

## Tutorial - Airbrushing the landscape "Desirable thirst"

Welcome to my tutorial on how i painted the landscape/waterscape Desirable thirst. The tutorial works like a walkthrough/step by step guide. I will not explain in detail how you should paint the different parts in the painting. But instead try to show one way on how to work.

This painting took approximatly 36 hours to complete, it was painted in Adobe Photoshop using a Wacom Intuios A4 (digital drawing board). I did a preliminary sketch on paper first. Actually the first sketch was on a tissue and it where an ugly dick :) But i scribbled over it and it became the rocks in the left/lower part :) Btw... don't ask..

This is my first tutorial, i have 5 more step-by-step tutorials in progress. And i'm planning a serie of 15 different tutorials explaining in detail different techniques and paintings. I would love some input and feedback on these tutorials so please don't hesitate to comment on my portfolio or mail me at [nicklas@nalf.it](mailto:nicklas@nalf.it) - portfolio: <http://www.nalf.it>

### Step 01 - Sketch



After doing a quick sketch on paper i start Photoshop and creates a new canvas. For this painting is i think i started out with 1024x768.

- Background layer.

It's good practise not to choose white back-ground, a grey color or a color which reflects the mood of the painting is better. This is because it can be hard to get started with a blank canvas. Also white is so bright that your eye will make surrounding colors darker. Choosing correct values can then be a bitch.

- Created a new layer with a transparant back-ground. I then drew my sketch again using a hard 3 pixel brush. Mainly thinking composition and not on specific details at this stage.

### Step 02 - Base coloring



Next thing to do is to do the base coloring. This step is just as important as the sketch. Choosing colors and values can dramaticly change the whole painting in mood and theme.

I wanted something very painterly, rich and warm colors to convey paradise. This part is always very relaxing and fun, at least i think so... i feel like a children painting in a colorbook :)

- I created a new layer and ordered it below the layer with the sketch. Then i paint with a hard brush (no soft edges on the brush).

Thoose with a digital drawing board should set the brush to change the size of the brush according to pen pressure, good for painting smaller regions without having to change size of the brush.

I started painting the objects that is in the background and far away from the viewer, in this case it's the sky.

**Tip 001 - Learn the keyboard shortcuts.**

I will soon write a short walkthrough on the most common shortcuts and add a link here. For now consult the Photoshop help.

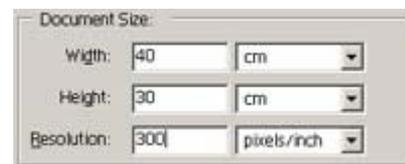
- After painting the base color of the sky i create a new layer adding it before the sky layer but still below the sketch layer. Then using same brush settings i painted the foreground forest. I used 2 layers so that i can edit the sky more easily after i started working on the foreground.

### Step 03 - DPI and The background



Until now i have worked with a small canvas, making it easy to paint big areas. But i want this to be printable in high resolution. So what we need to do now is to increase the canvas.

- In Adobe Photoshop 7.0 i choose in the Image menu "Image size". Photoshop now opens a new window where i can specify new size. In the "Document size" section i enter following:



This will make the painting huge and increase the filesize to 50 mb. Be aware that the memory and CPU usage will increase. Old computers should not be used for making printable paintings.

#### Info 001 - DPI.

DPI stands for DOTS PER INCH.

In other words, how many pixels that's printed /displayed on every inch. For screen / internet usage 72 in DPI is enough. For newspaper use 100-150 DPI. For high resolution prints use 250-300 DPI.

- I almost always start painting in the background because it can be really difficult to paint it after we have added details to the foreground. Also the skies color will be reflected on the foreground.

Making sure that the layer with the base color for the sky is active i start adding details. I use a soft airbrush pencil. Because of the change of the canvas size we must work with large brushes.

#### Tip 002 - Shortcut for eyedropper when painting

I use the keyboard shortcut for the "eyedropper" when using the brush tool. It's the "ALT" key on pc. So that way when i am painting i can easily pick up colors that i want to use by holding "ALT" and pressing on a color.

I don't do too much details, rather try to give the sky a texture that i'm satisfied with.

More information about my technique when i'm painting clouds will be in another tutorial. Please **notify me** if such tutorial is wanted.

#### Step 04 - Texturing the background



We go a step ahead against the viewer but still working in the background. The objects in the far background is usually very light or very dark. And details are not visible to the viewer. Although this rule is not often applied in my own paintings, i prefer details everywhere...

- New layer or choose the base foreground color layer. I used a brush that where small enough to make single lines (note: they are still quite large because of the huge canvas size). Adding base texture to the background trees.

I try to use different values and hues of the main color of the are where i'm painting. In this case i use different values of green. But dark and desaturated values. If i where to paint with the brightest green that we see in the foreground it had broken the depth.

#### Info 002 - Saturation / Desaturation.

Saturation express how much gray your color is mixed with. Desaturated images contains a large amount of grey. Example of artists using de-saturated colors is Linda Bergkvist (**Enayla**) and **Socar Myles**. I myself often use saturated colors.

#### Step 05 - Volcano



More texturing, started working on the volcano. I hadn't painted the sky everywhere (left the part of the volcano smoke). It took a while to repaint the sky so it covered the whole background. Then i started adding details to the volcano.

#### Link tips:

- **Handprint - Basics of perspective**
- **Handprint - Format proportions**

[Click here to see details.](#)

#### Step 06 - Getting clooser



More basic texturing, going forward against the viewer. I started on the tree that comes infront of the volcano. Worked on the first waterfall with texturing and detailing.

