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Pixel art person tutorial

If you've ever thought about creating pixel graphics, here's a very quick and easy introduction to one of the most basic aspects: characters. We will create an extremely simple character, but although it will be simple, it will still allow a decent amount of detail, so it will work well as an avatar for yourself or to represent your favorite movie or TV characters or stars. Can't think of any inspiration? Perhaps working with a stock image from Envato Market. 1. Create a Character Body I usually recommend you start with your head, and this is still a real starting point, but since this character will be so simple and its proportions will be a bit realistic, the body will be an equally good place to start. You need to create a new file in Adobe Photoshop. This can be 100 px by 100 px; the figure I made is only 28 px high. Step 1 Let's define the color of the skin. It is 25° in hue, saturation 40% and 98% brightness, but choose what works for you. Step 2 We will work with the Pencil tool with a point size of 1 px and below a nice amount of magnification, like 800%. With our newly created color draw legs that will be 2 px across with one empty pixel between each leg ... this'll work fine unless you're doing a chubbier character. The dimensions of the legs will help us define the rest of the figure. You can try your own dimensions/proportions rather than just follow mine to find what you like the most. But if you want your figure to look like mine, then the legs above are 9 px tall, just like your torso. Step 3 To complete the limbs, we add the arms from the side; are just one additional pixel on the side of the trunk. We're also adding an extra row of pixels at the bottom of the legs with an extra pixel on each side for the feet. I also added a row of pixels on my shoulders. It's a little strange to call the shoulder corners rounded, but these missing pixels give a more rounded, and thus more natural, look in the end. Step 4 Finally, we add the head, also with some rounded corners. I made it as wide as the torso and 7 px high. 2. Add facial features Our character will be very minimal, limited by small sizes, but we will still be able to add some details. Step 1 There is enough space on the face to add a pair of eyes. I opted for a slightly darker (15% darker) shade than the skin tone. I didn't want to have too much contrast there because I didn't think we should be able to see the color of our eyes at such a low resolution. Step 2 Let's add some hair. I used a dark brown tinge and added an extra row of pixels, so the head got a little soaring, because of the hair. Step 3 Add some hair to the sides of the head. I used a lighter color as if it were either short or anti-aliased. To add this color, I lowered the opacity of the Pencil tool to 50%, which can be easily done by pressing when the Pencil tool is on. Just remember to return it up to 100% later (you can press number 0). I finally gave my character a little pompadour hairstyle. 3. Add clothes Clothes will be where we can do most of our customization. This style uses no pixels on the outlines, so even if the character is small, it allows a lot of detail. Step 1 Let's take the pants on the character. The shade here is low saturation aquamarine, which I use to represent blue jeans. To try variations on the color theme, I usually copy the area I'm coloring to the new layer and open hue/saturation/brightness panel (Image > Corrections > Hue/Saturation...) and move the sliders on that panel until I like the result. Step 2 Add a few

shoes. I'll make them sneakers and they will be almost white; there really isn't much room to give these details. I won't make them white because I'll leave the background white. The disadvantage of not used contours is that if the background and foreground colors are the same, some details may get lost. Step 3 Give the character a shirt. I liked how this color went with the color of the pants. I made a shirt with short sleeves and a v-neck. Step 4 As I said before, you can add a decent amount of detail - maybe a tie or some graphics in the middle of the shirt. I added some (low contrast) strips. Step 5 And finally another layer of clothes: jacket. If you want, you can also give character accessories such as a vest or wristwatch or headphones. 