

Applying the soft, intimate look of a Mary Cassatt painting with Corel Painter IX

BY KAREN SPERLING

Loving treatment

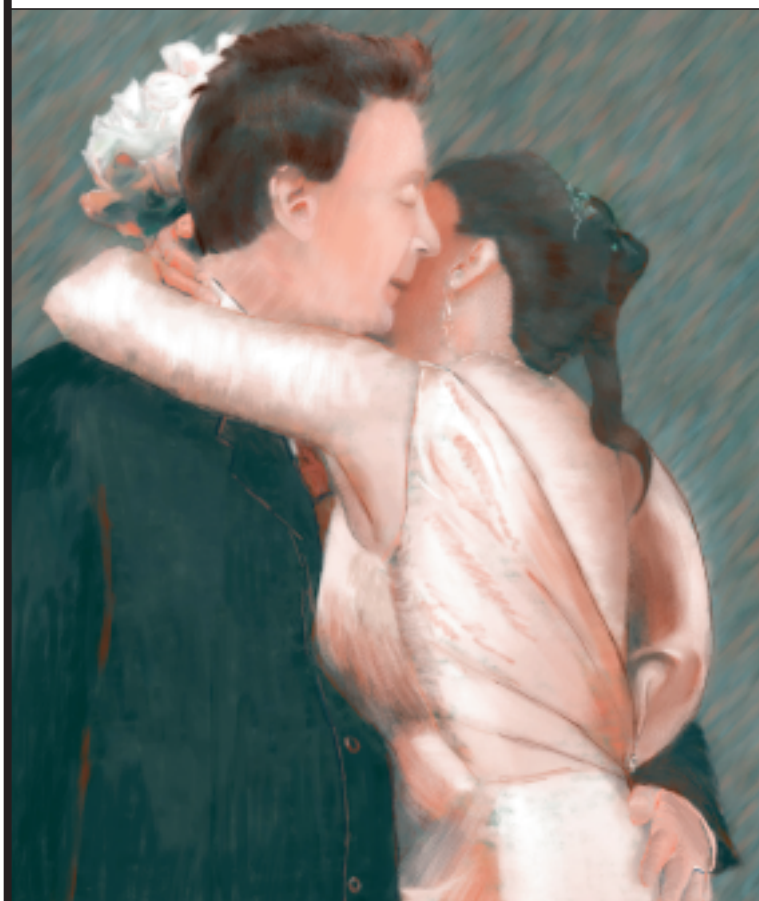
BRING INSPIRATION TO YOUR IMAGES

I photographed a wedding recently using a Fujifilm FinePix S3Pro digital camera with a Nikon 24-120mm lens from Alkit. Then, using Corel Painter IX software, I created a portrait for the couple in the style of American Impressionistic artist Mary Cassatt (1845-1926). Among contemporary artists Degas, Manet, Cézanne, Renoir and Morisot, Cassatt was like a photojournalist with paint, who captured subjects in the midst of everyday activities. Her style works well with today's photojournalistic approach to wedding photography.

The first step in creating my Mary Cassatt-style portrait was finding the right base photo. In most of Mary Cassatt's works, two or more people are touching in some way, so that viewers witness a personal moment between the subjects. I selected such a photo of the bridal couple.

Next, I chose a color scheme. Cassatt limited her color palette to create drama in her images. With a limited number of colors, you can still use all of the values within each color, so choosing red-orange, for example, means you can also use peach, orange and brown. The bride's dress and the skin tones were all in the

peach family, so I chose red-orange, a shade of peach, as my first color. The second color I choose is usually a complementary color of the first, the opposite color on the color wheel. Blue-green is the complement of red-orange, and I thought it would



work well for the dark areas like the groom's jacket.

Like Degas, Mary Cassatt did many of her works in pastels, so that was the look I decided to try. I kept examples of her work in view while I worked to get ideas about how to handle various aspects of the Painter drawing. (Do an Internet or library search for examples of Cassatt's pastels and paintings.)

I used Chalk's Square Chalk as my primary tool for filling in big areas of color, and the Smudge blender to smooth some of the chalk strokes. I didn't blend out all of the chalk strokes because I wanted the image to look like a pastel drawing. For outlining, I used Chalk's Sharp Chalk.

