



Technique

Practicing Blue:

Indigo body art technique is very similar to watercolor painting technique. Practice with watercolor or sumi ink if you haven't done brushwork before. The following practice patterns are done with blue watercolor paint and a watercolor brush.

If you are accustomed to doing henna body art henna ... blue is completely different! You can not mix blue into a paste and apply it like henna with a cone. You can not predict where the pattern will stain the best. You must learn to improvise your pattern to accommodate skin variation.

Blue technique is completely different from tattooing! You cannot depend on replicating fine, precise, predictable patterns. You must learn to improvise the pattern on the spot, accommodating body form, skin texture, hair, and the nuances of your vat.

Blue will make you develop your skills as an artist in different ways than before. The patterns in this book aren't meant to be copied exactly. You can not use a stencil. These exercises and patterns are meant to be the basis of freehand painting improvisation, to build skills for skin and blue.

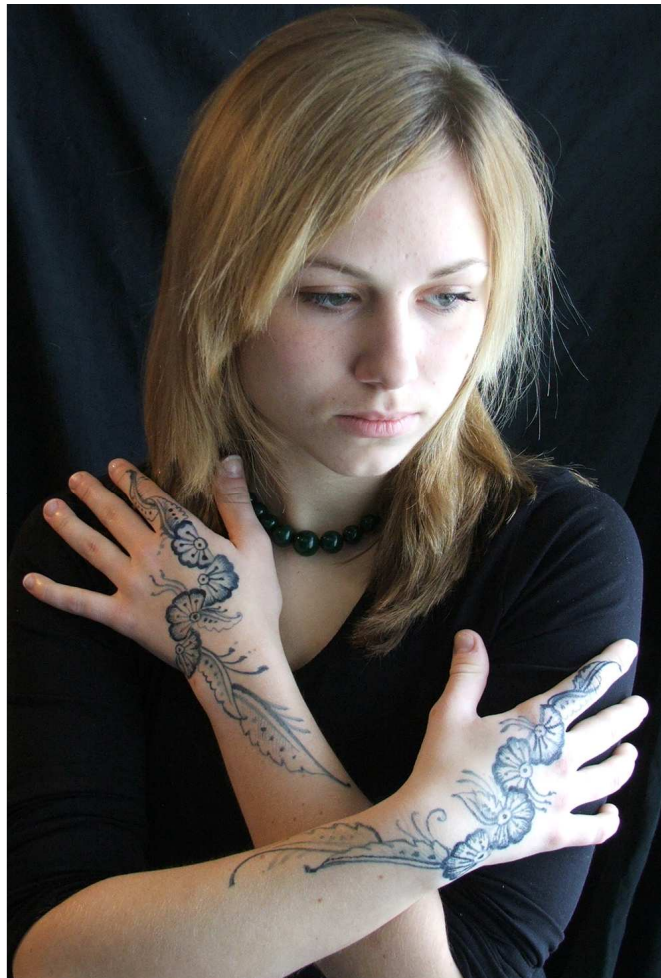


Figure 1: Begin with simple patterns and practice

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Begin with simple motifs

Spirals

Practice clockwise and counterclockwise spirals by painting the top part of the number "2" and the top part of the letter "S". Practice these until you can make them in a single stroke.



Figure 2: Make a spiral that starts like the top of the number "2" or a letter "s"



Figure 3: Practice spirals until they are smooth and flow gracefully

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Leaves

Practice making leaves. Press the brush down gently to make the wide part of the leaf, and lift up to make the thin part of the leaf.

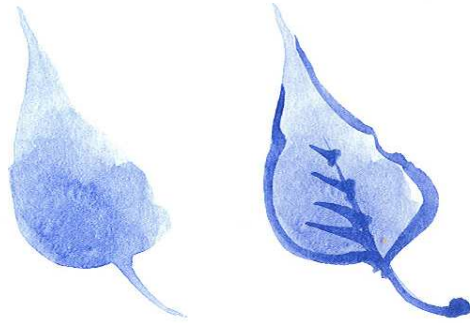


Figure 4: Make a simple leaf: press the brush down gently to make the wide part of the leaf. Lift the brush up to make the pointy part of the leaf. After you have rinsed the superficial pigment from the skin, go back and paint detail into the leaf

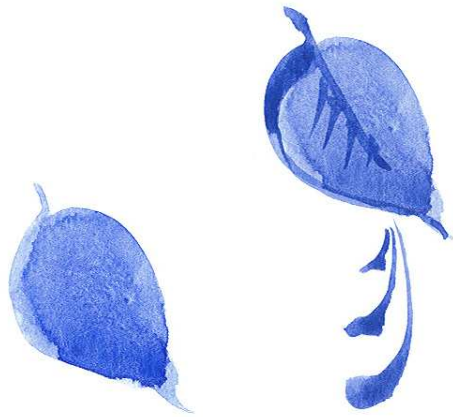


Figure 5: Add tendrils to an aspen leaf

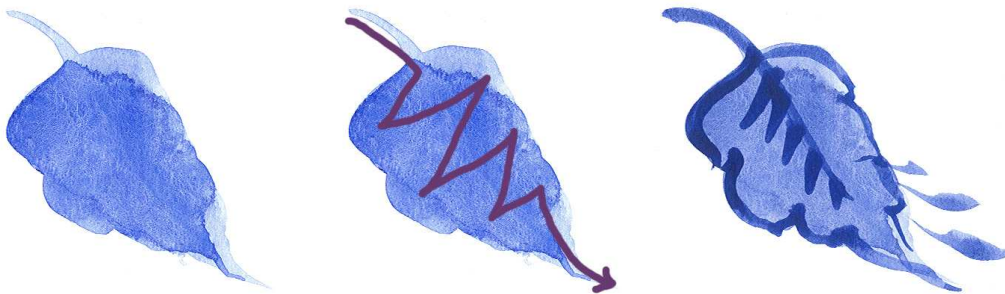


Figure 6: Make a more complicated leaf by pressing the brush down to make the wide part, and moving it in a zigzag, as if you're cleaning a window. Lift the brush up to make the narrow part of the leaf.

