



THE LITTLE EMPOWERED MERMAID

Ever After 2016

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Hello fabulous creative friend!

Welcome to my fairy tale art lesson:

'The Little Empowered Mermaid'

I love drawing & painting mermaids and upon exploring the original story, I wanted to give the little mermaid a bit more **power** and **strength**! When I started studying the original (and Disney) stories, I was struck by how much the little mermaid seemed to need *external* 'things' to make her happy such as: a prince, to be human, a soul. For her I wished a sense of 'happiness' and 'inner peace' without needing & searching for other things 'over there' that might make her happy.



I really had this urge to give her more empowerment. I also noticed how there were several other female characters in the story (her 5 sisters and the sea witch) and I liked the idea of '*finding strength in divine sisterhood*'. So instead of pitting the sea witch *against* the mermaid (as they do in the Disney version), I wanted them to be friends.

I ended up drawing the mermaid with a pet octopus (representing the sea witch), 5 stars in her hair (representing her 5 sisters) and a seahorse (representing equality and balance - because it's the male seahorses that carry the babies).

I hope you like my spin on this story and I look forward to seeing your mermaid painting!

TAM XOX :)





SUPPLIES USED THIS SESSION

Please note, below are the supplies I used, but you can substitute the supplies if and where needed if you don't have what I've used.

- ◆ 1 Sheet of hotpressed watercolour paper (140lbs) (I used 16 x 12" but you can use any size you prefer)
- ◆ Graphite pencil (I like the graphgear 1000 by pentel 2b in lead, 0.9 width, but any graphite pencil will do.
- ◆ Watersoluble crayons (Caran D'ache Neocolor II) or any other water based paints
- ◆ Acrylics paint in skin tones
- ◆ Tombow or Aqua Markers
- ◆ Posca pens black and white (or other waterproof black/ white pens)
- ◆ Optional: colour pencils (non-watersoluble) in darker colours like aubergine/ dark red/ dark brown/ grey
- ◆ Random collage materials of choice
- ◆ Gel Medium
- ◆ White Gesso & Brayer
- ◆ Washi Tape
- ◆ Blending Stump (or q-tip)

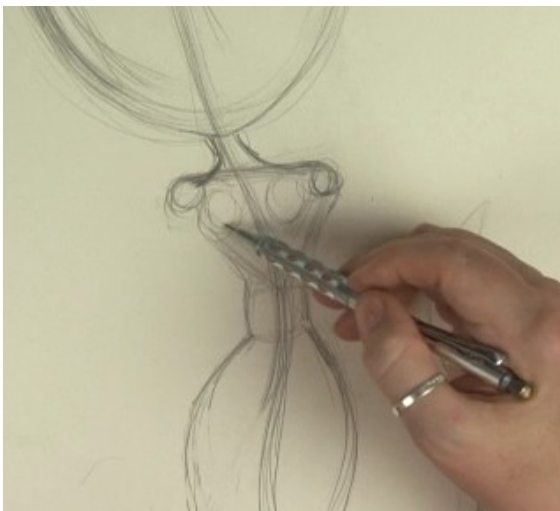


DRAWING THE MERMAID

A great way of building up a drawing, is by using large shapes and schematics first before bringing in the finer details. With a mermaid I often start off with an oval for the head, shortly followed by a 'spine' line first, I include the curve in the spine to imply a swimming mermaid in motion.



Once I have the basic shapes in place, I start refining and adding the detail.

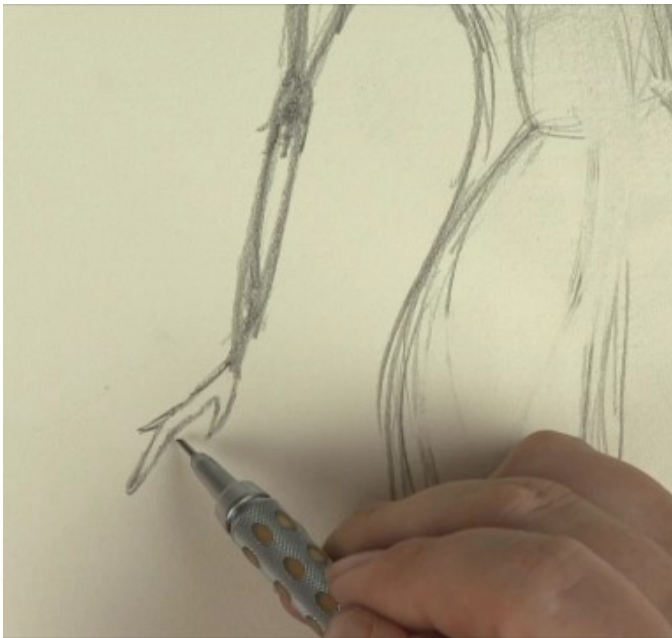


Note: breasts are not just 2 firm round circles on a lady's chest, they are often oval, hang somewhat and come out on the sides.



