10

1842-1931

GIOVANNI BOLDINI

MASTER OF SWISH

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APPLICATIONS

Painter

Miss. de Florian paced the floors of her Paris apartment. She knew time was running out. In 1940, London residents slept under blackened windows to the sounds of air raids shaking the foundation of their homes, but France had yet to see much of Hitler's devastation. All of that was about to change.

She had two choices: She could flee the city and abandon her opulent lifestyle or wait for German forces to invade and hope to be one of the lucky homes left standing . She looked up at the painting of her grandmother bathed in swirls of pale pink mousseline with her devil-may-care smile and wondered....What would grandmother do?(Fig 2). In the nineteenth century, her grandmother, Martha de Florian, had been an actress and reigning "demimondaine", accumulating a treasure trove of opulence and an impressive list of lovers including the prime minister of France, George Clemenceau. Would her grandmother have stayed or fled?

Miss de Florian decided then and there that she had enough of her grandmother's moxie to not end up in a government issued cardboard coffin. She stuffed a few precious belongings into her suitcase and in her haste, knocked a Mickey mouse doll to the floor, leaving his vacant, pupil-less eyes to stare back, as the door locked behind her. (Fig 1)

Miss de Florian fled for the South of France. No one knows why she never returned to her Paris apartment.

FIG.2   FIG 3

Seventy years later, auctioneer, Monsieur Olivier Choppin-Janvry got a call about an apartment whose heirs had passed away. He was told that the apartment had been abandoned during WWII, and the owner had continued to pay the rent until she passed away at the age of 91. His job was to inventory the contents of the apartment. He could not have been expecting much. The apartment may have survived the German invasion, but it could not have survived marauding thieves. Plus, little old ladies who abandon apartments often do not leave behind many treasures.

Janvry stepped into the decadent foyer, his feet kicking up clouds of seventy year-old dust across the priceless, oriental carpets. In one corner, he spied a stuffed ostrich staring back at him, the bird's quizzical stare demanding to know who dared to disturb his slumber. The walls were covered with floral wallpaper and paintings in gold gilt frames. One painting of a women in profile wearing a pink dress caught Janvry's eye. He recognized the painter immediately as Giovanni Boldini - the 'Master of Swish'. He had never been aware of this painting's existence, nor did he recognize the sitter. A clue lay in another corner of the room where the thick, damask drapery let in a sliver of light upon an ornate, wooden dressing table. Beneath layers of dust and cobwebs were glass perfume bottles, silver hair combs and small books, but inside the vanity's drawers lay the true treasure. Upon opening the creaky drawers, Janvry found love letters "in little packages wrapped up with ribbons of different colors." One of those letters contained a visiting card with a scribbled love note from Giovani Boldini to Martha de Florian. Further digging revealed a reference to the work in a book by the artist's widow stating it was painted in 1898 when Miss de Florian was 24.

Janvry had hit pay dirt. The painting later sold at auction for 2.1 million dollars.

If you have a Boldini collecting dust in your basement, you probably could safely retire. Boldini paintings are not always so easy to come by. He traveled so extensively that his paintings became scattered throughout Europe making for a cataloger's nightmare.

He was born in Ferrara to the father of a painter and later moved to Florence to study painting. In Florence, he became a member of the Macchiaioli - a coalition of realistic painters who did much of their painting in the outdoors, predating the impressionists. In an 1867 visit to Paris, he met Manet, Degas and Courbet. Influenced by their painting techniques, he later moved to Paris in 1871, and became one of the top portraitist of the Belle Epoque. Heiress, authors, and actresses found themselves sitting for him at the Boulevard Berhier - the Paris studio he claimed after Sargent moved to London . Always fond of the ladies, he married for the first time to journalist Emilia Cardona when he was 86 years old and she was several decades his junior. Much like his paintings, Boldini was hard to pin down.

