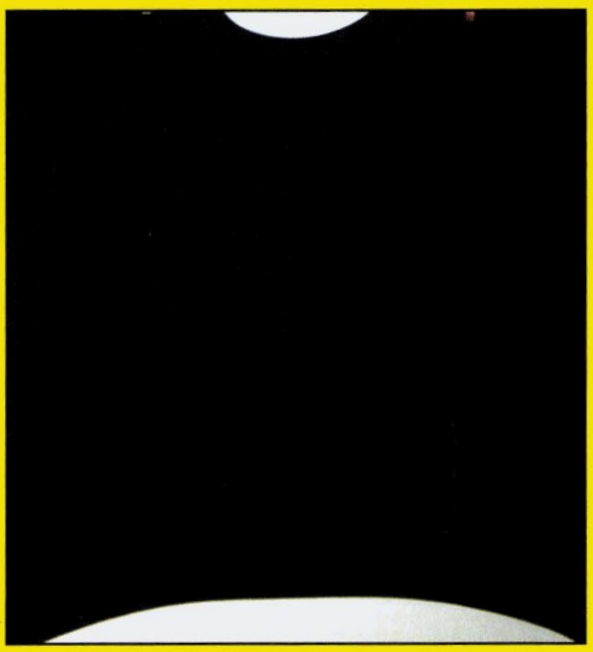


GRIN AND BEAR IT

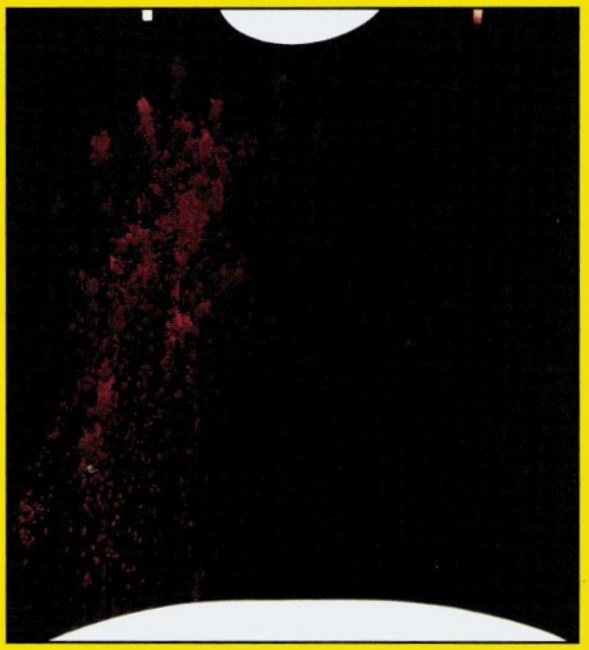
By Gary Worthington



Ask 10 shirt artists the best way to airbrush onto black shirts and you may very well get 10 different answers. However, all should agree that, if done well, black shirts provide a canvas for some of the most awesome examples of T-shirt art. This article shares a technique that I've practiced for 14 years involving the use of bleach in lieu of white paint to establish a white base for spraying transparent colors. This innovative approach clearly makes the color-on-black process easier, and also lends itself to some very interesting textures and effects. Black shirts I have painted using this method are some of the most popular and attention-grabbing displays I've used.



Step 1: For the bleaching process, begin by stretching the T-shirt tightly over a piece of cardboard or shirt board. This will protect the areas of the shirt you don't want to bleach (for this demonstration, a 100-percent cotton Fruit of the Loom shirt was used). Not all black shirts produce the same results when using bleach and you may have to experiment with different brands in order to find one that gives you the results you want.



Step 2: Begin by mixing a 50/50 solution of bleach and water in a trigger style spray bottle. Set the spray pattern to stream and spray the shirt. The pattern you spray should be random and have a speckled look to it. Covering the shirt with too much bleach will cause the shirt to have a uniform color and lose some of the character gained from this technique.

