

LEARN TO PAINT: Using Latex Paint

For durable paint that is easy to blend, try latex house paint

By Betty Padden



I am a professional sign carver, and when I'm making a sign that will hang outdoors, I paint it with exterior latex paints. Yes, house paint. They are designed for the outdoors, so they stand up to the weather. Like acrylic paints, latex paints are water-based, so they clean up easily with soap and water, but latex paints have a longer drying time than acrylics, which allows you to blend them more easily. They still dry relatively quickly, though, so you don't have to wait long to recoat. This method will give you a solid coating—you will not see any wood grain when you use these paints in layers as described.

This is the third of four articles describing painting options available to carvers. I designed these projects to be used as a changeable seasonal display with all four seasons represented. The final article includes a design for an optional banner so you can use the completed carvings as an interchangeable sign display.

Brushes

I use the same brushes for painting with latex paint that I use for other paints: a combination of synthetic and bristle brushes. The synthetics are great for applying the paint, while the bristle brushes are great for blending. I have some old synthetic brushes with splayed bristles that make good blenders, as well. I rarely throw out a brush. Even stiff, splayed ones make a great brush to use for a variety of textures—bushes, tree foliage, and clouds, for example.

Paint

I use semi-gloss or satin latex paint; you may use flat (matte)-finish paints if you prefer. Use exterior formulations if you intend to put this carving outside. Most stores will mix small sample-size cans of paint if you ask. I use the brand California Paints, which I've painted with for years with great success.

PUMPKINS: BASECOATING THE CARVING



1

Prime the carving. Apply two coats of primer to the front and back of the carving. Allow each coat to dry before applying the next one.



2

Basecoat the design. Note: Latex dries quickly enough that you should complete each pumpkin or leaf before moving on to the next. Mix 2 parts yellow with 1 part red to make a light orange, and paint the bottom half of one pumpkin. Paint the top half yellow, and then stipple along the line where the two colors meet to blend them. Repeat the process for the other pumpkin. Mix 3 parts yellow with $\frac{1}{2}$ part blue to make a light green; apply this to the leaves.



3

Paint the sky. Using dark blue, paint the sky area, continuing the paint up the sides of the leaves and the inside edges of the frame. Immediately add some white to the upper right side of the sky, and blend the edges of the white into the wet sky paint. This will be the glow of the moon that you will paint later.



4

Paint the pumpkin stems. Use a warm medium grey, such as barrel stave. Highlight the centers with a little white. Paint the outside and top of the frame with the grey. Allow everything to dry. Note: The primer shows through the basecoat in places, making the leaves appear to be more than one color although you have only applied one coat of paint to them so far.

PUMPKINS: DETAILING THE PROJECT



5

Add the leaf details. Mix 1 part yellow with 3 parts blue to make a dark green. Beginning with the leaf on the far left, paint the top half and edges of each leaf with the light-green mixture used in Step 2, and paint the center with the dark green. Blend the two colors well. Remember, complete each leaf before starting the next.

PUMPKINS: DETAILING THE PROJECT



6

Highlight the leaves.

Dip one corner of the blending brush in white. Position the brush so the white will hit the edge of the leaf, and then blend the white into the greens.



7

Highlight the pumpkins. Paint the top half of each pumpkin with yellow. Paint light orange just below the yellow, and blend them together. While the paint is still wet, add some white to the top "humps" of the pumpkins and blend it in. Paint the leaf between the pumpkins using the technique explained in Steps 5 and 6.



8

Recoat the sky. Paint the sky dark blue and blend white in the glow area around the moon like you did in Step 3. Paint the moon white, and let the paint dry.



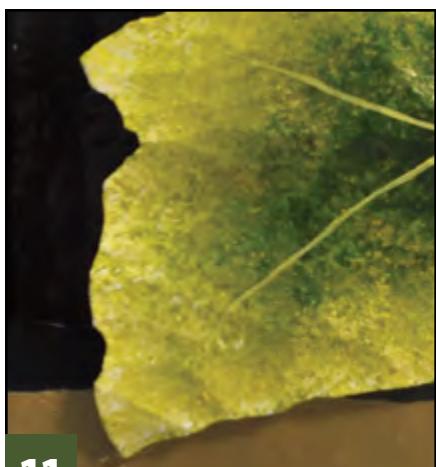
9

Paint the leaves that curl over the base. Use the techniques explained in Steps 5 and 6 to paint these leaves and to highlight the tips with white.



10

Paint the leaf curls. Paint the inner portion of the curl dark green and the outer portion light green. Blend the two colors, add a little white to the edge of the curl, and blend the colors again.



11

Add leaf veins. Mix white into the light green to make a celery color. Use a script liner to add veins to the leaves.



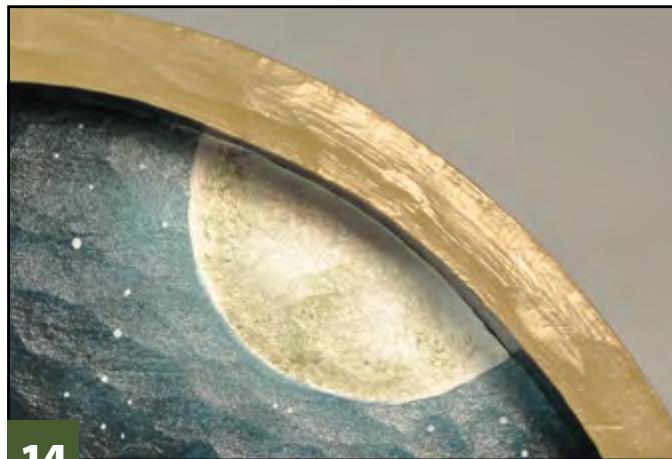
12

Add shadows to the bottoms of the pumpkins. Add crimson to the bottom of each pumpkin and to the depressions between the humps. Use a damp—not wet—blending brush to blend the red. Darken the red by adding $\frac{1}{2}$ part black to 2 parts crimson, and repeat the process a little lower on each pumpkin to add more shadow.



13

Finish the stems. Paint the stems with the warm medium grey. Add white to the top center of the stem and blend it in.



14

Finish the moon and sky. Paint the moon white again, and then blend some warm medium grey into the lower portion. Dip a pencil tip or the end of a paintbrush into white or very light blue paint and dot the sky with stars in a random pattern. Paint the edges, side, and back of the carving with warm medium grey.

materials & tools

MATERIALS:

- Pine, 2" (51mm) thick: 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 14" (222mm x 356mm)
- Primer (use exterior if the sign will be outside): white
- Latex paint (use exterior if the sign will be outside): white, black, crimson red, lemon yellow (such as California Confidant Yellow #DEA117), dark blue (such as California Navy Teal #DE5832), warm medium grey (such as California Barrel Stave #DE6216)

- Container (for water)
- Tin foil or other palette
- Paper towel or cloth

TOOLS:

- Assorted carving tools to carve the project
- Assorted brushes: synthetic and bristle

The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.



Betty Padden and her husband, Bob, own the Wooden Apple Signmakers in Auburn, Mass., and have been professional sign carvers for 35 years. They have been teaching their craft to students in their studio for more than 30 years. In addition, they created SantaCarls®, a unique figure that has been sold at Disney parks and Busch Gardens. Betty also designs and paints for Ne'Qwa Art and Blossom Bucket, among other companies. See more of Betty's work at www.WoodenAppleSignmakers.com.

Pumpkin plaque pattern

Each block of this grid equals 1" in proportion to the original pattern.
Enlarge this art to 150%, or to desired size.

ON THE
WEB for carving this project.
 woodcarvingillustrated.com