Illustrator CS3 or later

Work brighter and faster with Live Paint

Joe Van Wetering on harnessing the Live Paint tool to make colouring your work simpler than ever

When I started creating my drawings, I would draw every shape on the screen with the Pen tool. This was the cleanest way I knew how to create my images. I soon found the Live Paint tool, however, which helped me to fill outline shapes with colour very easily. The Live Paint tool enables artists to colour without worrying about objects being in front of or behind each other, making it simple to transform a line drawing into a clean, vibrant, print-ready file.

In this tutorial I will go through my complete process of adding colour to your work via the highly underrated Live Paint tool. Welcome to one of the fastest, cleanest ways of making big, bold, bright illustrations.


Joe Van Wetering
__ Born and raised in Chicago, Joe is inspired by the contrasting visions of pop culture and nature, exploring the developing relationship between colour and space in his abstract artwork. See more of his creations at www.joevw.com

Time needed
3-4 hours

Skills
——Using the Live Paint tool
——Selecting colour palettes
——Using the Quick Select tool
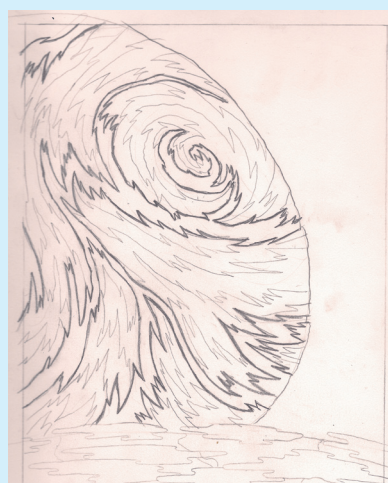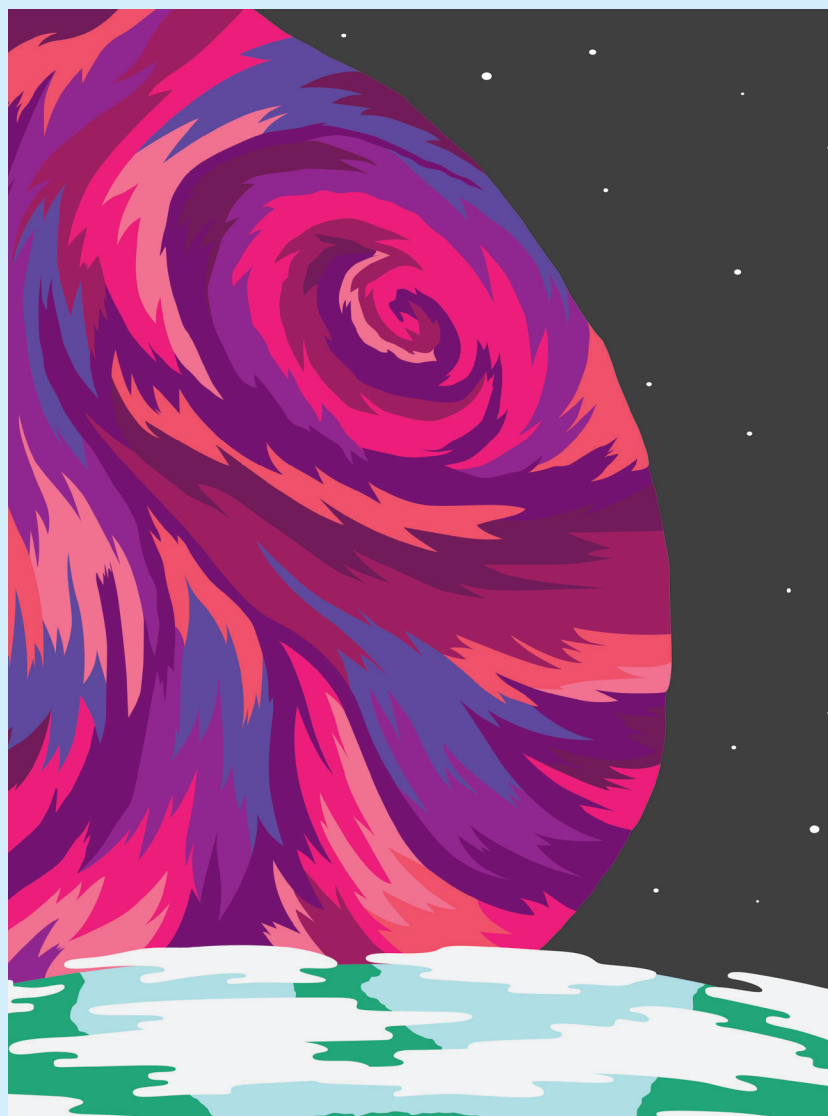
01____ Black and white is easiest to work with for line drawings. Sometimes I use tracing paper over sketches to get the exact lines I'm going to be making with the Pen tool. It can be helpful to bring your drawing into Photoshop to tweak the contrast levels for crispness.
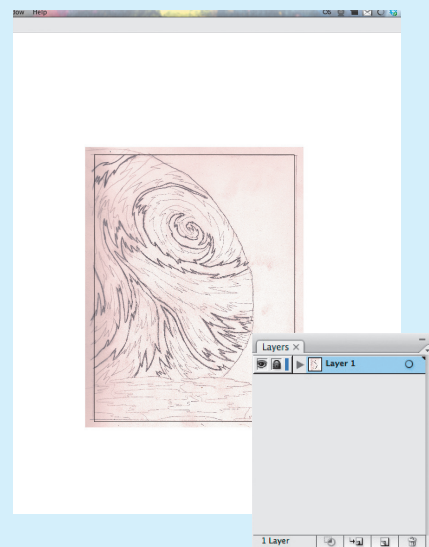

