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SuperBladePro

What it does

SuperBladePro gives graphics a 3-D look by creating beveled edges and surface textures. The effects can be subtle or stark, raised or sunken. There are several kinds of bevels, textures, and mirrorlike reflections, and controls for light, gloss, iridescence, tarnish, glassiness, and more. It's a timesaving way to make touchable-looking text, web buttons, and special effects.

Super BladePro can use the preset files from the original BladePro.

How to install

To use this software, you need a paint program which accepts standard Photoshop 3.0 plugins.

Just put the plug-in filter into the folder where your paint program expects to find it. If you have Photoshop, the folder is Photoshop:Plugins:Filters or Photoshop:Plug-ins. You must restart Photoshop before it will notice the new plug-in. It will appear in the menus as Filters->Flaming Pear->SuperBladePro.

Most other paint programs follow a similar scheme.

If you have Paint Shop Pro: you have to create a new folder, put the plug-in filter into it, and then tell PSP to look there.

PSP 5 and 6:

Choose the menu File-> Preferences->General Program Preferences... and choose the Plug-in Filters tab. Use one of the "Browse" buttons to choose the folder that contains the plug-in.

The plugin is now installed. To use it, open any image and select an area. From the menus, choose Image->Plug-in Filters-->Flaming Pear->SuperBladePro.

PSP 7:

Choose the menu File-> Preferences-> File Locations... and choose the Plug-in Filters tab. Use one of the "Browse" buttons to choose the folder that contains the plug-in.

The plugin is now installed. To use it, open any image and select an area. From the menus, choose Effects->Plug-in Filters->Flaming Pear->SuperBladePro

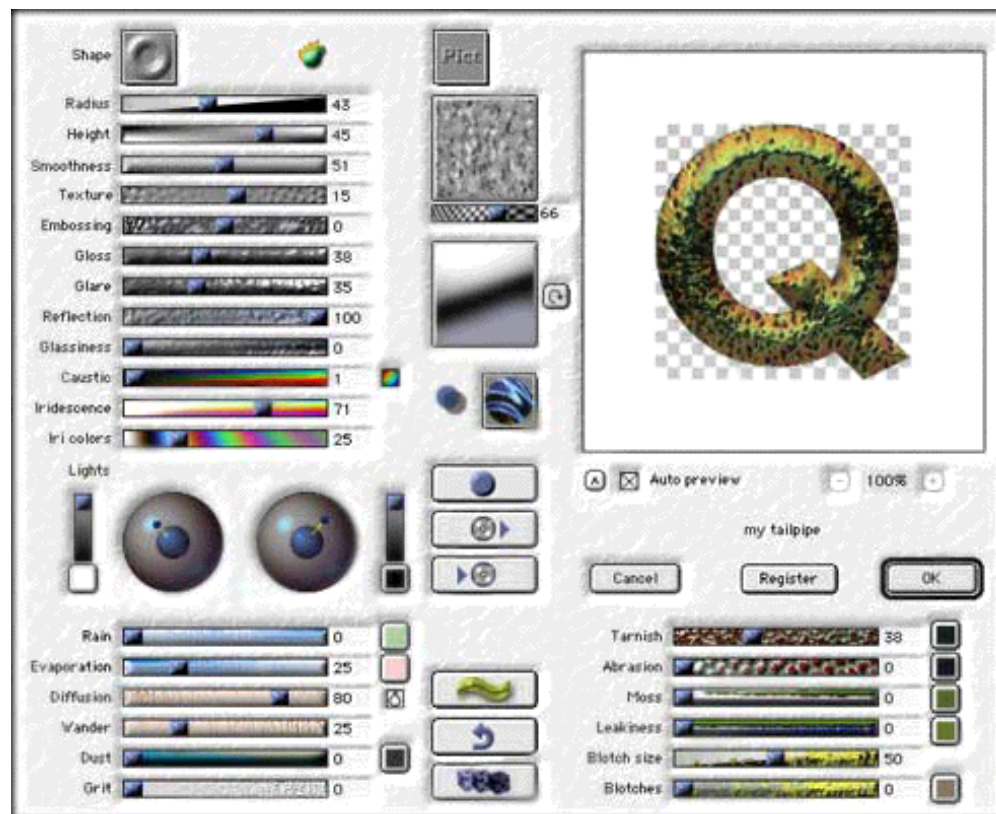
PSP 8:

Choose the menu File-> Preferences-> File Locations... In the dialog box that appears, choose Plug-ins from the list. Click "Add", then click "Browse" and choose the folder that contains the plug-in.