I first saw Boldini's work while traveling through Italy and I was immediately carried back to the never-ending hustle and bustle of Paris at the turn of the century. Nothing sits still in his art. His women are always placed in strong, seductive poses where you can feel the weight of their bodies cutting through space. Much like Sargent, he was also a master of painting the edge. In his portraits, and especially his landscapes , he knew exactly when to use a bold, dashing stroke and when to use a sharp, quiet edge to focus the viewer's attention to a part of an image. Much like classical music, his art builds with a steady merging of color into a fast tempo explosion of brush work. Most importantly, he knew when to use which. For the eyes and cheekbones of his portraits, he made the focus sharp and almost photographic. For the luxurious fabrics, he used long, slashing brush strokes by thinning his paint.

Boldini died in 1931 and his work lost some of its commercial appeal as art collectors gravitated toward Art Deco aesthetics. Today, his work is much more appreciated with an entire museum dedicated to his art in his birthplace of Ferrara, Italy. You can also see some of his work at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, MA.

In this tutorial, I will show you how to create some of the brush strokes that Boldini used to convey movement while incorporating some classical painting techniques. We will finish with thinning out the paint with one of my favorite collage techniques.

"When times have established values at their correct places, Boldini will be recognized as the greatest painter of the last century.
-Gertruid Stein

FIG 4
Boldini often used his brush strokes to create perspective lines that focus the viewer's eye on the subject. In the above painting, the lines of the floor move in a diagonal direction, pointing toward the central figures.

FIG 5
The Flamenco Dancer. **Created with Corel Painter's Oil, Impasto and Pattern brushes**

STEP 1
GESTURE STUDY

Boldini began his studies using charcoal with long expressive lines. Before beginning a portrait, he often did several sketches of his sitters and would then work from these sketches. In this next step, I created a charcoal study of my figure using the Charcoal and Conte Crayon brushes.

1 First, I used the Paint Bucket tool to fill the Canvas layer with a light flesh color.
2 From the Paper Library (Window/Paper Panels/Paper Library), I selected the Sandy Pastel Paper (Note: This paper is part of your default library, but you can also download it from the companion site.)
3 I duplicated the Canvas Layer by hitting Select/All and then Copy (CTRL/Command +C) and then Paste (CTRL/Command + V). I named this layer "texture."
4 I then selected Effects/Surface Control/Apply Texture. I used the default surface texture options with the Light Direction coming from the left and hit OK.
5 In the Layers Panel, I lowered the Opacity of the "texture" layer to 50% and then selected Drop (Layers/Drop).
6 Next, I chose the Charcoal brush from the Charcoal & Conte brush category. In the Property bar, I set the Opacity to 100%, the Grain to 25%, the Resaturation to 100%, the Bleed to 40% and the Jitter to 0. This brush will pick up the grain of my paper while still applying enough charcoal pigment to get a dark line.(Fig 7B)
7 I then roughly sketched out the outline of the figure, paying attention to the direction of my lines.
8 Still using the Charcoal brush, I increased the Grain to 35% in the property bar. I used this brush to create long sweeping lines in the background of the figure. This brush creates deeper lines allowing the charcoal pigment to seep into the paper. (Fig 7C)
9 Lastly, I created some softer modeling along the edges. For this, I switched to the Square Conte brush found in the Charcoal & Conte brush category. In the Property bar, I set the Opacity to 15%, the Grain to 15%, the Resaturation to 100%, the Bleed to 100% and the Jitter to .08. (Fig 7A)These settings create a much softer brush that sits on top of my paper grain. I use this brush to create transitions from dark to light that will map out my shadows and highlights. (Fig 6)

