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**Airbrushing:
A User's Guide
To Getting
Started**

featuring:

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Airbrushes

MEDEA
Professional Textile
Colors

Com-Art
Artist's Airbrush
Colors



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Iwata
starts

Airbrushing: Getting Started

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Introduction

Congratulations! You are now the proud owner of an IWATA airbrush. No matter what your intended application may be, if you have never before used an airbrush, you must first become familiar with the mechanics of the tool. This guide is designed to acquaint you with the airbrush and introduce you to the fundamentals of airbrush technique, with some specifics on airbrushing t-shirts.

Part 1

The Airbrush

Airbrush: A small, air-operated tool that sprays paint. It resembles, and is held like, a pen.

Today, airbrushes are used in painting for a multitude of applications. Artists who use the airbrush will generally have several different types (external or internal mix) as well as styles (gravity- or siphon-feed) on hand for a variety of uses. Considerations are based on the type of effect desired (coarse or soft spray), size of area to be painted and type of material to be sprayed.

Become familiar with the following terms:

internal mix—a type of airbrush where the paint is atomized inside the airbrush tip (All IWATA airbrushes are internal mix, including the new Eclipse.)

external mix—a type of airbrush where the paint is atomized outside the airbrush tip (SprayCraft Airbrush).

single action—a method of activating an airbrush whereby depressing the trigger delivers both air and paint simultaneously (SprayCraft Airbrush).

dual-action—a method of activating an airbrush whereby depressing the trigger delivers air and drawing back on the trigger releases paint (All IWATA airbrushes are dual-action, including the new Eclipse).

bottom feed—a siphon-feed system where paint is drawn up from a reservoir (jar or color cup) mounted underneath the airbrush (IWATA HP-BC and BE, Eclipse, and LPH95).

side feed—a siphon-feed system where paint is drawn from a reservoir (color cup) mounted on the side of the airbrush (IWATA HP-SB and Custom Micron SC).

gravity feed—the system where paint is drawn into an airbrush from a reservoir mounted on top of the airbrush (IWATA HP-C, HP-A, B and C, Custom Micron B and C, RG-2, LPH94 and LPS-1).

Part 1 - The Airbrush...

Choosing an Airbrush

External Mix - In external mix airbrushes, such as the SprayCraft Airbrush, the air and paint are mixed outside the tip, giving a coarse (stippled) spray. The external mix airbrush is ideal for spraying large areas to develop flat, continuous color. It is also handy for spraying thick or high viscosity materials, such as acrylics or varnishes. In addition, this is the least expensive airbrush and the simplest to operate. Most painters who use airbrushes will have one handy for a variety of applications.

Internal Mix - Internal mix airbrushes produce a very soft spray that mimics the dot pattern of a photograph. These airbrushes, originally developed for the commercial art field, are used in fine art to develop sharp focus realistic paintings or abstract illusionistic works or wherever a soft, delicate spray is required. Many painters have different types of internal mix airbrushes on hand for different job requirements.

A gravity feed, internal mix airbrush, such as the IWATA Model HP-C, is utilized in acrylic painting for fine line work (and it is acrylics that most artists use when working on canvas). With a gravity feed airbrush, the paint is loaded into a top-mounted color cup which enables the spraying of extremely fine lines at a fairly low air pressure—15 to 20 pounds. The lower the air pressure, the slower the artist can move his hand; and the slower the artist moves his hand, the more control he has over the spray. Also, because of the design, this airbrush cleans quickly for fast color changes.

When working larger and needing more volume of paint, e.g. background work or murals, the artist may choose to work with a siphon- or bottom-feed airbrush, such as the IWATA Models HP-BC or Eclipse. This airbrush is adaptable to various size jars that plug into the bottom of the airbrush and enable the artist to work with a large volume of paint for extended lengths of time with the convenience of only periodic refills. Since the jars plug easily into the bottom of the airbrush, quick color changes can be made. When using a bottom-feed airbrush, the artist can lay out his or her palette in a variety of jars. The colors are ready to be sprayed, and one jar is filled with the appropriate cleaner. (When airbrushing acrylics, use Medea Airbrush Cleaner.) In this way, the artist can spray one color, plug in

Part 1 - The Airbrush...

