

Creating manga-style artwork in Corel® Painter™ X

Jared Hodges

Manga is the Japanese word for comic. Manga-style comic books, graphic novels, and artwork are gaining international popularity.



***Bronco Boar**, created by Jared Hodges in Corel Painter X*

The inspiration for *Bronco Boar* comes from my interest in fantastical beasts, Mesoamerican design motifs, and my background in Japanese manga-style imagery. In the image, I wanted to evoke a feeling of an American Southwest desert with a fantasy twist. I came up with the idea of an action scene portraying a cowgirl breaking in an aggressive oversized boar.

In this tutorial, you will learn about

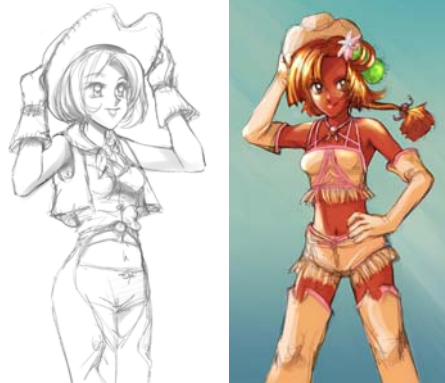
- character design
- creating a rough sketch of the composition
- finalizing line art
- the coloring process
- adding texture, details, and final colors

Character Design

This picture focuses on two characters: the cowgirl and the boar. I like to design the characters before I work on the actual image, so I can concentrate on their appearance before I consider pose and composition.

The cowgirl's costume was inspired by western clothing: cowboy hat, chaps, gloves, and boots. I added my own twist to create a nontraditional design.

I enlisted the help of fellow artist and partner, Lindsay Cibos, to create a couple of conceptual character designs based on my criteria.



Two concept sketches by Lindsay Cibos. These sketches helped me decide which design elements and colors to use for the character's outfit.

Combining our ideas, I sketched the final design using a custom 2B Pencil variant from the Pencils category, switching between a size of 3 pixels for detail work and 5 pixels for broader strokes.



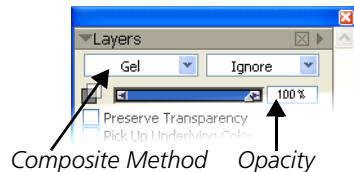
I sketched the final design using a custom 2B Pencil variant.

i To create the custom 2B pencil that I used, start with the standard 2B Pencil variant, and choose *Window > Brush Controls > Show General* to open the Brush Controls palettes. On the General palette, change the Subcategory to *Grainy Edge Flat Buildup*. Lower the brush Opacity and Grain to 22%. On the Size palette, choose the *Pointed Profile* for the tip, set the *Min Size* to 25%, and change the *Expression (Size Expression)* setting to *Pressure*.

i You can save a custom brush variant by clicking the menu arrow (▶) on the Brush Selector bar and choosing Save Variant. Type a name for the variant in the Save As box, and click OK. The variant is added to the list of brush variants.

i The Composite Method setting determines how a layer interacts with the underlying layer. This tutorial uses several composite methods -- Gel, Multiply, Overlay, and Screen.

I often change the composite method and adjust layer opacity as I work.



I worked out a color scheme for the girl based around khaki and pink. I created a new layer and set the Composite Method to Gel so the sketch lines in the underlying layer remained visible while I applied color with the Round X-Soft Pastel variant.



The design for the cowgirl (left) was sketched in Corel Painter with the 2B Pencil variant from the Pencils category. The color for the cowgirl (right) was applied with the Round X-Soft Pastel variant from the Pastels category.

For the boar's design, I began by collecting reference material of boars, including photos and art from online galleries and nature books. Even when working with fanciful creatures, it helps to have a clear understanding of the anatomy of the animal on which you're basing your design. As with the girl, I drew the boar's final design using a custom 2B Pencil.



The boar's character design and color scheme, placed next to the cowgirl character for scale.

