

Things that go bump in airbrush class

This is another in a series of lessons on art and drawing by special columnist David Messing. He has taught for eight years and operates an art store, Art Store and More, 18774 Middlebelt, Livonia. Messing encourages questions and comments from readers. You may write him at his store or c/o Observer Newspapers, 2352 Farmington Road, Farmington MI 48024.

By David P. Messing
special writer

OOPS! is an exclamation you would never want to hear during surgery. Although oops! is one of the exclamations I often hear in my airbrush classes.

You may know by now that there are a multitude of opportunities to goof with an airbrush. At the top of the long list of goofs most common to man (better make that persons) is the "catch your foot in hose" complaint.

This is the most common reason for breaking an airbrush. The six- to 10-foot hose is usually looped on the floor or over your knee and in the throes of creative expression it is easy to forget about the airbrush.

So you move or nudge or twist or bump however it happens, it is always unexpected and unwanted, but your airbrush somehow gets knocked to the floor.

The first time I knocked my airbrush to the floor, it seemed like it fell in slow motion. Before it hit the floor I thought of how could I afford to fix it when I spent all my money buying it? What was I going to do to finish my painting? How could I tell my wife I broke my airbrush?

Fortunately it was OK and I did the only thing there is to do to make sure that it didn't happen again. I bought an airbrush hanger which cost about 75 cents.

Actually a hanger is only a prevention. I am sure many readers have managed to nudge their airbrush right out of the hanger. I would like to dedicate that last sentence to Heidi, who after making payments on her airbrush, finally purchased her VL Paasche, walked back to my class, hooked up her brush and straightaway dropped and broke it.

NEXT ON the list is the "too much paint in

too little space" syndrome or the "centipede city" painter. With a single-action airbrush, it is important to stay the right distance away from the paper or board.

For example, if you are too close, too much paint will collect on the board and the air will blow little rivers of paint out of the excess. This also happens if you do bell move across the area fast enough. The result is a line with many little rivers of paint branching out on either side looking much like a centipede.

This is an even greater problem with those owning a dual-action airbrush. For this reason, I have noticed at the outset, those owning a single action seem to have an easier time doing the lessons than those with a dual action.

Here is the cure for "centipede city." Place your second digit on the button rather than your finger tip. It takes a much greater effort to pull your finger back, which seems to give you more "play" with the button. The finger tip is too flexible and gives you too much pull on demand.

I guarantee it will feel awkward at first but I also guarantee it will help. Third in the list of goofs would have to be the "staccato scribble stroke."

This mistake I often hear before I can see. In the class with everyone making long continuous sprays sometimes I will hear a rapid . . . ps . . . ps . . . ps . . . this is often accompanied by a nervous scribble-patterned stroke. Remember, depress the button and spray in slow and controlled patterns.

Of course there are too many goofs to list, but some noteworthy mistakes are "chief spray in the face," "splatter on the pants," "dirty tip blues" and "clean it later complain."

I FEEL that ink is the best medium to use with an airbrush while you are learning. It is thin and gives you no trouble becoming atomized. It is rich in coverage, which is important so you can see what pattern you are spraying. Ink cleans easily out of the airbrush and usually a quick rinse with water will do. Most inks are transparent, but with airbrush, transparency is of little use. Because of the nature of the spray, even opaque colors take on a form of transparency.

Higgins recently came out with a line of opaque pigmented inks which are my favorite for teaching. Dyes are too expensive to learn with. I remember one father and son to whom I recommended dyes.

Artifacts

The father returned the next day, somewhat heated, and said his son emptied his bottle in about 20 seconds of spraying. It is, of course, true in many areas of life, the less you know the more you waste.

So in the beginning it is more sensible to waste three ounces of ink at \$1.55 than to waste one ounce at \$1.40.

As you increase your ability it is nice to turn to gouche and/or dyes. With gouche you will encounter the "dirty tip blues" if you fail to thoroughly clean your airbrush after every session.

But I am a realistic person and I know that if your painting turns out great, you snap it off the easel and go show your critics, leaving a loaded airbrush behind.

Likewise, if your painting goes into the circular file or in the bottom of the bird cage, you walk away head drooped, again leaving a loaded airbrush behind. Days later you return to find your color cop is now welded into the airbrush, and Dick the Bruiser couldn't pull the button back.

Good thing airbrushes are hardy and with a sufficient cleaning can be restored to usefulness. Learn to take your airbrush apart and nine times out of ten you will find your own problems and save costly repair bills.

