
AirSick
Koi
PAINTED BY
SEAN CAHILL
Koi fish are extremely popular subject matter in the world of custom paint & tattoos. In this step-by-step tutorial we are going to take you through the process of creating a detailed koi themed guitar inspired by tattoo style artwork.
Throughout this tutorial, we will be covering some basic color matching, digital projector transfer methods, and the proper use of AirSick's "Koi Pond 2" stencil.
...Lets get started
www.AirSickStencils.com
AirSickStencils 2012

PROJECT SUPPLIES



- Double action airbrush
- Auto Mask or Sign transfer tape
- Masking tape 1/4" 1/2" 2"
- Pencil / black stabilo pencil
- AirSick Koi Pond 2 stencil
- Razor blades or Xacto knife
- Rubber scraper/bondo spreader
- Maroon Scotch Brite Pad
- Projector of any kind



AirSick "KOI POND 2"

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We are using the following House Of Kolor automotive urethanes and clear-coat:

VIOLET - PBC65
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HOK UFC35 FLO-KLEAR



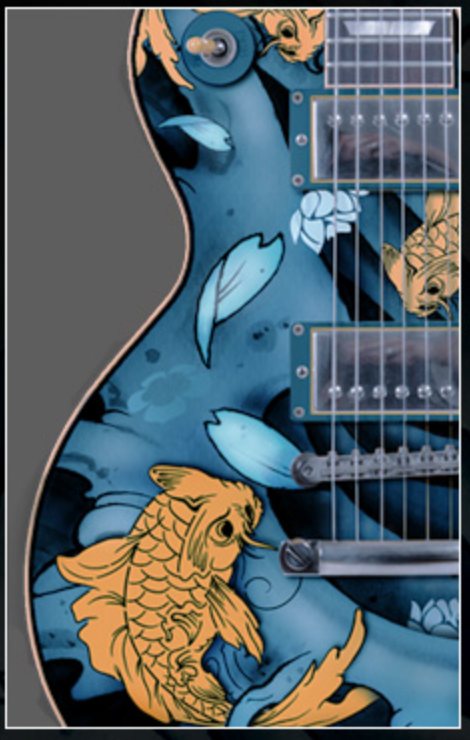
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In this tutorial we will be stepping up our basic skills and heading into a more advanced area of design and execution . What makes this piece more challenging is the use of several basic skills in succession to create a seamless work of art. These skills include: color matching, basic freehand skills, basic cutting and masking skills, and proper use of the AirSick "Koi Pond 2" Stencil.

Do not be intimidated by the complexity of the final design. If you have these basic skills under your belt we can break down the design piece by piece, then put it together like a puzzle. I also want to point out that this design is not limited to a guitar body. With a little creativity you can fit this design into a wide variety of applications.





DIGITAL MOCK UP

USING ADOBE PHOTOSHOP

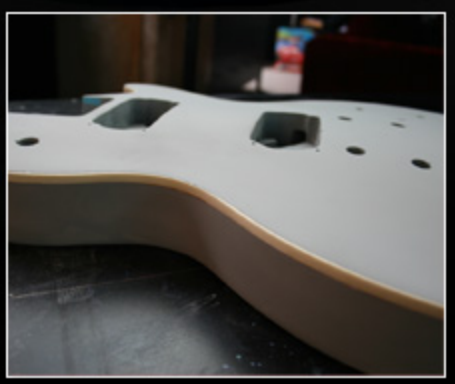
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PREP

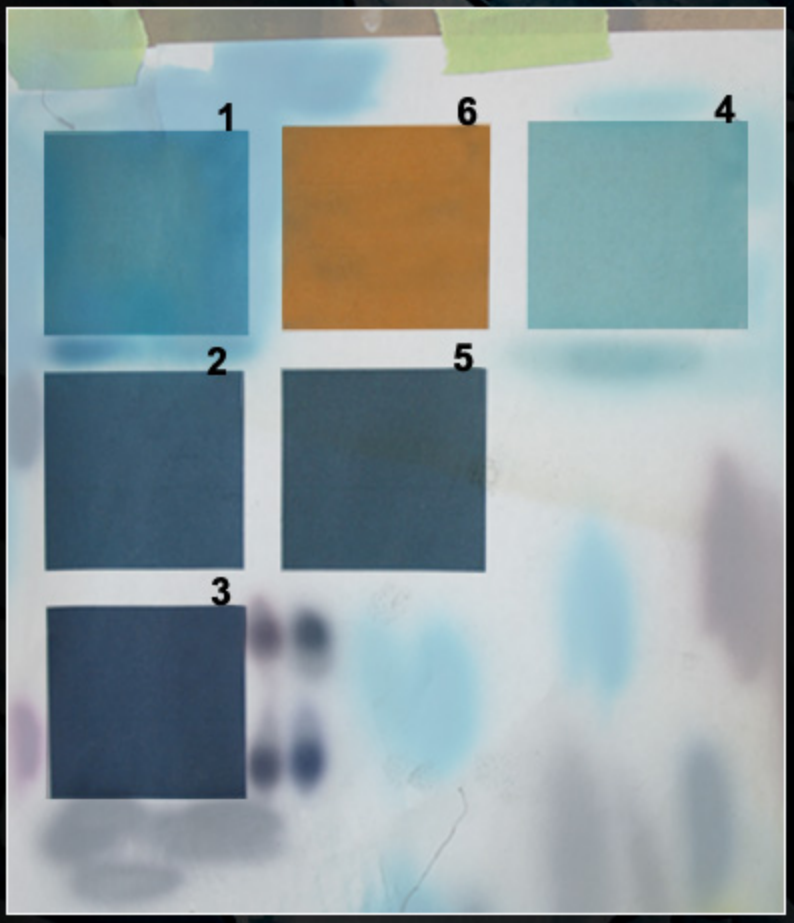
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COLOR MATCHING



We used Photoshop to pull out 6 main colors (FIG. LEFT). We placed them into separate squares on a white background and printed them out. This is a fast and effective way to match the root colors. By simply mixing and testing the paint mixture right next to the individual square. Once we have our 6 main colors matched, we can use black or white to tint and shade the colors as needed.

PAINT TIP

You always want to mix more paint than you will actually need. This will prevent you from having to color match your already color matched base. Getting a color to match the second time around can be a real pain. So always make more than you need.