4. Shadow character Now that all the details of the character and clothes are done, we add a touch of shading that corresponds to different toms of the character. Step 1 Create a new layer and draw shadows in black. Some of the shadows here correspond to a head that casts a shadow over the neck and a jacket that casts a shadow on the shirt. The rest simply correspond to the toms of the character; the legs are not flat, so the shading of one side carries an additional volume, and the same applies to the right side of the trunk. The arms, I thought, were too small to sedue. Step 2 I apply shading, just lower the mating layer to 15% or somewhere there. You can do this in the Layers panel, or by pressing 15 on your keyboard when the Pan tool is selected. You can then merge down (layer > merge) and export the graphic. Looking at 100%, the figure may be too small to appreciate it. So you can select, copy, and scale it to 200% or 300% (Edit > Free Transform) with interpolation set to Nearest Neighbor. Then save, preferably as PNG or GIF, and you're done! Amazing, complete character! Congratulations! You've finished the pixel sign. Of course, now you can make more of them, or take care of something like your favorite rock band or group of characters that you like from TV or movie, or pixel yourself or friends etc. Store tutorials List of Resources Pixel Editor Pixel Art Uploader User List Dailies In this fast paced tutorial, I'll show you the basics of creating pixel art by going through creating a sprite. Sprites are images in 2d games that represent various objects in the game, such as the player's character, monsters, items, etc. This tutorial is paired with a follow-up tutorial called PIXEL ART: COMMON MISTAKES. Quick Links Metal Snail 3 (Arcade). SNK, 2000. Pixel art, also known as dot art in Japan, is a form of digital art where editing takes place at the pixel level. This is primarily related to video game graphics from the 1980s and 1990s, where commercial artists stretched to limited memory and low resolution to create increasingly eye-catching visuals. Nowadays it is still popular in games and as an artform in itself, despite the possibility of realistic 3D graphics. Why? Well, nostalgia aside, remains a fun and satisfying challenge to create vibrant works of art in such tight confines. In the same way, we admire how several brush strokes from a trained hand can represent form and evoke emotions, so we admire how several pixels can combine the same thing. The barrier to entry on pixel art is also relatively low compared to painted or 3d graphics, making it a good option for independent game developers who want to put their ideas into practice. But make no mistake, that in no way means that it is easy to actually finish the game with it. I've seen a lot of indie Kickstart their pixel art Metroidvania thinking they have a year to finish when in fact it's more like six years. Pixel art at the level that most people want to do is time consuming and there are very few shortcuts to creating it. At least for a 3D model, you can rotate, deform, move its limbs, copy animations from one model to another, etc. High-level pixel graphics almost always require a lot of tedious placement of pixels on each frame. With this warning on the sidelines, a little bit about my style: I mainly use pixel art to create video games, and it's from video games that draw most of my inspiration. In particular, I'm a fan of Famicom/NES, 16-bit consoles and arcade games from the 90s. My favorite games of that era had pixel art, which I would define as colorful, bold and clean... But not so clean that it was stiff or minimalist. This is the style that I modeled after, but you can easily apply ideas and techniques in this tutorial to something completely different. Learn different artists and do pixel art of what you want it to be! The basic tools required for pixel graphics are zooming and pencil for placing pixels. Line/shape tools, selection/move tools, and a paint bucket for quick There are many free and paid software options you can use that have these tools. Outline some of the most popular here (including what I use). Painting if you are Windows, it's just Windows. Piskel Surprisingly solid pixel art editor that works in your browser! You can export to PNG or animated GIF, and save locally in your browser. This seems like a great exit option. GraphicsGale GraphicsGale is the first standalone editor I remember hearing about the fact that it was designed only for pixel art and interesting animation tools. Created by a Japanese company called HUMANBALANCE, it became free in 2017 and is still widely used despite the growing popularity of Aseprite. Unfortunately, it's just Windows. Aseprite seems to be the most popular editor available at the moment. Tons of features, actively developed and available for Windows, Mac and Linux. On top of that, it is open source and can be used for free if compiled from source code. If you're serious about creating pixel graphics and don't already have an editor to which you're attached, it's probably the way to go. GameMaker Studio 2 + GameMaker Studio 2 is an excellent tool for creating 2d games, which includes a decent Sprite editor. If you are interested in creating pixel art for your own games, it is very convenient to do so in the same software. I'm currently (in 2019) using it for UFO 50, a collection of 50 retro games. I mainly use GameMaker's Sprite Editor for sprites and create tiles in Photoshop. Photoshop+ Because Photoshop is an expensive, subscription-based app that isn't designed around