



Adobe® Illustrator® CS5 How-To Guide

La Comedie des Arts

by Emmanuel Romeuf

Emmanuel Romeuf lives and works in Paris, and takes his inspiration from great artists of the past such as René Magritte. In the past year his work has included aspects of typographic design, illustration, photography, and set design.

His designs are characterized by a quirky humor and playfulness but with truly amazing and thoughtful detail. His pieces can be found worldwide—from conceptual editorial illustration and cover art to original posters and apparel design.

Where I work

My desk is a big glass table, and on it I have my iMac with tablet, two containers full of pencils, a big Mickey Mouse lollipop, the famous poster of Bob Dylan by Milton Glaser, a prism, a phone, and usual things.

Around me is a set of signed silk-screen prints from the French comics artist and illustrator Blexbolex. There's a deep green wall, lots of plants, and many graphic and art history books, comics, novels, and old illustrated children's books. I have a collection of small plastic dogs, a collection of New Age vinyls, various graphic materials and many different types of media.

How I work

Generally, creating an artwork for me is solving a problem. I mean, if you manage to express what you intend at the very beginning, the execution stage will be easier. So I always start projects with a pen, writing words and drawing little ugly thumbnails. The first drafts need to be quickly drawn to keep the intention. I turn the question around and around, and I look what ideas or thumbnails are opposite. This step is really exciting. Making choices is as challenging as making a drawing. You not only design a beautiful picture but a space where you can express yourself and develop a message. I like to discuss my ideas with other people at this point. We talk and bounce around our differing points of view.

When I've decided on what to do, I proceed to crafting a better rough. Now I try to think about the layout, the details, and the colors. My roughs are often drawn in black and white and I don't spend too much time at this stage; I simply make notes about my color intentions.

Next I start to create the artwork on the computer, sometimes using a scan of the rough, sometimes not. I always feel free to respect or ignore the details drawn on the rough; it's really all about the feeling.

When I get stuck during a project, I go over to the library just near of my home. I like to roam around in the shelves looking for an unexpected idea. Most of the time, my ideas don't come from design books, but from science or history books.

“I like to look to the past for ideas. Jérôme Bosch, Giacomo Puccini, Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, Stéphane Mallarmé, Boris Vian, André Masson, and Walter Gropius are among my influences.

I suppose that our perception of the world depends on the times, but even today, their work makes us travel, discover, think, understand, extrapolate, and maybe look at things a little bit differently.”



