





➔ PHOTOSHOP • ILLUSTRATOR

DESIGN A STENCIL

If you're looking for a new, original and hands-on approach to illustration, then look no further. I Love Dust comes over all practical to produce this stunning image with stencils and spray paint, and a little help from *Photoshop*

DOWNLOAD



DOWNLOAD
Click here to download the files you need to complete this tutorial

TIME LENGTH

3 hours

INFO



I Love Dust is a design agency, based on the south coast of England, that

specialises in brand identity, illustration and web design. Clients include Hugo Boss, Marks & Spencer, Ash and Charlotte Hatherley, Double Dragon Music, Three Gut Records and sneaker artist Dave White. The team is currently working on projects for NYC-based store Deluxe. Visit www.ilovedust.com.

➔ Stencil art was once an underground art form, a subculture with a hold on the streets. From amateur tagging to masterful artwork from the likes of Banksy, the disparity of styles and talents was wide ranging, embellishing the urban landscape.

But in recent years, graffiti techniques and styles have re-emerged on a more mainstream stage, showing a strong influence on the visual language of graphic design, advertising and fashion. On T-shirts, on TV and in magazines, stencil art has had a huge impact – and become a vital aspect of contemporary illustration.

Using the computer as just one of many tools, this tutorial will give you basic guidelines and tips to help you get your head around stencilling techniques. Although the overall style can be achieved using computer software alone, we think it's far better to get your hands dirty.

The combination of both tools provides more control, and you'll quickly achieve bold stencilled artwork to be proud of. Once you've mastered the technique, there's no limit to how it can be applied. For this tutorial, we'll show you how to create a five-colour stencil, which you can then use as a stencilled piece on a background of your choice, or photograph and incorporate into a digital illustration.

However you plan to apply the final results, the main character and layered *Illustrator* files have all been included in the download to help you get started.



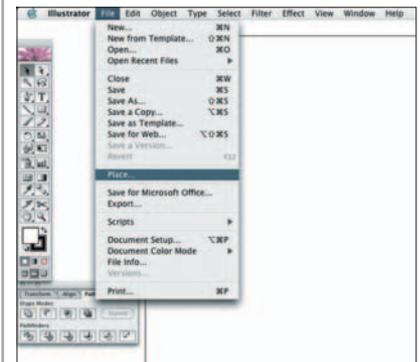
1 To provide a subject for this illustration, we looked for a theme or an existing symbolic/iconic figure that was due for a comeback. The lumberjack was a fitting candidate, so we searched the internet for some wood-chopping inspiration. We decided a modern day Paul Bunyan would be ideal. An image has been provided in the download



2 The best way to get the perfect lumberjack is to make your own. Keeping checked shirts and chainsaws firmly in your mind, style your victim and photograph them in different poses. Crop the image from the background using the Lasso tool in *Photoshop* and make a selection. Copy this selection to a new layer in your Layer palette and either delete the background layer or fill it with white.



3 Convert your image to black and white by choosing Image→Mode→Greyscale. A high contrast image is easier to work with, remember, so go to Image→Adjustments→Brightness/Contrast and adjust the levels. Simplify the image to a basic combination of shadows, midtones and highlights. You may also want to posterize the image by selecting Image→Adjustments→Posterize. Flatten and save as a PSD or EPS file.