Part 2 - Air Sources...

the cleaner to flush the airbrush and then go to the next color quickly and with ease.

Part 2

Air Sources

When you are first learning airbrush technique, the process can be intimidating. Not only do you have to learn a new painting technique, but you must learn how to use the equipment that goes along with it, as well. Unlike a paintbrush, the airbrush must be attached to an air source to be operated. Here are some simple instructions to follow for the three basic types of air sources available: compressor, carbonic gas tank and propellant can.

Become familiar with the following terms:

air source—a device or unit containing, or capable of producing, pressurized air.

cfm—a measurement of air: cubic feet per minute.

moisture filter—a filter for removing water from air.

psi—a measurement of air pressure: pounds per square inch.

air regulator—a device for adjusting air pressure (psi).

Diaphragm Compressor (Air Medea Silent Compressor) - This compressor is usually designed to propel one airbrush. All compressors have 1/4" pipe thread fittings to attach airbrush hoses. On a diaphragm compressor, the airbrush hose is attached directly to the 1/4" fitting with no air regulator, moisture or oil filters attached beforehand. All airbrush hoses have a 1/4" fitting designed to be screwed onto the compressor. It is recommended that an in-line moisture filter be used in the airbrush hose. The hose can be purchased with a built-in moisture filter, or one can be inserted after cutting the hose 18" from where the airbrush is attached.

Piston Compressor - This compressor is usually more powerful than a diaphragm compressor and produces more air than normally needed to propel an airbrush. Therefore, the air needs to be restricted before it reaches the air hose. This is accom-

Part 2 - Air Sources...

plished by attaching an air regulator (Medea F A600 or F A700) to the 1/4" threads that come from the compressor. The air regulator usually has an attached moisture filter which captures the moisture that is developed inside the compressor before it reaches the air hose. If the piston compressor uses oil, then an oil filter must also be attached after the regulator and before the hose to remove any oil that may work its way into the air source. Attach the airbrush hose—with or without an in-line moisture filter—after the regulators and filters. Medea carries a full line of accessories to meet your needs.

Propellant Cans (Medea SprayCraft Air Propellant) - Propellant cans are an inexpensive substitute for a compressor. The regulator is screwed onto the top of the can. In the center of the regulator is a brass screw that activates the propellant. **NOTE:** Before attaching the regulator to the propellant can, make sure that the brass screw is totally unscrewed so you don't inadvertently activate the propellant while attaching the regulator. Once the regulator is attached, a vinyl hose is screwed onto the threads of the regulator. One end attaches to the regulator and the other end attaches to the airbrush. Once the airbrush is attached, you can then turn the brass screw clockwise to activate the propellant.

Carbonic Gas Tank - The third method of propelling the airbrush is with a carbonic gas tank. The tank is filled with CO₂ or nitrogen and is under extremely high pressure (800psi), so caution is advised when hooking it up. Each tank requires a regulator specifically designed for carbonic gas tanks. This device enables the adjustment of pressure to the user's requirements. The braided airbrush hose is attached to the 1/4" male thread on the regulator, and the other end is attached to the airbrush. When using a carbonic gas tank, there is no need for either an oil filter or a moisture filter.

After the airbrush hose is attached to the air source and the airbrush is attached to the hose, you will need an airbrush holder to enable you to set down the airbrush so it doesn't tip and spill paint, such as the Medea Airbrush Holder with regulator bracket. Now you're all set to begin airbrushing.

Part 3

Airbrush Colors

Com-Art Airbrush Colors by Medea

Com-Art Airbrush Colors are designed specifically for use with the airbrush, but can also be applied with the paintbrush. These pre-reduced colors are available in both opaque and transparent formulas.

There are 27 rich, dense colors in opaque that spray smoothly and resist clogging. Com-Art heavily-pigmented opaque paints produce brilliant results and accurate four-color separations when reproduced. They are available in 1, 4, 16, and 32 ounce and gallon sizes. Also available are six neutral grays, along with warm and cool additives, for black and white photographic retouching or illustration.

The Com-Art transparent colors are a perfect match for the Com-Art opaque colors. Eighteen non-fading, permanent transparent colors are available. These are intermixable with the opaques, can be worked over top for glazing techniques, and are available in the same sizes as the opaques.

