



What is a Composite Photo ?

A big HI! To one and all.

Here we are again, still in lock-down; but, being optimistic with the vaccination programme under way we will hope that over the coming months the situation will improve and hopefully we will be able to congregate once again in September. We have already started to develop the programme of events for the season 2021-2022 but we are still mindful that we can revert to ZOOM if necessary.

I regret to say that I am a little disappointed that, apart from one or two people, members do not seem willing to contribute any ideas towards this magazine and I am running out of ideas for things that you may find interesting. After all , I see samples of pictures you have taken on your local exercise walks, on Facebook, so why not share what you did that day.... Why did you take the images that you did etc... If there are any specific subjects you would like me to research and write about to share with other members, then , please let me know.

I am aware that it is difficult for some of our members to get out and about but at the same time I am sure that many of you are playing with Photoshop (or other software) and trying to improve your techniques.

Use Youtube and explore the techniques involved with taking pictures of still life or even developing the skill of creating a composite image.

Checkout.. Photoshop Tutorials, Affinity Photo Composites, PIXimperfect, Nemaja Sekulic among others....

Finally with regard to 21-22 season we are anticipating some members participation nights. These will hopefully be in the form of a circus of activities which all members will have access to. This may be photoshop / lightroom instruction, setting up and taking shots of still life, macro work, some basic camera skills, critique sessions etc. (These are not intended to be 2hour slots so hopefully you won't have a chance to be bored) .

When photographers say “composite” – they are referring to an image that was constructed from two or more different photos. Most composites are done by layering images one on top of one another and then masking out the unwanted pieces using different methods. Another option is blending the layers together using various blending modes.

Some fine art photographers use the ability to mask out parts of the image to create “levitating” photos, where it seems like a person or object is floating through the air. How is this achieved? An image of a person on a chair is placed on top of the same image’s background, where the chair is masked out.



Levitation by
Brooke Shaden

Another idea is to create multiple occurrences of the same person or object, using the technique of layering different photographs on top of each other.

Cloning
by Photo Extremist



Another use of compositing is when shooting in a busy touristy area. All you want is to capture the beautiful landmark, but you're not the only one. You can use compositing to improve your result: take multiple photos on a tripod, layer the pieces on top of each other and get rid of anything you don't want to see in the final photo. In this case it was the crowds passing in 'waves'.



Four images and two clones/ healing brush later.

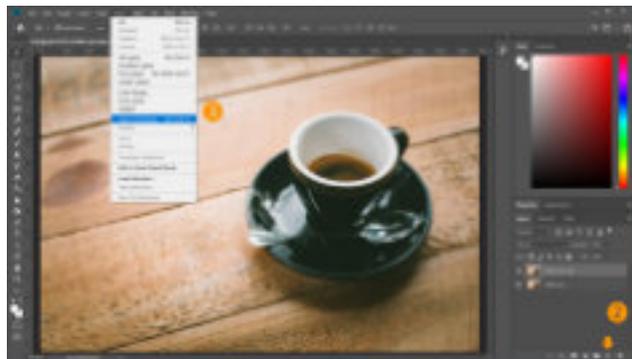
Check out Youtube and WWW and try some of the ideas. Many will let you download stock images to play with... This is one way of doing it.



1. Open "Cup". In the Layers panel rename the default layer name "Background" to "Coffee cup" by double-clicking it.

2. Duplicate the "Coffee cup" layer by dragging it on the Create a new layer icon or Ctrl +J.

3. Enter Select and Mask mode: Choose Select > Select and Mask.



4. In Properties panel that appears, choose View > On Black. In the mini tool palette at left, choose the Quick Selection Tool brush and adjust brush size and hardness from the top palette.



5. Paint inside cup and click OK

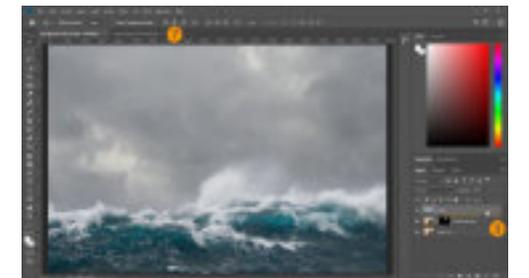
6. Based on your selection add a layer mask by clicking on the Add layer mask icon. The mask is indicated by a white hole where you painted, to the "Coffee cup copy" layer.



