
Halloween Pumpkin Carving with Courtney Cerruti

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

(spooky music) - Halloween is my absolute favorite holiday, but for some reason, I didn't really grow up carving pumpkins. It wasn't until I was in high school that I realized I could use printmaking tools to create really interesting and unique jack o'lanterns, and I'm gonna show you how to do it.

Chapter 2 - Carve Image

Trace and carve outline

- To start, you'll need a pumpkin, and I've already scooped out the insides of this guy, cut myself a top at an angle so the top won't fall through. You also need some kind of black-and-white image. I'm using a clip art of a moth that has a lot of contrast. This is really important, that you have a high-contrast image. That way, you can clearly see where to carve out. A couple of pins that are sturdy. You're gonna use these to poke through the pumpkin. These guys are hat pins, but you could use any kind of sturdy sewing pin or quilting pin. The top of a canning jar is a really handy scraper. You'll need some print-making carving tools. I tend to really like these wooden-handled ones. These are usually fairly inexpensive and you can get them at most craft stores, and they work really nicely for carving pumpkins. If you have the kind that has a changeable tip, that will work, too. A bit of tape and a couple of towels. We'll begin by taping our moth image to our pumpkin. Just using a removable tape. It just happens to be neon pink, surprise, surprise. This is where the towels come in handy. I actually use them to prop up the pumpkin while I'm working. So if I want my moth to be centered here, I'm gonna tape him in place. And you have a flat surface of sheet that needs to wrap around this pumpkin, so if you have to fold this in certain places, you can do that. It'll naturally sort of squish in the right direction. I folded it there, so I'll fold it over here, too, so that our wings still match up. Just a couple more pieces of tape. Smoosh it down. It's all wrinkled, that's fine, you're just gonna transfer the image onto the surface of the pumpkin. Get this guy sitting where it's comfortable, so it's angled up at you. And then, to transfer the image, I'm just gonna use my pin and poke along all the main edges. So I'll probably start and go on the outside edge. I'll punch against this line here, so I know where that happens. If you want to, you can also punch these black areas. So start at the top of the wing, and I'm just gonna make little dots. It's like transferring a pattern, kind of, those pattern-marking wheels for transferring sewing patterns onto garments. That's kind of what you're doing. Now, you could go along each little curve here. You can punch a straight line and then decide to carve out a little curve. You don't have to be super-precise. You can change this when you're carving. Lift this guy up. Might wanna punch along here, just so I know where that black line should fall. You can punch in here, but I'm gonna show you how we can carve it without punching. I'm not gonna do any punching in there. Just continuing along the outline. This is really just so we can orient ourselves to the kind of biggest, basic shapes of the moth. And then we'll do the rest with our tools. You can use this same method, let's say you had a picture of a person, you wanted to do a silhouette or something, do the same thing, print out a solid black shape and just punch out the outline to transfer the image to your pumpkin. Okay, do his little head. And let's mark out these lines on the center of the wing. And last, this black shape. See how it looks. Oh yeah. Can really see those lines transferred really well. I think that's plenty of information to then go ahead and carve from. If you're working on a really dark pumpkin, you may need to do deeper pin pricks, or

