

# Piping Hot Chrome

By Kiwi Terry

## Introduction

In this article I guide you step-by-step through my latest creation. I used Auto-Air's 4700 series Auto-Borne paint, and endeavored to dispel some of the preconceptions about it. I selected an image that would test the paint's limits for free-hand airbrushing, opaque and transparent colors, color blending qualities, and how it performs under and over-masking. I used Iwata HPC, HPC-plus and HP-BE2 airbrushes, an X-Acto knife with #11 blades, fine-line and masking tapes, frisket (transparent transfer film), auto-borne colors, House of Kolor SG100 Intercoat Clear, a gray Scotch Brite Pad, wax-and-grease remover, and a white powder-coated 24- by 36-inch aluminum sign blank. ➤



## STEP 1

Typically, I use a free-hand stencil to transfer an image to the surface. First, I photocopied the image to size (FedEx Kinko's has a 36-inch-wide roll-fed machine that allows multiple size choices) from which I cut a free-hand stencil. When cutting, always keep in mind the information that's key to rendering the image, and the strength of the stencil. Sometimes it's necessary to create bridges in the larger cut-outs to hold the stencil together.



## STEP 2

After I positioned the cut stencil onto my panel (which I prepped with a gray Scotch-Brite pad followed by pre-cleaner) I airbrushed transparent black through it. My transparent black is simply 4702 Black base over-reduced. By mistake, I realized that by having some of the picture protruding into the border would enhance the 3D perspective.

## STEP 3

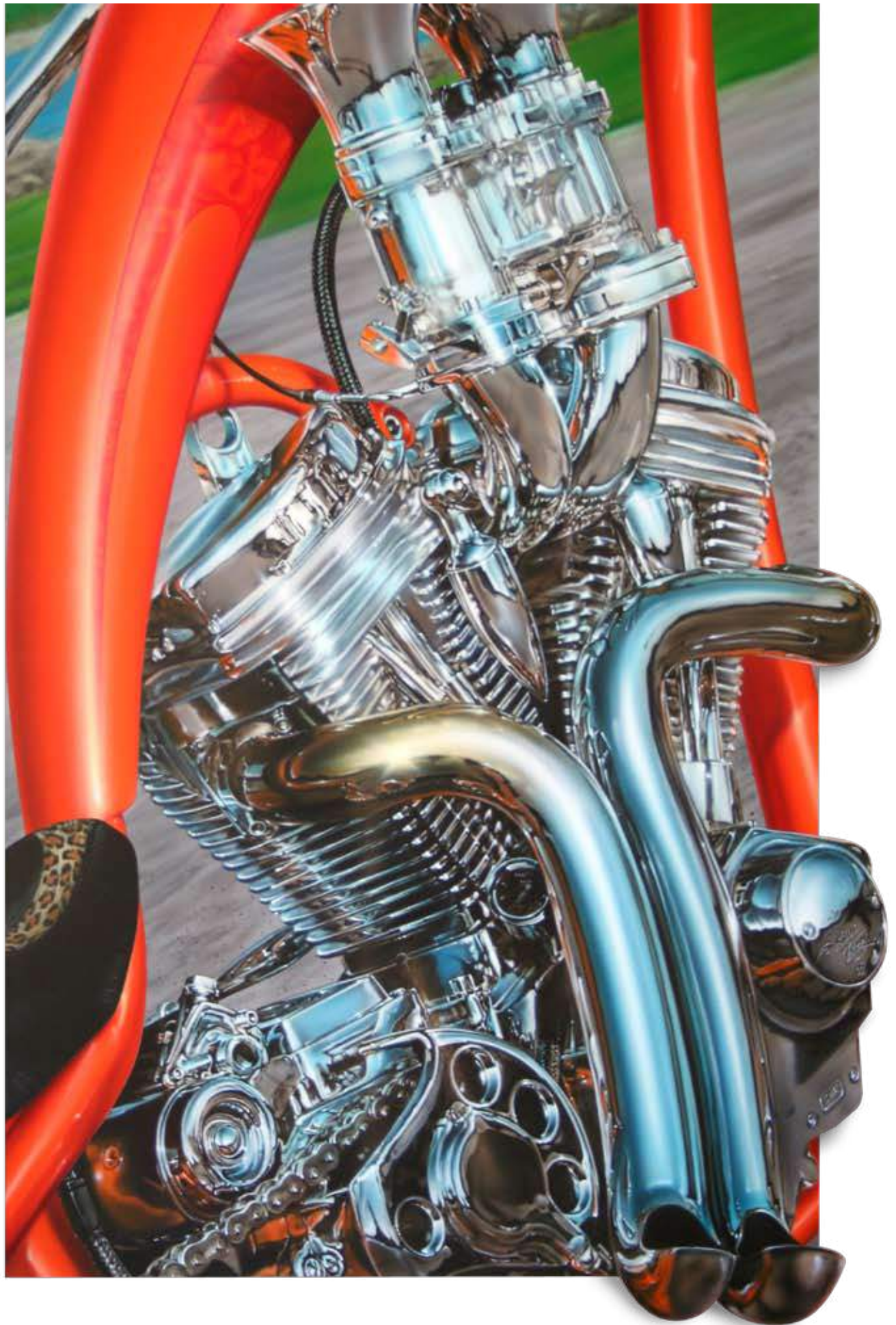
I rendered the complete image in black using radically different reductions depending on where the densest blacks and lighter gray tones were warranted. I copied the reference as closely as possible and paid attention to all the details, especially the reflections. The biggest difference between Auto-Borne colors and urethanes is tip dry in the water-borne. Water-borne consistently binds to the needle therefore requiring a lot more cleaning than I'm used to. The big up-side, however, is that because the paint is slower to cure it tended to cling to the needle instead of "spitting off" onto the painting. In fact, I don't recall ever having to remove any tip dry nibs from the surface of the painting. The black detail in this piece is intensive and I rendered it as a black-and-white monochromatic image. I jumped around the different areas of the painting to guard against monotony or the over-working of a section.