We have chosen to base the guitar body and neck in the lightest blue out of the 6 root colors. Since the light blue is the more dominant color in the artwork, it will work well as a base and give me flexibility when rendering the design. First we mask off the piece of trim on the body that we decided to keep using 1/4" masking tape (STEP 1).

STEP 1



The trim around the guitar is taped off before the base coat is painted

Note: Your specific guitar may not have this trim piece.

STEP 2



We used a mini gun with a 6" spray pattern to base coat the guitar. (Refer to our prep and base tutorials for more detailed info.)

STEP 3



Now that the base-coat is dry, we cover the guitar face with auto mask. We will be transferring the design directly onto the auto mask. By working in sections (strips), and smoothing out the auto mask as you go, you will achieve a smooth and clean surface to easily transfer the design onto.

Cut the tape at the ends, and carefully wrap it to the sides of the guitar (STEP 4).

STEP 4



STEP 5

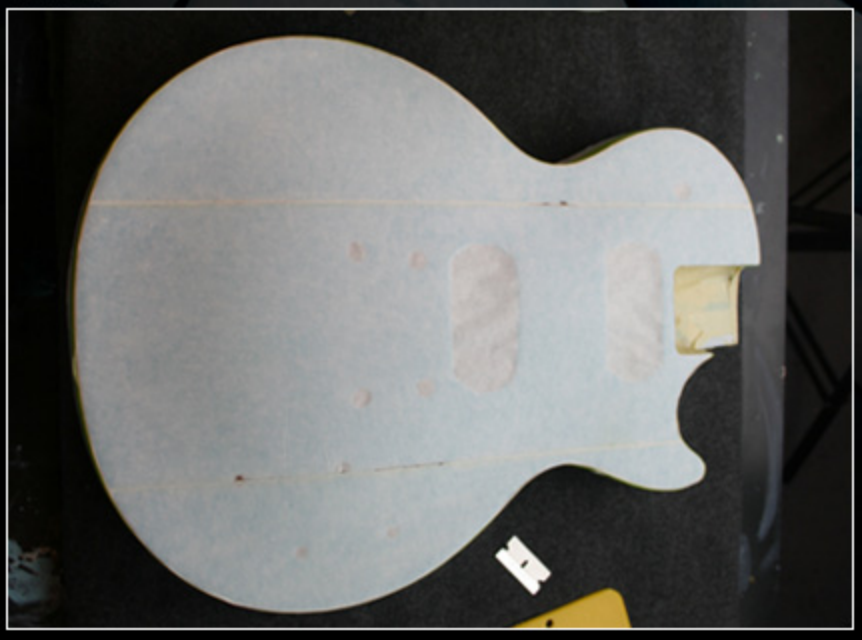


STEP 6



mask off all remaining areas that you do not wish to paint with paper and masking tape. Here we have completely masked off the sides (STEP 6), as well as the back (STEP 5).

STEP 7



STEP 8



By looking at the mockup, you can get a good idea of the placement of the first koi fish. This will give you an actual sized reference point, and allow you to properly adjust your projector to the size of the guitar, as well as the other stencils. Lightly dust through the stencil (STEP 9) and set up your projector.

STEP 9

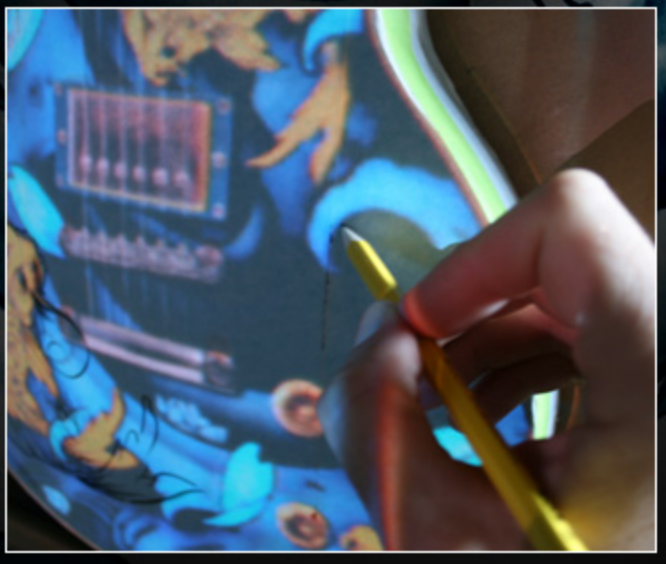


STEP 10



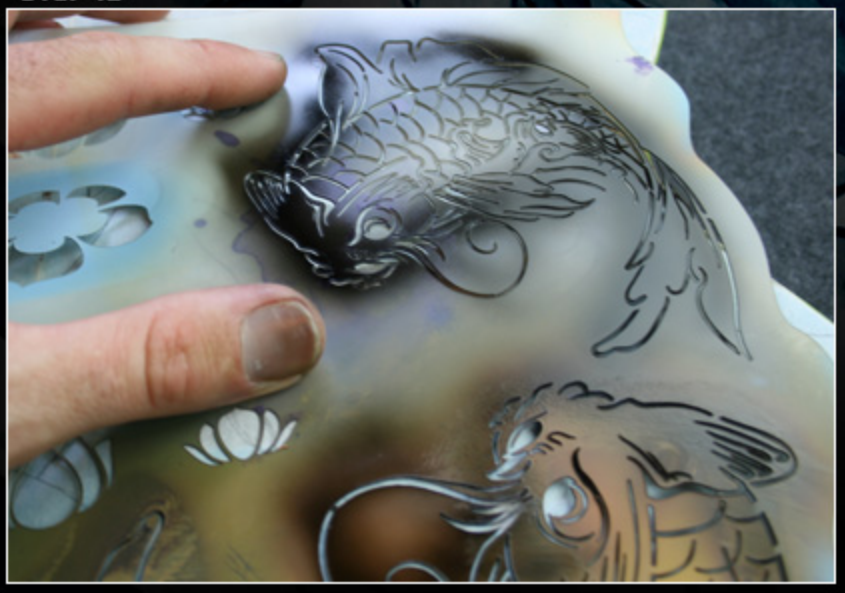
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STEP 11



With the image projected onto the face of the guitar and lined up to the outside edges we begin tracing. With the guitar in place, carefully outline the design onto the auto mask with a pencil.

STEP 12



STEP 13



After tracing the main elements of the overall design, you can easily place the other koi fish throughout the waves (STEPS 12,13,14). This way of working allows a high amount of flexibility, as you are able to make final tweaks and refinements before completely committing to the design.

