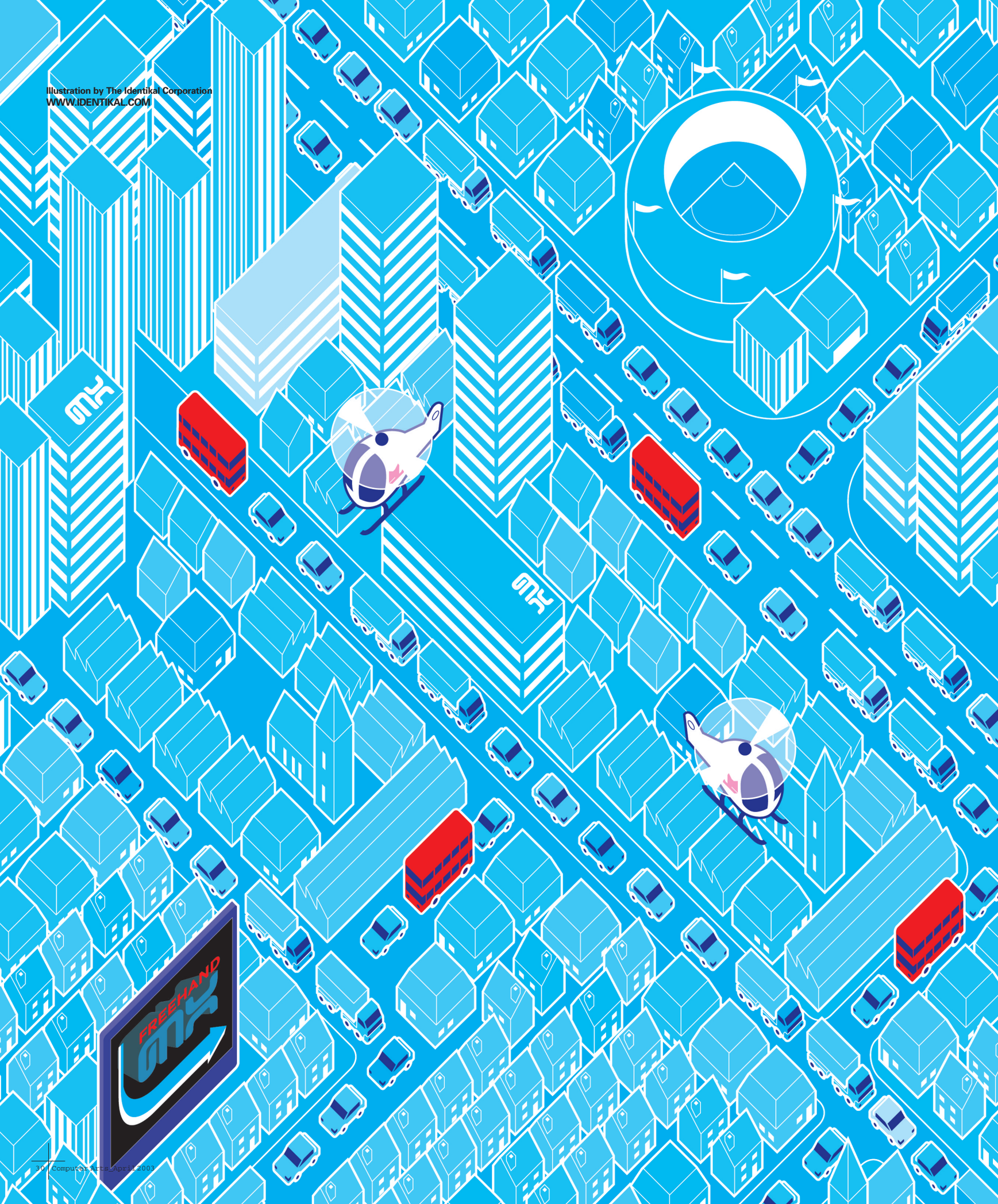


Illustration by The Identikal Corporation
WWW.IDENTIKAL.COM
FREEHAND

FREEHAND MX

MX CITY LIMITS

Using the current tools in *FreeHand*, along with the new and improved features of *FreeHand MX*, we show you how to construct your very own world

With the latest version of *FreeHand*, we're given a host of new and improved tools. In the next five pages, we'll give you the lowdown on these tools and take you through how this illustration was created. Start with our interface and new feature guide on the next page, then follow Identikal's tutorial on how to build and create your own little world of *FreeHand* vector magic.

