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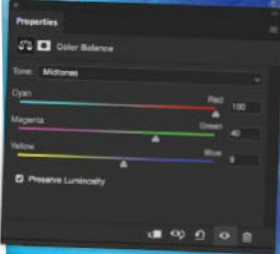
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Welcome



This issue, discover exciting new ways to
apply Photoshop's blend modes. We look
at various tricks that will speed up certain
photo-editing techniques, as well as steps
to create incredible styles, like out-of-
bounds art and double-exposure images.

Prepare to be amazed – turn to p18 and create your
best-ever art today! This issue is also packed full of
step-by-step tutorials on combining photos and sketches,
drawing with the Pen tool, retouching images, and
mastering layers and masks. There is an advanced guide
on taking typography effects even further, an Elements
section that includes tips on mastering negative space,
and a whole lot more. Don't forget to download the
tutorial files from this issue's FileSilo and follow along, or
practise the techniques on your own images. And make
sure you show us your creations. Enjoy the issue!

Sarah Banks

Sarah Banks **Editor**
sarah.banks@futurenet.com

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UNLOCK BLEND MODES CREATE YOUR BEST ART

Discover some of the best-kept secrets about blend modes, and see what they're really capable of achieving

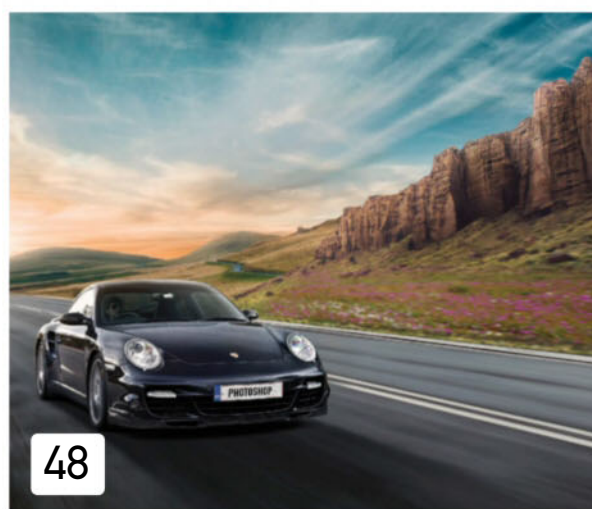
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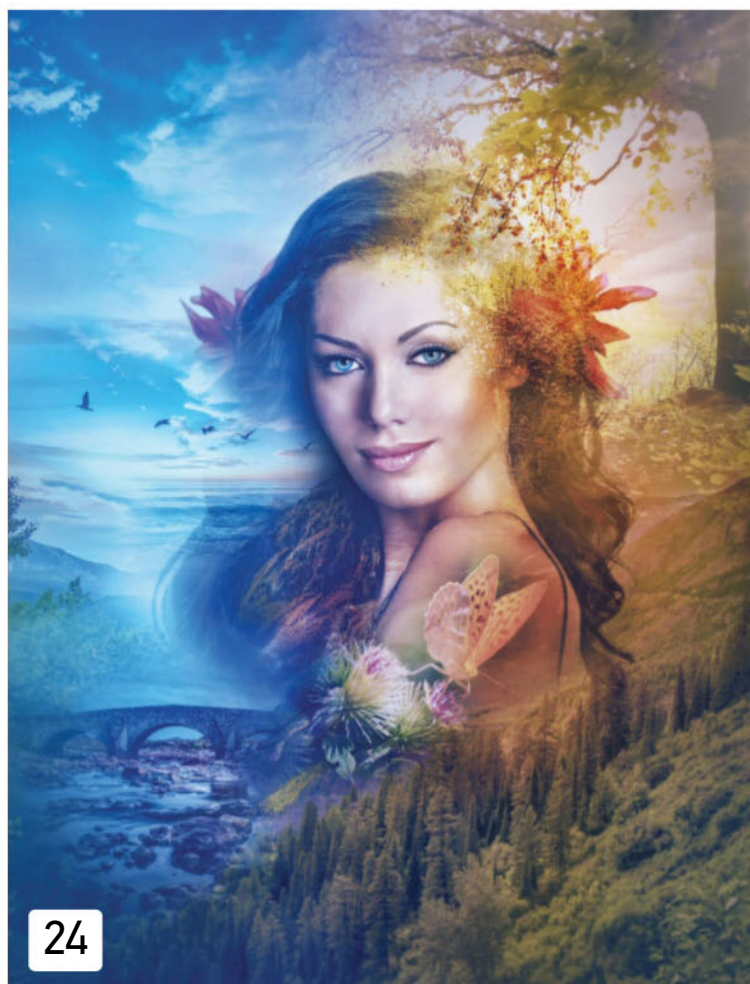
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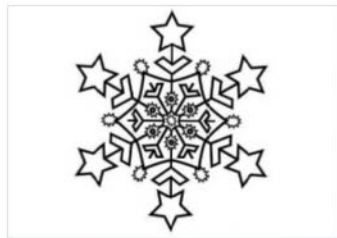
Mockups

Create a T-shirt design and show it off on one of these mockups



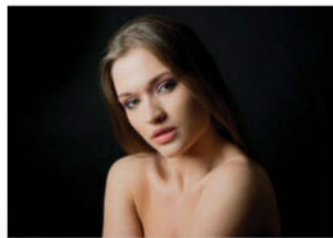
Creative pack

Use these 27 snowflakes as icons, textures or simple illustrations



Tutorial files

The assets and start photos you need to follow our tutorials



On the FileSilo this issue...

- 1 font by Codex Store worth \$100
- 68 actions by ArtPlanet and SparkleStock worth \$16
- 46 textures by FH&L and Jennifer Lauren worth \$34
- 32 brushes by SparkleStock worth \$4
- A creative pack of 27 snowflakes by SunnyArt Shop worth \$11
- 10 mockups by Go Media worth \$37
- Plus all the files to follow the tutorials!

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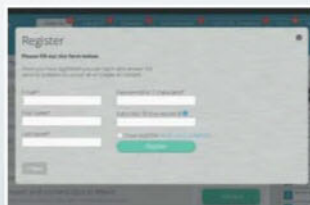


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TRENDING IMAGES

Check out some of the most popular artwork that's been rocking the internet over the last few weeks, and take inspiration from what's currently trending

There's nothing more inspiring than surfing the internet and seeing what other artists are creating, and we encourage you to do so. Here are some of our favourite pictures that caught our attention recently, from some of the world's most exciting artists and designers.

Martina's cartoon style is really popular on Tumblr and Behance, and the textures she uses in her artwork make for a really distinctive finish. Martina is a comic book artist, and this shows through her intriguing style.



Martina Naldi

martina-naldi.tumblr.com

I made this illustration in Photoshop CS6 and with a Wacom Intuos

Pro tablet. I wanted to replicate the textures of the ocean, so I used two or three custom brushes in order to create this effect.

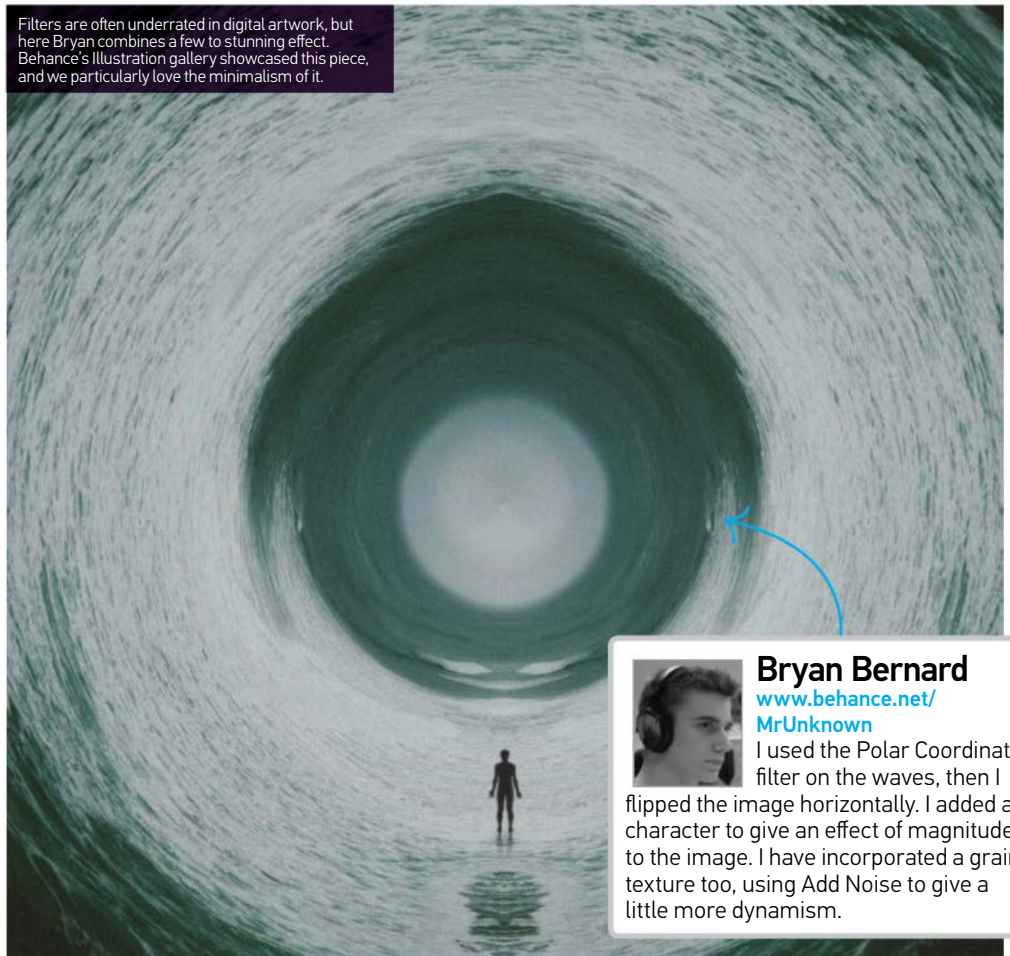


Anton Fadeev

www.artstation.com/artist/shant

For this landscape, I created a few new brushes to paint the strange shapes of the rocks. I also tried a new way of drawing to better control the colour palette at any stage of creation. This is one of a series of artworks.

Filters are often underrated in digital artwork, but here Bryan combines a few to stunning effect. Behance's Illustration gallery showcased this piece, and we particularly love the minimalism of it.

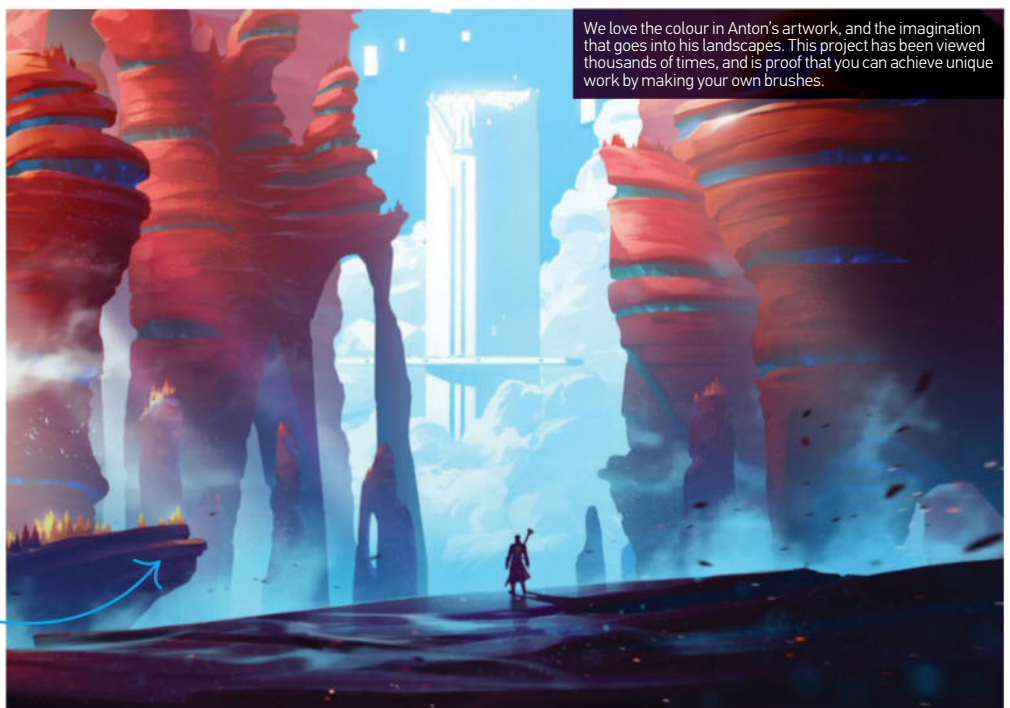


Bryan Bernard

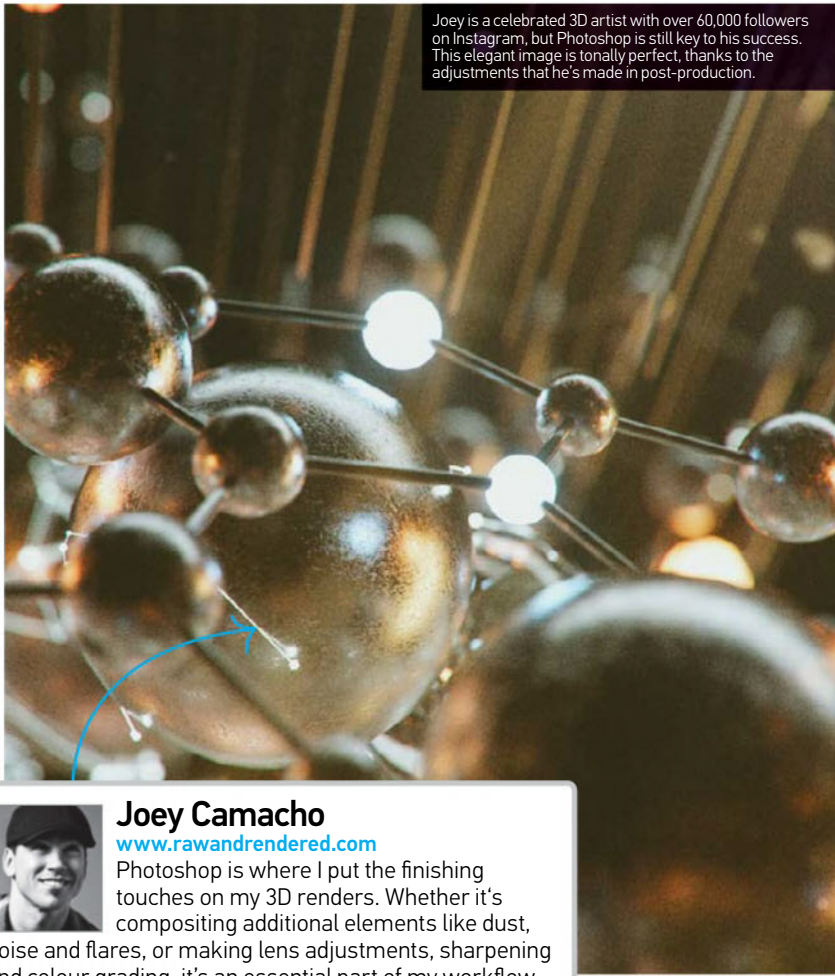
www.behance.net/MrUnknown

I used the Polar Coordinates

filter on the waves, then I flipped the image horizontally. I added a character to give an effect of magnitude to the image. I have incorporated a grain texture too, using Add Noise to give a little more dynamism.



We love the colour in Anton's artwork, and the imagination that goes into his landscapes. This project has been viewed thousands of times, and is proof that you can achieve unique work by making your own brushes.



Joey is a celebrated 3D artist with over 60,000 followers on Instagram, but Photoshop is still key to his success. This elegant image is tonally perfect, thanks to the adjustments that he's made in post-production.



Joey Camacho

www.rawandrendered.com

Photoshop is where I put the finishing touches on my 3D renders. Whether it's compositing additional elements like dust, noise and flares, or making lens adjustments, sharpening and colour grading, it's an essential part of my workflow.



Vasjen Katro

katro.me

Using Photoshop, I was able to create an abstract gradient texture to use in Cinema 4D. Playing with the brush strokes and different colours, I created a unique image to use in Cinema 4D, before it was manipulated in Photoshop to get the final results.



This image starts with a Photoshop gradient, which is then transferred to 3D software. It's a novel idea, but one that has struck a chord with the 58,000 people who have viewed Vasjen's work.

Illustrator Alessia has had over 40,000 views of her work online. While her brushwork is immaculate, we love how she uses blend modes to add light and shade to her pictures; aspiring digital artists should study her work.



Alessia Trunfio

alessiatrurfio.blogspot.it

I start illustrations with a rough pencil sketch, then I layer with the Pen or a flat brush. In the final phase, I use filters and blend modes, such as Color Dodge or Overlay. I like using Color Balance as it produces interesting effects!


READERS' IMAGES

Welcome to an inspirational round-up of great Photoshop artwork created by none other than your fellow readers




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Lisa Fotios

www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/Lisa90

Image of the issue

To create this I used stock images from various websites, and for the underwater part, I combined three water and sea pictures and blended them together. I then changed the opacity and colour of the rock to give the illusion that it is underwater.



David Pavlik

www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/da505

I started this image with the idea of creating something around sadness. It took me two days to complete this artwork, and it was composed of 92 layers. I used a lot of stock images in order to put this image together.





Corine Spring

www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/SpringDA

This picture was inspired by French artist Mr Xerty and is comprised of stock images. Lighting effects were used on the headlights of the car, and textures were used to create the mottled effect in the sky.



Nathan Nascimento

www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/Nathan

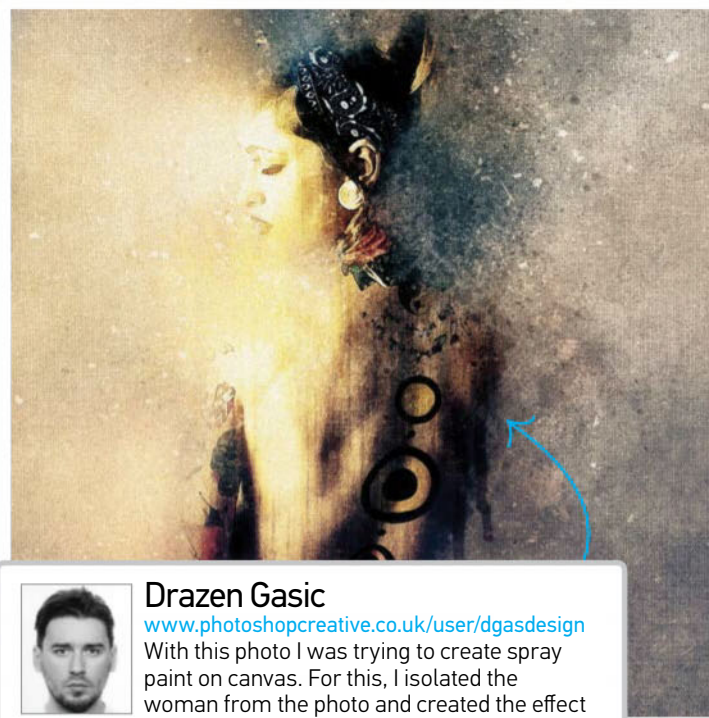
This image was created in a moment of frustration. Adjustment layers were key in bringing out the effect of the subject being underwater, and editing was made on the hair to make it look like it was floating.



Caroline Julia Moore

www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/CJMArt

I started with a photograph of a model, which I took. I used frequency separation and lots of dodge and burn. I used blend modes on stock images of the sea to add the water. Finally, lots of particle and lighting overlay layers were stacked.



Drazen Gasic

www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/dgasdesign

With this photo I was trying to create spray paint on canvas. For this, I isolated the woman from the photo and created the effect with brushes, patterns, blend modes and other techniques.

READERS' CHALLENGE

Upload your images to photoshopcreative.co.uk

We challenged you with these

In Issue 147, we challenged you to get creative with these four images. You were allowed to use any or all of the pictures, and whatever other resources you chose. Here's what you created.



Challenge entries

The best entries and overall challenge winner

1 Michael McLoughlin

Teapot Faced Fairy

I used all four images for this image. The teapot was converted into a house, with the clocks from the building image used too. The girl image was used inside the teapot.

2 Emma Littlefair

Sunday Afternoon Colour

I particularly liked the start image of the colour splodges and I used this as my inspiration. Turning the lady into a pencil drawing, I incorporated the splodges into the image and used a brush to add in the extra graphic effects.

3 Robin Crude

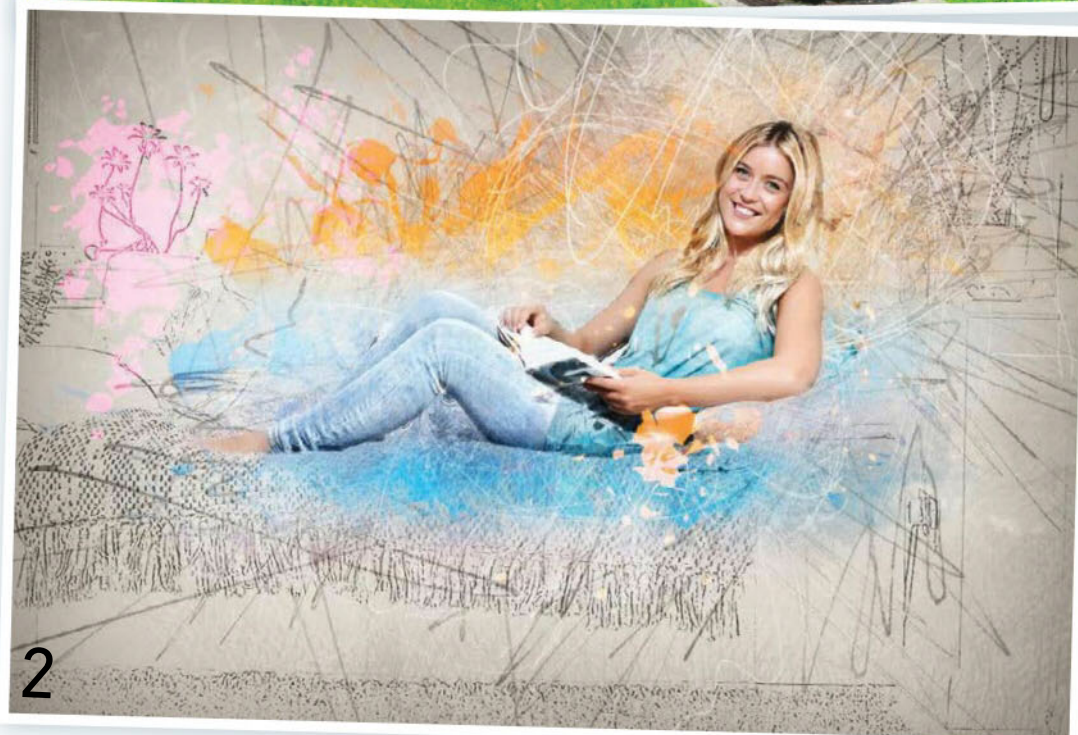
Beauty Among Flowers

I blended flowers into the start image of the girl and used lots of adjustment layers to bring out the colours and complete the final effect.

4 Trevor Budd

It's Never Just a Cup of Tea

To create this abstract image, I used many tools including blend modes, colour manipulation, multiple layers, scale and warp. Just the four images supplied for the challenge were used to make this artwork.



3



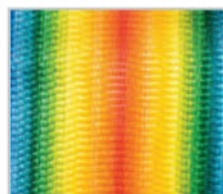
4



This issue's challenge

Think you can do better?
Prove it!

Get creative with the supplied images and you could win a fantastic prize! Use as many of the images as you like (from previous issues too!) and include your own photos if you wish. Head to www.photoshopcreative.co.uk and simply hit the Challenge link. Closing date: 2 March 2017.



THE PRIZE...

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Escape Motions Amberlight 2

This issue, one lucky winner will receive a copy of Escape Motions' incredible Amberlight 2 software! Ideal for producing backgrounds, abstract sci-fi pictures and lighting effects for your Photoshop compositions, this software is extremely fun to play around with, and creates exciting art. It's just as useful for beginners to get to grips with as it is for advanced digital artists wishing to inject new effects into their art.



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Graphéine

Graphéine has a focus on minimalism, but what looks simple is often far more difficult to create

Finding a strong, iconic but relatively uncomplicated visual identity is something that many companies strive for. Simplicity connects with a wider audience, but it's not as easy to create as you may think.

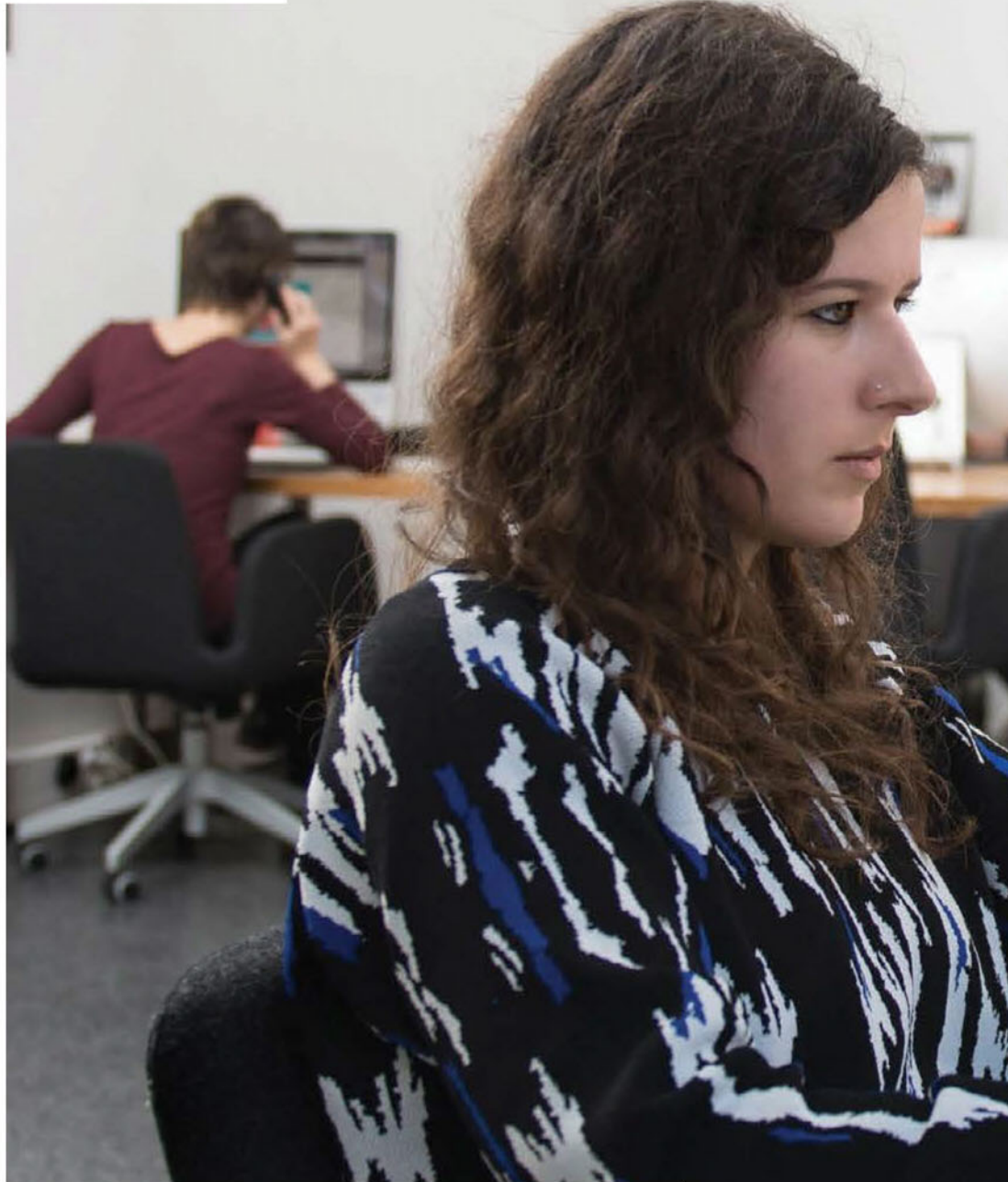
Founded in the 2000s, Graphéine studio – which consists of graduate designers designing logotypes, publishing documents and animation – approaches projects with a minimal philosophy. Led by Mathias Rabiot and Jérémie Fesson, the two creative directors of the agency, the studio focuses mainly on creation and consultancy in brand identity, and its work has a clear, cohesive look across its varied projects as a group.

“Our humanist vision can be seen in a lot of our projects,” says Céline Boursin, one of two office and project managers at Graphéine. “We are of course interested in experimental graphic design, but we don’t wish to push forward ‘visual feats’. What matters is solving a complex problem in the simplest way.”

An example of this is the brand identity the team created for the Saint-Étienne Opera House. The accent on the word ‘Opéra’ acts in the branding as a graphic representation of the pagoda that overlooks the roof of the building, a smile and the bottom section of an ‘O’. “For this project, our visual response was strongly impacted by a tough social climate within the teams of the opera,” says Céline. “We therefore carried out the communication campaign with the amazed portraits of all the employees, from technicians and reception staff to administrative staff. The result is a pluralistic and joyful campaign that has allowed all these people to regain a sense of belonging to this great opera house.”

No matter the size of the project though, the ideals always remain the same. The work on the Fontevraud Royal Abbey was one of the company’s flagship projects, and the challenge involved creating a relevant and modern brand image for a heritage venue, working on the visual identity of the venue and even creating original typography.

“This is neither Center Parcs nor Disneyland,” explains Céline, “And yet the project aims toward the ambition of being a real alternative to this type of resort. This project has kept us busy. The main icons we’ve designed have allowed us to spread the



ABOUT THE STUDIO

Graphéine
www.grapheine.com
[@grapheine](https://twitter.com/grapheine)

Graphéine is a graphic design advice agency founded in 2002 by like-minded and lively designers from various professional walks of life, all addicted to image. Graphéine primarily focuses on brand creation, visual identity, publishing, signage and web design.



Mathias Rabiot
CEO, partner and
creative director



Jérémie Fesson
CEO, partner and
creative director



A day in the life of Géraldine Martin

A day at Graphéine from the
perspective of an office manager

Morning mailbox

9:30 I'm the first to arrive at the office. I turn my computer on and go through a first email check. It's a quiet moment as the full team hasn't arrived.

Trello meeting

10:00 Everybody has arrived, the design team is all set. We usually meet for a weekly kick-off meeting, though everybody knows what he or she has to do, checking online our Trello board. It is updated throughout the day by everyone, following the advancements on the projects.

Starting on projects

11:00 Over the course of the morning, listening to a long playlist, each one of us loses the notion of time working on a creative direction, making a final touch, a colour arrangement, or writing emails. The phone rings for quote requests, project management and paper work. The creative director goes from one desk to another and follows up with ongoing projects.

Lunch

13:30 We finally have lunch. It's a relaxed moment. We share our ideas, comment on the news, and laugh a lot. It's a privileged time during which everybody expresses his/her personality.

Back to work

14:30 We get back to work. The creative director has a final review point with everybody. Some days we receive clients for meetings or visit them at their office. These kinds of meetings are always intense and take a lot of energy, for the better. Most of the time, afternoons are studious, flowing with good music.

Break

17:30 The end of the afternoon always requires some refill; for some a cigarette, for others a pastry or a digital break by checking out design books.

Finish up

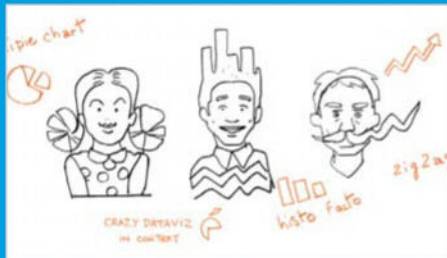
18:00 After a last moment of work, we drop our digital pens and have a debrief. Screenshots of the work done are posted on Trello, to be enjoyed by all starting tomorrow.



© Graphéine

Citéco poster project

How Graphéine branded Citéco, an economics museum in Paris



Roughs

01 It all starts with a team session, around a table, where we ping-pong ideas. At this stage, we don't think about the technical means that should be used for the final result. Here the goal was to create a playful poster series, playing with the codes of the representation of economy.



First layout

02 We then create a first mock-up in Photoshop, often with photomontages (images are taken from image banks). These kinds of projects are carried out in a short timeframe, so we do our best to be reactive and provide a clear art direction from the first mock-up.



Casting

03 When we get the go ahead from our client, we get in touch with photographers and stylists who are best suited for the project. Working with talented people from our network allows us to offer a tailored service to our client, in terms of budget, flexibility and especially on the final result; that is faithful to our first idea.



The photo shoot

04 The photo shoot is a major step in the design of the campaign. The quality of the visuals depends on a single session. For this series we worked with a great team of talented people, including photographer Gabriel De La Chappelle, hairdresser/makeup artist Rimi Ura and stylist Patricia Alves.



Retouching

05 We select the best pictures, the ones that seem the most balanced and eye-catching. A beauty retouch is done with attention paid to skin, light, colours and contrast on the selected images.



Assembling for the final poster

06 Finally, we put the visuals into the poster frame. We choose typographies, layout and background patterns. The slogan translates as: "Grow your interest for economy!" The visuals are also used on brochures, websites and event signage.



UNLOCK BLEND MODES CREATE YOUR BEST ART

Discover some of the best-kept secrets about blend modes, and see what they're really capable of achieving

We probably all have our own ideas on what blend modes are great for, and many of us will call upon them in most of the projects we do in Photoshop. However, blend modes are capable of doing so much more than you might realise – edits you never even imagined they could do.

We're going to explore some of the more unusual tasks blend modes can do, and really put them to the test. For example, did you know they can be used to completely transform a black-and-white image, and turn it into a coloured masterpiece? Perhaps you

never knew that blend modes can provide sneaky shortcuts for cloning difficult edges and removing unwanted halos. We even show how you can create incredible out-of-bounds effects and double-exposure images using blend modes. The creative possibilities are truly endless, and we're about to open your eyes to some of the exciting tricks that are possible.

Make sure you download the start files from the FileSilo to follow along, then have a go on your own images.

On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN...



TRANSFORM WITH COLOUR

Turn your black-and-white images into colourful masterpieces with blend modes.



REPLACE BORING SKIES

Swap dull skies with far more interesting ones thanks to a few handy blend-mode tricks.



MAKE OUT-OF-BOUNDS ART

Get the most of blend modes in your creative projects, and composite something surreal.



ADD GLOWING-LIGHT EFFECTS

Create atmosphere and mood by utilising blend modes and adding light effects to your shots.



COMP DOUBLE EXPOSURES

Blend images together and make your portraits stand out by mastering this popular technique.



ENHANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Use the Brush tool (B), pick the white colour, change the blend mode to Soft Light and click above the image to make the highlights brighter.

CHANGE THE OPACITY

To make the effect of the blend mode look soft, reduce the opacity of the layer.

CREATE TEXTURE

It's possible to create textures in an image simply by making use of blend modes. The Multiply blend mode is just perfect for placing and building up creative textures, and making them look completely natural. For this creative portrait, we made use of blend modes to create cracked textures. Open the image of the woman from the FileSilo. Add 'crack texture_2.jpg', place it on her chest, use the Hue/Saturation command (Cmd/Ctrl+U) set to 0, -100, 0, then change the blend mode to Multiply (Opacity: 70%). Now place 'crack texture.jpg', place it around the woman's body, use the Warp tool (Edit>Transform>Warp), adjust the shape and then change the blend mode to Multiply, with Opacity set to 100%.

We added even more effects to this image with blend modes to complement the textures. To bring in the highlight details, use the images in the folder with a black background, change the blend mode to Screen and place it as we've done here. Finally create a new layer, place it on top of all the layers, paint it with yellow (#fefac8) and change the blend mode to Color (Opacity: 10%).

Colour a black-and-white photo

Ever wish you could revitalise a black-and-white photo with colour? Well, drag one into Photoshop and do it with blend modes! We'll also turn to adjustment layers and Color Fill layers to assist, so we can really bring the photo to life.

If the image is in greyscale, go to Image>Mode>RGB Color. Prep with some adjustment layers. Lighten midtones with Levels or Curves. Get a warm skin vibe going with Photo Filter or Color Balance. When ready to colour, add Color Fill layers. (To help with colour selection, use the Eyedropper tool on reference photos.) Set the blend mode for the Color Fills to Color. Invert the masks (Cmd/Ctrl+I), then paint with white in the masks to add the colour.



EXPERT TIP

Colour with contrast

Use the Color blend mode to build up the basic colouring when renovating a black-and-white photo. Also try painting with a contrast mode like Overlay. If Overlay is too strong, use Soft Light. Another way to tone things down is to lower the opacity of the colour layer.

Replace a sky

Need to overhaul a bland sky? Perhaps there are only a few clouds, maybe none. How do you make things more dramatic? Use blend modes!

Find another image that has a more thrilling sky. Place atop the original image and set the imported layer's blend mode to Overlay. If you need to remove parts of the new sky, add a layer mask and paint black with a soft-edged brush in the mask.

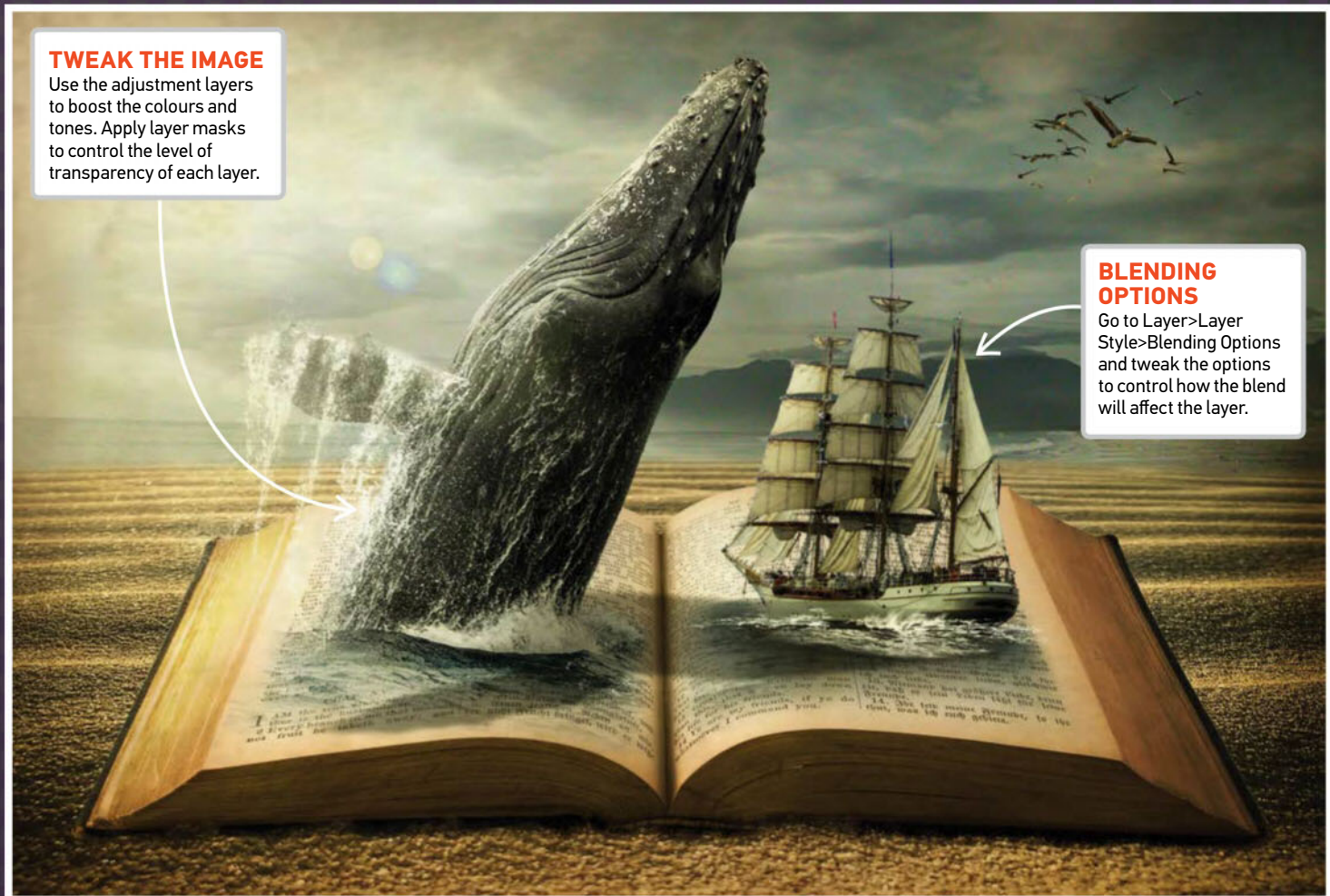
You can stack more than one sky to form an intricate cloud network. Make good use of the layer masks to edit your way to the perfect skyscape.



Create an out-of-bounds effect

Blend modes can be used for more creative projects. In this out-of-bounds composition, we started with the Soft Light mode to gently lighten some areas to produce a misty effect. Then we created a neutral layer, changed the Blending Options to Overlay

and painted the shadows and highlights using the Dodge/Burn tool. Next, we applied the Lens Flare filter, setting it to Screen to remove the dark pixels. Finally, we boosted the mood and feel of our composition by placing a texture at the top, set to Multiply.



Apply Soft Light mode

01 Place an image of a storm cloud in your document. Stack a seascape image, then set the blend mode to Soft Light. The areas where the blend colour is lighter or darker than 50% grey are lightened and darkened. Apply a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer and reduce the Saturation to boost the effect.



Overlay-neutral layer

02 Place more images and create a neutral layer on top of each layer. Press Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+N. Tick 'Use previous layer to create a clipping mask', set the mode to Overlay and tick 'Fill with Overlay-neutral color (50% Grey)'. Grab the Dodge/Burn tool and paint the shadows and highlights with it.

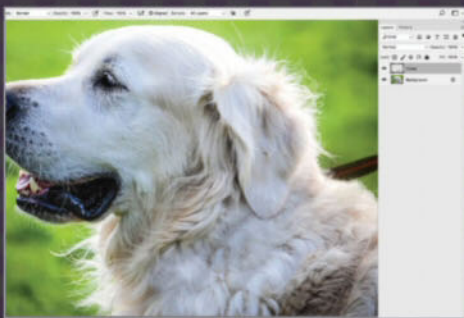


Add more effects

03 Create a new layer and fill with black. Go to Filter>Render>Lens Flare and apply the effect. Set the blend mode to Screen, then move it over the canvas. Place a texture image on top of the layer stack. Change the blend mode to Multiply to further intensify the gloomy effect.

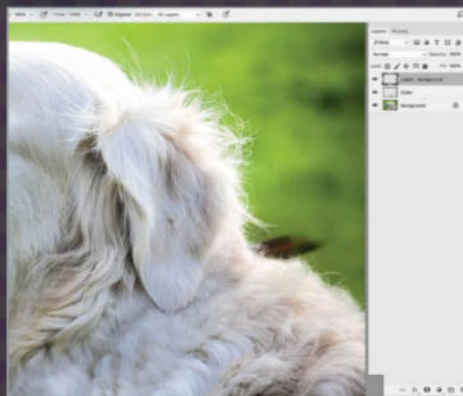
Clone tricky edges

Editing along fuzzy edges can be difficult, but blend modes are a welcome ally when working to remove something that's darker or lighter than the edges, and contrasts with the background. Create a new layer above and select the Clone Stamp tool. In the options bar, set Sample to All Layers (or Current & Below if there are other layers above that you don't want to sample). If the unwanted object is darker than the edge, set the layer to Lighten. If the object is lighter than the edge, set the layer to Darken. Clone edge and background texture over the object.



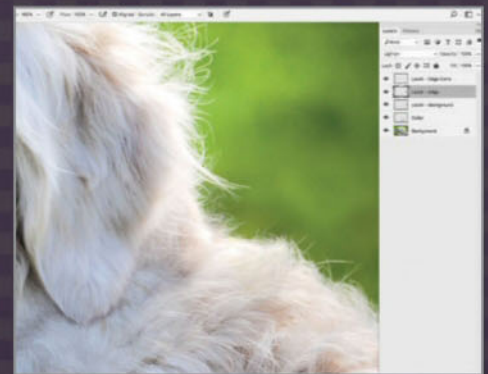
Hide the collar

01 Open 'CloneTrickyEdges-Start.psd'. Create a new layer above the Background. Select the Clone Stamp tool. In the Options bar, set Sample to All Layers. Ensure you're using a soft-edged brush at 100% brush Opacity. Option/Alt+click to sample fur, then paint along the collar. Re-sample as needed.



Remove the leash

02 Create a new layer. Now sample an area from the background. Paint on the leash to hide it. Re-sample as needed. Stay away from the fur edge until the next step.



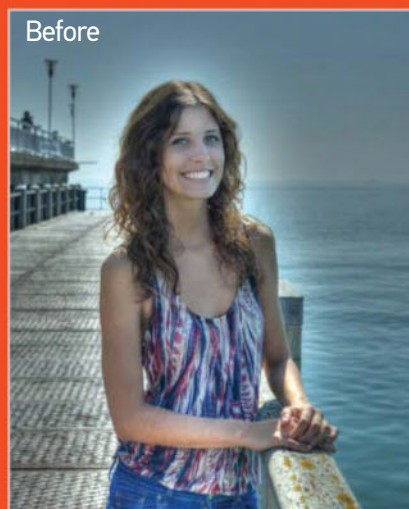
Clear up the edge

03 Create a new layer and set it to Lighten. Sample from a fur edge, then paint where the leash meets the fur. Because the fur is lighter than the background, it won't be cloned over. Re-sample as needed.

Reduce halos

Some types of editing, such as HDR-style processing, produce halos. These can occur where dark and bright edges are next to each other, and they're typically an unwanted phenomenon. The good news is that blend modes can help you to get rid of these glows.

Start by creating a new layer above the target layer and setting its blend mode to Darken. Select the Clone Stamp tool. In the Options bar, set Sample to All Layers. (If there are other layers above the clone layer you want to avoid, set to Current & Below.) Option/Alt+click the background texture, then paint to clone over the halo. Re-sample as needed.



Before



Make a glowing effect

Blend modes are capable of producing stunning glow effects to add atmosphere to any scene. Open the start image for this project, create a new layer and fill with black. Set the Foreground colour to white, and grab a soft brush. Start painting some random lines at different sizes to define the path and direction of the light source. Go to Filter>Blur>Radial Blur. Set the Amount to 100, Blur Method: Zoom, Quality: Best and drag the Blur Center to line up with the light direction. Re-apply the effect a few times to smooth the effect. Change the blend mode to Screen. With the Screen blending mode, the area on the layer that's black will disappear, leaving the white areas unchanged. Create a new layer, fill with black and apply the Lens Flare filter. Change it to Screen to add a new glowing effect.



EXPERT TIP

Blending with layers

Blend modes can be used with adjustment layers or fill layers. When you tweak the adjustment layer or the fill layer, the blend mode will be directly affected and will change the way the colour of the pixels interact with the blend mode, producing a totally different effect.

