



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE



2025 Online Workshops
Workshop 3, Birds of the World
with Claire Milligan coming soon



Artist How To Series
Plein Air painting for beginners
with Kelly Foss



Artist Tutorial
A series of watercolor wildflower
tutorials with Tin Bejar



Watercolor Painting Tips
Make your watercolor paintings
shine with these tips

MAIN FEATURE

Painted Paws & Furry Friends

By Laura Stahlmann



When I look back, my current path as an animal artist makes perfect sense—because I've always loved painting animals. Even as a child, I was constantly drawing: whether it was little nature studies of squirrels or frogs, underwater worlds with seals and fish, or probably thousands of horse sketches that passed through my hands.

As an adult, I've rediscovered this passion on a whole new level.

Because I realized: Nature is the greatest artist of all. It inspires me again and again.

And I know I'm not alone in feeling this way.

continued



For thousands of years, the animal world has fascinated artists and offered a never-ending source of inspiration and diversity. And for every mood, every season and every imaginable color, there's a fitting animal, waiting to be painted. And not just that, - there's one for every person, too. Everyone has "that one" special creature close to their heart.

Over the years, I've received countless messages from customers and students telling me what a certain animal means to them. Stories range from funny friendships with wild animals who visit their homes, to "spirit animals" and "power animals", and even to memories of beloved family members who may have already passed away. Again and again, I'm reminded: even a small, seemingly simple illustration can carry deep personal meaning for someone.

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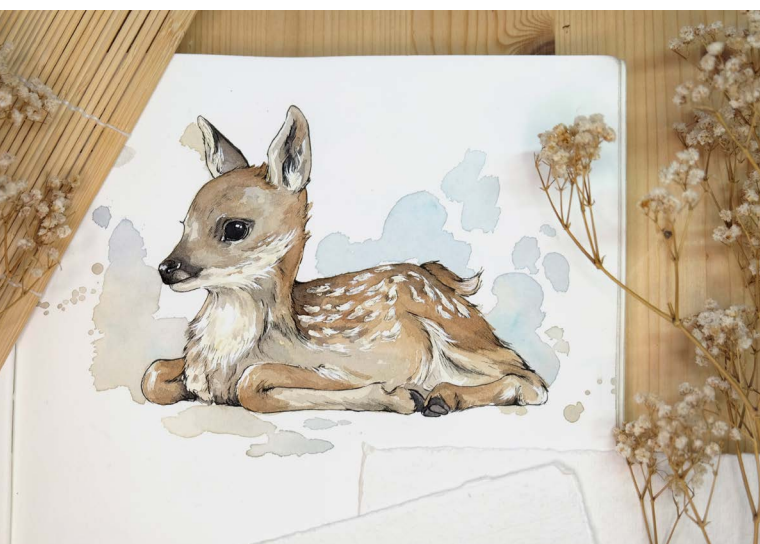
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This is one of the things I cherish most about my work—bringing joy to someone else through one of my paintings is something I'm genuinely happy about.

So, which animal makes your heart beat a little faster, or makes you go "awww...!"?

I have a soft spot for ducklings, birds in general, and the forest. This love is reflected in my illustrations, and even after all these years, painting them still brings me joy.



That's why I chose one of my all-time favorite motifs for you: a baby fox. I hope that its playful clumsiness, its wide-eyed curiosity, and that extra-fluffy fur bring a little lightness to your day while you paint.



Materials

Although I usually paint at home, I love working in sketchbooks. Let's be honest: keeping track of loose sheets, organizing them, storing them, and finding them again when needed... isn't exactly fun. A sketchbook keeps everything in one place, neatly organized, easy to store on a shelf and just as easy to pull out again.

It took me a long time to find a book that met my standards for paper quality. I wanted it to have a very smooth surface and, without exception, to be made from 100% cotton.

But most watercolor sketchbooks aren't smooth. Now don't get me wrong - I love textured paper, the feel of it, the look. But with hot-pressed paper, I can capture even finer details and get much cleaner results when scanning. That's a big plus if you, like me, want to reproduce your work later.



