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FEATHER
Explore your softer side with the feather command, p16

TAKE
COVER
Increase your image’s flexibility with faux layer masks, p25
As we enter the holiday season and 2006 comes to a close, I’m sure many of you have some special gadgets on your holiday list. Be it a pen tablet, a new computer, books, or even a new camera or lens, you’ll undoubtedly have plenty to keep you busy over the next couple of months.

But regardless of what new gear you get, I’d like to point out that in our newsletter and website we’re always showing you plenty of useful and fun things to do with these new toys using Adobe Photoshop Elements.

Whether you’re into digital photography, scrapbooking, or designing graphics, they all start with one common idea—good photos. So take an extra few moments to consider lighting, composition, digital effects, and editing to better enhance your cherished holiday photos.

On behalf of everyone at Adobe Photoshop Elements Techniques and myself, I’d like to wish you and your families a wonderful holiday season. Eat lots of food, give lots of presents, enjoy the presents you receive, and take lots of photos to remember those treasured moments.

Matt Kloskowski
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YOUR LEARNING DOESN’T STOP HERE!
It continues online, where you get exclusive access to print and video tutorials, discussion forums, downloads, and a personal user gallery. It’s all part of the value-added benefits of being an Adobe Photoshop Elements Techniques newsletter and website subscriber. Wherever you see the symbol at the end of an article, it means there’s additional material for that story at www.photoshopelementsuser.com/subscriber/printextras.php.
HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT HOW ONE COLOR CAN DRAMATICALLY CHANGE THE ENTIRE MOOD OF A PHOTO AND THE FEELING IT ELICITS? PHOTOGRAPHERS SOMETIMES ATTACH WARMING OR COOLING FILTERS TO THE END OF A LENS TO ACHIEVE A DRAMATIC COLOR EFFECT, BUT WITH ADOBE PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS YOU CAN DO THE SAME THING WITH JUST A FEW CLICKS.

STEP ONE: First open a photo that you’d like to work with. The warming effect we’re going to apply here generally works best on soft, soothing photos that didn’t quite turn out as soft and soothing as we’d like. In other words, you probably don’t want to apply it to an action photo taken at a football game.

STEP TWO: On the Layers palette, you’ll see a little half black/half white circular icon. This is the Create Adjustment Layer icon. Click on that icon and choose Photo Filter.

STEP THREE: When you do this you’ll see the Photo Filter dialog pop up. It’s here that you can adjust the entire feeling of a photo. For starters, the Warming Filter (85) will be applied by default. Try leaving that setting and just adjusting the Density slider near the bottom of the dialog. I’ve increased mine here. Increasing it will apply more of the warming effect and decreasing it will apply less.

STEP FOUR: Click OK when you’re done and you’ll now have a photo that has an orangish/yellowish warm feel to it. Just like that, you’ve changed the entire mood of your photo with one dialog. It actually makes this photo appear as if it were taken during a morning sunrise.
STEP FIVE: It doesn’t stop here, though. The warming filter is “live,” which means that you can change it at any time. Look in the Layers palette. You’ll see a new layer added above your photo. That’s the Photo Filter adjustment layer. Since it’s an adjustment layer, you can double-click on its thumbnail to edit the settings. So go ahead and do just that. You’ll see the Photo Filter dialog open again.

STEP SIX: Under the Filter pop-up menu, change the setting from Warming Filter (85) to Cooling Filter (82). The cooling filter doesn’t work all that well on the photo of the horse but if you try a different photo, you’ll see that you can really produce a nice cooling effect that’s reminiscent of a nighttime scene or a cold day.

As you can see, a simple adjustment can really take a plain photo and totally change it to something that has more feeling to it. The sky’s the limit here. Try experimenting with some of the other colors to see how they look. ■

Matt Kloskowski is Education and Curriculum Developer for the National Association of Photoshop Professionals. He has authored or co-authored several books on Photoshop and Illustrator. His latest book is The Photoshop CS2 Speed Clinic from Peachpit Press. Matt also teaches an advanced Photoshop course for www.sessions.edu.
moving the light

SEEING THE LIGHT—THE QUALITY, CONTRAST, INTENSITY, DIRECTION, AND COLOR—is the first step in taking a good picture. We can use accessories like a diffuser or a flash to affect the lighting as well as setting our cameras accordingly to take the shot. We can also affect the light after taking the photo.

STEP ONE: We can control the light, to a degree, in Adobe Photoshop Elements using Lighting Effects. Let's begin by using a portrait of one of my friends, Chandler. Taken on an overcast day, the photograph contains light that's diffused, soft, and flat. Let's see how Lighting Effects can create a more dramatic image. Go to Filter>Render>Lighting Effects. When you open the dialog, it can look pretty intimidating, but as you'll see, you can get some very nice effects using only a few of the controls.

[To follow along, download the image used in this tutorial at www.photoshopelements-user.com/subscriber/printextras.php.]

STEP TWO: As you become familiar with this creative filter, you'll want to play around with Style and Light Type. But for now, let's start with the default settings. In the Preview window, click on the center anchor point (the little white dot in the center of the oval) and drag it around to move the spotlight. Here I chose a point slightly to the left (her right) of Chandler's nose. Now click on the lower-right anchor point on the oval and spin that point around to the two o'clock position, as I have done. You can experiment with moving the anchor points toward and away from the subject for a more or less intense effect. As you move the anchor points, try adjusting the Intensity and Exposure to get the desired result. In this example, I also decreased the Ambience to –15.
STEP THREE: If you use the Intensity, Exposure, and Ambience settings as shown in the previous step (the only settings I usually change), after you click OK, Chandler’s portrait should look like this—with nice top/side lighting. Again, I encourage you to experiment with the placement of the anchor points. You’ll be amazed at how you can create different lighting effects.