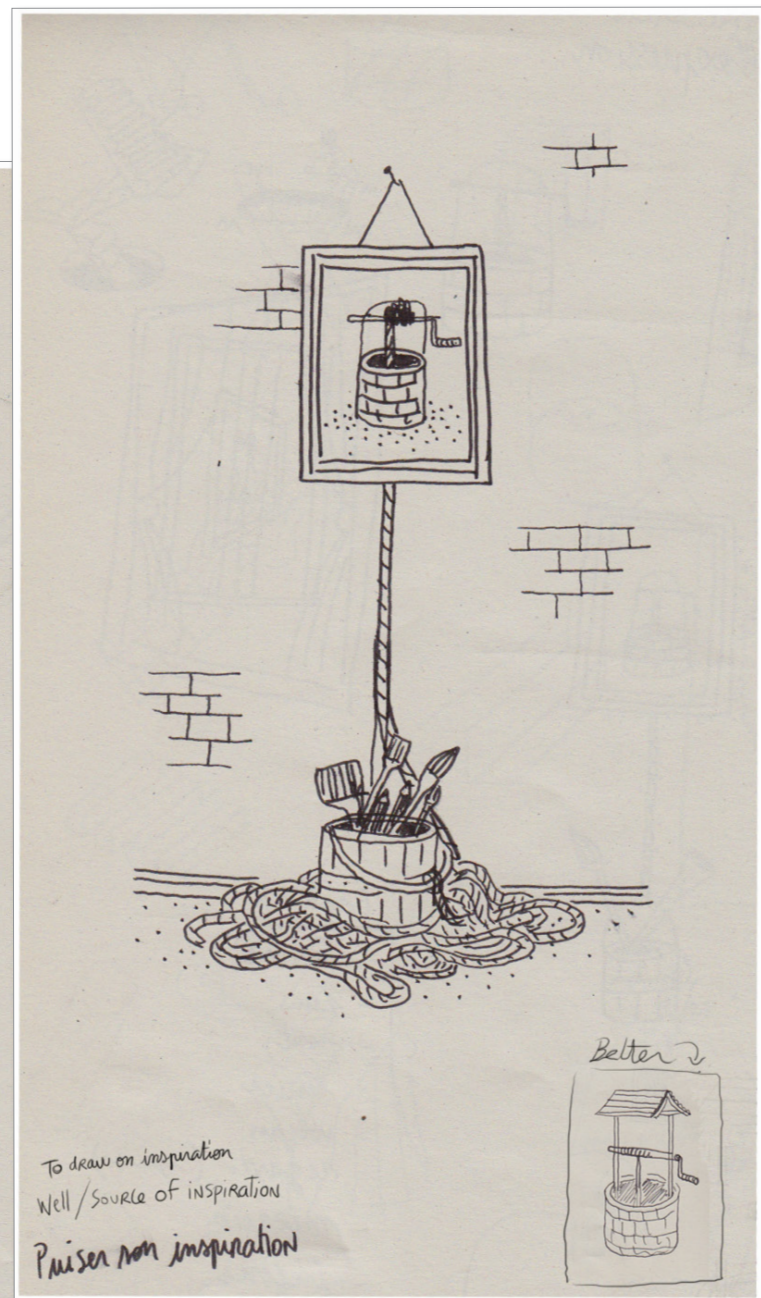
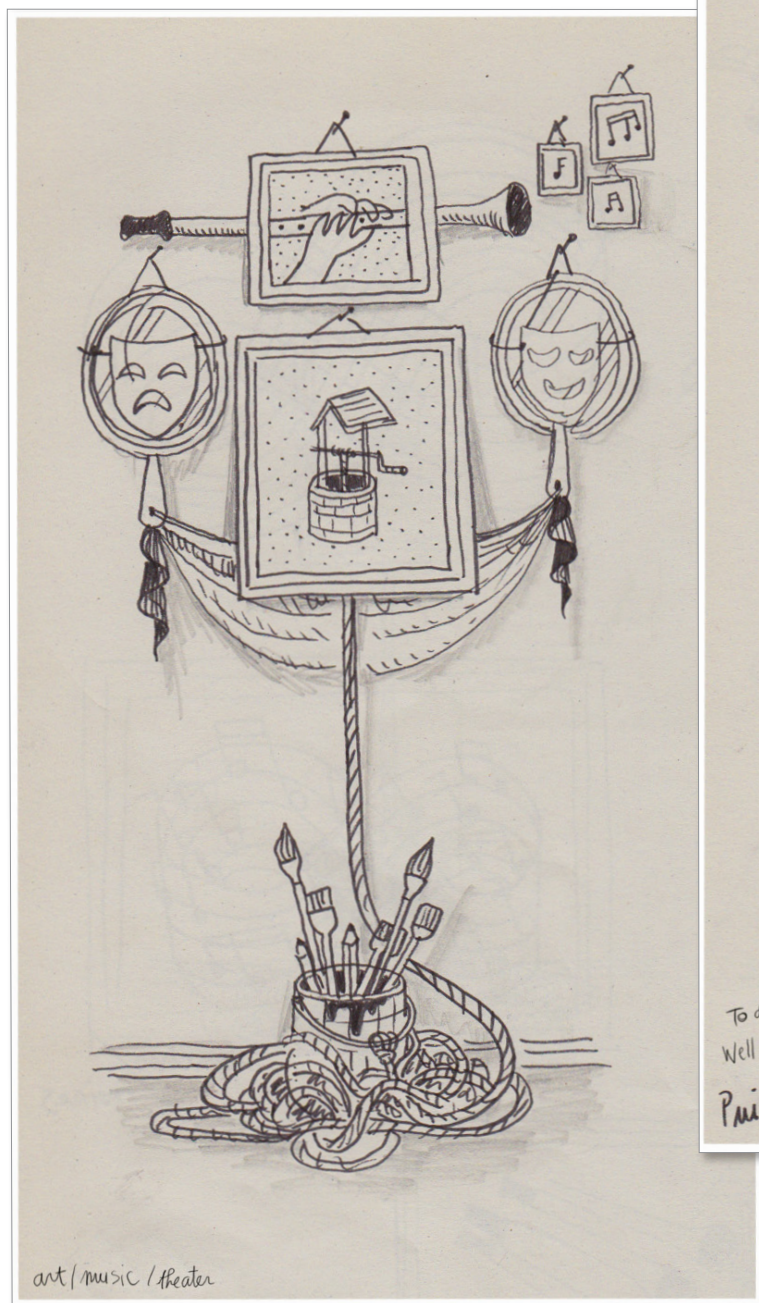
“To make my picture, I worked in the style of a contemporary artist who is designing an art installation—using real objects and drawings.”

I thought of my idea like I was staging symbols, trying to be enigmatic, digging deep into different kinds of art.”

Sketches

On a sheet of paper, with a black pen, I began the project by trying different layouts for my artwork.

Only the intention and overall layout is important at this stage.