With Painter, you can use shortcuts to speed the work without the results looking like you've used shortcuts. For instance, I edited the photo to give it my red-orange/blue-green color scheme. (I could clone the colors in the drawing later.) To change the color scheme, first convert the photo to grayscale: Effects > Tonal Control > Adjust Colors, and move the Saturation slider all the way to the left. Click OK.

Now use gradients to add the new color scheme.

1. If the Colors and Gradients palettes aren't already showing, go to Window > Color palettes, and Window > Library Palettes > Show Gradients.

It isn't difficult to transform your photos into paintings and drawings in Painter. It takes a knowledge of artistic technique and the imaging software, and practice.

2. Choose Two-Point gradient from the list at the top right corner of the Gradients palette.

3. Using the circles in the Hue Ring and the Saturation/Value triangle, choose your first color in the Colors palette—I chose dark blue-green. Click on the rear square and choose the second color—I chose a very light, almost white, red-orange. Click on the front square again to make sure it's selected.

You now have a two-point gradient that shows in the Gradients palette preview. Select the Left to Right Gradient from the gradients types along the bottom of the palette (the first one on the left).



As you fill with the gradient, the colors appear in the image according to their luminance, or areas of light and dark, so you want to set up the colors in your gradient to gradually go from light to dark. In this photo, the tones in the skin and dress are lighter than the jacket's, so I now have the light peach for the skin and dress and the dark blue-green for the suit and hair.

Next, I add the in-between colors for my gradient, the midtone colors in the image. Click on the menu icon, the little arrow in the upper right corner of the Gradients palette, and select Edit Gradient to open its dialog box. You can add colors from the Colors palette while the Edit Gradient dialog is open.

1. Click on the color bar in the Edit Gradient dialog, which adds a triangle.

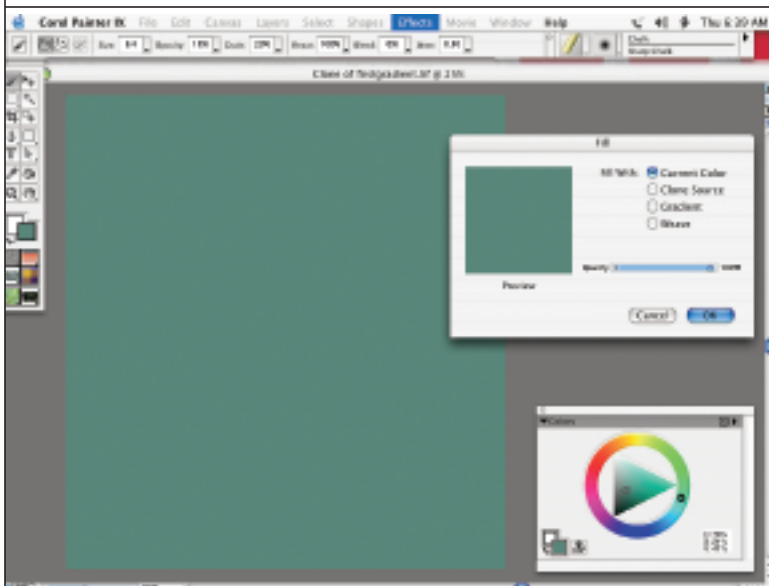
2. Click a color in the Colors palette. You'll have a new color in the gradient, and you can see how it looks in the Gradients palette preview.

You can keep clicking new triangles and choosing colors in the Colors palette.

To change an existing triangle color, click on it and choose another color in the Colors palette. Dragging the triangles in the Edit Gradient dialog changes the colors' ratios to one another. To delete a color, click on its triangle and press delete/backspace. All changes appear in the Gradients palette preview. Click OK to close the Edit Gradient dialog.