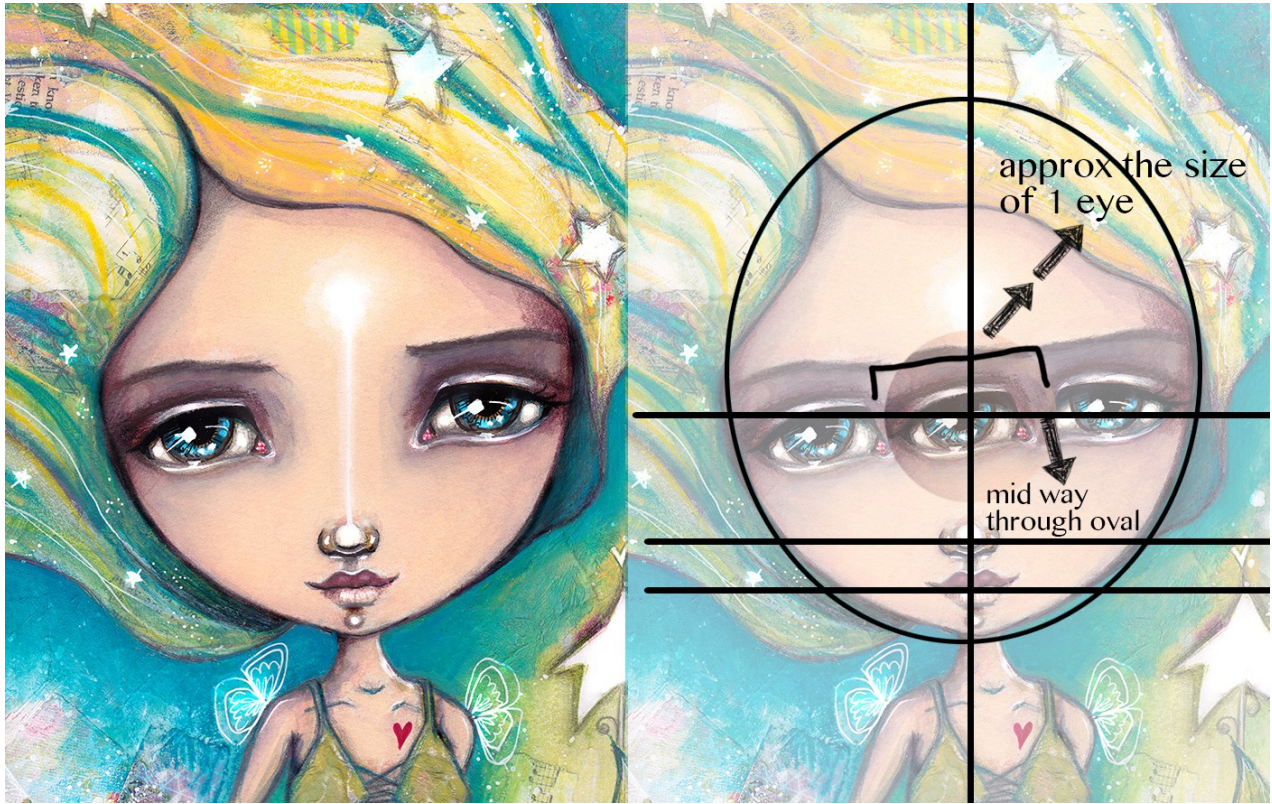
When adding shoulders and arms, it can help to work with joint points. If you struggle with those, do a google search online for human anatomy or get yourself one of those 'art mannequins' where the joints are clearly displayed.

For hands I did simple little shapes. When hands are only a small detail of a painting, I try to simplify them as much as possible, yet still make them look like believable hands:



DRAWING THE FACE

As with the body, it helps to start a face with large blocks/ guidelines first and then build up the details.



1. Start with an oval shape, sketch this in lightly, don't press your pencil down too hard, you'll want to erase quite a few of your lines later.

2. Draw a vertical line through the middle of the circle/ oval (use the guide above to show you where to place the nose).

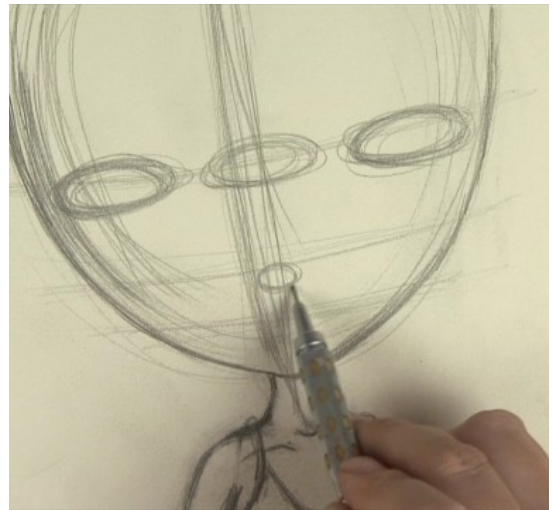
3. Draw a horizontal line mid-way down the circle (this is approx where you will place your eyes).

4. Draw another horizontal line through the middle of the bottom part of the circle/ oval (this is approx where the middle/ bottom of the nose will go).