closer together pin pricks, so you can really see that line. But on this orange, this transferred really nicely. Before we carve out our moth, I want to show you just, kind of what shapes these different tools make. In most of these sets, you'll get a U gouge, which has a soft curve, and you'll get a V gouge, which creates a V, just like it sounds. And then sometimes there'll be just straight lines that act sort of almost like an X-Acto knife. And sometimes they come in small, medium, and large, so let me show you. So this is a small U gouge. And this is a print-making tool. You wanna carve away from yourself, but you don't wanna brace your pumpkin and then stab yourself on accident, 'cause that can happen. So I don't want to brace here. I could brace down here, or I can hold something like this. It's a small U gouge. Here's a medium one. It's pretty close, actually, the way these are manufactured. And then here's a large one. This is good for clearing out a lot of space once you're carved a shape. So you kinda get these softer lines. If you wanna do a V gouge, this is a medium V gouge, and you can get kinda finer detail, but it's gonna go deeper. I don't know if you can see, but that's a much deeper cut and more narrow. These are good for outlining. There's also just this pin-prick tool that you can create a hole with. And then, those flat ones. They work almost like an X-Acto. And that's good for cutting out a shape, like if I wanted to cut out a triangle, I could use this. Pop this out. Create something like a triangle. If you want to practice using your print-making tools, you can practice on a small pumpkin or even an apple. Let's start by outlining this pin-prick shape. That'll give us some parameters to carve into. Don't worry about if it's black or white. We're just gonna follow this line to create an outline, and I'll start by using either your small or your medium V gouge. Be surprised how soft the surface of a pumpkin is. Just gonna go in there so I get a good line. There's a quote about pumpkins that I love, and I don't know who said it, but I read this quote that said, Only a knife knows the heart of a pumpkin. It's true. You wanna be working on some kind of surface so you can get all your little trimmings. Don't be afraid to turn the pumpkin as you're working for whatever feels most comfortable. If I look at my original image, this edge has, this edge of the moth's wing is sort of scalloped. I can do that now in my outline, or I could go back in with my U gouge. If I wanted to do that, I could just go ahead and we'll create a straight line here, so I started to do a scallop, but why don't we just create a soft, curved line, and we'll go back in with our U gouge and create the scallops later. So just follow along your pin-prick marks to create your outline. I'm gonna skip the scallops I created there. I'm gonna come back in with a tool and do that later, so I'll just create a soft curve here for the wing shape. Fix that line. You can always carve back into things and make them really deep. Right now, this isn't really enough to create a deep enough line, so we need to go back in and carve that out again, but this is just an outline, remember, to start. Continue to create your outline with your V gouge along the little pin pricks that we made, just until you get a complete outline of your moth.

Carve design details

- We're coming up to the head of the moth and in our picture there aren't any antennae but I probably will add some and I can just do that freehand here. There's his little head, I'll go in and fix his eyes a bit. But let's create some antennae since we've got this nice line carving tool. And they're just arcs here, you can just freehand that. If you get a thicker spot that's fine, you can go back in and carve this away. These could be curly, they could be feathered, I could create little tiny lines off of here which I might still do, just wanna get them in place, just to start though. OK another thing that's helpful about having this outline here is when we are carving it gives us a channel to carve up to. So if I were just to freehand for example those scallops I talked about earlier, if I didn't have a channel I could very easily use my U-gouge and I could just continue on into the butterfly shape

