HUMBLE BEGINNINGS
by Leslie Smith
INTRODUCTION
Did you ever peel apples for pie?
And, did you have a contest to see who
could get the longest peel without it breaking?

PALETTE
DecoArt Americana Acrylics
Black Plum #13172
Burnt Sienna #13063
Burnt Umber #13064
Buttermilk #13003
Driftwood #13171
Grey Storm #13561
Heritage Brick #13219 (optional)
Lamp (Ebony) Black #13067
Santa Red #13170
Snow White #13001
Tangelo Orange #13196
True Ochre #13143

SURFACE
Key/Memo Board #63205

BRUSHES
1" flat for basecoating #20103
Papillon Round size 4 #20161
Papillon Filbert size 6 #20118
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.

MISCELLANEOUS SUPPLIES
DecoArt American Soft Touch Varnish*
Marker (I prefer Identi Pen Black #70830)
Large Sanding Pad—Fine/Extra Fine #70797
Saral Transfer Roll #82071
Stylus #70125
DecoArt Chalkboard Paint #13509
Standard painting supplies (palette, water container,
etc.)
Embellishments (optional): red handles kitchen utensils were popular. They can be found in thrift shops
and online sale sites. I hung a pastry cutter from the
pegs. I also painted a General's White Charcoal Pencil
with the red paints and tied it to a peg, using string
that was similar in color to DecoArt's Buttermilk

TECHNIQUE AND THEORY
The piece lives up to its name. It is humble and
simple. There are not a lot of colors on this piece, and
almost all of them fall into the red, orange, and yel-
lows. The color scheme is called analogous.

And, there are only two objects: the apple and the
peeler; and they are both essentially red. To make
the reds “pop”, we will make sure that one of them is
warmer than the other and play with the textures.

We will also use different techniques to create the
highlights on each of the four different surfaces: han-
dle, blade, apple flesh and apple peel. That will make
it clear that they each consist of a different material.

The piece employs a lot of layers and washes. They
are deliberately allowed to remain transparent so you
can see all the layers beneath them.

Usually, washes employ transparent or semi-opaque
paints. We will occasionally use an opaque paint as
a wash. That is seldom done, as it leaves a “chalky”
overcoat. But, with the meat of the apple, we want
a depth that can only be achieved by allowing all
the layers to show at the same time that we show
the “substance” of the apple flesh. Use of an opaque
paint for a final wash is also good if you are creating
faux marl (fake marble).

PREPARATION
Sand, Seal, and sand again. Remember: always sand
in the direction of the wood grain.

Basecoat the board and the pegs with Buttermilk.

The raised, wooden edge around the blackboard is
5/8” wide. Use your ruler, an edging tool, or a com-
pass to mark a 5/8” border to create a little alcove
above the blackboard.

Paint the alcove with Lamp Black. While the black
is still wet, loosely “slip slap” Burnt Umber into the
insert area; keep it subtle and mostly on the right
side (behind the peeler.) It should be so faint that you
have to look for it to see it.

Use a fine pointed black marker to outline the black-
board area. The tip should just fit inside the groove
that outlines the blackboard. This will create a neat
edge and eliminate the need to paint with your brush all the way to the very edge. Coat with Lamp Black, creating a dark opaque ground for the black board paint to be applied later.

**PAINTING INSTRUCTIONS**

**Cabinet Faux Finish**

We are painting a little “whatnot” cabinet or shelf and trying to recreate the age of the kitchen gadgets of the 1950’s. They were originally shiny and red with a cream colored stripe. With age, the painted red handle and metal blade have become dull; the cream-colored stripe has yellowed.

Use control and very little paint in this phase. Wash the Buttermilk areas with dilute True Ochre. Allow the paint to streak, leaving large areas to remain Buttermilk. Repeat with Burnt Umber. Spatter and allow the paint to drip, just as would have happened in your Grandmother’s kitchen. But, again - do not get carried away. Your Grandmother would not have allowed the little cabinet to get dirty; she would have wiped it clean immediately. Use just enough paint to add age - not dirt.

Wash some areas with Buttermilk, going over the previously applied True Ochre and Burnt Umber. It will not (should not) cover completely. We will be using a last chalky wash more than once in this project. It adds depth to an object, if done with care.

