



plugs·n·pixels

IMAGE CREATION, MANIPULATION & EDUCATION

COLLAGE!

Use plug-ins with native Photoshop filters and layer effects to create haunting artwork

Create scenic artwork

Don't delete it!



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introduction

Photoshop and third-party plug-ins join forces to create gorgeous artwork! This issue's lead tutorial explains the decisions that go into the process of compositing multiple images together and enabling them to interact with each other in interesting and effective ways.

The next two tutorials show you additional approaches to expanding your digital creativity using standalone apps along with plug-ins. And as usual you'll find the latest news about creative digital imaging and 3D-related software releases.

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computer based scenic art
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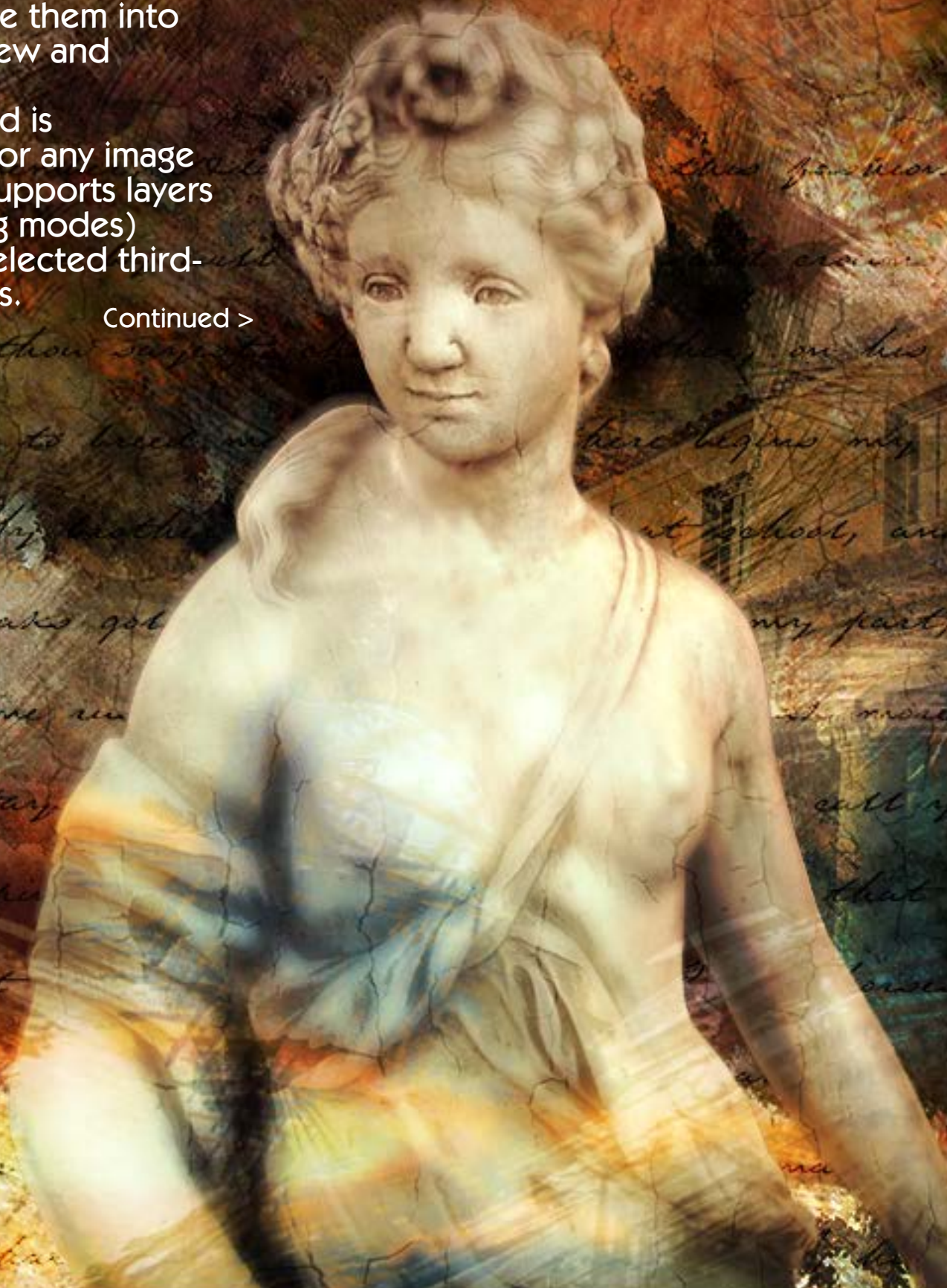
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collage!

You've got thousands of images sitting on your hard drives and DVDs! Let's combine them into something new and beautiful.

All you need is Photoshop (or any image editor that supports layers and blending modes) along with selected third-party plug-ins.

Continued >



collage!

For this tutorial I would like to describe the process I went through creating this particular piece, with the expectation that you will apply some or all of the techniques to collages using your own photos (as opposed to merely recreating my results). Any image editor that supports layers, blending modes (and ideally plug-ins for additional flexibility) will work.

