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Photoshop creative

THE **WORLD'S NO.1** FOR
PHOTOSHOP
& ELEMENTS

MAKE YOUR ART STAND OUT

BLEND MODES

MASTER DIFFERENT MODES FOR STUNNING RESULTS

DIGITAL ART SKILLS

BRUSH UP ON PAINTING

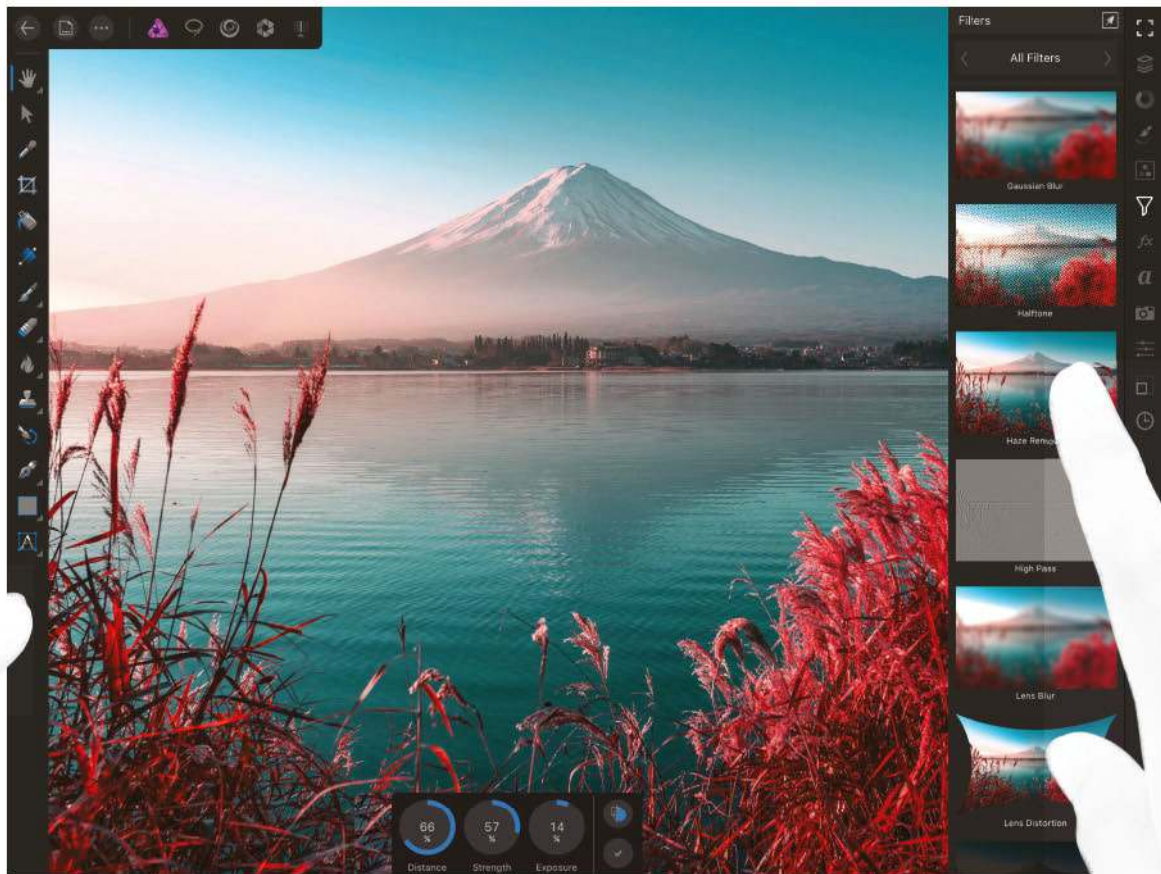**Step-by-step guide to painting the perfect portrait**

Normal
Dissolve

Darken
Multiply
Color Burn
Linear Burn
Darker Color

Lighten
Screen
Color Dodge
Linear Dodge (Add)
Lighter Color

Overlay
Soft Light
Hard Light
Vivid Light
Linear Light
Pin Light
Hard Mix

Difference
Exclusion
Subtract
Divide

Hue
Saturation
Color
Luminosity

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With the help of layers and stunning effects

Future

ISSUE 155

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Editors' Choice

Also available on Mac and Windows. | No subscription.

Photoshop creative

Welcome

We will be mixing it up this issue, as our lead feature is all about blend modes. One of Photoshop's secret weapons, blend modes can transform images, whether you're looking for subtle or striking blends. Delve into our multi-layered (sorry) blend modes feature (p14) and find new ways to use them, across all types of artwork.

We also have our usual plethora of tutorials; these include showing how to use filters to create stunning landscape vistas (p28), how to mix up text and photos for a striking movie poster (p38), as well as how to utilise the full potential of the Pen Tool in one of our advanced tutorial (p58). In addition, you'll find our fun Elements tutorials, in-depth interviews, readers' challenge and galleries in their usual places. We hope you enjoy the issue!

Erlingur Einarsson **Editor**
erlingur.einarsson@futurenet.com

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Make waves

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- 50 Abstract art textures worth $20
- Displacement waves worth $5
- 350 Paint splatter textures
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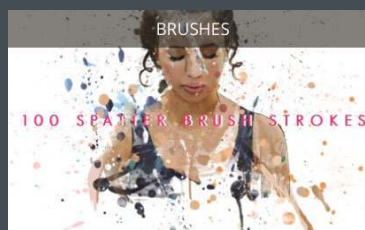
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TRENDING IMAGES

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.

This particular image has been included in Behance's Illustration showcase online, and we love the block colour and use of blur. Jenny shows here that there's more to digital art than just the Brush Tool.

Novans Morello
www.behance.net/ Novanshocker
This work is dedicated to David Bowie, one of my favourite musicians. Inspired by his song *Starman*, I tried to make an image with a touch of a galaxy that combines several elements of lines, colours and dimensions, of course using standard tools from Photoshop.

Novans is an example to any Photoshop beginner on how you can push software further: he's even been featured by Behance's Photoshop gallery. We love the colour and invention in this piece.

Jenny Yu
jennyyu. squarespace.com/
Starting with a very quick sketch, I selected shapes with the Lasso Tool and filled in some rough blocks of colour and lighting. Then I painted the details, using Colour Dodge to highlight the lighting.

Photoshop is a great tool for so many creatives: even 3D artists who use it to get the best out of their renders. Nico has over 3,000 followers on Behance, which is testament to the detail he uses in his work.

Nico Santos
www.artstation. com/artist/ nicolassantos
I created the 3D render, then used Photoshop to create the UV textures for the character and other elements of the scene. I use Photoshop for post-production, for better control and blending in the background to give more depth.

Darkslide
www.darkslide.it/

We used two pictures: a Phoenix 3D model made with ZBrush and an image of the Milky Way, everything masked to work independently. We blended the two images, did some adjustments, then used Selective Colour to enhance the tones and level everything.

Studio Darkslide is fantastic at blending images in Photoshop, and this is a case in point. The Italian designers have been featured by Wacom's gallery and this is one of their most exciting projects yet.

Magdiel Lopez
magdiellopez.com/

Using the Pen Tool, I created a cutout on the subject, imagining the photo as a 3D object rather than a flat image. From there I put flowers inside the subject, masked them and added shadows to create the illusion that the flowers were inside the subject.

Magdiel's daily poster project has racked up over 36,000 views online so far, and this one is a standout. We're big fans of the idea of even the simplest feature, like shadows, being used for imaginative images.

Andreas Varro
www.itsvarro.com/

All models were shot on location, and we used our own stock images in the background. Dodge and burn techniques were used to get depth on the models and gradient maps with Hard Light blend modes were used for colour tones.
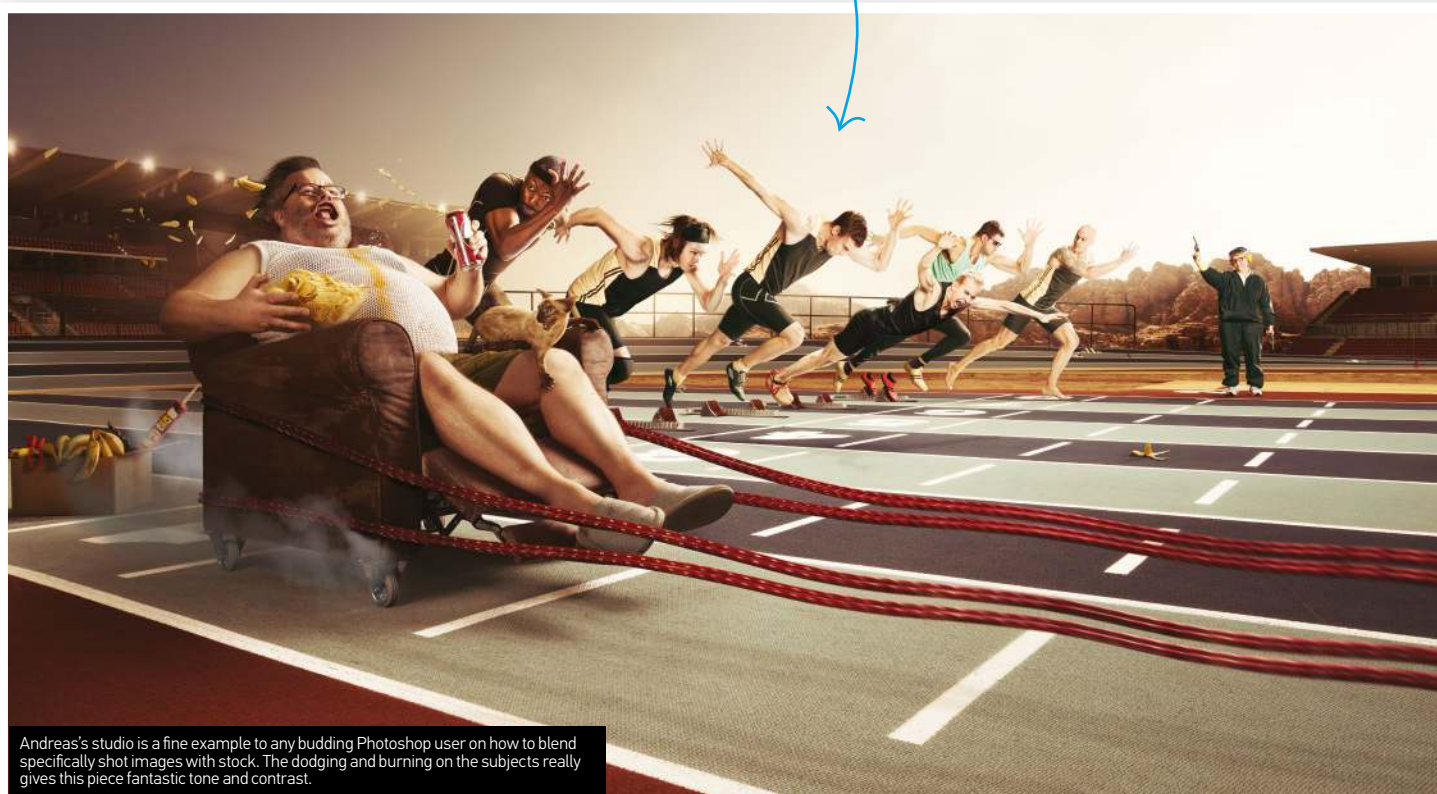
Andreas's studio is a fine example to any budding Photoshop user on how to blend specifically shot images with stock. The dodging and burning on the subjects really gives this piece fantastic tone and contrast.

READERS' IMAGES

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

GET IN TOUCH

Send us your images now for the chance to appear in future galleries

Future Create your own gallery online
PhotoshopCreative.co.uk

Upload your images to Facebook
Search PhotoshopCreative

Tweet us your creative artwork
@PshopCreative

Alternatively, you can email:
markwhite03@futurenet.com

Manon Moreau
www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/manon.M
Image of the issue
I decided to create a strong contrast between a night environment and artificial light. I used a chart of complementary (blue and yellow) colours to accentuate the contrast between the light and the night. Everything has been done using brushes.

Julie Powell
www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/Julie%20Powell
This image was taken in a studio on a black background. I used the Quick Selection Tool to create a layer mask and then Refine Mask to get the fine details. I used several adjustment layers for mood.
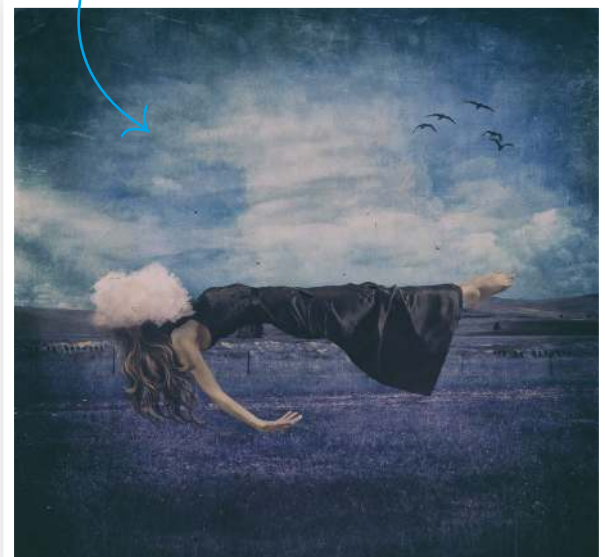
Mehdi Mostefaï
www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/mmmprod
The most difficult thing was to add, blend and lighten the numerous objects in the scene. There are more than 20. I then worked hard on the cinematic grading, as I'm always doing.

Mario Unger

www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/mariounger
There are about 20 images in this picture, and they're all free stock photos from Pixabay. It took me about two days to finish the picture: it's about 60 layers, plus another 5-10 layers for finishing touches.

Fadi Ajjan

www.photoshopcreative.
co.uk/user/fadi-art
First, I desaturated the image using Hue/ Saturation, then I used the Find Edges filter to take out the lines. After that, I used a brush. Finally, I retrieved the original coloured photo and used a vector mask to bring back some of the colour.

Raphaell Andrade

www.photoshopcreative.
co.uk/user/Raphaell
In this image I added masks and some layer adjustments and worked with blend modes. I spent a long time blending shadows, highlights, sharpness and making the image more realistic.

We challenged you with these

In Issue 153, 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.

Readers' Challenge WINNER

Challenge entries

The best entries and overall challenge winner

1 Corine Spring
Camera In The Grass
The focus for this came from the supplied image of the camera. The grass image is used at the bottom of the picture, with blend modes and masks used to tie the image together as a whole.

2 Neil Kelly
Dog Lost At Sea
I used Curves, Colour Balance, fill layers, Levels and Brightness/Contrast in Photoshop. I also used the Warp Tool to put the marble on the case.

3 Lucy Wright
Grass Camera
The images of the camera, the grass and the marble textures were combined for a minimal composition. The marble was reduced in opacity to give more of a texture to the grass.

4 Judith Musgrove
Flower Field
All four images were used. The marble textures were turned into cartoon flowers, the grass was used in the background, and the camera is to the left, photographing the dog.

THE PRIZE...

RollerMouse Red

This issue, we're giving away a fantastic RollerMouse Red from Contour Design, worth £269.99! The RollerMouse is a keyboard-like mouse alternative that can help with anyone seeking something less strenuous than a regular mouse, but it can also help to speed up your Photoshop work. It's great to use, efficient and can help change your creative process.

WORTH £269.99!

RUNNERS'-UP PRIZE...

WORTH £89.99!

Contour Design ShuttlePRO v2

Three runners-up, plus the winner, will receive a ShuttlePRO v2 from Contour Design, worth £89.99! Store all your favourite Photoshop shortcuts for ease of use and speed up your work in no time at all.

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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: 25 September.

DIVE DEEPER INTO BLEND MODES

Get to grips with one of Photoshop's most useful features, enabling you to blend your work quickly and efficiently

Blend modes are perhaps the most underrated feature Photoshop offers. They save you time, transform your work in subtle or dramatic ways, and they provide shortcuts to help you blend your work perfectly. They're central to everything we do in Photoshop: but how much do you know about them?

Believe it or not, there was a time before blend modes, simply because Photoshop hasn't always included the Layers panel. Before layers, we just had to edit everything flatly, but blend modes enable you to edit dynamically, changing the way certain pixels look when displayed against other pixels.

Despite this, most of us just use the same few blend modes to edit our work for the same few techniques. However, you can use blend modes for all kinds of projects, and each of them have their uses for specific tasks.

But don't worry if you have never spent much time exploring the blend mode drop-down menu beyond just selecting your favourites. In this feature, we're going to dive deeper into them and discover which ones can be used for different kinds of projects: some of them you'll know, and some of them you may wish to try out the next time you get creating.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN…
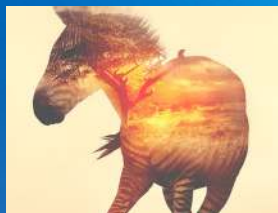
LIGHTEN MODES
Discover how to use the Screen and Lighten modes in order to create incredible double exposures, and other bright artwork.

DARKEN MODES
Create atmospheric posters and improve landscapes by inserting sunset stock images into your photos using the Multiply blend mode.

CONTRAST MODES
Learn how to create city compositions and discover ideas to brighten portraits with the Soft Light and Overlay modes.

COLOUR MODES
Recolour any image in Photoshop with no fuss using the Color modes, and learn how to add the finishing touches to digital art with them.

DIFFERENCE MODES
Make something unique by using a mix of blend modes, and incorporate the Difference modes into your work.

Normal
Dissolve

Darken
Multiply
Color Burn
✓ **Linear Burn**
Darker Color

Lighten
Screen
Color Dodge
Linear Dodge (Add)
Lighter Color

Overlay
Soft Light
Hard Light
Vivid Light
Linear Light
Pin Light
Hard Mix

Difference
Exclusion
Divide

Hue
Saturation
Color
Luminosity

LIGHTEN MODES
The Screen and Lighten modes add pixels to your work while ignoring the darker pixels. They're great for objects like clouds.

COLOUR MODES
The Colour modes – the ones beneath the water – are good for applying different shades across images.

DARKEN MODES
Use Darken and Multiply to add the pixels of one layer to the pixels of the layers below; in this case, the divers.

CONTRAST MODES
The Contrast modes – Overlay, Soft Light etc – are good for blending light and shade in ambitious compositions.

Start images

Screen & Lighten

Easily achieve a great double-exposure effect

First, cut the zebra out with the Pen Tool, zooming in to 200% to get clean lines. Then use the Refine Edge option for the mane. Merge these two layers. Place the landscape above the zebra layer in Screen mode and create a clipping mask. Move it until you find the best place to mix the two photos: the Difference mode can help with this. Paint in black to hide areas in the layer masks to mix them softly. Then use adjustments and blending modes to enhance the composition. Redraw or paint some areas such as branches near the eye to enhance the details, ideally with a graphics tablet for more precision.

Add a solid colour, like a neutral grey, then set to Lighten, for this retro filter effect.

Multiply
Get dramatic with this blend mode
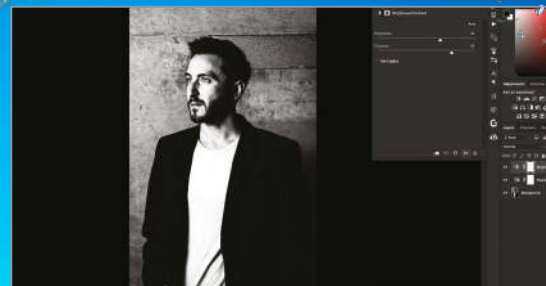
Adjust the image
01 Open your image, use Hue/Saturation adjustment set to -100 Saturation. Add a Brightness/Contrast adjustment, Brightness: +40, Contrast: +50.

Add a colour
02 Click the Fill Layer icon and choose a colour to Multiply with; we went with #53b7cc. Click OK and set to Multiply.

Insert textures
03 With your colour multiplied into the image, add the supplied water texture and set to Multiply as well; there's also a sparks image in the supplied files to Screen onto the image for an extra little touch of colour.

"Add the supplied water texture and set to Multiply"

Before

The Multiply mode is great for a variety of projects, but one of the simplest things it can be used for is improving landscapes by adding a sunset to an existing image. Open your start image and then place the sunset over the top; set the image to Multiply and then reduce the Opacity. Grab a soft brush and Alt/Opt-click on colours from the sunset, brush over any part of the image in the foreground or below the horizon, until you have an even tone with colour applied throughout.

Contrast modes

Improve portraits and compositions with this group

OVERLAY
Add colour – utilise a targeted Color Fill layer or simply paint on a blank layer above and set to Overlay to enhance eye colour.

SOFT LIGHT
If you try Overlay and it's too strong, use Soft Light for a softer blend.

"You can quickly change the blend mode of the layers in the group"

Before

TIP

Assign a mode to a group
In Photoshop/CC, you can set a group to a blend mode. This is convenient if you have an array of layers that will be set to the same blend mode, eg a shading and highlights group set to Overlay. It also means you can quickly change the mode of the layers in the group.

"Use an adjustment layer with the Overlay mode to create new possibilities"
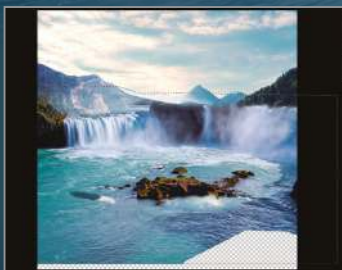
Blend with mask
01 Create a new document (Cmd/Ctrl+N), 230x230mm. First add 'background.jpg', then add 'waterfall.jpg' and place it on the top. To blend the image, click on the Add Layer Mask button, set the Foreground colour to black, use the Brush Tool (B) and gently erase the sky part.

Sharpen it up
02 Duplicate the city layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J), apply the High Pass filter (Filter>Other>High Pass), change the blend mode to Overlay and set the Opacity to 60%. Then, to make the city's colour more vibrant, duplicate it again and change the blend mode to Soft Light with 30% Opacity.
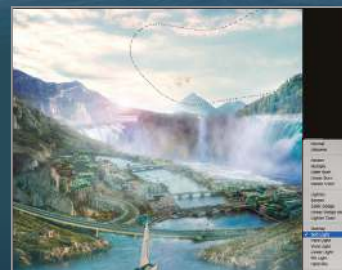
Create lights
03 To create lights in a specific part of the scene, make a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N), change the blend mode to Soft Light, set the Foreground colour to yellow (#fef8b4), pick the Brush Tool and apply the lights in the sky and around the mountains, just like the image above.

Adjustment layers
04 Let's use an adjustment layer with the Overlay mode to create new possibilities and set the colour tone of the scene. Add a Photo Filter layer, set to the Underwater option, with 25% Density, change the blend mode to Overlay and then adjust the Opacity to 30%.

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Colour modes

Make the colours sing with these options

ADJUST THE LUMINANCE
Add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. Then, go to the Properties and set the preset to custom/Greens. Set to 0, -42, -6.

EQUALISE THE COLOURS
Link a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer to the tiger (hold Cmd/Ctrl+Alt and click on the layer) and reduce saturation using the setting 0, -37, 0.

CHANGE THE COLOUR
Link a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer to the butterfly, activate the Colourise option and to change the colour, set to 36, 50, 0.

ADJUST THE TONE
Duplicate the left tree layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J), activate the selection (Alt-click on the thumbnail) paint it with green (#225f2a) and change the blend mode to Color.

COLOUR
Use the Colour blend mode to alter the overall colour of your letter.

HUE
Change just the hue, with the Hue blend mode.

SOFT LIGHT
Add almost a light effect by using Soft Light.

SATURATION
Use Saturation to improve or decrease the saturation.

TIP

Keep details

Difference and Exclusion can cause areas like facial features to become spectrally nebulous after blending. You may need to duplicate one or more of the main layers, move up in the stacking order, set to a less 'weird' blend mode or Normal, then mask in critical features.

"You may need to mask in some of the facial features to reinstate them"

Difference modes

Usually forgotten about, this set offers some decent creative choice

Edit and mask models

01 Open a model and perform desired edits. Merge layers at top and toggle visibility off for the edit layers. Use your favourite selection tool(s) to select the model. Add a layer mask. Save as PSD, close. Repeat steps for other model. When you're done, stack/overlap the models in your main composition PSD.

Create base blend

02 Use Difference and/or Exclusion to create the base blend. Experiment with the Colour Overlay layer style. Duplicate either model or both, and play with blend modes. At the top of the stack, you may need to mask in some of the facial features to reinstate them.
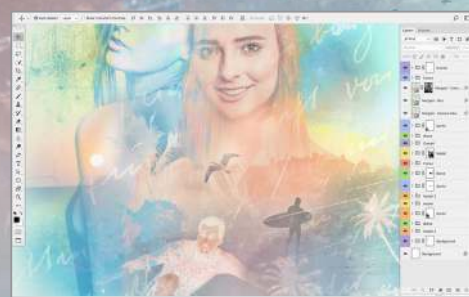
Add more blends and finalise

03 Place more photos and utilise Difference, Exclusion and any of the other blend modes, along with layer masks, to mix things together. You can also work in some brushwork and texturing, in addition to adding various adjustment layers.

Essentials

Works with

Elements   **CS**   **CC**

What you'll learn
◣ Use the blend modes and lighting techniques to create a unique scene

Time taken
5 hours

Expert

Rodrigo Marinelli

"One of the first Photoshop features I ever tried to learn was blend modes; it's amazing how different effects can be achieved by playing with combinations of modes. I always try new variations to discover more possibilities.

"I'm an art director and have 12 years' experience at advertising agencies. I learned and am still learning to use Photoshop through following tutorials."

Create a scene with blend modes

Combine blend modes with lighting techniques and 3D commands to create a fantastical scene

A good way to start creating a new image is to imagine how you are going to combine different tools or techniques to end up with something unique. Curiosity and creativity are the perfect combination to help enhance your knowledge. It's very important to keep in mind that in each image you create, there are infinite possible combinations, and knowing what can be achieved will help your work look amazing.

In this tutorial, we will combine photomanipulation, lighting techniques, 3D and many other tools to create a scene where a car is riding on a mirror, in the middle of a city centre. We'll be using a realistic style, so we'll have to pay close attention to every detail of the scene, so that anybody looking at it will believe it could actually be real.

We will also work with blend modes – one of the most interesting features of Photoshop – to set the colour tone details, to add elements for more movement to the scene, and also to help create the reflection of the mirror. And to ensure the scene is as believable as possible, we will be working with different kinds of blur.

Use the High Pass filter
01 Create a new document (Cmd/Ctrl+N) at 460x310mm, then add the photo 'pix_1912717_background.jpg'. Duplicate the layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J), apply the High Pass filter (Filter>Other>High Pass), set to 3px. Change the blend mode to Soft Light at 80% opacity.

Create some shadows
02 Make a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N), set the foreground colour to #9b854d and pick the Brush Tool (B). Go to the Brush Preset Picker, choose Soft Round, 50% opacity, paint on the sides of the scene, and change the blend mode to Multiply.
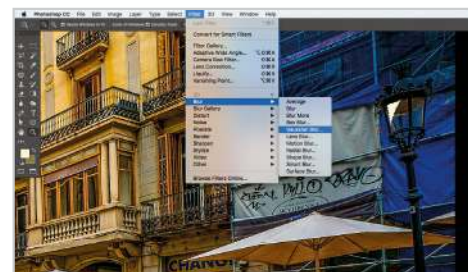
Draw the lights
03 Create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N), pick the Pen Tool (P) and draw the shape of the lamp's light. Activate the selection (Alt+Enter), paint it (Alt+Del) with white, disable the selection (Cmd/Ctrl+D), and apply Gaussian Blur (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur), set to 19px. Finally change the blend mode to Soft Light.

Blend with Screen

04 Let's make the city look a little brighter. To do that, add 'smoke.psd' and place it in front of the people on the street. Then, to erase the black background, simply change the blend mode to Screen.
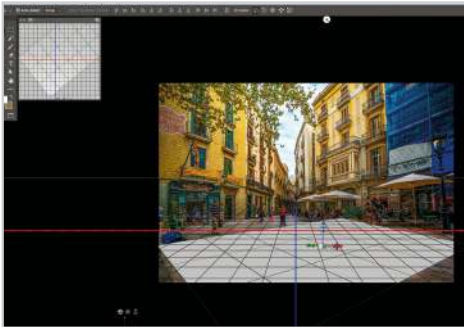
Work with 3D

06 Duplicate the square layers (Cmd/Ctrl+J), merge (Cmd/Ctrl+E) and disable the original square layers. Go to 3D and select the option 'New 3D extrusion from selected layer', then move the axis Z/Y/X to make the perspective look like the image above. Set the Extrusion Depth to 31cm.

Mask areas

08 Select the square layer and select Add Layer Mask. Then set the Foreground colour to black, pick the Pen Tool (P) and make a selection around a few squares. Finally activate the selection (Alt+Enter), and press Alt+Del to erase it.
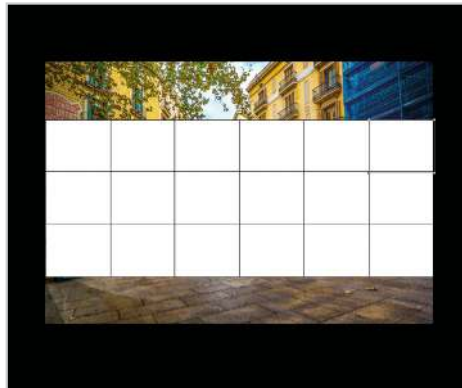
Create the mirror's shape

05 Let's start creating the mirror that will be on the floor. First, create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N), use the Rectangle Tool (U), set the Fill to white and the Stroke to black at 7px. Mark out six squares with three columns.