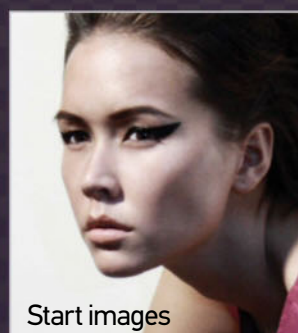


Before



Composite a double exposure

Creating a double-exposure image is made easy thanks to blend modes. Find two photos you want to blend, and place one on top of another, then try different blend modes to find out which one works best for you. In this example, we stacked the woman on top of the swimming pool image. Then we changed the blend mode to Linear Dodge. This blend mode brightens the image and increases the contrast, creating an interesting effect. Finally, we duplicated the woman's layer and added a layer mask to partially show the skin texture and colours. We also added a mask on the swimming pool layer and applied an extra filter to complete the effect.



Start images



On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative

Essentials

Works with



Elements CS CC

What you'll learn

Use blend modes and layer masks to composite a creative portrait

 **Time taken**
2 hours

Expert

Andre Villanueva



"If I were to be shipped off to a deserted Photoshop island and could only take two features with me, I'd pack layer masks and blend modes. Most of my work involves those two to usually substantial degrees.

"I'm an art director based in Alabama, USA, often gliding back and forth between the worlds of print and web. Whenever I'm not glued to my MacBook Pro, I enjoy spending time with family."

Blend with layer masks

Merge multiple landscapes with a portrait using blend modes, layer masks and adjustment layers

Layer masks are one of the most useful features in Photoshop. What better way to practise masking than with creative-portrait effects and blend modes?

Blending multiple images to make interesting juxtapositions can often result in startlingly beautiful artwork. You can create this effect in Photoshop by combining blend modes with layer masks. Push matters further with Photoshop's powerful features, precisely dictating where the blends occur with masks, adding multiple images and refining with adjustments.

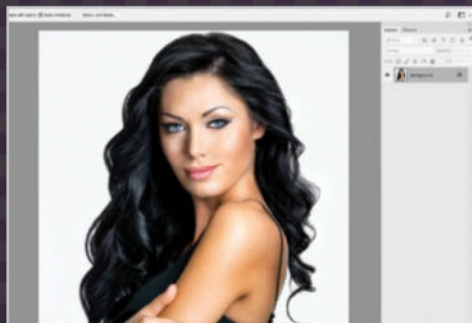
When stacking layers for this kind of creative portrait, you'll usually want the blend modes. Although knowing what each blend mode does is useful, you can just cycle through them to see if something clicks. Continue to blend by applying a layer mask and painting with black using a soft-edged brush to melt away edges and remove areas that don't contribute to the desired outcome.

In this tutorial you'll merge landscapes from the FileSilo with the portrait available to download from Dreamstime (ID: 27266435). You'll finalise with filters and adjustments for a blended masterpiece!



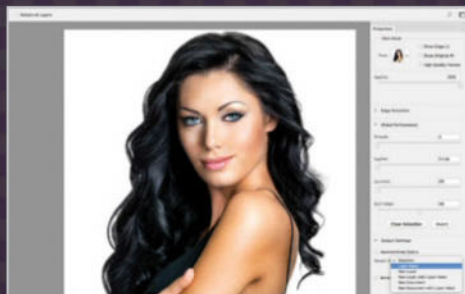
Start image

© Valuavitaly | Dreamstime.com



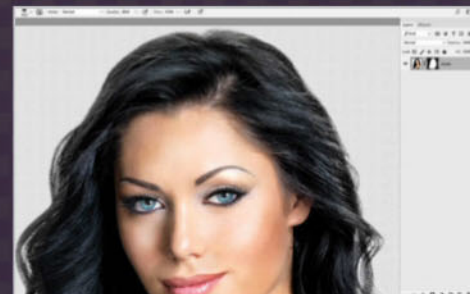
Select the model

01 Download the start image from Dreamstime (ID: 27266435). Use the Quick Selection tool to select the model. Resize the brush with the [and] keys. Get as decent a selection as possible. Don't worry about refining the hair edges – that's next.



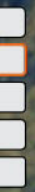
Refine the selection

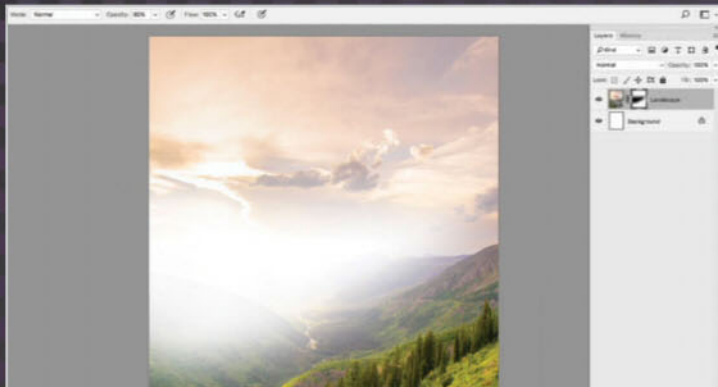
02 Go to Select>Select and Mask (non-CC: Refine Edge). Paint with the Refine Edge Brush tool (non-CC: Refine Radius tool) along the edges of the hair to fine-tune. Resize the brush with the [and] keys. When done, set Output To to Layer Mask. Click OK.



Tidy the mask

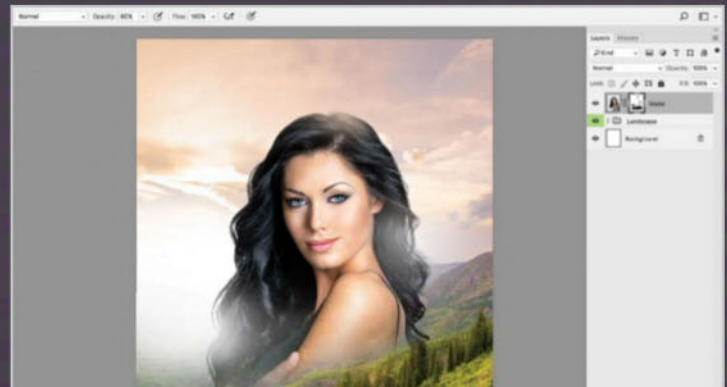
03 (Elements: Click mask.) Using the Brush tool and a Soft Round brush, paint black to hide and white to restore areas. Use the Zoom tool to get up close. Adjust brush Size/Opacity as needed. Decrease/increase brush hardness with the { and } keys. When done, save as a PSD and close it.





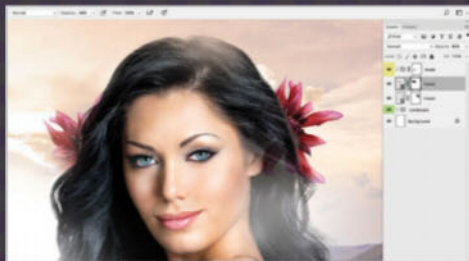
Blend the landscape

04 Open 'Start.psd'. Go to File>Place (CC: Place Embedded) and grab 'Landscape.psd'. Scale up and position to fill the canvas before committing. Click the Add Layer Mask button in the Layers palette. Paint black (80-100% brush Opacity) in the mask to fade the central area.



Place the model

05 Go to File>Place (CC: Place Embedded), grab the model PSD you saved earlier. Scale it down a bit and position before committing. Click the Add Layer Mask button in the Layers palette. Paint black (40-100% brush Opacity) in the mask to fade the bottom and soften the hair edges.



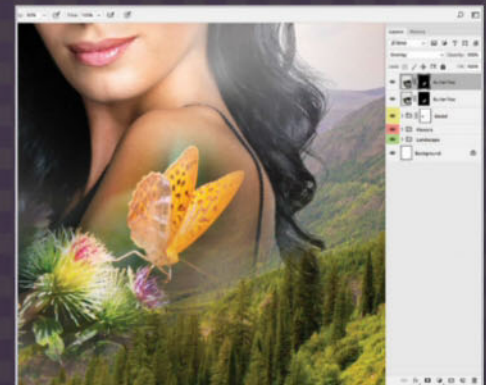
Add some flowers

06 Open 'Flower.psd'. Select the flower with the Quick Selection tool. Add a layer mask. Save and close. In the main PSD, select the landscape layer. Place 'Flower.psd'. Scale down, rotate and position before confirming. Add a layer mask, paint with black (40-60% brush Opacity) to fade/remove areas. Duplicate (Cmd/Ctrl+J). Position/scale/rotate with Free Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+T).



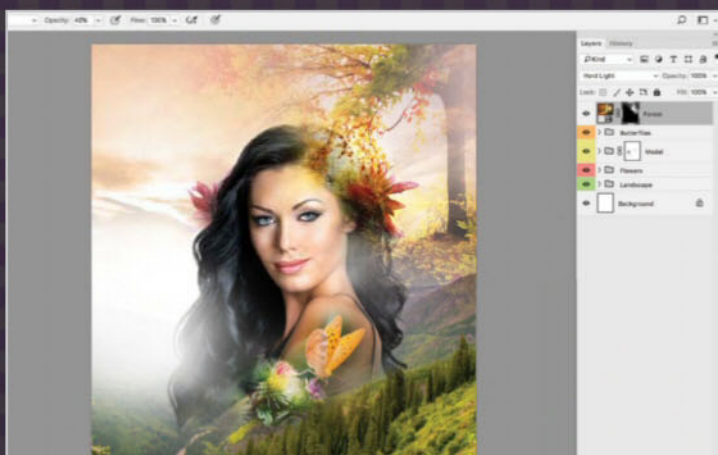
Blend the butterfly

07 Select the model layer and place 'Butterflies.jpg'. Set the blend mode to Hard Light, scale down, rotate (if desired) and position before confirming. Option/Alt+click the Add Layer Mask button, then paint back with white (60-80% brush Opacity) in the mask to reveal a butterfly.



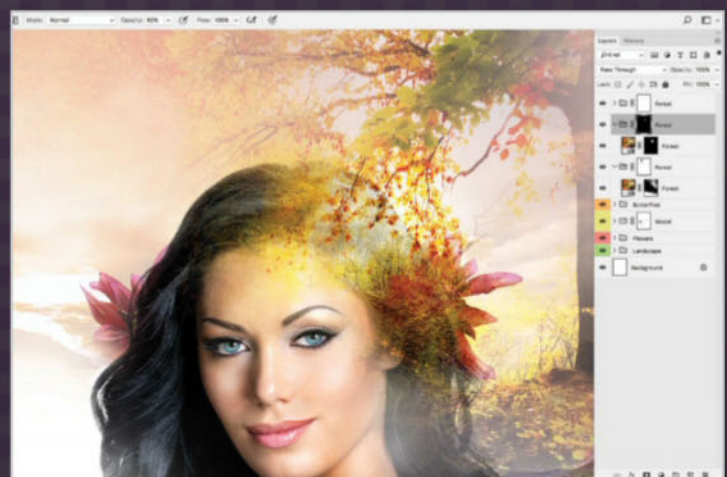
Reinforce the butterfly

08 Reinforce the butterfly by duplicating the layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J). Change the blend mode to Overlay. Adjust the mask if needed. Paint with black to tone down, and white to reinstate areas.



Blend the forest

09 Place 'Forest.jpg'. Set to the Hard Light blend mode, scale up and position at the top before committing the place. Option/Alt+click the Add Layer Mask button. Paint back with white (40-80% brush Opacity) in the mask to bring back some of the forest.



Reinforce the forest

10 Duplicate the forest layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J). Move the layer with the Move tool to redistribute the forest texture. Adjust the mask if needed. If you like, duplicate again to add more texture.



Reinforce the landscape

11 Place 'Rock.jpg'. Set to Lighten blend mode, scale down a bit and position the rocky incline in the hair on the left before committing. Add layer mask, paint with black (60-100% brush Opacity) to remove all but the rock. Place 'Landscape.jpg' again to cover bare space on left. Set to Multiply and mask.



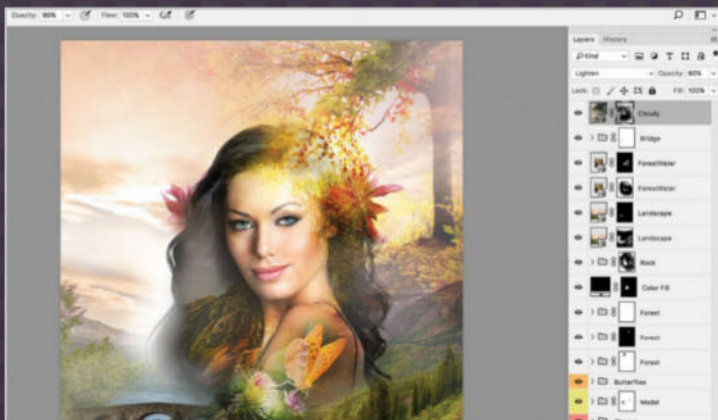
Add extra forest texture

12 Place 'ForestWater.jpg'. Set to Overlay blend mode, scale down and position on the model before committing the place. Add a layer mask and paint with black (60-100% brush Opacity) in the mask to reduce. Duplicate the layer to add additional texture. Adjust the mask.



Insert a bridge

13 Place 'Bridge.jpg'. Scale down, rotate counterclockwise a smidgen and position at the lower left before committing. Option/Alt+click the Add Layer Mask button, then paint with white (40-100% brush Opacity) in the mask to reveal the bridge.



Get hazy

14 Place 'Cloudy.jpg'. Set to the Lighten blend mode and scale up to fill the canvas before committing. Drop the Opacity to 60%. Add a layer mask. Paint with black (60-90% brush Opacity) in the mask to reduce.



Bring in a beach

15 Place 'Beach.jpg'. Scale down a little and position to the left before committing. Option/Alt+click the Add Layer Mask button, then paint back with white (40-100% brush Opacity) in the mask to reveal. If desired, duplicate to reinforce.



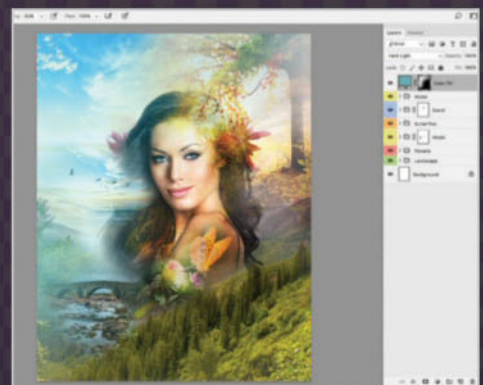
Introduce some clouds

16 Place 'Beach-NOBirds.jpg'. Scale up and position to fill the top-left corner with clouds. Option/Alt+click the Add Layer Mask button, paint back with white (60-100% brush Opacity) in the mask to reveal.



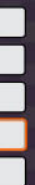
Reinforce the model

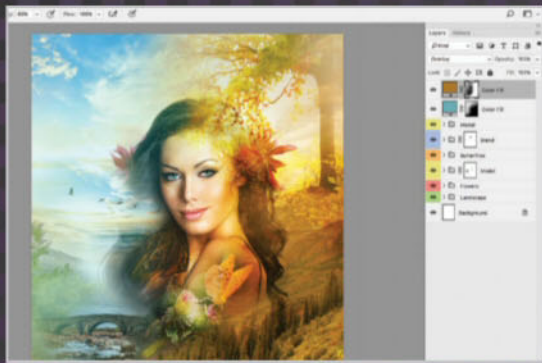
17 Select the model layer and duplicate. Drag the duplicate to the top of the layer stack to bolster the model. Set the blend mode to Soft Light and drop Opacity to 40%. Paint black in the mask to reduce.



Apply cool colouring

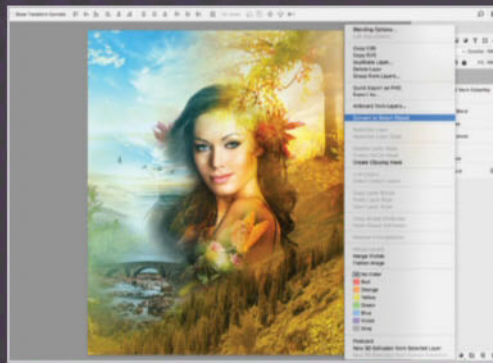
18 Click 'Create new fill or adjustment layer' button, choose Solid Color. Pick #68acb6. Set to Hard Light blend mode. Click the mask, press Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert. Paint with white (40-80% brush Opacity) in the mask to add cool colouring to the left.





Add warm colouring

19 Click the 'Create new fill or adjustment layer' button, and choose Solid Color. Pick #ac771a. Set to Overlay blend mode. Paint black (40-100% brush Opacity) in the mask to remove/reduce the colour on cool areas on the left, and if desired, to tone down in areas on the right.



Merge the layers

20 Scrutinise your composition and make any last positioning and masking changes. Select the top layer. Merge layers by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+Option/Alt+Shift+E. Photoshop/CC: right-click on the layer and choose Convert to Smart Object.

Expert tip



Camera Raw filter (CC)

Basic settings in this filter include Temperature, which controls the warm/cool colour balance. Contrast and Clarity boost the image, while Shadows and Blacks help to reclaim detail in dark depths. Detail settings enable sharpening and noise reduction. Effects settings include Dehaze, which is perfect for toning down (or even increasing) haze. Also under Effects is Post Crop Vignette, which controls the image's edges.



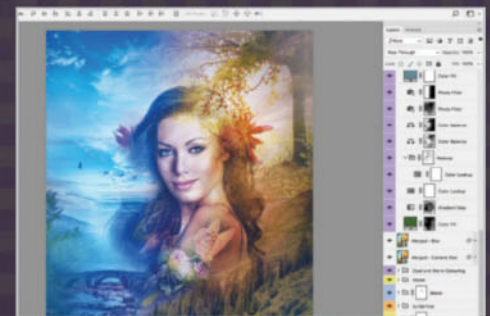
Bring out detail

21 (CC: Go to Filter>Camera Raw Filter. Play with the settings to bring out detail and tweak the look. When satisfied, continue to the next step.) Go to Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask (Elements: Enhance>Unsharp Mask). Increase the Amount setting to sharpen. Be sparing with Radius and Threshold. Click OK.



Merge and blur

22 Merge layers again (Cmd/Ctrl+Option/Alt+Shift+E). (Photoshop/CC: Convert to Smart Object.) Go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur. Set to 4.7 pixels. Click OK. (Photoshop/CC: paint black (40-100% brush Opacity) in Smart Filters mask to restore clarity.) (Elements: Add a layer mask and paint black to restore clarity.)



Finalise

23 Use various adjustment layers to finalise the look. Photo Filter can help you push warm or cool colouring. Photoshop/CC users can use Color Balance as another way to adjust warm/cool colouring. Use Vibrance or Hue/Saturation to regulate vibrancy. Try other adjustments. Save your work.

Expert tip

Multiple layer masks

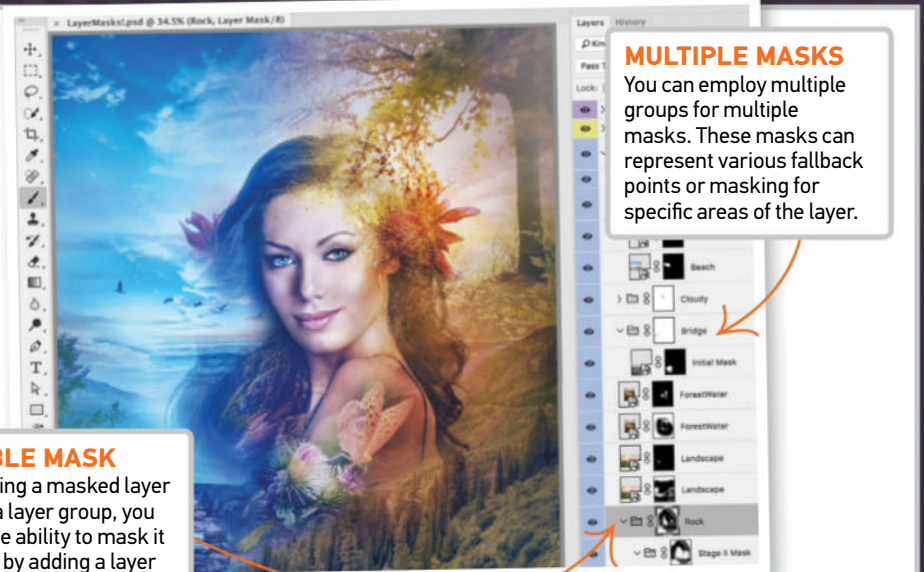
There are times when having the ability to apply one or more extra masks can be a great aid. How about when you're unsure of your next masking steps, and you really don't want to mess up the carefully produced mask you have so far? What if you want to mix brushwork with gradients? Maybe you need to mask certain parts of a layer, and you want to segregate the masking. In Photoshop/CC, place the masked layer in a group (drag into an existing one, or select the layer and press Cmd/Ctrl+G). Then add a layer mask to the group.

DOUBLE MASK

By putting a masked layer inside a layer group, you have the ability to mask it further by adding a layer mask to the group.

MULTIPLE MASKS

You can employ multiple groups for multiple masks. These masks can represent various fallback points or masking for specific areas of the layer.



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Essentials

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What you'll learn

Use Smart Objects and adjustment layers while drawing for faster workflow

Time taken
1-2 hours

Expert

Jenni Sanders



"It took me a while to get into Smart Objects, but once I got the hang of them, I realised what a powerful and useful tool they were! Groups are good up to a point, but the editability of Smart Objects is on another level!"

"From the moment I saw my dad manipulate photos as a child, I was hooked and have since worked entirely within the industry of photography and Photoshop."

Combine photos and drawings

Bring your drawings to life with some dynamic perspective interaction and by incorporating Smart Objects

Get your imagination fired up with this creative piece. By combining perspective and shadows you can make it appear as though a drawing is interacting with a photograph. In this tutorial an octopus is reaching out to grab the arm of the person drawing it, but once you've got a hang of the technique, you can mix in your own sketches and photographs to create completely new images.

The workflow of this tutorial relies heavily on Smart Objects to keep layers and effects editable,

so for anyone using Photoshop below CS2 or Elements, check out the Expert Tip for how to work without them. This method of non-destructive editing enables a much higher level of flexibility and reduction of mistakes; however, Smart Objects do require more computing power.

The best way to begin this project is with a sketch. Get your angles right either on paper or digitally before you dive in to the details. It's also an idea to have your photos from the start, so you can plan how the drawing will interact with them.



Create a sketch

01 Create a new portrait canvas in Photoshop. Using a small brush, sketch out the shape of your design, bearing in mind how it will interact with the photographs of the arms. This sketch could also be done by hand and scanned in or photographed. Remember to keep the perspective correct. Feel free to download our sketch from the FileSilo.



Add in an arm

02 Add 'grabbed-hand.psd' by dragging it from your file browser or going to File>Place. You could also photograph your own pose. Position it in the place you planned in your sketch. Create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N) and name it Outline.



Expert edit

Creating the reference sketch



Create a basic outline

01 In order to get the correct perspective, you need to know which part of your sketch is going to be reaching out of the page before you start.



Draw the main shapes

02 Sketch where your 'grabbed' object is going to be as your starting point, then continue to draw the parts that are 'staying on the page'.



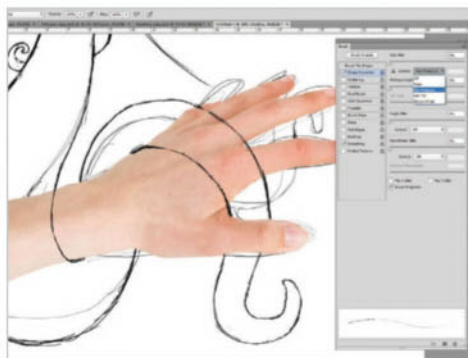
Add some perspective

03 Next, work out the angle at which your drawing will reach out – even take a reference photo. Remember it will get larger as it gets closer to the screen.



Draw the interaction

04 Create the interaction between the drawing and your object. This part will most likely change when you have your actual photographs, but it's good to have a basic plan.



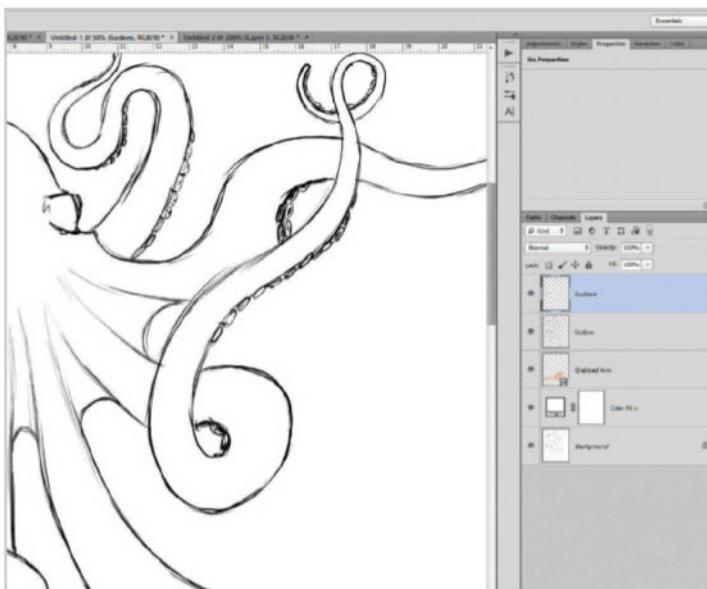
Draw an outline

03 Using a brush at 80-100% Hardness, draw a bolder version of your sketch. If you have a graphics tablet, turn on Pen Pressure inside Shape Dynamics (F5>Shape Dynamics). Keep the lines sketchy, and don't be afraid to change your design now the arm photograph is in.



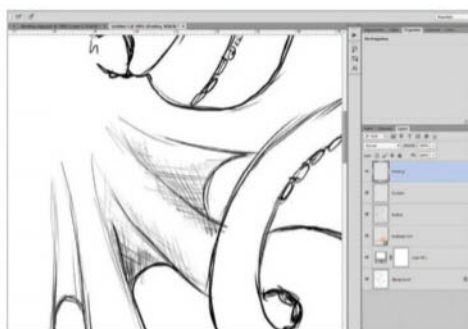
Prepare your canvas

04 We no longer need the sketch reference. Create a new Solid Color adjustment layer from the Black/White circle icon in the Layers panel. Set it to be white and drag it just above the Background layer. Create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N), and name it Suckers.



Sketch suckers

05 Sketch suckers on the tentacles using the same brush and style as before. Keep in mind how the tentacles would twist; sometimes they would be visible, sometimes they wouldn't be. Keeping these on a separate layer enables us to erase and change them easily without affecting the main outline.

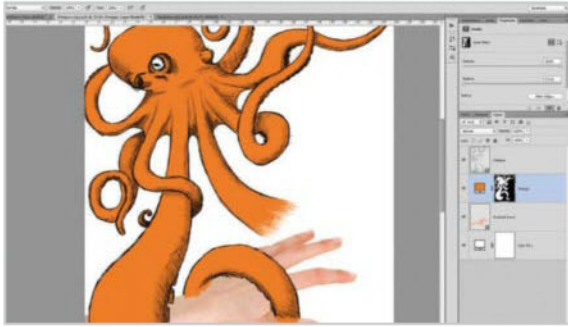


Crosshatch shading

06 Create a new layer and call it Shading. Turn your brush Opacity down to 50-60%. Imagining the light source is in the top-left, start adding shading in a crosshatched style. This means shading using diagonal lines in opposite directions. The tighter the lines, the darker the shading.

Complete the shading

07 Continue to use the crosshatching technique all around the octopus. Always keep in mind the light source in the top-left, shading mostly on the right-hand side of the tentacles. Play around with the length of the strokes, especially on the section that's closer to the camera.



Colour in the body

08 Select all sketch layers, Ctrl/right-click and pick Convert to Smart Object (CS2 and Elements users, see tip on the right). Create an orange Solid Color layer underneath, but above the arm. Fill the layer mask in black, and use white on the mask to colour the entire octopus. It doesn't matter if you overlap the arm. Fade out the unfinished tentacle.



Add blue shading

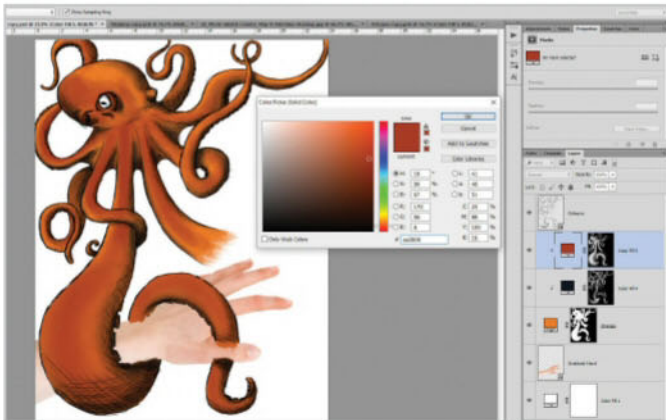
09 Create a new Solid Color layer, colour #0f161f. Drag it above the orange, and Ctrl/right-click>Create Clipping Mask. Set your brush to 10% Opacity, 20% Flow. Gradually build up shading around the octopus to give it shape – use your crosshatching as a guide.

Expert tip



Smart Object alternatives

Elements doesn't support Smart Objects, but there is a workaround. Keep your sketch and colour layers separate, and when you've finished, group them (Cmd/Ctrl+G) and call the group Octopus. Duplicate this group, turn off the visibility, drag to the bottom of the layers and rename it RECOVERY. Merge your Octopus group, follow the tutorial and apply filters while still having an editable version if needed. Repeat at stages throughout the tutorial.



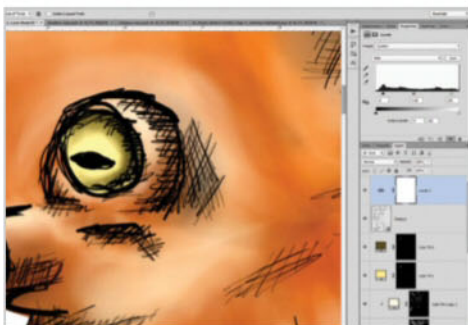
Paint more depth

10 Create another Solid Color layer, set to #aa3806, and again make it a clipping mask. Gradually build up the stronger colour around the octopus, giving it more shape and depth. Using Solid Color layers means that at any time we can adjust the colours without having to redraw the shading.



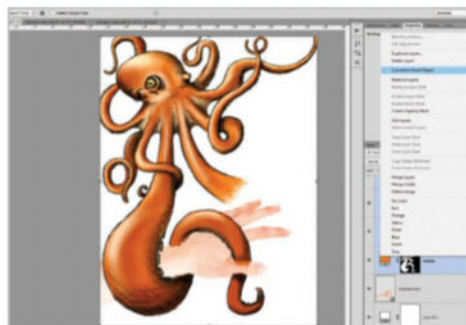
Introduce highlights

11 Create two more Solid Color layers, set to #faeac0 and #fff8e5. Fill both masks black, and paint the darker layer first. Use it for highlights, lightness on the underside of the tentacles and on the webbing between tentacles. Use the brighter layer for some sharp highlights.



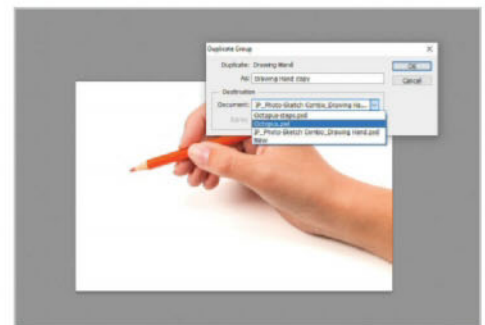
Work on the final colours

12 Create another two Solid Color layers: #ffeb8e and #5c4d17. Use these two layers to colour in the eye; the bright yellow as the main fill, the darker as some shading. Create a Levels adjustment layer from the Black/White circle icon in the Layers panel. Set the values to 22, 1.16 and 231.



Convert to Smart Object

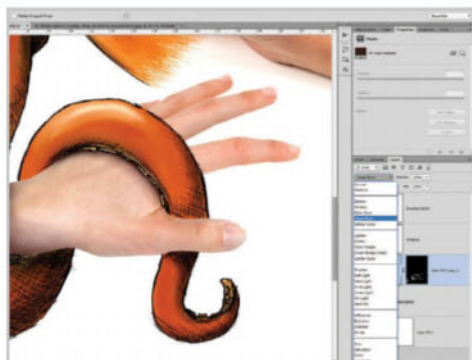
13 Select all your layers, excluding the white Solid Color layer and the arm, and Ctrl/right-click>Convert to Smart Object. This allows for further edits to the octopus, while still protecting the drawing, retaining editable properties inside. Simply double-click the layer preview to open it if needed.



Add a second arm

14 Open 'Drawing Arm.psd'. Ctrl/right-click the group>Duplicate and select the octopus canvas from the drop-down menu. Don't drag in or Place this file, or it will have a white background. Drag it above the octopus. Select the Octopus layer, Cmd/Ctrl+G, add a mask and tidy any overlaps.





Paint in shadows

15 Create a Solid Color layer and drag it just above the Grabbed Arm. Ctrl/right-click>Create Clipping Mask. Set the layer's blend mode to Linear Burn. Use a 10% Opacity, 20% Flow brush and start to gradually build up shadows on areas where the tentacle overlaps the hand.



Restore skin colour

16 Duplicate your Solid Color layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J). Select the bottom layer and set its blend mode to Overlay. This will help restore the colour that was lost when we darkened the skin. You may need to adjust the mask using black and white to add more or less colour where needed.



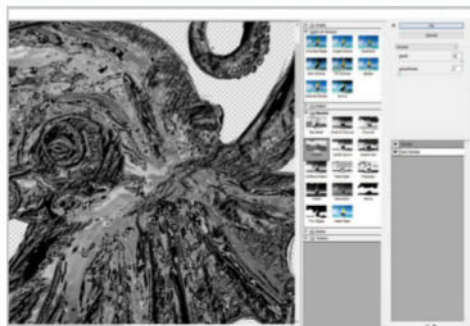
Add a pencil shadow

17 Create another new Solid Color layer and drag it above the Octopus, but below the Drawing Hand layer. Using a small, low-opacity brush, draw in a subtle shadow underneath the tip of the pencil going from top-left to the right. Remember that the light source is top-left.



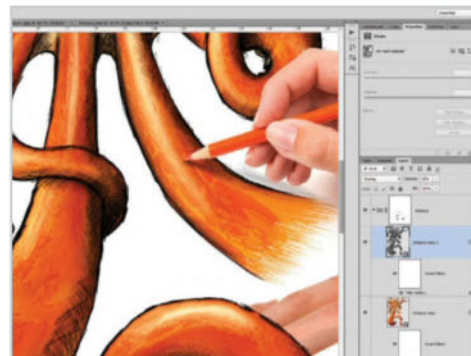
Use the Filter Gallery

18 Select your Octopus Smart Object layer. Duplicate it (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and select the bottom copy. Go to Filter>Filter Gallery. Select Rough Pastels from the Artistic section and set the values to: Length: 4, Detail: 1, Texture: Canvas, Scaling: 100%, Relief: 20 and Light: Top Left. Hit OK.



Create an octopus texture

19 Select the top duplicate and go to the Filter Gallery again. Add Dark Strokes from the Brush Strokes section with values 5, 5 and 2. Add a new filter layer using the icon in the bottom-right corner. Add Chrome from the Sketch section with Detail at 10 and Smoothness at 0.



Refine the texture

20 Hit OK to exit the Filter Gallery. Notice how the filters have been applied as Smart Filters, so we can adjust the values at any time by double-clicking the Filter Gallery label. Set the top Chrome layer to Overlay, Opacity at 30%.



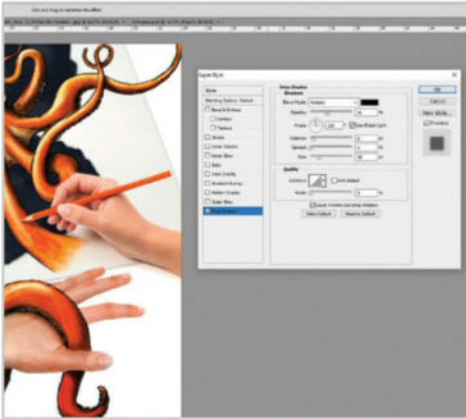
Make an ink splat

21 Go to Brusheezy.com and download a set of watercolour brushes. Load your .abr file into Photoshop via the Brush panel's cog icon and pick Load Brushes. Create a Solid Color layer using #090f1b. Drag it below all layers, fill the mask in black and paint a large 'ink splat' on the mask.



Insert paper

22 Insert the file 'Paper.psd' via File>Place or by dragging from your File Explorer. Position it underneath the octopus, making sure that some of the tentacles are reaching off the page. Hit Enter to place. If you need to change position, hit Cmd/Ctrl+T to transform again.



Give the paper a shadow

23 Ctrl/right-click the Paper layer and go to Blending Options. Select Drop Shadow and change the Opacity to 40%, Angle to 103, Distance to 8, Spread to 0 and Size to 40. Hit OK.



Create an arm shadow

24 Create a Solid Color layer and drag it underneath all your layers. Fill its mask with black. Select a normal, round paint brush and set its Hardness to 0%, Opacity: 10% and Flow: 20%. Gradually paint in a shadow underneath the Grabbed Arm by painting white on the layer mask.



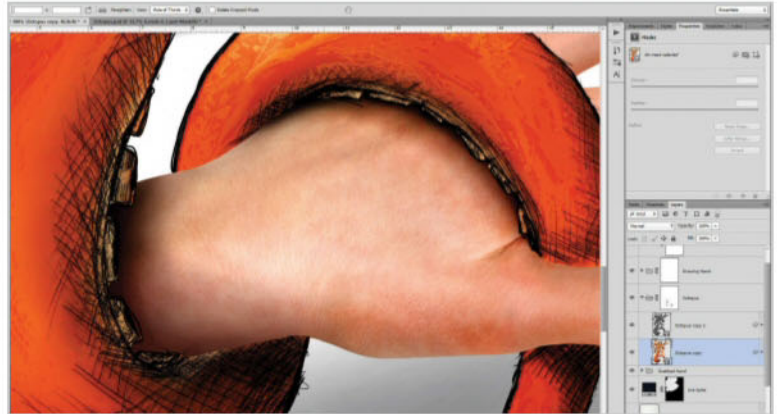
Make a tentacle shadow

25 Using the same Solid Color layer, create shadows for any other parts of the octopus that leave the paper. Keep the shadow soft and at a low opacity, remembering to make it darker the closer the tentacle is to the ground.



Create final contrast

26 Now is a good time to add any final global changes to your octopus, for example adding some contrast. A good way to do this is to create a Levels adjustment layer and drag the black slider slightly to the right, and the white slider slightly to the left to increase the overall contrast.



Check your details

27 Before you finish up, zoom in and check that your sketch is nice and neat – especially where the drawing interacts with the photograph. If you need to make any adjustments, simply double-click on the Octopus layer, edit and save!

Take it further

Utilise your Smart Objects

EXPERIMENT WITH BACKGROUNDS

Use your imagination with the background; maybe try the octopus creeping out from a sketched ocean scene.

SWAP PHOTOS

Add in your own photographs, for example your own arms, or have the octopus grabbing your whole body – get creative!

BRAND-NEW COLOURS

Double-click your Octopus Smart Object and change the Solid Color layers to get a completely different look.

CHANGE THE SKETCH

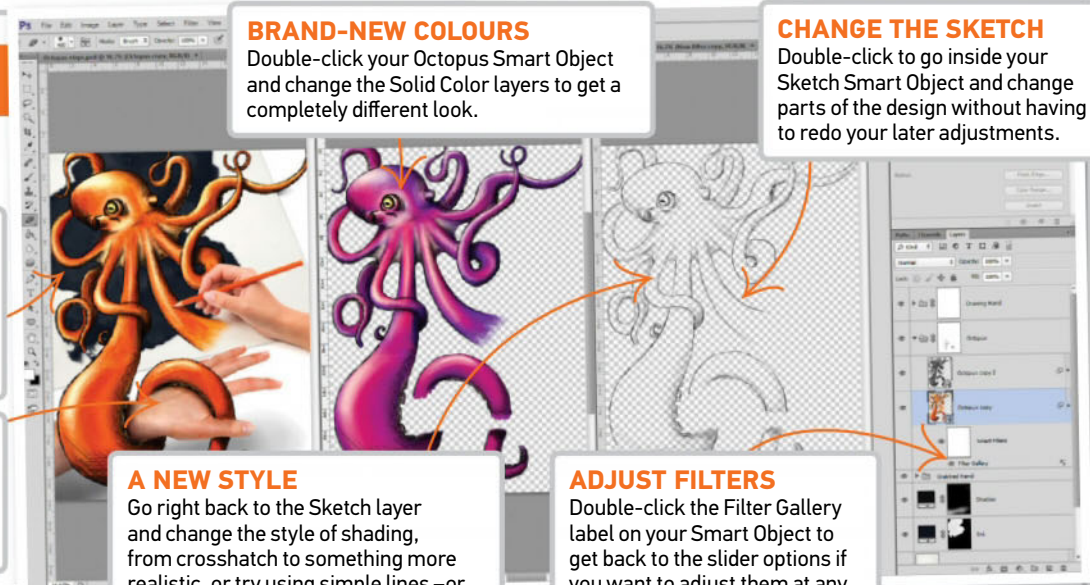
Double-click to go inside your Sketch Smart Object and change parts of the design without having to redo your later adjustments.

A NEW STYLE

Go right back to the Sketch layer and change the style of shading, from crosshatch to something more realistic, or try using simple lines – or even no sketched shading at all.

ADJUST FILTERS

Double-click the Filter Gallery label on your Smart Object to get back to the slider options if you want to adjust them at any point – or change filters entirely.



On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative

Essentials

Works with



Elements



CS



CC

What you'll learn

How to use Distort filters to combine multiple Adobe Stock images



Time taken
6 hours

Expert

Jeremy Young



"I try to make every creation unique; creating a circular composition with Distort filters made my piece stand out in Adobe Stock's Take 10 Competition. I spent as much time on the small details as I did on the overall effect."

"I'm a marketer and designer from New Zealand, and use Photoshop to bring my ideas to life."

Composite with Adobe Stock

Learn how to create a surreal masterpiece in Photoshop using only 10 stock images and a handful of tools

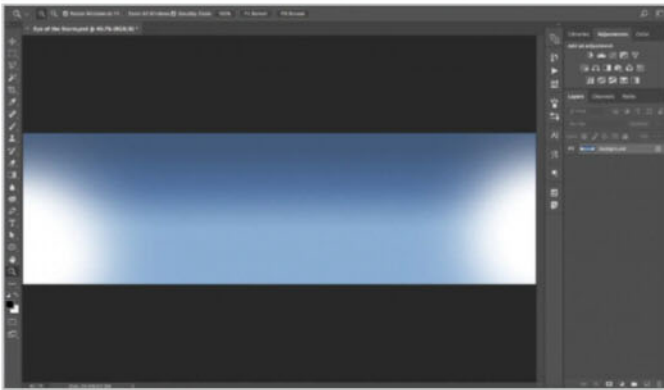
Adobe Stock's Take 10 Competition challenged designers to create a piece of art that represented a theme using only 10 images provided from Adobe Stock. In the most recent contest, the theme was 'The Storm'. As this piece was created for the Masterpiece Edition, the concept was to have a level of detail inspired by Rembrandt, while also showing the full extent of a storm from calm to destruction in a modern surrealist approach, highlighting the creative freedom available with Photoshop.

In this tutorial you will learn how to re-create one of the winning entries, as well as how to use Adobe Stock images to create a surreal scene from

scratch, and how to use Distort filters for a unique composition. Additionally, you will learn how to use the Free Transform tool to blend different elements into a seamless image.

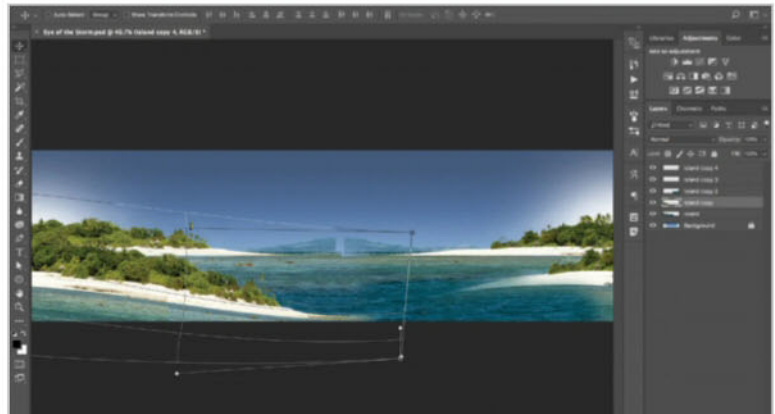
In order to jump to the good part, it's important to have your stock images cut out using the Magic Selection or Pen tool before beginning; this way you'll be able to focus fully on compositing them. You'll find links to all the Adobe Stock images and reference numbers in the tutorial.

Various Adobe Stock subscriptions are available, which you can view here: <https://stock.adobe.com/uk/plans>. The first month is free, so you can download 10 images today at no cost at all.



Compose the scene

01 Create a new document in Photoshop with Width set to 5400px and Height at 1590px. You will be cropping this later on, but for now the additional width will be beneficial. Fill the background with a gradient going from dark to light blue, and use a large soft brush to lighten the sides.



Add the landscape

02 Download image #31066291 from www.stock.adobe.com. Select the sky using the Quick Selection tool and delete it. Paste the image five times into your document and, using the Free Transform tool, distort and resize the images to obtain the composition shown above.



Insert the rocks

03 Download #105995865 from Adobe Stock. Place the image in your document four times. Using the Quick Selection tool, select rocks from one image, go to Select>Invert Selection, and delete the selection. Do the same to each image then, using the Free Transform tool, place them in your scene.



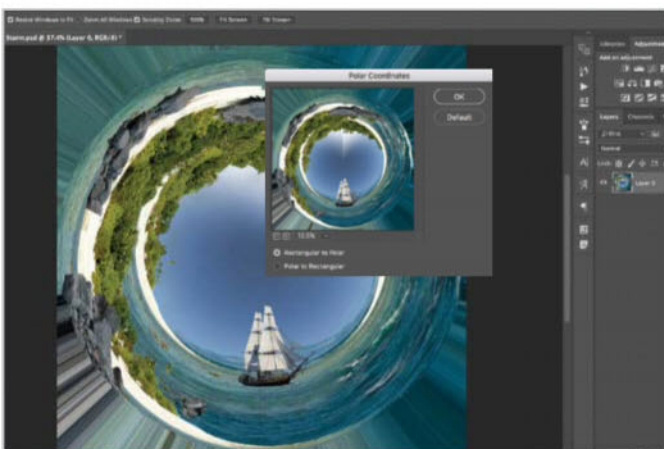
Place the ship

04 Add Adobe Stock image #95330170 several times, using the Free Transform tool to resize correctly and erase the edges to blend with the existing waves. Download image #101399134 for the ship, and use the Quick Selection tool to select and remove the background. Add and resize this to the middle of your scene.



