Easy Book Illustrations:

Module Three: GIMPShop & Other Free Illustration Tools

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Introduction

Welcome to *Easy Book Illustrations: Module 3.* This lesson will concentrate primarily on GIMPShop as well as some of the other free illustration tools that are available. This wasn't initially part of the course; it is kind of a bonus lesson created for those who do not currently have Photoshop.

If you do not have Photoshop, but would like to use it, then you should know that you can download Adobe CS2 for free. This includes programs like Photoshop and Illustrator. It is not meant to be a permanent tool for your use, but it is available. You can find the link for this in the Facebook group.

The first question that usually comes up is whether or not GIMPShop is a good option for illustrations. In this course you will learn how GIMPShop holds up in comparison to other available editing programs. You will also learn which GIMPShop tools are helpful to use in converting photographs to illustrations. You will also be shown some web-based illustration tools and other free illustration options.

Using GIMPShop

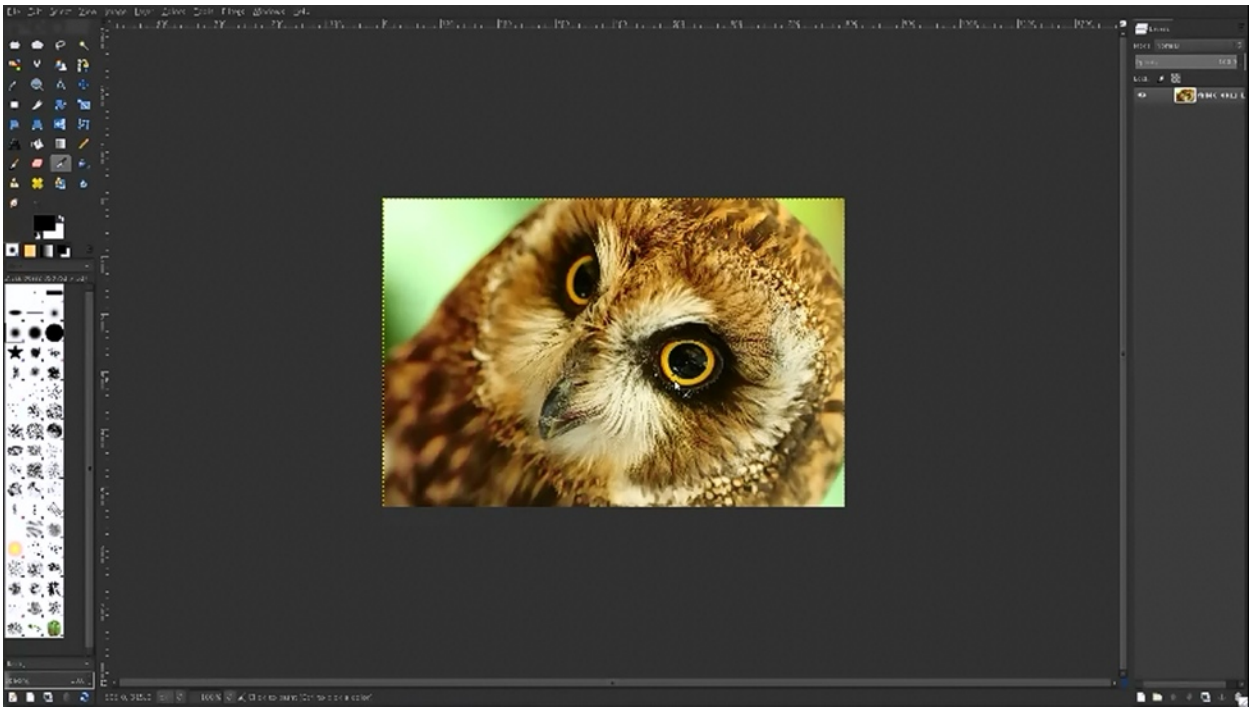
GIMPShop is a limited option for illustration creation. However, you can find several tools in GIMPShop that are similar to the Photoshop tools that we have used in the other lessons. In GIMPShop there are roughly six methods that you can use in creating your illustrations. They are:

- Line Drawing Technique
- Difference of Gaussians Method
- Cartoon Method
- Oilify Method
- Photocopy Method
- Van Gogh Method

If you look at the pictures above, you will notice that the two images look very similar. The one on top was created using the line drawing technique in Photoshop. To make this you have to make the black and white image and then invert it. The one on the bottom was created using the photocopy tool in GIMPShop. So, GIMPShop actually has a tool built into it that mimics the line drawing method typically used in Photoshop. You will probably also notice that the picture that was created in Photoshop looks a lot more detailed and much cleaner.