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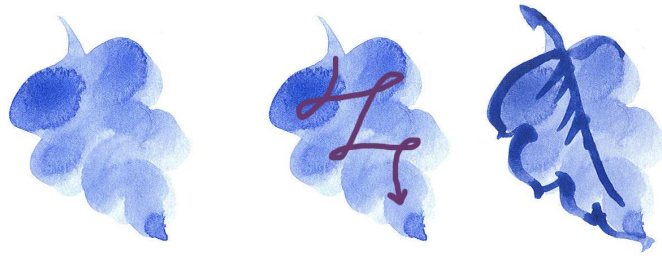


Figure 7: Make larger leaves by moving the brush side to side, as if you're mopping the floor. Add the detail to the darker side of the leaf. That will make the leaf appear to be receding into mist.

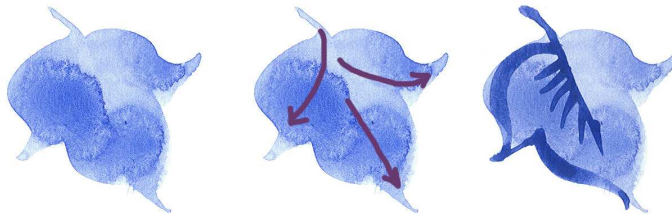


Figure 8: Make ivy leaves with three strokes.



Figure 9: Make garlands and branches by repeating leaves.

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Figure 10: Make willow leaves with longer strokes

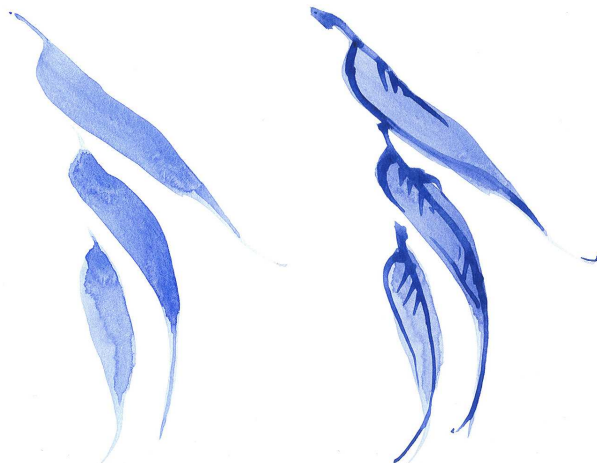


Figure 11: Make cascading strokes for clusters of willow leaves



Figure 12: Combine a spiral with cascading willow leaves

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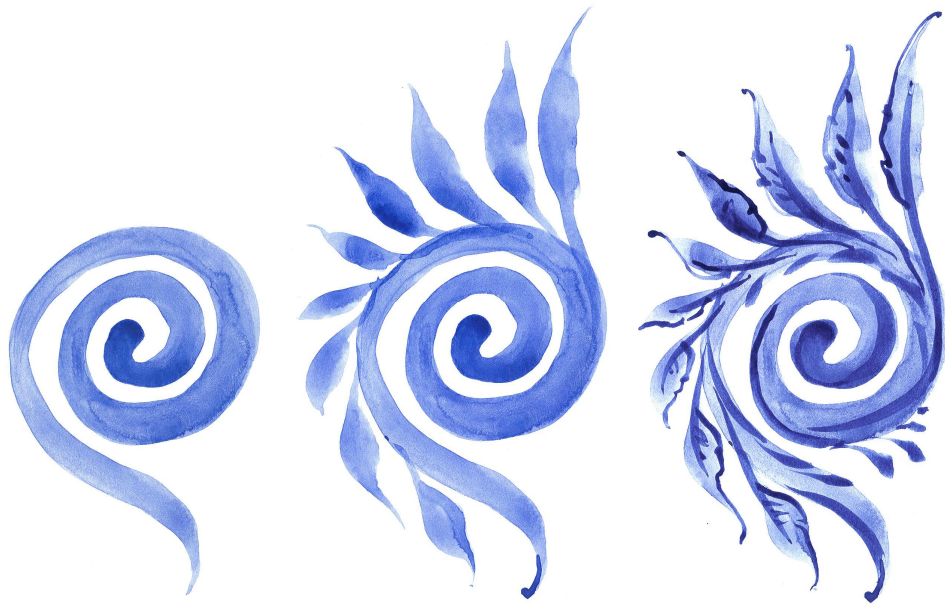


Figure 13: Combine a spiral with cascading leaves



Figure 14: Add a double cascade of leaves to a spiral

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Figure 15: Improvise leaves and spirals

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Figure 16: Make an alternating row of S and 2 spirals, and then turn them into garlands with simple strokes.



Figure 17: Cluster S and 2 spirals, and grow leaves on them

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Use diminishing stain as a creative tool.