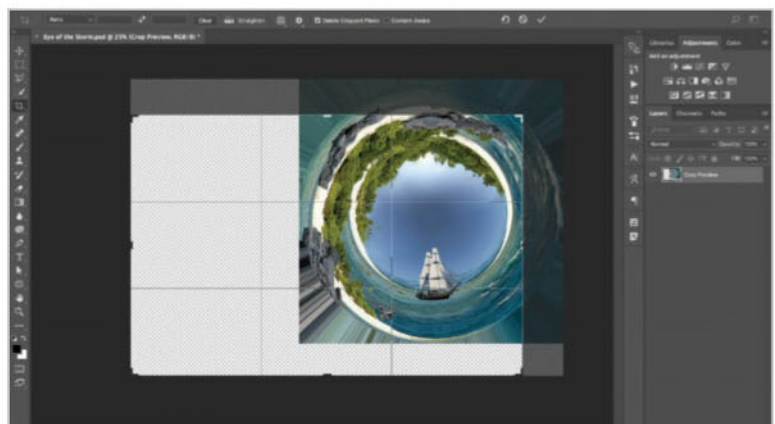
Resize the image

05 Flatten the image by Ctrl/right-clicking in the Layers panel and selecting Flatten Image. Next go to the Image menu and select Image Size, uncheck the chain icon and make the new Width and Height 4000px each. This will stretch the image but it will be fixed later on.



Make it circular

06 Unlock the Background layer by double-clicking on it, then go to Filter>Distort>Polar Coordinates. Select Rectangular to Polar and click OK. Any elements that don't line up, such as the sky, can be fixed by using the Spot Healing Brush.



Apply cropping

07 Ctrl/right-click on your layer and select Convert to Smart Object. Select the Crop tool and drag the top-right corner inwards and the bottom-left corner outside of the frame as shown. Click Enter. Go to Image>Image Size, check the chain icon to keep proportions, and make the Width 3400px.



Expert tip



Take your time

The more time you spend on the small details with the Burn and Dodge tools, the better your scene will look. It is important to create an overall mood by lightening and darkening different parts of the image, but spending time on individual details is equally important; this is what will take the image to the next level. Experiment with the Exposure and Range settings of Highlights, Midtones and Shadows on the Dodge and Burn tools in order to achieve the best effect.



Fill the frame

08 Duplicate your layer and select the bottom layer. Use the Free Transform tool to enlarge and rotate until the entire frame has been filled. Use the Quick Selection tool to select any elements on the top layer that don't blend well, inverse the selection, then click the Add Layer Mask button.



Blend the sea

09 Take the previously used Adobe Stock images #95330170, #31066291 and #105995865, and place them in your scene. Use the Quick Selection tool to remove unwanted parts, and the Free Transform tool to warp these images to match the existing sea. Use a soft Eraser to blend the edges.



Add clouds

10 Place Adobe Stock images #73238034 and #81356047 into your scene, and use Free Transform to warp and scale the clouds to fit the sky. Use the Lighten blend mode to make white clouds, and Multiply to create black clouds. Use the Eraser to remove unwanted parts.



Make a shipwreck

11 Use the Quick Selection tool to cut out Adobe Stock images #93725550 and #86795070. Use the Free Transform tool to place them in your scene, and a hard Eraser to 'rip' the sails. Select a small brown brush and cover the people in the boat, making it look empty.



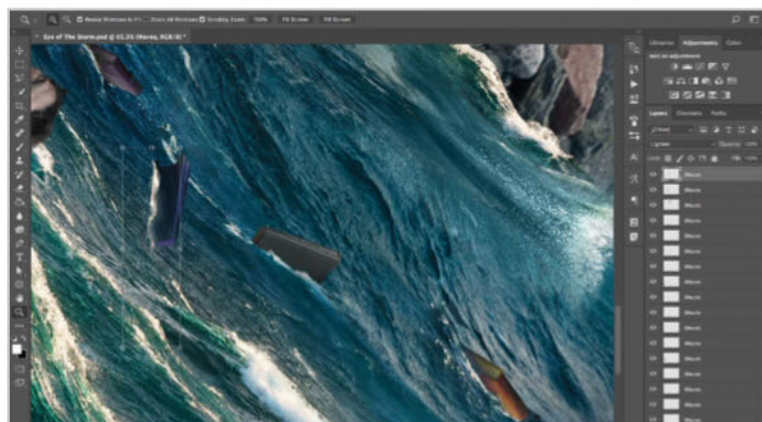
Create waves

12 Download #54892940 and #95330170 from Adobe Stock, and place the waves around the rocks and shipwreck using the Quick Selection tool to remove unwanted elements, and the Free Transform tool to resize and warp. To match colours, use a combination of the Color Balance, Levels and Hue/Saturation adjustments, found under Image>Adjustments.



Bring in the man

13 Use the Quick Selection tool to cut out the man and various books from Adobe Stock image #96157694. Place the elements into the scene and reposition using the Free Transform tool. Duplicate and reuse some of the previously created waves in order to blend the man into the sea.



Add detail to the waves

14 Using the previous Adobe Stock images of the sea and waves, cut out and Free Transform more waves and place them in your scene. Be sure to add waves around each individual book, the shipwreck and the rocks, if needed. Use a soft Eraser to blend the new waves.



Dodge and Burn

15 Press Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+E to Stamp Visible Layers. On the newly created layer, use the Burn and Dodge tools to lighten or darken parts of the image. Use a small brush for the details, and a larger brush to darken the top of the scene and lighten the bottom of the water.



Apply the finishing touches

16 The last stage is to add finishing touches. Use adjustment layers to darken the waves and lighten the clouds. Stamp Visible Layers, and use the Spot Healing Brush for blending areas, and finally use the Warp option from Free Transform to fix perspective issues.

Photoshop CC 2017 updates

Adobe Stock is now more integrated than ever with Photoshop

DRAG INTO PHOTOSHOP

Now, you can drag your images from the Stock panel on the right straight onto your canvas. Ctrl/right-click in the panel to license this image and the watermark will disappear.

IN-APP SEARCH

The search icon in the top-right of the Photoshop window enables you to search in-app in Photoshop, which of course includes the Adobe Stock library.



FIND SIMILAR

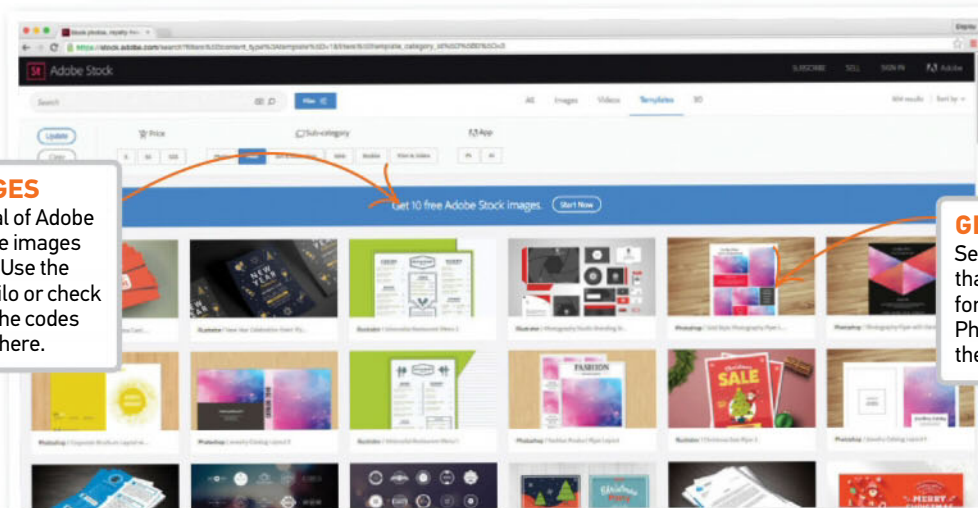
Ctrl/right-click on an image in the Stock panel on the right-hand side and click Find Similar to look for visually similar images in the Stock library.

GET STARTED QUICKER

By going to File>New, you can find templates from Stock and decide on whether you're focusing on Photo, Illustration, Web and much more.

TEN FREE IMAGES

When you start a trial of Adobe Stock, you get 10 free images for your first month. Use the text doc on the FileSilo or check the step text to find the codes for the images used here.



GET TEMPLATES

Search for templates that you can download for Photoshop, either in Photoshop itself or on the Stock website.



On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative

Essentials

Works with



What you'll learn

How to use selection tools, adjustment layers, masks and the Pen tool

Time taken
3 hours

Expert

Daniel Sinoca



"I love working with the new Select & Mask tool; I can create complex selections with only a few clicks, and the workspace lets me do all the necessary enhancements to create precise masks."

"I started to get involved in the digital world more than 15 years ago and have been working as a freelance artist ever since, creating all kinds of multimedia projects and tutorial guides."

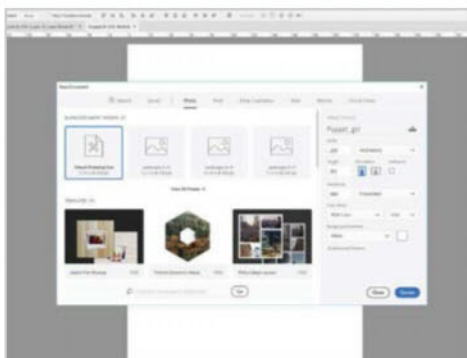
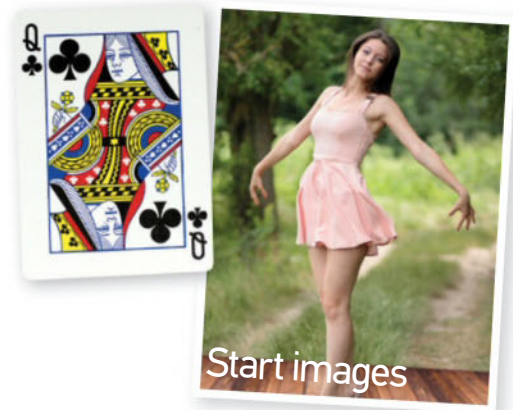
Build a puppet with selections

Turn a beautiful model into a marionette puppet using some basic selections in addition to a lot of creativity

In magic, sometimes the simple tricks are the ones that cause the biggest impression. In this tutorial, you'll learn how to use simple tricks and techniques to transform a female model into a marionette puppet for an eye-catching composition. You'll use basic tools, such as the Lasso and Elliptical Marquee, to create an impressive effect. You'll also learn a very handy technique to replace colours using the Color Replacement tool, and how to keep the layers organised by creating groups. You'll get to grips

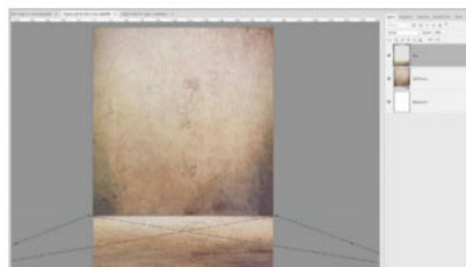
with layers, layer masks and neutral layers to create shadows and highlights, and hide what you don't need.

This tutorial isn't only about the basics, though. You'll be working with the new Select & Mask function to select a subject and create a mask, and also adjustment layers to make colour corrections or boost the tones. Creating a puppet figure is fairly easy but requires close attention to detail. Follow each step closely, keep the layers organised, and download the files to start manipulating.



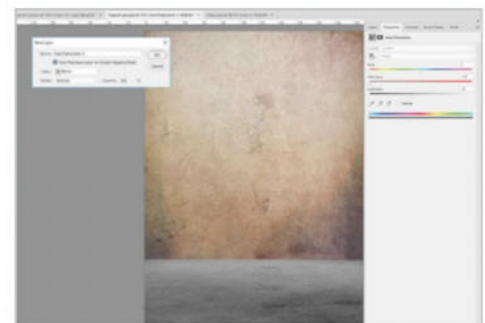
Start a new document

01 To begin, go to File>New (Cmd/Ctrl+N). In the Preset Details, name your document Puppet-Girl. Set the Width to 230mm, Height: 310mm, Resolution: 300ppi, then press Create or hit Return/Enter.



Create the stage

02 Go to File>Place Embedded and select 'Wall Texture.jpg'. Drag it to the top and press Return/Enter. Duplicate the layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and rename it Floor. Drag to the bottom, then open the Free Transform tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T). Drag the handles to compress the image and hold Opt/Alt while dragging to tweak the perspective.



Apply Hue/Saturation

03 With the Floor layer active, go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Hue/Saturation. Tick 'Use previous layer to create clipping mask' and click OK. Leave the Hue at 0, change Saturation to -100, and Lightness to -20, then click OK.

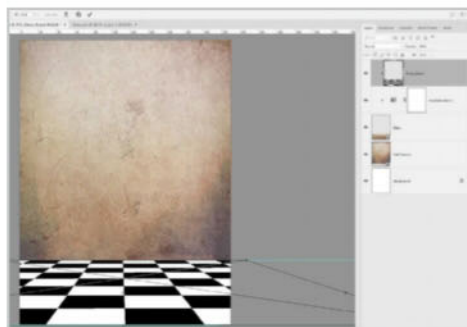


Expert tip



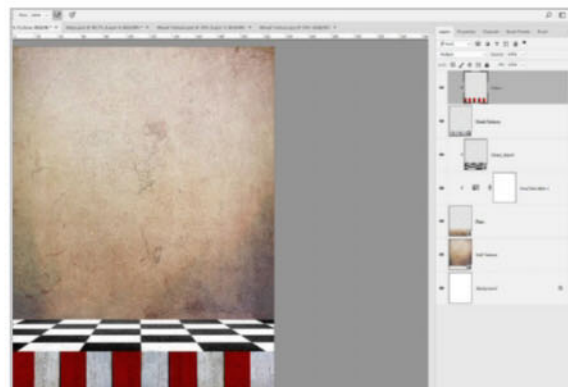
The Transform tool

The Transform tool is one of the most versatile tools in Photoshop. You access it by going to Edit>Transform and then choosing which command you would like to apply. Once done, you just have to drag the control points to adjust the shape or image. There are some shortcuts to control how the tool behaves. Press and hold Cmd/Ctrl and drag the anchor points to distort the image. Press and hold Cmd/Ctrl+Shift and drag the centre anchor point to skew the image,, or Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift to change the perspective.



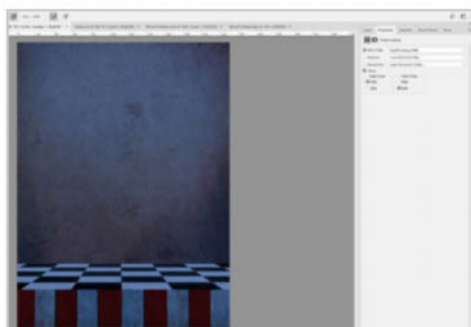
Place more textures

04 Go to File>Place Embedded 'Chess_Board.jpg' and click Return/Enter. Press Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+G to create a clipping mask. Now tweak the perspective as you did in step 2. Press Cmd/Ctrl+T and drag the handles to adjust the perspective, keeping the same angle of the Floor layer. Change the blend mode to Overlay.



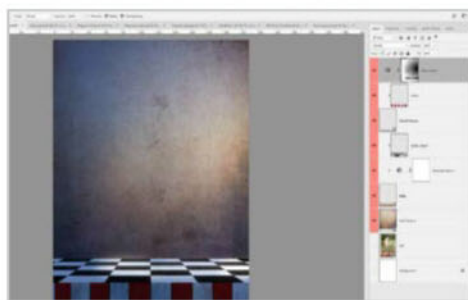
Complete the stage

05 Go to File>Place Embedded 'Wood_texture.jpg'. Drag it down to partially cover the floor to create depth. Create a new layer (Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+N). Name it Colour, tick to create a clipping mask, change mode to Multiply, and press OK. Grab the Rectangular Marquee tool (M). Select the segments and fill with red.



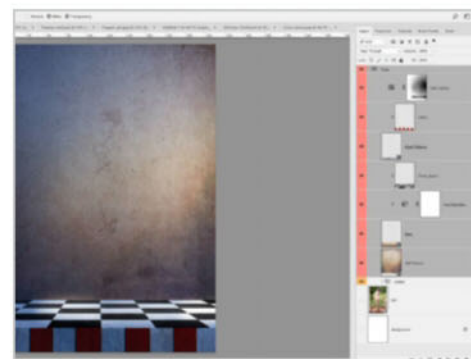
Make a new adjustment

06 To make a new adjustment, go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Color Lookup and click OK. In the Properties panel, check 3DLUT File and choose NightFromDay.CUBE. Press F7 to go back to the Layers panel.



Adjustment mask

07 Click on the Color Lookup mask. Grab the Gradient tool (G). In Options, click to edit the gradient and choose the Black/White preset. Click OK. Drag the gradient from centre-right to the left. Now grab a large, soft brush (B). Paint over the wall and floor to create the highlights.



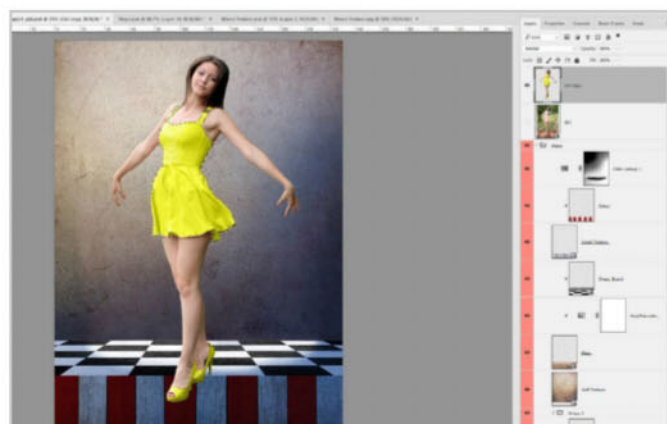
Create a group

08 Start organising the layers. Hold Shift and select all the stage layers, including the adjustments, then press Cmd/Ctrl+G to place them into a group. Double-click on the group name and rename it Stage.



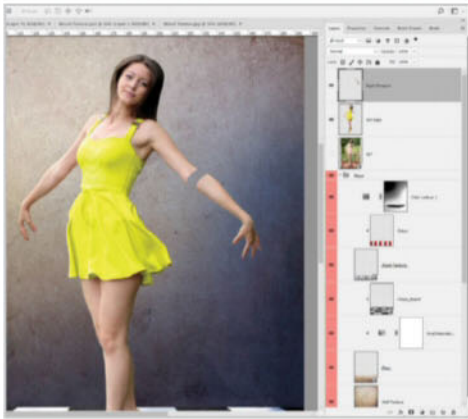
Add the woman

09 Go to File>Place Embedded 'Girl.jpg'. Go to Select>Select & Mask. In the Properties panel, choose View: Overlay, set the Radius to 3 pixels, then grab the Quick Selection tool (W) and select the woman. Change Output to: New Layer with Layer Mask and click OK.



Replace colours

10 First go to Layer>Layer Mask>Apply. Grab the Pen tool (P) and create a path around the dress. In Options, click Make: Selection. Set the Foreground colour to yellow. Grab the Color Replacement tool (Shift+B). In Options, set Tolerance to 100% and paint over the dress and shoes.



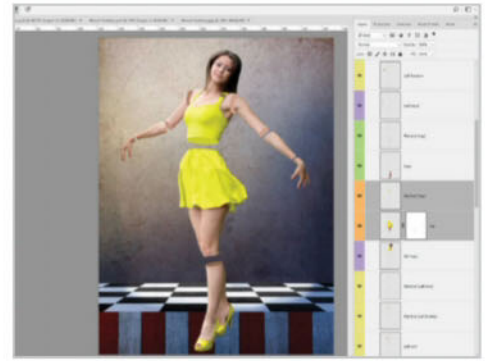
Cut the joints

11 Now grab the Lasso tool (L) and select the right forearm. Press Cmd/Ctrl+X to cut and Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+V to paste in place. Rename the new layer Right Forearm. Press (V) and move the arm slightly to the right.



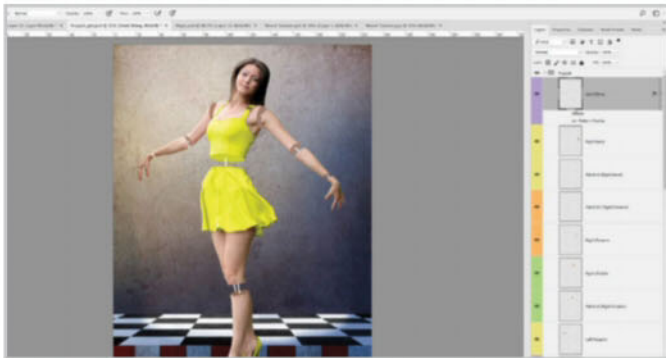
Create a flat end

12 Create a new layer (Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+N). Name it Flat_end. Grab the Elliptical Marquee tool (M), then draw an oval selection. Grab the Eyedropper (I) and sample the skin colour from the arm, then press Cmd/Ctrl+Delete to fill the selection. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+T. Rotate and resize, placing it over the forearm end.



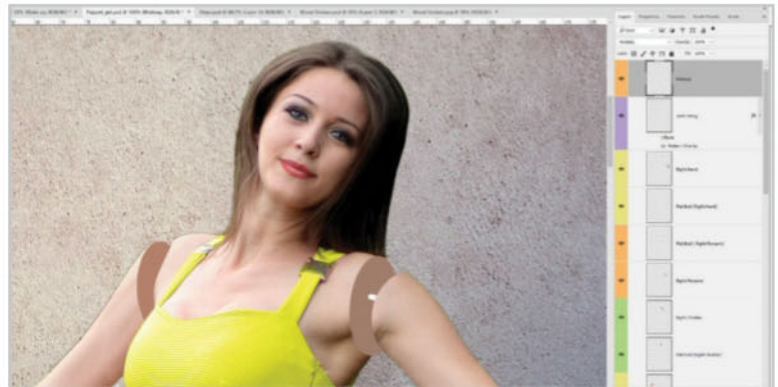
Repeat the steps

13 Repeat steps 11 and 12. Cut the legs, hip, hands and shoulders. Create a flat end and use the Free Transform tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T) to tweak the size and angle, and place over the joints to complete the puppet. Select the layers and place into a group (Cmd/Ctrl+G). Name it Puppet.



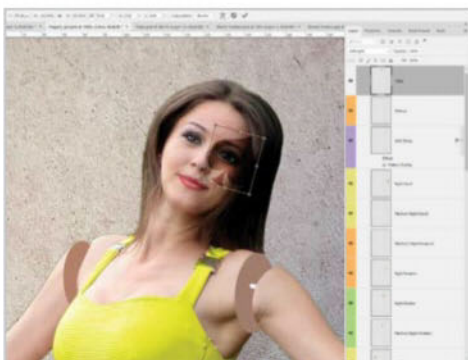
Make the strings

14 Create a new layer (Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+N) on top of the layer stack, and name it Joint String. Grab the Brush tool (B). Set the Foreground colour to white. Press F5 and choose a hard brush, Size: 12, and paint in the strings. Use black to paint the shadows on the strings.



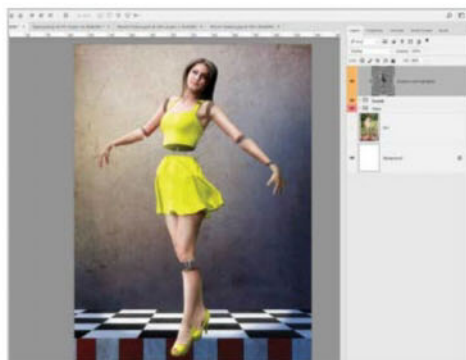
Apply make-up

15 Create a new layer (Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+N) and name it Make-up. Change the blend to Multiply. Set the Foreground colour to black. Grab a small, soft-tip brush (B), set the Opacity to around 25%, and paint around the eyes. Now use a very light-red colour to paint the lips.



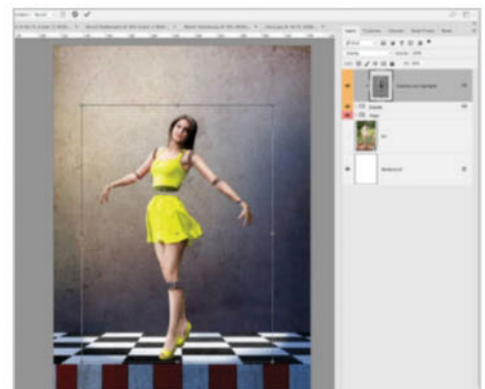
Draw a tattoo

16 Create a new layer and name it Tattoo. Grab the Custom Shape tool (Shift+U). In Options, set Fill: Black, Stroke: No colour, Shape: choose the Spade Card. Draw the shape, then go to Layer>Rasterize>Shape. Change the blend to Soft Light. Add a mask and hide the unwanted areas.



Add shadows and highlights

17 Create a new layer (Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+N). Name it Shadows and Highlights, tick to create a clipping mask, change the Mode to Overlay, check 'Fill with 50% gray' and click OK. Grab the Burn tool (O) to paint the shadows, and use the Dodge tool (Shift+O) to paint the highlights.



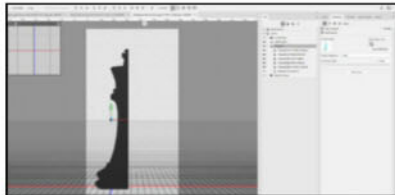
Link layers

18 Close the Puppet group. Hold Shift and select the Puppet group and the Shadows/Highlight layer, then go to Layer>Link Layers. Open the Free Transform tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T) and reduce the puppet girl's size to around 70%.



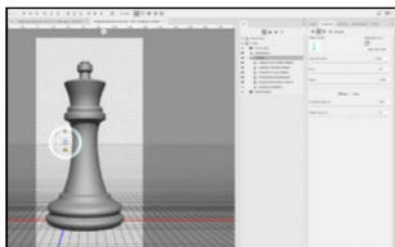
Expert edit

Create 3D objects



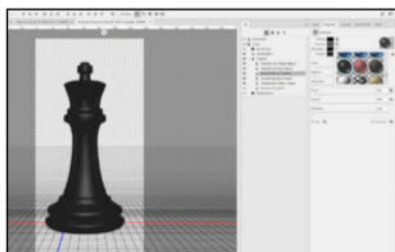
Place the template

01 Create a new document and then go to File>Place Embedded 'Template.png'. Now go to 3D>New>3D Extrusion from Selected Layer. In Properties, set the Extrusion Depth to 0mm and then hit Return/Enter.



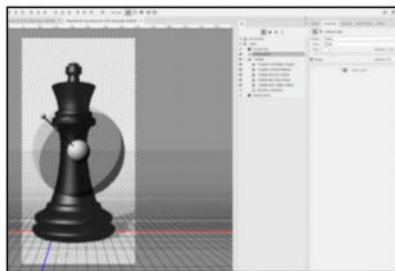
Make it 3D

02 Define the 3D shape. In Properties, open the Deform panel. Click on the top-right Deformation Axis, tick Bend, and set the Horizontal Angle (X) to 360°.



Apply materials

03 In the 3D panel, click on the Template Extrusion Material. Now in Properties, click on the Presets window and choose Satin Black, then tweak the settings as you want.



3D render

04 In the 3D panel, click on Infinite Light1. Drag the handle to position the light. In Properties, adjust the Intensity. Now go to 3D>Render 3D Layer.



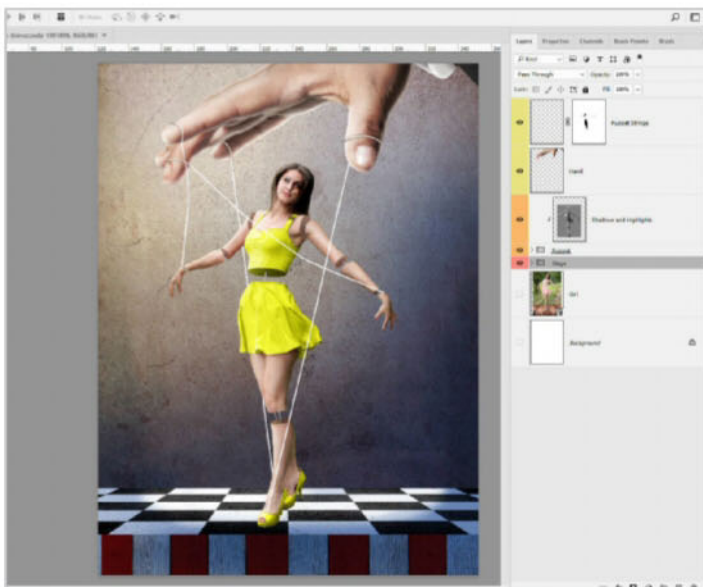
Place the hand

19 Go to File>Place Embedded 'Hand.jpg'. Go to Layer>Rasterize>Smart Object. Grab the Quick Selection tool (W) and select the hand. Create a layer mask, then apply the mask. Open the Free Transform tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T). Resize the image and place on the top of the puppet.



Draw the strings

20 Create a new layer, name it Puppet Strings. First, define the brush colour and size. Set the Foreground colour to white. Grab the Brush tool (B), then press F5. Choose a hard brush, Size: 8. Grab the Pen tool (P). Draw a path to create the first string.



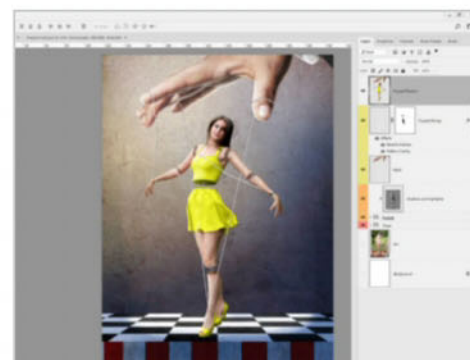
Convert to lines

21 Convert a path to a line. Right-click over an anchor point and choose Stroke Path, then click OK. Now delete the path by right-clicking and choosing Delete Path. Repeat these steps to create more lines. Add a layer mask, and mask away parts of the string over the arms and legs.



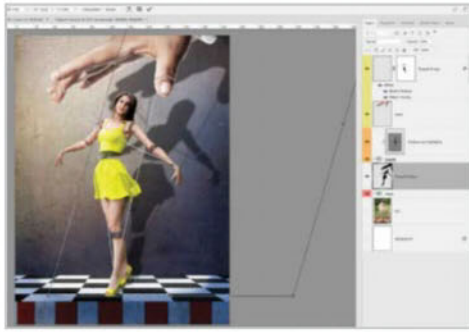
Use layer styles

22 Use the layer styles to add subtle shadows and textures to the strings. Go to Layer>Layer Style>Bevel & Emboss. Choose Style: Inner Bevel and tweak the settings to create the shadows. Now click on Pattern Overlay. Choose the Dot1 Pattern, set the Blend to Normal, Scale: 30% and click OK.



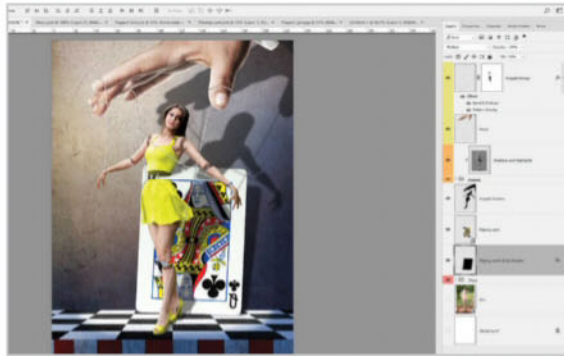
Duplicate the image

23 Hold Shift and select the Puppet group, the Shadows and Highlight, the Hand and the Puppet String layers. Now press Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate it, then press Cmd/Ctrl+E to merge. Rename the new layer Puppet Shadow.



Create the puppet shadow

24 Press Cmd/Ctrl+U to open Hue/Saturation. Set the Lightness to -100 and click OK. Go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur. Set the Radius to 10 pixels and click OK. Drag the layer between the puppet and the stage. Press Cmd/Ctrl+T and skew the image. Set the Opacity for the layer to 50%.



Introduce more images

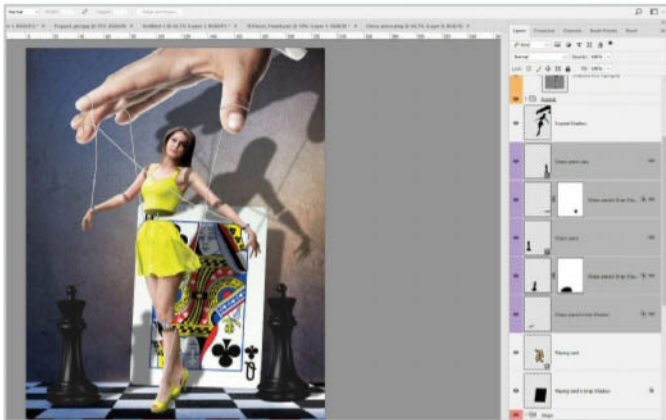
25 Go to File>Place Embedded 'Playing Card.png'. Resize it and drag under the Puppet Shadow layer. Go to Layer>Layer Style>Drop Shadow. Adjust the settings and click OK. Now place the shadow in a separate layer. Go to Layer>Layer Style>Create Layer. Press Cmd/Ctrl+T and tweak the shadow.

Expert tip



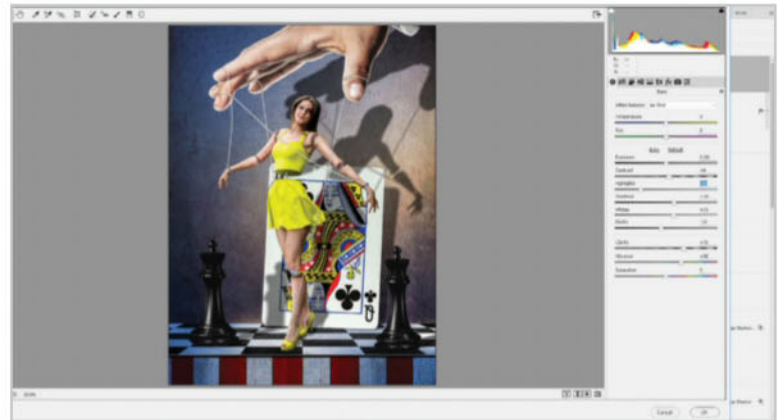
Camera Raw filter

The Camera Raw filter works well with jpg files. You can fine-tune images using its commands and tools in one place. You can remove red-eye and spots, apply gradients, make colour corrections, adjust white balance, replace colours, reduce noise and much more. You can also edit multiple layers by converting them to a Smart Object or creating a merged copy of the layers. Navigate through each panel and tweak the settings for further enhancements.



Place the chess pieces

26 Go to File>Place Embedded 'Chess.png'. Repeat step 25 to add a shadow, then create a separate layer. Adjust the angle for the shadow and duplicate the layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J), then drag the image to a different position.



Apply the Camera Raw filter

27 Click on the Puppet Strings layer. Now create a snapshot, press Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+E. Go to Filter>Camera Raw Filter. Tweak the settings to add more contrast, adjust the tones, and boost the colours. Navigate through the different panels to fine-tune the image.

Closer look

Custom shapes and adjustments

LOAD CUSTOM SHAPES

Select the Custom Shape tool. In Options, open the Custom Shape picker. Click the gear in the upper-right corner to choose a variety of ready-to-use shapes.

HUE/SATURATION

Make the flat end of the shoulder and arm darker. Select the layer, then press Cmd/Ctrl+U, reduce Lightness and Saturation to create a subtle effect.

LOAD PATTERNS

Open the Pattern Overlay layer style, then click on the Pattern menu. Click the gear in the upper-right corner to choose a variety of preset patterns.

ADD LAYER MASK

Create layer masks to mask away the areas you don't need, or to show the areas you do. Apply the masks to control the opacity of specific areas.



Essentials



Time taken
35 hours

The artist



Jack Usephot

"I'm a full-time freelancer, working for clients all over the world in conceptual and commissioned projects."

"I began my career as a graphic designer five years ago. After around three years, I realised I could go even further, and began studying photomanipulation techniques. I then broke into the creative community and design industry."

"As a self-taught artist, I continue to study to improve and learn. I dedicate my life to it. In April 2016, my artwork was featured as the presentation screen of Adobe Photoshop 2015.5, which was a huge achievement."

See more of Jack's work at www.behance.net/jackusephot.

How I made

The Hill

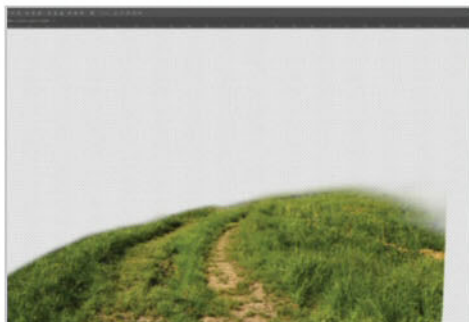
Intrigued by what *The Hill* represents, we asked Jack Usephot about the inspiration behind such a personal and spiritual piece of art

Jack Usephot admits he is "inspired by everything," whether it's the colour of a sunset, a book, a movie or other artists. He enjoys taking an idea and making it visual, bringing it to life in an image, and making the viewer feel what he feels.

Fundamentally, Jack's work is based on creating realism in landscape environments. He "loves photomanipulation on every scale and in every style." Creating landscapes and bringing a new environment to life is what gives him the greatest pleasure, and makes him feel truly proud of his work. No matter what kind of place it is, whether it's a desert, a jungle, or another planet entirely, Jack usually creates his environments based on inspiration from a mood or feeling he has. He then allows himself to be guided by colours and atmosphere, such as the warmth of the desert, the mist of a dark night close to an ancient castle, or the cold environment of a glacier: "I just love creating and delivering atmosphere!" And there is certainly atmosphere in *The Hill*.

Jack tells us that *The Hill* is a "sort of spiritual state; a kind of feeling of peace and human meaning". He goes on to muse that "perhaps the lonely cowboy is like me, or even he's me in my journey as a human, looking for meaning and his place in the world." Jack touches upon the feeling of solitude and loneliness that many of us actually benefit from – hearing the birds singing at sunrise on a distant countryside hill. This feeling is translated well in *The Hill*, through which the notion of being alone is conveyed in a positive light.

Jack's favourite Photoshop feature is quite simply the canvas, as it is the ultimate platform for his creativity. After that, though, his favourite tool is the Brush: "I use it every day to retouch almost everything!" It's also used on the details in many of his photomanipulations. Another feature Jack finds invaluable is adjustment layers, particularly Curves. He uses Curves to make many edits in his artwork, from lighting and colours to balancing the values of the shadows and highlights of the various elements in his images.



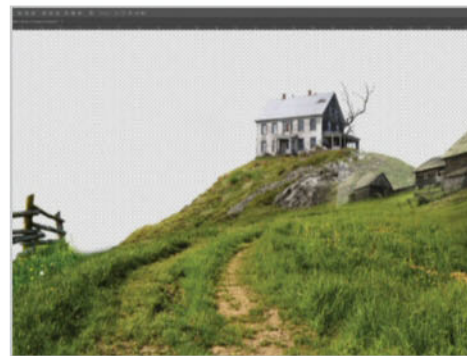
Adding the road

01 The fundamental element to start this composition was the country road. I started putting this asset on the empty canvas and erasing what I didn't want in the final image. Keep in mind to always work in a non-destructive way, using brushes to erase masks and Smart Objects to preserve the original assets.



Working on the sides

02 I then composed the sides of the image. On the left side, I added a fence that worked perfectly there. On the right side, I placed some huts, keeping the original perspective, because they worked well like that. I made some lighting adjustments to make sure they would work well in the composition.



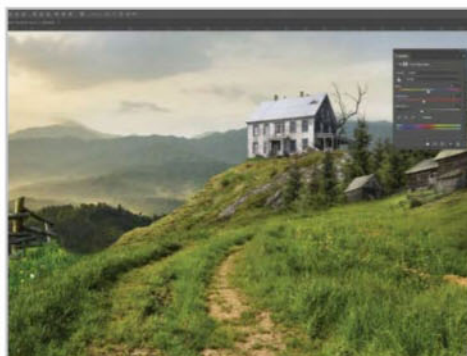
Placing the cottage

03 Next, I found and cut out the small hill and the cottage. The cottage is one of the most significant elements of the composition. It was therefore important to find a good place to put it. I used the rule of thirds in order to make sure the cottage was well placed.



Introducing the mountains

04 I wanted to add a mountainous valley or some tall hills, and found the perfect background for this composition. I loved the density of the mountains, and the morning feel was perfect for the mood I wanted to evoke. The mountains and the sky in the background are not a composition; it's a single image.



Blending the trees

05 I found some tree images and cut them out using just channels. After that, I used some adjustment layers in order to get the trees integrated as much as possible into the composition. One of them was Hue/Saturation to decrease the light and saturation of the trees.



Creating depth

06 I built up the foreground using bushes, leaves and rocks. These elements have an important function in the image. I blurred and darkened some to give the image more depth and guide the viewer's eyes directly to the main point of the scene, and what's happening in the middle plane.



Building atmosphere

07 A composition like this demands a lot of retouching and photomanipulation. In this screenshot you can see how I retouched the grass, giving it more realism and filling the erased grass with another one. Every element needed to build the atmosphere. Most of the time you can do this with adjustment layers like Color Balance, Hue/Saturation, Brightness/Contrast or Curves.



Making final touches

08 I made some overall colour adjustments to get the exact atmosphere I wanted, so I used Color Balance, Photo Filter (which I no longer use, because I now prefer to play with the tones in Color Balance), and Curves to give more contrast and make sure the elements were linked with each other. I also used a brush to paint some haze around the hills.





On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative

Essentials

Works with



What you'll learn

How to use correction tools, adjustment/mask layers and blend modes

 **Time taken**
4 hours

Expert

José Augusto Hykavy



"Retouching cars is one of my favourite edits to make. I love how you can achieve a whole new look."

"I'm a freelancer and designer in a print shop. My first contact with Photoshop was in 2009, practising tutorials. My current focus is graphic design, brand design and creative retouching."

Retouch and make corrections

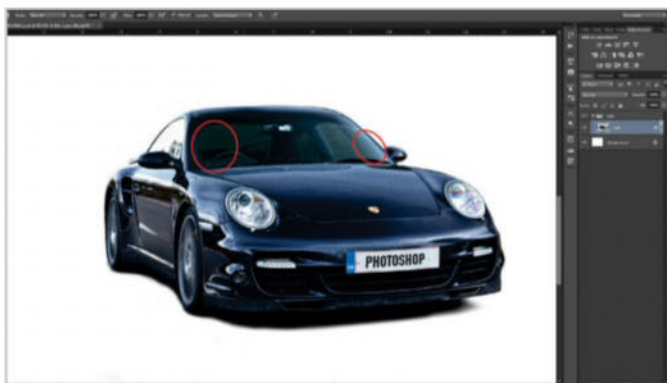
Take an ordinary shot of a car and transform it by adding colours and transporting it to a new location

This tutorial will excite those of us who have always admired the stunning car advertisements and thought about how striking the scenes are. Whether that's you or not, you are about to learn how to re-create effects such as these. Alternatively, perhaps you've taken some shots of your own car and want to have some fun. Or maybe a friend has asked you to do something creative with their motor images.

Over the course of this tutorial, you will learn important techniques for achieving uniformity across all elements in a composition. We will use some basic tools in Photoshop, as well as correction tools, such as Color Balance, Vibrance,

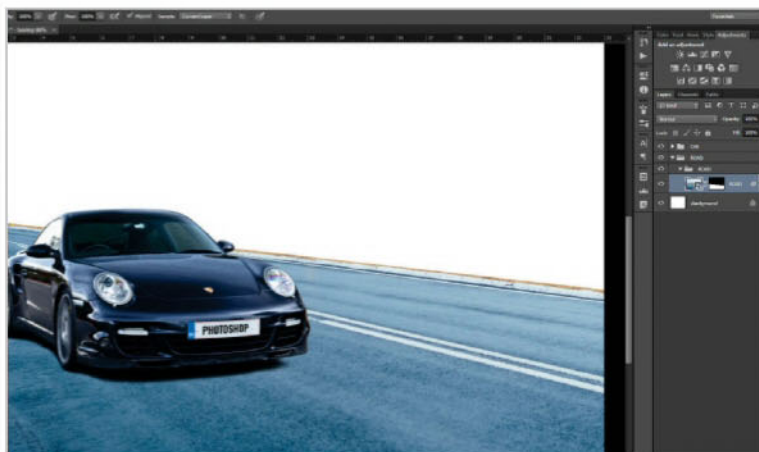
Hue/Saturation and more, to create harmonious colour and lighting to the elements; transform options; and adjustment layers. We will also work with layer masks and clipping masks. Layer masks are particularly efficient because they enable you to add effects only to the desired area; erasing unnecessary areas on the layer mask lets you return to the appropriate part if it's necessary.

A knowledge of cutting out images is essential to the success of this composition. When assembling the separate images, you need to be very careful with the proportion, brightness, contrast and lighting of pictures. Feel free to use other car images and different scenes to make this your own.



Adjust the car

01 Go to File>New (Cmd/Ctrl+N), set Width to 230mm, Height to 180mm, Resolution to 300ppi and click OK. Insert 'car.jpg', and rotate slightly to the left. Remove the road and background using a layer mask. Then remove the driver and the stickers using the Clone Stamp tool (S).



Build a new road

02 The car needs a new road. For this, insert 'road.jpg', go to Edit>Free Transform>Flip Horizontal and apply a layer mask, so that only the road remains visible.



Compose the landscape

03 Insert 'Rock.jpg' on the right side, remove the unnecessary parts and remove the sign using the Clone Stamp tool (S). The image has a 'washed' appearance, so to correct this use a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer and increase the Contrast value to 21.



Add hills in the background

04 We need to give some more depth to the scene, so place 'hills.jpg' and remove the sky. Use the Clone Stamp tool (S) to remove the houses. It is not necessary to remove the cyclist, because he will be hidden behind the rock.



Create the sky

05 Place 'Sun.jpg' in the sky and position so that the sun is in the left corner, between the road and the hills. Now, insert 'Clouds.jpg' and adjust as shown above. Using a layer mask, hide the selected area, also as shown above.



Change the clouds

06 The clouds don't fit in, so to correct this, insert 'Clouds 1.jpg' in the top-right corner and hide some parts, as shown above, using a layer mask.



Plant some flowers

07 Insert 'flowers.jpg' along the rock, use Free Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+T) to adjust the scale, position and perspective, and use a layer mask to remove areas, so the flowers blend with the rock.

Expert tip



Adjustment layers

An adjustment layer applies colour and tonal adjustments without permanently changing pixel values. The edits are stored in the adjustment layer and apply to all the layers below it; you can correct multiple layers by making a single adjustment. It's possible to discard changes and restore the original image at any time. This is important for harmonising a composition. Don't forget to create a clipping mask to apply the adjustment only to the desired images.



Create some movement

08 Click the Road.jpg layer, go to Filter>Blur>Radial Blur and set the Amount to 10, Blur Method: Zoom, Quality: Best and position Blur Center at the start of the road. Then go to Filter>Sharpen>Sharpen, and finally, create a new Curves adjustment layer and drag the line down.



Edit the road colour

09 Create a new Color Balance adjustment layer and set Cyan: +35, and Yellow: -40. Make a Vibrance adjustment layer, set Vibrance to -17. Create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Alt+N), use a 600px brush with Hardness: 0% and colour fffaf1 to create light on the road behind the car.



Make hill adjustments

10 Go to Filter>Blur>Radial Blur and set Amount: 1, Blur Method: Zoom, Quality: Best, position Blur Center where the sun is. Create a new Color Balance adjustment layer, with Red set to +31. Create a new layer and use a brush with Size: 200px, Hardness: 0% and a colour of fffaf1 to create light on the farthest hills.



Make rock adjustments

11 Go to Filter>Blur>Radial Blur and set Amount: 2, Blur Method: Zoom, Quality: Best, position Blur Center to follow the road (enable this effect only on the bottom). Create a new Color Balance adjustment layer with Cyan: -5, Magenta: -4 and Yellow: -20. Set up a Levels adjustment layer (0, 1.05, 246) and only apply it to the top.



