

# The Evolution of a Blueberry

Tiny, precise strokes of exuberant color build the perfectly painted berry, bloom and all.

STORY BY *Connie Scanlon*

**BLUEBERRIES AS A SUBJECT** are a complete explosion of every shade of blue, the most wondrous color on my palette. From a sweet, humble blueberry bush in a Saint Paul grocery store, I became enamored with the magical chameleon-like changes in color. The lime green of early spring with the slightest magenta of the young berry, gradually evolves into a rose purple that eases into the grand finale deepest indigo blue of a berry, 'ripe for the picking'.

I thought my days of painting blueberries were over until I was asked to put into words the artistic experience of bringing these berries to life on vellum. How could I resist? I reasoned that if the indefatigable Monet could paint over twenty five haystacks and not be tired with the subject, maybe one more little blueberry painting will be great winter painting!

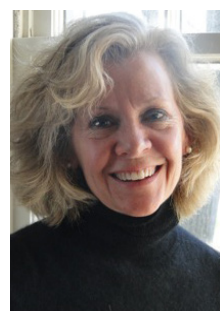
I tend to keep things as simple as possible.

My light source is natural from the window at my left shoulder punctuated when necessary with a lamp using a GE Reveal 60 W bulb. I begin and often end a painting with the same paintbrush - Raphael Kolinsky series 8408, size #4. I have been painting on vellum the past few years and love the Kelmscott vellum from Talas ([www.talas.com](http://www.talas.com)). Some artists feel that Kelmscott lacks character - it is without the markings and veining of other vellums (honey, veiny); however I think the white wash coating on Kelmscott creates an ice skating surface. My brush with color glides on top. Warning: the minute I add a hint of excess water, I create a swimming pool rather than a skating surface. Throw me a life preserver!

A darker line drawing of the original blueberry sketch is placed on translucent (i.e. tracing) paper and taped to a light box. Placing the vellum on the sketch, I transfer the sketch onto the vellum using a 2H pencil.

Envisioning the highlights, I use light pencil

marks as a reminder to avoid painting in these areas. Holbein Lilac and Lavender are chalky, yet transparent pale pink and purple paint, great for bloom. Winsor Newton (WN) Indigo is one of my favorite hues of blue when painting blueberries. Daniel Smith (DS) Ultramarine is another beautiful 'berry blue'.



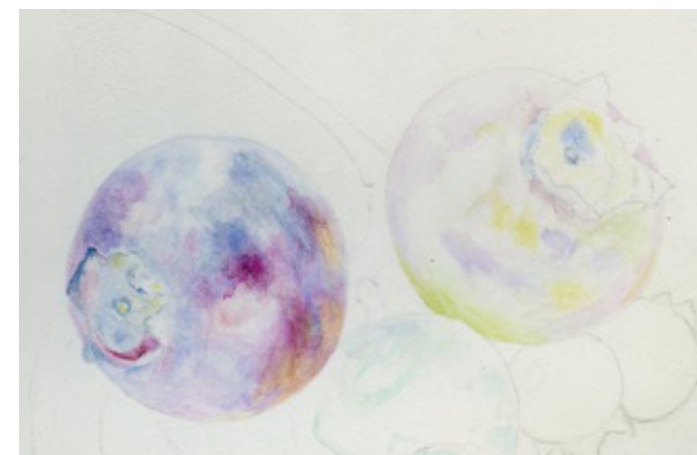
**Connie Scanlon** is from Saint Paul, Minnesota. She enjoys figure skating in real life. Whether skating on vellum or on ice, she tries hard to avoid falling through the cracks. Her work has been exhibited at the 17th and 18th ASBA Annual International at the Horticultural Society of New York, and the Royal Horticultural Society in London in 2013 where she was awarded a silver medal.



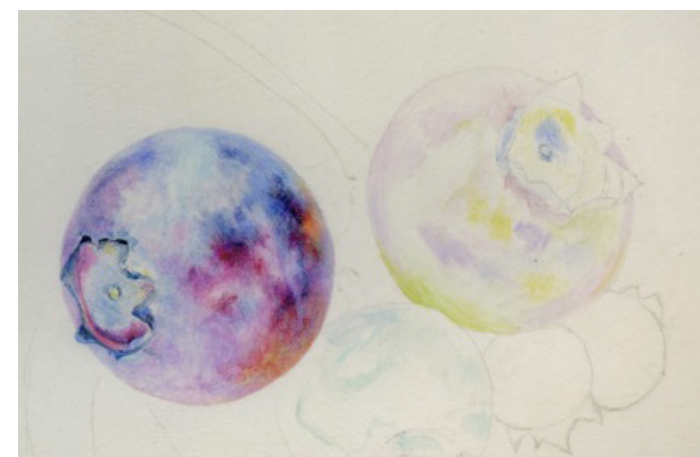
**AT LEFT. BLUEBERRIES** Close up of textural surface after lifting some color with brush. **ABOVE.** A glimpse into the studio.



