



Painter Profile

Custom muralist, decorative painter, faux finisher and art aficionado SHAWN MCRANEY turned his passion for art into a lifelong career. Although he earned a degree in art education, Shawn opted to provide an ongoing art education outside the classroom. Since 1996, Shawn's business, Paint the Sky Murals, based in Baltimore, Maryland, has enabled him to bring handcrafted beauty into personal surroundings by developing projects with individual clients as he strives to make art affordable for everyone.

What is your specialty?

I don't think that my specialty is specific to a particular theme or image. It's the manipulation of liquid color into form.

What inspires you?

That is a question that has an ever-changing answer. Currently, it is Michelangelo and McDonald's cartoon glasses.

What is your most important artistic tool?

The most important tool to have is observation. At any given moment in the day, you have to just realize that you are looking at something wonderful.



What do you love most about your job?

Honestly? Being left alone while I paint—I experience the most freedom of mind and spirit that is available.

What is your advice for do-it-yourself painters?

Anything can be accomplished if you take all the time that you need—it doesn't matter how much time someone else needs.

To contact Shawn McRaney, call 410-467-1943 or visit www.painttheskymurals.com.

Shawn's Insider Tips

- As hard as it can be with available time and money, preparation is the most important element to a successful project. Three words: supplies, drawings, samples.
- Never give up.

Shawn's Watercolor Bird Mural

To bring the beauty of the natural world inside, Shawn uses soft watercolors and images like large and graceful water birds to create elegant and inspiring murals.



1. Look at a book of nature photographs for an animal or plant you want to draw. In this case, I used a book of birds from the National Audubon Society.
2. Draw the image of your choice freehand with a graphite pencil on paper. Make the drawing as big as you want your envisioned mural to be. Draw several versions of the bird or other images until you create one you like.
3. Trace your drawing on a same-size sheet—or a few taped together—of tracing paper with the same pencil.
4. Flip that tracing sheet over. On the back of the sheet, trace the pencil lines that show through from the other side.
5. Pick a wall for your mural, and attach the newest tracing to the wall with painters tape. Trace it again, using moderate pressure, which will transfer the drawing to the wall. If you lack freehand skills, project the image directly onto the wall with an opaque projector, or have a slide made for a regular projector, then trace the image on the wall. You can also make a photocopy enlargement (in increments of 15 percent until you have the desired size); however, details may be lost.
6. Using watercolor paint mixed with gum arabic (a solution that increases watercolor brilliancy, gloss, transparency and depth; slows drying time; and helps control the spread of the paint), lightly fill in the drawing with color as desired. Use the original photo as a guide.
7. Using water-soluble markers, define the lines. Use a wet brush to re-wet edges and blend in color as necessary.