

Easy Book Illustrations:
Module Two: Composition &
Compositing

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Introduction

Easy BOOK ILLUSTRATIONS

Module Two: Composition & Compositing

Easy BOOK ILLUSTRATION



Easily Create Professional-Looking
Illustrations, **EVEN** If You Can't Draw!

Welcome to the second lesson of our Easy Book Illustration course. The last lesson laid the groundwork on how to take photographs and change them into illustrations for children's books and other art mediums. This lesson will concentrate mainly on composition and compositing, which means we will be learning about:

- Silhouetting and Compositing
- Using Cutouts vs. On Location
- Repositioning Body Parts
- Changing the Shape and Appearance of Characters
- And Much More!

This is an exciting lesson. There will be a lot more hands-on work to be learned about here, as well as a couple of photography tricks that you are likely to enjoy. We had touched on some of these subjects in the previous lesson, but there is still a lot more to be learned.

In the following lesson you will be learning how to use GimpShop. There may be other free programs to be highlighted as well. If you are a Photoshop user, you should still follow along because a lot of the methodology will be similar, so the lesson will still be useful to you as well.

Putting Your Character in the Scenes

SILHOUETTING & COMPOSITING...

Putting Your Character in the Scenes:

- Expands your scene flexibility.
- Works with models, photographed subjects and line drawings.
- White or Green Screen backgrounds are easiest to work with.
- Multiple tools to use: Lasso, Masks, Eraser, Paths.



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Some people will only be doing straight photography. Other people are more interested in taking characters and putting them into scenes. This approach expands your scene flexibility. For example, if it is winter and there is snow on the ground, you would have to wait to take pictures for a story that takes place in the summer. So, the solution for this is to take your characters and place them into scenes that you desire.

Silhouetting and compositing works well with models, photographed subjects, and even line drawings. White or green screen backgrounds are the best to use for this. However, there are a lot of tools that you can use to silhouette your characters. They include the lasso tool, masks, eraser tools, and paths. Most editing programs have these tools available. Here you will learn some of the benefits and the disadvantages of these tools.

In this lesson Photoshop will be used. However, everything done in this lesson can be performed in GimpShop and most other editing programs as well. To begin, open up your editing program and choose an image that you would like to edit.



Say that you have chosen an image with a solid white background. One tool that is available in Photoshop and Gimpshop is the magic wand. Simply select this tool, hold the shift key down, and click on the background until you get everything you want selected. This is fairly easy. You can usually silhouette most of your object with just a couple of mouse clicks.

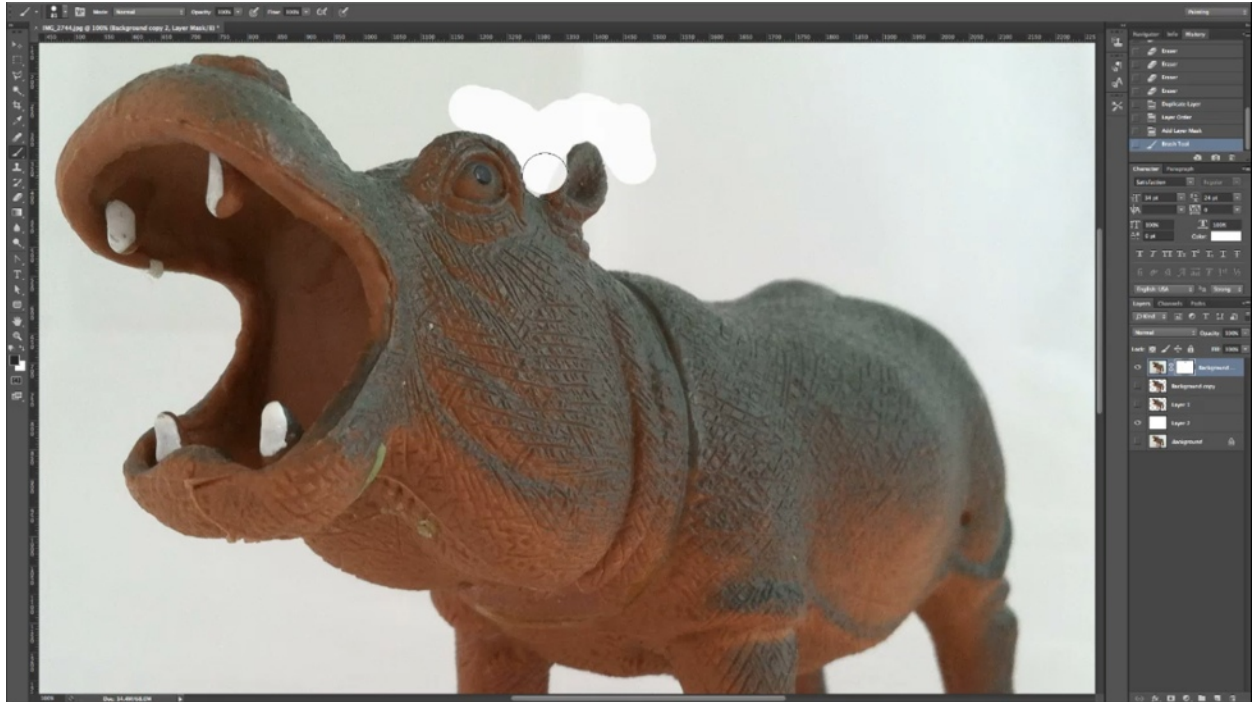
To deselect something all you have to do is select the polygonal lasso tool and hold the option key down (on a Mac), then click on the area that you want deselected. After you have the entire background selected, simple hit Command-Shift-I (Mac) or Ctrl+Shift+I (PC). This will invert the selection and the remaining image will be silhouetted. Now you should be able to just copy and paste the image (Ctrl+C and Ctrl+V are the short cuts for this).



You may also choose to use the eraser tool to erase the background. Begin by creating a layer that is pure white. This way as you erase the background will become pure white. You will have a number of different eraser sizes available. You will want to begin with a large eraser with a hard edge. As you get closer to the image you will want to reduce the size of the eraser.

The problem with using the eraser is that it takes a lot longer than the magic wand. When you get closer to the image that you want to keep, you will have to zoom into the picture to get the final details. Another problem is that if you accidentally erase something it can be hard to fix. Of course, you do have the option of using you're history. This method is much more difficult, but unfortunately it is a necessary process if you want to composite the image into another photograph.

A method that is a little easier is to work with a layer mask. This works almost the exact same way as with the eraser, except with a little more flexibility. You simply select the layer that you want to put the mask on. On the bottom you will see a square with a circle in it. That is your layer mask. Click on it. You'll notice that the color palette immediately turns to black and white.



