

HOW TO PAINT SMOKE USING SKETCHBOOK PRO ON THE IPAD



A Tutorial by Shaun Mullen

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Introduction

This tutorial will guide you through some basic steps to create the appearance of smoke or vapor, it covers the tools and settings along with some special techniques to achieve the end result. No matter what level of SketchBook Pro user you are, these simple steps will have you recreating smoke in no time at all and learning new techniques to add to your repertoire.

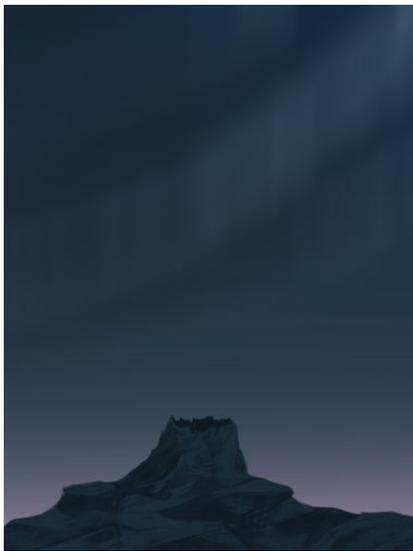


Image without smoke/vapor



Tools used



Image with smoke/vapor

This tutorial was created using a Apple iPad2™ and Autodesk's SketchBook Pro™, using the amazing HD canvas option, the theories and methods within the tutorial can however be used on any platform and with slight adjustments, traditional media. The input or actual stroke generation was created using a Wacom Bamboo iPad stylus but given the time and practise could be replicated using your finger on the iPad screen.

I hope you enjoy this tutorial and it inspires you to use the methods from it for use in your own work.

Thanks for reading.

Stage One

I decided the best way to easily demonstrate these techniques, the tools used and the methods of how I used them would be to create a basic image for the smoke/vapor.

I took the idea of a vent hole or some alien terrain which vents a noxious gas into the environment.

Whatever your subject is, a burning cigarette, smoking gun, burning candle, the vapor off a dying beast, no matter what the technique and tools used can be applied. The only limit is your imagination.



TIP: For these methods to work the smoke/vapor needs to be on a separate layer from the object or background as one of the steps will require you to smudge/blur/erase the painted parts and you don't want to ruin previously painted parts.

Stage Two

To begin the painting of our smoke we first have to select a brush, with practice and patience we could use any solid shaped brush but thankfully SketchBook Pro has the perfect brush for this technique.

Using the selected brush preset as shown by the arrow, we are going to paint the basic form of the smoke.

Start from the base we are going to work upwards building the single line into swirls and 'clumps' of colour.



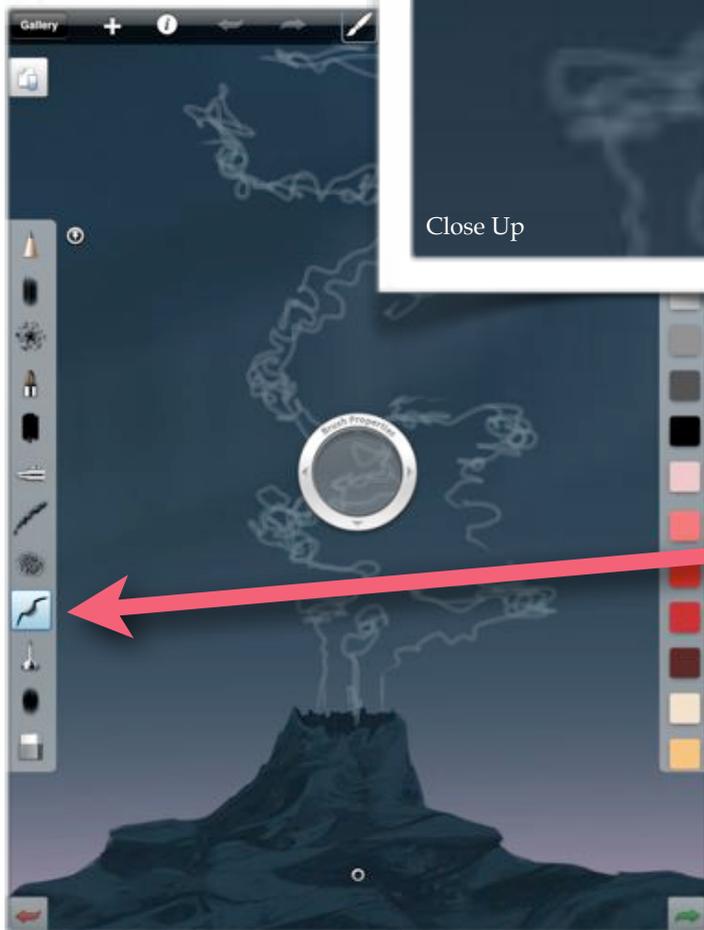
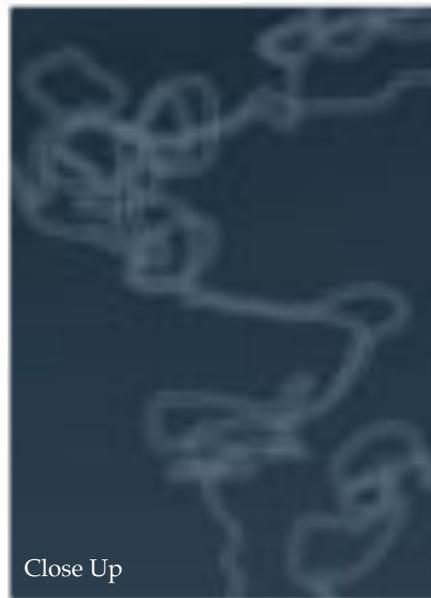
The colour I'm using for this smoke is based on the lightest value taken from the background, I've increased the brightness but reduced the saturation of it

