



**FEBRUARY 2013**

*“The Mixed-Media Giraffe”*

Ben Chestnut, CEO of MailChimp.com, shows the following slide in his 40-minute talk about cultivating a creative culture in his company:

**Chaos is Good.**

**Embrace Chaos.**

**Create Chaos.**

(source: <https://vimeo.com/34081566>)

Chaos and creativity go together! Chaos is one of the forces of creativity because when presented with a problem, us humans want to find a pattern and organize it. When random things are thrown into the mix, it forces us to think of our problem (in our cases, how to get our paintings to a point that we like them) in new and different ways.

Author Malcolm Gladwell, in his video "[Creative Types: Embrace Chaos](#)," says,

*"Creative people...their brains are messy. Their imaginations are messy.*

*"Why, because they don't want to throw anything out...they believe on some level that there is always something of interest or value in whatever they encounter.*

*"They know enough about how mysterious and serendipitous and unpredictable the creative process is that they realize that it's dangerous to kind of make too hasty a judgment about the value of anything that they come across..."*

*"Embracing of messiness and understanding its contribution to the creative process is something that writers and creative types, artists, whatever have got to cultivate, have to learn to be comfortable with."*

So at some level we as creatives need to figure out how to be comfortable in the chaos... at least for a little while, that is!

\* \* \*

This month we're going to try to embrace the messiness in a very tangible way as well: By rendering our giraffes with a variety of media at our disposal — paint, charcoal, ink, pencil, collage, photography or whatever else you can think to add — we will be in a situation where the very table we work on might be a chaotic mess.

For some of us this might be overwhelming at times (ahem).

But I think it's worth a shot... let's do it!

You can interpret “The Mixed-Media Giraffe” in any way you like. Like last month, create a goal or an “assignment” for yourself. (This can morph or change as time goes on, but it’s nice to have a starting point.

In my case, I want to explore and see what I can “invent” in terms of techniques, and try to make as many pieces as I can. I also want to try and push myself a bit more, and try to make some pieces that feel chaotic for me and STOP for awhile.

(I’m also setting a goal to not be upset by numerous disasters. :D )

What’s yours?

## WHAT IS MIXED MEDIA?

*For our purposes, I'd like to define "mixed-media" as simply any drawing, painting, assemblage, quilt, etc. that incorporates two or more different types of media.*

*Following is a list of some media I **might** be trying together this month (though not all at once!):*

*watercolors*

*acrylic inks, acrylic paint*

*collage, glue*

*charcoal, pencil, conté crayon*

*photographs*

*sewing*

*water soluble crayons*

*colored pencils*

*glitter*

*nail polish*

*stamping, printmaking*

*words*

*As I discover various things that work for me I'll throw them up on the blog or yahoo (and I can imagine all of you will have a lot to offer on mixed-media techniques as well!).*

*For supplies, I suggest starting by using what you already have on hand. As the month goes on and you learn about new techniques and things you'd like to try, you can add other stuff!*

*Following are three "Appendices" to get you started on your mixed-media journey! Have fun!*

## Appendix I

# Evolution of a Mixed-Media Giraffe



I started the above giraffe and didn't like it enough at its first stage (first version), so I decided to keep going. At this point I had used watercolor, colored pencil, white ink, a water-soluble crayon and pencil.

Then I added blue watercolor to the background and hated it (step not shown).

Then I added pink pastel (middle version) and liked it pretty well, but decided to try to push it further (third version) and added white gesso to the background.

Also, it's hard to tell from this small scan, but I went into the body a little bit to soften the orange lines around the spots and (in my mind) pushed it too far so that the body was suddenly "muddy." (Arrgh! But... a good way to practice my goal of not being upset! And I like the final okay. It's just painful when it was better at an earlier version.)

If I could do it over I might have let the pink version sit a day or two before going further, as looking at it here I kind of like it.

This gives me an idea to try another pink sky giraffe with blue clouds....

