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# Line art will never be the same

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The quality of the new features in Adobe® Illustrator® CS2 is significant for just about any illustrator. Among them, the new Live Trace and Live Paint features are probably the most glamorous and useful. In this tutorial, we're going to see a real-world example of how these features can be used to take an ordinary piece of line art and convert it to vector using Live Trace. Then we'll use Live Paint to quickly and easily add color. Finally, you'll learn a few tricks to help export this file to Photoshop for any detail painting.

## Use Live Trace

For this tutorial, we've taken a drawing from Patrick Shettlesworth of [www.polykarbon.com](http://www.polykarbon.com). He's an incredible artist and produces some stunning anime imagery. This was given to us as a GIF image but it could just as easily have been a TIFF or PSD among others.



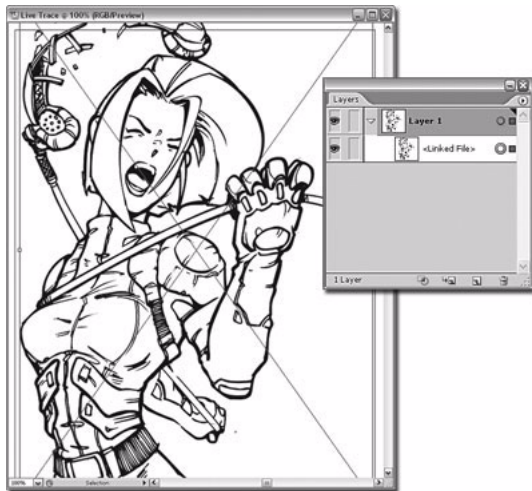
*Right-click the image, choose Save As, and then save it to your computer.*

## 1 Place line art in Illustrator

Create a new RGB document in Illustrator CS2. Choose File > Place and navigate to the file that contains the line art you'd like to trace in Illustrator. This file can be in many formats. Click the Place button to place this image into Illustrator.

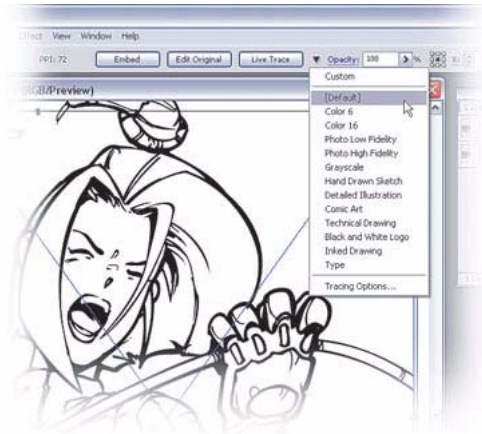
## 2 Tracing options

Click on the small circle to the right of the layer's name in the Layers palette to target the image.



The layers palette

You'll see the Live Trace button appear in the Control Palette under the menu bar. You've got a few options at this point: You could just click the Live Trace button to use the default settings and see what happens, or you could click the down arrow next to the Live Trace button and pick one of the listed presets. You could also create your own custom settings in the Tracing Options dialog (Object > Live Trace > Tracing Options).



Click the Tracing Presets And Options button in the Control palette to select a tracing preset.

## 3 Click the Live Trace button

For the sake of this example, we're just going to use the default settings. It actually does a great job on this line art drawing. To use the default settings, just click the Live Trace button. In a few seconds' time, you'll be left with a vector version of the line art. In fact, the process took less than 3 seconds to trace on my computer and the quality is excellent. Repeat after me please... "Wow!"



The line art is converted to vector when you click the Live Trace button.

#### 4 Adjust Threshold for more detail

Adjust the settings in the Control Palette to fine-tune the traced outlines. Adjusting the Threshold or Min Area settings will produce some interesting results. You can also click the Trace Options Dialog icon next to the Preset drop-down list to adjust all of the settings. In this example, we were able to bring out a little more detail in the line art by reducing the Threshold setting to 90.

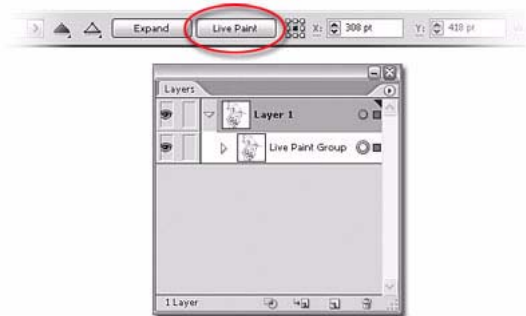


Adjust the Threshold and Min Area settings in the Control Palette.

### Live Paint

#### 1 Convert the object to a Live Paint Group

Now that we have our outlines, it's time to add color. Let's take a look at another new feature in Illustrator CS2 called Live Paint that will help speed this process along. Live Paint lets us color this artwork intuitively. Instead of selecting each subpath and coloring each small area, Live Paint automatically detects paths and gaps and allows us to fill them accordingly. For this example, we first need to convert our tracing to a Live Paint group. Click the Live Paint button in the Control Palette to convert the artwork into an object that can be used by Live Paint.



Click the Live Paint button in the Control Palette to convert the tracing to a Live Paint group.

#### 2 Use the Live Paint Bucket to fill the forearm

Select the Live Paint Bucket tool (K) from the Toolbox. Set the Fill color in the Color palette to R: 94, G: 84, and B: 75 and set the Stroke to None. Move your mouse over her left forearm and take note of the outline that appears as you hover over various parts of the traced image. This is a visual cue to inform you that this area is a Live Paint group and will be filled if you click with the Live Paint Bucket tool. Click the mouse to fill the forearm with the current Fill color.



