THE MALE PORTRAIT

Of all the coloring classes I've done, this one most closely resembles my professional working methods.

For this class I'll be walking you step by step through the process of color male skin.

You might call this an "advanced" class on rendering skin. It certainly is that. But in this case, advanced does not mean requiring a greater degree of skill or a process more technically difficult. Let's face it, laying color on paper isn't technically difficult at all. And that's all there is to this class... colors on paper.

The advancement comes in the form on concepts. Conceptually this class illustrates an advanced way to *think* about putting colors on paper to create the look of skin.

I'll be using more colors in the skin that you probably use to complete an entire work, but that's the only "advanced" aspect of this whole class.

So set aside your fears and reservations and step out on a limb... 'cause that's where the fruit is.

A note for colored pencil users:
I use over 25 colors in the face and hair. By necessity that means a lot of layers. My advice to you is to watch the videos and take a good look through the book before beginning your work. Make mental note of how many times I "restate" a color, and I'll remind you through the text.

Markers work a bit different than colored pencils, and where I may feel the need to restate an area that I lightened during blending, you will find in most cases you do not need to do so.

Above all, keep your pressure as light as possible for a long as possible when I do an over all "blend" or "glaze" layer to consider the tooth you have left. Often times you'll find saving these layers for last, after you have all the under-colors placed, and treating them as a burnishing layer will serve you best.

For most of you this will be a very new approach to coloring skin, regardless of what medium you use. Relax, enjoy... the only way to do this wrong is to stress out about it.

Copic Colors Used For The Study Page

(Refer to the color conversion chart for non Copic alternatives)

E0000
E04
E21
E27
E29
E34
E42
E43
E49
E51
E70
E71
E77
E81
E87

B0000

BV31

R00
R21

W0
W1
W2
W4
W5
W6
W7

YR00
YR31
YR14

G0000

Chapter One:
Coloring The Face And Hair

For this class I'll be using a disappearing line drawing. There are no lines in nature after all, and we want our work to look as natural as possible.

I lay in a base layer of E0000 over the right side of the face, covering the eyes and eyebrows. This represents the light side of the face.

I add areas of E42 along the hairline and jaw, in the corners of the eyes, along the shadow side of the nose, and under the nose and bottom lip.

This color is used to "lock in" the transition areas from skin to hair and from light to shadow.

I also indicate the cool areas of the five o'clock shadow under the nose and on the chin.

I use R00 along the contours of the head (light side only) and along the division of light and shade.

I add E51 along the borders of the R00 in the previous step.

Conceptually, I'm working from cool to warm from the outside in. The E42 is a cool grayish color, and the R00, while warmer than the E42, is still a cool color in this context. The E51 is the warmest of the three. Remember, cool colors appear to recede, so this technique of coloring cool to warm from the outside in will give the head a sense of roundness.

I add a base layer of E04 to the lips...

...and then "lock in" the eyes with a brown Sharpie marker.

Colored pencil users: Use PC947 (Dark Umber) for this step.

I use E71 to darken the nostrils and eyebrows, and as a base color for my shadow shapes.

(Colored pencil users - in the next step I'll cover most of this color with a darker color. You may want to do that step first and then use the color in this step along the edges to preserve the tooth of your paper as long as possible.)

Notice how I use this color over the line work and into the hair. This side of the face will be lost in shadow, so these lines will ultimately be lost in one big shadow shape.

It's important to understand the theory behind the approach up to this point. If you consider the photo above, you'll realize that all my major shapes have been "locked in" and I've begun the process of creating form. From here the line work is no longer needed. We have replaced the line with form and can now proceed with fear of "losing" the drawing.

I add E77 to the shadow side of the face, including the hair, nostrils, and a touch to the philtrum and lower lip. Pay attention to the shapes I've created here. They are important.

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I add R21 to the transition line between the light and shadow shapes on the nose...

...cheeks... (R21)

...and forehead... (R21)

...and to the contour on the light side of the face where I indicate the shadow of the hair and turn of the cheek. (R21)

I further refine the divisions between the light and dark shapes with E70, addressing the line of demarcation on the forehead and cheeks...

...near the upper lip... (E70)

...along the side of the nose and under the eye... (E70)

...and on the cheeks and chin. (E70)

If you study this photo carefully, you can see how each color we've used contributes to the overall effect thus far.

I add W0 to the light side eye socket and just above the wing of the nose...

...to the base of the nose where it meets the forehead... (W0)

...and to the forehead, side of the head, and chin. (W0)

Again, notice the shape and placement of these color areas. The W0 is a cool color and has the effect of adding roundness to the forms, but its shape and placement is important to its effect.

I add a darker W4 to the top and bottom of the eyelids...

...to the inside corner of the eye on the shadow side, and to the eyebrows... (W4)

(Compare this photo to the previous carefully)

..and over the darkest edges on the forehead. (W4)

I strengthen the shadow below the cheek bone with W4. (This is the cast shadow of the nose.)

