

Painting photos with Corel® Painter™ X

John Derry

"Smart Stroke Painting empowers people with little or no drawing experience to paint their photos."



On a recent trip, I came across an old pickup truck parked in a ramshackle farm structure. The morning light illuminated the front of the truck, creating a visually appealing subject, so I took a few photos. When I reviewed the photos, I realized that the scene would make a nice drawing or painting.

Corel® Painter™ X provides the solution for effortlessly transforming photos into a wide range of convincing artwork. In this tutorial, I will create a chalk rendering from a photo.

In this tutorial, you will learn about

- choosing a color scheme
- adding a border
- adding color to a border
- applying brushstrokes to the edges of a border
- creating a clone
- auto-painting with Smart Stroke Painting
- adding final touches



Original photo

Choosing a color scheme

I could have worked with the colors in the original photo, but by adjusting the colors, I enhanced the visual appearance of the chalk rendering. I adjusted the colors by using a color scheme from the Underpainting palette. Color schemes map an existing color range to the colors present in a target image.

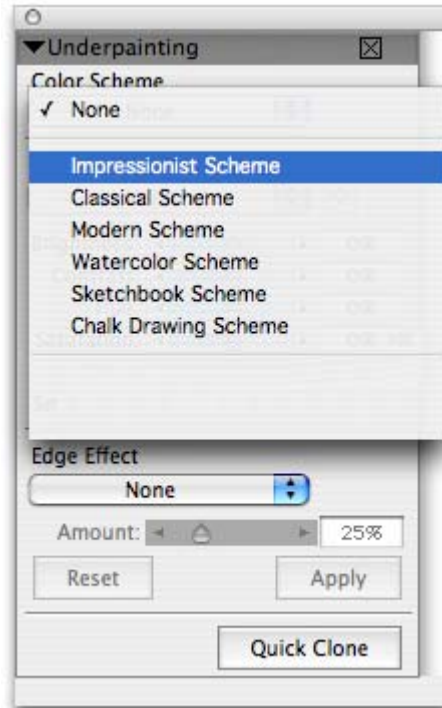
The Underpainting palette lets you test various color schemes. I liked the Impressionist color scheme but felt that it needed additional refinement, so I used the Photo Enhance controls to fine tune the image.



To choose a color scheme

- 1** From the Window menu, choose Show Underpainting.
This displays all three photo painting palettes: Underpainting, Auto-Painting, and Restoration.
- 2** From the Color Scheme box on the Underpainting palette, choose Impressionistic Scheme.
- 3** To refine the color scheme, adjust the sliders in the Photo Enhance area of the Underpainting palette.
I used the Contrast slider to increase the contrast and the Saturation slider to reduce the saturation.
- 4** When you are satisfied with the color scheme, click the Apply button near the bottom of the Underpainting palette.

i You can test various color schemes and Photo Enhance settings by applying settings, then clicking the Reset button on the Underpainting palette to undo the changes.



The Underpainting palette lets you prepare your image before you clone and auto-paint the image.



The color scheme applied to the original photo makes the colors richer and more vibrant.



If the resulting border is too wide or too thin, you can undo the border by clicking Command + Z (Mac OS®) or Ctrl + Z (Windows®).

Adding a border

Many chalk and pastel drawings are rendered on colored paper. This gives greater contrast between the lighter tonalities, like white, and the darker tonality of the paper. By choosing a colored paper that is related to the colors in the photo, any unpainted areas will show through the drawing in a very realistic way, and act as a framing element.





To add a border


- 1 From the Canvas menu, choose Canvas Size.
- 2 In the Canvas Size dialog box, type the number of pixels you want into the boxes in the Adjust Size area.
I added 200 pixels to each of the four borders. The number of pixels varies depending on the size of your image and the effect you want to achieve.
- 3 In the Canvas Size dialog box, click OK to apply the border.
You may need to enlarge the Document window to view the border. To resize the image window, drag the bottom-right corner until you can view the entire border.
The color of the border is determined by the current paper color. The default color is white.



Adding color to a border

I want to change the color of the border so it compliments the photo's color range.

 You can sample a color from your image and use it as the border color by choosing the Dropper tool  in the toolbox and clicking a color in the image. The color is displayed as the Main Color swatch in the Colors palette.

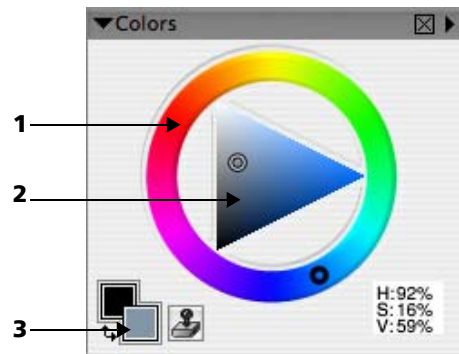
 To avoid color gaps between the photo and the border, place the selection along the inside edge of the photo.

I filled the border with a steel blue color by using the Paint Bucket tool. Depending on the image colors, the fill can flood into areas of the photo. To avoid this problem, use a selection to protect the photo. The selection isolates the border and constricts the fill to the border area.

