

Creating a Drip Nozzle in Corel® Painter™

John Derry



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One of the hallmarks of the painted image is the appearance of drips and runs of paint that occur during the painting process. In many cases these artifacts are undesirable and are avoided by the painter. However, in loosely created work, the presence of flung paint adds a desirable spontaneous quality to the final result.

In this segment I'm going to show you how create the appearance of paint runs and drips. There is a bit of initial effort involved, so be prepared to roll up your sleeves. By following through the process, you'll learn a bit about the construction of Painter's brush variants.

Faking It for Spontaneity's Sake

Painter's *Watercolor Layer* is capable of producing realistic runs and drips, but the process can be a bit slow and you may not end up with the effect that you see in your mind's eye. So, how can we otherwise create convincing runs and drips? Two words: Fake It. What Painter can't do on its own, we'll improvise. Let's look at the problem.

Runs and drips are random occurrences. Individually, these marks are unique; but as a group, they are basically round (drips) or long (runs). In Painter, a single unique shape can be made into a *Captured Dab* (e.g. *Sponge* variant). Good start, but we need to represent *several* drip or run elements to create a convincing illusion of randomness. The best tool for this job is the *Image Hose* (the *brush*) and its associated *Nozzle* file (the *content*). There are three steps to creating each of these files:

1. *Create* the *Nozzle* content (a set of runs or drips),
2. *Make* the *Nozzle* file, and
2. *Adjust* and *apply* the runs and drips with the *Image Hose*.

Creating Runs and Drips

There are essentially two approaches to creating drip and run *Nozzle* content. You could actually create runs and drips with actual physical media like ink or paint, scan the results into

Painter and individually auto-mask the elements (each on their own individual layer) and construct a *Nozzle* from the set of resulting layers. Or, you can hand draw/paint each drip or run element (again, each element must reside on its own individual layer) and create the *Nozzle* from them. I'm going to use the second method as it is easier (and less messy!).

I could have provided my personal run and drip nozzles and been done with it, but my nozzles may not match your style. And, you wouldn't have learned how to create your own personal nozzle files. *Nozzle* making is not difficult. The key concept to remember is that each potential nozzle element must be created on its own layer. You can't have two elements on a layer or you'll see it visually later on when you apply the nozzle. The total number of elements that you create for your nozzle is up to you. The more you make, the more random the final result will be. I would recommend creating twelve drip elements each for your drip and run nozzles.

Create the Drip Elements

I use the *Scratchboard Pen* for this work as it has a nice thick-to-thin ratio. I was able to draw my drips without reference, but you may want to search around for some existing examples if you're uncomfortable creating from scratch. *Draw your drips in BLACK!* This will be important later on. Drips generally start out loaded with paint. Gravity prompts the wet paint downward. As the paint dries out, the amount of wet paint is reduced. This action tends to create drips that reduce in width as they dry over time. Vary the length of each drip. Make some longer, some shorter. The size of your drips is dependent on what resolution you ultimately want to apply them to. I would recommend creating the longest drips to be at least three-hundred pixels tall. I tend to create my drips by initially drawing the outline of the drip with the *Scratchboard Tool* (Pens), then fill them in by hand with the same pen.

Remember that each drip element must reside on its own layer!

When you've got twelve individual drip layers, you're ready to create your nozzle. I recommend saving the layered file in *RIF* or *PS* format in order to have the elements should you want to add more at a later time. A *Nozzle* is created by *grouping* several layers together and creating a *Nozzle* from the *group*.

Start the nozzle-making process by *selecting*, then *grouping* all of the drip layers (*Layers* palette flyout: *Group*). In the *Layers* palette, select the *Layer group*. We now need to make a *Nozzle* from this *group*. Go to the *Nozzles* palette flyout and select *Make Nozzle From Group*. this will generate a new file that is apparently all black. Not to worry, Painter automatically creates nozzle files with a black background. The individual nozzle elements are preserved in to form of *mask* information. To see your drips, choose the *Reselect* command (*Select* palette). *Save* this file (in *RIFF* format).

Trying Out The Nozzle

I'm sure that you'll now want to see how your drip nozzle works. In order to use it, we first need to load it. Do this via the *Load Nozzle...* command (*Nozzle* palette flyout). We now need to select an *Image Hose* variant to spray the drips. I recommend the *Spray-Size-P* variant (*Brush Selector: Image Hose*). Did you try it? It doesn't work...yet! There is a little-known trick that I'm now going to expose. It involves how color is imparted into your drips.

