30-Day Flash Challenge

Day 3: Background and Border

Materials:

- Daler-Rowney F.W. Acrylic Ink: blue, red, yellow
- Speedball Super Black India Ink
- Painter's tape
- 2 brushes: for black and for color
- Rinse cups: Dixie Wax cups
- A plastic palette to mix colors
- Your design from Day 2

Homework:

Play around with the primary colors to get a nice shade of khaki brown with a hint of yellow for the background. Create a border for your painting.

Transcript:

Welcome to day three! Today we're getting into the painting of the piece that we designed yesterday. You should have two or three different designs, so choose your favorite one. You will be fully rendering it, maybe even doing a background today. I'm going to go and use the one that we did yesterday together, the mom heart inspired by Sailor Jerry.

This part is optional, but I like to put a little bit of a background behind my flash. I remember reading Sailor Jerry's diary and some of his old letters I got a hold of, and he mentioned that he would use a diluted version of burnt umber and paint the background of his flashes.

As you can see on the flash designs behind me, many of them have a soft khaki brown color. At first, I thought it was just from age, but he would actually paint them like that because he said it closely resembled what human skin looked like. So seeing a design on light burnt umber background would let a client see how it would look on their skin. I know a lot of guys also use diluted coffee or tea, so you actually just take your morning coffee (black, no sugar or anything like that) and paint your background.

But what I'm going to do is make a wash with the primary colors. I want to paint the background first because with the actual design itself, we're going to be using the watercolors. If any fresh water touches a dried water color, it'll reactivate and spread, ruining your entire design.

For the background, I'll be using the FW liquid acrylic. Again, you can use coffee, tea, you can use the Dr.Martins, whatever you want to use. But just for the sake of experimenting with different materials for you guys, I'm going to be using the liquid acrylic.

Since we don't have any browns, we're gonna have to mix it from the primary colors. I'm using the liquid acrylic FW Crimson, I have Indian Yellow, a really nice traditional yellow, and a Fluorescent Blue. But first things first, what you want to do is take some paper towels, doesn't matter what kind, whatever you have available, and start setting up your station.

Setting up the station

I like to have mine in a particular order. I'll typically put my paint tray here. I have my rinse out cup here with two cups on. The first one can leak if it sits for too long. So I put one cup inside the other and I'll have that here. I also have my two paint brushes: one for my black ink, and one for my color.

Then I have my liquid acrylic colors and my primaries of Dr.Martin's watercolors. And of course, I'd have my Speedball Black Indian. For some reason, the older it gets, the harder it is to get a nice smooth blend. But we'll do our best and make it happen. You can see the concentrated dried-up ink sitting on the bottom of the bottle here.

Mixing brown out of primary colors

First things first, let's make some brown. Brown is typically a mixture of a few different colors, and you can do it in a few different ways.

My favorite way is to mix green and red with a hint of yellow, and then wash that out to a nice brown. I do the same set up for my skin tone. If I'm doing like a painting or tattooing a portrait, you want to try and get that kind of light khaki color with some yellow undertones.

First, let's make our green. You want to always add your strongest color to your weakest color. The blue is super powerful. So what I'm gonna do first is add my yellow and then I'll use my brush to add some blue.

As you can see, even without adding any red yet, I'm already getting a nice kind of ochre, almost like a caramel color with a gold or yellow undertone. It also gives us enough of a green tint for what we're looking for. Then I'll add some red to it.

You can always spend $10-$15 and get a brown (I like Antelope Brown from Dr.Martin's). But if you're traveling or just starting out, I would encourage you to mix all of your colors by hand. Over here, we have two racks of paints and another full cabinet of paints at the shop, and we use probably 10% of them. At first, you get excited by a full set of ink. But in the end, you end up using only 10 to 20 of them, sticking to the same color. So buy the primaries: red, yellow, blue, and learn color theory. Learn to mix your own colors.

