

# The Mixer Palette in Corel® Painter™

John Derry



©2006 John Derry

Corel Painter provides many different mechanisms for choosing and organizing color. In the previous installments, we looked at the Color Palettes, as well as Color Sets. These palettes offer precise color selection and organization via sliders, numeric input fields, and color swatches. The Mixer Palette, on the other hand, enables a visual color mixing solution akin to the artist's traditional paint palette.

Using traditional paint media like oils and acrylics, the artist applies tube colors to the palette surface, then uses a brush or palette knife to blend the wet colors together to create the desired range of hues, tints, shades, etc. These mixed colors are then used as the color source for a painting. Painter's Mixer Palette duplicates this color mixing functionality to provide an intuitive color creation tool.

## Mixer Palette Commands and Tools: Mixer Color Swatches

A set of 11 *Mixer Color* swatches are positioned at the top of the *Mixer* palette. These swatches provide quick access to preferred colors used for mixing. Clicking on a swatch selects the color; painting in the *Mixer Pad* will then apply the selected color. *Mixer* palette color selection is tied to the *Color* palette; any color selected in the *Mixer* palette updates the *Main Color Square* of the *Color* palette. This enables the use of the *Color* palette to select color for mixing, as well.

The user can edit the *Mixer Colors* to suit their needs. To store a new color in one of the *Mixer Color* swatches:

1. Select the *Mixer Color* swatch to be updated.
2. Select the new color in the *Color Palette*.
3. Hold down the CMD (Mac) / CTRL (Win) key and click the selected *Mixer Color* swatch.

*Mixer Color* swatch sets can be saved via the *Mixer* palette flyout menu's *Save Mixer Colors* dialog. Conversely, saved swatch sets can be loaded via the *Mixer* palette flyout menu's

*Load Mixer Colors* dialog. The *Mixer* palette flyout menu's *Reset Mixer Colors* command restores the *Mixer Colors* to an internal Painter default. This *Mixer Color* set consists of a sample range of colors progressing through the spectrum, as well as gray and white swatches.

The gray swatch is internally stored as a rather arbitrary 71% gray. Many advanced Photoshop and Painter users utilize 50% gray for various layer compositing tasks (Overlay/Soft Light/Hard Light layer compositing methods). With these compositing methods, 50% gray is treated as transparent; lighter and darker grays will increasingly either darken or lighten the underlying imagery as applied grays move toward black and white. I position my *Mixer* palette immediately below the *Color* palette in the palette stack. With this in mind, editing the default 71% gray to 50% gray creates a convenient access to this handy color.

## Mixer Palette Commands and Tools: The Mixer Pad

The central area of the *Mixer* palette is the *Mixer Pad*. By default, this area is white. The background color can be optionally changed via the *Mixer* palette flyout menu's *Change Mixer Background* dialog. The *Mixer Pad* is cleared of any applied color by clicking on the *Trash Can* icon located at the lower right of the *Mixer* palette.

Color is applied to the *Mixer Pad* with the *Apply Color* tool. This brush's color mixing interaction behaves like a simplified version of the *Artists' Oils* category of brushes. As each stroke is applied to the *Mixer Pad*, the stroke begins with the current color and blends into any existing applied color. Note that the *Mixer* background is treated like an image's *Canvas*; colors applied with the *Apply Color* tool will not blend with the background color (it is as if the *Layer* palette's *Pick Up Underlying Color* is disabled). Consequentially, if you want to mix color with white, you'll need to select the color white for applying and mixing.

The behavior of the *Apply Color* tool can be modified with the *Dirty Brush Mode* tool. When *Dirty Brush Mode* is enabled, the color of each new stroke will begin with whatever colors were on the brush at the end of the preceding stroke, approxi-

mating a traditional *wet-into-wet* color mixing behavior. This mode is useful for admixing traditionally-based colors (from the *Painter Colors* color set, for example). The resulting admixtures are typical of what occurs with actual tube color.

