup>3</sup> TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Creating a painting is like going to war. You need an arsenal of weapons and even some provisions to keep you sustained when going into battle. The same things are needed when you begin to paint.

#### PAINT

What paint do I use? Here's my secret, I use Holbein Duo oils. These beautiful babies are oils that can mix with water! That's impossible right? "Oil doesn't mix with water," you say. Well, Holbein found a way to make it work. In fact, the Holbein Duo oils are the artist-grade water-soluble oils I prefer. I love to work with these paints because they are so flexible. I can use water, linseed oil, acrylic paints, and mediums to thin and blend them, allowing for a wide variety of painting techniques. As far as I know, I am the only Pop Surrealist artist who primarily uses water-soluble oils.

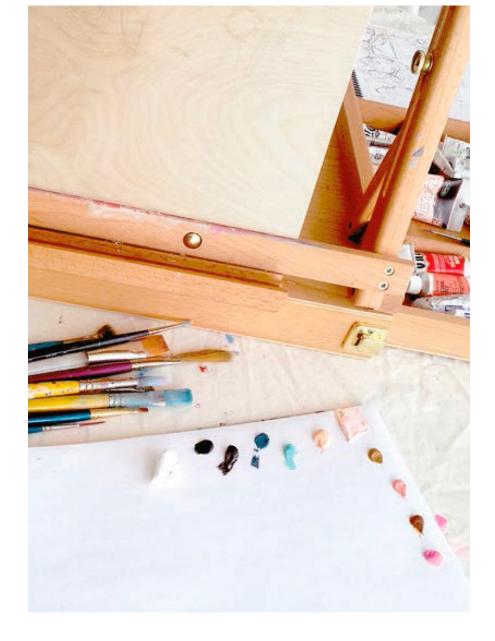
Why do I use the Duo oils instead of regular oil paints? While traditional oils are amazing, they come with some baggage. They take a long time to dry and you need to use chemical solvents to clean them. Because I have the attention span of a hamster, I have found that I don't have the patience to work with such requirements. Also, the fumes from the solvents were too strong for my tiny studio.

What makes these paints great? For one thing, you can achieve multiple looks with them. Since they blend with water, you can use them like watercolor paints and do washes on paper and on canvases. And since they have the consistency of oils, you can also use them as impasto paints, getting thick, luxurious textures from them. I love that they dry faster than regular oils. With them, I can create many different layers and use different blending techniques. The end result is a look that people don't really know how to place, and I find that very exciting.

Other paints I use are the Holbein Heavy Body Acrylics, Holbein Goauche, and Golden Liquid acrylics (which I mix with my Duo oils). I do this when I want to speed up the drying time of the oils or when I am doing underpainting or very thin linework. I'll walk you through these techniques in chapter 10.

What's the difference between Duo oils and acrylics? There are several: the texture, drying time, pigments, and blendability are all different. Oil paints have a higher pigment count than acrylics. That means there is more pigment in the oils, making them richer and more vibrant in color. Also, acrylics dry differently than oils. The color alters when acrylics dry, often becoming darker and duller than the wet paint. The color also changes when you varnish an acrylic painting. Varnish can sometimes darken acrylics or make them appear more vibrant depending on the brand of acrylics and type of varnish. I suggest you do small painting tests on canvases and then check the varnish on those tests to see which result you like best. It's best to play around with the paints, mediums, and varnishes to see which combination works best for you. Remember, I have spent years testing and painting to hone my painting so fun! You can experiment with gouache, watercolors, pencil crayons, oils, water-soluble oils, and so on. All artists have different ways of working and expressing themselves with art, so find what works best and is easiest for you and have fun.







#### QUALITY VERSUS COSTS

I often get asked if it's important to use quality paints, or if less expensive paints will provide the same results. Students and artists who are starting out have to be budget conscious, and I understand that. *I was a student!* I began painting using low-grade paints and brushes. You don't need the most expensive paints to start out; however, you will find that they make a huge difference when you begin to mature as an artist. Low-grade paints do not feel or look the same as high-grade ones. They do not have the same amount of pigments or textures. Often people who tell me they don't like painting say so because they are using the wrong paints.

Whatever you do, do not buy dollar store paints if you plan on keeping your pieces for a long time. Artist-grade paints are archival, which means they don't fade as quickly and they go onto the canvas much smoother and richer. If you don't have a lot of money to start out, don't worry—student-grade paints are fantastic and will help you find your stride as an artist. Once you have the budget for it, switch over to artist grade.

#### **MIXING PAINTS**

To mix my paints and thin them out, I use tap water and Golden Acrylic Glazing Medium (AGM). I know AGM is for acrylic paints, but it is great for thinning out my paints without having them lose a lot of consistency. Water will unevenly distribute the color, and is better for washes. The AGM will thin out the paint, but gives you an even distribution of color while still maintaining a creamy consistency.

You'll also need a surface to mix your paints. I like to use disposable palettes. I know it goes against my inner Captain Planet, but I have found that these wax paper palettes allow me to mix my paints and clean up very easily. I've used all sorts of surfaces as palettes—plastic trays, glass surfaces, even old plates. Since I like to mix a lot of different colors, I need a large surface area for spreading my paint around. Once I've used up all the room on the disposal palette, I rip the sheet away and start on a new one. You may find that you don't need as much area as I do; therefore, a reusable palette might just be perfect for you!



#### **DRAWING TOOLS**

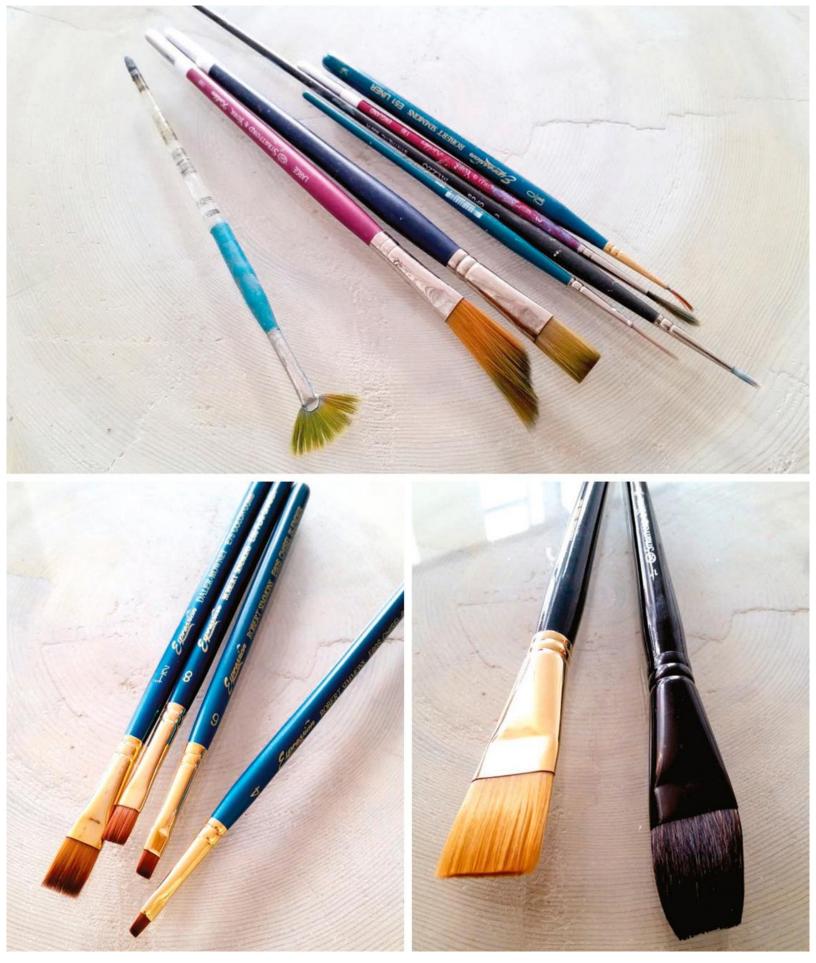
I use watercolor pencils to do all my underdrawings. These are amazing, because you can blend them with your paints. If you use regular graphite pencils, the lead will blend with but also muddy your colors, so invest in some watercolor pencils instead. Don't use crayons or pencil crayons either. The wax in their leads makes them difficult to paint over, and you'll have to add lots of layers to hide them. When you choose your watercolor pencils, try to select muted colors like sepias and light blue grays—colors that are not too dark. You don't want the drawings to show through your paints.

Along with your watercolor pencils, you'll also need an eraser—not just any eraser, but an artist-grade white eraser. Pink erasers will ruin your canvas. They leave color and streaks, and are pretty much terrible! If you need to erase your drawing or fix a mistake, lightly erase so that you don't damage the wood or surface.



### BRUSHES

Once you have the Holbein Duo oils, you'll need the tools to work with them. Brushes come in many shapes, sizes, and lengths. I like to use short handle ones, because I paint on small canvases. To achieve the fine details of my paintings, I also use very thin brushes. For those reasons, I use synthetic short handle brushes. I love Robert Simmons, Opus Allegro, Holbein, and Trekell brushes the best.



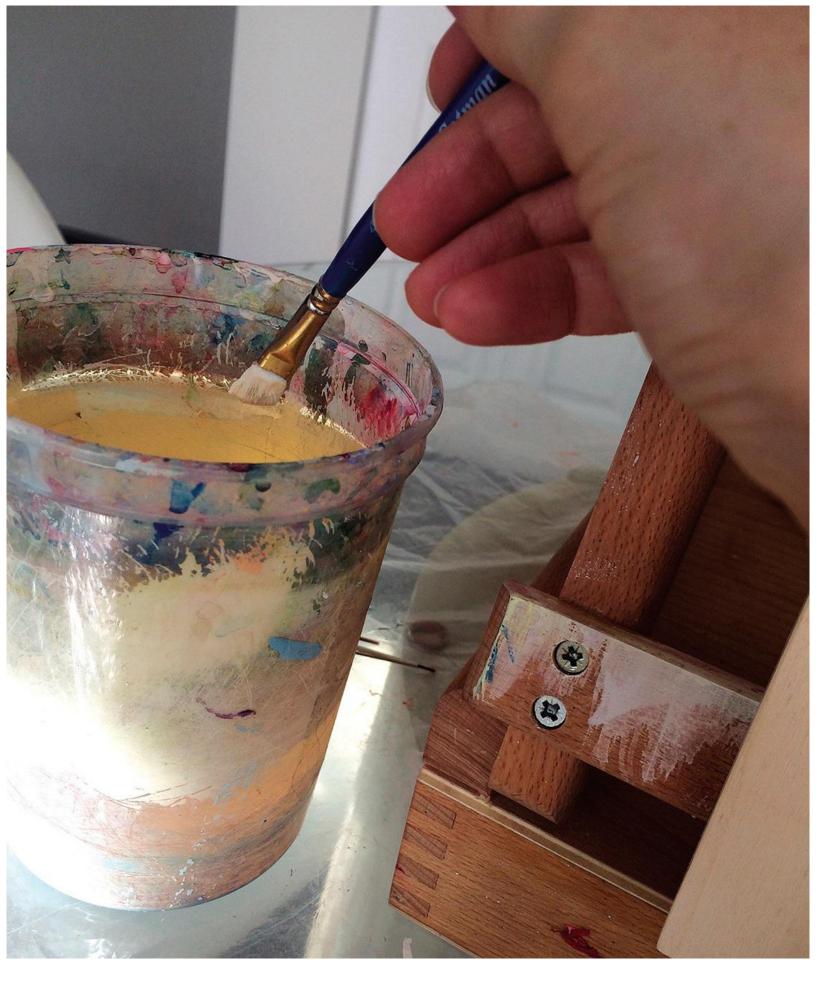
These are a few of my favorite ones. The brushes depicted here are a mix of brushes from the Robert Simmons Expression Series, the Windsor & Newtown Cotman Series, the Stratford & York Kielder Series, and the Stratford & York Rulland Series.

Liner brushes are great for hair and long thin applications of color. Comb brushes are great

for textures. I use angle brushes for edges. Chisel brushes and round, flat, blender brushes are nice for blending. Why do I prefer short handle to long? Long handle brushes are more commonly used for large paintings that you keep at a distance, so you have to grip the handle at the end to produce longer strokes. Short handle brushes add intimacy to my paintings. I work very closely to my canvas because my paintings' details are so small and thin. I grip my handle at the base of the brush head rather than at the end of the brush. I like the Robert Simmons brushes because they have thicker handles that are very nice to grip.

There are many, many companies that make brushes and a lot of options to choose from each one. I personally choose acrylic brushes because they blend really nicely and give a smooth finish to my Duo oils. I go into the store and select my brushes carefully by touching them and testing them with my fingertips and palm, making sure the tips are not too stiff and that the hairs won't fall out.

The lifespan of a paintbrush depends on how well you maintain it. You must never ever soak your paintbrushes in your water bucket. This will ruin the wood of the handle and also bend your brush tip, and no amount of soaking will clean it. The best way to clean your brushes is to use "The Masters" Brush Cleaner and Preserve. Place a little in the palm of your hand, and then slowly rub your brush tip into your palm until all the paint comes out. You can also use biodegradable dish soap if you don't have brush cleaner and use the same process to clean your brushes. Rinse the brushes and place them on a cotton rag to dry. Trekell actually makes a brush conditioner that revitalizes your brushes—it will bring your brushes back from the dead! Use this to lengthen the lifespan of your brushes.



### PAINTING SURFACES

Another huge part of my painting process is what I choose to paint on-wood. Specifically, I paint on birch plywood panels that are 1/4- to 1/2-inch thick. Many people ask me why I do this. Before making the switch, I used to work on canvas. Cotton canvases often come gessoed and stretched over a wood frame. They are flexible and white, so you start completely blank. You often have to be mindful of your hand pressure because you can easily dent the canvas. Pop Surrealists like Audrey Kawasaki and Amy Sol inspired my switch to wood. They were painting on wood and using the wood grain in their paintings, giving them a unique and fresh take. I was completely enthralled by their results, so I bought a piece of plywood, created my first painting on it, and fell in love! These panels can be purchased from multiple sources—online at Trekell.com, at Opus Art Supplies stores, and even at your local lumber store. In the beginning, I would go to my local hardware store and pick out huge sheets of birchwood. Birchwood is the lightest wood and takes paint really well. You don't want to choose a wood that has very dark wood grain or you'll find yourself using a lot of paint to cover it up. I spend lots of time looking at the grains on panels and picking just the right one. After that, I have it cut into many smaller pieces. Doing so saves money, but requires a few extra steps.

You can't paint on rough wood, so make sure to sand your wood canvases with sandpaper or an electric sander. Don't oversand them though. The more you sand, the more texture you remove. Wood that is too smooth will make it difficult for the paint to absorb into it. Trekell panels are already cut, sanded, and ready to go!

Painting on wood is very different than painting on stretched canvas. The wood is absorbent and stiff, so it forces you to do a lot of layering; however, it also allows you to work with the grain in interesting ways. Each wood grain is different and absorbs color differently. Some will take red really well, while others will blend really well with blues. It keeps you on your toes, but gives you a range that may even surprise you.

#### EASELS

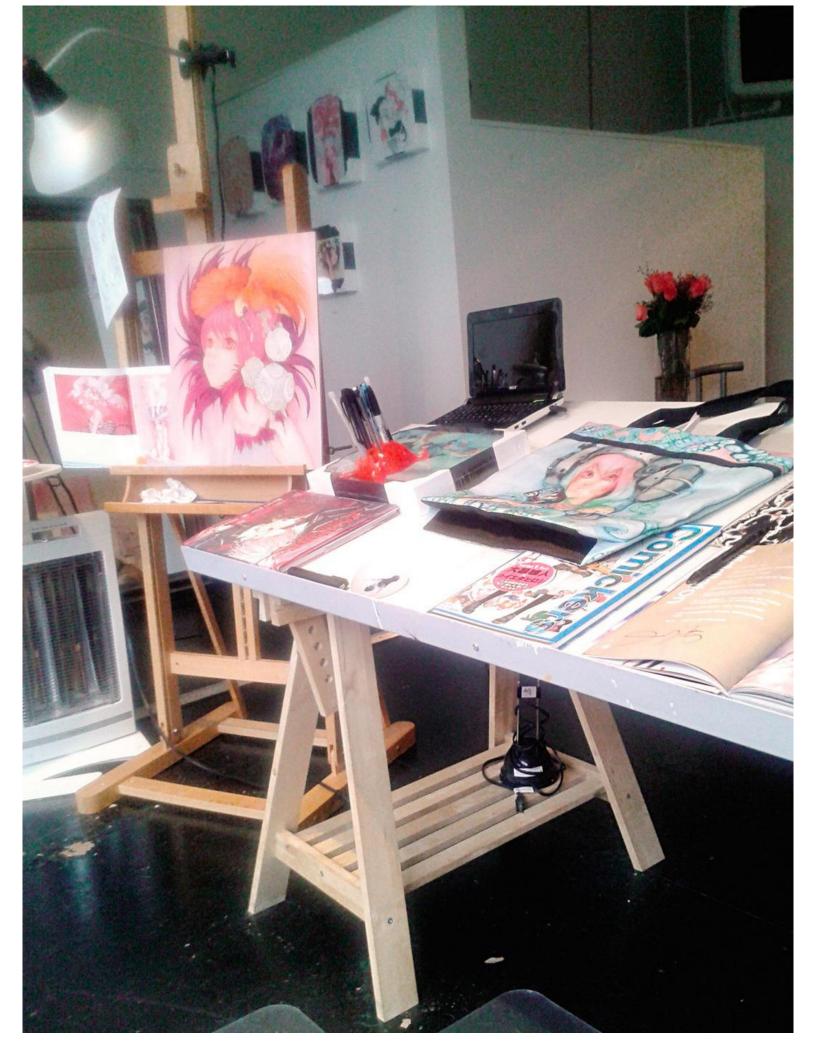
Easels are an important part of an artist's tool kit. Why do you need one? Why can't you just paint flat on a table?

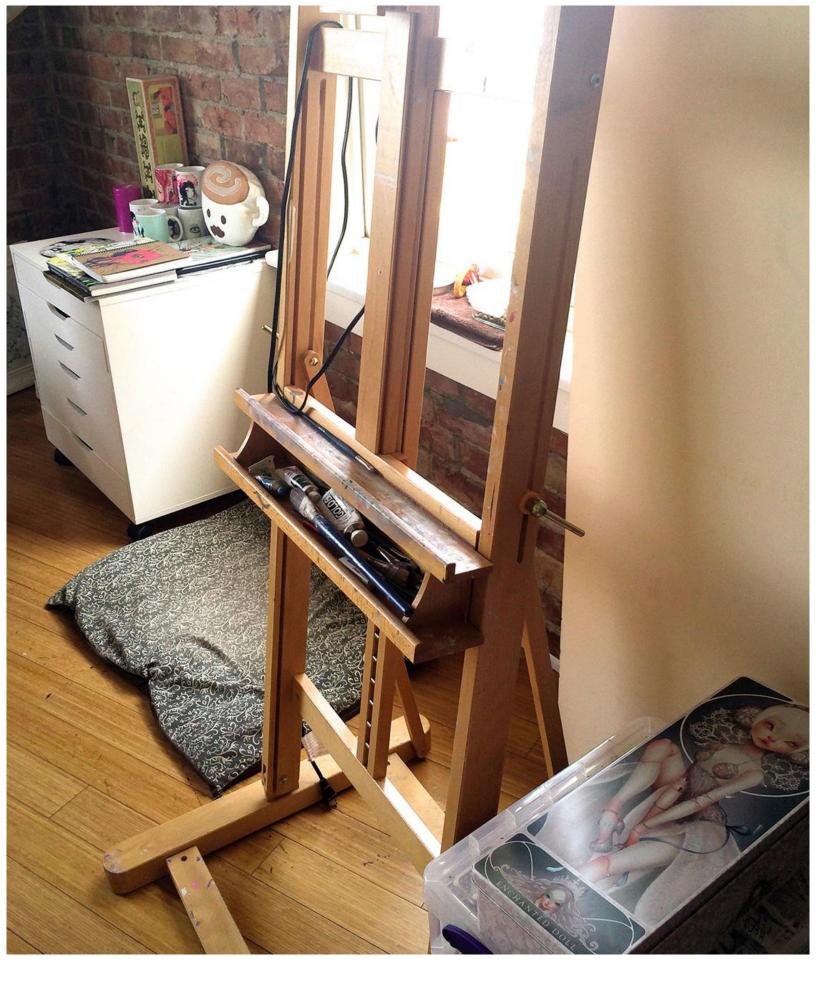
The perspective you work in is very important. If you work flat, you see your painting at a very different angle than you will when it is mounted on the wall. Easels prop up your painting so that it faces you directly, thereby giving you the perfect perspective for painting.

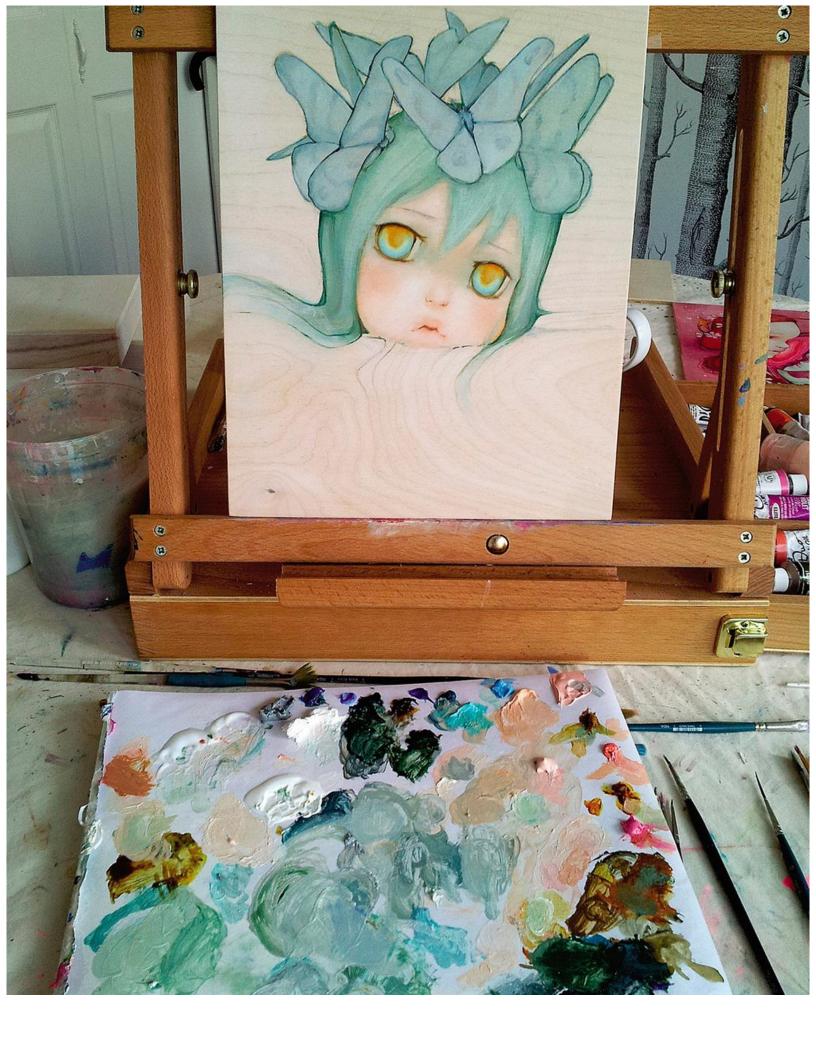
There are many kinds of easels. I have two—one is a tabletop easel that I can use on my kitchen table and the other is a standing easel that I keep at my outside studio. The tabletop easel is great for smaller pieces and if you want to move around and switch locations with ease. My standing easel is perfect for larger paintings. When I want to sit and paint, I will adjust the height of my chair and easel.

















## OTHER HELPFUL TOOLS

Drop sheet You'll need to make sure that when you paint, you protect your space from paint splatters and other messes. Use a drop sheet to avoid any damage. It can be a plastic sheet, a tarp, a large piece of thick fabric—any large covering. I use an old bedsheet that would have been thrown out, but I repurposed it. Reuse and recycle!

Container You'll need a container for your mixing water. You'll use it when you need to clean your brushes, when switching colors, and also when you need to thin out your paint. Infact, try to have two containers so that the water dish you use for mixing is clean and untainted. I use an old porcelain pitcher or an old yogurt container for my water dish. It's great finding uses for objects you'd otherwise just throw away. We need to be mindful of our planet, so before you throw a container or dishcloth away, think about how you could use that for your studio!

**Dishcloth** I also use an old dishcloth or cloth napkin to clean my brushes while I work. Using cotton rags is great, because they don't have any fibers that stick to your paintbrushes (unlike paper towels, which will leave bits of debris in your brushes).

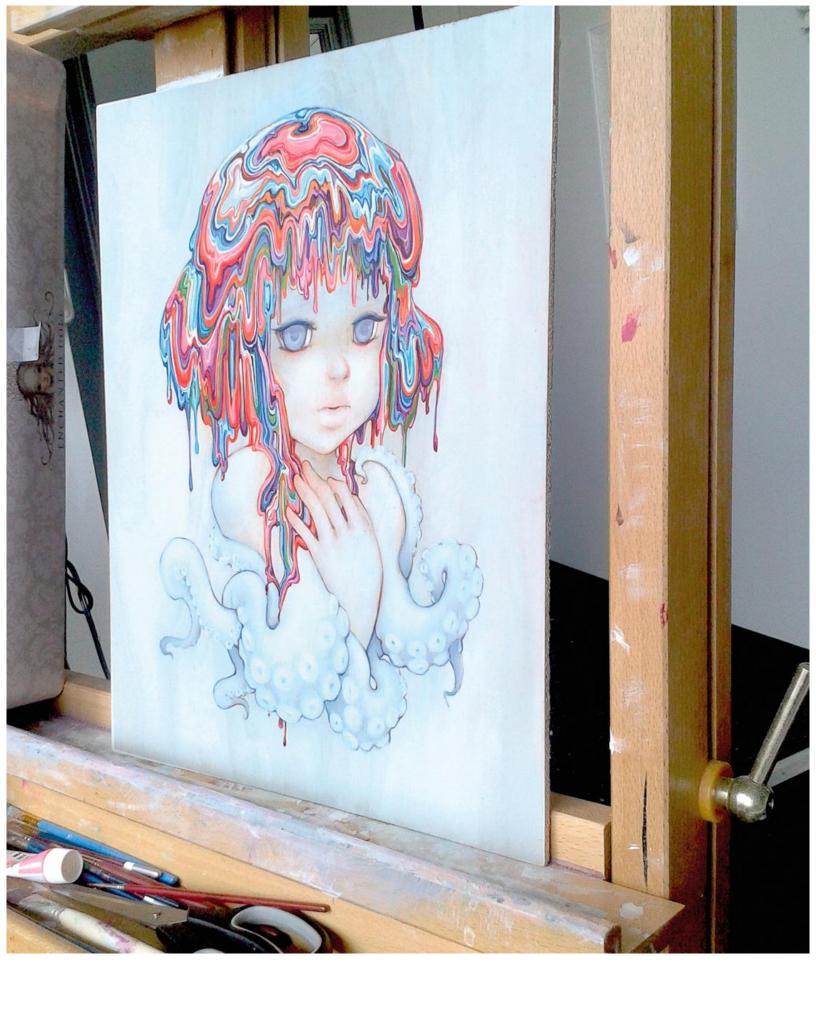
Apron I wear an apron while painting so I stay as clean as possible, not that it keeps my hands from getting filthy.

Daylight lamp One of the best items you can have in your tool kit is a daylight lamp that you can use when working in a dark studio or at night. Buy a regular lamp and replace the bulb with a daylight bulb available at an art supply store. This is how I work at night!

**Projector** Another neat tool I use is a projector. This little baby is perfect for those times when you don't want to redraw your sketch on canvas and you'd rather use the drawing you've created. A projector will enlarge your drawing, and project it on the canvas. Then you can slowly trace your projected sketch onto the canvas, using your watercolor pencil. Voilà! Your sketch is now on your canvas.

#### SELECTING YOUR TOOLS

I've had a lot of years to learn which materials work best for me—it's important that you take your time to find the right paints and surfaces that work for you. When I first started painting I worked with acrylics, traditional oils, and gouache, and found that I could achieve the style I wanted. It was through trial and error that I discovered the Holbein Duo oils worked best for me. So don't let just one type of paint get you down. Try and try again until you find your favourite medium and rock it!



# 4 THE ARTIST'S STUDIO

My studio is my personal Fortress of Solitude, minus the muscled man in a cape and all the ice. Every artist needs a studio. Whether it's at home, in a shed, or in an office, the studio is a place that is sacred ground for all artists. Mine is my sanctuary, my isolation chamber. The only exception is my little French bulldog Loki—he's my little studio buddy and follows me around like my shadow. Plus he's cute and squishy and wears outfits that make me giggle.

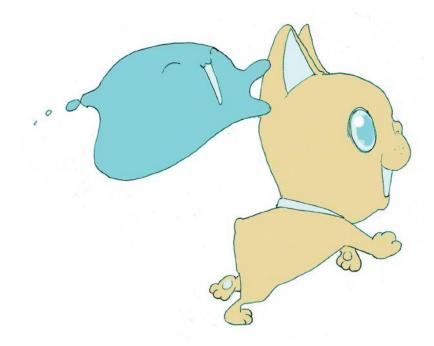
I am the kind of artist that needs absolutely zero human interaction and outside noise in order for me to focus and create. I know how that sounds, like I'm a cranky old woman shooing kids off her lawn; however, I'm just particular in the way I set things up—I can't help it if my inner artist is a hermit!

There are many kinds of artist's studios, collectives, and shared spaces. Some are controlled spaces that have no windows and use regulated lighting. There are also home offices. Then there are those studios that are forged in whatever space the artist could find (for example, the kitchen table, the walk-in closet, or a corner of the living room). Whatever space you find yourself creating art in, that is your art bubble, your happy place.

Set up your studio for maximum creativity. I fill my studio with all sorts of artwork. In fact, I have a library of art books and manga that help to jump-start my creativity. I'll post whatever images I think are amazing and inspiring around my space, along with anime figures, vinyl toys, and chibi characters that I've collected. There's nothing quite as adorable as a chibi Sasuke plush staring at you while you paint and draw!

### SETUP

There are a few things that you need to consider when setting up your studio. It's important to get the feeling of the space to match the organization of it. You can be as comfortable as a pig in a blanket, but if you can't find what you're looking for you'll get frustrated really quickly. So make sure that you put a lot of thought into your space so that it becomes your den of creativity and maximizes your productivity.



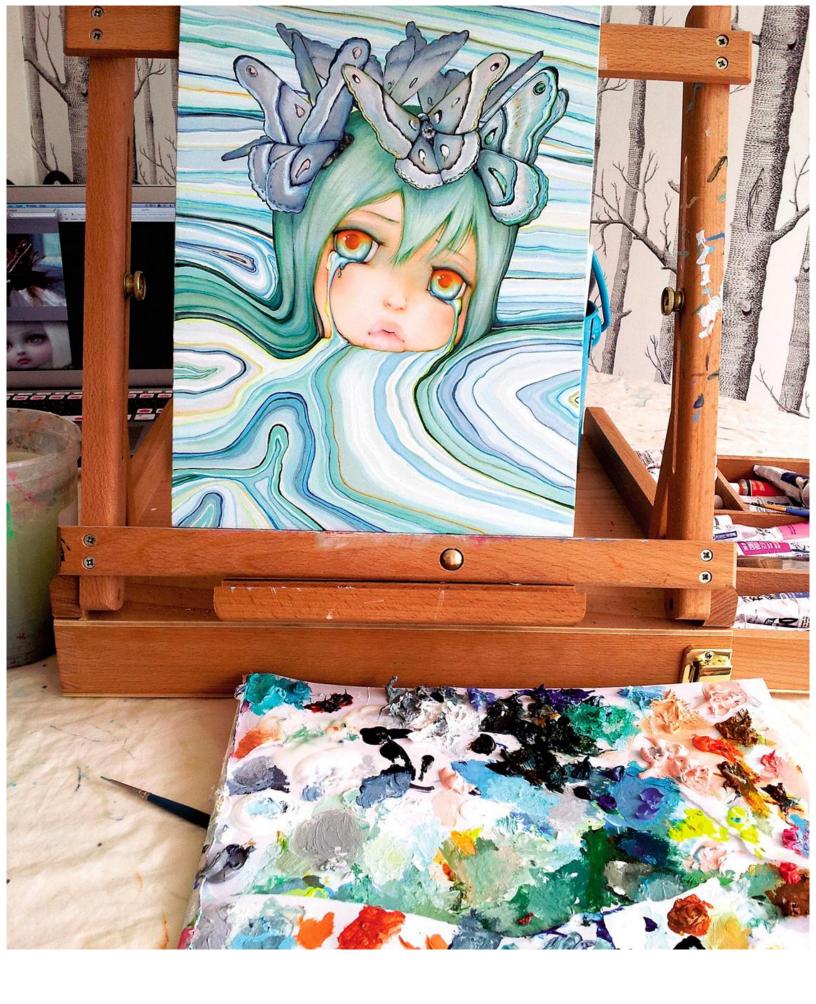
Loki and I love terrorizing Camilla in the studio—she keeps it clean and we make it messy! After all, he's not named after the god of mischief for nothing!

#### LIGHTING

Let's touch on lighting first, as it is one of the biggest challenges for an artist. I love natural light; however, it creates a challenge because the light changes throughout the day. I'm forced to shift around my space to catch the right amount of light for working. Still, I love windows, open spaces, and watching the birds fly by—they're a part of my creative process. Nature inspires me; I can't close myself off in a space that is just four walls, so even if I have to move around in my space to capture the correct natural light, it is worth it for me.

There are sealed artist studios that have track lighting and fixtures that perfectly light the space. These are great, as you never have to worry about getting the right kind of light. They also help when working at night. But they do take time to set up.

A lot of people ask me how I can paint at night. I use lamps with daylight bulbs, which can be purchased at art supply stores. They are a great advantage for the night-owl artist because they create artificial daylight, which helps for rendering accurate colors that match up in the daytime. It's amazing how technology has advanced and made it possible for artists to create anytime, anywhere. It's important to remember what happens to artwork outside of the studio—it will look different in each place you put it. Gallery lighting, natural light in a home, or the relative absence of light in a darkened hallway are all different, so be prepared to see your piece change. Remember that no matter how you light your space, ultimately your painting will find a home in a totally different lighted area.









## ORGANIZATION

The organization of a studio is very important. Each artist has his or her own way of keeping things organized—some have drawer systems, clear containers with labels, or even customized shelving to keep all their supplies and space organized. But not everyone is so meticulous. I have a system—organized chaos. It used to drive my mother crazy and now it drives my husband nuts! My "system" works for me though. I keep all my paints in one place, my brushes in another, and I have a stockpile of wood canvases that I store in a closet space dedicated solely to my art supplies. I know where everything is, even if it ends up in a pile sometimes. And never, *ever* touch my pile! (Ha ha, just kidding, but seriously...no touchy.) The most important thing is to keep things in one area, organized in such a way that you know what you have and where it is. Otherwise you might lose supplies, misplace them, or double up on paints that you already own. Organization is meant to keep things from getting out of control and to prevent waste.

### SAFETY

What can hurt you in a studio? Well, lots of things. However, *you* are likely the biggest disaster in the space. Keep things clean and don't leave things lying around where you can trip and hurt yourself. And never, *ever* have your cup of tea or whatever you're drinking next to the water basin where you clean your brushes. Trust me, I've accidentally swallowed

paint water and it is nasty! All kidding aside, it's also dangerous.

When I'm creating art, I try to keep things clean and organized. I have a drop sheet, my laptop, my art dolly, and my daylight lamp. When I'm done, I pack everything up and store it in my closet.

#### VENTILATION

Ventilation is a very, very important consideration for your studio. You must be mindful of the fumes that your paints, thinners, and solvents give off. It is never a good idea to close yourself off in a sealed space. After all, even acrylics will give off fumes. Make sure that you always have an open window or fan for circulating the air.

### CREATIVE SPACE: WHAT IS NEEDED

What do I need in my space to create art? To start, I need my computer or laptop. I use a lot of visual references when painting, so I make sure that I either have them on paper stuck to my easel or available on my computer screen. Having inspirational imagery such as previous artwork you've done, samples of other artists' work, or technical references for animals or other subjects you may be painting helps feed your creative energy. I've filled my creative space with toys, art books, photography, artist prints, and lots of manga. It's like artistic chili for my brain!

You need to feel comfortable, safe, and creative in your studio. I personally need to have wide, large, open spaces to let my creative mind roam free. Oddly enough, to center my mind and feel safe, I prefer to be in a space with high ceilings. This is an enigma, since I'm five feet three inches—very short, like a Smurf, yet, I like a space that has ceilings double my height. (Maybe I was a giant in another life.)

Temperature is important as well. Warm spaces will dry out your paints and humid spaces will keep the paints from drying at normal speeds. It's good to have a balance and to make sure that you yourself aren't sweating or freezing. I'm always cold, so either I have bad circulation or Zu stole my soul...hmmm. I drink tea to keep me warm from the inside out.

When painting, you'll have a few options for how you do so in your space. First, you'll have to make a decision: should you stand or sit to paint? I'm an unconventional artist, so I paint unconventionally. I shift between sitting on to kneeling on a chair. I'll sometimes curl up with my painting and hold it rather than have it resting firmly on the easel. Mostly I just end up sitting in my swivel chair, adjusting it to raise me higher and lower to achieve the best reach for my brushes.

There is no right way to paint, so make sure you don't try to paint in the way you think you're supposed to. Paint in whatever way works best for you.

### OUTSIDE STUDIO VS. HOME STUDIO

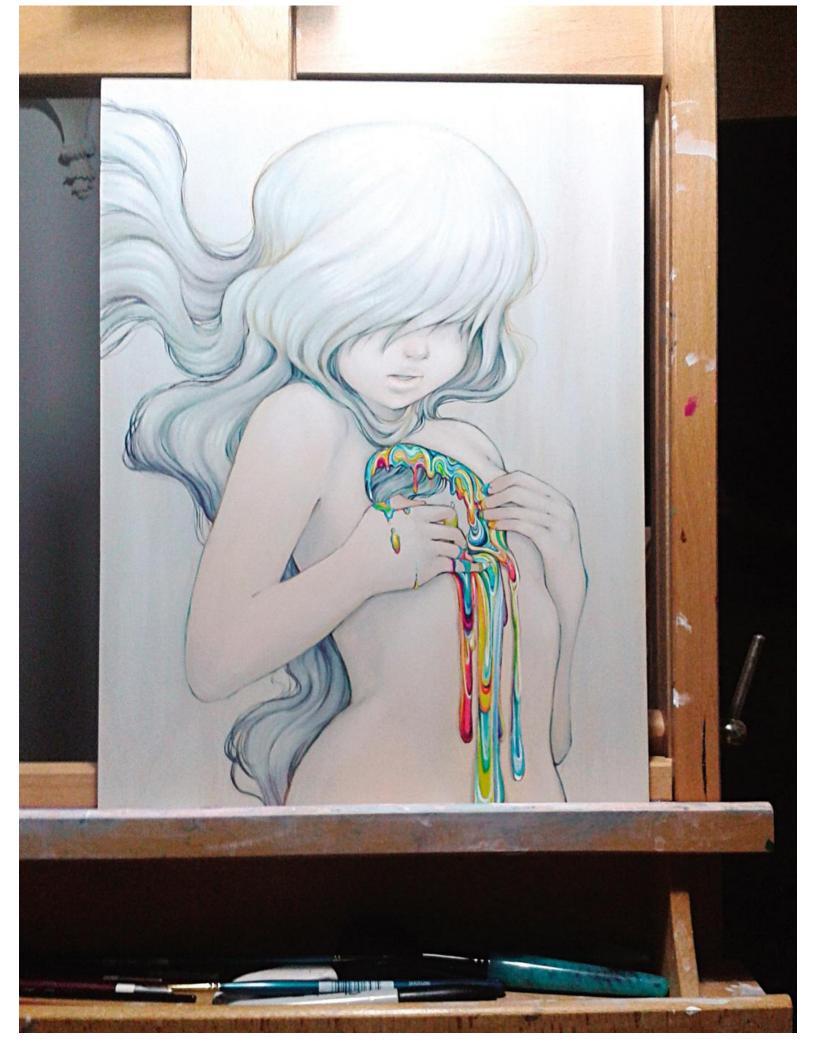
Working from a home studio versus working from an outside studio: there are pluses and minus to each. Over the years, I've worked in both.

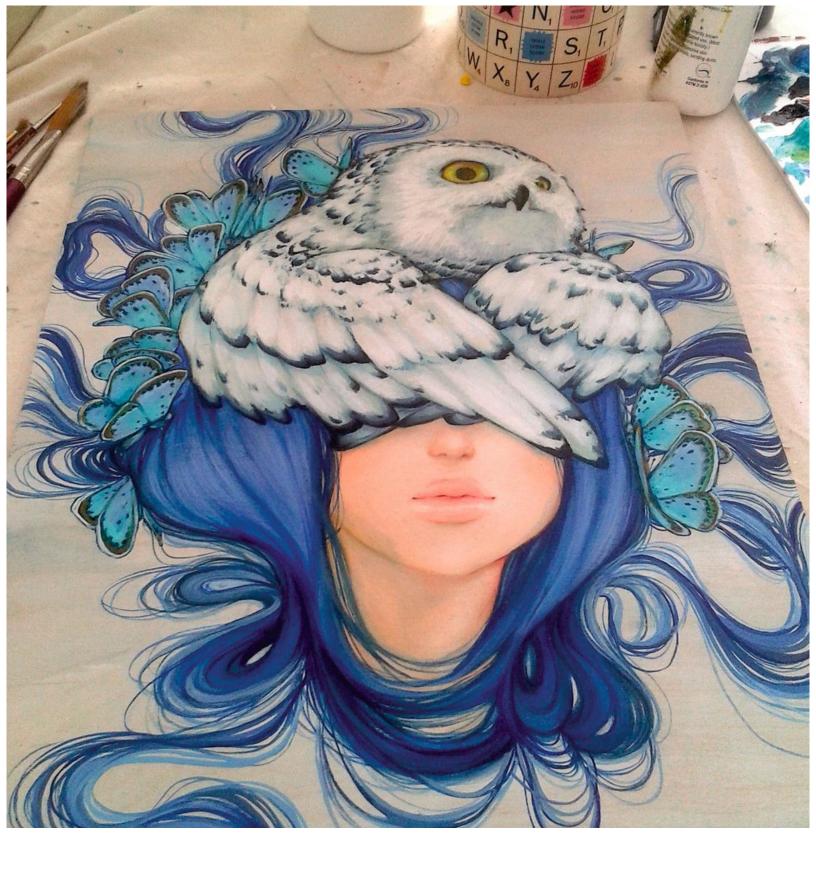
When you have a studio outside your home, it's like going to work. It's a great feeling to know that the time you spend in the studio is work time, and that when you are done, that's it. You can go home and enjoy your night. This is great for keeping home life and studio life separate. However, it can also have a downside: for example, if perhaps you suddenly want to paint after dinner, but your studio is far away. Or maybe the weather is terrible and you'd rather not go outside to your studio. There are also costs involved—like rent and maintenance. That's why most studios are shared with other artists to make them affordable.

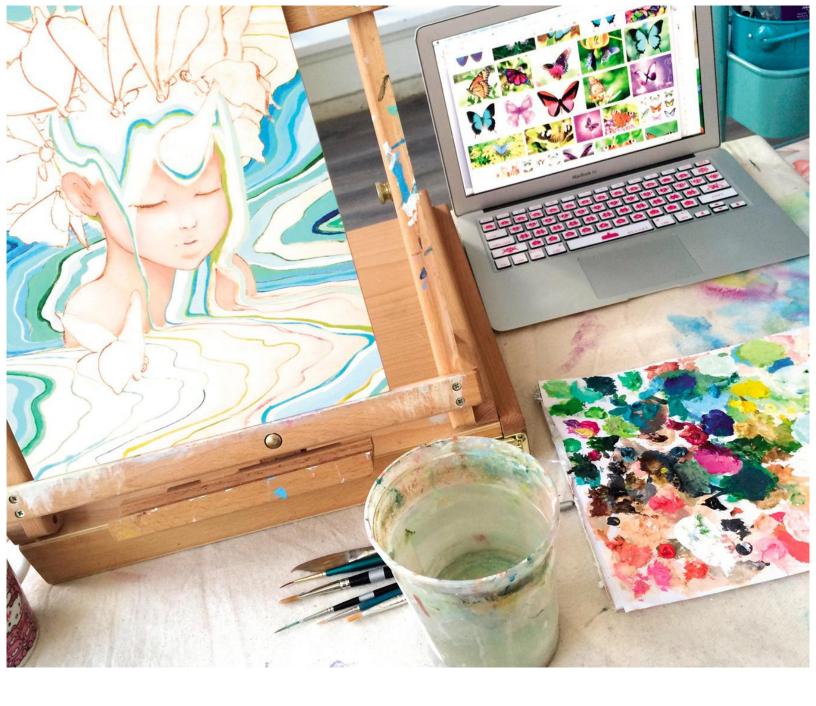
A home studio is great because you can get up, have coffee, eat breakfast, and then start creating art right away. You can make your own hours, so if you want to paint late into the night, you don't have to worry about how to get home—you are home! But be warned, people, this proverbial Garden of Eden has its snakes, too! There are many distractions when you are home—chores, family, the lure of the fridge, or procrastination because you think you have all day to work, so why start now? It takes a lot of discipline to work from home and shut out the outside world so you can stay focused. With a home studio, there is no separation of home life and studio life. You may feel that you can't have downtime. But remember that no matter what, all artists need time to enjoy life, so you don't overwhelm yourself. Give yourself breaks and time to pause from your art.

I work both from home and at a studio that is a twenty-five-minute walk from my home. Every artist has a vision of what his or her perfect studio will look like, it can be anything from a little space above a coffee shop to a giant NYC loft to a yurt! Eventually, I plan on building a shed in my future backyard that will be perfectly suited to my every creative desire. Big open spaces, walls covered in prints and shelves of toys, ceilings as tall as an ogre, and a nut dispenser that I will share with the family of raccoons that will most likely live in the studio. It will be awesome!











# <sup>5</sup> SKETCHING, STUDYING, OR JUST DOING IT?

We are all unique and have our own way of working, so I won't tell you exactly what to do. However, I can give you some advice from my personal experience and offer a few options for how to work out the concepts for your paintings.

### SKETCHING TRIALS AND ERRORS

In college, one of my teachers gave my art class an assignment: we were given a theme and told to come up with one hundred ideas (that is, sketches) for the theme, and then hand them in. The goal behind this lesson was to get us to draw out our ideas from the most obvious to the most ridiculous, exhausting all possibilities before finding the right idea. I've often found the hardest part of creating art is coming up with a strong concept. I have dozens of sketchbooks filled with ideas; some I've turned into paintings and others I've passed on. There is no wrong idea, just a lot of ideas that may or may not work, so spend time just getting your ideas out on paper. It's kind of like prospecting for gold—sift out the pebbles until you find treasure!

Studying is a very important part of the artist's journey. It's a good idea to spend time memorizing and learning the various objects in the world, from fruit to deep sea creatures. The more you examine the world around you the better you will be at rendering it accurately. It's also important to study different skills. You don't have to have a degree in fine art, but you should dedicate some of your time to studying different skills, techniques, and mediums. The world is filled with knowledge about drawing and painting, and you never know where or when you'll pick up a tip or trick that could help you improve.

I also recommend doing artistic studies, by which I mean studying your subject matter and drawing it in your sketchbook. All artists have sketchbooks. If you don't have one, get one immediately! It's very important to have a place to hone your drawing skills. The more you draw and study your subject matter, the better artist you will become. You can improve your drawing and painting skills with repetition and dedication. Sketch your ideas out and even do studies of the elements in your painting. If you plan on painting a lovebird (one element), sketch a few out first in a sketchbook. You can do this for all the various components of your painting. I've done multiple studies of lovebirds and hands, filling a few sketchbooks with them!

Though I don't have hundreds of sketches for every single one of my paintings, I do believe that it's very important to sketch out ideas as they come to you and to then spend time sketching out a few different options for each idea. Some individual elemental studies are great as well (that is, for flowers, armor, tools, or hair). Sometimes drawing the idea from a different angle or changing the size of the elements involved will lead to a better design. Sometimes I'll have an idea, sketch it out, and decide that it's perfect! But I can only have that realization after trying a few other versions of it on paper that *don't* work.

A word of warning: don't spend so much time on the sketch that you fall in love with the

drawing, because a sketch will never be exactly like the painting. Let the painting be its own unique creation and allow it to evolve past the sketch.

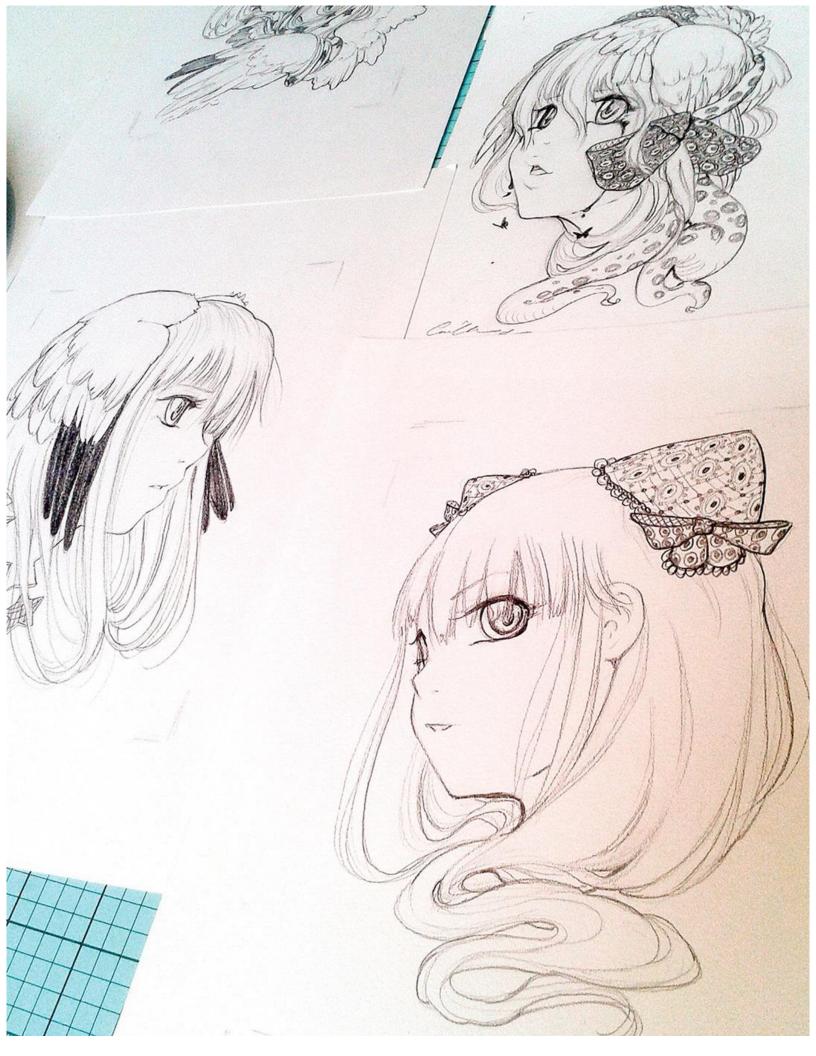
Sometimes I pick up wood panels and see imagery emerge from the wood grain. When that happens, I just go for it—even without a sketch! I grab my watercolor pencil and draw out the idea directly on the wood panel without sketching it on paper at all. When your instincts kick in, listen to them.

### **PRACTICE FIRST**

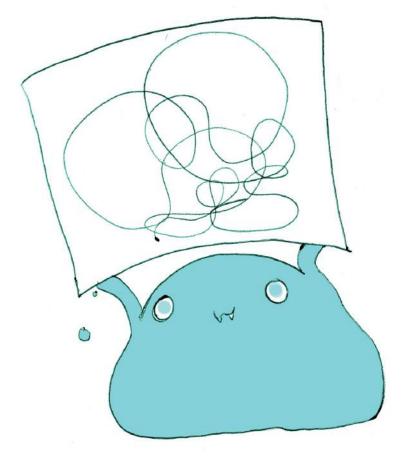
Other times it's very important to spend time studying the elements that you've never worked with before. The first time I ever painted a sheep was also the first time I'd ever drawn a sheep, and my painting turned into an odd combo of a sheep, a pig, and a dog. I learned my lesson. The next time I decided to paint an animal that I'd never drawn before, I ended up with pages and pages of sketches of it in my sketchbook, before I moved to the painting.

### DO IT!

The creative mind is a fantastic thing, but it can be chaotic, so try a few different ways of coming up with ideas. There is no right way to come up with a stunning concept, no formula for me to share with you that will give you a sure fire way of producing ideas. I'm sure Leonardo da Vinci had his own unique way that he developed the *Mona Lisa* that I haven't even thought of. But I've learned a few ways that have helped me that might help you. Try sketching out a dozen versions of your idea and pick the one you like best. Spend time drawing studies of the elements you plan on painting to get a better sense of them before putting paint to canvas. Look at your wood panel and if you can see an image pop out at you, like I do, just sketch out what you see straight on the canvas. No matter what, you won't go wrong—and eventually you'll find your way to how you work best!







Doodle game! Take a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Without lifting the pen, make a bunch of squiggles. Stop. Now look at your paper and try to make a character out of the doodles. Trust me, it's fun and loosens up the ol' noggin!





## <sup>6</sup> COMPOSITION

Let's tackle a technical subject and talk about composing your painting. *Composition* is the combination and placement of various components or parts of elements in one visual representation. The composition of a painting is very important and can be very challenging for an artist. There are a lot of things to consider: balance, movement, focus, contrast, proportions, and unity. I have a degree in illustration and design, so I spent many years learning about the basics of composition, about balancing imagery and the proper use of white space. Composition is how you use the space and place the elements together, so consider where you want the viewer to focus his or her attention and use elements to pull the eye towards that spot. I would say one of the biggest considerations is focus—where you want your viewer to look first and where you want the eye to go from there. Creating a focal point can be done with color, contrasts of shadow and light, and the sizes of your elements. The eye is drawn towards large objects, bright colors, or a dark color amidst light ones. I find that the movement of a painting is very important-you can arrange the elements in ways that flow throughout the painting like water.

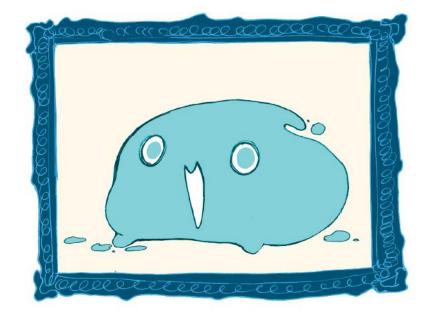
### SELECTING ELEMENTS

Determining what elements go well together is tough. I can't really say for certain why putting some animals together works so well. However, I can say that painting contrasting elements can be quite effective. For example, having a furry creature next to a smooth animal would balance well. Bright-colored animals beside neutral- or pastel-colored creatures look great. The same goes for other bright and dark elements. It's also really fun to mix and match sea creatures with landlubbers for added paradoxes. Your compositions should be comprised of bizarre and fantastical elements, so play around with different combinations of creatures that would never be seen together in reality. The nature of Pop Surrealism is fantastical and bizarre—don't play it safe!

