# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. **Prismacolor Markers**
2. **Dick Blick Studio Markers**
3. **Copic Markers**
4. **Neopiko Deleter Markers**
5. **Tri-Art Markers**
6. **Pitt Brush Pens**
7. **Tombow Brush Pens**
8. **Letraset Tria Markers**
9. **Letraset ProMarkers**
10. **Letraset FlexMarkers**
11. **Chartpak Ad Markers**
12. **Shin Han Touch Markers**
13. **Zig Kurecolor and Twin S Markers**
14. **Pantone Universe Markers**
15. **Marvy Le Plume Permanent Markers**
16. **Alpha Design/ Mepxy Brush Markers**
17. **StyleFile Markers**
18. **Spectrum Noir Markers**
19. **Utrecht Design Markers**
20. **Copic Airbrush System**
21. **Various Marker Replacement Nibs**
22. **Closing Statement from Mark J. Tannacore**

---

All photos in this publication are copyright ©Mark J. Tannacore. Portions of the text contained in this guide may be used provided the source is fully credited.
These are the markers that most people start with. There’s not too much to say about them. They have a decent variety of colors (156 at last count). And honestly, I’ll probably always have some of these, even though I’m trying to move onto higher end markers. They’re very vibrant, and the colors lay down smoothly. They have a broad nib (that flares out a little near the base, so they’re not a typical chisel point). They also have a bullet nib, which is handy for the smaller details (and likely the end you’ll use most). They blend decently, but not great. The biggest fault in these markers is the naming system. There’s no real “organization”, so finding the right blends/gradations can be troublesome with these. And don’t let the names fool you. You may think “Light Cerulean Blue” and “Cerulean Blue” are a great match, but I can tell you, you’ll find much better blends in the differently named colors like “Slate Blue” and “Periwinkle”. The price on average is about 3 dollars a marker. These are alcohol based, and a good start to learning. Dick Blick has their own brand of Studio markers that are direct competitors to Prismacolors, and about 2/3rds the price, so you might want to start there if you’re unsure. Prismacolor now also has a brush tip variety. Sadly, they replace the wonderful broad nib with the brush tip, rather than the more generic bullet tip.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>PROS</strong></th>
<th><strong>CONS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretty much the cheapest graphic markers</td>
<td>Non-refillable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vibrant colors</td>
<td>Blends just “okay”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smooth color laydown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decent color selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique broad nib</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near-Universal availability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Back to Table of Contents
DickBlick is a trusted name in art supplies, and they have a line of their own supplies. The addition of graphic markers to their line is a recent one. These are designed to compete with Prismacolors almost exclusively. The bullet nibs are identical, but the DickBlick markers have a standard chisel tip. Although I haven’t experimented with too many colors, I would say they do seem to blend better than Prismacolors. However there’s a downside to this, as they are one of the smelliest markers I’ve ever encountered (third only to Sharpies and Chartpak markers). There also seems to be something of a quality control issue (I actually got an “antique white” marker that had “antique” coming out one tip, and “antique white” coming out of the other! (those are two separate colors in the DickBlick line). They have a smaller selection of colors as well, with 95 colors compared to Prismacolors 156. The price has also increased a bit recently, so they’re only a little cheaper than Prismacolors (instead of barely 2/3rds the price as they originally were).

**PROS**
- The only professional brand of graphic markers that are cheaper than Prismacolors
- Blend somewhat better than Prismacolors
- Cheap enough to get the entire set easily. Makes for a great starter/learner product

**CONS**
- Non-refillable
- Quality control issues
- Decent selection of colors, but pretty much smaller than any other brand of graphic markers

