



Concert Undersea

by Shadow Chen

Shadow Chen works from her studio in Shanghai, which she says is a bit messy, but is full of many postcards and art prints that keep her artistic energy flowing. She keeps her favorite floral scent next to her cactus plants, so you can imagine that she derives inspiration from opposites. Along with creating packaging, identity, and websites, Shadow also works in product design, paints traditionally, and finds that her work is often used in fashion graphics.

Adobe®
Illustrator® CS5
How-To Guide

How I work

First and most importantly, I work by feel. When doing a certain piece of art, I get inspired by emotions, like when you hear music you want to sing along or dance. When the feeling comes I just have to draw and paint. Second, I need to be alone, in a space only for myself. I believe that being alone is something special for every art lover. Last but not least, music influences me. I love magical, powerful, trippy soundscapes.

Most of the time I start my work with sketches, and after that I spend some time thinking about what direction I will go with finalizing or digitalizing and coloring the artwork. Then I am ready.

Getting started

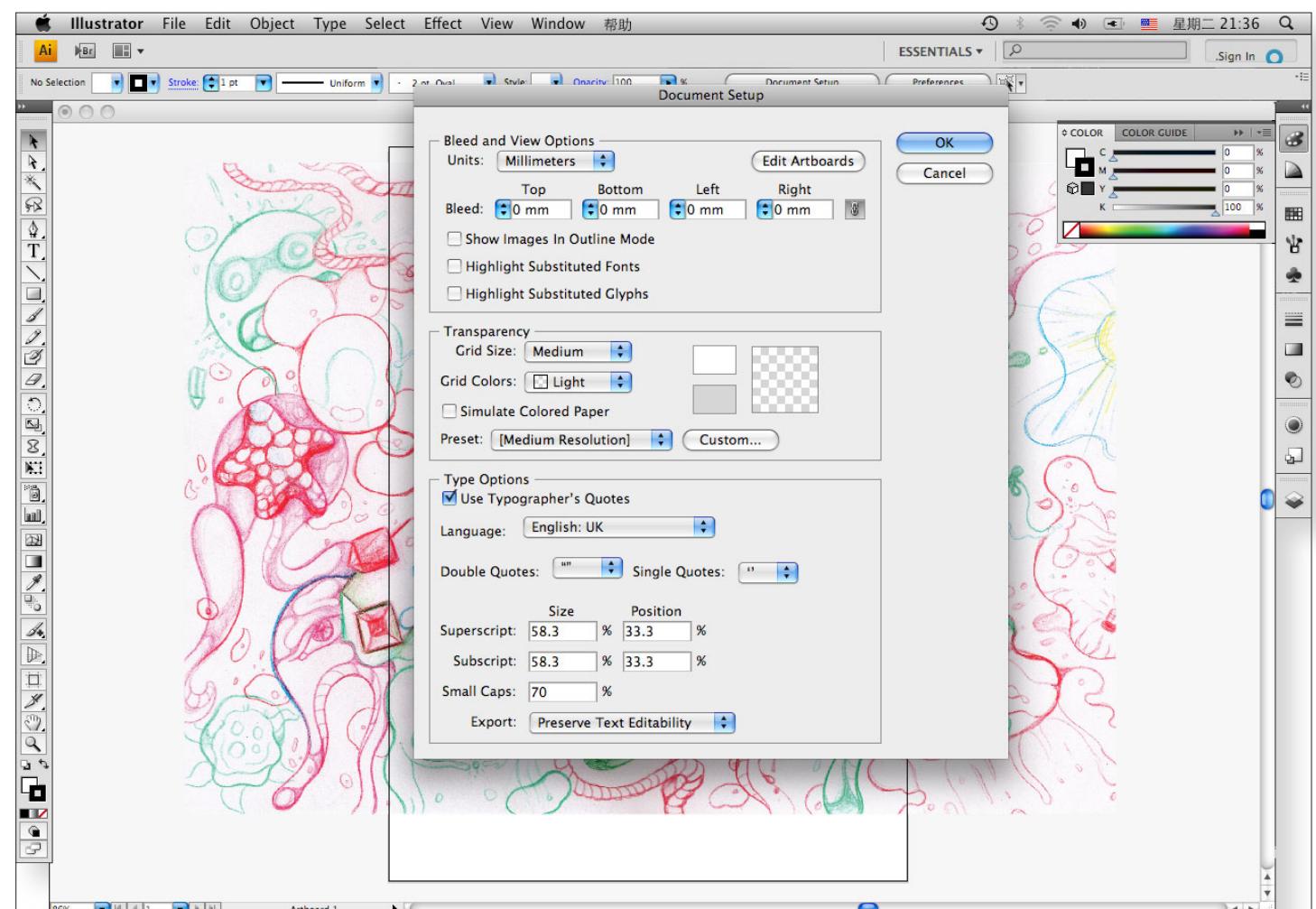
Concert Undersea started with a totally spontaneous sketch. I did this sketch by drawing on my mood, using colored pencils of red and green. The sketch expressed my passion and yearning and I loved it a lot, so I decided to digitalize it for this project.

