

Dance, Degas style

HOW TO EMULATE THE IMPRESSIONIST STYLE OF EDGAR DEGAS USING COREL PAINTER

BY KAREN SPERLING



Painting ©2007 Karen Sperling

Edgar Degas' paintings of dancers masterfully evoke a sense of place and movement through Impressionist technique. I first studied his artwork with the goal of creating a similar look with a photograph by Felicia Tausig and Corel Painter X. Degas incorporated such traditional techniques as using limited color palettes; making strong contrasts between areas of light and dark; picturing dancers from above or at an angle, rather than straight on; and making interesting compositions of dancers touching versus being separated.



Photo ©2007 Felicia Tausig

I chose a photo that featured Degas-like characteristics from a group of Felicia Tausig's beautiful images (*Figure 1*).

The task begins with a few preliminary steps:

1. Open the photo in Painter and create a clone (File > Clone).
2. Choose a color in the Colors palette for a first coat of paint, the underpainting (I chose a beige).
3. Choose Effects > Fill, creating the underpainting.
4. Choose the Artists Impressionist variant, which applies strokes going in various directions.
5. In the Angle palette (Window > Brush Controls > Show Angle), move the Ang Range and Ang Step sliders to 0°. This makes your

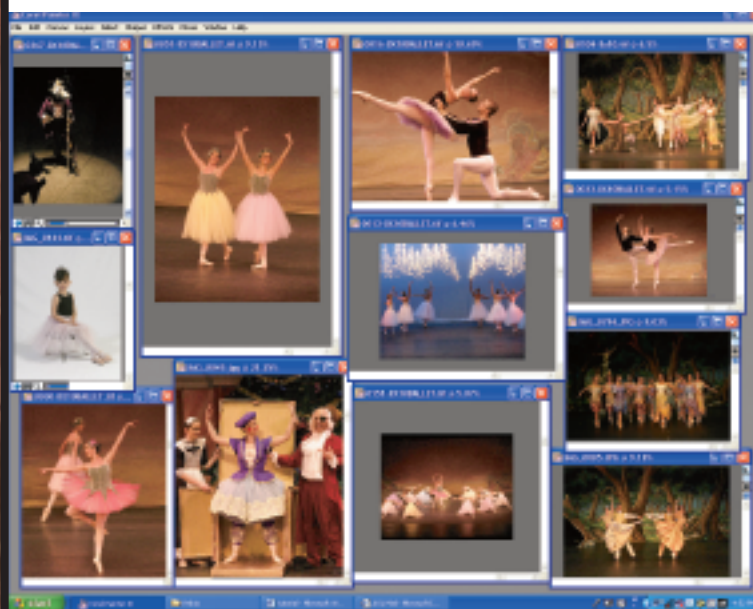


Figure 1: To emulate the style of Degas, I began with one of Felicia Tausig's beautiful images. I chose this image (top of page) because the composition, color and contrast suited the Impressionist style.

strokes go in the same direction, which is what we want for the base layer of the painting.

6. Raise the Size slider a little and lower the Opacity slider a little in the Property Bar, which will make large, transparent strokes to build up the effect gradually. Photographers always ask me for exact settings, but I like to experiment until I see the effect I like.

7. Click the rubber stamp in the Colors palette to reproduce colors from the photo.

8. Choose Effects > Esoterica > Auto Clone. Brush strokes appear, bringing in the photo as a painting (**Figure 2**).

9. To stop the cloning, click anywhere in the image.

The next layer of strokes brings in more variation, enhancing the painterly look.

1. Open the Auto-Painting palette (Window > Show Auto-Painting).

2. Choose the Artists' Sargent Brush and click the rubber stamp in the Colors palette.

3. To create a custom stroke, choose the triangle in the Brush Selector. In the drop-down menu, chose Record Stroke.

4. Paint a stroke.

5. Choose Save Stroke in the same menu and type in a name for it in the dialog box that appears. Click OK.

6. Choose this new stroke in the Stroke drop-down menu in the Auto-Painting palette.

7. Deselect the check boxes under Randomness, and set the sliders as follows: Randomness: 80%; Pressure: 85%; Length: 88%; Rotation: 354°; Brush Size: 75%

8. Click the arrow in the Auto-Painting palette to run the strokes. Run until you have large areas of brush strokes.

9. Click the red button in the palette or anywhere in the image to stop the strokes.

10. Adjust the Rotation, Length and Brush Size sliders in the Auto-Painting palette, run Auto-Painting again, stop and adjust the sliders, and run Auto-Painting some more. This builds up the brush strokes in a painterly way (**Figure 3**).

Now vary the stokes even more.

1. Choose the Scribble stroke in the Auto-Painting palette.

2. Check the Randomness boxes for all the parameters, and run Scribble for awhile.

3. Stop the strokes, adjust the Brush Size slider in the Auto-Painting palette, then run it again to add just enough randomness.