Step 1: Gather your photo sources

To be honest, when starting this project specifically for this tutorial, I had no idea where I wanted to go with it other than that it was going to be a collage/montage. When looking for photo sources I tend to visit my most recently shot images (which I store on an external hard drive as stock photos to draw from for my website and other uses). So I arbitrarily pulled up a recent image of a university building walkway to see where it might lead me...



Continued >

Step 2: Begin adding creative effects

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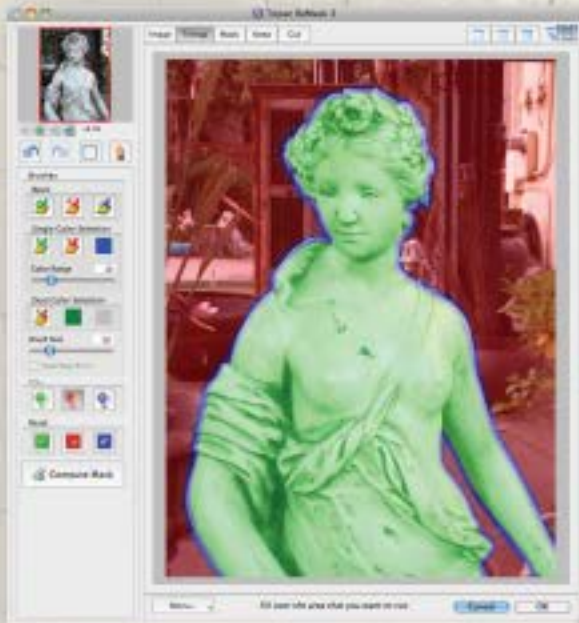
Just like musicians tend to add distortion or reverb to the sound of their guitars, I like to add all sorts of post-processing effects to my images. An untreated image seems too "unfinished" to me. So I used PostworkShop to add artistic effects to the walkway image, to the point where it was almost unrecognizable. At this point I had the makings of a nice background for my mystery collage. And since this is a collage, I needed more images to mush together! Another recent photo I took that I thought had potential was of a colorful stone wall, which also received the PostworkShop treatment as an intended background element.



collage!

Step 3: Think about your main element

Unless you are doing a pure abstract collage, you'll want to choose a main element to sit above the artistic background and serve as a center of attention. I chose a photo of a statue, which happened to be taken the same night as the walkway image. Of course, the existing distracting background was going to be of no use, so I had to isolate the statue. There are many ways of doing this, but I chose the Topaz ReMask plug-in due to its ease of use (paint a rough blue line around the edge of the subject, click the unwanted areas to fill them with red, click a button to create the editable mask).



The changing background art in this tutorial is the result of recombining the original Photoshop layers

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Step 4: Add effects to the main element

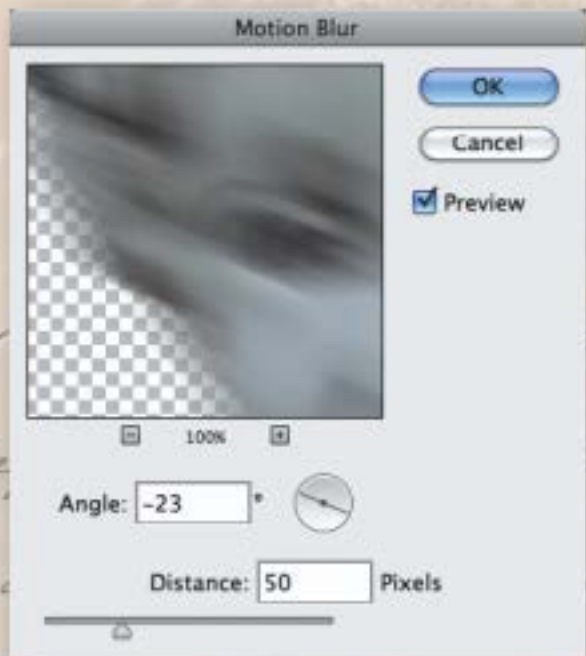
I mentioned I don't like bare images (the nude statue notwithstanding!), so I ended up experimenting with various plug-ins to bring some "life" to the statue. Here you see Topaz Lens Effects' "Tilt & Shift" and "Toy" presets used together to add depth and color to the pale statue. You'll note I also used Photoshop's Healing Brush Tool to remove distracting leaves and other debris that had fallen on the statue in its outdoor location.



Continued >

Step 5: Use duplicate layers to thicken effects

The final collage actually uses three separate extracted statue layers, all of which contribute in balance to its final soft vintage appearance: The bottom statue layer is treated with Photoshop's native Motion Blur in an attempt to soften the hard edges; the next up is a straight, untouched copy and the topmost of these layers is the Topaz-treated one. I arrived at this particular combination through experimenting – there is no specific recipe for creativity! (See Step 8 for a screenshot of the layer arrangement.)



