

Wacom Cintiq 12WX

Find out if the little brother to the Cintiq 21UX lives up to expectations

Ever since Wacom released the 21UX pen tablet, every designer, illustrator or Photoshop professional has longed for a smaller, more portable and cheaper device, and at last it has arrived!

The Cintiq 12WX, as the name implies, measures just 12.1 inches. Its slight complexion and weight of only 2,000g give the product the perfect dimensions for use anywhere.

As you would expect, the tablet is sublime. Drawing onto the glass, 1280 x 800px screen, is effortless; the pressure-sensitive display reacts instantly to your actions and accuracy is excellent. The pen's 1,024 levels of pressure sensitivity, combined with rotation and tilt sensors up to 60°, produce some stunning natural results from Pen, Brush and Eraser tools.

The need of a mouse and keyboard is greatly reduced with customisable Touch Strips and ExpressKeys found on both sides of the screen. Touch Strips allow you to zoom or scroll by sliding your finger along them – much like a



GOOD LOOKING: Sleek and stylish, the 12WX will appeal to those who want a functional device that will look good on the workstation

“IT REALLY IS HARD TO CRITICISE THE CINTIQ 12WX”



EXPRESSKEYS: Customise your ExpressKey and Touch Strip settings to allow one button to perform different tasks in each application. A Touch Strip could be set to zoom in Photoshop and then scroll through a PDF file

built-in touchpad on a laptop, while the ten, fully programmable ExpressKey buttons are real time-savers. When you eventually remember to use them, you can minimise keyboard use by assigning commonly used actions or events – such as Step Backward or switching between program tools – to an ExpressKey.

The ergonomic design of the 12WX has clearly been thoroughly thought through. The adjustable stand offers three comfortable viewing positions. A 65° vertical position gives you the opportunity to use the tablet to display your work or use the screen as a regular monitor. A 25° incline offers a relaxed working position, while using the 12WX flat on a desk or on your lap offers the same flexibility as a piece of paper – allowing you to rotate the display to reach those awkward corners.

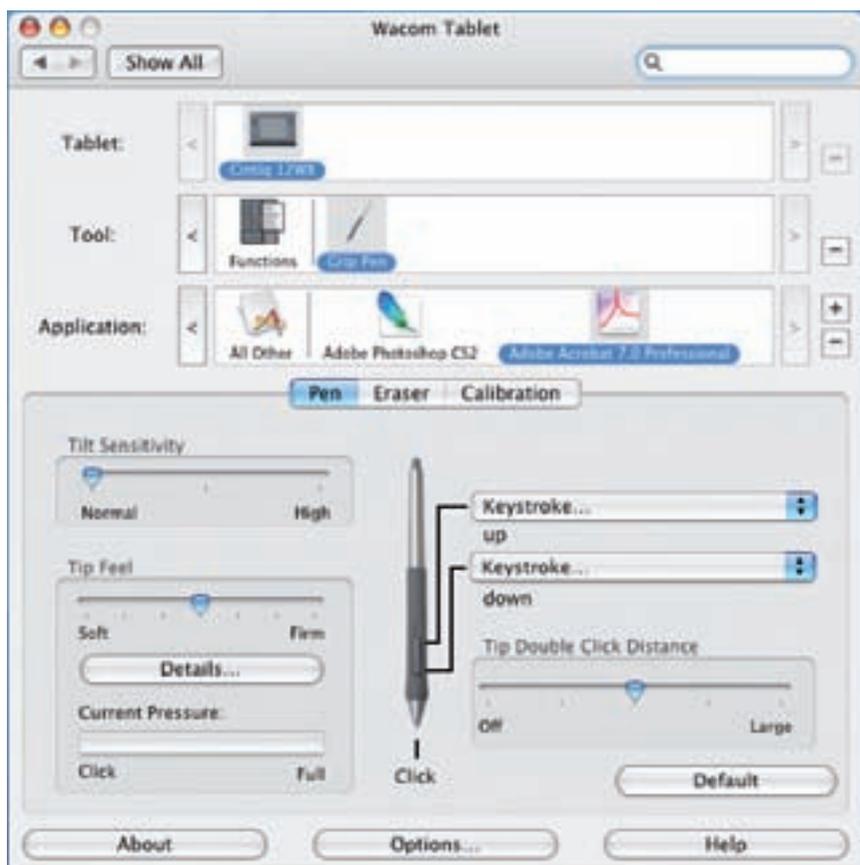
The pen is perhaps the most important piece of any pen tablet. It needs to be comfortable to hold, sensitive and easy to use, all helping to reduce cramps and aches. The Cintiq's standard pen is near perfect; the size and weight of the pen complement each other beautifully. There is a clever eraser positioned on the end, and within the chunky grip there is

a customisable double-sided switch – a natural position to add further functionality to the included pen.