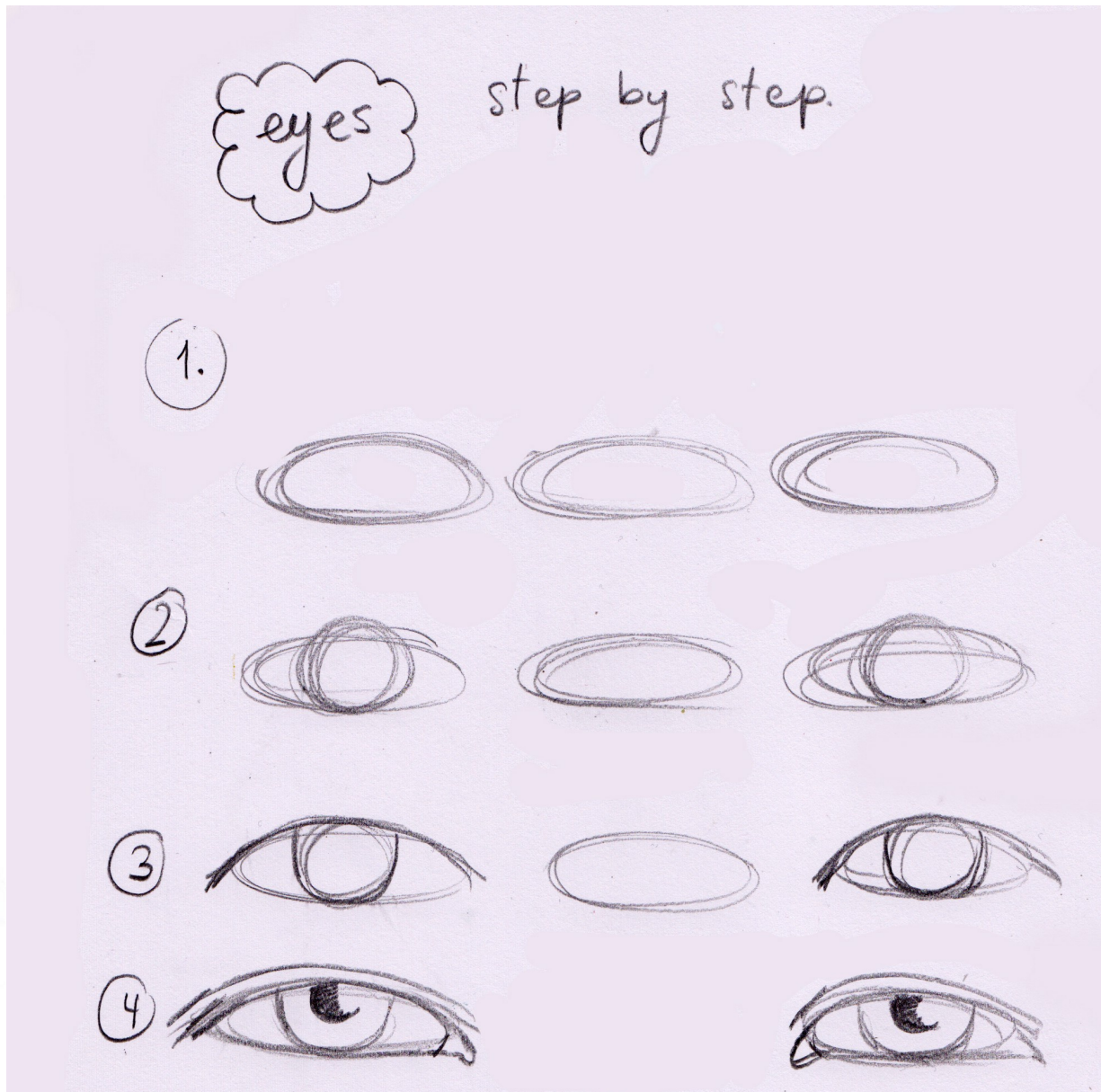
5. And again, draw another horizontal line through the bottom-bottom part of the circle/ oval (this is roughly where the mouth will end up).

6. Allow for the space of approximately 1 eye between the two eyes.