Continued >

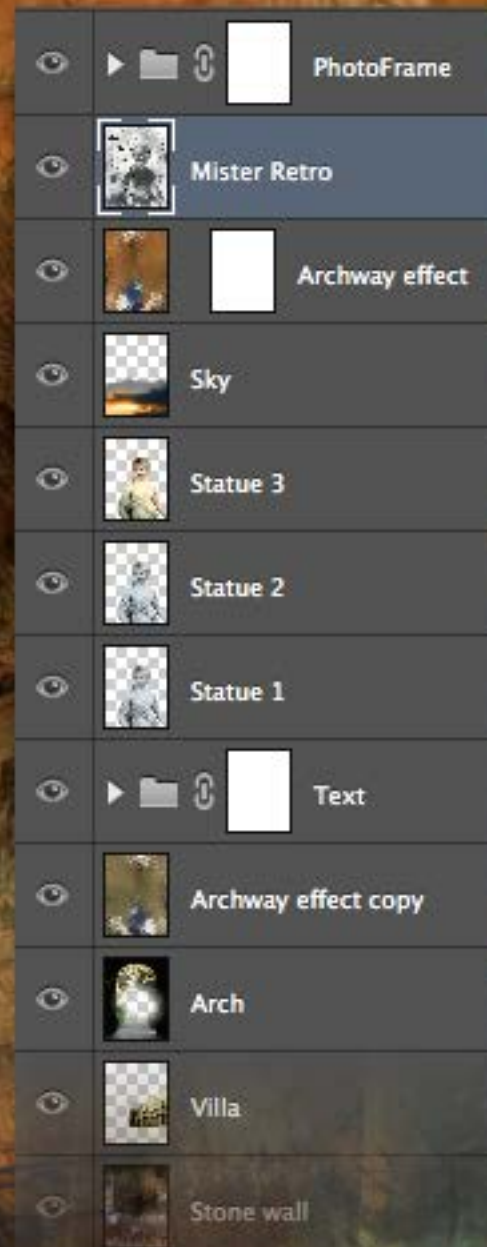
Step 6: Bring in additional elements

I kept on bringing images into the mix so long as they contributed to the results in an effective way. Some remained; others did not. Here you see an element that is in the final composition: a Roman villa (actually a college building, but it supports the general theme) placed to the right of the statue. The “villa” was treated with Topaz Adjust to add colorization and a vignette and its blending mode (more on this later) set at Hard Light at 27% opacity.



Step 7: Adding further effects

The text script between the background and the statue was added using onOne's PhotoFrame plug-in. I chose not to have it appear in front of the statue or reach all the way to the top of the composition, and since I was using layers, I had full control over its placement. After I was satisfied with the overall look of the composition, I flattened the whole thing and saved it under a different name for global finishing touches. Since this composition ended up being Classical in nature, I decided to finish it off with a cracked paint look, courtesy of Mister Retro's Retrographer (a plug-in full of vintage effects that can actually fool people with their retro-photo realism).

