

Tip #26

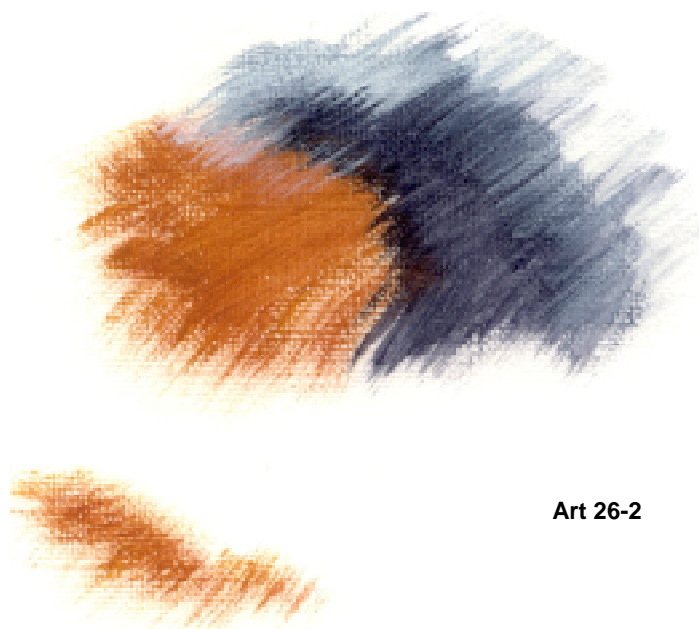
Focus on Animals

I'm happy to announce my new North Light book is available, as of August 10! It's one of their new No Experience Required series, and it's called Drawing & Painting Animals. It was a great deal of fun to do, particularly since I could finally put my critters to WORK, and earn their living!

My painting of Scoutie was one that didn't make it into the book - as usual I overproduced!-but she's the cover girl, so there's no living with her. Since I liked that painting very much, I thought I'd do something a bit different and share the painting process with you.

Art 26-1, Scout sketch

First I found a reference photo that I particularly liked, from a few years ago - Scout curled up on my handwoven blanket. The contrast between the calico cat and the plaid was just too good not to attempt ... but just to make sure I'd like the effect, I did a quick sketch and splashed watercolor in.



Art 26-2, Fur samples

I was reasonably sure I wanted to use acrylics on this one, so I could paint those overlapping areas of soft fur with their sharp contrasts in color - Scout's the first calico I've had in a long time, and I love her coloration! The acrylics also work well because they dry so quickly, allowing me to add layers without lifting or muddying.

I tried out drybrush on canvas textured paper, using a fan brush that I'd "barbered" to a kind of ragged pixie-cut, and that gave just the effect I was after, layering one color of fur over the next so they didn't look pasted on.

You can see the fan brush in Tip #6 in our archives.



Art 26-3, Laying in the basics

I sketched my composition onto the paper, then used good strong colors to lay in the first layers, mostly using a flat brush with manmade hairs. I supplemented with that fan brush, though, to make sure the fur areas stayed soft. I let the lines in the blanket follow the shape of the pillow to suggest the plaid and the softness underneath.

Art 26-4, Finishing up

Finally, I refined the details, added the red checkerboard stenciling on my bedroom wall, and played up the red line in the dark green blanket to complement it. I used a very fine round brush for the smallest details, and then tweaked here and there with a very sharp colored pencil in white, black, red-brown, gray, and blue. (I've even worked on it a bit since she was the cover of the new book!)

Look for my North Light book, *Drawing and Painting Animals*, from your local bookstore, or from North Light Books online at <http://www.artistsnetwork.com/nlbooks/index.asp> or <http://www.amazon.com>.

You'll find my original artwork on new products in my Cafepress store, at http://www.cafepress.com/cathy_johnson.



Art 26-3



Art 26-4