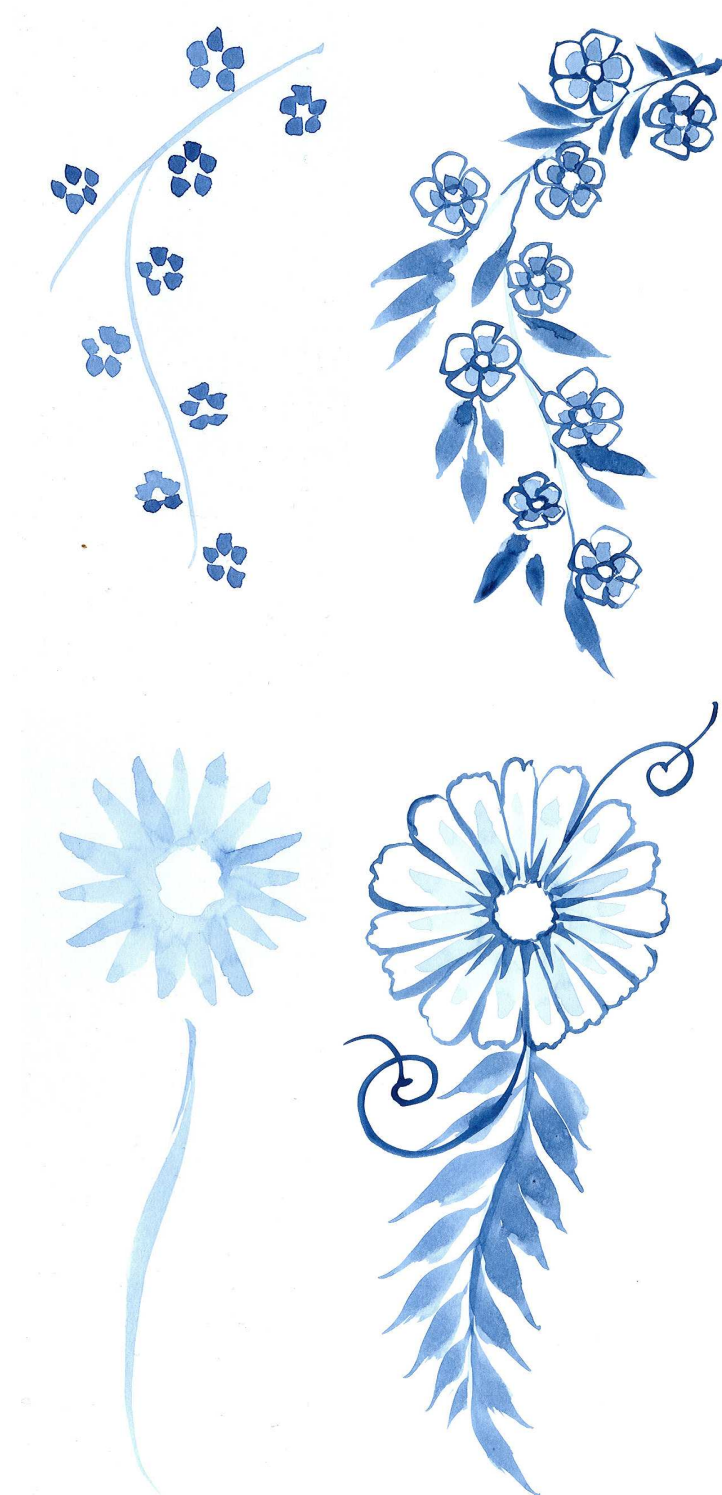
Figure 18: Your first stroke will stain the darkest because oxygen hasn't had a chance to bind with the precursor fresh from the vat. Each stroke after that stains less as it gathers oxygen, until there is no stain at all.



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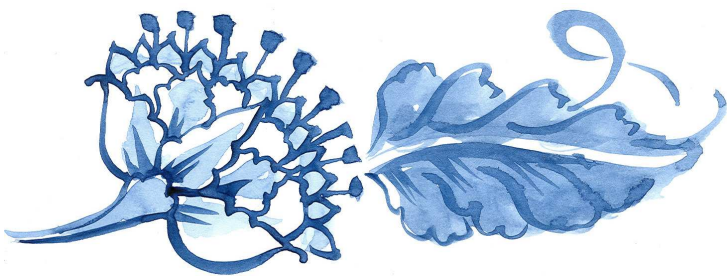
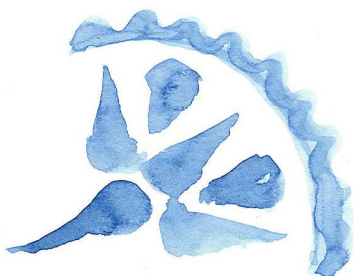
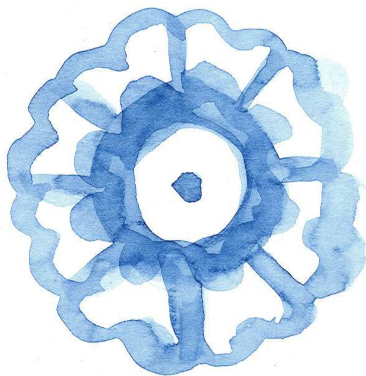
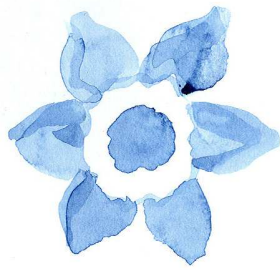
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Flowers



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Celtic Knots

Because woading is associated with pre-Christian Celtic art, and that art featured prolific swirls and knots, one is inclined to adapt these into blue. Blue is an ideal medium for knotwork, because of the two step process.

First, paint the basic shape of the knot. Allow the vat to oxidize on your brush, so the initial strokes will leave only a very light stain. After the first rinse, paint the interlacing with fresh vat.



