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## **Color Image Transfers on Wood** with Courtney Cerruti

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### **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

#### Overview

I love making image transfers and if you saw the other workshop where we did a lot of black and white techniques, this project is actually going to focus on color which is fabulous. I'll show you how to take your photo, transfer it on to a wooden surface, we'll do some finishing techniques, and then you'll have a lovely little piece that you can give as a gift, or hang in your house for a bit of instant decor.

### **Chapter 2 - Materials**

#### Materials

You don't really need a lot of materials to make this project which I love, it's something you can totally do on your kitchen table. The first thing that you'll need is a piece of wood to transfer onto. Now this can be in any shape or size, but what you're looking for is something that has a smooth surface, so that you get a really clean transfer. And I prefer to use this kind of blonde wood, it gives a lot of luminosity in your photo, especially if you're doing a portrait which looks really nice with skin tones. You can use a darker piece if you like, I would just experiment with your image and the type of wood that you like. But a clean surface is excellent. And you can get these at the craft store, they come in circles and rectangles, so you can experiment with different shapes and sizes. For your photo you're going to need a laser copy, so a photocopy, a color copy of your image that you want to transfer. Traditionally a sort of higher contrast images but there is a little bit of wiggle room there, something that's also really soft can work really nicely. So I have this photo of my friend Molly that's an Instagram photo it has a really soft focus, and that's going to transfer really nicely also. So you'll need something that fits the size of your wood. So you can cut it down, or you can shrink it before you make your photocopy. To make our transfer, we're going to be using gel medium, and I like to use a matte gel medium, because I like that satin finish, and I think it transfers the best. You can use whatever kind of gel medium you might have lying around. You do want something that has a fairly heavy body to it. You'll need a couple of burnishing tools you can use a bone folder if you have it, I like to use a popsicle stick. Or for this project I really like to use something like a library card, so if you've got that handy, that works great. You'll also need a couple of brushes for gluing the surface. We're going to burnish it so the type of bristle doesn't matter too much, I've got a fine bristled brush here, as well as a sort of just standard glue brush. You also need a sponge and a bit of water, and I like to just have that handy, in a little dish or cup. I always have a tea towel or paper towel handy as well since we're using water it's nice if we have wet fingers and we don't want them to just use a tea towel. And I'll show you a finishing technique that will require just a tad of oil. I mean literally a couple of drops. I've got some olive oil here. Whatever you have in your kitchen or bathroom will work just fine.

### **Chapter 3 - Creating Transfer**

#### Transfer image

[female speaking] Before you apply your gel medium to your wooden surface, you want to make sure that it's free of any kind of debris. Sometimes this can have like a little bit of wood dust on it. So, I'll just kind of wipe it off with my tea towel. You want to apply your gel medium in a good coat.

It doesn't need to be too thick and you definitely don't want it to be too thin. So, let's just squeeze some gel medium here onto the surface of our wood. I may need more. We'll see. You want to make sure that you go all the way to the edge. And what you're looking for is an even coat. You don't want to be able to see too much of the wood showing through the gel medium. But you don't want a layer that's so thick it looks like, I don't know, frosting or something. You want somewhere in between. If you need to add more or take some away, that's totally fine. I'm applying this with a brush, but you could also apply it with your library card if you wanted. This is looking good here. I just need to add a little more gel to this corner. That's a nice, even coat of gel. It's thick enough that I don't see a lot of the wood showing through, it's not so thick that it's like this heavy coat. While the gel is wet, and this is really important, you need to place your photograph face down into the wet gel. So I've got my color photograph. This is of my friend Angela. And I'm going to place it face down into the wet gel. And I sort of pre-trimmed it a bit. So that I don't have a lot of excess paper. And just with my fingers, I'm going to do a light burnish. [rubbing noise] And then I'm going to get my library card. And you want to burnish, but you don't want to press so hard that you're pushing the gel out from underneath your image. Because then your image won't have anything to grab onto to make a transfer. So I'm really lightly burnishing. And I like to use the library card or credit card or whatever you have hanging out in your wallet, because it gives flat, even pressure. If I was to use this guy on the tip, I could easily push out a streak of gel. I could use it on its side though, too. So if you have a Popsicle stick handy, feel free to do that. [rubbing] Once your image is burnished, this needs to dry. And I mean completely dry. I get very tempted to peek and see if it's ready for the next step. But, you can really mess up your transfer if this isn't dry all the way. So, I ideally like to let it dry overnight. That means I can make five or ten of these and go to bed and when I wake up in the morning, then I'm ready to reveal my image. So, really, really let this dry. If you're working in a sunny area, you can let it sit outside in the sun for a couple of hours and that will be sufficient. But again, it has to be fully dry. So if you're tempted to peek or you think you might be, go to sleep and just set it aside. And then in the morning, you'll have a little surprise.