beyond where I wanted it to. So creating this channel gives you a nice edge to carve against and that's something to keep in mind when you're working on other images if you're creating other pumpkins. And we'll also use that technique if we wanted let's say create a little design in here. Let's say I wanted to have a heart that was cut out, I'd wanna do an outline of the heart first and then carve away into it. If you look at our image, the black is where we're not going to carve, that's gonna be the pumpkin skin. And the white is where we're gonna carve away. Just like if you were carving a linoleum block in printmaking, it's the same thing. So this would be the surface that you would ink, this is our pumpkin skin, we're not gonna carve that away. So anywhere there's white, that's where we're gonna carve away. And in here I'm gonna kinda make up these details because our different tools will do different sort of shapes and that could be really interesting. But I'm gonna start first by carving away these white shapes. And for that I'll probably use my medium U-gouge. I'm carving away this here with my U-gouge. Just go slowly. You get these little striations here in the tool, that can look really cool and you can leave those, you can also go back and carve those out. Whatever you prefer. And then really going deeper, I'm entering in on the surface and going deeper as I come down, sort of creating this indentation here, I really like that so I'm gonna continue that and do the same thing on the other side. That channel is really helping us. You can see when I break off that pumpkin, it's not going on into the rest of the skin of the pumpkin, it's staying right at that channel. Alright so that's our first white space carved out. In the body of the moth there are these little highlights where the segments are of the body and they would probably continue up here, you can start to see the reappear here next to the head. And I'm gonna do them from the left to the right. I'm just gonna take little notches out and I can go back in and make those bigger. Just spacing them like a half inch apart, quarter inch apart. Maybe they start to get bigger closer up the body. I can also kinda turn this around and cut out like a little circle, or a little oval shape, if you feel like your skin is getting torn too much. Go up to there. And then let's create two eyes here. Create those two eyes. Very nice. Keeping your drawing handy so you can always refer back to it. It's fine to create details that weren't there or decide to skip a spot but it's helpful to kinda reference what you're doing to the left wing or to the right wing, where you wanna carve out and what you wanna leave. And experiment with different tools to see what kind of marks you'll get. I'm gonna continue using my U-gouge and carve away any large areas of white and then I'll switch back to my V-gouge for any kind of fine line or detail. There's these large patches of white about one third of the way out from the body on the wing and I'm gonna go ahead and do those also. They fall just inside this so they don't continue here they kind of fall on this range. And I'll go ahead and carve those away. This isn't going very deep, you're gonna really have to deepen these markings if you want the light to show through, if you're creating a jack-o-lantern out of this. But I could also, if you want your pumpkins to last much longer, instead of taking the insides out and cutting a top, you can just carve like this into a pumpkin and leave them on your doorstep, they'll last all season. So it's a nice way to carve words or other images instead of creating a jack-o-lantern shape. You're just carving an image into the skin of the pumpkin and it'll sort of dry out and scar which is really cool. So we came in just inside that white line, we'll do the same thing here. We'll come back in and go deeper here. Because I don't have a straight edge, a channel to follow this is getting torn and I really like that so I'm gonna keep that up. If you wanted a more precise line here, you could go ahead and carve out a channel or draw a line with the X-ACTO knife tip. Instead I like this jagged edge, it helps give texture to the moth so I'm just carving freehand on the pumpkin and it gives us that torn edge. Finish it up here. Maybe make these a little deeper. Alright let's switch to our V-gouge so we can get some different shapes and textures on the rest of this wing. There's a chevron shape that I wanna carve out using

the V-gouge. Creating this zig zag, to begin with. Go ahead and make that a little deeper. Create another one just next to it. And I could go in here and then remove all of this white space or I could use this to create two white channels on the other side which is what I'm gonna do. So I'll just follow along to make deeper gouges. Can create a lot of texture using these. Let's go ahead and just remove that whole area. Do the same thing on this side. Can really create a lot of texture using these tools, this is the same process you'd use for doing a cat face or a dog face or silhouette. You're just carving away the white space. Pumpkin skin stays as the dark space. Gonna go ahead also and just really define this outer edge here while I've got my V-gouge and we're working in this area. That'll help it really show up if I put tealight in here. Make this a jack-o-lantern. Very pretty. I could go in and do some small texture in here too, they don't have to be so black and white if I don't want. Let's carve this guy away too. I'll also carve this center line out more. And this last line. Can always sort of clean up your edges this way. That's one moth wing. Could do a smaller zig zag in here, maybe let's just create some texture. Do some little cuts. Could do it here too. Gonna get pumpkin everywhere, just so you know. 'Cause these are so shallow you may not get a lot of illumination from them, you could go back in and make them deeper if you wanted. They look like flower petals. Let's do the same thing to the other side. So that's the bulk of our moth. I'm gonna go ahead and create those scallops using our widest U-gouge. Come from outside and dip into the edge of your channel to create your scallop. I'm not gonna go all the way 'cause I'm gonna start it again here. We can also come in this way to create the texture on the wing here. We could do that here but I think I'm gonna leave that solid like in the picture. Just go ahead and create my scallops on the other side as well. We can come back in, this solid space is a little smaller on this side than on the other side, so I'll just create a few little texture pieces there. And I think I wanna just come in and make this a more solid line. So you can really see that body of the moth. Yeah like that. His little eyes are there, I could dip in from the outside also. It's like half a scallop there. And then if I wanna create those feathery antennae, and let's switch to the little V-gouge, and we're gonna create little feathery shapes along the antennae. You can also, depending on how comfortable you are, sometimes you can also kinda go in and that'll give you a skinnier line at the end and it'll taper into a thicker line which is what you'd want for this. But if it makes you uncomfortable to cut toward yourself then you don't have to do it, you could do the other way. And there is our moth. Oh he's so cute. Any time you carve a pumpkin you should check to see how much light is gonna come through the cuts that you've made. So take this into a closet or a bathroom and drop a votive into it if it's not nighttime, and just see if you're really getting light to show through your image. If you're not, you can do two things. You can go back into the shape that you've carved and just deepen all of the lines using your skinny V-gouge, you can also kind of poke holes in certain areas using the X-ACTO knife like tip. The other thing you can do, and this is something that I like to do, so I don't mess up my image, is use the top of a canning lid and go back in and scrape away the inside. I usually just do it on the side where the image is. So you can really thin out that pumpkin wall. (scraping) Remember this could also just be a treatment that you do to a pumpkin that's not a jack-o-lantern. So instead of scooping out the inside and removing the top you could just carve this on a solid pumpkin. It would be a really beautiful way to create a table decor that's gonna last a really long time, like from Halloween to Thanksgiving. I wanna show you another variation on this pumpkin using exactly the same techniques. This is a little owl face. And I carved it in the same way. I transferred the owl image using a really black and white high contrast clip art and then cut away all of the white space. So you can think about creating a character, you could use that for a dog. I really love the shape of this particular pumpkin and I didn't wanna hold him vertically so he had to stand

