

Digital Art Fundamentals

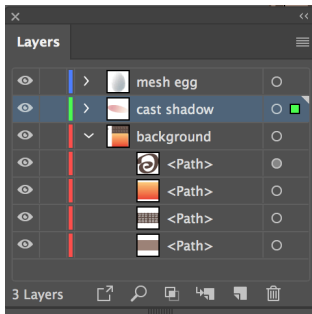
Goal: Use gradients and gradient mesh tool to create highlights and shading.

- Mix and save a new gradient
- apply gradient to a shape
- use gradients for cast shadows
- Use a transparency blending mode
- Use freeform gradient or gradient mesh tool

Tools/techniques:

Gradient panel
Gradient tool
Color panel
Transparency panel
Freeform or Gradient mesh

fig. 1



Working with value: gradients and gradient mesh

Gradients in Illustrator allow you to mix more than one color within a shape. They can be linear or radial blends. They can also include transparency. They can be applied to strokes as well as fill shapes. However, they cannot bend to conform to a more organic or unique shape.

The Freeform gradient (AI 2019+) or the Gradient mesh can be controlled to mix colors in a more sophisticated way to create more naturalistic shading.

1. Set up an .ai file with 3 layers: background/cast shadow/egg (fig. 1)
2. On the top layer, draw an ellipse, then modify it with the direct select (white arrow) to extend the top and flatten the bottom so it looks like an egg. On the bottom layer draw two overlapping rectangles to draw a table surface and a wall behind.
3. Fill the table surface with a gradient you create. Make it have the appearance of light hitting it on the top. Save the new gradient swatch.(fig. 2)
4. Fill the egg shape with 20% black, use the freeform or gradient mesh tool to create a highlight (white) and a shadow (30% black.)
5. Use the ellipse to draw the cast shadow on the shadow layer.
6. Fill the shadow ellipse with a gradient that is slightly darker than your table surface and set the gradient stop to transparent where it is farthest from the egg. Change the gradient blending mode (in the transparency panel) to darken or multiply to make it look like a cast shadow. (fig 3)
7. Draw a little something on your artboard and make it into a pattern with Object-Pattern-Make. In your layers panel, duplicate the sublayer with the bottom rectangle on it, and fill the new rectangle (the one on top) with your pattern. (fig 1)

