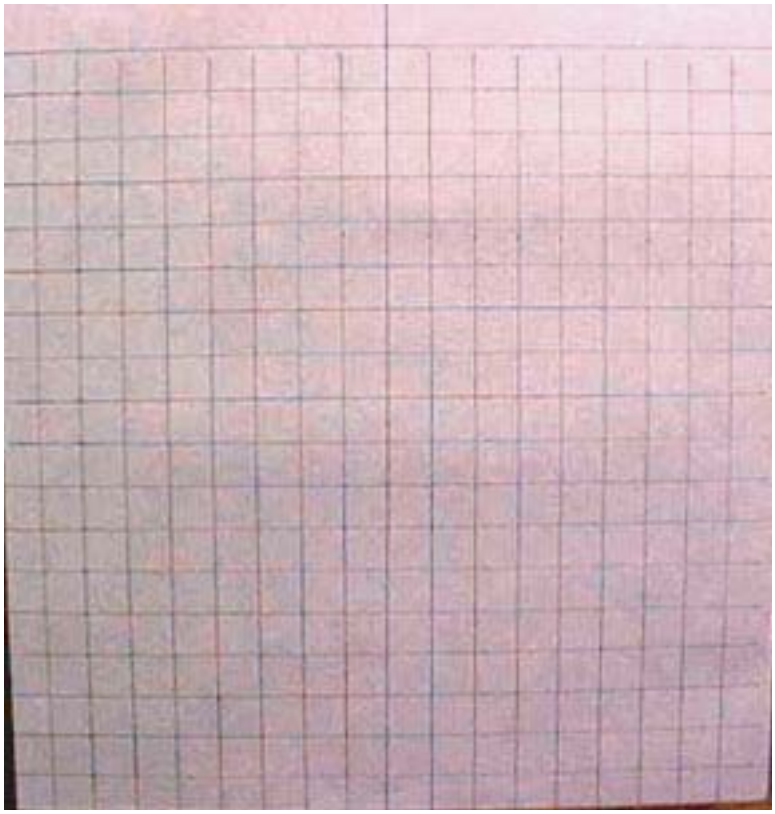
How to Pinstripe By Ray "el Vago" Smith

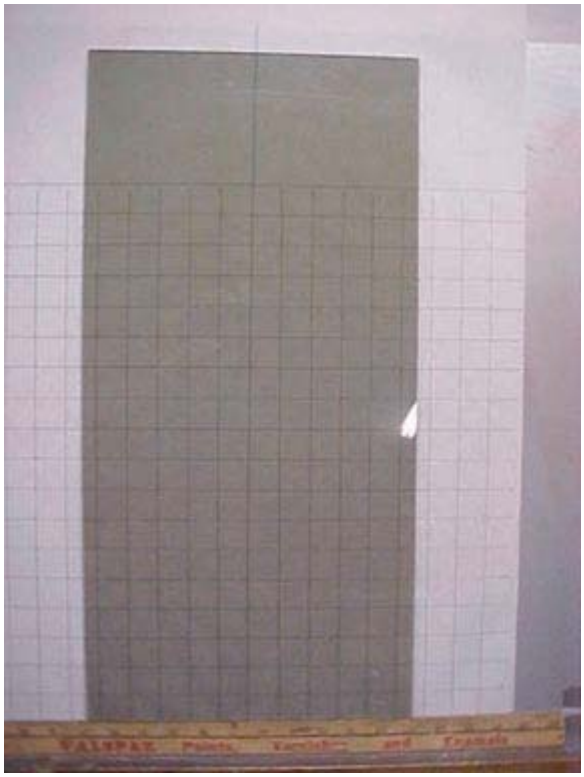
I am assuming that most of you have had some experience (good or bad) with a Mack striper and 1-Shot paint. If you have, then you have some idea of how to hold a brush (a long topic that is of questionable value) and how to get the proper consistency of the paint. I will dwell briefly on this as there are some variables that you may or may not know.

The quality of the pix may not be the greatest as I was taking them myself. Don't ask; it was 1 AM and I didn't want to wake my wife. Normally when I do designs I use both hands but for this I had to use my other hand to hold the camera and also to show clarity. So here goes nothing:

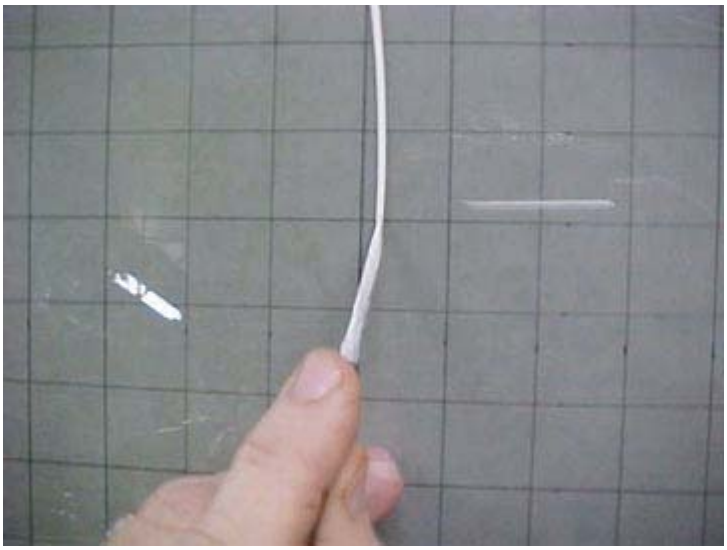


I took a piece of butcher paper and laid out a grid of 1" squares to use as a spacing guide. As I am going to be doing this design on a piece of gray Lexan, you have only to center the piece over the grid. In this case, I drew the center line higher than the rest to make locating it easier.

If you were doing this on a piece of metal or some other solid material, you can lay out the grid directly on the material with a Stabilo pencil. You can paint right over it (the adhesion of the paint isn't affected) and wash off the rest with water when the paint is dry.



The Lexan is laid in place. If you don't have enough contrast, you can lay out a grid on the reverse side of the Lexan.

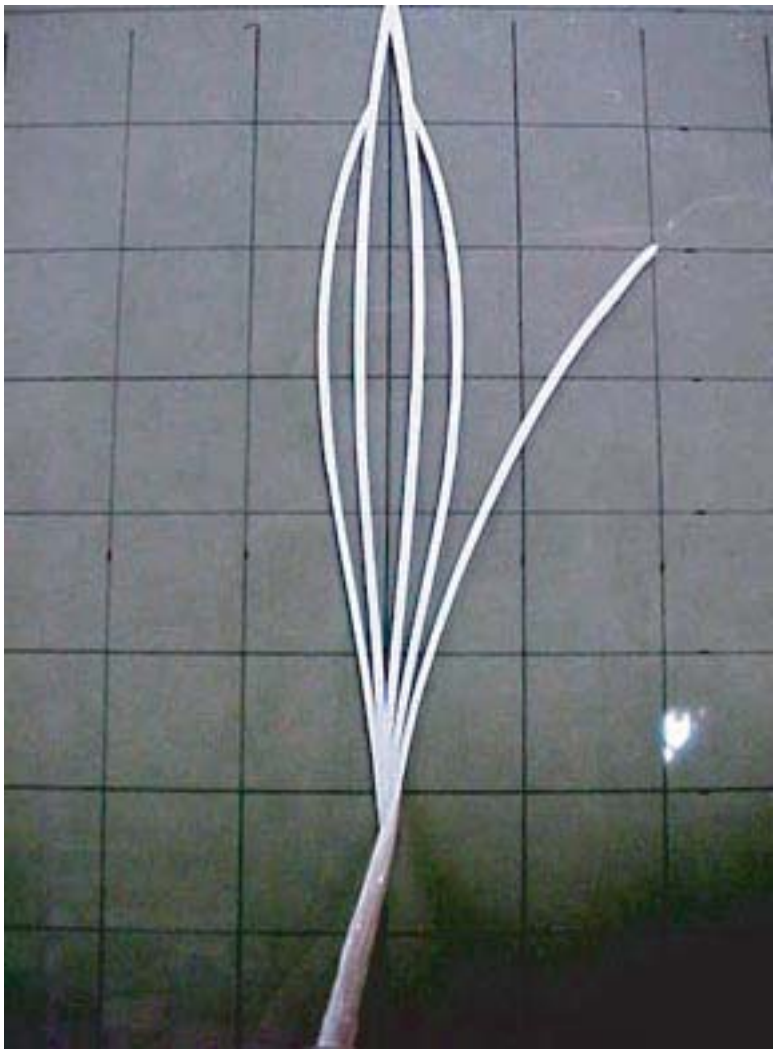


Before I start on this one, there are a couple things I need to say:
First; most of the designs I do have a couple things in common: they almost always start with a teardrop shape in the center a good eye reference) and most of the designs have a vaguely triangular shape that is a point at the top with the design gradually spreading out as it moves downward. It has something to do with an architectural principle Greek?)that makes that shape pleasing to look at. The disadvantage of it is that it's easier to lean in a freshly painted line!
Anyway as I am left-handed I make my first line on the right side of the center line. This makes it easier to see where I am going with the corresponding line on the other side.