I add W4 on the upper lip under the nose...
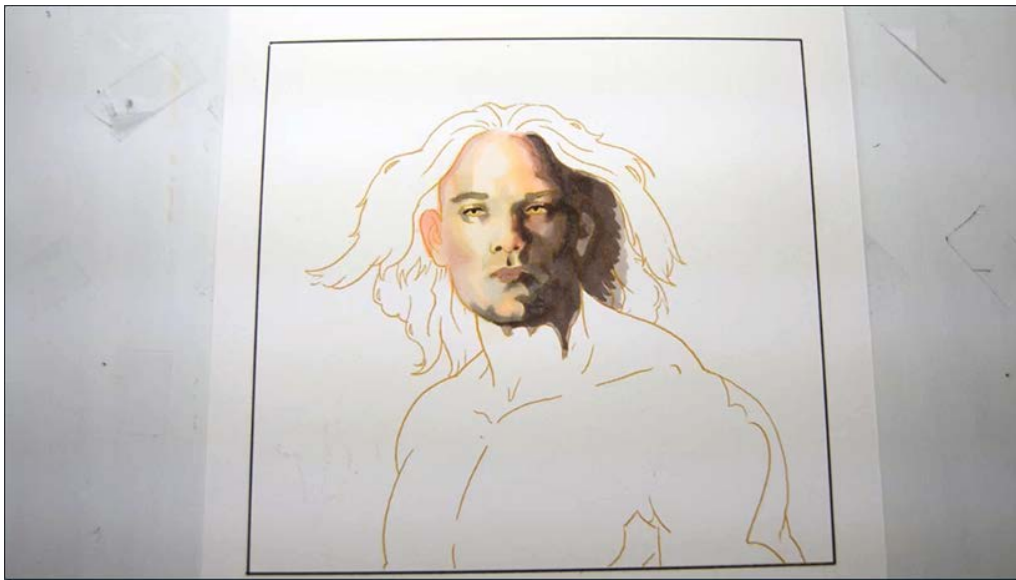
...and along the bottom of the chin and jaw as well as to the cast shadow on the neck. (W4)

Even though this is a value 4 color, I lay it in lightly, modifying but not obscuring the colors underneath.

I add "5 o'clock shadow" with W2...

...and add shadow above the ball of the nose... (W2)

...and to the temporal area and eye socket... (W2)

...as well as to the bottom plane of the nose. (W2)

Here's where we are so far. I love the look of this image at this stage. It has a very "painterly" quality to it with distinct color shapes and a rich variety of hues. Honestly, a glaze or burnish layer of E0000 (PC914 Cream) would pull everything together nicely here and represent a huge leap forward for most colorists. You really *could* stop here either before or after a glaze/burnish layer, but I'm not gonna :) I'm just getting started!

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I restate my darkest shadow shape with E77.

Colored pencil users, be very aware of your paper... if it's getting overloaded, skip steps as you see fit based on the look of your work and the tooth of your paper.

Notice the shape of this color area. The little "points" around the upper lip and on the brow are important indicators of form, as are the shapes in the inner eye socket and along the side of the ball of the nose. Really study this shape in comparison to the photo right before this shape was added.

I add E81 to the lower third of the light side of the face...

...above the eye... (E81)

...and along the transition line on the forehead. (E81)

This color (E81) is a cool green/ gray and is applied like a glaze to the entire (light side) bottom third of the face (excluding the lips), and represents the overall greenish cast present in male portraits due to the hair of the beard and mustache just below the skin.

I glaze the upper third of the head (from brow to hairline) with Y0000 (light side only).

I glaze the middle third (cheeks and nose, light side only) with R00.

The principles of these "color bands of the face" have a rich tradition among oil painters. For a more detailed look at these, be sure to watch the video that accompanies this text.

I darken the pupils and nostrils with E27.

I add a transition tone of E34 to the shadow edge on the forehead...

(That shape on the forehead is important as it indicates the plane change from the "dome" of the forehead to the bony ridge of the eyebrow.)

...to the lighter areas on the cheeks and upper lip... (E34)

...and as a "stubble" texture on the chin. (E34)

I add B0000 to the eye socket, temporal plane (side of the head), and upper forehead...

...and to the lower third of the face under the cheeks on the jaw and chin. (B0000)

Good god I love this!

I add an over all blend layer of E51 to the light side of the face...

...to pull it all together.

If you look closely you can see every single color we've put in assert itself in both the light and shadow areas.

Again, you *could* stop here. The addition of highlights here would really bring the face to life and the sophistication of color would far outstrip anything anyone else is doing with skin.

As for me? I'm a little over half way there.

I darken the eyebrows with E49.

Then I strengthen the cast shadow on the inside corner of the eye... (E49)

...and on the side of the nose. (E49)

I touch in the corner of the mouth with E49...

...and lay in my "core shadow" on the side of the face, leaving plenty of underlying color on either side. (E49)

I then darken the cast shadow on the neck. (E49)

I merge the side of the forehead and the shadow of the hair with E49, leaving the ear exposed.

I then add shadow shadow shapes to the undersides of the hair around the ear on the light side with E49.
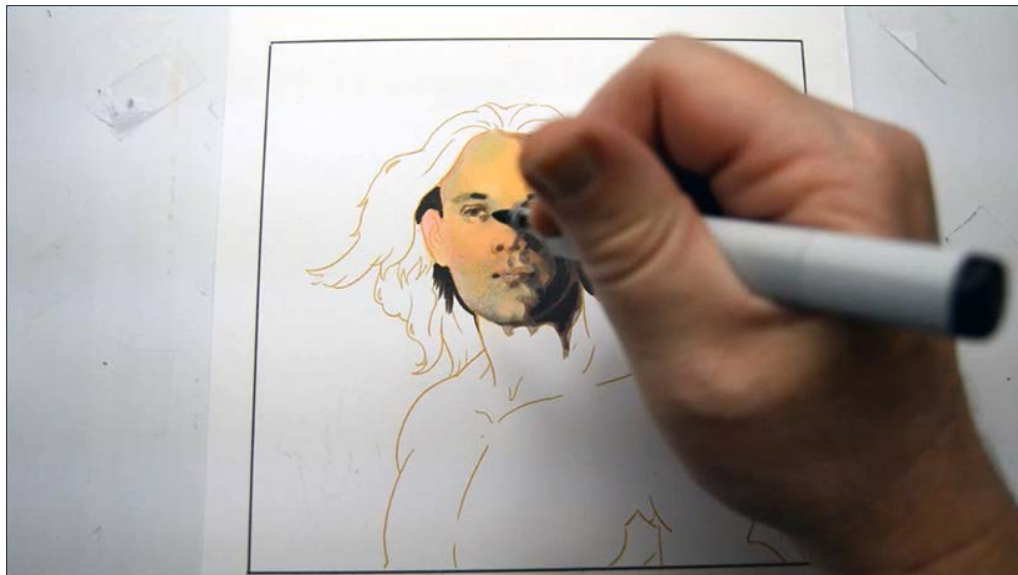
I add more dark shapes to the hair (E49) to give it form and volume. Notice the combination of shape and line.