Free Transform Tool

07 Duplicate the 3D layer, Ctrl/right-click and choose Rasterize Layer. Then disable the original 3D layer, use the Free Transform Tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T), hold Cmd/Ctrl, click on the little squares and adjust the mirror's shape, as the image above shows.

Make the mirror's reflection

09 Change the square layer to Multiply, then create a new layer, pick the Pen Tool (P), make a selection around the mirror shape, activate it (Alt+Enter), create a layer group (Cmd/Ctrl+G) and select Add Layer Mask. Duplicate the background layer, flip it vertically (Edit>Transform>Flip Vertical) and place it inside the folder.

Expert edit

Add more details


Motion Blur

01 Duplicate the car layer and apply Motion Blur (Filter>Blur>Motion Blur), Angle: 6, Distance: 65px. Make a mask to erase the unnecessary parts.

Set the tone

02 Set the Foreground colour to black, the background to white and apply the Cloud filter. Change the blend mode to Screen with 30% opacity.

Another Lens Flare

03 Create another Lens Flare effect (step 23), set the light to the top of the car and change the blend mode to Soft Light with 50% opacity.

Use masks

04 Select the Colour Balance adjustment layer, set the foreground colour to black, pick the Brush Tool and erase around the top of the scene.

Bevel effect

10 Create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N), pick the Pen Tool and draw a thin line on the mirror's extremities. Activate the selection, set the foreground colour to black and paint it (Alt+Del). Follow the same procedure for the other extremities.

Link adjustment layers

11 Add 'car.psd' and place above the mirror. Go to the Adjustment menu, choose Brightness/Contrast, hold Cmd/Ctrl+Alt and click on the car layer, then set it to 0, 21. Repeat the procedure to link a Colour Balance layer set to 5, 0, -26.

The Warp Tool

12 Add 'license_plate.psd' and place it in front the car. Use the Free Transform Tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T) to adjust the size and the perspective (step 7). Use the Warp Tool (Edit>Transform>Warp) to adjust the shape.

Enhance the tyres

13 Let's create highlights to give more volume to the tyres. To do that, create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N), use the Pen Tool to draw the highlight shape, paint it white, apply Gaussian Blur (12px) and change the blend mode to Soft Light.

Set the car's tone

14 Create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N) and place it above the car's layer. Then activate the car's selection (Cmd/Ctrl-click on the layer thumbnail), paint it with #c0b193 and change the blend mode to Colour, set to 30% opacity.

Create the tree's reflection

15 Follow step 9 and make a layer group with a car windscreen-shape mask. Select the background layer, use the Polygonal Lasso Tool, make a selection around the leaves, Ctrl/right-click and choose Layer Via Copy. Place it inside the layer folder and change the blend mode to Multiply (opacity at 30%).

Use the Spin Blur

16 Select the car layer and apply the Spin Blur (Filter>Blur Gallery>Spin Blur). Select the middle circle to place it above the tyre, then use the smaller circles, located at the edges of the larger circle, to adjust the shape. Set the Blur Angle to 15.

Make a reflection with masks

17 Let's make the front reflection first. Duplicate the car layer, flip it vertically (Edit>Transform>Flip Vertical), place it below the car and change the opacity to 60%. Select Add Layer Mask, set the colour to black, pick the Brush Tool and erase the unnecessary parts. Follow the same process for the car's back reflection.

Add movement to the scene

18 To give a windy look to the scene, add 'movement.psd' and change the blend mode to Screen. Then duplicate it (Cmd/Ctrl+J) until it fills the scene, as the final image shows. To lend more depth to the scene, also place it above the car.

Create sunlight

19 First, create a new layer and place it above the car layer. Then pick a Soft Round brush (step 2) with 80% opacity, set the foreground colour to yellow (#fff16f) and make the sunlight. Finally change the blend mode to Soft Light with 50% opacity.

Warmer colour

20 To make the scene look warmer, go to the Adjustment menu, pick Photo Filter and use the Warming Filter (85) with 25% density. Also use Colour Lookup (Crisp_Warm.look) at 20% opacity.


Use the Cloud filter

21 Besides wind, let's also add a foggy look to the scene. Create a new layer, set the foreground colour to #ccc2a8 and the background colour to white. Apply the Cloud filter (Filter>Render>Clouds). Finally, make a mask (step 17) and erase the effect above the car, as the final image shows.

Add lights

22 To continue adding fog to the scene, add 'smoke.psd', place it above the car and change the blend mode to Screen. Then add 'right_lights.psd', place it on the right side of the buildings and change the blend mode to Screen.
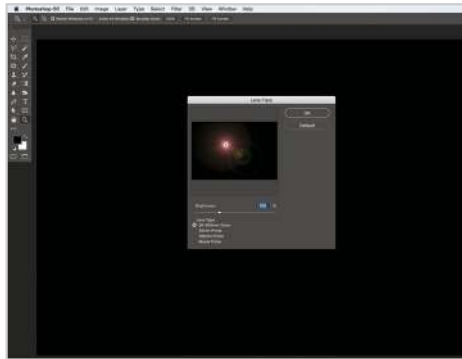
Lens Flare effect

23 Create a new layer, set the foreground colour to black and paint the scene (Alt+Del). Then apply the Lens Flare filter (Filter>Render>Lens Flare), set the light position, use the option 50-300mm Zoom and change the blend mode to Screen.

Adjust the tone

24 Let's adjust the colour tone of the scene using blend modes. Create a new layer, set the foreground colour to black and paint the scene, just like the previous step. Change the blend mode to Soft Light with 50% opacity.
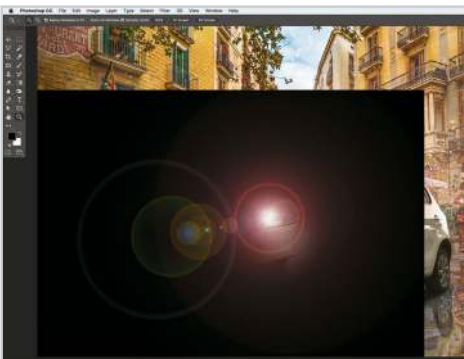
Shiny headlights

25 Let's add another realistic element to the scene: light from the headlights. Create a Lens Flare effect (step 23) and place it above the headlights. Finally, to make the light look a little softer, create a mask (step 17) and erase the excess.

Set the details

26 Add more light to give the impression that the scene is taking place on a sunny day. Create a new layer, set the foreground colour to white, use the Brush Tool (B), paint on the top of the buildings, close to the sun's light. Change the blend mode to Soft Light.

Make the final adjustments

27 Time for the final colour adjustments to the scene. Go to the Adjustment menu and use Colour Balance set to -36, 0, 0, Brightness/Contrast set to 5, 44 and Colour Lookup (3Strip.Look) with 50% opacity.

Vibrant sunsets with filters

Work with filters, masks and adjustments for stunning compositions

I f you're thinking that Photoshop filters are only intended for artistic effects, think again. Photoshop has a wide variety of powerful filters capable of retouching photos, creating distortions, making colour and tonal corrections, and more. Also, you can install plug-ins created by other companies to expand the potential even more.

In this tutorial, we'll show you how to take advantage of the filters to create a beautiful seascape. First, you'll work with the Camera Raw filter to transform a mundane background image into a vibrant and colourful sunset. Next, you'll start adding images and use basic masking and adjustment techniques to combine them. After the composition is complete, you'll use several filters to create sunlight and add depth of field. Finally, you'll fine-tune the composition with Camera Raw. This tutorial has plenty of tips to boost your skills.

On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at **www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative**
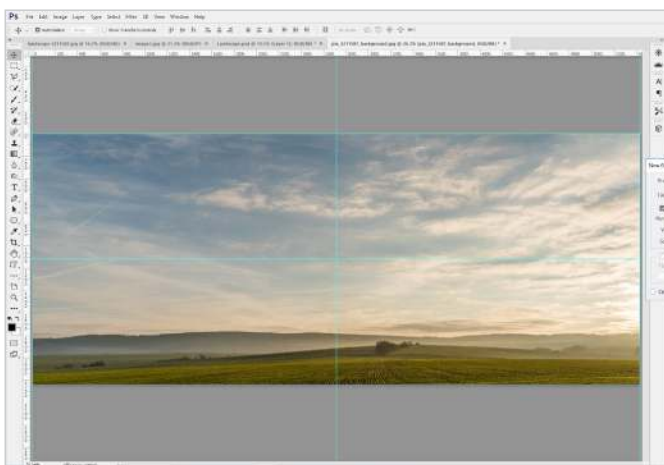
Place the background

01 To begin, add the background and save it. Go to File>Open 'pix_2211587_background.jpg'. Now, add guidelines to help position the images. Go to View>New Guide Layout. Check Columns and Rows, setting the number to 2, then click OK. Save your project as Seascape.psd (Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+S).
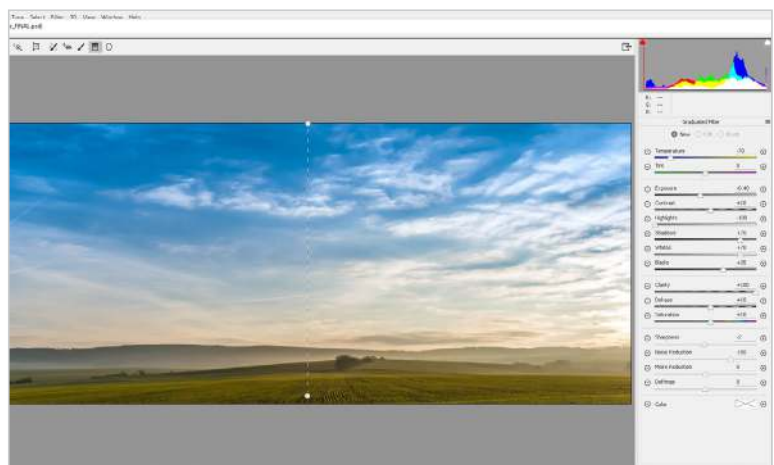
Add a graduated filter

02 Transform the image into a Smart Object; go to Layer>Smart Objects>Convert to Smart Object. Now, go to Filter>Camera Raw filter. Grab the Graduated Filter (G). Set the Temperature to -70. Drag the gradient from top to bottom and then tweak the other settings to create a bluish sky.

Paint with the Adjustment Brush

03 Now, grab the Adjustment Brush (K). Set the Temperature to +70 and paint over the horizon to boost the yellows. Tweak the settings to fine-tune the colour. Add a new adjustment. Set the Temperature and Tint to +100. Paint above the horizon to add a reddish colour, then click OK.
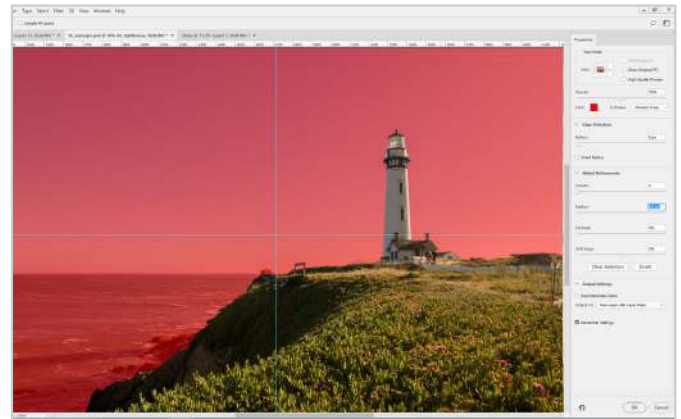
Place the lighthouse

04 Go to File>Place Embedded 'fo_lighthouse.jpg' and press Return/Enter. Grab the Magic Wand Tool (W). In Options set the Tolerance to 50, check Add to Selection and select the sky. Click on Select and Mask. Use the tools to mask the ocean, then tweak the settings to refine the selection.
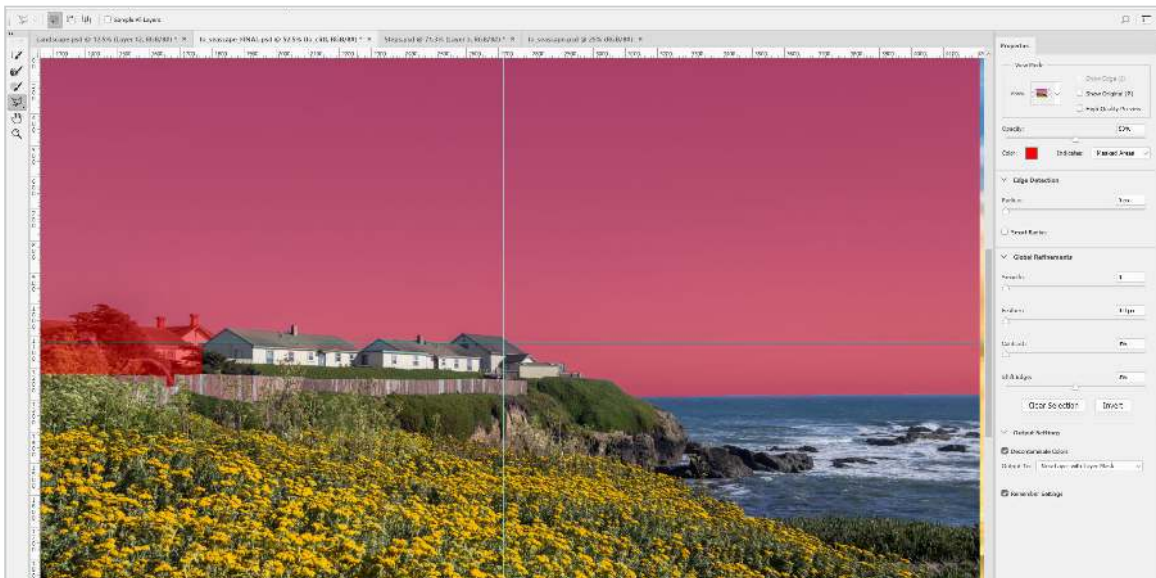
Add the cliff

05 Resize the lighthouse (Cmd/Ctrl+T) and drag to the left. Go to File>Place Embedded 'fo_cliff.jpg' and press Return/Enter. Grab the Quick Selection Tool (W). In Options, open the Select and Mask panel. Check Invert and start refining the selection, then click OK.
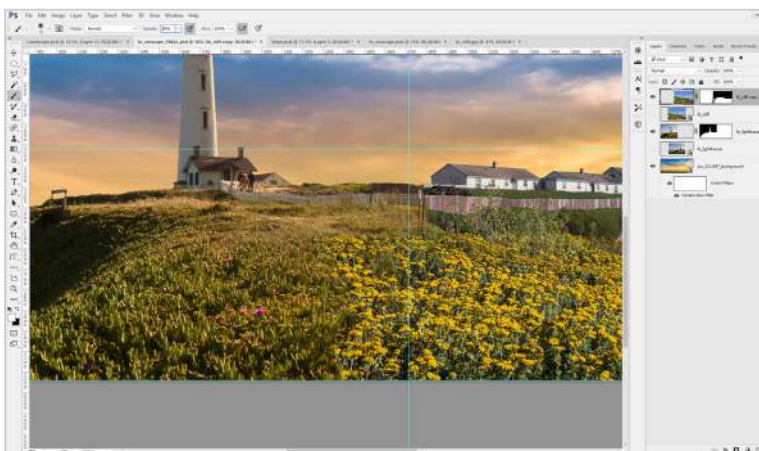
Blend the images

06 Resize the image, trying to align the fences in both images. Now, grab a soft brush (B) and carefully paint over the cliff layer's mask to blend the flowers with the grass.

Color Balance adjustment

07 Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Color Balance. Choose Midtones, set the Cyan/Red to +30, Magenta/Green: 0, Yellow/Blue to -30 and check Preserve Luminosity. Choose Shadows and set the Yellow/Blue to -20, keeping the other settings at 0, and for the Highlights set the Magenta/Green to -10, and clip the layers (Cmd/Ctrl +Opt/Alt+G).
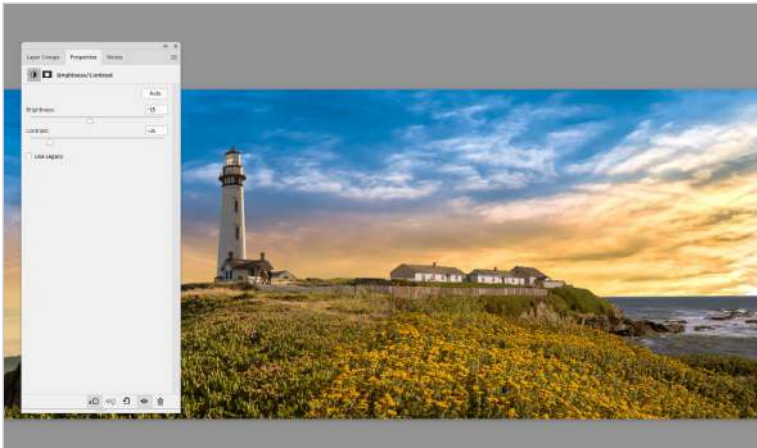
Add a new adjustment

08 Now, let's adjust the brightness and contrast to complete the adjustments. Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Brightness/ Contrast. Set the Brightness to -15, Contrast to -35 and clip the layers (Cmd/Ctrl +Opt/Alt+G).

Bring more images

09 Go to File>Place Embedded 'pix_1845096_mountains. jpg'. Use your favourite selection tool to select and mask the mountain. Drag the layer below the lighthouse layer. Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Color Balance. In Midtones, set Cyan/Red to +30, Magenta/Green: 10, Yellow/Blue: -20 and then clip the layers.

Place the animals

10 Place the image: 'pix_1993259_cow.jpg'. Grab the Pen Tool (P), select the cows and add a layer mask. Press Cmd/Ctrl+L, set the Inputs to 0, 0.90, 240 and click OK. Resize the image. Grab a soft brush (B) and paint over the mask to blend the feet with the grass.

Complete the composition

11 Place the balloon. Grab the Magic Wand Tool (W). In Options, set Tolerance to 50 and uncheck Contiguous. Click on the sky, then press Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert the selection, and now add a layer mask. Resize the image. Apply the Brightness/Contrast adjustment and tweak the settings, then clip the layers.
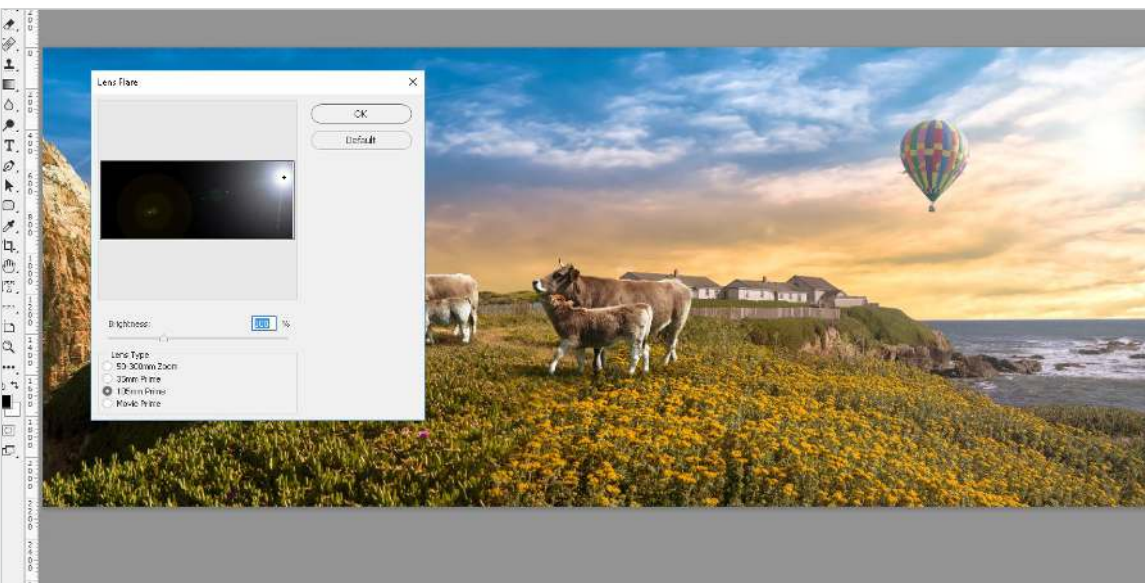
A sunlight effect

12 Create a new layer on top of the layer stack. Fill it with black. Now, go to Filter> Render>Lens Flare. Keep the Brightness at 100%. Choose Lens Type: 105mm Prime. In the preview window, drag the flare to the top right and click OK. Change the blend to Screen.

Expert tip

Use Oil Paint correctly

The results achieved with the Oil Paint filter depend on the image size. In this tutorial, the animals were first shrunk down to fit the composition, and then the filter was applied. If you start applying the Oil Paint filter on the animals without resizing them first, you'll find that the result will be less smooth and have a lot more detail, even with the same settings. Because the beauty of the Oil Paint filter is that it gives a sketchy, illustrated effect, fewer details are actually desirable.
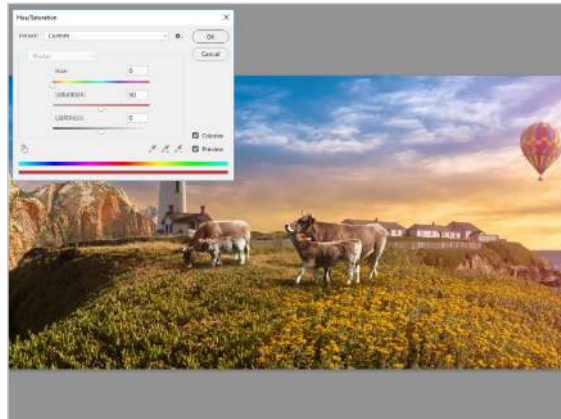
Add a new colour

13 First, convert the Lens Flare layer into a Smart Object. Now, press Cmd/Ctrl+L and set the Inputs to 0, 1.40, 230 to adjust the tones. Open the Hue/Saturation adjustment (Cmd/Ctrl+U). Check Colorize and set the Saturation to 50 and Hue to 0, then click OK.
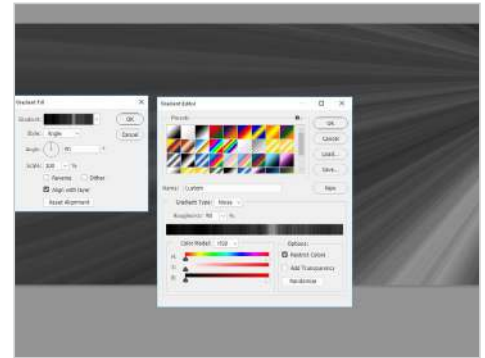
Create light rays

14 Go to Layer>New Fill Layer>Gradient. Set style to Angle and click on Gradient to open the Gradient Editor. Choose Gradient Type: Noise and change the Color Model to HSB. Drag the S white right slider to the left and click OK. Position the gradient to the top right and click OK.

Rasterise the layer

15 Change the blending mode for the light ray layer to Soft Light. Go to Layer>Rasterize>Fill Content. Press Cmd/Ctrl+L and set the inputs to 0, 0.90, 140 and click OK. Change the Opacity of the layer to 75%.

Field Blur filter

16 Let's simulate depth of field using the Field Blur filter. First, create a merged copy layer; press Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+E. Now, go to Filter>Blur Gallery>Field Blur. Drag the centre point to the bottom and set the Blur to 30. Now add a second point right above and set the Blur to 0.
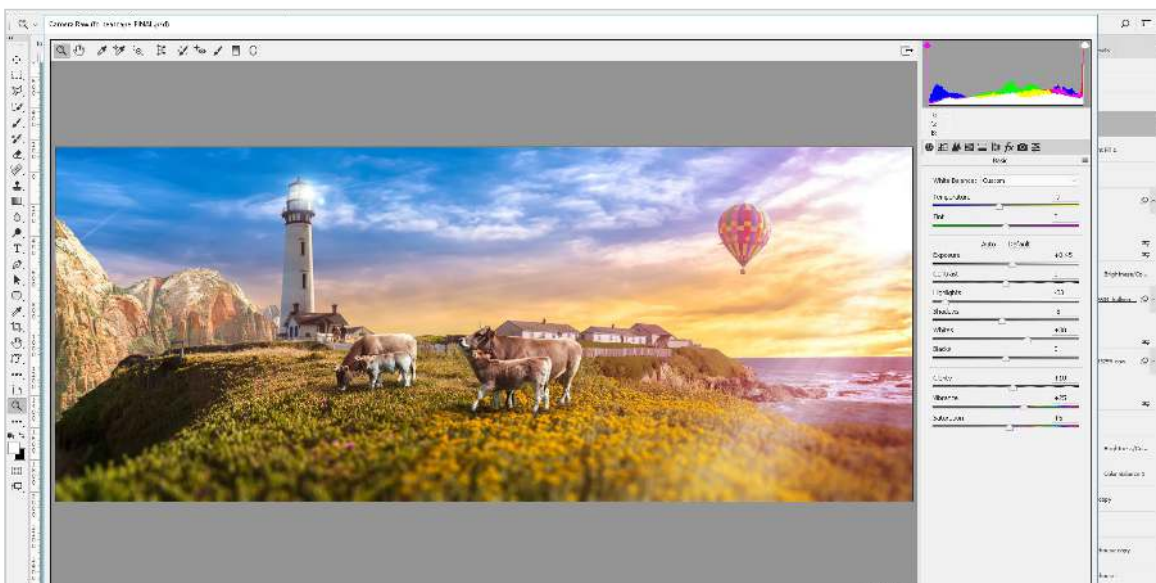
Final edit

17 Convert the merged copy image into a Smart Object. Go to Filter>Camera Raw filter. Select Basic from the tabs on the right and start tweaking the settings to correct the exposure, balance the colours and process the image. Explore all the tabs and simply tweak the settings as needed.

The artist

Ahmed Nabil

"My name is Ahmed Nabil, I am 24 years old and was born in Tanta, Egypt, before I moved to Cairo for work. I've got a Bachelor of Arts and I'm an Egyptian professional graphic designer with over five years' experience in the field. In 2014, I got an award from UNICEF and The Egyptian Ministry of Youth in 2014, and was featured by Behance and Creative chair blog in 2017."

See more of Ahmed's work at **Be.net/DesAhmedNabil**

Essentials

Time taken
1 hour

Particle Explosions

How watching a slow-motion video led Ahmed to create colourful explosion pieces

"I was watching a slow-motion video of an explosion and it gave me an idea for a piece of artwork," explains Ahmed Nabil. "I became interested in the idea of how to create a visual image based on the beauty of explosions in slow motion. I started to visualise lots of ways that explosions could be beautiful and peaceful."

Although Ahmed's ability to capture what a still from an explosion might look like seems a complicated procedure, he explains that he only used two tools to create the image: "Adobe Photoshop, and my mind! Photoshop was used for a lot of colour correction," says Ahmed. "I used high-resolution images of space and landscapes from Shutterstock and the NASA website to start with, and I tried to create something as close to what I originally imagined as possible. When my source images had been edited, I started to cast the magical shift by creating a depth map to every image using the 3D tool in Photoshop."
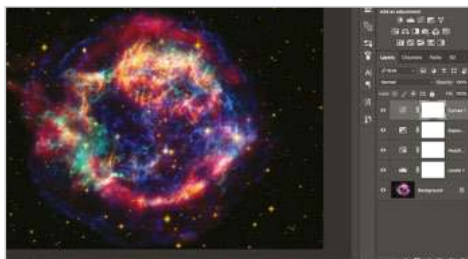
Prepare the source

01 I started this artwork searching for resources from sites like NASA's official website, which provide free high-res images from space. I then used adjustments like Exposure, Vibrance, Saturation, Contrast and any Spot Healing that was needed.

Create depth map

02 Here's where the magic was created! After merging layers, I selected the merged layer and created a depth map by going to 3D>New Mesh From Layer>Depth Map To>Plane. I then played with options under the 3D Properties tab.

Finalising

03 I didn't stop with this result even though it was gorgeous: I applied the same trick multiple times until I got the best result possible. Then I refined and finalised the artwork by doing some masking, cropping and adjusting until it looked like this.

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The artist

Pierre Kleinhouse

I'm an award-winning illustrator, painter and designer based in Tel Aviv. I work as an illustrator for *Mako* magazine, and also work as a freelancer on different projects such as making gig posters, artwork for animation, branding, advertising, package design and more. I also make artwork for exhibitions and run my own studio shop, selling prints and T-shirts.

You can find more of my work at **www.pierre-kleinhouse.com/**

Slow Animals #1

We caught up with Pierre Kleinhouse to discover more about how he created this piece, one of a series of three prints made for an exhibition in Milan, Italy

Whenever I make artwork for exhibitions, I try to explore new concepts and techniques and take my time with the process," says Pierre Kleinhouse, a Tel Aviv-based artist with a wealth of vibrant digital paintings in his back catalogue, and clients ranging from the BBC to Stella Artois. "When there's no client, I can do whatever I want!"

Slow Animals is particularly playful and very much in keeping with Pierre's style, marrying together both a human subject, in the form of the girl, and an animal, in the form of the cat. While it looks as though the colours have always worked for the image, Pierre originally designed the artwork with a red hue, but later decided on the yellow. "This illustration explores the idea of facing your fears and maybe finding something beautiful mixed with something dangerous on the way," he says.