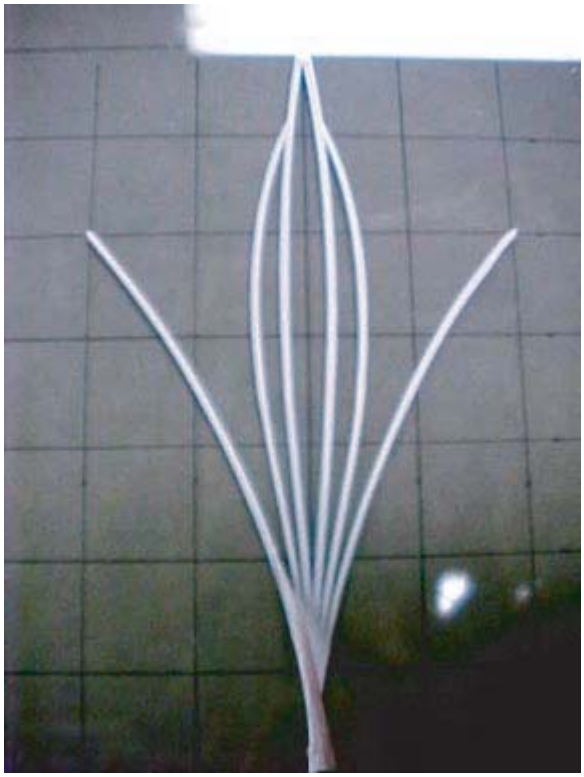
The other side.

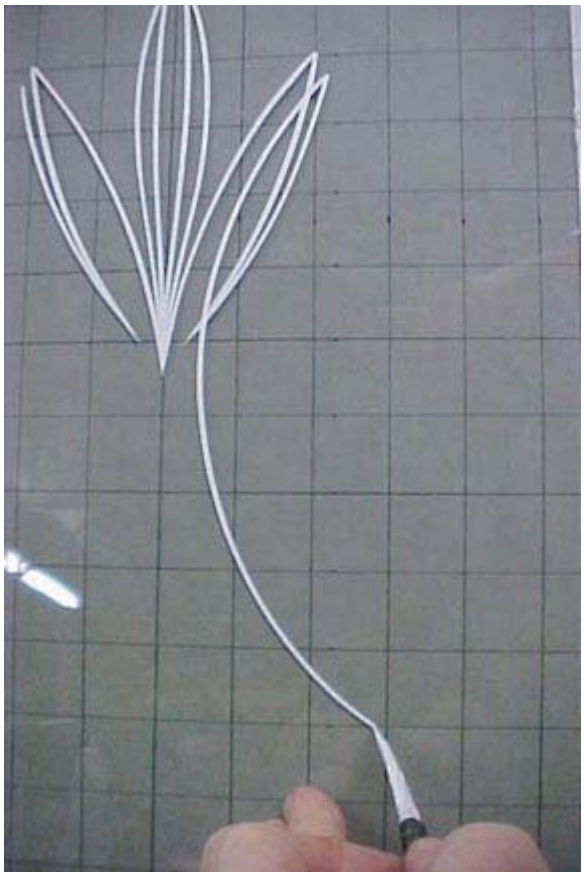
I make another line a little further from the first. Also I would like to say that one thing that new stripers do that makes things difficult for them is: they will make a starting loop and when they bring it back to the center try and bring it together at a very wide angle. This makes it almost impossible to bring the two lines together without crossing over too far. When you bring your lines together, do it at a very narrow angle and you will find they blend much easier note how the first loop comes together).

Again the design is brought together at the center.