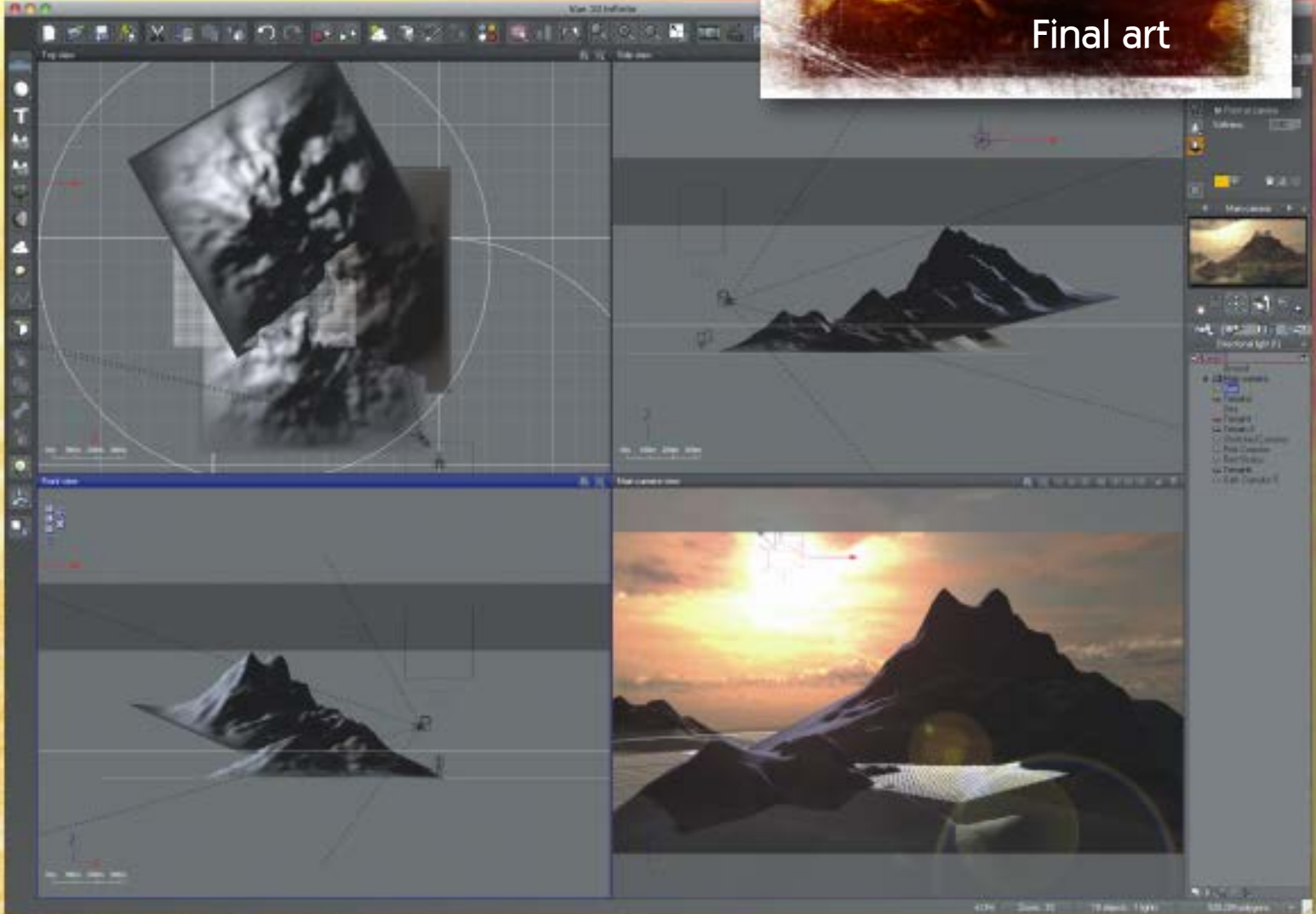


Step 8: Blending modes and Opacity: The keys to compositing

Here you can see the full 12 layers that ended up as part of the final composition. They interact with each other via various Blending modes (a VERY important tool for this type of work!) and varying degrees of opacity, which also allows layers to interact. From the bottom of the layers stack, there is the stone wall, serving as the background (Normal/100%); the "villa" (Hard Light/27%); an archway (very subtle contribution; it could be removed without detriment, Overlay/13%); the first of two walkway images treated with PostworkShop, Hard Light/39%; the PhotoFrame text, Overlay/100%; statue layer 1, Normal/100%; statue layer 2, Normal 58%; statue layer 3, Normal/52%; the sunset, Overlay/68%; the second of two walkway images, treated with PostworkShop and flipped horizontally, Overlay/50%; Retrographer (effect layer dragged in to the original composition from the flattened image; finally, a subtle use of a dark grunge frame from PhotoFrame (Pass Through/100%).•

scenic art

Create scenery from scratch at your computer and turn it into artwork



Maybe you live in the city and don't get out of town much, or perhaps you're in a scenic mood and the weather is just not cooperating. No matter, you can create beautiful scenic views while sitting at your desk and proceed to enhance them in an artistic direction using Photoshop and various plug-ins.

There are a number of different options for creating digital scenery, some free, some inexpensive and others on the high-end. For this tutorial I am using e-on Software's Vue Infinite.

STEP 01: In Vue, create a new scene and populate it with a few heightfield terrains (these look like mountains). (Since this is not specifically a Vue tutorial, please visit websites such as www.geekatplay.com for free training videos.) Arrange the terrains as desired, then add an atmosphere, cloud layers and some water while experimenting with the direction of the sun. Don't worry about little details; they will be hidden by the application of artistic effects later. Here is a screenshot of my Vue work in progress.

Continued >

scenic art

(con't.)



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STEP 02 (left): After rendering the Vue scene into a standard image format (such as TIFF), we can begin experimenting with ways to alter the results in Photoshop. I first applied Topaz Adjust 5 to improve the tonal quality and pop the details.
STEP 03 (above): Next I applied Topaz Lens Effects (Diffusion preset) to add a bit of dreaminess to the scene. This can even be considered a final effect.



STEP 04: I like to brighten up the sun in any image by using Knoll Light Factory. I opted to add a more defined sun disc and a bit of lens flare, nothing too dramatic.



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PostworkShop!

STEP 05: Next I explored the Painting, Photo and Drawing presets in PostworkShop. I added more presets to this one and used blending modes to merge them together.



STEP 06: I opened Mister Retro's Retrograpper to experiment. This effect was a bit shocking but inverted the area where the sun was so it was less of a "light hole".



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STEP 07: One of my favorite plug-ins is onOne's Perfect Photo Suite, which offers many frame and edge effects. A portion of the Photographic presets are shown here. •

don't delete it!

How often do you delete photos from your collection that are a bit too soft, badly-timed, awkwardly composed or off-color? My source photo suffers from some of these ailments, but I decided to give it one last chance. I'm glad I did! Here is my redemptive process:

STEP 01: Hazy photo taken from the Santa Monica CA pier, zoom maxed out (26x), very windy and too bright to see exactly what I was shooting. Yuck. The unexpected helicopter added a nice touch though.



STEP 02: Since the original was so bland due to the distance and haze, the first thing I did was make manual Levels adjustments in Photoshop CS6. This gave me a better base image to work with.



STEP 03: I began experimenting with the presets in PostworkShop. This is the RedBlooded preset. Nice!



STEP 04: Next I applied PostworkShop's Speed Painting preset.



STEPS 5-7: I continued on with Mister Retro's Retrographer (L), Topaz Lens Effects and Flypaper Textures (R).



Unused
PostworkShop preset (Dune)

(At left is the very first PostworkShop effect I tried, which is also interesting.)

Step 08: For the final touch to this military/industrial scene I added an appropriate frame preset from onOne Perfect Photo Suite 7 (below).

