

## TECH REVIEW

## Painting &amp; Drawing in Corel Painter 11

By JOSHUA PHILIPP  
Epoch Times Staff

Corel Painter 11, a digital painting software, has set out to bridge a gap between artistic mediums and assists artists accustomed to traditional arts to find their way in the digital world.

The program is built from the ground up to mimic the look and feel of actual paints, markers and more—a complete toolset that artists are accustomed to. The interactions of these tools with one another—plus the integrated features with a pen tablet—help make the mediums in Painter 11 work and feel like their real-world counterparts.

The program also uses an interface similar to that of Photoshop, which helps keep the workspace familiar.

After spending a few weeks using Painter 11, I can say that the program is a powerful tool for artists and photographers. Since the program's tools work very much like real art tools, in order to appreciate the full potential of the software a certain degree of artistic knowledge is needed. In other words, just like with the real tools, you'll need some level of artistic talent and experience with various mediums to fully appreciate Painter 11.

There are also some automated tools that can convert photographs into paintings or drawings in a convincing manner—which may prove useful to photographers, even if they don't plan to use the other features of the program.

## A DIGITAL CANVAS

The software is dual compatible for both Mac and PC. I ran Corel Painter 11 on a Macbook Pro with 2 GB of RAM and a 2.4 GHz Intel Core 2 Duo processor.

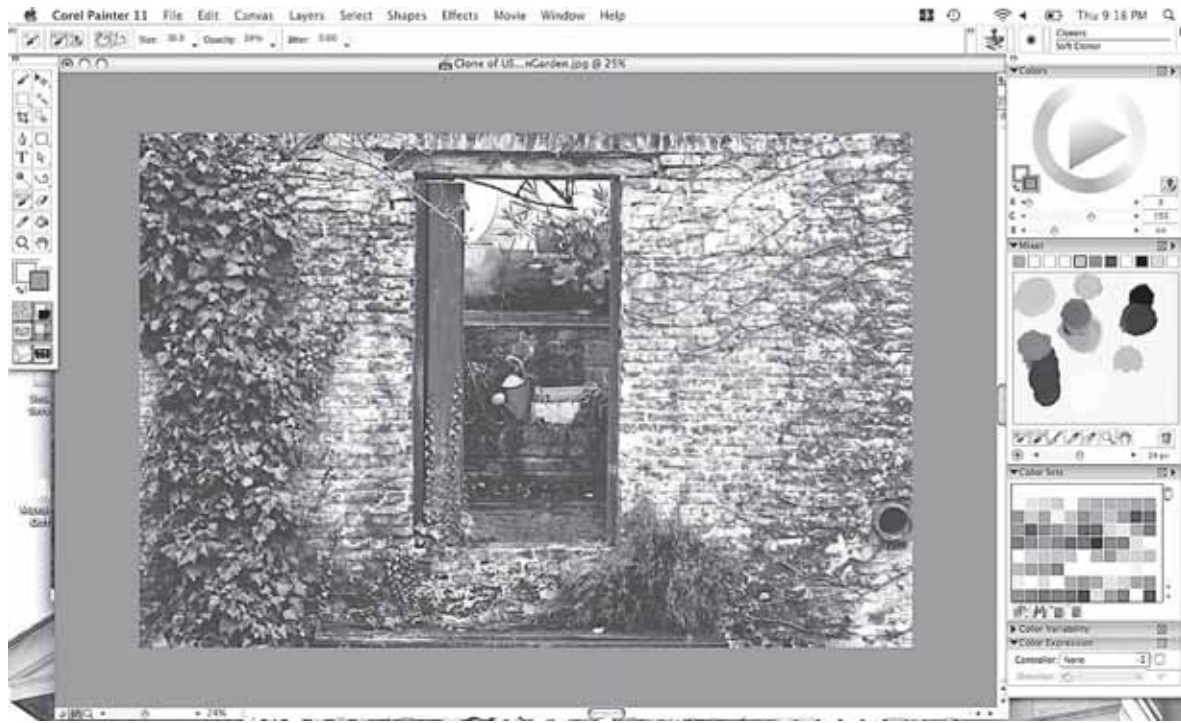
I did some research before using the program and was drawn in by the vivid, often highly detailed works created by artists using Painter 11. Many of the pieces truly resemble real paintings.

