



Adobe® Illustrator® CS6 How-To Guide

A Study in Contrasts

By Huan Tran

Huan Tran is constantly in motion. Whether traveling the globe, exploring his Toronto neighborhood, or letting his imagination take flight, Huan is always on the hunt for inspiration, asking questions, and seeing things in new ways. His studio, Leaking Faucet, is really just a metaphor for his own mind because like his creativity, his thoughts never cease.

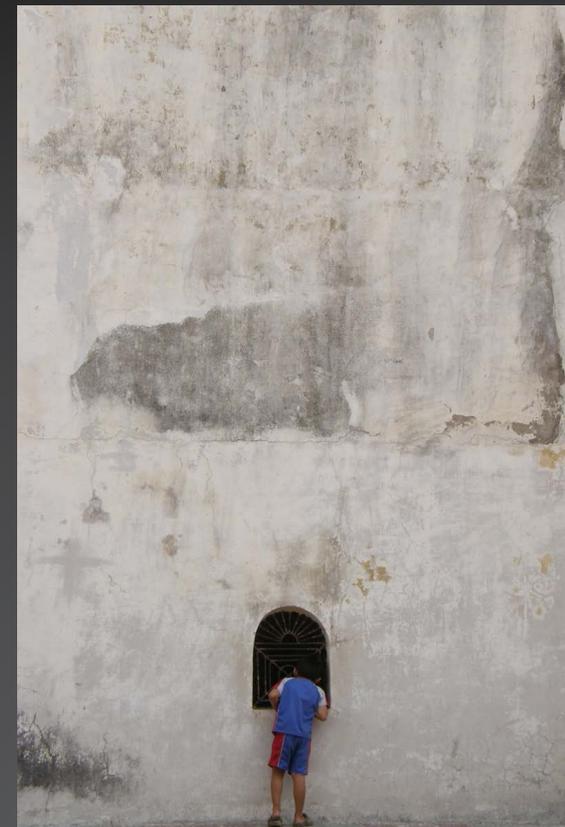


How I work

When I want to find inspiration, I step outside my everyday world. Always being in my ordinary environment can lead to ordinary ideas. I love watching how other people work and interact in any situation. It forces me to react, respond, and readjust my view.

Long before I sketch anything, I read—delving into my client's industry, their challenges, their customers—and keep asking questions. This passion for exploration might come from my background in computer science and philosophy, or just my innate fascination with learning how and why things work.

Before I begin any project, I like to brainstorm concepts that might be interesting, as well as explore their potential to be transformed into an image that can communicate those ideas. After a lot of doodles, squiggles, and notes in the margins, I eventually produce a linear sketch that will be the blueprint for my image as I move forward.



"I'm drawn to vibrant, conceptual work that plays a lot with contrasting elements."

Getting started

For this project exploring *The Birth of Venus* as part of my design, I was instantly drawn to the themes of love and trouble. Love is mischievous and adventurous, yet it often seems to cause trouble. One way I demonstrated this is by showing a gang of Cupids getting into trouble as they escape from the heart of Venus.

I didn't want to stop there and wanted to introduce a variety of contrasting elements. I am fascinated with contrasting ideas, juxtaposing a soft and hard edge, texture versus flat graphic, or dark against light.

To create my design, I used many features that were introduced in Illustrator CS5 as well as those that are new in Illustrator CS6, wanting to give my work a more hand-drawn, organic feel.

Drawing all the lines

Venus' body is rendered in a softer, painterly way to pay homage to the original Boticelli painting while the elements that flutter, fly, and swirl around her are more graphic and modern in style.

I always like to start an image by first drawing all the lines. I use varying widths, styles, and transparencies to get the lines to feel the way I want.

