

# Snip Snip Snip Project

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This ancient pair of garden shears make a fantastic painting subject. Years of wear and tear plus numerous adjustments to make them as comfortable as they are practical have given them a character way beyond their original appearance. We are going to capture that character using just three colors.

## Materials

Three colors plus white gouache and gesso, Burnt Sienna or Brown Ink (Pigment ink is best) a pen, black and white charcoal pencils, 1/2" Bristle brush, 1/2" flat brush, 1/4" flat brush, #1 rigger. You will also need a 1/4 sheet of your favorite paper (I'm using Arches 300gsm medium) and a palette to mix your paints on. We will also use a piece of coarse gauze material to create texture.





### Let's Get Started

Once we have decided on our composition (You may want to vary yours from what I have chosen) our first step is to draw our subject onto our watercolor paper. I have used a black charcoal pencil to slowly and carefully build up the subject. Pushing the shears up towards the top of the paper gives breathing space and allows the eye to travel up to the focal point.



### Background wash

The first wash is a dirty Grey mixed from our three colors and applied with your rough 1/2" bristle brush. Start with a pale wash, lay it on quickly, cutting carefully around the shears, then while everything is wet, feather out the outer edges. Before the wash dries add some more pigment to the mixture and drop in an area of dark Grey around the pivot area of the shears.



### Shiny Metal Parts

The top and bottom of the handles are shiny metal so a cool Grey, tending towards Ultramarine is our color for these regions. Use the same puddle of color we used for the background and adjust it as necessary. You can apply this wash with your 1/2" bristle brush, or if it feels more comfortable, use your 1/2" flat brush. Apply the color then, while it is still wet, lift out pigment with a clean damp brush to suggest highlights on the metal.



### Rusty Blades

We can mix up a rich Burnt Sienna color with Indian Yellow (or Quinacridone Gold) and Alizarin tamed with a little Ultramarine. Make it nice and strong - plenty of pigment and not much water. The best way to achieve this is to not rinse your brush out between dipping into colors. Paint the blades with your 1/2" flat brush then dilute the mix, by dipping your loaded brush into the water, before painting the mechanical area around the pivot. I blotted some color out of the smaller blade with a paper towel and added some darker pigment to the large blade to increase variation and contrast. The same color can be diluted and applied to the spring and handle bindings. Leave some highlights in the spring and add shadows to it and the handles.



### Rigger Details

When everything has dried we can start building up detail with our rigger brush and a dark mixture of our three colors. Keep these marks fine and precise by using just the tip of your rigger. Pick out the divisions in the spring, screws, ratchet etc. Anywhere you feel a fine line would add detail and interest, put one in. If you keep your damp 1/4" flat brush handy you can soften or eliminate these lines if you don't like the look of them.



Move onto the handles now. Still with our rigger brush, we can add detail to the cloth and string bindings. Make the direction of the string binding cross the center line of the handle at ninety degrees.



### Burnt Sienna Ink

Once most of the detail has been defined we can make things look a little more rustic and weather beaten with some spidery lines of Burnt Sienna Ink. Apply a couple of strokes of ink with your pen then quickly spray them before they dry to make them bleed and feather. When the ink dries, unlike watercolor, it can not be dissolved, so don't over do the lines. It is also a good idea to have some paper towel handy as blots are bound to happen and must be cleaned off immediately.

After the ink lines have been added let the painting dry then go back to your rigger brush and work some more fine lines into the detail.



### Gesso Adjustments

We could almost stop now, but to squeeze more character out of the painting we will lose the blades and part of one handle with a sloppy wet application of gesso. Apply it roughly with your 1/2" bristle brush, stir it around with plenty of water, soften out the edges with a clean, damp brush, then leave it looking fairly aggressive and uneven. We want the blades to appear partially lost, emerging through a vigorous, hazy mist.

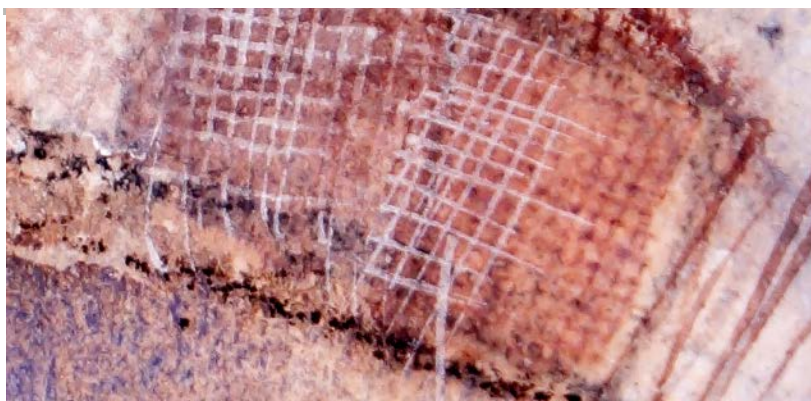


### Charcoal and Gouache Details

Let the gesso dry thoroughly then apply a few loose strokes with your black and white charcoal pencils to subtly reinstate the blades and add some loose, animated marks to the painting.



We can also build up detail in the cloth binding with finely hatched rigger lines and White Gouache. Apply the fine lines then soften them around the edges to tie them into the painting. Left unsoftened they appear to sit on the surface rather than being part of the shears.



### Gauze Rubbing

The final thing we will do is add to the texture of the cloth binding by applying a couple of patches of dirty red/brown watercolor and before it dries cover it with a piece of gauze or cheesecloth and rub it hard with a smooth round metal or plastic object. A pen top is ideal for this - the idea is to indent the paper slightly so the paint fills the indentation.

## Extra Images

Here is your chance to have some fun and try out what you have learned on a few more objects that have accumulated a wealth of character through years of hard work. Paint them individually or combine them in various ways. Remember the subject is not so much the object, but that beautiful aged patina.

Good Luck.