Note: With my major darks in place in the hair, I will now completely readdress the colors and values in the face. You may not need or may not want to follow my footsteps here at the very least.

Before placing any more colors in the face, set your page aside overnight and come back to it with fresh eyes. Take the time to really assess what you have. You may even skip ahead and finish the hair to get a good overview of what you have.
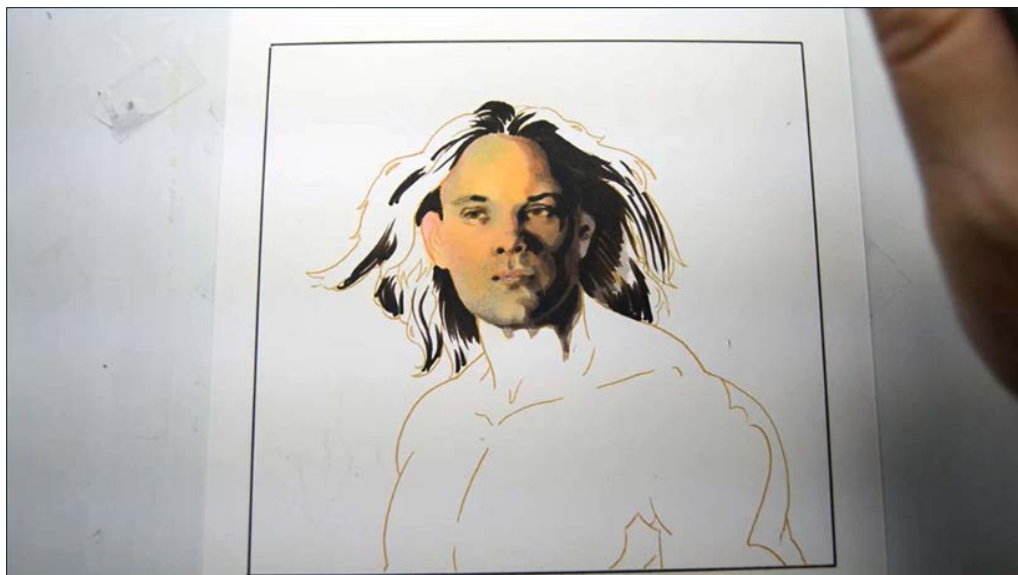
Colored pencil users - check your paper. You may not have room for any more layers. Again, from where we are we have an "advanced" portrait. What follows is strictly my personal practice. You can consider this a "master class" from here on in (when it comes to the face). I don't know anyone else in the entire world who pushes their markers as far as I'm about to go.

I work back into my shadow area with E71, softening the edges where needed.

I use this color judiciously, deciding where to put it based on the relative hardness or softness of the shapes within the shadow area. (E71)
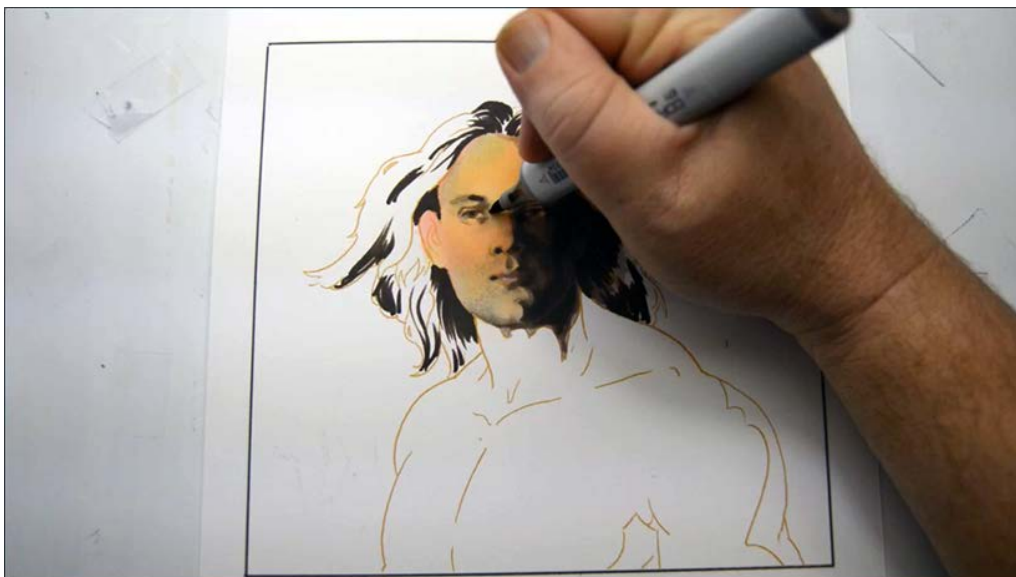
I deepen the shadows in the corner of the eye. (E71)

After the E71.