Using the photos as a guide, outline the wooden edges on the bottom and right only to give depth to your fake edging. Dilute Burnt Umber was used in some areas; Buttermilk in others. Figure 1

**Peeler Handle**

The wooden handle has a grain and it is old/worn. The highlight is not smooth. Do not undercoat the handle to make it easier to get coverage. An undercoating always influences the top coat. It may be slight, but it happens. We want the cold dark black beneath the red.

Base handle with Santa Red. Once it is dry (really dry so your brush won’t pick up paint), apply a second coat of Santa Red, starting in the area that will be occupied by the highlight and working outward. Repeat until you get that 1950’s red enamel that was applied on wooden handles of kitchen gadgets.

The stripe is based with Buttermilk. When dry, wash stripe with streaky dilute True Ochre. (Note: Neither True Ochre nor Burnt Umber are ever used on this piece without first diluting).

Shade handle as shown on line drawing with Heritage Brick. (This is the only time Heritage Brick is used. If you do not have it, try using any dull red. I cannot, in good conscience, ask you to buy a bottle for this tiny usage.) Note that the shading in quite thin along the upper edge, but wider along the lower edge. Shade handle, including stripe, with dilute Burnt Umber. The highlight on the handle is comprised of many tiny dots, not unlike pixels. This method of creating a highlight can provide a brilliant highlight and still show texture. Using the tip of a small round brush, highlight the red of the handle with Snow White, with tiny dots of painted patted onto your surface. Use only tiny bits of paint, wiping most of the paint off your brush onto a paper towel before you pat into the painting. It will not be solid or look shiny with only one pass. Note that the shape of the highlight mimics the outline of the peeler and that the outer edge of the highlight is not solid.

Repeat, this time with Buttermilk, but highlight a smaller area within the previous highlight. Repeat with Snow White. Repeat back and forth; the last pass is Buttermilk.

The highlight on the stripe is comprised of dots of Snow White. Figure 2

**Peeler Ring**

The ring is a metal cylinder. Approximately a third is shaded. The values (shading and highlight) are all lines or stripes on a cylinder. The highlight will be sharper than the one we painted on the enameled handle; a different technique is used. We will sideload and blend the highlight to show the shine of metal.

Base the ring with Grey Storm. Go over the Grey Storm and shade both lower and upper edges with Lamp Black; the shading on the lower edge is wider.

Dirty it up with some dilute Burnt Umber. This will also warm and soften the metal. Add a line of reflected color/light to both upper and lower edges.

Sideload a flattened brush (either a flat or flatten the #4 round) with Buttermilk. Add a line of highlight to the ring; it should extend the highlight on the handle and be in precisely in line with it. Flip brush and repeat. Add a narrower final highlight with Snow White. Figure 3

Use your c-through ruler to check and be sure that the sides of the ring line up with the sides of the handle. Also check to be sure that the creamy colored stripe is consistent in width and distance from the metal ring. The peeler, in contrast to the apple, is manufactured. It would be precise in measurement and shape except where age has caused damage. Figure 4

If you wish, you can add a little nick in the handle with a smudge of black. I put one near the metal ring.

**Peeler Blade**

The blade is also a cylinder, but part of it is cut away.
We see the outside of the cylinder in the front and the inside of the cylinder in the back. The values are opposite; i.e., the darks on the front of the blade are the highlights on the back of the blade. It is easier to start with the back.

Use your c-through ruler to check the upper edge of the peeler and fix the teeth as needed. The tips of the teeth should line up with the handle. The teeth in the front should each have a corresponding tooth along the back of the blade. **Figure 5**

Fill in the back portion of the blade with Grey Storm. Shade each of the teeth with Lamp Black that blends into the Grey Storm of the blade. Use Driftwood to give the teeth dimension and depth by edging each tooth on the left side of the triangle. If the teeth are not pronounced enough, try adding a little Burnt Umber to the background directly behind them.

Sideload and blend Driftwood along the upper edge of the rectangular hole in the blade. The hole is painted in Lamp Black and may need to be “cleaned up” at this point. The area near the ring should be quite dark. **Figure 6**

The front of the blade is, from a value perspective, the opposite. The teeth are painted first in Driftwood. Use your c-through rule to insure that each of them is the right height. The lower section is painted with Grey Storm. There is no sharp line between the Driftwood and Grey Storm; they should blend together seamlessly. Use Buttermilk to define the edges of the teeth—but again, only on the left side. There is a thin line of reflected light along the very bottom; it is painted with Driftwood. **Figure 7**

While you have reds on your palette, paint the tips of the pegs with Heritage Brick. Then, repaint them with Santa Red.

