I choose not to see shadows as scary or something to avoid – but rather as something necessary in all our lives. Shadows make the light appear so much brighter. Shadows bring a richness and depth to our lives that would not be there otherwise. I feel that by standing together and casting shadows and light all around us, we connect, we comfort and we are in turn comforted.

Many times in our collective history communities have come together in times of hardship. My own artwork is inspired by all the times we stand alone and all of the times we stand together.

I would like to share this lesson with you that takes a small element of that inspiration into creating a page in our Life Book with some mixed media techniques to create a narrative piece of art with great depth and contrast.

Please don’t be intimidated by the content of this lesson! The techniques are actually very easy once you break them down. No matter where you are in your art journey just make a start and enjoy the process. I offer a couple of different ways of building up an image depending on your drawing skills from using copyright free images to trace elements to building up the drawing free hand and in your own style.
Materials List

- Watercolour paper in your chosen Life Book dimensions – I like Fabriano Artistico Hot Pressed

- Gesso - Any brand – I am using Liquitex Gesso

- Fine Tip Embossing tool. You can find these in the card making department of your hobby or craft store or Amazon. Or you could use an old ball point pen or anything with a dull point such as a tapestry needle.

- Black Indian Ink. Or any dark coloured ink that you have.

- Ink or Golden High Flow Acrylics. I am using a combination of Liquitex Acrylic inks and Golden high flow Acrylics. Any kind of acrylic inks will be fine. Use the colours you love! The colours I am using in the Liquitex inks are Burnt Umber and Raw Umber, Prussian Blue, Grey and Red Oxide. The colours in the High Flow acrylics are Titanium White, Quinacridone Nickel Azo Gold, Indigo.

- Typewriter Carbon Paper  I buy multiple sheets of this from Amazon where they usually come in packs of 10 sheets in blue or black. Here I am using black.

- Household paintbrush

- Paintbrushes in various sizes  I like Windsor and Newton brushes or Rosemary & Co but any brushes suitable for acrylics will do. Have a variey of sizes.

- Paint palette  Even a sheet of paper or card will do!

- Old wallet card or palette knife

- Making tape to tape your paper down

- Spray bottle of water and an old rag

Gillian Lee Smith – Fine Artist

www.gillianleesmithartist.com
Resources for Copyright Free images

www.morguefile.com
www.flickr.com

(go to home page, click on ‘Explore’ then ‘More’ and go to ‘The Commons’)

Add your search term e.g ‘bird’ which will take you to this page

In the upper left above the thumbnails you will see a drop down menu where you can search for images with ‘No known Copyright restrictions’

Gillian Lee Smith – Fine Artist
www.gillianleesmithartist.com
1. Tape your paper down with masking tape. With applying the materials the paper will buckle but can be flattened under books once dry. Using a household brush or a large bristle brush cover your paper with gesso moving your brush in different directions to create texture.

2. Using your embossing tool create texture into the wet gesso. Text, pattern, swirling lines and shapes. Take your time over this and enjoy creating marks. Get a balance between areas that are flat and areas that have a lot of texture. Use an old rag to blot if you wish.

3. Pour some Indian ink or a dark colour ink over the dry gesso. Use an old rag or a brush to darken the whole piece, blotting and lifting the ink off in places. You might need less ink that you need so go slowly at first!
4. Add another layer of gesso using an old card to spread it around the page. Use your embossing tool to create more texture and pattern and quieter spaces.

5. Gradually introduce colour and layer that between areas of light and dark. Use your cloth to remove ink in places. Keep working these layers until you have built up a beautiful surface with lots of layering and depth. Back and forth, back and forth.

6. Practice on another piece of paper first or go straight onto your textured background. You can partially or completely trace your reference images (remembering that you don’t have to follow the lines exactly!). Your own photographs will give you the most unique artwork.

Gillian Lee Smith – Fine Artist
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7. If you are more confident with your drawing then use a piece of tracing paper to draw freehand with a sharp pencil so that you can see what you are doing.

Play with the placement of your images until you reach a composition you are happy with before using the carbon paper to draw them.

8. Work on getting a good variety of light and dark into your drawings using reference imagery that has a strong contrast between the two. Be loose and expressive with your drawing – don’t worry about perfection! Just enjoy the process.

9. Use your other imagery to build up layers and details. Text, nature imagery, abstract. Whatever appeals to you and inspires you.

Begin to think about how you can introduce narrative – a time and place that interests you.
10. Using your high flow acrylics and/or gesso to begin working into the figures introducing shadows and light. Brightening up the light areas and working over the darker areas to create tone. You can go as far as you wish with this, smudging the dark tones completely or working so that some of the texture of the ink marks remain.

11. Introduce colour. You can mix your inks with gesso to get more opaque colour. Layer these opaque colours with washes of ink – spray your work frequently with your spray bottle to achieve atmospheric layers. Go back and forth, layering and layering between opaque and washes and drawing with your carbon paper. Allow the layers to dry inbetween.

12. Continue to work in layers. Adding more details. Colouring outside the lines in washes to achieve atmosphere and blending areas! Use stronger colours to add details into your drawn areas. Build up the background. Always be mindful of creating strong contrast between shadow and light.
Add as much or as little details as you wish. This is what will make your work unique! I could have gone on and on and remember you can always pause and return to the work once you have lived with it for a little while.

I would love to see what you create in the Facebook Group. You can ask me any questions you may have and will do my best to help.

Enjoy!!

13. Use long strips of white paper to frame your image. It will make the colours and tones pop and will take away the distractions of your surrounding mess which will make it easier to see when your image is complete.

Take a day or a week to come back and see the image with fresh eyes and appreciate all that you have created.
We all Cast Shadows by Gillian Lee Smith