Here are two other examples of how you can use filters to illustrate your book. Both of these were created in GIMPShop. The one on the left is made with the cartoon filter and the one on the right was made with the oil paint filter. In GIMPShop, it does take a little extra work to get the oil paint filter to work as desired.

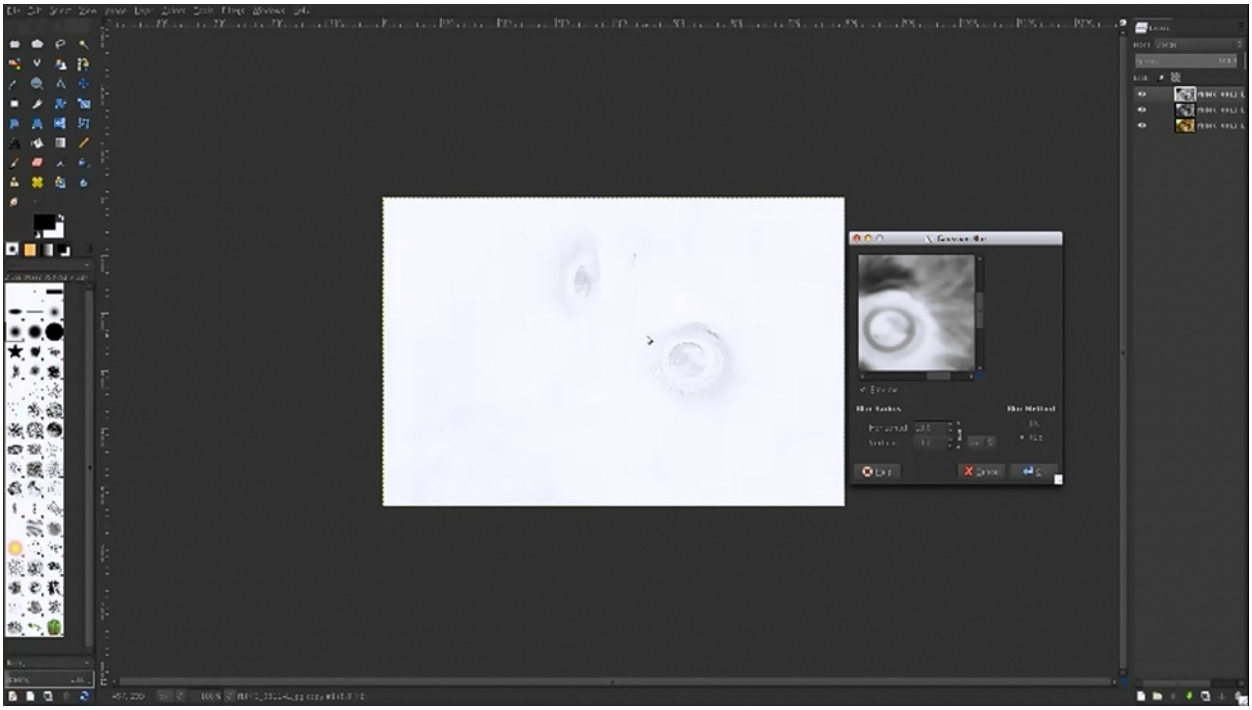
Changing a Photo to a Line Drawing



For this lesson, the photo of the owl above was used to demonstrate some of the different illustration techniques that are available in GIMPShop. This will be turned into a line drawing. By following these instructions you can learn to do so yourself:

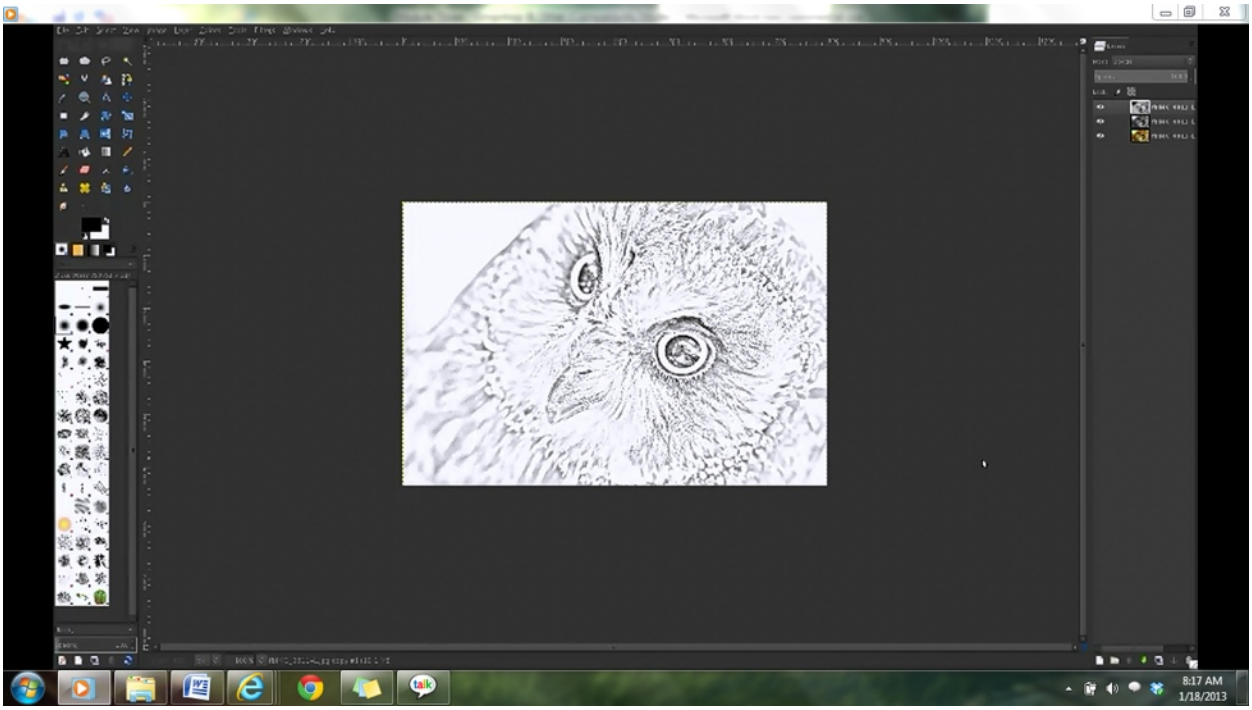
Begin by loading the photograph which you would like to change to a line drawing into GIMPShop. Next, create a duplicate of the layer. You can do this by clicking on the icon which looks like a double box; it can be found on the bottom of the layers panel. Once done, you should have two layers of the same thing. Next you will want to use the de-saturate tool in order to convert the photo from color to black & white. Do this by right-clicking on the picture, scrolling down to 'Colors', and then choosing 'Desaturate' from the colors palette. Duplicate this layer, just like you did before, so that you have another layer of the black & white photo as well.

Invert this layer by right-clicking again, scrolling down to ‘Colors’, and then choosing invert. At this point you should have three layers: the color picture, a layer with a black & white picture, and a negative of the black & white photo. In Photoshop, you would change this layer’s mode from ‘Normal’ to ‘Color-Dodge’. In GIMPShop you just use ‘Dodge’. After doing this you will not be able to see much of the image any longer.



Click on ‘Filters’ and choose ‘Blur’ next. When you do this, you may notice one of the benefits of Photoshop. In Photoshop, you can see a preview of what you are doing live. In GIMPShop, the preview lies within the menu that arises. There is a little more trial and error involved in editing your photos this way.

The blur ratio is determined by your image and your image resolution. Since it is hard to preview the changes as you work, changing it a little at a time is best. So, start at 10 pixels and click ‘OK’. Now your picture should look like a line drawing.



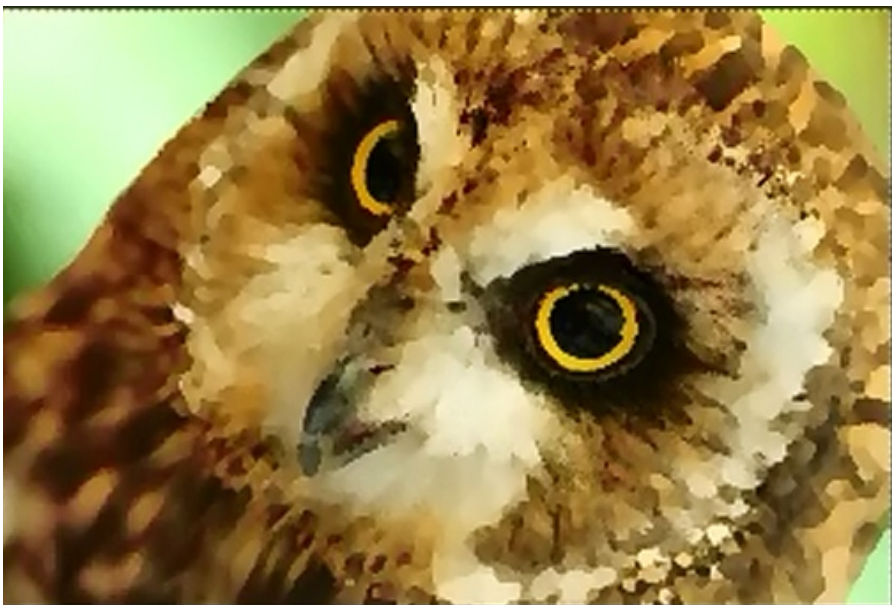
Now, try playing around with the settings a little. Hit undo (Ctrl+Z), and then click 'Filter' followed by 'Reshow Gausian Blur'. This has the same settings. Now change the setting from 10 to 20. You will notice that the effect is a little more pronounced than before. Now, repeat the process and change it to 15. This should be about right for our purpose. However, you can vary it to whatever you think is best for your photo.