Now that I have a nice olive green color, I'll test it. The color in the palette always looks different from when you paint it and then from when it's dry. So I'm gonna let it dry for a few minutes to really see the color of it. But in the meantime, I'll add some red straight into my green.

Everything that you see me do here translates directly to tattooing. When I'm prepping for tattooing, I know I'm gonna be mixing colors and I'll be using a blue to mix, but I also want to have a blue to do a blue section of the tattoo. I'll put out two or three caps of blue, and some will be used for mixing, while other ones will stay pure blue.

Going back to the brown color, we now got a nice caramel tone. I do have some air bubbles here, so I'd probably let this sit for a little while. I'll take my rinse cup and I'll pinch it to create an edge that I can pour from. I'll fill up a cap with water, dip my brush into the color, squeeze out the excess, and put it straight into my water, cleaning my brush in the pool of water.

If you're doing this with straight brown or with coffee or tea, I'll typically make a second rinse out and I'll just start putting it into my water, so I end up with a whole cup full of wash. It's just a lot easier. But there are many different ways to mix the colors, so I'm introducing you to color theory.
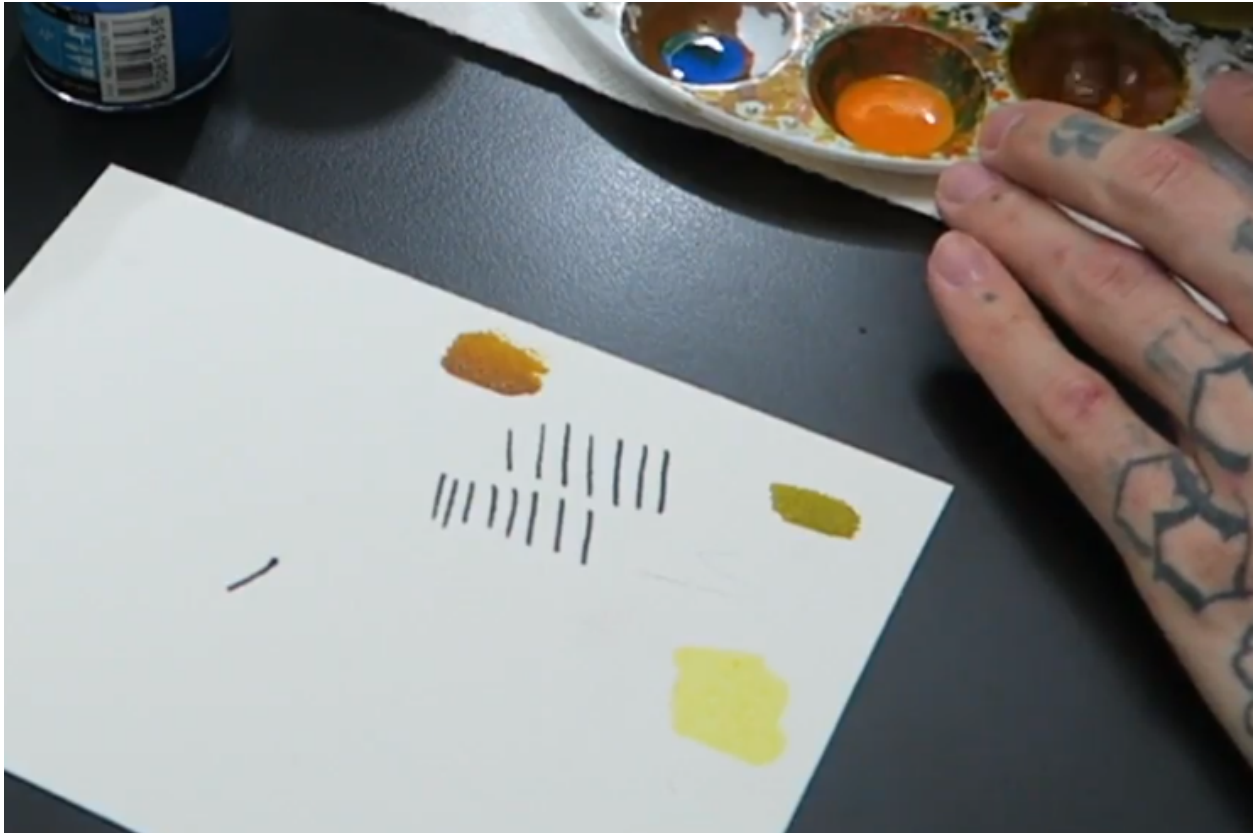
The mix is still too bright, so I'll darken this a bit with red, and then level it out with blue. Basically, it's just experimenting, trying different colors, showing different mixtures. Now, I wouldn't recommend it if you have a client in the chair to be sitting over here for 45 minutes and mixing all your colors and doing stuff like that. But to practice, this is great.