To choose a color


- 1 From the Window menu, choose Color Palettes > Show Colors to display the Colors palette.
- 2 Click a color on the Hue Ring.
- 3 Inside the Hue Ring, click the Saturation/Value triangle to set the exact shade you want.

The Main Color swatch in the lower-left corner of the Colors palette displays the selected color.



The Colors palette: (1) Hue Ring, (2) Saturation/Value triangle, (3) Main Color swatch

To isolate the border area


- 1 In the toolbox, choose the Rectangular Selection tool .
- 2 In the document window, drag across the photo to enclose it in a rectangular selection.

The selection is indicated by a dashed line called a marquee.

- 3 From the Select menu, choose Invert.

The photo portion of the image is now protected.

To fill the border with color

- 1 From the toolbox, choose the Paint Bucket tool .
- 2 Click anywhere on the border to fill the area with the color you have selected.
- 3 Remove the rectangular selection by choosing Select menu > None.

i If you want to create a border quickly, you can choose a preset border from the Edge Effect box on the Underpainting palette and use the Amount slider to determine the width of the border.



Applying brushstrokes to the edges of a border

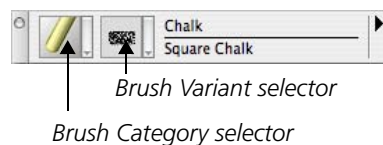
Chalk drawings on colored paper generally have an imprecise border rather than a straight border. Applying brushstrokes to the edges of the border helps hide the photographic source of the image. I used the Square Chalk brush variant from the Chalk Category to apply brushstrokes.

It is important at this point to choose a paper grain. The grain of paper can dramatically affect the appearance of the image.

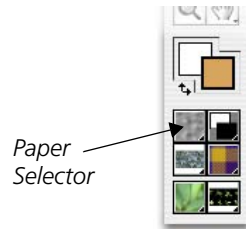


To apply brushstrokes to the edge of the border

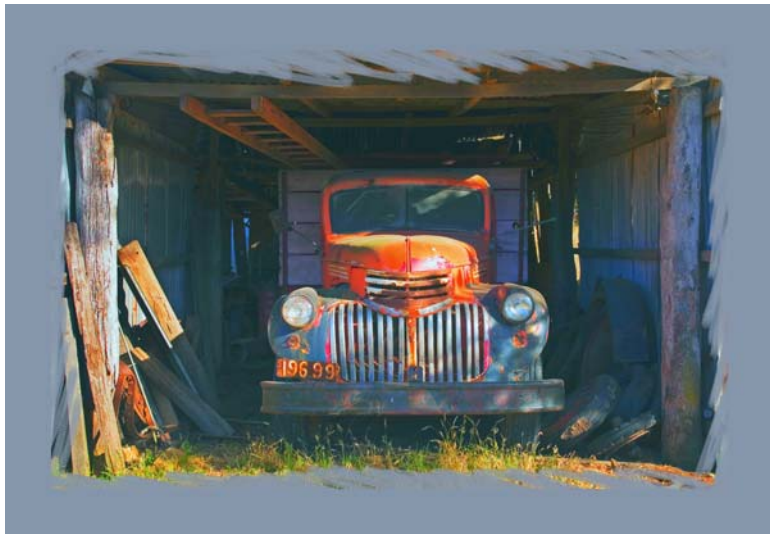
- 1 On the Brush Selector bar, click the Brush Category selector, and choose Chalk from the list.
- 2 On the Brush Selector bar, click the Brush Variant selector, and choose Square Chalk from the list.



- 3 In the toolbox, click the Paper Selector to display the available paper textures.



- 4 Choose Coarse Cotton Canvas from the list.
- 5 Using the same color as the border, scribble along the inside edges of the border to break up the photographic edge.



Creating a clone

Now that the image preparations are complete, I can clone the image by using the Quick Clone feature in the Underpainting palette.

By default, the Quick Clone command creates the clone, also called a target image, with Tracing Paper enabled. Tracing Paper lets you see the underlying source image, which is useful for tracing and hand-cloning specific areas. For auto-painting, I turn the Tracing Paper off so I can work with a blank canvas.

I fill the blank canvas with the same steel blue color that I applied to the border. This lets the proper paper color show through in any unpainted areas, which enhances the hand-drawn appearance of the final image.

i You can toggle Tracing Paper on and off easily by pressing Command + T (Mac OS) or Ctrl + T (Windows).



To clone the image

- On the Underpainting palette, click Quick Clone.



When you use Quick Clone, the Tracing Paper feature displays a faded version of the source image on the new document.



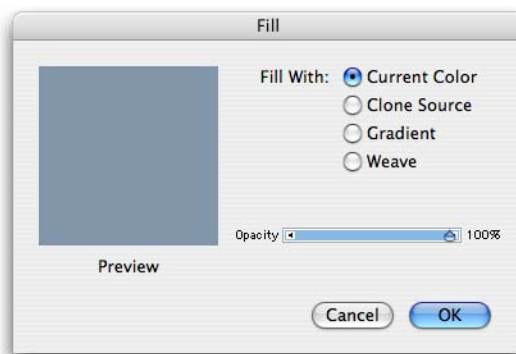
To turn Tracing Paper off

- From the Canvas menu, choose Tracing Paper.