The project has been featured in Behance's curated Illustration gallery, and has garnered thousands of views online.

Making a sketch
01 I started the process with some very loose sketches. Then I took a picture of the rough sketch with my phone, moved it to Photoshop and made it cleaner. At this point I don't get too carried away with the details, and just try to find a well-balanced composition that feels right.

Creating big shapes
02 I started with making the big shapes with the Pen Tool. I tried to make these shapes as simple as possible, and get a good balance of black, white and red spots. As you can see, some parts, like the cat's tongue, are very rough at this point, and will have to be redrawn later.

Adding detail
03 Once the big shapes were in place, I worked on adding small details like soft shadows and contour lines to the woman's face and hair. Most of the lines were drawn with a simple hard round brush. For the soft shadows I used one of the default spray brushes that come with Photoshop.

Colour combinations
04 After finishing the small details, I still wasn't sure about the colours. So I tried different colour combinations until I got to the final result. I actually made two colour variations in the end – yellow and red – and used the yellow one to show in the exhibition.
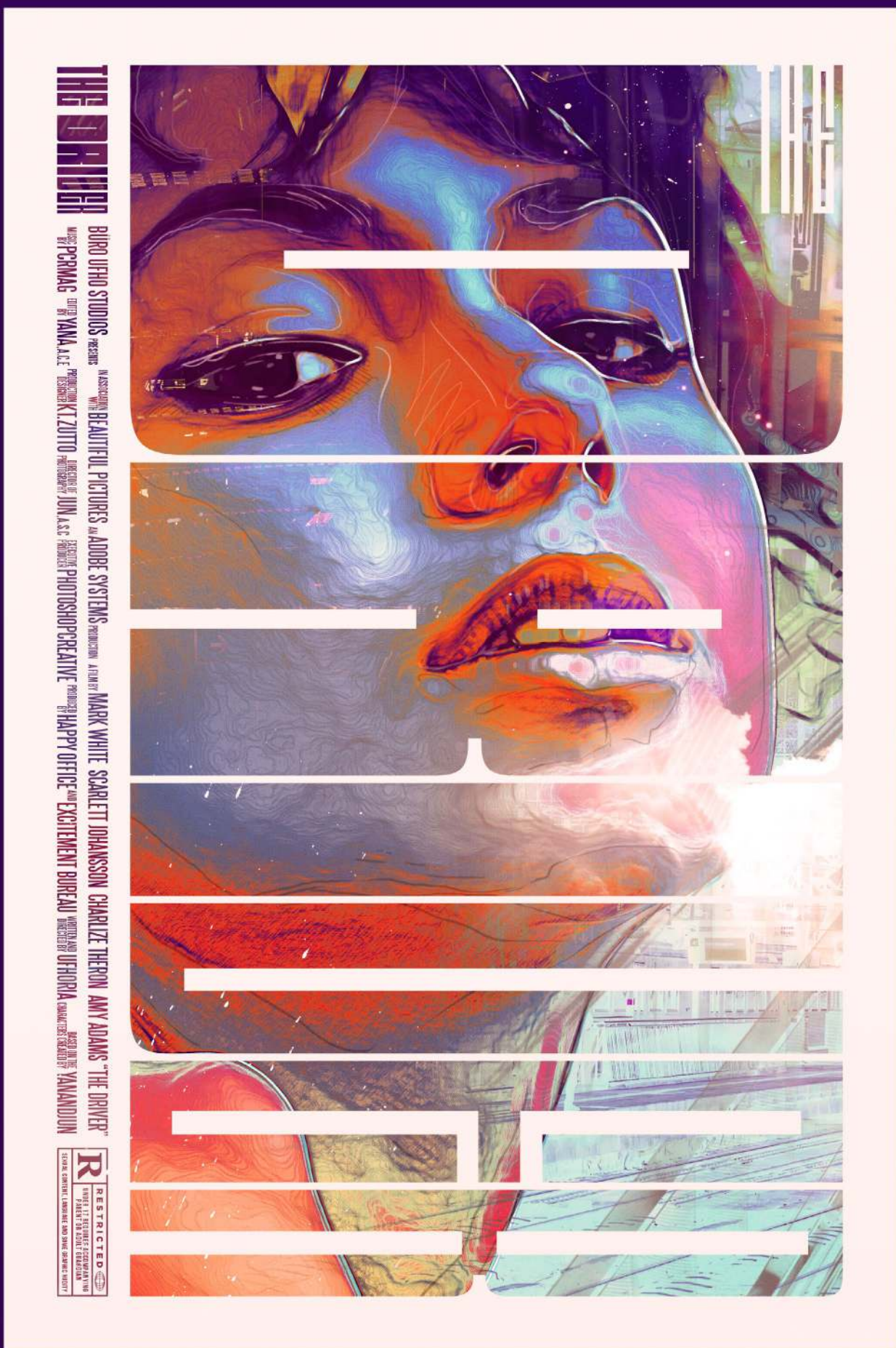
Essentials

Works with

Elements   **CS**   **CC**

What you'll learn

Use filters, blend modes and adjustments to transform a photo

Time taken
1-3 hours

Expert

BÜRO UFHO

"Masking your image to create a see-through effect behind big bold type can result in a visually interesting movie poster.

"Being both an artist under the moniker kittozutto, and graphic design studio BÜRO UFHO, we have been using Photoshop for over ten years. In 2015, we had the privilege to be invited by Adobe to celebrate its 25th Anniversary of Photoshop."

Turn a photo into an illustrated movie poster

Transform any photo into a stylish illustration using masks, filters, blend modes, type and adjustments

In today's digital age, when we're constantly bombarded with movie posters that are essentially the same kind of photographic collage, we find ourselves attracted to clean, bold, illustrated movie posters that exude confidence. Do an online search for 'movie posters' and you'll be greeted with a sea of similar dark-blue posters with collages of desaturated photographic portraits. An example is the poorly received poster for *Spider-Man Homecoming*, which was criticised for looking unfinished.

But every once in a while, an illustrated movie poster that is well crafted, such as the one created for *Logan* IMAX, can be a breath of fresh air. In this tutorial, we'll take you through the process of transforming a photo into an illustration, and show you how we use masking in Photoshop to create a transparent movie poster effect. Check out our Expert Tip for more specific advice on the Blend-If sliders and also use the information at the end of the tutorial to ensure you stay clear of a common creative pitfall.

The images used in this tutorial are all provided on the FileSilo. You can also download the layered PSD to get a better understanding of how you can build up your artwork.

Import the image
01 Begin by importing 'pix_ womens-2333355.jpg' into the canvas as a base for the movie poster. Duplicate the layer. Go to Filter>Filter Gallery>Paint Daubs. Set Brush Size to 50, Sharpness to 24, Brush Type to Simple. This simplifies the details of the photo.
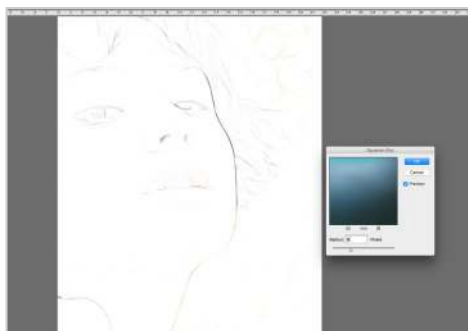
Create line works
02 Duplicate the Paint Daubs layer and then hit Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert. Set the layer blend mode to Color Dodge. Go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur. Set Radius to 6px. This will create some main outlines for the illustrated effect.
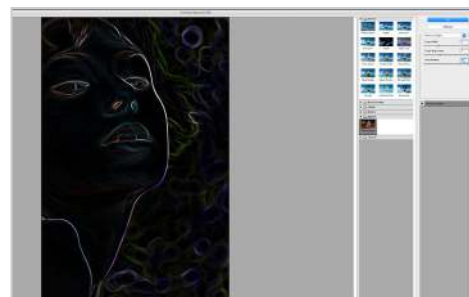
Glowing Edges filter
03 Duplicate the original Paint Daubs layer again and ensure it is the top layer. Go to Filter>Filter Gallery>Stylize> Glowing Edges. Set Edge Width to 5, Brightness to 7, Smoothness to 15. Cmd/ Ctrl+I to invert. Set the layer blend mode to Multiply. This creates some detail outlines.

Expert tip

Blend-If sliders

Blend-If is a powerful tool for layer blending that lets you manipulate specific areas to blend based on light and dark tone. Under layer Blending Options, hold down the Opt/Alt key and drag the Blend-If slider out. Holding down the Opt/Alt key causes the slider to split in half. This will smooth out your layer blending and create more transition between the two layers. We've used this technique to prevent our Multiply effect going over the white outlines.

Charcoal sketch effects

04 Duplicate the original photo layer and make it the top layer. Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+U to desaturate. Go to Filter>Filter Gallery>Sketch>Charcoal. Set Charcoal Thickness to 7, Detail to 2, Light/Dark Balance to 62. Set the layer blend mode to Multiply. This creates some sketched shadings.
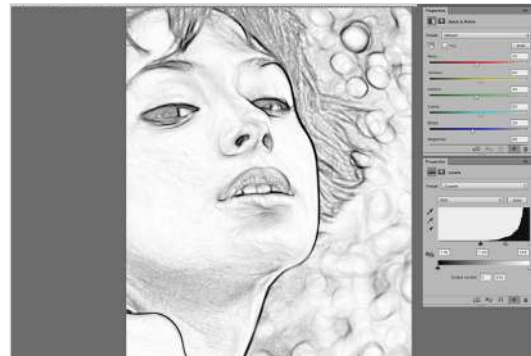
Intensify the lines

05 Create a Levels adjustment layer. Pull in the black slider to 118. Add a Black & White adjustment layer. You have successfully created a black-and-white drawing effect from your photo. Use the Dodge and Burn Tool to darken or lighten areas you wish to intensify.
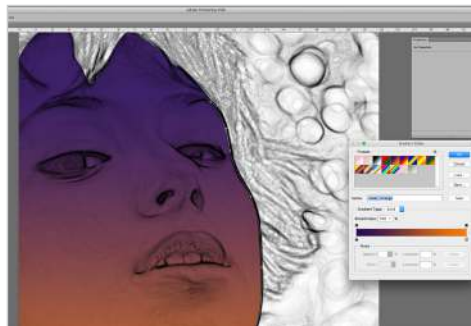
Use a colour gradient

06 Fill a new layer with violet-to-orange gradient. Using your favourite selection tool, isolate the skin area. Make a selection of this area and duplicate the layer. Set the layer blend mode to Multiply, Opacity at 90%. Add a Hue/Sat adjustment to the original layer below. Set Hue to +108.
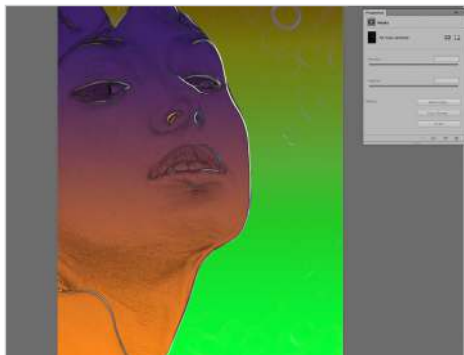
Introduce white lines

07 Duplicate the Glowing Edges layer to be the top layer. Press Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert. Set the layer blend mode to Lighten. This creates some white outlines. Add a layer mask to brush away the white outlines on the left pupil.
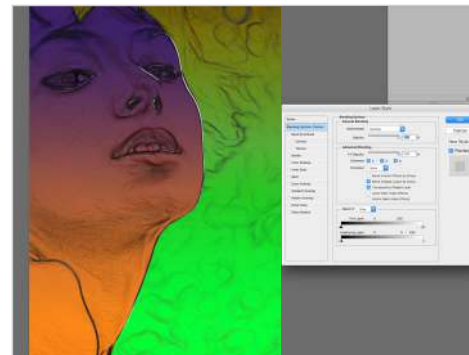
Black outlines

08 Duplicate the Glowing Edges layer again, which is set to Multiply, and make it the top layer. Use the Blend-If sliders under Blending Options to avoid affecting the white outlines. This darkens the black outlines while preserving the white outlines.
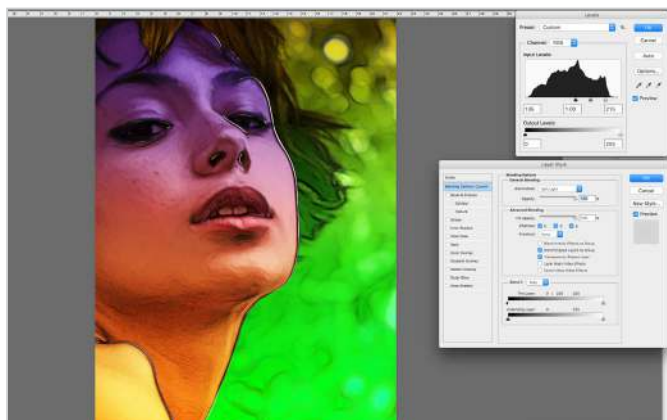
Boost highlights

09 Duplicate the Paint Daubs layer to be the top layer. Set to Overlay. Duplicate this layer again. Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+U to desaturate. Cmd/Ctrl+ L to open Levels. Drag the black slider inwards to 135, white to 215. Use the Blend-If sliders to use the whites on this layer. Change the blend mode to Soft Light.
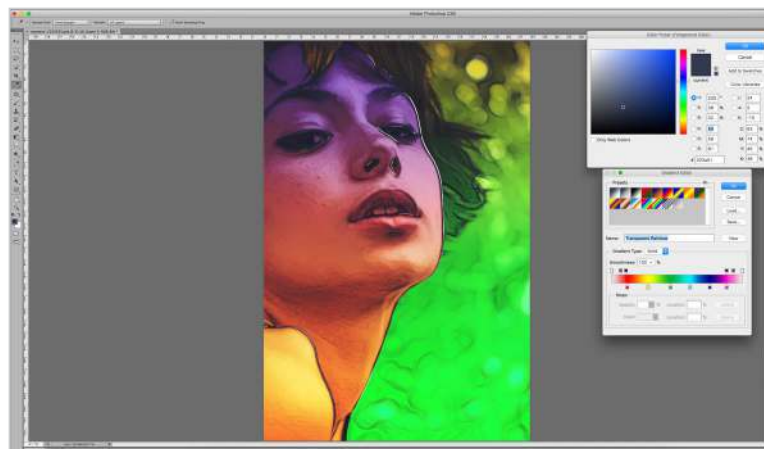
Recolour using a Gradient Map adjustment

10 Fill a new layer with #323a51. Set layer to Lighten, Opacity: 50%. This lightens the blacks to a dark blue colour. Next, add a Gradient Map adjustment layer. Select the Transparent Rainbow gradient. Set the layer blend mode to Overlay.

Selective Color adjustments

11 Add a Selective Color adjustment layer. Set the following: Reds: C+100, M+42, Y+100. Green: C-100, M-100, Y-100. Cyan: M-100, Y-100. Blue: C+100, M-100, Y-100. Magenta: C-100, M-100, Y+100. White: C -100, M -100, Y -100. Neutrals: C+73, M+13, Y-100. Blacks: C+13, M+100, Y+2.
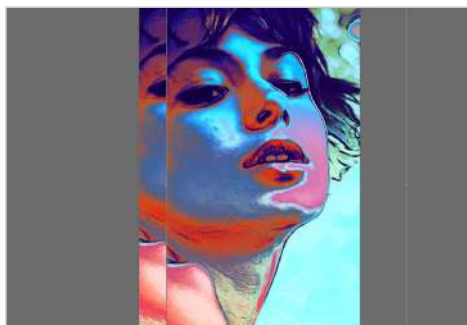
Resize your image

12 Cmd/Ctrl+A to select all. Ctrl/ Cmd+Shift+C to copy merge. Paste on a new layer. Centralise the face to the canvas. Enlarge it to about 108.7%. Don't worry about the repeated image showing below the layer because it will be covered by text later on.

Import images

13 Import and set the following: 'pix_sun-1700843.jpg' to Soft Light, and 'pix_helix-nebula-11155.jpg' to Lighten. Desaturate 'pix_station-839208.jpg' and set to Exclusion. Desaturate 'pix_stairs-547640.jpg' and set to Exclusion, Opacity: 50%. Set 'pix_station-839208.jpg' to Lighten, and 'pix_rocket-launch-67646.jpg' to Screen. Position and mask these detail patterns accordingly.

The poster text

14 Import the 'DRIVER_type.psd' text layer. Fill a new layer with #faf5ef. Cmd/Ctrl-click on the text layer thumbnail to make a selection. Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I to invert selection. Select your new fill layer and add a layer mask.

Add pencil details

15 On a new layer, select 2B Pencil and set the colour to white. Draw some sketch lines over the brows, eyes and nose area. Repeat using a black pencil. Import 'pe_splatter14.psd', invert to white. Duplicate and place them around the edges. Finally, select Photo Filter, Warming Filter (85) and Red.

What can go wrong — Gradient maps and the Selective Color adjustment

When applying the Gradient Map adjustment layer, do make sure the Reverse checkbox is not selected, otherwise your resulting colours could go very wrong very quickly.

The general guide for tweaking the Selective Color adjustment in this image is that currently, with the Gradient Map adjustment applied, the black values such as those on the hair are too light and too reddish, so we are aiming towards achieving a darker and more purplish tone for the hair. We also want to bring out the orange and reds around the nose area. By focusing on balancing these two main colour values, the rest of the colours will fall in place. As a result, the colours orange, greenish-blue and darkish purple will form a triadic colour scheme that is harmonious for our poster.

Wrong

Right

Essentials

Works with

Elements   CS   CC

What you'll learn

How to blend stock images together for an ambitious skyline

Time taken
6 hours

Expert

Mark White

"I had great fun with this image, sourcing all my favourite landmarks from around the world. Aside from the obvious icons, Kilimanjaro, the Acropolis, the Great Wall of China and a Canadian lake all made it into the final image!

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

Create a fantasy skyline

Organise your layers and blend an array of images for a super skyline of epic proportions

Layers are one of the most important aspects of any Photoshop project, but so many of us don't bother to organise them. The fact is though, that without a well-structured Layers palette, your image is more likely to be messy: there will be parts you forget to blend in as well as others, and it will become harder to edit your final piece. This project can really help you stay on top of your layers stack.

With landmarks from every corner of the globe packed into just one skyline, unifying the image can be a nightmare. While this project will certainly test your masking skills, it's more a test of how clean your Layers palette can be. With your layers well adjusted, well blended and placed perfectly, you can have more fun creating the smoke or the clouds, adding penguins, and brushing colour over certain aspects to keep the picture harmonious.

Start with the sky

01 Begin by opening the image of the park and add the picture of the sky. Make sure the horizon is clear and set the new sky to Overlay. Create a new layer and with a big, soft, white brush, add more shine to the left of the sky.

Lay out the buildings

02 Open the tutorial files and add as many of the landmarks as you wish. Reduce the opacity of them all to around 30% by hitting 3, and reorder the layers so the furthest forward landmark is towards the top of the stack.

Use the Quick Selection

03 Let's start to cut out each of the landmarks and icons in the image. Grab the Quick Selection Tool (W) for icons that stand out clearly against their background, such as the Himalayas. Drag to select and then click Mask.

Select with Colour Range

04 Colour Range is great for selecting landmarks against clear blue skies. Simply Ctrl/right-click and choose Colour Range; use the Eyedropper to pick the blue in the sky, and click the Eyedropper with the plus to extend the range of colour. Click OK, Mask, then Invert (Cmd/Ctrl+I).

Draw with the Pen

05 If you're looking for a more precise selection still, try the Pen Tool. Click around the outside of your landmark, and rejoin the first point when you're done. Click on the Paths tab, then Cmd/Ctrl-click the path to select. Hit Mask.

Adjust each building

06 Once you've cut out each of the buildings, create adjustments such as Curves, Brightness/Contrast and Hue/Saturation to unify the tone and colour of each landmark. Alt/Opt-click on each adjustment to clip it to the layer, and then zoom out (Cmd/Ctrl+0) in order to view the image at full screen.

Populate the scene

07 There will still be blank spaces between the landmarks, so use the supplied tree images that are on the FileSilo to populate the image a little more. Cut them out and blend them with the same techniques as you used on the buildings.

Blend the mountain range

08 Objects in the distance should have less contrast and colour than objects in the foreground. For the mountain range, for example, reduce the contrast using Brightness/Contrast and add two Fill Layers of #537ea6, one set to Overlay, 40% opacity, one to Screen, 60% opacity.

Brush over the water

09 Grab a soft brush and select the supplied swatches with lake colours. Create a new Colour layer and brush over in the blue, before touching over in grey and green. Create a new Soft Light layer and brush over again to unify the colour of the water.

Work on the beach

10 Place the supplied images of beaches and sand, and add them to the water's edge by the tree. Use the soft brush to blur the line between the grass and the sand. Alt/Opt-click to select colours, and brush them on the image to unify colour.

Add some penguins

11 Find the iceberg and penguin images in the resources and add them to the scene. Cut out the images using the Pen Tool and place them above the water wherever they would look best. Adjust sizes so that they don't look too big.

Render clouds for smoke

12 Select black and white in your swatches (D), create a new layer and go to Filter>Render>Clouds. Set to Screen, hit Mask, invert the image (Cmd/Ctrl+I) and brush in with a soft white brush to add smoke to the image. Add these smoke layers further back in the composition.

More clouds

13 Load the supplied GrutBrushes into Photoshop using the instructions in the .zip file. Use these realistic brushes over the tops of the mountains, and across the back of the image to tie the composition with the sky a little more.
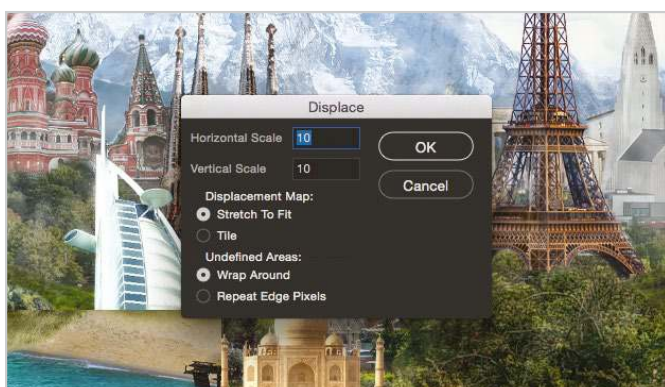
Create a reflection

14 Save your project (Cmd/Ctrl+S). Hit Cmd/Ctrl+Alt/ Opt+Shift+E to merge everything into a new layer. Select around the lake with the Marquee (M), Flip Vertical (Cmd/Ctrl+T) and then go to Filter>Distort>Displace, using the above settings. Choose your saved file as the map, then reduce opacity to 25%. Mask the reflection over the water.

Adjust as a whole

15 With the entire composition pretty much assembled, let's make a few adjustments to blend the image as a whole. Use our supplied action to create the adjustments we did, or experiment with Curves, Gradient Maps and Vibrance until you find something you like.

Dodge and burn

16 Merge everything into a layer at the top of the layer stack twice (Cmd/Ctrl+Alt/Opt+Shift+E). Set one layer to Screen, one to Multiply, and then hit Mask on both and invert (Cmd/Ctrl+I). With a white brush, draw over each mask to accentuate the highlights and shadows of the entire image.

Blur the image

17 By blurring the image, we can further blend all the disparate elements into one composition. Merge everything into another new layer, then clip a Hue/Saturation layer; tweak the Saturation to -50, Lightness to -25 and then reduce the layer's opacity to 30%, before changing it to Overlay.

Expert tip

💡 Colour-code your layers

As much as this tutorial tests your Photoshop skills, it also tests your organisational skills, as you'll find yourself trying to keep layers in check. In the early stages it can help to colour-code. When you've added the landmarks, Ctrl/right-click the layers and set them to red. When you've cut out a landmark, set to yellow. When it's adjusted and blended into the scene, set to green. This way, you'll be able to clearly see what's edited, and what is yet to be done.
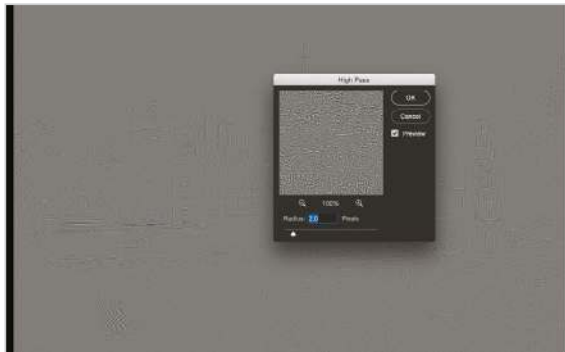
Sharpen up

18 Merge everything into another new layer and go to Filter>Noise>Reduce Noise. Set Strength to 10 with all other values at 0, then click OK. Merge everything to another new layer and go to Filter>Other>High Pass. Set the Radius to 2px and click OK. Set to Overlay.

Refocus in areas

19 Create another High Pass layer with the same settings. This time, hit Mask, Invert (Cmd/Ctrl+I) and with a soft, white brush, draw over the landmarks further in the foreground to shift the focus and add depth. Add the supplied lens flare and set to Screen, 60% opacity.

What you'll learn

The making of a composition

FILTERS
Filters are used for the reflection, the smoke, and the sharpening, among other things, making them useful for tying the composition together.

LAYERS
This entire composition is built from layers, and making sure they're orderly and logically structured is one of the most important aspects of the project.

MASKS
The masks help to pinpoint exactly what you see on each layer. Layers are for building, masks are for blending.

BRUSHES
Brushes are employed in this project for colour control, from the water to retouching shades over the individual landmarks. They're also great for precision in your masking.
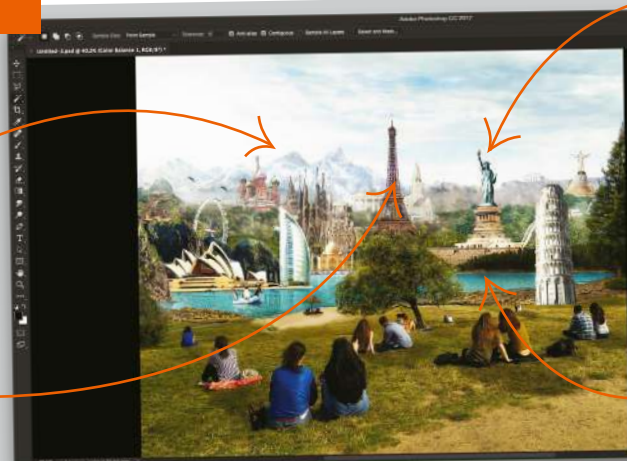
45

Essentials

Works with

Elements   **CS**   **CC**

What you'll learn

How to create a battle scene where you'll take the role of the gladiator

Time taken
5 hours

Expert

Rodrigo Marinelli

"Since I started using Photoshop I've always tried to take my own pictures to create art; even when I didn't have a good camera, I just used my phone. This helped me understand how to create a scene with multiple images.

"I'm an art director with 12 years' experience at advertising agencies. I learned and am still learning to use Photoshop through following tutorials."

Transform yourself into a gladiator

Discover how to use photomanipulation techniques to compose a scene where you take centre stage

One of the most interesting things about Photoshop is that you can be the star of any image you want; all you have to do is think about a theme and not be shy to be a model for a day. In this tutorial, we'll show how to transform yourself into a brave gladiator.

A fun way to learn how to compose a scene with multiple images is to take your own photos. This will help you improve your knowledge of exposure and composition. In this case, let's create a scene with a gladiator in the midst of battle, where you will take on the gladiator's role.

To make the scene more interesting, we'll use blend modes, filters, masks and photos to give the impression that the battle is happening in that moment, with explosions, dust and fire all around. We'll also use adjustment layers to set the colour tone of the scene.

So, grab your camera, make a good gladiator face and get ready for war!

Blend with mask

01 Create a new document (230x310mm) and add 'sky.jpg'. To make the sky fill out more of the scene, duplicate it (Cmd/Ctrl+J), move it down slightly, select Add Layer Mask, set the Foreground colour to black, use the Brush Tool (B) and erase the unnecessary parts.

Link adjustment layers

02 Add the 'coliseum.jpg' image and place it as shown above. Go to the adjustment layer menu, pick Brightness/Contrast, hold Cmd/Ctrl+Alt and click on the coliseum layer. Finally, set the adjustment layer to -53, 21.

Set the tone

03 Now add the 'castle.jpg' image and to blend it with the scene, make a mask, just like step 1. Then, to set the colour tone, go to the adjustment layer menu, pick Colour Balance and set to +55, 0, 0.
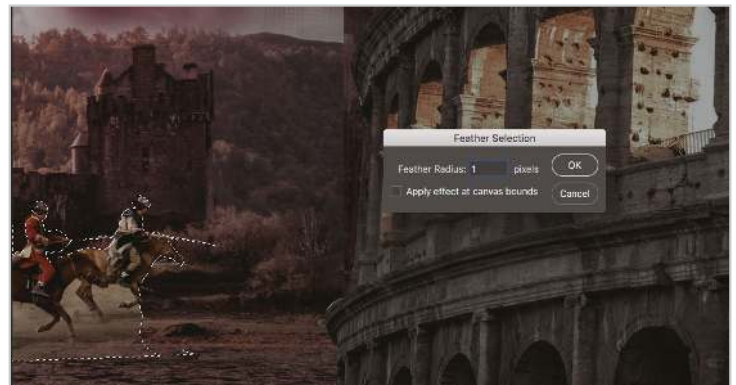
Use the Feather

04 Add the 'horse.jpg' image. To blend the photo's edges, activate the layer's selection (Cmd/Ctrl-click on the thumbnail), use the Feather (Shift+F6) at 1px, invert the selection (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I), and press Delete three times. Finally, add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, place it above all layers and set to 0, -66, -37.

