

From Desktop to Easel: How Computers Can Help Your Art

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Strike a Balance

The key to building strong compositions

CHANGE IS GOOD

Richard McDaniel finds a new "partner in progress"

Kim Casebeer takes up a new support

Stephanie Birdsall embraces a change of scenery



The Blue Chinese Vase (detail: 16 1/2 x 22 | by June L. Maxwell

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Special Report

By Tom Zeit

The 21st Century Pastelist

The computer is one more studio tool that can help you make a great painting. Find out how these four artists use technology to assist and inspire the creative process.

Maximize Color

Jennifer Gardner digitally exaggerates the color of her reference photos in order to guide her toward a more effective painting.



Reference photo after digital color adjustments

"The original photo for *Avenue of Trees, Champagne, France IV* was taken in poor light," she says. "The landscape looked bleached out and the colors were quite tired. When I adjusted the photo to increase the saturation of the colors [using Microsoft Picture Manager], it was far easier to distinguish shapes in the otherwise fairly gray mass of branches and leaves.

"I also managed to pull out something of a highlight on the leaves that's more suggestive of a bright, sunny day, which is what I had in mind for the painting."



Avenue of Trees, Champagne, France IV (pastel, 18x24)
by Jennifer Gardner

The Colors of Imagination

Florida pastelist Jennifer Gardner is another artist who likes to manipulate her digital photos. She primarily uses Microsoft Picture Manager, however, and her favorite technique is to saturate the color of her photos (see "Maximize Color," at left, for an example). "Color saturation can sometimes reveal colors and possible color schemes that I might not otherwise have spotted," she says. "I have a tendency to push colors beyond what they are in reality anyway, and I've always done this, even in my pre-computer days."

Gardner also likes to paint in a square format, so she often digitally crops her reference photos for better compositions. "This helps me to 'see' some shapes and designs better. I may have been aware of them subconsciously, but when you can alter shapes on the screen, other ideas can develop which might not have developed without this facility. Sometimes we don't always see what's staring us in the face."

Gardner uses Photoshop as well, but doesn't often need all the capabilities of that software, and so finds Picture Manager more efficient. No software is perfect, however, especially when it comes to color. "Some colors have eluded me as far as accurate representation by digital image is concerned," she says. "Teals and turquoise shades never seem to appear correctly; they tend to veer more toward blue, which can cause problems. I take heart, however, from the knowledge that a professional photographer who

used to produce slides for me told me that these colors were difficult for him to reproduce, too.”