XARAXONE.COM tutorial transcript

January 2013 Tutorial transcript

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

Hi I'm Gary Bouton and this is another Xara TV tutorial at Xara Xone dot com.

Oh, and let's start writing this on checks…instead of this.

This month, I'm going to take you through another under-used feature in Xara, Live Effects. Live Effects is your gateway to using a whole passel of native filters in Xara, and also just about any third party Adobe standard plug-in you might buy.

Now, the obvious neat thing about Live Effects plug-ins is that you can make vector shapes (and imported bitmaps) look like paintings, make them blurry, and make your artwork look like Renoir was having a bad hair day.

What's not so obvious (and neat) is that you can change the settings of a plug-in and change the path of the shape while the plug-in filter is still applied. You can even remove the filter, Live Effects is a non-destructive process, and the only time a plug-in filter is done…is when you are.

So let's get some hand-on experience with plug-ins now…

To begin this month, go to Xaraxone.com/tutorials. Scroll down the page, click the Download button to download the Zip archive for this month, unpack the contents and let's get ready to go.

Before getting into this month's tutorials on Live Effects, a good question to ask might be, "What is a Live Effect?" Xara's Live Effects tool loads plug-ins that

usually conform to the Adobe standard for filters and other effects. These plug-ins can dramatically change both bitmap imports and vector shapes usually in ways that are hard or impossible to accomplish using only Xara's native tools and features. Before we get too deep or too far into Xara Live Effects, you should know that Xara can accept third-party plug-ins. That means that if you've bought a filter from, say, Alien Skin, or Corel, or most any other vendor, you can use that plug-in within Xara. Right now I'm going to show you how to specify the folder Xara can tap into that'll contain your plug-ins.

So in Xara you press Ctrl+Shift+O, on the Options dialog box, you click Effects and Plug-Ins, Photoshop Plug-Ins, click Setup, and then in the Setup box you click "Add Folder" and that will take you to a directory on your hard drive…now, I have a folder called "Xara Pluggins" that I'm choosing—this is where I installed my third-party plug-ins…click OK, then click OK in the Options box, and once you've created an object, you click the Live Effects button (on the Toolbar), click New (on the Infobar), and as you can see, in addition to the native filters you have all your third parties.

Let's take this Live Effects out for a test drive. I'm going to create a star here, and then choose Arrange>Convert to Editable Shapes so I can change the paths later…click Live Effects…click New, and then in the Deformation Filter folder I'm going to click "Even Waves". This gives me Amplitude (on the Even Waves dialog) and Frequency and as you can see it's severely distorting the star. This would be hard to do with just Xara's vector tools—now the fun doesn't stop here…on the Infobar we have Effect Order; this means you can add more than one filter to the same object. We also have Resolution…now as you can see the outline is smooth at high resolution for print, but if you want to work quicker, you use a lower resolution—you pick that from the list.

Also on the Infobar is "Lock/Unlock Effects", "Delete All Effects", and you can edit the current effect at any time by clicking the Edit button, As you can see I've severely messed up this star now, it doesn't resemble a star at all, However, what's underlying if you change the View Quality to wireframe—is the star is still there. With the Shape Tool, I'm going to click and drag some of the control points that I simplified earlier, this in turn changes what's happening with the applied filter. And if I go back to Wireframe View (Quality), you can see that this is a very simple vector shape that gets its complexity through a filter.

Sooner or later you're going to create a whole group of shapes and apply a filter. Here, I've taken the Painting filter and also added a shadow to the group.

To edit inside this group without destroying the filter's effect, what you do (in version 8 and later) is double-click and a new window opens up, called "Edit Inside" . now from here, for example, I can increase the size of the heart and when I'm done I close the window, I answer Yes in the dialog box "Do you want to save changes?", and I'm back to the filtered drawing with the edits in place.

Another way to edit—live—it to Ctrl+click on an object in a group…what you can see here is I'm changing the shape of the heart, by "selecting inside"…and make it a little bit larger and as long as that shape is selected, I can even take the Erase tool and edit a shape within a group of shapes that all have the same filter(s) applied to them. And as you can see here, I'm turning the heart into a diamond.

Why don't you get out the Be Bop.xar file now, and I'll show you a really neat trick you can do with one of the native filters in Xara's Live Effects. What appears to be two simple extruded shapes are not at all. They're actually a collection of many, many shapes with gradient fills and as you might imagine, unless these colors were named it would be darned hard to recolor either of the characters. However, with the Color with Gradient filter under the Color Filter group, you can choose a preset—let's say we want to make the gal green—so we pick something similar to this green preset, then create a Copy so you don't alter the original preset—give the copy a name…"My Green" is good in this case…now what do is you can drag off the strip to delete it, you can also click on a stop and assign it a new color (or click on an unoccupied area above the strip to add a new stop) as I'm doing here, so make yours a little darker green and then move it over so that the green is preferred over the black and all of a sudden—BOOM—the Pink Lady is now a Green Gal.

But wait a second. That's not the really cool thing I want to show you. Click on Edit now and then put a check in the Invert Gradient box. Now click on the (green) swatch, and let's edit it. Click Edit and I want you to move the green stop a little closer over so the finished result is not so dark. Now what's going on with this inverted gradient is a little bit subtle. I want you to copy the girl now (Ctrl+C), and then press Ctrl+N, and you're going to paste her into a new document. Let me show you something; by reversing the gradient, what you've actually done is change the lighting. The girl used to be front lit…and it's not obvious quite yet that she's being lit from behind until you put a black rectangle behind her. With the Rectangle tool, draw a rectangle. Press Ctrl+Shift+B to put it behind the girl. With the Fill tool, drag upward (to make a linear gradient), select the first control handle and then color it green (click a

green swatch on the Color Line). Let's now take the Ellipse tool, drag an ellipse…now it's going to have the last-used fill (a two color gradient) so let's click oin green to make it solid green, let's Feather this a little bit so it looks like a green light behind the girl, Ctrl+Shift+B to put it behind, then what we want to do is drop a copy of the girl (right-button drag, then release right button to make the copy). Once we've ungrouped (Ctrl+U), the filter goes away. Now in this case, that's okay, you *want* the filter removed. What we want to do with the individual pieces all selected is to make a single shape. Choose Arrange>Combines Shapes>Add Shapes. And what you want to do is flip it upside-down like this, You're going to create a shadow—color it black, let's scale it disproportionately—I think "squashing" is the non-technical term— push it up just a little bit more…and then click on it while it's selected to bring up the rotation and skew handles, skew it like that…

And what you've achieved is a completely new illustration through the use of filters. I hope you've had fun using filters, and I'll see you again next month, at:

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