4. Switch to the Artists Impressionist variant, click the rubber

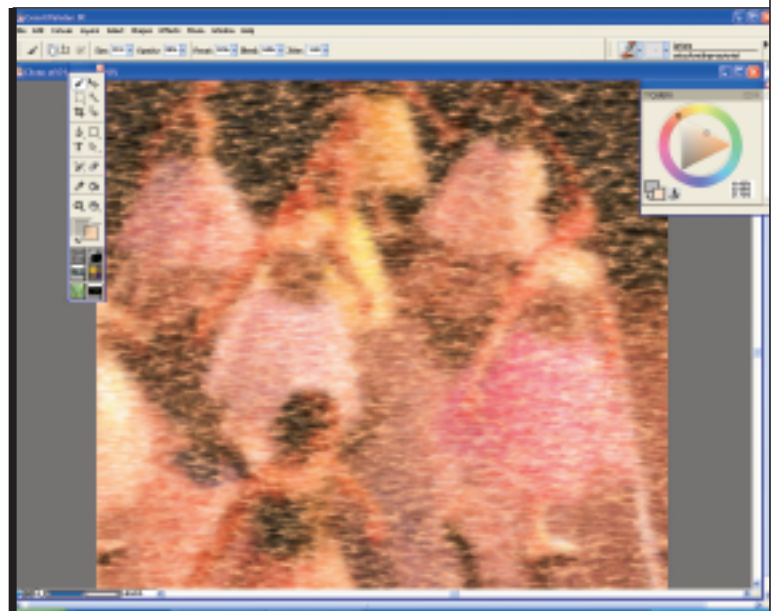


Figure 2: Pulling colors from the original, Auto Clone brings in the photo as a painting.

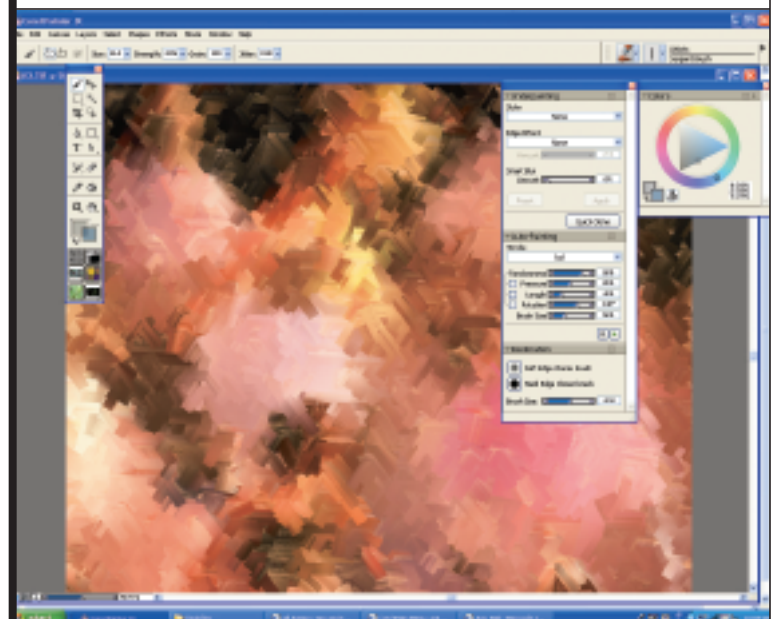


Figure 3: Here we've varied the direction, pressure, length and size of the automated strokes.

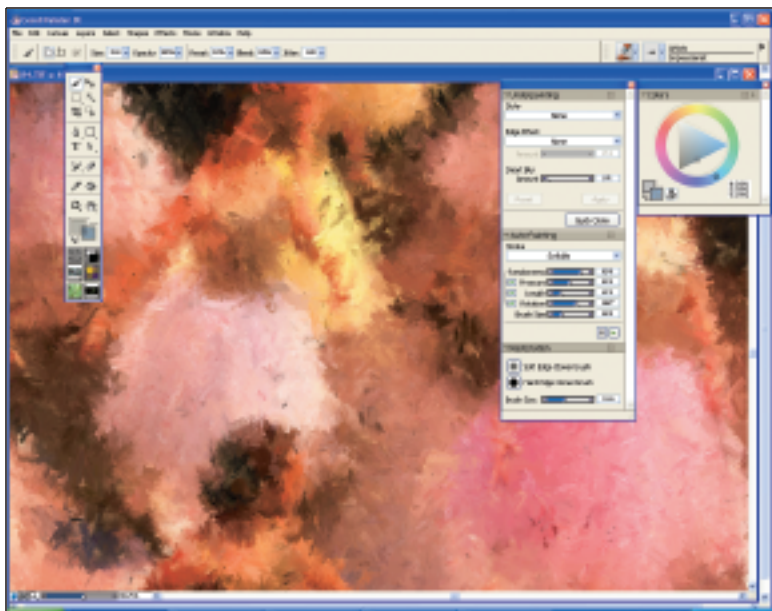


Figure 4: The Scribble stroke and increased randomness begin to bring in interesting detail and shape.