And another important thing, never mix different mediums together. Don't put Dr.Martin's watercolors together with FW's or with liquid text ink, mixing them all together in this little cap here. They're going to dilute at different levels and it's going to look really weird.

The wash color looks pretty good. We'll know more once we see how that looks when it's dried. Give it a few minutes to dry completely, the paint looks much different and much less vibrant when it's fully dry than when it's wet. Too many times I've ruined my painting just because I didn't give it enough time to dry and show its real color.

Adding a different amount of water will have an effect on your dilution too. Also, note how important it is to have a paper towel under your palette in case you make a mess.

Painting the background

Now we're getting down to the actual painting. Ideally, I would have a larger brush to do this because you want to keep a wet edge on your painting. That means that you don't want parts of your paintings to dry up before you continue painting the adjacent parts.

If you're not careful, you'll have a clear line between the old and the new paint. This is why it's ideal to use a wide flat edge brush for this kind of work, but we're going to challenge ourselves here and work with whatever you have right now.
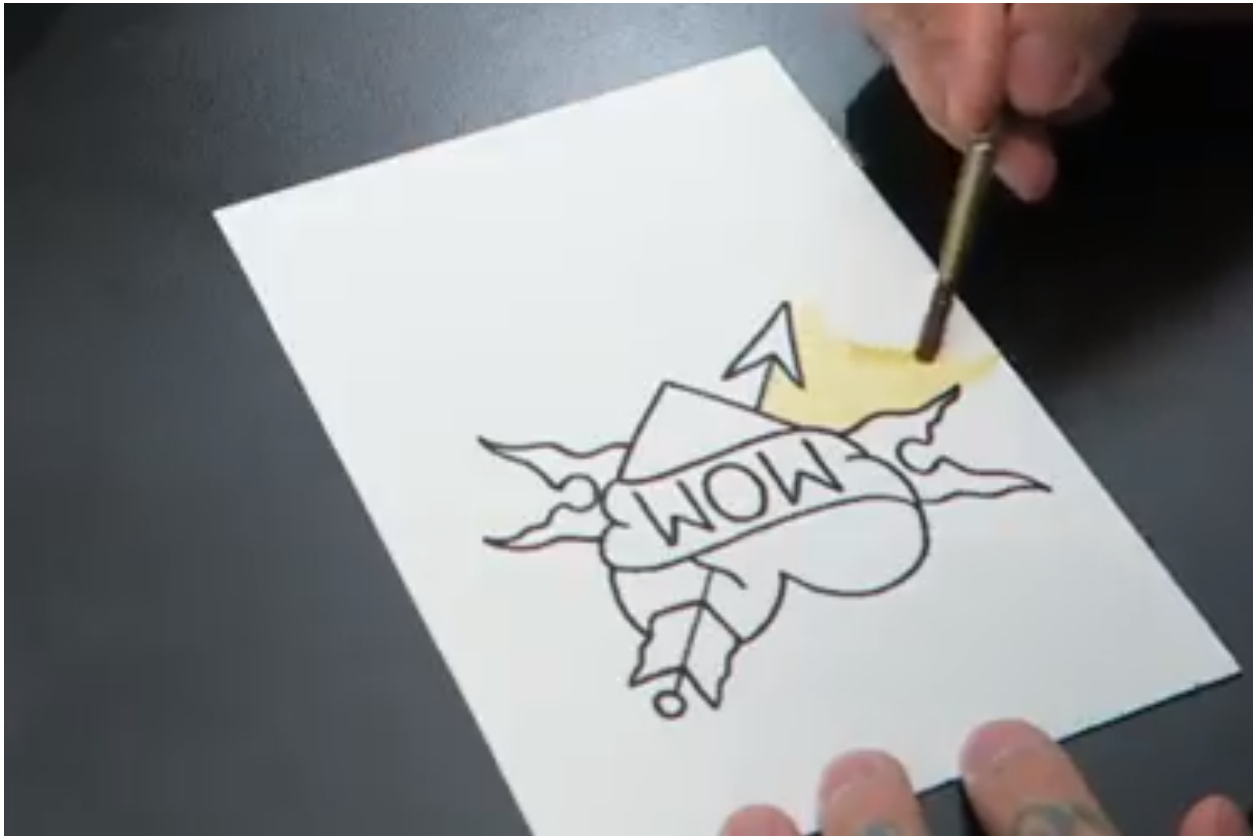
We're starting below the left edge of the banner, working quickly but not too quickly. It takes time for the paper to absorb the moisture and the color, so don't use large streak movements to cover the most space - you will have those streaks show once the paper dries up. Instead, saturate your brush well to keep the paper wet for a while, and vary the pressure of your brush to determine how much pigment is coming off of your brush at that moment. For the tighter parts, use lighter pressure and the same thing is true for speed.