That's why I love the [Strathmore 500 Series Mixed Media Art Journal](#). It may be marketed as a "mixed media book", but for me it's perfect for small watercolor illustrations. And although the 190 g/m² pages are somewhat thinner than many other watercolor papers, the 100% cotton structure holds a surprising amount of water!

I've filled several of these books already, and in different sizes. My favorite is the softcover version in 7.75" x 9.75". It's large enough for any of my illustrations, but still compact enough to take on the go if needed.

For the fox, though, I chose the larger book.

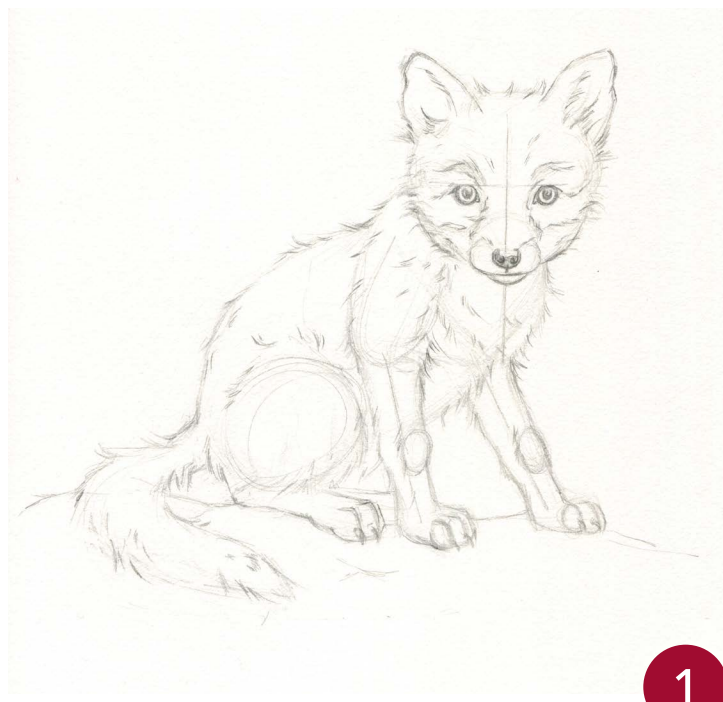
Because sometimes even a small motif deserves a grand stage—whether in a sketchbook, or in real life.

Nature's Sweetest Muse: Painting a Furry Forest Friend in Watercolor

In this tutorial, I'll walk you step by step through the process of painting a fluffy baby fox.

We'll focus on sketching with natural proportions, layered watercolor techniques, creating depth with shadows and highlights, and adding expressive final details.

So grab your sketchbook, turn on your favorite painting music, and let a little woodland magic happen.



1

Step 1: Pencil Sketch

We begin our painting with a pencil sketch of the baby fox. For this tutorial, I've drawn the sketch a bit darker and more detailed than I normally would. I like to keep the sketch light, so I don't have to erase as much later on.

Use guidelines to simplify your drawing, it really helps! Draw a vertical line down the center of the face to keep it symmetrical, and a horizontal line for the eye placement. Look closely: both eyes and nose together form an almost symmetrical triangle. To simplify the joints in the legs, draw them as ovals, - this makes it easier to capture the right curves.

Try keeping in mind: a young animal's head is proportionally large compared to its body, and the eyes are oversized too! The muzzle is shorter than that of an adult fox, and the fur is much softer and fluffier.



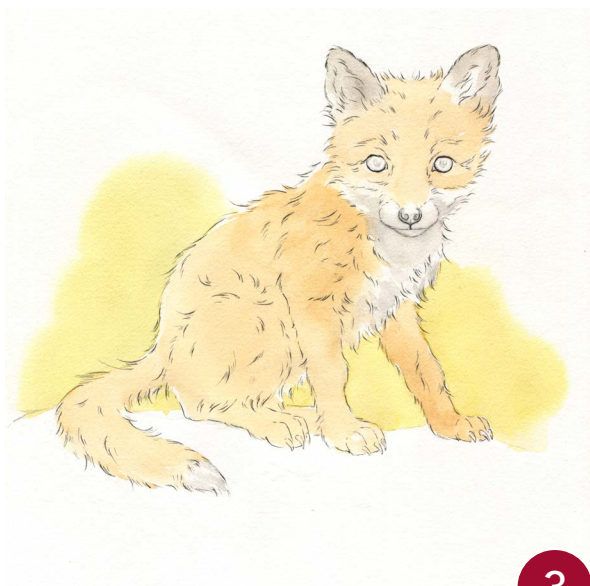
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Step 2: Fineliner Outline