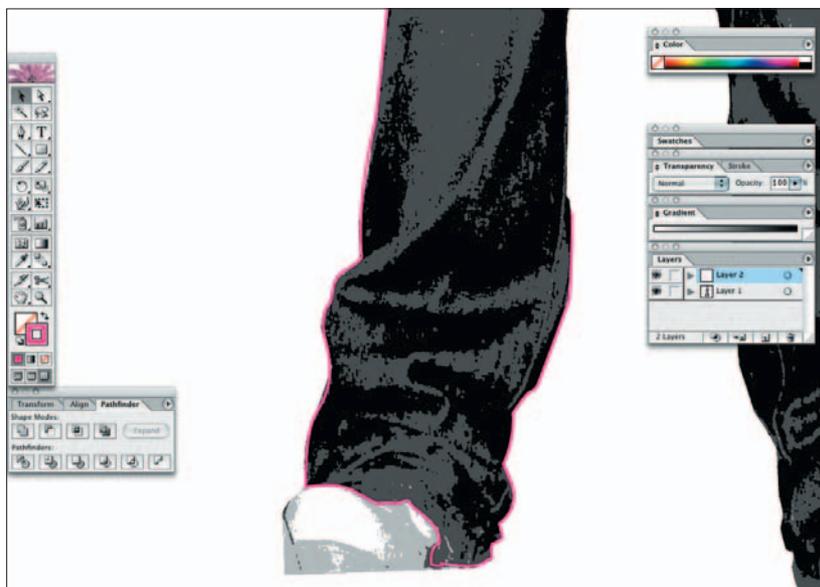


4 Now create a new document in *Illustrator*. The file size for this tutorial is 235x290mm. Import the image of the lumberjack by choosing File→Place and then navigate to the image. Once you've selected it, choose Object→Lock→Selection.





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5 Create a new layer. You can now start to trace the basic lumberjack shape using the Pen tool with a thin stroke set at 0.25. Start with the basic shapes – the trousers, for instance. On the same layer, trace other parts of the image that have the same tonal value. On a new layer, draw the basic shape of the shirt and any other details of a similar tonal value.



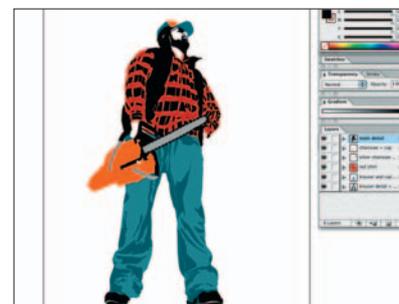
6 Trace the image to different layers, and restrict yourself to a few spray-paint colours. Group the shapes as shadows, midtones and highlights. For example, the folds of the trousers will go on the shadow layer and will be sprayed in black ink.



7 Apply colour on screen to work out how your stencil will work. Limit yourself to four colours, plus black: red (shirt), light blue (trousers and cap), orange (chainsaw and front of cap), silver (chainsaw blade) and black (shadow detail). You can also have areas that are not sprayed – we used paper/card/wood surface as a skin tone.



8 Choose your colours in the Colour Picker and drag the swatches to your Colour Palette. Then, selecting each layer, apply the colours you want by clicking on the swatch in the Colour Palette. Think about how the paint will build up layer by layer. It may be helpful to unlock and move the photograph at this point to use it for reference only.



9 You should now have up to six layers: one for each colour of the illustration and one for the photograph, which you can now delete. You may need to re-order them by dragging and moving each layer in the Layers palette into the sequence in which they will be sprayed. For instance, finer details will be on the top layer, to be sprayed in black.



10 Each layer will now represent the five stencils you are going to cut. You need to check for "islands" in your vector shapes as floating white space will not work when you start cutting out the coloured shapes. Add "bridges" to join these details to the white negative space of the stencil.



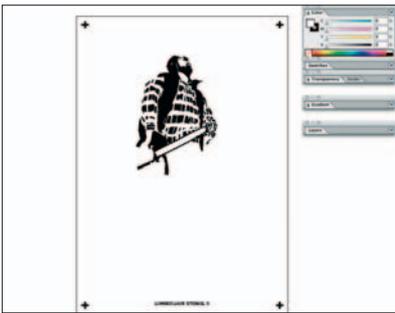
11 On a new layer, make cross marks at each corner of the document so that when printed in separated layers each stencil can be aligned more easily. These marks must be big enough to cut out later, so make them out of 5mm black rectangles

◎ FEELING CONFIDENT?

If you get confident with the spray can, use a combination of colours blended together to create a subtle gradient. Try this technique out on the shadows on the trousers with a base of black paint and a light spray of dark blue on top. By laminating the stencils, you should be able to re-use them again and again, so practise lots of different techniques, surfaces and colours until you create a truly professional piece of artwork.



12 At this point, we decided to separate the shadows on the trousers from the other dark elements, and spray them first on a separate stencil. We then sprayed the blue trouser colour on top of this to create a subtle dark blue. If you also want to do this, copy the trouser shadows onto a separate layer.



13 You should now have a simplified illustration of the lumberjack with each different element on a separate layer. Now to print them out. Add numbers and names to the different layers by adding some text, which you can print out along with the graphic. This will eliminate confusion.



