The Photoshop CC Book

The ultimate guide to getting the most out of Creative Cloud

Over 350 tips inside



Retouch your photos • Create characters • Paint digital art

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Welcome to The Photoshop CC Book

As Adobe takes a giant leap into the world of cloud-based subscription services for its latest instalment of Photoshop, we bring you some great tutorials that range from basic photo edits to the more adventurous digital artwork that will have you creating some of your best work to date. In the editing essentials section, you will learn how to fix your photos from your bent and broke scanned in memories to brightening your grey skies. You'll lean how to master mixed media in the digital art section, and grasp the Pen tool with both hands. Finally, in creative projects, you'll learn the best photomanipulation tricks creating matte paintings and excellent composites. The Photoshop CC Book also comes with a free disc packed with tutorial files, outstanding textures, watercolour brushes, web gradients, and video tutorials from Digital-tutors that will take you through some digital painting essentials. So take a look and learn something new!



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The Photoshop CC Book

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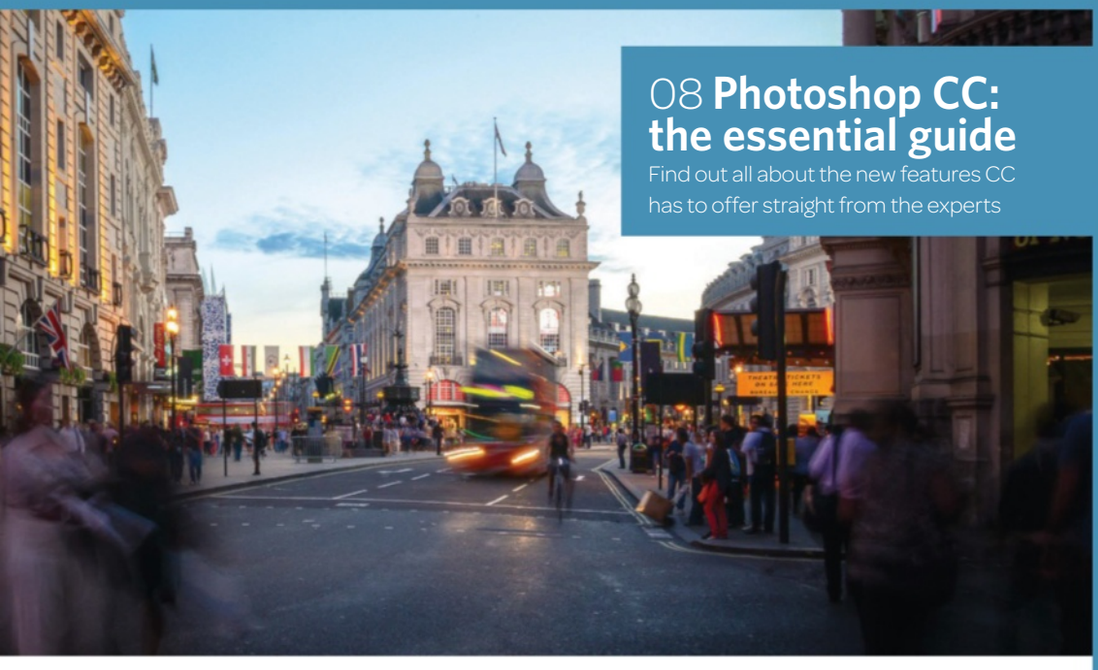
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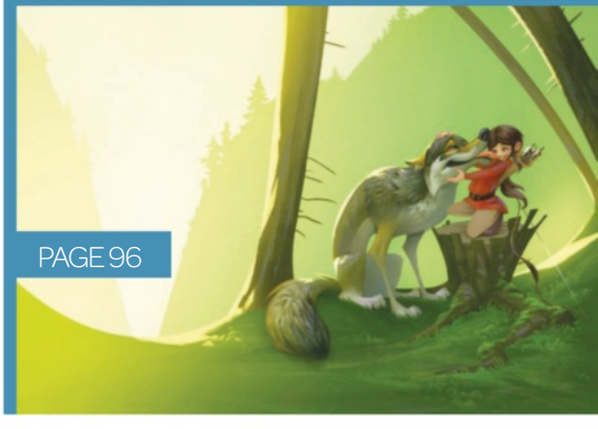
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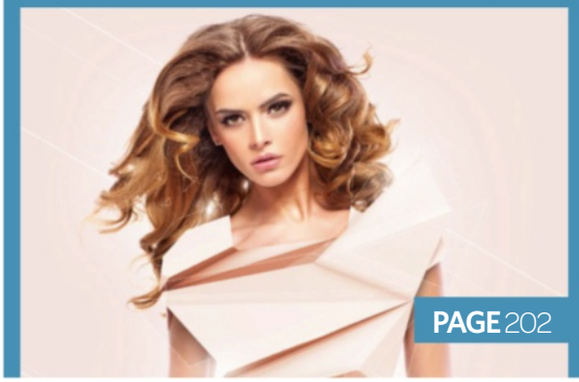
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Photoshop CC: the essential guide

Everything you need to know about the new version

We're finding it hard to contain our excitement over the cutting-edge upgrades in Photoshop CC. The latest version of software gives Creative Cloud subscribers the chance to edit with a host of brand-spanking new tools, as well as reinvented ones.

Its launch has left the creative world a little stunned, with not so much as a beta being made available before release. It is for that reason that this feature goes into slightly more detail than usual when explaining the most significant upgrades, to ensure that they can all be put to good use straight away. There have been no drastic changes to the interface, however, which corresponds with the look of CS6, meaning we can integrate all the new tools and filters into our existing workflow with ease.

Many of you will also be interested to discover what the rest of Creative Cloud software has to offer, so over the next few pages we'll deliver information on the rest of the best bits, including the upgrades to Illustrator, InDesign and Dreamweaver.

The deluxe feature then concludes with a series of interviews including an exclusive interview with Stephen Nielson - Adobe's Photoshop Product Manager who offers up his choice of Photoshop's hidden gems. By the end of this book, you should know all there is to know about Photoshop CC, Creative Cloud, and how these could impact on digital artists planning to use the products and services.

Adobe CC Price Guide

Adobe software is now subscription-based through the Creative Cloud. Single application purchases are available for those of us who are only concerned with one program, be it Photoshop CC or another. Adobe's complete suite, which includes applications like Illustrator and InDesign, is available at a higher cost. All UK prices include VAT and are per month.

	Price (GBP)	Price (USD)
Complete individual new	46.88	49.99
Complete individual upgrade	27.34	29.99
Creative Cloud Student and Teacher Edition	15.88	19.99
Single application	17.58	19.99
Creative Cloud for teams	65.44	69.99
Creative Cloud for teams upgrade	37.11	39.99



"Photoshop CC is now available. Here, we guide you through the best new features and discuss what the industry thinks of the changes"

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Preserve Detail

Providing intelligent upsampling in an all-new scalable dialog box

Preview changes Select Image>Image Size and resize the new dialog box. The larger this is, the bigger the preview image space becomes. Ctrl/Cmd-click Width and Height options, swiping the mouse/stylus horizontally to enter values quicker

Better options If you need further convincing about just how improved this function is, simply select Bicubic Smoother from the Resample drop options and swap between new and old enlargement options

New details Activate the Resample drop options and set this to Preserve Details (enlargement). This activates CC's improved interpolation algorithms. Once the new dimensions are applied, there's little to no image distortion noticeable

Reduce noise The new enlargement algorithms also repair detail by applying a certain amount of sharpening. This creates noticeable noise, which can be combated with the newly included Reduce Noise slider



Camera Shake Reduction

Bring unusable photos back into focus with this impressive new Photoshop CC filter

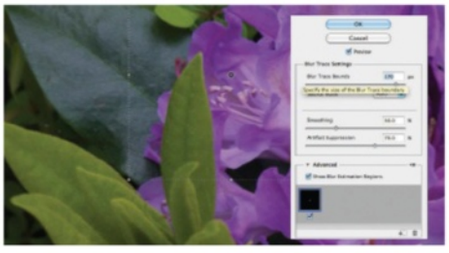
The new Camera Shake Reduction filter is a clear indication that CC's primary concern is expert photo editing. Its improved image algorithms choose the best settings and automatically improve detail in shots affected by camera shake. This is a step in the right direction, allowing for a salvage otherwise unusable photos. Activate Camera Shake Reduction from the CC Filter>Sharpen menu.

To get the best results from Camera Shake Reduction every time, follow this simple three-step process.



Full automation

01 Select Filter>Sharpen>Camera Shake Reduction. Activate the Advanced menu to subsequently activate the Blur Estimation Tool. Apply this as a selection to the area you want to remedy most. This is resizable using control points.



Manual editing

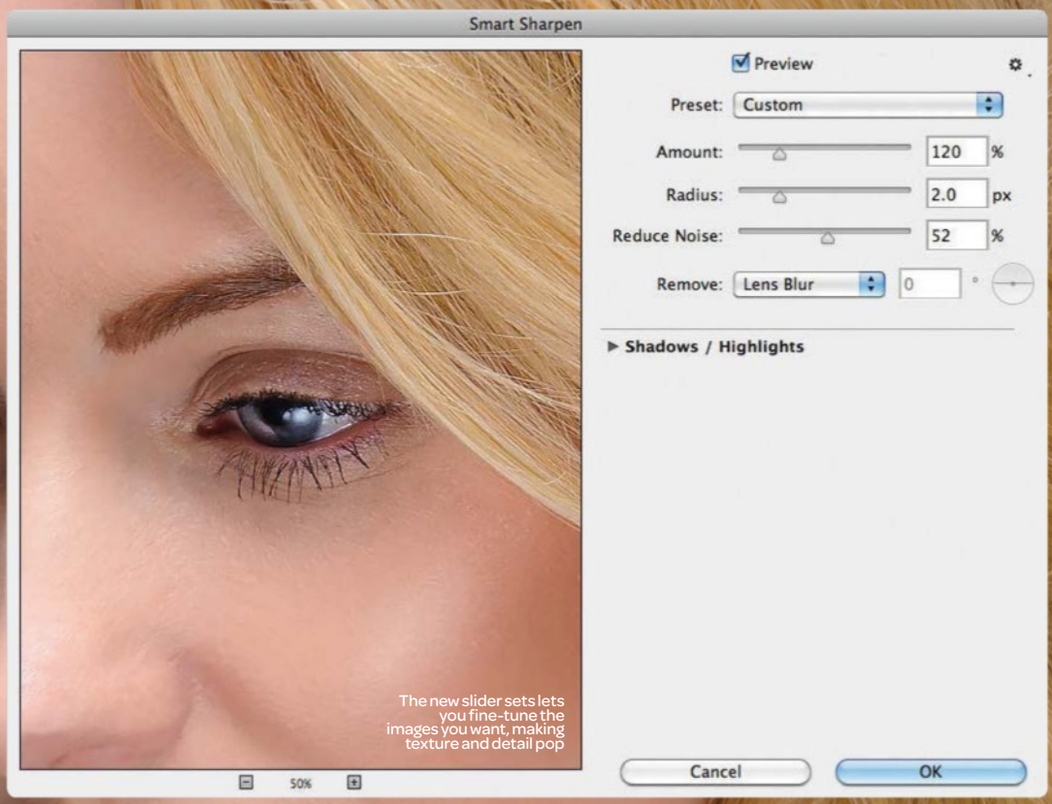
02 Blur Trace Settings determines refocusing and sharpening accuracy. Higher the Blur Trace Bounds will give more detail, but noise can encroach in your images. Higher Smoothing and Artifact Suppression can combat this.



Scrutinise results

03 The Show Blur Estimation Regions mask preview shows the existing shake direction in your image. So when applying sliders correctly, the white area becomes less visible. Select Unlock Detail (Q) to activate a magnified preview.

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All-new Smart Sharpen

Get crisp, clear images by conquering noise and halo effects with this filter's

The upgraded Smart Sharpen filter sits exactly where the old one did; under Filter>Sharpen. The difference is evident in the new Noise slider now sitting in the dialog box. This type of artifact dogged users in previous versions of Photoshop the higher the Amount slider was set. But it's now combated through the improved editing algorithms.

Even at a maximum Amount of 500%, we were able to create pleasing looks. Marvel at just how well this tool performs by adding effects, then activating Legacy (L) and More Accurate (M) options. This will show how the previous version of Smart Sharpen would have tackled the combination of sharpening and noise – nowhere near, quite frankly.

If you want even more control over image delineation, avoiding global effects, an extended set of Shadows and Highlights sliders is also provided. It's true that noise is prone to appearing in these image areas and now you can combat effects even more intuitively. All editing is complemented with a resizable dialog box for better scrutiny.

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Improved 3D painting

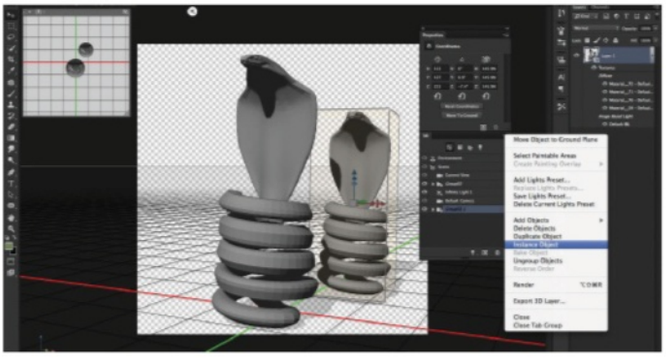
Faster live previews and more responsive options make 3D creation

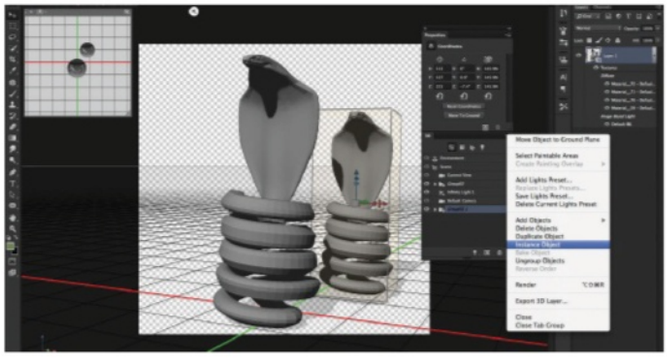
All of the Photoshop CS6 extended options are made available in Photoshop CC, which means 3D modelling is now open to everyone. However, functionality has become even more intuitive, with several improvements.

Adobe looked to create a middle ground between 3D generation and Photoshop application, this makes creation far less daunting for new users. Photoshop CC provides this smoother transition from 2D to 3D editing by now including familiar Layers panel options. You can choose to Duplicate, Delete and Group layers using the new Object options in the 3D>Whole Scene panel.

Photoshop CC also reads and writes applied textures and special effects much faster, with improved render times. Preview times are also faster, displaying complex elements like shadows quicker and in better quality.

Texturing 3D objects has become even more accessible through improved manual application. You can use default, custom and Texture setting brushes to apply straight to your on-screen object as before. But now, live cursor previews of both the 3D model and flattened texture map the location of the marks. Looks update in real-time in both instances. Follow the three-stepper below to find out how this works.



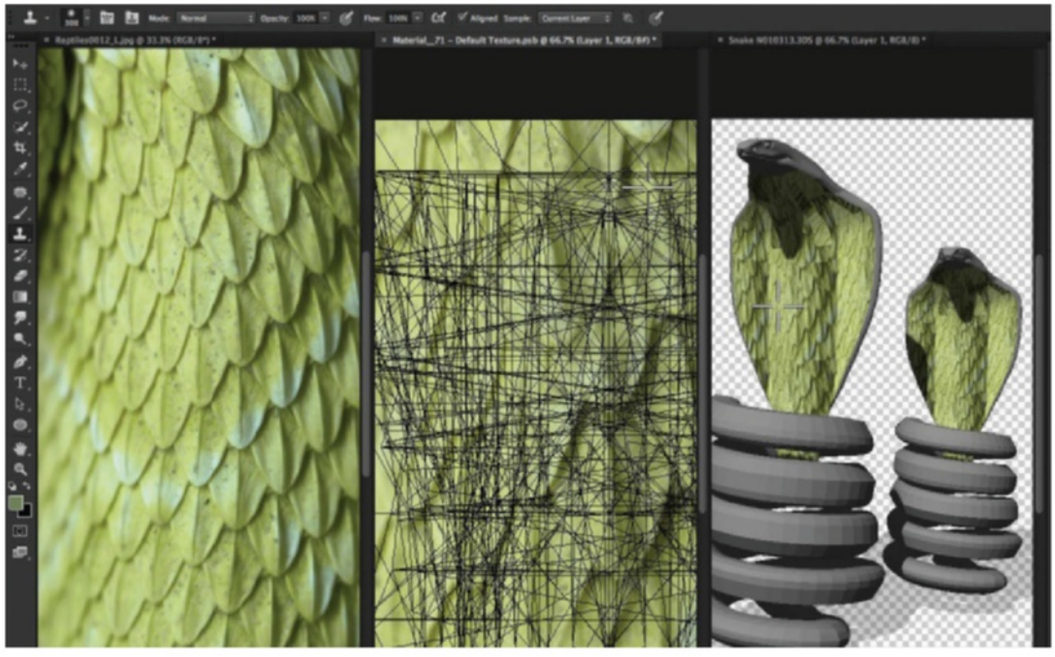


Add Instance Objects

01 Instance Objects work much like Smart Objects. Whatever effect you apply to one will also update in duplicate layers. You can create these by activating the 3D>Whole Scene panel, selecting your 3D model, and then opening the panel fly-out menu. Now choose Instance Object.

Optimise view

02 Select one of the 3D objects and activate the Layers panel, double-clicking one of the Diffuse sub-layers. This will open a wireframe overlay layer in a separate document. Select Window>Arrange>2-up Vertical to set the wireframe and 3D model in side-by-side windows.



Paint to object

03 Now you can paint directly to the Wireframe overlay layer, updating marks in your 3D models. Alternatively, open a texture image, set Arrange to 3-up Vertical, and then activate the Clone Stamp. Pick from your texture, add to the Wireframe overlay layer and update the 3D models.

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Shapes Properties panel

Save time editing and adding effects to shapes with the latest updates



Photoshop CS6 took huge strides in improving Shape Tool functionality. Bitmap layers were replaced with Vector technology, which provided more flexible resizing. Colour and gradient effects were pooled together in one dialog, along with new Stroke settings. Photoshop CC hasn't looked to radicalise shapes any further, instead tweaking and perfecting operation. This is achieved through simple updates, accessed through the Smart Shapes Properties panel.

Here, users can apply all of the previous CS6 options, but also reshape rounded corners individually or all together. Simply hover over the corner icon, click, and horizontally drag to apply settings manually. Even more exciting, you can now select a series of shape layers and manipulate them simultaneously. This lets graphic and web designers get more done in fewer clicks. The only complaint would be that once saved, it's impossible to reopen a file and reactivate your settings. Hopefully this will be featured in a future update.

Photoshop CC offers the ability to create shapes and then export CSS data from these. This also saves web designers a lot of time. To do this, simply Ctrl/Cmd+click a Shape layer and select Copy CSS from the pop-up options.

New layer functionality



Isolate layers in a complicated layer stack

Subscribers to Photoshop CS6 through previous versions of Creative Cloud benefited from a few dedicated layer functions that rest of us couldn't access. These are now available to every Photoshop CC user. You can now make Smart Objects from individual and multiple layers. Improvements to Smart Object layers don't end here though; thanks to this functionality, the some filters can now be applied non-destructively.

The addition of the new Isolate Layer option works when activating a sequence of layers in our stack by Ctrl/Cmd+clicking them. All you then have to do is choose Selected from the Pick a Filter Type drop options, found at the top of the Layers panel. The Isolate Layer option hides all of the layers except the ones you've targeted in the stack, and none in the image. This lets users target layers more intuitively and arrange them to suit their application.

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Tone in ACR

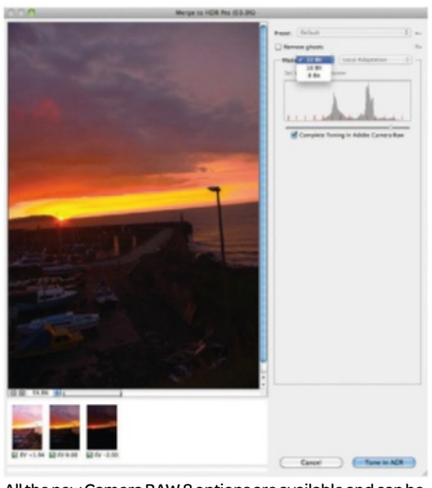
Open up your HDR images to the power of Camera

There was an increased use of Automate options with CS6's update to Merge to HDR Pro. This has long been the go-to option for photographers looking to create HDR styles in Photoshop.

The flexibility of its supplied Advanced sliders when working in 16-bit mode was limited. These included types such as Shadow, Highlight, Vibrance and Saturation to help improve image temperature and exposure. Sadly, the Shadows and Highlights sliders available in Adobe Camera RAW (ACR) 7 at the time provided a greater deal of precision.

Adobe has tackled this issue and alleviated any creative tension with another new Photoshop CC option: Tone in ACR. You can trigger this by firstly selecting File>Automate>Merge to HDR Pro, hitting Browse and uploading your set of photos.

Once inside the Merge to HDR Pro dialog box, set Mode to 32 Bit and the Tone in ACR option will appear in the bottom-right corner of the interface. Click this and all the ACR 8 options are made available. The significance of this is enhanced control over your HDR looks. Now you can edit temperature and exposure to a greater degree, using the Shadows and Highlights functionality previously missing.



All the new Camera RAW 8 options are available and can be added to improve HDR images

New Camera RAW 8

A host of new options make RAW editing more powerful than ever before

Photoshop CC incorporates the power of Adobe Camera RAW (ACR), available as a filter option but only in RGB Color Mode. This makes editing photos far more accessible and a whole lot quicker.

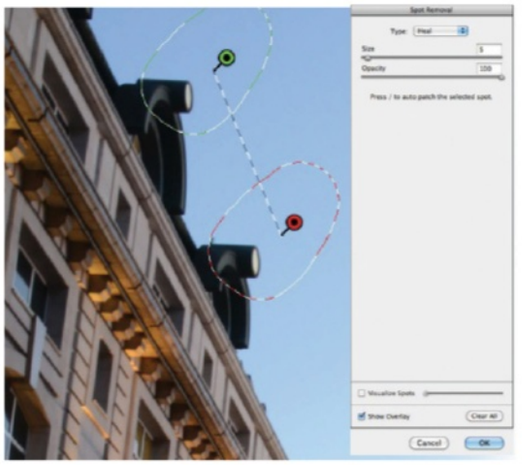
In keeping with the radical Photoshop CC, ACR 8 presents its own host of new options that improve image results. The plug-in has always excelled at perfecting aesthetically pleasing looks, and now capabilities are further enhanced with the Radial Filter. This is fantastic at creating focal points as well as vignettes in our snaps, and is very intuitive to use.

ACR 8 also takes itself seriously as an advanced photo editor. The all-new Spot Removal tool will no doubt be compared to Photoshop's own Spot Healing tool, as both can be applied by drawing over an area. But the ACR 8 Spot Removal Tool is more logical, showing both selected source and destination areas.

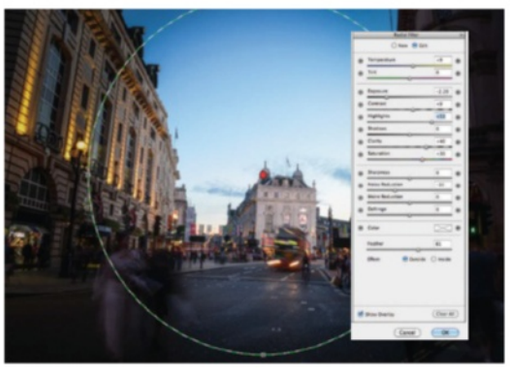
The Lens Corrections dialog has also had a facelift. Profile options have been removed and Manual options augmented with the new Upright controls. These tackle all types of distortion through a set of five presets, determining the best effects mechanically.

Spot Removal Tool

Select this from the tool bar options and apply it to the area you want to remove. It would seem ACR 8 automatically remedies the selected area. Press V to show and hide source and destination selections. Drag and place the green point to manually alter the destination selection, perfecting its effect on your edited area. This tool handles parallel selection better than perpendicular ones on offer.



Radial Filter

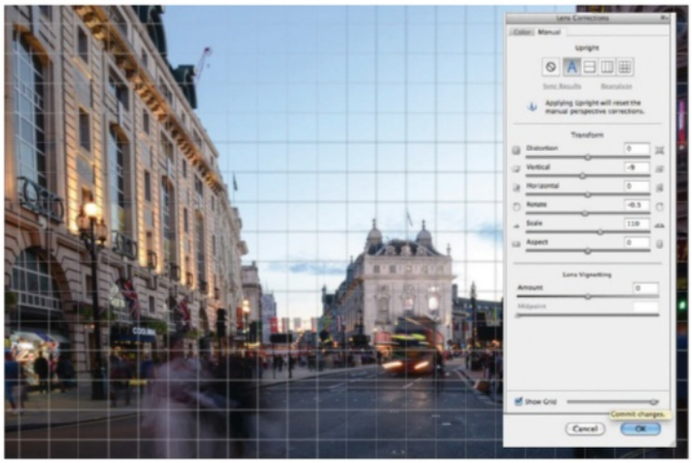


This is also selected from the tool bar options and provides an extensive set of slider controls. These are geared towards perfecting the light, temperature and noise detail in an image. Determine whether you want to create focal points or vignette effects with the Outside and Inside Effect options. You can also determine how soft your selection edges are with the easy-to-use Feather slider. Review effects by pressing the P key shortcuts.

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Upright controls

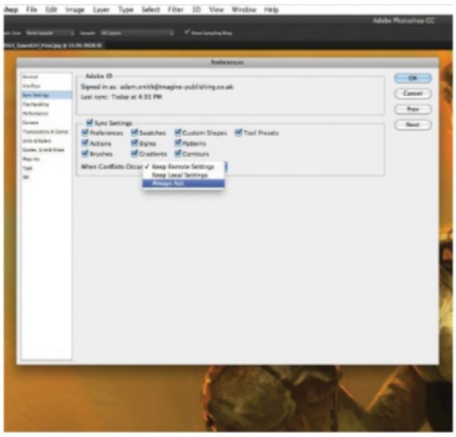
Activate the Lens Correction> Manual panel to access the Upright presets. Five presets in total provide one-click effects, including Auto for balanced correction, Horizontal to match the best horizon, and Vertical for vertical lines. Full applies all perspective corrections at one time; Disable Upright is self-explanatory, and Transform sliders let us level manually. Use these to align to a grid with the Show Grid slider, determining size and spacing.



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Brand new Sync Settings



Set the Sync Settings>When Conflicts Occur option to Always Ask to determine whether to maintain local or remote settings

The invention of Creative Cloud allowed subscribers to swap and share artwork from one central location. Tools were disconnected from online services as well as within the local workspace.

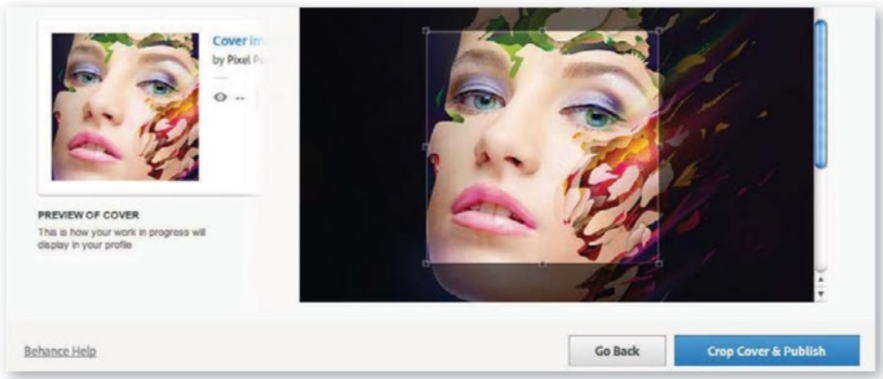
This became a real issue for those who take full advantage of the two available licenses. To work with the same settings on both computers, the only way was to manually copy preset files from one machine to the other. But not anymore; with the new Photoshop CC, those that must have consistency across both platforms can have it, with the new Sync Settings Now command.

Simply go to Photoshop> Preferences>Sync Settings and activate what you want to upload to Creative Cloud, share Actions, Brushes, and much more. Once you have selected the ones you want, go to Photoshop>Email account and choose Sync Settings Now in the first licence on one of the machines in use.

Follow this by activating your second licence on another machine, select Sync Settings Now and voilà – you have all the settings from your first licence. Even quicker than this, open a file and source the Sync Settings to Creative Cloud icon in the bottom-left of the interface. Click this to open the dialog and select Sync Settings Now.

Export to Behance

Upload to the world's largest creative platform



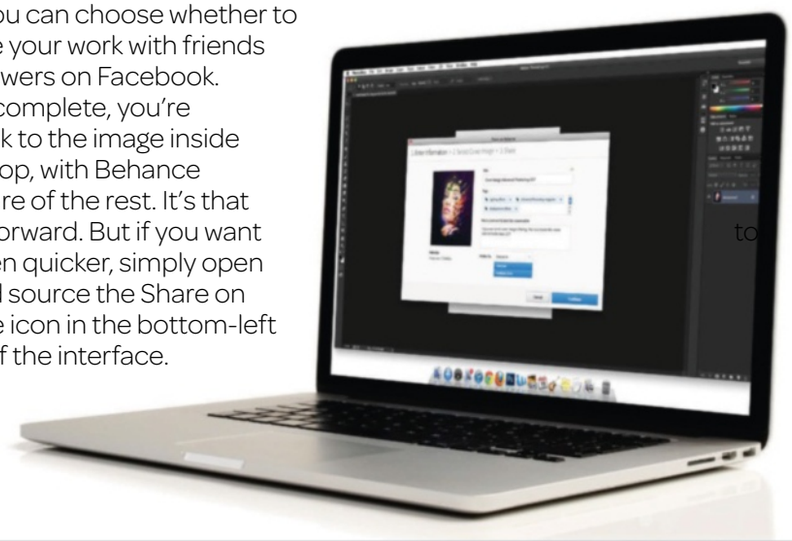
Upload to Behance at the click of a button, setting this export option as a hotkey in the Edit>Keyboard options

Behance.net is the leading social platform for creative people to showcase and discover design. Adobe recognised user contribution to this forum and decided to acquire it in December 2012. Now Adobe has improved the coupling of its software with Behance, with the inclusion of the all-new Share on Behance option in Photoshop CC.

This provides direct file synchronisation and sharing capabilities, the likes of which we've never seen before – well, not in our favourite app, at least. Select File>Share on Behance to open a dedicated dialog asking you to input your Behance membership details.

All you then have to do is follow a simple three-step process. First, set image Tags, as well as determine who can see your image. Then you're able to select your cover image using a simple free transform box. Clicking Crop Cover & Publish opens the subsequent Share dialog, where you can choose whether to promote your work with friends and followers on Facebook.

Once complete, you're sent back to the image inside Photoshop, with Behance taking care of the rest. It's that straightforward. But if you want work even quicker, simply open a file and source the Share on Behance icon in the bottom-left corner of the interface.



"As far as sharing goes, I'm not sold. I think it's a marketing tool for Adobe rather than an improvement on how we collaborate. I currently use Dropbox, social media and Behance for all my collaborating and posting online. But I can see how it could keep a larger group of creatives working together on the same idea"

Mike Campau / www.mikecampau.com

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Rest of the best new CC updates

Discover what else Adobe has added to its flagship software, now available with Creative



Illustrator CC

Illustrator now includes the ability to paint with Art, Pattern, and Scatter brushes. It has also released the ability to create CSS code for every object.



InDesign CC

The premium software for print designers, this now has HiDPI and Retina display support, meaning every design element has greater clarity.



After Effects CC

3D scenes can now be used directly as footage without having to render first. 3D camera tracking has been added allowing you to select object for stabilisation.



Dreamweaver CC

Web designers will love the latest updates, which include a new Fluid Grid Layout interface, editing tools to help apply CSS properties like gradients and box shadows.



Premier Pro CC

Video production is better, with all-new preset colour grades thanks to the Lumetri Deep Color Engine. Edit more efficiently with a redesigned Timeline.



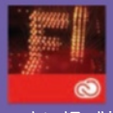
Muse CC

Muse CC adds only a few options, but improves the software greatly. In-browser editing is also available, letting clients make changes without affecting the structure.



AUDITION CC

Sound Remover scans and removes unwanted elements from recordings. Preview Editor compares waveform tweaks, view multiple file sections simultaneously, and confirm time stretching before applying. It also has clear clip handling and grouping tools.



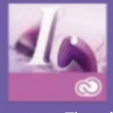
FLASH PROFESSIONAL CC

Work faster than ever before with a 64-bit architecture. Carry out real-time drawing with familiar shape tools, fill and stroke colour options. There is also HTML5 support with updated Toolkit for CreateJS, including new functionality for buttons, hit areas and motion curves.



SPEEDGRADE CC

Shot Matcher automatically corrects subtle differences in footage to achieve consistency between shots. Powerful layer-based grading offers keys and masks to fine-tune corrections. You can also choose from classic film stock presets to create a cinematic look.



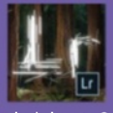
INCOPY CC

Font search enhancements use the arrow keys to browse through styles fast and find the perfect font from the growing library of Adobe Typekit fonts, then sync it to our system. There is also HiDPI and Retina Display support for greater clarity and vibrancy.



PRELUDE CC

Share rough cuts faster with Prelude CC by exporting directly to Adobe Media Encoder, and create custom metadata templates for collecting key information more easily. You can also set up filename presets to automatically rename files upon ingest.



LIGHTROOM 5

Straighten tilted images with a single click using the new Upright tool. The Radial Gradient tool creates off-centre vignette effects, or multiple vignette areas within a single image. Smart Previews generate smaller stand-in files of our full-size images.

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The creative industry speaks out

The concerns and excitement of professionals from around the globe are laid bare, as they tell you just how Adobe's new subscription-based software is set to affect their business ventures

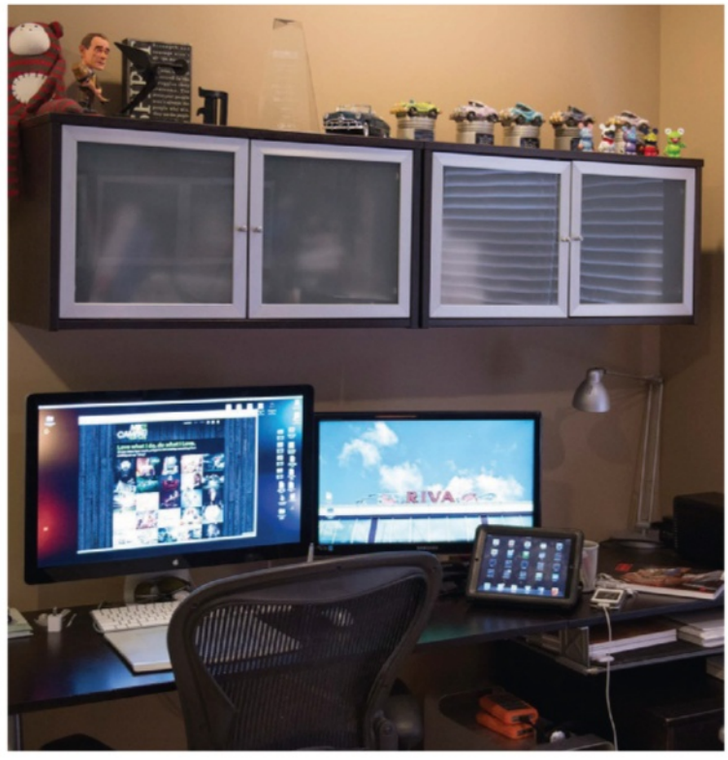


Mike Campau

CEO, creative director and freelancer

Mike Campau (www.mikecampau.com) has steadily climbed the ladder of studio and agency life. He now has over 15 years of valuable experience under his belt. But he's hit a crossroads. He's finding it hard to decide whether or not the new Photoshop CC will benefit his own venture. "A subscription-based software seemed to make sense to me," he admits. "I always upgrade to the industry standard, because I need to continue to be compatible with the many artists and photographers I work with. It's just way more convenient to click 'update' and have the latest software at my finger tips."

On the other hand, Campau sees the merits of physically owning a copy of Photoshop. "It's like the difference between buying or leasing a car. It makes more financial sense to buy and own it outright, saving on monthly payments," he says. "If the version of Photoshop you're using is still working for you, then being forced to effectively lease a new version can be very frustrating. It can be harder on your pocket too in the long run." This is why many freelancers like to just buy software outright, saving on cost and minimising overheads.



Leon Ephraïm Co-founder at YummyGum



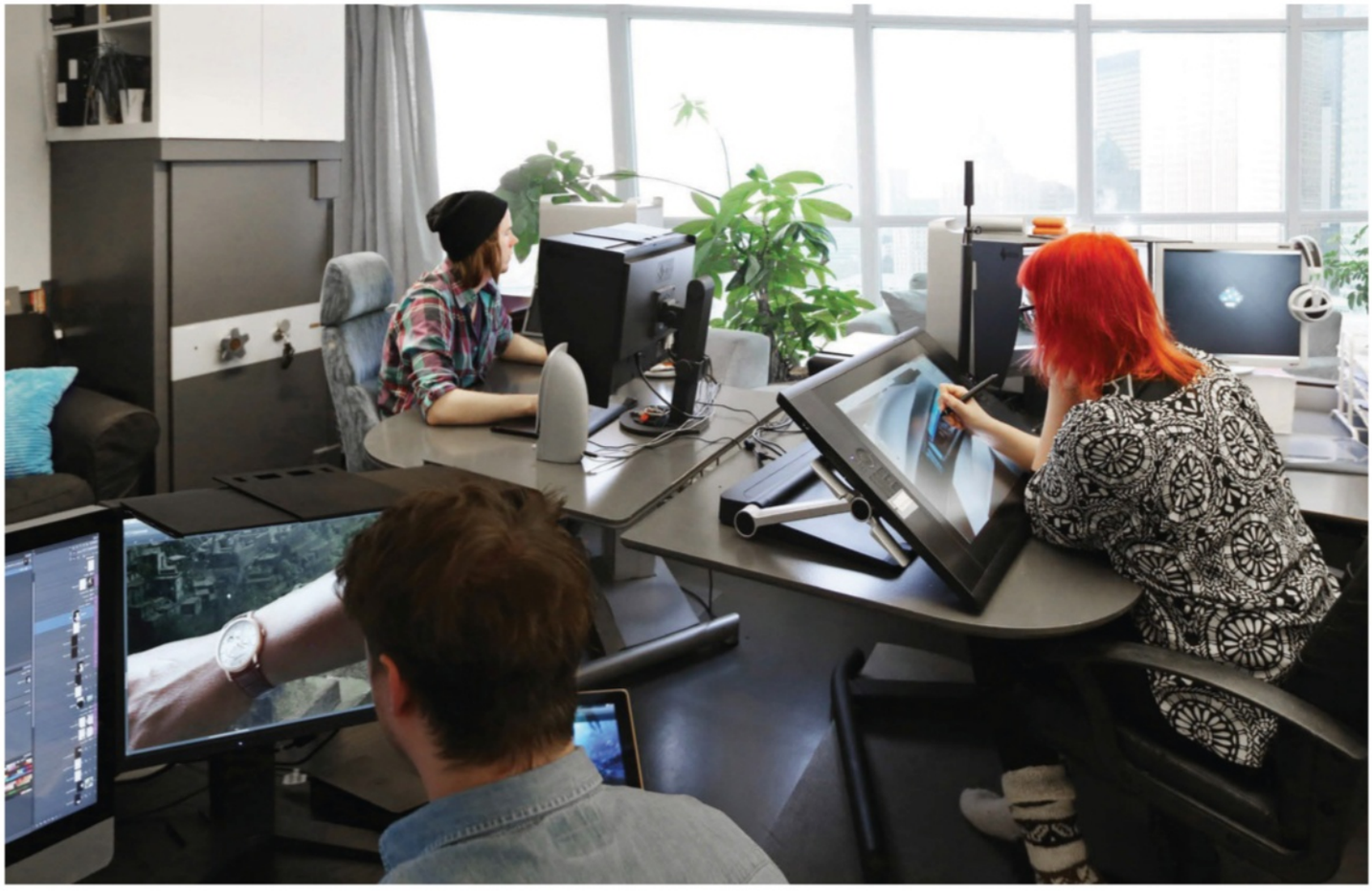
Design company YummyGum (www.yummygum.com) is an army of two, consisting of co-founders Leon Ephraïm and Vincent Schwidder. They produce pixel-perfect User Interfaces (UI), icons for web, iOS and native apps on a daily basis. They know web trends move fast and anticipate a high turnover of styles. This means that YummyGum needs to stay up-to-date at all times with the latest software used to produce their desired looks.

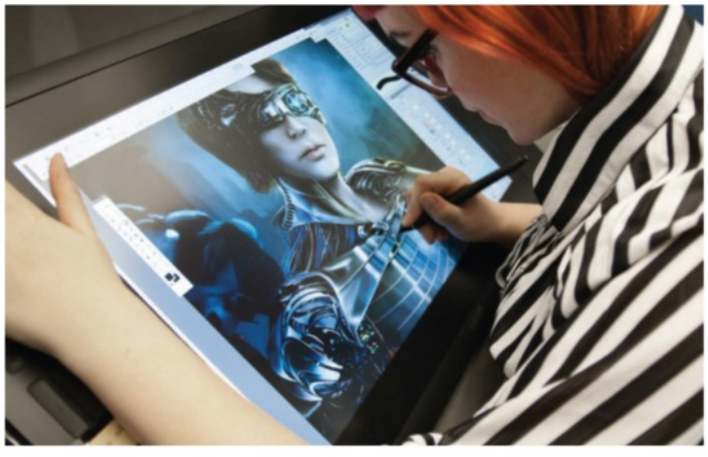
This factor has had a huge bearing on the studio's eventual acceptance of Adobe's new subscription-based software, after initially being hesitant. "The entry cost for software is now much lower. Anyone can spare a few bucks to try out new software for a few months. As it's crucial for us to always use current software, it's becomes a solid 'win' for us both."

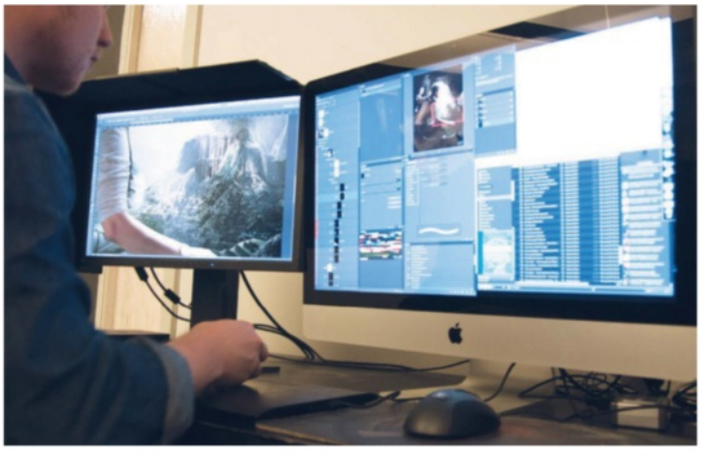
Several other functions have the pair enthusiastic about Adobe's new launch. "Syncing documents with the Creative Cloud and across devices is super-efficient. Vince can draw on an iPad and I can immediately take his sketch into Photoshop." CC's new Shape Properties panel is also set to augment the YummyGum workflow. "By using shapes with adjustable properties, we can easily play around with each other's designs and tweak until we're all happy," Ephraïm explains. "We can also easily re-use values, such as border radiuses and have a consistent look throughout all of our designs."

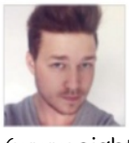


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Philip Engström
Commercial retoucher at Eightbit studio

The entire Eightbit studio (www.eightbit.se) team works to create massive projects for some of the globe's biggest international clients. Sony, Bosch and Volkswagen are just a few that have been added to its roster over the years. Philip Engström has been an important cog in this commercial retouch studio for some time and knows better than anyone how important it is to share ideas and content with clients as quickly as possible. For the creative industry, it is absolutely vital.

That is why Engström and the entire Eightbit team have high hopes for the new sharing abilities that are now available inside Creative Cloud. "It's easier to share a folder with a client by just dragging and dropping files. They can view and give feedback without having to go through the process of mailing or re-uploading content."

Engström also believes that the new Creative Cloud for teams subscription is a great incentive. "We're all using standalone licenses right now, but in the future the team license will probably replace these. This is due to how easy Adobe has made it to once again upload and share up to 100GB of content, in one location." Eightbit feel this is a real boon for large teams working on multiple projects at any given time.

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Photoshop CC Hidden Gems

Adobe manager discusses the best new features

Photoshop product manager, Stephen Nielson works closely with Adobe's digital imaging engineers to help make applications the best they can be. Here in this interview he talks about all the new features in Photoshop CC, some of which you may not have known about.

What new Photoshop CC tool has you the most excited?

The new Camera Shake Reduction tool, which can be found by selecting Filter> Sharpen>Shake Reduction. Our engineers have figured out how to take an otherwise unusable photo and remove blur caused by moving your camera. We've already seen customers recover photographs of loved ones and law enforcement have recovered license plate numbers with this amazing technology.

Which new filters really make a difference?

By adding ACR 8 as a filter Adobe has opened up all kinds of new workflows. Before Photoshop CC, ACR was normally used only when opening an image. With ACR as a filter you can make adjustments at any time to any layer. This gives customers more flexibility to use powerful ACR tools like Highlights, Shadows, Temperature and Clarity, at any time.

Who really benefits from the new Preserve Details option?

The new Preserve Details option, now founding the Image Size>Resample dialog, will benefit anyone who enlarges photographs in Photoshop. Our best-in-class algorithm can increase the size of an image with very little noise by preserving the edges, which results in photorealistic details.

Has Photoshop CC taken advantage of 64-bit support?

More computers are coming with 8GB, 16GB and even 32GB of RAM. As a 64-bit native application, Photoshop CC is ready to take advantage of that extra memory. It also makes better use of your graphics card by rendering complex operations like Blur Gallery and Liquify separately from the CPU.

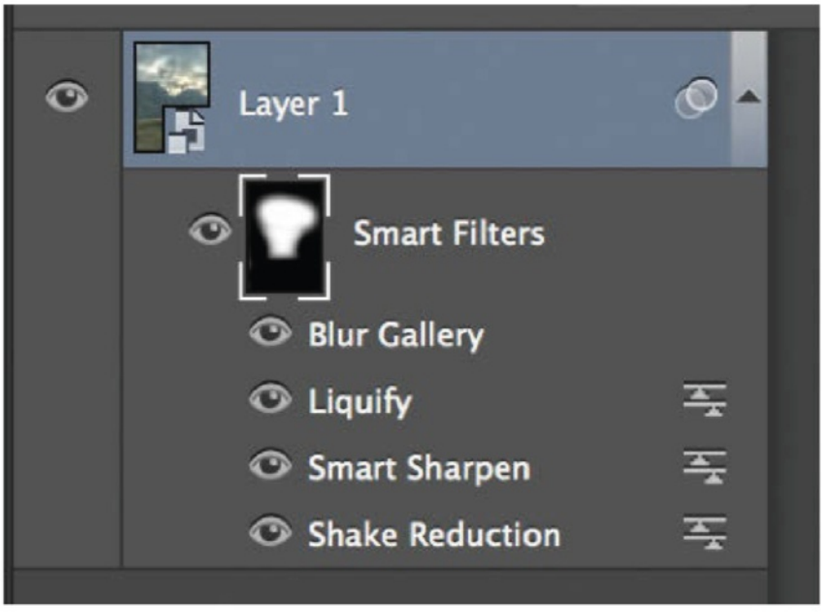
What new time-savers can we expect from Photoshop CC?

Photoshop CC has over two dozen new time-saving features. The installation can now migrate all of your presets from the last version of Photoshop and no longer requires a restart. Adobe has also improved the reliability of saving to network file shares, improved the performance of 3D painting, added a new tool to Liquify and much more.

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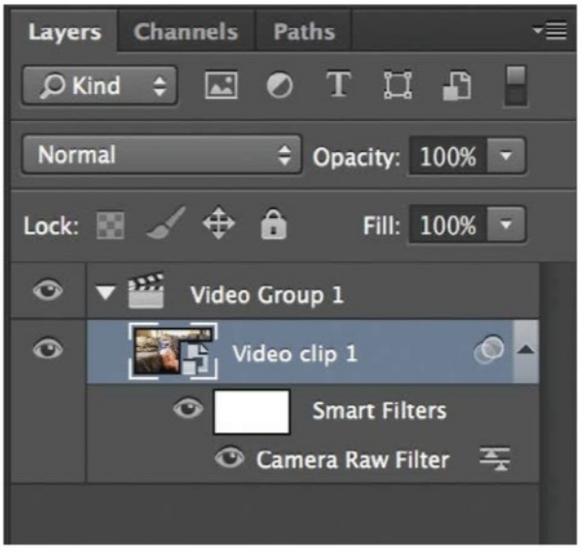
Adobe's pick of the best

Stephen Nielson reveals some of the most useful tools to improve images and workflow



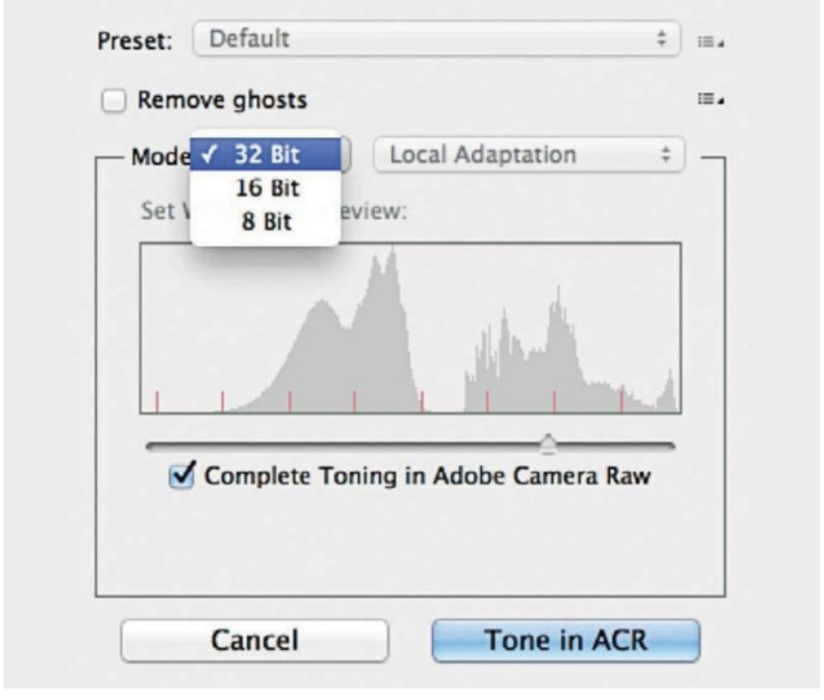
Smarter workflows with Smart Filters

Smart Objects and Smart Filters allow for powerful workflows. You can now use Camera Shake Reduction, the all-new Smart Sharpen, Liquify and Blur Gallery as completely non-destructive Smart Filters. This means you can always go back and edit your original image.



Use Adobe Camera Raw with video

ACR can be used on JPEGs and video. Lightroom 5 supports some video adjustments and so does Photoshop CC, with full ACR support available for the first time. Just convert your video to a Smart Object (Filters->Convert for Smart Filters) then apply ACR as a filter (Filters->Camera Raw Filter).



Tone HDR images with Adobe Camera Raw

A little-known feature in Photoshop CC is the ability to use the intuitive ACR controls like Exposure, Contrast, Highlights, Shadows, and Clarity to tone an HDR image. Start by selecting your bracketed shots in Merge to HDR Pro. Change the Mode to 32-bit and select Tone in ACR in the bottom-right.

What do you think?

Attitudes from around the globe

Our Facebook community tells you what they think about the changes Adobe has made to its software

"More pros than cons I think!"

Elias Klingén / Sweden

"I wasn't thrilled at first, but there are a lot of pros. I always upgrade to the latest version anyway and this just spreads the cost. You get a lot for $600 a year"

Jay Levine / USA

"I will never rent software. Adobe is making a big mistake. Most people will look elsewhere for their photo editing needs I think. Jolly bad show"

Steve McAleney / United Kingdom

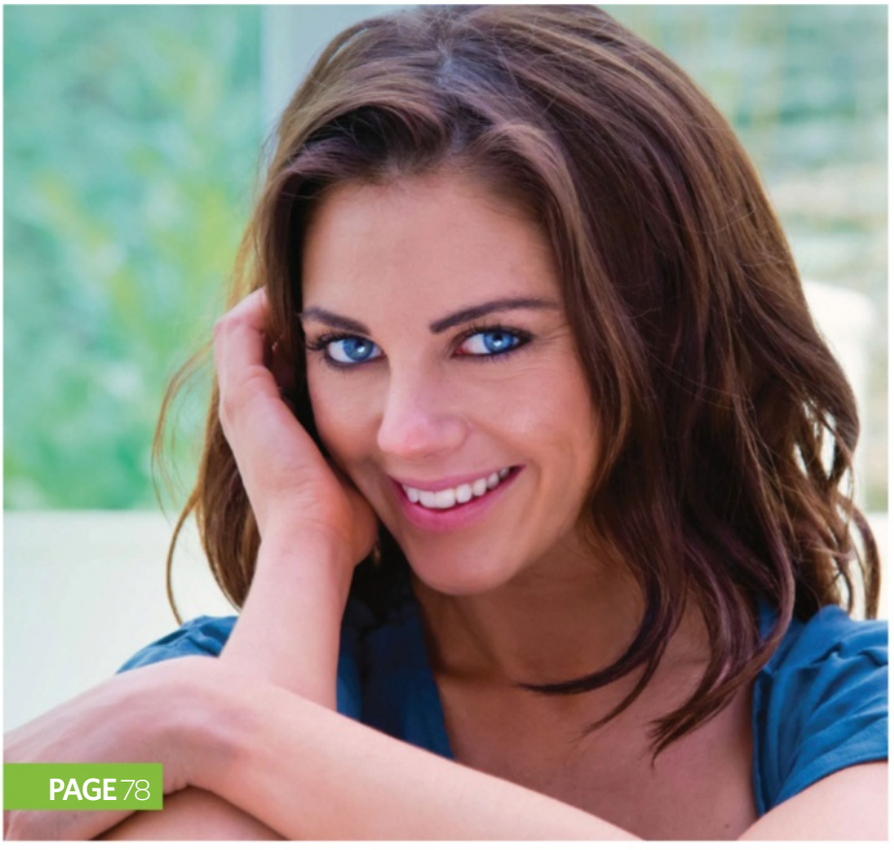

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Editing essentials

Get to grips with retouching, repairing and all the basic photo edits


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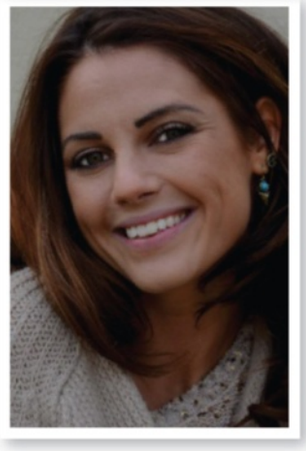
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Repair your photos

From bad lighting to problem skin, check out our essential photo-fix guide!

Cameras do a good job of helping us come close to the perfect image, but there are still so many snaps that don't come out the way we want them to. This could be due to awkward lighting, poor colour or general blurriness, and it's enough to render a good image useless.

To tackle the issue, we've compiled our best tricks and techniques for improving your images, and fixing those common problems that every photographer faces on a daily basis – no matter how good their camera is. We look at the processes and tools that form part of these essential rescue techniques, all in aid of the pursuit of photographic perfection.

So take a moment to round up all your images that you think could do with sprucing up, and try out some of the following tricks. From controlling colour and exposure to bringing back detail and cropping for visual impact, these simple processes are designed for speed and effectiveness. Let's face it, if you've come back from a trip away, or have been outside shooting lots of images, then you probably don't want to sit down for hours to edit them all. You'll be impressed with what can be done using the right tools and adjustments, and how a 'bad' image can be transformed into an artful composition.

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Instant results

Don't underestimate the power of Levels



Problem

Bad lighting

Capturing perfect exposures is the biggest challenge for every photographer. Incorrect exposure is usually down to the differences between the background and the main subject in terms of brightness. This can make it very difficult for cameras to capture the two extremes for a balanced overall exposure.

Solution

Levels adjustment

We can separate the subject from the rest of the image to rescue the exposure. The Levels adjustment is a very dependable one that will help us fix problems such as bad exposure in no time at all. Split into three areas, Levels contains a graph showing the distribution of light through shadows, highlights and midtones. Controlling these regions is very simple to do.



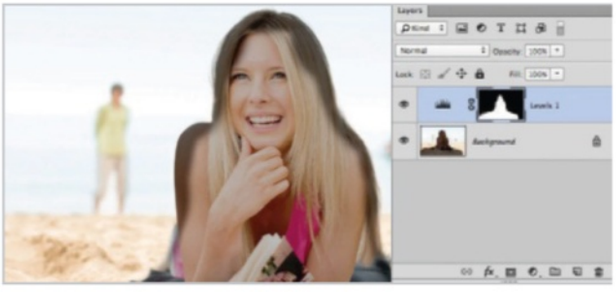
Shadows/Highlights

Call up the Shadows/Highlights adjustment from the Image menu to bring back details in dark and light areas of an image. This will also help improve exposure, giving you lots of control over the midtone contrast, colour and brightness of all areas of your image. Push this too far, however, and you may end up with a very peculiar exposure. Be sure to have Preview ticked and click on Show More Options to adjust the Tonal Widths and bring your image to life.



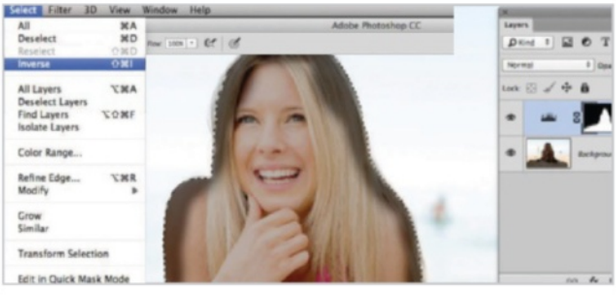
Lack of light

01 Sometimes, there's not enough light to expose the subject. Apply Levels as a new layer and slide the Highlights and Midtones left to correct for the main subject.



Mask exposure

02 Using the Levels adjustment's mask, paint away the background with a soft brush to reveal the unedited original. You may need to go over the subject's edges.



Select background

03 Hide the Levels adjustment and locate the Quick Selection tool (Q). Select the background around the main subject. Reveal the Levels adjustment and go to Select>Inverse to flip the selection.



Trim excess

04 Use the Eraser tool (E) to remove excess dark parts over the edges and hit Cmd/Ctrl+D to remove the selection. You should be left with a more balanced exposure. Lower the Levels' Opacity to suit.

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Boost colour tones

Make colour a bigger part of your image



Problem

Dull colours

Colours can make or break an image, and that's why it's important to be able to control exactly how much of it is there. Images can suffer from poor colour when there's not enough light or contrast, and also if the subject is lacking vibrant colour in the first place.

Solution

Sponge tool

The Sponge tool is a lifesaver when it comes to rescuing colour, as we can selectively bring back colours. Using layers, we can control the opacity of parts of the image, and as the Sponge works in the same way as a brush, we can apply a soft, selective adjustment with lots of control.



Sponge to start

01 Select the Sponge tool (beneath Dodge and Burn). Once it's selected, you can hit O to quickly jump to it. Press Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate the Background.



Clipping control

02 In the Options bar, set the Sponge to 200px with Hardness: 0%, Mode: Saturate and Flow: 60%. Also tick the Vibrance box to prevent over-saturation.



Brushed colour

03 Paint over the subject and any areas lacking colour to bring saturation back to normal. Apply the brush in strokes to control the changes. Lower the Flow to apply more subtle colour to areas, if needed.



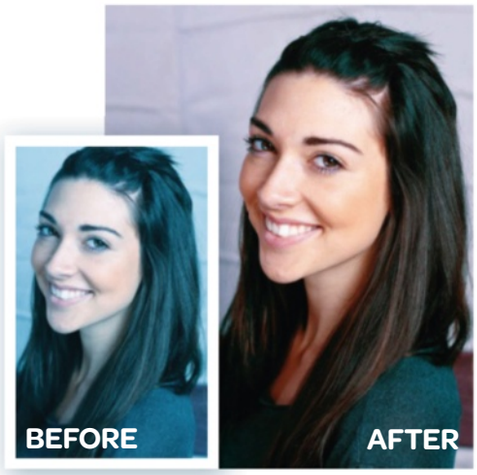
Blend layers

04 Watch out for colour banding; this occurs when the Sponge is applied too heavily. Apply the changes to a duplicate layer, so you can lower Opacity to fade the effect and try blend modes like Saturation.

Balance colours

Remove ugly tints with a Color Balance layer

White balance, or the colour temperature of light, is something that cameras usually take care of when the image is shot. If you find that colour just doesn't seem to turn out right, head to Layer>Color Balance. When correcting blue tints, slide towards the red and yellow sides of the three sliders. You may need to go all the way to the plus or minus 100 extremes in order to bring back a more normal colour.



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Clear skin

Put your portraits under the care of Photoshop's trusty healing brushes for perfect complexions

Problem

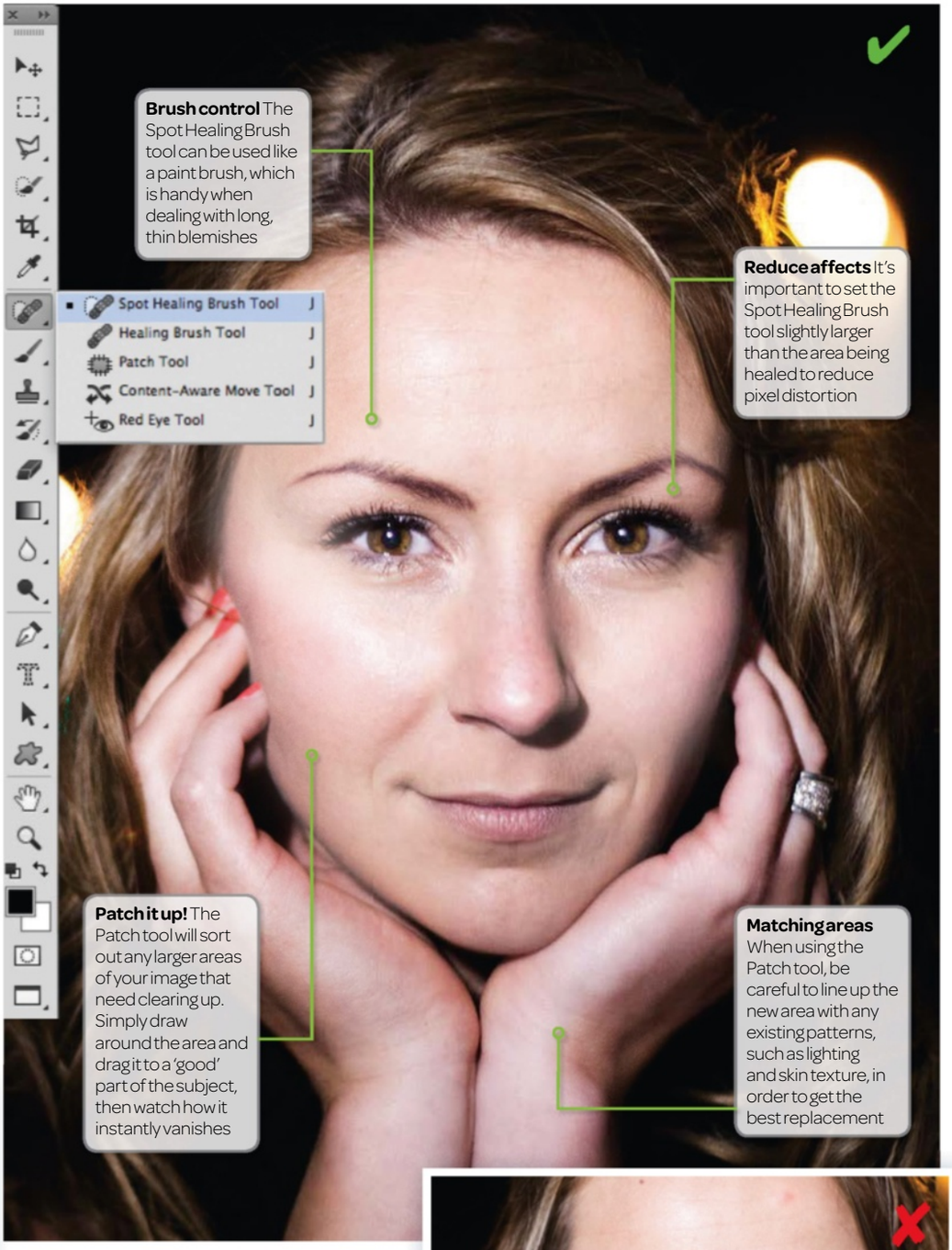
Spots and blemishes

Images rarely come out spotless straight from the camera, and when it comes to spots and blemishes we can retouch them to make faces appear clear. Using tools such as the Clone Stamp, the Patch and the Spot Healing Brush, there's nothing that can stand in the way of a spotless image.

Solution

Patch and Spot Healing Brush

These two tools are vital in the retouching process for removing spots and other marks or blemishes. The Spot Healing Brush is ideal for those small areas on a person's face that need removing. The Patch works wonders for getting rid of larger blemishes, by copying and then blending the clear areas over the top of undesirable ones.







Expert tip

Better complexion

To improve the overall complexion of the skin, select the Brush tool and set it to Screen in the Options bar. Pick a light skin tone from the person's face by holding Opt/Alt. Then, on a duplicate version of the Background layer (press Cmd/Ctrl+J), brush over the skin to apply soft and subtle blemish removal. This quick process is great for reducing reddish skin, where the person may have severe sunburn.

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Quick fixes

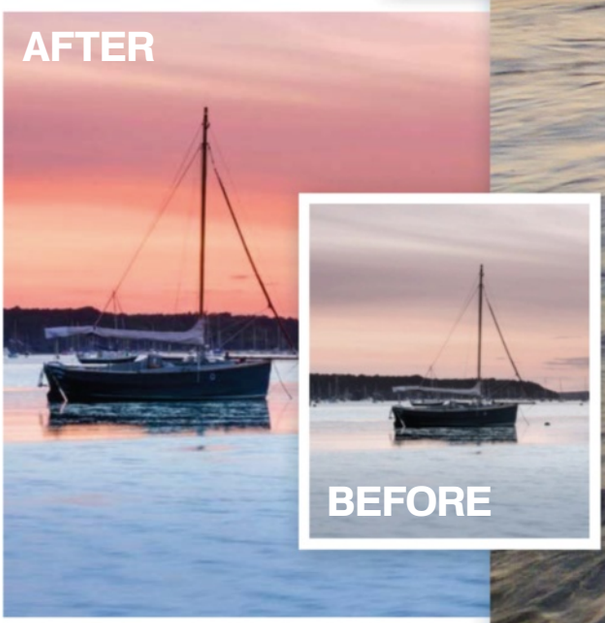
Here are a few Photoshop secrets to help quickly banish common problems

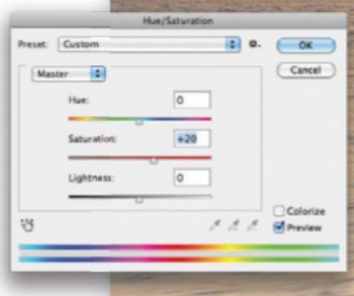
We don't always have the time to sit down in front of an image and undergo time-intensive edits; we need quick-fire, effective techniques. To take any image and make it better instantly, we can call upon a number of adjustments that will quickly adapt the colour, lighting and tone of an image. These easy edits involve nothing more than a click or two of the mouse for great results.

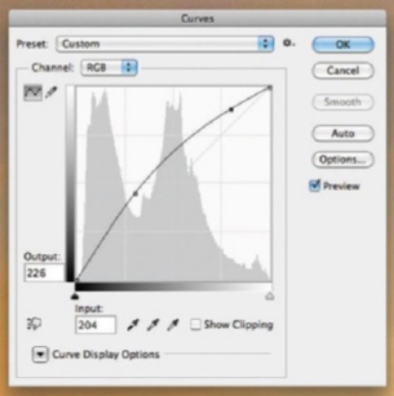


Instant colour improvements

The fastest way see an improvement in the colour of an image is to head to the Hue/Saturation adjustment inside the Image menu (or simply press Cmd/Ctrl+U). Inside the adjustment, look to the Saturation slider and increase this to between 10 and 30 to see a significant improvement.







Brighten up with a curves adjustment One very easy way to instantly brighten up a dull exposure is to press Cmd/Ctrl+M to open up the Curves adjustment. Click on the diagonal line in the adjustment and push it upwards. Placing one or more points along this line will help you to control light in the highlights, midtones and shadows of an image

Auto Contrast, Tone, Color These commands offer a standard correction for tweaking colour casts, dull tones and poor contrast. They could save those vital few minutes in the editing of an image, and provide just enough correction to make the image more appealing. These can all be found at the top of the Image menu, or you can use the shortcuts for each one, such as Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+L for Tone

Expert tip

Add stunning light

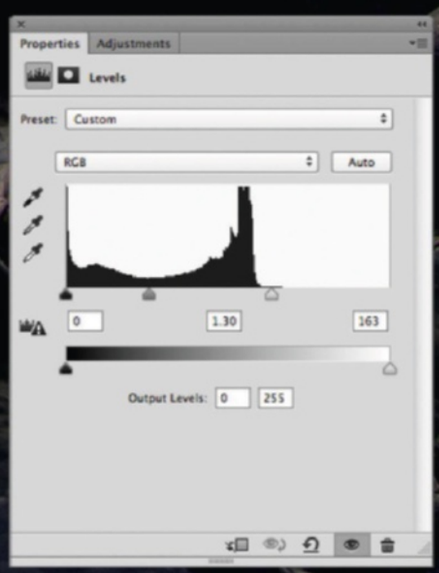
The Screen blend mode is perfect for creating glows of light. You can create a subtle glow and simulate light leaks or sunlight by using a big soft brush and a grey tone. With one stroke, it will add a cinematic effect that makes images stand out. It works best on portraits, but you can also use it to enhance existing light or create focal points.

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Gradients for boosting sky contrast Sometimes we just want to improve the sky or clouds in an image, so they have more impact. The Gradient tool is ideal for this. Press G to select the tool, and then D to reset your Foreground and Background colours to black and white. In the Options bar, choose a Solid to Transparent gradient, setting it to a Linear style and changing Mode to Overlay. Click and drag a gradient from the top of the image down to the ground and watch how the sky pops!

Straighten horizons Wonky images are quick to sort out using the Crop tool. Press C to jump straight to the tool, and then look inside the Options bar and click on the Straighten command. Simply draw a line over an obviously straight edge that's wonky, such as the horizon, and the image should readjust itself. Hit Return to confirm the correction, or rotate the crop box to angle it to perfection

Auto Levels The Levels adjustment is one of the most effective adjustments for adapting exposure. It also comes equipped with an Auto button that will make sure the highlights, shadows and midtones are balanced correctly. Press Cmd/Ctrl+L to load up the adjustment on any image for a handy one-click fix



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Get perfect composition

Turn amateur shots into professional pics

Problem

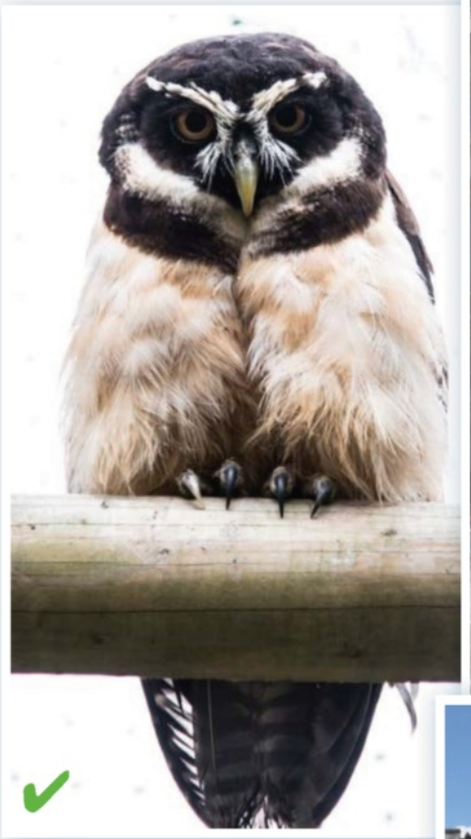
Awkward composition

In the pursuit of better images, look to the Crop tool to compose images for maximum visual harmony. It's usually a good idea to capture just a bit more of the scene than less of it when you take the photo, as you can always crop in later on.

Solution

Crop tool

Photoshop's Crop tool is our saving grace, and is one of the most important in any photo project or quick fix. It's simple yet has the power to completely transform your images into eye-catching or emotive composites. The tool is key to improving the composition and visual balance of an image, and you'll be pleasantly surprised at how much of a difference cropping an image will make.

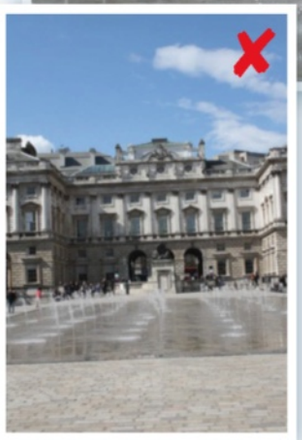




...on animal photos

When working with photos of animals, it's important to show as much of the animal as possible, and to remove anything uninteresting from the background. To do this, crop in tight to the animal's fur and match the posture of the animal with a portrait- or landscape-style crop box.





...on buildings

With shots involving architecture, it's all in the details. Crop in for a better look at patterns and brickwork, and cut out any distracting objects around the edges. The crop box can be used to level the image by rotating one of the four corner points, and you can use the Grid overlay to level the image out.





...on long shots

The way in which the image is cropped will help better determine its meaning or message. A well-cropped image guides the eye towards the most important part of the frame, such as where the main action is happening.

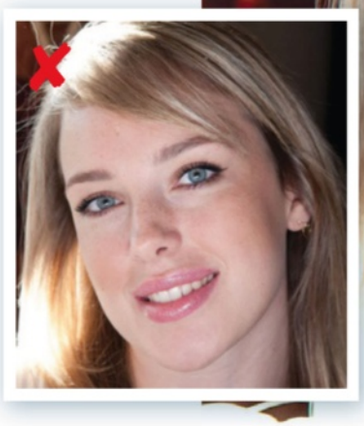
Pin-sharp images

Explore the best filters to correct out-of-focus shots

Problem

Blurry shots

A big concern when shooting images under poor light conditions, or where the subject is moving, is blurriness. This can prove impossible to eliminate in the most severely affected images. However, if an image comes out blurry then there are usually a number of tools and filters that we can use to help reduce this and improve the way that an image looks.

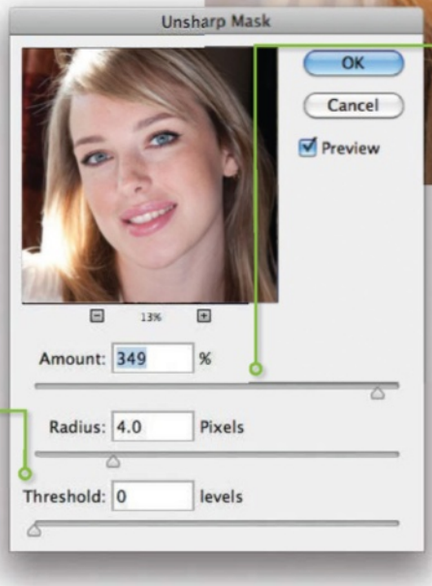


Solution

Filters

Filters in Photoshop are not just for arty effects, but also for practical photo fixes. The Sharpen and High Pass filters offer ways to redeem image detail that was lost due to blurring. You'll find even these filters have their limitations, so learning how to control them is crucial for the best results.

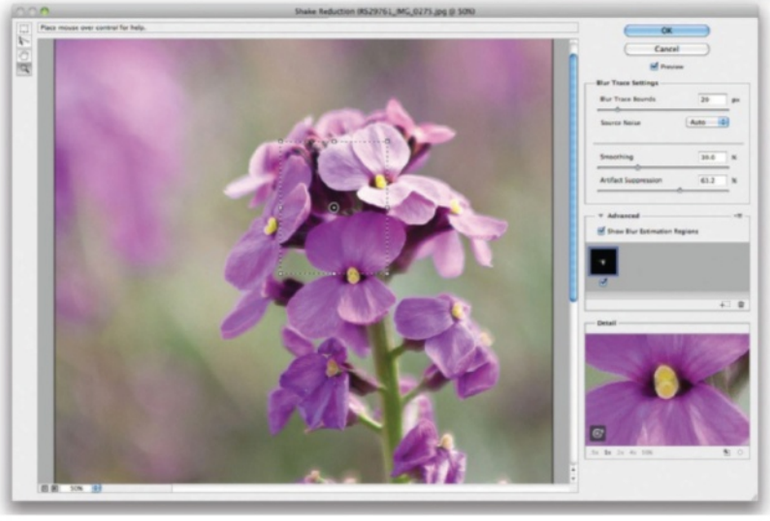
Unsharp Mask filter Although this sounds like it will have a negative effect, the Unsharp Mask filter actually makes an image much crisper. It does this by increasing the contrast between neighbouring pixels



Amount Increase the Amount slider until your image appears visibly sharper. Depending on the extent of the blurring, this value will be different each time

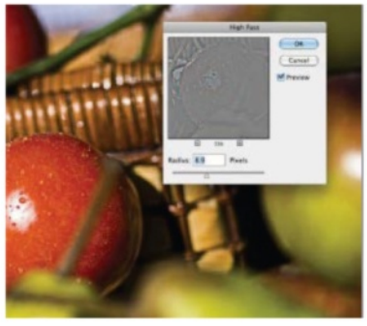
Fewer halos There's no hard and fast rule for sharpening an image, but try to keep Radius as low as possible to reduce halo effects around a subject

Threshold Zoom in and assess the final image with Preview ticked. The Threshold slider will reduce the appearance of halos and distortion if you need to control these further



Expert tip

High Pass route



If Photoshop could have a secret weapon, then the High Pass filter would be it. Hidden in the Other filters, High Pass brings details back to dramatically improve any image. To use the filter, duplicate your Background layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J), change its blend mode from Normal to Hard Light and apply the High Pass filter using a Radius setting to suit your image.

Photoshop CC

Benefit from the new features CC has to offer

If you're using Photoshop CC then you'll be able to take advantage of the new Shake Reduction filter. Use this to compensate for subtle blurring that can appear in images shot with long exposures, or when the main subject moves slightly. The filter will track the direction of the movement and compensate to make the image appear in-focus.

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Retouching in Photoshop CC

Learn how to use the new features in Photoshop CC to edit portrait and fashion photos

Adobe's latest version of Photoshop presents several exciting new options to users. These range from great new technology, like the new Camera Shake Reduction filter, to subtle improvements, like the now-accessible brush rotation widget.