## STEP 3 PROGRESSION











#### STEP 4

Most blacks have a somewhat warm hue to them, so to create some contrast and help separate the aluminum from chrome surfaces, I “cooled down” the black with a little 4701 White over-reduced and sprayed transparently. This also aids in softening the reflections in the aluminum.



#### STEP 5

I began adding color with some reduced 4707 Blue. Referring to my reference I air-brushed transparent washes over the black shading and the white areas. I built the color slowly to a small percentage over-sprayed onto the white sections. This is done in preparation for the white highlights to be added later. The black underpainting inhibits the blue from becoming too strong and bright.



#### STEP 6

Changing to 4704 Orange (the motorcycle’s intended base color) I rendered these reflections. Also, I loosely airbrushed some color onto the bike’s painted surface to determine how the colors related for composition purposes. Happy with what I saw, I moved on.



#### STEP 7

Adding black to the orange in the airbrush, I created a brown and began the section of the exhaust pipe discolored by heat. I also used this color to warm up some of the gray tones elsewhere.



#### STEP 8

Focusing on the burnt exhaust part of the painting, I used white with a couple of drops of yellow to render the highlights.





**STEP 9**

To complete this piece of the puzzle, I tinted with a yellow/gold wash.



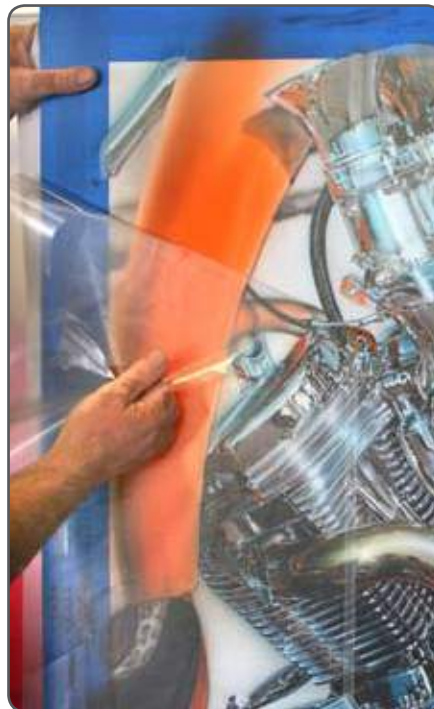
**STEP 10**

White highlights! This is where the magic happens. Using 4730 Opaque White for full coverage, and reduced 4701 White for more transparent gradations, I worked the complete engine adding the appropriate highlights and also pushing back some of the black detail, as per my reference.



