

DESIGNING A
TATTOO
OF A
GREASE MONKEY
Brenda Hoddinott



Y-03 ADVANCED: CREATING IN COLOR

With so many tattoo designs readily available, designing your very own personalized tattoo is not for the faint of heart.

This heavily illustrated diary demonstrates the process of designing an original tattoo of a grease monkey, from its initial concept through to its final completion.

This article is divided into the following three sections:

- **THINKING WITH PAPER AND A PENCIL:** As an artist, I prefer to think on paper; hence I begin to sketch a few ideas. Objects that I have not drawn previously are researched, and a final line drawing is prepared for shading.
- **ADDING COLOR TO A MONKEY FACE:** I first choose the colors I want to use and then add shading to the hair, face, ears, fur and eyes. My favorite medium for this type of drawing is colored pencils, which work well for coloring both big sections and tiny intricate details.
- **SHADING A TIRE, WRENCH, FUR, AND CLOTHING:** I add shading to the rest of the drawing, outline the basic shapes neatly in pen, and add a few final touches. The orange tones of his face and fur will contrast beautifully with the bright blue overalls.

Suggested supplies: An HB mechanical pencil is used for the initial sketch. Colored pencils work well for adding shading. The thin black outlines are drawn with Micron pens.

11 PAGES – 25 ILLUSTRATIONS

This article is recommended for adults with good drawing skills, a basic understanding of color, and experience using colored pencils. The curriculum is easily implemented into instructional programs for home schooling, academic and recreational learning environments.

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THINKING WITH PAPER AND A PENCIL

About a month before my daughter, Heidi, got married, she called me with a request, “Can you design a tattoo for Chris; he would love to have a tattoo as my wedding gift to him”.

Chris works as a mechanic for large working vehicles, such as tractors and large dump trucks. When Heidi suggested designing a grease monkey tattoo, ideas began floating around in my mind. As an artist, I prefer to think on paper; so, I begin to sketch a few ideas.

Naturally, my initial thought was to draw a monkey. Never having drawn a monkey before, my first research project was to look on the Internet to find photos. With a basic concept of the shape of the face and ears, the rough sketch in Figure 301 escaped being thrown in the trash.

This was getting close to what I envisioned, but not close enough. He looks like he is leaning on a barbell or a dog bone, rather than a wrench!



Figure 301: The sketch that passed the first cuts.



Time to research a little more and find out what a more realistic wrench looks like.

By placing tracing paper over my rough sketch, I could easily refine the sketch and add a few extra details. I also decided to give him overalls and a facial expression that was a little less “cute and adorable” and more “manly”. Figure 302 shows a little more refined sketch of a monkey with a wrench.

Figure 302: My first line drawing demonstrates my ideas a little more clearly.

At this point, I showed the design concept to Heidi to get her ideas. She suggested that I have him leaning against a tire and holding a wrench. Ah ha! Perfect! Chris loves pretty much everything with tires and a motor, and they have a garage behind their home, even bigger than their house. The garage is always filled with “toys”, such as all terrain vehicles, mud-runners, motorcycles, cars, and trucks; all in various states of restoration.

Compared to a motor, drawing a tire should be a piece of cake! Back to the drawing board! I used tracing paper to redraw the sections of the sketch that I wanted to change, such as replacing the oversized wrench with a tire. I moved his right hand up a little so it rested on top of the tire. The left hand held a wrench that is drawn with perspective so its end appears to be farther back than the front.

When I was happy with the changes, I used Photoshop to overlay the new parts of the sketch onto the old sketch. If you are not familiar with Photoshop, you can easily erase the parts you don't like and redraw new sections.

If you are designing a tattoo for someone other than yourself, you really should show your design to the individual at this stage, before you get into the shading. He or she may also have ideas.