Next, we'll use a waterproof Fineliner. These are available from a number of manufacturers, just look out for the word "waterproof". I usually draw with size 0.05 or 0.1.

The fur on the body grows and sticks out in many different directions. Use quick, short strokes moving outward from the body. Try lifting your pen slightly at the end of each stroke to make the lines thinner toward the tips.

Don't make the strokes too parallel or evenly, but vary their direction, pressure, and length. This is how you create lively, natural-looking fur. Do not cover the whole body in strokes, or close all the outlines, but leave intentional gaps!



3

Step 3: Background & First Wash

Using a light green tone, we paint the background wash behind the fox. First, wet the areas you want to paint with clear water, then use plenty of water and only a little pigment to create a soft green background. Even if you have a lot of ready-made tones in your palette, try combining your shades—this keeps the color more natural and muted. I mixed my green with raw sienna, a color we'll be using a lot in the rest of the painting. This helps keep everything harmonious.

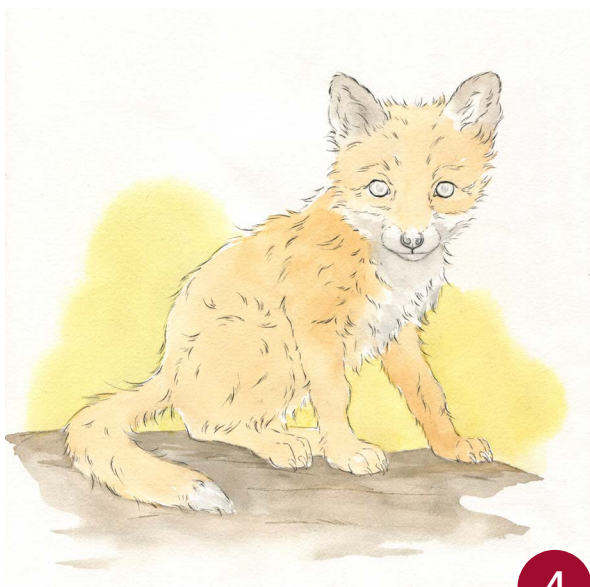
It may seem random, but I pay attention to where I place the green: it should rise up to the white chest, but not all the way up the back on the opposite side.

Let the background dry completely!

Then we prime the fox: I mixed raw sienna with burnt sienna for a rich fox-red, and added a touch of umber or sepia to tone it down.

Paint the fox generously, taking care to leave the white areas free: tail tip, chest, muzzle. Next, prime the ears with sepia brown. If you don't have sepia, mix umber brown with a bit of indigo blue for a soft, matte brown.

Use a light gray for the chest and muzzle base tones.



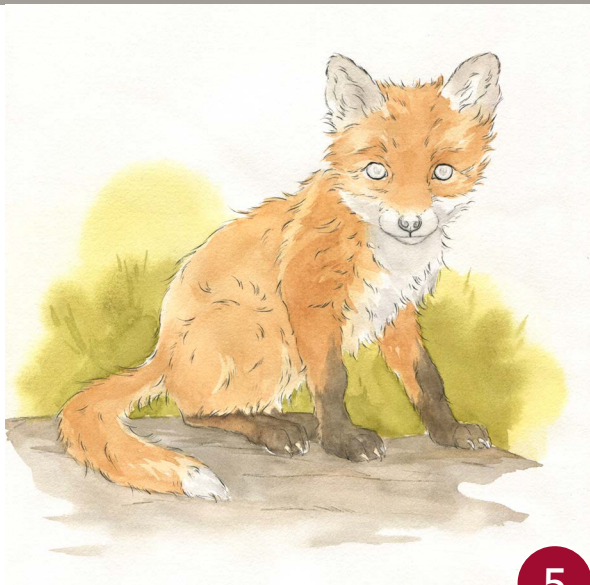
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Step 4: Ground / Tree Trunk

The ground on which the fox is sitting could be the forest floor or a tree trunk. I didn't fully detail it, but in my template, it's a fallen tree trunk.

