

# The Lone Birch

This scene/design actually exists. The lake is about five miles away from my home in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. I hope you enjoy painting this project.

## Supplies

**General Pencil Co** : Kimberly® Watercolor Pencils: #719 Terra Cotta, # 769 Light Olive, #712 Light Blue, #714 Light Green, #707 Green, #715 Black, #711 lemon Yellow, #706 Purple, #739 Straw, #703 Blue, #704 Brown. Factis™ ES-20 extra soft white vinyl eraser, # S-650 Little Red® All-Art™ stainless steel pencil sharpener, The Masters® Brush Cleaner & Kimberly® Graphite Pencil (2H).

**Brushes:** A number 6 round watercolor brush and a 1 inch flat wash brush.

**Masket Application brushes:** previously used acrylic #2 round and #4 flat.

**Watercolor paper:** 90 lb cold press student grade watercolor paper for palette technique and 140 lb cold press paper 11x14 to paint design on.

**Misc. Supplies:** absorbent paper towel, masking fluid, shampoo, masking fluid and water bin.

## Color Reference Guide

\*\*with the exception of the distant forest trees section, all colors are listed in the order you will place them in that area when painting.

SKY: blue

WATER: blue, blue+purple

DISTANT FOREST TREES: purple+blue, blue+green, blue+green+more blue, light olive+green blue+light blue, light olive, light olive+blue, light olive+blue+more blue.

FOREGROUND TREES (distinct trees): green+black, purple+green, blue.

ROCKS: (light colors) black+ lots water, terra cotta, yellow+lil black, straw, brown+terra cotta+yellow, (darker colors) brown+black, black+blue, brown

SAND: straw, straw+brown, terra cotta, brown+terra cotta+yellow

GRASSES: light green, terra cotta, light olive, green, brown

FOREGROUND HILL FOLIAGE BY BIRCH: green+light green, blue, blue+light olive

LEAVES BY BIRCH TRUNK: light green, green, green+blue, green+blue+more blue.

BIRCH TREE: A: **First step colors:** terra cotta+brown, brown+terra cotta+yellow, blue+

black+water. (All these mixes are light so use small amounts of paint.) **B: Second step colors:** brown, black +brown, black+water. **C: third step colors:** brown, black.

### Technique Definitions

Palette technique: On a piece of student grade watercolor paper draw swatches of color with each pencil. Load your brush with water and run the brush over a color swatch to turn pigment into a wet paint puddle.

Draw and wet: Draw with pencil tip on dry paper. Run a damp brush over color line to look like paint line or leave alone to look like a color pencil line.

Draw on wet: Draw with pencil tip on wet paper for bold concentrated color.

### Directions

**Prep:** Tape pattern on window, lay 140 lb paper over pattern and trace pattern onto paper using a 2H graphite pencil. Use a light touch and make lines only as dark as needed to see. Option B: use a light box instead of window. Option C: lay 140lb paper flat, lay wax less graphite paper over paper, lay pattern on top and lightly trace over pattern lines with a stylus.

**Step one A:** Thoroughly coat the acrylic brush with shampoo, dip the brush into masking fluid, then stroke the loaded brush horizontally across each individual rock at the background forest edge. **\*\*Leave part of each rock exposed.** (hint) mask should go on lightest sections of each rock. If shampoo starts to thin and expose hairs, rinse brush, reload with shampoo then masking fluid again and then continue on. Next apply mask to foreground rocks next to birch tree. (just like you did the background rocks) Finally, stroke masking fluid horizontally across the birch tree trunk. Start at the top of the tree and work your way down. Try to leave a few spots exposed on the tree by slightly lifting up on the brush as you execute some of the strokes. **BE CAREFUL NOT TO SMEAR ROCKS AS YOU DO TREE.** Optional....stroke in a few mask lines in the reed/long grass area also. Let masking fluid dry thoroughly before you start panting.

**Step two:** Water is done using the palette technique (please refer to definition sheet). On 90lb student grade paper draw several watches of blue and purple. Wet the water area using the 1" brush and water. Try to leave a few dry spots on the paper. Load 1"brush with activated blue from the palette and stroke color in water area on left side of paper. Immediately load brush with palette mix of blue+purple and stroke color mix

on water edge by background rocks, foreground bank edge and throughout the rest of the water. Let dry.

**Step three:** The sky and background forest is done with palette technique. Make several palette swatches of all needed colors before you wet paper. Next rip some paper towel so it has curved /ragged edges and place the pieces over entire water/lake area of your paper. Load the 1" brush with water and stroke water across sky area and down into the tree areas. Load the 1" wash brush with blue and stroke in the sky area color. Go back and forth horizontally when laying in the color. IMMEDIATELY load the round brush with one of the tree colors and loosely lay in the color in a few spots, rinse and load brush with another tree color and place color in a few more areas, continue step until all tree colors have been used. As the paper starts to dry you can stroke in a few more trees shapes if all previous colors have run together and no distinct tree shapes are visible. Make sure you stroke some of each color in small sections of the rocks too. Let dry.

**Step four:** Start your sand using the palette technique. Make several swatches of each color on the palette and then working light to dark lay in colors using the round brush. \*\*In the open area in the middle, try to leave a few small areas white. Once dry, we will come back and draw and wet additional color if needed.

**Step five:** The first step of the foreground foliage on the bottom right of the design and under the tiny fir tree above the rocks is palette technique. Make several color swatches on the palette. Load the round brush with water and slip slap water all around foliage area leaving some small areas dry. Immediately load round brush with activated green and slip slap some color in area, then rinse and reload brush with blue and slip slap some color in then rinse and load blue+light olive in brush and fill in remaining areas. Let dry.