Once the entire image is transferred to the auto mask, use a Sharpie pen and go over the pencil lines (STEP 15). This gives you a solid black line that will be easy to see when cutting out all of the different elements of the piece.

STEP 14



STEP 15



SEQUENTIAL MASKING

Sequential Masking is the process of exposing an area that is to be rendered by cutting into the auto mask, then re-masking that area to work on another. You can use a plotter to cut a sequential mask design, but for this tutorial we will be doing everything by hand.

STEP 16



Begin by carefully cutting along the lines using a standard single edge razor blade, being very careful not to cut into the guitar body. Only apply enough force to cut through the auto mask (STEP 16,17).

STEP 17



STEP 18



After cutting out the four koi fish, remove the masking and save it off to the side. We will be using the cut out sections to re-mask the koi when we are ready to move on to the water.

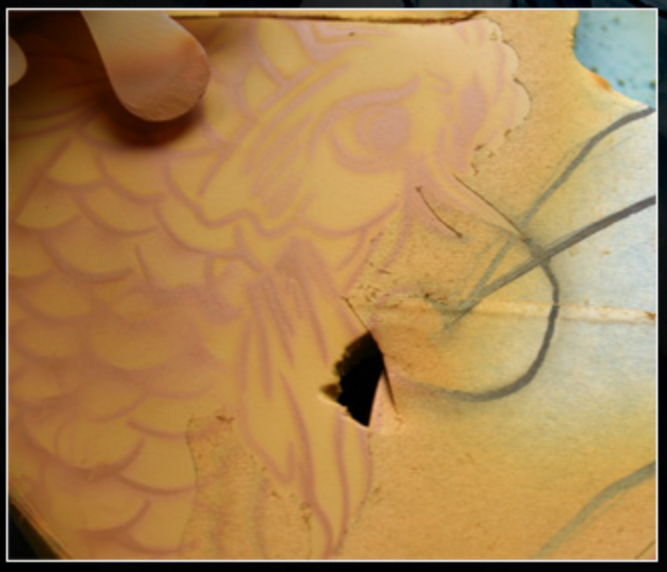
STEP 19



Use your airbrush to fill in the negative space of the koi with your base orange color.

By adding black or white, the base orange will serve as the highlight and shadow color as well.

STEP 20



STEP 21



Place your "Koi Pond 2" above the cut-out koi shape and carefully spray through your stencil with the orange/red color while holding it down to the surface as best you can (STEP 20).

Note: For best results have your airbrush perpendicular to the surface as you make several light passes. If you are getting a lot of overspray under your stencil making the lines all fuzzy, try lowering your air pressure or backing off the surface an inch or two while you spray.

With a mixture of base orange and a little white, add highlights to the top of the head, tail, and individual scales (STEP 21).

Add a few more drops of black to your orange/red mix to get a muddy brown color. Then use this color to create shadows, form and dimension (STEP 22). Then come back in with your mix of orange/red and black to darken in areas that are to be pushed back into shadow (STEP 23). Continue on with this method, jumping back and forth between dark and light until you are satisfied with the look of the koi.

STEP 22



STEP 23



STEP 24



STEP 25



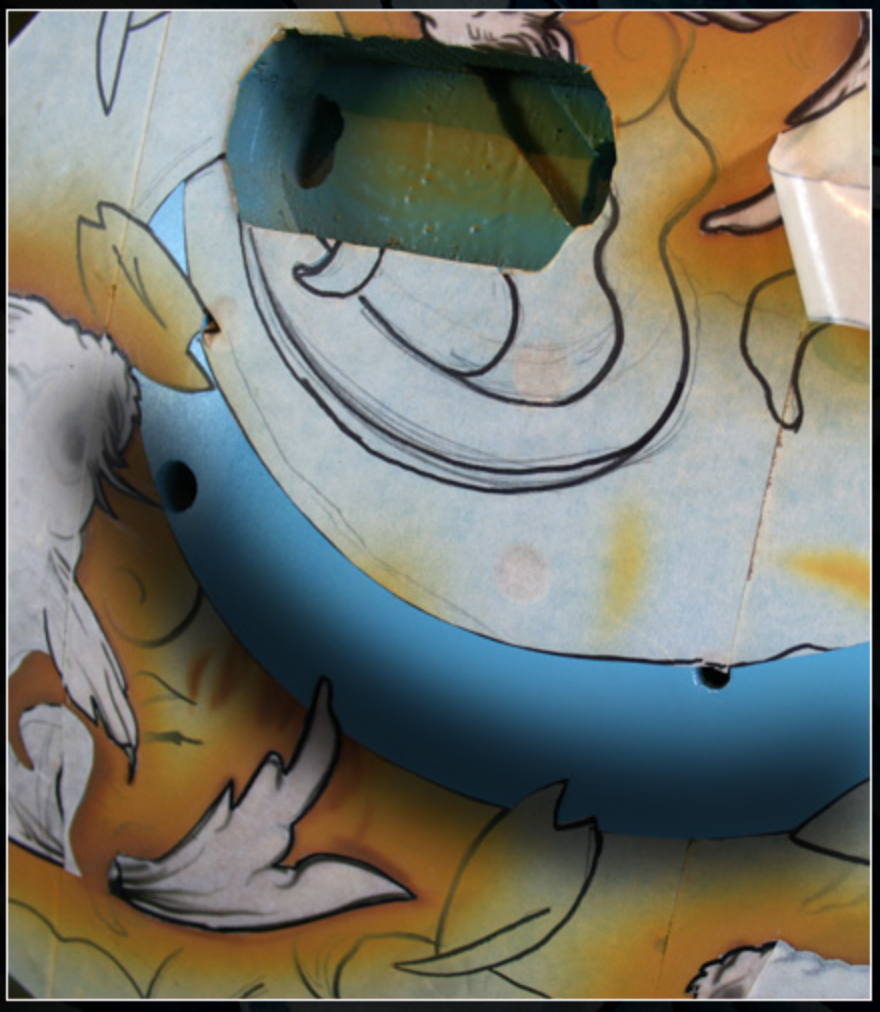
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Now that the koi are finished we can move on to the water. Re-mask the koi, making sure all edges are firmly pressed down, and begin to remove the bottom section of the barrel wave (STEP 26).