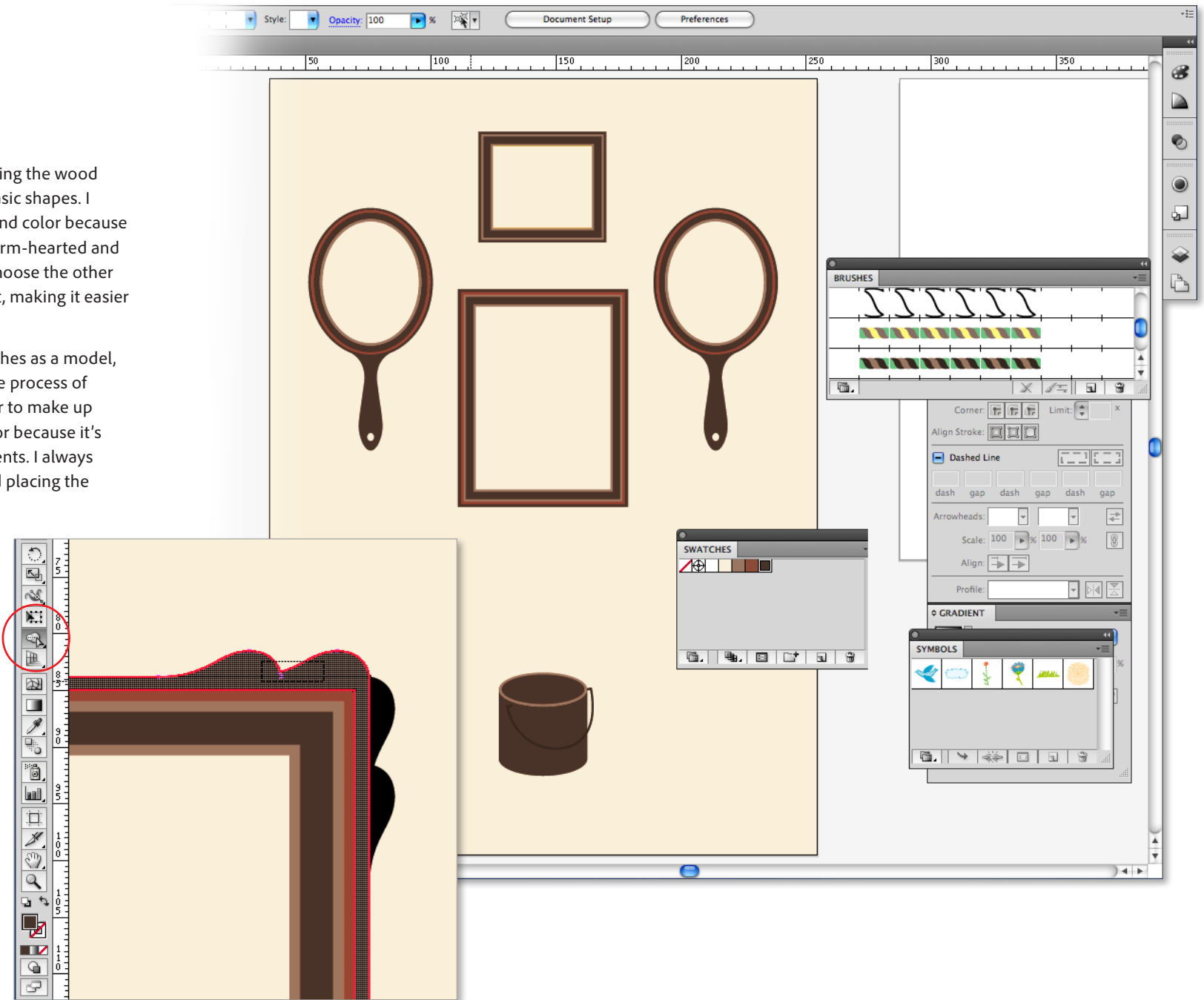


Global shapes

In Illustrator, I started by drawing the wood frames and the bucket with basic shapes. I added a warm, light background color because I wanted my drawing to be warm-hearted and welcoming. This helped me choose the other colors of the artwork as I went, making it easier to develop my palette.