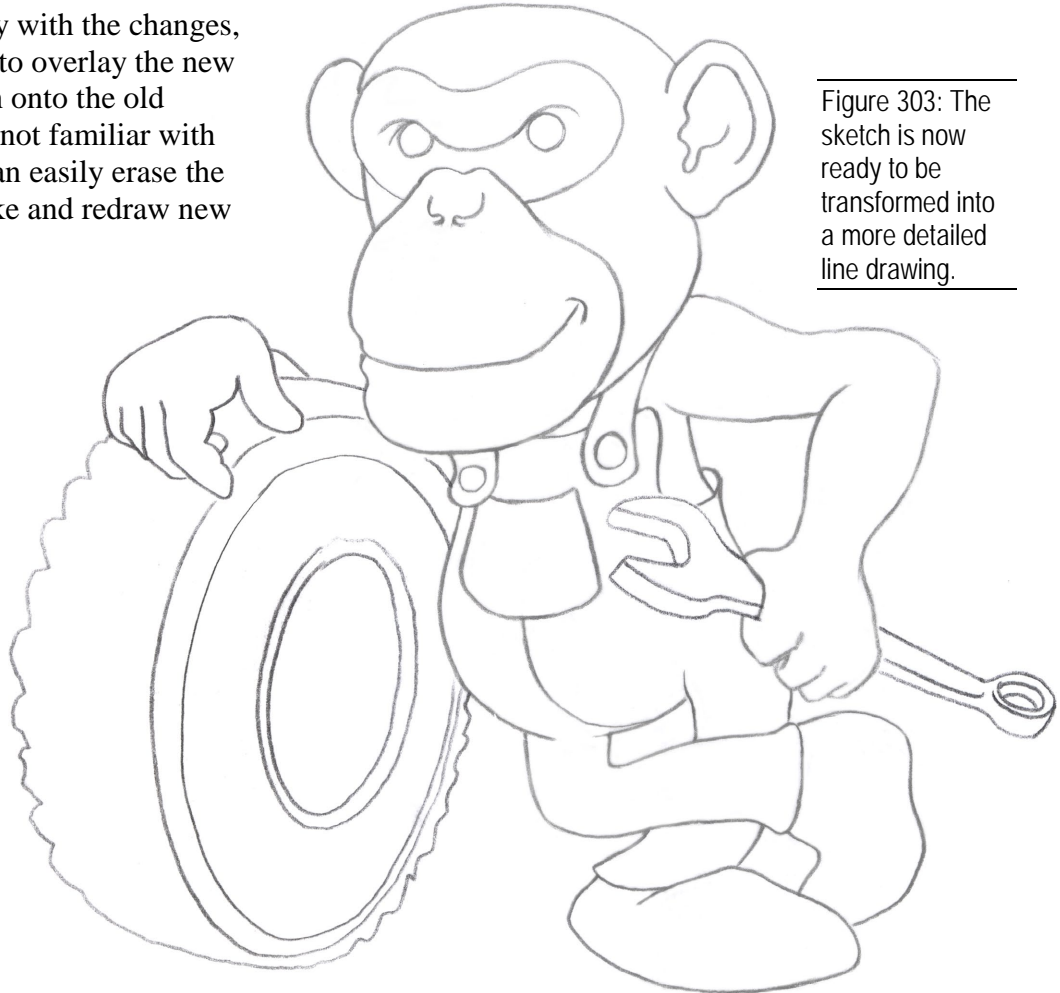


Figure 303: The sketch is now ready to be transformed into a more detailed line drawing.

When drawing a tattoo design, you have to keep in mind that the design needs to be kept as simple as possible. Even though the primary tool of a tattoo artist is a needle, extremely intricate details are more difficult to draw on the uneven surface of human flesh than on smooth paper.

Also, keep in mind that tattoos can vary in size depending on what part of the body becomes the artist's canvas. The actual tattoo may be smaller or larger than the drawing. Hence, you need to add enough details to work well for a larger tattoo, but also make sure that it is easy to simplify for a smaller tattoo.

Heidi suggested that I have a red hankie hanging out of his pocket. She also sent me a photo of a tire. In addition to Heidi's suggestions, I added larger eyes, a furry perimeter around his head and arms, a tail, (I almost forgot the tail!), and work boots. The final line drawing in Figure 304 is illustrated the same size as my actual drawing.

Colored pencils are very difficult to erase, so I need to be sure that my outline is accurate. I've added a lot more details, so as to make life easier when I get to the shading.

Take note of the shapes of the tire's tread, the handkerchief hanging out of his pocket, the various parts of the rim of the tire, the seams of his overalls, the pupils, irises, and highlights of his eyes, and the addition of work boots (instead of blobs where his feet belong).

