



OTTAWA

PC NEWS

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PRODUCT REVIEW

Corel Painter X

by Jenni Boles

I was very excited when asked to review Corel Painter X. I was already a regular user of Photoshop for photo manipulation, and occasionally used some of the artistic features to convert my photos to watercolour or sketch. I figured that Painter would provide even greater options. I was not disappointed. Painter simulates actual watercolour and oil paints, ink, pencil, charcoal and pastel in an electronic form. I found it quite fun to watch the watercolour actually blend and then soak into the "paper". Although I have played around with the basic components of the program, I know that I haven't even begun to scratch the surface of what Painter can do.

The following review is based on a combination of personal observations as I worked with Painter, following examples provided by "Corel Painter Official Magazine," and descriptions of features from Corel itself. Since I am a new user of this software, I also relied on other reviews for comparisons of Painter X with its previous versions. I chose topics in which a wide variety of reviewers seemed strongly unanimous in their opinions.

First of all, Painter should be used with a graphics pad and pen. A mouse doesn't really give you much control as you paint. Bruce Dorn, a seasoned digital painter, very aptly described the use of a mouse as "painting with a potato".

Sadly, I am currently in the spud category.

The major attributes of Painter are RealBristle and the Mixer palette. RealBristle simulates the various bristles used in different brushes. You can select the overall shape of the brush tip, bristle length, rigidity, and fanning. These bristles are apparently quite superior to what was offered in previous versions of Painter. The brushes combined with the palette's ability to mix colours make Painter a very cool experience. By dipping your brush into 'pots' and dabbing colour onto the palette, you can then mix exactly the hue you want. And once the colour is just right, you can use as much of it as you like - the palette will never run dry. Loading multiple colours onto a brush and applying to the "canvas" with very smooth results further blurs the line between traditional and digital painting (no pun intended). You could spend hours, days, and even years experimenting with the various effects achieved with the brushes and palette.

Two other options new to Painter X are the Layout Grid and the Divine Proportion Grid. The Layout Grid divides the canvas into nine equal areas (like a tic-tac-toe square) that comply with the common Rule of Thirds for image composition. Line up your subject, or subjects, on one or more of the four spots where the vertical and horizontal

lines cross. This should improve the aesthetics of your image. The Divine Proportion (also known as the Golden Ratio) has also been recognized for centuries as inherently pleasing to the eye and was recently made more popular when spotlighted in "The Da Vinci Code". The Divine Proportion tool overlays a pattern of lines and curves on your canvas to help you arrange your composition according to this theory.

The function that I tend to use most as a complete novice of digital art is Auto-Painting. I find this most similar to Photoshop. Auto-Painting allows you to automatically apply a hand-painted look to digital photos using Smart Stroke. Painter is certainly far more advanced than Photoshop in that you have the ability to adjust the settings to apply brush strokes with varying

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Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, February 13th, 2008**

February Raffle

At the February general meeting, thanks to the generosity of Corel, we will be raffling off a copy of **Paint Shop Pro Photo X2**. If you have a digital camera, this package can help you make the most of your photos. It includes tons of easy automatic fixes as well as amazing depth with precision editing tools. If you have been making do with the free program that came with your camera, see what a powerful, yet easy-to-use tool like Paint Shop Pro Photo X2 can do to bring out the best in your photos. Valued at \$90.

Tickets are still *only* \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten. What a bargain!

Coming Up...

February 13, 2008

Topic: Monitor's Tax Preparation Update

Speaker: Maggie James, MONiTOR Magazine.

Every February, our local "Monitor Magazine" publishes their review and comparison of the current crop of tax preparation software. Taxpayers in the area have come to rely on this feature before deciding which software to use. This year, we are fortunate to hear all about the latest and greatest features of both web-based and desktop tax software.

Maggie James is an Ottawa writer who focuses on the impact of technology on society and the family. She has contributed to MONiTOR Magazine for more than a decade and is currently Assistant Editor. She is also MONiTOR's User Group Community Coordinator.

January Prize Winners

Our door prize winner of a Microsoft Vista Book was **Ray Martineau**.

The four raffle winners, each taking home a copy of the *McAfee Internet Security Suite*, were:

**Allen McNamara,
Mark Merriman, Frank Rogers
and Bob Whitla.**

2008 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, February 13 th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the Canada Museum of Science and Technology , 1867 St. Laurent Blvd. http://www.science-tech.nmstc.ca/english/index.cfm
Beginners' SIG	Wednesday, February 13 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
IT-Pro SIG	Wednesday, February 13 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Linux SIG	Wednesday, February 13 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
PIG SIG (Wing SIG West)	Wednesday, February 13 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Chances "R" restaurant, Baseline Rd. at Woodroffe Ave. (College Square Shopping Centre)
Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)	Wednesday, February 13 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Liam Maguire's, St. Laurent Blvd. at Innes Rd.

Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting).

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

In reflecting upon the activities of 2007 with the OPCUG, I think that it was a very successful year for the Group.