Make more rock adjustments

12 Create a new Color Balance adjustment layer with Cyan: -15, Blue: +7 only for the top of the rock. Now use a Vibrance adjustment layer, with Vibrance set to -7, and a Curves adjustment layer with the line dragged up. Make this active at the top.



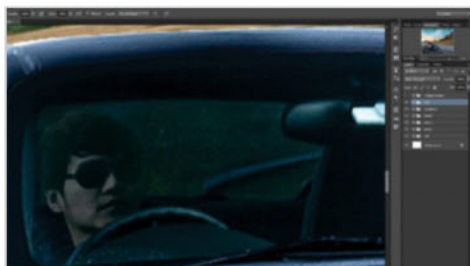
Blur the flowers

13 Go to Filter>Blur>Radial Blur and set Amount: 2, Blur Method: Zoom, Quality: Best, position Blur Center to follow the road perspective. Create a new Color Balance adjustment layer, with Red: +6 and Yellow: -9. Select 'Rock.jpg' and with the Clone Stamp tool (S), remove the tree.



Introduce a new driver

14 Select just the head from 'driver.jpg' and position next to the steering wheel. Create a new Color Balance adjustment layer with Cyan: -47 and Blue: +62, then a Vibrance adjustment layer with Vibrance: -50 and Saturation: -30. Apply a Curves adjustment layer, drag the line down, and leave it active on the right side of the face.



Make driver adjustments

15 Set up a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Alt+N). Use the brush, Size: 125px, Hardness: 0%, colour: #fffa1 and paint the face as shown above. Adjust the opacity and size if necessary. Select a little rectangle on the side of the head, press Cmd/Ctrl+J, increase size and position over the head. Change layer Opacity to 55%.



Make car adjustments

16 Create a new Color Balance adjustment layer, Red: +16, Yellow: -44, then a Vibrance adjustment layer (Vibrance: -34). Set up a Curves adjustment layer and drag the line up. Use another Curves adjustment layer and drag the line down. Leave active only for the front of the car.



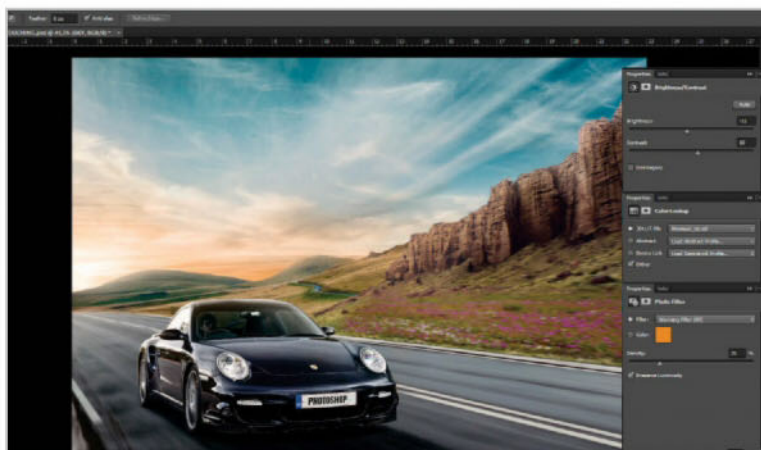
Make more car adjustments

17 Create another Color Balance adjustment layer with Cyan: -16. Apply this only to the front-right side. Now create yet another Color Balance adjustment layer with Red: +16, Yellow: -34. Create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Alt+N), use a brush, Size 300px, Hardness 0%, colour #ffffff and paint the top of the car.



Carry out final adjustments

18 Select 'clouds 1.jpg' and create a Color Balance adjustment layer, Cyan: -20 and Blue: +2. Create a Curves adjustment layer and drag the line up. Create a new layer, make a selection, as shown above, then paint with black. You can use a layer mask to erase some parts.



Apply final corrections

19 Apply a Photo Filter adjustment layer (Warming filter (85)) and change the layer Opacity to 68%. Apply a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer with Brightness: -11 and Contrast: +10. Finally, use a Color Lookup adjustment layer (3dLutfile>filmstock_50.3) and change the layer Opacity to 15%.

What you'll learn

Key things covered

LIGHTING

It's important to pay attention to the direction of light, because lighting is the key to compositing. Get this right and the composite will look real.

COLOR LOOKUP

This adjustment layer creates more enhanced colour correction. It's a quick and easy way to try out combinations for the various elements by choosing a new 'look' from a list of presets.

CLIPPING MASKS

Clipping masks are a speedier and more versatile method for applying cut-out effects to images, using a shape or text layer under your image to control which parts of an image are visible.



LAYER MASKS

Masking layers is a valuable compositing technique for combining multiple photos into a single image, or for removing a person or object from a photo.

Use masks to create an unlikely scene

With the help of adjustments and stock photos, use masks for a stunning composition

When it comes to blending separate images together, masking is an incredibly important technique in creating a believable scene.

Masking might seem like a simple thing to master, but good masking comes from using the right selection tools on the right layers. When you want to isolate the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben from the background here, for example, the Pen tool is perfect for selecting every pixel for the most accurate cutout possible; it may take a couple of hours to select, but it's worth it for the final effect.

The polar bears, however, are cut out using a small, soft brush, to enable the fur to be feathered slightly. When you've made your outline around one of the bears, select around the outline with the Polygonal Lasso, Ctrl/right-click to Select Inverse and then fill with black.

When you have each of your assets cut out perfectly, you can focus adjustments and blurs to certain areas of the image by Cmd/Ctrl+clicking on layer preview windows. So although masking is a relatively simple Photoshop technique, if you use it correctly it can deliver amazing results.

On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative



💡 Want to duplicate a layer? **Just hit Cmd/Ctrl+J!**



Essentials

Works with



Elements



CS



CC

What you'll learn

🔧 Composite a fun scene using adjustments, masks and stock images



Time taken
5 hours

Expert

Mark White

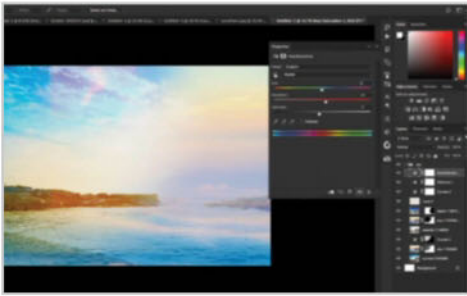


"For me, one of the most important aspects of a composition is the colour. Big, bold colours can really draw you in, and a lot of effort was made in this image to perfect the hues in the sky, and to choose the best adjustments for boosting the natural tones."

"As senior staff writer on **Photoshop Creative**, I've learned all kinds of quick tips to help with even the most impressive-looking pictures."



Tutorial Use masks to create an unlikely scene



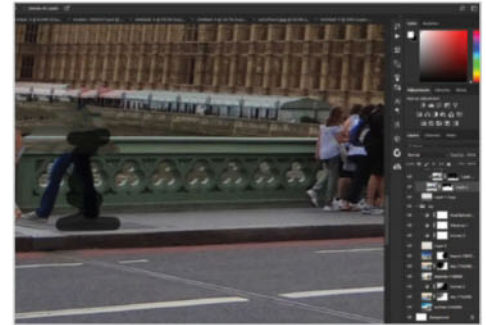
Composite the sky

01 Go to File>New and create a document that's 470mm wide, 320mm high. Drag in the sky images from the FileSilo. Mask different skies together to create a bright, textured backdrop, and use adjustments such as Hue/Saturation and Curves to control the colour. Group these layers (Cmd/Ctrl+G).



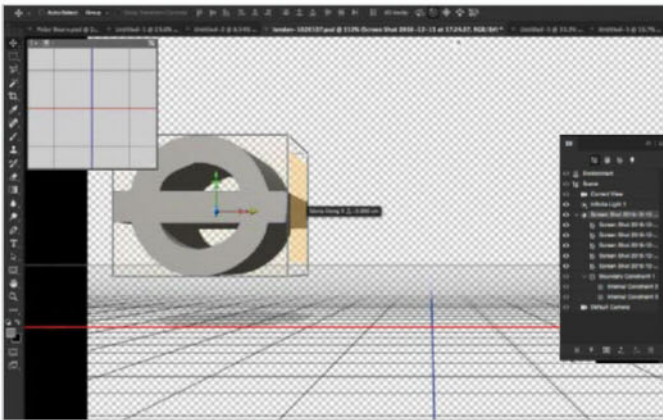
Cut out Parliament

02 Next, drop in 'parliament.jpg'. Select the Pen tool (P), zoom in quite close to the image, and cut around the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben. This may take a long time, but the more accurate you are, the better the results. When selected, hit the Mask icon.



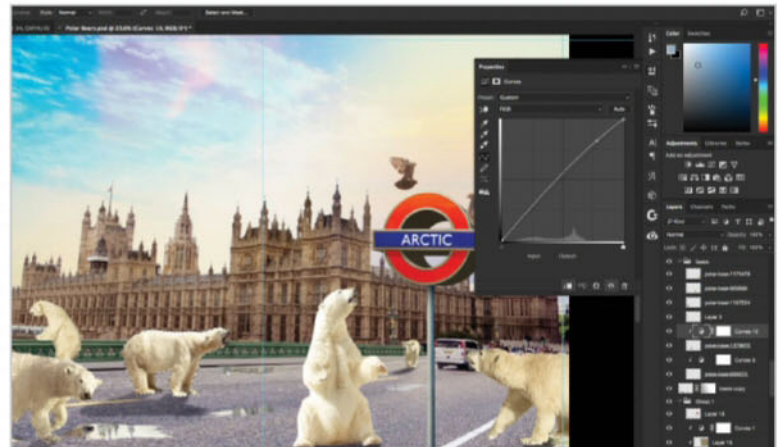
Clean the scene

03 Next, remove people from the scene using the Spot Healing Brush (J) and Clone Stamp (S). Place 'road.jpg' and Transform (T) across the scene; select parts of the bridge and copy them along the scene until you're left with a blank space to add your own images to.



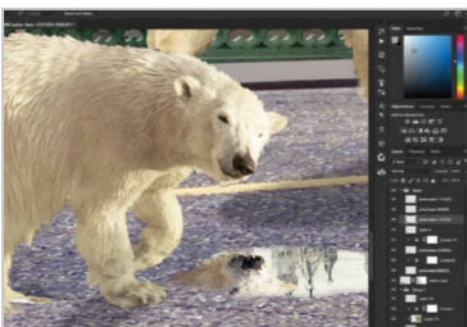
Extrude the sign

04 Open 'greysign.psd' and go to 3D>New Extrusion from Selected Layer. Move the sign along and up the axis, so it looks like our example above. Copy this into your London scene; place 'sign' over the grey face, use 'signpost.jpg' behind it, and recolour with brushes.



Mask in the bears

05 Place some of the polar bear photos from the FileSilo. Cut them out using a soft, 2px brush to select the fur accurately, and clip Curves to harmonise contrast. Mask in 'pigeons.jpg' too, and group these layers. Clone around the bears' feet if your selection is a little sharp.



Brush in some puddles

06 Duplicate the Houses of Parliament, Transform and flip vertically. Hit Mask, Invert (Cmd/Ctrl+I) and using a soft, white 25% opaque brush, brush some puddles into the image. Use the same technique for bears you wish to reflect, place in 'Splashes.psd' if need be, and set to Screen.



Shade and highlight

07 With a black, soft brush on an 80% opaque layer, manually draw the bears' shadows. Go to the top layer and create a stamp layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Alt/Opt+Shift+E). Set to Multiply, hit Mask and invert; brush with white to add shade and definition. Repeat this but set the blend mode to Screen to add highlights.



Focus the image

08 Create another stamp layer and go to Blur>Blur Gallery>Field Blur. Add a blur of 5px and hit OK. Mask out the three bears in the foreground, the sign and the pigeons. Repeat, but add 15px of blur, and mask out more foreground. This will create a depth and focus to your image.



Brighten behind the sign

09 Create an Exposure adjustment layer of +0.26 Exposure and a Vibrance layer of +100 Vibrance. Mask these layers behind the sign to suggest this is where the sun is. Create a Soft Light layer, and with a soft, white brush, add more highlights to the bears.



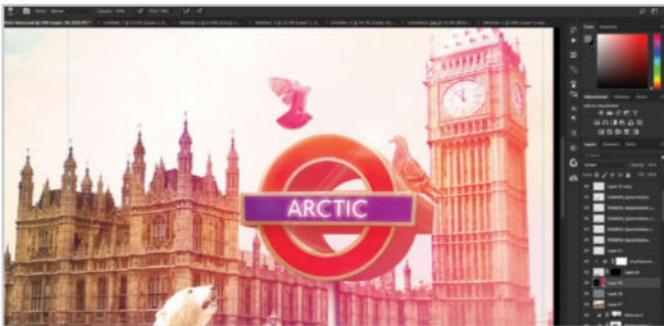
Use Camera Raw

10 Create another stamp layer. Go to Filter>Camera Raw and use the sliders in the Basic section of the command to make simple tweaks, such as increasing the temperature and adding a subtle clarity to unify the picture further. Make edits as you see fit.



Experiment with adjustments

11 While you can completely adjust your image in Camera Raw, Photoshop's adjustments enable you to edit non-destructively. Use the Gradient Map adjustment (we've supplied a gradient to use) set to Color, 10%, along with more Vibrance (Vibrance: +10), and a warm Photo Filter, or experiment for your own look.



Sharpen and cartoonise

12 Create two more stamp layers. Go to Filter>Noise>Reduce Noise for the first; move all values to 0, except for Strength, which should be left at 10. Set the second to Overlay, then go to Filter>Other>High Pass and choose 6.0px to sharpen the image.



Place light effects

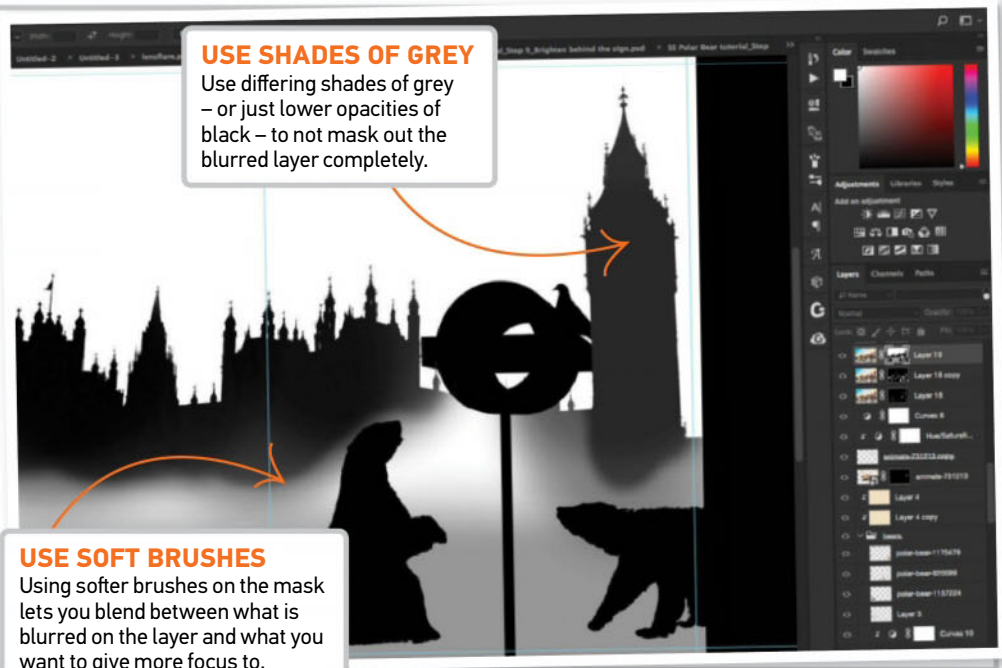
13 Place 'lightleak.psd' and 'lensflare.jpg' into the image. Set both to Screen and adjust the opacities accordingly; move the lens flare over the top of the Arctic sign and place the lens flare over the right of the image. Create a black to white gradient (left to right) and set this to Soft Light, 10% Opacity.

Expert tip

Mask with selections and brushes

We typically use brushes to mask, but by using simple selection techniques, you can ensure that you're even more meticulous with your masking.

This screenshot shows the mask of the blurred layer created in step 8. To create it, Cmd/Ctrl+click the preview window of the layer of one of the bears; hold Shift, and click on another preview window to select that too. Select the three bears in the foreground, the sign, a pigeon and parliament. Now when you paint black over this selection, you will draw perfectly over the elements you wish to erase from the blurred layer, and therefore give more focus too.



Essentials

Works with



Elements



CS



CC

What you'll learn

Combine the Pen with gradients and other tools for lively illustrations



Time taken
2 hours

Expert

Moe Hezwani



"One of my favourite layer styles is the Gradient Overlay; I can spend hours experimenting with different gradients. I enjoy playing around with Photoshop to mix illustrative elements with photographic textures."

"I'm a professional graphic designer/illustrator, and Photoshop is my go-to platform for my designs."

Mix the Pen with gradients

Become a master of the Pen tool, and create a vibrant illustration

Have you ever made a drawing by hand and wondered what it would look like in digital form? The best tool for this is the Pen tool.

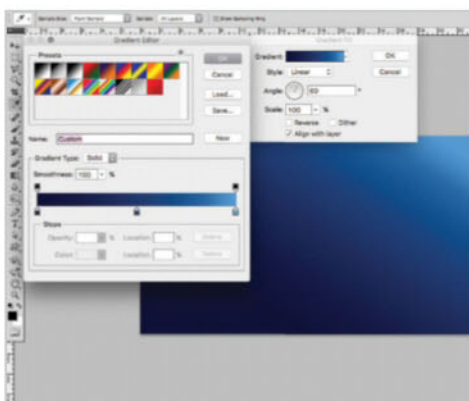
You have three options with the Pen tool: Vector, Path or Pixel. The Options bar along the top of the screen, near the left-hand side, has a set of three icons. Each represents one of the three Pen types. The first icon is the Shape Layer option, which you use for vector shapes, and is what we use here.

However, there is more to this tutorial than the Pen tool. You'll learn how to mask in textures to shapes, and we'll use layer styles, such as Gradient Overlay, Outer Glow, Inner Glow and Inner Shadows, to create a light source to bring the spooky scene to life. Depth will be enhanced by adjusting contrast and saturation, in addition to adjustment layers. You'll also discover how to use Smart Filters to create light beams.



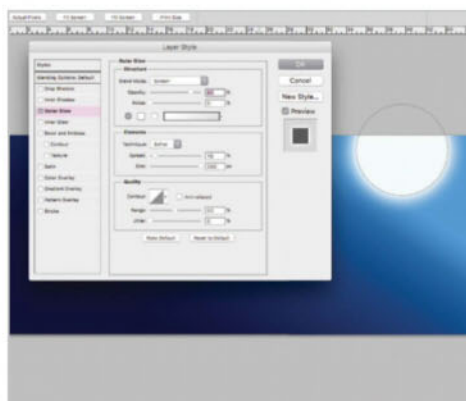
On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative



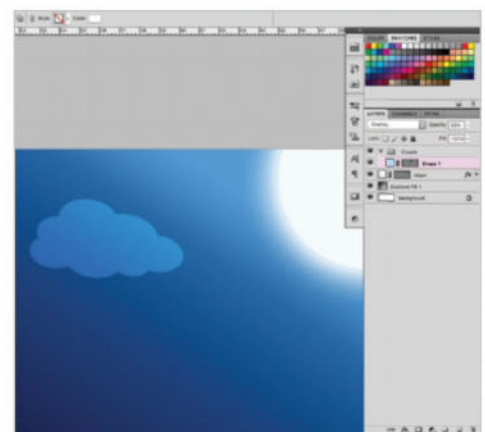
Create a gradient

01 Create a new document, then create a Gradient Fill layer by going **Layer > New Fill Layer > Gradient** and hitting OK. Click the gradient bar and make your first colour stop a dark navy, the middle a lighter navy, and the last a light blue. Click OK and set the Angle to 60°.



Draw a glowing moon

02 Grab the Ellipse tool, ensure Shape Layer is selected, and draw a white circle in the top-right corner of your canvas. Double-click the circle layer to bring up the layer styles. Select **Outer Glow** and use the following settings: Opacity: 80, Colour: White, Speed: 10% and Size: 250px.



Illustrate a cloud

03 Start by using the Pen tool to draw a basic, light-blue cloud shape, or use the Cloud 1 shape from the Custom Shape tool. Once you have drawn your cloud, change its Opacity to 60% and blend mode to Overlay, then select the Magic Wand tool.

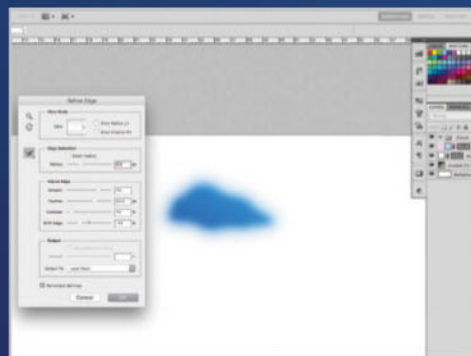


Expert tip



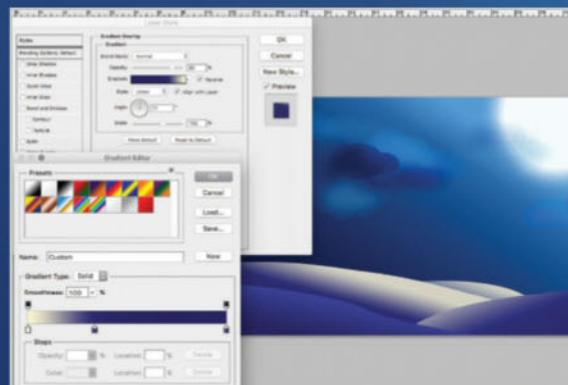
Grouped layer folders

With this kind of artwork, you'll be creating a lot of layers, so your Layers palette will get full. A really handy tip is grouping layers together into folders. It is also easier to duplicate groups of layers if they are in folders (for example, the fence from step 21). To do this, select the layers you want to place into one folder, then from the Layers palette, select New Group from Layers. You will notice those layers will then be placed into a folder in your Layers palette.



Make the cloud fade

04 Cmd/Ctrl+click on the clouds thumbnail to make a selection around the cloud. Then click Refine Edge from the top Options bar and change the following settings: Radius: 6.5px, Smooth: 55, Feather: 50px, Contrast: 10% and Shift Edge: 44%. Repeat steps 3 and 4 for multiple clouds.



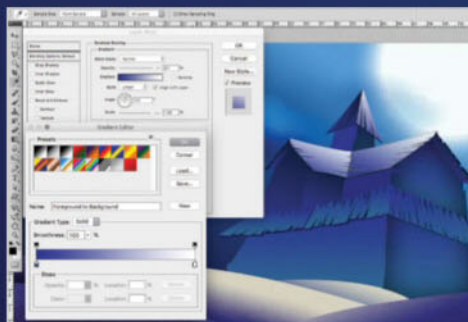
Add gradients to the hills

05 Use the Pen to draw five hill shapes that overlap each other. Now add gradients to each shape; when adding gradients, be conscious of where the light from the moon would hit. For example, the middle hill will have the majority of the light on its front, but the back will be dark.



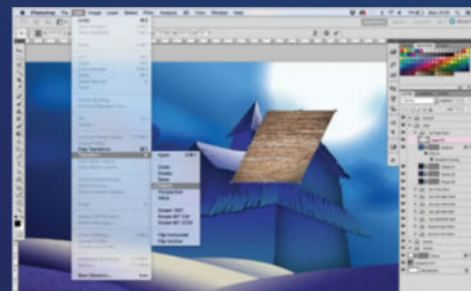
Create ground texture

06 Open 'Ground texture.jpg' from the FileSilo, paste it into your canvas, then use Free Transform to scale. Cmd/Ctrl+click the middle hill's vector mask thumbnail to make a selection, and add a layer mask to the texture layer. Change the blend mode to Soft Light and Opacity to 20%. Repeat this step for all of the hills.



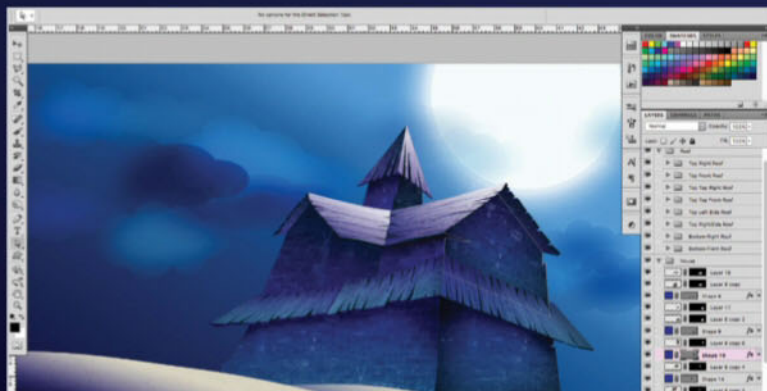
Draw a house

07 Use the Pen to draw the basic shapes of a haunted house. Now add gradients to each shape of the house, again being mindful of where the light will hit the house, for example the top of the roof will be light as it's closer to the moon, whereas the lower part will be dark.



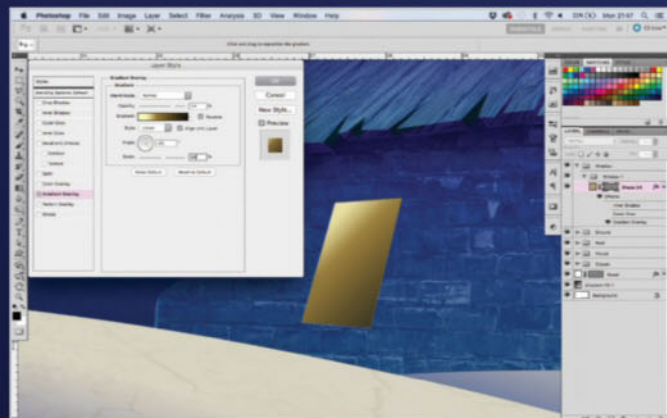
Distort the textures

08 Add textures to give your house some depth. Start by pasting 'Wood texture.jpg' into your canvas. Use Free Transform to scale and rotate it to a roof shape, then go to Edit>Transform>Distort to further tweak the texture's shape to match that of a roof by clicking on each edge of the bounding box.



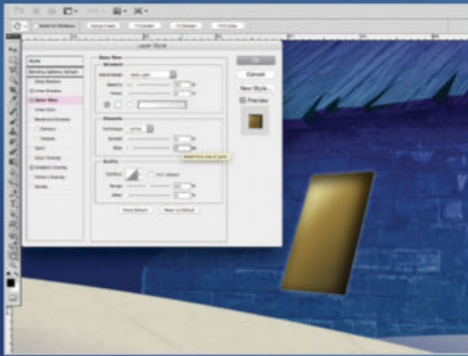
Mask the textures

09 Once you have distorted the texture, Cmd/Ctrl+click on the shape's mask thumbnail and add a layer mask to the texture layer. Then change the blend mode to Soft Light. Repeat steps 8 and 9 to complete the other roof shapes with this technique, and use 'Brick texture.jpg' for the wall of the house.



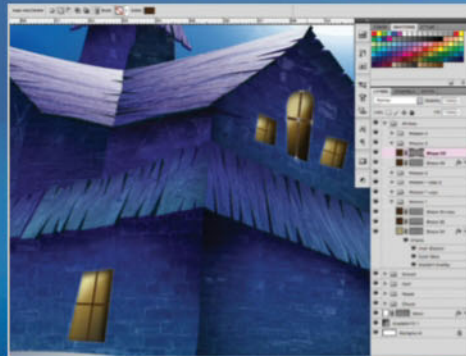
Build some windows

10 Start by drawing a basic rectangle shape, and add a golden gradient that is dark from the right-hand corner and gradually gets lighter towards the left side. Change the Scale to 89% to narrow the blocks of colour for a less gradual flow.



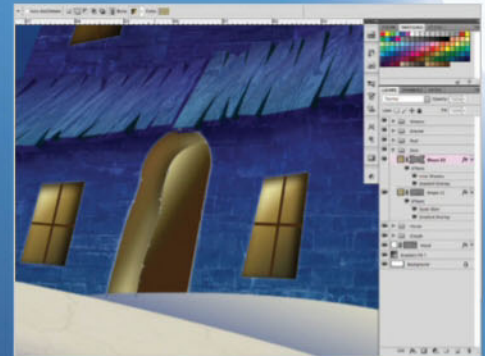
Add more window effects

11 Now add an Inner Shadow layer style to the window and use the following settings: Opacity: 88%, Distance: 14px, Choke: 19% and Size: 17px. Then add an Outer Glow style around the window using the following settings: Blend Mode: Hard Light, Opacity: 20%, Colour: white and Size: 9px.



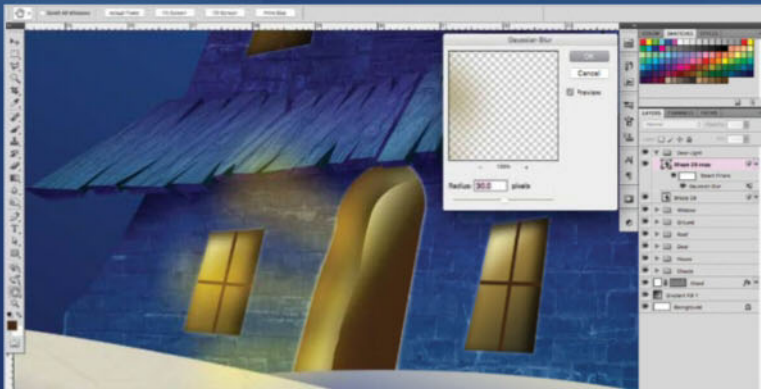
Complete the windows

12 To finish off the window, use the Pen tool to draw two long, thin, brown, rectangular shapes for the window frames. Then repeat steps 10 to 12 to draw five more windows for the house. Draw two of the windows with a circle arch to make the house look more haunted.



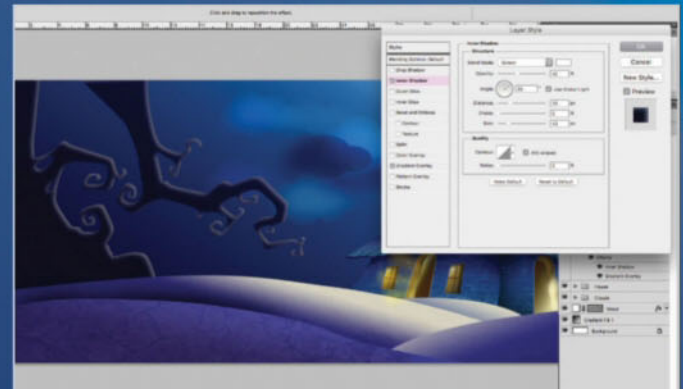
Construct a door

13 Using the Pen tool, draw a door with an arch, and add the same gradient and outer glow as the window from steps 10 and 11. Using the Pen once again, draw an inner arch to the door, and use the same gradient and inner shadow as the window from steps 10 and 11.



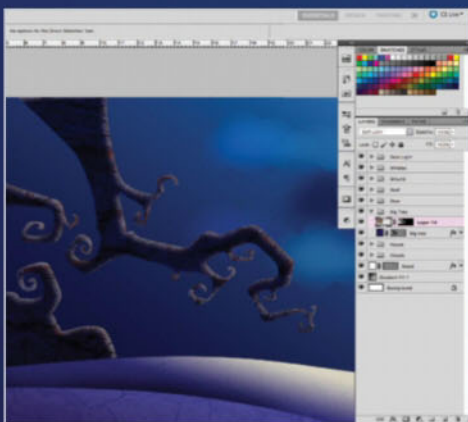
Create a light beam

14 Use the Pen to draw three trapeziums coming out of the door. Next, Ctrl/right-click on the shape layer and select 'Convert to Smart Object'. Then go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and set the Radius to 30. Change the blend mode to Overlay. Duplicate the layer and make its blend mode Hard Light.



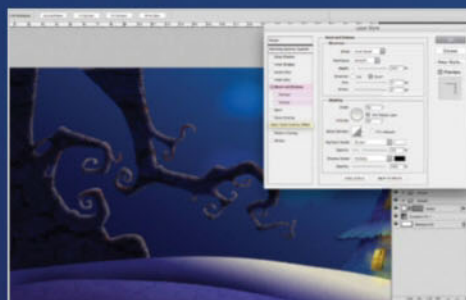
Draw a creepy tree

15 Start by using the Pen to draw the basic shape of the tree. Then add a blue-to-dark-navy gradient, making the Scale 150% and blend mode Multiply. Next, select the Inner Shadow style and change the following settings: Blend Mode: Screen, Colour: White, Opacity: 40%, Distance: 26px and Size: 43px.



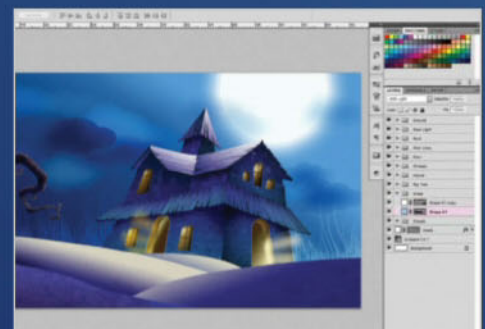
Give texture to the tree

16 Now paste 'Tree Texture.jpg' into your canvas. Make a selection around the tree shape, add a mask over the texture, and change the blend mode to Soft Light.



Work on the tree details

17 Draw basic lines and circles around the tree to create depth. Draw all these shapes in the same shape layer by clicking the '+' button when drawing a new shape. Now add a Bevel and Emboss layer style to the shapes, and change these settings: Direction: Down, Highlight Opacity: 24% and Shadow Opacity: 100%.

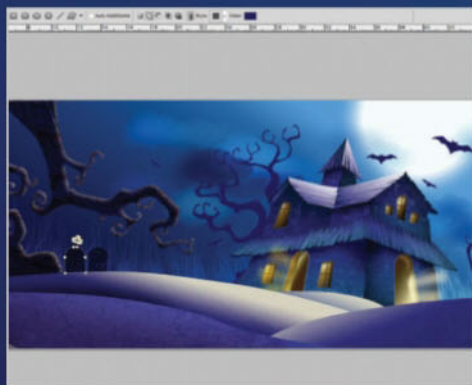


Apply soft light to the grass

18 Using the Pen again, draw some long, wispy grass behind the main tree and the house. Make the grass between the tree and the house a light blue, and set the blend mode to Soft Light. Make the grass to the right of the house white, and the blend mode Soft Light.

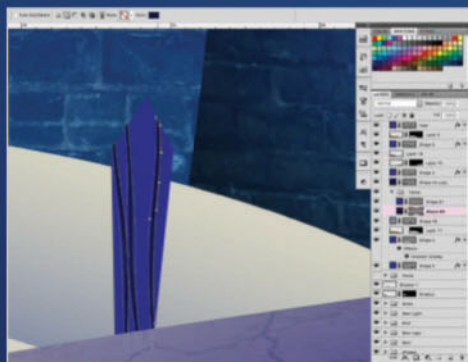


Tutorial Mix the Pen with gradients



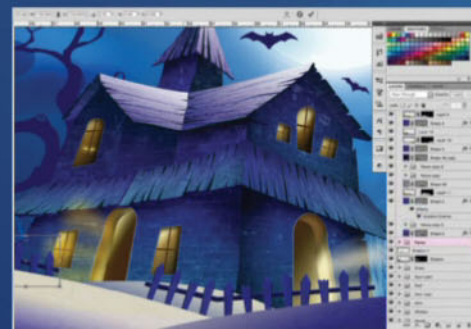
Add background objects

19 Use the Pen to draw dark-navy tree silhouettes behind the house, some gravestones, and a few bats in the sky. It might be handy to find reference images that you can trace. Change the blend mode of the gravestones to Multiply to darken them.



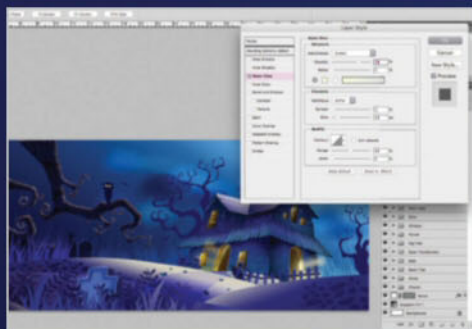
Create a wooden fence

20 Use the Pen to draw a triangle, then the Rectangle tool to draw a rectangle underneath it, and click on the '+' icon to ensure that both these shapes are on the same shape layer. Then with a slightly darker colour, use the Pen to draw some knots in the wood.



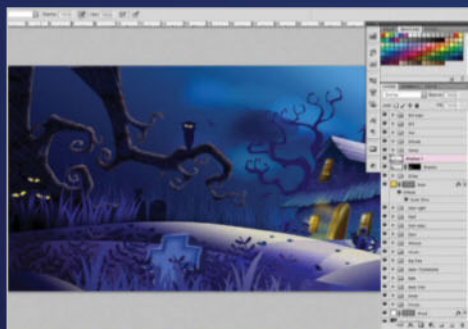
Duplicate shapes

21 Draw three more wooden planks; for more horror, why not draw one plank with a broken top and sharp edges? Then use the Rectangle tool to draw a thin piece of wood to combine them together. Finally, duplicate all these shapes a few times and use the Free Transform command to rotate them around the house.



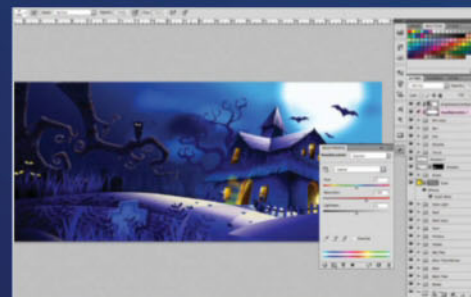
Apply final touches

22 Use the Pen to draw in some final bits, for example the foreground grass, the tombstones, skulls on the fence, eyes in the shadows, the owl and the cat. Also, give the eyes an Outer Glow style, using the following settings: Opacity: 70%, Spread: 2% and Size: 23px.



Paint shadows

23 To really bring the artwork to life, create a new layer on top of the shape(s) you want to darken, change the blend mode to Overlay, and use a black brush to paint over, for example, the left-hand corner in front of the tree, or in front of the gravestones in the background.



Boost contrast and saturation

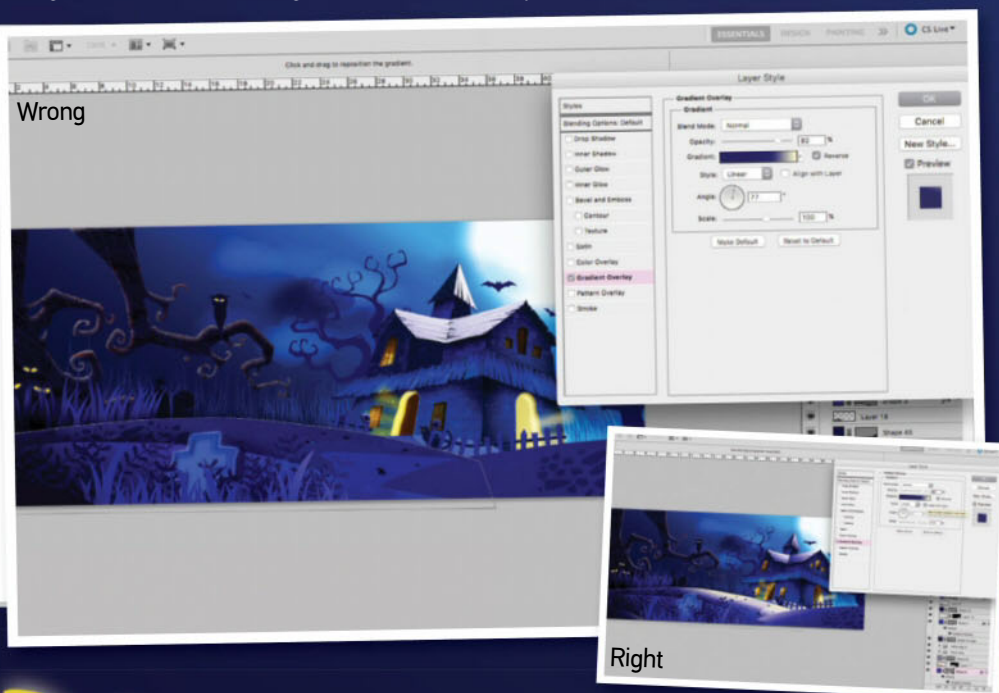
24 Give the artwork more depth by enhancing the contrast and saturation. Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Brightness/Contrast and boost the Contrast to 75. Use the Brush (B) to mask away the added contrast to the tree on the left. Finally, add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer and increase the Saturation to +30.

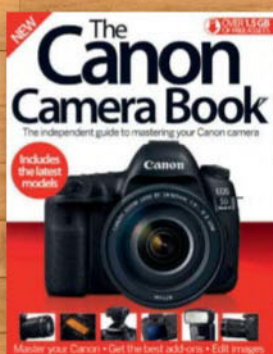
What can go wrong

Align gradients together

One of the key elements within this tutorial is the light source; knowing where the light from the moon is hitting each object is important in making your illustration look realistic. To create a perfect balance of light, the gradients added to your shape layers can help.

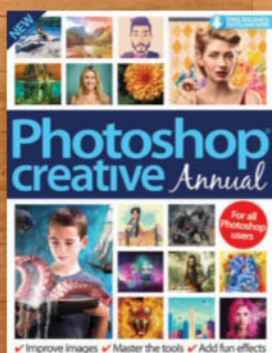
However, when creating an illustration with a large number of Gradient styles, you need to tick the Align With Layer box. Ensuring the box is ticked means all your gradients will simultaneously align together, so if you move the Angle on one Gradient layer style, all your gradients will move with it. Without it checked, any changes will spoil your illustration.





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Resource project Make watercolour feather brushes



WATERCOLOURS

For this washy effect, you will need watercolour paint; any type will do.

HEAVY PAPER

To ensure that the paper doesn't warp with the water, you will need to get hold of heavy, textured paper.

On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative

MASKING FLUID

You will need masking fluid or frisket to block off areas to the paint.

Make watercolour feather brushes

Learn how to create your own watercolour feather brushes for use in Photoshop projects

Watercolours are, as the name implies, water-based paints. Watercolour paintings can range from loose and expressive to incredibly detailed. Many countries have a form of watercolour painting. In Asia, specifically East Asia, it is known as brush painting, and usually done with brown or black inks. In the western world, Albrecht Dürer is considered the first

artist to employ watercolours. He made detailed studies of wildlife, botanicals and some landscapes. However, watercolour didn't take off until the 18th and 19th centuries, when aristocrats began painting, and artists needed to travel. Map makers, geologists, archeologists and other scientists were often accompanied by artists who created watercolours to record their findings.

Eventually, watercolours gained enough traction to be considered widely accepted, and in the 19th century, watercolour-painting societies were established by the upper and middle classes. Since then, watercolours have become a popular, sophisticated medium all over the world. In this tutorial, you will learn how to create your own watercolour paintings even if you have no technical art skill.

Make the watercolour feathers Paint your own watercolour-feather designs



Apply masking fluid

01 Begin your project by making an outline of your desired feather shape in masking fluid (or frisket) on watercolour paper. Masking fluid prevents paint from soaking into the paper wherever it is applied.



Wet it down

02 Wait for the masking fluid to dry completely, then fill the feather shape with a thin layer of water – just enough to wet the paper so the paints swirl together nicely. Don't go too mad with the water, or you will get puddles.



Start painting

03 Next, while the paper is still wet, choose your watercolours and begin painting your feathers. You can be as detailed or loose as you'd like. If you do have puddles in your feathers, just take a dry brush and dip it into the puddle to absorb the excess water.



Peel off the paint

04 Wait for your paint to dry completely, then rub your fingers on the masking fluid until it begins to come off. Peel slowly until it is all removed from around the feather shape. You should now have a nicely defined feather base for adding decorations.



Work on the details

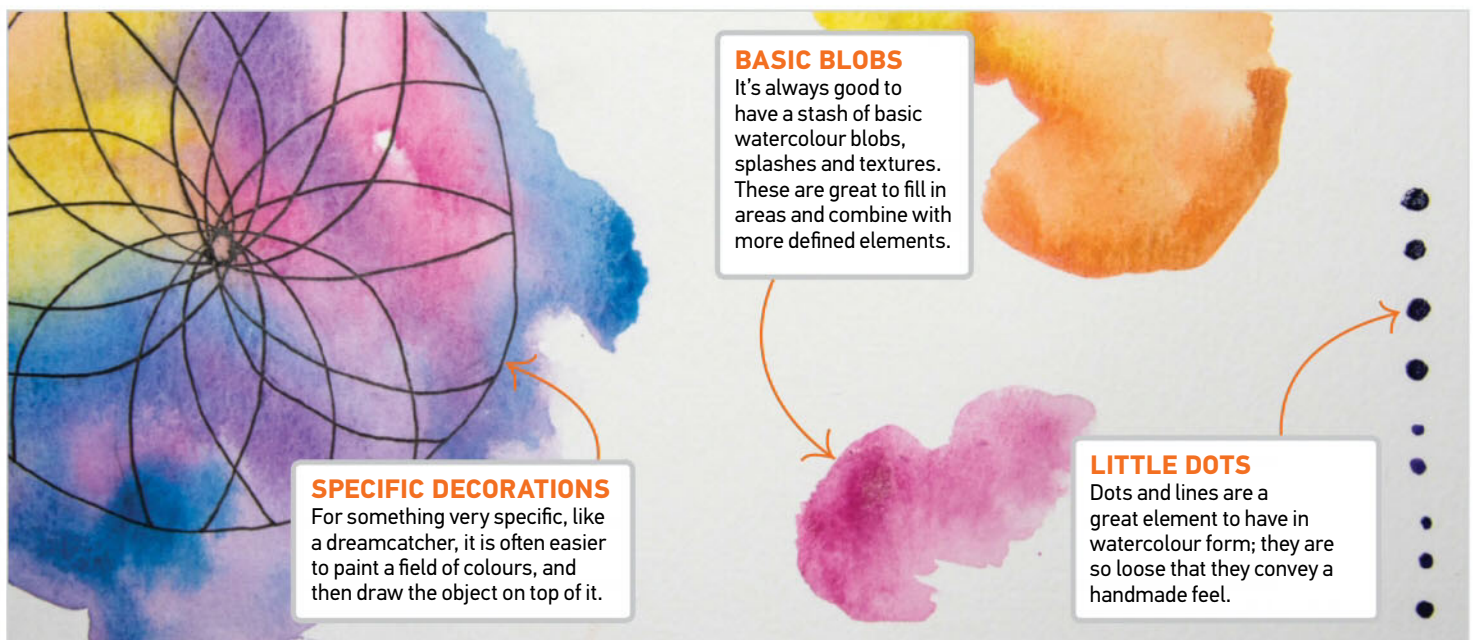
05 Next, take a thin ink pen and begin adding details to your feathers. Add dots, lines, swirls and any other accents you can think of to add interest. Since these are painted with watercolours and fairly loose, there's no need to be perfect.



Photograph the assortment

06 Make plenty of these. It's easy to create a bunch of feathers at a time and work on some while others are drying. Once you have a number you're happy with, photograph or scan each one, taking note of any messy areas that you may need to correct in Photoshop.