Once I started using the program myself, I found it equally as difficult as painting—which is actually a good thing.

Painter 11 is not the kind of program where you can pull a few shapes together, create some layers, and make a work of art (unless you're making some modernist piece). Just as with real paints, you need to know how different colors interact and mix, the effect certain paints or mediums have when placed over each other, and how different paints and brushes interact.

The program has more than 900 different brushes, as well as customizable brushes that can be used. Even the way each of these interacts with different paints, chalks, markers and so on is highly realistic.

The feel and look of each tool will also change accordingly with the type of canvas you're working with. For example, on a canvas with more defined textures the paints will show small gaps for the textures—until you paint them on a bit thicker.



RENDITION: A photograph transformed into a gouache painting using Corel Painter 11. The program offers a vast range of tools tailored for artists. JOSHUA PHILIPP/THE EPOCH TIMES

## THE TOOLS OF PAINTER 11

The true-to-life feel of the tools is impressive, to say the least.

If you have a pen tablet—which I used for this review—the program really starts to shine. Using a pen tablet, rather than a mouse, will not only give you better control over your brushes and tools, but will also allow for quick access to some of the more advanced features of Painter 11.

If you tilt your pen, the function of the tool will change just as if you tilted it. For example, if you tilt your pen while using the pencil tool it will make a mark as if you were drawing with the side of a pencil—giving a much thicker line. If you're drawing with the chalk tools, it will also do this. This function is also highly sensitive, and it will detect a range of tilts between a slight tilt to a full, nearly laying on its side, tilt.

The program also picks up on brush rotation. If you twist your pen on the tablet, Painter 11 will respond by twisting the digital tool. For example, if you are using a wide, flat brush and you twist your pen, the digital brush will twist and paint circular or semi-circular marks along with you.

It is also pressure sensitive. So if you press hard, your lines will be thicker and darker, while a lighter press will give a much lighter line.

Keep in mind though that the tilt and rotation sensitivity features do not work with lower-end pen tablets.

## THE PAINTER'S PALETTE

Color mixing in Painter 11 is very interesting. I've yet to see another program that uses the same method.

The program features a menu called the "Mixer" which works like a true-life paint palette. Painter 11 also lets you choose colors in the conventional fashion—selecting them from a detailed color set or from a customizable wheel with different shades—but the Mixer is more like working with real paint.

Just as with a paint palette, you can select colors and paint them

onto the Mixer. From there, you can mix different colors together to create any color you'd like.

I was particularly impressed by how the colors slowly blended. Similar to real paints, you can see the brush marks and the colors carry from one blob of color to the next. The digital paint on your brush also slowly wears out as you continue to mix with a certain color—also adding to the realism.

For traditional artists, this tool is much more preferable than using the normal color selectors, as it allows you to create colors yourself and in a way that is more familiar. You can also keep your unique color palette if you close and reopen the program, or you can discard it and start anew whenever you'd like.

## THE ADVANCED FEATURES

Aside from the vast range of brushes and traditional art features, Painter 11 also incorporates several features more tailored for the digital art community. Among them are layers, lighting effects, and several functions that could not be used in a real-world setting.

Some artists may prefer to stick with the basic painting and drawing features of the program, but for those who master the other functions, Painter 11 becomes a much more powerful tool.

One of the more easy-to-use features is "Auto-Painting." As the name would suggest, this allows you to quickly turn any photograph into a painting. To test this out, I loaded one of the photos I'd taken, selected the gouache paint tool, and set it in motion. The photo suddenly came alive with small brush strokes moving across it.

The feature will paint or draw over your picture and will move from creating the larger details to the smaller details. The process can also be stopped at any time if you want a more stylized look.

You can also customize the brush size, type of paint or other medium, as well as other features used to render your picture into a painting. The finished prod-

uct makes this a great feature to have.