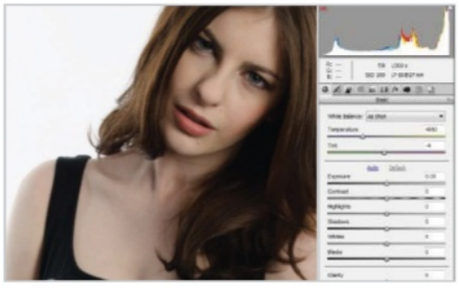
This tutorial will focus on a handful that will be of particular interest to photographers and retouchers. Working from a starting portrait, we will put into action some of the latest features found in Adobe Camera Raw 8.0, including the new Spot Removal brush capabilities. Moving into Photoshop CC, the tutorial will highlight a few major improvements and use them to further fix the image. The Smart Sharpen filter and the Preserve Details option are also explored, demonstrating how these are combined to perfect photo enlargement.

In addition to the updated tools, the tutorial will touch on a long-awaited feature for working with paths and rounded rectangles. Follow these steps to see what Photoshop CC really has in store.

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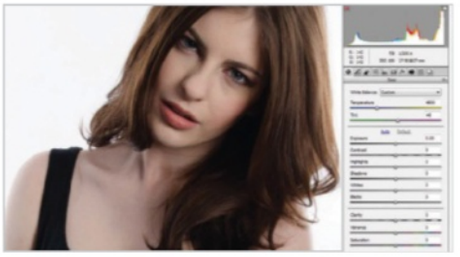
Smarter image editing in Photoshop CC

The newest release has more options for non-destructive photo editing than ever before



Camera Raw 8.0

01 Photoshop CC is paired with Adobe Camera Raw 8.0, which boasts several useful new features. Begin by opening the supplied disc file DSC_5385.NEF. This is a RAW file that cannot be opened directly in Photoshop. Opening it will launch Camera RAW 8.0 instead.



White Balance

02 The model is decently lit against the solid white backdrop, but there is still some room for improvement. There's a slightly warm colour cast to the photo that can be removed using the White Balance Tool. It's a grey-filled eyedropper found in the top tool bar. Use it to sample a mid-grey area of her dress.



Colour Correction

03 Use the sliders in the Basic tab of the RAW interface to adjust colour and exposure, making these look how you want them to in the image. Alleviate shadow areas by adjusting the Shadows and the Blacks sliders, then increasing the Clarity and the Vibrance settings, which helps to enhance the image's tone and detail.



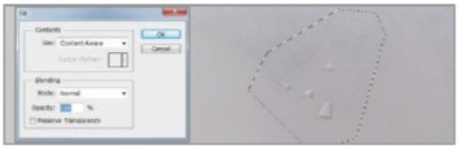
New Spot Removal tool

04 The Spot Removal tool is a well-loved feature from previous versions of Camera RAW. The significant change in ACR 8.0 and Photoshop CC is that you no longer need to apply it through circular areas. Now you can stroke over areas, creating irregular shapes that are then healed by the program as it finds similar pixels to merge with the selected area. This is done non-destructively, as source and target pins can be moved and readjusted to define fixes. The new Visualize Spots slider uses a black-and-white translation to assist in finding irregularities in the image that are candidates for healing.



Spot Removal Opacity

05 Use the Spot Healing Brush to outline the pronounced tendon in the model's neck. The default operation of the tool completely replaces the area with smooth skin. A more natural correction isn't to remove the tendon entirely, but to make it less pronounced. By decreasing the Opacity slider to a value of around 55, we can still apply and show through some original pixels, but blend it in with the smooth skin.



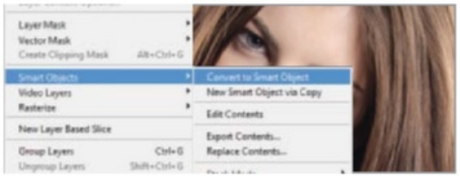
Background cleanup

06 Click Open Image to apply the Camera RAW adjustments and send the file to Photoshop CC. Notice the area near her waist where there's visible damage to the background material. Select a small portion of the damaged area using one of the Marquee tools, then use Edit>Fill>Content Aware Fill to remove the imperfections. If the Content Aware Fill pulls pixel information from the dress instead of the background, use the Spot Healing brush tool or a tighter selection.



Smart Sharpen

07 The new Smart Sharpen filter does an extremely impressive job of recovering details from fuzzy images. One of the best new aspects of this filter is the way the Amount can be boosted to extreme levels without the image suffering from edge halos, as in previous versions. For the image here, set the Amount to 266%, Radius to 1.5px and the Reduce Noise slider to 81% to get the necessary detail.



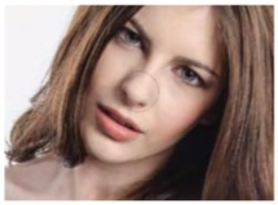
CS6 CC update features

08 Among the newly available features is Smart Object support for filters, which before was restricted to standard layers. The new Blur Gallery filters are included, as well as the Liquify filter. A favourite of pro retouchers everywhere, this is now available non-destructively as a Smart Filter. Convert the layer to a Smart Object with the Image>Smart Object menu before adding these.

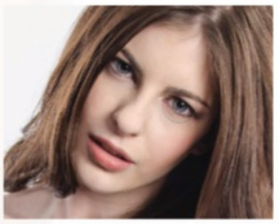
09 A better, faster Liquify filter

Photoshop CC integrates CS6's subscriber-only features, including the ability to use Liquify

Snub Nose Sharpen the model's nose by switching to the Pucker Tool, and apply in a similar way to the eyes. Set the brush size slightly larger than the tip of her nose, at a value of around 150. Gently click until it shrinks slightly. Be sure to use single, controlled clicks, otherwise it's easy to get carried away



Eye popping A very common beauty retouching technique is to increase eye size and shape. To do this, select the Bloat tool and increase the brush size to completely cover the whites of the eyes. Carefully click directly on the pupil, making the eyes wider



Fuller Figure Switch back to the Bloat Tool and reduce the brush size to around 70. Then give the lower lip area a bit more volume with just a few clicks, but be careful not to distort the teeth. Increase the brush size to around 450 and add some fullness to other body areas



Expert tip

Preserve Details

One of the long-standing rules with photomanipulation is to avoid resampling upwards. If an image is enlarged too much, the pixel information breaks down and detail is lost. Photoshop CC reduces this restriction with a new Preserve Details option when resampling. Go to Image>Image Size, check the Resample box and choose Preserve Details from the drop-down menu.

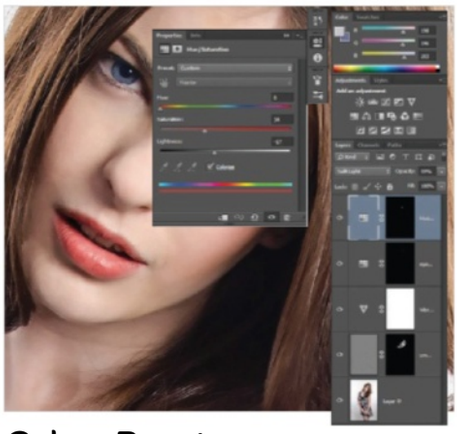
More Flexible Workflow

Photoshop CC's support for Smart Filters allows greater flexibility and creativity when retouching



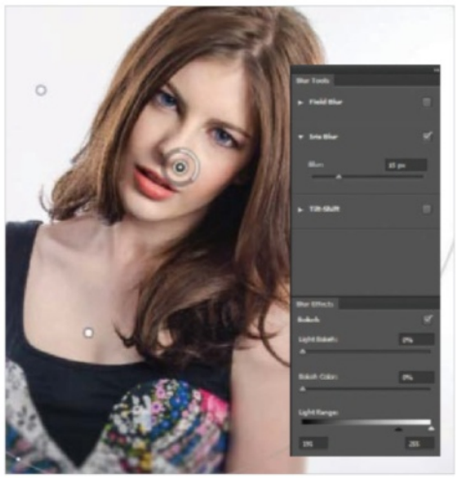
Smart Skin Smoothing

10 Double-click the Smart Object to edit contents. Notice that these are in their pre-Liquify form. Duplicate the image layer and invert, pressing Ctrl/Cmd+I. Set this new layer's blending mode to Vivid Light. Select Filter>Other>High Pass and set a radius of 2. Then go to Filter>Blur> Gaussian Blur and use a radius of 5. The result should be an extremely smooth skin layer. Hold Opt/Alt and add an inverted layer mask. Use a white soft brush at 40% Opacity to apply the softening effect to the model's skin alone.



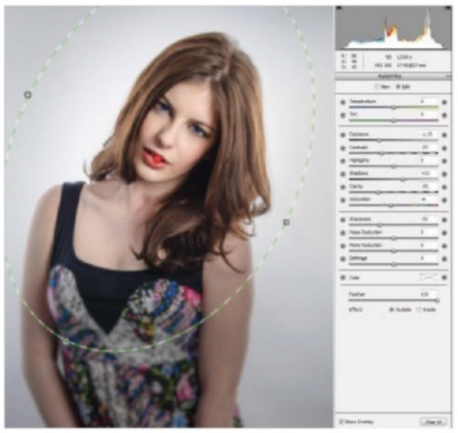
Colour Boost

11 Use a Vibrance Adjustment layer, with Vibrance set to +36 to boost the colour of the dress. Then add a Hue/ Saturation adjustment layer set to Colorize. Set Hue at 229, Saturation at 26, and Lightness at +7, enhancing the eye colour. Apply a layer mask to target the effect to the irises. Use another Hue/Saturation Colorize adjustment layer to add tint to the lips, setting Hue at 0, Saturation at 34 and Lightness at -17. Change the layer blending mode to Soft Light, reducing Opacity to 59%.



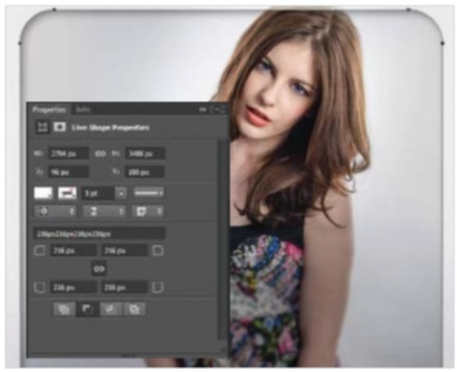
Smarter Blur Gallery

12 One of the most celebrated features from CS6, the Blur Gallery, just got even better in Photoshop CC. Now it can be applied as a Smart Object. The actual menu item is shuffled slightly, but can be found under Filter>Blur>Iris Blur. Rotate the on-screen widget to match the angle of the model's head, then position the focal point directly over her face. Be sure the falloff markers sit well outside of her head so that her face isn't blurred. Set blur to 15px.



Back to Camera RAW

13 Camera RAW can also be applied as a Smart Filter. Go to Filter>Camera RAW Filter and launch the application. Select the new Radial Filter from the tool bar, which is the last icon in the menu. Drag out an ellipse and pull the exposure setting down to -1.35, and reduce the saturation to -6 and the clarity to -35. This new Radial Filter tool lets you specify a type of custom vignette to direct focal points in the image.



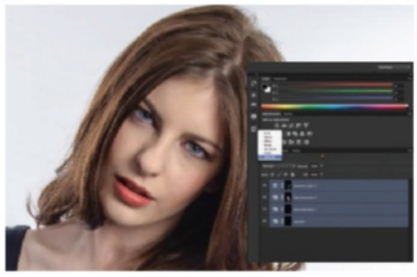
New Shape Controls

14 Draw out a frame using the Rounded Rectangular Tool. Set the Fill to white and the Opacity to 58%. Open the Properties Panel and use the icons along the bottom to set the shape to Subtract. Enter 216 into one of the corner definitions, and all the corners should adjust accordingly. Transform the shape to the size you want for the frame, and the corners will retain their curve settings. To control the corners separately, unlock the central chain link first.

Use Color Range

Automatic selections by colour

This option comes in handy when isolating areas of colour. In simple cases, we can just use the Magic Wand to select solid colours, but when working with paint images like those in this tutorial, or ones with existing lighting, Color Range becomes a must. Make the most of the black-and-white preview to see what you've selected and use the plus and minus droppers to specify detailed areas. Click OK, and you can easily remove parts of the selection by holding down Opt/Alt or Shift and then applying the Lasso to add or remove active areas and match selected edges.



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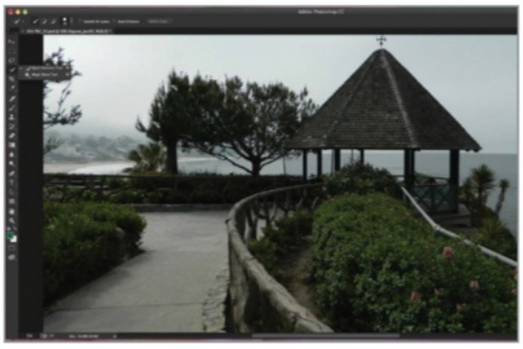
Boost your colours

Learn how to use different Adjustment layers to edit and enhance the colours in an image

Colour editing is an essential skill for image improvement and transforms a boring photo into something special. In Photoshop CC you will find a whole list of different tools under Image>Adjustments from Levels to the Brightness/Contrast options. In this tutorial, you will learn how to use Adjustment and Fill layers to apply colour, gradients and tonal adjustments without changing the original image, as well as how to edit the mask on these layers in order to control the effect that they have on the image. You will also learn how to use key techniques such as Replace Color, Shadows/Highlights and Curves to boost your image and polish your editing skills.

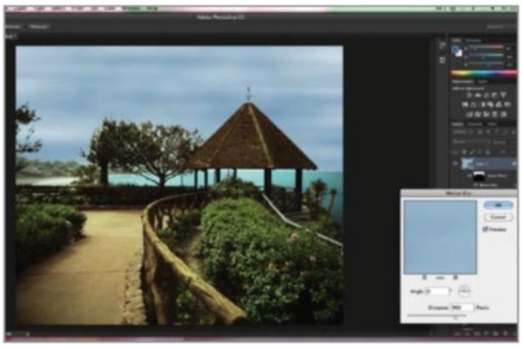
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Fix the dull sky

01 Open Laguna_psc95.psd from your resources. Grab the Magic Wand tool (W) and set its Tolerance to 25, and also tick the Contiguous and Anti-alias boxes. Click on Add Selection. Now click over the sky until you have all of it selected.



Throw up some clouds

02 With the sky selected, create a new layer. Set the foreground colour to #2d6993 and the background to #ffffff. Open Filter> Render>Clouds. For a more realistic effect, open Filter>Blur>Motion Blur, set the angle to 0˚ and the Distance to 998.

Expert tip

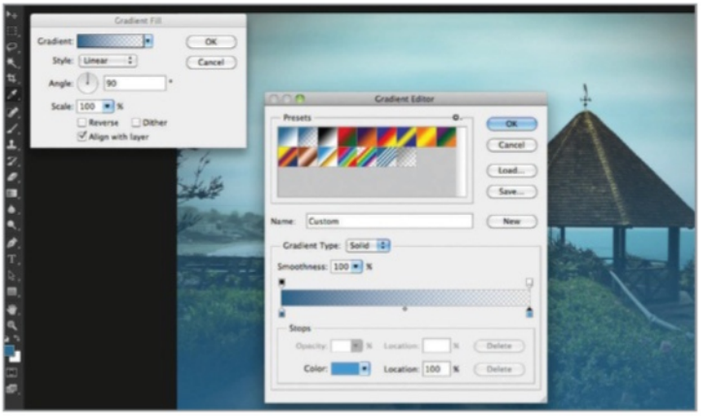
Smart Brush tool

The Smart Brush tool in CC lets you apply various effects to enhance specific areas in your images. Select an effect or adjustment colour from the Smart Brush presets. Drag or paint over the areas where you want to apply the effect and the Smart Brush automatically creates an adjustment layer. This is a great tool to edit and enhance images; explore the presets and make dramatic changes to your photos.



Grab the ocean

03 To select the ocean, click on the image layer and pick up the Magic Wand tool again. Set the Tolerance value to 30 and tick the Contiguous and Anti-alias boxes. Click on 'Add Selection' and click over the ocean until you select the whole area.



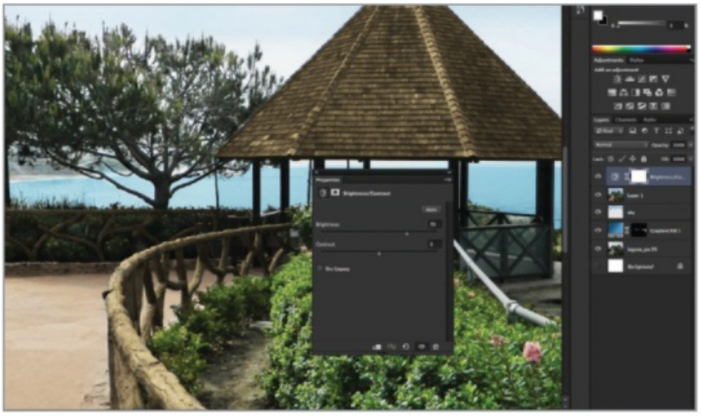
Add a soft light

04 Click on 'New Adjustment Layer' at the top of the Layers palette and choose the Gradient Fill. Click on 'Edit Gradient Box'. Change the first colour stop to # 1e4966 and the second to #4699d3. Alter the layer's blend mode to Soft Light.



Select the trees and bushes

05 Click on the Image Layer and choose the Selection Brush tool then ensure 'Add to Selection' is selected. Vary the brush size and then draw over the bushes and trees to select them.



Brighten it up

06 We need to make the brushes and trees brighter. Click on 'New Adjustment Layer' at the top of the layers palette and choose Brightness/Contrast. Increase the Brightness to 70.

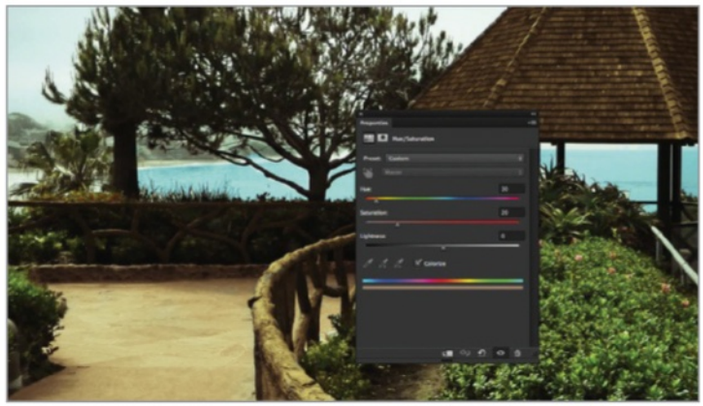
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Select the aisle

07 Repeat the selection process for the aisle. Choose the Selection Brush tool from the toolbox, click on 'Add to Selection', then draw over the aisle and spaces between the fence to select it.



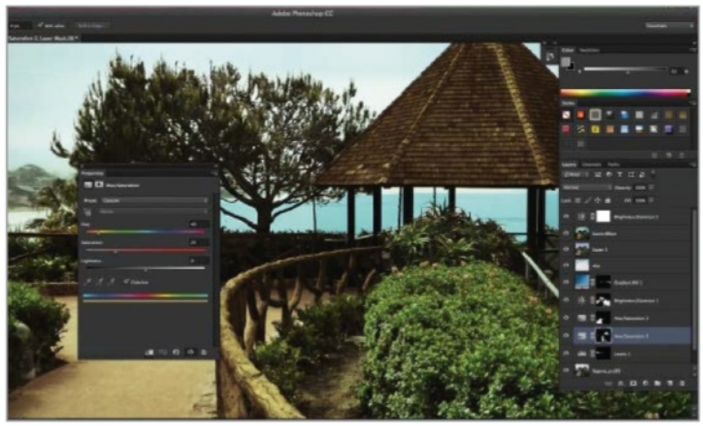
Raise the colour

08 We need to add some colour to the aisle to create a better contrast. Click on 'New Adjustment Layer' at the top of the layers palette and choose Hue/Saturation. Tick the Colorize box, changing the Hue to 30 and the Saturation to 20.



Mix up the tools

09 You can combine two selection tools to select different objects. Start by using the Polygonal Lasso tool to select the roof, then choose the Selection Brush, being sure to click on 'Add Selection', and draw over the fence to select it.



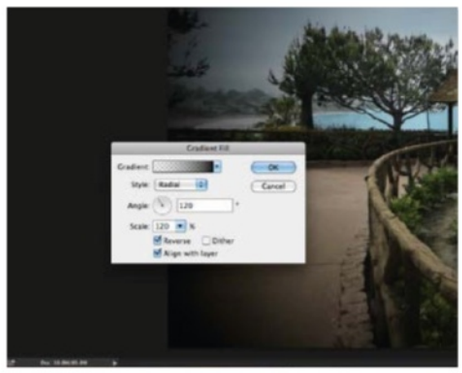
Adjust Hue and Saturation

10 With the fence and roof selected, click on New Adjustment Layer at the top of the layers palette and then choose Hue/Saturation. Tick the Colorize box, and then change the Hue to 40 and the Saturation to 25.



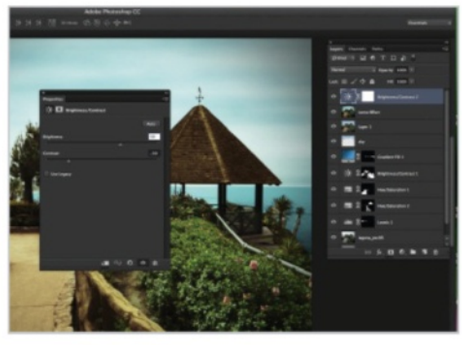
Hit the beach

11 On the image layer, choose the Selection Brush and select the beach. Click on New Adjustment Layer and choose Levels. Move the middle marker to 0.68, as this will help to bring back some of the lost details in the selected area.



Give it a Lomo

12 Ensure Background/Foreground colours are default black and white. Choose Layer>New Fill Layer>Gradient. Hit OK. Now for the Gradient Fill settings, set the Style to Radial, Angle to 120 and check Reverse and Align with layer are ticked.



Finish up

13 The image is a little dark, so let's use the Adjustment layer to increase the Brightness. Click on Adjustment layer and choose Brightness/Contrast, then increase the Brightness to 50 and decrease the Contrast to -30 to achieve a subtle effect and create a gorgeous photograph.

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Colour editing tool

Make simple colour edits in Elements using a variety of tools



Select and adjust skin tones

Photoshop CC has an easy way to select skin tones for adjusting. Open the Select menu and choose Color Range, and from the list of colours pick Skin Tones. Adjust the Fuzziness slider for the best selection.



Levels

Use Levels to adjust the brightness, contrast and the overall tones in your image. Open the Image>Adjustments menu and pick Levels. Move the sliders left or right to extend the entire tonal range.



Shadows/Highlights

Use the Shadow/Highlight command to improve the dark (shadow) and light (highlight) areas of an image. Go to Image>Adjustments>Shadows/Highlights and drag the Lighten Shadows slider to gradually bring details back into the dark areas.



Curves

The Adjust Color Curve command improves colour tones by adjusting highlights, midtones and shadows in each colour channel. Go to Image>Adjustments>Curves. On the Select a Style box, choose a preset style to apply.



Replace Color

Go to Image>Adjustments>Replace Color... to swap a colour for another. Click the eyedropper and then click on the colour you want to replace. Drag the Fuzziness slider and drag the Hue slider to add a new colour.

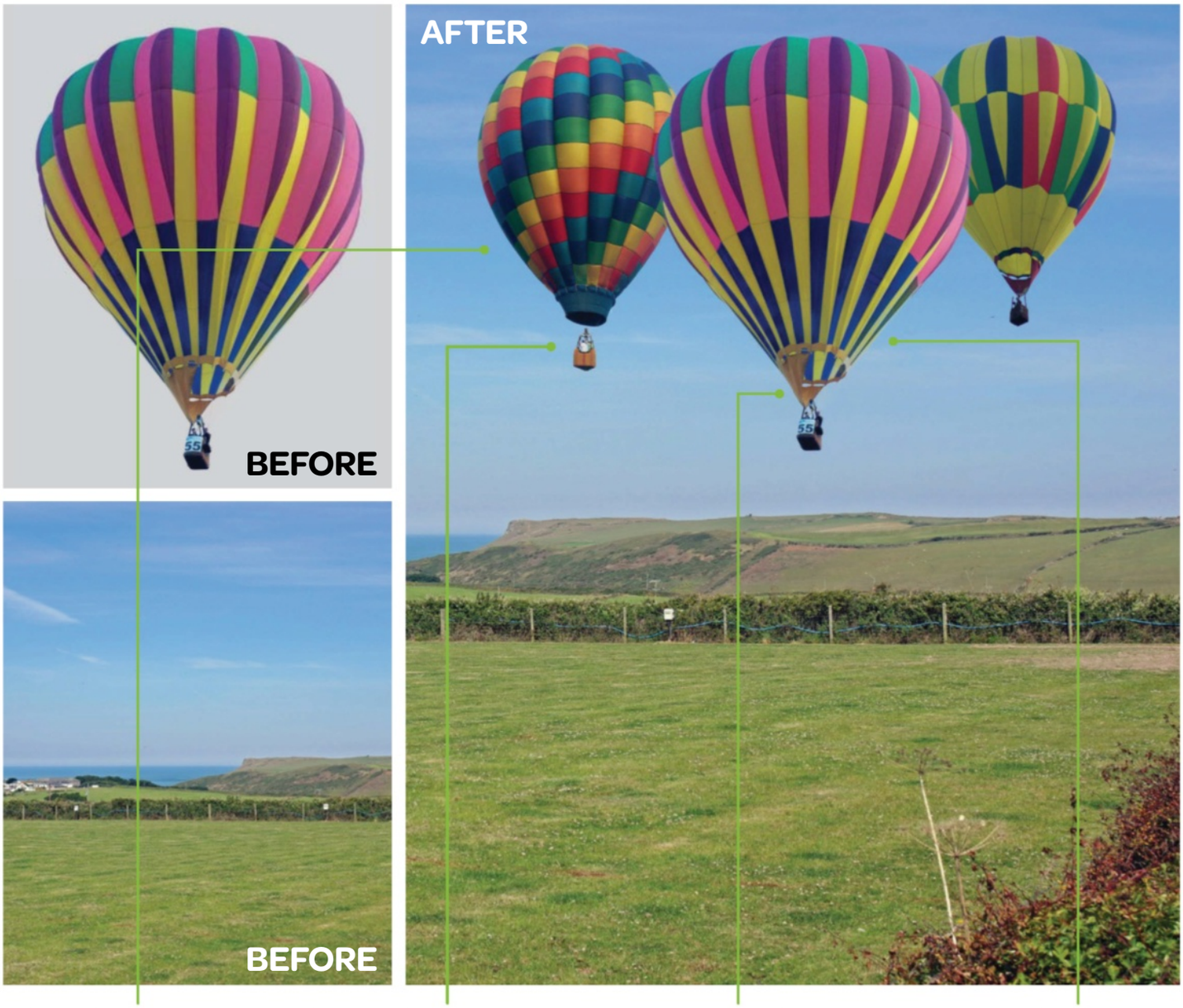


Remove Color

You can convert a specific image area or the entire image to black and white. Select a part/all of your image using one of the selection tools. Head to Image>Adjustments>Desaturate and move the sliders until you are happy.

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Quick selections Each of these balloons is from a separate photo and has been cut out using the Quick Selection tool

Refine the selection To ensure that the selections are accurate, the new Refine Edge tool has been used so that the balloons are completely isolated from their original backgrounds

Speedy solutions A simple composition like this can take around under ten minutes from start to finish

Compositing The balloons have been copied and pasted into their new surroundings and scaled to suit

Selections made easy

We take an in-depth look at the selection tools available

Making selections is one of the staple skills that any Photoshop user should learn, but it doesn't have to be difficult. You don't have to use the dreaded Pen tool (even though once you get the hang of it, it really isn't so bad), as CC offers you a wide range of easy-to-use selection tools to suit every possible project.

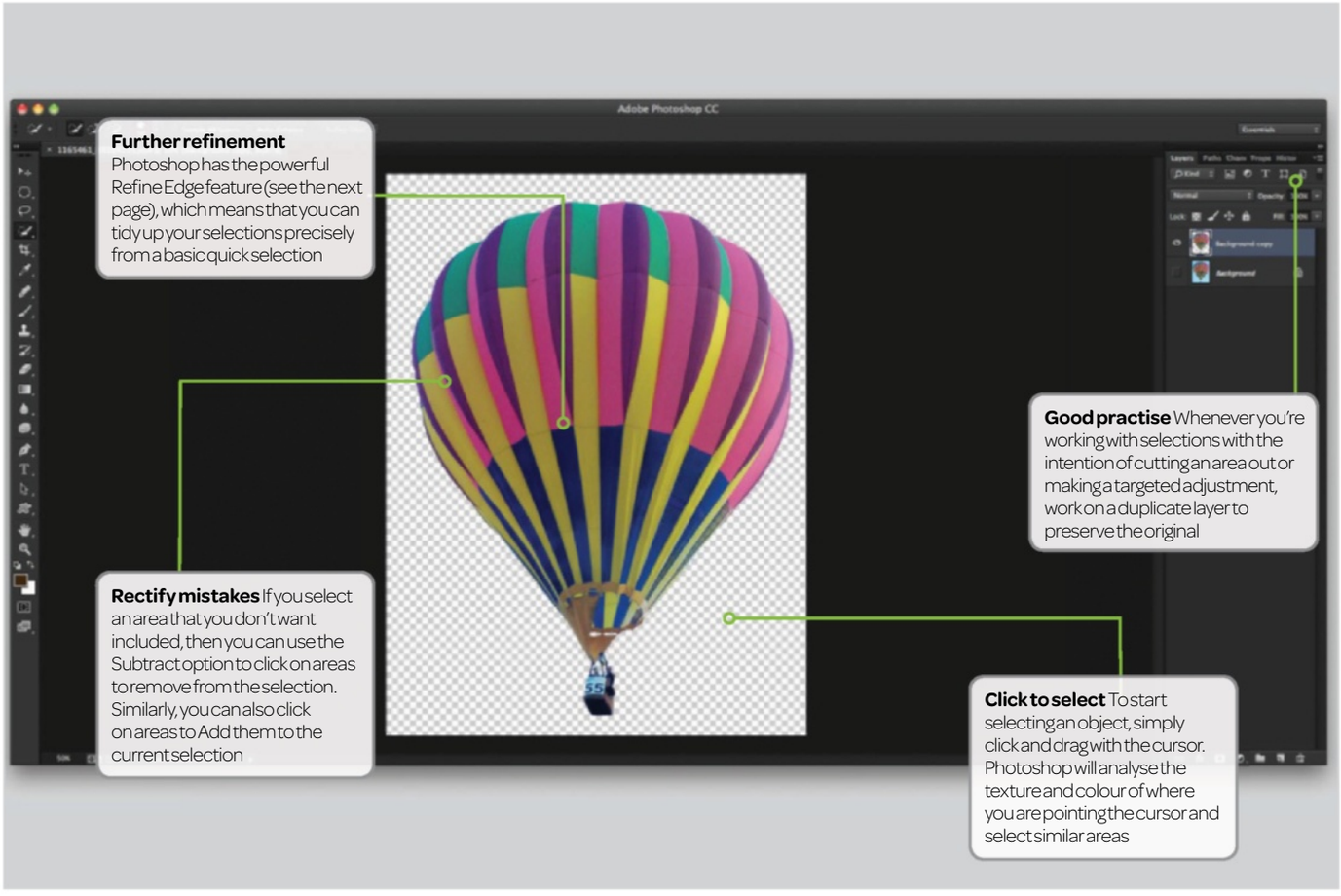
There are a number of reasons why you might need to make a selection. One of the most common is to create a new composition, for example by placing a new sky into a cloudy scene, or changing the background for a family portrait. You might also want to remove an unwanted object, or blend the best parts of two photos together. You might also want to brighten the faces of the people in your photo without affecting the rest of the background. All of these tasks use some form of selection method, so you won't get too far in editing using Photoshop without coming across them.

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The Quick Selection tool

Use Photoshop's automated selection option

Photoshop offers many selection tools that are simple to use. The Magic Wand tool (A) has always been a go-to for cutting out, but this only selects pixels of the same colour, which means it's no good unless the object you're cutting is uniform. The Quick Selection tool (A) is just as straightforward, except that it selects pixels based on where you click.



Make a quick selection Create simple selections in minutes



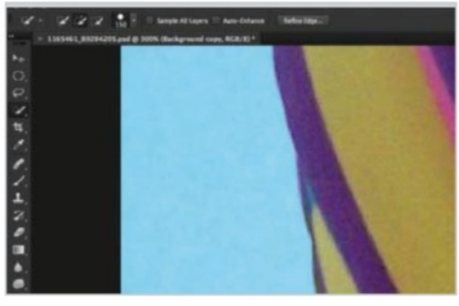
Locate the right tool

01 You will find the Quick Selection tool in the left-hand palette under the Select heading. It shares its space with the Magic Wand tool and the Selection Brush.



Start selecting

02 To start selecting, simply just click and drag. We started in the middle of the balloon and worked our way to the outer edges



Tidy it up

03 Use the Add and Subtract options in the bottom menu to click on areas you wish to add to or remove from your selection. We needed to remove small bits of background and add in a some areas.

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Better selections with Refine Edge

Get to grips with the powerful Refine Edge tool that CC has to offer

The ability to refine the edges of selections has been around in Photoshop for quite a while. However, it was with CS5 that it got a real makeover as the Refine Edge tool, with its own dialog and powerful controls to save huge amounts of time. It has continued to be refined and now with CC it is better than ever.







Get started

01 Open your image and use the Quick Selection tool to isolate the object you want to select. Now grab Refine Edge in the panel at the bottom of the screen.

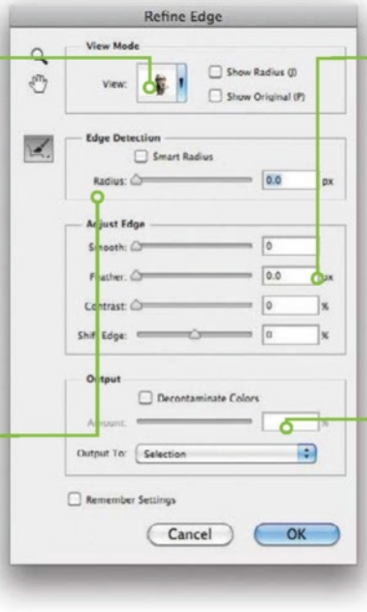


Refine Edge dialog

02 In the first section of the dialog you can pick how to view your selection. How the selection will be used? If it's going on a light background, view it On White.

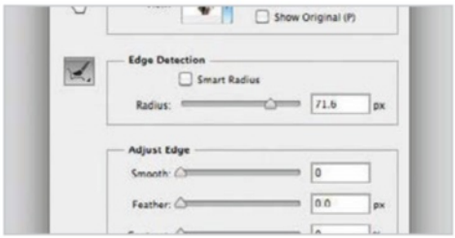
View Mode Here you can choose to view your selection On Black, On White, as a Black & White image or on a transparent background, among many others

Smart Radius When you pick this option, Photoshop Elements will analyse the edges of your selection and look for changes in texture and colour to determine where your selection should be. You may wish to leave this unchecked and manually adjust radius



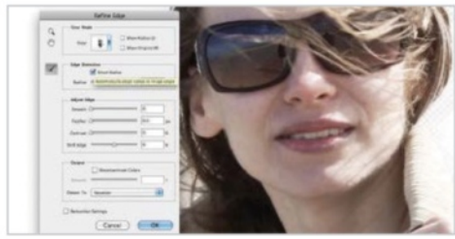
Refine and remove areas Brush over areas where you need to expand or contract the radius selectively, for example to bring fine detail into the selection or to remove any other background elements

Decontaminate colors This is great on hair, as it eliminates the background colour showing through, giving you a clean selection. As with the Radius option, you can adjust its strength to suit



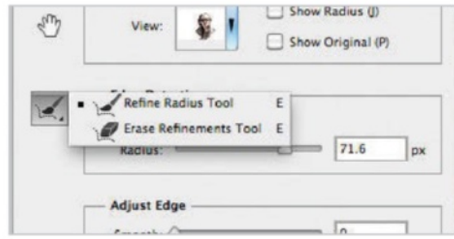
Adjust the radius

03 You can use the slider to increase the radius of your selection. The value you need depends on your image, so move it until you can see the desired areas.



Use Smart Radius

04 Ticking the Smart Radius box means that Photoshop Elements will analyse the edges and determine the radius for each area automatically.



Tidy it up

05 Keep using Refine Radius and Erase Refinements. Decontaminate Colors will prevent the background from seeping through into your selections.

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Traditional selections tools

All the modern tools can make you forget about these classics

Selection tools have been around since the very first versions of Photoshop, however they've become much more advanced and automated over the years. Often you don't need to mess around with the modern methods and the basic selection tools are perfectly suited to the task.

What does it mean?

TARGETED ADJUSTMENTS This simply means to make adjustments, such as colour editing or tonal changes, eg, in one specific area of an image. To make a targeted adjustment, start with a selection of the area you want to edit and then anything you do will affect only the selected area.





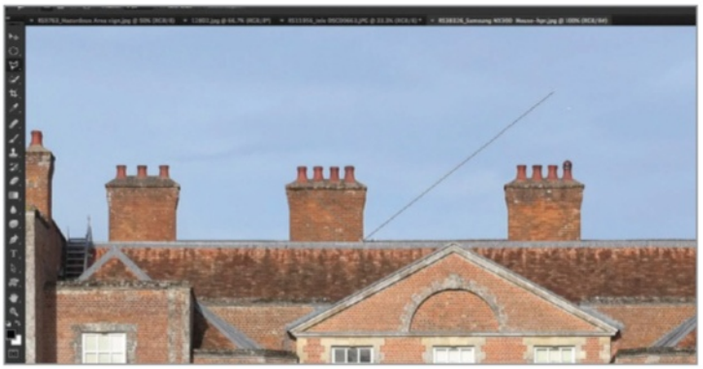
Rectangular Marquee tool

01 If the object that you want to isolate is square or rectangular, then you can use this tool to draw a straight-edged selection area. This is great for signs and billboards, for example.

Circular selection

02 This is another simple-shaped tool, this time designed to quickly select circular or elliptical areas of an image. Hold down shift to create a perfect circle.





Lasso tool

03 Click on the Image Layer and choose the Selection Brush tool then ensure Add to Selection is selected. Vary the brush size and then draw over the bushes and trees to select them.

Polygonal Lasso tool

04 Similar to the Lasso tool, this draws straight edges, which is good if you don't have a steady enough hand to draw straight.



Select the trees and bushes

05 Click on the Image Layer and choose the Selection Brush tool then ensure Add to Selection is selected. Vary the brush size and draw over the bushes and trees to select them.

Even more options

Your selection options



These are the final selection features in Photoshop CC. The Selection Brush tool (A) enables you to either paint over the area that you want to select (in Selection mode), or paint over the areas that you don't want to select (in Mask mode). You can then adjust the brush as normal. The Smart Brush tool (F) adds targeted adjustments to selected areas. This means you can make the sky bluer or teeth whiter automatically, for instance, by creating a selection based on a specific texture and colour.

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Organising layers

Photoshop wouldn't be Photoshop without layers

Layers form the basis for all editing, either from scratch or with a photo to start you off. Every layer contains new information that changes the way your image looks. Adding a new layer is easy enough, but keeping them organised is usually more difficult.

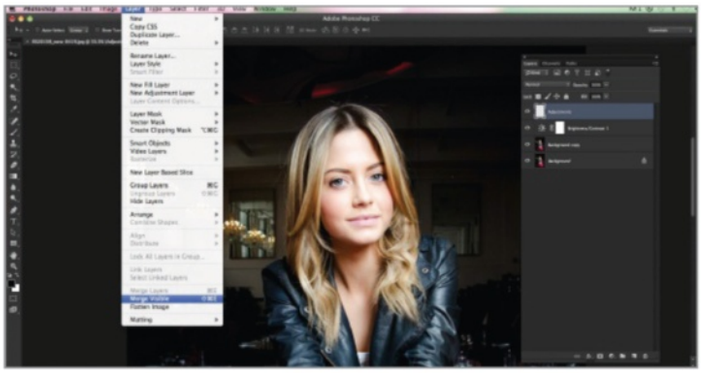
We take you through the various ways in which you can arrange a busy Layers palette. It could be a matter of merging or grouping a bunch of layers, so that you have a better sense of where everything is located inside the palette.

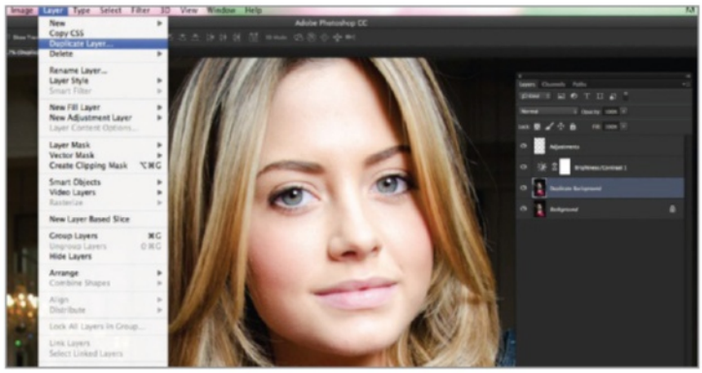
These techniques should help you become a more efficient Photoshop artist. Understanding the basics of using layers, and ordering them in the palette, is essential before jumping straight in the deep end. Grouping your layers can save you lots of time. Try creating your own photo collage by following the steps opposite.



Controlling layers

Different ways in which layers can be handled





Merge layers

01 Multiple layers in an image can be merged together. This reduces the number of layers in your palette, and there are no limits. To do this, select the layer you want to merge and go to Layer>Merge Down (or press Cmd/Ctrl+E). When a layer is merged it joins with the one directly underneath it in the palette.

Making duplicates

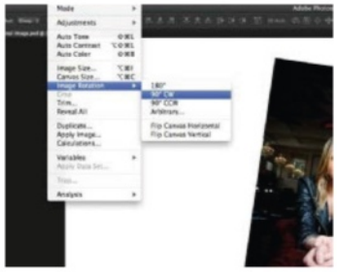
02 If you ever want to make a direct copy of one layer during the editing stage, press Cmd/Ctrl+J, or drag a layer onto the Create a New Layer button. This makes an exact duplicate of whatever's on that layer. Get into the habit of doing this whenever you open an image, so that you always work non-destructively.

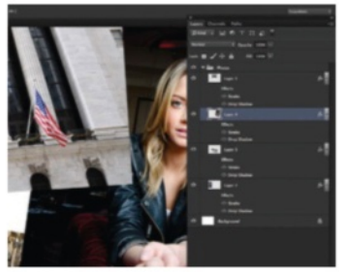
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Create a Group

Keep a closer eye on your layers in a photo collage



Create a new document

01 In Photoshop, go to File> New. From the Preset drop-down list select International Paper, and then A4 for the Size. Give your file a name at the top of the Open dialog box, such as Photo Collage. Hit OK.

Place images

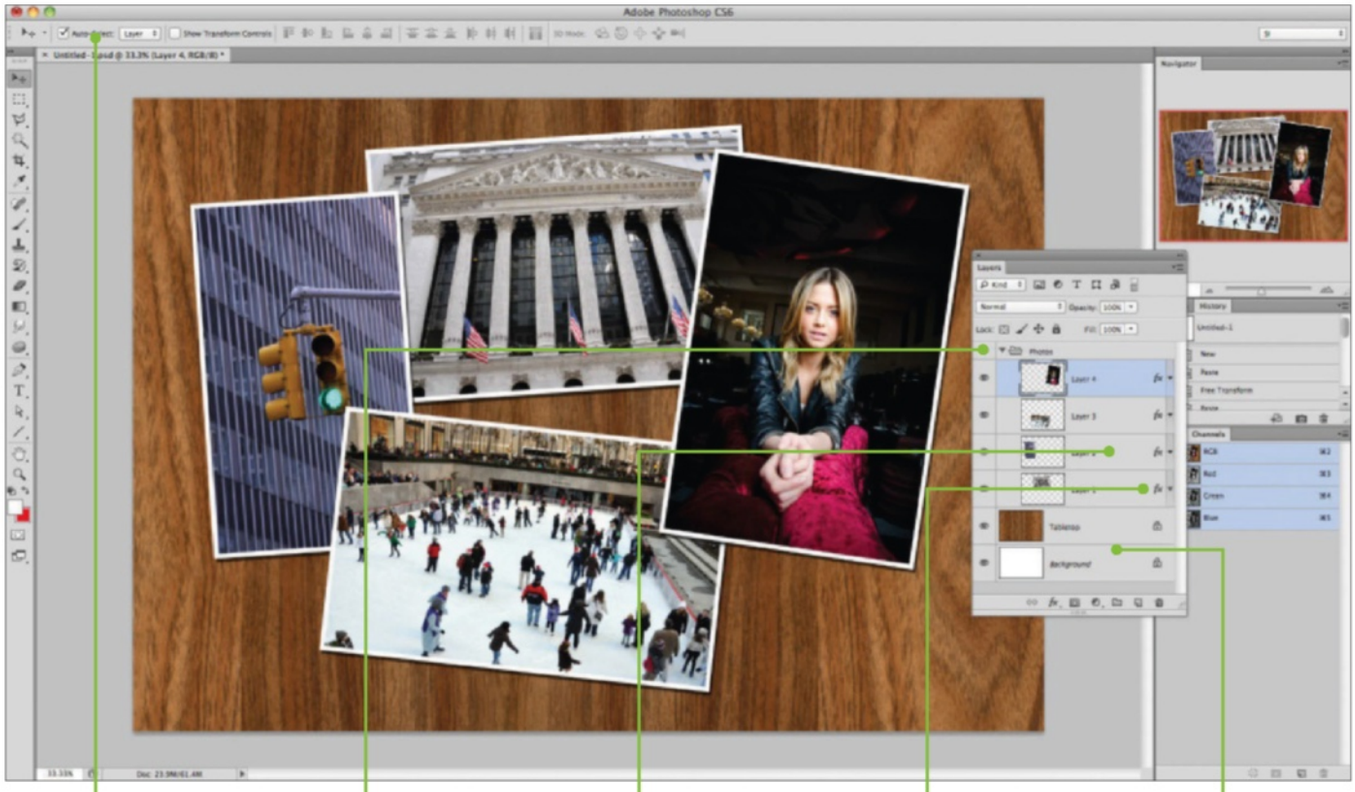
02 Go to Image>Image Rotation>90 CW. To open images into this document one by one, go to File>Place and pick your first image. Hit Place and rotate and resize holding Shift and using the corner points. Hit Enter to confirm its position.

Group up

03 When all of your images have been placed, click on the first image in the Layers palette and the last while holding Shift. Then go to Layer>Group Layers. The layers should hide away inside a new Group folder. Double-click the group label to rename it.

Reorder layers

04 To change the order the layers overlap in the composition, click and drag a layer up or down the palette (Cmd/Ctrl and [/]). The current active layer is always highlighted blue, so you know at any stage which one you're working on.



Moving layers The Move tool (V) set to Auto-Select: Layers at the top of Photoshop will instantly recognise the image's layer clicked on in your canvas

Groups Group folders can contain multiple photos, which will keep your palette looking tidy. Click on the drop-down arrow next to the folder's icon to hide or show the contents

Rename layers To rename a layer double-click on its name inside the palette. Doing this regularly will help you recognise what's on a layer, especially if its content is small

Layer styles Layer styles show up with the letters fx on the layer. The Stroke and Drop Shadow styles were added to these images (from Layer>Layer Style) to add extra elements to the design

Locked layers To lock a layer into position, click on the third button in the Layers palette under Lock. The wooden background in this image has been secured into place under the images

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Learn to love Levels

Re-edit light using this essential Photoshop adjustment

The Levels adjustment means that we can take straightforward photos and turn them into dramatic compositions. It comes with three pointers for controlling Highlights, Shadows and Midtones in an image, and the results are instant.

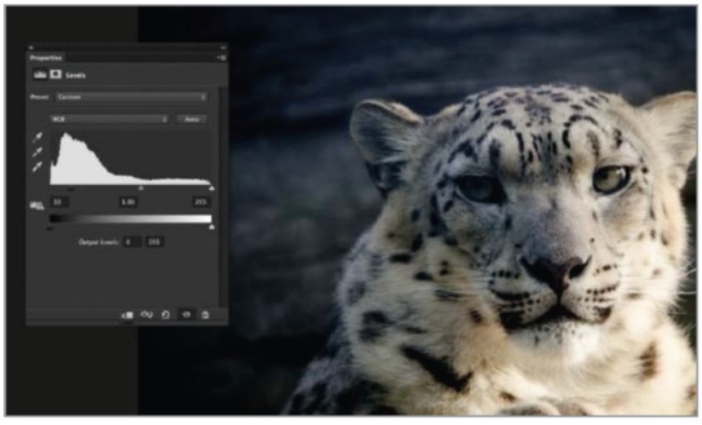
The adjustment can be applied in two ways: either through the Image menu or the Layer menu. Going down the Image menu route, we don't have the addition of a mask and the adjustment is applied destructively to the highlighted layer. However, going via the Layer menu, we can enjoy the useful inclusion of a mask.

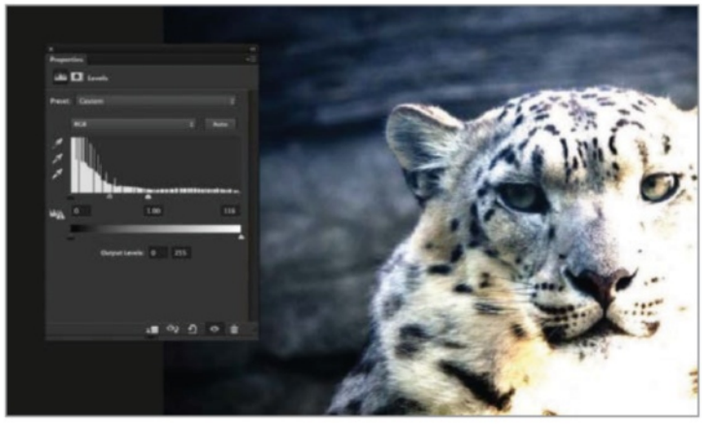
The mask that comes with the adjustment (after hitting Layer>New Adjustment Layer) enables us to choose which parts of the image we want to affect. Take this photo, for example, which has a distracting background in what could have be an impressive portrait capture. We can edit just the background using the mask and a brush to make the person stand out more clearly.

Follow these steps to learn about Levels and masks. You can use any photo you want, just not a portrait one.



Manipulate light Adapt the shadows and highlights





Darken an image

01 The Levels adjustment is one way to quickly darken the shadow regions in an image. This creates a moodier feel, and it helps images that have been overexposed during the shooting. Simply push the far left pointer under the graph (the black one) inwards and watch how your image changes its brightness. Also, notice how the middle pointer under the graph slides slightly to the right as you make these changes.

Brighter highlights

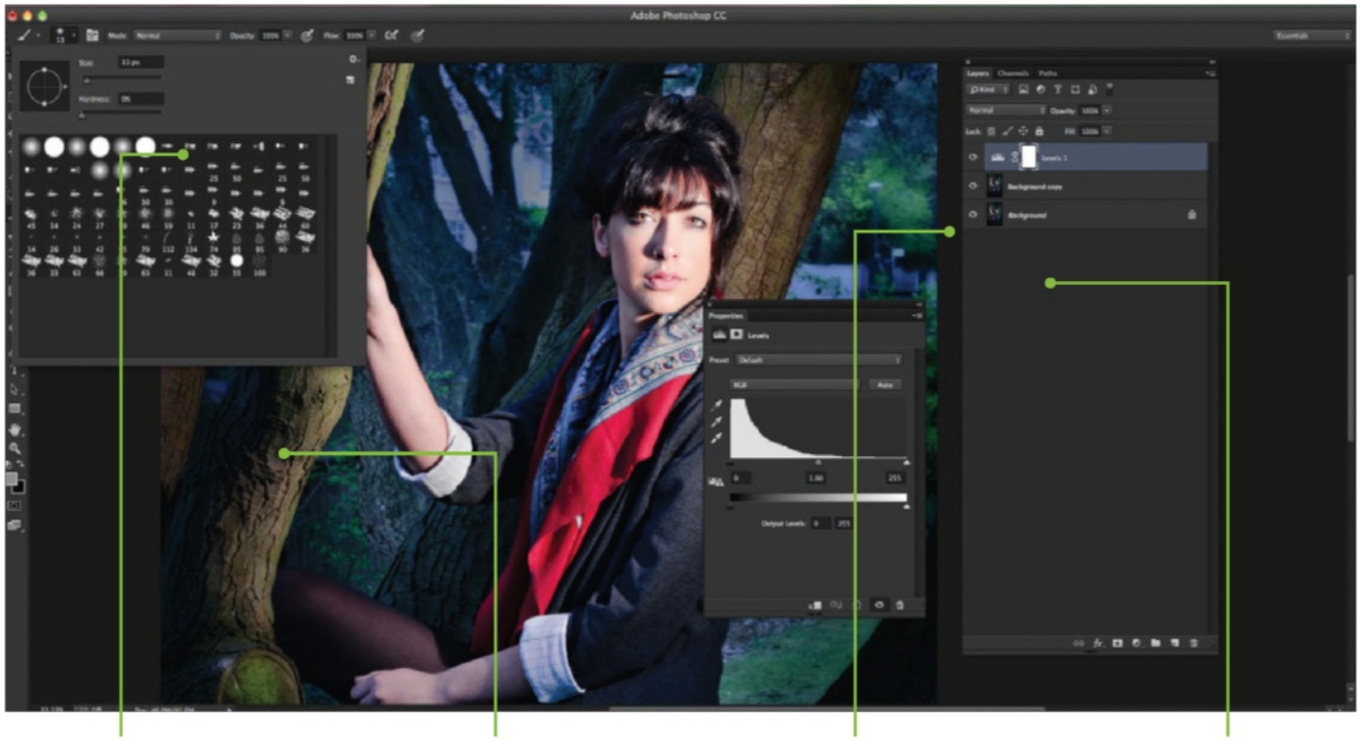
02 Since the Levels adjustment contains three separate pointers under the graph, we can control certain parts of the image. The far right pointer is for adapting the highlights in an image. Push this inward to boost the brightness and to make your image appear much lighter. Too far, however, and the image will become overexposed. Try to keep the changes to this adjustment very subtle, as a little goes a long way.

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Editing with Levels

A breakdown of the Levels adjustment



Brush tool The mask on the adjustment layer can be edited using the Brush tool set to black. Choose a soft tip when editing light, setting Hardness to 0%

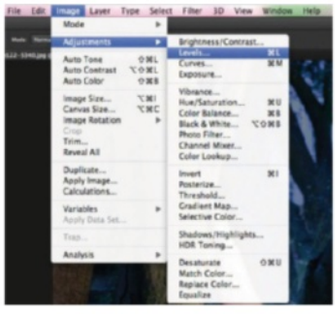
Layering techniques The Layers palette shows the Levels adjustment above the Background layer. Click on the small graph symbol to open up the settings

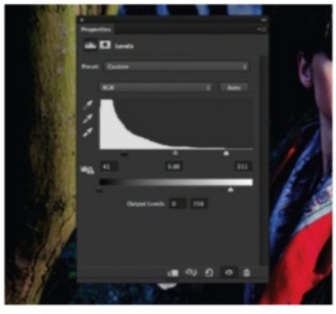
Graph confusion The lighting in your image is displayed as a graph, showing the shadow regions on the left and the highlight regions on the right, and everything in between

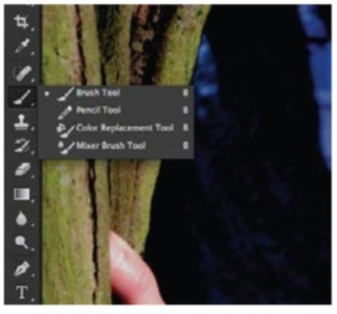
Output Levels You can alter the Output Levels to further reduce the impact of the highlights and shadows in your image

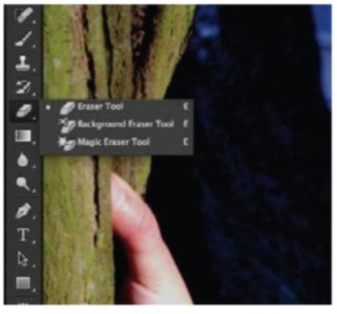
Relight your photos

Use Levels and brushwork to adapt the lighting for better portraits









New adjustment

01 With an image open, add the Levels adjustment from the Layer menu at the top of Photoshop, and under New Adjustment Layer. In the pop-up dialog box, call it Background Light and hit OK.

Reduce lighting

02 Tweak the Levels adjustment so that the background is much darker. To do this, push both the black (for shadows) and mid-grey (for midtones) pointers inward. You should see a significant difference to the brightness.

Retrieve light

03 The main subject will be too dark after making these edits. Grab the Brush tool (B) from the Toolbar and set it to a soft, round brush. Click on the adjustment's mask and paint over the main subject to bring back the original details.

Edit its mask

04 Notice how the layer mask shows the changes you made as black. To remove any mistakes, switch to the Eraser tool (E) with the same settings as before and then paint over the parts you didn't want to affect.

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Control your curves

Handle Curves confidently to improve exposure and boost colours

Photoshop's Curves adjustment is used to control the exposure of an image. The adjustment can also be used to manipulate colour, as it's divided up into red, green and blue. When worked with individually, these colours give you the chance to restore exposure and create more abstract effects. You can boost each of the levels separately giving preference to one colour if you so wish.

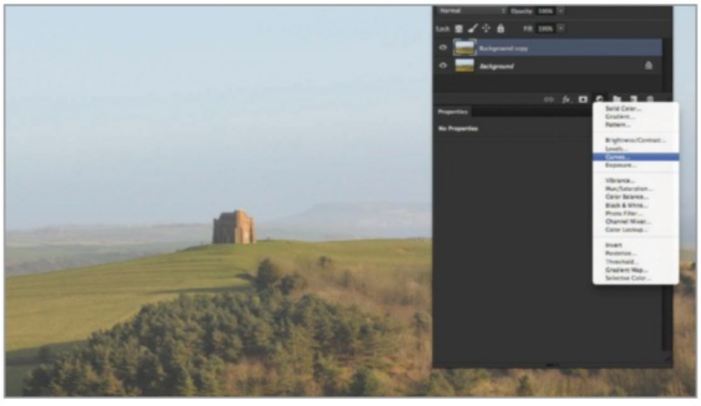
Like many adjustments in Photoshop, Curves can be added to an image as a separate layer, which also means that it comes with a mask.

Read on to find out how Curves can be used to improve a landscape image. If there's a distinct colour in your image, use Curves to increase or decrease its contrast by changing the adjustment from RGB to one of the three colours.

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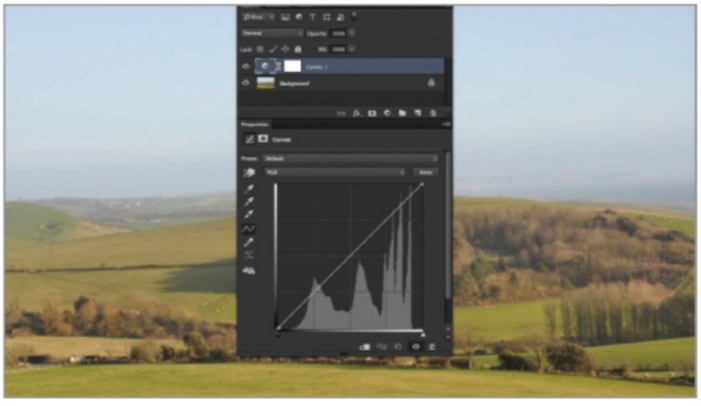
Better colour

Increase the contrast of colour using the Curves adjustment in Photoshop



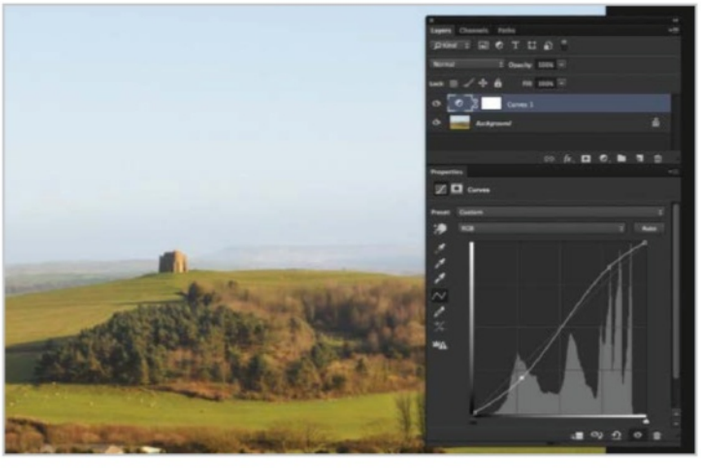
Find the adjustment

01 Load up the Curves adjustment layer from the circular icon at the base of the Layers palette. It will appear as a new layer, with a white mask and a small thumbnail containing its settings.



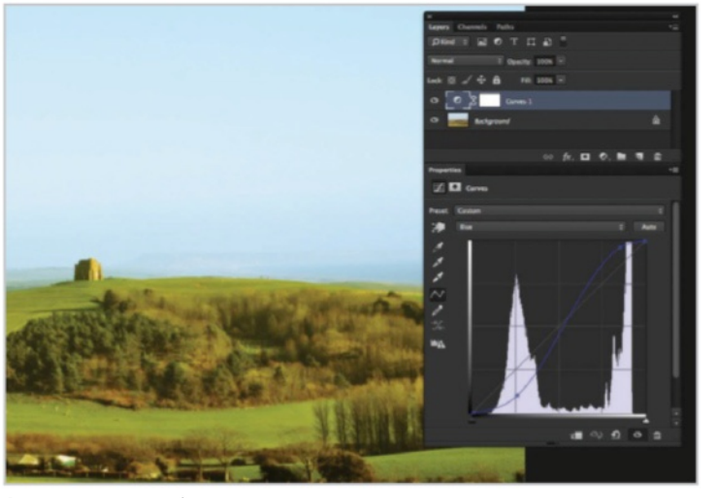
Curves structure

02 The Curves adjustment contains a straight diagonal line that cuts through a graph. The graph shows the shadows on the left hand side and the highlights over to the right. Hover over this diagonal line to see a pair of crosshairs.



Increase contrast

03 Click and drag the diagonal line upwards over the right side of the graph to see a boost in the highlights. Click and drag the line downwards over the left side to deepen the exposure of the shadow regions. Use the eye symbol in the adjustment to compare it before and after.



Improve colour

04 The letters RGB will be selected at this stage. Change this to Blue to improve a blue sky or green for a grassy landscape. Adapt the diagonal line in much the same way as before, until you see an improvement to the colour.



Colour correction

05 Go through Red, Green and Blue in the adjustment and lift the diagonal line upwards to boost the colour tones of certain subjects. Keeping the changes very subtle, you should see a significant overall improvement to the image. Go back to RGB to adapt just the exposure.

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Learn about histograms

Using levels and curves is one thing, but are you getting the most from histograms?

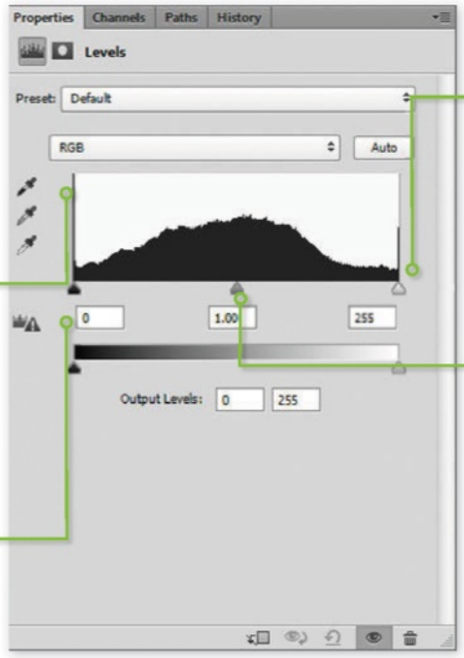
Histograms; the often overlooked indicator in all images is surprisingly more than just a pretty pattern in your Levels and Curves dialog boxes. This little graph is a representation of the colour and tonal depth within an image – a quick-glance indicator if you like – explaining how much lightness and darkness is present, and can also telegraph any gaps within the tonal integrity of an image that may affect the editing possibilities of the image.

When you look at a histogram in context to the image you are working with, depending on which side of the graph/scale has more information on it, indicates the brighter or darker the image. Seeing as how histograms work in both X and Y scales, there is an indicator as to which tonal area is affected, and typically, the graphical representation of all histograms are all laid out the same, with the shadow details indicated on the left, the mid-tones in the middle, and the highlight detail on the right. The vertical column is dedicated to showing intensity, reflecting the amount of detail present, be it nothing or everything.

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Closer look

What the different elements of a histogram palette actually mean



The X and Y axis The X axis displays the tone/shade, anywhere from 0-255, 0 being black and 255 being white, and the Y axis indicates how strong that tone/shade's presence within the image is

Adjust the light tones The Highlight indicator is the polar opposite of the Shadow's except it deals with pure whites and greys. By adjusting this, you can bleach out your image by extending the reach of pure white within an image

Adjust the midtones The Midtone indicator is possibly the most subtle, and most affective of the histogram's tonal areas. Here you can adjust the overall contrast of the image, by either lightening or darkening the image

Adjust the dark tones Using the Shadow detail indicator you can adjust the value of the dark tones, darkening the image by sliding the black point along, reducing the lightness of the image

Both levels and curves Even though this histogram is taken from the levels, the principle is the same across the board in terms of histograms, meaning that the principles stated here are the same for curves

Use the histogram with curves

To edit tone or colour, read on to see how to get more from this tool



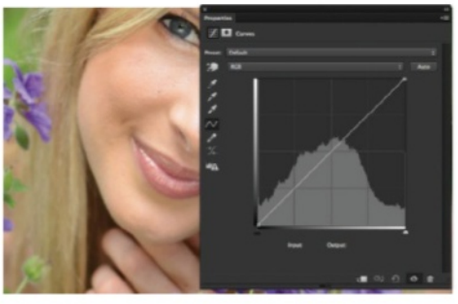
Select your image

01 Click Cmd/Ctrl+O to open your image. Select the curves via Image>Adjustments>Curves (Cmd/Ctrl+M) or by creating a re-editable adjustment layer; click Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Curves.



Access the histogram panel

02 Go into View>Histogram to access a live feed showing your edits' impact on the integrity of the image. We've clicked on All Channels View, so we can see each channel's role in the build up to a final image.



Access Curves

03 Once the curve information is available, look at the histogram. Colour and tonal arrangements are reflected in the histogram, giving a gradual peak over the midtone section, indicating a dense colour palette.



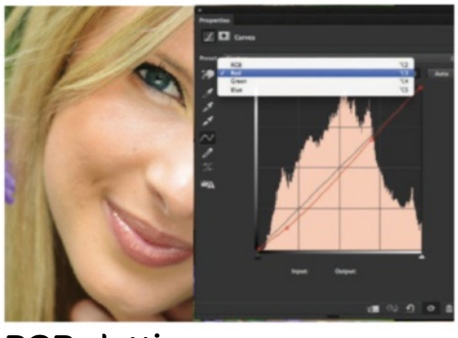
Image break up

04 We want to add contrast and colour, but when using curves it's easy to damage the image. We've boosted brightness, and the breaks in the histogram indicate missing tonal detail. Avoid this at all costs.



Plot points revealed

05 To add the contrast without damaging the image too much, we will add a few anchor points into our curve. Click three points in the line and give them the following input/output values: 54-45, 102-102, 133-138.



RGB plotting

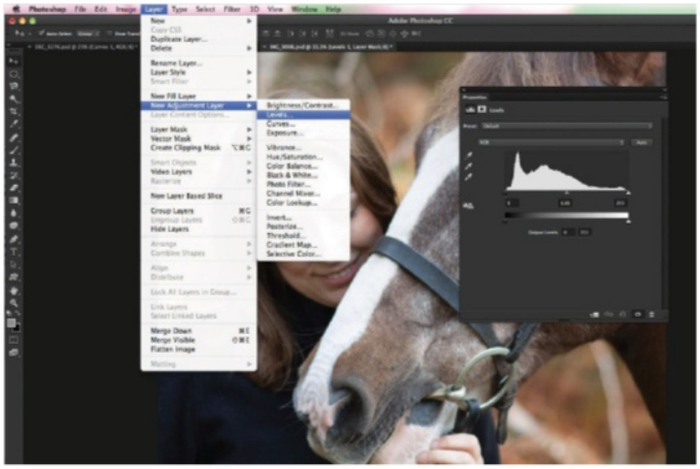
06 Exactly like the last step, drop down the channel option and select each colour and add in the following input/output values: Red; 44-33, 179-172, Green; 127-121, Blue;128-117.

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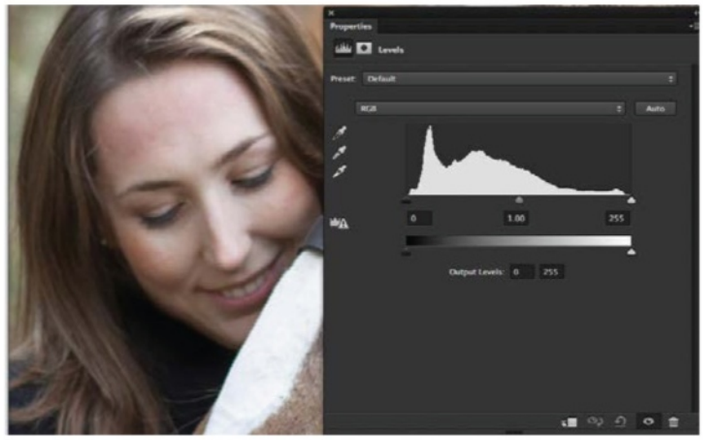
Use the histogram with levels

The Levels histogram leaves out the lines but can have quite an impact



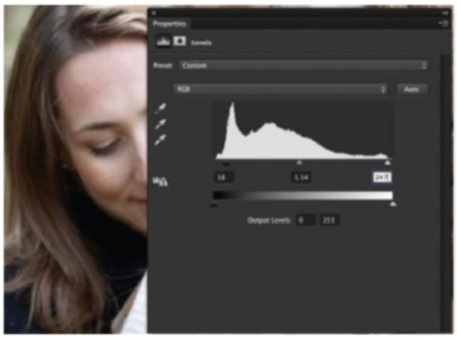
Level out

01 For this project we will be using an adjustment layer as we have before, so open your image and click Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Levels. This will open the Levels dialog box.



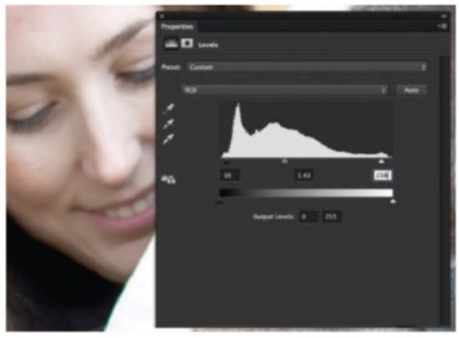
Assess the histogram

02 With clear peaks on the left-hand side of the histogram in Levels, it's clear this image is a lot darker than the last. Open up the Histogram panel as well as the Levels by clicking View>Histogram.



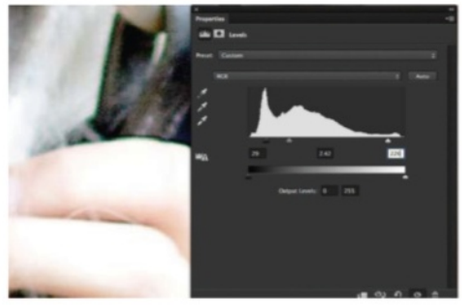
Sliders

03 As with Curves, Levels does almost the same job, but is laid out differently. For starters, the edit mode uses a slider, giving you a strong sense of exactly where on the scale you are editing.



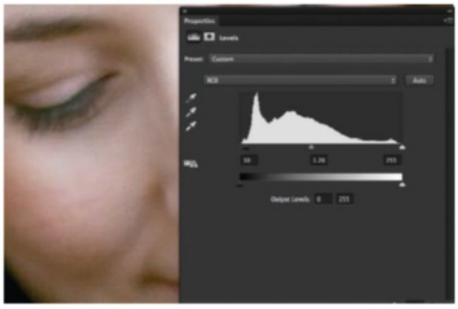
Slider operations

04 The sliders on the Levels histogram relate to the Shadow, Midtone, and Highlights. The output sliders underneath control shadow and highlight representation when using specific printers and paper.



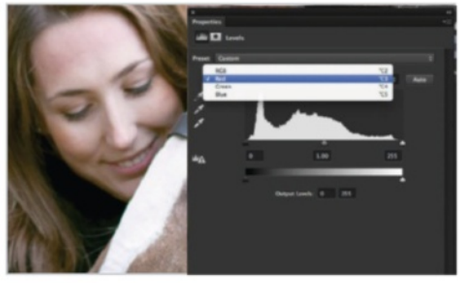
Tonal breakdown

05 As you can see, there is some breakdown in tonality because we're pushing the lightness of the image past that of what was captured in camera. Too much will result in digital noise and distortion.



Expose your image

06 As this image is naturally dark and lacking saturation, use the Shadow slider and move it to 10, and the Midtone slider to 1.26. You don't need to worry about the highlights.



Bring out the foliage

07 Like the Curves dialog, there's access to the RGB controls. However, the control is very linear and can appear heavy handed. Add in the following: Red; 14, 1.13, 250. Green; 8, 1.10, 255. Blue; 8, 1.10, 255.



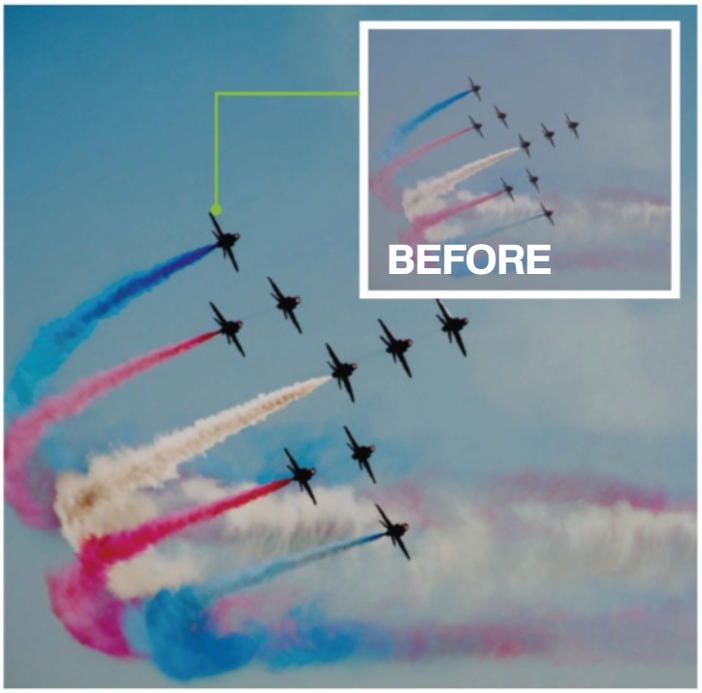
Appease the histogram

08 As the histogram is a clear indicator as to the exposure value and tonal reference of an image, at the end of the edit you may want to fade the effects of your edit to make the histogram less patchy.

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Histograms at work

Once you've got your head round them, histograms are essential for fixing photos



Fix colour and contrast

For this image, a combination of both levels and curves has been applied to give the dynamic scene a more colourful and contrasting edge. The histogram was looked at,and in the centre was a large spike in the midtones and not a lot else. To bring out the colour, the RGB options of the curve and the levels were adjusted bringing the colour out, then the contrast was tweaked on both levels and curves. This gave a vibrant feel, but sadly brought out the grain of the shot and made the midtone of the blue channel blocky, so a Gaussian Blur was used on the blue channel and with the help of the History tool, carefully edited so it didn't affect the planes.



Create dramatic impact

Already a dark image, this shot was set up to be contrasting but with detail. It would have been easy to simply use the Shadow or Highlight pipette in Curves to boost the contrast, but instead a subtle curve was added based around the information contained in the histogram, so applying tweaks to level out the peaks and flows slightly, without losing the contrast. Then as a finishing touch, the black and white conversion was added to keep the midtone range in the lighter areas of the image.

Subtle lighting corrections

With this image, the challenge is set in that the exposure is pretty much perfect from the start. The issue raised is in the marble work where the highlight tone is burning out to white. By using the curves, you can plot points to bring back detail to a specific range of highlights by subtly replacing the value of 'white' with something a little darker. This is where the curves hold the advantage over levels as the ability to plot specific values in the scale to edit is more versatile than simple sliders.



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Adjust with dodge, burn and sponge

Image adjustments made easy with these tools

The Dodge, Burn and Sponge tools are designed to edit exposure and colour in an image. Being tools, rather than adjustment layers or filters, they give you a great deal of control and accuracy. They enable you to choose the exact position and strength of the effects by painting them onto the image.

Let's start with the Dodge and Burn tools. These two reflect the traditional photographic techniques used to enhance lighting, with Dodge brightening areas and Burn darkening them. You may have one subject in your image that has been under or overexposed, and that's where these two come into play. Lastly, the Sponge tool deals with colour, and can be set up to add or remove colour to a subject.



Background copy With edits made to a Background Copy layer, blend modes and Opacity can be adjusted to control the effect

Toggle option The three tools are grouped together with the same shortcut key of O. Ctrl/right-click over the icon to reveal all three tools

What does it mean?

PROTECT TONES

This option comes with the Dodge and Burn tools. With this turned on, details in your image won't be lost in the highlights and shadows when making adjustments with the tools.

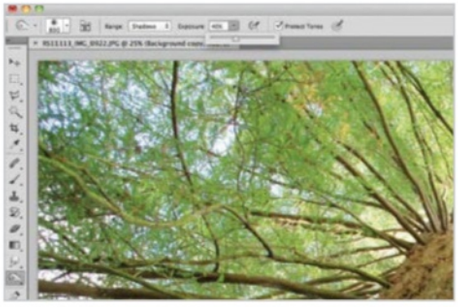
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Dodge and Burn tools Change how the light falls in your images



Burn tool

01 The Burn tool is used to darken parts of your image. Select the tool from the Toolbar (O). Check that you have the Burn tool selected, and not the Dodge tool, by clicking and holding over the icon to view all available options.



Range

02 In the Options bar, there are three Ranges to choose from: Shadows, Midtones and Highlights. We'll only need the first two for the Burn tool. Select Shadows and set the Exposure to 40%. Duplicate your background layer.



Darken

03 Set your brush size to a large, soft tip from within the Options at the top. Paint with the tool over the shadows in the background parts of your image. If the effect is too strong then lower the Opacity of tool. Use this sparingly over your image.



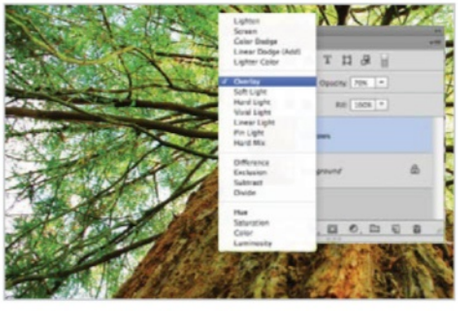
Add contrast

04 Set the Range option for the tool to Midtones. Paint once more over the background elements to add further contrast. Try not to paint over one area too many times, as the effect will get increasingly stronger.



Dodge settings

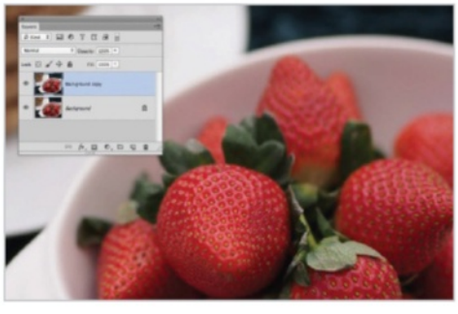
05 Now select the Dodge tool, which is used to brighten up subjects. In the Options bar, set Range to Midtones and set Exposure to 40%. Paint over the foreground parts of your image to brighten them up.