Step 3: Once you have a good pattern defined, switch the spray bottle to mist. The mist spray pattern will give you a solid, more uniform look than the previous stream pattern did. Begin by saturating only the center areas of the shirt where the focal point of your design will be, leaving the drips and splatters around the outside edges for effect. These areas can be used later to your advantage in the finished design. Once you have achieved a look you are happy with, let the shirt sit for about 10 minutes to give the bleach time to work. At this point the bleached areas probably will have an an orange tint to them; don't worry, this will change. Carefully remove the shirt from the board, trying not to let any wet areas touch the remaining black parts of the shirt. Place the shirt into a washing machine that has been prefilled with water. Wash and dry the shirt as you normally would to remove the bleach.





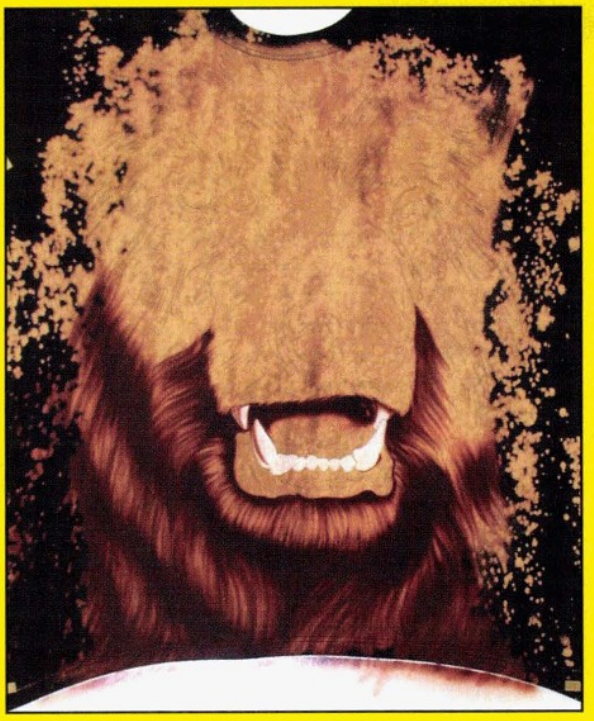
Step 4: Once the shirt has been washed and dried, stretch it tightly onto the shirt board. Using an Ebony drawing pencil, make a detailed drawing of the bear onto the shirt. Because of the bear's dark fur, these pencil lines won't show through in the final image.



Step 5: Start the painting by spraying in the areas of the teeth using opaque white. The overspray from colors used later will land on the teeth, giving them a stained and more realistic appearance. Small details like this are easily overlooked but can help make a painting more convincing to your customers.



Step 6: With Createx light brown, using short dagger-like strokes, start defining the fur in the chin area. Create a sense of shape by curving these strokes slightly in unison from top and bottom. This will create the illusion of a tuft of fur on the bear's chin.



Step 7: Continue with the longer fur on the chest and neck area of the bear using longer, more tapered dagger strokes. Varying the length and direction of these strokes will create realistic, thick fur. Refer to your reference often and be very careful to precisely follow the direction of the animal's fur.



Step 8: Using tight dagger strokes, define the area of short, flattened hair on the bear's muzzle and around the eyes. While working on this area, sculpt the bear's nose with the light brown, using a combination of hard lines and soft shading.



Step 9: Finish the brown areas of fur around the eyes and on the forehead of the bear. At this point, the fur should look natural and transition well from one area to another.



