



Gemma Gylling

Endless Possibilities

Gemma Gylling has found that the properties of colored pencils allow for an array of techniques, styles and values

People will often ask me, “Why do you only draw animals?” The answer is simple—because I love them! My art is inspired by my love and passion of wildlife and animals. The animals speak to me in a very special way and because of that I try to help them speak to you through my art. I strive to portray the velvet touch of their fur, the sound of their roar or the plight they are living to exist. I have been drawing animals since I was a very young girl. It’s exciting to me as they evolve on the paper. I enjoy examining the texture, colors, shapes, drama of light and energy found in nature.

Another one of the questions I’m often asked is “Why colored pencils?” I appreciate the transparency of the medium and laying down layer after layer to create a depth of reality. I like how I can have so much control of each little line on the paper, the wonderful textures you can create or the smoothness of an eye that appears as if it’s wet or made of glass. The colored pencil medium is an amazing medium that gives you endless possibilities. I love how you can spend just a few minutes or endless hours and never have to clean a brush or make a big mess.

I first discovered colored pencils in the year 2000. I read an article about a colored pencil artist and was absolutely blown away with what could be done with this medium. I knew right then I was going to put my oil paints and brushes away and learn this medium.

I have never looked back.

When I create my art, I start by photographing the animals. When I first started creating art, I did what most up-and-coming artists do, I used other photographer’s photos (with permission) for my reference material. I came to understand, what I was doing was simply copying someone else’s composition and design. Once I finally understood this, I went on a quest to accumulate as many wildlife/animal reference photos as I could. I use my photos and Photoshop to create my compositions. I might use just one photo and crop it to a pleasing composition, or I might use several images to create an even better image; this is all done with Photoshop.

Once I’ve decided on my composition, I then create a line drawing using a grid system and then transfer that line drawing to the decided substrate. To me, one of the most important things is to use good photos and good materials. I use artist-grade colored pencils and paper. I use one of three surfaces: I use a smooth white paper, a sanded surface and I will often use suede mat board.

I use several different brands of colored pencils and yes, I do mix them even if they are waxed-based or oil-based pencils. The brands I use are Prismacolor, Derwent Studio, Caran d’Ache Luminance, Derwent Coloursoft, Lyra Rembrandt Polycolor, Caran d’Ache Pablo and Faber-Castell Polychromos. The reason

why I use so many different brands is I’m looking for different attributes of the pencils as well as the colors. For example, the Derwent Studio are a harder pencil and work great for fine lines for some of the fur, whereas the Derwent Coloursoft are very soft and



Endangered Reflections, colored pencil, 22 x 12" (56 x 30 cm)

This is an Amur leopard, which is native to Southeastern Russia and North China. They are listed on the Critically Endangered list and are said to be approximately 60 left in the wild. I took the reference photo of this Amur leopard while at a sanctuary in Montana.



Animal Totem – Cougar and the Cloud Spirits, colored pencil, 12 x 16" (30 x 41 cm)

I have always been fascinated with the Native Americans and their traditions. The cougar is one of their animal totems and one of my favorite animals. Because of my interest I came up with the design of this piece.

are great on the sanded surfaces and suede mat board.

The different surfaces will cause the colored pencil to behave a little differently. When drawing on white smooth paper, you need to save your light colors; you can't go back and draw a light color on top of a dark color without it looking muddy, so you would work from light to dark. With the suede mat board, the colored pencil is a bit more opaque rather than transparent, so you can add some light colors on top of darker colors. When working on suede mat board I usually start with a medium colored base and then add the lights and darks on top of that. That is an advantage when doing fur. The sanded surfaces fall somewhere

in between the other two. One of the great things about the sanded surface is, you can use a ceramic knife (with a light touch) and scratch out nice fur patterns, then go back over them with a wash of color.

When I'm drawing, I use a variety of pencil strokes to create texture or to get a smooth surface. Often, I'll use solvent to blend the first layer or two and it's also great for creating out-of-focus backgrounds. Along with the strokes, I'll use different pressures, typically you'll start with a light pressure and add more pressure as you continue to add more layers.

Values are a very important part of making your work pop; I am constantly thinking about values.

Often, I will go back, when I thought I was finished, and add more darks to a piece to bring it to that next level. I always try to take photos or scan my work as I go along. A good reason to do this is it gives you a great way to really see your work; you'll have a different perspective when it's on the monitor. Also, I always keep my laptop close, with my reference photo on the screen so that I can zoom in to really see the detail and values.

Colored pencil has endless possibilities. It is finally becoming known as a fine art thanks to so many incredible artists and most of all the Colored Pencil Society of America along with other international colored pencil societies. 

