How to Use the ParticleShop Creeper Brush Pack

Corel's ParticleShop plugin for Adobe Photoshop offers an astonishing number of special particle brushes to enhance and enrich your paintings or photographs. Each brush can be customized to suit your individual needs by changing the size, opacity, and particle size. ParticleShop ships with a Core Pack with 11 individual brushes. As of this writing, you can also download an Exclusive Pack for free that contains an additional ten brushes. Also, there are many additional brush packs available for purchase.

Elite Painter Master Don Seegmiller will show you how he used ParticleShop and the Creepers Brush Pack to add some details and finishing touches to a character he painted. You could do the same things with a photo. The uses of ParticleShop are limited only by your imagination.

I am using one of my sketchbook doodles as the basis for this painting. It was done in Corel Painter 2017 and on three layers; the background layer, the shadow layer, and the character layer. I saved the final image as an Adobe Photoshop PSD file and opened it in Photoshop.

01.Duplicate the layers you want to paint on using ParticleShop
Select the layer of the image you will be painting on. Choose the Filter/Painter/ParticleShop plugin. When you first open the plugin, you are asked if you want to duplicate the layer you will paint on. I suggest you do this. By nature, the particle brushes produce more or less random strokes making it hard to use them for finely controlled painting techniques.

By creating and painting on a duplicate layer, any areas that are covered with particle brush strokes can be erased revealing the clean original layer. It is quite possible that multiple copies of the original layer will be needed to get the painted effect wanted.

02.The ParticleShop window
Particle shop opens in a full screen window. There is the usual menu bar at the top of the screen controlling the size, opacity, and the particle size, as well as the zoom of the image, undo, and redo.

On the left side of the screen is the toolbox showing a brush, erase, smudge/blend, dropper, and color wheel icons. When you click on the Color Wheel, the color picker is displayed. I like to keep mine open and click the push pin icon in the upper right corner. If this is not activated the color picker will close when you paint.

On the right side of the window you will see the different Brush Packs installed. ParticleShop installs with the Core Pack. You can register and download the Exclusive Pack.

To purchase additional brush packs, simply click on the More Brushes button. For this image I am using the Creepers Brush Pack. It contains a number of brushes that are great for adding that "organic" feel to creature and character paintings. The brushes are previewed in the Brush Options window directly below the Brush Packs.

At the bottom right corner are the Save or Cancel buttons.

03.Painting with ParticleShop

Here is where the real fun begins and it will take some experimentation to get familiar with what is possible with each brush. To familiarize yourself with the brushes, pick different ones from the options window, paint a few strokes, change the brush colors, and vary the size and opacity. I would take a few notes of the settings that of any particular brush that you really like so you can duplicate it in the future.

When you finish with a few strokes, undo them. Should you forget and paint too many strokes to undo, remember that you are working on a duplicate layer and another can be created from the original.

In the painting I have added some shaggy hair (Caveman brush), a subtle texture to the staff (Bacteria Brush), and some texture to the skin (Freckles Brush and Random Brush). I simply erase any brush overlap where I don't want any.

I erase the overlapping hair strokes and decide to add some stitches to the figure's arms using the Stitches Brush.

I save the changes and go back into Photoshop.

I create a new layer below the characters shadow. On this layer I am going to paint some rather abstract bony or fungus shapes. It really doesn't matter what they are as long as they are kind of creepy looking in keeping with the overall feeling of the painting.

Back in ParticleShop I choose the Roll the Bones brush and paint a row of "bones" across the bottom of the layer. I click "Save" and am back in Photoshop. In the image below, you can see that the bones are below the shadow layer and appropriately darkened.

Though it is difficult to see, I have added additional texture to the skin and background using more of the brushes in the Creepers Brush Pack. An important thing to remember is that often you will need to be more subtle than you think for the particle brushes to integrate into the image well and not look artificial.

Back in Photoshop I clean up the edges of the character and staff adding some rim lighting.

04.Finishing Touches
At this point I usually take the painting back into Painter 2017 for any finishing touches. In this particular painting I need to finish the bracelets on the characters arm and add a few more subtle rim lights.

Corel's ParticleShop and its versatile Brush Packs are a wonderful addition to the Photoshop painter. Using these unique tools will allow the artist to create effects and subtle enhancements that would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to create with standard tools.

I would encourage all artists to invest in ParticleShop, a new and exciting tool.