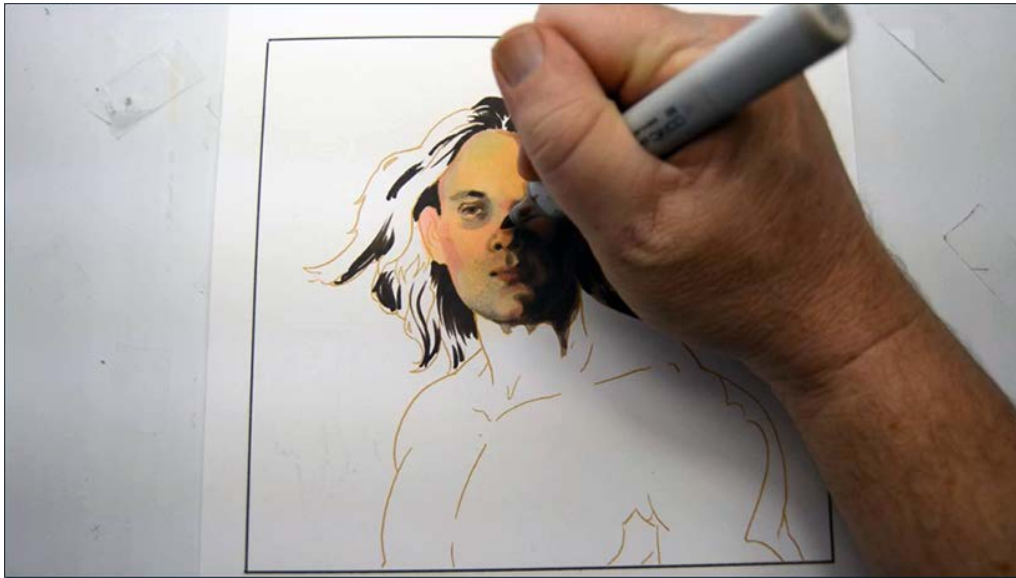I add R21 to the lips...

...bridge of the nose... (R21)

...and to the cheeks and chin. (R21)

After the R21.

I strengthen the shadow in the "hollows" of the eyes with W3...

...and define the contours of the nose... (W3)

...as well as delineating the anatomy of the mouth and chin. (W3)

I indicate the side plane of the forehead as well. (W3)

After the W3.

I add BV31 to the outside corner of the eye…

…along the side and to the underside of the nose… (BV31)

...to the corner of the mouth and under the bottom lip... (BV31)

...to the outside edge of the forehead... (BV31)
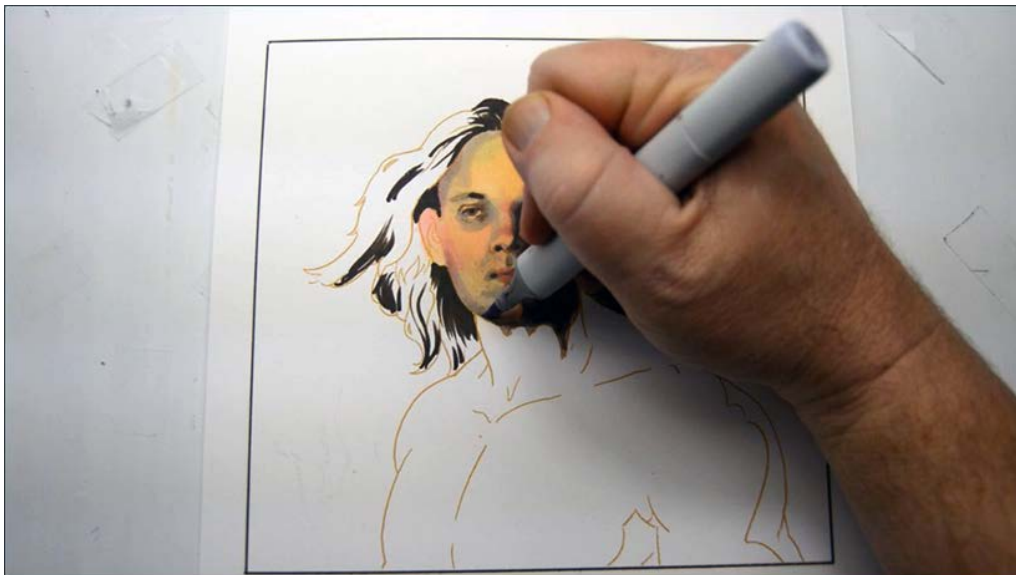
...and to the jawline. (BV31)

After the BV31.

I add glaze layer of W1 to the beard area around the mouth...

...and chin. (W1)

After W1.

I add a base color of YR31 to the hair.

I strengthen the depression between the brows with E81...

...and indicate the forehead wrinkles. (E81)

I then further define the shapes and forms around the mouth... (E81)

...eyes... (E81)

...brow bone... (E81)

...and cheek. (E81)

After the E81.

I modify the shadow around the eyes with W6...

...darken the eyebrows... (W6)

...and the shadow above the ear. (W6)

After the W6.

I add a very bold accent color to the side of the head... (YR14)

...bridge of the nose... (YR14)

...shadow edge of the chin...
(YR14)

...shadow side of the cheek...
(YR14)

...and forehead. (YR14)

After the YR14.

I blend everything together with a glaze layer of E0000.

After the E0000.

I warm up the forehead and cheek with YR00.

After the YR00.

I then restate my "pinks" in the light areas with R21 here...

...here... (R21)

...here... (R21)

...here... (R21)

...and here. (R21)

...to finish off the face :)

I desaturate the hair with E43 here...

...here... (E43)

...and here. (E43)

After the E43.

I then add color accents and "hair" strokes with E34.

I add darker accents and hair strokes with E27.

Resist the temptation to over-blend.

I restate the darks in the hair with E29...