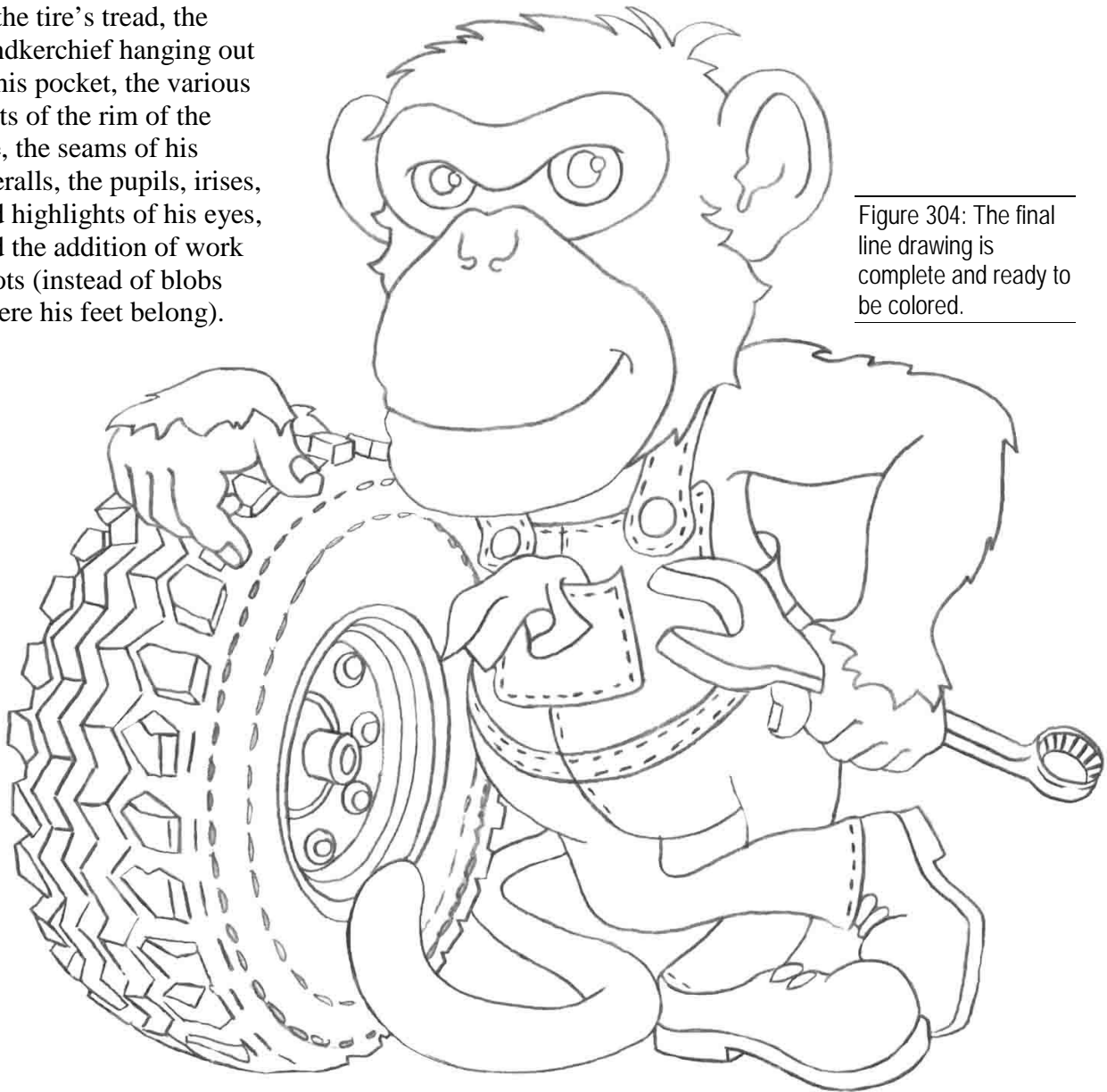


Figure 304: The final line drawing is complete and ready to be colored.

ADDING COLOR TO A MONKEY FACE

In this section, I first choose colors and then add shading to the hair, face, ears, fur and eyes. My favorite medium for this type of drawing is colored pencils. I have tons of different colors to choose from, and colored pencils work well for both big sections and tiny details. The thin black outlines are drawn with a Micron 03 pen. The ink doesn't fade and is archival; the tip doesn't go blunt easily, and provides consistent line width. The paper is smooth and works well for both colored pencil and pen (Make sure you test your pencils and pen on the paper before you begin).

Defining light and shadow is more than simply using light colors for light areas and dark for the shadows. Hue must also be considered in terms of warm and cold colors. Any cool color, such as blue can be mixed with the other colors for shadows. Yellow mixed with the other colors helps create the illusion of light, and is a fantastic choice for warming the lightest values. Also, complementary colors will be utilized in the final stages of the drawing to further enhance the contrast between light and shadow.

I begin by choosing a few shadow colors that will work well to darken all other colors. Most of the colors in this drawing will be oranges. Hence, blue, being the complement of orange, is a great choice for the overalls.

