## A Walk-through of how this image  was created in ArtRage 2.5

These few scant pages **will not** teach you how to draw and paint.
Just bring your style with you and see if any of the tips and techniques offer you something that you can use.

The image was created for a challenge at Pixelbrush.com online forums.  The theme was 'MYTH'.  Rather than have to choose one scene from the riches on offer, I elected to take two widely known characters, fairies and the Grim Reaper and assume they were unaware of each other's existence.  That being the case - What would a first meeting be like?  That's where the idea behind it came from.

## But I Don't Believe in You

There is the temptation to think that you must have the most expensive, tool laden painting software to be able to create rich imagery.  That may have been the case a few years ago, but I would argue that it is not so now, and wasn't necessarily so even then.

Today's aspiring digital artist has  a choice of free or low budget alternatives capable of marvellous results.  It is one of these that we'll look at today.  This is a brief look at some of what it can do

**ArtRage** is marketed for a nominal price by a software company called Ambient, who also run their own friendly and helpful forums dedicated to and for users of the product.
(http://www2.ambientdesign.com/forums/
Originally aimed at the hobbyist market, it has begun blossoming into something  with credentials to attract the more serious minded digital artist.
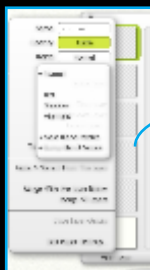
Some of the attractions include
**Layers** -  layers with full '**blending modes**'
**Stencils** - Cut out masks - use rulers - add textures
**Reference Images** - can be pasted on the screen
**Rotate the Canvas** - as you wish to make drawing more comfortable

*I am using a graphics tablet with  Windows XP Pro on a Pentium4 processor with 2gig RAM - This should be just as possible on a machineMac or PC with lesser specifications - Things may just take longer.*
*The essential for me is the graphics tablet - others may prefer a mouse!*

# The Object of this Exercise

Is to show what a good example of a low budget software can be coaxed to do.
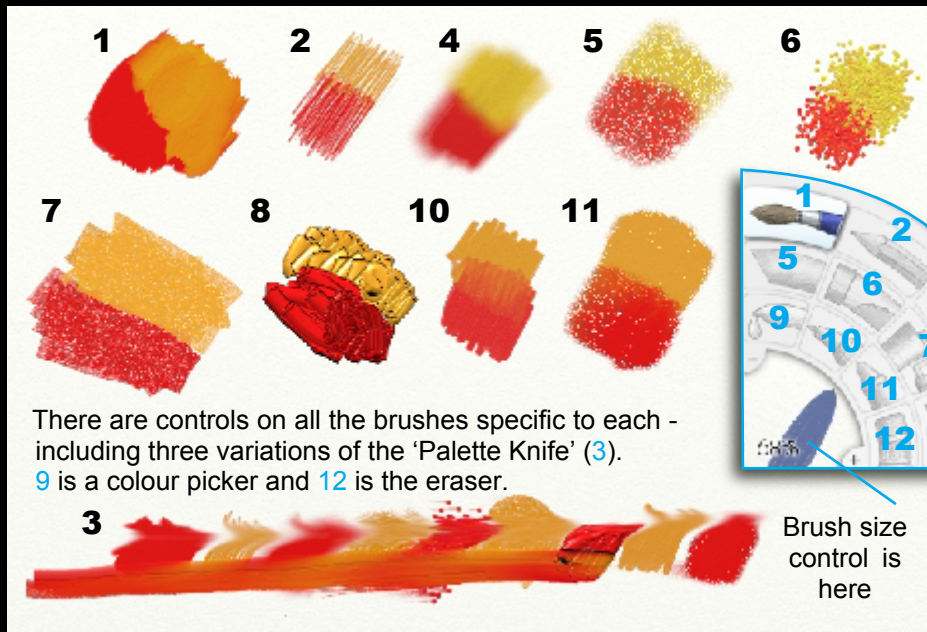We'll look at a few of the tools and some things I've done with them in a particular image.
I don't claim to be any kind of expert with this software.
This is just how I happened to use it this time.