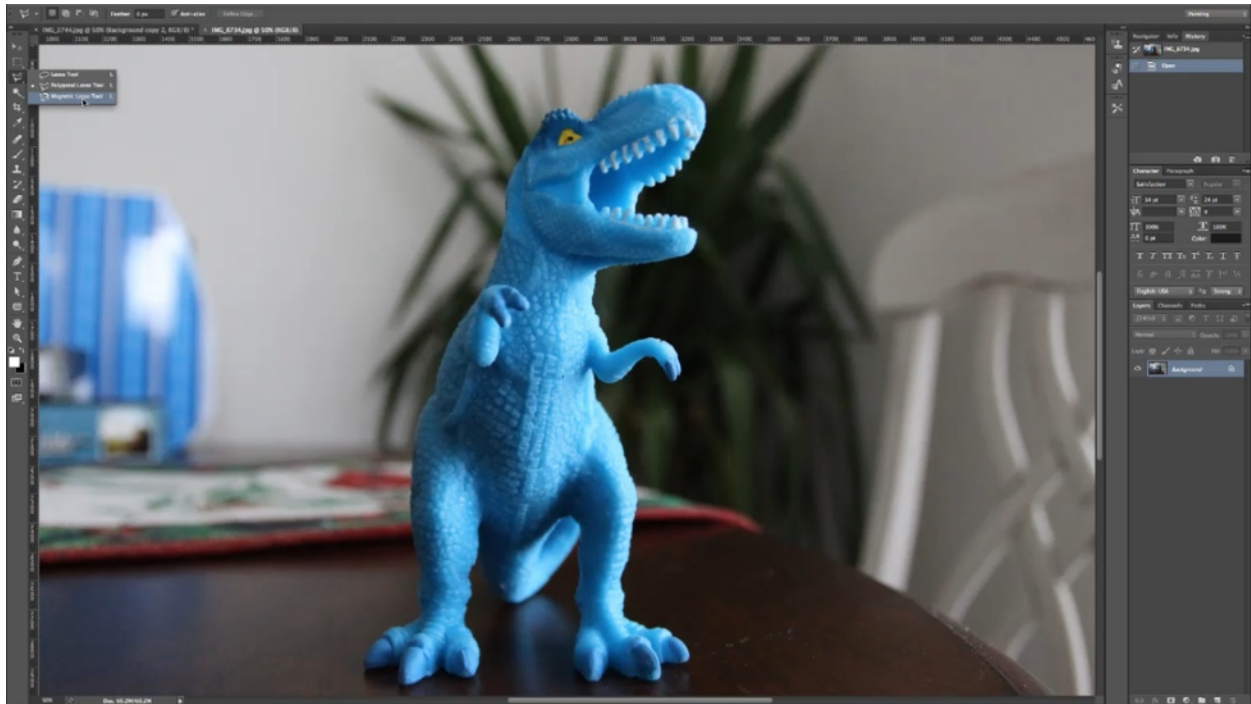
Begin by choosing the brush tool, and then change the size of the brush just like you did with the eraser. Now, everywhere that you paint black, essentially erases it. Everywhere that you paint white restores it. So, if you accidentally erase part of the image, you can switch to white and paint over the part you erased, restoring it. You can't do that using an eraser. The difference here is that when you do this you are masking the pixels instead of deleting them.

Another way that you can silhouette your image is by using the lasso tool or the polygonal lasso tool. It is much easier to use the polygonal lasso tool because the regular lasso tool is a free-hand type of tool. The polygonal lasso tool allows you to draw in straight lines and then everywhere you click another point is anchored. So, you can even edit rounder images by just making smaller lines.

This is still a lot faster than using the eraser tool. When you have finished tracing part of the image, you can select a large amount of the surrounding white area and hit delete to make a large area of the background disappear. This method works best if you are trying to separate the background that is busy. The magic wand, for example, only works well if the background is of a solid color. That is why multiple methods are available.

One of the problems with this process is that once you have anchored a point you cannot go back and change it. For this reason working with paths can be easier. Paths work in a very similar way to the polygonal lasso. The difference here is that you can go back and edit these. You can also curve the lines as needed. So, this can be a much easier tool to work with in some cases. Continue working with these until you have surrounded the entire image.

You can keep on editing these, if needed, until it becomes an exact fit. Once your path is finished, all you have to do is to convert the path into a selection. You can do this by clicking on the 'Paths' tab or by selecting 'Window' and then 'Paths'. You'll notice there are some different choices that come up, one being 'Make Selection'. A window will pop up. Click 'OK' and it will close the path. This will turn it into a completed selection, which you can copy and paste.



There is a tool called the magnetic lasso, which finds the edges along a subject and can usually follow them fairly closely. This works especially well on pictures with a hard edge. This tool can be used where there is somewhat of a background. This probably would not work well with images that have softer edges or where the background colors are very similar to the color of the subject.

In conclusion, you have several methods available to use in order to silhouette your subject. With a solid background, as in the picture of the hippopotamus, the magic wand tool may be your best choice. You can also erase the background or use a mask to paint it out. Using the lasso tool and the paths tool will also bring you the same result. There are some cases in which your choices are limited, however. For example, if you are using a picture with a busier background, you couldn't use the magic wand.

Photography Tips

SILHOUETTING & COMPOSITING...

Putting Your Character in the Scenes:



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As was noted above, a solid background is much easier to use. You don't have to use high-tech equipment for this. Look at the above picture. The left-hand picture shows a small light tent which can be bought on Amazon.com for about \$60. These can be found on a number of other websites as well. As you can see, this particular light tent fits on a dining room table.

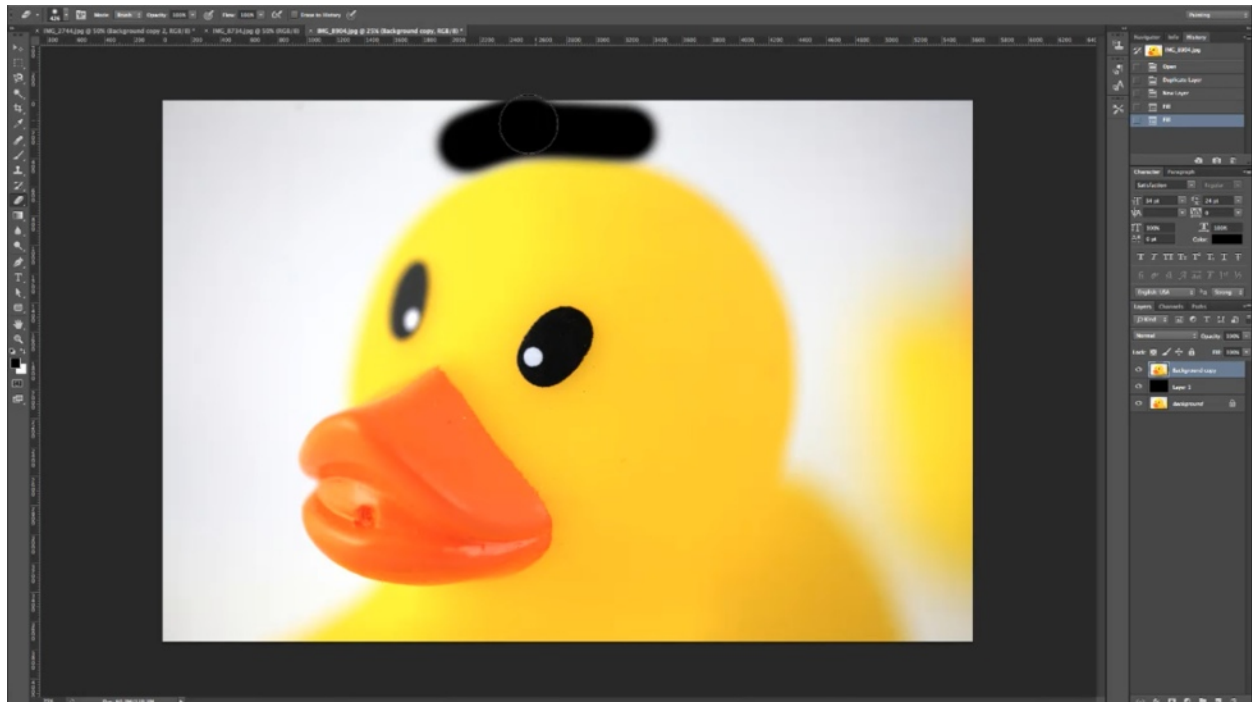
A mixture of natural light and LED light was all that was needed to snap the picture of the hippo above. The photograph was simply taken with an iPhone camera. There was no need for anything more. Remember the detail will be reduced when you convert the images to illustrations. So, for this type of project the pictures don't need to be perfect.

SILHOUETTING & COMPOSITING...

Putting Your Character in the Scenes:



The rubber duck picture above illustrates differences in depth of field. The picture on the left was taken with an iPhone. The middle picture is basically the same, except it was taken with a macro lens on a digital SLR. You'll notice that it has a much shallower depth of field and the duck in the back is far more out of focus. Note that focusing in on one character rather than another can be used to show your audience which character is talking.



Since the camera focuses in so closely, the edges of the ducks are soft. Because of this, the eraser tool or a mask would probably be best to use in silhouetting this picture. The picture above is outlined in black to make it clearer. Here it is being silhouetted by using a mask. Using the eraser tool, you can control the hardness of the tool. For this picture you might want to use a soft edge as you outline the picture. You will want the softness of the eraser to complement the hardness of the edge of the picture. For example, you would want to harden the edge of the eraser when you start to erase around the bill of the duck.