Overlay mode

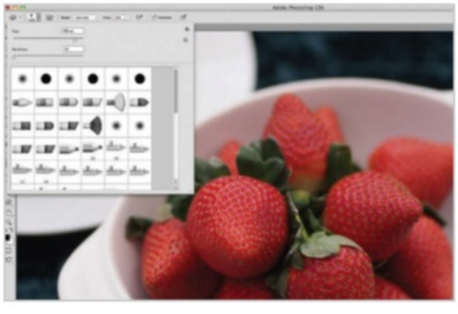
06 To see how much the lighting has changed, click on the eye symbol of the duplicate layer to turn it on and off. Change the layer's blend mode to Overlay and lower its Opacity to 70% for more contrast.

Make colours sing Boost colours with the Sponge tool



Layers palette

01 Import your image into Photoshop. Duplicate the Background layer by dragging it from the Layers palette onto the Create a New Layer button. A Background Copy layer will appear.



Tool's Mode

02 Select the Sponge tool (O) and, in the Options bar, set Mode to Saturate and Flow to 30%. Tick the Vibrance box. Select a brush size that covers the area of colour you want to adjust, then set it to 0% Hardness.



Paint saturation

03 Paint with the Sponge tool over the colour in your image. You should see the saturation of the colour increase, adding more life to the image. Be careful not to overdo the effect, as noise will start to gather and degrade the quality.

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Use clipping masks

Turn your layers into creative tools with this essential feature

Clipping masks sound horrific and don't really feature on the radar of many beginners. However, as with a lot of things that seem initially impenetrable, they aren't that hard once you take the first leap.

A clipping mask enables you to stick one image onto the form of another. In the world of Photoshop, this means using a shape layer to make a form and then adding an image on top to stick to that form.

This is a dream capability for digital scrapbook enthusiasts or anyone wanting to create a digital display. Our image here was built using clipping masks for all of the frames and decorative effects.

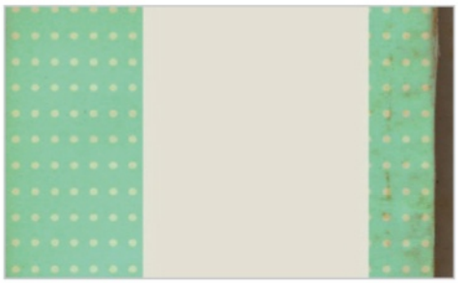
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Easily format shapes Harness the power of this crucial tool



Set the background

01 Start by importing all of the supplied images into Photoshop. We've supplied the backgrounds, but grab a selection of your own snaps. Open up one of the backgrounds to sit happily on the bottom layer, then add the shape and clipping mask layers on top.



Add a shape

02 Go to the Shape tools in the toolbar and click on the Rectangle tool. Now click and drag where you want to place the first image. As soon as you let go, a shape layer will appear. Don't worry about the colour for now, as we'll apply an image to it next.



Insert your first photo

03 Double-click on one of your photos to open it up. Once open, go to Select>All and then Edit>Copy. Click back on your document and go to Edit>Paste. This is make a shape layer, so you need to make sure it will fit. The next step is to restore the opacity of the photo layer.



Move to fit

04 Select the Move tool from the toolbar, then click and drag the photo about until it's in place. If you need to adjust the size (our example is too large) simply click and drag on the anchor points. When you are happy, click the tick icon and then move the Opacity slider back to 100%.



Use a clipping mask

05 Hold down Alt/Option and click the line between the photo layer and shape layer to clip them together. You'll see an arrow next to the clipped layer pointing downwards. If you need to get rid of a clipping mask, go to Layer>Release Clipping Mask.



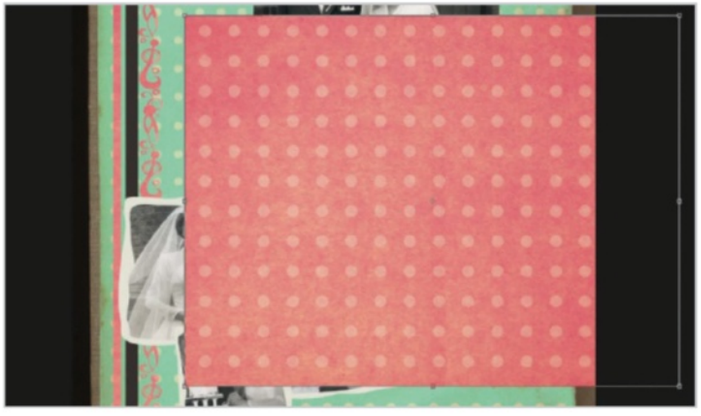
Include more shapes

06 Now let's get decorative. Go back to the Shapes tool area and this time pick the Custom Shapes tool. It comes with a host of preset forms, which we will use now. Click the Shapes picker and then click the right-pointing arrow to see the different types of shapes. Pick the Frames set.



Adjust the frame

07 You'll now see thumbnails of all the available frames. Select one and then click and drag on your document to surround the photo. It doesn't matter if this isn't exact, just pick the Shape Selection tool (under the Custom Shape tool), then click and drag on the anchor points around the frame to adjust the size.



Apply a pattern

08 You can add patterns to shapes the same way as photos. Open up one of the supplied papers, select all, copy and paste into the document. Adjust the size and then go to Layer>Create Clipping Mask. This technique can be repeated with other shapes and papers to build the rest of the image.

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Remove objects

Don't let stray lampposts or street signs ruin your shot!

It's all too easy to miss a distracting object like a street sign or lamppost while you're busy snapping away, only spotting them afterwards when you look back through the photos that you've captured.

More often than not, reshooting images with distracting objects looming behind the subject, perhaps even appearing to grow from out of their head or shoulder, is simply not an option. Fortunately though, Photoshop CC has the tools you need to remove these blemishes. How long it takes to carry out adjustments like this naturally depends on the severity of the problem but you will soon find that, with practice, you get quicker and more adept at dealing with distractions. Of course, the big secret lies in ensuring that the editing you do is as seamless as possible, so that anyone viewing the photo can't spot that something has been removed at all.

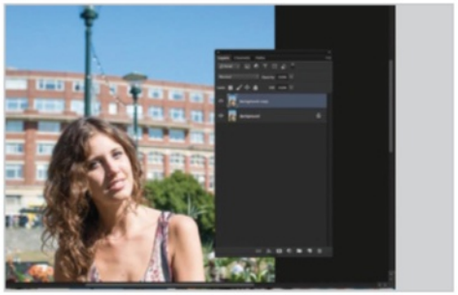




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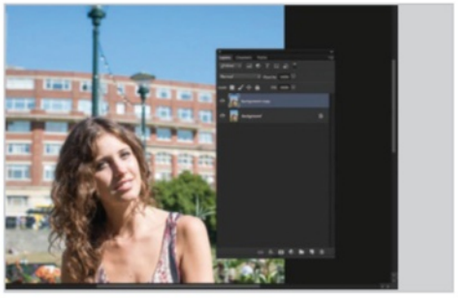
Master the Healing Brush

It takes a few steps in CC to remove distractions



Get set up

01 Open 'Lamp post portrait.jpg' in CC. Before you begin, it's an idea to duplicate the Background layer – the main image layer. Then head to the Toolbar and select the Spot Healing Brush tool or press J on the keyboard.



Healing Brush options

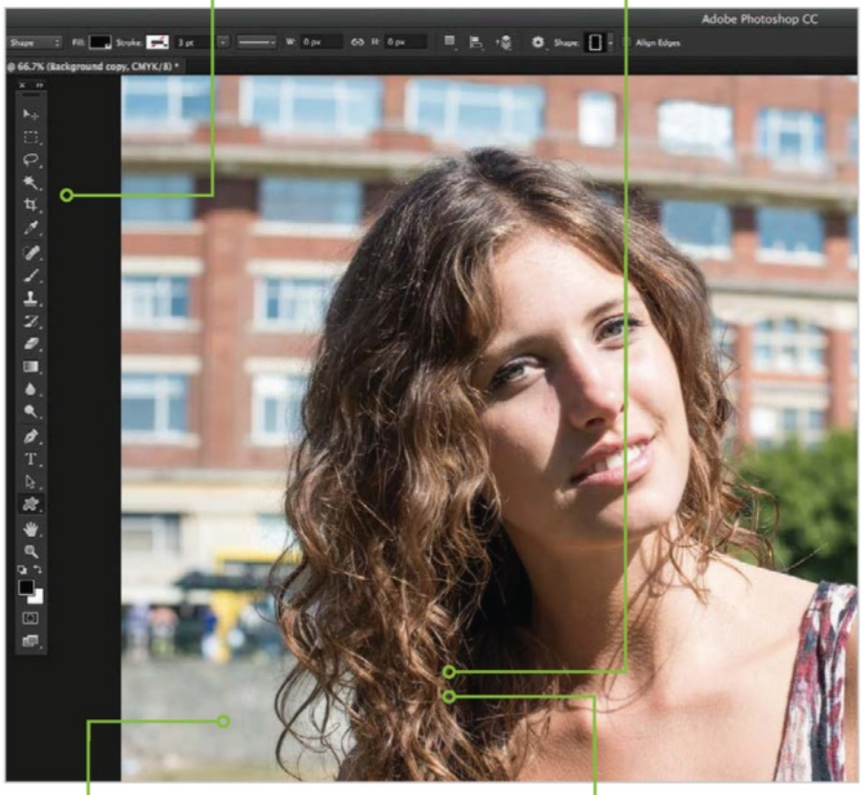
02 Choose the normal Healing Brush. Change the Mode to Replace and uncheck Aligned. Use the Brush Settings button to reduce Hardness to 0%. Also ensure that Size reads as Off.

Closer look at the Healing Brush tool

Customise the Healing Brush to work how you want it to

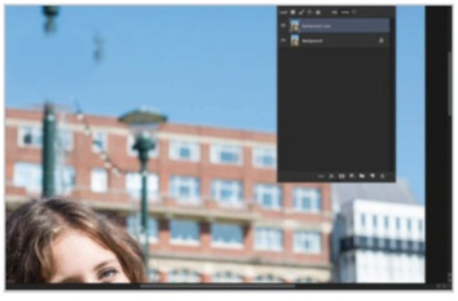
Healing Brush type You can choose either a Spot Healing Brush, which works well for pimples or sensor dust, or the regular Healing Brush

Source Choose between Sampled and Pattern. There are relatively few common situations in which the latter will be of much use



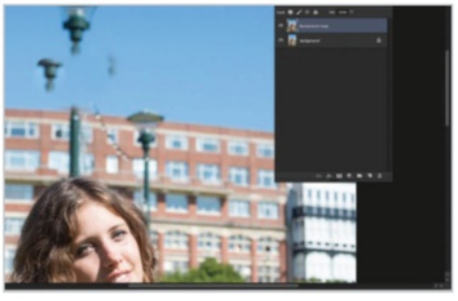
Aligned When checked, the source point you selected changes as you carry out your retouching work. This can cause problems so is often best left unchecked

Mode The two options at the top, Normal and Replace, are the most useful. The former creates a blend while the latter places sampled pixels on top



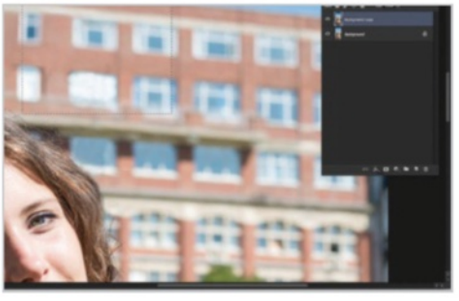
Begin retouching

03 Hold down Alt and click once to select a source point. This is what will be referenced as you click on the object(s) to remove. Reselect source points often to ensure that it's appropriate for the area that is being removed.



Normal mode

04 CC can intelligently blend the pixels from the sampled source area and the part of the image being removed. Be cautious with this and always ensure that the blend is accurate, particularly when working close to points of transition.



Use the Marquee tool

05 Sometimes it is easier to remove a distraction by putting something on top. The windows in the building are a good example. Use the Marquee tool to select a neighbouring window, right-click and choose Layer via Copy. Move the duplicated window.

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Rescue your old photos

Breathe new life into old and tattered images by giving them some digital love and care, with easy to use Photoshop tools, adjustments, filters and more



Reduce noise Apply a Noise Reduction filter to minimise the grain in the image and refine the overall effect

Get rid of dust To complement this filter effect, add the Despeckle filter to combat any remaining particles and debris

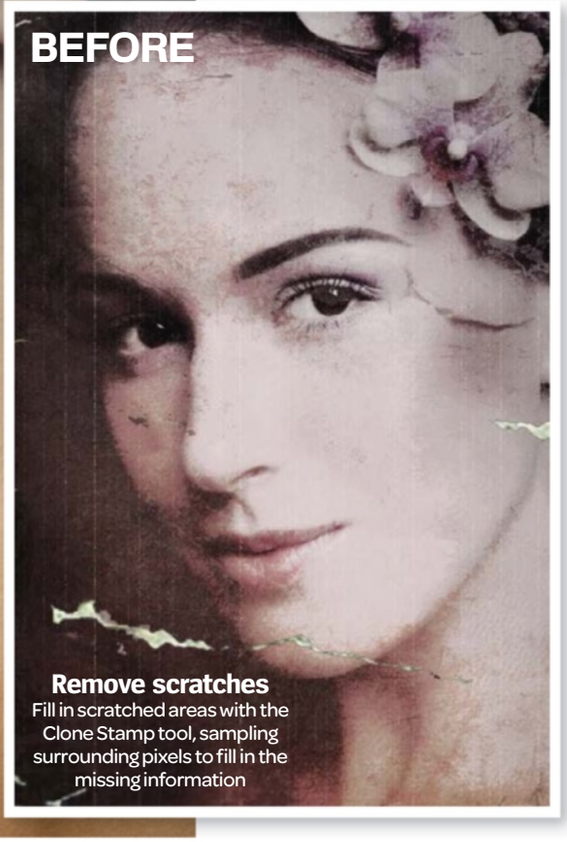
Reapply make up Use a low opacity paintbrush to reapply the subject's makeup, concentrating on the lips and eyes

Improve skin Use the Spot Healing Brush tool to clean up scratches and marks on your subject's face by blending them into skin

Brighten it up Restore the colour and vibrance of the image with adjustment layers that balance the colour and increase the contrast

Sharpen the lines Reconstruct edges around the face and neck using the Clone Stamp tool, zooming into the image to see details





Remove scratches Fill in scratched areas with the Clone Stamp tool, sampling surrounding pixels to fill in the missing information

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Thanks to the modern digital age, your favourite old images are no longer destined to a life of slow and painful disintegration inside old albums and frames.

Snapshots that are in bad shape can be given a new lease of life with a few simple restoration techniques. The first step is to scan in your images to get a digital version for you to work on. Most new home scanners will do this very well, but if you haven't got one then head to a professional printing shop for some help and advice.

There are many ways to tackle an ailing image once you've got it onto your computer. However, there are a few key tools that you should keep close by. The most useful ones, namely the Clone Stamp, Healing Brush and Patch tools, work so well because they've all been designed to reconstruct areas of an image using the information from surrounding pixels.

Common touch-ups include removing cracks, speckles and blemishes, and also filling in the broken pieces of an image. It doesn't stop there, though, and we take you through additional techniques that include restoring colour to photographs, fixing lighting with adjustment layers and applying filters that will bring out the best in your old images. While some techniques require a little more time and attention than others, once you see your worn image in a new light you'll know that all this effort was well worth the wait.

Repair with the right tools

Patch up holes and scratches with easy-to-apply retouch tools



Prepare your image

01 Open up your damaged file in Photoshop and assess which areas are missing and what you need to fill in. Ctrl/right-click the background layer and select Duplicate to make a copy. Name the layer Background Copy.



Select tool

02 Clone Stamp and Pattern Stamp are grouped together in the left hand Toolbar. Pick up the Clone Stamp tool (S) and select a size of 90px, or small enough to fit inside your damaged area, and set Hardness to 20%.



Apply the Clone Stamp

03 Pick a missing a rea of the image and sample a similar colour from nearby pixels by holding down Opt/Alt, and then clicking. Paint in the damage area and, to get an even fill, keep resampling pixels.



Repeat the process

04 Use the same method to fill in any other missing areas of your image. Zooming into an area will give you a better sense of what looks right. Change your brush size as you go to give better results for different sized areas.



Final touches

05 Once missing areas have been patched up, apply some final touches by cleaning up blemishes and spots with the Healing Brush tool (J). As with the Clone Stamp tool, sample similar pixels and then paint over these areas.

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Dust and speckle removal

Revive aged images to their good-old selves





Duplicate background

01 Open up your image in Photoshop and duplicate the background layer by selecting Layer > Duplicate Layer. Name the layer Background Copy. This is good practice for any image you are restoring, as the original image is preserved while you edit.





Noise filter

02 Select Filter>Noise>Dust & Scratches. Set the Radius to 13 and the Threshold to 73, then click OK. You'll see a loading bar and, depending on the size of your image and the scale of the adjustment.



Healing Brush

04 Select the Spot Healing Brush tool and choose a brush size of 40px. Go over your image and individually fix up dust and scratches that sit on the main areas, especially on people.

Make better choices

Get the most out of a filter's Preview when applying edits



Filters aren't an exact science, and knowing how far you can push your image is a matter of trial and error. When using the Reduce Noise and Dust & Speckle filters, if you increase the settings more than your image can handle, you may find that you lose a lot of detail in the facial features. Using the Preview window is the best way to ensure you're on the right track. By default, the Preview window is zoomed right into your image, so you can see how the filter will affect individual pixels. Use the minus icons to zoom out and see a full picture of how your image will turn out before committing.



Lessen the noise

03 Select Filter>Noise>Reduce Noise. Noise denotes the tiny speckles that are often found in images. Set the Strength to 8, Preserve Details to 10%, Reduce Color Noise to 70% and Sharpen Details to 30%, then hit OK.



Crop down

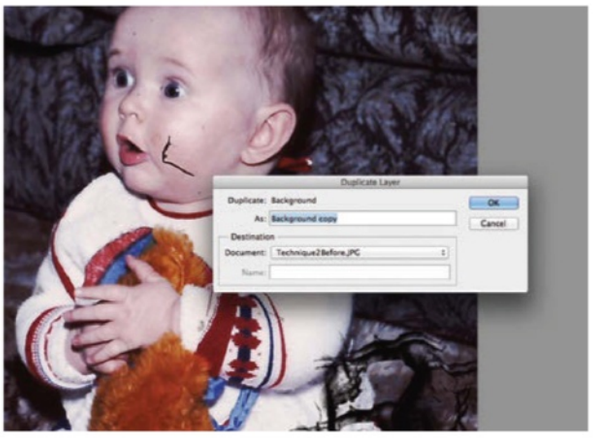
05 Select the Crop tool (C) and use the grid overlay options to judge the centre of the image. Use the handles to specify where to crop and hit Return once you're happy with it. Use this to remove rough edges too.

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Banish blemish

The Healing Brush makes marks magically disappear



Prepare your image

01 Open your image and duplicate the background layer. Before you start working on making any edits, have a closer look at the image and identify where the problem areas are. This tool is best for large areas.



Spot Healing

02 Select the Spot Healing Brush tool from the Toolbar and check the blend mode is set to Normal. Select a brush size of 70px and set Hardness to 80%. Start with blemishes on faces and paint over marks until gone.



Smaller edits

03 Resize the brush to 50px and continue to click on small blemishes and marks across the face, as well as on the plain areas of clothing. Keep the brush size as small as possible; match the blemish for the best results.



Switch brush

04 Select the Healing Brush tool (beneath the Spot Healing Brush) and work on larger areas like stains. Set the brush size to 70px and Hardness to 20px. Sample an area of fabric by Opt/Alt-clicking and then fill in the areas.



Clone pixels

05 When you come to cleaning up the stains, switch to the Clone Stamp tool. Set Hardness to 100% to be able to draw in the small details behind the marks. Zoom right into the area and work carefully through each section.

Scan in old photos

Save your antique snaps from disintegration by scanning them in



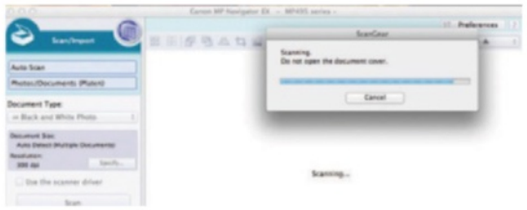
Scanner choice

All-in-one printers are a good option for scanning images, but make sure that you have the scanner software installed. Ensure the image you're scanning is relatively flat, too. If you're image has suffered damage, first flatten it between two books overnight.



Scan resolution

Place your photograph image side down onto the scanner and close the top. Make sure that the scanner software is ready to go. If you have a photo scanning option, select it and then choose a high DPI between 300 and 1200.



Batch scanning

When you're ready, hit Scan and wait for the scanner to process the image. It may take a couple of minutes, especially with large photographs. Once finished, you will be asked if you need to scan more images. If you have a batch of images simply continue scanning them in.



View and save

When you're done scanning, click on the image to view it. Your image should automatically save to your scanner's default folder. To save in another location, select the image and choose Save As. Specify your location and click Save to store it ready to open in Photoshop.

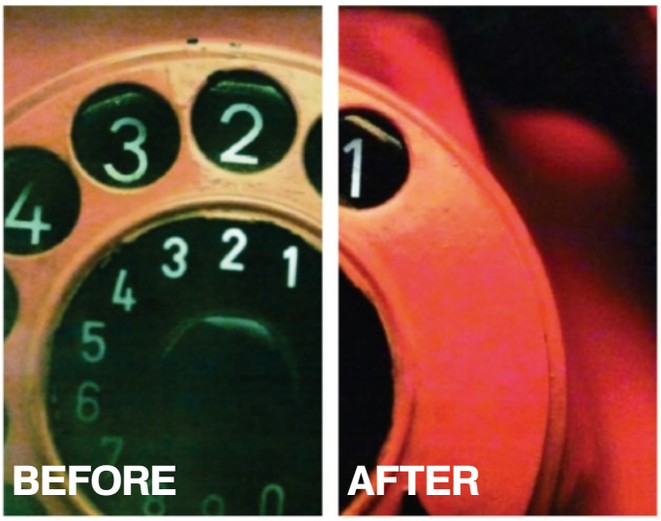
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Restore tone and colour

Give lacklustre hues and faded shades a new meaning

Different adjustments



Colour with adjustment layers

Adjustment layers are perfect if you have an image that requires a mixed treatment to get it back to its best. Start with a Color Balance adjustment layer to remove any colour casts, such as orange in this image. Next, add a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer to bring up dull colours. Finally, add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer to deepen the colours. Switch between adjustments until you're happy.

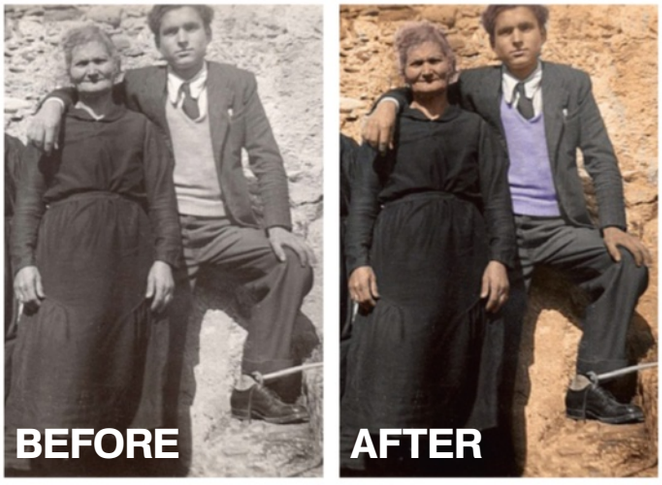
Colour casts



Remove colour casts

Colour casts are common in film images and can usually be identified by a blue or orange tinge. The cast can be sorted by adding a new adjustment layer to the image. Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer and then choose Color Balance. Find which colour is causing the problem and then use the sliders, and a bit of colour theory, to neutralise it. For a blue cast, for example, add more yellow.

Colouring



Hand-colouring

Bring a little colour to an old black and white image by colouring it by hand. One of the easiest methods is to simply use a paintbrush. Change the Mode of your image to a colour one by selecting Image>Mode>CMYK Color. Select a paintbrush and set its Mode to Color. Set the tool's Opacity to 80% and use the Color Picker menu to select a hue. Zoom into your image and start painting.

Grayscale



Go monochrome

A seemingly easy way to turn an image black and white is to change the Mode to Grayscale from the Image menu. While this gets the job done, you have no control over how the image looks and so this should be avoided. A better way to do it is to add a new adjustment layer to your image and select Channel Mixer. Tick Monochrome and then use the RGB channels to play around with the final effect.

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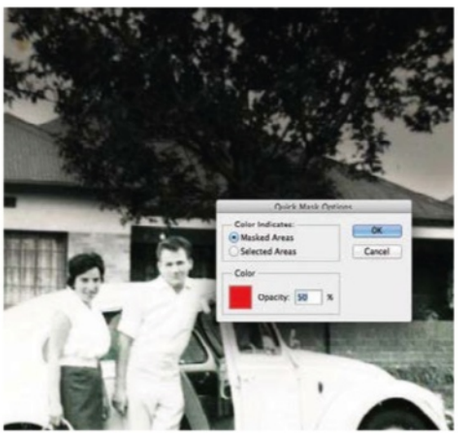
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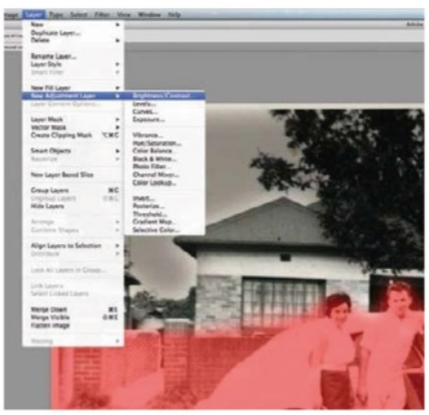
Fix exposure

Balance over and underexposed areas of a vintage image using masks



Quick Mask mode

01 Open up your image in Photoshop and duplicate the Background layer. Enter Quick Mask Mode by selecting the small icon in Toolbar (or press Q). While in this mode, select a large soft brush to prepare to mask your image.



Mask and adjust

02 Use the Brush tool (B) to paint over the areas that need brightening. Exit Quick Mask Mode to view this as a selection. Select Layer>New Adjustment Layer> Brightness/Contrast, then increase Brightness.



Repeat and adjust

03 Switch back into Quick Mask Mode. Mask out any underexposure in your image; use a soft brush. Select Layer>New Adjustment Layer and choose Levels. Balance out the levels of the underexposed area.



Clean up and balance

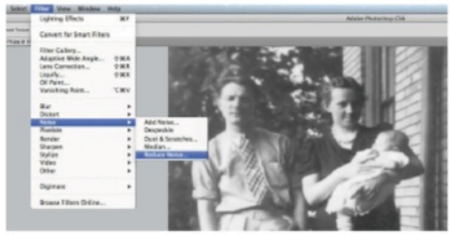
04 Use the Clone Stamp tool to clean up any debris and marks in the image, especially in the corners. Add a final Levels adjustment layer to balance out the image. Finally add the Smart Sharpen filter.

Top three filters



Smart sharpen

In older images where details have been lost, the Sharpen filter is a good way to refine edges and restore some of the lost definition. Select Filter>Sharpen>Smart Sharpen, then adjust the settings to bring back the edges.



Reduce noise

To remove noise from your photos go to the Filter menu, select Noise>Reduce Noise and use the preview to help you pick the right settings. If your image has JPEG damage from resizing, use the Remove JPEG Artifact option to reduce it.

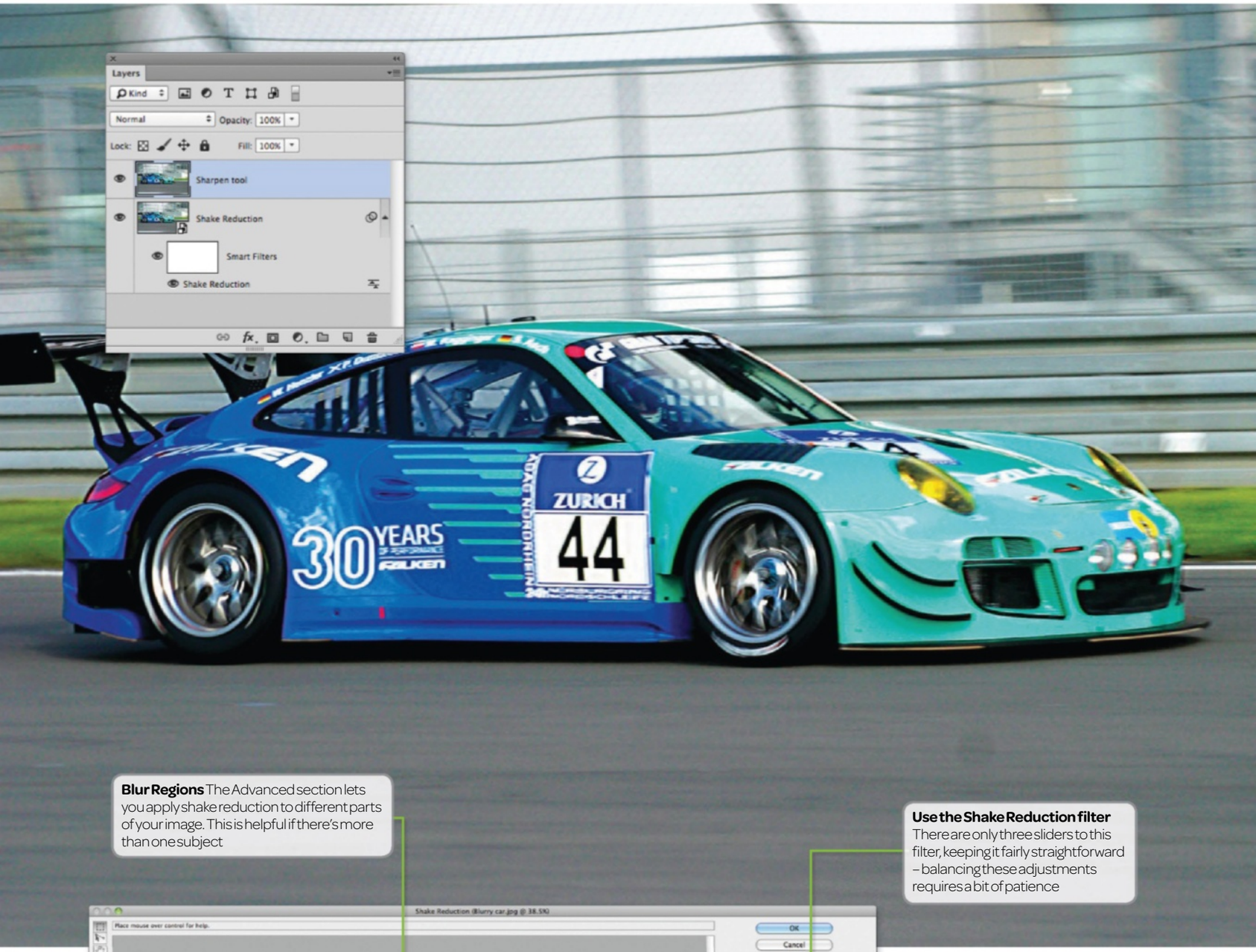


Lighting effects

Applying the Lighting Effect filter is an easy way to add some drama. To add a spotlight, select Filter>Render>Lighting Effects, select Spotlight from the drop-down menu. Move the circular boundary to get your subjects under the light.

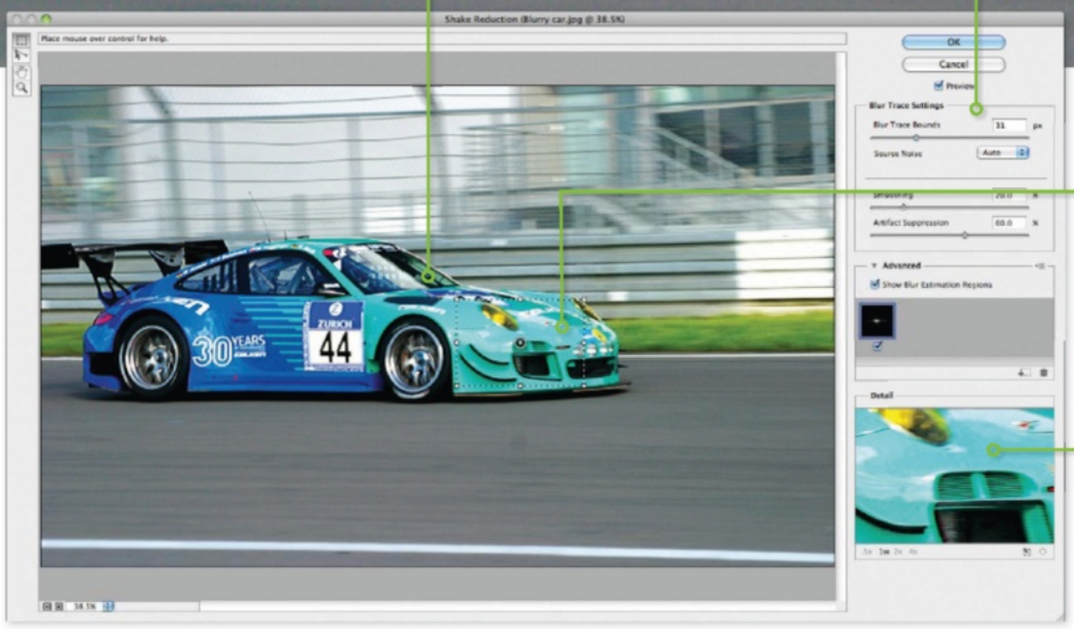
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Blur Regions The Advanced section lets you apply shake reduction to different parts of your image. This is helpful if there's more than one subject

Use the Shake Reduction filter There are only three sliders to this filter, keeping it fairly straightforward – balancing these adjustments requires a bit of patience



Marquees The Rectangular Marquee works best when it's focused over a small area of the image that's blurry. This then adjusts the entire image based upon the distortion inside this selected area, or Region

Close-up view Looking at your image as a whole is important, but the Detail box gives a better view and a faster preview of any changes made to the settings

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Use CC's new Sharpen filter

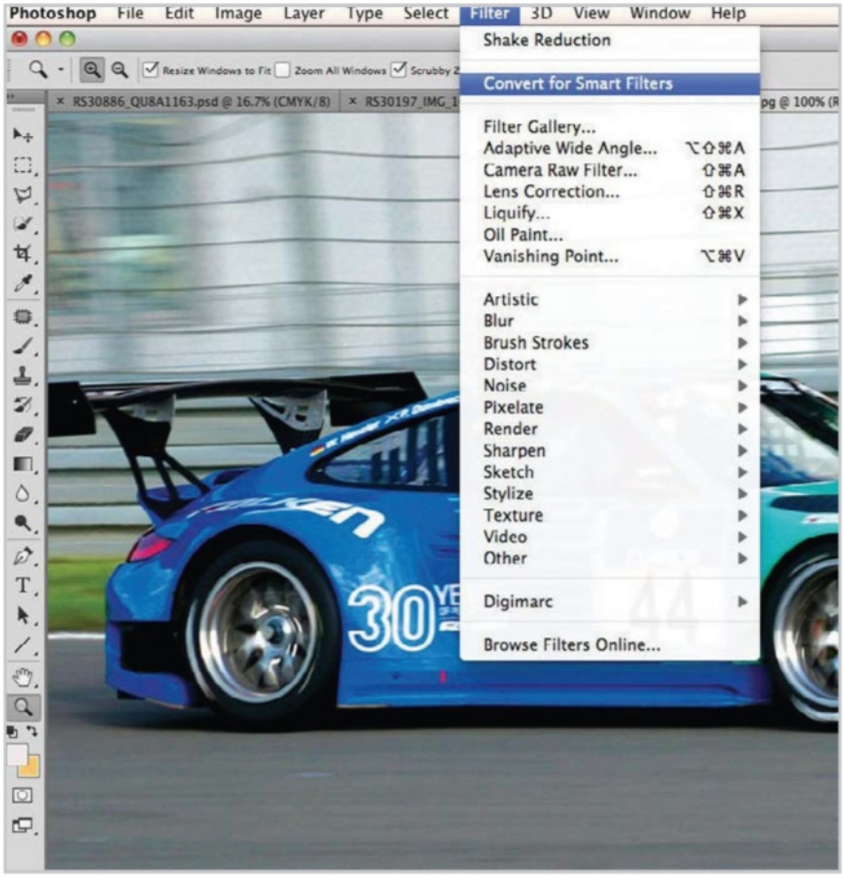
Perform the once impossible task of undoing blurry images, with Photoshop CC's new Shake Reduction filter



With the release of CC, a lot of new features were introduced beyond that of the new updating system. Though many of the main Photoshop features remain the same in CC, one great new tool is the Shake Reduction filter, one of the most groundbreaking features ever seen. This filter looks to reverse the blurring in an image back on itself, effectively sharpening the image up. Before, sharpening a blurry image could only be taken so far until quality became an issue; now, the Shake Reduction is another feature that we add to our toolbox.

The filter uses Regions to estimate the amount of blurring there is in an image. It can then smooth out details and reduce the appearance of distorted artifacts to make an image that's more pleasing to the eye. Granted, results are far from perfection, but with the help from Photoshop's other tools and filters, we can take a blurry image and turn it around in minutes.

In this tutorial we take you through the process of using this new tool, its options and how you can use the older Photoshop tools to finish up your image.



Convert layer

01 Open up 'Blurry car.jpg' from this tutorial's resource files. Start by converting the image to a Smart Object ready for this new filter (Filter>Convert for Smart Filters). This will let us go back to settings if they need tweaking. A small symbol should appear on the Background layer to indicate this conversion.



Locate filter

02 The new filter is found with the other Sharpen ones inside the Filter menu. It's called Shake Reduction and does just that. Click on it to go straight to the menu, settings and a large preview. It's been applied as a Smart Filter behind the scenes.

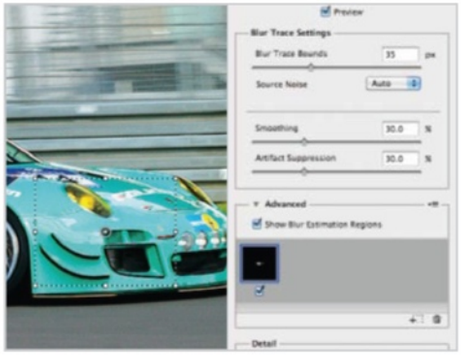
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Magnify image

03 Inside the Shake Reduction filter, start by zooming in until your image is at 100% magnification (press Cmd/Ctrl and the '+' key multiple times). Also make sure that the Preview box is ticked at the top of the menu, so you can constantly assess how well the filter is working.



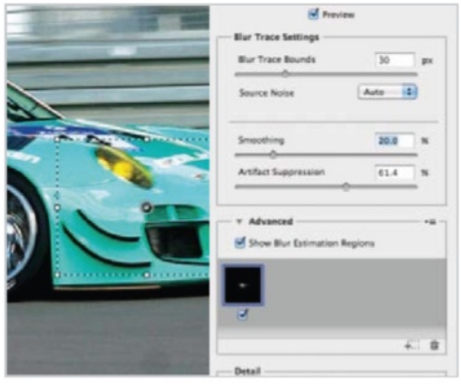
Define area

04 The Shake Reduction filter needs a good look at the direction of the blurry parts of your image. Change the size of the marquee that is there on opening the filter. This needs to fit over a small part of the blurred area to provide Photoshop with just enough information to work effectively.



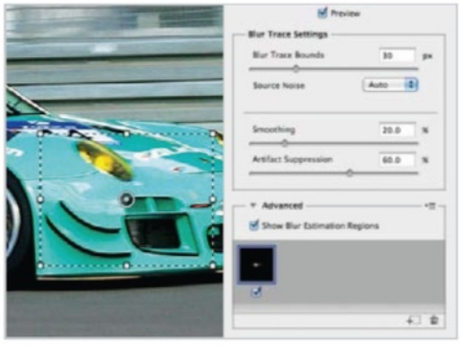
Look out, blur!

05 When the box is resized the filter will automatically detect the blurriness and its direction, and then compensate for this accordingly. Try repositioning the marquee box over another part of your image for a different result.



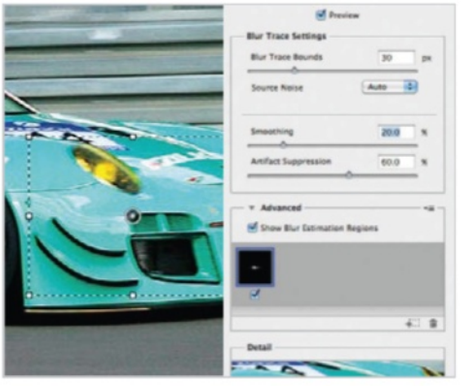
Trace amount

06 When you've found a good spot for the marquee, head to the Blur Trace Bounds slider to the right. In images that suffer from soft blurring, this works well at around 30px. Don't worry at this stage about detail distortion.



Control distortion

07 The image may still look a little rough around the edges, but this is where the Artifact Suppression adjustment comes into play. Boost this slider up to 60% in order to see the harsh details reduced and any distortion controlled. The resulting image should look slightly sharper.



Smoother details

08 The Smoothing adjustment reduces the rough edges, but going too high with this will reduce the details in each pixel. This puts your image at risk and can make any text harder to read. Keep this slider at around 20% for a subtle effect.

What can go wrong

What happens when Shake Reduction is pushed to its limits

While we're all big fans of Photoshop CC's new tool for tackling unwanted blur in our images here at Photoshop Creative, things can start to turn very ugly indeed if the Shake Reduction filter is pumped right up. This is because it's over compensating for blurriness, with pixels shifting too far one way or another. The resulting image will appear more blurred than the one you started out with, so it's best to start with small doses.

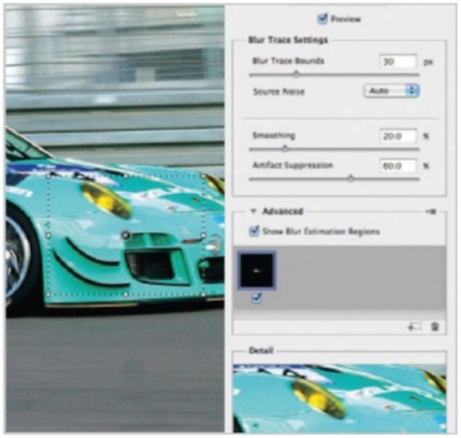


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Fast preview

09 Make the most the Detail preview window down the right-hand side of the filter to assess how the effect is going. Inside this window, position the image to see a constant update that actually renders faster than the main preview.



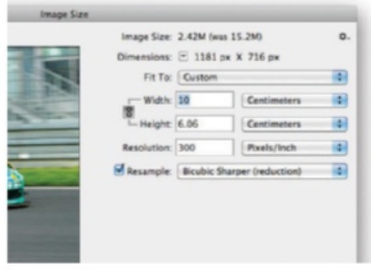
Best guess

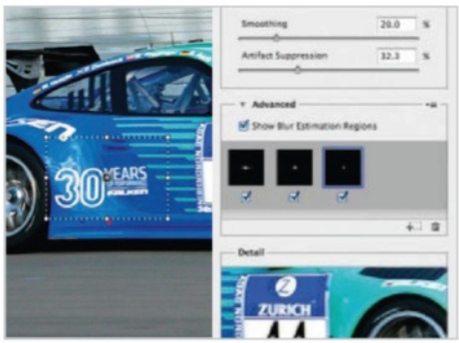
10 The Shake Reduction filter uses what are called Blur Estimation Regions. More than one of these Regions can be added to your image, and each one of them is displayed as a black and white box (see the Advanced field, which you can find just underneath the filter's adjustments).

Expert tip

Reduce image size

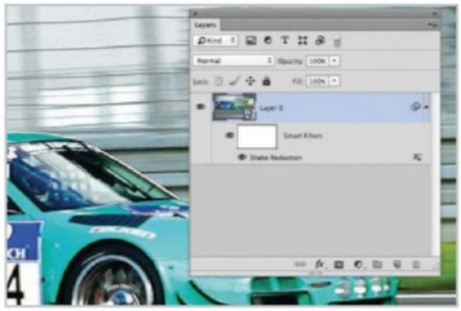
If Shake Reduction runs slowly with high-res images, you can speed things up by reducing the size of the image slightly. A smaller image helps the filter move quicker when undergoing heavy de-blurring, and you won't have to wait around for results. Go to Image>Image Size and tick the Resample box. Lower the dimensions to suit your purposes.





Regions upon Regions

11 To add another Region to your image, click and drag over a blurry part of your image to add a new marquee. The Region will adjust everything else surrounding it, so may not work out for the best.



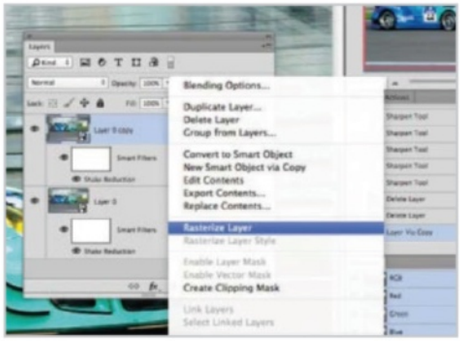
What's happened?

12 When you're happy with the results, hit OK. In the Layers palette, see how the image has changed by hiding the Smart Filter. The image should appear to be sharper and more defined. We can actually sharpen the image even further...



Create a duplicate

13 Press Cmd/Ctrl+J to make an instant duplicate of the layer. The Shake Reduction filter will be duplicated with the new layer, but in order to use any tools we will need to rasterize this layer.



Rasterize layer

14 To do this, Ctrl/right-click over the layer and select Rasterize Layer. This removes the filter from this layer, but all the settings are kept on the layer below, so the image shouldn't change in its appearance.



Pick up your tool

15 Head to the Toolbar and select the Sharpen tool. We can use this to selectively bring out details after the Shake Reduction filter. In the Options, set Strength to 30% and tick the Protect Detail box. Set its size to 50px with 0% Hardness.



Sharpen up

16 Paint over the parts of the image that could do with extra amounts of sharpening, such as text and any graphics. Clicking multiple times with the Sharpen tool will strengthen the effect.

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Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Explore new filters

CC brings you new ways to apply Camera RAW editing straight from Photoshop's Filter menu

Photoshop Creative Cloud features Adobe Camera RAW software inside the Filter menu, meaning we can now apply precise edits to any layer, and no longer to just RAW files.

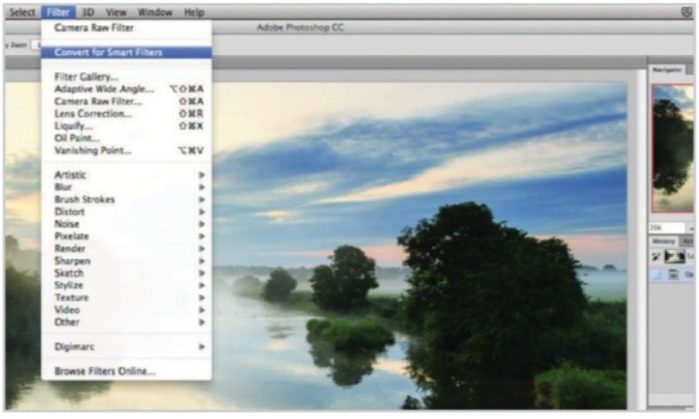
The Camera RAW filter is exciting to photography fans as it contains everything a photographer would ever need. It can improve lighting, undergo retouching, apply gradient effects, create black and white conversions, and even finish off an image with a vignette or some grain, for example. We can take advantage of the array of tools CC provides – including the Adjustment Brush, which we demonstrate in this tutorial – in order to help bring this image to life.

So being able to incorporate Camera RAW editing into a composition is by all means helpful. Of course, Photoshop has all these edits and more, but Camera RAW has its own tricks. Graduated filters enable the instant application of photo effects and edits that would otherwise require an extra layer or two to reproduce in Photoshop.

Grab our image from your resources to start off, or select one of your own, and prepare yourself for the amazing power of the Camera RAW filter!

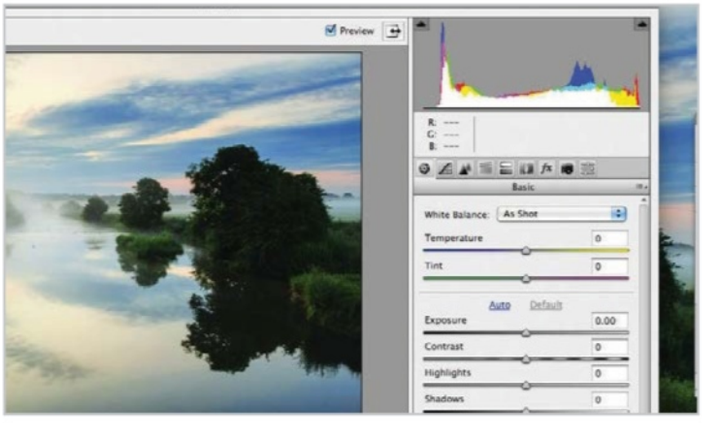
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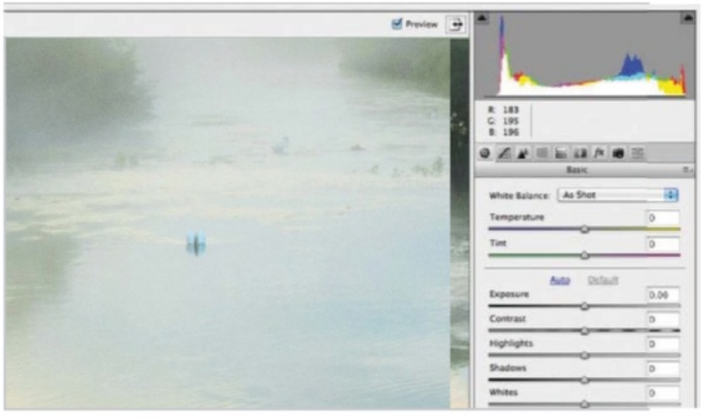
Smart Objects

01 Open up 'Landscape.jpg' from your supplied resources. We must make the image a Smart Object first, so we can edit the Camera RAW filter at any point. Head to Filter>Convert for Smart Filters.



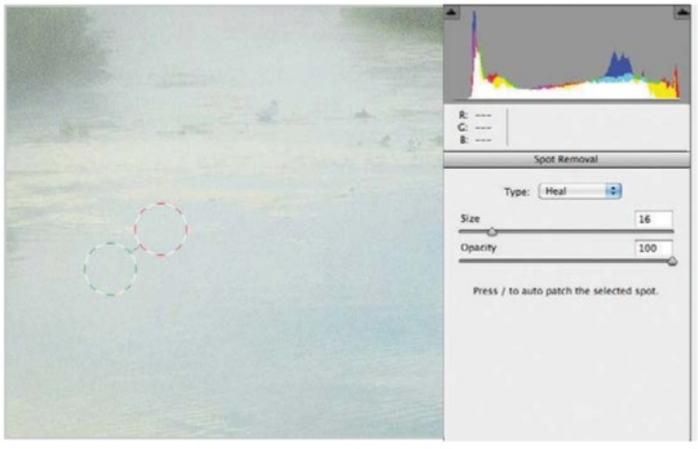
Smart Filters

02 Go to the Filter menu and down to Camera RAW Filter. This opens the Camera RAW editing software as a Smart Filter, so whatever changes are made are re-editable by double-clicking on the layer.



Work up close

03 The Camera RAW filter window can be enlarged or made smaller to suit your screen by dragging the bottom-right corner. The filter opens by default with the Zoom tool selected. Click five or six times on the small blue object floating on the water to zoom into it.



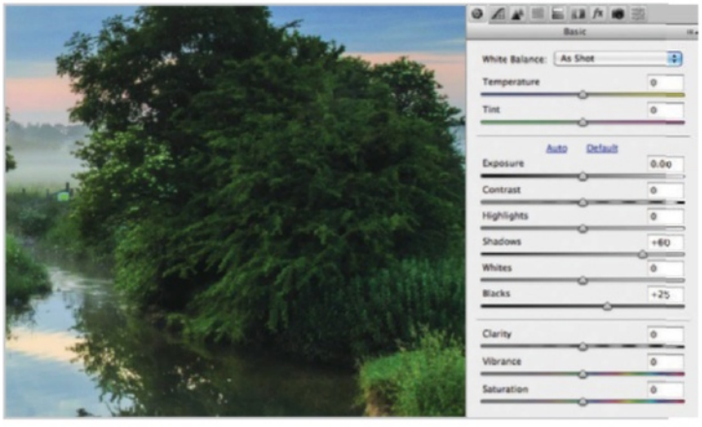
Tool editing

04 Locate the Spot Removal tool (B) from the top of the Camera RAW filter. Set the Size of the tool to 16 and Opacity to 100. Set its Type as Heal. Click over the blue object to remove it completely.



Clear up

05 When using the Spot Removal tool, the red circle shows the area cloned and the green shows the area used. You can move the green circle for a better result, if required. If you make a mistake, press Cmd/Ctrl+Z to undo. Click the Show Overlay box to turn off these circles.

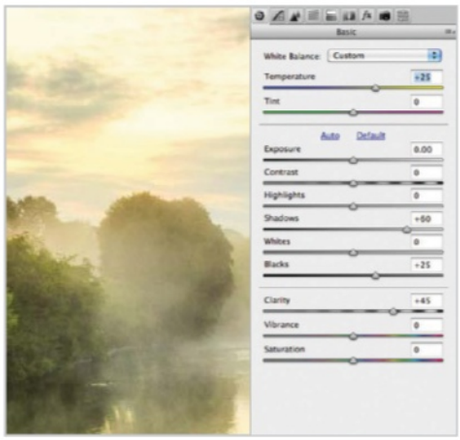


Retrieve shadow detail

06 To rescue lost details in darker parts of the image, such as the trees, push the Shadows slider up to 60 and the Blacks to 25; only these areas are affected by the changes. This creates a more balanced image in terms of exposure.

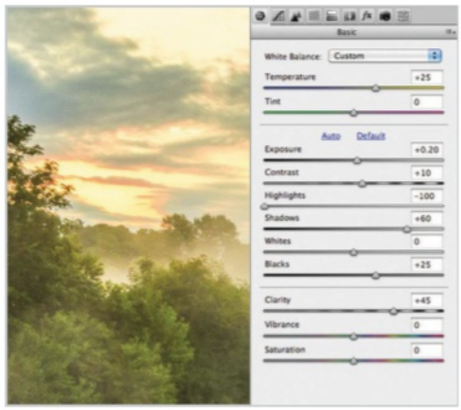
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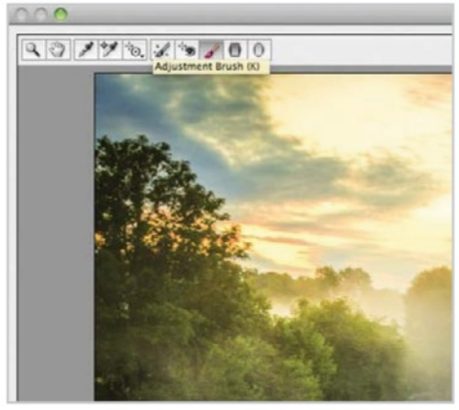
Warm up

07 We can increase the warmth of this image to make the sunset colours more obvious. To do this, boost the Temperature slider to 25. This will add some orange to the image to tint it slightly.



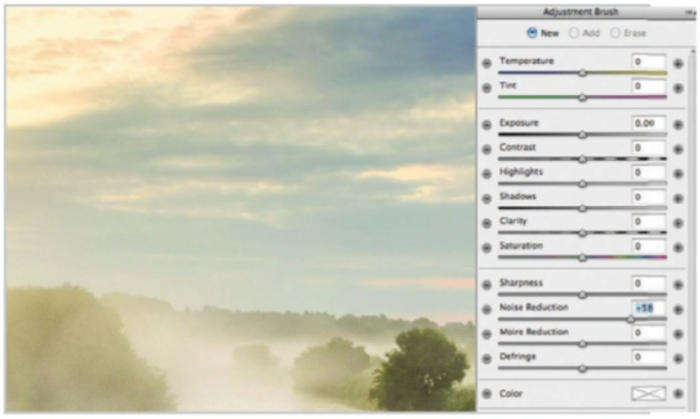
Control highlights

08 To instantly make the image more dramatic, reduce the Highlights slider to -100. Also increase Exposure to 20 and Contrast to 10 in order to help make the overall image more dramatic and also to intensify the atmosphere.



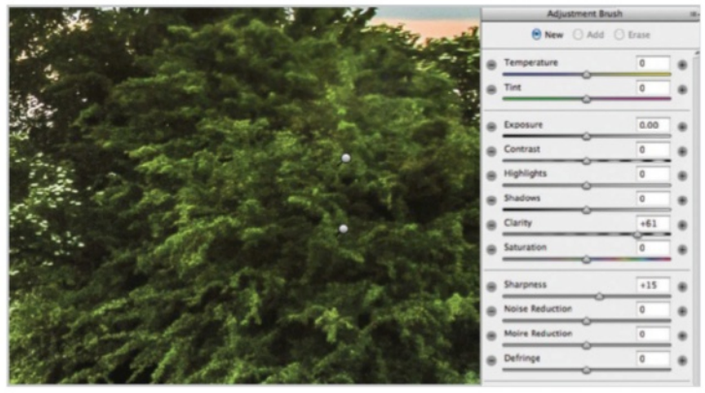
Clever brushwork

09 The Camera RAW filter contains a useful tool called the Adjustment Brush (K). Locate this tool along the top bar and notice that a range of adjustments appears on the right side of the filter, which are dedicated for use with this tool.



Noise reduction

10 The Adjustment Brush lets us apply edits selectively to parts of the image. Notice that the blue parts of the image suffer from noise. Increase the Noise Reduction slider to 60 and then brush over the blue parts of the sky and water.



Next adjustment

11 The Adjustment Brush lets us control many attributes of the image, from Exposure to Sharpness. Look closely at the trees on the right side. Click the New button at the top to start editing a different part of the image, set Clarity to 60 and Sharpness to 15, then brush over the trees.



Adjustment Pins Using the Adjustment Brush, subjects can be edited away from other parts of the image – the grey pins on the canvas show you which areas have been altered

New, Add or Erase? Select one of these three options before using the Adjustment Brush. Add will continually apply the same adjustments, while New starts afresh

Reveal Pins Click on the Show Pins box under the list of adjustments to either hide or show the positions of each one. Click on a pin to tweak the slider settings

Brush size The Adjustment Brush works just like a normal brush, but applies whichever edits you tell it to using the long list inside the filter

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Graduated edits

12 The Camera RAW filter contains tools that photographers will use on a regular basis. The Graduated Filter tool (G) lets you apply subtle or strong changes to colour, exposure, sharpness or noise. Select the tool from the top bar.



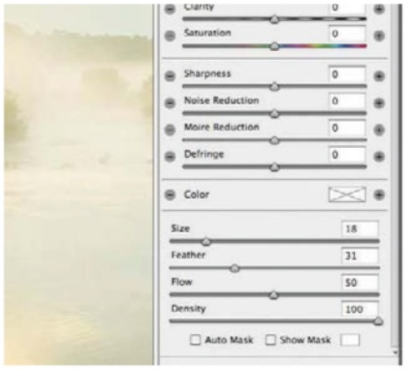
Improve sky contrast

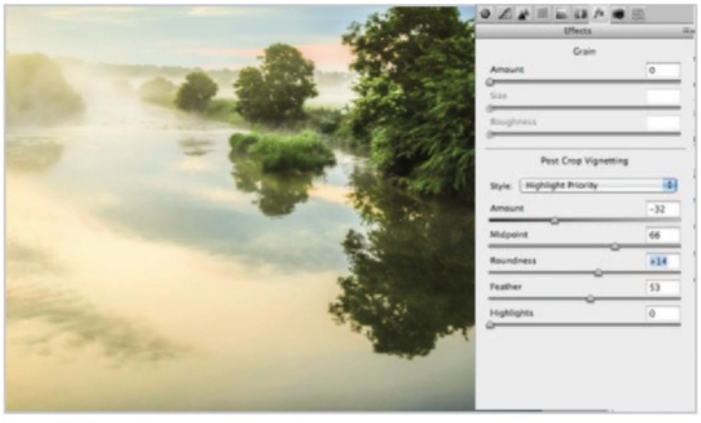
13 On the right side is a list of adjustments for this tool. Boost Exposure to 0.5 and Saturation to 30. Drag a line from the top of the image downwards so that the gradient only affects the sky. Increase the distance between the red and green pins to soften the gradient.

Expert tip

Adjustment overflow

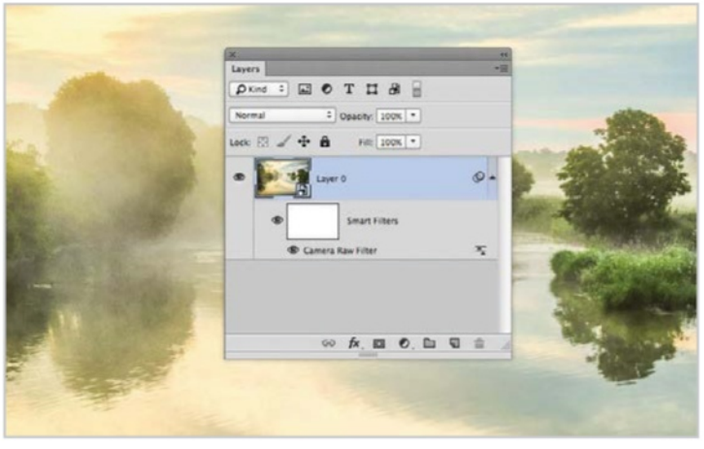
When using the Adjustment Brush, you can help reduce the spilling of the effects from one area into another by lowering the Size and Feather sliders. This will make sure targeted adjustments are accurate, and your image will look much better for it.





Vignette to finish

14 The fx button in the Camera RAW filter has options for applying Grain and a Vignette. Add a new Vignette with Amount set to -32, Midpoint to 66, Roundness to 14 and Feather to 53. This makes the image look more ominous.



Before and after

15 Hit OK in the Camera RAW filter to apply all of these changes to the Smart Filter. Flick between the before and after views by clicking on the eye symbol inside the Layers palette.

Creating fake mist

Play with the Clarity slider to produce misty water or a HDR look

The Clarity slider in Camera RAW Filter determines how soft or sharp the image looks. Reducing the Clarity slider for this image can actually create the effect of mist running gently over the water. Going to the other extreme with the Clarity slider, however, will take the image into the realms of HDR. The Clarity slider can also be used with the Adjustment Brush, meaning that this pretend mist can be applied selectively.



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Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Discover adjustment layers

When it comes to keeping images safe, adjustment layers are king

Adjustment layers are one of Photoshop CC's most powerful tools. They are different edits that you can make to your image, but rather than applying them directly to the photo, they are applied on a separate layer. What's more, you can click on them again at any point to edit them.

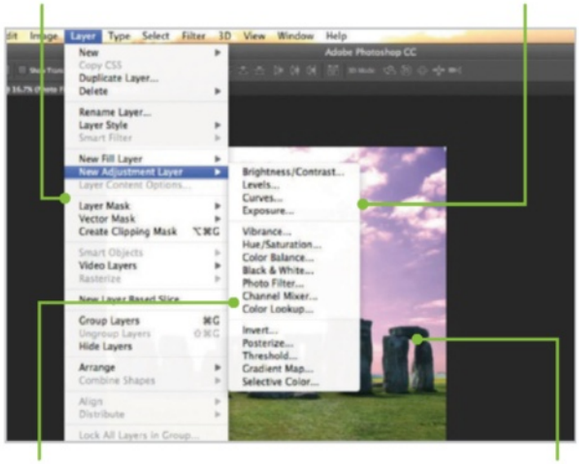
Here, we will be showing you how by using just three adjustment layers in combination, you can turn a drab landscape into a vivid scene. It doesn't take long, but the effect is great. We will also be delving into making a simple selection, so we can work on the foreground and background separately. When you make a selection and then apply an adjustment layer, the edit is applied only to the selected area. A mask is automatically added to the adjustment layer with your selection on it, which is useful if you need to go back and select the same area more than once.

The adjustment layers

Where to find all your adjustment layers

The menu The adjustment layers can be found under Layer>New Adjustment Layer, or from the Layers palette by clicking the icon

Tonal edits The first two adjustment layers in the list alter the tones or exposure of your image by darkening or lightening the pixels



Colour tweaks The second set of adjustments affect colours. Using these, you can add a completely new range of tones to your photo

Get creative The last three adjustments offer creative effects. These are used in photomanipulation projects, rather than photo editing

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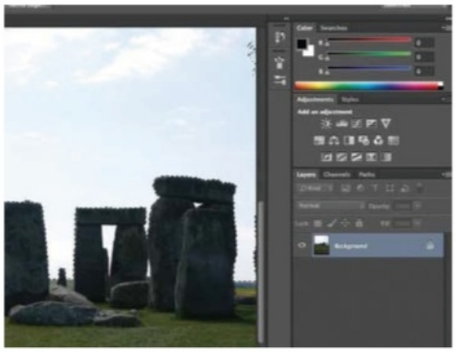
Make editing re-editable

Six steps to stunning landscapes and vivid colours



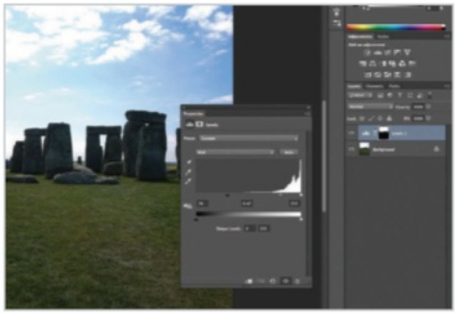
Magic Wand

01 Choose the Magic Wand tool from the main toolbar on the left – it might be hiding behind the Quick Selection or Selection Brush tool. Simply click anywhere in the sky to select it.



Add to the sky

02 Zoom in to the middle of the image. Now hold down the Shift key and this will enable areas to be added to the sky selection. Click between the stones where the sky shows through.



Add the first adjustment

03 Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Levels. We're going to make the sky vivid by dragging the left-hand and middle triangles to the right. Hold down Cmd/Ctrl and click on the thumbnail for the mask next to the Levels layer to reselect the sky.

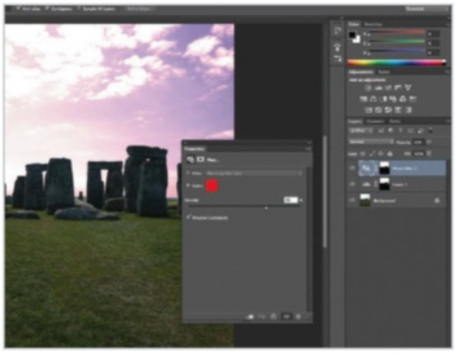


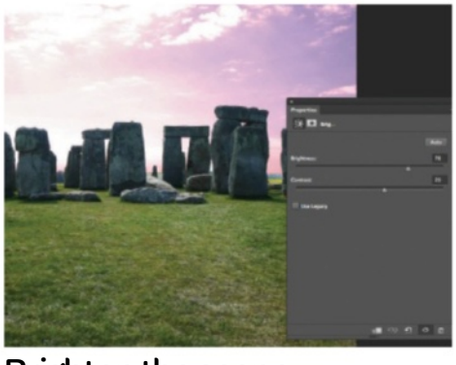
Photo Filter

04 We're now going to add a nice sunrise-red tinge to the sky using Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Photo Filter. From the Filter drop-down menu pick the Red filter and then raise the Density until you like the effect.



Select the foreground

05 We need to select everything bar the sky. Select the sky again as in step 3. Next, go to Select>Inverse, which flips the selection. This will mean that the foreground is selected.



Brighten the scene

06 For the final adjustment layer, go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Brightness/Contrast. Pull the Brightness slider up and the whole foreground will lighten and complement the sky. Pull the Contrast down a touch to finish.



Adjustments at a glance

Here's a quick look at what each does set at high levels



Threshold

Use to determine the lightest and darkest areas



Posterize

Good for creative effects, specify the range of tonal levels



Photo filter

Mimics the effect of coloured filters in front of lenses



Levels

Bring out incredible attention to detail by experimenting



Invert

This technique inverts all the colours in an image



Hue / saturation

Boost the vibrancy of certain colours, tones and hues



Gradient map

Use to create vivid monochrome or sepia effects



Brightness & contrast

Boost light and darkness for impact

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Change hair and eye colour

Learn these simple techniques for seeing how a new hair colour would look

Chances are we've all pondered what it would be like to have a different hair colour. Yet the act of going out to the shops, buying the right dyes, and then taking the bold step of actually doing it... it's all just a little bit overwhelming – and that's just the start of it! We recommend using Photoshop instead, since it's a lot less messy and there's an Undo button to rescue you as well.

Photoshop is the master of retouching, and this extends as far as changing the colour of someone's hair. Using the Brush tool, paint can be applied with your chosen hue to just the hair. We can further enhance this new tone by using the Color Balance adjustment, to tweak it so it's exactly how we want it. Best of all, nothing is permanent, so we don't have to worry if it goes wrong.

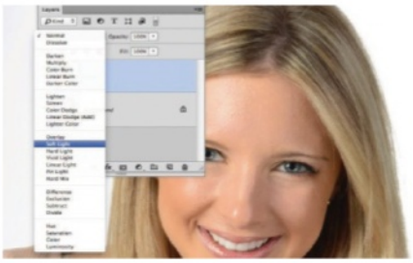


New layer

01 Open the image 'Change hair colour.jpg'. Start by adding a new blank layer by clicking on the Create A New Layer button in the Layers palette. You can also do this by pressing the shortcut keys Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N and then hitting OK in the pop-up dialog box.

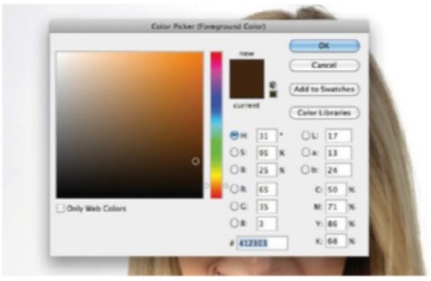
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Apply digital dye Give yourself – or someone else – a brand new look!



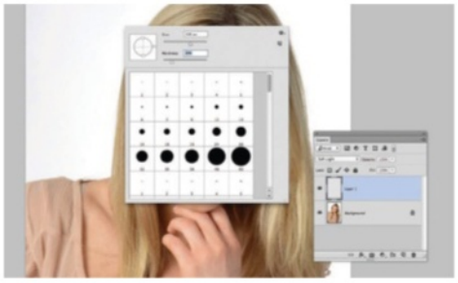
Pre-emptive blending

02 Change this layer's blend mode from Normal to Soft Light in the Layers palette. The image won't look any different right now because there are no pixels on the layer to blend in. As soon as pixels are added, they will blend with the Background layer.



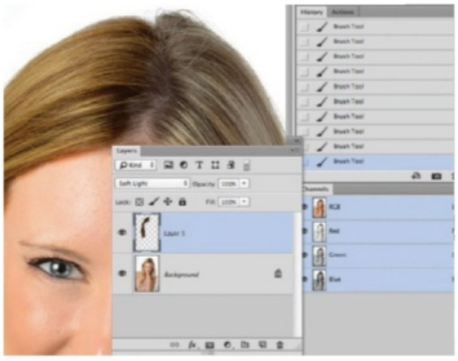
Select colour

03 Click on the Foreground colour swatch (found at the base of the Toolbar). Inside the Color Picker menu, enter the numbers 412303 into the '#' field. This hexadecimal code sets the active colour to a dark brown, for the new hair colour.



Tool of choice

04 Head to your Brush tool (press B to quickly select it), and Ctrl/right-click anywhere on the image to open your Brush options. Reduce the Hardness value to 20% and also set Size to 150px, making it just right for covering the hair.



Apply new colour

05 Carefully paint over the model's hair to see a change. Don't worry about being precise with the tool; if you happen to paint over anything you shouldn't, simply use the Eraser tool (E) at 50% Hardness to carefully go around the edges and tidy things up.



Clip adjustment

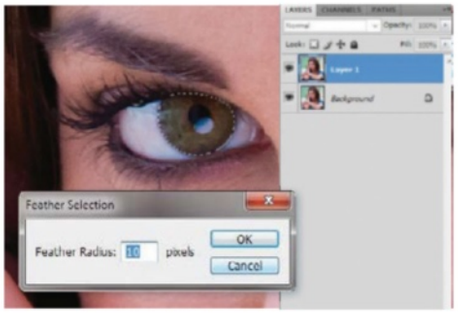
06 The new colour may appear a little golden at this stage, so add the Color Balance adjustment by going to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Color Balance. In the dialog, tick the option that says 'Use Previous Layer to Create Clipping Mask'. Now hit OK to add the Adjustment to the Layer Stack.



Digital dye

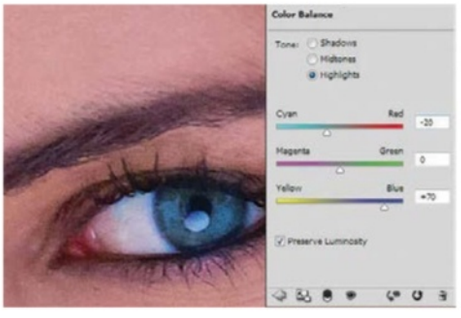
07 Inside the Adjustment's settings, make sure that the Midtones range is selected, shown above the sliders. Change Cyan/Red to -100, Magenta/Green to -100 and Yellow/Blue to 90. After that, you should see the hair look a much more natural shade of brown, but of course these settings will depend on the shade that you're going for! Your best bet is to tweak the final values by eye.

Get an instant makeover Test out a new look on-screen!



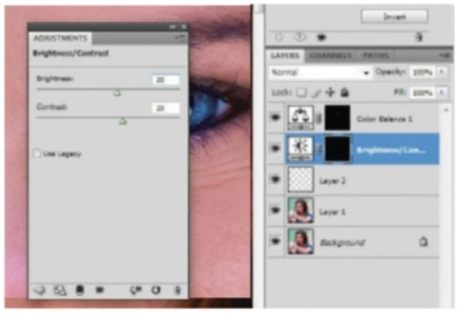
Select the eyes

01 Open your start image and, as always, duplicate the background to preserve the original image. Select the duplicate layer, select the eye with the selection tool of your preference and use a feather radius of 10.



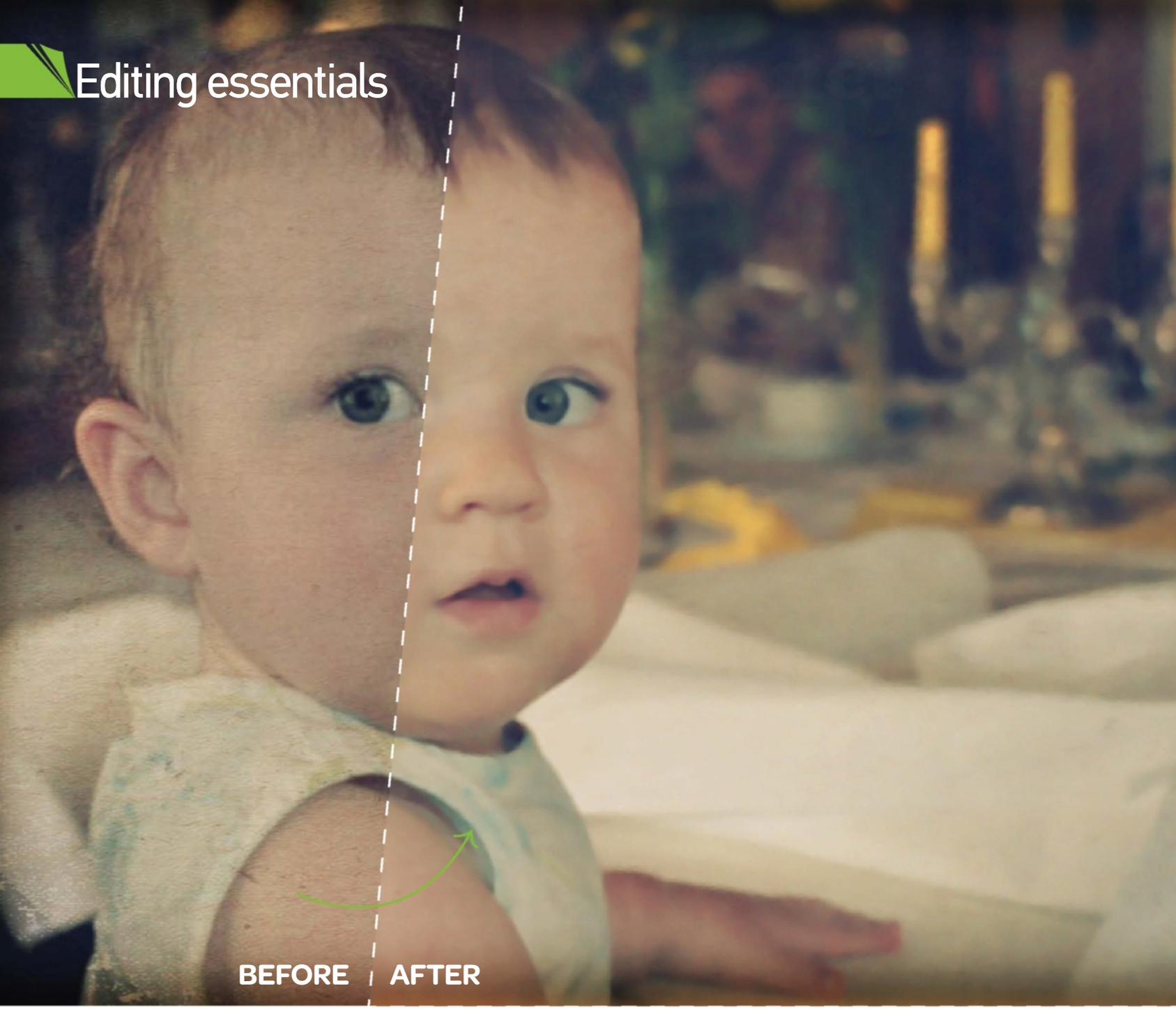
Color Balance

02 Add a Color Balance adjustment layer, select Preserve Luminosity and adjust. This image used the following values: Midtones, Red: 0; Green: 23; Blue: -70. Highlights, Red: -20; Green: 0; Blue: +70. Shadows, Red: 10; Green: 0 and Blue to 10.



Brightness and Contrast

03 With the eyes selected, add a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer. Adjust Brightness and Contrast to 20. Now use the Burn tool (Mode: Midtones) to add impact by lightly and carefully painting round the eye details.



Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Restore with filters

Rejuvenate old photos by removing grain and sharpening them up

Old images are often spoilt by grain, dust and scratches. While there are many retouching tools for cleaning up and restoring family memories, when it comes to removing noise and unwanted artefacts then a Photoshop filter is the place to turn to. Most filters, such as Blur and Distort, are designed to add creative effects to an image, but among these are two that are extremely useful for restoring a damaged photograph.

