Reviews

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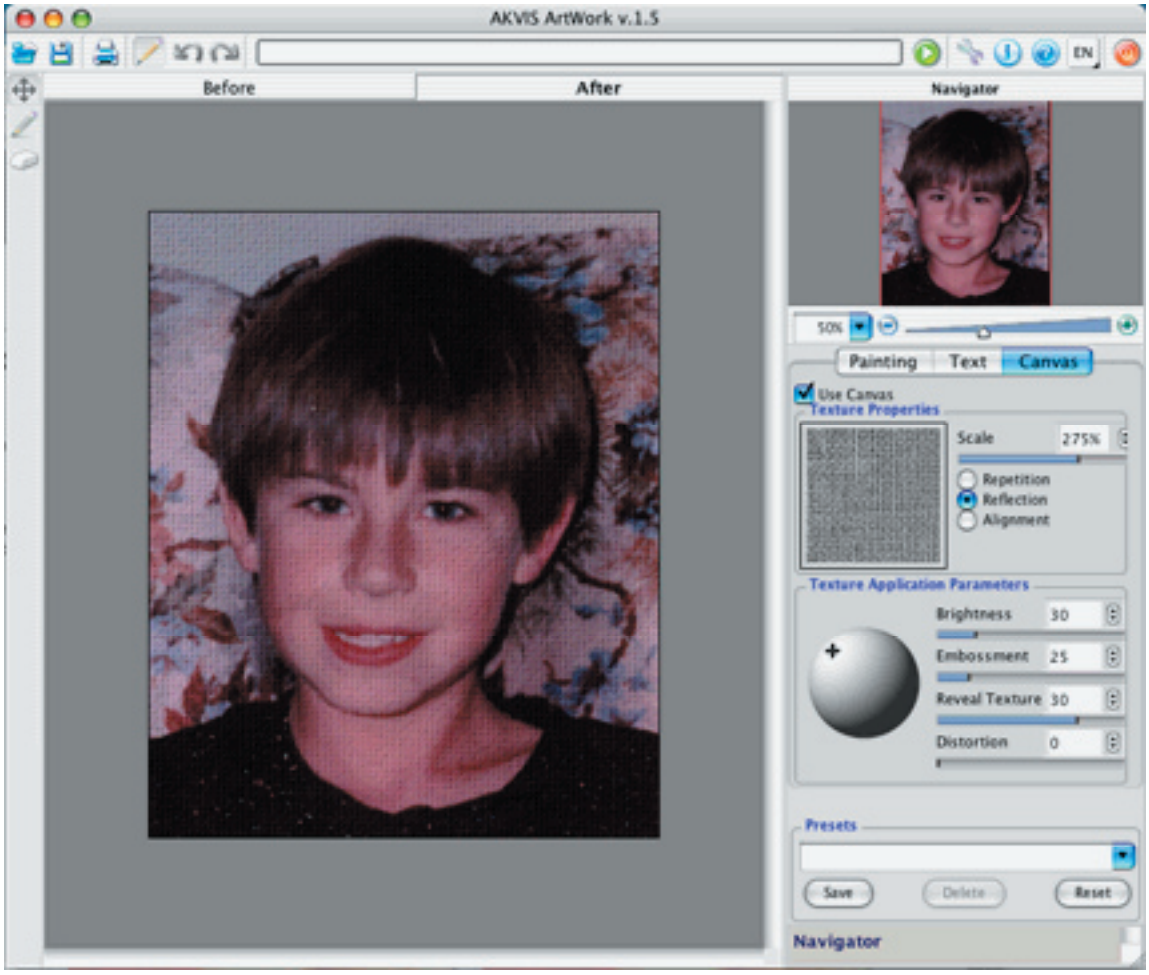
Akvis ArtWork

by L. Davenport

Akvis ArtWork is a Plug-in and a Standalone application that lets you transform your photos into works of art. It accomplishes this by letting you specify the brush: stroke, length, density, curvature, etc. of your final digital painting.

The ArtWork "Workspace" has a Before and After tab that lets you see if you are getting your desired results before applying it to your photo.



This is the Akvis ArtWork Workspace with the Canvas tab selected. If you enlarge this picture, you will see that a canvas texture has been applied to the photo.

