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Free Resources for the Digital Artist

**Or:
How
I Learned
To
Stop
Pirating
Software
And
Love
The
GIMP**



This handout is also available online at:
http://gaia-kat.addr.com/digital_resources/
**You can simply go there and follow all of these links,
rather than typing them all in by hand.**

Software

The GIMP – GIMP is the GNU Image Manipulation Program. It is a freely distributed piece of software for such tasks as photo retouching, image composition and image authoring. It works on many operating systems, in many languages.

<http://www.gimp.org/>

Inkscape – A Linux, Windows & OSX vector graphics editor (SVG format) featuring transparency, gradients, node editing, pattern fills, PNG export, and more. Aiming for capabilities similar to Illustrator, CorelDraw, Visio, etc.

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/inkscape>

CinePaint – CinePaint is an open source painting program used by motion picture studios to retouch images in 35mm films. It was formerly called Film Gimp. It has been used in a dozen feature films including Harry Potter, Scooby-Doo, and the Fast & the Furious.

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/cinepaint>

Art of Illusion – Art of Illusion is a full featured 3D modelling, rendering, and animation studio. It is written entirely in Java, and can run on almost any operating system.

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/aoi>

Scribus – Scribus is an open-source program that brings professional page layout to Linux/Unix, MacOS X and Windows. Scribus supports professional features, such as CMYK color, spot color, separations, ICC color and robust commercial grade PDF.

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/scribus>

TTFEdit – TrueType fonts editor. Allows for editing vector-based glyphs

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/ttfedit>

EyesRay – EyesRay render a 3D scene with the raytracing algorithm. Some specific points are: a scene loader, the support of transparency, availability to generate images (ppm format)...

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/eyesray>

SharpConstruct – SharpConstruct is a 3D modeling program designed to let users paint depth on to polygon models in real-time. Unlike traditional modeling programs, SharpConstruct makes it easy to quickly model organic shapes.

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/sharp3d>

3dom – 3dom is a 3D Solid Object Modeler, designed to be independent of the renderer back-end. Highlights include constructive solid modeling, reality-based material representation, scripting through Python binding and a constraint solving engine.

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/threedom>

SculptMesh – Sculpt Mesh is a 3D tool for sculpting mesh as if it were clay, It provides some of the basic functionality of ZBrush (TM), giving unprecedented artistic freedom, allowing artists to rapidly achieve quality and interesting results with free tools.

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/sculptmesh>

Books and Magazines

From here on out, definitions get fuzzy. When a print magazine has a website with great tutorials and a fabulous community forum, does that go under “magazines”, “tutorials”, or “communities”? Most any website is going to have multiple compelling features, and I encourage you to check out as many as you can, regardless of what semi-arbitrary category I've thrown it under in this handout. You never know when you'll stumble across that technique that takes your art to the next level, or that forum post that solves the problems you've been having with that character portrait you've had on the back burner.

Grokking the GIMP – <http://gimp-savvy.com/BOOK/index.html> – this 350-page book by Carey Bunks is a little dated now, since it was written before the GIMP developers released version 2. But it is still the best book on the GIMP there is. It explains in detail how things work and how you might be able to use them. It's fun to read, and exhaustively indexed. Many times when I get stumped on why a GIMP tool works the way it does, or how to do a particular task, Grokking the GIMP comes to my rescue.

Print magazines can be expensive once you start adding them all up, but remember that they all have websites, where most of them will post a bit of content as a “free taste” of what you're missing. Also, they will show off the artists they are featuring – and hopefully link to them – and those artists may have tips, tutorials, or workflows for you to look at (not to mention fabulous and inspiring art). And, when you can afford the industry magazines, you'll find that they almost always include CDs that have great freebies, like free software, stock images, brushes, plugins, etc., along with a PDF of the magazine itself with all the reviews, in-depth tutorials and workshops, industry news, business tips, etc., indexed and searchable. Once you add up what all that is worth, the price tag for the magazine suddenly seems much more reasonable. But, if the budget is tight, surfing the magazine websites and checking out the freebies they offer can be a great way to get information and ideas.

<http://www.3dworldmag.com/>
<http://www.art-scene-international.com/>
<http://www.computerarts.co.uk/>
<http://www.digitmag.co.uk/>
<http://www.imaginefx.com/>
<http://www.layersmagazine.com/>
<http://www.pshopcreative.co.uk/>
<http://www.photoshoper.com/>

E-Zines are even more compelling for the thrifty resource-hound. Without the overhead of printing and distribution costs, e-zines can offer a lot of content for a very reasonable price (often free). Unfortunately, they tend to be short-lived and many are not worth the effort. Here's a few of the ones I've found:

<http://www.emg-zine.com/> -- really, really good. Ellen Million's zine saved the whole category from being deleted, I swear.
<http://itsartmag.com/>
http://www.msstate.edu/Fineart_Online/

Tutorials

There are eleventy-billion tutorials out there. Here are some that don't suck, and some pages that list and categorize other tutorials.

<http://resource-exchange.deviantart.com/>
<http://elfwood.lysator.liu.se/farp/art.html?33924>
<http://www.gimptalk.com/>
<http://www.gimp.org/tutorials/>
http://www.henningludvigsen.com/wordpress/?page_id=22
<http://chaosshattered.deviantart.com/journal/6836628/>
<http://www.designertoday.com/tabindex-13/tabId-27/page-2/DesktopDefault.aspx>
<http://thefellapages.deviantart.com/journal/8063581/>
<http://artisticflair.deviantart.com/journal/2801919/>
<http://www.fur.com/~almackey/tutorial/>
<http://user.fundy.net/morris/?photoshop.shtml>
<http://www.bakaneko.com/howto/index.html>
<http://ver.rubberhouse.net/tutorials.shtml>
<http://artcorner.org/tutorials/lessons/>
<http://cedarseed.deviantart.com/journal/4895422/>
<http://www.digitaltutors.com/>

And finally – how to watermark your art if you're worried about people stealing your stuff:

<http://www.deviantart.com/deviation/21839291/>

Communities

Communities are a mixed bag. On the one hand, it's great to be able to upload your art, get critiques, share tips and tricks, get opinions, etc. But on the other hand, communities are filled with people, and all the imperfections that come with them.

DeviantART: <http://www.deviantart.com/>

Elfwood: <http://elfwood.lysator.liu.se/>

These are the... less professional communities. What they lack in prestige, DeviantART makes up for with size, as Elfwood does with genre focus. DA is huge. Really, really huge. Elfwood is strictly Fantasy and Sci-fi. There are many newbies and social butterflies on these communities, which can be frustrating for the serious artist looking for critique.

GFXartist: <http://www.gfxartist.com/>

ConceptArt.org: <http://conceptart.org/>

CGSociety: <http://www.cgsociety.org/>

These three communities are much more professional, and are more focused on heavy critique, industry news, and contests. The critiques can be brutally harsh for the beginning artist.

Extras!

A few other places to find goodies to use in your art:

Stock Images and Textures

<http://www.sxc.hu/>

<http://www.imageafter.com/>

<http://freestockphotos.com/>

<http://www.morguefile.com/archive/>

<http://hubblesite.org/gallery/>

Fonts

<http://1001freefonts.com/>

<http://www.goodfonts.org/>

Brushes

<http://www.cybia.co.uk/starterpack.htm>

<http://www.rhysin.net/brushes.html>

Plugins

<http://gug.sunsite.dk/scripts.php>

<http://www.nuclecu.unam.mx/~federico/gimp/index.html>

Graph Paper

<http://www.incompetech.com/beta/plainGraphPaper/>