MIRKWOOD DESIGNS presents…
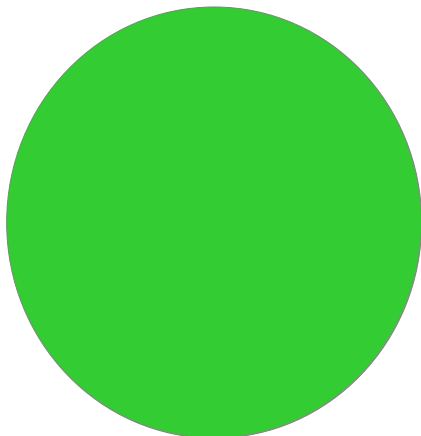# Simple Watercolor Tutorial

Supplies and Tools

- Variety of watercolor pencils (paints are OK, but this tutorial uses watercolor pencils)
- Watercolor paper cut to fit your printer (use the heaviest weight your printer will accommodate)
- Variety of watercolor brushes (I used three sizes of brushes)
- Small amount of white acrylic paint

- Access to a printer (or light box)
- Paper towel
- Cup with water
- Black super-fine permanent marker (optional)
- Exercise and project pages (from the end of the tutorial) printed onto watercolor paper (alternatively, trace them using a light box using a very light pencil mark)

Exercise 1: Light and Shadow – The Circle/Ball

1. Print the Circle/Ball Exercise page (from the exercise pages at the end of this tutorial) on a piece of watercolor paper. (Alternately, you can trace the images using a light box – use a very light pencil outline.)
2. Select a color you would like the circle/ball to be, and from your watercolor pencils, select two or three shades of that color. You can also use dark gray or black to shade if you don't have enough shades of a particular color.
3. Notice that the top circle has two arrows pointing at it. These represent the light sources. Keep that in mind when coloring in your circle/ball.
4. Using the lightest pencil, lightly color the ball, leaving two places where the arrows point empty of color. Note: You can always layer more color, so start lightly.
5. Take your medium watercolor brush and saturate it with water. Remove most of the water – you want it just damp at first, until you get the feel of how the water reacts with the watercolor paint. Beginning at the edges, lightly draw your brush through the watercolor you drew onto the circle. Dampen your brush as needed. The paint should be darker toward the edges of the circle, and the lightest spots should be where your "light arrows" are pointing. You should completely remove evidence of the watercolor pencil marks – they should be blended using water from your brush. Allow this layer of paint to dry (it won't take long).

Remember, you can layer on more color, but it's difficult to remove color, so start light and add darker and more color as you progress. Keep those shadows and light sources in mind!