Add the gladiator

05 Add 'gladiator.psd' and place it as above. To make the image look sharper, duplicate the gladiator layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J), use the High Pass filter (Filter>Other>High Pass) at 2px and change the blend mode to Soft Light.
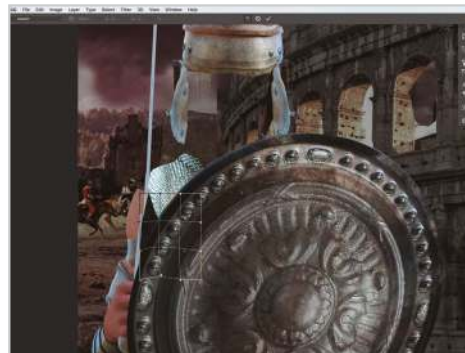
The Warp Tool

06 Let's add the gladiator's outfit. First, add the Clothes layer from 'iron_armor.psd'. Use the Warp Tool (Edit>Transform>Warp) to adjust the shape. Then add the Iron layer from the same image, place it as above, and follow the same procedure to adjust the shape.

Add your photo

07 It's time to place your photo onto the gladiator's body. In this case, just as an example, add 'face.jpg'. Use the Free Transform Tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T) to adjust the size of the head, then use the Pen Tool (P) to make a selection around the helmet, activate it (step 4) and press delete.
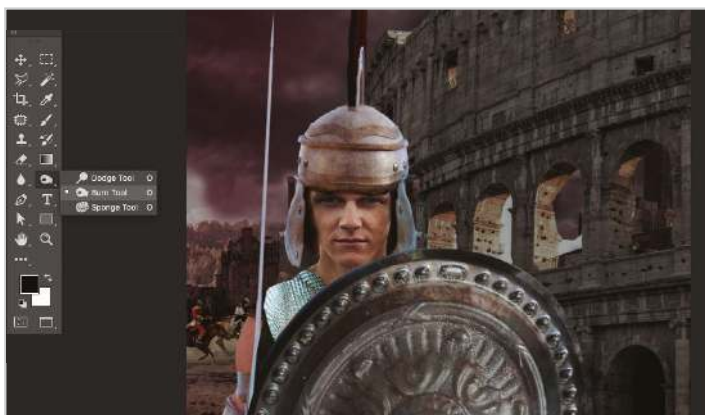
Enhance the details

08 Let's use the Burn Tool (O) to enhance the shadows of the gladiator's face. Use it at size 50 and 50% Exposure. Then use the Dodge Tool with the same settings to enhance the highlights of the face.

Work with blend modes

09 First add 'pix_1325471_explosion_01.jpg', change the blend mode to Screen and place in front of the gladiator. Then add 'smoke_02.psd', place it behind the gladiator and link a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer (step 2) set to 0, -91, 0.

Add movement to the scene

10 Add 'dust.png' and place it in front of the gladiator. To give the impression that the dust is moving, apply Motion Blur (Filter>Blur>Motion Blur) and set to Angle: -32 and Distance: 11px.

Gradient masks

11 Add 'fire.psd' and change the blend mode to Screen. Then, select Add Layer Mask, set the Foreground colour to black, use the Gradient Tool (G), set the Gradient Picker to Foreground to Transparent, with 20% Opacity and gently erase the fire image.

Embellish with details

12 First, add 'spikes.psd', place it in front of the gladiator's shield, change the blend mode to Screen, and make a gradient mask (step 11) to make it look more realistic. Finally, to lend a foggy atmosphere to the scene and help blend everything in, add 'smoke.psd', and repeat the procedure.

Make an explosion

13 Add 'fire.psd', follow the same procedure as in step 11 and place on the top of the coliseum. Then add 'pieces.psd', change the blend mode to Screen and finally apply Motion Blur (Filter>Blur>Motion Blur) with Angle: 56 and Distance: 4px.

Set the fire tone

14 Add 'red.psd' and place it on the coliseum's top, above the fire layer. Then, change the blend mode to Colour and apply Gaussian Blur (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur) set to 435px. Finally, duplicate the layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and place it in front of the fire at the base of the scene.

Use the Lens Blur

15 As the explosion must fill the whole scene, add 'dust_02.psd', change the blend mode to Screen and place on the sky, above the gladiator's layer. To help with realism, apply Lens Blur (Filter>Blur>Lens Blur) and set the Radius to 15.

Texture surfaces

16 Add 'texture.jpg' and place it above the whole scene. Then link a Levels adjustment layer (step 2) set to 128, 1.00, 255 and change the blend mode to Screen, with 30% Opacity. Finally, apply Gaussian Blur (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur) at 20px.

Create a Lens Flare effect

17 Create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N), set the Foreground colour to black and paint the whole scene (Alt+Del). Then, apply the Lens Flare effect (Filter>Render>Lens Flare) and set it to 50-300mm Zoom. Change the blend mode to Screen and place it close to the gladiator's sword.

Increase the fog effect

18 Because the gladiator is in the middle of a battle, more fog will help add intensity to the scene. Create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N), set Foreground colour to black and Background to white, and then apply the Cloud filter (Filter>Render>Clouds). Adjust the Opacity to 15% and make a mask (step 1) to erase any excess.

49

Combine Blur filters

19 Let's continue to lend a foggy look to the scene. Add 'light_front_01. psd' and place it at the base of the scene. Change the blend mode to Screen, apply a Gaussian Blur (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur) at 40px and a Motion Blur (Filter>Blur>Motion Blur) with Angle: –32 and Distance: 44px.
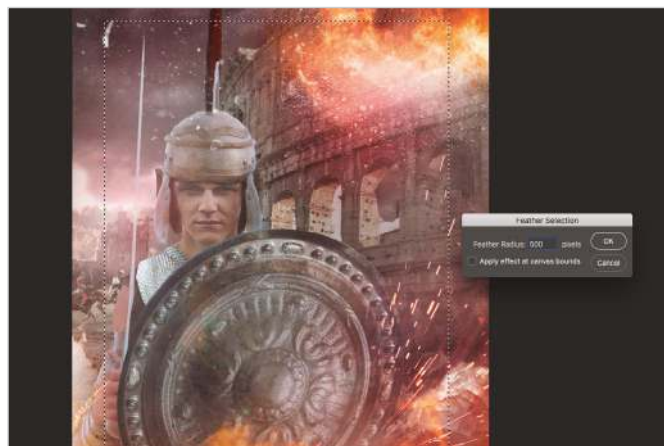
Burn the edges

20 Select all layers, duplicate (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and merge them (Cmd/Ctrl+E). Use the Rectangular Marquee Tool (M) to make a selection, then apply a Feather (Shift+F6) set to 500px. Press delete four times. Change blend mode to Multiply.
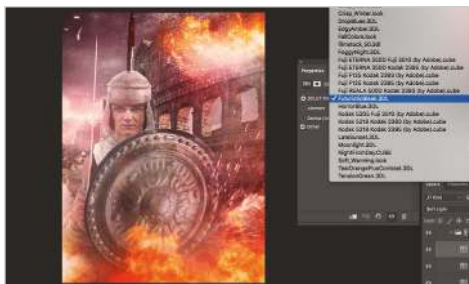
Warm colours

21 Go to the adjustment layer menu, create two Photo Filter layers. For the first. use Warming Filter (85), and Red for the other. Then, use three layers of Colour Lookup; Crisp_Winter.look, FallColors.look and FuturisticBleak.3DL. Duplicate the Colour Lookup layers and change Opacity to 70%.

Set the scene colours

22 Use Curves and adjust as shown above. Use Hue/Saturation (0, +31, 0), Levels (0, 0.87, 255) and Colour Balance (0, 0, +17). Create a new layer, use the Brush Tool (B), set the colour to #FFE66E, paint close to the gladiator's face and change the blend mode to Colour (30% Opacity).

Create a fire effect

23 Select all layers, duplicate (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and merge (Cmd/Ctrl+E). Convert into a Smart Filter (Filter>Convert for Smart Filters), apply the Glass filter (Filter>Filter Gallery>Distort>Glass) set to 12, 12, 100%. Finally, make a mask (step 1) and erase the effect on the gladiator's face.

Expert tip

There are many ways to make the edges of the scene look darker; one way is using the Pen Tool to draw the shadows. The biggest difference between this and burning the edges is that with the Pen Tool, it's possible to create shadows wherever you want. To create this shadow, create a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N), use the Pen Tool (P) to draw the shape of the shadow, activate the selection (Alt+Enter), paint it (Alt+Del) with #6c5a5e, disable the selection (Alt+D), apply a Gaussian Blur (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur) at 83px, change the blend mode to Multiply with 40% Opacity.

Essentials

Works with

Elements | **CS** | **CC**

What you'll learn
How to use default brushes, blend modes, and apply filters for paint effects

Time taken
5 hours

Expert

Rebekka Hearl

"As a graduate of two art-related courses, I am very familiar with life drawing and portraiture. I've been using the Adobe Creative Suite since my teens, and it is still a vital part of my workflow to this day.

"I don't know how I survived so many years without my Cintiq 13HD, and my favourite Photoshop tool is without doubt the Brush."

Paint with brushes and filters

Get to grips with Photoshop's default brushes and use the filter library for a great painted portrait effect

Portraiture is one of the staples of art study. Drawing from life is one of the best ways to practise and further your drawing and painting skills. If you thought pursuing digital art instead of fine art meant you wouldn't have to practise frustrating subjects like anatomy, sorry dear reader, you're not off the hook! Luckily, though, there are some techniques we can use in Photoshop to make this process feel more enjoyable and less like homework.

In this tutorial, we'll be looking at the use of photos in your digital art, how to best apply Photoshop's default brushes to your drawings, and the best filters to make your images stand out when it comes to colour and contrast.

If you don't feel confident enough to draw a portrait from scratch, don't worry; you can trace a photo if you prefer. Portraits make for great gifts, so if you have a photo of a friend or family member to hand, feel free to use that rather than the example provided.

Photoshop makes it easy to set up photos to trace. You won't need any tracing paper for this: just load up a photo into a new canvas, reduce its opacity, create a new layer and start drawing. And that's exactly how we'll begin this tutorial!

Find a photo reference

01 Before you start, make sure you have a photo of a person you can use as the subject of your painting. This would be a great opportunity to find a photo of a loved one, and paint their portrait. It would make for an excellent gift!

New file

02 Create a new canvas at 300ppi, set to 2800px wide and 3200px high. You can open your photo from the file browser, or click and drag the file into the Photoshop window. Reduce opacity to 50% and create a new layer above.

Get sketching

03 Set the photo layer to 50% opacity or lower. Create a new layer above it, select a Hard Round brush at 10px and a saturated colour. Draw over the photo. If using a tablet, make use of the pressure sensitivity and press lightly when it comes to drawing the hair.

53

Play with colour

Achieve different looks

Levels adjustment

01 Levels, contrast and blend modes are great ways of getting impressive colour. Press Cmd/Ctrl+L to bring up the Levels window.
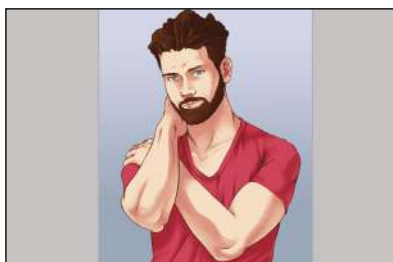

Overlay

02 Overlay is a useful and versatile blend mode. Use it to create contrast and saturation in your piece after shading is complete.

Screen

03 Since Overlay has a tendency to deepen colours, make use of Screen every now and then to keep things bright. This is especially useful on dark colours, like our subject's brown hair.

Merge

04 Create as many blend mode layers as you like. Merge them before you add the final touches. Select all layers, Ctrl/right-click, select Merge.
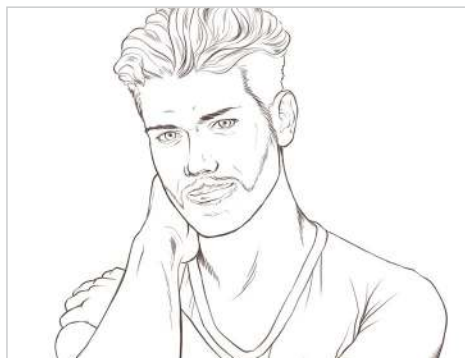
Finish the lines

04 Using the same brush settings, at 10px or smaller, create a new layer above your sketch layer and draw a much neater rendition of your subject. Hit the E and B keys on your keyboard to quickly switch between the Eraser and Brush.

Flat colours

06 Create a new layer beneath the lines layer, and use the Bucket Tool to fill it with a flesh colour. Click the lines layer, and use the Magic Wand Tool to select outside of it. Go back to the colour layer, and press delete. Instant flat colour!

Colour in the flats

08 Reduce the hard brush to 40px, use the Eyedropper Tool to select colours from your palette, and hit the Transparency Lock on the flats layer. This will ensure you don't colour outside the edge as you fill in your subject's colours.

Add colour to lines

05 At the top of the Layers panel, you'll find an icon called Lock Transparency. Click this, and you'll find that you can't draw anywhere on the canvas that doesn't already have an element on it. Use this to change your lines' colour to a warm, dark brown.
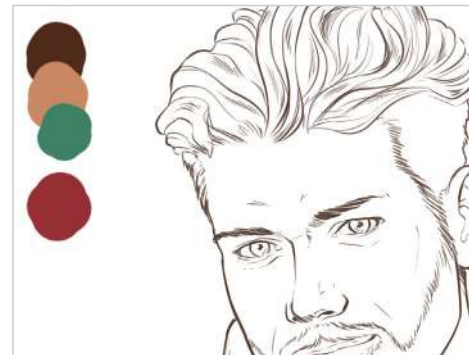
Set up a colour palette

07 Create a new layer above all the others. Use a large Hard Round brush to draw blobs of the colours to use. If you want to use exact colours from your reference photo, use the Eyedropper Tool to select them, and add to your palette layer.

Set lines to Multiply

09 You may find it difficult to draw in colours that are a darker colour than the lines. To quickly fix this, select the line layer and from the drop-down menu at the top of the Layers panel, select Multiply. The line colour will blend with the flats.

Apply basic shading

10 Create a new layer above the flats, Ctrl/right-click it, and select Create Clipping Mask. This works like Lock Transparency. Set the blend mode to Multiply, and use a Hard Round brush to draw in the shadows on your subject. Use a warm red or pink colour.

Soften the shading

11 Select a Soft Round brush, set at 50px+ and 70% opacity or lower. Using the same colour, trace the edges of your subject's shadows to soften them. This will give them a more natural look. Make the shadows on skin soft; keep them sharp on clothes.
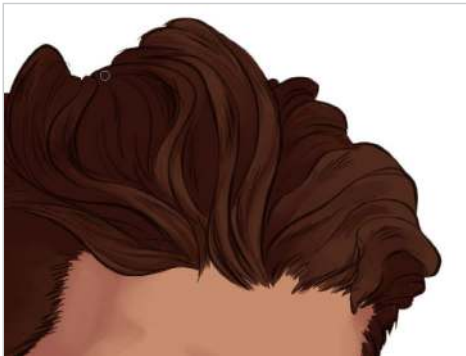
Shade the hair

12 Once you've applied the soft shading to the hair and skin, swap back to using your hard brush, set to 10px and below. Use this to hatch in some texture and detailing to the hair – and beard, if your subject has one!
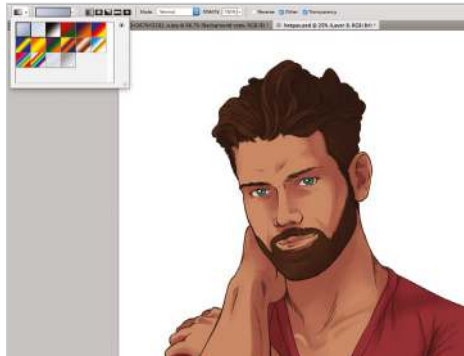
Gradient background

13 Prepare a light and dark blue for your foreground/background colours. Select the Gradient Tool (G), and make sure it's set to Foreground to Background. Create a new layer beneath your subject, and drag from top to bottom to create a gradient.
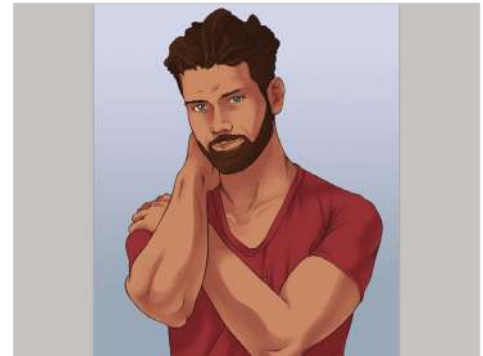
Combine subject layers

14 Now we're done with shading, we're ready to edit the subject's colours and apply some filters. To prepare the artwork for editing, select all relevant layers: lines, shading and flats. Press Cmd/Ctrl+E to merge them into one.
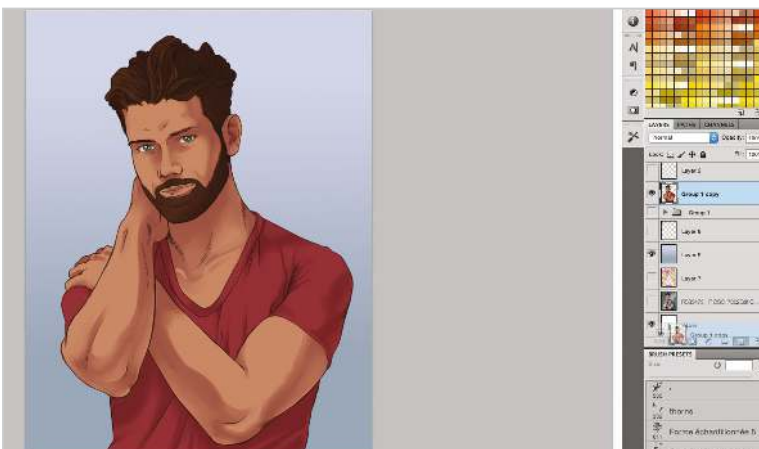
Duplicate subject layer

15 The Undo command can only do so much. To protect your original piece, create a duplicate of it by clicking and dragging the layer down to the New Layer button at the bottom of the Layers panel. Let go, and a duplicate will be created.

Note Paper filter

16 Now for fun with filters! Navigate to Filters>Filter Gallery. Using the menu to the right, click the Sketch drop-down to find the Note Paper filter. Click this, and apply these settings using the sliders: 25, 10, 11.

Soft Light blend mode

17 Just as you did with the shading layer, Ctrl/right-click the filter layer and select Create Clipping Mask to tie it to your painting. Apply the Soft Light blend mode. Set the opacity to 60% or lower.

Use a splatter brush

18 Select a Hard Round brush, and adjust these settings in the Brush window: turn on Transfer and Scattering. Set the Scatter settings to 350%+ Scattering, 5+ Count, and 20%+ Count Jitter. Create a new layer above the gradient and paint in a splatter shape in a saturated blue.
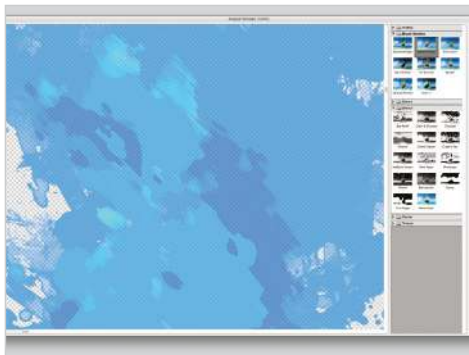
Filter the background

19 With the splatter layer selected, navigate back to the Filter Gallery (Filters>Filter Gallery). Apply the Angled Strokes filter, which you'll find under the Brush Strokes drop-down. Apply the following settings: 50, 35, 5, then click OK.

Adjust background hue

20 Applying the splatter in blue enabled us to see the contrast more clearly, but a warmer palette would suit this piece far better. Press Cmd/Ctrl+U to bring up the Hue/Saturation window. Adjust the Hue slider to -160. This will change the blue to reds and oranges. Click OK.
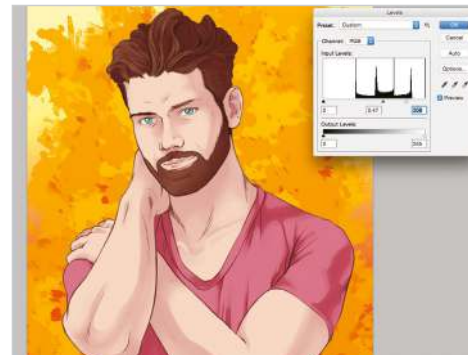
Alter the Levels

21 Apply the same Hue adjustment to the gradient layer. To give it some extra oomph, press Cmd/Ctrl+L to bring up the Levels window. Pull the middle slider to the right to increase shadows, and the far-right slider to the left to boost brightness.

Contrasting colours

22 Your portrait is nearly done. Select all layers and press Cmd/Ctrl+E to merge them together. Go to Image>Adjustments>Brightness/Contrast and set the sliders to -15 and +44 respectively. This will make the colours pop nicely.
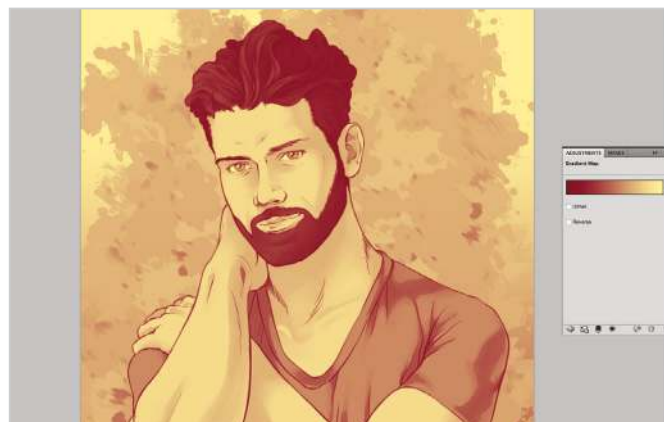
Gradient map

23 Set your Foreground/Background colours to a dark red and a light yellow. Go to Image>Adjustments>Gradient Map. This will create a new layer with your selected colours applied. Set the layer to Overlay, and reduce opacity to 50% or below. Congratulations, you're finished!

On the FileSilo

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

Essentials

🖥 **Time taken**
20 hours

Expert

Andy Hau

"I love drawing urban landscapes, and Photoshop has some great tools to help with this.

 "I am the owner of A H A Design Ltd, a multidisciplinary design studio and I believe all design should have an element of joy about it."

Drawing with the Pen Tool

Create your own glowing city in Photoshop using very simple tools

Without the restrictions of stringent guidelines (or reality in general), there is something almost hypnotising about drawing an urban landscape. In this tutorial, we are creating a glowing urban scene, based on the city of Yokohama. To capture the neon glow and the hustle of the city, we will be using Photoshop's Pen Tool and gradient fills, as well as some simple colour theory to make the lights shine brighter. To set up the composition, the image will be anchored by three main buildings; a looming skyscraper, a Ferris wheel and an icon building, which will help to draw the viewer's eye across the entire page.

 Although the image looks complex, the restricted colour palette helps bring order to the scene, and it is vital these colours are chosen from the outset – you do not want to change the colours of all those buildings as you're reaching the end!
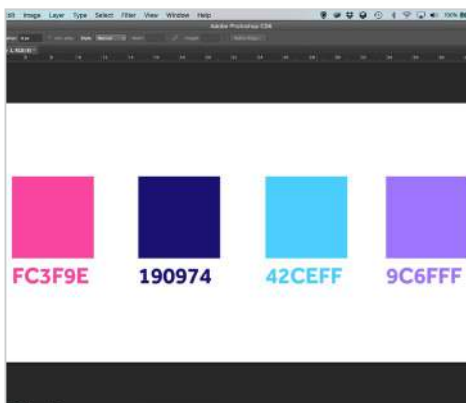
Colour palette

01 Pick a vibrant colour palette. This image uses shocking pink (#fc3f9e), navy (#190974), electric blue (#42ceff) and lavender (#9c6fff). From this main palette of colours, we can also establish our highlights and darker tones used for shading.
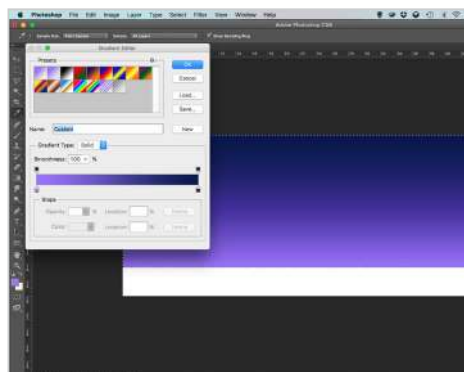
Sky

02 The secret to getting neon colours to really explode off the page is to use navy as a background, rather than black. Use the Rectangular Marquee Tool (M) to draw the sky and fill it with the Gradient Tool (G), using navy for the top and lavender for the bottom colour.
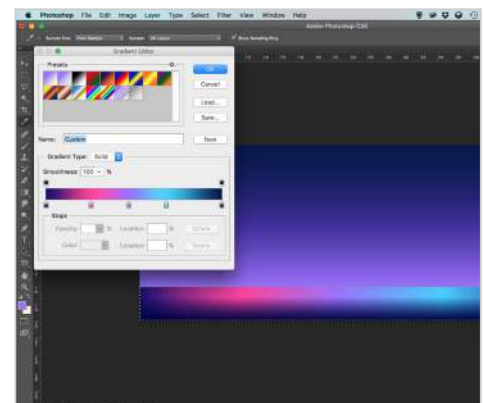
Water

03 The water needs to glow under the three anchor buildings to help draw attention to them. Use the Rectangular Marquee Tool (M) to draw the area of water and fill it with the Gradient Tool (G) using the four main colours from the colour palette.

59
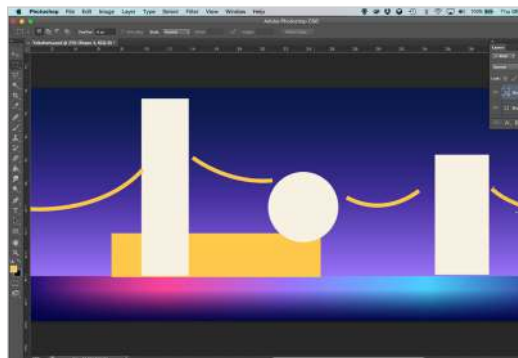
Blocking out

04 Quickly block out where you want your three anchor buildings to be and then map out the heights of your other buildings. Bear in mind that traditionally in urban design, the height of the buildings between these anchor buildings will form a gradual slope to balance out the skyline.
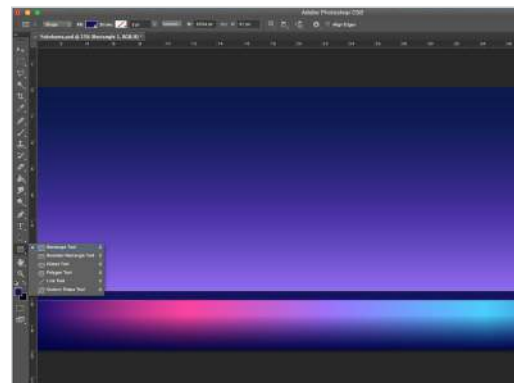
Waterfront

05 The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, so let's start the illustration of the buildings with a simple one! Create the waterfront with the Rectangle Tool (U) (or Rectangular Marquee Tool (M) if you prefer) and use the navy colour for the fill.
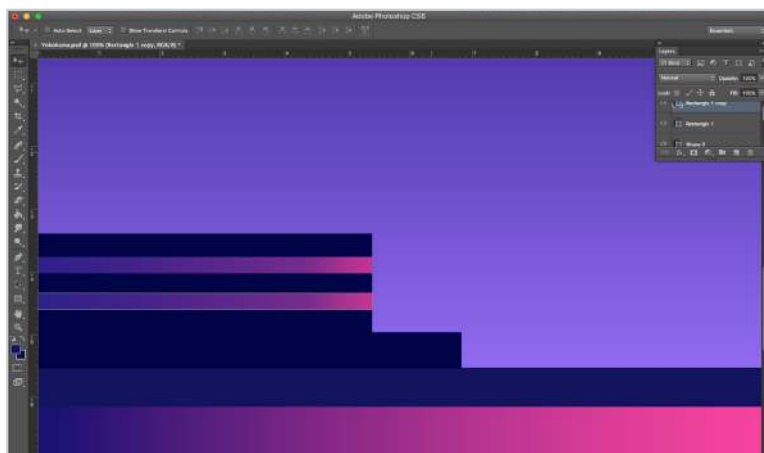
Foreground building

06 Create the building with the Pen Tool (P) and use a navy colour for the fill. Bearing in mind the pink light source, add stripes with the Rectangle Tool (U) and use a gradient for the fill.
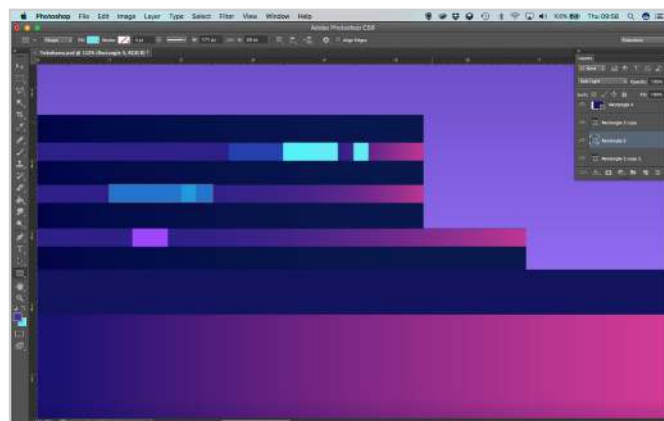
Windows

07 Create the windows with the Rectangle Tool (U) and use the electric blue colour and the lavender colour for fills. Lower the Opacity setting of some of the windows and overlap them to give the windows a reflective feel.
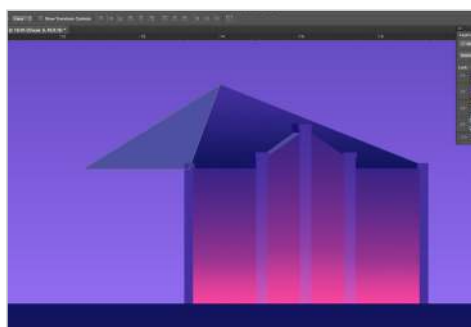
First warehouse

08 Create the warehouse in the foreground with the Pen Tool (P). Change the fill option to Gradient and change the colours. Play with the Gradient Editor until you get the effect you want. Using the Pen Tool (P) again but changing the fill to solid, add the roof and highlights.
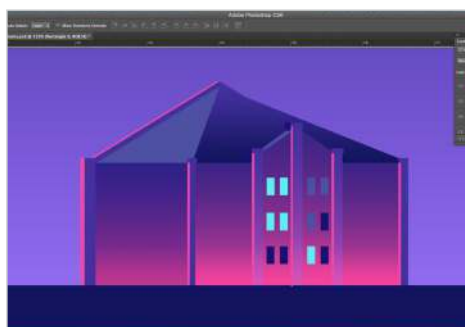
Put in windows

09 Use the Rectangle Tool (U) to create solid blocks of fill for the windows. Use the electric blue colour to show fluorescent lighting and use darker navy colours for unlit rooms. A scattergun approach is best and the windows do not need to be evenly spaced out.
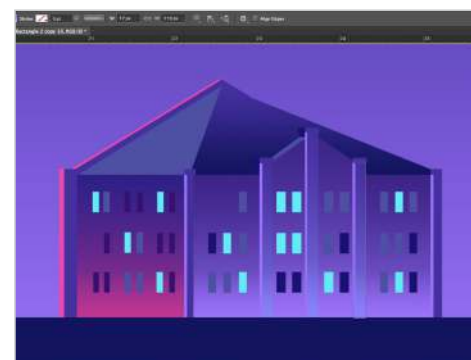
The second warehouse

10 Make a copy of all the layers for the first warehouse and move them across to form the second warehouse. You must select the layer and the tool used to create the shape (for example the Pen Tool) in order to be able to adjust the colours.