As you're covering the page with the color, make sure to keep all edges moist. You can notice that I'm starting to get the minor warping of the page due to moisture absorbing into the sheet. It's not as critical for this size of the flash, but whenever you're working on a larger piece, you might need to tape the edges down or find other ways to keep the paper flat.

If you see any puddles forming on the surface, come back with your brush to spread them out and even out the color. I'm using just the tip of the brush in the tight areas, as opposed to pushing down on the brush in wider areas so that most of the brush surface is in contact with the page.

If you get a dry edge, it's not that big of a deal. Chances are, it's not going to dry up to have a color as consistent as the rest of the page, but our skin is not perfect either.

The biggest benefit of spending time to do the background color is that any "negative space" white highlight in your design will really stand out once the painting is done.
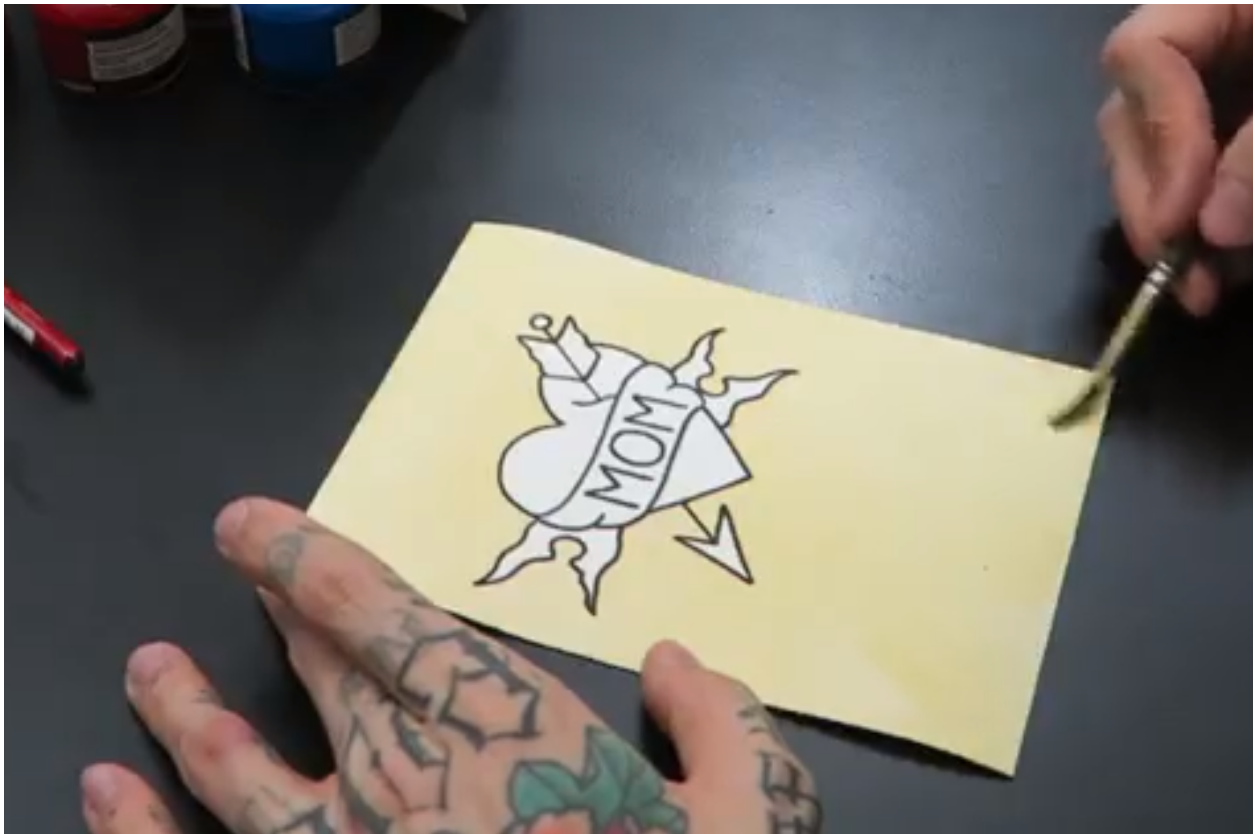
We're going to let this dry out for 10-15 minutes.

Now that it's dry, look at your design. You might need to straighten it out a bit if it's a bit wavy. If you picked up a few hairs from the brush, you can just try and scratch it off with your finger.

Here I have a little bit of texture, it isn't too big of a deal. Clean off the edges if they have some random debris on their side. The next thing you want to do is put a nice border around the outside of the painting.

Creating a border

Tape it to something that you don't care about since you're going to get ink on it. There are a few ways you can create a border. One way is just to simply take a ruler and a Sharpie and go around the edge and do it that way. But I'm going to do it differently because we're here to practice, right?