Medea Airbrush Cleaner is used for cleaning the airbrush when using these or any other water-soluble paints. It is ready to use, fast-acting, odorless and environmentally safe. Remember—always spray in a well-ventilated area whenever using airbrush paint or cleaner.

TIP: Medea Airbrush Cleaner can also be used as a liquid eraser for Medea Com-Art Colors. When working on a smooth surface (hot press), Com-Art opaque and transparent colors can be wiped off with Medea Airbrush Cleaner. Use a little cleaner on a cotton swab, paper towel or soft rag to clean off large areas of paint or wipe down to the white illustration board for bright highlights. Practice this technique, you'll find it helpful.

Medea Textile Airbrush Colors

Medea Textile Airbrush Colors are pre-reduced paints designed specifically for airbrush use on T-shirts, fabric and leather. They are ready to be sprayed directly from the bottle with no further reduction. You may choose from 18 standard transparent colors, 7 heavily

Part 3 - Airbrush Colors...

Part 4 - Getting Started...

pigmented opaques, 7 fluorescents, 4 metallics and 2 grays. These paints are free-flowing, brilliant and non-clogging. The non-clogging nature is due to a special additive called “the lube,” which provides a flow-enhancer that allows for hours of hassle-free spraying. It also allows for better fabric absorption that prevents fading of color from repeated washings. Note that the paint must be heat-set to lock the paint into the fabric before washing.

Heat-Setting Instructions:

- Conveyer: 320 degrees for 20 minutes.
- Heat Press: 375 degrees for 30 seconds.
- Conventional Iron: Cotton setting for 2 minutes.
- Heat Gun: Rotating motion for 30 seconds.

Part 4

Getting Started

Many users of the airbrush are self-taught and have, in many cases, struggled to learn airbrush technique on their own. Some individuals are successful and some become frustrated. Getting started often gives the most difficulty. Here are suggestions for those who wish to learn airbrush technique on their own.

—Start with a dual-action airbrush, such as the IWATA Model HP-C. Once you learn how to use a dual-action airbrush, you can use any airbrush.

—Start by using pre-reduced paints (Com-Art Airbrush Colors) or inks so that you can airbrush without being concerned about reduction formulas and properly thinned and strained paints. This eliminates the frustration caused by a clogged airbrush. These potential problems can be tackled after you feel comfortable with the airbrush.

Materials List:

Internal mix airbrush

Airbrush hose

Com-Art Airbrush Colors - Opaques - Kit A

Pad of airbrush paper or illustration board

Frisket film

Part 4 - Getting Started...

Frisket knife

Air source

#4H pencil

Get a pad of white, two-ply drawing or Bristol paper. Work achromatically on this paper with black drawing ink or paint (Com-Art). Just spray; don't try to be creative and do a painting. Simply get the paint to come out of the airbrush. Learn the triggering mechanism—always down first for air and then back for paint (with a dual-action airbrush). Make lots of mistakes and learn from them.

Start with very basic exercises. Remember that the resultant effect is determined by how much paint is sprayed in conjunction with how close the airbrush is held to the work surface. A small amount of paint very close results in a fine line; a large amount of paint very close results in a mistake.

Begin by spraying little dots—hold the airbrush very close to the work surface and spray a quick “blast” of paint. Then practice airbrushing thin lines. (Anyone can spray wide lines!) These are achieved by spraying a small amount of paint close to the work surface while your hand is moving. Beware the “barbell effect,” which is globs of paint that appear at the beginning and end of a line when you are first learning. This is caused by hesitation or not moving the hand while paint is being sprayed. Remember, you must move your hand steadily.

Once you have mastered the dots and lines, move on to soft gradations, also called “vignettes.” This soft, gradation of spray is used to give airbrush work a three-dimensional feel. It is achieved by spraying back and forth across the page in overlapping passes while holding the airbrush about 6" from the work surface. Work slowly. This mist of spray, when done properly, will have the appearance of fog.

While going through these exercises, you will become familiar with the airbrush—how it is used and what it will do. The key to airbrush technique is to work slowly. Don't begin by immediately blasting a lot of paint. This defeats the purpose of airbrush—to achieve a soft, gradation effect, not an opaque blob. Remember you can always add more paint, but you will have a difficult time removing it. After you feel comfortable using the airbrush, you can move on to more

Part 4 - Getting Started...