It really is hard to criticise the 12WX, and for many reasons we don't really want to. But unfortunately we did have some niggles with it. While actually using the tablet the only problem we came across was when working near to the edge of the screen, as the cursor was sometimes unresponsive – which was frustrating when trying to enter menus.

We were also disappointed to learn that the Wacom tablet isn't really as portable as advertised. Due to the mass of cables and converter unit, setting up isn't a quick process and carrying the cables around with you isn't much fun, but at least you are working in a more ergonomic manner.

Wacom's Cintiq series of displays are designed to work as an extended desktop together with your computer monitor. This seems to work fine on many desktop PCs and all laptops, but we discovered that you can only 'mirror' the display on iMac G5s, and not extend the desktop, meaning that both displays are the same. As many creative professionals use desktop Macs it's



PEN: The wire and battery-less pen is supremely comfortable to use – in fact it's a design masterpiece when you consider what is packed into it



disappointing news, although it's not a Wacom issue, merely an area that Apple hasn't yet addressed.

When we first picked up the tablet we saw it as an expensive, specialist tool to be used to accomplish delicate tasks such as drawing, painting or finely touching up an image. Of course it does that, but its comfortable design, ease of use and interactivity make the 12WX extremely absorbing. It was developed as if it were a sketchbook – lightweight, flat and manoeuvrable, something you can quickly pick up and have a doodle with or draw a masterpiece – characteristics the Cintiq 12WX has certainly inherited.

You really feel in control of this tablet. The pen sits nicely in your hand, and with high-pressure sensitivity you can easily draw and get the same stroke density results you would expect from a traditional brush or pencil.

Representing excellent value for money, the Cintiq 12WX will suit many people, especially those who want the same features, accuracy, sensitivity and quality of the 21UX without the vast workspace. If you have around £800 to splash out on a new gadget, this should definitely be near the top of your list. ■

Specifications

Manufacturer: Wacom
Web: www.wacom.com
Price: £830
Spec: 12.1" diagonal screen size
LCD screen with WXGA resolution (1,280 x 800)
Adjustable display stand
Cordless, battery-free grip pen and stand
Replacement nibs (1 stroke nib, 1 felt nib, 3 standard nibs)
Pressure levels of 1,024
Apple Mac OS X 10.3.9 or higher
Microsoft Windows 2000, XP, Vista

Summary: This tablet will be a popular choice for anyone with restricted space or budget. Disappointingly, the extended desktop is not compatible with desktop-based Macs.

Rating: **4/5**

Similar products

Wacom Cintiq 21UX

Manufacturer: Wacom
Web: www.wacom.com
Price: £1,800
Spec: 21.3" diagonal screen size
LCD screen with UXGA resolution (1,600 x 1,200)
Adjustable display stand
Cordless, battery-free grip pen and stand
Replacement nibs (1 stroke nib, 1 felt nib, 3 standard nibs)
Pressure levels of 1,024
Apple Mac OS X 10.2.x
Microsoft Windows 2000, XP

If you have the money then why not splash out on the bigger brother of the 12WX — the 21UX — Wacom's first interactive pen display. The extra screen space can be a real benefit when you're designing. The Wacom Cintiq 21UX is another masterstroke from Wacom, offering not just another top-performing market alternative, but also a truly intuitive product that gives users further advanced options with heightened navigation, control and comfort. Makes creation a digital dream.



Rating: **5/5**

Symposium ID350 interactive pen display

Manufacturer: Symposium
Web: www2.smarttech.com
Price: £1,410 (www.pcwb.com)
Spec: 15" interactive screen
Battery-free tethered pen
Pen-tool and function buttons
Function buttons
On-screen display buttons
Adjustable tilt stand
VESA mounting plate
USD computer hook-up
RGB video

This is a product for those that want effortless presentation. You can write over slides in digital ink, save your notes, access any website or multimedia files and project your work onto a large screen. You can also touch the screen with your finger to navigate the interface menus of your room-control system. Better with software such as Windows versions of Microsoft PowerPoint and Word. More of a business product than a design device, however.



Rating: **3/5**

Color Management

A Comprehensive Guide for Designers

Manufacturer: Rotovision

Web: www.rotovision.com

Price: £22.50/\$43.90

Spec: 224 full-colour, fully annotated pages
10,000-hue swatch system on free CD

Technical issues relevant in communicating colour in 2D/3D environments

Aesthetically pleasing presentation of page and image

Bright, bold and vibrant, Rotovision's *Color Management* title is a real visual delicacy. This book grasps an impressive creative capacity when presenting all subjects, with an easy-to-follow layout.

However, at times, what a title makes up for, it lacks in other essential areas. So does the aesthetics of this title dissuade readers from the issue of education? Well, no, actually. This is a title that aims to evolve education in a progressive and digestible fashion, so even the most enthusiastic or unaware are made aware of the true value and effect of colour management in all composition.