The plugin is now installed. To use it, open any image and select an area. From the menus, choose Effects->Plugins->Flaming Pear->SuperBladePro.

Controls

When you invoke SuperBladePro, a dialog box will appear:



Quick start

Click the dice button a few times until you see something that you like.

Click OK. The progress bar will appear, and then your selection will have a new 3-D look.

Bring the filter back and take a look at the controls. On left are a popup menu and several sliders.

Shape: Choose the shape of the bevel from this popup menu. Choose from straight, curved, up-and-down, and doubled forms. The last shape is a Gaussian bevel which produces a very smooth result at the expense of some detail.

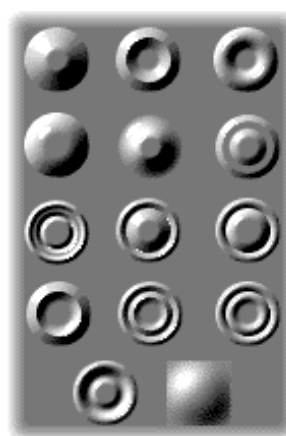


dice

Radius: The width, in pixels, of the beveled edge. If this is more than half the width of the widest part of the selection, no area will be left unbeveled.

Height: Larger values here give the bevel a steeper appearance. Positive values cause the selection to rise out of its background, and negative values make it sink in.

Smoothness: Larger values reduce the rippled appearance of the bevel. (If you want the kind of smoothing found in earlier versions of BladePro, set Smoothness to zero.)



bevel shapes

Texture specifies the amount of texturing, if any. Positive values make the texture rise out of the bevel, negative ones make it sink in.

Embossing makes the brightness of the underlying image influence the shape.

Gloss controls the shininess. Zero gives a chalky appearance; higher numbers are glossier.

Glare controls the size of the glossy highlight.

Reflection controls how much the selection reflects the Environment graphic. If you don't want any reflection at all, turn this slider down to zero.

Glassiness gives the selection a glassy rather than opaque appearance. The color of the original image becomes the color of the glass.

Caustic, for glassy selections, this slider controls the brightness of the caustic highlight that appears opposite the light source. The tiny square just to the right of the slider lets you choose prismatic or white caustics.

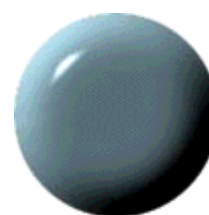
Iridescence controls the strength of iridescent coloration, and...

Iri colors controls the choice of colors.

Together, Caustic and Iridescence reproduce the effect that gives soap bubbles their colors: if light is reflected from two surfaces separated by a very thin, transparent layer, interference colors will appear.

Light angle controls are the two grey spheres. To change the placement of a light, drag the small blue dot to a new position. Best results come from placing the light somewhere in the upper half of the ball.

Spotlight sliders next to the light angle controls can produce uniform illumination or a spotlight effect.



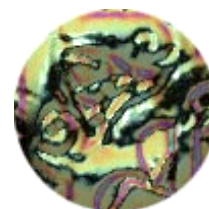
plain bevel with gloss



reflection and texture



glassiness and prismatic caustics



iridescence



color button

Color-buttons are for changing the lights' colors. If you want to turn a light completely off, set its color to black.

The next column of controls has an assortment of buttons and pictures concerned with texture and reflections.

Texture popup menu chooses the texture you want. The first item is 'no texture'; the next eleven items are built-in textures; and the last item is the custom texture.

You can use any greyscale BMP file as a custom texture. To do this, select the custom texture item from the popup menu, and use the file browser you'll then see to choose a picture. SuperBladePro will load the picture and use it as a texture.

The texture graphic is just below. Clicking on it is another way you can load a new texture file, and you can reposition the texture by dragging it with the mouse.

Texture files are "height fields" and describe the shape of a surface: black is low, white is high, grey is in between. SuperBladePro comes with several texture files in its 'environments and textures ' folder, and you can make your own. They can be as large as 256 by 256 pixels (larger ones will be squeezed to fit) and the right edge should wrap seamlessly around to the left, and the top to the bottom.

The texture zoom slider is right below the texture graphic. It lets you scale the texture up or down by a factor of 16.