Part 5 - Frisketing...

sophisticated exercises, such as geometric shapes with the use of frisket film.

Part 5

Frisketing

While practicing with the airbrush free-hand, you made dots, lines and vignettes. Look at them and you'll notice that the marks made with the airbrush free-hand always appear soft and out-of-focus. This is caused by the overspray that drifts above and beyond the direction of the spray.

To eliminate the softness and obtain a hard, sharp-focused edge, you must spray through a stencil—commonly called a frisket in airbrush illustration, but a stencil in T-shirt painting—or around an object. In this way you block the overspray and create the edge of a shape. Frisket film, a thin sheet of self-adhering plastic, is the material used to make the frisket. It is self-adhering and is used to cover a contour line drawing. The airbrusher cuts through the frisket film with a stencil knife to open up areas that are to be sprayed. Note that when airbrushing on T-shirts or fabric, acetate stencils should be used.

Some recommendations follow:

—When you peel off the protective backing to expose the frisket film, save the backing paper and use it to hold cut pieces of frisket for reuse. After removing the backing from the frisket, lay it over your line drawing and rub the air bubbles out to the perimeter.

—Don't press down hard on the frisket film or it may be difficult to remove.

—Cut with a sharp blade. Practice scoring the film without cutting into your paper, and change blades often.

—Don't leave frisket film on your work for long periods of time (24 hours or more) or it may become permanently adhered.

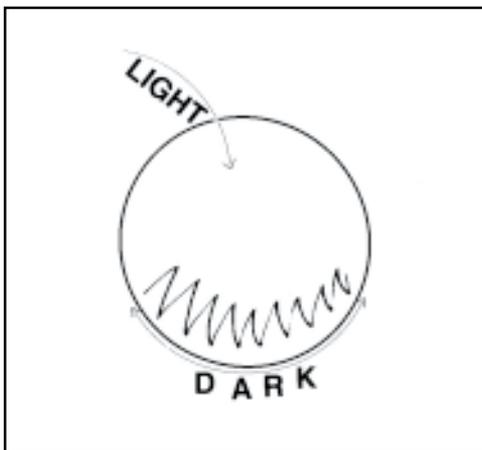
—After you have practiced cutting frisket, spray around the edges to see how it works. Move the cut shapes around the page to create a small abstract painting.

Part 6

Geometric Shapes Exercises

Now that you feel comfortable with the airbrush, have worked with frisket film and know how to develop hard-edged lines, it's time to move on to fundamental exercises.

Geometric shapes have always been used to teach basics of art. It is said that all objects brought down to their simplest visual levels are made up of basic geometric shapes. The airbrush, because of the soft dots of the spray, has the ability to render objects three-dimensionally.



Sphere - When a sphere is rendered with an airbrush using black ink and frisket film, it ends up looking like a black and white photograph of a ball with a three-dimensional appearance.

1. On a sheet of paper (a minimum 145lb. weight or two-ply, 50% rag content, hot or cold press) use a compass and a No. 4H pencil to draw a circle.
2. Remove the protective backing and apply the self-adhering frisket film. Smooth out any air bubbles.
3. Using a frisket knife, cut around the circle. Remember not to cut into the paper.
4. Remove the frisket film from the area to be painted (center of the circle or sphere).

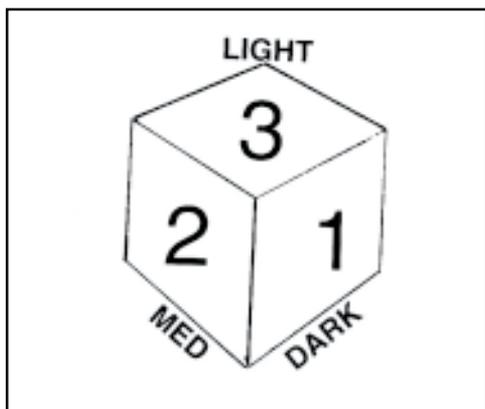
NOTE: At this point you are ready to airbrush. Let's say that the light is coming onto this sphere from the upper left-hand corner, so the highlight of the sphere will be at the top left and the dark of the shadow will be at the bottom right.