#### Rub off paper backing

[female speaking] Once your transfer is completely dry, and I mean completely dry, you're ready to start rubbing off the paper backing, which is going to reveal your image. Now, I don't want to put this entire wood block under streaming water or in a big tub of water like we did with some of our other image transfers. Instead, I'm just going to use a sponge. Just get a little bit of water. And you can start to apply the water to the back of the transfer. [rubbing noise] Oh. And I can start to see the image goes this way. And I'm going to use the sponge to help me start to remove the paper backing as well. And, be mindful that you're just using the sponge part. You're not using that green scrubby part if that's what your sponge looks like. And I'm just going to carefully start to remove the paper backing. And I want to sort of rub all over the back of the transfer. I don't want to concentrate necessarily on just one area. If you rub really, really hard, you can start to remove your image. Sometimes that looks really great and you can get this sort of distressed look. But if you're wanting a really clean transfer, just make sure you're kind of rubbing the paper off all areas of the transfer. Continue just grabbing water as you need it. And I'm rubbing in a circular motion. [rubbing] Just keep rubbing away. Until all of that paper is removed. And if you notice any portion of your image trying to come up, I would switch from the sponge to just using your fingers. So you can really feel what you're doing. Sometimes you'll get a little slice that will, of the image that will come up and that's fine. Sometimes that looks really cool. Gives it a sort of vintagey look. But, if you

want to minimize that, you can use your fingers instead of a sponge. A sponge is good for sort of wiping away those fibers. [rubbing] And you can feel with your fingers. If there's paper pulp, it will feel kind of textured or gritty. And it should feel fairly smooth and satiny when you've taken off all the paper. Also I have my tea towel handy if I want to sort of rub the surface clean. [rubbing] She's almost there. I'm just going to do sort of a light rubbing. I can still feel some of the paper fibers. And when the paper is wet, it will be transparent. As this transfer dries, you may see some really fine little white hairs show up. And I'm going to show you a finishing technique on how to get rid of those once your transfer is fully dry. [rubbing] Okay. She feels nice and smooth. And there she is. Your image is transferred onto the wood.

## **Chapter 4 - Finishing**

### Finishing techniques

[female speaking] When your transfer is dry, you may notice a really fine, thin, white film of kind of residue fibers. Now, if you've rubbed as much as you possibly can to get those fibers off, and you can, once it's dry, you can add a little bit more water again. That's fine. But I want to show you one other technique that you can use to kind of make those little fibers disappear. And your image transfer needs to be dry. You want to take a little bit of oil. And I'm using olive oil here from my kitchen. I have it in a little container. You really only need a couple of drops. I just use my finger for this. You could also use paper towel. I'm just carefully applying some oil to the surface of my transfer. Your transfer does need to be dry because oil and water don't mix. And you'll see that these little white fibers will disappear entirely. Let me grab my paper towel just to kind of buff off that oily surface. [rubbing sound] And that will remove any last little fibers that you have, and give you a really nice sort of luster on your image. I think Angela looks pretty good. There's a little bit of gel here that probably came out when I was burnishing. You can just peel that off of the edge. If you want to take a little bit of sandpaper to the edge, you can do that as well. But, she's good as is. I wanted to share with you a few other transfers that I've made and different kind of finishing techniques. This photo is from an Instagram image and it has a really soft focus, which actually lends itself really nicely to a transfer on wood. Again, you have that luminosity from the color of the wood that sort of shows through in the image. So, you get this nice, kind of overall soft look. And I cut the image down to get this sort of wooden border just like I did with Angela, which I actually really like. It's kind of a nice way to frame this. This image has really vibrant color and this is where that oiling technique at the very end will really allow that to pop. We have that bright red and green. And I love the composition, the sort of triangular shape of her leg there. Again, just the wooden border for this one. If you're using a thicker piece of wood or possibly a different shape, and you want to do something else to sort of finish the edges, I like to use a little bit of washi tape. And if you've seen any of my other classes, you know how much I'm obsessed with that stuff. It's just a paper tape, but it gives a nice little finishing technique. And it's a good way to add some pattern or color to an image. For here, I liked her red shoes. And then just this little pop of red washi tape. And it's really easy to adhere. You could also use acrylic paint if you wanted to give sort of a finishing edge to these guys. This is such a quick and easy process. It's a great way to turn those photos on your iPhone into permanent pieces of art. And you capture these sort of intimate moments, but give them a permanence on the block of wood, which I really love.