7. Open "Ocean".

To add it to cup document, choose Select > All then Copy. Select the "Cup" document again and Paste.

8. Clip the ocean image (Layer 1) to the mask on the layer below, by creating a clipping mask: Alt+click between the layers or right-click Layer 1 and select Create Clipping Mask.



9. Click and drag ocean image so that ocean waves fill the cup.

10. Add adjustment layer. Click the Add new adjustment layer icon at bottom of Layers palette, then select Gradient.

11. Choose Foreground to Transparent gradient swatch.

12. Create another clipping mask for the adjustment layer: Layer > Create Clipping Mask or use the keyboard shortcut Cmd/Ctrl + Option + G.



*Images available for your practise session
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Less is More

Peter Clark APSA GMPSA FRPS EFIAP/p

“simple is sometimes better or **more** effective than elaborate”

The greatest detriment to any digital image is over processing – the basic aim of post processing is to produce an image which appears natural, but which retains the impact of those elements which attracted the photographer to the scene in the first place.

Throughout my judging career I saw many images that were over processed, some grossly so, in terms of tonal balance - loss of detail in blocked up shadows and blown highlights, excessive contrast, excessive saturation, over sharpening, etc. Many of those images could have been so much better with sympathetic processing. This article is aimed at those who are relatively new to Photoshop rather than those with years of experience!

I was guided in my early days of working in Photoshop (CS3) by Dr Eddy Sethna FRPS who, along with Barry Thomas FRPS was one of the pathfinders in digital imaging in the UK. One piece of advice which I will always remember was that when applying an adjustment layer to an image to assess the effect and then back off the adjustment by 50% and reassess. More often than not the initial adjustment is excessive.

I have used Photoshop CS6 since its release and find it more than capable for my post processing work flow and have no desire to fill Adobe's coffers any further by upgrading to CC! The techniques which I employ can no doubt be used in other image processors e.g. Lightroom, Elements, but I have no experience of those or of any other processing software. Thus the techniques outlined below are all based on PS CS6.

For reference my basic workflow is as follows ...

