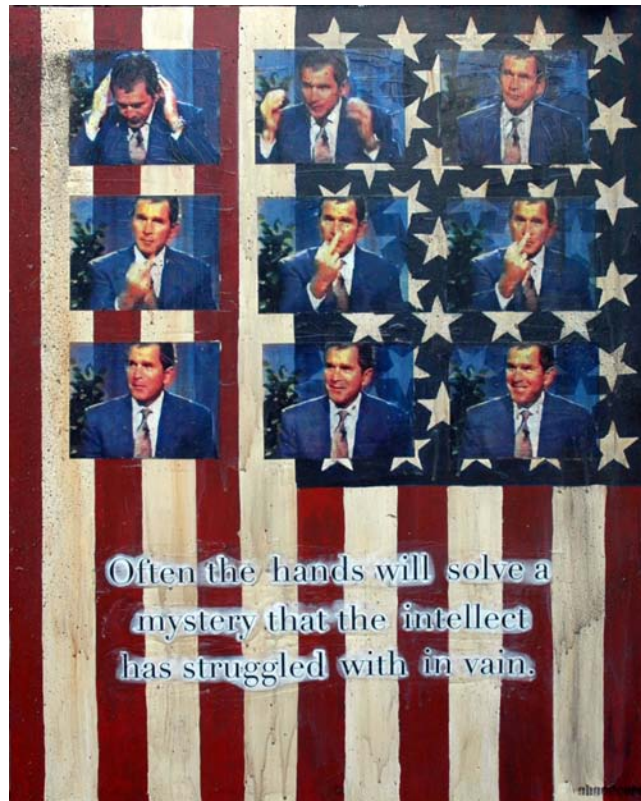


Paint your own Bushfinger

by **shardcore**



Bushfinger #5 (2006)
acrylic, digital print and dirt on canvas
80cm x 60cm

The Bushfinger story

I painted the first Bushfinger in 2005. I'd been playing with a number of political images when I came across a video clip of a pre-presidential George W Bush flipping the bird (when he believed he was off-air), the combination of the childish, furtive act, and his obvious indifference to the consequences seemed to resonate with his actions as president. By selecting a number of frames from the video I captured the essence of the action.

The quote by Carl Gustav Jung - "Often the hands will solve a mystery that the intellect has struggled with in vain." - seemed an obvious fit. The first Bushfinger was sold to a collector in Texas, which seemed fitting. I subsequently used images from the clip in a diptych [bushfinger #2], and two further versions of the original piece, which are now in private hands.

The video tutorial represents the fifth and largest of execution of the concept.

Materials

- **Canvas**

Any size will do, though very small canvasses can be difficult to work with. The canvas in the video is 80cm x 60cm [30" x 24"] and the associated digital files are scaled for this size. you don't need to use a canvas base, wood, board or stiff card will do - paper may be difficult, since the collage needs a strong support.

- **Masking tape**

I get my masking tape from the pound-store, but it is available in DIY stores across the planet.

- **Acrylic paints**

I used titanium white, ultramarine, cobalt blue, burnt umber, yellow ochre and cadmium red. In addition acrylic retarder is useful for increasing the flow of the paint, and clear acrylic gel is used as 'glue' for the collage elements.

- **Brushes**

There's not a great deal of fine detail work in this painting, so use a fat brush, it'll be quicker. If you intend to back-paint the text, then you might need something a little finer.

- **Images**

You can download PDFs and jpegs of the images and text from <http://www.shardcore.org/bushfinger> . You will need to re-scale them if you're using a different sized canvas, or the text can just be written on with a marker or paint.

- **Printer and transparencies**

I use an inkjet printer, but if you're lucky enough to have access to a colour laser printer that should work too. You don't need to use transparencies, but I like the effect they have. You also don't have to use transparencies for the text, earlier incarnations of the painting just used some white and a permanent marker.

- **Cutting board and blade**

You'll need to cut out the Bush images, the text and the star stencils. This can be done with a pair of sharp scissors, but a blade is easier.

Downloads

All downloads are available from <http://www.shardcore.org/bushfinger/>

- Bush images
- Star stencils
- Text

The files are scaled for A4 printing, with a final canvas size of 80cm x 60cm. Use an image manipulation package to re-scale them for smaller or larger surfaces.

Instructions

Step 1. *Tape up the canvas.*



Start by taping up the 'blue' area of the flag, I used the wooden frame behind the canvas as a guide, since this results in an area just over $\frac{1}{4}$ of the canvas. Remember, you're taping up the area you **don't** want to paint, so put the outermost edge of the tape at the bounds of the blue area.

There are seven red stripes on the american flag, depending how accurate you feel you need to be, you can

either measure and mark the correct distances for the stripes at the top and bottom of the canvas, or just do it 'by eye', which is what I tend to do.

For my canvas and tape, each stripe is about 1.5 widths of tape, so I overlapped them.

Step 2. *Paint the red stripes*



My 'dirty red' is made with cadmium red, burnt umber and ultramarine in 4:2:1 ratio. paint the stripes and don't forget the edges of the canvas!