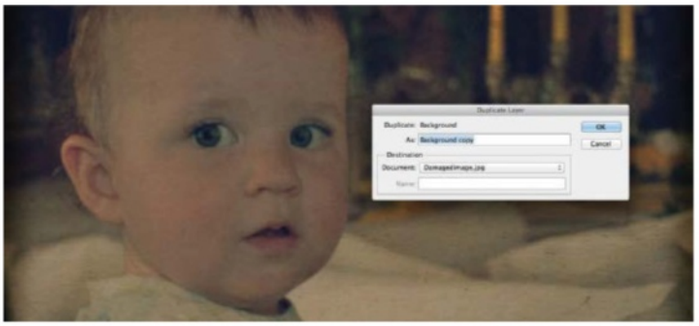
The Noise and Sharpening filters can be used together to remove grain and then to restore detail. The noise reduction filters work by blending individual pixels with surrounding colours, but as a result your images can come out blurry. To bring back any lost details, call in the Sharpen filters. Just as Noise filters create blur, too much sharpening can result in noise. To balance out these two side effects, use a combination of the techniques that you will learn by following the steps opposite.

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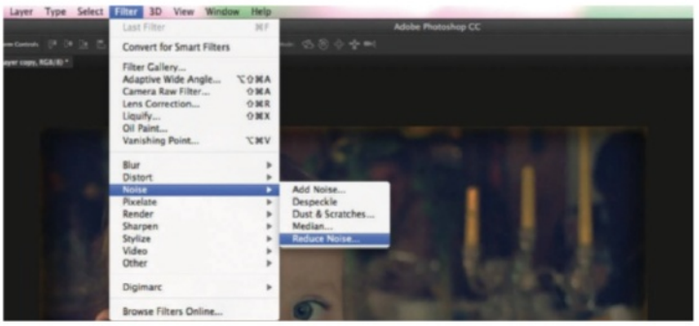
Silence the noise!

Use the Noise filter to reduce digital distortion



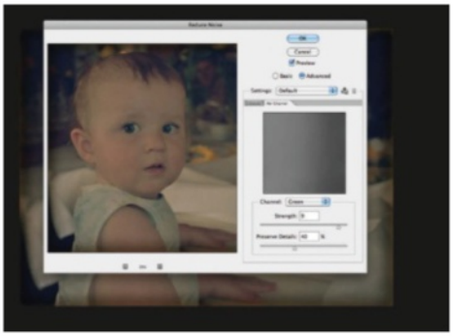
Make a copy

01 Open the image in Photoshop and begin by duplicating the Background layer. Ctrl/right-click on the layer and select Duplicate, renaming it Background Copy. Filters are applied directly to layers, so it's important to keep your original image intact.



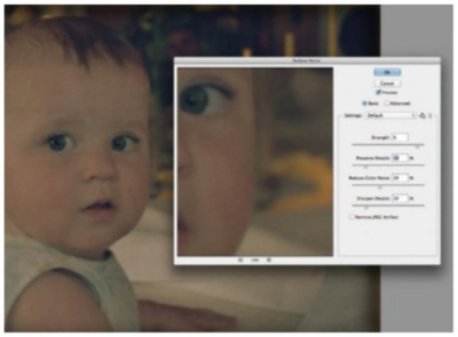
Targeted reduction

02 The Noise filters are all grouped together under Filters>Noise. There are four reduction filters and one filter for adding noise. Select Reduce Noise. This filter offers advanced options for targeting specific areas of noise in an image.



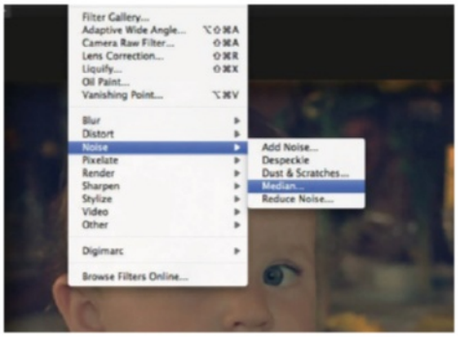
Channel hopping

03 In the Reduce Noise menu, select Advanced to view Noise in each of the three colour channels; namely Red, Green and Blue. Select Green and increase Strength to 9 and Preserve Detail to 20%. Hit OK to apply and then rename this new layer NoiseFilter_ColourChannel.



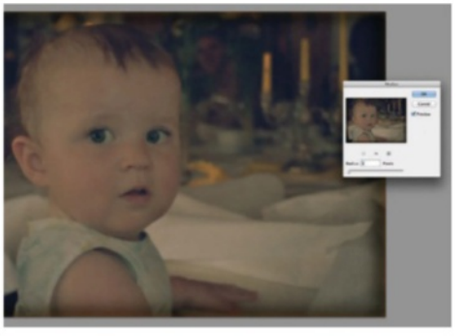
Apply reduction

04 Duplicate the layer and name it Reduce Noise Filter. Select the same filter, but this time apply the effect to the entire image. Set the Strength to 9 and Preserve Detail to 20%, then hit OK. Again, duplicate the new layer in preparation for the next step.



Median filter

05 The Median filter reads pixels with a specific radius and then blends the luminance of those pixels by calculating an average. A side effect of the filter is that the image looks blurry, and so this step is saved for last to smooth out any additional noise left behind by the previous filters.



Set Radius

06 The Median filter has only one setting: Radius. Using the image preview box, calculate how far you can push the Median without excessively compromising the sharpness of the image. In this image, the Radius is set to 2 pixels.



Apply Median

07 Hit OK and rename the layer Median Filter to separate the effects that have been applied. The image is now free from noise but, as a result, it's fairly blurry. Next, we'll show you how to sharpen it up.

Expert tip

Keep Files Large

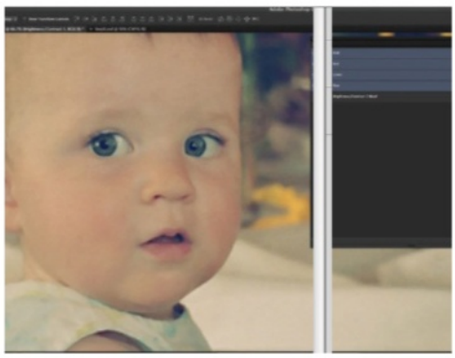
When restoring and retouching old images it's important that you start with files that are as large as possible to increase the number of pixels that you have at your disposal to edit with. Since most old images are scanned in to create a digital copy, be sure to scan at the highest possible resolution and keep the dimensions of the file as large as you can without losing any quality.

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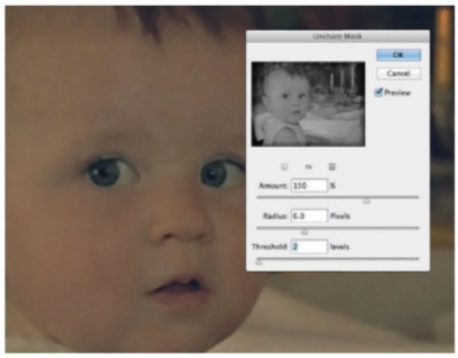
Stay sharp

Use Photoshop's Sharpen filters to recover detail



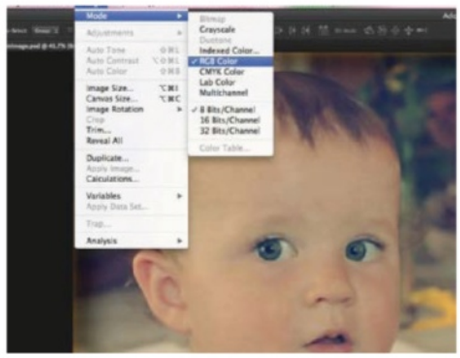
Switch to Lab Color

08 Select Image>Mode>Lab Color. A dialog box will appear and ask if you want to flatten the image, so select Flatten. In the Channels palette (Windows> Channels), select only the Lightness channel but make sure all the others are visible too.



Unsharp Mask

09 From the Filter menu choose Sharpen>Unsharp Mask. The amount by which you can push the settings depends on your image. Here, the Amount is set to 150%, the Radius to 6 pixels and the Threshold to 2.

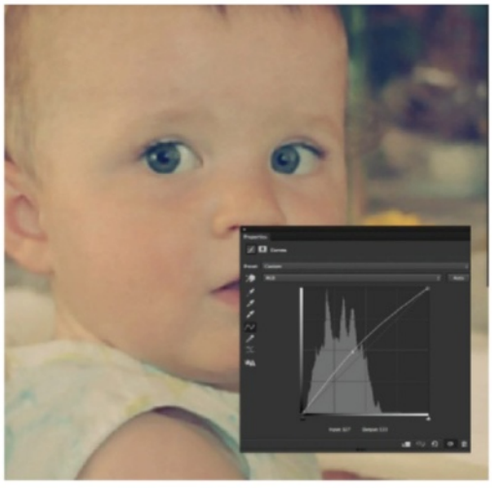


Back to RGB

10 Go back to the Image menu and select Mode. Now change the Mode back from Lab Color to the standard RGB. If you look in the Channels palette then you'll see that the Red, Green and Blue are all restored as the three isolated values.

Bend the Curves

11 Finish off the effect by adding a couple of adjustment layers to brighten up and balance the image. Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer and select Curves. Lighten the image by bringing up the Midtones and creating a slightly rounded curve.





Boost Saturation

12 Add a second adjustment layer by selecting Layer>New Adjustment Layer, choosing Hue/Saturation this time. Increase Saturation by a value of 15 to bring out the colours and draw attention to the recovered detail in the image.

Understand the Sharpening values

See how Unsharp Mask affects the image



The Amount value controls the percentage that the image is sharpened by. If pushed too high then over-sharpening can be seen. This looks like thick black lines around the edges of the subject with increased grain.



Pushing the Radius value too high will create unwanted halos in the image. The Radius controls the degree to which the sharpening can be seen. Try to keep this value as high as possible without introducing distortion.



Set the Threshold too high and you will counteract any sharpening effects. Threshold determines how many nearby pixels should be considered an edge. Keep this as low as possible and watch out for any resulting noise.

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Retouching filters

A walk through the Noise and Sharpening filters



Sharpen Edges

Targeting the edges within the image reduces the amount of noise that is created when all of the pixels are sharpened. The Sharpen Edges filter does not have editable settings, as one click will assess the subjects and sharpen up the edge pixels.



Sharpen More

The Sharpen and Sharpen More filters are one-click options that don't have specific settings to adjust. Both sharpen the whole image and are good options in images that don't have major problems, but which could do with a bit of extra definition.



Despeckle

This simple filter assesses your image and then smears pixels around to overcome any speckling or unwanted debris. Pair this filter with the Healing Brush tool to clean up any spots that it missed out in the rendering process.



Smart Sharpen

Images suffering from blur will benefit from the Smart Sharpen filter. This works to remove problematic areas while giving you options to fade the amount of sharpening. Both shadow and highlight areas are affected to reduce noise and curb over-sharpening.



Dust and Scratches

Many old images suffer from some sort of dust or scratch marks. Set the Radius and Amount sliders in this powerful filter to balance out the colour differences between pixels. Always sharpen up edges afterwards in order to restore any lost details.

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Digital art

Create new pieces of artwork from your digital canvas


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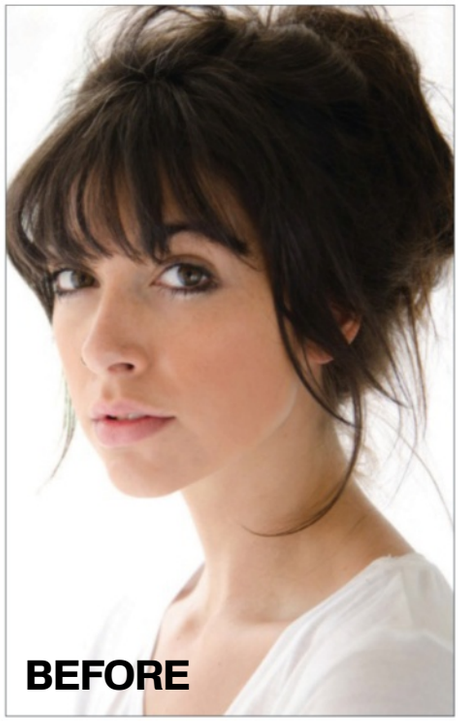


AFTER

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Perfect portrait illustration

Create this colourful and dynamic portrait by teaming up Photoshop with Illustrator

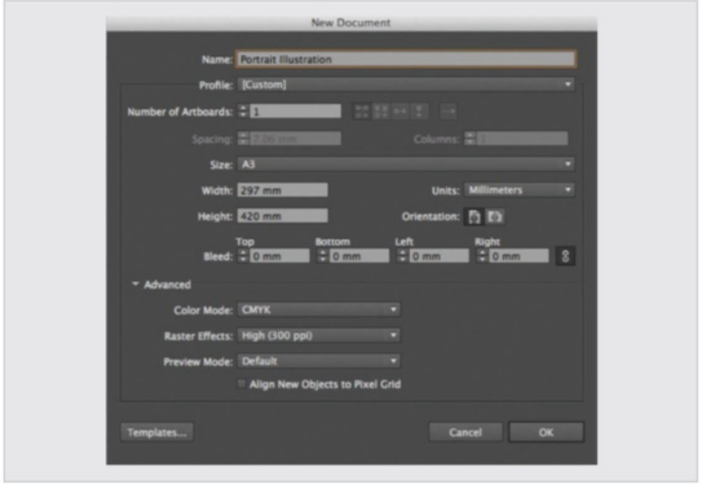


Working cross-platform can often create some of the most interesting and unique results. Combining programs means you can get the best from each of them, mixing and matching tools and techniques to create some really unusual mixed-media styles. This tutorial will show you how to create a bright and colourful portrait image, working from a photograph to first create a sketch in Illustrator, and then moving onto Photoshop to add splashes of colour.

Before you start, have fun sketching lots of different portraits on paper. It's important to understand shading and colour, and which details have the biggest impact on your portrait. As you progress, you will see that the eyes are often the trickiest part to get right, yet they are also the most important aspect of a portrait. Study plenty of photo stock to ensure that you master their shape and shading, for a more engaging and convincing design. Don't be put out if this takes you some time as you'll learn from each mistake.

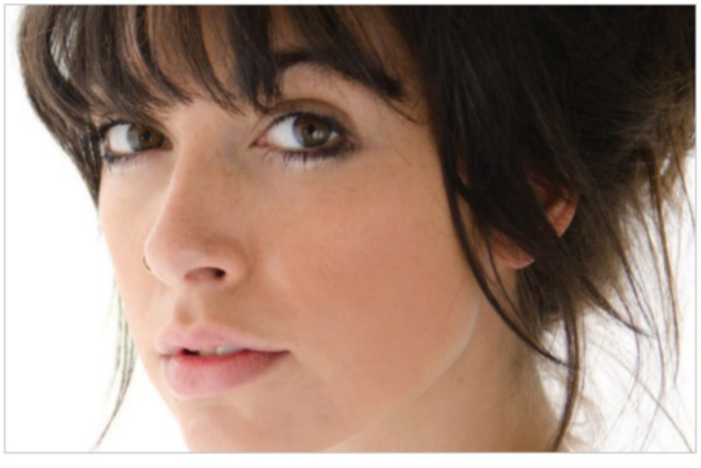
Illustrate The portrait

Sketch the portrait shade by shade



Create a new document

01 Start up Illustrator and create a new A3 document with Color Mode set to CMYK. If you prefer using different settings or sizes, feel free to do so. Here you will need a portrait orientation. Make sure you don't change the raster effects and keep it at t.



Find your photograph

02 Use a photo as a base for your illustration. To spot a good picture from the rest, you need to check a few important details. First, you must make sure that the size is okay; the bigger, the better. It's also important that there is enough contrast, as this helps a lot when you are sketching the image.

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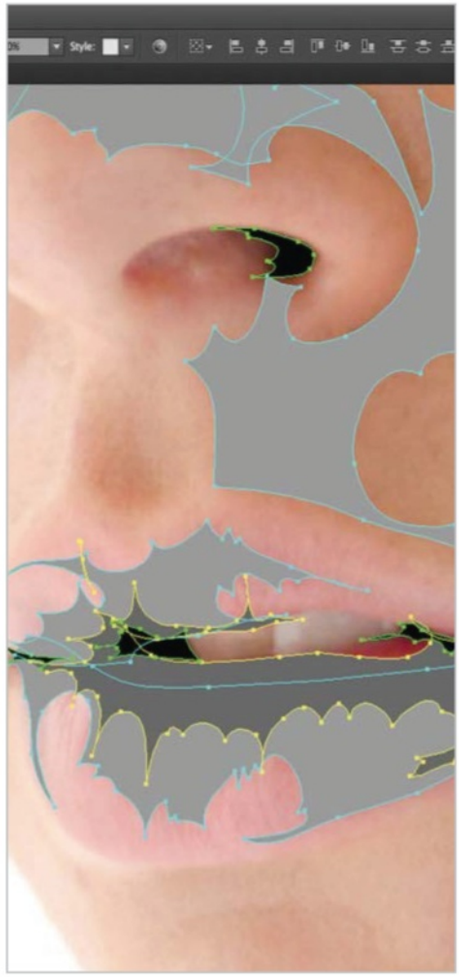
Layer organisation

03 If there is something that will always help you in the future working as a designer, it's a nice and clean layer organisation habit. Start your document by naming your layers. In this tutorial you will only need a few, depending on how many colours you wish to use.



Start with black

04 To create this portrait, always start with the darkest colour to draw the most important elements of your portrait (these are the eyes, nose, hair etc). It's important to use your fresh energy in the beginning to make sure that these features are just perfect! Use your Wacom or mouse with the Pencil tool if you have some experience of drawing in Illustrator, or use the Pen tool and create your paths point-by-point if you are a beginner.



Draw with waves

05 After you have finished the most important details in black, continue drawing with a dark grey. Select 'Only web colors' in your Fill(x) menu to work with the six shades of grey. Now you can draw in the darker areas and build your portrait. To create paths, I like to draw with a 'wave' technique, where I try to draw in waves and curves. This way I can create some experimental colour paths – perfect for lips and shadow from the hair and chin.



Continue the process

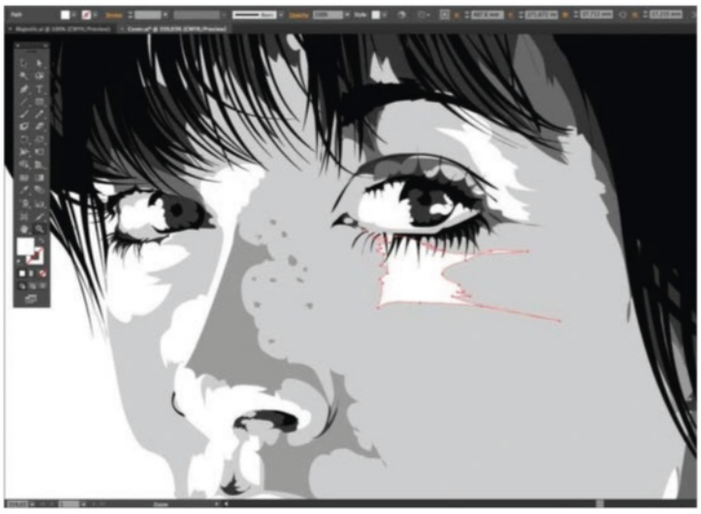
06 When you are shading your portrait, you will see how important it is to start with the darkest colours first and then the lighter colours in the layers below. Make sure you look at the whole image, to keep your focus and not get lost in one single detail. After a few hours of drawing portraits, you will pick up your own ways to recognise and handle different shapes on a face; for example, how you like to draw a mouth or an eyebrow.

Expert tip

Draw something every day

There is no tutorial that can teach you how to draw. It's essential for you to sketch on a daily basis to get better at it. Challenge yourself and try something new every day. You will train your eye to recognise shapes very quickly and learn how to build your illustrations.

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Make it dirty

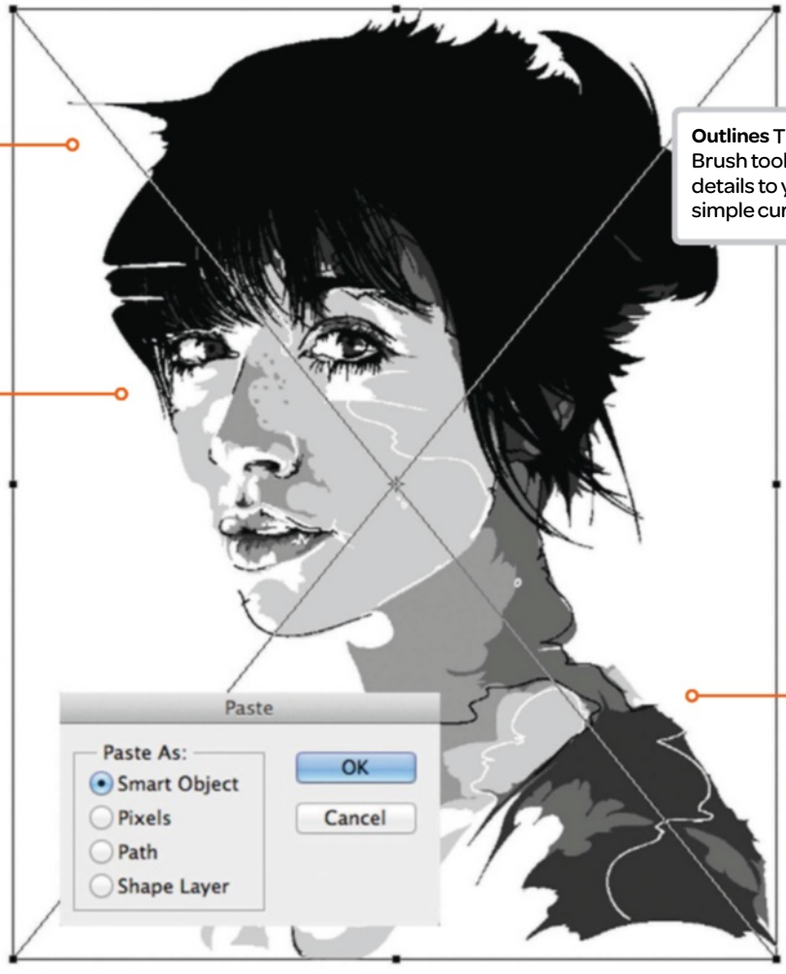
07 You should now be almost finished with your black and white illustration. The next step is to add a dirty paint effect to your portrait. Create a new layer on top and call it 'Dirt'. Then imagine you have a dirty, rough brush in your hands and wipe black and white paint over the portrait, in particular coming from the highlights. Take the Pencil tool and draw your dirty paint strokes and place them around so they still fit and add value to your portrait.

Add some linework

08 Before you are completely finished in Illustrator, create a new layer group called 'Linework' and take the Paintbrush tool (B) with Stroke on. Set the Stroke up with a Size of 0.25pt (depending on your image size), a Brush Definition of 3pt Oval and a Uniform variable brush width profile with Opacity of 100%. Now draw lines to emphasise the curves of your portrait and add flow to your model's face. It's also a perfect tool to add details and outlines.

Open Photoshop

09 Time to start working in Photoshop. Copy all the paths from your Illustrator document by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+C. Open a new A3-sized document in Photoshop and place your illustration. Photoshop will then ask you how you want to paste it. Pick Smart Object to allow easy updates to your drawing later.



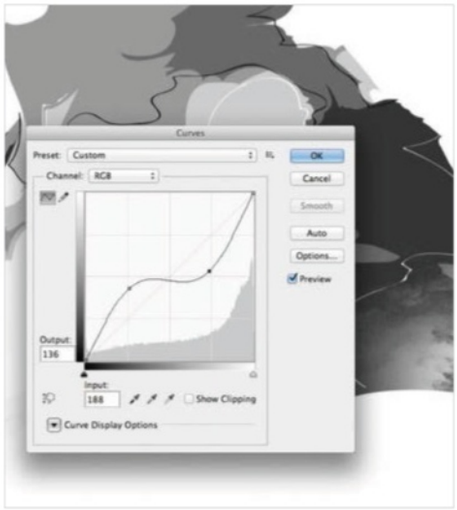
Details Draw all the important details in black and make sure it's perfect so that people easily recognise your model

Dirty paint effect Create dirty brush strokes on the face in black or white to add a gritty and realistic paint effect

Outlines Thanks to the useful Brush tool, you can add more details to your portrait with simple curly lines

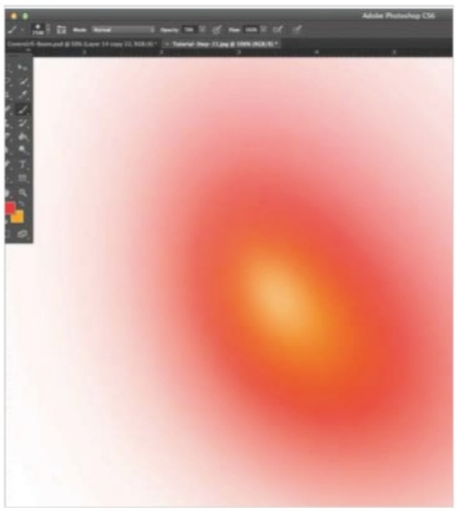
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Add haze

10 For the next step, you need to search for high-resolution images of dark clouds with lots of details in them. Once you have found some, paste them into your Photoshop document, desaturate your layer (Cmd/Ctrl+U) and adjust the brightness using Curves (Image> Adjustments>Curves) until you have a high-contrast black and white image. Now change the layer's blend mode to Multiply and place it over the shoulders and hair to add a foggy feeling to your portrait.



Create your own Gradient brush

11 You will now create different coloured gradient brushes. Use a soft round brush with Opacity of 70% and Flow of 100% and start by brushing one circle of 2500px in a pinky-red colour. Then create another at 2000px with dark orange, 1500px with orange and 1000px with yellow. Then transform your brushes with the Warp tool (Edit> Transform>Warp tool and pull around) and set the blending mode to Screen to place it over the portrait.



Warp your brushes

12 You can warp the gradient brushes around specific parts of your portrait; for example, around the shape of your model's hairline or neckline. Play around and see what looks best. Make sure you try and adjust the colours as well with the Hue/Saturation option (Image> Adjustments>Hue/Saturation) after you have brushed your own gradients. This way you can come up with unique colourways you would never have imagined before.

Continue to add energy

13 By placing the correct warped brushes, you will experience a special effect where it feels as though your portrait has gained some energy. This result can come from the movement your brushes suggest and the colour. In this tutorial, you should try and stick with warm colours and pull your round soft brushes to one specific side with the Warp tool. This will give the impression that your model has stopped in time, but her surroundings are still moving.



Expert tip

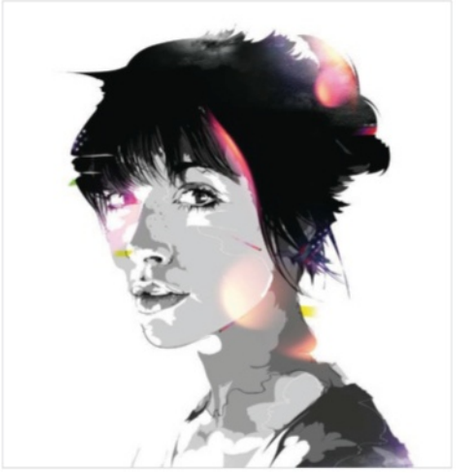
Keep yourself organised

Make sure you keep all your files organised. It will help yourself and the other people who may need to use your files later. It will also speed up your work time by far and helps you focus on other important things. Try and make it a positive working habit as quickly as possible.

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Final adjustments

Use layer masks, adjustment layers and filters to complete your illustration



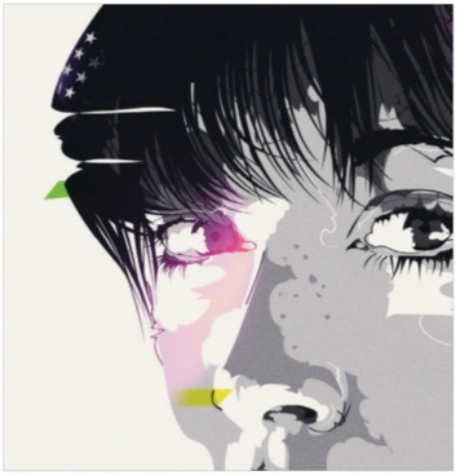
It's in the details

14 Your image is almost complete, but before you finish, search for images that will create textures to add to your portrait. For example, in this tutorial I used a waving American flag with the red stripes and white stars to add details that matter to the model, in order to create a story behind the artwork. Then blend the texture with the illustration by changing the contrast (Image>Adjustments>Curves) and change the blending mode to Screen again to place it in the darker areas.



Changing the overall colour

15 Create a new layer on top of your whole document and fill the layer with color #2a59ef, for example, then change the blending mode to Difference and the Opacity to 10-15%. You will find that you discover a fantastic colouring effect with this single step. You can also duplicate this layer and change the colour for another effect. When you do this, place white lines on top of this layer to emphasise specific details in your portrait – for example, below the eyes.



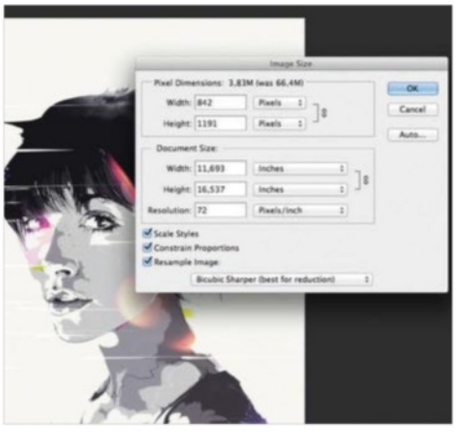
Add a grain

16 You may have noticed that recently a lot of digital art has a cool grainy effect in the colour shading. Ever wondered how this is done? Well, it's easy. Search for 'grain texture' in Google with the search option on large images and you will find a high-resolution grain texture image (grey and white dots like on an old TV). Paste this image on top of your work and change the blending mode to Overlay and the Opacity to 30-50%. This works just fine with the dirt brushes you created earlier.



Moving in time

17 Earlier in this tutorial I explained how to add energy and movement to your portrait, to give the impression that the model is in a dynamic environment. To add a very obvious feeling of movement, you can add an extra group of layers with white lines on top of all your layers in a specific direction to create this really awesome movement effect. It's an easy step that has a very big impact on your portrait.



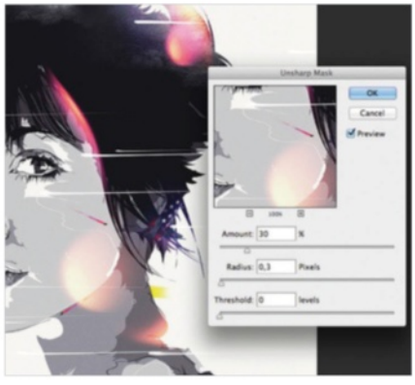
Finishing and saving

18 Since you are working on a high DPI with the purpose to print this artwork, it's important to change some things before you share your work on the internet. First you have to change the image size (Image> Image Size). Change the Resolution from 300dpi to 72di and resample the image to Bicubic Smoother (best for reduction). Normal quality will be just fine since you worked on a high-resolution image.

Quick tip

Finalise your preview

When you are finalising your high-resolution images for a web preview, it is possible that you will lose some sharpness in your artwork. To solve this annoying problem, you can use Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask after you have changed your image size to 72dpi. Then change the Amount to 30%, Radius to 0.3px and Threshold to 0 levels. This simple technique will sharpen your preview in one second.



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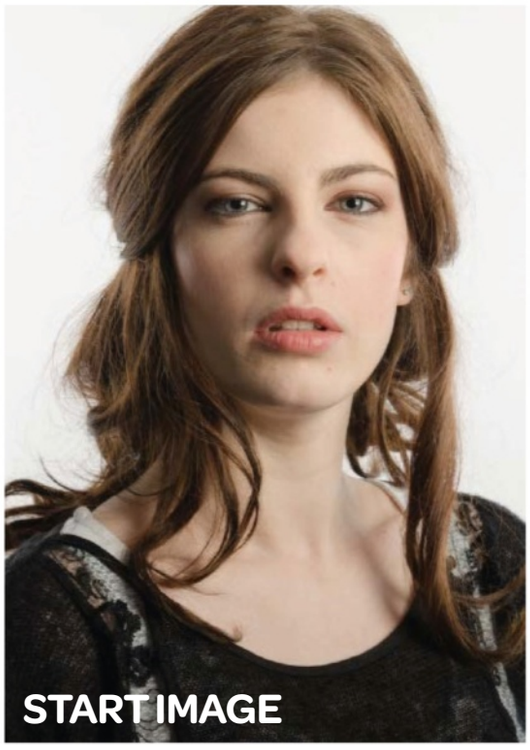


Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Master mixed media

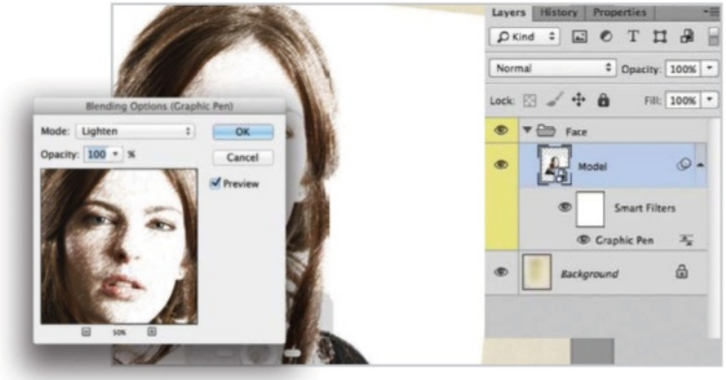
Use the improved filters to add the finishing touches to a vibrant composition



Ready to paint outside the lines with CC? We'll start with a model photo and treat it with the Graphic Pen filter to strip it of its photographic sheen. The edges will then be scraped away with a spatter brush on a layer mask.

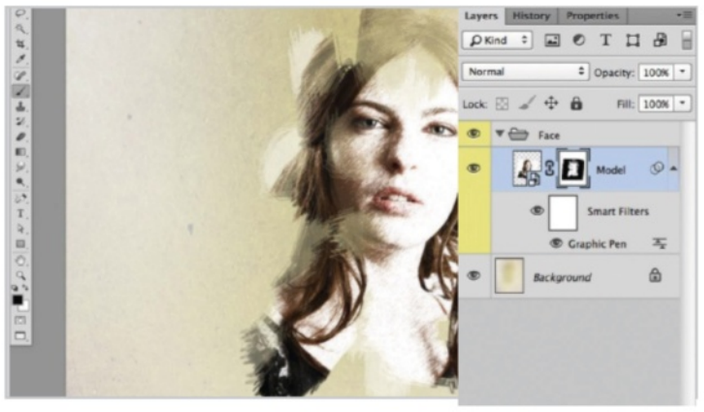
We'll keep using the Spatter brush along with other artistic presets to first give our model a new hairdo, then to create some bold and vibrant swathes that will mix with the image via blend modes like Screen. After completing the base composition, we'll enhance it with some of CC's improved filters. Liquify can now be applied as a smart filter. We'll use it to warp and tug at key points in our image. Because it's now 'smart,' we can tweak our gooey edits at any time, or remove them altogether.

Camera Raw can now also be applied as a smart filter, and it works with any layer. We'll use it finalise our piece's look. (If you're using an older version, substitute with a combination of a Vibrance adjustment layer and the Unsharp Mask filter). Let's get brushing!



A sketchy beginning

01 Open 'Start.psd'. Go to File>Place and add 'Model.jpg'. Scale down and rotate slightly before confirming. Press D. Go to Filter>Sketch>Graphic Pen. Set Stroke Length to 15, Light/Dark Balance to 35. Click OK. Double-click the filter's Blending Option button, set to Lighten. Click OK.



Rough mask

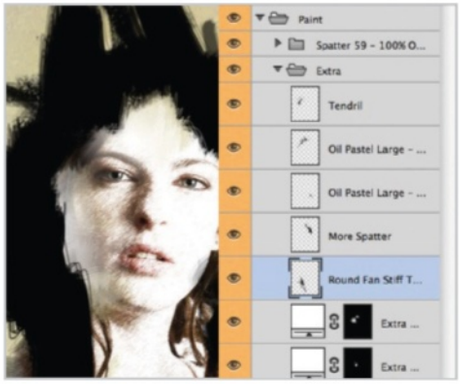
02 Add a layer mask from the Layers palette. Select the Brush tool and choose the Spatter Brush 59 preset at 100% Opacity, 600px Size. With black, paint in the mask to remove the outer areas. Reduce brush size and Opacity as you move inward.



Spatter brush

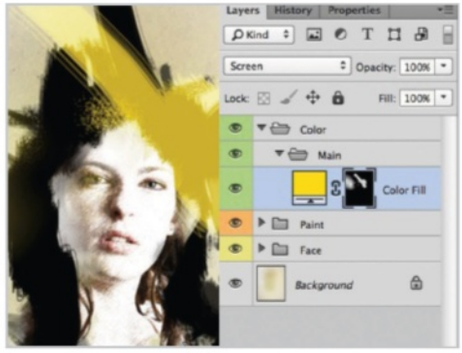
03 Create a new layer above the model. Using the same Spatter preset and black at 200px Size and 100% Opacity, paint some strokes over the model's hair. Continue painting, lowering the brush size and opacity for variation.

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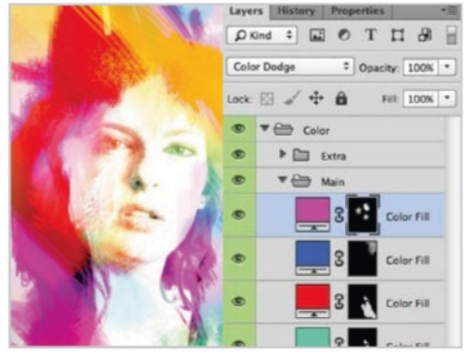
What a hairdo!

04 Try other brushes at various sizes and opacities to complete the hair. It's a good idea to work across multiple layers so that it's easier to remove or edit just a particular segment of brushwork.



Add yellow streaks

05 Click Create New Fill Layer in the Layers palette and choose Solid Color. Pick #ffd900 and set mode to Screen. Fill the mask with black. Pick the Brush tool, use the Spatter preset at 300px and 80% Opacity to paint white into the mask.



Unleash colour

06 Create some more Color Fill layers, using colours such as #16eeb9, #ee1616, #004eff, #fc05e8. Use the Spatter brush and other presets. Test out other blend modes like Lighter Color, Vivid Light, and Color Dodge for various effects.



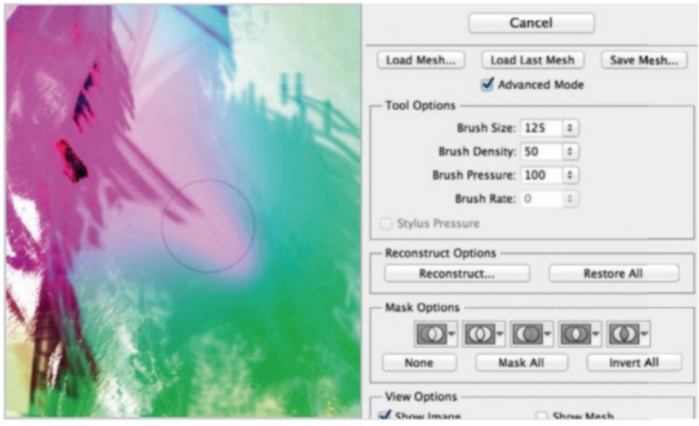
Deepen the colour

07 Create one last Color Fill layer, choose #5b3e22. Set the blend mode to Overlay. Next, apply a Levels adjustment layer. Set the mid slider to 0.73. Paint black at 80% Opacity on the adjustment's mask with a soft, round brush to tone down areas.



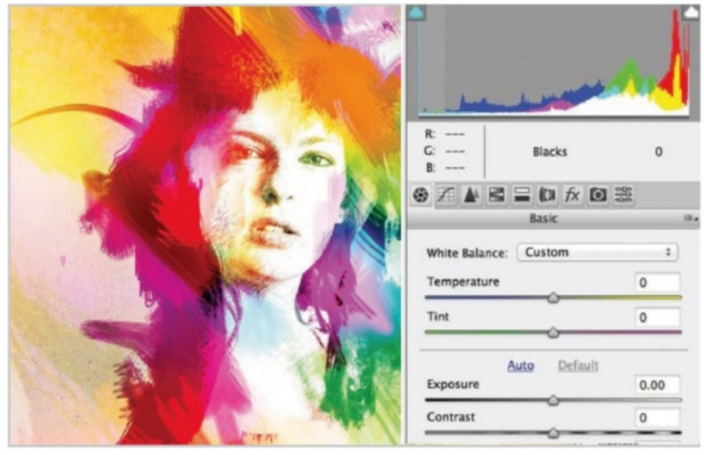
Merge layers

08 With the topmost layer selected, press Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E. This stamps the image onto one layer. Ctrl/right-click on the layer and choose 'Convert to Smart Object'. Go to Filter>Liquify.



Smart Liquify

09 Use the Forward Warp tool in the top-left to push pixels around. You can also try some of the other tools (tick Advanced Mode to show all). Use the Reconstruct Tool to slowly paint away mistakes. Click OK when done. Merge layers again and convert to a Smart Object.



Camera Raw's smart, too

10 Go to Filter>Camera Raw Filter. Set Clarity to 30, Vibrance to 25. Under Sharpen, set Amount and Radius to maximum. You can also try out the multitude of other settings. When done, click OK. Use a layer mask to hide areas to tone down.

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Building up the mixed-media effect

A summary of the key tools and techniques for mixing media



Camera Raw Merge layers, convert to a Smart Object, then apply the Camera Raw filter for ultimate control

Blend modes Blend modes like Screen let you to add swathes of colour while retaining detail in the underlying image

Artistic brushes Use gritty, artistic brushes on the layer masks instead of the standard round brushes to boost the painterly vibe

Preparation Employ filters like Graphic Pen and Colored Pencil to ready your photos for a dose of mixed-media integration

Liquify filter Liquify can now be applied as a Smart Filter, allowing you to re-tweak your edits as you work

An alternative approach

Scan, convert and sharpen for a different feel

One advantage Photoshop has over traditional methods of making art is the ease in which a piece can be taken into multiple directions. Simply save any number of copies, and you have the ability to experiment with different approaches. Craft simple variations or orchestrate wholly dissimilar creations. Here we stripped out the vibrant colouring elements, leaving a stark base. We scanned in some old newspaper, then used the Elliptical Marquee and Polygonal Lasso tools to select and cut out elements for use. After finishing the layout, we merged layers, converted to a Smart Object, then lightly applied the Smart Sharpen filter, which now provides improved results in Photoshop CC. Try this approach, or come up with your own!



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Design your own characters

Develop a character concept and bring it to life using Photoshop's digital paint tools and techniques

This tutorial will teach you how to create an illustration suitable for a children's storybook. You will be guided through the entire process, from the very first tiny thumbnail sketches, all the way to the final image. Learn how to handle composition, colour schemes, overall readability, effective shortcuts, and other tips and tricks. The main focus will lie in creating an illustration that tells a tale.

The painting was made for a spread based on a short story. It was commissioned by a Swedish youth magazine. I really love painting animals and story-driven art that's geared towards a younger audience, so it was lots of fun working on this one! Being able to paint cute, expressive and appealing illustrations that really reach out to the viewer has always been one of my goals as an artist.

If you have a Wacom tablet, I definitely recommend using it from start to finish for more control. The image was also partly painted using some basic brushes, but I did use a few custom brushes from a free brush set created by the talented artist Shaddy Safadi. You can download his brushes at **www.shaddyconceptart.com/download**. Ready?

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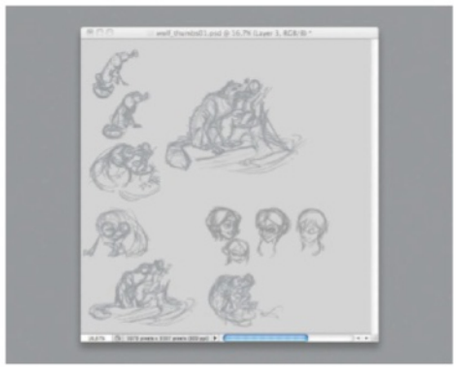
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Create a new canvas

01 First, you'll need a brand new canvas. Start by creating a document by going to File>New and create a canvas that is 210mm x 148mm, and at 300dpi. It's better to keep the canvas rather small at this stage so that you can pay attention to the whole of the image. Fill the background layer with a light-grey tone. It's often better to work on a darker canvas, since it's more comfortable for your eyes. Then create a new empty layer on top – that's the layer you're going to sketch on next.



The very first thumbnails

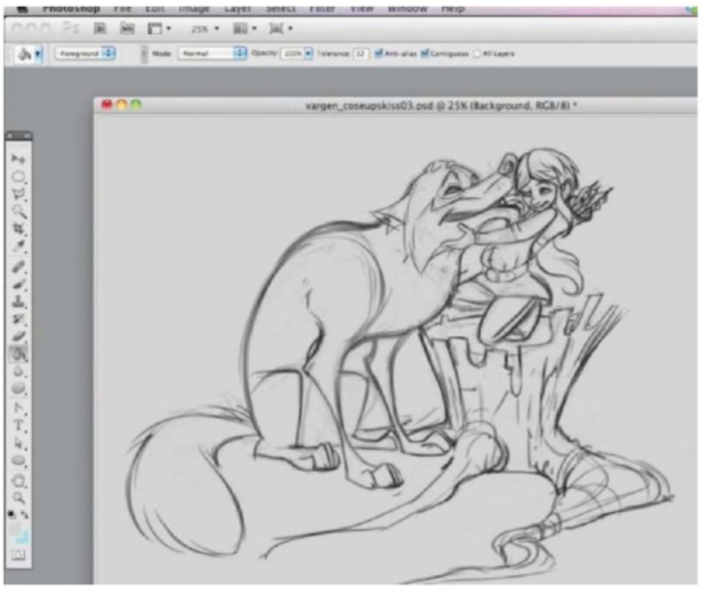
02 Start by quickly putting down a bunch of thumbnails. Keep them small and pick a medium-sized brush that you feel comfortable with. This is the 'sandbox' phase, and any idea is allowed at this stage. Focus on experimenting with pose, composition and proportions. The position of the little thumbnails is not that important, just make sure that you get every single idea out of your system. Stay very loose and feel free to play around a lot before settling entirely with your idea.



Create a rough sketch

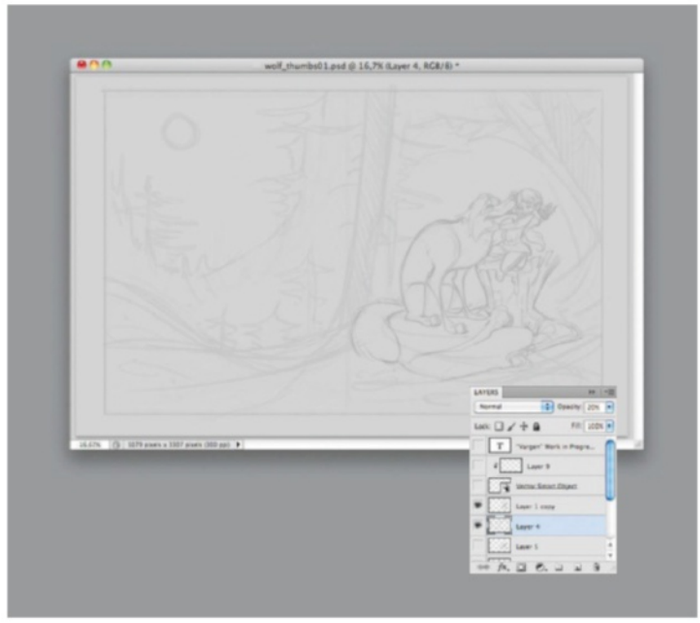
03 Pick the thumbnails that are closest to your idea and start arranging them on your canvas. Lower the opacity of that layer and create a new one on top of it. Keep sketching until the entire image works, and keep experimenting. It's great to constantly ask yourself questions such as: What's the purpose with the image? How does the story go? Which moment works best for this illustration? What style should it have? Who's the audience? Does the composition direct the viewer properly?

"It's often better to work on a darker canvas, since it's more comfortable for your eyes"



Refine the characters

04 Now you will need to create another document to implement your final design. Feel free to make it even larger this time and fill the background with a light-grey tone. Select the character sketch with the Lasso tool from the rough sketch, copy the selection and paste it into your new document. After that, scale the characters so that they fill out the whole canvas and lower the opacity of the layer, then create another empty one and start refining the sketch further. To do this, use a brush with hard edges, and with the opacity settings activated.



Lower the opacity

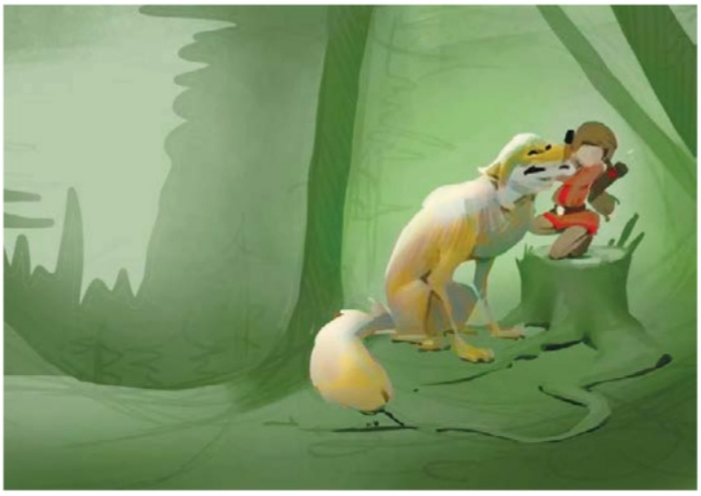
05 When the characters are more refined and you feel happy with them, copy the layer and add it to the previous sketch document. Remove the rough version of the characters and merge the sketch layers together. The sketch should only work as a vague guideline for the painting itself, so lower the Opacity to about 30% and lock that layer. Most of the other layers (except some adjustment layers that affect the entire image) created for this painting will stay underneath the line drawing.

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Try it out in greyscale

06 It's time to play around a bit with the values. Block everything in with flat tones just to find some suitable values that will work well with the composition and mood. Paint on a new empty layer that's created underneath the sketch layer. A nice rule to go by is that if things work well in greyscale, then it will definitely work out in colour as well later on. In general, it's also nice to have several possibilities to choose from before you start to colour a new piece.



Colour test

07 Before getting too serious with the illustration, it's a good idea to quickly flatten the greyscale sketch and create and save a new version that will serve as a colour palette later on. On the new document, create a new empty layer and set the layer blending mode to Color. Now you can start painting some colours in without affecting the tones. This one will work well with lots of greens as the dominating hue, with a slight touch of brown, yellow and red.

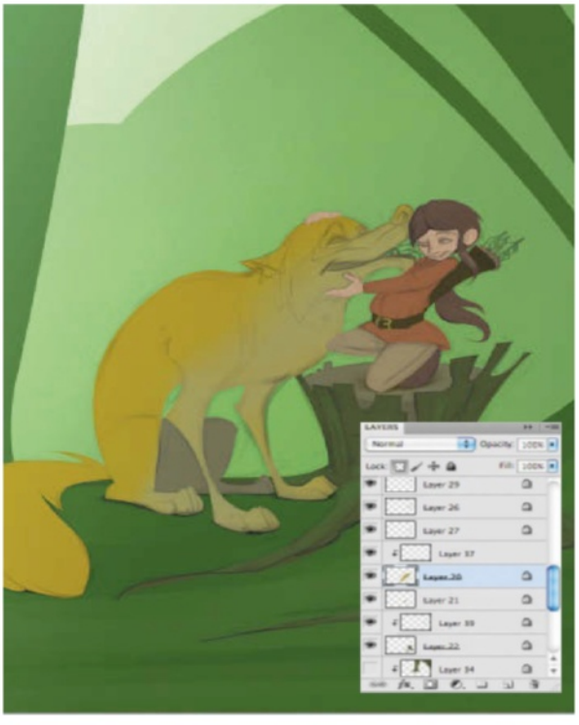
Quick tip

This shortcut that can be created through Actions is very handy when painting digitally in Photoshop. Simply create an Action that flips your canvas horizontally when pressing a specific key, perhaps F2. Flipping your canvas often makes you look at the painting with fresh eyes, and you can immediately see and fix any proportions or compositions that may be a bit off.



Block in the base colours

08 After settling on a nice colour scheme, it's time to block everything in. This will make things so much easier when starting to paint the illustration. The base layers can be created using the Pen tool. Start by drawing the main shape to create a new path, then make that path a selection and fill it with a basic colour. Proceed by creating basic shapes for the different background elements, the wolf and the girl. Lock the transparency of each layer when done.



Create clipping masks

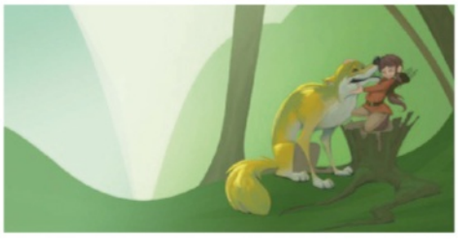
09 This stage really is a true time-saver, and it's one of my favourite Photoshop shortcuts. Start by creating new layers on top of each 'blocked' layer, then press Opt/Alt and hover the cursor in-between the two layers. The lower layer will become the parent of the upper one, and it will then stay within that shape, no matter how messy you paint. It also means that you only need to block in the main parts once. You can then focus on the fun part – the painting itself!

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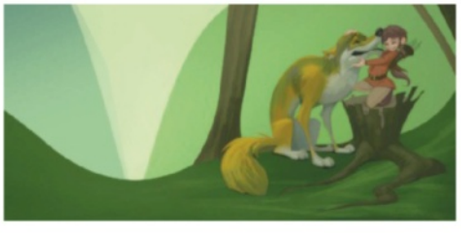
Double-check in greyscale

10 When all the base colours are added to the painting and you're all set, it's helpful to create a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. Keep it on top of the entire painting and adjust it so that the painting gets completely desaturated. You can then turn this layer on and off to keep checking the values when painting. Is the painting readable in greyscale at this stage? Good! Then it's ready to get painted for real.



Time to paint!

11 Keep blocking in base colours with a large brush. The basic brushes will work perfectly at this stage. Use big, bold strokes in the beginning and switch between hard-edge and soft-edge brushes, keeping the Opacity at 20-50%. Stay loose and always work on the entire painting. To get a better overview, open the document in two separate windows using Window>Arrange> New window.

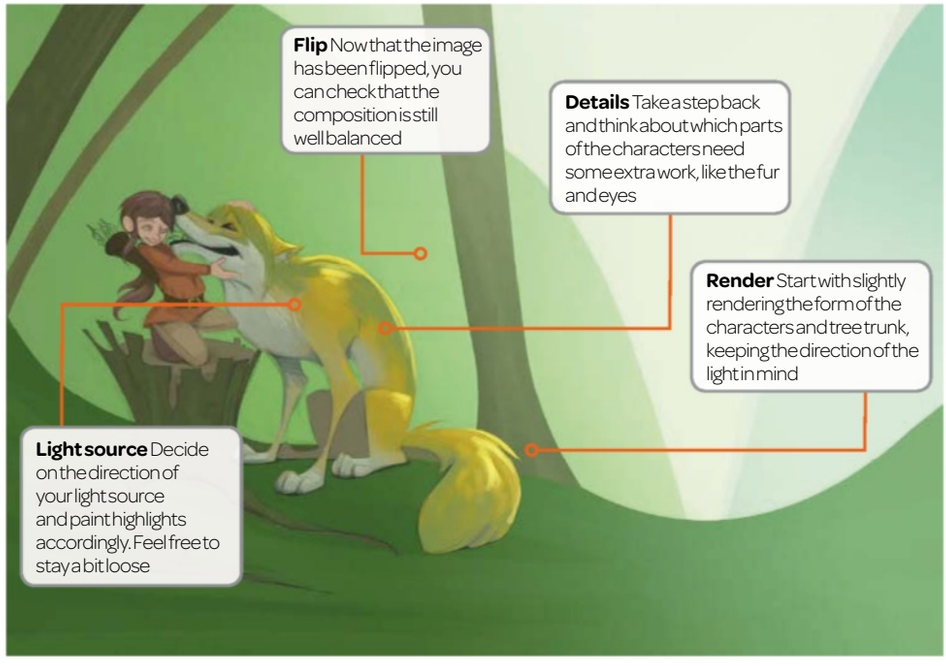


Second painting pass

13 Keep fleshing out the illustration, working on the entire painting and correcting smaller mistakes that you encountered when mirroring the image. Keep comparing the image in the smaller window as you proceed and make sure that it looks good and readable when it's smaller as well. Although it's tempting, don't dive into the smaller details just yet; just keep painting with a slightly lower opacity and render the forms.

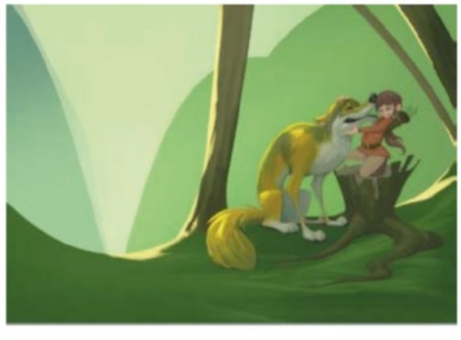
Flip your canvas regularly

12 Go to Image>Image Rotation>Flip Horizontally on a regular basis to check the proportions, balance and composition. When you flip the canvas, you'll see immediately if the nose looks off, or if the position of the eyes is awkward. It's a lot easier to spot mistakes. The great news is that you get to make the changes in time. If the image is working in both angles, then it's probably balanced.



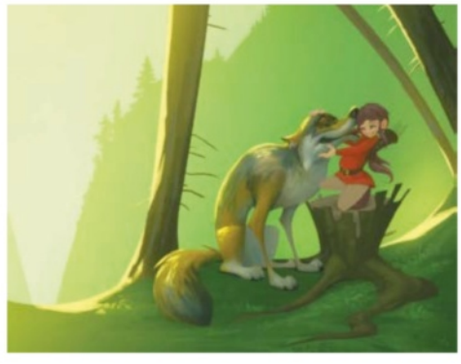
Quick tip

It's always a good idea to keep your light sources on a separate layer to your base image. This way, you can turn those layers off when you need to, and you can then focus entirely on rendering form and putting down those basic values in your painting.



Add some light

14 It's a bit dark here, isn't it? To solve this, create new layers for the background and the characters, then connect them to the layers underneath as clipping masks. Set the layer mode to Color Dodge and pick an orange midtone to paint with. Use a hard brush without any opacity settings and paint in highlights, ensuring they are in keeping with the direction of the light source. Let those layers stay rough for now, as long as it looks good overall.



Third painting pass

15 The image is now ready for some slight detailing and early polishing. Play around with different textured brushes to get that traditional, painterly feel. Safadi's custom brushes will suit perfectly for this phase. Vary the opacity of the brushes to gain full control while you paint. Create new empty layers on top of the parenting layers if you feel unsure and want to redo, or remove unnecessary changes as you paint.

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Double-check in greyscale again

16 Turn on the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer that you placed at the very top and check the values. Is the illustration still readable? This part is really crucial, and as mentioned earlier – if it's working in z, then it will most likely work in colour as well. So it's a very good habit to just double-check your illustration on a regular basis while working with colours. I can't encourage this part enough. Is it still working? If it still reads well, then it's fine.



Refine the fur

17 You can see that the wolf's fur needs some more details. Keep painting with a medium-sized brush and render the forms a little bit more. After that, pick a brush that feels more like a traditional brush that slightly imitates hair or fur. Having photo references is always a huge benefit; so don't be afraid to search for some nice photos that clearly show what a wolf's fur really looks like. References will always be important, even if you paint in a rather cartoon-like style.



Further detailing

18 Keep adding in smaller details where they are needed. Paint them all in while keeping a careful eye on the entire illustration. Remember: less is more. Another good thing to keep in mind is to spend some extra time on characters' eyes and faces in general. These features are one of the first things that the viewer looks at, so it's important that the eyes and expressions read well and show clear emotions. Getting this part right definitely helps to tell a story.

"References will always be important, even if you paint in a rather cartoon-like style"



Final touches

19 Finally, you can add the smallest and finest details to the painting. These include the whiskers, hair and sparkles in the eyes. Evaluate the entire painting by flipping the canvas horizontally as in Step 12, turning the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer on to check values once again, and last but not least, make sure that it reveals your story. You can also flatten the entire painting at this stage, so you don't have to handle all the different layers anymore.



Prepare for delivery

20 Since this was made for a magazine, it's good to make sure that all the settings and modes are correct. To start with, check that the image is scaled or cropped properly. Most publishers handle their images in CMYK, so make sure that it's converted. You can also sharpen the image a bit. Go to Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask. Play with the settings and make sure that the image looks nice and crisp, and then you're done! Hope you found this tutorial helpful. Good luck!

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Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Merge photos with illustrations

Learn how to composite a mix of textures and styles to create eye-catching pieces of digital artwork

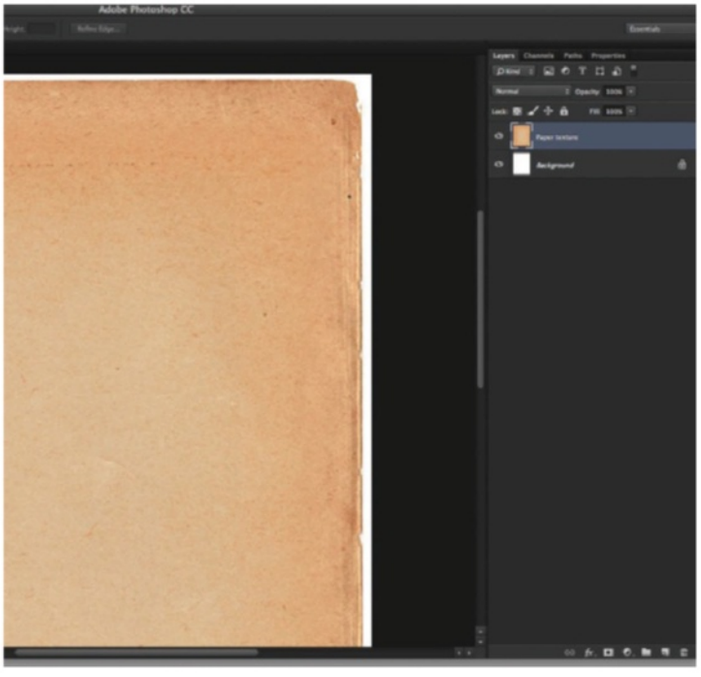
This illustration is a fun mix of media. We'll be working with hand-drawn illustrations, photography and block colours in Photoshop. Be prepared to spend a bit of time tracing and selecting elements, all great skills worth mastering!

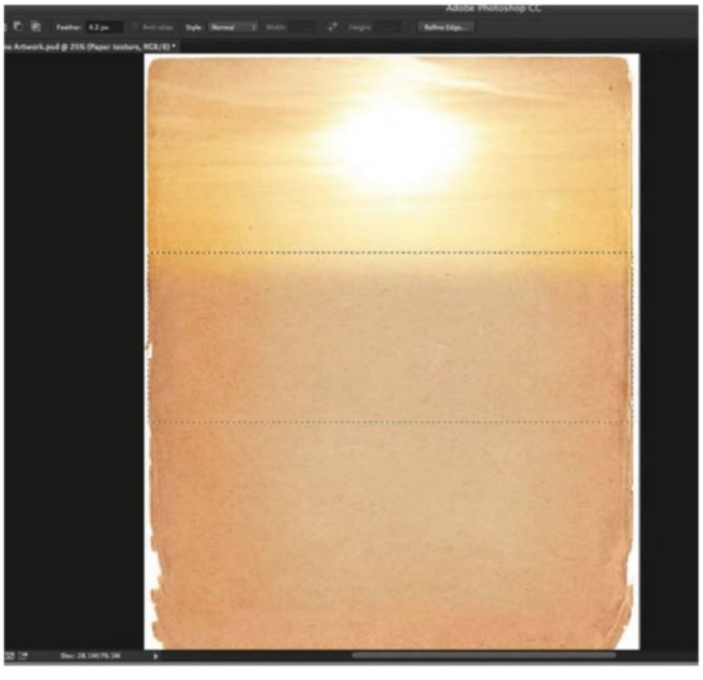
We will go through experimenting with different layer styles and building colours to create a bold and original piece of artwork. This kind of style is very easy on the eye and is really great to use for your own posters, greetings cards, wall prints and much more!

Here we've used a selection of photographs – you can download them from the supplied resources. Or why not put your own spin on things and incorporate loved ones into the composition? Scan in your family photos and get editing!

Piece it all together

Stitch up a composite using photos, block colour and drawings





Prepare your files

01 Kick off by cutting out the elements that you need from your photographs then start compositing them together. Let's start from the back and work forwards, so we'll begin with a lovely paper- texture background.

Add sky

02 Open your sky background, select all (Cmd/Ctrl+A), copy (Cmd/Ctrl+C) and paste (Cmd/Ctrl+V) your sky photo on top of your paper layer. Position this in the top third of the composition, then click on your layer and set layer style to Hard Light.

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Expert tip

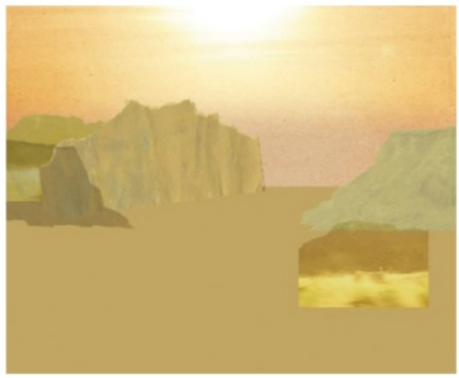
Cut out neatly!

For artwork that is comprised of numerous similar elements (like the mountains in this one), you may be tempted to duplicate layers rather than spending lots of time creating different ones. If you're doing this, try to change each layer as much as possible to create an illusion of variety. You could go to Edit>Transform> Flip Horizontal, or hit Cmd/Ctrl+T to change the size of the layer. Also, don't forget to name all of your layers so that you can keep them organised – this will save you plenty of time while working!



Add mountain photography

03 Cut out the mountain photographs and also add a scan of some ripped-up sandpaper just to mix things up a little. Now you can have a play here – move the photographs about until you're happy with the layout.



Base colours

04 Cmd/Ctrl-click on a mountain's layer icon, highlighting its area. Add a new layer underneath it and Edit>Fill (or Shift+F5) with your chosen base colour. Click back on the mountain layer, change to Multiply blend mode and lower Opacity to 60%. Repeat for the other elements.



Block out the colour

05 As well as these slightly textured mountains, you can also add in a few mountains that are simply block colour. Draw a mountain shape using the Lasso tool (L) and then fill in the whole area with your selected colour.



Complete your entire mountain range

06 Duplicate the Mountains folder and hide the original. Click once on the new folder and hit Cmd/Ctrl+E to flatten it into one layer. Change this element's blend mode to Linear Burn.



Wall photo and illustration

07 Open 'Wall original.jpg' and use the Magnetic Lasso (L) to cut around the fence and wall (hold Alt to get rid of the fence post gaps). Paste the selection onto your main project. Now place 'Illustration 2 original.jpg' on a new layer set to Multiply. Rotate clockwise using Edit>Transform.



Create a base tone for the wall

08 Hold Cmd/Ctrl and click the Wall layer icon. Create a new layer underneath and Edit>Fill (Shift+F5) with your desired colour (for instance #bb998b). Now go back to your Wall layer and change its style to Overlay at 50% Opacity.



Main figures

09 Now for the main figures. Use the same technique you used for the wall with the supplied figures. Trace over them using a black Pen tool (P). Draw some extra lines to join the characters together and give them something to sit on.



Delete the objects

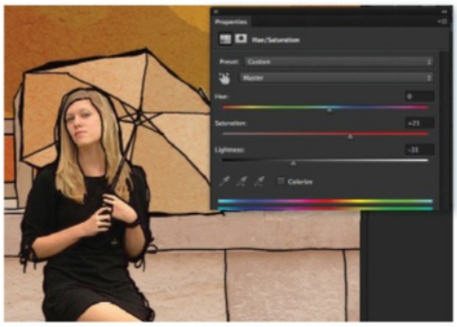
10 Scan and clean the illustration and add it on top of the photographed figures. Delete the objects that the figures are holding in the photo using the Lasso tool. Then merge the photograph and illustration (highlight both layers and hit Cmd/Ctrl+E).

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Paper texture for objects

11 Duplicate the Paper texture layer and place it underneath the figures. Highlight the area around the figures with the Magic Wand tool (W) and then go to Select>Modify>Expand and enter 1px so that the selection is underneath the illustration line. Hit Delete on the Paper texture layer.



Break up the umbrella

12 Duplicate the Paper texture layer under the umbrella. On the Figure layer, highlight every other triangle with Magic Wand. Choose Select>Modify>Expand and enter 1px. Hit Delete on the second paper layer. Hit Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation; Lightness down, Saturation up.



Apply a warm hue

13 Highlight the area of the figures by holding down the Cmd/Ctrl keys and then clicking on the layer icon. Create a new layer underneath and then go to Edit>Fill (or Shift+F5) with your desired colour (example: #ffbab1). Now set the Figures layer to Multiply blend mode.

Use extra elements

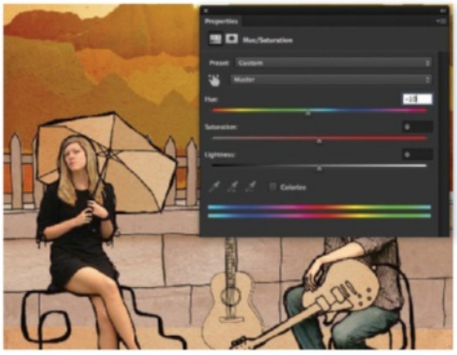
14 The extra guitar is simply a scanned illustration that has been coloured the same way as the guitar and umbrella. Duplicate the paper texture, highlight the area around the guitar, expand it by 1px and then finally hit Delete on the paper texture.





Include seagulls

15 Cut the seagulls out from the original photograph and paste them onto the artwork. Hide this layer and then highlight the seagulls by holding Cmd/Ctrl and clicking on the layer icon. Now create a new layer and Edit>Fill (or Shift+F5) with your desired tone.



Tidy up and finish!

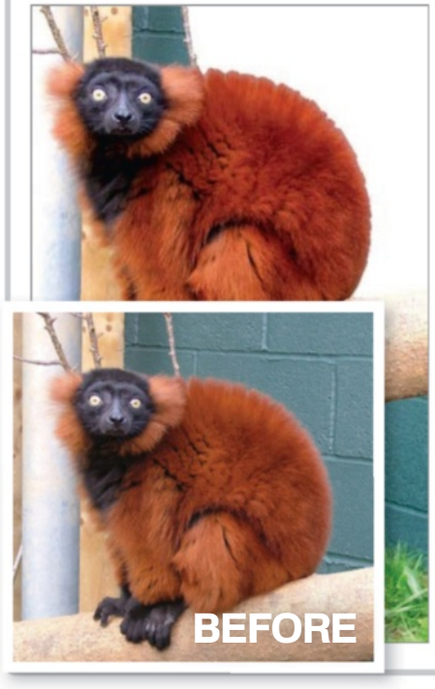
16 You can then make the mountains little a bit more red by selecting the Mountains Final layer and then heading to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation and taking the Hue down to –10.

Expert tip

The Lasso tool tips!

If you're using the Lasso tool to cut around a figure's hair or grass on a mountain top, then you can add a feather to your Lasso selection before you delete the background. You could also duplicate your neatly cut photograph and add a Gaussian Blur to the layer underneath.

Once you've cut out your selected area from your photo, go to Layer>Matting>Defringe by 1px. This is a really helpful little tool and makes all of the tiny bits of excess colour that you might have missed around the edges disappear like magic!



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Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Illustrate with the Pen tool

Learn how to use the Pen tool to transform a blank canvas into a vector masterpiece

The Pen tool is one of the more advanced tools, and can be daunting if you're just starting out. But have no fear; mastering this vector-based tool isn't as hard as it seems. Based on Bézier curves, the Pen is actually very predictable and easy. And thanks to some handy keyboard shortcuts, it's very efficient, too.

When using the Brush tool, drawing is rigid, relying on the Eraser to correct mistakes. The Pen tool enables shapes to be fully drawn and then revisited to edit size, shape, angles and curves.

With this tutorial we'll go through the basic Pen tool controls, and guide you through the many useful features of using paths, such as stroking lines and filling shape. Brush Dynamics will also come into play as you learn to utilise a range of different tools to quickly create a professional-looking masterpiece.

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Open the image

01 Let's get acquainted straight away with the Pen tool. Open the image 'Paint brush.jpg' and select the Pen tool (P). We're going to use it to cut out the hand from the white background to allow for interaction with the shapes we draw.



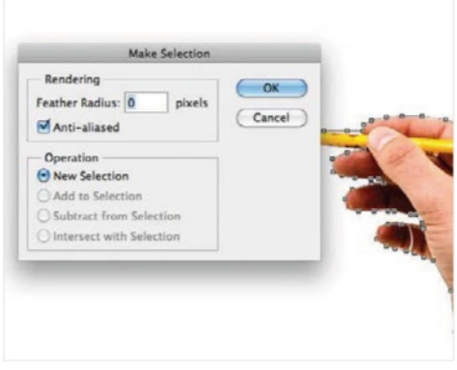
Cutting out

02 Click at the base of the wrist to make the first anchor point, put a second at the first curve, a third at the next curve etc. The lines are currently straight, so go back to your second point, holding Opt/Alt, drag from the centre of the point out left.



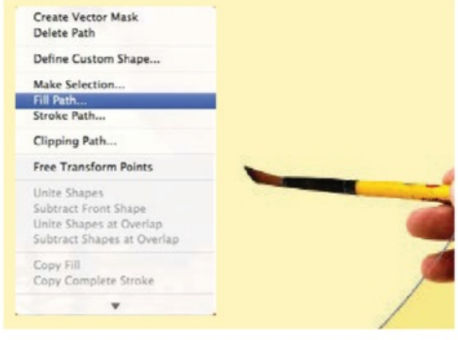
Make adjustments

03 Two adjustment points will appear. Keep dragging left until the left side matches the wrist. Release, then press Alt and drag the right hand point in so the bottom of the curve matches the wrist. Adjust the other points, and then continue to draw around the hand.



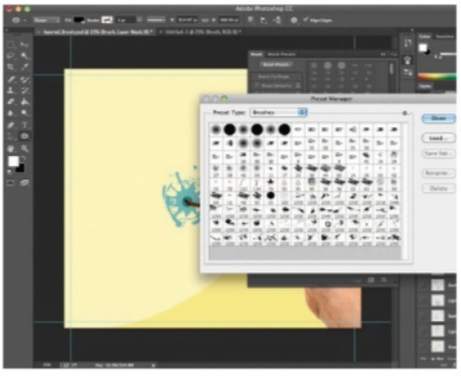
Cutting out

04 If you put a point in the wrong place, simply hold Cmd/Ctrl and drag it back where you want. When the entire hand is outlined and with the Pen tool selected, right-click and click Make Selection. Set the Feather to 0px and hit OK.



Create your background

05 Double-click the Background layer, then go to Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal Selection. Press Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N to add a new layer underneath. Use the Pen to draw a shape for a two-toned background. Ctrl/right-click and select Fill Path.



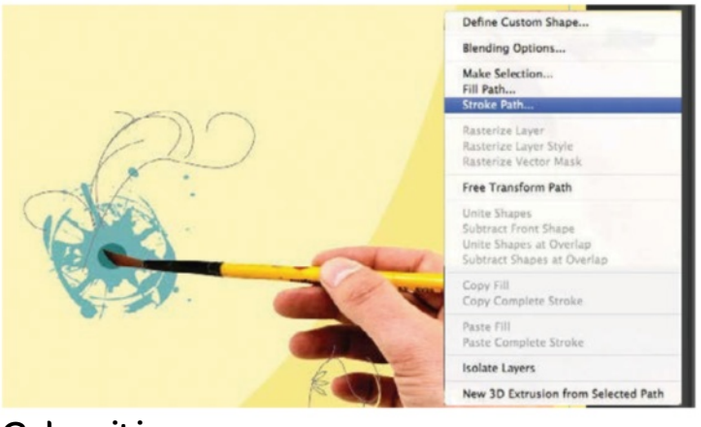
Add a centre point

06 Select the Ellipse tool (U) and draw a circle at the tip of the brush, put this layer under the Brush layer. Turn off the Stroke and Fill the shape with a block colour. Repeat with other custom shapes for extra detail. Find these in the top banner.



Begin to draw

07 Open the Paths palette via Window>Paths and with the Pen tool selected, click the New Path icon at the bottom of the palette. Draw the first curve emanating from the centre using Cmd/Ctrl and Opt/Alt to adjust like before. The less points you use, the smoother the curve.



Colour it in

08 Go back to the Layers palette and create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N) below the Brush layer. Choose a Foreground colour and set your Brush (B) to 100% Hardness and 30px. Select the Pen tool and Ctrl/right-click to pick Stroke Path. Select Brush and un-tick Stimulate Pressure.

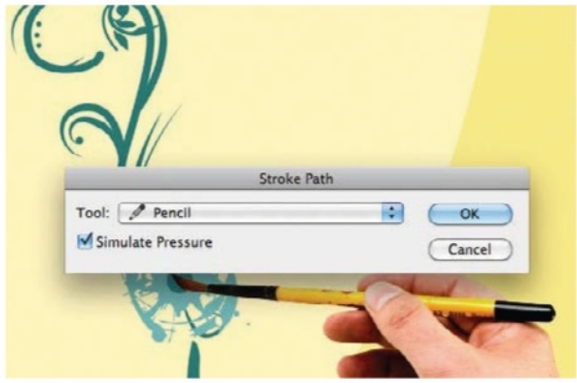
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Expert tip

Smooth curves

When drawing curves with the Pen tool it is easy to make jagged and uneven edges instead of smooth flowing lines. There are some tricks for avoiding this, though. Try and keep your adjustments to no more than 30-40˚ away from the line. But most importantly, make sure that you place your anchor point where you want the line to change direction – not where you want the middle or the dip of the curve! This will ensure a smooth transition between angles.



Add more curves

09 Go back to the Paths palette. On the same path layer, draw a subpath of another curve, keeping the colour and brush size the same. This time, Ctrl/right-click and click Stroke and tick Simulate Pressure. This will add a nice tapered point.



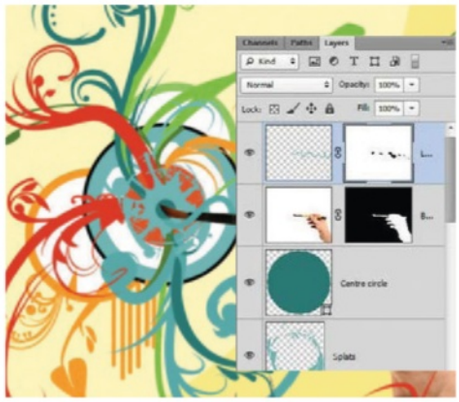
Complete your shape

10 Continue to add to this path layer, varying the brush size and switching between Stimulated Pressure and not. Now also use the Pen tool to draw additional shapes such as leaves by joining up the path points. Then instead of adding a stroke, Ctrl/right-click>Fill Path in the same colour.



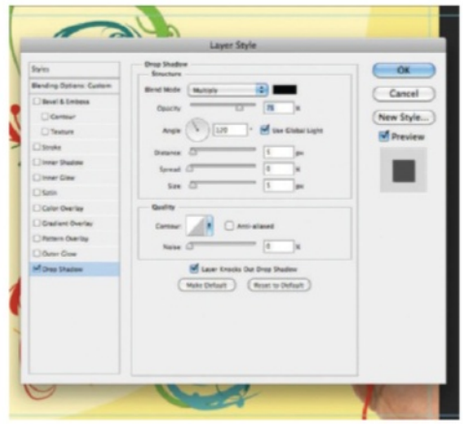
Add more shapes

11 Create a new layer and paths layer and select a different colour. Repeat previous steps to draw in more curves, shapes and details, adjusting the brush size, toggle stimulate pressure and create a new layer for each colour – have fun with it!



