SOMETHING OLD
by Leslie Smith
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INTRODUCTION

Something old... something new... something borrowed... something blue. Paint a Trompe-l’œil heirloom with me. The term, which is French, means to “fool the eye.” The objects may not be real. But, our wishes for the bride to be are.

PALETTE

DecoArt Americana Acrylics
- Baby Blue #13042
- Bittersweet Chocolate #13195
- Buttermilk #13003
- Grey Sky #13111
- Grey Storm #13561
- Raw Sienna #13093
- Snow White #13001
- Spa Blue #13267
- Uniform Blue #13086

SURFACE

Oval Plaque #63036
Something to create feet; I used four 1.5” wooden ball knobs #63255, Manufactured by Darice Craftwood.

BRUSHES

Papillon by the Artist’s Club
- Glaze Wash size 1 inch #20103
- Shader size 8 #20129
- Round size 4 #20161

Note: Round brushes are my current brush of choice. I can flatten them to make a flat or filbert. I can point them to make them behave like a round or liner.

MISC. SUPPLIES

Multi Purpose Sealer #87392
- Americana Dura Clear Soft Touch Varnish 8 oz #72013
- Dura Clear Gloss Varnish #87393
- Gray Graphite Paper 18x36 #70141
- Stylus #70125
- Americana Wood Glue*
- Fine grit sandpaper
- C-through ruler
- Standard painting supplies
- Small hand saw and wood file (optional if you wish to remove some of the lace border)

TECHNIQUE AND THEORY

Light travels in straight lines. Because of this, different areas of any object will be struck by more or less light.

As a simple example, we see this phenomenon when light shines on a beach ball. The area closest to the light is defined by a circular highlight that fades out over the ball. A crescent shaped portion of the sphere is in the dark and is seen as shading. And, a number of gradations in light and dark occur along the ball’s surface. These variations in dark versus light are used when we paint and try to convey shape. The more irregular the object, the more gradations in light and dark will be seen.

But, there is a second factor at play. In our example, the ball will cut off the light; i.e., it doesn’t travel through the ball. There is an area “behind and under” the ball that no longer receives light. That is the shadow.

Shading and shadow are both phenomenon that result when objects interact with light. They are both portrayed by carefully using and placing darker values on the objects in the painting. But, they are different in many ways.

We will be using both shading and shadows in this painting; and we’ll discuss how they differ.

PREPARATION

To enhance the trompe illusion, some of the outer lace border (the outer portion of two loops) was cut away, using a small hand saw and wood file. This is an option and the design works without this step. Some people don’t like to play with the new fiberboard surfaces. The material is an amalgamate; it is formed by combining fibers with an adhesive. It can be damaged by moisture. But, there are a lot of advantages to fiberboard surfaces. They are light weight, tough and can be laser-cut into intricate shapes. They can also be hand-sawed, glued, drilled, wood filled and sanded like wood, if exposed edges are sealed immediately. See Figure 1.

Regardless of your choice, seal both sides of the plaque with All-purpose Sealer. It was sealed during manufacture, so you don’t have to get into all those nooks and crannies. Seal the feet at this time, but

*discontinued
leave the flat surface unsealed. It will grasp the adhesive better if left unsealed. The feet will be attached later; it is easier to handle and paint the piece if the feet are not yet attached.

In the course of writing one packet, I probably take at least a hundred photos. Some become the Figures that are included in the packet; others help me see my mistakes and forgotten steps. Does one need to paint inside each and every hole in the lattice? Nope. I couldn’t tell. If you are a true perfectionist, feel free to do so. But, I couldn’t see which holes accidentally got painted and which didn’t.

Basecoat with Grey Sky. Once dry, basecoat the edges and the lace border with Grey Storm.

**PAINTING INSTRUCTIONS**

**The Lace Edging on the Doily**

If you crochet you know that the crochet thread or cording is made up of many twisted thin threads. The thickness is fairly consistent and the crocheted lace is created by roughly four basic repeated stitches. The stitches vary in that each involves a different number of loops created by the crochet “hook.” The lace border on this tray resembles a “shell stitch.” Each part of the shell has to have the same number of strokes as every other shell to create the pattern.

I found it easiest to paint it the crochet lace edging in a simple sequence. Instead of painting one complete loop (shell stitch) and then moving onto the next, it is easier to paint a few strategically placed strokes on all the loops. Figure x. These strokes will divide the loop into segments and also establish the angle of the twisted thread. Then, the remaining stitches aka strokes are painted.
We are only using one other paint color in this step: Snow White. The Grey Storm, revealed between the Snow White strokes, will form the shadows and shading. The strokes are tiny ovals or commas—not stripes.