STEP FOUR: Now let’s take a look at how selecting Omni as the Light Type affects the image. After selecting Omni, adjust the Intensity, Exposure, and Ambience sliders as shown here. These settings are only suggestions—choose your own for your own unique style of lighting.

STEP FIVE: After you click OK, Chandler’s portrait has a nice center spotlight for a mysterious look. I also used the Healing Brush tool to remove some of the small blemishes from Chandler’s face. Plus, I used the Dodge tool to whiten the whites of her eyes (an enhancement that fashion art directors use all the time). So when the light is flat, don’t let your pictures fall flat. Use Lighting Effects to create a more dramatic image.

Rick Sammon has published 27 books, including Rick Sammon’s Digital Imaging Workshops, written for Photoshop Elements users. He has also produced a DVD for Photoshop Elements users: 3-Minute Digital Makeovers. See www.ricksammon.com and www.rickspixelmagic.com for more information.
back to the ’60s: make pop art!

BY SARA FROELICH

They say if you can remember the ’60s you weren’t there, but everyone remembers pop art, whether you wore flowers in your hair or not. The ’60s were a colorful time in many ways: politics, music, and art, and forty years later pop art remains a popular illustration style.

Pop art emerged in the 1950s and 1960s and had many influences, including advertising and comic books. Roy Lichtenstein was one of the major artists of the time, making the style of art called “pop” more popular. The style involves creating halftone patterns and using bold, bright colors. Halftone patterns are also used to create gradients on people and patterns.

In this issue, I’ll show you how to take a photo and give it a pop-art style using Adobe Photoshop Elements. First, we’ll need a photo of a person to use. Finding the photo might be the hardest part of the project. Try to find a portrait rather than a whole body photo, and you’ll need one with good contrast, which we can add using the photo editing tools and Levels settings in Photoshop Elements.

EXTRACT, DUPLICATE, AND DESATURATE
Our first task is to isolate the subject and then create really strong contrast.

STEP ONE: Open your photo in Photoshop Elements and crop it if you wish. I cropped mine using the Crop tool (C) to focus on the face. Use the Crop tool to click-and-drag to emphasize an area, or resize the entire image if you want to make it smaller (Image>Resize>Image Resize). Convert the Background layer to a regular layer by double-clicking on the layer in the Layers palette and clicking OK (we’ll just leave the default name of “Layer 0”).

STEP TWO: Remove the person from the background using your favorite selection tool. I used the Magic Extractor (Image>Magic Extractor) to remove the boy from the photo. If you prefer to use another selection tool such as the Lasso tool (L) or Magic Wand tool (W), make sure to delete the background area so it becomes transparent (once the background is selected, press Backspace [Mac: Delete]).

STEP THREE: Press Control-J (Mac: Command-J) to duplicate the layer. Double-
CREATE HALFTONE PATTERN

We’ll use the Color Halftone filter to add a pattern of dots to help create the pop-art look.

STEP ONE: Add a new layer by clicking the Create a New Layer icon, and drag the layer between layer 0 and the outline layer. Name it “color.” Fill it with a bright color that contrasts with your image. This is just a working layer used to keep your painting visible, and doesn’t have to be the color you plan to use for the final background. Click on the Foreground color swatch at the bottom of the Tool-box, choose a Foreground color in the Color Picker, and then fill the layer with that color using the Paint Bucket tool (K); I used a bright blue (settings are R:0, G:174, and B:239).

STEP TWO: Click on the outline layer and choose Layer>Duplicate Layer. In the Duplicate Layer dialog, choose New as the destination document. Click OK and you’ll have two images open—the original and the new document just created by duplicating the layer.

On the new document, go to Image>Mode>Grayscale, and when asked if you want to discard color information, click OK. The reason we made a new image and converted it to grayscale is that the Color Halftone filter we’ll use to create the halftone effect will create colored dots unless we use it on a grayscale image. We’re going to create the grayscale halftone look and then copy it to our original file.

STEP THREE: Go to Filter>Pixelate>Color Halftone and set the Max Radius to 4 pixels, which is the smallest allowed setting. This will keep the dots small. Leave the Screen Angles settings at the defaults and click OK.

STEP FOUR: Lighten the image with Levels (Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Levels). Drag the Highlights slider to the left, and the Shadows slider to the right until the image is light but with good contrast. With the sample image here, I set the values of the Input Levels to 71, .58, and 191.

STEP FOUR: Select the Move tool (V). While holding the Shift key, drag the halftone image from its window and drop it into the first image. Release the mouse button and it will center itself on the image in a new layer. Name the layer “halftone” and change its blend mode from Normal to Multiply in the Layers palette. Now you have four layers: Layer 0, color, outline, and halftone.
PAINT THE IMAGE
Now it’s time to add some color back into the image.

STEP ONE: Select the outline layer in the Layers palette and click the Create a New Layer icon on the Layers palette. The new layer will be created above the selected layer, between the outline and halftone layers. Name this new layer “paint.”