You can always use your sketches as a model, but once I've gone through the process of sketching I leave them. I prefer to make up my shapes directly in Illustrator because it's really easy to adjust the elements. I always begin like this, by creating and placing the basic, main elements.

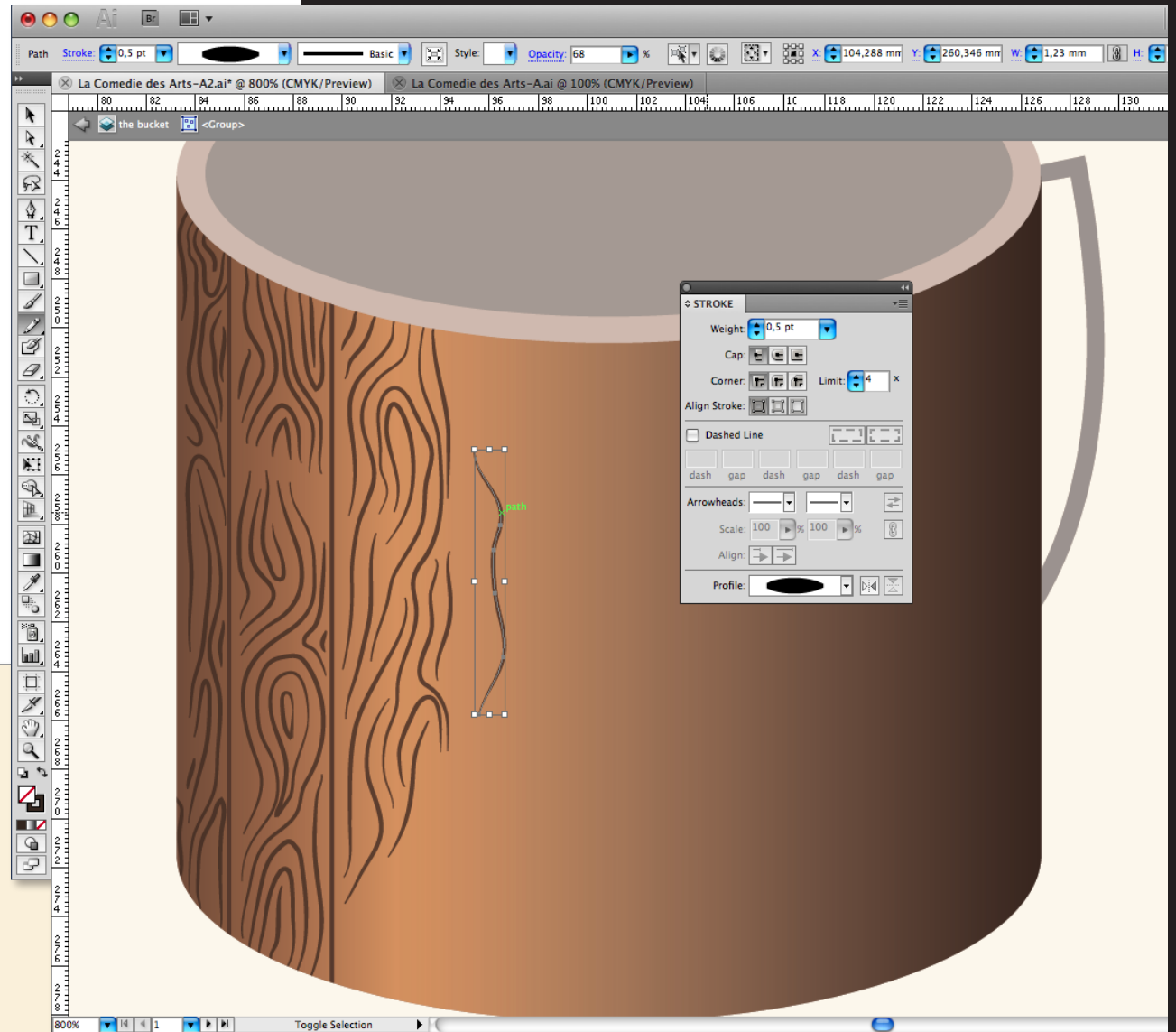
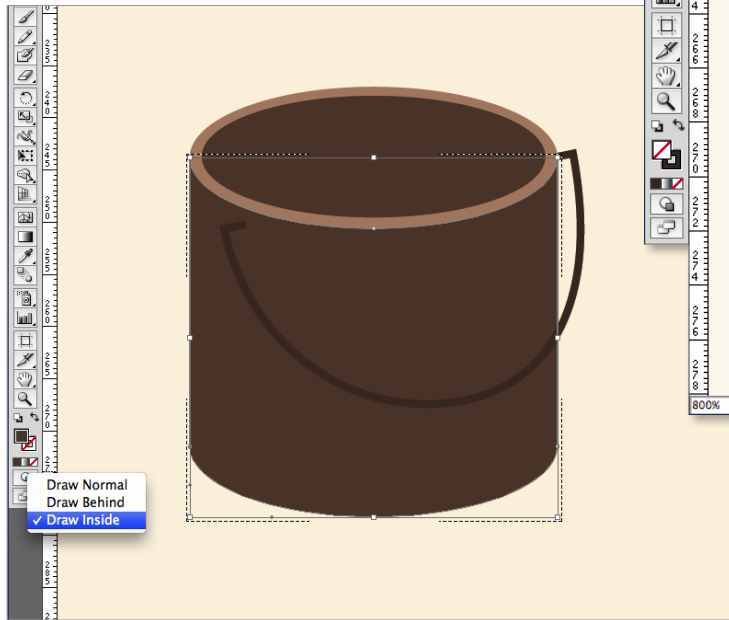
The new Shape Builder tool in Illustrator helped me build the wood frames really quickly.

