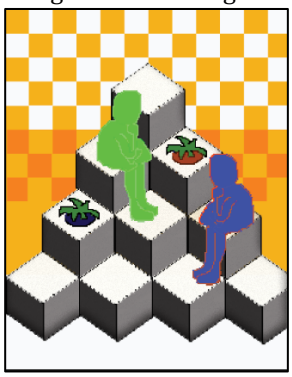
Pixel Art

Bring a bit of nostalgia into your pieces by making 8-bit pixel art

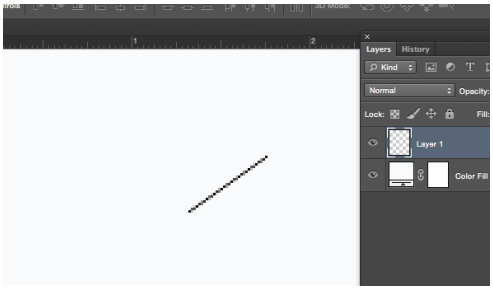


Pixel art has a huge amount of popularity due to its very specific look and feel- mostly amongst nostalgic games fans and those who remember the glory days of the arcade.

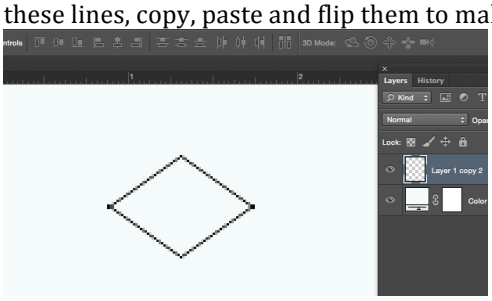
1. As we're making pixel art, we'll be working at an uncomfortably low resolution. We choose 72dpi with an image size of 235x300px. Once the artwork is complete you can, of course, size it up to suit, but we'll be discussing that later on.

2. As we're working at the level of pixels, the last thing you want is blurry anti-aliased lines confusing the image. Using the Options bar, set your Brush tool to Pencil mode and then do the same with the Eraser. Shrink the size of the brush down to one pixel (you can use Cmd+[to do this).

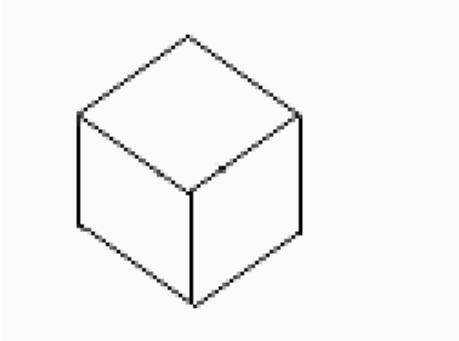
3. For our background, we used repeating cubes to build a Q*bert-style pyramid. Draw a straight line the Pencil (holding Shift will help), then copy and paste the line. Use Edit>Transform to draw a diagonal with even pixel distribution.



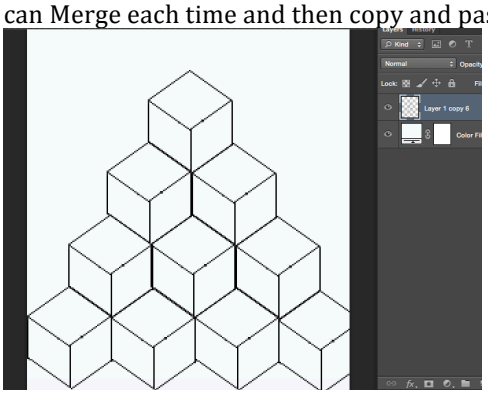
4. Copy and paste the diagonal, and then Transform it horizontally to make the other side of the top of the cube. Merge these lines, copy, paste and flip them to make the top portion, and then Merge them to create a diamond.