To the left is a green circle, and to the right is a green ball. The light and shadows give it dimension.
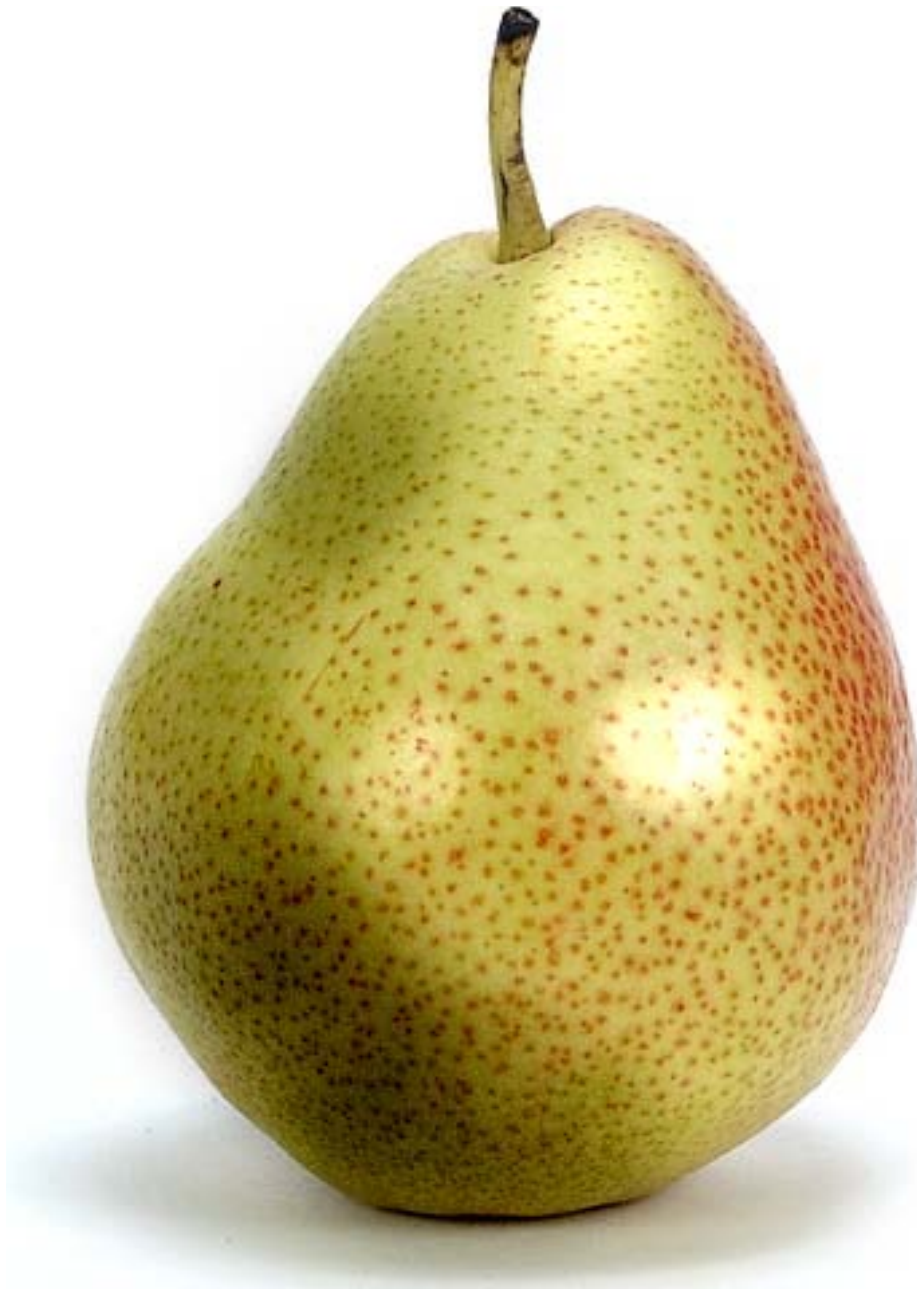
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Exercise 2: Light and Shadow – The Pear

1. Print the Pear Exercise page on a piece of watercolor paper.
   (Alternately, you can trace the image using a light box – use a very light pencil outline.)
2. Select colors for your pear.
3. Using the photograph below, begin coloring in your pear, beginning with the lightest watercolor pencil first.
   Note: Don't worry about the speckles on your pear or the shadow beneath it. After your pear is completely
   painted, you might want to try going back and adding the speckles and the shadow.

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Exercise 3: Kitten and Ball

> **General note**: When I say "color in," I not only mean use the watercolor pencil to color the area in, but also to use the wet brush to activate the watercolor paint.

> **Caution**: Don't be tempted to "scrub" the wet paint into the surface of the paper because you will ruin the texture.

> **Tip 1**: Practice varying the wetness of your brush. A very wet brush will dilute the paint and will make it really flow. A drier brush will enable you to get a much darker color, and will also enable you to get a wispy look, if you splay the brush as you paint.

> **Tip 2**: I sometimes dampen my brush and touch it to the tip of my watercolor pencil to "load" it with paint, rather than using the pencil itself on the paper.

> **Tip 3**: You can create a paint palette by scribbling your watercolor pencils on a piece of paper and loading your damp brush from that instead of drawing directly on your watercolor paper.

1. Print the Kitten and Ball Exercise page on a piece of watercolor paper.
   (Alternately, you can trace the image using a light box – use a very light pencil outline.)
2. Select colors for the kitten and the ball (they don't have to be the same as in the photograph of Titus Andronicus).
3. Start with three alternate segments of the ball. Again, begin with the lightest color first and color in each alternating segment. When those three segments are done, add the other three segments. (Remember the light sources!)
   Note: It's a good idea to wait until one area is dry before you begin painting in an adjacent area, otherwise the color might flow from one area to the next.
4. Next color in the irises of the eyes, and then the pupils. (I like to do eyes fairly early because they make the painting come to life.) Remember, you can always go back and refine different areas later.
5. Use light pink to lightly color in the inside of the kitten's ears. If you're using the colors in the photo of Titus Andronicus, notice that his nose is also pink, so color that in, too.
6. Using the lightest color for the fur, color in the kitten's body. Next look at the photo and begin adding the next darker shade to begin adding shadows and variations in the fur color. End with the darkest shade. Remember, you can always add more paint, but it's difficult to remove it!
7. Add detailing, such as lines around the eyes (Titus has black "eyeliner").
8. Go back and layer more color or shadows if needed.
9. Dab the end of the smallest of your brushes in the white acrylic paint and make pinpoints on the irises (keep in mind where your light sources are!).
10. Finally, either using a fine brush and the white acrylic paint, or a super-fine black permanent marker, add whiskers. Cats have whiskers not only on either side of their nose, but also on their upper cheeks and above their eyes. (I'll be honest and say that the whiskers were pretty much the most difficult part of my painting – I was worried that a misplaced whisker would ruin all the work I had done!)