Have more watercolour fun Create other details to combine with the feathers



Add some personality Customise clothing and people with your watercolour creations



Customise a T-shirt

01 To make a T-shirt design from your watercolour, simply fit it onto the shirt portion of your image, then use the 'Underlying Layer' Blending Options layer style to reveal the shirt texture underneath. Combined with manipulating layer styles, this creates a believable illusion.



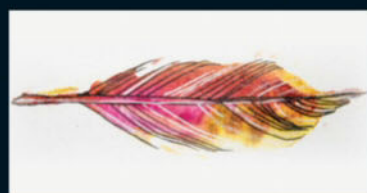
Make a feather appliqué patch

02 To make a patch on the shorts from your watercolour, begin by pasting the feather right onto the fabric, then create a duplicate and fill it with a solid colour; this is the backing of the patch. Next, use Curves in order to shade the patch until it blends into the shorts.

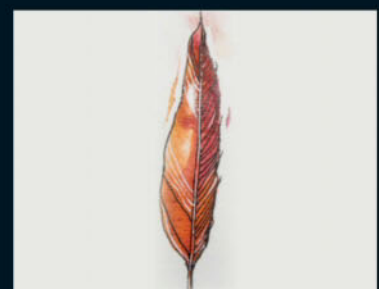


Design a watercolour tattoo

03 To make your watercolour feathers into tattoos, begin by placing them on the body, then change the blend mode to Hard Light and lower the opacity. You can use the Blending Options to make it fade into the skin better.



Watercolour feather images
We've included 11 watercolour feather images that are free for you to use in your personal projects.



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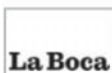


twitter.com/DPhotographer

Designing for sci-fi

London studio La Boca has created record sleeves and posters, but was challenged by Penguin to create a series of book covers for classic sci-fi novels

About the artist



La Boca
site.laboca.co.uk

La Boca is a design studio based in West London, specialising in illustration and image-making. The studio's work has featured on a wide range of projects from limited-edition vinyl record sleeves, through to advertising campaigns for global brands. Its members like to create emotional connections through their work, and play a part in contributing to popular culture as a whole.

Name of the project
Penguin Sci-Fi Book Covers

Creating artwork for an iconic company is always daunting, but for London-based studio La Boca, creating a set of book covers for Penguin evolved into a project in which it later animated its artwork.

"We're working on an Augmented Reality app to accompany the books so a reader can interact with the artwork," says studio founder Scot Bendall. "It's our first foray into digital, so we're learning a lot about the process as we go along."

We asked Scot all about the inspiration behind these incredible covers, the heritage of science fiction, and how Photoshop can help to illustrate literature.

How did this project come about?

We had been designing record covers for a long time, and a few years ago an art director

at a publisher suggested we may be able to apply the same working methods to designing book covers. Although the content is quite different, at their core, both are about creating a visual presence for something that has no physical form. We always try to be a connection between the artist and their audience, and whether that artist is a musician or an author, many of the same thought processes apply. For this project, Penguin approached us, and as soon as I saw the brief I knew we had to jump on it!

Can you tell us a bit about how the process began?

The first step in designing a book cover is to read the book if possible. It sounds obvious, but this isn't always a choice with new books. For this project we knew there was a series of five books, but that Penguin wanted them to feel like a family rather than a 'set'. We decided the best way to do this was to create each of the illustrations in a similar style so they would naturally sit together. You wouldn't necessarily see it in the covers, but there were four illustrators working across the series so it was really important we were all aiming towards the same goal.

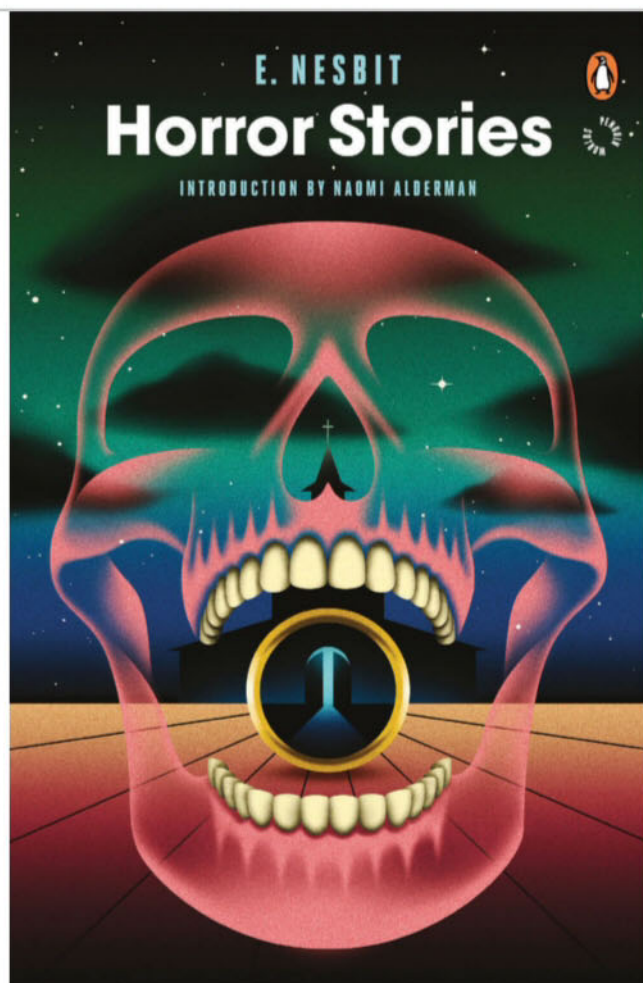
How important was Photoshop in helping you to create these pieces of art?

Photoshop is integral to pretty much every project that we work on. We usually work in vector combined with pixel, but I'd say the most frequent tool we use is probably the good old-fashioned airbrush.

All of our shading is done manually within Photoshop using a Wacom tablet; we try not to use layer effects so we can try to retain a sense of the human hand being involved in the creation. I don't mind if things are a little bit wonky occasionally.

And as well as Photoshop, you used After Effects to animate these images

Even though we don't usually animate our work, we quite often think of our illustrations as being part of a bigger environment, so the process of imagining them coming to life is fairly natural. One of the designers in the

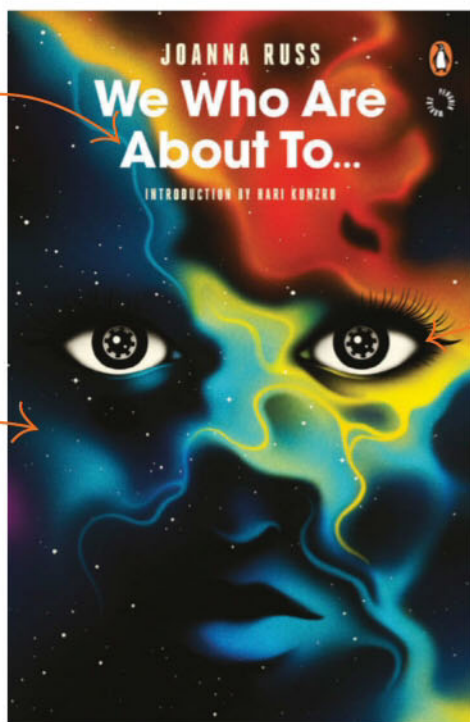


THE PROTAGONIST

The cover for *We Who Are About To...* focuses on the lead protagonist from the book, a sound engineer who descends into madness while stranded on a remote planet with a small crew.

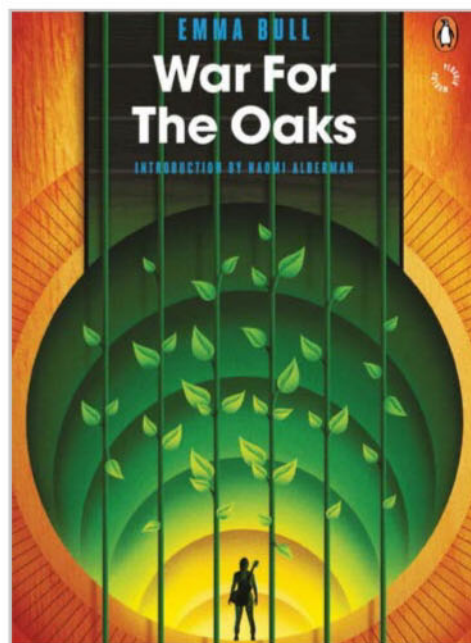
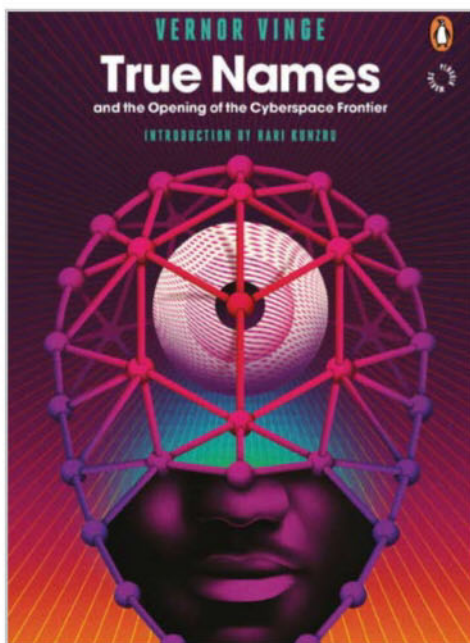
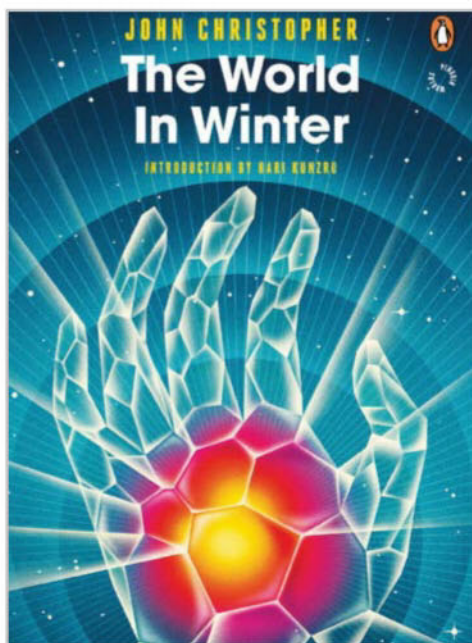
AIRBRUSHING

The galaxy effects are made with layers of separate airbrush in Photoshop created using a Wacom tablet. The eyes are drawn in Illustrator but then imported into Photoshop.



THE STORY

She archives sounds on tapes so we nod to this by representing tapes in her eyes. We decided to blend her features into a psychedelic galaxy in reference to the hallucinations the character experiences and the fact that she is isolated in deepest space.



All images © La Boca

studio had already been exploring ways to animate our files before this project, but like any new process, it involves a lot of patience and a little bit of experimentation. It's early days for our animation careers but I think we'll keep trying!

Do you have a favourite cover from the ones you created?

I think *Horror Stories* is probably the overall favourite in the studio. It wasn't necessarily the easiest one to create – we went through several ideas and variations before reaching this solution – but the end result sits quite well with the content of the book, I think. I like covers that reveal themselves the more you delve into the story. As long as the image

creates intrigue, you don't necessarily need to understand all of its references straight away. Or it could also just be that everyone is a sucker for pink skulls.

Did you have an overall direction you wanted to go in, or did an overriding theme start to develop as you designed?

We didn't want to simply create a sort of pastiche of sci-fi books from the past, but as the books are all vintage titles that are being republished, the approach we took was to think of the covers as having one foot in the past, and one foot in the future. They should have a familiar feel, but be completely new designs. We try to achieve this through the

illustration technique rather than with the content of the images themselves.

Penguin's book covers are iconic – did you feel much pressure?

Yes, the heritage of Penguin science-fiction cover art, in particular, is something that weighed heavily on our minds at the start of this project. Past designers like David Pelham, Alan Aldridge and Franco Grignani are among our design heroes, so we definitely felt humbled that they would even consider letting us loose on a project! Because of this strong history, I was a little nervous about how the designs would be received, but I'm happy to say the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive (so far).





PRO MASKING TECHNIQUES

Masks are essential to all kinds of Photoshop artwork. We asked the pros to share their top tips on the best methods to use

Masking is one of the key Photoshop techniques that every digital artist needs to know. No matter what you use Photoshop for – from retouching to illustration, and graphic design to compositing – being able to create accurate masks is a skill that you will turn to time and time again.

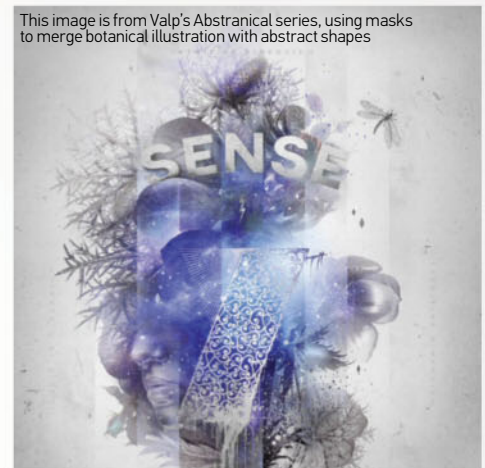
In essence, it's very simple to create a mask. You can add a layer mask from the bottom of the Layers palette or from the Layer>Layer Mask/Vector Mask menu, which attaches to your main layer. As long as you remember that 'white reveals, black conceals', you can go on to use any method that you like in order to generate a monochrome mask.

Of course, it's not all that simple. If you've ever tried to get a perfect mask of hair blowing in the wind, or separate an object from a similarly coloured background, you'll know that there is some art to masking. The big advantage with masking is that it is non-destructive, so you can tinker with the mask to your heart's content until you get it just right, safe in the knowledge that you are not making any permanent changes to your original image.

It is precisely this re-editable nature of masks that makes them so essential to professional artists. "Whenever I work in Photoshop I always try to be as non-destructive as possible, and I therefore use masks for almost anything I do," agrees Anton Forsberg of Studio Mint (www.behance.net/antonforsberg). "Since I do a lot of compositing in my artworks, one of the key benefits of using masks is the ability to non-destructively create cutouts of the different elements I want to use in my composite," he continues.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF MASK

There are two main types of masks available for use in Photoshop: pixel (raster) and vector. Layer>Layer Mask is a pixel mask and is edited using any of the selection or painting tools in Photoshop. Using a layer mask creates a new thumbnail next to your layer, which shows a greyscale channel where black completely hides a portion of the image, white completely reveals a portion of the image, and shades of grey have varying transparency. These are good for softer blends, and are useful for things like hair and fur. They are also versatile in that you can use any brush to create the



This image is from Valp's Abstranical series, using masks to merge botanical illustration with abstract shapes

© Valp, Maciej Hajmrich



In this image, *Life*, the rays of light are created using a group of layer masks

mask, including custom brushes and special brush tips, which gives a lot of scope for flexibility and creativity.

The latest version of Photoshop CC has a Select and Mask workspace, designed to help you create accurate masks faster than ever before. It replaces the Refine Edge dialog box and has been enhanced in the November 2016 release of Photoshop CC 2017. This workspace, accessible via Select>Select and Mask or using the Select and Mask button in the toolbar when choosing the Quick Selection tool, Magic Wand tool or Lasso tool, groups all of Photoshop's tools for refining layer masks.

Layer>Vector Mask creates a resolution-independent mask, which is created using the Pen tool or any of the vector shape tools. The thumbnail that is created by this mask shows the path of the area that has been masked, and this is perfect for crisp, sharp edges. Vector masks are used a lot in web and UI design for graphical elements.

Most artists will use a combination of both types of mask, depending on the requirements of the job in hand. "We often like to combine both raster and vector masks together on the same layer to have soft- and hard-edged masks work together to give more realism to the composition," says Andy McIntosh of PSD Innovative (<http://psdinnovative.com>). Digital artist and illustrator Emi Haze (www.emihaze.com) also combines the power of both types of mask: "In some cases you might have to do a selection that has complicated edges on some parts, and clean, sharp edges on other parts. In these cases it's useful to make the most of both mask types on the same layer. Pixel masks are better for fine and complicated details, while vector masks are better for sharp, clean edges."

KEY MASKING TOOLS

There are plenty of tools that you can use to create your masks, and it's worth taking the time to practise as many as you can, so that you can then switch between them as a project demands.

The Lasso and Polygonal Lasso tools are good for geometric shapes, whereas the Quick Selection tool can create a good base selection ready for further refinement. Even the often-belittled Magic Wand tool has its uses for those instances when the background is a plain, distinct colour to the foreground object.

For creating crisp, accurate masks, the Pen tool is the selection option of choice for Andy McIntosh: "The Pen tool is vital to give a sharp, clean mask edge which can be refined in Properties and a tiny feather added to it to blend into the background. This layer mask will remain live and the feather constantly adjustable, giving flexibility throughout a project."

It can be time-consuming creating an accurate selection with the Pen tool, but it does give very good results. Anton Forsberg is also a fan, but he says that for the best results, you need to be careful to avoid any unwanted artefacts: "It takes some time to get used to, but I always try to stay a couple of pixels inside the edges of the object when



4 TIPS FOR THE SELECT AND MASK WORKSPACE

Get to know Photoshop's masking powerhouse, found as an option in the key selection tools or by going to Select>Select and Mask.



1. Pick the best view

To get the best view of your mask, you need to select the right View mode. It depends on your image as to which works best, but for general masking, either On Black or On White are good for getting precise edges.



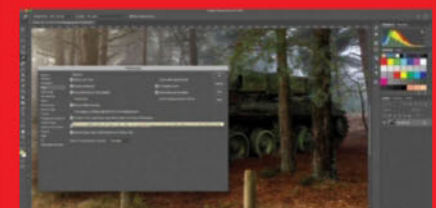
2. Refine Edge Brush tool

This is the best tool for precise refinements to the edge of your mask. It enables you to brush over softer areas, like hair or fur, which are traditionally difficult to mask, and add fine details for a more accurate mask.



3. Selection tools

Quick Selection is a great way of adding in details quickly, whereas the Lasso tool works in the same way as it does in the main Photoshop workspace. As of the November 2016 update to Photoshop CC, the Polygonal Lasso tool is also available.

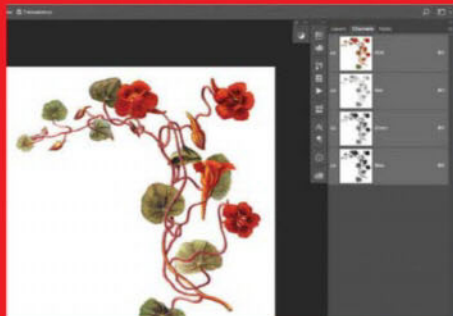


4. Set your Preferences

Gain quick access to the Select and Mask workspace by double-clicking on a layer mask, but it has to be set as your preference. The first time you double-click a layer mask, you'll be asked if you want opening the workspace to be the default.

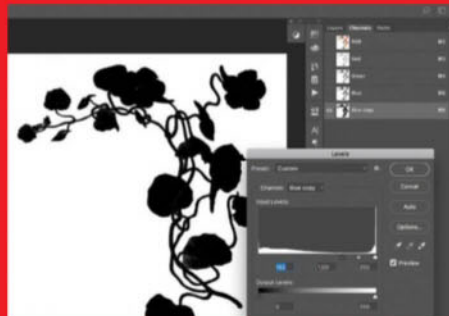
MASK WITH CHANNELS

Maciej Hajnrich, aka Valp (www.valpnow.com) explains how he uses the Channels dialog to create complex masks



Work with Channels

01 With your image open, take a look at the Channels palette. You need to select the channel with the darkest values [to create the clearest outline] – in this case, the Blue channel. Duplicate it by Ctrl/right-clicking on the channel name and selecting Duplicate Channel.



Adjust the contrast

02 On the duplicated channel, boost the contrast of the image with the Levels control (Image>Adjustments>Levels) by dragging the sliders below the Input Levels window. Keep Output Levels as they are so that the white background remains.



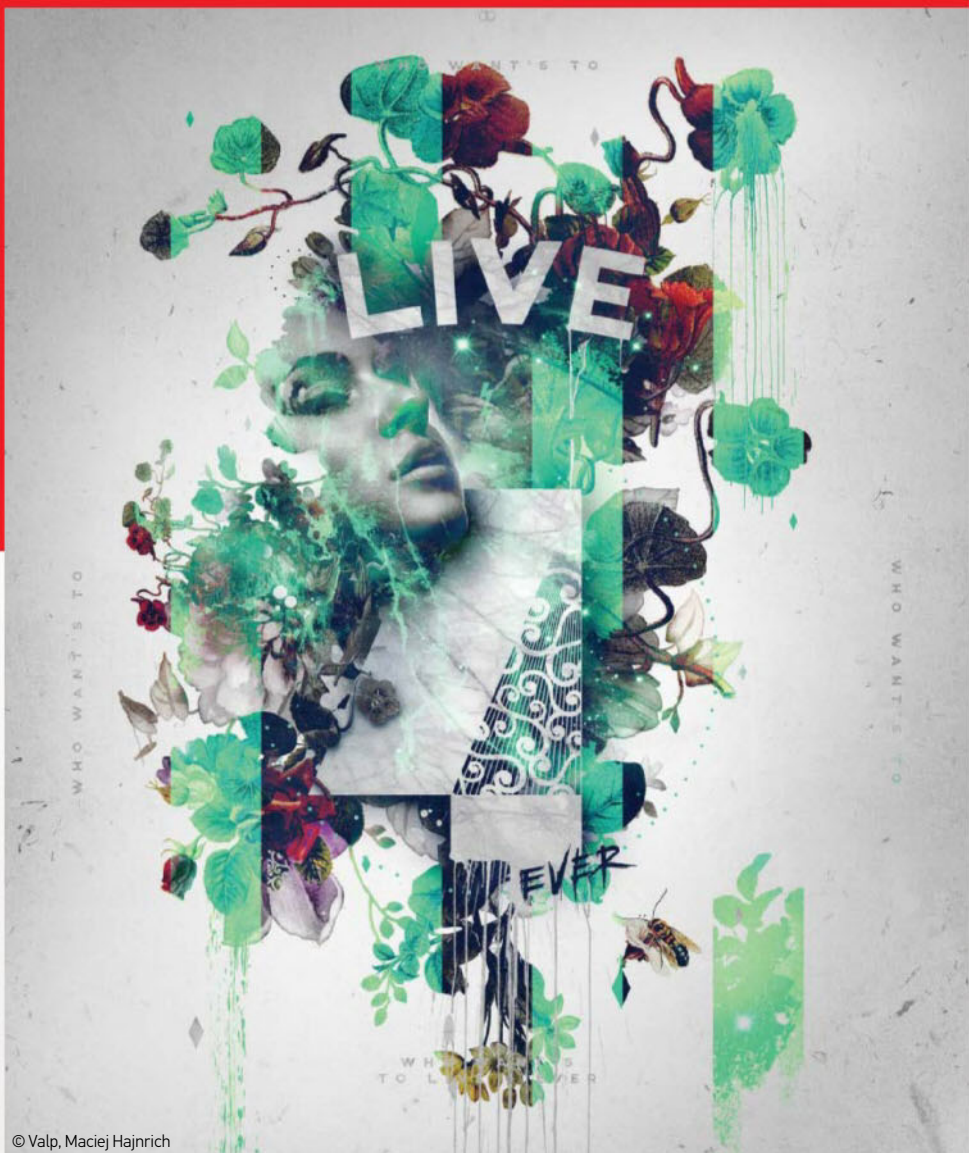
Make a selection

03 The next step is to create a selection from your new channel. This is achieved by clicking the Load Channel as a Selection icon found in the lower part of the Channels palette. Invert the selection (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I) if necessary.



Create a mask

04 Now you can use this selection to create a mask. Go to the Layers palette and click the Add Layer Mask icon in the lower area. Use the Brush tool to fix the finer details on the layer mask itself if needed.



© Valp, Maciej Hajnrich

I'm creating my path to minimise the risk of a visible halo when I later separate the object from the background."

Another popular method among professional artists and designers is to make use of channels to create complex masks quickly. "I combine several techniques for clipping artwork from the background, as it all depends on the image I'm working on," says art director and graphic designer Maciej Hajnrich, aka Valp (www.valpnow.com). "However, my favourite technique is to work with channels, as it allows me to quickly get rid of the solid colour background and focus on the design process more." By using the Channels palette to pick the colour channel with the most information that you need on it – ie the part that you want to select and mask – you can very quickly pick up a lot of



Emi Haze's popular double-exposure effect is created through the use of masks and adjustments to blend elements together

© Emi Haze

intricate detail with little effort. Most channel masks will need some refining, but it's a quick start.

To get even more involved in the minute detail of perfect masks, Andy McIntosh suggests that you give Calculations a try: "One of my favourite techniques is Calculations. With Calculations you can calculate a mask between the foreground and background based on the channels of your image. You can use blending modes to change how the different channels interact with each other, and then use the Levels adjustment and brushes to tidy and refine the mask further."

TOP TECHNIQUES

Learning new mask techniques and experimenting will give you more scope to be creative in your compositions. Luckily, some of our artists revealed their top tips and techniques with us to give you a chance to practise your skills.

Sometimes, simple is the best solution, even on high-end artwork. PSD Innovative creates commercial composites for some big-name clients, so the masking has to be spot-on. Andy McIntosh often needs to blend foreground and background elements seamlessly, but at speed. He shares one technique that works well when the main

subject, for example a model, has been shot on a neutral background: "For this to work, place the background on top of the main subject so that the subject is completely covered by the background. Set the background to Hard Light or Overlay, and [on a layer mask] simply brush away with a soft brush the overlapping background image from the subject. This technique will allow you to retain very fine details like stray hairs and other fine details that would be almost impossible to retain with conventional masking methods."

From the practical to the creative, Emi Haze uses a combination of masks and



© Caleb de Gabriel

BLEND TYPOGRAPHY AND ILLUSTRATION

Blending together a mixture of photography, illustrations and typography takes some careful masking work to ensure that the final result looks like one complete artwork, and not a series of individual images placed together. For this image, graphic artist and designer Caleb de Gabriel (www.behance.net/calebwashere) pieced the different elements together primarily using masks. The first step was to compose the visual 'bouquet' of flowers using individual watercolour flower illustrations from stock sites.

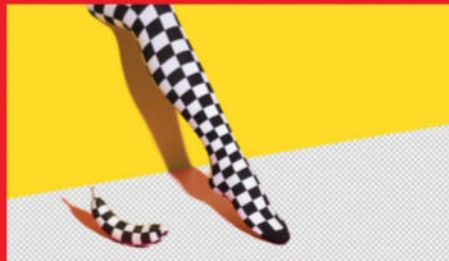
"Each illustration was clipped off a white paper background. When I clip the image, I select the mask, then go to Select>Modify>Expand. From this window I can expand the mask by 1 or 2 points to overlap and mask the white keyline."

With all of this initial prep work complete, he could then move on to bringing the elements together in Photoshop in a non-destructive manner: "I always save the masked files as Smart Objects within the Photoshop file. This allows me to be able to edit those elements individually. Using masks within Smart Objects also keeps the layers organised and minimal."

"I placed the flower illustrations layer by layer into a composition that I was happy with. Then I added the typography over the top. Again I used masks, this time to clip out the shape of the flower from the typography to create the appearance of the typography sitting beneath the petals. Finally, I added some layers of grading and texture to the image as a whole to create the appearance of one complete illustration."

adjustments to create surreal scenes: "Find an image of a tree and select the Magic Wand tool. Click on the white area or sky if it's present around the tree and make sure you have Contiguous unchecked - this will select the white areas even within the tree. If you're picking up too much of the tree, you might have to darken the tree first to get a better selection. Once done, apply the mask and use the Select and Mask Refine Edge options to enhance the mask. Use the Soft Light blending mode, Warp tool (Edit> Transform>Warp) and clipping masks to blend the tree and textures to any object or character, such as a woman. Place a texture over the character, then blend it using the appropriate blending modes. Use a clipping mask to either clip it to the character layer or add a custom mask with brushes." The image can then have various adjustments applied to finish the look.

The more complex your composition, the more masks you will end up with. It certainly pays to stay organised and label everything in your Layers palette. Anton Forsberg suggests making the most of the Groups option to keep on top of large projects that use lots of different, individual elements: "Often the elements are photographed on a white background, and if that's the case then Photoshop's Color Range selection normally gives a good enough result. The key here is to make the edge of the object as sharp as possible, as the smaller areas that get affected inside the object are easy to paint back in later on. Press OK and then invert the selection (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I) to select



USE THE COLOR RANGE TOOL

Sometimes the more basic tools can get overlooked when it comes to creating masks, but they can be quick and actually very effective. Art director and photographer Jaime Sánchez (<http://jaimesanchezart.com>) is a fan of creating masks through the Color Range tool (Select>Color Range), which works particularly well for his photographic style, using bold, bright colours as backgrounds. Sánchez first uses the Color Range tool to isolate each block of background colour, then he uses the Select and Mask option from the Quick Selection tool (W): "I can make my borders smoother and avoid 'saw teeth'," he explains. "This tool also offers the possibility of painting in those areas that haven't been properly selected, so the result is a perfect

layer mask." The aim is to eliminate the whole background, just leaving the main elements that he wants to use. He will often perfect his layer mask bit by bit to remove rogue pixels, which he does so using a graphics tablet for speed and precision.

Once the main objects in his composition have been masked out of their photographic background, he is then able to add in a digital colour fill in order to give his trademark style: "For the background, I create a layer with a yellow fill. With the Polygonal Selection tool, I create a diagonal selection to create perspective and then apply a layer mask and remove the bottom. To finish, I add a layer filled with pink underneath the one of yellow. I duplicate the bananas, and finally I polish all of the individual masks."

In this editorial image for *Happy Socks*, Jaime Sánchez made use of the Color Range tool to create his masks



the object instead of the background. So far so good, but here comes a little trick. Instead of using the selection you just created to apply a layer mask to the object itself, I usually create a group for the object and apply the layer mask to the group instead. The advantage of this is that you now only need to place the adjustments you want to apply to your object directly into the masked group. This achieves the same effect as clipping your adjustments to your object, but with one difference. The fact that you no longer need to create clipping masks makes it possible to group your adjustments in subgroups, and this could help you a lot when it comes to keeping your growing layer stack clean and organised."

Hopefully, you will feel inspired to try new things with masks - as they are completely non-destructive, it's one area where you can try new methods over and over to get them right, without affecting your image.

© Jaime Sánchez

© Jaime Sánchez



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Essentials



Time taken
4 hours

Expert

Rodrigo Marinelli



"I always try to create a scene with something unexpected. Generating curiosity grabs people's attention."

"I'm an art director and have 11 years of experience in advertising agencies. I learned and am still learning to use Photoshop through following tutorials."

Transparent mask effects

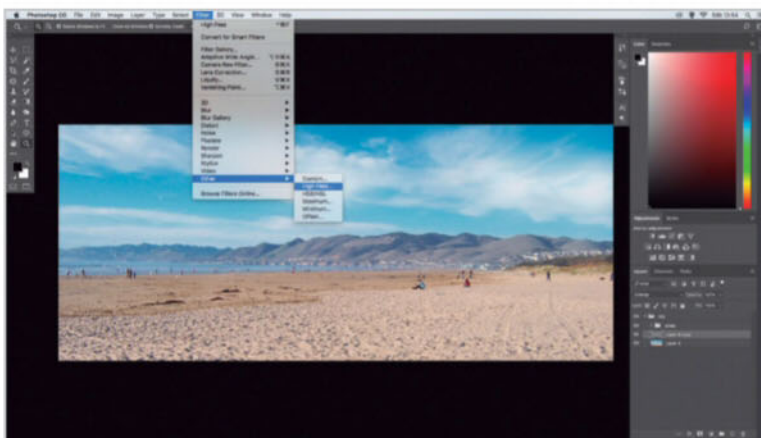
Use masks to play with transparency and create a surreal scene

To ensure a composition grabs people's attention, creating a surprise element is a useful technique. With this in mind, let's create a beach scene using a transparent bucket with an island inside as the surprise.

For this to be possible, we're going to use one of the most fantastic Photoshop tools: the mask. This makes it possible to do many things, such as blend different photos, erase unnecessary details, and

when applied to a layer group, add many photos that automatically follow the shape of the mask.

Because we're creating something that doesn't exist, it's important to be careful with the details. It is also necessary to imagine how the scene will look in terms of highlights, shadows and also the colour tone. To create these details, we'll use the Gaussian Blur filter, the Feather command, blend modes and the adjustment layers.



Sharpen the image

01 Create a new document (Cmd/Ctrl+N) set to 460x190mm. Use 'sky.jpg', duplicate the layer, open the High Pass filter (Filter>Other>High Pass) set to 1px and change the blend mode to Soft Light. Create a new layer, use a soft brush (B), select white as your colour, and enhance the white parts of the clouds.

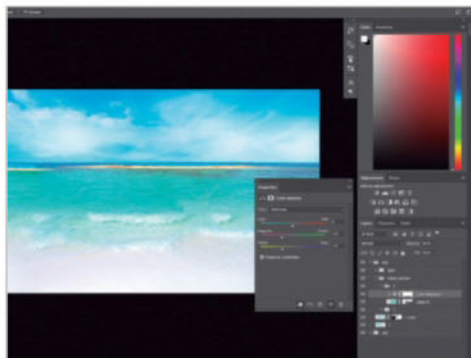


Blend the layers

02 Use the Beach layer from the photo 'beach.psd'. To fill the scene, duplicate it (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and place it as shown above. To blend the images, select the top layer, press the Add Layer Mask button, select the Brush tool (B), and with black as your colour, erase the unnecessary parts.



Advanced Transparent mask effects



Link the adjustment layer

03 Add the Water_texture layer from 'island.psd' and place it at the top of the beach. To fill the scene, duplicate the layer and repeat the procedure from the previous step. Use a Color Balance adjustment layer (0, -33, -32), hold Cmd/Ctrl+Alt and click on the Water_texture layer.



Soften with a feather

04 Add the sand from 'sand.jpg'. Activate the selection of the layer (Cmd/Ctrl+click in the layer), use the Feather (Shift+F6) set to 2px, invert the selection (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I), and press delete twice. Set a Color Balance adjustment layer to 0, 0, -29, and link it with the sand layer (step 3).



Erase some details

05 Add 'mountain_01.jpg', click the Add Layer Mask button, choose black as your colour, and with a Soft Round Pressure brush (B), smoothly erase the base of the mountain to make it blend with the sea. Then add 'mountain_02.jpg', flip it horizontally (Edit>Transform>Flip Horizontal) and repeat the procedure.



Use the blend mode

06 Add the Left_island layer from the photo 'left_island.psd'. Duplicate the layer, change the blend mode to Multiply, use the Levels command (Cmd/Ctrl+L) set to 0, 1.00, 227, and place it below the original layer. Make a mask (step 5) on the original layer and smoothly erase the unnecessary parts of the sky.



Transform with the Warp tool

07 Add 'bucket.png'. Make a mask (step 5) and erase the base. With the Pen tool (P), draw the shadow, paint it with #040403, change the blend mode to Multiply and the Opacity to 40%. Use the Warp tool (Edit>Transform>Warp) and adjust the shape to make it look more natural.



Group layers with a mask

08 Create a new layer. With the Pen tool (P), make a selection on the bucket's base, activate it, make a layer group (Cmd/Ctrl+G) and press the Add Layer Mask button. Select the top and repeat. Select the handle, use the Polygonal Lasso tool (L), Ctrl/right-click and choose Layer Via Copy.



Make a gradient mask

09 Add the following to the folder: 'coral.jpg', 'coral_02.jpg', 'colorful_fish.jpg', 'yellow_fish.jpg', 'underwater_03.jpg' and 'underwater_01.jpg'. Blend them using masks (step 2). For a transparent effect, select the base folder, click the mask thumbnail, use the Gradient tool (G) (Foreground to Transparent, 40% Opacity) and erase the sides.



Custom warp

10 Add 'water_top_02.psd' and place it inside the top folder. To adjust the shape, use the Warp tool, select the custom menu and use the Arc Lower option. To adjust the colour tone, activate the top selection, create a new layer, and paint it with #0e749f at 30% Opacity.



Draw highlights and shadows

11 Create a new layer and with the Pen tool (P), draw the highlight shape, paint white and use Gaussian Blur (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur) set to 70px. Play with the layer's opacity to get the best result. Use the same procedure for the shadows, but paint with black and change the blend mode to Multiply.



Adjust the colour tone

12 Let's adjust the colour tone. Make a new layer, place it inside the base layer folder, paint with #157da5 and change the Opacity to 30%. To soften it, make a mask, use the Gradient tool (Foreground to Transparent, 40% Opacity) and erase the sides of the bucket.

Expert tip



Make quick masks

There are always many ways to adjust the colour tone of a scene, and one is the Quick Mask. With this, it's possible to make adjustments in specific parts of the photo in a very easy way, for example the climber's arm. Select the climber's layer, press Q, use a soft brush (B) at 40% Opacity and paint the arms. Next, press Q again, invert the selection (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I) and use any adjustment tool you want. In this case, we used Brightness/Contrast (2, 20) and Hue/Saturation (0, -23, 0).



Create the island

13 Create a new layer, make a selection of the bucket hole, create a masked group (step 8) and place 'pier.jpg' inside. Duplicate the layer and place it outside the layer group, then use the Pen tool to crop the other wooden huts, as shown above.



Place the palm trees

14 Place the Island layer from 'island.psd' behind the wooden huts. To erase the unnecessary parts of the photo, which are close to the palm trees, follow step 6. Then add 'island_02.psd' behind the Island layer and repeat the procedure.



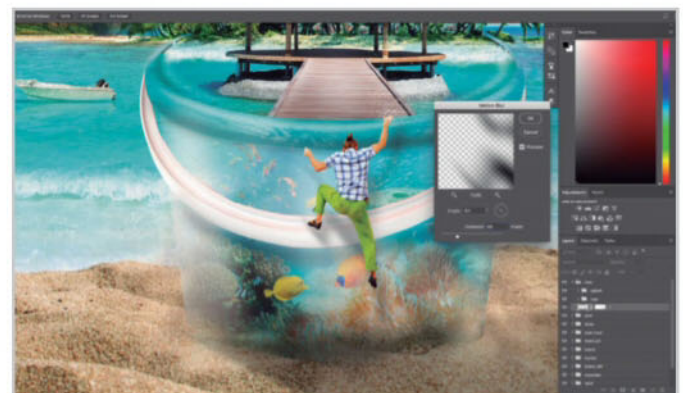
Bring in details

15 Use the Wave layer from 'beach.jpg' and place it in front of the island, as shown above. Make a mask to blend the image with the scene as in step 5, then use the Pen tool to draw the highlights and shadows, just like in step 11.



Add dust

16 Use the 'sand_texture.psd', place it on the bucket's right side, make a mask (step 5) and erase the unnecessary parts. Adjust the colour tone using Levels (Cmd/Ctrl+L) set to 0, 1.74, 219, and Hue/Saturation (Cmd/Ctrl+U) set to 0, -43, 0. Finally, duplicate the layer, flip it horizontally and place it on the bucket's left side.



Build the shadow

17 Add 'climbing.jpg', duplicate it, place it behind the original layer, paint it black, use the Warp tool to adjust the shape, use the Gaussian Blur filter (set to 12px) and finally use the Motion Blur filter (-51, 49px). Add the 'water_splash.psd', place it next to the climber's hand, and change the blend mode to Screen.

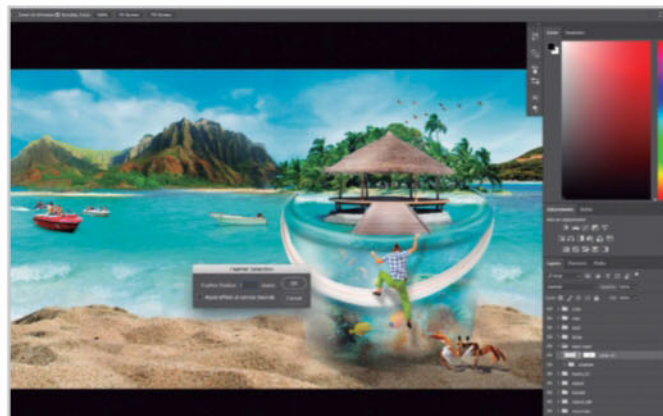


Advanced Transparent mask effects



Select and rotate

18 Add 'crab.psd', change the layer's shadow to Multiply, and use Levels (Cmd/Ctrl+L) set to 0, 1.00, 218. With the Pen tool, select the crab's claw, activate the selection (Cmd/Ctrl+Enter), then rotate it (Cmd/Ctrl+T) as above, giving the idea that it's trying to grab the climbing man.



Compose the scene

19 Add 'birds.jpg'. To make it blend with the scene, use the Feather command (step 4) set to 2px. Then add 'boats.psd', make a mask to erase the unnecessary parts, and finally add the White_boat layer from 'left_island.psd'. Place all the photos as shown above.



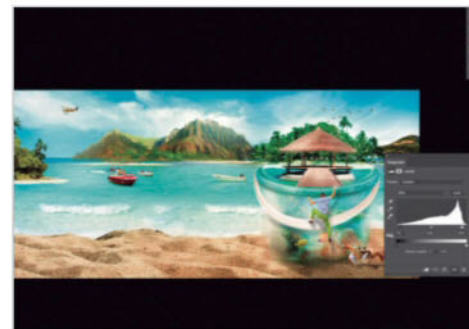
Use the Elliptical Marquee tool

20 Add 'dolphin_02.jpg', flip horizontally and make a mask to erase unwanted parts. Create a new layer, use the Elliptical Marquee tool (M) to make a circle, paint with #007a9d, set the blend mode to Multiply, and use Gaussian Blur at 9px. Add 'dolphin_01.jpg' and repeat the procedure.



Add the sky details

21 Use a soft round brush (B), set the Opacity to 40%, select white as your colour, and paint above the mountains, bringing more light to the scene. Change the blend mode to Soft Light. Finally, add 'plane.psd', place it as shown above and use the Feather (step 4) set to 2px.



Set the colour tone

22 Use adjustments to set the colour tone of the scene. Use Brightness/Contrast (0, 20), Levels (15, 1.00, 239), Color Lookup (3Strip.look), Photo Filter (Warming filter 85, 25% Density). Finally, create a new layer, paint it yellow (#ffffd7), change the blend mode to Color and set Opacity to 20%.

What you'll learn

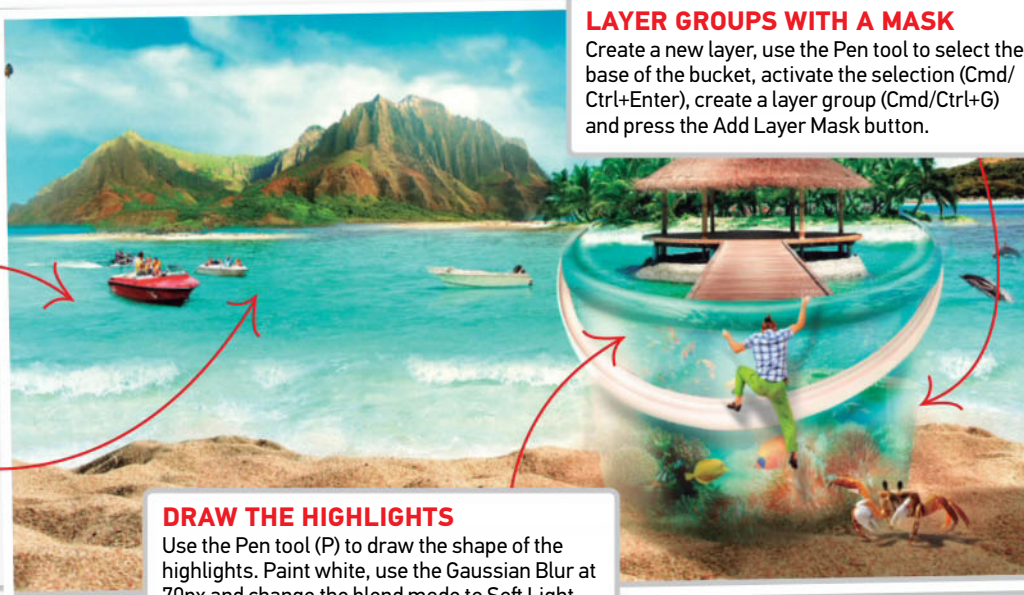
Compose a surreal scene

MAKE MASKS

Select a layer, press the Add Layer Mask button, use a soft brush (B), set to black, and erase the unnecessary parts.

SET THE TONE

The last step for the scene is to adjust the colour tone. To do that, use the adjustments and edit the colour tone using layers.



DRAW THE HIGHLIGHTS

Use the Pen tool (P) to draw the shape of the highlights. Paint white, use the Gaussian Blur at 70px and change the blend mode to Soft Light.

LAYER GROUPS WITH A MASK

Create a new layer, use the Pen tool to select the base of the bucket, activate the selection (Cmd/Ctrl+Enter), create a layer group (Cmd/Ctrl+G) and press the Add Layer Mask button.

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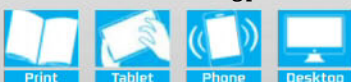


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Expert

Andy Hau



"With my background in architecture, the impossible objects and conflicting perspectives of M C Escher have always inspired me. Although not immediately apparent, Photoshop has great tools for emulating this isometric style.

"I am a London-based architect and graphic designer, and the owner of A.H.A. Design Ltd, a multidisciplinary design studio. In all of my work, from buildings to digital imagery, I believe that all design should have an element of joy about it – from its inception to the final product. Design is an escape from the futility of modern life, not an endorsement of it."

If you would like to see more of Andy's work, visit www.andyhau.com.

Create isometric type art



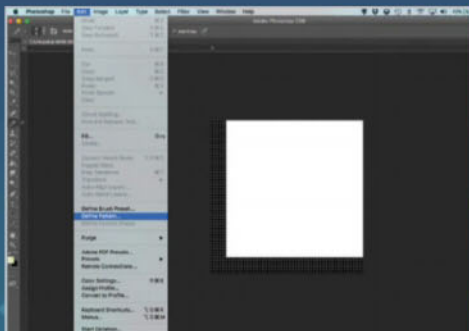
Are you confounded by impossible objects and perspectives? Here's how to make the impossible possible!

If you're unfamiliar with M C Escher's *Waterfall* image, it is definitely worth your while to take a minute to search for it on the internet and then trace the flow of water. No matter how hard your mind tries to make sense of it and rationalise it, you'll find that either the water is flowing uphill or the waterfall is defying gravity. As with a lot of Escher's work, it is an effect that is fun and challenging to re-create.

In this tutorial, we are going to make art out of letters that have been cleverly disguised by using optical illusions and bending perspectives. Inspired

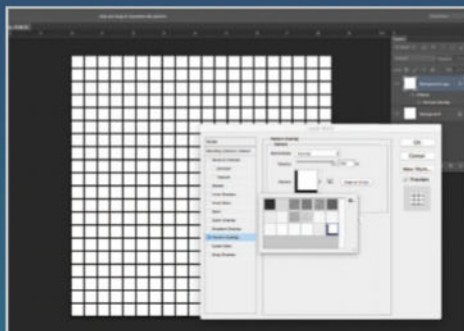
by M C Escher and games such as *Monument Valley* and *Skyward*, this tutorial will teach you how to set up an isometric grid to create simple yet impossible perspectives, blurring 2D illustration into 3D.