STEP TWO: Keep this new layer selected and choose the Paint Brush tool (B) in the Toolbox. In the Options Bar, choose a hard round brush. Choose a skin tone for the Foreground color and start to paint on the paint layer over the skin areas. I chose the following settings: R:216, G:184, and B:167. Because the upper layer called halftone is set to the Multiply blend mode, you’ll see your paint through the areas that are white on the upper layer. When you have painted all the skin, change the Foreground color and paint the shirt, making sure you keep painting only on the paint layer.

ADD POP-ART BACKGROUND
When you’re finished touching up the painting, it’s time to add the background.

STEP ONE: Select the color layer (mine is blue) and add a gradient fill—select the Gradient tool (G) and click-and-drag across the image. I used the Orange, Yellow, Orange gradient in the default gradients set to Radial (choose these options in the Options Bar). Because I wanted to accent the head a little, I started near the middle of the face and clicked. Holding down the mouse button, I dragged to the upper-right corner and released to apply the gradient.

STEP TWO: With the same layer still selected, go to Filter>Pixelate>Color Halftone. This time set all the angles to 45 and set the Max size to a larger setting (10 works well, since this will produce larger dots). Click OK to apply.

This adds a pop-art background to the pop-art portrait. Save a copy of the image if you would like to use it for a website or scrapbook, and be sure to save the Photoshop Elements file as well, in case you want to change certain layer settings later.

Sara Froehlich teaches online classes at Eclectic Academy (www.eclecticacademy.com) in Photoshop Elements, Photoshop, Xara Xtreme, and more. She also teaches Illustrator and Photoshop Special F/X at LVS Online (www.lvsonline.com) and is the Editor of Designorati: Illustration at Designorati (www.designorati.com). For more information on all of her classes, go to www.northlite.net
There are some talented digital artists who have the skill to use the brush tool to create amazingly beautiful works of art from scratch. I'm just not one of them. The good news is that even less talented artists who use Adobe Photoshop Elements can pull off beautiful works of art with just a little brush tool know-how.

Let's cover the brush basics and some of the techniques for using brushes, and next time we'll get a little crazy with the Impressionist Brush. Because several tools that we've already covered in past issues use the analogy of a digital paintbrush (the Healing Brush tool, the Clone Stamp tool, and the Eraser tools), you're probably already pretty comfortable with the idea of using the Brush tool for painting in your image. Some people don't use the plain Brush tool very much, but there are a couple of specific things to use it for. If you're an artist, I'm sure you'll be able to accomplish a lot.

Select the Brush tool by pressing B, or if you click-and-hold on the Brush tool in the Toolbox you'll see a flyout menu that shows three Brush tools and the Pencil tool. After selecting the regular Brush tool, you'll see there are quite a few settings you can adjust in the Options Bar. The Size and Opacity settings are self-explanatory but the Mode setting deserves a little more examination. If you're familiar with blend modes when it comes to layers, you already know what this brush setting will do. It affects how your painted strokes will blend with what you're painting over. When you're using the Brush tool, try painting on a new blank layer above the layer on which you want to paint. This way you can change the blend mode in the Layers palette at any time for the layer that contains the paint. If you don't like how a particular blend mode looks, you can keep trying other modes until you find one you like. If you choose a blend mode for the Brush tool in the Options Bar and paint directly on a layer, your options become very limited after you apply your strokes.

To the left of the brush Size adjustment in the Options Bar is a small preview pane that lets you see what kind of brush is currently selected. Click on that preview and the drop-down dialog allows you to choose different brush shapes by scrolling down the list. If you don't like any of the Default Brushes, select entirely different sets by clicking on the Brushes drop-down menu and choosing one of the other options.
Photoshop Elements provides a huge number of brushes grouped by brush type.

The Airbrush on/off button allows you to paint normally (off) or gradually add layers of paint (on) much like a real-world airbrush. The Tablet Options only work when you have a Wacom or other graphics tablet attached to your computer. While we don’t have the time here to go into all the reasons, a tablet is superior to a mouse when it comes to photo retouching or restoration. I just can’t imagine working without one. The stylus pen feels more natural than a mouse, and you can control aspects such as opacity by pressing harder or softer.

MORE OPTIONS
Finally, the More Options button reveals some special effects and fine adjustments you can make to your brushes. The Fade option causes the stroke to drop off as you draw. Increasing the amount of Hue Jitter will alternate between your Foreground and Background colors as you paint, and Scatter disperses the placement of the brush around your cursor location.

The Spacing setting controls the distance between the brush marks in a stroke. The number is the percentage of the brush diameter, so a zero value gives you a constant, smooth stroke. The Hardness slider adjusts the edge of your brush. It gets fuzzier as you approach 0%. And finally, the Angle setting changes the orientation of your brush (this works on just about any brush shape except circles), and the Roundness setting squeezes your brush vertically.

THE COLOR REPLACEMENT TOOL
There’s another tool under the Brush tool flyout menu in the Toolbox called the Color Replacement tool. We’ll skip the Impressionist Brush tool until next time, since it takes a bit more to explain and it’s also a little hard to control.

The Color Replacement tool replaces whatever color you’re painting over with whatever color is currently selected as the Foreground color. The key here is to realize that just the basic color will be replaced, not the brightness. In other words, if you’re trying to paint lemon yellow over a rich red car, it won’t make the car look lemon yellow. It will have a much darker value and look like lemon yellow would in a dark, shadowy place. For the best effect, the brightness values of the original color and the replacement color should be similar.

