

The pattern for this picture is made with a slightly different twist from the standard line drawings traditionally used for leather patterns; it includes shadowing to eliminate confusion when transferring the design. The shadowing helps in another way, if you follow these instructions carefully part of your contour work will be done before you make a single cut.

1. You will need reasonably fresh tooling leather. If it doesn't burnish because it's so old and dry don't try this technique because it won't work. Cut a piece of leather slightly larger (10" x 12") than the finished 8" x 10" size. You will trim the work after all the tooling (and embossing if you do that) is done to mount the piece for framing.
2. Case your leather thoroughly. Cut a piece of cling wrap/Saran wrap (it has to be very thin) big enough to pull around the edges of the leather, smooth it across the carving surface and tape in several spots to the flesh side. This helps to keep the leather at a correct moisture content long enough to finish a detailed transfer and gives time to cut the pattern
3. Xerox copy or print the pattern on plain copy paper to use for transferring and center it on the cling wrap. Staple or tape the pattern in two spots at the top edge so that you can check occasionally if any lines or marks in the transferring have been missed. Rest your hand on the paper to keep it from moving as you work.

Transfer your lines for cutting. This leaves grooves in the paper that you can see and feel which, help prevent missing parts in the transfer. Work one section at a time and, here's the twist, ***model the shaded parts of the pattern while transferring the lines.*** There are 2 shades of gray on the pattern, one lighter and one darker that dictate the depth or pressure of the modeling. Hold the paper firmly while rubbing the modeler. The paper will allow the modeler to move very smoothly. Practice tilting the spoon edge and point along the cut lines to show where to bevel. Complete your cutting and tooling using the modeling done in the previous step as a guide for pear shading and figure beveling.

Practice this technique on a couple of simple patterns before tackling something more complex or confusing. I think you will find difficult patterns not so bad after all.