### JUXTAPOSITION

The balance of your compositions can be either symmetrical or asymmetrical, depending on what your preference is. Symmetry provides calmness because it's in perfect balance, but asymmetry throws that calm out the window! It's an imbalance that causes chaos in the painting. Personally, I love asymmetry and always plan elements in my paintings for this type of composition. Juxtaposing elements creates a dynamic contrast in your piece that is both interesting and gives it movement. I start by sketching out an image in the center of the canvas and then add asymmetrical elements around it. You can also consider colors as elements and choose to make one part of your painting muted and have an entire section in color to contrast it. You want to have a part of each element within the other to balance it out. (Think of the yin and yang symbol.) My piece The Dream Melt is a good example of this. The top half of the painting is muted and the lower half is vibrant; however, the use of tentacles in both sections balances the painting. I used similar elements in both the muted and vibrant area. If you have an area in your painting that has few elements, give that area a bold color contrast to balance out the area of your painting that has many details. This technique will help shift the viewer's eye between the two areas of your painting and creates an interesting dynamic.

There is no clear rule for how big your imagery should be, but it's always a good idea to keep in mind what will be covered up by your frame. About 1/4 inch of space on the edges of your panel will be covered by the frame, so don't paint any important details on the edges.



I'm facing right, so I moved my butt closer to the left which gives a balance to the white space. Since my face is so fabulous, it needs more white space around it.

### WHAT TO DO IF YOU RUN OUT OF ROOM

If you run out of room, then I'm sorry to say that you'll have to erase your underdrawing and start over. It's frustrating, but the last thing you want to do is compromise your entire painting and composition because you ran out of room. However, I have two tricks to help you avoid this situation!

The first trick is to use a projector to draw out your sketch on the canvas. This will keep you from going too big or too small. Next, if you don't have a projector and instead plan on drawing directly on your canvas, then apply a strip of masking tape on the inside edges before sketching. This border should help you from going too close to the edge and making your image too big.

You might think that I'm saying you *can't* paint right to the edge of your canvas, but that's not the case. I caution you not to put in crazy detail on the edge because it will get covered up by the frame. However, you can absolutely have your painting go to the edge and you should—stopping right before the edge wouldn't look good. If you are planning a portrait or scene, then you should definitely paint to the edge.

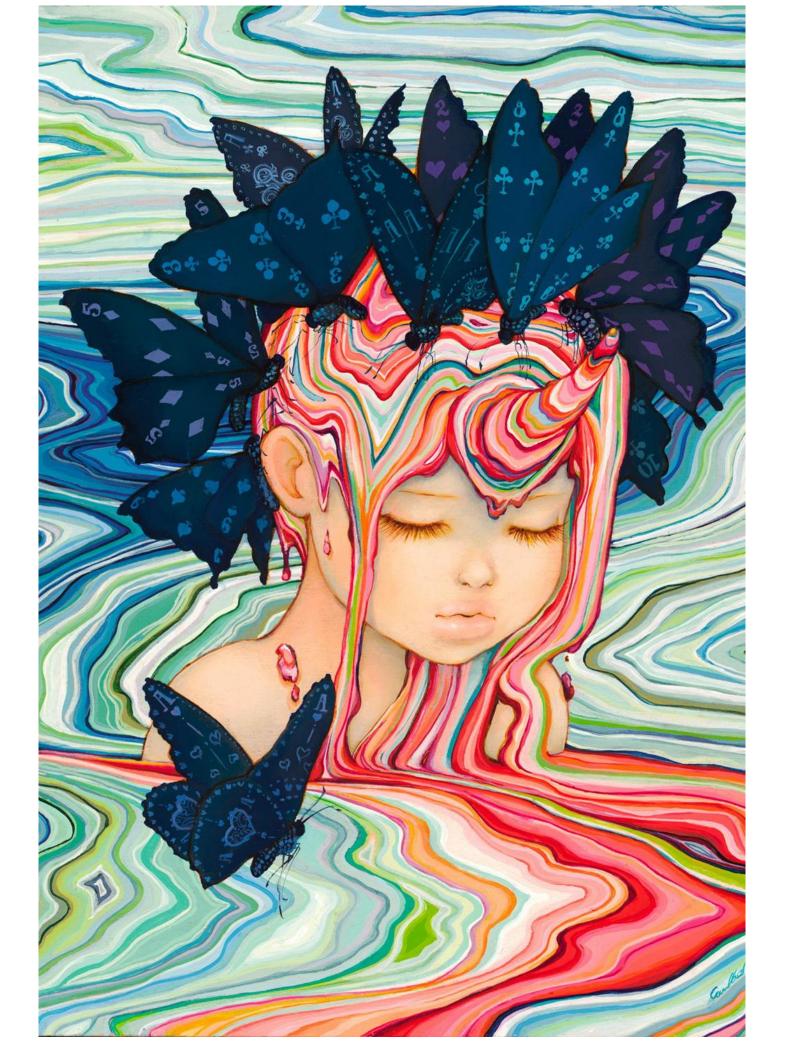




WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMETHING IS MISSING

If you look at your painting and think there's something missing, then there is! You shouldn't worry about putting too many elements on a painting. Look at your underdrawing. If you think, *Hmm, that element doesn't work*, then take it out. Remember: your drawing on paper is one thing and your painting is another. Don't be afraid to edit your initial idea to make it work on the canvas. Then, if you look at the painting and think something's not quite right, think about what element you can add to make it feel complete. My painting *Fukurou* is an example of a painting that changed from my original drawing to the final painting. In the sketch, I had the owl holding a puzzle piece with an eye, but as I painted I realized that the puzzle element didn't feel right. So I dropped it from my composition and immediately felt like the painting was complete without that extra bit.

When you feel that there is something missing and you don't know what it is, figuring it out may take some time. Step back from the painting and look at it from afar. Close your eyes and open them again: Where does your eye go? What part of the painting draws you in at that moment? What part bothers you? If you can pinpoint those locations on the painting, then you have a target zone to focus on and add elements to. Sometimes as with Fukurou on the opposite page-it's just a case of extending an existing element (her hair) and balancing out white space. Other times, you might feel that a new element is necessary. It could be a case of adjusting color balance or contrast. It might be a more intricate element that adds a touch of complexity to the painting. In my painting Neapolicorn, I planned to make the butterflies regular looking; however, as I painted, I realized that it would appear too busy and somehow also a little boring. The painting needed something bizarre and dark to balance out the color. I thought about chance and luck and life-or-death games. Suddenly, poker popped into my head and I thought, Omigosh, what if the butterflies looked like playing cards? Not only was this visually interesting, but it would also symbolize taking risks. I stopped what I was doing and rushed over to my easel and sketched in the symbols. That was it! Inspiration can hit you when you least expect it.





# <sup>7</sup> PUSHING BOUNDARIES

There is a common theme that applies to all artists, and that is that we stay in our comfort zones. We take so long developing our styles that we can sometimes find ourselves in a rut, or stuck on a continuous motif. You find something that works and keep painting it over and over again, a formula if you will. I did that for a while and felt stagnated by it. Even though my fans liked the work and it was selling, I knew that I wasn't pushing myself.

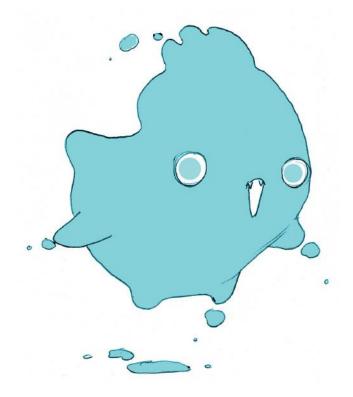
So how does one push past these proverbial boundaries? It's not as hard as you might think, but it requires some courage. As they say, the road to success is always under construction.

Pushing past your boundaries means creating art that you've never made before, breaking the mold, and coloring outside the lines. One of the best ways to achieve that effect is to just get out of your own way and stop thinking about what you want to paint based on what you've done that people liked. It's scary to make art that's different from what people have seen from you before, but as long as it comes from your heart and is true to your style, you will be fine.

### PAINT WITH YOUR GUT, NOT YOUR HEAD

Don't paint something just because you think that it's what people will like. Take risks with your art and paint what's inside your heart! For a period of time, I painted girls with animals on their heads. I loved each one of them as I created them, but as time passed I noticed myself falling into a predictable pattern. I found myself editing other ideas that were coming to me, dismissing this more bizarre and surreal imagery because I believed that people expected me to paint girls with animals. Then one year, I decided to heck with it—I couldn't ignore those images anymore. I was going to paint whatever I wanted! Thus my "Rainbow Girls!" were born. I stopped painting with my head, and instead painted with my gut.

Now that I've stopped self-editing, I've found an entire new playground of ideas available to me. I've pushed myself to create new imagery that I've never made before, covering up the girl's eyes, painting backgrounds, or even morphing a girl into an octopus. When I first started painting, I never thought I would ever have made that kind of art. When I create my paintings, I now push myself to try even more bizarre imagery.



Get outta your comfort zone! What are ya, chicken?

### DEALING WITH BLOCKS AND DRY SPELLS

What if you are having an artistic block or a dry spell? What do you do? What do you do when you are blocked? Blocks happen to everyone, so don't worry—you are not alone, I've been there too, my friends. There are days when I just can't draw to save my life or come up with any good ideas. (Zu could tell you many a tale of my epic tantrums!) I've learned to deal with these moments in a couple of ways.

One way to deal with artistic block is to step away from your easel or sketchbook. Just stop pressuring yourself to come up with ideas. Forcing your mind to be creative often leads to frustration. Take a break—go for a walk, enjoy a chai latte while reading some manga or a sexy vampire book (Zu could recommend a few), and relax. Artists need creative fuel, so power up by spending a couple of hours looking through art books or photography websites, or even playing some games. Whatever your inspiration—double down on it! If you are frustrated, get out of your studio and take in your city or town. People-watching is superneat. It will distract you and maybe even give you some ideas.





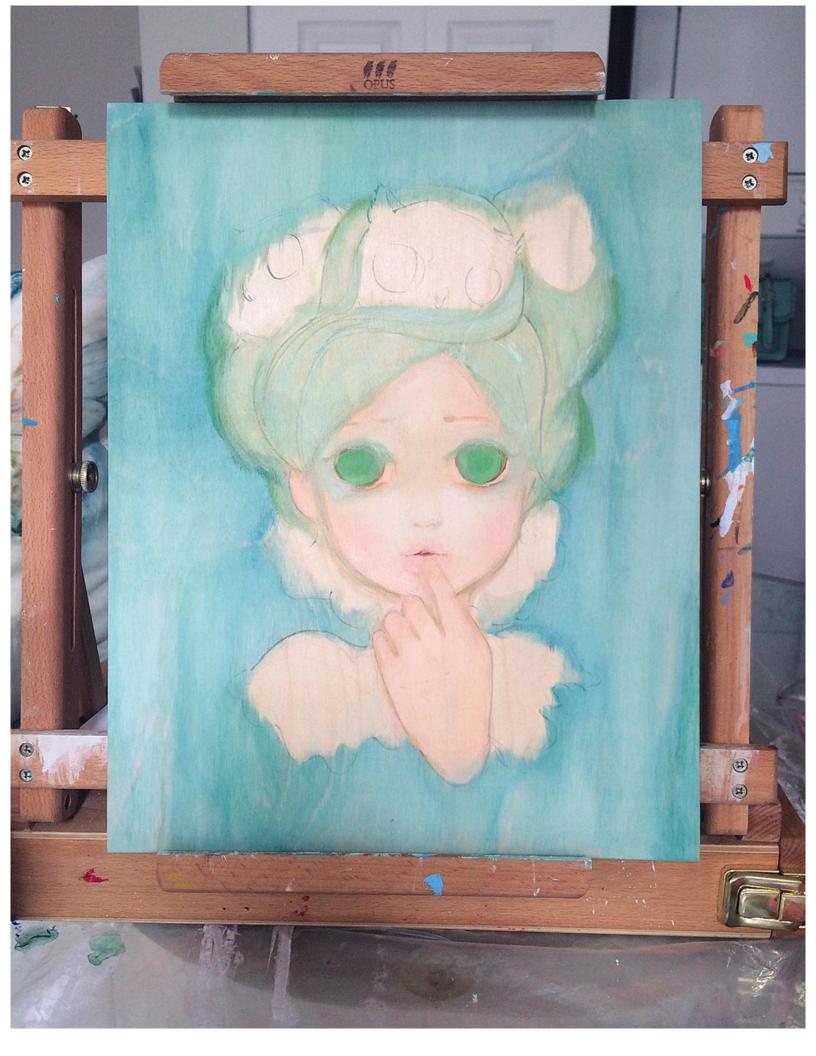
I've also found that exercising helps clear the mind and get the creative juices flowing! More than one of my ideas for paintings has come to me while I was running on the treadmill.

Yoga is another fantastic way to clear your mind and focus. I think I came up with *The Melting Mind* while in downward-facing dog!

From the professional side of art, of course, blocks can be devastating, especially if you have a deadline. If you are blocked and have an impending deadline, sometimes you can't afford to take an hour off. If this is the case, then give yourself some positive motivation. Coming down on yourself can have a negative effect on your work. Instead of punishing yourself for not finishing, imagine a reward for yourself if you do! I'm food motivated, so envisioning a cupcake or a juicy piece of watermelon helps me hunker down and draw my heart out! The power of positive thinking and treats goes a long way.

### DON'T LET FAILURES GET TO YOUR HEART: MOVE ON!

In the event that a painting doesn't work out or a client isn't happy with the end results, there is really only one thing to do. Move on. If your piece fails you despite your efforts and you just can't seem to make it work, then start over. I've done this a couple times over the years. This piece *Hootie* was a fail for me. No matter what I did to rework the image, I just hated it. I don't feel that I wasted my time. I just decided it was time to call it—game, over man—and start again. Remember this: don't let your victories go to your head or your failures get to your heart.





# <sup>8</sup> EVOKING EMOTIONS

Paintings are windows to the soul. If I held up a painting in front of you, it would be the same as if I showed you a mirror—what you saw would be a reflection of your subconscious. I'm sure you've heard the saying art is subjective. That is a truth that no artist can deny. Paintings affect every viewer differently. In this chapter, I'll help you navigate through the twists and turns of how to evoke emotions in your paintings and how to set yourself up for painting them.

# TAPPING INTO EMOTIONS

Not only can paintings bring people to tears or bring them joy; for the painter, the work is often very therapeutic. For myself, my paintings are a way for me to come to terms with my life and to express my emotions. Even when I am not trying to be obvious or thematic, without making conscious choices, I inevitably create imagery that expresses my emotional state. It's only after I am finished painting that I realize the significance of the elements featured in a painting.

I've met a lot of people who have told me that a particular piece of mine resonated with them on a profound emotional level. Other times people have found my artwork to be whimsical and playful. They've told me it made them feel like a kid again. I've also met people who were inspired by a painting I created and for reasons they could not explain, felt attached to that particular work. It seems that emotions exist within my paintings—whether I am painting a girl with a helmet on her head, a girl holding an iguana, or a girl whose chest is bleeding rainbows.

# YOUR EMOTIONS WHILE PAINTING

If your painting expresses an emotion, do you feel it the whole time you make that painting? No. Because of the nature of painting, it's not possible to feel the same emotion the entire time you are creating the piece. Paintings take a lot of time—hours, days, weeks, and even months—to create. So if you're painting a sad scene, it would be pretty rough to be sad the entire time. The same can be said for a happy scene. It's just unrealistic to expect yourself to feel one singular emotion throughout the course of the painting. So don't pressure yourself to feel one way while painting if you are feeling another.

# **GETTING IN THE MOOD**

How do you get in the mood to work on a painting? Psyching yourself up to paint shouldn't be too hard. Most of the time, I'm chomping at the bit to paint! Honestly, it's hard for me to sit through an entire movie or read a book when I have a painting in progress. In fact, one time I ran away from my friends when we were all out at the beach because I felt the need to paint. (I know. Crazy artist, right?!) I literally left them in my dust as I ran back to my studio!

There are definitely ways to get in the mood to paint. One of those ways is to get your inspiration on! Surf the Internet and stalk your favorite artists or sites like *Hi-Fructose* and *Juxtapoz* and within half an hour the need to create will be too strong to resist! If you need something else to kick you into gear, listen to some music and let your mind drift away into your imagination—that should get you in the mood to paint.

Sometimes I find myself wanting to paint but not being in the mood to do so. As a result, I

have to get back in the mood! In order for me to get there, I need to reconnect with my painting. Sometimes life is distracting and it'll keep you from painting. However, it's necessary for artists to express themselves, otherwise festering emotions and energy might turn us from happy-go-lucky to rampaging Godzillas. Sit down in front of your easel and let go of whatever is going on in your life. Forget about the dishes you have to do or the emails you need to check, and definitely don't think about Facebook. Sit there and look at your painting. Recall what it was you were feeling when you began the piece. Focus and let your energy flow out of you. If that doesn't work, then grab a coffee, put on an audiobook, and let part of your mind wander into an adventure while you start painting! I love listening to a story while painting—it's like a part of me is in another world. It provides some excitement while I paint!





# **COLORING EMOTION**

Are there colors that are *sadder* than others? Absolutely! Will making my girl cry make the painting seem sad? Oh yeah! But creating an emotional painting won't always be a formula like *crying* + *blue* + *crow* = *sadness*. Don't base the emotion in your painting solely on what images or colors you think are sad or happy. You can use balance and contrasts to evoke emotions that aren't obvious. A sad-looking girl can be surrounded with bright colors and a girl with a whimsical look or crooked smile can be in a dark setting.

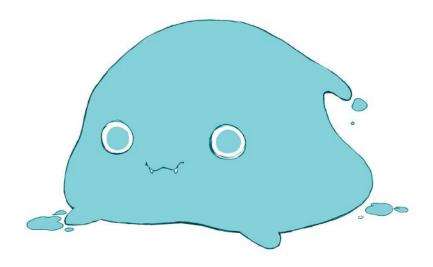
Here are some visual hacks that will help you define your paintings emotionally. First, ask yourself, *What do happy people look like?* Generally, they are smiling and have great posture. They tend to look straight at the camera and exude a positive energy. Warm colors are definitely happy colors. They are inviting and bright, and the imagery they are associated with is often fun and playful.

Next, ask, *What do sad people look like?* They are often crying, with their eyes downcast. Their body postures change and seem more diminutive. Sad people tend to hunch and look smaller in the scenery. The colors we associate with them are colder and muted. Blues, purples, and greens are often connected with sadness. The lighting is more dramatic with stronger shadows and dimmer lighting.

Can you ever change gears partway through and change the emotional tone of a piece? I've definitely started a painting with one emotion and ended with a different one. I think that happens very naturally. Sometimes I think the girls I'm painting are real, and I'm just bringing them to life with distinct personalities all their own. So it's not strange for me to start out seeing the girl in one way and end seeing her another. I feel the emotions through the painting process, so I'll adjust my concept accordingly. I won't change the tone of the piece in these instances, only the expression. It would be too difficult to change everything in the piece. And frankly, it's more dynamic and unexpected to have a sad or angry girl in a sea of rainbows then to have a happy girl in the same scene.

# SUBJECT MATTER AND EMOTION

The emotion in a painting should come from the subject matter, not the elements that surround that subject. I can create a visually bright painting and still make the emotion of the piece dark, if I focus the emotion through the expression of my subject. I can do the same for a happy girl in a dark scene. The character helps evoke the emotions, not the surrounding elements.



How much is too much? Sad and crying girls are cute, don't you think? Be careful when expressing emotions—less is more! Sobbing girls...I can't even.

# EXPRESSING YOUR EMOTIONAL MEANING

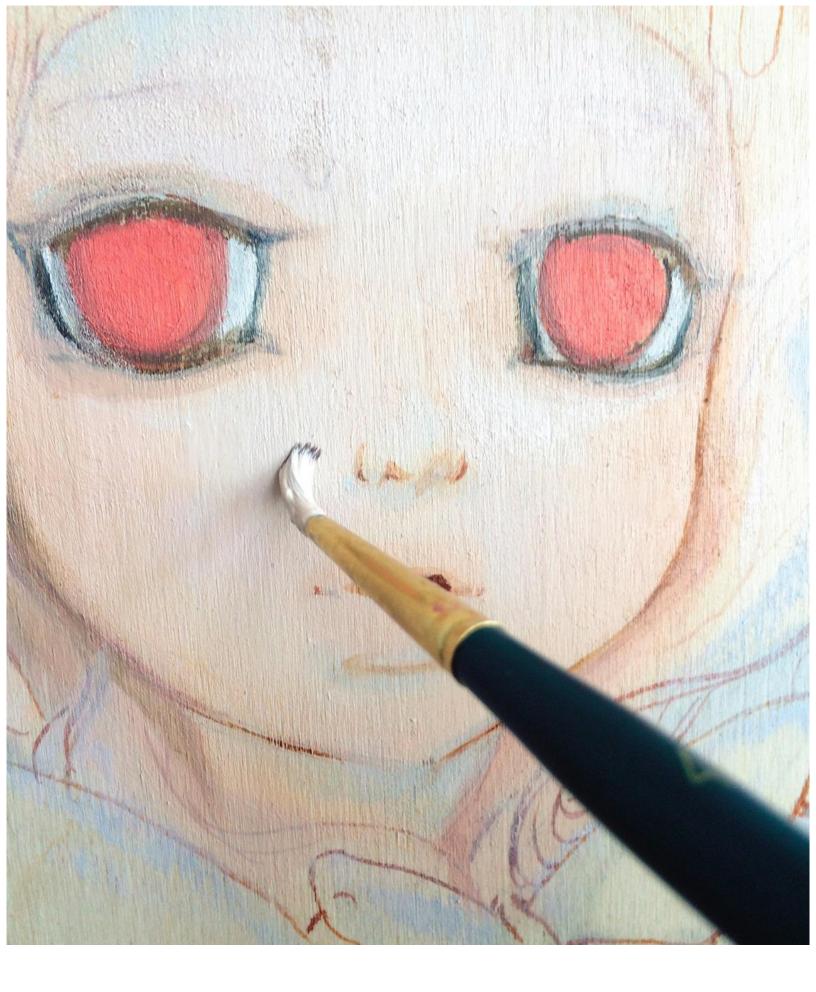
Sometimes the emotion you put into a piece can be just as significant as the elements you choose to paint. You don't have to be literal at all; you can be vague and mysterious in your choice of elements. I've often used the term *visual puzzle* when describing my paintings. I choose my elements and give each one a meaning based on how I perceive it. The puzzle works for me alone, since I am the one with the cheat sheet. To me a lovebird might mean something totally different than it does to someone else. So, no matter what you are feeling or trying to express, you can never make it obvious simply by the very nature of the form. Art is too interpretive for everyone to see the same thing as everyone else. So don't worry about being literal because you won't be. Choose objects, animals, or colors that have significance to you, paint them in a composition, and you'll see that you've expressed your feelings without anyone being the wiser.



# THE POWER OF EMOTIONS

Art is often about stirring the viewer up, making them feel things for the subject matter or just making them uncomfortable enough to look for a deeper meaning in the surface elements. The power of a painting is that it both expresses the emotion of the artist and evokes emotions in the viewer. I'm constantly challenging myself to express emotions in my work. Sometimes they are subtle emotions, sometimes they are bold and obvious, but there is always an element of emotion in my work. I want to create a connection with the viewer and to do that I have to make them feel something!





Blending is a very important topic, one that I want to be as thorough in describing as I can. If this were a video tutorial it would be easy for you to see how I blend paints, but alas, we have to go through this 2D style!

Because of the paints I use, my blending methods are unique. Holbein Duo oils are a unique media—they are oils that blend with water! Duos can also blend with oils, acyrlics and their accompaning mediums. So part of what makes blending so special isn't just the techniques that I use but also the things I use to thin out my paints.

# **BLENDING BASICS**

There are differences in how the Holbein Duo paint spreads when you thin it out with linseed oil, water, or acrylic glazing medium (AGM).

Linseed oil will slow the drying time and allow you to work your paints for an extended time. The paint will smooth out beautifully with linseed oil and cover a lot more surface area.

Water is great for thinning, but beware! Water will break down the paint and the molecules of the paint will spread unevenly. This means when you thin your paint out with water you might get a granular look and have certain areas of the paint more pigmented than others.

Acrylic glazing medium is my go-to medium! This beautiful medium will thin out the paints without losing too much of the texture of the paint and will keep the cohesion of the paint, allowing for an even distribution of color when it's thinned out.

#### BRUSHES

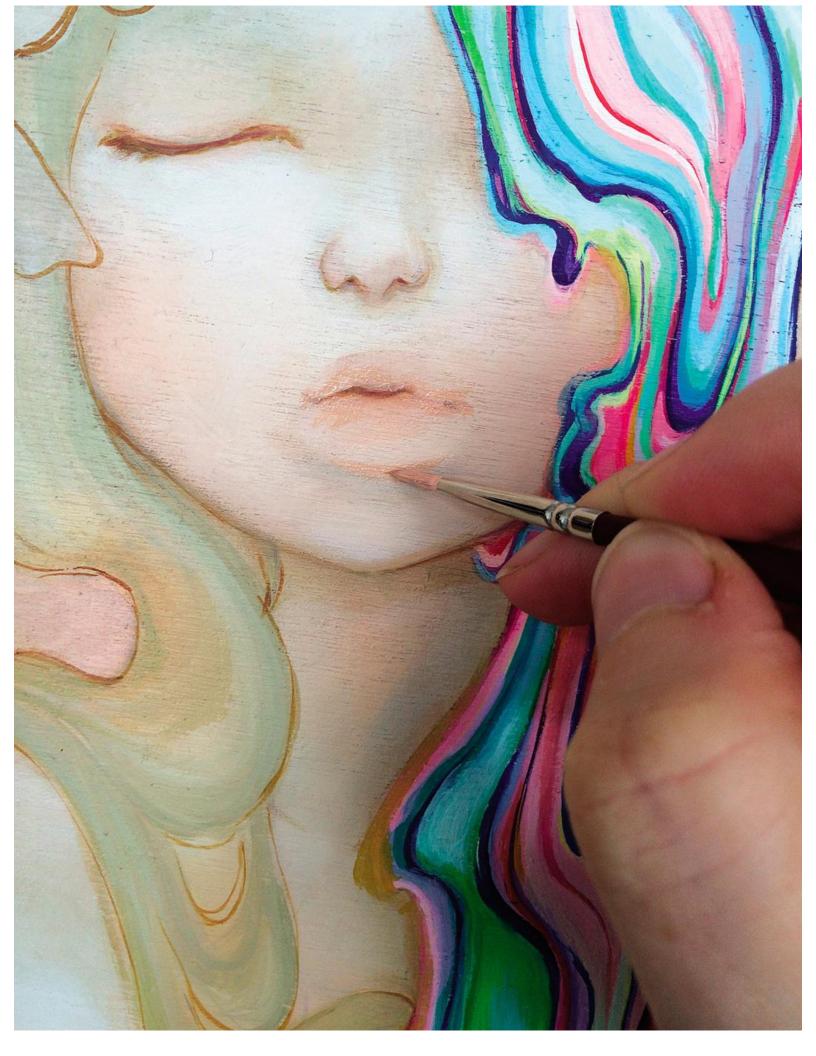
When you're going to blend, brushes matter! Thicker and coarser bristles will create more texture, while softer bristles will create smooth textures. I've really fallen in love with synthetic short hair brushes to blend my layers. And believe me, there are lots of sizes, widths, and shapes. So let's explore my favorites.

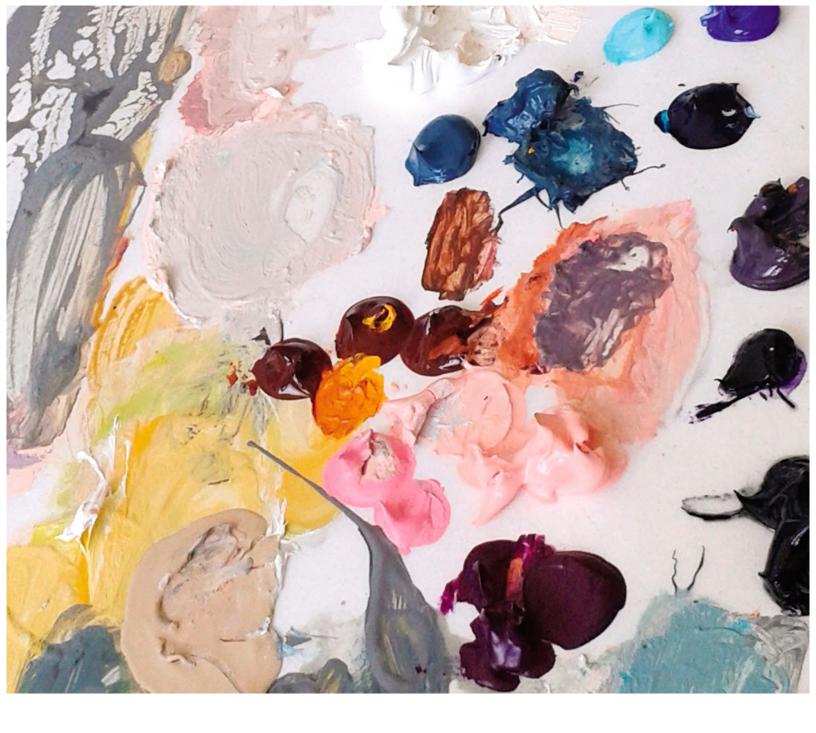
Flat-tipped brushes have a clean, straight edge that helps apply color evenly. They are my go-tos for blending. Round brushes are great for creating lines and I'll use them when I want to create a fine point and clear contour. Filberts are a hybrid between flat and round brushes—they are flat with a round tip. These are also fabulous for blending and I use them a lot when painting skin tones. There are many other kinds of brushes. In fact, fan brushes are specifically made for blending and texturing, yet I rarely use them.

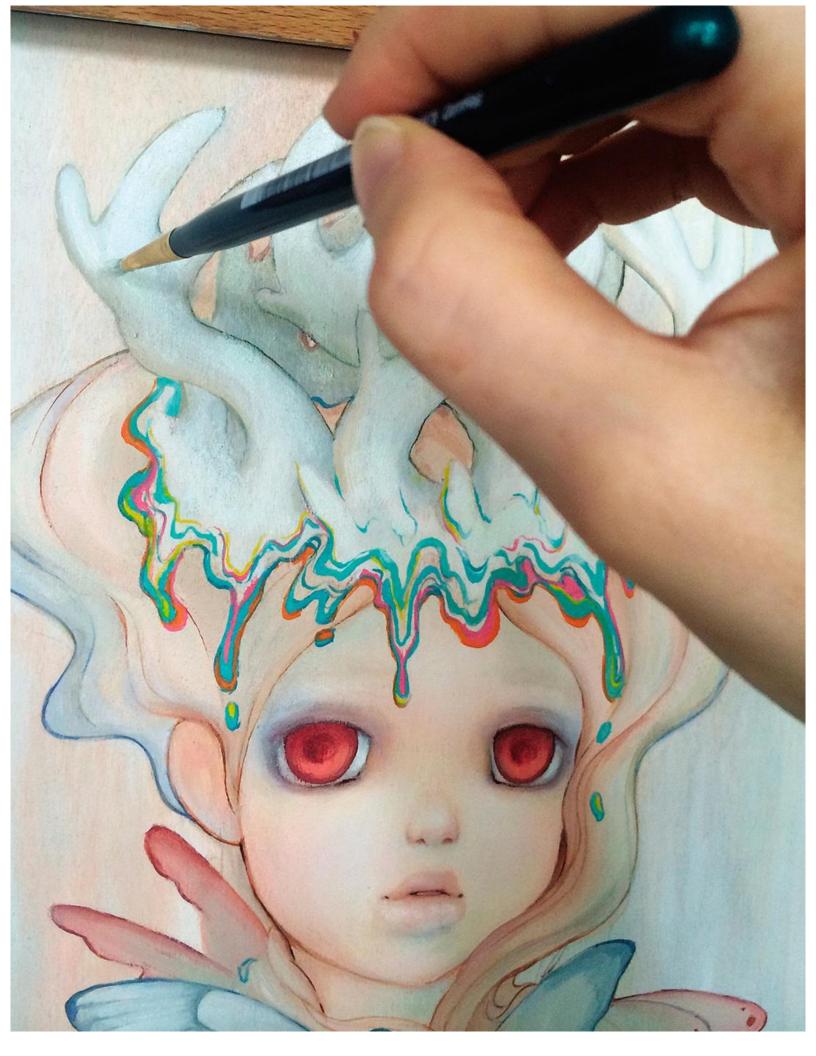
Finding the right kind of brush for blending is really up to you and how you prefer to paint. Experiment with as many brushes as you can, playing around with sizes and shapes until you find the winning combo for you!

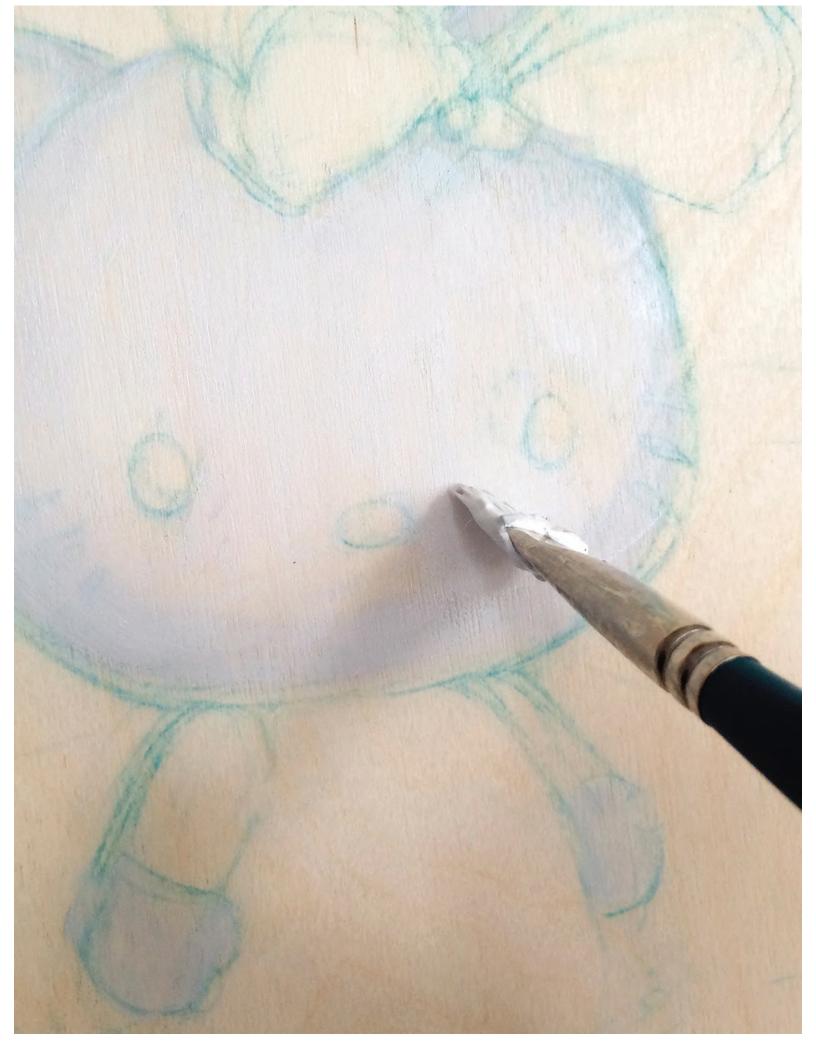
## BASIC BLENDING TECHNIQUE

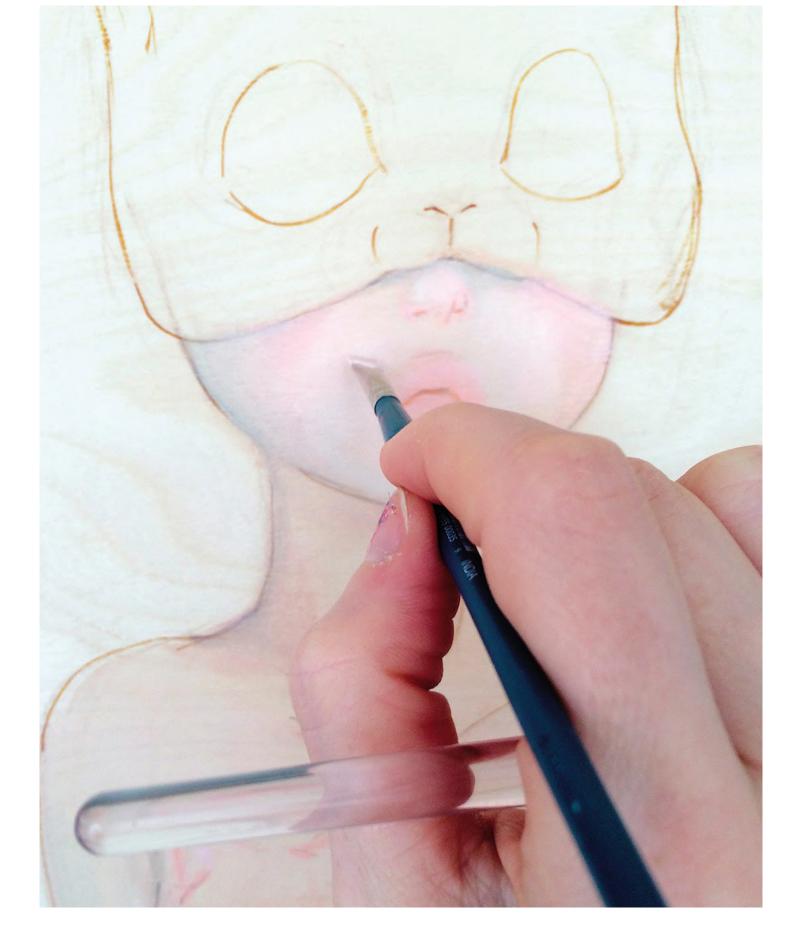
When blending your layers together, add as little pressure as possible to your brushstrokes in order to keep the brush from scraping off the bottom layers of paint. Think of it as lightly feathering your paint on the next layers. You can push the brush down and increase the pressure, but doing so will cause you to shift the bottom layers; if they are dry, you might even end up scratching the surface. So you really don't need to push too much on your brush when blending unless you are adding in a thick layer of paint.

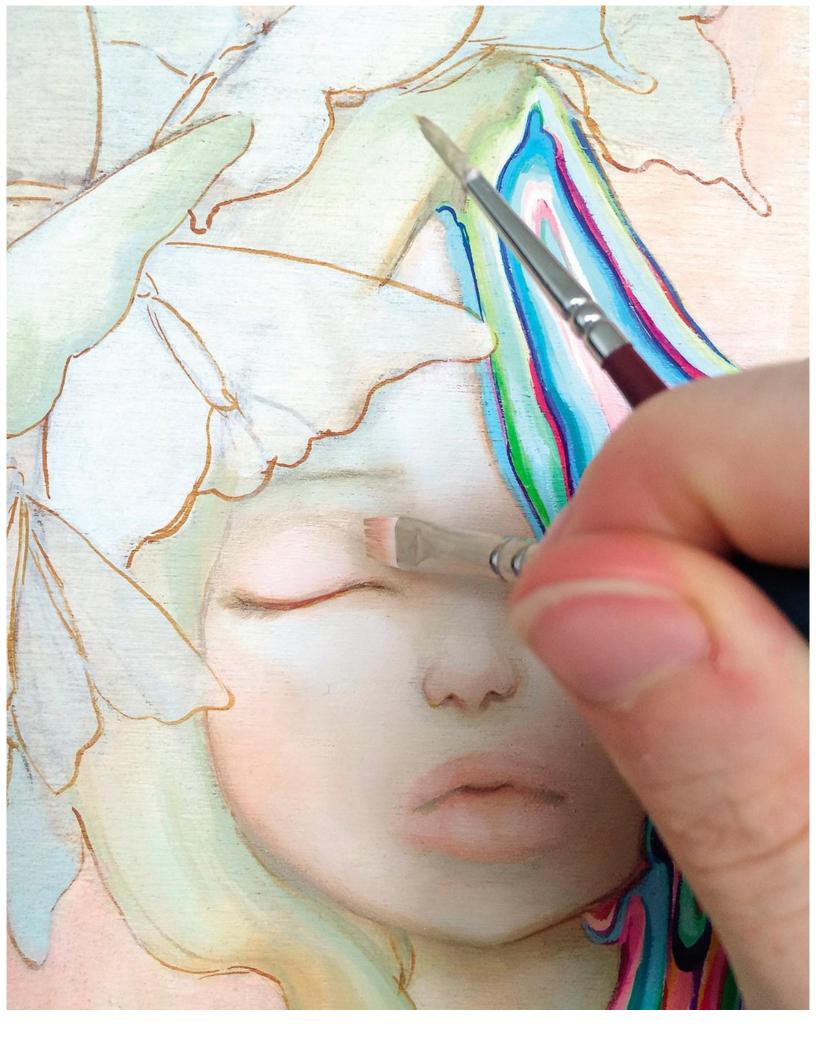












#### MIXING COLORS ON PALETTE OR CANVAS

My general rule of thumb is to mix my colors on the palette, then apply the mixed color to the canvas. I break this rule every now and then, but mostly I prefer to mix first, controlling the shade and tone before applying it to the canvas. It is okay to occasionally mix your colors on the canvas, too. I do it when I'm mixing thick layers together. My melting rainbows and similar color effects tend to be mixed on the canvas, not on the palette.

#### **BLENDING LAYERS TOGETHER**

When you blend between layers, you may worry that your blending will just cover the bottom layer up. You will definitely do a good amount of covering up when blending layers, but that's exactly what you want. The first layers are your base layers. Much of that paint will be absorbed into the wood. There is nothing wrong with leaving layers thin, if that is the look and style that you are going for. It's a great way to use the wood grain.

The best way to blend layers together is to use two brushes. I use one brush to apply the paint. I'll put down a stroke of the color, and gently pull the paint along the surface. However, I then use another brush that has no paint but that does have a small amount of acrylic glazing medium (AGM) on it. I then lightly blend the edges of the new layer into the one that I've already laid down. This practice allows me to taper the color smoothly into the next layer.

#### HOW NOT TO BLEND

Keeping colors from blending is another necessary skill. Remember: dry paint won't blend. So if you want to keep colors from mixing, paint a layer, let it dry, and then anything you paint on top of it or near it won't blend.

### **DRYING TIME**

One important factor to keep in mind when you're blending is the drying time, which will vary depending on the paint you use. For example, Holbein Duo oils dry faster than regular oils, but slower than acrylics. Paints' drying times depend on how thick they are. Usually, I wouldn't take more than ten minutes before I start applying the next layer if the previous one is thin. However, there are definitely times when I've put a thick amount on the canvas, and it's taken about three days before it was completely dry. Remember: the thicker the layer, the more time it will take to dry.

### FIXING PAINT THAT'S TOO LIGHT OR TOO DARK

What happens when you paint something too dark or too light? That's a job for *superblending!* 

The best way to blend in lighter colors and darker colors is to dab your paint on the area.

Doing so will give you a good sense of whether the color works in that area. If it doesn't, you can immediately swipe it off either with your finger or with a cloth. If the color works, then you can use a brush with acrylic glazing medium (AGM) and pull the colors into the next layer. Now if you paint your shadows too dark and want to lighten them up, it's not a problem. You'll just mix in the darkest color you used and add an opaque lighter color and blend them over top.





### SMOOTHING LAYERS OF BRUSHSTROKES

I use two methods to smooth out the layers of brushstrokes. The first is to apply the color with my paintbrush, and then gently pull the paint along until there is no more color. Then I will go back to the thickest part of the color and pull it along again until there is no more paint to thin out. The second is to use a clean, dry brush to pull the paint out and blend it into the layer. You can either load it with acrylic glazing medium (AGM) or leave it dry. It all depends on the thickness of your color. Believe it or not, I will use my fingers occasionally to blend the paint. Sometimes when I make a mistake, I'll scoop the paint away with my index finger. Other times, it's more like applying makeup—I just dab my finger along the paint until I smooth it out.

#### SMOOTH COLOR TRANSITIONS

Blending completely different colors together in a smooth gradient/transition is all about layering! To blend two colors together and seamlessly transition from one to the other, you need to have a starting point and an ending point. Start with one color that you like and apply it to your painting, then add in a little bit of the second color, and mix the two together on your palette. Apply a small amount of the mixed color on top of the one you just used on your painting. Then, with gentle strokes, pull the paint away from the bottom layer and along the surface of the canvas. Then mix your colors again, repeating the process of mixing a little bit of the second color to the mixed one. Next, apply another thin layer over what you painted. Continue this technique until you get to the point where your color is undiluted.

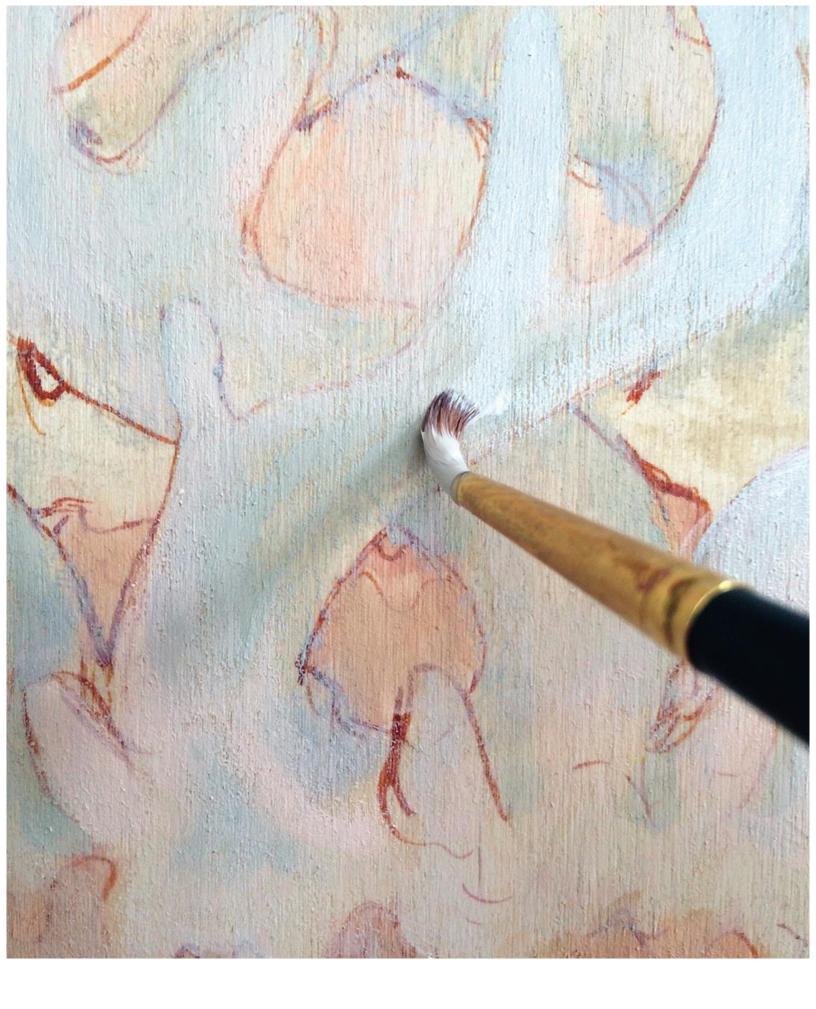
Another way to blend layers is to apply one of the colors first, starting with a thick amount of paint, and then pulling the color along your canvas, thinning it out with acrylic glazing medium (AGM) or water. Then, you can clean off your brush and apply the second color on the opposite end of the area, again starting with a thick layer that you pull out and thin with AGM or water. The transparency of the layers will help blend them together.



I love when Camilla blends me with acrylic glazing medium. I feel so smooth and thin-and it tickles!

#### **BLENDING IN SHADOWS**

Blending in shadows can get tricky. The most important thing to remember when blending in your darker colors to your lighter areas is that transparency of the paint is essential. There are paint colors that are opaque and others that are transparent. Opaque colors are ones that you can't see through and that hide the colors underneath them. I've found that using transparent colors works beautifully for painting in shadows, because they still reveal the texture and a small amount of color from the layer underneath them.





USING WET-ON-WET AND DRY BRUSH TECHNIQUES

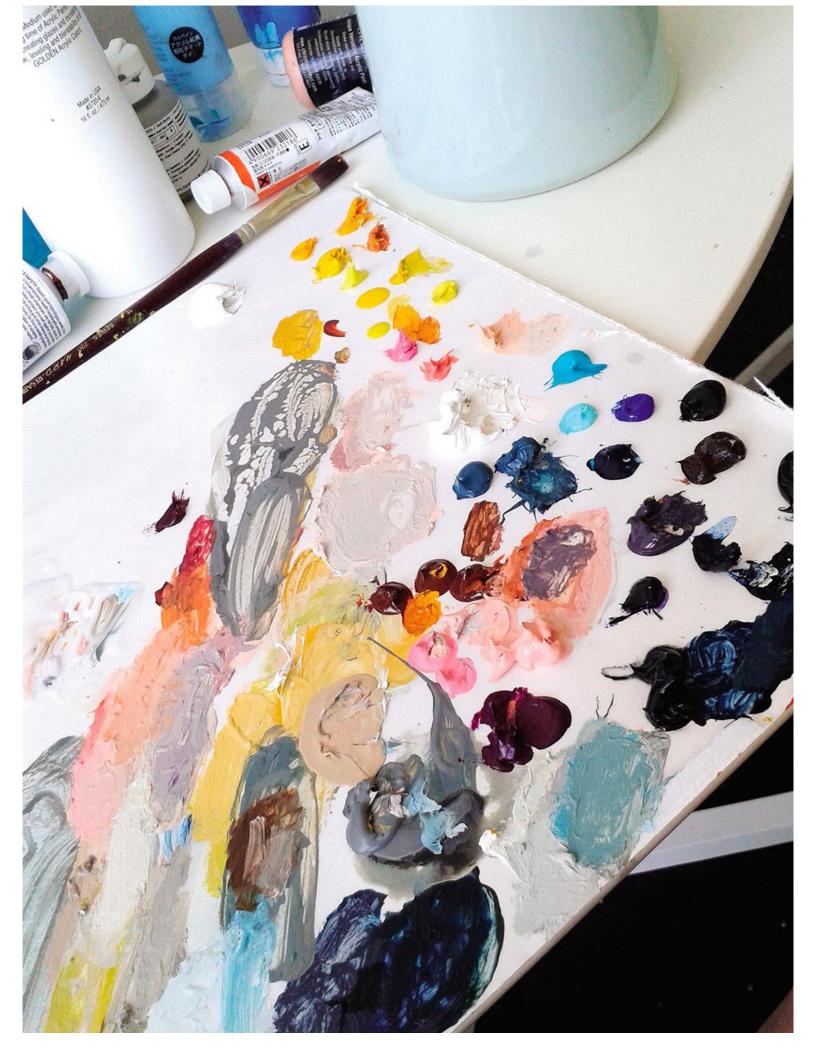
I'm a big fan of trying all sorts of techniques when I paint. I use various blending methods to achieve the best looks for my paintings. Each one will give a different look. *Wet-on-wet technique* is commonly used with oils—it's what I mostly use for my paintings. With this technique, I paint a new layer over a wet layer of paint. This application helps create a smooth transition from the bottom layer to the new one. I use this technique in many different ways. I use it to layer smooth textures, and also for creating fur. If I want to create an impasto look, then wet-on-wet is the way to go. (*Impasto* means adding very thick paint strokes.)

On the other hand, dry brushing will give you a different look altogether. Dry brushing is great for creating rougher textures. For this technique, your paintbrush must be dry and free of any solvents or liquids. Load up your bristles with paint and then brush thick coats onto your canvas, spreading the paint around. The bristles will leave a rough texture and the paint will pick up on the texture of the canvas, whether it's wood or cotton.

#### **BLENDING BACKGROUNDS**

The way that I paint in my backgrounds is by using a technique called *washing*. This results in background colors that are soft and floaty. It lets me show the wood grain through the paint (without showing the brushstrokes), which I like doing because the wood grain adds a nice texture and organic feel to my pieces.

If I want to have a very soft and unified look, I take clean water and a large fan brush, then I wet the wood in the areas that will be the background. You don't want to soak the wood because it will warp; however, you'll have to be fast because the wood will dry out quickly! Once I've wet the background area, I work quickly to apply my washes. You can take a tiny little container, fill it with water, and then add a bit of color. I mix the color in roughly, so that there are still some small globs of paint on the brush. Starting from the top of the panel, I use broad strokes to apply the wash. I go top to bottom, because the water will run downward. You'll see that the colors will mix in with the damp wood and spread. Remember: you don't want to soak the wood, so add in your backgrounds in stages.



# BLEND, SET, GO!

Blending is a true art unto itself. Remember, just take your time. Blending is all about patience and training your hand. Even the greatest masters had difficulty blending. If you're having a discouraging blending day, just try and imagine Leonardo da Vinci flipping out over the neck shading of the *Mona Lisa*. That should help get you back on track!

# LIGHT AND SHADOWS

I want to give you a basic idea of how to deal with lighting. Light is an essential weapon in your painting arsenal. Light = drama! Intensities of light and its effects are used in many different ways by artists. I'm in the soft and indirect light camp. Generally, I don't add a strong light source. That is part of my soft, ambiguous style—the girls I paint exist in a well-lit environment. Even though I don't have strong light casting huge shadows on my girls, I do understand shadows, highlights, and low lights and how to manipulate the lighting to achieve the kind of emotion and drama that I seek.

## LIGHTS, CAMERA, AND ACTION!

Let's shine some light on lighting, shall we? First, you should know that you will need more white paint than any other tube of paint. White paint will be your best friend, trust me! There are different kinds of white paint to choose from, but I stick with titanium white as my go-to for mixing. It's bright and opaque, and I love how it mixes.

Creating lighting in your painting is all about source, direction, and intensity. There are all kinds of light: ambient light, sunlight, direct light, spotlight, and so on. Each one gives your painting a totally different look. I generally paint with ambient light. I prefer it because it's a softer light that doesn't cast strong or dark shadows. I also suggest you choose a direction that the light is coming from. I'll switch from top left in one painting to top right in another, based on my composition. If your light source comes from below, it will create an eerie look.

### HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights are another big part of lighting and shadow. They help define the intensity of the light, reflectiveness of the surface, and depth of the shadows. Painting solid white in your highlights is okay.

### **REFLECTIVE LIGHT**

Another thing to consider is reflective light. Reflective light is a secondary source of color that you can paint on your elements. The colors come from surrounding objects or the background. If your character is wearing pink, then the reflected light on your character will be pinkish or reddish. Reflected light can come from multiple sources. Not only objects reflect light—backgrounds do, too. So, if you have a green background, it will reflect green light on your elements.

### LIGHT SOURCES

The first thing you need to ask yourself is, Where is the light coming from? Why? Where the

light is coming from will change the direction and intensity of your shadows. The stronger the light source, the bigger the shadows. The closer the light source, the brighter the highlights and the darker the shadows.

## SHADOWS

Shadows are multifaceted. They can be barely there to almost black. Note that you want to be careful with the intensity of the shadows. Paint large areas too dark and you might create a black hole—an area that will suck the viewer into an abyss. This isn't *Star Trek*, so let's avoid black holes and leave them for Kirk and Spock to explore. Shadowed areas that have too much contrast when compared to the rest of the image, or that are too large and black, create dead space in your piece. That's a bad thing.