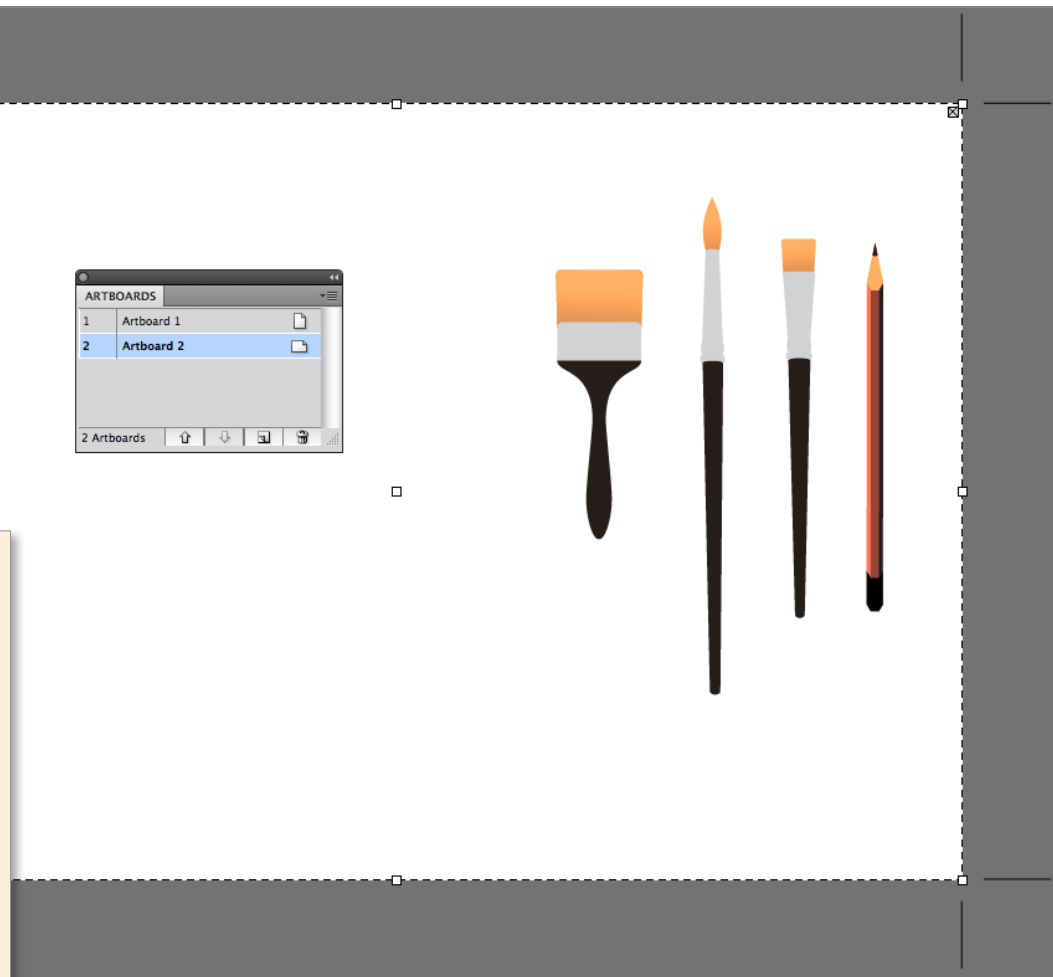
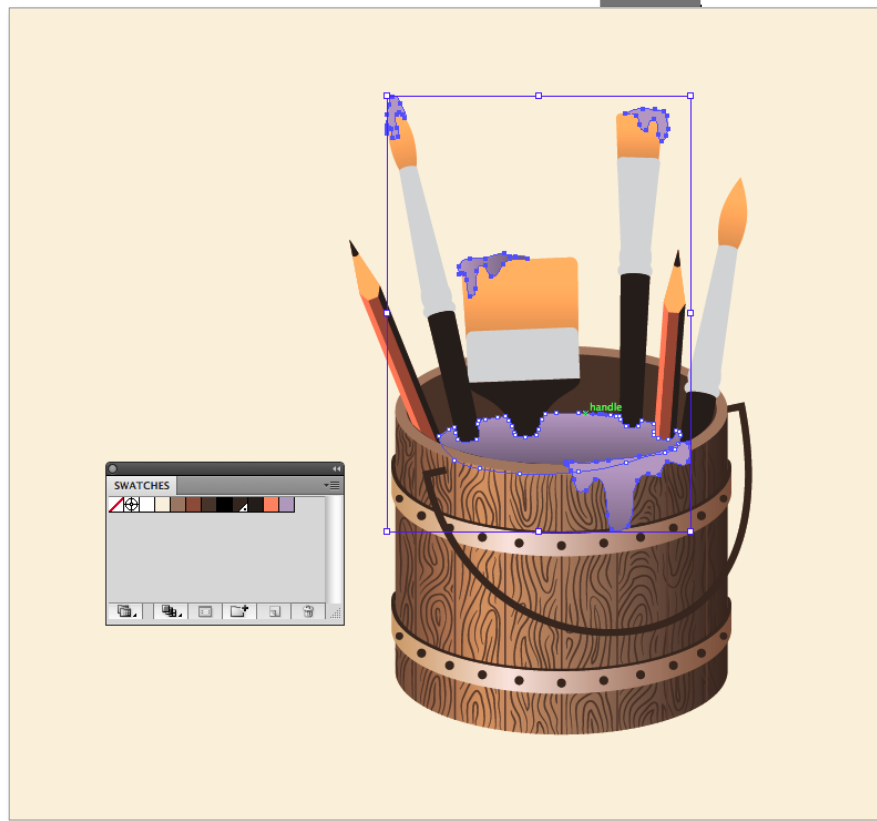