While there is a Mode option in the Options Bar that lets you select Hue, Saturation, Color, or Luminosity, the best results are generally achieved with the default setting of Color. However, if you’ve got time to experiment, try some of the other modes to see what happens.

Most of the time when you’re painting with this tool you’ll want to be sampling each new place you’re painting over. Control how the Color Replacement tool samples by choosing one of the next three options on the Options Bar. The sampling default is Continuous and you should usually leave it there. As you paint, Photoshop Elements will continually sample from the tool’s crosshairs to affect colors within the tolerable range.

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image to paint. Finally, you can set the sample color to the current Background color by choosing the final sampling option, Background Swatch. For my example, I used the default Continuous setting.

Leave Anti-alias checked if you want your new color to smoothly blend with no jagged edges. The Tolerance default of 30% is good because it allows for as much as a 30% variation from the sampled spot to similar colors it’s replacing. In other words, if it were set to 1%, for most images you would have to click on just about every single pixel you wanted to replace, and if you go higher than 50%, it starts putting your new color in too many places.

One of the secrets to using the Color Replacement tool is to run your brush smoothly over the area to recolor just enough to make the color change. If you scrub your brush back and forth over an area it will tend to muddy the area with your new color.

Finally, let’s discuss the physical size and the sample point of the cursor itself. The brush size and hardness/softness works like other brushes, but this brush has a plus sign in the middle. This lets you know from which point it’s sampling. The size of the cursor is important because no color changes will happen outside the working area of the brush. If you have the Limits set to Contiguous, a color inside the brush’s circumference must not only be within 30% (the default Tolerance) of the sampled pixel in order for it to change, it must also be touching a color that’s being changed. If you have Discontiguous selected, it just needs to be in the right color family and inside the brush area. Try both settings and you’ll see what I mean. I usually prefer Contiguous because it offers more control.

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We can use the Brush tool to paint natural-looking borders on images.

**STEP ONE:** First, click on the Create a New Layer icon in the Layers palette to create a new layer above the base image that you want to add an edge effect to. Choose a Foreground color for the Brush tool (we’re using white in our example). Then, choose a brush that’s appropriate. The trick here is to use the Thick Heavy Brushes set, so click on the brush thumbnail in the Options Bar to open the Brush Presets menu, and then choose Thick Heavy Brushes from the Brushes drop-down menu.

**STEP TWO:** Use the first brush in the Thick Heavy Brushes set to paint most of the long, left to right swishes. To paint the left and right sides of the image, you can set the Angle of the brush in the More Options menu to 90˚.

**STEP THREE:** Use the second brush in the Thick Heavy Brushes set and go back over the painted areas to give it more of a stippled look.
Some Quick and Helpful Tips

1. You can customize the information that’s displayed in the Info palette (Window > Info) so that you see the information you want. In the Info palette, use the More menu to choose Palette Options. In this dialog you can determine what you want the Info palette to display. For example, there are two Color Readouts that provide information on the image, and by default it displays in RGB Color in the first one and Web Color on the second one. If you’re not making Web graphics, then you might want to change the second readout to another choice, such as Grayscale. This is particularly useful when you’re evaluating if your image has good shadows and highlights: hover over an area and you’ll see the RGB color values on one side of the Info palette, and a percentage of black on the right side of the Info palette. Other settings you can change include the unit of measurement and status information such as Document Sizes, Document Dimensions, and Current Tool.

2. When you use the Free Transform command (Image > Transform > Free Transform), a box with transformation “handles” appears—it’s these handles that help you transform the selected pixels. However, once the handles appear, almost every other function in Adobe Photoshop Elements is unavailable until you’ve finished transforming. So, here’s a tip—if you try to use a menu command and it’s grayed out (meaning that you can’t click on it) or it won’t activate, check and see if the Free Transform handles are still visible. If they are, you’ll have to press the Commit Transform checkmark in the Options Bar or press Enter to finalize the transformation (or press Escape to cancel out of the transformation).

   Here’s one of the very few exceptions to the above rule: Even when Free Transform is active, you can change the opacity of the active layer. On a separate layer, make a selection of an area of pixels and then press Control-T (Mac: Command-T) to start Free Transform. Then, open the Layers palette and use the Opacity slider to change the opacity. This can be a great help when you’re trying to transform something and need to see the pixels underneath. One...
mild warning: If you’ve already started to transform the pixels and then you change the opacity, the selected object will temporarily display at its original size and rotation as you’re adjusting the opacity.

If you ever need to draw an arrow in Photoshop Elements, try adding an arrowhead to the Line tool. Select the Line tool but before you use it, look in the Options Bar and click on the Geometry Options menu (at the end of the shape icons). With the Line tool active you’ll get a series of options that controls how the arrowhead is added (at the Start and/or the End, Width, Length, and Concavity). After adjusting the settings, in the Options Bar choose the Weight of the line and click-and-drag with the Line tool to create your arrow. Keep in mind that you cannot adjust the arrowhead after the line has been drawn—you must change the settings in the Options Bar before using the Line tool. Here are three examples of the many types of arrows that can be created.

There are Geometry Options also available with the other shape tools. Click on the Rectangle tool, Rounded Rectangle tool, or Ellipse tool and the options include setting it to a Fixed Size, Proportional, or making the shape constrained or unconstrained, and drawing from the center outwards. Switch to the Polygon tool and you’ll get options that include Radius, Smooth Corners, or the ability to create a star.