STEP 26



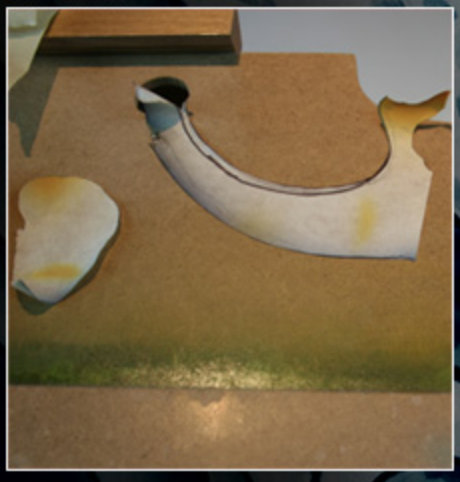
STEP 27



STEP 28



STEP 29



Begin with the darkest part of the barrel, spraying in long smooth strokes along the curved shape (STEP 27). With black and my number 3 color, begin removing the other pieces of masking (one at a time) and rendering each section as close to the original design as possible (STEPS 27,28).

Be careful to save each piece to easily re-mask as you move along (STEP 29). You will use all 5 pre-mixed colors from light blue to violet to shade and shape the form and dimension of the water.

STEP 30



With the barrel wave completed and masked off again (STEP 30), we prepare to render the rest of the water by carefully removing other sections of mask (STEP 31).

STEP 31



STEP 32



STEP 33



The final stage of water rendering will have a great impact on the overall look of your design. We are adding drop shadows underneath the koi (STEP 32), as well as using light streaks and dagger strokes to enhance the look of movement in our swirling water (STEP 32,33). At this stage we also add some extra floral elements from the "Koi Pond 2" stencil (STEP 33).

After finishing the koi, water, and flower petals we remove all of the paint mask (STEP 34).

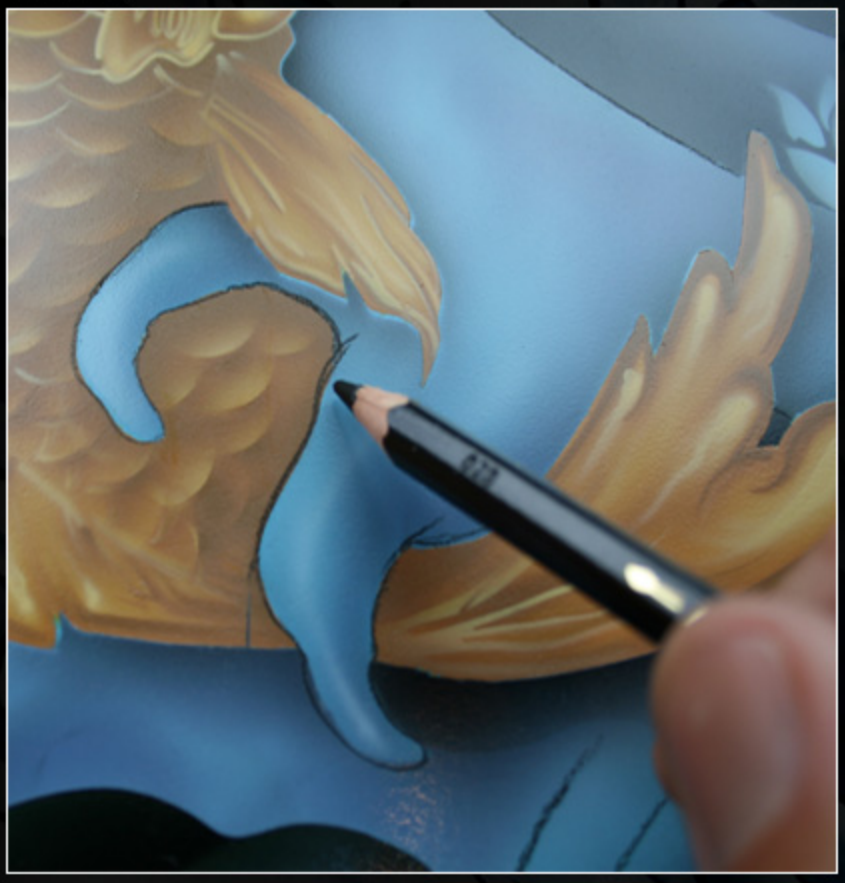
STEP 34



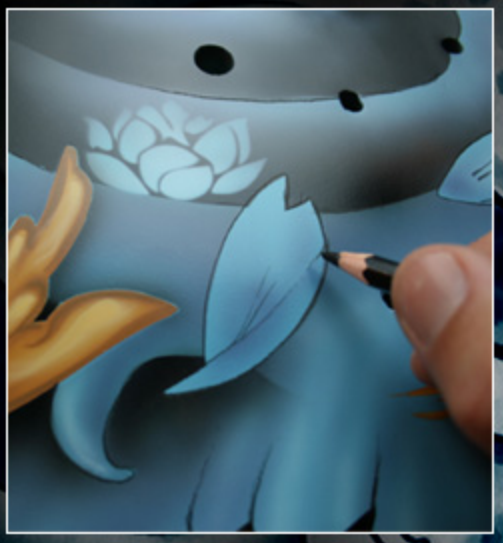
FINISHING TOUCHES

With the vast majority of the airbrushed artwork finished, we begin to focus on the finishing touches to really pull the design together. The first step is the addition of darker outlines around many of the main elements - this will get us very close to the tattoo style of artwork in our digital mock-up.

STEP 35



With a black Stabilo pencil, lightly outline the waves and flower petals (STEP 35). Doing this will help them stand out against the background. Be careful at this stage to not go overboard, we are simply adding some seperation from the background and achieving a subtle stylized tattoo look.



STEP 36



We continue with the Stabilo pencil, lightly tracing over the wave forms and petals on the top-most section of the guitar

STEP 37



This technique will really make the top-most elements (such as the petals) actually appear to be hovering over the rest of the artwork.

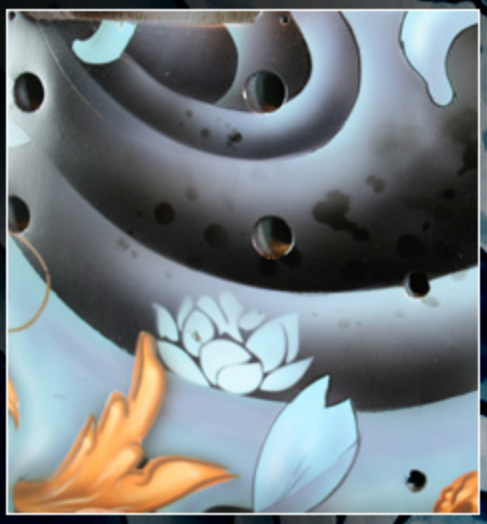
STEP 38



The AirSick "Grunge 2" stencil works great for quickly adding small details to projects like this (STEP 38). This helps to add some additional texture to our water, giving a slightly more gritty or weathered feeling to the piece.