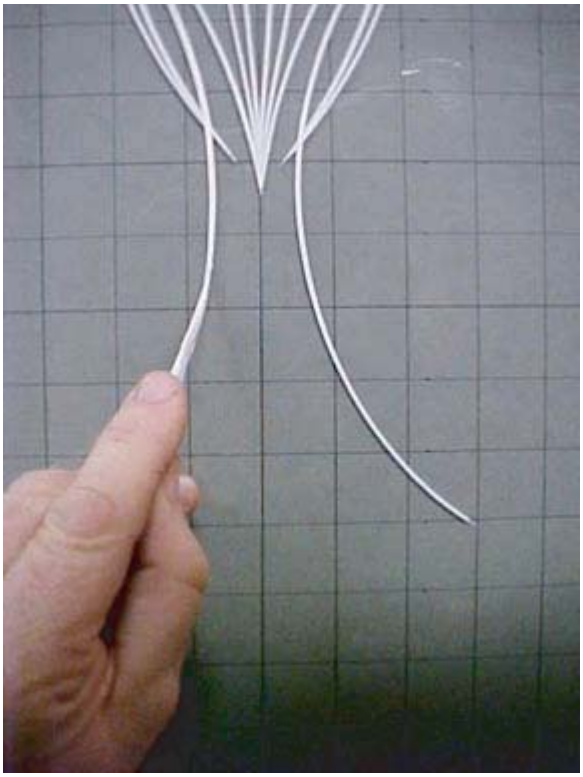


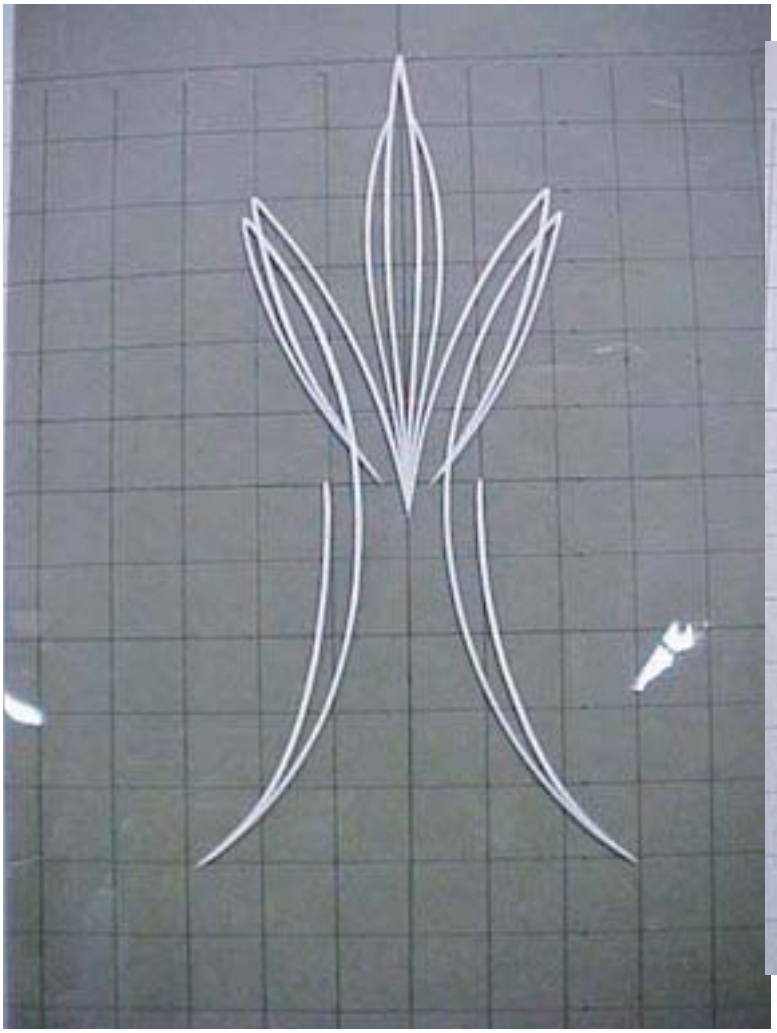
I am now expanding the design a little further out, not going too wide or it will throw the balance off.

