

Using Brushes in FxFoto – the Basics

By Susan White

If you have questions about this tutorial please contact me at susan.white@triscap.com

I am not sure where the term brush came from since they really are not like an artist's brush. More like a rubber stamp than a brush, they are often applied as a decorative touch to a photo or layout. Those doodles, flourishes and swirls you see on digital layouts are all brushes. Unlike a paper the background is clear so the doodles look just like you drew them on your layout. Since they are digital they are not permanent and you can easily change the size and position. And of course there are no messy stamp pads or rubber stamps to clean. Great fun!

Brushes come in two formats – ABR and PNG. You can use any PNG brush in FxFoto but the ABR brushes can only be used in Photoshop. You can use the PNG file either as a brush or as an element. Once it is on your layout, you can rotate or resize it. You can even create your own brushes in FxFoto but let's work on the basics here.

1. Getting Started

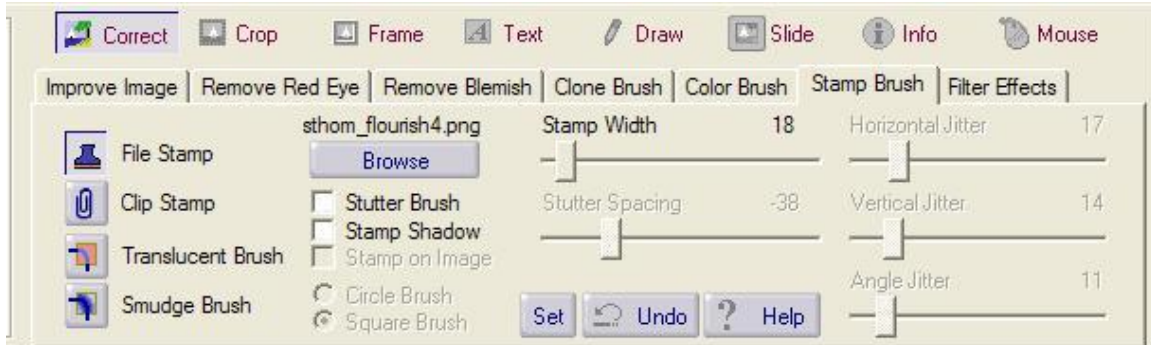
First, of course you need to download some brushes. I save mine in My Pictures in a folder called Brushes. Then I add individual folders for each designer or brush kit.

Now open up your FxFoto Creative Edition. Check to make sure you have version 4.0 (or greater) – the tool box is different in the earlier versions and the new one has lots of great new features. You may upgrade for free on our website or using this link <http://www.fxfoto.com/fxdownload.htm>. Not sure which version you have? Click on Help in the upper tool bar, then choose About FxFoto and the dialog box will tell you which Edition you have and the version number.

You can play with the brushes alone but I think it makes more sense to start a layout so you have some papers to stamp. I am assuming that you are already familiar with starting a layout. If not please see the tutorial “Creating Your First Layout in FxFoto” which can be found here on Digiscrapping Tutorials at www.digiscrappingtutorials.com. So now either start a new layout or open an old one and we can get stamping.

2. Loading a Brush

Click on Correct in the upper tool box and then on the Stamp Brush tab and you will see the dialog box below. Let's take a moment to look at it in detail.



This is what the tool box looks like most of the time when you are using brushes. Notice that some of the sliders are grayed out and not active. These sliders control some advanced features which I will cover in the Advanced Brushwork in FxFoto which is available at Digiscrapping Tutorials at www.digiscrappingtutorials.com. So for now we will ignore them.