Figure 19: Paint the basic shape of the knot

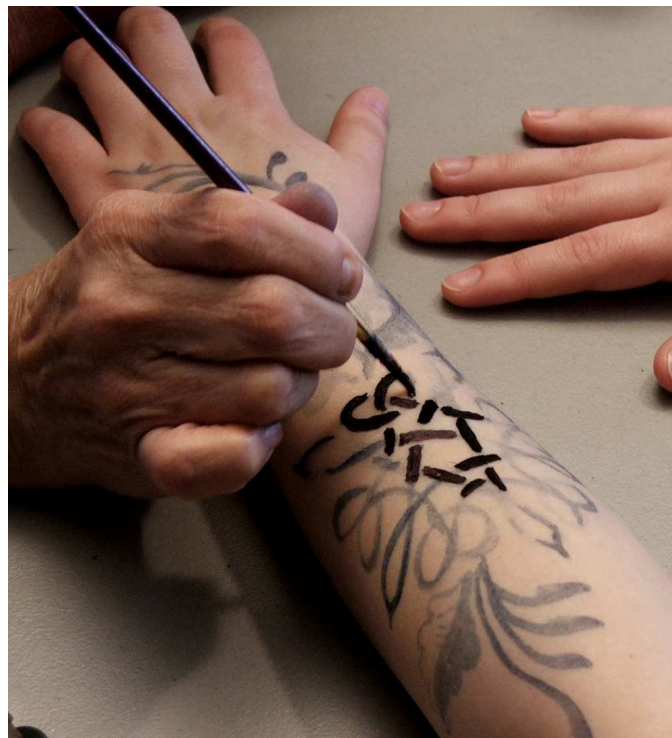
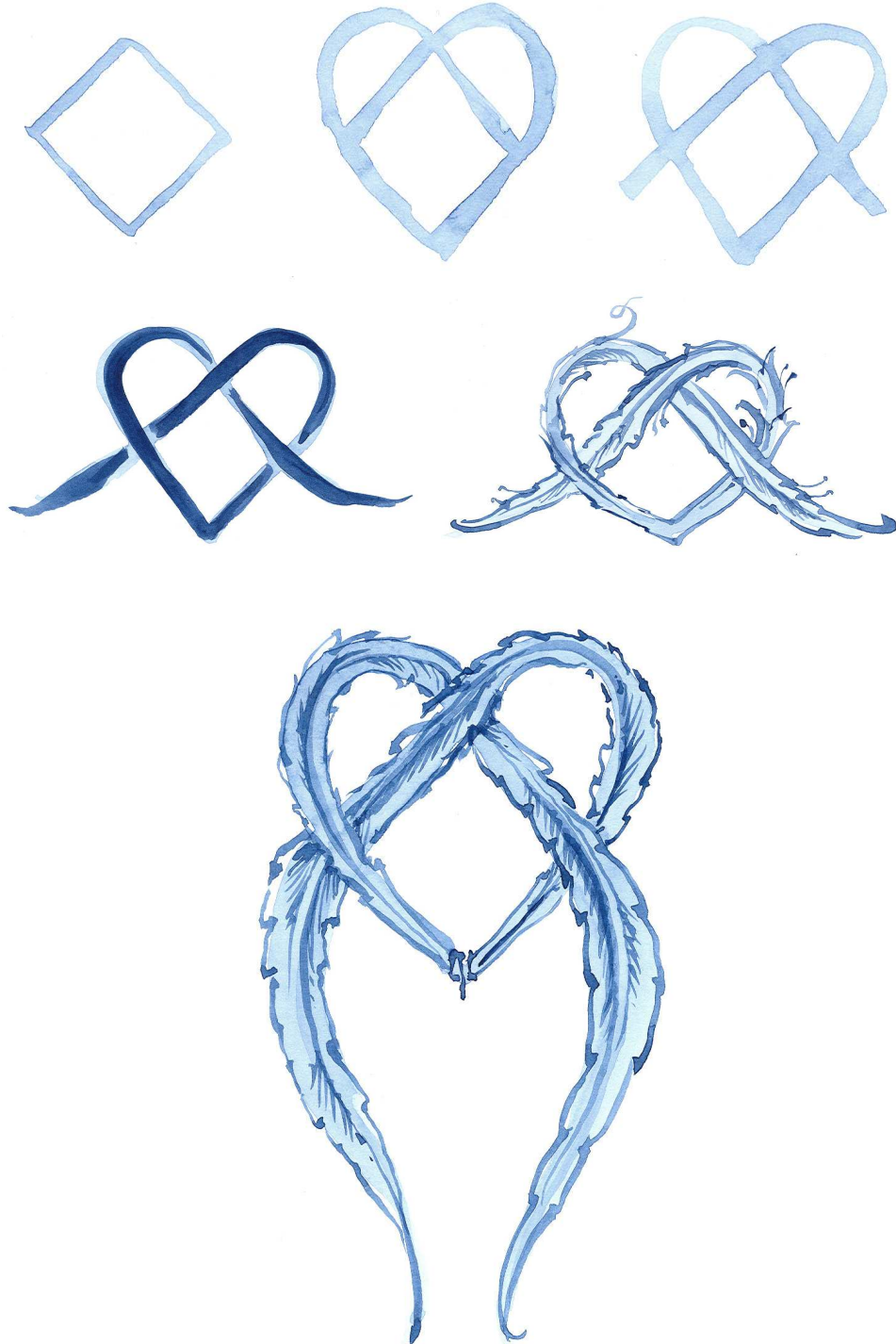