Foreground buildings

11 Use the techniques previously described to fill in the rest of the foreground with buildings. As you create the new foreground buildings, bear in mind that the lighting changes and therefore the colours you use for each building will have to change to accommodate.
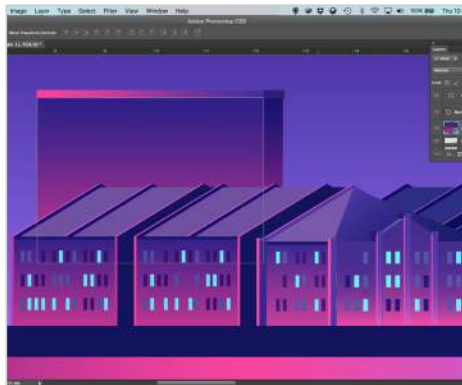
Mid-rise buildings

12 Use the Pen Tool (P) and Rectangle Tool (U) to create the mid-rise buildings in the midground. Keep these buildings fairly blocky and nondescript, with not too much detail as this will help to draw the eye towards the anchor buildings.

Glass buildings

13 Use the Pen Tool (P) to create the shape of the building, selecting navy and pink for the Gradient fill. Overlay this block with electric blue strips created using the Rectangle Tool (U). Set the blending mode of these layers to Soft Light to create an iridescent effect.
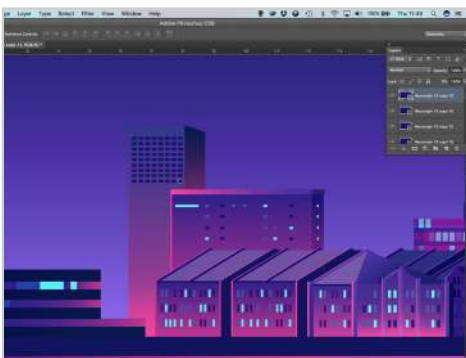
High-rise buildings

14 Use the Rectangle Tool (U) and Pen Tool (P) to create the high-rise buildings. Once you've drawn one window with the Rectangle Tool (U), make copies of it and form a grid. Change the colour of the windows to create a random pattern.

Ferris wheel

15 Use the Ellipse Tool (U), the Pen Tool (P) and the Line Tool (U) to create the structure and carriages. To help you with the placement, create a radial grid by drawing a line in the middle of the circle and rotating it (Edit>Transform>Rotate).

Extra tips

The Pen Tool
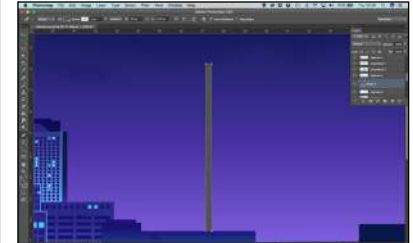
Perfect orthogonal lines

01 To create straight horizontal, vertical and 45° diagonal lines, hold down the Shift button as you left-click on the mouse to create the path.

Curves

02 For curves, hold down the left mouse button and pull the handle. Remember to bear in mind that you have to create two curves before you can go back to a straight line.
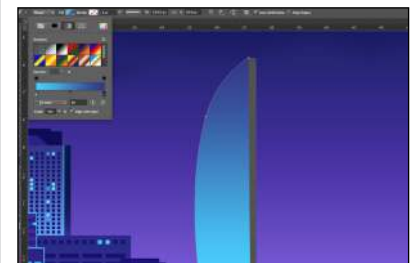
Solid fills and gradients

03 To change the fill type of the shape, click the Fill box and select the Solid Color icon for solid colours and the Gradient icon for gradients.

Editing

04 To edit a shape, select the Pen Tool, hold down Cmd/Ctrl until a white arrow shows up, and move the anchors as you wish.

61
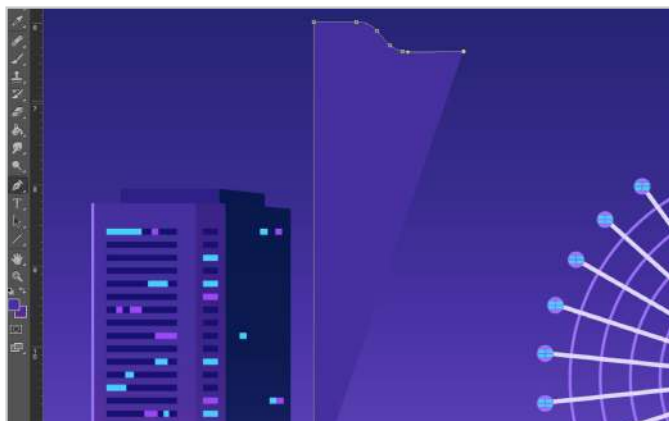
Large chamfered building

16 Use the Pen Tool (P) to create the building. For the chamfered parapet, hold down the left mouse button to create curves. Add navy stripes to the building using the Rectangle Tool (U). We'll be making copies of this building, so wait until the next step before adding the windows.
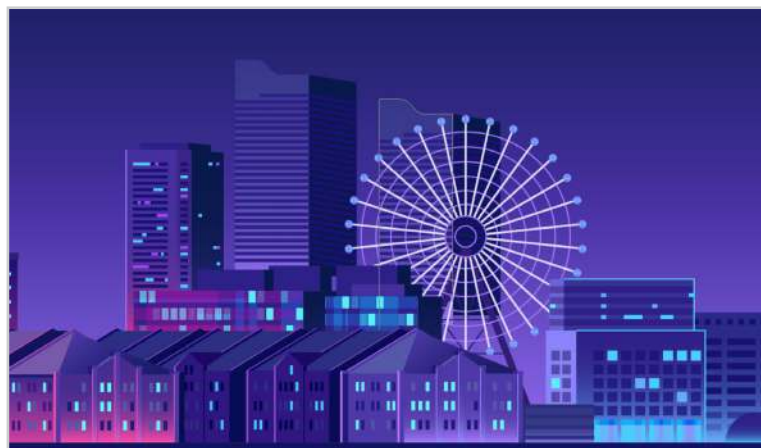
Chamfered building copies

17 Make a copy of all the layers used to create the chamfered building and move them across. Select Edit>Free Transform and make the building smaller. Since this building is behind the Ferris wheel, make sure to keep lit windows to a minimum so that they do not compete with it.
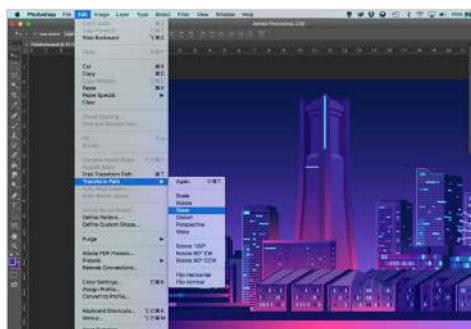
Skyscraper

18 Use a combination of the Pen Tool (P) and Rectangle Tool (U) to create the elements of the skyscraper. Unfortunately there is no shortcut for this – you'll just need time and patience! For the windows, draw long thin rectangles and then skew them (Edit>Transform>Skew) in order to create a subtle perspective.

Icon building

19 Use the Pen Tool (P) to create the curved sections of the building. For the windows, create a grid using the Rectangle Tool (U). With all the window layers selected, go to Edit>Transform>Distort to distort the angle of the windows to create perspective. Follow step 13 for the reflective glass sections.
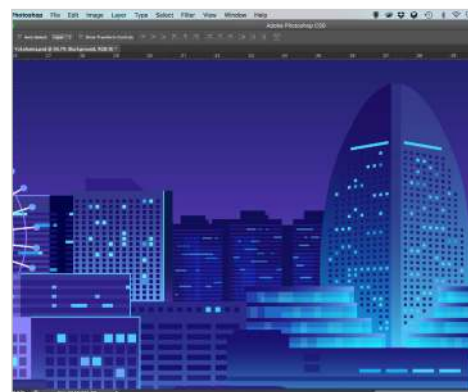
Background buildings

20 Create the background buildings using the same techniques as step 14. However, since the buildings are far away, keep the contrast low and hazy. Push these buildings even further back by lowering the Opacity of the layer.
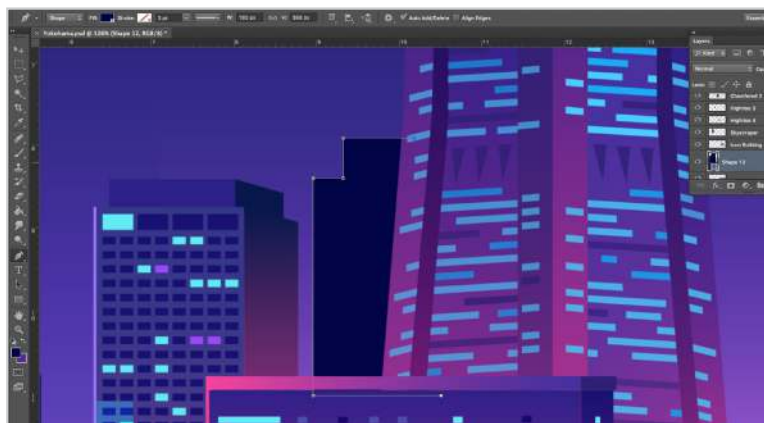
Building silhouettes

21 Use the Pen Tool (P) to create building silhouettes. Use the darkest navy in your palette for this and then lower the Opacity of the layer to push the silhouettes far back into the distance.
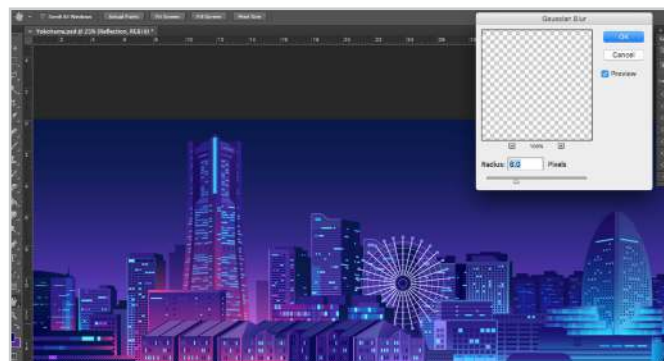
Reflections

22 Make a copy of all the layers with building elements and merge them together. Reflect this layer vertically (Edit>Transform>Flip Vertical) and lower the Opacity setting. Apply a Gaussian Blur (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur) to help defocus the reflection.
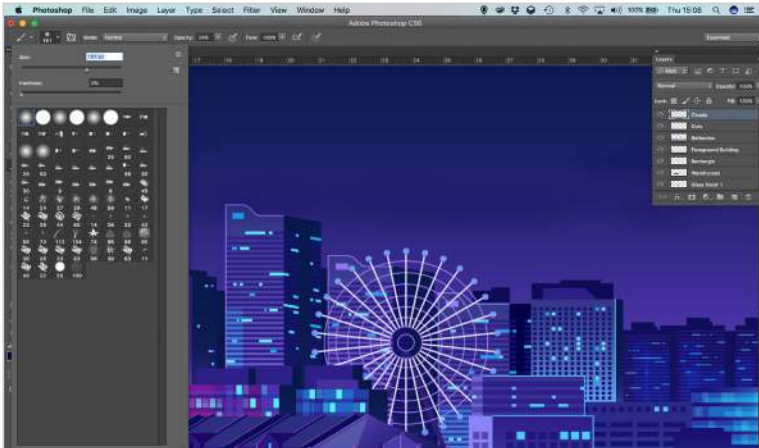
Clouds

23 Use a soft brush (B) set to a low Opacity level to paint in the clouds. Use a dark navy colour if you want a moody, atmospheric sky, or alternatively you could try using a pale lavender for a dreamlike quality.
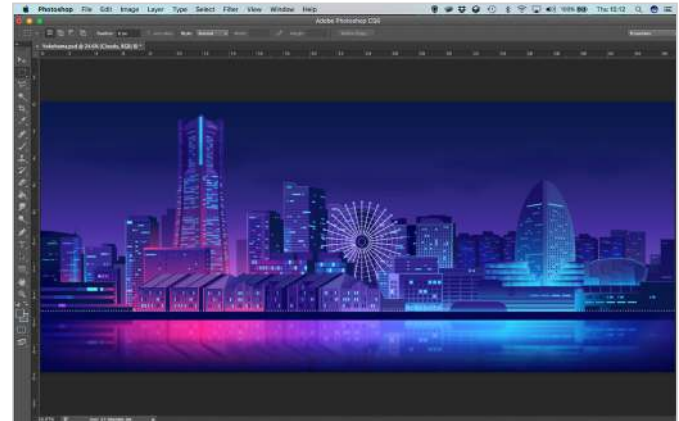
Zoom out

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

Closer look   Easy reflections using blending modes

EXPERIMENT WITH COLOUR
Blending modes are unpredictable so you need to experiment. The bottom layer is actually purple but with an electric blue Soft Light overlay, it becomes the perfect indigo for glass.

SOFT AND HARD LIGHT
Experiment with different blending modes to get the reflective effect that you want. Soft Light produces gentle fluorescent reflection whereas Hard Light produces an intense vibrant effect.
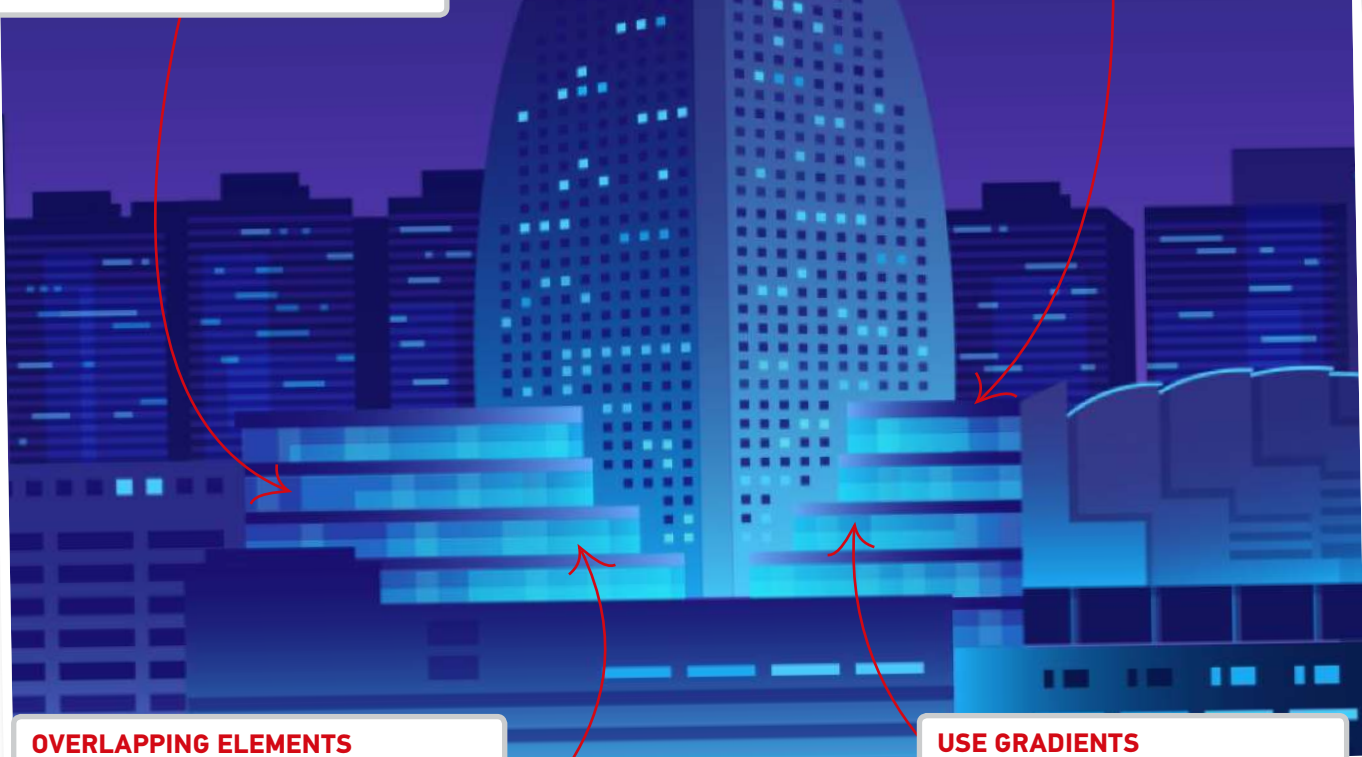
OVERLAPPING ELEMENTS
Overlapping elements with different blending modes creates a reflective and beautifully multifaceted effect. Try half overlapping elements so that you get multiple blending mode effects.

USE GRADIENTS
Gradients give an iridescent sheen to glass and work particularly well with blending modes, as the changing colours seem to intensify the reflective glow.

ZO

Essentials

Time taken 3 hours

Expert

Daniel Sinoca

"I love to add humour to my compositions and the tools and filters in Photoshop make my life more joyful. For example, the new Selection and Mask command enables me to easily cut out and mask the image. The filters already give me what I need to create wonderful effects.

"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."

Plan a fantastic escape

Add humour to your artwork and start learning some creative tricks for producing amazing compositions

Every project starts with an idea and a search for the right images. Once you've gathered all the necessary resources the creating can begin. Typically, the process starts by cleaning out the images and making basic tonal adjustments with Levels and Curves. The next step is to cut out and mask each image, and finally add the filters and effects. Of course, there are many tricks and techniques involved in the process, some of which you are about to learn.

The first tip is to keep or convert the images into Smart Objects; it means that most of the effects, adjustments and styles will not directly affect the pixels of the original image, letting you make changes at any time. Second, use adjustment layers and clip them (Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+G). Adjustment layers create an independent layer above the original image, enabling you to work the adjustments whenever you want, and by clipping the layers, the effect will only affect the layer immediately below it, and not all the layers in the composition. Follow the next few steps to learn new Photoshop skills and check the side stepper and boxout for extra advice and tips.

Expert tip

💡 Layer styles

There are several ways to create shadows in Photoshop. In step 14 we show you how to draw a selection to create a shadow. But for the gate and other images, you can use layer styles. Select the layer and go to Layer>Layer Style>Drop Shadows. Define the Opacity, Angle, Distance, and tweak the other settings. Now, go to Layer>Layer Style>Create Layer. Photoshop puts the shadow in a separate layer, then you can use Free Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+T) to adjust the shadow.
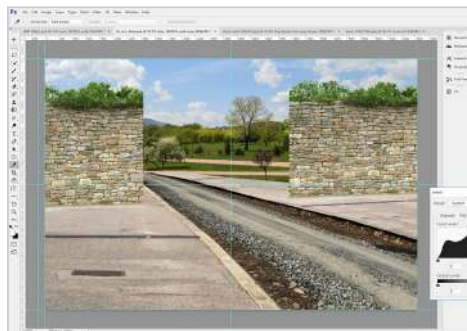
Create the background

01 Go to File>Open 'fo_background.jpg', File>Place Embedded 'pix_1967015_wall.png' in the top-right corner. Drag the handles to adjust the perspective, hit Return/Enter. Press Cmd/Ctrl+L, setting the Inputs to 0, 1.15, 235 and click OK. Duplicate the image (Cmd/Ctrl+J), adjust the perspective (Cmd/Ctrl+T) and place on the other side.
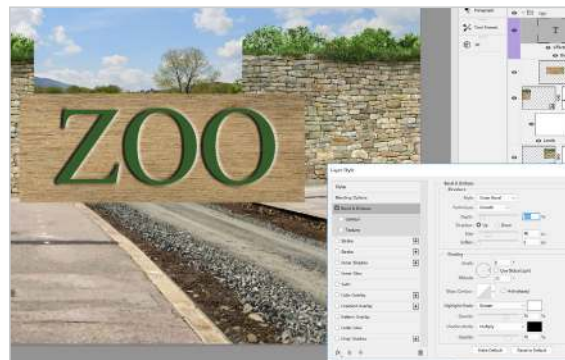
The zoo sign

02 Place the image: 'pix_1606518_wood.jpg'. Grab the Type Tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T) and type the word 'ZOO'. Now apply layer styles. Go to Layer>Layer Style>Bevel & Emboss. Set Style to Outer Bevel, Technique: Smooth, tweak the other settings. Adjust the Shading Angle to 5, Altitude: 25 and reduce the opacity for the Shadows/Highlights to 70%.
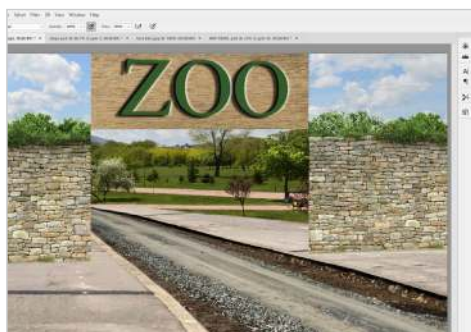
Apply more styles

03 In the Layer Style panel, click on Drop Shadow. Set Opacity to 65%, Angle: 20, tweak the other settings and click OK. Hold Shift and click on the text layer and the wood layer, then go to Layer>Smart Objects>Convert to Smart Object. Resize and adjust the perspective (Cmd/Ctrl+T).
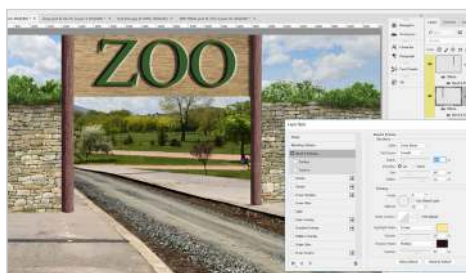
Sign supports

04 Create a new layer (Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+N). Grab the Rectangular Marquee Tool (M) and draw a long rectangular selection. Set the Foreground/Background colours to #B79595 and #6A4B4B. Go to Filter>Render>Fibers and adjust the settings. Apply a Bevel & Emboss layer style, use Inner Bevel and tweak the settings. Duplicate, resize and place next to the sign.
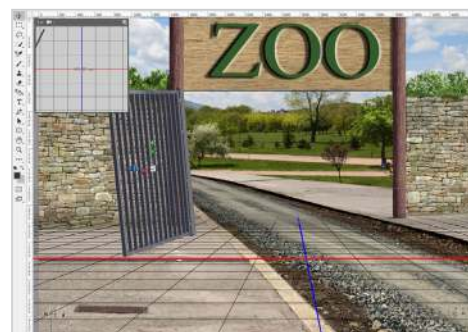
Build the gates

05 Place the image 'fo_gate.png'. Go to 3D>New 3D Extrusion from Selected Layer. Switch to the 3D workspace. In the 3D Properties panel, set the Extrusion Depth to 50 pixels and uncheck Cast Shadows. Use the on-image controls to rotate and position the gate.
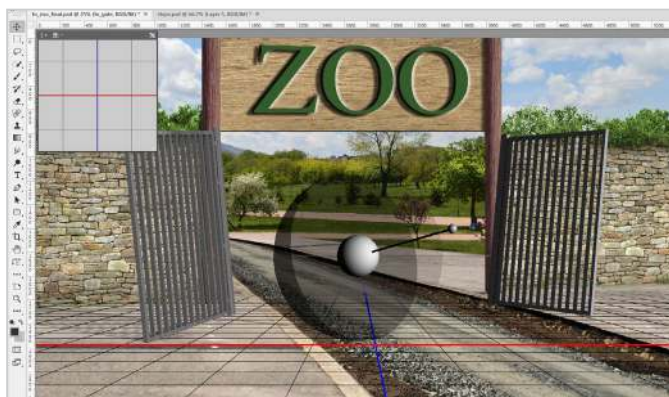
Duplicate the object

06 In the 3D panel, Ctrl/right-click over the fo_gate layer and select Duplicate Object. Use the on-image controls to rotate and position the image on the other side. Now, click on Infinite Light 1 and rotate the light around 45º. Go to 3D>Render 3D Layer. Switch back to Window>Workspace>Essentials.

Place the car

07 Place the image 'pix_1582193_car1.jpg'. Grab the Pen Tool (P) and draw a path around the car. In Options, choose Selection and then go to Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal Selection. Now go to Layer>Smart Objects>Rasterize and then go to Layer>Layer Mask>Apply.
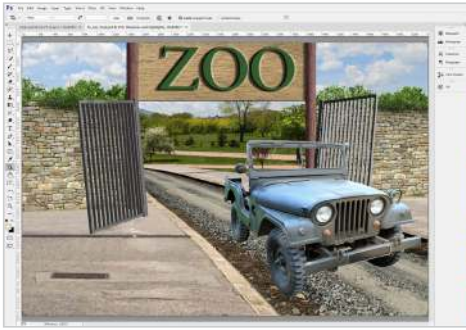
Make adjustments

08 Go to Filter>Lens Correction. In Custom, set Remove Distortion to +100.00. Press Cmd/Ctrl+T, click and drag the handles to adjust the perspective. Create a new layer. Change the blend to Soft Light. Grab a soft brush (B) and paint a yellowish highlight over the car and clip the layers (Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+G).
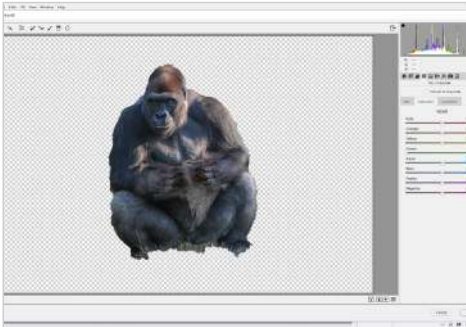
Camera Raw edits

10 Let's use the Camera Raw filter to fine-tune the image. Go to Filter>Camera Raw. Set the Highlights to -60 and Shadows to +70. Click the HLS/Greyscale panel and set the Saturation Greens to -100, then click OK. Resize the image and place behind the car layer.

Distort the bear

12 Go to Edit>Puppet Warp. Add a few control points over the bear's body and foot, and then drag the control point on the foot to distort the image and fit in the car. Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Levels, set the Inputs to 0, 1.00, 230 and clip the layers.

Place the animals

09 Download the gorilla from www.freeimages.com/photo/gorilla-1-1407331 and place it into your project. Grab the Quick Selection Tool and select the gorilla. In Options, click Select and Mask. In Properties, check Smart Radius, setting the Radius at 10px. Convert to a Smart Object by going to Layer>Smart Objects>Convert to Smart Object.

Add the bear

11 Place the image 'pix_912444_bear.jpg'. Use your favourite selection tool to select the bear, then use the Select and Mask command to refine the edges. Now go to Layer>Layer Mask>Apply. Resize the image and place behind the car layer.