The bucket

For the bucket, I use the Draw Inside mode to make the wood pattern on the bucket shape. I used my graphic tablet and a special stroke profile, part of the new variable width strokes, to make the pattern less linear and more natural.

I like it when patterns are hand drawn. The irregular aspect of drawing is something that's important to me.

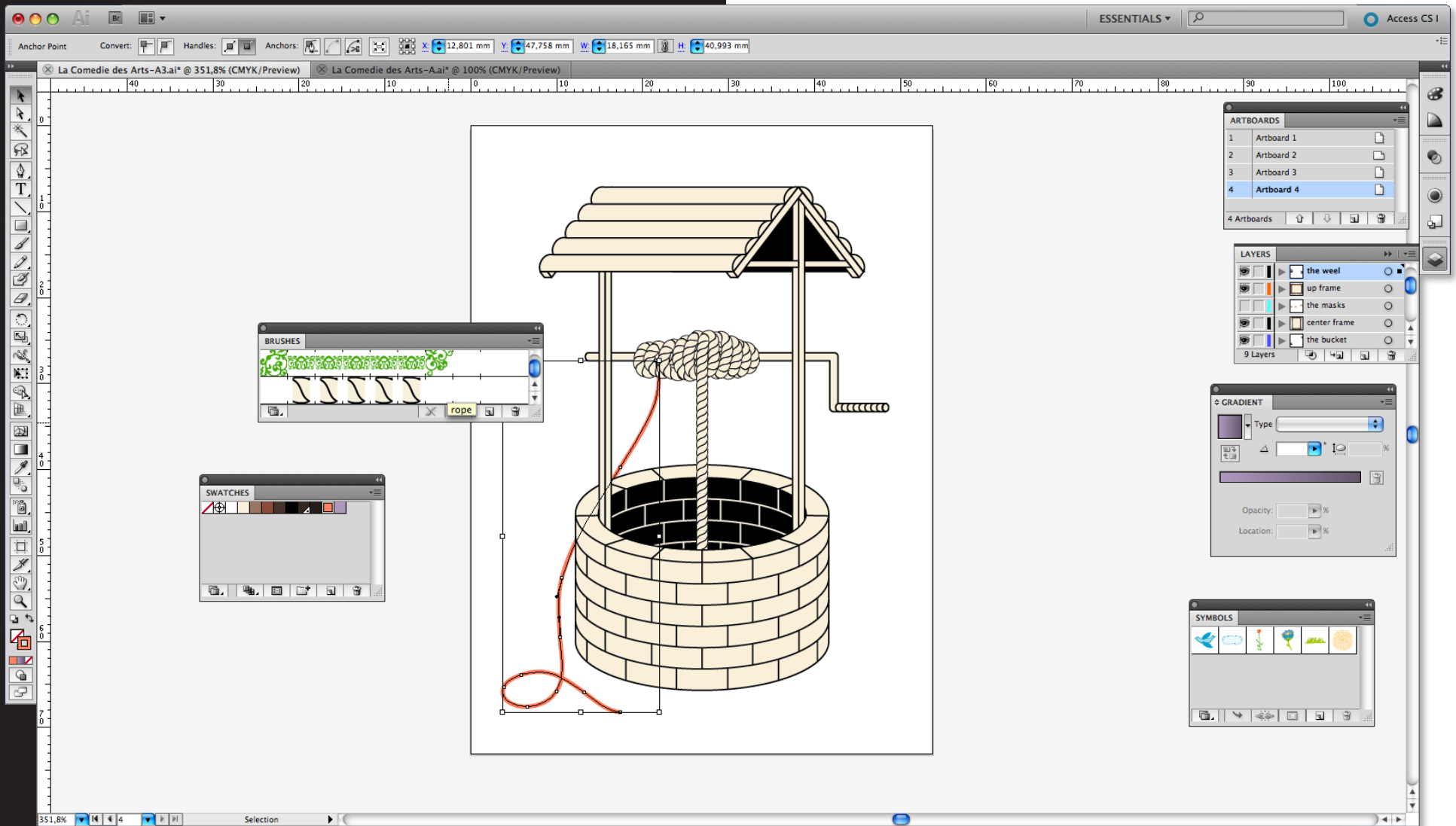




Another artboard

Next, I created a new artboard to be able to draw the pencils and brushes properly. I like to draw the elements of the artwork outside of the final piece. It's cleaner, and you can keep a copy of each element if you decide to transform them or do something different with them inside the art layout.

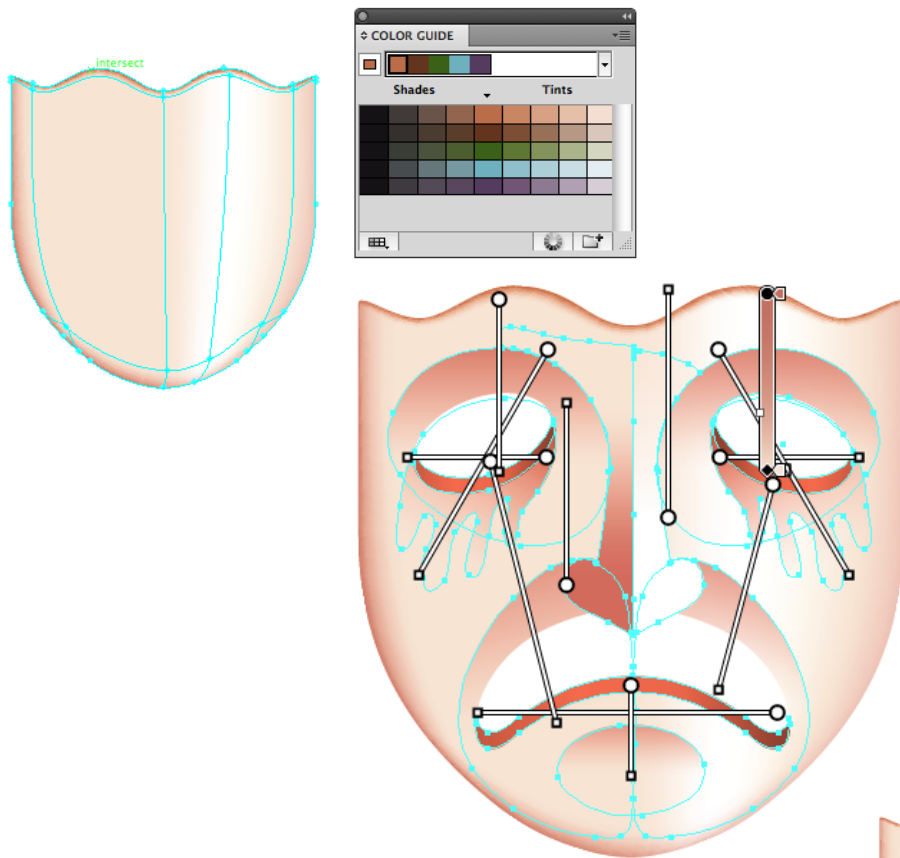
Using clipping mask in Illustrator, I placed the brushes and pencils "inside" the bucket. I then added some spots and drips of paint on the brushes and in the bucket.



The Well

For drawing the well, I created a new artboard that is the same size as the center frame of the design. In this way, I can make the new objects proportionally correct.

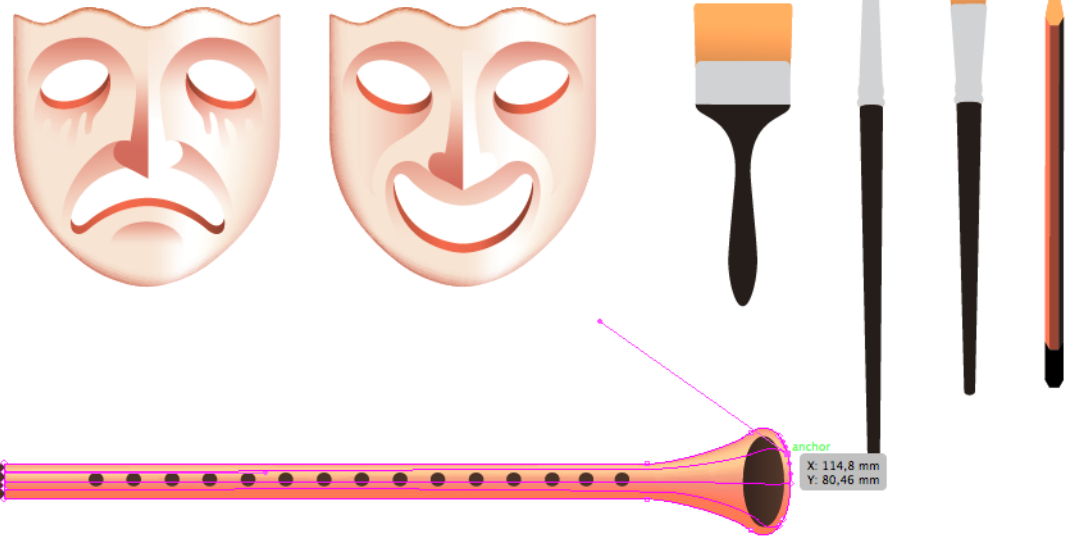
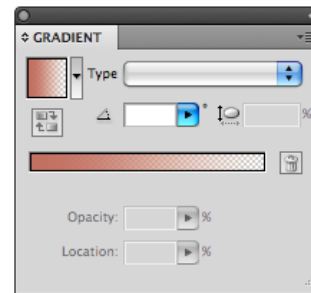
The rope is a Pattern Brush that I designed and applied to a stroke. I use only black and white for this part of the artwork because this will appear in a picture frame as a drawn element in the scene.