[Back to Table of Contents]
The Copic Sketch markers have a chisel tip and a brush tip (the wide markers have a super wide chisel tip, the Ciao also have a chisel and brush tip, but are smaller and round, and the originals have a chisel and bullet tip). ALL types of copic markers are refillable, and the nibs are replaceable. They are a high end marker (usually running around 4-6 dollars each), and the refills cost the same as the marker. However, you get *nine* markers worth of refills from one refill. So for the price of 2 markers, you get 10 markers worth (not including nib replacement). These markers blend like nobody’s business, too. You can blend light to dark, or dark to light. What I like best about the blending is, you can add color to the shadow tones. It’s just the way the ink works with them, the lighter color can displace the darker tone just enough to add color to the shade, but not muddy it up. The brush tip has a nice amount of give, but it’s still strong (so you get great control over them). This is a Japanese made marker, and it really is tops. The organization system is decent. Not the best, but not horrible. Again, each color gets a letter/name, and a number. However the numbers don’t quite go in tonal succession. Granted the values are close numerically, so you don’t have to go nuts trying to find a good shade to blend with (just look within a few numbers, higher or lower), but there are some that seem to change abruptly (a suddenly significantly darker shade than the color before or after it, numerically in the order). The biggest downside is the initial financial layout (nothing says you have to get the marker AND the refill all at once, you can hold onto the markers until you can get the refill, plus they do have empty markers that you can actually create your own colors with). I highly recommend these.

**PROS**

- Ink is refillable
- Nibs are replaceable
- Good variety of nibs
- Marker quality is superb, even with non-copic ink
- They blend excellently
- HUGE selection of colors (over 300 in the Copic sketch markers)

**CONS**

- The most expensive professional graphic marker
- Not really a good “starter brand” due to the cost
- Organizational system can be confusing

[Back to Table of Contents]
Another Japanese made marker, and contrary to what some retailers would like you to believe, these are NOT designed to be direct competitors to Copics. Although I’m fairly certain Trias are not big in Japan, these would basically be in between Prismacolors and Trias. They are similar in size, shape and design to the Copic Ciao’s (round, chisel tip and brush tip). They clock in (price wise) at just a bit more than Prismacolors. I have heard that they are refillable, but I haven’t seen any place actually selling the refills, nor have I seen any replacement nibs.. They aren’t horrible, but take a little getting used to. For smooth color laydown, you pretty much MUST use the chisel tip. The brush tip is more flexible than the Copic brush tips, and you can get some nice painterly effect with it (makes for good blendable shading, but you need a solid base underneath it, because the brush tip doesn’t cover larger areas well). Store these on their sides, because you will be using both ends interchangeably. They are harder to get in the US, but I would recommend these. They blend better than Prismacolors, IMO, and really aren’t that bad (if you remind yourself that they are not meant to compete with Copics). And the price is pretty good, even for imported markers.

**PROS**

- Refillable
- They blend decently
- Good starter set due to refillability, price, and introduction to a brush tip
- 144 colors (good for a starter set up)