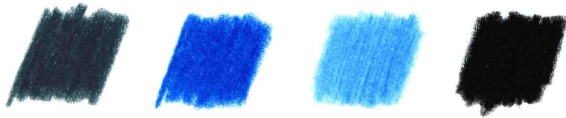


Figure 305: Shadow colors include a bluish gray, a medium blue, a light blue, and black (which will be used VERY sparingly).

Then I pick out a few skin colors that are easily darkened with the shadow colors. Yellow will be used only in the highlight areas to really bring out the illusion of light.



Figure 306: Skin colors include light and dark flesh colors, a warm brown and a pale yellow.

Chris is a redhead with blue eyes and a fair, pinkish complexion; hence, I'll take this into consideration when choosing my colors. I want Chris's red hair to stand out strongly. Hence my choices for his hair are the brightest I could find. The rest of his "fur" will be more subdued.



Figure 307: The hair colors are very bright; red, orange, yellow, and a light flesh to tone down a few sections.

I've already decided on an imaginary light source from the upper right front. The key, to making this cartoon look three dimensional, is to use this light source to navigate me through the placement of light and shadows.

Now for the fun part! I begin with the ear on the left, partially because it's not an important feature if I mess up. In addition, this section is in the upper left, so I won't be smudging my drawing as I work from the upper left downward (if you're left handed, work from the upper right downward).

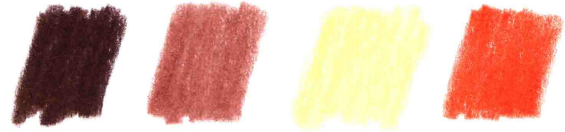
I made the hair style as close to Chris's as a simple cartoon allows. Of course, I exaggerated the cowlicks! In addition, I added a few lines of darker color to show the direction in which his hair grows.



Figure 308: The skin tones are burnished with a white pencil in the light sections, and the hair is burnished with bright yellow.

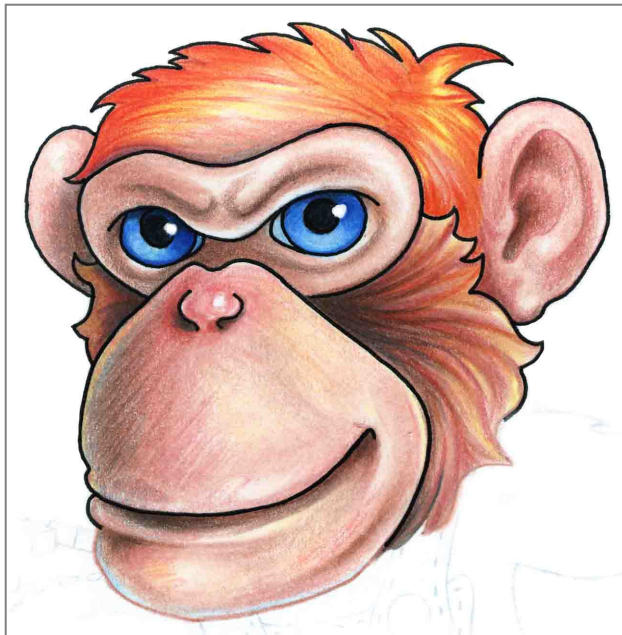
The fur on his face, arms, and hands is made up of the following four colors along with a few of the shadow colors from Figure 305.

Figure 309: The colors for the fur are not as bright as those for the hair.



The eyes are shaded with two blues (Figure 310); a little dark gray is added in the shadow sections under the brow. The whites of the eyes are light blue, but will be a little darker in the final drawing.

Figure 310: The blue eyes contrast sharply against the bright orange hair.



Outlines in pen should be added after the shading is complete in each section. If you add colored pencil over the ink, the ink becomes dull. In addition, if the ink is not quite dry when you touch it with a colored pencil, it may smudge and ruin your drawing.

The sections of fur on the right and left have shadow colors added to darken and tone down the brightness. The ears and nose are slightly pinker than the skin around his eyes and face.

If you outline everything, your drawing becomes disjointed and cluttered. You can create lots of forms with the colored pencils alone. For example, only the outside edge of the ear on the right is outlined.

Figure 311: This handsome monkey is actually beginning to look like my son-in-law!

SHADING A TIRE, WRENCH, FUR, AND CLOTHING

In this section, I complete the drawing by shading the clothing, tire, handkerchief, and wrench. The orange tones of his face and fur will contrast beautifully with the bright blue overalls. Blue and orange are complementary colors (as are red and green, or yellow and purple). When placed beside one another each looks brighter.