Outlines indicate a Live Paint group that will be filled if you click with the Live Paint Bucket.

### 3 Fill the face

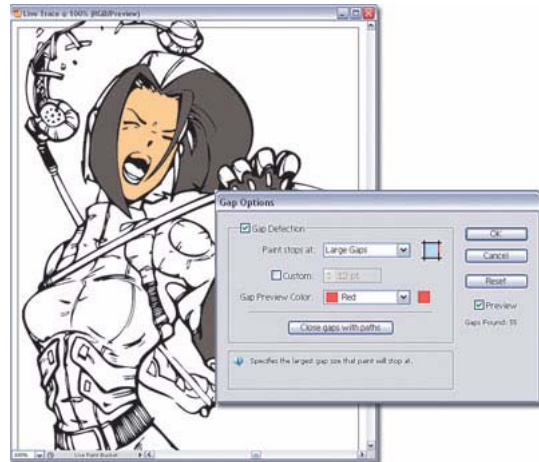
Next, set the Fill color to R: 253, G: 211, and B: 151. Using the Live Paint Bucket tool, click on the face area to fill it. If you've been following along with the settings that we've used, you'll notice a portion of her hair is filled as well. This is because of gaps that exist between the paths created by Live Trace.



Gaps in the paths cause areas other than just the face to fill.

### 4 Turn on Gap Detection

Fortunately, there are settings to help adjust gaps so we can paint the illustration more accurately—it's called Gap Detection. To use Gap Detection, click the Gap Options icon next to the Expand button in the Control palette. In the Gap Options dialog box, select the Gap Detection checkbox. Then experiment with the Paint Stops At settings by choosing one of the options, clicking OK, and hovering over the illustration to see which areas the Live Paint Bucket tool highlights. In the image we're using here, the Large Gaps setting worked best.



Adjust the Gap Detection settings in the Gap Options dialog box.

### 5 Finish coloring and adjust the Gap options

Continue painting the rest of the illustration with the Live Paint Bucket tool. See the accompanying image for an idea of what colors we used throughout. Remember, if you're having a problem painting a specific area, you can always go back into Gap Options and adjust the settings.

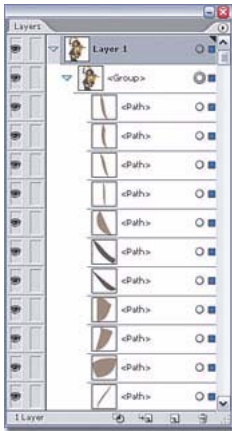


You may need to adjust the Gap Options as you color the rest of the illustration.

## Export to PSD

### 1 Expand the Live Paint Group

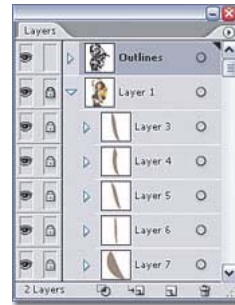
Now that our image is painted you may notice it looks a bit flat. You could add some shadows and highlights right inside Illustrator to give the appearance of depth; however, Adobe Photoshop® is much better suited for painting this type of detail. But we need to do a few things before exporting this artwork to a PSD file to make it easier to work with in Photoshop. The first step is to expand the Live Paint group so we can have access to each object in this illustration. To do this, click the Expand button in the Control palette.



Click the Expand button in the Control palette to display the objects in the illustration.

### 2 Cut and paste the outlines to separate layer

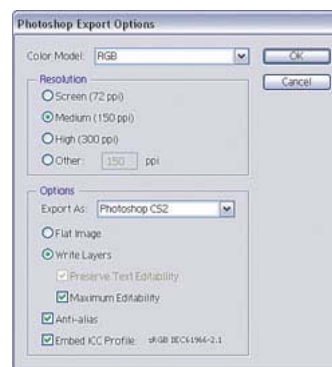
Next, we need to separate the black outlines from the colored portions of this illustration. First, target the Group in the Layers palette and choose Object > Ungroup. Using the Direct Selection tool (A), select an area of the traced outline that is filled with black. Choose Select > Same > Fill Color. This will select all areas that are black (the outlines). Then choose Edit > Cut (Ctrl/Control+X). Lock the layer and create a new layer above it named “Outlines.” Then choose Paste in Front (Ctrl/Control+F). This action will paste the outlines onto their own layer.



Create a new layer in the Layers palette for the outlines.

### 3 Delete white areas, release to layers, and export

Unlock Layer 1, select a white area using the Direct Selection tool, and then choose Select > Same > Fill Color. You can delete these white areas since we won't need them. Now, the original layer should only contain the colored sections. Target Layer 1 and choose Release To Layers (Sequence) from the Layers palette flyout menu. Now you can choose File > Export. Select PSD for the Save As Type and then click OK (Windows) or select Format and then click Export (Mac OS X). Enter the above settings and then click OK. Your file will be exported to Photoshop with each color on its own layer and separated from the black outlines, making it easier to paint.



The Photoshop Export Options dialog box in Windows.

## Before and after



*Before Live Trace and Live Paint, after Live Paint, and after adding shadows and highlights in Photoshop.*

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**By Matt Kloskowski for Layers Magazine**

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