Using the 45-degree angle rule, you'll learn how to add those final touches of quality to perfect your own *FreeHand* illustrations; how to construct a technical-looking illustration using layers and colour co-ordination as simply as possible; how to plan and build your own unique city using the 'graphic blocks' you have put together; and finally, how to add definition and simplicity to your image as a whole.

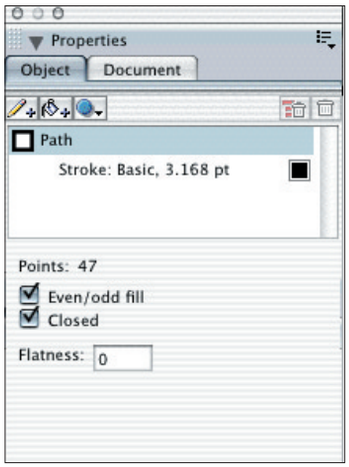
The tutorial will also help you understand more about the simple rules of illustration: composition, colour and technique. Without these rules, your image will lose its character and fluidity. Once you've mastered all of these processes, you'll then be able to apply them to any of your illustrations to help develop your own unique styles and worlds. Best of luck!

Artwork and tutorial by Identikal; visit www.identikal.com

→

FREEHAND MX INTERFACE

FreeHand MX brings Macromedia's product in line with the rest of its *MX* products. The interface has significantly changed since version 10, so we thought we'd give you a quick reference guide to the tools – old and new



OBJECT PANEL

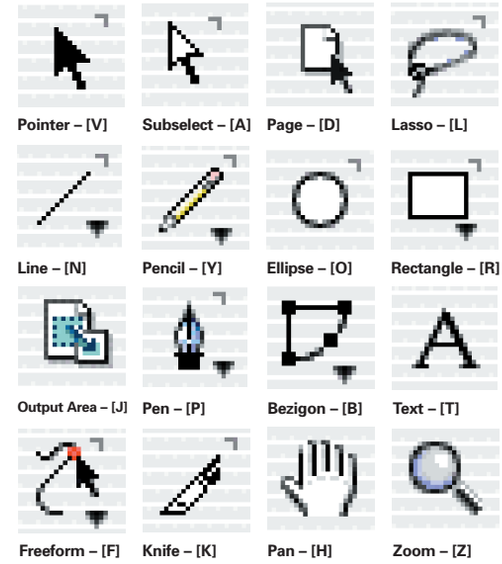
The Object Panel has been seriously revamped in *FreeHand MX*, and now lets you edit your objects' attributes in a hierarchical fashion.

The Object Panel is now context-sensitive, which means it changes to display different options when different tools or object types are selected. Most of the time, the Object Panel looks like it does here. The three icons enable you to add (in order from left to right) strokes, fills and effects to your object.

You can add as many strokes, fills and effects as you like until you get the desired effect. Live Effects enable you to add all manner of vector and bitmap-like effects to your object, while the Object Panel enables you to alter the order in which the effects are applied. You can apply effects to strokes or fills.

ESSENTIAL TOOLS

Your guide to *FreeHand MX* toolbox shortcuts (key commands are in square brackets)



NEW AND ENHANCED TOOLS EXPLAINED

Output Area
The Output Area tool is a nifty addition to *FreeHand* that enables you to quickly output only certain areas of your document. To use the tool, simply drag a selection marquee around the area you wish to output and then print as normal.

Vector-based Eraser
Working much like an eraser in a raster-based application, the new Vector-based Eraser tool in *FreeHand MX* enables you to quickly delete parts of an object or a path.

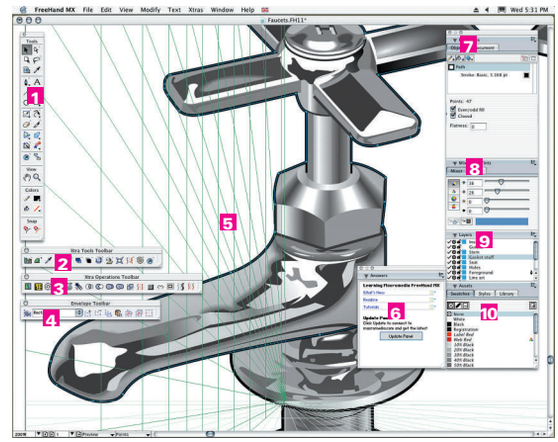
Extrude
From an illustrator's perspective, the Extrude tool is one of the most exciting additions to *FreeHand MX*. Found in the main toolbox, it enables you to quickly and interactively extrude 2D objects and rotate them in 3D space. After your extruded object is in place, switch to the Object panel to alter the shading and lighting or add a bevel.