7. Depending on how stylised you're making your face, you could allow for some space on each side of each eye on this face the spaces are fairly minimal but you can play with that.



THE EYES - STEP BY STEP



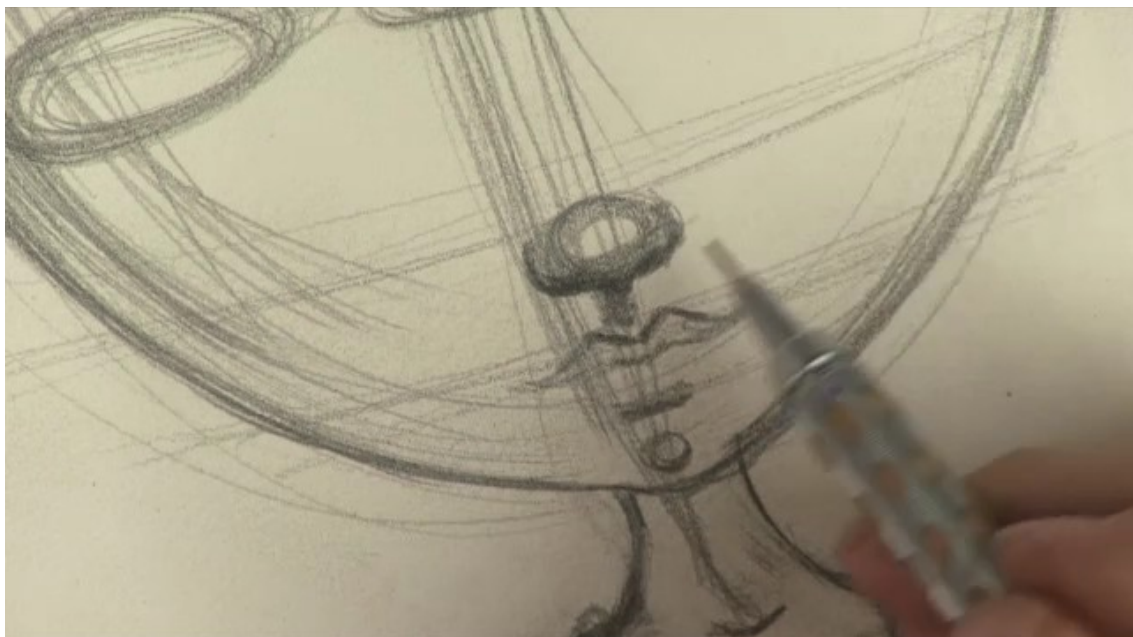
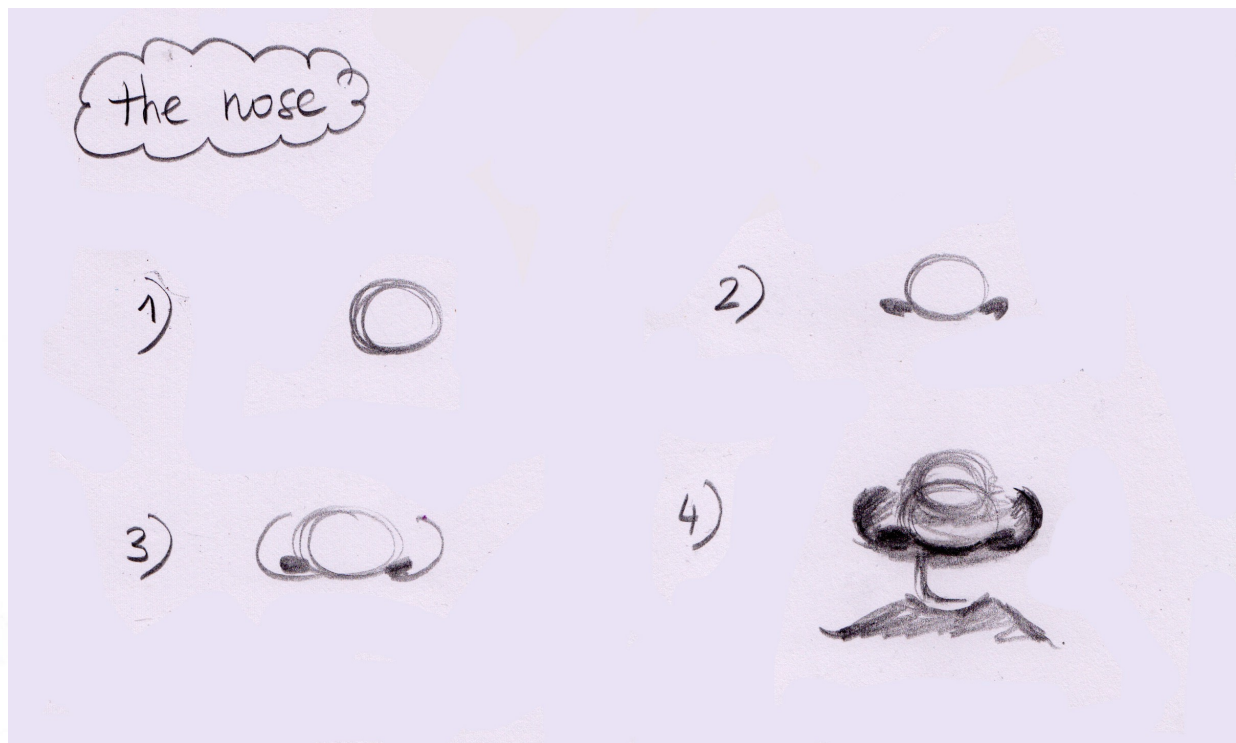
Tips on doing eyes.