Part 6 - Geometric Shapes Exercises...

5. Load the airbrush with a pre-reduced black airbrush color (Medea Com-Art) and begin to spray it onto the surface of the paper. When you spray a shape such as a sphere, move your hand in the direction of the shape. In this case that would be an arc, so spray the paint onto the lower right-hand side and keep the upper left (the highlight) paint-free.

NOTE: When spraying the paint onto the surface, do it in slow, overlapping movements, slowly building up the paint to the desired intensity. Let the airbrush overspray that drifts out onto the work surface develop the value changes from black to gray to white that make the sphere look rounder. Make sure that when you spray the paint, you release the trigger at the end of each pass—on/off, on/off—to avoid the barbell effect (see Part 4).

6. Once you have airbrushed the sphere to your satisfaction, gently remove the frisket film that remains on the background. You will see an exacting hard-edged line around the perimeter of the sphere where the frisket covered the white of the paper. The overspray from the airbrush came off with the frisket film, and the object that you have just painted will look like a ball. Remember, practice makes perfect!



Cube - The rendering of the cube presents a particular challenge. Unlike the sphere, which is simply one opening in the frisket, the cube has three separate planes. One key point to remember in this exercise is once you establish a hard-edged line in the darkest dark, it is virtually impossible to cover up. This statement will make more sense as you

progress through the airbrushing of a cube.

1. Using a 4H pencil, draw the three planes of a cube on a sheet of paper. (With a 4H pencil you can erase—with a kneaded eraser—pencil lines that may show up in the rendering without marring the surface of the paper.)

Part 6 - Geometric Shapes Exercises...

2. Cover your drawing with a sheet of frisket film.
3. With a stencil knife and a straight edge, cut the straight lines that define the perimeter of the cube and the three lines that separate the planes. We will number these planes: right-hand #1, left-hand #2 and top #3.
4. Assume that the light is shining on this cube from the upper left-hand corner. The darkest plane will be #1, medium value plane will be #2 and the lightest plane will be #3. Remove the frisket film from plane #1. Load your airbrush with black Com-Art and spray plane #1 dark. Do it by spraying overlapping passes, slowly bringing it up to an opaqueness. Make the passes first back and forth, and then up and down to get even coverage. If you begin to see wet paint puddling on the frisket film, you are spraying too much paint too quickly. Stop and let it dry.
5. Now that plane #1 is sprayed dark, remove the frisket film from plane #2. What will appear is an exacting hard-edged line that separates one plane from the other. The only way this hard-edged line can be obliterated is by painting the adjacent plane, #2, equally as dark. You don't want to do this, since it will defeat your purpose. Without re-covering plane #1, airbrush in plane #2 with slow overlapping passes, stopping when it becomes half the value of #1.
6. Now that you have planes #1 and #2 rendered, remove the frisket film covering #1. What should appear are hard-edged lines that give the shape of plane #1. This is your lightest plane and should be painted 50% of the value of plane #2. Just a few passes with the airbrush are necessary.
7. Now that all three planes have been painted dark to light, remove the remaining frisket film that covers the background. What should appear is a cube that looks very three-dimensional.

NOTE: If you wish to paint each plane a distinct color, you must replace the removed frisket film over the previously painted plane before painting the next to keep one color from drifting onto another.

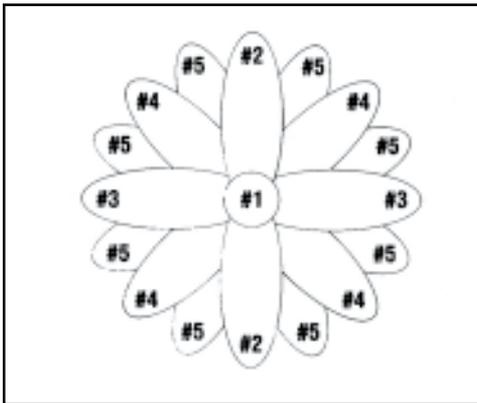
Practice, practice, practice! By devoting one hour a day to practicing simple exercises, you will become proficient in airbrush technique in less time than you can imagine.

