

# Five Important Things You Should Know About CorelDraw X3

The graphics application developed specifically for garment decorators is full of time-saving tools and features.

I love to showcase the new capabilities of the latest version of CorelDraw Graphics Suite, version X3, since CorelDraw is such a valuable design and production tool for many apparel decorators.

And there is a lot to talk about X3 since it represents a significant advancement from previous versions. Why? Well, the entire suite got a lot of attention after Corel Corp., based in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, was acquired by Vector Capital, a private equity group, in August 2003. One of the new owners' first priorities was to refocus Corel's product line on its five core applications, one of them being CorelDraw.

## THE HISTORY

The first step in moving Corel Corp. forward was to conduct research to determine CorelDraw's position in the marketplace, and that produced some surprising results. Researchers found that CorelDraw Graphics Suite had little success gaining market share in the North American graphic design community. This market segment was (and still is) dominated by Adobe CS (Creative Suite) from Adobe Systems Inc., San Jose, Calif. Various versions of Adobe CS include two key programs used by many apparel decorators, Adobe Illustrator (a vector-editing program) and Adobe Photoshop (the bitmap, or raster, editing program).

These and other Adobe products (InDesign for print page layout and Dreamweaver, After Effects, Flash and

others for Web site design and animation) are taught in most graphic design schools. This wide use in art schools helped cement Adobe's products as the de-facto standard tools for graphic designers, not to mention art directors, photographers, illustrators, Web site designers, pre-press operators and other graphics professionals.



**CORELDRAW INCLUDES** a powerful Bitmap Image Adjustment lab that works great for anyone who owns a sublimation system or direct-to-garment printer. Image changes can be previewed in the Lab with a variety of "before and after" preview options. The sliders give you infinite control over temperature, tint, saturation, contrast, brightness, highlights, shadows and midtones with live previews. Once you select the best version and click OK, the color corrected bitmap image is updated in CorelDraw.

Thus, an entire generation of professionally trained graphic designers simply did not consider CorelDraw to be a professional design platform; or, more accurately, it just wasn't on their radar.

On the other hand, the research by Corel's new owners uncovered that CorelDraw had a very large market share in the garment decorating trades. It found that CorelDraw was the graphics platform of choice for the majority of screen printers, sign makers, embroiderers, engravers and promotional products professionals —

many of whom approached design from the perspective of small business owners rather than art schools.

Vector Capital decided that Corel had been too focused on trying to gain market share from Adobe in the graphic design community and did not focus enough on its core market, the imprinting trades. Vector Capital changed that focus and the result, CorelDraw X3, is the first generation of graphic design and production software specifically developed for the imprinting trades. Graphics professionals working in the various decorating mediums were included as alpha and beta testers in the X3 development cycle. Thus, CorelDraw X3's new features were tailored to the design and production processes of screen printers, sign makers, engravers, embroiderers and promotional products professionals.

Corel Corp.'s development team has invited my input on each version of CorelDraw since ver. 10. At the beginning of each development cycle, they asked me (and other testers) to submit a "wish list" of features we would like to see. Each time they sent me a beta version of an upgrade, I eagerly scanned it to see if any of my ideas made it into the application. During the development of previous versions, I didn't find too many of my "wish list" ideas included.

One of the reasons I'm so excited about X3 is that when the beta version arrived, I found it incorporated nearly every feature and modification suggested by the beta testing community. In fact, Corel exceeded my expectations

and included significant features that I knew were going to improve the workflow of garment decorators.

Our company, Digital Art Solutions, is greatly impacted by each new version of Corel's Graphics Suite since our main product, Smart Designer, is a CorelDraw add-on. Sometimes known as a "plug-in," an add-on is a small software program made by a third-party developer that extends the functionality of a larger, commercial software application for a special niche of users.

When our Smart Designer development team first saw CorelDraw X3, we knew that our add-on would now be able to automate and simplify design and production in CorelDraw at an entirely new level. This was both a blessing and a curse, as the new capabilities of CorelDraw X3 nearly doubled the amount of time it took us to develop the Smart Designer add-on for X3, but the results were worth it.

In the next section of this article, I am going to outline five key things in CorelDraw X3 Graphics Suite that will make a significant improvement in the workflow of apparel decorating professionals.

### 1. INTEGRATED PHOTO EDITING

A key advantage of CorelDraw X3 Graphics Suite over its competitors is its newly included capability to edit digital bitmap images and photographs directly in what had, in the past, been only a vector image-editing program. Before X3, you had to transfer bitmap images to Corel PhotoPaint for routine editing, and then import the edited image back into CorelDraw.