...and hit my darkest areas with E49.
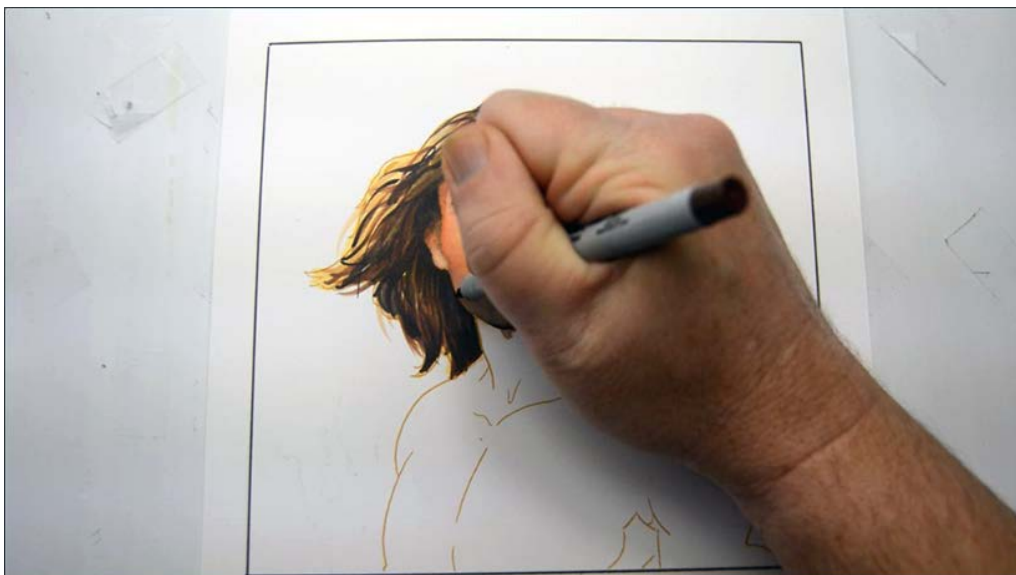
I add smaller hair strokes with brown Sharpie...

...to finish off the face and hair. (excluding highlights)

For this image I'll be using both white gouache, and white and yellow ocher gouache in combination to add highlights.

I mix the white and yellow ocher gouache to a soft cream color to create natural looking highlights, then rub out my brush strokes with my finger to soften them into the surrounding colors.

Switching to pure white gouache, I begin adding my strong white highlights.

I add hairstrokes to the eyebrows and hair to complete the portrait.

The steps I've outlined in this chapter are most closely akin to the techniques used in classical oil paintings. The initial phase of the work (steps 1-60 ish) could be considered the under-painting or "dead coloring" stage, while the subsequent steps would be considered the finishing steps.

These are the techniques I use in all my personal and commissioned works. The reason my Copic work looks like an oil painting is because I approach it like one.

You may or may not take your own work to this level. It *is* a lot of work, but the result is worth the effort. The choice is up to you, but now at least you know how :)

Chapter Two:
Coloring The Neck

With the face and hair complete, I now turn my attention to the neck and shoulders.

I begin by laying a light background color around the figure with W0.

I add a little bit of contrast with W1.

I'm not working to complete the background in these steps. Instead, I just want a darker value than white behind the figure to I can accurately judge my colors and values.

I lay in a base color of E0000.

...then develop out my shadow shape with W2.

I add E70 along the shadow edges.

I add E43...

...and W0.

I restate my shadow areas with E71...

E71...

E71…

E71…

…then darken them down with E77.

I add E51, being careful to allow my cool colors from the previous steps to show through.

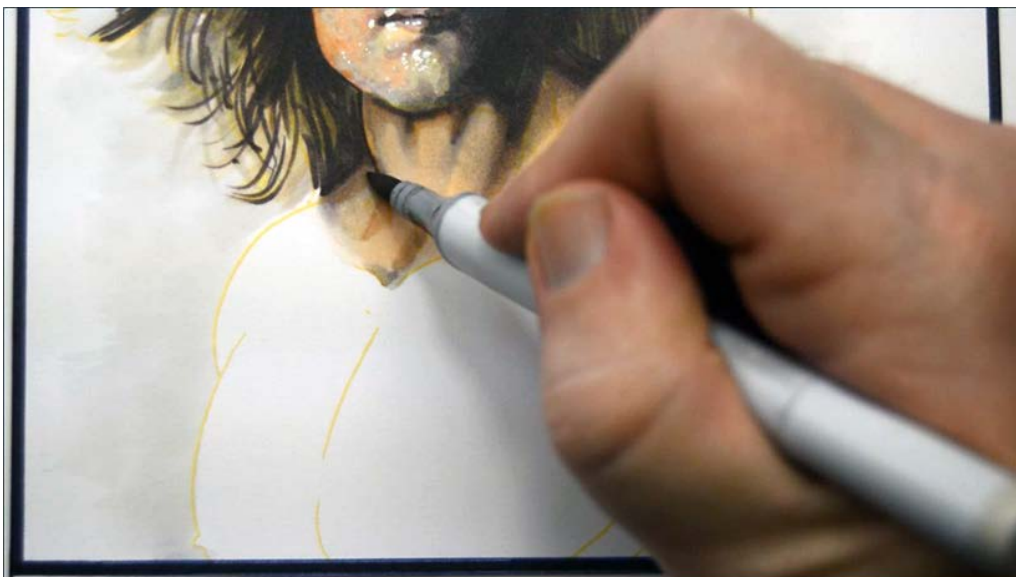
I soften the edges of the darkest shadow shape with E71...