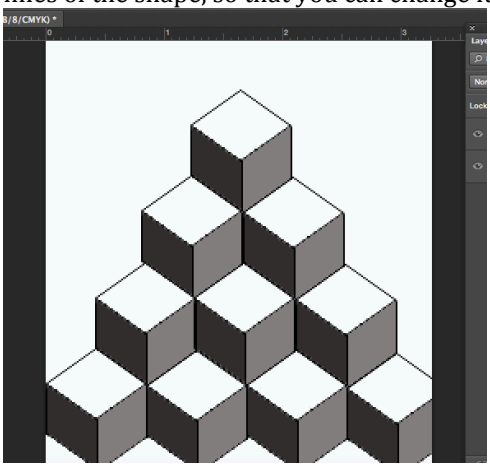
5. Copy your diamond to make the bottom of the shape, then use the Eraser to remove the unnecessary black lines and join up the edges. Now you have a cube, we recommend saving a copy of this layer just incase; even though it's a relatively simple shape, it can be annoying if you need to draw it again.



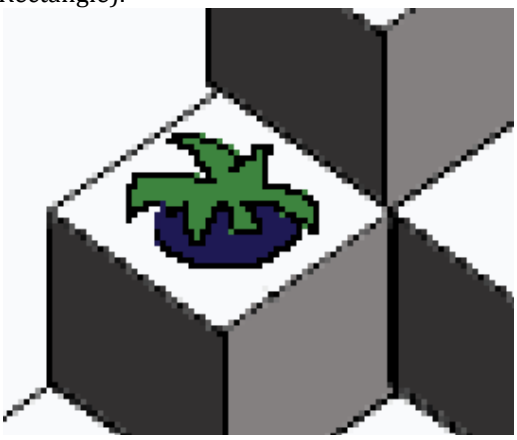
6. Copy the layer and then paste it, positioning the cube so that it tessellates with the original. To speed things up, you can Merge each time and then copy and paste the new cubes for each layer.



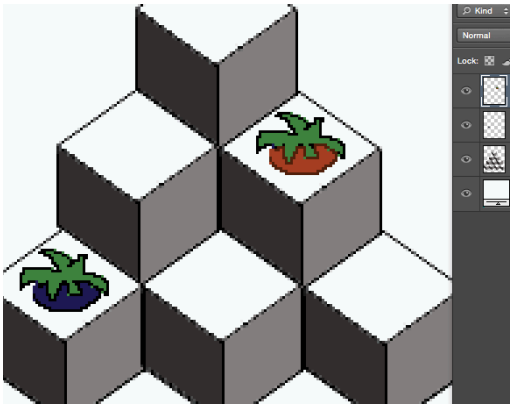
7. Now that you have the pyramid, you can put in some shading. It's a good idea to set the Tolerance of the Paint Bucket tool to 1, as there are no smooth edges in this image. You should fill the spaces with a different color to the lines of the shape, so that you can change it later.



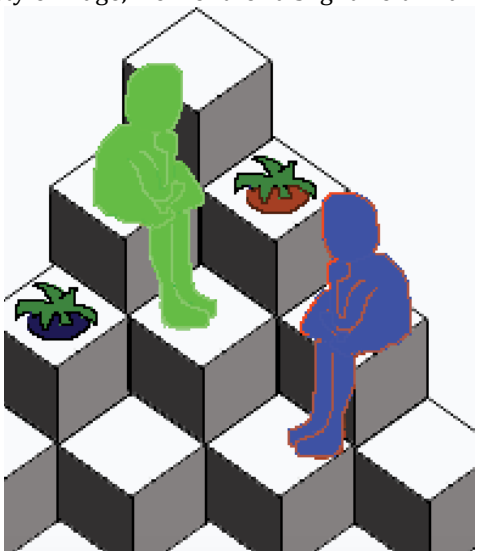
8. In a new layer, draw a simple object on top of one of the steps. We choose to draw a plant freehand, but if you have the time then it is probably worth using the line tool in various other shapes (found in the Tool window under Rectangle).



9. To fill scene with minimal effort, copy and paste the completed layer and then adjust it's hue or fill it with different colors. We did this too create three iterations of each drawing inside the scene.