Part 7

Painting A Flower

In this exercise you will learn a simple method of developing objects in space. A key to painting with an airbrush is to develop the subject matter from the background to the foreground (which is similar to traditional watercolor technique). By utilizing this system, you can develop images with a minimum amount of frisketing.

Draw the illustration below on a sheet of paper. Notice how the various petals come out from behind each other and exist on numerous planes. The closest object to you is number 1; out from behind it comes number 2; then the 3's, the 4's and the 5's. **NOTE:** As a rule of thumb, objects that exist on the same plane that are not adjacent to each other are given the same number and can be painted at the same time.



1. Cover the drawing with a sheet of frisket film. Cut around the objects to be painted starting with the closest object to you and then working on back into space: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. The reason for starting at the closest plane and working on back is that it orientates you as to where in space the objects or planes exist.

NOTE: You will cut objects 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. But when you airbrush, you will paint 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

2. Load your airbrush with black opaque Com-Art. Remove the frisket film from the number 5 petals. Spray the black paint just along the edges that separate one plane from the next. Don't fill in completely with black paint; allow the white of the paper to be used for highlight.

3. Now remove the frisket film from areas number 4. What will appear is an exacting hard-edged line that separates one petal from the next. Repeat the process on numbers 3, 2, and 1. At this point,

Part 7 - Painting A Flower...

Part 8 - Frisketing With The Flap System...

you have an achromatic black rendering that establishes the spatial relationships between one petal and another. **NOTE:** Once you establish an exacting hard-edged line in your darkest dark, it is virtually impossible to cover up.

4. Now all the frisket film has been removed from the petals of the flower, but it remains on the background. Flush out your airbrush with Medea Airbrush Cleaner until all the black paint has been removed; then reload the airbrush with a color—let's say red. At this point you can lightly airbrush back into your painting with the red paint, utilizing the black that you first sprayed as an underpainting to develop a value change of the red. Notice you don't have to worry about remasking areas to keep their definition. **NOTE:** With an airbrush, you have the ability to paint either transparently or opaquely, depending on the amount of paint sprayed onto the surface or the type of paint sprayed. So, hypothetically, you can first render your work using black paint on a white surface to develop an achromatic rendering and then go back over top of it with transparent layers of color to complete the final image.

5. Once you have completed the airbrushing, remove the frisket film from the background. The result is a flower that appears to be three-dimensional.

Remember, no matter what the subject, cut the frisket film from front to back visually and paint with the airbrush from back to front. Practice this method and keep it in mind as you pursue painting more complex images.

Part 8

Frisketing With The Flap System

In the last exercise, painting the flower, the frisket was cut in a process of elimination. You removed area number 5 and painted it, then removed area number 4 and painted it without replacing frisket film number 5. This was continued until the entire process was completed achromatically. Then you sprayed transparent color over this rendering to develop your image.

This procedure is fine as long as all the petals are meant to be the same color. However, if you were to paint petals number 5 red and

Part 8 - Frisketing With The Flap System...

Part 9 - Airbrushing T-Shirts...

petals number 4 blue, you would have to replace the frisket film over number 5 before painting number 4. This is to prevent one color from drifting into another. Replacing frisket film in exact registration can be extremely difficult. The slightest shift in registration when replacing the frisket will cause paint to fill in the gap and leave a line where you don't want one or possibly cover some of the white paper on an adjoining area so no paint can be received, thus leaving a white area in the rendering.

To assure registration when replacing frisket film, use a simple process called a "flap system." Here's how to do it.

1. Cut the areas of frisket film you wish to render. When all areas are cut, take a small piece of drafting tape and lay it over a small area of the cut (half of the tape on the frisket you will lift and half on the frisket that stays in place).
2. When you lift up the frisket film to paint, it is now hinged with the tape. Simply fold back the hinge so the frisket is out of the way and then paint the area. Once the paint is dry, you can fit the flap of frisket back into place without any shift in its registration. This procedure can be continued, picking up the frisket and dropping it back into place until the entire rendering is complete.

TIP: When the piece of frisket is flapped back out of the way, the adhesive side is facing you. To prevent painting the adhesive side, take a small piece of the frisket backing paper and cover it. That way, when you airbrush, paint will not go onto the adhesive and ruin its tack. Practice this on the flower exercise. Hinge number 5's, lift them, paint the area, then fit back into place. Repeat this process for areas 4, 3, 2, and 1.