02____ Scan your artwork, then create a new document in Illustrator. Embed the image (File>Place) and put it on its own layer. Lock it, so you don't accidentally shift it in the process.
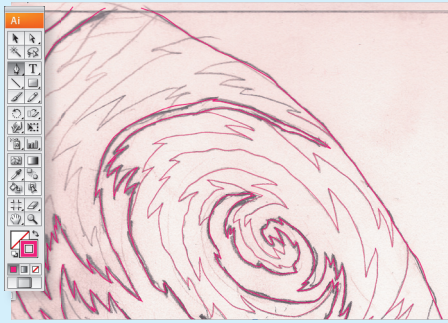
03 A drawing like this requires some knowledge of the Pen tool. Curves are always the hardest to get down, but the more you practise the better you will get. Try to trace over your lines as closely as possible. Zooming in close makes this much easier than trying to see the whole drawing while you work.
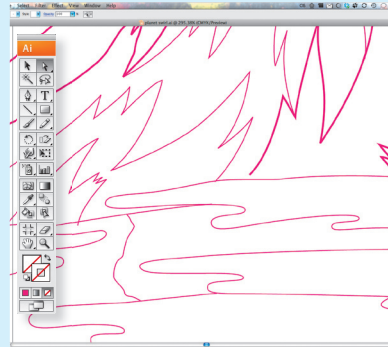

04 Once you have traced the entire design, double-check all your lines. With your Direct Selection tool, clean up any overlapping lines. You want everything butting up against each other so there are no gaps.
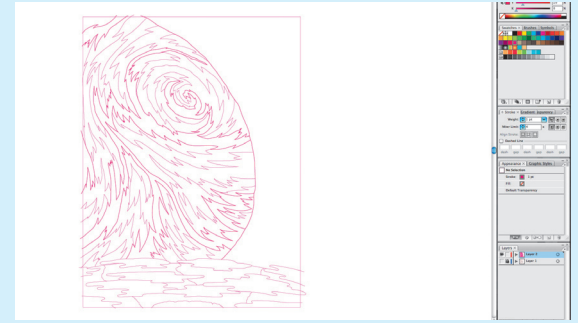