I did run into some problems using Painter 11. A few times I got stuck trying to navigate the program's broad list of features. This is partly due to the fact that while testing the program I was activating, deactivating, and playing with just about every tool the program has to offer.

However, Corel does include several Painter 11 tutorials on their Web site that teach how to use a good range of the program's tools. I found them very helpful.

## IN A NUTSHELL

I found the program mostly easy to use, although there is a bit of a learning curve for some of the more advanced features. Still, this is not to say it is difficult—with a little effort one can figure out how to use these effectively. Most users should be able to access the basic painting and drawing functions of Painter 11 right from the get-go.

Corel Painter 11 is certainly a program that should be at the top of the list for painters wanting to enter the world of digital art. Since it is tailored to work as closely to real-world tools as possible, the program creates a soft transition for artists.

The program is both useful and effective at what it does, enabling users to create impressive works of art with digital renditions of familiar tools.

WEB SITE  
www.corel.com  
PRICE:  
\$399.00

## SCORECARD

Effectiveness: **A+**  
Interface: **A**  
Usability: **A-**  
Installation: **A**  
Final Score: **A**

## Pixologic Announces ZSpheres 2

By JOSHUA PHILIPP  
Epoch Times Staff

Bringing 3-D animation to a new level, Pixologic announced ZSpheres 2 on August 13. The company is best known for its ZBrush software, which was used to create the surface details of Davy Jones and his crew in the movie "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End."

ZSpheres is a tool available within ZBrush that allows for the quick creation of 3-D models by using spheres that can be aligned and expanded. Once the sphere set is created, it will work as a kind of digital skeleton or "armature" at the heart of a 3-D character.

"It's highly creative," explained Pixologic Chief Operations Officer Jaime Labelle in a phone interview, adding that the new software provides a vast setting for users to experiment with character design.

"It's really about creativity and it's the closest you can have to a real media," Labelle added.

In the new release, available in the 3.5 version of ZBrush, users will be able to see their character in a transparency mode where they can edit the armature through the digital clay. Once the digital clay is overlaid, it will bind

itself to the sphere structure. As you move parts of the structure, the volume created over the top will move along with it.

'It's really about creativity and it's the closest you can have to a real media,'

—Jaime Labelle, Pixologic

chief operations officer

According to Labelle, the new software will bring a higher level of flexibility to users than the previous version. He said the program "allows for a broader and faster range of creativity," and allows users to "have performance without the technology getting in the way."

With the creation of ZSphere 2, the company is introducing some features that will bring new tools to the world of digital animation.

## Dell Unveils Nickelodeon PC for Kids

SAN FRANCISCO (Reuters)—Dell Inc. recently unveiled a line of Nickelodeon co-branded personal computer for children, the first in a series of branding deals intended to galvanize its consumer business.

Dell's move is the latest example of PC makers using design and targeting particular demographics to stand apart from rivals such as Hewlett-Packard Co. and Acer Inc. in an increasingly commoditized industry.

The Dell Inspiron Mini Nickelodeon Edition will come clad in the Viacom Incchannel's trademark "green slime" design, with additional designs based on programs such as "SpongeBob SquarePants" and "iCarly."

The 10-inch netbook has wireless Internet access, weighs less than three pounds and comes loaded with entertainment and educational content. It will also feature a personalized user interface with Nickelodeon-branded desktop wallpaper and icons, and easy access to the channel's online content.

Michael Tatelman, vice president of global consumer sales and marketing for Dell, said the Nickelodeon netbook is just the start of its co-branding effort as it pushes into areas such as college students and pro sports.

"The PC, like the smartphone, has become a 21st century symbol of self-expression. People are identified by what they carry, and people identify with what they carry," he said.

Leigh Anne Brodsky, president of Nickelodeon and Viacom consumer products, said the "sweet

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spot" for the PC was the so-called "tween" market.

"This really is not a toy. This is the real deal," she said.

The world's No. 2 PC maker did not announce pricing for the netbook, which will be available in October in the United States through Dell's online store, and at Wal-Mart Stores Inc. outlets and Walmart.com.

The Nickelodeon PC is based on Dell's Inspiron Mini 10v, which starts at \$300.

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