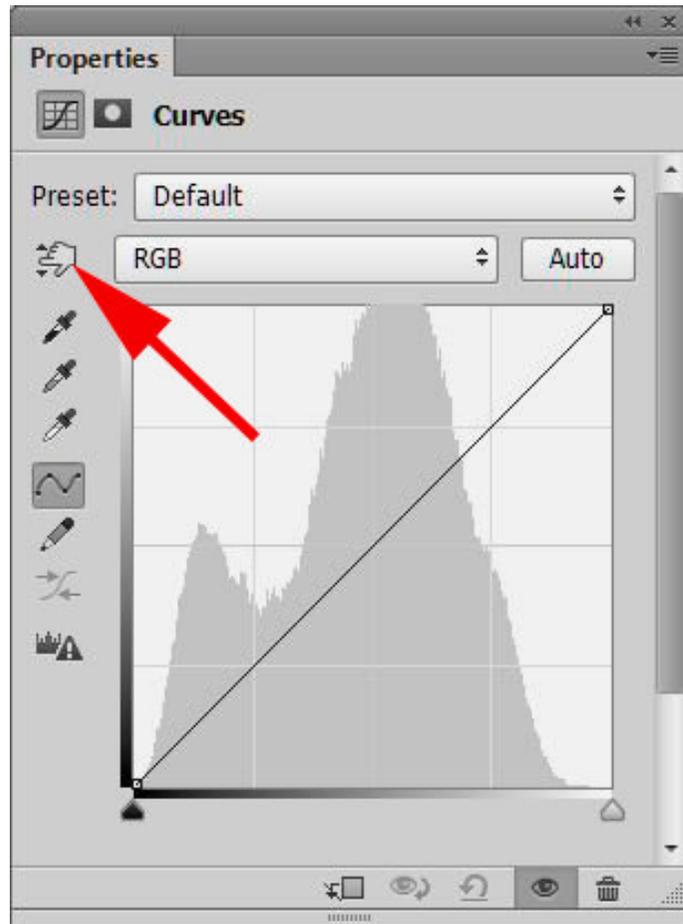
1. Open an image in Camera Raw, make a few minor adjustments if necessary bearing in mind the next stage in my post processing and transfer to Photoshop.
2. Apply Nik Colour Effex Pro 4 Detail Extractor to a duplicate layer – Nik is set up to do this automatically. I do not necessarily use the default settings and will adjust them to suit the image to retain a natural effect.
3. Apply a Nik Colour Effex Pro 4 Pro Contrast layer as above with the Highlight control at 100% and use the Dynamic Contrast slider to adjust the overall contrast.
4. The remainder of the processing is carried out on multiple masked Curves Adjustment layers in Luminosity mode (for a colour image) and possibly Vibrance.
5. The image area, particularly skies, is examined at 100-200% magnification for any noise or granularity emphasised by the post processing. If present Topaz Denoise A1 is applied to a Merge Visible layer at the top of the layer stack at a suitable level.
6. When processing is complete the image is Merged Visible at the top of the layer stack and a Nik Colour Effex Pro 4 Darken Lighten Centre layer applied to give a very slight vignette, so slight that it is only apparent when turning the layer off and on, but which serves to hold the eye in the image.
7. It is important to sharpen the image at the final output size and not before resizing. To this end a duplicate of the image is flattened, resized and then sharpened for exhibition/competition use using the High Pass filter set at 0.5-0.9 pixels (for PDI) in Soft Light mode. The layered working copy of the image is filed away for future reference – I never flatten the working copy as inevitably I will return to it and tweak it further.

Here are some of the '**Less is More**' techniques that I use on a regular basis .

Adjustment Layer and Mask Opacity

The strength of an adjustment on any Adjustment Layer e.g. Curves, Levels, etc. can be modified by altering the opacity of that layer i.e. at an opacity of 50% only half the applied correction is reflected in the image and I find this far more convenient than returning to the Adjustment Layer palette and making changes there given that the initial adjustment was not grossly excessive in which case it is better to start over again. In addition to Adjustment Layers Image Layers can be treated in the same way.

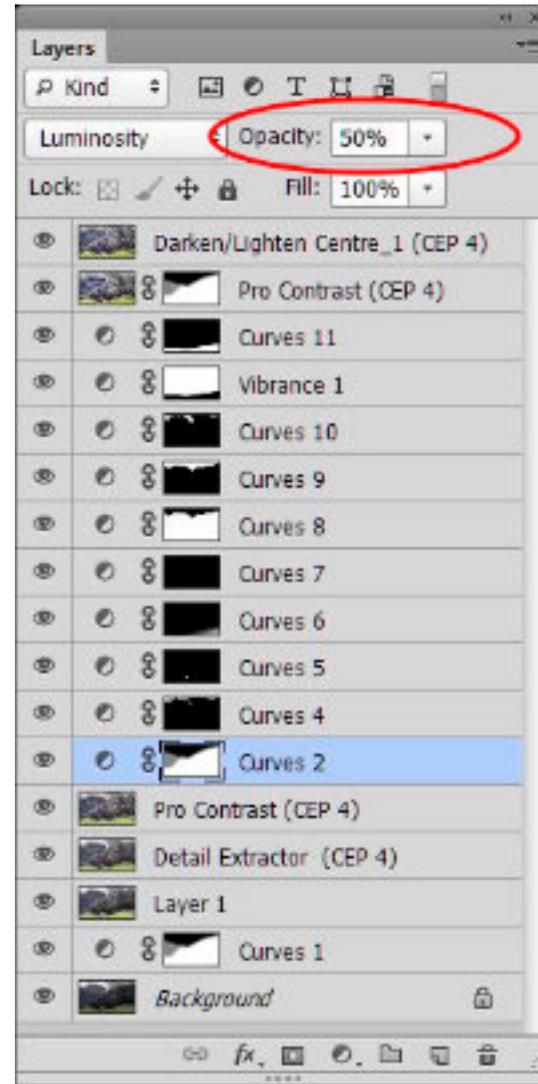
My first step when applying a Curves Adjustment Layer is to select the click and drag tool (arrowed) and click and drag in the image to modify the Curve for a particular area. The adjustment is global i.e. the entire image will be