But it isn't just about setting up a structure. Using gradient fills and a tight, otherworldly colour palette, this tutorial will also teach you how to create a sense of depth and space in your images. All of the techniques you learn here can be applied to other projects, whether they bend the rules of reality or not!



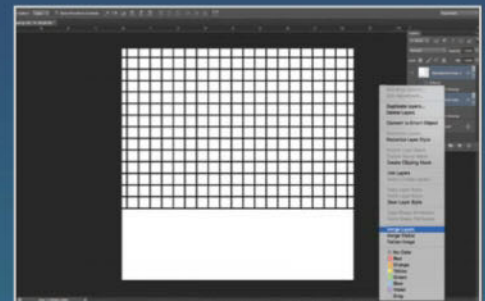
Set up the grid

01 Open a new canvas and make it 50 pixels wide by 50 pixels high. Select the Pencil tool (B) and set the Radius to 5px. Starting from the top left of the canvas, draw an 'L' shape in black. Select Edit>Define Pattern and save the pattern.



Create a square grid

02 Open a new canvas and make it 1000 x 1000px. Create a new layer and use the Paint Bucket (G) to fill it in white. Double-click on the layer in the Layers panel and select Pattern Overlay. Use the pattern we created in step 1 and click Snap To Origin.



Enlarge the grid

03 Move the pattern across slightly and duplicate the layer. Tile the layers together to create a larger area of pattern. Tile it as many times as you want but make sure the pattern always remains a square. Select all the pattern layers, right-click and pick Merge Layers.

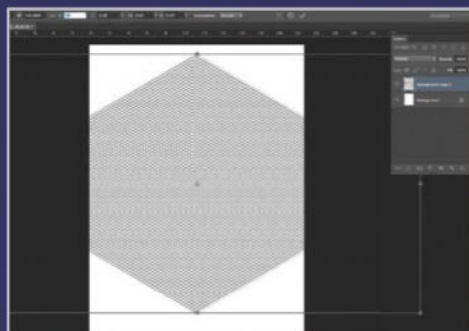


Expert tip



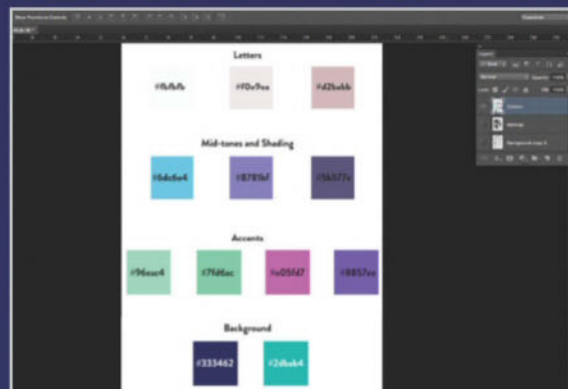
Accurate grids

Although Photoshop can emulate the style of an isometric drawing, due to the fact that you can't create a 'snappable' isometric grid, the method is not actually that accurate. For more accuracy, you could draw some elements in Illustrator and then bring the elements into Photoshop for compositing and editing. However, if you are a perfectionist when it comes to accuracy, you could always use a computer-aided design drawing package such as AutoCAD.



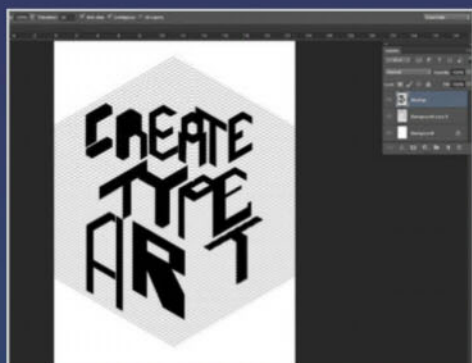
Create an isometric grid

04 Open up a new canvas (this will be your working canvas) and drag in the pattern. Rotate the pattern 45° (Edit> Transform>Rotate) and apply the transformation. Select Scale (Edit> Transform>Scale) and in the Height box type in 58% (keep the Width at 100%) to create an isometric grid.



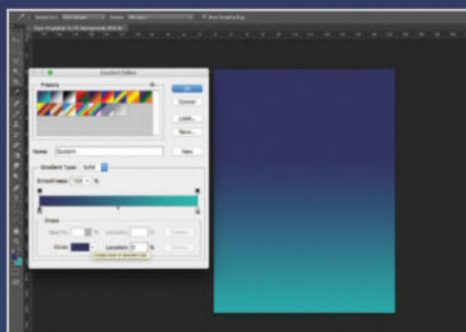
Choose a colour palette

05 For the text to really stand out, we are going to use whites and taupe for the letters, and make everything else fairly dark by using blues and purples for the midtones and shadow colours. Blues and cool purples tend to recede into the background, which will help to draw the letters out.



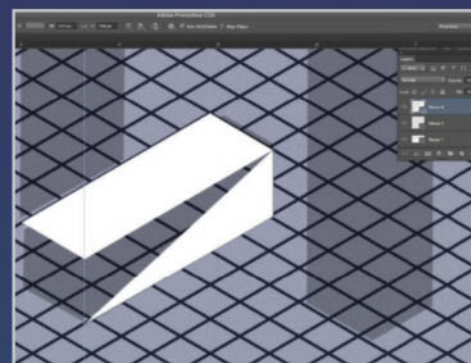
Make a quick mock-up

06 Use the Polygonal Lasso tool (L) or Brush tool (B) to quickly block out the composition and where you think the text will be located. This doesn't need to be accurate or final – it's only a guide for creating the shapes.



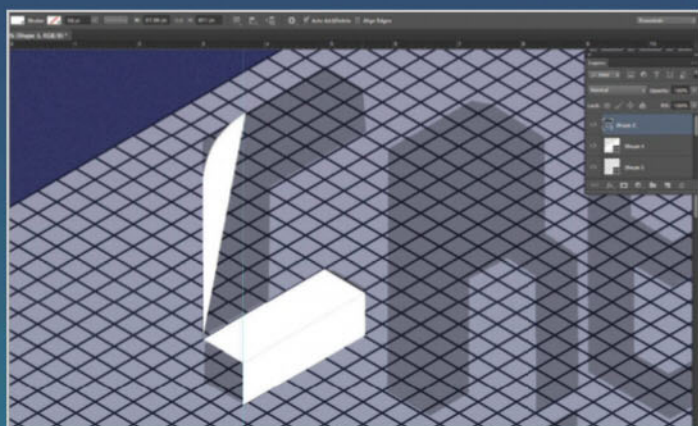
Gradient the background

07 Fill the entire canvas using the Gradient Fill (G) with the colours we chose in step 5. You can change the location of the fade by changing where and how far you drag the Gradient Fill tool. It's best to keep the background mostly dark to help the letters stand out.



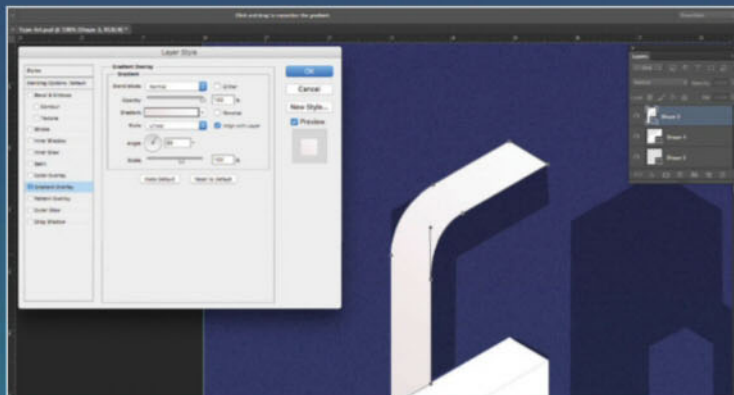
Start the letters

08 Using your mock-up as a basis, create the shapes with the Pen tool (P). Follow the lines of the grid to create the sides in the correct perspective. You may want to add a few vertical guides to help you keep track of the starting point of the shape.



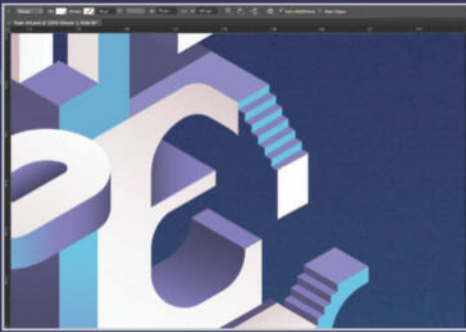
Create curves and edit

09 To create curves, click and hold down the left mouse button or Alt/Opt key. If you want to edit the shapes, select the Pen tool (P), hold down Cmd/Ctrl, click on the anchor points and move them to where you want them.



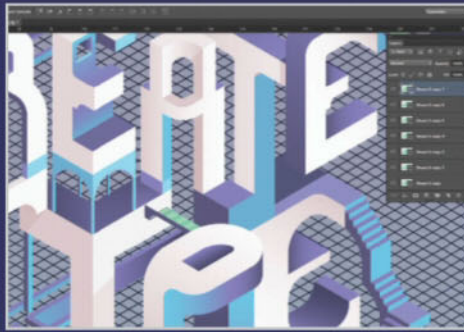
Set the Overlay colour

10 Once you have your shape, double-click on the layer in the Layers palette, select Color Overlay and change the colour accordingly. For a more convincing shading style, pick Gradient Overlay and choose a dark and light colour to blend together, keeping in mind where your light source is.



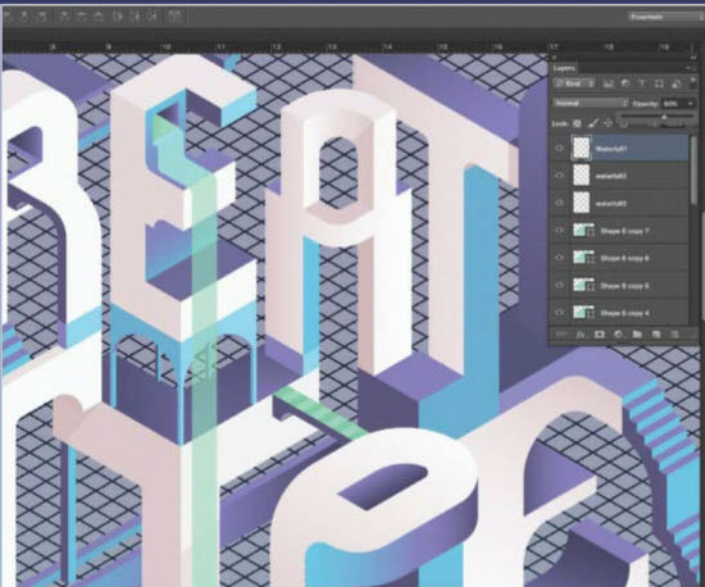
Create some stairs

11 Once you have created all of your letters, create the stairs using the Pen tool (P), following the grid lines to help with the perspective. As with the letters, use Color or Gradient Overlay to change the colour. You can warp the perspective by unexpectedly making the stair landings vertical.



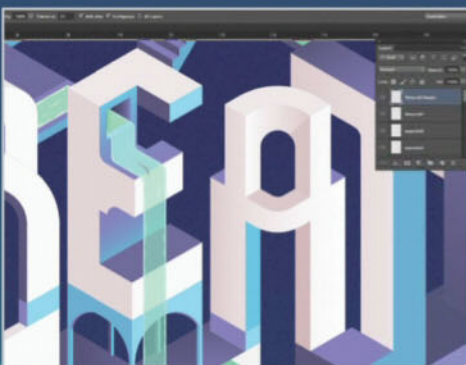
Build walkways and bridges

12 Using the Pen tool (P), connect the letters with walkways and bridges to add complexity and to distort the outlines so that the letters aren't so easily recognisable. However, be sure to use a different colour so that these elements do not merge with the letters, which would make them illegible.



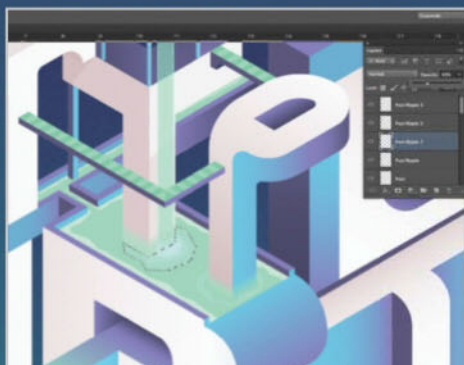
Add a waterfall

13 Create the water with the Pen tool (P) and change the colour by using Color Overlay. Ctrl/right-click on the waterfall layer and select Rasterize Layer and Rasterize Layer Style. Lower the opacity setting of the layer so the waterfall becomes transparent.



Work on the waterfall details

14 Use the Polygonal Lasso tool (L) to create boundaries for the reflections in the waterfall. Fill the boundaries with a lighter colour using the Paint Bucket tool (G) and lower the opacity if necessary. Creating lighter areas at the edges helps to create the illusion that the water is rippling.

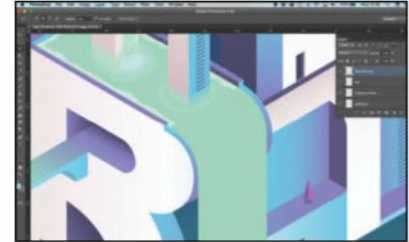


Make the pool

15 Create the pool in the same way as the waterfall. You can give the effect that the waterfall is distorting the water in the pool by adding ripples using the Polygonal Lasso tool (L) and Paint Bucket (G) – gradually lowering the opacity of each ripple.

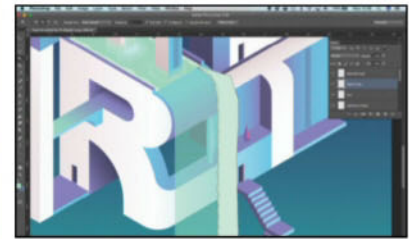
Expert edit

Clipping masks



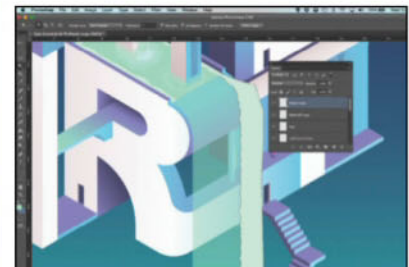
Perfect trimming

01 Clipping masks help to ensure that the edges of the ripple layer align with the edges of the waterfall layer underneath. This technique is particularly useful for complex curved areas.



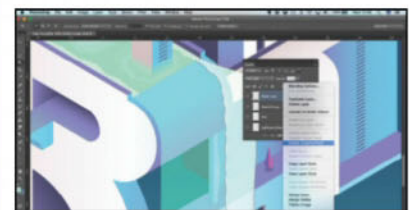
Overlap the elements

02 Ensure that the element you want to trim is oversized and overlaps the trimming element sufficiently so that you'll get a perfectly clean edge.



Layer placement

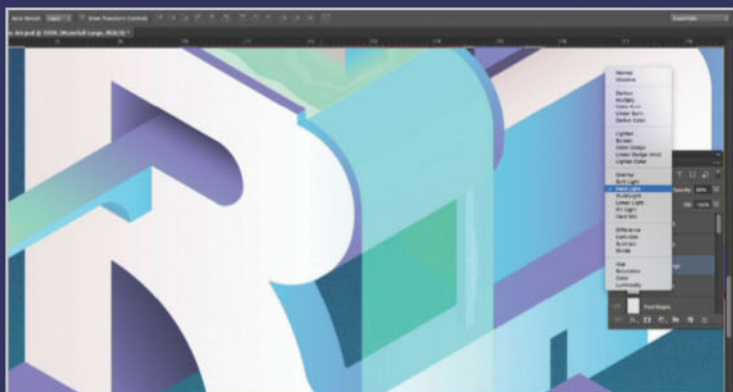
03 Unlike Adobe Illustrator, the trimming element needs to be below the element to be trimmed in Photoshop. Place the ripple layer above the waterfall layer on the Layers panel.



Create clipping mask

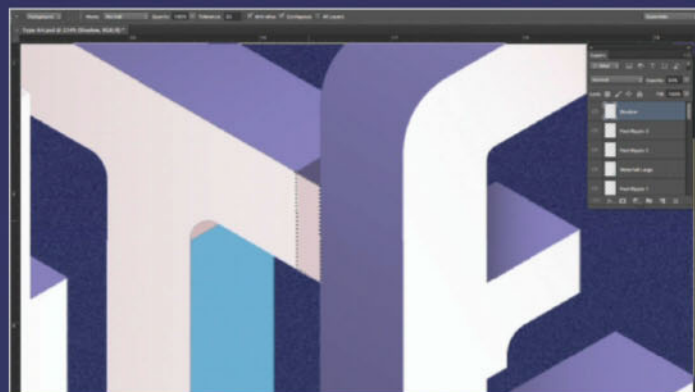
04 Ctrl/right-click on the ripple layer in the Layers panel and select Create Clipping Mask. The ripple layer should show through the waterfall layer and the edges should align perfectly.





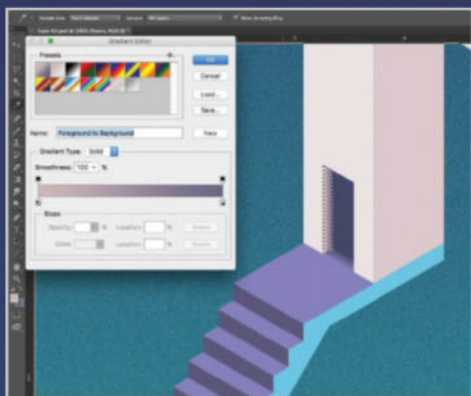
Create the large waterfall

16 Follow steps 13 and 14 to create the large waterfall. Try changing the blend mode of the layer to Hard Light so that it reacts with the colours underneath. Since there aren't many elements behind the large waterfall (unlike the smaller waterfall), the colour reaction won't be too distracting.



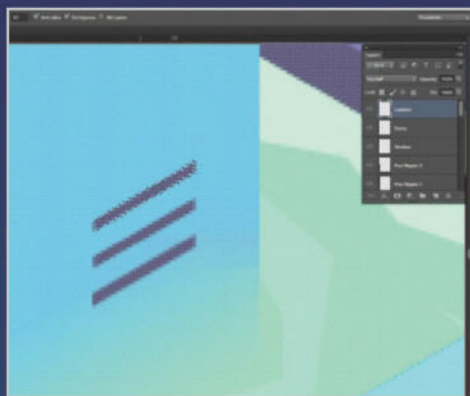
Add shadows

17 Even though we want the perspectives to be somewhat confusing, we still need to create a sense of depth and mass for the letters. Add shadows in strategic places (for example where elements overlap) by using the Polygonal Lasso tool (L) and Paint Bucket (G), lowering the opacity where necessary.



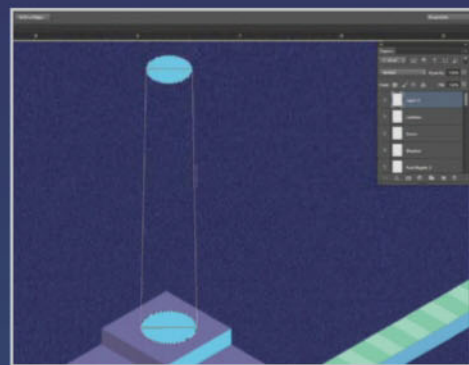
Connect the doors

18 Create doors with the Polygonal Lasso (L). Fill the opening of the door with a solid dark colour using the Paint Bucket tool (G). Fill the side and the threshold of the door with a Gradient Fill so that they look like they are fading into darkness.



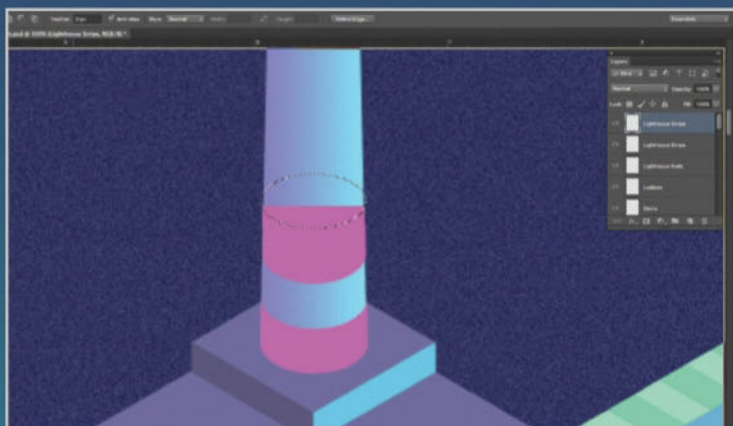
Construct ladders

19 Create small dark strips using the Polygonal Lasso tool (L) and Paint Bucket (G) to form the rungs of the ladders. Once you've made one rung, you can then copy and paste it until the whole ladder has been formed.



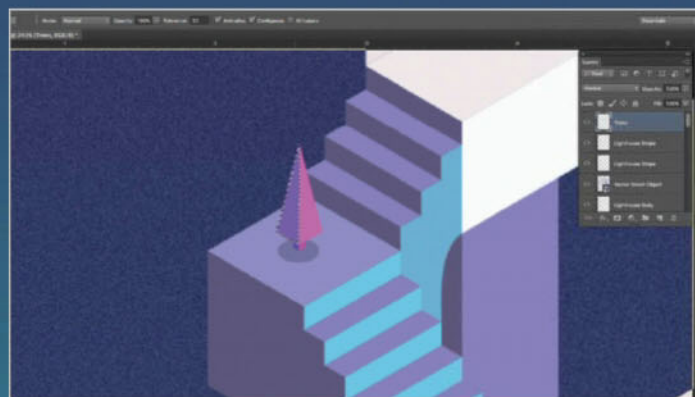
Build the lighthouse body

20 Create two ellipses using the Elliptical Marquee (M) and connect them using the Polygonal Lasso (L) to form the lighthouse body. Fill it in with the Paint Bucket (G). Merge the layers and use the Gradient Overlay layer style to change the colour. Use a similar technique for the lantern.



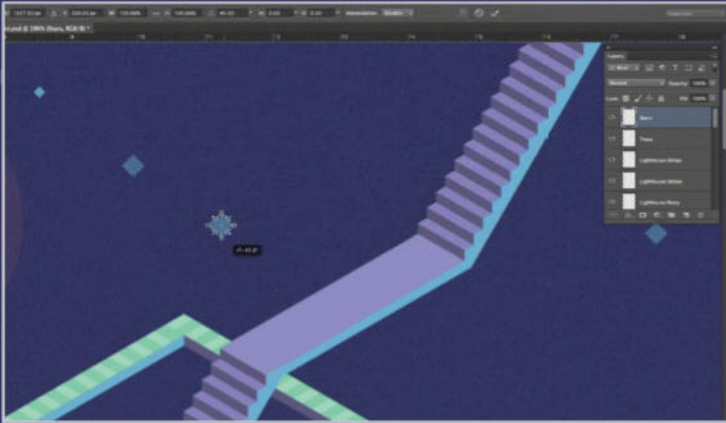
Add lighthouse stripes

21 Create an ellipse that is the same proportion as the ones for the lighthouse body. Starting from the midpoint of the ellipse, create a rectangle to form the depth of the stripe. Create another ellipse with the Elliptical Marquee (M) and delete the top of the rectangle.



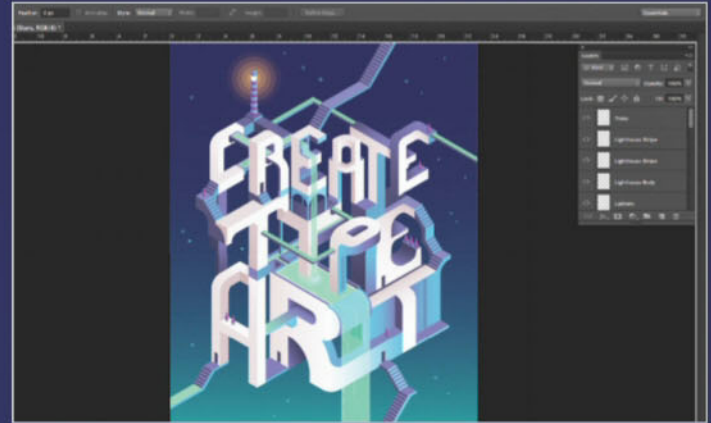
Plant some trees

22 Use the Polygonal Lasso tool (L) and Paint Bucket (G) to form some triangular trees. Use a strong accent colour for the trees to lift the other colours in the image and place them strategically so that they do not compete with the text. Don't be tempted to add too many!



Add the stars

23 Use the Rectangular Marquee (M) to create a small square shape. Fill this in with the Paint Bucket tool (G) in white. Rotate the square 45°(Edit>Transform>Rotate) and lower the opacity to form a star. Repeat a few times to fill the night sky with stars.



Zoom out

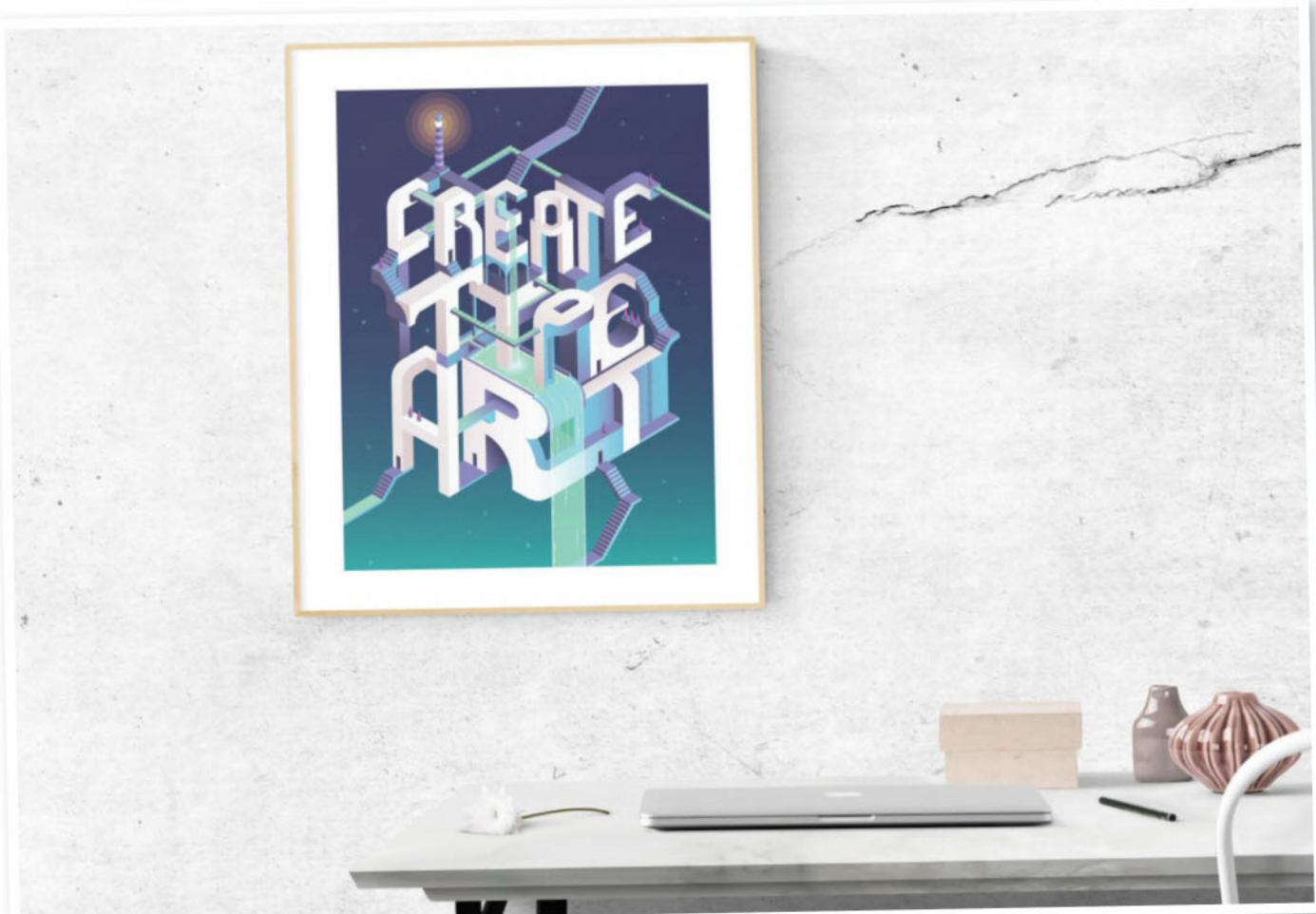
24 Zoom out using Cmd/Ctrl+0 so that the entire image fits onto your screen, and check that you are happy with the overall composition. The image should look balanced, and the elements and colours should be evenly distributed.

What you can do with it

Create a print to hang on the wall

The complex composition of this image lends itself perfectly to being printed as a poster. Most professional printers will require a 300ppi resolution image and some may also require a 3-5mm bleed, that is to say an extra 3-5mm of canvas running around your artwork that

will be trimmed off to ensure that the edges are clean when it is cut to size. With this in mind, it is important that you make sure your most critical elements are not near the edge, or you run the risk of them being trimmed off!



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COMPOSITE AN ANIMAL HYBRID

Apply non-destructive techniques and blending modes to merge two animals together and create a new species p96

RECOLOUR THE EYES

On a new Color layer, brush 50% opaque colour onto the irises of your subject to brighten up the eyes.

What does it mean?

LIQUIFY – The Liquify tool is one of the more well-known distortion tools that Elements offers. It enables you to warp pixels; the benefits of using it are that it can simultaneously resize elements in your image while filling in the blank spaces with other pixels. You can find the tool under Filter>Distort.

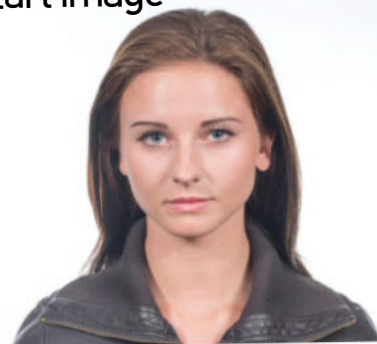
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Tool focus...

Adjust Facial Features

Start image



Retouch a subject's face using Elements' new slider-based feature

Retouching is something that everyone, from photographers to digital artists, has to consider. It's not just a quick first step for many people either; retouching is almost an art in itself, as transforming a subject's face with both realism and subtlety isn't as easy as it looks.

Subtlety is key, too. 'Photoshop fails' are common on the internet, as retouchers often don't spot the background warping along with their subject. The Liquify tool is an advanced one, and that's what makes the Adjust Facial Features tool so much more convenient. It consists simply of sliders, pinpointed at key areas of the face, which when tweaked, can alter the height, width and size of the eyes, lips and nose. It's easy to use, you can see your edits happening in

real-time, and if you're not a retouching pro, you'll be pleased to know it's almost impossible to create one of those infamous 'Photoshop fails' with this feature.

Retouching is useful for all kinds of projects, but the best thing about the Adjust Facial Features tool is that it delivers quick, realistic results, no matter what you want to achieve. If you want to increase your subject's smile, it can help, just as if you want to completely renovate a face. Experiment with the sliders to see how they interact with each other, and if you're feeling confident, use the Liquify tool to take your retouching further. Adjust Facial Features doesn't just create realistic edits; it can help you to discover the art of retouching.



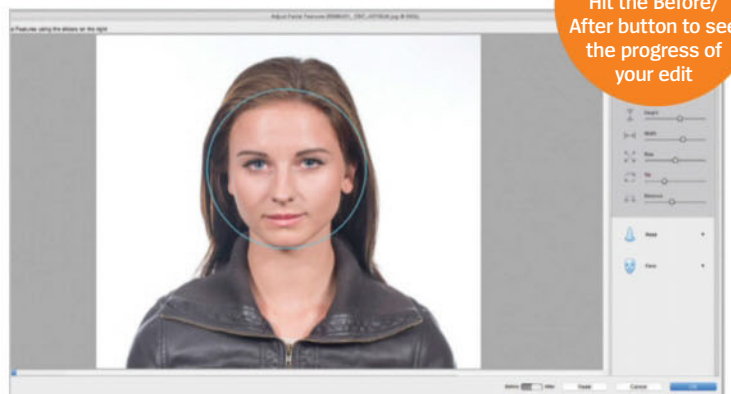
Shortcut
Hit the Before/After button to see the progress of your edit

Reshape and retouch Use sliders to alter the look of your subject



Reshape the lips

01 Open your start image and go to Enhance>Adjust Facial Features. Here, you can master the height and width of the lips, you can edit the lips individually with the sliders, and you can improve the curve of the subject's actual smile.



Edit the eyes

02 Next, down the right-hand side of the window, click on the Eyes subheading. Using similar sliders, you can tweak the height, width and general size of the eyes; you can also change the distance between the eyes and tilt them.



Retouch the nose

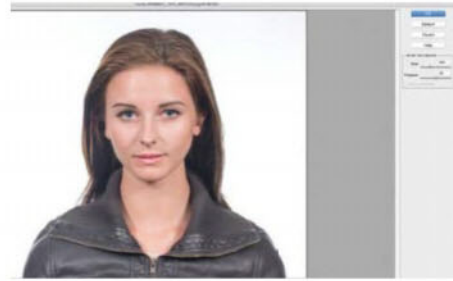
03 Further down in the menu, the Nose options only include sliders to alter the height and width. Use these two sliders to subtly tweak the nose; the shape of the nose will rely on the rest of the face, so feel free to retouch the nose again at the end.



Finish with face shaping

04 Finally, click on the Face subheading. Here, you will find options to tweak the width of the face along with the forehead height, jawbone and chin height. These edits should come easily based on the work you've made with the rest of the face.

Other retouching options Go a little further to improve subjects' faces



Liquify

The Liquify tool is a staple of retouching, as it can help to reshape parts of your subject by dragging pixels across the image. This makes it perfect for resizing parts of the image without losing quality elsewhere; we've used it to touch up the ear of the subject. Watch out for warping in the voids of where you've just edited.



Resize features

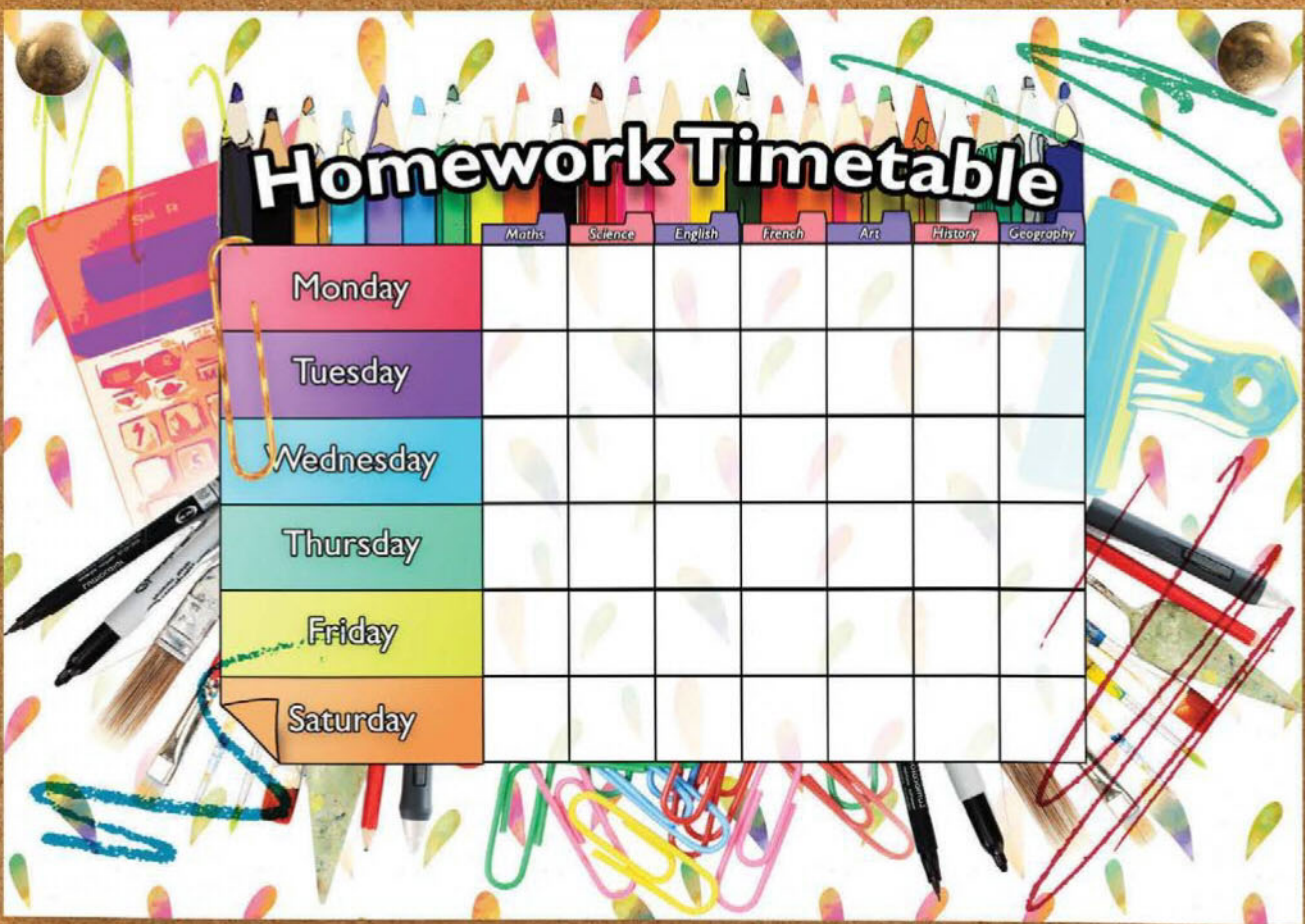
The easiest way to resize parts of an image is to select, Ctrl/right-click and choose Free Transform. When resizing an eye, for example, hold Shift to keep the aspect ratio of the selection; only resize slightly for subtlety, and when done, grab the Spot Healing brush (J) and brush over the edges of your selection.



Resize forehead

Resizing the forehead relies on the same principle as resizing specific facial features. The only difference is that you don't need to retouch along the edges of your selection, as you're not resizing over the existing pixels of the subject's face. Remember to keep this resizing restrained, because any big edits will look too obvious.





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Creative project...

Design a vibrant homework timetable

Use Elements to inject fun and colour into your school schedule

Creating a school timetable is a project that relies on two very different sides of Elements: being creative and being organised. While it's always fun to add bright colours, images and effects to your projects, this is one task that needs structure to work.

- ☐ Luckily, Elements has the tools you need to create a clean grid, and embellish it with all kinds of effects. The grid can be one of the most underrated tools that the program offers, and in this tutorial, it's vital in making sure your timetable's rows and columns are all the same size and shape.

With the main grid sorted, you can really unleash your creativity with the title and everything you place around the centre of the design. Use masks to cut images out and place everything on layers behind the actual grid. The Filter Gallery is perfect for transforming the look of images – the Cutout filter in particular gives a nice cartoon effect – but you can also use gradient maps to edit colours.

Remember to be as creative as you can with this tutorial. Personalise it, use your own colours and fonts; just stick to a neat grid, and use the rest of the project to be as colourful as you like.

STAGE 1

Create the grid

Set out the basic structure of your timetable

Timetables need structure, so for the first few steps of this project we're going to create the grid that the timetable needs, and decorate it for good effect.

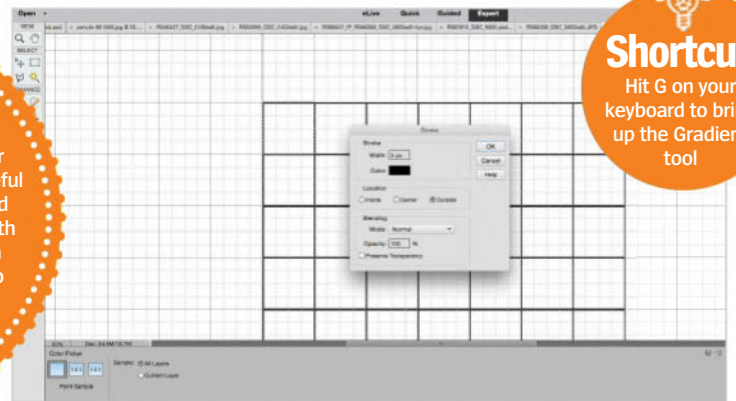
Stroke (Outline) Selection is a particularly useful feature here, because it enables us to create a straight line of a specific width and colour. Remember that you can create a grid of as many rows and columns as you like, and that tabs are optional; you can customise these steps according to what you need.

What does it mean?

STROKE – Stroking a selection or layer gives it an outline. This is useful for making objects and text stand out, as you can create borders with it, or just subtly highlight certain parts of your image. You can also choose to place the stroke inside, outside or centrally along the pixels of your layer.

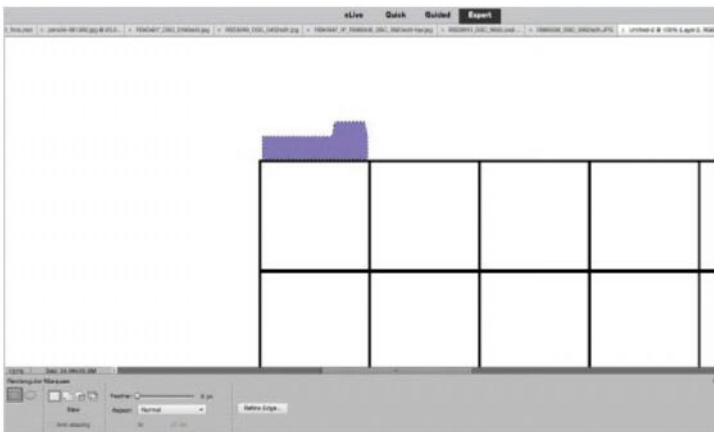
Shortcut

Hit G on your keyboard to bring up the Gradient tool



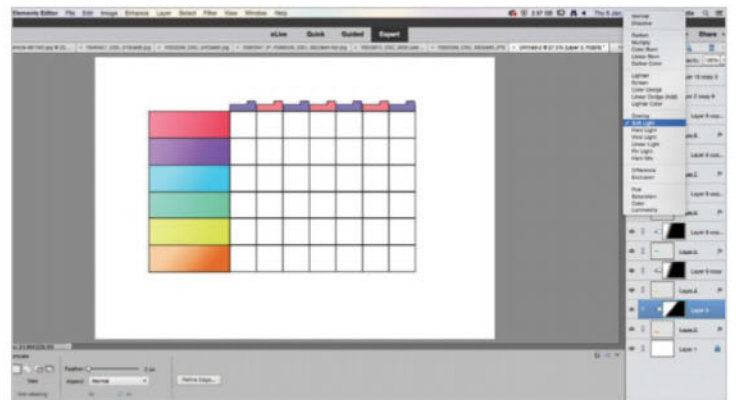
Create the grid

01 Create an A4 document and hit Cmd/Ctrl+' to bring up the grid. Select a square, Ctrl/right-click and choose Stroke (Outline) Selection. Choose a Width of 5px, black as the colour and click OK. Repeat this horizontally for as many subjects as you wish, and vertically for the number of days.



Make the tabs

02 On a new layer above the grid, use the Polygonal Lasso to create a tab shape. Fill with a colour – we chose #9177ec – and go to Layer>Layer Style>Style Settings. Stroke this shape with black and a Width of 5px. Copy this and paste it along the top.



Fill the days

03 Make a selection to the left of a row, fill with a colour and stroke the outline, as you did with the tabs. Repeat this downwards; we chose #f16983, #b369f1, #69d9f1, #69f1c6, #e6f169 and #f1a669. Create 40% opaque, Soft Light layers above each selection, and clip white-to-black gradients.

PRESETS

Choose a ready-made gradient, should you want one, from the presets, and add to presets with the button on the right.

LEFT STOPPER

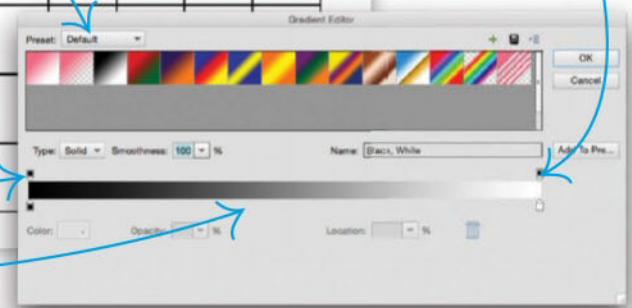
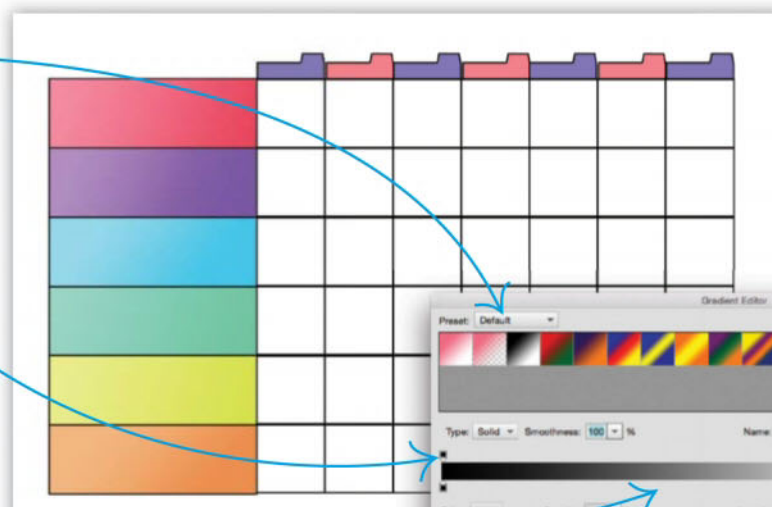
Click on the left stopper to bring up the eye-dropper, where you can choose the start colour for your gradient.

ADD NEW COLOUR

Click anywhere along the gradient band to add a new colour to the gradient, and drag it to place it in the gradient.

RIGHT STOPPER

Click on the stopper on the far right to choose a second colour; in our case we're going for a simple black to white.



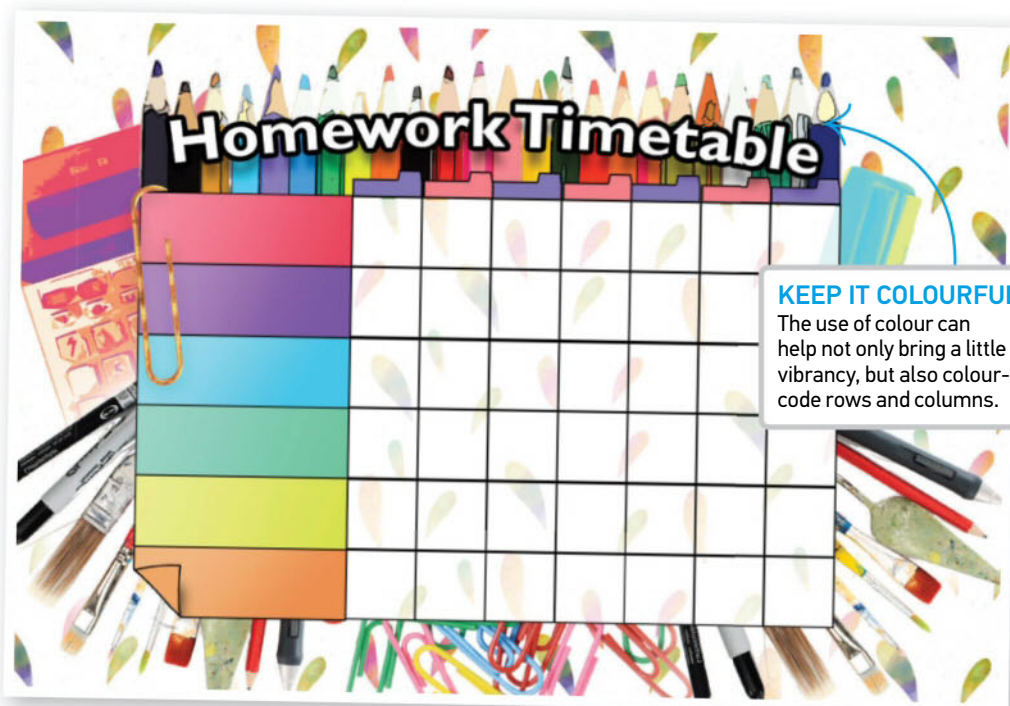
STAGE 2

Build the timetable

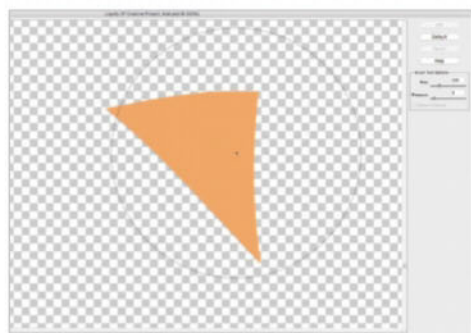
Start adding colour, images and much more

With the grid for your timetable complete, it's time to start the fun bit: adding in all the bright, colourful elements that personalise it.