Once you get the picture set the way you like it, you'll want to merge the layers together. To do this, right click on the layer and choose 'Merge Down'. You don't want to choose 'Flatten' because at this point you don't want to combine all of the layers. Also, you want to be able to go back and edit the layers if you need to.

Choosing ‘Merge Down’ should just merge the grayscale image and inverted layer. So, now you should still have a colored layer as well as a layer with a black & white line drawing. If the line drawing still looks too light and lacking detail, this is an easy fix. Simply right-click on the picture, and then choose ‘Colors’ followed by ‘Levels’. Next, click on the shadowed area of ‘Input Levels’ and drag the ‘shadow triangle’ to the right. Click ‘OK’ to apply it and now the lines should now be darker. Combining the two remaining layers would now cause the picture show through with all of its color, but also look illustrated because of the lines that were created.

Other Filters to Try

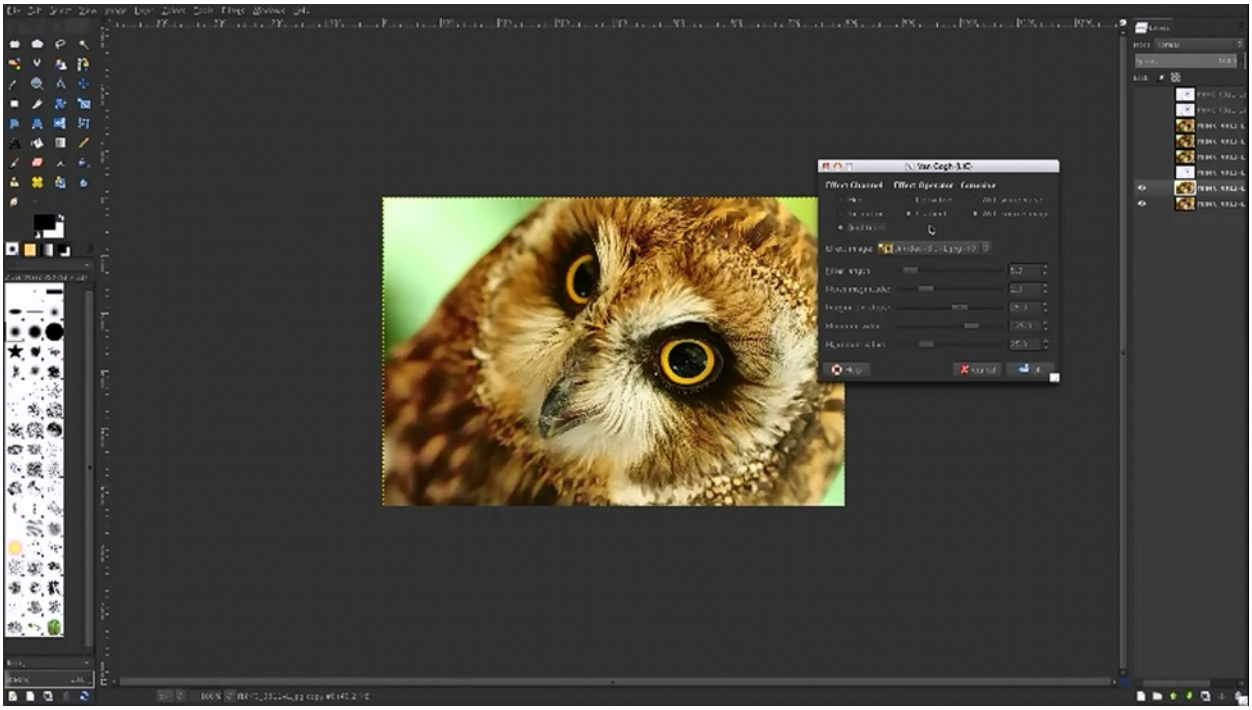
In GIMPShop, there are a number of other filters that you can use that will help you to turn your photo into an illustration. One of the best to use is **Cartoon**. Essentially what this tool does is mask the colors and adds detail using black. By clicking on 'Filters' and then clicking on 'Cartoon' you can start changing the mask radius in order to make the picture look more cartoonish. The higher you go with the mask radius the less detail there is in the black. By looking at the picture above you can see how our picture has been changed with this effect.