## Appendix II

# Transparent Layering

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### Media Needed

*watercolors, brush*

*small set of colored pencils*

*small set of markers*

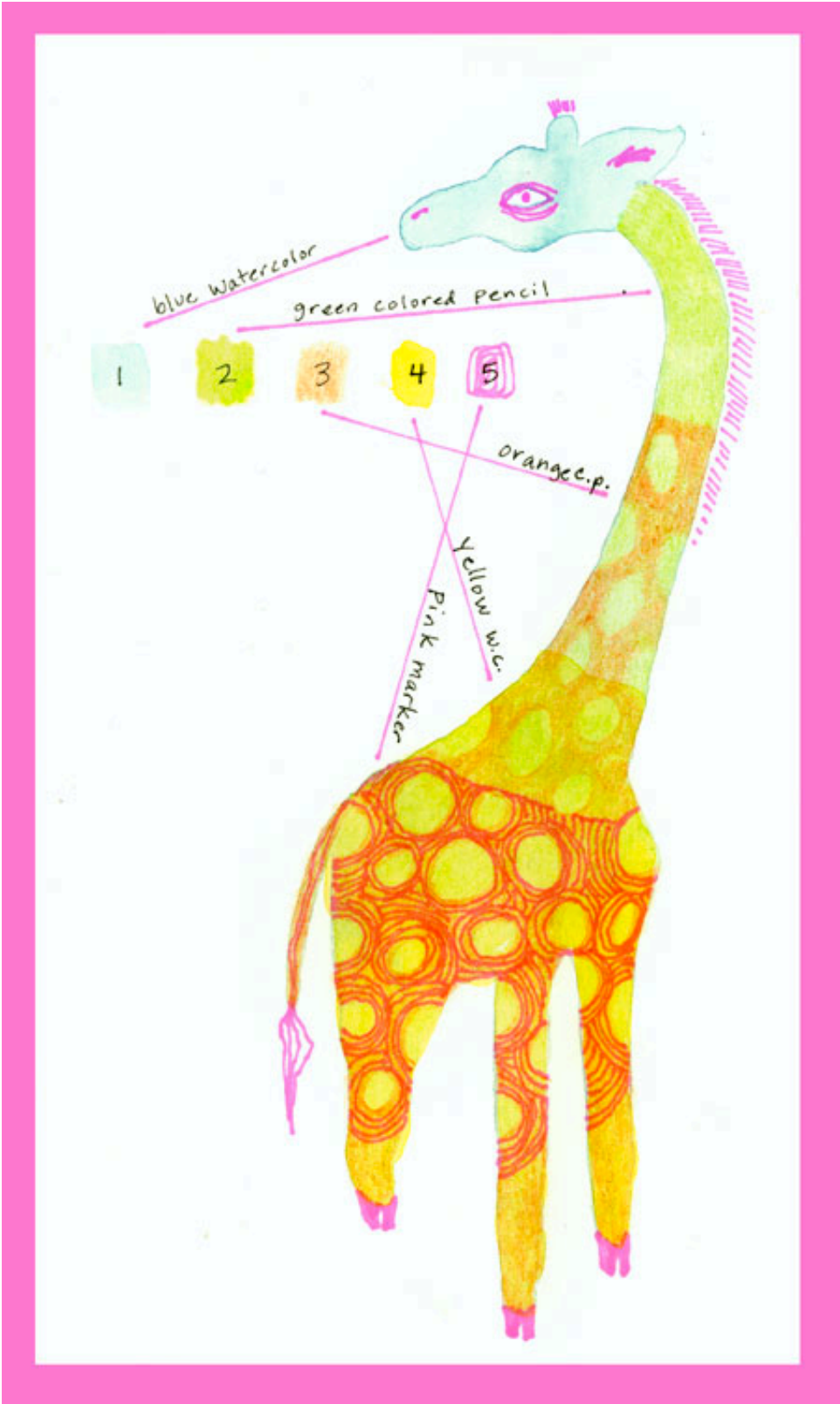
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On the next page is a giraffe “chart” showing a progression of layering watercolor and colored pencil on top of each other.

I typically like to build my color slowly, which means that the layers are very light. Toward the end of a drawing I will go in with darker markers or colored pencil lines, but I usually begin with a light hand.

The reason I like to do this is that I like having “colors within colors.” It’s kind of the difference between having a sweater made of solid green yarn, and one made with green yarn that has little specs of yellow and red in it; it gives it depth and interest.

Chart of Giraffe Layers:



## Appendix II

# Some Other Mixed-Media Tutorials

Following are the urls to a handful of tutorials I have at my blog and website:

Red Bull Tutorial (Watercolor "Plus")

<http://www.carlasonheim.com/red-bull-tutorial/>

Animals in Tape

<http://www.carlasonheim.com/animals-in-tape/>

Alligator Coloring Tutorial (layering)

<http://www.carlasonheim.com/alligator-coloring-tutorial/>

Watercolor Birds

<http://www.carlasonheim.com/watercolor-birds/>

Layered Poodle

<http://www.carlasonheim.com/layered-poodle/>

Abstracted Flowers

<http://www.carlasonheim.com/abstracted-flowers/>

Oaxacan Dotted Elephant

<http://www.carlasonheim.com/oaxacan-dotted-elephant/>