Wrap it round

12 To add more depth, create a new layer underneath the Brush layer and draw a wavy line leading from the centre up the brush and hand. Ctrl/right-click>Stroke Path. Add a layer mask and paint in black alternating waves to make it appear as though the line is wrapping round the photo.



Add a shadow

13 Duplicate the wavy line, double-click the thumbnail of the layer copy and add a pale Drop Shadow, hit OK. Ctrl/right-click>Rasterize Layer Style. Fill the layer mask in black, and paint in white where the line crosses the brush or hand.



Add more curves

14 Repeat these steps with a few more curves to add more interest. But don't forget about the Brush tip. Create a new layer with Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N and with a black paint brush (B) at 5% Opacity, paint in a subtle shadow at the tip of the brush for even more realism.



Textured background

15 Open the three supplied texture files and add them into the background above the Background layer. Use similar colours and varying opacities to give the image a textured grungy look.

Expert tip

Freehand Pen tool

Drag out the Pen tool icon to reveal the Freehand Pen tool. This allows you to draw freely without having to place anchor points and Photoshop will convert it to a path when you release the mouse. This allows much more creativity and freedom to make new shapes. You can adjust how sensitive the Pen is using Curve Fit – the higher the number, the smoother the curves.

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Vibrant colours

16 To really make it shine, add a Gradient Fill adjustment layer, choosing strong, warm colours. Set the blend mode to Lighten to get the colours to interact with just the darker shades. To get back the lost detail from the paintbrush, add a bright levels layer with a layer mask.



Final tweaks

17 If the gradient layer has washed the image out, add another Levels adjustment. Drag the black slider down until the contrast has returned. As you've saved your paths, if you want to adjust any of your past curves just go back and tweak away!

5 practical skills you will learn

01 Drawing paths
Discover how to make perfect paths with Photoshop's Pen tool

02 Custom shapes
Add and edit ready-made shapes to your image

03 Fill path
Give your pen-drawn creations colour

04 Levels adjustment
Boost level and tone the safe way

05 Gradient fill
Add an interesting colour wash that can be edited later

Pen tool art

Useful tips when working in vector



Swatches Create your own colour palette! Either use the Eyedropper (I) to copy a colour or select via Set Foreground colour, then on the Swatches window click the New Swatch icon

Step back Make sure to keep zooming out to get a feel for the image as a whole. As important as the details are, you don't want it to get too unbalanced

Embrace the Curve Flow through your design by working with the natural curves of the Pen – the less points the better in order to avoid jutting points or edges where you don't want them

Separate layers By drawing the shapes on separate layers it makes it possible to change the order of the shapes quickly to alter the dynamic of the image

Saved Paths With each colour path created separately, it makes it easy to adjust each shape individually. Simply click a path to select it and begin adjusting with Cmd/Ctrl and Opt/Alt

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Use the image provided to re-create this

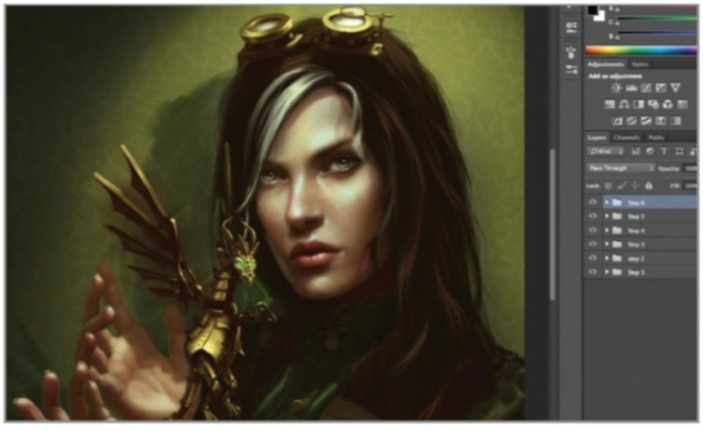
Paint a Steampunk-inspired portrait

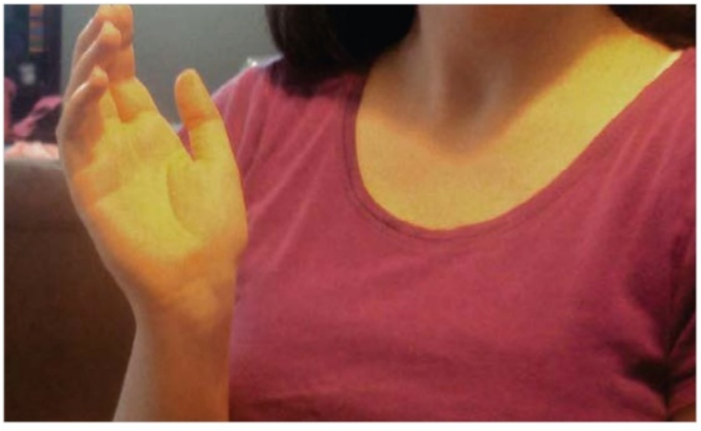
Use light, shadow, colour and texture to create a portrait

The following tutorial is for those who wish to learn the basics of digital painting and discover tips and tricks to add texture, luminescence and mystery to illustrations with simple Photoshop methods.

Learn to sketch non-existent objects using basic perspective and visualise lighting so that you can add any element to your painting regardless of reference. Discover the difference between form shadow and cast shadow and how to effectively render both.

Once you understand how light interacts with your subject matter, the possibilities are limitless. Learn how to pick compelling colours to establish mood, to paint different materials such as cloth, metal, and skin, including how to apply textures and patterns realistically using filters. Finally, discover the secret to creating glow effects and glares using various layer blending modes. From start to finish, you will learn how to employ Photoshop effectively to create a compelling painting.





Visualise your image

01 Before starting, visualise what you want to accomplish. In this case, the goal is to paint a Steampunk piece which integrates portraiture with mechanical elements. It's meant to be a dark, atmospheric image with lush colours to invoke mystery and interest. Remember to download the resources before you start.

Gather reference

02 Paintings should be unrecognisable from reference unless the material belongs to you, so take liberties in deviating from online sources. The easiest way to obtain reference is to take photos yourself, but make sure all of your images have the same light source or be prepared to paint them differently to how they appear.



Start a new document

03 Begin by creating a new document (Cmd/Ctrl+N). Set the image dimensions to 4800px by 6400px at 300ppi. Decide between RGB or CMYK for your colour mode (RGB can achieve richer colours while CMYK is useful for printing). Fill it with a warm green tone in the middle-range of value (not too light and not too dark).

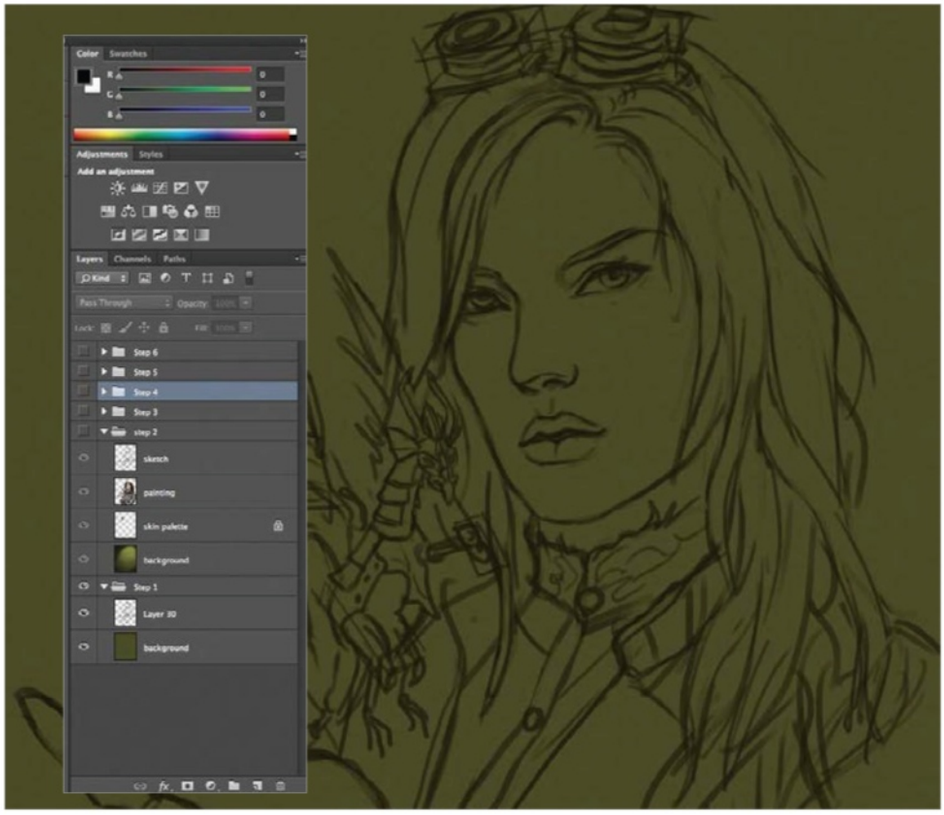
Expert tip

Lock the transparency

Paint separate elements on their own layers so that you can lock the transparency and paint each one without going over the edges. To do this, choose the corresponding layer in the Layers palette and click the checkered square icon at the top next to the word 'Lock'.

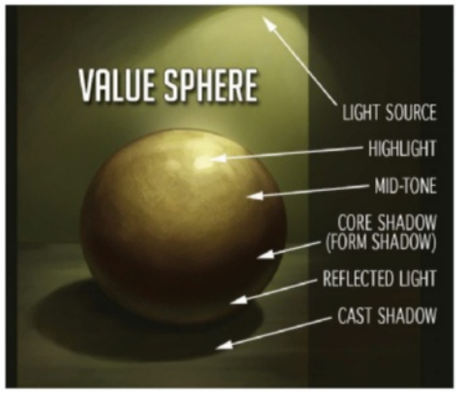
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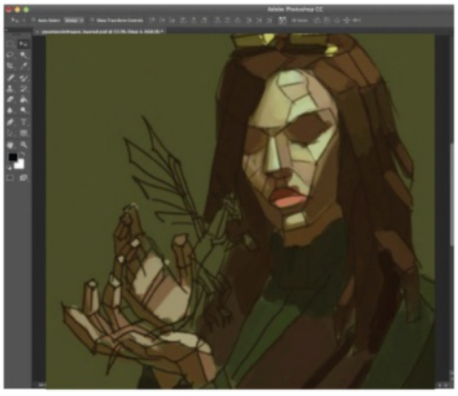
Sketch the outline

04 Create a new layer named 'Sketch' (Layer>New>Layer). When sketching, think about the focal point to keep the eye moving within the image. Use your reference as a rough guide as you freehand the sketch in a dark burgundy colour. Keep in mind perspective as you draw objects without reference, like the dragon and goggles. It helps to sometimes draw boxes in perspective with the rest of the piece and then chisel away at the objects inside to create angular shapes before finally rounding off the details.



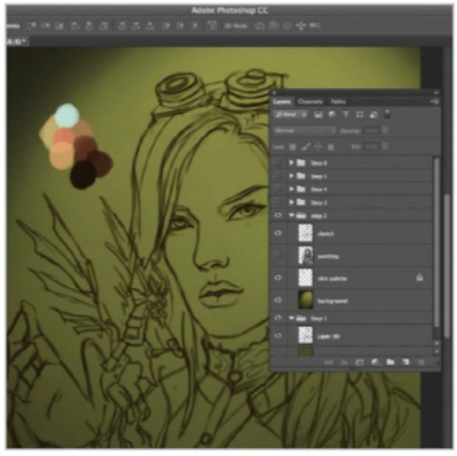
Understanding light

06 Form shadow creates the illusion of form and gives objects depth. It occurs when light fails to completely wrap around the form of something and is a gradual transition from light to shadow, with softer edges (like the cheekbone, which at first catches the light and then curves downward into shadow). Cast shadow occurs when something, blocks the light, throwing areas below into darkness. It tends to have sharper edges.



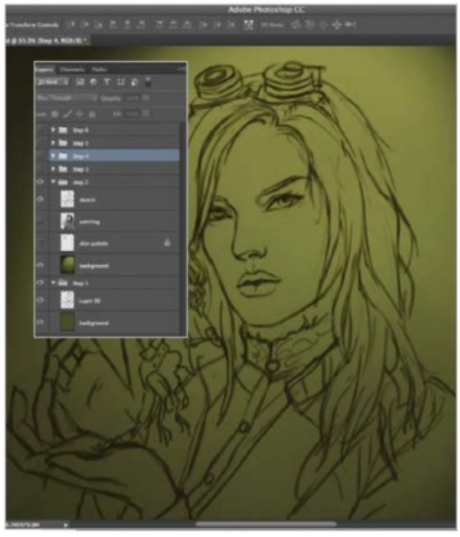
Visualise where light falls

07 When creating an object without reference, it is vital to be able to picture in your mind where the shadow would fall if you could see it. It helps to picture the subject matter as if it were made up of several small geometric polygons. Look at each surface plane and ask yourself if the angle would catch the light or not, then translate that into your painting. Add in cast shadows of made-up elements to ground the work and give it a cohesive feel.



Pick colours

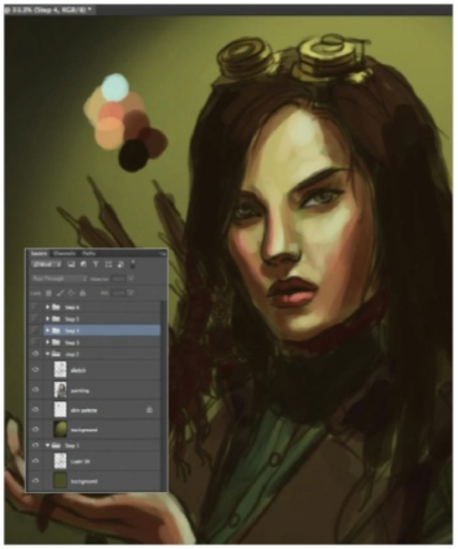
05 Colour defines the mood of a piece. The key to having lush colours is finding a balance between rich and dull. Too bright and your image looks contrived and over-the-top. Too dull and your image looks washed out. Lighter colours should be less saturated and darker colours more saturated. On a new layer, pick a basic flesh colour, scribble and repeat, increasing the saturation as you go darker. To help the image pop, add subtle oranges and warm pinks for the eyes and cheeks. Pale cyan works as a highlight.



Create the Background

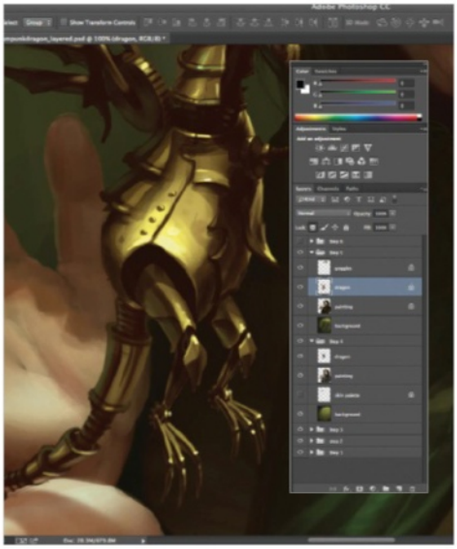
08 Create the illusion of a light source just off canvas using a hard round brush in a pale yellow hue. Sweep the brush downward to emulate the glowing effect of light on a wall. Picking a dark green, sweep the same brush along the edges of the canvas to push the corners into darkness. Blend the colours with a soft round brush. Note that the light will be brighter and the change between values will be more drastic near the top where the light is closest.

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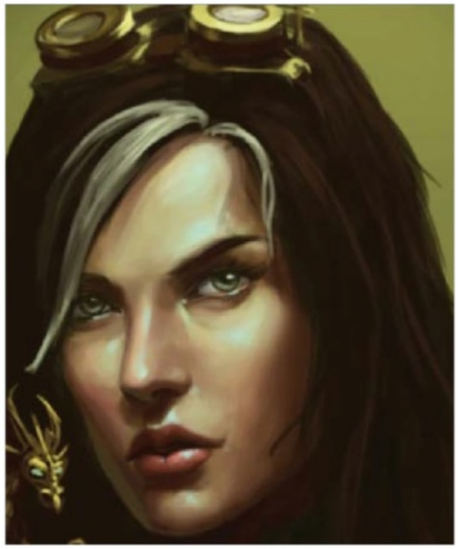
Start painting

09 On a layer beneath the sketch, paint the skin using a default round brush. Keep your Opacity and Flow at 100%, and rely on the sensitivity of your tablet to blend the colours. Make a clear delineation between light and shadow. As you continue to refine, add the transitions between the two values using a soft brush when needed. Use your highlights sparingly for the greatest effect. Merge your Sketch layer and your painting layer and gently paint out the sketch until all the lines are gone.



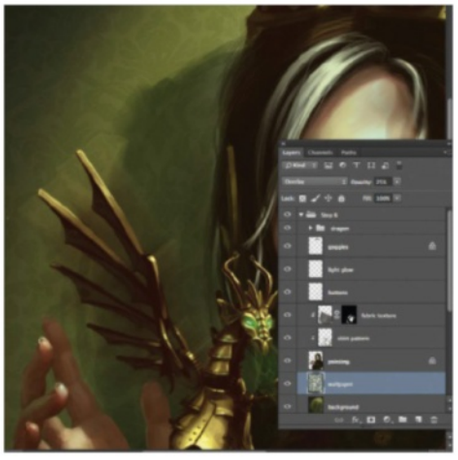
Shiny versus dull

10 When painting matte surfaces like the cotton vest, do not paint highlights. Only two values are needed for these – mid-tone and shadow – with gradual transitions between the two on occasion. When painting reflective surfaces like silk or brass, however, exaggerate the drastic change in value by using sharp specular highlights in areas where the light would logically fall and by using contrasting strokes. Remember to incorporate surrounding colours, as metal is highly reflective.



Painting skin and hair

11 When painting skin, find a balance between matte and shiny. The skin will have sharper and brighter highlights if the face is wet (like around the eyes) or where oils of the skin reflect light (like on the nose and inner tear duct). If you haven't already, add these specular highlights to create luminescence. When painting hair, start by putting in the darkest values first, and then add the midtones using a chunky round brush. Slowly reduce the size of the brush until you are painting individual strands.



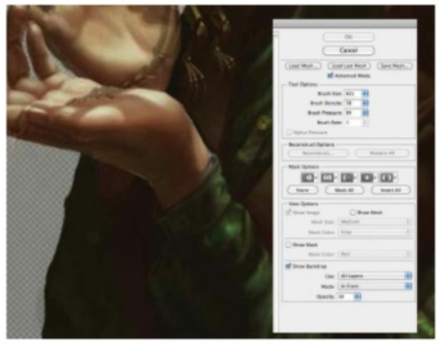
Add texture and pattern

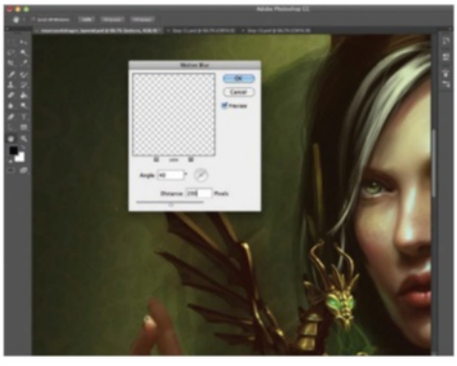
12 Texture and pattern add realism to your work when done correctly. To create the illusion of wallpaper, paste a damask pattern on a new layer and set the layer Blend Mode to Overlay from the drop-down menu on the Layers palette. Reduce the opacity of the layer so that the pattern is not overbearing but still present. You don't want your image to be too busy or distract viewers from the figure in the foreground.

Liquify filter

More on pattern

To create the effect of the pattern wrapping around the silk shirt, paste the pattern on a new layer above the painting. Create a quick mask over your painting by clicking between the two layers and pressing Opt/Alt. Set the layer Blend Mode to Overlay and reduce the Opacity to 30%. Go to Filter>Liquify, and with the painting layer visible beneath, use the Forward Warp tool (W) to push the pattern downward around the edges of the arm. Do the same for the fabric texture on the vest.





Add atmospheric effects

13 The last step is to add subtle atmospheric effects. Create a glare on the highlight of the goggles using a soft round brush in a pale yellow colour on low opacity. For the blur on the dragon wings, copy the wings onto a new layer underneath and use the Motion Blur filter. Set the angle to 40 degrees and the distance to 200px. Use a smoke brush for the dragon steam. To make it glow, on a new layer use a soft green brush set to Hard Light.

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Use the image provided to re-create this

Use different media in your edit

Learn how to combine images, brushes, shapes and textures to create a mixed-media masterpiece

You get a sense of satisfaction when your final outcome is nothing like what you started out with. Experimenting with different splatter paintbrushes is a lot of fun, so really letting loose and getting your document dirty is how you'll achieve this final result. Here the aim isn't to have the perfect result, because the rough and messy look will give your images originality and depth.

Over the next few steps we'll take you through how to use Smart Objects, adjustments, layer styles and blend modes to toughen up your model. Then we'll build up layers of brush techniques and layer mask tricks to create the vintage/grunge effect. We'll then bring in the final touches, such as adding simple shapes and typography, to complete the overall composition.

There are no rules when creating textures with Photoshop, the techniques and skills in this tutorial can be carried out with any sort of starting images. It's really a matter of mixing experimentation and letting your creativity run wild.

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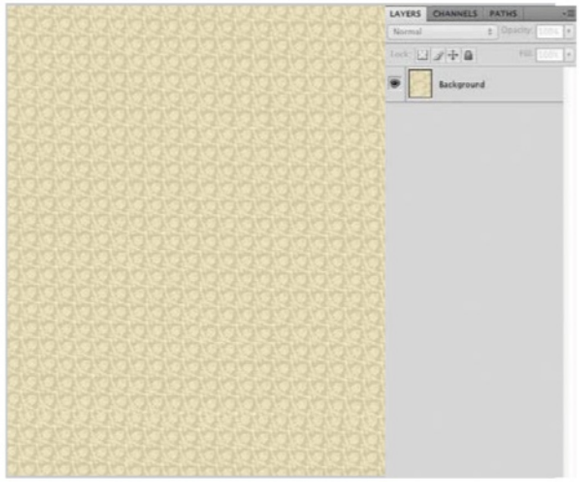

LET IT BE

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Expert tip

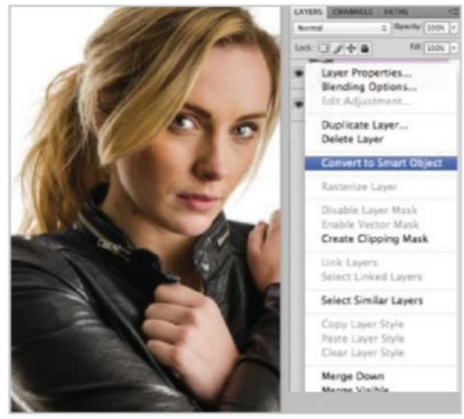
Grouped layers

With this kind of artwork you can use quite a lot of layers, so you may find your Layer palette getting quite cluttered. A really handy tip is grouping your layers together into folders. To do this, select together the layers you want to place into one folder then, in the Layers palette, go to Layer>New Group From Layers. You will now notice these layers have been placed into a folder. For example, place all the top colour layers into one folder and then all the back colour layers into another. This also makes finding layers easier.



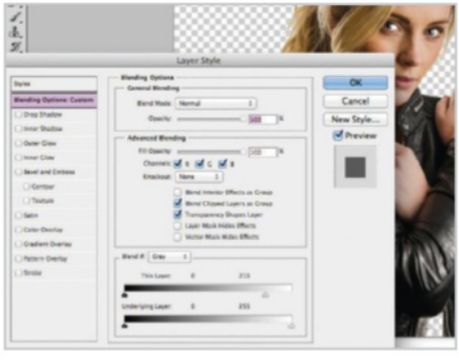
Set things up

01 Add 'Damask Background.psd' from the supplied resources. Next, open up a new PSD file with the following settings: 235 x 300mm, Resolution: 300dpi and Mode: RGB. Now paste your pattern into the file.



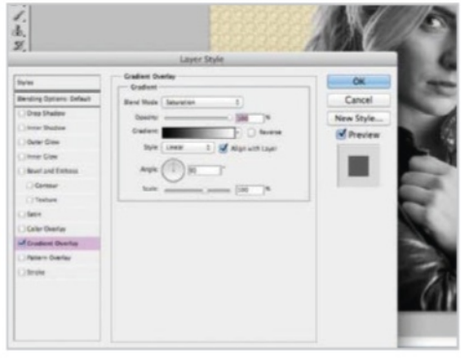
Use a Smart Object

02 Now paste in your model (supplied). Ctrl/right-click on the model layer and select Convert to Smart Object. You'll notice a little paper icon pop-up; double-click it and Photoshop will redirect you to a new document.



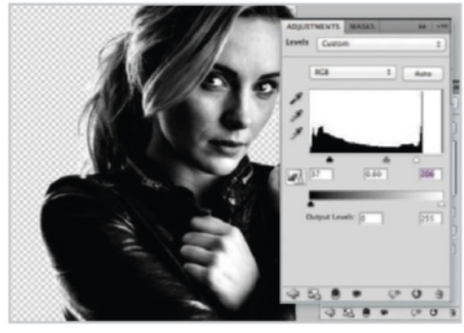
Cut out

03 In this document, double-click on the layer to bring up the Layer Style dialog box. You'll see two sliders. Drag the white pointer at the right of the top slider to 215. Hit Enter. Save and close the document.



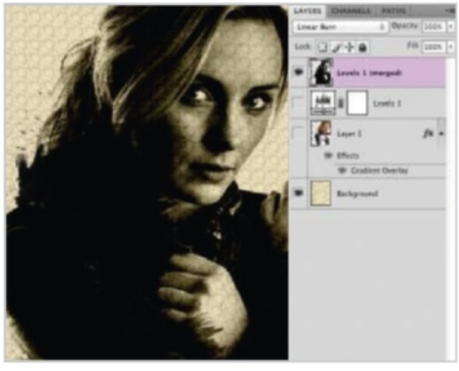
Use layer styles

04 In the main document, double-click on the model layer. Select the Gradient Overlay. Change the blend mode to Saturation and the Opacity to 100%, with a black-and-white gradient. Hit Enter.



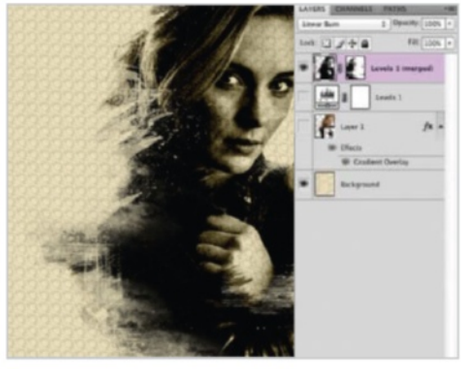
Boost the contrast

05 Hide the wallpaper layer. Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer> Levels and change the variables to: 37, 0.60, 206. To merge the level and the model, select the two layers and hit Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E. Hide the two separate layers.



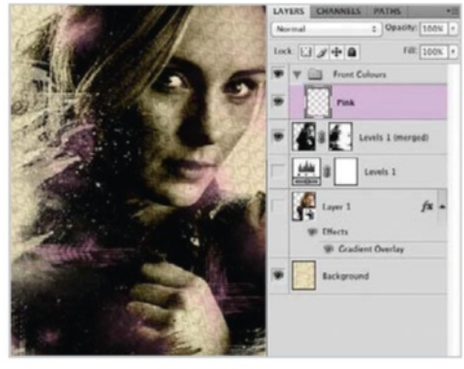
Paint brushes

06 Go back to your background and select your new Levels 1 (merged) layer. Change the blend mode to Linear Burn. Load a paint splatter set and start painting your model with black for depth.



Mask with paint brushes

07 To create the cut-away effect, click Add a Mask Layer. Grab the Brush tool (B). Using your paint splatter brushes (Foreground colour set to Black) paint on your model to rub parts of her away.



Adding Colour

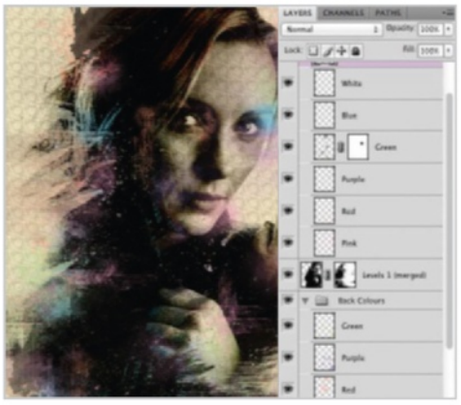
08 Create a new layer. Change your Foreground colour to pink. Select the Paint Brush tool (B) with the paint splatter brushes. Change the brush Opacity to 60%. Paint your model for a stained effect.

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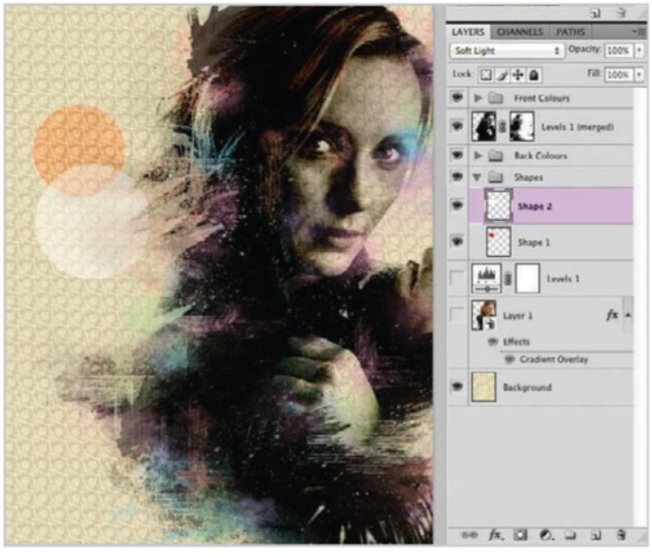
Create depth with colour

09 Add a new layer. Select and drag it below the model layer. Grab the Brush tool, keeping Opacity at 60% and select a blue. Paint behind the model, ensuring that you can still see the blue.



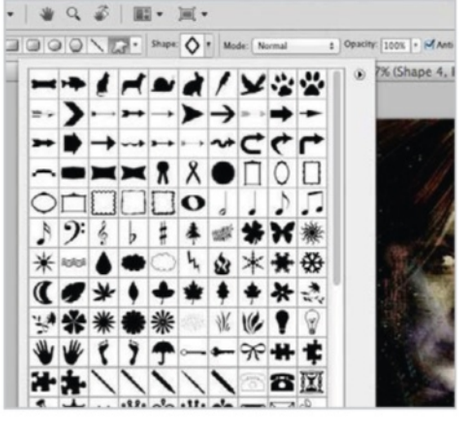
Bring in even more colour

10 Be creative and paint all over your model. Create a new layer for every new colour. Make sure colours are getting painted in front of and behind the model (by dragging layers below the model layer).



Adding simple shapes

11 Make a new layer (behind the model), select a red (#ff0000), then grab the Ellipse tool (U) to create your circle. You can hold down Shift to ensure you get a symmetrical cycle. Next change the blend mode of this layer to Soft Light. Now repeat this step, using white this time.



Apply the Custom Shape tool

12 Access the Custom Shape tool (U). Now click the Triangle Frame, draw it on a new layer in white, and then change the Opacity of the layer to 60%. Repeat this step with the Diamond Frame in red.

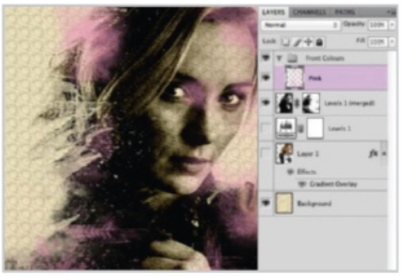


Input some text

13 Select the Horizontal Type tool (T) and set the Color to white, the Font family to Helvetica Neue and the style to Bold. Type in your text, then hit Enter. Save your document and you're done.

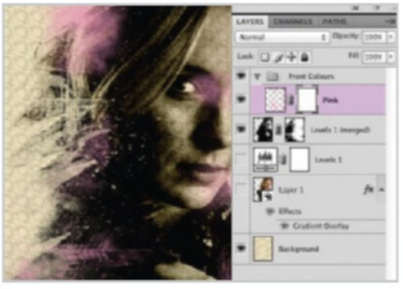
Expert Edit

Experiment without fear till you find the right blend



Over-painting

When you start to paint on to your artwork, it's better to over than under-paint your subject.



Create a layer mask

It's better to over-paint because you can create a layer mask to erase the parts you aren't keen on.



Opacity and Flow

Experiment with the Opacity Flow of the brush. Lowering these won't erase your work, but will fade them out slightly to create a stained effect.



Subtract and add

Layer masks are reversible. Bring back something you mistakenly erased by hitting X to switch to white and paint the area you want back.

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Paint a city scene

Learn how to use free images and painting techniques to make a digital masterpiece

This tutorial will teach you how to make a dynamic concept image using free stock images from websites like CGTextures.com. It will focus on getting a solid composition, blending images that don't match together with colour, and painting in all the gaps.

In preparation for this tutorial, grab a few images of cities or buildings you like from a free stock site. You'll also need some car shots. If you can, go out with a camera and take reference pictures; you'll own all the pictures and the fresh air will do you good too. Once you've done that, you can start thinking about the compositions. You don't need to be overflowing with ideas; a rough sketch will do.

Finally, these pages will detail some easy painting techniques to make your image your own. By following these steps, you'll be able to get an idea across quickly and have a setup that you can take to full completion at your own pace. This is a popular concept artist work method, so let's get going.

Sketch foundations

Form crude line art and basic imagery in Photoshop

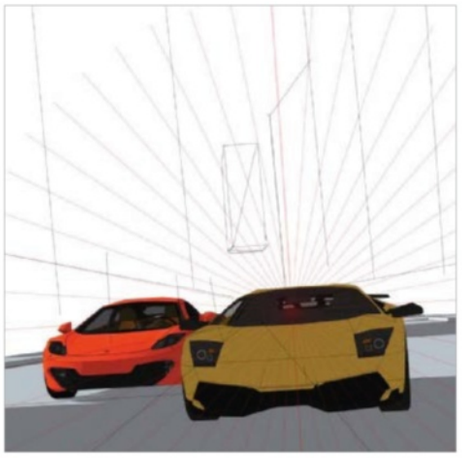
The rough

01 Start off by laying out the roughest of compositions. It's the very first idea and things might change dramatically along the way, but that's OK. Keeping an image as dynamic as possible is what makes it come to life, and ensures you learn new things every time. I used SketchUp for this because it comes with some free-to-use models.



Lines and more lines

02 Putting the image in Photoshop allows you to do some crude line art. Adding in perspective lines as a guide helps to set up things like scale and distance. Put in some rough horizontal lines, as since it's a portrait image those will be the most important. Use a round brush tool with no pressure and press Shift to make straight lines.



Building Bash!

03 You can now add some buildings taken from **CGTexures.com**, so go there and copy in the files listed here. Copy and paste HighRiseNight0114 and place it as shown. Copy and paste, then distort HighRiseNight0119 into place with the Transform tool by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+T. Mask off the sky in HighRiseNight0119 by using the Polygonal Lasso tool and a masking layer. Do the same for HighRiseNight0114.



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Pushing and Pulling

04 Add CG Textures' HighRiseNight0117, HighRiseNight0113 and HighRiseNight0118_02 into your Photoshop document. For the background building shown in the middle, take the Lasso tool, cut out a part of HighRiseNight0117 and copy and paste it back in. Lighten it a bit by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+U and tweaking the lightness. Cut out the large structure from HighRiseNight0113 and place it on the right side in front of HighRiseNight0119. The HighRiseNight0113 layer should be on top.



Foreground to Background

05 As a solid white background is not very interesting, add something there – even if it's a placeholder – just to make it easier to look at. Go to Stock.XCHNG (**www.sxc.hu**) and grab image ID 1418317 to use as a sky, I've used another one for now because I'll show you how to paint one yourself later on. Also grab image ID 648519, cut it up and mask as shown. Now grab CG Textures' HighRiseNight0099, distort it on HighRiseNight0114, and set it to Pin Light for a nice light effect.



The road

06 OK, time to let go of the initial lines and setup and let the painting take over. For the road, use the Stock.XCHNG image ID14654. Drag it into the Photoshop file and rotate it a bit using Cmd/Ctrl+T. Use a layer mask to cut off the top bit. Now grab the default chalk brush and start to paint on top of it in a clipping layer. To do this, make a new layer on top of image14654, then go to Layer>Create Clipping Mask. This will allow you to paint without touching the other pictures.

Apply paint

Use paint to add colour, light and detail



Zoom in

07 At this stage you can start adding paint. Think about things like lighting and cool neon strips on the side of buildings. Pick a soft round brush and select an orange colour as shown in the image. Set your brush to Linear Dodge at 50% Opacity and 40% Fill. Go to your HighRiseNight0117 layer and create a new layer on top of it. Now clip it to the building layer. Paint in the light with a fade, with the strongest colour at the bottom.

Quick tip

By using clipping masks, which can be found in the Layer menu, we can freely paint without going outside of the original mask. The advantage to doing this is that you can stack anything on here from regular paint layers to adjustment layers like Color Balance and Brightness/Contrast.



Lights everywhere!

08 By using the technique from the last step on all of the buildings in the scene, you get a much richer feeling. Another thing you can do to further integrate buildings and objects into the scene is to use the Color layer. Make a new layer, set it to Color and pick the colour of the object next to it, Make sure the saturation is high so that it's visible. Play around with this and see what you get.

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Recap and move forward

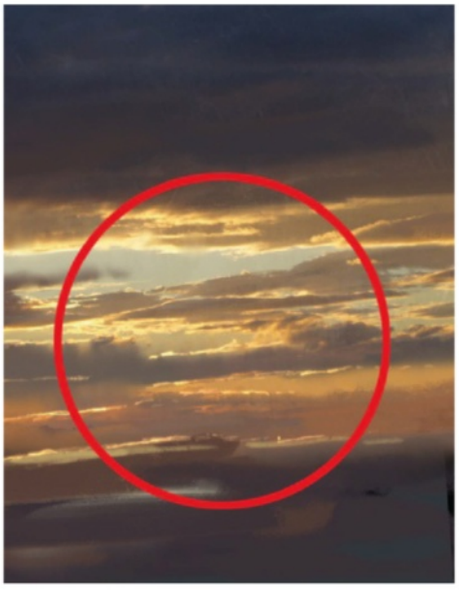
09 Lets take a look at what has been done so far and what's left. We have added in buildings and a basic ground matching our original idea, but it's still a bit lifeless. We are now going to add in the cars and start blending it all together with some paint.





New sky

10 The old sky was a bit generic and uninteresting, so here's how to make a better looking one. Start by picking some nice colours that occur in real skies. Take a look at sunset pictures and try to match the colours. I used a rough brush for this in combination with the Smudge tool to blend the colours. Mixing in photographs to get some texture in is also a possibility – it's up to you! If you don't feel like painting, you can use Stock.XCHNG image ID 1418317 instead.



"If you can go out with a camera and take reference pictures, you'll own all the pictures"





In Depth!

11 Take a look at the sky more closely. It contains a few basic elements; the sun, the blue atmosphere, and the clouds. Everything blends with the sun colour – we can use a soft round brush with orange to get the values in. Getting that crisp silver (in this case gold) lining is simple. Grab a small brush with a bit of noise, set it to Linear Dodge (Add) and pick a dark shade of orange. Now, just paint and use the Smudge tool to blend it in with the rest.

Introducing...

12 Finally, the cars. This is the hardest part. Just sticking them in won't do the job so we'll talk about what you need to do in order to get them sitting just right. Finding the right car is tricky; make sure you look at your perspective to ensure you get the right angle. A quick way to do this is to check if the rear tyres sit higher or lower than the front ones. The closer they are together, the more compression towards the horizon you have.

Getting ready

13 So the cars are probably far from what the scene needs, but that's OK. One of the first things we want to do is get rid of all the light bounces and dirt we don't want. Grab the Polygonal Lasso tool and start masking off bits, making sure you follow the panels of the car. You can save selections by going to Select>Save Selection. This will save you time later on. Now, grab a round brush, sample colour and start painting!

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Final touches

Add reflections, shadows and sparks to bring your image to life



Reflections

14 When the cars are nice and neutral, it's time for us to put in the reflections that we expect to see in the scene. We need to grab the whole image, so turn off the cars and then press Cmd/Ctrl+A, then Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+C, and lastly Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+V. This compresses everything into one layer and pastes it in place. Use a clipping mask to attach it to the car, then scale it down and warp it a bit to match the rough shape. Lower the Opacity and play with blending modes.

Quick tip

It's very important to keep a loose attitude towards these paintings. It's about getting things wrong so that you know what to avoid. Don't try to be perfect from the start. Paint, experiment and fail as much as you can. It brings life to your image and improves your workflow at the same time. If you want that painterly feel, it probably means you have to paint it, so go on and experiment. You can use the techniques described here to give you a basic idea, but ultimately it's about your own artistic touch. Don't just imitate, but invent!



Shadows and corrections

16 Blend in the cars further using adjustment layers like Hue/Saturation. Tweaking the values can push the colour of the car more towards the ambient value of the scene. Adding Colour Dodge layers with some paint is a great way to add some strong highlights. Grab a soft brush and put in some highlights. Lastly, the cars will cast shadows in the scene. We can easily create them by making a new layer set to Multiply (60%) and painting them in.



Headlights

17 Putting in the headlights is a lot of fun, and it's one of the things that really makes the image pop. Head over to a free stock site and grab a few flares that you like. Drop them into the painting and set their blending mode to Screen. To avoid destroying the image, we can make a mask for it and paint it away using a soft brush. Play around with the saturation by either using a link layer, or editing the image directly by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+U.



Blending some more

15 We have talked about blending in the buildings before, but now do the same for the cars. It's pretty much the same principle, but because the cars are much more reflective it will end up having more colours displayed in different places. Just like before, start by making a colour layer that's linked to the car/cars. Grab a soft round brush and start sampling surrounding colours and carefully putting them into place.



More life

18 The scene is still a bit empty, so focus on adding some details. Bring the scene to life by adding in bar names. You can make things look like they glow really quickly by duplicating the layer (press Cmd/Ctrl+J with the layer selected), putting it to Linear Dodge (Add), and then going to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur. Play with this until you get a nice glow. Grab some flamingo images from Stock.XCHNG and cut them out to get this effect.

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Puddles

19 We can make things even more interesting by adding some additional reflections. Create a new layer and start painting in where you want the water to go with a hard round brush set to 100% Opacity, making sure it's a solid colour. Fade the edges by using a soft round eraser. Do the same as in Step 14, but link it to the puddle this time. Now use a mask to get rid of it so you have a nice fade towards the car.



Reflection blur

20 Now that we have a base reflection in, it looks a bit too rigid. We want to give it a dynamic feel. Duplicate the reflection layer and link it to the puddle, now, go to Filter>Blur>Motion Blur. Grab the angle that works with the perspective and set it to 22px. I've blurred this image quite a bit to give it those nice light streaks. We can mask things out; I didn't do it here, but try it if you like.

Quick tip

Remember to let the photos and paint work together. Paint away nasty photo artifacts and paint in your own details. By contrast, use photos to get that high level of detail that would take ages to paint. It's not so much about one technique; it's about getting an idea across quickly and having it look good too.



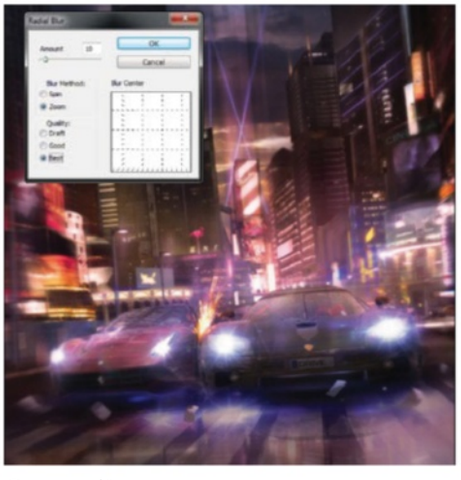
Drama

21 Getting a narrative in can be as simple as adding some sparks. Make an ellipse with the Selection tool, grab a soft round brush and set it to Linear Dodge with 50% Opacity. Paint it in and make sure the bright spot is in the middle. Deselect it and duplicate it until you have a few. Distort them in place as shown. Paint on top with the same brush to get a nice glow effect.



Values

22 Values determine everything. We can check the value by creating a new layer filled with solid black. Set it to Hue to give you a nice readout. Here is a nice side-by-side. The left one is close but the right is much more dramatic. Use Brightness/Contrast layers and masks to get it just right. Remember, high contrast up front and low contrast in the back. Values help pull focus and sell distance. Use masks for the most control over your layers.



Speed!

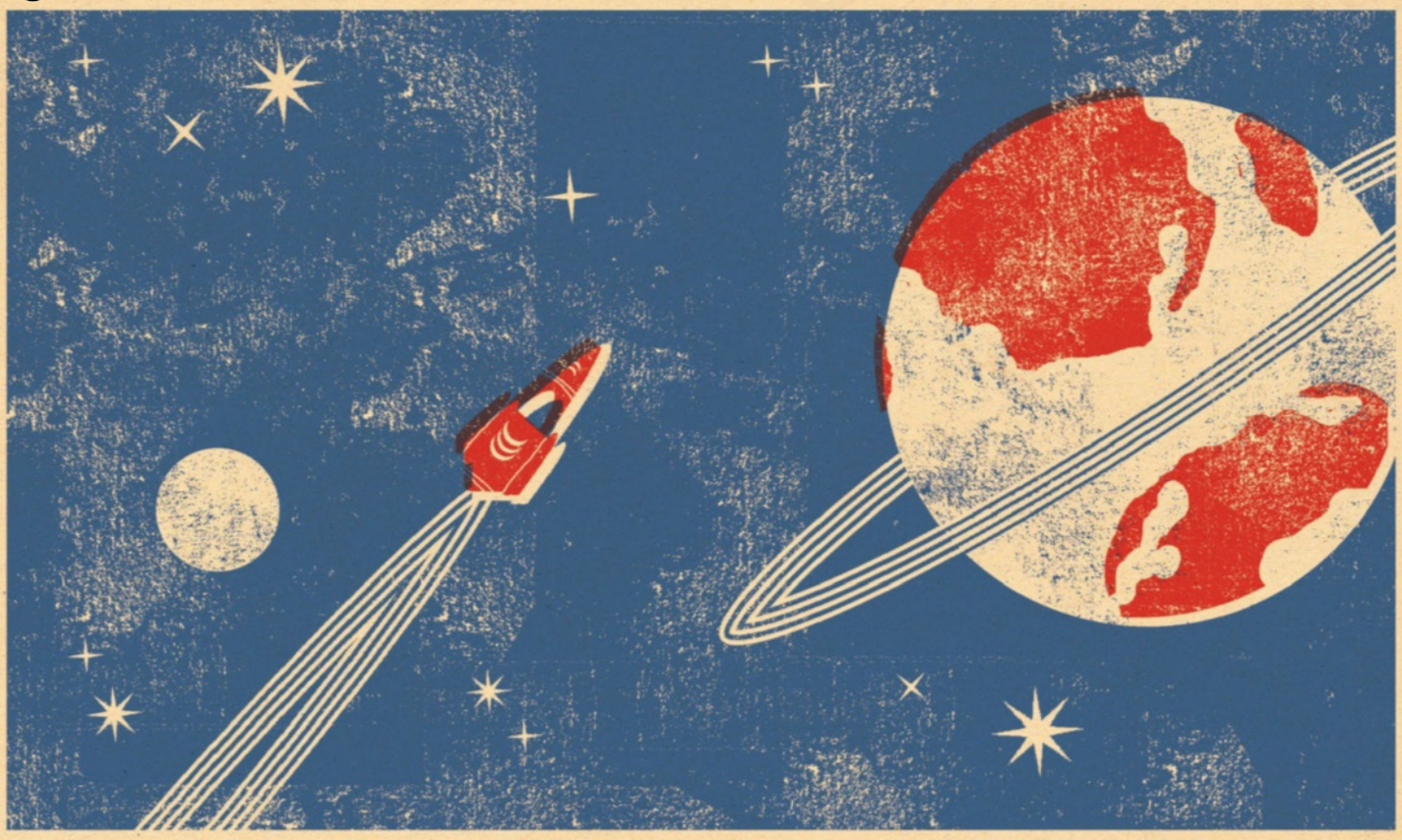
23 We can use the photo filter adjustment layer to blend the colours together a bit more. Keeping them in the same value range helps to bring them together, with a few spikes here and there. Now for speed. Compress your painting again as in Step 14 and go to Filter>Blur>Radial Blur. Set it to Zoom>Best and move the marker to the central point behind the cars. Use the mask to apply the blur in the foreground and on the sides.



Final touches

24 Lastly, we can pull the image together more by painting in a few details. We've left this bit open so far because painting things in is all about what you want. Stay true to the image by matching the sharpness using the Lasso tool, and blend colours with the photo filter layer or just paint. Think of things that could add to the scene, like smoke. It should always be a harmony between paint and photo, not a battle.

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TWO POSSIBILITES EXIST:
EITHER WE ARE
ALONE
in the universe, or we are
NOT.
BOTH ARE EQUALLY
TERRIFYING

- ARTHUR C. CLARKE

Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Design a graphic print poster

Learn to play with fonts to make your own inspirational poster from your favourite quote or saying

Graphic print posters are great to adorn your walls at home or at work – and if you're making your own, then you can get the exact quote or saying that you want. The great thing about them is that you don't even need to be able to create labour-intensive detailed artwork to make them look good. Some simple typography and icons work just fine.

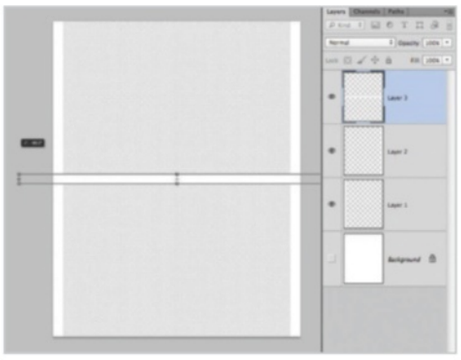
It's impossible to talk about bold, printed, type-orientated posters without acknowledging the primary influence – Modernism. This movement really kick-started the big, bold, brash design aesthetic, with propaganda posters and advertisers using graphic designs based around one simple concept or message. Straight lines, limited colour palettes and bold type helped make the messages stand out for both political and commercial agendas. In particular, it's hard to see a screen-printed black-and-red poster and not think about the posters from the Soviet Union.

Perfect posters Bring quotes to life by illustrating them in Photoshop



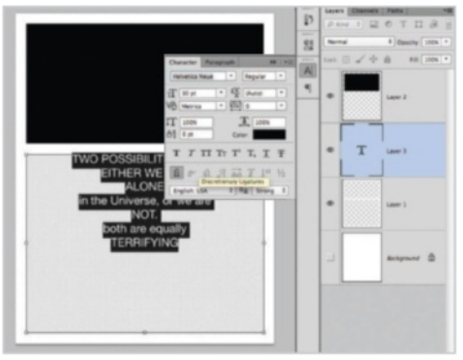
Sketch an idea

01 Pick an idea that you really like and come up with a rough idea of the way you want to make the poster. It's ideal to use a sketched-out rough idea so that you'll have something to refer to.



Establish margins

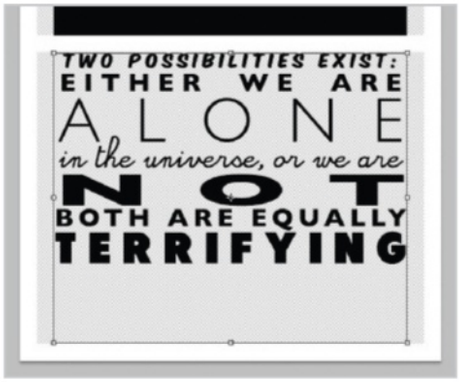
02 Make margins around the page, so you have something to snap to. Draw one margin with the Marquee tool (M), fill with white, then copy and paste it, transforming for the top and bottom.



Use raw type

03 Now make a text box using the margins and put in your type with the line breaks in the right place according to your mock-up. Place a black rectangle to get a feel for the layout.

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Edit your type

04 Using the Character window, you can change the Font, Leading, Tracking, Width and Height to get the desired look. You can use pre-installed fonts or free ones from **www.dafont.com**. Spend some time on this step to get things right.



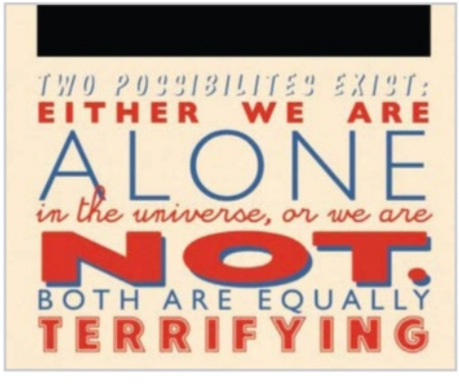
Realign your margins

05 After working on the fonts to get everything to fit together, you may want to alter the margins. Make sure your image box lines up with your text to keep everything clean and bold.



Bring in colour and texture

06 Remember, this is a screen-print imitation! Bold, primary colours and a papery texture layer (set them to Multiply) are essential. Try out different combinations to find the right blend of tones that perfectly suits your piece.



Customise the fonts

07 You can make your fonts different with some customization. Here, on the word Terrifying, we have selected the pixels of the text (Ctrl/right-click and choose Select Pixels) and contracted the selection, filling it in white in a new layer.



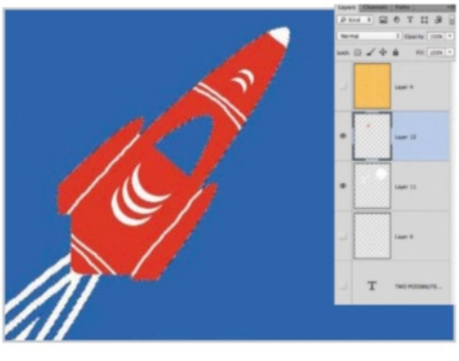
Draw the image

08 The image used here is also quite bold and simple. You can add this element with the Marquee and Lasso (L) tools, filling in a layer with white. Get creative with the Transform tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T) to make shapes relevant to your theme.



Layer on more details

09 Use the Elliptical Marquee tool (M) to make the planet's rings (and the spaceship's trail) by contracting the selection (Select>Modify>Contract) by 10px each time and alternating between filling and deleting the white.



Focus on the effects

10 Use the Pencil tool (B) to add some details to the spaceship (in a new layer for red). Use a Non-Contiguous selection from a papery texture to delete part of the white layer.



Separate the colours

11 Once you're happy, Rasterize the text (duplicate first if you want to change it). Use the Magic Wand to select one colour at a time, filling in a layer for each colour. Now set all these to Multiply and offset them.



Mess things up a little

12 Finally, add some Noise (Filter>Noise> Add Noise) to make the colour look like ink on paper. You can also add another paper texture on a layer set to the Multiply blend mode to make it look like an old poster.

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Alternative poster designs

Experiment with different fonts for an array of different styles

Depending on what you want to go on the poster, you need to change the colour palette and the design the poster to fit it. There's so much room to play around with simple bold ideas, it's no wonder that there are hundreds of re-imagined film posters out there. It's best to take inspiration directly from the idea, rather than trying to imitate the exact look of another poster that you like. This way, you'll come up with something new, using a style and method that's very much in vogue. Once you've gasped the basics, it's easy to apply the skills to different ideas and new designs, you can create great posters of a similar vein to fantastic effect. The ideals behind the posters are simple and can be used to convey a number of different products and slogans. They make great, personalised decorative pieces too, you'd never have to worry about presents again by creating individual posters to print. Here are some other ideas!



Light a candle

This fairly basic stock photo makes a visually strong poster, as there is a central object to work around. We drew the candle by hand, with a black Pen (P), and used the shape created to make selections to work with in a block of colour on the poster. Again, we offset the colours to give it that print look, and used textures to get the image a vintage poster feel.



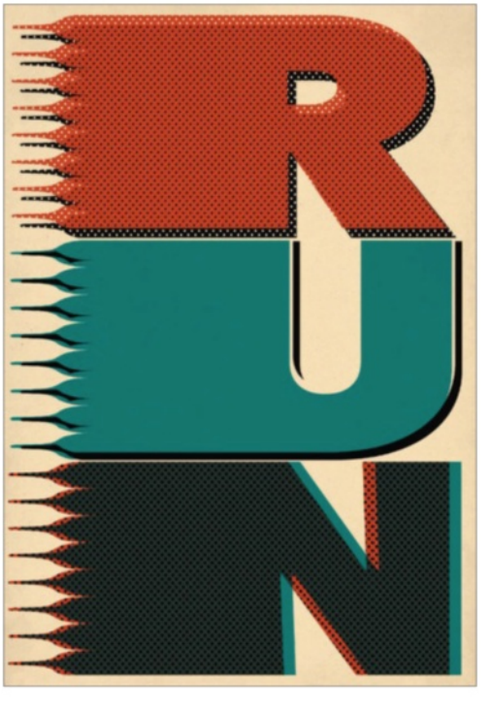
Lemons

This is an old quote that has a strong central image. The large graphic shape of a lemon with text running through is visually striking. Using the right colours and bold visual imagery means that even with a glance at this poster you know what the text says without fully reading it. This is the main aim of a bold graphics poster, as it's the original intent for the design.



Union Flags

Here, a half-tone screen shades parts of the art. Create a grey or gradient fill in the shape that you want the half-tone to be in. Copy it into a new file and make this file into a Bitmap image (Resolution of 300 and a Frequency of around 20). Now copy this into your original file and use a selection of the black to create a Multiply layer of any colour you see fit.



RUN

Simple, bold, large and to the point. This is probably the most to-the-point inspirational poster. We modified the type using a pen-like shape drawn for the tails of the letters. Do this by copying and pasting the shape on the back-ends of the letters. We used the shapes to make print-style colour blocks, using the methods from the rest of this tutorial.

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Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Use layer styles for glowing art

Learn how to make an eye-catching photomanipulation using several tools and filters in Photoshop CC

In this tutorial, we'll create some electrifying guitar artwork with some easy light effect techniques using a combination of wildly colourful layer modes and styles. These techniques can easily be applied to other awesome projects or even as a foundation to build upon for your own creative tricks! To create this dazzling light show, we'll need a few tools and materials to pull it all together – our guitar photo for tracing the outline, the Pen tool for making our guitar's sleek edges and crisply detailed interior, Transformation tools for bending our elements into action, and few simple brushes to make it come alive. And don't worry, if you don't have these tools, we've got you covered with some easy workarounds to get you going! Let's get started and create a new document with sizing dimensions set to preference, with a white background.

Create electrifying art

Learn how to create this image using a range of tools



Get prepped

01 Let's paste the guitar photo into our newly made document, then position the guitar with Rotate or Scale using Free Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+T). We'll make it semi-transparent by reducing the layer's Opacity by 50%.



Use Paths for selecting

02 Use the Pen tool to trace a path around the outer edge of the guitar. You could alternatively use the Quick Mask and selection tools for this, but the simplicity of the Pen tool can save time.



Stroke the path

03 In Paths panel, tap the Load Path as Selection icon and invert with Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+I. Switch over to the Layers panel, and make new layer with Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+N. Use Edit>Stroke with Width set as 10px and Location ticked as Outside.

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Expert tip

No Pen tool no problem

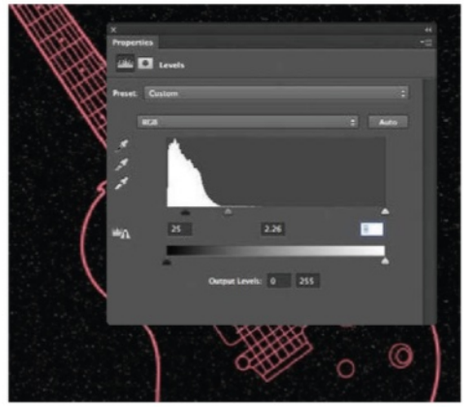
The Pen tool can make quick work out of complicated selections, but if you are uncomfortable using it or its not available in your version, the Quick Mask can be used in its place. However, if Quick Mask is unavailable, all isn't lost! Make a new layer on top, fill it with a bright colour, then reduce layer Opacity by half. Next, pick a Selection tool, select an area, and Press DELETE. Restore layer Opacity, Cmd/CTRL+Click the layer thumbnail, then SHIFT+Cmd/CTRL+I.





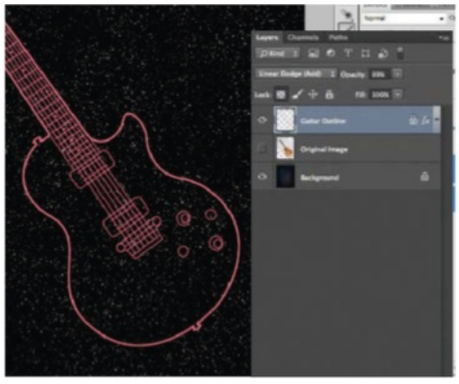
Add guitar detail

04 Continue adding detail by making paths for the smaller elements of the guitar. Stroke these elements as before only on a slightly smaller pixel setting, around 6px. Color can be changed easily with a Layer Style.



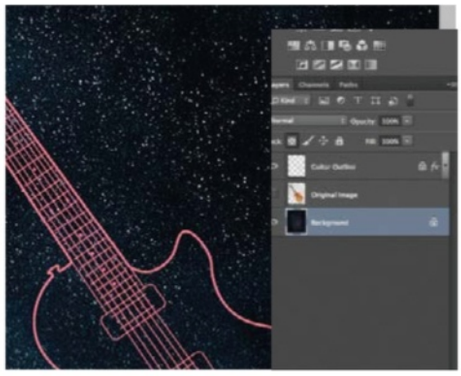
Bring on the stars

05 Fill background layer with black and use Filter>Add Noise, setting the slider around 10%. Cmd/Ctrl+T to Scale, enlarging to 400%. Use Levels (Cmd/Ctrl+L), adjusting sliders to diminish the number.



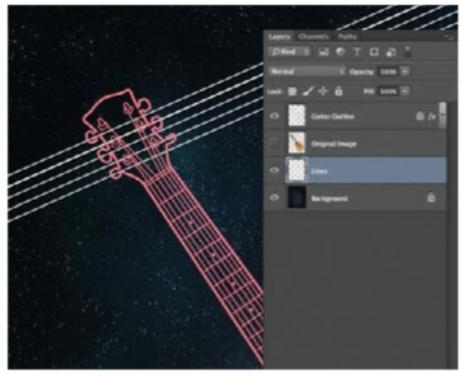
Thin them out

06 Now we have some nice stars, but we need to thin them out. Make a new layer above the background, and use a soft round Airbrush set with low Opacity in black to paint over, creating depth and diversity. Cmd/Ctrl+E to merge this layer.



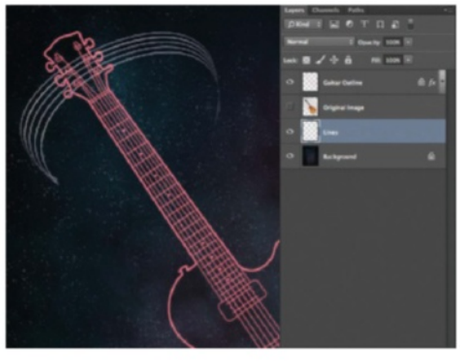
Add final sky detail

07 Use Clone Stamp with Mode set to Screen to make groups of stars, then follow it up with a soft Airbrush in blues and pinks to create a space sky effect. Add extra stars by hand, if you like, by using a small brush.



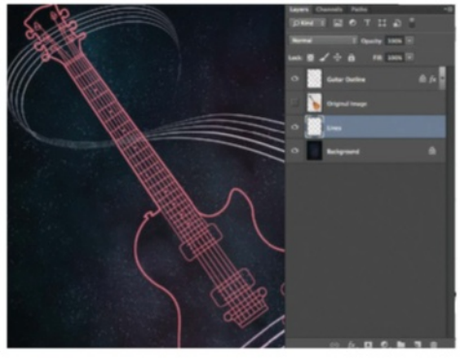
Create the music lines

08 Open up a new document and draw five long lines on a new layer, the end result resembling lines from sheet music. Paste into our main document, then Cmd/Ctrl+T to Rotate the line across the image in the direction we'd like the swirl to go.



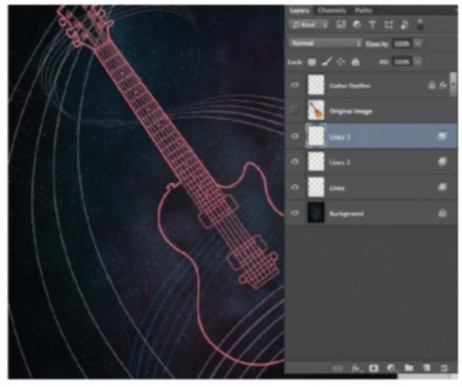
Warp the line shapes

09 Use Transform>Warp to bend the lines so that they curve almost appearing to spiral. Don't worry if it isn't perfect on the first try, just hit undo and go for it again until you're satisfied with the overall direction.



String them along

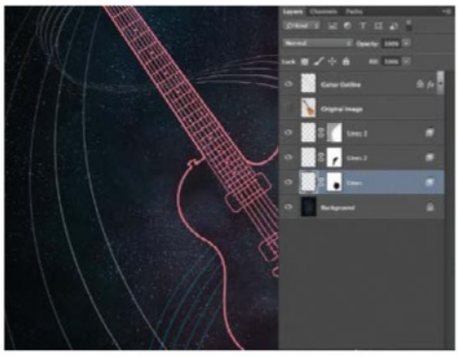
10 Keep adding more lines and warping them, stringing the ends along so that it appears as a single line. You can also make additional line strings in different directions, but keep the layers separate for easy adjustment later.



Reduce Opacity

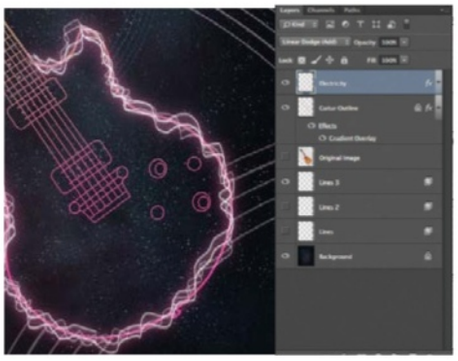
11 Reduce layer Opacity on each swirling line layer according to overlap structure – meaning the furthest swirl back in space gets the lowest Opacity setting and those closest to front can have a little higher.

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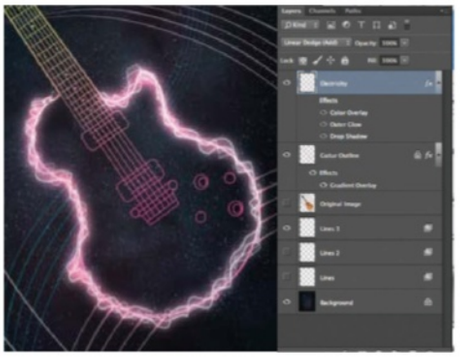
Remove and fade

12 Create a mask for each swirling line layer. Paint the mask in black along the lines that cross the guitar for removal. Grab a soft brush and stroke along the lines in the distance to fade them. The Eraser can be used as a masking alternative.



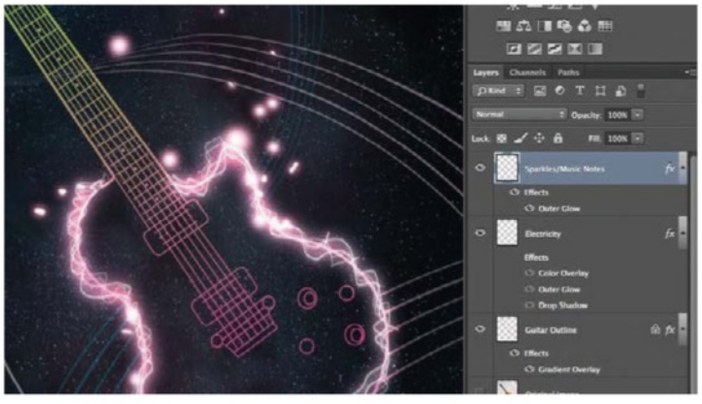
Electrify the guitar

13 Create a new layer above the guitar outline with Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+N. Using a custom brush constructed of two dots side by side, (with Angle set to Pen Pressure in Shape Dynamics) make random squiggles around the guitar body for an electric effect.



Add Glow

14 To make the electricity really come alive, add an Outer Glow to this electricity layer with a layer style, setting the Blend Mode to Color Dodge. The Spread and Size of the glow can be adjusted to however you would like.



Add sparkles

15 Now go ahead and select a soft, opaque Airbrush. Begin painting sparkle dots in varying sizes around the guitar and flowing into the line swirls. Vary the size of your brush as you go using the [and] shortcut keys for ease. Now copy and paste the layer style from the electrified guitar body to this sparkle layer.



Make it musical

16 Use the Custom Shape tool to incorporate pre-made musical notes or make your own. Simply select them with the Lasso tool, then head to Transform>Warp. Now warp and bend them, twirling them along the spiral lines to make them appear almost as if they were floating.



Add contrasting colours

17 Make a new layer on top of the stack and set the Blending Mode to Colour. Brush over the image with a soft Airbrush in saturated tones of your choice to liven things up. Contrasting colours will work really well here.



Further colour enhancement

18 On top of the stack again, make a two new layers – one with Blending Mode as Overlay and the other as Colour Dodge. Experiment a little here, brushing on more of the saturated chosen colours on each layer.



Adjust and Finalize

19 Press Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+E to merge all layers together. Use Hue/Saturation (Cmd/Ctrl+U) to enhance colour and saturation, then use Levels (Cmd/Ctrl+L) to balance things with contrast.

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Create 3D abstract graphics

Learn to build atmosphere with texture, shapes and Photoshop's extensive colour adjustment tools

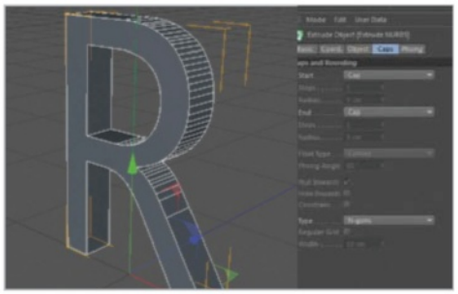
Abstract art has a long history of placing the surreal among the real and you will be capturing some of the essence of that heritage in this tutorial.

You will begin by using 3D modelling software (we used Cinema 4D) to generate a number of abstract stocks quickly and easily. Then move into Photoshop CS6 or above, manipulating your stock images to create a unique and interesting design, which can be placed into a vivid and atmospheric scene of your own creation.

By following this tutorial, you will have used the Magic Wand tool as a simple method of preparing stocks for manipulation, used Dodge and Burn to help blend those stocks into your scene, become familiar with Layer Masks and seen the benefits of using Groups in organising layers. Finally, you will use several of the Adjustment Layers available in Photoshop to dramatically transform the image through changes to colour, vividness and depth.

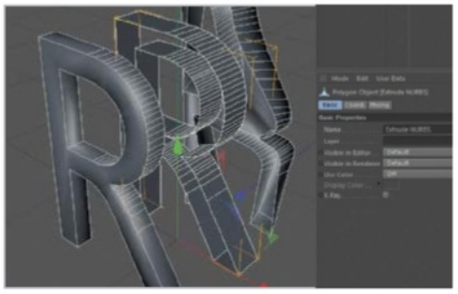
It can't be stressed enough that the key to creating images like this is constant experimentation and it may prove difficult to replicate some of the steps in this tutorial. More important here is that you create something unique, interesting and very much in the spirit of abstract art.

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Start in 3D

01 Start in Cinema 4D. Create a text spline (Create>Spline>Text). Go to the text object properties and in the text box enter a letter. Go to Create>NURBS> Extrude and in the Object Manager, drag your Text Object into the Extrude NURBS. Select the Extrude NURBS and press C, making it editable.



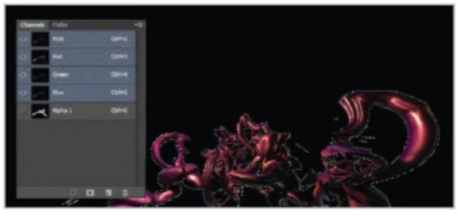
Create the abstracts

02 There are now three objects: the NURBS and two Caps. With the Move tool (E), move the two Caps away from the central NURBS. Now select Extrude (Mesh>Create Tools>Extrude) and click one, hold the left mouse button and move, giving your object substance. Repeat on the other two objects.



Deform, texture and render

03 Select the Magnet tool and change to Polygon mode. Select and move random points on the objects to create interesting shapes. Apply deformers to manipulate further. Repeat the first three steps, making a range of abstract shapes. Create a texture with a vibrant colour and apply to all objects. Now render several PNG images in various positions, giving a range of stock images.



Paste in the abstracts

04 Now move to Photoshop and create a large portrait canvas. Open up all of the newly created abstract stocks and for each one, go to the Channels window and Cmd/Ctrl-click on the Alpha Channel preview window. This will automatically select the abstract, letting you copy and paste each one into the new canvas. Close all of the stock files and return to the new canvas. Select all of the abstract layers and put them into a group (Cmd/Ctrl+G) and rename it 'Abstract'.



Fill the background

05 Pick one of the abstracts with the most vibrant colour and hide all of the others. Now create a light to dark colour gradient that will contrast well with the colour of the abstracts. In this example, it is a range of blue hues. Note that it doesn't need to go too dark, as you will be using a number of adjustment layers later. Create a new layer, select the Gradient tool, then choose Radial Gradient and fill the background from a point in the upper-right quarter to the bottom edge.



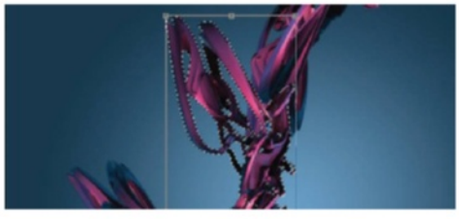
Build your image

06 Unhide all of the abstract stocks again and arrange them around the canvas so that they can be used to create your base image. Generate a sense of flow from the top of the canvas to the bottom by using those stocks with the longest lines. Using the Transform tool, you can resize, rotate and flip them to generate that top-to-bottom shape and flow. Try to use Transform as much as possible to avoid repetition and obvious use of the same images, for a more interesting design.

Expert tip

Use the Smudge tool

When creating the glow, the majority of work is just resizing the original image. To make it more interesting, create a number of areas that stand out. A great way to do this is to use the Smudge tool with a soft round brush, teasing some of the glow's edges out.



Trim the fat

07 There will always be elements that just don't seem to fit or sit contrary to the overall flow. Those need to be removed, so add a Layer Mask to each stock that you want to adjust. This means you can erase and experiment without fear of permanently erasing the originals. Press X to quickly swap foreground and background colours, and paint on the Layer Mask directly to put anything erased straight back in.



Start to add effects

08 Hide the gradient background layer so that you see the chequered pattern underneath, indicating transparency. Press Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+C and paste to create a single layer of the work so far. Ctrl/right-click on the Stocks folder layer and select Duplicate Group. Rename the duplicate 'Main Glow', maximise it, hide all layers and place the layer just created inside it. Unhide the gradient background.

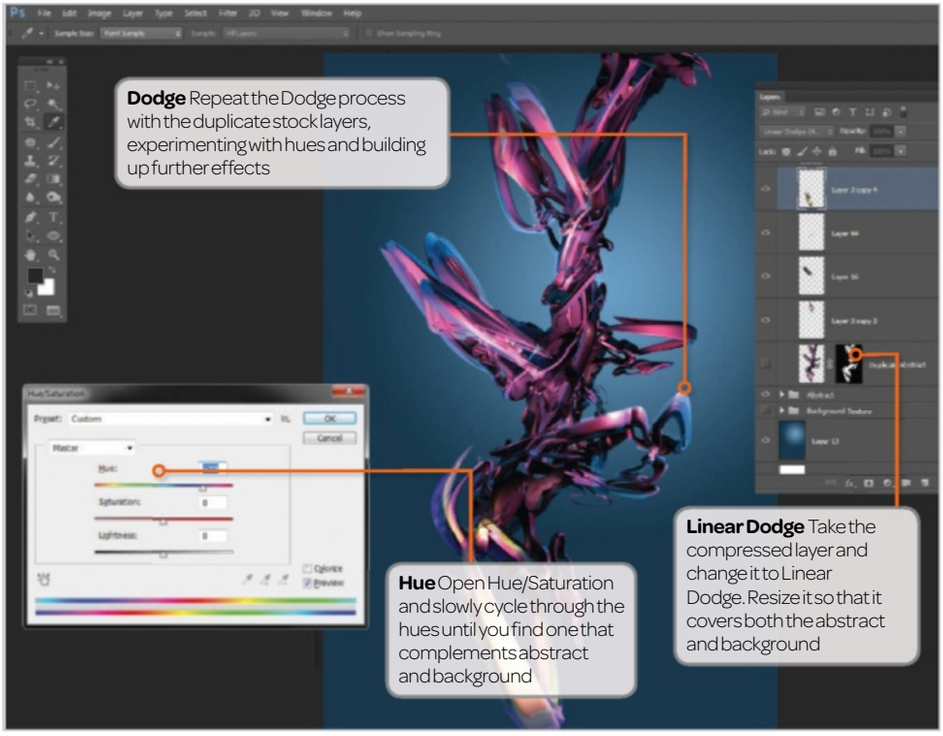
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Build layers and elements

Apply strokes with your brushes and tweak the composition

Easy colour effects

09 Once you've created an interesting design, you need to make the colour really stand out. Add easy colour effects by taking the compressed layer, changing it to Linear Dodge and adjusting the Hue. Experiment by moving it around the canvas, seeing how it affects the abstract and the background.

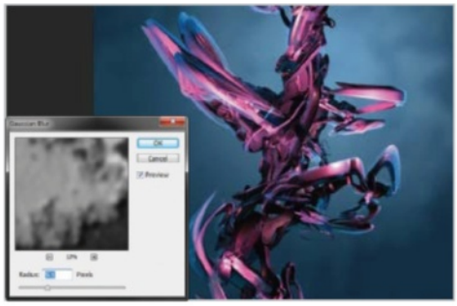




Easy colour effects

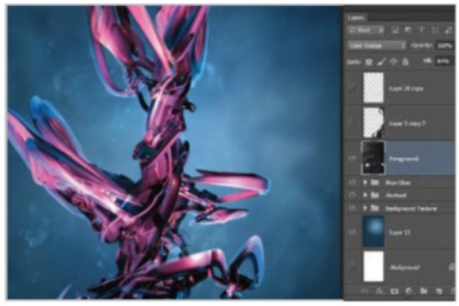
10 Simply adding a glow in one layer has the downside of 'flattening' the depth, but allows you to see where it works best. Begin to restore depth by adding a Layer Mask and removing the Dodge from anywhere it doesn't fit. Now unhide some of the other layers in Main Glow, setting them to Dodge and moving them into the Stocks group. By putting them between and behind the original layers, you can get some of that depth back. Experimentation is key.