Step 3. *Remove the tape*

Once the paint is dry, carefully peel off the tape.

Step 4. *Re-tape the blue area*

The red stripes provide a good guide for re-applying the tape for the blue area. This time, tape the *outer* bounds of the square.

Step 5. *Paint the blue*



The blue needs to be a similar tone to the red, I used cobalt blue, burnt umber and white titanium in approximately 5:2:1 ratio - don't be afraid to experiment.



Step 6. *Remove the tape*

Once you're removed this tape you should have a star-less american flag.

Step 7. *Paint the white stripes*



My 'white' is in fact titanium white and yellow ochre in about 7:1 ratio. I also used a little acrylic retarder to improve the flow.

I chose to hand paint the white, without taping, since this gave me an opportunity to clean up the edges of the red stripes, which weren't as clean as I'd liked.

The stars

How accurate you want to be with the stars is up to you. For this iteration of Bushfinger I wanted the correct number, which means six rows of five stars interleaved with five rows of four. This can be quite fiddly, so an approximate distribution of stars will do just as well. (Jasper Johns didn't feel compelled to be accurate, so neither should you...)

Step 8. *Making the star stencils*



Download and re-scale the star templates to suit the blue area on your canvas. The files provided here are for an area approximately 55 cm wide. For me that meant printing out two A4 sheets of acetate and sticking them together with tape.

Cut out the stars using a blade and cutting board.

Step 9. *Paint the stars*



The key with stencilling is to avoid 'bleeding' from the edges of the stencil. Spray paint is one option, however I used acrylic paint in the same mix as I used for the white stripes. If you are using paint, try using a piece of sponge to fill them in. If you use a brush, make sure the paint is thick, and always paint in from the points of the stars to the centre.

After making six evenly spaced rows of five stars, it's relatively simple to stencil in the rows of four in between.

You should now have a pretty good american flag



Step 10. *Print out the Bush images and the text*

Re-scale the bush images, if you're using a different sized canvas. Print out the acetates and give them plenty of time to dry - wet acetates will stick together and ruin the surface, you have been warned!

Step 11. *Back paint the images*



Using some white titanium, paint the reverse side of the bush pictures. only paint the area covered by the head and the jacket - we want the rest of the frame to remain translucent so the flag shows through.



In the same way, back-paint the text - you don't need to be super accurate here, just make sure the text has a decent amount of white ground to make it stand out over the flag.

Step 12. Cut out the images

Carefully cut out the Bush images along the edge of the frames.

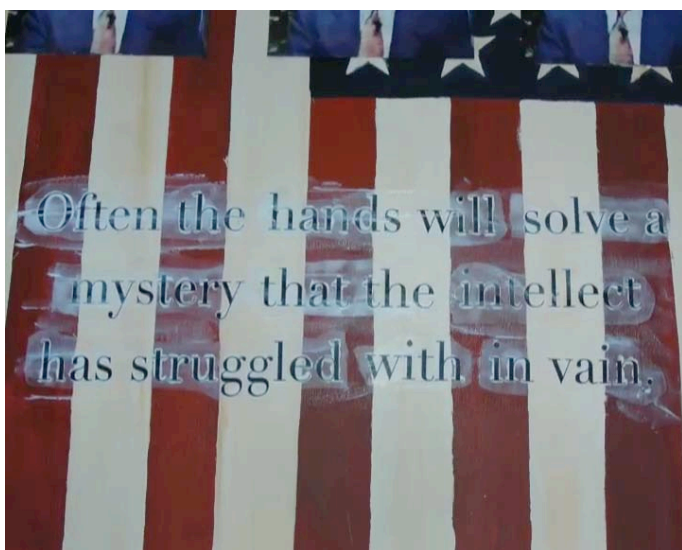
For the text, cut as close as you can to the outlines of the words - depending on your canvas you might need to squeeze them together or space them apart a little when laying it out.

Step 13. Stick down the Bushes



Use some acrylic gel, and a tiny amount of white to make the 'glue' - spread it liberally on the reverse of the transparency and lightly stick them to the surface of the flag in a 3 x 3 arrangement. Once you're happy with the layout, press them more firmly onto the canvas and leave them to dry.

Step 14. Stick down the text



For the text we want a completely clear ground, so use acrylic gel neat. Use plenty of it for the text, since you need a good connection between canvas and transparency if you want the edges to remain invisible. Acrylic gel looks white when it is wet, but dries completely clear.

Step 15. *Cover the transparencies in gel*



A good slathering of gel should be applied to the Bush images and the text. If you've used an inkjet printer, be careful not to scratch or smear the surface of the transparencies. The inks will bleed a little into the gel, but the softening effect is quite pleasing.

Step 16. *Leave it to dry*

Depending on how thick you've applied the gel, this may take some time!

Step 17. *Adding the dirt*



Make a varnish from PVA glue and water - make it dirty with a tiny amount of black or burnt umber. Cover the entire surface of the canvas with glue, then add some dirt.

Any dirt will do.

Step 18. *Leave it to dry*

Once it's dry you'll have your very own Bushfinger. Hang it somewhere where the world can see, and don't forget to send me a picture!

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