SILHOUETTING & COMPOSITING...

Putting Your Character in the Scenes:



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The pictures of the hippo above also illustrate the depth of field. The picture on the left, again, was taken with an iPhone. This picture is much more in focus than the one next to it, which was taken with a macro lens. In most cases, you would want your picture to be as sharp as possible, unless you have a particular reason for wanting the picture to fade. Finally, the picture on the far right is taken to illustrate that you can use different angles to present your picture differently. For instance, the picture on the right looks more like the hippo is laughing, where in the other two pictures the hippo looks more like he is talking.

Shooting On-Location

SILHOUETTING & COMPOSITING...

Shooting On-Location:

- Ideal for consistency.
- Use physical cutouts in the scenes (props).
- Much more control over perspective and POV.
- There is a challenge in finding the location.



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Sometimes you can't put your photos together using mattes, and sometimes it is much easier to shoot on-location. One of the benefits of shooting on-location is it helps you to be more consistent. It also gives you much more control over perspective and point of view (POV). This is best for shooting live subjects as well.

One old Hollywood trick to try is to use paper cut-outs for models. For example, if you only have a few models of dinosaurs to use, but you need more characters for your story, cut-outs can be your solution. All you would need to do is photograph your models, print them out, stick them on Popsicle sticks, and stick them in the grass. If you photograph them head-on, using a matte paper, they still come out looking three dimensional.

The major problem with shooting on-location is that you are limited by what you have to work with. For example, it could be difficult to create a story set in New Zealand if you don't actually live there. Fortunately, there are a lot of different ways to get the pictures that you need if shooting on-location is not an option for you.

Shifting, Matching, & Changing

COLOR MATCHING...

Shifting, Matching & Changing:

- Your composites **MUST** match in color!
- You **MAY** want to shift red to green...
- The sky is the limit with illustration provided it doesn't look like a mistake!

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When you are compositing pictures together, sometimes you really have to work at making things look right. Things don't always fit together perfectly, and if you don't match the pictures up right then your photo will either look cheap or look like you didn't know what you are doing. There are some specific tricks that you can use to fix these types of problems.

Color differentiations are one of the biggest problems when compositing photos. Even different tones can make your picture look composited and unnatural. For instance, you wouldn't want to composite a photo of a hippo that has a blue tint in color into a picture that is full of warm colors it is going to stand out. Therefore, one key element of compositing pictures is making sure all of your colors to match up and the sun direction always seems to be the same.

COLOR MATCHING...

Shifting, Matching & Changing:

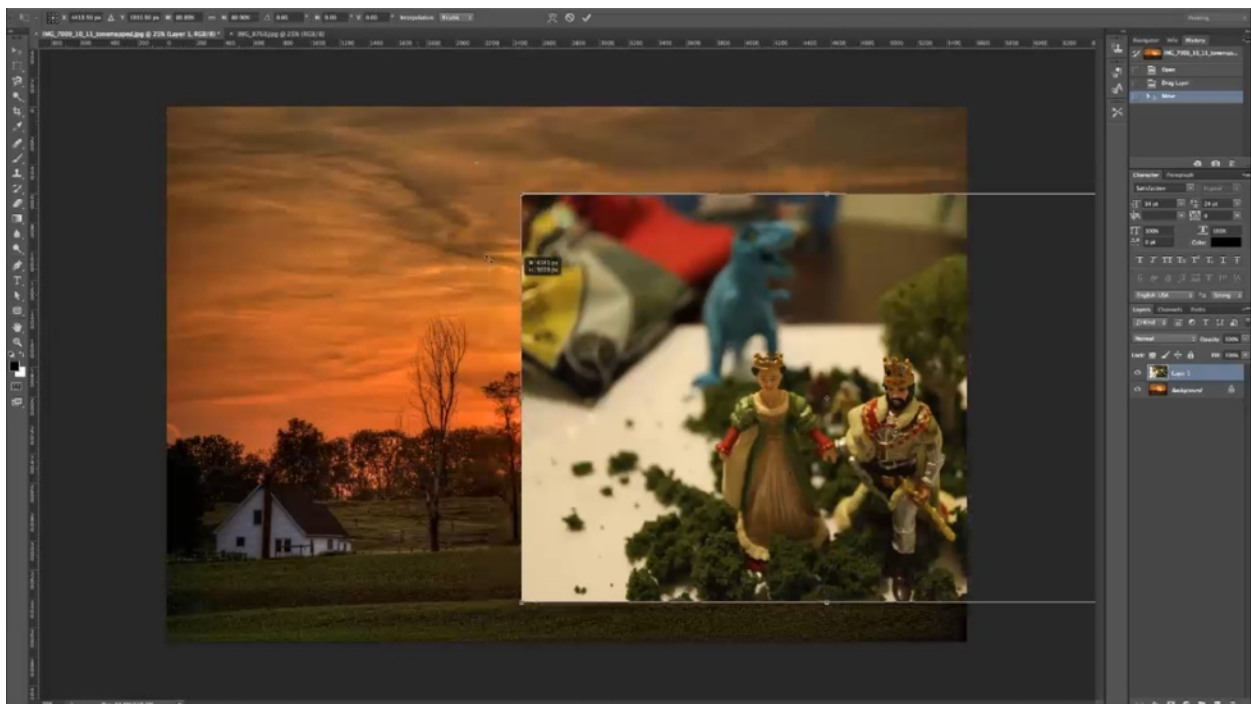


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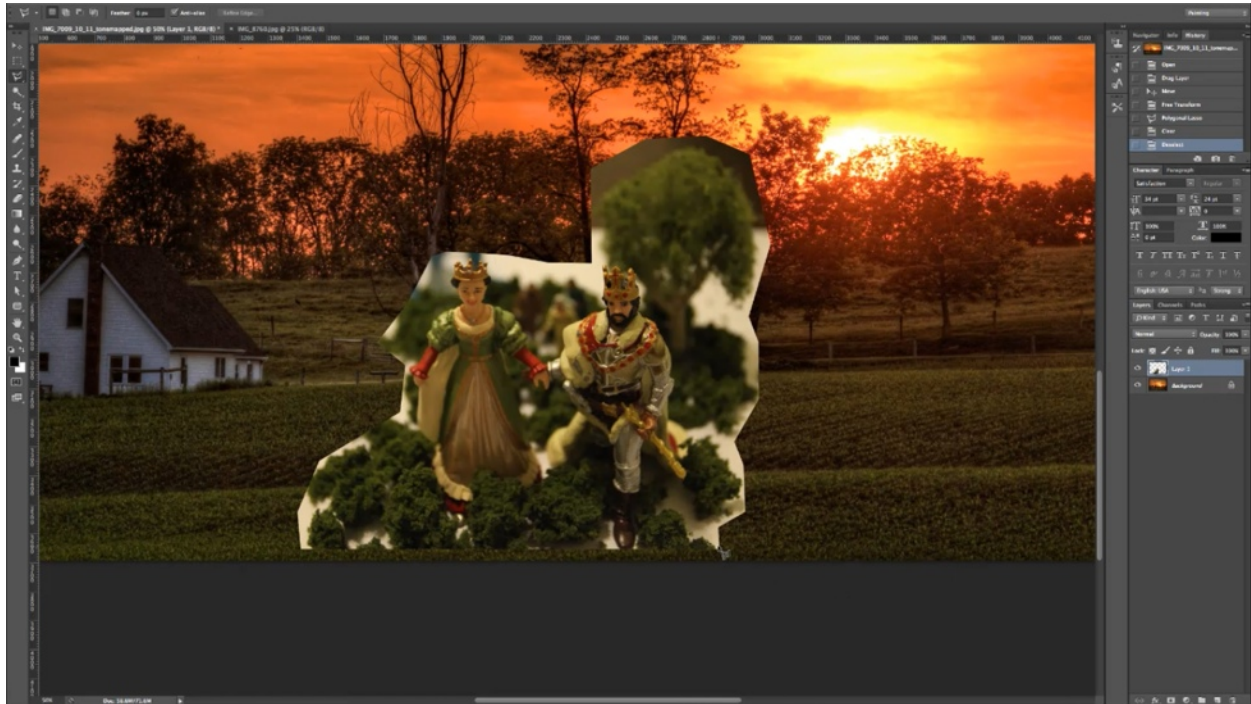


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The photograph above was used in the first lesson to show forced perspective. When the photo was first taken the green color of the grass in the photo did not match the color of the photo used for the background. So, the tint of the green had to be adjusted. This was done in Photoshop.