Use browns and grays for the first wash, according to your preference. The colors can blend into each other—there's no right or wrong here. I kept the tones relatively neutral (mainly sepia shades), as the fox will already have a lot of bold color later on.

Let this layer dry completely before moving on to avoid unwanted bleeding.



5

Step 5: Light Midtones

Next, we add another layer of color—first to the background, then to the fox. You can carefully dampen the background again before applying more green, but be careful not to touch the fox. Let everything dry! Now add more color to the fox. I work from the head downwards, using the same color mix as before (raw sienna, burnt sienna, umber), but with less water.

Make sure to leave parts of the first layer visible - those are your highlights.

The feet are dark and painted with sepia. Try blending the colors into each other a little, as not to create very sharp edges.



6

Step 6: Darker Midtones

While the layers from step 5 are drying, you can continue working on the ground or tree trunk. Use browns and grays, and you can even add a touch of blue or green. Shadows appear under the paws and tail. Then, repeat step 5 on the fox, but this time, use even more pigment and less water so the tones become darker. Choose a smaller brush so you can start creating a visible fur texture. End the paint strokes in small, pointed tips to mimic tufts of fur.

Again, make sure to leave bits of the previous layer showing - don't cover everything!

Add gray shadows to the white fur under the chin and on the chest.



7

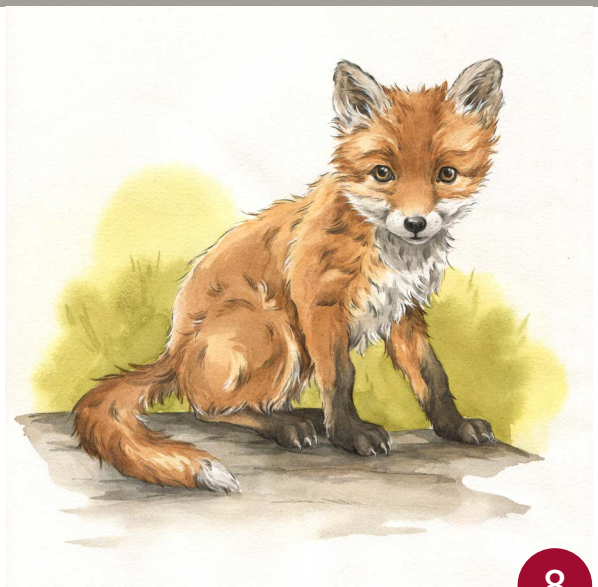
Step 7: Details & Shadows

Now it's time for the final details! With a very small brush (size 1 or 2, depending on the size of your painting), we add darker strokes to give the fox more depth.

Add more sepia to your brown mix to darken it. Pay attention to areas that are particularly dark, such as under the head and between the fore- and hind legs. You can also add detail to the ears and feet with this mix.

On the rest of the fox, use small, deliberate strokes to indicate fur and shadows. On the chest, use Payne's grey to deepen the shadows in the white fur.

Ultimately, add more shadows beneath the paws and tail on the ground.



8



Step 8: Eyes & White Gouache

I always save the eyes and nose for last. Needless to say, use your smallest brush for this! Mix the two sienna tones to create a light color for the inner part of the eyes.

Once the layer is dry, carefully paint the pupil using Payne's grey. Paint in several layers, and try to leave two tiny white highlights - or add them afterwards with white gouache. Then, darken the outer circle with Paynes grey, while trying to maintain an even distance to the pupil!

Use Payne's grey again for the nose, working in two layers to give it dimension.