...then add shapes of E34 under the chin, on the far shoulder, above the sternum, along the major neck muscle, above the near collar bone, and along the shadow edge.
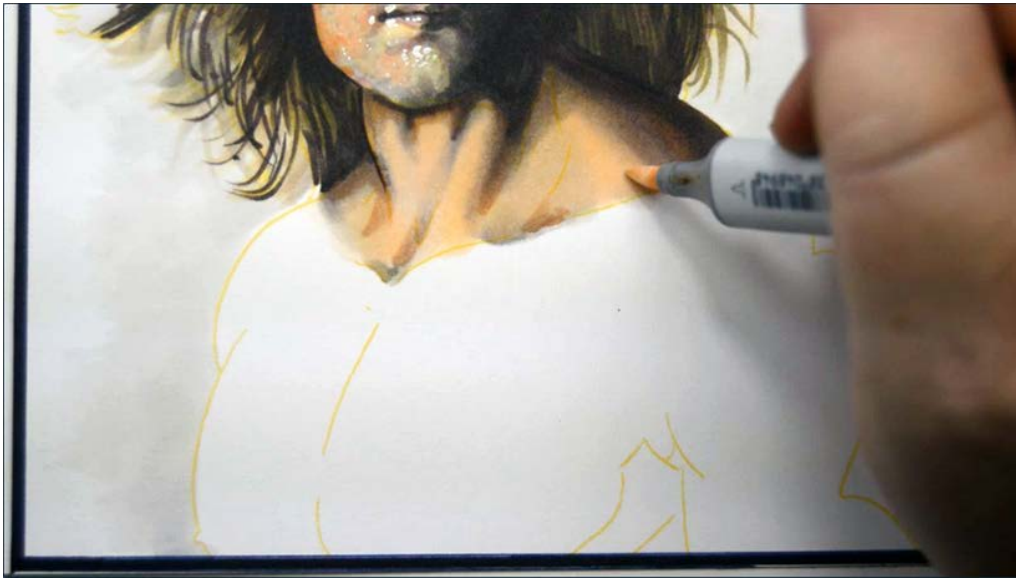
I blend it all together with E0000.
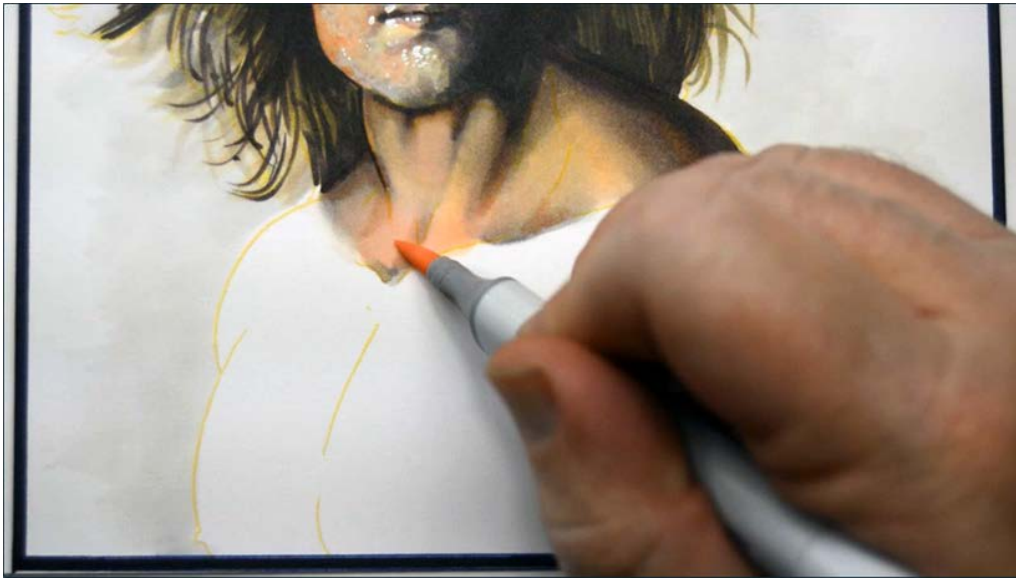
I soften the transitions from shadow to light with W2...

W2...

W2...

W2...
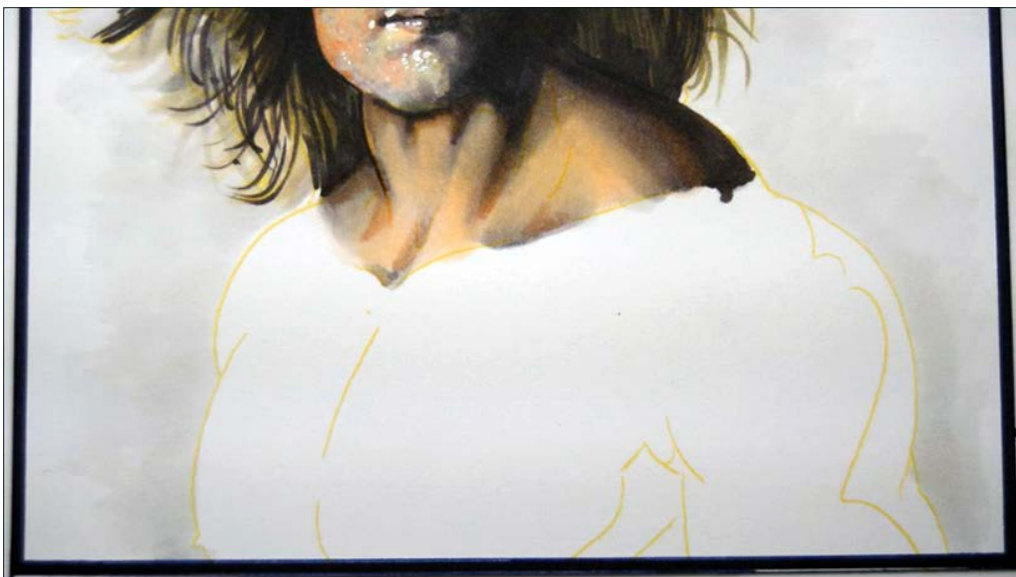
After the W2.

I add areas of R00.

I'm not "blending" here. Instead, I'm keeping my color shapes distinct and laying them one over the other. (R00)

After the R00.

I add mid tones with E42. These are too light to be shadows and too dark to be lights, and are placed in the "hollows" between the major forms.

E42...

E42...

After the E42.

I add E04 to the line of demarcation that separates the light from the shadow...

...then blend it out with R00.

Getting close but could use some green :)

...so I add G0000...

...to finish it off.

Chapter Three:
Coloring The Torso

For the torso, I'm compartmentalizing the forms by breaking them along the natural curves of the musculature. This allows me to keep my colors nice and smooth and minimizes the difficulty of trying to lay even color over large areas.

I begin with a base of E0000.

I indicate my shadow shapes with W0...

