

Creative Colouring With Lois Cordelia

Hello everyone,

How are we all doing? I do hope you're keeping safe and well.

I've been racking my brains in recent days to think of art materials that we all have access to at home during this period of isolation: things that you may never have thought of using for art. Thinking creatively, we can reimagine and repurpose the most humble items for visual art.

Let's start with **tea and coffee**. These make great pigments for painting, printing and staining.

Let's put the kettle on. Time to relax with a cuppa... and some art.

If you can find a couple of shallow dishes (e.g. saucers or small tea bag trays - ideally plain white), these will be very useful as makeshift **palettes**, in which to hold your different 'paint' colours. Into one, place a tablespoon or so of instant freeze dried **coffee**. Add a tiny amount of freshly boiled water - just enough to be able to ensure that you can stir in all the coffee granules to make an intense coffee 'soup' - the less water, the more intense the pigment. Use a tablespoon to stir the coffee mixture thoroughly.

In another palette, place a **tea bag**, and pour over it just enough water to be able to squeeze out some intensely tea-coloured water - use the teaspoon to squeeze the teabag. Try not to puncture the teabag in the process. You may like to experiment with different teas, including red fruit teas, green tea, etc.

Don't forget to pour yourself a cup of your favourite beverage along the way!

Concerning **paper**, you may be lucky and have some watercolour paper, which is ideal for tea and coffee painting. Otherwise, the plain white back of an old greetings card works well, as it tends to be quite stout card. Even the back of a corn flakes packet will suffice - this may be greyish in colour, but that's no problem as long as your pigments are strong enough (i.e. don't dilute them too much).

Now let's find a few basic tools: a paintbrush (if you have one - experiment with make-up brushes, too), a fork, an old toothbrush, a kitchen sponge-scourer, a cotton bud, a drinking straw ... Be imaginative and consider the mark-making abilities of different items.

Begin with the brush, if you have one. Dip it into your pigments (add a tiny bit of water if they are beginning to dry up). Play with your tea and coffee pigments on the paper to see how many different tones (light, medium, dark) you can achieve. Notice how varying the pressure can help you create thin lines or thicker marks. Now take a fork and drag the paint around on the paper to create spikey marks. See how many interesting shapes and patterns emerge. Similarly, use the toothbrush to drag the paint into spikey 'grass' shapes. Use a small piece of sponge dipped into tea or coffee pigment to create dappled textures - perfect for atmospheric backgrounds in your paintings. Use a cotton bud or

scrunched up kitchen towel to mop up any areas where you don't want the paint to spread as thickly. Now use the brush or even a teaspoon to create a small puddle of the pigment on your paper, then grab your drinking straw, and use it to blow the paint across the paper in different directions - watch the magical effect of 'branches' and 'twigs' that grow in seconds.

You may prefer to create abstract paintings, focusing on the beauty of different mark-making techniques. If you want to work from photo references, I would recommend Pixabay (<https://pixabay.com/>) as a great source of royalty-free copyright-free images. Simply type in a keyword (e.g. 'animals', 'flowers', etc) into the search box and go.

If you have access to the Internet, you can watch my tutorial and demonstration, including timelapse footage, for free here: <https://youtu.be/QUZukpH8h70>

I hope you have great fun painting with tea and coffee. I'd love to hear how you get on and see some results.

Most importantly, please stay safe and well. We will get through these challenging times.

Warmest wishes from afar,

Lois