

Exploring 9's Artistic Media Tool

Creating your own brush and spraylist

Improved over version 8

The way the artistic media tool is implemented in version 9 is vastly superior to what was done in version 8. Version 8 introduced the feature, but it was not nearly as well done as in 9. In version 8, it was strictly a freehand artistic tool. You chose a stroke and drew with it.

In version 9, you can not only draw with preset shapes or pressure sensitive strokes, but with special brushes and you can spray using a series of images.

Return of the PowerLine

For those of you that have been using the program a while, you might remember and may have even used the PowerLines feature in CorelDraw 5.

If not, realize that the now famous image of Heddy Lamar—the Grand Prize Drawing produced in Draw 5, by John Corkery—made heavy use of PowerLines. All of her hair and many other objects were done with this tool.

PowerLines were powerful, but inefficient. They tended to produce tons of nodes. Nevertheless, they were sorely missed by a lot of power users. Corel listened, and incorporated the functionality of PowerLines into the Artistic Media.

Freehand Creation or Apply to Curves

There are two ways to work with artistic media. You can either pick the tool and draw freehand with it, as was done in version 8. Functionality has been improved, because of the new node reduction/smoothing algorithms in Draw 9. This allows you to draw freehand—even with a mouse—and still produce smooth curves.

The other way, is to use any of the various tools one would use to create a curve, including: freehand tool, bezier, spiral, and even ellipse and rectangle tools. You simply draw your shape and then apply the artistic media stroke you want to it.

In either case, you can go back with the Shape Tool and modify the media stroke's shape. This is the commonality they share with the old PowerLines, the ability to edit the shape after creation. You simply click on the Shape Tool, and the underlying curve will be outlined and the nodes visible. Select a node and reshape the curve!

Using Artistic Media to Solve some Practical Problems

As cute as the sample brush strokes are, I haven't had occasion to use any of them in my work. But, I realized that there are a couple practical problems that I've encountered in past work, for which Artistic Media might provide a great solution.

Map Making: The first problem, was in creating maps... Something I've done fairly frequently. Professional maps denote different roadways, by using various thickness and

colored curves. But they're not simple open curves (outlines) with a single color. They have both a fill and outline.

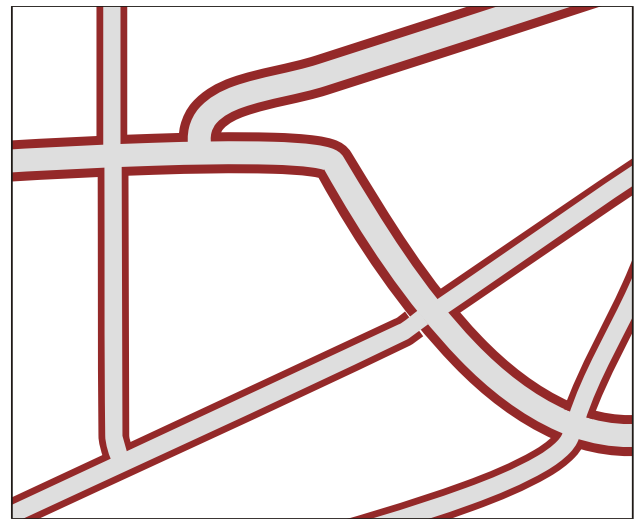
In the past, I would create two sets of outlines, one on top of another. The bottom set would be thicker and would thus produce the apparent outline. This works, but managing all those lines was a royal pain!

So how about Artistic Media? It turns out to be a simple solution. Simply create a brush from the group of objects shown below:

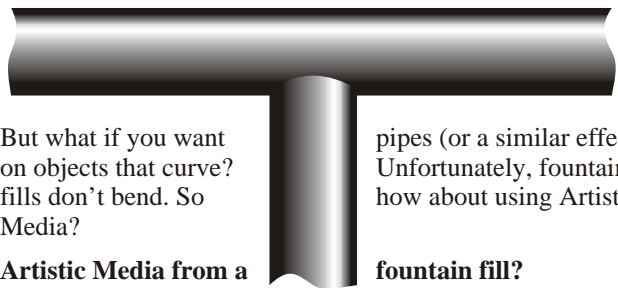
This is a very easy task. You open the Artistic Media docker, and click on the save button, with the objects that you wish to turn into a brush selected. A dialog asking if you want a brush or object sprayer comes up. (We want a brush). You name it, and it is now ready to apply.

Below are a couple "roads" of varying thicknesses created with the same brush. For serious map work, I might create several brushes, each with the characteristics for a particular road type.

Creating Piping: It is fairly easy to use a fountain fill, to



create what looks like metal pipes... As long as the pipe is straight. Here is an example:



But what if you want on objects that curve? fills don't bend. So Media?

Artistic Media from a fountain fill?
This was my first thought; create a shape similar to a horizontal section of the pipe done with the fountain fill, then turn it into an Artistic Media brush.

pipes (or a similar effect) Unfortunately, fountain how about using Artistic

fountain fill?
thought; create a shape similar to a horizontal section of the pipe done with the fountain fill, then turn it into an Artistic Media brush.

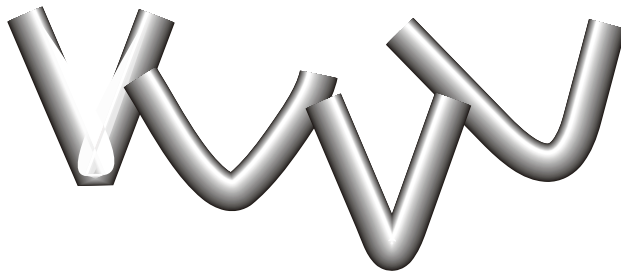
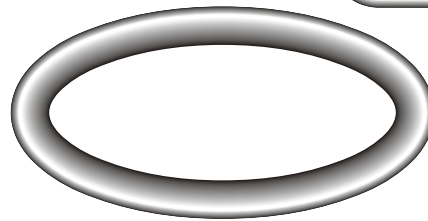
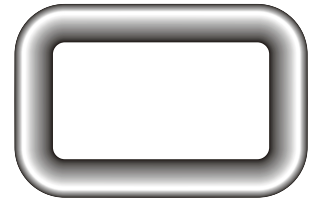
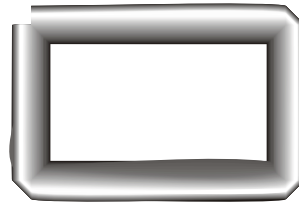
Unfortunately, the results were not what I had hoped for. At right is an example of what resulted:

How about a Blend?

At the CorelWorld conference I recently attended, Bob van Duuren, a very talented Draw user from the Netherlands, was demonstrating this exact thing. He used a blend to create his Artistic Media brush, and it worked like a charm.



One thing you need to avoid, however, are angles sharper than 90 degrees. At right is the brush applied to a regular rectangle, a rounded rectangle, and an ellipse. You can see that the sharp edged rectangle is having some problems.



Similarly, the “V” on the left, which was drawn with the freehand tool, is a mess. The other three “V’s” were drawn directly with the Artistic Media tool. The two on the right were then node edited.

Bill’s Photo-Paint Scripts:

Bill’s Scripts, produced by Bill Whelan. Available at <http://www.unleash.com/billw/index.html>. (Foster Coburn’s Unleashed Productions site.) These scripts all create text strings with various special effects applied. You can download bundles of 50 scripts for \$12.95 each. There are 6 bundles. We’ll take a look at a couple: Abrupt, Bronze, Burning Desire (using Animal Symbols), Crayons & Gold Nugget.