**STEP 11**

I noticed that some of the black detail was diffused by the white's overspray. I'm not one-hundred-percent sure, but the Auto-Borne seems a lot less prone to overspray. This may be because the slower drying time allows more paint to adhere to the surface. I reconstituted some of the darker sharp reflections with black.



**STEP 12**

So far, the entire piece has been free-hand airbrushed. Now it's time to use some hard masking techniques. Frisket is a transparent, self-adhesive film that I applied on top of the painting covering the areas I wanted to protect. Once the frisket has been positioned and the air bubbles squeegeed out, I used an X-Acto knife to cut around the engine and hand grip (upper left), and removed the film in areas I wanted to expose for painting.



**STEP 13**

While spraying the orange base I realized that the under-painting did not cooperate; it looked muddy and not nearly as vibrant as it should. No surprise really—it's usually preferable to work from light to dark. I remedied this by airbrushing an opaque white base to establish a clean foundation.





#### STEP 14

Now back to the orange base. In spraying these larger areas I keep in mind that water-borne paint is better applied in thin coats with plenty of air flow to draw the moisture out. Moderate heat is fine, but too much heat can work against you by drying the surface too quickly and trapping moisture under it. This is where delaminating and adhesion problems can occur later on. WOW! What a great orange; very clean and vibrant.



#### STEP 15

Returning to my custom painting roots, I masked a panel for graphics. And just when you thought it was safe to go back into the booth: SKULLS, Baby!



#### STEP 16

After free-hand airbrushing the skulls in 4705 Red, I masked and airbrushed a pinstripe line around the border with the same red.



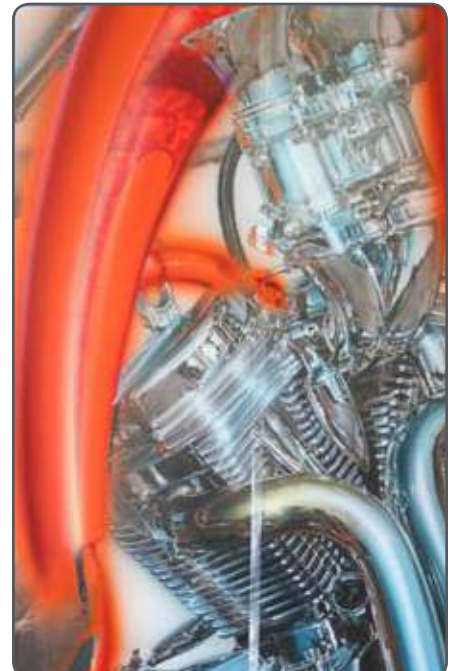
#### STEP 17

With the graphic unmasked, I added a couple of drops of blue to the red in the airbrush, and I shaded the shadow areas on the orange base. Next, the highlights were rendered in white tinted with yellow.



#### STEP 18

The highlights required some adjustments, so I tinted them with 4703 Yellow. This color combo helps create the illusion of the orange paint having a "flip," similar in appearance to a pearl paint.



#### STEP 19

I deepened the shadows in the orange using over-reduced transparent 4706 Violet. Darkening warm colors is a great way to avoid muddying colors.





#### STEP 20

I masked the Orange and left the background exposed for painting. Fine-line tape helps obtain smooth flowing lines, which are then filled with masking tape.



#### STEP 21

I sprayed a gray mixture for coverage and a base for the ash-felt background.