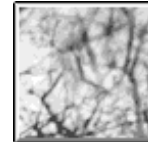
Next is the **environment graphic**: When Reflection is on, Blade will produce mirrorlike reflections of the environment graphic. Just click on the graphic and you can load any BMP file as an environment. You can find several samples in the 'environments and textures' folder that came with SuperBladePro.

If you don't want your selection to be reflective, turn the reflection slider down to zero.

Some of the example environments, like 'gold', appear to contain their own light source coming from the top left. If that conflicts with your design plan, you can spin the environment with - amazingly enough - the environment spinner button, so that it better matches the rest of the lighting. This button is the one with the little curly arrow on it.



texture popup



texture graphic



texture zoom



environment graphic
with spinner button

Dice randomize the settings. Click it as much as you want to see different effects.



dice

Glue mode lets you combine the sun with the underlying image in various ways. Modes other than "normal" produce special effects.



glue mode

Auto Preview makes the preview update automatically whenever you move any control. Turn it off if you want to save time.



Load preset (top)
and save preset

Load preset: SuperBladePro comes with some presets, which are files containing settings. To load one, click this button and browse for a preset file.

Save preset: When you make an effect you like, click this button to save the settings in a file.

Important: The presets expect their texture and environment files to be in the 'environments and textures' folder. If presets fail to load properly, SuperBladePro will ask you where that folder is. The [Installation](#) section of this guide explains in more detail.

Update folder lets you update a whole folder full of presets to the newest version. If you have a folder full of presets from original BladePro, you can automatically turn them into SuperBladePro presets containing previews.



update folder

At the bottom of the screen are some more controls.

SuperBladePro can simulate water stains. This uses four sliders:



hubcap with rain

Rain is the amount of water falling from the top of the selection.

Evaporation sets the rate at which water evaporates. If evaporation is greater than rain, waterstains may only appear near wrinkles in the surface.



more evaporation

Diffusion controls the horizontal spread of the water

Wander makes water wander over flat areas instead of falling straight down.

There are two **rain color buttons**. As rain becomes heavier, the color changes from the first color to the second.



There is a **wet/dry checkbox** which controls whether the rain acts like opaque paint or transparent dye.

less diffusion



less wander



wet rain

The remaining controls produce a weathered or damaged appearance.

Dust makes dull powder appear on upward-facing surfaces.

Grit puts high-frequency noise in the texture.

Tarnish puts dull, matte color in the concave parts of the surface. The color-button just to the right of the slider lets you change the tarnish color.

Abrasion is similar to Tarnish, but it puts dirt on convex areas.

Moss places moss-like matter on upward-facing surfaces.

Moss has **two color buttons**: one for the moss itself, one for the underlying soil.

Leakiness makes the moss leak water, and makes the blotches soak it the resulting stains.

Blotches grows lichen-like blobs. Blotches have color, scale, and coverage controls.

Blotch Size makes the blotches bigger or smaller.

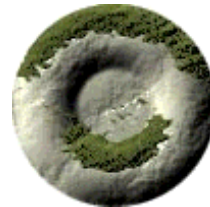
The **random seed** nearby changes the detail of the blotches. You can click it repeatedly until you see the effect you like.



dust and grit



green tarnish & red
abrasion



moss



blotches



random seed

Other controls

Dice This randomizes the settings. Click it as much as you want to see different effects.



dice

Glue mode Lets you combine the sun with the underlying image in various ways. Modes other than "normal" produce special effects.



glue mode

Plus, % and minus buttons: If the selected image area is larger than the preview are, these buttons will let you zoom in and out. You can also reposition the preview by dragging it around; your cursor will turn into a hand.



Auto Preview When this box is checked, the preview automatically updates whenever you move any control. Turn it off if you want to save time.

Load preset SuperBladePro comes with some presets, which are files containing settings. To load one, click this button and browse for a preset file. A small preview of the effect appears in the file chooser.

load preset (top)
and save preset



undo

SuperBladePro can load the presets from original BladePro, but can only save in the new SuperBladePro format with a graphic preview.

Save preset When you make an effect you like, click this button to save the settings in a file. Settings are always saved with small previews.



simple bevel

Undo backs up one step.

Simple Bevel produces a plain effect suitable for making buttons.

Three more buttons:

OK Applies the effect to your image.