To fill the cloned image with the border color

- 1 From the Effects menu, choose Fill.
- 2 In the Fill dialog box, ensure the Current Color option is enabled, and click OK.



The color selected in the Colors palette determines the color of the fill.

Auto-painting with Smart Stroke Painting

With the clone now prepared, you can move onto the auto-painting stage by using the new Smart Stroke Painting features in Corel Painter X. Smart Stroke Painting empowers people with little or no drawing experience to paint their photos. Brushstrokes are intelligently applied using the structure of the source image.

I used both the Smart Stroke Painting and Smart Settings options. Smart Stroke Painting evaluates the source image and applies directional strokes to the clone. This mimics the manner in which many drawings and paintings are created.

The Smart Settings option progressively reduces the size of the brush. The initial brushstrokes do not necessarily resemble the source image—these large, coarse brushstrokes block in the basic color areas. As the process continues, the brush size decreases and finer brushstrokes are applied to the areas of detail. The result is an image that appears to have been painted or drawn by hand.

You can auto-paint with most brush variants, but there is an advantage to choosing a brush variant from the Smart Stroke Brushes category. Smart Stroke brush variants are optimized for Smart Stroke Painting, and like brush variants from the Cloner category, they are already set to clone the colors from the source image. If you choose a brush variant from another brush category, you must enable the Clone Color option on the Colors palette.

After you choose a brush variant, you can start auto-painting. You can let the auto-painting process complete its cycle or you can stop the process when the desired visual effect is achieved.




To auto-paint by using Smart Stroke Painting

- 1 On the Auto-Painting palette, enable the Smart Stroke Painting check box and the Smart Settings check box.

This action disables the stroke adjustment controls.

This action also updates the Brush Selector bar to display the Smart Stroke Brushes category.

- 2 Do one of the following:

- On the Brush Selector bar, click the Brush Variant selector and choose a Smart Stroke brush variant from the list (such as Chalk Texture).
- On the Brush Selector bar, choose a brush category and a brush variant, and click the Clone Color button  on the Colors palette. I used the Square Chalk brush variant from the Chalk category.

- 3 On the Auto-painting palette, click the Play button .



If you do not enable the Smart Settings option, the brush size remains constant when you use Smart Stroke Painting.



If the Clone Color button on the Colors palette is not enabled, the brush does not sample colors from the source image; instead, the brush applies the color displayed in the Main Color swatch.




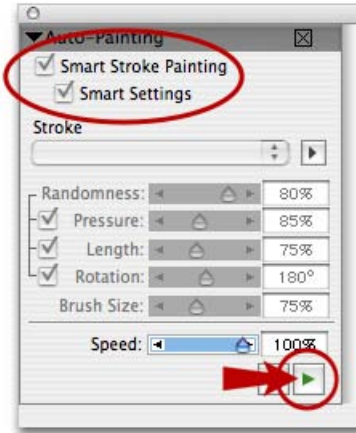
The Auto-Painting palette is displayed below the Underpainting palette. If the Auto-Painting palette is closed, you can open it by choosing Window menu > Show Auto-Painting.



If there are specific details in your image, such as faces, that you want to restore, choose the Soft Edge Cloner brush from Restoration palette (below the Auto-Painting palette), and drag over the areas that you want to restore.

The Speed control can be used to adjust the speed with which brushstrokes are applied.

- 4 Click the Stop button  when you are satisfied with the results.



Adding final touches

I decided to finish the brushwork by hand-blending areas of the image. As a final touch, I added a modest amount of surface texture to the image.



To hand-blend image areas

- From the Brush Selector bar, choose the Blenders category, and choose the Diffuse Blur variant.

I used this brush variant to soften areas at the border edges. This enhances the hand-drawn quality of the image.



To add surface texture

- 1 From the Effects menu, choose Surface Control > Apply Surface Texture.
- 2 In the Apply Surface Texture dialog box, ensure Paper appears in the Using box.

The Paper texture is used to create the surface texture.

I used the same Coarse Cotton Canvas paper texture that I chose earlier.

- 3 In the Appearance of Depth area, adjust the sliders to get the texture you want.

I adjusted the Amount slider (set to 11%) and the Shine slider (set to 0%) to add texture without distracting from the artwork.



The Apply Surface Texture effect lets you add a three-dimensional quality to the image surface so it resembles the texture of a rough paper or canvas.

The final surface texture step is optional. For ink-jet output to a fine art paper or canvas, you probably won't need it. For publishing on the Internet or printing on a smooth-surfaced medium, however, the addition of the surface texture simulates a traditional drawing surface.

About the author



John Derry is a pioneer of digital painting and one of the original authors of Corel® Painter™. Since 1985, he has leveraged his background in drawing and painting to advance the look and experience of traditional art-making tools on the computer. John has a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in Fine Art and is a practicing artist and photographer. He is currently serving as Corel Painter's Ambassador-at-Large. John's web site is at www.pixlart.com.

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