affected to one degree or another depending on the tonal range. This is where masking comes into play – the white rectangle on an Adjustment Layer is the mask which is transparent by default. By painting on the mask in black the adjustment is masked out which enables you to restrict the adjustment to a specific area.

Conversely the mask can be filled with black and painted on in white to reveal the areas to be adjusted. The degree to which the adjustment is

applied to the painted areas can be controlled by altering the opacity of the brush. The opacity of a mask may also be adjusted by clicking on the mask in the Layers Palette and adjusting the Layer Mask Density Slider to suit. Overall the various opacity controls are a boon in finessing the processing of the image. I have never used the Burn or Dodge tools preferring the flexibility of Adjustment Layers.



The screen grab on the left shows a typical Layers palette for a fully processed image. The Adjustment Layer (Curves 2) selected is set at 50% opacity as shown in the Opacity dialogue within the red ellipse. The Opacity can be adjusted in one of two ways either by highlighting the opacity value and typing in the required value or by using the dropdown arrow to reveal an adjustment slider. Note that the blending mode for this layer is set to Luminosity mode which prevents the Curves adjustment from changing the colours. If the opacity of a mask has been reduced it will show at an appropriate shade of grey as in Curves 2. The image to which this Layers Palette refers is shown at the end – ‘Chapel of San Giovanni Val di Funes’

Contrast Control with a White Layer

An over contrasty image does not look natural and too often the contrast is boosted to conceal other defects in the image arising from poor focus control or general softness in the lens. As noted above I use Nik Colour Effex Pro 4 Pro Contrast for adjusting the contrast of an image – there are other methods of course available in Photoshop and in other processing software too.

In general Pro Contrast works well, but occasionally the balance of a contrast adjustment does not look quite right. Reducing the opacity of the Pro Contrast layer only reduces the degree of contrast adjustment and not the balance.

One solution which I have come up with is to create an empty layer at the top of the layer stack, fill it with white and set the Blending Mode to Soft Light. The initial result is a very pale pastel image, but if the opacity of the white layer is reduced as outlined earlier a slightly less contrasty image can be achieved. You will need to experiment with the opacity setting, but 5-10% generally works well. This technique works regardless of how the contrast has been adjusted.

Saturation Control

It is very tempting to boost the saturation of an image for impact, but the end result may well look unnatural to the detriment of the image.

Hue and Saturation and Vibrance are applied as Adjustment Layers by default and the opacity control may be used to reduce the effect of the adjustment on the image without the need to return to the Properties palette.

Sharpening Control

There is nothing worse than an over sharpened image the effect of which grates on the eye. My preferred sharpening method is the High Pass filter as noted above for PDI, but in the days I was producing prints I used the Nik Sharpener Pro Output Sharpener. Whichever method of sharpening you use I recommend the following procedure

1. Duplicate the layered image, save and close down the original image for safety and flatten the duplicate image.

2. Resize the duplicate image to the required size for print or PDI and then sharpen on a duplicate layer.

Sharpening on a duplicate layer permits the degree of sharpening to be reduced by reducing the opacity of the layer and masking can be employed to control the degree of sharpening in specific areas. If the degree of sharpening is felt to be inadequate there is no option but to delete the sharpened duplicate layer and start over.

And Finally – Review your processed image again and again

Once you have finished processing your image it is very tempting to send it immediately to print or to a competition/exhibition. In my opinion this is unwise – when processing an image we tend to view it through rose tinted glasses and think that we have produced a real winner – the best thing since sliced bread! Sadly this is not always the case – reviewing the image in the cold light of the next day may well show up deficiencies and the need for further correction or tweaking. Hence the need to save a copy of the original layered file so that further adjustments can be made.