**CONS**

- Hard to find
- Brush tip not resistant enough (making it tricky to use)
(I’m reposting this blurb from an email I sent to the retailer, they asked me to give an assessment of the markers):
“The biggest problem is that they're long. They have three sections. A brush, broad, and a fine/bullet tip. Only thing is, each section is like a third of the marker, so unless you're using the broad tip, the marker itself is easily a couple of inches longer than a copic or any other marker. This makes it a tad unwieldy. The color itself doesn't lay down too badly, but I have yet to test the full blendability of these markers. Triart markers are refillable, and made to be direct competitors to the copics (as opposed to the DickBlick markers which are targeting prismacolors). I'd say you get the same value from them as you do Copics (1 marker + 1 refill = cost of 2 markers, but you get about 9 markers worth out of them), only they are a little cheaper (about 6 dollar layout as opposed to 8-10). Only thing is, the tips do wear down, so you'll have to take that potential cost into account as well.”
These are another Japanese marker, and they ARE a direct competitor to Copics, so take what you will of the review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refillable</td>
<td>Size makes them unwieldy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nibs are replaceable</td>
<td>Like the Neopiko markers, suffers from flimsy brush tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ink quality is good</td>
<td>Small reservoir means more refilling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Back to Table of Contents
These are also water based, and the same style as the black brush pens that Pitt basically made the brush pen market viable several years back. They really don’t blend well, but they’re *great* for small details. Unfortunately, the price has been going up on these for the past year and a half. They started at just over a dollar each, now they’re closer to 2 bucks apiece. They are European in make (Faber-Castell is based in Germany, I believe) and the prices started going up with gas and import fees increasing (at least, that’s what I was lead to believe). They have only 48 colors, and honestly I’d only recommend these if you’re going to buy the set. They’re not really that worthwhile just buying a few markers here and there, as they can’t cover larger areas well. Some people recommend them for using manual color holds (ie colored outlines instead of a normal black outline), and while I agree, again, I say get the set, because you don’t know what color you’re going to need when for just such a thing. If you do color larger areas, they have a grainy texture to them, seemingly despite whatever paper stock you’re coloring on. The tips are pretty good, too. The Big Brush version is identical to the regular version. It has a slightly larger tip though, and a bigger ink reservoir. They cover larger areas a little better, but there’s still that watercolor/paper grain issue. They now come in the same colors as the normal pens.

**PROS**

- Sturdy, thin tip. Good for drawing and coloring in small spaces

**CONS**

- Made in Europe, so the price went up considerably when the gas crisis really started a few years ago
- Not really blendable
- Color banding can be an issue in larger spaces, as can paper grain showing through the color.
Tombows are water based markers. They are fairly long, have a brush tip, and a bullet tip (but their bullet tip is a little thicker than the typical bullet tip). The problem with water based ink is it’s nearly impossible to get a smooth color laydown. The paper you use it on is important for the color laydown (even or textured). They don’t really blend well (with each other, and definitely with other markers). They’re reasonably priced (on par with Prismacolors), and work best for sketching with minimal coloring (like maybe just using them to shade a darker area, rather than a full on coloring job). The black Tombow marker is great for doing convention sketches. I’d recommend these for limited usage, but not for full coloring jobs.

**PROS**

- Good for traveling with
- Inexpensive

**CONS**

- Not very blendable
- Color banding is an issue

[Back to Table of Contents]
Letraset Tria Markers

These markers are kind of an inbetween from Prismacolors to Copics. They are refillable (via a replacement cartridge), and you can replace the nibs. The first batch of the ‘new design’ (about 6 years ago) turned out to be faulty. The nibs aren’t the best. The ink flow from the cartridges can be a little uneven (so even though I normally recommend storing markers on their sides, with these I’d recommend picking a tip and storing the markers that tip down, to maximize flow). They have a typical chisel nib, and a brush nib. The brush nib has a bad habit of drying out at the tip, and actually falling off. Now, I’m talking on a marker that I use minimally, so I can pretty much guarantee it’s nib quality rather than simply a case of ‘needing to replace the nib due to normal usage’. The best thing about these markers are the numbering system. They original set was “Pantone Trias”, but I don’t know if the Letraset Trias (the newer version) is also fully pantone compatible. Even so, each color has a letter, and each marker under that letter set is numbered in succession of value, making them a LOT easier to match up (and find blending mates). They are also alcohol based, but for some reason act differently with certain pens (outlining/inking) than Prismas and Copics (also alcohol based, and react pretty much the same way to pens). Trias tend to bleed line art more than most marker brands given the same amount of drying time for the line art. If you decide to use these, give yourself more drying time for your line art. They are mid ranged markers, around 3-3.50 each. After working directly with the manufacturer (they are based in the UK) I have come to the conclusion that; They work great if they aren’t shipped from overseas. I still have issues with markers drying prematurely, but they do blend great. I don’t know if it’s how they ship, or that the markers don’t hold up well to overseas shipping. I’ve seen some amazing stuff on YouTube with them, but from UK artists. I’ve taken to getting the refill inks (which sadly, they seem to be discontinuing) and using them in empty copic markers.

