

MAMTA DIGITIZED

- my way to make digital fine art

Most of you are familiar with traditional printmaking techniques, but may be not all of you are as familiar with the digital process, and this article presents how some of my digital artworks are created.



Mamta Digitized

Let me briefly introduce myself. My name is Mamta Baruah Herland and I am from Assam in India, now living in Norway. Currently I am doing my Master in Fine Art - Painting at Winchester School of Art in England. During my studies in visual art at Sydney College of Arts I mostly painted with oil and acrylic on canvas. My interest for photography developed when driving around the beautiful scenery in Australia, and after studying Graphic Design in Oslo, I saw the possibility to combine my computer skills with my artistic expressions.

With digital manipulative tools I want to explore new possibilities by disassociating known subject relationships and re-associate them in new ways to create work with a concept of synthesizing different art forms.

The software I have used includes Adobe Illustrator, Corel Draw, Photo Paint and Corel Painter, but today I often use PhotoShop. The features mostly employed are sizing, cropping, layering, masking, filtering, channel and color adjusting. In addition to the possibilities offered by different software, my digital toolbox also includes my own palette of sources. I have taken a huge range of photographs with the intention that they may become useful and appropriate for the feeling and intuition of my work. In most cases, however, the subject matter is deliberate and I take new photos if needed, as ideas constantly evolve. I categorize my collection of photographs into **overall photos** like landscape, **macro photos** for details, **portraits** and **special effect photos**.

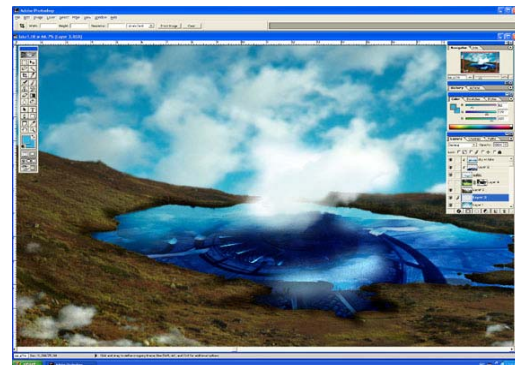
To create different textural surfaces in my digital art I use **textures** that I make by using a number of paint applications on paper, canvas and other materials, including effects made by using plastic wrap, dripping water and other liquids on painted surfaces. I also use **natural objects** like leaves, bark, wood and shells to enhance sharpness and physicality in my work. I scan natural objects by placing the object directly on the scanner.



Besides digitizing textures and natural objects, I have also digitized some of my paintings, prints and collages either by photographing them or scanning them directly. They are all stored and made available in my digital toolbox so that elements of these images can be incorporated in my digital works.

Agony, a linoleum print, is an example of an earlier work that I have digitized and later used in a digital image.

I usually customize my workspace to start with so that I keep my PhotoShop working area organized and tidy in a way that I feel comfortable with. I normally create several workspaces to maintain work efficiency. A simple switch from one workspace to another re-configures the interface to suit my needs.



By now I am ready to make my first draft based on sketches illustrating ideas of the work. The drafts are composed by using chosen source elements from my personal toolbox. In the composing and recomposing process I often find that I need certain elements I do not already have in the toolbox, and therefore I have to create those specifically.

After digitizing I manipulate, extract elements and montage them to compose a new image that transcend the original work. The basic elements of my digital images are therefore original, and the resulting digital images say something beyond what was originally there. At the same time, I explore and investigate the possible development of newer contexts and aesthetics and I make a deliberate attempt to engage with the viewer the potential of digital technology in the artistic and aesthetic process.

To illustrate my digital technique I made three examples. Example 1 shows how a single photo can be manipulated to create a collage-like multiple layered dimensional images, in Example 2 I have used three photos as my starting point resulting in a multidimensional painted image and Example 3 is somewhat more complicated as well as introducing use of textures.

Example 1: From a single photo to a collage-like layered image



Fig E1-1

The original photograph of the famous train "The Gahn" (Fig E1-1) was taken just outside Alice Springs in Australia's dry and lonely Northern territory. I adjusted the colors in order to increase brightness and contrast.

