



Kerstin Upmeyer
Graphic Design Faculty
academy.edu

“What does it take to get a good job? What if I’m not sure what type of job I want? Can I, or should I consider working for myself?” As a rising, creative professional, you’re likely to ask yourself many questions. Sometimes it’s tough to know where to go for answers. As both a seasoned instructor in a design college and a professional in the industry who keeps her ear to the ground, I’ll do my best to provide you with the straight scoop when it comes to this crazy, yet fulfilling world of design.

For this edition, I’ve chosen to respond to a question from a graphic designer and Academy Alumni. She asks:

“Do I have to have a gimmick for my portfolio, or can I get by with just a clean simple book full of good work?”

My instinctive response is to shout out, “of course!” After all, I remember when I graduated; “cough”, the professional thing was to have a portfolio book that was exactly like everyone else’s, because it was all about the work, and only the work.

Until it wasn’t.

Ultimately, having a book of your strongest work has always been the primary thing to get you a job when you go on that interview. However, things like streaming web television, dying newspapers and the content aware fill tool in Photoshop CS5 are creating dramatic upheavals in advertising and design. I hear a lot of chatter on design blogs out on the interwebs regarding the change in our industry and the worth of design. For example, in a blog entry titled “We Don’t Need You To Design Anymore”, author Paul Scrivens asks the question of why companies should pay us the going rates for design when they can go to sites like 99Design’s logo store and get a logo (maybe not the best in the world, but potentially functional) designed for just \$99? We are in a flux in our industry. As automation in the programs we use takes more and more of the skill away from us, what is it exactly that we have to offer? When middle school kids are learning Photoshop in their art classes, we need to really make sure we can bring something unique to the table.

I teach a class at IADT-Tampa called Creative Thinking. When I started teaching this class, I saw it as “fun”, and in some ways, a distraction from the more challenging classes that were software intensive. Since then, I have come to realize it is one of the most important classes we teach in our department because it forces designers to think first and design later. Each project must begin with a really great idea. That’s what designers are being hired for- their ideas;

to visually communicate and problem solve. They are being hired by agencies and companies for the ability to come up with outside of the box answers to the sometimes-troubling questions. These questions involve how companies get an ROI (return on investment) in a dramatically changing industry where the old methods of advertising are no longer working.

Yes, it would be great to be able to send a nice clean resume with a cover letter, get an interview and show your good quality work in a plain but professional portfolio. But that is becoming less and less what we, as designers, are about. Many companies are looking for our ability to BRAND OURSELVES. If we are able to launch a successful campaign to create interest and buzz in “We -the-designer”, we are saying something about our ability to create buzz for clients. When our portfolio, website, self promo work and social networking all create a unique and “stand-out” persona of us professionally, we are showing them that we are the idea-driven/creative/imaginative type.

Obviously, the work in our portfolio needs to stand out as well, and there will always be a place for the true artisan who can make the graphics programs we use sit up and sing, no matter how automated they become. However we need to be the people who can sell a concept, create an idea and solve a problem. It’s comfortable to keep doing things the old way, but that’s not what will get us noticed in today’s emerging design industries.



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ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR

Replicating Fine Art

■ By Kerstin Upmeyer

When designers think about Adobe Illustrator and vector art, they often think of crisp graphic images, clean logos and sharp graphics. However, Illustrator has tools that, with a few smart techniques, can create elegant painterly effects. In this tutorial, we are going to replicate Van Gogh's well-known painting, *Sunflowers* using Illustrator to emulate the highly textured strokes in the painting.

01_ Bring your image in as a template. This will set it up ideally to trace from. Then, not unlike an actual painter, begin by creating an "under painting" using the pen tool. Trace the larger shapes of the painting and pull your colors from the original art using the eyedropper tool.



02_ Next, we'll begin tracing smaller shapes to fill in the details. If you are feeling anxious to jump right into "painting", remember that brushes in Illustrator are huge memory hogs. The more brushstrokes, the slower Illustrator will update, and the longer each screen refresh will take. It's always best to build as much up with basic pen tool shapes as possible. So detail is added on top of the under painting in both the background and the foreground elements.



03_ Now that the detail has been added, it's time to start "painting". The brushes we want are located in Window>Brush Libraries>Artistic. You should consider using brushes from both the Paintbrush and Watercolor Palettes.



04_ We'll be using Watercolor Stroke 4. Its texture and the range from light to dark levels within the brush will best emulate the texture on the original painting. By clicking on it in the Watercolor Palette, it is automatically transferred into the default Brush Palette, where we can double click it to edit the options. Here, I chose to change the width to 50% so that the brush is slimmer, then hit OK.



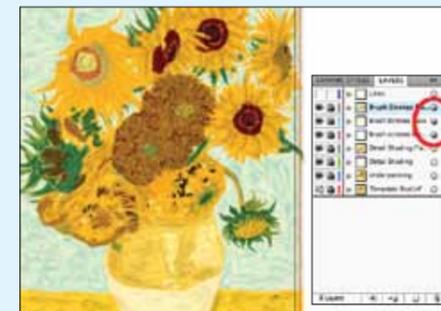
05_ To make the brush blend into the under painting in a more realistic way, you'll want to set all the strokes you paint to have a specific blending mode. The easiest way to do this is by targeting the whole layer on which you are painting. Click on the Target button for that layer in the layer palette, then go to the transparency palette and set the blending mode to Multiply. That setting will now be applied to anything done on that layer.



06_ Now we'll begin painting the background. The Multiply blend helps make the brush strokes blend into the under painting, adding texture and depth to my artwork. Be careful to break the brush painting up into several layers. Here, I have a layer for the background painting, the vase and the brush strokes on the flowers. Breaking your artwork into layers will allow you to show and hide them, which will help some with screen redraw issues. Because brushes make Illustrator work so hard, you should SAVE FREQUENTLY!



07_ Here you see the flowers are now completed and some final touches have been added; a few darker lines around the edge of the vase and table, and a few between some of the petals. Each brush stroke layer has been "Targeted" for the Multiply Blend option by the grey Target buttons.



08_ We now have a "painting", created entirely in Adobe Illustrator that has the texture, depth and richness of an oil painting. Once the basics of this are done, the original image can be moved to one side and further details could be added or colors tweaked to make things a little more exact to the real painting.