- Only ever fully expose the iris and/ or pupil if you want your person to look startled, shocked or scared. To give your character a more relaxed expression, partly cover up the Iris and pupil (see in the image above).
- As a general rule, aim for the size of approx 1 to 1.5 eyes between the two eyes you are drawing. This is based on a whimsical lollipop type of face. On more realistic faces you'd aim for approx 1 eye in between the two eyes.

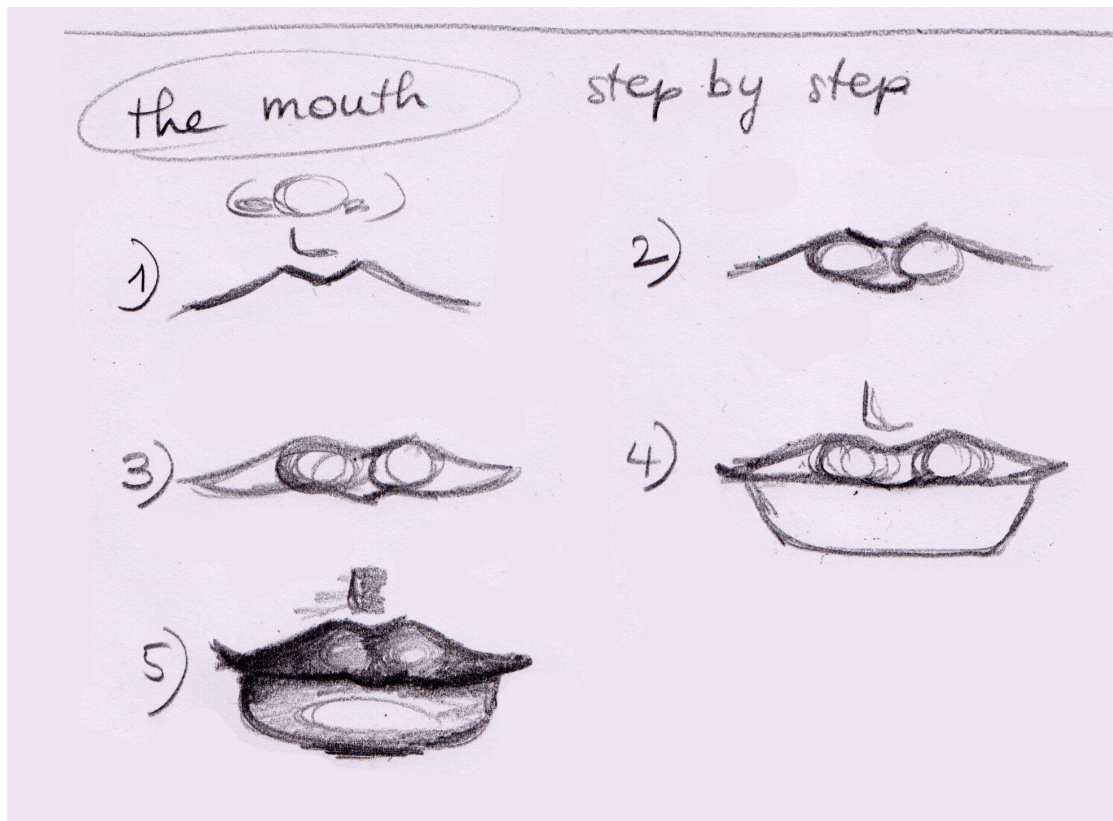


THE NOSE

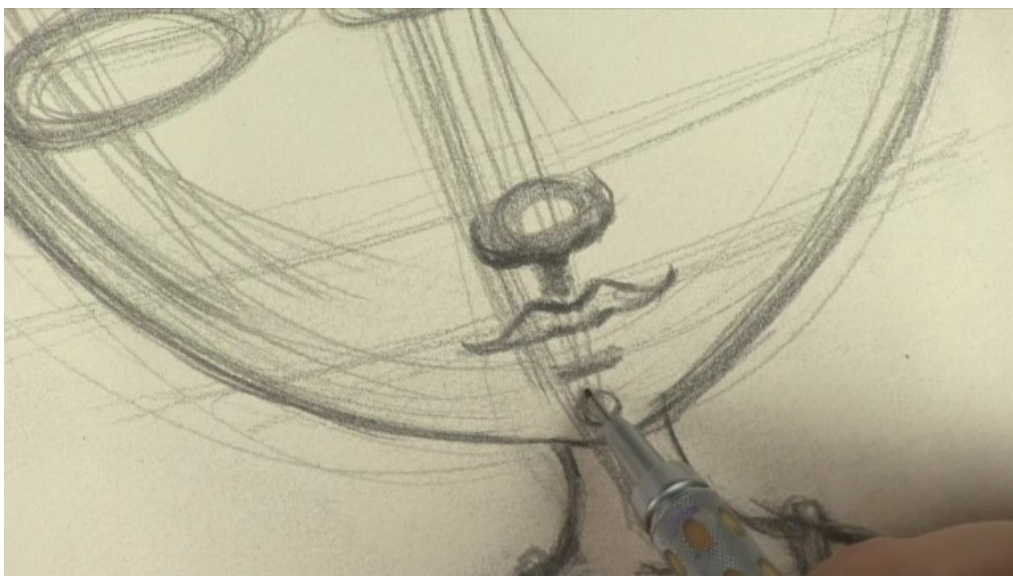
The noses on my whimsical faces are usually simple little things. I don't go into too much detail. Much of the shape of it is created through the shading. You can make your nose as simple or as elaborate as you enjoy. In the image below you can see the simple steps I take to create mine.



THE MOUTH

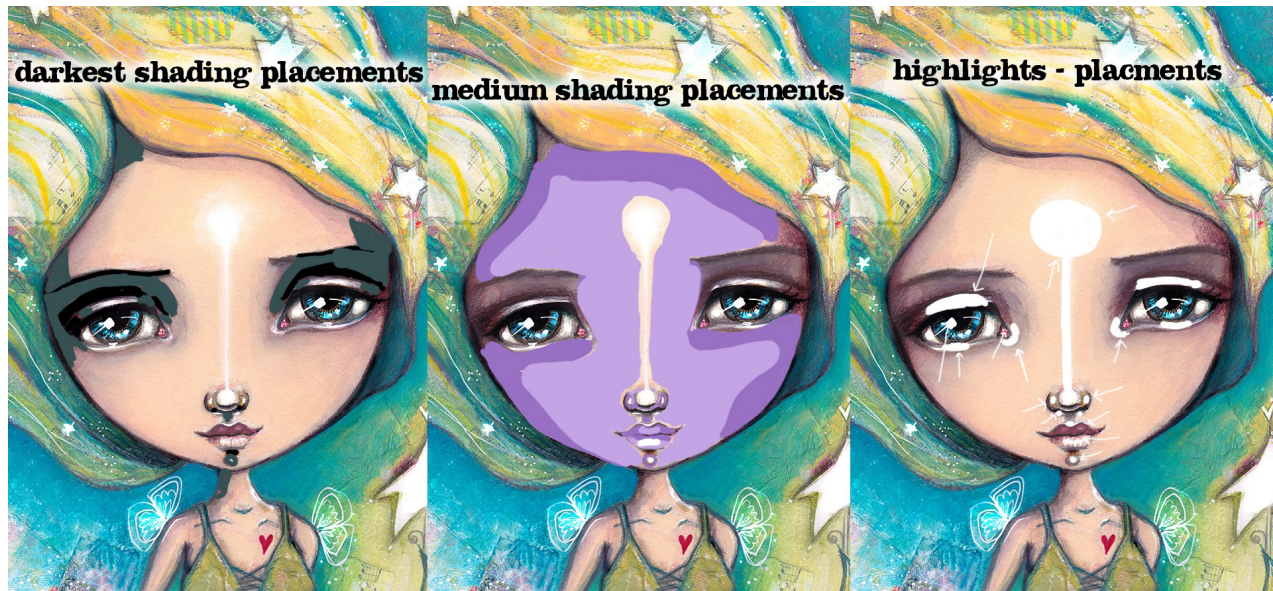


When you shade a mouth, remember that the upper lip is usually darker than the lower lip which catches the light. If you want your mouth to smile pull up the outer corners a little. Follow the easy steps above to create a simple mouth.



SHADING THE FACE

There are many ways that one can shade a face. It all depends on where you assume the light is coming from. In this painting I assume the light comes from the front. Below I've detailed where the darker and lighter shades go.



Colours & Supplies I like using for shading a light-skinned face:

I don't always use the same colours, but mostly I tend to go to the following colours & supplies:

- **Skin tone supplies and colours** I used (substitute with different brands and colours where needed, I'm only listing exactly what I used in case you are curious):
 - Caran D'ache Neocolour II watersoluble Crayons, in the following colours: salmon + salmon pink
 - Craft paint (acrylics) (Americana/ Ceramcoat): off white/ beige
 - Heavy body acrylics (Daler Rowney): flesh tint
- Colour Pencils in violet, purples, dark reds, dark browns (the brand I use are prismacolor and luminance (caran d'ache)
- I also used Derwent inkintense pencils in the colours of ink black, aubergine, reds and browns
- **For facial features** like eyes and mouth: Tombow Markers/ Caran D'ache Neocolour II watersoluble Crayons in colour of choice
- **For fine details:** Black marker with fine tip: posca or signo-uniball/ White marker with fine tip: posca or signo-uniball
- **For hair:** tombow markers/ watersoluble crayons & ink in your colours of choice (I mix several different turquoises/ light blues and yellow).

