

21 December 2006

By: Mihai Marinof, Linux Editor

[Krita Review](#)



Painting and image editing software.

Did you know that for each piece of Windows software, there's an alternative for Linux? Well, at least for most of them. Krita, part of KOffice, is an image manipulation software that could be considered an alternative for Photoshop. Unfortunately, even if it tries really hard, it still has a very long way to go until it will reach Photoshop's level of performance. But this doesn't mean that it should be ignored until then, not at all. At the moment, Krita allows you to pretty much do whatever you want to with images, from photo retouching and image editing to creating original art using Krita's tools (paint, brushes, pencils, pen and ink). Krita can be obtained either from your distribution's repositories or by downloading and compiling the KOffice source packages. When Krita is launched for the first time, a new document window pops up, which offers several templates to choose from, such as a Grayscale, CMYK or RGB document of various sizes. You can also opt for a custom document, which allows you to select a custom image size and color mode. **Interface** If you have worked with Photoshop, you'll notice that its interface is rather identical to Krita's. The left part of the main window is reserved for the toolbar, which consists of painting, selecting or editing tools. The upper part for menus, toolbar and a brush selector, while the right part for layer and options palettes. The center section is reserved for showing the image you're currently working on. Similar to many other KDE applications, Krita's menus are a combination of KDE or KOffice menus with menus particular to Krita. The menu's names are kept just like in any other application: the File menu contains commands for file manipulation, such as new, open, import, print etc. The Edit menu contains commands related to the current selection, the View menu consists of commands that allow you to change the way you look at the image, the Image menu contains commands that enable you to change the entire image such as resize, rotate or shear. The next menu, Layer, offers commands similar to ones found in the Image menu but the difference is that commands in the latter apply to the current layer, while the former ones apply to the image as a whole. Next menu is named Select and allows you to manage selections. The Filter menu consists of commands that apply to the current layer, based on the filter you have installed and also offers adjustment operations for contrast and color balance. The Scripts allows you to execute or manage scripts. The Settings menu which is commonly found in KDE applications allows you to configure toolbars, shortcuts and opens Krita's configuration window. Finally, the Help menu presents various information such as Krita's handbook, its authors and license. Many image manipulation applications have a toolbar in the left part of the main window which offers quick access to various tools, including Krita. You can change various options for most of the tools from the toolbar positioned in the right, once a tool has been selected. Among the tools in the toolbar, you'll probably notice the shape-drawing tools but also the lack of basic drawing tools such as a pencil or airbrush tool. Krita has chosen a different approach for this, compared to other editors: the toolbar allows you to choose the drawing mode which can either be freehand or by using one of the geometric primitives, while the style of drawing is controlled by the brush selector found on the toolbar, in the upper section of the screen. The brush selector consists of four options: airbrush, eraser, brush and pencil. The rest of the tools are pretty self-explanatory. Moreover, Krita uses many of the GIMP's keyboard shortcuts. If you have been using Krita for a while and just upgraded to version 1.6, you'll notice a few changes among its tools, filters and effects. The first tool you'll probably notice is the Bezier curve tool which allows you to create and edit a curve, while the result can be painted with any of the built-in brush tools. The next new and worth mentioning tool is called Magnetic selection which attempts to tighten the outline you draw

around edges recognized in the image. Other new additions include a tool for manipulating the perspective grid and two new options added to the duplicate tool: healing and perspective correction. As for the file filters, Krita now allows importing from and converting to bitmap PDF files. Moreover, some improvements have been added to the png filter so it allows opening big files. A few effect plugins and filters have been added as well: an adjustable blur effect, some color filters, fast color transfer and lens correction effects and also an unsharp mask, layer masks and the ability to add noise.

FeaturesKrita can be extended through plugins, which can be tools, colorspace, paint operations or filters. It can also be extended through Python and Ruby scripts, using Kross, the cross language scripting engine that originated in Kexi. The scripting is compatible with PyQt/KDE and allows adding GUI items, such as dialog boxes. The color modes available in Krita are part of a complete color management system based on lcms. 8, 16 and 32 bit colorspace are available (RGB, CMYK etc), while colors can be selected from a color wheel, rgb or greyscale sliders or with a palette. As for editing and viewing, Krita offers unlimited undo and redo actions, as well as basic editing functions such as cut, copy and paste between layers and images. An interesting feature is that OpenGL is supported for display. Moreover, the main view can either be fullscreen or split, the image can be zoomed, while the palettes can be hidden in one go, pressing Ctrl+Shift+H. Also, a histogram palette is made available. Layers can be added, removed, grouped, locked, make visible or invisible and re-ordered. Images can be mirrored, sheared, rotated and scaled but unfortunately, some transformations tools, such as flipping and shearing, can be applied only to individual layers. Filters available in Krita can be previewed in the filter gallery. Custom brushes can also be created, even from entire layers or images, or by importing the GIMP brush shapes.

Image FormatsKrita supports most of the general image formats, such as PNG, JPEG, TIFF, GIF, BMP and Targa but also can import ICO files, XPM and OpenEXR. It can also import the Photoshop file format (PSD) but only up to version 6. Embedded icc profiles and exif information are preserved while exporting the images to supporting file formats.

The GoodKrita is a free, image creation and manipulation software that allows you to do anything with images through its large number of features. It allows you to create art images using paint and brushes, pencils, pen and ink. Krita is being actively developed so expect important features and improvements with each new released version.

The BadAlthough at its current state, Krita is a quite powerful editing tool, it seems to be more suitable for manipulating images, rather than for creating them.

The TruthKrita's development seems to be heading in the right direction so we shouldn't be surprised if most of the Photoshop users will switch to a better, yet free alternative - Krita. *Check out some screenshots below:*