**ArtRage 2.5**

*Free starter edition to download - but a mere $25 for the full software. $39.95 + shipping for the physical version with manual.*
One of the things that often differentiates between top end software and the budget offering is the size of the toolset. - that and how much control you have over the marks they can make. If you like mark making and experimenting though, a limited toolset can be an advantage.

To the left is a basic visual record of some of the sorts of marks the ArtRage brushes will make. There are almost infinite variations available if you take into account individual brush controls and the ability to change paper settings.
As if that wasn't enough, there is the ability to import any image to make a stencil of - which is a fantastic addition to the mark making arsenal.

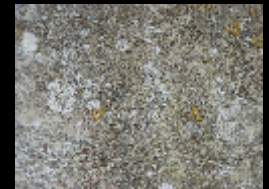**1   2   4   5   6**

**7   8   10   11**

There are controls on all the brushes specific to each - including three variations of the 'Palette Knife' (3).
9 is a colour picker and 12 is the eraser.

**3**

Brush size control is here

*Here's a few such images gathered in a local cemetery.*

It might be a good idea to point out some basic navigation features for moving about the image before we get any further.

You can **zoom** in and out using
**Ctrl/Cmd** in combination with the + and - keys
OR hold down **Spbr** and **Shft** while dragging left and right

You can **Move the image** if you hold the Spacebar down and drag it.

**Rotate** the image by holding down **Spbr** and **Alt/Opt** and dragging around

You can look at the image flipped horizontally (which is always a good test to see how your right or left handedness has affected your drawing) by holding the **H** key down.

Hold the **V** key down for vertical flipping.

That should be enough to get you started,
Remember that the full manual is built into the software,
to access at any time.

**F**ire up ArtRage and create a new default document. You can alter the image size through *Edit/Rescale the Painting* or paper textures through *Tools/Layer Options/Edit Paper Settings* if you feel like playing straight away. The software comes with a full built in manual, so stuff like this can be looked up at any time. Scan a sketch in if that's your preferred way of working, but I usually draw straight in with my tablet. ArtRage is nice to draw in, with good sensitivity. I prefer the '*precise pencil tool* option, but the standard more textural one is nice too.

I add a few layers, by clicking the *Add Layer* button at the bottom of the layer palette.

(1) I sketch the figures on one layer with the *precise pencil*,
Block in a dark green base for the water with the *roller*, as big as I can make it, on another, and
Paint some rough leaf shapes on a layer above with the *paintbrush*

(2) Add layers as you go for elements that may also need to be isolated. WHY? It makes adding textures etc easier without affecting everything near to that element.
I separate the ground
The ripples - 2 layers
Body colour of the characters.

(3) It's possible to emulate '*lighting effects*' by using a layer on top with its blending mode set to '*Mulitply*' and working into it.

Here I've filled the layer with blue/green, using the roller, and then painted into it with much lighter yellow - or rubbed it out with the eraser.

**Tip**
*You can contract the palettes to the sides by pressing TAB - or clear the the area completely by clicking onscreen while holding the spacebar down (or right clicking on a PC) - Just repeat in each case to return them.*

**1**

*I beef up the base green colour by duplicating the layer ad working on the upper layer with the '**Palette Knife**'*

**2**

**LAYER PALETTE**

**BLENDING MODES**
*Affect how layers interact with what's below them. Depending on whether they are additive or subtractive they can darken or lighten in different ways. Some transform the colour in an almost psychedelic way. The best way to find out is to* **TRY them out**.
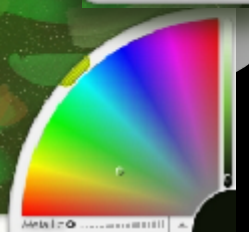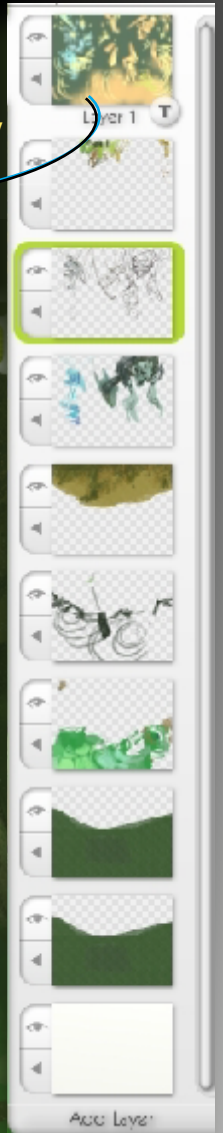*To change a layer blending mode in ArtRage - right click over it, and click in the window that says BLEND-Normal. I list of options will appear for you to select from*
*You will find blending modes in far more expensive software like Photoshop and Painter*