PAYING ATTENTION TO DETAIL

A face really comes to life when you pay attention to the little details. Small additional highlights, subtle gradient blending etc will add depth and intrigue to your face. So, adding little details is not something to gloss over!

Some important details to include to bring your face to life more:

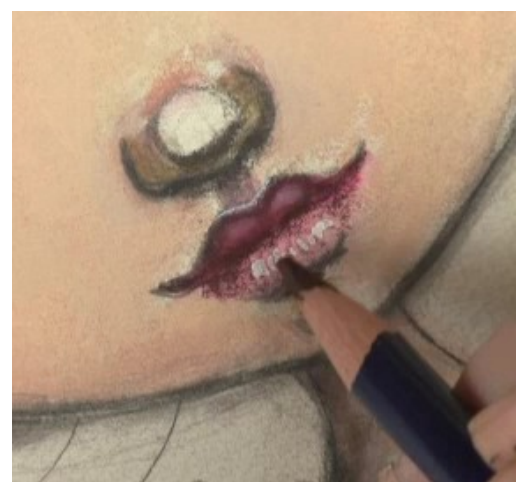
Eyes - the eyeball itself is rounded and will have a small shadow cast onto it from the upper lid. Little reflective highlights in the eyes add sparkle to your eyes. The tear duct often 'bulges out' a little and therefore catches some light, hence there is often a subtle little highlight on it. The bottom and top eyelids both tend to be lighter in the middle than on both outer parts of the lids. Inside the tear-duct too there are sometimes some tiny small reflective highlights.



Nose - Often the bits under the nostrils stick out a little and therefore catch some highlights. Also there can be a highlight right under the tip of the nose which helps with 'shaping the nose', the outer nostrils are darker and sometimes the entire nose casts a shadow onto the part above the upper lip.



Mouth - Assume the upper lip is darker than the lower one, yet there are variations of darker and lighter segments inside both lips. The two 'bulging out parts' on the upper lip that we all have on our lips can be a tad bit lighter and the bit in between them both darker. The bottom lip is lighter in its entirety but tends to be a bit darker in both corners and the bottom of it too is darker. The bottom lip is the one that has more actual bright highlights. Adding those makes your mouth 'glisten' a bit.





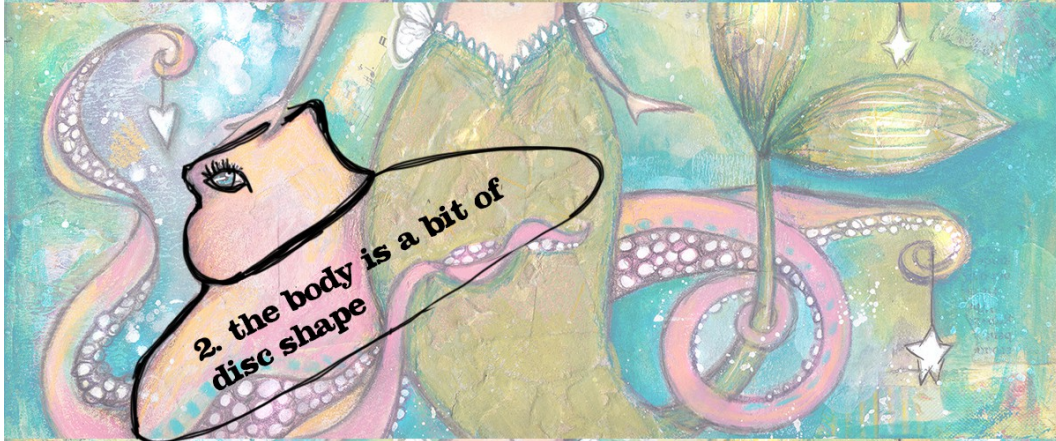
HOW TO ACHIEVE SMOOTH SHADING

The way I like creating smooth shading/ blending is by using a semi-damp brush (avoid coarse brushes) and 'scrub' your paint gradually into the area where you want the smooth shading to happen. Flatten the head of your brush against the paper and scrub gently, experimenting with adding or removing water and alternating between using acrylics and watersoluble paints.