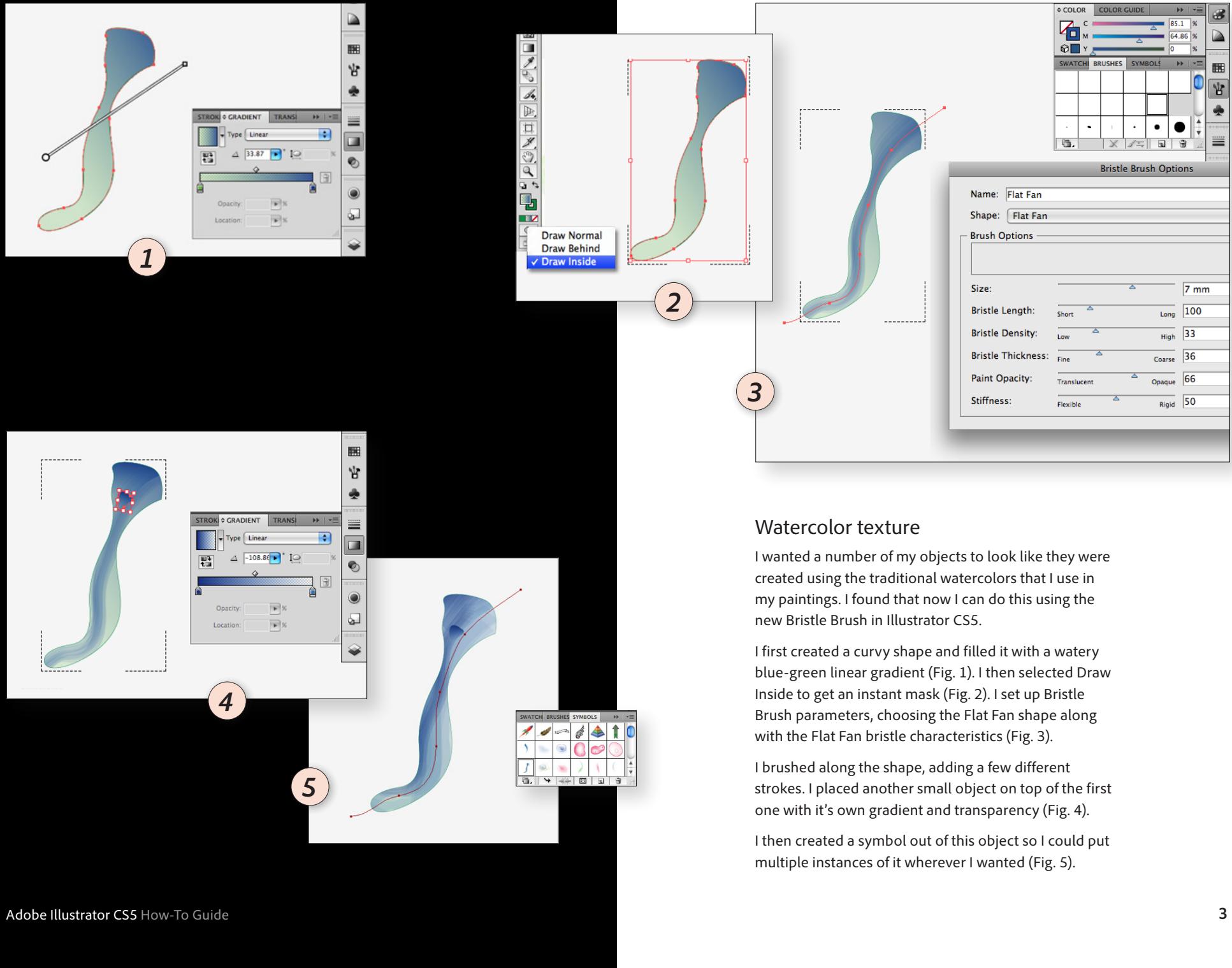
I first imported the sketch into Illustrator and set up my artboard to be the same size as the placed sketch.

