



Tutorial: How to use Painter to be more painterly

Some photographers are intimidated by the idea of turning photos into paintings in Corel Painter because they say they're not artists.

But I believe that turning photos into paintings in Painter is a skill that photographers can develop by studying concepts of art, following Painter steps, and practicing.

For instance, one way in which paintings differ from photographs, generally, is that paintings are less detailed. So if you want your photo to look more like a painting, eliminate some of the details.

After opening a photo in Painter (Figure 1) choose File>Clone. Now you can work on

the copy and leave the original intact. To eliminate detail, choose Cloners for your Brush Category, opt/alt-click on the area you wish to clone from, then paint in the area you wish to clone to with the Soft Cloner Brush Variant. For instance, clone in greenery above the head to eliminate the white flowers, and add red flowers to remove the gray ledge.

First, select the child using the Pen tool, which is a shapes or vector tool. Turn the shape into a selection (Shapes>Convert To Selection). Save this selection (Select>Save Selection). Now invert the selection (Select>Invert), which selects the foliage. Feather the selection 3 pixels (Select>Feather). Save this selection, too (Select>Save Selection).

The foliage has too much black, another unnecessary detail. We'll change the blacks

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Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

to green. Activate the child selection (Select>Load Selection), make the child selection into a layer (choose the Layer Adjuster in the toolbox and click within the selection), and click back on the Canvas layer in the Layers palette.

Select the Magic Wand and make sure Contiguous is deselected in the Property Bar. Click in a black area in the foliage to select all blacks. Next, fill with a green from the Colors palette (Effects>Fill, turn down the Opacity slider in the Fill dialog for a more subtle effect). Deselect (cmd/ctrl-D). Click on the child layer in the Layers palette and flatten, or Drop, as it's called in Painter (Layers>Drop) (Figure 2).

Next, make the background painterly by applying Custom Tile. Activate the foliage selection (Select>Load Selection), and choose Effects>Esoterica>Custom Tile. Choose Paper from the Using dropdown menu. I used a large paper grain by moving the top Scale slider to the right in the Window>Papers palette. In the Custom Tile dialog, with Use Grout checked, click on the Color square and choose green's comple-

Due respect

It might surprise you to know that Corel Painter has been around about as long as Adobe Photoshop, though it has remained a big secret—until now, thanks to Corel's two recent marketing moves.

Many factors contributed to Painter's relative obscurity, but Corel has addressed the main two: Painter's perceived high price and its alleged lack of user friendliness. I list both points in a skeptical way because to me, Painter has always been the Rodney Dangerfield of software programs; it never got any respect.

Painter has more tools and features than Photoshop, yet people objected to its traditional price of \$300 to \$500. Consumers would pay that for other programs, why not for Painter? But okay, Corel said, if you want Painter for less, you've got it. As of April 2003, when Painter 8 was announced, Corel decided to allow Photoshop owners to buy Painter at an upgrade price of \$149. The upgrade is a full, standalone version of Painter with a printed manual. At that price, Painter, with its vast array of painting tools and effects, is a great deal.

As for Painter's interface being unfriendly, it was just that its selection and layer tools worked differently than Photoshop's. Painter actually had layers features before Photoshop—technically, it was Photoshop's tools that didn't work like Painter's! Of course, with so many more people using Photoshop than Painter, it's a moot point. To have to learn Painter's tools in addition to Photoshop's, well, there are only so many hours in a day, said the users who snubbed Painter.

Again, Corel got smart with Painter 8. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. They made the selection and layer tools Photoshop-esque, drastically reducing Painter's learning curve. They did away with the Tools, Brushes and Controls palettes, three decidedly Painter-esque features, and replaced them with the more Photoshop- and QuarkXPress-like Toolbox, Property Bar and Brush Selector. Now Photoshop users will feel like they're on terra firma in Painter.

If Painter is so much like Photoshop now, you might ask, why do I need Painter? Because Painter still excels at brushes, paper textures and artistic effects. See for yourself.



Figure 4



Figure 5

ment, red. Click OK. Set Threshold=129; Blur radius=8; Blur passes=3; Thickness=1. Click OK. (Figure 3).

Here's where the File>Clone you did earlier comes in handy. Reset the clone source (File>Clone Source, choose the original photo). Choose the Cloners' Chalk cloner variant and paint in some of the flowers from the original, and touch up areas around the clothing and hair (see below). Turn on Tracing Paper



Use the Chalk cloner variant to paint in flowers from the original file.

(Canvas>Tracing Paper or cmd/ctrl-T) to see better where to paint the flowers. Use the Cloners' Soft Cloner to bring back some of the original photograph if necessary—around the bow in the hair, for instance—and then paint the area with the Chalk cloner to make it less photographic. Turn off Tracing Paper by unchecking it in the Canvas menu or pressing cmd/ctrl-T.

Make the dress look more painterly by making the color more harmonious with the background. Select the dress with the Pen tool and convert it to a selection. Choose Effects>Tonal Control>Adjust Colors and make the dress greenish by moving the Hue Shift slider. Lower the Value slider a little to make the dress darker (Figure 4).

Simplifying the clothing will make it more painterly. Choose File>Clone. Choose Blenders as your Brush Category then paint over the whole outfit with the Just Add Water variant to blend out the detail (Figure 5). Next, with Tracing Paper turned on, paint with light and dark greens from the Colors palette with the Chalk brush's Square Chalk variant where you see lights and darks in the dress (Figure 6). To get a really painterly

effect, use red—green's complement—in the shadows. Adjust the chalk size and opacity in the Property Bar as you go along. Now go back to Blenders and Just Add Water and paint over the chalk lines to smooth them out (Figure 7). Choose Photo as your Brush Category and use Dodge and Burn variants for highlights and shadows (see below). □



Dodge and Burn variants help emphasize your highlights and shadows.

Artist and author Karen Sperling is the original Corel Painter expert. She wrote the manuals for the first several versions of Painter and several Painter books. She published the Painter magazine, Artistry, and currently publishes Artistry Painter tutorials on CDs and as downloadable files. Sperling also leads Artistry Corel Painter 8 Retreat workshops. Her commissioned portraits and paintings are held in private collections internationally. See more of Karen Sperling's work at www.artistrymag.com.



Figure 7



Figure 8