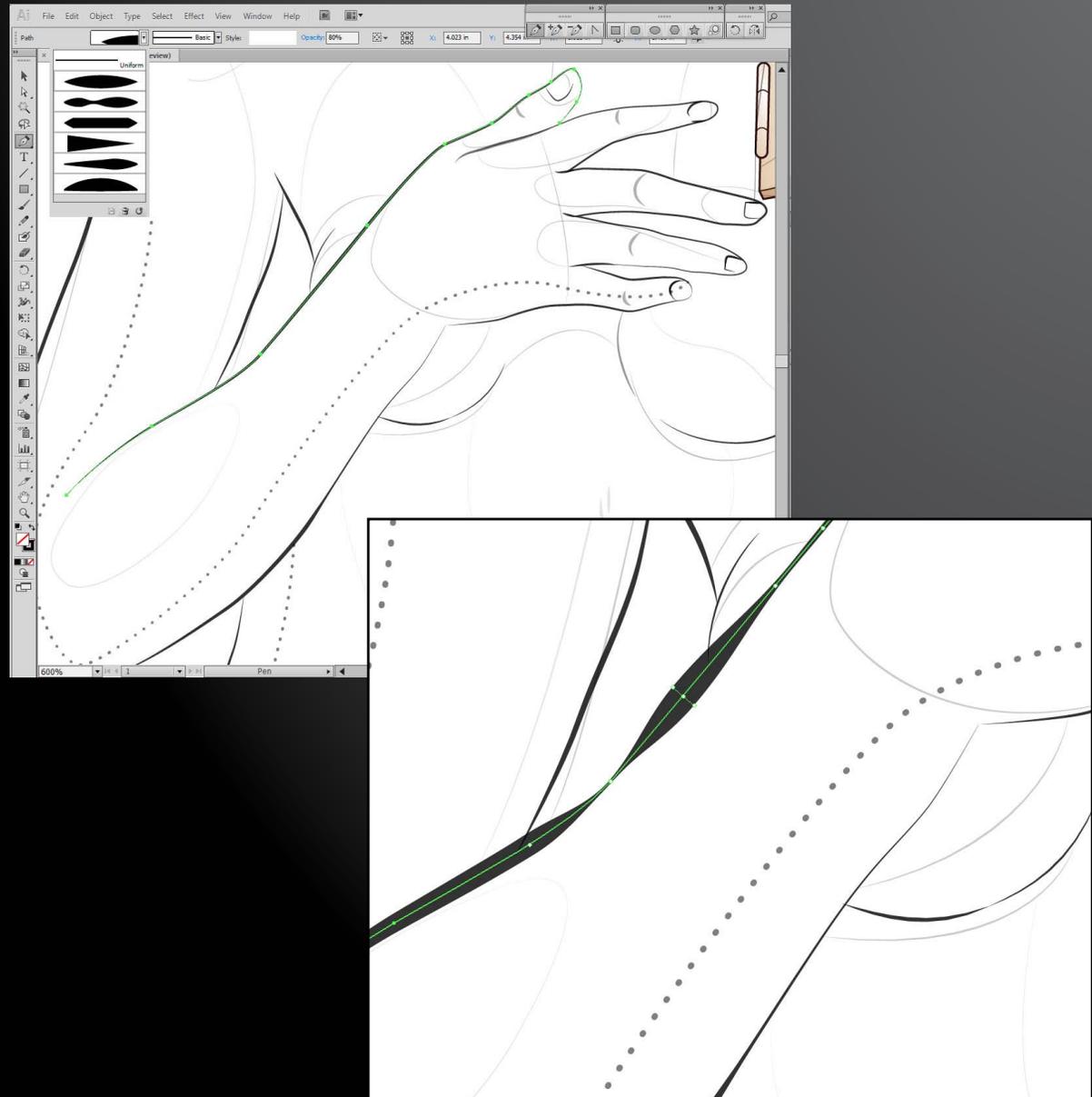
The way I construct and create an image is hard to describe. In fact, I can't take you through every thought, but I can highlight how I do use certain Adobe Illustrator features to achieve my final image.



"I think behind the best image is an idea that makes you think—do a double take and dares you to look deeper."

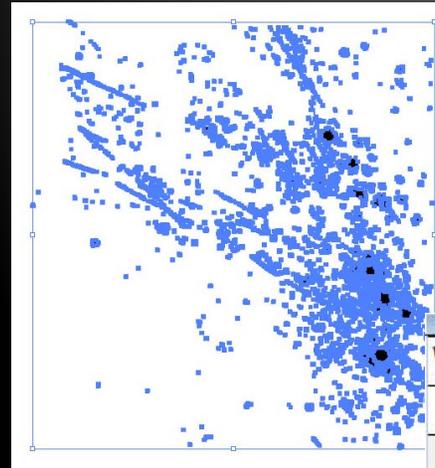
Variable width strokes and profiles

For Venus, the seashell, and the whale tail, I wanted the lines to feel more organic and hand drawn. For other lines, I wanted them to be more mechanical and graphical in nature. For the more organic lines, I applied one of the default width profiles in Illustrator CS6 on my stroke, and then used the Width tool to adjust and perfect the stroke, giving it thicker and thinner points along the way.