pixel art, I wouldn't recommend it unless you already have it for painting or image manipulation. This may get the job done for static sprites and pixel illustrations (like the ones I did for this tutorial), although this is quite cumbersome compared to focused applications like GraphicsGale or Aseprite.. My pixel graphics setup. Very black, I'm now noticing ... I highly recommend a drawing tablet for all kinds of digital works of art to prevent repeated stress injuries of the wrists. RSI is much easier to prevent than to fix. When you start to feel pain, you're already headed down (my days of drawing with the mouse made it harder to play games that require blurring buttons). So start taking care of yourself early - it will be worth it! I'm currently using a little Wacom Intuos Pro. Wrist Guard If getting the tablet is not possible, at least get a wrist. My favorite is the Mueller Green Fitted Wrist Buckle. I've found other brands to either be un comfortable tight or not helpful enough for me. You can order wrist guards easily online. Final Fight (Arcade). Capcom, 1989. (Source) Let's start! In this tutorial, we'll start by creating a 96x96 pixel character icon. I decided to make an orc, but feel free to go Another! I put my finished plowing in the screenshot from Final Fight above to give you a sense of scale – this is a big sprite for (screenshot is 384x224). The reason we start with such a big sprite is because it's easier for me to show the techniques we learn. Pixelating larger sprites also seems more analogous to traditional art forms, such as drawing or painting, which may be more familiar to you. After we get the basic tools under the tape, we can start working less. 1. The selection of a palette pixel graphic is defined by its limitations. The pixel is much more important in pixel art than other digital media, and the same applies to the colors you ultimately want to limit. So yes, the color palette is important and helps define your style. But for aspiring pixel artists, I think it's best to put any theorizing about palettes aside and just choose an existing one (or even a few colors randomly) so you can start pixelling. One of the nice things about pixel art is that it's very easy to swap pallets at any time, so there's no need for this decision to paralyze you before you start putting dots. In this tutorial, I will use the 32 color palette that we created for UFO 50. 32 colors are a popular choice for pixel graphics palettes, but 16 colors is also common. This particular palette was designed for a fictitious console that lied somewhere between Famicom and the PC engine. Feel free to use it to quickly bypass this step! (Or not! This tutorial is not pallet-dependent at all.) We'll start the sprite by dragging the Pencil tool, drawing the sketch in the same way as drawing it with pen and paper. There is an overlap between pixel art and traditional art, especially for larger sprites like this one. From what I've noticed, strong pixel artists are at least pretty good at drawing and vice versa. So it never hurts to improve your drawing skills as well. Next, we clean the contour by removing stray pixels and reducing each line to one pixel thick. But which pixels do we remove, exactly? To answer this question, we need to learn more about pixel lines and jaggies. There are two basic lines that we need to learn to create in pixel art: straight and curved. With pen and paper, it's mostly a matter of muscle control, but we work with small blocks of colors, which creates a new kind of challenge. The key to creating nice pixel lines is to reduce the number of jaggies: single pixels or small pixel segments that break down line consistency. Since a single pixel in pixel art has a great effect on the overall image, jaggies can be eyesore. Imagine drawing a straight line on a piece of paper when suddenly someone hits the table - that a little uncontrollable squiggle is sort of what a jaggy in pixel art can feel like. Let's look at some examples: straight Curved Lines With curved lines, jaggies appear when the length of line segments does not grow or shrink in consistent way. At this point, you probably think jaggies are worse than a step in the gum, but in fact, it's impossible to avoid them altogether unless pixel art is just the simplest of shapes. Each of your favorite retro games will have jaggies. The goal is simply to minimize them when expressing what you want to express. Use a paint bucket or other filling tool to color your character! The palette will simplify this part, and if the painting software does not support pallets, you can always paste the palette into the image itself (as I did here) and choose colors using the Eye Dropper tool. In the lower left topping, I also introduced a friend, The Ball, to quickly look at what's happening at every turn. It's time to sedue! The basic idea is that we're going to add darker colors (called shades) to the sprite to simulate the shadow, making the sprite