Filters can be extremely useful in making images look cartoony, but by using gradient maps, we can also recolour the calculator and bulldog clip so that they better blend into the image as a whole. Add your own images if you wish, and deviate from the tutorial if you're feeling creative.

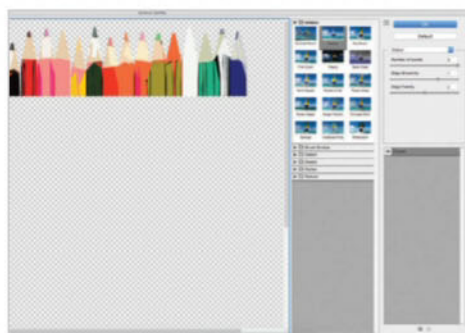


KEEP IT COLOURFUL
The use of colour can help not only bring a little vibrancy, but also colour-code rows and columns.



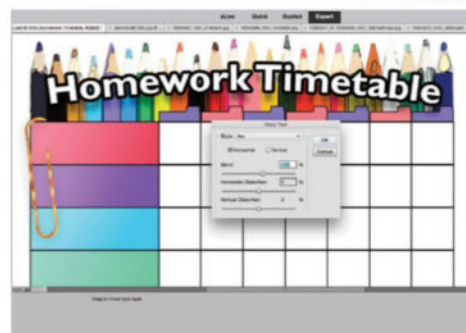
Curl the corner

01 Select the bottom-left corner of the orange tab, Ctrl/right-click and pick Layer Via Cut. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+T to Transform, and flip vertically and horizontally. Go to Filter>Distort>Liquify and warp slightly to make it look curled. Apply the same stroke.



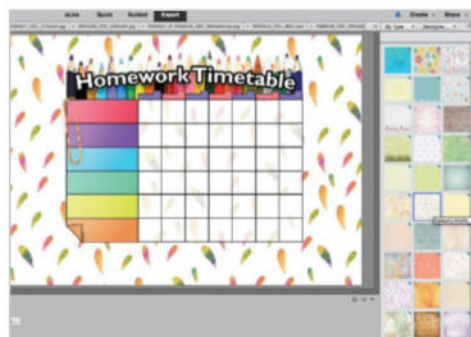
Insert the pencils

02 Insert the supplied image of the pencils and use the Polygonal Lasso to cut them out. Mask this and go to Filter>Filter Gallery>Cutout. Choose Number of Levels: 8, Edge Simplicity: 7, Edge Fidelity: 2. Place above the grid and mask the excess.



Set the title

03 Select the Type tool (T). Drag from one side of the grid to the other, and type in white: Homework Timetable. Pick a bold font, add a black stroke as before, and add a drop shadow. Insert the supplied paperclip over the corner of the timetable.



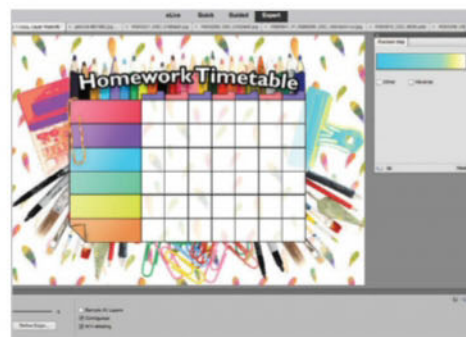
Lay a background

04 Now is a good time to insert a background. Elements has plenty on offer; click on the Graphics tab in the bottom-right corner, and choose a background to insert. We chose Colorful Motifs. On a new layer behind the grid, select, fill with white and lower the Opacity to 60%.



Mask in some paintbrushes

05 Open the supplied paintbrushes and use the Magic Wand to select all of the white space around the outline of them, before hitting Mask and Invert (Cmd/Ctrl+I) to remove it. Copy this into your timetable, and place behind the grid.



Place more stationery

06 Place the paperclips into the image, and add the calculator and the bulldog clip. Go to the Fill Layer icon and add a Gradient Map; clip one to the bulldog clip and one to the calculator in similar colours to the timetable. Go to Filter>Filter Gallery>Cutout to cartoonise these images.

STAGE 3

Embellish your work

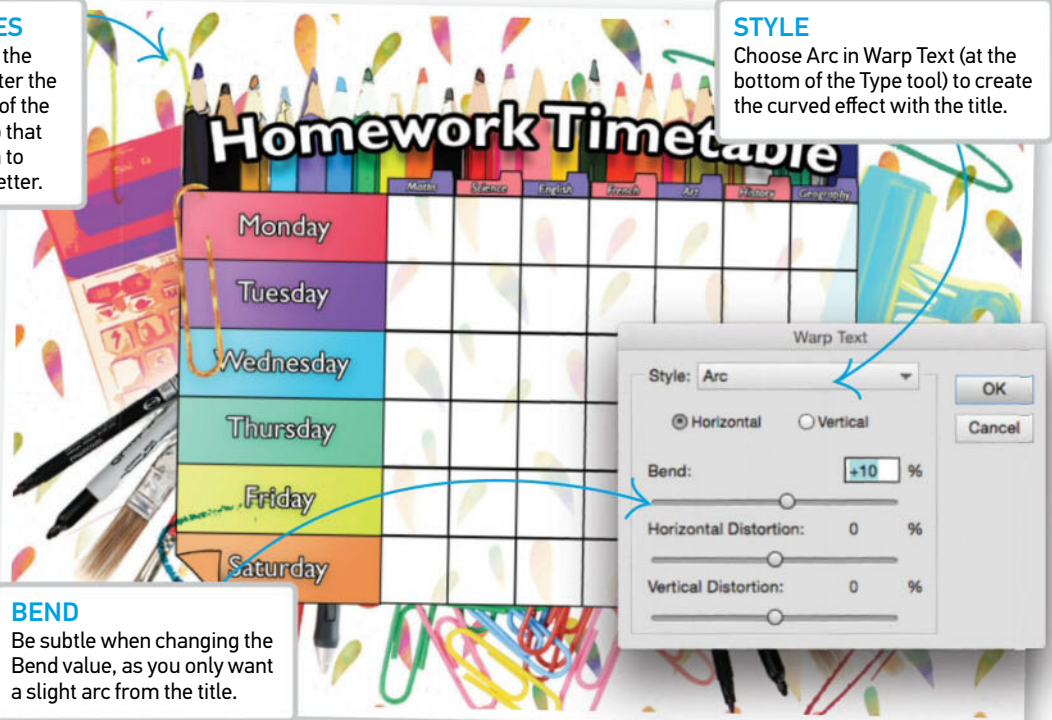
Add the finishing touches to your timetable

Now that everything's in place on the timetable, we can add all the final flourishes and check that the highlights and shadows are consistent across the project. If you don't ensure the lighting is the same across all elements, it will ruin the picture.

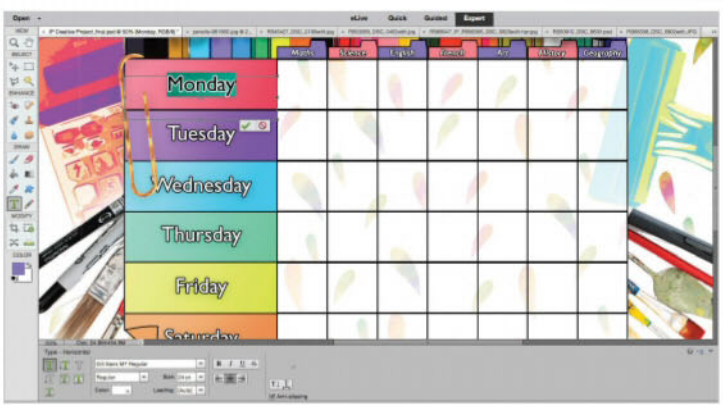
This is the part where you enter the text too. Make sure you pick a readable font, and use the same layer style techniques to make it stand out even more. Adjust when you're finished to bring the best out of your work.

SQUIGGLES
Either lower the opacity or alter the blend mode of the squiggles so that they blend in to your work better.

STYLE
Choose Arc in Warp Text (at the bottom of the Type tool) to create the curved effect with the title.



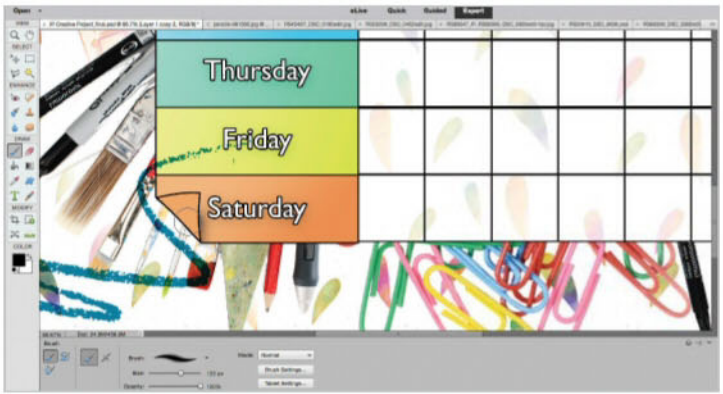
BEND
Be subtle when changing the Bend value, as you only want a slight arc from the title.



Shortcut
Select squiggle layer, hit Shift and + to set blend modes

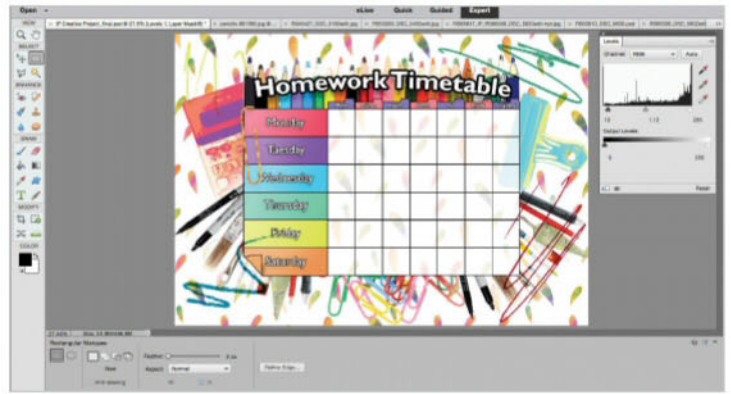
Write in the text

01 Now that the timetable is pretty much complete, grab the Type tool again and write in text for each of the days vertically, and subjects along the tabs horizontally. Use layer styles such as Drop Shadow and Stroke to make this text stand out.



Brush in squiggles

02 In the resources you will find 500 free pen and pencil squiggle brushes. On a new layer above everything else in the image, insert a squiggle in each corner in a different colour, then set this layer to Multiply.

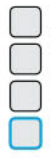


Perfect the shadows

03 Make sure that the shadows are consistent across the image, by brushing in soft black on new layers and reducing the opacity setting. This might include the curled corner of the timetable, behind the grid and behind the title.

Adjust slightly

04 Finally, check that the text is readable and adjust the image slightly with a Levels adjustment. If you need to add more shadows, do so, and Hit Cmd/Ctrl+O to return to a zoomed-out, full-screen view to check your final project.



What does it mean?

SOFT LIGHT – Rather like Overlay, the Soft Light blend mode screens white pixels and multiplies black pixels, but with a much softer effect. This makes it perfect for adding highlights and shadows to your images, as the tone of that particular layer will react with the tone of the image below.

ADD WHITE SHINE

Select white (#ffffff) and brush over the highlights of the face to enhance them further and create more of a shine.

HUE/SATURATION

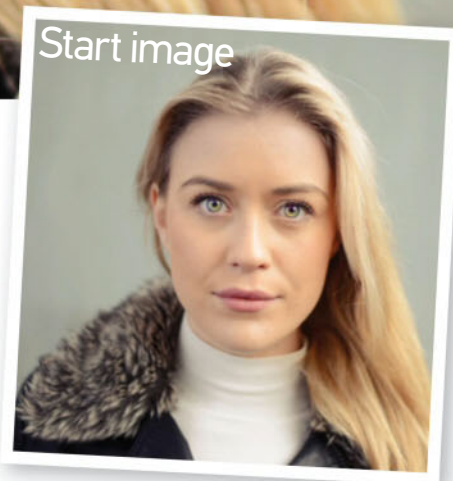
Apply a Hue/Saturation layer of Saturation: -5, Lightness: +10 to create a brighter, white finish to the face.

On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative

Photo edit...

Achieve porcelain skin



Remove blemishes and use blur for perfect skin on your subject

Giving your subject smooth skin is often essential in portrait retouching. This is why the Clone Stamp tool and Spot Healing brush exist; removing blemishes from a face is one of the more basic photo-editing techniques that you'll learn about, but it's one that can come in handy for a range of projects.

However, actually removing the texture of skin altogether is a completely different kind of project. Creating porcelain-like skin in your subject is one of those things that can end up looking really unnatural if you're not careful with the settings you use, but when it's

applied correctly, it's an edit that can give a classy, refined finish to your subject.

The process of creating porcelain skin relies on balance, though. Blurring the skin too much will result in the main facial features becoming too blurred as well, so by masking and brushing over the image, we can control the amount of smoothing being applied to certain areas of the face. Try to keep the opacity of your brush low when applying colour onto the face, so you don't cover the subject in soft colour, and mask away anything that needs removing.

Blur and smoothen Create a glossier face with blurs, brushes and blend modes



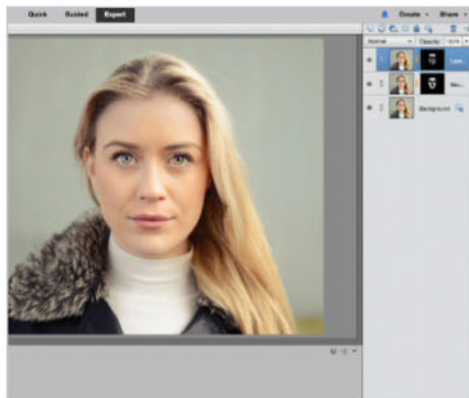
Surface Blur the image

01 Start your edit by duplicating your start image and going to Filter>Blur>Surface Blur. The Surface Blur is used for blurring the pixels of your image but maintaining the details; choose a Radius of 10 pixels and a Threshold of 40 Levels, before hitting OK.



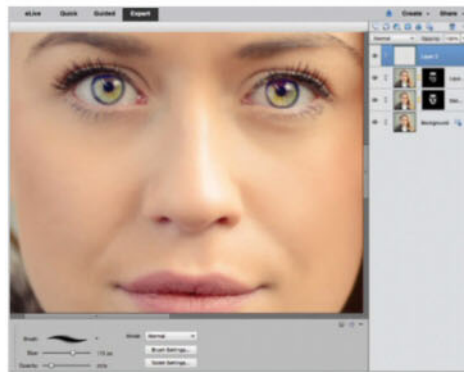
Mask through

02 Hit the Mask icon on your Surface Blur layer and invert (Cmd/Ctrl+I). Select a soft brush of 70px, 50% Opacity, and select white in your swatches by hitting D. Brush over the skin, paying attention to miss the more detailed facial features like eyes and lips.



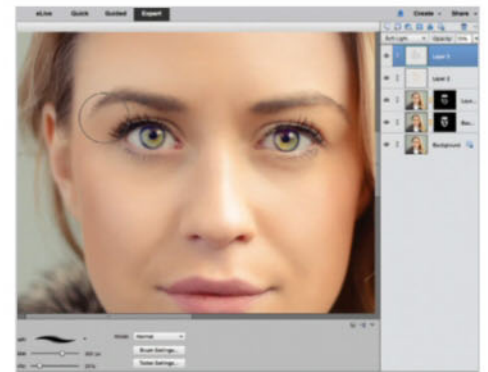
Add a Gaussian Blur

03 Create a stamp layer of your work so far by hitting Cmd/Ctrl+Alt/Opt+Shift+E. Go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and choose a Radius of 20px. Again, hit Mask and invert, before following the previous step and masking in the blurred layer.



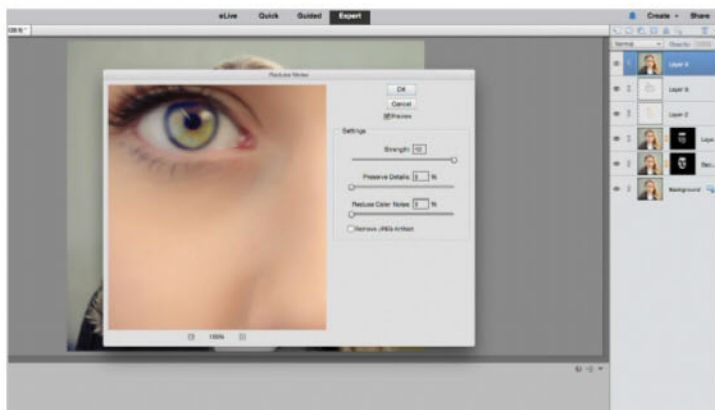
Brush colour

04 Create another new layer. Select the Brush tool (B), choose a soft, big brush with 20% Opacity and hold Alt/Opt to bring up the Eyedropper tool. Click anywhere on the subject's face to select a colour, and brush over. Keep doing this to create a smooth effect on the face.



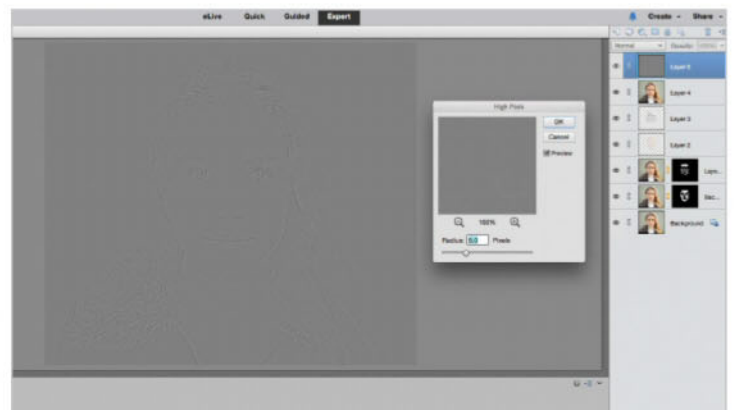
Darken and lighten

05 Select black and white in your swatches and create another new layer; set this one to Soft Light, 70% Opacity. With the same soft brush, draw in highlights and shadows over the face to bring out the contours of the cheeks, and highlight where the skin is newly smooth.



Reduce the noise

06 Create another stamp layer. Go to Filter>Noise>Reduce Noise and choose Strength: 10, Preserve Details: 0% and Reduce Color Noise: 0%. Hit OK. This will further smooth your image while keeping the details of the main facial features.



Sharpen the subject

07 Create one last stamp layer. Head to Filter>Other>High Pass and choose a Radius of 5 pixels. Set this layer to Overlay to sharpen the main details once more. Finish off with adjustments, such as Levels, Hue/Saturation and Photo Filter to complete the image.

Shortcut
Hit X to swap the Foreground and Background swatches



What does it mean?

BRUSH TOOL – Brushes are essential for enhancing masks, but you don't need to open the Brush Preset Picker to customise the brush. Use the [] bracket keys to change the brush size. To make the brush tip harder or softer, press Return/Shift+[or]. To change brush opacity, use the numbers.

BLENDING MODES

Choose a blending mode from the drop-down menu to overlap the layers, creating unique effects.

ADJUSTMENT LAYERS

Apply the adjustment layers to make tonal corrections and balance the colours in a non-destructive way.

On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative



Surreal art...

Composite an animal hybrid

Use non-destructive techniques and blend modes for easy editing

Creating an animal hybrid is a fun way to improve your Elements skills. One of the biggest challenges in creating this kind of composition is to match the colours, shadows and highlights in each image. In this tutorial, you will learn how to achieve this effect using adjustment layers and blending modes. You will start by using the selection tools and the Refine Edge command to create masks and overlap the layers. Then you'll apply non-destructive adjustment layers, clipping masks and blending modes to match the colours.

Adjustment layers enable you to edit the image without affecting the original pixels, while clipping masks or clipping layers let you apply the adjustments to the layer immediately below without affecting other layers. This technique is ideal for this situation, because you can edit the adjustments repeatedly until you're satisfied with the results. Check the Expert Tip and the Boxout for extra tips and advice, then follow each step closely and download the start files to begin to learn.

Combine two animals

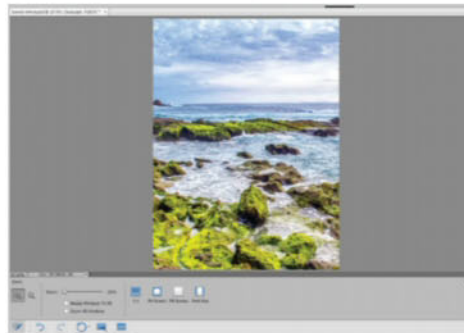
Blend different images with layer masks and adjustments

Shortcut
Press the F5 key to hide or show the Tool Options bar



Set the stage

01 Create a new, blank file by going to File>New>Blank File or hitting Cmd/Ctrl+N. Name your project Surreal Animal. Set the Width to 230mm, Height to 310mm, Resolution to 300 pixels/inch and press OK.



Add the background image

02 Now go to File>Place 'Seascape.jpg'. In the Tool Options bar, tick the Constrain Proportions box. Change the Width to 90%, position the image on the canvas, then hit Return/Enter.



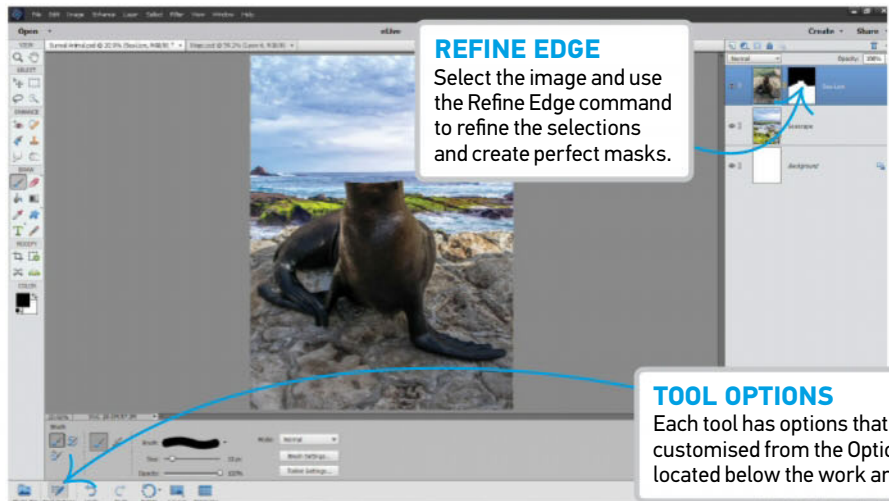
Place the sea lion

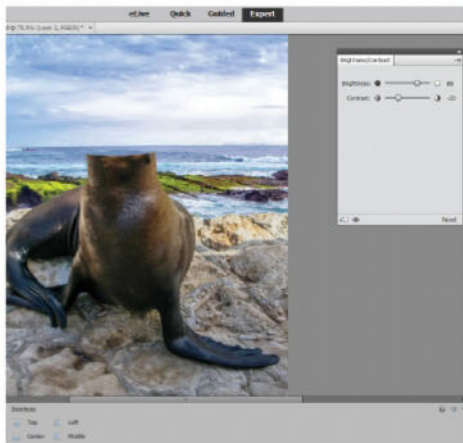
03 Go to File>Place 'Sea-lion.jpg'. In the Tool Options, change the Width/Height to 30% and hit Return/Enter. Grab the Quick Selection tool (A) and select the sea lion and part of the rocks. Now create a layer mask by going to Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal Selection.



Enhance the mask

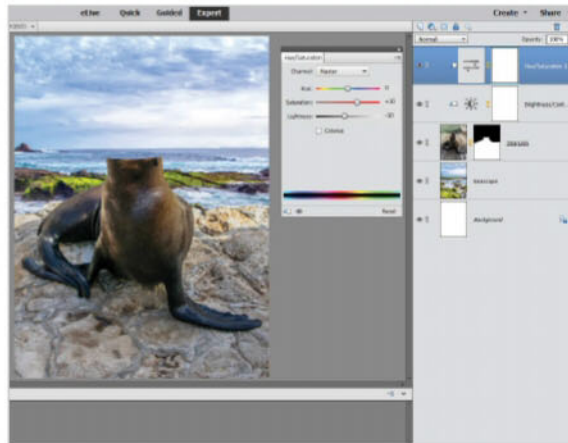
04 Grab a hard-tip Brush (B). Use the Zoom tool (Z) and zoom in. Start painting over the mask to hide the sea lion's face and the rocks in such a way that it is possible to see both the horizon and the seascape underneath.





Adjust the brightness

05 Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Brightness/Contrast. Set Contrast to 65 and Brightness to -20, then clip the layers using the down arrow icon at the bottom of the adjustment window, or press Cmd/Ctrl+G.



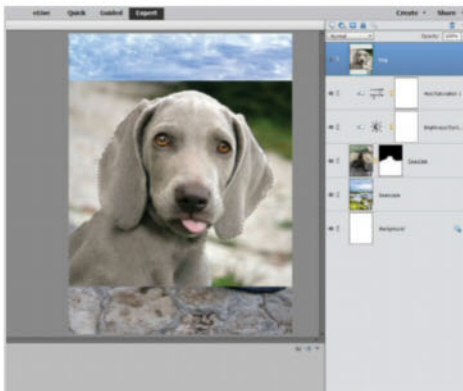
Make more adjustments

06 Let's make a quick colour correction by increasing the saturation and adjusting the lightness. Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Hue/Saturation or click the 'Create a new fill or adjustment layer' icon on top of the Layers panel. Set the Saturation to 30, Lightness to -10 and clip the layers (Cmd/Ctrl+G).

Expert tip

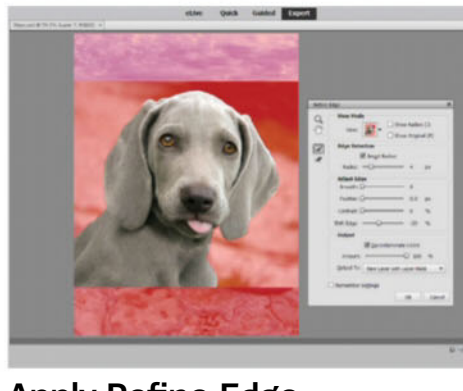
Liquify filter

Use the Liquify filter to make subtle distortions on the dog's head. Hold the Shift key and select each layer relating to the dog's head. Press Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate them and press Cmd/Ctrl+E to merge the layers. Name the new layer, then turn off the layer's visibility of the extra layers (click on the eye icon). To apply the filter, go to Filter>Distort>Liquify. Grab the Warp tool (W), reduce the brush size and pressure (this will give you more control over the distortion), then start dragging the pixels to make the dog's head thinner and longer. Finally, click OK.



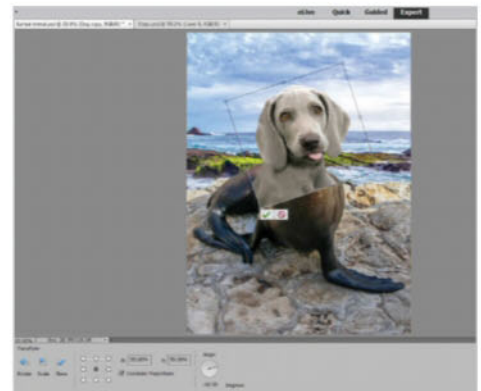
Place the dog image

07 Go to File>Place 'Dog.jpg' and hit Return/Enter. Grab the Quick Selection tool (A). In the Tool Options, choose Add to Selection, pick a hard-tip brush, check the Auto-Enhance box, then select the dog.



Apply Refine Edge

08 Go to Select>Refine Edge. Choose View Mode: Overlay, check the Smart Radius box and set Radius to 4 pixels. Adjust the Shift Edge to -20%. Check Decontaminate Colors, set Amount to 60%, choose 'Output to new layer with layer mask' and click OK.



Use the Free Transform tool

09 Resize and rotate the image. Press Cmd/Ctrl+T to open the Free Transform tool. Check the Constrain Proportions box and set the Width to 50%, set the Angle to -18 Degrees and hit Return/Enter.

HUE/SATURATION ADJUSTMENT

The Hue/Saturation adjustment layer controls the colours (Hue), the intensity of a colour (Saturation), and the values (Lightness).

FREE TRANSFORM TOOL

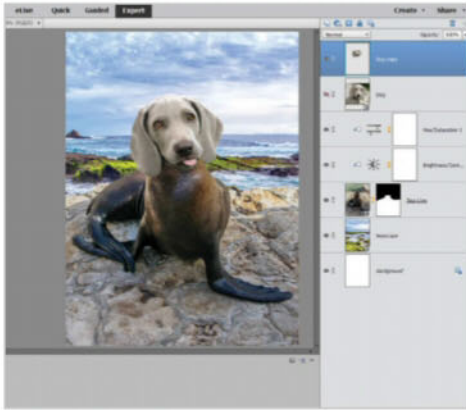
Hold Shift to resize, press Opt/Alt to skew, place the mouse cursor next to the borders to rotate the image.

CLIPPING LAYERS

Clipping layers lets you apply an adjustment or effect to the layer immediately below without affecting other layers.

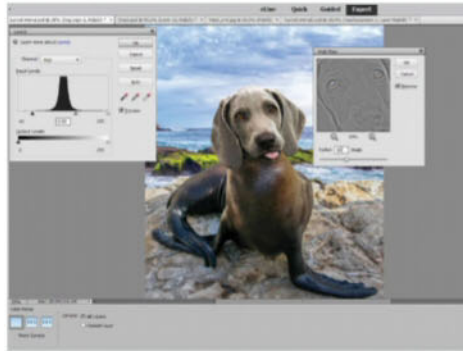
SELECTION OPTIONS

Use the selection options to create a new selection, add a selection or subtract from a selection.



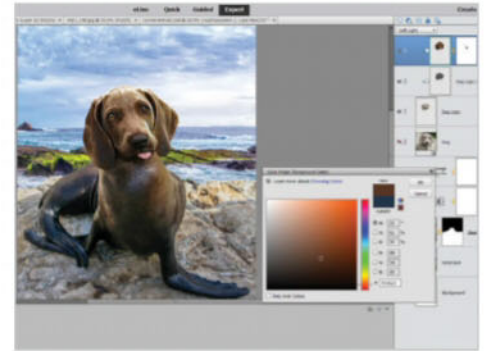
Paint the mask

10 Grab a soft-tip brush (B) and start painting over the mask to hide the hard edges and the neck, leaving only the dog's head visible. Now apply the layer mask by going to Layer>Layer Mask>Apply.



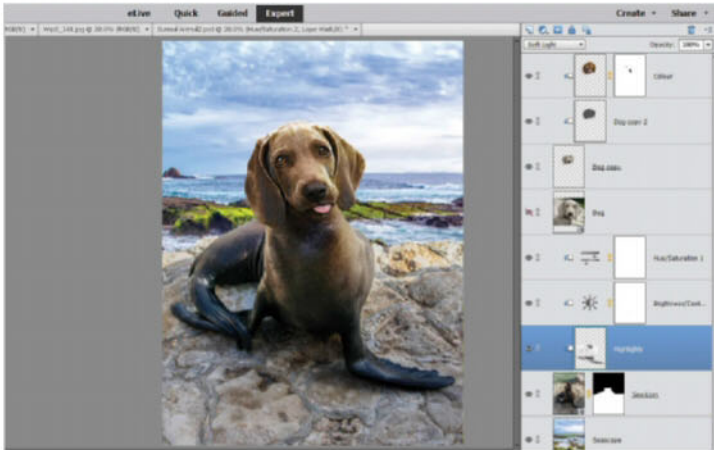
Sharpen the image

11 Press Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate the Dog Copy layer. Change the blend mode to Overlay, then go to Filter>Other>High Pass. Set Radius to 10 pixels and click OK. Press Cmd/Ctrl+G to clip the layers. Now adjust the tones. Press Cmd/Ctrl+L. Set the Inputs to 40, 0.80, 255 and click OK.



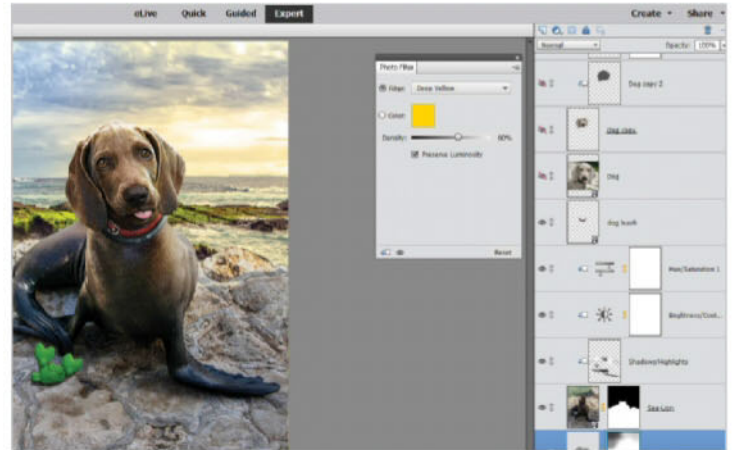
Create a colour layer

12 Create a new layer (Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+N). Name it Colour, tick the Clipping Mask box, change Mode to Soft Light and click OK. Grab a soft brush (B). Set the Foreground colour to #593623 and paint the layer. Hold the Alt key, sample the bluish tone from the tail, and paint the shadows.



Work on shadows and highlights

13 Create a new clipping layer (Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+N) and place on top of the Sea Lion layer. Change the blend mode to Soft Light. Grab a soft brush (B). Press D to set the default Foreground/Background colours. Paint with black and white to create the shadows and highlights on the seal and rocks.



Make final flourishes

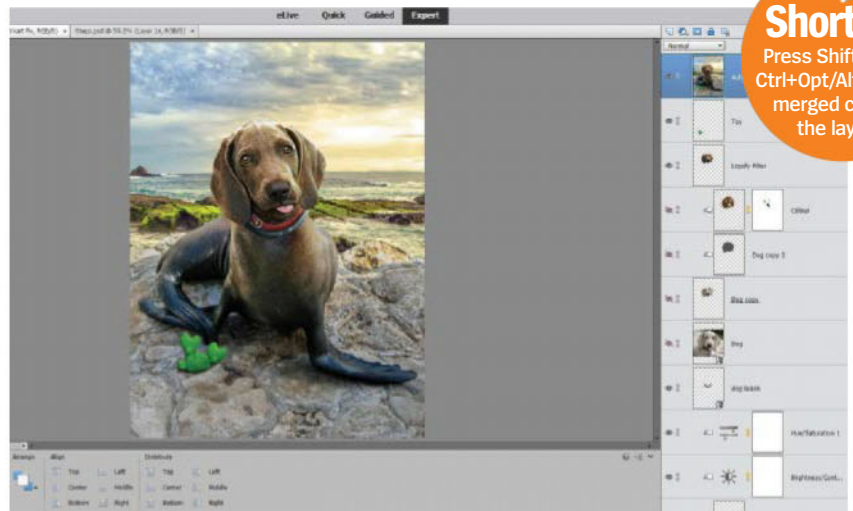
14 Go to File>Place 'Leash.jpg' and 'Toy.jpg'. Adjust the size and click Return/Enter. Create a layer mask and hide the unwanted areas. Now go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Photo Filter. Choose Deep Yellow, set Density to 60% and tick Preserve Luminosity. Drag it on top of the Seascape layer.

The Enhance menu

Explore the auto fix commands

Elements enables you to correct lighting and colour automatically. Click the Enhance menu and you'll find several commands to fine-tune your image. In this tutorial, you applied non-destructive adjustments to individual layers to match colours and blend the images. You can go one step further and make a final adjustment directly on the image using the Auto Smart Fix option.

This command will help you to balance the colours and improve the shadow and highlight details. Click on the top layer of the Layers panel, then press Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+E to create a merged copy of the layers. Open the Enhance menu and choose Auto Smart Fix to make the corrections automatically. If the results aren't to your satisfaction, you can always try the Adjust Smart Fix command to determine the amount of correction applied to the image.



Shortcut
Press Shift+Cmd/
Ctrl+Opt/Alt+E for a
merged copy of
the layers

DEFINITION FROM EMPTINESS

Even though we've only painted in the tiger's stripes, a recognisable image has still been formed.

On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative

Digital art...

Create shape with negative space

Use brushes creatively to produce a dramatic piece of art

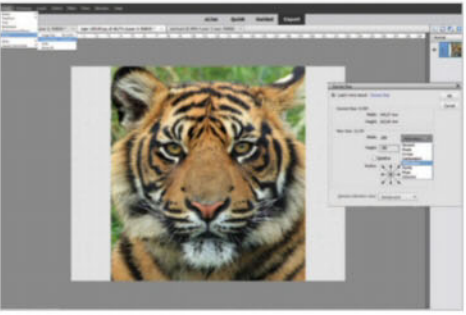
Negative space is essentially any area of your canvas that isn't a subject or object. Creating art in this style takes the space around an object and uses that to define the shape, rather than the details or shading of the positive version. Negative-space artwork often takes the form of silhouette – simple or monotone colour schemes, which brings the main focus on the form. Here we are defining the entire tiger using only its stripes, letting your brain fill in the details that aren't there.

This tutorial covers a lot of the tools and features found inside Elements to give your negative space even more drama. You will use

the Brush tool to paint some contrasting eye detail, filters to neaten your sketching, as well as clipping masks to overlay an ethereal space image. Another large focus is the use of custom brushes. You will download some free paint-style brushes and use them to create really quick but dramatic effects. And finally, layers play a big part in this tutorial. They are crucial to keeping everything editable, and also mean you can change your base drawing whenever you like, so you can continue to get creative and try out this technique with anything else you can think of! You can also change the overlaid image to add a completely different effect to the same drawing.

Paint the space

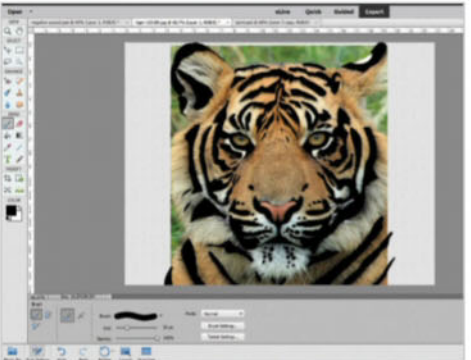
Turn any photograph into a negative-space masterpiece with brushes



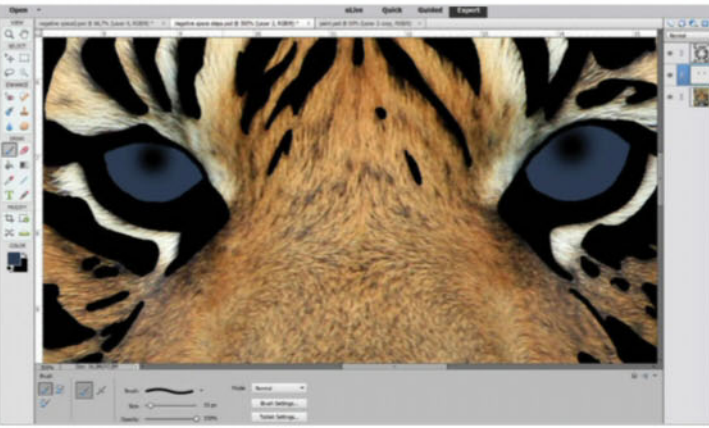
Set up your canvas
01 Open Elements and enter Expert mode from the top toolbar. Open the file 'Tiger.jpg' from the FileSilo with File>Open (Cmd/Ctrl+O). Double-click the image thumbnail on the right to turn it into a layer. Go to Image>Resize>Canvas Size and change the canvas to 230mm x 180mm.



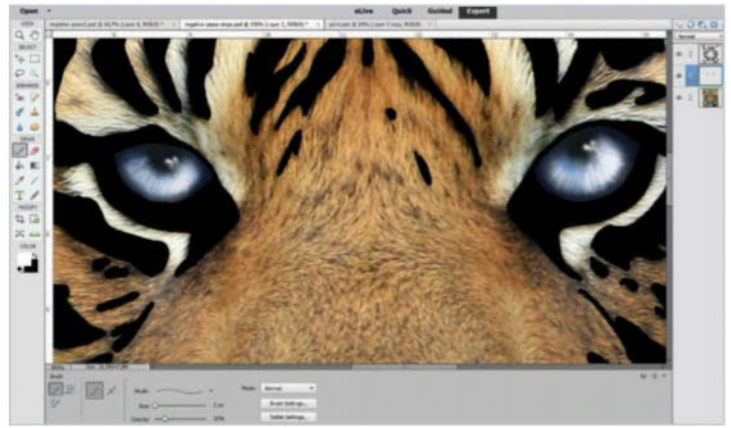
Start painting stripes
02 Create a new layer above the photo with Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N. Select the paint brush (B). On the new layer, start painting over the tiger's stripes. You don't have to be perfectly neat, but keep your shapes blocky and thick. Make sure your brush is set to 100% Hardness.



Finish the stripes
03 Continue until you have painted over all the stripes in black. Include some of the larger areas or dark fur around the face and ears as well. Keep small details to a minimum, and for now don't draw in the pupils.



Paint the eyes
04 Create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N) and drag it underneath the stripes layer. Select the Brush (B) and change the Hardness to 0%. Select the Foreground colour and change it to #2c3a51. Paint inside the eye. Then change your brush to black and paint in a soft pupil.



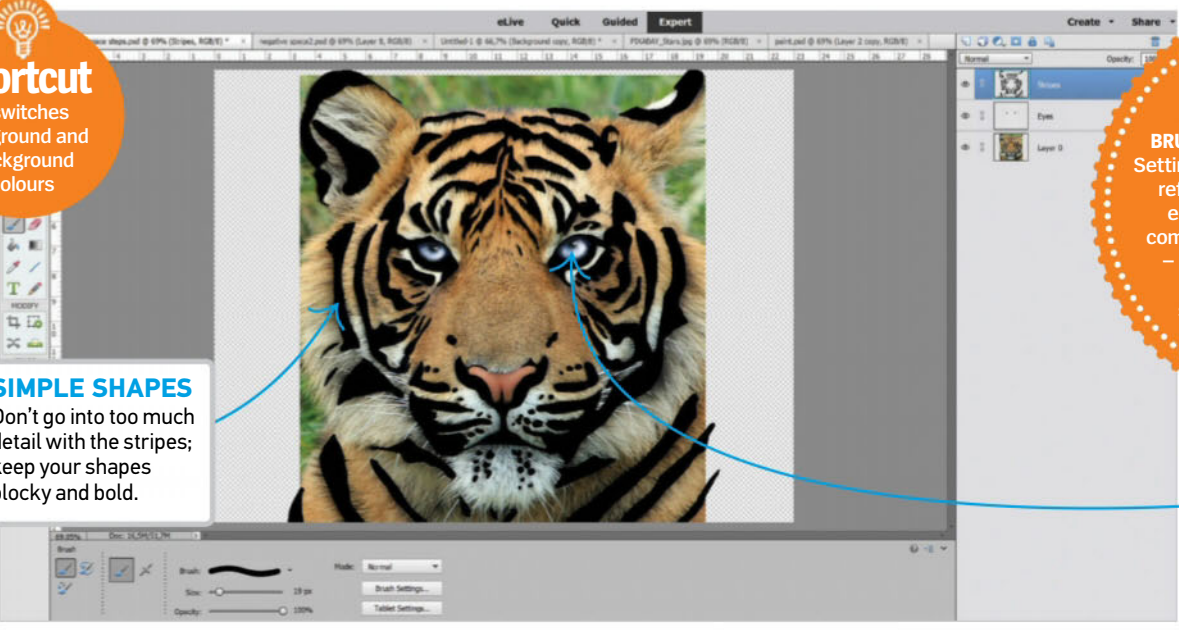
Add eye detail
05 Make your Brush Size 2px, Opacity around 20%. Using a mix of black and white, add shading to the eyes. Be patient; build up the shading over many passes. Keep your strokes in a radial pattern to try to imitate the texture of an iris.

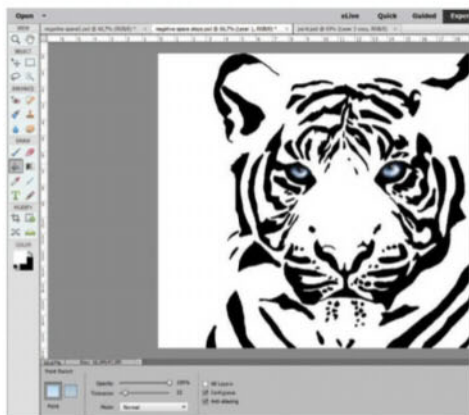
Shortcut
 X switches foreground and background colours

What does it mean?
BRUSH HARDNESS – Inside Brush Settings is a slider for Hardness. This refers to how 'hard' or 'soft' the edges of a brush are; 100% is completely hard, with a crisp edge – perfect for the stripes; 0% is completely soft – great for shading and blending while colouring the eyes. Play with the values!

SIMPLE SHAPES
 Don't go into too much detail with the stripes; keep your shapes blocky and bold.

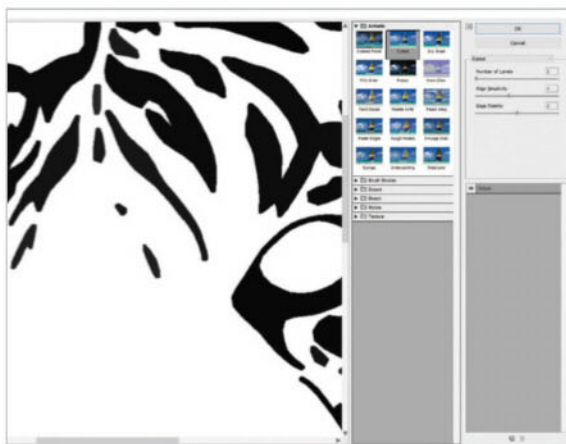
SOFT EYES
 Contrast the crisp, clean stripes with soft, textured eyes. Blend them in with the dark edges.