Figure 20: Define the "over and under" with your second application

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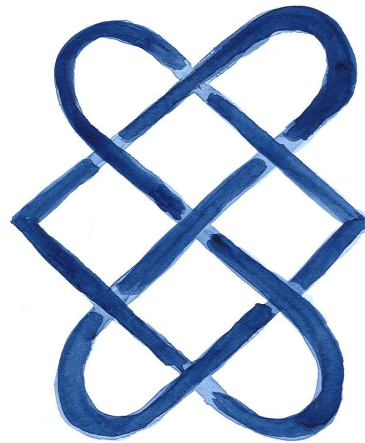
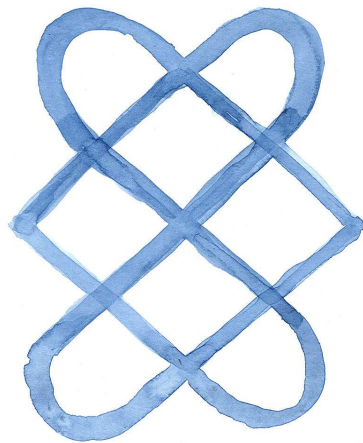
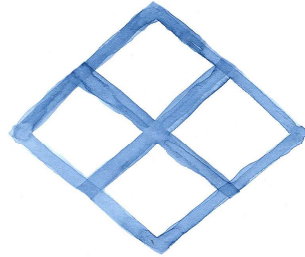
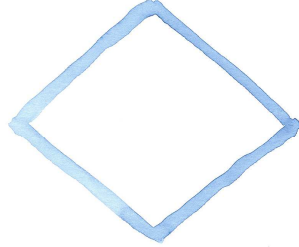
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Construct the knot with basic shapes. Weave the "over and under" with the second application. If your figure isn't perfect, (and blue body art is very rarely perfect) adapt the knot with leaves and curls, as if a plant is curling itself into a knot.



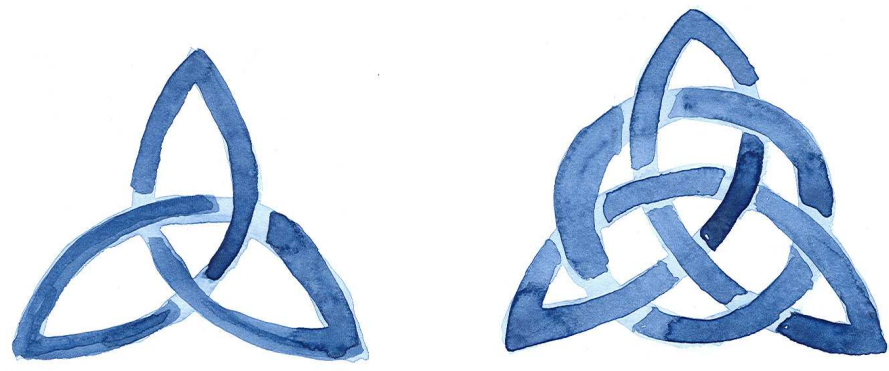
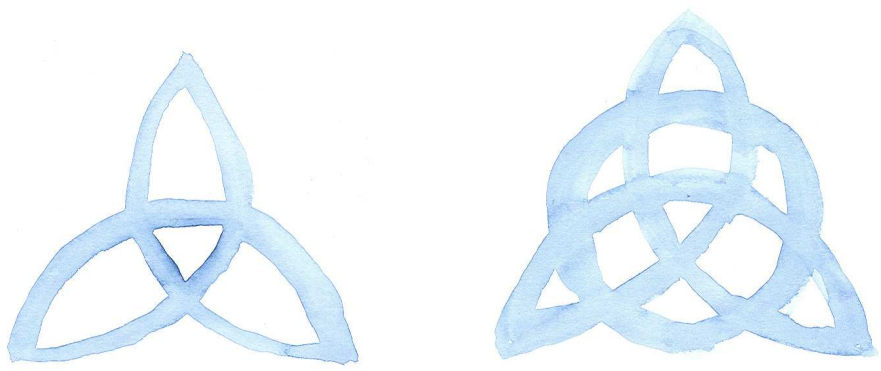
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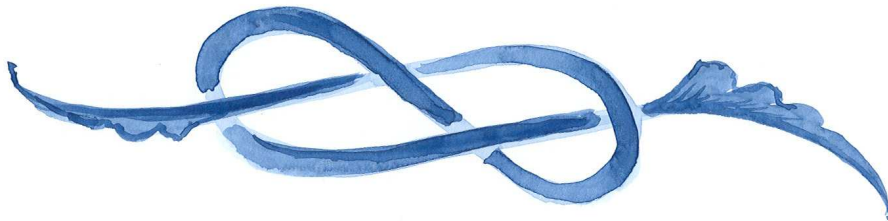
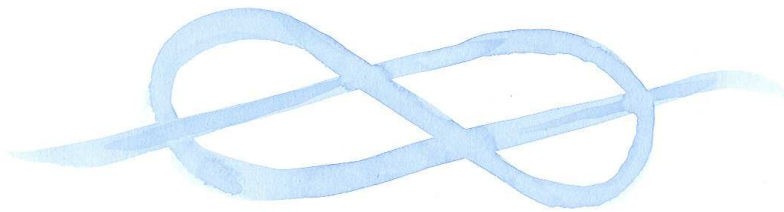
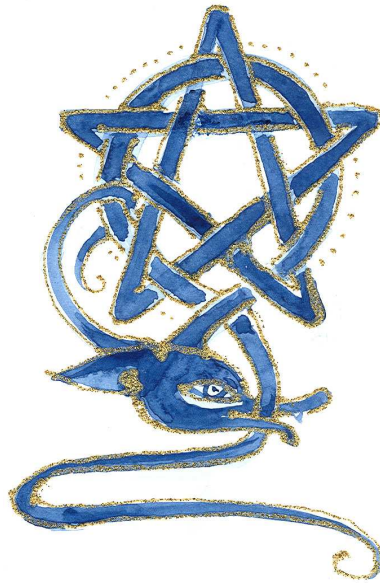
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Figure 21: If the pattern is very complex or if you're uncertain of your ability sketch knotwork on skin with a watercolor pencil. Sketch on slightly moist skin, or dip the tip of the pencil in water. You can correct mistakes by dabbing them with water.