05 Now that you have everything drawn and cleaned up, create a box around it all using the Rectangle tool. This makes sure every shape is defined at the edges and every area can be filled when you are live painting. It's okay if some of your lines go outside the box – they will not get filled, and will be deleted later. This is also a good time to adjust the crop of your work if needs be.
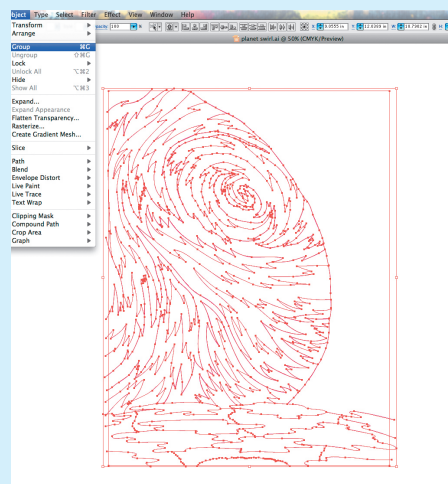

06 Select your work. Click on the Live Paint tool and then click on your artwork to make a new Live Paint Group.
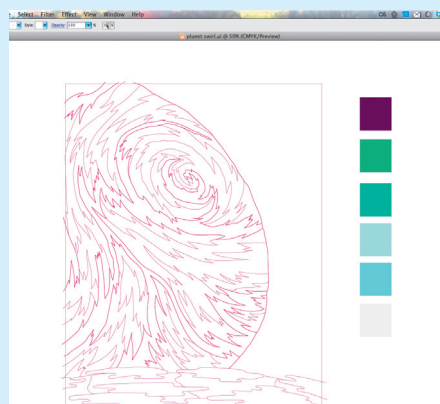
07 At this point, I like to get my palette nailed down. I already have a rough idea of how I want it to look. I want the planet to be overlooking Earth, so I choose some blues, greens and an off-white. I choose a purple for the planet in focus, so it contrasts with Earth below.
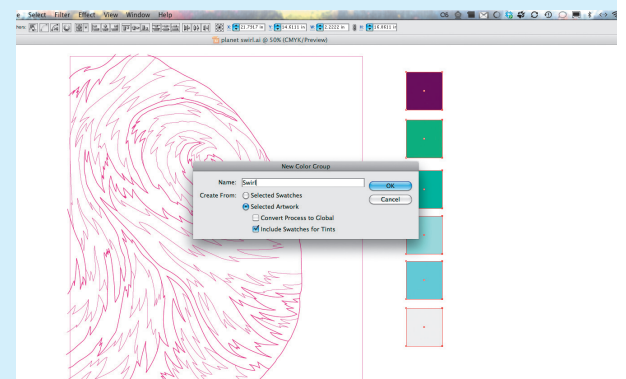

08 Select all this work and go over to the Swatches palette. Hit the New Colour Group icon. In the dialog box that appears, choose Selected Artwork to turn these colours into swatches within a group in the palette. This helps to keep track of the colours you're using, making them easy to reference as you're working.
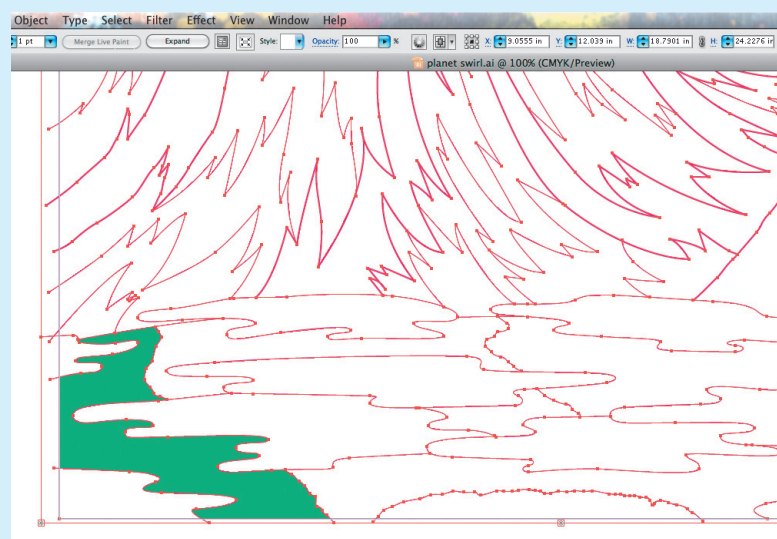

09 Before you start painting, select the colour you want to begin with. I choose the green because I am going to start with the land on the Earth section. Once you have your colour, make sure the Live Paint tool is selected and click in the middle of the area you want to paint and – Bam! – it's filled.