The *Image Hose* normally gets its color from the colors that were present in the original layer elements that made the nozzle. Remember that the *Image Hose* was created to deposit full-color imagery. We are going to "*bend the rules*" a bit in order to selectively add designated color to our currently black drip elements. To do this, adjust the *Grain* slider all the way down to *0%*. This tells Painter to fill the nozzle elements with the current color in the *Additional Color* square (*Tool* or *Color* palettes). Highlight the *Additional Color* square and select a *non-background* color. Test your drip nozzle by painting with the grain-adjusted *Image Hose* variant. You've got a Drip Brush!

I recommend saving this variant (with the *Grain* slider adjusted to *0%*) as something like *Dripper Hose*". This will enable you to select an *Image Hose* with the *Grain* slider already pre-adjusted to work with these specially created nozzles.

You may want to add this new nozzle to the default *Nozzle* library for quick recall. Before doing so, I recommend checking and setting the nozzle's scale. This is done via the *Nozzle* palette flyout's *Set Nozzle Scale:* command. Set it to *100%*. Now use the *Add Nozzle to Library...* command to name and place it in your *Nozzle* library.

Remember that when using nozzles that rely on the *0% Grain* method to get their color, you need to use the *Additional Color*

square as the nozzle's color source. You can create splats, drips, and anything else you'd like with the exact same technique outlined above. To apply these techniques to an image, you'll need to add some extra white space around the edges of your painting in order to have room to add the drips. I generally sample image colors near the border to give a sense of congruity to the placed accidents. Use the *Jitter* slider (*Bush Property Bar*) to control the content spray pattern. You may want to apply these effects to a separate layer to preserve your original art; you can drop the layer later once your satisfied with the visual result.

That's it. I hope that you'll find this technique useful and maybe even find new ways to utilize it!

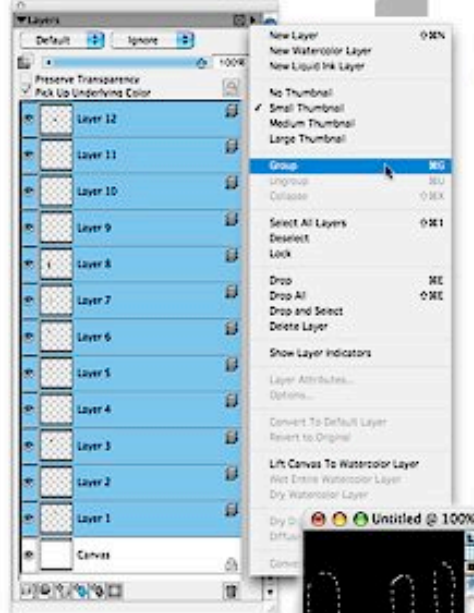
Viva la Painter!

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.

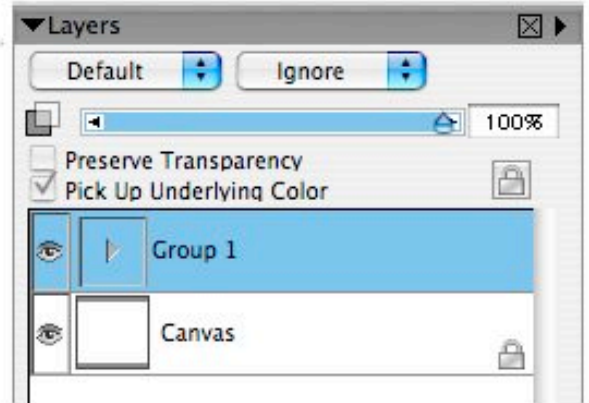
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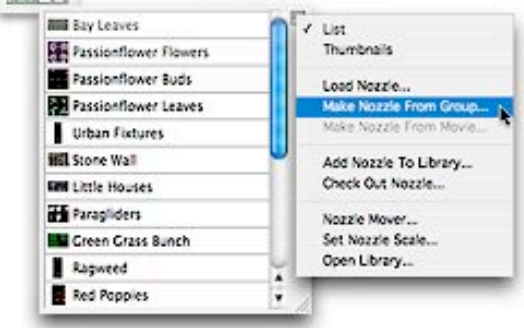
1 Original Hand drawn Drips (1 each per layer)



2 Grouping the Individual Drip Layers



3 Creating a Nozzle from a Group



4 Loaded and Reselected Nozzle File



5 Drip Art from Resulting File