Thanks to Bob Gowan's hard work we had terrific speakers at our meetings, ranging from product focused presentations through services such as the National Capital Freenet. May was the most fascinating meeting for me personally, with Dr. Michael Geist talking to us about copyright in the Internet age. Always entertaining, Harley Bloom from Bloom MicroTech wrapped up the year with his 9th annual Christmas Gift Show.

At the annual BBQ in June, we decided to do something a little different - we had it catered by the Lone Star. There was plenty of excellent food (fajitas and BBQ chicken) and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.

Part of the reason membership dues have remained unchanged in 18 years is because of our raffles. At all 10 meetings in 2007, the raffle prizes were donated by various groups within Microsoft, which raised \$1,388. Many thanks to Microsoft, who has always been there to support the OPCUG.

Alan German was - by far - the Group's most prolific contributor to the newsletter, with 14 review articles over the course of the year! The contest for the Best Newsletter Article only attracted two participants last year - Peter Hawkins (the winner) and Micheline Johnson. Although there is no contest this year, Brigitte is always looking for new material for the newsletter. Why not give it a whirl?

The OPCUG held its 5th workshop in November. With the hard work of many individuals within the Group, it was a great success. You can see the summary from the evaluation forms at <http://opcug.ca/public/history/workshop/2007/eval.html>. A big thanks to the sponsors who promoted the workshop (Glenn Lisle of Monitor Magazine and Bert Schopf of Blackbird Communications) and donated door prizes (McAfee, Microsoft, O'Reilly Media, Computer Supply House and Ubuntu.) We had so many prizes that every attendee went home with a prize!

I hope 2008 is as successful as 2007 was. Think about ways in which you can help make that happen. You could give a mini presentation on your favourite software, write an article for the newsletter, help out at meetings or at the June BBQ, or find an interesting speaker for a general meeting. And, if nothing else, please continue to support the Group by being part of this great community of enthusiasts.

Chris Taylor
President, OPCUG



FINANCIAL REPORT



Ottawa PC Users' Group, Inc.
 3 Thatcher Street
 Ottawa, ON K2G 1S6
 Web Site: <http://opcug.ca>

Balance Sheet, 2007

Assets

Current Assets

1000	Cash Account (TDCT)	2,006.05
1100	Investment Account (ING)	19,423.61
1200	Membership float	40.00

Total Assets **21,469.66**

Equity

Owner Equity

OPCUG, Capital
 December 31, 2006 21,770.17

Total revenue 6,667.03

Total expenses 6,967.54

Net income **-300.51**

OPCUG, Capital
 December 31, 2007 21,469.66

Total Equity **21,469.66**

FINANCIAL REPORT



Ottawa PC Users' Group, Inc.
 3 Thatcher Street
 Ottawa, ON K2G 1S6
 Web Site: <http://opcug.ca>

Income Statement, 2007

Revenue	2007 (\$)	2006 (\$)
2100 Bank Interest (ING)	704.03	570.34
2200 Membership Income	3,675.00	4,700.00
2300 Raffle Income	1,388.00	1,154.00
2400 Merchandise Income	0.00	0.00
2500 Workshop Income	875.00	1,725.00
2900 Miscellaneous Income	25.00	0.00
Total revenue	6,667.03	8,149.34
Expenses		
3100 PUB II Expense	1,311.01	1,257.16
3200 Newsletter Expense	2,441.12	3,370.08
3300 Office Supplies Expense	11.02	5.46
3400 Bank Charges	69.44	70.24
3500 Barbecue Expense	2,147.27	258.20
3600 Facility Rental	200.00	200.00
3700 Workshop Expense	719.29	864.97
3800 Merchandise Expense	0.00	0.00
3900 Miscellaneous Expense	68.39	0.00
Total operating expenses	6,967.54	6,026.11
Net income	-300.51	2,123.23

Painter X *(Continued from page 1)*

widths, lengths, and pressures as it follows the forms of the original photo. However, rather than applying the strokes in a completely random way with haphazard results, Painter uses edge detection to place the strokes intelligently to the contours and discrete areas in your photo.

In addition to its artistic components, Painter X has a good range of photo-editing tools and filters and can be used for retouching photos. Colour palettes can also be extracted directly from a photo. Painter's format is conventional, with a menu across the top, toolbox down the left-hand side and palettes down the right.

To sum up, this latest version of Painter apparently exceeds its predecessors with its bristles, ability to mix paints, and new proportion grids. Although it is reportedly faster than past editions, one downside of Painter X is that it will lag if you are using higher resolution images. You may need to keep your canvas resolution and brush sizes low in order to avoid major lagtime. Despite this, I certainly recommend Painter X, whether you're painting from scratch or starting with a photo. It is suitable (and fun!) for both amateurs and professionals.