"The intention is to re-create some of the ethereal elements of underwater light"



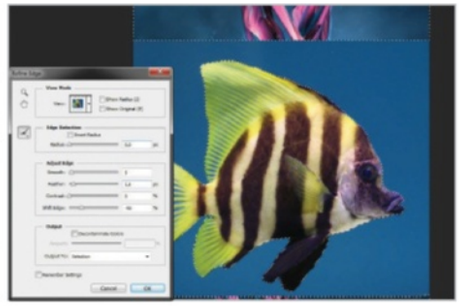
Build up depth

11 Now start work on the background to build atmosphere and depth. Open a stock image of bubbles in a dark liquid and put it in a new group called 'Background', which will go below the other two groups. Resize the stock to cover the entire canvas and set to Soft Light at 50% Opacity. Select Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and set it to a high radius. The intention is to lose the detail but take advantage of the contrast, to re-create some of the ethereal elements of underwater light.



Add to foreground texture

12 Open further bubble stock images and place them in the Background group. Repeat the process in the previous step using varying levels of blur and use them to frame the focal abstract. Now open a bubble stock with a good amount of high-contrast detail and place it above all your other groups. Resize it to ensure that it covers the entire canvas and change the layer mode to Color Dodge. The highlights in the stock will bring out background detail and create points of foreground interest.



Unexpected elements

13 Some of the best examples of abstracts contain an unexpected element of reality. The image created here has a strong underwater atmosphere, so add some real fish. Open the stock image (**www.sxc.hu/photo/823028**). As it has a clear background, you can quickly remove the fish from its surroundings. Select the Magic Wand and click the background. Increase Feather or Smooth by small increments to refine the selection, being careful not to lose too much of the stock.

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Finishing touches

Add more stock, adjust colour and apply filters



More fish

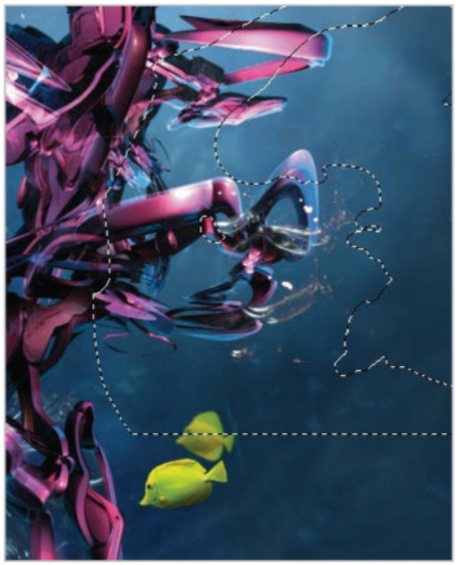
14 Use Transform to resize and position the fish to the left of the abstract, facing into the middle. Open the other two fish stock images (**www.sxc.hu/photo/893415** and **www.sxc.hu/photo/573350**) and extract them from their backgrounds. Transform them so that they are facing in from the right side of the canvas. Now lightly use Dodge and Burn to help them fit in with the scene. Apply a gentle Gaussian Blur to one of the fish to simulate a degree of depth.

Expert tip

Content-aware patching

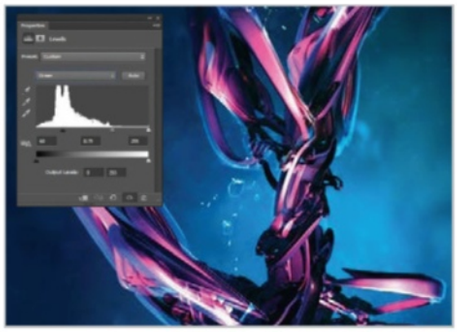
Working in larger image sizes than ever before quickly leads to systems being pushed to their limits. So flattening your images is increasingly necessary, and it's inevitable that errors sneak through. At this point, Photoshop's array of clone and retouching tools will help. For small retouches, the Clone Stamp is ideal. For larger areas, the Patch tool can be used. Select the tool, changing the Patch option to Content-Aware. Define the area to be corrected, click, and while holding the button, move around until you find a match for the area to be fixed. Photoshop will automatically blend the patch in.





Add bubble stock I

15 Open a bubble stock, paste it into the canvas and change the colour mode to Lighten. Test the stock in various positions around the abstract, both above and below the original layers, making the bubbles fit with the flow and shapes already created. Again, be sure to use the Transform tool to rotate, scale and Warp the stock, ensuring that there is no obvious repetition. Only pick two or three areas to add bubbles to, so that the effect isn't overused



Colour adjustments

17 Add a Levels Adjustment layer, changing the drop-down from RGB to Green. Drag the left tab to 60, removing a lot of green from the background. Repeat with Red. Add another Levels layer, adjusting the middle tab for Red and Green to 0.78, and on another one, increase the middle Blue tab to 0.71 and reduce the right to 243. The pink needs to blend more with the blue, so add a final Levels Adjustment layer, setting the Red left to 19 and middle to 0.89.

Expert tip

Desaturate for vision

It's easy to become too familiar with an image, meaning you can't see the weaker elements that could be easily fixed. One way to look at the piece differently is to desaturate it to black and white and see if you still have the same high-contrast focals you're aiming for.



Add bubble stock II

16 The bubble stock used in the example doesn't have a lot of definition on the Lighten layer mode, so you can paint straight onto the layer to make the bubbles stand out. Select the Brush tool and change to a small brush of 3-6px and Hardness of 0. Using small strokes, paint on top of the stock bubbles to help define them. Using this small white brush, you can also paint some smaller bubbles around the abstract to add to the fine details.



Tidying up

18 Press Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+A to select the whole canvas, then copy and paste to quickly make a single layer version of the image. Duplicate the layer and apply a Smart Sharpen filter. Apply a Layer Mask and remove any areas that appear over-sharpened. Copy and paste the whole image once more. Lastly, select the Burn tool with a very large round brush (Hardness 0) and burn the bottom edges of the canvas in a 'V' shape.

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START IMAGES

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Source file available

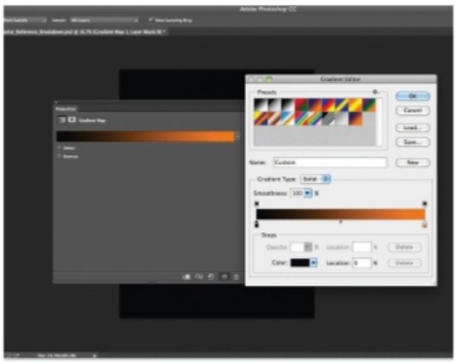
Use the image provided to re-create this

Painting with fire

Set your work ablaze with just a mere handful of tools and stock images!

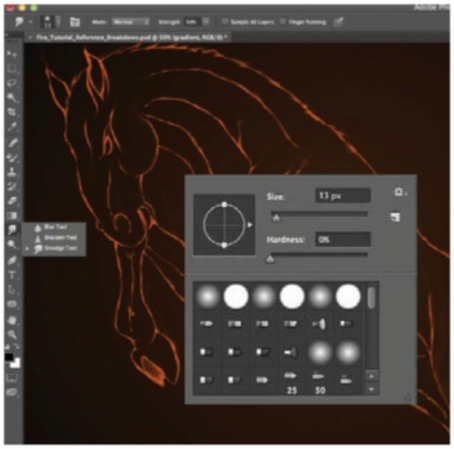
With a little bit of technique and creativity, we'll be creating a blazing horse masterpiece! Starting off with basic line drawing and smudging it through, we'll be using the Cloud filter and a good amount of fire stock images (courtesy of Matt Lowden from **hutzon.deviantart.com**) to help build up the scene. Then, to bring the whole image together, we'll be using layer masks, the Gaussian Blur filter and adjustment layers. We'll also harness the power of layer blend modes to light up the scene.

Once this tutorial is complete, you'll be confident enough to create other light effects imaginable. Remember: experimentation is the key!



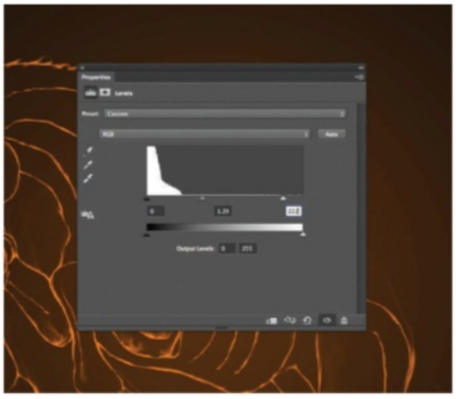
Set up the background

01 Create a new document with width 2,776px, height 3,543px, 300 dpi. Fill the background with black. Add a new layer, click the Gradient tool (G), select Radial Gradient. In the gradient editor, change the white colour flag to an orange (#e05d09) and hit OK. Click and drag from the page centre towards the border and release. Then set the layer's Fill value to 25%.



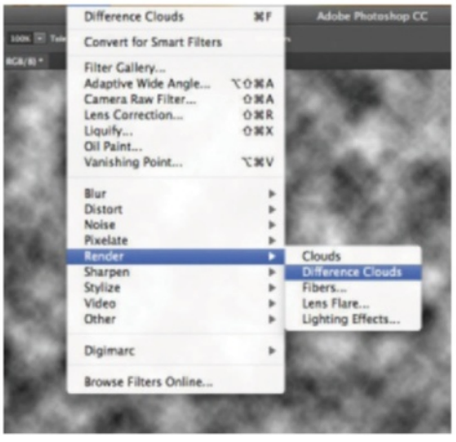
Smudge the line work

02 View>Fit on Screen (Cmd/Ctrl+0) then File>Place 'Linework.psd' and rasterise. Set Smudge tool to brush size 25px, Hardness 90%, Strength 60% and smudge lines for subtle wisps. For longer wisps, set Strength to 75% with a small brush.



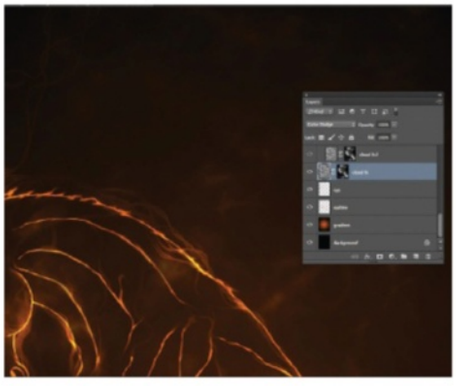
Create the glowing eye

03 On a new layer, use the Elliptical Marquee tool (M) to make a small selection, fill with a Radial Gradient (G), set the layer blend mode to Color Dodge then squash and rotate for an eye shape. Head to Adjustments>Levels (L), set Midtone Input Level to 1.28 and Highlight Input Level to 222.



Difference Clouds filter

04 Create a new layer, fill it up with a black colour using the Paint Bucket tool or Alt+Backspace. Then head over to Filter>Render>Difference Clouds.



Mask the filter layer

05 With the Cloud layer selected, add a layer mask and fill with black. Before you paint, set the layer blend mode to Color Dodge. Using a variable-sized soft or hard brush, paint along the line work, mostly going inside the hooves and legs.



Reuse the filter layer

06 To strengthen the effect, duplicate the Cloud layer and add it to a group (Cmd/Ctrl+G). Then add a layer mask for the group itself, fill it up with black colour and then using a soft brush and a white colour, paint around the horse's hooves.

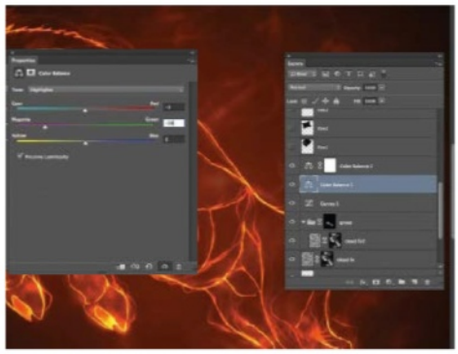
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Expert tip

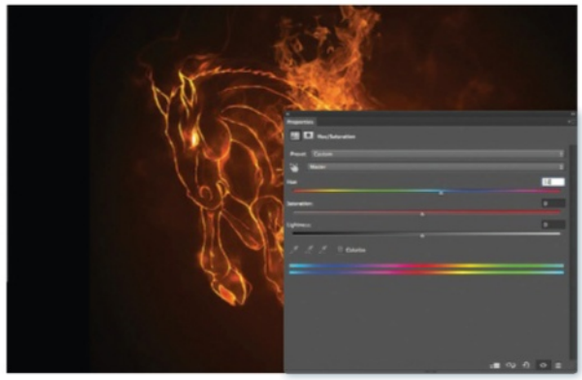
The Smudge tool wonder

Photoshop's simple yet powerful Smudge tool can also be used to create the flames itself. With a brush of your choice, just use a grey colour and paint a small patch, set the layer blend mode to Color Dodge. Use any brush type and experiment with the smudge strength for interesting results. For longer extensions use a range of 70-90%. For shorter ones, a range of 40-65% is good.



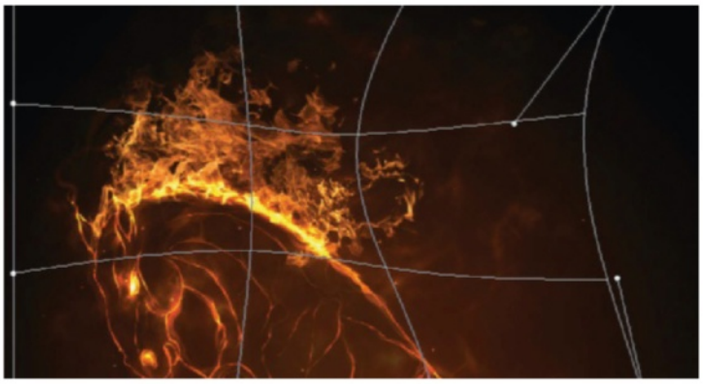
Add adjustment layers

07 Open 'Adjustment_layers.psd' and drag two layers into the document, on top of the Cloud filter layers. Playing around with the adjustment layers elevates the look and feel of the artwork. Changing the layer order will also give different results.



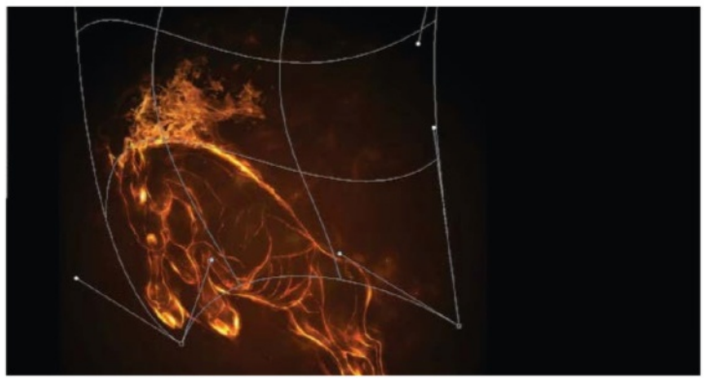
Inject more fire

08 Open 'Fire1.jpg' and drag into the main document. Using Free Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+T) scale it to 50%, hit Enter. Go to Image>Adjustments> Hue/Saturation and change Hue to 11. Set the layer blend mode to Linear Dodge.



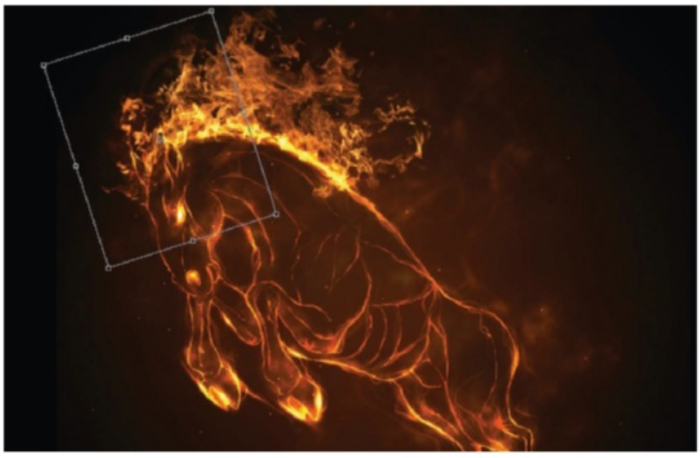
Add and modify extra files

10 Open 'Fire2.jpg' drag it into the main document and repeat the same process of scaling, rotating, modifying the hue and using the blend mode Linear Dodge (Add). Warp the image and move it further down the neck area and tweak it even more if desired.



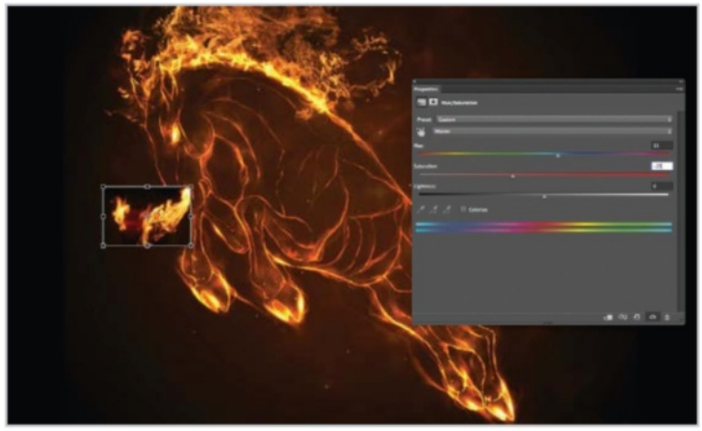
Tweak the flames

09 With the Fire1 layer still selected, rotate it a bit using Free Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+T). Move it near the top of the horse's neck but don't hit Enter yet; instead, Cmd/right-click and select Warp. Push and pull the handles and control points to stylise the fire. Hit Enter to apply.



Build up the flames

11 Open 'Fire3.jpg' into the document. Using Free Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+T) scale to 20%, Cmd/right-click and select Rotate 90° CCW then Flip Vertical. Slightly rotate right. Position close to the ears and set blend mode to Linear Dodge (Add).



Breathe in extra heat

12 Open and drag 'Fire4.jpg' into the document, scale to 10% and position near the nose. Set the layer blend mode to Linear Dodge (Add). Use the Burn tool (O) with Exposure set to 75% and Range to Midtones; burn the image to eliminate borders. Set Hue to 11 and Saturation to -25.

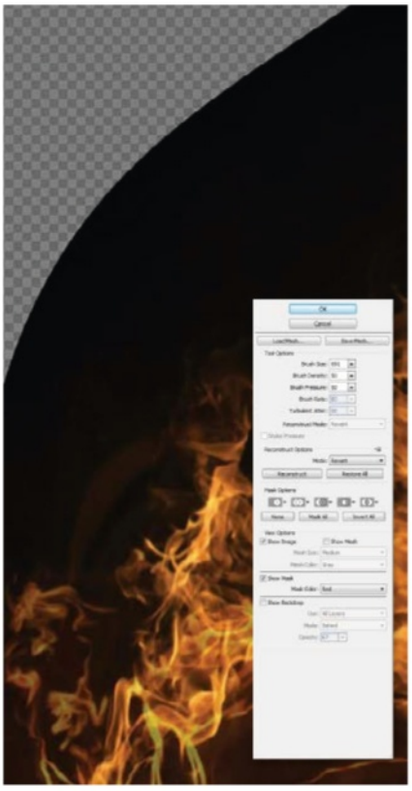
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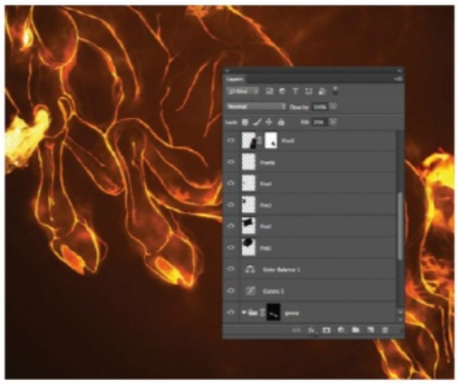
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Expert tip

Liquify it!

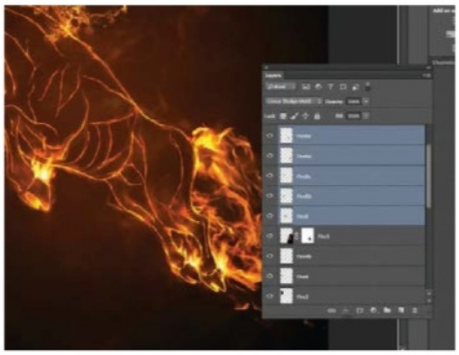
For a more fluid, nondestructive approach, the Liquify (Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+X) filter works just as well as opposed to the Warp option and the Smudge tool too. Then again, it all depends on what you're comfortable with and how well you can harness the power of these tools. Experiment with the brush Size, Density and Pressure for a fluid push and pull.





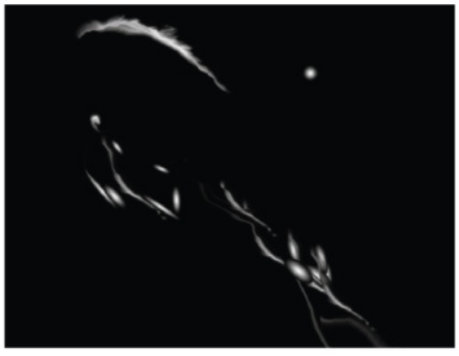
Create the flaming tail

13 Open 'Fire5.jpg', drag it into the main document, repeat scaling and rotating. Set Hue to 11 and use Linear Dodge (Add) blend mode. Position near the horse's rear. Add a layer mask, use a black semi-soft brush to paint out unwanted areas.



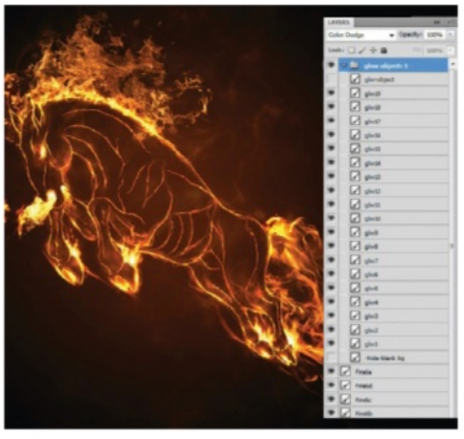
Add extra features

14 Open and drag 'Fire6.jpg' into the document. Scale as required. Duplicate and position near the hooves and mouth. With a small hard brush, use the Smudge tool to fix and extend certain areas. Make sure to use Linear Dodge (Add) blend mode for the duplicated layers.



Create glow objects

15 On a new layer, make a small elliptical selection. Fill with a Radial Gradient and duplicate. Place near the hooves then squash and rotate (Cmd/Ctrl+T). Duplicate once more and position on the neck. Extend down the neck with the Smudge tool at 60%.



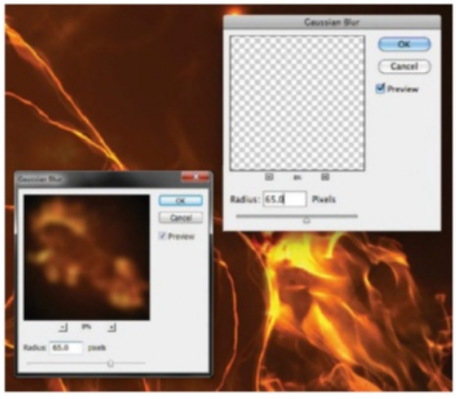
Set the blend mode

16 Next, add all the Glow layers into a group (Ctrl+G). Set the blend mode for the group to Color Dodge.



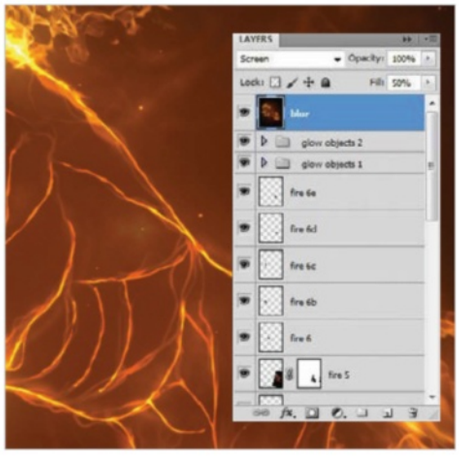
Create glow particles

17 On new layer, make a very small elliptical selection, fill with Radial Gradient, deselect. With the Move tool (V) and Alt key, repeatedly clone-drag the object around the horse. Merge layers and set blend mode to Color Dodge.



Blur it out

18 Select the entire document (Cmd/Ctrl+A) head over to Edit>Copy Merged (Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+C)>Paste (Cmd/Ctrl+V). Then, go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and then set value to 65px.



Complete the effect

19 Finally, with the Blur layer still selected, set the blend mode to Screen and reduce Fill value to 50%.

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Creative projects

Add flare to your projects with these great techniques

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Create a matte painted scene

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Use an assortment of photos to create a new abstract scene

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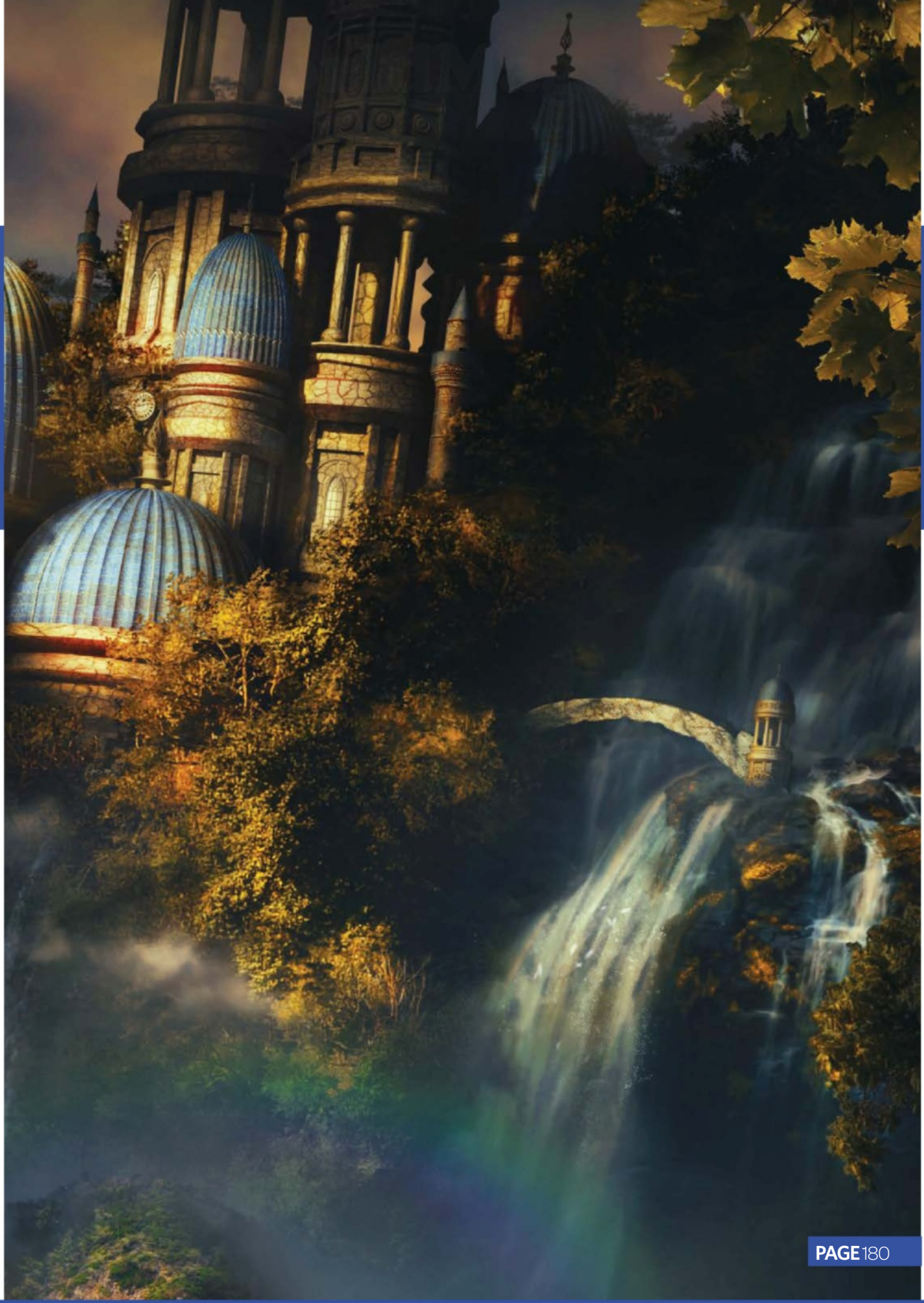
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Combine multiple assets

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Make art with geometric shapes


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Compose textured portraits

Here we show you how to create a fun, colourful image using only two photos and a host of filters, blend modes and masks

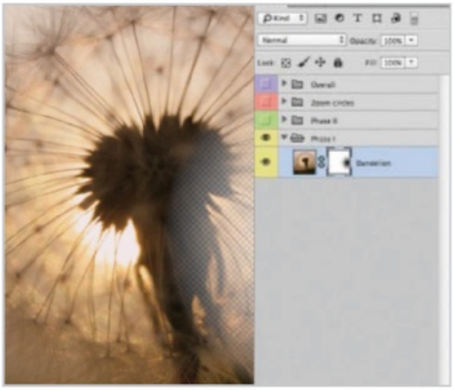
Starting with only a few photos, we can come up with a lively, textured piece of art by utilising Photoshop's filters and tools.

Using a dandelion as a backdrop, we'll first introduce a model photo and then go bonkers with a full-on filter barrage. The Texture filters will enable us to introduce roughness and depth without the need to import actual texture photos. Blend modes and layer masks will be our trusted partners throughout the process, and we'll use them to mix each filtered reinvention of the original photos with the evolving composite.

You'll see the incredible value of merging layers together as a flattened stamp, in order to apply overall sharpening and to fill in some decorative circles as a final touch. After completing the tutorial, you may want to try it again with your own photos – just use the steps and filter values as a rough guide, and check out the alternate image we came up with for further ideas. Experiment with other effects and filters. Your only obligation is to stick with the 'two photo' restriction.

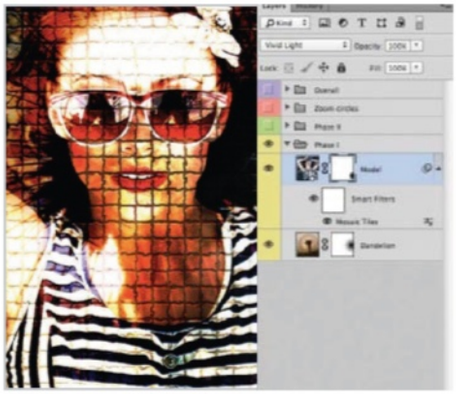
With Photoshop's tools as your faithful allies you're bound to surprise yourself with what you can achieve. So let's take a look at how to create this stunning visual.

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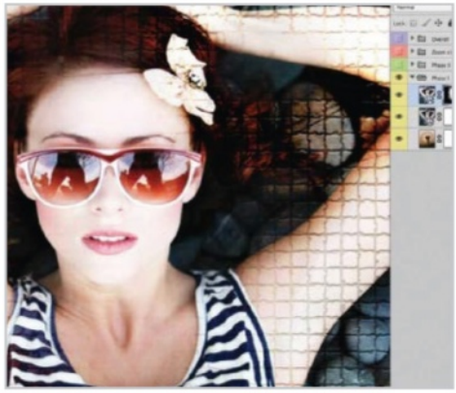
Dandelion drop

01 Open the supplied 'Dandelion.jpg'. To vary our colours, let's punch out a transparent hole. Add a layer mask via the Layers palette icon. Use a soft, round brush at 80% Opacity to paint out over to the right.



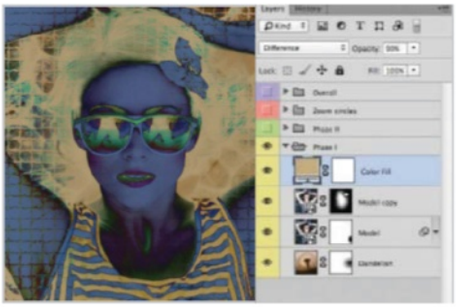
Mosaic Tiles filter

02 File>Place the supplied 'Model.jpg'. Go to Filter>Texture>Mosaic Tiles. Set Tile Size: 52, Grout Width: 7 and Lighten Grout: 7. Add a layer mask, paint a little black in the bottom right and set to Vivid Light.



Facial restoration

03 Duplicate the Model layer via Cmd/Ctrl+J. Drag the layer's Smart Filter to the Trash. Fill the mask with black to hide everything, switch your Foreground to white, then paint to reveal the unaltered face.



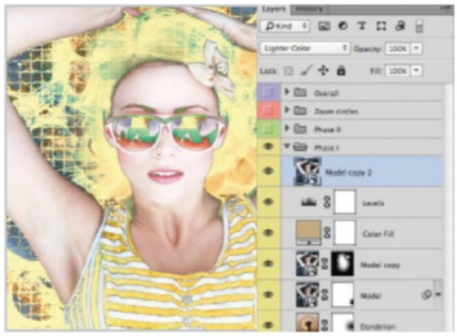
Eerie colours

04 In the Layers palette, hit the Create New Fill/Adjustment Layer button and choose Solid Color. Input #c4ac81, set the blend mode to Difference and Opacity to 90%. It's an interesting effect, but the image is now a tad dismal. We'll correct it.



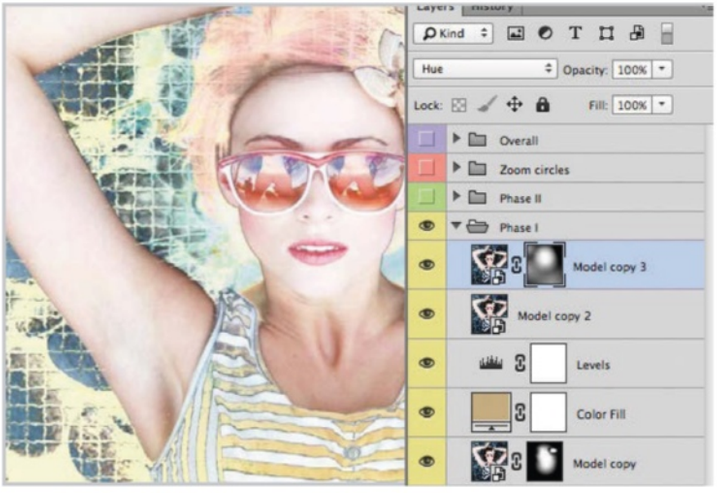
Lighten up

05 Add a Levels adjustment layer using the same button in the Layers palette. Drag the Midtone and Highlight sliders to the left to brighten the image. Notice we still need to restore the skin tone and lighten colours from the original photo.



Restore lighter colour

06 Opt/Alt-click and drag the Model layer above the Levels adjustment layer. Now Ctrl/right-click on its mask and choose Delete Layer Mask. Set the blend mode to Lighter Color.



A bit of cool

07 Duplicate the layer again with Cmd/Ctrl+J. Set the blend mode to Hue to add some cool colouring. Add a layer mask, switch the Foreground colour to black, then paint out areas surrounding the model.

Expert tip

Make use of the Filter Gallery

Use the Filter Gallery (Filter>Filter Gallery) as a laboratory for testing and creating filter recipes. The middle pane shows the filters you can try. Simply select one and the preview pane on the left will reflect your choice. The right pane is context-sensitive, showing the options and settings for the current filter. At the bottom-right, you can stack multiple filters for potentially mind-blowing results.



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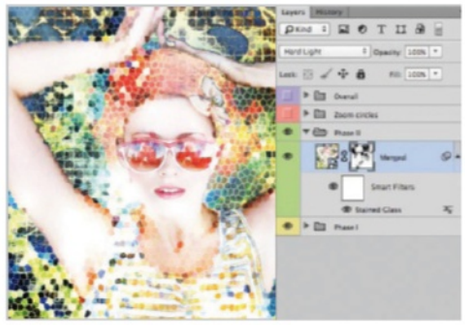
Stained Glass filter

08 Duplicate the layer once more then set its blend mode to Color Burn and Opacity to 80%. Go to Filter>Texture>Stained Glass. Set Cell Size: 19, Border Thickness: 4 and Light Intensity: 3. Click OK and paint black onto a new mask at the top, reducing the impact in areas.



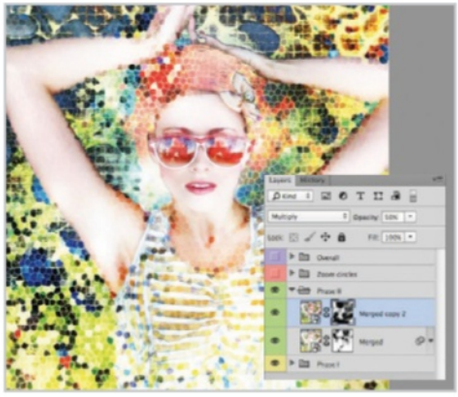
Even more burn

09 Duplicate the layer, bump the Opacity back up to 100% and then fill the mask with black. After that, set your Foreground colour to white and then lightly paint some of the central area back into the image.



Merge layers

10 Press Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E to create a merged copy, then Ctrl/right-click and choose Convert to Smart Object. Go to Filter>Texture>Stained Glass. Set Cell Size: 19, Border Thickness: 4 and Light Intensity: 3, then set it to Hard Light.



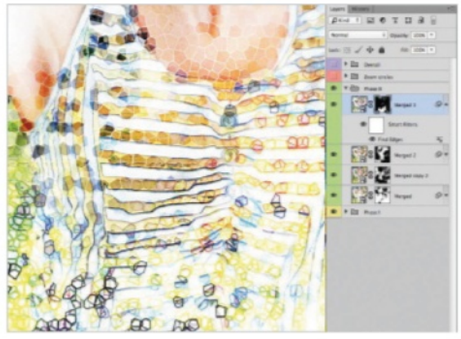
Duplicate and blend

11 Duplicate the layer and drag the Smart Filter to the Trash. Set the blend mode to Multiply and layer Opacity to 50%. Now paint with black onto the mask to reduce some of the darkened areas.



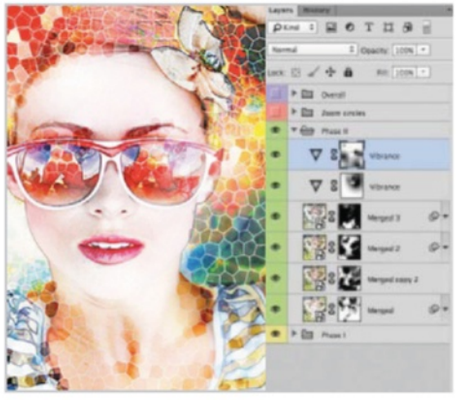
Looking sharp!

12 Merge your layers again and convert to a Smart Object. Now apply Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask. Set the Amount to 80% and the Radius to 5.5px. Click OK and, with a black brush, paint over any areas that you don't want sharpened.



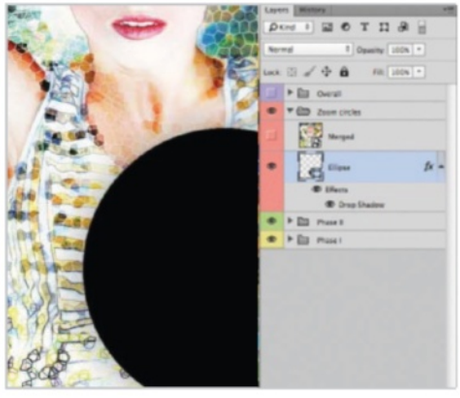
Add an illustrative touch

13 Merge your layers and convert to a Smart Object again. This time, head over to Filter>Stylize>Find Edges. Now add a layer mask, fill it with black, then paint over some of the areas with white at 80-100% Opacity in order to add some illustrative flair to your growing mosaic artwork.



Vibrance control

14 Pick Vibrance from the Adjustment layer list in the Layers palette. Drop Vibrance to -50. Paint black in the mask to restore some colour. Add another Vibrance adjustment, this time with Vibrance: 30 and Saturation: 20, then tweak with the mask.

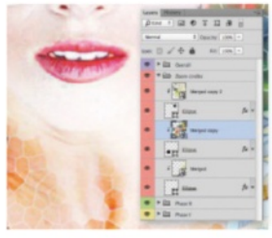


Circling shapes

15 Merge and convert to a Smart Object, then tick the eye icon to hide the layer. On a new layer, use the Ellipse tool (set to Shape in the Options bar) to create a circle, holding Shift as you drag. Add a slight Drop Shadow via Layer>Layer Style.

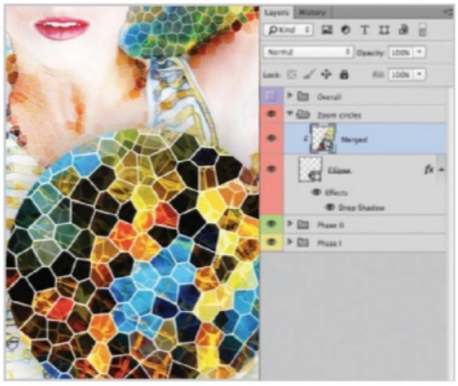
Expert tip

Smart editing



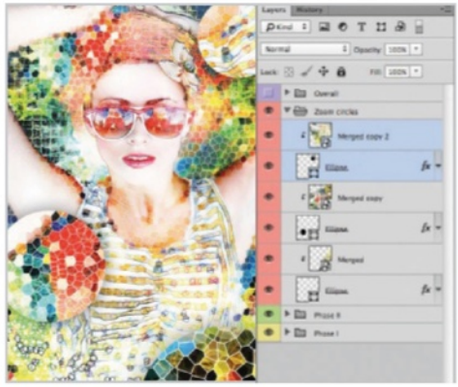
When is it a good time to use a Smart Object? Any time! Keeping a layer 'smart' gives you the flexibility of being able to resize the layer without the fear of losing any of the original clarity. Also, any filters applied to a Smart Object become Smart Filters. These are non-destructive and do not permanently affect the layers. Edit these any time by double-clicking on them, and use the Smart Object's mask to hide parts of the effect.

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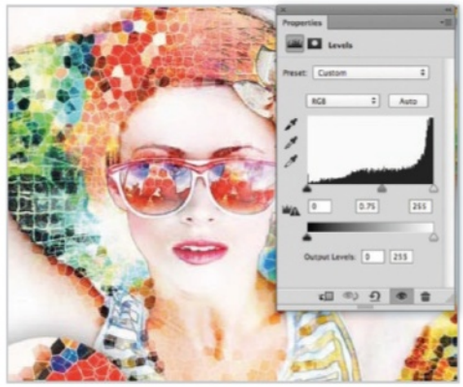
Zoom effect

16 Turn the visibility back on for the merged layer. Opt/Alt-click between the circle and merged layers to clip them. Use Free Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+T) to scale and position the merged layer. Enlarge and zoom in on an interesting area of the effect.



Three's company

17 Now create two more circles of differing sizes. Apply Drop Shadows. Duplicate the merged layer twice, then position and clip with the other two circles. Free Transform the merged layers to scale and rotate, or even try warping them.



Levels to finish

18 We'll finalise with a Levels adjustment. Use the sliders to fine-tune contrast, then paint black on the adjustment's mask over areas that don't benefit from the adjustment. You can even add another Levels adjustment for extra tonal control.

Alternative effect Endless variation

Vary shapes and colour settings for a more subtle result

This tutorial is just one of many possibilities. Every step can be modified, replaced or discarded – it's all up to you! Here we've used the same model and tried a lighter approach. The Mosaic Tiles and Stained Glass filters were used, but with different settings. As a counterpoint to the inverted triangle (formed by the model's arms), we've created some upward-pointing triangles, with a few facing down for variation.

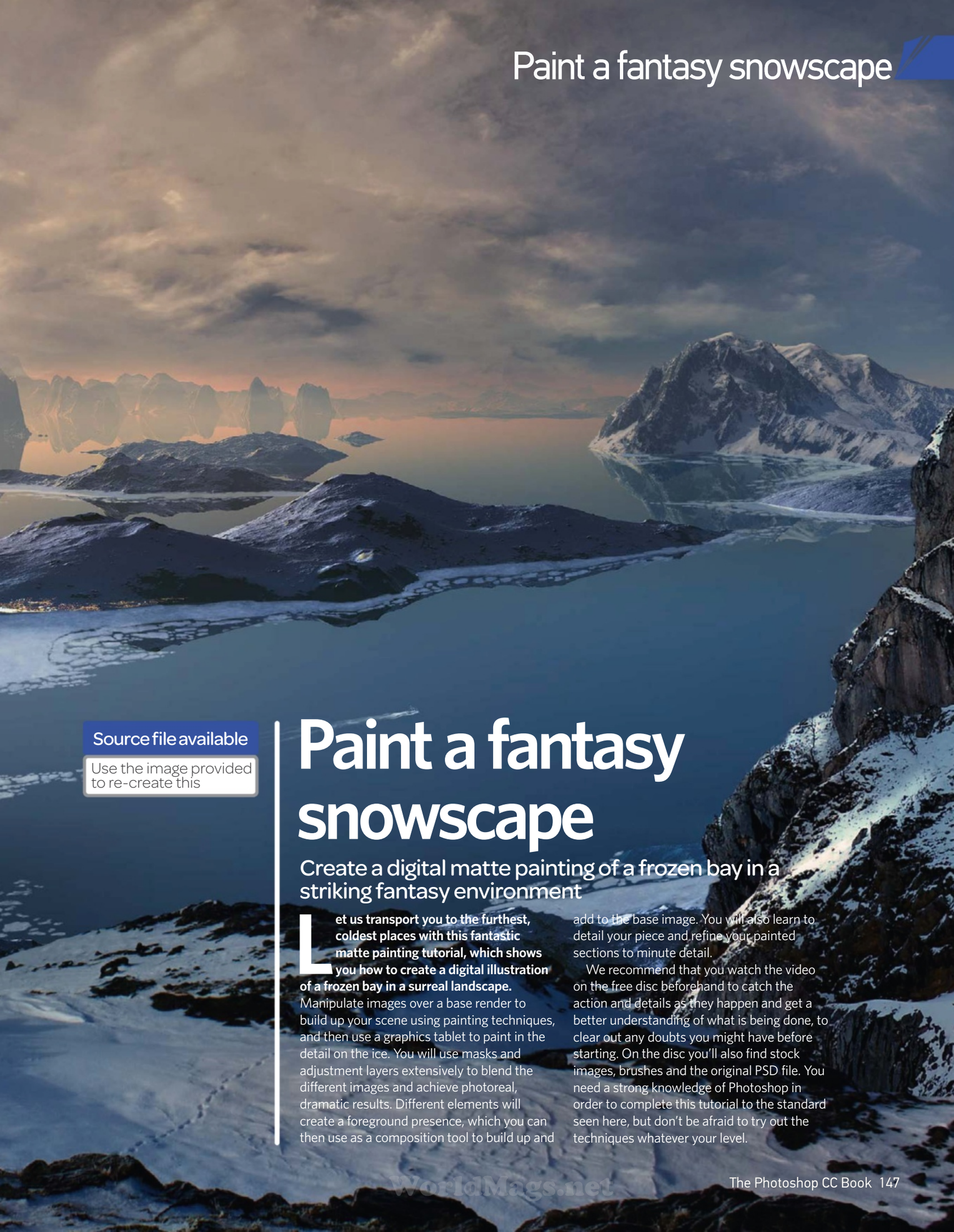
Go ahead and use the same photo (or your own) to create a new outcome. Use the Texture filters or try some from other categories, such as Artistic and Stylize. When it's time to blend layers, cycle through the various blend modes (Shift and +/-) until you get the right mix.



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Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Paint a fantasy snowscape

Create a digital matte painting of a frozen bay in a striking fantasy environment

Let us transport you to the furthest, coldest places with this fantastic matte painting tutorial, which shows you how to create a digital illustration of a frozen bay in a surreal landscape. Manipulate images over a base render to build up your scene using painting techniques, and then use a graphics tablet to paint in the detail on the ice. You will use masks and adjustment layers extensively to blend the different images and achieve photoreal, dramatic results. Different elements will create a foreground presence, which you can then use as a composition tool to build up and add to the base image. You will also learn to detail your piece and refine your painted sections to minute detail.

We recommend that you watch the video on the free disc beforehand to catch the action and details as they happen and get a better understanding of what is being done, to clear out any doubts you might have before starting. On the disc you'll also find stock images, brushes and the original PSD file. You need a strong knowledge of Photoshop in order to complete this tutorial to the standard seen here, but don't be afraid to try out the techniques whatever your level.

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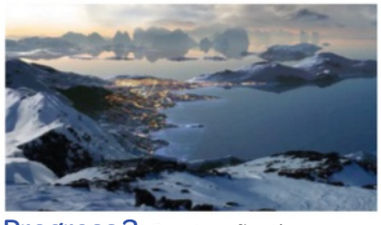
Base image to render



Progress 1: Extract images



Progress 2: Screen the lights

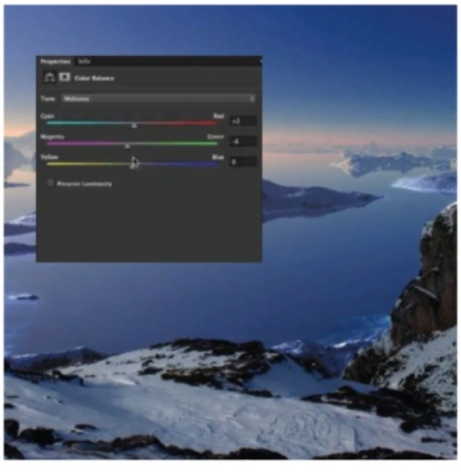


Progress 3: Create reflections



Build up the foreground

01 The first stage is to find all the images needed for the scene, but we've already taken care of this for you by supplying them on the disc. These include the mountain JPEGs and 'bay.jpg'. Your job is to extract the sections you need and start placing them roughly on the base image provided to find a good composition. Make sure that the different sections are placed in a realistic manner and you don't have weird mountainsides going nowhere, or in a position that doesn't agree with the overall illumination of the scene.



Adjustment and blending

02 A very important step that you need to start doing right away is to blend the images to the environment, both through colour and shading. This allows you to get a good feel of how the different sections are sitting on your image and which areas could do with filling in. This also helps to avoid any distracting inconsistencies. Once you have adjusted each section at least roughly to the plate, it's much easier to go ahead and find a good composition and keep the creativity flowing.



Layer Masks

03 A brilliant tool at your disposal is the use of layer masks to quickly cut out sections and make them sit on the image, to give you a sense of the look and composition quickly. However, as these masks are non-destructive, you can edit and refine them as much as you need without worrying about having to go back and extract the same image again, or about little mistakes in the extraction process. Instead, be creative and use the masks without fear of messing anything up.



Blending modes

04 The use of blending modes, in this case the Overlay mode, allows you to paint in simple layer highlights or shadows as needed, taking you one step further to merging the different pieces with the base plate. Simply sample colour from the highlights in the plate and apply them where needed, to increase the brightness of a surface and make the light direction more apparent in the selected region. This is also a non-destructive process that can be fine-tuned or reduced in opacity as needed.

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Town lights

05 Once you have the base of your landscape laid out, you will now use an image of a night city scene to quickly build up the appearance of a town on your bay. Copy the image 'night_town.jpg' from the disc into your Photoshop document and then scale it down. You will need to rotate it a bit so that it matches the angle of the surface below. Also make sure that the size of the town corresponds to the image's perspective.

Quick tip

A non-destructive workflow allows you to create your artwork freely without having to worry if the next step will be a problem further down the line. It also means that you can decide later if you need to adjust or readjust any aspect of your image, rather than having to make decisions on the spot. With non-destructive editing, creativity and experimentation are always welcome.



Extend the town

07 Now you want to extend the town beyond what you have already placed, so do this with the help of the Clone tool and a small brush. You can also use the Clone tool to choose interesting, varied sections of the lights and eliminate those that are not very interesting; just be sure to set your Clone tool to Current Layer in the top settings bar. Then clone all around the bay to extend the town out from the main area and into the surrounding land.



Screen and mask

06 Set the layer mode for your lights to Screen so that all the black is quickly discarded, and then create another layer mask to get rid of what you don't need, effectively placing your lights across the bay. Make sure there are no lights where it would seem unlikely for a structure to be built, such as on steep hillsides. Mask away until you have all the light following the coast and placed on the land for the base of your town.



Light levels

08 You should now have your city dispersed around the edges of the bay. At this point you can adjust the light levels of the town by using a Levels layer clipped to the main lights. Adjust the Levels to increase the contrast and bring out the highlights, yet at the same time increase the blacks. As you have this layer in Screen mode, it means that the blacks are hidden even further and the bright lights get boosted even more, consistently giving a better look for your town.

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Light hue

09 To fine-tune the city's lights even further, you can now apply yet another adjustment layer. This time go with the Hue/Saturation adjustment, and reduce the Saturation slightly to get rid of the orange and red excess. You can then use a small amount of blue tint to make the lights appear somewhat colder in order to match the rest of your scene, yet once again keeping control of the non-destructive workflow. This means that you can go back and adjust the lights at any time.



Increased ice detail

11 Once you have the base, you can go in with an increasingly smaller brush to start adding detail, getting rid of all the obvious paint strokes, refining the shapes and making them more solid as you go. You can also start sampling darker shades to add shadow over the ice, taking into consideration where the light is coming from. Add another level of detail to the ice surface by refining what the base has provided for you, eliminating the rough strokes or following them if needed.

Quick tip

Solid colour layers in different overlay modes are a great way to add drama and contrast to a scene, giving you the freedom to mask and reduce the opacity as needed, and even combine them to get interesting results. Don't hesitate to experiment with them.



Ice base

10 You can now start painting the base for the ice covering the bay. Create a new layer and sample a light blue-white from the image 'snow.jpg' on the disc, then start painting in the base structure for what you envision to be the ice covering the bay, painting in the smaller sections that break off as the ice sits further into the water. There is no need to worry about the small details just yet.



Add Texture

12 Use the ice image on the disc to add extra texture to the frozen bay. Copy 'ice.jpg' onto a new layer and scale and distort it into place and perspective over the ice. You can duplicate or clone it several times to cover the entire bay, and use a dirtier texture for the shaded areas. Then just clip it over the ice layer and reduce the Opacity to about 68%. After that you can spend a bit of time refining all of the other layer masks and making sure the edges are clean.

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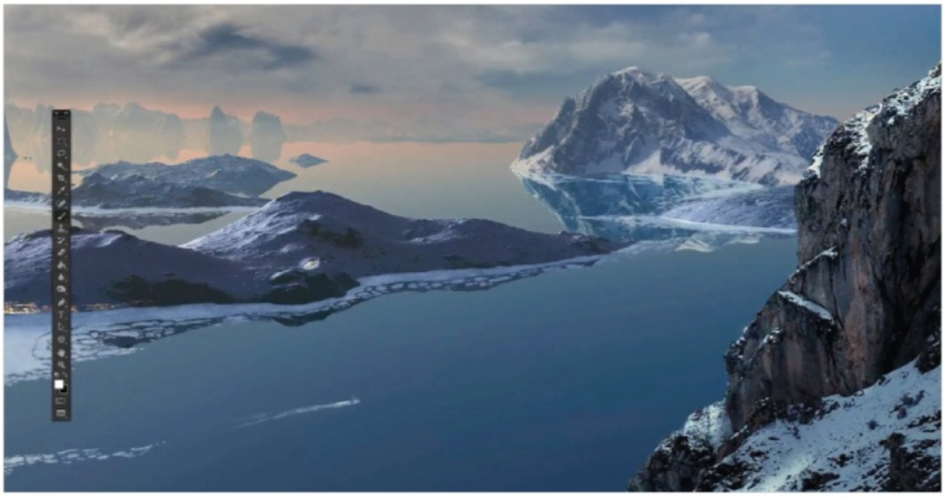
Mountain highlight and boat

13 You will now use the technique you used earlier to paint some highlights onto the background mountain. Make sure they are in keeping with the direction of the scene's light source and do them on a layer in Overlay mode. Then extract the image of the boat from 'boat.jpg' to add a bit of action to the middle of the bay, and again use a couple of adjustment layers to shade it and adjust the tone to match the image.



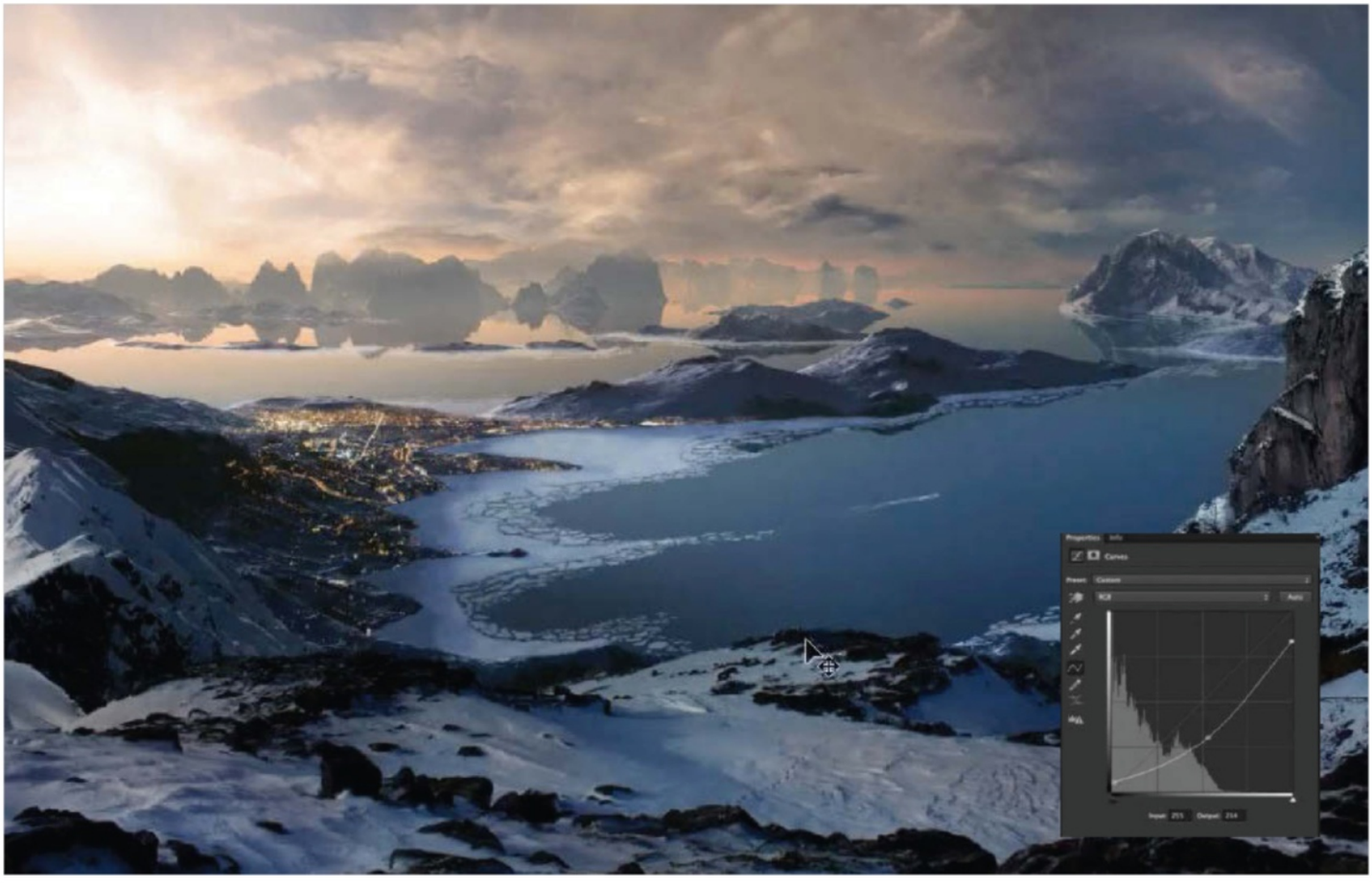
Mountain reflection

14 You now need to duplicate all the layers for the background mountains and then flatten those layers to use them as a reflection in the water. Once you have done this, flip it upside down and place it as a mirror image below the mountain range; then when it is in position, once again use a mask to get rid of everything that is not over the water. Reduce the opacity of the layer, and adjust the Color Balance so it has a colder hue.



Final look

15 To finish the matte painting off, add several colour and toning layers on top to add more drama into your image. Cool off the shadows and increase the warmth from the sun so you have a nice contrast of colours and shades to frame your scene. On each layer, use a soft brush and masks so the effect is applied only where you need it. Be sure to take a look at your PSD file and study each layer setting.



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Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Master layer masks

Using an assortment of photos and an array of clever techniques create a scene with one world spilling into another

Surrealism is a place where reality and dreams converge. The individual elements of a surrealistic piece can be mundane, but the combinations they form are often unreasonable, forming scenes that evoke wonder, laughter and sometimes even shudders.

Here we'll combine photos and effects in order to create a surrealistic scenario, then control tone and colour to meld everything perfectly. We'll clip an ocean scene inside an ornate picture frame, then hang it underneath a motorway overpass. We'll form an out-of-bounds effects by having the framed scene literally spill into our world. We'll steal water from waterfall photos with the help of the underused Blend If sliders, then add a few birds courtesy of Sias van Schalkwyk.

The Unsharp Mask filter will bring out exaggerated detail, and the Color Lookup adjustment will be used to achieve a deliciously bleak look.



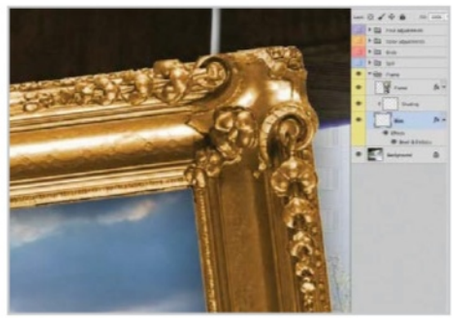
Frame the horizon

01 Open 'Frame.psd', then File>Place 'Horizon.jpg'. Opt/Alt-click between the Horizon and Mask layers to clip. Add an Inner Shadow to the Mask layer (via the Layers palette's Layer Style button) at 75% Opacity; moderately increase Distance and Size.



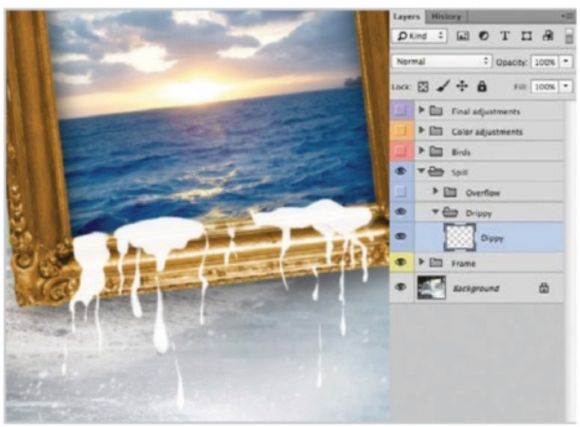
Place the frame

02 Open 'Surreal.psd'. Go to File>Place, and choose 'Frame.psd'. Before confirming, scale the frame down and rotate slightly. Add a Drop Shadow at 50% Opacity, with increased Distance and Size.



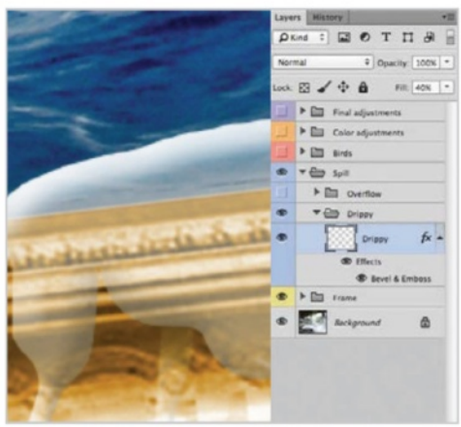
Hang it

03 Set the Foreground colour to white. Use the Rectangle tool set to Shape to create the wire. Add a Bevel and Emboss layer style. Now create a new layer. Opt/Alt-click between the layers to clip them, then set your Foreground to black. Shade with a soft round brush at 30% Opacity.



Leakage

04 Now set the Foreground back to white and then grab the Lasso tool (L). Create some dripping selections, then fill with white. Apply a Bevel and Emboss layer style using the Inner Bevel. Drop the Shadow Opacity to 25%.



Translucent effect

05 Drop the Layer's Fill to 40%. This only affects how opaque the layer fill is, leaving any layer effects intact and giving us a translucent look with the unaffected Bevel and Emboss.

Expert tip

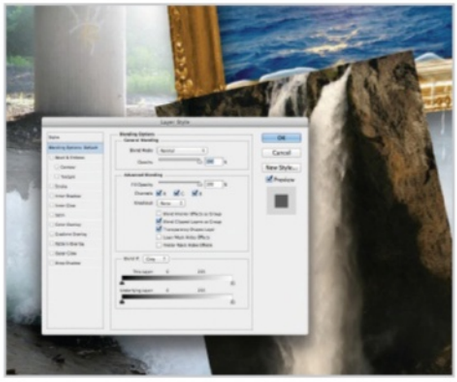
Wild ideas

Sometimes, the hardest part of a composition is defeating the blank, white page (or screen) and coming up with a concept. The next time you're in the middle of a creative drought, try something wild and surreal! Gather some photos from your camera, hard drive, and/or free stock sites. Concoct a crazy situation and select the images to best tell that story, or pick several photos at random and then merge them together. The only rule is to have fun and get Photoshop practice while you're at it!

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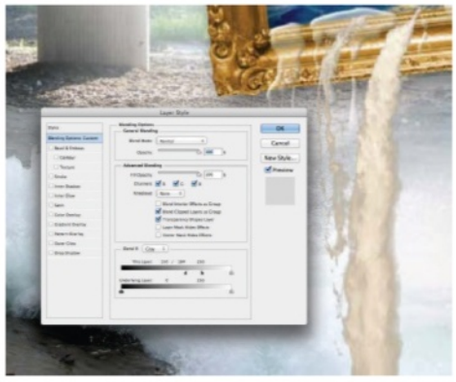

START IMAGES

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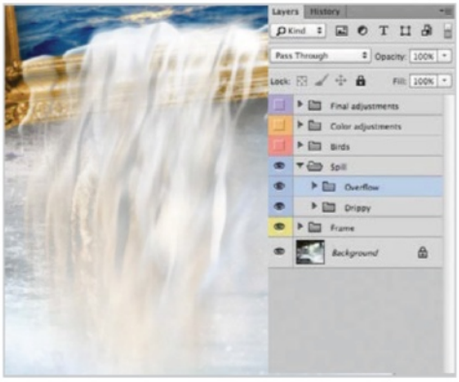
Water thief

06 Now we'll steal water from a waterfall scene. File>Place 'Waterfall1.jpg' and situate it so that it looks to be gushing from the frame's scene. From the Layer Style menu, pick Blending Options. You'll see the Blend If sliders at the bottom.



Blend If slider

07 Drag the dark slider inward to make the darkest parts of the layer hidden. Opt/Alt-click and then drag the slider to break it apart into two, creating a smoother transition. Fine-tune by adjusting both halves, then click OK to apply.



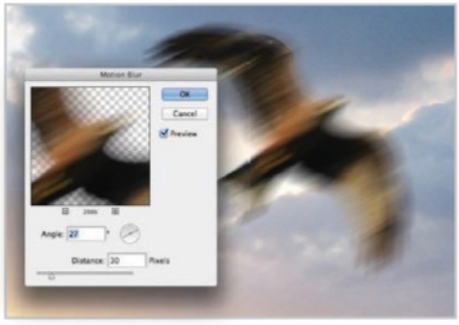
Gushing overflow

08 Do steps 6 and 7 for 'Waterfall2.jpg'. Duplicate with Cmd/Ctrl+J and go to Filter>Blur>Motion Blur; use a Distance of 60-70 and dial Angle to align with the action. Combine and duplicate a few times, painting with white to blend and masking as needed.



Extract bird

09 Open 'Bird.jpg'. Use the Magic Wand or Quick Selection tool (W) to select the areas surrounding the bird. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I to invert the selection. Now click and drag from within the selection into the main composition. Position in the frame.



Fast bird

10 Ctrl/right-click on the Bird layer and choose Convert to Smart Object. Go to Filter>Blur>Motion Blur. Set to 30 pixels, and align Angle with the bird's trajectory. In the Smart Object mask, paint some black at 13% to restore a bit of the bird.



Extract eagle

11 Open the eagle image and extract it as you did in step 9. Bring it into the main composition and position it as if it's bursting free from the confines of the frame. Create a layer below it and use a soft round brush at 15% Opacity to add shading.



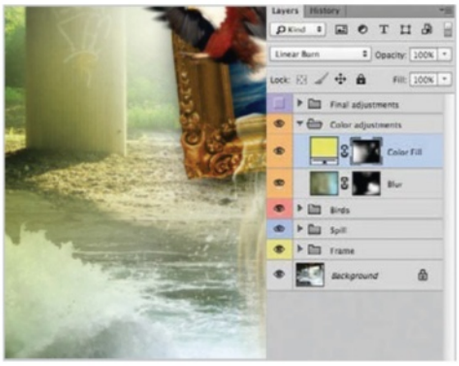
Escaping eagle

12 Ctrl/right-click on the Eagle layer and choose Convert to Smart Object. Go to Filter>Blur>Motion Blur. Set to 65 Pixels and dial Angle accordingly. In the Smart Object mask, paint some black at 80% to restore some of the eagle.



Blur

13 Place 'Blur.jpg'. Set the blend mode to Color Burn. Opt/Alt-click the Layer Mask icon in the Layers palette to create a mask filled with black. Paint back in with white at 80% Opacity to add areas to darken.

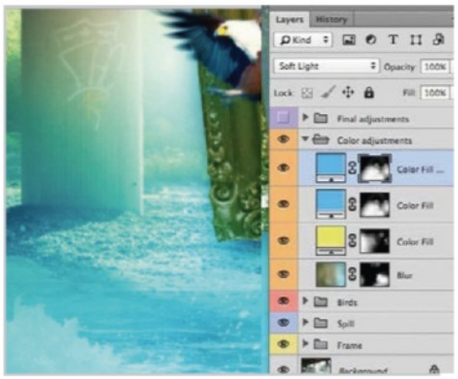


Linear Burn

14 Click the Create New Fill/Adjustment Layer button in the Layers Palette and choose Solid Color. Pick #e7ec65. Set the blend mode to Linear Burn. Now fill the mask with black, then paint back in with white at 40% Opacity to add the colour.

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Soft Light

15 Click Create New Fill/Adjustment Layer in the Layers Palette, choose Solid Color. Pick #00baff and set the blend mode to Soft Light. Paint black inside the mask at 80% Opacity to remove the top and a few other select areas. Duplicate layer.



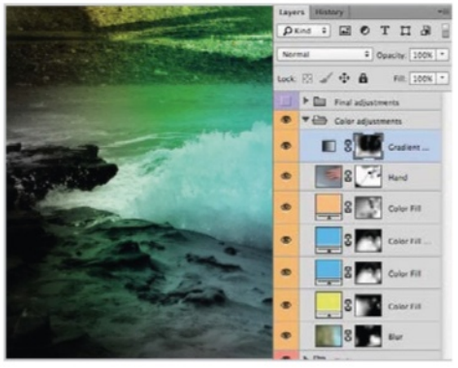
Color Burn

16 Hit that same button in the Layers Palette once more and choose Solid Color. Pick #f7bd81. Set the blend mode to Color Burn for this one. Paint black in the mask at 60-80% Opacity to remove the colour in areas that became too dark.



Overlay is handy

17 Now go to File>Place, and add 'Hand.jpg'. Set the blend mode to Overlay. Paint black in the mask at 60-80% Opacity in order to remove the colour in areas where you don't like the newly added colour.



Gradient Map

18 Click Create New Fill/Adjustment Layer again, choosing Gradient Map. Pick the Black, White preset. Fill the mask with black, then paint back in with white at 80% Opacity to remove colour in areas.



Merge layers

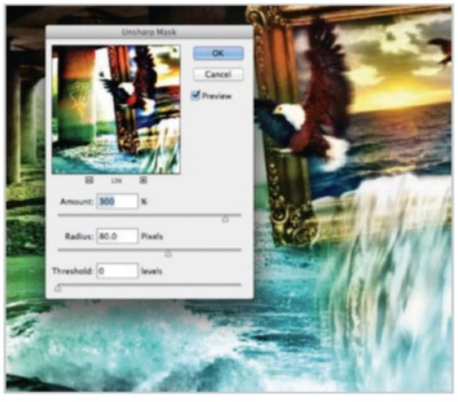
19 We'll now merge all the layers so we can sharpen everything at once. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E. Ctrl/right-click and pick Convert to Smart Object. The next step's effect will now become a Smart Filter.

Expert tip

Surrealistic colouring

Surrealistic visuals can often have an HDR-like feel. Here we use the Unsharp Mask filter with high Amount and Radius to bring out gritty details. This is applied to a stamped composite of all layers and set to Luminosity. The Color Lookup adjustment was also used and set to Futuristic Bleak.





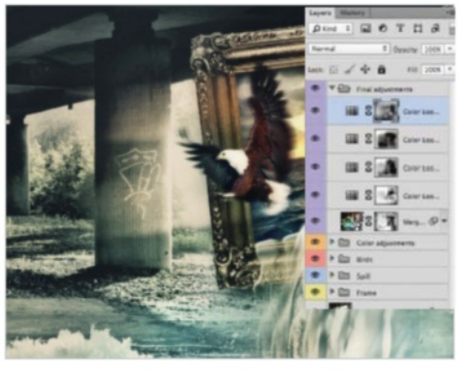
Exaggerated detail

20 Go to Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask. Set Amount to 300% and Radius to 80 pixels. Click OK. With black, paint out areas you don't want sharpened. Set the blend mode to Luminosity.



The future is bleak

21 Click the Create New Fill/Adjustment Layer button, picking Color Lookup this time. Choose Futuristic Bleak, because this will heighten the drama and surrealism. Add black to the mask in some areas in order to restore some colour.



Even bleaker...

22 Duplicate the Color Lookup adjustment with Cmd/Ctrl+J until you are satisfied with the resulting look. Edit each mask as needed. We've duplicated three times, and painted more black in each mask to selectively fine-tune the effect.

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Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Perfect expert compositing

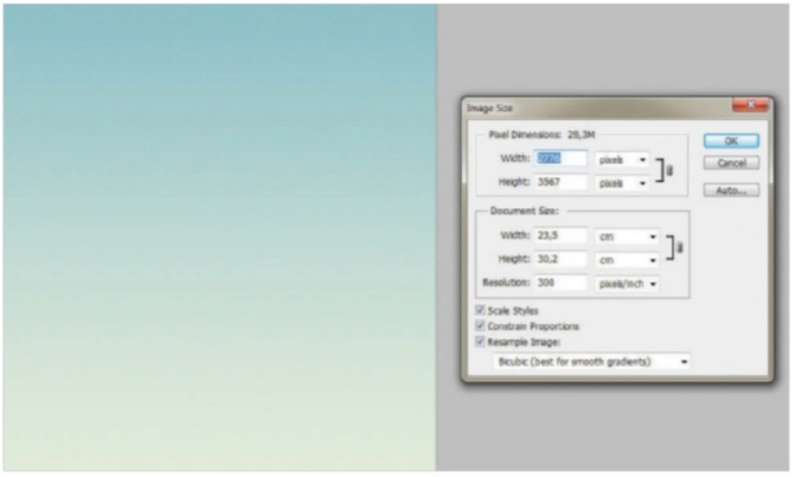
Follow Photoshop methods and techniques for designing fashion-based illustration

Fashion illustration can take many forms. Digital artists can use brushes, textures, scanned drawings and stock to invent vibrant images. Most of the work is done with layers, adjustments, blending modes, selections, painting and layer styles.

You'll also need a pen tablet and scanner if you're planning on building your own image. If not, then it is advisable to prepare drawings, however there are some additional images available for the objects along with other stock images. The goal is to achieve a romantic, feminine mood where the beauty of the model is highlighted. Prepared material, as well as the steps below, will leave you with enough skills to revisit and adapt the image to your own liking.

Create your workspace

01 Create a new file 235mm wide by 302mm high at 300dpi. The background will be made using a gradient. Activate the Gradient tool and in the Gradient Editor choose a #e2ebdb colour in one Color Stop and #69adbf in the other. Then drag the Gradient tool line from the bottom edge to the upper edge.



Expert tip

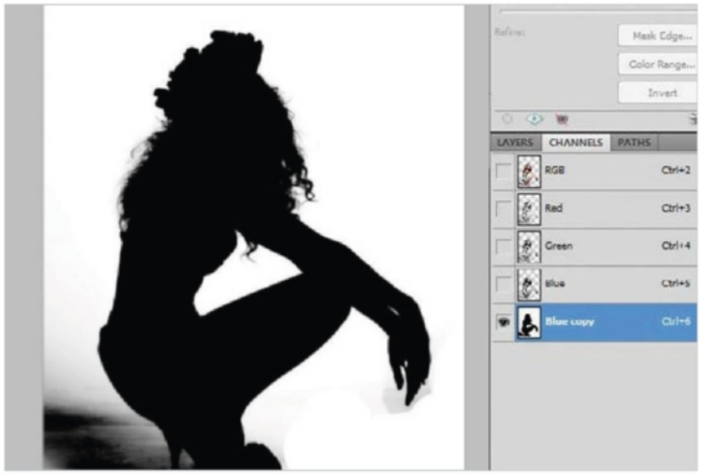
Shade your objects

Shade objects in your images more easily by working to a new layer. Always place this directly above the one you want to edit. For better results, always lay your shadow marks with a Multiply blending mode. Also, before you start painting, load a selection of the layer below, then press Cmd/Ctrl+H to hide it.



Select the model

02 First, select a model of your choice from any photo stock site. Open the Channels panel and select Blue. Ctrl/right-click then duplicate this. Go to Image>Adjustment>Levels and make a small adjustment to increase contrast. The main goal is to keep edges of the hair and not cut them off. Go to Image>Apply Image, choose Blending: Overlay.



Paint to your channel

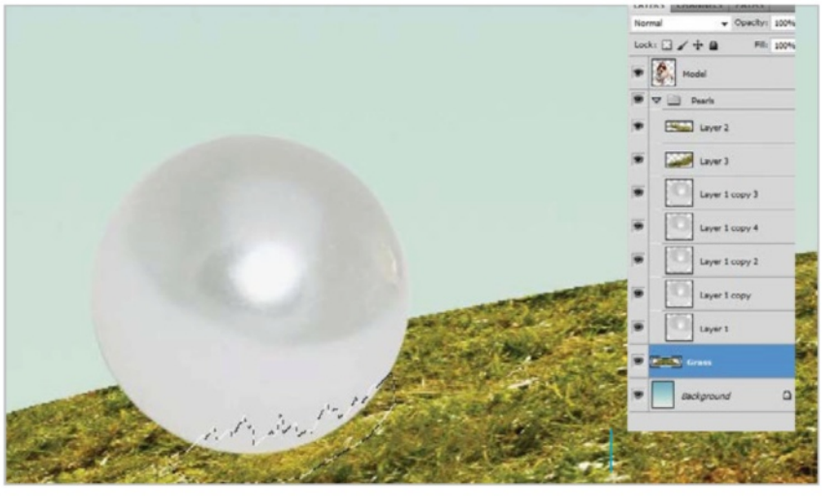
03 Paint the model with a black brush and the background with a white one, using different sizes of hard brush. Keep edges as they were in the original image. Cmd/Ctrl-click on the duplicate thumbnail and create a selection of all black areas. Turn on the visibility of the RGB channels and open the Layers window. Drag the model into your working file.

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Transform elements

04 Go to cgtextures.com, then search and download the large sized 12107 grass file. Drag this into your working file. Press Cmd/Ctrl+T, then Ctrl/right-click a control point and choose Perspective from the pop-up options. Narrow the upper control points then, without pressing enter, Ctrl/right-click again and choose Distort. Click the upper-middle point and lower it. After this, choose Warp and adjust like in the example presented, using points to create Bézier curves. Your goal is to make a curved surface.



