

## Get Down! Part 1 Techniques for rendering feathers

**A step-by-step article by Michael Cacy**

**Photos by Pat Krueger**

**A number of special techniques may be used when rendering feathers. Following is just one method that you may find useful in painting feathers or even fur.**

**Before diving into a painting, which may involve a technique new to me (or present the opportunity of using a familiar technique in a previously unexplored manner), I often spend a few minutes preparing what I call a "style test." This quick experiment may help you decide the best way to achieve the look you're after. It's good practice (and a confidence booster) before you begin painting where it really counts—on your masterpiece.**

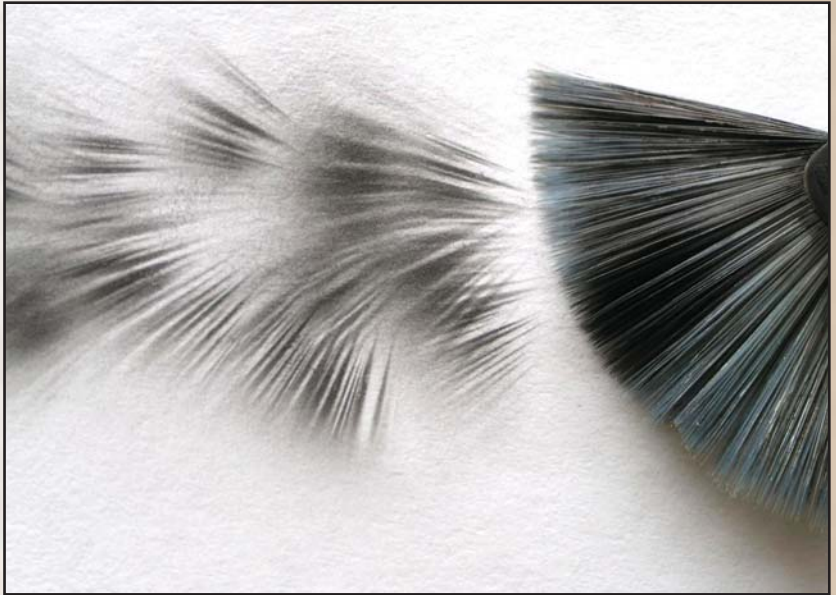


The bristles of a synthetic fan brush are spread and pushed flat against the working surface and sprayed into with the airbrush. A special tip is to drop your air pressure as low as is practical while still providing a smooth spray pattern. This may keep the bristles from fluttering as you paint through them.

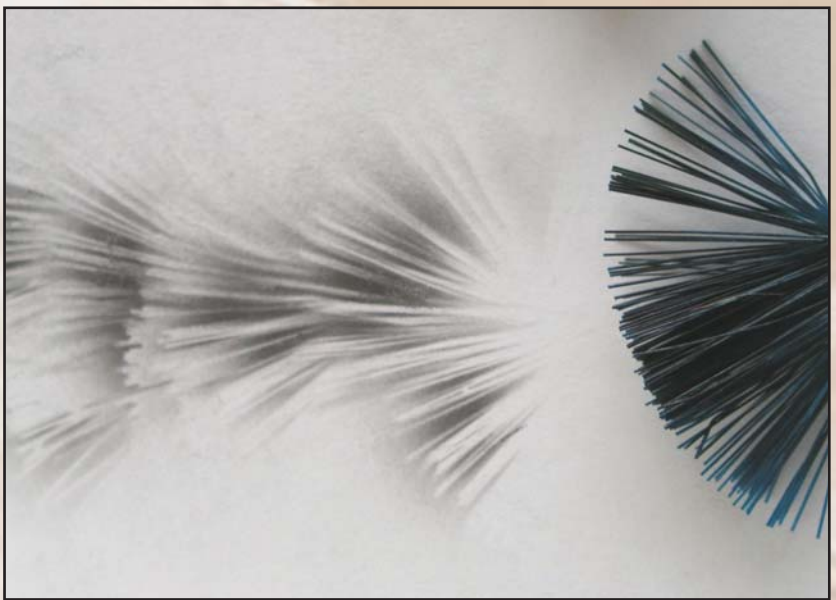


Spray in stages, stepping the brush back after each pass with the airbrush. To avoid smears, the bristles of the paintbrush should not be allowed to become damp with paint. It's important to avoid working too "wet." On a large, involved project, the bristles may need to be cleaned periodically and wiped dry before continuing.