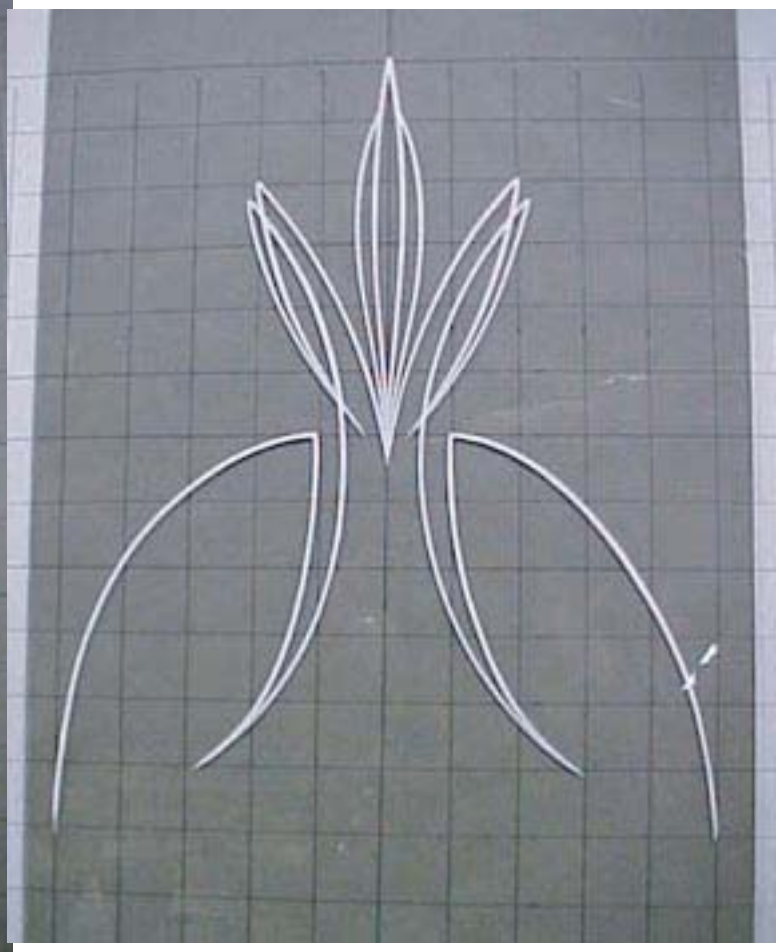




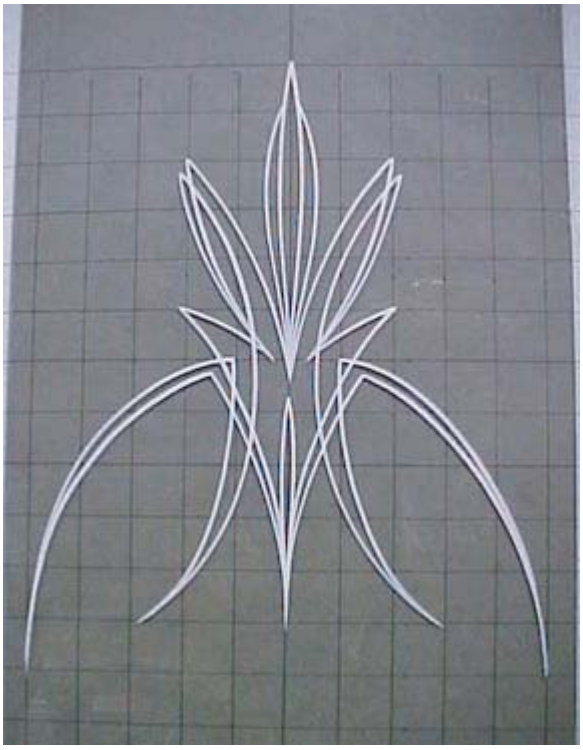
The design is now moving further outwards and down and I've added a couple of extra lines as filler.You can add as many as you like but too much and it starts to get cluttered.

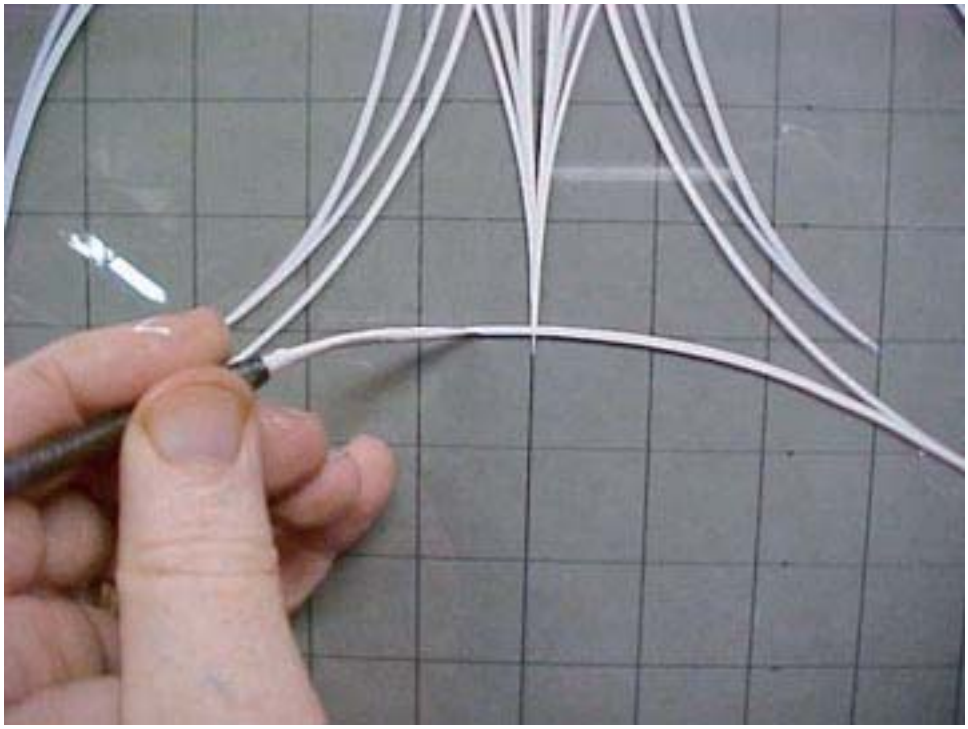




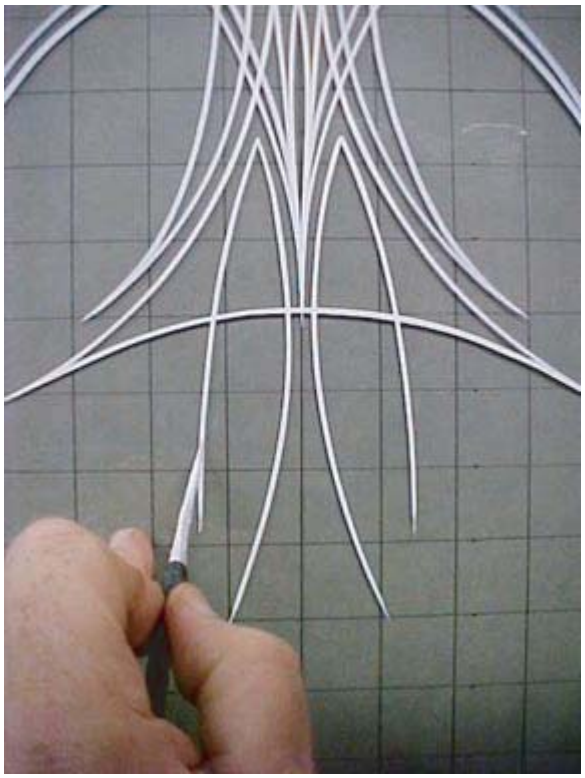


Now I've started to go out further to the side but still trying to maintain my triangular shape. On this type of juncture(90 degrees to one another), it's best to bring the brush tip gradually down to the line width and make your line; then go back and using the very tip of the brush, square up the junction. If you want to square a junction at the end of a stroke, it's better to run a little over and then come back with a DRY paper towel wrapped tightly over your fingernail and rub across the line. If you have solvent in the towel, it is almost impossible to dry the surface to continue painting.