A misconception about shadows is that they are black. However, when you stop and examine a shadow in real life, it is full of color (albeit it darker color)! I never, ever mix black into my paintings, unless it's for a black-and-white painting. The darkest color that I use is Payne's gray, which is a mixture of black and ultramarine blue. Shadows capture a wide variety of rich colors—a whole bunch more than you might believe. Painting a natural shadow is all about mixing colors that complement your elements, and taking the opportunity to mix even more color into your painting. Use blues, purples, reds, and greens, instead of black, and you'll see how much more intense and enriched your image becomes.

# STUDY PHOTOGRAPHY AND ART

I've found that a great way to learn about lighting and shadows is to study photography. You'll be able to see how light affects objects that are solid, semitransparent, and those that are metallic and glossy. Shadows are superdynamic and change colors depending on the light as well. So, make sure you study the kind of lighting you want to use and make notes. The best way to learn is to study and apply!

Some of my favorite shadows are the ones cast on sand or snow. There is something so magical about seeing a blue shadow over white tundra and purple shadows spread over sandy beaches.

I don't work with heavy shadows or intense lighting, but there are many artists who do, including some of my favorites from the Renaissance. Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci are amazing examples of artists who captured rich, intense lighting in their portraits. Pop Surrealists like Lori Earley, Mark Ryden, and Greg Simkins rock shadows and dramatic light like no one's business! Check out their work if you want to sink your teeth into some dramatic portraits.



# **DEPTH: AN IN-DEPTH LOOK**

Making a two-dimensional painting look 3D is all about depth and rendering the elements in a way that makes them feel as if they are layered on top of each other. To make something look like it has mass and occupies space, you need to create that depth by playing with the shadows and light source, as well as with edges.

### **OVERLAPPING OBJECTS**

It's tricky to make a 2D image look 3D, because it lacks that third dimension. However, there are techniques for tricking the eye into seeing a flat painting as 3D. Overlapping objects is one of the most basic ways to show depth. Having things in front and behind others will show distance in your painting.

# COLORS

Colors can also show depth. There are cool and warm colors. Warm colors are hues from red to yellow, tan, and brown. Just think of colors you associate with heat, the sun, fire, and deserts. Cool colors are the opposite—blues, greens, and purples. Think about ice and water and starry nights.

The farther away the object, the cooler its colors become. If you look at a photo of mountains, you'll see that the farther the hills are, the bluer they become. Warmer colors always seem closer and cooler colors seem farther away.

### SATURATION AND VIBRANCE

It's important to understand the elements of hues and tones. Saturated colors are pure colors that don't have any white in them. So, the more saturated a color, the less white it has mixed in it. Vibrant colors are bright colors that are intense and stand out against other colors and hues. So, you can have a saturated blue that is dark versus a vibrant blue that is brighter.

#### SHARPNESS

Sharpness is another qualifying way of painting depth. Objects in front will be in focus, while those that are farther away will be blurry and less in focus. So, if you paint elements that are in the distance, you don't want to paint them with a thick outline but rather with a faint outline that will make them look blurred.

### SHADOWS

Shadows are another excellent way of showing depth. When you cast a shadow, it shows distance between one object and the next. So, if I want to show an element that is behind another, I paint in a shadow and—boom!—the eye is tricked into believing that the element

is separated from the object in front of it.

#### HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights also play a role. Just as shadows show that objects are behind others, highlights show what is in front. Light will be brightest on the object that is closest to the light source.



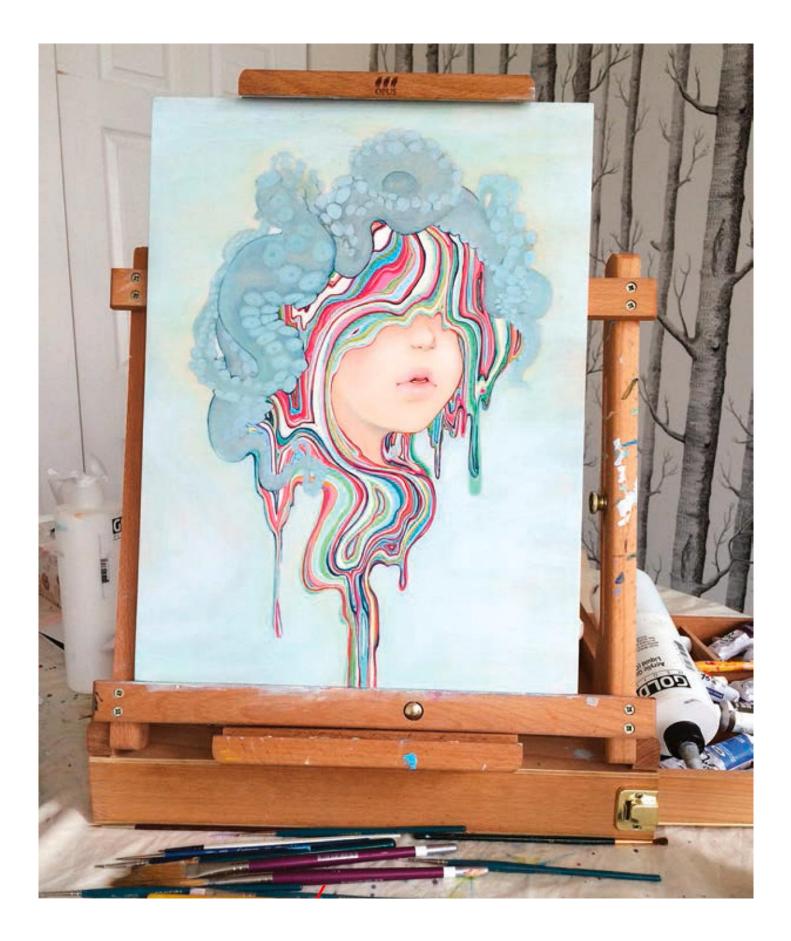
Choosing a light source can be fun or it can be scary. You know what's *really* scary? The time Camilla painted *The Melting Mind* with no pants on!





## PART 2

# PAINTING POP SURREALISM



## **TOP TEN QUESTIONS**

**1 Do you lay down thicker layers of paint as a foundation, or build up slowly?** I always build my layers up slowly. The beauty of the water-soluble oils is that you can thin layers if needed, so I will work with washes of color first and then slowly add in more layers. When I add in thick layers of paint, it will be specifically for the element that I am working on and most likely one of the top layers.

**2** Do you do underpainting? How? An *underpainting* is a preliminary layer of paint, usually just one solid color, that coats the surface of your canvas. Artists use underpainting as a base from which to build; the color they use also helps set the tone for the painting. I actually don't use an underpainting for the simple reason that I like to see the wood grain show through on my paintings. Because the wood grain already has a color, I want to work with the tones in the wood. I do paint in a light wash of color in the background sometimes. That definitely helps me set the tone for my painting.

**3** How do you decide which parts will have darker outlines? The two darkest parts of the painting are usually the points where the shadows are the strongest and the eyes, because those elements will always be the focal points of my painting. Using dark lines definitely helps to focus the eye of the viewer, so keep that in mind; the eye will automatically go to the lightest or darkest point in a painting, so it's like you are telling the viewer where to look.

4 How long does it take for layers to dry? What happens if I don't wait long enough and try to paint over wet parts? With Holbein Duo oils the drying time is a lot faster than regular oils, but slower than acrylics. They'll dry slower depending on how thick you make your layers. I love painting with the Duos because they allow me to add in a thicker layer and then leave it for a day. I can then come back to it and blend it with a new layer. The thing you want to avoid is to paint a thin layer over top of a thick layer that hasn't fully dried. When paint dries, it shrinks. So when the bottom wet layer dries and shrinks, the top layer (which has solidified) will break because it's no longer flexible. Your paint is only going to crack if you use a really thick layer and paint a thin layer over top.

**5 How do you decide which parts to paint first?** Deciding which part to paint first is totally up to your intuition! I have no rule for deciding where I start. It's really up to what I decide on in the moment. Sometimes, I know exactly what color I want the eyes to be, so I'll start there. Other times, I'm dead set on having a blushing girl, so I'll start with the rosy cheeks. There are even times when I have no idea what color I want the background to be, so I leave it until last. Other times, I want to get that background color established first. The

best thing to do is to go with your gut! No rules here!

6 What if you want to add or remove a big element halfway through the painting process? Because of the nature of painting on wood, removing paint is much harder than adding paint. Wood soaks up paint, and some colors will stain the wood grain. No matter what you do, you can never fully erase it. If you want to try to remove the element, start by putting the painting flat on the table (you don't want any drips ruining the rest of your painting). With a flat-tipped paintbrush, start to blend water into the area you don't like. (It's kind of like reverse blending.) With some pressure, circle your brush around, and when you see the paint starting to blur, take a cloth and dab it in the area, gently lifting off the paint. Keep adding a little bit of water and swirling your brush and taking away the excess paint with the cloth. Eventually, you should be able to get down to the wood grain. Keep in mind that whenever you add water to wood, it breaks up the softness of the grain. Therefore, the affected area will be a little rough now. Hopefully, you've been able to remove enough paint that you can start over.

On the other hand, adding things is much easier! Duo oils are opaque, which means that you can add layers of one on top of other colors and you won't be able to see underneath it. I don't suggest you put a big, thick layer down, but instead slowly build up your layers. The beautiful thing about painting is that you can never add too much paint! In fact, there have been a lot of cases of painters painting an entirely new image over the top of a finished painting. Believe me, there are times when I've repainted a girl's face five times before I got it right.

7 The surface of my canvas got scratched. What do I do? Scratches are tricky, since they are cuts that completely damage the painting. There is no easy fix here, so you have one of two options to consider. (1) Repaint the area. It sucks, I know. However, it will be almost impossible for you to remix the exact colors that you used in the painting. (2) Add in a new element in the scratch. Use it to your advantage. Someone once said, "There are no accidents, just new opportunities." So, make lemonade out of those lemons. A scratch can turn into a strand of hair, a feather, or a tear—anything is possible!

8 How long does it take to create a finished painting? One thing you need to know about painting is that it takes time—lots of time. I know the lessons in this book will make it seem like I painted each of the step-by-steps in an hour; however, all the paintings in this book were done over many hours and many days. A typical painting typically takes me a couple of weeks to complete. I usually spend about six hours per session. The first layers of your painting will always be rough, but don't get discouraged. If you don't like the rough stage—what I call the ugly duckling phase—remember that it'll take a few more painting sessions to get through it. Once you are past the midway phase, I find the painting goes faster. I gain more confidence once the elements are in place and I've chosen the colors. Give yourself time to complete your painting and expect to spend several days, weeks, maybe even a month, on it. Patience is a virtue!



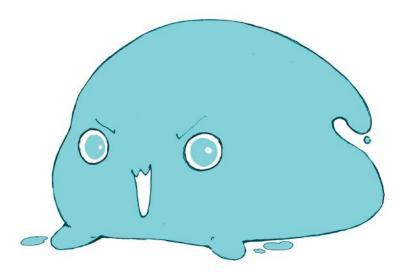
**9 How do you seal/protect the surface after you finish painting?** Once you have finished your painting, you will need to protect it from dust and UV light. Over time, light will fade the colors, and dust and debris will collect on the surface of a painting, eventually ruining your masterpiece. There are a lot of varnishes on the market. There are ones that you can spray on and ones you can brush on. Matte, gloss, and even semigloss varnishes are some of the options for finishing your paintings.

I prefer a semigloss finish, and I also prefer brushing the varnish on rather than spraying it. For me, it's about getting an even coat. The liquid varnishes are thicker, so I only use one coat rather than the two or three needed with a spray varnish. I use Golden Polymer Varnish with UVLS. I love how it gives a nice sheen to the painting without altering the colors.

One very important thing to know about sealing your painting is that it first needs to set before you varnish it. Acrylics need a twenty-four hour period from your last brushstroke until you varnish it. If you use Duos, then you need to wait at least seventy-two hours from the point the paint has dried. Since the water-soluble oils take longer to dry, you want to make sure that they have set completely before you seal them. Otherwise the paint will crack, and you don't want that.

If you use a spray varnish, then make sure to do it in a very well-ventilated area and wear a dust mask so you don't breathe the varnish in. Meanwhile, brushing on varnish has some requirements that spraying doesn't. First, lay a plastic sheet underneath your painting. (The last thing you want to do is ruin your floor!) Use a wide-tipped brush and follow the varnish instructions, mixing the varnish with the right amount of water. Again, make sure that your room is well ventilated and as clean as possible. Human hair, animal hair, dust, and little bits of fibers will stick to your varnish like flypaper, and you'll never be able to remove them. Dip your brush in the varnish mixture and, with a smooth and unbroken stroke, run the varnish down your painting in sections. You do *not* want to spread the mixture on your painting and mix it with your brush. You want to use the least amount of strokes; otherwise, the varnish will bubble and that's not good. If you do get bits of dust or lint or even your own hair in the varnish when it's wet, you have very little time to take it out. Use a clean brush to pluck the bits out. Believe me, all the effort is totally worth it! The varnish will add a beautiful sheen to your painting, protecting it from the sun and from time itself!

10 How do you take your photos/scans afterward? What kind of scanner is best? Properly documenting your artwork is superimportant! When I first started as a gallery artist, I didn't have my paintings scanned or photographed. So, there are actually a lot of my works that I can't share with anyone; it's a real shame. Eventually, I got on board the archiving boat! What you need to do is find a professional scanning company that specializes in documenting artwork. Trust me, it will be worth the cost to make sure that you have a color-corrected digital file of your painting. Make sure that when you have a file, it is a high resolution dpi (dots per inch)—300 to 600 dpi will be best.



The most important question of all: What's Camilla's favorite color? Me, baby! Zu is short for *azzuro*, which is Italian for teal. Booya!



## **TIPS AND TRICKS**

#### MAKE ART AND COLOR YOU LIFE

Does anyone else out there love color so much they wish they could eat it? Well, I sure do! I have always imagined that teal would taste the weirdest and pink the best—omigosh, imagine the sweet candied ambrosia that it would be! But let me tell you, pink does *not* taste like candy. I would know, since I tried to eat some when I was eight!

I've loved colors and art for as long as I can remember. However, my love for pop culture started the second my mother turned on the TV one fateful Saturday morning. *My Little Pony, Rainbow Brite,* along with *Strawberry Shortcake* and her motley crew of colorful tots, each mesmerized me and transported me into a world that I never wanted to leave. And in fact, I have never left that world. I'm immersed in pop culture. From childhood to adolescence to adulthood, I've stayed young at heart because of it!

I surround myself with all kinds of art—from the works of Renaissance masters to the sea of manga and anime produced in the Far East to the paintings of present-day artists in the Pop Surrealism movement in North America and Europe. Art is my life and it is a fun one!

#### EAT! DRINK! STAY ALIVE!

Remember to eat and drink when you are painting. If you're like my husband, who often forgets to eat, you'll wither away and look like a dried prune or a zombie after about ten hours of painting. I love my hubby, but it's not an attractive look! Those bags under the eyes are nasty. Don't neglect your body while being creative. Make sure to stay hydrated. If you can't break for lunch or dinner, have healthy snacks to munch on so you can keep your energy up. Cherry tomatoes, grapes, and raw almonds are some of my favs! They are chockfull of nutrients, and don't leave a mess (unlike, say, eating lasagna).

#### **NO DISTRACTIONS**

Don't distract yourself! Stay off YouTube and Facebook when you paint or you'll get sucked into the abyss that is the Interweb, where one minute can easily turn into two hours. It's bad news bears, I'm telling ya! Trust me—I know from experience. And actually I'm still guilty of it sometimes.

The lure of the sun can also pull you away from painting. It's hard to tell yourself that you can't go outside when you make your own hours. But stay focused, especially if this is your career. Distractions will only cut into your painting time and that means you'll have to sacrifice other hours and days to make up for it.

### AUDIO ENTERTAINMENT

I like to listen to music while I paint. If I feel bored of listening to songs I've heard before, I'll switch to an audiobook. Audio entertainment is a fantastic way to engage your brain, while your eyes stay focused on the work. Granted, a really good audiobook can captivate you and you might pause to enjoy a minute or two, but ultimately it's much better than putting on an anime or your favorite TV show. Then all you'll do is watch and take your eyes away from what you're painting.

### WHAT TO WEAR

What should you wear while painting? Well, anything and even nothing, if you dare! Just make sure that what you wear is comfortable and that it is nothing that you plan on keeping clean. Even the most meticulous and fastidious painter will inevitably get paint on herself. When I paint, I like to use an apron and some cruddy clothes I don't mind getting dirty.

### STAY ACTIVE

Make sure to get exercise so your body doesn't suffer from the countless hours of being hunched over and immobile! Remember to stretch. Put your hands behind your back and intertwine your fingers and touch your palms together like you're holding a pencil. This exercise will pull your shoulders back and strengthen your spine!

### THE WITCHING HOUR

You've probably heard the saying "Artists are night owls." Well, it's true. But don't let that stop you from painting in the morning. I work at the oddest hours. I'll jump up wide awake at 7 a.m. and paint for hours, and other times I'll paint so late that I hear the sounds of birds chirping, and then realize the light coming in my studio is from the sunrise.

When creativity strikes, seize that moment and paint—no matter what time it is. Unless, of course, you have to go to school or a job or have commitments the next day. Recovering from an all-nighter is no picnic!

#### FOCUS, DANG IT!

Find something to focus on—whether it's your deadline, the audiobook you are listening to that you really, *really* want to hear the end of, or the progress you are making on your painting. It's almost impossible to paint when your mind is cluttered with things you have to do. A good way to focus is to get everything out of the way first—e-mails, chores, exercise, and so on. That way, when you sit down to paint there is nothing pulling your mind away from you and the beautiful canvas in front of you.

### **GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK**

One of the most important rules for an artist is TAKE A BREAK! I know how all-consuming art

can be. Boy, when I get on a roll, it's like the world just disappears and time ceases to exist. It's not healthy to work for too many hours straight. You need to recharge, stretch your legs, and step away from your painting. Not only is it good for your health to take a break, but it's also important for the creative process. Sometimes artists get tunnel vision when we paint for too long. So while being on a roll is usually a good thing, it can also blind us to mistakes that we might be making. I've been there and done that! Trust me, even though you might think you are creating magic, you may actually be making a mess! Every couple hours, set aside the paintbrush, take off the apron, and step away from your painting. You'll thank me for it!



Want a tip? Hold your painting up to a mirror: the reflection will reveal anything that's distorted. So will turning the canvas upside down. Don't ask me why, I'm just a temp.





























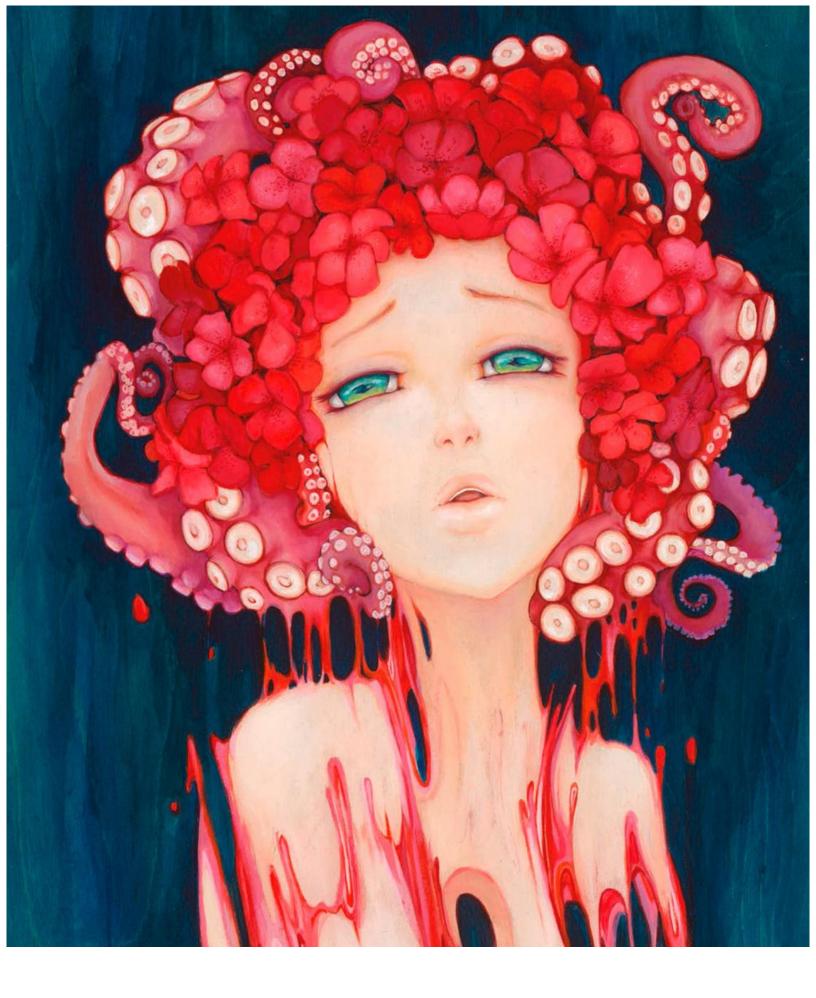




# <sup>10</sup> STEP-BY-STEP EXAMPLES

So are you guys ready to learn how I create my paintings now? Well, I hope so, because I'm ready to put paint to canvas! I've broken down these examples into a few sections: Humans, Animals, Melting Effects, and Twisting Reality.

Remember that paintings are not like drawings. They take much longer to create—days and weeks even—so don't rush. Take each step and focus on it until you are ready to move on to the next one. These featured paintings each took me a long time to create. So remember, guys: patience is a virtue! I'll be here to help and so will Zu!



## HUMANS

One of my teachers in college once told me that I couldn't paint people very well. He said the man I painted looked like "he was a man under the sea"...I still don't know what that means. So trust me when I tell you that it takes time and practice to render a portrait. The secret is to take apart the various facets of the character you are painting. In this section, I'll show you how to do that! Start small. Learn how to paint specific areas, like the eyes, lips, and so on. I'll also show you how I paint skin tones, which I know are a big issue for a lot of artists. The colors I use aren't as important as the techniques. You can choose any color you want for eyes, hair, or skin; however, I'll show you one color theme for each lesson and then once you've mastered the techniques behind the lesson, go wild! Paint a purple girl with silver hair if you want...hmm, that's a good idea...I might just do that. Come on, Zu, we're going painting!



Some say that eyes are the windows to the soul. That principle holds true for paintings as well. What connects you and me to the essence of a painting is often that longing stare, that wistful look, or that penetrating gaze of the subject. Painting round-, big-eyed girls is what I am best known for—blending the classic doe-eyed manga girl with a Renaissance portrait painting style. I think that my girls span the edges of the Japanese and European styles, resulting in a unique look. I try creating things that don't necessarily exist in nature, like orange and pink eyes. This is a style that I have developed over a decade of painting. When you create *your* paintings, keep in mind that they come from your heart and soul, so take your time to create a look and style that is unique to you.

Painting eyes is a process that takes patience—lots of patience. It is the part of my girls that I spend most of my time on, because it is the part of the painting that I want to pop, to catch the attention of viewers and make them fall in love with the girl they are seeing. Pop Surrealism is all about twisting the normal—like the eyes—into something fantastical. So, let's jump in!

#### Tips

A good way to understand eyes is to have photographic reference while you paint. Gather imagery of eyes and study the colors in them. You'll see that a lot of eyes have multiple colors in them, so don't be afraid to add in little bits of other colors!

Use muted and vibrant colors when painting your eyes. The contrast in the colors will really make the eyes pop!

Most people tend to use a little too much paint, so try to mix your Duo oils with acrylic glazing medium (AGM) to thin the paints out. Also, add in as little paint as possible with each new layer. It'll help you with your blending and saves you money, too!



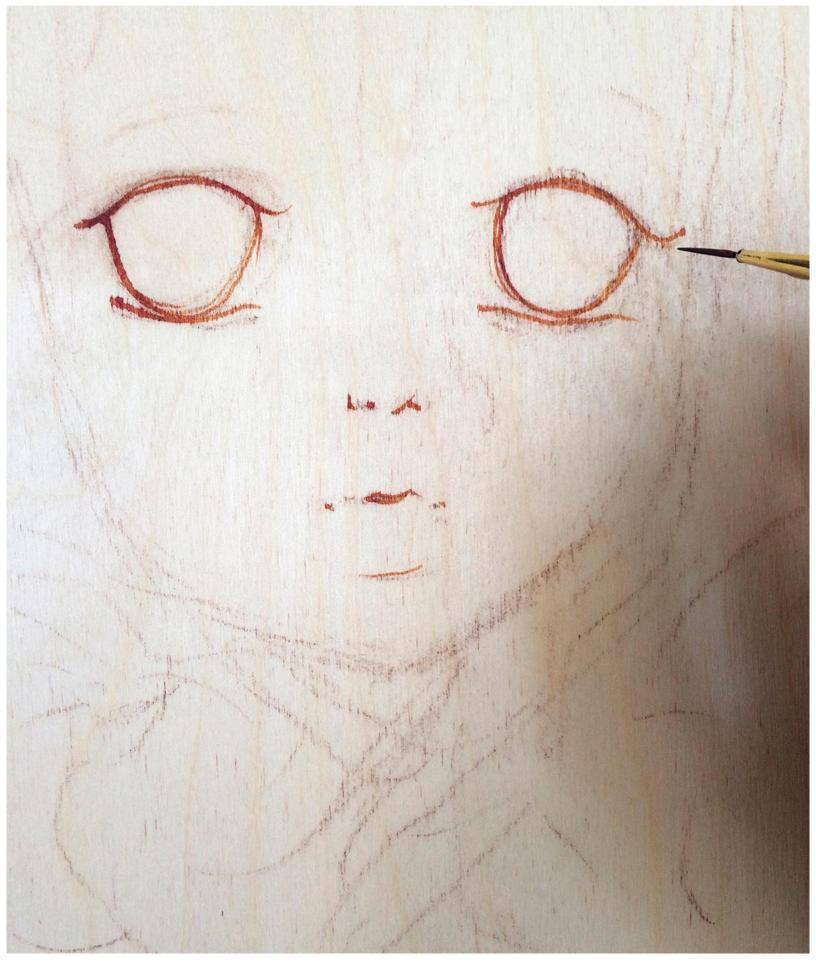
The bigger and rounder the eyes, the more innocent your character will look. See? Aren't I adorable now?



**STEP 1** I start with the underdrawing, done with a watercolor pencil. You want to choose a color that will complement the overall tone of your painting. Don't worry if you change your mind about what colors to use—the underdrawing will be covered up eventually. I choose a brown color for my underdrawing.



**STEP 2** Next, I outline the shape of the eyes. I mix acrylic paint with water to thin it out so that it creates a smooth stroke. It can be hard to hold the brush steady (with my old, shaky hands over here), so I recommend holding the brush near the very tip. This helps you maintain a solid grip and steadies your stroke.

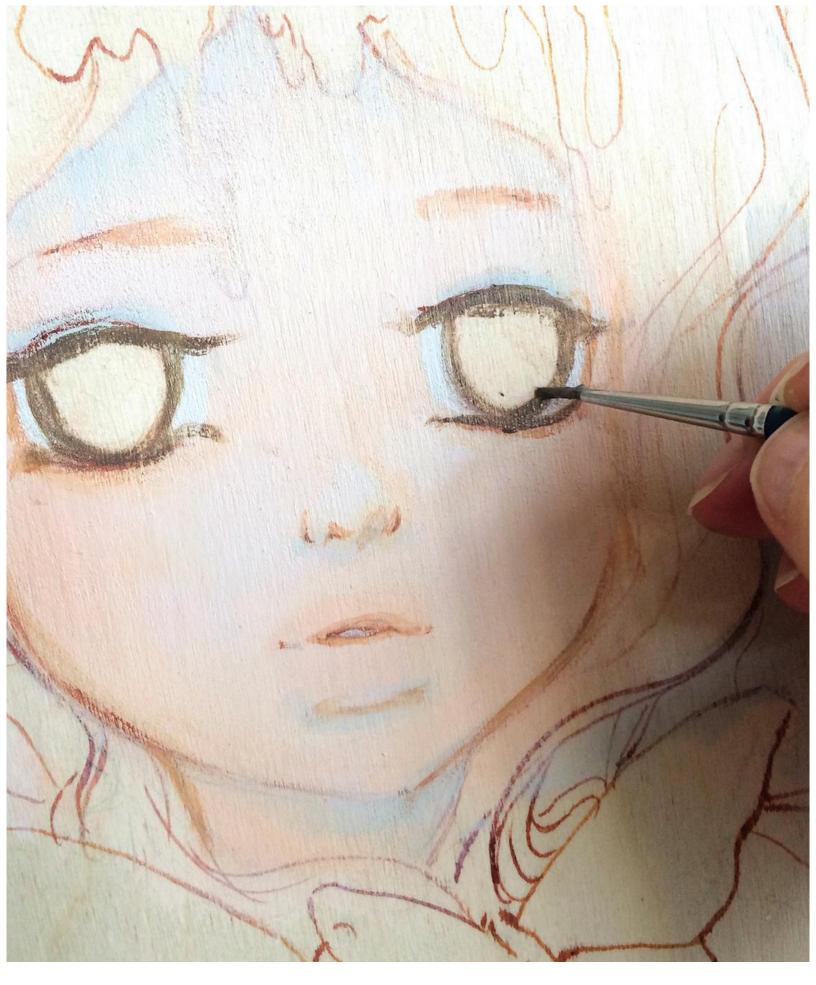


**STEP 3** To outline the eyes, I use a very fine paintbrush, usually a liner brush. The thinner the line you can get, the better. Add water until you achieve the right consistency. I use Holbein quinacridone gold and burnt sienna at this step.



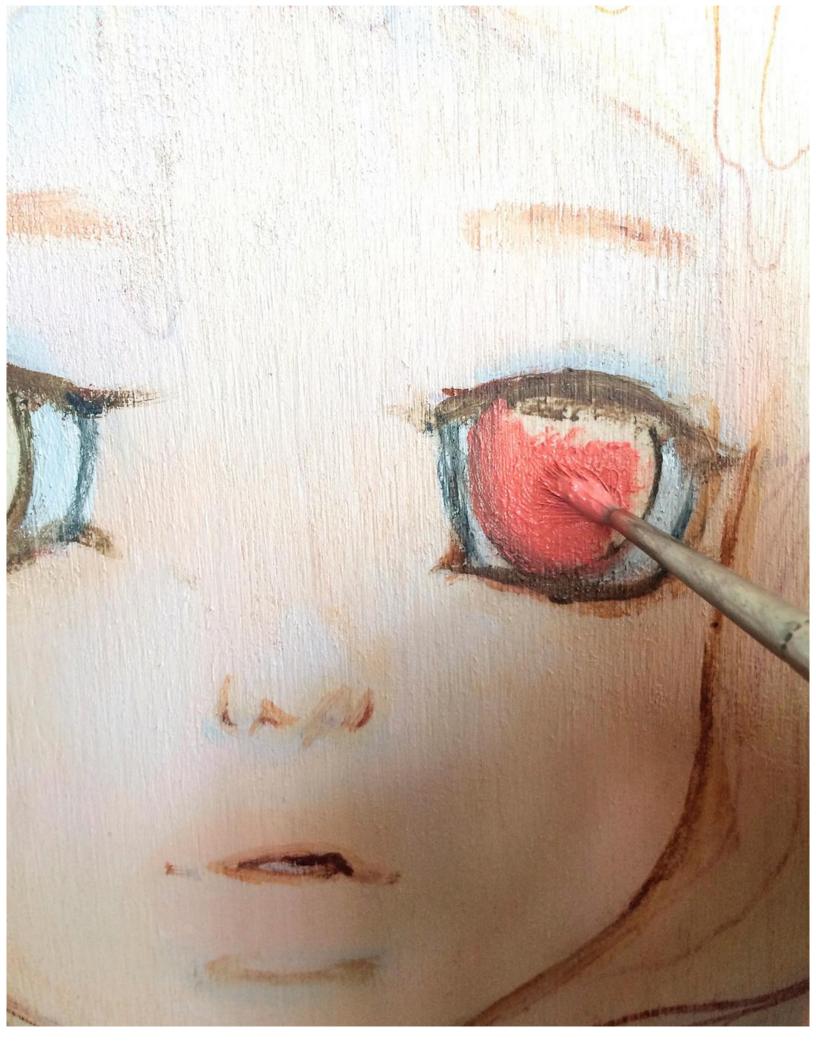
**STEP 4** Focusing on the eye only, I want to contour the shape now. I do so by adding in the whites of the eye. This gives the viewer a sense of which direction the character is looking. For this piece, I want her to look slightly to the left, so I add in my white to the right side of

the eye with a small sliver on the left.

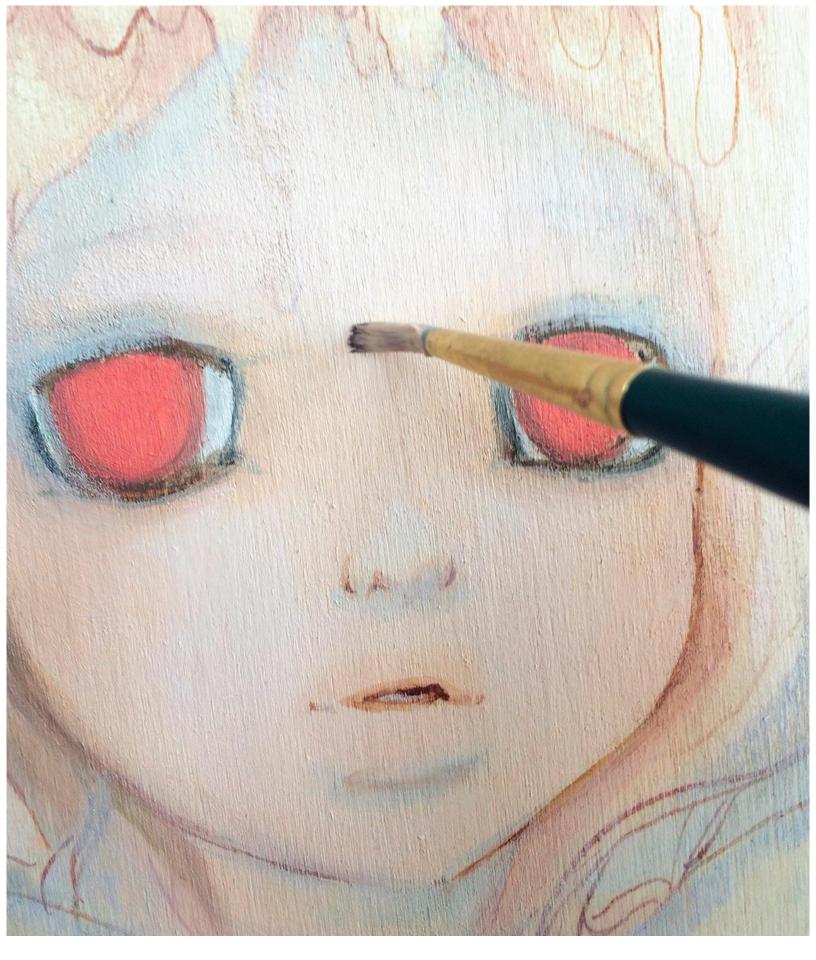


**STEP 5** What's a girl without a little bit of eyeliner? I find the best way to define the eyes is to add a thick layer of dark paint along the top eyeline and then trace the iris with that same

darker paint. It may seem like a dramatic look, but it's only the starting point. It will be covered up eventually.

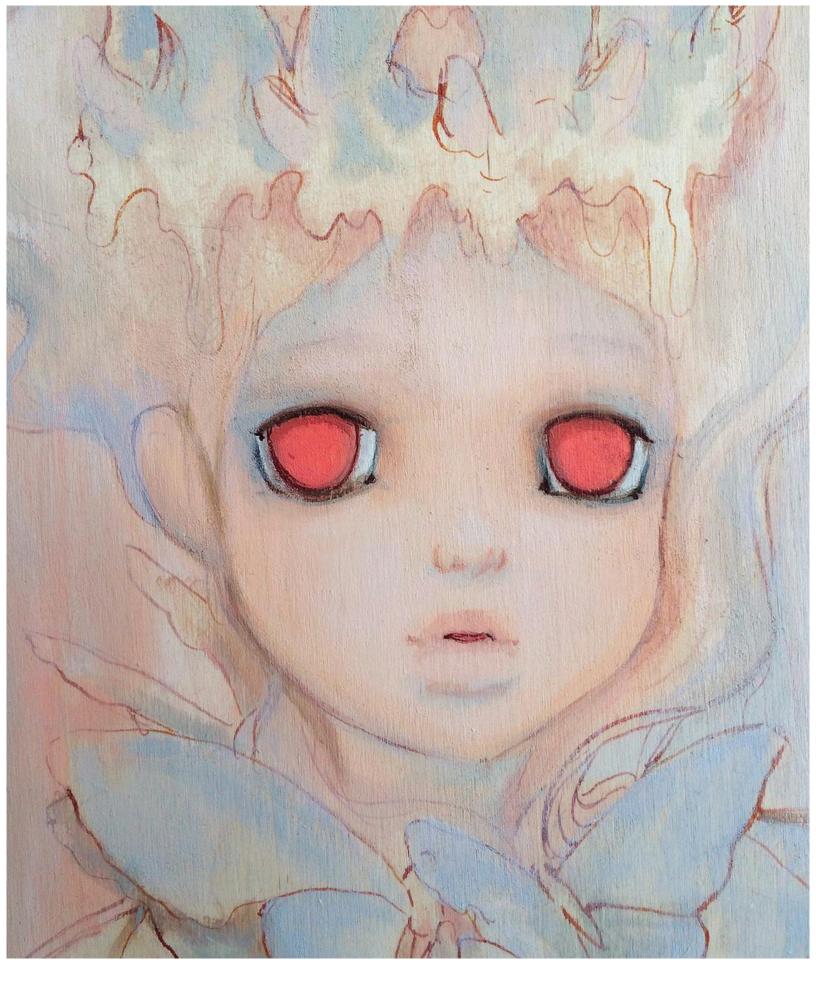


**STEP 6** Eyes are all about layering and more layering. You have to combine neutral and vivid colors to create a lush eye that looks alive. I start out with a neutral color as a base and then fill in the total iris. For this stage, I'm mindful not to use a vibrant tone but rather a more pastel, neutral color. You should choose a neutral color that will be the halfway point between the darkest and the lightest color. Sometimes I'll go through a few colors before I land on the one that feels right!



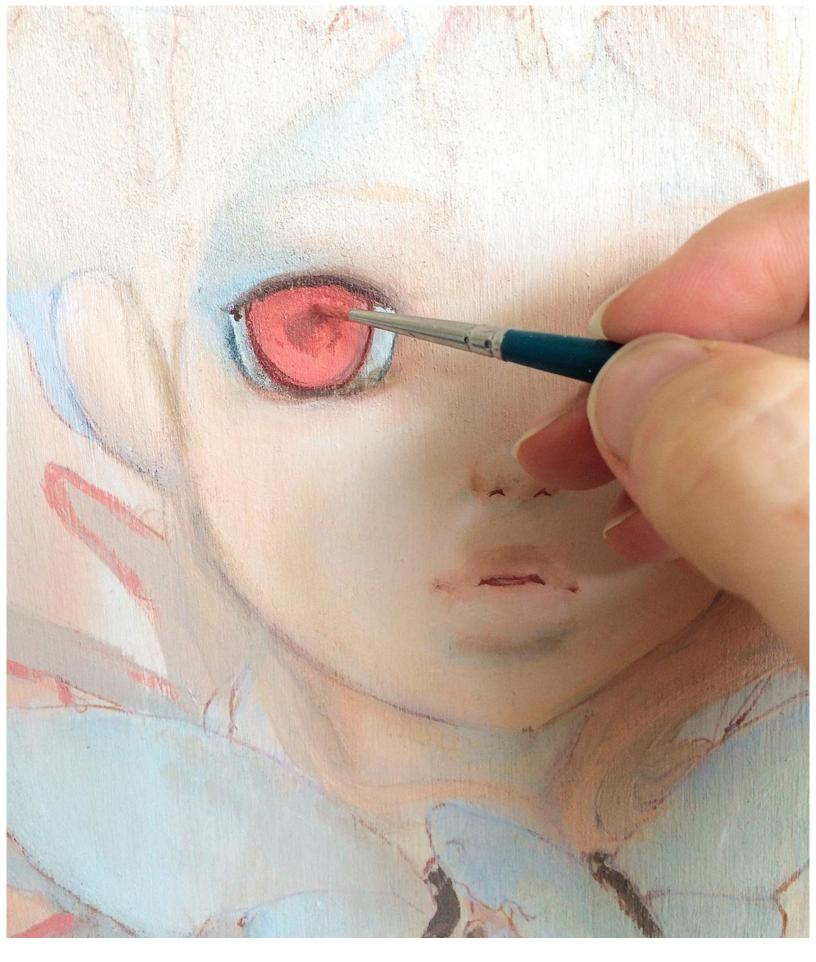
**STEP 7** As the painting develops, I know that it's okay to switch from the eye to the skin and vice versa. At this point, I want to soften those lines that were painted over. Using skin tones, I add a thin layer over the dark lines. This blends the lash line with the eyelid, and

looks supersexy!



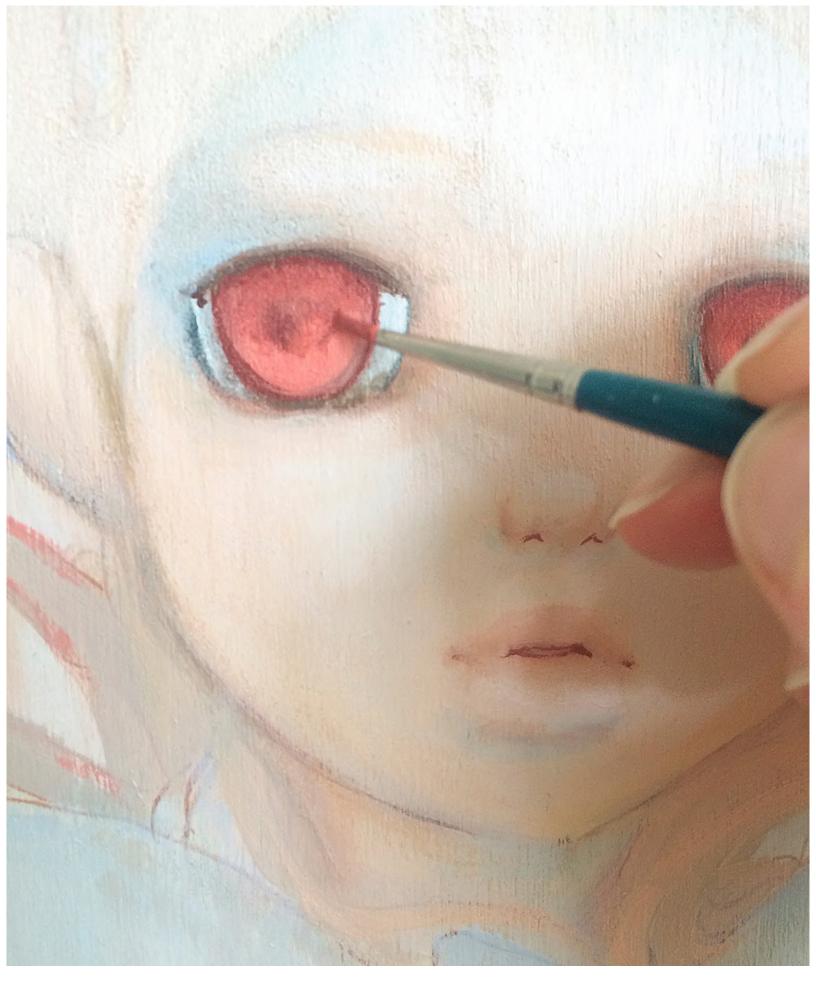
**STEP 8** It's time to start filling in the eye! I mix a darker shade of my base color. Starting from the top of the iris, I work thin layers downward, gradating the darker color gradually, to

the iris.



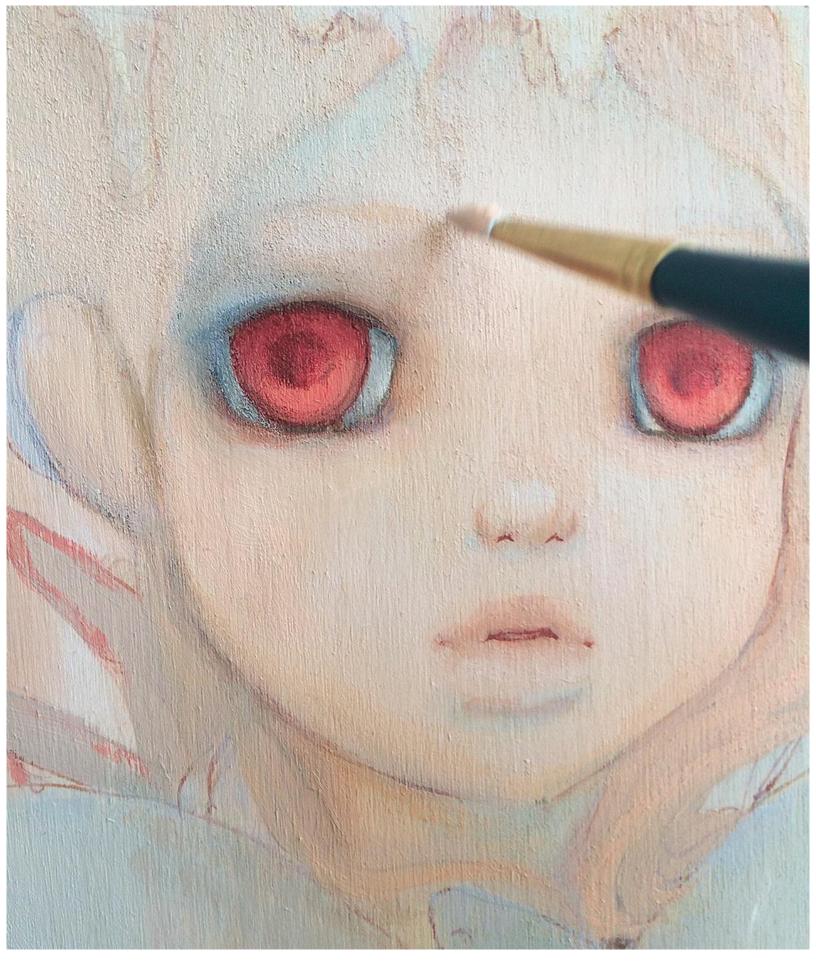
**STEP 9** Now it's time to get that pupil painted! The pupil is generally in the center of the iris. I find where the center should be and make my mark! Painting the pupil subtly gives a soft look to the eye, so don't just put down one big dark dot. The pupil is a tricky part of the

eye, and the one I find the most difficult. I use a light stroke and paint half of the pupil in first. Remember to use a dark color (but not black) for the pupil.



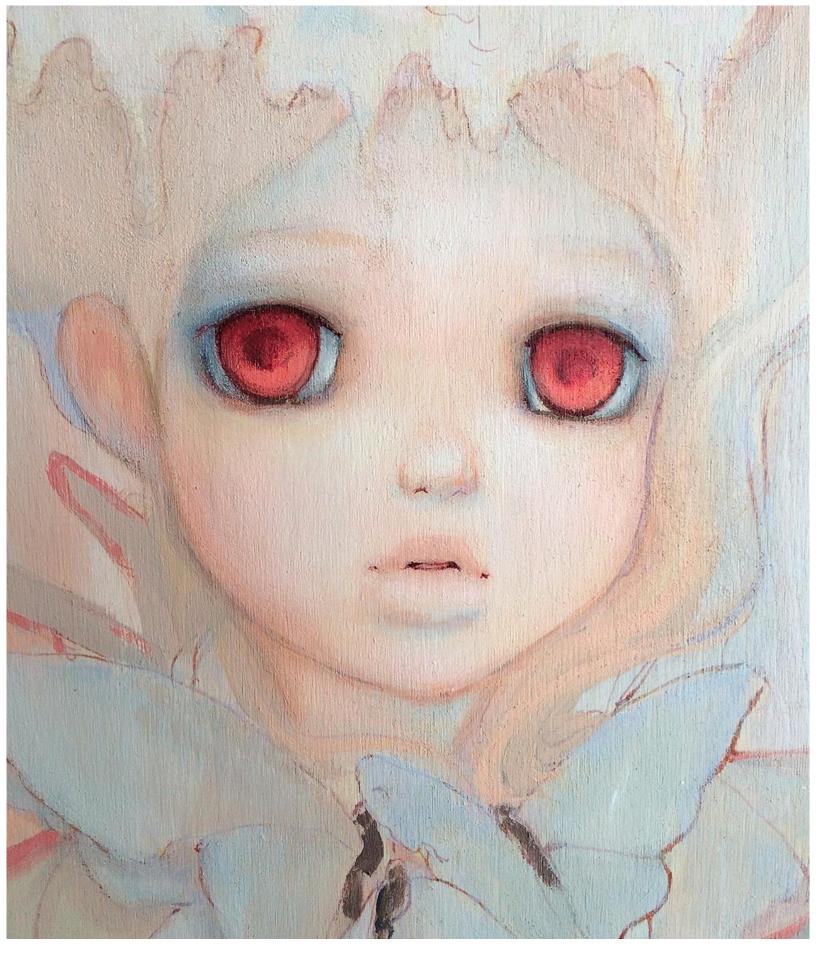
**STEP 10** I blend the colors while they are still wet, and continue to darken the upper part of the iris. This is a time when you can use more vibrant and saturated colors. I recommend

blending the paint over the pupil, as you fill in the iris. It makes it looks cohesive. Don't be afraid to blend in the colors in the eye. The more layers, the more depth there will be.



**STEP 11** I now outline the iris with a color similar to the one I used for the pupil. I add in a bit of definition on the upper eyebrow and the corners of the eye. It's a good time to add in some shadows to the white of the eye. Don't just mix black and white to make gray. Add in a

bit of blue or yellow for the shadow. This tiny addition of color produces a more natural shadow.



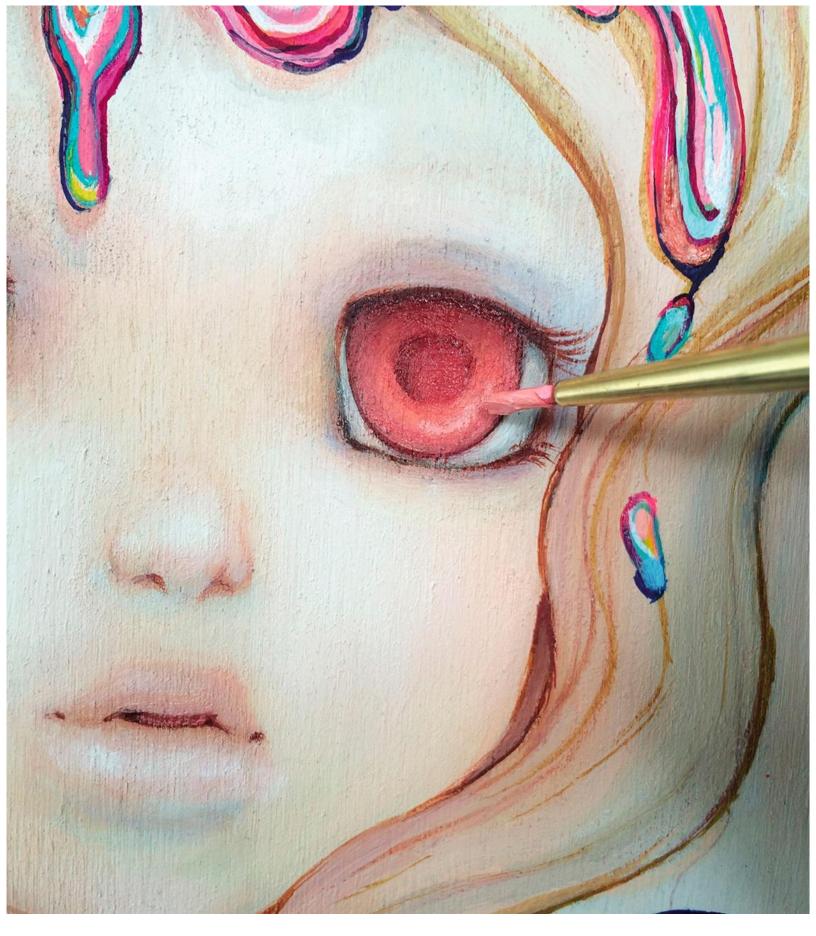
**STEP 12** It's important to remember what's on the outside (of the eye). Painting around the eye is as important as painting the iris. I like to give a bit of coloring to my girls, so I blend small amounts of color with the skin tones, and then gently blend them around the eye.

This requires a few layers of painting over the outlines. The part of the eye that I want to pop is the colorful iris, so I make sure it is strongly outlined with a darker shade—never black, but always the darkest shade of the iris color.



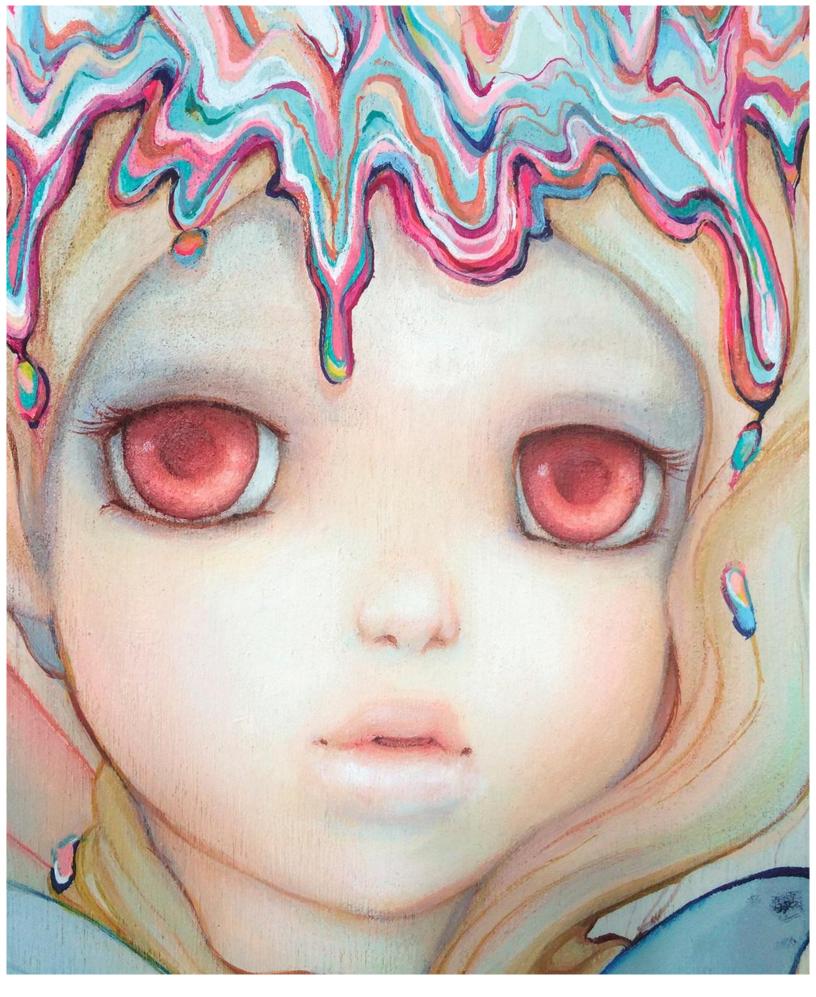
STEP 13 At this stage, it's good to establish more of the outside details of the eye. I blend in

what one could describe as eye shadow. I suggest you choose colors that will complement the tone of your eyes.



