

Notes for Fourth Tuesday Digital for 6-24-2008

Smart Objects (and Smart Filters)

Shawn Miner

Smart Filters can only be applied to Smart Objects. There are several ways to convert a 'normal' image to a Smart Object but the two that we're most likely to use are:

Open your image and choose Layer > Smart Object > Convert to Smart Object

In Bridge, to import a file as a Smart Object into an open Photoshop document select your image and choose

File > Place > In Photoshop

When an image becomes a Smart Object, it has a small square in it's lower right corner.

So, that's ALL you need to know about creating Smart Objects, what can they do for you? Well, you can MESS with them and it is like doing a 'background copy' in that your original is UNTOUCHED! So, you could do an Image > Size from 16x20 to 4x5 and back to 16x20 and never lose a pixel... Stuff like that. Fun huh? (some functions are unavailable /grayed out/ for Smart Objects)

The MAIN reason we'd convert to a Smart Object is to be able to use Smart Filters. Filters vs. Smart Filters remind me of the difference between Image > Adjustments > Levels and Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Levels. With the first, you get ONE shot, NO second chance (without going back to the previous version of the image) where with a New Adjustment Layer, you get to go back to that Adjustment layer any time and re-do it or even delete it completely, with NO effect on the original.

The SAME applies to the difference between Filters and Smart Filters where Filters is a one shot deal and Smart Filters can be reopened/adjusted again and again.

As you apply a filter to a Smart Object, it becomes a Smart Filter. Some people recommend using the Filter > Filter Gallery so you can get in and 'play' with ALL your filters at once. The only problem is that with Smart Filters, you can change the Blending Mode of each IF they are done separately BUT only the once if you use Filter Gallery... Your choice.

You can also use a Mask on the Smart Filters. See the box just to the Left of the word Smart Filters. You can only use one mask for the all the Smart Filters. You can however, use a Mask on the Smart Object itself. (and, if you are really clever, you can make the mess into a Group and the Group can have a Mask too! (The Lone Ranger got nothing on Photoshop!))

With Smart Filters, you can turn them off, drag them up or down in the Smart Filters sequence or even throw them away. And, if you double click on the two little arrows to the right of each one, you can change the Blending Mode AND Opacity of each one individually!

That's the very BASICS of Smart Filters, about 8 paragraphs MORE than in Tim Grey's "Photoshop CS3 Workflow" book.

For more, Google Photoshop CS3 + "smart objects" and/or + "Smart Filters"

And let me know if you find stuff we can use!

High Pass Sharpening using the High Pass Filter.

Using this method, edges are sharpened and not the flat spaces. It is a very simple procedure.

First, flatten and resize your completed image. Copy the background layer by dragging it to the copy icon in the bottom of the layers pallet. Change the copy's Blending mode to Overlay and select Filter > Other > High Pass.

In the box that comes up, your only adjustment is Radius and 10.0 is a suggested starting/ending point. That's it. You can reduce the Opacity of the Background layer to reduce the effect of the High Pass Sharpening.

Clone Tool

ALWAYS make a new layer and work on that new layer, NEVER on your image! (and if it is NOT working, you probably have one of the Adjustment Layers selected and you cannot use the Clone Tool on an Adjustment Layer. I know I've tried MANY times... sigh)

I prefer a soft edge brush (hardness down around 50 to 70% depending on what I'm doing)

I prefer to 'use all layers, it just avoids surprises!

In 'the old days' if you had a couple of adjustment layers and then Cloned, the pixels were multiplied thru the adjustment layers and made a MESS! Now you have the option to Ignore Adjustment Layers, give it a try...

Use alt/option to select the source and away you go!

In the example I'll use, Cloning a second flower pot into the image, notice that if I get too much, I don't erase, but use a Mask on the Clone layer to Hide/Reveal sections of the edges. That way I don't have to recopy as I just have to mess with the Mask.

I use Separate Layers for different things. I may use one layer to put in a face and another layer to add flowers. I do this so I can control the color/tone/whatever separately for each thing! More layers make it easier!

Healing Brush Tool

Again, on a NEW layer! And about the same as using the Clone tool except that with the Clone we were replacing parts, with the Healing Brush, we are adding or usually REMOVING Texture! Known for 'smoothing' the skin, it can also be used to ADD texture to an image where the texture was 'blown out' by improper exposure! (Hot Spot)

The Spot Healing Brush is great for small spots! One thing though, BEFORE you go removing all kinds of moles/tattoos etc. make sure that that is what the model/customer wants!

I prefer a hard brush (100%) for the Healing Brush because the Healing Brush averages the edge areas into the mix and you can end up with hair color into the skin etc of the brush is too soft...

Alt/option an area of texture that you'd like to have in your destination area and away you go!

Usually when you do 'healing' on the skin it can look TOO smooth. Because you are on a separate layer, you can reduce the Opacity and bring back some of the natural texture without bringing back all the wrinkles...

There is MORE to the Healing brush, and if we have the time, I'll talk a bit more about it. IF not, we'll do it another time!

take care

shawn