FIG 6

At this point, You can create a simple gesture study or a more detailed study. The purpose of the charcoal study is to find the movement of your lines and map out how lines connect. This drawing has an obvious fast slanted motion to the lines. This charcoal study helps me see how the lines can strengthen that fast moving slant.
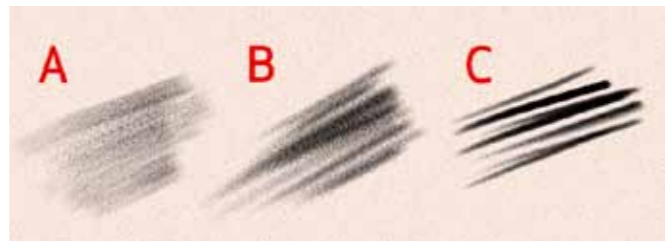

FIG 7

In the above examples, I do not alter the Opacity of the brush, but instead use the pressure of my hand and the levels of grain to create softer or harder lines.

Fig 7A. The Square Conte Crayon brush. I use the Conte Crayon to create soft transitions.
Fig 7B. The Charcoal brush. I use a low grain on the Charcoal brush to create harder lines while keeping the grain of the paper
Fig 7C The Charcoal brush. I increase the Grain of the Charcoal brush so that the pigment seeps into the paper. This would be the equivalent of using a Charcoal pencil with more pressure.

STEP 2
CLEAN UP LINES

Now that I have my gesture study complete, I will use it as a guide to trace over. I am going to paint in reverse from dark to light so I will lightly trace out the figure using a light beige color on a dark background.

1 I duplicated the Canvas Layer that contained my charcoal study by hitting Select/All and then Copy (CTRL/Command +C) and then Paste (CTRL/Command + V). I named this layer "texture." I named this layer "study"
2 I lowered the opacity of this layer to 50% so that I could still see it but it would not interfere with me tracing over the lines.
3 I selected the Canvas layer and using the Paint bucket tool, filled it with a dark sienna color. I chose this color because it is dark but still has warmth to it. I am planning to use reds, oranges and magenta for the figure so I want the background to become the base for my warm colors.
4 I created a new layer(Layer/New) and named it "Pen Lines."
5 I then selected the Thin Smooth Calligraphy pen found in the Pen brush category. I selected this brush because I liked the thin and thickness of it to retain a motion in my line as I traced over my study.
6 Lastly, I deleted my "study" layer (Layers/Delete) and then dropped my "Pen Lines" layer down to the canvas. (Layers/Drop). (Fig 8)
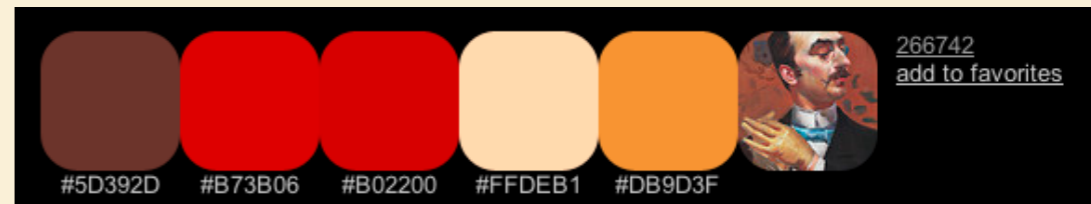

FIG 8

Boldini often placed his subjects on slanting floors and not in a perfect 1 pt. perspective that I have here. When tracing over your study, it is important to not lose the energy in your line. I will use this as a guide to apply paint but I will not let it be my source of inspiration.

QUICK TIP: COLOR HUNTER
One of my favorite sites for coming up with quick color combinations is Colorhunter.com. You can enter any artist into the search box and it will spit out a color palette based on their painting. When I entered Boldini I got the following color palette. This color palette is based on the portrait he did of Toulouse Lautrec (far right).
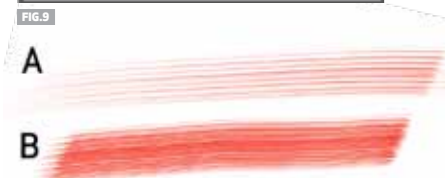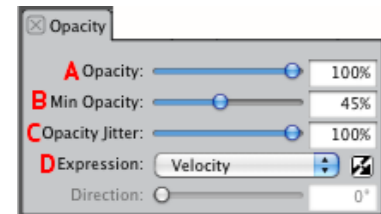