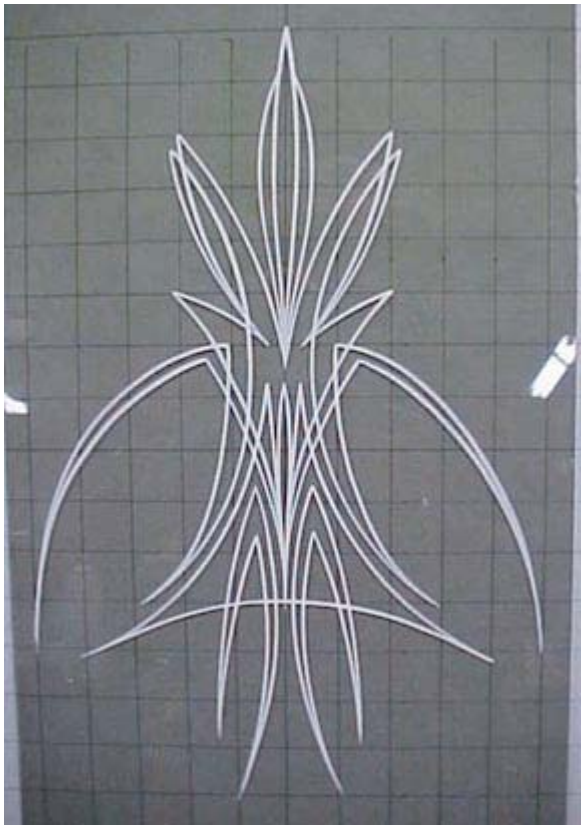


I'm adding a cross line to tie the bottom together. Again I'm working from right to left so I can see where my line is going.



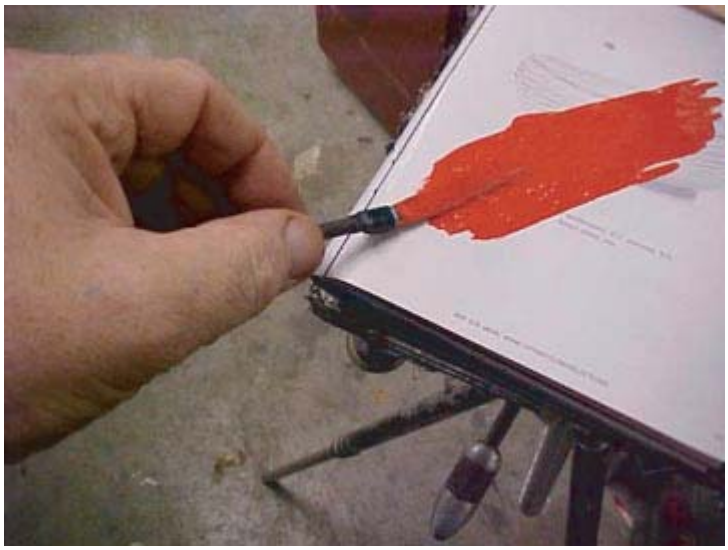
I'm adding a few more lines to fill in the design a bit. Not too many because we're going to add a second color.

This shows the completed first color design. You could leave it like that or you could add a second or even third) color. The second color I will be using is Fire Red only because it provides a pretty good contrast for the white against the gray. Color selection is a whole other ball game which I'm not going to get into here.



Anyway we've let the design dry I didn't but I was in a hurry to get this done) and we're ready to add another color.
What I will say about this is: the less second color you add the better. Whenever you add a new color in you want it to complement the design not contrast with it. I've probably added more than I should have but it's my panel and I can do what I want with it!

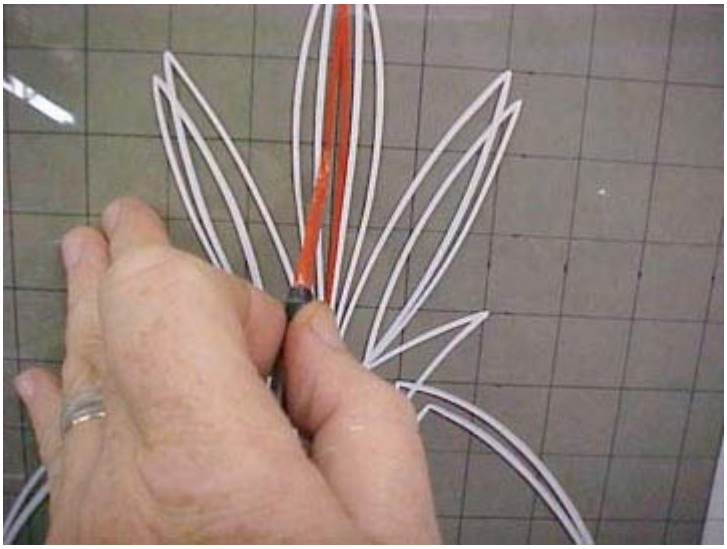
I guess now is as good a time as any to say something about paletting. If you are doing a design or a work that doesn't require a long line in it, the paint should be slightly thicker than if you are pulling a line down the length of a car.