and I thought he might be really nice on a table, on an entry way, or actually right by the front door is what I was thinking. So I used a clip art frame, transferred my image in the same way, taped on the frame, did my little pin pricks, and then carved out the entire border, and then just freehand carved the word boo. But you could also do something like welcome or thankful and leave it on your doorstep for the whole season.

Chapter 3 - Carving Variations

Additional designs

- Let me show you a couple other things you can do with your pumpkin. I'm gonna show you another way to transfer carving out the white of your image instead of the black of your image. Then I'll also show you how to do a free-hand design. Instead of doing the pinprick method, which we tried earlier, I wanted to show you a way to cut out the outline of your image. Sometimes this works really well for certain images and sometimes it's a little trickier to do so. Figure out which method works best, either the pinprick or this knife technique. We start in the same way by taping down our image. This is clip art that I got from Graphics Fairy of a bird. You can see here, I've already started. I'm just cutting along the outline. You can use an Exacto knife or I'm using the Exacto knife like tip on this carving tool. This works well for larger shapes. It tends to get a little finicky and you just have to know that it's not gonna be exact. Like, I'm cutting over this line here. That's fine. You'd be surprised how soft the skin of this pumpkin is, so you're really just, you're not digging in to the pumpkin. You're really using like you would cut paper. You might need to hold down the paper in certain areas as you start to curve around the pumpkin. I'm just getting the basic shape of this leaf 'cause I'm gonna go back and carve later. Finish off my birdy shape. I'm very loosely cutting around this. I'm not being very exact with my lines. I just wanna get the basic shape 'cause I'm gonna carve into those lines, sort of like we created a channel. Let's take this off. On this darker pumpkin, especially, this line is gonna be really hard to see, so keep your clip art handy. You can see that the pumpkin oozes a little bit where you cut away. Turning it in the light might help you find out where the line is. We're gonna use the line like an outline in a coloring book and carve away all the shape in between the line. Alright, so here's my leaf shape. I can see the edge here. You really have to kind of rotate this until you can see the line. Once you get it, you've got it. You're just gonna carve inside that line. What's nice is the carved away pumpkin against this green is really pretty, so even though it's hard to see in the beginning it makes a really nice and dramatic image. I'm using the tools in exactly the same way that we used them to create the moth and the owl. The only difference is here I'm carving inside that outline that I created, like I said sort of like a coloring book, but the tools are being used in exactly the same way. For this one, I just happen to be using my V-gouge because I can kind of follow that outline nicely that I created. You can see how nice this carving is against the darkness of the pumpkin. It makes it hard to see the outline but it creates a really beautiful and dramatic silhouette once you do have the carving in place. I'm just finishing up this leaf here. I've been using my little V-gouge the whole time. You can use, like for these areas, you could go in with your wider U tool and get rid of that. I left a little texture in the log. It's like that in the clip art but I also could've just carved this away entirely. I think that makes a really beautiful fall silhouette. This would be really nice on a Thanksgiving table or on your porch for Thanksgiving if you wanted to continue the season from Halloween and beyond. I like the bird motif because it's not specifically Halloween. You can also do something like a vine would be really pretty in this motif or some kind of floral pattern. Clip art makes a great resource for this because you can just get a solid black silhouette that then you can carve away. Carving your pumpkins with print making tools is