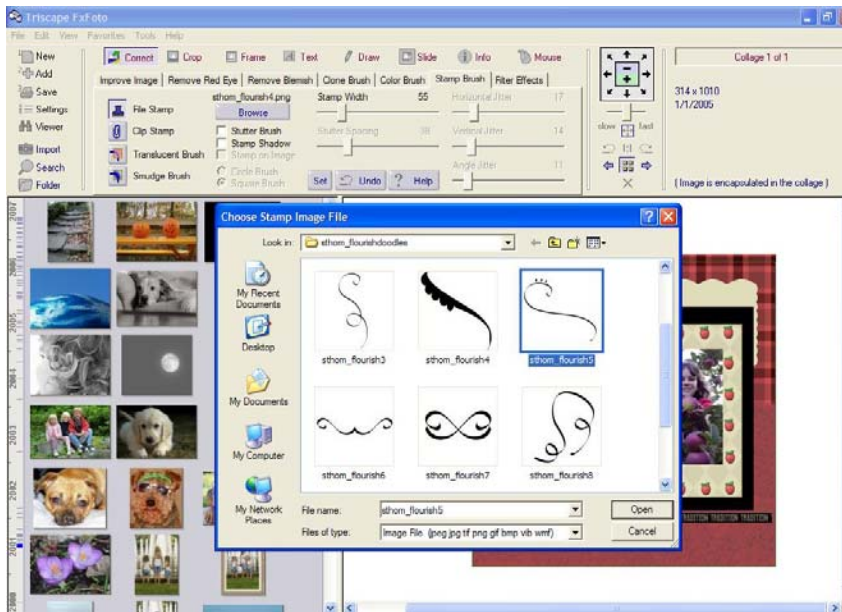
First you will need to decide on the type of stamp you want to use – File Stamp or Clip Stamp. For most brushes, you will use File Stamp.

File Stamp – this is what you will be using for PNG brushes. You can also use other file formats too – JPEG, TIFF, BMP, GIF - these all can be used as brushes in FxFoto.

Clip Stamp – this allows you to use an image stored on your clipboard as a stamp. This is handy for using clipart in your layouts.

You can use a brush or element that is located in the left folder of your FxFoto too – see **Step 6. Using a Brush from the Left Folders** below for details.

When you press File Stamp and select Browse, the dialog box below pops up and you can browse through your files to find a brush. Here, I have opened a folder with Serena Thomas's Flourish Brushes and have selected a brush. Click on Open to load the brush.

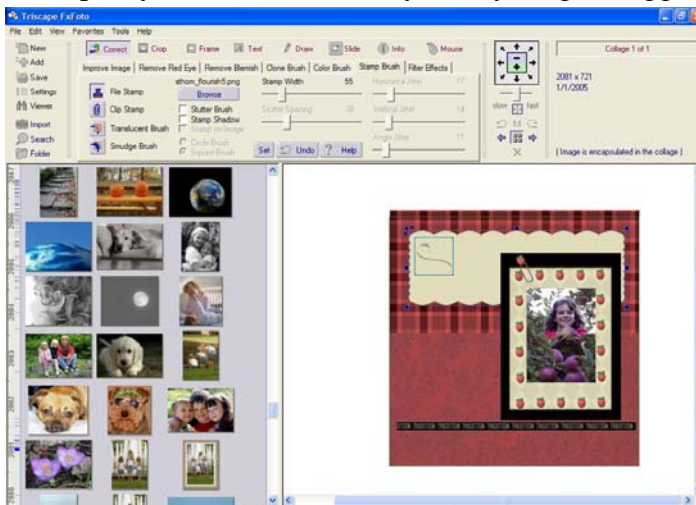


Above you can see I have clicked on File Stamp. The words above the Browse button indicate what brush is loaded – the file name.

3. Brush Size

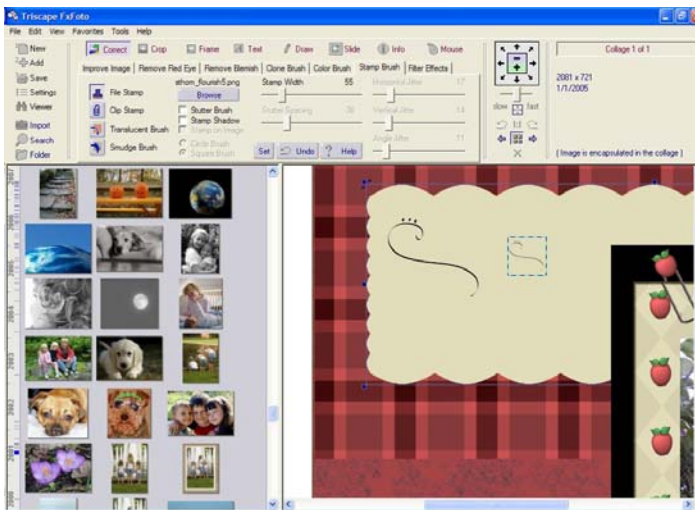
The size of your brush is controlled using the Stamp Width slider. You will see a blue dotted square which is approximately the size of the stamp when you move your cursor.

