

## Intro to Carbon Dust

### Creating Backgrounds with Coffee Grounds or Tea Leaves

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Damp coffee grounds spread out over a sheet of hot-press watercolor paper in a baking sheet.



Final, fully dried paper with coffee-stained background, after approximately three consecutive 24-hour applications.

Creating a background using coffee grounds or tea leaves (or bags) can add a fun and interesting element to carbon dust drawings or charcoal drawings.

First developed by Gerry Hodges (medical illustrator) to mimic the flocking on old documents and the look of vellum, the technique has been used by illustrators and artists for works that are reproduced in journals and publications. The technique may not be archival, although artworks using these backgrounds on archival substrates appear to be quite light-fast and in good condition decades later. It's highly recommended you test archival qualities thoroughly though, if that's important to your piece.

#### 1. CHOOSE YOUR SURFACE

Hot press watercolor paper, multi-media paper, illustration board and clay-board are all good candidates. Whatever is a favorite substrate that can handle wet media.

Place your surface in a baking sheet (with a rim).

#### 2. CHOOSE YOUR BACKGROUND

Once you've finished brewing, collect cooled, DAMP coffee grounds or cooled, DAMP loose tea leaves (any variety) or cooled, DAMP tea bags (any variety). The secret is to make sure your background material is not too wet.

#### 3. SPREAD CAREFULLY ACROSS THE SURFACE

If you're using tea bags, you can open them up or simply plop them on as you use them. Don't aim for control—you will be disappointed. Part of the fun is seeing what develops and reacting to it within your artwork.

#### 4. LEAVE ON THE SURFACE UNTIL DRY.

Then brush off into the compost pile. Repeat until you're happy with your background.

#### 5. IMPORTANT:

#### MAKE SURE YOUR SURFACE IS COMPLETELY DRY

Before applying any carbon dust.