*Also be aware that you have total control over layer transparency. Simply right click over the layer and type a value in the appropriate box*
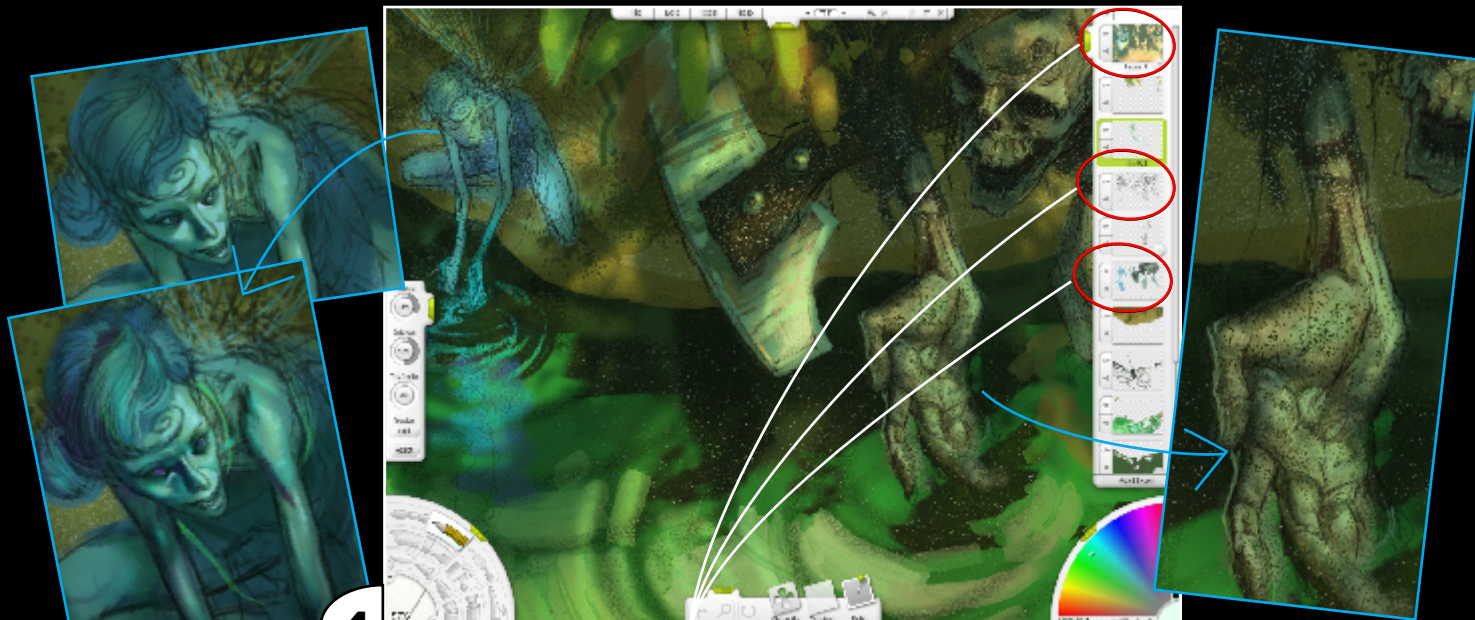
*I add a bit of texture to the 'gound in the top half of the image, using the 'Glitter Brush and '**Palette Knife**' tools.*

**3**

**4**

*Stencils can be combined by overlaying one on top of another, as I've done here to work on the ground texture. You also have options how your stencil will behave.*
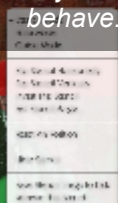
## STENCILS