My Art in the Making Spirit Animals – Alpha Pair

Photo Reference

This reference photo was taken while at a sanctuary in Montana. I had the opportunity to photograph a pack of wolves. I took several of the alpha pair of the pack.



WHAT THE ARTIST USED

Colored Pencils Used

- » Prismacolor Premier
- » Caran d'Ache Luminance
- » Caran d'Ache Pablo
- » Derwent Studios
- » Derwent Coloursoft
- » Faber-Castell Polychromos
- » Lyra Rembrandt Polycolor
- » General Scribe All White

Miscellaneous Supplies

- » Clairefontaine Pastelmat Card – White
- » Moon Scrubber Brushes, Nos. 0, 2 and 4
- » Miscellaneous stiff brushes
- » Gamsol Solvent
- » Removable adhesive putty
- » Loew-Cornell Waxless Graphite Transfer Paper
- » Pentel Arts Aquash Water Brush, Assorted Tips
- » Slice Ceramic Knife
- » Steel Mesh Tea Strainer Ball



STAGE 1 LINE DRAWING

I start with a line drawing that I create using a grid, on a separate piece of paper, I then transfer it to the Pastelmat Card. This can be done using a waxless graphite transfer paper or by simply taping the line drawing on a window (on a sunny day) with the Pastelmat on top and tracing it to your surface. I then start working on the background in the upper left corner.



STAGE 2 BACKGROUND

I always start with my background first. I have a couple of reasons why I do this. First, the background effects the foreground colors tremendously. Secondly, it's much easier to draw the edges of the fur out over the background rather than trying to add the background around the fur without getting a haloed effect.

While looking at the reference drawing, I decided I didn't want to put in the dark rock area above the dark wolf's back, I felt it was very distracting. I started at the upper left corner and laid down a layer of Silver Gray and then White. I filled a Pentel Arts Aquash Water Brush with solvent and then used it to blend the two layers down into the tooth of the paper. While it was still wet I intermixed Light Cobalt Blue, Sepia 10%, Cool Gray 10%, 30%, 50%, Cloud Blue, Slate Gray, Sky Blue Light, White, Powder Blue, Greyed Lavender, Dove Gray, Cloud Blue and White to create the lights and shadows of the snow. To create the rocks in the snow I intermixed Raw Umber, Cocoa, Dark Umber, Black, Cool Grey 70%, 90% and Espresso. Once I'm finished with the background, I create a powder by grinding the General Scribe All White pencil in the tea strainer. I then create a paste type paint using water and a watercolor brush and then painted in the white edges of the snow.

STAGE 3 EYE FEATURES OF THE BLACK WOLF

To create the pupil of the eyes I lay down a layer of Dark Umber and then Black using a medium pressure and a sharp point. To create the iris, I first laid down a layer of Cream and then intermixed Burnt Ochre, Chocolate and Goldenrod, using a squiggly stroke with a sharp pencil. To create the eyelids, I used Dark Umber, Black and Cocoa using a sharp pencil and circular stroke.

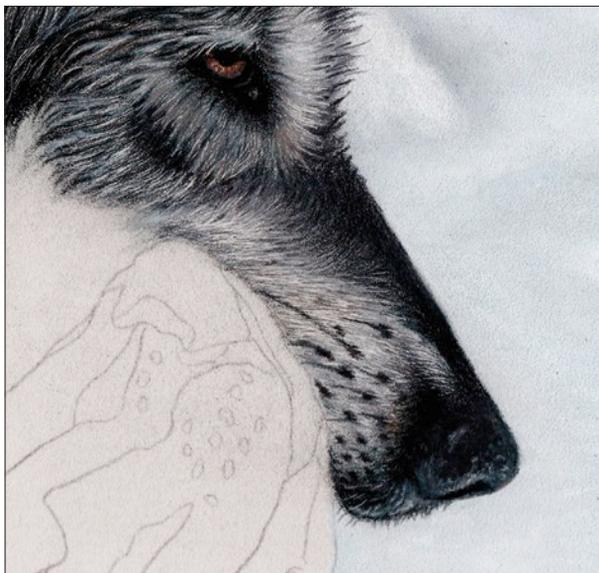
The most important thing to do when creating fur is to always draw it in the direction the fur is growing, pay close attention to that direction. First, I lay down a layer of Warm Grey 50% and then brush it with a Moon Scrubber brush to get the color down into the tooth of the paper. I then create negative space by intermixing Warm Grey 70%, Warm Grey 90%, Black and Dark Umber. I then start scratching out the lighter areas using, a Slice Ceramic Craft Knife, being careful to use a light touch to be sure not to cut too deeply. After scratching the lighter fur, I then intermix Light Cobalt Blue, Putty Beige, Light Umber, Warm Grey 10 & 30% and French Grey 30% into the scratched-out fur by laying down a light wash.