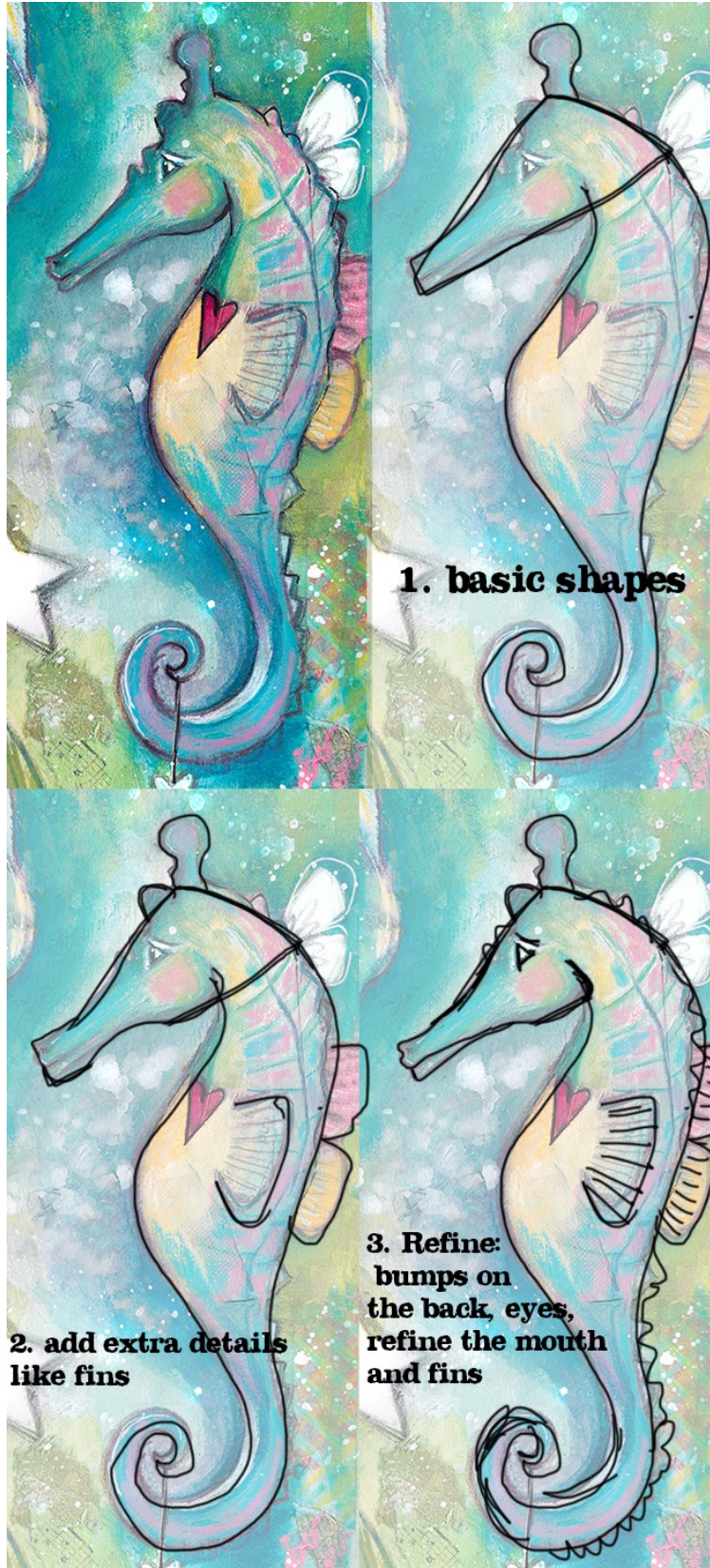
DRAWING THE OCTOPUS & SEAHORSE

Octopus' might seem complex to draw, but there are some steps to them which makes it easier.





Seahorses are sweet little things to draw:



CREATING THE BACKGROUND

Layering is a great way to make an interesting background! My usual steps are as follows:

Step 1. Choose some collage materials in the colours that will suit your overall colour scheme (for a basic introduction to colour theory refer the accompanying colour theory PDF) and glue the pieces down randomly with a gel medium or matte medium (do not use glue stick as it won't keep your collage down over time). Put some in the clothing and the hair as well as the background. Avoid the face.



Step 2. Using watercolour crayons and tombow or aquamarkers, start adding colour to the background and hair. Choose colours that go together well as per the colour theory PDF. Watersoluble crayons and markers can be activated with water and a brush.



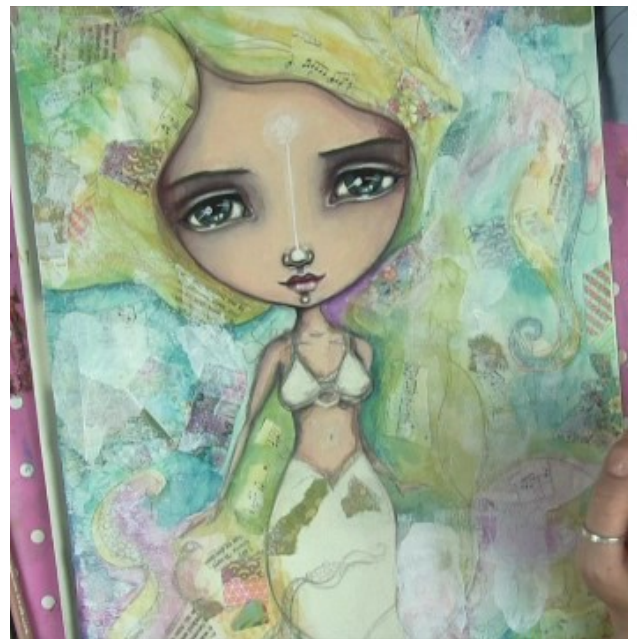
Step 3. Let your layers of colours dry and now add a layer of white gesso with a brayer. This will create a beautiful milky transparent layer. It can also pull the entire page together and mute down colours/ collage that is too 'loud' for your liking.



Brayers are LOVE! ↷



White Gesso is your friend! :-)



Note how my 2 layers pretty much go over and cover the octopus, hair and the seahorse. I plan to refine and redefine all the details in those elements in the next steps.

Step 4. I started redefining some of the drawings that I lost during the layer process using a colour pencil.



Step 5. Bring back colour in the background. Aim for good value contrast. You want to alternate between lighter and darker values to make your painting pleasing to the eye. When you add darker colours against the edge of an element it will pop more off the page and brings the element forward.