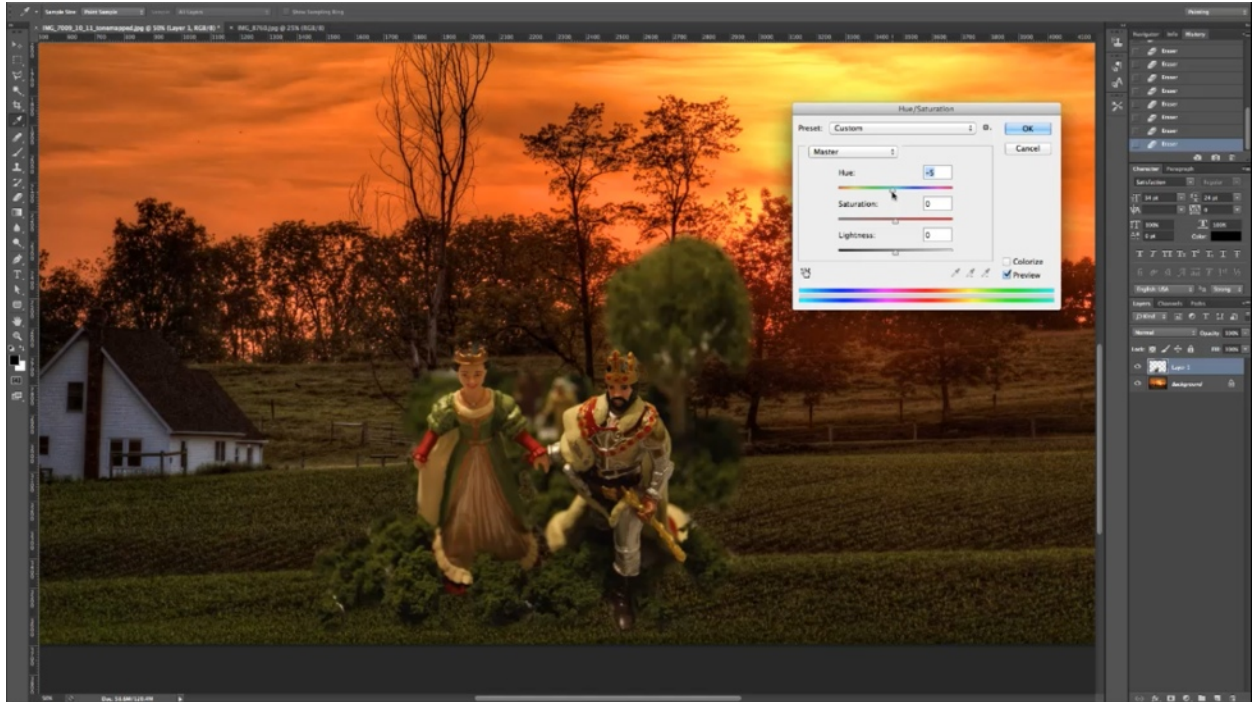


To composite the photos you would open both pictures in Photoshop. You would drag the picture of the models onto the picture of the background. The first thing that you would notice is that the picture of the models is too large. So, you would have to scale it down. Holding the Shift key down while you do so will make it scale proportionately.



Once you have it sized right. You will want to get rid of all of the elements of the top photo that you don't need. The fastest way to do this is by using polygonal lasso tool to get rid of the bigger parts of the photo which are unneeded. So, you would simply click around your main subjects using the tool.

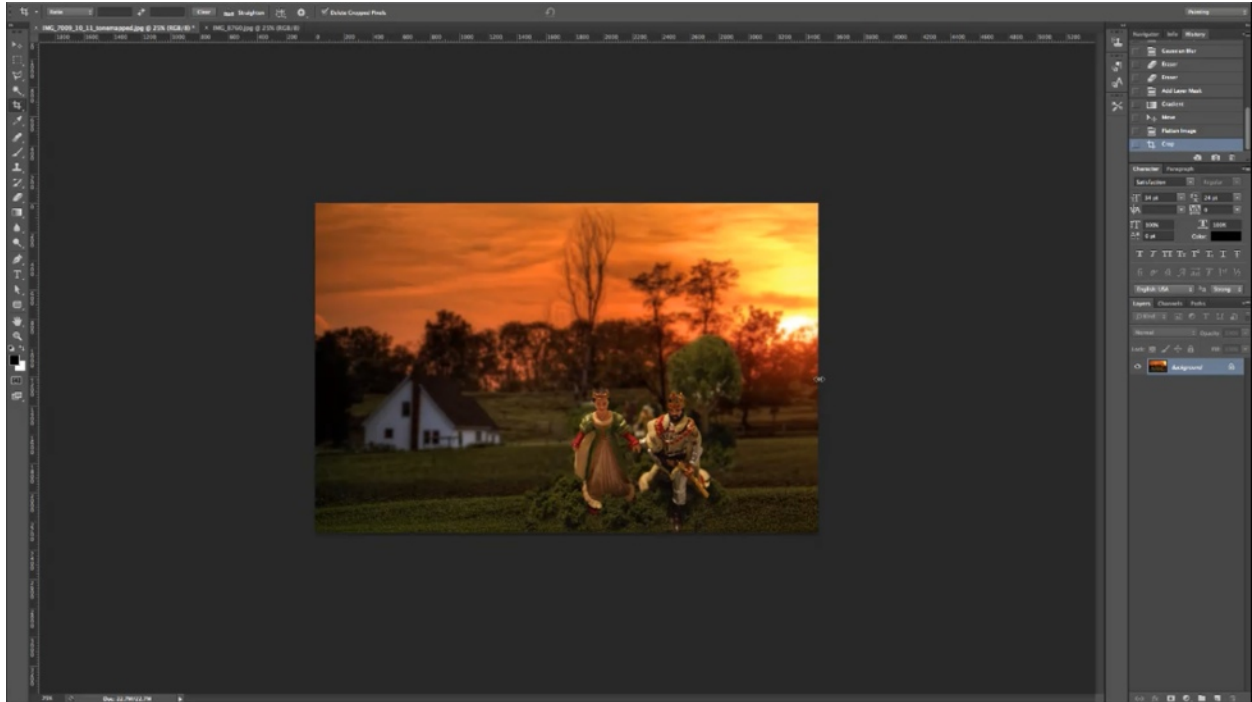
The next thing you will want to silhouette around your photo, using the eraser tool. As you erase, your eraser should only be erasing parts of the top photo. (Those lucky enough to own a tablet should know that this process is much simpler when you are using one.) Continue erasing until all of the unwanted parts of the photo are erased. You may want to reduce the size of your brush as you move into some of the finer details.



In this particular case, the photo still did not look like it fit into the background right after it was silhouetted. To fix this, the hue of the top photo was adjusted. The hue only needed to be adjusted slightly, until all of the greens all blended in together.

Another problem that came up when the picture was being composited was that it had a background which was out of focus, but the images in the background photo were not blurry. So, first the background picture was blurred slightly to make it match up. This brought about another problem though. Now everything is blurry.

This was fixed by layering the blurred background over a sharper version of the background, and then the gradient tool was used to cut out the bottom of the middle layer. This allowed the sharper picture shine through at the bottom of the photo. So, now the photo seems sharper in front, and then everything else slowly falls out of focus.