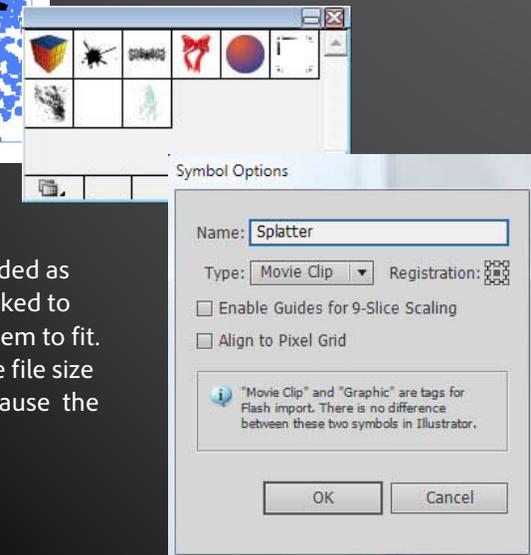


Ink splatter

I like to add texture to my work, and one way I did this was to take a scan of an ink splatter, and convert it to vector paths using the new Image Trace in Illustrator CS6.



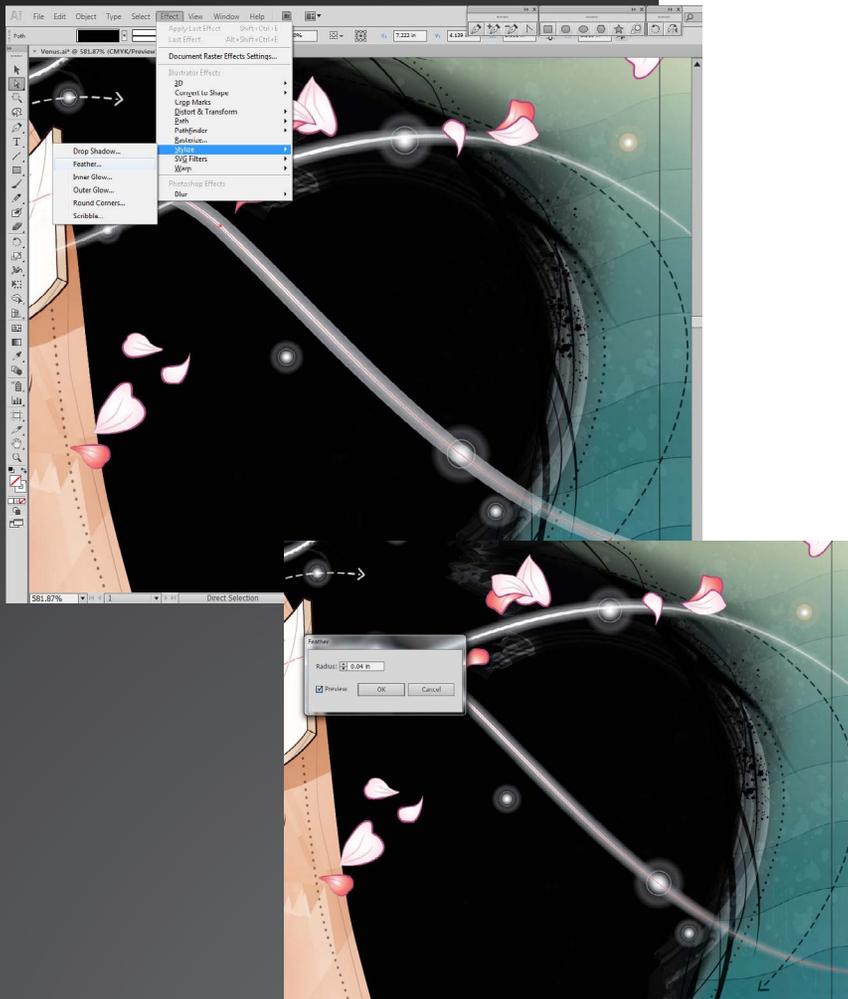
The splatter consists of hundreds of vector shapes. To save disk space, I converted the splatter into a Symbol. To do so, I selected the splatter group, then dragged it to the Symbols panel to create a new symbol, which I named "Splatter."



Once the symbol was created, I added as many of the splatter symbols as I liked to the image, rotating and skewing them to fit. By creating a symbol, I reduced the file size of the image by roughly 12MB because the splatter was stored as a symbol.