Color applied to the *Mixer Pad* can be further blended with the *Mix Color* tool. This brush acts like a palette knife and is useful for further refinement of blended color. The *Mix Color* tool blends color only and does not apply color.

*Mixer Pads* can be saved and loaded via the *Mixer* palette flyout menu's *Open/Save Mixer Pad* dialogs. The *Mixer Pad* can additionally be adjusted using the *Zoom* and *Pan* tools.

### **Mixer Palette Commands and Tools: Sampling Color**

Color can be sampled from the *Mixer Pad* by two methods: single color or multiple colors. The *Sample Color* tool is used to select an individual color. The *Sample Multiple Colors* tool is closely tied to the *Artists Oils* category of brushes; only this brush category will apply multiple colors as selected by the *Select Multiple Colors* tool. The resulting behavior mimics the traditional technique of brush loading in which multiple colors are intentionally picked up from the color palette to create multi-hued strokes on the canvas.

### **Mixer Palette Commands and Tools: Mixer Pad to Color Set**

The *Mixer* palette is a great way to create a range of colors with traditionally-mixed overtones. You can also take advantage of the *Mixer* palette's strong ties to the *Artists' Oils* brushes to load your brushes with rich colorings.

### **An Interesting Side Note**

Painter users often requested the addition of a mixing palette over several versions of Painter with no mixer forthcoming. *Why?*

*Quantel*, the British company that developed and sold the ground-breaking *Quantel Paintbox* broadcast paint system, held several paint system-related patents, including one covering electronic color mixing and selection.

Some of you may remember that the first couple of versions of Photoshop did indeed have a visual color mixing area attached to its *Color* palette. The Quantel patent—as well as the insistence of Quantel's lawyers—was the reason that the color mixing functionality disappeared from Photoshop—and didn't appear in Painter at the time. Quantel sued Adobe over the illegal use of their patents. A trial ensued and a jury found the

patents invalid in September of 1997. With the patents rendered invalid, the way was clear for Corel to implement what is now the *Mixer* palette.

And now you know the “*rest of the story*”.

*Viva la Painter!*

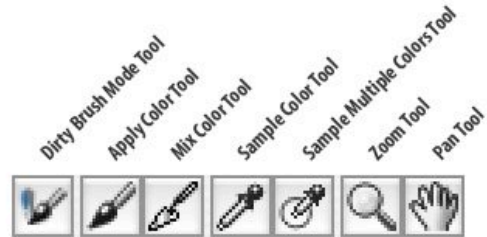
*John Derry is a pioneer of digital painting and one of the original authors of Corel® Painter™. Since 1985, he has leveraged his background in drawing and painting to advance the look and experience of traditional art-making tools on the computer. John has a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in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

# The Mixer Palette

## in Corel® Painter™

John Denny

### Mixer Palette Commands and Tools



### Mixing Colors on the Mixer Pad

Mixture result using the *Color Apply Tool* only



Mixture result using the *Color Apply Tool* with *Dirty Brush Mode* enabled



Mixture result using the *Mix Color Tool*



### Sampling Color from the Mixer Pad

Single color stroke result using the *Sample Color Tool*

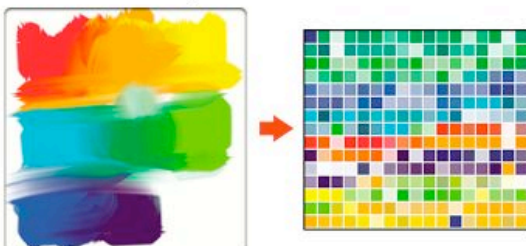


Loaded color stroke result using the *Sample Multiple Colors Tool*  
(Artists Oils Brushes Only)



### Storing Colors for Quick Access

Color Set generated from the Mixer Pad



Examples of saved Mixer Colors



To store new colors:

1. Select Mixer Color swatch to be updated.
2. Select new color in the Color Palette.
3. Hold down CMD/CTRL key and click selected Mixer Color swatch.