You can increase or decrease the softness of a brush (without changing its size) directly from the keyboard. Press Shift-[ (Right Bracket) to increase the hardness (or decrease the softness) of the current brush, and Shift-] (Left Bracket) to decrease the hardness (or increase the softness) of the brush.

If you’ve created your own brushes (using Edit-Define Brush), or you simply want to change the order in the Brushes palette of the existing brushes, use the Preset Manager. From the Edit menu, choose Preset Manager and if the brushes are not already displaying, choose Brushes from the Preset Type pop-up menu. Then simply click-and-drag any brush to change the order in which the brushes will appear. This also works with all of the presets, meaning you can also change the order of Swatches, Gradients, and Patterns.

Here are a couple of useful Camera Raw shortcuts: to quickly turn off all the Auto settings (and back on again), press Control-U (Mac: Command-U). That way you can quickly assess whether these auto adjustments are helping or not. At the top of the Camera Raw window, there are options to preview how the Shadows and Highlights of the image are affected as you make adjustments. You could leave these previews on all the time or use these shortcuts: press U to turn the Shadows checkbox on and off and press O to turn the Highlights checkbox on and off.

Using the keyboard shortcut turns off all the Auto checkboxes
not only does the Feather option have the power to blend one photo into another for myriad effects, it has the power to evoke emotion. For example, picture a soft vignette highlighting a bride’s bouquet framed on a bed of blood-red rose petals; or imagine the clasped hands of newly ringed fingers resting softly on a satin pillow, blended into a solid, light-peach background. The possibilities are endless.

Today, I’m going to share with you a technique for using the Feather option that’s not just for photographers, but one highly useful for graphic designers as well. Though we’ll use the Feather option in the same way, we’ll produce completely different yet practical effects highly handy to have in one’s personal bag of tricks.

FEATHER 1: THE VINTAGE VIGNETTE
An oldie but goody, this effect never goes out of style. We’ll use it today to encircle lovers in an ellipse. Nothing says romance like a vignette!

Open a romantic image in Photoshop Elements. Let’s protect us from ourselves and make a copy of the Background layer by pressing Control-J (Mac: Command-J). In the Layers palette, go ahead and turn the visibility Eye icon off on the original layer.

Grab the Elliptical Marquee tool and draw a selection around the couple’s heads in the photo. If you like, hold the Alt key (Mac: Option key) to draw the ellipse from the center outward. Hold the Shift key while you drag to constrain the ellipse to a perfect circle. Press the Spacebar as you draw the selection to move it around on the photo (just release the Spacebar and continue making the selection larger or smaller). These keyboard shortcuts also work when using the Rectangular Marquee tool.

Right-click (Mac: Control-click) within the selection area and choose Feather from the contextual menu (you can also choose Select>Feather). Enter 20 pixels and click OK. This should give us a nice soft edge; though, if you’re working on a high-resolution image, this number will need to go higher. In either case, the higher the number, the more gradual the fade or degree of
resulting “softness” will be. Feel free to experiment! All you have to do is press Control-Z (Mac: Command-Z) to undo your last action, or worst-case scenario, trash the layer you’re working on and begin again with the original Background layer (see the value of creating the copy above?).

Choose Select>inverse, so everything except the couple is selected. Press Backspace (Mac: Delete) and the background will disappear, leaving only the couple surrounded by a soft edge. Click anywhere on the canvas to deselect. At this point, we can do a couple of things—we could add a solid background beneath the photo, or we could add another photo altogether. Let’s do both.

**Vignette on solid background**

First, let’s add a solid background. Control-click (Mac: Command-click) the Create a New Layer icon in the Layers palette. This will create a new layer below the one currently selected, which is the photo.

Pick up a new background color from the photo itself by pressing I to select the Eyedropper tool. Mouse over the photo, choose a color, and click once to load it as the Foreground color. With the new layer still selected in the Layers palette, press Alt-Backspace (Mac: Option-Delete) to fill it with the Foreground color.

**Vignette on photographic background**

The leaves in the original photo were nice, but they weren’t very colorful. Let’s see what happens if we place our vignette onto a background of super-brilliant fall leaves.

Open the photo to be used as a background—in our case brightly colored leaves—and position the windows on your screen so you can see both images. From the Layers palette, click-and-drag the photo layer and drop it onto your original vignetted image (make sure the new background is below the vignetted photo in the Layers palette). This new background makes a big difference.

### FEATHER 2: THE TWO-SECOND TONE DOWN

Lest you think the Feather option is just about romance, let’s use it in a graphic design scenario. For example, let’s say we’re creating a colorful ad for visiting Vermont in the fall. However, after placing text atop the leaf photo (that we used in the technique above), the image looks a little too busy. What can we do? We can use the Feather option in conjunction with a rectangular selection to tone down that particular area of the photo so the text can be read more easily. We’ll do this in a couple of different ways.

#### Darken and feather area below text

Let’s begin by opening the leaf photo and immediately duplicating the Background layer by pressing Control-J (Mac: Command-J). We’ll use this layer copy in the next effect (if you like, you can turn off its visibility Eye icon in the Layers palette for the moment).

Press T to select the Type tool and type “Visit Vermont” in the font of your choice. Control-click (Mac: Command-click) the Create a New Layer icon at the top of the Layers palette to create a new layer below the type layer we just made. This new empty layer should be between the type layer and the leaf background copy layer.