**PROS**
- 3 tips
- Refillable ink (via refill cartridge)
- Replaceable tips
- Cheaper than Copics
- Great selection of colors
- Blend wonderfully when not dried out

**CONS**
- Tips wear down/degrade very quickly
- Quality control issues
- Refill cartridge is a single refill, so it’s not much different than buying a second marker at a discount

[Back to Table of Contents]
Letraset has created a sub-brand called “ProMarker”. These are more of a competitor to Prismacolors, but they utilize the same inks as their higher end Tria markers. I like these as a starter marker, because they’re similar in price to Prismacolors, there’s a good selection of colors, and while the tips are standard bullet and chisel nibs, they are sturdier than the replaceable nibs Letraset makes for their Tria line. Some people feel the Prismacolors are a little too vibrant. These ProMarkers don’t seem to have that same problem. They cover nicely, and blend about as well as prismacolors (maybe a little bit better), but the hues aren’t so bright (there are some bright colors, but you can get a better “darker mood” easier with these than with Prismacolors. Also, because they utilize the same inks/color system as the Trias, you can segue into the Trias for more advanced techniques, but without having to re-learn the color system. The sturdiness of the tips allow for good details. Admittedly though, the caps can be difficult to pull off. The fine tip has a little peg to keep it from rolling, but it doesn’t really help with removing the cap, and the texture does more to help your hand slide off it than grip it. But that’s more of a cosmetic issue. It doesn’t affect the quality of the marker itself. Letraset also has “ProMarker Aqua” which has about 2 dozen colors and the ink is water based, for water color type effects. Letraset recently introduced a fine point nib (similar to the original Pantone Letraset fine point add on). It works better than the Tria fine point, IMO.

**PROS**

- Great price for the quality
- Ink/color system compatible with the higher end Tria markers
- Nibs are nice and sturdy

**CONS**

- Caps are hard to remove (which can be a hassle if you’re a blender)
Letraset has a new subset called “FlexMarkers”. It basically is 60 colors from the Tria/Promarker set, plus 12 exclusive colors (and they’ve been putting out seasonal exclusive 6 packs), in a marker that has a chisel tip on one end and a brush tip on the other. I will say these are my second favorite brush tips (second to Copics). They’re very fine, and taper off to a rather fine point. But they’re not overly flexible, despite how thin they get. They offer lots of control, but you still have some flexibility as one would expect from a brush tip. They’re numbering system is sequential, but not tonal. So you’re going to have to experiment to see what blends well with what. The seasonal packs are easier, as they have three sets of 2 colors that blend well, but you’ll still need to play around to see what lightest and darkest colors you can blend. They’re finally coming around to the U.S., but fortunately they (like the ProMarkers) don’t seem to suffer the same shipping dry out issues that the Tria’s do. They average a touch over 3 dollars each, when bought in sets. I haven’t seen them individually in the U.S., yet. Buying them from letraset directly though, they cost almost 5 dollars a marker (not including shipping), so they’re a bit overpriced individually.

**PROS**

- Not a large color selection, although you might want to get the set exclusive colors for your marker collection
- Exceptional brush tip

**CONS**

- Despite the brush tip, most of the colors are repeated from Letraset’s ProMarker and Tria lines, so it’s not worth getting doubles
- Individually, they’re priced a bit high considering they’re not refillable