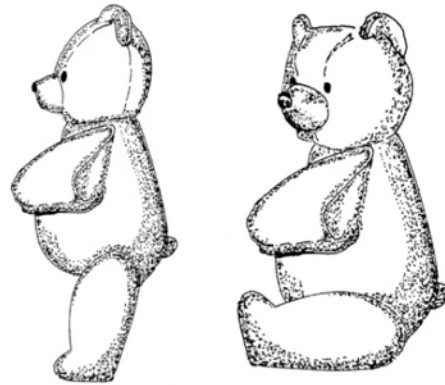
To recap, this photo was edited by cutting out the unneeded parts of the top photo, adjusting the hue to make the colors match, and blurring the background. Then a third layer was added to the bottom in order to use the sharpness of the original photo. Cutting out the bottom of the middle photo allowed the sharper part of the bottom layer to shine through. After this was done, everything looked more natural.

When you get everything the way you want it, you will need to flatten all of the layers, which essentially makes all of the layers into one. You can do this by clicking on the layer dialogue box, and choosing 'Flatten Image'. Afterwards, you may need to crop the photo to cut out any excess. Don't forget to save your work.

Repositioning

REPOSITIONING...

When You Need A Different Pose:

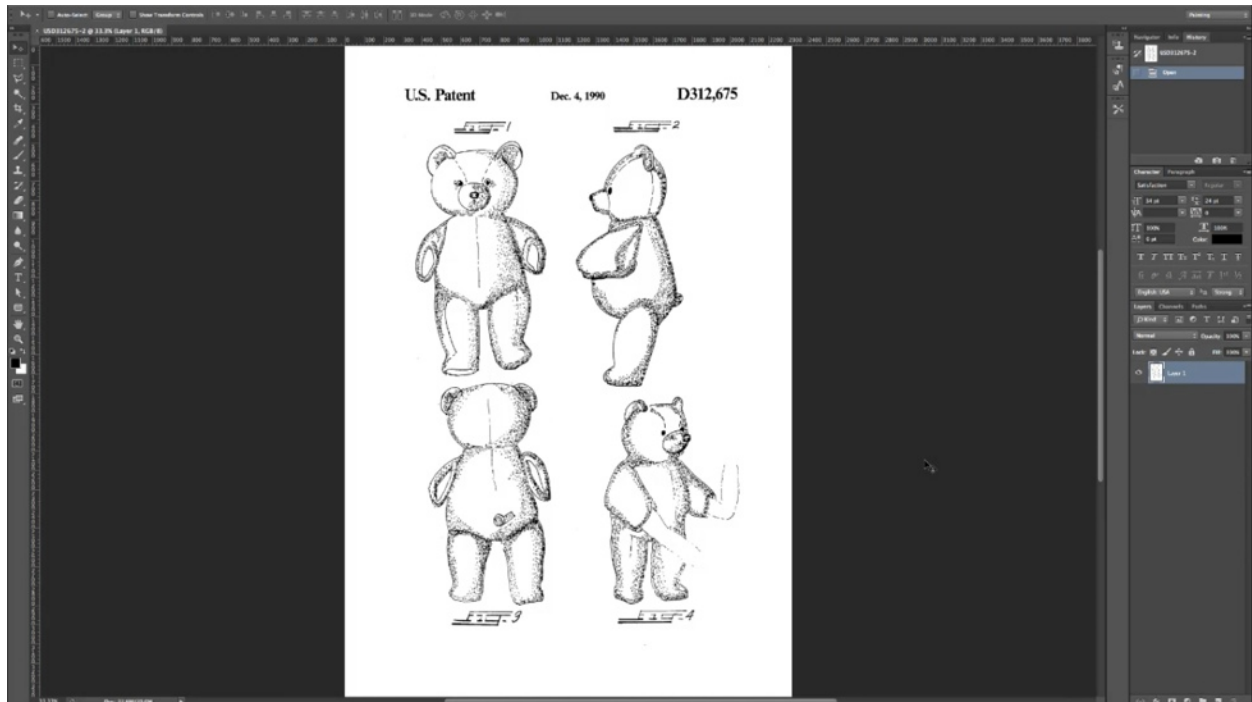


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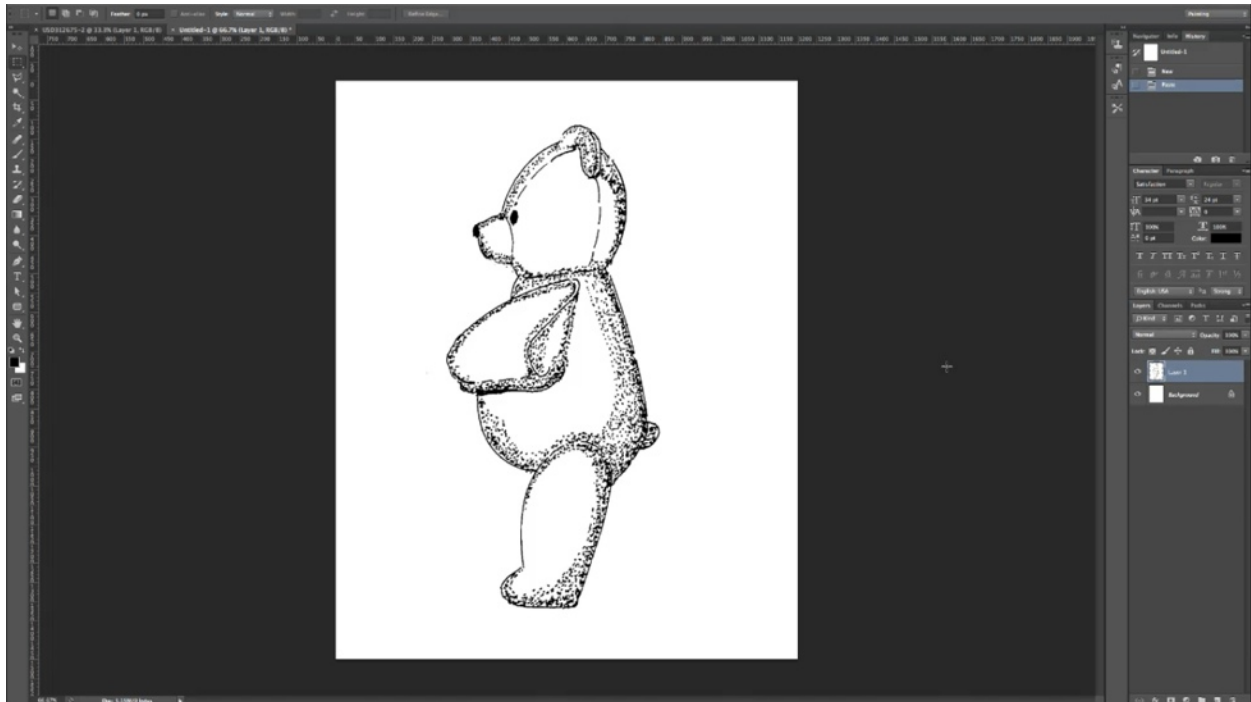


Easily Create Professional-Looking Illustrations, **EVEN** If You Can't Draw!

The picture above is an example of a patent drawing. Say that you have the drawing on the left and you want to create the drawing of the right. You can do this easily in Photoshop.



You would begin by opening up the drawing in Photoshop. In patent drawings more than one point of view is shown, as illustrated above. This gives you a lot of options in changing and repositioning a picture. So, these drawings are really great to use in illustrating.



Select the bear on the top left so that you can copy and paste him. Hit Ctrl+C and then open up a new document which is 1200 pixels by 1500. Once this opens up you can paste your image in there.