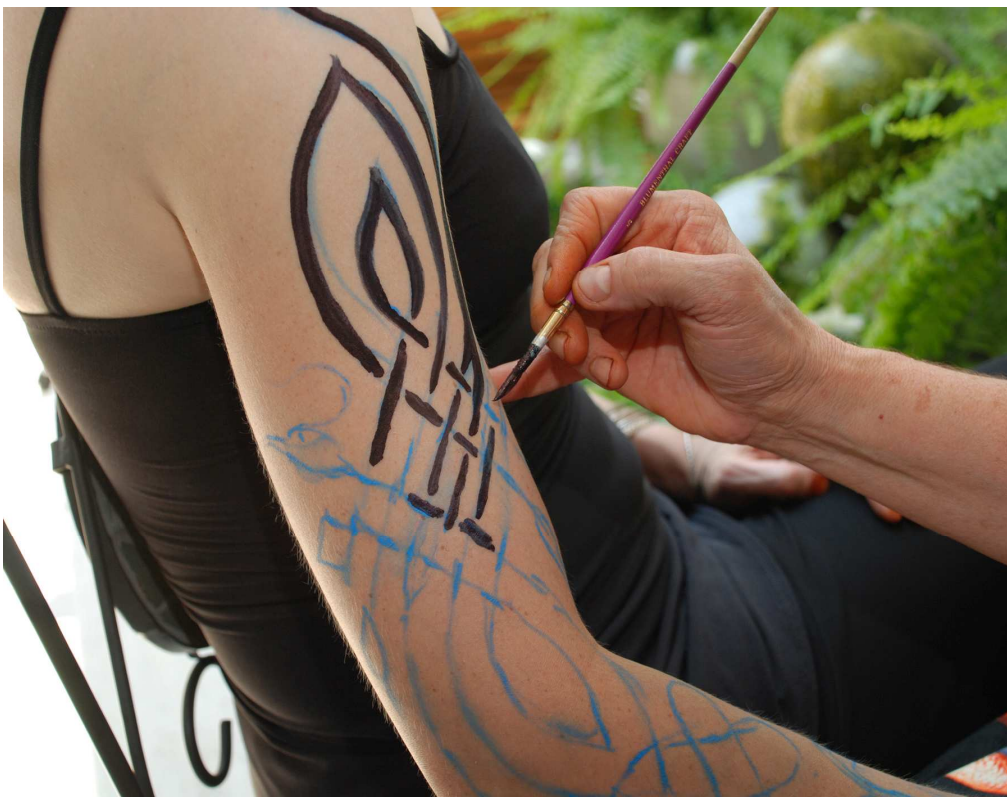


Figure 22: Brush the vat directly over the watercolor pencil lines.

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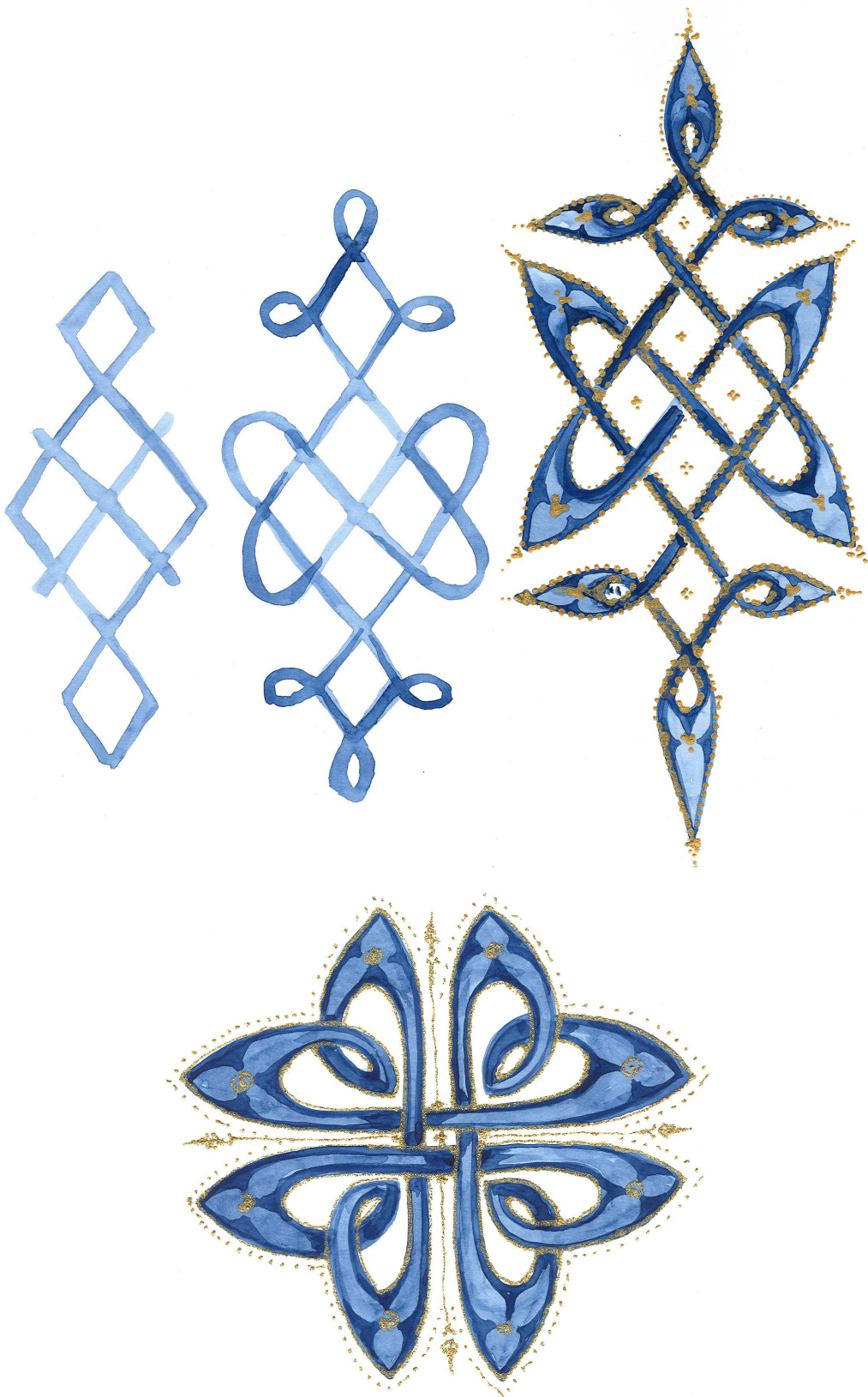