Add pearls

05 Open 'Pearl.psd' and drag the layer into your image. Cmd/Ctrl+J to make a few duplicate layers of this. Use Transform to resize your layers and arrange on top of the grass layer, making sure that the bigger ones are closer and smaller ones further away. Use the Polygonal Lasso tool to select grass shapes and duplicate these from the grass texture layer. Place these new cut-out layers above your pearl ones. Add Layer>Layer Style>Inner Shadow to the biggest pearl layer, setting Opacity at 75%, Angle at -75 degrees, Distance at 20, Choke at 0 and Size at 109.



Add flowers

06 Go to CG Textures and download the 24670 flowerbed file. Use the Pen tool to make a selection of your flowers, then drag them into your image. Since two flowers bushes are needed, duplicate your new layer and reposition the duplicate using the Transform tool. Now apply colour corrections. Select Image>Adjustment>Levels and input the following values: 0, 2.00 and 220. Then apply a Hue/Saturation layer, setting Saturation at -50. Finally, apply a Color Balance adjustment layer at +8 , -31 and -28.

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Decorative thorns

07 Create thorns by adding the Pen Path tool to a new layer. Select a 30px hard white brush and in the Paths panel, Ctrl/right-click your path thumbnail. Select Stroke with Simulate Pressure deactivated. Choose Select>Load Selection and use a soft brush at 15px, with 'Always Use Pressure For Opacity' activated from the Brush options. Add shadows to the edges of your line, using a #b7b7b7 coloured brush on a new layer. Open 'Thorns.psd' and paste them in, arranging them on the stem you've created.



Animal collage

08 Open 'Fawn.psd', 'Yellow Rose.psd' and 'Horns.psd' from the disc. Select and drag them into your working image. Activate the Fawn layer and apply Color Balance, setting values to +48, -22 and -36. Show the Horns layer and again add Color Balance, setting values to +66, -63 and -34. Create a new layer beneath your Yellow Rose layer and apply a #977166 colour to create a shadow. Do this by applying a soft brush with the 'Always Use Pressure For Opacity' option active.



Create arrows

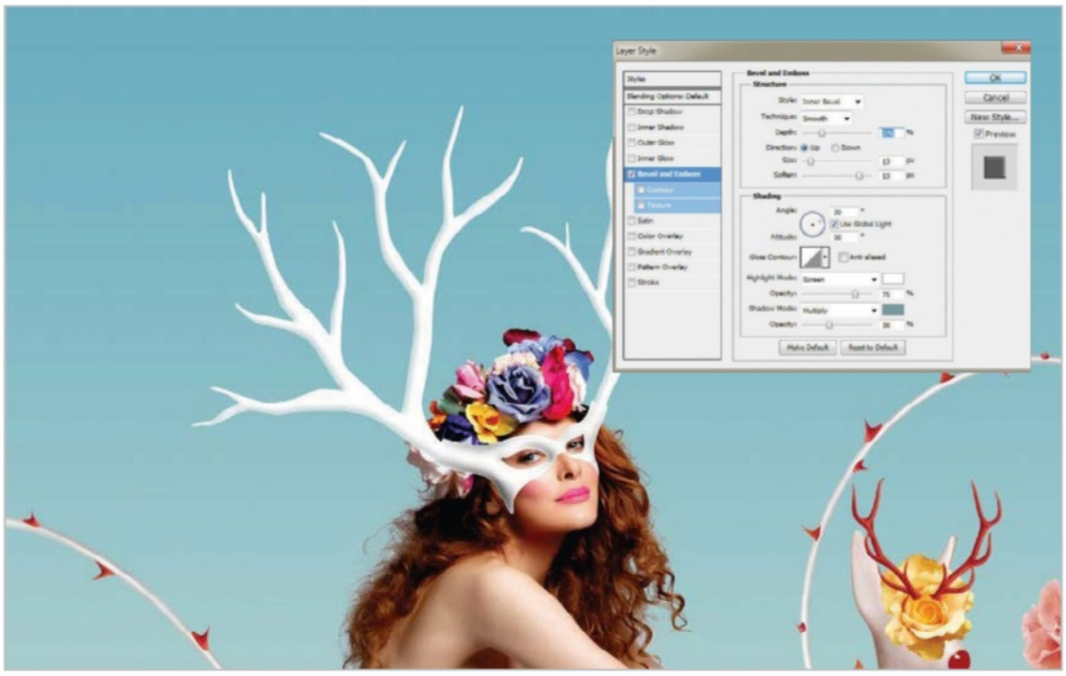
09 Make the body of your arrows by applying a selection with your Rectangular Marquee tool and filling this with a #404040 colour. Add an Inner Glow Layer Style and set Blend Mode to Screen, Color to #c3a87c, Technique to Softer, Source to Center, Size at 29 and Choke to 18. Use the Pen Shape tool to create arrowheads, adding a #3f3f3f to #5e5341 colour gradient overlay. For the fletchings, download the 107167 branches file from CG Textures and change it to red using colour adjustments. Merge the layers and duplicate, then place in the model's hands.



10 Create a mask

Use the Pen tool to draw a path that follows the contour of the face with horned extensions. When closed, make a selection of it, add a new layer and fill it with white. Apply shadows to edges to create a 3D effect using a #b7b7b7 coloured soft brush, with the Always Use Pressure For Opacity option activated. Before you start painting shadow, you need to load a selection of the mask, then make a new layer above. Paint to this with a soft brush, creating shadow. Apply Gaussian Blur at a 4px radius, while your mask selection is still active.

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Expert tip

Match a light source

Take care of light and it will take care of the rest, making your image much more convincing. All newly imported images and elements need to be edited so that they follow one light source.

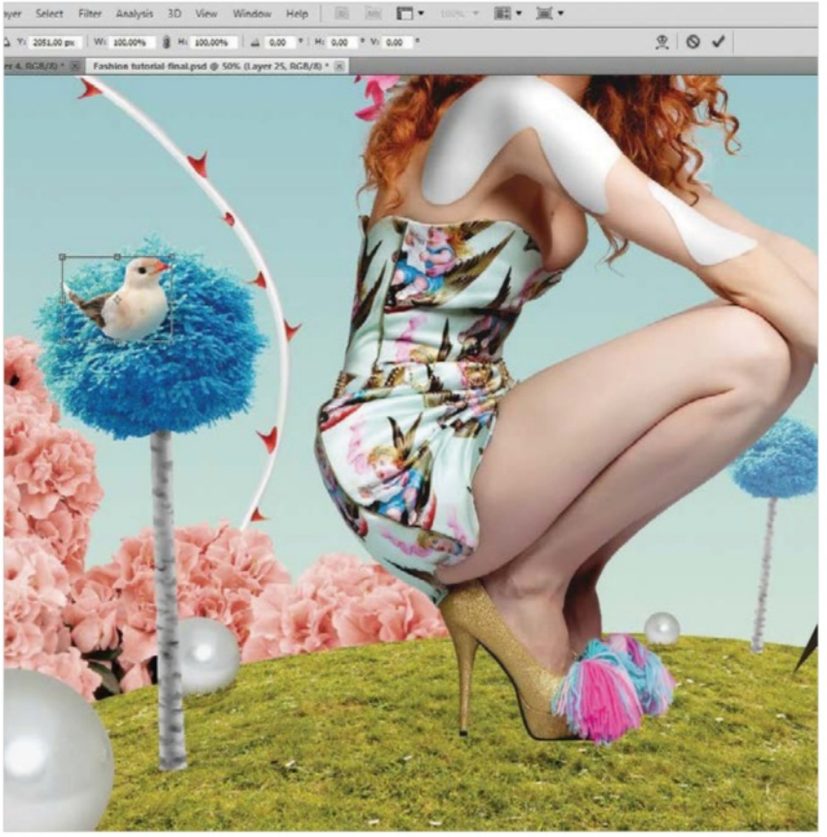
Horns

11 Creating the horns is a similar process to the mask. First, draw these out using the Pen tool. Then make a selection of the horns and fill this with white in a new layer. Add a Bevel & Emboss Layer Style and set Style to Inner Bevel, Technique to Smooth, Depth at 276%, Size at 13, Soften at 13, Shadow Mode to Multiply, Color to #77979e and Opacity at 38%. Everything else is set to default. Open the 'Flowers.psd' supplied on disc and drag this into your working image. Place and transform to build the best look.



White parts

12 Now you will continue to add what looks like bits of porcelain to the model's skin. First, make use of the Pen tool to make a selection as before, then press Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate a skin section. With this duplicated layer selected, go to Image>Adjustment>Desaturate. Load a selection of this shape and apply Gaussian Blur set at a 10px radius. Deselect (Cmd/Ctrl+D) your selection, duplicate this layer twice, then merge all three layers. Go to Levels and input the following values: 15, 1.18 and 228. Apply shadow below the objects using a #926958 coloured brush applied to a new layer set to a Multiply blending mode.



Trees

13 Trunks can be made with a #c9c9c9 coloured hard brush. A #767676 coloured soft brush is added to create shadow in the middle of the trunk. Change your brush group to Dry Media. Pick a Soft Oil Pastel brush with a #767676 colour and add lines of varying sizes to the trunk. Download the 55089 trees image from CG Textures and select only the treetop, dragging it into your image. Apply Levels set to 0, 1.88 and 245. Now add Hue/Saturation, setting Saturation at -25. Finally, add Color balance, setting values at 100, 0, +100.

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Glowing effects

14 Open the 'Bird.psd' file from the disc and drag it into your working image. Create a glow effect behind your model using the Elliptical Marquee tool. Before making your selection, set Feather at 200px. Apply to your background layer and duplicate the layer. Add Levels, setting values at 0, 2.08 and 255. Add Color Balance, setting values to 0, 0 and 100. Duplicate your pearls and arrange them at different sizes, floating at the top of the image.



Improve the mood

15 To improve mood and connect the elements together, apply textures and adjustment layers. Open 'Texture.jpg' supplied on the disc and drag it into your working image. This layer needs to be above all other layers. Set its blending mode to Soft Light. Add more contrast using Layers>New Adjustment Layer>Curves. Select the Green curves channel and add a slight upwards curve to affect the image colour. See the position in the screenshot below.



Settings

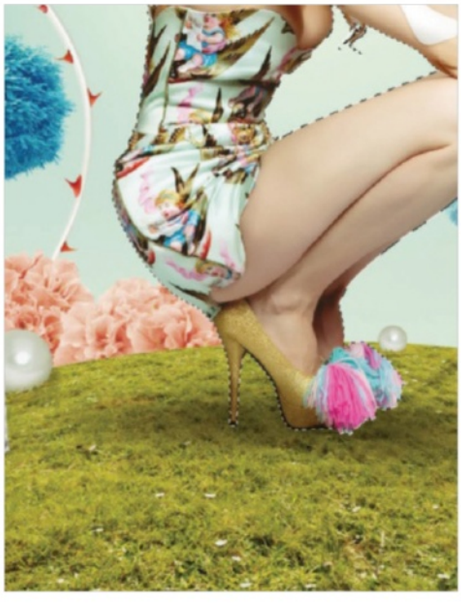
16 After changing the overall colour and mood, it's time to polish your image and review all image elements. To make the model's hair brighter, use the Dodge tool with Exposure set at 70% and pass over this area and darker parts of the dress. To make the model closer to her environment, apply Levels with input set to 0, 1.18 and 255. The grass also looks too dark, so apply Levels with input values set to 0, 1.35, 241. Set output to 11 and 231.

Quick tip



Improving general atmosphere

Applying textures and layer adjustments is important, as these tighten up the image and make all elements look as if they belong in the same space. Very often an image looks too raw. Vignette effects in particular focus all elements in a single space, making the whole image less flat. Layer adjustments can work to create some exciting effects, but first and foremost their main concern is with creating colour harmony, existing throughout all your layers.



Shadows

17 Adding shadow defines your main light source much better. The most important shadows exist in the grass layer. Choose a #979842 colour and create a new layer. Select a soft brush set to Always Use Pressure For Opacity and paint in shadows beneath the model, pearls and trees with varying brush sizes. The model's shoes also need to be darker, so use the Eyedropper tool to choose a darker tone from these. With the same brush settings, make the lower part of the shoes darker.



Sun rays

18 These illustrated sunrays are made in Adobe Illustrator. In a new file, make one straight line with a 1pt stroke. Select Effect>Distort and Transform>Transform.

Change Scale/Vertical to 109%, make 40 copies and set Angle at 124°. Turn colour to white and drag objects into your image. Resize this new vector layer then Rasterize it (Cmd/Ctrl-click layer> Rasterize layer). To avoid sharp ends in your lines, apply a soft brush Erase tool and erase the tops of these with one click.

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Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Create fantasy compositions

Create a colourful and engaging abstract artwork with a little help from the Custom Shape tool

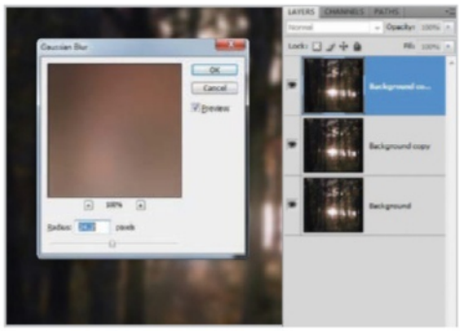
The idea of a composite is to take elements from various photos and combine them together into a single convincing montage. Photoshop makes this process very simple, giving us the tools to achieve that desired artistic expression.

In this tutorial we will take you through all the steps you will need in order to extract photos, alter their lighting and colour to fit a scene, use painting techniques to manipulate and add your own unique touch, use the Clone Stamp to sample and place photo texture, and even create your own additional elements from scratch. By the time we hit the finale, you will be able to successfully take your own images and create your own one-of-a-kind fantasy composite.



Start the background

01 Grab the background photo from the disc. Use Free Transform to resize and position the image. Crop along the outer edges of the canvas to remove excess. Duplicate the layer and choose Filter>Artistic>Palette Knife.



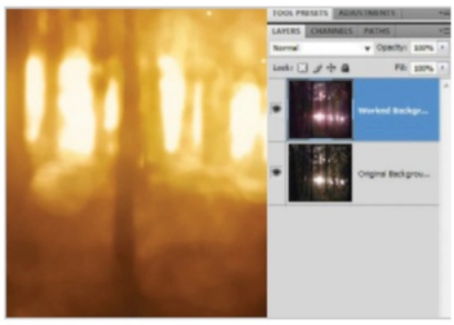
Run some filters

02 Duplicate this new filter layer and use Filter>Noise>Median. Merge down with Cmd/Ctrl+E and duplicate this layer. On the new duplicate, apply Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and then reduce the layer's Opacity by half. Merge down again.



Adjust the colours

03 Duplicate the filtered layer and hit Cmd/Ctrl+U for Hue/Saturation. Adjust the sliders to taste. You can use a soft round brush (B), set to the Color mode, to control colours manually. Merge down again.



Background effects

04 Create a new layer. Use a soft brush in a light colour with low opacity to paint over the image. For a bokeh-like effect, make various sized dots with a hard round brush, set to a low opacity.



Introduce the foreground

05 Bring in the model image. Select Free Transform, then hold Shift and drag a corner to resize proportionately. Duplicate this layer and hide the original, just in case you need to start over again later.

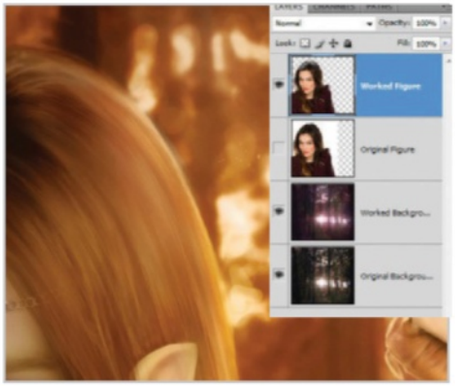
Expert tip

Managing layers

Layers allow us to try out anything without the worry of affecting the image permanently. Use them to your advantage by working on a new layer until you are satisfied with the look, then merge it down into your main layer. Duplicate the main layer often and hide it – just in case you'd like to revert further than Undo History will allow! Grouping and naming layers will help you stay organised.

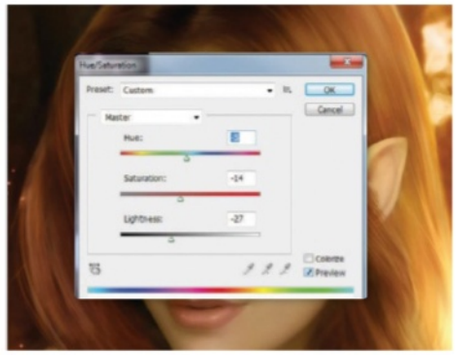
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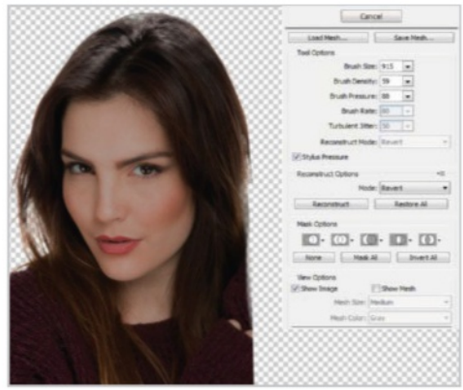
Erase the background

06 Select the Magic Eraser and click on the white area of the image to erase it. The edges will need cleaning up, use the Background Eraser, sampling with the hotspot in the centre of the brush.



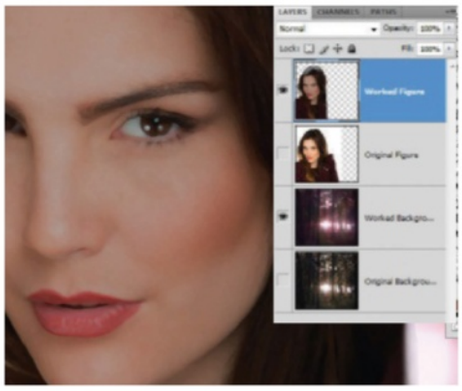
Blend with the environment

07 Now go to Image>Adjustments> Hue/Saturation (Cmd/Ctrl+U). Adjust each of the sliders as needed to lessen or boost the Hue, Saturation and Lightness, in order to blend with and better match the environment of the background.



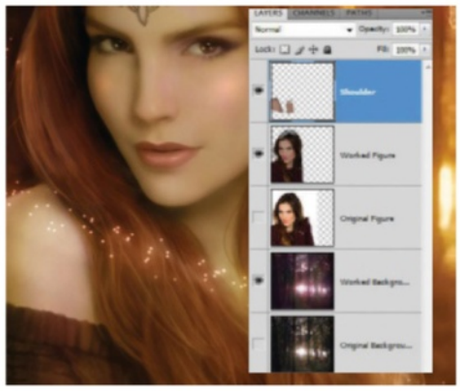
Alter the pose

08 Remove the hands with the Eraser and then crop to the edges of the canvas. Now apply Filter>Liquify and select Forward Warp Tool. Use it to push the folds over to highlight the change of posture.



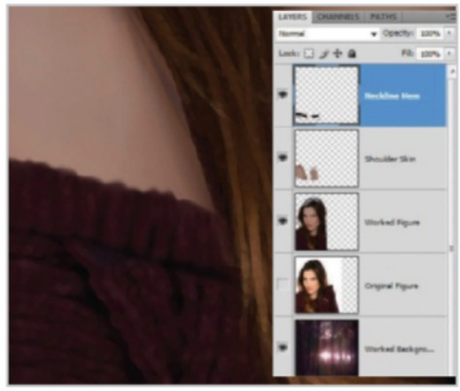
Make it artistic

09 To get a more painted look use Median (under Filter>Noise) lightly; enough to remove the crisp detail but so that the natural features are still retained. Follow it up with Paint Daubs on a low setting.



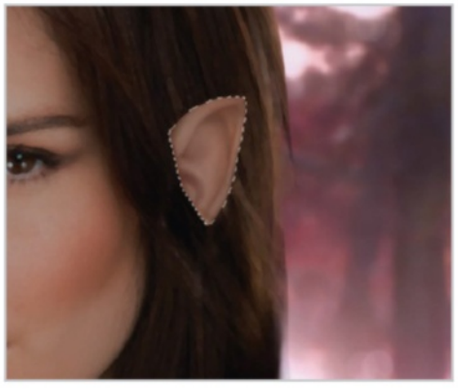
Customise the clothing

10 On a new layer, make a selection along the desired neckline. After colour picking from the face using the Eyedropper, use a soft brush to fill in areas of skin, avoiding the hair. Then deselect.



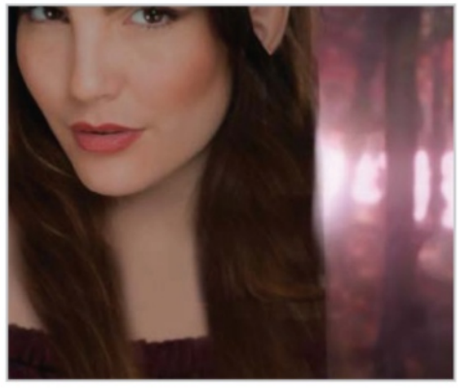
Clone Stamp the neckline

11 Make a new layer. Sampling from the cuff, use the Clone Stamp to make the neckline hem with -35 degree rotation. Erase the excess and create ridges. Use Burn along the hem's bottom edge for shadow.



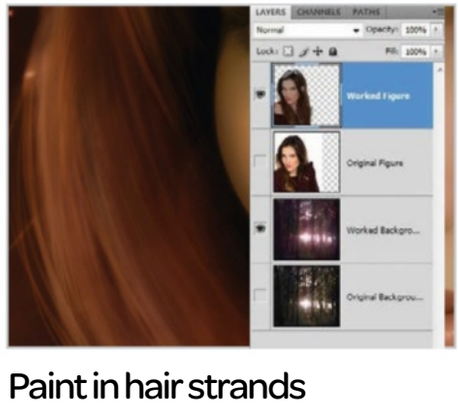
Create the ear

12 Again on a new layer, make a selection of the ear shape. Fill with a base skin colour, then use the Eyedropper to sample colours from the face to develop the inside of the ear. Look in the mirror for reference.



Clone the hair base

13 Hit Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N. Now use Clone Stamp – sampling the hair often – to create a volumised base for the hair coming over the shoulders. Use a soft round brush, as it allows samples to blend with each other.



Paint in hair strands

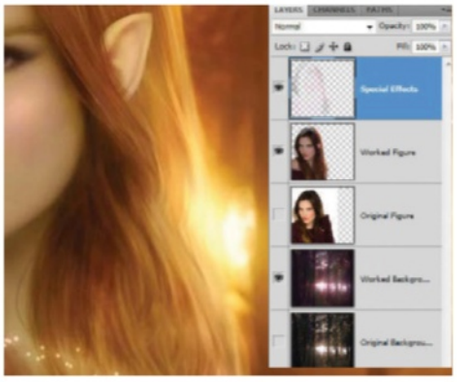
14 Use the Eyedropper and sample a hair colour. Using a tiny soft round brush, create strands that are flowing in the same direction as in the photo. Include strands that overlap others, as well as a few in opposing directions, for a natural look.

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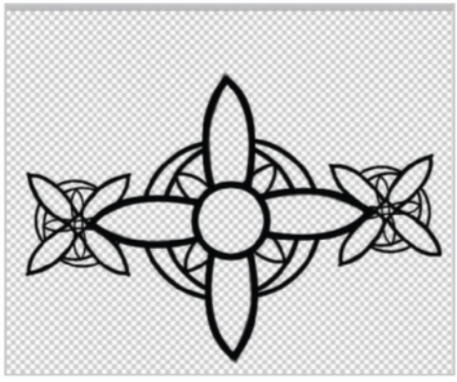
Merge and enhance

15 Hold down Shift and then select all the layers from the top of the stack to the model layer that we worked on. Merge them together. Now use a soft brush on the face – in the Normal, Hard Light and Color brush modes – to enhance the makeup.



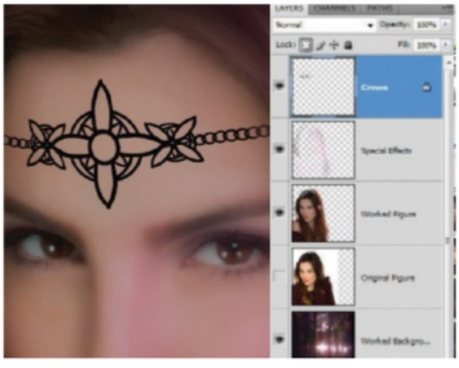
Add some enchantment

16 Create a new layer. Use the Brush tool to paint over the figure, adding lights and visual effects. To add lighting around the edges of the hair, jump over to the model layer and run Dodge (O) along the edge.



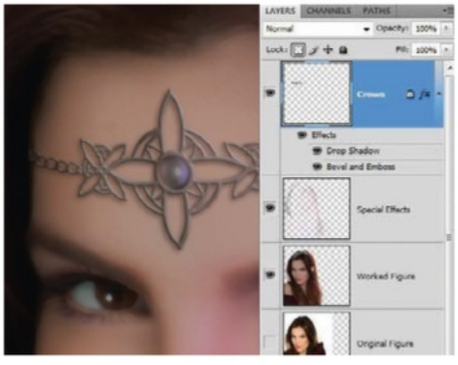
Insert the crown

17 Now make a new document and use the selection tools in conjunction with Edit>Stroke to create the shape you want for the crown. Or, if you'd rather, paste our pre-made crown (supplied in your resource pack) into the composite.



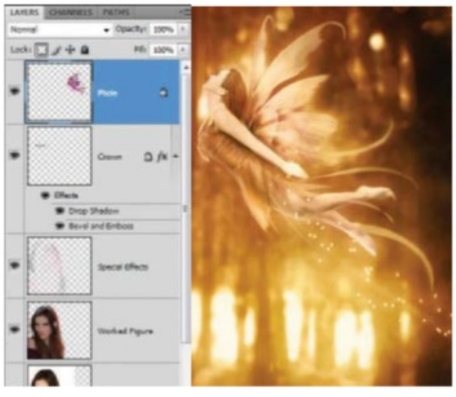
Make the crown fit

18 Free Transform again to resize the crown if necessary. Use Edit> Transform>Warp to conform the crown to the curve and perspective of the forehead. Use an opaque brush to make a chain – a custom chain brush makes quick work of it!



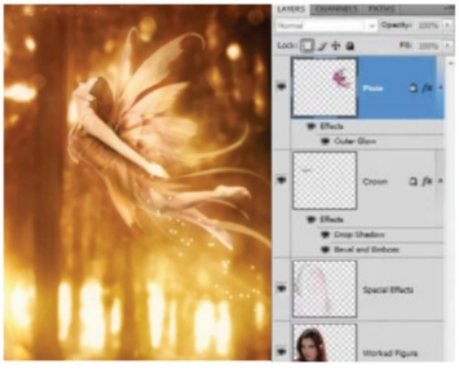
Finish up the crown

19 Lock the crown layer's transparency and then colour with a brush in the desired shade. Use Layer>Layer Styles> Bevel and Emboss and Drop Shadow to add form to the crown. The Dodge and Burn tools can make some nice metallic finishing.



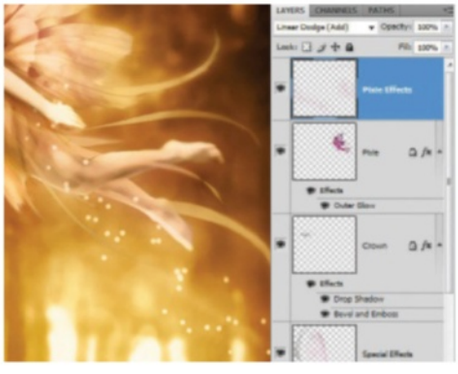
Bring in the pixie

20 Now we can get things going by adding extra elements. Bring in a prepared photo of your choice or use our prepared pixie. Use Free Transform if necessary to resize or position as desired.



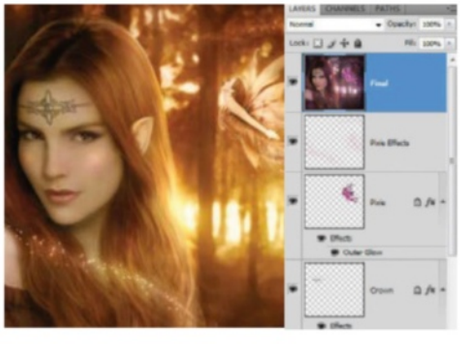
Adding the glow effect

21 Now let's add a glow around the pixie with Layer>Layer Styles>Outer Glow. Choose a light pink colour and make sure the blend mode is set to Linear Light, and that the Opacity is around 30%.



Create the pixie dust

22 Make a new layer right at the top and then set the blend mode to Linear Dodge. Create 'pixie dust' special effects using a hard round brush with the Spacing and Scattering options set as desired.



Finish things up

23 Press Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E to merge all of the visible layers together on a new layer. Harmonise and bring everything together with any final blending or painting effects. Filters such as Paint Daubs can also be used, if set lightly.

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ASTEROID FC

SEASON STATS

GOALS SCORED	63
GOALS CONCEDED	26
YELLOW CARDS	15
RED CARDS	3

WATCH ASTEROID SEASON HIGHLIGHTS



ENTER YOUR PREDICTION

REAL DYNAMITE

SEASON STATS

45	GOALS SCORED
19	GOALS CONCEDED
9	YELLOW CARDS
8	RED CARDS

WATCH DYNAMITE SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

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Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Design for the web

Combine photos with typography and UI elements to create a dynamic layout

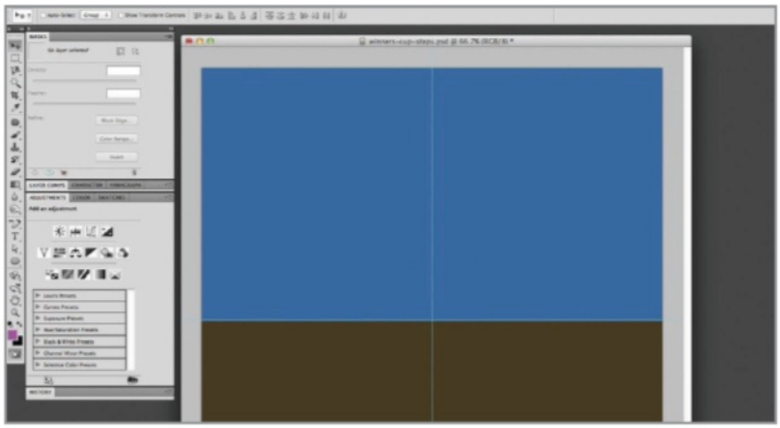
Photos now play a massive role in web design. They are being used to convey messages. Photos can appear in the form of thumbnails inside a grid, or as large backdrops to support floating elements including type, icons or buttons.

However, thought must go into selecting your photos so that you don't end up disrupting your composition. If they clash with any other elements, your web design will be ruined.

Here you'll discover how to tackle photo-based web styles and produce some great look. You'll learn how to create a dynamic layout using shape and type juxtaposed with photos. Create depth by pairing elements and is how to add dramatic lighting effects using adjustment layers. We look at ways to transform, composite and edit photos with layer masks, leading to an exciting end result that will promote your design to global viewers.

Initial Setup

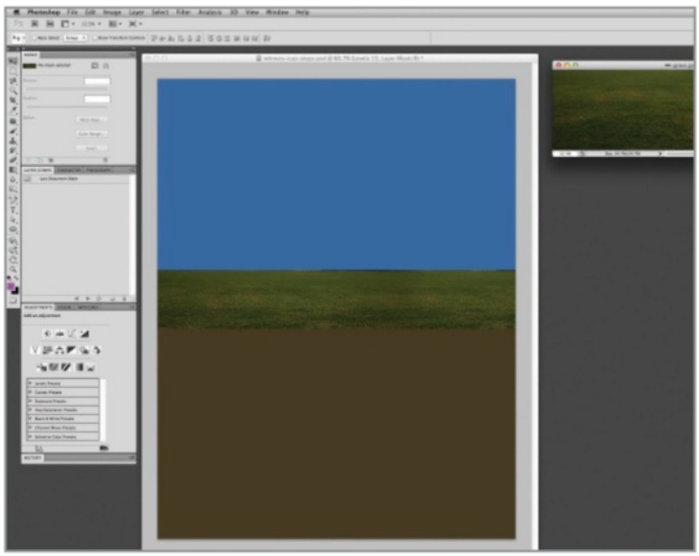
01 Create a new 72dpi 1280 x 1645px RGB document. Press Cmd/Ctrl+R and place a guideline at around 700px. Create a new layer. Apply the Marquee tool to your guideline then fill with blue. Create another new layer, apply the Marquee tool to your bottom space, then fill with brown.



Expert tip

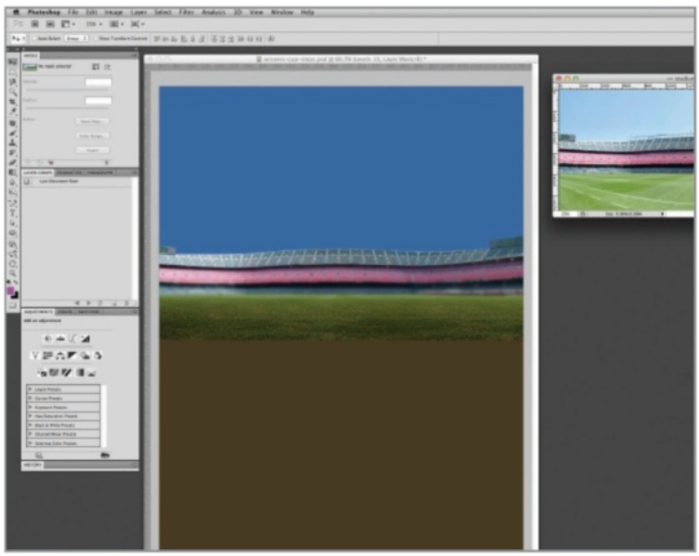
Think on perspective

When using different photo assets to build a composition, consider the space you're working with. Objects in focus will naturally be sharper than objects in the distance. Use adjustment layers to colour and light correct layers so that they match and correspond to depth of field.



Import turf

02 Open an image of some grass, which is pretty easy to source or take yourself. Drag this image layer into your web project document. Cmd/Ctrl-click this new grass layer and select Convert to a Smart Object. Place this new layer at around 650px down and resize the height using Edit>Free Transform (T) accordingly.

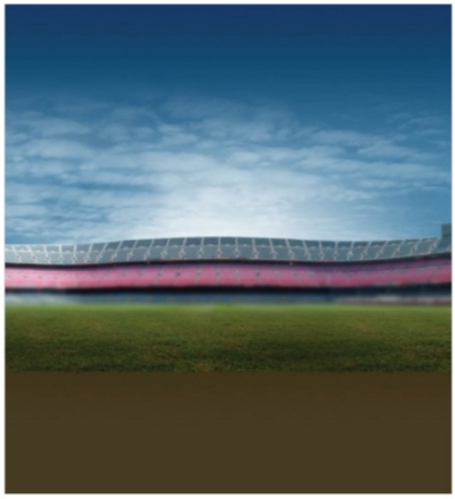


Add a stadium

03 Download the stadium image (540239) from **sxc.hu**. Add the Pen tool around it, then make it a selection. Select Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal All. Drag the stadium layer into your web project and make this a Smart Object. Resize and position as above. Apply a black to transparent gradient to the clipping mask to merge it with the grass layer.

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Sky and clouds

04 Download the cloud image (1421859) from **sxc.hu** and drag this into your web project. Place it in behind your stadium layer. Make this a Smart Object too and scale it down. Also set its blending mode to Screen and Fill at 80%. Resize the height of the layer. Add a Levels adjustment layer then select Layer>Create Clipping Mask. Drag the left slider to 45. Add a Layer Mask and a black to transparent gradient from the top down to about 200px, fading your clouds.



Soil and players

05 Grab a soil image from **cgtextures.com** and import it into your project, below the grass layer. Open 24867568 and 24698993 from Dreamstime and use the Pen tool to select and cut out the football players. Add a Clipping Mask to both then drag them in. Convert these new layers into Smart Objects, resize them and place them hovering above your grass layer. Focus on making all elements interact authentically through size and placement.



Set the mood

06 Now for colour and contrast adjustments. Go through every layer and adjust them until they work well together. Apply black to white Gradient Maps with layer blending modes set to Multiply and Screen to control lighting. Drag the black slider in Gradient Maps set to Screen and the white slider in those set to Multiply until you get good results. Make sure all adjustment layers are linked to the layer with a Clipping Mask so you don't affect the layers panel.

Quick tip



Using adjustment layers

By using a black to white Gradient Map set to Screen blending mode and dragging the location of the black sliders, you can control highlights. Drag it down to 90% and slowly start dragging to increase values, until the amount feels right. This is an effective way of adding a dramatic feel to your photo elements in web. You can use the same technique using the Multiply layer mode, dragging the slider to 10% to control darkness.



Change existing colour

07 Change a shirt to red by adding a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer and clipping it to the correct layer. Set the Hue slider at +170. The players are very desaturated, so also add some realistic skin colour using a Selective Color adjustment layer and clip it to a player layer. Select Colors to Neutrals and set Cyan at +10, Magenta at +35 and Yellow at +50. Repeat this for the other player layer. Now cut out and import the 24768939 football image file.



Add typography

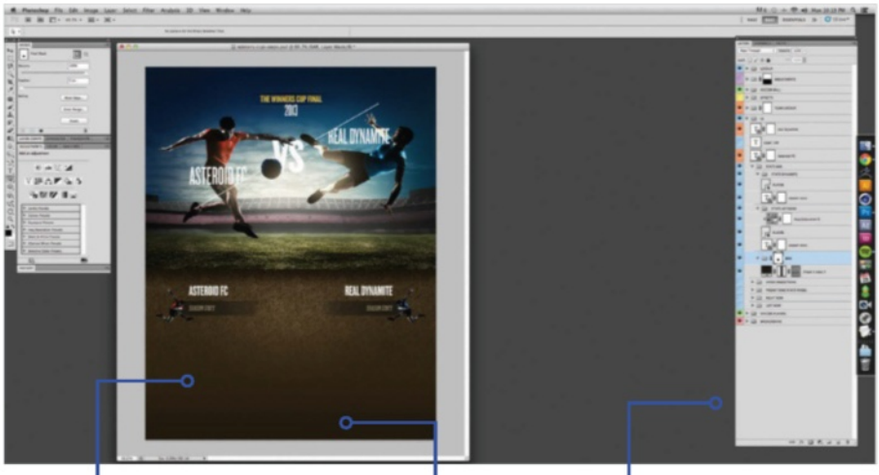
08 It's important that different elements don't compete against each other. Create a simple line using the Line tool and add the player names on each side of this. Place them slightly over the line and add a Layer Mask to each, then apply a black brush and paint out the parts that overlap. Group the text elements and the line, then add a Layer Mask to that group folder. Mask off parts where the players interact so you get a nice sense of depth.

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Working with UI

Add shape layers and Layer Styles to create interface elements



Colouring Paste the player from the 24768939 Dreamstime file. Duplicate, flip, then change the shirt colour to red

Details Add the team names in white and season stats in a #978863 colour, then overlap with the players

Dedicate negative Unite both type elements to correlate content. Also make sure you have dedicated enough negative for the UI elements

Introduce the UI

09 Set up a guideline in the middle of your image that you can use for reference when placing the UI elements. Add a #1f1b15 coloured rectangle using the Rectangle tool, at about 65px tall, horizontally across the image. Mask away the middle part using a black to white Radial Gradient and fashion it into a UI element.



Add Layer Styles

10 Add a green circle using the Ellipse tool. Duplicate this shape layer and scale it down, holding Opt/Alt+Shift, placing it in the centre of the original shape. Select it and add a Clipping Mask to your original circle shape. Double-click on your original circle and add Bevel & Emboss. Set Depth at 25, Size at 250 and Opacity at 60% to create a 3D effect. Also add Drop Shadow from the same Layer Styles options, setting Size at 50 and Opacity 80%.



Bar chart

11 Create the bar chart UI seen in our example using the Rounded Rectangle tool with Edge Radius set to 2. Draw a rectangle about 40px tall and 300px wide with a #42361f colour. Draw a new rounded rectangle shape with a #727c20 colour and place it inside the original. Double-click on the layer in the Layers panel and choose Gradient Overlay. To make the hard lined gradient, set both the black and white sliders at a Location of 50%. Set Opacity at 8% and click OK. Duplicate and create more bars.



Buttons

12 You now want to start creating buttons. Draw a new shape using the Rounded Rectangle Tool, around 70px tall and 300px wide. Set shape layer Fill at 0% and double-click the layer to enter Layer Styles options. Now activate Gradient Overlay. This time use a soft gradient, setting the black slider at 0 and white slider at 100. Set this gradient's Opacity at 25% then click OK.



Final Tweaks

13 Now it's time to add final copy and icons. Go through your layers and see what can be improved. Play around with different adjustment layers and colour variations, tweaking everything to get the look you want. Add infographic elements such as amounts and titles to your bar chart. Also add icons to your buttons, such as social platform types and custom shapes, for a more interactive feel.

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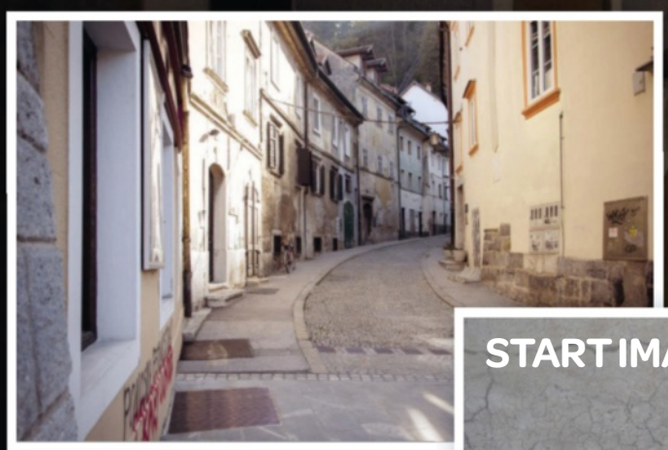
Turn day to night

Achieve more-dramatic light sources using adjustment layers and create realistic light effects by combining blend modes

Creating a day-to-night effect on a photo can be a challenging task that involves the use of many adjustment layers and blend modes in order to achieve a realistic result. A wise selection of stock images can make your job a whole lot easier, because images with neutral lighting and soft shadows are simpler to manipulate. Avoid using shots with bright highlights taken at midday, because you will have strong shadows and bright lights on the walls that are very difficult to work with.

You will learn how to progressively darken an image and correct a bright wall using textures and blend modes. Several Gradient Maps will be used to change the colour and brightness of the image and you'll learn how to create several types of light effects using the Screen and Color Dodge blend modes.

Fix or avoid highlights Remove or cover bright highlights on your image with a neutral texture so you can use the blend modes more effectively



START IMAGES

Cast realistic lights Use the Color Dodge blend mode, then paint lights on the floor and walls using a dark orange

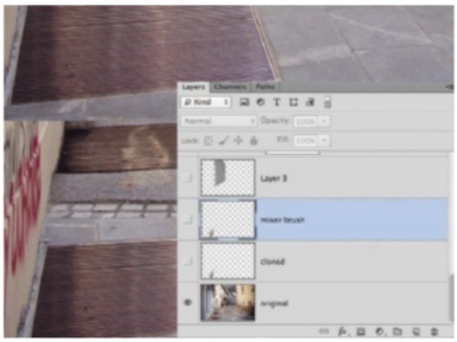
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Turn day to night



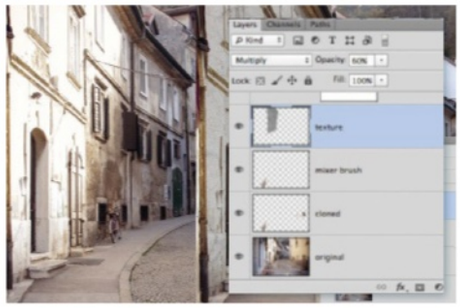
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Clean things up

01 Take a look at the image and remove any distracting elements. Use the Clone Stamp tool (S) on a new layer to cover the graffiti and then use the Mixer Brush tool (B) on another layer to blend the colours.



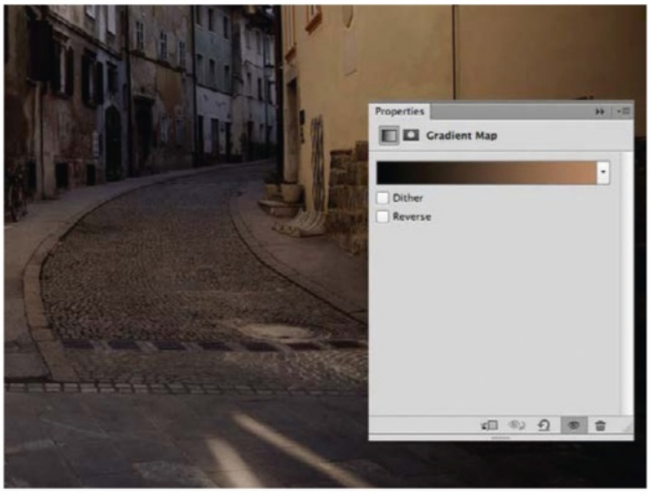
Treat the highlights

02 Bright highlights are your worst enemy, because blend modes don't affect them. You can use textures, like the provided concrete texture, to cover the white building. Apply the Multiply blend mode and reduce the Opacity to 60%.



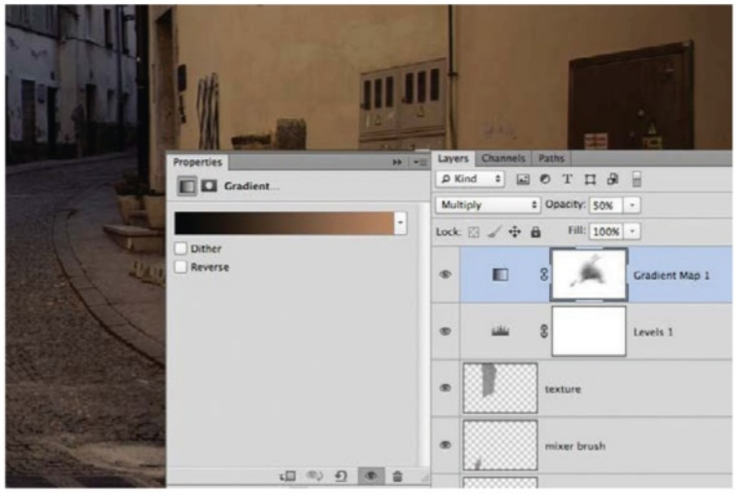
Begin to darken the scene

03 You need to progressively darken the image using adjustment layers and blend modes. You'll need to use different adjustment layers. I usually use Levels, Gradient Maps and blend modes such as Multiply, Vivid Light and so on.



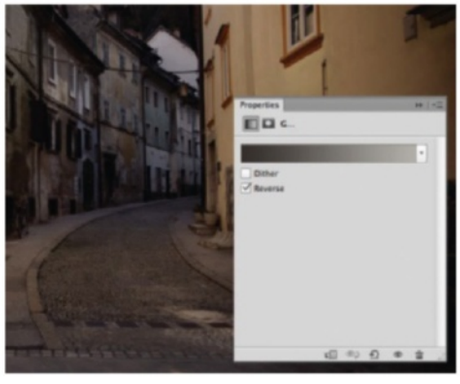
Bring down the midtones

04 Now begin to darken the midtones using a Levels or Curves adjustment. Don't make this too dark, because we'll be using more adjustments on the following steps. Here we've set the Midtones slider to 0.59.



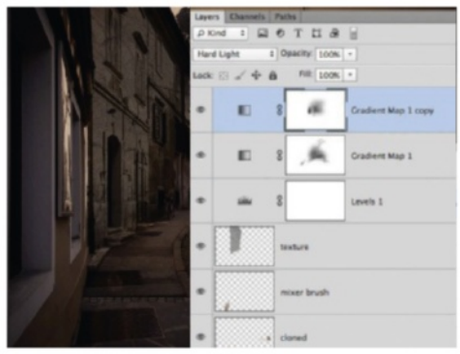
Add your first Gradient Map

05 Gradient Maps enable you to change the colours of your scene. By combining them with the correct blend mode you can make the image darker. The first setting used on our Gradient Map is: #000000 to #B58462. Set blend mode to Multiply and Opacity to 50%.



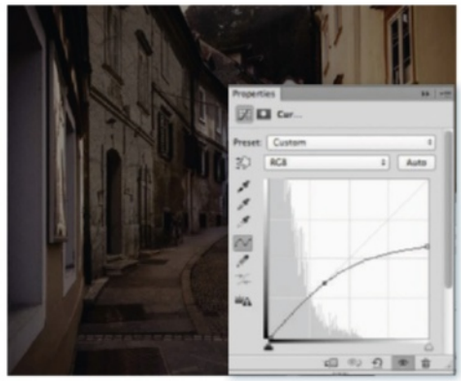
Insert another Gradient Map

06 Make the image darker, keeping the brighter tones untouched. On the second Gradient Map, use the settings: #352E2B to #AFADA7. Change the blend mode of this Gradient Map to Hard Light.



Uniform darkness

07 Some of the areas of your image will become too dark after applying the Levels and the two Gradient Maps. Use the masks of the two Gradient Maps to hide the effect on those areas and apply a large soft brush with low opacity and Flow.

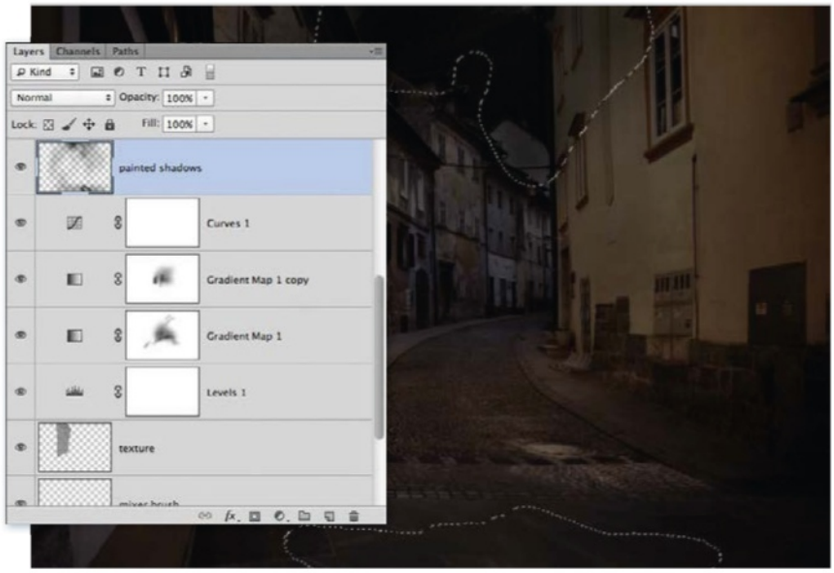


Correct the highlights

08 After making all these adjustments, some highlights might need touch-ups. We used a Curves adjustment layer in order to darken the brighter tones and make the image a bit more uniform.

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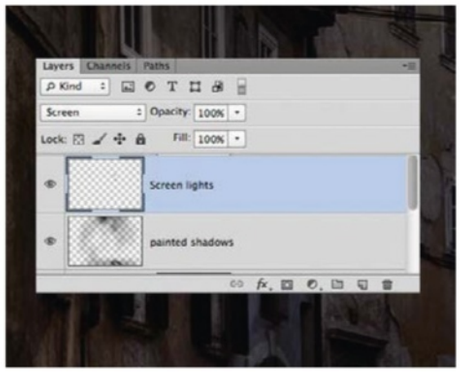
Paint more darkness

09 Adjustment layers are great for creating the general lighting on the image, but some areas will still need special attention. On these areas you will have to paint the shadows or lights manually. We used a soft brush to darken the top and bottom part of the image.

Expert tip

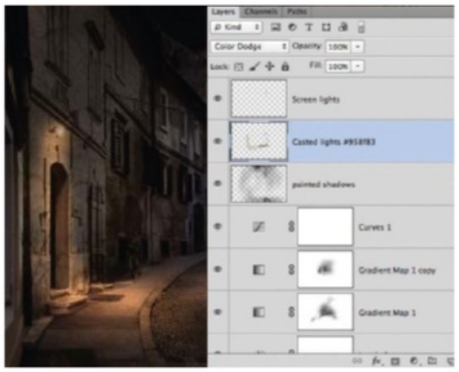
Realistic lights

Color Dodge and Screen blend modes are great for producing light effects. To get the perfect colour and brightness of light, select the colour on the Color Picker. If you want less brightness on the light, choose a darker colour. Avoid changing the layer opacity. If the colour you chose is close to what you want, use the Hue/Saturation adjustment. With Saturation you can control the colour of the light. With Lightness, you control its intensity.



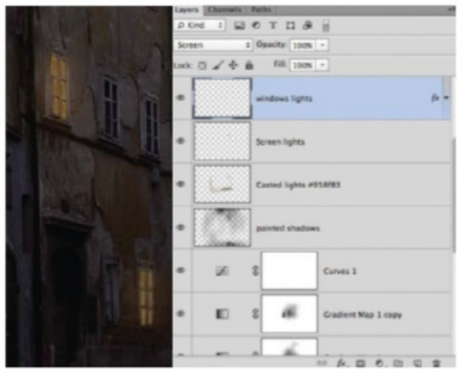
Input glows of light

10 Now we'll create two types of lights, so add a new layer and change its blend mode to Screen. Use a soft brush and an unsaturated orange to produce the light glow on the street lamps.



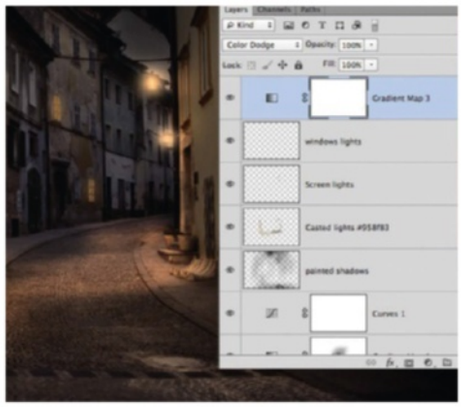
Add more realistic lights

11 Insert another new layer below the previous screen light's layer. Change its blend mode to Color Dodge. Use a soft brush and a dark unsaturated tone to paint the lights. Here we used: #958f83.



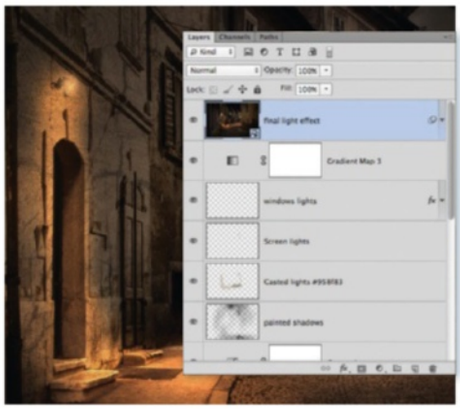
Additional lights

12 You can add lights to the windows by filling them with a yellow, then applying Outer and Inner Glow, as well as the Screen and Color Dodge blend modes. If lights are too bright, they'll look unrealistic.



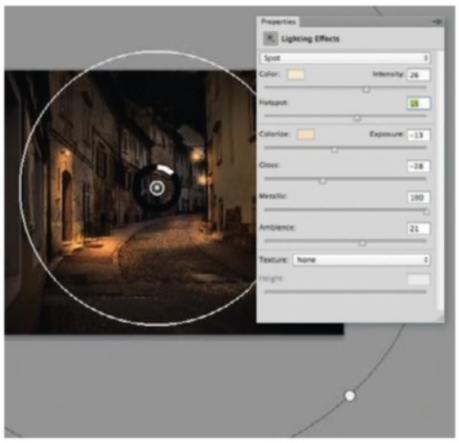
Add a final Gradient Map

13 Insert a new Gradient Map on top of all the other layers. The colours used on the gradient should be similar to the rest of the image. The blend mode here was Color Dodge. If the lights become too bright, try darker colours on the Gradient Map.



Use a stamp

14 We'll apply the final light effect non-destructively. For this we need to create a stamp of all the visible layers, so select the top layer on the palette and hit Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E. Once the new layer is created turn it into a Smart Object.



Render global lighting

15 Filters>Render>Lighting Effects. The key here is to focus the light on the centre of the frame and darken the edges. Use a big spotlight and adjust the Intensity to your liking.

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Use dynamic layer effects

Stack up adjustment layers and create incredibly striking illustrations using stock photos

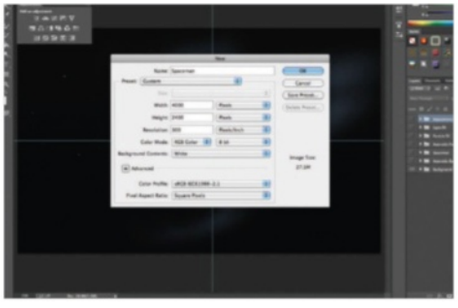
In this tutorial, you will learn how to improve your skills with the adjustment layers and compositing stock photos to create whatever your imagination comes up with. It is important that all of the elements in your image match up when it comes to lighting. This will heavily improve the realism of the scene and also help place attention where you want it.

It's preferred that you have some experience working with adjustment layers, basic brush skills and extracting techniques because this tutorial will focus on creating the desired look and lighting through them. You will also discover tips on how to create light sources, how to paint reflections, how to create simple particle effects and more.

While this tutorial aims to help you to produce an exact copy of this image, you can come up with a totally different composition with the suggested elements and just follow the techniques explained to you. After completion of this tutorial, you will have more understanding of how to work with the adjustment layers and how to edit your photos non-destructively.

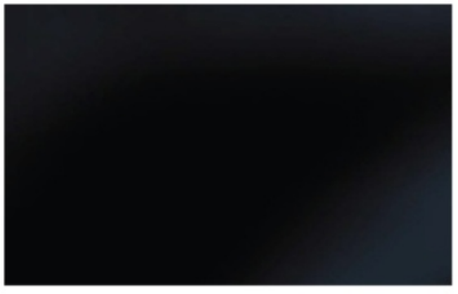
Create your composition

Gather and extract photo stock to build up your image



Document setup

01 Create a new document 4000 x 2480px, with a Resolution of 300dpi and a Color Mode of RGB, 8 bits. Name your image and save it. It is also strongly recommended that you have the Snapshot function in your History panel enabled. Now download all the source images from their respective websites.



Basic background

02 Once all the images have downloaded, you can return back to your Photoshop document. To begin your composition, fill the canvas with black (#050505). Then use a dark grey-blue (#27303b) to draw some background light accordingly. The light source will be located in the upper-right corner. You can adjust this later.



Extract your astronaut

03 Open the astronaut image, extract it from the background and place it into the scene. You can use layer masks to clean up the edges if need be. Zoom in while masking and use a hard brush. You can then apply another layer mask to the astronaut's feet to fade them into the background. This helps to create some more depth.

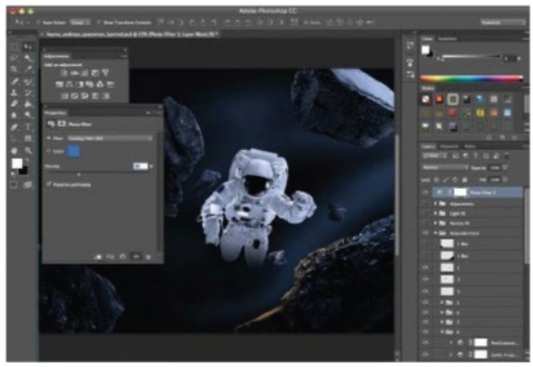
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Extract the asteroids

04 Open up the coal images. As in the previous step, extract them from the background and place them into your composition. Use a layer mask and a small hard brush to clean them up if needed. For the extracting, you can use the Magic Wand with a correct tolerance or colour selection (Select>Color Range). Once complete, you should have all the stock images extracted and cleaned up. Adjust the size and position of the elements if necessary.

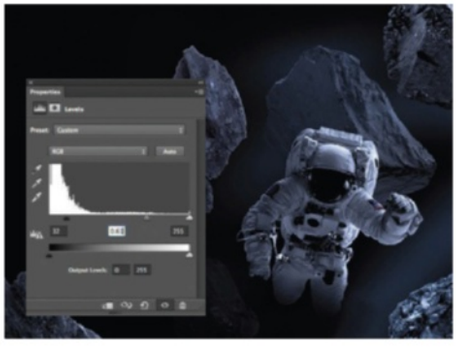


Finish your composition

05 Once you have placed the asteroid images, it's time to add the first adjustment layers on the top of all the layers. First, go to Image>Adjustments> Brightness/Contrast and set the Brightness at +13 and the Contrast at +15. Then add another adjustment layer by going to Image>Adjustments> Photo Filter and apply a Cooling Filter (80) with a Density of 30%. You need to add one new layer to be able to create these layers through the Image menu, or you can use the Adjustment Layers icon at the bottom of the Layers panel.

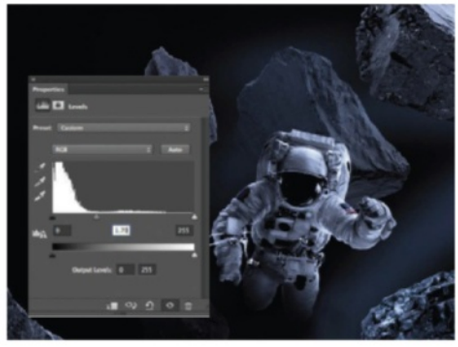
Quick tip

Using adjustment layers like Levels and Exposure lets you paint shadows more precisely and non-destructively. You can also change their blending mode to get a different result on the target layer. Remember that you can use a layer mask to paint on certain parts of the image.



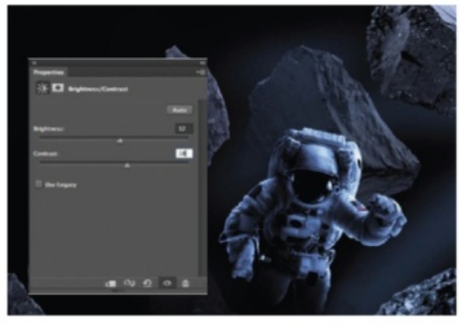
Adjust the astronaut

06 Now start creating the adjustment layers for the astronaut. Go to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation and set Hue at 0, Saturation at -100 and Lightness at 0. Create a layer mask for the adjustment layer and use a white brush to bring back the colour in the patches in the arms. Now add another adjustment layer. Select Image> Adjustments> Levels and set them at 32, 0,61, 255. Remember that you need to have the astronaut layer selected to be able to add adjustment layers to it.



Highlights and shadows

07 Create two new Levels layers for the astronaut. For the shadows layer, set the middle levels to 0,49. For the highlights layer, set the middle levels to 1,70. Fill the layer mask with black. Start painting the shadows and highlights on the astronaut. Create a selection from the astronaut layer, then create a new layer top of it and fill the selection with white. Fill the layer mask with black, set the blending mode to Overlay and continue painting on the mask to bring up the highlights.



More adjusting

08 Go to Image>Adjustments> Exposure and set Exposure to -3.11, Offset to 0 and Gamma Correction to 0.92. Fill the layer mask with black, and with a white soft brush, start creating the deeper shadows. Add a Cooling Filter (80) at 25% Density and a Brightness/Contrast adjustment, with Brightness set to 12 and the Contrast set to 18. Create a selection from the astronaut layer. Fill the selection with colour #cb844c. Change the blending mode to Overlay and fill the layer mask with black.

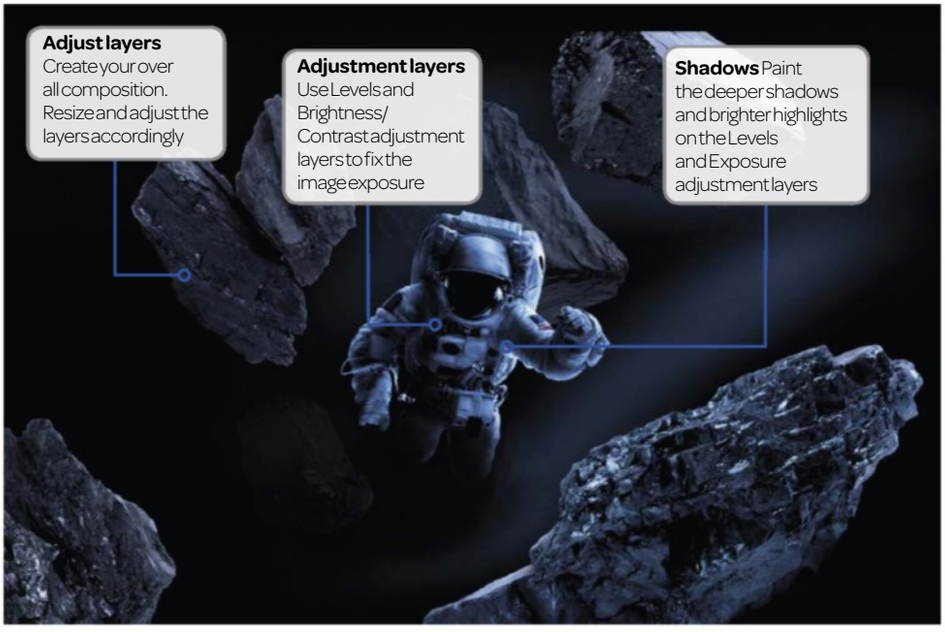
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Creating the asteroid field

Apply the same adjustment layer techniques for the asteroid layers

Analyse your composition

09 With all the adjustment layers for the astronaut done, it is now time to start using the exact same techniques for all of the asteroid layers. See the annotations below to find out how.





Adjusting the asteroids

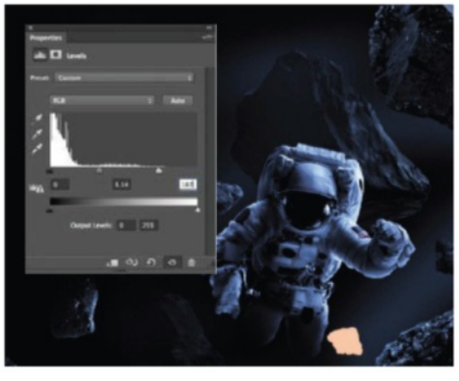
10 Now start stacking up the same adjustment layers for each separate asteroid layer. Use Hue/Saturation with Hue at 217, Saturation at 15, Lightness at 0 and Colorize selected to make sure that each asteroid has the same blue tint. Use Levels to adjust the basic exposure to fit the scene and to paint the shadows and highlights on the asteroids. Go through all the asteroids and add the necessary adjustment layers. Remember that the light source will be placed in the upper-right corner.



Correct shadows and highlights

11 Adjust the highlights and shadows so that they look realistic: harder highlights on the right edge and the darker shadows on the left. Lower the Opacity of the asteroid behind the astronaut to 45% and the one down to the left from him to 20%. Select the asteroid on the lower-right corner and create a selection from it. Fill the selection with the colour #dea363, deselect, then set the blending mode to Overlay and fill the layer mask with black. This layer will be used later.

"Use Levels to adjust the basic exposure to fit the scene, and to paint the shadows and highlights"



Create smaller pieces

12 Your astronaut and the asteroids should be finished. Now you can create the smaller asteroids by duplicating an asteroid with all its adjustment layers, flattening it and cutting pieces off it with the Lasso tool. Use the same techniques as before to match the highlights and shadows with the other asteroids. Remember to create the colour fill Overlay layer for the small asteroid right in front of the astronaut. As before, this layer will be used for the light effects later.



Adding some depth

13 As in the previous step, duplicate an asteroid with its adjustment layers and then flatten it. Go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur to blur two different asteroids together and place them onto the lower-left and right-hand side of the scene. You can then use Levels (Cmd/Ctrl+L) to darken them if they look too bright. If you choose to, you can create even more blurred asteroids and place them onto the edges of the scene. You can also try to place them behind the astronaut.

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Lighting brings it together

Use brush techniques and blending modes to create the light effects



Make the light source

14 Select a soft brush and a light blue colour. Brush one big stroke from the upper-right corner towards the astronaut and set the blending mode to Screen. Create another layer and click once with the soft brush on it. Change the blending mode to Screen and Opacity to 25%. Place it in the upper-left corner to highlight the light source. Create a layer mask for the larger light stroke and with a soft black brush with Opacity set to 30%, mask away some of the light behind the small asteroid on the light beam.



Light up the astronaut

15 Make a new layer for each light you create so that you can adjust them if needed. Use a Screen blending mode for the light that comes out of the astronaut and an Overlay blending mode for the light that is reflected on the astronaut. Play with opacity and Gaussian Blur. Create the chest light beam in the same way that you created the main light source in the previous step. Also, use the previously created colour overlay layers to paint the reflected light for the astronaut and the two asteroids.



Add the space dust

16 Now open up the Cosmos Lighting stock image that you downloaded earlier. Use the Lasso tool to cut pieces from it and change the blending mode to Screen. Create a layer mask for each one and with a soft black brush, mask away the edges so that they seem to blend with the background. Use Hue/Saturation (Cmd/Ctrl+U) to give them the same blue tint. Start placing them onto the edges of the astronaut and the asteroids. Avoid putting them on the far-left side of the scene.

Change the tone

Using the adjustment layers

Remember to have your adjustment layers clipped onto the target layer. If you have adjustment layers that aren't clipped to a layer, they will affect every layer under them. With the Ctrl/right-click and Create Clipping Mask option, you can clip adjustment layers to the target layer. It is also good to keep in mind the correct order for the adjustment layers. If you place Levels over your Hue/Saturation, this will affect the colours in your target layer. Adjustment layers are also a great way to change the whole tone of the image when they are placed on top of all layers.





Brush in the dust

17 Use a small hard brush and start clicking on a new layer. Make enough dots so that when you use Free Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+T) and scale them down, they look like dust particles. By duplicating the layer and masking away some parts of random dot layers, create the dust floating around the scene. Use blending modes Screen and Lighten and play with different opacity settings to give it a nice overall flow. As before, avoid putting the dust on the far-left side.

Quick tip

Always experiment with using different methods. Even if you know what blending mode to use to achieve the look you're after, browse through them all and see if you can produce some new, usable effects. Even if the result isn't something you can use with the project you are working at the time, it might be something you can use later in another project.

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Create the stars

18 As in the previous step, use a small hard brush to paint in the stars. To create the bigger stars, use Filter>Blur>Motion Blur on a single painted star. Then duplicate it and use Free Transform to rotate it 180 degrees or less. You can create as many stars as you wish. To give them even more glow, duplicate the star layer, use Gaussian Blur slightly to blur it and set the blending mode to Screen.



Final adjustments

19 All the elements and effects should now be in place. If your lighting feels off or there is something that looks a little shaky, now is the time to correct it. Clean up any rough edges in your asteroids or astronaut, painting them away on the layer mask. Use a hard brush to get nice clean edges. When you are happy, flatten the image. Bring up Levels and slightly darken the middle tones (0,96) and bring up the whites (245).

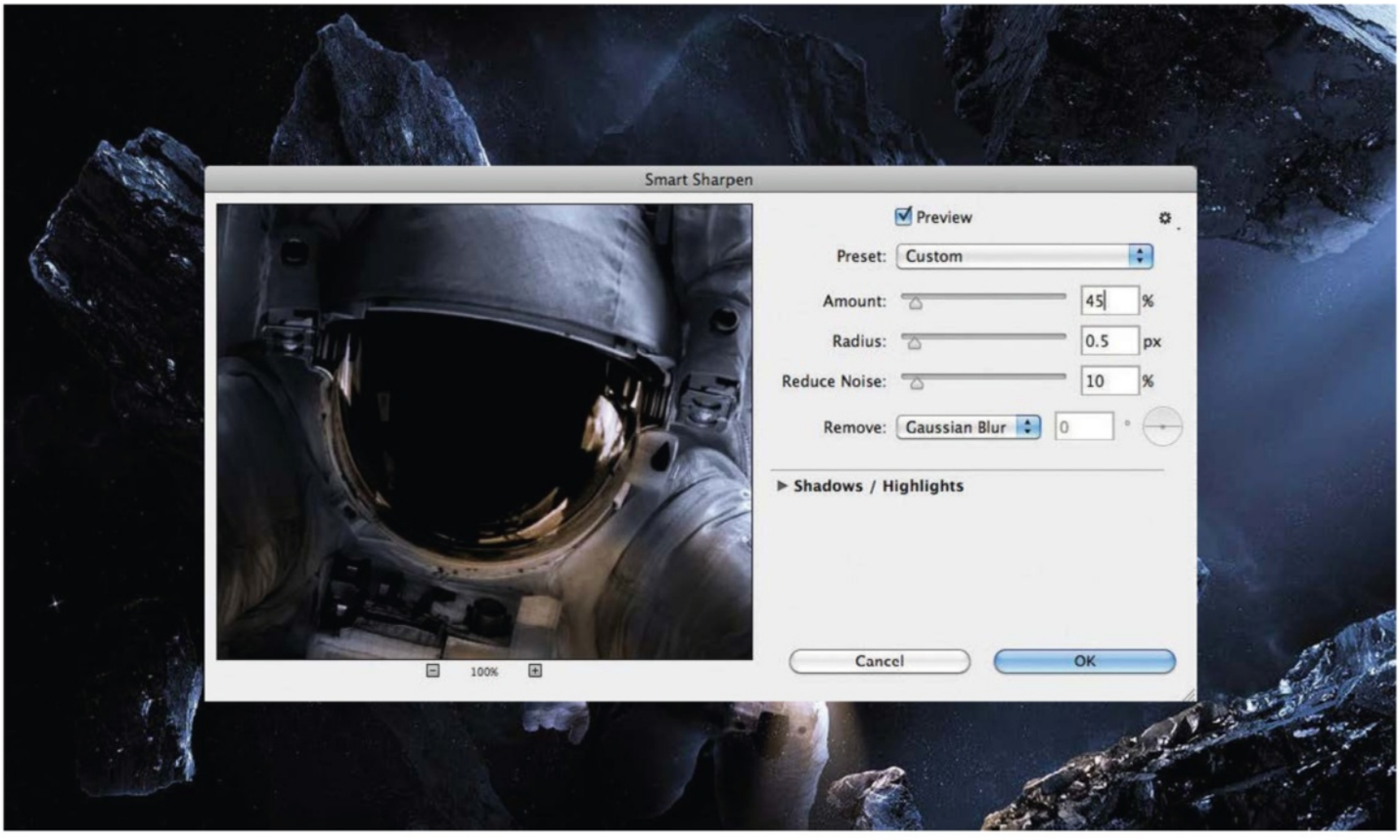


Sharpen the image

20 The last thing to do is to sharpen the image. Duplicate the flattened image and select Filter>Other>High Pass. Set the Radius to 0,5px and click OK. Set the layer's blending mode to Vivid Light and lower the Opacity to 80%. Flatten the image again and then go to Filter>Sharpen> Smart Sharpen. Set the Amount to 45% and the Radius to 0,5px. Remember – if you resize the image, your sharpening might become obsolete and you may need to sharpen it again.

Quick tip

With the High Pass filter, you can sharpen the image in a way that the more blurred parts of the image won't sharpen. This will bring out only the harder details. Try different techniques to see what works best.



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Master matte painting techniques

Create realistic digital matte artwork using photographic references and digital painting

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Master matte painting techniques



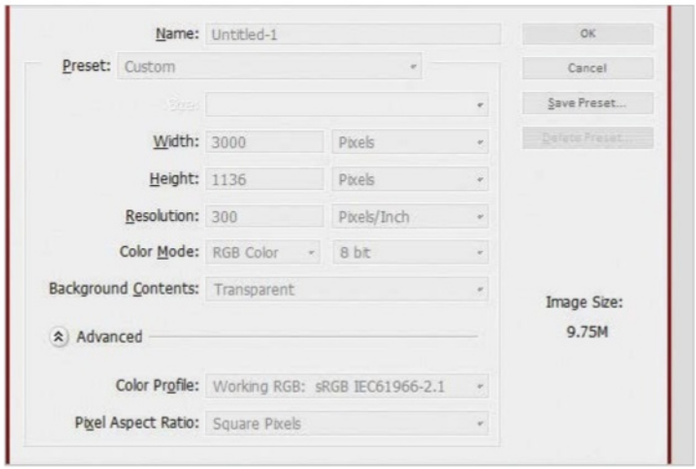
Digital matte painting is achieved by combining digital painting with photography to achieve photorealism. Today, this process is widely used within the film industry to create fantasy settings or landscapes which would otherwise be impossible to shoot. In this tutorial, you will learn how to edit, manipulate and paint over photographic imagery and tailor them to a specific need in order to create your own fantasy matte painting.

Once this has been completed, you will have a better understanding of how to use and manipulate photographs to your advantage in several different ways, and how to combine them with digital painting techniques to get the most out every piece. Achieving photorealism does not happen overnight, so use this information as a starting point to build upon. Once a firm grasp has been made, there are little to no limits as to what can be done with these techniques.

This tutorial will require some prior knowledge of layer masks and how to apply them via selection, quick masks and painting and erasing. Other knowledge includes colour grading and correcting, clipping masks, basic brush and toolbar settings, Transform tools, and some usage of the Clone Stamp tool.

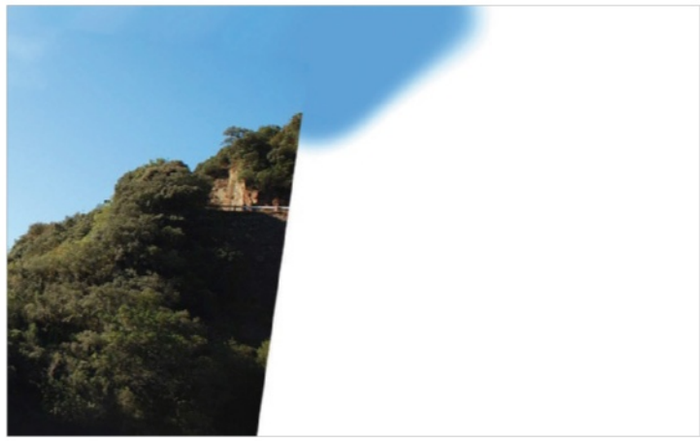
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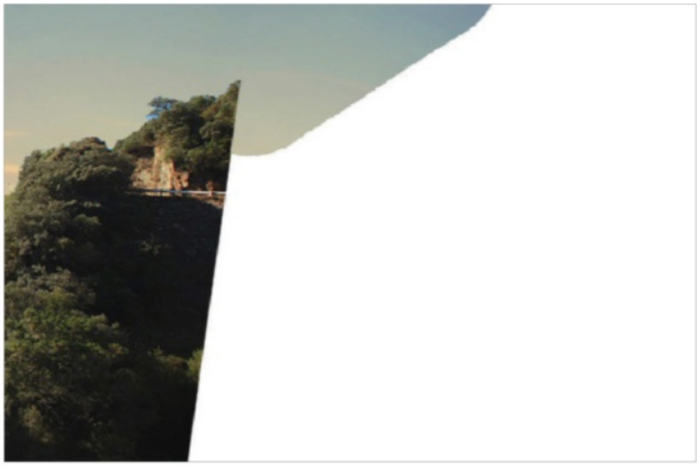
Setting Up

01 The first thing that needs to be done is to create a new document and place the photographic plate. Go to File>New and set the image size to 3000 x 1136px. Download image ID 1252246 from **www.sxc.hu** and place it into the scene. Use the Transform tools to adjust and tilt the layer. Name the layer 'Plate'.



The Plate

02 Now to paint over parts of the layer that aren't needed. Select a soft round brush and with a dark green colour (not too saturated), paint over the water portion of the plate. Create a new layer and place it under the Plate layer. Use the Eyedropper tool to select a dark blue colour from the sky and using the Brush tool, paint in a small portion of the sky. Merge this layer with the Plate layer.