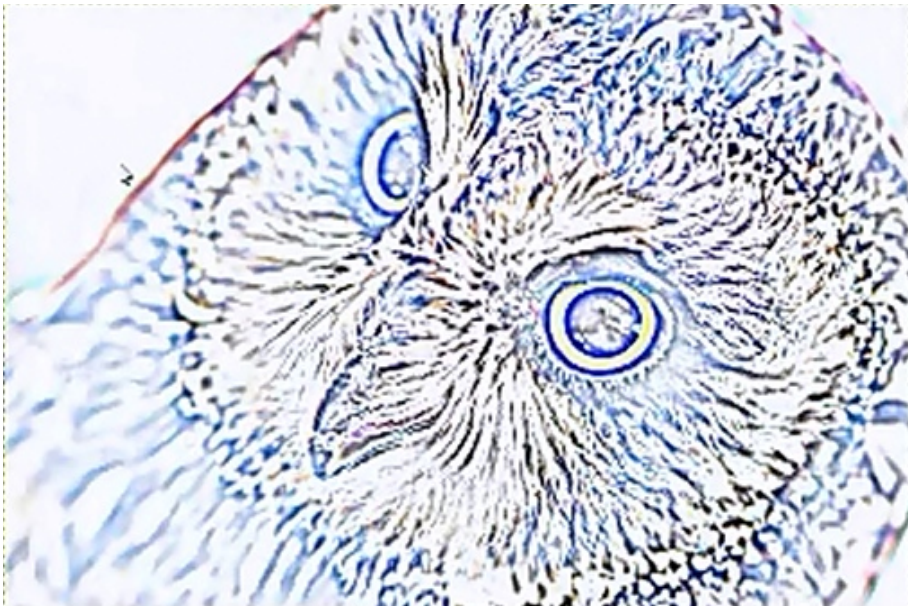
Oilify is another useful tool to use in GIMPShop. The default setting may be all you need, but there are settings that you can adjust if you are not satisfied with the default. Some of the settings that you can change are 'Mask size' and 'Exponent'. You will also see the option to 'Use mask size map' and 'Use exponent map'. These work by referencing more of the original photograph for more detail. You will notice that if you will check the box for 'Use mask size map' the picture begins to look much more like the photo. Then you can adjust the slider to give it more or less detail.

Moving the slider for 'Exponent' to right sharpens the color areas. In this case, checking the box to use the exponent map will soften the picture. You are using this tool to adjust the details so that it looks more like an oil painting. So, simply continue tweaking the details until it looks the way you want it to. You should remember that you can also mix and match the various effects in different ways to achieve the effects you want. For example, you can change your picture to look like an oil painting, and then use the line drawing filter on top of that in order to achieve your desired effect.

Photocopy creates an effect that looks very similar to the line-drawing filter that was used in the beginning of this lesson. In fact, by adjusting the settings here you could probably make the photo look almost exactly like the first line-drawing picture. There are some differences, however. This method may give you better control over your results, but the original method is much quicker and is also more likely to provide greater detail.



Van Gough is another effect that you can use to make your photo look more like an illustration. One of the problems with this filter is that it provides you with a lot of settings, but you aren't provided a preview of your changes. So, it is kind of like flying blind. You just have to guess about how your picture is going to change. One thing you can do is soften your photos a little at a time. This is not the most helpful tool to use because the end result does not usually come out very clear.



Difference of Gausians can be found under 'Edge Detect'. It is another tool that can help you add a line drawing appearance to your photo. In this case, changing the radius will adjust the blur and sharpness. When you are done, click 'OK' and you will see that it changes the picture to look like a line drawing, except now with colored in the lines. By right mouse clicking and choosing 'Levels' you can darken these lines as well as tone the mid-tones and shadow areas down.

There are not as many useful filters in GIMPShop as you could find on Photoshop, but as you can see there are some useful methods you can apply. By experimenting with these techniques, you may be able to find effects that you like and can use frequently. Also, don't forget that you can mix and match the filters to try to achieve the style that you are looking for.