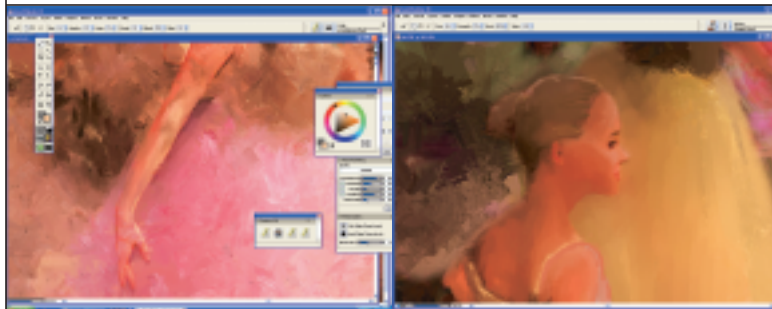


Figure 5: At this point, alternating painting with the Soft Edge Cloner in the Restoration palette and blending with the Smudge blender defines the level of detail in the painting.

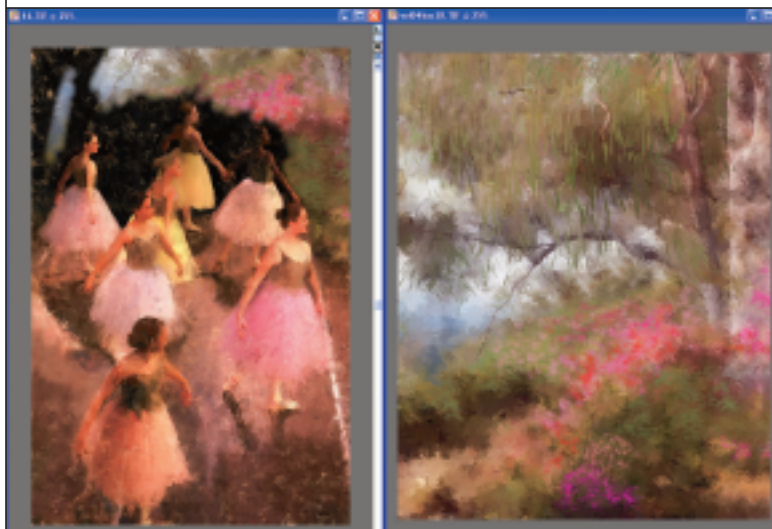


Figure 6: Use Cloners to add detail from another open image file.

stamp in the Colors palette and run Scribble some more, stop it, adjust the Brush Size slider in the Auto-Painting palette, then run it again. Do this several times (**Figure 4**).

Now move from auto painting to your own brush strokes. Here's where artistic decisions come into play. I started by painting some details with the Soft Edge Cloner brush in the Restoration palette, which restores the photo. Restoration's Soft Edge Cloner is a shortcut to choosing the Cloners' Soft Cloner in the Brush Selector. Adjust your brush size to suit the details you paint. I painted in the edges of faces and arms and at the edges of contrast between light and dark in places such as on the neck.

Turn on Tracing Paper (Canvas > Tracing Paper) to see these edges to paint. Turn off Tracing Paper to check your progress (Canvas > Tracing Paper).

The less detail you include from the photo, the more painterly your image will look.

I smoothed some strokes, like on the dancers' arms, by painting with the Blenders' Smudge variant. Then I painted with the Soft Cloner to bring back the photo a little.

Last, I blended the strokes with the Smudge.

This is a back-and-forth process. You paint the color a little, you blend a little, you paint with the Soft Cloner a little, you blend a little (**Figure 5**).

I saved this version of the image (File > Save), then File > Clone, and saved the new version (File > Save As).

I wanted to create a different setting for the dancers, so I chose one of the backdrops from my Artistry Backdrops for Photographs, Vol. 4, opened it in Painter and resized the windows so that the clone of the dancers and the backdrop were side by side on the monitor.

With the Cloners' Soft Cloner chosen, I opt/alt-clicked in the green leaves in the lower right corner of the backdrop. I clicked in the dancers image and started painting at the top of the stage on the right side (**Figure 6**).

Next, with the Soft Cloner still selected, I extended the stage by opt/alt-clicking on a part of the stage in the image foreground and painting it in on the right and into the new background.

With a little observation, and with Painter's auto-painting and cloning tools, I now had a Degas-style painting. ■

Artist, author and photographer Karen Sperling is the original Painter expert, having written the manuals for the first several versions. Her next Artistry Corel Painter Retreat is in New York City, April 23-27, coinciding with the New York debut of her abstract art in a group show at Monkdogz gallery in prestigious Chelsea. Visit www.artistrymag.com for details.