With the empty layer selected, press M to select the Rectangular Marquee tool and draw a selection around the text area. Right-click (Mac: Control-click) within the selection and choose Feather from the resulting contextual menu. Enter 10 pixels and click OK.

#### Vignette on solid background

First, let’s add a solid background. Control-click (Mac: Command-click) the Create a New Layer icon in the Layers palette. This will create a new layer below the one currently selected, which is the photo.

Pick up a new background color from the photo itself by pressing I to select the Eyedropper tool. Mouse over the photo, choose a color, and click once to load it as the Foreground color. With the new layer still selected in the Layers palette, press Alt-Backspace (Mac: Option-Delete) to fill it with the Foreground color.
Next, take a peek at the bottom of the main Toolbox and set your color swatches to the default of black and white by pressing D (black should be in the top position, which is the Foreground color swatch). Fill the selected area with black by pressing Alt-Backspace (Mac: Option-Delete). Solid black is a bit too dramatic for our advertisement, so let’s lower the Opacity of that layer to about 30% in the Layers palette. Click anywhere on the image to deselect. As you can see, a soft and slightly opaque black fill tones down the photo just enough for the text to be readable—it’s a simple yet effective technique.

For a final touch, I added a soft drop shadow to the text to ensure legibility. We could’ve reversed the color and grayscale areas by inverting the selection like we did in the first technique. Just press Shift-Control-I (Mac: Shift-Command-I) before you press Backspace (Mac: Delete). This would make the outside edges color and the selection area grayscale.

As you can see, we’ve produced three different but practical effects all using the Feather option on selections of differing shapes. So the next time you want to highlight a specific portion of a photo, either by fading it onto a solid background or a completely different image, just reach for the Feather command. It works with any selection of any shape, and it’s just the thing for creating a romantic vignette. Similarly, it’s also useful for toning down a portion of a photo so it’s easier to read text, and for creating a partial color/grayscale effect. Just remember: If you have marching ants, you’re free to feather!
beveled memories: creating photo corners

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO CREATE PHOTO CORNERS, BUT MOST CORNERS END UP BEING FAIRLY SIMPLISTIC. IN THIS TUTORIAL, WE’LL CREATE A REALISTIC 3D PHOTO CORNER THAT LOOKS GREAT IN A DIGITAL SCRAPBOOK. THE BEVELED SHAPE CAN CREATE A NEAT-LOOKING EDGE TO YOUR SCRAPBOOKING PHOTOS.

STEP ONE: Start by creating a new document (File> New> Blank File), and set the Width and Height to 400 pixels and the Resolution to 72 ppi. Set the Background Contents to Transparent and click OK. Double-click directly on the name “Layer 1” in the Layers palette and rename it “Photo Corner.”

STEP TWO: Using the Rectangular Marquee tool (M), drag a square in the middle of the document (hold down the Shift key while you drag to create a perfect square). Switch to the Paint Bucket tool (K), and set the Foreground color to a dark gray (go to Window> Color Swatches and click on a swatch that includes a few shades of gray). Click in the square with the Paint Bucket tool to fill it with the dark gray. Press Control-D (Mac: Command-D) to deselect.
STEP THREE: Next, select half of the square with the Polygonal Lasso tool. Click at the top right and bottom left corners of the square to get a straight diagonal selection line, then click on points around the outer edge of the bottom right half of the square and click back on the beginning point to complete the selection. Delete the selection by hitting Backspace (Mac: Delete) to create a right triangle.

STEP FOUR: Click on the Photo Corner layer in the Layers palette while holding down Control (Mac: Command) to select all the pixels in that layer. Switch back to the Rectangular Marquee tool. Hover over the selection and click-and-drag to move it. Move the selection down and to the right while holding down Shift (this will keep the movement at a 45˚ angle). When the selection has just a small triangular bite of the hypotenuse, press Backspace (Mac: Delete).

STEP FIVE: Select the pixels in the Photo Corner layer with the Control (Mac: Command) key again, and go to Select>Modify>Contract and contract the selection by 12 pixels. Delete the selection with Backspace (Mac: Delete), and then add a new layer by clicking the Create a New Layer icon on the Layers palette. Switch back to the Paint Bucket tool, and fill the new selection with the same dark gray. Deselect (Control-D [Mac: Command-D]), then double-click on the new layer and name it “Corner Top.”
STEP SIX: Select the Photo Corner layer, and give it a simple sharp inner bevel from the Styles and Effects palette (select Layer Styles in the left pop-up menu, Bevels in the right pop-up menu, and select Simple Sharp Inner). Select the Corner Top layer, and give it the same bevel. Lock the two layers together by selecting them both (clicking on each while holding Shift) then pressing the Link Layers button, which looks like a chain—now the two layers will move as one. Save the file, and you're done. Now you can move these two layers to your photographs to make great scrapbooking effects!
Step by Step

Artistic Effects
BY SALLY VITSKY

mix up your media

YOU CAN CREATE 3D PAPER SCULPTURE ILLUSTRATIONS USING VARIOUS ADOBE PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS TECHNIQUES. BY REPLICATING THE SHADOWS AND TEXTURES, WE CAN CONSTRUCT A 3D FINISHED PRODUCT THAT USED TO ONLY BE POSSIBLE BY SHOOTING ART WITH A 4X5 CAMERA. BY SCANNING AND THEN EDITING VARIOUS COMPONENTS, WE END UP WITH LAYERED ART THAT POPS UP FROM THE PAGE.