**Apple flesh**
The apple flesh is moist. It glistens and glitters. It is somewhat translucent and you can see through it. There are marks where the peeler left grooves. The flesh is oxidizing and turning yellow-brown. To make all of these distinct differences, we will change brushes, change paint application techniques, and change how the highlight is achieved.

Either flatten your round or use a filbert brush (I used a number 6 filbert). Apply “pats” of Buttermilk with brush, forming splotches or funny little squares of paint. Your brush should be fairly dry and not hold a lot of paint. **Figure 8**

Add some splotches of dilute True Ochre and dilute Burnt Sienna with a light touch. They should not cover the apple, but just some of the areas. Repeat the Buttermilk layer. Repeat the True Ochre and Burnt Sienna and so on until it starts to look like the layers of apple flesh.

How often you need to do this will depend upon how much paint you pick up and how heavy a painter you are. I use very little paint and a very light touch.

Because the apple is a sphere, we do need to add some shading around the outer edge. The light source is slightly upper left, so the lower right portion of the apple would be slightly darker.

Edge the apple with dilute Burnt Sienna and dilute Burnt Umber. If your apple starts to look rotten, just wash again with pats of dilute Buttermilk.

The cast shadows under peeler and the hanging peel are also painted with Burnt Umber. The shadow under the peel is darkened nearest the peeler with Grey Storm. See **Figures** and line drawing for the shadow shapes.

Shape of shadows are determined not only by the shape of the object casting, but also the shape of the object on which it is cast. In the case, the object is a sphere. Both the shadow under both the peeler and peel curve with the surface contour of the spherical apple.

Finally, add some dots of Snow White near the center of the apple to make it glisten. **Figure 9**

**Apple Peel**
We are looking at the bottom of the apple. The little hair-like circle (in the center) is the former stamen and calyx of the apple blossom. Even though both are painted red, the apple peel is painted with more warmth and more variation than the peeler handle. We are also going to use the direction of the brush stroke to help built texture and shape.

Base the center peel (attached to the apple) with Santa Red. Use your round brush and stroke outward from the center like spokes of a wheel. Repeat.

Edge the peel randomly with Black Plum. Create the depression for the end of the apple with Black Plum, again starting in the very center and stroking outward with “wheel spokes.” The little stamens are painted with tiny wisps of Driftwood and Grey Storm. The very center “hole” is a dot of Lamp Black.

Create the curved surface using a lighter, warmer, and brighter paint; in this case we will paint lines with Tangelo Orange, starting about half way out from the center to the edge of the peel. **Figure 10**

Final highlights are dry-brushed with Buttermilk.

Two precautions: Be sure that the red and orange underpainting is dry. If you try to fix anything with either
of the reds, be sure that the Buttermilk is dry. Otherwise—you will get a horrible pink apple.

How the remainder of the peel is painted depending upon which side is facing: the shiny peel side or the inner apple flesh side. Be sure to make the flesh fairly dark as it wraps behind the peeler blade. See photos for further definition.

Dilute Burnt Umber is used to create a shadow to the left of the peel as it tumbles down and onto the blackboard. A faint dark area was also created beneath the apple on the “ledge.” Figure 11

When you are happy, sign your name.

**The Pizazz and all that Jazz**

Technically, the painting is done and you can skip to the section on finishing. But, there are always some neat little extras that you can add to make it a “bit more sophisticated.” Here are some suggestions for this project.

Paint a General’s White Charcoal Pencil with an undercoat of Heritage Brick and then Santa Red. When dry, tie several loops of string about the pencil, leaving about two feet of free string. Loop the end of the string and hang from the pegs.

**FINISHING**

Apply two or more coats of DecoArt American’s Soft Touch to the painted areas and pencil. Do not varnish the area to be used as blackboard. Wait 24 hours.

Apply two coats of DecoArt’s Chalkboard paint to the insert, following the manufacturer’s directions; go around the peel (I taped that area to protect the hanging peel.) After 24 hours, condition with a piece of chalk.
Figure 3

Driftwood
Thin shading Lamp Black
Grey Storm
Buttermilk and then Snow White
Grey Storm
Wider shading Lamp Black
maybe some Burnt Umber (rust, age, dirt)
Driftwood

Figure 4
To ensure your pattern is at 100%, this box should measure 1” x 1” when printed.