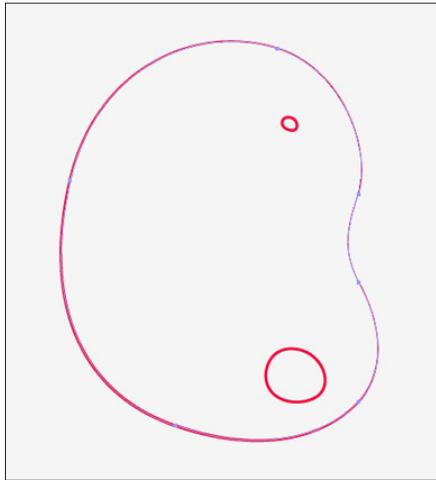
I next began to create all the different types of objects in the sketch. I got to use a lot of different tools to make the variety of creatures that are in my undersea world.

"Design excites me because it can transfer your emotions and knowledge in such beautiful and useful ways. Art and design simply make people happy, both those who do it and those who appreciate it."

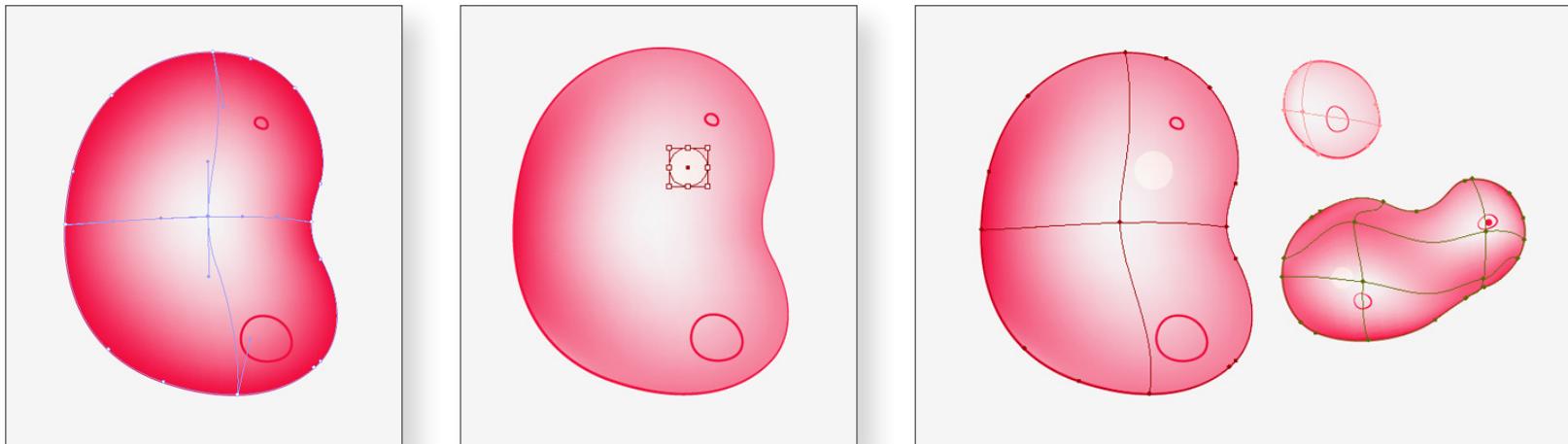
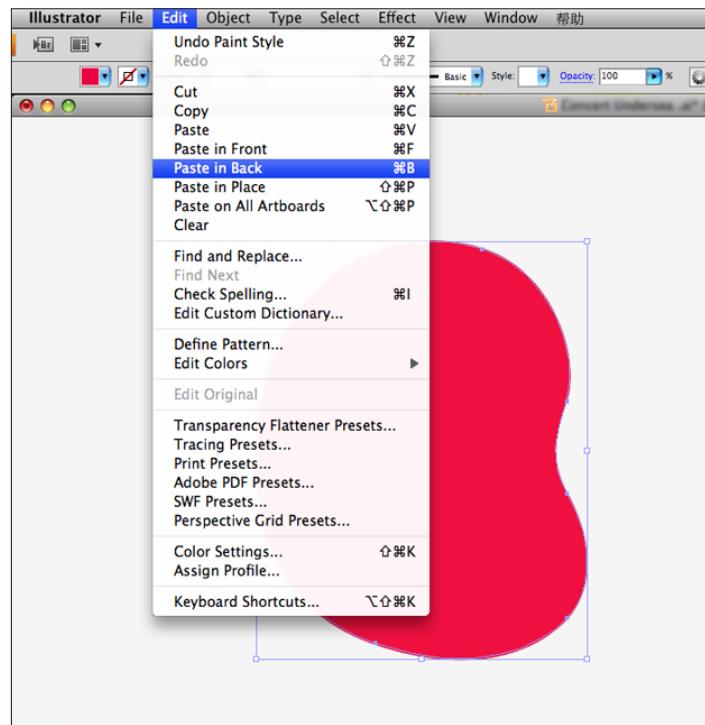
I believe design makes your life better, and art always makes your soul happier."







"I love the variable-width stroke feature. It's perfect for achieving my artistic style. Another favorite is the transparency in gradient meshes, which is great for color textures."



