

# Palette Knife – “BIRCH TREES”



## Art Elements:

Line, Color, Space, Contrast

## Tools:

Artist painting Sample  
Art Term Posters

## Supplemental Tools/Ideas:

Music – use the boom box in the portable  
Books – check the Art Docent library, books from home, etc.  
Photo of the artist  
World Map – show where artist is from  
Color Wheel

## Supplies:

Watercolor Paper 20 x 14 (should get two out of each full sheet!)  
Water color brushes  
Cups and Water  
Painters Tape  
Black Acrylic Paint  
Cardboard “palette knives” (in project bin)

## Introduction:

1. Today we will be learning a new process using a common artist tool – the pallet knife. There are many artists throughout the world and throughout history who have chosen to paint with a palette knife rather than a brush including Rembrandt, Monet, Chagall, and Matisse!
2. As you look at a knife painting you will notice that the paints are applied much thicker than a typical brush would do. Because of the large amount of paint these artists use, it is often easier to see the “whole” painting from afar.
3. Okay, let’s create some beautiful birch trees using our “palette knives!”

### **Procedure:**

1. Hand out the 20 x 14 water color paper and the painters tape. There are a couple different thicknesses of tape, so choose which will be your “trunks” and which will be your “branches.” Next use your tape to create at least three trees that go up the full length of your paper. These trees can cross over each other or not, these trees can have multiple branches or none at all – make it your own. Some trees may be thin, some thick – be creative!
2. Once you have made sure that your tape is securely fastened to your paper, hand out the watercolor paints, brushes, and water. Use your watercolors to create a beautiful “forest” background. Blend the colors. Try not to over-wet your paper, as you will need it to dry as quickly as possible.
3. Once your background is complete, take a few minutes to clean up your work space and prepare your palette knife and black acrylic paint. Take a few minutes to practice using your palette knife – dip the edge into the acrylic paint and gently but quickly drag it across scrap paper to get used to how it feels. This will give your painting a few extra minutes to dry.
4. By this time your painting should be nearly dry. Your next step is to CAREFULLY remove the tape from your painting. This tape is quite sticky and may tear the paper so be sure to remove it CAREFULLY! Once all the tape is removed, you can begin to paint your trees. Don’t worry if a bit of watercolor seeped onto your “trees”, the acrylic will cover it.
5. Now comes the “palette knife” process. Take your “knives” and dip the edge directly into your black acrylic paint, you don’t want to glob it onto your knife; just get a bit of paint along the edge. Then place your knife at the very outside edge of one of your trees and quickly drag it halfway across your tree. You should get an effect that looks very much like at the bark of a birch tree! Continue this process along both edges of all of your trees and branches until your trees are complete!
6. Set painting on drying racks to dry and then use tag board to mount each piece.

### **Summary/Art Quiz:**

1. Once students have cleaned up their work area. Remind them what they learned today.
2. Can anyone tell me the artist’s name who inspired us today? And what art techniques did we learn? And do you remember what tools we used? What was your favorite part of this lesson? Use the Art Quiz Door Poster for reference.

## **Artist Inspiration:**

### The History of Palette Painting

There is nothing better than palette painting for thick texture. Popular with artists since the 1800s, painting with palette knives reached new heights in the 20th century when many artists eschewed brushes altogether. From the early endeavors of European masters to the contemporary artists of today, the use of the palette knife has led to new and bold art forms.

### The art of palette painting

Because of the broader strokes possible with palette knives, many paintings created with the blades appear unintelligible up close. They often can only be fully viewed from farther away. When paint is laid on the canvas with a palette knife, it makes large strokes that have a highly visible texture. This impasto technique allows for swift completion of the whole canvas. Strong and vibrant colors are particularly effective when coated on a canvas with a palette knife. Palette knives are often the preferred tool of painters using the wet-on-wet technique.