Expert edit

Extra tips for best results

Free Transform

01 Open the Free Transform Tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T). Hold Cmd/Ctrl and drag the corner handles to adjust the perspective or Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt to skew.

Gradient mask

02 In step 16, press D to set the default Foreground/Background to black and white. Open the Gradient Editor, choose Foreground/Background preset and drag it over the mask.
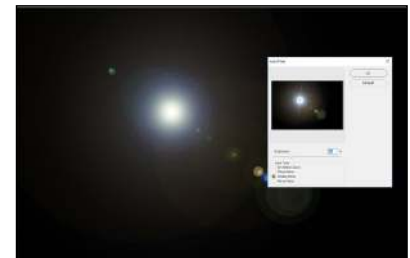
Create the headlights

03 Create a new layer and fill with black. Go to Filter>Render>Lens Flare. Choose 105mm Prime, Brightness: 100 and click OK. Change the blending mode for the layer to Screen.
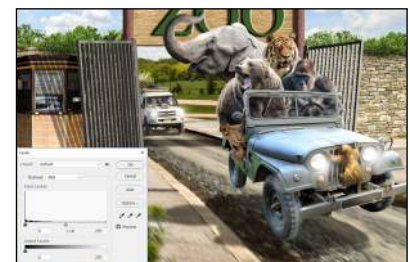
Level adjustment

04 Open Free Transform, hold Shift and resize. Open Levels (Cmd/Ctrl+L) and tweak to regulate the intensity. Duplicate (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and put in place.

Place more animals

13 Place the image 'pix_2341961_tiger.jpg' and 'pix_1771171_elephant.jpg'. Use the same techniques you just have learned from steps 9 through 12 and select, add masks, make adjustments, and apply distortions on the images. Place the monkeys and bring more images like the ticket office and the second car to complete the composition.
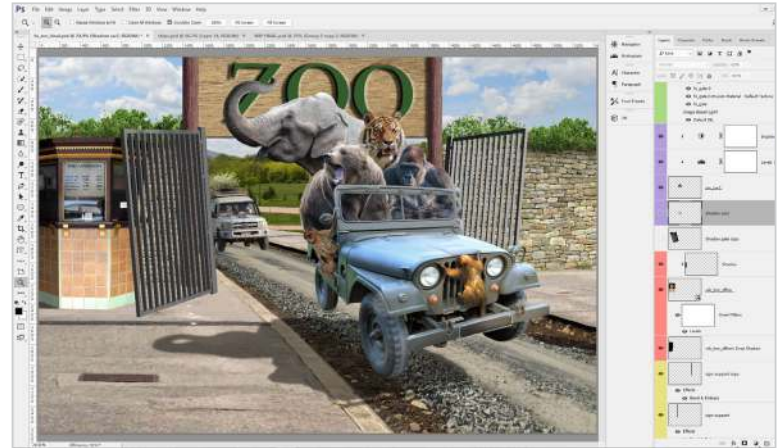
Add shadows

14 Create a new layer below the Jeep layer. Grab the Polygonal Lasso Tool (L) and draw a selection matching the car's shape (use the Lasso Tool to create the shape of the animals), then fill it with black. Apply a 3px Gaussian Blur and reduce the layer's Opacity to 50%.

Spin all the wheels

15 Create shadows for the gate and other images. Make the Jeep layer active. Zoom in (Z) and select the wheel. Go to Filter>Blur Gallery>Spin Blur. Drag the pin to the centre of the wheel, drag the controls inward to create an oval shape, then set the Blur Angle to 15.

Motion effect

16 Duplicate the background layer. Go to Filter>Blur>Radial Blur. Set Amount to 3, Blur Method: Zoom, Quality: Best, and move the Blur Center to top left, then click OK. Create a layer mask. Grab the Gradient Tool and drag it diagonally over the mask to partially hide the effect.

Final touches

17 Place the image 'fo_vegetation.png' on top of the layer stack. Apply the Radial Blur as in the previous step. Now, press Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+E to create a merged copy layer. Go to Filter>Camera Raw. Set the Temperature to +5, Highlights: +10, Shadows: -10, Whites: +40 and Clarity: +15, then click OK.

What you can do with it

Create a calendar

Now you have created a beautiful piece of art, why not make your own calendar? You can easily find many sites offering free calendar templates; download the template to your computer and personalise it using images from your own project. Create a new document, A4 in size, place the calendar template and then place a copy of your image. Add more images around the canvas, and then simply print out your personalised calendar.

FANCY FONTS
Write in the months using different fonts to personalise your calendar. You can find lots of themed fonts online.

LAYER STYLE
Use the layer styles to add a Bevel & Emboss effect around the border and add shadows to make the images pop, creating a 3D look.

Turning brands into art

Dexter Maurer was working on a medieval knight series in Photoshop, when the idea occurred to him that he could create 21st century editions of knight figurines

About the artist

Dexter Maurer
dextermaurer.
tumblr.com/

Dexter Maurer is an illustrator from Delémont, Switzerland. His father, an art teacher, is who Dexter cites as teaching him the technical basics of art and fuelling his passion for his profession. When he finished school, he went to Wallis, EPAC (Professional School of Contemporary Art) to take art lessons.

Name of the project
Brand Knight

Dexter Maurer used to draw cartoon characters when he was a child, but it was a project about medieval knights that put him back in touch with that side of his creativity.

For his personal project, Dexter re-imagined toy figurines of knights, with each of them having the theme of a recognisable brand. This was a huge departure from the kind of work that Dexter was used to working on, but it's been a huge success, with both Wacom and Behance showcasing the project in online galleries.

We asked Dexter to tell us more about the inspiration behind these knights, along with how he created them.

How has your work evolved over the years to look like it does now?

Well, I first discovered Photoshop when I was a teenager; I had a friend whose dad had Photoshop on their computer. It's taken a long time for me to first understand the software, and then find a way to use it in the exact way that I want. At the beginning, my friend and I were so happy just to use a professional software package to colourise our little comics: we both got ourselves graphics tablets because it was hard to draw with the mouse. Through a lot of practice, testing out new renders, compositions and colours, I finally came to the point where I felt fully comfortable in Photoshop. I can really feel the evolution when I go back to drawing on paper and canvas.

Which Photoshop tools would you say you use the most in your creative process?

The Brush Tool is definitely the big one. At first I make my characters in flat colours, and then I change the opacity or move to a smooth brush to add the shadows, the highlights and the cold lights.

How did the idea for this project come about?

When I was a kid I use to draw a lot of my favourite characters like Batman, Mickey Mouse, etc, and I wondered what children's figurines could be created from symbols of today's culture. I had been thinking about it a lot at the time, and it turned out that at that moment I was working on illustrations of medieval inspirations. I figured, why not mix the two together? That's how the idea came to me. I chose to do it with brands that I usually see or even wear myself.

Are you interested in branding, or was this something that you had to research when you were working on the project?

I'm not really intimate with branding, I'd say that I'm more into narrative illustration, but I do really appreciate some branding projects. I'm fascinated by the fact that good typography, a good colour layout and good composition can make something really effective that at first seems simple. I also like how different styles work well in different types of media. It is also very interesting to note that branding evolves a lot and proposes new ways to put forward a product.

This project certainly feels like a huge departure from the kind of work you're used to creating. Is that something you were keen on?

REPEATED ICONS
Each knight featured repeated icons, such as the logo, colours or other themes to create a cohesive character with its own identity.

WEAPON
Each knight's weapon was tailored by Dexter to reflect the brand itself, and in some cases, even include the emblem.

COLOUR
The colours for each knight and its packaging were carefully chosen in accordance with the brand, but also so that the knight would stand out nicely.
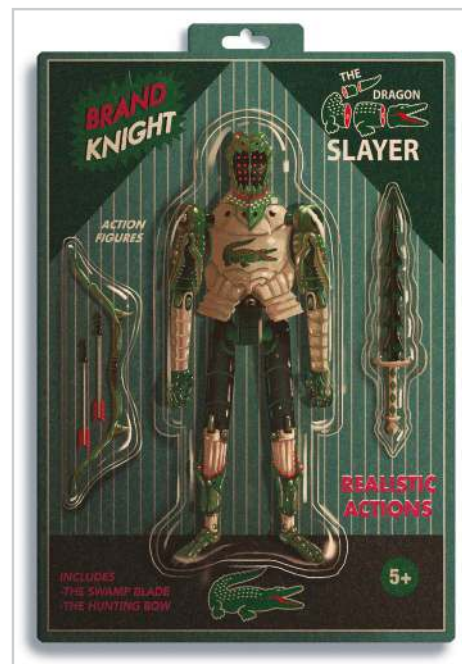
All images © Dexter Maurer

The big difference between this project and the others was at the sketch stage. There I was forced to invent a knight's armour from already established colour forms and style icons. It was really interesting to take the logos and turn them in all directions, to interpret a shield, a helmet or a shoulder. Then, in Photoshop, I tried to give them a very plastic rendering, which I was not used to, so I learned a lot by doing this series.

What advice would you give to artists trying to create projects like this?
I think the best advice I can give to anyone is to be organised, know what kind of visuals or render you want from the beginning and then try various techniques with Photoshop using different tools, textures and compositions. It's best to work on them consecutively, one after the next, and then be prepared to add finishing touches to each illustration at the very end of the project to give a little more unity to the series.

Which other projects have you worked on that you're especially proud of, and how would you say this one compared?
Last year I worked on a series of four illustrations called *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* for an exhibition in Spain. I was really happy with these pieces because it was the first time that I used textiles as a printing aid. I was really happy with the render of the *Brand Knights* but it's a different kind of pride because I illustrated products and not a story or a universe.

Have you been overwhelmed with the feedback on this project?
I was really happy that people enjoyed it and really understood the approach! I think this kind of project is much easier to rack up big views because I used recognisable brands and it's therefore easy to connect with the public. But still, I'm really happy with the feedback of this series!

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creative

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Follow our rain-soaked step-by-step guide on p76

What does it mean?

HISTOGRAM – When you open the Threshold command, you'll see the slider below a black-and-white, graph-like area: this is called a histogram. This distributes the light and dark in your image and helps you to see where it falls in your picture when you move the slider along the bottom of the filter.

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Start image
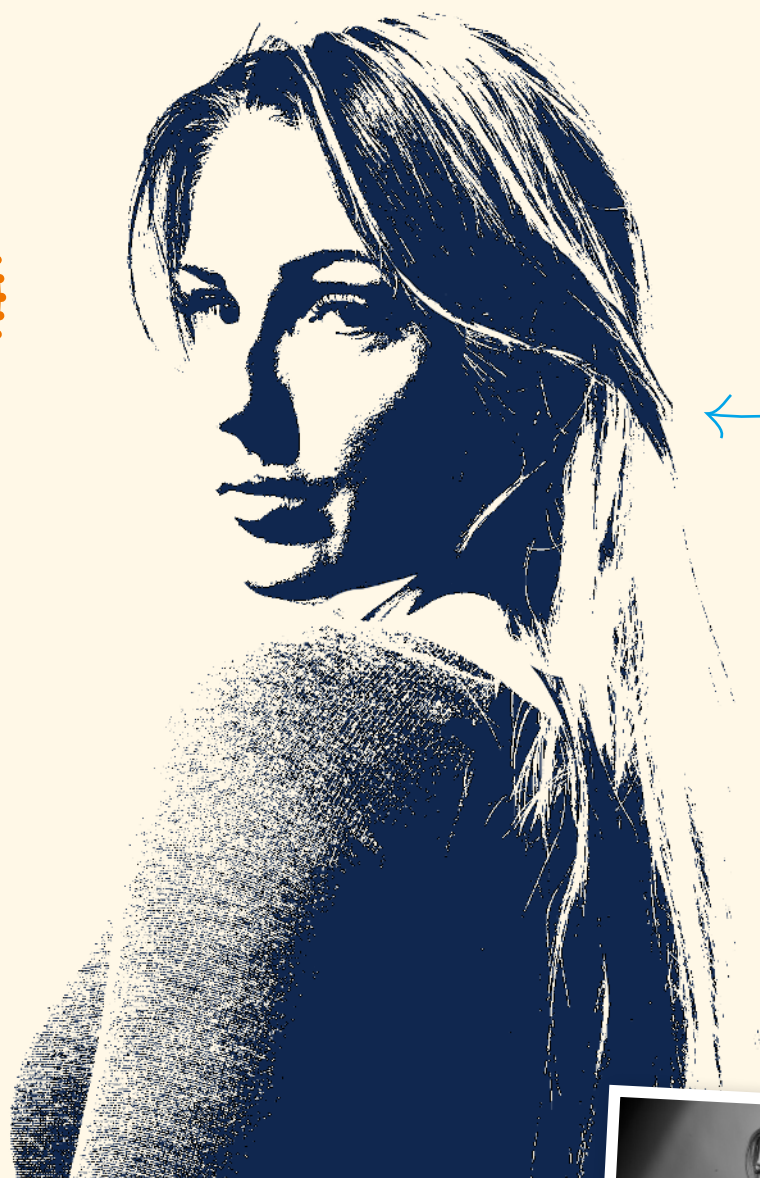
Tool focus...

Edit with the Threshold command

Convert any image to just two colours with this basic adjustment

Photoshop Elements is a program with some incredibly sophisticated tools for editing photos. So sometimes, it's nice to use an adjustment that only has one slider.

Although the Threshold option might be easy to use, don't get the impression that it's not powerful. It instantly turns your picture into just black and white, with the one, solitary slider helping you to find the balance between the light and dark in your image. It's perfect for converting your pictures for a novelty effect, or using it to create a basic block image to build on with illustrative or drawn effects.

In fact, although the Threshold is a basic adjustment, you have full creative reign when it comes to editing it. For example, once

you've grouped each adjustment with the layer you wish to apply it to, you can mask them so that more detail is visible in certain areas over your image. If you wish to use a brush on a final layer just to touch-up the black and white in your image, it's easy to do: Threshold layers are as simple to add to as they are to create, because they only ever rely on two colours.

Simplicity is often hard to master in Elements, but the Threshold adjustment makes it possible to create great two-colour pictures really quickly, and only using the most basic tools. Use the Gradient Map adjustment once you've finished with the Threshold to add a tone of colour to your finished image.

Master monochrome Use a single slider for the most minimal of effects
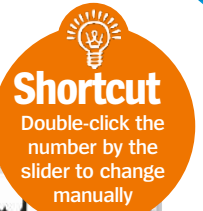
Apply the Threshold

01 Open the start image from the supplied files, or choose your own; Ctrl/right-click the background and choose Layer From Background. Click the Fill Layer icon and choose Threshold. Experiment with the slider until you reach a good balance of black and white.

Create a second threshold

02 Duplicate the background layer and the Threshold adjustment. Adjust the slider to reveal a little more from the original image; because the Threshold only splits an image into two shades, we're going to have to create a little more detail. Group each Threshold with its layer (Cmd/Ctrl+G).

Mask each group

03 With two separate images with different levels of detail in the Threshold, hit the Mask icon on the upper layer and mask in some more detail from one of the groups to the other. Use a hard brush (B) so that the hard lines of the Threshold aren't softened.

Brush some more

04 On a new layer above the two Threshold groups, mask white over any excess of black left at the edges of the image. This will ensure that you have a cleaner and clearer Threshold image with just the subject in view.

Three similar effects How else can you reduce a picture to just a few colours?
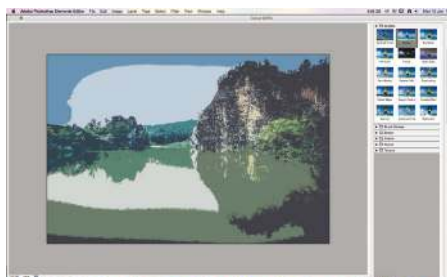
Cutout

An excellent creative option from the Filter Gallery, the Cutout filter breaks down an image into a number of levels – you can choose how many via the slider – to create a low poly-style illustration. You can also change the simplicity and fidelity of your image to vary the detail in the final picture.
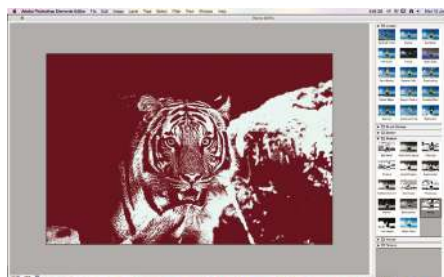
Stamp

Just like the Threshold adjustment, the Stamp filter turns your image into just two colours. It has two sliders – Light/Dark Balance and Smoothness – which enable you to create something a lot blurrier than the Threshold can manage. This is particularly good for editing backgrounds on which you place the Threshold.

Torn Edges

The Torn Edges filter is similar to the Stamp filter, but where the stamp can create something blurry and out of focus, the Torn Edges filter can make your image look a lot noisier. It has three sliders for Image Balance, Smoothness and Contrast, and can be used to either show a little detail or a whole picture.
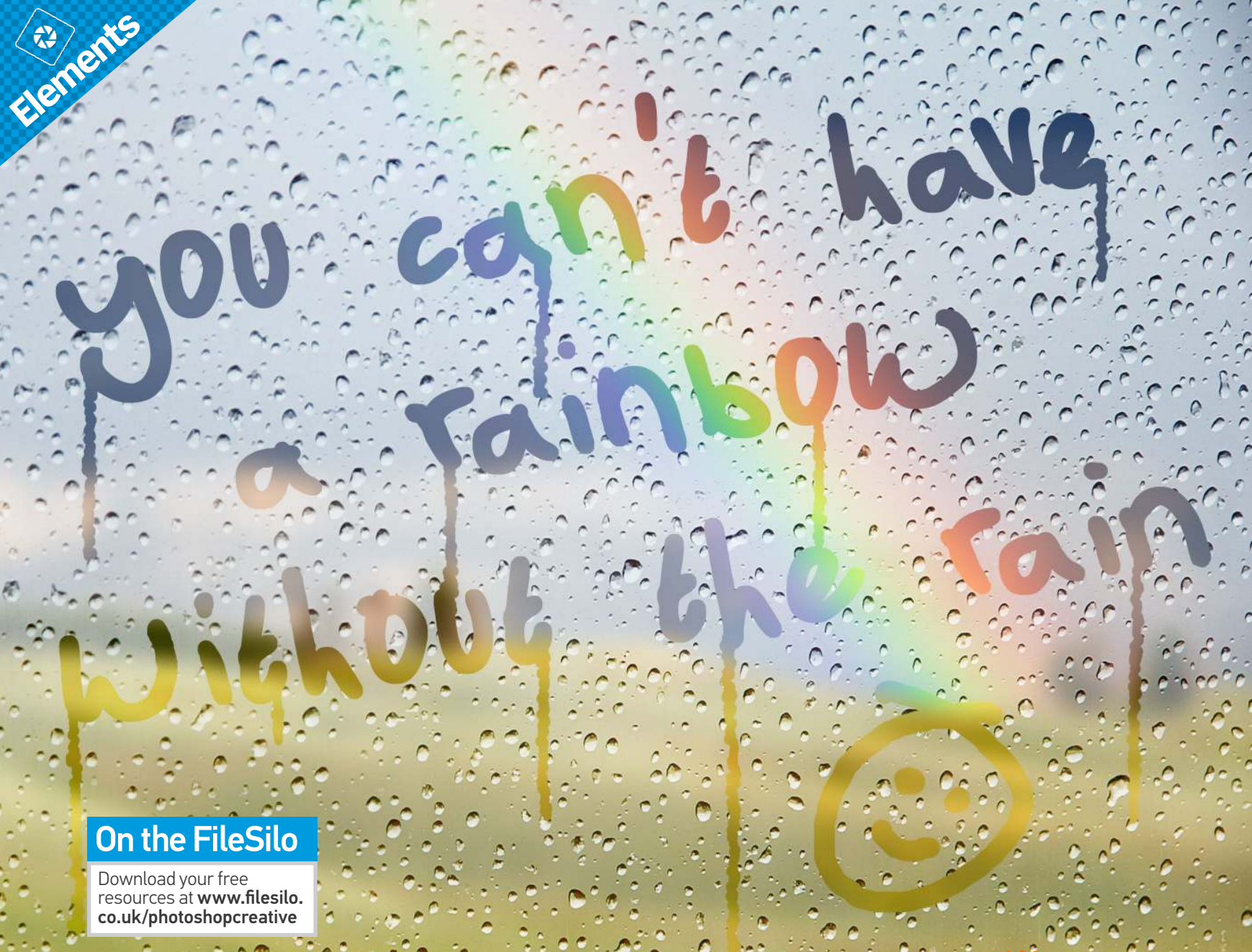
On the FileSilo

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Creative project...

Write messages on windows

Use layer masks to write a message on rain-covered windows

There's something about a foggy or rain-covered window that makes it hard to resist writing or doodling on it. Much like a fresh covering of snow that just HAS to be trampled on, it makes for a wonderfully satisfying blank canvas. And the sweet, reassuring message in this image seems beautifully in sync with the carefree, absent-minded enjoyment of doodling on windows. The text combined with the distant, blurred rainbow makes for a lovely combination, but other quotes and images would work just as nicely.

Perhaps you have a favourite quote that you would like to use with this tutorial? Think about the theme and the sort of imagery that would tie in with it. There are plenty of wonderful free stock photos to choose from online, or you could use a photo of your own to make it even more personal. The font you pick can also play a big role in the final effect. Are you going for something fun and cheery? Or softer and more elegant? Again, with so many free online resources available, you have plenty to choose from!

STAGE 1

Create the background

Combine a rain-covered window with your background photo

Before we get to the stage of adding the text and creating the main effect, we first need to set up the background and the rain texture. You can follow along using the same rainbow image we have supplied, or supplement it for a photo of your own. If you want to write a different quote, then it could be that an alternative background is more appropriate; this method works with any photo and text combination you can think of. When you've got everything ready, launch Elements and then choose Photo Editor and the Expert workspace.

Shortcut
Transform+Shift to toggle Constrain Proportions function.
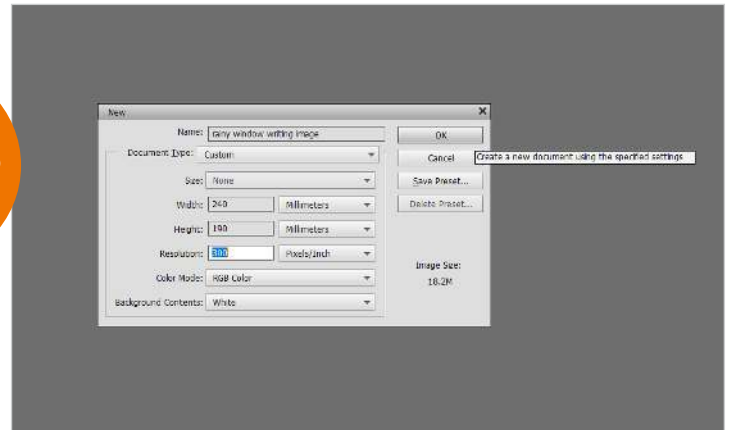
New file

01 Create a new file 240mm wide by 190mm high, at 300ppi. Open your background image (we've used 'pix_1834809_rainbow.jpg'), press Cmd/Ctrl+A to select the canvas, Cmd/Ctrl+C to copy it and then go to the new file and paste (Cmd/Ctrl+V) it in.

Resize the background

02 Press Cmd/Ctrl+T to resize and position the background image appropriately. We have cropped some of the grass from the bottom, in order to include more of the rainbow and sky. Click the green tick or hit Enter to apply the changes.

Add the window

03 Now open 'pix_933424_raindrops.jpg', copy and paste it into your artwork. Press Cmd/Ctrl+T, untick Constrain Proportions in the Tool Options and resize and position the image so it fits the canvas exactly. Change the layer's blending mode to Hard Light.

RULE OF THIRDS
Follow the Rule of Thirds for a better-looking image. Here we have one-third grass and two-thirds sky.

A NEW BLEND
Click here to access a drop-down menu with a host of blending modes to choose from.

IN PROPORTION
Constrain Proportions helpfully prevents your images from being distorted or stretched during transformations, but can be unticked if needed.

NAME THOSE LAYERS
Don't forget to rename your pasted in layers; double-click the layers' names to edit them.

STAGE 2

Write a message

Achieve the effect with the Text Tool and layer masks

Next we are going to add some text and use it to mask the window layer, so the background shows through. Choose an appropriate font that looks as though it has been written with a fingertip. We have used a font called Manns Bare Hand, which can be downloaded from Da Font at **www.dafont.com/manns-bare-hand.font**.

Alternatively, if you are using a graphics tablet (or are confident with the mouse), you can write the message freehand directly onto the rainy window's layer mask.

Font selection

01 Select the Text Tool (press T), and choose your font. We are using Manns Bare Hand with a size of 115pt, leading of 100pt, and Faux Bold ticked. Click on your canvas to generate a new text layer and type out your message in black.

Rotate and select

02 Press Cmd/Ctrl+T, and rotate the text so it is at an angle. Hold Cmd/Ctrl and in the Layers panel, left-click the text layer's thumbnail (the large T icon) to select its contents.

Add the layer mask

03 We still want the text a little bolder, so go to Select>Modify>Expand, enter a value of 5px and hit Enter. Now press Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert the selection, go to the window layer and click the Add Layer Mask icon at the top of the Layers panel.

Apply a blur

04 Click the eyeball icon next to the text layer to hide it. Go to your rainbow background layer, go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur. Enter a value of 25 and hit Enter.

Adjust the Levels

05 Click the 'Create new fill or adjustment layer' icon at the top of the Layers panel and choose Levels from the drop-down menu. Move the black slider to 10, grey to 0.79 and white to 204 and click OK.

Now for a smile!

06 Click on the window layer's layer mask, and select the Brush Tool (press B). Choose a hard round brush, at a size that matches the thickness of your text (we used 35px) and set black as your colour. Use it to add any embellishments you like (we opted for a smiley face!).
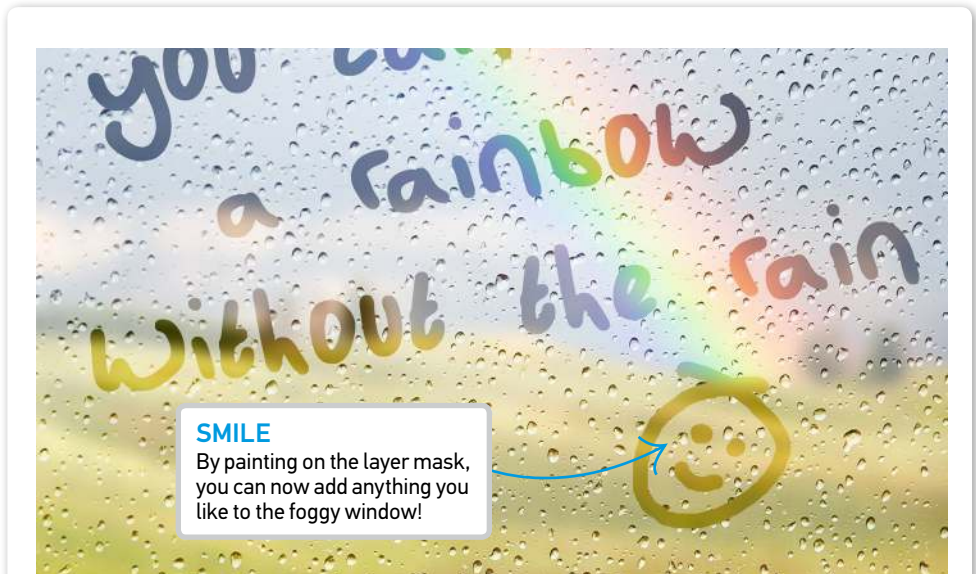
SMILE
By painting on the layer mask, you can now add anything you like to the foggy window!

STAGE 3

Finishing touches

Add some final embellishments to the layer mask

We're entering the final few steps now. Things are looking good, but we can still apply some finishing touches and extra details on the layer mask to make the image even better. Tweaking the text to make it more irregular will enhance its hand-written appearance, while the addition of some dribbles and streaks with a specially edited brush will help the final effect look as realistic as possible. But make sure to apply these sparingly; adding too many may make your text difficult to read.

MAKING DUPLICATES
When you duplicate a layer the layer mask is duplicated too, as well as the choice of blending mode.

BLACK AND WHITE
Using a black brush on a layer mask will obscure the content of the layer, while using white will make them visible again.

VARIATION
Create dribbles of different length, some leading off the bottom of the canvas, or joining one letter to another.

Edit the letters

01 Use the same hard round brush as before to tweak some of the letters slightly. We want to make it look more random and as though it has been written by hand, so focus on recurring letters. Where there are two or more of the same letter, edit one slightly.

Shortcut
On masks, press X to switch between black and white

Customise the brush

02 In Tool Options, click on Brush Settings. Change Scatter to 7%, Spacing to 30%, Roundness to 80% and the Angle to -90 degrees. We can use this brush on the layer mask to add some dribbles coming down from beneath the letters.

