

# Illustration work

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Digital artists should be using their scanners to capture anything that inspires them. If you're an Illustrator, scan in anything you see that catches your eye, however abstract. Chuck it all in a folder on your hard disk and build up a veritable digital sketchbook. You never know when a few fish scales might come in handy...

## **3D objects**

Don't be afraid to put some 3D objects on your scanner, you may be pleasantly surprised at how well this works. The objects appear sharp and the lighting is always even. Sometimes this is quicker and easier than using photography. Use the scanning tent as a backdrop to even out the reflected light and to act as a shadow catcher.

## **Acetate**

Cover the glass of your scanner with a sheet of clear acetate when scanning dirty or wet objects. You don't want to accidentally scratch the glass or spend hours cleaning it. If you are scanning anything wet, or anything with fine particles, tape the acetate down with masking tape so that nothing can leak underneath. Make sure to tape down all of the edges securely.

## **Acetate layers**

You can achieve some interesting results by using layers of acetate. Cut up some acetate sheets with a pair of scissors, then layer the pieces on top of each other on your scanner. Feel free to

tape some of the layers together using transparent Scotch tape. There will be noticeable differences in brightness where there are multiple layers of acetate. Also, the edges of the tape and cut-up pieces will catch the light in an interesting way.

## **Crumpled paper**

Try crumpling a regular sheet of paper into a ball. Flatten it out and put it on the scanner. In this instance leave the lid open. You don't want the lid to flatten out all of those deep folds you just created. You can achieve plenty of depth doing this. Also try using your crumpled paper as a background for scanning 3D objects.

## **Food**

With the acetate still on your scanner, have a look and see what you can find in your refrigerator. Items such as steaks make great images; picture a close-up of that marbling effect where the fat combines with the meat. Scales of fish are also useful, especially when enlarged in Photoshop to look like shingles. The inside of something like a sweet red pepper can look like an other-worldly, organic environment.

## **Liquids**

Place a clear baking pan or casserole dish on top of your scanner. Pour in a bit of water, add some cooking oil and mix it around. Add some food colouring for a different result. Use the back light and scan the concoction to create a liquid psychedelic 1960s background. Again, you may have to play with your scanner software settings to get the brightness right, but it makes a cool Grateful Dead-style concert backdrop.

## Organic materials

Once your scanner is covered with acetate, try creating some scans of organic elements. Build up layers of gravel, sand, dirt and rocks on top of your scanner. Don't be afraid to mix it up a little and scan it again. You can create a whole series of scans by simply stirring up the mixture and rescanning it.

## Paint and thick liquids

Still on top of the acetate, squeeze out some paint from acrylic or oil paint tubes. Let it mix together, and try adding some paint thinner. Scan it, then move the paint around. This is another situation where you can create a number of different scans just by manipulating the paint on the scanner.

If you're going to create a mess like this, you might as well capture plenty of images.

## Sharpening

Do not enable any sort of sharpening in your scanner software. Do any sharpening you need or want to do in Photoshop. Unsharp mask is much more flexible and convenient than any scanner driver. Also, you may prefer the softer look of a scan when you see it raw and unsharpened. It's nice to have both options.

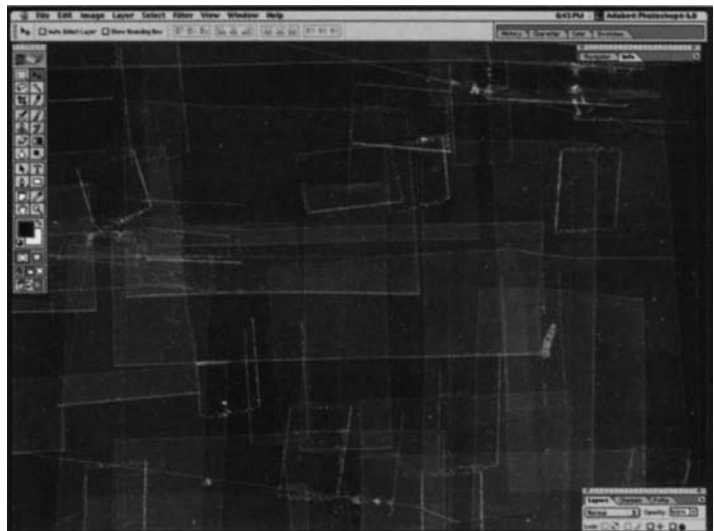
## Use a back light

Try scanning translucent objects: things like shards of broken glass. Leave the lid of the scanner open and shine a desk lamp or any bright light on the objects from behind to create illuminous images. You may have to play around with your scanner software settings to avoid results that are too dark or too light.

## Use a scanning tent

Obviously you won't want to close your scanner lid on a pile of dirt, wet paint or fish. Try using something like a styrofoam food container lid.

Place the open end face down on the scanner surface, covering the items you are scanning. This provides a good backdrop and will help keep reflected light even, so if your scanner automatically calibrates light and dark areas it won't be confused by having the lid open.



The result of layering bits and pieces of acetate on top of the scanner and taping them together. Try this one in Photoshop as a layer with a blending mode of Soft Light. Use it to overlay a scan of a black and white photo.