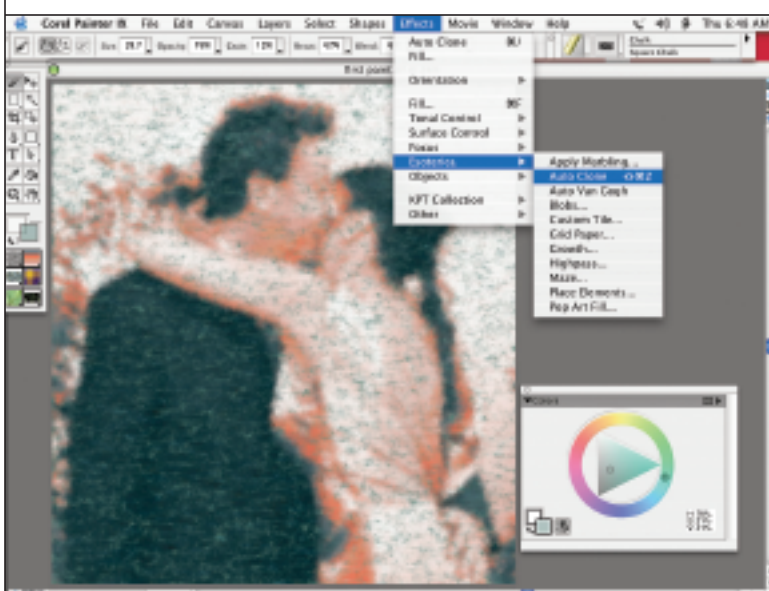
Gradient set, add it to the photo. From the Gradients menu, choose Express in Image. Click OK. The photo is now in your color scheme.

Choose File > Clone and fill the entire canvas with a medium blue-green tone: Choose the color in the Colors palette, then choose Effects > Fill. Make sure Current Color is selected. This will be your midtone color. You'll draw the highlights and shadows with brushstrokes.



Now create an under-painting by cloning. To get transparent strokes and gradually build up the effect, choose the Chalk's Square Chalk variant and lower the Opacity slider in the Property Bar. Adjust the Size slider until the size of the stroke is appropriate. The proper size depends on the resolution of the image file and your preferences; experiment to find what suits you best.

To clone the colors from the photo, click the rubber stamp icon in the Colors palette. Choose Effects > Esoterica > Auto Clone. Chalk strokes appear, lightly bringing in the photo as a pastel. Click anywhere in the image to stop the cloning.



Top: color gradient applied to the image; center: canvas filled with midtone color selection; bottom: Auto Clone applied.

Now clone in some details from the photo. Here, I chose Canvas > Tracing Paper to reveal the source photo, and I used the Cloners' Soft Cloner, to paint a little in the faces and hair. By changing the photo to the colors of the painting, you can clone-in with the Soft Cloner without ruining the color scheme. You're not bringing the entire photo back in, just some of the details.

Here, we'll make the background darker. Save the file and open it in Photoshop, where you can select the background area around the couple: Select > Save Selection. Type in a name for the selection and click OK.

Save the file in the .psd Photoshop format and reopen it in Painter. Load the selection, Select > Load Selection. Choose Select > Feather and feather the selection about six pixels, depending on the size of your file.