Blend tool
The Blend tool in *FreeHand* has been tweaked and moved from the Xtra Operations panel to the main toolbox. This now enables you to simply click on two objects to create a blend – the Object Panel enabling you to adjust the blend accordingly.

Connector
The Connector line tool is a great addition. To use it, simply click on an object you wish to link to another and drag the connector line that appears. As you move one of the objects, the connector line moves with it. Easy!

Action tool
The Action tool is another great feature – enabling you to link multipage *FreeHand* documents to form *Flash*-based presentations. The tool has a few options, enabling you to link to, print or load the target page as a movie. Double-click to select the action you want, click on an object with the Action tool, then drag it to the page you wish to link it to.

THE MX INTERFACE



1 Tools
Contains all the main tools for creating and editing vector-based objects and paths. You can also determine the stroke and fill, as well as control snap settings and move around and zoom into your document. (Check out new and enhanced tools with the help of our annotated diagram, left.)

2 Xtra Tools toolbar
This contains various tools for adding effects and creating unconventional vector objects. You can easily roughen the edges of an object, create a bar chart, mirror objects and more.

3 Xtra Operations toolbar
The Xtra Operations toolbar contains what you may know as Pathfinder tools. These enable you to quickly combine together more than one object to form a new one. In addition, other tools are available that enable you to simplify paths and expand strokes.

4 Envelope toolbar
The Envelope toolbar enables you to control an object's shape by means of another – or an envelope. Use this combined with the Envelope option found in the Modify menu.

5 Perspective Grid
Used in combination with the Perspective tool in the main toolbox and the cursor keys, the Perspective Grid helps you create realistic perspective effects within your illustrations.

6 Answers
Introduced across the *MX* range of products, Answers provides access to up-to-date info, tutorials and other advice from Macromedia.

7 Properties
Contains both the Object and Documents panels. The former enables you to quickly alter the appearance of your objects; the latter gives you options to change the size, resolution and dimensions of your document.

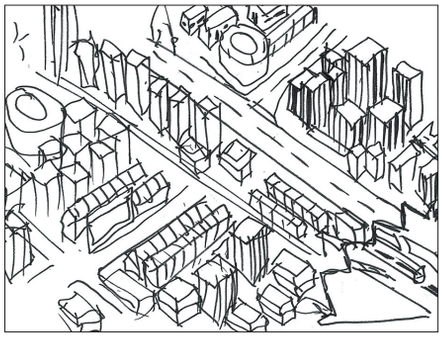
8 Mixers and Tints
Use this panel to create and apply various colours to your vector object and text.

9 Layers
Manage your document with ease using *FreeHand*'s now familiar Layers panel.

10 Assets
The Assets panel contains a list of user-created swatches and styles (created from the Object panel), and a library containing all of your *FreeHand* symbols. Symbols can be edited by double-clicking on the relevant symbol in the Library panel.

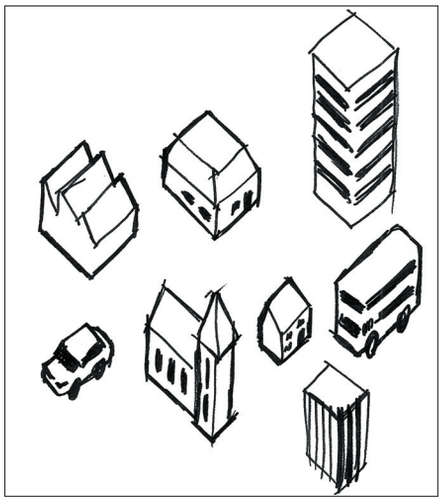
PART 1 PLAN YOUR CITY

In this section, we show you how to get the primary elements right before you go on to produce your image ↴



1 Using a sketch pad, roughly illustrate the shape of your city. Include roads, streets and buildings, all within your given dimensions.