Treatment of shapes

Some Shapes I outlined and some I didn't. Some are sharp, while others are fuzzy and faded. To get the fuzzy edges, I applied the Feather effect to the object.



For the white thorn bushes at the bottom of the images—which represent how love can be guarded—the shapes are given texture by punching out the ink splatter along the edges of the vines using Pathfinder.



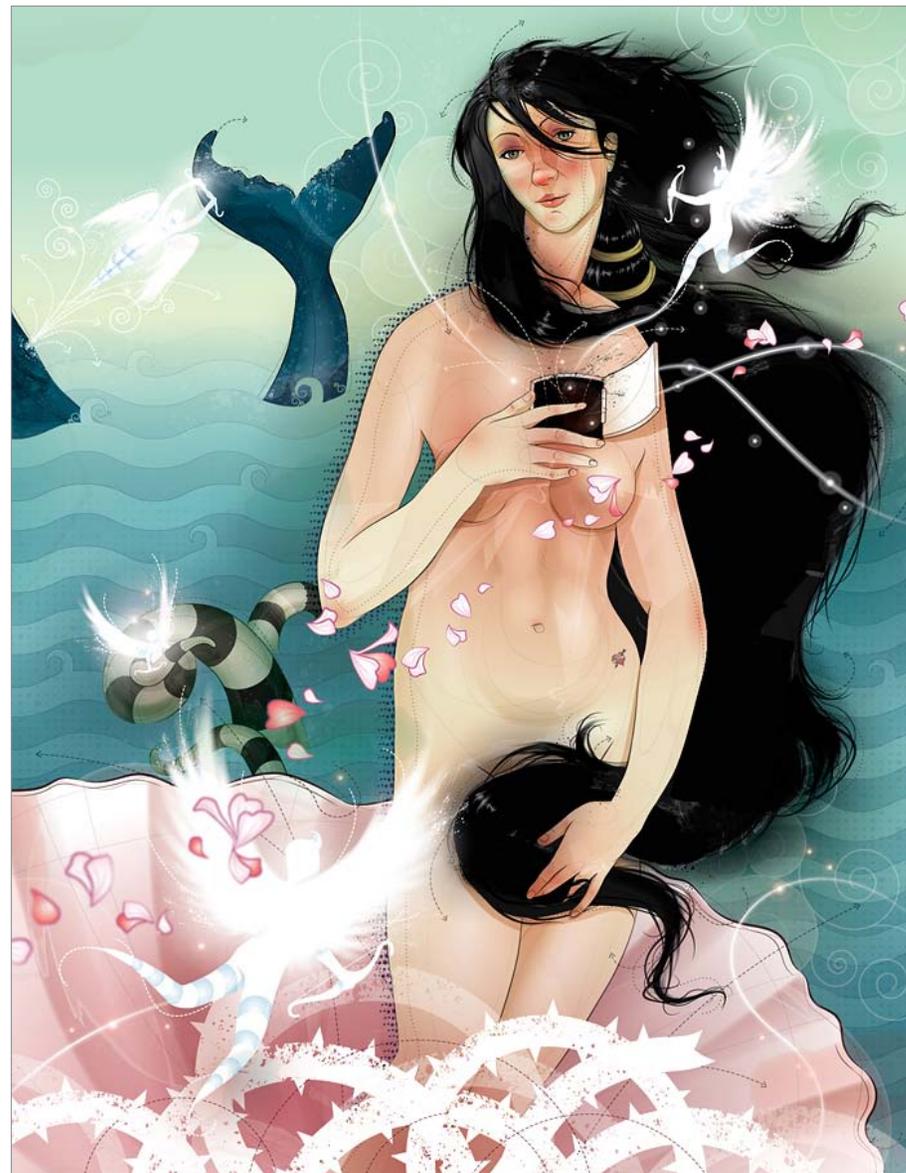
“What used to take half an hour or longer to render, now only takes a few seconds to process with new 64-bit native support in Illustrator CS6. The faster execution really helps my creative process.”



"It's fascinating to see what can be done today with the new tools—to see how technology, society, and creativity push forward. I'm always excited by the opportunity to use Adobe Illustrator to try new things and take new risks in my work."

Leaking Faucet Venus was commissioned by Adobe and created using Adobe Illustrator CS6.

For more information
Product details:
www.adobe.com/illustrator



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