

## Getting SKIN DEEP with Dru Blair

**N**EXT MONTH'S ISSUE WILL FEATURE A STEP BY STEP OF THE "Tica" painting, but we decided to give you a sneak preview of how one element is constructed. The highlight on the forehead is the most requested demonstration my students ask me to perform, so I thought it would be appropriate to share the technique of its creation.

The first order of business is to analyze the target area you wish to render. Using a good, clear photograph, isolate the portion of the image you are preparing to address, so that you are free from the distractions of the surrounding area. You can accomplish this by physically isolating the area of interest with a window cut in a piece of paper, or simply by focusing on one small section, wholly ignoring the rest of the image.

Sometimes it helps to "peel back the layers" like an onion to reveal the foundation of the image. In this case, I noticed that there were crisp dots of dark and light colors set against a background of soft transitions.

To establish the background, mix a buffered (opaque) paint to match to the dominant color of the skin, and spray until the surface is completely covered (*figure 1*). Opaque paint may be purchased, but it is more economical to create your own buffered color by adding a high quality opaque white to a pigmented paint.

The next step is to create areas of highlight and texture with an aggressive eraser and sand paper. The remaining residual paint will create an appropriate texture resembling skin. More paint is removed from the area in the center to correspond with the highlight on the center of the subject's forehead (*figure 2*).

Keep in mind that nature is full of chaos, which needs to be reflected in your paintings. As humans, we have an unconscious tendency to create a sense of order and repeat the same shapes over and over. You must be vigilant against repetition, because too much of the same pattern will make your painting look contrived and compromise its realism.

We lighten the color by removing paint instead of covering the paint with a lighter opaque color for two reasons. First, removing

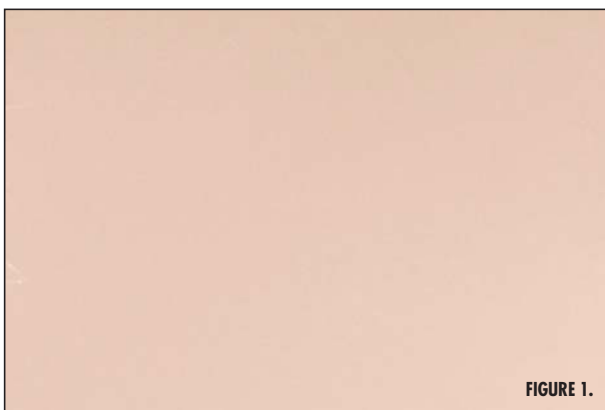
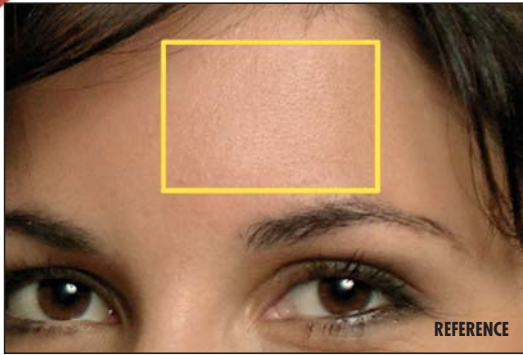


FIGURE 1.



FIGURE 2.



paint with an eraser or sandpaper creates texture, which is what we desire for this section of skin. Secondly, by removing paint we will not have to contend with a blue color shift, a phenomenon that occurs when a light opaque paint is sprayed over a darker color.

Using the same buffered paint, lightly spray the paint over the textured surface, allowing the highlights to show through (*figure 3*). Since the paint that is already on the board is the same buffered color, it will not change with the addition of the more of the same color. If the paint were transparent, the addition of more paint would darken everything. At this point, several passes with the eraser and/or sand paper may be necessary to refine the highlights. After the refinement is made, spray another light coat of the buffered color on the board (*figure 4*).

Some of the larger bumps on the skin have their own specular highlight, or reflection of the light source. The placement of the specular highlight is critical, and the edges are transitional or intermediate. In other words, the edges of the specular highlight are neither very crisp nor very soft. To create these edges, a colored pencil works well.

Some artists will make the mistake of using pure white for all their highlights, but white highlights are extremely rare on skin. With some experimentation, it was determined that a Rosy Beige #1019 Berol Prismacolor pencil corresponded most closely with the reference photograph (*figure 5*). Of course, flesh tone palettes are unique to the individual, lighting, photography and printing. Rarely does one individual's color palette work for another person, and while the Rosy Beige highlight may fit this image, chances are it will not work on another painting. Be sure to twirl the pencil so that it leaves a softer mark.

Be sure to catch next month's issue, which will feature the creation of the entire "Tica" painting. For more information about Photorealism, visit my website at [www.drublair.com](http://www.drublair.com) 