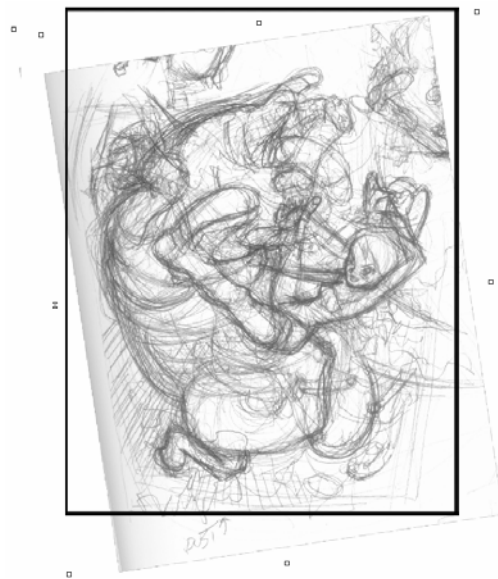
For the color scheme, I studied desert animals to determine which colors were most appropriate in arid climates, and applied the colors with Digital Watercolor brush variants.

Creating a rough sketch of the composition

After the look of the characters was determined, my next step involved working out the composition and refining it into a rough sketch.

First, I made several thumbnail sketches on paper, only a few inches in size. Although crude, these sketches allowed me to establish the picture's composition. I selected my favorite and scanned it into Corel® Painter™ to use as a guide for the rough sketch.

I opened a new document in Corel Painter with a large canvas size that gave me extra room to sketch. Then, I selected my thumbnail sketch and copied and pasted it into the new document. Using the Rectangular Shape tool, I created a box proportionate to 8.5" x 11" to represent the final size of my image. Thinking about how to best present the picture, I stretched the thumbnail sketch (Effects > Orientation > Free Transform) until it fit into the box's boundaries.




I used Free Transform to stretch the thumbnail sketch into the constraints of the border.

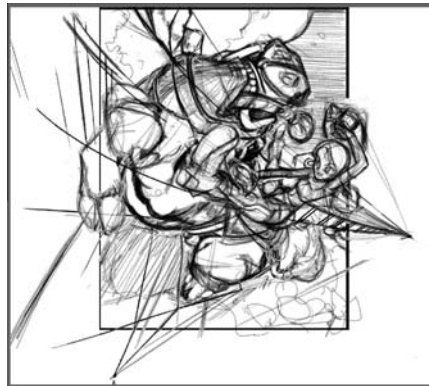
Afterward, I created a new layer for sketching, and lowered the opacity on the underlying layer to 30%. Reducing the opacity made it easier to differentiate between the underlying art and the rough sketch I was creating in Corel Painter.

To achieve the look of traditional pencils, I used my custom 2B Pencil. As I worked, I periodically turned off the thumbnail layer to view the rough sketch by itself. I also kept an eye on how closely

i You can rotate a layer by choosing Effects > Orientation > Free Transform, and pressing Command (Mac OS®) or Ctrl (Windows®) while dragging one of the corner handles that appear around the image.

i You can easily hide or show layers by clicking the eye icon  that appears to the left of the layer thumbnail in the Layers palette.

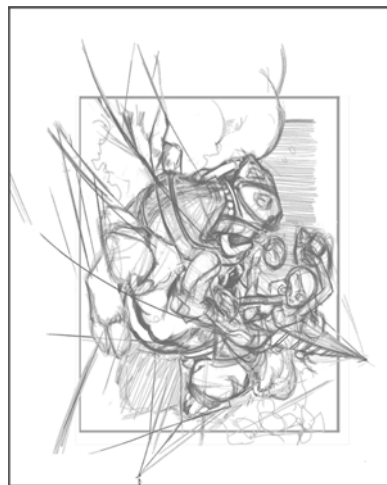
the characters in the image matched the character designs, tweaking the sketch as necessary. For example, I enlarged the boar's snout.



The finalized rough sketch.

At this point, the sketch no longer fit the box. To better fit the parameters, I used the Distort command (Effects > Orientation > Distort) to stretch and pull the image.

i The Distort command differs from the Free Transform command because it lets you distort the image by stretching it at any angle you choose.



The rough sketch after using Distort.

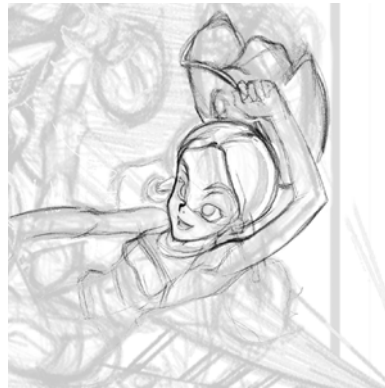
Finalizing the line art

Prior to coloring, I produced a final draft with clean line art which was suitable for painting.