10 As I start to paint, I notice that I forgot to draw a line. You can continue to add to your work by drawing what you need, selecting everything and going Object>Live Paint>Merge. Now this is a paintable area and can be edited like everything else. →
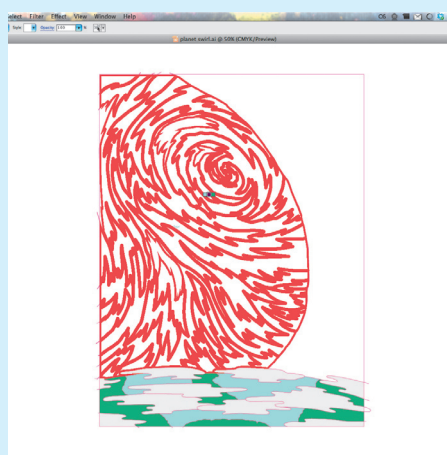
11_____ Another way to Live Paint is to just click and drag your mouse over an entire area. You can hold it until everything you want is highlighted, or just keep moving your mouse in the section you need. It makes for quick painting of solid colours.
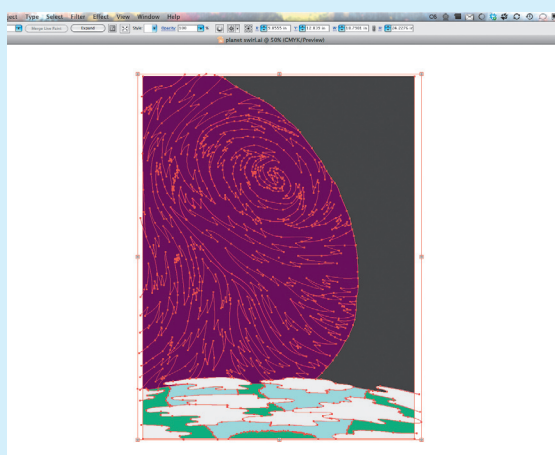

12_____ Now I have my general colours complete, I get out of Live Paint mode and play with the vectors. Go Object>Live Paint>Expand. Now your work is out of Live Paint mode and almost ready to edit. You want to make sure you have your work exactly how you want it, because once you expand everything it will be harder to edit.
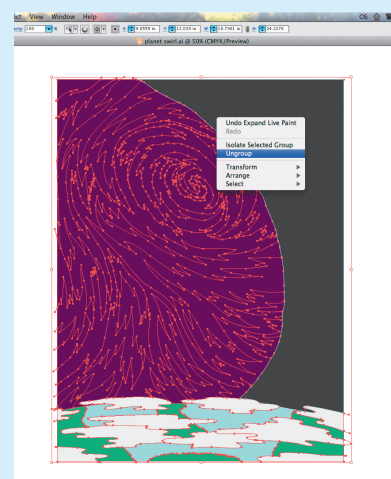

13_____ Everything is expanded and ready to be edited. I want to get rid of the bright pink lines I used as guides. I need to ungroup everything twice, then I can regroup as I please.
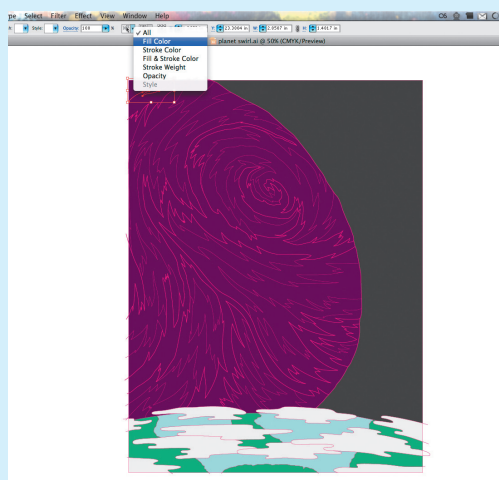