Here (STEP 39) you can see the result of this effect.

STEP 39



STEP 40



We continue to add subtle texture around the remainder of the water.

TEXTURE DETAIL



Just like the stabilo pencil stage, be careful to not go overboard with the texture. Often times you can achieve more impact by adding these types of details in a very subtle way.



We decided to finish the edge with a black pin stripe. It's not necessary, but the pinstripe really ties our artwork together and adds a nice accent. We also added some artwork to the headstock, in order to keep the theme flowing throughout the entire guitar.

With the artwork complete, we give the body 5 or 6 coats of clear, making sure to cover all areas evenly. With our clear coat dry, we wet-sand, buff, then reassemble the guitar.



KOI GUITAR
DIGITAL MOCK-UP

PRINTER FRIENDLY


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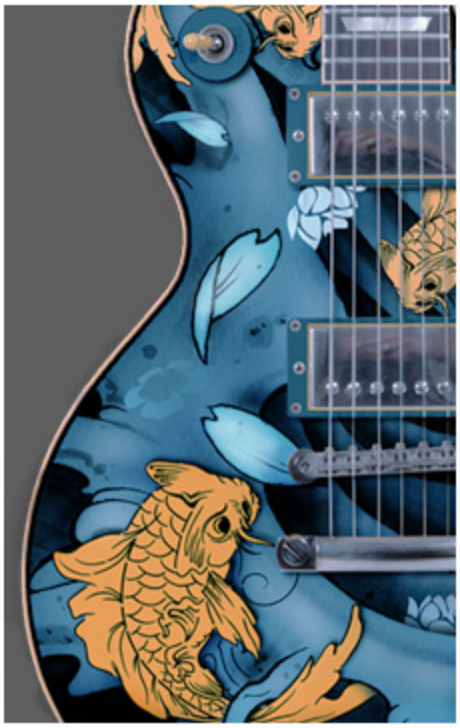
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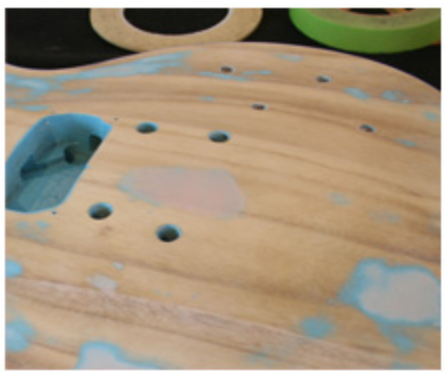
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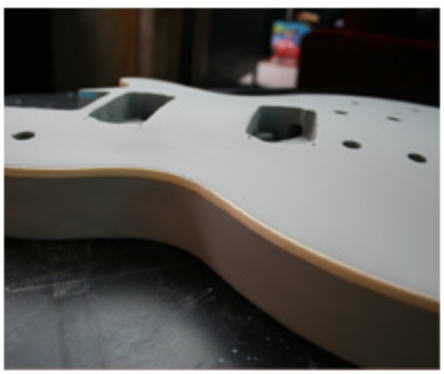
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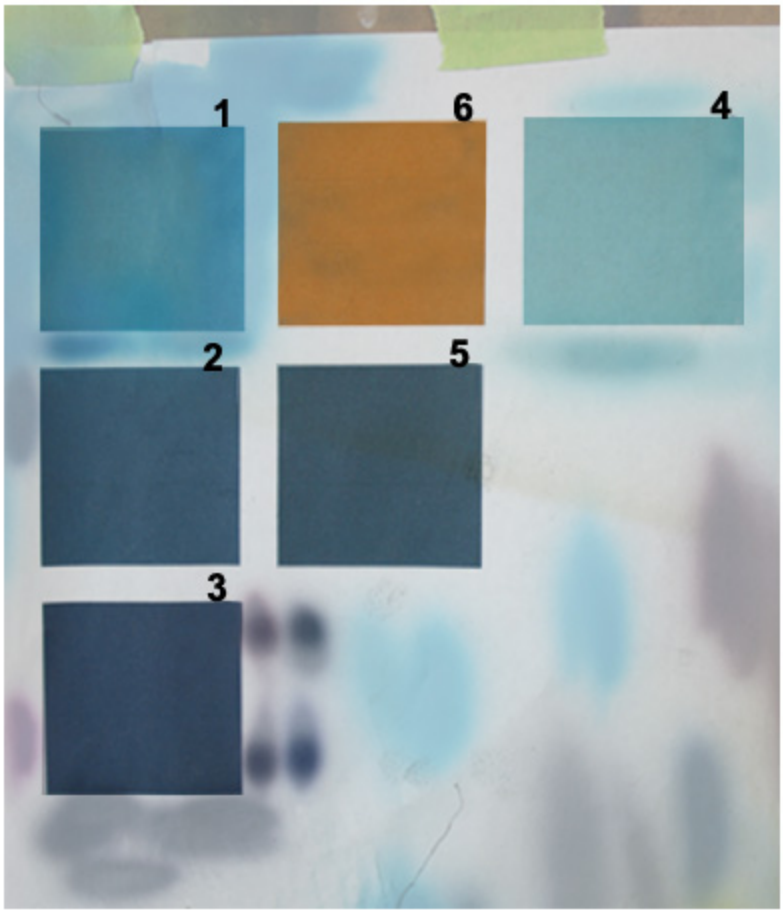
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COLOR MATCHING



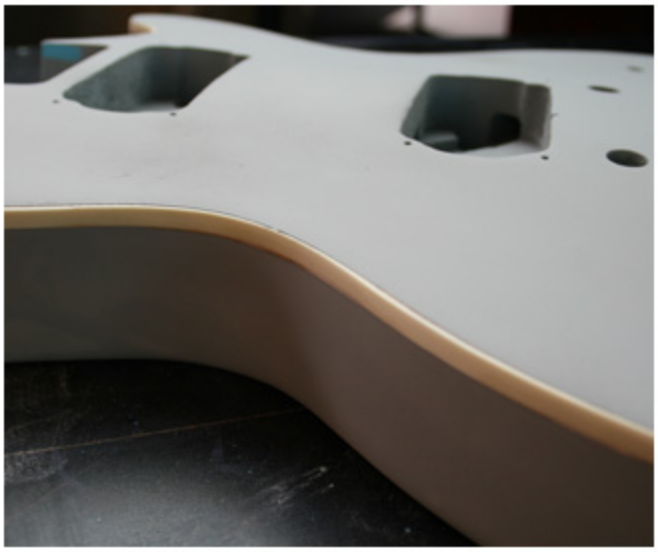
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Note: Your specific guitar may not have this trim piece.