Chapel of San Giovanni Val di Funes

Still Life Photography from an article by Andrea Minoia

Still life and tabletop photography is a great way to improve your photography skills. Common subjects for still life photography include inanimate items — flowers, food, plants, rocks, etc. You can of, course, set up your still life on a tabletop with appropriate backgrounds etc.



Still life photography will enable you to observe how different kinds of light will affect the scene. Sidelight from a low light source is ideal for revealing textures and with still life and tabletop photography, you are in control of each aspect of your photo.



Of course tabletop photography lends itself well to commercial shots for products and the like, and there is no reason why you shouldn't give a go.

You can take amazing photos with basic equipment in the corner of your living

room. Keep your costs low by getting creative and crafting DIY solutions to get the shot that you want.

Any kind of camera will do; a mobile phone or DSLR will give you immediate feedback, but nothing prevents you from using a film camera.

A collection of different materials and fabrics are useful for creating the flooring and backgrounds for your image.

To bounce the light back into your scene you can use a small silver or white reflector. These can be easily built using tinfoil and cardboard. (mountboard is useful).



Look around your house or visit a flea market for interesting, cheap props to enhance the scene.

You may find a flash-gun useful, especially if you use it in manual mode and it has adjustable power; also a wireless trigger to enable off camera flash. A tripod will also be very useful for making shots easier than hand-held and second one can be useful if you want to mount your

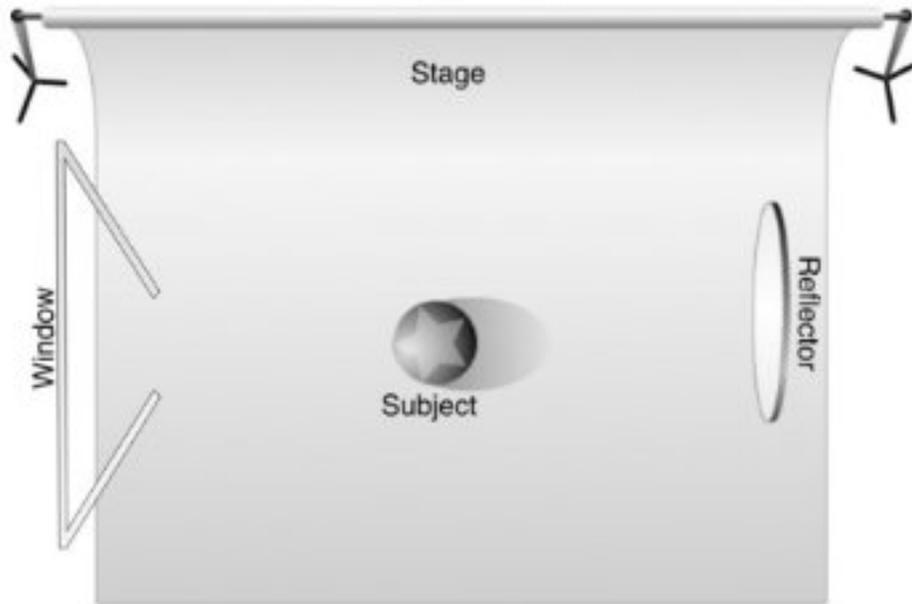
flashgun or any lights that you may have.

Experiment with the lenses that you have. Use a macro, 50mm kit lens or a 200 telephoto and you can also get away with a set of close up lenses that fit onto your lens..