To achieve greater clarity and detail on this final pass, I increased the size of the sketch (Effects > Orientation > Scale) and then created a new layer over top.

i A second monitor is useful for displaying reference material. In this case, I used a second monitor to display the concept sketches of the cowgirl and the boar.

Again using the custom 2B Pencil, I carefully worked through the drawing, taking time to draw smooth lines and to fix any remaining problems in the line work.



Progression of the line art, taking special care to keep the lines clean.

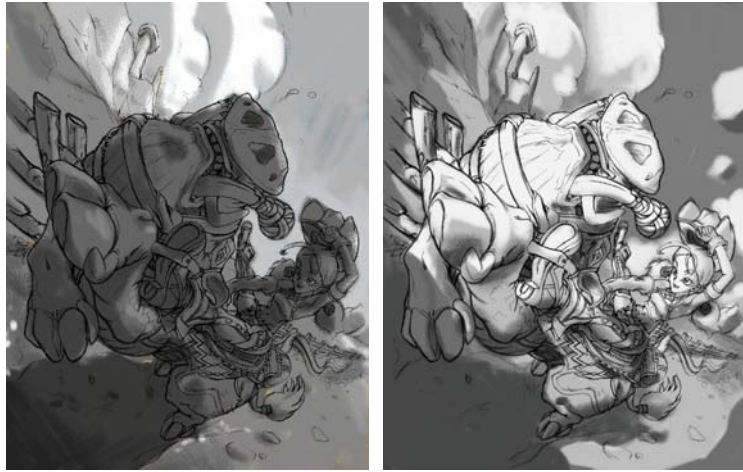


The completed line art, ready for coloring.

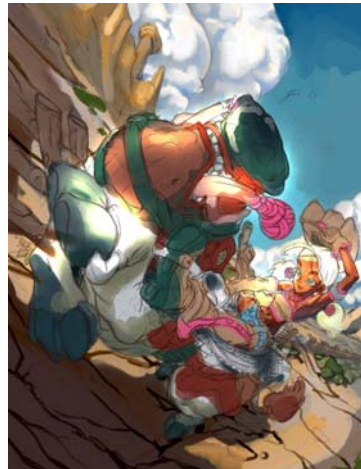
Starting the coloring process

Adding color is the final step in the process. Corel Painter comes equipped with many different brushes from which to choose. I used brush variants from the Artists' Oils category to create an animation-style background, and variants from the Pastels category for the characters.

In a separate file, I applied the Blunt Soft Pastel variant from the Pastels category to create some value and color sketches. I used these sketches for reference during the coloring process.



Two value sketches were used for shading reference. I chose the second version (right) that cast direct sunlight on the characters.



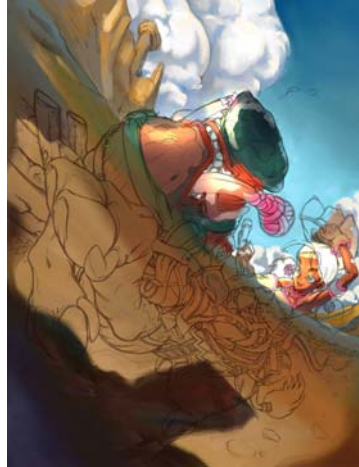
I created a quick color sketch to determine the colors I wanted to use.

i The Multiply composite method combines layer colors to produce a darker color.

Since the final output for this image will be a portrait-oriented print, I opened a new document and set my canvas size to 8.5" × 11", with a resolution of 300 pixels per inch. I moved my completed line art into this file as a new layer and set the Composite Method to Multiply. I then increased the size of the image so it filled the canvas area.

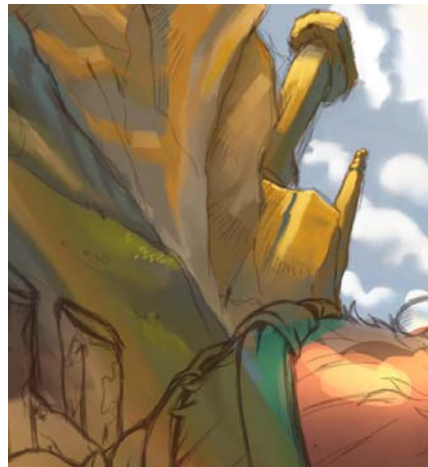
I applied the colors beneath the line art, on the canvas layer. Starting with the sky and rock formations, I worked through the picture from back to front. To achieve a smoothly blended painted

look, I primarily used the Clumpy Thin Flat brush variant from the Artists' Oils category—it yields a nice streak of color that fades as you pull it across the canvas. I set the brush opacity to 100% for general application, and lowered the opacity for glazing and blending.