TIP: Imagine the flow of the smoke as it travels upwards, if your painting has signs or indications of wind/air direction make sure to paint the smoke so it appears affected by the air. This helps with the realism of your image.

Stage Three

I continue to build up the basic layer of smoke trail, I purposefully leave holes and create multi lines of smoke. When observing real smoke you'll notice that its made up of several 'broken' lines and not one continuous one.

Once your happy with the basic shape and direction of the smoke we can move onto the blurring and smudging part.



One question which I often hear is 'where is' or 'there is no smudge tool in SketchBook Pro', there is a smudge/smear/blur tool and this is the icon for that brush preset.

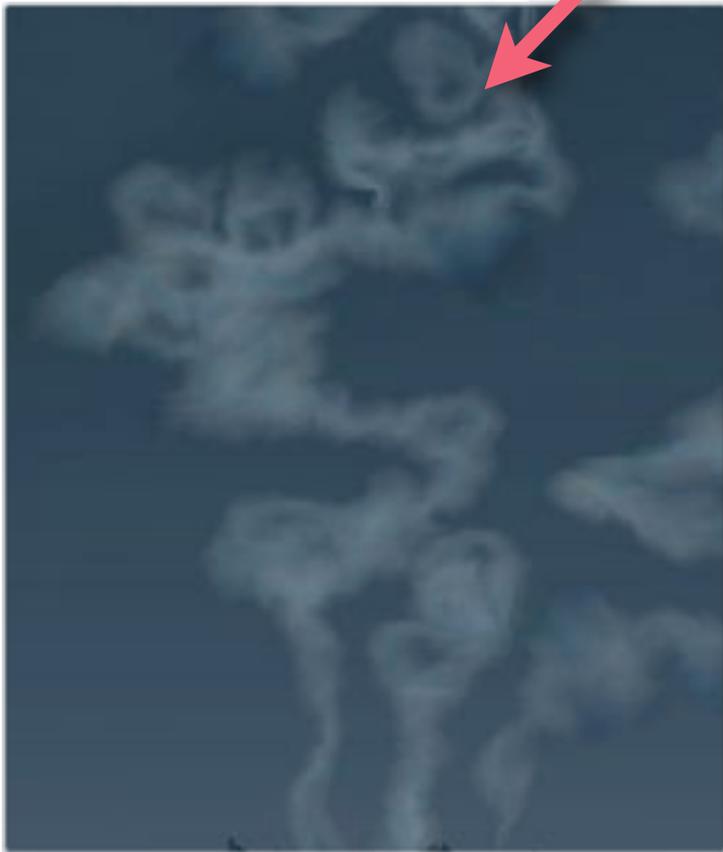
TIP: Save your document and open either a new layer or new document, fill the background and create a new layer. On this new layer draw some random lines in a contrasting colour. Now using the smudge tool experiment with the various size, strength and other settings until you find something that works for your personal style and approach.

Stage Four

Start by moving, pushing and smudging your smoke lines in the direction of your air / wind direction. Try not to smudge too much as you will lose those twin lines that the default SketchBook Pro brush gave you in the basic layout stage.

I attempt to get a mix of line and soft smoke areas. You may need to reference real smoke if you are unsure of the basic shape and construction. Having an in-depth reference library is always a valuable resource to any artist.