Figure 23: Complex knotwork is not difficult if you begin with a sketch.



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Beasts

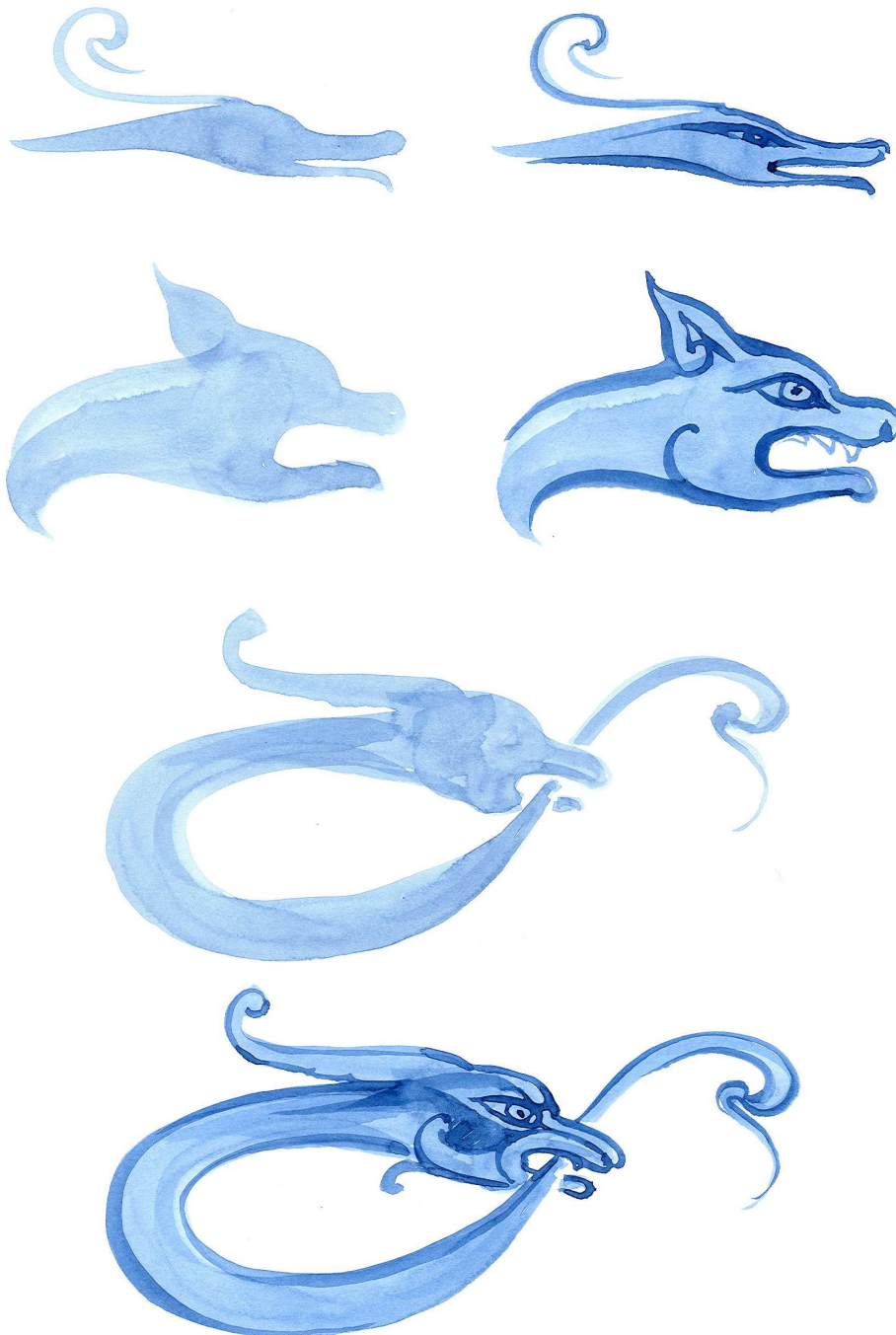
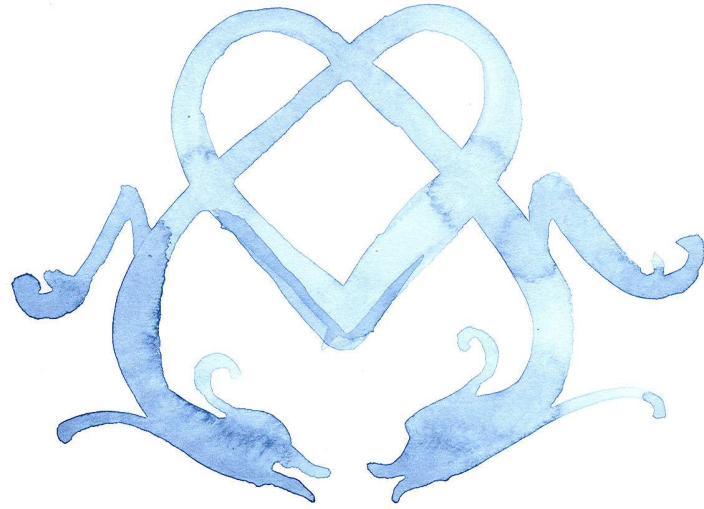


Figure 24: There is a Celtic artistic tradition of intertwining and biting serpents, dragons, and beasts. Evidence from medieval literature indicates that these were used in Celtic blue body art. Serpentine biting beasts adapt easily to Ancient Blue body art!