Finally, use white gouache to add fine white hairs to the chest, hind leg, tail tip, and along the back. If these hairs overlap darker areas, they'll really pop! With this final step, we put the finishing touches to the fur.

If you feel confident enough with your ink pen, you can now add whiskers to the muzzle using fast but very light strokes. And that's it!

How cute, our new furry little friend is finished!

Now, let's give him a warm welcome...

...hello, little fox!



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Laura Stahlmann is an architect and freelance illustrator with a focus on watercolor and animal painting.

In her work, she combines her love of nature with a loose, naturalistic style. Many of her motifs are inspired by her fascination with the animal world and her love for cute subjects and charming scenes.

In addition to her own artistic projects, she teaches painting and shares her knowledge of creative techniques through various channels. In 2021, her book "The Art of Watercolor Painting – Animals" was published. Alongside original artworks, she also offers her illustrations as stationery and gift items under her own brand, "Laurasita."

Laura lives and works in Hamburg, Germany.

Website: www.Laurasita.de

Instagram: [@laurasita](https://www.instagram.com/laurasita)

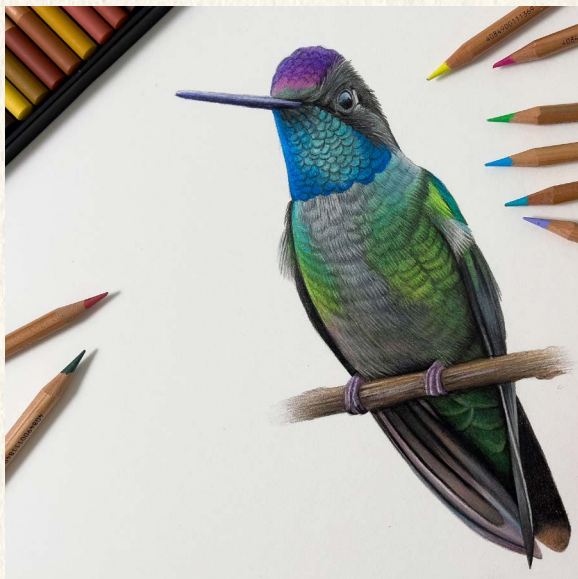
Strathmore® ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES

Join us for Strathmore's FREE 2025 Online Workshops!

Strathmore's Online Workshops feature free video lessons and downloadable instructions created by experienced artists. Follow along in the online classroom as instructors guide you through various art topics. After a lesson releases, it remains on the site for viewing the rest of the year. #StrathmoreWorkshops

Share all the fun on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) using #StrathmoreWorkshops

Workshops start March 3 and continue through December 31, 2025



WORKSHOP 3

Drawing Birds of the World in Colored Pencil
Instructor: Claire Milligan

In this workshop, we'll draw four realistic birds using colored pencils. You'll learn to capture feather textures—from soft and fluffy to sleek and iridescent—while exploring rich color palettes. We'll focus on layering, blending, and fine details to bring each bird to life.

STARTING AUGUST 4!



WORKSHOP 1

Sketching - The Foundational Artistic Skill

Instructor:
Jordan Rhodes

NOW OPEN!

Sketching is the first step in the creative process—a fast, visual way to bring ideas to life. In this workshop, Jordan will share how he sketches, how it supports idea generation, learning, and practice, and how it can simply be a fun, essential part of any artist's routine.



WORKSHOP 2

Underpainting in Watercolor

Instructor:
Mallery Jane

NOW OPEN!

Learn how to use underpainting in watercolor to create beautiful undertones, define shadows, and enhance color harmony. Discover how to choose the right colors, where to apply them, and how to integrate this technique into your own work.



WORKSHOP 4

Vibrant Illustrations with Gouache

Instructor:
Sofia Pavan Macias

Start Date:
November 3, 2025

In this four-part workshop, we'll create seasonal sketchbook spreads—spring, summer, autumn, and winter—using vibrant gouache paint. You'll learn techniques for painting with gouache, keeping colors bold, and making your illustrations come to life.