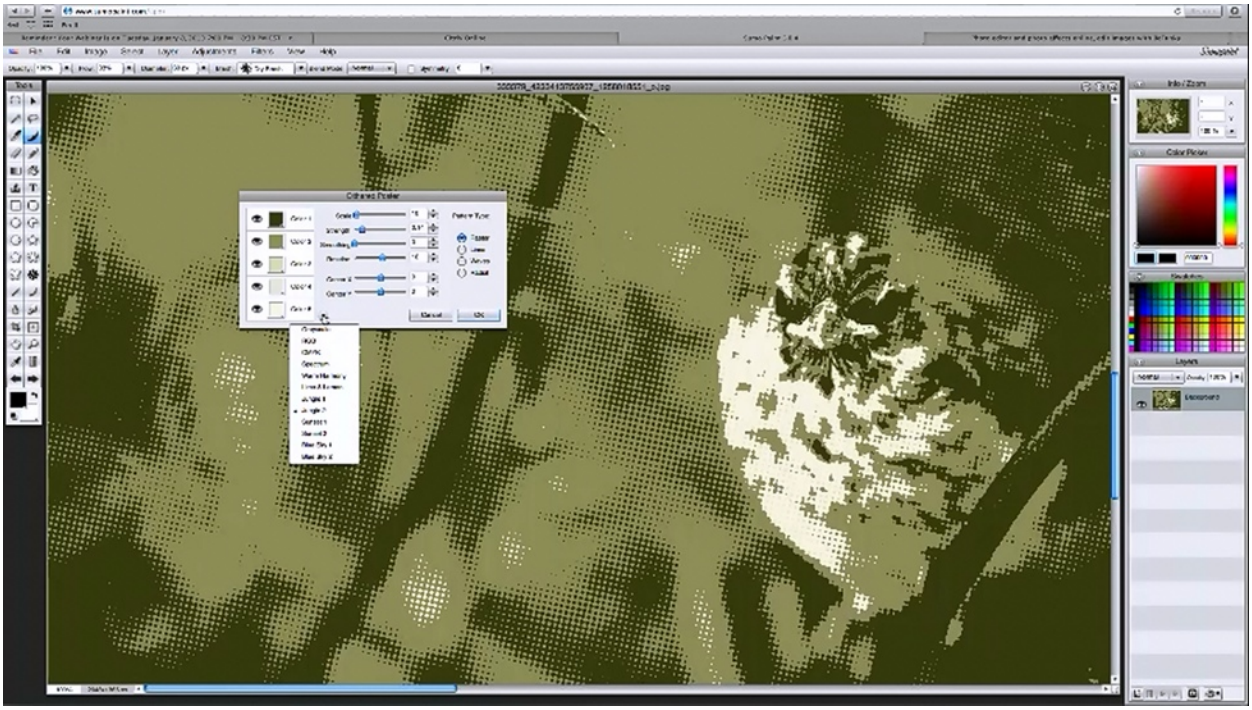
Web-Based Options

You don't have to limit yourself to using GIMPShop, even if you do not have much of a budget available for illustrating your books. For example, you can also create illustrations for free online. Two of the websites that will allow you to do this are SumoPaint.com and BeFunky.com. Both of these websites have free and low-cost versions available.

Above, the picture on the right was created with an effect called 'Dithered Poster'. This is one of the only illustration effects that are available in SumoPaint.com but there is a lot that you can do with it. To begin, go to SumoPaint.com and open up the picture that you wish to edit.

Once you have the photo opened up, click on 'Filters' and then choose 'Stylized' followed by 'Dithered Poster'. You will see that there are a number of different effects available here. They include:

- Raster
- Lines
- Waves
- Radio



Each of these effects has various settings that you can change. For example, you can change the strength of each effect or the angle at which it appears. There are really a lot of options on changing the colors and tones in the picture as well. For example, clicking on the various colors shown will allow you to modify each of them. At the bottom of the menu, there is a little circle that you can click on to bring up even more options than this.

Between all of the stylized patterns that you can choose from, the settings for each one and the color pallets available, the effects that you create are limitless. You don't want to use these effects in each one of your books, but for some illustrations these effects can be very effective as well as eye catching. There are also a lot of other good effects and tools that you may be able to use here. However, for the purpose of turning your photos into illustrations quickly, 'Dithered Poster' is really the only useful filter here.

BeFunky.com has a lot more available options. Upon visiting the website you will immediately notice that there are many more tools available and that the creators have made it incredibly easy to edit your photos. Many of these can come in handy in editing your photos, but for illustrating them you will find most of what you need within the 'Artsy' section. The effects here include:

- Cartoonizer
- Gouache
- Impressionist

- Inkify
- Oilpainting
- Pointillism
- Sketcher
- Underpainting
- Watercolor
- Get More Effects

Clicking on 'Get More Effects' will take you to a paid version that is not very expensive at all, but for now you don't need this. Simply experiment with the free effects. These effects are demonstrated in the pictures of the owl photos below so you can understand what each one does. While experimenting with each of these effects you will likely notice:

Cartoonizer gives you a lot of control over adjusting your photo. You may not need to use these settings though, because the picture usually looks pretty good with the default settings in place. So, if you like what you see at first, simply click 'Apply' and you will have an illustration.

Gouache doesn't really give you as many settings to adjust. In fact, it only allows you to adjust the brush size and the smoothness. However, this effect can be very helpful in some instances.

Impressionist doesn't give you many choices either. You would get more if you purchased a subscription to the site, but there is no need to do so just yet.

Inkify is an effect much like the 'line drawing' effect that was used in GIMPShop. In this program the settings make it much easier to shift the colors though. The lines are much more intense as well.