ONCE had a student say "I want to learn to airbrush but I don't want to cut stencils." I told him if he still had his receipt, he could probably get a full refund for his airbrush. You see, very little airbrushing is done free hand.

You need to use stencils — no matter how fine a line you can achieve with your airbrush. Paintings without the use of templates, stencils or friskets are too soft and make you rub your eyes in an effort to focus properly on the art work.

The name frisket probably has a great meaning in some other language but to me it sounds like something I could have with coffee and a little peanut butter. But frisket is a thin masking paper for blocking out areas from

over spray.

For example, let's say I snapped a picture of grandpa and that turned out to be the first time he ever really had both eyes opened at the same time. But in the background was a crooked lampshade, someone's T-shirt on the chair and the dog ran by as the shutter was snapped.

No problem: Simply put frisket over grandpa, carefully cut along his outline, then peel off any excess. Now spray out the chaotic background and airbrush in studio lighting.

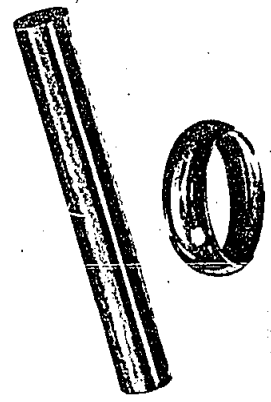
Frisket comes in light weight and regular weight, treated and untreated. Untreated requires you to paint on an adhesive, while treated already has a low adhesive on the roll. I prefer the treated because it is faster to use, it peels off easily and I am lazy and don't want to mess with adhesive.

There is also a liquid masking fluid which is sold under many name brands. Maskoid is very popular and they now make a special photo maskoid. Both frisket and liquid frisket work well. However, I should like to caution those using treated frisket paper. When you first peel the frisket from it's backing it is important to allow it to lay open to the air for 30 to 60 seconds.

This gives the chemicals in the adhesive time to cure. If you fail to do this, often the adhesive will release and stick to the artwork, and that, my friend, is "cryin' time."

YOU CAN'T, of course, cut frisket on a T-shirt, but you can still get clean lines. Simply draw the design on oak tag board and cut it out to make a stencil. Then spray the back of the stencil parts with spray glue and let it sit until the glue becomes tacky. Then place the stencil parts on the shirt and spray. Ope! I'm running out of room again so I will continue next week with some simple lessons and tips on airbrushing.

ARTFUL HINT: For a fish scale pattern, tape five or six pennies in a row on a 3-by-5 card. Do this so one half of the coins are off the card. Now airbrush on illustration board holding the card with your free hand. This will produce semi-circle patterns. Now alternate patterns and spray directly over the coins. Repeat to fill required area.



Q: What is the secret to making things look shiny?

A: Well, it won't be a secret if I tell but I will give you a hint.
Keep the darkest darks next to the lightest lights. Things that are wet or polished must have clean white or light highlights. By softening the edge of the highlight you reduce the amount of the shine.

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Kirk hosts brass society

A performance by the Detroit Brass Society will be given at 7:30 p.m. Sunday at Kirk in the Hills.

The program of music for brass instruments and percussion is the third concert of the 1983 series which is open to the public at no charge.

Featured will be Gabriel's "Canzona

nini" and "Tocatta" by Bonelli, both antiphonal compositions. Scott Schroeder and Robert Brockett, trumpets and Thomas Cook, trombone, are some of the musicians.

The Kirk is at 1340 West Lone Lake, Bloomfield Hills.

Guitar series set

The second concert of the Kithara Classical Guitar Series will be given at 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 20, at Birmingham Unitarian Church, 651 Woodward, Bloomfield Hills.

The guitarists will be Peter Tollas and John Hall from the University of Windsor. They will play music by Bach, Carulli, Faure, Albeniz and George Gershwin.

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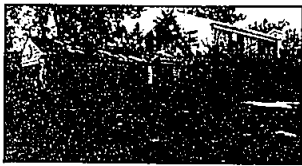


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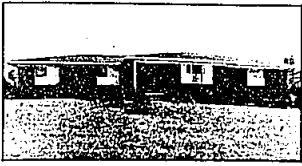
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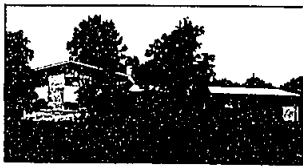
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