In the X3 Suite, you can do things like use a Crop Tool that crops portions of both bitmap and vector images. Simply drag a cropping path around an object, double-click, and the portion of the graphic outside the cropping path is removed regardless of whether it's

photo inside a CorelDraw file and then click on Image Adjustment Lab in the Bitmaps menu.

"Before and after" previews show how your changes impact the image, and you can take a snapshot of each adjustment as a reference point. The Lab sliders give you infinite control over temperature, tint, saturation, contrast, brightness, highlights, shadows and midtones with live previews. Once you're satisfied with your changes (or you've compared snapshots and selected the best version), simply click OK and the color-corrected bitmap image is updated in CorelDraw. This is a simple, easy technique for improving the output quality of digital images, which is very handy for inkjet-to-garment printing.

Corel PhotoPaint X3 is included in the X3 Graphics Suite, so you still have the option of transferring a bitmap image into a fully featured photo editing program. You can do this instantly by right-clicking on the image and selecting Edit Bitmap from the pop-up contextual menu.

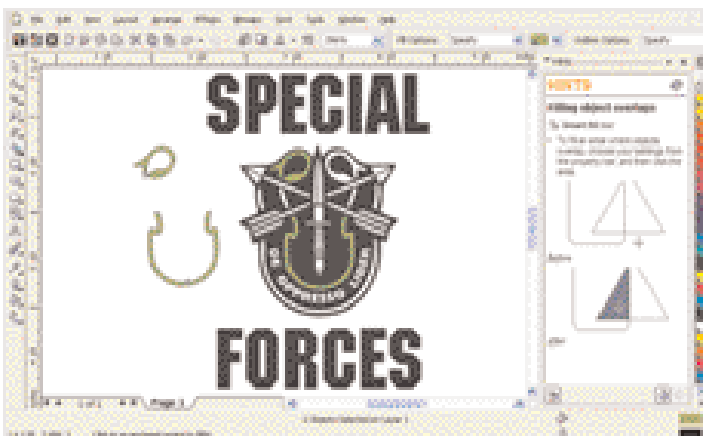
PhotoPaint is a powerful tool and the best kept secret in CorelDraw X3 Graphics Suite. Many of our clients prefer PhotoPaint over Adobe Photoshop because of the ease of use and smaller, quicker learning curve. I can get anything I want done with a photo without investing big bucks. (Adobe CS, which comes in various combina-

tions, is significantly more expensive than the CorelDraw X3 suite).

For instance, PhotoPaint's new Cutout Lab is an amazing tool for deleting elements from a photo. This is the tool you use to cut your head out of a photo and place it on a model's body. Also, the new integrated photo editing functions in CorelDraw are a great addition.



**SCREEN PRINTERS** can use X3 to create complex digital effects and output them as spot color separations (whereas they could only output process colors with previous versions). These include bevel effects, lens effects, fountain fills (gradients and blends), transparencies and interactive drop shadows.



**CORELDraw's SMART FILL TOOL** easily colors complex vector images. In previous versions, you were required to break apart and combine vector images that did not contain fill colors. With the Smart Fill tool, you can click inside negative space and apply color, actually creating an object where nothing previously existed. It also is very useful for coloring complex black-and-white clip art images.

bitmap or vector data, or a combination. (Select any tool and a new Hints Docker guides you through its various functions.)

In addition, CorelDraw includes a powerful bitmap Image Adjustment Lab. This feature is especially important to anyone who owns a sublimation system or direct-to-garment printer. It's simple to use. Just select a bitmap or

## 2. ADVANCED PDF SUPPORT

Corel has greatly improved support for the PDF (Portable Document Format) in CorelDraw X3. The Publish to PDF function has flexible settings that allow the user to tweak PDF file quality and size for both soft proofing and produc-

(or any version of Corel) may or may not open in an older version, or might open, but contain errors or have suffered a loss of quality.

Both EPS and PDF files created in CorelDraw X3 seamlessly transfer to and from all Adobe CS applications.

**Join Craig in person at ISS Fort Worth for the all-day workshop, "Digital Art Camp: Powered by CorelDraw X3," on Oct. 11 from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. He also is giving a shortened version of the class on Oct. 14 from 8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m. Visit [issshows.com](http://issshows.com) to register.**

tion output. A new document security function prevents the editing and printing of PDF files in the event that a client is less than trustworthy.