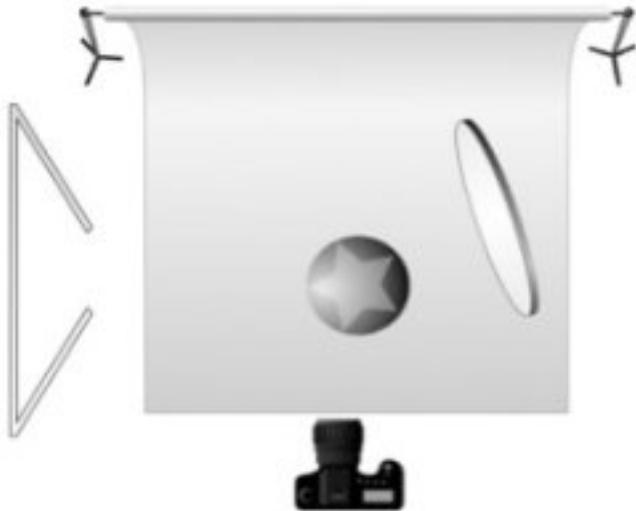
Keep it simple. Take a minimalist approach, where the main subject is easily identified. Work the scene to make the most of it.

Try to avoid working with shiny reflective surfaces in the beginning and clean your props and visible surfaces to remove dust, smudges and fingerprints. Think about your composition, how the objects go together and consider leading lines and angles of view. Experiment with the light thinking about what you want to highlight in the scene, and what textures you want to reveal.

Here are some lighting setups that you may find useful.



In this one the light for the subject is provided by a window and a reflector. The shot is taken from above. And below using the same light source but shooting from the side.



In this one an extra light source is used in conjunction with a reflecting surface in a closer situation. (Ideal for close up macro shots)



This one illustrates using your light source to give you more directional lighting



Iceland in Winter

Peter Clark APSA GMPSA EFIAP/p FRPS

Winter in Iceland is a truly magical season - the black lava landscape overlaid with a mantle of snow is almost completely monochromatic which to my eyes is infinitely more attractive than the rather bland summer landscape. One of the attractions of Winter is the possibility of seeing the Northern Lights – an unforgettable experience, but one which is far from guaranteed as their appearance is very much dependent on a combination of weather and solar conditions. Another attraction is the low temperature – down to -10 deg C in my experience, which results in many waterfalls freezing up completely or, in the case of the largest and most spectacular waterfalls, at least partially. Either way round unique photographic opportunities abound when the weather plays ball, but weather conditions in Iceland are extremely variable and unpredictable and the full gamut of sun, rain, sleet and snow in one day is quite possible!

I have been privileged to be able to visit Iceland on 9 occasions since 2015 , 5 times in winter and have returned with many successful images and, incidentally, a replacement hip in 2015 after slipping on ice! A selection of images captured in winter at my favourite locations are shown below with descriptors.

The Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis) captured within a few hours of arriving in



Iceland for the first time. An amazing experience and so lucky as it was another 5 years until I saw them again.



Godafoss in NE Iceland spectacular in both winter and summer



Kirkjufellsfoss on the Snaefellsnes peninsular in NW Iceland – the last image I captured before slipping on ice and breaking my hip.



Budakirkja – the iconic black church at Budir on the Snaefellsnes peninsula, originally dating back to 1703, rebuilt 1987, and still used today primarily as a wedding venue and is a magnet for photographers. So much more attractive in winter than summer.



A remote mountain hut or refuge on the pass between the south and north coasts of the Snaefellsnes peninsula in NW Iceland



The remote church at Rif on the Snaefellsnes peninsula - the red roof and white walls are typical on many rural Icelandic churches and highly pictorial of course.



Pseudo craters at Myvatn in NE Iceland – these craters are not volcanos, but were formed by steam explosions when the lava flowed over a wet surface



The Vestrahorn is situated on the Stokksnes peninsular in SE Iceland – the black sand beach and dunes in the foreground are characterised by grassy humps. One of my favourite locations in south Iceland and the source of many successful images – not so interesting in the summer months.



The glacial lagoon is tidal and the icebergs float down a short channel to the Black Sand or Diamond Ice beach and the sea' This image is by no means typical of the size and amount of ice which ends up on the beach, often it is minimal.



The Jokulsarlon glacial lagoon freezes over almost completely in winter and is difficult to photograph unlike in summer when the icebergs float freely and make their way down a short channel to the Black Sand beach.



Inside an ice cave in the Vatnajokul glacier which feeds icebergs to the Jokulsarlon glacial lagoon. Another memorable experience!