14 Print out each document, making sure you keep the paper size the same for each one. If you want to be cost effective, change the colours to black before doing so. Take your five sheets of paper to a local stationery shop or printers and have them laminated. This makes the stencils much easier to cut and re-use.

KEEP IT CLEAN

Consider trying different nozzles on your spray cans to create different spray effects. It's also worth checking that your nozzles are clean before spraying your artwork. If they get clogged then the spray will be uneven, so soak them in warm water before you start.

15 Use a sharp scalpel to carefully cut out all the black and linked sections from the laminated sheet to create your stencil. Start with the simplest one to help you hone your scalpel skills. Try and spot any errors such as islands while you cut: you can cut in little bridges to floating sections to retain these little details, without altering the final image.



16 Next, cut out the registration marks. Place one of the stencil sheets on your cutting surface and, using a pencil, make a mark through the stencil registration marks. This will make it easy to line up each stencil.



17 Lightly cover the reverse of the Trouser detail stencil with spray mount to help it stay in place. Position the stencil on the surface you have chosen to spray on. Make sure that the surface is light enough to pass off as skin colour. It's a good idea to test each stencil before trying a layered version so you get used to how much paint is needed for each section.



18 Point the nozzle of your spray can directly downwards, about eight inches away from the stencil, and spray lightly over the entire image. Do not aim the jet in one place – make sure you keep it moving. Leave the paint to dry for a few minutes before carefully removing the stencil.





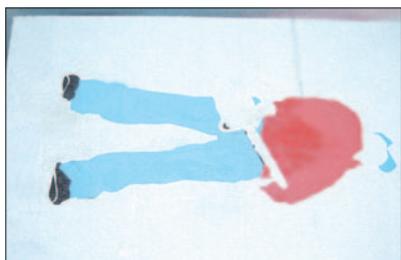
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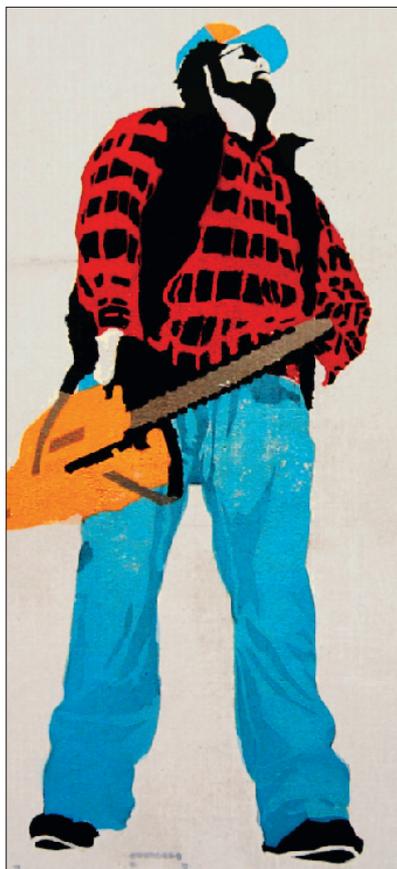
19 For this image, the next section to spray is the blue of the jeans, as this goes over the first stencil to create extra colour. The black of the trouser detail becomes covered in blue to create a darker shade. The cap base also uses the same colour.



20 Colour by colour, build up your artwork by repeating the previous steps with each stencil. Make sure that you align the registration marks each time.



21 The stencil image soon starts to take shape as you add the colours. Here, the red shirt layer is sprayed in position.



22 Once you've sprayed all the basic layers onto the surface, it's time to add the most important stencil. Because this has the most detail, it should be sprayed with extra care. Once the image has dried, you should have a finished five-colour stencil, as shown.



23 Using the same techniques, you can easily create a background for your image – as seen in the main illustration on page 40. This is a collage of photographed stencils and graphics. We used elements such as fir trees and log trucks to help stick with the lumberjack theme.



24 If you're looking to create a simplified version of this image, why not try creating a stencil that uses just two colours?



25 Alternatively, try stencilling onto a blank sheet of sticker paper. This is easier and means that you can plaster your art everywhere – without being caught! **arts**

◎ GO STEADY

When you're cutting out the more intricate parts of your stencil shapes, don't think you need to cut one area all in one go. By cutting the stencils in segments, you'll be able to get your blade into the tricky angles more easily, rather than bending it meticulously around the perimeter of the inked area.