[Back to Table of Contents]
These are the juiciest of the juiciest. I used to use these to color the backgrounds of full sized (11x17) comic pages for my first semi-pro gig. These are one of the few markers that can actually cause photocopy linework to bleed. They bleed more than the Spartans in “300”. You cannot do small details with these. But they lay down color great, and with the right colors can blend nicely. So I still use them for backgrounds (even on sketchcards!) But because of the bleeding, you need to ‘dab’ them a lot (just dab near the outline, and it’ll bleed up to the line art if you do it right). Like with Prismacolors, the tonal system is anyone’s guess. They go by names, and you really just have to experiment to see what colors blend. They are priced similar to the Trias (about 3-3.50 each), and it’s not bad to have a few colors on hand for backgrounds or other large areas (like if you’re doing a lot of space scenes, they cover large areas fast). They also stink even worse than sharpies. So ventilation is important! Chartpak now also has a fine point version (which is basically a conical shaped nib). I think the point on the original ad marker is actually sharper, but it has more give, so I think it’s harder to do small details. The newer fine points are not that fine, but because of the shape of the nib, it’s sturdier.

**PROS**

- Unmatched color laydown
- Good blendability

**CONS**

- Stinky markers
- Exceptional bleed
- Not good for detail work

Back to Table of Contents
ShinHan’s are Korean art markers. They are square-ish in body shape, and have a chisel tip and a bullet tip. Again, nothing is replaceable except the marker itself. My experience is a bit limited with them (I only have the primary 12 color set and the Blue Gray/Green Gray set). I will say that the color it lays down is a lot darker than the color on the marker, so be aware of that. They are priced similar to Chartpaks and Trias. They have some more unique colors, which works for fill ins, and they blend pretty well with each other, and decently with other markers. So I can’t really recommend these for other than the unique colors. (btw, that darker color laydown also makes them bleed through the paper a bit more, although they don’t seem to bleed out any worse than Prismas or Copic’s). Shin Han has recently redesigned the shape of their Touch markers, and introduced a Touch Brush Marker to coincide with the redesign. The brush replaces the bullet nib. I haven’t tried the brush marker or the new design (so I don’t know what actually changed except the marker body).

**PROS**

- Good color selection
- Has some “niche” colors that are good to have on hand

**CONS**

- More expensive than Prismacolors, but similar quality

[Back to Table of Contents]
Another alcohol based marker. The color range is a little limited (it has 106 colors, but skin tones seem to really suffer in this set. I bought 5 of the colors that would be the main core of skin tones in this set, and they're just too dark for the most part). However, these markers blend probably better than any of the others. Or at least as good as copics. They have two tips, a bullet tip and a wide nib (the bullet nib is identical to Prismacolors bullet nib, and the wide nib is identical to the Tria wide nib). The price is about 3.50, and they are refillable, and the nibs are replaceable. These markers hold a LOT of ink (they are a little shorter than most markers, but they're a lot bigger around). That girth is their biggest shortcoming. My hands aren't small, but they're not large either (they are fairly meaty though), and they take some getting used to to hold. If you have small hands, I don't think you'd be comfortable at all (I just barely can hold them comfortably, I can't imagine someone with smaller hands trying to use them). The ink covers beautifully, and they don't smell which is nice. I could have done with a third, even a quarter less ink if it meant tightening up the girth of these markers. Still, for the smooth color laydown and the refillability, I'm going to pick up some more. They also have a couple of colors that I previously could only find in older sets (the "Dawn Grey" is almost identical to the old Design 2 "Steel" color, which was one of my favorite unique colors and I'm glad to have found a 'new' version. The colors are fairly vibrant, on par with with the Prismacolors (although Prisms have better flesh tones). The Twin S markers use the same ink, and the tips are replaceable, but they are roughly the same size and shape as the original Copic and Shin Han Touch markers. The bullet tips are “sharper” (I believe they are plastic), and very resilient. A good alternative considering the size of the original Kurecolor markers.