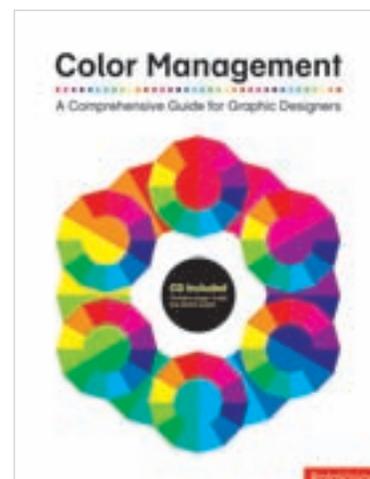
With seven chapters split over 224 full-colour pages, *Color Management* starts from the top, presenting the language of colour and its physiological effects. Other essential topics present are the additive colour theory and its varying theories and sciences behind colour legibility, forms



and functions of the colour wheel – relating each theory's set of colour primaries – and behavioural effects and attributes of colour.

Such subjects, at first thought, may seem daunting. However, what starts as a fun approach, turns into a riveting read and ultimately a profound edifying experience. It is this discovery, of the true capacity of colour within creation, which will surely hold a reader's attention. Essentially, this title will provide you with the terminologies and knowledge that will act as a building block to evolve understanding.

Apprehension may set many readers back when faced with reading *Color Management*, but through intrigue, and with each page coupled with clearly defined annotated references, learning becomes less daunting and more content. Also, the book comes with a CD, offering consumers a 10,000-hue swatch system, all for the handsome sum of £22.50. ■



FULL OF COLOUR: No colour goes unattended. Even the colours used to decorate the pages are referenced in corner-page Pantone swatches

Summary: A truly attractive textbook that not only provides insight, education and great aesthetic appeal, but also a cost-effective product within its included hue swatch CD. A real one-stop resource for colour all enthusiasts.

Rating: **5/5**

Adobe Photoshop Elements 6

No need to worry about the element of surprise with this creative resource

Manufacturer: Focal Press

Web: www.focalpress.com

Price: £22.99/\$39.95

Spec: Full-colour easy to follow step-by-step tutorials
CD containing video tutorials
Supplemental website
CD/book provides visual guide to key features

Adobe *Photoshop Elements 6* presents a title that not only teaches fundamental techniques, but prides itself on providing readers with the means to employ them practically.

A creatively concerned resource, this latest Focal Press release promises to benefit 'both seasoned pros and new users' alike.

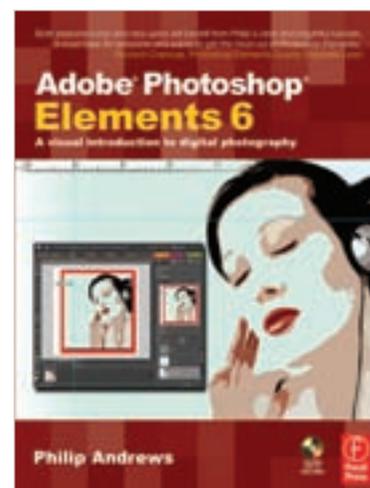
Like many of Focal Press's latest releases, this title provides consumers with precise and practical tutorials to test their technique and to develop the proficiency of their skill, through the book itself and accompanying CD. At first glance this title seems a little jam-packed with objectives, but techniques are easily distinguished with annotations and boxouts, coherent through the popular means of colour coding.

Each tutorial reveals a way to optimise workflow using Elements 6-specific options. Consumers can familiarise with the new features of Elements 6 even before approaching tutorials, introduced to the latest interface and navigation. They can then indulge in the book's more proactive sections such as Hands On Techniques, Photo Projects and Photomerge Stitching.

Tutorials include essentials such as balancing image size and picture quality, and processing with Elements 6 and Adobe Camera Raw, through to more fun, creative tasks like photomerging faces and creating albums and scrapbooks with the revamped photo-layout features.

This title may seem specific, but is in no way exclusive to photographers. It also provides techniques that can be assumed and applied in different methods, such as understanding the fundamentals of producing imagery for web and print.

For consumers that feel this title isn't sophisticated enough, consider investing in Focal Press's *Adobe Photoshop Elements 6 Maximum Performance*. This book, presented by international freelance photographer Mark Galer, unleashes hidden performances, essentially revealing the most powerful post-production editing techniques, all for £19.99/\$39.08. ■



PROFESSIONAL ADVICE: Get one-on-one training from professional photographer, best-selling international author and alpha tester Philip Andrews with this title's accompanying tutorial CD

Summary: Obviously a step up from the previous instalment, *Adobe Photoshop Elements 6* provides readers with an all-inclusive read, learning essential working practices.

