

## KolourPaint

# It's a Colourful World

Gimp, the flexible image manipulation program, is often overkill for simple graphical tasks. The brand new KolourPaint tool looks set to become the application for simple every day drawing jobs.

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*kolourpaint* & in a terminal window, or by selecting *Graphics | KolourPaint* in the K menu (see Figure 1).

The program is clearly structured. Besides the menu bar and the typical KDE tool bar, it has just one palette where you can select drawing tools and configure tool properties.

## Getting Started

After launching the program, you are shown an empty drawing area. Figure 2 shows an overview of the available tools.

Typical painting tools such as the pencil, the brush, the filling tool, and the airbrush work just like in any other program of this

There's no doubt about it: Gimp is a program that gives you tools for almost any kind of task involving pixel graphics. Unfortunately, you may need to delve into the depths of Gimp's menus to find the tool that you are looking for. If you prefer a more simple and relaxed approach, check out KolourPaint.

Clarence Dang took only eight months to write the program, thus providing a tool for every day tasks that doesn't weigh users down with feature overkill. For example, the developer decided against using multiple drawing levels,

and restricted the number of tools to a minimum.

## On Your Disk!

KolourPaint will be one of the *kdegraphics* package components as of KDE 3.3. Until then, you need to install and possibly compile the program yourself. The KolourPaint homepage [1] has binaries for Mandrake 9.2, and Suse 9.0. Users with other distros need to build the program themselves. After downloading the source code archive, *kolourpaint-1.0.1.tar.bz2*, unpack the file by entering `tar -xjf kolourpaint-1.0.1.tar.bz2`. Then change to the new *kolourpaint-1.0.1* directory created by the previous step, and enter `./configure`, followed by `make`.

If the program builds OK, you can go on to install the program by typing `su` to assume administrator status, and then entering `make install`. After completing the installation, you can launch the program by typing

type, with the possible exception of the extremely limited selection of tool shapes and brushes. The program has rectangular and circular selection tools, and a freehand selection tool. The *transparent selection* option is a nice touch. KolourPaint displays areas that have the same color as the background transparently when you move a selection.

The options for the current tool are displayed below the tool selection area in the palette. These include stroke width and color for the pencil tool, for example. You can select the foreground and background colors by clicking on the two color boxes at the bottom left of the program window. The ability to make all the areas transparent is important if you are designing icons. To do so, simply click on the icon with the crystal at the bottom of the program window, next to the color selectors.



Figure 1: KolourPaint is the new KDE drawing tool.

## KTools

In this column we present tools, month by month, which have proven to be especially useful when working under KDE, solve a problem which otherwise is deliberately ignored, or are just some of the nicer things in life, which – once discovered – you would not want to do without.



Figure 2: KolourPaint's selection of drawing tools is reduced to the max.

Tools are available for drawing rectangles, ellipses, and polygons, so there is no need to compose these objects from individual lines. You can fill closed objects with the foreground or background colors. Three different stroke widths are available for lines.

The program supports the typical keyboard/mouse combinations that most other drawing programs also use. For example, to draw a square, hold down the Ctrl key while dragging with the mouse, the rectangle tool. Holding down the Ctrl key while drawing a line means that you can only draw diagonal or horizontal lines. In the case of the ellipse tool, holding down the Ctrl key draws a circle. This allows you to draw geometrical figures quickly and accurately. You can fill these figures with color, but not with patterns or gradients, as the program does not support these features.

If you enjoy experimenting, you might appreciate the fact that you can undo your last ten actions by pressing Ctrl-Z, or selecting Edit | Undo.

At zoom factors of 600% or more, KolourPaint can display a raster that allows you to edit individual pixels. All the tools are available as usual at higher zoom factors. This lets users add text or geometrical forms to icons, without any trouble.



Figure 3: The text tool supports direct text entries in the drawing area.

The text tool allows users to select the font and size. It can handle texts of any length. To insert a text, drag the mouse to create a box with the size you need, and type the text directly into the drawing area (see Figure 3).

The fact that KolourPaint does support multiple layers is one thing that might bother users who frequently need to add text to their drawings. This makes it impossible to edit the text at a later stage. What's worse, you cannot remove the text without damaging the underlying graphics.

Unfortunately, the program opens up each image in a separate window. This tends to clutter up the screen while working with multiple images. The developers have promised to change this in the imminent 1.1 version, however.

### Transformation

KolourPaint has a selection of image transformation and manipulation tools. The Edit | Skew command pops up a dialog where you can crop the image to form a parallelogram (see Figure 4). Type the slope into the Horizontal and Vertical boxes. A small preview at the top right of the dialog shows you what the finished image will look like.

The program also supports horizontal and vertical mirroring and infinitely variable rotation of images. Again a preview shows you the effect this will have on the final image.



Figure 4: Image manipulation.

Of course you can scale images by scaling the drawing area up or down, or by scaling the whole images. Select Image | Resize/Scale to open the dialog box where you can enter the corresponding parameters. Enter the new image size. KolourPaint can keep the current aspect ratio, if so desired.

The current version of KolourPaint is not suitable for touching up or manipulating photographic images. The developers plan to add a few tools for changing contrast and brightness values to the next version. So there should be nothing to stop you touching up your holiday snaps when that version is released.

### Conclusion

KolourPaint is useful for editing smaller images such as icons or logos. The fact that it does not support multiple-level drawing is a nuisance, especially if you frequently need to add text. This is something the program's authors should look into. Otherwise, I have no hesitation in recommending the program. I am reliably informed that the slightly old-fashioned looking tool icons will be replaced in the next program version.

If you want to know where the author is planning to go with KolourPaint in the near future, check out the TODO file in the KolourPaint source code directory. There are lots of interesting developments in the pipeline.

**INFO**  
[1] KolourPaint:  
<http://kolourpaint.sourceforge.net>