

Leaf Fall

DEBRA L. WELTY TDA



Add a touch of the great outdoors to your wardrobe with this versatile fabric paint design.

Debra L. Welty TDA designed this piece especially for people who want to create something original using the leaves we find in nature. I first painted this design on a heavy cotton twill shirt, but I have since used T-shirts and sports shirts. I encourage you to use your own favorite colors—have fun with the design and let it happen as it will.

PREPARATION

Wash the item to be painted. Do

not use fabric softener. When dry, slide the canvas panel beneath the painting surface; the panel must be large enough to extend all the way to the edges of the surface. Keep in mind that we will be painting wet-into-wet and that we want the colors to be free to spread. Secure loose fabric behind the board with pins or tape. The fabric should be taut but not tight, and all excess cloth must be secured to avoid dragging it accidentally through the paint.

You may gather your own leaves in a variety of shapes and sizes or use those provided in the line art, in which case they must be cut out. Scatter the leaves across the surface to test various arrangements. Point some leaves upward and some downward, and keep the design loose and free. When you have an arrangement you're happy with, trace the leaves directly onto the fabric using a no. 2 graphite pencil.

Painter's Checklist

SURFACE

Long or short sleeve cotton shirt, white or lightly colored.

PALETTE

DECOART SOSOFT FABRIC ACRYLICS

Antique Gold
Cadmium Orange
Christmas Red
Crimson
Primary Yellow
Wine

DECOART SOSOFT GLITTERS

Glimmer Glitter

DECOART SOSOFT METALLICS*

Glorious Gold Metallic
Luminous Gold
Renaissance Brown
Olde World Patina

BRUSHES

SCHARFF BRUSHES INC.

White Nylon Series 300 nos. 2 & 4 flats

White Nylon Series 3/4" wash

MISC.

1" sponge brush

SUPPLIES

Brush basin

Flat board (16" x 20" or 40.64 x 50.8cm)†

General's Charcoal Pencil no. 6B

Graphite pencil

Sakura Identi-pen Permanent Marker (black)

Palette paper

Paper towels

Pins or masking tape

Tracing paper

Transfer paper

SOURCES

The General's Charcoal Pencil is manufactured by the General Pencil Co., WWW.GENERALPENCIL.COM.

* Optional

† Any flat surface that can support the fabric surface during painting will suffice.

LET'S PAINT BACKGROUND

The background is painted using a watercolor technique. Therefore a lot of uncontrolled spreading of the colors will occur.

Using the 1" sponge brush, moisten the entire surface, but stay about 1/2" inch away from the leaves. The fabric should be evenly moist, but not sopping wet. The heavier the fabric, the more water it will take.

While the water is spreading, assemble your background colors on your palette; I recommend using all but the glitter paints. Do not use a sponge or wet the palette. Simply place the paint directly on the palette paper, beginning with the lightest values and moving to the darkest: *Golden Yellow*, *Primary Yellow*, *Cadmium Orange*, *Christmas Red*, *Crimson*, *Wine*, and *Christmas Green*. Arranging the paints in this way helps to illustrate which colors work best in combination. As a rule of thumb, never place a color directly beside another color that is more than two values away; for example, placing *Wine* alongside *Primary Yellow* will cause a conflict, detracting from both.

Touch your surface. Is it wet? Be sure that the water has bled into the outline of the leaves just a little, and if it hasn't, add more: otherwise, you'll have a dry ring around the leaves. Dampen any other dry areas as needed.

Rinse the no. 16 flat brush, blot it on the palette, and then touch the tip of the bristles in water. You want a brush that is very moist, but not dripping. Dip the wet brush into *Golden Yellow* and pull, pressing the paint into the bristles as you stroke; do one side and then the other.

When the brush is loaded, hold it perpendicular to the surface and, beginning near a leaf, pull away, skimming the bristles lightly across the surface. If you press too hard, you'll get solid lines. If your brush has too little paint in it, your lines will be too faint.