One thing to keep in mind – the size of the stamp is not absolute but varies relative to the paper. That means as you zoom in and out, the size of the stamp changes. Actually the stamp stays the same size but your layout gets bigger or smaller as you zoom. Since a



a picture is worth a thousand words so too is a screenshot - you can see what I mean below. I used the same stamp width of 55 for both swirls.

Here a swirl was stamped with a width of 55 while I was zoomed out.



Then I zoomed in, keeping the exact same stamp size and did the stamp on the right. See how when I am closer to the paper, the swirl on the right looks much smaller than the first swirl on the left? That's what I mean!

4. Adjusting the Brush

Once you stamp your brush, you still can go back and adjust it. You may rotate it or make it bigger or smaller the way you would any object in FxFoto. Click on the swirl or doodle and use the grab boxes. So if you forgot about the zooming you can always adjust the stamp size or position later.

5. Deleting a Brush

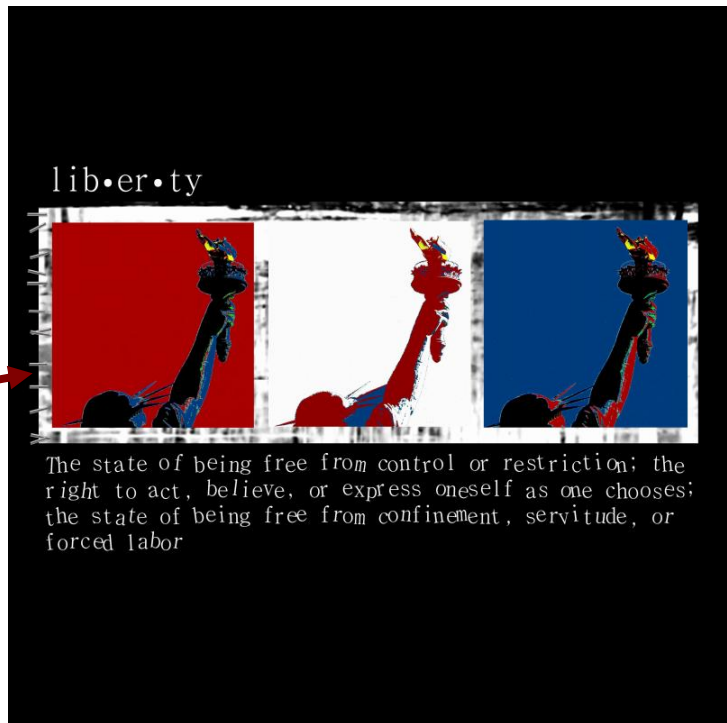
This is just like removing any object from your layout. First turn off the brush by clicking on the Mouse tab. Then right click on the brushed image you want to remove and choose Delete Image from Collage. Click on Yes when it asks if you are sure.

6. Using a Brush from the Left Folders

Using an image from one of the left folders is possible too. Simply right click on the element in the folder and choose Use As Stamp Image and you will be able to stamp with it. Although we have been talking about PNG brushes here, you can use an object as brush – button, ribbon, staple, brad. And you can use JPEGs too – try stamping with a photo as a border or maybe put text over it for a title.

Actually, this is really handy for applying lots of little elements such as staples or brads. Simply load your brush with a brad or staple and stamp away! If you set a shadow then you won't have to add it later. Just be sure not to change your zoom because that will change the size of the staple or brad.