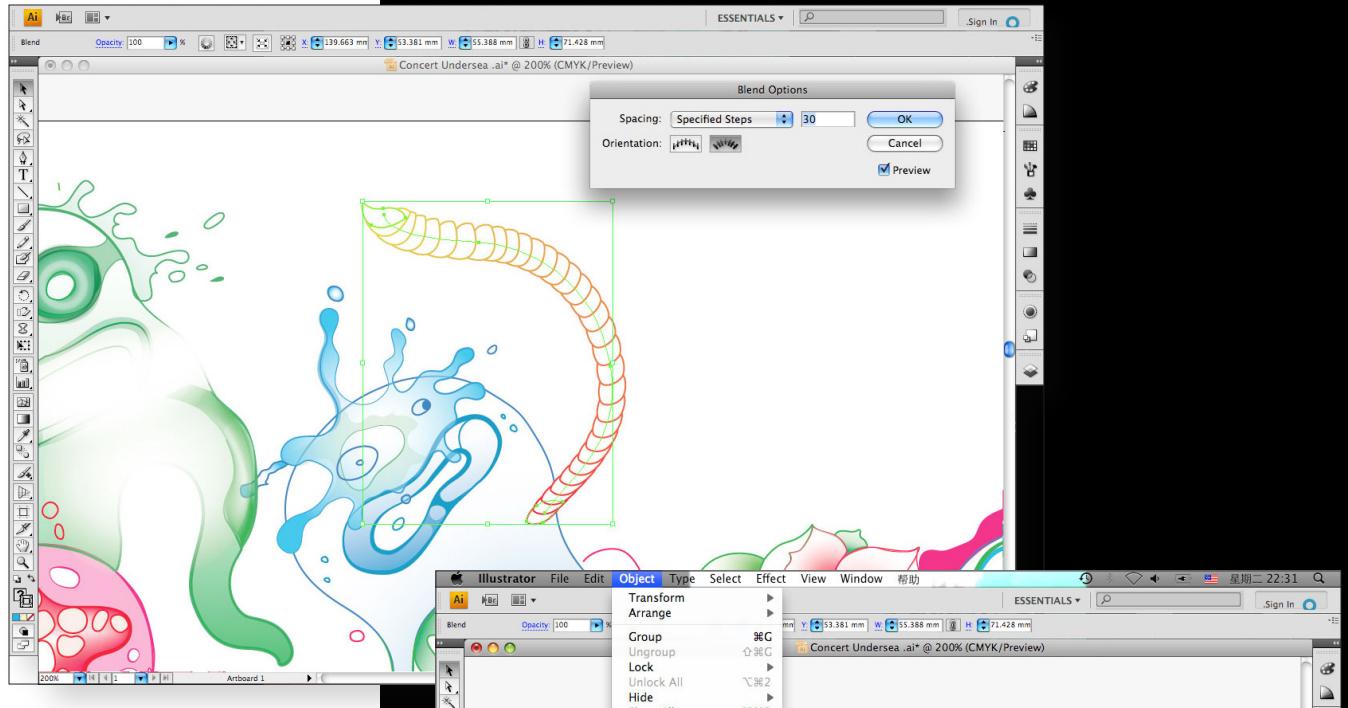
Bubbles

Making one of my bubble objects is simple with the use of the new variable-width stroke feature. I started with an outline stroke, and used the new Width tool to vary the width of the outline around the shape. I added two circles on top, which are just little blobby shapes that I like to sprinkle around in my artwork.

I duplicated the big bubble to use as a separate fill object, pasting it in back and filling it with red.

Applying a gradient mesh with the Mesh tool allowed me to really control the location of shine and shading. I altered the transparency of the gradients to let the red color on the back object show through to create the rounded volume look.

I drew a white transparent ellipse for a highlight and created a series of various bubbles in the same way. Finally, I made symbols out of my favorites, so I could quickly use them in other areas of the artwork.