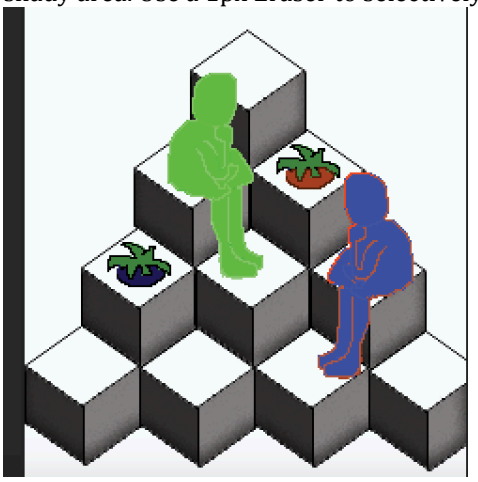
10. In a new layer, using a different color, it's definitely worth putting in some figures. As the image is an 8-bit, late-80s style image, we went for a slight Keith Haring influence.



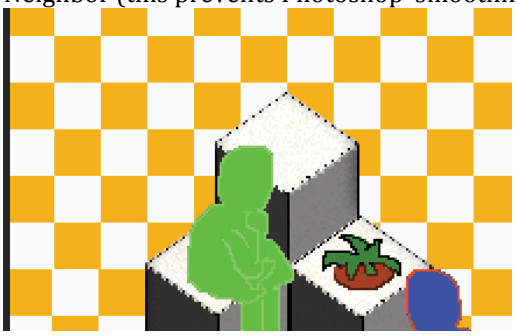
11. Make sure that when you're duplicating he objects, the color of the outline and the fill color compliment each other. To change the outline color, use the Magic Wand with all the boxes unchecked in the Options bar and then select the outline.

12. As you draw the objects, start thinking about things that would work with each other. In our piece, we populated the image with surreal, colorful things that might accompany the figures. Play around with hues to see what works for you.

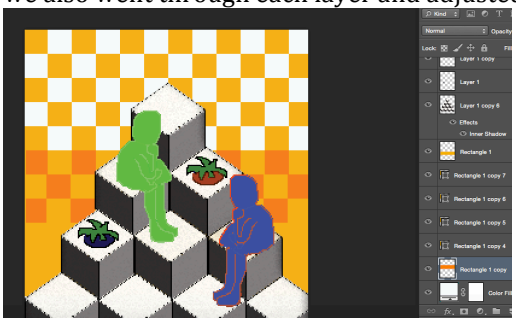
13. Use the Magic Wand to select the color you want to shade. Then, in a new layer, draw with a darker color in the shady area. Use a 1px Eraser to selectively erase a checkered-board pattern, dithering out to the edge.



14. We used the scaled-up version of the pixel shading for the background, copying and pasting several times to add to the depth of the color. Remember, if you do Transform anything, make sure that the Interpolation is set to Nearest Neighbor (this prevents Photoshop 'smoothing' the edges).



15. We use some semi-transparent color layers in order to give our background the tint that we were looking for, and we also went through each layer and adjusted the colors of the lines and fills to make everything match.



16. Now head to Image>Image Size and scale it up, making sure that Resample Image is set to Nearest Neighbor. We just added a '0' to the end of each pixel amount. If you want to check the print size, set it to 300dpi with Resample Image unchecked.

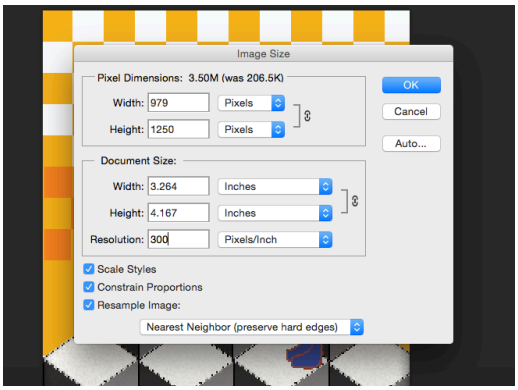


Image Size
Pixel Dimensions: 3.50M (was 206.5K)
Width: 979 Pixels
Height: 1250 Pixels
OK
Cancel
Auto...
Document Size:
Width: 3.264 Inches
Height: 4.167 Inches
Resolution: 300 Pixels/Inch
Scale Styles
Constrain Proportions
Resample Image:
Nearest Neighbor (preserve hard edges)