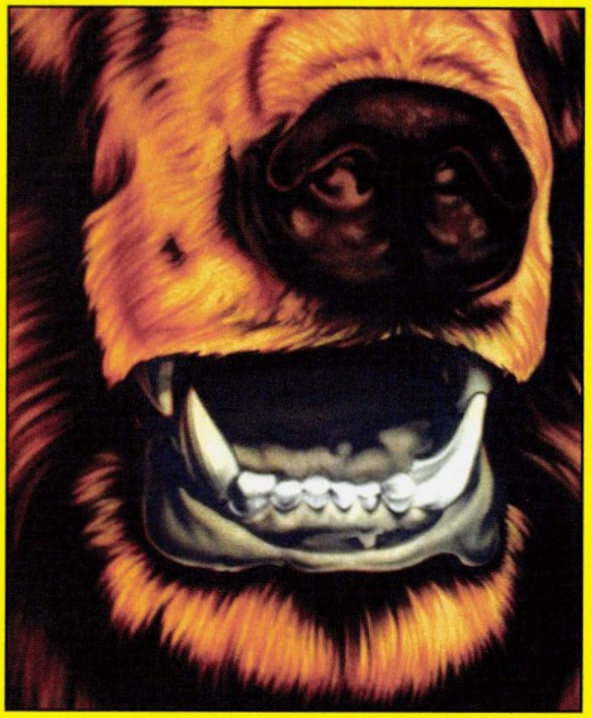
Step 10: To give the bear its natural golden appearance, spray a glaze of Createx yellow moderately over the whole painting except for the mouth area. Be careful not to add too much color. Using florescent orange, very lightly glaze over the yellow. You only want to take the edge off the yellow, not shift the color to orange.



Step 11: Use black to fill in the nose area leaving some of the brown underpainting to show through. This gives the nose added depth and a more natural appearance. Then, add the darker shadow areas of fur using opaque black, mimicking the strokes used earlier with the light brown.



Step 12: Finish the darker areas of fur around the bear's head. Follow the same direction and angles as you did earlier but don't completely cover the black strokes. This creates dimension and depth in the fur and makes the bear blend well with the blackness of the shirt. Use the black to define the areas around the eyes and brows. The fur should look thick and have a nice flow to it.



Step 13: Start defining the teeth using a mixture of transparent gray with a few drops of ultramarine blue. Use this same color to fill in the shadow areas of the mouth, lips and gums. This color will serve as an underpainting for the next step.



Step 14: Spray florescent pink lightly over the gray areas in the mouth, staying away from the teeth. To create a little more depth, spray a light mist of florescent violet in the shadow areas around the mouth. Add a little light brown and yellow to further "stain" the bottom areas of the teeth.



Step 15: Use opaque black sparingly to fill in the deepest shadows of the mouth and lips.



Step 16: Add color to the eyes using red to define the darker areas around the pupils and outside edges, and florescent orange to fill in the brighter areas in the middle. This makes the eyes look bright and lifelike.



Step 17: Finish the shirt with opaque white by adding small highlights to the nose, mouth, and eyes.

T-Shirt Airbrushing Seminar

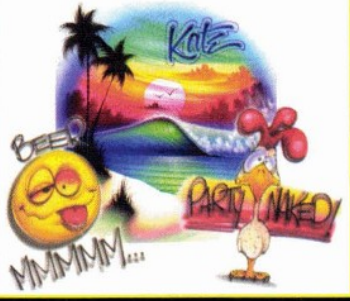
This dynamic and completely hands-on course is a must for anyone wanting to master the secrets of T-shirt airbrushing and maximize their earning power. Designed for the serious beginner to professional shirt artist who wants to improve in all areas, this class lets you work at your own pace.

Instructors:
TERRY HILL, KENT LIND

What you'll learn:
- ✦ Designs that sell
- ✦ Pricing guidelines
- ✦ Professional lettering and stenciling
- ✦ The business side of T-shirt airbrushing
- ✦ Custom portraiture, cars, logos
- ✦ Shortcuts for fast turnaround & high volume

Locations and dates:
CHARLOTTE, NC: MAY 12-15, 2005 (THURS-SUN)
LAS VEGAS: 2005
Seminar Cost: $495

See pages 40-46 for details.



Tech File:

Airbrush: Iwata Eclipse BCS
Manifold: Terry Hill Air Rail
Air source: Jun Air Maxi
Paint: Createx
Surface: 50/50 cotton blend T-shirt
Lighting: Daylight-balanced lighting
Ventilation: Exhaust fan built into the easel.



Circle Reader Service no. 102

Gary Worthington has been airbrushing professionally for 14 years, working in Destin, Florida, and New York City. Mr. Worthington is a contributing editor for Airbrush Action and has taught for the prestigious Airbrush Getaway Professional Workshops program. Gary lives with his wife of nine years, Cristie, and they are expecting their first child this November.