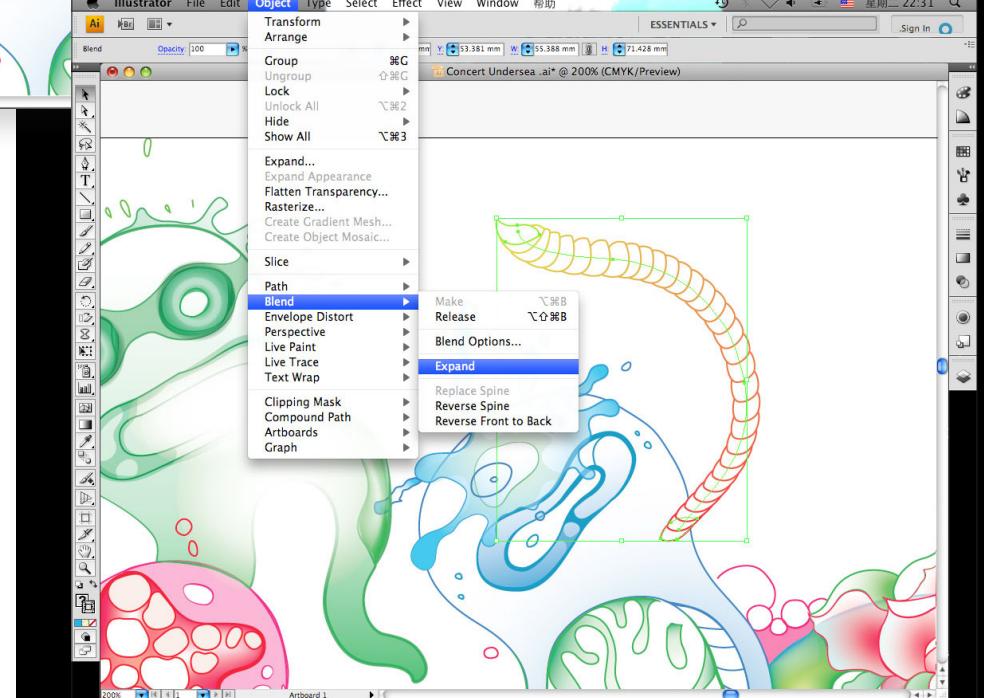
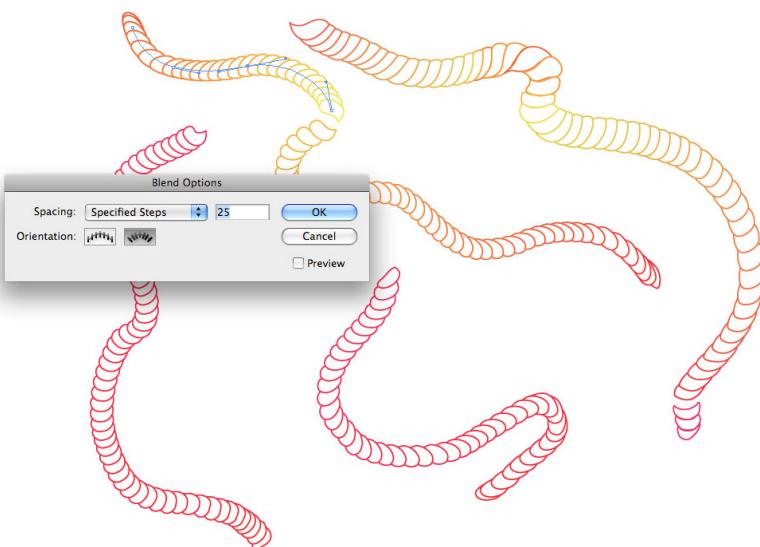


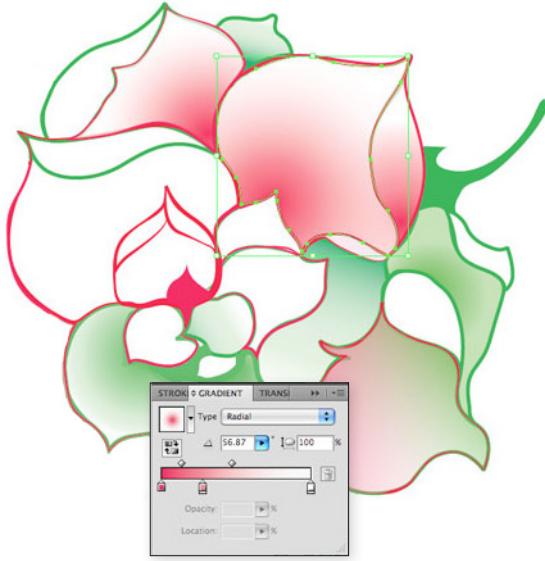
Making a rope

The rope, or worm-like elements, are made using a blend. I started by creating the two shapes that are the ends of the rope segment. I then drew a curve to guide the shape, or give it a spine, and used the Blend tool to create the intermediate objects. I played with Blend Options to get just what I wanted.

If the result is not natural and realistic, I will expand the blend and edit each part.

Making more ropes is even faster. I copy and paste a blended object, alter the steps using the Blend Options, and change the shape of the spine curve.





Putting it all together

Once I finished creating most of my objects and completed details, like the gradients in the petals of the central flower, I was ready to refine the artwork and add the finishing touches.

Now I looked at the overall composition, worked more with the colors, and improved how all of the little elements work together.

I deleted my sketch layer and started making the colors stronger, adding depth and new detail to make the artwork more exciting.

I finished off with a rich, bright blue background that fades toward the surface of the water, giving the whole piece additional depth.





Concert Undersea

was commissioned by Adobe and
created using Adobe Illustrator CS5.

For more information

Product details:

www.adobe.com/illustrator



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