*When you click on the 'Stencils' tab you open up a whole world of possibilities.. Click on one and it will appear as a red shape in you image. The red area represents what will be prevented from passing through onto the canvas when you apply paint. Chalk, whatever.. There are also rulers and geometric shapes should you need them. All are scaleable, rotatable and moveable.*
*The most exciting part is the ability to add your own to the libraries though.*
*__EITHER__ - Right click on a layer and take the option to 'Make a stencil form this layer'. Do this and right click over it so you can 'Invert this Stencil' to create a protective mask for the painting on that layer.*
*__OR__ - Click the 'Add New Stencil' button in a library to navigate to any image of acceptable format (see guide) and open it for the stencil to be created. I use images of rock, ground etc to add textures that way.*

**4**    Ignoring the fact that I haven't even resolved the composition yet, I start working up the characters , because they will be the focal points of interest. This is done by refining the drawing, body colour and 'lighting' layers. I use mostly the *Pencil, Chalk* and Airbrush tools. I've added one more layer for bright edges that I name Glint, to sharpen up the highlights.

It's about time I introduced to you a very powerful tool in this application that I've begun employing as well - the *STENCIL*

*I drop some bright Autumnal eaves floating in the water to add interest in the foreground (forewater?)*

**5**

**5**    I've kept the main light-source in the image simple - the sun, and imagined it coming from top right   It will make it easier to bring subtler lighting effects from the water and fairy magic (!?) into the shadows later. The light is golden/yellow, so the shadows should be purple/blue, if I rely on simple complementaries like I usually do. This mixed with the natural earth tones of the leaves and ground should give the sort of feel I'm after.
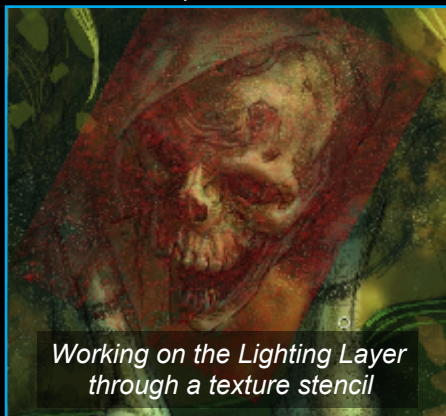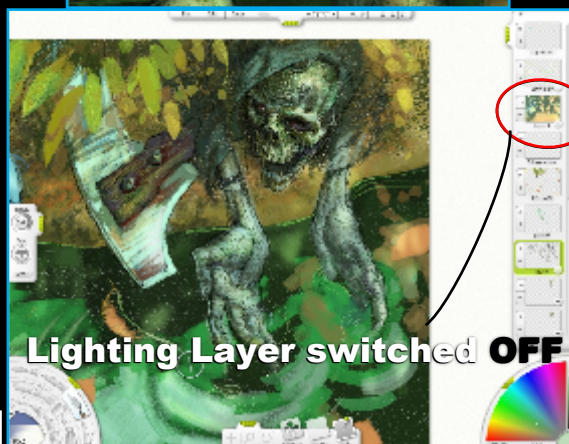
*Working on the Lighting Layer through a texture stencil*

To make the most of textures

Bear the form in mind

All the Time

OK

**Lighting Layer switched OFF**

**Lighting Layer switched ON**

**6**

*Switch layer visibility on and off to see how you're doing.*
*Click the 'Eye Icon' on each layer.*