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Titus Andronicus and His Ball
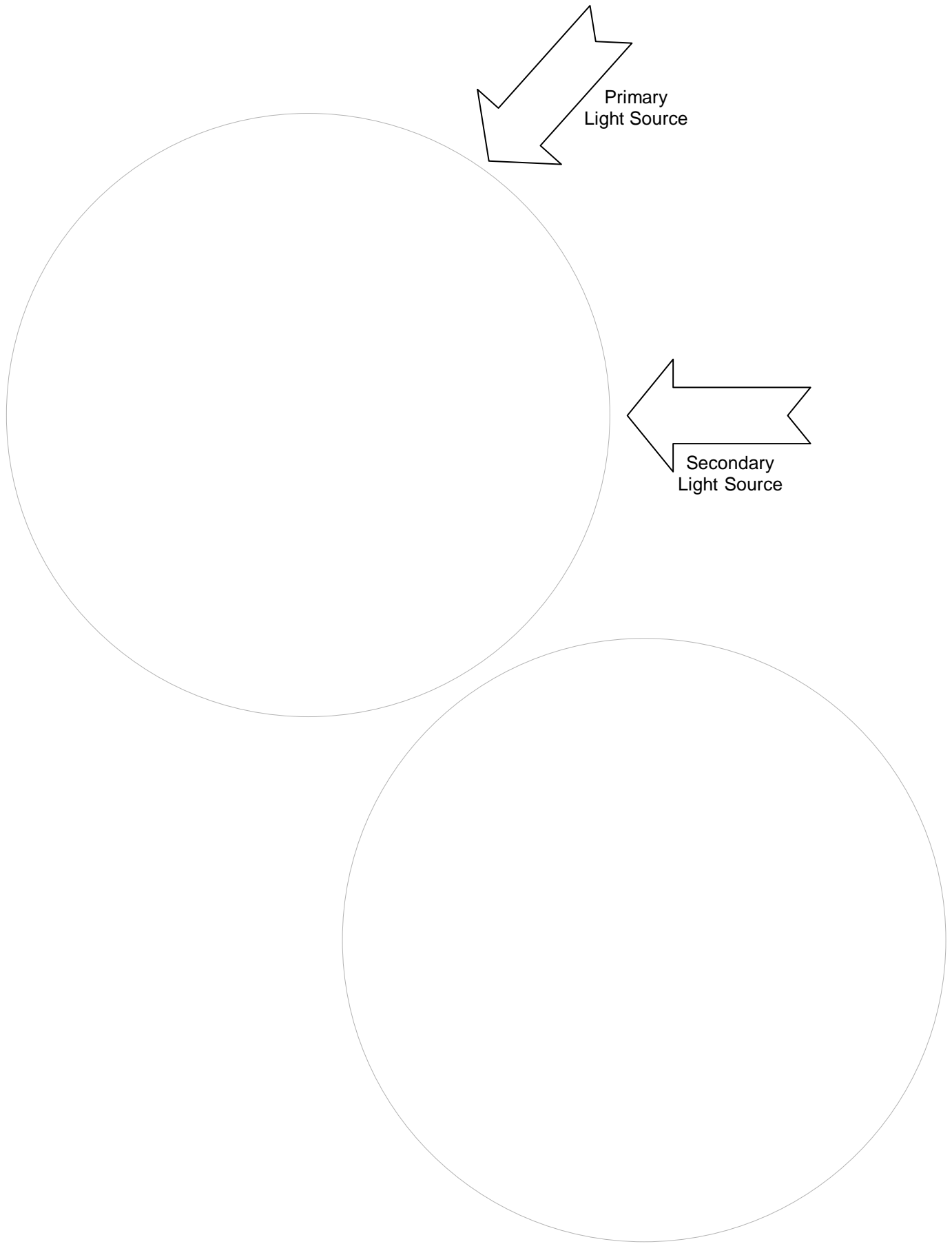
Primary
Light Source

Secondary
Light Source