LEARN MORE
about Workshop 1

LEARN MORE
about Workshop 2

LEARN MORE
about Workshop 4

Join us for our free workshops at: strathmoreartiststudio.com



400 Series WATERCOLOR

Explore endless possibilities with our 400 Series Watercolor Paper

Strathmore 400 Series Watercolor Paper is ready to support your ideas in every format imaginable. Loved by artists for its reliable performance and versatility, this paper features a **cold press surface** with just the right texture for washes, layering, and detail work, making it perfect for both quick studies and finished pieces. At **140 lb /300 gsm**, it's heavy enough to handle multiple washes without buckling, yet remains an affordable choice for daily practice or larger projects.

Available in a **wide range of formats:**

Pads and Blocks:

Ideal for studio or plein air painting

Sheets and Rolls:

For when you need a custom size or large surface

Cards & Postcards:

Send your original work in the mail
or give a handmade greeting

Artist Tiles & Trading Cards:

Perfect for quick studies, small works,
and sharing mini masterpieces

Art Journals:

Durable, portable options for
travel & daily watercolor work





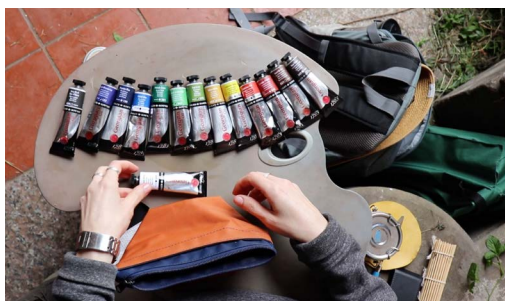
PLEIN AIR PAINTING FOR BEGINNERS

With Strathmore Ambassador Kelly Foss

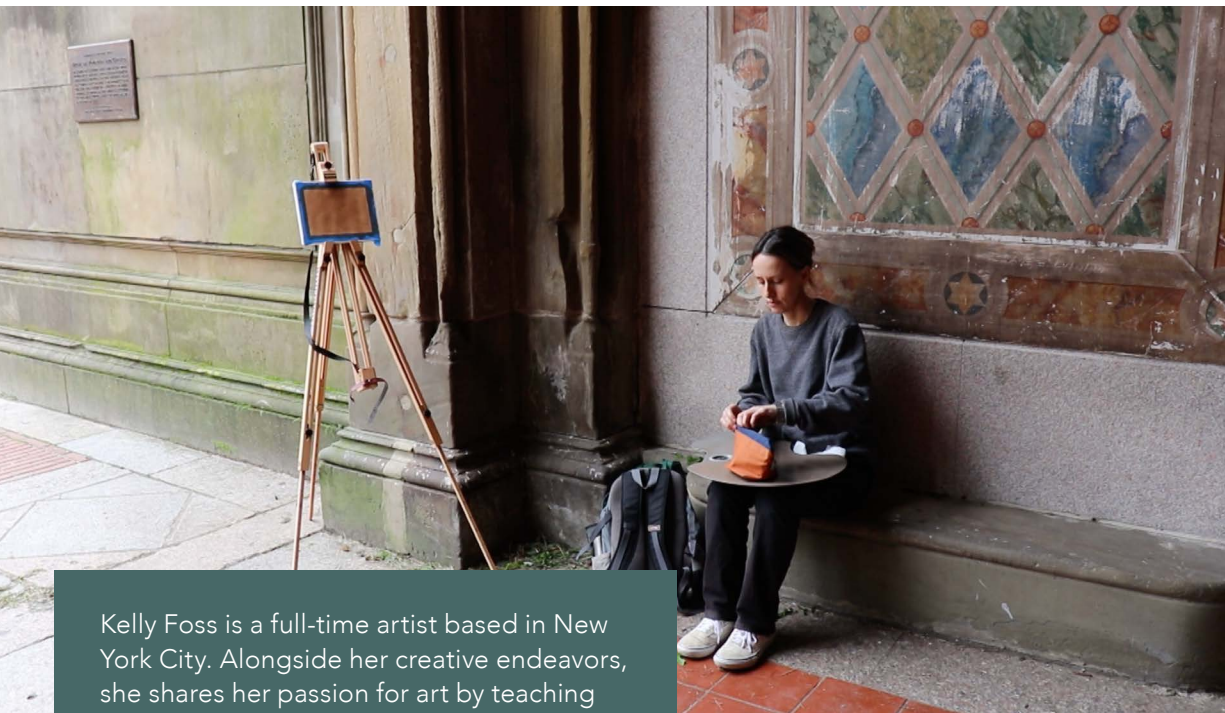
Join artist and Strathmore Ambassador Kelly Foss for a refreshing creative escape into the outdoors in this 3-part plein air painting series. From packing your supplies to scouting the perfect location and building your first on-site oil painting, each video guides you step-by-step through the beginner-friendly process of painting outside with confidence. Get ready to embrace the mess, enjoy the view, and let nature become your studio!

