

# Easing airbrush goofs

**Y**OU MAY know by now that there are a multitude of opportunities to goof with an airbrush.

At the top of the long list 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. In the throes of creative expression, it is easy to forget about the airbrush. So when you move, nudge or twist, bump or however it happens — and it is always unexpected and unwanted — your airbrush somehow gets knotted to the floor.

To prevent this from happening you can buy an airbrush hanger which costs about 75 cents. Actually a hanger is only a precautionary measure. I'm sure many readers have managed to nudge their airbrush right out of the hanger.

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, thus looking much like a centipede. This is an even greater problem with those owning a dual action airbrush.

**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 on the list of goofs would have to be the "staccato scribble stroke." This mistake I often hear before I can see.

In my airbrush class, I hear everyone making long continuous sprays, sometimes I will bear 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



artifacts  
**David Messing**

the face," "splatter on the pants," "dirty tip blues" and "clean-later complaints."

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. Only because of the nature of the spray, even opaque colors take on a form of transparency. Higgins came out with a line of opaque pigmented inks which are my favorite for teaching. As you increase your ability, it is nice to turn to gouache and/or dyes. With gouache, you will encounter the "dirty tip blues" if you fail to thoroughly clean your airbrush, after each session.

**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 to the bottom of the bird cage, you walk away head drooped, again leaving behind a loaded airbrush. Days later you return to find your color cup welded into the airbrush, and Hulk Hogan couldn't pull the button back. Good thing airbrushes are hardy and with a sufficient cleaning can be restored to usefulness.**

Most people who come into my store wanting to buy an airbrush, aren't really aware there is such a variety. Be sure to ask before you buy. Tell whoever is waiting on you what you are using it for. It makes a difference.

David Messing is an area art teacher who also owns the Art Store & More on Middlebelt Road in Livonia.

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designing ways  
**Eve Garvin**

bed. The bed is formed from two separate mattresses and this allows you to be restless without disturbing your partner.

Eve Garvin has been an interior designer in the area for many years. She welcomes comments and questions from readers. Send those to her in care of this newspaper, 36231 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150-30

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