actually super easy and fun. It gives you a really sophisticated look. I wanted to show you how to free-hand a design quickly on an irregular shaped, like this guy. Again, this is something I might do to put on a table or leave on a porch, put it in a hall tree or just in a bedroom or something. It's not gonna have a light inside of it. We're just gonna carve into the shape. Using my medium size V-gouge I'm gonna carve a feather. A feather starts with a spine. I'm just gonna free-hand a line that has a softly curving shape. Go back in just to even that out, to start. Then your feather pieces are gonna come off from the central spine. I'm gonna switch to my skinny gouge. Sometimes I wind up cutting toward that center line. If you feel uncomfortable doing that you can also away from that central line. I tend to get better control. You're just gonna free-hand these little feather spines off of that central line. You can get smaller shapes as you get to the top. Usually, a feather has one little kinda wonky, irregular spine down here at the bottom. Carving these feather shapes is a great way to practice using the print making tools but it's also a really nice thing that you can add for a table scape. You could easily create many of these feathers on different squash shapes, to then run down the middle of your Thanksgiving table, or you can cluster these together for a nice little Halloween presentation.

Chapter 4 - Non-carving designs

Paint pens

- Another fun way to transform your pumpkins for the season is with paint pens. I like to use these oil based paint pens by Decocolor and for metallics I like the Krylon pens. This is a gold leafing pen. And we're gonna use these to create some designs on our pumpkins. I've already started on this pattern and I'll show you how to create it. Just prop our towel back there so we can work on this. What's nice about this design is we're just gonna follow the ridges of the pumpkin to create these vertical shapes that we'll then place our arrows in. I'm using the black Deco marker, this is the broad line, which is the largest size I think I comes in. Gives you a pretty consistent thick line. I'm just following the pumpkin ridge. I'll do a little V here at the bottom. You could continue your line all the way to the underneath side of the pumpkin if you wanted. And then I like to free hand these V's. I don't want them to all be the same. If you wanted to make them all the same you could. It could all kind of line up, like this. But I like to have thick ones and skinny ones. So I'll draw all my black line first. And you might wonder why I'm using these oil paint pens and you see I can draw back over my line. If I were to use Sharpie, the waxy surface of the pumpkin would eventually prevent me from drawing. Whereas these oil pens put on a nice thick coat and they dry glossy, which I like also. And you get really nice opaque colors, like this white. If I were to use an acrylic based pen, you might get some beading where the paint won't stick to the surface of the pumpkin. Alright. Oh, let's actually, let's do one of these guys in the solid black. And I can depressed down the tip if I think the paint's not coming freely. You also want to try to make sure that your pumpkin is fairly dust free so if you just kind of towel them off with a tea towel it'll help the paint stick better also. And let's do a black V here. These are a little bit smelly so if you're bothered by the smell you should work with your windows open. Let's go to the white. It's okay if certain colors line up in your arrows. That actually looks more random than if you perfectly place them out like polka dots. So sometimes I intentionally put a couple of colors next to each other so I have a little white arrow next to this larger white arrow. Let's do another white one maybe this time down here. The paint will be tacky for a moment so try not to stick your fingers into the wet paint. It just takes a second to dry. You'll see that this white one might need a second pass. Let it dry entirely and then you can go back over it without lifting it up. So this one's dry and I can go back over this one to fill in some of those little spots.

