

Digital Photo Image Editing

- using Adobe® Photoshop Elements

Lesson 19 – Image Adjustments Workflow and Smart Brush Tool

The objective of this lesson is to bring together what you have already learned and use these tools and techniques to improve a photo. We will also discuss the Smart Brush tools for those of you who have PSE 7 or later.

The Smart Brush is a set of tools that are available beginning with PSE 7. PSE lets you apply many different preset adjustments using the Smart Brush tool and the Detail Smart Brush tool. You can adjust color and tonality using the Smart Brush tool. The Detail Smart Brush tool allows you to paint the adjustments to specific areas of a photo. Use this tool to adjust finer details. The available adjustments are grouped into several categories such as Nature, Portrait, Lighting, etc. available by the pull down menu in the pop up box as discussed below.

However, the Smart Tools simply are simply short cuts to the techniques you already learned last semester in Lessons 9, 10, and 11. There you learned the workflow steps for improving a photo. Here is a quick summary of the usual workflow steps:

Image Editing Workflow

Adjust Lighting

Can I adjust the whole photo, or do I need to select parts of it and adjust them separately?

- Yes – continue with Levels, etc.
- No – use Adjustment Layers after making selections (see below).

Adjust Colors

Can I adjust the whole photo, or do I need to select parts of it and adjust them separately.

- Yes – continue with Adjust Color menu choices.
- No – use Adjustment Layers after making selections (see below).

Adjust Color for Skin Tone works well for portraits.

Adjust Hue/Saturation is tricky, but powerful. Usually do NOT touch the Hue, but just try adjusting Saturation and Lightness.

Touch Up, Heal, Remove Junk, Edit

Scenic photo: Is there a power line or telephone pole you would like to get rid of? Use the Clone Stamp tool, and remember to Alt-click in the region you want to use as a source. Try the Spot Healing brush to remove any dust or small imperfections.

Portrait: Are there some blemishes that you can remove from your subject? Use the Healing Brush, and remember to Alt-click on the source point. Did the flash result in red eyes? Use the Red Eye Removal tool. Are there shadows or highlights on the subject's face? Use the Dodge and Burn tools.

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Sharpen

Nature, architecture, and landscape photos usually benefit from using the Sharpen tool to make details stand out. But don't overdo it!

Adjustment Layers

Is there a part of the image that I would like to adjust separate from the rest of it? (e.g. a person's face, a building façade, the sky, one flower, etc.)

Select that part using your favorite Selection tool(s), and then create an Adjustment Layer. Among your choices are Levels, Brightness/Contrast, and Hue/Saturation. Or alternatively simply create a New Layer and add some other effects.

Examples

This exercise lends itself to before and after shots, leaving it up to the students to try to get the after version using the right tools. There are no detailed instructions, because you have already learned how to proceed.

Glades_Heron.jpg

Try using Levels. Then select bright water and create Levels Adjustment Layer. For extra credit select the heron and adjust hue and saturation on it. Sharpen.

Sunset_Stacks.jpg

Select sky and create Hue-Saturation Adjustment Layer. Then select water and create Levels Adjustment Layer.

Sunrise_Clouds.jpg

Select sea and create Levels Adjustment Layer. Select sky and create Hue-Saturation Adjustment Layer.

Gov_Palace.jpg

Select brick front of palace and create Hue-Saturation Adjustment Layer. Select sky and create Levels Adjustment Layer.

Princess_Fog.jpg and Foggy_Tow.jpg

Try using Levels, Shadow/Highlights, and then Filter > Equalize.

Sufer_Wins.jpg

Use Levels. Select just the parasail and create Levels Adjustment Layer. Select just the surfer and create Hue-Saturation Adjustment Layer. Increase the Hue only in the Red part of the color spectrum.

Using Smart Brush Tools

As described above the Smart Brush tools allow you to apply a predefined adjustment to a Layer that you create by using the Smart Brush selection tool. So it is essentially doing in one step what you have practiced doing above in two steps. That is you first made a selection, and then created a layer with a particular adjustment on it.

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The Smart Tools pull down menu allows you to choose between the following choices: All Purpose, Black & White, Color, Lighting, Nature, Photographic, Portrait, Reverse Effects, and Special Effects.

Under Nature the subheadings are: Blue Skies, Cloud Contrast, Dark Sky, Greenery, and Sunset.

Under Portrait the subheadings are: Lighten Skin Tones, Lipstick, Pearly Whites, Spray Tan, and Very Pearly Whites.

So for those of you who have PSE 7 or later, you can try to do the previous exercises using Smart Brush Tools. Because there are so many to choose from it is worthwhile just running through a bunch of them and see how it effects a particular selection. Once you have become familiar with them, you will probably find them to offer a quicker way to making some routine adjustments. Look at the PSE Help about how to use them.