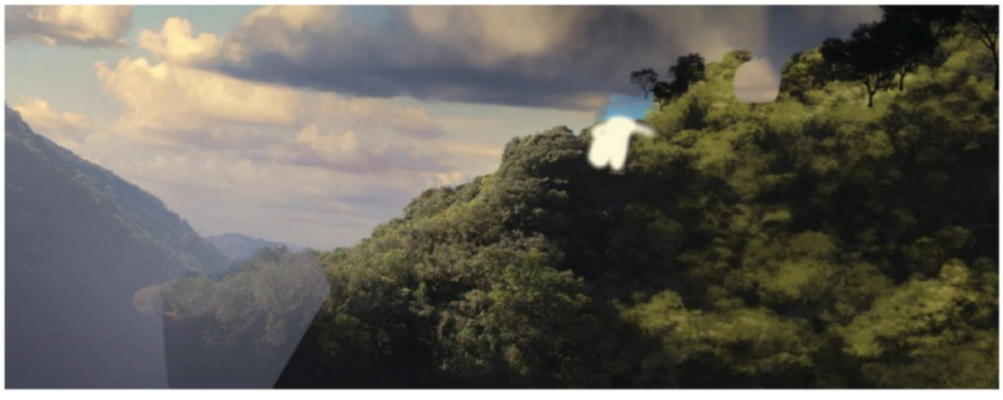
Replacing the Sky

03 Now it's time to import the new sky. Since the old one is dull and doesn't tailor to the scene's needs, it needs to be replaced with one that is able to fill the void. Go to **www.cgtextures.com** and download image ID 35830, then place it into the scene as seen in the example image. Depending on its size, it might need to be scaled down. Use the Transformation tools (Ctrl/Cmd+T) to adjust the scaling and tilt.



Placing Extra Clouds

04 Download the additional cloud image from **www.sxc.hu/profile/ukunurk** (the large cloud is in the centre, while the smaller one is on the left). Extract and paste them into the scene file. Scale and place them as shown in the image. Select the Brush tool and a nice cloudy brush, then paint dark and light tones on the larger cloud to create a more dramatic effect. The entire cloud does not need to be painted, so only paint as much as is necessary, as shown above.



Building the Base

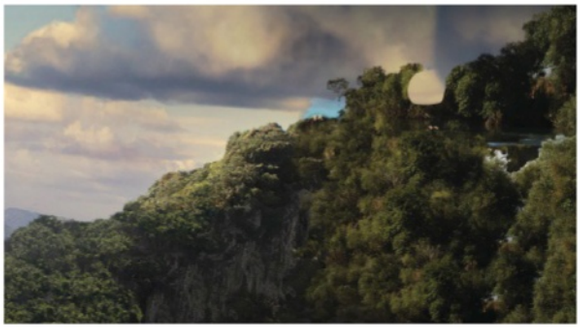
05 Now start building up the base where the main mountain will be. Take the Brush tool and a good tree-shaped brush (with some Scatter) and paint a mountain similar to the example image. Colour doesn't matter, as you'll be overlaying it with texture later. At this point it's a good idea to map out how the light will hit the mountain, which will be useful when texturing later on. Paint lighter tones to simulate where light will be.

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Lighting the Mountain

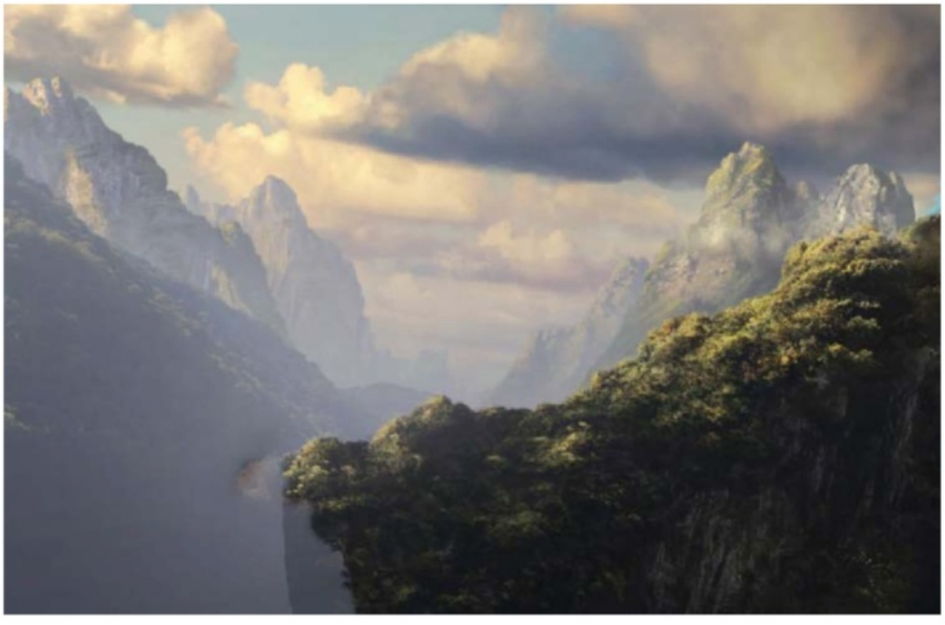
07 Grab the Brush tool and select a tree-shaped brush or something equivalent. Change the colour to a light yellow (not too saturated) and begin painting in the highlights on the mountain. Pay attention to where the sun is coming from in the base plate: right to left. If needed, lower the opacity and fill of the brush. This will lower the density of the brush stroke to allow a slower build up and make painting more forgiving and natural.



Texturing the Mountain

06 Search for images 1273649 and 1252247 on **sxc.hu**. Extract and paste them into the scene. Using the Transformation tools, set them into place as you see in the example. Use the Clone Stamp tool and begin cloning parts of the textures to cover the painted areas. Make certain that there are no repeating patterns. Clone parts of the tree texture over to the front of the mountain to make it match the example. If necessary, paint extra detail into the rock to make it look more rigid.

"The goal is to create realism, but going too far or too short will break that. Giving an even balance to everything is essential"

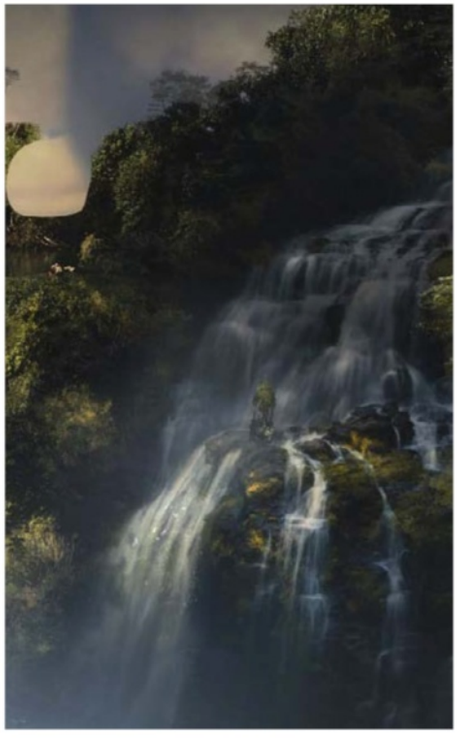


Quick tip

It's tempting to paint as much as you can, but unless you're working in a high resolution, the best way to obtain photorealism is to let the photographs do most of the work. As your painting skills increase, so too will your knowledge of how to use those references.

Building the Background

08 There are several different ways to create the mountain shapes. One is to create a selection and fill it with a colour, and another is to use the Brush tool and paint it. Use whatever is most comfortable. The goal is to create realism, but going too far or too short will break that. Giving an even balance to everything is essential. Download image ID 78057 from **www.cgtextures.com** and paste it into the scene. Clip it to the base layer and position and scale it as needed. Create a new layer, clip it and paint highlights and shadows onto the mountains.

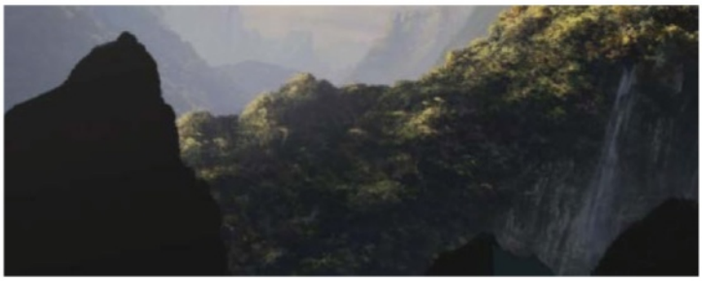


Adding Waterfalls

09 Download image 1337592 from **sxc.hu** and paste it into the scene. Use the Transformation tools to adjust and tilt the image appropriately. Use a layer mask to hide the top, bottom and side areas. With the Brush tool and a dark cool blue, paint a shadow on the top half of the waterfall, just above the rocks. This will act as the cast shadow from the castle. On the lower half, paint in the remaining highlights and shadows. Remember what direction the sunlight is coming from. The other waterfalls were painted with a chalk brush.

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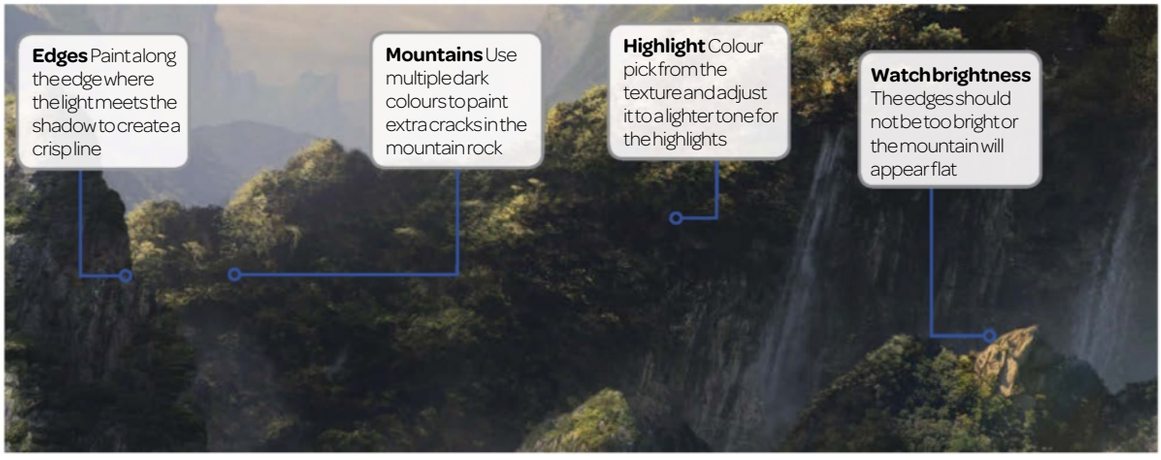
Creating Foreground Mountains

10 Much like in the background, you can create the foreground mountains by making a selection and filling that with a colour, painting, or any other method. The main idea behind these mountains is to lead the viewer's eye up towards the castle (main focal point). By pointing them upwards, it would create an implied line that leads to this focal point. Once the mountain bases are created, they will be used as a clipping mask for the textures. Name this layer 'FG mtn base'.



Adding Texture

11 Go to CGTextures and search for image ID 82231. Click on the image and choose any of the ones that appear. Then repeat for ID 82144 and choose the image on the far right. Extract and paste them into the scene. Place them above the FG mtn base layer you just created and clip them to the layer. The textures will now only appear where the base layer is. Position the textures into place and use the Transformation tools if needed. Unclip the layers from the base if there is difficulty positioning them, and then re-clip them. The goal here is get as much balance between rock and grass as possible.

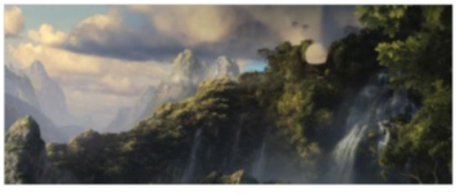


Quick tip

Layer masks are a great way to edit non-destructively. They can hide and show parts of a layer at any time due to the contents of the layer itself never being erased, but only hidden. If needed, they can always be merged with the layer to lower the file size.

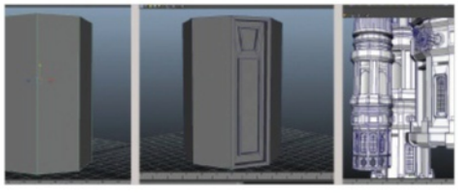
Painting and Lighting

12 Use the Eyedropper to grab a selection of grass and stone colours from the texture and store them in the Swatches tab. Get your brush and use these colours to paint extra grass and rock. Create a new layer and clip it to the base layer. Get a light yellow-orange colour (not too saturated) and paint highlights onto the front side of the mountains. Paint shadows using a dark blue colour on the other side so that they don't appear flat.



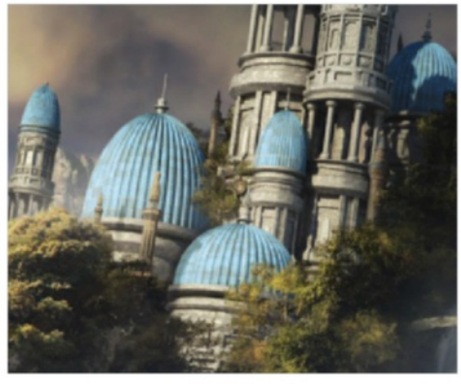
Placing the Trees

13 Download the trees 35864 from CGTextures and 841073 from **www.sxc.hu**. Paste them into the scene. Go to Layer>Matting>Defringe, set it to 2px. Use the Transformation tools to scale and position them. Create two new layers, set them to Overlay and clip each to their respective tree layer. With the Brush and a light yellow/orange colour, lightly paint in highlights on the trees. With a dark cool blue, paint shadows on a separate layer.



Creating the Castle

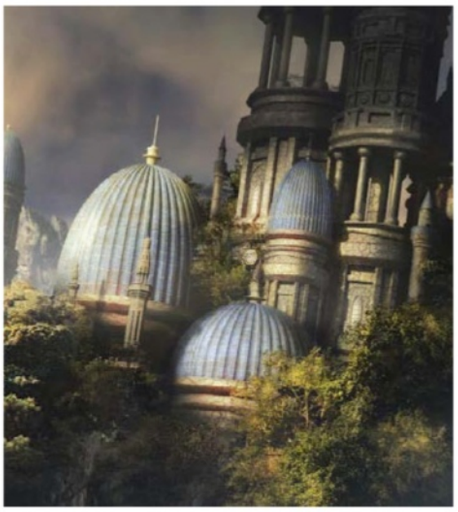
14 The 3D model of the castle was created in Autodesk Maya. It was box-modelled from a cylinder and extruded and bevelled to give the desired look and feel. Other objects were created from spheres and spline elements. Texturing consisted of Substance materials within Maya and rendered with V-Ray. Before rendering, the main castle was duplicated, scaled, rotated and reordered several times to create a denser look for the final matte painting.



Importing the Castle

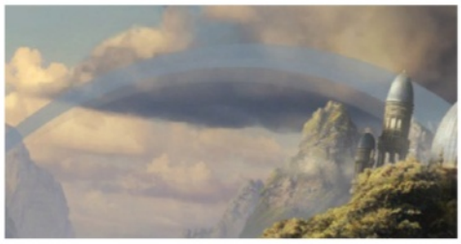
15 Once the castle has been created either by 3D modelling or piecing together photographic references, paste it into the scene and make it a group if it contains multiple layers. Adjust its position and tilt using the Transform tools. Create a layer mask for the castle layer. Select the Brush tool and with the colour black, paint near the bottom of the castle to hide this part. Be sure to paint on the layer mask and not the layer itself.

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Lighting the Castle

16 Even though the castle itself has been previously lit, it could still benefit from some dramatic lighting and increased intensity. With the Brush tool, a soft round brush and a dark cool blue, lightly paint a shadow at the top of the castle. This will decrease the focus brought to this area and increase the focal point. Next, pick a light yellow-orange (not too saturated). Create a new layer and set it to Overlay/Soft Light. Now lightly paint in stronger highlights on the castle to simulate harsh sunlight. If needed, paint additional shadows on the other sides.



Constructing the Arch

17 Use the Elliptical Shape tool to draw a circle. Copy it, make the duplicate smaller and place it in the centre of the larger circle. Cmd/Ctrl-click on the smaller circle to make a selection and delete it from the larger circle. Delete the small circle and the lower half of the original. Duplicate it, scale it down and place it under the arch. Set its Opacity at 70%. Group these together and position them in between the background mountains.





Adding the Texture

18 Download **bit.ly/1h7HocN**, clip it to the arch base layer and set it to Overlay. Set Opacity at 70%. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+T to activate the Transform tools. Ctrl/right-click and select Warp. Now adjust the texture to the shape of the arch. Hit Enter to apply the warp. With the texture adjusted, feel free to erase the remainder of it that is not being used. If needed, desaturate the texture by hitting Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+U.

Lighting and Extras

19 Create a new layer above the arch group and clip it to it. Select a soft round brush at about 200-400px and change its colour to a light yellow (not too saturated). Lightly paint a highlight near the middle of the arch to simulate the sun lighting it. The triangle was achieved by painting with a hard brush. Inner Shadow, Drop Shadow and Inner Glow were used as layer styles to create the outer bevels.



Finishing Detail

20 Like the Arch, use the Elliptical Shape tool and draw out a circle. This will be the rainbow. Copy it, make the duplicate smaller and place it in the centre of the larger circle. Cmd/Ctrl-click on the smaller circle to make a selection and delete this portion from the larger circle. Now apply a Rainbow Gradient Layer Style to the larger circle and Gaussian Blur it 10-40px. For the low-lying clouds, select the Brush tool and get a soft cloud-shaped brush. Using real clouds as a reference, paint them along the bottoms of the mountains.



Colour Grading

21 Go to 'Photo Filter', change the colour to a greenish cyan and set the Density at 32%. Create a new Color Balance and change the following; Shadows: Magenta/Green +1, Yellow/Blue +4, Midtones: Cyan/Red +16, Highlights: Cyan/Red +1, Yellow/Blue -16. Create a Gradient Map and set the left side to black and the right to white. Now change its layer Opacity to 40%. This is a good base to work from, so feel free to make changes and experiment.

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Use liquid paint effects

Discover how to manipulate paint stock and create energy using layer masks, selection and transformation tools

Paint splash effects can be used in many ways. One that's very popular is to replace clothing by using photo stock. That's what we set out to achieve here, showing how we create our own photomanipulation of a model with paint splash fashion. Once finished we'll have created enough depth and movement that our effects will look realistic.

The Pen tool will be essential for selecting and cutting out our model. We'll reveal how to retouch and mask her out, replacing her dress with paint alone. We also explain how the Transform tools can be used to directly paint layers and fit them in place.

Isolating and changing the colour and appearance of our paint stock layers will be easy when we start using the colour adjustment tools and further masking techniques. We use these so that our layers fit seamlessly together in our composition. We will also tackle different blend modes and show how these react with our image to create specific lighting effects.

All in all, this is a fun tutorial that we can get very creative with. It does offer more than just entertainment, though, because we'll discover core techniques that can then be easily be applied to any future photomanipulation projects.

Preparing the layout

Here we'll use selection techniques to layer the image



Prep our image

01 Open Photoshop and create a new image document, then open our starting stock photograph by dragging it into the new canvas. Transform it (Cmd/Ctrl+T) so that it fits nicely into our new canvas. Before we start adding any effects to the photo, we'll need to cut the model out. Zoom in and use the Pen tool to do this.



Isolate the model

02 We'll use the Pen tool to isolate the model from the background. Pick a start point, where her hands meet her dress, and then begin drawing a path around her. The Opt/Alt key will help you to be more accurate with the path, and also when zooming in and out with the mouse.



Continue to cut out

03 Don't worry too much about the hair for now – just make a rough selection and we can fix this in the next step. We can be rough around the dress area too, as both these will be replaced with paint. Close the path, then Ctrl/right-click and choose the Make Selection option. Duplicate the model layer then activate Quick Mask.

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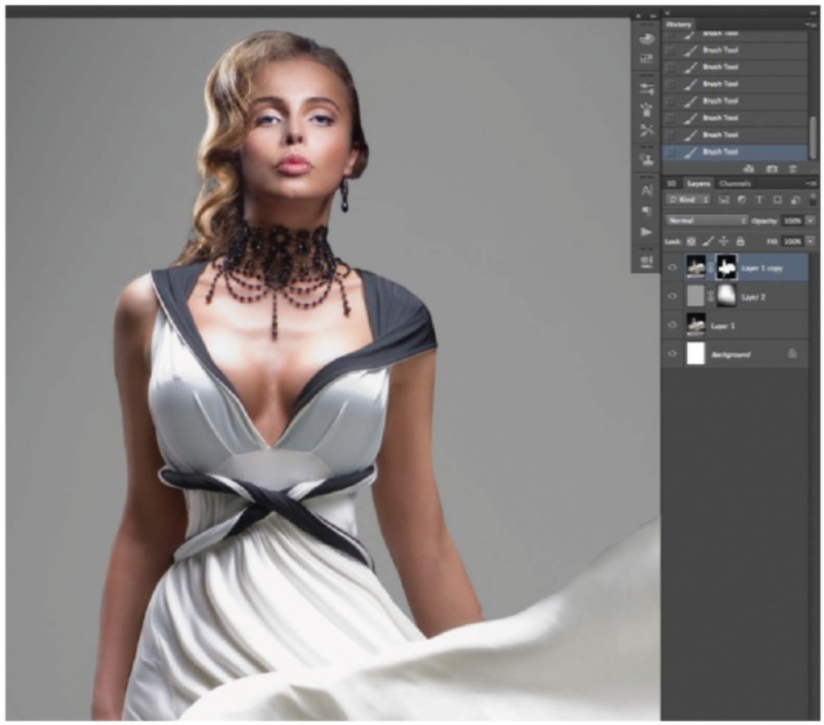
Background work

04 Having masked out the woman we can now work on the background. We'll want to make this lighter, so create a new layer behind our masked model and fill it with a 50% grey. Apply Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal All and apply a soft brush at 11% Flow to paint in some of the original background detail. Press X to switch between black and white brushes and alternate masked areas and effects. We'll come back to the background a bit later once we've worked on the model some more.

Expert tip

Using the Smudge Tool

When adding the Smudge tool to hair, use a combination of different sized brush strokes with different Flow amounts. Use different colours and parts of the hair for variation. Apply strokes outwards for spiky hair strands, and then curve these to modify the hair and tidy edges.



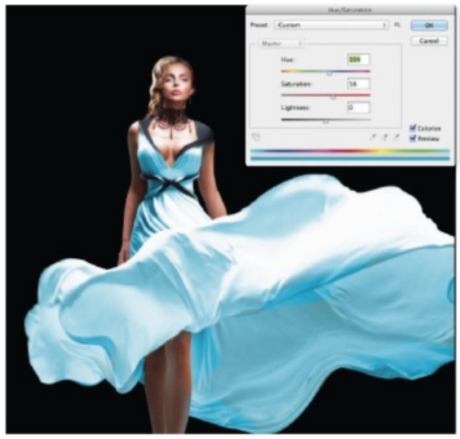
Fix the model

05 Click on the model layer and zoom in; we will start fixing up areas of the mask that don't look right, especially around the hair. Select a black flat brush then start painting around the black areas of the hair and the parts that we want to hide from our model layer. Lower the brush's Flow to 12%. If you make a mistake, hit X then paint areas back in with a white brush. Also fix areas around the outline that may have been missed during the initial Pen tool selection.



Retouch phase

06 Duplicate our masked model layer and hide the original. Create a new layer and merge that with the model layer. Continue to fix our model's hair using the Smudge tool and a small flat brush. Apply a Brightness/Contrast adjustment, setting Brightness at 10 and Contrast at 40. Duplicate this layer and hide it, so we have a backup if needed. Also use the Burn tool at 18% Exposure and the Dodge tool at 14% Exposure, both set to Midtones, to increase the contrast in certain areas.



Change colour

07 Make a new black layer beneath our model. Choose Select>Color Range and click on a white part of the dress, setting Fuzziness to 200, then use the plus and minus pickers to select tones in the dress. With our selection active, hold Opt/Alt and use the Lasso to remove areas of the dress. Copy Merged then paste into a new layer. Add a Hue/Saturation adjustment, activate Colorize then change Hue to a blue colour and increase Saturation. Rename this layer Dress, duplicate it and delete the black layer.



More dress work

08 With the duplicate active, select Layer>Layer Styles>Color Overlay. Make it blue. Move the original dress layer above this duplicate and set it to Overlay. This brings out the dress highlights. We can change the Color Overlay of the duplicate layer and the Hue/Saturation of the original dress to get the perfect natural look. Bring some of the white and light back in by setting a Reveal All layer mask on our dress copy layer, using a black soft brush set at 20% Flow to mask into areas we want highlighted.

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09 Apply paint splashes

Build effects using stock and basic adjustments



Paste in paint layers Copy and paste the paint layer into our main image. Put it into a new folder called Paint, set at the top of our layer stack. Repeat this process with all the stock images, placing each onto the canvas. Solid colour backgrounds can be removed by using the Magic Wand tool to select them and then hitting X to delete

Isolate stock images Open a paint stock image in Photoshop and choose Select>Color Range. Use the dropper tool to select a red colour, set Fuzziness at 200 and use the plus dropper to select a deeper red, so we get all the red tones. Pull Fuzziness back a bit, so the background in the preview is black again rather than grey

Change existing colour Arrange the layers that we've introduced over the top of the model's dress, and then select one of them. Apply Image> Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. Make the selected paint splash blue to match the woman's dress. This can just be a rough adjustment before merging the model with both dress layers

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Work with light

Combine blend modes and colour adjustments to create depth



Arrange layers

10 Once you've brought in and processed all the paint splash layers, you will need to start arranging all of these in a way that makes each one seem to be a part of our model's dress. For the ones placed higher up, near the torso, use light blue-coloured layers on top and dark blue layers beneath. Use the original model dress layer as a reference. Also erase parts of the dress that get in the way and sit behind our paint splat layers.



More play with paint

11 Feel free to select and cut parts off the paint layers to make them fit. Also cut some off and add them to the top half of the model's dress. Try and make the dress feel as though it ruffles by using different paint splats and hues. Apply a soft round black brush to attached layer masks and blend areas of the paint more realistically, and use Edit>Transform>Warp to enhance the flow of the dress. It's all a matter of playing and seeing what we can create. Don't be afraid to experiment.



Create depth

12 Once we have established the final look of our paint layers we can begin to edit the existing lighting. Bring the highlights of the original paint back in and add darker blue tones to certain areas, producing greater contrast. Get one of the top paint layers and duplicate it, then set the copy to Overlay. Continue by adjusting the hue of the original layer to make it a deeper blue. This colouring method is a great way of producing depth. Repeat the process with the other paint layers.

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Alter brightness

13 Some of the bottom layers of the dress need to be made darker, as they would naturally fall into shadow. To achieve the look we see here we repeat pretty much the same technique used in the previous step, but lower the brightness of the duplicate layer by decreasing the Lightness value in a Hue/Saturation adjustment. One trick is to duplicate a layer, apply the above settings and then add an inverted layer mask (Opt/Alt-click on 'New layer mask'). Edit using this mask and a white soft brush to paint in areas of light.



Manual effects

14 Now add and style paint stock to the floor using the same techniques. Then add more light to areas of paint using a soft white brush, so they blend better. Darken other areas by using the same brush, but with a deep blue colour and set to Overlay. Dodge and Burn to create more depth, and fix the lighting on the right side of the model. Add more paint to the top half of her dress and blend it with the bodice using previous techniques. After that, we're finished.

Expert tip

Use Colour Range

This option comes in handy when isolating areas of colour. In simple cases we can just use the Magic Wand to select solid colours, but when working with paint images like those in this tutorial, or ones with existing lighting, Color Range becomes a must. Make the most of the black and white preview to see what you've selected, and use the plus and minus droppers to specify detailed areas. Once you've clicked OK, you can easily remove parts of the selection by holding down Opt/Alt or Shift and then applying the Lasso to add or remove active areas and match selected edges.



"Make the most of the black and white preview to see what you've selected"

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Source file available

Use the image links provided to re-create this

Manipulate pro layer techniques

Manipulate varied stock images to create a fun, adventure-based image in Photoshop

The inspiration for this piece came from the actual title of the job, which was '€20,000 Amazing Poker Adventures'. The idea here was to combine outdoor adventures together with poker elements and of course cash.

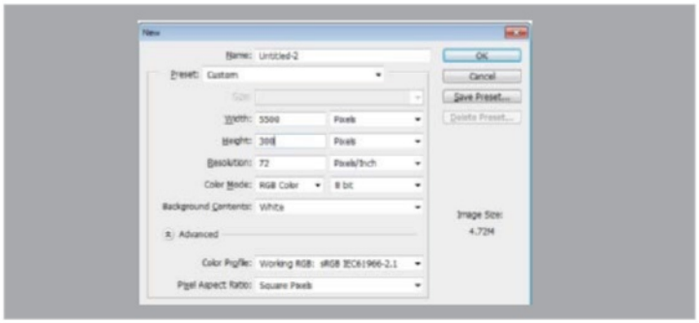
In this tutorial, we'll show you how to take unrelated images and combine them to create a surreal piece that will send viewers on a visual expedition. There is no right or wrong in the art of surrealism, so feel free to add your own artistic interpretations and be amazed by what happens! By the end of this tutorial, you will have taken your skills in merging images to a whole new level.

In order to jump to the good part, it's a good idea to download and route all of the images beforehand and have them handy in a single PSD file; this way you will be able to dedicate your undivided attention to the actual editing. You'll find links to the stock image websites and the image reference numbers within the tutorial steps.

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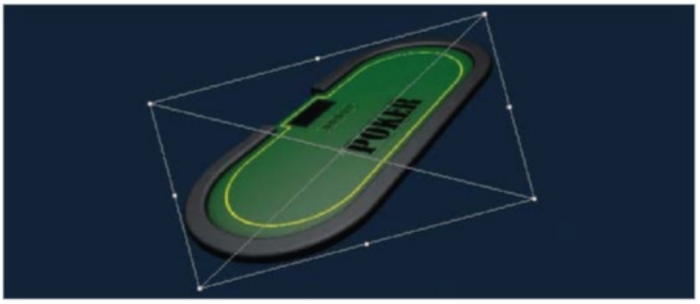
Seamless blending

Combine multiple images for a surreal photo composite



Compose the scene

01 To begin with, open a new document in Photoshop and set the Width to approximately 5500px and the Height to 300px. You will be cropping this down to a horizontal format later on, but for now this extra headroom will allow you to distort images freely and still be able to see all the edges of those images. When you are happy, hit OK.



Cut out the poker table

02 Download image #136925039 from www.shutterstock.com. Select the Pen tool and create a path around the border of the poker table. From the Paths menu, click on the flyout menu and convert the path to a selection. Head to the Selection menu and click Invert Selection, then delete the unwanted part of the image. Using the Free Transform tool, distort the table to obtain a similar angle to the provided example.



Add the landscape

03 Download #109348496 and #108547703 or any similar stock from Shutterstock. Place the images on top of the poker table one at a time. For each image you place, distort that image so that the perspective matches that of the poker table. Route out any unwanted image parts using the Lasso tool and try to route close to the river edges and tree edges. In general, when routing out by object edges, you will not be caught out by viewers.



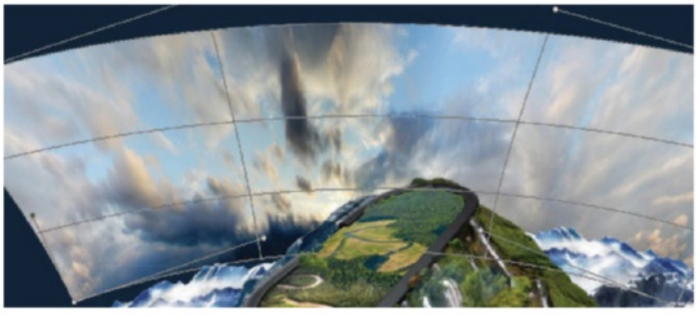
Place the mountains

04 The mountains around the poker table are made of Shutterstock images #2668837 and #579633, along with others. Place the mountain images into your document, then Free Transform them to achieve the correct overall perspective. To make the mountain images blend into each other, route out unwanted bits using the Lasso tool. Routing on the tree and river edges is a good idea, as your routing will not be easily seen. Continue doing this until you have populated the entire mountain.



Add background mountains

05 In my example, I have used snow-covered mountains to leave the focus on the mountain in the middle of the composite. Feel free to use whatever you fancy. Download and route the snow-covered mountains you wish to use in the background and place them behind the main mountain. Free Transform the images so that the mountains slant downwards from the main mountain. This effect will help to make the table look like the highest point.

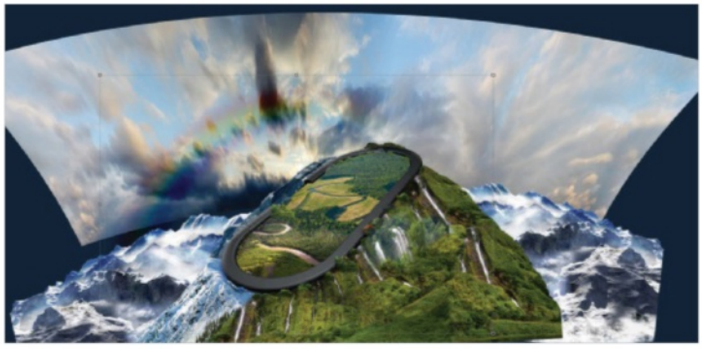


Create a dramatic sky

06 Download and place a cloudy sky image behind the mountain, then use the Warp tool to create a fish-eye effect as shown. This technique always adds more drama to skies and is perfect for action images as well. Also, create a Levels adjustment layer, targeting the clouds image and pushing up the Shadows and Highlights to gain a little more contrast. In many cases, if the sky looks dead, the entire image does too.

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Tweak the weather

07 Pick an image of a rainbow from any site you wish; in this case, any image will do. Route out and place the image in your PSD, then head over to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and blur the image by around 20%. Set the blending mode of that layer to Color Burn and drop the layer opacity until the overall effect is subtle and pleasing. Select the rainbow layer and add a layer mask. Select the layer mask on that layer, then use a soft eraser to mask out the edges of the rainbow so that it is nicely blended into the clouds.



Add some backlight

08 Pick a large, soft airbrush and set your colour to white. Then create a new layer behind the main mountain but in front of the background mountains and spray some paint around the edges of the poker table. If you begin to see too much paint or if the outcome looks fake, take the opacity of that layer down or start over with more subtle brush settings. The aim here is to do two things; first, to create that misty background effect, and secondly to make the main mountain and poker table pop.



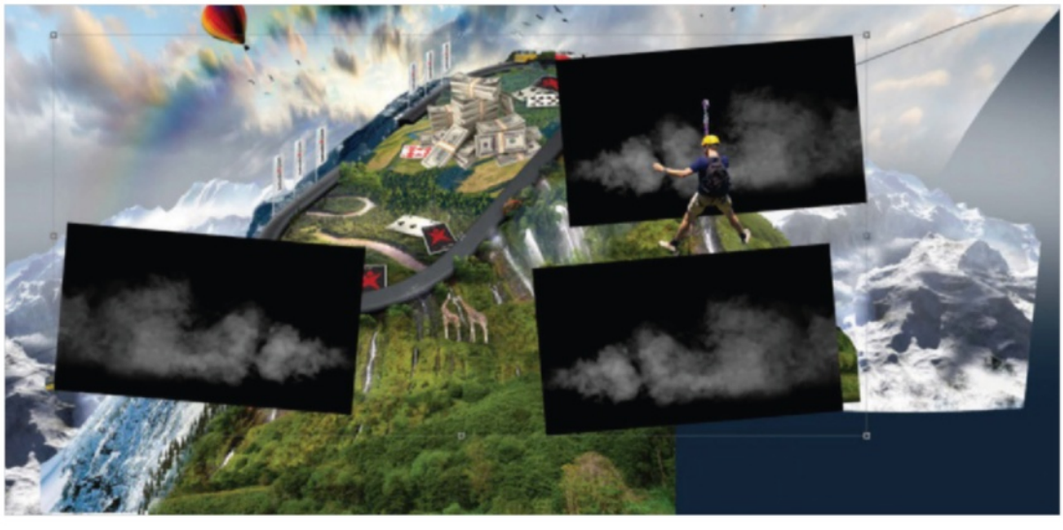
Remaining elements

09 Route out and scale the following images from Shutterstock: #62404879, #133923290, #147550133, #32159902, #116105287, #129940925, #122591179, #131663882, #79855990, #46258021, #145855442, #103620464, #154449554 and #111600083. Use Free Transform to correct any perspective issues. To create the cables for the zip liner and cable cars, use the Line tool set to 2-3px.



Paint ground shadows

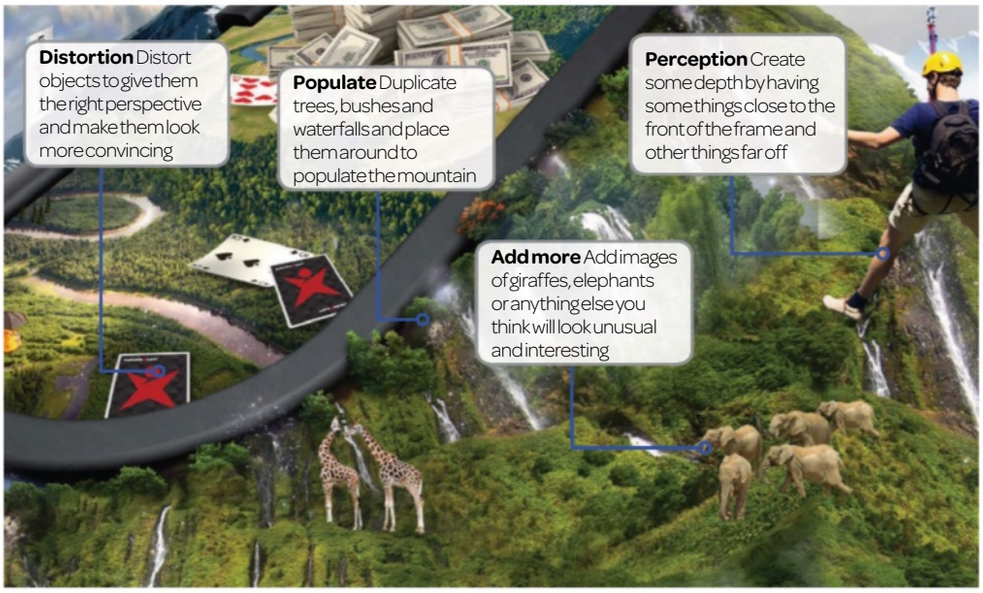
10 In order to avoid things 'floating' in mid-air, you need to create some ground shadows under the elements you have placed in your composite. To do this, simply create a new layer and place it on top of the mountain but under the animals, tents, cards etc. Switch that layer's blending mode to Multiply and spray some paint under all of the items that need a ground shadow.



Cloud effects

11 Download #115255420 from Shutterstock or search for something similar to it and place the clouds around the mountain. Switch the blending mode of this layer to Screen, then target the layer with a Levels adjustment and increase the Shadows and Highlights until the clouds blend in nicely with the background. Take down the Opacity of the layer to around 60%. Create a mask on the clouds layer and erase unwanted edges using a soft eraser.

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Waterfall touches

12 Download #136444304 from Shutterstock. Place the image onto of the waterfalls section of the composite and head to Image>Adjustment>Desaturate to remove all colour. Set the blending mode to Screen to keep the highlights and drop the black background. Create a Levels adjustment layer and increase the Shadows and Highlights. Create a mask on the layer and erase the unwanted sparkles by gently erasing.

"Routing on the tree and river edges is a good idea, as your routing will not be easily seen"

Quick tip

In 99.9 per cent of the cases, if the sky looks dead, the entire composite does too, so try to create great-looking skies and in particular, clouds! The best approach is to find stock of wintry or stormy skies and then use a Levels adjustment to get the shadows and highlights right.



Adjust the lighting

13 Create a Curves adjustment layer at the top of your layers. Open the Curves dialog box and pull the curves until the image is darkened significantly. Create a layer mask on that layer and select it. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert the mask. Select black, then click on the mask on the Curves adjustment. Using a soft eraser, draw in the shadows on top of your image, then double-click on the Curves adjustment layer and readjust until the shadows look great.



Colour it up

14 Pick a medium-sized soft brush. Using the Color Picker or holding down Opt/Alt, select a vibrant colour in your composition, then dab that colour of paint in the same spot that you picked it. Go over your entire image and look out for nice blues, purples, yellows and greens. When done, head over to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and blur the layer by around 5%, then switch the layer blending mode to Overlay. The colours should now be more vibrant.

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Source file available

Use the image provided to re-create this

Perfect blending

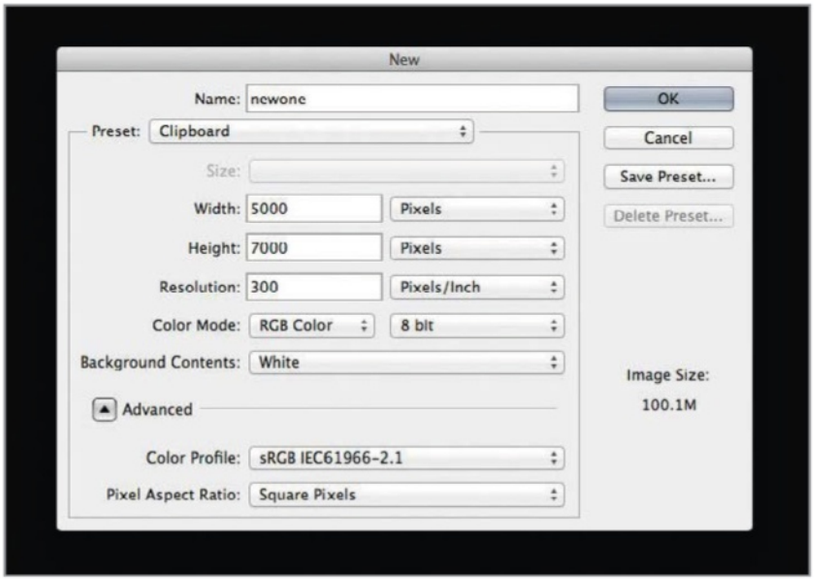
Learn how to Combine multiple assets in Photoshop to build this unique sci-fi image portrait

Photomanipulation is one step beyond simple image retouching. The two have techniques in common but for a photomanipulation to have life, it is also necessary to master its lighting, composition and depth of field. This can sometimes be like piecing together a puzzle, if you are an advanced Photoshop user, it shouldn't be a problem.

In this tutorial you will learn how to build a surreal scene based on normal photographs. The idea here is to create a utopian floating city, with its composition involving aspects of entertainment, technology, beauty and all the structure that a city needs to have. The Warp, Free Transform, Content-Aware Scale and Clone tools will be widely used, along with blending modes and clipping masks. It is necessary to cut out and balance each photo before you start bringing them together. Only Photoshop is needed!

Create the background

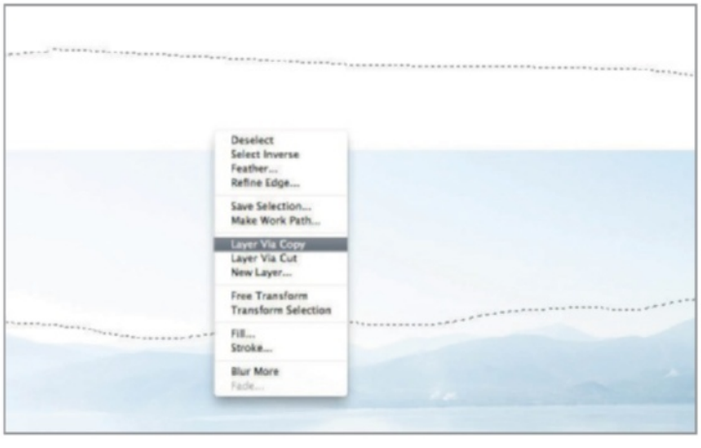
01 The first step is to create a file 5000 x 7000px at 300dpi. Go to **www.shutterstock.com** and download image ID 109899800, which is a photo of a seascape with land on the horizon. Copy and paste it into the blank file and use the Free Transform tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T), press Shift and fit it to the bottom, interpolating around 190%.



Expert tip

Lock the layers

Paint separate elements on their own layers so that you can lock the transparency and paint each one without going over the edges. To do this, choose the corresponding layer in the Layers palette and click the checkered square icon at the top next to the word 'Lock'. You will be able to unlock them at any time. We suggest that you lock your layers so you don't accidentally edit a layer you didn't intend to!



Use content aware scale

02 The seascape on the canvas will act as a background for your sci-fi image. Select part of the sky with the Lasso tool (L). Ctrl/right-click on it and select Layer Via Copy. After this, go to Edit> Content-to stretch the sky up to the top. You can also use the Gradient tool (G) if you prefer.



Add a lens flare

03 Download 'sky.jpg' from the Advanced Photoshop website. Select all of these layers, flatten them, then apply a Gaussian Blur at 9.0px. Create a new layer, colour it black and go to Filter>Render> Lens Flare. Add a flare at 100% Brightness and 50-300mm Zoom on the right-hand side to create a point of light. Set this layer to Screen at 100%.

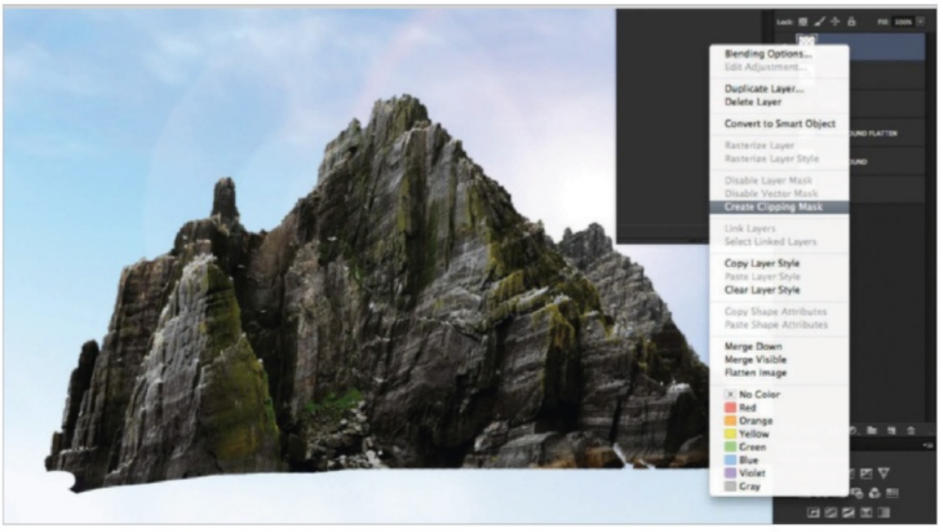
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Flip the layer

04 Once you have prepared the background, you can begin to add in the individual elements that will make up your floating city. First, you will need to download image ID 59083051 from Shutterstock, which is an image of a rocky island. You need to use the Pen tool to make a precise cutout of it. Select Free Transform>Flip Vertical to turn the island upside down. You now have a base to work your floating city onto. You can modify the image of the island and add new rocks.



Create a clipping mask

05 Now you will need to create a new blank layer with a Soft Light blending mode. Ctrl/right-click on the layer and select Create Clipping Mask. With a white brush, start to paint in highlights on the left of the island, and then repeat for the right side in the dark areas. This will help to acclimate the lighting. It is important that you follow the direction of the light source. You can do this using the Gradient tool with black and white colours, but this will be more generic.



Correct distortion

06 Download image 77785429 from Shutterstock and cut out the buildings in the same way that you cut out the island. In the stock image, they have a wide-angle distortion that you will need to fix. Use the Free Transform tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T) to correct the distortion by placing them in line with the straight angle. Download image 74919148 from Shutterstock and place it into the canvas to compose the full set. Lift up the fourth building to help balance the image.



Fit the monorail

07 Now it's time to fit the monorail into the composition. Download image ID 46658332 from the Shutterstock website and fit it into the image so that it snakes around the buildings. You will need to extend the columns for a better result. You can use the Clone Stamp tool (S) to do this, or use the Rectangular Marquee tool (M), Ctrl/right-click and select Layer Via Copy. Extend the columns until they disappear behind the green plants. You can then flatten all of these layers.

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Insert a roller coaster

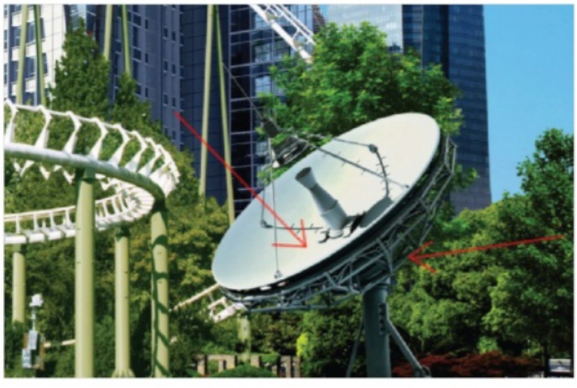
08 Add even more interest to your city by pasting in an image of a roller coaster, available from Shutterstock. Image ID 55522621 works well in this case. You will need to cut out around every detail of the roller coaster for a professional and convincing result. You can use the Eraser tool (E), Polygonal Lasso tool (L) with a layer mask or the Pen tool to do this. Whatever your choice of technique, you need to have patience! Every detail is important in ensuring that the final image is of a high standard.





Disguise with trees

09 Cover the missing areas of the roller coaster with trees. Go to **www.stockfresh.com** and download image ID 1494530. Isolate the trees using Select>Color Range with a Fuzziness of 50 and create a mask. Select it and go to Filter>Blur to improve the edges. Create a layer with a clipping mask and use the Clone Stamp tool to fix the areas where Color Range doesn't work. The trees are great disguises! You could even add some fruit to the trees.



Place the satellite

10 Now download an image of a satellite (Shutterstock ID 101799472). Cut it out and place it on the right-hand side of the city. Always pay attention to the direction of the light source. In this case, you will need to select the layer using the Free Transform>Flip Horizontal option. Arrange the satellite according to the lighting of the buildings and rocks.

Fit with warp

11 With Step 10 completed, you will now need to download image ID 100612153 from Shutterstock and use the brick edge to better integrate the city with the island rock. Paste it onto your canvas and fit it using the Free Transform tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T), Ctrl/right-click on it and choose Warp. Pick up the edges and fit it in as best a way possible. Adjust using the Dodge and Burn tool (O) to create shadows and add light effects. Erase the parts that are not needed, for example the pavement.



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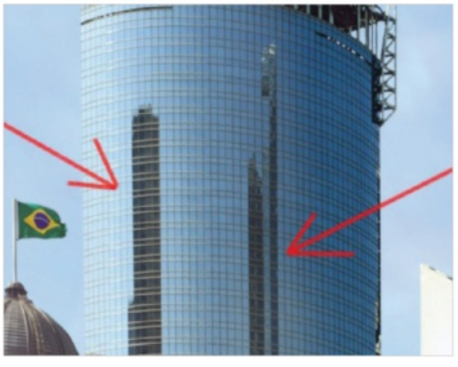
Apply Textures

12 Now you are going to apply some texture. Go back to the island layer. Open and apply the image of 'earth_texture.jpg' (available to download from the Advanced Photoshop website) onto the rocks. Hold down the Cmd/Ctrl button and click on the layer of the cliffs to make the selection. Apply this selection in the texture layer and set the blending mode to Overlay at 100%. Note that the shadows and colours are improved with Overlay blending. You can use this method in other parts if you wish.



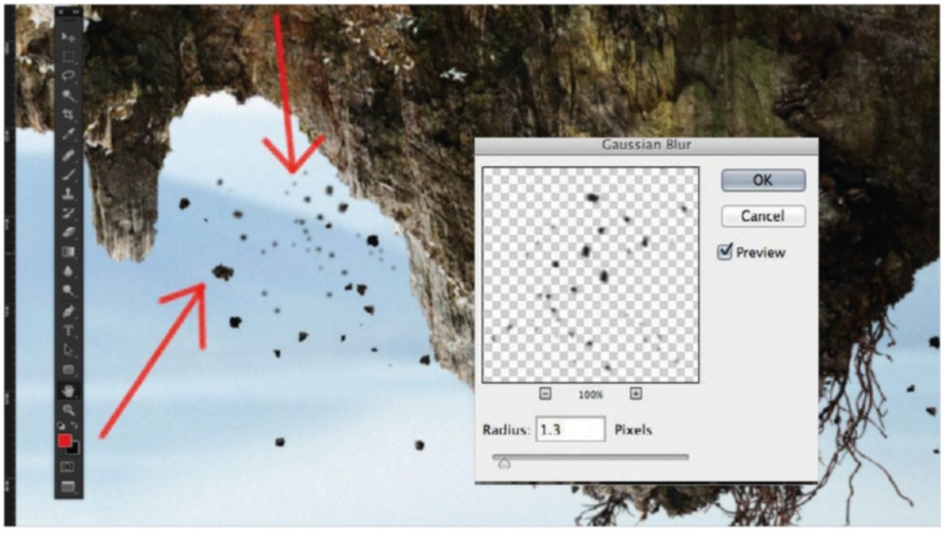
Isolate with color range

13 It's time to add some roots. Download the bonsai tree image 28329367 from Shutterstock. You can isolate the roots from the tree using Select> Color Range. Place the roots so that they appear to be coming out of the rocks. Cut pieces of texture (you will find a wide selection at http://cgtextures.com) and apply it between the edge of the city and the rock, creating volume with the Dodge and Burn tool (O). That way you'll be able to give more volume and detail to the rock. In this part you can include your own personal touch!



Fix details

14 Download an image of recycling bins from Shutterstock (image ID 96735547) and use the Clone Stamp tool (S) to remove the words and create highlights and shadows, then add it to the park. While you're cloning, go back to the second building in from the left. Remove the reflection with the Clone Stamp tool (S). Be patient! Download 'fence.png' from the Advanced Photoshop website and place it in the left-hand corner if you feel necessary. This will help to harmonise the image and give more detail to the photomontage.



The composition continues

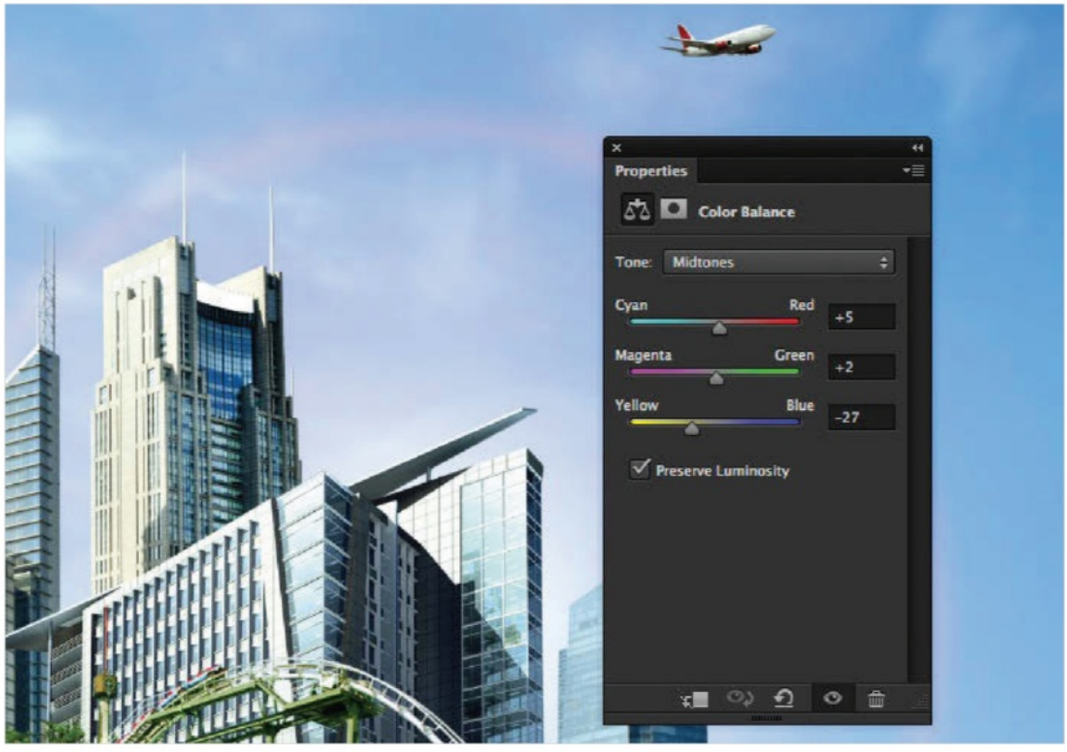
15 Now add in the flag of your favourite country. In this case, I placed the Brazilian flag (my country) at the top of the first building on the left. Download image 28260301 from Shutterstock and desaturate just the white parts of the plane. I scaled it down to make it quite small in the image, but you can use it as you wish! To improve the composition of the scene, download an image of birds from Shutterstock (19079998) and place them around the cliffs. You can also cut small pieces from the cliffs and simulate earth and rock falling from them.

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Lights and colours

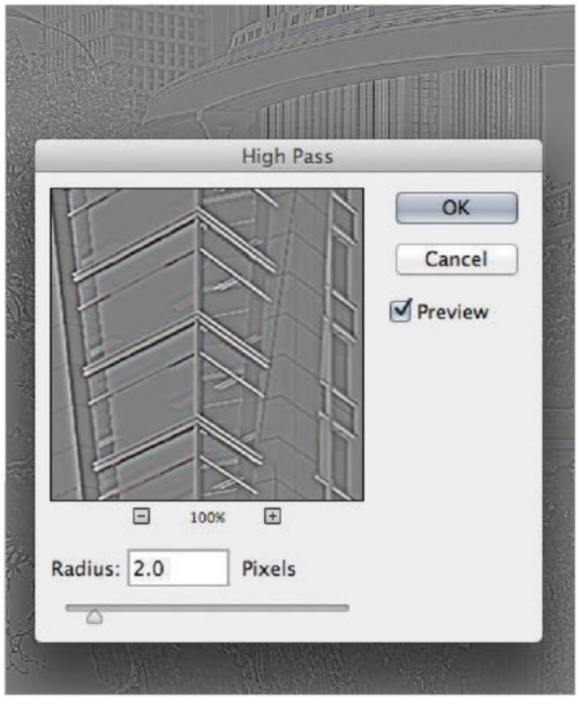
16 Create a Brightness adjustment layer set to -18. Create another with Color Balance. In the Tone drop-down menu, choose Shadows and set Red to +1 and Blue to +5, then choose Midtones and set Green to +5, Red to +2 and Yellow to -27, then choose Highlights and set Cyan to -16 and Blue to +1. Create a new layer, paint it black using the Paint Bucket tool (G) and create a flare, but this time on the right-hand side. Use a mask with the Gradient tool (G) to minimise the entry of light in front of the city. Set this layer to Screen at 100% as in the third step.





Finishing touches

17 Apply an Unsharp Mask with an Amount of 20% and a Radius of 50%, then apply a 70% Fade. Duplicate the last layer and create a mask set to Overlay. Only paint the areas where you can improve the colour and contrast. Duplicate the last two layers and flatten them again. Add a High Pass filter with a 2.0px Radius. Desaturate it and apply an Overlay blending mode at 100% to that layer. To finish, select all the layers from the first flat layer, duplicate and create the last layer. Apply the Add Noise filter at 1%.



High pass and noise

18 Apply an Unsharp Mask with an Amount of 20% and a Radius of 50%, then apply a 70% Fade. Duplicate the last layer and create a mask set to Overlay. Only paint the areas where you can improve the colour and contrast. Duplicate the last two layers and flatten them again. Add a High Pass filter with a 2.0px Radius. Desaturate it and apply an Overlay blending mode at 100% to that layer. To finish, select all the layers from the first flat layer, duplicate and create the last layer. Apply the Add Noise filter at 1%.

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Master the Pen tool

Use simple Photoshop tools and techniques to make stunning geometric shapes in your artwork

Sometimes the most striking designs are the ones that are actually very simple and straightforward to achieve. Minimalism is incredibly popular in the design world right now, with geometric shapes taking precedence in web design, and with fashion artwork hot on its heels. This tutorial will show you how to use basic Photoshop techniques to achieve a simple but beautiful photomanipulation that could easily grace the cover of any glossy magazine. CINEMA 4D will be used to render shapes, which will then be imported into Photoshop. Flower photos were used as a reference for the beige and rose colour palette. Tools are not used extensively; this tutorial instead encourages you to have fun making an eye-catching but minimalist image. You will need to use basic colouring techniques, the Pen tool and blending modes, then play around with clipping masks, layer styles and filters to finish. Let's start!

Working with photography

Use the Pen tool for full control



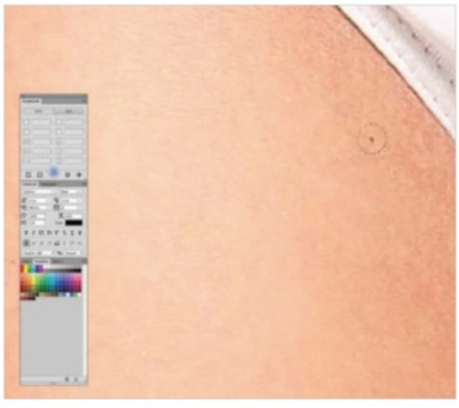
Separate the model

01 Purchase the model photo (ID 30914224) from **Dreamstime.com**. First, you need to cut out the model from the background. Select the Pen tool in Shape mode and start cutting around her. Leave the head and hair for the next step. After selecting the whole body, copy the layer from the selection.



Cut out the hair

02 Cut out the head and hair and duplicate the Blue channel. Select a soft round brush and switch its mode to Overlay. Start colouring the hair black. To colour white spaces, switch the brush mode back to Normal. Go to Select>Load Selection and load the Blue Copy channel. Copy the selection.



Remove skin defects

03 To remove skin imperfections, select them with a round Selection tool and press Shift+Delete, with the Content Aware option switched on. You can also use the Lasso tool for a quick way to remove small defects. With fashion artwork, even the smallest imperfections must be corrected, as this is the thing that's going to sell your product to consumers.

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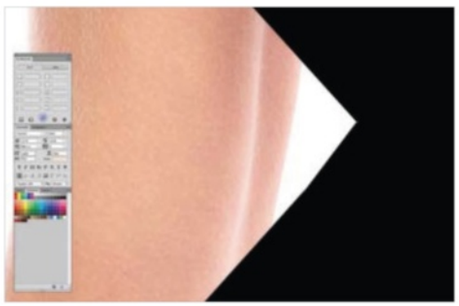


Choose the right colours

04 It's always a good idea to have a reference colour palette. In this case, photos of flowers were used. With the Eyedropper tool, select a couple of colours from the reference images to build the palette. Understated rose and beige colours were chosen to give the model a sense of pure, natural beauty. Now, create a new layer using Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N and make a couple of spots with the picked colours using the Brush tool, then leave this layer. You will need it later on.

Quick tip

Your reference colour palette is your best friend. It helps you to keep the mood of your artwork perfect and is one of the essentials to a successful image. It can be simple, based on just three or four colours, or larger, with many other shades for the background, skin or environment. It all depends on what you want to achieve.



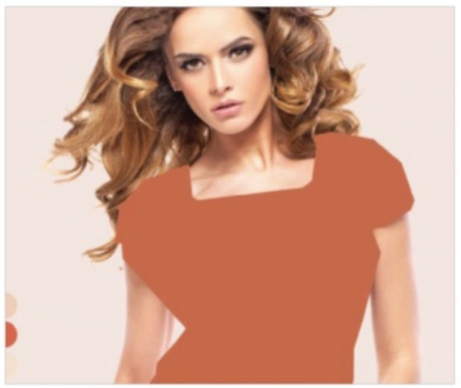
Adjust the shape

06 To achieve a good shape for the dress, you need to re-position the anchor points and delete some of them. To do so, choose the Direct Selection tool from your toolbar or hit the A key on your keyboard. You need to make the dress as simple as possible, so delete the points that are close to each other. Leave just one point and go to another group. Long, sharp lines will look much better than short ones. In a while, you will reposition all of the points to fit your renders.



Shape of the dress

05 Using the Pen tool (P) with the Shape option selected, start drawing the main shape of the dress. It should be sharp edged. You can adjust the anchor points with the Direct Selection tool by holding down the Opt/Alt key while drawing with the Pen tool. When complete, once again leave this layer. You will be placing pre-rendered shapes into it later. You can always go back and adjust the main shape, depending on the final shape of the dress you want to make.



Apply colour

07 Now go back to your colour palette. You need to pick the main colour for the dress and one that will overlay the whole artwork and background. Set a new layer above your dress shape and simply fill it with your chosen colour, setting the blending mode to Overlay. Pick another less saturated colour and place it on a new layer in the background. For great results, copy this layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and place it above all the other layers, setting the blending mode to Color Burn.



Play with blending modes

08 You can experiment with different blending modes, as sometimes other modes will give you better effects. You can always choose another colour for the background or for the overlaying layer if need be. The key is to stick to the palette and make the whole artwork as smooth as possible in terms of colour. That's why your palette layer is so important: it helps you to keep the right mood within your artwork. If you are happy with the colouring, you should stick with it until the final colour correction.

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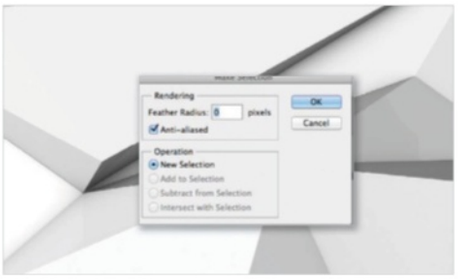
Give your image an edgy look

Mix pre-rendered images with the model



Finding the best shape

09 A flat shape isn't enough, so you need to use pre-rendered images made in CINEMA 4D. The most important thing is to set together parts of the renders to fake the dress material. It must look as realistic as possible. Take your time and think about how you can connect separate elements. This is the part where you can improvise and experiment. It is a good idea is to search for some reference photos of clothes and see how they lie on the models. Any research you can do will benefit you.



Cutting shapes

10 You need separate elements that will fit perfectly into your artwork. You can open pre-rendered images and start cutting those shapes. With the Pen tool (P) and Path option selected, start cutting interesting pieces. After selecting the shape, simply Ctrl/right-click>Make Selection, set Feather Radius to 0 and hit OK. With this selection, hit Cmd/Ctrl+J to create a layer via the selection. After that, press Cmd/Ctrl+D to deselect. Go back to the main image layer and separate another piece.



Making the composition

11 When you have all of the shapes that you need, you can start making the composition. Start placing shapes over the dress shape and scale or rotate the elements. You can also Distort or Warp them to fit the fabric form. Remember to keep all of the lines straight and try not to bend individual elements too hard. It is okay for pieces to overlap. The shading will be done in the next steps. Feel free to transform elements as you like, but maintain a realistic look.



Repositioning

12 When you have made your dress composition, you need to reposition your base shape. Select the dress shape layer, hit A for the Direct Selection tool and move the points to fit your render shapes. There is no need to follow them directly, but you need to stick with the lines. After the moving part is done, you can start adding some colour. First of all, make a clipping mask from all the render layers to your dress shape layer so that you can start adding some colour.

"Feel free to transform the elements as you like, but maintain a realistic look"



Colouring

13 Let's head back to colour you chose at the beginning for the dress. Move it above all the clipped layers to the dress layer. Set the blending mode to Overlay to give the colour effect a good look. You can also play with others shades of your base colour, but in this situation shapes are already a little bit shaded, so a single colour should do the job.

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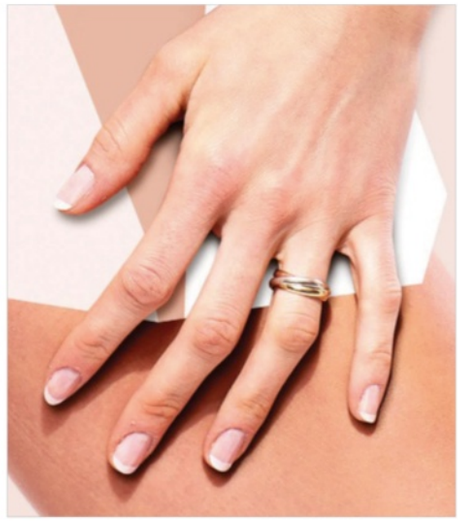
Take care of the details

Pull out some fancy shading and lights



Add depth

14 Now you will need to pull out the model's right hand from underneath the dress to add some depth to your image. All you need to do is cut the hand out from the original image using the Pen tool. You will then need to make a selection with a 0.5 pixel Feather Radius and then hit Cmd/Ctrl+J to copy the selection to a new layer. The next few steps of the tutorial will show you how to add shadows to the dress and the model to make the whole image look more realistic.



Shade the hand

15 Create a new layer beneath your hand layer and select a round brush set at 50% Hardness. Draw shadow onto the bottom-right side of the hand. Shadows on the original image will help you to decide the direction of your own shading. After that, set layer Opacity to 40% and set the blending mode to Overlay. Make another new layer, draw smaller shadows and set Opacity to 60% on the first layer. Then make shadows on the darkest places and set their Opacity to 100%.

Creating 3D shapes

Modify with the Knife tool

In this tutorial, you need to use pre-rendered shapes made in CINEMA 4D. These are simple cubes sliced with the Knife tool and then modified point-by-point to achieve interesting shapes. There are many more techniques you can use to make these. You can find web-based shape generators or just start playing with Photoshop. With the Pen tool, you can draw shapes and fill them with gradients to obtain similar effects.





More shadows

16 You will now need to add more shadows on the model's body to help create extra depth and more of a sense of realism. To be precise, make a new layer with the clipping mask to the body layer. With a soft round brush set at 100% Opacity and 1300 pixels, start shading in areas of the legs, hands and neck that are beneath the dress. Set the layer Opacity to 60%. Now you can use the Eraser tool (E) to adjust the shadows and fit them correctly to the body shape.



Even more shadows!

17 Now it's time to focus on the dress. You need to add some more depth to a couple of the fragments and cast shadows. Use the Polygonal Lasso tool to draw a shape and fill it with a black colour. On a new layer over the rendered shapes, fill the selection with black and go to Filter>Blur> Gaussian Blur and set it to 5. You have to make it look realistic as possible, so shadow will be smaller nearer the connection of the shapes and will disappear at the ends.



Add flares

18 This simple technique adds a more exciting look to the dress edges. Simply create a new layer, and with a white soft brush draw one spot. Then, using a brush half that size, draw another spot in the middle of first one. After that, hit Cmd/Ctrl+T to transform this layer, and just scale in vertically to make it look like an optical flare. Set the blending mode to Overlay and rotate it to fit the edges. Copy this layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and add it to the other edge, changing the size of your flare.

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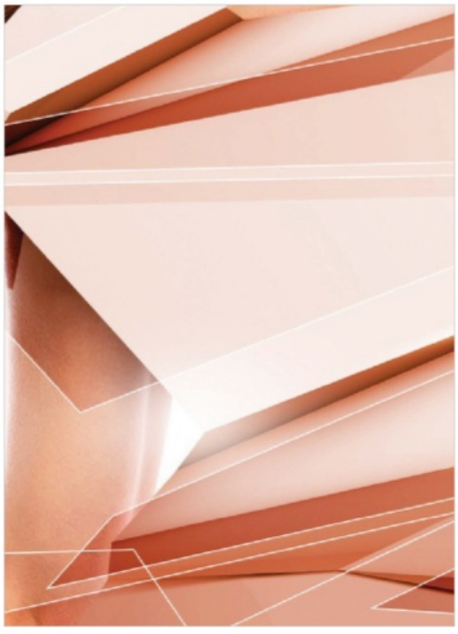
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Quick tip

When shading, you can use the Eraser tool (E) to modify shadows, but you cannot edit them later. To be safe, you can use a layer mask to mask out unwanted fragments of your shadow. This method makes it a little easier to edit later.

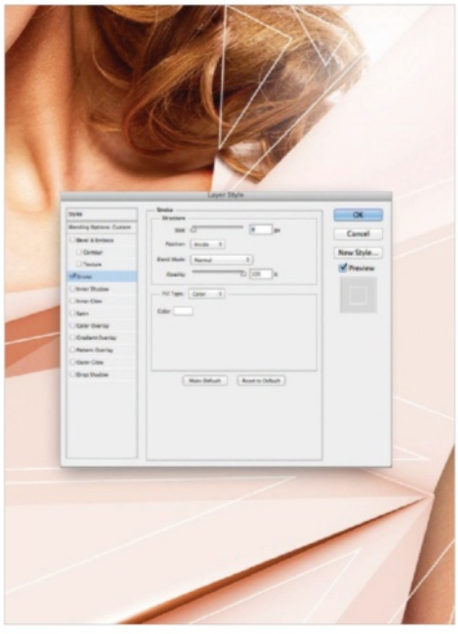
Playing with lights

19 Start adding some light effects by drawing on the background behind the model. Using a large soft brush, draw a couple of spots with a white colour. Try to maintain the shape of the model to just cover the space behind it. Next, with the Transform tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T), start warping this layer to fit the space behind the model. With your background, this white layer will make a smooth tonal difference, for an eye-catching effect.



Light leaks

20 You can add even more lights to the model and dress. Create a new layer above your artwork and start playing with a small soft brush, painting with a white colour. Try to match the edges where the light could leak from the background. Places between the arms and the dress, at the edges of the hair and areas where there is less hair and light can be harder. You can play with the opacity to achieve better effects, but in this case leave it at 100%.



More dynamic

21 To make the image more dynamic, draw triangular shapes, placing a white line around them from the dress. To do so, select the Pen tool with the Shape option enabled. Draw a single shape and set Fill to 0%. Double-click on the layer to open the Layer Styles window. Go to Stroke and set Size to 4 pixels, Position to Inside and pick a white colour. Hit New Style and save it to your palette. Draw more shapes, select them all and pick your preset style.



Glass-like effect

22 Now create a new layer beneath those shapes. Select the Polygon Lasso tool (L) and start drawing more shapes. Each time, make a selection with the Polygon Lasso tool, select the Gradient tool (G), set it black to transparent in the Gradient palette and draw a gradient from the bottom-left corner to the centre of the shape. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+D to deselect and repeat these steps with every shape. After that, set this gradient layer to a Soft Light blending mode.



Add details

23 As you are nearing the finish, you need to add a couple of details like hair over the dress. Simply cut a small piece of hair and put this layer over the dress layer. You can also add a couple more white-edged shapes to make the image more dynamic. At this stage, you can experiment to make your artwork more eye-catching. Adding lights and shapes is good at this stage, but you must remember that less is more in this case.



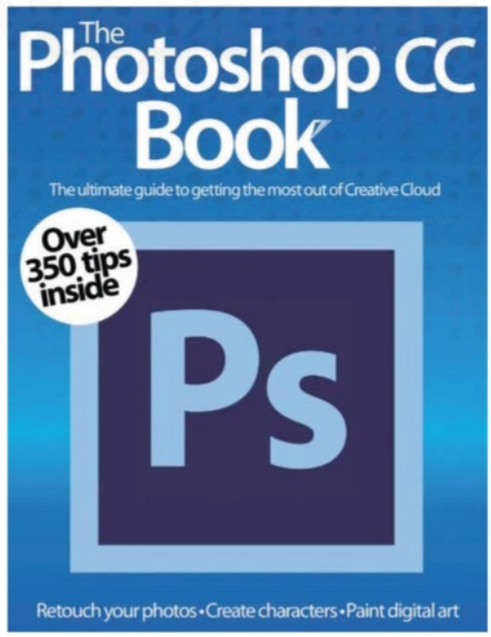
Final touch

24 At the end, create a bit of extra interest by adding some lines in the background. For this, use the Line tool (U) with a white colour. Set three lines with the weight at 10 pixels and another three with the weight at 4 pixels. Draw the lines at a 45-degree angle from the top-left side to the bottom-right. Your image will now be smooth thanks to the colour palette and dynamic due to the shapes you used to create the dress.

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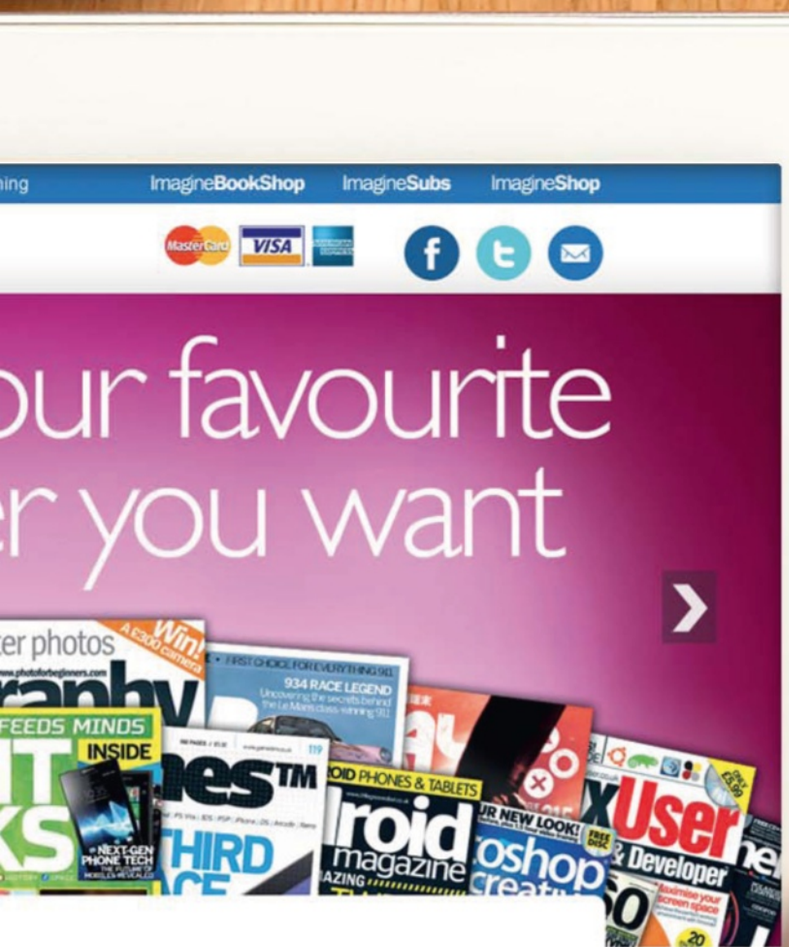
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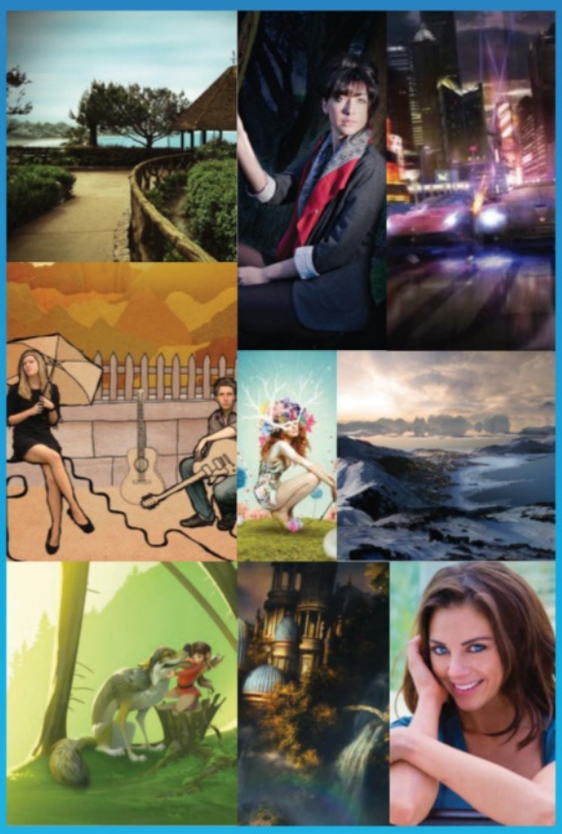
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