To give you an idea of how I shade around a form, the lower section of the arm is incomplete (Figure 312). You can now compare the bright orange hair to the dull colors of the fur. The bright colors bring the viewer's eye toward the upper section of the drawing.

The upper section of the tire needs to be simple so as not to take attention away from the face (Figure 313). The dark section of the tire under the hand is in shadow.

Figure 312: The fur on his chest is in the shadow of his chin; the under-section of his upper arm is also in shadow.

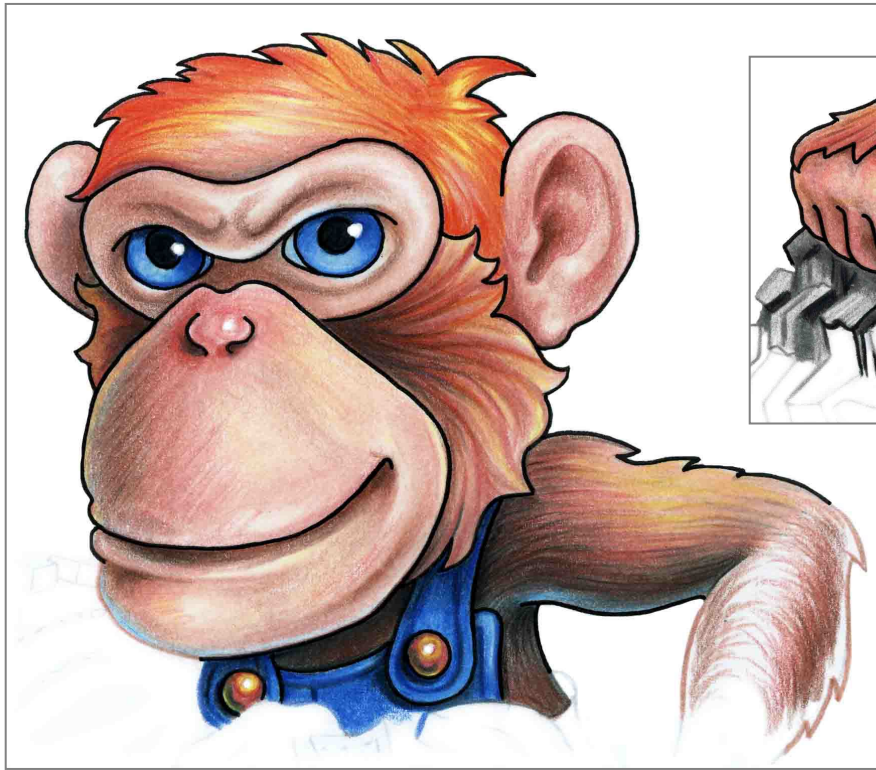
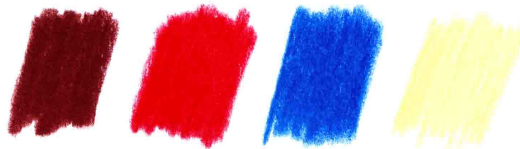


Figure 313: The blue of the overalls reflects onto the tire.

The different values of the handkerchief were first shaded with a dark and medium red. Then, blue and gray were burnished into the shadows. Yellow was added to the lightest sections (Figures 314 and 315).

Figure 314: A few of the colors used for shading the handkerchief.



Take note of the rim of light blue (reflected light) along the tummy edge of the overalls. The tire rim is metal and therefore mirrors colors around it; hence, the tiny red and blue sections.

Figure 315: The blue of the overalls and the red of the handkerchief are used in the shading of the tire.

Figure 316: The drawing is more than halfway complete; however, a few changes and additions will be needed in the final stages, such as less yellow in the highlights of the tire rim.