266742
add to favorites

#5D392D #B73B06 #B02200 #FFDEB1 #DB9D3F

STEP 3
CREATE UNDERPAINTING

Boldini began his paintings with cool skin tones and then slowly warmed them up with a largely monochromatic palette. In this step, I created an underpainting using green undertones in the skin and then slowly built up the warmth in the paint.

1 I created a new layer (Layer/New) and checked the box for "Pick up Underlying Color." I named this layer "underpainting."

2 Next, I selected the Real Tapered Flat brush from the Oils brush category. In the Property Bar, I set the Resaturation to 100%, the Bleed to 60% and the Feature to 4.5.

3 In the Opacity Panel (Window/ Brush Control Panels/Opacity), I set the Opacity to 100%, (Fig 10A) the Min Opacity to 45%, (Fig 10B) the Opacity Jitter to 100% (Fig 10C) and the Expression to Velocity(Fig 10D). These settings will vary the

Opacity of my brush depending on the speed of my hand.

4 In the Dab Profile Panel, I changed the Dab to Flat Rake Profile. (Fig 10)

5 In the Color Variability Panel (Window/Brush Control Panels/ Color Variability), I increased the Hue to 6% (Fig 11A) the Saturation to 14%, and the Value to 20%(Fig 11B). These settings will randomize the Hue, Saturation and the Value as I lay down paint.

6 With these brush settings in place, I build up the skin tones in green and the drapes of the fabric and background in reds and browns (Fig 12). I then dropped down the layer. (Layer/Drop.)

FIG.12
Her skin tones may look very alien-like but the green underpainting helps me create more realistic skin tones.
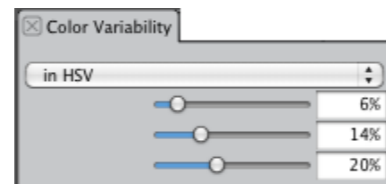

FIG.9
By setting the Opacity to Jitter, my marks will vary based on the speed of my hand. Setting the Min Opacity to 45% will cause the Opacity to never go below 45. Setting the Jitter to 100% gives me the maximum amount of randomness in the Opacity.
Fig 9A. When I create a fast mark, the Opacity is lowered
Fig 9B. When I create a slow mark, the Opacity is higher.

FIG.10
As I paint, I often vary between the Dull Profile Dab and the Flat Rake Profile dab to get different marks.
Fig 10A. The default Dull Profile Dab creates a soft, steady mark.
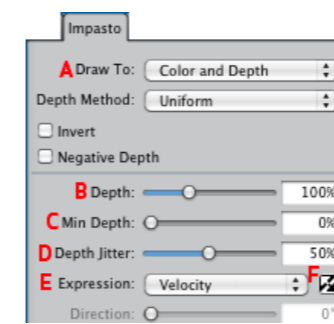**Fig 10B.** The Flat Rake Profile creates a more bristly mark with the ends tapering off.

FIG.11
I always increase the Color Variability when I want color to be applied with a bit of color mixing for a less clean application of color.
Fig 12A. With the Color Variability set to 0, the brush applies flat color.
Fig 12B When I increase the Color Variability, my brush picks up different hues, values and saturations.

STEP 4
BUILD UP PAINT

Unlike Sargent, Boldini used much thinner paint in the initial stages and then slowly built up the thickness in the drapes of the fabrics. In this step, I will begin to warm up the skin tones and apply thicker paint in the drapes of the fabric.

1 I created a new layer (Layer/New) and checked the box for "Pick up Underlying Color." I named this layer "underpainting." I set the Composite Depth to "Add" instead of "Ignore. These settings are important to build up impasto effects in each layer.