Gonna add a pink one here. What's nice about these markers is you have such control just like drawing, we're basically doodling on our pumpkins, which makes it really approachable, I think, for anybody, kids too. Sometimes trying to make geometric shapes or anything with a really hard line with a paintbrush and paint can be really tricky to do especially on a round surface like a pumpkin. Let's put some gold arrows in here. It'd be fun to have people use these pens to sign a pumpkin or maybe write what they're thankful for for Thanksgiving dinner. You could also use this to create patterns and draw names on little miniature pumpkins and use them as place cards. And then we'll add one more color to this. I'm gonna leave some of these arrows open with just the pumpkin color, I like that. You could cover an entire pumpkin though with this paint. Got this icy blue I wanna try. See what it looks like. Looks very similar to the white, let's try this teal color instead. Oh yeah, that's better. You continue making these stripes if you like along the ridges of your pumpkin, you can add arrows, fill them in as you like, you can cover an entire pumpkin or just do a portion of the pumpkin like I have. Alright, we'll let that dry. Let me show you how to make this super fun geometric shape. This one comes together very organically, which is really fun because it looks so structured otherwise. It's basically a series of triangles. Let's actually put this under. Alright, so using my black pen to start. Just start with a triangle and then from there make more triangles so this is starting to look like spokes. And then I can do triangles like that. I can do a triangle like that. There's no right or wrong way to make these triangles come together, which is why it's so much fun to do. Looks a little spider webby too, which I like, if you are gonna do this for Halloween. Sometimes it's fun just to have a random triangle coming off. You can also create these little floating shapes by just creating two triangles on top of each other. Could do. They look like little croissants or something. Little origami boats. And then once you have your outline you can go back in and fill it in with solid black. Think I could fill that guy in with solid black. Maybe I fill this one with solid black. This color's called rosemary. It's pretty close to neon pink. Just do a few, you could do all of them if you wanted, but I like to just do a few. Go back in with the white. Maybe white here. Maybe white on the other side of this black one. Let's add some gold. You really don't have to fill in the whole shape. Just however much or however little you like is fine. Using these paint pens is a nice alternative to decorating your pumpkins as opposed to a jack-o-lantern. This way they'll last a really long time and you can enjoy them for the whole season.

Glitter

- Sometimes you just need a little glitter so I'm gonna show you how to glitter a pumpkin. It's actually very, very easy and a lot of fun. You'll need PVA glue, which is polyvinyl acetate. It's a book binding glue. It's similar to Elmer's, but it has less water and it's a little more viscous, so it's gonna work really well for holding on your glitter. A pumpkin. I like to do this for little pumpkins so you can just add a pop of sparkle, but you can do it to any size pumpkin. Some glitter. The fine kind is nice. Then a couple of glue brushes and some kind of paper to work on so that you can recycle your glitter. We're gonna start by gluing our pumpkin. You're gonna cover your whole pumpkin in a nice even coat of glue. You don't want any globs, just a nice even coat. You're gonna apply all the glue. You wouldn't glue and then glitter 'cause you'd wind up with all these blank spaces. You just need to glue the whole thing. That's why we're working on a scrap piece of paper. Your fingers will probably get gluey too, so if you wanna have a tea towel with some water on it next to you, you could do that. Go right up to the stem or the handle of your pumpkin. Once you have your pumpkin covered in glue, set the glue aside and switch out your paper because we're gonna use a lot of glitter and we wanna be able to recycle back into the jar and if our paper's covered in glue, the

glitter will stick to the paper instead. I'm just gonna pour this glitter all over my pumpkin. You could put your glitter in a sugar shaker. That would be fun, instead of in a jar, like the kind you use for powdered sugar if you were gonna do a lot of these. Get the bottom too, I can kinda roll it around. Got a little bit of glue there. It's kind of unavoidable, but. Oo, that looks good. Give it a couple taps and shakes and set it aside to dry. This glitter will go back into my jar. It helps to have a little crease there to kinda help funnel it back in. We lost a little glitter but that's okay. Let's close these guys up. PVA dries quickly so make sure you wash out your brush promptly. Let your pumpkins dry, I don't know, for about 20 minutes. Then they're ready to set out on a table. Here's a little kind of more classic style of pumpkin in the same glitter color. Then I love this little gourd and I painted the glue right up to this naturally dark edge that the gourd had and I used a lighter glitter that still allows the pumpkin color to sort of show through, which I thought was really pretty. These would look fabulous in an antique gold, in a champagne color. You could even try some neon glitter, black glitter, and test out what colors you like better with what shapes and then put them on the table to add a little pop of shimmer.