Moleskine’s new smart notebook vectorizes lines in Adobe Illustrator in real time

Adobe and Moleskine have teamed up again to launch the Creative Cloud Connected Moleskine Paper Tablet, which turns hand-drawn sketches into vectors in Illustrator in real time. The Creative Cloud notebook is the latest addition to Moleskine’s Smart Writing System, which works with the standalone Pen+ Ellipse to track what’s being drawn on the pages. The idea is that it’ll eliminate the extra steps artists have to take between sketching out their ideas on paper and getting to the finished digital product.

To get started, you need to download the Moleskine+ for Adobe Illustrator extension, which adds an option in Illustrator’s Windows tab to connect the pen. You don’t necessarily need to have Illustrator open while you’re working (as fun as it is to watch pen strokes showing up on the screen in real time). With the Pen+ Ellipse connected to the companion Moleskine Notes app on or Android, you can sketch away from the desktop, and save your pages as an image, PDF, text, or an SVG file, which you can open up in Illustrator or Photoshop at a later time.

Photo by James Bareham / The Verge

Adobe and Moleskine’s first collaboration was the , launched four years ago. The companion scanning app could be used to take photos of drawings on the Moleskine notebook, but in my testing, I found that it worked well with regular paper as well. The app automatically fixes the contrast and brightness to vectorize images, which can then be saved to your Creative

Cloud or sent to Illustrator. The new Creative Cloud Smart Notebook saves the step of having to take a photo, and the lines appear automatically in Illustrator.

Still, it’s hard to say whether the notebook is going to fill a niche. There are already apps like that automatically vectorize strokes drawn on a tablet, and it’s definitely not hard for artists to take a photo of or scan their hand-drawn sketches before working on it digitally. Illustrator even has an Image Trace feature that lets artists turn images into vectors, which is a much cheaper option than the $180 pen and $35 notebook combo. Alternatively, you could just use the free Moleskine for Creative Cloud app to get your sketch into Illustrator, as it actually works quite well.



Photo by James Bareham / The Verge

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In addition to Creative Cloud connectivity, you can also use the notebook like you would with Moleskine’s other smart writing sets to digitize notes and transcribe text. The Creative Cloud notebook just costs an extra $5 over the regular smart notebooks, so it’s worth a try if you already own a Pen+ Ellipse and need a new notebook.

My one issue with the Moleskine line of smart notebooks, besides the price, has always been the ballpoint pen. The Pen+ Ellipse is certainly not my choice of drawing tool, and I wish Moleskine had other options like smart pencils or markers.

Other analog-to-digital options like the iSKN Slate let artists slide a magnetic ring over their own art supplies, which is a start.

All criticisms aside, it is pretty magical to watch pen drawings on paper show up on real Adobe software. It works fairly well, and strokes are replicated instantly and accurately. The Creative Cloud Connected Moleskine Paper Tablet is available now in stores and on for $34.95, and it requires the separate $179 to work. You can read detailed instructions on how to set up the process on Adobe’s blog here.

https://www.theverge.com/2019/3/19/18267593/moleskine-paper-tablet-adobe-creative-cloud-connected-illustrator