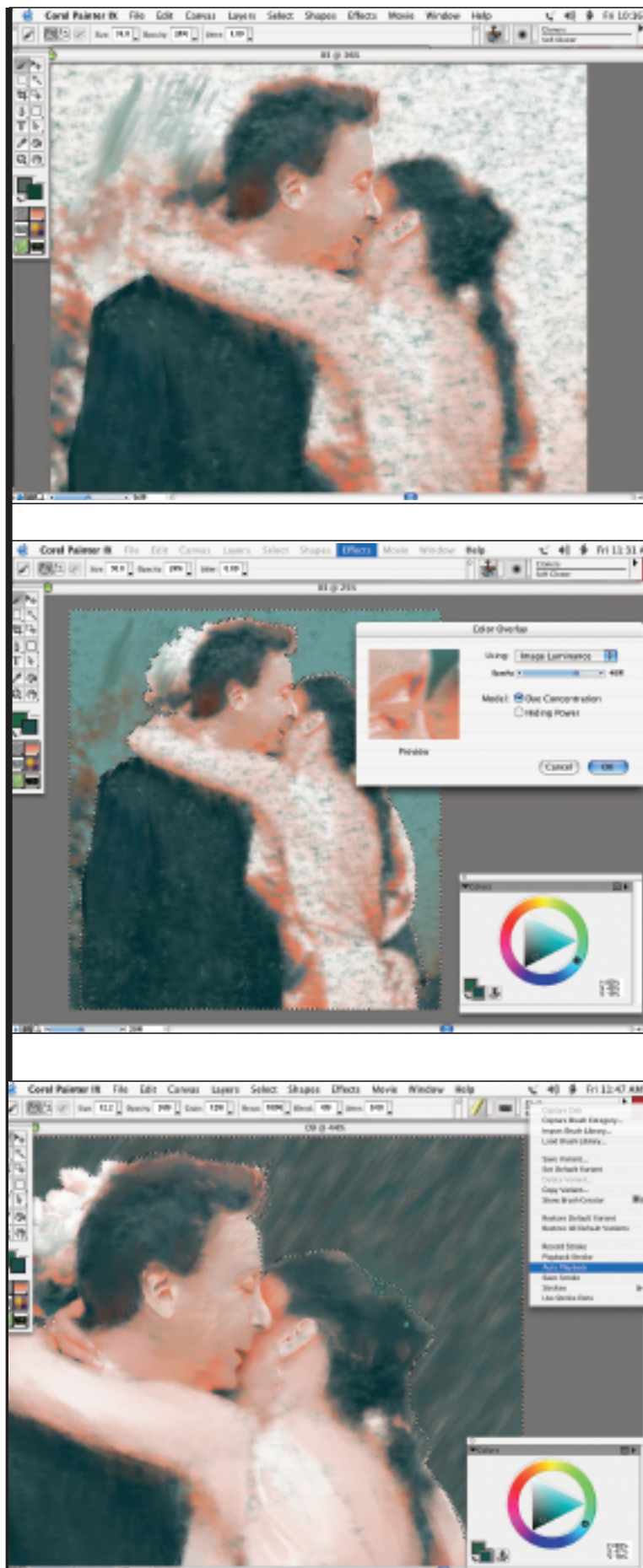
Reattach the image to the gradients photo. With the drawing window active and the source photo open, select File > Clone Source, and choose the photo. The drawing is now attached to the photo.

With the background selection active, I chose a dark blue-green in the Colors palette, then Effects > Surface Control > Color Overlay. In the Color Overlay dialog that appears, choose Image Luminance from the Using menu, keep Dye Concentration selected, and move the Opacity slider to 40%. Click OK. The background is now darker.

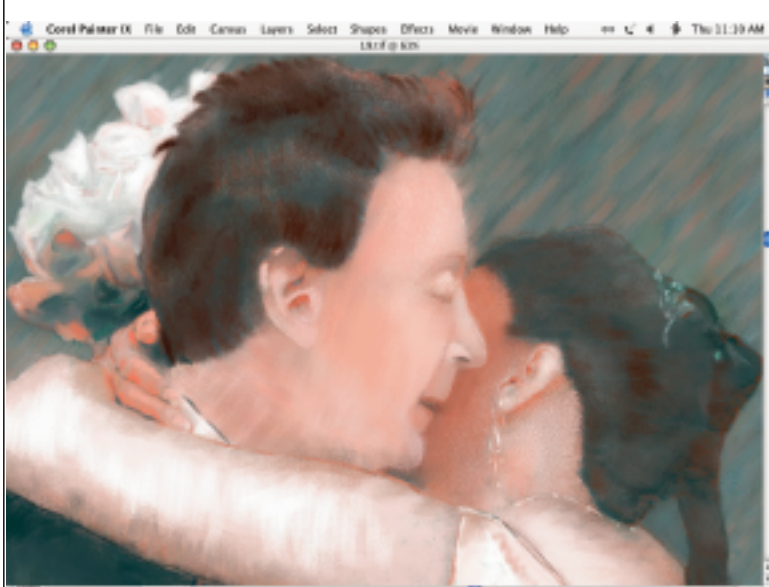
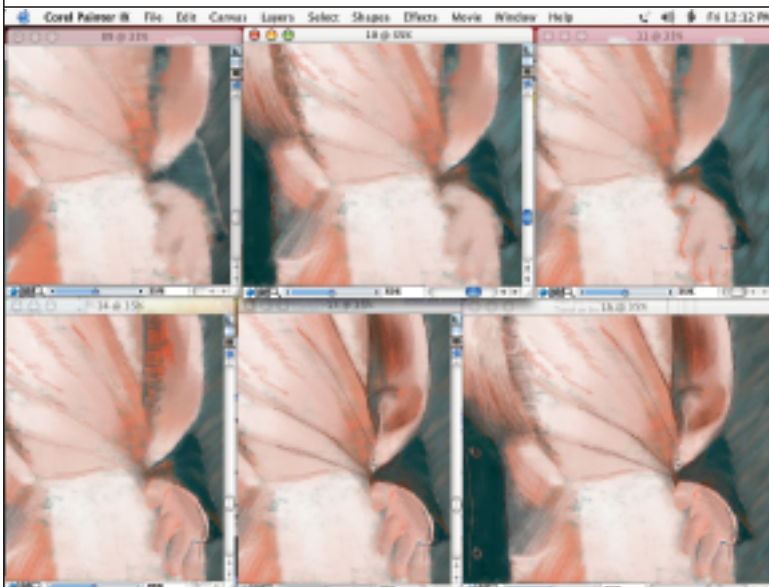
Now you can start adding brush strokes—automatically. First, with the background still selected and using the Square Chalk, choose Record Stroke in the Brush Selector popup menu. Choose a color—I chose a dark blue-green—then paint a stroke in the image. I drew a slanted stroke. Choose Auto Playback in the Brush Selector popup menu, and allow the brush strokes to proceed for a while. Stop them by clicking in the image. Change the color—I chose a peach—and choose Auto Playback again, letting the strokes go a while longer. Click to stop the strokes, then blend them by lowering the Resat and raising the Bleed sliders in the Property Bar, then choosing Auto Playback again. Click to stop the strokes, raise Resat and lower Bleed, choose another color and choose Auto Playback again.