The trick when trying to salvage a shot headed for the digital trash can is to play off of the subject matter when choosing post-processing effects, then let each effect suggest the following step to take. The industrial nature of my original suggested a rougher, more graphic treatment, while an out-of-focus close-up of a flower would better benefit from a softer touch. •

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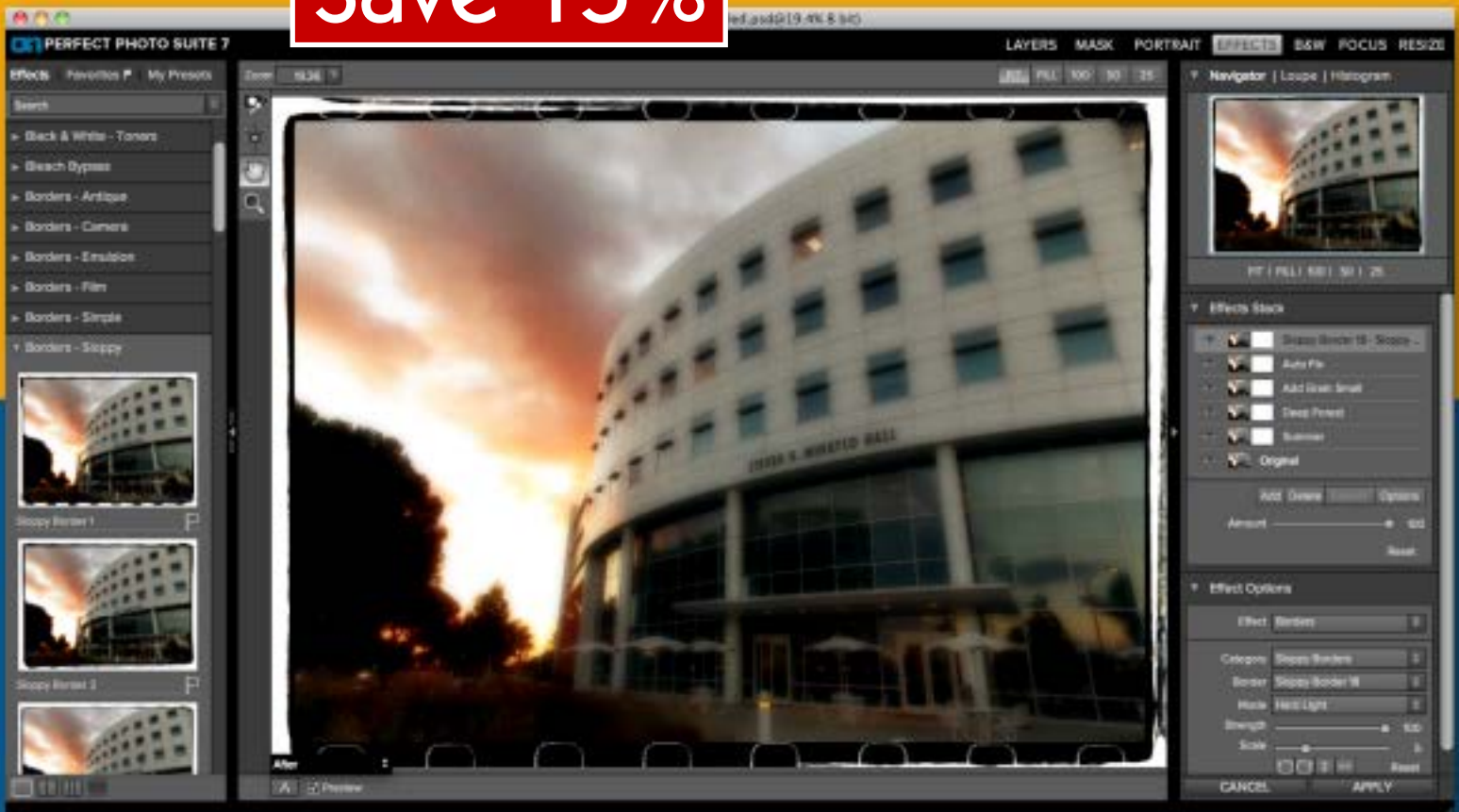


New!

PERFECT PHOTO SUITE 7

on

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onOne Software has just released its Perfect Photo Suite 7, which includes several new or improved professional-grade post-processing products (contained in a new integrated interface!). With Perfect Photo Suite 7, you can create and work with layered files, develop stunning black and white images, retouch portraits, stylize images with photographic effects, remove unwanted backgrounds, add realistic depth of field after the shot, resize images up to 1000% and prepare them for print while working directly with Lightroom, Aperture, Photoshop, Photoshop Elements or even as a standalone application (see screenshot above)!

Included titles are Perfect B&W, Perfect Portrait 2, Perfect Layers 3, Perfect Effects 4, Perfect Mask 5.2, FocalPoint 2 and Perfect Resize 7.5 Pro.

A 15% discount off the Suite or any individual plug-in from onOne is available through Plugs 'N Pixels (see URL below).

LAYERS MASK PORTRAIT EFFECTS B&W FOCUS RESIZE

www.plugsandpixels.com/ononesuite.html



simplify 4



When things get too complicated, you have to Simplify! We often strive for razor-sharp images, but sometimes the opposite approach is more effective, especially if you're doing fine-art type work.