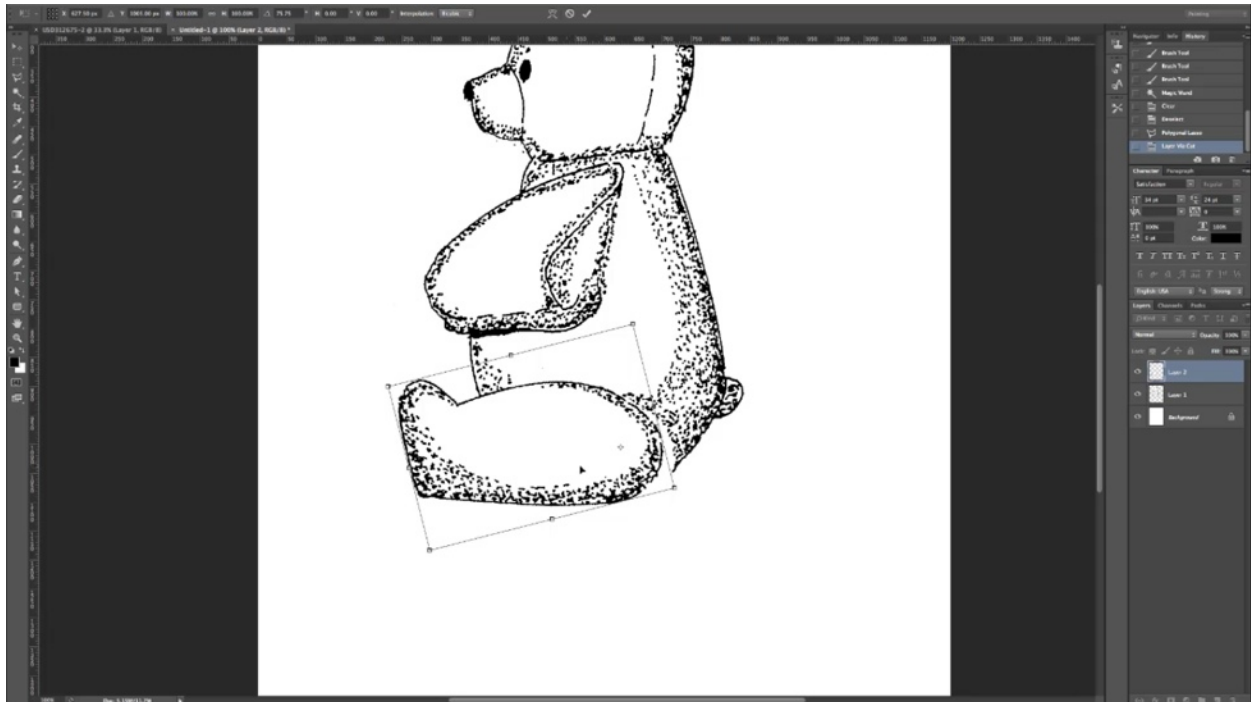
Now, the first thing that you would want to do is get rid of all of the white around the drawing. The quickest way to do this would be to use the magic wand. The problem is that there are breaks in the outside of the drawing, so the magic wand selects all of the white area within the drawing as well. To fix this you would have to close all of the breaks on the outside lines. You can do this with the brush tool, choosing the color black and a similar size to the lines in the drawing.

When you are repairing the line it doesn't have to be perfect. You simply want to close the perimeter. Once this is done you can choose the magic wand tool and click on the background. When you are sure that only the area around the bear is selected, simply hit delete and then deselect (Ctrl+D or Command-D).

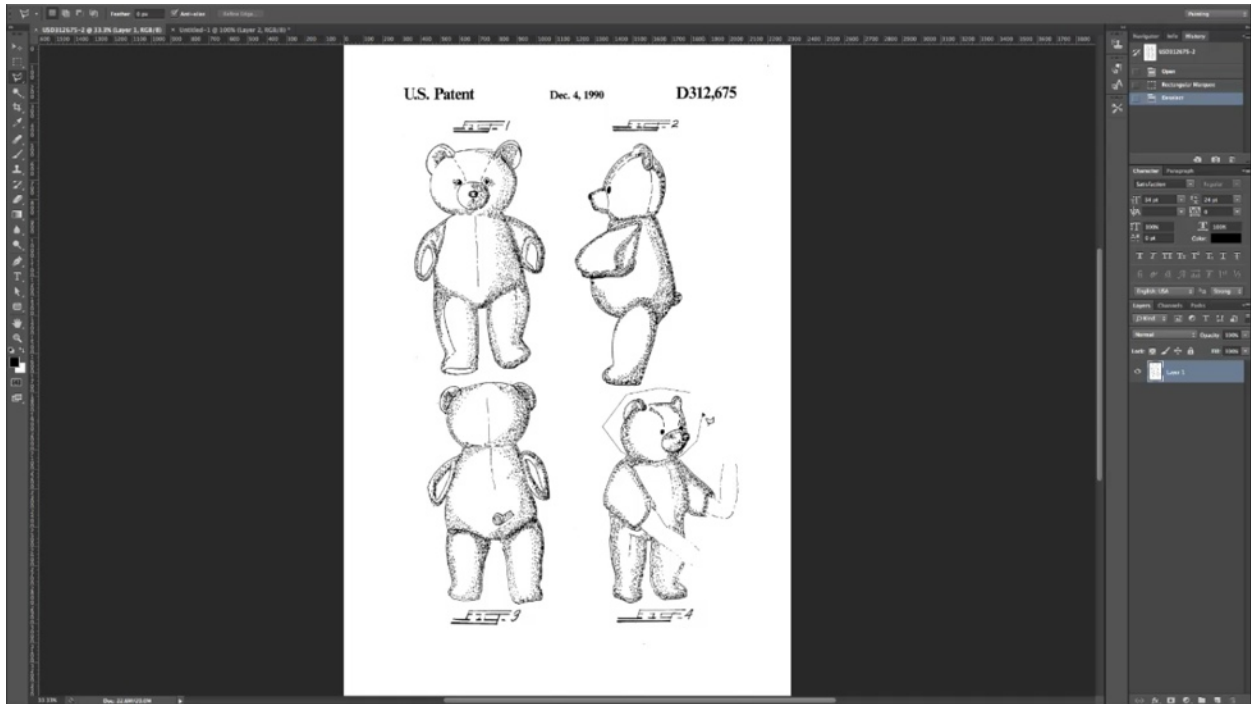
Essentially all you want to do is make him sit down and turn his head. So, you want to begin by silhouetting the leg. You can do this by choosing the polygonal lasso tool and clicking around his leg. Since you have removed the background you only have to stay close in where the leg

combines with the rest of the body. So, you can do this quickly without having to be too careful.

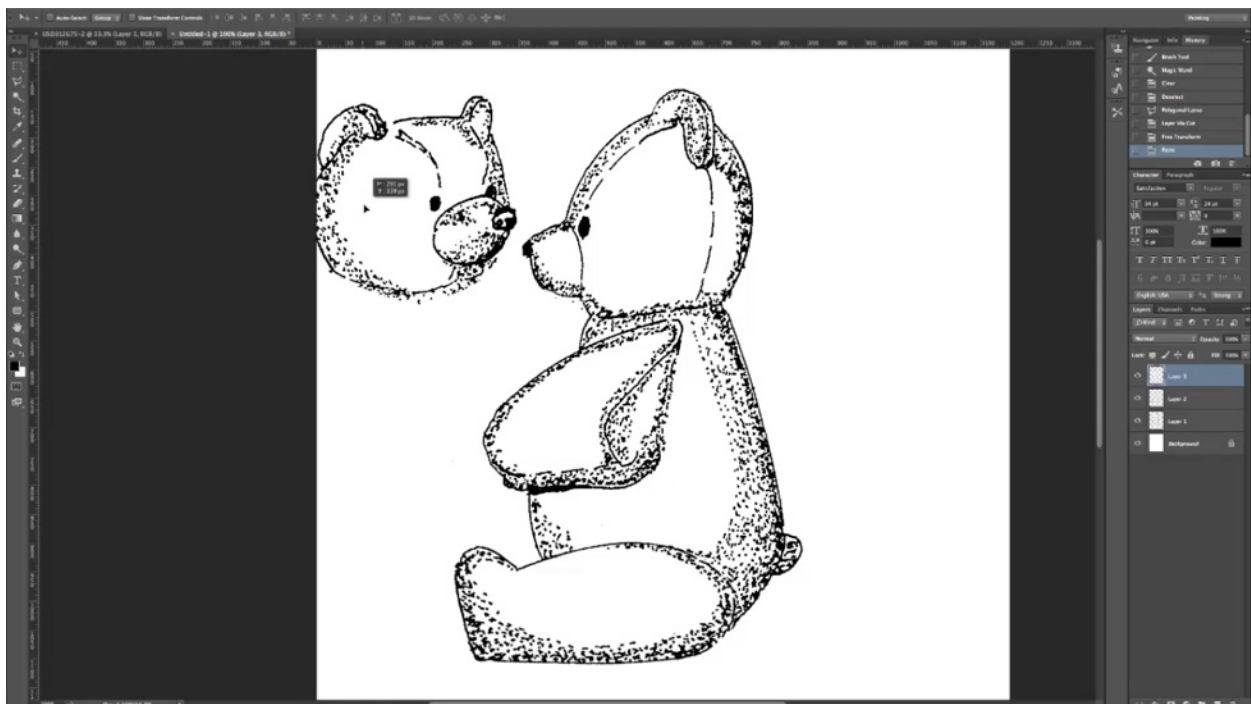
Now that it is selected you want to right click, and then choose Layer Via Cut. This cuts his leg out and pastes it into a new layer. Choose the layer with his leg and then click on 'Edit', 'Transform', and then 'Rotate'. The first thing you will notice is that the rotation point is in the very center of your selection. That is okay. All you have to do is drag the rotation point over to where his leg would naturally rotate.



