

Japanese Cherry Tree Painting

ARTventures

... at home!

Paint moonlit cherry trees inspired by the woodblock prints of Yoshitoshi's *One Hundred Aspects of the Moon* series using watercolor and Japanese ink brush painting techniques.



Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (Japanese, 1839—1892), *Cherry trees blossom by the Sumida river, boats fade from view in the gathering dusk at Sekiya as I view the moon* – Mizuki Tatsunosuke, 1891, woodblock print; ink and color on paper. Museum purchase with funds provided by Jack Graef Jr., Linda Stein, Susan Shettler and their families in memory of Jack and Marilyn Graef. 2019.9.90

Materials Needed:

- liquid watercolors—red, blue (or watercolor tray set)
- crayons (or oil pastels, white and assorted colors)
- watercolor paper (140lb.)—2 sheets, 9 x 12
- bamboo brush (or watercolor brush)
- paint palette with wells
- sumi ink (or India ink)
- small water bowl
- masking tape
- sponge brush
- paper towels
- table salt
- pencil
- q-tips



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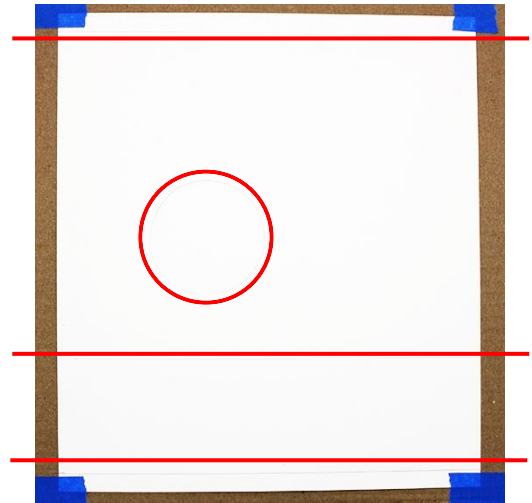
Step 1:

Tape the top and bottom of the paper down to prevent curling. Draw a horizon line and a circle for the moon.

Helpful hint: draw a line above and below the tape to allow space for the artwork to be signed and prevent tape interference. Painting can later be cut along these lines if desired.

Helpful hint: draw all lines lightly so they show through the watercolor less.

Helpful hint: use the center of a tape roll as a circle stencil.



Step 2:

Color in the moon with a white crayon. Lightly wet paper with sponge brush. Dip sponge brush in liquid blue watercolor and spread paint from side to side and from the top down to the horizon line, covering over the moon. Blot moon dry with paper towel to remove water.

Helpful hint: press very hard with white crayon to color in the shape as fully as possible.

Helpful hint: to create depth in the background, use more saturated color at the top and then dilute the color with water more towards the horizon line while blending.

Helpful hint: gently and evenly blot painting with paper towels for quicker drying. Press hard to create textures for clouds or to lighten up an area.

Extra technique: while paper is still wet, lightly add salt to the sky to create starfield effects. For best results, allow salt to sit on paper for approx. 30 minutes for full effect. *Brush all salt off before continuing to next step.*



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Step 3:

Once the paper is dry, paint the land using ink and a sponge brush. Start with concentrated ink at the horizon line and dilute with water while spreading ink to the bottom of the paper. Create distant mountains and hills if desired by adding layers of diluted ink near the horizon line.

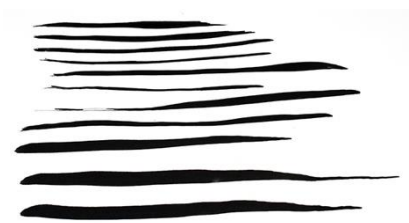
Note: ink marks are permanent. Wear apron or smock to protect clothing from stains.

Step 4:

Practice painting thin and thick lines with a bamboo brush on a spare piece of paper before adding to the painting.

Helpful hint: hold bamboo brush perpendicular to the paper. Allow only the pointed tip to make contact with the paper. Keep hand steady and draw lines with slow motions. To create thick or thin lines, lower or raise arm while painting.

Once comfortable with line control, begin painting tree(s). Paint a long thick line from the ground to the sky for the trunk. To create branches, start lines at trunk and paint outward, slowly raising arm until the brush lifts off the page. Add as many branches as desired.



Step 5:

Dip q-tip into red watercolor and apply layers of red dots to tree branches. After painting all blossoms, add extra color and details with crayons or oil pastels if desired (ex: add pink and white marks to cherry tree(s)). Use light colors over extra dark areas (ex: black ground) and dark colors over light areas (ex: moon) for details.



Note: once an area is covered in crayon, it will resist paint marks. Crayon can also be helpful to color over any undesired areas on the painting.



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Resources

[Learn more about Yoshitoshi's *One Hundred Aspects of the Moon*](#)

[Learn about the moon and moon phases](#)

[Learn about the history of cherry blossoms in Japanese culture](#)

[Extra watercolor effects](#)

Questions

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