[To download the three textured background files used in this tutorial, go to www.photoshop-elementsuser.com/subscriber/printextras.php.]

STEP ONE: Let’s go through the process of creating 3D art from scanned sources. Start by scanning a few pieces of art. The scanner will pick up shadows on the art. Be careful to slightly prop the scanner top so the art isn’t crushed. You may eventually build a library of diverse digital papers and fabrics. Each scanned piece of art will be a different layer on our Photoshop Elements file.

STEP TWO: The scanned art will usually need cleaning up and definition around the edges. Zoom in the art to see any irregularities. Use the Lasso tool (L) to select any stray edges and press Backspace (Mac: Delete) or use the Eraser tool (E) to smooth out the edges. Once the edges have been smoothed, use Free Transform (Control-T [Mac: Command-T]) to resize the art pieces according to your personal preferences and move and/or rotate them to form your art.
STEP THREE: When each component is placed within the file according to your finished art, let’s create the 3D effect with shadows. If they’re not already, move each piece of art to its own layer by selecting it and pressing Shift-Control-J (Mac: Shift-Command-J). Go to the art piece that will be closest to your background and click on its layer in the Layers palette. In the Styles and Effects palette choose Layer Styles in the left pop-up menu and Drop Shadows from the right pop-up menu, and choose a drop shadow to apply. Repeat this process with each layer that should cast a shadow on the background. However, images that are further away from the background will cast a lighter shadow upon it. So, the next layer away from the background should have a smaller or less obvious shadow.

STEP FOUR: Once the art has been created, explore the textural and pattern possibilities for the background. You can collect and scan samples from art supply stores, magazines, textured chips at paint stores, your closet, your kitchen—great textures and patterns are everywhere! You can also download and use the two texture files that we’re using here. Once the papers and/or fabrics are chosen and opened, use the Rectangular Marquee tool to isolate a portion of each. Click on the Move tool and drag them one by one into your art file. Drag the new texture layers below your art layers in the Layers palette.
STEP FIVE: Next, click-and-drag the scanned background art using the Move tool and resize and rotate as needed. The backgrounds and details enhance the art. Optionally, add shadows according to Step Three.

STEP SIX: In some cases, a perfectly straight edge is not desirable in the background textures. To replicate a torn edge, tear a piece of black paper and place it on white. Scan this image (or use the download provided). Once the file is in Photoshop Elements, use the Move tool to drag this shape into your art file, and resize and align the black torn edge to the side of the paper or fabric scan that requires the irregular edge.

STEP SEVEN: Using the Magic Wand tool (W), click the black paper to make a selection around it. Click on the blue paper’s layer in the Layers palette to make it active. Go to Select>Inverse and then press Backspace (Mac: Delete). This creates a torn edge on the blue paper. Drag the black paper layer to the Trash icon in the Layers palette to delete it.

Creating a three-dimensional effect digitally can give an image a unique quality that piques interest and draws attention. The tools and effects of Photoshop Elements provide boundless opportunities to experiment with the 3D components that were once glued in place and supported by tiny pieces of foam board and balsa wood.

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hide and seek: making faux layer masks

BY JAN KABILI

ADOBE PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS DOESN'T OFFER A DIRECT WAY TO APPLY A MASK TO A LAYER. BUT DON'T LET THAT STOP YOU FROM USING LAYER MASKS TO COMBINE AND SELECTIVELY EDIT IMAGES. USE THIS EASY WORKAROUND FOR CREATING A “FAUX” LAYER MASK, AND FOLLOW THESE PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR PUTTING FAUX LAYER MASKS TO WORK IN PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS.

CREATE A FAUX LAYER MASK

In this simple example, our goal is to hide the two chairs at the head of the table. Start by following these steps to create a faux layer mask.

1. Open an image in the Photoshop Elements Editor. Rename the image layer by double-clicking its name in the Layers palette and typing “Top.” Set the Foreground color to a color found in your image by selecting the Eyedropper tool (I) and clicking on a part of the image. In our example, we sampled the color of the projection screen directly behind the chairs at the end of the table.

2. Make a new layer beneath the Top layer by Control-clicking (Mac: Command-clicking) the Create a New Layer icon in the Layers palette. Rename the new layer “Bottom.” Fill the Bottom layer with the Foreground color by pressing Alt-Backspace (Mac: Option-Delete).

3. Make a neutral adjustment layer between the Bottom and Top layers by clicking the Create Adjustment Layer icon in the Layers palette and choosing Levels (Hue/Saturation or Brightness/Contrast will also work).
Without changing any of the Levels settings, click OK in the Levels dialog. The Levels adjustment layer comes with its own layer mask, represented by the white thumbnail on the Levels layer in the Layers palette.

4. Create a clipping group comprised of the Top layer and the Levels adjustment layer by pressing the Alt (Mac: Option) key, and moving your cursor over the border between those two layers. When the cursor changes to a double circle, click your mouse button. The Top layer is indented and displays a curved arrow, meaning that it’s clipped to the Levels adjustment layer. The layer mask on the Levels layer will now act as a mask for the Top layer so that changes you make to that mask will affect the Top layer only.

**PAINT IN A FAUX LAYER MASK**

You can hide content on the Top layer by painting with black in the layer mask on the Levels adjustment layer in the clipping group. After following steps 1 through 4 above to make a faux layer mask, click on the layer mask thumbnail on the Levels adjustment layer to make it active. The thin border around that thumbnail means you’re now working on the mask.