The flap process will save you time and aggravation.

Part 9

Airbrushing T-Shirts

At this point you may feel confident with the mechanics of airbrushing, but you're not sure how to go about doing T-shirts.

Materials List:

IWATA HP-BC or The Eclipse

Part 9 - Airbrushing T-Shirts...

Piston operated compressor (1/2HP)
Braided Hose
Medea Professional Textile Colours (Sample Kit)
Medea Airbrush Holder
Medea Fabric Stencils
T-Shirt Boards
100% Cotton T-shirts
Easel
Medea Airbrush Cleaner
Assortment of paint jars
Stencil knife
Acetate, 5mil

—To begin, go to a local fabric store and purchase a few yards of white 100% cotton Pilon. Practice on this instead of the more expensive T-shirts. You must practice on actual fabric, since it has a different feel from paper.

—Practice the “dagger stroke” on fabric. This is a stroke that goes from a wide line to a fine line in a short space and is that used most often by T-shirt artists.

—It’s important to master airbrushing an alphabet. All your customers will want a name airbrushed on their T-shirts. The most popular lettering styles are script (simply a controlled handwriting); block or bubble (solid letters with a bulbous appearance); and punk or graffiti (straight, stick-type lettering). Remember to keep your letters consistent.

—As you will see after spraying your alphabet, free-hand airbrushing results in a soft look. To achieve a hard edge, you must use a stencil. Cut a stencil out of 5 mil acetate and airbrush through it; see how the spray captures the edge. Most airbrush work is a combination of free-hand airbrushing and stencil airbrushing.

—Work with a limited palette of colors. This should consist of red, yellow, blue, purple, aqua, brown, medium gray, black, white and hot pink.

Tips for Airbrushing T-Shirts:

—Work on 100% cotton T-shirts, which do not require prewashing.

Part 9 - Airbrushing T-Shirts...

—You will need T-shirt boards to stretch the shirts over so the fabric is taut with no folds or dimples. These can be made from quarter-inch tempered masonite or foam board.

—A sturdy easel is required—one that will hold your airbrush and paint jars in a tray about 32" off the floor.

—A multiple airbrush system will simplify your operation. Many T-shirt airbrushers work with one airbrush per color for ease of operation. All the airbrush hoses are hooked up to one compressor. Since you can use only one airbrush at a time, this system will not overload your compressor. A multi-hose adapter—the Medea Multiple Valve Assemblies—will be required to hook the hoses to the compressor, one hook-up per hose.

—Use a 1/2HP piston compressor that will deliver 65psi (pounds per square inch), the suggested working pressure for t-shirt painting. Be sure the compressor you choose can run ample time without overheating.

—Work with pre-reduced airbrush textile paints—Medea Professional Textile Colours.

—Wear a protective mask while spraying and have a ventilation fan if you work inside.

—Heat-set your painted T-shirts to insure their permanency and washability. (See Part 3 or Medea paint label.) Do not iron directly on the painted surface; iron on the reverse side of the T-shirt or cover the painted area with butcher paper and then iron on the paper.

—Assemble an attractive display of samples.

In conclusion, airbrushing T-shirts can be lucrative and has been a great summer job for many aspiring artists. Pricing is determined by the complexity of design and the competition. Don't limit yourself, however, to painting only T-shirts; baseball caps, license plate tags and children's clothing are also popular airbrushed items.

Part 10

Airbrush Maintenance

Cleaning Tips - Internal Mix Airbrush

Internal mix airbrushes are the type most commonly used and can be identified by the fact that they have a needle running through the length of the airbrush body. This needle controls the size and the amount of paint sprayed. As the needle is drawn back and away from the tip (head assembly) of the airbrush, paint is mixed with air (atomized) and then released. The further back the needle is drawn, the more paint is allowed to exit.

