

Corel® Painter's™ Brush Creator: The Transposer

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In the last installment, Corel Painter's Brush Creator: The Randomizer, we began to examine Corel® Painter's™ Brush Creator, a virtual laboratory for generating new variants. We initially looked at the Randomizer option, a Las Vegas style pull-the-handle-and-see-what-happens tool for randomly mutating existing variants. This option requires no knowledge of Painter's brush construction and is especially inviting to newer users wishing to add new variants to their library. We dug a bit deeper to learn about directed random mutation, which enables a user to breed new variants in a desired direction. We'll begin with a review of the Brush Creator's layout, then delve into the Randomizer. Let's go!

The Brush Creator Layout

Painter treats the *Brush Creator* as a separate area. You can think of it as a room off of your primary art studio in which you focus on the process of creating new brush variants. Ultimately, you'll take your newly crafted variants back into the studio for the image-making process. The *Brush Creator* is accessed via the *Window > Show Brush Creator* command. Alternatively, you can press *CMD + B* (Mac OS) or *CTRL + B* (Windows) to launch the *Brush Creator*.

Upon launching the *Brush Creator*, the first thing you'll notice is that the interface will change. The menu bar options change, as well as the *Property Bar* and *Tool* palette. These areas are pared down to focus solely on brush creation. The *Brush Creator* window contains three tabs (*Randomizer*, *Transposer*, and *Stroke Designer*), each with its own interface. Below the tab buttons is the *Brush Selector Bar* which provides the same brush selection functionality as it does in the primary Painter interface.

At the bottom left is the *Stroke Preview window*. This window provides a dynamically updated stroke preview of the current variant. This enables you to make adjustments to any variant and see how it affects the variant's character. For enhanced testing, you'll use the *Scratch Pad* located on the right. This provides an area for drawing in to see how the current vari-

ant performs. *Brush Size* is controlled via a *slider* above the *Scratch Pad*. The *magnification* of the *Scratch Pad* is controlled via a slider below. The *Scratch Pad* is cleared via the *Clear button*, also beneath the *Scratch Pad*. The size of the *Brush Creator* window is scalable by clicking and dragging on the *window size adjuster* located in the Brush Creator's lower right corner. Both the *Color* and *Tracker* palettes are available, as well.

The Transposer Interface

The *Transposer* is a highly controlled form of directed mutation. Instead of using the *Randomizer's* technique of randomizing a single variant's settings, the *Transposer* uses *two* existing variants selected by the user and blends their values to create a set of intermediate variants sharing characteristics of the two. As mentioned earlier, the *Randomizer* requires no knowledge of Painter's brush construction. The limitation of this approach to variant creation is that the *Randomizer's* results are, well...random. The *Transposer*, on the other hand, does require a greater understanding of variant construction in order to achieve usable results.

The *Transposer* uses the concept of *From* and *To* variants to generate a range of new blended variants. The *Transposer* layout uses a pair of *Brush Selector Bars*, one at the top of the page and one located at the bottom. The upper Bar is the *From Brush Selector Bar*. The lower Bar is the *To Brush Selector Bar*. In between these two Brush Selector Bars is the *Preview Grid*. Blended variants are displayed here. To the left of the *Preview Grid*, the *Category Icons* for both of the *From* and *To* variants are shown, with each column graphically fading in and out to represent the blending of the selected variants.

The transposing process is performed by clicking on the *Transpose Current Selection* button (represented by an icon of 2 gears), located immediately to the right of the upper *From Brush Selector Bar*. When you click on the *Transpose Current Selection* button, a new set of variant blends is displayed in the preview grid based of the currently selected *From* and *To* variants.

Further transposition is done by first selecting one of the intermediate blended variants from the *Preview Grid* and

again clicking the *Transpose Current Selection* button. This will create a new blend between the *selected* variant and the *To* variant.

The Transposing Process

As I mentioned earlier, some knowledge of Painter's brush construction is required to generate successful variant blends from the *Transposer*. Transposing two randomly selected variants will almost always end up with unusable frankensteinian results. For example, it's not possible to blend two *Captured Dab* variants—each with a unique dab—and get a successful result. Why? The *Transposer* doesn't know how to blend two separate graphically created dabs. This is where a greater understanding of brush construction can help to avoid illogical blends.

In general, you can't successfully breed a variant from two radically different variants. The best *Transposer* blends occur when both the selected *From* and *To* variants share similar characteristics. It never hurts to experiment, just don't be disappointed when randomly selecting *From* and *To* variants. Think of it this way: use the *Transposer* for subtle breeding of similar variants; use the *Randomizer* for extreme results.

The Best of Both Worlds

A useful technique is to use the *Transposer* to generate a useful blend between similar variants, then switch to the *Randomizer* option and randomize the current transposed result. In fact, until you utilize the Variant > *Restore Default Variant* command to reset a currently altered variant, you can move back and forth between the *Transposer* and *Randomizer*, using each to further slice-and-dice your current variant.

Together, the *Randomizer* and *Transposer* offer useful tools for variant creation without an intimate knowledge of Painter's brush construction. The third panel of the *Brush Creator—the Stroke Designer*—contains all of the controls for infinite variant tweaking. This is where knowledge is power.

Viva la Painter!

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Brush Creator: The Transposer in Corel® Painter™

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