You'll notice that as you push and



move the 'paint' around the edges become soft and also change colour tone. This is due to the smoke being on its own layer and the colour interacting with the transparent aspect of it. If we'd have painted the smoke on the same layer as the other elements then during this stage all elements would be affected by this tool.

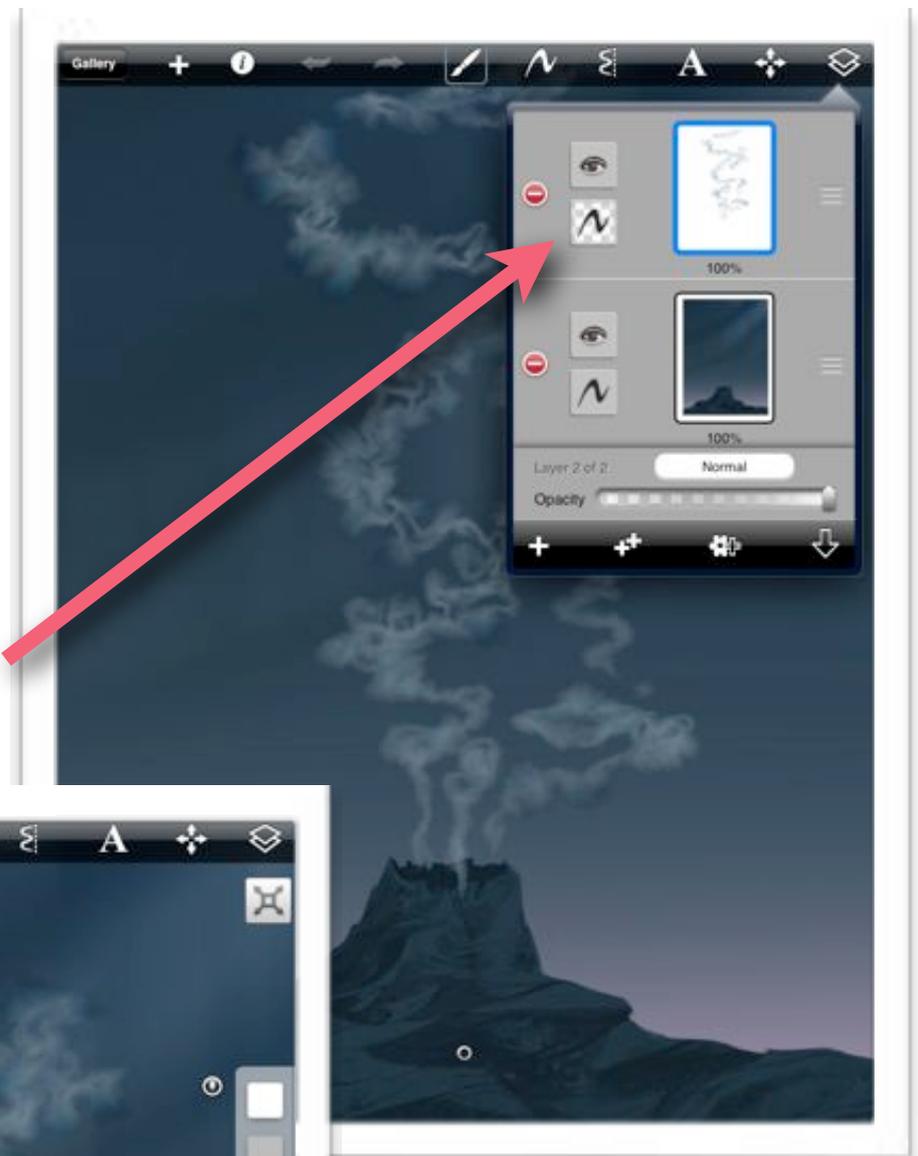
TIP: Take your time with this stage and don't concern yourself with the changes in colour as we address this in the next stage.

Stage Five

Once you've smudged and blurred the smoke shape to a level your happy with its time to correct those colour areas.

If you like those changes in colour where the smoke and layer interact then leave this stage and move onto the next.

I prefer to flatten the colours as the darker parts sometimes make the area look raised and too harsh. To correct this I 'lock the layer transparency', this



allows me to colour whatever is on that layer and only that layer.

Once the layer is locked I use the large airbrush tool to quickly colour over the entire smoke trail.

I'm using the same colour as we painted the basic smoke trail but as you paint over the form you should notice a change in the shape.

The edges become uniform and sit down into your painting.