Airbrush

The airbrush need be cleaned only in the areas which come in contact with paint; and the paint flows from the paint resevoir (gravity feed, side feed, or bottom feed styles) into the airbrush, around the tip of the needle and out through the head assembly. These areas must be kept clean for optimum performance of the airbrush. Some recommendations follow:

1. Choose the appropriate cleaning agent. For water-soluble paints, use Medea Airbrush Cleaner. For most non-water-soluble paints (automotive, artist's oils, etc.) use paint thinner or spray gun and equipment cleaner. (Use caution—This is toxic!)
2. If there is paint in the paint resevoir, pour it back into a bottle or container and spray out any excess—ideally into the Medea Over-spray Eliminator or else into a paper towel.
3. Wipe the paint resevoir as clean as possible.
4. Fill the paint resevoir one-quarter full with the appropriate cleaning agent. With a No. 5 flat bristle paintbrush, slosh the cleaning agent around the paint resevoir to break down the paint. The cleaning agent will turn opaque as this is done. Be sure to get into all the nooks and crannies and, if you are using a gravity-feed airbrush, get down into the cavity at the bottom of the paint resevoir.
5. Spary this now paint-contaminated cleaning agent through the airbrush, and once again wipe the paint resevoir clean with a rag or paper towel.

Part 10 - Airbrush Maintenance...

Part 11 - Common Questions...

6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 as necessary until the cleaning agent sprays clear.

7. Using new cleaning agent and a clean bristle brush, gently wipe across the paint tip to remove any build-up of dried paint.

TIP: Do not use cotton swabs—the fibers will release and make a mess!

Needle

Between color changes, you could stop here with the cleaning and then continue to paint. However, periodically and at the end of the workday, you will want to clean the needle that runs through the airbrush. Here's how:

As previously stated, the needle runs through the length of the airbrush. To find it, remove the airbrush handle at the back of the tool. You will see the back end of the needle protruding through a nut (needle chuck nut). Loosen the needle by turning this nut counter-clockwise. Then pull the needle out and carefully wipe it clean. (Be aware that the needle has a sharp point.) Before you replace it, you may want to give it a light coat of Medea Super Lube needle oil to facilitate smooth triggering. Gently slide the needle back. If you feel any resistance, it is most likely caused by the trigger being slightly out of place. Reset the trigger (main lever) and slide the needle forward until it fits snugly in the nozzle. Reset the needle chuck nut by turning it clockwise until tight. Replace the handle.

At this point, your airbrush should be thoroughly clean and in good working order. Daily and thorough maintenance of your airbrush will result in spraying that is smooth, consistent and hassle-free.

Part 11

Common Questions

Q: What is the difference between internal-mix and external-mix?

A: In an internal-mix airbrush, the air and paint mix inside the paint tip. This produces a thorough atomization or mixing, which results in a very soft, fine spray pattern. In an external-mix airbrush, the air and paint mix outside the tip, producing a coarse spray pattern.

Part 11 - Common Questions...

Q: What is meant by dual-action and single-action?

A: These are two different types of airbrush triggers. Single-action airbrushes are activated by simply depressing the trigger; a preset amount of paint is automatically sprayed. To change the amount of spray, you must stop airbrushing and reset the needle adjustment screw. These are recommended for students because they are less expensive than dual-action. With the more sophisticated dual-action airbrushes, when the user depresses the trigger, only air is released; the second action of drawing back on the trigger releases the paint. This dual-action—down, then back—enables the user to adjust the volume of spray simply by manipulating the trigger and without stopping.

Q: What types of paints can be sprayed through the airbrush?

A: Any paint can be sprayed through the airbrush as long as it can be thinned to a flowable consistency (such as that of milk or ink) with the appropriate thinner.

Q: At what air pressure is the airbrush sprayed?

A: 25 pounds per square inch (psi) for artwork; 55-65 psi for T-shirts and automotive painting.

Q: Is an airbrush hard to keep clean?

A: To maintain the airbrush, simply flush it with the appropriate paint cleaning agent—Medea Airbrush Cleaner for water-based paints and paint thinner for oil-based paints. Never immerse or soak an entire airbrush. Follow up with an application of Medea Super Lube for continued smooth operation.

Q: Why are there different size tips for the airbrush?

A: Most airbrushes are adaptable to three different tips—fine, medium, and heavy—to enable different size/volume sprays and to airbrush materials of varying viscosity (thick or thin). When the tip is changed in an internal-mix airbrush, the needle must also be changed to correspond (fine, medium or heavy).

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