The masks

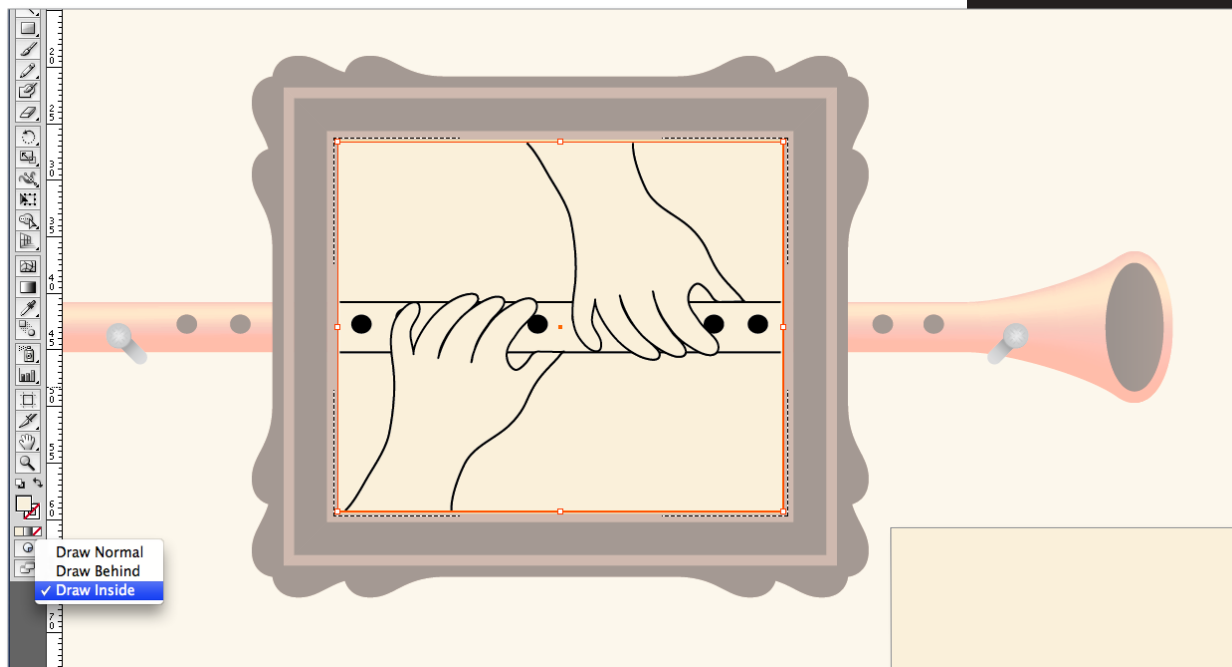
Next, I built a mask on another artboard. To model it, I used the Mesh tool to create a gradient mesh to give the mask shape its volume.

I designed the basic, underlying shape first and gave it the global color I wanted. Then, I added rows and columns to the gradient mesh and changed the colors at the different points to give the mask the appearance of shape and volume. Once I have the volume perfected, I drew the eyes, nose, and mouth with gradient shapes. I used a color-to-transparency gradient to create these effects.



The clarinet

I used the same technique for the clarinet, using the Mesh tool to create a gradient mesh to develop the appearance of shape and volume.



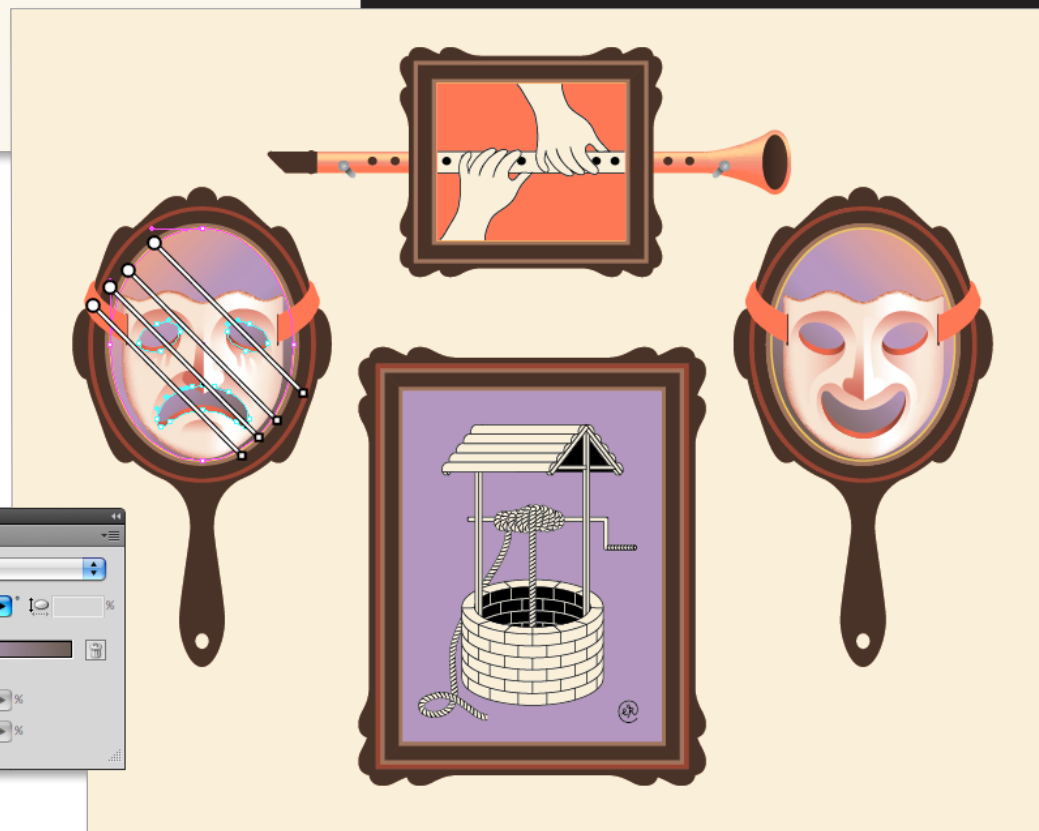
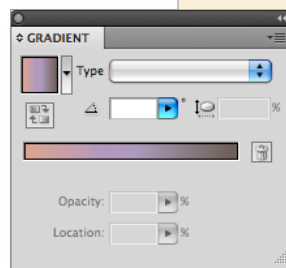
Once most of the individual objects were created, it was time to place them all into the final artwork and finish the composition.