**PROS**

- More “niche” colors
- The Kurecolors hold plenty of ink
- Refillable
- Nibs are replaceable

**CONS**

- Original Kurecolor markers are very thick, hard for smaller hands to hold
- Significant lack of decent skin tones
- Some bleed issues, making smaller details tricky

[Back to Table of Contents]
These have got to be the oddest shaped markers. They have a larger brush tip, and a bullet tip similar in size to the Tombow bullet tip. But the marker itself is rectangular, and it tapers towards the bullet tip end. The coloring system is ridiculous. Everything has a pretty name, and a fanciful description. IE “ALASKA BLUE; clean, soft, heavenly”. It’s a nice cerulean shade of blue. All the colors are like that, with the added (but totally useless, and in some cases even laughable) descriptors. However, don’t let that fool you. The markers blend excellently (I need more colors to get a better feel, as most of what I have are close enough tonally to blend well), and the color laydown is excellent. They are a little over 3 dollars each, and nothing is replaceable. I’d like to futz around with them more before I can definitely recommend them or not, but I like them a lot better than Tria’s already. The color laid down versus the colors on the markers are a little off, but nothing nearly as bad as the shinhans. They don’t bleed through or out really either. The worst things about these so far, is their numbering system, and small details are a bit tricky (you’ll wind up using the brush tip, but it’s not a really small brush tip, so it takes a little getting used to.

**PROS**

- Nice color selection
- Pantone compatible

**CONS**

- Terrible organizational/naming convention
- Odd shape may take a little getting used to
- Small details are difficult
- Brush tip somewhat flimsy
Marvy’s Le Plume brand has quite a few marker sets, but I generally tend towards the alcohol based markers, which these are. I don’t know how new they are, I stumbled across them quite by accident. They are a bit smaller than most markers, and only have one tip. They call it a “soft brush tip”, but it’s really more of a conical shaped bullet nib that’s a little thicker than your average bullet nib. They run about 3 bucks a pop, and sadly aren’t refillable. They blend excellently though. Most of what I have are skin tones however, so I’m not sure how darker colors blend or bleed. They also have an opaque white water-based marker that’s part of the set. It isn’t the best, but it’s far from the worst opaque white that I’ve used. Due to their shape and size, they’re a little harder to store than most markers (standard holders are too big, but pen holders are too thin. I just keep them in a plastic bin). They have a fairly standard organization system. A two or three letter color family, and four digit sequential numbers. There seems to be 3 or 4 tones of a particular shade, so it’s not hard to find compatible colors. They have 141 colors (well, 144 if you include the gold, silver and white which are water based), so selection isn’t too bad.

**PROS**

- Comparable to Prismacolors in price
- Smooth color lay down, despite only the bullet nib
- Probably the most blendable marker in it’s price range
- Simple/easy to understand numbering system

**CONS**

- Single tip makes small detail work a little difficult
- Non-standard size
Alpha Design Markers are made in Germany, by the Montana-Cans company (known in the US for their large assortment of paint markers). They are practically impossible to get in the US, despite Montana being a pretty common product. I had to special order mine from an art store in Canada. They have a standard marker (the dark grey bodied markers) with a standard bullet nib, and chisel nib. They have a brush version (the white bodied marker), where a brush nib replaces the bullet nib. They have a decent selection of colors, but are non-refillable (nor are the nibs replaceable). They’re decently blendable (more than Prismacolors, less than Copics). But they suffer from the same brush issue that Neopiko’s and Tri-Art markers do. The brush is too flimsy. It’s hard to do details when the tip gives way too easily, and of course color coverage suffers if you try to color a larger area with the brush nib. Unfortunately I can’t accurately gauge the price since I usually compare them in the US market (I did get them on sale, but the regular price, to me, would seem a little too high for a non-refillable marker). The brush tip version of these markers can now be found in the U.S. As the rather oddly named, “Mepxy Brush Markers.” I don’t know if they culled some of the colors, or simply re-organized them, but the numbering system is different. However they retained the naming system however.