look 3d instead of flat. In this tutorial, let's say there is one light source above the orc and a bit in front of it, so everything on top and/or front is clear. We'll add our darker colors to the bottom and back of the plowing. If you have problems with this part, you may need to practice thinking about drawings as forms with volume, not just lines and colors. Forms exist in three-dimensional space and can have a volume that fills that space. By shading, we extract this tom. It can help you visualize your character without all its details and pretend it is made of clay instead of pixels. By shading, not just adding color - you're carving out the form. A well-defined figure has details that do not cover the basic forms - if you squine, a few large clusters of light and darkness should still appear. Every time I introduce a new shade of color, I do some anti-aliasing (also known as AA), which is a way to smooth out block pixels by placing colors between corners where two line segments meet: gray pixels soften the gaps in our line. The longer the line segment, the longer the AA segment we use to soften it. On the right side you can see what AA looks like, how it applies to our ploughing in the upper arm. I use it to smooth out lines that define the curvature of his muscles. Be careful not to smooth out the sprite used for the game or wherever you know what color the background will have. For example, if you smooth out against a light background, this smoothing will stand out against a dark background. Until now, our contour was pure black, which gives a sprite overall cartoonish look. It also creates many difficult segmentations. For example, the black lines on the arm define the muscles in an extreme way, making them look less like they are part of the same part of the body. To give more naturalistic appearance and soften the segmentation (in (in to bring out the basic form of our character), we can use a technique called selective delining or selout. Selout means replacing many black contours with lighter colors. In the direction of the mountain, where the light hits our sprite, we will use the brightest colors or, where the sprite meets the negative space, we can completely remove it. For segmentation (e.g. for muscles, fur textures, etc.) we can use our darker shadow colors instead of pure black. I also added another level of even darker shadow to the plowing in this step. On the skin of our orca there are now three shades of green. This new shade of green can be used for selout and further smoothing. Finally, we can add the most interesting (brightest spots on our sprite), details (earrings, pins, scars) and continue to make adjustments until we are happy with it (or we need to go further, as is often the case!). A few other things to try at this stage: flipping composition horizontally is a powerful trick in digital composition, which often exposes flaws in proportions and shading. Another trick is to remove the color from the artwork (i.e. set the saturation to zero) to see if the shading is still reading well. So far we've been mostly shading with large, uninterrupted clusters of darker color. However, there is another technique, called diunding, that allows us to combine two different shades of color without adding a new shade. Look at the following example: At the top is a gradient that moves from dark to light using hundreds of different shades of blue. Inside, we reduced the number of colors to 9, but it's still many shades for one color. It also created a scattering effect called banding, where, due to thick, uniform color bands, our eyes begin to focus on lines where colors meet instead of the colors themselves. Finally, at the bottom we used diunding, which relieves the banding effect and uses only 2 colors! The idea is to create noise of different density to simulate color gradation. If you're familiar to a technique called halftone, which is used in printing. Or stippling in illustrations and comics. I use dithering sparingly - on ploughing I just added a little to the texture. Some pixel artists don't use dithering at all. Some people use it extensively and make it look pretty good. In general, I think it works best on large areas of one color (look up close to the sky in a Metal Slug 3 screenshot from above) or in places that we want to look rough or bumpy (like dirt, perhaps). If you like what it looks like, experiment with it and find out how it works best for you! If you want to see dithering widely used and well done, study bitmap brothers games, a game studio in the UK for years or games on PC-98, Japanese PC (note that many pc-98 titles are NSFW): Kakyusei (PC-98). Elf, 1996. (Source) there are only 16 colors in this image! One of the dangers of pixel art is that due to the limited, mesh-like nature, it's easy to feel that you can do it right, and you can spend too much time overclocking the sprites at the end. In a way, it feels like a puzzle to solve, and it can be very