

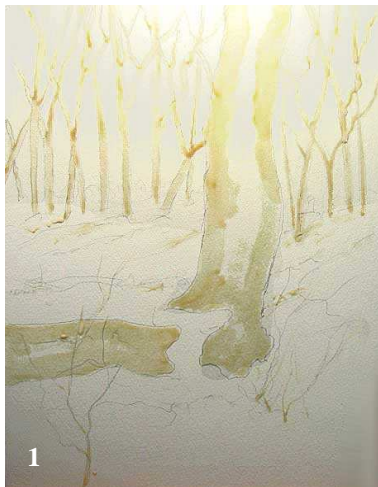
A TREE IN AUTUMN



The Sam Sidders Way

This demonstration deals with the use of liquid masking fluids to preserve whites. If you are using good quality paper and masking fluid, it is possible to assist the drying process with a hair dryer. However, it should be used on a very low heat setting and should not be held too close to the paper. Getting the masking fluid too warm can sometimes cause it to bond permanently to the paper.

I strongly recommend allowing the paint to air dry naturally between the steps of the painting process.



Step One: Using an old digital image from my collection of resource photos, I lightly drew this old dead tree and numerous trees in the background area. I roughly blocked everything in, having to extend the top height to compensate for different aspect ratios between the reference photo and the working surface. It didn't quite fit so I "fudged" it.

Once the drawing showed some possibilities the photo was no longer used. I took an old round brush, dipped it in water, then dipped it in liquid detergent and wiped this mixture off with a paper towel. I opened my bottle of Incredible White Masking fluid, removed the "clot" that had skinned over inside, stirred it and proceeded to mask out background trees that I would leave white.

I applied mask to the outlines of the foreground tree, and used an "Incredible Nib" with the masking fluid to add some texture to the ground on either side of the tree base.



Step Two: The reference photo had been taken in the winter. It was all grays and browns and there was no light source to speak of. It was taken on one of those bright gray days. I decided to push the season back a bit so there was a bit of green and the autumn colors were still in evidence. I planned the light source to come in from the right at a low angle.

I prepared some pure color washes of: Cobalt Blue, Burnt Sienna, and Alizarin Crimson. I then prepared smaller puddles Cadmium Orange, and a purple color that was achieved by mixing Ultramarine blue and Alizarin Crimson.



I used a wide flat brush and clean water to wet the paper everywhere except on portions of the large tree. When it looked fairly uniform I picked up the Cobalt blue and laid a bit of sky tone on top through the trees. I then mixed purple with burnt sienna and laid in the background clutter and ground debris.

Using the wide flat brush again I picked up some New Gamboage and laid it across the middle ground through the foreground.

Using my #6 round brush, I added purple and cobalt accents to the raking shadows in the middle ground. Burnt sienna, Alizarin Crimson, and Cobalt Blue were all used in the mid to foreground textures. A smattering of cadmium orange accents were distributed for local color.

Using the beveled handle of my 1" wash brush, I scratched some saplings in the background, brush into the middle ground, and leaf shapes in the foreground. I also blotted a few foreground areas to keep some highlights. While the foreground was still damp, I applied a light amount of table salt to achieve a textured look.





Step Three: After allowing the painting to dry completely, I used a “bristle” brush and my fingers to gently remove the dried salt. I then mixed up some purple, cobalt blue, and burnt sienna and laid in some darker trees in the background. Using a Rigger, I made a darker shade of this mixture and added more brush and weed detail to the edge of the background woods. I flowed some of this color into the mid foreground and flicked in a few more random weed stems. I used a paper towel to blot areas that appeared too strong. I then allowed the painting to dry again.

Step Four: Trying to get some drama going in this painting, I turned to the middle ground. I reinforced the scratchy tree shadows using my #6 round sable with some cobalt blue.

I added more cobalt blue to the mix and continued on down the foreground “scribbling” the ground textures and shadows to life, making sure to leave some white areas. After all that thoughtful work was accomplished, I again allowed the painting to dry.