Use the size 4 round to make each stitch individually, referring to the photos. When done with the entire border (it took me roughly two hours), stripe the edges the piece. See Figures 2 and 3.

Clean up the inner edge by creating a border with Grey Storm that loops around each stitch. If you have any dark areas that appear too large, tuck in an extra stitch. No one will notice. Don’t be overly concerned about perfection; painting is supposed to be fun. The Figures make it clear that I am not perfect in my stroke work. The viewer sees the entire effect—they don’t see the individual stitches. See Figure 4.

Like many of my pieces, you can stop painting at some stages or keep going, depending upon the complexity of painting that appeals to you. Compare Figure 3 to each of Figures 5. Then decide if you want to implement each of the accompanying steps. Otherwise, skip to painting the ribbon.

Prepare two puddles: a 50:50 wash of water and Buttermilk and 50:50 wash of water and Snow White. Wash over the entire piece, randomly choosing the Buttermilk or the Snow White. Repeat until the piece looks more white than grey, but you can still see the crocheted stitches in the lace.

Some of you are now asking why we painted the border darker, so we could turn around two steps later, and wash over it to make it lighter. There are several reasons. (1) It was easier to paint and see the strokes when the background was darker than the background we want to end up with. (2) It was easier to just use two paints for the repetitive strokes, but a greater number of values and temperatures will give a more “elegant” painting. The washes achieve a variety, but keep the paints to a minimum. (3) The washes blend the strokes together so they look more like loops in one continuous thread and not a bunch of disconnected strokes or stitches. Remember, you can always go back and put the Grey Storm or Snow White back of you loose too much of it.

Once the washes dry, repaint the row of holes that anchor the lace to the fabric with Grey Storm.
Use Grey Storm to shade the inside of each shell stitch and where the stitches go behind or below another stitch. See Figures 5 and 6.

The Fabric Center of the Doily
Run lines with Buttermilk and/or Snow White horizontally across the fabric. Mop some of them (but not all) to soften. Let dry. Repeat with vertical lines. Use a ruler or t-square to keep them perpendicular as woven cloth would be. Edge the fabric with Snow White just inside where the lace is attached.

Paint the side of last finished crocheted shell stitch with Grey Storm. See Figure 7.

Crocheted Loops and Woven Ribbon
Again, there is no line drawing. The angle of your strokes may be ever so slightly different from mine. This would change the woven ribbon. So this stage is best free handed.

Measure 1/2” in from each shell stitch along and draw a faint pencil line. These lines will form “wheel spokes” and indicate where the crocheted chain stitch or loop would lie.

Sketch the top and bottom of each ribbon segment, with a pencil. The ribbon edges are softly curved because the ribbon is narrower where it goes under the crochet loops and wider between the loops. See Figure 8.

The term, “corner load,” indicates that the paint is loaded only on one corner of the flat brush. Once you decide which corner will be loaded, always load that same corner. The term, “dress,” refers to a process where the brush containing both values or paints is stroked against a surface (typically a non-absorbent waxed palette) until the two values blend together in the brush. The brush is used to apply paint to the project once it is “dressed.” The two step process has to be repeated freshly for each side of the ribbon loop.

Figure 9 shows the six steps to create the ribbon border.

Using your round brush to create horizontal lines, base each loop of ribbon with Baby Blue. Use this step as practice to apply more pressure at the center and less at each end. This will create a stipe that is wider in the middle and tapers on each end. Fill the ribbon loop with Baby Blue.

Load the size 8 flat brush with Baby Blue and
corner load with Uniform Blue. Dress your brush to blend the two values of blue together. Use the dressed brush to shade each side of each loop.

Create horizontal lines in each loop with Spa Blue. These lines occupy the center of the loop; they do not touch the Uniform Blue, nor do they cover all of the Baby Blue. Repeat with Snow White, confining most of the Snow White an area that is smaller than that of the Spa Blue.

Paint a line with Grey Storm; it starts at the edge of the crocheted border and extends to the 1/2” point we measured earlier. Paint a series of tiny strokes (note they are diagonal and nest into one another) with Snow White over the Grey Storm line. This is to create the crochet thread loop to weave the ribbon and hold it in place. Place a dot of Grey Storm at the end to indicate the hole in the fabric where the loop attaches. Border the hole first with Snow White and then a very faint line (shadow) of Grey Storm.

You have just created depth with shading. The technique of making the ribbon twist and turn employs two basic principles: (1) That which is closest to the viewer is usually warmer, brighter, and lighter. (2) The distance between an object and its shadow is dependent upon the distance between the object casting the shadow and the surface on which it is cast. To make the distinction, the first is usually called, “shading,” the second is called, “shadow.” It is important to note the difference as both behave under different optical rules.

That which is closest to the viewer is usually warmer, brighter, and lighter. Figure 10 shows both shading and shadow.