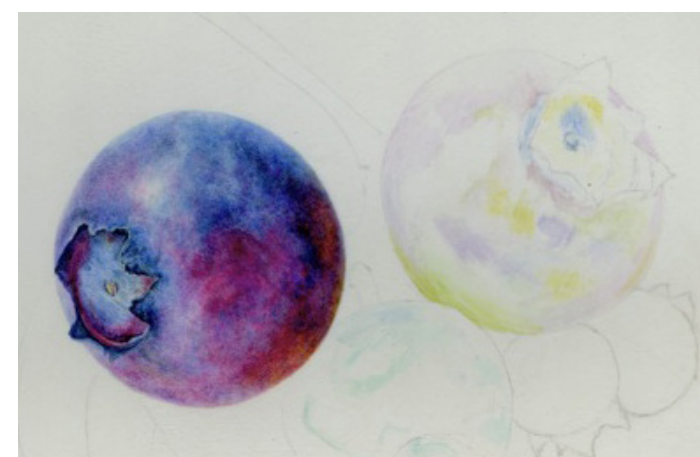
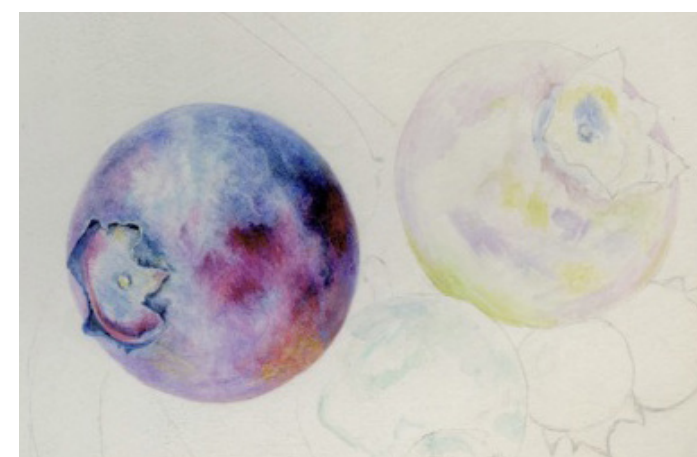
**FIGURE 1.** I mark the berry perimeters lightly with pale blue or pink- as a future guide. I designate the highlights by a soft color perimeter (erasing pencil marks) so that future color will gently ease into areas having an absence of color for the berry highlights. DS Quinacridone Gold, is used on this first layering as an undercurrent of color, marking the change from immature green to gold- and on the way to Perylene violet and Indigo.



**FIGURE 2.** Four hours later. Building color and adding 'bloom' next to deeper DS Quinacridone Magenta, Quinacridone Violet and Perylene Violet. Pale hints of color are used in these beginning stages.



**FIGURE 3.** After four more hours of dry brushing and building layers of pale blue (WN Cobalt, Schmincke Ultramarine finest, and light WN Paynes Gray), I start to deepen shadows and get more bold with color. **FIGURE 4.** Details begin on the leaflets of the blueberry opening. I start to bring stronger color up to the edges of bloom. I use DS French Ultramarine in a pale 'glazing' of the upper right corner of the left blueberry. Glazing on vellum is picking up the driest, smallest amount of color and gently crosshatching the color onto the surface of the layers of color below, carefully, to avoid removing these lower layers of color.



**FIGURE 5.** Another six hours: I use WN Violet in the midsection and DS Quinacridone Fuchsia on the bottom right to bring both a warmth and vibrance to the berry. A damp brush-or Qtip- close to dry as possible- lifts color to accentuate surface textures and elements of bloom. Here the 'too much' Quinacridone Gold will get a little lift. Indigo adds deeper leaflet contrast. **FIGURE 6.** Six hours later: The berry is complete after dry brush glazing with DS Rose of Ultramarine and WN Cobalt to tone the golden areas. WN Indigo gives the punch of contrast needed at the leaflets.