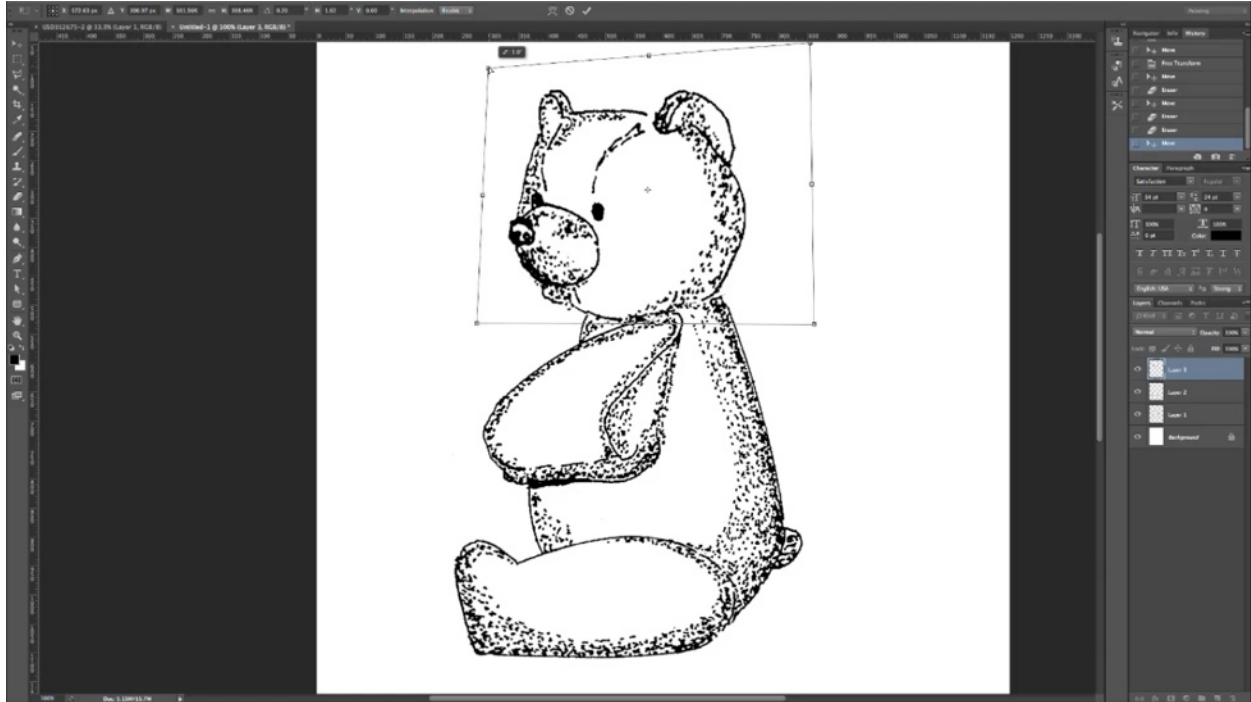
In this scenario, when you rotate the leg into a sitting position, you would notice that it leaves a gap in the drawing. All you have to do to fix this is to scoot the leg back and cover it up. You can also scale the leg out to make it a little longer.



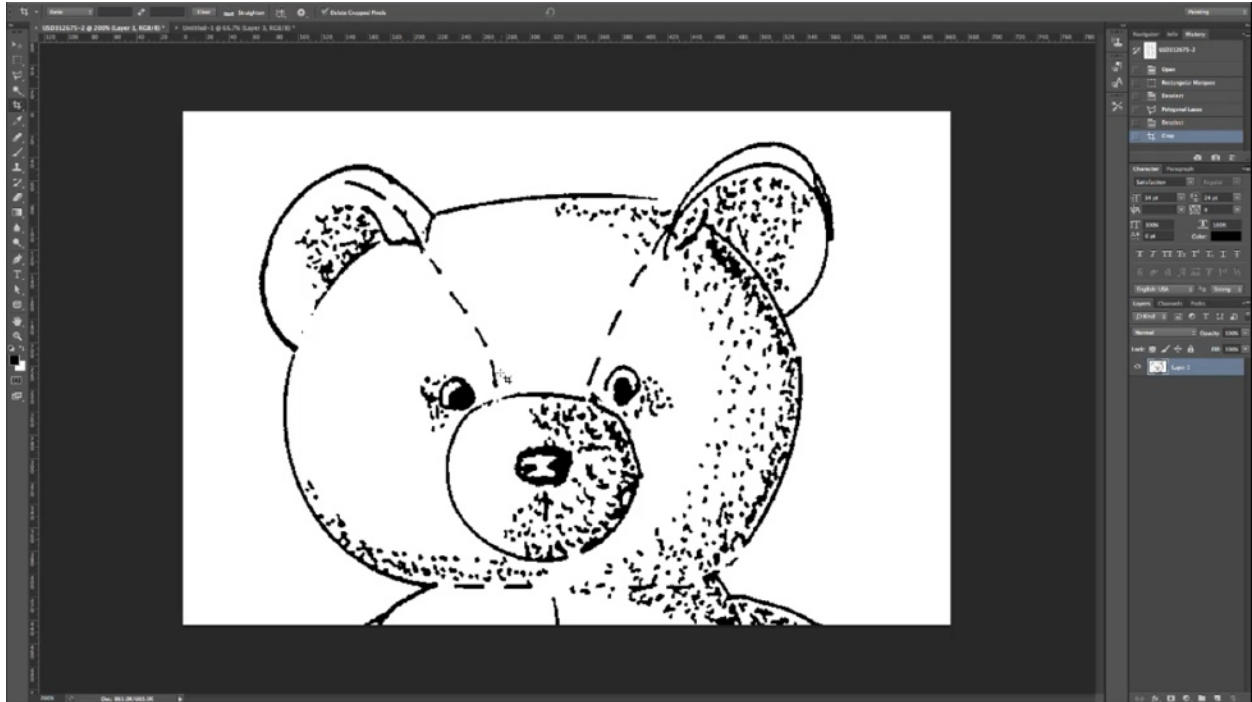
Now that you have the bear in a sitting position, the next task is to turn its head. So, return to the patent page, select the turned head with in the picture on the bottom right using the polygonal lasso tool. Then you can simply copy it and paste it onto the page with the drawing that you wish to edit.



When you paste the new head into the picture, you are likely to notice that this head is a little too small and it is facing the wrong direction. All you have to do is flip it by clicking on 'Edit', 'Transform', and 'Flip Horizontal', and then make it larger by selecting 'Edit', 'Transform', and 'Scale'.



The next step is to take off the other bears existing head. To do this you can just use the eraser tool. You may need to edit the new head a little to make it look better. If you want to reshape it a little to make it look right, you can simply click on 'Edit', 'Transform', and 'Distort', and then work with it until it looks right to you. You may also have to reposition it. Save your work, and you have a new picture to use for your book.