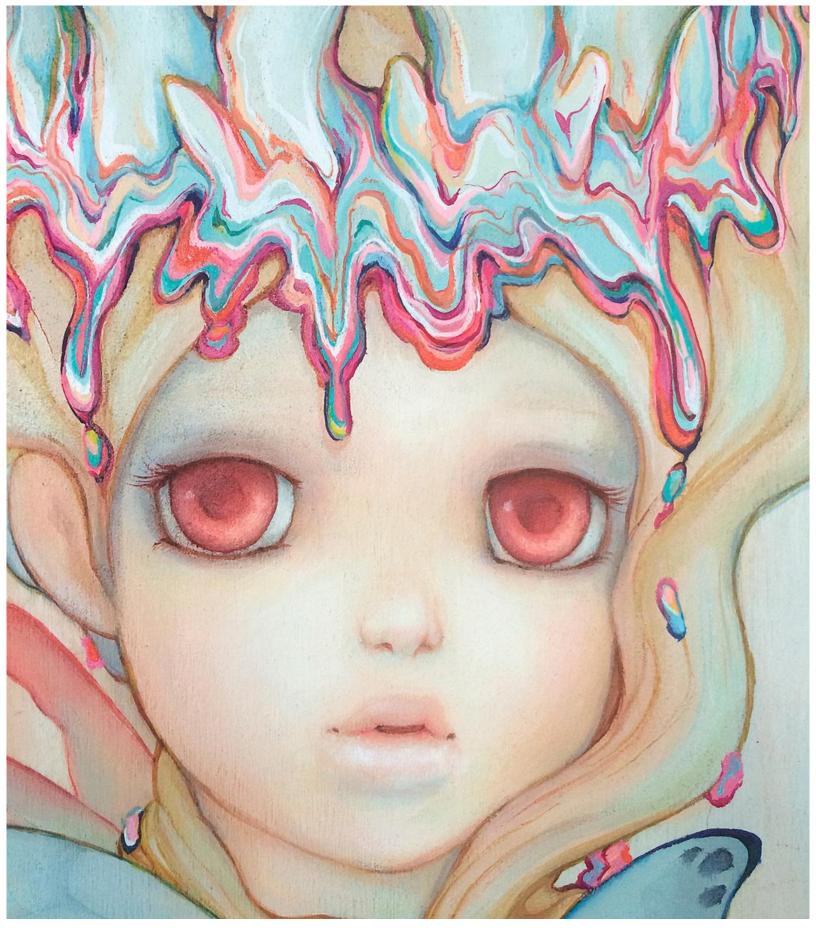
**STEP 14** It's time to add in some highlights to the eye. Here is where you can choose a light color, perhaps a lighter version of the base color or a more vibrant, lighter shade of a contrasting color. I choose a salmon pink. I dab the color on with a shorter bristled paintbrush, and make sure to stay between the pupil and the edge of the iris. I build up the

lightness in the eye by blending the light color with the base color. I continue by adding even lighter tones to that area of the eye. I like to mix slightly different shades to add depth to the lighter part of the eye. You can use more vibrant shades, including both cooler and warmer tones, at this step.



**STEP 15** I add in one small highlight to the corner of the eye. This highlight is both the brightest color in the eye, but also the smallest. Don't just add a pure white dot. You want to

mix the white with a little bit of the color from the iris. This helps blend it and makes it appear less out of place. I also add more color to the highlights of the eyes here.



**STEP 16** The pupil has many layers to it as well. As you can see, I choose to give a dark edge on one side and a lighter edge on the other. For more depth, I also add the most saturated colors in the pupil, while blending the highlights so they look smooth.

When finishing the eye, you want to paint in the eyelashes and contour the eye as well as the iris. And then, voilà!

You're all done! Don't be fooled by the steps here, painting the eyes takes hours, many layers, and patience. Don't rush it. Remember: the eyes are the windows to the soul, so take your time.



## LIPS

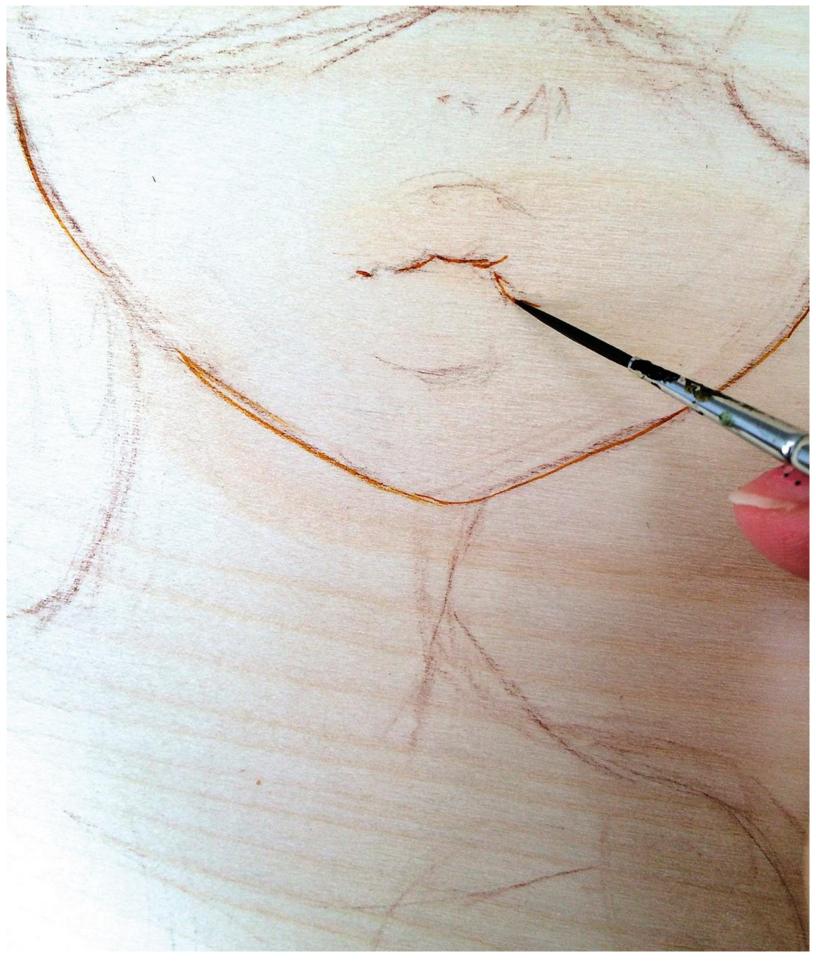
Plump, juicy, and delicious—no, I'm not talking about food. I'm talking about lips, baby! Eyes express the soul, but lips express emotions. A subtle smile, a little pout, a frown—all of these details bring to life a person's emotion.

Manga aesthetics simplify facial features, especially the lips. Mostly manga artists just draw the opening of the mouths. By simply painting in lips, I blend genres and define my own style. I just can't help it. With so many kinds of lips, it was too tempting not to fall in love with painting plump lips that even Angelina Jolie would envy!

So, how does one paint a pouty COVERGIRL-style mouth? Follow along with this step-bystep example and you'll see that it's not as daunting as you might think. While this particular example is for painting big, pouty lips, remember that these steps can apply to any size lips!

## Tip

Lips should be a different shade of pink than the skin tone, so add in cooler or warmer tones of pink to the lips and do not use those in the rest of the skin.



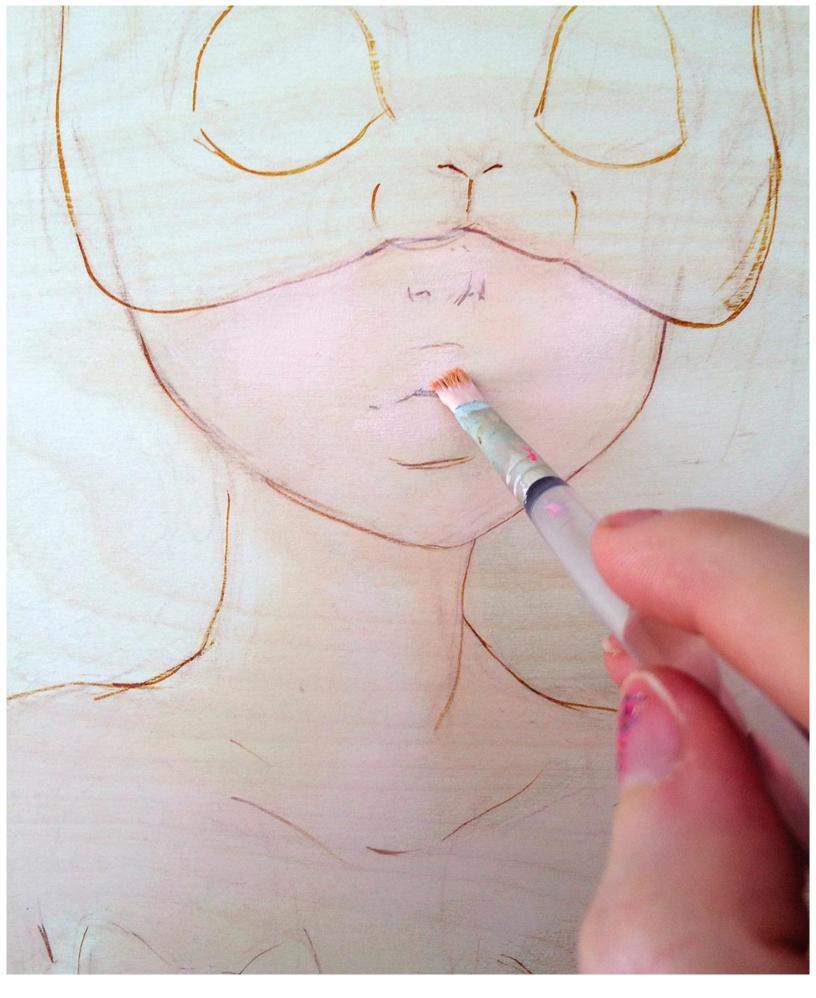
**STEP 1** First, I draw in my figure and her lips with a watercolor pencil. Then I trace the drawing with a very thin line of paint using a liner brush. The trick to full, pouty lips is to start off with the line of the mouth. You should draw the mouth wider than the upper and

bottom lip line. I make the corners of the mouth curve slightly down. Keep in mind that the more you curve the line down, the more upset the expression will look; the more you curve upward, the happier the expression will be.



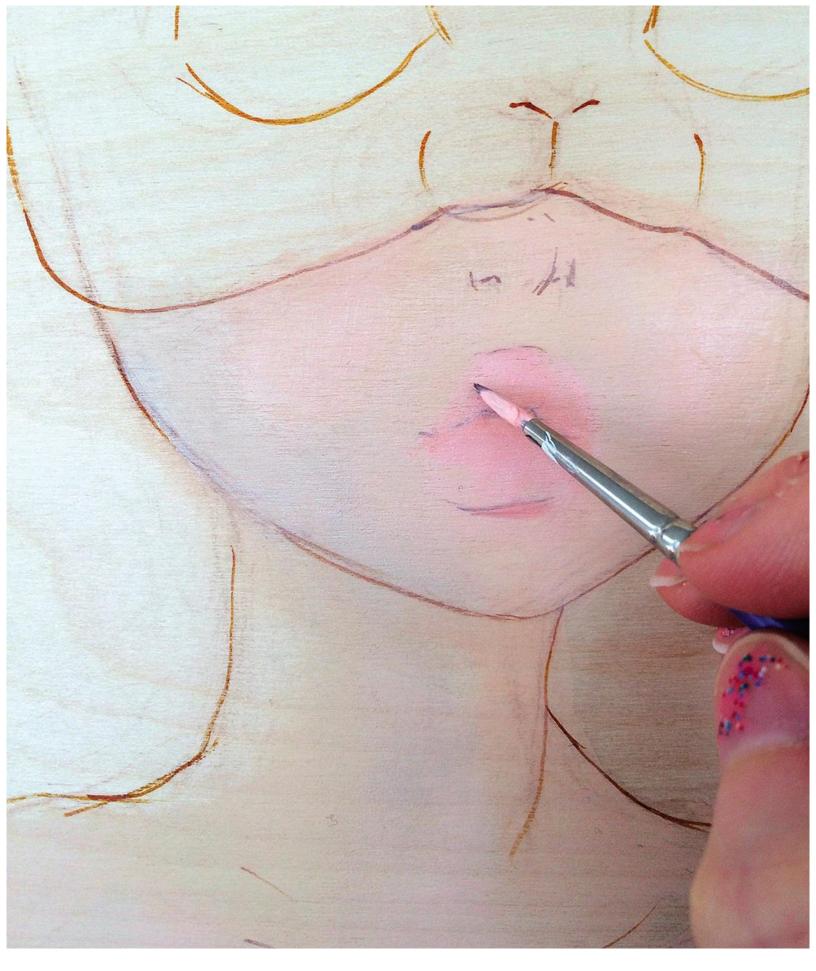
**STEP 2** When painting a pouty mouth, you want to leave a small gap so it looks like the girl's mouth is slightly open. Doing so gives a bit of life and movement to the expression. It also shows that she is breathing. (You can even add in a thin line for teeth if you want.) Once

I've finished outlining my figure, I erase the watercolor lines with a cotton rag. A white eraser will also work.

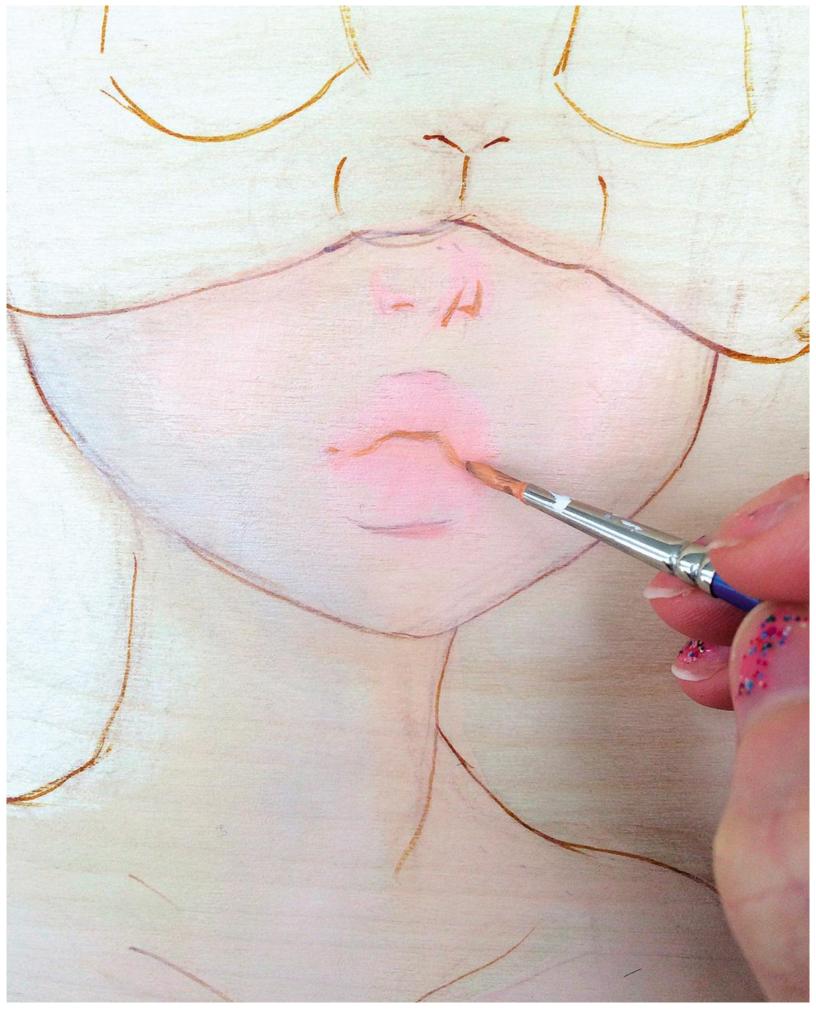


**STEP 3** I can't just paint the lips and then fill in the face later. I have to paint everything at once so that it all blends together. I use very thin layers of skin tone, thinning it out with

either water or acrylic glazing medium (AGM) and brushing the paint lightly over the entire face. I add in lighter layers of skin tone on the cheeks and use that same lighter color for the lips. I start at the center of the lips and pull outward to the corner of the mouth.

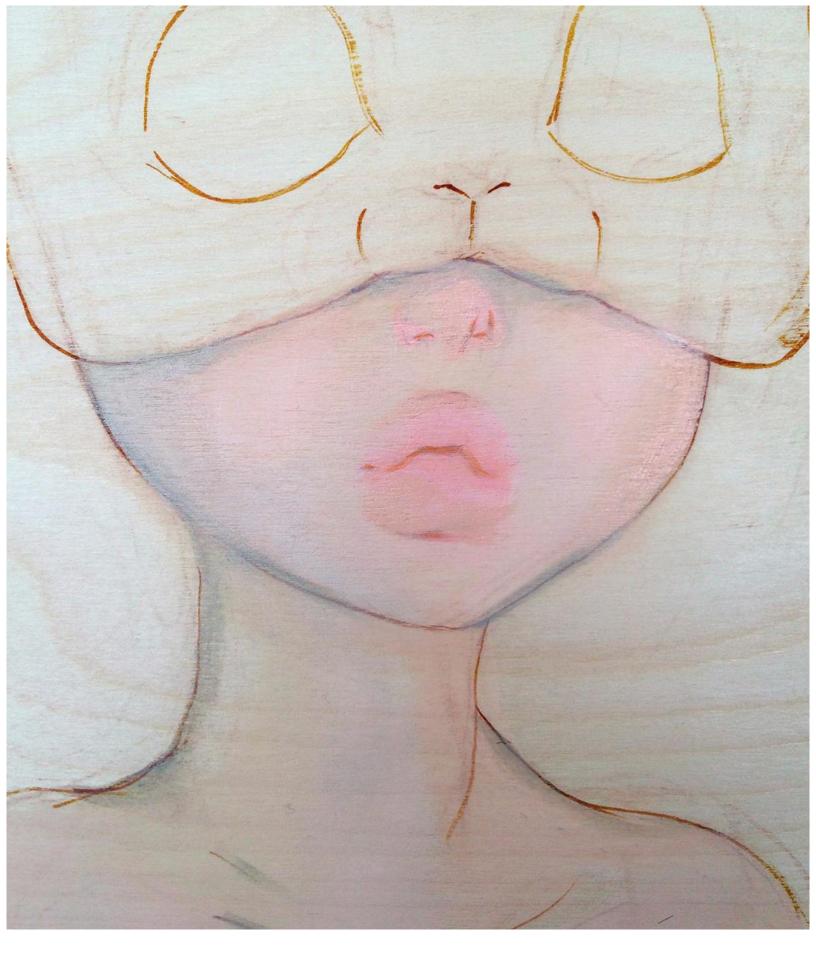


**STEP 4** As I add in my darker shades of pink, I make the center of the lips the darkest color and lighten the tone at the top of the lip. I also paint in a shadow under the bottom lip, which is a darker shade of pink. This helps to give some real depth to those juicy lips!

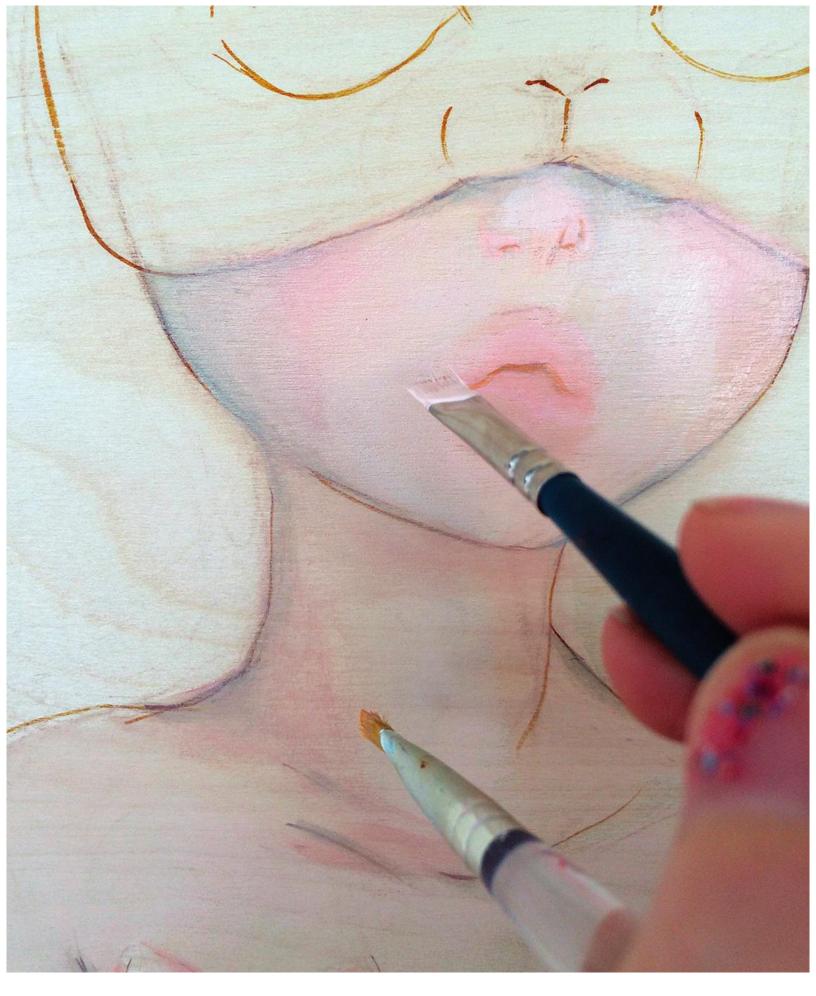


STEP 5 At this point, I need to redefine the line of the mouth. I mix a warm skin tone that

will contrast with the cooler lip color. I start at the center of the mouth and pull out from the left and then from the right. You can change the expression anytime by curving the line up or down. So, if you want to change the mood, you can!



**STEP 6** I add in a warmer tone to the bottom of the lip and blend it up to the midpoint of the lip. Lips have multiple shades and tones within them. The upper lip is a lighter color than the bottom lip, generally.



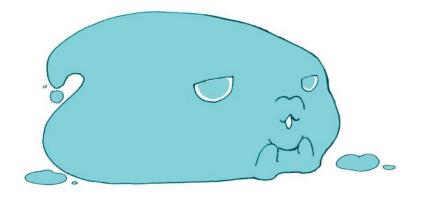
**STEP 7** Remember when I said you can't just paint the lips—you need to blend them into the rest of the face? To do so I pull the colors from the cheek into the outer edges of the

lips. This will blend them and soften them as well. In the final painting, I don't leave any hard edges to my lips, so I take my time and slowly, with thin layers, build up the skin tone of the lips.

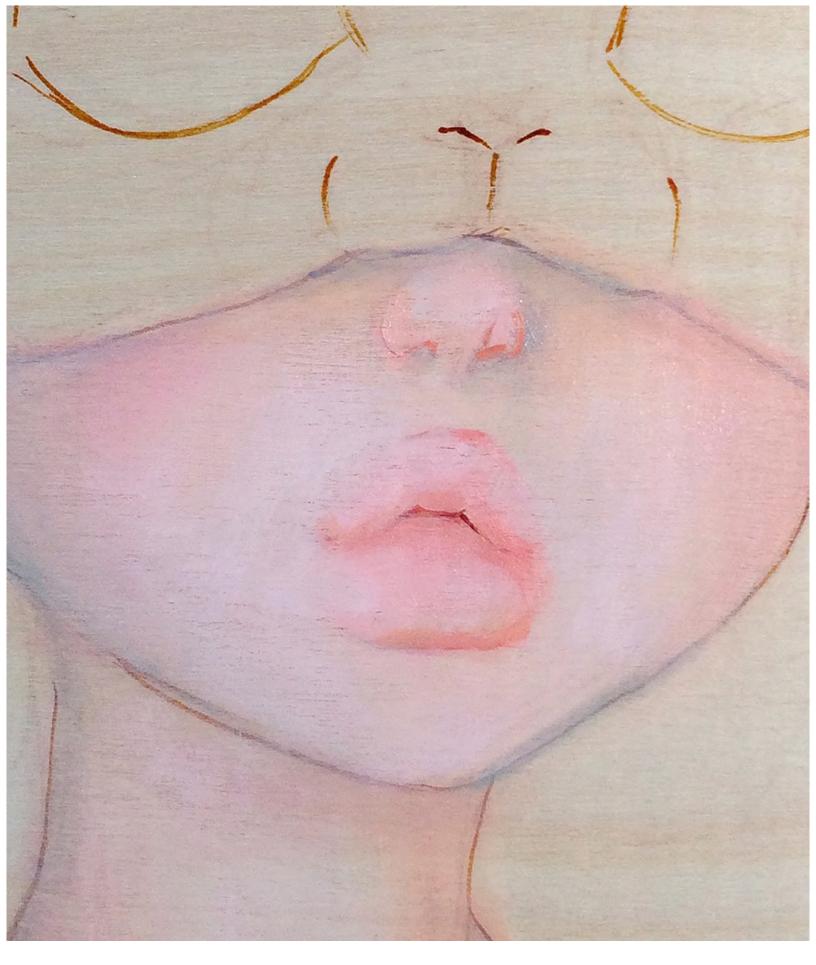


**STEP 8** Once I've blended my skin tone into the lips and established the overall skin tone for my subject, I again define the lines of the lips. This happens often, because I'm building up the layers to add depth. This time, I use a darker color that is more saturated. You can

add reds, corals, or magentas for the lines, if you like. Once the lips are finished and you're satisfied with the results, you'll understand what I mean when I talk about creating depth.



When I pucker my lips up, they sure do look plump and pouty. Angelina Jolie, eat your heart out!



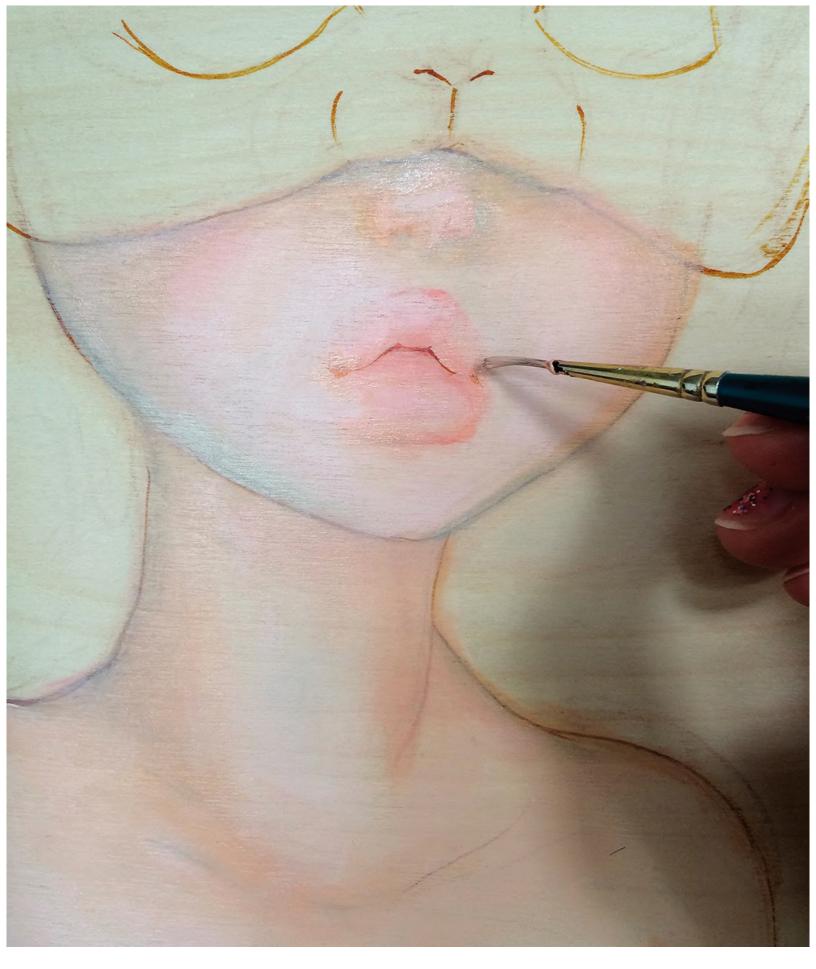
**STEP 9** Okay, it's time to add some shadows! As you can see, I paint over the outline and use a darker shade of pink to do so. You can choose how pouty your lips are by how much shadow you put in. Because I'm going to make these very plump, I add wide lines for the

shadows.



**STEP 10** I don't paint girls with red or dark lips. Instead, I like to give a more natural tone to the lips. That is why I add in another layer of lighter skin tone at this step. I pull those cheek colors into the lips, softening the edges and making the middle of the bottom lip and top

corner of the top lip lighter.



**STEP 11** The next layer calls for another shadow. I paint in darker shades of pink, choosing cooler tones closer to magenta. I paint in the mouth gap and pull the darker color along the edge of the mouth for more definition.



**STEP 12** Now it's time to add in some highlights. I start by dabbing on a light color of pink in the middle of the bottom lip. This layer should be a little bit thicker than my other layers,

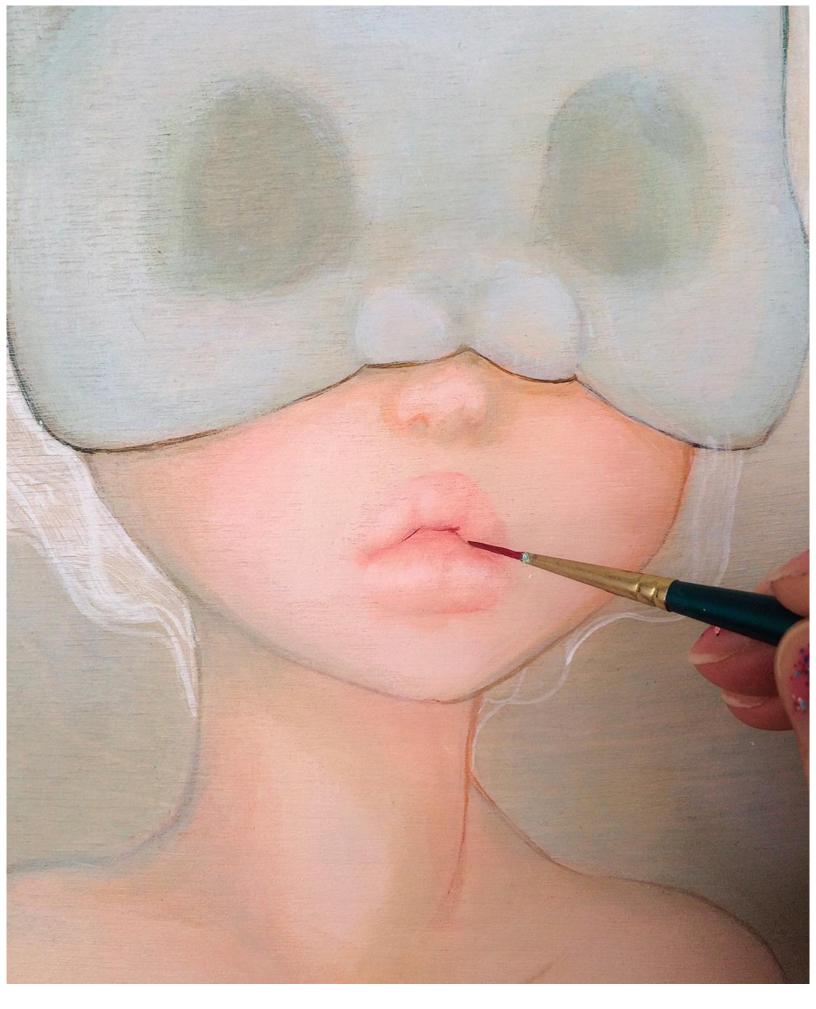
because I am going to softly blend the paint into the lip.



**STEP 13** With gentle strokes, I blend the lighter color into the lip. Those little dabs recreate the texture of lips, so don't blend them completely but instead leave them slightly visible. When I add in the highlights to the top of the lip, I make sure to change the shade to a slightly cooler tone compared to the bottom.



**STEP 14** The lighter your highlights, the shinier the lips will look. That is just what I am seeking! So I add in another layer of highlights here. Again, I leave the strokes a bit separated so that there is some texture. You want to have one side of the lips with more highlights to show the light source. Keep that in mind when you are painting the lips.



STEP 15 It's almost done! Now it's time to add the line of the mouth. I use saturated colors

so that they bring some depth to the lips and draw the eye to the center of the mouth. I often use a cooler tone and blend that cooler, darker tone into the lips very slightly. Doing so rounds out the lips and gives them even more depth.



**STEP 16** For the final stage, I blend the skin tone into the lip one last time. Using the skin tone in the cheeks, I gently pull the cheek color into the edges of the lips to cover the darker outline. You don't have to do this, but I prefer the softer look it produces. Then, I add

#### a little bit of shadow under the lip. I use the shadow color from the body for consistency. This is the last thing I do and then I am done with the lips!

Whether they are pouty or pursed, lips always draw the viewer's eye. You can choose to make them glossy and bright or make them have a more neutral look without sheen or color. It doesn't matter really, what matters is the expression! Don't forget that the lips (and the mouth as a whole) define a huge part of your character's emotion, so use them to your advantage!



Let me ask you something: If you could choose any hair color for yourself, what would it be? Would you go with blonde? How about jet black? Or would you think like a Pop Surrealist and go pink? My point is—don't limit yourself to realistic colors. Go wild like I did with my painting *My Little Moonberry*. The rainbow hair in this painting was the most challenging I ever painted. I'm pretty sure I used every color I own to create it! But for now, let's start out simple, shall we? I'll show you how to paint pale hair based on my painting *Strawberry Whispers*. Learning how to paint is all about baby steps, so for this first round, let's start with blonde hair. Then you can run with any hair color you like afterward!

Hair is a very important feature when painting any character (but especially for girls), and you should focus on making it appear as flowing as possible. I imagine hair as if it were liquid. I picture it running down the girl's head, cascading over her shoulders and around her body. Hair has weight to it, so think about how gravity will affect the hair and then exaggerate the result. Hair falls down and curls around the face and shoulders. If you need help with the visuals, look at magazines or photographs for reference and inspiration. There is a lot of incredible imagery out there.

#### Tips

Hair should have highlights and lowlights, because it is glossy.

Hair is thicker at the base and thinner at the ends.

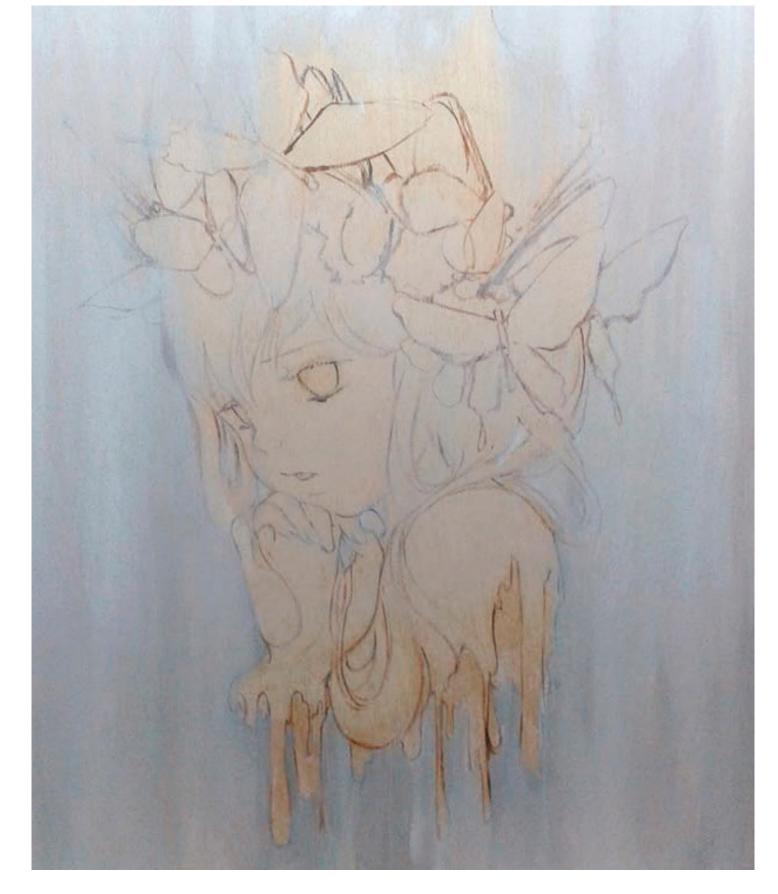
Hair should look like one continuous unbroken line.

Hair is not just one color. Whether you are painting brown, white, or red hair, you must use warmer and cooler tones throughout the hair.

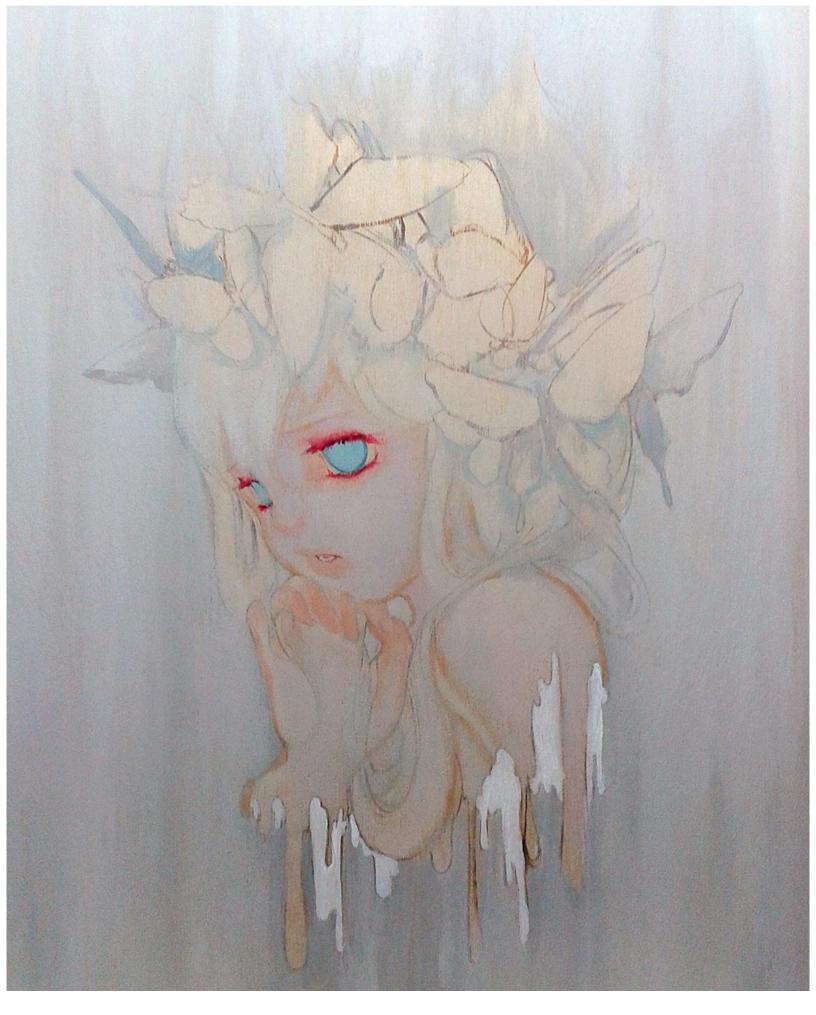


**STEP 1** Let's start with the basics. I draw the hair, paying close attention to its flow. Hair is not one solid mass. As you will notice, I break it up into thick and thin sections. My girl holds a part of hers in her hand, so I draw a chunk of hair coming off her shoulder. Because of

gravity, it dips down and curls back up into her hand.

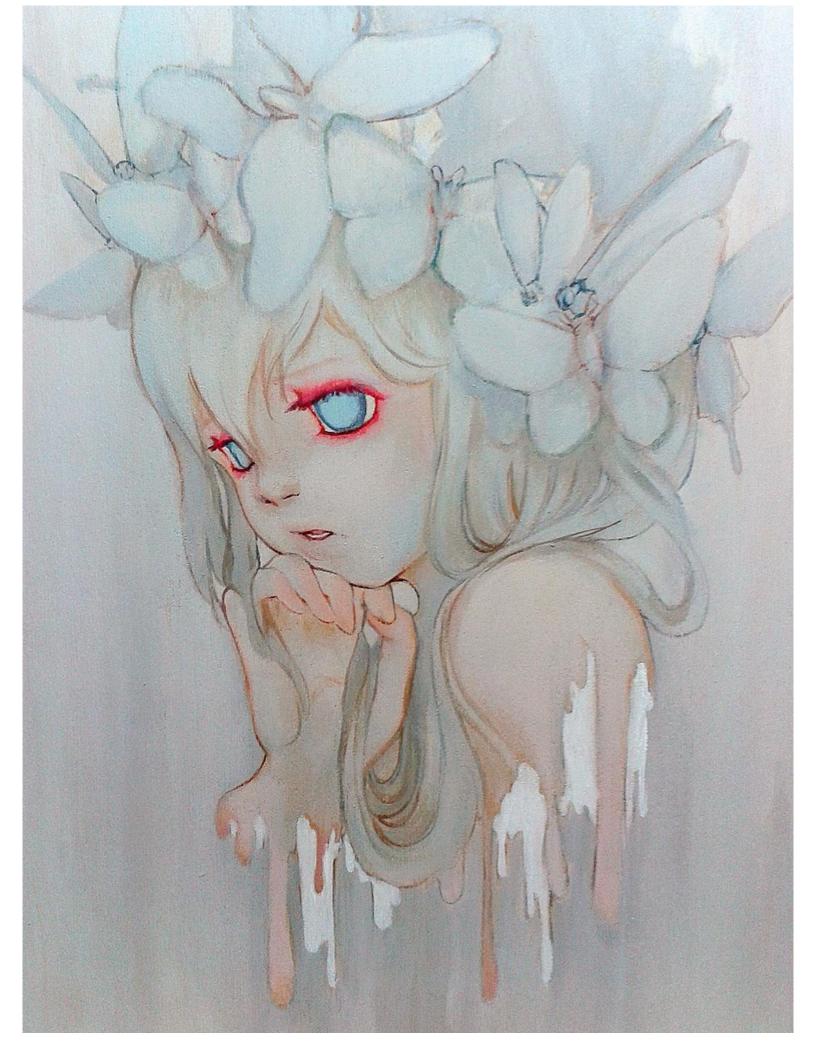


**STEP 2** Because I am going to make the hair pale and similar in tone to the background, I use the background color and gently wash it into the hair, slightly covering the lines that I initially painted to define the hair. Doing so helps keep the tone of the hair in line with the background.

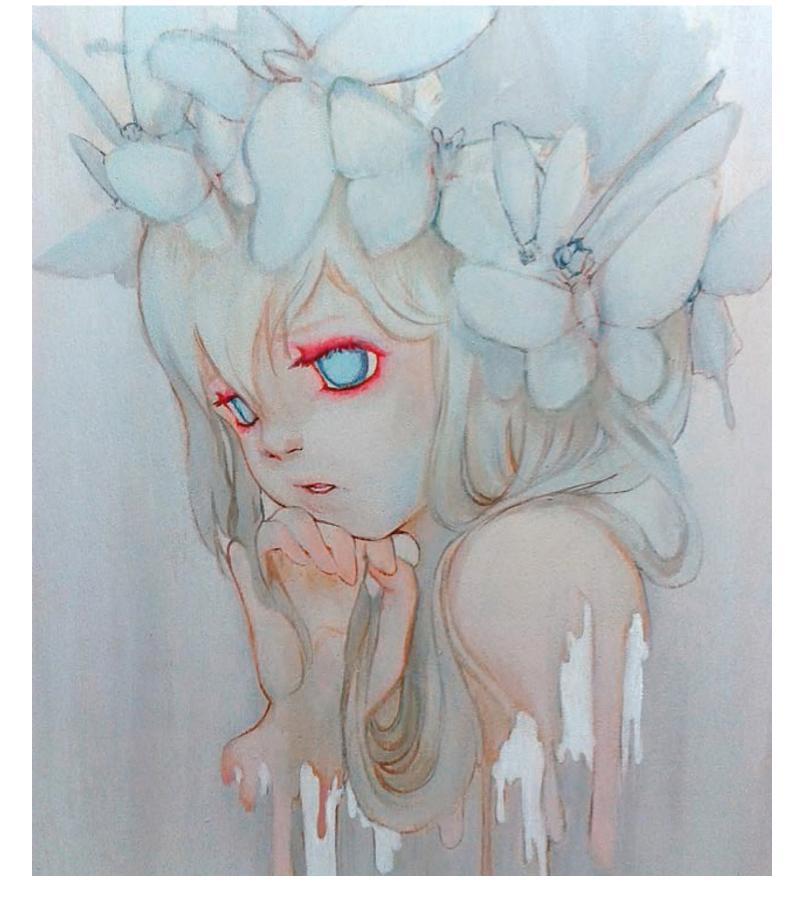


STEP 3 There are elements on top of the girl's head that cast shadows, so I want to paint

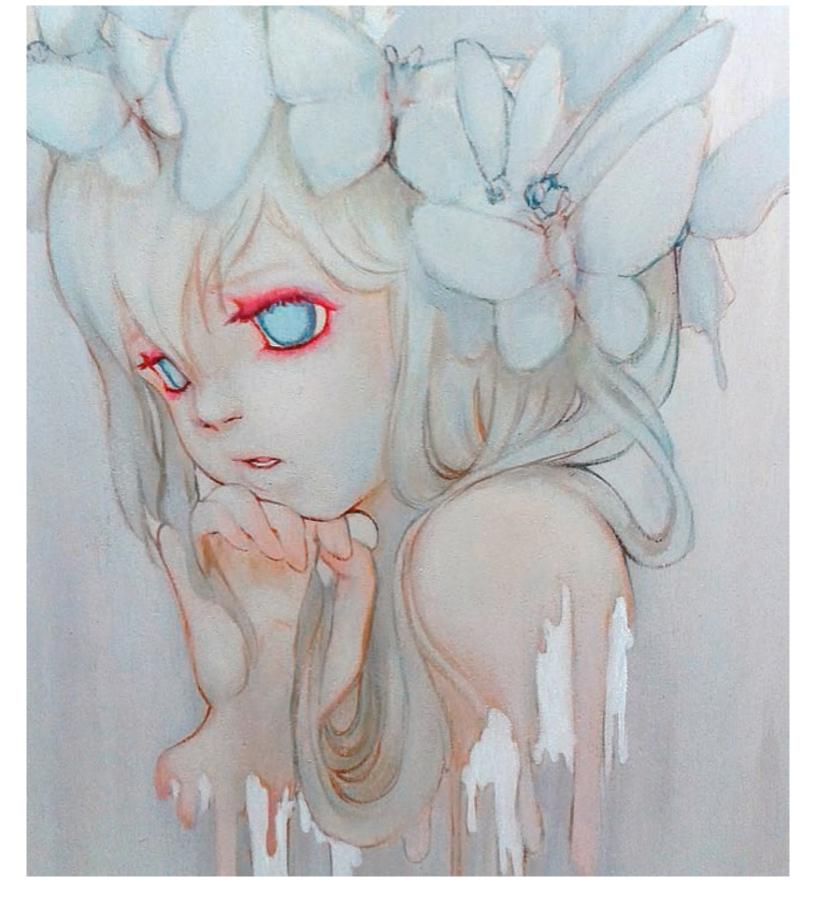
those into the hair now. This allows me to block in the color before I start layering. I use a cooler shade for the shadows, so it will distinguish the butterflies. It's normal at this stage for the painting to look muddled. After all, you are still establishing the elements.



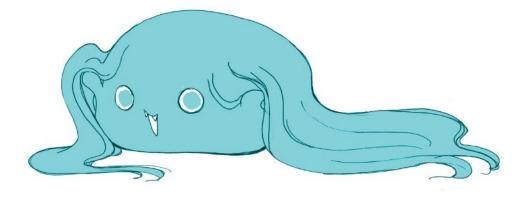
**STEP 4** Next, I establish the overall color of the hair. Since I want it to somewhat match the background and butterflies, I use a similar color, but add in a slightly warmer tone. I also outline some of the strands for definition, in order to retain the shapes I'll be working with.



**STEP 5** It's now time to establish more definition, so I add outlines and darker shadows. The outer edges of hair should be darker so that they stand out from the background. This also shows depth, as it rounds out the hair. Don't be afraid to add in dark shadows. It's good to be dramatic at this point, so you can build lighter layers from here.



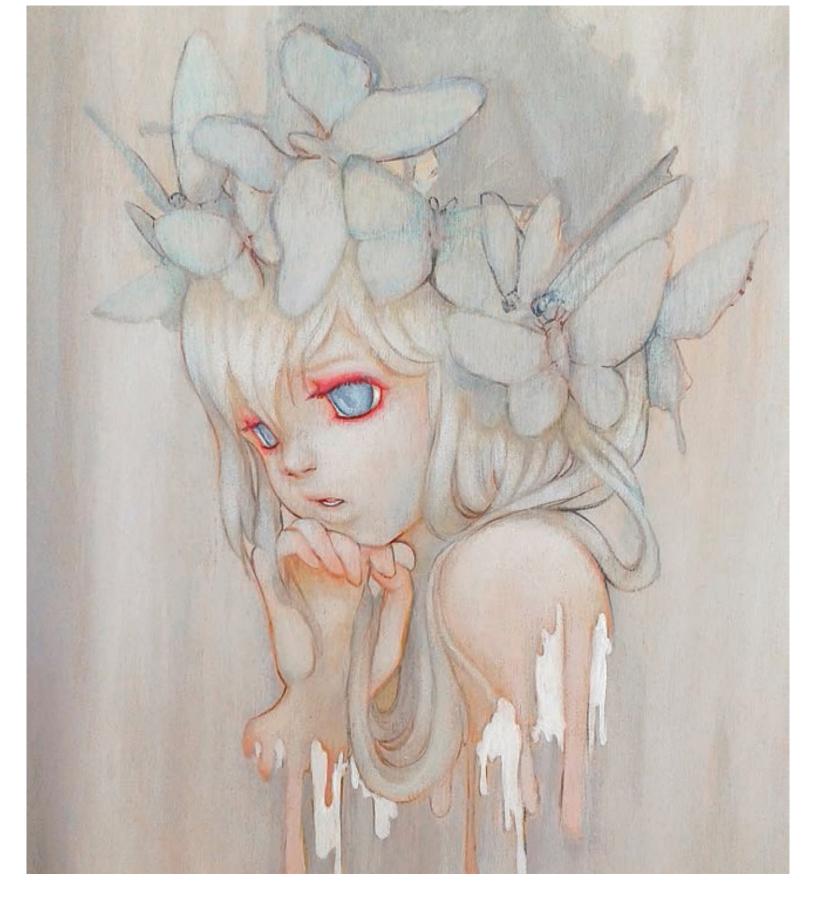
**STEP 6** Now I need to add lighter layers and blend the shadows into the hair. I paint thin layers of lighter shades over the hair until the lighter layer blends in seamlessly.



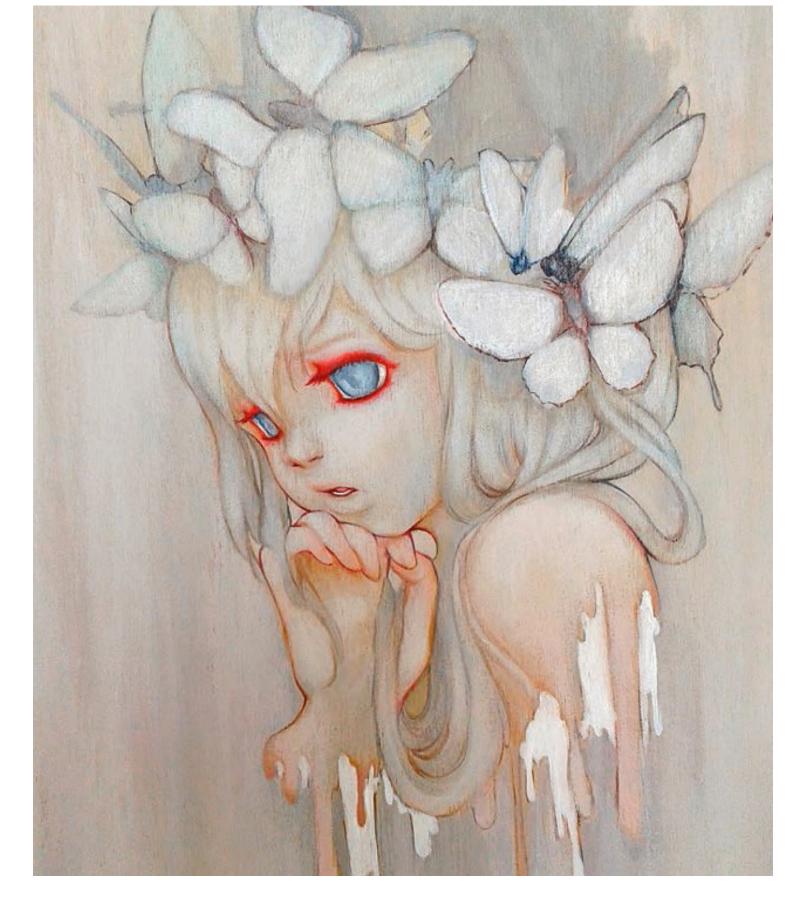
Long and flowing like a river, make my hair grow thicker and thicker! Think of hair as if it were liquid and how it would flow over objects for a really silky look!



**STEP 7** It's time to give depth to the hair. I blend warmer tones into the strands. The hair near the face and the hair at the halfway point from top to bottom should be warmer in color and the hair along the outside cooler. I gently blend these colors in with a few layers of paint.



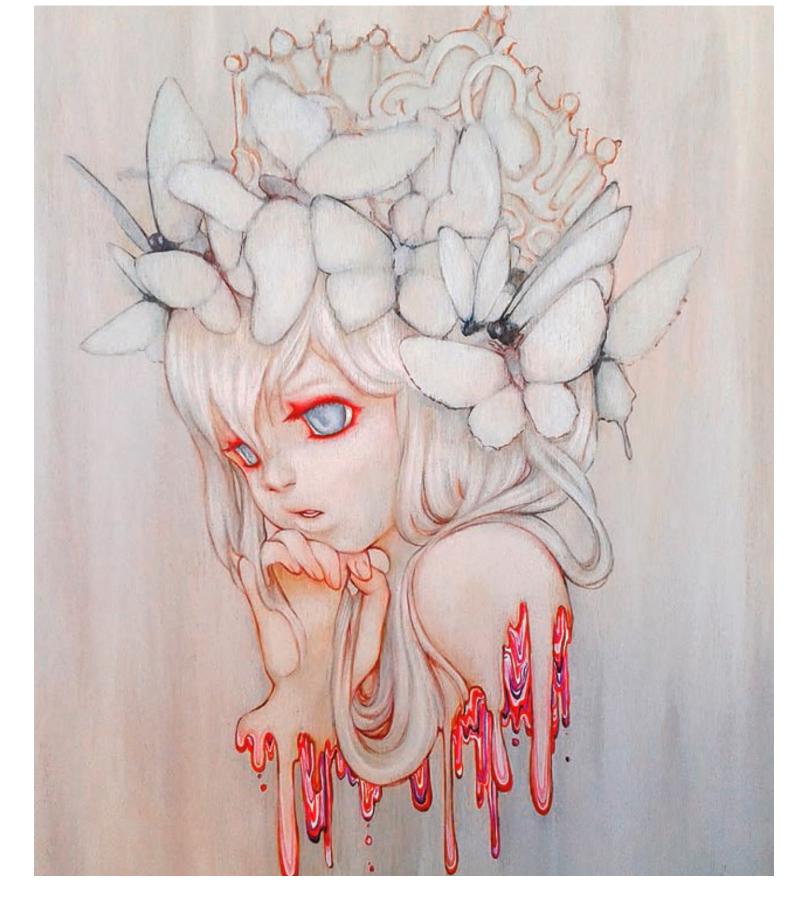
**STEP 8** Now I lighten the hair. I mix titanium white into the hair color on my palette and carefully add the light shades over the hair. I use a long round-tipped brush and pull the lighter mixture along the hair, making sure that I don't blend to the edges. In fact, I leave some of the darker colors visible because it looks like the hair has strands that way.