2 Put together a hierarchy of what objects and buildings you wish to establish as your focal points, then highlight them on your sketch. These focal points will be useful later on in the tutorial.



3 Once you 've worked out your hierarchy, you will now need to decide what to include in the illustration. Using a mock 45-degree angle look, an isometric vantage, draw rough sketches of the elements you wish to include. These can be anything – skyscrapers, cars or even factories.

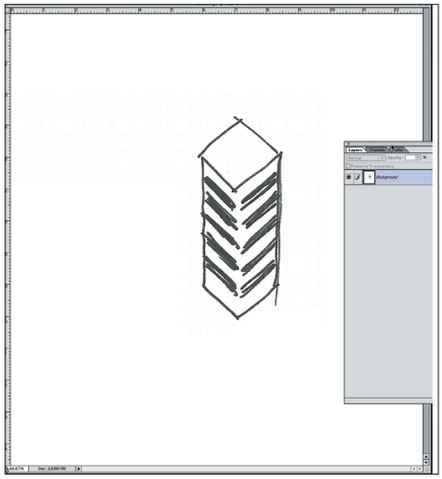
INSIGHT

COLOUR CO-ORDINATION

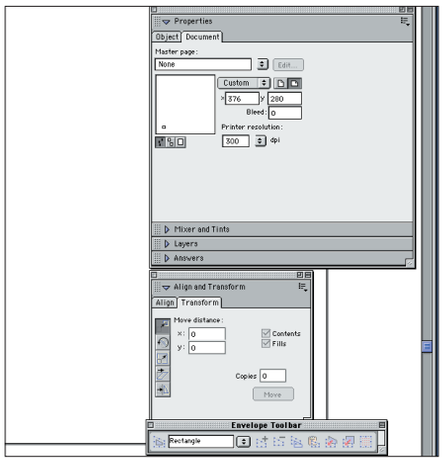
Always restrict yourself to a colour palette that has a limited number of colours. Choose them wisely, too, and try to use tones to lighten or even darken objects. Nick Hayes at Identikal tells us: "We restrict ourselves to two or three main colours that play a dominant role in our illustrations, then add three to four colours as a secondary palette, to pick out bits of detail."

PLAN YOUR PIECE

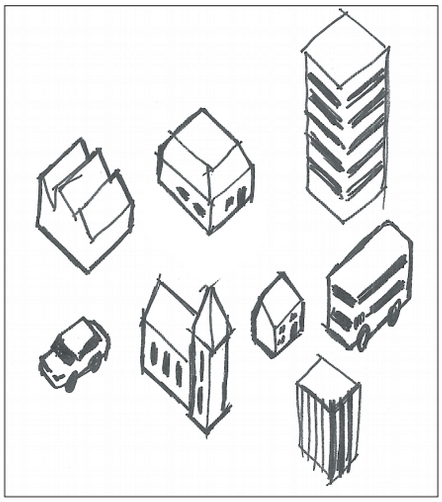
Always start your illustration by planning exactly what you want to achieve. There's nothing worse than trying to fill a blank space with no real structure or concept. By planning what you want efficiently, you'll complete your image a lot quicker than if you rush straight into it.



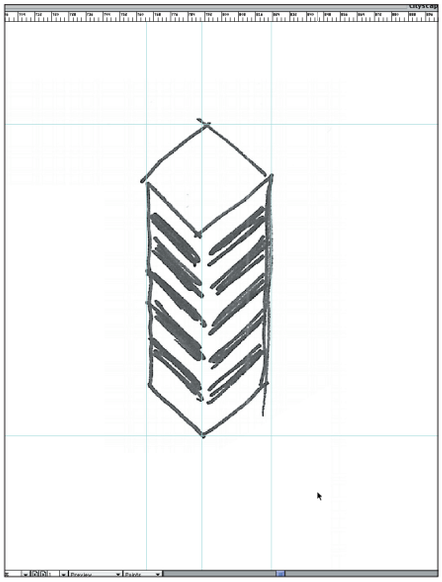
4 Scan all of your objects into *Photoshop*, then save them as 72dpi JPEGs. You'll need these scans to accurately draw your objects when importing them as JPEGs into *FreeHand*.



5 Open up a new file in *FreeHand MX*. Change the active area (if needed) to your desired size by selecting the custom dimensions in the Properties>Document window. Remember to save your file with an appropriate name.