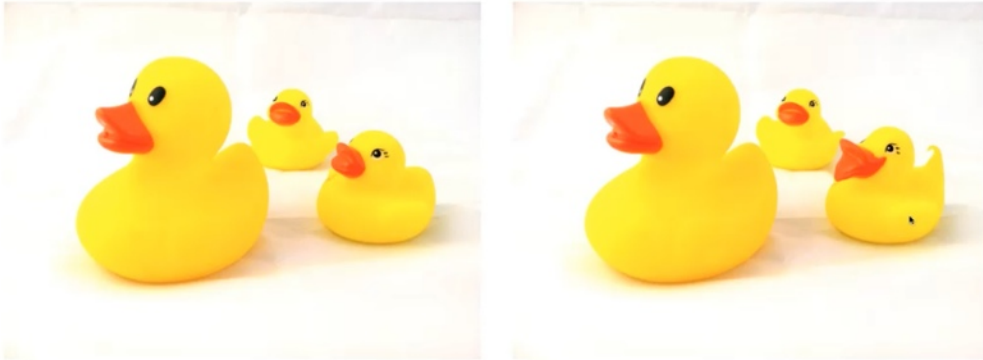


With just a few easy steps we have created a brand new pose for our bear. These patent illustrations make it easy to do this because they offer you multiple points of view. Remember that you will also want your shots to be close up, medium, and wide. So, in some cases you can simply vary your shots by cropping the picture. For example, you can make one picture consist of only his face and then on the next picture show his entire body. You can use this method for making him bend over or raise his arm. It even works with photographs at times.

Turning Real Models into Animated Characters

SHAPE SHIFTING...

Manipulating Your Characters:



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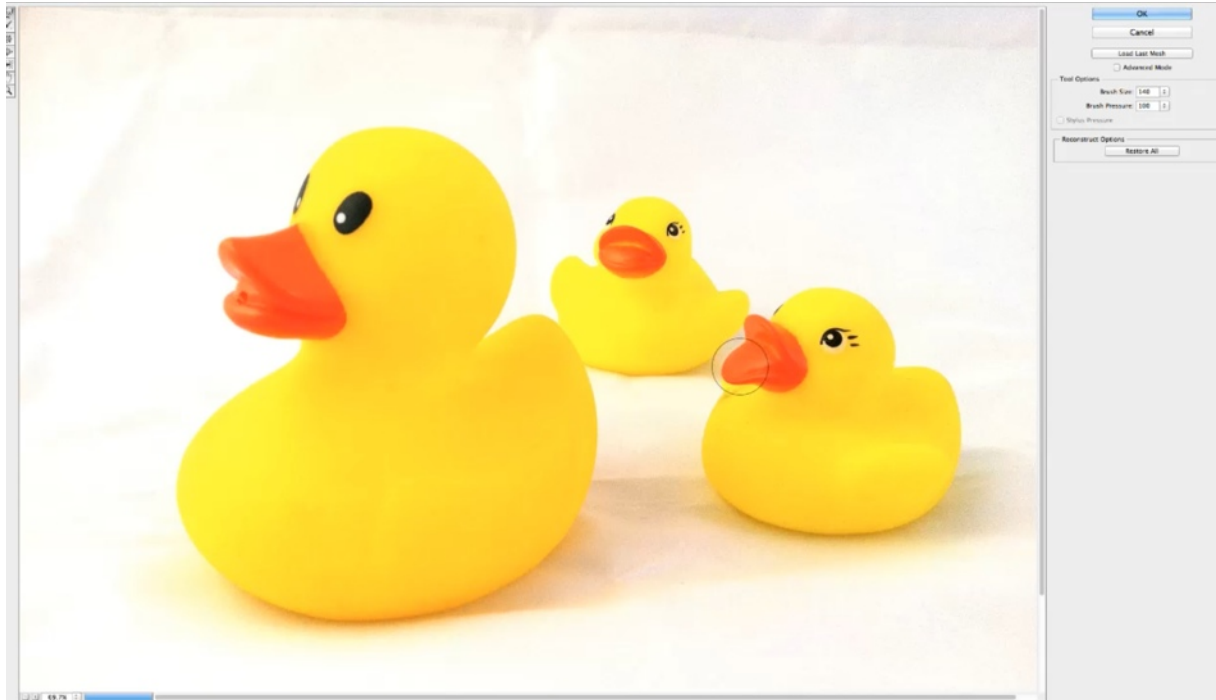
You have probably noticed that animated characters tend to have exaggerated body parts. There are methods that you can use to make solid characters look more animated before turning them into illustrations. For instance, if you look at the pictures above, you will notice in the picture to the right the baby duck looks more animated. This was done in a very simple manner.



This particular change was done by using the Liquify tool in Photoshop. It may not be available in some graphics programs. When using this tool, you can control the side of the brush. On the top left corner of photo shop you will see a column of different tools available to use:

- The first tool is a forward warp; it moves everything forward.
- The second tool down restores what you have done, in case you make a mistake.
- The third tool makes everything pucker.

- The fourth tool makes everything bloat out.
- The fifth tool is push left.
- The sixth tool is the hand tool.
- The seventh tool is the zoom tool.



For this scenario, the forward warp was the tool that was primarily used. To recreate what was done above, you would begin by choosing a brush that is slightly smaller than the duck's bill. The center of your brush should lie over the area that you want to manipulate, and then you would simply left click and pull outward. Essentially, what the tool does is manipulate the pixels and stretch them out.



You can do then do the same to the top part of the duck's bill. You can also use this tool to move the position of his eye. Using a larger brush size here helps to maintain the integrity of his eye while manipulating the outer area of his head. You can also extend his tail, as you do so you can use smaller and smaller brush sizes to add detail and bring it to a finer point. Finally, using a brush approximately the size of the duck's head affects the shape of his head and makes the ducks eye look more animated.

As you try this, don't forget that you can use the reconstruction tool to restore it back to where it was. You also want to remember that when you change the picture into an illustration the detail will be reduced. So, if there are some slight lines that show the stretching, you really don't have to worry about them.

This process can be very fun and only takes a very short amount of time to do. The possibilities here are really endless. For instance, you can use this tool to manipulate the bill and make the duck look more like he is talking.

FAQ

Does it help to enlarge the area you're working with for greater control?

Absolutely. A lot of times you don't need to because, again, the detail will be reduced. There are times however where details need to be added.

When would you erase versus mask?

You should use erase when you are just needing a quick fix; most of the time the preferred method would be to use the mask. This way you can go back and edit it.

After you have made a silhouette, how can you save it so that you can use it in other pictures?

You would begin by deleting the background, then you can save it as a Photoshop or Gimpshop file. You can also save it as a PNG file to save the transparency. This makes it easier to drag them into various scenes.

Why would color-matching matter if you are going to use illustrative techniques on the picture?

Even when you apply illustrative techniques, the differences in color can still stand out. On the other hand, as long as you are close it really won't matter too much.

What version of Photoshop was used in editing these photos specifically?

The photos were edited in the newest version of Photoshop available. The painting workspace mode was used, and it was set to Standard Screen Mode.

How did you adjust the hue without affecting the layers?

This can be done by selecting the layer before selecting the hue pallet (Ctrl+U or Command-U).

What is the difference between using 'Flatten' and 'Merge Visible'?

Most of the time both will bring about the same result. The only time it would make a difference is when you didn't want to merge all of the layers. Then it would really be best to use 'Merge Layers'.

Will the photos be provided so that the audience can try these techniques while they are watching these videos?

Yes a zip file will be made available when the replay to the video is posted so that the members can have access to these photos.

Can you freely use these patent images in your book without violating any trademark laws?

You can if they have expired. Essentially, at this point you can use any patents that are older than 1992. To determine that go to Google.com/patents. Then type in 'teddy bear', for instance, and then click on 'search tools', then 'Any time', and then 'Filing date'. This will bring up a menu in which you can specify the date range. Here you can enter in 1800 to 1992. All of the resulting patents that come up you can use because after 20 years they fall into the public domain. Once they are in the public domain you can do whatever you want with them.

Can you use a paid-for royalty picture and use it after you edit it?

Probably so, but you should read the terms of use on the royalty-free site to make sure before doing so.

You can find more comments, questions, and answers about this lesson in the Facebook group. Some of these techniques will be revisited in the following lessons.