Cancel Dismisses the filter, and leaves the image unchanged.

Register Allows you to type in a registration code.

Five effects you can try

[More tutorials...](#)

1. A web button

Suppose you want to make a web button that has the word "Go" on it.



In your paint program, paint an area in some neutral color. With your text tool, make the word "Go" in green.

Using your favorite selection tool, with antialiasing turned on, select a button-shaped area around the word.

Bring up SuperBladePro. Click the Load button (it looks like a CD with a blue triangle pointing from it). Navigate to your 'environments and textures' folder and open the preset called 'button, basic'.

After the preset loads, the preview should show your button with a basic bevel effect.

Play with the controls. The Radius control changes the width of the bevel. The Shape, Height, and Texture controls, in particular, let you make the most useful changes.

Click OK. There's your button.

For a more sophisticated effect, make a button as above but without the word "Go". Instead, make a blank button. Then, in a new layer, make a selection in the shape of the word "Go" and use SuperBladePro to make the word look like gold; use the preset called 'gold, basic'. Last, settle the word "Go" on the button by giving it a drop shadow.

2. A ruby

Make a selection with some straight sides and fill it with ruby-red. Bring up SuperBladePro and decide how you want your ruby to look.



Adjust the Shape and Radius and Height to produce a shape with some internal edges in it.

Rubies are glassy, so set Glassiness to about 90. You want it to appear sparkly and reflective, so set Gloss to about 50, Glare to 50, Reflection to 75. Choose an environment with flattering colors in it: 'Rum' is nice.

To increase sparkle further, turn Caustic up to 60 to produce a highlight away from the light. Even better, use both light

sources: move the second one to about the 2 o'clock position, and set its color to creamy-yellow.

Introduce more variety of color by turning Iridescence to about 15 and putting the Iri Colors slider somewhere in a pink-and-yellow region.

Subtle texture will make your ruby look best. Click the texture graphic and load the texture file called 'ripples2'. Set the Texture slider to something between 10 and 30, and experiment with the Texture Zoom until you like the result.

Click OK. There's your ruby.

3. A glassy logo

Use your text tool to write a word in 50% gray, using a large, husky font - say, Gill Sans Bold at 100 pt.



Make sure the text is selected, and call up SuperBladePro. Load the 'rainbow glass' preset. The word should now appear as glass with a bright rainbow caustic.

Play with the controls. Try a white caustic, or a different environment, or a different degree of glassiness or reflectivity.

Click OK if you like the effect.

If you want to experiment with colored glass, cancel out of the filter, and use your paint tools to paint each letter a different color. Moderately saturated tones at about half of full brightness work best. Then go back into the filter and see how the colored glass looks.

4. Tarnished metal

Select a region of your image, and call up SuperBladePro.



Load the preset called 'old copper'. The important elements here are 100% reflection of a coppery environment, a wavy texture, some pale green tarnish like corroded copper, and a light source at the upper left, which matches the light

in the environment map.

If the real light and the light in the environment don't match, the tarnish will look wrong. If you want, try moving the light source and spinning the environment to see how they need to be in sync.

The tarnish collects in the concave parts of the surface, so it will react to the scale and height of the texture, as well as the crevices in some of the bevel shapes. Try changing those settings and the tarnish amount and color to see how they interact.

Try some other combinations: the environment 'city' with black tarnish looks like dirty silver. The 'dull steel' environment with brick-red tarnish looks like rust; strange tarnish colors like magenta give a surreal effect.

Good textures to use with tarnish are 'scales', 'pits', 'crackle', and 'dimples'. And try the preset called 'my tailpipe' to see a oxidized metal effect that uses tarnish and iridescence together.

5. Iridescent surfaces

Select a part of your image, and call up SuperBladePro, and load the preset called 'ski goggles 1'.



The selection reflects a nearly colorless environment, but the iridescence adds plenty of color to the result. The Iridescence slider controls the strength of the added color, and the Iri Colors slider decides the range of possible hues.

The final outcome of colors will react to the shape of the bevel and the strength of the texture, so try changing those settings to get a feel for how the colors change. Basically, the more strongly sloped the surface gets, the wider variety of colors it will have.

The Iri Colors slider produces assorted effects. At zero, iridescence disappears. At very small values, about 7, surfaces become dull brown, like slightly oxidized metal. At 12, you have an anti-reflective coating. Soap bubbles are about 25, and higher values give the hues you see in ski goggles and sunglasses.