2 Next. I selected the Loaded Palette Knife brush from the Impasto brush category. In the Impasto Panel (Window/Brush Control Panels/ Impasto), I changed the "Draw to" drop down to Color and Depth (Fig 13A). I set the Depth to 100% (Fig 13B), the Min Depth to 0% (Fig 13C),

the Depth Jitter to 50% (Fig 13D) and the Expression to Velocity (Fig 13E.) Lastly, I unchecked the option for Invert Velocity (Fig 13F)These settings will unload less paint if I make a fast mark and build up more paint if I make a slow mark. I used this brush in the dancer's skirt to create more spontaneous marks.

3 Next, I selected the Real Oils Smeary brush from the Oils brush category. In the Property Bar, I set the Feature to 2.5 and the Bleed to 20%. In the Real Bristles Panel (Window/Control Panels/Real Bristle), I increased the Bristle rigidity to 100% and the Fanning to 35%. These settings will cause the brush to fan out without bending. I used this brush in the shadows and highlights of her skirt to spread the paint applied with the Loaded Palette Knife. (Fig 14) .

FIG.15
As I add more paint, I vary the speed of my hand to apply thick or thin paint.

4 Lastly for the skin tones, I also used the Real Oils smeary brush but in the Property Bar, I lowered the Opacity to 35%. This brush allows me to glaze in color washes to warm up the skin tones.

It is important that you vary the thickness and thinness of the paint to create a rhythm throughout the art.
Fig 14 A the Loaded Palette Knife cuts into the paper with thick paint.
Fig 14 B To soften this effect in places, I used the Real Oils Smeary Brush to spread the paint thinner.

FIG.13
If i make a fast mark (13A) the impasto is not raised. If I make a slow and steady mark, the paint is applied thickly. (Fig 13B) It is a very subtle difference but one that you will feel when painting.
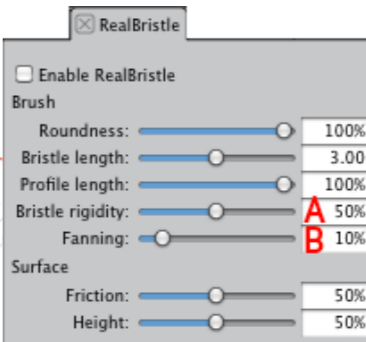

FIG.14

DRAMATIC LIGHT

Boldini used dramatic light and bright whites to make the eye move around the figure. In this step, I used different Layer Composite Methods to create dramatic lighting and punch up the color intensity..

1 I created a new Layer (Layer/New). I set the layer's Composite Method to Hardlight. (Fig 15A) and checked the box for "Pick up Underlying Color." (Fig 15B)

Fig 15A
In this example the layer's Composite Method is set to Normal. The Magenta color sits on top of the underlying red color and looks unnatural.
Fig 15B
With the layer's Composite Method set to Hard Light, the Magenta blends with the red allowing the colors to play off of each other.

2 I selected the Real Tapered Flat brush from the Oils brush category. In the Well Panel (Window/Brush Control Panel/Well), I set my Resaturation to 30%. I set the Bleed to 80%, the Min Bleed to 100% and the Expression to "Pressure." The Resaturation controls the amount of paint loaded onto my brush. The high bleed settings will cause my brush to bleed colors into each other depending on the pressure of my hand while the Min Bleed forces that bleed amount to never drop below 80%.

3 I then selected a magenta color and used long strokes to paint in where the light would hit her skirt. I switched to white and increased the Resaturation to paint more dramatic highlights on the skirt. I dropped this layer down once I was happy with it. (Layer/Drop)(Fig 16)

4 I created a new Layer (Layer/New). I set the layer's Composite Method to Multiply. (Fig 15A) and again checked the box for "Pick up Underlying Color." (Fig 14B)

5 I then selected black and used long strokes to paint in darkened shadow around her face. (Fig 17) I dropped this layer down once I was happy with it. (Layer/Drop)

Fig 16: Whenever I am adding white highlights, I always increase the Resaturation to load my brush with the maximum amount of white paint.
Fig 17: I made the space around her nose and eyes darker to make the skin pop forward and also to create a directional movement from her eye to her outstretched hand.