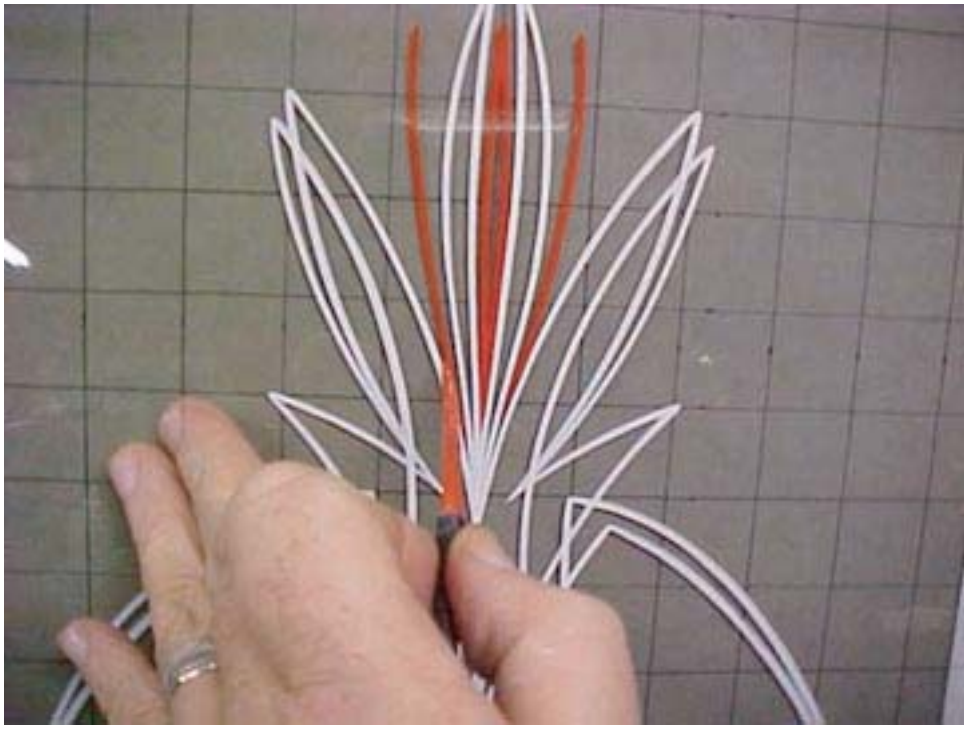


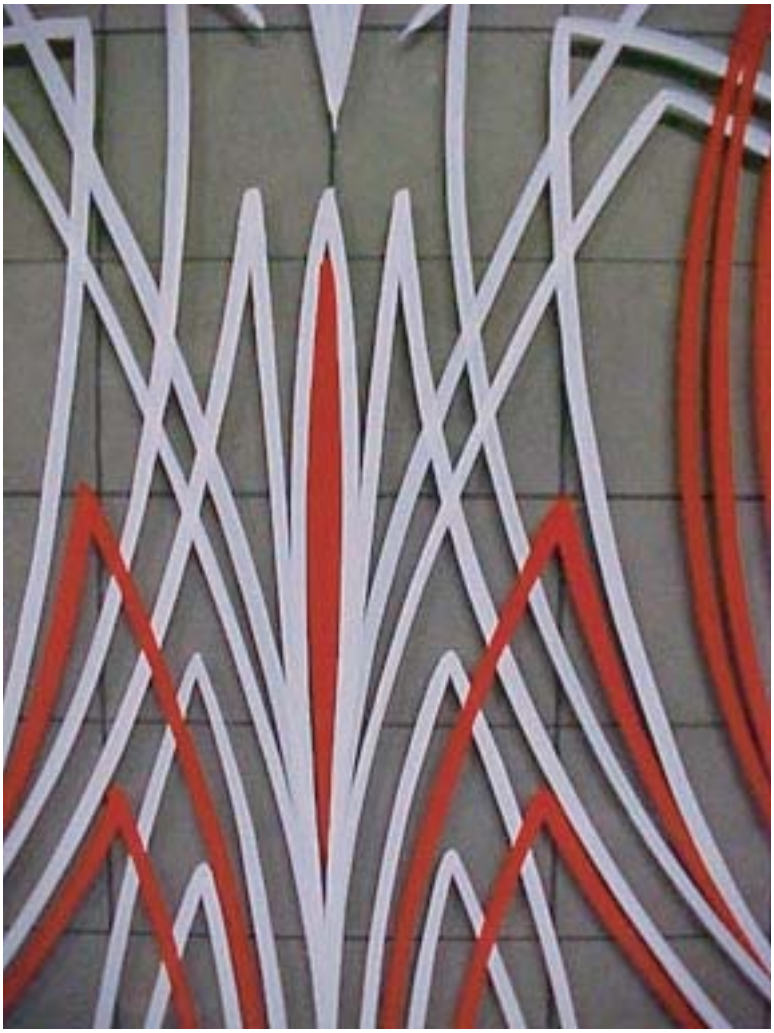
I take a brushful of paint and lay it on the palette a glossy junk mail catalog that my wife gets hundreds of daily.BTW don't use these if you're using HOK paints because the thinners will eat the ink right off the paper and contaminate your paint) an dip the brush in some thinner either mineral spirits or 1-Shot reducer) and work the brush back and forth through the paint alternating from one side of the brush to the other. I repeat this process until I feel the brush slipping through the mixture smoothly. Then I check the point of the brush to make sure it's nice and thin. If the point looks like it's swelled up a bit, the paint is too thin and will spread out and make a ragged line. Add more paint and re-palette until it's nice and sharp. It's then ready to work.

