



# Crazy Stencil Tips & Tricks

[ adding tools to your art arsenal ]

by **Darlene Olivia McElroy** | [darleneoliviamcelroy.com](http://darleneoliviamcelroy.com)

A quick little FREE step by step tutorial about unusual stenciling techniques.  
Expand your creativity by learning new tips and techniques.





# Crazy Stencil Tips & Tricks

[ adding tools to your art arsenal ]

Of course you can buy stencils at art or craft stores but it is so much fun making your own unique ones or finding objects around the house to use as stencils. Use stencils as texture plates or cut your own with stencil film for your unique personal designs. Go crazy layering them, deconstructing them, giving them texture and just having fun.

## How to Get Crisp Stencil Edges

Creating crisp and clean stenciled images on your art is easy to do. Start by spreading a layer of soft gel over your stencil to seal the edges. While wet, apply your paint over it with a palette knife. (Note: A palette knife gives you a smoother coverage than a brush will). Lift off the stencil and let dry. Because you used the soft gel first you get a raised look as well as crisp edges. Note: Polymer gel is white when applied and becomes clear as it dries.



Apply paint over wet gel, remove stencil & let dry.

## Faux Rust Stencils

Of course, you can rust your art using expensive two part compounds but spice is cheaper. I like using turmeric, cinnamon, and chili powder for my colors. I change the mixture percentage depending on the desired look. Not only is this technique fun and fast, your studio will smell good. Note: Cheap spices can be found at dollar stores.



Apply burnt umber/gel mixture over stencil.



**1** Remove stencil & sprinkle spices on wet mixture.



When dry, remove excess spice with soft brush.

## Salt Your Stencil

Add a gritty look to your art with salted stencils. Apply paint through your stencil. Remove the stencil and salt the paint while it is wet. If you let the paint thoroughly dry, the salt will permanently stick to it. For the most drama and contrast, apply this technique on a high gloss surface.



Paint & gel mixture applied to stencil.



Salt the wet mixture. Let dry.



When dry, brush off excess salt.

## Butter Up

I am a mad art scientist and am always trying to think of art supply options. You can use Vaseline, butter, or face mask for this technique. Just apply the butter with a palette knife and remove stencil. Then apply paint and wait until the paint is thoroughly dry before you remove the butter with a damp soapy paper towel. Because butter and Vaseline are both shiny it might be hard to tell when the paint is dry so you might need to test an area before removing it.



Butter applied through stencil (stencil removed here).



Remove butter. Paint will have a weathered look.

## Clean Up

I add soap to a damp paper towel to get rid of any greasy feel on my art. Make sure that your art surface can accept water.

## Sand Your Art

I use aquarium sand for stencils. It is finer than regular sand and has a more consistent grit. It will give you a nice raised stencil. When dry, it takes wet paint well. Other options include micro beads, mica powder, glitter or ??? It is really endless what you can add to a stencil.



Apply soft gel to your stencil. Remove stencil.



Apply sand to wet stenciled gel. Let dry.



Remove excess sand. Now it is ready to paint.

## Creative Paperclay® Stencil

Creative Paperclay® is a self hardening clay with great adhesive qualities that is great for surface textures. The paper clay was rolled onto a panel. Then a stencil was placed on top of it and brayered. When the stencil is removed, it leaves an imprinted surface. Allow the paper clay to dry. When it has dried, coat with polymer medium to seal the surface. The surface will be ready to paint and add various surface techniques.



Stencil laid over paper clay & brayered.



**3** Iridescent pearl wash applied to an orange surface.



Yellow paint dry brushed onto dark surface.

## Darlene Olivia McElroy

Darlene is a working artist, educator and art book author who has a touch of mad scientist in her. She loves exploring art surfaces techniques and sharing them with other artists around the world.

She a storyteller by birth and could never resist the power of paint to give vision to the tales floating in her imagination and asking to be told. Her richly layered work is about time, personal myths and the links that join the individual to the continuum of past, present, and future.

Darlene's art work is represented in galleries in the U.S. and Mexico. When she is not in her studio in Santa Fe, NM, surrounded by three dogs, you will find her teaching classes and workshops and writing art technique books for Northlight.

To see Darlene's art or sign up for her monthly newsletter full of studio news, tips & techniques, visit her web site: [darleneoliviamcelroy.com](http://darleneoliviamcelroy.com).



*White Dreams, 12" x 12" mixed media on panel*



*Spring Awakening, 12" x 12" mixed media on panel*