**STEP 9** The previous layer was about adding dramatic lighter tones. Now I want to blend slightly darker colors to soften the hair. I focus on blending the hair from root to tip. I don't blend the strands because I want to leave that detail intact. It's not as simple as starting dark and working toward lighter colors. You have to manage the shaded spots as you brighten everything.



**STEP 10** Integrating various warm and cool tones into the hair makes it dynamic. I want the hair near her face to be warmer, so I mix little bits of warmer colors into the hair. You want to be subtle—so don't use vibrant colors because those will be too bright for the overall tone. I use cooler tones for the hair that is furthest from the girl's face. Use round-tipped brushes for the hair and blend the colors in long, fluid strokes. Separate your long strokes slightly, which gives the illusion of hair strands.



**STEP 11** Once I've established the main colors of the hair, it's time to contour! I slowly build up the outlines with my liner brush. Vary the colors in your hair for a more interesting effect. I use warmer colors near the face and cooler colors toward the back of the hair. I use more saturated colors near the rainbow dripping areas to complement the hair. Try not to make the outlines very dark. You want a soft look for the hair, so only use dark colors in the areas where the hair pools together.



**STEP 12** The little additions that I love to paint with hair are the stray strands that fall away from the larger portions of hair. Painting this part is like adding the icing on the cake for me! I use a liner brush and mix a vibrant shade that complements the hair color. Starting from the top of the hair, I contour the edge of the hair using a line that is as thin as possible. I then gently pull away from the contour and create a single strand that falls away from the rest of the hair. I do this several times with lighter and darker shades to create flowing

### strands of hair that are playful and colorful.

I add in subtle highlights by lightly brushing a mixture of the lightest color of the hair and titanium white. I use a liner brush and start at the midpoint in the hair with light pressure, then increase the pressure downward and lighten it again as I pull away. The end result is glossy and flowing hair that falls around the figure, adding movement and charm to the painting. These steps will work no matter what hair color you choose!



# SKIN

Soft porcelain, perfect skin—don't we all wish we had it? Well, I sure do! That explains why I paint my girls as if they were Maybelline cover girls. Many people have asked me how I paint skin tone and what colors I use to do so. It's probably the second most asked question I get!

The first thing to know is that I cheat. Well, okay, maybe it's not cheating to use premixed skin tones by Holbein, but it was a no-no according to my teachers in college. Today, however, I think that if a company makes skin tones, then why not use them? To follow along, you'll need to create the same skin tones as me with these Holbein Duo colors:

- Brilliant pink
- Brown pink
- Cadmium red hue
- Coral red
- Imidazolone brown
- Jaune brillant
- Light magenta
- Quinacridone gold
- Raw sienna
- Titanium white

Those are the basic colors I use for skin and lips; however, remember that you'll end up adding other colors to this list as you paint. With each painting, there is an overall color theme, it can be blue, yellow, pink, and so on. Keep that in mind, because your color theme will have to translate into your skin tone selections. Why? Well, it's simple—lighting. When you paint a person's skin, you aren't just painting a flat piece in white space; you are painting a reflective surface. There is a light source highlighting that person. You have to add small amounts of the colors in the painting to the shadows and highlights on the person's face. Remember when I told you that shadows aren't black? Well, I meant it. In the shadows of the skin you'll add in the blues or reds or yellows from the overall painting. Doing so adds depth and brings a sense of unity to the elements of your painting.

## Tips

Remember when I told you that painting is about patience and layering? Well, painting skin is no different. You need to take your time and use thin layers to create a smooth look. To paint skin, I use a combination of shorter bristled brushes. Here's a trick I've learned: use two brushes for blending—one to add the paint and the other, is a dry brush, to do the actual blending.

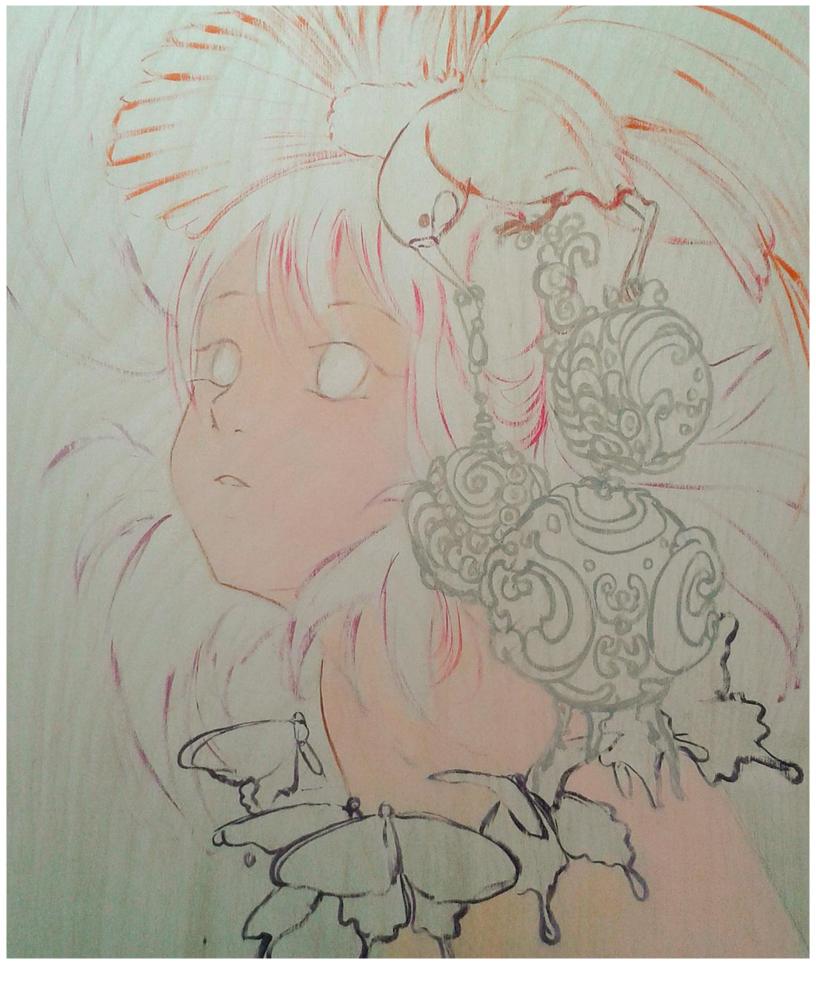
Painting skin is all about lighting. You can choose how dramatic you want the light to appear by focusing on how dark you make the shadows. I like a softer look, so I paint my girls with fair skin and minimal shadows.

Shadows are cast when an object blocks out the light from another object. Therefore, the darker and wider the shadow, the larger and higher the object that is casting the shadow.



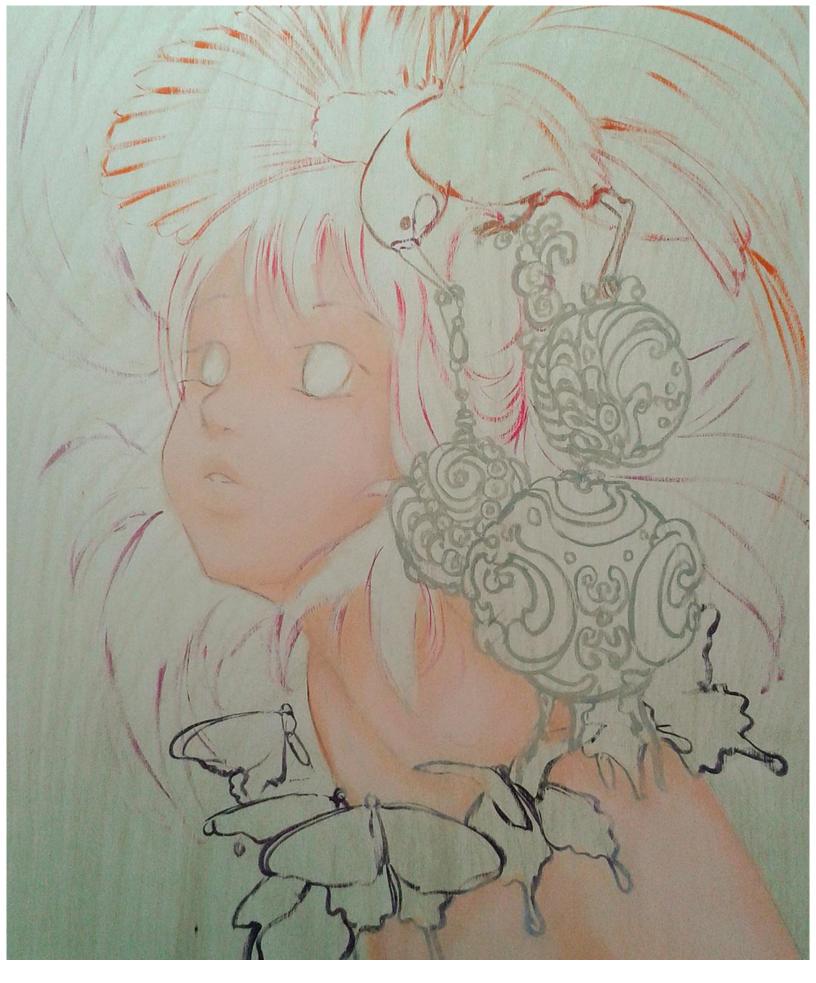
**STEP 1** Once I've established my underdrawing, I trace over it with a thin layer of acrylic

paint. I recommend using your liner brushes for this step. Here I use quinacridone gold and imidozolone brown. I mix the two until I achieve a sepia color. (I'd say a 50/50 mix will get you the right tone to use with the liner brush.)



**STEP 2** Next, I create a thin base color that sets the stage for my skin tone. For this step, you want to use a small amount of titanium white and jaune brilliant, thinned out with water

and acrylic glazing medium until it's almost transparent. The idea here is to create a wash of color that absorbs into the wood so I can still see the wood grain.



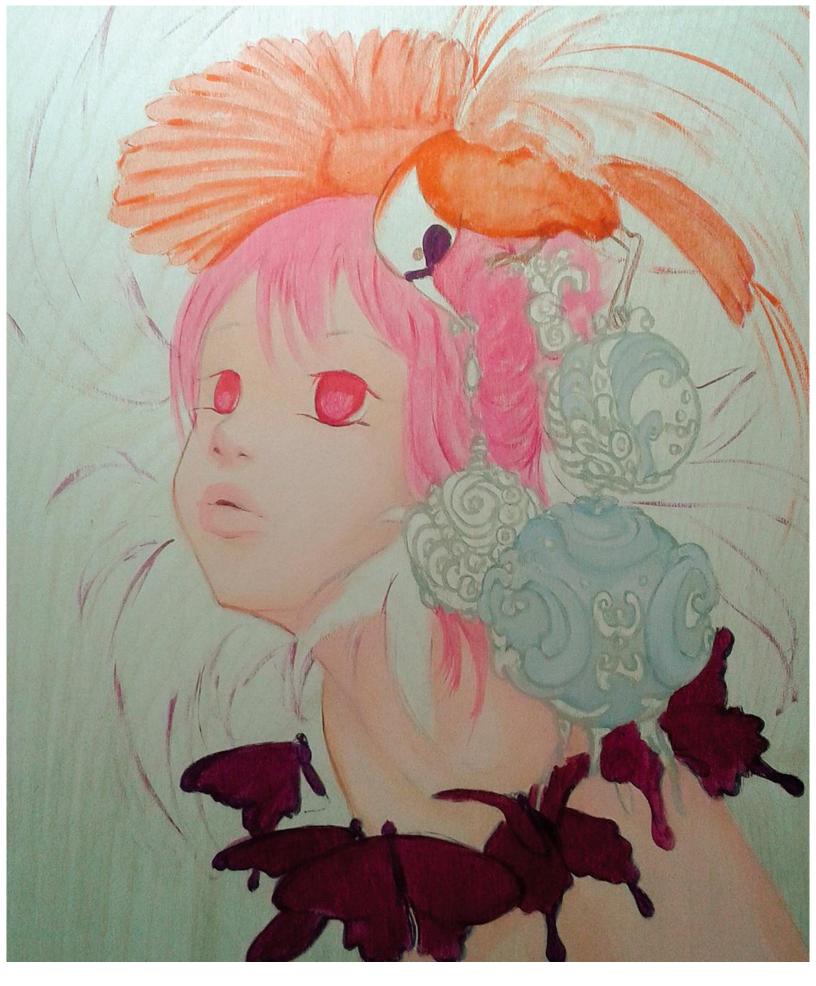
**STEP 3** As you can see, I next add a darker tone in the eye area. That is the shadowed area of the face, so I mix in a color that I plan on using as the overall tone of my painting. Since I

plan to use a lot of greens and blues for this piece, I mix blue gray for my base color and apply a very thin layer along the eye line. Picture a raccoon's mask when you paint your shadows! I also add a bit more jaune brilliant around the nose and under the eyes.



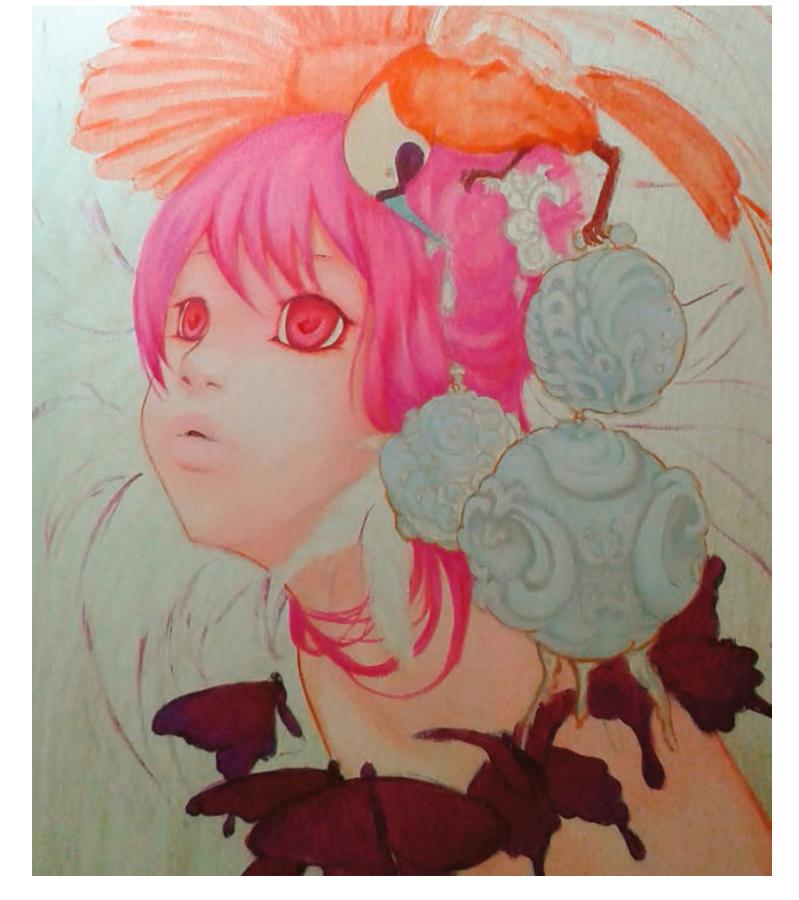
**STEP 4** For the next step, I blend another thin layer of jaune brilliant with a hint of raw sienna and light magenta to fill in the cheeks and the lips. I outline the eyes with a dash of my theme color as well. This color can also be what you plan to use for the hair, if you are

planning for a vibrant hair tone.

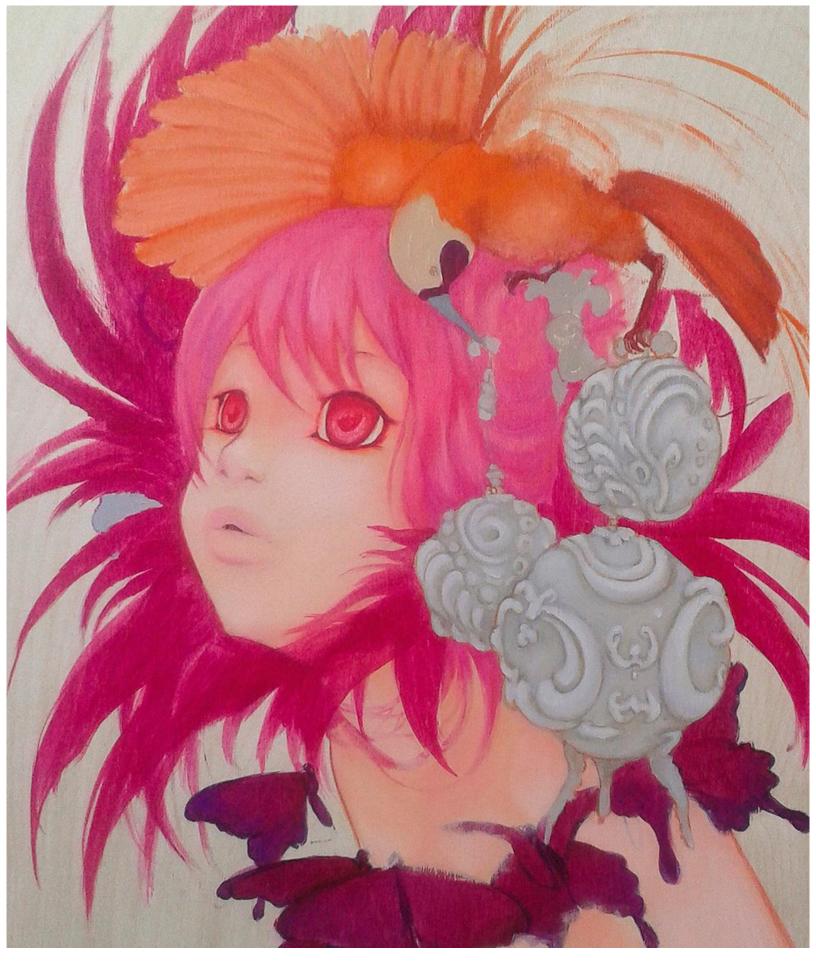


**STEP 5** I continue to slowly build my layers up. I add lighter layers of titanium white and jaune brilliant. I also mix in some raw sienna for blending. Slow and steady wins the race, so I

take my time, adding in thin layers of color and blending them slowly while the paint is still wet.



**STEP 6** Slowly, I build my light layers. At this time, I focus on the center of the face (that is, the inner line of the cheeks, the nose, and chin).



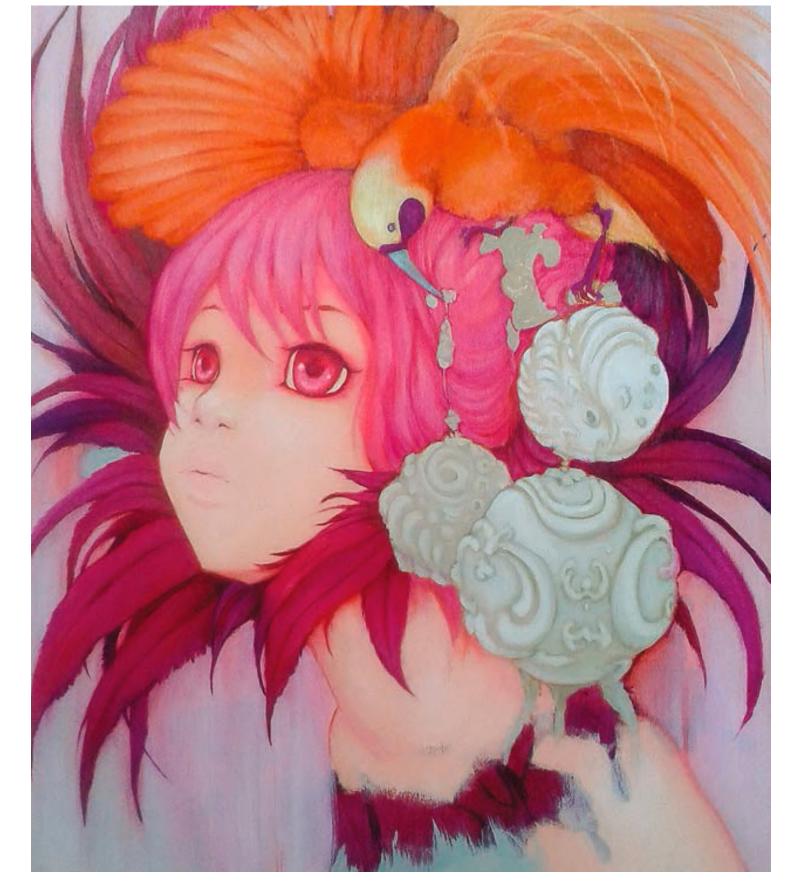
**STEP 7** I contour the face with a darker shade of skin tone. You can use jaune brilliant, titanium white, raw sienna, and brown pink to create your tone. I blend mine so that the sides of the face are darker, and work the color lighter as I paint toward her nose. The

cheeks are a more vibrant shade of skin tone, so I mix jaune brilliant and coral red for those.

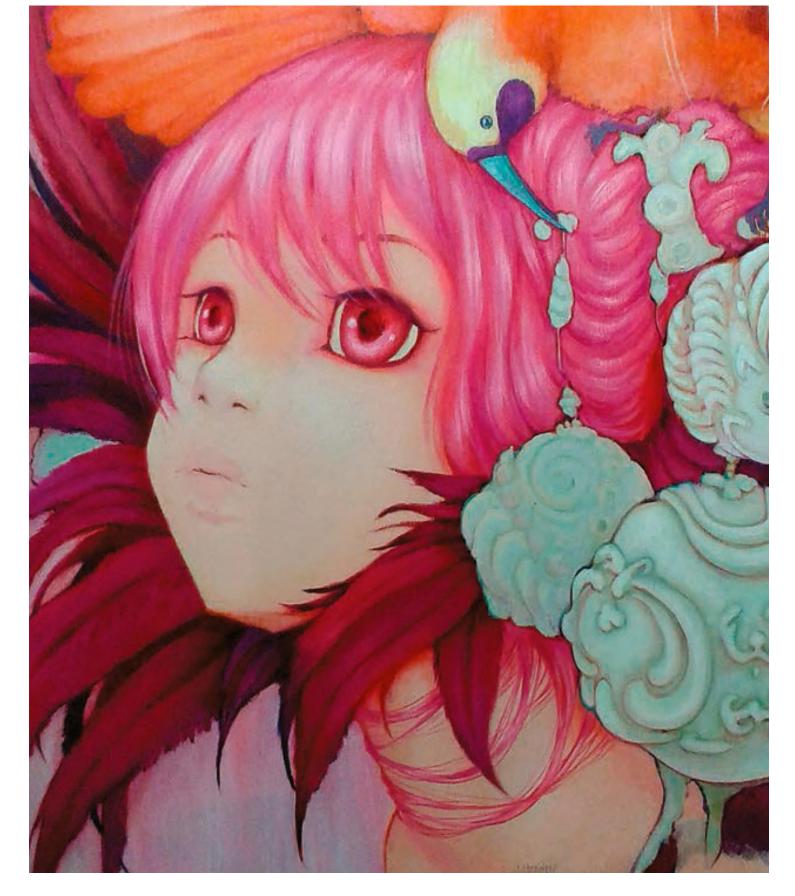


**STEP 8** The next stage may seem like a leap because I decide to change the shape of the

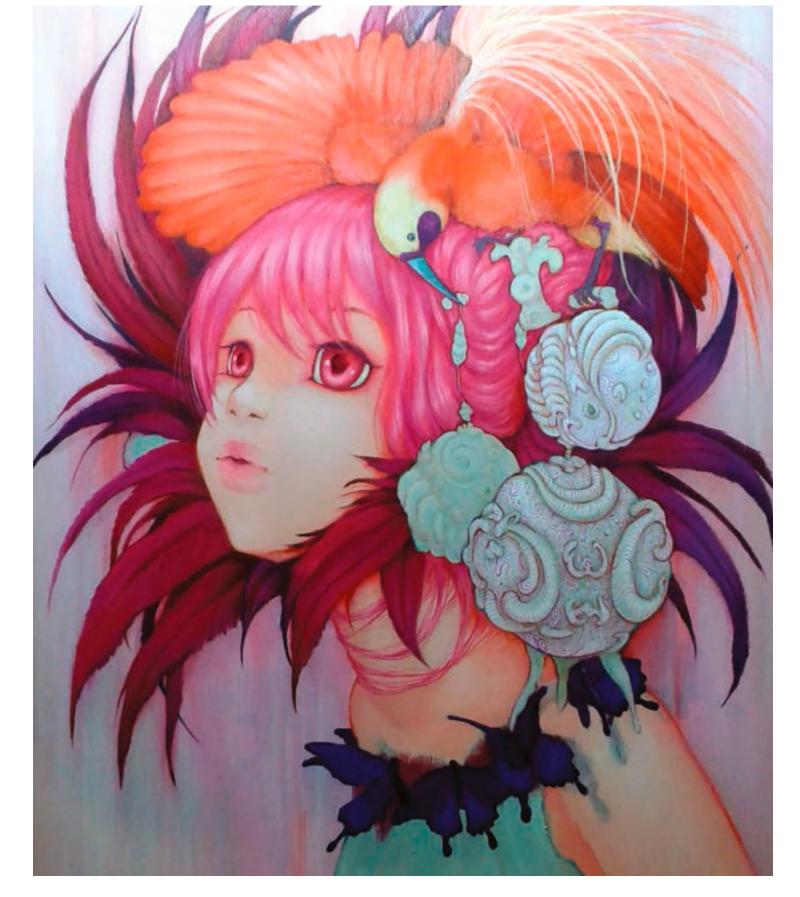
mouth. That is something that you can do with your painting. I want to show you that nothing is permanent in your painting until you've varnished it!



**STEP 9** I continue to slowly build up layers. I lighten my highlighted areas and add some darker tones for the shadows. Here are the key parts to pay close attention to: (1) the rosy cheeks and (2) the light shadow under the nose. I shadow the area around the eyes, contour the edges of the face with darker skin tones, and paint the lips with a more vibrant shade of skin tone.



**STEP 10** Getting this look right is about subtlety. To paint hair over skin, you need to use your thinner brushes, preferably liner brushes. I mix a small amount of jaune brilliant with coral red and brown pink. Then I thin out my mix of colors with acrylic glazing medium (AGM). I slowly glide my brush down the side of the hair.



**STEP 11** Because I want the lips to be a bright and juicy color, I use coral red, jaune brilliant, and a cooler shade of pink—light magenta. Keep in mind that the upper lip is always a little darker than the bottom lip. For this step, I also contour the edge of the face with another line of acrylic paint. The choice of color is subjective and should be based on the colors you are using in your theme. For this painting, I want the edges of the face to play off of the eyes and bring cohesion to the face as a whole. To achieve that, I mix quinacridone

gold and imadozine red, then use a liner brush to add in the lines.



**STEP 12** I increase the contrast between the cheeks and the highlights in the face by adding more color to the top of the cheeks just below the eyes and lightening the skin around the nose and mouth. I want to show more shadow in the creases of the hair, so I start there and slowly blend the shadow into the forehead. I want the darkest part to be exactly where the hair touches the skin.

And there you have it! Painting skin is all about personal taste. Whether you want to create paler or darker skin, the

principles in this lesson still apply. You have to focus on rounding the cheeks and casting shadows under the chin and nose. Have fun with it!

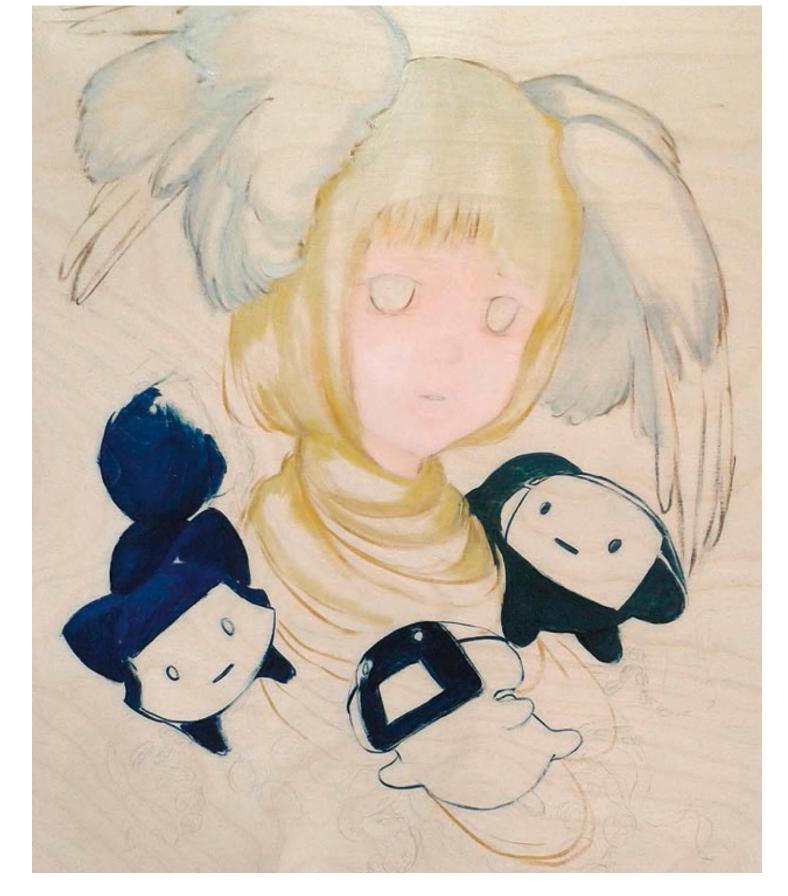




I'll take you through the process of integrating depth into the painting *The Dandelion Crown*. This is a painting inspired by my graphic novel series "Tanpopo." There are a lot of elements in it—Tanpopo and the various forms of Kuro—so I'll focus on what makes this piece come together to look so three-dimensional.



**STEP 1** I start out with the basic outline. To create a sense of depth, I have Poodle Kuro lying over Tanpopo's shoulder. Specter Kuro (the little white dude) will be flying in front and Fox Kuro is going to come around from the other shoulder, but I want his tail to be placed behind Tanpopo's hair. The wings on her head also give depth, with one of them folded. This positioning shows part of the wing in front of Tanpopo's hair.



**STEP 2** For this next step, the trick is to make sure I know what will be in front and what will be behind each element. I paint in a basic layer for the shadows, using a dark color to represent the tone of the elements. Remember that the farther away something is, the darker and thicker its shadow will be.



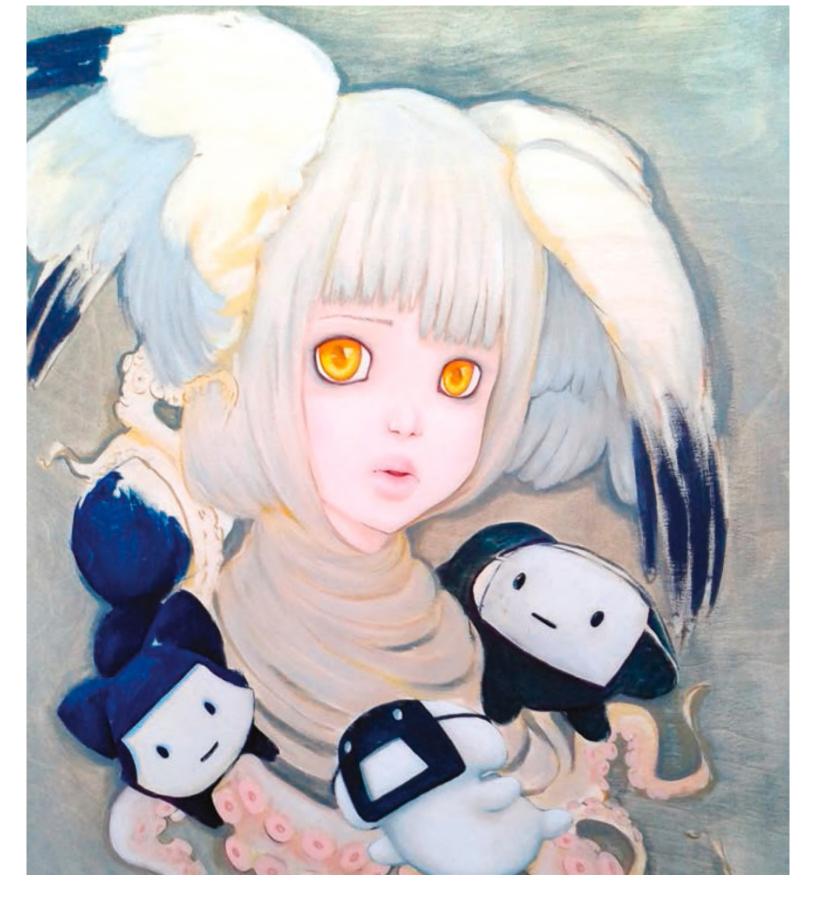
**STEP 3** I continue to add in darker colors for the other elements, as well as darkening the shadows in the wings. In the case of Fox Kuro, I've already established a highlight on top of his head and body, because I know that part of him will be the closest to the light.



**STEP 4** I establish my background. When establishing a background, you can do a wash of color at the beginning or even at the very end. It's up to you. Here, I make the background dark and neutral to create a big contrast between it and the other elements. I render Specter Kuro with shadows and highlights, using cooler colors in the shadows and warmer whites near the top of his body.



**STEP 5** For this step, I add in more depth to Tanpopo's hair. I achieve this by applying the midtones. These are cooler shadows that are going to be the base for the rest of her hair color. Blending these grays with the yellows creates a dynamic depth.



**STEP 6** Because the hair, wings, tentacles, and the Kuro characters are light, I need to vary the tone of each element so they stand out from each other. To do this, I make the shadows in the wings a very cool shade of gray. I mix in blues to achieve the cool effect. Since I want the hair to be warmer, I blend it with warmer grays. As you can see, I establish the skin and eyes as the brightest elements. That's because I want them to be the focal point of the painting.



**STEP 7** In order to add more depth to the wings and hair, I add lighter colors to the details that sit on top of each other. Whatever parts are closest to the top must be lighter. I also add darker tones to the edges of the feathers, because they will cast shadows underneath them.



**STEP 8** To add depth to the tentacles, I focus on putting distance between them. I achieve this by making the ones farther back darker. To make some things seem closer than others, it's about not just lightness but also saturation and vibrance. I make the tentacles that are closest more vibrant, as well as lighter.



Don't let Kuro's cuteness fool you! He's a little devil!



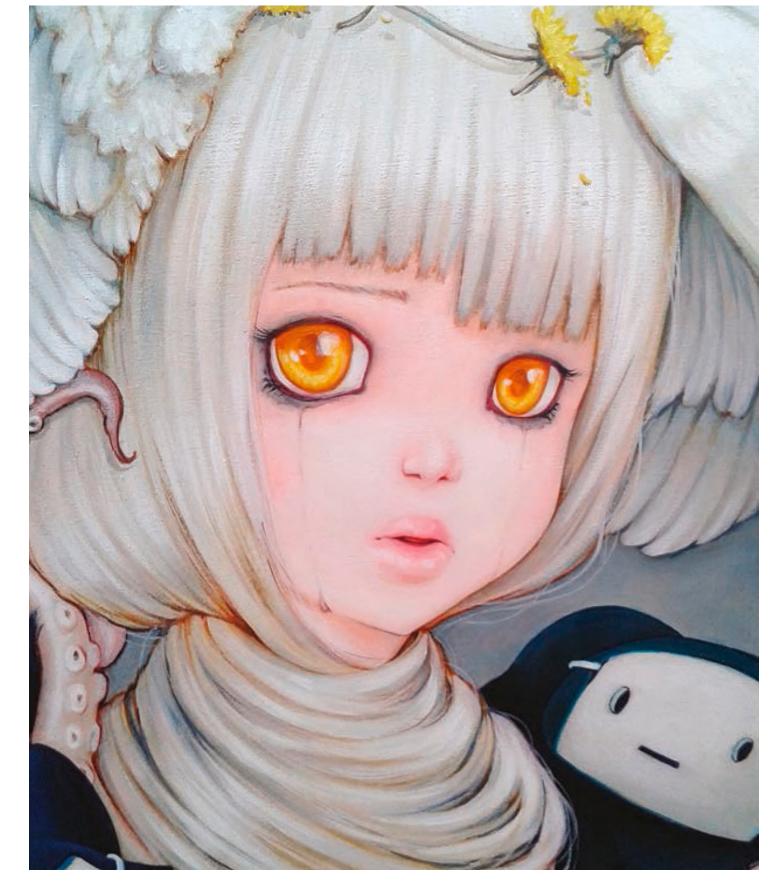
**STEP 9** Highlights are essential for creating depth, because they show what the light hits first and they help shape the objects. With glossy hair, the highlights follow the curve of the head, so I need to add highlights at the top of the head and then more highlights along the bangs. I highlight the feathers along the top edges and paint in shadows, starting with warmer tones and then mixing cooler shadows the farther down the wings go. The change from warm to cool adds depth.



**STEP 10** A lot of details go into hair and wings. So, to create more depth, I add in more highlights to the other parts of the hair that catch the light. I also add in the final highlights to the little critters. I don't want to use gray to highlight them, even if they are black. Adding highlights not only adds a more interesting touch, but also draws the eye very quickly. By adding in vibrant colors throughout the black areas, I am able to pull the viewer in and focus their eyes.



**STEP 11** Once I've finished painting in the main body and figure, I add in the elements that will float above everything. I decide to paint a crown of dandelions. I start by painting the flowers sparsely over her hair and wings, leaving an inch of distance between the dandelions and the figure.



**STEP 12** The final stage is adding in a shadow that shows how far away the dandelions are from the head and wings. The farther away from the object you cast a shadow, the farther away the object will seem. I paint this shadow semitransparent so that the details of the hair and wings still show through. To do this, I use acrylic glazing medium (AGM) to thin the color.

There you have it, folks, a painting that shows depth by layering not only shadows and highlights but also the other

elements, in a way that makes them look as if they exist in a three-dimensional world. This is a typical example of how I create depth; however, you can go even further and create more distance in your paintings by placing your elements in an environment. There are a few Pop Surrealists who create gorgeous landscapes. Kukula, Mark Ryden, Greg Simkins, and Lori Earley are some of my favorite artists that create complex and vivid scenes with a lot of depth!



## ANIMALS

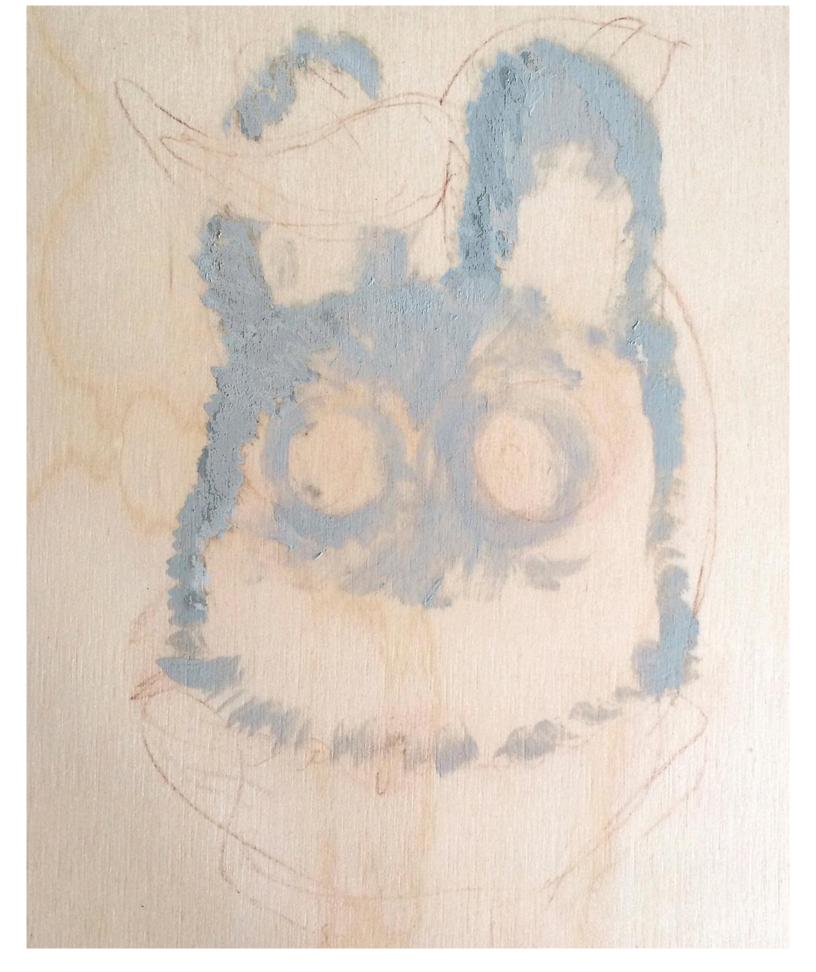
Furry, fuzzy, squishy, squirmy, soft, and smooth are only a few ways to describe the lessons in this chapter. I've painted all sorts of animals over the years: zebra sharks, pigmy owls, snow leopards, butterflies, a squirrel, and even a scorpion! I'll paint just about any creature... except for spiders—omigosh, I just, can't even—those creepy critters make my skin crawl! Instead, let's focus on some of the more delightful animals and how to bring them to life. To do so, you have to master textures! In this section, I'll focus on showing you techniques for re-creating some of nature's most lovely textures.



## FUR

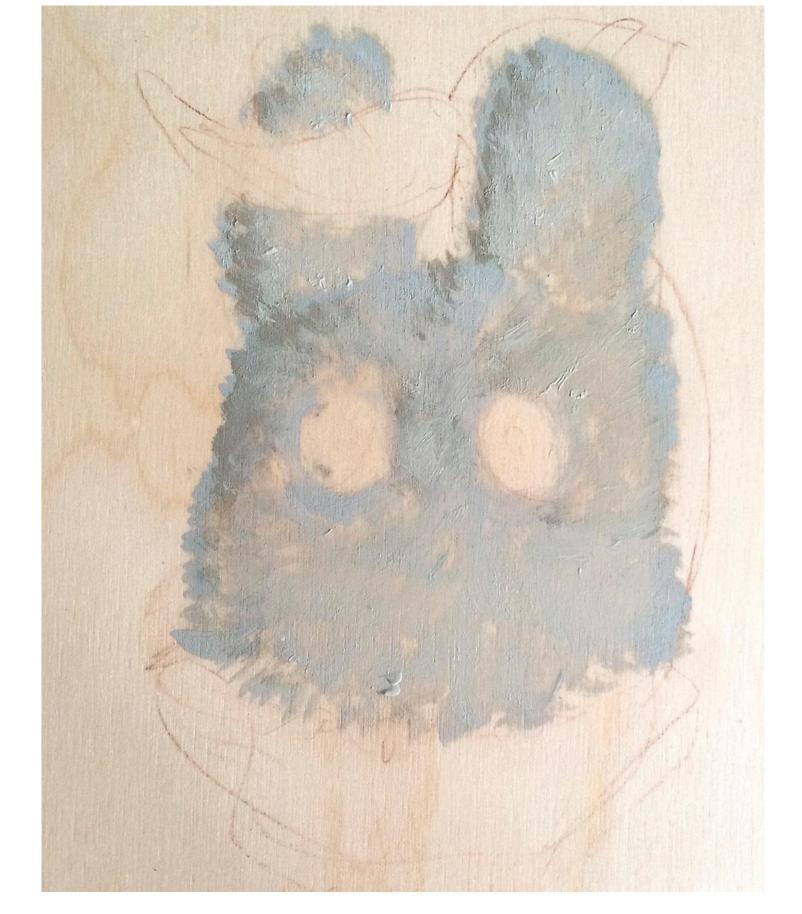
Have you ever looked at a bunny or Pomeranian, and wanted to die because it was so fluffy? Every time I look at a furry little animal, I can't help but squeal in sheer delight! As an artist, I want that same feeling to come through in my paintings of animals. I want people to look at my kittens and other creatures and become giddy at how fuzzy they appear!

For this exercise, I'll break down the best way to achieve the furry look. It involves a lot of layers. You want to use your Duo oils with short-tipped brushes, preferably square and round ones. I think it's best to show you how to do this technique step-by-step with *Gelatotoro*, a painting inspired by Hayao Miyazaki's fluffy spirit in the film *My Neighbor Totoro*.

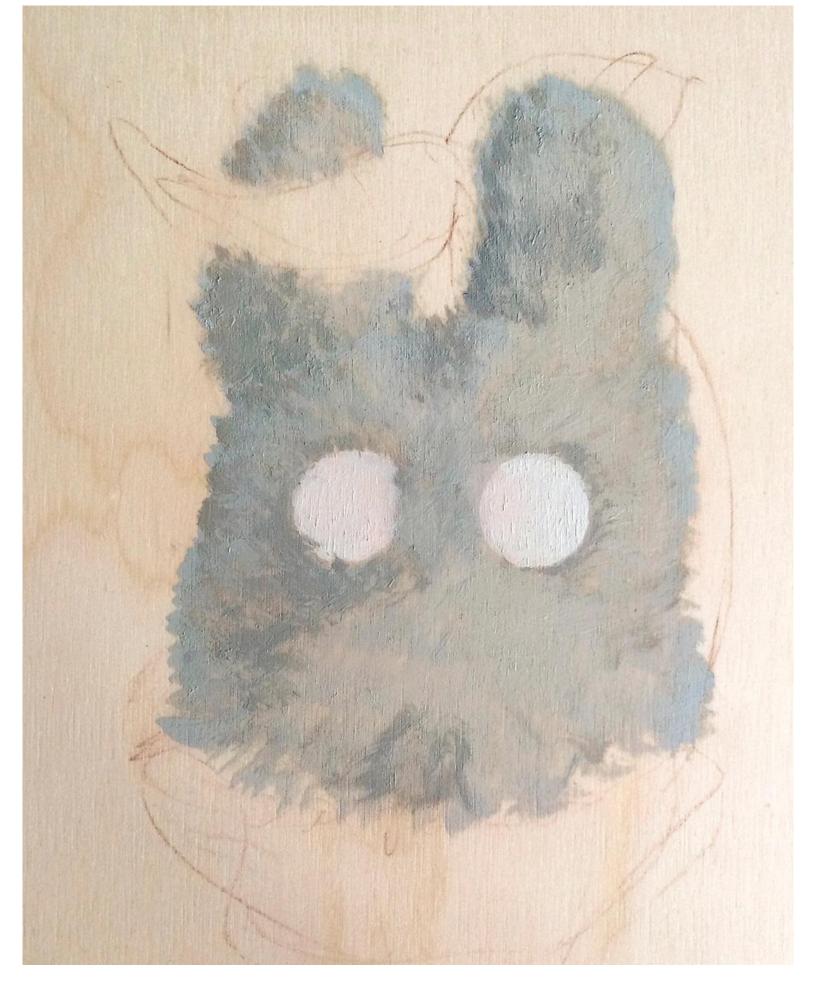


**STEP 1** First, I draw out the shape of my little creature with watercolor pencils. When I paint over the outline, I make it a bit wider and thicker than the initial watercolor outline. I achieve this effect by dabbing my round-tipped brush along the outline. Maximum fuzziness is best

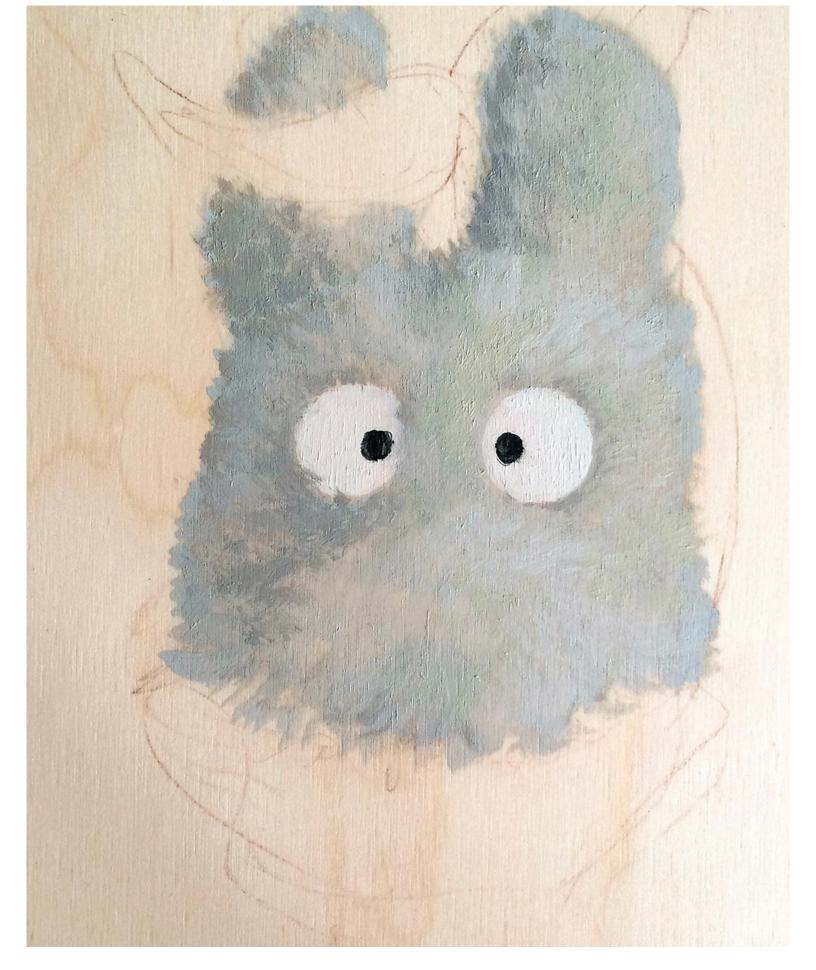
created without having any solid lines to work over.



**STEP 2** Layering fur is different than any other kind of blending technique. You want to see the brushstrokes, because it is the little dabs of paint that give the illusion of fur. So when I put in my base layer, I dab the paint on the canvas. I dab and pull away quickly, like a swoosh, so that the stroke goes thick to thin. Start in the middle and work your way outward.



**STEP 3** It's important to take into account the other features, such as the eyeballs. Otherwise, the fur will be layered over the top of those parts. I make sure that I add the eyes before I get too far ahead of myself. Once I add the base color for the eyes, I start adding shadows. I've decided the light source is coming from the right side, so I paint darker fur on the left side. Use the dab and pull technique to slowly add shadows.



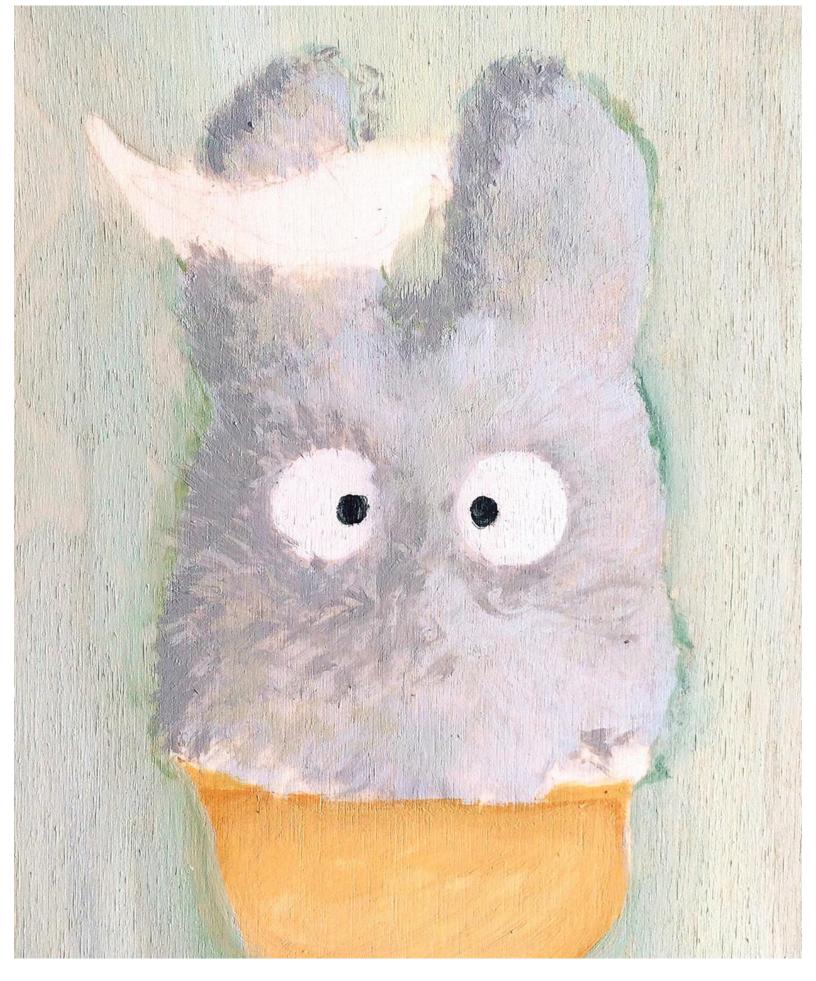
**STEP 4** Fur has depth because of the multiple layers of color that are added to it. I mix a warm tone into a light layer of fur. I dab these colors gently, because I don't want to overpower the underlayers. If you are wondering about spacing, add in your dabs and shift

your next stroke over slightly so that you leave a small sliver of space between your strokes.



**STEP 5** Once I've painted a base coat for the background and added other elements, I blend the fur with the background. I pull colors from the background into the fur, but make

the tones more vibrant so the hairs stand out from the background. The reason for the vibrant outline is that the fur and background share similar tones and coloring. In order to make the little guy stand out, I need to give him a vibrant edge that will draw the eye to him.



**STEP 6** It's time to add more pronounced fur. I mix a darker shade and dab it into the shadowed sections. I make my strokes as pronounced as I can, because I want to see the

separation between strokes here.



STEP 7 Once I've established the cone element, I can add some color to the fur. This color

transition is very minimal, but you can use this technique in other paintings on a larger scale. For now, I add in a semitransparent layer of color along the edge.



**STEP 8** I want to establish the color of whatever elements are placed close to the fur, so I paint the leaf. I want the teal to look like it is part of the fur, so I use a mix of yellow and the fur color to blend the teal into the fur. My strokes are smoother as I do this so that the fur doesn't look too pronounced.



**STEP 9** It's time to define the edges of this fuzzy creature. I use a color from the cone to bring in a bit of cohesion. With small strokes, I start at the edge of the fur and pull away from

the fur into the background. This layer of paint is semitransparent so, as I pull the paint out, the background is still visible.



**STEP 10** Once I establish my contour, it's time to build up the fur from the inside. With a round-tipped brush, I start blending lighter colors into the fur. Don't forget that the fur has a direction as you build up your layers. The fur is very symmetrical in this painting. It sticks

straight out of the little guy in the center. To give him a round look, I pull the fur out toward the right on his right side and vice versa for the left.



**STEP 11** I build up the fur in separate little strokes and pull the brushstrokes out in different directions to really make the little guy look fuzzy! My dabs are kept separate from each other. I also add warmer tones to the lighter sections. I even add fur that is slightly blue

close to the edges so that it reflects the teal at the bottom. When I paint fur near the eyes, I make sure that there is overlap of the fur over the eye for added depth.