Press D and then press X until the Foreground color in the Toolbox is set to black. Select the Brush tool (B). Choose a soft-edged brush from the Brush Presets menu in the Options Bar. Paint over an area of the image that you want to show through. As you paint with black on the layer mask, the areas are hidden on the Top layer, allowing you to see through to the color on the layer below. Because we filled the layer with a color sampled from the projection screen, it appears as if we have painted in the screen over the chairs.

If you conceal part of the image by mistake, press X to switch the Foreground color to white and paint on the Levels layer mask to reveal those items. In our example, we’ve removed the visibility of two chairs at the table. Remember the layer mask mantra: black conceals and white reveals.

**REALISTICALLY COMBINE IMAGES WITH A FAUX LAYER MASK**

Use the principles you learned in the preceding examples to realistically integrate images for a dimensional look. Find two images to practice with. This example is a photo of open hands on the Top layer and a photo of the earth on the Bottom layer. We’ll paint on the faux layer mask to make the hands appear to be cupping the earth.

Follow steps 1 through 4 to make a faux layer mask but instead of filling the Bottom layer with a solid color, use an image that you want to combine with the Top layer. Select the Top layer. Choose the Magic Wand tool (W) and uncheck Contiguous in the Options Bar. Click in the area of the image that you want to hide from view, such as the solid white background behind the hands on the Top layer, allowing you to see through to the color on the layer below. Because we filled the layer with a color sampled from the projection screen, it appears as if we have painted in the screen over the chairs. If you conceal part of the image by mistake, press X to switch the Foreground color to white and paint on the Levels layer mask to reveal those items. In our example, we’ve removed the visibility of two chairs at the table. Remember the layer mask mantra: black conceals and white reveals.

**TEXT WITH CHARACTER**

You may be wondering why we didn’t just erase the area on the layer we wanted uncovered. The answer is simple: you can go back and paint white over the mask and restore the original area. When you erase, you get rid of the pixels.

Plus, with the faux layer masks, you can create some cool text filled with images. Here’s a fun example. Repeat steps 1 through 4, but instead of having the bottom layer be a solid fill, type some text with the Type tool (T). You can move the text around and it keeps the background area as a fill, depending on what part of the photo the text is over.
the Top layer is now hidden, and you can see through it to the image on the Bottom layer. Press Control-D (Mac: Command-D) to deselect.

If you need to resize or reposition the Top layer, select the Top layer and then Shift-click the Levels adjustment layer in the Layers palette so that they’re both selected. Now if you use the Free Transform command, the layer mask will be transformed as well. In our example, we chose Image>Transform>Distort. We clicked inside the bounding box and dragged the hands into position below the earth. We then dragged the top left anchor point of the bounding box toward the earth until the fingers of the left hand were touching the globe. We then repeated for the right hand. Click the Checkmark icon in the Options Bar to accept the transformation.

Select the layer mask thumbnail on the Levels layer again. With the Brush tool and black as the Foreground color, paint on any remaining areas you want hidden. In our example, we hid the fingers so they look like they’re behind the earth. The hands now appear to be cupping the earth.

If you conceal too much of the image, press X to switch the Foreground color to white, and paint on the Levels layer mask to reveal those parts of the object again.

For added realism, blend the edges of the visible parts on the Top layer by blurring the layer mask slightly. With the layer mask thumbnail still selected, choose Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur, move the Radius slider so that the edges look softly soft, and click OK. Blurring the layer mask with a visual preview is a better alternative than blindly feathering the original hand selection.

**GRADUALLY BLEND IMAGES WITH A GRADIENT**

Let’s apply a black to white gradient to a faux layer mask to gradually blend images together to make a collage. This example starts with a photo of wedding rings on white on the Top layer and a photo of a book and rose on the Bottom layer.

Follow steps 1 through 4 above to make a faux layer mask. Select the layer mask thumbnail on the Levels layer. Press D and then press X until the Foreground color is set to black and the background color is white.

Select the Gradient tool (G), and choose the Foreground to Background gradient in the Gradient Picker in the Options Bar. Drag a diagonal line from the top left to the bottom right of the image. This creates a black to white gradient on the layer mask, in this example concealing the ring photo at the top left (where the mask is black), gradually revealing it in the middle (where the mask is graduating shades of gray), and revealing the ring photo at the bottom right (where the mask is white).

Paint on the mask to fine-tune the gradient blend. Choose a large, soft brush and reduce the brush Opacity in the Options Bar to about 80%. With black as the Foreground color, paint on the mask to hide more of the ring photo, revealing the areas you want to be visible on the rose image below. Press X to switch the Foreground color to white, and paint on the mask over the areas you want visible (in this example, the rings) to make sure they’re not partially concealed by the grays in the gradient.

There are many other uses for faux layer masks. You can use them to sharpen parts of an image differently, to filter selective parts of an image, or to apply lightening or darkening to various parts of an image. Experiment with making these and other changes to a top layer that you’ve clipped to a neutral adjustment layer to unleash the power of faux layer masks in Photoshop Elements.

Jan Kabili is a popular Photoshop author and trainer. Her latest book is How to Wow: Photoshop CS2 for the Web. View her video podcast, Photoshop Online, at www.photoshoponline.tv or subscribe to it with iTunes. Read Jan’s regular column, “Photoshop for Educators,” in Photoshop User magazine.