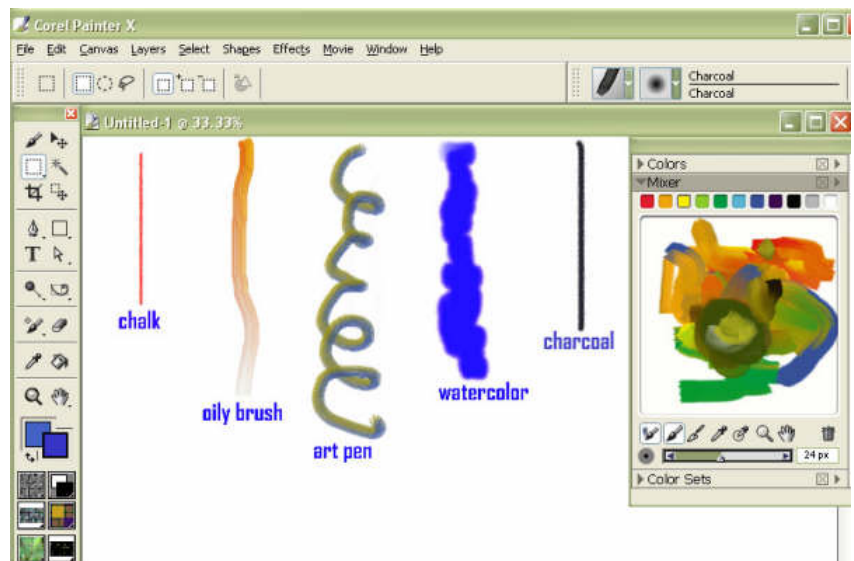
Bottom Line:

Painter X is the latest version of the software from Corel. It currently retails for \$379, \$199 for an upgrade, or \$119 for the educational edition. Further information on the product, and a free trial version are available at <http://www.corel.ca>.



Figure 1 shows a progression from photo, to Auto-Paint (using a sketchbook color scheme and Smart Blur), to the manual use of a blender brush to create a more impressionistic look.

Figure 2 shows just a few of the numerous effects tools available in Painter X. Note that multiple colors can be applied in a single stroke by using the Mixer with an oil brush or pen.



ARTICLE

Browsing Some Firefox Add-Ons by Alan German

At OPCUG's fall workshop I compared some of the features of Vista and Linux. One of the things I noted was that the default browser bundled with Ubuntu Linux was Firefox. However, I bemoaned the fact that, while Firefox offers tabbed browsing, Internet Explorer 7's version of this specific feature was superior for my application.

In particular, IE7 displays a partial tab that, when clicked, launches a blank tab. But, the killer feature for me is that IE7 allows me to specify that this new tab should display my default web page. The reason for this is that I have a custom HTML page, stored locally on my hard drive, that contains a menu of the web sites that I use most frequently, with a hot link to each of the sites. So, it's very convenient to have these links immediately available when I open a new tab.

Now, obtaining a new tab in Firefox isn't hard. One can use the menu, File – New Tab, or the Ctrl-T keyboard shortcut. The problem for me is that there is no way to natively make Firefox open a specific page in this new tab. It just opens a blank page.

After the workshop, I started thinking about this problem. Surely others had the same issues and, if so, had someone developed a solution? I knew that a wide variety of “add-ons” existed for Mozilla products, having previously used one of these for the Thunderbird mail program. So, I wondered if there might be a suitable add-on for Firefox to accomplish my specific purpose.

A little searching with Google took me to a Firefox extension that showed some promise. “New Tab Button on Tab Bar 2.0” (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/1456>) adds a button to the tab bar. And, when clicked, this button opens up a new tab. But, Firefox still doesn't let the user specify a web page to be opened on this blank tab.

So, I sent an E-mail message to Mike Goodspeed, the add-on's author, asking if he had considered extending his program code “...so that each new tab can be configured to open a specific page (like Internet Explorer 7)?”

I received a same-day reply that I found both interesting and informative. Of particular interest was Mike's minimalist programming philosophy: “I try really hard to keep out any

options... Plus, I see this extension as trivial enough to be one feature and one feature alone.” But, he was also gracious enough to provide the information necessary to solve my problem: “However, that's not to say you can't do what you want. Try this extension:

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/777>”

The latter turned out to be “New Tab Homepage 0.3” by Ben Basson. As this author states, this add-on to Firefox “...loads your homepage when you open a new tab. If you have multiple homepages, the first is chosen.”

So, having installed the two add-ons, I now have the best of both worlds – Mike Goodspeed's button to quickly bring up a new tab – and Ben Basson's routine to load my menu page when I hit the new-tab button.

Bottom Line:

Firefox 2 (Open-source)

<http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/>

New Tab Button on Tab Bar 2.0, Mike Goodspeed
<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/1456>

New Tab Homepage Version 0.3, Ben Basson
<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/777>



No I am NOT addicted!!!



OTTAWA PC NEWS

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July and August. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members.

Member participation is encouraged. If you would like to contribute an article to Ottawa PC News, please submit it to the newsletter editor (contact info below). Deadline for submissions is three Sundays before the next General Meeting.

Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Canada Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. and Special Interest Groups go until 10 p.m.

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Editor's note:

Due to insufficient space in this issue, the second half of "Who's on First" for the 21st Century will appear in the next issue of Ottawa PC News.

Reduce, Re-use, Recycle

Bring your old computer books, software, hardware, and paraphernalia you want to GIVE AWAY to the General Meetings, and leave them at the table near the auditorium's entrance. Please limit magazines to publication dates of less than two years old.

You may TAKE AWAY any items of use to you. Stuff left over at the end of the meeting will be sent to... the recycle bin.

