

# KRITA: GET STARTED WITH BRUSH MODES AND LAYERS

You don't have to be an artist to create (almost) credible results from this fantastic drawing application.

### WHY DO THIS?

- Support an excellent free software project
- Unleash your inner artist
- Create your very own Stallman portrait

Don't worry, we're not becoming a magazine about art or drawing. But during the course of writing this month's FAQ on Krita (see page 38), we learnt quite a bit about how to work with this fantastic application. And we did this by attempting to draw Richard Stallman without any prior artistic knowledge and using just a mouse. We think this highlights some of the excellent drawing modes and tools in Krita, but most of all, the fun you can have messing around for a few hours. You might even find some artistic ability you never knew you had. Even if you don't, it certainly helps take your mind off programming and PulseAudio if things are getting a little stressful.

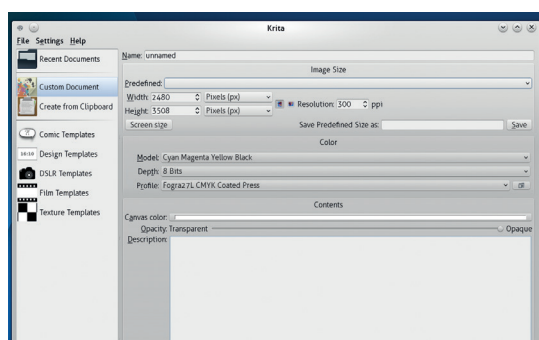


## Step by step: Create with Krita

### 1 Create the canvas

We're using Krita 2.8, which you should find in your distribution's repository – either as a standalone application or as part of KDE's Calligra suite. When you first launch the application, a dialog appears asking you to create a document. This is where you need to define the resolution and aspect ratio of the end result, as well as the colour mode.

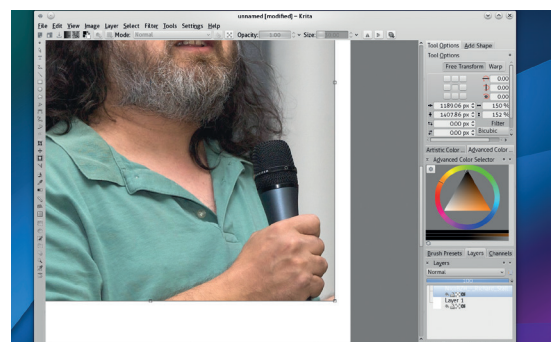
After clicking on Create, the main window will appear. The Docker panels that are attached to the right-hand border can be moved and dropped onto one another, and enabled and disabled from the Settings > Dockers window. Depending on the capabilities of your graphics hardware, we'd also highly recommend using OpenGL hardware acceleration for the canvas. This can be enabled by selecting Settings > Configure Krita, clicking on the Display page and the OpenGL box. This will speed up nearly all drawing operations.



### 2 Find your base image

We're going to copy both the colour palette and the overall image from a photo. We took ours from Wikimedia – it was taken by NicoBZH and released under a Creative Commons licence. You need to import your photo into a new layer. Krita's layers are identical to those you find in many art programs, and they enable you to draw one layer on top of another layer, or for layers to process another layer while allowing transparent areas to show through.

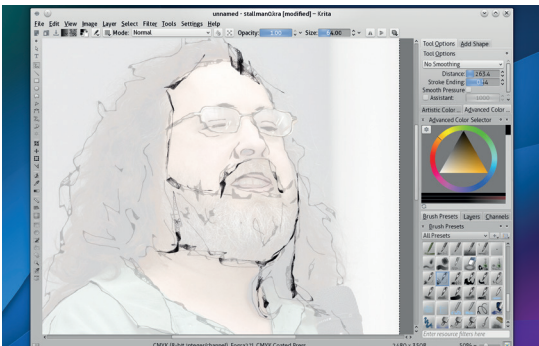
Krita enables you to import an image as a new layer by selecting Layer > New > Import Layer. But after doing this, there will be a disparity between your image size and the size and resolution of your canvas. To solve this, we need to scale the layer, and the easiest way to do this is using the Transform tool over on the left. With this selected you can Shift+drag one corner of the image to fill the largest area of your canvas (holding Shift keeps the proportions intact).