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STEP 5

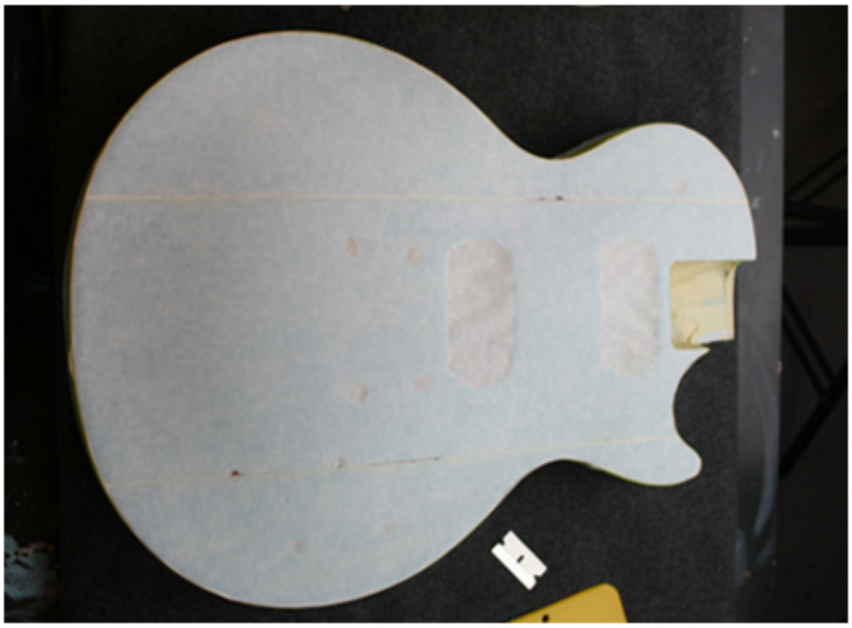


STEP 6



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STEP 7



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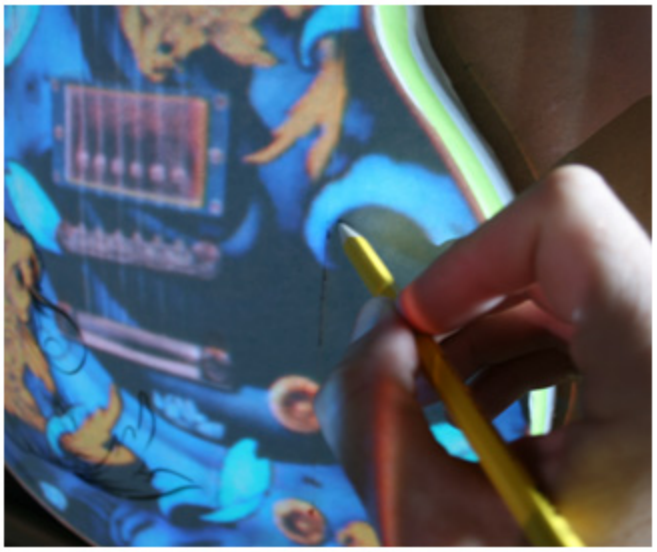


STEP 10



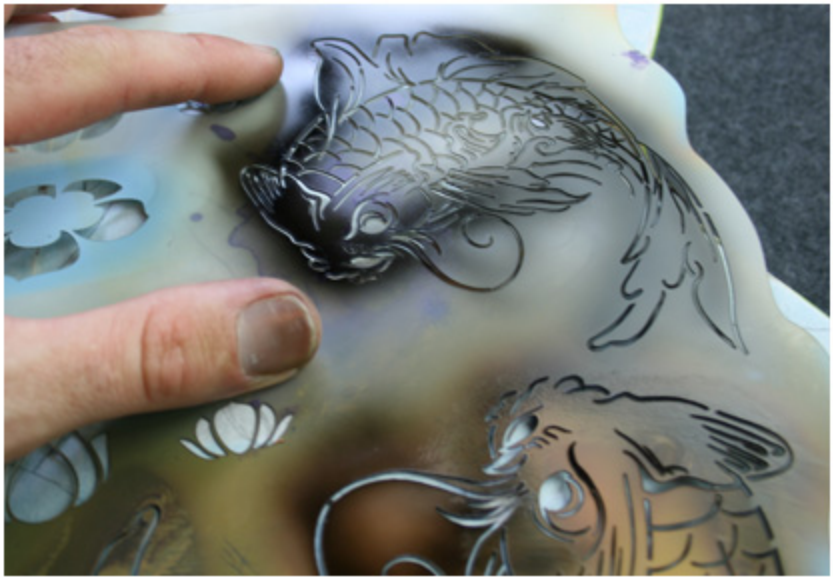
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STEP 14



STEP 15



SEQUENTIAL MASKING

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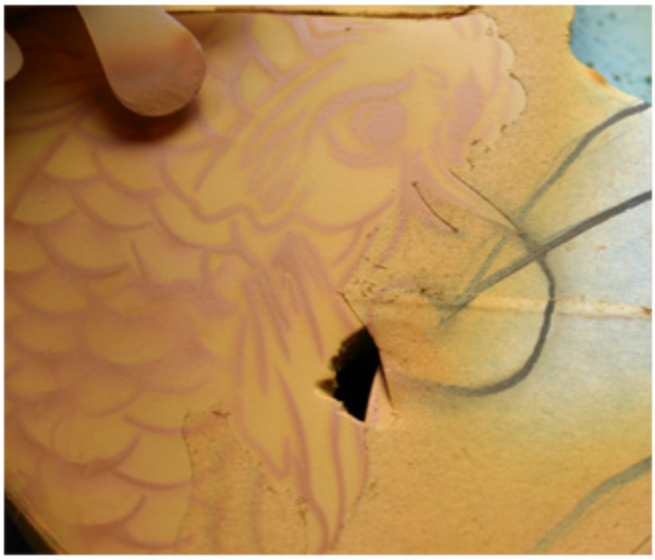
STEP 19



Use your airbrush to fill in the negative space of the koi with your base orange color.