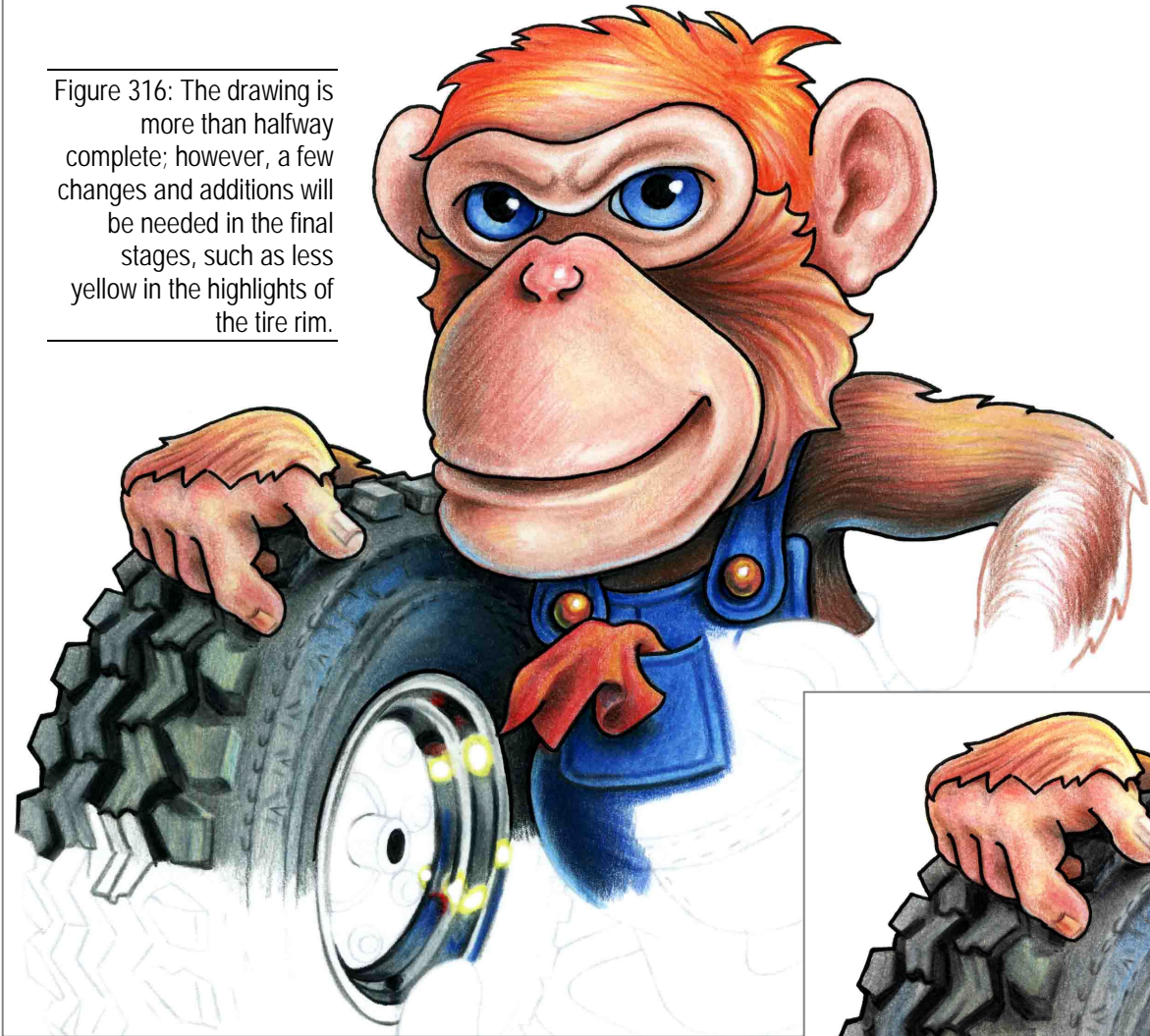


Figure 317: The tread of the tire is darker in the lower sections.

