XARAXONE.COM TUTORIAL TRANSCRIPT

October 2012 Tutorial transcript

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This transcript is not *verbatim, but it's what Gary used during the filming of the tutorial.*

This month, I'm covering The shape tool, it draws, it edits, it makes beautiful julienne potatoes. Come with me and explore its possibilities.

First, go to Xaraxone.com, click the Read more link and then download and open the tutorial files for this month.

Okay. When you've chosen the Shape tool, you have options on the Infobar to create line segments when you click, or curves, and the connection for the control points can be smooth or cusp. I've chosen lines and cusp connections, because when I want a curve segment, all I do is drag on a line and it becomes curved. And curve segments have control handles, by which you steer the slop of the curve. Remember the keyboard shortcuts L and C. I'm going to press C for Curve and now when I click, I'm creating curves. Now, when you click+drag, you're not steering the curve like you do with the Pen tool—you're repositioning the current node.

Now it's back to lines again—you press L, and a single click on your beginning point closes the path.

Although the curves were created so they're smooth, because the joints are cusps, you can make a connection pointy by adjusting a control handle. A double-click on a node converts a cusp to a smooth joint.

Let's play a little more with join properties. Regardless of whether you begin with cusp or smooth joints, a curve segment always is created with control handles in 180 degree opposition. So if you reposition a control point, the curves segments will remain

smooth at their node, even if the joint is cusp. You can even select multiple nodes by marquee dragging, and when you drag, the curves remain curved.

However, when you drag on a node's control handle, all deals are off and you can drag the handles to make the connection pointy.

I'm going to start over again making this starlike shape, but I'll specify smooth joints this time. You'll notice that the shape will look pretty much identical to the same shape with cusp connections. Except now, dragging on the control handles only affects the curves and not the joining part of the control point.

Another fun thing you can do with curves is to convert all the nodes so lines go between them instead of curves.

Let's move on. Deleting nodes when the Shape tool is active can be done by hitting Delete or backspace on the keyboard, and you can also click the Delete Point button on the Infobar.

In practice, you can add a control point just by clicking on a path segment.

So I'm going to add a digit to this fellow's haircut by first clicking on the path, and then clicking Smooth on the Infobar so editing this node is easier. If you hold Shift while dragging on a Smooth control handle, you move both the handles in tandem.

And to return the drawing to its original state, you can click or marquee select nodes and then press Delete.

Here's a neat trick to pan around a zoomed-in drawing when a node is selected with the Shape tool.

You use the Tab key The interface auto-pans. And if you want to go back, you reverse the path with the button on the Infobar.

Let's get into joining and breaking paths now, because this will be necessary in a lot of work. I create a circle, and then convert it to an editable Shape. With the Shape tool, marquee select two of the nodes and then click Break at points button. The result is two shapes both arcs, see? Choose Utilities, Line Gallery and you can make each open

path unique, as I'm doing here. This is a great way to make direction arrows or other artistic elements in a composition. When the novelty has worn off, you can connect the open paths by selecting both and choosing Arrange>Join Shapes. The most recent outline property I given to the combined shape, and you can still manipulate part of the combined shape by selecting its nodes with the shape tool and dragging reposition it.

Okay, joining shapes can also be done so the end nodes on a path are connected. Try this to make a zigzag line: first, drag out a horizontal guide, then three vertical ones spaced an inch apart. With the Shape tool set to Line and cusp connection, click a point at bottom left of the guides, then up and then down working right to make an inverted V. Choose the selector tool, hold Ctrl to constrain movement, and then drag and drop a copy to the right of the original. The shape tool can be used here, but I'm using the selector tool, when you drag an end point to over a different selected node, the cursor tells you that you're going to connect the two different lines. Voila, you have one shape now, and can repeat the steps to make a zig zag line as long as you like.

You can also make a perfect wavy line out of a copy of your zigzag line. Marquee-select all the nodes and then click To curve on the Infobar. Or press C. You can also delete points and the segment between the neighboring points will change to the shortest distance between the two. And if you choose to break the path at a control point, you wind up with two or more shapes and some interesting design elements.

Moving on to some more node-related stuff, a path that has an outline width greater than zero has properties you can adjust.