Remember that the water in the fabric will cause some bleeding and softening of the strokes. Repeat this step as needed until you have a good smattering of *Golden Yellow* across the surface.

Rinse the brush thoroughly, and repeat the above steps using *Primary Yellow* next and continuing into the darker values. You may apply some colors next to and even on top of each other, but keep their position on the palette in mind in order to keep the combinations of color pleasing. Starting with the lightest values keeps them from becoming lost in the background, so take care to not overpower them with the darker colors. Bear in mind that you can always add more color later to set off the leaves. For that reason, I keep the background light and airy at this point, planning to return to it later as needed.

LEAVES

Read all the instructions for painting the leaves before proceeding.

The leaves are painted wet-into-wet. You will apply paint heavily and blend colors where they meet, as you add them and while still wet. Paint each leaf to completion before moving on to the next.

Refer to the finished piece for guidance in placing colors.

MAPLE LEAVES

Maples have leaves that glow with vibrancy in the fall. I use a lot of *Primary Yellow* and *Cadmium Orange* on the main areas and *Christmas Red* and *Crimson* with *Wine* and *Christmas Green* on the smaller sections, tips, and bug bites. The dark, rich colors set off the bright, glowing colors.

Begin by applying *Primary Yellow* on one side or at the base of the leaf, covering a large area. Apply *Cadmium Orange* around this, blending the colors as you go. Apply *Christmas Red* next, further out, and then *Crimson* or *Wine*. If you'd like a green area, apply a small amount of *Christmas Green*

on a tip, at the base, or around a bug bite. Apply *Wine* around the *Christmas Green* and blend carefully where the colors meet. This should cover only a small area. Finish the leaf with *Cadmium Orange* and *Primary Yellow*.

OAK LEAVES

Oaks usually have dark, burnished leaves in the fall. Start with a dark green area covering one-third of the leaf: the base or end is a good place for this. Apply *Christmas Green*, stretching the color out toward the border of the green area. Apply *Wine* next, blending between the colors. Apply *Crimson* next, blending it into the *Wine*, and follow this with *Christmas Red*. Finish with *Cadmium Orange*, blending this into the *Christmas Red*; you may wish to finish the leaf so that the orange runs along the central vein, on one edge, or at the tip.

VEINS & STEMS

When you're satisfied with the color on your leaf, rinse the brush and load it in a color one or two values darker than the body of the leaf. Load the brush flat into the edge of the paint puddle so that the bristles come together in a nice, straight line. Holding the brush straight up and down at the base of the leaf, pull the leaf's central vein by "drawing" it down the center, using the chisel-edge and no pressure: the more pressure you apply, the fatter the line will become. Pull side veins off the central vein, and stroke stems on the leaves in the same manner.

Repeat the above steps for each of your leaves. When all the leaves are finished, check your painting and composition, making adjustments to the background and leaves as needed. If any leaf edges have been lost, apply a background color against the lost edge using the loading technique described in the background instructions. (You may need to moisten the surface again as well.) Use any color that will show up in that area, keep-



ing the color dark against the leaf, and fading it out as you move away.

When the leaves are dry to the touch, you can stroke *Karat Gold Glitter* or *Glimmer Glitter* over them to add more sparkle.

FINISHING

Gently pull the painted fabric surface away from the canvas panel to prevent it from drying onto the board. After the paint has dried for at least forty-eight hours, launder it using mild detergent. ☘

ARTIST'S SKETCH

Teaching at her home studio, Jubilee Junction, and designing from photographs and nature keeps Debra L. Welty TDA busy; but this industrious SDP member also travels, teaches at retreats, conventions, and chapters, and stays involved at her own chapter, where she has served in various offices.

Debra has been a member of SDP since 1985. You may email her at JUBILEEJUNCTION@GMAIL.COM or call (330) 939-0095. Visit Debra's website at WWW.KOALATYART.COM.



Design is shown
at actual size.

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