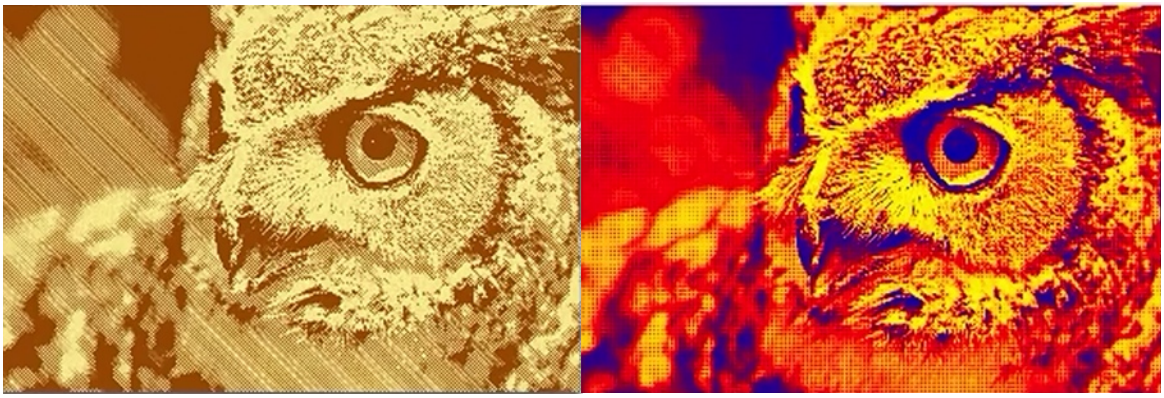
Oilpainting is not as impressive of an effect as what you can do with GIMPShop. You don't have many settings available for adjusting it. There may be instances where this effect could be useful, so don't rule it out completely.

Pointillism speckles your photo in an artistic manner. It provides you a number of different settings to change as well. So, spend some time learning what you can do with this style; you may be surprised.

Sketcher doesn't do well at all with this photo, but may do better for some. One thing to keep in mind is that you can stack effects. So, using these lines on top of a photo where the oil painting effect was applied may give you the illustration you desire.

Underpainting has a similar effect as the oil paint effect in GIMPShop. In this case you don't have as much control over the settings with this tool either. It may be useful as a quick illustration method though, since the default results aren't bad.

Watercolor can also be used to edit your photos quickly and easily. You don't have many settings to work with in this effect. Adjusting the colors to make them brighter may make your illustration better for a children's book.



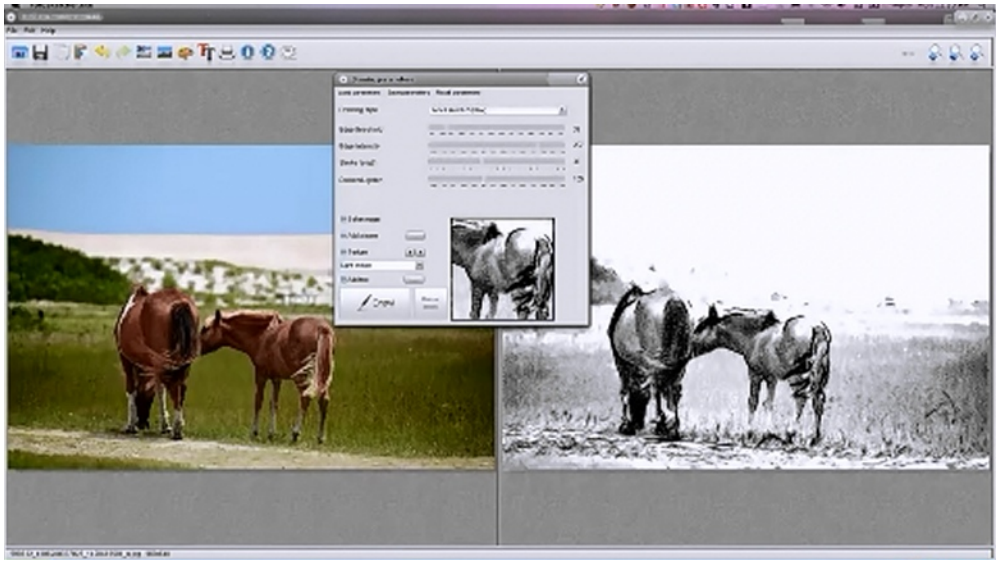
A number of illustration effects, some of which are similar to those on SumoPaint.com, can be found under the 'Effects' tab. The picture on the left was done with 'Line-Artopia' and the one on the right was edited using 'Pop Art'. These can be fun and useful, and will work well with certain types of book genres, such as in a graphic novel.