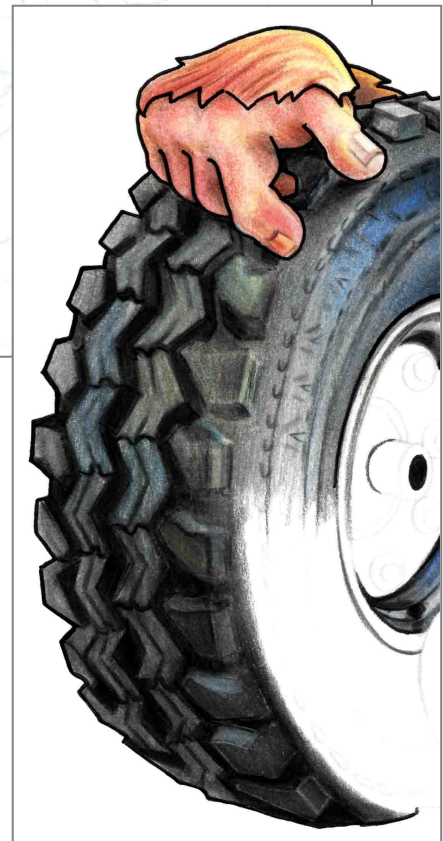
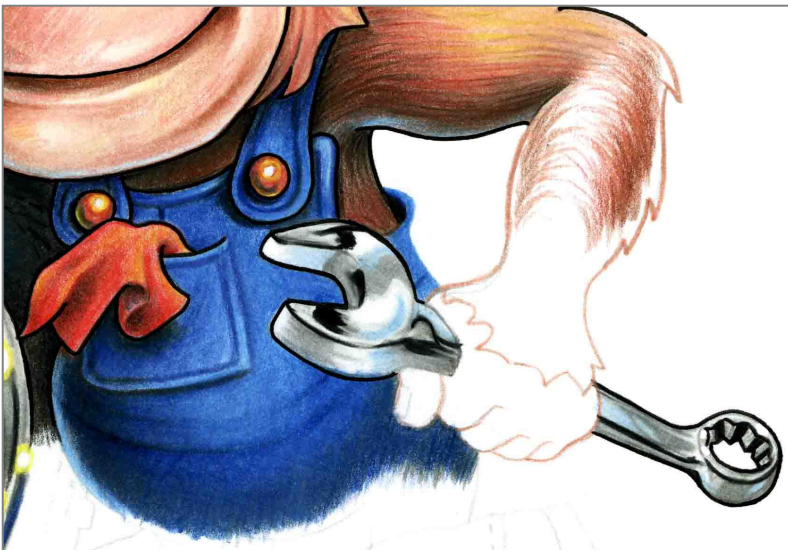


Figure 318: The overalls are lighter closer to the light source, and the wrench is shaded with black, light blue, and gray.



Figure 319: The lower section of the tire is darker and less detailed. His tail is lighter closer to the front, but is darker farther back in space.

As I go back over the drawing I make a few final touch-ups. For example, all the outlines have been redone with a slightly thicker pen.

Figure 320: I erased and/or covered up a lot of the yellow in the tire rim and outlined its perimeter a little neater.

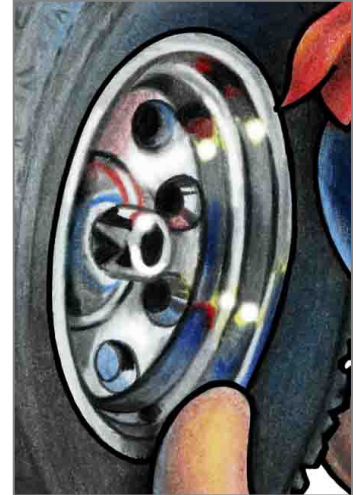


Figure 321: The boots are a combination of colors already used plus yellow ochre (brown/yellow).



Figure 322: The pupils of the eyes are colored in with a black pen, and the outlines are neater.



Figure 323: A shadow is added to the ground with light and dark gray.



A few additional touches were added, such as darkening a couple of sections and lightening others.

I will send the drawing to my daughter and son-in-law in a few different sizes; hence, he can choose the size that best fits wherever he plans to have the tattoo. The final design will be sent to the tattoo artist a week before Chris's appointment.