A couple of do's and don'ts: Always try and work in the shade and out of the breeze. Both will adversely affect paint consistency. They will prematurely dry the paint on the brush and force you to re-palette more. Always try to get in a comfortable position when striping. That can be difficult sometimes but it's amazing how much less your hand shakes when you're comfortable. If you don't believe me, try pulling a line while standing on your tiptoes! If you can do it, you're a better man than I Charlie Brown!

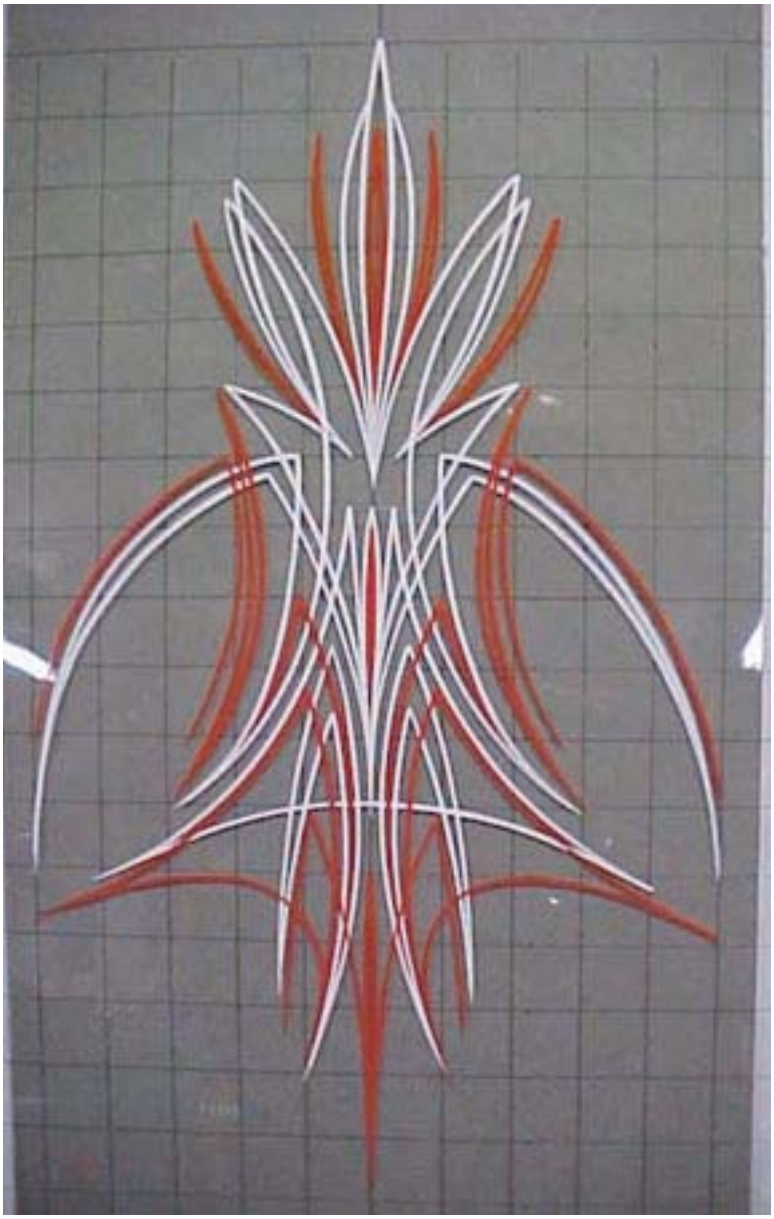
I add a little red into the design trying to keep it as simple as possible.







The finished product!



I know this is by no means a complete guide to striping but rather the way I go about doing a design.