About Digital Illustration with the Wacom Tablet

When grouped together with the Wacom Tablet, Photoshop can be used as a powerful tool for creating professional illustrations. The pressure sensitive tip along with the maneuverability of the pen let you create nice fluid brush strokes. The wacom tablet will let you increase your speed and accuracy to get the job done on time.

Illustration

Due to the amazing pressure sensitivity that the Wacom Intuos 2 lets you exercise, it presents itself as the perfect tool for digital illustration. Whether its control over color intensity, brush size, shading intensity, or wrist control; the wacom tablet gives you complete control over the look of your illustrations that a mouse can never attain. This tutorial will demonstrate how to take a real life sketch or drawing and mold it into a finished masterpiece.
1. Once in the setup, you can adjust how much tilt the pen will detect for wrist comfort and better maneuverability.

2. The tip feel field adjusts how hard you have to press to get the maximum pressure of the pen. You can set this “really sensitive” so that you achieve maximum pressure by merely tapping the tablet with little force. This will be very important when it comes to illustrating lines, applying shading, and coloring.

3. The button configuration can be set to any keyboard stroke shortcut or any button on the mouse.
Scanning the Original Drawing and DPI

You will first scan in an outline drawing that contains no color. The drawing should mainly consist of outlines and some detail since the coloring and shading will be made up in Photoshop later. The drawing should be scanned in at a dpi of 300. This is so that you have more pixels to work with when using the pressure sensitivity of the wacom pen. A screen resolution of 72 dpi can be used, but this dpi allows for less detail and freedom in brush work. In this case we will use a dpi of 300.

Basics of Setting Up Canvas Size

Now that you have your drawing make sure you have the canvas set up to your liking so that all of your content fits accordingly. The scan of your drawing should not restrict you; feel free to extend or minimize your canvas so that you can add more elements or crop out unwanted space. Once you have attained the pictorial field that you feel comfortable with you can proceed with your next step. You can always go back and change the canvas size at any time, if the composition is not going as planned. There are no set guidelines when creating illustrations. Go with what your eyes sees fit.

Setting Up the Layers

Setting up the appropriate layers is vital and can be confusing but it pays off in the end. The scanned drawing is already set as the base layer. We will now add one layer named OUTLINES. This layer will go on top of the base layer. This layer will be used to redraw the outlines and contour lines. Another layer will be added and it will be called COLOR. This layer will be the layer that you apply all the color to. We now have a layer set up for our outlines and one for our color. Make sure that the outline layer is located on top of the color layer, otherwise the lines will not be visible when coloring over them. A note about any additional layers: there may be times you want to add something new into you illustration, but you don’t necessarily want it on the same layer; nevertheless, you can create a totally new layer to isolate and work on the new elements with no conflict.
Line Work & Brush Setup

This step is optional if your scanned drawing’s line work is finished and clean. The brush type, brush size, and hardness of the brush will determine how your drawing will look. In this example we are going to use a brush with hardness of 100 for nice sharp outlines. The size of the brush can always vary. The wacom pen is set up so that the maximum pressure applied is equal to the brush size. If you set the brush size to 50 pixels and apply strong pressure to the pen than you will get a line with a weight of 50 pixels. If you apply minimal pressure it will give you a line thickness equivalent to the pressure applied.

In this step you are going to basically replace your sketchy rough lines with more define lines. It is very important that you remember to draw these lines on the OUTLINES layer so that it is isolated from the background layer. The outcome will produce a drawing that is ready to be colored in. A note before you start coloring as well: make sure you close all of your outlines so that coloring in shapes will be easier.

Coloring

Now that the outlines are well established, it is time to go ahead and start laying down some base colors. Now keep in mind that there are many different ways of coloring a subject and this is just one of them. Make sure you are on the COLOR layer for this step. Apply a base color for each object in your composition.
Isolating Objects and Layers by Color

When all the base colors are established, you can isolate each shape accordingly so that it will not interfere with other objects when you are working with them. You isolate these shapes by using the magic wand tool to select each base color and copy and paste them. This will make each object its own layer. This is helpful when you want to finely color the bull without accidentally coloring the sky or ground. There is nothing worse than accidentally painting over a finely colored and shaded character with a solid color, especially when you don’t notice in time and it is too late to undo it with buttons “control+z.”

Shading and Lighting

Now that we have the base colors and different layers set up, we can go in and individually fine tune each individual model. You can add in color on top of the base color as necessary for different areas of your subject (hair on head, nails on fingers, etc). The next step will involve using the dodge and burn tools demonstrate “lighting”. This will really bring out your subjects and give them depth. The dodge and burn tool have three different modes that give off different effects. The dodge tool adds light and the burn tool adds shade.

Note About Textures

If you want to give your illustrations another level of depth you can also add textures to your illustrations. This can be done by taking “texture” pictures and placing them accordingly into certain areas of your illustrations. Playing with layer properties and transparencies will give you variously different effects.