The results shown here look fairly promising, but before putting the technique into practice on the actual painting, let's make sure we've covered our bases.



In addition to the synthetic brush used in the previous steps, I tried a natural bristle fan brush and (as shown here) even the plastic brush on the end of a stick eraser.



This array shows the three brushes used in the style test and the resulting patterns. From these, I can choose the effect which will best execute the downy feathers I have in mind for my subject.





Tiny thumbnail sketch



I began my project by airbrushing the bird's beak and feet, but left the feathered areas unpainted. I find that texture effects, like feathers, are best begun on the white surface of the ground so that I can easily see the effects as I work. Final colors will be layered over the top of these effects later using transparent colors. The actual color I started with is a mix of violet and black. The pattern begins at the lower left (rear) side of the bird.



The pattern is continued in a sweep toward the head of the bird.



Transparent colors were applied over the initial effects achieved with the fan brush, and the painting of the bird is complete. The longer feathers on the wing and tail were subtly enhanced by subtracting paint with a hard eraser stick and by dragging coarse steel wool across the paint for added detail.

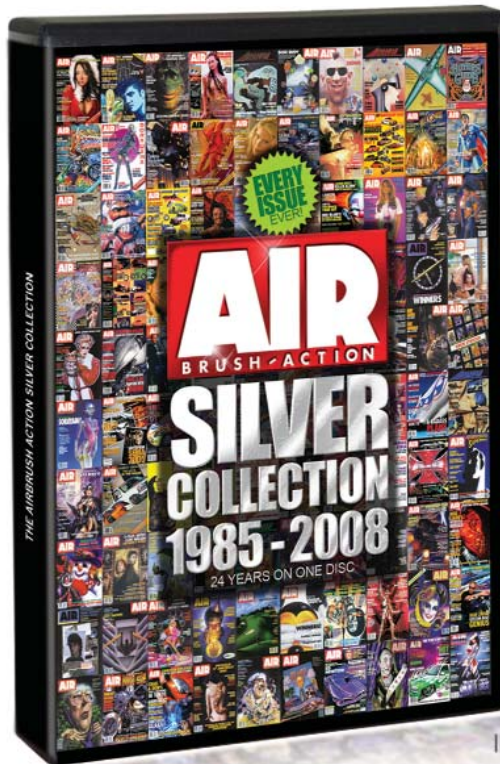
In an upcoming article, I will cover more advanced techniques for rendering feathers.

**24 YEARS  
140 ISSUES**  
OF AIRBRUSH ACTION MAGAZINE ON



**For Serious Airheads**

Launched in 1985, *Airbrush Action* magazine is the most successful and longest running airbrush publication in history. And now, for the first time, you can own, explore, and enjoy every back issue up to 2008. This fabulous collection includes hundreds of top pro techniques, artist features (including Olivia, H.R. Giger, Don Eddy, Sorayama, Mark Fredrickson, Craig Fraser, Michael Cacy, Terry Hill, Don Ahswood, Szeto, Martin Mull, Billy Dee Williams, Alberto Ponno, Stanislaw Fernandes, Jerry Lofaro, Vargas, and the list goes on!), equipment buyers guides, Vargas and Annual Airbrush Excellence Competition winner editions, tips, tricks, and much, much more of the past 24 years.



A \$770 VALUE  
FOR ONLY  
**\$99.95**  
**AVAILABLE NOW!**

CALL TOLL FREE!  
1 800 232 8998

INTERNATIONAL CALLERS: 732 223 7878  
[www.airbrushaction.com](http://www.airbrushaction.com)