6 Make your first layer, which should be underneath both the guides and the foreground. Now you can import your scans into this layer and lock it.

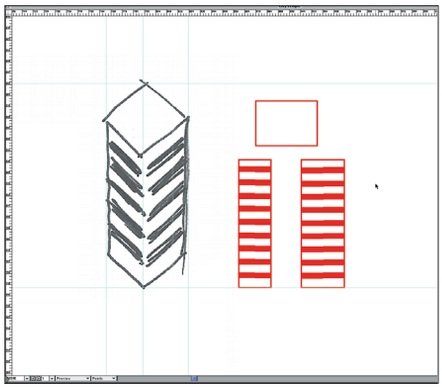


7 Set up guides around each object. You'll need these guides to lock up to once you begin drawing them accurately. Produce your second layer: Objects. Make sure it's above the scans layer. Select a bright colour to use for your outlines – this will help you differentiate between guide and JPEG more easily.

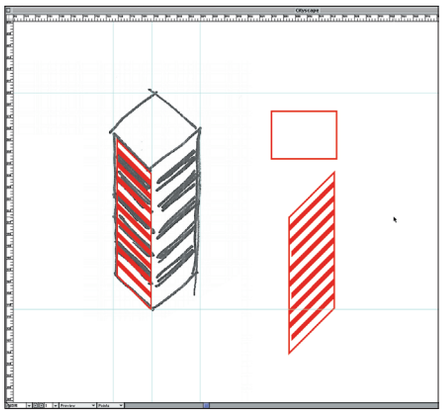
INSIGHT

TECHNIQUE

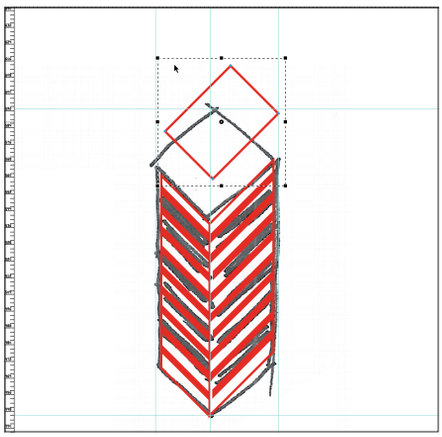
At times, producing a stylised illustration can be difficult. Try to develop your own unique way of producing images – be inspired, but don't copy. You'll find it easier to produce illustrations using your own techniques. ↳



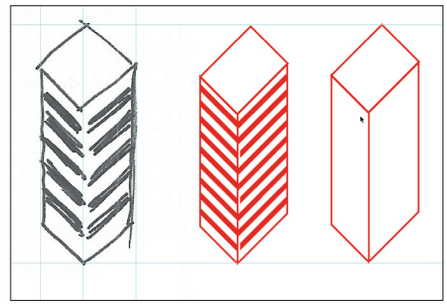
8 One by one, you'll need to trace around each of the objects you've scanned in. The best way to do this, however, is to imagine that each side of the object is flat. Draw what you feel this will appear like using either the Geometric Shapes tool, or by pressing Shift when using your mouse.



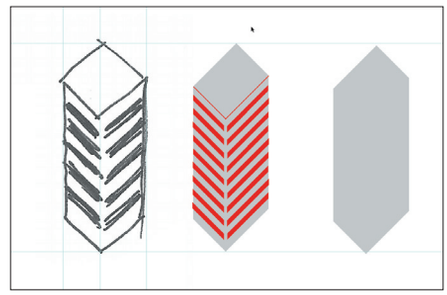
9 Now you've drawn both sides to the object and also the top, you'll need to make them into 45-degree angle objects. Start by getting the left side of your object and use the Skew tool in the Transform window. Set the Transform angle to -45 degrees (Vertical). Do the same for the right-hand side of your object, but make the skew angle 45 degrees.



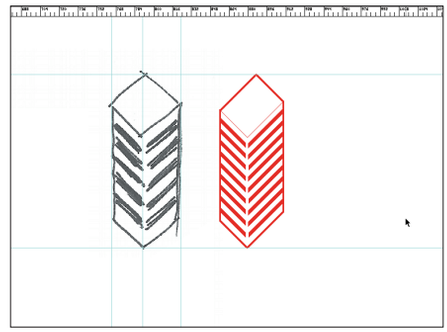
10 For the top of your object, all you need to do is rotate the shape 45 degrees (do not Skew). Using your guides around the sketch, place the new shapes in place around it - these should snap to the guides. Notice how the two sides are now larger than those you originally illustrated. You'll need to correct this by using the sketch as a guide.