STAGE 4 THE NOSE

When creating the fur down the bridge of the nose, pay close attention to the direction the fur is growing; remember, animals have cowlicks just like we do. Using a very short stroke, sharp pencil, linear stroke and medium pressure I lay down a layer of Warm Grey 50% to create the underpainting for the darker area of the fur and then brush with the Moon Scrubbers. I then created an underpainting using the same stroke and pressure in the lighter area using Warm Grey 30% and then brush with the Moon Scrubbers. I then intermixed Warm Grey 10-90%, Black, Cocoa and Raw Umber to create the detail of the fur. I scratched and brushed as I went along when creating the detail.

To create the nose, I used all the same colors but, used a loose circular stroke to create the texture that the nose has and stippled when needed. I slowly build the layers until I get it to look the way I want. I also brush and scratch as I go along.



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STAGE 5 THE FUR

For the patch of light fur on the right side of the face, I started with an under painting of French Grey 10%, then brush this area to help blend the layer down into the tooth of the paper. Over the French Grey 10% create the negative space using Sandbar Brown and Raw Umber, next brush to blend. Working the longer fur, I work from the top down and create the fur by creating clumps of fur. For the lighter fur I used French Grey 30% and 50% for the darker areas I used Cool Grey 50% and 90%. As I went along, I would brush to blend and scratch the lighter hairs in as well.

In the darker shadow areas of the fur I would use Bronze, Ginger Root, French Grey 90%, Espresso, Dark Umber and French Grey 30 & 50%. I would then start brushing to blend and scratching to create the lighter hairs. I would then do a wash of some of the darker colors to create the shadowed areas. As I moved to the left, I continued to use the same colors and techniques to create the clumps of fur.

To create the darker strip of fur, I used Dark Umber then Black, then I would brush to blend and scratch in some light fur into the dark area, along the edges.



STAGE 6 FOREHEAD & EARS

To create the underpainting of the lighter forehead fur lay down a layer of Warm Grey 30%, then brush into the tooth of the paper with the moon scrubber. To create the underpainting of the darker patch lay down a layer of Dark Umber, then brush it as well. Using Warm Grey 10-90%, Putty Beige, Light Umber and Black start defining the fur, I would scratch and brush as I went along, being very careful to draw the fur in the direction the fur is growing.

For the darker fur of the ears on the back, edge and the center of the wolf's right ear I used Dark Umber and then Black. I brushed to blend. I then intermixed Warm Grey 10-90%, Bronze, Cloud Blue, Cream and Black to create the fur pattern in the ear, I also brushed and scratched to get the look I wanted. I used the same process to create the other ear.



STAGE 7 BEGINNING THE OTHER WOLF

The first layer of the tongue is done with Nectar and then brush to blend. I then intermixed Dark Umber, Black, Henna, Rosy Beige, Clay Rose, Deco Pink and Black Grape, using a tight circular stroke and a very sharp point. I brush to blend when necessary.

For the nose, I am using the same process I used on the other nose, I intermixed Warm Grey 70%, Black and Warm Grey 30%. I brushed and used solvent if I felt it was necessary to blend.

For the fur up the bridge of the nose and the muzzle area, I used a very sharp pencil, very short strokes and would blend by brushing and scratching some of the lighter fur back in after laying down all the layers. I intermixed the following colors to create this area: French Grey 10-90%, Dark Umber, Chocolate, Black, Light Umber, White, Cream, Espresso, Ivory, Warm I-V, Blister, Walnut, Raw Umber, Cocoa and Brown Ochre.



STAGE 8 THE EYES AND FACE

The eye was done by using the same colors and process as I used to create the other wolf's eye. For the fur around the eye and down the side of the face, I am using the same techniques used on the other wolf, I intermixed French Grey 10-90%, Light Umber, Warm Grey 10-90%, White, Chocolate, Bronze, Espresso and Sandbar Brown. I continued to brush, and scratch as needed, and I was very careful with the direction of the fur and the stroke lengths, to create the short and longer fur.



STAGE 9 THE FOREHEAD AND THE SIDE OF THE FACE

For the underpainting I used French Grey 30% and then brushed to blend. I then drew in the negative space using French Grey 70% and 90% and then Dark Umber and Black. I then brushed and scratched to create the lighter fur and filled in the scratches with White and French Grey 10%. Add a wash of Light Umber to the brownish areas and give the white areas a wash of French Grey 50% and Pale Brown as needed to create a shadow area.