14_____ I select one of the pink lines, go to Select>Stroke color, and delete it. This handy step enables me to select all similarly colored objects for easy deletion. If you need to select a specific colour and adjust it in any way, this is the fastest method to use.
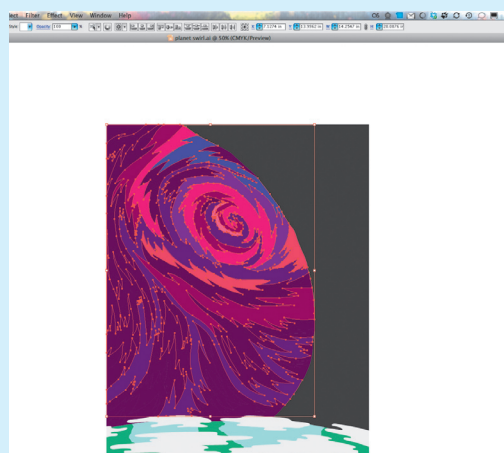

15_____ I want to add a variety of tones the big purple planet. I take a selection of purples and blues from my default colour palette and adjust them to make some brighter and darker tones. You can vaguely see the lines where the shapes within the planet are touching, and once I start adding colour to this it comes together quickly.
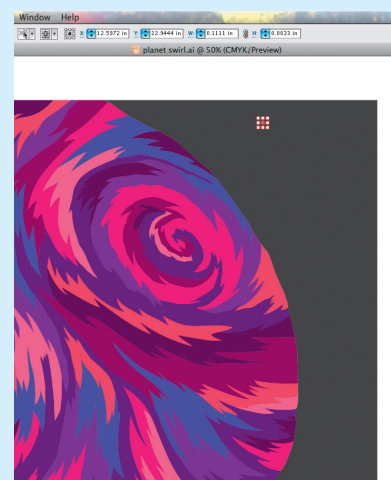
16_____ Now that I'm done with the colours, I decide I want to add a couple of stars in the background. I select the Circle tool and make a small off-white circle. Making it the same colour as the Earth's clouds pulls the image together.
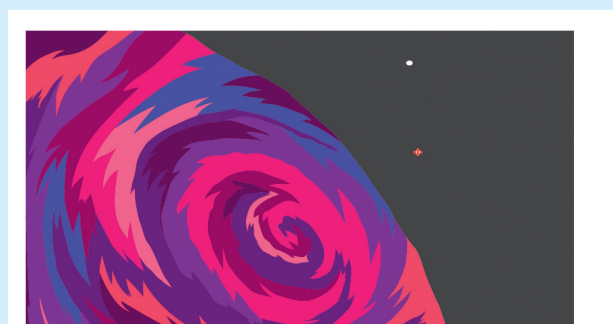
17_____ Once I've created one circle, I simplify things by duplicating the circles. Select the 'star' you want to duplicate, hold down the Alt/Opt key and drag. You'll have an identical star positioned in the area that you let go. Do this (or copy and paste them) around the screen until you have as many as you want.
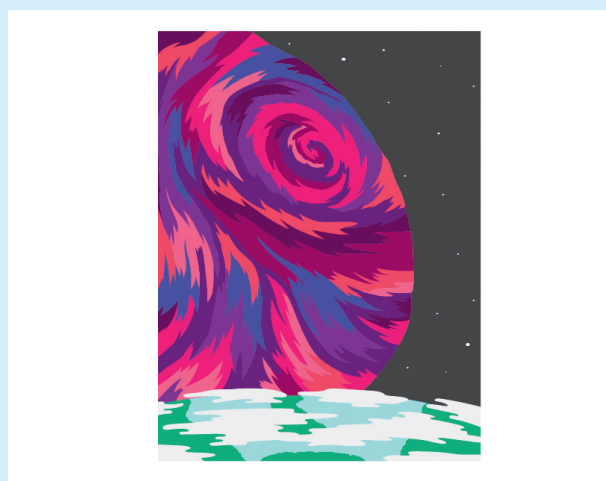
18_____ Once you've resized some of the stars to add variety to your piece, you have your finished file! It's now ready to go to the printers or to upload straight to the web.