Rating: **4/5**

Squares, Checks, and Grids

Check out this creative resource that really isn't as square as you may think

Manufacturer: Rotovision
Web: www.rotovision.com
Price: £15/\$21.66
Spec: 256 pages of full-colour images
Five informative sections
Fashion, architecture, contemporary aesthetics and more are addressed
Provides historical and educational information
Images accompanied with clearly defined annotations



Squares, Checks, and Grids seems a bare title. After all, why would most readers want to study a volume about the simple square, you may well ask?

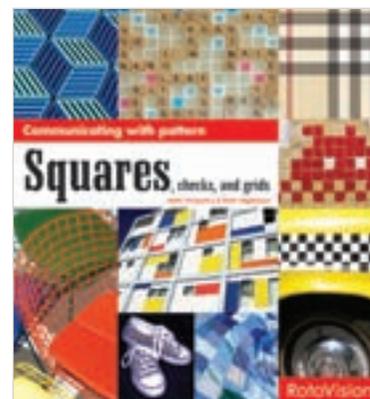
This third and latest instalment from Rotovision's successful *Communicating With Patterns* series, sets out explaining the interesting language and visual patterns that squares, grids and checks present in society on a daily basis. It offers five informative sections that not only present inspiring visual examples, but also an educational resource of creative sciences and intriguing historical morsels. From the first appearance of the tartan pattern to the style rituals of Burberry and Argyle, there is something to inform and inspire all creatives, from graphic designers to fashion enthusiasts.

These sections, including Classic Checks, Membership and Identity, Themes and Mood, Signals and Information and

Form and Function, relate profound topics regarding modern architecture, retro interior design, the proficiency of pixels, even addressing the iconography of the Rubik's Cube. This title is a real visual homage to all things four-sided.

We'd have to agree that this title is an inspirational graphical collection and an unrivalled source of creative inspiration, but only as there aren't that many titles specialising in squares. However, that does go some way to reflect the innovation of what first appears as a modest title.

The one major reservation in this book seems only to be on an aesthetic level. Yes, it does serve wonderful full-colour images of a plethora of artistic delights, but we feel that the page layouts seemed laboured at times. Presented all in framed format, in accordance with its theme, pages became derivative as the read progressed. ■



NOT SO SQUARE: We agree that this title does supply an attractive source book of pattern ideas to suite designers across the spectrum of disciplines

Summary: For £15 there are probably more aesthetically pleasing titles on the market, but this is a great specialist keepsake for fans of the cube, offering an informative and attractive read.

Rating: **3/5**

Digital Character Painting Using Photoshop CS3

Add a bit of character to your composition using this fun tutelage title

Manufacturer: Charles River Media
Web: www.charlesriver.com
Price: £25.66/\$49.99
Spec: Step-by-step full-colour tutorial
Essential topics including eyes, hair, face and fabric creation
Tutoring in traditional and digital skills
Basic principles for improving traditional techniques
Accompanying resource CD

Digital Character Painting Using Photoshop CS3 is a title that at first glance seems an attractive proposition.

With its eye-catching cover it entices readers with the promise of entertainment. However, upon closer inspection, its interior fails to inspire. With a standard layout approach, the provided examples for learning seem less rousing than first imagined.

However, this doesn't really diminish the amount of fun and reward that readers will get. After all, we all need to walk before we can run, so they say, and with this in mind it becomes apparent that *Digital Character Painting* is a title for enthusiasts. Well presented and coherent, each section provides an informative approach to each and every task.

Illustrated with full-colour working examples, clearly annotated and related in the text, all essential applications are made apparent. This provides the means to master technique and build a foundation for more adventurous creative ventures. Consumers can experience teachings in how to successfully blend edges and colour, understand and create specific lighting effects and then employ these in realising form by creating eyes, faces, hair and fabrics.

Consumers can indulge in projects such as creating a friendly dragon, a dragon's lair, monsters from scratch and painting your own professor image. This really is a title for the fantasy enthusiast. Fun this may seem, but perhaps conservative topics to more adventurous creatives.

However, like all good titles, *Digital Character Painting* is accompanied with a resource CD that allows readers instant self-education in all methods. This is all-inclusive, providing sketches, textures, brushes and gradients offering means to replicate every tutorial.

There are also varied resources that allow readers to initiate their own designs from the skills learnt. All in all a fun set of tutorials provide practical insight into using Photoshop CS3's powerful painting functions, including customisation of brushes to achieve professional outcomes. All in all, this is a book that has a lot for the money. ■



BRUSH UP: This title provides practical ideas and techniques to help all enthusiasts improve their creative projects

Summary: An entertaining title that really does deliver in educating creatives in combining traditional techniques with contemporary digital methods.

Rating: **3/5**