Topaz Simplify 4 is an excellent tool for adding an artistic touch to your images. Choose from several traditional art effects such as watercolor, textured oil paintings, cartoon-like images, abstracts, charcoal drawings, line art and photorealistic painting.

The over 100 presets make it easy to get an effect started; you can make adjustments from there as appropriate for your image and the results you have in mind (including using the edge-aware selective brush for dodging, burning, smoothing and brushing out effects).



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www.plugsandpixels.com/simplify.html

FLYPAPER TEXTURES

classic grunge and painterly texture layers for all your photographic and illustrative needs



Adding a texture layer to your images takes your creativity to a whole new level. As you can see from this issue's tutorials, texture layers play a large part in creating atmosphere in the finished illustrations.

Texture layers are literally additional images that are placed in the layer stack above layers containing photographic content and merged back into the image by use of blending modes.

The folks at Flypaper Textures offer a very large selection of ready-to-use textures based around different themes. The samples shown on this page are from their new August Painterly texture set which evokes a high summer Venetian concept.

Sets include August Painterly, Autumn Painterly, Spring Painterly, Summer Painterly, Antique Edges and French-themed overlays. These texture sets are downloadable and ready for immediate use.



www.plugsandpixels.com/flypaper.html



POSTWORKSHOP 3

reimagine your photos



Change

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postworkshop.html](http://www.plugsandpixels.com/postworkshop.html)

There are many ways to turn your photographs into artwork without having to resort to doing tedious manual digital painting, but PostworkShop is perhaps the MOST fun way to accomplish this goal.

To prove my point, the examples on this page (derived from the original at lower right) were all created using unedited presets, literally clicking once and getting the result.

Of course you can interact with your artwork at a much higher level, by adjusting any of multiple parameters, controlling paint stroke attributes and direction, using the bitmap editor, layering, chaining, reordering and blending any of the 350 artistic styles, digging into the node-based filter graph editor, using layer masks or working by hand in the Paint Module.

PostworkShop's fast render engine takes advantage of your computer's multiple processor cores and RAM and supports batch processing.

Besides operating as a standalone application, PostworkShop is also presented as a Photoshop, PaintShop Pro and Painter plug-in or external editor for Lightroom.

For maximum flexibility, export your work in any of several different image/file formats.



Original



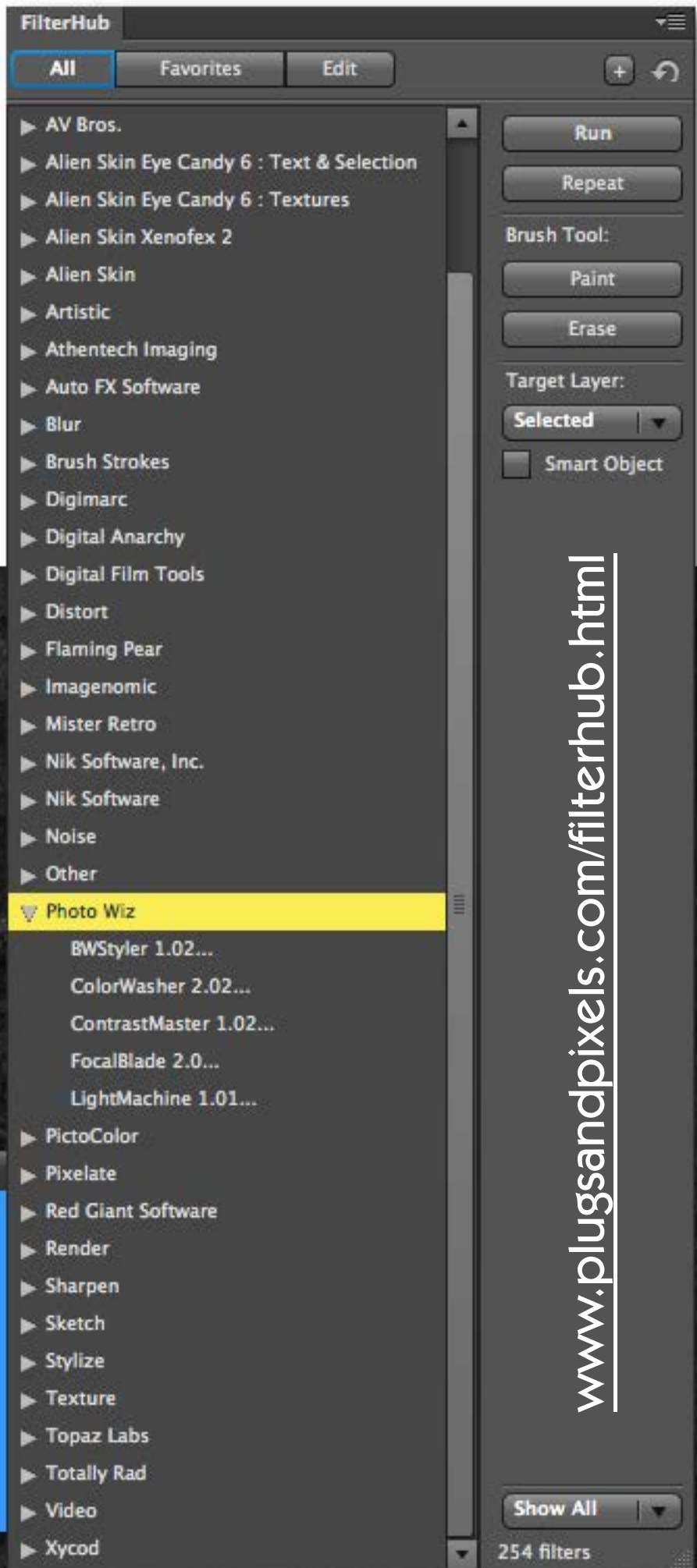
Do you have a lot of plug-ins? You probably do, and chances are you're tired of digging through Photoshop's Filter menu to access them.