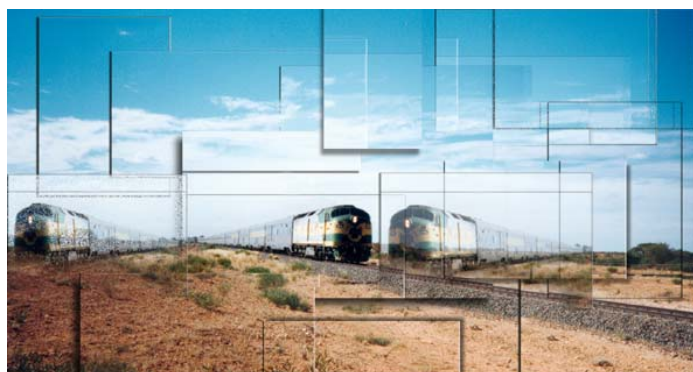
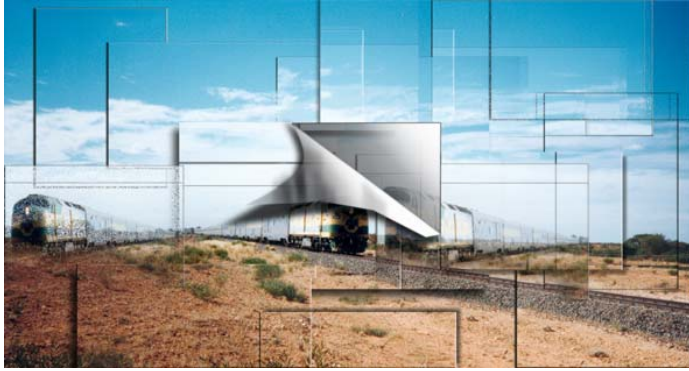


Fig E1-2

A number of selections were made in the original photograph. The selections were afterwards copied and pasted into different layers. Few of the selections like the train, (Fig E1-2) were flipped and positioned in such a way that one train seem to be moving towards another intensifying the content, apparently a collision is about to take place. Another train is departing from the meeting point and out of the picture. Shadows have been added to



Intersection, inkjet on watercolor paper, 30 x 50 cm

break the perspective, generating collages and creating endless game of dimensional space.

Further, by cropping and distorting the image, a dimensional space is created and the final image says something about how a single image can be created and distorted by playing with layers and shadows.

Example 2: From several photos to multidimensional painted image

The following illustration shows how several photographs can be combined, manipulated and painted by using digital tools. In this example I have chosen three photographs (E2-1,2 and 3) as my basic source.

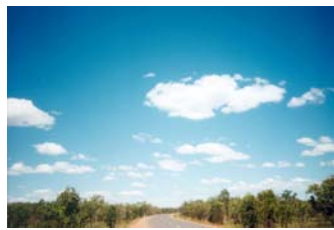


Fig E2-1



Fig E2-2



Fig E2-3



Fig E2-4

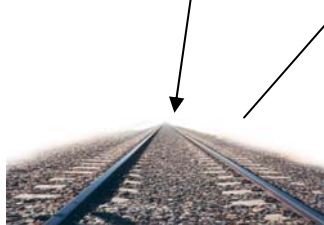
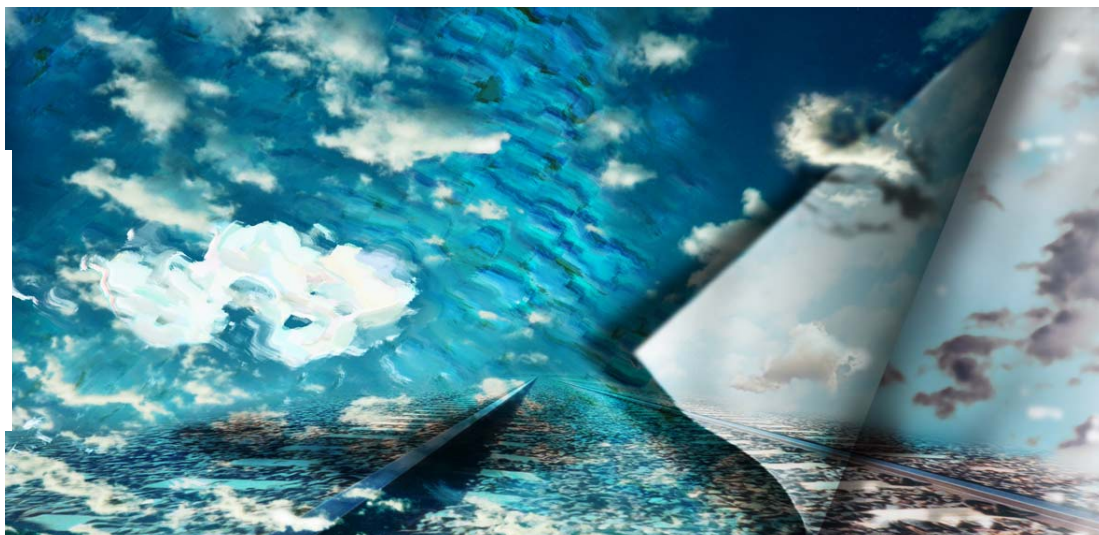