Video 1: What to Pack • **Video 2: Plein Air Locations** • **Video 3: Let's Paint Outside**

WATCH THE TUTORIALS HERE



ABOUT THE ARTIST: KELLY FOSS



Kelly Foss is a full-time artist based in New York City. Alongside her creative endeavors, she shares her passion for art by teaching occasional classes and workshops both locally and globally. Kelly has cultivated a strong online presence, fostering connections through her YouTube and Instagram platforms. In her free time, she finds joy in plein air painting, especially in Central Park..

Throughout her life, Kelly has traversed the United States, calling Georgia, New Mexico, Vermont, Texas, Hawaii, and New York home. Despite her many moves, art has remained a constant source of comfort and inspiration. Her artistic journey began at a young age, nurtured by her mother, who is also an artist.

Drawn to all things creative, Kelly honed her skills in figures and portraiture through four plus years of academic art training with live models. With a keen eye for detail, she excels in rendering faces, flesh, and fabric, striving to make her paintings and drawings feel tangible and lifelike.

Kelly takes great delight in sharing her knowledge and expertise with students who share her love for realistic art, encouraging creatives to 'Keep calm and art on'.



kellyfoss.com

  
[@kellyfossart](https://www.instagram.com/kellyfossart)



WILDFLOWERS IN WATERCOLOR

with *Tin Bejar*

Bring the beauty of nature into your sketchbook with our Wildflowers in Watercolor series, taught by artist [Tin Bejar](#). This beginner-friendly collection guides you through painting four classic wildflowers—poppies, daffodils, black-eyed susans, and daisies—using simple watercolor techniques, subtle blending, and delicate brushwork. Whether you're new to watercolor or looking to grow your floral painting skills, these calming tutorials will inspire you to slow down, observe details, and create your own beautiful botanical pieces

SUPPLIES:

- Strathmore [500 Series Ready Cut Watercolor paper](#) (100% Cotton, 140lb/300gsm, 8x10")
- [MaimeriBlu Watercolors](#)
- Princeton [Heritage](#), [Aqua Elite](#) and [Lauren](#) Brushes in Round Sizes 2-8
- Princeton [Mini Detailer](#) Brushes

WATCH THE TUTORIALS HERE





WATERCOLOR PAINTING TIP: LET THE PAPER BE YOUR BRIGHTEST HIGHLIGHT

When painting with watercolor, one of the most powerful tools in your kit can be the white of the paper itself. Watercolor artists often reserve the white of the paper to create brightness, sparkle, and contrast in their work. This approach requires some planning, but the payoff is luminous, light-filled paintings.

How to Do It

- 1. Identify Your Highlights First.** These are areas you'll avoid painting altogether.
- 2. Work Light to Dark.** Start with light washes and gradually build up darker tones, always keeping those reserved white areas protected.
- 3. Masking Fluid Is an Option.** For very detailed highlights, like the reflection in an eye or fine hairs catching the light, masking fluid can be used.
- 4. Resist the Urge to "Fix It" Later.** It's tempting to go back and try to lift paint or use white ink. While this can be effective or useful in certain cases, it won't always match the brilliance of untouched paper. Trust your planning!