Adding a very small amount of iridescence can create attractive

variation in hue in any effect. Check out the preset 'my tailpipe' and change its iridescence settings to see what's possible.

Hints

Selections with an antialiased edge will yield vastly better results than ones with hard edges. Most paint programs have an option to create an antialiased edge for text-shaped and freehand selections.

If you find that the textures look grainy, try setting your monitor to 24-bit (millions of colors) mode rather than 16-bit (thousands of colors) mode.

The environment and texture graphics can be any BMP file at all, and you can use your paint software to make your own. Included with SuperBladePro are...

Thirty-two environments	Eighteen textures
2am	burrs
bronze sunset	cow
cheap gold	crackle
city	crumples
copper	dendrites
Curacao	dimples
driftwood	fibrous
dull steel	grass
glitter	lumps
gold	pits
hillside	plaster
island	ringlets
la-la land	ripples2
puffy	ruffles
red copper	scales
road	silk
rum	tumor
sea & sky	turbulence
tinsel	
watery	
white chrome	
winter	
big city	
canal	
chinarock	
cove	
empire	
greenstairs	
lumphini	
samui	
victoria sky	
zwolle	

Several Extra Texture Packs are available for free -- check <http://www.flamingpear.com/textures.html> .

If you want to make your own metal environments, it aids realism to make the bright parts slightly bluer and the dark parts slightly redder than your base hue.

If you want to produce a scene with shiny objects in front of some backdrop, you can use a small (64x64 pixels or so) version of the backdrop as your environment map. This way the shiny objects will match their background. There's an example of this at

<http://www.flamingpear.com/bladex2.html> .

Constructing a 3-D shape from a selection's edge results in a slightly ripply surface, so reflections tend to have fine striations in them. For that reason, the best results come from environments with contrasty ramps of color and a bare minimum of detail. Take a look at the included samples to get an idea.

You can use bevels with a small radius and negative height to create a chiseled edge.

SuperBladePro can be used purely as a texture generator; just set Bevel Height to zero, and reduce Radius to the minimum. Try this using the texture 'dimples' and some tarnish.

You can make your own textures: dark areas are low, bright areas are high. Try this recipe:

Find an interesting piece of a some image.

Use the cloning brush to make a roughly square, roughly homogenous chunk

Gaussian Blur by about 0.5 pixels

Adjust->Auto Levels

Use the highpass filter on it, radius 4 to 8 pixels

Adjust->Auto Levels again

Wrap the edges of the selection to make a seamless tile.

Try inverting the grey values of the whole image. If the picture becomes generally darker, then use the inverted picture. That way, positive settings of the texture slider will produce bumps, and negative settings pits.

Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to troubleshooting questions appear online at <http://www.flamingpear.com/faq.html>.

More presets and tutorials appear [here](#) and [here](#).

You can check for new releases of the filter at

Version History

Version 1.09 April 2003

Adds bigger previews in the preset browser. Adds a button for automatically updating a whole folder of presets.

Version 1.08 April 2003

Fixes the appearance of zoomed-out views in Paint Shop Pro 8 .

Version 1.07 December 2002

Fixes the appearance of text in the interface when running under Mac OS X 10.2.3 .

Version 1.06 April 2002

Fixes a bug in the both the Windows and Macintosh versions where loading presets would sometimes cause spurious error messages.

Version 1.04 August 2001

Fixes yet a third bug in the Macintosh version where presets would sometimes not load their texture and environment files. This version is PowerPC only.

Version 1.02 September 2000

Fixes another bug in the Macintosh version where presets would sometimes not load their texture and environment files.

Version 1.01 September 2000

Fixes a bug in the Macintosh version where presets would sometimes not load their texture and environment files.

Version 1.0 September 2000

The first public release.

Novel features include waterstains, blotches, abrasion, spotlighting, dust, grit, embossing, moss, and smooth Gaussian bevels. The Windows version will operate correctly even if Windows is installed on a drive other than C:.

How to Purchase

You can place an order online [here](#). A secure server for transactions is available.

Questions

Answers to common technical questions appear on the [support page](#), and free upgrades appear periodically on the [download page](#).

Trouble with your order? Orders are handled by [Kagi](#); please contact admin@kagi.com.

For bug reports and technical questions about the software, please write to support@flamingpear.com .