Step Five: Rethinking Looking at the background woods, I decided it was coming on too strong. I didn't like the harshness of the background trees. So, I wet all of the background trees with clean water. Then I used a fairly large bristle brush to lightly scrub them. I then blotted them with a clean, soft paper towel. I finally had it lightened back to where I thought it should be. Had I left it damp and not gone ahead and dried it first, this step would have been quicker and the paper would have received less stress. Once more I let everything completely dry before proceeding.



Step Six: I needed a warmer background to play off the coolness of the large foreground tree in shadow and I wanted to reduce the “coolness” of the background trees, so I attacked them with a wash of cadmium orange, raw umber, and permanent rose. Again, I spent a few more leisurely minutes allowing the paper to dry

Step Seven:

Make sure your paper and paints are absolutely dry. Take the natural rubber pick-up and using a gentle but strong stroking pressure roll off and pick-up ALL the friskited areas on the painting. With the new white paper exposed, things change, and you have a whole new set of parameters to play with.

Using a mix of burnt sienna, raw umber, ultramarine Blue, Alizarin Crimson, and a touch of burnt umber and the 1" wash brush and my #6 round sable I made some gradations to the white trees in back and layered darker details of the same mix in the forest and trees.

I threw a quick wash of Gamboge over the newly exposed areas on either side of the tree's base. I had left some random dots in the clearing behind the tree for an indication of flowers. Using a #6 round sable I made a mixture of some of the same colors and made a light pinkish lavender color I used on the middle- and fore-ground flower forms.





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Step Eight: I then turned my attention to the foreground tree. Using my 1" flat wash brush I mixed a "purple-gray/brown" by combining Alizarin Crimson, with some cobalt blue and burnt sienna. I cut in the shadow areas on the left side of the tree taking care to drop in shadows for the textures and surface details of the tree and it's roots. When that first shadow layer had dried I mixed a lighter tint of the same mixture and, holding my 1" brush nearly parallel with the paper, I dragged the flat side of the brush down the trunk, picking up a bunch of surface highlight textures that looks remarkably like bark. Pulling this same wash over the entire tree, leaving only the highlights. After the area was dry again I moistened the entire tree with clean water. Using a #6 round and a strong mix of cobalt blue with a touch of burnt umber on darker edges, I slashed in the diagonal tree branch shadows when the paper

had dried enough to be of controllable dampness. I also pulled the intense blue wash over the textured shadows picking out the last few highlights as the paper dried.

Step Nine: Alternately using a #6 round and a rigger, I gradually built up and intensified the forms within the shadow of the tree trunk. This was done with a mixture of purple, cobalt blue, and burnt umber mix. The linear flow of the bark was indicated with the rigger. In the lighter areas I used a lighter tone of the same mix as before with burnt sienna added for warmth.

Step Ten: Polish and refine

Upon closer examination of the background trees I realized the white trees weren't finished at the bases. I mixed a close proximity of the colors I used before on these trees and added darker graded washes at their bases to root them (sorry) to the background. I then re-worked the brush and debris at the base of the background trees.

With a mix of the darker purple grays I used a #6 round and added texture to the ground at the base of the tree, drawing random shapes reminiscent of leaves.

I wanted to punch the big tree up a bit. The darks were not dark enough for my tastes. I made an extremely dark mix of blue and alizarin crimson and using some fancy brushwork (a #6 round) "drew" the darks in again. I used the brush edge to pick out some heavy textures at the base of the tree.

Step Eleven:

For some final touches I picked up the darkest colors laying around with a rigger and picked out stray weed stems and ground debris in the foreground. Next I re-introduced a few darker tree silhouettes in the background. I then used the "spatter" technique to add texture and soften the foreground.

After a bit of thought, I decided I'd do more harm than good by continuing, so I declared this one "Finished".