This shape has a tapered pressure profile applied to it, but if you change your view quality to wireframe you'll see the underlying path itself, no frills. Open the Line Gallery now if it's not open and let's look at how the nodes are joined. This shape has a round join, but if you set it to Miter, the path had corners now, and the blip on this joint up here is because the underlying path isn't perfectly perpendicular, which I'll fix now.

Your third option for Joins is Bevel, and this is both ornamental and help hides joining nodes whose paths are perfectly aligned. The end of open paths can be capped as round as I've done here, and also butt and square. The difference between butt and square is that a butt line cap ends exactly at the last node, while square ends at the outline's set width.

When you've bothered to create an elegant shape and it's an open path, it doesn't have to remain that way. You use the Arrange>convert Line to Shape command and bang…you now have a closed path with no outline width. I'm selecting all the nodes

with the Shape tool and reducing their number by dragging the Infobar's Smoothing slider. There, now if you go to wireframe view quality, you can see the new path. This shape can be filled with any fill you like—I'll use a linear gradient here, and guess what? This thing that used to be a line, can now have an outline, because it's no longer an open path. Now, let's say you want this to be a line again. You can select nodes at either end of the shape and then choose Break at Points, and you basically have two copies of your original open path. As an open path, the shape can't have a fill anymore, but it can have outline properties, including an arrowhead, which can be reversed by choosing reverse path.

Okay, it's hand-on time now. Import or drag the Clock tower jpeg image into a new document. It's ten twenty four by ten twenty four so you can adjust the page by dragging on its margins. With your newly acquired Shape tool skills, I'm going to ask you to trace over parts of the clock. Tracing is one of the best ways to refine your coordination and skills. On your own, you might want to fade the item to trace; you select it and then choose the transparency tool, then drag the slider on the Infobar to the right.

Then with the Selector tool, right-click and then choose to lock the image. You don't need an additional layer now.

Choose the Shape tool, and then give your line width about 2 pixels and then Shift-click on red or something, a color that contrasts against the image. Set the properties to Line and cusp connection for the toll, and then click starting at the top of the tower, working clockwise. When you come to the curve of the clock's face, click at about 3 o'clock and then drag the line to a curve as I showed earlier.

You now have a couple of straight lines so you click points, then another curve—click points and then drag the line to a curve, don't' forget that you can switch to the Push tool to navigate around the page by pressing Spacebar—if you'd like to try your hand at working with curve segments, you have one at the left of the clock face. Press C, click points and then adjust the curve using the control handles.

Go back to clicking lines to now close the path at its beginning. Yay!

Here's a payoff—why not use the Extrude tool to totally recreate the clock tower? Here's how: click-drag the color sampler (the eyedropper) tool from the status line to the bottom of the clock tower image to fill your shape with an off-white. Now choose the Fill tool, and drag downward on the shape—to get a lighting fall-off on the shape. Don't worry that the image's top is near-black: there are no passing or failing grades on these tutorials. Shift-click the no color icon on the color line to remove the shape's outline. Now choose the Extrude tool and drag on the shape to apply an extrude. Dragging on the face of the extruded shape rotates it, and dragging on its edge increases or decreases its depth.

Let's try another part of the tower. The brass L-shaped area is an easy one to copy: all you do is click points around it, in line mode with the Shape Tool. Once you've closed the shape, sample the darker brown to fill the shape with solid brown. To imitate the play of light and dark reflections on the piece, with the Fill tool, choose fractal Plasma from the Infobar drop-down, and then drag the fill handle outward to increase the size of the fill. Call up the color editor, and choose the local start color, and then use the eyedropper to sample a lighter brown from the image.

It's back to the Extrude tool: drag on the face of the shape, and then angle it so it looks like the shape in the image. As you can see, I'm alternating between the Shape, Extrude and the Selector tool, to move shapes so the underlying image is visible. The off-white shape needs a little angling, but overall, I think if you follow along, you'll impress yourself, and certainly others!

Let's wrap up this month with adding an extruded circle to the composition, to represent the face of the clock. Again, a linear fill will simulate the light fall-off of the original, and once you've assembled the pieces, you're going to wow your audience.