Fig E2-5



Fig E2-6



Dimension,
inkjet on
canvas,
200 x 100 cm

To create a painterly background in my image, the landscape photo image in Fig E2-1 was first painted by using PhotoShop's native painting tools (Fig E2-4). As I wanted to insert the train line as the center of focus in my final image, I removed the background in Fig E2-2 by using selections and path (Fig E2-5). In Fig E2-6 I have transformed and placed the train line inside the section of the cropped sky from the photo in Fig E2-3. The sky layer was merged into the painted background layer creating illusionist distance between painting and photography. Transparent areas in one layer above another were made by using layer mask with soft edged brush partly to show through the layer under. Towards the end extra clouds were added to create space and distance. Shadows being created for each objects in one dimension that reflects in another dimension to create a sense of space.

During the process I applied a number of color modes and effects, such as layer modes, blending options, light, shade, masks and filter to achieve a number of different effects finally composing the image, *Dimension*.

Example 3: Introducing textures

My intention in this work was to integrate different form of elements and to introduce textures to compose an image that would emit a sense of intensity and spirituality.

I associate sky and sea with dreams and spirituality and to get a dreamlike state I have chosen the two photographs shown in Fig E3-1 and E3-2 as the background of my image.



Fig E3-1



Fig E3-2



Fig E3-3

The colors in the photos were not entirely complimentary, so I created a number of adjustment layers (hue and saturation, levels, and color balance) to create uniformity of color tone. The two photographs were placed in layers and layer masks were applied to create some smooth transparent areas that show part of each underlying layers, as shown in Fig E3-3

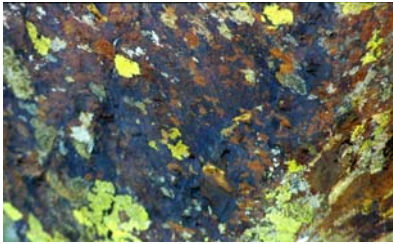


Fig E3-4



Fig E3-5

The macro-photo in Fig E3-4 was taken from a huge mountain stone. It has a rusty natural colour that associates with time, stability and the roots of the nature.

The open window in the photo shown in Fig E3-5 looked like a moment of hope and freedom seen from the darkness. Since I only wanted the window in composing my image, I selected and removed the unwanted dark areas around the window and also what was seen through.

The layer in Fig E3-4 was then placed over the part of the left window frame and thereafter grouped with the underlying layer.

Overlay blending mode and shadow was applied to give an authentic look resulting in Fig E3-6.



Fig E3-6



Fig E3-7

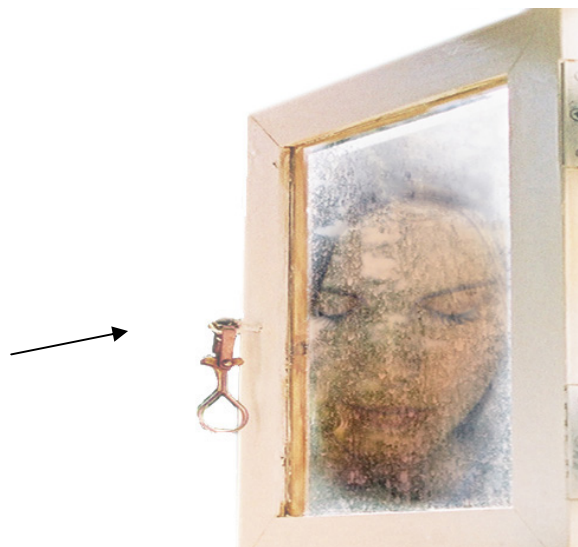


Fig E3-8

To get a sense of tranquility I introduced a portrait inside the frame. I had to shoot a number of different facial poses of the model for the right head position, and decided on the one shown in Fig E3-7. I masked the areas around the hair and the neck, and pasted the layer inside the window frame.