Fill the background

06 Create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N). Fill it white using the Paint Bucket (K) and drag underneath the stripes layer. Select them both by holding Cmd/Ctrl and right-clicking>Merge Layers. Use the Eraser to remove the white that covers the eyes. This gives us a crisp black/white edge.



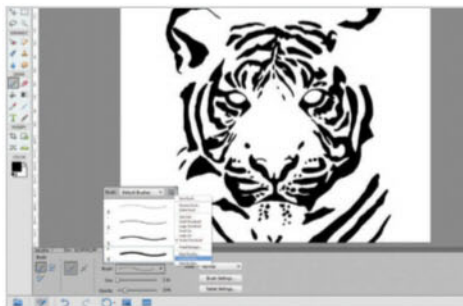
Smooth out the stripes

07 Make sure your colours are set to black for the foreground and white for the background. To give the hand-drawn stripes a smoother look, select the stripes layer and go to Filter>Filter Gallery. Select Cutout from the Artistic section and enter: Levels: 2, Edge Simplicity: 4 and Edge Fidelity: 2.



Add the Stamp filter

08 Click the New Layer button at the bottom of the filters window. Navigate to Stamp inside the Sketch filters. Set the Light/Dark balance to 32 and the Smoothness to 7. Hit OK. If your Foreground/Background colours weren't black and white, you need to cancel, change them, and redo steps 7 and 8.



Load custom brushes

09 Go to the Freebies section of blog.spoongraphics.co.uk, and search and download '12 Free High Res Dry Brush Stroke Photoshop Brushes'. Back in Elements, select the Brush (B) and click the drop-down arrow next to the brush preview. Click the icon in the right-hand corner, select Load Brushes, then navigate to the .abr file you downloaded.



Paint in brush strokes

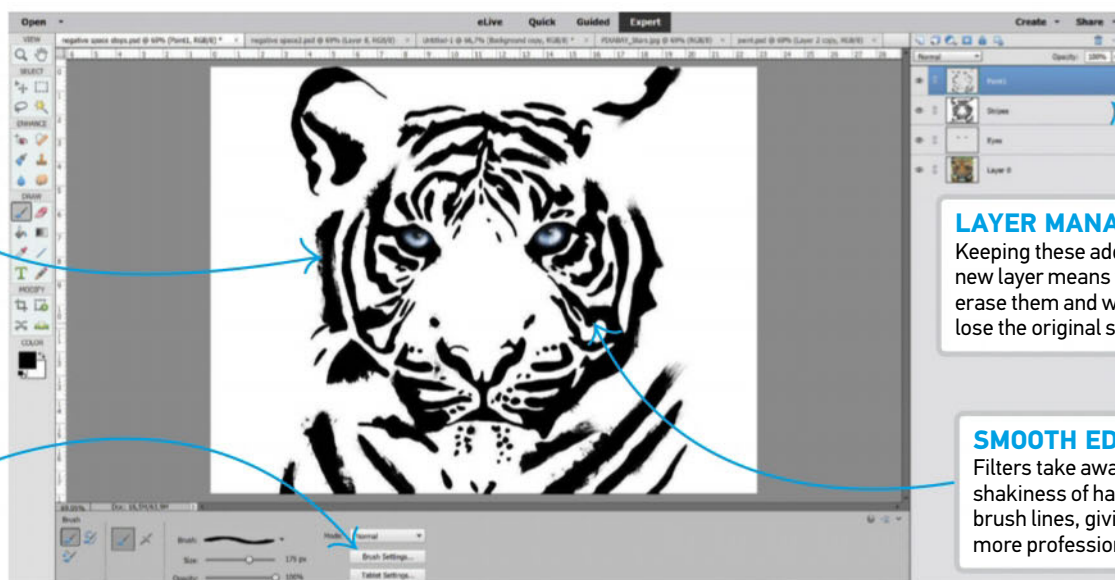
10 Create a new layer above the stripes. Start exploring the new brushes and add some 'painted' texture to your illustration. Inside the Brush Settings menu you can rotate the brush to match up with the angles of the stripes. Click once rather than dragging, to keep all the custom brush detail.

SUBTLE DETAILS

Use the custom brushes sparingly here, creating subtle additions to the larger blocks of paint.

MATCHING ANGLES

Make sure you rotate the brush inside Brush Settings to match the angles of the stripes.



LAYER MANAGEMENT

Keeping these additions on a new layer means that you can erase them and will never lose the original stripes.

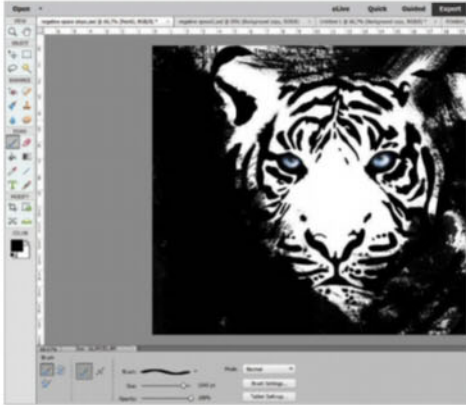
SMOOTH EDGES

Filters take away the shakiness of hand-drawn brush lines, giving a more professional feel.

Expert tip

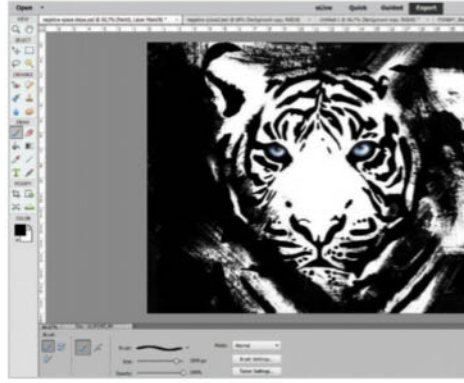
Organising your brushes

Custom brushes are a great way to get cool effects really quickly, and there is no real limit to the amount you can install. You access different brush sets via the drop-down at the top of the brush preview window. Inside the small menu button in the top-right corner, you can change how you view the brushes, for example thumbnail or list view. See which one is most helpful. You can also open the Preset Manager, which is a useful place to rename and organise brushes – invaluable if you have some favourites or want to create your own sets.



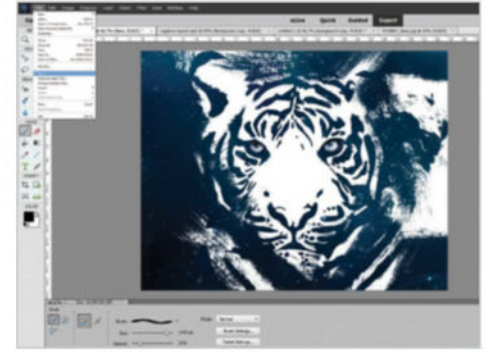
Fill with brush strokes

11 Create a new layer above the paint strokes. Now fill most of the canvas with big brush strokes. Click once to add each brush to keep its texture. Leave some gaps and rough edges for extra effect.



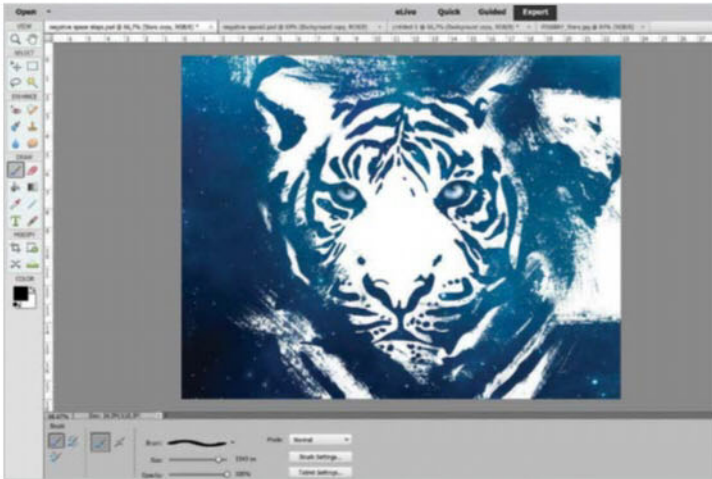
Add a layer mask

12 With your top paint layer selected, add a layer mask with the 'circle inside a rectangle' icon. Painting black on this mask will hide what's on the attached layer. Use the Dry Brush brushes to paint black on the mask to create more interesting shapes.



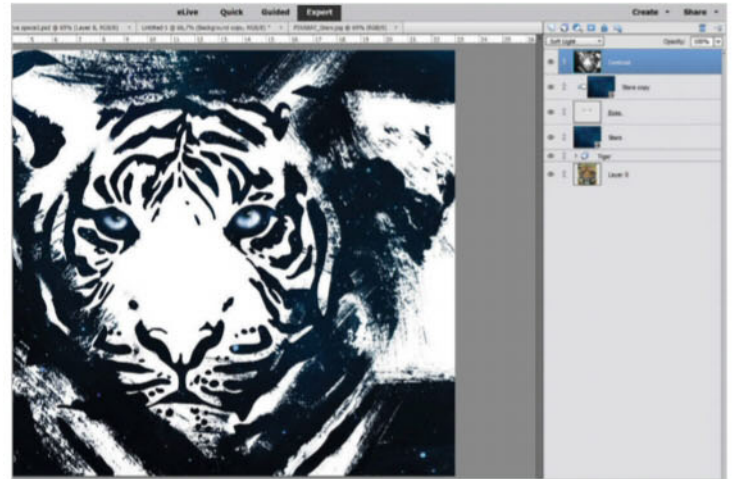
Overlay the stars

13 Select all the painted stripe layers and hit Cmd/Ctrl+G to Group. Drag the eyes layer above the group. Go to File>Place and add in 'Stars.jpg' from the FileSilo. Drag the Stars layer below the eyes. Set the blend mode from Normal to Screen, and the Opacity to 80%.



Make starry eyes

14 Duplicate the stars layer with Cmd/Ctrl+J. Drag this new layer above the eyes. Right-click and select Create Clipping Mask. This ensures it only affects the eyes layer and not the Tiger group. Reduce the Opacity to 50%.



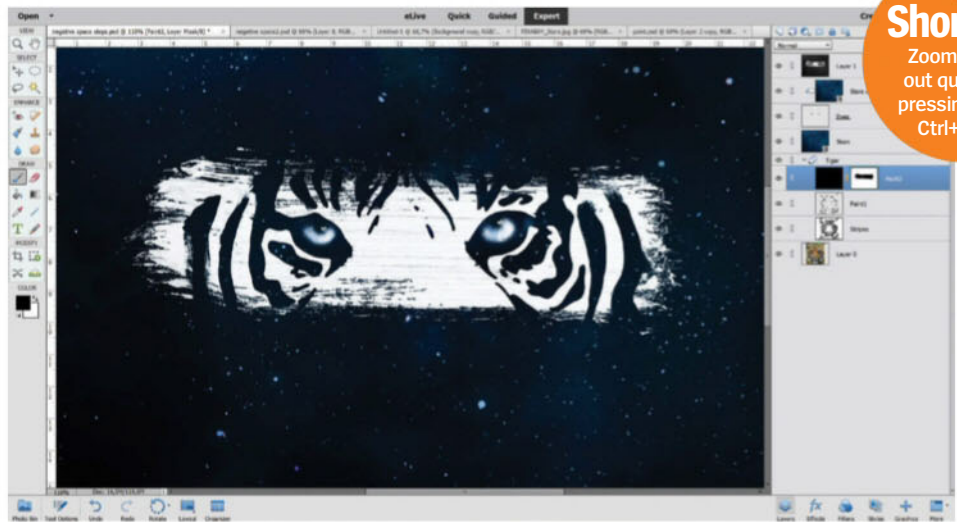
Add contrast

15 With the top layer selected, hit Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Alt+E to make a 'stamp' of all your layers. With the new layer selected, hit Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+U to desaturate it. Change the blend mode from Normal to Soft Light. Adjust the opacity to taste, and you're done!

Layer masks

Get comfortable with non-destructive editing

Layer masks are very simple to use, and can be extremely powerful once you get to grips with them. On a layer mask, black hides what is below and white shows what is below – by default layer masks are set to white, so when you first add one, nothing will change at all. As you start painting in black, the layer it's attached to will start to disappear. Different shades of grey will add different layers of opacity to the layer. The advantage to working this way is that you never permanently erase anything – any part of the layer that you hide can always be brought back by painting in white. This is called non-destructive editing, and prevents a lot of costly mistakes.



Shortcut

Zoom in and out quickly by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+ + or -



Q+A COMMON PROBLEMS IN ELEMENTS

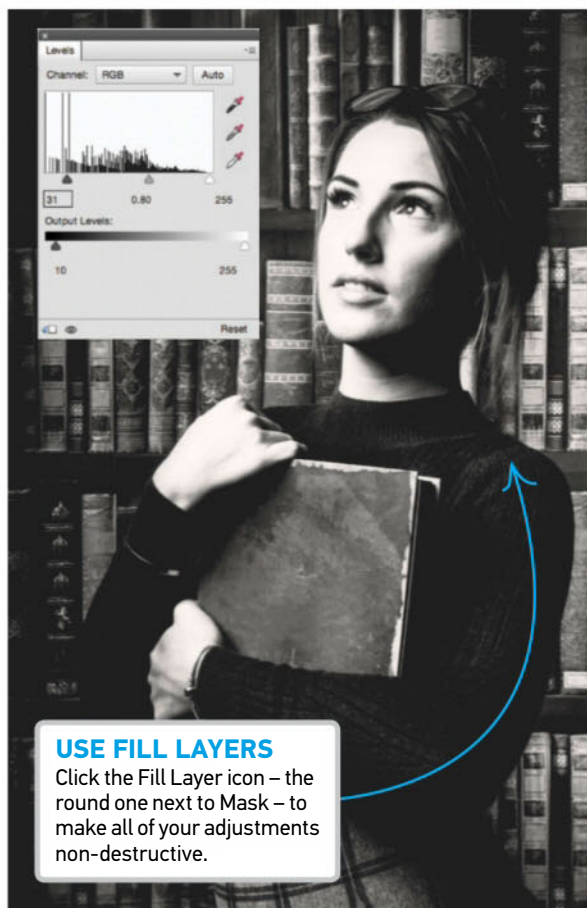
Get in touch  Ask on Twitter @PshopCreative |  Post on facebook PhotoshopCreative | Alternatively, you can email: pcr@imagine-publishing.co.uk

ARE THERE ANY SIMPLE WAYS TO HELP IMPROVE MONOCHROME SHOTS?

The perfect monochrome shot isn't finished when you've converted a picture to black and white. Greyscale pictures take a lot of editing to make sure the tones, contrast and brightness are perfect, and there are lots of techniques that you can use in Elements to guarantee that your monochrome pictures are looking good.

The most obvious of these tools is the Levels adjustment. Levels is a great way to change brightness, exposure and contrast, but by accessing the Channel drop-down menu, you can make further adjustments to the individual red, blue and green strands within the image. This will change the tone of your image; just remember to create a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer above, and slide the Saturation down to -100 to keep the monochrome look.

Brightness/Contrast is also useful; a black-to-white gradient map can improve most shots; and add a subtle Photo Filter for a soft, warm effect.



USE FILL LAYERS

Click the Fill Layer icon – the round one next to Mask – to make all of your adjustments non-destructive.

On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative



BRUSH IN COLOUR

Create a new layer, set to Color, and brush over the final image to ensure all the stock images are a similar tone and hue.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO CREATE A FLOATING ISLAND?

A fantasy flying island is the kind of image that kick-starts the imagination. They're built entirely from stock images and really challenge your ability to blend disparate elements into one surreal scene.

To begin a flying island, start off with a stock image of a rock and rotate vertically, before cutting it out. Use the supplied images of the cliff edge, duplicate and mask, before placing on the edge of the rock, to make the rock look as though it is linked to the top of the cliff. Then, grab the stock image of the grass with the trees on top, go to Filter>Distort>Liquify and bend it into a steeper hill, before cutting out and again masking into the image.

With the base of your island complete, you're now free to play around with whatever you'd like to place on top of the island. We've supplied stock images of snowy grass, a lake and some penguins to create a thawing winter scene. Mask each of your layers and use soft brushes to cut the images out and blend them easily into the scene. Use adjustments and brushes to unify everything.



REFINE EDGE
Use the Refine Edge tool to smooth and perfect the selection you've made.

WHEN IS THE POLYGONAL LASSO USEFUL TO USE?

The Lassos are some of the more precise selection tools available in Elements. Unlike the Magic Wand or Quick Selection, they enable you to follow the outline you want to create manually, meaning that you can cut out objects exactly to the edge.

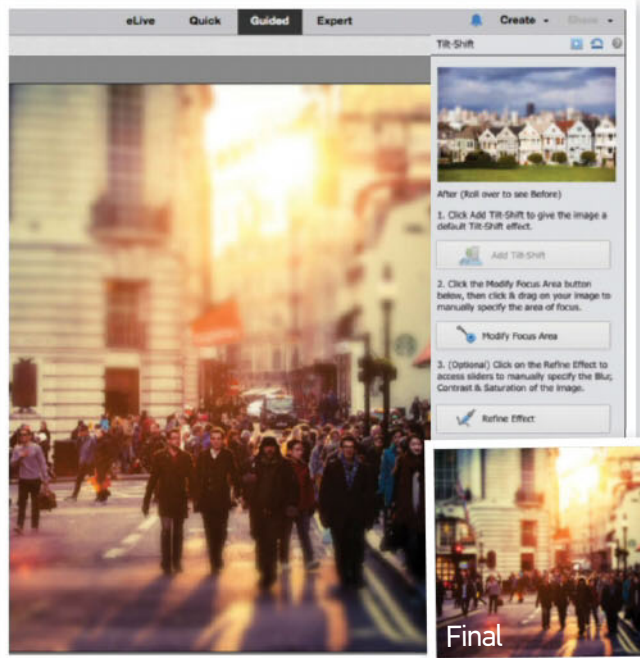
The Polygonal Lasso is typically used for cutting out straight edges, as the name suggests. It is used simply by clicking points, but if you zoom in far enough in Elements (Cmd/Ctrl and +), you will be able to get so close that when you cut out with the Polygonal Lasso, you won't see obviously straight lines. Simply click around your object as you would usually, and when you're done, hit the Mask icon to cut out.

CAN ELEMENTS CREATE A TILT-SHIFT EFFECT?

A tilt-shift effect, often referred to as the 'toy town effect', is a simple blurring technique that keeps the foreground focused and the background blurred. Because there is a lack of detail in the buildings and scenery, and the foreground is the only part of the image to be in focus, everything in the foreground looks small and toy-like – hence the nickname.

While it is possible to complete this effect with layers and masks, Elements provides a shortcut for anyone wanting to create it easily. Go to Guided at the top of Elements, along to Special Edits, and you'll see a Tilt-Shift option. Click on there, and you'll be prompted to follow the steps.

Hit Add Tilt-Shift to create the effect and then Modify Focus Area to sharpen your foreground. By using the Refine Effect you can then pinpoint exactly where you want the blur in your photo.



Quick tip Inverting masks



Masks are what enable you to show or hide pixels in Elements without having to actually delete anything that you might use later. While many tutorials and projects rely on you masking out various parts of a layer, you can actually mask things in too.

Once you've hit the Mask icon, use Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert everything in the mask. The mask will now turn black; by brushing in white over this mask, you will be drawing in the pixels that were otherwise hidden on that layer.

IS THERE AN EASY WAY TO ADJUST COLOUR BALANCE?

It's going to sound obvious, but often the quickest way to do anything in Elements is via the Quick tab at the top of the program. There, you can find all kinds of simple photo edits, many of which only rely on a simple click. When it comes to colour balance, you need to access the Color option.

The colour balance of an image is something that you might not even realise could do with some subtle correction. By using the previews, you can give more of a warming or cooling tone to your picture, and even tweak the tint of your photo from green to magenta. Remember to use this tool deftly to avoid oversaturated images.





SOFTWARE

Price £52 / \$64 US (approx) Web www.macphun.com

Macphun Luminar

Does this latest application from Macphun have what it takes to challenge Lightroom?

**LOOK AND FEEL**

Luminar is in keeping with other Macphun applications, opting for a modern appearance that's based around blacks and greys.

The specs

Company
Macphun

Additional specs
300+ tools and features
RAW processing
Adaptive interface
Plug-in or standalone

PRESETS

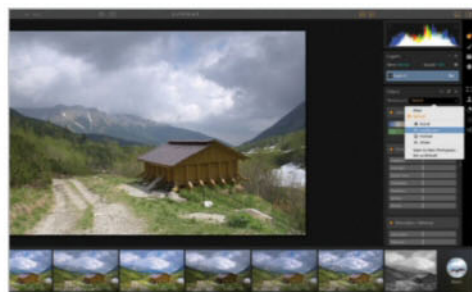
There are plenty of presets already available, potentially saving you lots of time, as you can select a look that appears in just one click.

MASKING TOOLS

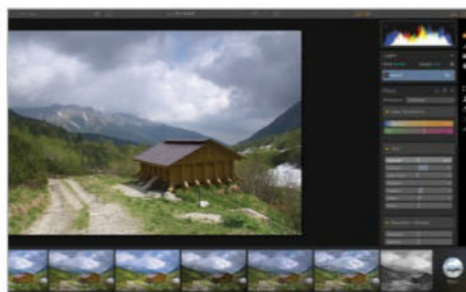
Over on the right of the interface, you'll find various masking options, such as a gradient mask and a regular brush tool and eraser.

Process a RAW file

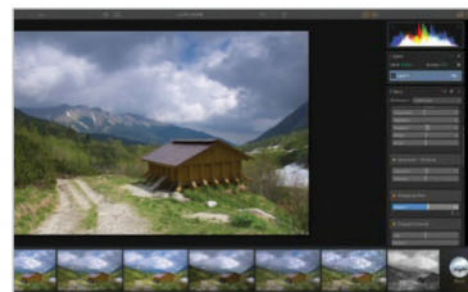
Discover how Luminar can quickly turn your files into fantastic photos

**Flexible editing**

01 When you load a RAW file, you decide how to edit it. You can pick a preset, or create something from scratch. If you opt for the latter, you can tell Luminar to adapt the set of sliders on display according to the type of image you're working on.

**Adjust the basics**

02 If you are used to the way Photoshop and Lightroom work, you'll find that colour temperature and exposure are adjusted in much the same way in Luminar. Remember to keep an eye on the histogram and use Smart Tone with care.

**Re-create polarisation**

03 In truth, this is something that editing applications routinely mislabel, as you can't truly digitally replicate the look of a polariser filter, but the Polarizing Filter in Luminar does a pretty good job of boosting colour and contrast along the same lines.



Macphun has a proven track record of producing sophisticated and attractive software applications for photographers, which have tended to focus on specific processes and tasks, such as its Aurora app for HDR, or the Tonality app for converting to black and white.

Luminar is a little different, in that it is a general photo editor that's designed to offer flexibility and adaptability to users, enabling photographers of all types and skill sets to work with it. In truth, this really means that it's aimed at relative newcomers to image processing ahead of experienced enthusiasts and pros – few people are likely to be converted away from Lightroom or Photoshop – but that's not to say that it doesn't have plenty of attractions.

It can be installed as a plug-in to Lightroom, Photoshop, Elements and Aperture, or you might prefer to run it as a standalone application. The downside of the latter option is that there's no library or browser option in

Luminar, which is of course integral to Lightroom, but in terms of its main functionality as an image editor, Luminar does have plenty to offer.

To get the very best from it, RAW files are the preferred option, but you can edit JPEG files and TIFFs too. Luminar requires a little more thinking time when you are processing a RAW file, and the software is as lightning fast as some, but this will depend on the speed of your machine to some extent.

If you have already experimented with any of Macphun's other applications, Luminar will feel very familiar. When you first load up an image, you'll find that there's a strip of previews along the bottom of the screen, which are divided into sections by subject. These provide very convenient and quick starting points for your editing, and are especially useful when you don't have a clear preconception of how you want the image to end up looking. There's also an option here to access and download some additional preset

packs that have been uploaded to the Macphun website.

One of the chief selling points of Luminar is its adaptive user interface, which sounds as if the software is going to intelligently identify your skill set and image adjustment needs and adapt itself accordingly. In reality, it simply means the ability to dispense with and/or rearrange some of the sliders, such as Tone, Saturation/Vibrance, Clarity and Structure. Slightly frustratingly, if you've started by selecting a preset from the filmstrip at the bottom of the interface, changing the interface counts as a history step, and so undoes the preset you've already selected and changes the way your image looks. It would be nice to have the option to retain an initial starting look from the presets filmstrip and also be able to modify the available sliders, but that's us being picky.

As is typical of Macphun's applications, Luminar makes it easy to reach an attractive and/or creative result in very little time, so this is ideal for beginners or those who want to process their images with minimum fuss. Being able to select a look from the presets with just a single click is very advantageous for those who don't want to have to experiment in order to achieve a certain look, and it enables you to learn how to create effects of that kind so you can learn the software without having to wait for your editing skills to catch up.

The verdict

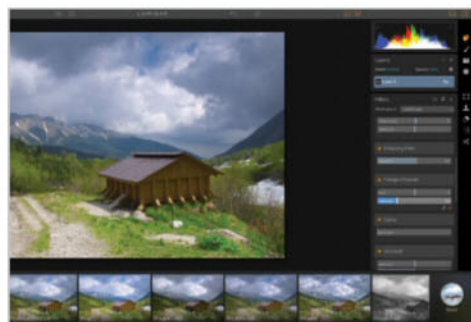
9

This is an excellent piece of software, and with additions already on the way at the time of writing, Luminar looks to have potential for future upgrades.

Standout feature

Create your own setup

One of the main advantages of Luminar over other software of its kind is the ability to opt for different sliders, reordering their appearance and dispensing with irrelevant ones altogether, according to the type of image you are working on. You can save your own custom setups if you find a winning combination that works for you.



Foliage Enhancer

04 This targets yellow and green tones – which can be identified using the Hue slider – and enables you to boost their vibrance in isolation, which is extremely useful when you are working on a landscape scene.



Apply finishing touches

05 The Top & Bottom Lighting adjustments essentially enable you to apply similar edits to your images as a gradient filter, controlling the brightness of the sky in relation to the foreground.

PLUG-IN

Price £32 (approx) / \$39 US Web www.akvis.com

AKVIS Refocus 6.0

Get to grips with blurring and sharpening, with AKVIS's new photo-editing plug-in



Five essential presets

Use these presets as one-click fixes or build on them with the sliders



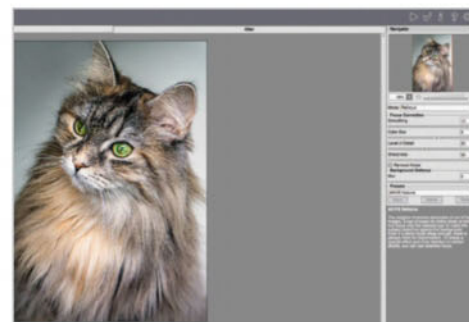
Diamond Bokeh

01 Available in the Iris Blur option of the plug-in, the Diamond Bokeh preset is one of the more subtle presets available. It's great for just giving a touch of focus to an object in a picture without noticeably blurring out the rest of the image.



Dramatic

02 The Dramatic preset, found under the Refocus drop-down option, is the most thorough sharpening preset that you can pick. While it may end up making your whole picture look a little messy, you can mask it into certain areas for strong effects.



Natural

03 Natural, a preset in the Refocus section of the plug-in, is the perfect sharpening option for portraits or animals. It gives definition to outlines but doesn't overdo the effect, leaving a soft finish to your image.



Sharpening and blurring may well be thought of as totally different kinds of edits, but the truth is that they're two sides of the same coin. Every composition or photo needs focus in some areas and not in others; sometimes you're lucky to have a photo that's naturally shot that way, and sometimes you'll need to edit it for the effect that you want.

AKVIS Refocus promises to make blurring easy, but doesn't do so at the expense of losing focus in the image. Available as a standalone program and as a Photoshop plug-in, it's split into three sections: Refocus, Iris Blur and Tilt-Shift. The Refocus option offers a range of sharpening sliders, while the other two options offer blurring around a mask, which you can adjust to alter the focus of your image. The software is divided in the same way as all other AKVIS products – with a big preview window, navigation top right, sliders just below – and it feels familiar and part of Photoshop itself.

The specifically focus-based section of Refocus is perhaps the least spectacular, but it

offers sliders capable of bringing more detail out of your shots than you thought possible. The Level of Detail and Sharpness sliders can hugely enhance your pictures either as a quick first step in a composition, or a final edit on a photo you've taken; there are presets available for you to tweak as you wish, and it's a good idea to be subtle with them, as the results can be extremely powerful. There's also the option to slightly blur around the edges of where you've just sharpened, but that can be further explored with more precision using the Iris Blur and Tilt-Shift effects.

To the left of the preview window tool is a simple masking tool; while it is true that it doesn't quite compete with the masking tools already available in Photoshop, it does help to direct attention onto the foreground in your image, ready for blurring effects later.

The plug-in is essentially a refocus tool. Below Refocus in the drop-down menu, you'll discover the Iris Blur and Tilt-Shift options, which both produce blurring effects. The Iris Blur will keep a round section in the middle focused, while the Tilt-Shift will keep a

rectangular band focused. These masks are really easy to edit because you can resize them, and they can also be moved around the image to find the perfect placement with ease. The user-friendliness of Refocus is certainly one of the main draws of the plug-in, but beyond how simple it is to create effects, you can delve deep into the blurring effects that you create too.

There's a lot of scope for how blurred you can make your image, and you can have incredible control of the bokeh in the blur. You can even choose the shape of the bokeh and the sharpness and rotation of these shapes; this gives a classier finish to the blur and a sharper contrast between a background and the subject. There's no doubting the limits in which you can actually take Refocus; it's extremely powerful and a fun plug-in for experimentation as much as perfecting your photos. Its true power, though, is in the subtlety of the sliders and the ease with which you can get the perfect focus in your photo in just a few clicks.

Refocus isn't an essential add-on by any means, but it does offer a lot to any Photoshop user looking to play around with blur. Focus is a difficult thing to master in photography, and Refocus makes it easy: sharpening and blurring aren't so different after all, and this software package can help you to control both effortlessly.

The verdict

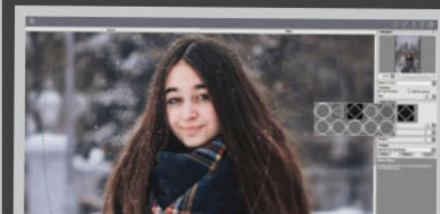
7

A plug-in that can open new worlds of possibility when it comes to focus in your images, Refocus is full of cool features, but not an essential add-on.

Standout feature

Various bokeh shapes

It might be a plug-in designed to blur images, but Refocus can help you blur with incredible detail. The bokeh options are extensive, as not only can you choose the shape of your bokeh, you can choose the sharpness of it and how rounded the edges are. This is perhaps the most fun part of Refocus to experiment with.



Strong Blur

04 Strong Blur, a Tilt-Shift preset, is a good option for toy-town effects and action shots. Its resizable focus area means that you can change exactly where the bigger blur falls in your photo, making more of a vignette than a tilt-shift if you choose.



Super Star Bokeh

05 The Super Star Bokeh preset is another Tilt-Shift preset that takes advantage of Refocus's ability to produce strong, sizeable blur options. This preset, though, can make the edges of your picture look far more unfocused than other options, with the defined star shape selected.

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ahmed21karam

A study of Photoshop

After discovering Photoshop in 2011, Ahmed Karam learned to paint incredibly lifelike portraits. His secret? Practice really does make perfect

Ahmed Karam is a digital painter whose incredible eye for detail comes from hours of practice.

With over 175,000 views of his work on Behance though, it's clearly paid off.

"The best thing about it is that I feel like I've travelled all over the world with my work," he says of his worldwide popularity. We caught up with Ahmed to find out more about how he started and how he uses Photoshop.

When was it that you first discovered Photoshop?

I've loved all kinds of art since I was young, especially music and acting. My father was a musician and singer, and he encouraged me to draw; I wasn't very good – at least not in my eyes – and so I stopped art for a long time. It was only in 2011 when my father died that I wanted to really express myself again, and get back into drawing and graphic design. Everything really started for me from this point on.

How did you experiment with the software? Did you always want to digitally paint?

When I started to design, I couldn't really do it! It's only when I saw people who weren't professional designers that I really felt confident in my own abilities. I tried and tried until it felt easy. I remember after my first photomanipulation, I thought 'Wow, it feels good to take something from the real world, to take deep thoughts and feelings and translate them into Photoshop'. I thought the software was amazing, and I still do.

So how did you go from your initial explorations in Photoshop to what you do now?

I do a lot of studies, and a lot of them fail, but you will never learn if you never fail! Since 2013, I've started traditional drawing, and I wanted to get into that

more. I was a graphic designer, but I feel that drawing really helps me to express myself a lot more; you need a lot of patience to digitally paint though. Some paintings vary from four days' work to four weeks'. I wanted to get quicker and stronger at digitally painting, so I just studied a lot to learn the basics, from lines and proportions to lighting, edges and colours. I still have fun learning.

Would you recommend to other budding digital painters to follow what you did?

I would say to study. Study hard, fail and learn. Learn how to use soft brushes and how to control edges; I had to paint in black and white first to learn about tonal values and the depth in portraits. Take your time too. Painting realistic portraits is really difficult, but it's once you break it down into smaller practices – such as adding texture to the skin, for example – that you notice everything is achievable with digital painting. Photoshop is a big program, so you have to know what you want to do before you start, I think. Check out tutorials to understand tools, and try them while you study them. In no time you will be an expert.

It's been years that I've been using Photoshop, and I still learn something new every day; Photoshop has no limits, for example the Dodge and Burn tools are excellent for retouchers, but also good for digital painters.

As a digital painter, is the Brush tool your favourite?

Photoshop has so many amazing tools, which are hard to find on most other apps! Photoshop is unique, with gradient maps, filters, warp and transfer tools being other favourites of mine. These tools can help you out whether you're sketching, drawing or painting, and yes, the custom brushes are fantastic for hair, material, skin and texture. I've used a lot

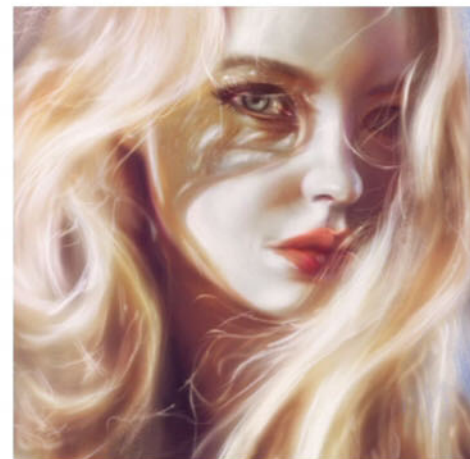
of programs, but Photoshop is by far the best for using brushes.

Your work has been viewed lots of times online. Is it overwhelming to think of how many people have seen your paintings?

When I put my heart and soul into my work, I love to see people's comments and what they see and feel in my work. This is what makes us human: sharing our experiences and our thoughts. I love to make short tutorials, and love it even more when someone says that I've helped them. I feel part of a community now, but when I started I was working alone; no one really looked at my portfolio! If you give work your best shot, someone will always appreciate it.

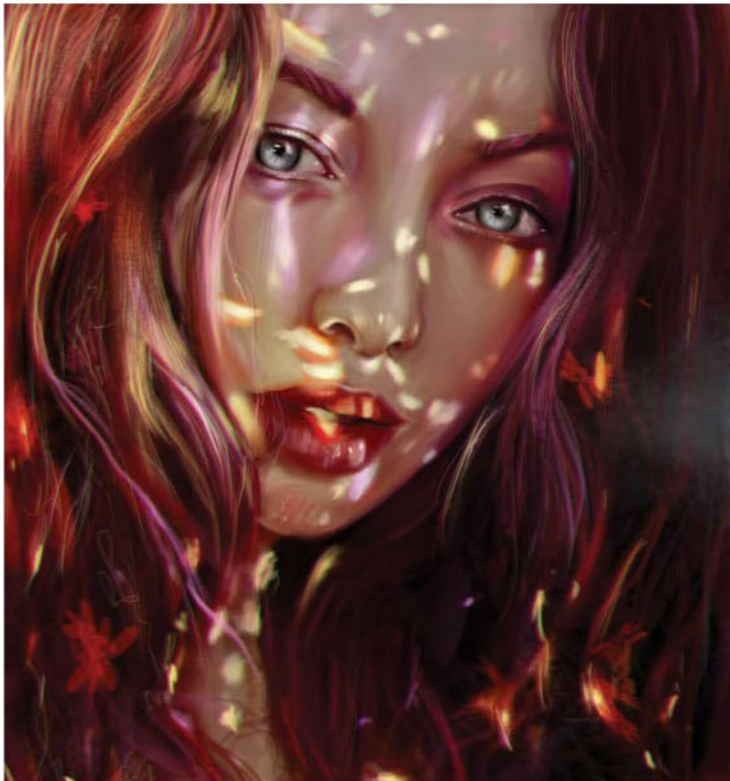
Finally, what's your favourite piece of artwork you've created?

I love them all! Yes, some of them find more success than others, but if something fails then it teaches me something new. Every piece of artwork I do, even if it was just a study, points to something or some time in my life when I wanted to express my emotions. For me, painting is like a diary.

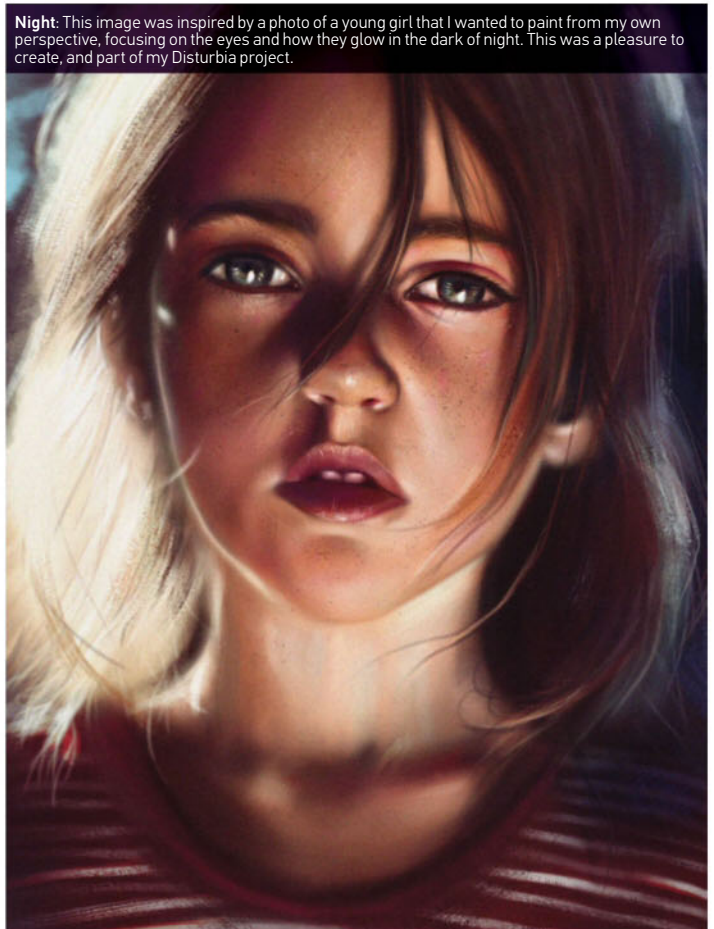


Shine: The final look of this image was a lot of fun to accomplish. I studied stylisation forms with lights, and ended up casting the shadow of the subject's hair across her face.

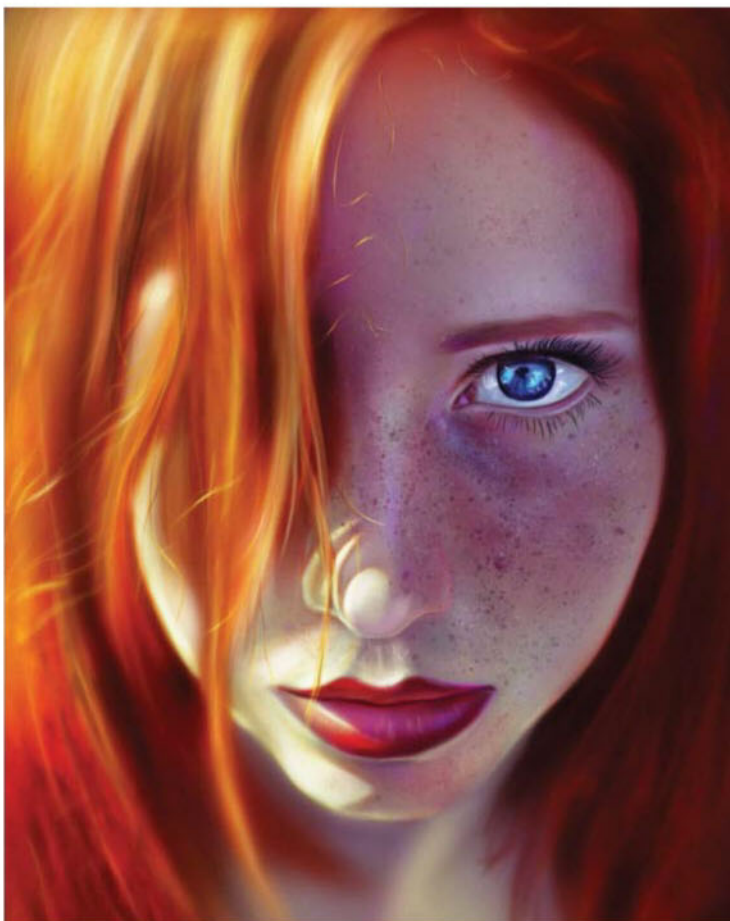
All images © Ahmed Karam



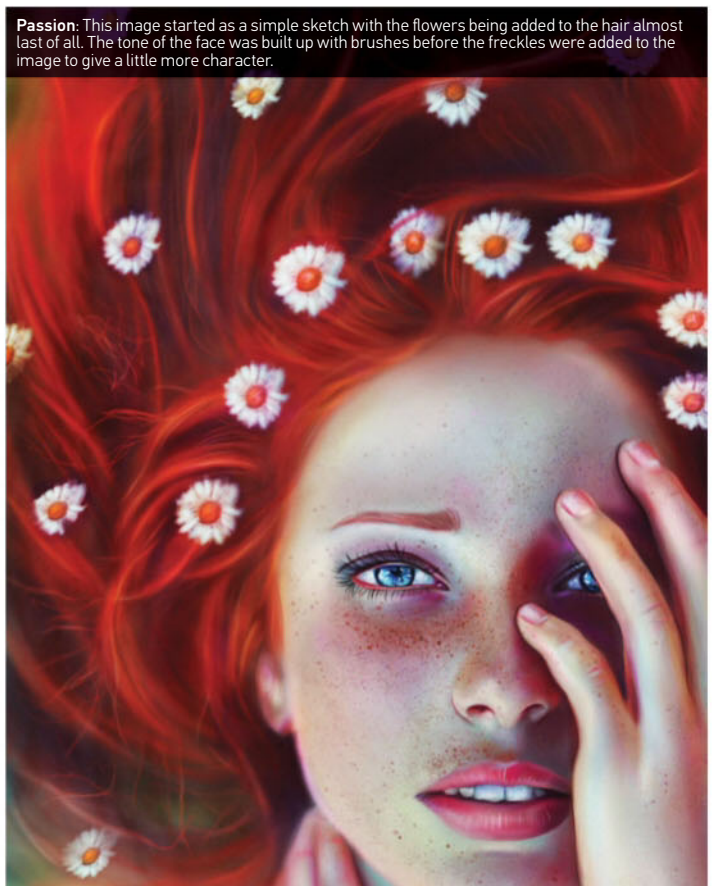
Strength: The light in this image was visible even in the first draft. It was simply built up to the point where it looks like the subject is in darkness, but for the shafts of light falling on her face.



Night: This image was inspired by a photo of a young girl that I wanted to paint from my own perspective, focusing on the eyes and how they glow in the dark of night. This was a pleasure to create, and part of my Disturbia project.



Believe: This painting was done as a study for lighting and proportions, and how they work with colour and hue. I was very happy to be featured on Wacom's gallery and the Fashion Institute of Technology with this image. This painting was inspired by a reference image of Maja Topcagic.



Passion: This image started as a simple sketch with the flowers being added to the hair almost last of all. The tone of the face was built up with brushes before the freckles were added to the image to give a little more character.



Fallen Angel



Frozen



The End



Orange Tree



Mehdi Mostefai

French artist Mehdi shares his tips with us, and discusses how cinema differs from digital art

A camera operator in the world of cinema, Mehdi Mostefai turned to still art to explore the ideas that never made it onto the big screen. "I always had many film ideas in my head, but ideas cost a lot in cinema," he says. As a solution, he "decided to teach myself photomanipulation."

But how does he create his art? We caught up with him to discover his tips.

Do you sketch basic ideas before you start an image?

I don't have enough skill to be able to sketch an idea from my head! I do as we do in cinema: we think about a story, a character and an emotion. I work with my models in the same way that we work with an actor in a film. Then everything tends to come easily, from the background to the lighting.

What do you think makes a good Photoshop composition?

Shadows and lighting are the most important things. If they are not realistic, we don't pay attention to the picture. I look for an original

scene with an original shot, then I look at the technical knowledge people have, and see if I can learn from them. I'm still learning!

What tips do you have for Photoshop beginners?

When I finish blending someone, I adjust the blend with a simple layer, brushing around the character using the average colours that are around them, then use Gaussian Blur and opacity to blend it better. Copy this layer and clip it, use Overlay and opacity to enhance the blend again. This will clear the edge and enhance your blending, providing scene colour to your character.

What do you want to achieve with your artwork?

I don't work to give a message but to give an emotion. I believe this is the main goal for most artists. If I'm able to provoke emotions in people, I have achieved something!

To see more of Mehdi's work, go to <http://photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/mmmmprod>

The making of The End

How Mehdi created this apocalyptic photomanipulation masterpiece



Choosing the background

This is a simple background. I chose a nice picture from London, which gave me good ideas. I thought 'What would James Bond have done if it was the end of the world'?



Enhancing the scene

I always work hard on the background to enhance it. Here, it was easy; I just added a dramatic sky and changed the mood with colour/contrast/brightness. I tried to keep to the original details.



Blending the waves

Probably the hardest part was to try to blend 30 layers of waves and swirls. To blend images perfectly you will need a lot of patience. I spent three days doing this wave.



Final colour grading

I added details and lights, just before my favourite last stage. I fixed the colours as you can see in the final picture. Here I have added a main car, flying debris, cars and hazy light.



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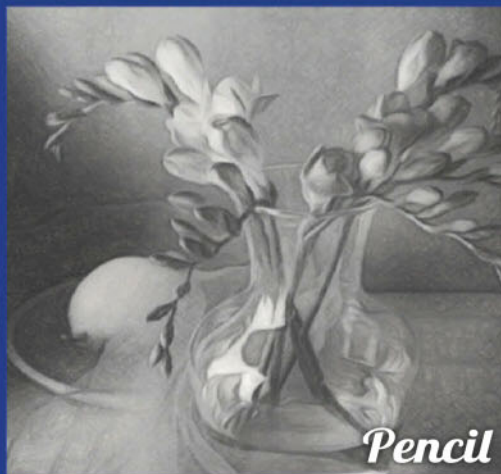
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