Paint in the drips

03 Use a brush size of around 25px. Hold Shift (so that the line you draw will be straight) then click on the underneath of a letter and drag downwards to draw a vertical trail. Add several of these beneath your letters, of varying lengths.
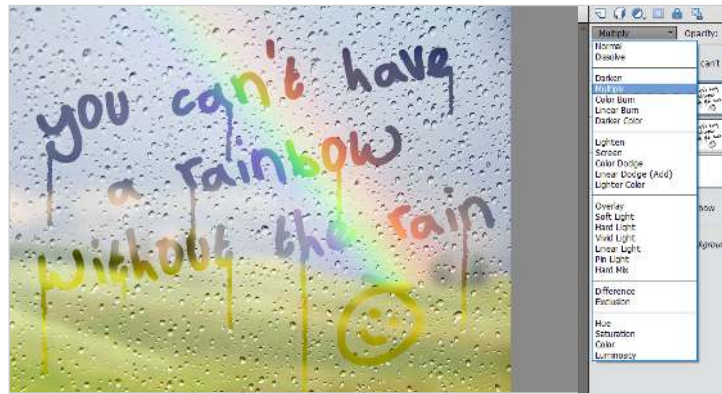
Multiply layer

04 Once you have completely finished altering the layer mask, on the window layer press Cmd/Ctrl+J to create a duplicate of it, and set this new layer's blending mode to Multiply and the layer Opacity to 40%.

COLOUR
The colour of the lens flare can be customised further by clipping a colour layer to the lens flare layer.

BRIGHTNESS
If you wish to lessen the brightness of your lens flare, simply hit Mask and brush black over the layer.

What does it mean?
TRANSFORM – The Transform Tool enables you to warp, distort, resize or rotate objects. Here, it's perfect for editing the lens flare by tweaking the corner handles of the selection, but remember not to skew or distort the lens flare: they're effects caused by the camera lens, not the environment.

Photo edit...

Improve photos with lens flares

Add a photographic leak across your image in the form of a flare

Lens flares are a misunderstood aspect of photo editing. They're sometimes underused in photography, partly for fear of them looking tacky; at the other end of the spectrum, they were arguably overused by director JJ Abrams, who apologised for reportedly using over 700 in a single *Star Trek* film.

As with so many photo-editing techniques, the key is balance. Elements only enables you to place a lens flare onto a layer with pixels, so by adding one to your background, you have to be meticulous in your positioning and hope that one of the four default options looks good. It can be hard to add a flare that feels both prominent in the image and subtle at the same time.

This is where non-destructive editing comes in. Non-destructive editing simply means editing – such as adding a lens flare – that doesn't irreversibly change your picture. By applying the flare to a new black layer and blending it in with the Screen blend mode, you have far more control over how it looks in your image.

Just remember to exercise restraint and use them sparingly: lens flares can really enhance a photo if applied correctly!

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Add some flare Create a layer, apply the lens flare and transform it
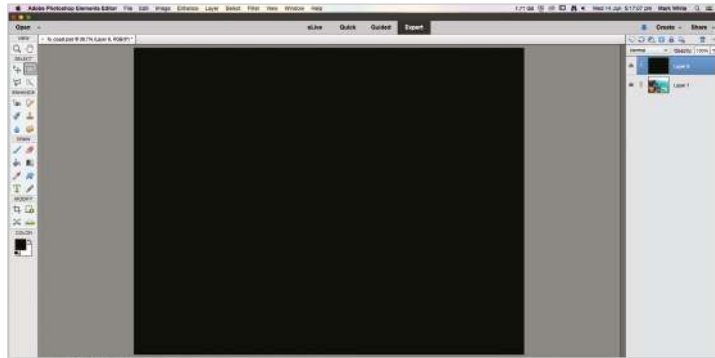
Fill with black

01 Begin by opening your photo and creating a new layer, before selecting black in your Foreground swatch (D) and filling this layer (Alt/Opt+delete). By creating a new black layer, we'll be able to blend the lens flare into the image with the Screen blend mode, but be able to edit this layer if necessary.

Add the flare

02 Go to Filter>Render>Lens Flare. There, you'll see options for four different lens flares, but we've gone with 105mm Prime, because it has a few lens spots that will show up over the photo. Place it as we have over the layer so you can transform it.

Move the flare

03 With your lens flare created, now is the time to get it into position on your picture. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+T to transform it, and position it so that the brightest point is somewhere in the sky, with the actual flare over the rest of the picture.

Edit the flare

04 You may wish to edit the lens flare even further. Go to the Fill Layer icon and click on Hue/Saturation, and then Alt/Opt-click the layer to clip it to your lens flare. By increasing the Saturation or altering the Hue, you can control exactly how it looks.

Take it further The other flares What the other lens flare options look like

35mm Prime

01 The 35mm Prime's name refers to the size of camera lens, and is easy to recognise from the large, teal-coloured spot, along with the bluer dots close to the bright glare. This is a great lens flare for adding big circles of subtle colour.

50-300mm Zoom

02 Again named after a size of camera lens, this one combines a big orange circle with a selection of smaller bright spots dotted along the line. This is good for showing off a lens flare, or creating a low-opacity layer with subtle flare.
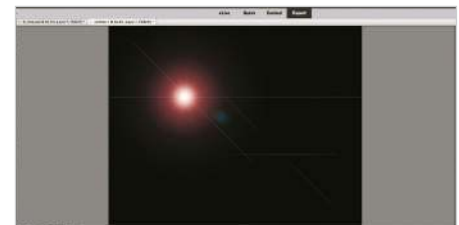
Movie Prime

03 This lens flare is the most cinematic, but it's also the most minimal. Rather than an array of spots and circles, it contains a couple of blurred dots near to the flare and a few bright lines. Great for sci-fi scenes, among other things.

Start images

What does it mean?

TOOL OPTIONS BAR – Located underneath the workspace area, each tool in Elements has options that you can customise. When you select a new tool, new settings appear in the Options bar. Play with the settings to adjust the tools to your liking and to understand how they work.

LAYER MASKS

Add a layer mask. Paint inside the mask and vary the brush opacity setting for a transparent effect.

CLIPPING MASKS

Clip the layer to avoid the images or the adjustment layer affecting other layers.

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Surreal art...
Create a miniature waterworld

Make a great image with masks, blend modes and adjustments

You can achieve amazing effects in Photoshop Elements; you just need to learn the right technique. To begin, you need to understand how a layer mask works. Layer masks basically show or hide areas of an image, but also control the level of transparency of a layer. For example, when you apply a black-and-white gradient over a mask, the greys create a gradual transition along the mask; these greyscale tones determine the level of transparency of the layer.

In this tutorial, you'll apply this technique to make a transparent glass effect and then you will use blending modes to add some contours and highlights. To get you warmed up, you'll create a beautiful background using basic tools. Next, you'll use the Magnetic Lasso Tool to outline the glass and the Refine Edge command to create a mask. Then you will create a transparent object, by painting over the mask, controlling the mouse opacity or the pen pressure. Last but not least, you will create a sub-aquatic world by clipping the layers and complete the composition using different effects. So let's download the start images from the FileSilo and get started.

Vibrant compositions Use basic tools and advanced techniques for surreal art

Create the background
01 Go to File>New>Blank File or press Cmd/Ctrl+N. Name your project Surreal Art and set the Width to 230mm, Height to 310mm, Resolution to 300ppi and click OK. Now go to File>Place 'pix_958712_sky.jpg'. In Options, check Constrain Proportions and increase the Width/Height to 45%, then click Return/Enter.

The table texture
02 Go to File>Place, select 'pix_2113987_table.jpg' and press Return/Enter. Move the texture below the horizon line, then go to Image>Transform>Perspective. Drag the bottom-right handles to adjust the perspective, then click Return/Enter. Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Hue/Saturation. Set the Lightness to -25 and clip the layers (Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+G).

Shortcut
Press Cmd/Ctrl+T to open the Free Transform Tool

Place the glass
03 Go to File>Place and select 'pix_1975235_glass.jpg'. Resize the image to around 200% and click Return/Enter. Grab the Magnetic Lasso Tool (L). Set the Width to 35px, Contrast to 50%, Frequency to 40 and Feather to 0. Click on the image to set the first anchor point, and draw with the Magnetic Lasso to outline the glass.
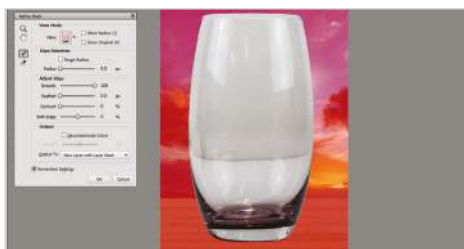
Use layer masks
04 First, grab the Polygonal Lasso Tool (L). In Options, click on Add To Selection and draw around the imperfect areas to refine the selection. Go to Select>Refine Edge. Set Smooth to 100 and Output to 'New layer with layer mask', then click OK.

THE TOOL OPTIONS
Control your tools. In the Tool Options bar, tweak the settings to customise the tools.

MASKS
Mask an object, refine the edges, then duplicate the layer before painting inside the mask.
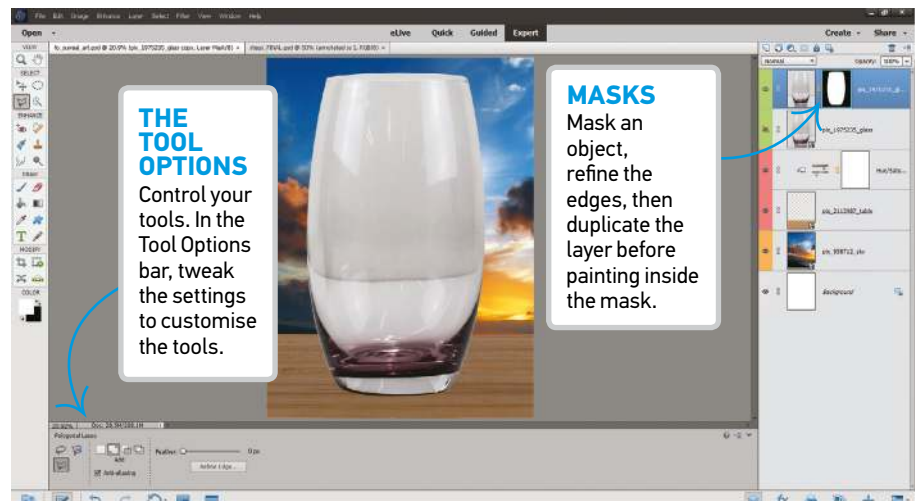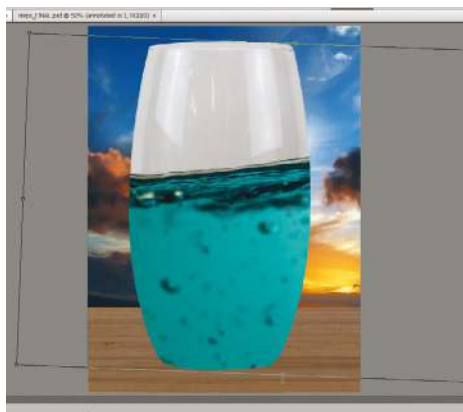
Fill the glass

05 Go to File>Place 'fo_water.jpg' and press Return/Enter. Grab the Quick Selection Tool (A) and select the water. Add a layer mask by going to Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal Selection. Press Cmd/Ctrl+T and resize the image, then clip the layers (Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+G).

Add the island

06 Place 'pix_1836050_island.jpg' and press Return/Enter. Grab the Magic Wand Tool (A). In Options, set Tolerance to 50 and uncheck Contiguous. Click on the sky to select it. Press Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert the selection and then add a layer mask. Drag the layer below the water layer.

Expert tip

Contextual menus

Most tools in Elements have a contextual menu with extra options. To access them, select any tool from the toolbox and Ctrl/right-click on the canvas to preview the options respective to that tool. Depending on the tool you are using and the location you are clicking, the menu command will change. For example, if you Ctrl/right-click on a layer, you can easily find the commands to duplicate or rename the layer, create a clipping mask, group layers and so on. The contextual menu is a great timesaver for you to try.

Make the glass transparent

07 First, duplicate the glass layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and hide the original layer. Now click on the mask to activate it. Set the Foreground colour to black. Grab a large soft brush (B). Set the brush opacity to 25% and carefully paint inside the mask to make the glass slightly transparent.

Reveal the outline

08 Click on the original glass layer and unhide it. Then drag it to the top of the layer stack. Change the blending mode to Hard Light. Grab a soft brush and using black, mask out the inside of the glass to reveal the background, but try to preserve the highlights.

Some marine life

09 Place 'fo_swordfish.png'. Resize and rotate it, placing between the wave and the surface. Now add a layer mask. Use a hard brush to mask out the swordfish at the centre to hide that area. Place 'pix_1593875_1920_turtle.png' and 'fo_fishes.png'. Cut and paste the images all over the glass.

TRANSPARENT OBJECTS
Set the brush opacity to around 25% and gradually paint inside the mask to create a realistic transparent object.

BLENDING MODES
Explore and apply blending modes to control how a layer combines with the layer below it.

REFINE EDGE
Use the Refine Edge command to fine-tune your selection and create a layer mask.
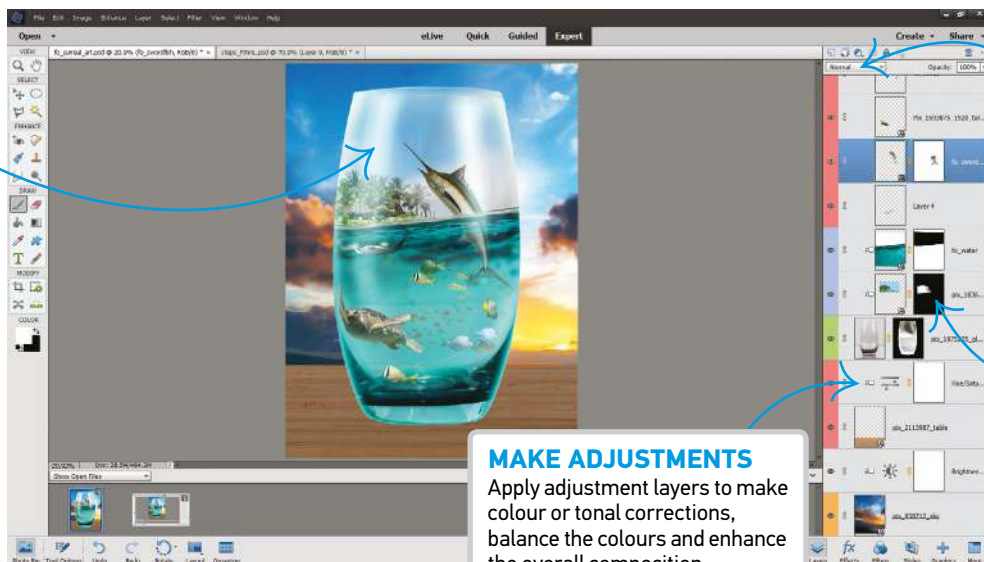
MAKE ADJUSTMENTS
Apply adjustment layers to make colour or tonal corrections, balance the colours and enhance the overall composition.

Create a group

10 Hold Shift and select all the fish layers. Press Cmd/Ctrl+G to group them. Add a new layer above the fish group and clip (Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+G). Fill with colour #3aefe9. Change the blend to Colour and reduce its opacity to 35%. Add a layer mask and mask the swordfish above the surface.
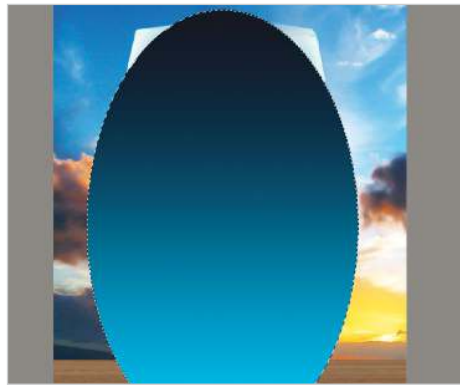
Add shadows

11 Create a new layer on top of the layer stack. With the Elliptical Marquee Tool (M), create a selection the same size as the glass. Grab the Gradient Tool (G) and create a gradient with the colours #020e25 and #1ac6f7, then apply the gradient.

Adjust the shadow

12 Place the shadows layer over the table layer. Press Cmd/Ctrl+D to deselect and apply Gaussian Blur at 10px. Grab the Free Transform Tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T) and adjust the size and angle. Change the blending mode to Overlay.

Cheerful sunlight

13 First, place the image: 'pix_238977_shell.png'. Resize it, then create a shadow underneath. Now create a new layer on top of the layer stack. Fill it with black and apply a Radial gradient using the colours #ffffff, #fd830c and #000000. Change the blend mode to Linear Dodge (Add) and reduce the opacity to 65%.

Custom brushes

14 Go to Edit>Preset Manager. Click in Append and Load 'fo_ brushes_155.abr', then click Done. Add a new layer. Grab the Brush Tool (B), choose the Light-ray brush, then paint over the layer. Apply Gaussian Blur and reduce the opacity to 25%. Paint some splash and bubbles to add more details.

Enhance lights

Achieve realistic transparency

Edit highlights and shadows to enhance transparent objects. Use a Levels adjustment layer to improve the tones of the glass image. Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Levels, adjust the Inputs and clip the layers. You can also apply it directly over a layer mask to control the transparency of the mask after you painted it. Click the mask layer thumbnail, press Cmd/Ctrl+L, then make the adjustments. Use layer styles to add new contours. Go to Layer>Layer Style>Style Settings. Choose Inner Glow or Bevel, adjust Lightning Angle, choose a blue or yellow colour and tweak the settings. Finally, use the Dodge/Burn tool, choose a low Exposure and set the Range, then paint the areas to improve.

Shortcut
Hit Cmd/Ctrl+F to repeat the last filter that you used

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Start image

Digital art…

Create a pencil sketch in Elements

Use a tiny brush and hand-drawn effects for easy photo art

Every digital art project starts out with some kind of sketch, but pencil drawings can be pieces of art in their own right. While there are plenty of filters and plug-ins that can transform your images into quick pencil sketches, it is much more fun to actually create your own from a photo of your choice.

Pencil sketches are easy to create and can evolve into other digital art projects involving custom brushes and filters if you wish. For this tutorial though, we're just going to focus on the precision of the Brush Tool and add a few custom pen strokes –

that you can create yourself – to build a completely individual picture. You may wish to use crosshatching for the shade, create a sparser picture or draw it on a black background: details like these are completely up to you.

Just remember to follow the basic principle of drawing a pencil sketch, and follow the lines of your original photo closely to get the best results. This is a tutorial that requires a lot of patience, but one that can really unleash your creativity – even if it is in (mostly) black and white.
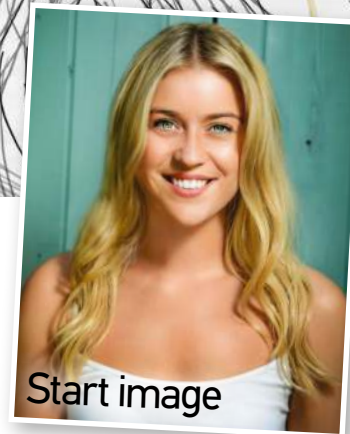
Sketch a portrait Create the hand-drawn look with a basic brush

Create a white layer

01 Start by opening the image you wish to turn into a sketch and create a new layer above. Fill with white and reduce to 50% opacity: this will act as a tracing layer for you to draw over, yet still clearly see the subject.

Adjust the brush

02 Select the Brush (B) and #4a4a4a as your foreground swatch. Reduce the brush size to around 3-6px, keep the opacity at 100% and reduce the Hardness to 80%. Play with the brush on a new layer just to check it looks like a pencil, and get ready to draw over the subject.

Draw the eyes

03 Erase your practice marks and then on your new layer, draw over the eyes. Start with the pupils, and then make flicks for the eyelashes and eyebrows. Just follow over all the darker lines in the image until you're happy with the result.

Sketch the mouth

04 Once you've completed the eyes, move on to the mouth of your subject. Create sketch-like strokes so that you cover the lips, teeth and chin, and be sure not to make the strokes too dark over the lips or corners of the mouth.
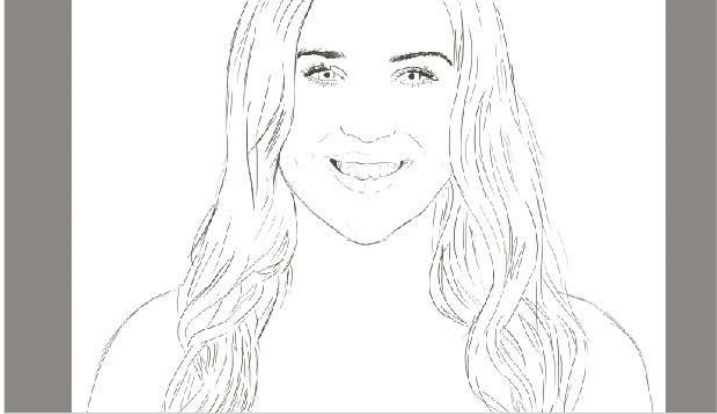
Finish tracing

05 Trace over the rest of your portrait using the techniques you used on the eyes and the mouth. You don't have to sketch the ends of the hair; just create enough shape within it. Hide the start image layer to see how the portrait is taking shape.

Shortcut
Hit [or] to change your brush size

Brush Settings

Fade:	0
Hue Jitter:	0%
Scatter:	0%
Spacing:	1%
Hardness:	80%
Roundness:	100%

Angle: 0°

Set this as a default

ROUNDNESS
Alter the Roundness using the bottom slider if you're looking to create a flat pencil effect when you sketch.

SPACING
Reduce the spacing of your brush down to 1%; otherwise you'll have bobbly, rougher lines when you sketch.

What does it mean?
BRUSH HARDNESS – The hardness of a brush refers to its edge, and whether it's soft or solid. Hard brushes are good for accuracy, but that can be difficult to achieve so soft brushes are more often used. We're using an 80% hard brush, to get the precision of a hard brush but with a softer flick.

Hatch over shadows

06 Create a new layer and reduce to 30% opacity. Using exactly the same brush, draw around the shadows before making diagonal strokes with the cursor to make shadows. This will add more depth to your portrait.
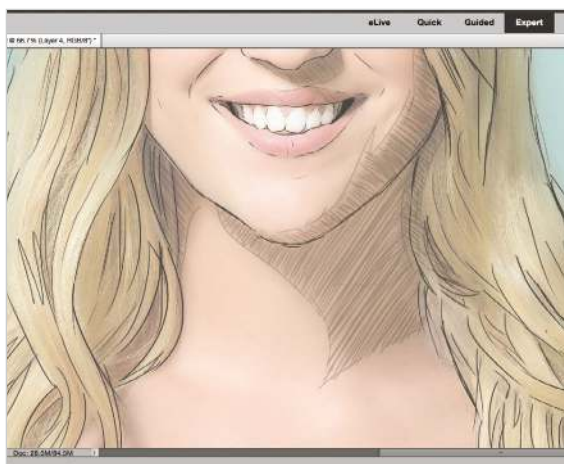
Flip the portrait

07 Naturally, it's easier to create straight, diagonal strokes in one direction, depending on whether you're left- or right-handed. Go to Image>Rotate>Flip Horizontal to flip the whole image and create natural-looking hatching in both directions.
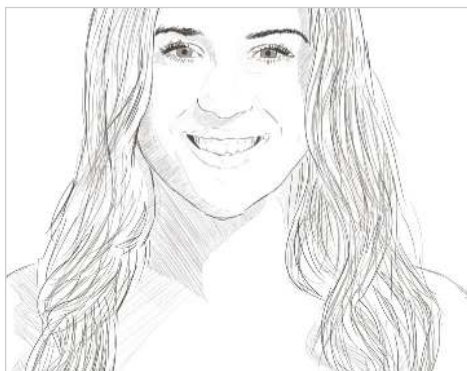
Add more to the hair

08 Create more strokes all over the hair. These don't have to be particularly neat or tidy, as they're just adding to the image generally, but follow the darker strokes you made on the first layer to ensure the hair doesn't become too messy.
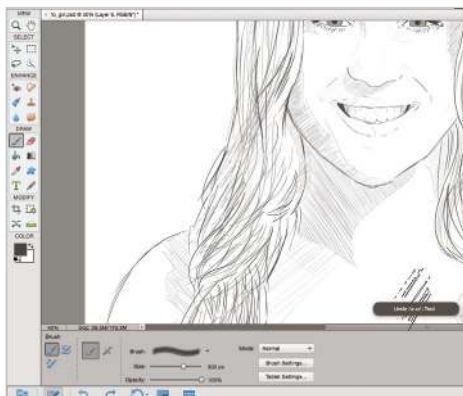
Load more brushes

09 Load the supplied pen and pencil brushes. You can use these brushes either to add more volume to the hair, or as scribbles around the portrait itself. Alter the Size and Rotation in the bottom panel.

Scribble with a pen

10 Step away from Elements for a second and, using some pens, create some squiggles on a piece of paper to incorporate into your image. Transfer these to your computer.
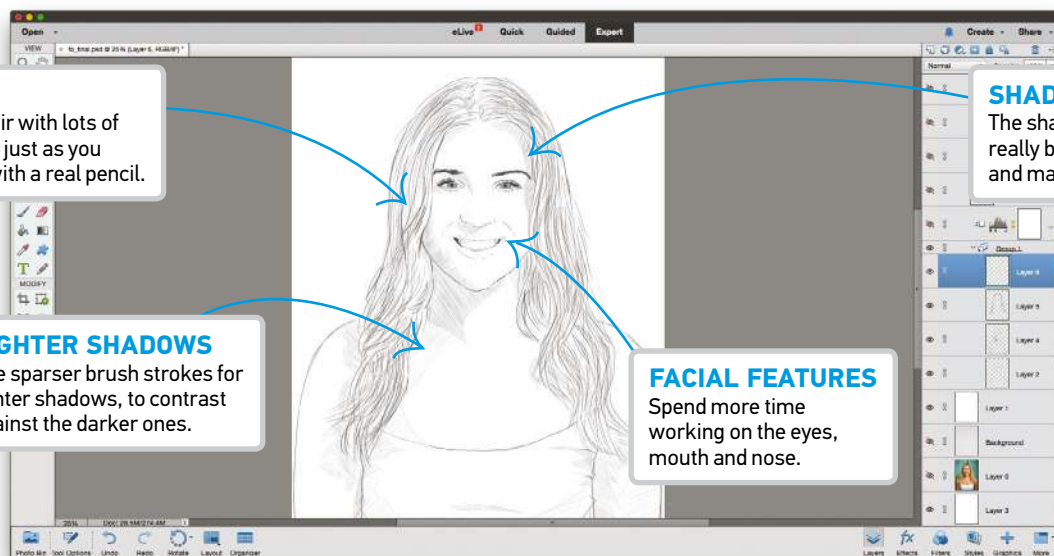
HAIR
Build up the hair with lots of brush strokes, just as you would shade with a real pencil.

SHADING
The shading around the face can really bring your sketch to life and make it look more realistic.

LIGHTER SHADOWS
Use sparser brush strokes for lighter shadows, to contrast against the darker ones.

FACIAL FEATURES
Spend more time working on the eyes, mouth and nose.
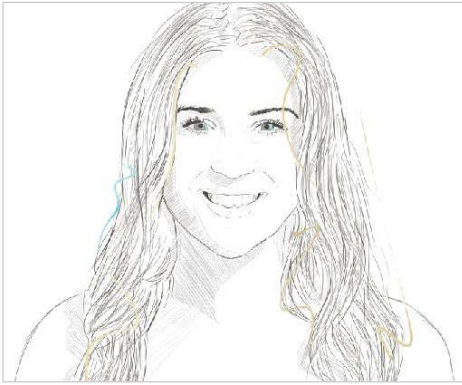
Place the squiggles

11 Add your pen scribbles into the project, adjusting them with Levels (Cmd/Ctrl+L) and then cutting them out with the Magic Wand. Place them over or around your pencil sketch to bring a touch of colour to the black-and-white drawing.
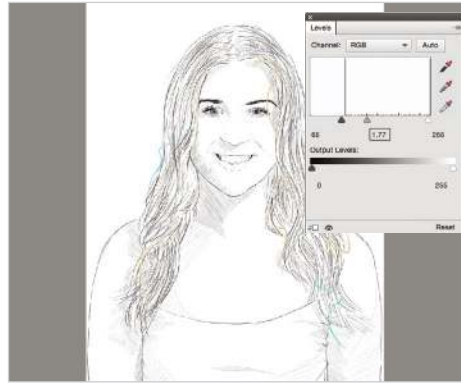
Improve the contrast

12 Use Levels again to adjust the contrast, this time of your pencil sketch layers. Select all of them, group them (Cmd/Ctrl+G) and then use the Fill Layer icon to add a Levels adjustment, before clipping it to your group (Alt/Opt-click).
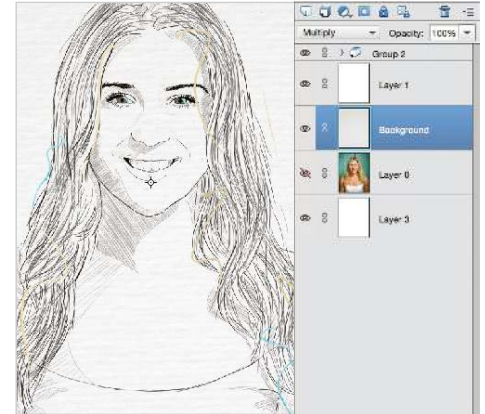
Insert a texture

13 On the FileSilo, you'll find a supplied paper texture for you to drag into the project and add below the other layers. When you're happy with it, hit Enter and reduce the opacity if need be.
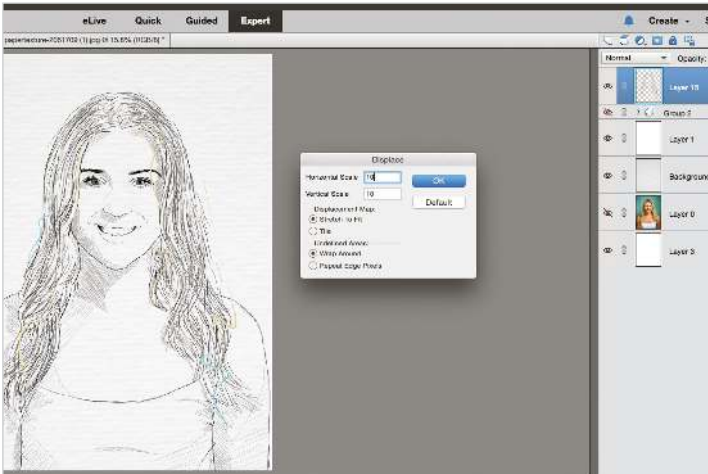
Displace the original image

14 Merge all your sketch and pen layers, hide temporarily and then save. Unhide that layer, then go to Filter>Distort>Displace. Choose the settings above and displace your sketch layers over the texture you've just placed into the image.