That's why PhotoWiz offers the new FilterHub extension as a more efficient replacement while upgrading the menu's capabilities at the same time.

Using FilterHub, you have immediate access to built-in Photoshop filters as well as third-party plug-ins (as seen in my list at right). Just double-click the filter or plug-in name in FilterHub and the filter or plug-in immediately launches!

The buttons at right offer even more convenience, allowing you to run the filter, repeat it afterwards, paint on or erase the effects, and even run multiple filters/plug-ins at the same time!

How did we live without this?



www.plugsandpixels.com/filterhub.html



Silva 3D

Digital Botany & Objects

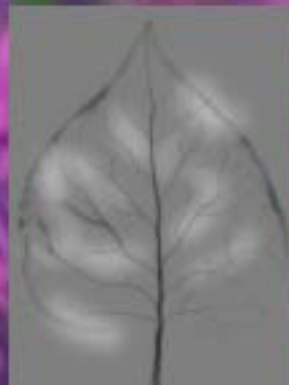


The background photo on this page is not a photo at all! It is a render using the digital botany objects from Silva 3D.

Those of you doing 3D design and rendering know how important realism is, and Silva 3D offers various plant categories such as Flowers, Shrubs, Hedges, Bushes, Trees, Weeds & Herbs, Ornamental plants and Grasses in addition to a handful of interior 3D objects.

Silva 3D's offerings come in multiple formats for maximum compatibility with the popular 3D apps (*obj, *c4d, vray for *c4d, *vob, *tgo). See URL below for more photorealistic examples and info.

