

## Let it Snow

I love cityscapes with atmosphere, but trying to an effect like falling snow can take a little bit of trickery to accomplish and have it look real.



Figure 1: Winter scene in Denver

This is one of my Digital Watercolor paintings that I did which captures the atmospheric feeling of fresh falling snow in Denver.

# Let in Snow – Digital Watercolor Technique

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## Original Starting Photo



Figure 2: Original Photo

As you can see, even the photograph cannot capture the falling snow very well because it doesn't have enough contrast to stand out from the rest of the scene. So we'll have to find a way to add it later.

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### Step One: Flatten and enhance the Color



Figure 3: Flatten and enhance the Color

I ran this through Topaz Simplify setting it to capture fine edges and less detail and more saturation. I decided I could sacrifice more details in the tree branches and go for overall shapes over details.

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### Step Two – Abstraction and More Painterly Look



Figure 4: Adding a more painterly look

When I go for an artistic look, I really try to remove the traces that link it to the photograph, and make it feel more hand painted than simply digitally rendered. In this case I took my Simplified image and ran it through Topaz Impressions using a Modified Pencil preset. I didn't want it to get too abstract, but still wanted to get away from the straight dry brush look.

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## Step Three – Add the Watercolor Look

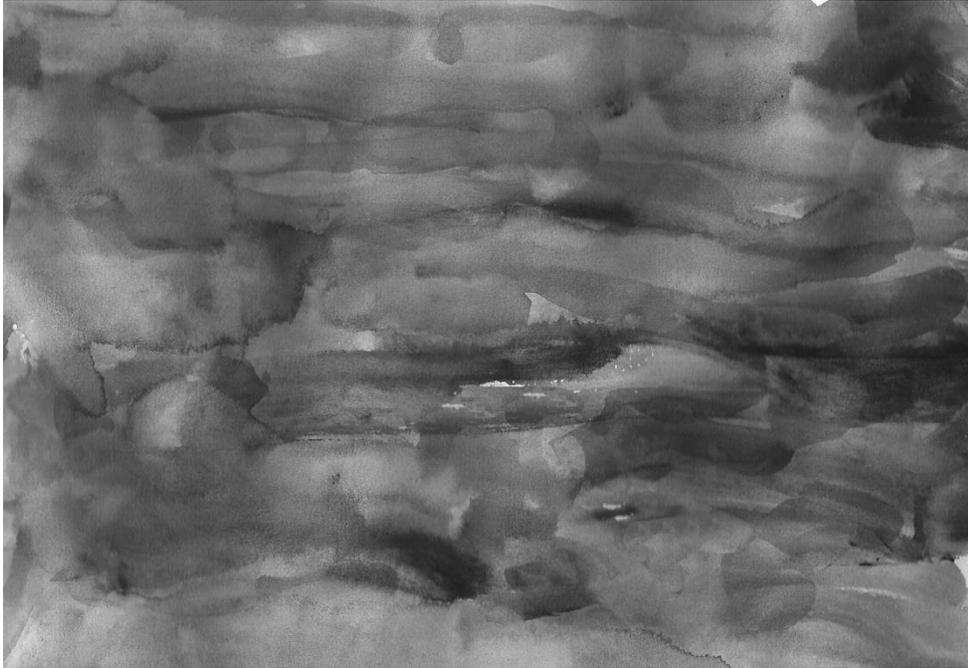


Figure 5: Watercolor Overlay1



Figure 6: Watercolor Overlay 2

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To accomplish the genuine look of a watercolor painting, I used two separate scans of some actual watercolor brushwork on paper. The first one I used to get the mottled pattern and nuanced strokes. The second one, I used to capture the paper texture and grain. I used Corel Painter for this but Photoshop or ACDsee Ultimate would have worked equally well. Using the Overlay composite method the pattern essentially fuses with the underlying image.



Figure 7: watercolor paint patterns overlayed onto the image

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## Step 4: Adding Snow

While I could have stopped here, I still wanted to capture the look and feel of real snow falling on an urban scene. To accomplish this I resorted to a little trickery.

I used Using Microsoft PhotoDraw II for this although I imaging other programs might also be able to produce the same effect. I started with simply a black square and applied a filter to break it up into tiny white blotches on black.

