

Corel® Painter™ Brush-ology: Quick Access to Favorite Brushes

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This installment focuses on organizing your favorite brushes within Painter's interface for quick access. If you're like me, you probably have a short list of Painter brushes that you regularly use. Rather than constantly dig through the Brush Selector Bar's Category and Variant drop-down menus, wouldn't it be convenient to have your favorite brushes a single click away? Well, your wish can be granted by utilizing a couple of handy organizational features within Painter. Let's get organized!

I'm going to guide you through the process of organizing your libraries, as well as show you how to duplicate and migrate your favorite brush variants from one machine to another. There are a few concepts that you'll need to get under your belt in order to become fluent in Painter brush-ology, so we'll take it slow in small digestible bites. Once we're finished, you should be able to organize your brush variants to your liking, as well as share variants with other Painter users. Let's get started with an overview of Painter's variant technology.

Create a Custom Palette

A *Custom Palette* is a convenient tool for organizing Painter items that you regularly use. You can place items from the *Brush Selector Bar*, any of the six content selectors (papers, patterns, looks, weaves, nozzles, or gradients), Library palettes, or Script palette on a custom palette. You can also add any menu command, such as *File menu > New*, to a custom palette. I'm going to focus strictly on adding brush variants to a custom palette, but the Custom Palette feature obviously very powerful in its ability to place different Painter tools of your choosing into organized containers.

Creating a Custom Palette of your favorite variants is very easy. In the *Brush Selector Bar*, locate a variant that you want to add to a custom palette. Click and drag either the *Category* or *Variant* icon out of the *Brush Selector* (you'll see a gray rectangle as you drag). Painter creates a new *Custom Palette* containing the Category icon for the variant you just dragged.

To add more variants to your new Custom Palette, select each one from the *Brush Selector* and click and drag them into the newly created *Custom Palette*. You'll notice that the icons snap to an invisible grid. To move them into your desired position, hold down the *Shift key* and *click and drag* them in the custom palette to the desired location. If you want to delete an item, hold the Shift key and drag the item out of the palette.

Painter allows you to create as many Custom palettes as you'd like. The *Custom Palette menu* (*Window menu: Custom Palette*) lets you select which custom palettes are active. Depending on your Painter habits, you may want to create multiple custom palettes that contain tools specific to an activity: Sketching, Retouching, Painting, etc.

Dock Your Custom Palette

I've seen users create all varieties of Custom palettes. Long ones positioned under the *Property Bar*, for example. My quick access method maintains them in their narrowest possible configuration. This allows a maximum of 4 brushes across, so I arrange the brushes in rows of fours to keep the palette width narrow. By doing so, this custom palette can be docked into the main Painter palette container. I typically place my custom palette above the *Colors* palette, thereby positioning it immediately below the *Brush Selector Bar*. If I temporarily need more palette area for another activity (layer work, for example), I simply collapse the custom palette by clicking on that palette's disclosure triangle (left side of the palette bar).

Variant Icon Limitations

A limitation of a *Custom* palette populated with several brush variants is that any variants from the same *Category* will all use the same icon. This means that you could have several *Artists' Oil* variants in your custom palette and they would all appear to be identical! You can determine which variant a custom palette icon represents by holding your cursor over the icon. A *Tool Tip* will appear with the variant's name (assuming you have Tool Tips enabled (Help: Show Tool Tips)).

The Tracker Palette: An Alternative for Favorites Storage

The *Tracker* palette is a history list of your recently used brush variants (25 maximum). This enables you to return to a brush that you've used earlier without going to the Brush Selector Bar to retrieve it. You can also lock variants in the *Tracker* palette. This provides another method for keeping your favorite brushes a click away.

To lock a variant in the *Tracker palette list*, select the variant and click on the lock icon in the lower left corner of the palette. A *lock icon* will appear to the right of the list entry. To unlock a variant, select the list entry and once again click the lock icon at the lower right corner of the palette.

The Tracker palette's default view is strictly graphic: the *Stroke view*. Like the Custom palette, it can be difficult to discern which variant is which. As a result, I prefer the *List view*. This provides the variant's name. To switch the Tracker palette to List view, launch the palette's fly-out command menu (triangle at the right side of the palette bar) and choose List. You'll now have a textual list of variants.

Now for the bad news: The List view is not currently sticky in Painter. This means that Painter does not remember this setting between sessions. Consequentially, you'll need to manually choose List view each time you launch Painter. Hopefully, this inconvenience will be corrected in a future release.

Dock Your Tracker Palette

Like the Custom palette, the Tracker palette can be docked to the main Painter palette. I position mine between my *Custom* and *Colors* palettes. What makes this arrangement really convenient is the flexibility of being able to selectively open and close these palettes as needed. Sometimes I have just my Custom palette open; other times just the Tracker palette. Other times I have them both open. If you're really an organization nut, you could have multiple custom palettes docked, each representing specific tasks.

Just One More Thing

By now, you are probably starting to realize the power of docking various palettes into a personalized workspace. Here's a tip: Dock your Layers and Channels palettes at the bottom of the main Palette stack (by default, these palettes are grouped in a separate palette container). When opening and closing various palettes, the entire palette set will perform its accordion-like magic, collapsing and expanding without generally hiding palettes.

Should you need to quickly navigate to the top or bottom of a taller-than-the-screen palette stack, hold down the *ALT/OPT* key and click and drag the palette stack. And you can hold down the *Shift* key while clicking on any palette bar's disclosure triangle and collapse the entire layer stack. Performing the same action on a closed stack will open all the palettes.

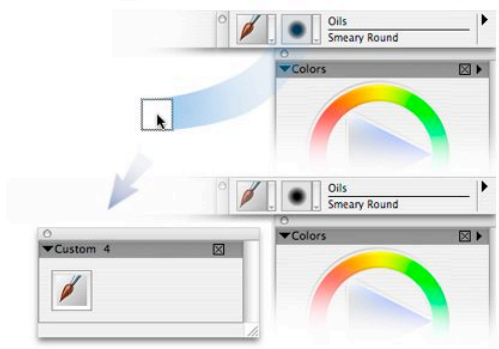
Viva la Painter!

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's Painter Ambassador-at-Large. John's Web site is at www.pixlart.com.

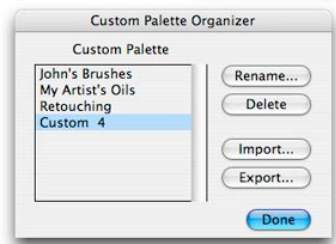
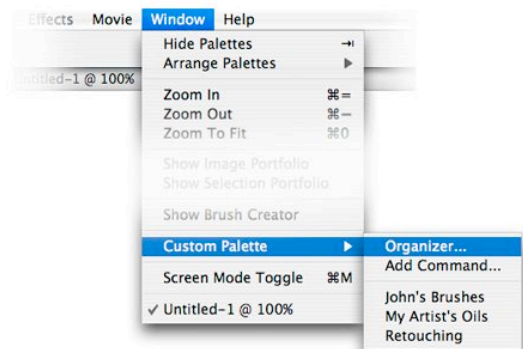
Quick Access to Favorite Brushes in Corel® Painter™

John Lewis

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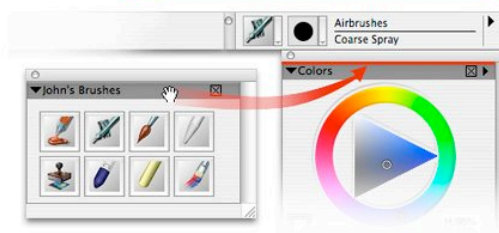
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