By adding black or white, the base orange will serve as the highlight and shadow color as well.

STEP 20



STEP 21



Place your "Koi Pond 2" above the cut-out koi shape and carefully spray through your stencil with the orange/red color while holding it down to the surface as best you can (STEP 20).

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STEP 22



STEP 23



STEP 24



STEP 25



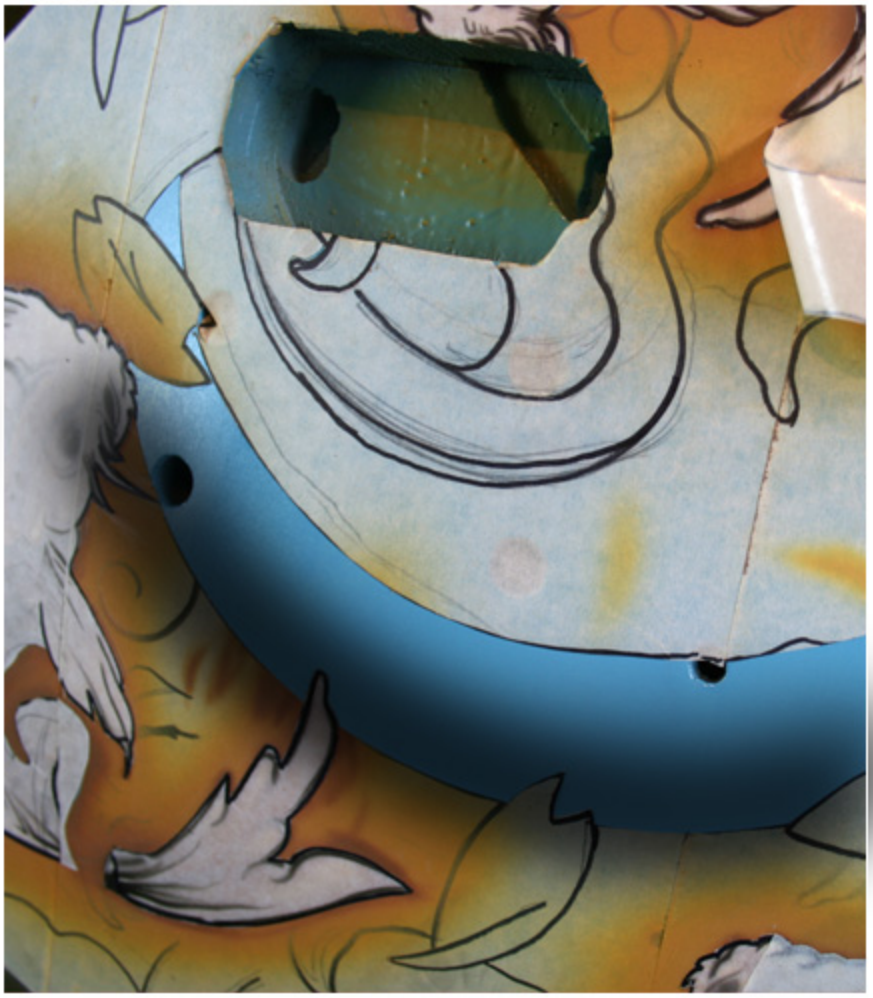
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Now that the koi are finished we can move on to the water. Re-mask the koi, making sure all edges are firmly pressed down, and begin to remove the bottom section of the barrel wave (STEP 26).

STEP 26



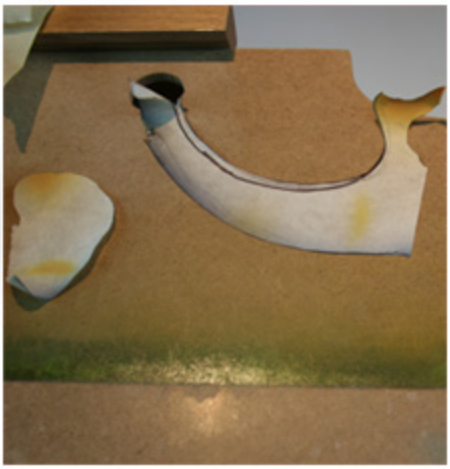
STEP 27



STEP 28



STEP 29



Begin with the darkest part of the barrel, spraying in long smooth strokes along the curved shape (STEP 27). With black and my number 3 color, begin removing the other pieces of masking (one at a time) and rendering each section as close to the original design as possible (STEPS 27,28).

Be careful to save each piece to easily re-mask as you move along (STEP 29). You will use all 5 pre-mixed colors from light blue to violet to shade and shape the form and dimension of the water.

STEP 30



With the barrel wave completed and masked off again (STEP 30), we prepare to render the rest of the water by carefully removing other sections of mask (STEP 31).

STEP 31



STEP 32



STEP 33



The final stage of water rendering will have a great impact on the overall look of your design. We are adding drop shadows underneath the koi (STEP 32), as well as using light streaks and dagger strokes to enhance the look of movement in our swirling water (STEP 32,33). At this stage we also add some extra floral elements from the "Koi Pond 2" stencil (STEP 33).

After finishing the koi, water, and flower petals we remove all of the paint mask (STEP 34).