#### STEP 22

Adding a stipple texture, I sprayed a variety of greens, blues, and brown to emulate grass, rocks, and a river in the background. As shown, these are painted very loosely for an out-of-focus effect, and to contrast against the sharpness of the foreground.



#### STEP 23

After unmasking the complete piece, I noticed a small section of paint lifted at the bottom of the gas tank. This was due to my careless haste in unmasking it to see the results. I'll cover this small flaw with the seat, yet to be rendered.



#### STEP 24

Frisket was used to mask the seat area, followed by free-hand airbrushing in black and white.



#### STEP 25

I used light brown (4711 Golden Yellow with 4710 Brown) to paint a wash to tint the leopard skin. Using the same color I darkened the inside of the leopard spots. I added a blue wash to the leather for the sky's reflection in the highlighted areas.





**STEP 26**

A few small touch-ups and final adjustments, and I was ready to paint the border. First, I applied House of Kolor's SG100 intercoat clear to the complete image as a security measure, and then used wax-and-grease remover to eliminate the glue residue from the border masking.



**STEP 27**

I masked the entire painting, applying frisket over the protruding engine parts, and more conventional fine tape and masking paper over the rest. I then painted the border in a taupe mix made from white, brown, and yellow.



**STEP 28**

Using Artool's Gerald Mendez stencils and some stippling, I textured the surround in brown. Then, using the same brown, I shaded the three inner edges, and highlighted the bottom edge facing upward. This created a rolled edge to the surround, giving the illusion of depth. Finally, I added a shadow under the protruding engine parts, unmasked the painting, and clear-coated.

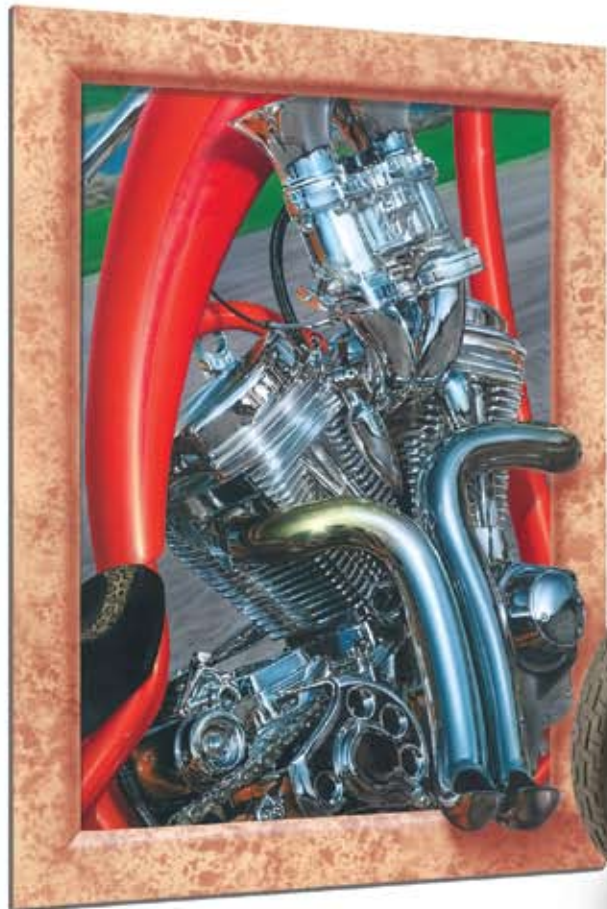


Terry 'Kiwi' Stephens started airbrushing at the age of 16 as a hobby, painted professionally in his native New Zealand for a couple of years, and came to the U.S. in 1999 ("the hub of airbrushing and all things custom") to work for Huntington Beach Bodyworks. Stephens is also a hired gun helping other shops and artists with their projects. Most recently, Terry is working on a series of paintings for future availability in print, and enjoys teaching for the esteemed Airbrush Getaway workshops. Terry is also featured in *Tribal & Metal Airbrush F/X*, the new instructional DVD, available from Coast Airbrush, Dixie Art, TCP Global, *Airbrush Action*, and other airbrush outlets.





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