Digital Art Solutions' clients might also use this tool, along with Smart Designer's integrated product templates, to create secure PDFs for, say, e-mail marketing campaigns. Whatever the case, this new CorelDraw functionality saves you the cost of purchasing Adobe Acrobat Standard (\$299 MSRP) or Acrobat Professional (\$449 MSRP).

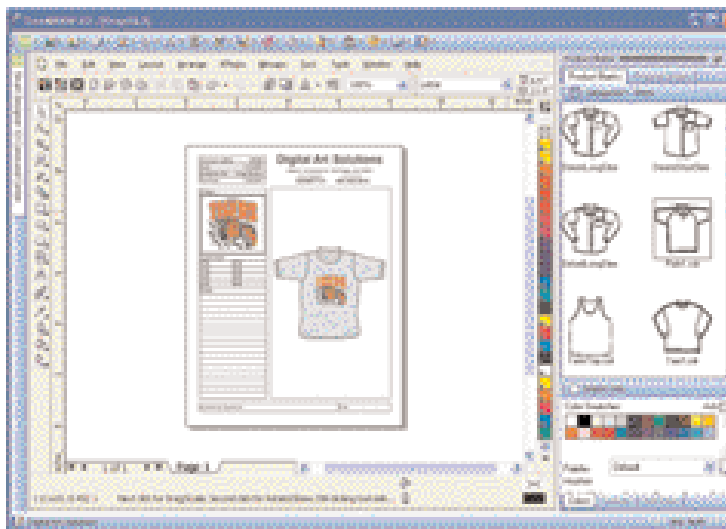
## 3. IMPROVED EPS CAPABILITIES

Corel has made great strides in improving the import and export capabilities of Encapsulated Postscript (EPS) files in CorelDraw X3. In fact, the EPS import function has been completely revised. There is just one EPS import filter and it has expanded options for importing EPS images as placeable bitmaps or vector images. In addition, EPS files can be imported with text as curves or as live text.

From my own experience, EPS and PDF formats are much better choices for transferring images between CorelDraw and Adobe Illustrator. Illustrator files (AI format) are version-sensitive, which means an AI file created with the new version of Illustrator

## 4. SMART FILL TOOL

The Smart Fill Tool is a wonderful feature for quickly coloring complex vector images. In the past, this task could be time consuming. With the Smart Fill tool, you can click inside negative space and apply color. In fact, a new object will be created where nothing was before. This is an incredibly useful tool for coloring complex black-and-white clip art images.



**SMART DESIGNER X3** is a CorelDraw add-on sold by the author's company that simplifies the design stage of apparel decorating.

## 5. BETTER SPOT COLOR SUPPORT

CorelDraw has always been capable of creating complex digital effects. However, screen printers have sometimes been frustrated because these effects could be output as process colors (CMYK) but not as spot color separations. This has changed in

CorelDraw X3. Screen printers can use X3 to create complex digital effects and output them as spot color separations, including bevel effects, lens effects, fountain fills (gradients and blends), transparencies and interactive drop shadows.

In my opinion, CorelDraw X3 is an ideal graphics platform for anyone engaged in screen printing, digital garment printing, embroidery, appliqué cutting, large-format digital printing, sublimation printing, laser engraving, pad printing and the list goes on.

Adobe did an amazing job developing Illustrator for graphic designers working in print, broadcast, wireless and on the Web. And all Adobe products are available for the Macintosh operating system and Windows. On the other hand, I would argue that Corel built the premier graphics platform for garment decorating and related imprinting trades. The CorelDraw suite is a Windows-only application, which also fits well with the garment decorating industry as most small shops are Windows-only.

I teach CorelDraw classes at the Imprinted Sportswear Shows and have judged the reception of the X3 Suite from the many "oohs" and "aahs" I hear from the audience. I tell my attendees that upgrading to CorelDraw X3 is one of the best investments they can make in improving their graphic design capability. (MSRP is \$379 for a full version and \$169 for an upgrade.) ▲

*Craig Mertens is co-owner and president of Digital Art Solutions, Tempe, Ariz. He's a popular speaker at the Imprinted Sportswear Shows with more than 25 years of industry experience. His company, which received the 2006 Corel Strategic Partner Award, provides production-ready digital clip art and design templates for CorelDraw users. Free vector clip art is available for Impressions readers at [smartdesigns.com](http://smartdesigns.com).*