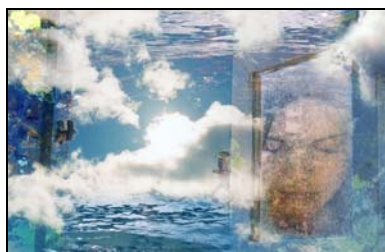


Fig E3-9



Fig E3-10



Fig E3-11

The recomposed window frame in Fig E3-8 was placed over the background image and manipulated further with colour and layer adjustment (Fig E3-9). The left window frame, as shown in Fig E3-6 was placed on the left side of the image. Elements of the macro-photo in Fig E3-4 were also added to the right side of the window frame with a reduced opacity. The areas above and under the frame were then softened by using masks with a soft brush.

The photo in Fig E3-10 was taken from inside an old fireplace. I wanted to depict the face of the model (Fig E3-5) with flames for a forehead to emulate the intensity. The image of the fire was scaled and transformed, slightly distorted and blurred by using filter.

The flame was inserted into the picture by combining the layer of the face with the flame (Fig E3-11).

Finally to give a painterly effect I added oil and acrylic textures, which I originally made by knife on canvas board (Fig E3-12) and thick brush strokes on paper (E3-13). The textures were placed in layers and merged into the background image by using layer-blending mode.



Fig E3-12

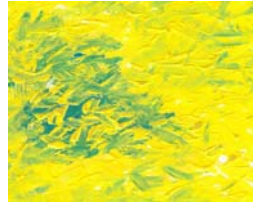


Fig E3-13



Fig E3-14



Fig E3-15

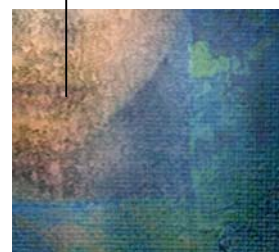


Fig E3-16

The colors of the textures were adjusted to harmonize with the whole image. To achieve a rough textural canvas like look and feel, I have applied filter effects as shown in Fig E3-15 and E3-16.

The final stage brings together all the intricate elements I have created over many tasks resulting in *Alchemy*.



Alchemy, ink jet on watercolor paper, 30 x 45 cm

For me art is a growth process, a living entity in its own right, a process that provides inspiration and excitement, and using digital technology gives me new possibilities for experimentation. I find it fascinating to be able to "reuse" some of my works that I originally created by using other media by having them digitized and incorporate elements in a new digital image.



Manipulated, ink jet on paper, 40 x 80 cm

When an image like *Manipulated* is finally ready for print, it is transferred to the printing environment with a number of technical considerations and adjustments to be made. The result of the final printed image depends on issues like color management, synchronizing the monitors and

printers, substrate and ink decisions that influence both the brightness of the colors and the longevity of the printed image. The quality of the digitized photos and other sources in my toolbox are also part of what decides the size and quality of the printed image. I normally use either canvas or watercolor paper, but there are lots of other alternatives if I wish to impose other effects. These issues are partly covered in my dissertation "*The Impact of Giclée. A shift towards digital art in future art*" which is available at www.worldprintmakers.com or at www.MamtaArt.com. The dissertation also discusses other related issues like originality, authenticity, editions and how well digital ink jet is accepted in the art market.

My recent digital works invokes links between technology and emotion, reality and dreams, rationality and magic. *Screen Scene* was created to explore issues of subjective space through a dialogue between dimensional analogies together with an idea of an object in one dimension being the shadow of an object in another dimension.



Screen Scene, inkjet on watercolor paper, 35 x 70 cm

In my opinion my work today defies any single categorization. These works consists of elements from painting, photography and prints and can be considered as a synthesis of different art media creating unconventional hybrids.

I hope the digital process will continue to stimulate and evolve into something new and fresh. There are endless possibilities for artists yet to be discovered. We should allow us to experiment with the given digital tools in order to broaden our knowledge. The process and applications through which we achieve the desired work of art is part of the 'art' itself.