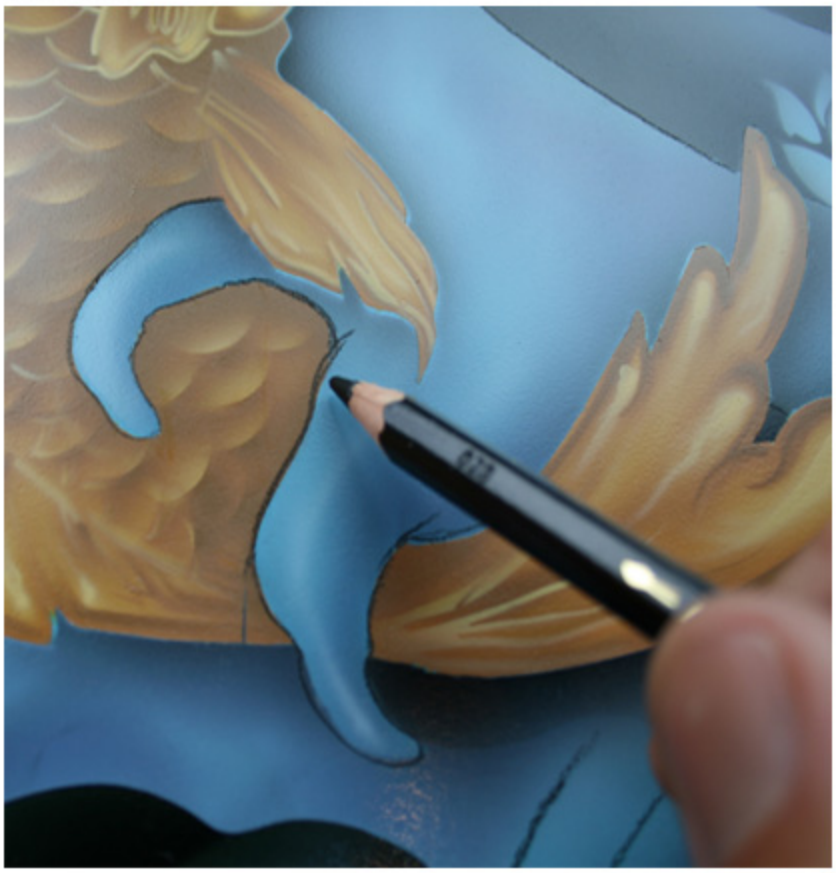
STEP 34



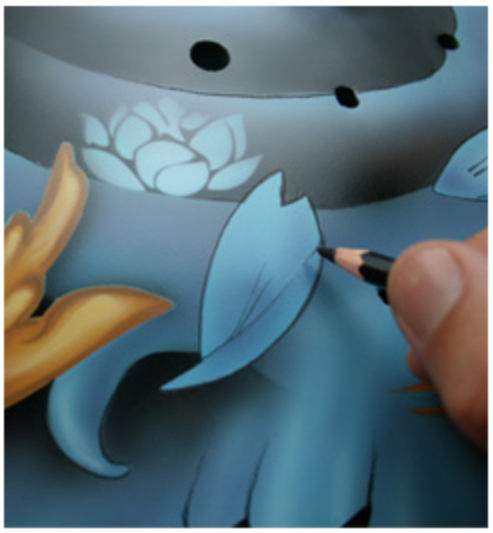
FINISHING TOUCHES

With the vast majority of the airbrushed artwork finished, we begin to focus on the finishing touches to really pull the design together. The first step is the addition of darker outlines around many of the main elements - this will get us very close to the tattoo style of artwork in our digital mock-up.

STEP 35



With a black Stabilo pencil, lightly outline the waves and flower petals (STEP 35). Doing this will help them stand out against the background. Be careful at this stage to not go overboard, we are simply adding some seperation from the background and achieving a subtle stylized tattoo look.

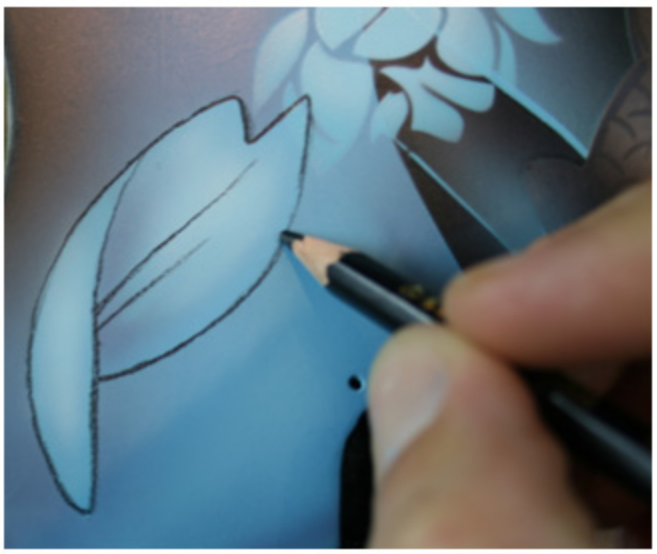


STEP 36



We continue with the Stabilo pencil, lightly tracing over the wave forms and petals on the top-most section of the guitar

STEP 37



This technique will really make the top-most elements (such as the petals) actually appear to be hovering over the rest of the artwork.

STEP 38



The AirSick "Grunge 2" stencil works great for quickly adding small details to projects like this (STEP 38). This helps to add some additional texture to our water, giving a slightly more gritty or weathered feeling to the piece.

Here (STEP 39) you can see the result of this effect.

STEP 39

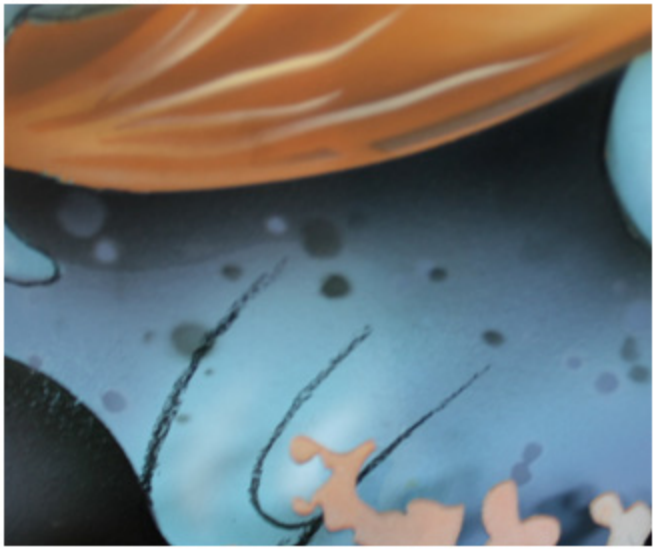


STEP 40



We continue to add subtle texture around the remainder of the water.

TEXTURE DETAIL



Just like the stabilo pencil stage, be careful to not go overboard with the texture. Often times you can achieve more impact by adding these types of details in a very subtle way.



We decided to finish the edge with a black pin stripe. It's not necessary, but the pinstripe really ties our artwork together and adds a nice accent. We also added some artwork to the headstock, in order to keep the theme flowing throughout the entire guitar.

With the artwork complete, we give the body 5 or 6 coats of clear, making sure to cover all areas evenly. With our clear coat dry, we wet-sand, buff, then reassemble the guitar.



KOI GUITAR
DIGITAL MOCK-UP