### 3 Experiment with brush models

We're going to do our drawing on a layer above the photo. Just click on the small 'plus' icon in the layer Docker to create one. You also need the default 'white' layer between the photo and our new transparent layer. Layers can be dragged and dropped to change their order, and you can switch between making them visible by clicking on the small 'eye' icon to the right of a layer's thumbnail. You should also change the opacity of the 'white' layer so that you can see through this to the image below. You're going to become very familiar with layer shuffling, visibility checking and opacity changing, because you need to constantly adjust the layer order for each section of the drawing.

The see-through opacity of the white layer creates the digital equivalent to tracing paper, and our first step is to create a sketch of Richard's outline in the transparent layer we just created.



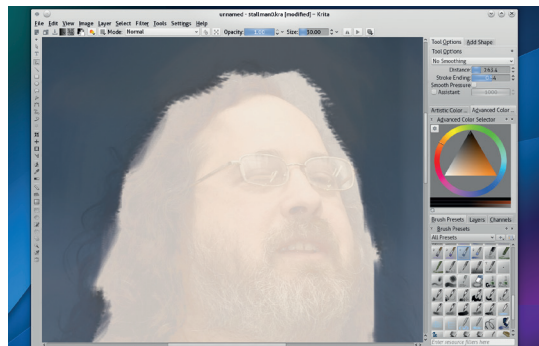
### 4 Add a background

With the sketch of the outlines created, we next wanted to create a background to give the image some context. This is very simple and it allows you to mess around with the 'wet' brush models offered by Krita. These are great fun, because by changing the opacity levels, you can use the brush to paint colours and to merge and blend colours.

To create the background, first switch to the photo and steal a colour from the background. Use the colour picker or press P, and select a colour before switching back to a brush (press B). **Bristles\_wet** is a good brush for this, and using this in broad strokes is a good way of finding a style that works for you. You should also get used to stealing colours from the photo and painting them back into the same approximate locations, because that's how we got the lighting and colours correct in our final image.

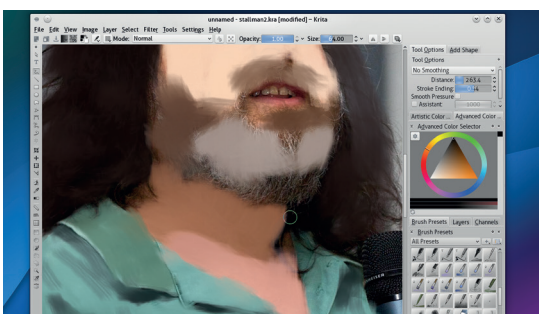
#### LV PRO TIP

You'll want to remember the keyboard shortcuts for changing the brush size – [ and ], as well as the brush's opacity, I and O, as you use these all the time.



### 5 Use only handful of colours

With the background created, add a new transparent layer. We're going to use this for the main body of our drawing. By picking colours from the photo, switching between layers and brushes, and by changing the opacity, you should now attempt broadly paint the main blocks of colour into your image. You might want to do this with the photo layer directly beneath the new layer you created, at least initially. We found the best brushes for this step to be the various **bristles** modes and the **mixover\_dull** brush. It's also important to try to fill in some of the sketch lines with the colours of the shades on the photo. We quickly got used to picking new colours and merging them together and using 100% opacity for the edges with a small brush. As you can see in the screenshots, we didn't get too worried about fine detail as long as we got the thrust of the outline and colours correct.



### 6 Refine your masterpiece

Adding the final detail is a great stress reliever – we found ourselves tinkering around for hours, selecting colours, using the colour palette to darken them, or experimenting with other colours. We also added a light source to the background and added some of the colours from the background into the main image for added interest. The **mixover\_oil** brush is perfect for this, because it changes direction depending on where the mouse is moving, adding colour in a way that feels similar to oil painting. It also enables you to create thin lines when moving in one direction, or a dapple effect for hair when clicking randomly.

When you've finished, your exported image may need a little post processing, because the OpenGL acceleration isn't 100% accurate when it comes to colour reproduction. But we also found the PDF output to be excellent. 