TIP: The side tool bar has been configured so my most used brushes are at hand quickly. A great feature.

Smoke Tutorial

Stage Six

Next I increase the volume of the higher areas, this is where your smoke spreads and dissipates into the atmosphere. I use another layer for this part of the process.

The brush I use for this volume is one which I use for the majority of my atmospheric elements, clouds, smoke, mist, anything which requires a soft layer to increase depth between planes.

I've spent a long time in configuring the brush settings so they perform and react in a manner which fits my requirements and workflow. In-



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vesting time in this is a worthwhile exercise and you learn how each tool works and responds.

This brush also changes its colour tone when used so to help unify we repeat the 'locked layer' and over paint approach we used after the smudging.

The image on the left shows the blurred smoke trail, the colour correction stage and with the added mass & volume.

TIP: Treat the smoke mass in the same way as the basic shape, pay attention to things such as wind direction, heavy and light areas.

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Stage Seven

This stage is where we start to make the smoke look more convincing and real.

As we know, smoke or vapor mixes with the atmosphere and reduces in opacity the more it mixes. To replicate this effect we need to reduce its opacity in areas we know will be dissipating the most—the upper and outer edges.

To reduce this opacity first we need to merge both the thin smoke trail with the volume layer so they become a single layer.

Using the airbrush tool we used for the over paint we are going to gently, with low opacity settings, erase back the areas which require it.

To do this, hold down the brush like you are going to colour pick, instead of selecting a colour move the cross hair to the top outer edge until the cross hairs become white. This indicates the brush tool is now an eraser and we can use those specific brush setting to 'knock back' the smoke. My brush opacity setting is at 0.02 as I don't want to totally remove the mass. Knock back the opacity to suit your requirements and taste.

NOTE: The 'eraser' tip was kindly given to me by Susan Murtaugh when I first started using SketchBook Pro, so a big Thank You goes to Susan.



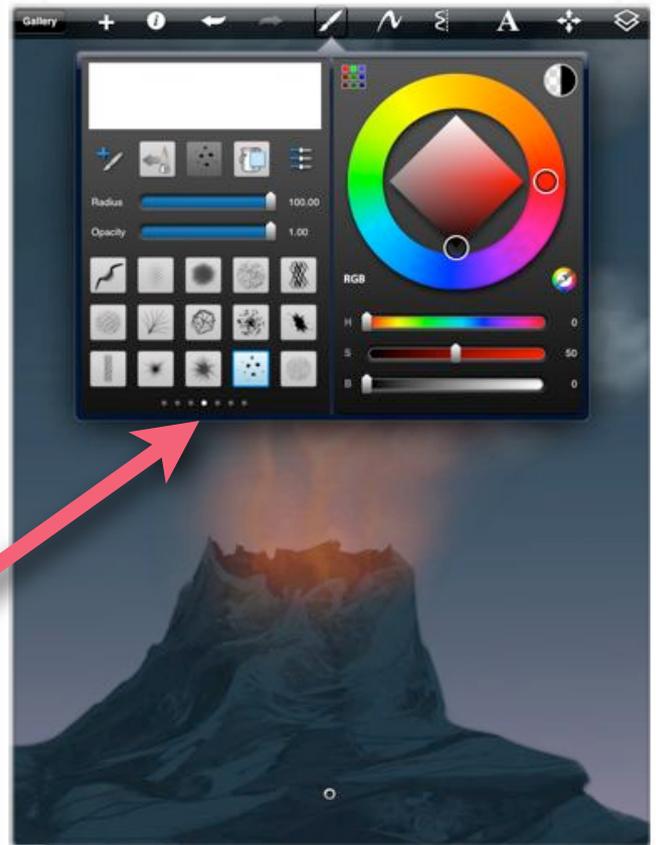
Stage Eight

To add some variety and some heat to this smoke, to add a secondary colour to the smoke we simply use the 'lock layer' mode that we used earlier.

Using the airbrush tool and low opacity I over paint a warm orange hue to help emphasis and give the impression of heat radiating from the rock vent.

To help 'sell' this impression of scorching heat I decide to add some embers. By adding some particles and 'real' details helps connect your view to real events or things.

To add these particles I often use this brush, as mentioned earlier all of my brushes have been adjusted so they produce the stroke or mark that I require.



To help give the impression of movement and direction, I use the smudge tool and give a slight upward lift to the embers/ particles.

This helps your viewer understand the direction and flow of your painting.



And that completes the tutorial.

I hope you enjoyed following the process of this image and have taken something worthwhile from the methods or techniques explained within, any questions please ask. Thank you for reading.