

Lynn Al-Qahtani, CT, CA, Dubai, UAE : Baby Falcon

Preparation: Study every little detail really closely. Just like painting people, if you don't get the features accurate you will not capture the likeness. Draw the bird several times so that you become familiar with every part – study the shapes.

Brushes: A large, long pointer quill; a smaller version of the same; a very long and very fine quill liner for the finest lines and a few different-sized, very soft deerfoot stipplers.

Medium: A fast-drying medium (either fat oil or copaiba) and keep it open as necessary with lavender or occasionally clove oil.

Painting feathers: 'Flat wash first' method : lay down the base color first and then work detail on top (with or without firing in between).

First Fire:

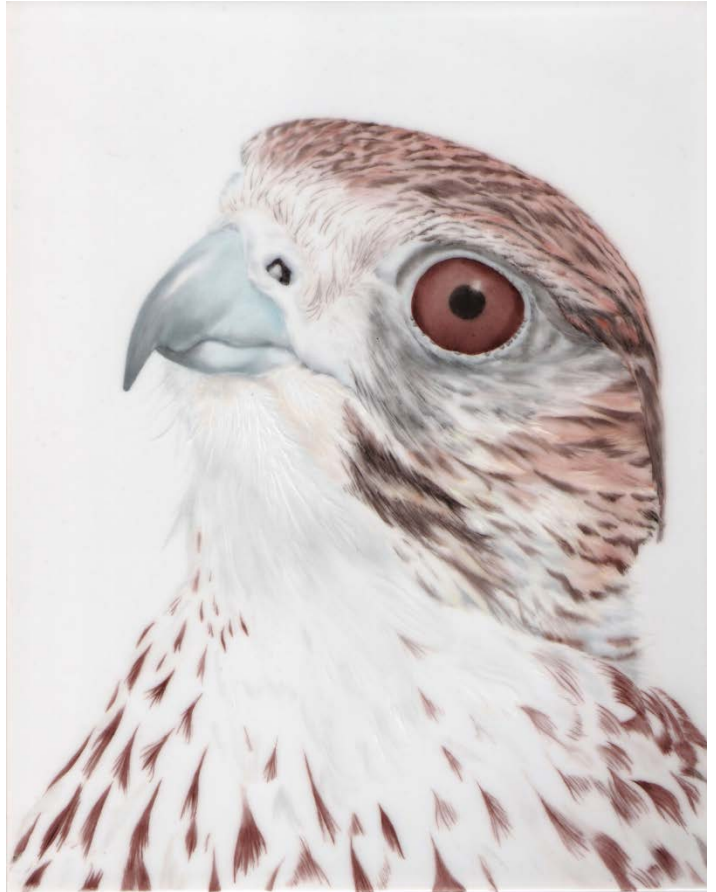
- Keep all the features in the correct place and in correct proportions, trace the falcon onto porcelain.
- Use a light flat wash of blue-grey, paint in the beak and wipe out the highlight.
- Use a med/large soft deerfoot stippler, carefully pull the color in the direction of the surface curves to get slight highlights and lowlights.
- Add a touch of color for the rest of the mouth line as shown in the photo, keep the upper edge very soft and disappearing into the face.
- Place the nostril depth, ensure edge of the shadow is soft.
- Use dark brown to paint the eye, first flat and then use deerfoot stippler to softly pull the color from the centre to the edges to achieve a nice curved shape. Wipe out the highlight, making sure this is in the correct place.
- Apply a very soft shadow line under the eye hood, keeping all the edges soft.
- Use a very light and flat wash of rust, place this color as in the photo, keep the edges soft. Do the same with light grey. Fire according to your color brand (usually 016 or 015)

2nd Fire – most of the work is done on this stage.

- Start with the beak - add charcoal grey to the darker areas and soften the lines. Intensify the shadow on the bottom half of the beak in the same way.
- Shade the wattle (area above the beak with the nostril) using blue-grey mixed with a little violet from the uneven areas next to the beak.
- Keep the shading to the sides around the beak and the nostril, the highest areas should be left white. Add shadows under the mouth line.



- Shade around the edge of the eye and put in the pupil – don't make this too black or with edges which are too hard, watch that highlight as it eats into the pupil a little.
- Add small spots of very dark grey around the eye as shown in the photo. Wipe out highlights on each one. Increase the shadow under the eye hood, keeping the front, bottom edge fairly soft. Carefully form the eye ridge at the front.
- The feathers - work from the bottom up and start with the chest feathers, working left to right. Use dark brown and a very long fine liner paint the centre line of each brown feather (if present) and then the strands coming off this centre line. Work your way up the bird, keeping the color pattern true, occasionally adding a very light brown feather.
- The throat area - softly wash with shading grey and then pull out the whitest feathers using a clean fine liner.
- As you reach the cheek, change color to grey as necessary; add a little black to the brown for the very dark areas.
- Use tiny strokes, shade the rim of the eye.
- In the cheek area and on top of the head; gently soften your strokes and pull the color slightly in the direction of the line of the feathers. When you have finished the cheek, place small single feathers on the front of the head and edge of the eye hood as shown in the above photo.
- Continue with the dark brown feathers from the right side of the eye and work upwards to the front of the head. Don't over-smooth the feathers – only very slight touches are needed. Second fire.



