

# Adding Textures & Edging to Images with Poor Man's Masking in Corel® Painter™

John Derry



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It is popular these days to imbue images—both painted and photographic—with rough edges and distressed surface detail. This visual antiquing technique instills a sense of age and nostalgia to an image. The use of analog-style texture additionally serves to break an image free of its digital origins. Painter contains useful secret weapons to aid the artist in distressing an image. With just a few textures and brushes, you can create a virtual antiquing factory in Painter that can be endlessly adjusted to develop varying effects.

This technique employs what I call Poor Man's Masking. Rather than utilizing layer masks, which can require a bit of blind faith to master, Poor Man's masking takes advantage of Painter's Layer Compositing Methods (Blending Modes in Photoshop) to additively build up a composite mask through which an image is filtered. With a few concepts explained, you can be on your way to adding unique non-destructive edges and textures to your art work. Let's get started!

## A Distressing Situation

Antique specialists and home builders often employ a technique known as *distressing*. A simple example is the use of a chain to add nicks, dings, and dents to an otherwise pristine wood surface. The chain is forcefully applied to the wood, roughing up the surface with random imperfections. Why wait 100 years for an item of furniture to naturally gain the experienced patina of age when it can be added in a few minutes with the proper technique? A similar type of distressing occurs with old photographs, paintings, drawings, prints, etc. All of these mediums can pick up scratches and blemishes as they age. For digital artwork, Painter can be employed to add distressing.

The secret weapon in Painter's arsenal is its broad-ranging *Paper Grain libraries*. Before describing the *Poor Man's masking* technique, we need to know how to access Painter's various *Paper Grain* libraries. Painter must always have a

*Paper Grain* library active. By default, it is the *Paper Textures* library. However, you have 23 additional *Paper Grain libraries* available to you on the *Painter IX* CD's *Extras* folder (earlier versions of the *Painter* CD's *Paper Grain* content will vary). You may want to copy the *Paper Textures* folder from the CD to your *Corel Painter IX* folder for future access.

To work with *Paper Grains*, you'll want the *Papers* palette visible. Go to *Windows: Library Palettes: Show Papers* to launch the *Papers* palette. The *Papers* palette provides a preview of the current *Paper*, plus *Scale*, *Contrast*, and *Brightness* controls to adjust the visual character of the current *Paper*. The *Invert Paper* button (far right button above the sliders) is used to invert the grayscale of the *Paper* as necessary.

To change *Paper Grain* libraries, click on the *palette menu arrow* to open the *flyout menu*. Choose the *Open Library...* command at the bottom of the menu. This will display the *Load a New Paper Texture* dialog. If you have added new textures to the current library, click the *Append* button to permanently add them the library. Otherwise, click on the *Load...* button to open the file dialog. Locate the *Paper Textures* folder and click it to access the *Paper* libraries. As you click on *Paper* libraries, Painter conveniently displays thumbnails of the various papers found in the library. Load a library by *double-clicking* on it. The current *Paper* library will be replaced with the selected library.

Once you understand this process, you can easily load various libraries to gain access to an amazing array of textural content.

## Poor Man's Masks

The basic idea behind *Poor Man's masks* is the *Layer palette's Screen Composite Method*. A layer set to the *Screen* method treats *Black as Transparent* and *White as Opaque*. The grayscale values found in-between the extremes of black and white are appropriately partially transparent or opaque, as well. Painter's *Paper Grains* are stored in a grayscale format. By placing a *Paper Grain* on a layer and changing the layer's *Compositing Method* to *Screen*, any image below it will be interposed with the screened grayscale content on the layer above it.

A *Paper Grain* is easily added to a layer and composited with an underlying image in a few easy steps. First, select a paper grain from the *Paper* palette's *Paper Selector*. Create a new layer, fill it with *White*, and change the layer's *Composite Method* to *Screen*. Change the *Current Color* to *Black*. Launch the *Color Overlay* dialog (*Effects: Surface Control*). Set the *Using* pop-up menu to *Paper* and select the *Hiding Power Model* option. The *Color Overlay* preview will display the composite of the *Paper* with the underlying image. Use the *Paper* palette's controls to adjust the visual appearance of the interaction of the *Paper* with the underlying image. Click *OK* to complete the operation. You'll now have a screened texture composited with your underlying image.

The tonality of the underlying image will affect the appearance of the screened texture layer. In some cases, you may want to experiment with other *Composite Methods* to get the desired result. *Multiply* and *Overlay* are generally good candidates for altering the overall grayscale character of a texture layer. Adjust the layer's *Opacity* (*Layer* palette: *Opacity* slider) to control the strength of the texture's interaction with the underlying image.

### Stacking Layers to Build Up Texture

Once you've mastered the above-described *Poor Man's masking* technique, you can take textural buildup even further by stacking multiple layers of different texture sources. Note that, to get the best visual stacking results, you'll need to use the same chosen *Composite Method* for all of the layers.

The *Paper Grains* are a great repository of a wide variety of texture, but you can add even more variety by incorporating photographic texture sources. Textures from nature make a good source. Clouds, rock surfaces, wood bark, and water are examples. Photographic sources from traditional art media work well. Images of watercolor washes, diluted ink, or transparent paint can all add unique effects.