**Step six:** The distinct trees in the background section near the shoreline are first painted in palette technique and then details are added with the pencil tip itself. Make several color swatches on palette. Load the round brush with water only and stroke in a tree shape. While paper is still wet, load the brush with a tree mix and paint in a tree. \*\* Do not follow the water tree shape exactly as you paint over it. The paint will spread slightly where it hits moisture which will make your tree loose and interesting. When the trees are almost dry go back with the pencil closest to the tree color and draw small needle lines on the tree. \*\*You want these lines light because trees in the distance have less detail than foreground trees. If lines are too obvious, let paper dry more before continuing.

**Step seven:** Remove the masking fluid from the reeds and grass area using a pick up stick or by rubbing it off with your finger. \*\* Make sure finger is clean first. Draw color swatches of all grass colors on your palette. Activate a light green and stroke in some grass and reeds, rinse and load brush with terra cotta and stroke in some more grass, rinse and load with light olive and add more grass, rinse and load with green and stroke in more grass and finally load with brown and stroke in just a few reeds. Once dry, draw a few additional reeds of each color using the pencil tip right on the paper and then run a damp brush “here and there” only at the base of the grass so the ground area is darker and ruddy looking where all the colors have run together. If additional darks are needed still, lightly draw with the brown pencil in a few areas at the base and then run a damp brush across the entire base area so the color softly bleeds out. Let dry.

**Step eight:** Remove the masking fluid from the rocks and the birch tree. Make several color swatches of all the rock colors on your palette. There is no precise way to paint rocks. You will be placing several colors on each rock to create light, shadow, and base color and every rock does not have every color in it. The darker colors should be placed in shadow areas or where one rock lays behind another rock. The lighter colors should be used in high areas of the rocks where more light hits. Start placing color mixes on the rocks using the palette technique. Leave some white areas too. Once all rocks have color on them, evaluate where you might need more color. In a dark area add the additional color using the pencil tip and then either run a damp brush over the color or leave it alone. Lighter color areas can be enhanced with additional palette color or pencil tip color. Let dry.

**Step nine:** Step one/A: birch tree colors are palette technique and dry brushed on using a horizontal stroke. I use the round brush and lay the brush on it's side and drag it across the trunk in several areas of the tree or I gingerly load the 1" wash and drag the edge of the hairs lightly across those areas. Make several swatches of steps 1 and 2 colors on your palette then begin applying step one/A colors to the tree one at a time using a dry brush drag stroke. The color should hit and miss across the trunk giving a textured look to the trunk. A lot of the white of the paper should still be showing if you are doing this right. (practice first on scrap paper) Let dry and then load the round brush with a step two/B color and paint in the first stage of the knots and/or peeled bark lines on the trees. Repeat this step using the other step two/B colors in other areas on the trunk. While these areas are still wet draw with the tip of the same color pencil and make the dark knot (thicker area) or peeled bark line (thin line) in a smaller area of the step two/B color.

**Step ten:** The leaves by the trunk of the birch tree are done with the palette technique. Make several swatches of all color mixes on your palette. Randomly pre wet a leaf with water then load the round brush with light green and drop a small amount of color onto the leaf. Immediately load brush with green and drop in color in a few different areas of the leaf. Let dry. Next pre wet the leaf with water and then drop in a small amount of green + blue in a few areas of the leaf and let dry. Repeat all these steps on all the leaves. After all leaves are dry load the #8 brush with the green + blue + more blue mix and side float dark color in shadow areas on leaves. To do a watercolor side load... lay the color down, rinse brush, come back and straddle the brush between the wet paper and dry paper and stroke. The edge of the paint will softly blend out into the clear water on your paper.

**Step eleven:** The little fir tree next to the birch tree is done exactly like the other distinct trees you painted earlier except you add additional pencil tip detail to it and it is darker in color than the ones further in the distance. Do the same steps only use more paint and less water in your mix to make it darker and use the pencil tip when the paper is still pretty wet so the color detail lines really stand out.

**Step twelve:** To create texture in the sand, the foreground foliage or even on the birch tree try this fun grating technique. Wet that section of paper, take a pencil (color used in that area) and run the tip across a sanding block or nail file. The pencil should be positioned under the sanding block so the pigment particles fall off the sanding block and onto the paper. The particles will only stick where the paper is wet. Any particles that fall on dry paper will blow off easily. Finally, evaluate your painting. Do I need to add any additional color in any area to balance it? Do I need any more lights and darks on an element? (Lights and darks give form/depth to elements in a painting) If no corrections are needed, congrats on a job well done!

**Final step:** Don't forget to clean your brushes after painting. Place the paintbrush in water and then rub the brush hairs over the Masters® Brush Cleaner. The water will activate the cleaner and it will gently yet thoroughly remove any color residue in your brush. The preserver in the cleaner will condition the hairs as it cleans and lengthen the life of your brush.

Hints for the beginner water color pencil artist: Don't try to use all the color mixes in each area, just pick two and try the step. Remember, palette color will flow out easily if the paper is evenly wet. If it starts to dry, stop, wait till it is dry and rewet the paper and continue the step.

If you found this particular art project challenging. General Pencil's #70 Kit "Learn Watercolor Pencil Techniques Now", is a wonderful educational kit for beginners. It contains a step by step technique booklet, patterned projects on paper to paint, 6 Kimberly watercolor pencils, a paint brush and their All-Art™ Sharpener. Look for future project ideas in the upcoming months.

Until then, "Happy Painting to you always," Kathi Hanson