

Try an airbrush — it's almost like cheating'

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 studio c/o Observer Newspapers, 23333 Farmington Road, Farmington Hills MI 48336.

By David Messing
special writer

The headline on this story is a sign I would like to do for my store. I thought of the wording four years ago and in that length of time I have painted many signs for many stores but have never painted my own sign.

Whenever I put off doing something I should or want to do, I think of a small strip of moulding outside our bathroom door.

When you walk into our bathroom it is very important to drag one foot over the stone slab across the doorway. This

pushes the moulding up against the stone slab.

Most of the time you're leaving the bathroom, one of your feet nudges the small piece of trim and it falls. It's a nice place. The "V" is solid except until someone goes back into the bathroom.

One of my good friends always teases me about taking a few minutes to fix the molding, and I always say, "yeah, I got to nail that down." This term is now used for my most neglected job.

Shortly after the invention of the wheel, Paasche invented the airbrush.

Really, I don't know who invented the airbrush, but I do know that Paasche is the oldest manufacturer. For years Paasche was the only airbrush I had ever known about.

There are long airbrushes, short, light, and heavy airbrushes. Some come in wood boxes, plastic and cardboard boxes. Their names vary from hard to pronounce, to mysterious! But of them all I prefer Paasche.

Compared to their new sleek competitors, the Paasche airbrush looks like a Nash Rambler at a Corvette swap meet. Despite its 1950 design, it is still the best airbrush for the money. For one reason, if you need some little replacement part there is no wait for

an order to arrive from Japan. I appreciate this more than most, because I repair airbrushes. As a matter of fact we stock every part of the H & V, most of the V and some of the AB models.

I'M NOT SAYING that the many other airbrushes are inferior to the Paasche line. I think that they are beautiful to look at and terrific to work with.

It is just that the newest design and latest style cost you money. I will make a comparison to prove my point. I carry at the Art Store, the Badger XP 100 which is a very nice airbrush. The "XP" means extra fine, the "100" means "22" people watched as "100" guy designed it. This airbrush comes with a "V" set for \$64.

The Paasche "V" set comes with a 6 foot hose, one extra nothead (about a \$10 item) several extra noheads, one color cup and a bottle for about \$60.

The Badger "111" is also an excellent airbrush. I like the feel of it in my hand because it is small and light-weight.

Most airbrush manufacturers make the same basic brushes and it is important to compare them accurately.

"Applies to apples and oranges to oranges," as the used car salesmen say. Usually there is a bottom of the line brush which is an "external mix" design. In other words, the force of the air blowing out the tip causes a suction which pulls the paint up from the bottle

Artifacts

or color cup. Then the paint becomes atomized by the force of air.

This mixture of paint and air takes place outside of the airbrush as compared to an external mix airbrush. The bigger manufacturers offer two lines. One is very cheap and cost around \$15, but if you only want a craft airbrush it is a good deal.

If your needs are a little more critical, then try the better line which comes with an assortment of tips and bottles for around \$26 to \$30.

NOW WE take a giant step when we move to the "dual action internal mix" line of brands. The internal mix means that the mixture of paint and air takes place within the airbrush.

The dual action means that you depress the button for air and pull the button back for paint. The less you pull back the less paint and the finer the line. The more you pull the button back the more paint and the wider the line.

So here we compare only the dual action internal mix airbrushes. I would like to point out, too, that there is one more feature to confuse the issue. You must compare "slow feed" to "slow feed" and "fast feed" to "fast feed."

"Slow feed" means that the supply of paint is slow, which allows you to get in

close and paint tiny, restricted areas which is often the case in photo retouching.

"Fast feed" is where the basic requirement for airbrushing which allows you the ability to do very small work and by merely pulling the button back you can cover large areas.

There is one top of the line turbine airbrush which Paasche offers. It's basic operation is that the air pressure drives a small turbine causing a fine feed.

On the back of the stroke it collects paint on the tip of the needle and on the forward stroke the paint is blown off the tip of the needle by the air tip. This, of course, makes a tiny spray of paint and is well suited for its primary function, photo retouching.

The problem is that they look and sound exactly like a dentist's drill and — oh yes — it costs about \$169.

Here is a good way to look at buying an airbrush. If you are 10 to 15 years old and only like painting models and small items, you need only a \$15 set by Paasche.

If, however, you like to draw and feel the need to try an airbrush, look into the more paint and the wider the line.

If you are 16 to 110 and loved your "H" set, then move up to the "VL" set which is \$78. This set includes about \$10 in extras that no other company offers. By the way, hold onto your "H"

set. I thought I was so cool when I bought my "VL" that I sold my "H" to some kid. Well, one week later "cool" Dave had to go borrow the "H" back from the kid, to spray a heavy casting paint on a back drop.

The "VL" set allows you to do anything you want. You can spray thin watery dyes and inks and merely by changing tips and needles you can spray acrylics to heavy lacquers and enamels.

An experienced artist can paint hairlines with "VL", but the supply of paint is rapid. After you have tried or considered the "VL" look at the "V". Although it is more expensive, it is sure fun to paint with and because of its slow feed qualities is usually easier to use. A "V" set cost about \$69.

Next week, I will cover the care and use of an airbrush. But I must close now for two reasons. One, I have run out of the room and two, I have to go all that piece of molding down!

ARTFUL HINT: For a finer spray, when airbrushing a small area, get in close and loop the hose through your free hand. Then cut the air pressure by pinching the loop of the hose.

Q: I can't get a satisfactory spray out of my airbrush, what is wrong?

A: Usually it is not the airbrush, if you have a dotted or stipple look spray. Your paint is too thick or the air pressure is too low or your tip is too dirty.



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