QUICK TIP: FIND YOUR EDGE
It is important to vary the sharpness of your edge to keep the eye moving around the page and vary the movement of the figure. For the folds of her dress, I used the Real Oils Smeary brush to create soft, sweeping brush strokes. For her arm and face I created a cleaner, tighter edge by using the Real Tapered Flat brush. The sharper edge creates a pause or a moment of stillness from the surrounding motion of her dress.

SMEAR PAINT THROUGH CLONING

Boldini didn't get called the "Master of Swish" for nothing. His painting used long lines of paint that swirled around his figure, forcing the eye to lead in a specific direction. In this next step, I used the quick clone function to smear the paint further. The quick clone function allows me to take my original image and use it as a template to create more painterly brush strokes, while still retaining the color and values of the original.

1 To create a quick clone, I selected File/Quick Clone. This function opens another copy of my image with a "tracing paper" effect over it. The default tracing paper will allow me to see 50% of my original image.

2 Next, I increased the Opacity of the Tracing Paper so that I cannot see as much of the original image. In the Clone Source Panel, (Window/Clone Source), I changed the "Set Tracing Paper Opacity" option to 85%. (Fig 19A)

3 Next, I created a New Layer.(Layer/New Layer). This will be the layer that contains my smeared paint.

4 I selected the Loaded Palette Knife and turned on Clone Color option in the Color Panel (Fig 20A). This will cause my Color Panel to turn grey.

5 Using the Loaded Palette Knife as a Cloner brush, I painted into the new layer using long strokes that follow the direction of the action.

6 When I had finished smearing the paint, I selected it (Select/All) Copied it (CTRL/Command + C) and then opened up my original image. I then selected (CTRL/Command + V) to paste it into the original. In the layers panel, I lowered the Opacity of my smeared layer to 80% and then dropped it down (Layer/Drop).
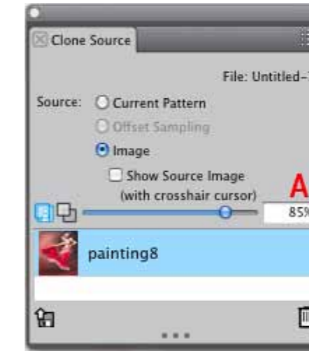

FIG 19
I find the tracing paper at the default 50% too distracting. I prefer to increase it to at least 80% so that I can only see a hint of the original image below it.

FIG 20
Painter has a whole brush category of Cloners but any brush can be turned into a cloner brush by selecting the Clone Color option.
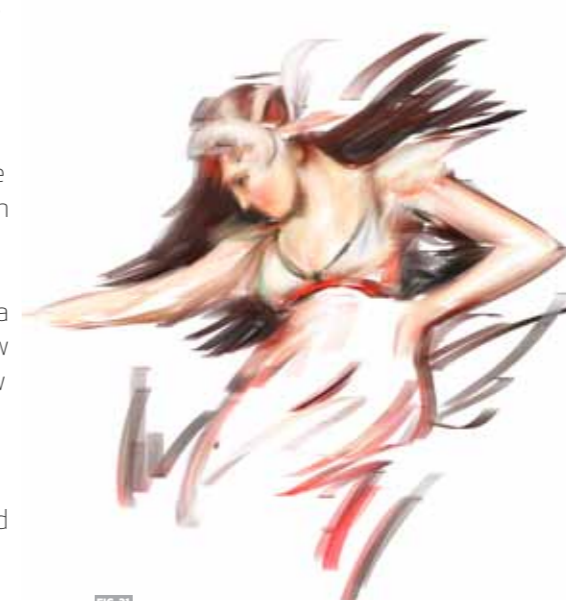