www.plugsandpixels.com/silva3d.html





NEW WORLD DIGITAL ART
NEW WORLD DIGITAL ART

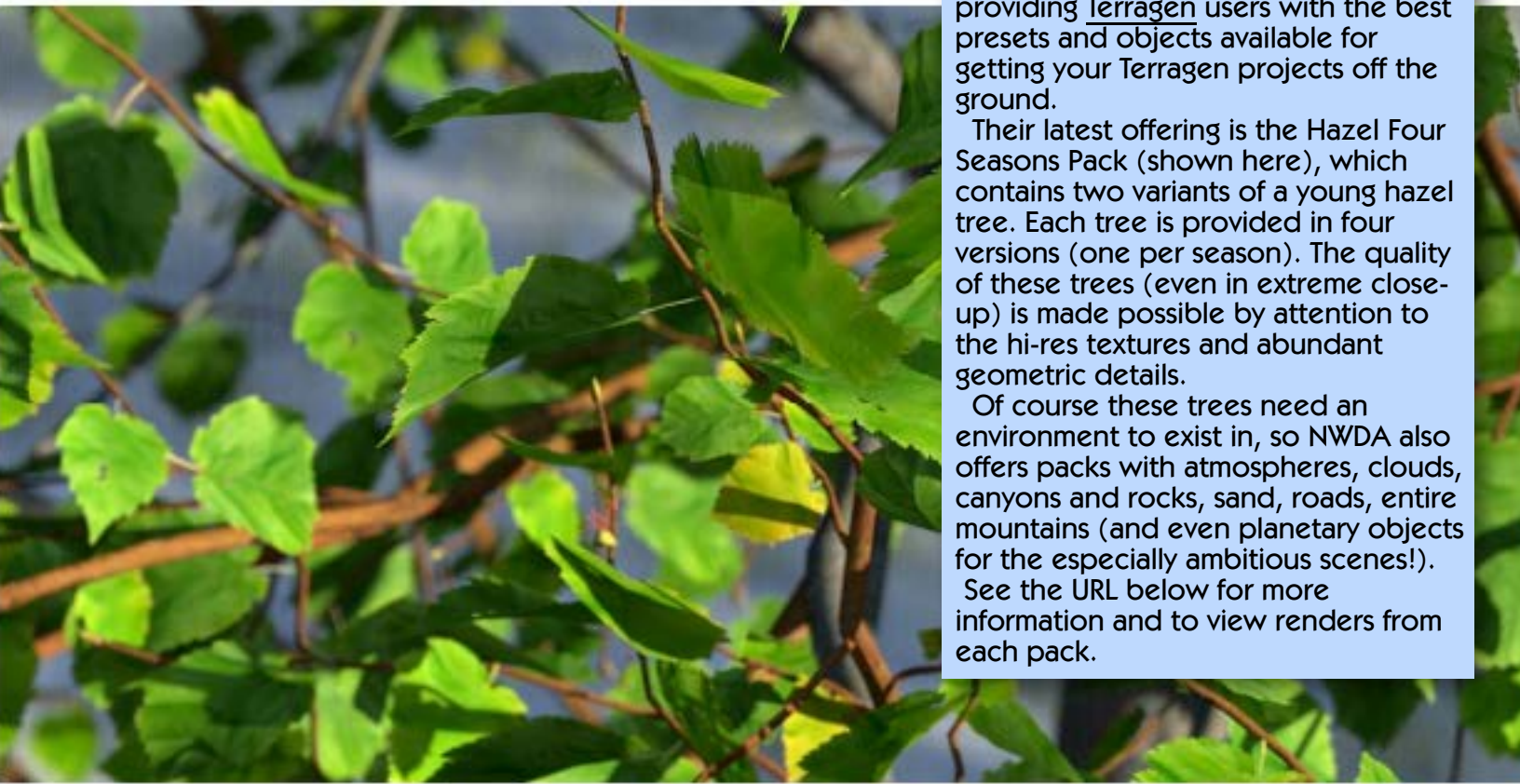
Hazel Four Seasons Pack

The digital artists at New World Digital Art are dedicated to providing Terragen users with the best presets and objects available for getting your Terragen projects off the ground.

Their latest offering is the Hazel Four Seasons Pack (shown here), which contains two variants of a young hazel tree. Each tree is provided in four versions (one per season). The quality of these trees (even in extreme close-up) is made possible by attention to the hi-res textures and abundant geometric details.

Of course these trees need an environment to exist in, so NWDA also offers packs with atmospheres, clouds, canyons and rocks, sand, roads, entire mountains (and even planetary objects for the especially ambitious scenes!).

See the URL below for more information and to view renders from each pack.



Nasturtium

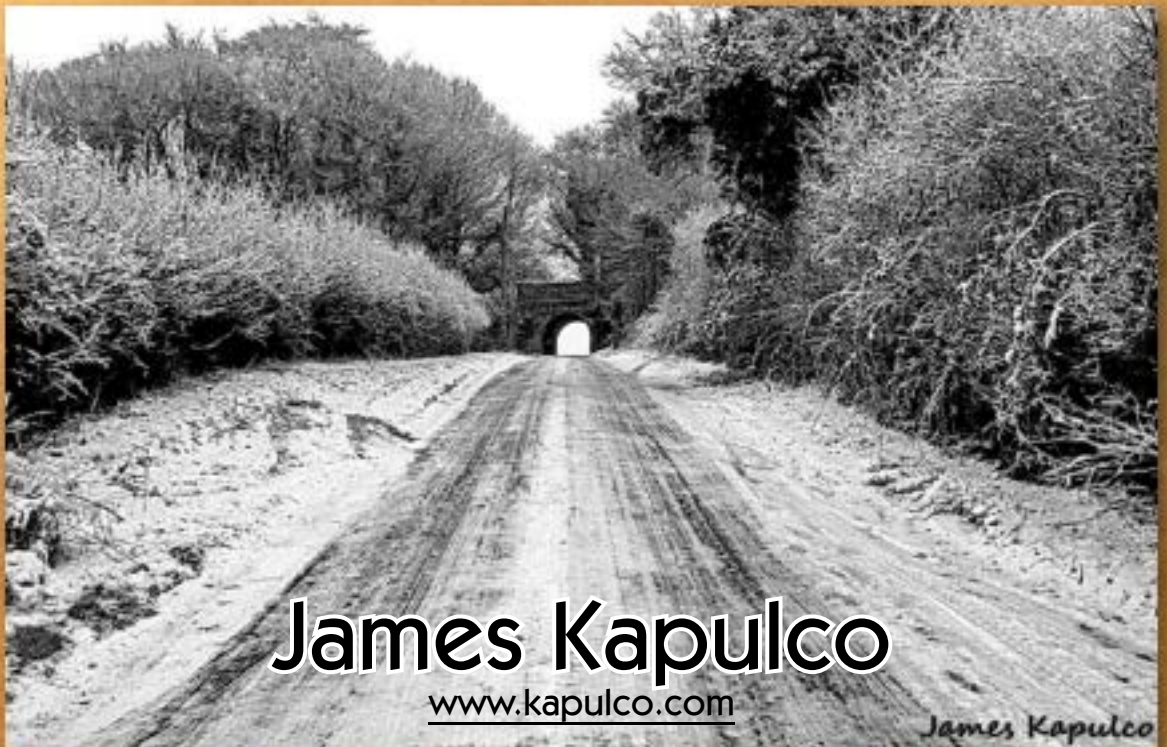
www.flickr.com/photos/nancee_art/



Nasturtium post-processes her photos mainly with Xycod PostworkShop while James Kapulco uses ACDSee Pro as well as Serif Photo+.

To have your work considered for the Featured Artist page, send an email directing us to your online galleries at: mike@plugsandpixels.com

Background texture by Flypaper textures



James Kapulco

www.kapulco.com

James Kapulco

closing artwork

Detail from this issue's "Scenic Art" tutorial



Created with [Vue Infinite](#), the [Topaz Bundle](#),
[Knoll Light Factory](#), [PostworkShop](#)

Artwork by [Mike Bedford](#)