

Reviews

AKVIS Sketch 19

by L. Davenport

Akvis Sketch can be used to convert photos into black and white or colored sketch drawings or even watercolor paintings. There are two photo-to-sketch conversion styles: Classic and Artistic - both can be used to create a wide variety of pencil drawings.

Classic style

The Classic style lets you create color and black-and-white drawings with well-defined contour lines (Figure 3). The converted image looks like it was created with contour lines and hatching. This would be good for pictures where you want more detail, such as with architectural or technical illustrations.

Besides creating a black-and-white picture, you can also create colored sketch pictures by setting the degree of color that still shows through from the original photograph (Figure #1 & 2).

The Akvis Sketch parameters give you

complete control over the angle and thickness of your hatching strokes along with the minimum and maximum length of the strokes.

The “Edges” parameters let you set the Edge strength. For example the lower parameter levels create fewer edges so the level of detail decreases. Conversely, the higher values draws the edges with more detail (Figure 6).

The “Effects” parameters let you convert your photo to a watercolor or charcoal drawing. As you move the Watercolor slider to a higher value, the strokes get blurred and the contrast and detail gets weaker, imitating drawing on wet paper. If you combine the Watercolor and Coloration parameters, you will end up with a colorful watercolor drawing. The “Smudging” effect lets you smear the midtone hatching areas without affecting the contour lines of the drawing. This is similar to what artists do when they rub a stump tool or their finger over their drawing to smooth out their pencil strokes.

The “Contrast” parameter increases the difference between the highlights and shadows and the “Noise” parameter adds noise to the image which in turn increases the shading effect.

Artistic style

The Artistic Style parameters are designed to create expressive drawings that look like handmade drawings of a real artist. Using this style, you can create both a quick sketch or a nice complex shaded pencil drawing.

When you turn on the “Original Colors” option, Akvis Sketch uses the colors of the original photo. By contrast, if you disable the Original Colors



(Figure 1) This is AKVIS Sketch’s main work window. It is currently showing a color sketched image that is surrounded with a wood frame. To the right it shows various frame styles that are available. At the bottom of the window are thumbnails showing the various steps taken to modify this photograph.

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(Figure 2) I created this image using Photoshop Elements and the AKVIS Sketch plug-in. I followed one of [AKVIS' tutorials](#) that makes your final image look like it has a postcard lying over a color pencil drawing.

option, it will turn to a black-and-white image. You can also change your sketch to blue and white, red and white, etc. to give it a unique look.

As with the Classic Style, the Artistic Style also lets you set the angle, thickness of your stroke, and the maximum and minimum length of each stroke. But the Artistic style also let you set the Uniformity, Curvature, Hatching Intensity, and Crosshatching (versus drawing all in one direction).

The AKVIS Sketch “Home Deluxe” and “Business” licenses have a Timeline at the bottom of the main window. This lets you see the progression of the conversion of your photo into a pencil drawing (Figure 1). If it turns out that you like the third image better than the final, etc., you can click on its thumbnail to step back in the process and save it as your final image.

There are two buttons at the top of the AKVIS Sketch window called: Express and Advanced. The Express button/mode streamlines the controls/parameters to the bare minimum, where as, the Advanced mode shows all of the controls and parameters. So if you're in a hurry, you can choose the Express mode to do a quick sketch. But if you want more controls so you can to find tune your sketch, you will want the Advanced mode.