11 Once you're happy that your object is right, you should duplicate it. This will be used to bring out the 45-degree angles of the object. With the original version, make the three objects a completed shape, as this will hold the colour of the object and also the thick outline.



12 By using your duplicated objects, place these above the completed shape and turn the thickness of the lines to a light weight. With the shape completed, now turn the background to a colour so that you can begin (without an outline).

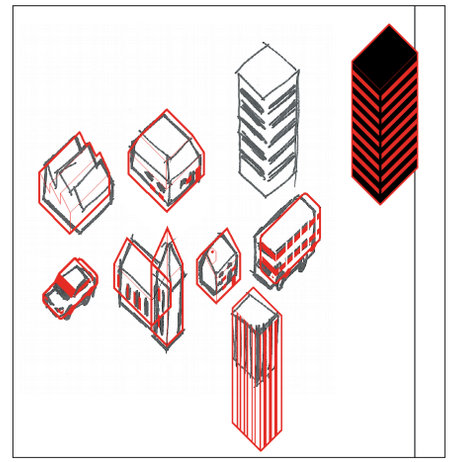


13 Duplicate the completed shape with no background. Have a thicker outline than the other shapes. Bring this shape to the front of the object to complete your design.

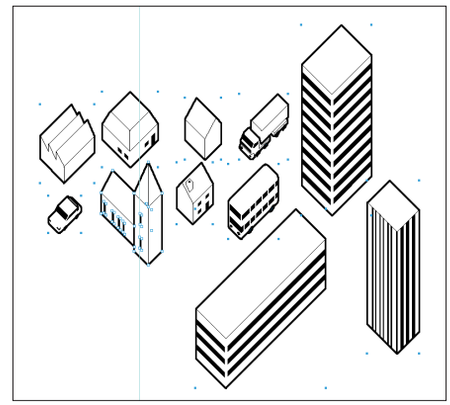
INSIGHT

TECHNICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

A simple way to add depth to your image is by using the 'thick and thin line' technique. This style was developed for the presentation of engineering blueprints in the most simple way possible. Look through books on engineering, manuals for cars or even instruction manuals included in products that you buy.



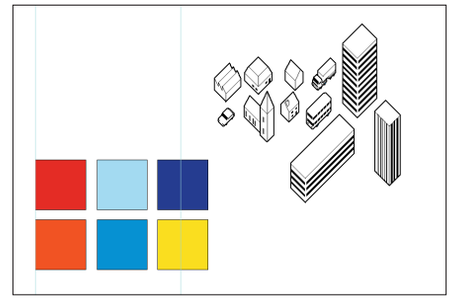
14 Once you've completed your object, repeat the process with all the other scanned objects until you've finished the whole set.



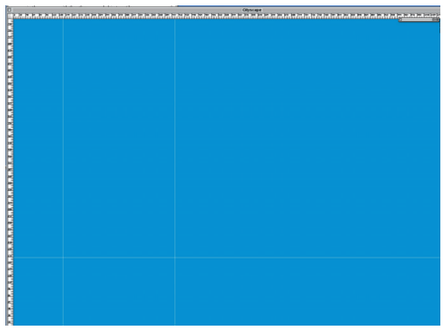
15 Now delete the scans layer and replace it with a flat colour layer; this will be used for the back of your illustration. You now have all the elements you need to begin building your own unique city.

PART 2 SIM CITY: FREEHAND STYLE

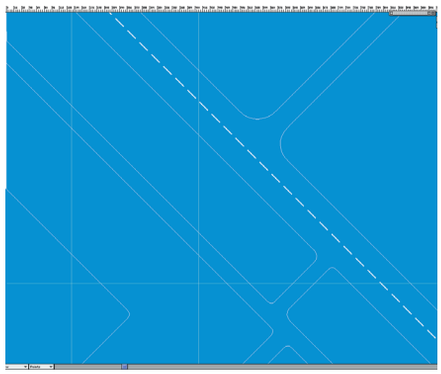
You have your elements – time to use them. We show you how to get the best results, fast ↴



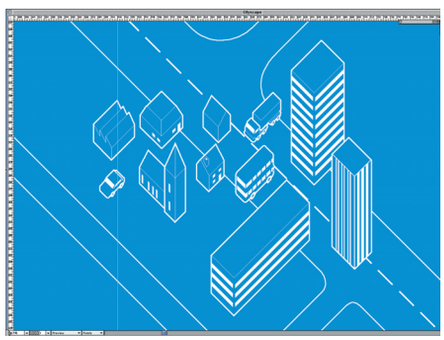
16 Before you begin, decide on a colour palette. Think back to your hierarchy and how you want particular objects to stand out. Try and restrict your palette to three or four different colours.



