

CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY: SAMPLE DIGITAL EFFECTS

(Jon Evans)

[NB The effects described below utilise Adobe Photoshop *Elements*]

_By “Digital Effects” I mean changing the appearance of the original so it no longer looks like a photo.

I can explain how to produce the effects, but I can’t show you which images to use; most effects work much better with some images than others, and considerable experimentation is necessary to find the best results.

A. Standard Recipe

- 1) Copy the original image, and paste it as a new layer on top of the original (shown in Layers screen to right of main Elements editing screen)
- 2) Modify the new layer using Photoshop Filters etc
- 3) Experiment with blending the modified layer with the original, using the blend mode (via button at top of Layers screen, probably labelled “Normal”)
- 4) Experiment with the opacity of the modified layer, either by using the opacity of the layer or by selecting an area and using the eraser with low opacity
- 5) Save as Photoshop PSD file (to retain all layers and digital data) and/or as JPEG.

Most of my modified images are created in this way.

B. The Orton Effect

First used by American photographer, Michael Orton.

Originally used a sandwich of two slides:

- Both of the same scene
- Both slightly over-exposed
- One sharp and the other out of focus

This can be emulated digitally:

- 1) Copy the original image, and paste it as a new layer on top of the original
- 2) Blur the new layer using the Gaussian Blur filter
- 3) Change the blend mode of the blurred layer to Multiply
- 4) If the result is too dark, experiment with brightening either or both of the layers
- 5) Experiment by varying the opacity of the modified layer

C. Outlines

The outline images I showed are created in a very similar way:

- 1) Copy the original image, and paste it as a new layer on top of the original
- 2) Find the edges in the new layer using the Find Edges or Glowing Edges filter
- 3) Invert the colours in the new layer using the Invert Adjustment from the Filters menu
- 4) Experiment by partially erasing areas of the modified layer to allow the original colour to shine through

D. Watercolour Sketches

The watercolour images I showed are also created in a similar way:

- 1) Copy the original image, and paste it as a new layer on top of the original
- 2) De-saturate the new layer, or otherwise convert it to black and white
- 3) Find the edges in the new layer using the Find Edges filter
- 4) Simplify the result, using Levels, and by removing unnecessary detail (I find a white paintbrush useful), until it looks like a pencil drawing
- 5) Experiment by varying the opacity of the modified layer
- 6) Experiment by partially erasing areas of the modified layer to allow the original colour to shine through

E. Paper Weights

- 1) Crop your image to a square
- 2) Select the Spherize filter from the Distort group and apply it using Amount 100% and Mode Normal
- 3) Choose the Elliptical Marquee, click in the top left corner and drag down to the bottom right corner
- 4) Invert the selection (Select/Inverse)
- 5) Create a new fill layer (Layer / New Fill Layer / Solid Color) and fill the area outside the sphere with black
- 6) If desired, increase the canvas size so the sides of the sphere don't touch the sides of the image (I add 100 pixels to each side). Use Image / Resize / Canvas Size, check the image is centred and the background colour is black, and add 200 pixels to each dimension.

F. Geometric Designs

Simple montages combining geometrical cut-outs from other images can be made as follows:

- 1) Make a new image with a black background
- 2) Select shapes from other images, copy them and then paste them into the new image
- 3) At this stage it should be possible to move the shapes around to arrange them
- 4) To resize a shape, select it (click on it with the mouse), hold the Shift key down (locks the vertical/horizontal proportions so you resize without distorting), and drag a corner in or out

G. More Complex Montages

More complex montages follow the same general method:

- 1) Make a new image with a suitable background. Sometimes it helps if you start from another image as the background.
- 2) Roughly select parts of other images, making sure you have all the parts you want, copy the selection and then paste it into the new image
- 3) At this stage it should be possible to move the different components around to arrange them, and to experiment with using different components. You can also move layers in front of each other by dragging them up the stack in the Layers window.
- 4) To resize a component, select it (click on it with the mouse), hold the Shift key down (locks the vertical/horizontal proportions so you resize without distorting), and drag a corner in or out
- 5) When you are happy with the arrangement, select one individual component image. If necessary turn off the visibility of other layers to focus on this one.
- 6) Zoom in to 200% or 300%.
- 7) Using whatever selection tool you are most comfortable with (I usually use the Polygonal Lasso Tool), with 1-5 pixels feathering (usually 1-2, 5 gives more blurred edges), select a small area of background you do not want included in the final image, and delete it. If you make a mistake, use Undo.
- 8) Proceed until all unwanted background has been removed from all component images.
- 9) Make sure all the layers are visible again.

JE
(Feb., 2015)