I did this again and again until the background was the way I wanted it. Deselect the background (cmd/ctrl-D) when you're done.

At this point, add brush strokes one by one. I used the Mary Cassatt images and my photo as my guides for my pastel



Top: cloning in details; center: color overlay in background; bottom: background selected for automatic brush strokes.



strokes. Cassatt's strokes all go in one direction to indicate tones—no crosshatching—and the outlines in her images distinguish one area from another.

Use the Square Chalk to draw lines for light areas, such as on the arms and the dress. Use darker lines in the shadows. Use the Sharp Chalk to draw thin lines between areas, such as the dress and the bride's back.

Blend just a little with the Blenders' Smudge tool, so the strokes still look like pastels. Slowly build up the strokes until you get the look you want. I turned Tracing Paper on and off to see the highlights and shadows in the photo so that I could draw them in the painting. I also resized the images so that I could display the photo and the drawing side by side onscreen for reference.

I noticed that Cassatt used less distinct brush strokes for faces and hair, so I applied the Smudge blend more in these areas than on the clothing and background.

Concentrate on getting tones right. I made the bride darker because she was in shadow, and the contrast between her and the groom created drama in the drawing. I darkened the bride by painting with the Photo Brush's Burn variant, and added texture by painting with the Add Grain variant. I painted the bride's jewelry with the Photo Brush's Dodge variant. I lowered the Size slider in the Property Bar, and with Tracing Paper turned on, drew where I saw the jewelry in the photo.

I left the greenish tone in the hair for color harmony, repeating the color scheme throughout the painting. However, I did add some brown with the Square Chalk by lowering the Opacity slider, raising the Size slider and painting. This added some color and texture to the hair. I drew a few strands of hair with the Sharp Chalk.

It isn't difficult to transform your photos into paintings and drawings in Painter. It takes a knowledge of artistic technique and the imaging software, and practice. It's not so much about moving the stylus as observing the locations and relationships among the lights, darks and midtones, and rendering them in the new work. ■

Artist, author and photographer Karen Sperling wrote the manuals for the first several versions of Painter; authored several Painter books and tutorials, and has taught Painter to artists and photographers at movie companies, design firms, universities and professional photography organizations. She publishes the Artistry Corel Painter tutorials and Artistry Tips and Tricks newsletter; and leads Artistry Corel Painter Retreats. She paints commissioned portraits, and her Painter art has been displayed in several group shows. For more on Sperling, visit www.artistrymag.com.

Top: as in Cassatt's images, outlines separate distinct areas; center: faces and hair have less detail; bottom: a close view of the final portrait.