You may find that the stacking of several composited layers begins to diminish the visibility of the underlying image. You can once again utilize layer *Composite Methods* to pump up the underlying image's visibility. Select and copy the base image. Select the topmost layer and use the *Paste In Place* command (*Edit* menu). This action positions an in-register copy of the base image above all of the existing stacked layers. Change the new layer's *Composite Method* to *Overlay*. This will essentially *double* the visual weight of the image while retaining any existing composited texture.

If the image is too overpowering in relation to the textural elements, use the layer's *Opacity* slider to season to taste.

### Framing An Image

As I mentioned earlier, imagery with roughed-up edges is popular these days. You can even purchase applications that add faux hand-wrought edging to an image. With *Poor Man's masking*, you can easily add your own edges with Painter's brushes. This can be done in concert with layered texturing addition or by itself.

To add a framed edge to an image, create a new layer, fill it with *White*, and change the *Composite Method* to *Screen*. If you are adding a border to an image with stacked layer textures, be sure that the border layer is topmost in the layer stack. At this point, all you'll see is an apparent blank white canvas.

Change your *Current Color* to *Black* and choose a favorite brush. Begin painting in the middle of the image and you'll start to see the underlying layers and image appear within the brushstrokes. Continue to paint out your image until you've revealed it in a frame that you like.

### What Else?

Now that you know the secret of *Poor Man's masking*, you can use this technique to revive some of your photographs and imagery, as well as apply it to new projects. Keep in mind that you can also use the additive texturing technique on selective areas of an image to add local texture.

Once you've created and discovered a result to your liking, save it in a layered format (RIF or PSD). You can use this existing texture/border layer stack to paste various images under it. By turning different layers on and off (or adjusting their *Opacity*), you can dramatically alter the visual character of the texturing to tune it to the new image. Don't rule out resizing these layer stacks to accommodate various sized images. You'll be surprised how well this type of visual element will withstand significant up or down resizing.

### Viva la Painter!

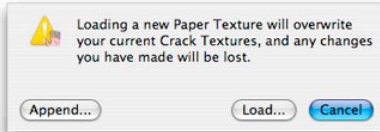
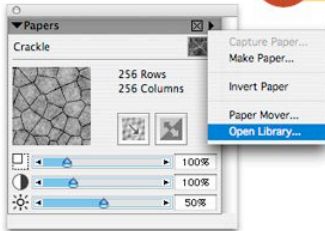
*John Derry is a pioneer of digital painting and one of the original authors of Corel® Painter™. Since 1985, he has leveraged his background in drawing and painting to advance the look and experience of traditional art-making tools on the computer. John has a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in 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](http://www.pixlart.com).*

# Utilizing Poor Man's Masking Techniques

in Corel® Painter™

John Dennis

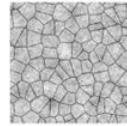
## 1 Accessing Paper Libraries



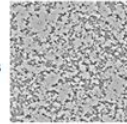
## 2 Painter's Texture Libraries

Libraries available on the Painter IX CD (Extras folder)

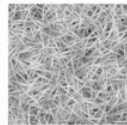
- Assorted Textures
- Assorted Textures 2
- Awesome Textures
- Biological Textures
- Branched Textures
- Contrasty Textures
- Crack Textures
- Crazy Textures
- Drawing Paper Textures
- Molecular Textures
- Organismal Textures
- Painter 5.5 Textures
- Painter 6 Textures
- Painter 7 Textures
- Painter 8 Textures
- Paper Textures
- Paper Textures 2
- Relief Textures
- Subtle Textures
- Textile Textures
- Weird Textures
- Wild Textures
- Wild Textures 2



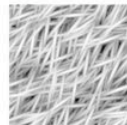
**Crackle**  
Crack Textures



**Watercolor**  
Paper Textures 2

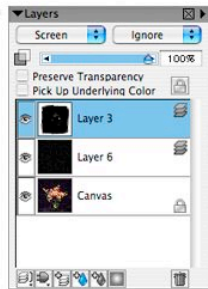
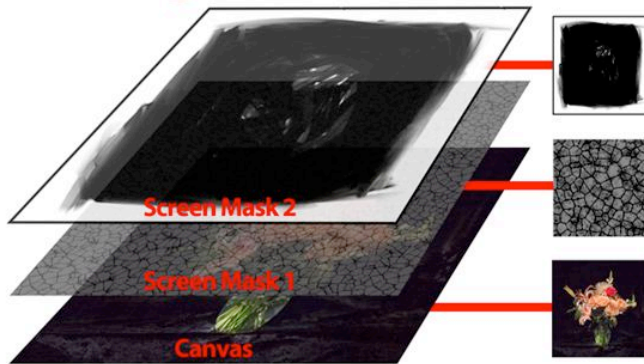


**Fibers**  
Wild Textures



**Long Grain**  
Wild Textures

## 3 Stacking Screen Layers over an Image



## 4 Creating Variations with Various Layer Combos