17 Begin your virtual urban sprawl by using your background layer; use the colour you wish to see as the primary one. Lock this layer and then produce the first city layer.



18 In your new city layer, using your original plan, draw out all of the streets and pedestrian zones. This is where you'll place your vehicles and objects later on. Turn the colour of these zones into a tint of the background colour. Now lock this layer.



19 Now turn the background colours of the objects you designed in the first stage into tints of the background colour. Make sure you have the same colour lines as the streets and roads on the first city layer, so that all the elements gel together.

INSIGHT

COMPOSITION

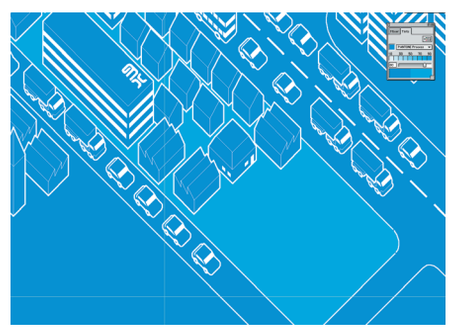
Use a hierarchy when positioning objects in your image. Control your viewer's eye by picking out objects that you wish them to see in order. In this simply way, your image will stand out and appear organised, rather than confusing and chaotic.

GRAPHIC BLOCKS

'Graphic Blocks' is a term Identikal uses to describe elements it has produced that can be easily duplicated. Once you have produced a set of these Graphic Blocks, you can add them to your illustrations as many times as you like with the minimum of fuss.

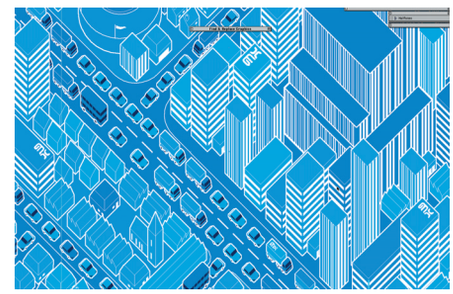
20 Make a new layer – this will be the background of the city. Now start duplicating your desired objects and placing them where you wish them to be. Remember to start from the top left-hand corner of the image, and then work away from this point.

21 By flipping objects using the Mirror Transform tool, you can make them work harder for you. A vehicle looking down to the left can easily be moved to look down to the right, for instance.



22 When putting together the roads of your city, try and tone them, or colour them differently in order to disguise the repetitiveness.

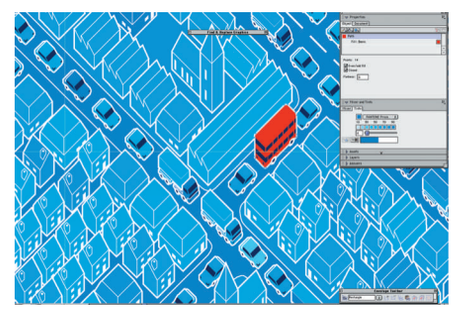
23 For your focal points, make another layer and place the objects in it. This helps solve a lot of problems you'll come across later on in the tutorial.



24 Make another layer. This will be the final layer for all of the top part of your city – work exactly the way you have in the previous steps.

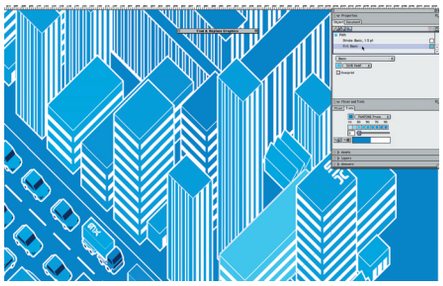
PART 3 FINE-TUNE YOUR CITY

Now you have the layout of your city, you'll need to add colour and depth to your focal points ↴

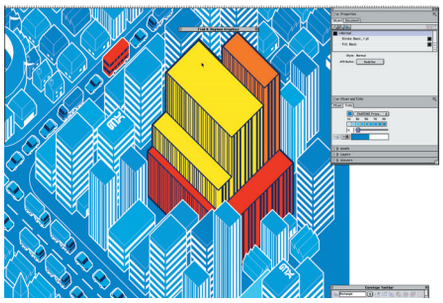


25 Once you're happy with the shape of your city, you now need to pick out some focal points to weigh out the image. Here we've picked out the buses by colouring them red.