**6**  **C**ontinue to push the textures, using stencils and a combination of the various brushes.  The Reaper's head is a particularly attractive spot to play with this.  The natural grain of the chalk just adds to the effect.  You can adjust how much grain it has in its  onscreen tool settings.  Each tool has its own set.
Don't just think about adding grain on the solid paint layer.  You can also work through stencils on the semi-transparent 'Lighting Layer' as well.
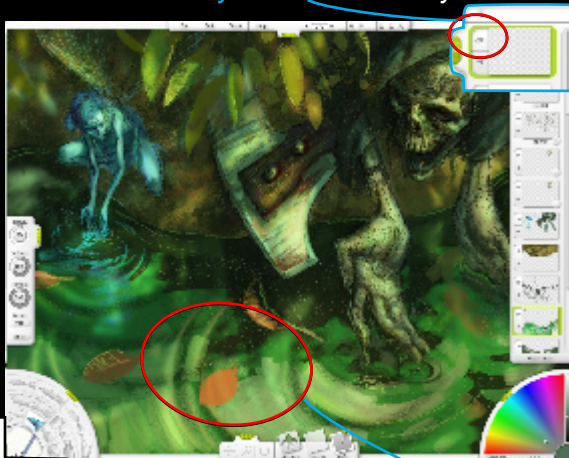
**7**  **I**t's long overdue that the composition be improved.  It's strongly divided into two halves at the moment.  The greatest gift of digital is editability.  Real media is far less forgiving, and demands better planning if you are to maintain any sort of control - Unless you are blessed with supreme confidence and ability.  I have neither.   Just as well we're in the digital world then..
If I can put something eye-catching enough here, it'll make a more triangular composition, which should work  better.
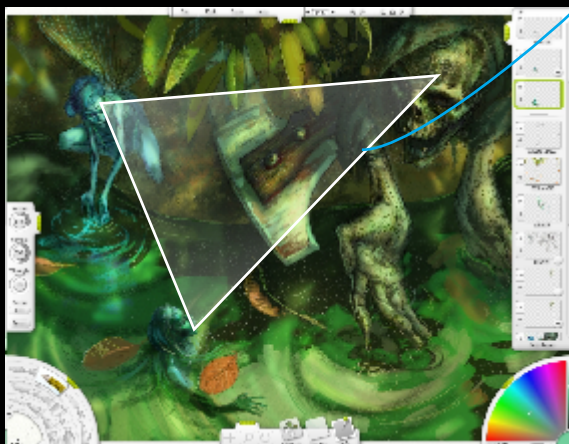
The leaf is OK but not a strong enough element to compete with  the  two characters.
I  add  a swimming  Fairy on a couple of new layers, and group them so that I can move her about as a unit.

**7**
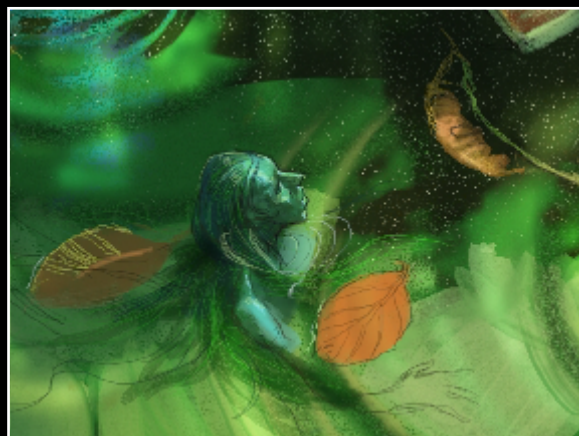
# Carry On - MORE OF THE SAME

*There are **gradients** included in the stencils - It's a bit of a chore, but you can lay a flat wash using the roller and a bit of patience.*

*If you work with dark tones through a texture stencil - think about inverting it and using light tones to really push the effect home.*

