

AKVIS-Coloriage Plug-in

by Anna Lee HORTON - IBM PC USER'S GROUP OF REDDING

Coloriage by **Akvis** is a plug-in for photo-editing programs such as **Adobe Photoshop** or **Elements**, **Corel Photo-Paint**, and **Jasc Paint Shop Pro**. This plug-in allows you to color a black and white photo or change colors in a colored picture. It's a great tool to experiment with in designing and decorating. You can look at how a room or house would look in different colors and compare. It's nice to be able to take those old family pictures and color them. I used the **Coloriage** plug-in with **Microsoft's Digital Image 9 Suite** and in **Adobe Elements**.

Akvis has an excellent help section on the web. If you click on the question mark on the right side of the tool bar when you are in the program, it will take you to their website. Under About Programs, select Working Area and the tools will be explained. Then select How It Works and you get step by step instructions on how the plug-in works. The instructions are very easy to follow.

What is nice is that the shading, brightness and tonal quality of the original picture are retained when you choose a color for an object in the picture. This makes the picture look natural. So it is important to correct flaws in old pictures of "Aunt Hattie" or great grandma and take out any scratches, fold marks or do general "repair" before you color the picture. Select your color selections with the original shades and brightness in mind since you cannot change a dark color to a lighter color and visa versa from the original picture.

Once I had the **Coloriage** file in one program's plug-in folder, I copied it and put it into my other photo-editing software's plug-in folder. When a picture is opened in **Adobe Elements**, go to the Filter menu and select **Akvis** and click on **Coloriage**. It will launch the plug in. In **Microsoft Digital Image 9** to go the Effects menu, select Plug-in Filters and then click on Launch Plug-in Filter.

The **Akvis Coloriage** window has an image window with two tabs above it—a Before and After. In the Before tab, you see the original photo where you put the colors within objects in the picture using the Pencil tool. The tools for coloring are in the toolbar above the **Coloriage** window. The After tab shows the results. On the far right side of the window are the Navigator, Color Library and the Colors Palette. When you left click a color the selected color will show in the square on the right in the Colors Palette. The gradient line above the Colors Palette shows the gradients for that color. Select what gradient you want (the eye dropper will show) and use the pencil tool to outline within the boundary of the object you wish to color. If you are inside and object where there are details that will be painted in other colors, outline them with the main color of the object. As an example, outline a face with the color of the skin and then draw a closed line around the eyes and mouth in the same color so that the color of the eyes and lips won't bleed into main area.

The Colors Library is a neat feature. It has under the heading, Peoples, color selections for different skins with gradients in each sub set of colors-- the same for hair and lip colors. The Color Library is divided into groups and contains colors that are hard to pick

such a grass, trees, stone, bricks, water and leaves. Each group has color selections with gradients within that color. It is a very versatile and useful feature.

In the tool bar you have various tools to use--- an Eraser tool, a Keep-Color Pencil, an Eyedropper which lets you select a color already painted or select another color from the color palette, a Tube tool to change color of drawn strokes and a Magic Tube tool that lets you change the color of all strokes having the same color. There are Save-Stroke and Load-Strokes buttons on the tool bar. These tools are real time savers when you want to be able to work on an image another day.

After you finish defining your color outlines, click on the button that looks like a greater-than symbol (next to the eyedropper) to start the colorization process. This may take a few minutes. The result is shown in the After tab. If you are satisfied with the colored image, click the button with the check mark on the right side of the tool bar and the changes made are applied to the original picture and the **Akvis Coloriage** window closes.

I experimented with a sepia colored portrait of my mother's high school graduation. I changed the background and the color of her dress several times. She wore a string of pearls and when I changed the color of her dress, the pearls picked up the same color. This is where the Keep-Color Pencil was useful. For coloring the pearls a smaller Pencil "brush" size was required and this was accomplished by using the slider in the Navigator. When the scale of the image is made larger (magnified), the smaller the "brush" size becomes making it easier to define smaller color strokes. When the image is made smaller, the Pencil "brush" becomes larger and makes larger color strokes.

I also colored a group picture with trees, lawn, fences and a building. Many objects had to be outlined and many colors were required. The Color Library with its many sub-choices of tree, leaves and grass colors was just the ticket. I took a picture of my house and changed the roof and wall colors and experimented with different combinations of color. A great thing should I decide to paint my house. I had fun with a picture of a friend and gave her different color lipstick, eye color and hair color. Purple and green hair and blue lipstick is good for a laugh.

You can download the Akvis Coloriage plug-in for a 10 day free trial at

<http://akvis.com/en/coloriage/index.php>

Tutorials can be found on <http://akvis.com/en/coloriage-tutorial/index.php>

After the evaluation period a registration key is required. The price of Coloriage is \$97.

System requirements are:

Pentium III minimum

256 Ram minimum

15 MB free space on hard drive

Installed photo editor supporting plug-ins