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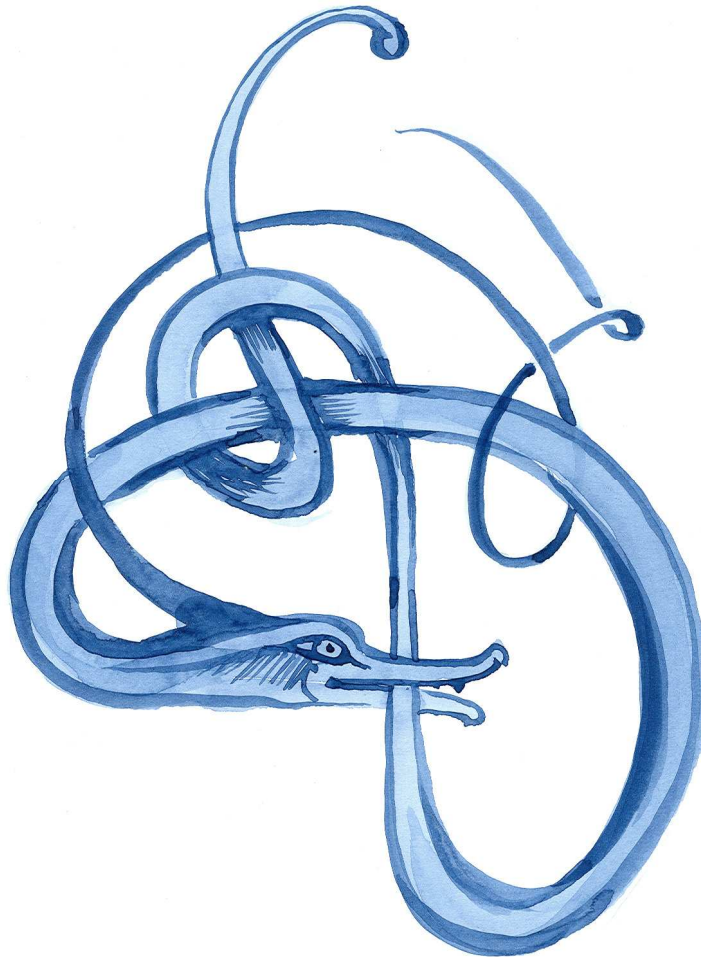


Figure 25: These beasts can be adapted into knotwork, gripping their own tails or each other

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Gilding and Gems

Gilding and glitter would not have been used in ancient times as body art, but it is a lovely way to finish your blue, to make it dazzle and sparkle. Henna artists use gilding pastes, glitter and gems to make their henna more lavish. Medieval artists illuminated their manuscripts with gold and silver to emphasize the rarity and importance of the words.



Figure 26: Add gilding paste, gems and body glitter for a dazzling finish!

Gilding paste and glitter wash away with water, but they're beautiful and harmless, and add an extravagant beauty to your work. You can make gilding paste with hair gel, lumiere powder and body glitter.¹

¹ Find more complete information on making and using gilding paste at <http://www.hennapage.com/henna/how/gilding/>
Gilding paste supplies are available at <http://www.mehandi.com>

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Find a hair gel that dries quickly, and will hold hair in rigid peaks, such as what would be used for spiking gel. Find body glitter and lumiere powder. If you can't find lumiere powder, smash up a cake of eye shadow and mix it into the gel².

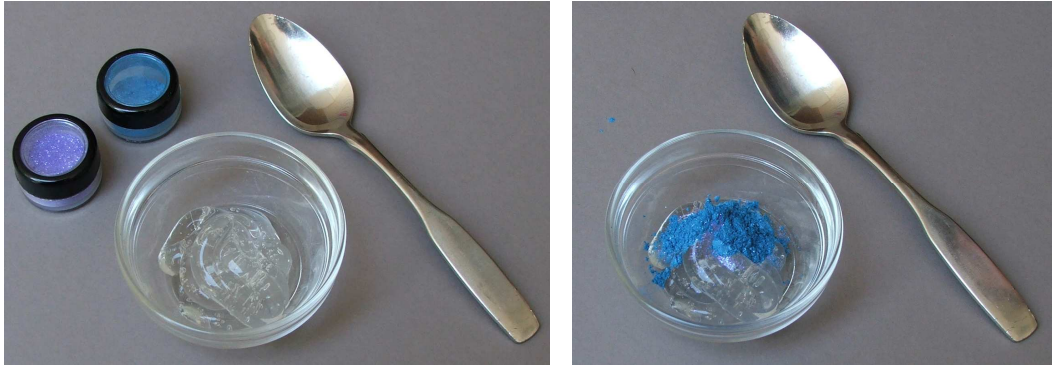


Figure 27: Get "super hold" hair gel, body glitter and lumiere powder. Add 2 grams of body glitter and 2 grams of powder to 35 ml of gel



Figure 28: Stir the gel, powder, and glitter together and put them in a cone.

Use a henna cone to apply the gilding paste. Apply in very thin lines, or the gilding will be slow to dry. Apply rhinestones with a drop of eyelash glue.



Figure 29: The gilding paste and gems will wash away, but the blue stain will remain.

² Mehandi.com has gilding gel, body glitter, gilding powder (lumiere powder) and rhinestones for body art.

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