The above shows just the Clone layer. Using the clone function allows me to smear the paint but still retain my original color and values.
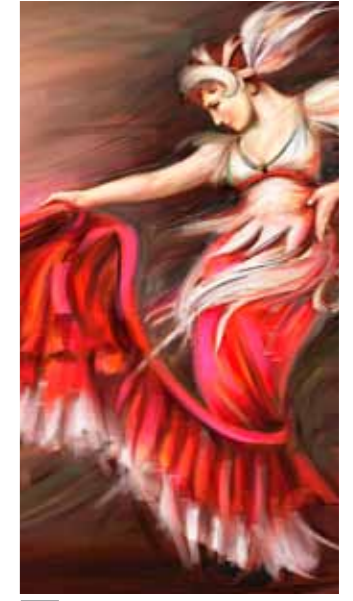

The clone layer and the original combined. Smearing the paint with the clone layer is very similar to using your fingers to move paint around.

7 I selected the Sargent brush from the Artists brush category and in the Property Bar, I increased the Stroke Jitter to 1.25. In the Size Panel (Windows/Brush Control Panels/Size) I increased the Size Jitter to 25%, the Expression to Pressure and the Size Step to 60% (Fig 23). I used this brush to blend the red of her dress into the white under layer.

8 Lastly, I selected the Sargent Super Jitter brush from the Artists brush category. From the Property Bar, I set the Stroke Jitter to .45. I used
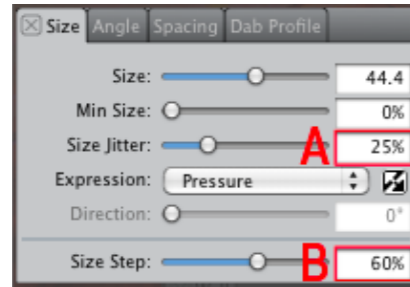

These settings will vary the size of my brush based on the pressure of my hand.

this brush on the edges of her dress to get the appearance of dragged paint.

FIG 24
The Sargent brush with the Stroke Jitter set to 1.25 and Size Jitter set to 25% the paint is more jagged looking because the size is being varied.

FIG 25
The Sargent brush with the Stroke Jitter set to 1.25 and the Size Jitter set to 0. The paint is smoother and has less variation.

FIG 16
The Sargent Super Jitter brush with the Stroke Jitter set to .45 and the Size Jitter set to 0.

STEP 7
THIN PAINT

If you look at a Boldini oil painting up close, the paint is so thin that you can see the canvas. At this point, I realized that I had lost most of the canvas and needed to bring it back in places. In this next step, I overlay my image with a paper texture to give the appearance of thinner paint.

1 From the resource site download and open the ScratchedCanvas.psd (Fig 26)

2 I selected all of Scratched Canvas image (Select/All) and then Copied it (CTRL/Command +C).

3 I then pasted it into my Boldini painting (CTRL/Command +V).

4 I set the layer's Composite Method to Overlay and set the Layer's Opacity to 60%.

5 I added a layer mask(Layers/Create Layer Mask)

6 I selected the Digital Soft Pressure brush found in the Airbrush brush category and set the Opacity to 50%. I then selected the color black from the Color Panel.

7 I painted the area that I wanted less texture using this brush. Remember

that painting with black will mask out parts of a layer while painting with white will make it visible.

8 I then repeated this process using another image of a scanned book (Fig 27)

Fig 26
I created this texture by scanning in an old canvas book cover and then scratching it up further with the Gritty Charcoal Brush found in the Charcoal and Conte brush category.

Fig 27
The Collage elements were taken from the cover of a vintage book.

The collage elements add visual interest and contain my image. In areas that I wanted the appearance of thicker paint, I masked out my old book texture.