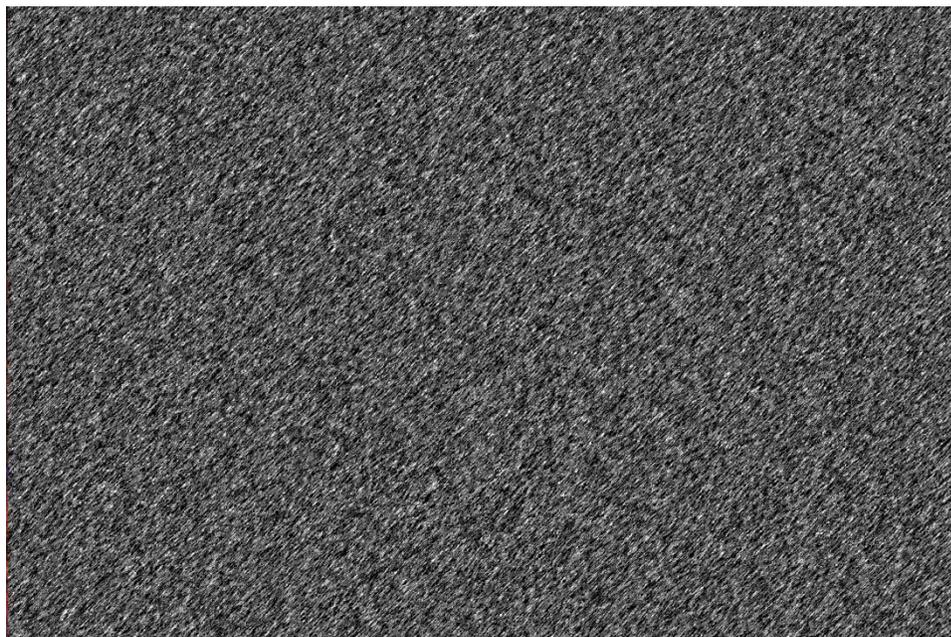
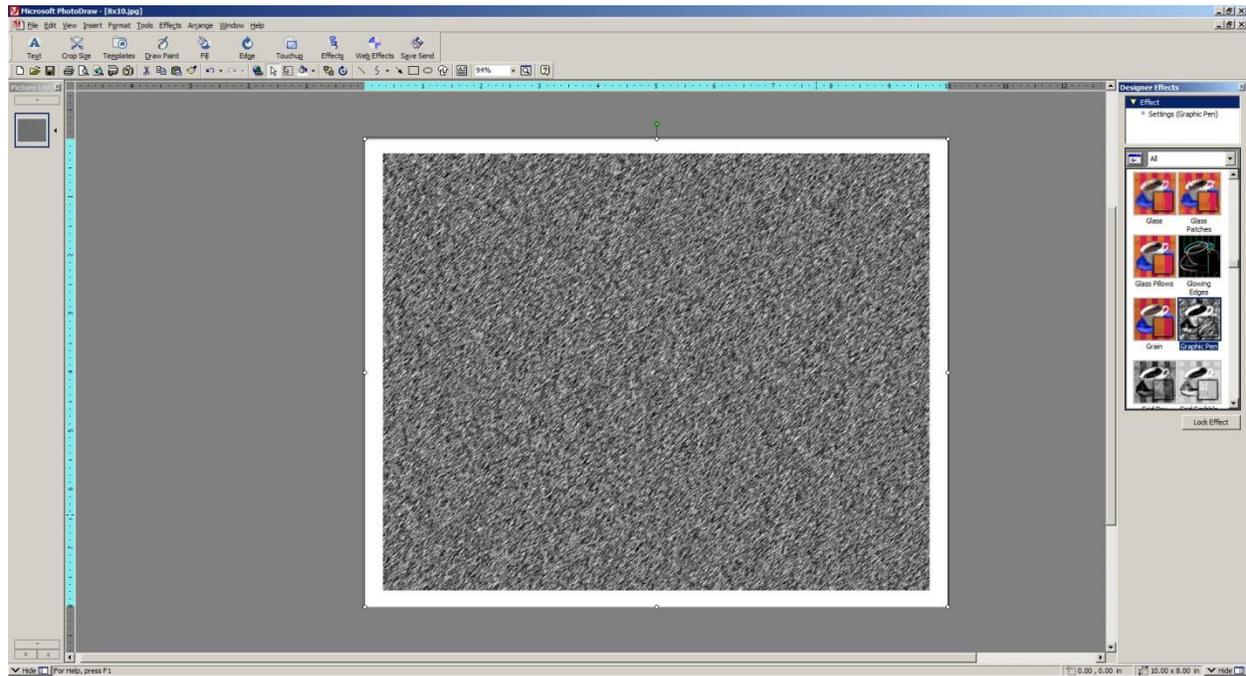


Figure 8: My Snow Template

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What I like about this vs. some type of spotty pen or airbrush is that it produces consistent density of whites and blacks, but still makes it look random but consistent.

### The Final Composite



Completing the image in Corel Painter applying the “Snow” template as a layer using the **Magic Combine** composite method. This method makes black areas show through but preserves the white. I do not know of an equivalent method in Photoshop, but I’m sure the real PS experts can tell you how.