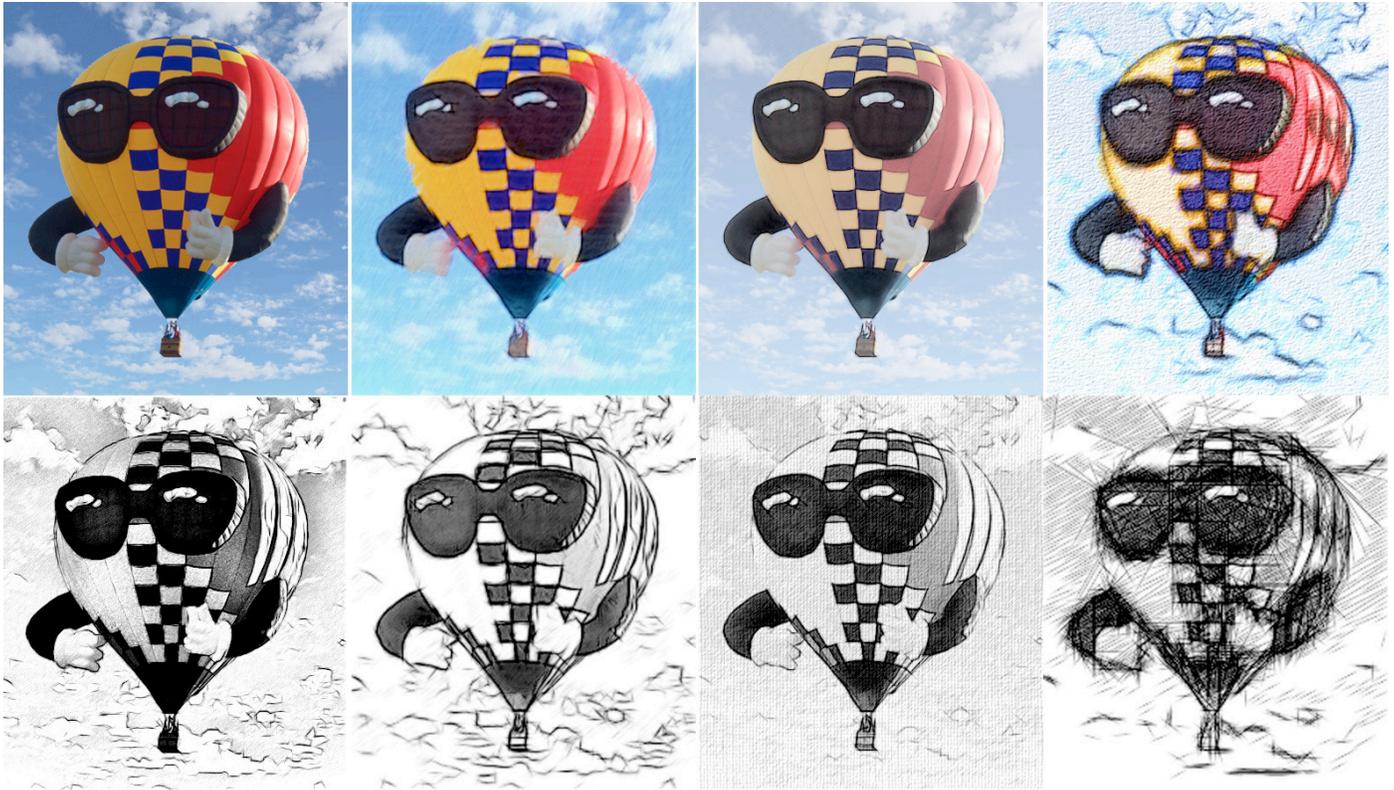
AKVIS Sketch's Background Effects can be used to process the converted image further e.g. it can blend the original photo on the drawing, blur some parts of your image, or add a motion blur. It also gives you blue and red pencil tools that you can use to define which areas will be converted to a drawing and which will not. For example, I used the red pencil in the Figure 5 image to preserve the face of the Egyptian queen. Afterward, I used the blue pencil to specify the areas that I did want changed to a sketch drawing.



(Figure 3) The Classic Style has well defined lines

When the conversion process is complete and you are satisfied with the

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(Figure 4) The original photograph is in the upper left-hand corner. The remaining seven images were created using seven (of the many available) presets. Notice how you can get a totally different finished product depending on which preset you choose to use.

final image, you can add a frame to give your image a finished look. AKVIS Sketch comes with five different types of frames: Classic frame, Pattern frame, Strokes, Vignette, and Passe-Partout.

- Classic frame: this lets you surround your image with a typical square frame just like frames that surround a painting (Figure 1).
- Pattern frames are small pics that you can surround your image with. There is a Library that includes many texture samples and patterns that you can use, such as flowers, butterflies, leaves, holiday items, etc.
- The Strokes frames are long straight lines that are drawn around the edge of your image. You can set the stroke line's color, transparency, intensity, size, stroke number, width, length, and randomness. Each gives you a unique look (Figure 5).
- The Vignette effect lets



(Figure 5) I did two additional things to this image: First, I wanted the Egyptian queen's face to be untouched from the sketching patterns to preserve her beauty. So I used the "Sketch & Photo's" red pencil to draw a circle around her face and neck (telling AKVIS Sketch to leave that area untouched). After that, I added a white "Stroke" frame around the image. BTW: The image is intentionally dark so you can easily see the Stroke frame in such a small image.

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you lighten or darken the edges of your image, thus creating a retro styled image (Figure 7).