...then darken them down with E70. Notice the W0 is still visible.
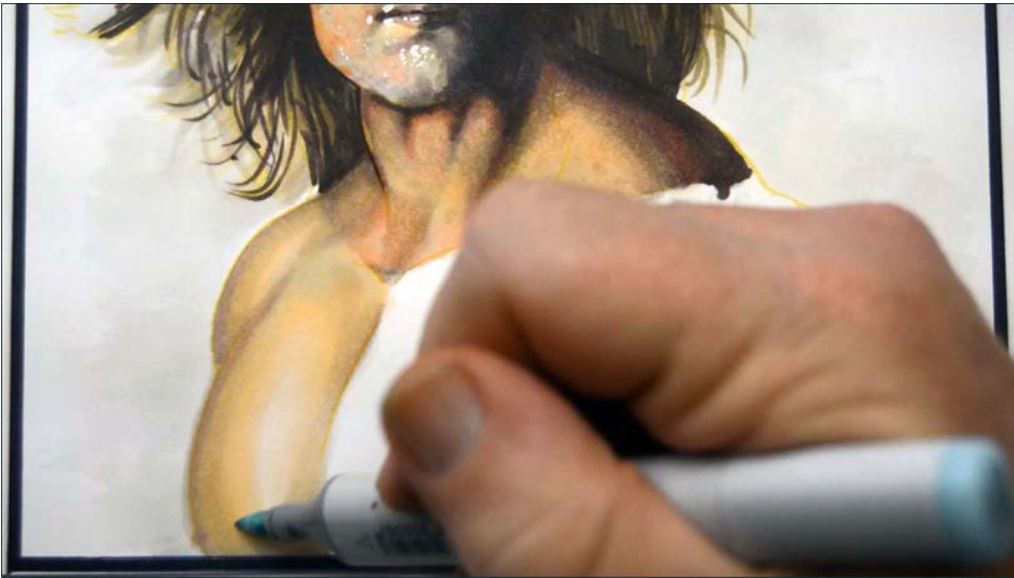
I add E42...

...then blend with E51.

I cool the "hollows" between the muscles with B0000.

B0000

I then add touches of E04.

I soften the E04 with R00...

...then add an over all glaze layer of E0000.

I strengthen my cooler areas with W0.

Notice how beautifully these colors interact.

I add G0000...

...to finish this section off.

I add a hard contour line with brown Sharpie.

You may or may not choose to do this in your own work. I kind of like it and I know I'll be darkening the background later, so it will ultimately appear less bold.

I turn my attention to the other side of the torso. I'll be using the same concepts that we've used throughout this lesson, so from now on I'll only be indicating the colors used.

I start with E0000...

W3

W0

E70

E71

E51

R00

E77

E0000

E70

E42

E51

G0000

E27 along the back edge of the shadow shapes.

E77 to soften the E27...

E04 to bring in some color along the light/shadow border.
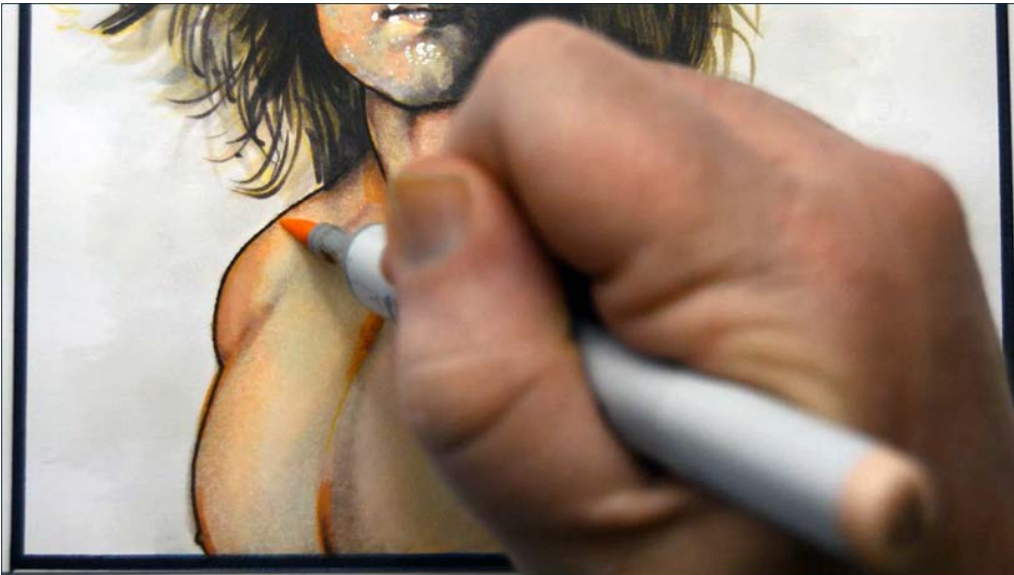
R00 to blend the E04.

Progress to this point.

Desaturate with W0...

Strong color accents with YR24...

Blend the YR24 with YR00...

After the YR00.
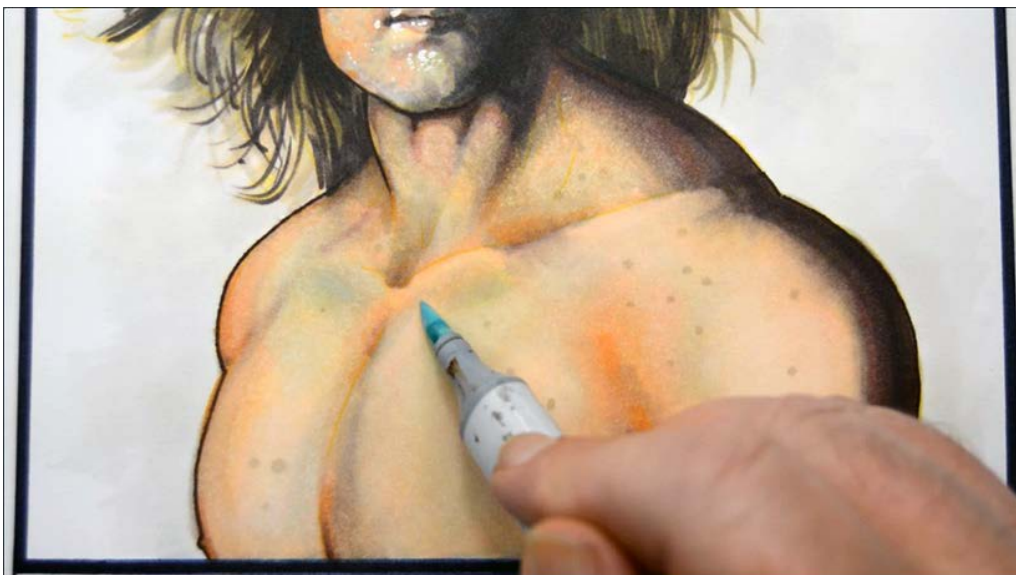
R00

E0000 as an over all blend...