What I'll do is I'll stick one edge of my tape down to my background surface, making sure this edge is still loose and I'll feed it across and get it roughly the same all the way.

I'll stretch my paper out and give the bottom the same treatment.

Since it's painter's tape, it's not going to give us a hard time by ripping the paper or by taking some paint off (provided it's dried up all the way).

Now we'll take the Speedball Black ink, shake it well, and put some into the palette. If you got some on your fingers, make sure to clean everything up before you resume painting. Shaken ink tends to jump out of the bottle and make surprise stains on your hands, so look out for that. That's an easy way to ruin your work.

Dip your brush into the black ink and quickly paint the edge. Do the same on the bottom.

Something else to look out for: make sure that your tape is stuck to the paper in a really tight way. If you get paint under the edge, it'll start to look rough. Sometimes it's inevitable. Sometimes it's going to happen no matter what you do, but I'm going to try and prevent it as much as possible.

Now we'll just let these two edges dry before continuing with the other two edges. Once the paint is fully dry, we'll tackle the other side. India ink dries faster than other paints, so several minutes should be enough.

Gently take off the edge of the tape and carefully peel it back against itself. Again, make sure you wait until the painting is dry!

Continue with the other two sides. That will be it for part 1 of today's video. In part two, we're going to be starting the actual painting. It's a long day compared to the other ones, but it'll be worth it in the end when you have a finished design. These are the foundations of what we'll be doing in the future, so every little thing is important.

See you soon in the video for Day 3, Part 2!