Ribbon and Thread Ends
Transfer the line drawing of ribbon and thread ends (not crochet hook), adjusting if necessary to make it flow from the lace and ribbon borders on your piece.
Basecoat ribbon with Baby Blue - use your round brush, following the flow of the ribbon, as before. Highlight with Spa Blue and shade with Uniform Blue. Add a final highlight (especially on the edges where the ribbon turns) with Snow White.

Basecoat the thread with Grey Storm. Note that it is not a straight line, but rather, painted as a series of tiny strokes or twists in the thread using the round brush. Each stroke is at an angle so it overlaps the previous stitch. Again, see Figure 10.

**Shadows Cast by the Ribbon and Thread**

The light source is in the upper right. It is shown on the line drawing. Paint each section of shadow completely before moving onto the next. The paint is patted onto the tray’s surface (not stroked or pulled across) using the round brush. This keeps the shadow irregular and enhances the texture and weave of the fabric. If the paint were solid, it would make the fabric look flat.

Start by painting the shadows for the ribbon ends using Grey Storm. Pat the paint nearest the ribbon and work outward toward the shadows edge. Before the paint dries, pick up Grey Sky with the same round brush and pat out the edge of the shadow so it blurs into the fabric. With the Grey Storm, the paint was applied starting at edge of the ribbon and working away from the ribbon. With the Grey Sky, the paint is applied at the edge of shadow and working towards the ribbon.

Pat in shadows for the thread with Grey Storm. Soften, if needed with pats of Grey Sky paint.

Examine the piece for areas where two or more shadows cross one another. Darken with Grey Storm.

There are three places where a cast shadow falls onto the ribbon (see Figure 10 again; they are marked with an “x”). Those two cast shadows are painted with Uniform Blue.

Each loop in the border will cast a shadow away from the light. As the ribbon loops completely around the tray, this means that each loop will cast its shadow in a different location. It will also change shape slightly. See Figure 11.

Paint a shadow for each ribbon loop. If the shadow falls upon the center fabric, start with Grey Storm and then fade into the fabric with Grey Sky. However, if the shadow is cast onto the outer crochet lace, simply use Grey Storm. The area is too small to fade or otherwise fuss with it.

If you need to fix the fabric at any time, use horizontal and vertical lines of either Snow White or Grey Sky so the fabric weave is maintained.

**The Crochet Hook and its cast shadow**

Transfer crochet hook line drawing (not the shadows) onto piece. Basecoat hook with Raw Sienna.

Highlight with Marigold on the curved tip, along some of the lettering (the lettering is painted with broken lines only) and down the shaft with a narrow line. See Figure 12.
Accent some of the lettering with broken lines of Bittersweet Chocolate.

The crochet hook is wider and depressed in the area where the brand is written. That is where the hook is held. The placement of two highlights help make this “bowl” shape; one is on the crochet staff before the depression (marked “2” on Figure 13) and at the end of the depression (marked “3”).

Highlight within the Marigold highlight areas with a smaller highlight of Buttermilk. Only three areas get the final highlight of Snow White, which is even smaller than the previous highlight of Buttermilk. See Figure 13.

Paint the shadows for the hook as before. The hook is sitting atop the thread in one spot and so, the thread also gets a shadow.

If you want to get persnickety, the thread is lying on the fabric. So the top of the thread is closer to the hook than the fabric. The shadow cast by the hook onto the fabric would actually be wider than the shadow cast by the hook onto the thread. If you can see it, you can do it.

The Jazz and all that Pizazzz...

No painting is ever finished. There is always that one more thing that can be done to make it better, more detailed, etc. These kind of details enhance a painting, but are not always necessary. They are what makes personal preference for each artist. The following details I added are optional.

There is a tiny faint area of fabric, washed with Marigold, above the tip of the crochet hook. This would be reflected color. If you choose to add this detail, keep it barely visible. It would be more pronounced on a shiny surface, but the fabric is not shiny nor very reflective. Hence, you can barely see it.

But, the hook is somewhat shiny. So, it makes sense that there could be some reflected color on it. There is a tiny haze of Baby Blue near the ribbon (marked ‘4’) and Grey Sky along the lower shaft (marked ‘5’) in Figure 14.

Lastly, the thread was highlighted with Buttermilk where it rose up to go over the hook.
FINISHING

Sign your piece with pride.

Attach the feet to the bottom of the tray in four equi-distant corners, using DecoArt Wood Glue.

Apply two or more coats of DecoArt American’s Soft Touch Varnish. Go over the ribbon (and only the ribbon) with DecoArt’s Dura Clear Gloss Varnish.
To ensure your pattern is at 100%, this box should measure 1" x 1" when printed.