The sky and ground colors were applied and blended.

Further blending was done using the Grainy Blender brush variant from the Artists' Oils category. Finally, I achieved the fluffy look of the clouds by using the Broad Wheel Airbrush variant from the Airbrushes category.

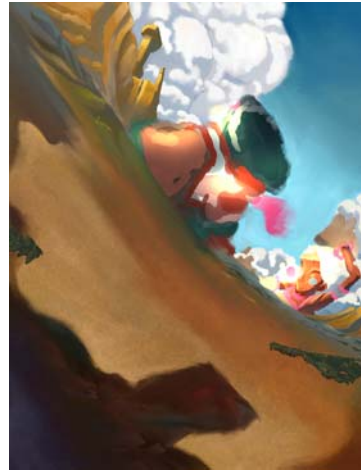


Little dollops of color were added to the hillside with a horizontal stroke of the stylus.

i The Overlay composite method combines layer colors while preserving the highlights and shadows.

Adding texture, details, and final colors

I decided to add more detail to the front portions of my picture. Adding detail to the ground was a multi-step process that first involved creating a new layer with the Composite Method set to Overlay and an Opacity setting of 20%. On it, I added texture by dabbing a light color over the ground with the Sponge variant (from the Sponges category) using a brush opacity setting of 30%. Next, I created a layer with the Composite Method set to Multiply and an Opacity setting of 15%, and applied a darker color with the Sponge.



Texture was added to the ground using the Sponge variant from the Sponges category. In this image, the line art is hidden so you can see the texture more clearly.

i The Screen composite method combines layer colors to produce a lighter color—basically creating the opposite affect of the Multiply composite method.

To further define the ground, I created a pair of layers. The first layer was set to Multiply. Using dark brown and the Clumpy Thin Flat brush, I gestured in valleys of rutted dirt.

i The Depth of Field effect (Effects > Focus > Depth of Field) can be used to soften image areas. I used the following Depth of Field settings to soften the edges of the ground ruts: Min Size 10.3, Max Size 1.0.

I set the second layer to the Screen composite method and used it to paint in highlights. Both layers were then blurred with the Depth of Field effect (Effects > Focus > Depth of Field). I then selected all the layers, except the layer with the line art, and dropped them to the Canvas (Layers > Drop).



I used the Clumpy Thin Flat brush from the Artists' Oils category to add highlights and shadows to the ground (left). I used the Depth of Field effect to soften the highlights and shadows (right).



Full image showing the ground detail.

Finally, I tackled the colors on the character art. Working on a new layer above the background colors, I applied color with Pastel variants. The circular shape and cover method of the Pastel variants let me control the detail work and apply a thicker layer of color—this works well for anime-style characters. Specifically, I used the Round X-Soft 10 variant with the brush opacity set to 30%. I used this variant to block in areas of mid-tone color and then I added darker and light shades for shadows and highlights. For highly detailed work, I used the Pastel Pencil 3 variant.



The Round X-Soft 10 was used to block in the color of the characters.



Details were applied using the Pastel Pencil 3 variant.

Conclusion

With the character art fully colored, *Bronco Boar* is complete! From here, I saved an archival copy of the file in RIFF format, the native file format for Corel Painter, and I saved a smaller JPEG version of the file to use on the Web. This picture will be produced as an art print, which is why it was so crucial to work on the image at the correct print size and resolution from the start.

About the author



Jared Hodges is a freelance artist based in Florida who has worked on illustrations, character designs, comics, and more. Along with Lindsay Cibos, he is the co-artist and co-author of *Peach Fuzz*, a comedic manga series published by Tokyopop about a young girl and her pet ferret. He is also the co-author of *Digital Manga Workshop*, a how-to handbook on digital art covering Adobe® Photoshop® and Corel Painter, as well as a participant in the how-to book, *Mangaka America*, both published by Collins Design.

You can see more of his work at www.jaredandlindsay.com.

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