The playing hands

While in Draw Inside mode, I drew the hands playing the clarinet within the picture frame.

I used the same range of colors for the interiors of the picture frames, using a gradient to create the mirror effect. Since we can't make "holes" in an object with a gradient mesh, I had to create separate shapes with gradients to create the see-through appearance.

I think my artwork is more powerful when there are two to three dominant colors (brown, orange, purple). This is a technique used by the old poster artists. I think it's more difficult to achieve stunning artwork when you choose a Harlequin palette.

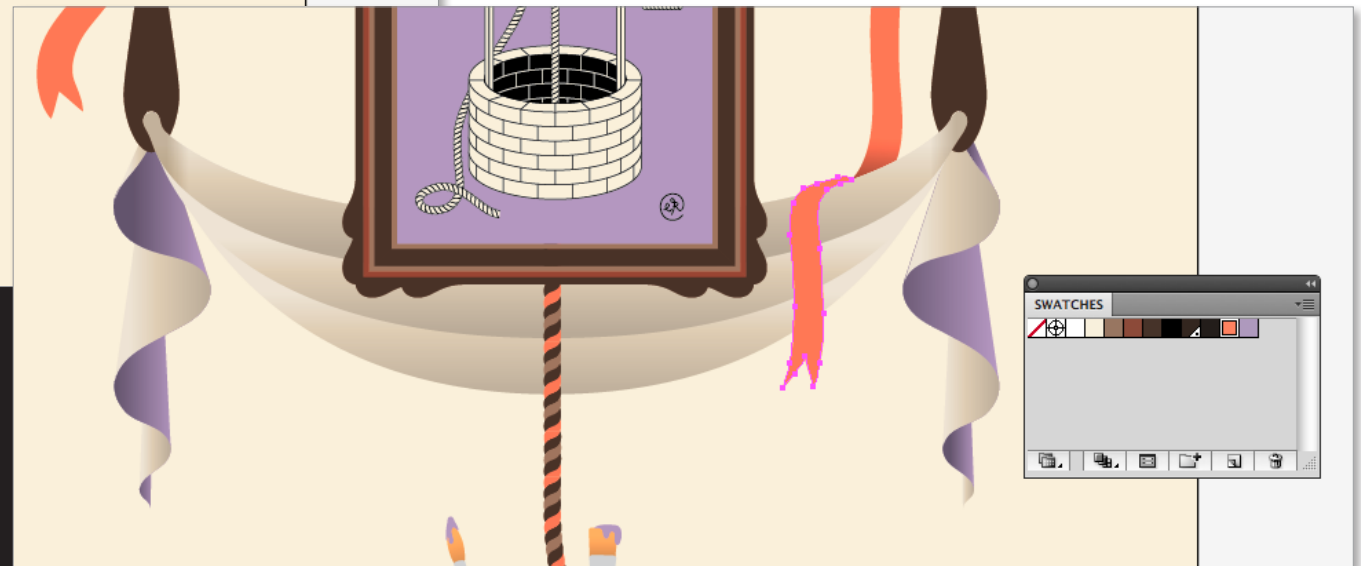


“The topic for this piece, “Depth of Expression,” made me think about “La Trahison des Images” by René Magritte. I love the ambiguity of this painting—between the drawn object and the real object. It’s full of humor and so clever. I also love Magritte’s creative touch with his riddle paintings, his use of hidden meanings and symbols.”



The rope, ribbons, and sheets

I made a new Pattern Brush to create the rope, using the orange and brown colors of my palette. I drew the ribbons and the sheets using gradients to express the volume.





Confetti and tears

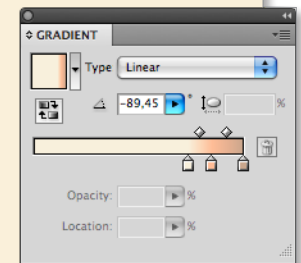
I added confetti and tears that I wanted to appear to be falling from the masks. The tears made a painting on the floor, and to accent this, I took a brush and placed it on the floor with some extra paint.

La Comedie des Arts was commissioned by Adobe and created using Adobe Illustrator CS5.

For more information
Product details:
www.adobe.com/illustrator

A background gradient

I wanted to better suggest the floor so I finished the artwork by adding a gradient in the background.



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