**STEP 12** To create a superfuzzy and furry look, you have to go extreme. That means I have to add even lighter layers and dab them into the fur. The best way to show depth in fur is to

separate your light layers. As you can see, I left a small space between them in a circular direction starting from the center of the little guy. I add more outlines along the edges with more saturated colors and also some that are a bit more vibrant. I add some greens and browns to complement the leaf and the cone. When you paint fur, keep the other elements in mind. Don't forget to add some of their colors into the fur.

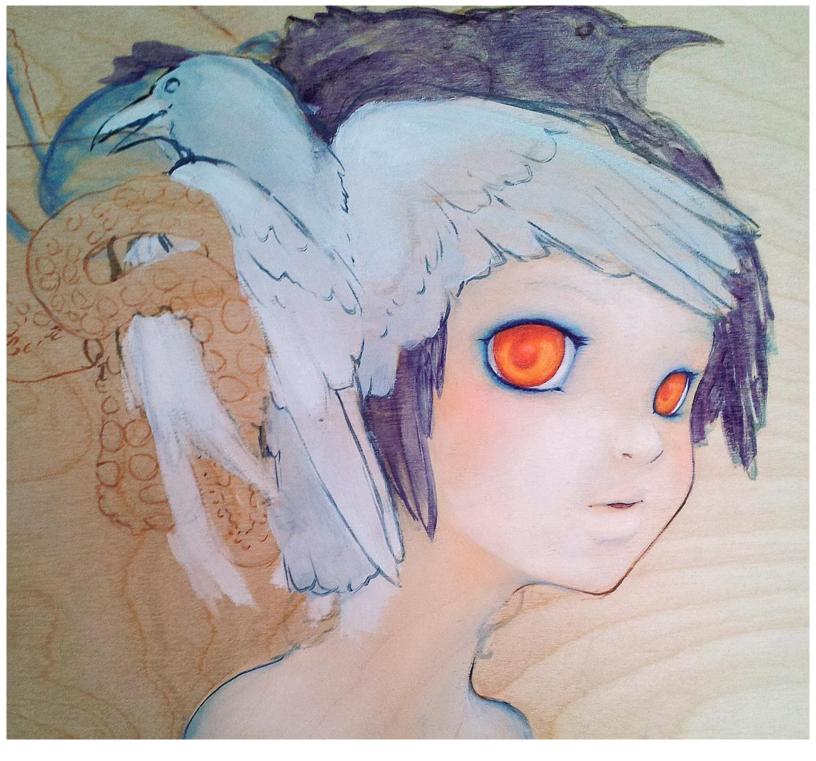
Fuzzy, furry, fluffy little critters just make me squeal with delight! I love to paint my little animals so they look squeezable and oh-so-huggable. When you paint your own little creatures, think about how cuddly you can make them and go for it! Painting fur requires lots of layers and time, but it's well worth it once you paint an animal that is so fluffy viewers just want to reach out and hug it!



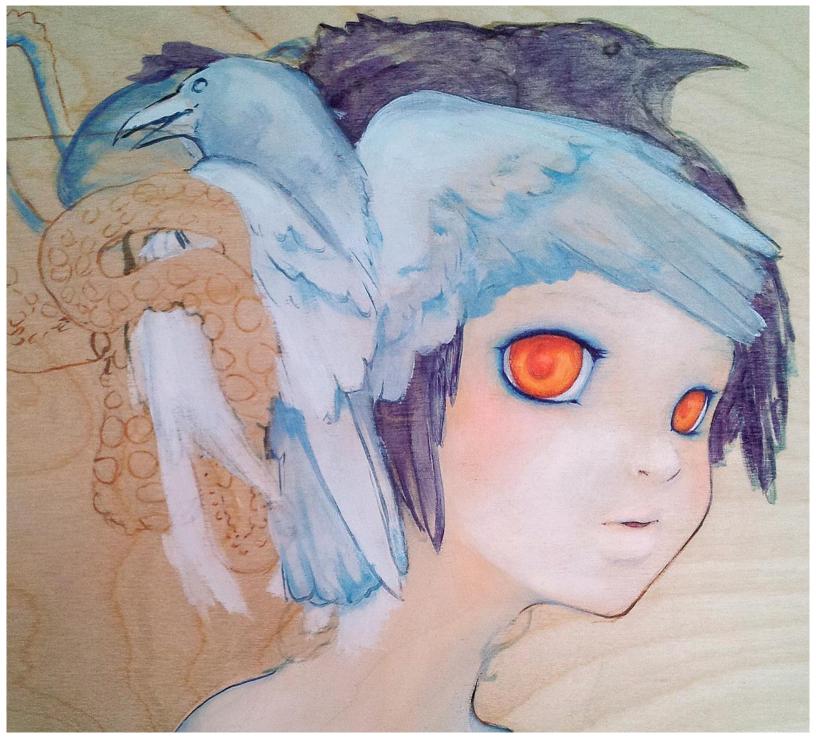
## WINGS

I tend to paint a lot of birds. I'm best known for my albino birds and my lovebirds. I adore these animals, and have always envied their freedom. Wings are not as complicated to paint as you might think. Almost all winged species in the world have similar wing structures. Sure, wings have a lot of feathers and other details, but the trick is not to paint each and every single one—just a few layers is all you need. Wings should be smooth and soft looking, because there is nothing quite as soft as a feather.

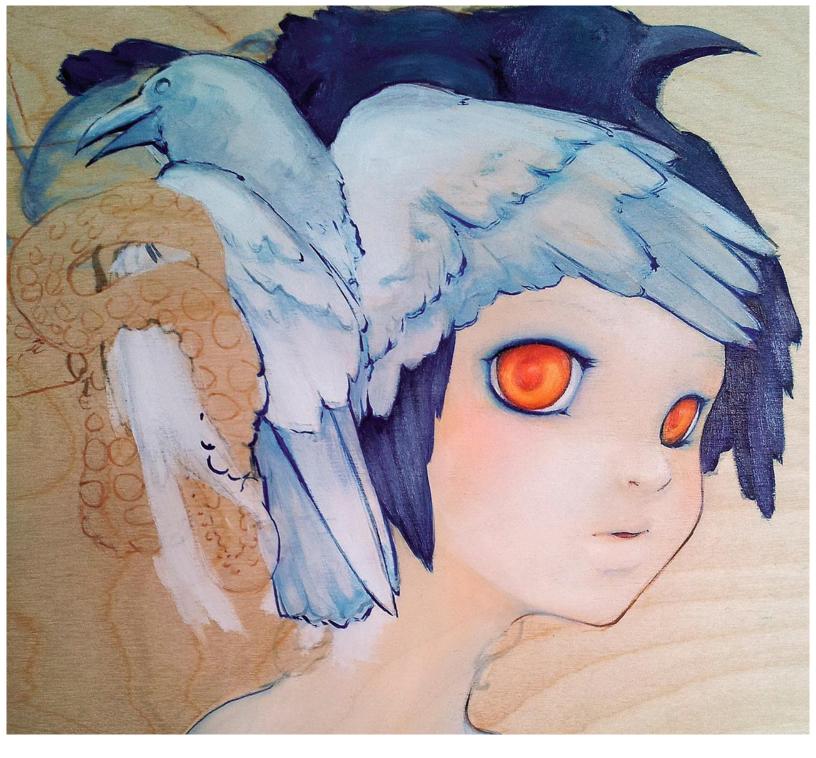
Because there are all kinds of different birds, you should definitely use reference and study the coloring when painting a particular bird. Pay close attention to where the feathers sit on the bird. Feathers on a bird change size, going from small to large from head to tail. As a result, artists always paint from the head down, from the top to bottom. Wings and feathers are very smooth, so keep that in mind when painting. (It's the little details that will make all the difference.) Let's jump right into it, shall we?



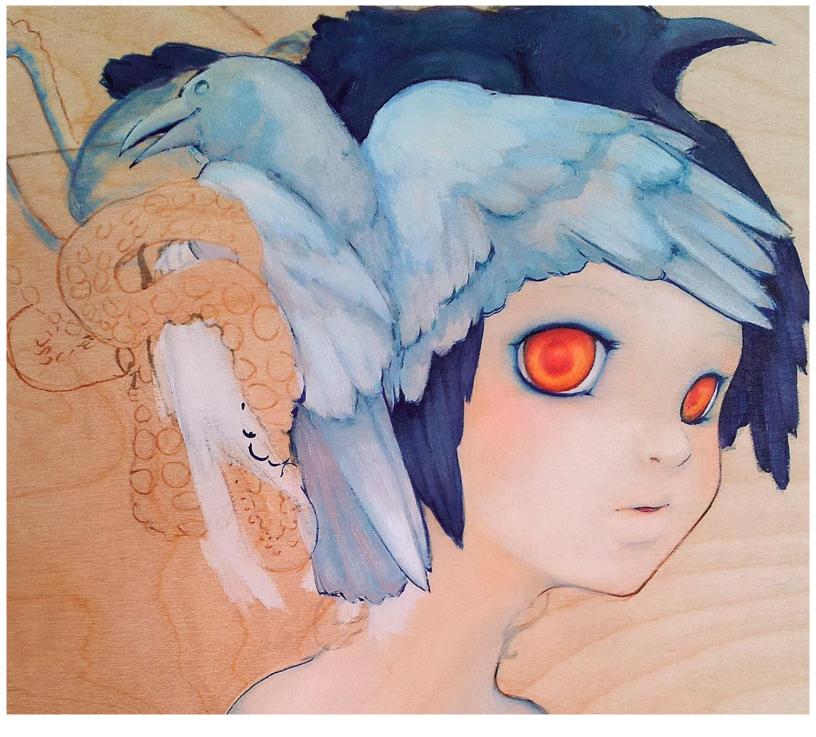
**STEP 1** I start by painting the base coat for the bird. It doesn't really matter what color you choose for wings—birds are all kinds of different colors. All you need to do is draw the shape and lay down a thin base coat. Once I put in my base color, I paint thin outlines for the feathers.



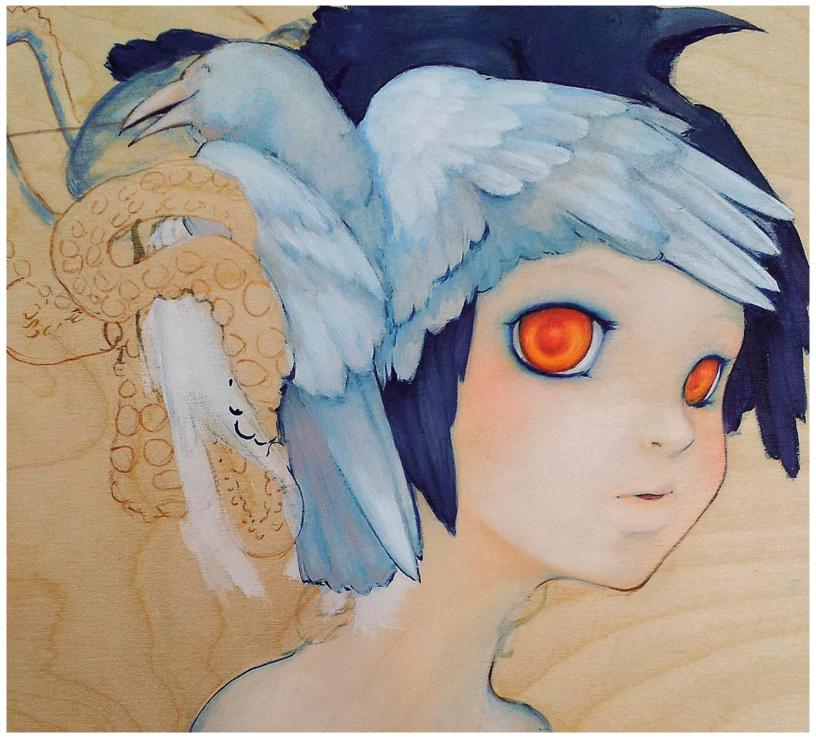
**STEP 2** Next, I add a little depth by painting thin layers of shadows at the tips of the feathers. I add shadows at the edges of the feathers, so they stand out from the bottom layers.



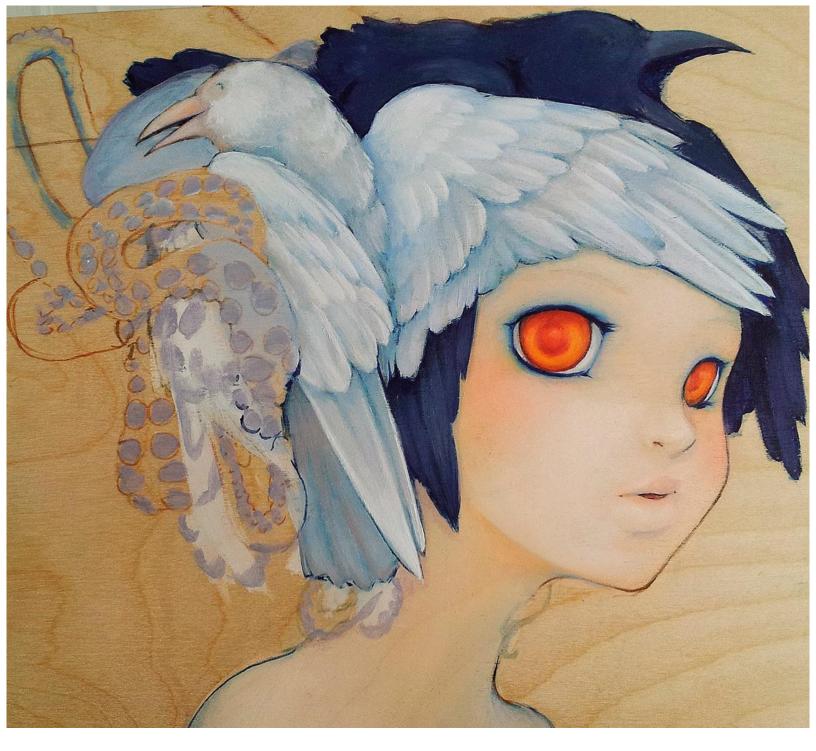
**STEP 3** Once I've put in the first layer of shadows, I retrace the feathers with another thin outline. You should use a more vibrant color for this step. I select the same color to outline the girl's eyes as well as the feathers, to keep continuity in my painting. You'll start to understand the importance of colors matching in the painting overall as you gain experience. It provides cohesion and unity.



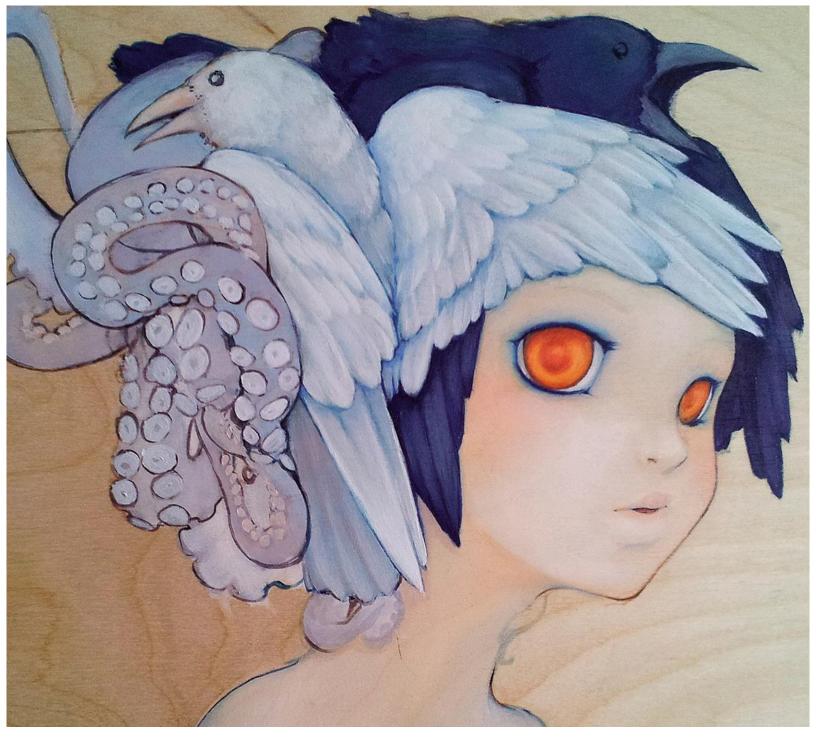
**STEP 4** Layering feathers is all about painting over outlines and repainting the outlines. That's because feathers need a lot of distinction. I add some lighter layers with a flat-tipped brush. Add shadows and paint over your outlines, leaving a little bit of the outline showing at the edges.



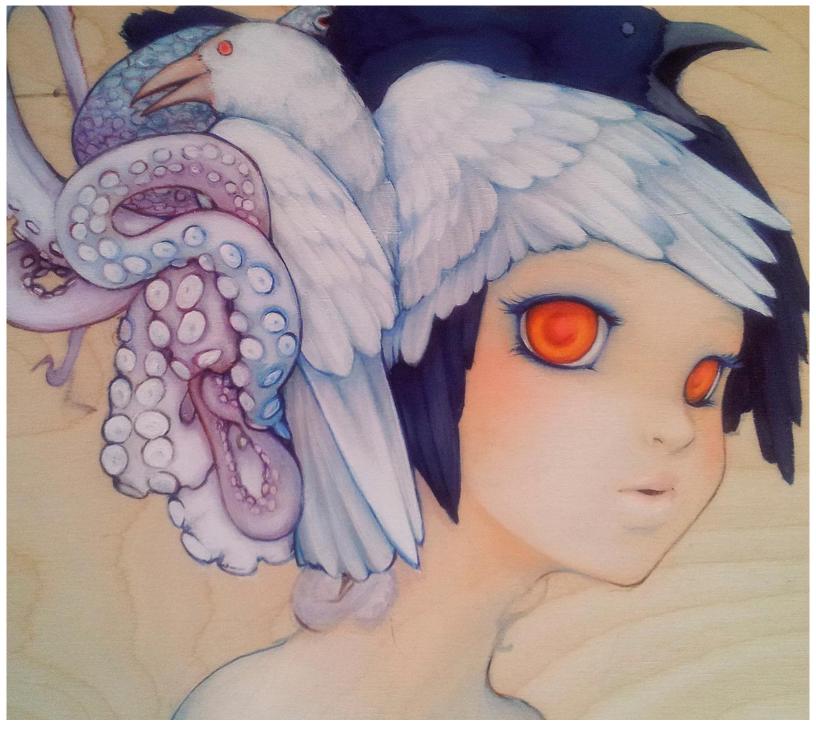
**STEP 5** To give the wings more definition, I first have to make the feathers more distinct. I find it best to use flat-tipped brushes for this step. I slowly pull small amounts of paint along the edge, and then round the tip of the feathers. You want to blend the feathers from dark to light, keeping the tip and edges the lightest. Feathers should be smooth. So as I continue to paint more highlights, I use soft, smooth strokes to blend the colors as seamlessly as possible.



**STEP 6** Now, I begin to define the feathers on the head. Keep in mind, the feathers near the beak should be the smallest. They'll get larger as they move down the body. I also add some more shadows. I use a more vibrant shade near the base of the wing and a darker, more muted shadow for the tail. These distinctions help focus the eye, pulling it toward the center of the painting.



**STEP 7** Here I blend the highlights into the feathers to smooth them out. I use acrylic glazing medium (AGM) and thin layers of paint to pull the highlights into the feathers. You should blend the shadows into the feathers as well. Doing so adds another layer of smoothness and more depth. I add outlines to the external feathers as well as the edges where the wings meet the body.



**STEP 8** Finally, I add the tail feathers and paint the beak and eye. I do so by adding a final thin layer of the lighter color to the feathers. It's important to have a blend of light feathers, vibrant tones, and muted tones.



## **BABY ANIMALS**

One day a white bunny gave birth to ten babies, but there was something very peculiar about those little babies. Each one was a different color! Not a single brother or sister was the same, but the mamma bunny loved them all! I'm not really sure when I came up with the idea for this painting, but as soon as I sat down to create it, I knew it would be very special to me! As part of pushing my own boundaries, I took a leap of faith and imagined the story. I decided to create this painting even though it doesn't have a girl in it at all. It's important to

step outside your comfort zone, otherwise paintings with rainbow bunnies wouldn't exist!



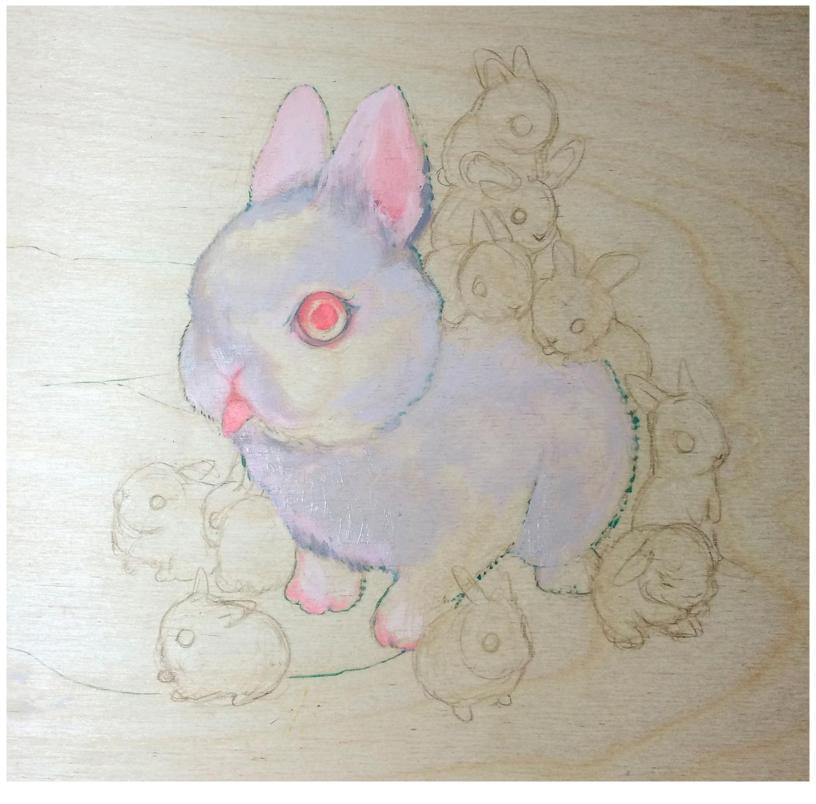
**STEP 1** To start, I carefully choose a wood panel with a beautiful horizontal grain. I want all the bunnies, large and small, to look realistic. Photo references of dwarf bunnies are all over my monitor as I sketch them out. (My computer may have crashed at least once due to cuteness overload.)



**STEP 2** Because there are so many elements in this painting, it's best to paint one bunny at a time. The focus of the painting will be the big white mamma bunny in the center, so I start by outlining her first.



**STEP 3** White bunnies aren't just white. They also have pink ears, noses, tongues, and eyes. The best thing to do is to paint in a thin base color for those areas. I start with a dark pink and then blend in a paler pink for the, nose, ears, tongue, and eyes.



**STEP 4** Because I am painting fur, I have to establish an initial tone. I paint in a thin layer of gray for this white rabbit's body as a base color. If you start with white you can't create depth, but if you start with gray you can add lighter tones of gray until you get to the top layer of white fur. I use a light gray overall, and darken it a little in the shadowed areas.



**STEP 5** I paint in the entirety of my initial color. I add in the color with small strokes that are slightly apart from each other. I then blend in the pink and gray areas with even smaller strokes. The more detailed the area, the smaller the stroke.



**STEP 6** It's now time to paint in some of the highlights in the fur. I blend in lighter layers of color over the gray fur. The separation of strokes replicates hair. This separation also allows the bottom layers to show through.



**STEP 7** It's time to add some different colors! I choose to make the eye of the big bunny very colorful to complement the colors in the little bunnies. At this point, I also add outlines to the mama bunny's fur. I select dark grays for the white areas and darker pinks for the mouth and toe areas of the paws.



**STEP 8** I want to establish the little bunnies and give each a different-colored base coat. Before I can paint in the bunnies on top of the white fur of the mamma bunny, I want to establish the shadows in the big one. I paint little strokes of cool gray fur to add dimension. Doing so makes the fur look farther back from the head.



**STEP 9** Time to make this big mamma bunny even furrier! I add in an even lighter layer of fur; however, this time I make the strokes a little fatter and shorter, separating them even more. Doing so helps to add dimension to the fur.



**STEP 10** For this next step, I want to smooth out the ears, tongue, and paws of the mamma. I blend in colors lightly, adding them gradually with acrylic glazing medium (AGM). I pull the colors out from dark to light. You can add in the detail to the eye as well. I blend a lighter, more vibrant color in the center of the eye, and outline the pupil with a darker muted color.



**STEP 11** I can't forget about the background. It's a very important part of the composition. It's important to alternate colors between thick and thin lines, saturated and muted, as well as vibrant and dull.



**STEP 12** Here is where I start to make the mamma bunny even fluffier! As I refine my background I also paint over the lines that overlap the bunny. I round out the cheeks, forehead, and upper body with lighter layers of paint.



**STEP 13** At this point, I complete my background. Then I add in outlines for the big bunny. I choose warmer colors for the top of the bunny and cooler ones for the bottom to show that the top of bunny is closer to the viewer. I add in a cool shadow to give the furry bunny even more dimension. And what's a bunny without whiskers? I use my liner brush and a mix of liquid acrylics and acrylic glazing medium (AGM) to paint them on the bunny. I start the lines of the whiskers from the cheeks and gradually pull the brush away from the bunny and toward the background. To get a fine line, ease the pressure off as you create the whisker so you can lift the brush up when you reach the end of the whisker.



**STEP 14** I complete the mamma bunny by adding the final white highlights to the forehead, cheeks, and shoulder area. After that, it's time to give some love to the little colorful furry bundles around her. Painting them is similar to the process for the big bunny, but all in color. I focus on defining the shapes, contours, and expressions.



**STEP 15** I concentrate on adding warmer and cooler tones in the shadows and highlights for more visual depth. I find it's best to work with the smallest brushes I have. Don't forget to add in white bits of fur over the bunnies that are nested on top of the big bunny to achieve the layered look.



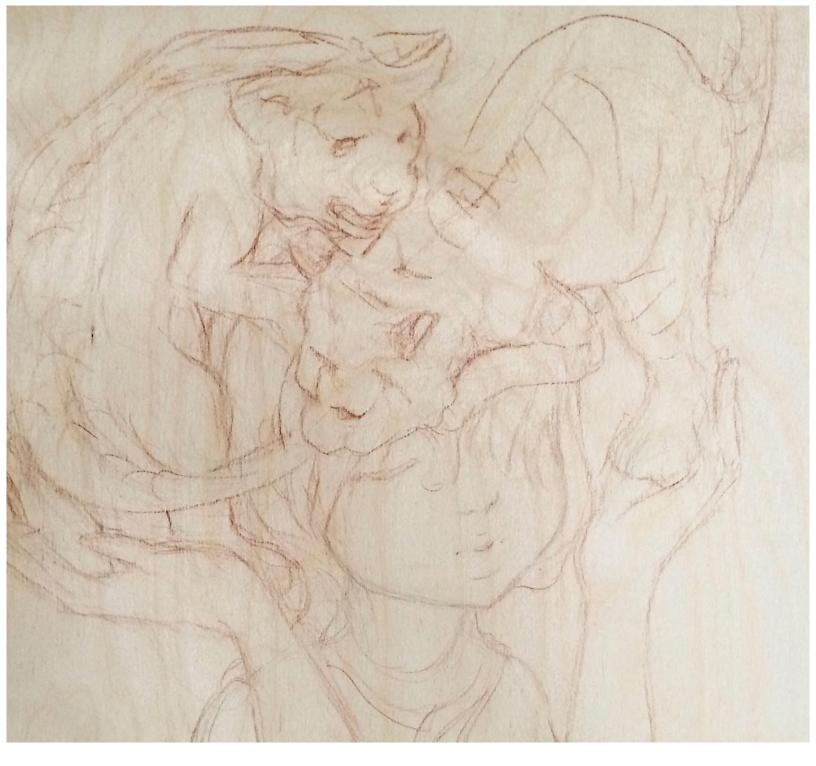
**STEP 16** For the final step, I add the last highlights to the little bunnies. These take time because each one is a different color; however, follow the same steps for adding highlights to the mamma bunny. Slowly build up the highlights of the fur by adding more vibrant colors to each baby bunny.

There you have it: a big ol' rabbit with a bunch of bouncing baby bunnies! There are a lot of elements in this painting, so take your time to focus on each element, one at a time.



## **RAINBOW TIGERS**

Not all Pop Surrealism is cartoony and goofy. In fact, it can be quite realistic when you want it to be. Artists like Lori Earley and Audrey Kawasaki have mastered the art of placing realistic imagery in surreal scenes. I've also been known to throw down some mad realism in my paintings, mixing anime-inspired girls with realistic octopuses, lovebirds, and polar bears! However, unlike the common fauna that exists in nature, my paintings also feature animals that take on albino coloring and that shrink in size. This time around I've decided to go wilder with my fauna. What could possibly be cuter than tiger cubs? How about rainbow tiger cubs?



**STEP 1** Using reference for accuracy, I draw my tigers with watercolor pencils. I decide my tigers will be white with rainbow stripes—because why not? Unlike the other paintings, this time I won't be outlining the tigers with acrylic paint. To make the fur fluffy, you want to avoid strong outlines in the beginning.



**STEP 2** Since the tigers are in the forefront of the painting along with the girl holding them up, I add in light washes of color, selecting a tone that complements the girl. (In this case, it is pale yellow.) Establishing your background first makes it easier to add the fur later, as there won't be a spot of unpainted canvas between the fur and the background.



**STEP 3** I then fill in a thin wash of white on the tigers and add minor shadows. The shadows should be a shade that complements the girl, so in this case, I choose a pale purple that reflects the girl's purple hair. Using a darker shade of purple, I add in some outlines around the eyes, mouth, and ears.



**STEP 4** Now that the background has been established, I can add a more defined outline for the tigers' fur. You want to make the lines broken and a little jagged to mimic the look of real fur. I use two colors—yellow and purple—for the outline of the different parts of the cubs.



**STEP 5** For the next stage, I establish the stripes and darker elements of the tigers. To make the stripes look like rainbows, I transition each stripe from one color into the next to achieve a true rainbow effect. I start with a primary blue, then work the shades into purples and lighter blues on either side. As I paint the tiger's face, I work with thin layers of paint, adding shadows to the mouth and eye area.



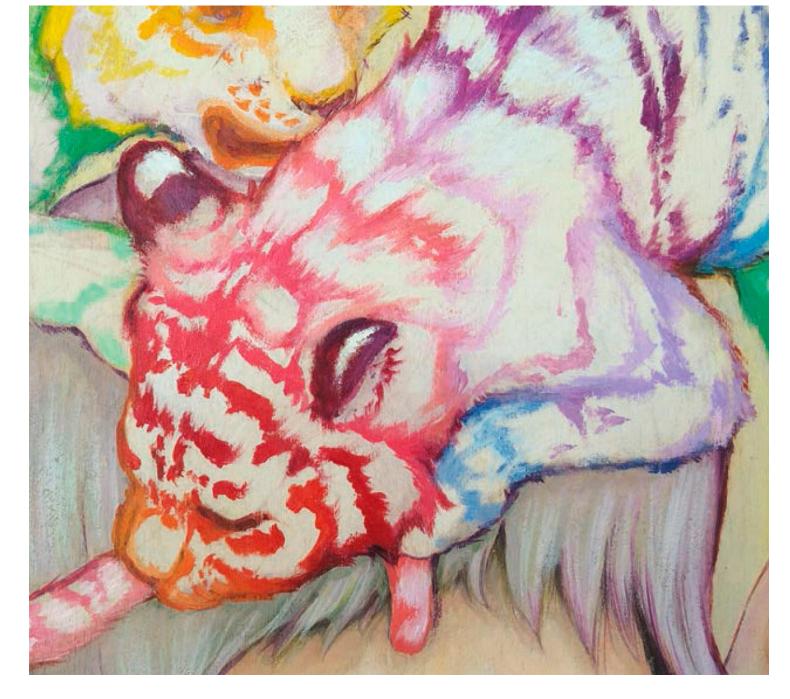
**STEP 6** I lay in my rainbow stripes throughout the tiger. I paint in basic colors so that I have an established gradient that I can blend with the fur. I make sure my stripes are jagged and broken, just like real tiger stripes!



**STEP 7** The next tiger should have different stripes, so I alter which colors I use from the top of the cub's head to the tail. I want to have a nice contrast between the two cubs, so I decide to give the second tiger orange and red stripes on its face. If you are unsure where the stripes should go, look at a photo of a tiger for reference. Usually they have smaller stripes on their faces and tails, with longer stripes around the torso.



**STEP 8** Once I've established the colors on each cub, it's time to make those tigers appear furry! For this step, I use the colors in the stripes and pull the paint away from the body in quick little strokes. A small round-tipped brush is best. I pull the colors away in the direction the fur would naturally flatten (in this case the fur is lying back). I blend in the colors as I outline the cubs. You don't want to make the outline just one color, but as diverse (like a rainbow) as you can.



**STEP 9** I begin to blend the white fur into the colorful stripes. I do this by using titanium white with acrylic glazing medium (AGM). I make these layers semitransparent because I need to build up the fur slowly. I pull some of the color into the white to show that the colored stripes are blending in with the white fur. This process requires a lot of layers, so don't add in thick layers or you'll just cover up the color.



**STEP 10** I blend in more white along the top of the tigers. Don't forget the shadows! Painting shadows is critical so I can have realistic-looking 3D tigers. I mix a little bit of gray with my fur color for the shadows, and slowly blend that in the dark areas. I also include some of the stripe colors in the shadows. Doing so keeps the stripes looking realistic. Don't forget to darken and lighten those stripes where there are highlights and shadows.



**STEP 11** To properly blend the stripes in a realistic and fluffy way, I add many layers of highlights and shadows. Blend the stripes into the fur so that the center of the stripe is the more vibrant color and the outside of the stripe is lighter and blends into the white. My strokes are short, light flicks. These give me a thick-to-thin effect that's perfect for fur.



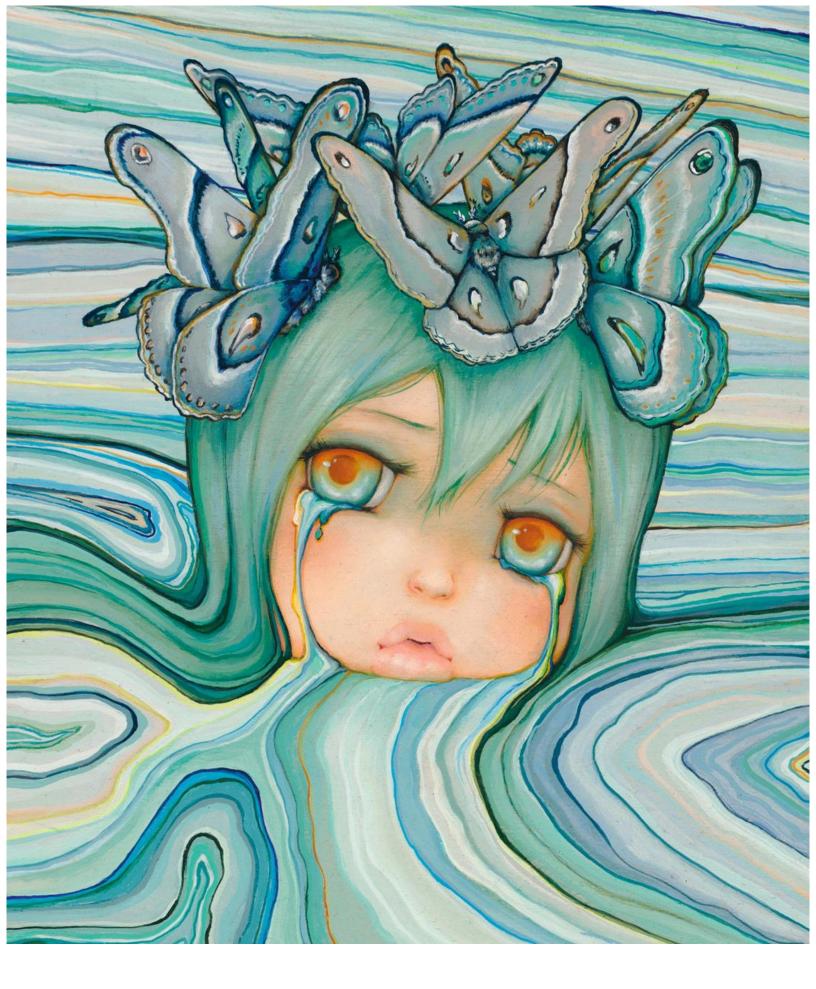
**STEP 12** The eyes are the final details. I make the eyes stand out by using a contrasting color. Since I used yellow and orange to start, I decide a pale blue eye would contrast best and focus the viewer's attention.

And there you have it—rainbow tigers! This painting took me two weeks to paint, and I spent most of that time on the fur. There are at least ten layers of fur and stripes on there, so take your time and don't rush. The fur was also quite thick by the end and I had to wait three days before the paint dried. Remember, patience is a virtue!



## MELTING EFFECTS

How many of you have accidentally spilled paint and watched it pool over your floor or table? Raise your hand...come on...I know you did. Well, so have I! I once saw a photograph online of a truck that was carrying dozens of buckets of paint that had somehow turned on its side. In the photo, all the paint from the buckets had spilled down the road, and was blending and mixing together into the most beautiful pattern I'd ever seen. I'm sure the driver didn't think it was beautiful; however, just like when I've spilled paint all over myself or knocked a can over in my studio, the mixing colors had a certain beauty. I love when they combine and swirl together, pouring into one another. Taking that effect and putting it into my paintings was something I started doing in 2012. I'll show you how I create these melting and pooling effects without spilling paint all over myself! Zu will be there to help, too, since he loves puddles of paint even more than I do!



POOLS OF COLOR

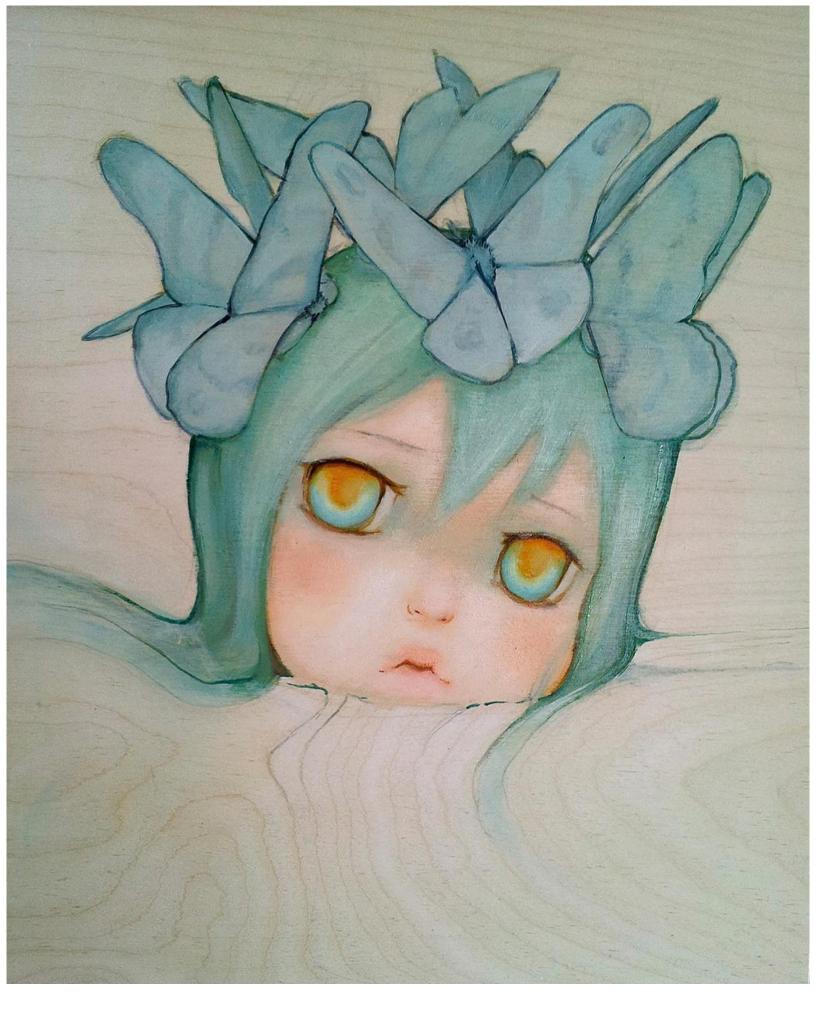
I absolutely adore color—it's amazing, gorgeous, and I just can't get enough of it! Sometimes colors even make me feel hungry and I want to eat them. When I first started to paint melting colors, I wanted them to blend into each other and change from one color into another, but then I fell in love with the idea of using an entire scene of colors—all separate but blending together.

Have you ever seen two colors blend together, or seen natural crystal formations that look like puddles of color? Agate crystals are another source of inspiration behind my pools of color. If you want help with re-creating the patterns, I suggest you look up agate crystals and have some photographs of them on hand for reference. It's not cheating if you use those images as inspiration, but don't copy the photographs exactly! That is plagiarism. You want to express yourself from within, not from what you see. Borrow from others, but make it your own!

The first of my paintings to show pools of color was *Bubs*. This painting was my first foray into the world of using solid colors for a background. Thus began my descent down the rabbit hole! Let me show you how I did it!

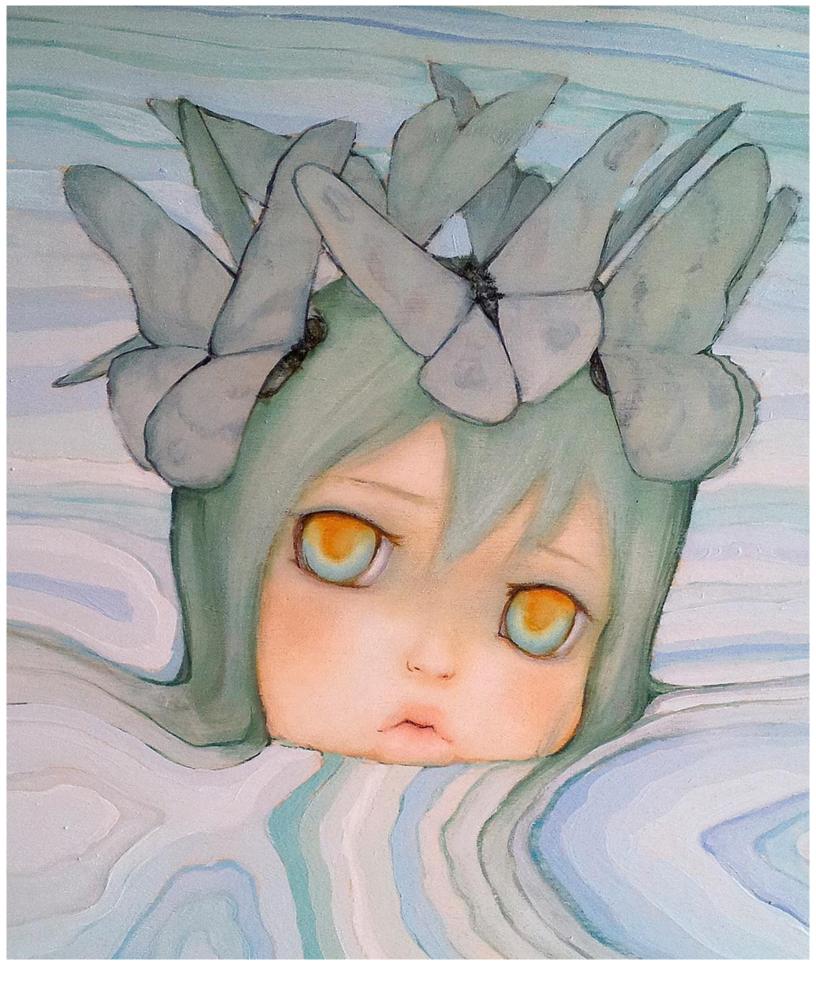
First, you should know that these pools of color are not created using the Duo oils. The reason for that is simple: I don't want my paints to blend into one another. Instead I use Holbein gouache. These are fast-drying acrylic paints that dry as a solid color. For my paintings, I use a combination of gouache and fluid acrylics.

Second, more often than not, I follow the contours of the wood grain when painting. This is why I spend a lot of time deciding which wood panel I will use for a painting. Sometimes I pick up a board and suddenly I see an image form in the wood grain. It's kind of like those eye puzzles that look like a bunch of patterns but reveal a hidden sailboat if you stare at the lines long enough!



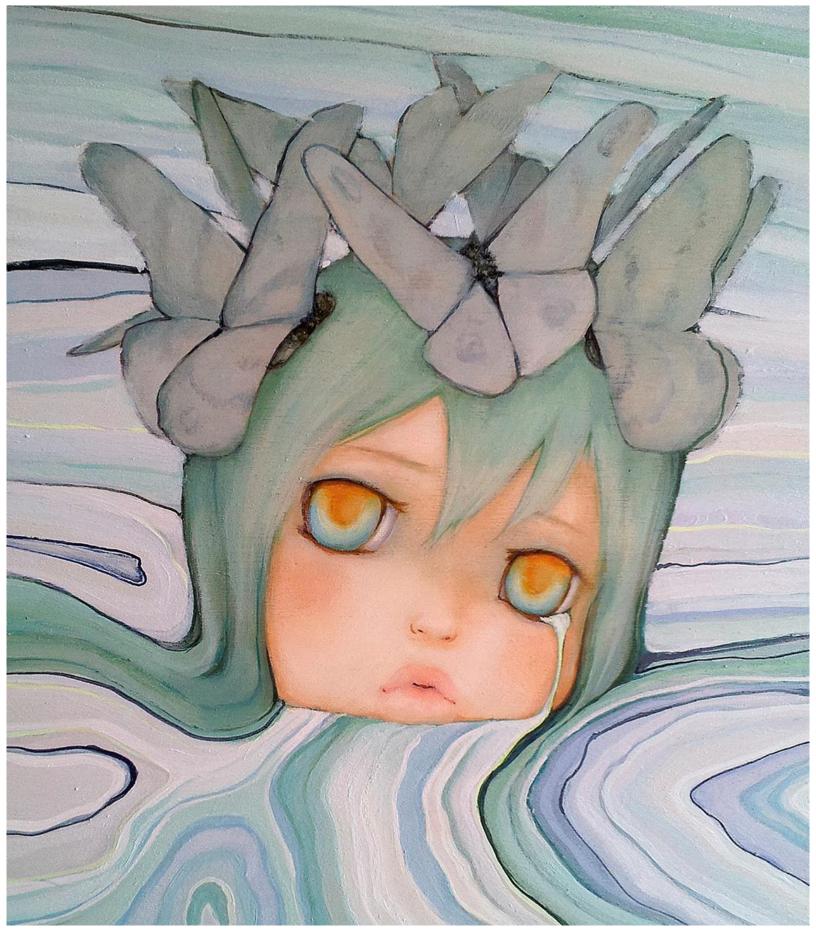
**STEP 1** Creating the color pattern depends on the wood grain, so I choose a panel that has

a nice grain to it. Making pools of color isn't about mixing up every single color you have. I choose only a few colors that I will then lighten or darken. Once I establish the figure and select my colors, I begin painting the pool of colors. Using my liner brush, I start where the figure ends and the color pattern will begin. I trace along the wood grain, away from the figure.



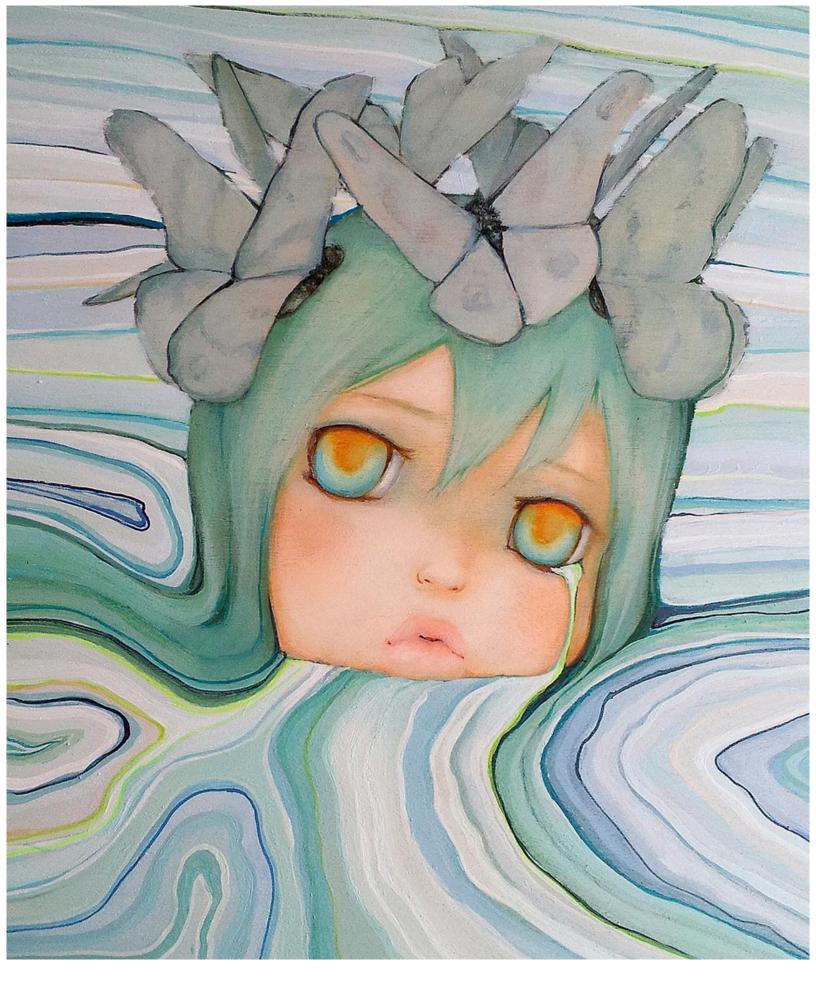
**STEP 2** I like to have sections of color that are similar beside colors that are of a completely different tone. For example, when I trace a line of wood grain with a dark blue color then the

next color I choose is the same blue, but blended with a little titanium white.

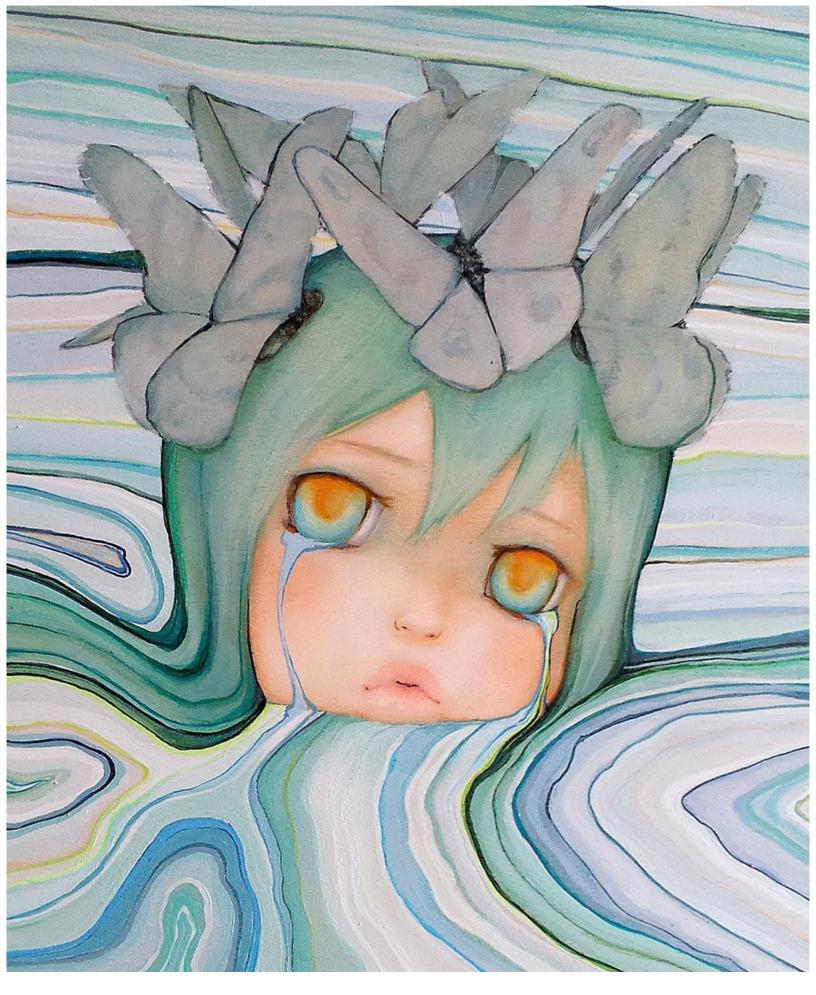


**STEP 3** The next contour after that is an even lighter shade of that blue. That way, it looks like I'm transitioning one color into the next, creating what is known as a linear gradient. Then I add in a dark line of a different tone, either a more vibrant color or a duller tone, depending on what's already there. Placing dull colors next to vibrant ones creates contrast

and balance.