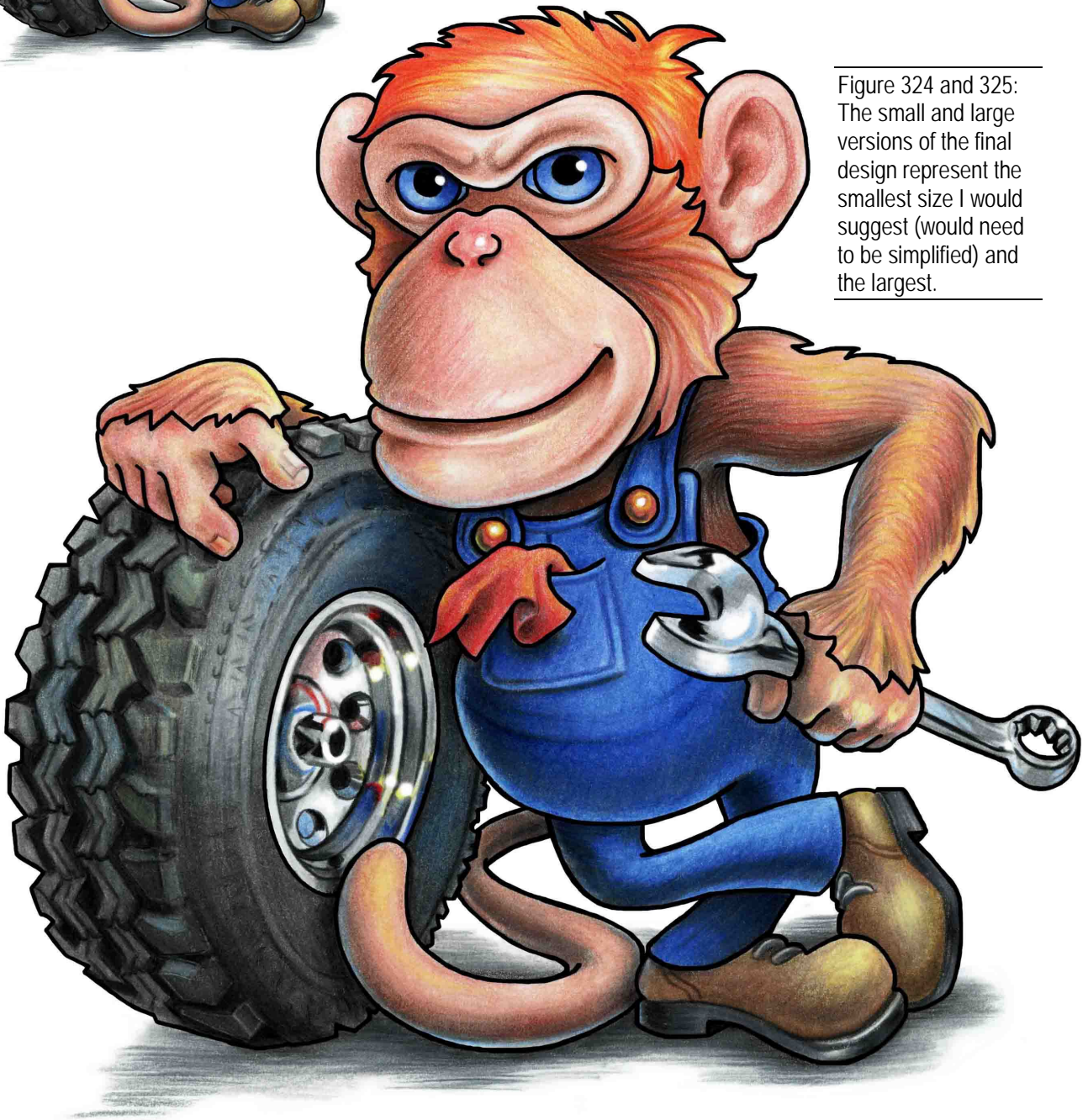


Figure 324 and 325:
The small and large
versions of the final
design represent the
smallest size I would
suggest (would need
to be simplified) and
the largest.

Brenda Hoddinott

As a self-educated teacher, visual artist, portraitist, forensic artist, and illustrator, Brenda utilizes diverse art media including graphite, technical pen, colored pencil, chalk pastel, charcoal, conté crayon, and oil paints.

My philosophy on teaching art is to focus primarily on the enjoyment aspects while gently introducing the technical and academic.

Hence, in creating a passion for the subject matter, the quest for knowledge also becomes enjoyable.

Brenda Hoddinott

Biography

Born in St. John's, Newfoundland, Brenda grew up in the small town of Corner Brook. She developed strong technical competencies with a personal commitment to self directed learning, and the aid of assorted "Learn to Draw" books. During Brenda's twenty-five year career as a self-educated civilian forensic artist, numerous criminal investigation departments have employed Brenda's skills, including Royal Canadian Mounted Police and municipal police departments. In 1992, Brenda was honored with a commendation from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and in 1994, she was awarded a Certificate of Membership from "Forensic Artists International".

Her home-based art career included graphic design, and teaching recreational drawing and painting classes. As supervisor of her community's recreational art department, Brenda hired and trained teachers, and designed curriculum for several children's art programs. In 1998, Brenda chose to end her eighteen-year career as an art educator in order to devote more time to writing, drawing, painting, and developing her websites.

Drawspace <http://www.drawspace.com> incorporates her unique style and innovative approach to curriculum development. This site offers downloadable and printable drawing classes for students of all abilities from the age of eight through adult. Students of all ages, levels and abilities have praised the simple step-by-step instructional approach. This site is respected as a resource for fine art educators, home schooling programs, and educational facilities throughout the world.

Learn-to-draw books

Drawing for Dummies: Wiley Publishing, Inc., New, York, NY, this 336 page book is available on various websites and in major bookstores internationally.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Drawing People: Winner of the Alpha-Penguin Book of the Year Award 2004, Alpha - Pearson Education – Macmillan, Indianapolis, IN, this 360 page book is available on various websites and in major bookstores internationally.