I finish the bridge of the nose with an underpainting of French Grey 90%, brush and then intermix French Grey 90%, Chocolate, Dark Umber, Black, Espresso and French 50%. On the light patch above the eye I used French Grey 10%, 30% and 50%.

STAGE 10 CONTINUING THE WOLF

To create the top of the head, down the back of the head and down to the ear, I laid down an underpainting using French Grey 70% and then brushed. I then used French Grey 90% to create the negative space, brushed and scratched as needed. I then intermixed Pale Brown, French Grey 10% and 30%, Black and Dark Umber. As I'm working down to the ear I used Pale Brown as the underpainting and intermixed French Grey 70% and 90%, Dark Umber, Black, French Grey 10% and 30%, and White. I brushed and scratched as needed. I continued with the same colors to create the ear.

To create the fur behind and above the ear, I continued with the same colors, but I added, Peach Beige, Copper Beach, Chocolate, Dark Umber and Golden Brown.

To create the longer fur behind the ear the underpainting was Cream and then Ginger Root. I then intermixed Light Umber, Chocolate, Chocolate, Dark Umber, Beige, French Grey 10%, Black and French Grey 50%, 70% and 90%. I scratched and brushed as needed and added more layers of the colors above.

The fur at the jaw line was done with an underpainting of French Grey 10% and I intermixed French Grey 10% through 90%, Cocoa, Cream, Ginger Root, Light Umber, Dark Umber and Peach Beige.



STAGE 11 BACK OF THE BLACK WOLF'S HEAD AND NECK

The underpainting is Warm Grey 50%. Then intermix Warm Grey 70% and 90%, Black, Espresso, Warm Grey 10%, 20% and 30%, French Grey 70% and 90% and Cloud Blue. Scratch, brush and lay down more of the same colors until I got it to look the way I wanted.

STAGE 12 CONTINUING THE BODY

I continued to use the same colors and techniques on the black wolf's neck but when I moved into a warmer fur area I used more of the French Greys and Light Umber as washes. I also used solvent on the underpainting to create a nice dark base.





STAGE 13 THE BODY AND LEGS

Note: When I got to an area where the fur was going to be up against the snow I put the snow in first using the same colors and techniques I used on the rest of the snow but I applied more of the darker colors to create the shadows under the wolves.

To finish the Black Wolf, I used all the same colors and techniques thus far. When I started down the legs, I used shorter strokes and the lighter shades of colors and I continued to pay close attention to the direction the fur is drawn.



STAGE 14

By now I think you are probably getting an understanding of my techniques and process so for this section I only list the colors used and make note of a few important areas to pay attention to.

Colors Used for this wolf are: Cream, Light Umber, Ginger Root, Cocoa, French Grey 10% to 90%, Beige, Peach Beige, Chocolate, Dark Umber, Black, Burnt Yellow Ochre, Raw Umber, Yellow Ochre 10%, Raw Umber 10%, Brown Ochre, Seashell Pink, White, Vandyke Brown, Copper Beach, Golden Brown, Brown Ochre and Sienna Brown.

When looking at the fur of this wolf pay very close attention to the fur direction in particular look closely at the back-left leg. The fur is drawn in clumps and it represents the matted look they would get. Also, winter is the time of the year, so their fur has lots of undercoat therefore, you would see patches of long fur. When drawing the long fur use longer strokes but when working in the shorter fur area as on the front left leg going up to the shoulder, the fur is very short so I used very short strokes.

**STAGE 15 THE
FINISHED DRAWING**

Spirit Animals – Alpha Pair,
colored pencil, 20 x 16"
(51 x 41 cm)



ABOUT THE ARTIST



Gemma Gylling grew up on a small ranch in Southern California and currently resides in Valley Springs, California, with her husband and two dogs. It was on that small ranch where she developed her love of nature and animals.

After several years of working in electrical engineering as a printed circuit board designer, she decided to concentrate on her art. For many years Gylling's medium of choice was oils until she discovered just what could be done with colored pencils. When asked why she uses colored pencils, she remarked, "I think it has something to do with the technical aspect of it, plus I love the fact that there is no cleanup or mess."

Gylling has received numerous awards and exhibited her work nationally and internationally. She travels throughout the US to teach colored pencil workshops, wrote a book on drawing cats (wild and domestic) with colored pencils, has six in-depth tutorial booklets and her work has been published in several books and magazines.

She is a signature member of the Colored Pencil Society of America, the Artists for Conservation and the Society of Animal Artists.

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