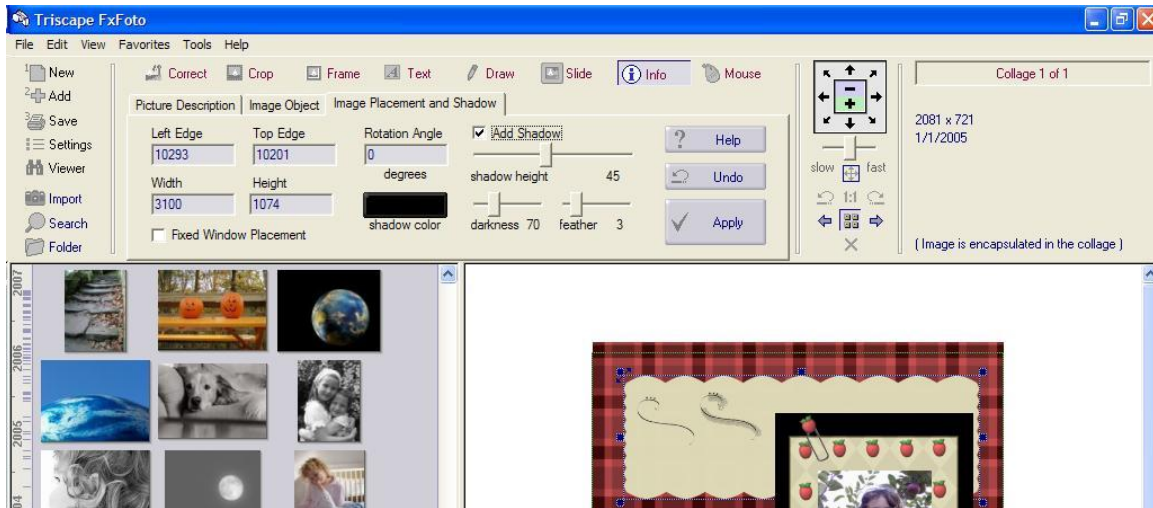
Stamped Staples



7. Shadows

Brushes are often meant to look like rubber stamping with ink or like doodles drawn with a pen. Since ink is rather flat, there is not usually a shadow. But if you are stamping with a more 3D object like a brad, you may want to add a shadow to make it look more real. There are two ways to do that – add the shadow along with the stamp or add the shadow afterwards.

To add the shadow with the stamp, click on the Stamp Shadow box. Now click on Info and then click on the Image Placement and Shadow tab. Here is what you will see:



Click on the Add Shadow box. Now use the slider to determine how big you want the shadow. Here, I used a huge shadow of 45 for the swirl on the right so it would be obvious! You can also adjust the darkness and feather of the shadow too. Objects which are thick and hard like brad or a button cast a shadow that is dark and has a hard edge so you would increase the darkness and decrease the feather. Objects that are thick but soft like a fiber cast a lighter shadow with a softer edge so you would decrease the darkness and increase the feather. Got that? You can also play with the shadow color too by clicking on the Shadow Color.

To add a shadow once you have stamped it, click on the stamped object to select it. Now click on Info and then click on the Image Placement and Shadow tab. See the paragraph above for the settings and then click Apply. If you would like to add the same size shadow to another object, then right click on the object and choose Apply Shadow to Image. It makes it much faster to add shadows.

Hints

Hint #1 – If you would like to line up your stamps in a straight line, then you can turn on the grid lines. Click on Collage Settings and look for the Page Guide tab. In the bottom right corner, click on Grid Scale and choose Lines and then set how many you would like per inch. Now your layout will have guide lines. There is a shortcut for turning on and off grid lines – Ctrl + H will turn the grid lines on and off.

Hint #2 – For a more realistic stamped effect, rotate each item slightly. A random pattern works best to make it look as if it were stamped by hand. You can do this automatically too – see the Advanced Brushwork in FxFoto available on Digiscrapping Tutorials www.digiscrappingtutorials.com for all the details on using jitter.

Hint #3 – You can use lots of things as stamps that you might not think of as brushes like a photo or any JPEG as a stamp. And you can stamp or brush doodles or eyelets or buttons on ribbons, papers, photos, slide mounts or whatever you wish!



Lots of brushes/stamping for this Halloween layout. The ghosts were stamped as border. For the bats and spiders – they were first stamped on the paper and then resized and rotated to give the appearance of printed paper.

(Credit – elements and papers from RAKScraps Collaborative kit Oct 2005, no longer available)



All the staples in this layout were stamped on with a shadow, saving a lot of time!

(Credit – Burlap and Denim by Katie Mann, template by Jen Caputo; font is Teen Angst)