

Digital Art - Creating Art Effects with images using Photoshop

Introduction

Creating digitally enhanced images for an artistic effect can add new dimensions of pattern, colour, shape and effect to the 'Photographic' image. This becomes, then, a new way to express the “what” or “why” of your image. Then again its simple fun.

The challenge is picking the right image. Water and plants work well but people can look awful. It's also tough to select the best combination of brush types and sizes, filters, and effects. Many automatic Photoshop Actions are available that do it for you (note: Actions are not possible in Elements) however, using Actions often much control is lost - and fun, I feel.

Have we left the realm of Photography? That is, “Painting with Light” Definitely, but it is a legitimate form of visual art similar to the traditional painter. I note that painters also interpret the landscape either sitting outside with their easels and brushes or from a sketch or photograph. Artists actually were the first to adopt digital cameras – I bought my first digital camera from Curry's Art Supplies in Whitby!

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Considerations

1. Using a single Photoshop Artistic filter is often not enough to create the effect of a water-colour, sketch or oil painting effect. They are best used in combination. Brush sizes, blend modes, and layer opacity are also critical to achieving the painted effect.
2. “Unpainted” edges or borders make the image appear to be painted on white board or canvas. Similarly applying a texture also adds to the “painted” look.
3. Photoshop's artistic filters are applied more easily on file sizes smaller than 5 mb.
4. Paint strokes appear more realistic if you click and drag using short strokes in the same direction as the objects in the image.
5. In CS (not Elements) the Art History brush is available to “paint” the image onto a white layer to allow you to create a painting that appears to be painted one stroke at a time.

Basic Approaches

Using Find Edges - Pen and coloured wash/ pastel sketch / *Hayes Island Cafe* effect (David Rowley)

Artistic Filters Only - Water colour, Oil Painting

Simplification - Diffuse filter, Blur layer+blend, Buzz Filter, Noise Filter technique (David Rowley)

Creating a water-colour effect using Photoshop (*All versions of Photoshop*)

Step 1

Duplicate the background layer
Blur this layer using Gaussian filter around 1.5
Go Filters menu, choose Stylize, Find Edges.
Desaturate the layer using Ctrl+Shift+U.

Step 2

Reduce opacity of the layer to around 75%
Choose the OVERLAY blend mode

Step 3

Choose the Impressionist brush (*Art History Brush in CS+*)
Use a Soft Round brush with opacity at 20%, Normal mode, and depending on the image, around 60 px.
In the additional settings choose Tight Medium style, size 5px, Tolerance = 0%
Paint over the image in short “dab-like” strokes and the image will blur and colours spread creating the water-colour effect. Experiment with the brush settings if the effect is not quite working for you.

Step 4

Create a new, empty layer above your top layer
While holding the alt key – choose Layer> Merge Visible to create a layer that combines the others but keeps them in case you want to adjust the effects later. On this merge layer you can do some final touches.
(Note: adjustments on layers using a blend mode give unexpected results so a merge layer avoids this problem)

Step 5

Crop the image if necessary
On the Merge layer paint a white, uneven border around the image
Add texture using Filters>Texturizer (or open an image of textured paper into a new layer on top of the merge layer then use the transform tool to make it fit then blend it (Multiply) with the merged layer. Adjust the opacity of the paper layer for the best effect.)

Step 6

Increase the colour saturation of the image and apply the unsharp mask if desired.

Recommended links:

<http://www.retouchpro.com/forums/photo-based-art/3244-tutorials-photo-art-tutorials-links.html>

Using only filters: http://www.davrodigital.co.uk/tut_online2.htm

Hayes Island Café: <http://www.davrodigital.co.uk/tut1.htm>