Y0000 as an over all glaze...

Textures with E43...

Blend the E43 with E0000...

Add cools where needed with B0000...

B0000

The torso before highlights.

White gouache...

...softened where needed...
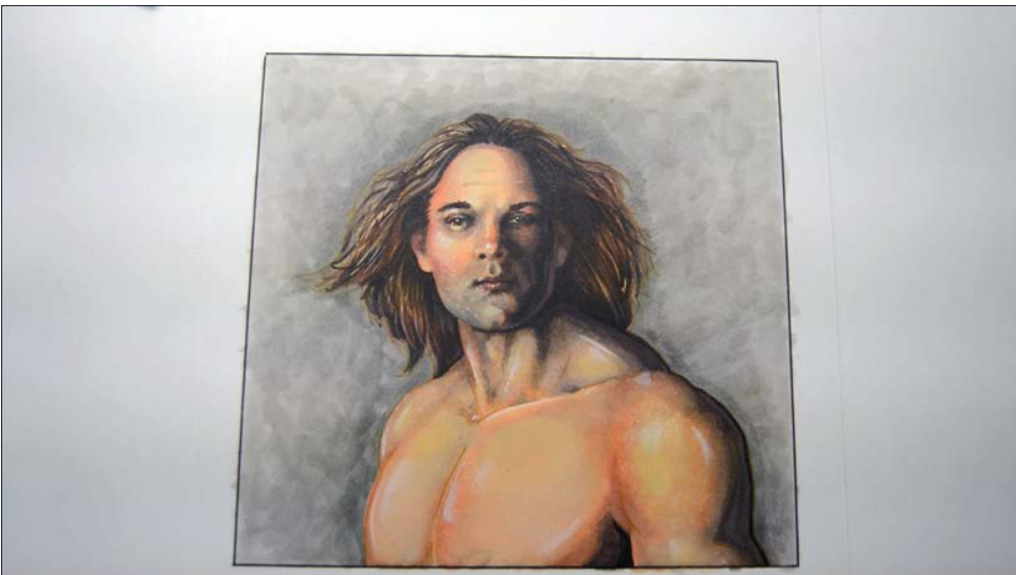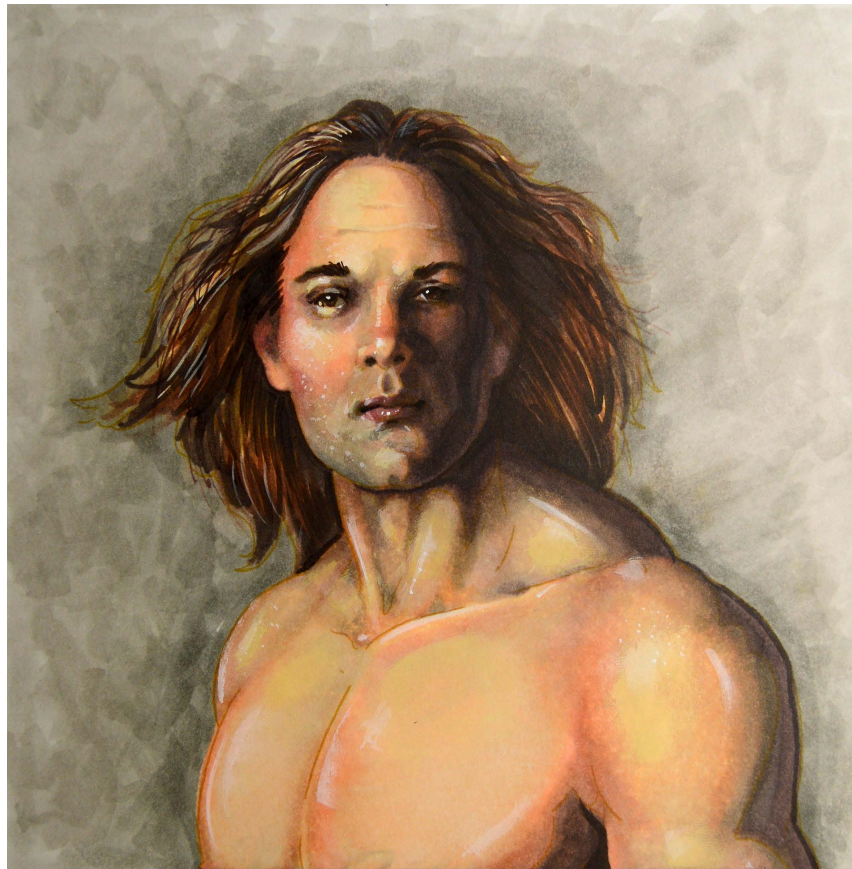

...to finish off the skin.

W5...

W4...

W3...

...and done.

The Finished Work

In conclusion, the techniques outlined in this class represent a thorough presentation of the methods I use while completing a personal work or commission. To call these techniques "advanced" is a bit of a misnomer since it's really just laying colors on paper.

The thing that differentiates my work from most is the ridiculous number of colors and layers used in any given area... but your work is your own. You need not use every color and every layer I do to make your work stand out.

Honestly, any work that uses more than the traditional three-color blend in any given area is going to get noticed.

This is how I do it. Take what you like and leave the rest :)

Until next time...
Christopher Kerry