**PROS**
- Like slightly upscale Prismacolors
- Easy to open (trust me, that’s an issue with more than a few markers)
- They have a decent ink reservoir

**CONS**
- Extremely difficult to find
- Flimsy brush nib
- Expensive for a non-refillable marker
- The blender is insane. It acts more like a powerful solvent than a marker blender. Use it carefully, as it can easily damage your artwork and paper

*Back to Table of Contents*
StyleFile markers are an “exclusive brand” to a company located in Germany. It’s actually a graffiti marker, but it’s alcohol based (there’s a sub-culture of graffiti artists who only do their work in those hardbound black sketch books, these markers and a few others are designed to cater to them). They are round all around, but have a little nub on the caps to keep them from rolling. They are aesthetically pleasing, but also the color insert in the caps is pretty accurate to the color within, so it’s not all eye candy. The bullet nib is a little rounded, so tiny details may be a little more difficult. The chisel nib is standard. The color lay down is smooth, but they don’t blend as well as say, trias, or the le plumes or copics. They do blend better than Prismas or Neopiko Deleters though. The markers have a good charge (and they don’t seem to suffer from the same shipping-related dry out issues as the Trias). Pricing is a little difficult to say, because as a U.S. Resident I have to order them international. I don’t know how many colors they have overall, but it’s a good amount as they have at least 3 different 72 color sets. They’re numbering system is simple 1-XXX, and color values may be out of order.

**PROS**

- One of the most extensive color selections
- Cap colors are very accurate to the marker color

**CONS**

- Exclusive to the German company of the same name, so they have to be imported
- Numbering system not very concise
- Non-refillable

[Back to Table of Contents]
Spectrum Noir’s are another exclusive brand. This time, to a company located in the U.S. (but they have a UK website and ship to Canada as well, so it’s not too hard to get them outside the U.S.). They worked with a China based company to create an exclusive line of markers for the crafters (and stampers in particular) as an alternative to the expensive copic markers that many use. It’s alcohol based, and comes in 168 colors. All the sets they sell are unique (ie no overlapping colors between sets). They are refillable, but don’t have replacement nibs (the nibs are pretty sturdy though, but if you have issues, see my entry on nibs later in this guide). You can’t buy the markers individually, but you can buy the refills. This also helps cut down on overhead cost. These are a pretty good value, even for non-craft artists. They blend decently. Again, not great like copics but better than prismacolors. Like the stylefile markers, they’re middle-of-the-road blendable. They come out to roughly 2 dollars a marker with the refills running about 6 dollars each. You get 6-9 markers total (1 marker plus 6-8 refills, according to the site), so it’s not a bad deal. The numbering system is your classic; color + number value based on tonal order. My biggest issue with it is that there’s a degree of randomness in the sets. You can buy the smaller sets by color family, but they’ll be certain colors in the succession only in the bigger sets, so you might find yourself without a key connecting color unless you’ve bought well, all the sets. Visually, they’re almost identical to the original Alpha Design markers.

**PROS**

- Great starter/alternative set (especially if you have a simpler, cel shaded type style or are a stamper)
- The least expensive refillable marker
- Better blendability than comparably priced marker brands

