

Transferring

I strongly suggest drawing on a good quality tracing paper rather than directly on the watercolor paper.

Watercolor paper does not take erasing well, the surface is easily abraded. The eraser lifts the fibers and some of the sizing, changing the texture of the surface dramatically. Paint will not flow in the usual manner over the abraded surface, settle quicker and more deeply into the paper wicking out making tidy edges very difficult to create.

When drawing on tracing paper composition does not interfere with the drawing process, that comes when the tracing is placed on the watercolor paper, an image can be resized, even be reversed, small angle adjustments are easily made.

Once the image is drawn to your satisfaction, be sure the drawing is understandable. Imagine the drawing will be passed on to another artist, that artist should be able to transfer your image with complete understanding of every line and nuance of detail. Redraw any lines or areas that are not clear. Check, and re-check your drawing, a bad drawing never gets better when painted it just becomes a really bad painting. It is helpful to think of every stage your process to be complete in and of itself, for instance if you go no further than this step – the drawing on tracing paper - would the image be complete, stand on its own, fully understood?

I know the thought of transferring seems an utter waste of time, but think of it as another chance to check the drawing, go at the process with a peaceful heart, do it slowly, thoughtfully, and NEVER lose sight of what the image is. Never get involved in transferring just lines, shapes, know what each line describes, where it begins and where it ends. In essence transfer as if you were drawing, carefully and with close attention. Always work in the direction of growth. Do not press hard this will indent the paper and create a strong line that is hard to erase. Press just hard enough to create the lightest line you can see.

1. Transferring onto 140lb or thinner paper using a Light-box

Place your drawing on the light-box, secure with tape.

Position the watercolor paper over the drawing, carefully checking composition and image placement. Use three small pieces of tape on the top edge to secure the paper to the light-box. Using three rather than one or two lessens the likelihood of one releasing, causing the paper to move or pivot. Do not tape the sides or bottom, this allows the paper to be lifted to check the drawing on the tracing paper. Use only white acid free artists' tape. Transfer using a 2H pencil, press VERY lightly. The light of the light-box will make the graphite appear lighter than it really is, hard to see, so be sure to turn the light off regularly to check your line quality, check to be sure the entire image has been transferred.

Remember to work with care, thoughtfulness and ONLY IN THE DIRECTION OF GROWTH. The lines should not be dark or thick but very thin lines just dark enough to see. When the transferring process is complete lift the paper to check if the entire image has been transferred before removing the tape.

You are not done yet!

Before adding paint the image will need to be checked a final time. Transferred images never have the same flowing quality as the original drawn line. Lightly roll a kneaded eraser over the transferred lines, this will lift any extra transfer graphite. Do this right away, I have found that these lines become more and more permanent with time. I left a transferred image for 6 months before redrawing and I could not lighten the lines at all - so lesson learned! Once the lines have been lightly lifted use a 2H or HB pencil to lightly go over the lines once more, This process adds energy and life back to the lines to your drawing.

Now you are ready to add color or surface graphite information.

Methods of Transferring.

2. Transferring onto 300lb or heavily textured paper using Graphite Transfer Paper

Use ONLY Wax Free Graphite Transfer Paper, any other is unerasable.

Graphite transfer paper is a wonderful tool to use when transferring images from tracing paper onto watercolor paper that is too thick or too textured to use a lightbox.

- a. Tape a piece of paper to a board or hard work surface. Drawn lines are likely to indent the paper if the work surface is too soft. Use three pieces of tape rather than one or two to lessen the likelihood of one releasing, causing the paper to move or pivot. Use only white acid free artists' tape.
- b. Place the tracing paper drawing on the watercolor paper, move around until the compositional placement is balanced and pleasing. Tape. Tape the top edge only, leaving the bottom edge free to be lifted. Use white acid free artists' tape only, no less than three pieces, apply no pressure to the tape, if pressed onto the paper surface it is likely to raise the paper fibers when lifted off. Do not leave tape on the paper surface for too long as this will also change the paper surface. Using only one piece of tape the image is likely to pivot, two pieces of tape one is likely to come loose causing the tracing paper to move.
- c. Slip a small piece of graphite transfer paper, no larger than 3 x 3", dark side down, (I cannot remember how many times I have not checked and placed the graphite paper dark side up only to find I have carefully transferred the image onto the back of the tracing paper!), this piece of transfer paper will be moved under the each area being transferred. Never use a large piece, pressure of your hand or finger tips as you work will cause smudging which is difficult to erase.
- d. To transfer use a well-sharpened #8H pencil. Hold the pencil upright, use only the tip, not the side of the lead, this will transfer the thinnest line possible. A soft pencil, or using the side will transfer thick ungainly lines. Do not press hard, as this will create a groove on the paper. I suggest doing some practice lines to check pressure. In humid conditions the paper will be even more vulnerable to pressure, more likely to indent. After the first few lines have been transferred lift the tracing to check the intensity and thickness of the transferred line. It should not be dark, just light enough to read. Remember to work with care, thoughtfulness and ONLY IN THE DIRECTION OF GROWTH. The paper should not be grooved.

When the transferring process is complete lift the paper, but do not remove the tape yet, check if the entire image has been transferred.

If the drawing is large and complicated transfer and redraw in sections. Complete each section at one sitting,

Reminder:

Work with awareness as if drawing the image for the first time.

Work with only enough pressure to create delicate lines.

Work only in the direction of growth.

No matter which transfer method you have used, before removing the traced image go over the whole drawing check that every line has been transferred.

ROLL a kneaded eraser over the lines, this will reduce the value of the transferred graphite.

Remember a transferred image is very stiff and lifeless, this will lessen as you become more practiced with transferring in the meantime after rolling the kneaded eraser ALWAYS lightly go over all the lines using a 2H or HB pencil. This will put emotion and energy back into the transferred lines.

NEVER paint on an image that has been transferred without redrawing. This is be the last time to check for errors before adding color. Keep the drawn line light, especially if the subject is light.

Pencil lines are not easily hidden with paint, in fact become permanent under just ONE glaze of yellow. Lines are only created to delineate where a color ends, they need to disappear once color or graphite value is added to the surface contour.