*You can crisp things up more by picking out details on that 'Glint'layer I mentioned a few pages ago.*
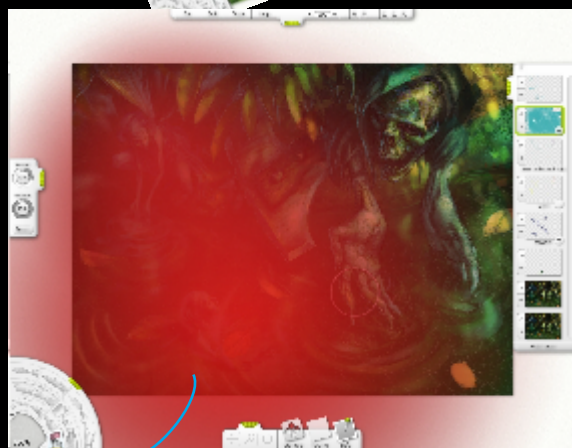
*Using two radial gradient stencils I lay down a 'magical' turquoise glow in the shadowy areas, by laying a wash with the roller on a separate layer and reducing the opacity. Then I work back in eraser where it's just too strong still.*
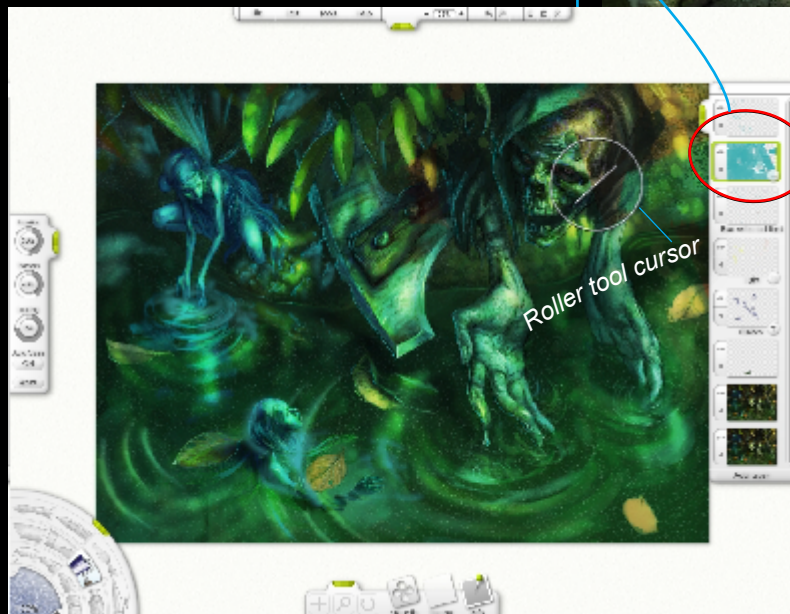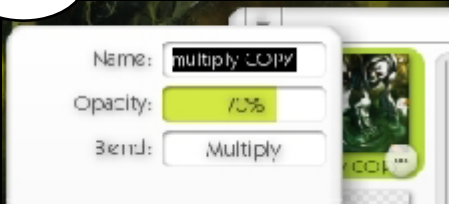
*Roller tool cursor*

*I've left some of the original texture that the chalk produced much earlier,to seem like dust floating on tranquil water. That was never planned, but I spotted it and thought it might work.*
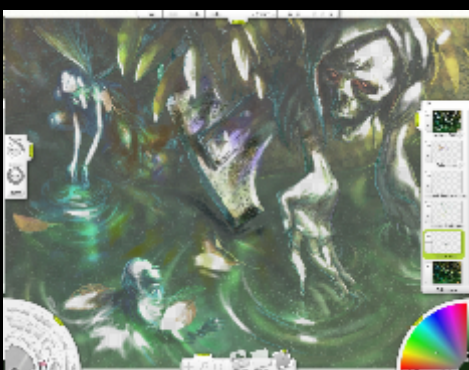
***ALWAYS** keep an eye open 'happy accidents'*

I add more layers to do my final tweaking, still naming them to avoid confusion.

multiply COI...

Extra trees

Added Shadow Colou...

Texture Highlights

Reflections

Add Layer

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**8**

Name:  multiply COPY
Opacity:  70%
Bend:  Multiply

Duplicating the image and setting to multiply blending mode

This is how the last tweak layers look with the visibility of the image at the bottom of the layer stack turned off

**8** I've come to a point where having all these layers is impeding me rather than helping. That's why I decide to ''Merge All Layers' which is an option on the layers palette. This allows me to work in a much more holistic way again. A quick technique for darkening the image is to duplicate the image to another layer, set it to 'multiply' blending mode (or another of the additive options) and adjust the opacity to taste. You can then go back in and gently erase lighter areas on the upper layer to accentuate the contrast. Doing this throws up a couple of areas I feel need attention. Some hint of reflected leaves and a bit more colour and detail on those floating.

**FINISH**    **T**hat's about it. The rest is down to more tweaking and fiddling (very technical terminology), using the methods already covered. It's far from the perfect image, but then that wasn't really the object here. Knowing me I'll go back in and tinker with it at a later date, when I have a fresh perspective on it and some time to do that. For now it'll have to do.

Here's hoping that you can get something out of this brief look at a promising software. Just enjoy yourself with it, or whichever software you decide to or are limited to using.