Currently living and working in Toronto, Diane Vetere studied studio art and was primarily a painter at first. When she and her husband purchased Apple’s first Macintosh computer, everything changed. “I was hooked,” she explained. “I’m a fairly impatient artist, and I like to get results quickly. On the other hand I love exploring and pushing tools to the limit. The computer satisfies each of these conflicting obsessions. And best of all there is ‘undo.’”

As a result, most of her images are generated by trial and error. “I would say improvisation is the most accurate description,” she explained. “Though usually what happens is that I get intrigued with some tiny little thing that happened, perhaps accidentally, and then just feel compelled to explore and try to do something unexpected.”

The inspiration for Vortex 1 started with a photograph of Vetere’s cat, of all things. That’s where the colors in the image came from. “Just as an exercise, I had been fiddling with this photograph to make it more like a drawing or painting, not, incidentally, what I normally do,” she explained. A few Photoshop filters later, and voila. “I really liked using [the wave filter], which does a terrific job of breaking an image up. I was fairly restrained and just wanted large, different sized blocks of texture. The reconstruction images in the [online] gallery are a further step from that point and the medallion images were another that led to Vortex 1. Using those original blocks of texture, I applied a free filter that would break up images even more into rectangles of whatever size I set and would then color those rectangles based on the underlying colors of the first image, but each small rectangle would be filled with a gradient.”

Continuing with Photoshop’s median filter at maximum setting, Vetere softened the hard edges of the rectangles so they would melt into one, resulting in soft blobs of gradients. “Gradients mean contours,” she explained. “I used a free action that did a fine job of trace edges, coloring them sepia and then adding them back into the original image. This produced the desired contour lines. The next step was to make them visible. Copying the image to a second layer, I applied [Photoshop’s] bas relief filter, which, with a reduced opacity on the layer, both embossed and metallized the colors in the image. Layers were flattened to produce the medallion images, one of which was then put through the KPT hypertiling filter using one of my own presets to produce Vortex 1.”
Photoshop’s wave filter also played a significant role in *Rose 1* (see Figure 1), *Blink* (see Figure 2), and *Maelstrom* (see Figure 3). “Both [Rose 1 and Blink] again started with a base image (though not necessarily a photograph) being broken up with [the wave filter].”

“Blink was the result of applying the original distortion over and over again to achieve the pattern. In *Rose 1*, I was looking for a brocade effect. … You make a selection box across part of the image selecting the base of the roses and then scale that selection, stretching it down, which produces the trailing lines. I used the find edges filter, selected the edges, and stroked them with the gold color and pasted these lines into another layer above the background of broken up color. I then used layer effects to give the golden threads a drop shadow and some contour, which produced the depth I wanted.”

**Dead flowers**

Just when you thought there was no use for dead flowers, enter Diane Vetere, a flatbed scanner, and a glass of Sprite. In fact, the whole concept reminds me of the Rolling Stones song, *Dead Flowers*, penned by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards.

Vetere’s Web site contains 12 pages of dead flowers. That’s right. “I’ve always loved the way flowers died and often would leave vases of dead blooms around for weeks watching the petals fall,” she explained. “I used to take Polaroids of them and have a shoe box full. One year I discovered that if you put your flowers in Sprite (non-diet), they would eventually die but keep some of their shape just distorted a bit. It was the slightly shriveled lilies that really caught my attention. They were so beautiful, almost more like drawings so I decided to scan them.”

Again, all hail Photoshop filters. “The originals of these scans were not at all appealing but with the help of Photoshop they came alive again but different,” she said. “I didn’t add any color to them, but the levels command just transformed them so I was on my way. I actually still have some of those dead flowers that you see in the flowers gallery [on my Web site].”

Vetere says she has several series of works completed for the public’s consumption. “I’m hoping to be able to print them at their full size and have a gallery show eventually,” she said.

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