3rd Fire

- Very accurately mask out the bird and apply background color, (in this study, blue-violet and sky blue). Once this is dry and the masking removed, work a little more on the falcon.
- If you can work on the beak without damaging your background, add more depth where necessary using a light addition of black with a little blue added. Keep it light to build up the depth slowly. If you are uncomfortable working on the beak with an unfired background, leave this for the next firing.
- The wattle – shade top edges with a light yellow-brown and push the color from centre to edge to create the roundness. Use blue-grey with a touch of violet on the bottom edge increasing the shading slightly on the bottom edge by the beak and on the inside edge of the nostril.



- Give the whole eye a wash with dark brown mixed with a slight touch of black – go right over the pupil. Smooth the color from the centre to the outer edge to keep the roundness and wipe away color from the highlight.
- Add a little grey shading to the front of the head and eye ridge. Deepen the shading above the eye and under the hood using charcoal grey. Carefully add some very light blue grey to the eye rim,
- Go over the dark feather areas with either dark brown mixed with a little black, or grey depending on the original color laid down using the very long thin liner and very fine strokes to match the feather length.
- Use mid grey or shading grey, add more depth to the shadow under the throat and at the side of the mouth, pull out those white strands again so you don't lose them.
- Add some very subtle grey areas at various places over the chest to indicate very light shadows, don't overdo this or the chest will just look dirty.
- Wait for the grey to dry and add highlights. Using white with a little white relief mixed together, add turps to almost a pouring cream consistency and using a very long thin liner, add white highlights to areas of the cheek where there are white areas showing and to where you have wiped out the grey so that the long feathers stand out. Keep the strokes fine, but keep the brush well (but not over) loaded. This gives the white feather areas that extra lift. Fire, dropping the temperature by 10°. Some brands of brown tend to fire out more at the high temperatures, work with the supplier's guidelines, but fire hot enough for the background colors.

4th Fire

- Beak first - Increase the depth on the tip and bottom using the black/blue mixture (the touch of blue gives the black a nicer tone). Always move the color in the same direction as the beak surface.
- Apply a thin wash mixture of dark brown and black all over the eye, smooth, then wipe out the highlight and add just a touch of white for extra sparkle. This way the pupil softly fades in the eye, but you can just still see it. If necessary, add a touch of charcoal under those small round areas around the eye.
- Use shading grey, wash areas of the top of the head to tone down colors a little, leave the hood above the eye white with a little shading on the edge so that it folds in.
- Wash grey over the bottom half of the face so that it dips behind the shoulder area. If necessary, deepen the shadow under the chin and wipe out those long white feathers again and a few other light areas.
- Add a touch of violet to the grey and shade the left chest area under the chin. Using the shading grey again, pull out the very fine hairs around the nostril and into the background. Also, under the chin and at the back of the neck.
- Finish the chest area - using the light grey, add some shadow feathers to the chest and, before it dries, pull out white strokes either with a clean brush or a fine wiper (if you use a fine wiper, soften any really hard lines afterwards).



- Using the white mixture again, come back and put lots of highlights to the white areas in feather shapes. To do this, you use the long pointer, work this into the white and with the piece upside down press and softly release the strokes in feather shapes making sure there is no hard end to the stroke. This should give you a high white start to the stroke which disappears softly. Turn the piece the right way up again and see the effect. If necessary and while the paint is still wet, pull more lines through the white paint which will give some raised white areas that can leave a good effect. Clean off most of the original brown feathers but allow the white to soften the tops of others.
- Finally for the background, use the blue violet, just lightly sponge the edges of the piece so that the head has a slight halo effect.
- Add just a touch of flux to the violet so it doesn't fire dull at the lower fire temperature. You can touch up the background this way in stage 4 if you wish. Fire at 10° lower than before.

Last Fire

- Almost done! Now is the time to really scrutinize your work. Are the shadows deep enough? Are the highlights light enough? Did the brown fire out too much anywhere? Look at that beak tip – is it dark enough? Is the pupil still too visible? (it should only just show through). If necessary, add depths, touch up the darker feathers, and add any subtle shading to the chest.
- For this study, the black as well pale blue on the beak and the shadow on the bottom right of the face's colors were increased. When you are completely satisfied, sign it and fire it! If you have had problems with your browns, fire much lower this time. You're done!