### Step 07 - Trying to fix composition



More details on the volcano. Felt that the volcano had some composition problems. Just having so bright red colors there ruins the mood. But by adding more of the same colors around making a transition between the colors somewhat fixes it.

So i added some lava or magma running down. Also added some more details to the trees.

#### Info 003 - Composition.

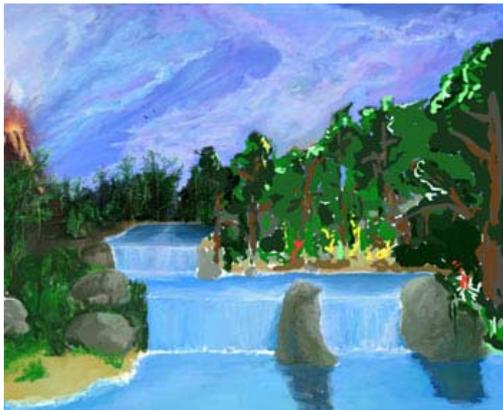
One of the most important issues in paintings is the composition. If a painting has a bad comp-osition it can ruin everything.

It helps comming from a design and movie background. Imagine this painting here to the left without the volcano... everything falls to the left.

Annoying and disturbs the mood that i wanted.

Composition can be learned by reading some design books and tutorials.

### Step 08 - The foreground



Not much to say.. Worked on the foreground Adding basic textures. Using brighter colors than i used in the background. More details added with a smaller pencil using a hard brush.

### Step 09 - More textures



I prefer working from left to right in my paintings. Now when i have finished the basic texturing on the foreground i continue on parts that i have neglected. I try to give depth to the forest by painting with dark colors first and add brighter colors above.

- The composition was still falling so i added some mountains in the background to keep it from slipping away. You can easily see that it helps.

#### Tip 003 - 100% Black

It's not often i paint with 100% black, nothing is really black. Try instead to paint with a very very dark value of the color in the surroundings.

### Step 10 - Adding details



Finally.

Everything has a basic texture. Now begins the slow but fun process of adding details. Using a small brush and shift the opacity and colors a lot i go trough the painting. In a a dark textured part i paint with a brighter and more saturated color in the same color or something that stands out. This pushes the details forward and they will "pop" out. Same technique in bright areas, just add dark details and they will stand out.

At this point i have some perspective errors..

My biggest weakness, i tried to fix it by removing one of the waterfalls. This also improved the mood and calmness of the painting. But there remains a couple of perspective problems.

### Step 11 - Details again...



Darkening parts so that i can use the above technique and add things that stands out. Adding more details everywhere again...

On a sidenote, water has no color of its own, it's based on the material, enviroment and with the lightning. The main source of color for water in this painting is the sky and the forest.

I'm adding reflections on the water further down.

### Step 12 - Realistic



Reality change, volcanos often tend to change the atmosphere and color the sky red. So i had to repaint the sky. Adding red and purple, enough so that i could do a nice fade to the blue. I darkened several areas, added stars to the darkest parts of the sky. Made minor color changes to the water to reflect the sky change.

#### Quote 001 - Socar Myles about realism

"However, knowing HOW to paint the pillar (or whatever you've got in your background) realistically is important. Before you get too stylized, you've got to have some foundation in realism. Looking at reference pictures so you at least understand the forms you are painting before you get too crazy with the artistic license is wise." - **Socar Myles**

### Step 13 - Details...

More details, darker, better mood. Added some shading in the water. Removed some stuff on the left part that destroys the composition.



**Step 14 - Waterfall**



I love painting waterfalls... Adding a lot of white and bright blue values to the foreground. Really pushing the background back and gives the painting good depth and mood.

I'm still trying to fix the perspective error. This time by modifying the beach and darken some parts.

**Step 15 - Fixing stuff**



The volcano had to go, it was ugly and the red lava/magma didn't fit in the color scheme. It was too outstanding and made the mood eerie.

- Added a moon :)

**Quote 002 - Fred Flick Stone about coloring**

"From all the artists I have learned from, the one thing most of them say is keep the image simple, keep the values simple, no more than 5, no less than 3. Less than three, the image becomes a graphic representation, go more than 5, and chaos ensues. This does not mean your image cannot have many colors. It can have all the color in the world so long as the value make up of the image remains in tact. " - **Sijun**

**Step 16 - Composition fixed**

Finally fixed the composition, adding a tree on the left that is quite high saved my day. I also merged the two stones, and added a third. I removed the beach in the foreground. They bright colors of the water and beach destroyed the mood. Much better this way.

- I darkened the middle forest alot. making better depth. Added more details everywhere.



### Step 17 - Details



In the previous step i darkened the forest so now i add single strands of leaves and bushes that are in a brighter value. Added more splash and details to the waterfall.

- I added reflections to the water. I copied the painting above the water into a new layer. This layer i resized and twisted using the shortcut "CTRL+T". I then mirror the layer and changing the opacity so that the water still is visible.

Next step was to erase the reflection on all places where there shouldn't be any reflection.

### Step 18 - Details



More details, this time focusing on the foreground tree. Adding leaves and grass.

### Step 19 - Almost done..

Almost final. After this step i go trough the painting adding FX details, such as sunrays, glowing fairys. Darkening parts. Adding some flowers that stand out in color and much more.

Then when finished i adda signature, save the original and smaller versions for internet use.



Visit <http://www.nalf.it> for FINAL painting.

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This tutorial can be found at <http://www.nalf.it> (updated and final version online).