Along the right side of the window is the settings panel that contains parameter controls that let you modify your photo. These are divided into three categories: Painting, Text, and Canvas. Let's look into each category to see what Akvis ArtWork can do:

Painting tab

Simplicity: defines how much of the details are kept
Stroke Curvature: sets whether the strokes run in a straight line or a (user specified) curved line.
Max Stroke length: sets the maximum length a stroke can have
Stroke Thickness; the width of the strokes
Stroke Intensity; sets how distinct or discernible are the strokes

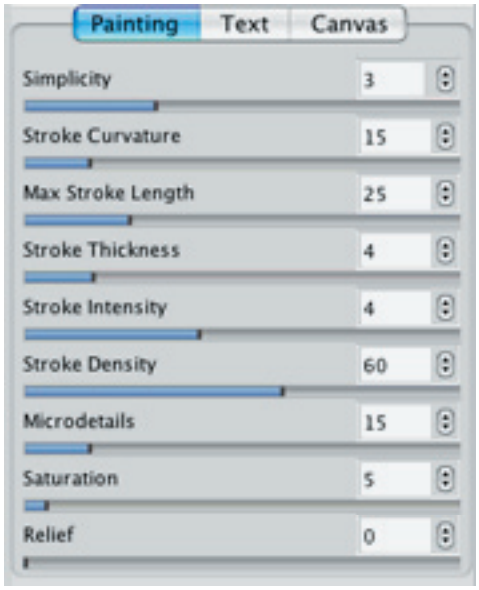
Stroke Density: sets the number of long strokes and changes their position on the image
Microdetails: strengthens or weakens the clearness of thin strokes
Saturation: sets the toning of the image using brighter colors
Relief: Gives volume to the strokes

Text Tab

A painting isn't complete until it has a signature. The Text tab lets you choose the font, font color, and location of your signature: e.g. bottom left corner, bottom right corner, etc.

Canvas Tab

If you really want to make your photo look like it is a painting, you should use Akvis ArtWorks' Canvas option. Here you can simulate painting on a rough surface. ArtWork comes with a library of 32 textures that you can apply to your painting- everything from rough canvas to burlap. If you don't see a texture that you want to apply, you can import a texture that you have created in another application- as long as it is saved as a JPEG, BMP, TIFF or PNG file. Once you choose a texture, you can further modify it by Scaling the texture pattern. Other parameters that can be set are: Light source, Repetition, Alignment, Reflection, Brightness, Embossment, Reveal texture, and Distortion.



Here are the settings parameters for the Painting and the Text tabs.

Before

After

You can set the paint strokes to be subtle or quite pronounced. I had it set to the higher settings for this example so you can see the difference.

If you have ever gone to an art museum to look at some of the old Masters, you will note that a lot of the paintings have thin cracks in the paint-caused from age and room conditions. You can simulate this look by choosing one of the two "Cracked" textures (which draws thin crack lines all over the painting).

Akvis ArtWork comes in three versions: Home, Home Deluxe, and Business. They are basically the same but there are three differences between them. First, the Home Deluxe & Business versions include the Stroke Direction Tool that allows the user to set the direction of the strokes whereas the Home version doesn't. Secondly, the Deluxe/Business versions come with both the plug-in and the stand alone application- the Home version doesn't. You must choose whether you want it as a plug-in or a stand alone application. Fortunately, Akvis does have an upgrade path for those who (at a later date) want to move up from the Home version to the Home Deluxe or Business version. The demo lets you try both versions so you can see which version you prefer. The third difference between the three versions is that the Home and Home Deluxe versions are for non-commercial personal use whereas the Business version allows you to install the software on two computers and is for people/business who want to sell their final artwork.

The Akvis ArtWork Help file contains the documentation and an easy-to-understand tutorial. The Akvis web site has additional tutorials and before/after examples. This way you can see right up-front whether Akvis ArtWork will suit your needs. If you like what you see-download the demo to further check out what it can do.

The Skinny

Evaluation: I like that Akvis ArtWork comes in two basic versions-which is especially helpful to individuals that don't own Adobe Photoshop or another compatible art program that uses plug-ins. The user interface is simple and easy to use. I tested it out on a 300 MHz G4 which is below the minimum requirement. It worked but was very slow on 8 megapixle pictures. So if you have

the horse-power and want to have some fun with your photos- I suggest you give the demo a try.

Requires: (Minimum) OS X 10.3.9, Intel/G4, 512 Mb RAM, 100 Mb Hard drive space, screen resolution 1024x768, (Recommended) OS X 10.5, Intel/G5, 2Gb RAM, 2 Gb Hard drive space, screen resolution 1280 1024

The plug-in version is compatible with Adobe Photoshop 6+, Photoshop Elements 1+, and Graphic Converter 5.6+. If you don't have access to one of these programs, you should buy the Home Deluxe or Business version so you can use the Akvis ArtWork stand alone application.

Company: **Akvis**

Street Price: Home vr. (plug-in or Stand alone) $72, Home Deluxe vr. $129, Business vr. $189

Demo Available