

Piranesi 2010 Pro 3D Painting

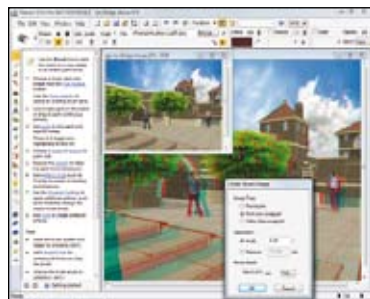
3D output and 64-bit support, but it's the new layer-based handling that adds most to Piranesi's creative power

In a world of me-too software, Piranesi 2010 Pro really stands out: whereas other bitmap editors deal with fundamentally flat pictures, Piranesi's EPix images contain depth information. It's a simple difference that leads to some extraordinary creative power.

To unlock this power you need to have an EPix image to work with. Most of the main professional 3D apps – such as 3ds Max, LightWave, Cinema 4D and Vue – can directly render to the EPix format. For 3D applications that can't output directly, Informatix (the company behind Piranesi) provides Vedute 2010, which lets you import models in an extended range of formats – including 3ds, fbx, dwg and dxf – and set up your view and lighting ready for export. Significantly, Informatix also now provides an export plugin for the free version of Google SketchUp, which means anyone can develop 3D ideas in SketchUp that they can then bring to creative life in Piranesi.

Once you've loaded your EPix bitmap into Piranesi, you can work on it. The main tool options are handled via the context-sensitive Properties bar where you control the paint or effect to apply. The handy new colour sampler tool lets you quickly pick up colours from the current image. More advanced control is offered via a range of floating panels.

Despite its new branding, the



You can now quickly prepare anaglyph images for viewing in eye-popping 3D.

Piranesi 2010 interface is showing its age – "Piranesi 1995" would have been more appropriate. However, as you explore Piranesi, the advantages of its 3D handling become apparent.

For starters, you can vary the size and angle of your brush according to the underlying surface, which means you can lock tools to underlying materials, planes and orientations.

Even more impressively, Piranesi provides a wide range of seamless textures in categories such as walls and flooring. The option to automatically wrap textures to surfaces means you can quickly turn a simple unformatted plan into a fully realised, near photo-realistic rendering. The Clone capability, meanwhile, allows you to pick up existing textures from the image and accurately apply them to other surfaces.



← Piranesi 2010 Pro adds impressive layer-based management to its existing cut-out system.

3D PAINTING

PRICE
£449 (£528 inc VAT)

UPGRADE
From £179 (£210 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER
Via Piranesi website

INTERNET
www.piranesi.co.uk

Piranesi's Cutout tool takes things one step further, enabling the import and placement of bitmap files and 3D models to populate a scene, complete with shadows. As well as a range of ready-to-use cut-outs, it even lets you download models from SketchUp's 3D Warehouse, automatically resizing and masking the cut-outs, depending on where you place them.

Using cut-outs lets you quickly turn your images into 3D photomontages, and this ability has been enhanced in 2010 Pro with the addition of support for layers. The new Layer Manager allows layers to be created, reordered, deleted, duplicated, hidden and merged; the blend mode and opacity can be adjusted too. Working like this you can non-destructively build up your image from separate layers: one each for shadows, outlines, textures and cut-outs, for example.

This sort of layer handling will be familiar to users of traditional bitmap editors such as Photoshop, but Piranesi adds its own creative twist. Rather than limiting you to working with pixels on the currently selected layer, it treats each new layer as the sum of all visible underlying layers. This means, once you've built up your core image, you can then quickly explore radically different artistic variations of it. The use of layers does add greatly to memory requirements, however, so Piranesi 2010 Pro adds 64-bit support.

Piranesi 2010 Pro adds one more major advance: support for 3D output. To create the 3D illusion, you need to split your image into stereo channels representing the different views of a scene that each eye would see. Since the EPix image contains depth information, Piranesi is ideal for this and lets you experiment with settings such as angle and focus depth to achieve the best results.

For some users this new capability might seem little more than a gimmick, but for others the ability to quickly convert their 3D renders for true 3D viewing will be reason enough to buy Piranesi 2010 Pro. It's a good example of how Piranesi's unique approach unlocks unique power. **TOM ARAH**

EASE OF USE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★☆☆
OVERALL	★★★★☆

REQUIREMENTS
Windows 7/Vista/XP