

Creating Shiny Metal with Colored Pencils

by Janie Gildow



Creating Shiny Metal - Step 5

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Colored pencil on Strathmore Bristol smooth

I love colored pencil for its richness of color and exceptional control. My favorite subjects are transparent and reflective objects and I am fascinated with the effects of shiny metal. Metal isn't created with a metallic colored pencil, instead you develop metal by using just the regular colors. When you reproduce metal, three things are important: the accuracy of the shapes of the reflections mirrored in the metal, the amount of contrast in the reflections: from bright white highlights to black (or nearly black), and the sharp clean edges of the reflections.

You can actually make any object look shiny by placing sharp-edged white highlights on any of its edges or surfaces nearest the light source. But to make the object look *metallic* you must include reflections.

The secret to drawing metal is your ability to see the shapes of the reflections and highlights-and to be able to reproduce them correctly. And then to be able to see and interpret their values from dark to light. Wait to work from real life until you get some practice under your belt. Begin by working from photographs-because you can rotate them. It's a lot easier to "see" or interpret the shapes if you turn the photograph upside down or sideways. That way you draw what you see rather than what you think you *know*. And photographs make drawing easier because you are translating one two-dimensional surface (the photograph) to another (your drawing surface). So when you first work with metal, make it easy on yourself and concentrate on learning what happens that makes the metal look metallic. Then once you are comfortable with the characteristics of the reflections, by all means start working directly from real life, which will make your work

much more spontaneous. If you don't do your homework by learning exactly what happens with reflections and are consequently not able to correctly reproduce them in your drawings, you will not only lose the "look" of the shiny reflective metal, but you will also lose the reality of the drawing.

A mirror is a flat reflective surface that exactly reflects its surroundings. Objects reflected in its surface are not distorted, so they look normal and natural. They are, however, affected by perspective-and they may be reversed from side to side, or flipped upside down. But they still retain their correct proportions and appear quite recognizable. Shiny metal objects, on the other hand, do not have perfectly flat surfaces. So even though they reflect their surroundings, they *distort* them at the same time. The shiny surface really acts as a distorting mirror to the reflected objects reflected. Those reflections can elongate, shorten, curve and swirl, disappear and reappear. If the surface of the metal is convex (curves outward), shapes reflected in it appear to bloat and widen. If the metal surface is concave, reflected shapes narrow and turn upside down. When a reflection travels up the side of an object, it distorts to follow the contours of the object.

"The secret to drawing metal is your ability to see the shapes of the reflections and highlights..."

Reflections in metal exhibit a great deal of contrast so make sure that you develop a good range of values. Values range from very high (white) to very low (black or nearly black). Reflected highlights should be white-as white as you can make them. Darks should be very dark- make sure that you make them dark enough. In addition to that, the shapes reflected in the metal should be very sharp-edged. Smooth gradual changes in value will still appear within a shape, but will not affect its clean, sharp edges. So keep those pencils sharp! You can't make crisp edges and outlines if your pencils are dull.



Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4



Step 5

STEP 1: How to Begin

Start with a line drawing. Copy (or trace) and enlarge the one provided here or draw freehand. Once your line drawing is finished, clean it up. I draw on tracing vellum. That way I can erase as much as I need without roughing up the surface of the paper. Once my drawing is finished, I retrace the main lines with a black fine-tip permanent marker and then erase all the pencil so that I'm left with just an ink line drawing. I put the line drawing on a light box (if you don't have one, you can use a window or put a light under a glass-topped table) and transfer it to my good paper (Strathmore 300 Bristol smooth or regular surface) with a 3H graphite pencil. Before I start the color, I lift as much of the graphite as I can with my "lifter" (a kneaded eraser or a piece of mounting putty). Then I'm ready for color.

STEP 2: Adding Shading

I like to start metal with a grisaille technique. Grisaille (pronounced greeze eye) originally meant using a range of grays from light to dark to establish all the values of an object *before* adding the color. It is actually the French word for "grey." Now it usually means the use of one middle (or dark) value *color* to establish all the values before adding any other color. For metal, I usually use 996 Black Grape. It adds some color right away, but it doesn't involve complicating the mix with any other color(s) at the very beginning and makes it easy to develop the middle to dark values by changing my pencil pressure. I actually use the Black Grape as a grisaille for silver, brass, gold, bronze, and copper. Then once I've established the values, I begin to layer on the colors that make up the local color mix. I choose the darker hues for the particular metal I happen to be working on and layer them over the Black Grape grisaille. Then I choose the mid-tones and layer those colors over the already applied color-and in addition, extend them farther toward the lighter parts of the object. Finally, I choose colors from the high value list and layer those colors over the middle values, and extend them into the lightest areas (but not into the bright white highlights).

STEP 3: Choosing Color

The "color" of metal (its local color) consists of a range of colors that includes high value colors, mid-tones, and low value colors in the same (or nearly same) color family. The most important thing to remember about shiny metal: the color of the metal is *always mixed with the colors that are reflected in it.*

First, choose the colors you need for the metal you plan to recreate from the Metal Formula Chart. For this demo I'll use Brass. Brass is a yellow-colored metal. Its local color consists of ochre with a hint of cool yellow. Brown and dark brown (almost black) make up its darker values. Lay the pencils out on your drawing table and arrange them according to their values. Group them into darks, mid-tones, and lights.

STEP 4: Tempering the Color

In exactly the same manner, layer 948 Sepia over the Black Grape to begin to develop the lower value of the local color. Color the medium values with 941 Light Umber. With changes in pencil pressure, work some of the Light Umber into the lighter value areas.

STEP 5: Adjust the Temperature and Complete the Container

Over the dark brown values, layer some 911 Olive Green to cool the brown. To further develop the local color, layer 940 Sand over the middle and lighter value areas.

Over the middle and light values, apply 942 Yellow Ochre and 1024 Goldenrod. To modulate the local color slightly more into the cool range, lightly apply 915 Lemon Yellow over everything but the white highlights. Inside the rim in the colored reflections: 1024 Goldenrod, 918 Orange, 943 Burnt Ochre.