**CONS**

- Nibs are not natively replaceable
- Tonal value succession incomplete if you don’t buy all the sets
- Cannot buy individual markers
And we come to yet another company exclusive marker. There are 72 colors, with a chisel tip and a brush tip. The brush tip is not as good as the FlexMarker, Copic or Pitt Brush pens, but better than the other brands I’ve tried. Sadly, it’s one of those sets that lacks a decent flesh tone selection. The colors blend pretty nicely though, and at 2 bucks a pop it’s a very good starter set (especially if one is unfamiliar with brush markers). It’s exclusive to a U.S. Based company so they’re easy enough to obtain here, but I don’t think the company ships overseas (I believe Utrecht is based in New Jersey). As I mentioned above, they do blend pretty nicely, but the color selection is lacking, so not every color has good colors to blend with it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Another good value inexpensive starter set</td>
<td>• Lack of color selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brush tip is pretty good for a ‘budget marker’</td>
<td>• Poor flesh tone selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Exclusive brand makes it harder to get outside the U.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I felt the need to include the Copic Airbrush System into my marker review for several reasons: 1] it’s designed to utilize copic markers as it’s color/ink source, and 2] it’s a bit of a “natural extension” of said color system. However, there’s more that they’ll never tell you that I will. They do tell you that a full marker will fill roughly an 11x17 page (I figure that’s including the loss of ink via air circulation. No biggie since they are refillable, but still keep that in mind. Just like a regular airbrush, you can control flow (although to a lesser extent). You can’t get really fine control, but you can blend colors that normally don’t seem to go well (just by coloring). I like using this for backgrounds, or special effects (like fire). It says it only works with Copic Originals and Copic Sketch markers. However, it also works with Shin Han Touch and the Zig Kurecolor Twin S broad ends, which fit into the adapter perfectly (better than the Copic Sketch markers actually). The Zig markers spray on par with the copics (and are also refillable). The Shin Han will give you more of a spatter spray, and they are not refillable, so use them sparingly.

**PROS**

- Usable with more than just Copic markers
- Nice for adding effects and blending to artwork

**CONS**

- Requires a compressor or proprietary compressed air cans
- Can use up marker ink quickly if you’re not careful, so make sure you have refills available
- Not capable of small details like a traditional airbrush (can’t get a super fine spray)
Several brands of markers reviewed in this document have replaceable nibs. Copic, Kurecolors, and Triarts. However, the nibs are not only good for just those markers. I have found that the smaller nibs for Copic (originals) and Kurecolors work with the small/bullet nibs of most other markers. Granted most bullet nibs outlast the ink supply, but in some cases, you may still have say, the second generation Prismacolor markers with the fine/drawing point (as opposed to a bullet nib). That second gen production line didn’t last long, because those points were leaky, and often ineffective (they dried out too quickly because of inconsistent ink flow). However, the semi-broad nibs for Copic fit into the prismacolors perfectly (and gave them a usable fine/bullet point). Most of the bullet nibs in most of the markers are the same, or close enough in size that you can use almost any of the small end nibs from Copic or Kurecolors. Since they have semi-broad (miniature chisel tips, essentially), calligraphy tips, brush tips and more, you can really customize how you use your markers. The broad ends are a little different, and seem a little less interchangeable (granted, Prismacolors have the best broad nib, IMO, so you probably wouldn’t want to change them). Again however, I have some of the original Prismacolors (20+ years old and still working!) and the chisel tip is so worn out. I haven’t tried the Triart nibs yet, but the only kurecolor tip that will likely work is the brush tip (for the wide end, which has a little metal clip to keep it in place). There is also a trick with the Pitt brush pens. Apparently the tips are double ended (both points, the one you use, and the one inside the barrel) are identical. When the end you’re working with wears down, you can pull the tip out, turn it around, and put it in backwards, and now you have a brand new working tip!
There are many professional graphic marker options out there. I’m sure even now I’m missing plenty that are in fairly widespread use. I’m always trying to find new products. I know there are several products used in Europe that are similar to US products. I would still love to try them. Also, there are some great past products that I haven’t discussed here. Chief among them are the original Design and Design 2 markers. A classic favorite of mine, I still miss them dearly.

Markers are not the only products I like to experiment with. I have many types of pens, nibs, brush pens, inks, pencils, erasers, sharpeners and more. If there is enough interest, I may create a similar guide to other supplies.

All products reviewed herein are copyright and trademark their respective owners.

This document is (and all graphics and photographs herein) copyright ©Mark J. Tannacore and is strictly my own personal opinions

This document is presented free of charge and may be freely distributed, with this copyright notice left intact.

If you have any other marker related products you would like me to add to this comparison, or any questions about the contents of this document, please feel free to email Mark J. Tannacore: Mark@frayedlogic.com

Version 3.6.6
Last Updated: August 13, 2012

Back to Table of Contents