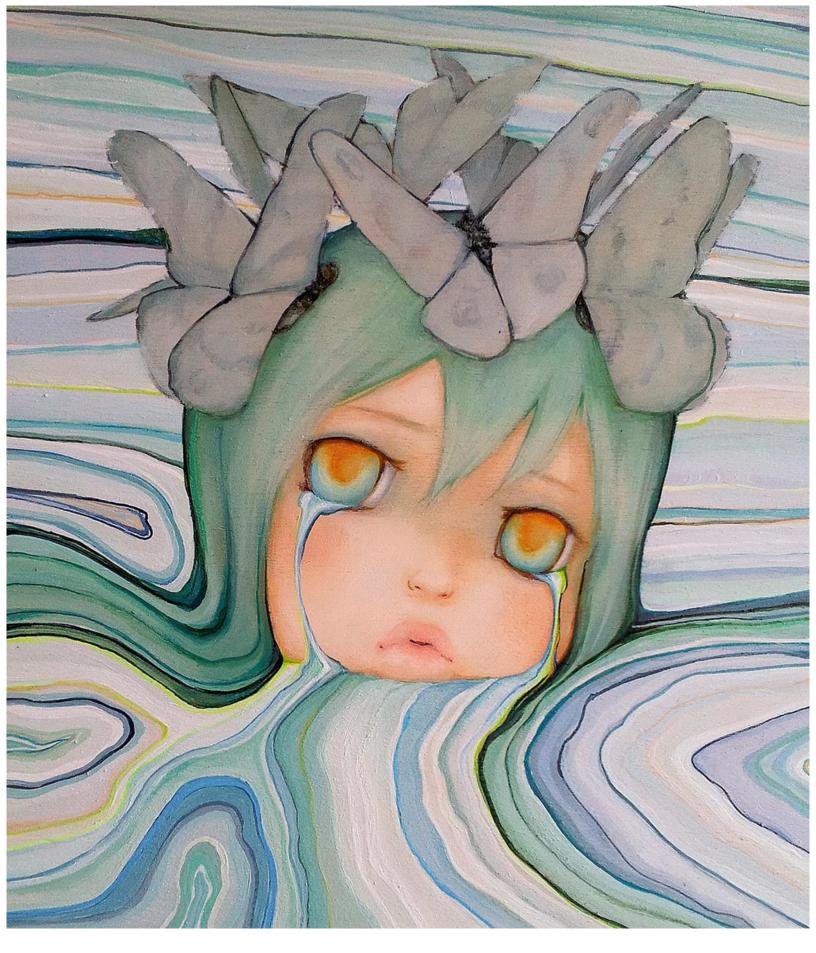


**STEP 4** My favorite part of these pools is the unexpected addition of a neon or a supervibrant color!

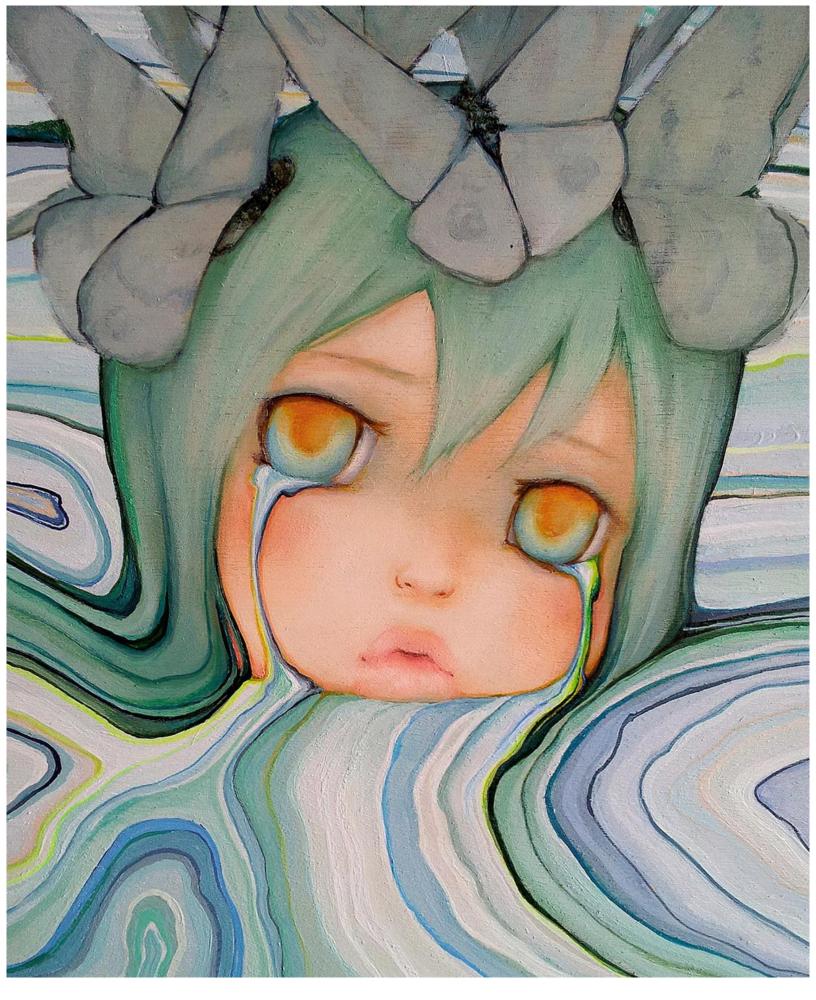


**STEP 5** If my palette has blues, then I add in a pink or a yellow to shake things up! These colors don't just come out of nowhere. I choose a color that I've used in the eyes of the girl

or an element from the figure. Doing so brings cohesion to the piece.

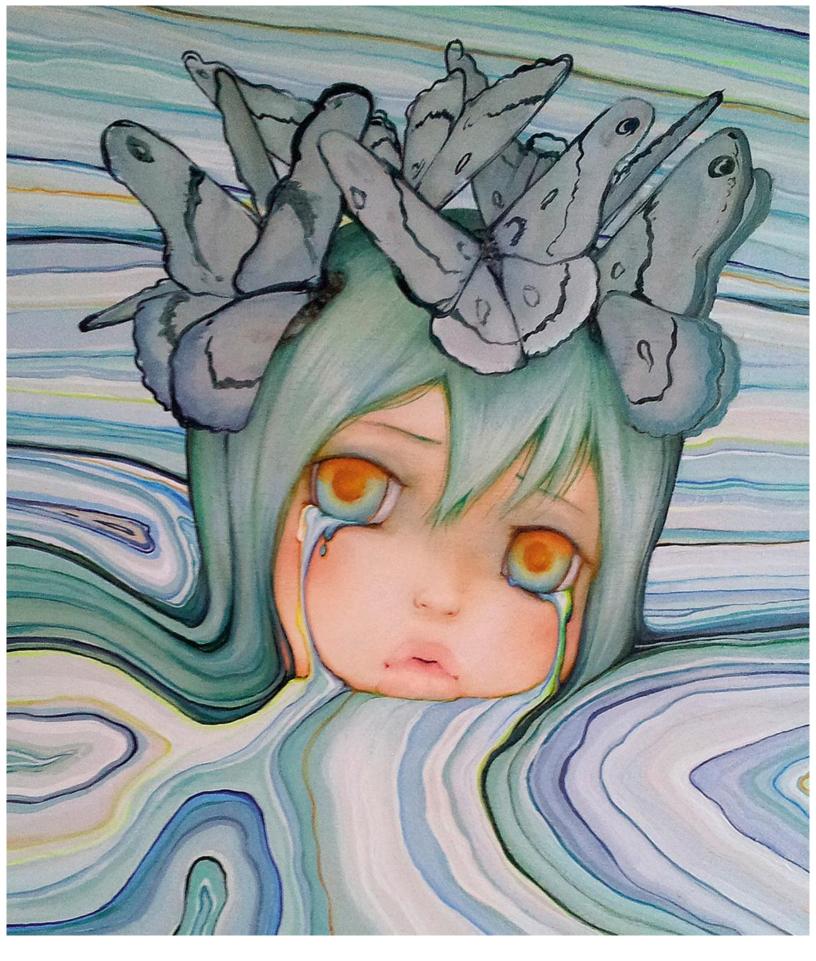


**STEP 6** Before I get too far ahead, I want to tell you a little secret. The final pools of color that you see in all my paintings are formed from many, many, many layers of paint! I spend a lot of time adding in lines of color, then paint over them again and again, until I find the right balance of colors.

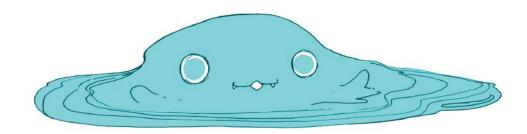


**STEP 7** Creating this painting's look takes a lot of time. Sometimes creating the pool of color is the part that takes me the longest. I paint over the lines again and again, until I can't

see the wood grain anymore and until I feel like it all flows together.



**STEP 8** I make sure to take my time with these pools. They are complex and intricate, and they take a lot of time to create. Remember to vary the thickness of your lines and add vibrant colors here and there (but not too much).



Now I know what ice cream feels like when it's left out...



MELTING RAINBOW

Have you ever seen Salvador Dali's "melting clocks" painting *The Persistence of Memory*? The step-by-step painting for this section is similar; however, instead of melting an object, I'll show you how to melt colors!

I produce this effect using a mix of the Holbein Duo oils and liquid acrylics. The effect is based on realistic-looking color pouring down the figure. So keep in mind that you have to pay close attention to the depth of your piece. To add depth to my painting *Beyond the Rainbow*, I place the girl's hands inside the part of the hole that is melting. That way, when it comes time to create the rainbow, I can overlap the color with her fingers.



**STEP 1** First, I establish the dripping color and set how much will be coming out of the girl's chest. I do so by painting in the contour. You want to add in a few lines of dripping color that vary in length and width. I choose a sepia tone to outline the melting color so it

complements the skin tone.



**STEP 2** I add drips on the inside of the hole, so it looks like the center of the girl is melting. I also include some faint drips on her hand. It's important to show that she is part of this

melting effect. If her hands are touching the color, then naturally some drips would fall onto her fingers, right?



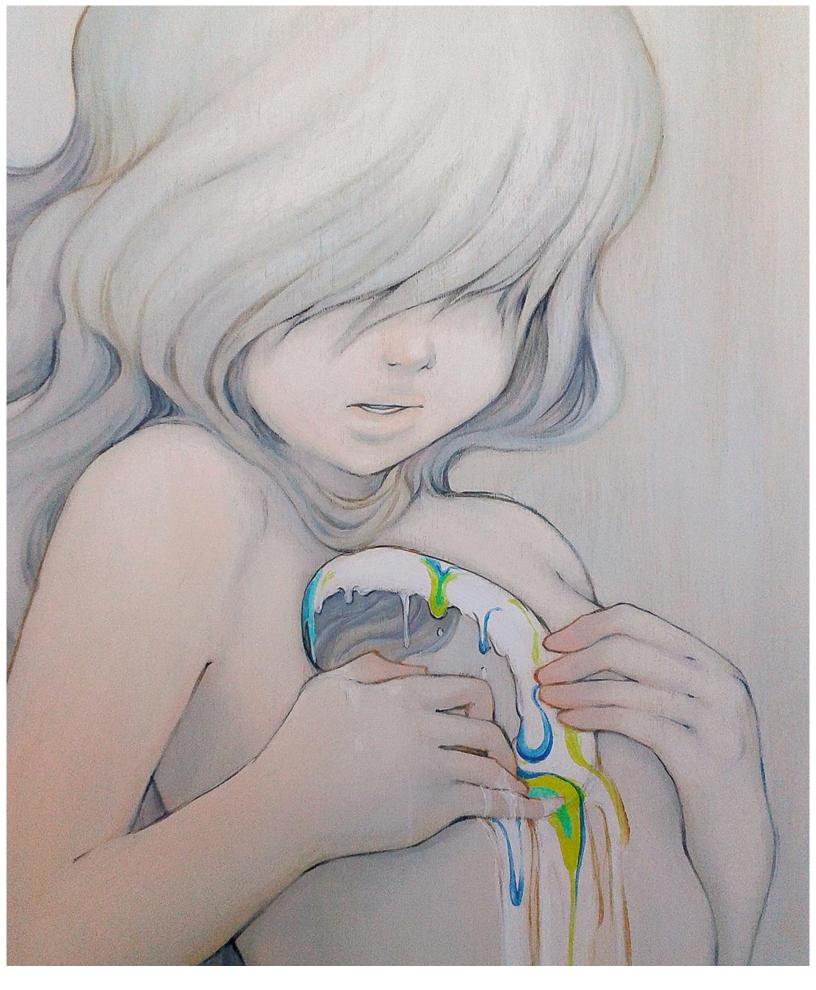
**STEP 3** Now I fill the drips with a thin coat of liquid acrylic white. I want the base color to be unified and to dry quickly so that I can work on the next step. I outline the hole as well as

the drips. I want to make sure that I have a clear point from which I can add the color. If I don't define this area, I may lose sight of where I want the color to go.

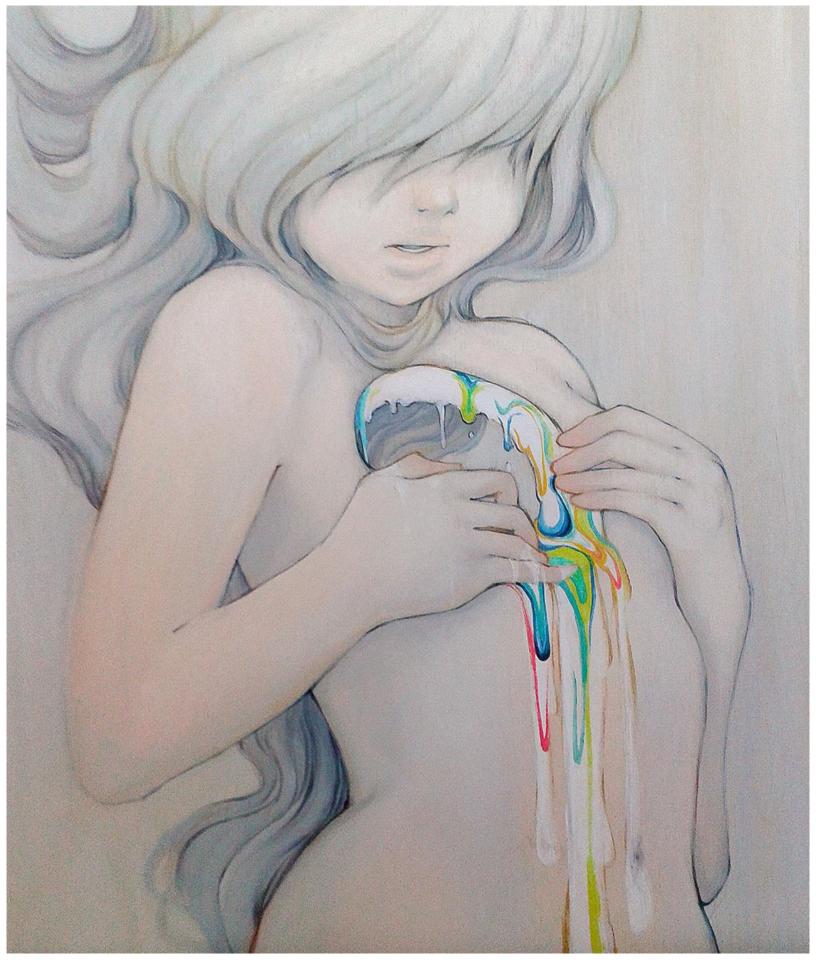


**STEP 4** You may think that you need to add in large areas of flat color, but don't! The effect of melting colors together, rather than having them separate, is a delicate process. It requires layering the paints and blending them. Flat colors will stifle that natural flow. I start

with a couple of colors, and using a round-tipped brush, paint in areas of color that start out thin at the top then thicken as I round the color toward the bottom.



**STEP 5** For now, I want to keep the colors distinct, so I don't blend them into each other. Instead, I make sure to continue to add in colors, moving from thin to thicker at the bottom and back to thin at the top. The lip of the hole is a particularly important area. Because I want to establish that the color is flowing over the edge, I paint the drip at a sharp downward angle at the spot where the paint was originally coming out.



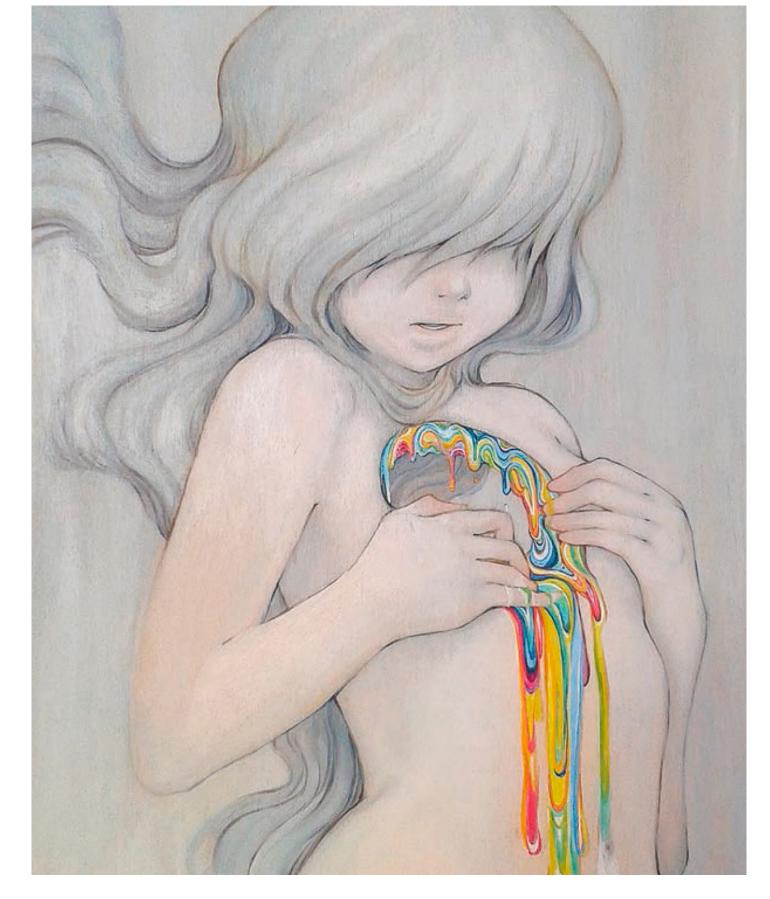
**STEP 6** Now I add in thicker areas of color. You can use any color you want for this step! Because I'm going to have a melting rainbow, I use reds, blues, greens, yellows, and purples. I want to keep the darker colors minimal for now. I work my layers up as I add the various colors.



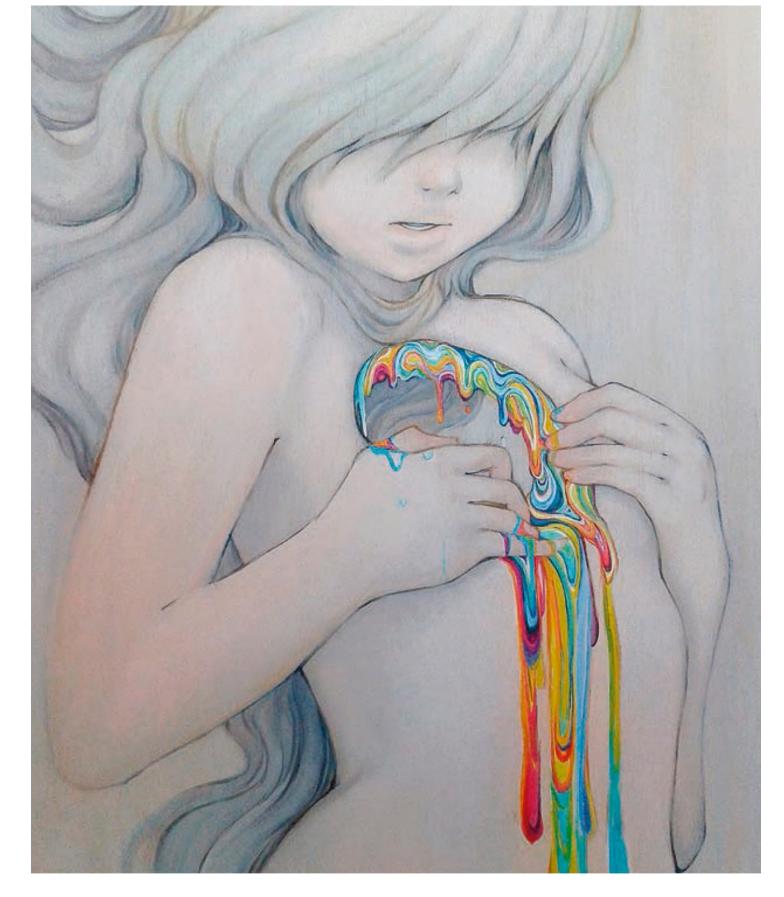
**STEP 7** I begin to blend the colors into one another. For the areas that have red and yellow, I add in some orange. For the areas that have blue and red, I blend in some purple. I still want to keep the areas separate so that the painting doesn't look muddled. I gently pull my brush down, putting more pressure on the tip when I want to thicken my stroke and less when I want to create thinner lines.



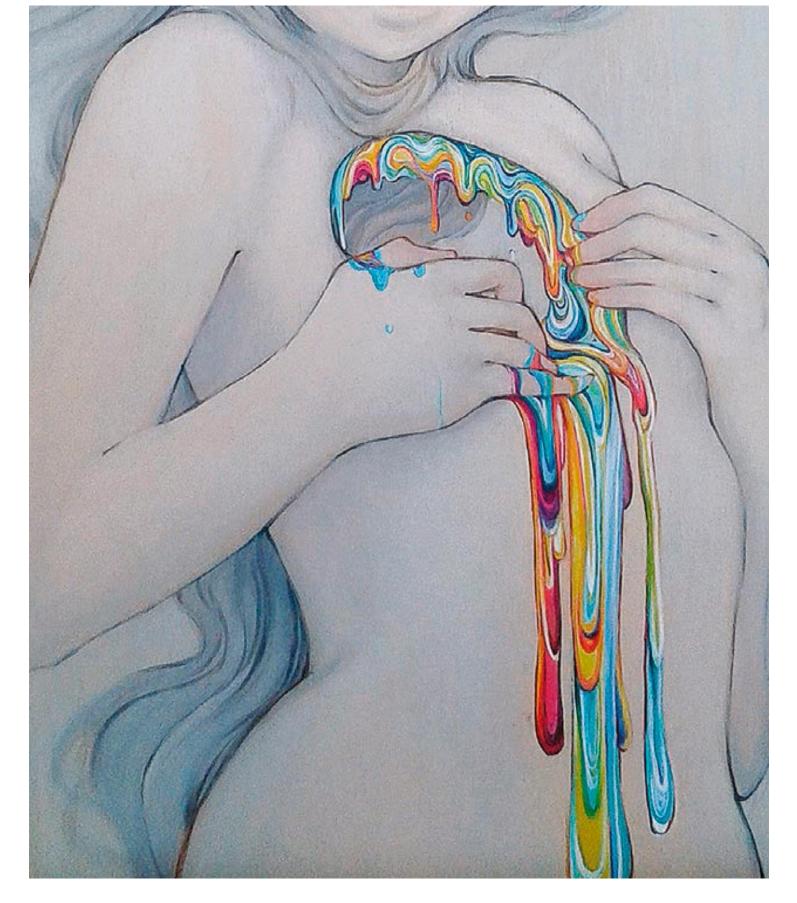
**STEP 8** This next step is all about adding swirls in the chest hole. I dip the lines up and down in a goofy *w*-shape, dripping some parts lower or higher. When I add my colors, I pull my brush along the colored lines and try to overlap them a little. Doing so helps the colors look more cohesive.



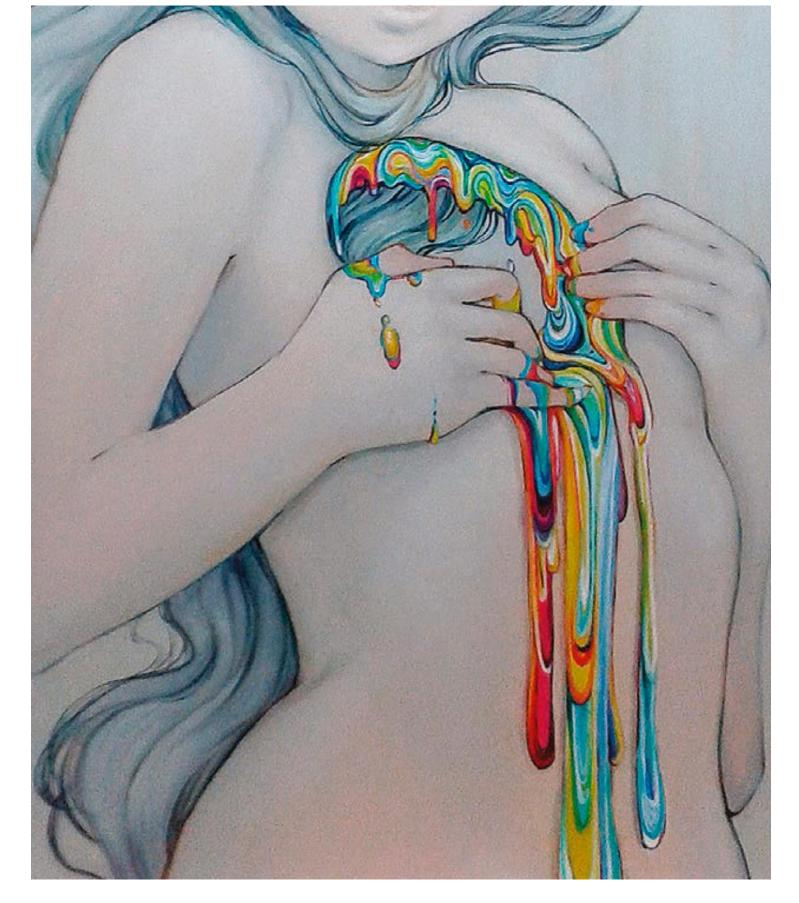
**STEP 9** Vary the colors so the lighter colors are wider and the darker colors are thinner. I have a lot of room to play with at this point. I pull the colors downward, and round off the drips at their ends. Remember to take your time, and don't add too much paint at once.



**STEP 10** At this point, I add in colors that I combine with titanium white. I blend these lighter mixtures in the center of the drips. Doing so softens the colors and also helps to add depth.

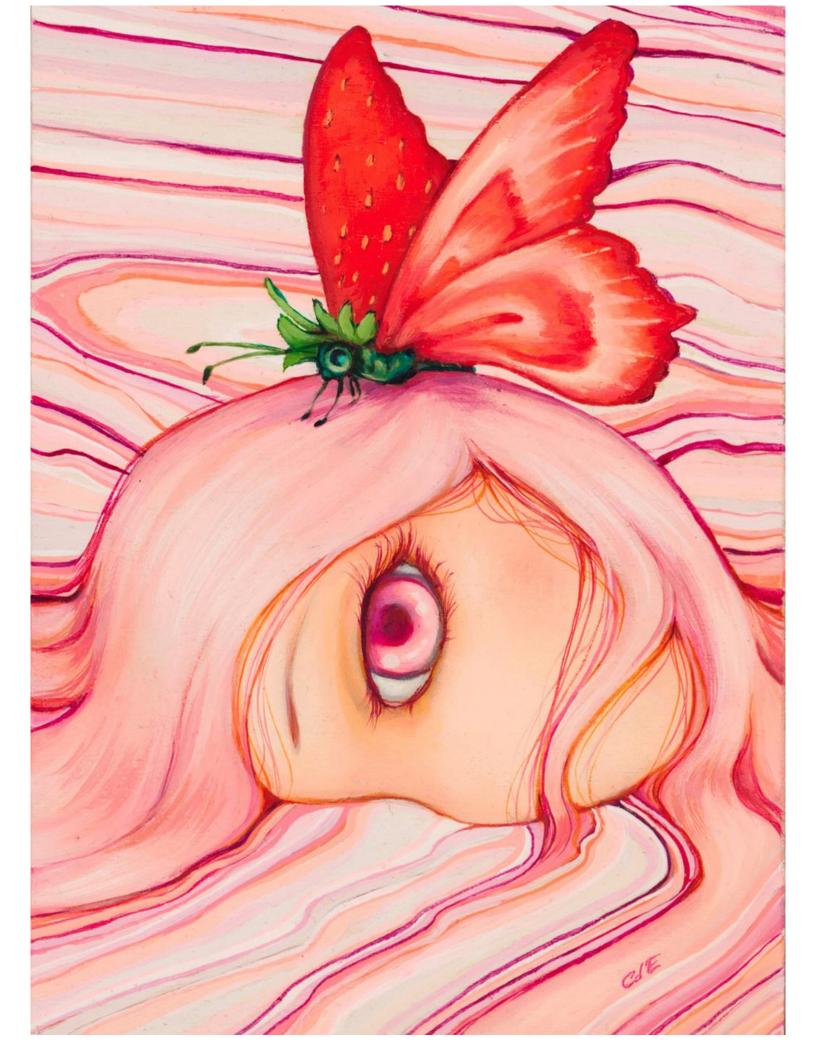


**STEP 11** Having added basic lights and darks, I now want to add some vibrant colors. I paint in some greens and oranges to areas I feel are too similar in tone and that need contrast.



**STEP 12** At this stage, I add shadows on the girl's body to show that there is substance to my drips. I make sure the shadows are not too thick or too dark. I don't want to give the impression that the drips are floating off her body. Instead, I hug the shadows closely to the drips and make sure they are wider on the side of the body that is opposite to the light. In this case, the light comes from the right side of the painting, so I cast wider shadows to the left of the drips.

And there you have it! I've just melted a rainbow!



## TWISTING REALITY

On a hot summer day while I was sitting on my balcony eating a delicious slice of juicy watermelon, a butterfly floated in front of me. Drawn by the sweetness of my fruit, it landed on a piece of watermelon on the table before. I watched and as it tasted the sugary goodness of the watermelon, an image popped into my mind. I looked at the delicate little thing and thought, "What if it were made out of fruit?"

From there my mind went to more bizarre places and I started merging two objects that had nothing in common into one creature. A strawberry butterfly, an owl that was a flower, and so on—the possibilities were endless! In this section, prepare to let go of what you thought was reality and journey into a world where lemons are flowers and things that shouldn't be are, in fact, reality!



## COMBINING CUTENESS

What's cuter than an owl? How about an owl that's also a flower? For this lesson, I'll show you how to paint a cute little blue owl that I call *Flowl*. The best part of being a Pop Surrealist is that I get to twist reality, so mixing birds and roses is totally acceptable. I've skipped a few steps in this lesson so we can get down to the nitty-gritty!



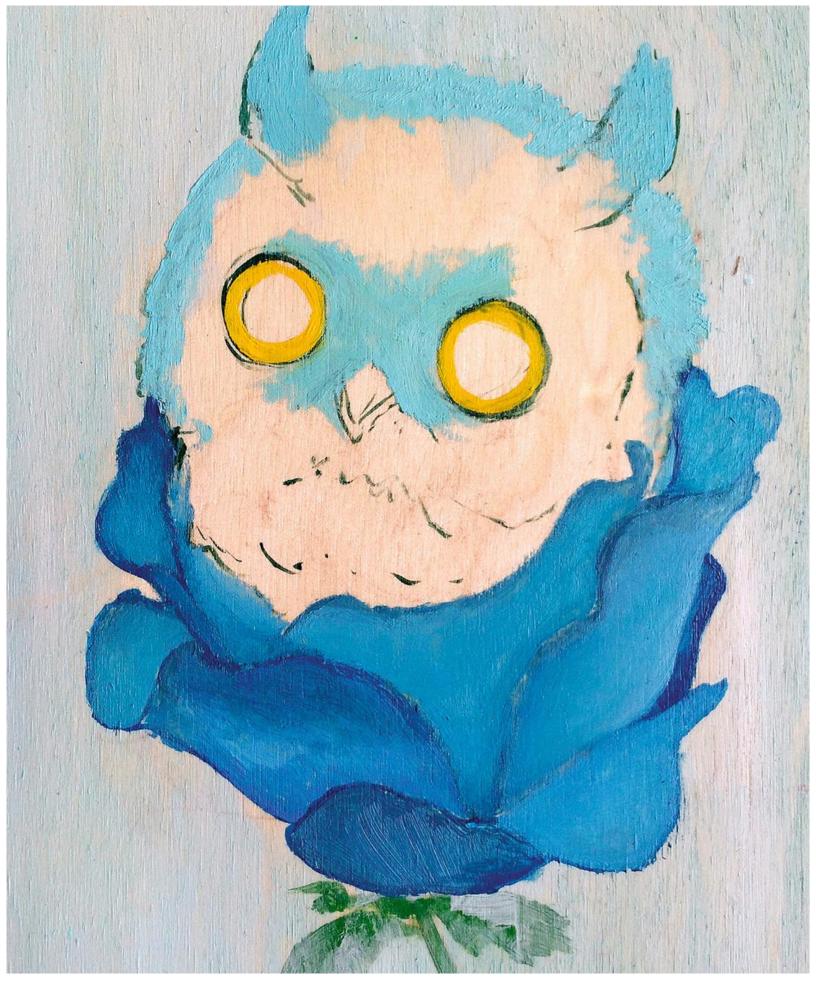
**STEP 1** I've already painted the outline of Flowl and applied a light blue wash of color in the background. I outline my owl and rose. For your version, use the colors that you envision for

your piece. I choose blue because it's rare for a flower and because I think it will make the yellow of the eyes really pop!



STEP 2 Roses are made up of multiple petals that are not simply one color but a variety of

colors that change depending on the light. When you are establishing your petals, it's important to not just throw down one solid color. Instead, I create gradients of it from dark to light. If you need help with this, use my example as photo reference!



**STEP 3** Now that I've painted the rose—keep in mind this is not the finished rose, but one of its first layers—I begin to work on the owl part of my painting. This owl will be blue itself

and also part of the blue rose, so I want to use a light blue that I create by mixing in the rose color with titanium white. I start by painting the outside of the owl and covering up the outline that I had already painted. I also want to establish the eye color. I use a bright yellow because it really pops against the blue.



**STEP 4** For the next phase, I add another layer of outlines. You'll find that this is required throughout the painting. I have to repaint the outlines several times. I don't use black for any of my outlines. I know it may look like black in the image on the opposite page, but trust me

-it isn't. Adding outlines is where a lot of the depth comes into the painting. I use dark colors for this step—a dark brown for the pupils and a dark blue for the outline.



STEP 5 When painting an owl, it's important to keep the shape of its face in mind. Owls

have large eyes and tiny beaks at the center of their faces. This arrangement is really what makes them so cute you just wanna squish 'em! But don't do that because it would be animal cruelty. I set down a light base coat for my little owl, keeping the outline and eye area light and the area below the beak dark. I don't want to just use the same blue color throughout, so I mix in a warmer blue near the eyes to complement the yellow and a duller, more grayish blue to distinguish the feathers from the petals.



**STEP 6** It's time to add some details! I don't want to paint every single feather, but I do want to make sure that I give the illusion of feathers when painting the shadows. So I paint little swoops that resemble half moons to achieve this effect. I also make the pupils a little bigger toward the middle of the eyes so that the owl looks a tiny bit cross-eyed.



**STEP 7** I continue to paint in the shadows, filling in darker feathers near the belly and

around the eyes. You want to build up your darker areas so that you can eventually lighten them. Adding layers of colors creates depth—and from what I've learned it is easier to lighten a dark color than darken a light color.

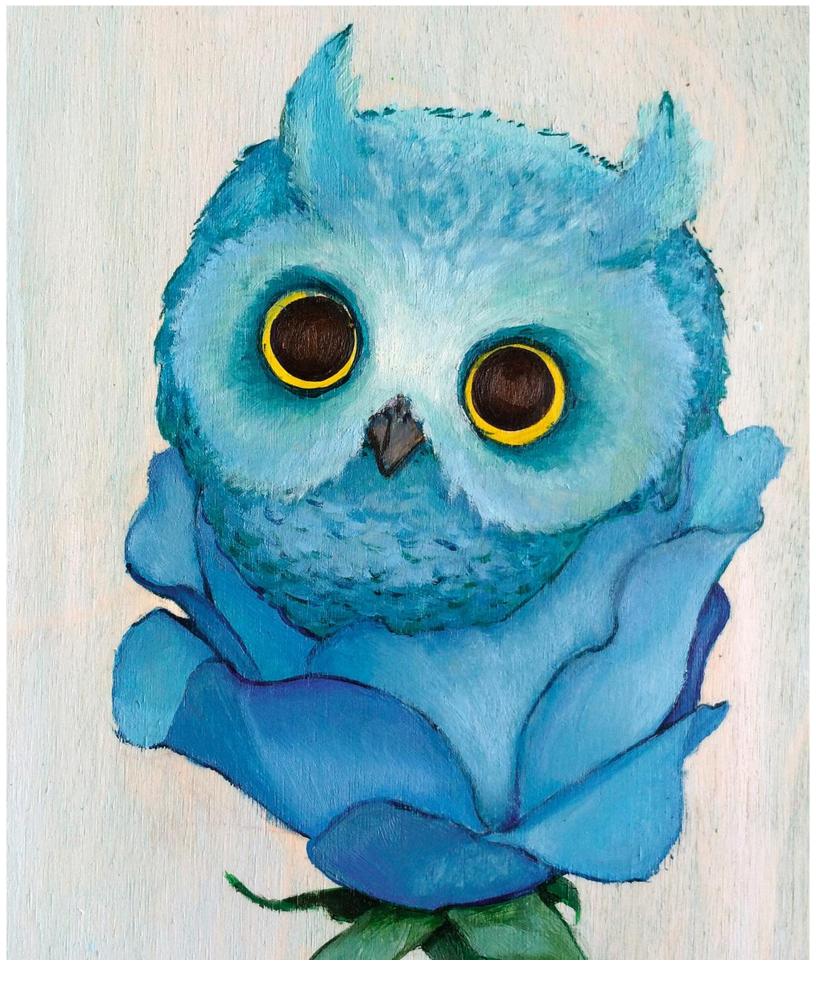


**STEP 8** I wasn't kidding about adding more outlines! Once I've painted more feathers, I make sure that I don't lose the shape of my cute little guy here. That's why I use a darker blue-green paint for an outline. If you wonder if you should use acrylics for the outline, the answer is—yes! They dry faster and won't blend with the next layer of Duos.



**STEP 9** I want to use a round-tipped brush for the details of the painting because the round tip makes it easier to paint the feathers that are curved and round. I use quick

brushstrokes and a mixture of my Duos and acrylic glazing medium (AGM) for easier blending.



**STEP 10** As I begin to build up my layers, I stop blending the feathers and instead start to make small strokes that stand out from the blended layers. Because I'm painting a bird, I

make sure that my strokes look like feathers and not hair. To achieve this, I keep my strokes small and round. I add in darker edges to the feathers along the belly and to the tips of the wings to show more shadows.



**STEP 11** One tip for painting depth is to have areas with contrasting color. The area around the eyes of the owl has more vibrant colors, so I use duller blues near the beak and at the contours of the eyes to make those lighter, vibrant colors pop even more. Not only do the

lighter areas stand out, but so do the darker ones. Remember that whenever you have a dull color next to a vibrant one, it will stand out regardless of if the colors are darker or lighter.



**STEP 12** This next step is a dramatic one. I add my final colors to the feathers. These bright colors are the topmost layer, so I want them to stand out. I don't want to just add a solid white and blend it in because these are feathers. Instead I make little strokes with my paints

and keep them separated, leaving some of the bottom layer visible. The same principle applies to the darker layers. I want to show the feathers as a texture, not as a perfectly blended color. I also use a lighter brown for the center of the pupils to provide a bit of depth. I add in a slightly darker yellow (a blend of some of the brown with the yellow) near the top of the iris.

I hope you enjoyed this first look at twisting reality—merging two things into one! Have fun with this lesson and apply it to your own creations. Make a puppy bloom from a sunflower or turn a lovebird into a watermelon!



TENTACLES

What's a little surrealism without octopuses? Have you ever looked up the octopus? These lovely creatures of the deep are some of the most fascinating on the planet, and I have fallen in love with them! They are highly intelligent, and I bet they can problem-solve better than me! They are resourceful and mysterious, they can blend into their surroundings, and they come in all sorts of shapes and sizes.

I've found that painting octopus tentacles is a little tricky, so let me walk you through how I paint them. I've discovered that one of the best ways to paint these complex and intricate little guys is to actually simplify the tentacles.

## Tips

Remember that they are squirmy, fluid, and stick to everything—so twist them and curl them, sometimes even around each other.

Make the tentacles thicker at the base, then taper them out to rounded points.

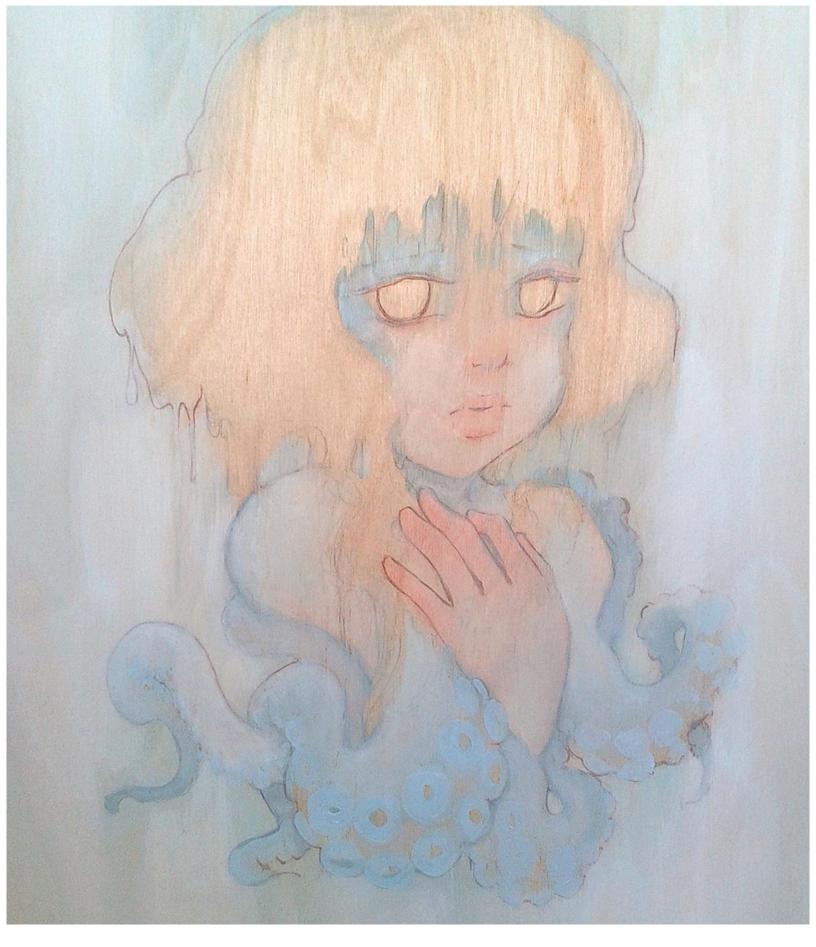
Place suction cups only on the bottom side of the tentacle, and line them up in two rows that are parallel to each other.



**STEP 1** In this first step, you'll see that I've already outlined my character and added in a slight wash to the background. This wash covers up some of the tentacles, but that's okay. That paint will eventually get covered up as well.



**STEP 2** Next, I establish the color of the tentacles. I decide to go with a pale blue that complements the background. One thing to note here is that I want the tentacles to go from dark to light. To achieve this effect, I use a slightly darker, cool blue to fill those tips.



**STEP 3** Since there are many details in these tentacles, I begin to establish the suckers at this stage. If you look at an octopus, you'll notice that the suckers are usually very light or sometimes even white. So, I know that these suckers will need to be bright in contrast to the rest of the tentacle.

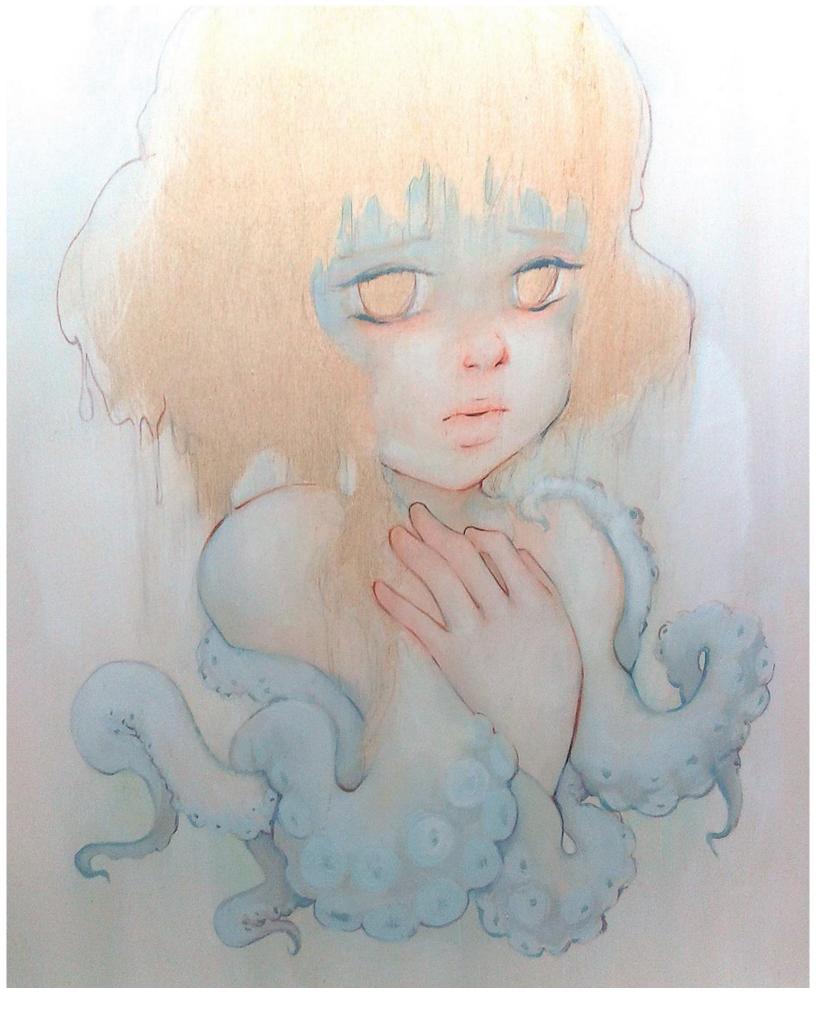


STEP 4 I now add in some dark blues. Doing so allows me to outline the tentacles, to

maintain their shape, and to define the suckers a bit more. The center of the sucker should be a dark point. You add shadows depending on your light source. Remember to keep your layers light and transparent. I use Duos with a mixture of water and acrylic glazing medium (AGM). I pull the color along the surface in one direction, blending it smoothly with a gliding motion.



The best part of tentacles is how squirmy they are! The more I curl them, the more they look real!



**STEP 5** At this stage, I slowly add lighter colors. It's okay if the suckers look a little rough

right now. I will have plenty of time to refine them later. Rendering tentacles in a realistic and three-dimensional manner is almost like painting a long balloon. (I'm serious! Zu is looking at me like I'm crazy, but it's true.) After all, tentacles and long balloons are both like tubes. You want to make the center of the tentacle light and the sides darker. You can highlight the top of the tentacle with a bright color and the bottom with reflective light.



**STEP 6** For the suckers facing down, there will be a shadow cast between the line of the suckers. I suggest using a less vibrant color for shadows. Doing so helps give more depth to the painting. Using my Duo paints, I mix a good amount of titanium white with blue, and

paint little donut-like shapes along the tentacles without filling in the centers of the suckers.



**STEP 7** Okay, now I want to darken some of the tentacles. I focus on the parts that are overlapping, since the light is shadowed in those areas. I like to outline the tentacles at this point with a darker blue made up of gray blue and a little Payne's gray. This is also the time when I add thin layers of vibrant colors to the tentacles. Doing so creates more depth and brightens the tentacles as well. I use acrylic glazing medium (AGM) and flat-tipped brushes to smoothly blend this new layer (which is thin and semitransparent). Remember you want to slowly build up your layers. I add the more vibrant colors gradually, mixing small amounts of the new color with my lightest shade.



**STEP 8** I add in cooler shades of blues near the tips and at the most shadowed areas. Cooler colors will seem farther away spatially from warm colors, and the addition of another shade of blue adds more depth, making the tentacles appear more interesting. For more depth, add yellow to warm a blue and red to cool it.



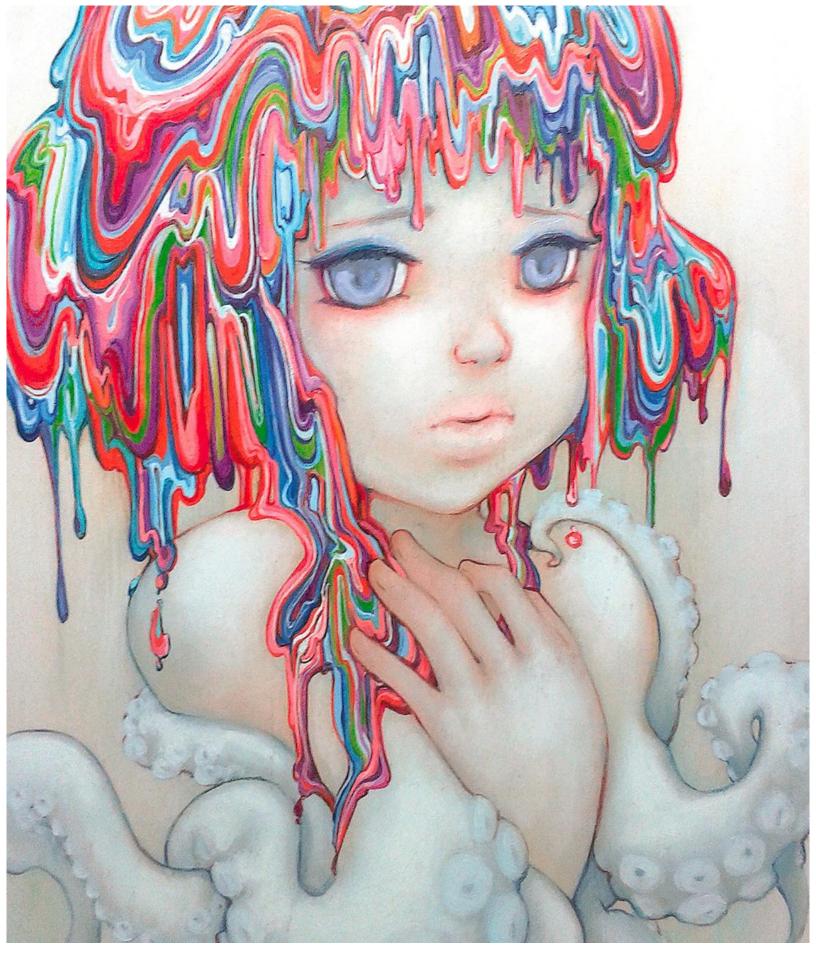
Great. Now I'm craving donuts-time for a break!



**STEP 9** I want the tentacles to seem like part of the girl, so I will blend some jaune brilliant into the tentacles. This very subtle touch brings cohesion to the piece by bringing colors from the tentacles into the skin and vice versa.



**STEP 10** To make the tentacles look even more three-dimensional, I build up contrast in the tentacles. To do that, I have to use more saturated colors. I add in more white to the color in the brightest points. You'll see that when you brighten an area, the other parts seem more in shadow. That's just the result I want. I need more contrasts so my tentacles pop!



**STEP 11** Ready for even more contrast? Those suckers need some additional attention. The suckers are the brightest parts, so I paint more white on them. I also add darker shades at the tips and in the center of the suckers. I add even more depth by painting a slightly more

vibrant shade of blue near the base of the suckers and blending it into the bigger area.



**STEP 12** It's time for drastic measures! For the final stage, I outline the tentacles with darker, vibrant colors and add the final highlights. Since the background is a neutral color,

## the saturated outline really accentuates the tentacles and makes them stand out even more. And voilà—painted tentacles!

The most important thing to remember when painting tentacles is that they are complex, squirmy things that will take some time to master. You may need to look at photos, watch a few nature videos, or go to your local aquarium to really capture their sense movement.



## CARTOONS AND CARICATURES

Cartoonish characters often find their way out from my imagination, and land smack-dab on my wood canvases! An adorable little bumblebee was one of the more amusing things I've ever painted. I was so overjoyed about doing so, that I thought it would make a great lesson for you. This particular section will show how you can twist and bend reality, giving a painting a surreal feel, while also pushing the boundaries of your art and caricaturizing animals.

What do you need to know about caricatures? Well, caricatures are all about exaggerating features and simplifying characters. You exaggerate some parts and oversimplify others. I have always been a big fan of googly eyes, so I decided that a bee with huge, glassy eyes would be adorable. However, I wanted to simplify the bee's legs and body to keep it as cartoonish as possible. You can do the same for anything. Just imagine a character like Puss in Boots from the "Shrek" films when painting something like this little bee. Nothing says cute more than big eyes and fuzz!



**STEP 1** I draw and outline the character with a watercolor pencil and acrylic paint. I make

little dabs for the body outline instead of a solid line because the bee is going to be fuzzy and I don't want a solid line to interfere with its furry outline. For the lemon flower part—yes, you read that correctly—I paint a flower that is actually a lemon, outlining it with thin lines of acrylic.



**STEP 2** I paint my background. I want the background to be in place so that it sets the tone for the painting. It will also make it easier to paint the fuzzy parts of the bee. I choose a pale, greenish-yellow color, and, to make it interesting, I alternate lighter streaks with more

vibrant ones.



**STEP 3** I start to paint the objects in my composition that are behind others (like the lemon, which is behind the bee). Doing so makes it easier to add the bee afterward. First, I fill in the lemon with a midway yellow. *Midway colors* are those that are a halfway point between the lightest and darkest colors of an object.



**STEP 4** I begin to paint shadows and round out the lemon. I add darker tones of yellow to the outer edges of the lemon. The leaves need shadows as well, so I paint darker greens near the center of the leaves and at the edge that is closest to the lemon. You don't have to

worry about blending these smoothly. Instead, I focus on adding chunks of shadow.



**STEP 5** Now I add textures. The lemon rind isn't smooth but very porous, so using darker tones of yellow, I add in little dots of paint on the rind. Small round-tipped brushes are best

for this. I also outline the lemon with a bit of orange or quinacridone gold for the edge. The leaves are a smooth surface, so I slowly blend in the darker colors with the lighter highlights. The highlights should be at the tip of the leaves where the light will hit. I like contrast, so I outline the leaves with teal to make them pop.



**STEP 6** At this stage, the lemon is almost complete. I start to fill in the darker colors of the bee with a thin Duo base layer. However, my real focus is on adding highlights to the lemon. I add in little dots of lighter yellow along the outer edges. I also brighten the interior rind.

Because I want the interior of the lemon to be a focal point, I add vibrant yellow along the edges of the segments. Doing so draws the eye toward the center of the lemon.



**STEP 7** Notice anything different? Here is a perfect example of what happens when an artist changes her mind halfway through a painting. As I paint in the dark color of the bee, I decide that it is too cliché. Instead, I decide to make the bee albino—even cuter! So, I switch

gears and decide to go full pink/pale! The best way to fix the colors is to paint over the top with a mix of acrylic and Duos. The acrylics speed up the drying time of the Duos, and help cover up the darker tone much more easily.



**STEP 8** I build up the bee's fluffiness with short brushstrokes. I want to have a clear separation between the lighter section and the darker one; however, it's important to show highlights around the edges. I use darker tones for the light parts and lighter tones for the

dark ones. Doing so gives dimension and depth to the composition.



**STEP 9** It's time to add some depth to my painting. The bee casts a shadow on the lemon, so now that I've established the fuzz, I can see where the darker yellow will go. The closer

the object is, the darker the shadow. Therefore, I blend the shadow from the bee outward, slowly thinning out the color as I go. I outline the bottom of the bee with the same color as the edge of the lemon. Doing so helps connect the two elements. If you have gold paint, consider adding in a light wash of gold on the wings. It adds iridescence and *bling* to the painting.



STEP 10 Time for some definition! I outline the bee's face and legs. I also add in a thin layer

of bright pink for its pupils. To really draw viewers' attention to the eyes, I make them bright and contrasting with the more neutral face. I blend a bit of red into the cheeks to give them a little bit of a blush effect.