addictive. As a result, pixel art tends to attract perfectionists, so be wary of pulling too long on one sprite. If you lose one small piece of a very complex arrangement of pieces and it is important not to lose sight of the bigger picture, so to speak. Even if you're not creating pixel graphics for games, it's good to be able to say This is good enough! and move on. The best way to improve your skills is to see the whole process from start to finish as many times as possible on as many different items as possible. At least leaving a piece for a while will allow you to look at it with fresh eyes! First we created a large 96x96 sprite, because in this size it still feels like drawing and painting, but with pixels. The smaller the sprite gets, the less sprite it looks like what it is supposed to represent and the more responsibility each pixel has. In Super Mario Bros., Mario's eye is just two pixels stacked on top of each other. It's the same with his mind. And its creator, Shigeru Miyamoto, explained that the reason he has a mustache is that they needed it to distinguish his nose from the rest of his face. One of Mario's most distinctive features was not just the choice of character design, but also pragmatic! From the old adage that necessity is the mother of invention ... and gives us more insight into why pixel art is so interesting. With all this in mind, the basic steps we will take to create a 32x32 sprite are actually very similar to the 96x96 sprite: sketch, color, shadow, and then polishing. However, for intitial sketches, I often use colored shapes instead of drawing an outline, because color plays a greater role in defining a character than outline. If we look at Mario again, he has no outline at all! And it's not just his mustache that puts himself into the job - his sidebeards define his ears, his sleeves define his hands, and his overalls more or less make his whole body understandable. Creating small sprites involves compromises. If you add a contour around something, you may lose space to obstruct it. If your character has well-defined arms and legs, the head will probably need to be smaller to make room for them. With effective color, selout and smoothing function, you can make the canvas larger than it actually is. For small sprites, I tend to favor chibi (or Patterns where the characters are cute and have large heads and eyes. It's a great way to create an expressive in a limited space (it is also an attractive art style independently). But perhaps you are more interested in extracting character mobility or brute force, in which case you can focus less on your head in favor of a stronger body. Ultimately, it depends on your preferences and design! The whole event assembled! Just send chills to every pixel of the artist's spine. The above is what happens if you save your artwork as a JPG, a lossy file format. This means that the data is actually lost during saving, due to the way the file is compressed (to reduce the file size). Practically speaking, your nice, sharp pixels will look blurry and you won't be able to easily recover the original palette. The recommended lossless file format for static pixel graphics is PNG. For animations, animated gifs are the most common format. Sharing pixel graphics on social media is a great way to get feedback and get to know other pixel artists (don't forget to use #pixelart hashtag!). Unfortunately, social networking sites tend to convert PNG to JPG without asking, outsming their artwork when it goes public. On top of that it can be hard to figure out what is about the image that triggered the conversion! To help, here are some tips on how to keep pixels expressive on different social networks. Please note that these sites often change their algorithms and this section may not always be completely up-to-date. Twitter's key to keeping PNG intact on Twitter is to make sure they are either less than 256 colors or less than 900px on the longest page. (Source) I would also upscale images to at least 512x512 px, making sure they are scaling in pure multiple (200% rather than 250%, for example) and preserving hard edges (called Closest Neighbor in Photoshop). Animated gifs must be less than 15 MB to post on Twitter. In terms of quality, the prevailing theory is that they should be at least 800x800 px and loop animations should be looped three times, and the final GIF frame is displayed at half the length of every other frame. However, it is not clear how all these steps are necessary as Twitter continues to update the way images are displayed. At least I would like to make sure that the animations are at a minimum size. (Source) Instagram As far as I can tell, there is no way to post lossless photos on Instagram, but you can improve the look by scaling your graphics to at least 512 x 512 pixels. That's the end of this tutorial! Click on your hand to check out the next tutorial: PIXEL ART: COMMON BUGS

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