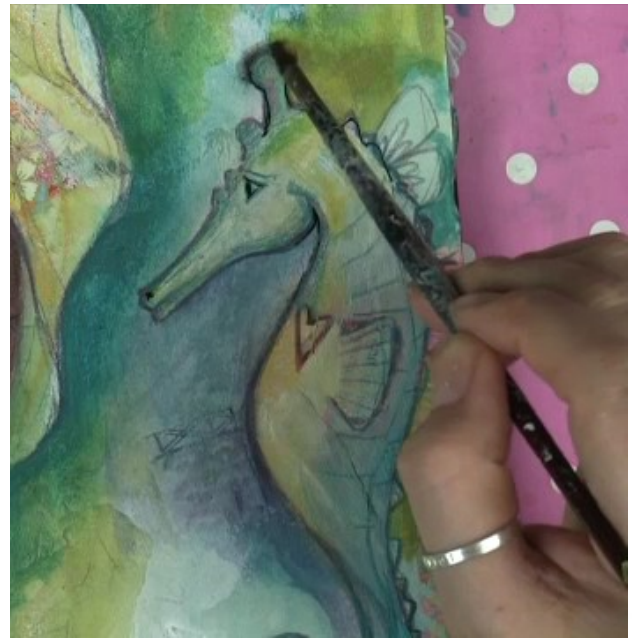


Step 6. Continue to add and take away darker or lighter colours in the background until you feel happy with the balance of contrast and colour relationships.



SHADING THE OCTOPUS AND SEAHORSE

I wanted the animals to fit within the water background so chose to give them colour that could already be found in the background. This helped with the integration of the animals. Avoid using a completely new colour or deeply dark colour for the animals unless your intention is for them to become the focal objects of the painting.





FINISHING TOUCHES/ TENDING TO

Finishing the painting with small details and 'tending to' tiny elements of the painting is one of *the* most important things for me when I create painting like this. I 'clean up' lines that are a bit wonky, add tiny details like symbols and doodles, 'neaten up' small details in the eyes or correct some of the shading etc. Don't gloss over this part, this is the phase that often pulls the entire page together! I love this time, I often refer to it as 'doodle time'! :)



Add butterfly wings/ stars/ hearts/ fishies/ seaweed or sea plants, anything that calls you!





I added the 5 stars to her hair to represent her 5 sisters.



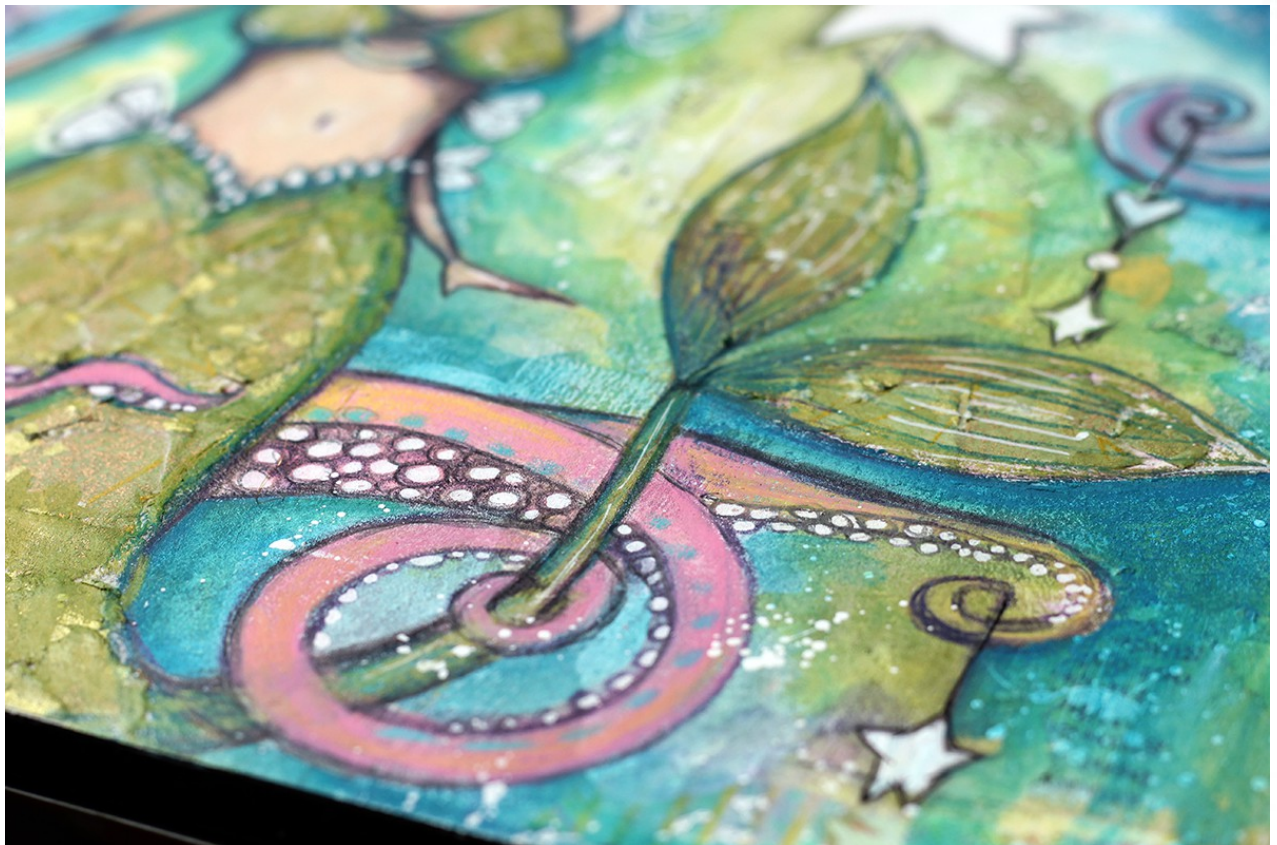
I also added white splatter to the background (making sure I protected the face and any other parts I didn't want to get splatter. (To splatter, simply use white acrylics ink, or dilute down with water some heavy body acrylics, then put some of the ink on your brush and use another stick to bang against your brush).



AND HERE IS THE FINAL PAGE:



And here some more detail shots:





Thanks for being here and trying out my suggestions. :)
I hope you had a great time creating your
own paint little mermaid painting!

I APPRECIATE YOU!

TAM

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