- The Passe-Partout effect lets you surround your image in a mat (basically it surrounds your image with a beveled white cardboard frame).

AKVIS Sketch has tools that let you add Text or Watermarks to your drawing. So you can add a signature, greeting, logo, or a watermark to protect your image.

If you want, you can add a texture to the surface of your image, thus imitating drawing on a canvas, corrugated paper, brick wall, etc.

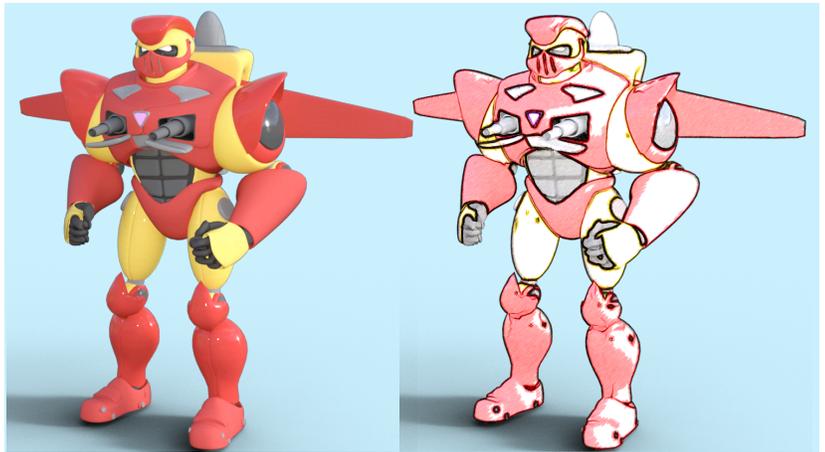
If you are a budding graphic novelist (comic-books), you can use AKVIS Sketch to convert your photos into comic-book illustrations (Figure 6). This is especially handy for those who can't draw. They can take photos of an action figure (or in my case I saved a rendered image of my 3D robot) and convert them. This way you can pose them (in real-life or digitally in a 3D program) and slowly create the artwork for your comic-book.

AKVIS Sketch comes with many presets that help you get started modifying your photos. But if you can't find a preset that you like, you can create your own and save it for later use.

If you have a lot of photos that were taken under the same conditions with identical camera settings, you can use the Batch Processing option to process the whole group at one time.

If my review has piqued your interest but you'd like to see more, please go to AKVIS' [Examples web page](#) to see around 68 images that have been converted using AKVIS Sketch (it also shows you the steps that were used to create the finished image). You can also go to [AKVIS' YouTube web page](#) and watch the Sketch videos or click on the following link if you would like to see a short [B & W animation](#) created using AKVIS Sketch.

AKVIS Sketch comes as a standalone program or as a plug-in that you can use in a photo editor such as Photoshop, Photoshop Elements, Corel Paint Shop Pro, Corel Painter, GIMP, etc. I suggest you go to AKVIS' [Compatibility web page](#) to see the list of compatible editors and to get the exact versions that it is compatible with before you buy the program.



(Figure 6) You can set the amount of your photo's original color that will show in the final image. You can also increase the "Edges" parameters to add an outline to your image, thus making it look like a comic-book illustration.



(Figure 7) The Vignette effect lets you lighten or darken (in varying amounts) the edges of your image.

The Skinny

Evaluation: I am quite impressed with the sketches that AKVIS Sketch can create. I like that not only can it create sketches, but it also has frames that you can apply to give your sketches a professional finished look. I like being able to use the AKVIS Sketch plug-in version (as was used in Figure 2). Since the image is already inside Photoshop Elements, I was able to easily use Photoshop Element's tools to create a drop shadow and a border for the postcard.

Requires:

Operating System: Mac OS X 10.7-10.12 (Sierra), 32 or 64 bit

Minimum hardware requirement : Intel, 1 Gb RAM, 100 Mb free hard drive space

Recommended hardware requirement: Intel, 4 Gb RAM, 2 Gb free hard drive space

A Compatible Image Editor (*if you purchased the plug-in*)

Company: [AKVIS](#)

Price:

Home (*non-commercial license*): Standalone OR plug-in \$72

Home Deluxe (*non-commercial license*): Standalone & Plug-in \$89

Business (*commercial license*): Standalone & Plug-in \$154

Academic license for Home or Home Deluxe: 30% off discount (*proof of enrollment or employment in an educational institution is required*)

[Available 10 day Trial copy](#)