Tidy up the image

15 Finally, merge everything into one layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Alt/Opt+Shift+E) and use the Spot Healing Brush (J) to trace over any loose pencil marks you made throughout this image that you now want to get rid of. The Spot Healing Brush will use Content-Aware to brush intelligently over the image.

Add colour to the image
Bring back the original photo

While you might want a black-and-white pencil sketch with just a few scribbles of colourful gel pens – or you may wish to not add the pen squiggles at all – there is a simple way to create a colourful sketch based on the shades from the original photo.

Start off by dragging the original photo to the top of the layer stack, and go to Filter>Filter Gallery, before choosing Film Grain. Pick Grain: 10, Highlight Area: 20, Intensity: 10, and then click OK: this will transform your image into a brighter, more vivid layer with all the colours popping.

Group all the sketched layers by selecting them all and hitting Cmd/Ctrl+G. Alt/Opt-click the filtered layer you just created to clip it to the sketch, and this will apply all of the colours from that layer over your sketched layers.

Shortcut
Press K for the Bucket Tool, G for the Gradient Tool
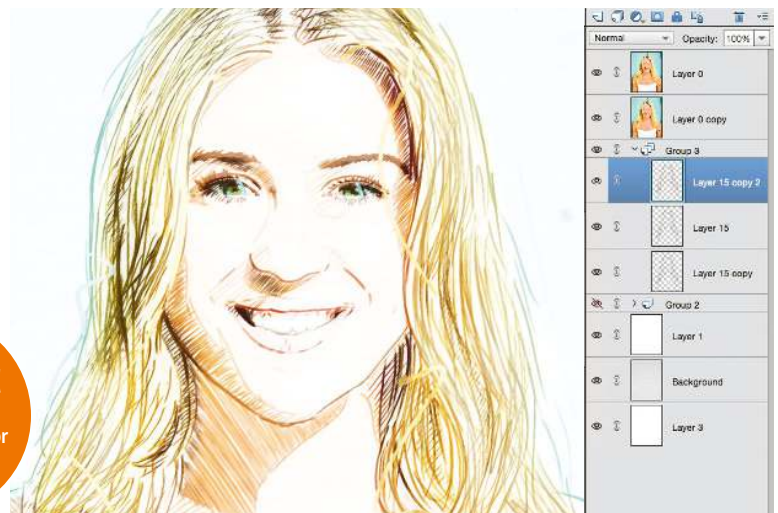
Q+A COMMON PROBLEMS IN ELEMENTS

WHAT GOES INTO THE STREET ART GENRE, AND HOW CAN IT BE CREATED IN PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS?

Street art is a genre popularised in the 1990s by the likes of Banksy, but these once-ephemeral pieces have now been immortalised thanks to the internet.

You can create street art in Elements yourself: they're often simple, mural-like pieces that send out a funny or even political message. Start by opening a wall image and add a picture to 'stencil' onto the wall. Duplicate and with one of the layers, apply Threshold from the Fill Layer icon. Alt/Opt-click to clip the layer.

With the second of these layers, go to Filter>Filter Gallery>Cutout and experiment with how your image looks with block colours. Once happy, apply and mask both these layers until you just have the outlines of your subject. Set to Multiply, 85% opacity to make it look more realistically placed onto the wall, and if need be, mask around the plants on the wall, too.

USE A NARRATIVE
Street art can just look pretty, but often it sends a message, such as this piece about selfie culture.

Before
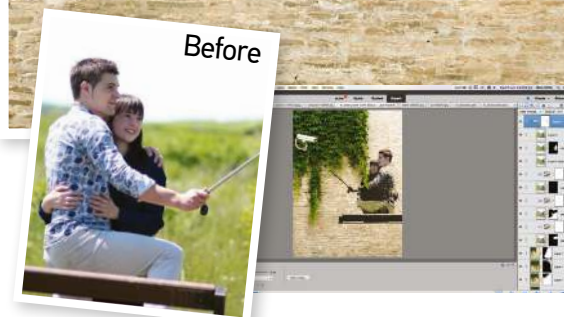
GEOMETRIC PATTERN
Mask a fill layer with a hard brush to create a geometric pattern in the background of your shield.

On the FileSilo
Download your free resources at **www.filesilo. co.uk/photoshopcreative**

Before
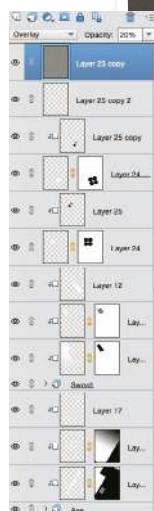
IS THERE AN EASY WAY TO CREATE GEOMETRIC LOGOS IN ELEMENTS?

Creating geometric logos might seem like a job for the Pen Tool in Photoshop, but it's just as easy to do in Elements, providing you get a little bit imaginative with the way you approach selections.

Start by creating the shield with the Marquee Tool (M): select a square and a circle and fill with #c9c9c9. Cmd/Ctrl-click the layer preview to select everything on that layer, then Ctrl/right-click to Transform Selection and delete the centre. Fill the centre with #f91343, and use the Marquee to create the central cross and circle.

Create the sword using the Marquee to make selections again; use the Elliptical Marquee for the tip of the axe and mask out the excess of the blade with a hard brush. You can mask the corners of shapes as perfectly round by using a hard brush, and to create the shine, select with the Polygonal Lasso and fill with gradients, before reducing the opacity of these layers. To create the glints, dab once with a white brush on a new layer, then mask once in each corner. Finish with a noise layer (Filter>Noise>Add Noise) set to Soft Light, 20% opacity.
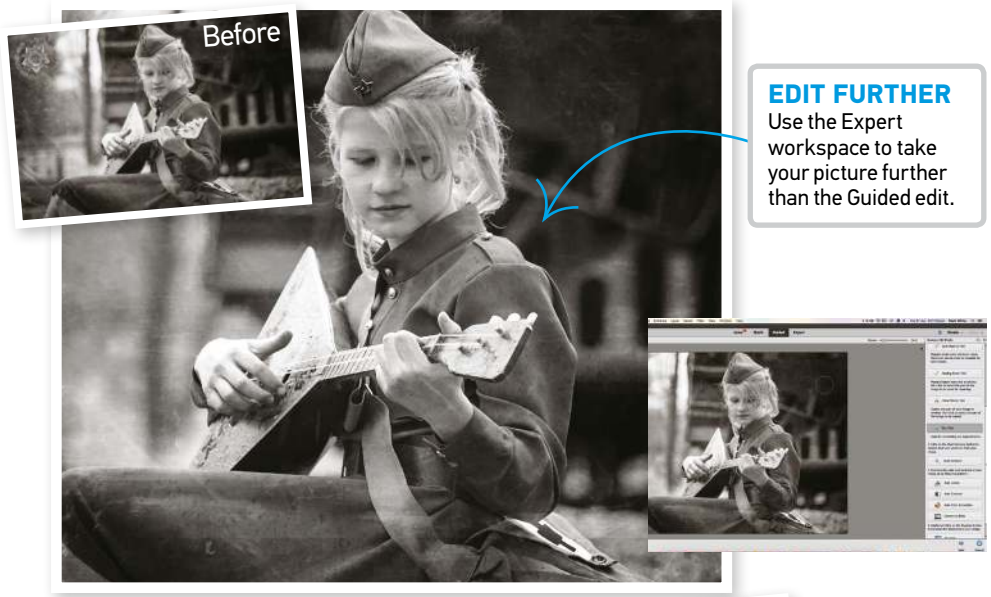
Before

WHICH TOOLS CAN BE USED TO RESTORE OLD PHOTOS IN ELEMENTS?

Learning to restore old photos is one of the most valuable photo-editing skills you can have in the real world. Luckily, Elements has just the Guided edit to help you bring your worn snaps back to the modern day.

Go to the Guided tab at the top of the program and find Restore Old Photos under Special Edits. Here, you'll find a step-by-step guide to repairing your pictures, from removing the scratches and blemishes with the Healing Brush, to blurring specific sections and removing the focus.

The last of the tools is Sharpen, which can add some much-needed detail back into the shot. Feel free to use these features either in order or as you wish.

WHAT'S A PANOSPHERE, AND HOW ARE THEY MADE?

A panosphere is a globe-like structure that you can create with filters, from any skyline. The best thing is that while it looks complicated, it only takes minutes.

Open the New York image and resize (Cmd/Ctrl+T) so it is square. Flip Vertically and choose OK. Go to Filter>Distort>Polar Coordinates to distort the skyline so one side flips to meet the other.

Select the Quick Selection Tool (A) and drag over the whole of the distorted skyline before hitting Mask. Insert a new sky behind the panosphere and if needed, create a Photo Filter above it using the Fill Layer icon. Alt/Opt-click to clip it to your panosphere and thus separate it from the background.

Before

Quick tip
Inverting layers

It's really easy to invert any layer or selection: simply hit Cmd/Ctrl+I, and you'll turn every colour and shade into its exact opposite. This is good not only because you can quickly flip between black and white, but you can use the inverted white version of a black layer to see more clearly when working. There are all kinds of effects you can use to invert, and remember to use the Difference blend mode to invert, too.

HOW CAN I ADJUST COLOUR CURVES IN MY PHOTOS?

The Curves Tool is one of the most popular adjustments in Photoshop, and there isn't a direct equivalent in Elements. However, you can get pretty close with the Adjust Colour Curves command (Enhance>Adjust Colour>Adjust Colour Curves). It is perfect for tweaking the contrast, brightness and shadows in your image.

Select a style to begin with, and scroll through until you find the one that you're happy with. You may wish to choose one and just use that, but Elements also offers sliders to adjust the highlights, midtone brightness, midtone contrast and shadows, should you wish to have more control.

Before

HARDWARE **Price** £ 3,436.99/$3,499 **Web** canon.co.uk

Canon EOS 5D Mark IV

The newest member of the EOS 5D family, but is it the best?

Photoshop creative **EDITOR'S CHOICE**

TOUCHSCREEN
The touchcreen around the back is very responsive, making the camera really easy to use.

DEEP GRIP
The deepened grip makes the camera comfortable to hold.

DIALS AND CUSTOMISABLE BUTTONS
The drive mode dial makes it easy to change settings and the customisable buttons mean you can adapt it to your own needs.

Using the EOS 5D Mark IV Get the most out of this powerful and professional camera

Set to manual

01 In order to have the most control, we'd suggest that you shoot in Manual mode. Set the drive mode dial to M. This means you will be able to adapt your settings to the type of image that you want to take and it will also help give you a better understanding of what is happening in-camera.

Choose RAW

02 Shooting in RAW is far better than JPEG. It means you capture more information, giving far more flexibility post-production. Go into the Cameras menu and select the RAW shooting option. There is also the option for you to shoot both JPEG and RAW at the same time.

Set the autofocus

03 You can manually focus the camera if you wish, however the EOS 5D Mark IV has a superior autofocus system that will enable you to take stunningly sharp pictures every time. As we were shooting on the street, we enabled AI SERVO, which is perfect for capturing moving subjects with ease.

The Canon EOS 5D Mark IV was introduced by Canon to replace the popular Mark III and is packed with a range of new and improved features, which really impress and it feels like one of the most versatile EOS models yet.

The 36x24mm CMOS sensor has been booted up from 22.3MP in the Mark III to an impressive 30.4MP in the EOS 5D Mark IV, and the new full-frame sensor delivers images that are jam-packed with detail – even in the brightest highlights and darkest shadows. The EOS 5D Mark IV houses a Digic 6+ processor as well as a Digic 6 processor. It is the first time that a camera of this level has two processors at launch.

The ISO ranges from 100 to 32000 – which is expandable from 50 to 102400 – and in our tests we were able to capture great-quality images in almost any lighting condition without noise being hugely problematic. This is due to the enhanced noise-processing algorithm that improves low-light shooting. We were careful to ensure we tested the camera both in bright sunlight and dark indoor environments, and were very impressed with the ISO performance.

The new camera can shoot 7fps full-resolution images with full AF/AE tracking, which is impressively fast and responsive. We never felt the camera having to hunt for focus and there was little to no lag while shooting. It can also capture up to 21 RAW files in one burst or an unlimited number of JPEGS, plus in Live View the EOS 5D Mark IV can capture 4fps, which is more than its predecessor.

The 61-point wide-area reticular AF system makes tracking subjects incredibly easy – we were really impressed with the AF when we did some street photography with it, as we were able to lock onto and focus on moving subjects. The 61-points/41 cross-type AF points cover an expanded sensor area and provide the ability to focus even under moonlight at EV -3 in viewfinder shooting mode, or EV -4 in Live View mode, which is really impressive.

The EOS 5D Mark IV is the first EOS camera to premiere the innovative Dual Pixel RAW file format, which enables photographers to fine-tune images in post-production by adjusting or correcting the point of sharpness, shifting the foreground bokeh or reducing image ghosting, which is really great for making changes once the shot has been taken. Not only that, but the Canon EOS 5D Mark IV can record in 4K and provides the ability to extract 8.8MP JPEG images from the 4K videos.

In appearance it is fairly similar to the EOS 5D Mark III; however, it has a deeper grip as well as a lighter weight thanks to a redesigned mirror box, and we felt the 50-gram weight difference between the 5D Mark III and the Mark IV made a great deal of difference. Fifty grams might not seem like much, but it does really improve overall handling, and the deepened grip made holding it feel very comfortable and intuitive. There is also a customisable button on the back that gives the user more flexibility and makes changing some settings easier. In addition to the design differences, the Mark IV has improved weather proofing and durability, so we were never overly worried about dust or moisture during testing.

The touchscreen capabilities make using the camera really easy. The Mark IV boasts enhanced connectivity with built-in Wi-Fi that will enable remote operation and secure file transfer via smart devices using the Canon Camera Connect app. NFC provides instant connections between compatible devices, which is great for sharing imagery easily online as well as helping to streamline the workflow. The smartphone app is quick to connect and image transfer is also speedy.

Additionally, for the first time, photographers will be able to enter IPTC metadata in-camera that will be automatically embedded into their images. It may not be the flashiest addition, but it will greatly speed up the workflow for many photographers.

The verdict

9 This camera impresses. It is durable, comfortable and gives stunning images. Autofocus is extremely responsive and low-light performance is fantastic.

Standout feature

Touchscreen capabilities
The Mark IV has a touchscreen that is active all the time across all menus and can be used for quick and easy AF point selection, which will be a gift to some photographers. You can scroll through images in playback with a simple swipe and tap to move through the menus.

Open in Photoshop

04 Although the colours and contrast were stunning in the images we captured, a little post-processing is always a good idea. We selected a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer to bring out some of the colours as well as Brightness & Contrast to increase the contrast slightly.

Remember to sharpen

05 Due to the anti-aliasing filter on the sensor you will always have to sharpen your images slightly. To do this we simply added a Sharpening adjustment layer. Just be careful you don't over-sharpen at this stage – we wouldn't recommend the Radius to be over 2.

The specs

Company • Afterlight Collective, Inc

Additional specs
iOS 8.0 or later • Android 4.0.3 or later

Afterlight

Fix levels, add filters and inject light effects into your photos

For some, Photoshop's most-used tools are the adjustments. They can quickly transform images non-destructively, and can be used in any project.

Afterlight is an app that works in a similar way to the adjustments, in that it doesn't add anything new to your pictures, but it does get the best out of them. The basic adjustments include sharpening, cropping, highlights, shadows and adding colour to the highlights, midtones and shade, making it adept at all kinds of photo-editing tweaks. There's a collection of high-quality filters too, which are perfect for adding a retro twist to your images.

Where Afterlight truly stands out is in the light leaks it offers. There's an array of default ones to use, with the option to buy more. You can alter not just opacity, but colour too. This makes Afterlight perfect for creating vintage shots, and for adding subtle colour filters across your images.

Afterlight is one of the most complete apps out there, and it blends power and style. If you're looking to adjust photos on your phone, this is the app for you.

The verdict

9 A creative mix of sharp editing functions and fancy overlays, Afterlight is a great photo-editing app to have at your disposal.

Lomography Petzval 58 Bokeh Control Art Lens

Does this striking lens produce imagery to match its looks?

The Petzval Bokeh control lens is the ideal choice for photographers looking to add a little creativity to photography. The lens itself comes in a stylish black finish or a striking brass look. Annoyingly though, the brass shows every fingerprint and scuff so it loses its pristine shine pretty quickly, especially if you change lenses frequently. We also found the lens cap quite infuriating as it fell off extremely easily in our camera bag.

However, once we got past our slight annoyances, we discovered a really impressive bit of kit. It is the perfect lens for portrait and street photographers because of the stunning bokeh you can create. However, it will also add a bit extra to landscapes. The lens itself has a 58mm focal length, bokeh control ring and a super-bright f1.8 maximum aperture.

We tested the Nikon F fit lens, but it also comes in the Canon EF fit and there are adapters that can be purchased so you can use it with the Sony Alpha range and more.

You have to manually focus when using the lens, but the knob is easy to use and responsive so you won't have to worry too much about missing focus. The bokeh adjustment ring is what makes it stand out – with each bokeh and aperture combination you'll get different effects, and the bokeh that is produced has a unique swirly appearance. Images come out crisp and sharp thanks to the premium Russian glass optics, and the colours are truly beautiful. It does take a little practice, but once mastered you'll probably never want to go back to a standard lens, especially for portraits.

The specs

Company • Lomography

Additional specs
58mm focal length • Fast f1.8 aperture
Bokeh control ring • Available in Canon and Nikon mounts

You can capture stunning bokeh while keeping your subject sharp.

The glass elements allow plenty of light through for rich colours.

The verdict

9 A stunning lens producing creative captures that will stand out against shots captured with a normal lens. Only minor issue was the easily tarnished finish.

PLUG-IN   **Price** £100 (approx) $129.99 US   **Web** https://pixnub.com/

RESAMPLE
The Resample option is great for maintaining the image quality in your picture, even after you've cropped it.

PREVIEW
You can watch your image take shape in Photoshop, just as if you were using the default Crop tool the program offers.

SLIDERS
The sliders can help you to tweak and perfect the crop that you're making to your image, from zoom to position.

The specs

Company
Pixnub

Additional specs
Photoshop CC 2015.5 or above
Windows/Mac

Standout feature

Batch Crop
Portrait Crop's big selling point is that it can save time cropping, so it's only right that its best feature is its ability to Batch Crop. Find a folder of images you want to crop, and you can run the plug-in over each image.

Pixnub Portrait Crop

Cut the perfect picture and save editing time with this Pixnub plug-in for Photoshop

To many Photoshop users, cropping is the very last thing you do with a picture, if at all. Cropping is seen as quite a boring edit in Photoshop, but the truth is that it can totally transform your picture by altering the composition.

Portrait Crop, a small Photoshop plug-in from Pixnub that embeds itself in the Filters menu, is just the tool to show how important cropping is. It not only creates a fantastic crop based on facial recognition in your image, but it can help to save you tons of editing time.

As well as being powerful and efficient, Portrait Crop is also wonderfully simple.

Simply go to the Filter menu, select it, and it will immediately get to work at recognising a face in the image before making a provisional crop. You can click OK from here and crop fully, but the plug-in enables you to fine-tune the details, such as how central the face appears, and how zoomed-in the image is.

This on its own saves time cropping portraits, but where Portrait Crop really comes into its own is with its batch feature. The ability to crop multiple portraits quickly and competently is something that will appeal to professional photographers and hobbyists in equal part, and the plug-in does a great job

of finding the faces even with subjects wearing glasses or posing against a transparent background.

Portrait Crop is a plug-in that every Photoshop user can find a job for. It's easy to use, but its results are superb.

The verdict

9

A fantastic tool for photographers, Portrait Crop is a powerful, quick-to-use plug-in that excels when put to the test with batch processing.

5 key features Improve compositions with Portrait Crop

Find it in Filters
01 As with most plug-ins, start by going to the Filters menu. You'll find Portrait Crop and Portrait Crop Batch at the bottom of the menu.

Face detection
02 Click on Portrait Crop, and the plug-in will start running the Face Detection, which looks for a face in your image to crop around.

Apply a preset
03 Instead of using the sliders to find the perfect look for your image, fix it in a single step and use the Preset dialog menu.

Adjust further
04 Now, should you need to, you can alter the zoom of the image along with the face position both horizontally and vertically.

Resample
05 Finally, choose the resolution of the exported picture and decide whether or not you want to save to the same image or save as a copy.

Illustrating for album covers

Martí Serra uses liquid effects, real ink and even 3D to create album covers and posters, but it's Photoshop that ties all his work together

Martí Serra is an artist who claims that he has an unorthodox method of using Photoshop. But whatever method he uses, it hasn't stopped him receiving acclaim for his work from a number of sources. The Barcelona-based designer has had thousands of views online, and created a number of album covers.

We caught up with him to find out his artistic secrets.

Can you give us idea of how a project begins for you, Martí?

First of all, I come up with a basic concept, I investigate the subject, and then I like to experiment with different techniques. I think of what I would like to achieve or what would work for that piece and then I make some sketches on paper or directly in Photoshop with a graphics tablet. Then I develop, and in the process of the work I come up with ideas until I get to the final piece. I studied at art school and later illustration, and I have always been clear that art is what I am passionate about creating, whether it be designing, illustrating, or creating concepts to represent.

How would you describe your style to someone?

That's a really difficult question! I like to do many different things, I get tired of doing the same thing all the time, and though people say they see a style in my work, I do not feel that way particularly. I like to experiment, play with new processes and change the way I approach things with every project. I like my pieces to have magic, movement and fluidity, with organic details and above all, I just aim to create work that is visually appealing to me. The most important thing is to feel that the medium, the technique or the aesthetics of each project, is the perfect one for that piece. This makes me feel great.

How does Photoshop help you to create your work?

I discovered Photoshop when my parents bought me my first computer in 1995. The computer programmer installed the software and after studying arts and crafts I learned to use it in school. I am therefore very self-taught with the program, so I like to investigate and experiment when I create. When working with agencies, I have noticed that sometimes I have a somewhat strange way of working with the program. I love the gradients, the masks and the brushes. A lot of the time, I work in Illustrator and then use Photoshop to give the finished image more volume or detail.

Would you recommend Photoshop beginners teach themselves, as you have done?

Yes! Look closely at other artists' pieces, and analyse them to deduce how they are created. Then adapt this process to the program, bring in your style, and over time I guess creating will become more of an automatic process for your brain. I have many artists that I'm influenced by, and you can always find ideas and ways of working from them. I suppose all your influences are reflected in one way or another in your work. You always evolve, even more if you are restless. I get bored quickly, and so I need to work on many different projects, and I love to take on fresh ideas.

Which projects have you worked on that you're most proud of?

Good question! I am always dissatisfied: when finishing the piece, I visualise it and say, "This is good!" I deliver it to the client, and after a week, I say, "I don't like anything about this, I must do better!" Despite this, though, I really like the *Heart* project I worked on (a collection of four album covers), for several reasons. The client, Oscar, called me and told me to do

what I wanted; I had complete freedom of concept, technique and aesthetics. I was able to develop the concept from scratch based on the layers of the Earth, representing the centre of the Earth as the largest heart of our world. I found the process of these designs fascinating too: I vibrated the ink on a speaker while the music played; it was very organic and fun to create, and the final artwork I personally think works very well as a collection of covers for an electronic music label.

Since you create a lot organically, does Photoshop help tie strands of your work together?

Definitely. Colour adjustments and masks are very important in my pieces and until I get to Photoshop, the colours and gradients in my work are never finalised.

Can you tell us about your upcoming projects?

Looking forward, I would like to be able to advance in materials like inks. I just want to learn more every day, and to be able to create magical things with my own rules.


36daysoftype: *36 Days of Type* is a project that invites designers, illustrators and graphic artists to express their particular view on letters and numbers of our alphabet. These were some of the chrome lettering images I did for the project that were coloured in Photoshop.

Cloudkid: This was a vector illustration created in Adobe Illustrator, with the final adjustments made in Adobe Photoshop. This was the album cover for *Imagine*.
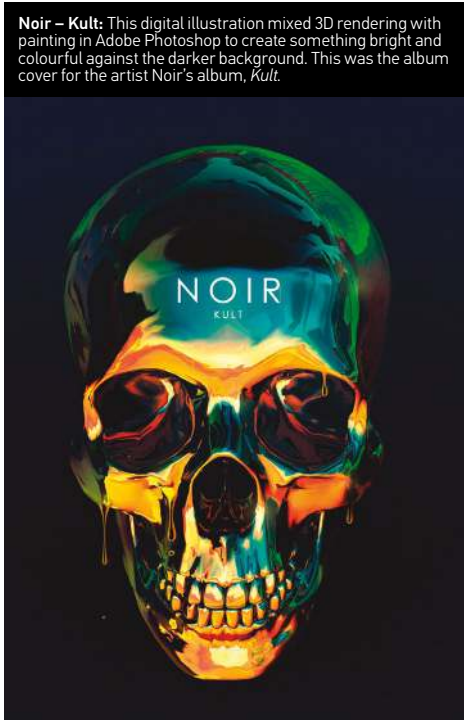
Noir – Kult: This digital illustration mixed 3D rendering with painting in Adobe Photoshop to create something bright and colourful against the darker background. This was the album cover for the artist Noir's album, *Kult*.

World Changes too Fast: This poster used noise as a final layer and gradients to create the illusion of the globe having liquid in the middle. The fluid motion of the painting was achieved through brushes and colour-correction techniques.

He-art: The colour adjustments for this image were managed in Photoshop. He-art Recordings is a record label managed by Oscar Aguilera, and these covers were part of a collection of releases from the label.

Save your Fear: Creating the three-dimensional feel of the shapes along with the gradients in this image, was all made possible with Photoshop. This poster was created in 2014.

Inner Glow: A lot of time was spent mastering the volume in this image, along with the gradients in Photoshop. This was featured in Wacom's online gallery.

DSORDER 2014

SAVE YOUR FEAR

MTE Travel

Sphinx

Animals Fly

Trainer

The Space

Heart

The making of Heart

How Emad created his heart composition with shapes and selections

Create the heart

Start with a blank background and create a new layer. Go to the Custom Shape Tool and select a heart shape. Drag it onto the canvas and place it in the middle, with space all around it for other elements.
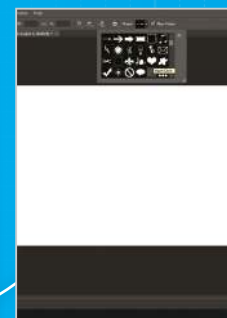
Add some leaves

Place leaves into the image and position them around the outside of the heart. Make sure that there are different sizes and shapes of leaves to vary them and keep them to the edges of the shape.

Build up the elements

Add more leaves to the image to completely cover the heart, and when you're happy, hide the black shape from before. Add some wings to the image and place them either side. Add a bird, too.

Adjust

Place a sky background at the bottom of the layer stack. Create a warm gradient and set to Soft Light; add any additional adjustments to help unify the elements in the composition.

Emad Helail

Egyptian artist Emad Helail on how to master Photoshop and develop your own signature style

"I've been working with Photoshop for a long time now," says Emad Helail, a 29-year-old Egyptian designer who works in advertising. "I love Photoshop because you can reach all kinds of audiences with just one piece of software."

We spoke to Emad about compositions, tips for beginners and how he's developed his own style.

What do you think makes a good Photoshop composition?

I personally find that when you're playing in Photoshop, it's important to create a memorable story. When you're mastering skills with any kind of technology, it can be frustrating when you don't get the results you want straight away. You just need to have fun, and this will show through in your work.

What tips do you think are useful for Photoshop beginners?

Learn how to use each tool separately, and you'll be able to use them together on bigger projects. For example, picking consistent colours to suit the design can help attract attention on its own, but it's a big part of the unity of your composition. Worry about every detail and you will improve as an artist.

Do you have any recurring themes in your work?

Sometimes I use the same few backgrounds, though not in all my work, just to keep some familiarity. I try to use nature in all my work too, and I like my work to feel calm.

What would you say are your favourite Photoshop tools?

There's nothing that I like to use more than anything else; I like to just use whatever the image needs. I'd like to think that my work looks unique and individual!
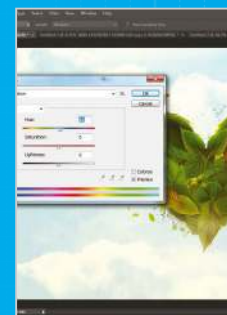
You can find more of Emad's work at **https:// www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/emad%20 helail**

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