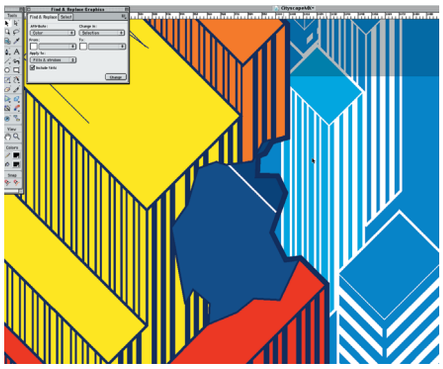
↳



26 Now go over the buildings of the city and change some of the tints, so that, again, you lose that repetitive feel. Try not to use different colours, as this will ruin your hierarchy.



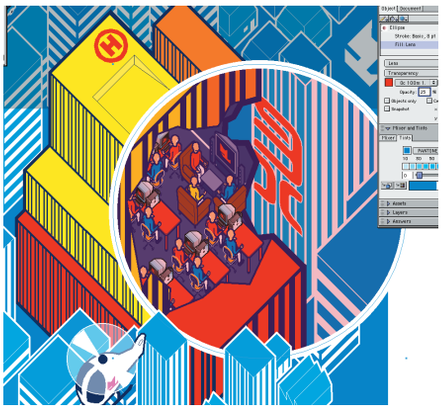
27 With your main focal point, change the colour to something that reflects the background colour, so that it stands out. Change the colour of the outlines to one that's darker than the main city – this should lift the skyscraper in the composition.



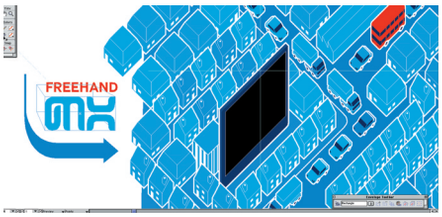
28 Try adding an effect to your building, using the same process you learned in the first stage – think about how you can add extra detail to your city. Here we've opened up the side of the skyscraper to reveal what's inside.

29 To bring out the effect, add machines and people to this space, making it look busy and detailed. You can also duplicate, as you did before with the other building, to bring out the open area.

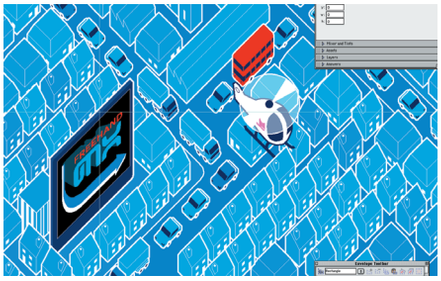
30 By sticking a circle over the scene, you can then use Magnifying Effect>Object>Fill>Lens>Magnify. You can play around with how large you want the area to be seen. Here we've set the Magnifying tool at a scale of 1.8.



31 To make this area stand out, make the same-size circle as the magnified area and use the Transparency effect. Use a colour that will draw attention to the space – we've used red at 25 per cent. Finish the effect by thickening the outline of the circle.



32 Now add another focal point for balance (we've picked the ad board). Here we're using the 3D Extrusion tool, exclusive to *FreeHand MX*. Once you've selected the vector shape you wish to extrude, pull away with your mouse. This automatically shows the depth of the extrusion as a linear shape; once you let go, the shape will automatically render itself as a 3D-looking object.



33 Once you've made your logo for the ad board, use the Skewing tool to fit the 3D object into place. Finalise your piece by adding other elements to enhance the space – we've used helicopters.

FINAL STEP

Illustrating well in *FreeHand MX* is a matter of combining colour co-ordination with technical techniques – and you should have picked up a few essential ones over the past 33 steps. Your final image should not only look detailed, but have a great sense of hierarchy and composition – which is exactly what Identikal has achieved here. ☐