**STEP 11** Here comes the fuzz! To really build up the fluffy look, I add in thick layers of light and dark colors to the fuzz using light touches of my brush tip, kind of like I'm dabbing the

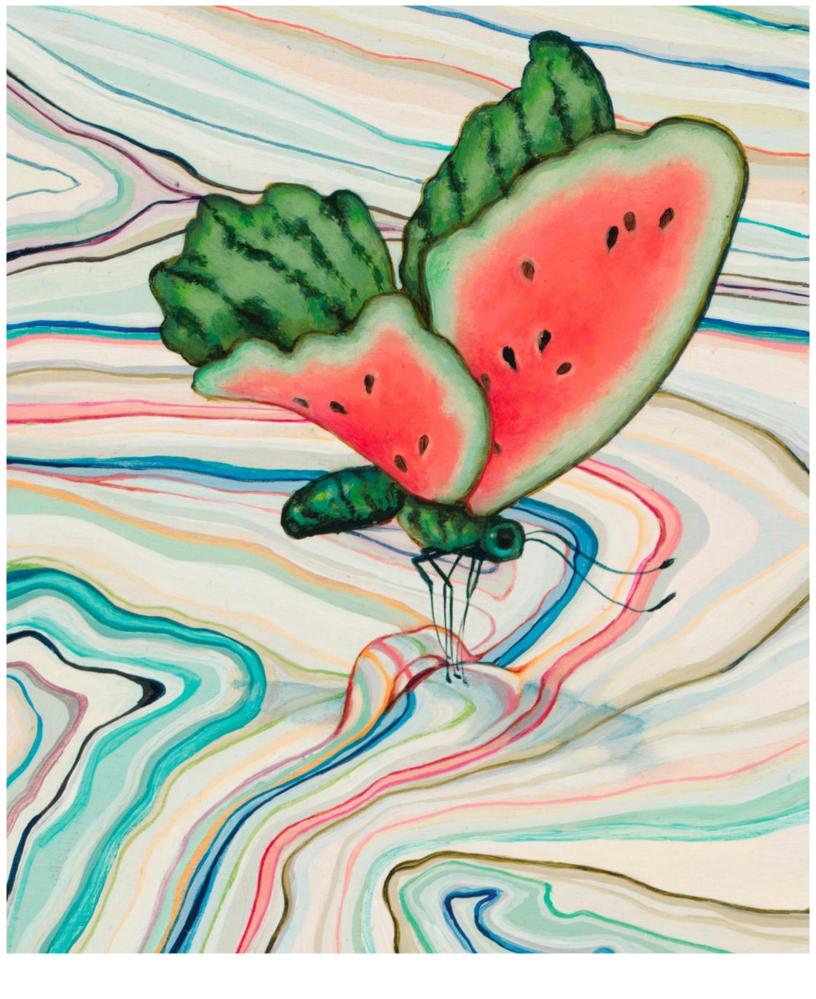
paint on. Small round-tipped brushes are best for this step. You want to dab and pull quickly so it looks thick at the base and thins out at the top. I outline the fuzz with a small liner brush and a thin layer of semitransparent paint. You can make any color more transparent by adding in your acrylic glazing medium (AGM).



**STEP 12** For the final step, I add in darker colors to the fuzz for definition. I add more vibrant colors along the edges of the bee as well to make it pop a little more. I finish the eyes with darker pupils and white highlights. I realize the painting is missing something, so I

decide a nice bit of juice coming from the lemon will really make this piece come alive. To achieve the liquid effect, you need to add in a lighter yellow from the lemon and pull it over the edge with your brush. To give the drip dimension, I outline it with darker yellow and add in a light highlight as well.

There you have it folks, an albino bee on top of a lemon flower!



**BUTTERFLY KISSES** 

Pop Surrealism is all about twisting reality and warping physics. So, while I could show you how to paint a piece of watermelon or a butterfly, I think it's more fitting to show you how to paint a butterfly that *is* a watermelon!

Combining elements should be a carefully thought-out process. Blending a butterfly and a watermelon only works if you stay true to the nature of both elements. Use the shape of the butterfly and mix in the textures of the watermelon to bring it all together!



**STEP 1** The first thing I have to do is decide on the angle of the butterfly. I choose one that will show the top and underside of the wings. That way I can display two sides of the watermelon texture—the rind and the juicy insides! I outline the butterfly with a dark green

that isn't vibrant but is more neutral.



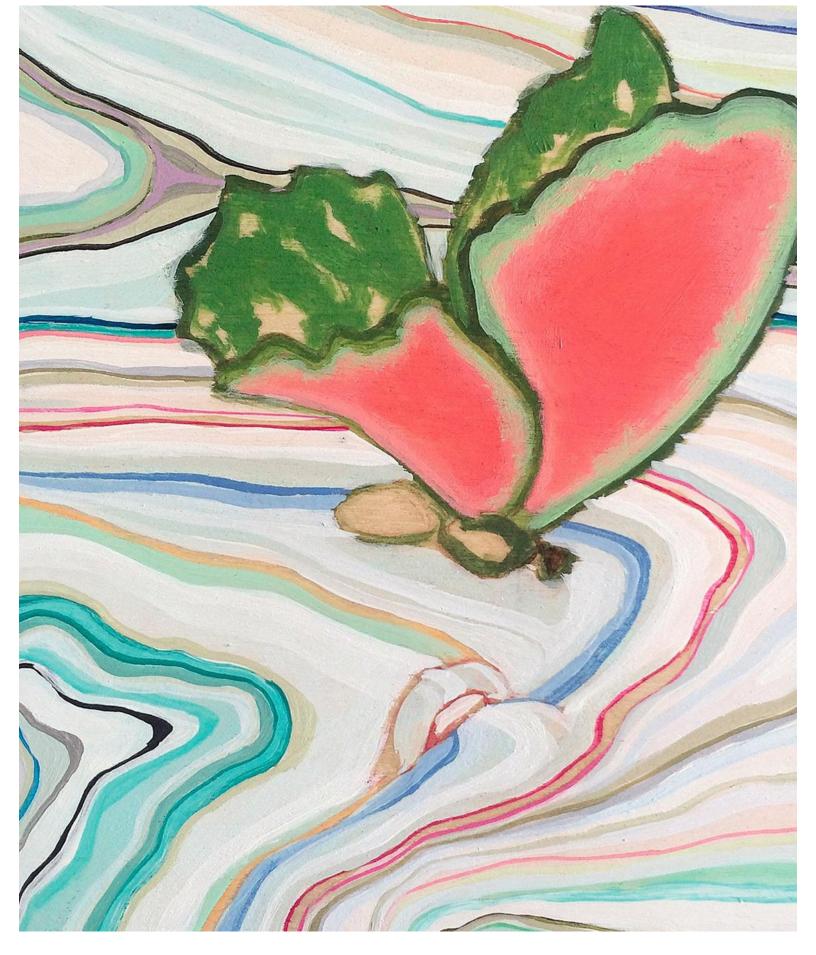
**STEP 2** Let's jump straight to filling in the wings—the side that shows the rind and the side that is the pink watermelon. Once I decide which part is pink, I fill in a thick layer of color.

You want a thick layer because it has to cover up the wood grain. I use a combination of Duo coral red, pink, and light magenta.



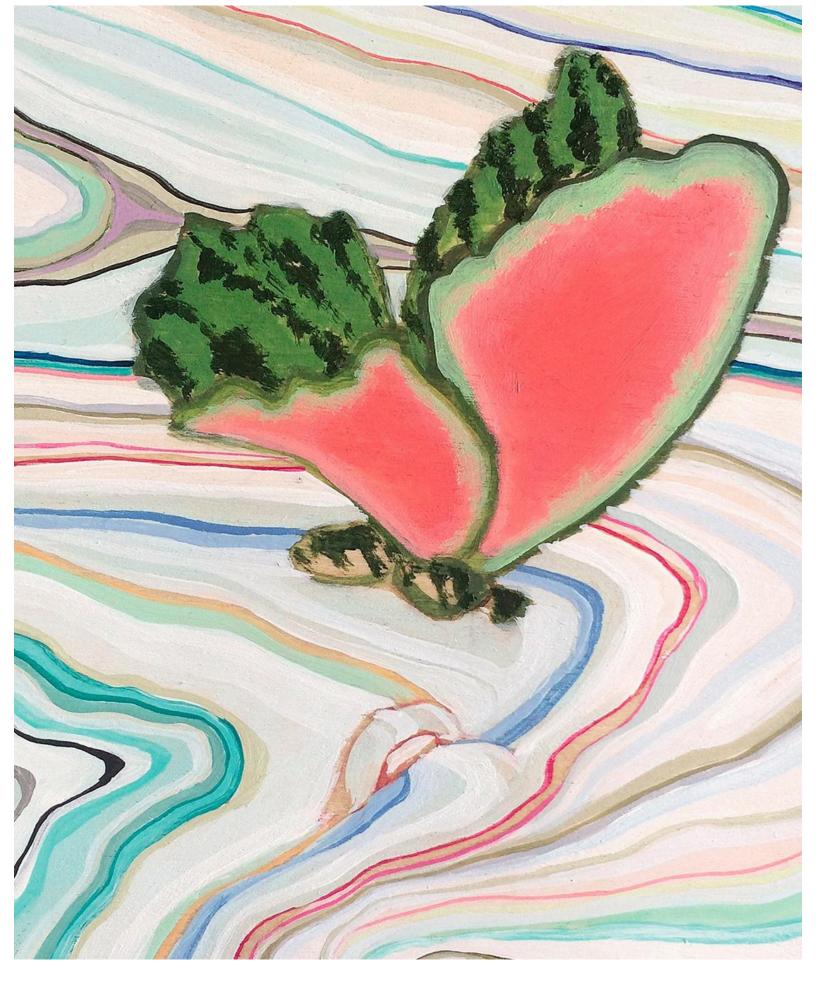
**STEP 3** I make my outside edges light, and slowly paint color gradients for the fruit moving to a darker pink in the middle, just like on a real watermelon. I blend in white and a bit more coral to get this lighter pink. I decide to make the background of the painting swirls of color, so I fill most of it in before I tackle the rest of the butterfly. It's okay for the background to

bleed over your subject's lines. Remember this is the first layer, and you'll add in more layers to cover it all up. You are just "roughing in" color at this point.



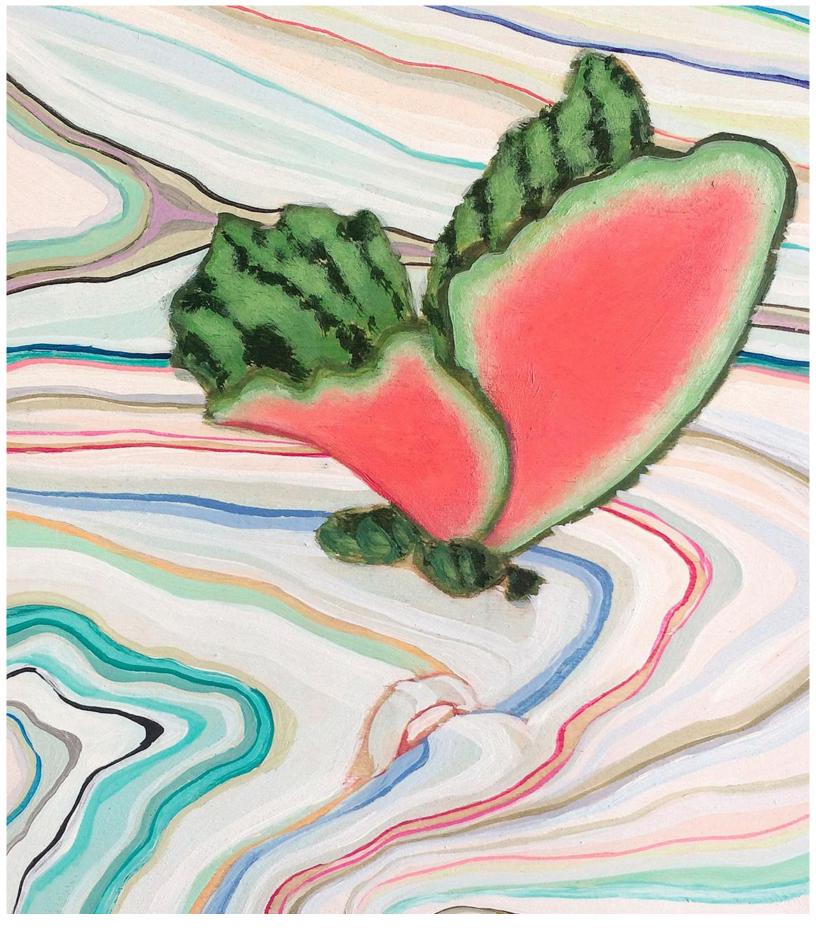
**STEP 4** At this stage, it's all about defining more of the textures. Watermelon rinds are not always solid green; the pattern is almost like messy green zebra stripes. Photo reference is good for this step! It's not cheating, but a good art hack! I add in pale green on the inner line of the watermelon. I then fade it into the pink (so I don't make it too thick). I use round-

tipped brushes for the blending. It makes it easier to contour the edges of the wings!



**STEP 5** I add a dark shade of green. For the best contrast, I add a bit of yellow to the dark mix so that it contrasts well against the neutral green of the rest of the rind. I also add it to

the same stripes on the body of the butterfly.



**STEP 6** I add some lighter greens on the rind for highlights. Watermelons are not glossy, but they do have a semisheen, so I make sure to add that to the wings. I want to re-create the texture of the pink watermelon, which is slightly grainy, so I use a round-tipped brush to add in lighter colors by dabbing softly.



**STEP 7** What's watermelon without seeds? I use Payne's gray and Hooker's green to make my seed color. I add in the seeds sparsely and outline them with a light pink blend that

roughly approximates the rest of the pink. I also add darker pink tones near the seeds for more depth.



**STEP 8** I create more depth in the wings by filling in darker green tones near the edges. This will also help the pink wings to pop more. Outline the wings with a warmer green tone; the vibrancy of a saturated dark tone will make the wings really stand out.



**STEP 9** To round the watermelon edge, I blend in slightly darker and cooler pink tones. I also add a bit of magenta to cool it off. Then I contour the edge with magenta. The body should stand apart from the wings, so I fill it with darker green tones.



**STEP 10** I continue to add depth to the body of the butterfly. In order to give it a round look, I make the edges of the body darker and the center lighter. Doing so gives me the rounded effect that I want.



**STEP 11** The legs of the butterfly should be thin and elegant, so I use my liner brush and a dark green to create long thin lines for its legs. If you are hesitant to make any mistakes with the legs, I recommend using a light blue first to make your lines. Then go over them with

the darker green. I add tiny little feet and keep the legs straight. I make sure the antennae are curved and longer than the legs. I like to keep the anatomy of the butterfly as accurate as I can so it really twists the viewer's mind and makes them fall in love with the idea of a *real* watermelon butterfly.



**STEP 12** For the final step, I put in the details for the butterfly's eye and body. To give contrast and depth, I use a greenish-blue highlight. I blend this along the body and eye very subtly. Don't overdo it! Then I add a lowlight for even more depth. To achieve this effect, I

use a yellowish green that I blend with the underbelly of the butterfly. I add one last contour on the wings, using a transparent color, in this case quinacridone gold. That additional color distinguishes the one wing from the other and makes them pop, adding to the 3D effect.

Now that I'm all done, I'm craving a tasty treat! It's time for some real watermelon! I wonder if my butterfly friend will come back and join me for a tasty little dessert on my balcony and share a patch of sunlight with me?



# <sup>11</sup> BLACK AND WHITES: PAINT DRAWING

I am a huge fan of manga. Anyone who has ever read manga knows that in Japan manga is printed in black and white. As my career as a painter and manga artist developed, I decided to combine my passion for black-and-white art with my paintings. I love experimenting with different techniques and styles. Thus was born my new style of "paint drawing"—a unique style of painting that uses acrylic black paint and canvases. I call it paint drawing because most people who see my black-and-white paintings mistake them for pen drawings! I feel so excited when I tell them it's actually paint on canvas. They just can't believe it! My first painting in this style was a Helmetgirl that I called *Rocket*. She is currently hanging in my apartment and is one of the only paintings that I've decided never to sell. *Rocket* became a milestone in my career, and I wanted to have her with me as a reminder that art is limitless. Don't ever put yourself in a box. Let your creativity find new and exciting ways of expressing itself!

Although the technique is simple, mastering it can be difficult. It requires patience and a steady hand. It takes time to train your hand so it is steady, so don't rush yourself. Have a cup of tea, put on some classical music, and relax while you paint. Or you could paint like Zu does and listen to sexy vampire audiobooks while you're working.

#### Tip

If you dip your brush into the water, make sure that you shake it off and remove any extra water on the handle or bristles, or else that water will run down your brush and drip onto your painting.

### SURFACE PREPARATION AND UNDERDRAWING

The setup for paint drawing is simple. You need a stretched white canvas or a wood panel, fluid acrylic black paint, and your thinnest brushes. Stretched canvases are often covered in dust or are otherwise dirty from sitting on shelves. As a result, priming them with a couple layers of titanium white acrylic paint is necessary to smooth out the surface, as well as to give you a nice clean canvas to work on.

#### WHITE WASH

I recently began using wood panels for my black-and-white paintings. To prepare them, I first whitewash the boards. This is a simple process that involves mixing titanium white paint with a lot of water (the ratio varies, but I'd say 1:1 works well). I want the wood grain to show a little bit, so I coat the board with two or three thin layers of white. It's best to let the board dry between coats, otherwise the wood may warp due to the water. The surface of the wood will become rougher the more you add water to it. Once I've let my final coat of white dry, I lightly sand the surface, either by hand or with an electric sander. Be mindful not too sand to much, otherwise you'll remove the white paint.

Once I have my canvas or panel ready to go, I lightly sketch my underdrawing on the surface with a pencil. I use a mechanical pencil with 0.7 mm lead. It's easy to erase and doesn't leave a mark behind.

#### THE PAINT DRAWING PROCESS

Now that the drawing is finalized, it's time to start painting. Since I use only black acrylic paint for this style, all I need is my Mars black fluid acrylic, a palette, a bucket of water, and acrylic glazing medium (AGM). I water down my black paint and add just a little bit of the AGM, which will keep the paint from drying too fast.

To create the look of fine lines, it's best to get the bristles of your brush as smooth and slick with paint as possible. I swirl my brushes with water and paint, coating them thoroughly. Then I twirl and stroke the brush on the palette a few times to get excess paint off of it. It's important to have smooth lines, because any excess paint will glob and ruin your linework. And only Zu likes blobs of paint in his work!



Ha! Bet you thought that this was ink, didn't you? Most people think Camilla's black and white works are pen and ink, but they're acrylic! Zu and I love it when we break the news that it's him and not me. Ha ha! We fooled ya!





















#### HOW TO PAINT STRAIGHT LINES

It's a little hard to paint straight lines, but I've found a trick to it! Hold the brush by the metal tip near the bristles—doing this will give you stability and help you to maintain a steady line. Using liner brushes will also help you achieve thin and long lines. Remember, the shorter the bristle, the shorter the stroke.

The more pressure you put on the tip, the more bristles will touch the surface and create thicker lines. If you want to achieve thin lines, use a little pressure and glide the brush along the surface, pulling in one continuous stroke. You're basically pulling the paintbrush gently along the surface, so don't twirl the brush. If your brush runs out of paint, then reload it; however, do so only when needed and make sure you remove excess paint so no blobs occur.

Due to the nature of the drying time of acrylics and because there is so little paint on your brush, you'll have to dip your brush in your acrylic-paint-and-water mixture more often than with oils. It's okay to dip your brush into the water if you find that the paint is too dry. I do it a lot when I'm painting in black and white.

Trace your drawing slowly and patiently by pulling the brush along the canvas. Not all of the lines are going to be long and continuous. When you find a part of the painting that requires smaller strokes, switch to a shorter paintbrush. Use quick, light strokes for hair and textures.

I've noticed that I'm better at painting smooth lines that go from left to right. (Probably because I'm right-handed!) When I need to make a line go from right to left, I turn my canvas around and paint the lines while the image is upside down. It's fun to paint this way!

#### HOW TO PAINT OVER THE CANVAS EDGES

Painting over the edges of a canvas is something that defines my black-and-white work. I love extending the image off the sides to give it a 3D look. It's the hardest part of my black-and-white work, so if you try it, be patient and focused. I know you can do it! It's tricky, so hold the paintbrush high and slowly let the tip slide over the edge and then pull it along to complete the line.

Now, mistakes happen. Hey, no one's perfect! One time I fell asleep at my easel while I was painting and when I woke up I had a big line that ran down my painting. Yikes! Since this is a black-and-white painting, it's going to be a little more difficult to cover up mistakes. But don't panic. There are two ways to correct these oopsy-daisies!

**1. Use titanium white fluid acrylics to "white out" the mistake.** You'll need to add a few layers over the line you want to cover up because the black will show through the white paint. Just keep adding white until you can't see it anymore.

**2. Roll with it!** There are no mistakes in art, so when I accidentally add a line I didn't plan on, I just look at it as creating another element to the image. A glob becomes a petal, a line becomes a piece of hair, and so on. Any mistake becomes a part of the painting. I like to

think that those paintings are collaborations between me and the universe.

Sometimes in my paint drawings, I'll add in a spot of color. Go ahead and try that! Add a purple butterfly, a red strawberry, or even colorful dots! It's a nice contrast to have a singular color against the starkness of the black-and-white lines.



Once you've decided that enough is enough and you've painted your last stroke, let the painting dry overnight. I know that acrylic paint dries superfast and you can touch the paint and it feels dry. However, I like the paint to set overnight before I erase my pencil lines.

Thought I forgot about those, didn't you? Well, erasing your pencil lines is actually the second-to-last step. You'll need your white eraser. (Remember to never, ever, ever use the pink erasers or black ones or any eraser with color on your white canvas; there is a big chance that your pretty eraser will leave a streak of color, and you don't want that!) Lightly and carefully erase any pencil marks that you see. Don't press too hard—you don't want to ruin the white! Dust off the eraser bits and look at your painting. If you love it and are ready to seal it in all its glory, then take the final step and varnish your painting!

Voilà! You've now learned how to paint draw. I hope you enjoyed the lesson. Remember that learning techniques takes time and that practice makes perfect!





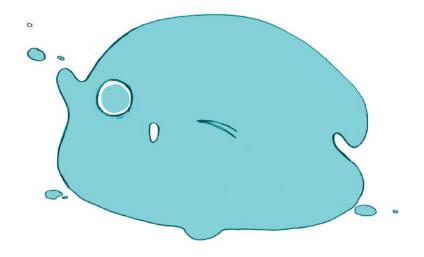
## <sup>12</sup> PASSION TO PROFESSION

Wanna know a secret? As much as I loved art, I never planned on being a painter. Instead, all I wanted was to be was a manga artist. Oh, sure, when I was a kid I wanted to be a Disney animator, but turns out, I wasn't very good at animating. In college, I developed my drawing skills. From 1998 until 2004, I focused only on my comics career. That is, until one fateful day in 2005 when I stepped inside The Ayden Gallery in Vancouver, British Columbia. My life was never the same afterward! Up until that point I'd only drawn my manga inspired characters but never painted them. At the gallery owner's suggestion I put down my pencil and picked up a paintbrush. I had nothing to loose, no harm, no foul. What followed would redefine my entire life. I never imagined that I could create an entirely new kind of painting style based on my manga work. I not only found that I loved to paint, but it led to me becoming part of a movement greater than I could ever have imagined.

In my career, I've been privileged to work with such companies as Disney, Hasbro, Dark Horse, Image Comics, and Boom! Studios. It's been an honor to work with these great companies. Each one presented a new challenge and collaboration that made me a more accomplished artist. I've shown alongside great artists like Audrey Kawasaki, Greg Simkins, Glenn Barr, Travis Louie, and many more. It is the greatest honor to exhibit next to artists that I admire and look up to.

Over the years, I've spoken to thousands of people—one-on-one and in giant rooms filled with hundreds of individuals. I've painted all over the world—on stage, in galleries, at the Vancouver Winter Olympics, and in clubs. Even if I'm a little nervous—okay, a lot nervous—I have always pushed myself to do it, no matter how much my knees wobbled. I know that many artists can be shy and quiet, reserved or introverted. Believe me, I'm like a hermit most of the time! So it's okay if you aren't the greatest public speaker, you don't have to be.

I've stumbled along the way. I've struggled, and ultimately succeeded in doing what I love to do.



Don't let success get to your head—nobody likes an egomaniac—and don't let failure get you down. Don't tell Camilla that I told you this, but she failed color theory in college! Shocking, I know, but just look at her now! No road bump stops the Camzilla!

### **MY ART EVOLVES**

As an artist, I've learned over the years that I have a lot to offer others and that I also still have a lot to learn. Even as I teach you my techniques, I will continue to grow and develop skills. I find that with each new painting I create, my art evolves. Art is in a constant flow; you'll never stop changing and shifting. Over time, you'll see that even my art—from my first paintings to my newest works—has altered. Don't be discouraged if you don't like your first painting. I didn't like mine! There are still paintings I create that I dislike, and others that I love. Remember, we are our own worst critics! Power through the tough times. If you hate a painting you've done, set it aside and start anew. It's okay to fail, just as long as you don't give up! It's taken me years to develop my style and skills, so give yourself time to mature as an artist.

It's important to push yourself, to break out of your comfort zones. I do this with my paintings, with my career, and with my life in general. It's a great way to live, and it allows you to grow. Be uncomfortable—that's when you learn something new.



## HOW I LEARNED TO LOVE PAINTING

So how did I go from learning how to paint to becoming a professional painter? I'd taken a lot of classes and courses on art—from fine arts to animation to illustration and design. In college, I was told that I wasn't a very good painter. It may sound crazy, but it's the truth! Even Zu will tell you, I'm not making any of it up. I'd even gotten a D in color theory. *How silly is that*? I'll be honest: I hadn't enjoyed painting up until that point. That's because I didn't like painting bowls of fruit or sailboats. I found realistic paintings boring.

Over the years, I've tried many different surfaces and types of paint, all in pursuit of finding the right combination for achieving the best results for my work. After working with acrylics and traditional oils, I discovered the Holbein Duo oils and I've never been happier to paint! It's important for me to tell you that what works for me, may not work for you. Maybe you like regular oil paints, or gouache, or watercolors—that's totally fine. The materials don't make an artist; they just help you express yourself.

I'm not in a classroom anymore, but that doesn't mean that I'm not always learning. I experiment with different mediums, paint, surfaces, and so on. It keeps me excited about the limitless possibilities for my art. Taking the lessons I've learned in college and from experimentation and making them part of my career is second nature. I focus my time and energy training myself and honing my skills. Each new painting I do is better than the last (in my opinion anyway). Each time I paint, I grow as an artist.

Now that I'm outside of the classroom I get to make art my way. I paint whatever pops into my head—a girl with red eyes, a melting rainbow antler crown, a body made of butterflies, and so on. No more sailboats for me!

So have fun, get crazy, and try as many different media as you can in order to find the right combo for your work.

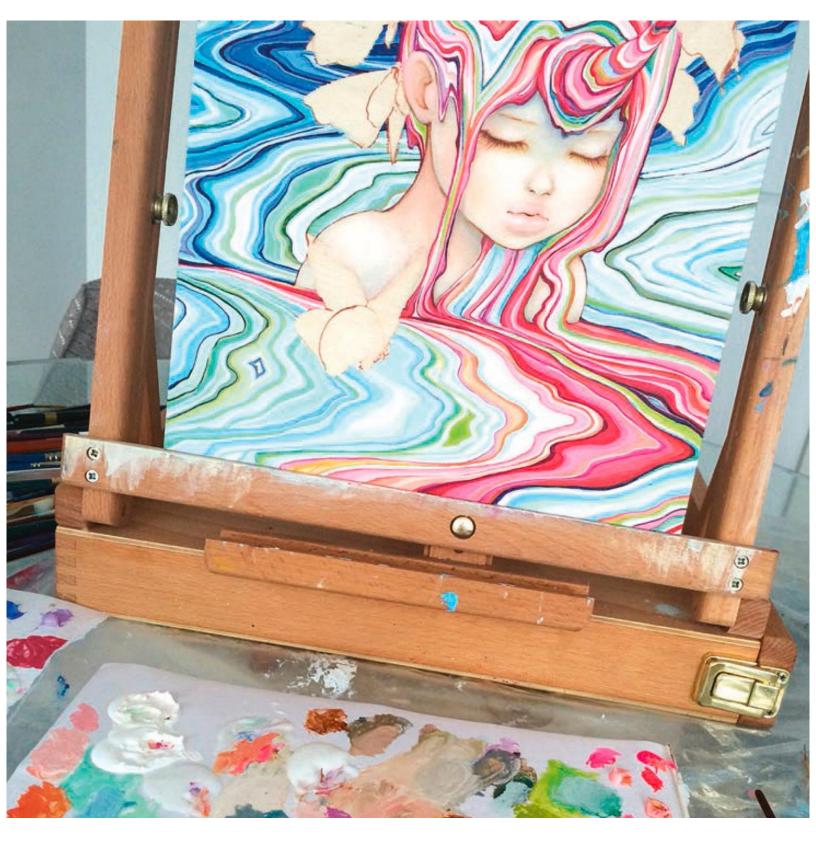
### FINDING MY CREATIVE HOME IN POP SURREALISM

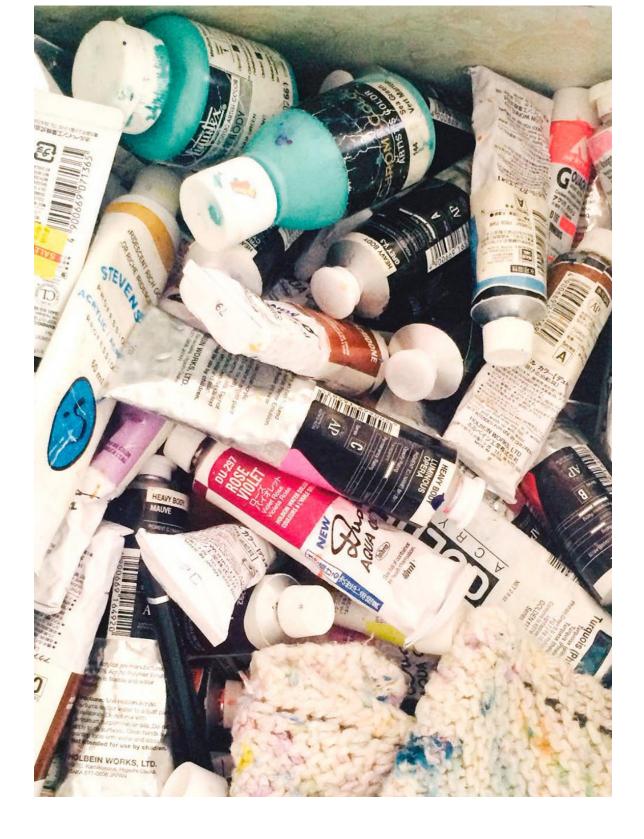
The Pop Surrealism movement was picking up steam in North America as I began my painting career. I soon found that I had a place where I could fit right in and became a part of that scene. I noticed quite quickly that the artists in the movement were just like me. They didn't want to paint in a realistic style, sticking solely to painting still life. Instead, these artists sought to create art from a unique perspective.

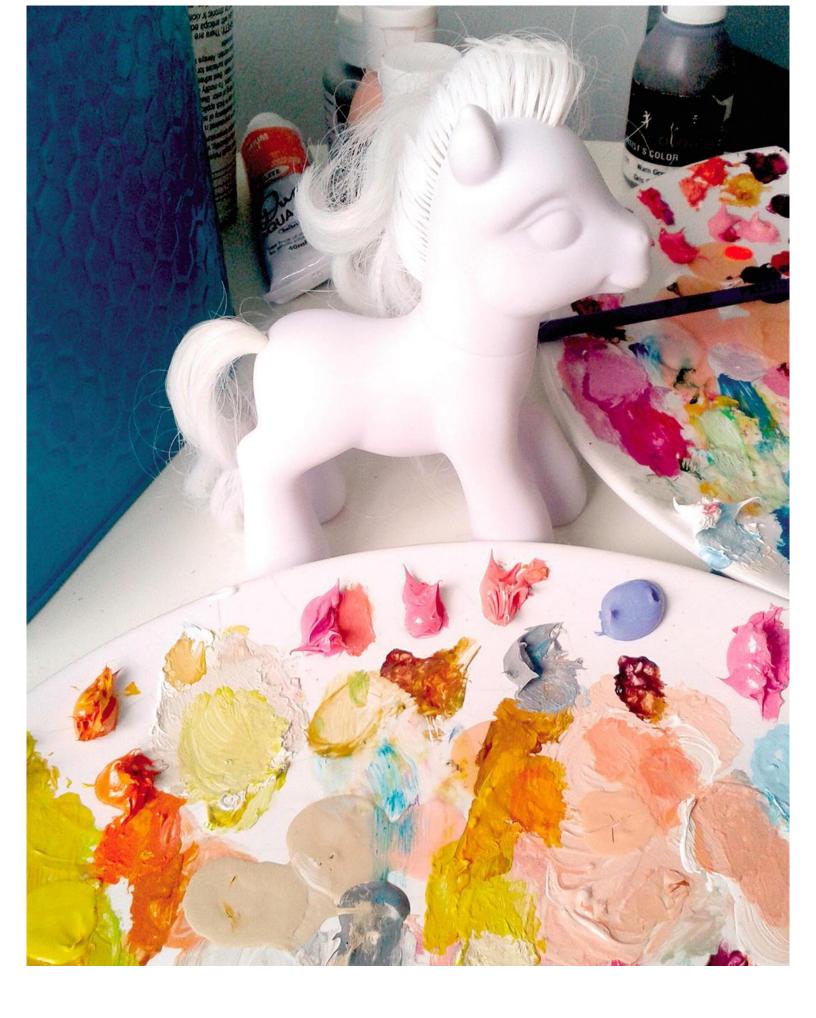
So, how did I become one of Pop Surrealism's leading ladies, you may ask? After multiple gallery shows in Vancouver, I started to work with galleries in California. As I grew into the gallery scene of North America, other galleries from all over the world began to approach me. As a result, I eventually branched out as an international artist. In the intervening years, I have changed careers, switched agents and galleries, riding the roller coaster that fate has put me on.

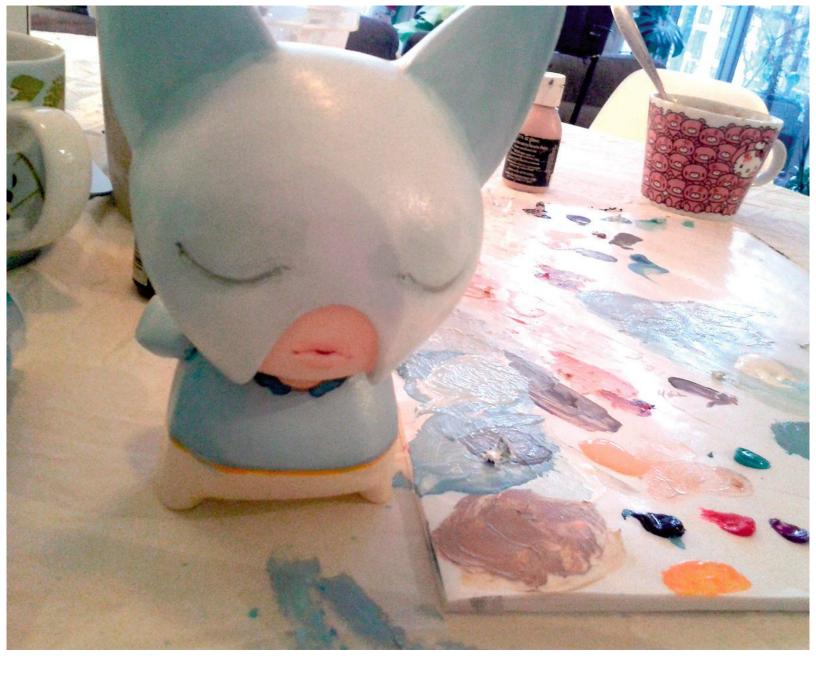
My specific path to becoming a gallery artist isn't one that can be re-created. I don't think

that any artist out there can give you a step-by-step guide to becoming a successful artist. Life is too unpredictable and changes too often for that. Change is good, though. Don't be afraid of it. Learn to flow with the universe, and when an opportunity comes along, take it! Who knows, it might just change your life in an incredible way!



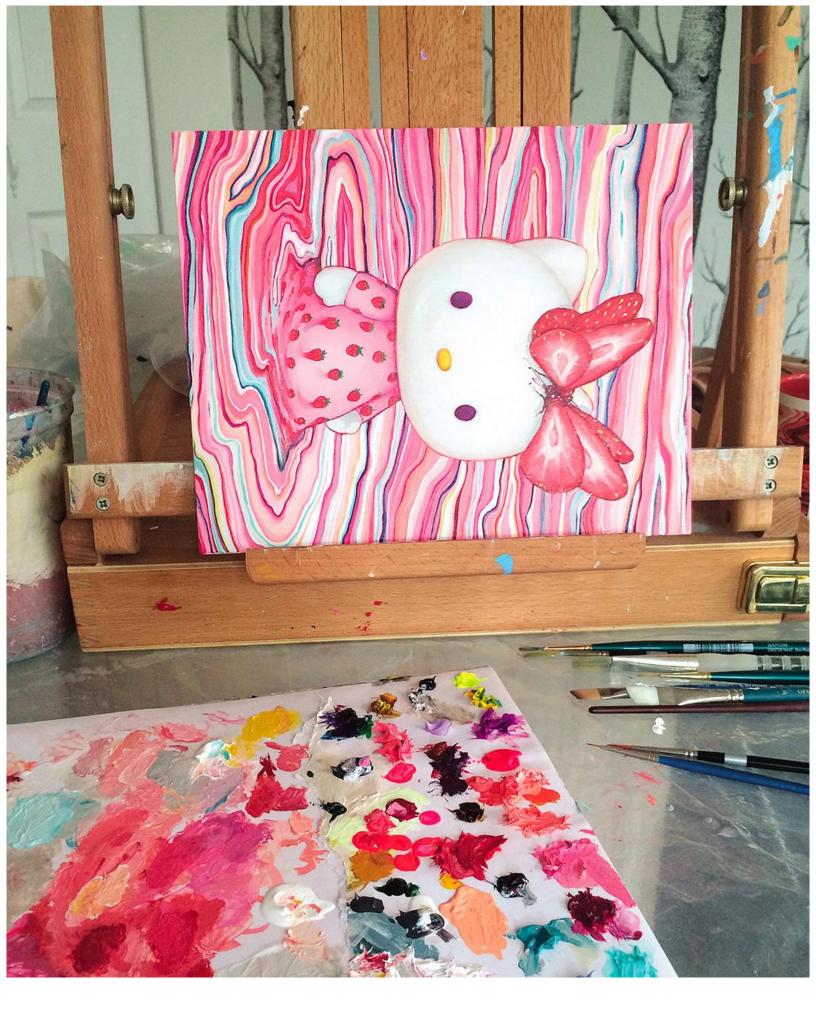














#### ON BEING A PROFESSIONAL ARTIST

I want to give you some advice on being a professional artist. Trust me, doing art as a hobby is *way* different than doing it as your job.

What's the difference between doing art as a hobby versus as a job? Here's an example: My handsome, talented, hilarious, and charming husband does art as a hobby. I do art as a career. Here is a real conversation from when we had just started dating and I had seen him working on a new painting:

Me: Hey, honey, whatcha doing?

Tristan: Painting a guy with a mask and a spear.

Me: Cool! What's it for?

Tristan: What do you mean?

Me: Well, who are you painting it for?

Tristan: I don't understand.

Me: What do you mean, you don't understand? What's it for? Where is it going? Who are you painting it for?

Tristan: I have no idea what you're talking about.

Me: Ugh! Why are you painting this?

(Moment of silence between us.)

Tristan: I'm painting it because it's fun.

It had been years since I'd done any kind of painting that hadn't gone directly to a gallery or been a commission. I had forgotten the very simple idea that art can be done out of enjoyment! I know that I'm a crazy, ambitious person, so when he said that to me, I had an epiphany. Since then, I've learned to make time for my own art and not focus on creating art for a purpose. Art is meant to be fun and expressive—so I don't let my career always dictate what I use my art for—sometimes I'll draw just for the fun of it.

That said, as a career, the art you create will not always be for yourself. Instead, it becomes a job. You will have deadlines and commitments. Even if you don't feel like painting or making art, you'll have to submit artwork. The consequences if you don't: you will lose the trust the gallery (or whomever) put in you and you might not get to show in that gallery again. Essentially, it's career suicide to miss your deadlines. Think about it before you decide that you want to do art as a career. Yes, art is awesome and fun. I love painting and drawing; however, the hours are long, the energy you need to put into the artwork is intense, and

everything you create is subject to public scrutiny.

In the real world, you are graded by the public and, even worse, by yourself. We artists are our own worst enemies. It's totally normal for most artists to hate their own work. But to sustain a career, no matter what, you have to deliver the artwork.

As a professional I focus my time and energy training myself and honing my skills and managing my time so I meet my deadlines.

### APPROACHING GALLERIES AND GETTING STARTED

Here is what you'll need to approach galleries and get started: a working and updated website, a portfolio with at least ten of your newest paintings/artworks, and a good attitude. I can't tell you how many times I've met artists who showed me their artwork, but had a bad attitude. No matter how good the art was, I didn't care, because the artists were kind of jerks. No one wants to work with jerks. Be yourself, be friendly, and be confident (but not cocky). Then present your artwork. Phone the gallery ahead of time and make an appointment. Most galleries don't like being surprised because they are very busy. Work with them and be respectful of their time and yours.

### PRESENTING YOUR PORTFOLIO

Your portfolio is very important. It says everything about you as an artist, a person, and as a professional. Don't walk in with a huge clunky case that is awkward to handle and has loose papers. Have a well-sized case with excellent printouts or photos of your work arranged neatly in pages. The gallery has to see your best work—only show the most recent pieces. Include only the kind of work that you want to do as a career. Don't put in your sketches or life drawings if you want to hang your oil paintings in the gallery. Show only what you are proud of and never, ever make excuses for your artwork. Remember you are trying to convince them to show your art. Never be negative and point out your own mistakes. Saying things like "Oh I didn't really have time to do that part" or "I might have used this color instead, but..." will make you come across as incompetent and not really ready to be a professional. Present your portfolio proudly.

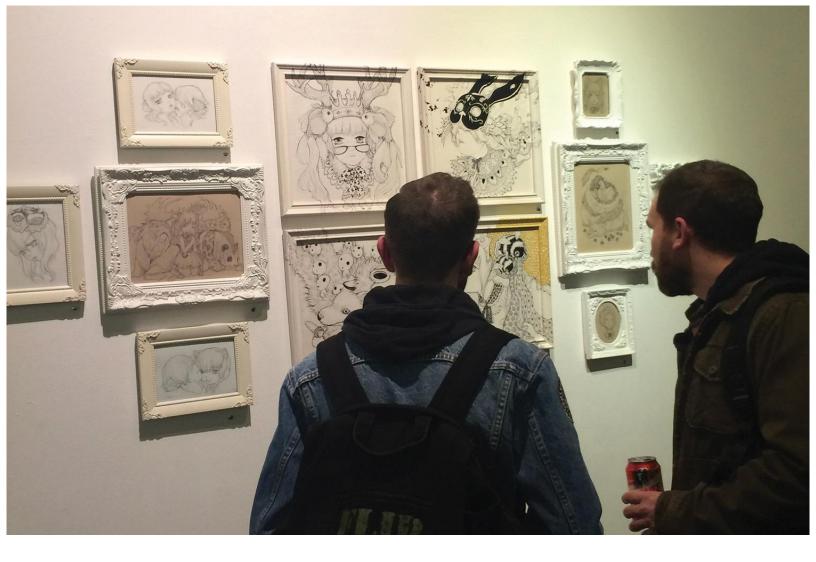
When gallery owners review your portfolio, be attentive and listen to what they have to say. These people have experience you don't, and they have a lot of information to share. But here's some advice from a working artist: don't let them tell you what you should be painting. Take that advice with a grain of salt. Portfolio reviews are critiques meant to see if you are the right fit for the gallery and to give you friendly advice. What they are not is a criticism of your art. Keep that in mind. As much as you want to have your work in a gallery, you don't want to compromise your artistic integrity by creating art that doesn't come from your soul. I have turned down opportunities from clients and galleries when I didn't want to change my style to suit their needs. I'm telling you now: don't let someone else compromise your art! You'll find the right fit elsewhere.

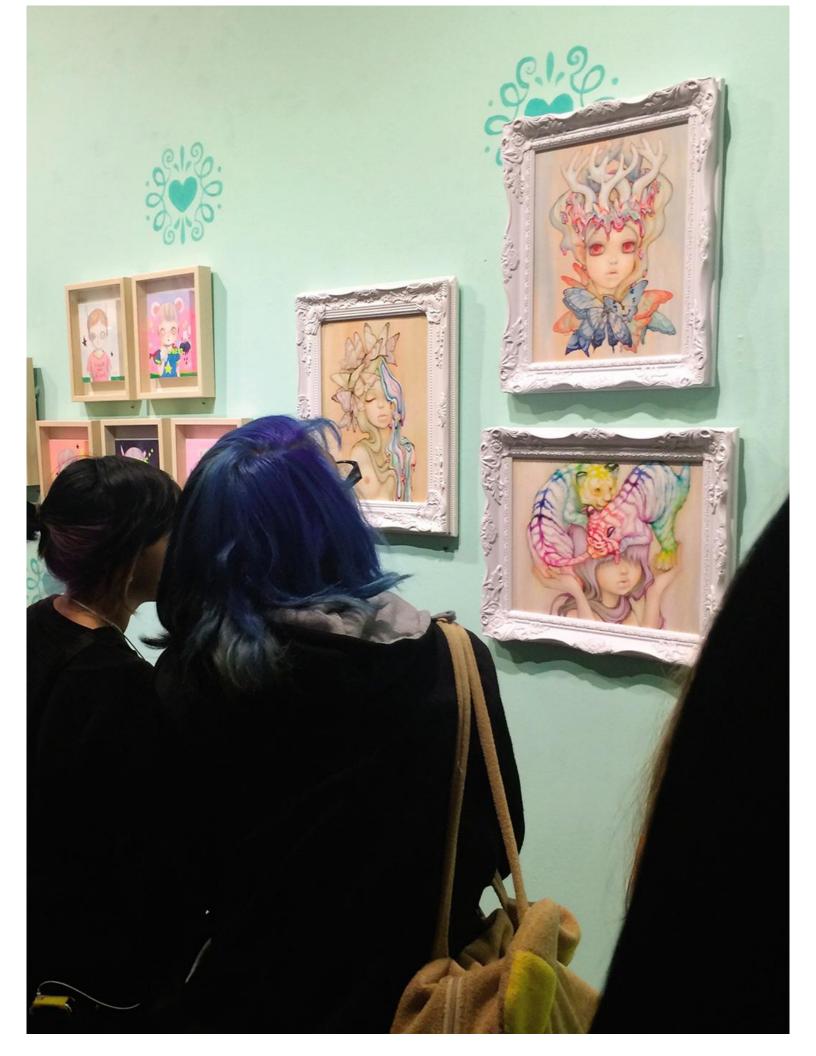
## **DEALING WITH REJECTION**

Nothing stings more than when someone doesn't like your artwork. For an artist, that artwork is part of you—it's your soul. It's a picture of who you are. When someone rejects that, it feels like he or she is saying that you as a person are no good. But guess what, guys? That's so not true!

Ready for some big advice? Art is subjective. Not everyone is going to like what you make. How many people here like the color blue? Who thinks that Brad Pitt is good looking? Who loves cats more than dogs? What about carrot cake, do you like it? For every person who says yes, someone else will say no. Nothing in life is unequivocally and unanimously liked or loved. *Nothing!* Don't be surprised if there are people out there who don't like your artwork. It's nothing personal. Humans are just wired to be different. We have different tastes, different likes and dislikes. If you show the world something you made, you'll receive a wide range of reactions.

Here is how I cope with rejection: *I ignore it.* I would rather focus on the people who like my art and give my energy and attention to those people who give me their support and love. If I get a negative response, I don't care. Instead, I remember the hundred people who said how much they loved the art, and forget about the one person who didn't. Life is too short to focus on the bad parts. So, if a gallery rejects you, move on to another one. I heard that multiple major Hollywood studios and production companies rejected *Twilight* before Summit Entertainment decided to make the movies. Imagine that! Half a dozen companies rejected one of the most successful film series in history. Don't feel bad, guys. Someone will see your potential and maybe you'll be the next major artist to hit the galleries since Dalí.

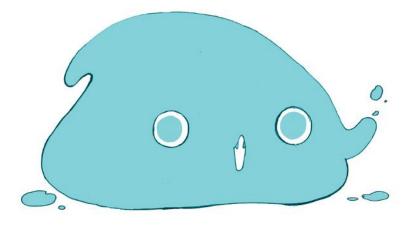






Ooooh, I get so angry when teachers say that anime and manga aren't art! Art is art; it is subjective and diverse and can be anything you want it to be.

On the other hand, in the unfortunate event that clients are unhappy with the work, you will have to work things out with them. I can't tell you what to do, but know that clients can be hard to please. You are creating artwork *for* them and trying to create a piece that *they* are envisioning. It's hard to make something that is in someone else's head. The best way to work with a client is to establish the look early on and not improvise when creating the piece. Remember that work for clients is not the same as personal work. You can't take it personally if they ask for changes that you don't agree with. Commissioned work should still express who you are as an artist. Make changes your client wants, but don't compromise your style. It's okay for someone to ask you to paint a girl with a panda but not okay for them to ask you to paint a girl with a big nose and giant lips and a panda that's not in your style. I've had to put my foot down with clients who have asked me to alter the way I render my girls. I've said no, because what was asked for was not how I paint or did not represent who I am as an artist. In the end, things work out.



I've known Camilla for years and this girl's worked harder than most people I know. She's pulled more all-nighters than a frat house!

## VALIDATE YOURSELF

Validation is a big part of being an artist. On some level, we all seek it, whether it's from our family, our friends, or our peers. But the truth is that no one else can validate you, only you can. Don't seek someone else's approval. Create art that speaks to you and it will speak to others. If you create art because you think it's what someone else will like, or if you create it because it's popular, then you are doing a disservice to yourself and to the people who love your art. Even if you use pop culture in your art, create a piece of art that is inspired by a famous character and make it your own! That is how Pop Surrealists create themed paintings—we use the inspiration from a famous character and transform it into our own thing, instead of just generating fan art. We see our childhoods in our themes and we express them through paint. Don't let yourself get caught up in what sells—make art for the love of it!



## AFTERWORD

Congratulations! You've just crossed through the Twilight Zone that is my artistic process! Now that the veil has been lifted and I've shown you my methods, given you tips and tricks, and Zu has thoroughly harassed you, it's time for you to take what you've learned in these chapters and paint!

Don't worry. Painting isn't as scary as you might think it is. Nothing is, as compared to Zu's singing! Once you've lived through a night of karaoke with him, you'll be more courageous than Finn the Human! Give yourself time to develop your skills. Rome wasn't built in a day, and I'm sure even Leonardo da Vinci's first painting wasn't that good. Sorry Leo.

As I try to achieve greatness, I know that it will take time and practice to reach the master level. You'll see that with each new painting you create, it becomes easier and easier. Not only will your skills improve, but so will your ability to express your ideas.

Find your art mantra! "Feel what they express and express what they feel." This is my artistic motto, my guiding statement. With my art, my goal is to create an emotional engagement with the people who see it. I take a lot of that from the various anime and manga that I watch and read. Each story pulls at my heartstrings and I feel connected to the characters. I care about them, so I strive to create the same kinds of connections between my paintings and their audiences.

Look for your artistic path! Take life's experiences—whatever it throws at you, good or bad and use them as fuel for your creative fire. If you ever feel as if you are limited, take a step back and let the world surprise you. You have no idea what is out there that can inspire you. Look up when you are walking outside, say yes to things more often then you say no. Life was never lived by not doing things.

Follow your passion! Remember my saying, the one that I live by: *never regret the things that you do but those that you don't*. If I had never asked The Ayden Gallery if they wanted to see my artwork, then I may never have become a painter. Take chances!

Don't forget that art is subjective. It is a mirror in which we see the reflection of our subconscious. This may sound fancy and artsy-fartsy, but what it means is that what one person sees in a painting may not be what another person sees. Art is about the person who is looking at it. It's amazing what people can see in your artwork, it can surprise you and even inspire you!

If I can give you one last parting piece of advice it is this: paint for the love of painting. Don't create artwork that you think others will like or copy what another artist is doing. In the end, the art that you need to make should come from you and only you.



Later peeps! Time for Cammy to paint and for me to practice!

CAMILLA d'ERRICO has gained wide acclaim for her illustrative work, and has been nominated for the Joe Shuster Award and the Will Eisner Award. She has worked with Dark Horse Comics, Image Comics, Hasbro, Disney, Sanrio, and Neil Gaiman, and created her own cult-sensation properties Tanpopo and Helmetgirls. She is also well known for her melting rainbow, big-eyed girl oil paintings, which have made her a hit in the international Pop Surrealism movement. Visit her at camilladerrico.com.

## ART CREDITS

fm01.1: No Ordinary Love, 16" x 20", oil on wood, 2009 ded.1: Zebramilk, 15" x 30", oil on wood, 2010 toc.1: Princess Tickle Trunk, 11" x 14", oil and acrylic on wood, 2014 frw.1: Greg "Craola" Simkins, The Wanderers, 20" x 16", acrylic on canvas, 2014 itr.1: Dream Melt, 11" x 14", oil and acrylic on wood, 2012 p01.1: Lady Fan Tail, 12" x 12", acrylic on wood, 2014 1.1: My Little Moonberry, 18" x 24", oil on wood, 2013 1.2: Travis Louie, Jeff and Jim, 8" x 10", acrylic on board, 2013 1.3: Xiomara, 18" x 24", acrylic on canvas, 2010 1.4: Hikari Shimoda, Children of This Planet #17, 18" x 21", oil on cotton, 2013 1.5: Tara McPherson, Crystal Waterfall, 30" x 18", oil on wood, 2013 1.6: Travis Louie, Oscar and the Truth Toad, 16" x 20", acrylic on board, 2011 1.7: Audrey Kawasaki, Possessed, 24" x 28", oil, acrylic, and graphite on wood, 2012 2.11: Canadian Tiger, 18" x 24", oil on wood, 2010 5.1: Hourglass Game, 11" x 14", oil on wood, 2013 6.1: Unpredictable Gravity, 18" x 24", oil on wood, 2014 6.3: Loveless Bird, 18" x 24", oil on wood, 2008 6.4: Love Love Hime, 12" x 24", oil on wood, 2008 6.5: Fukurou, 11" x 14", oil on wood, 2013 6.6: Neapolicorn, 11" x 14", oil and acrylic on wood, 2014 7.1: Queen Beeatrice, 10.5" x 15.4", oil on wood, 2015 7.3: Where the Wild Things Squirm, 16" x 20", oil on wood, 2010 7.4: Hootie, 5" x 7", graphite on paper, 2013 8.1: Caged, 11" x 15.75", oil on wood, 2015 8.2: Cheek Tickle, 12" x 16", acrylic on canvas, 2008 8.3: Purple Tear Girl, 12" x 16", oil on wood, 2008 8.5: Gentle Fawns, 18" x 24", oil on wood, 2009 8.6: Silence of the Lamb, 12" x 24", oil on wood, 2009 9.14: Glow Friends, 12" x 24", oil on wood, 2008 9.16: Marshland Priestess, based on Calypsu from Sky Pirates of Neo Terra, 16" x 20", oil on wood, 2013 p01.1: Suckerpunch, 12" x 16", oil and acrylic on wood, 2014

p01.3: Little Dressup Doll, 16" x 20", oil on wood, 2008

p01.4: My Milkfall, 11" x 14", oil on wood, 2013

10.2: The Hourglass Game, 11" x 14", oil on wood, 2013

10.3: Princess Tickle Trunk, 11" x 14", oil and acrylic on wood, 2014

- 10.21: Kitty Titties, 12.5" x 20", oil and acrylic on wood, 2015
- 10.39: Strawberry Whispers, 11" x 14", oil and acrylic on wood, 2012
- 10.53: Peaks of Paradise, based on Rena from Sky Pirates of Neo Terra, 16" x 20", oil on wood, 2011
- 10.66: The Dandelion Crown, based on the series Tanpopo, 16" x 20", oil on wood, 2013
- 10.80: Mr. Velvedeer, 8" x 10", oil on wood, 2015
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- 10.94: Sea to Sky, 8" x 10", oil on wood, 2014
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- 11.6: Rocket Girl, 16" x 20", acrylic on canvas, 2008
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