Obviously, this website provides you with a lot of options which could be useful in illustrating books. Plus, it is very easy to use, which can be helpful for those who are not great at illustrating yet. Take some time to experiment with the different possibilities. As you get better, you may consider expanding your options by purchasing a subscription as well. Furthermore, you should note that the website suggests that you aren't supposed to use the program for commercial use without purchasing the full-version.

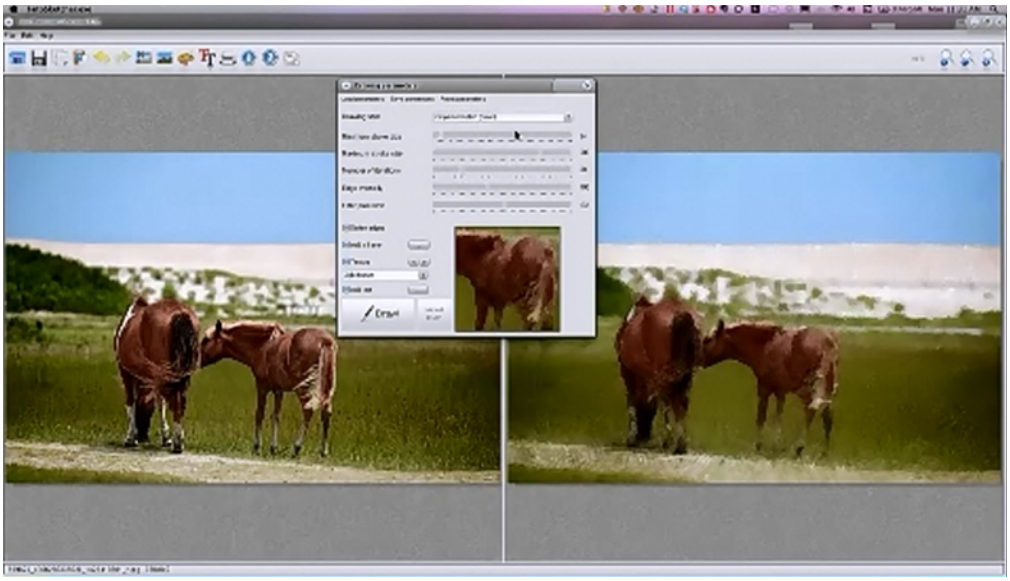
FotoSketcher

Fotosketcher is a free program that is available online (Fotosketcher.com). Many effects available here are incredible to say the least, especially when you consider that the program is free. Additionally, each effect has a number of settings that can be changed, giving you a good expanse of options for your illustrations. The interface for this program is very clean, and therefore easily navigated. This is also one of the most user-friendly programs to use for creating illustrations. For example, as you edit your picture, the program shows you the original picture on the left, and as you adjust it, you can preview it on the right by clicking Draw. An automatic preview is also shown as you adjust the settings.

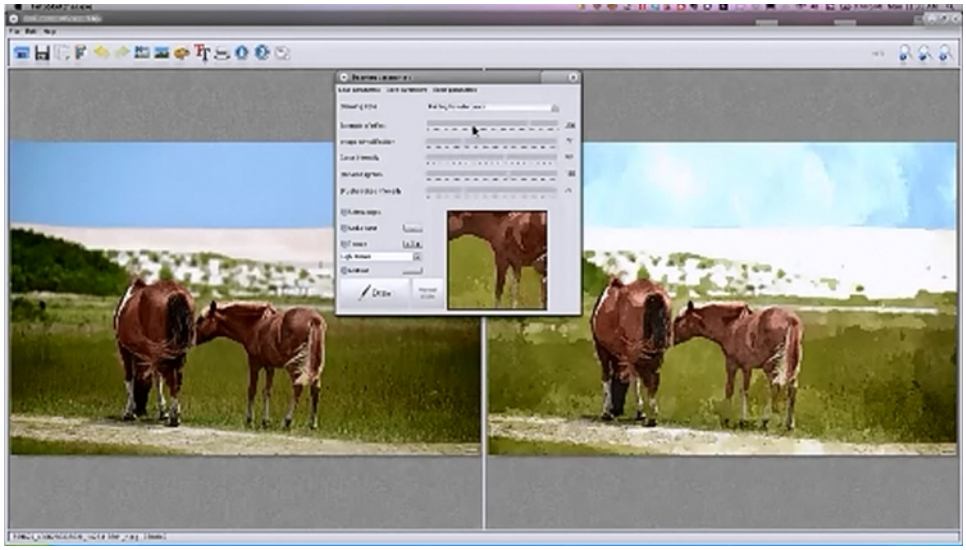
Fotosketcher is a PC-only program, which means you can only install it on a Mac if you have parallels installed on your computer that allow you to run Windows. There is a comparable version of the program available for Mac users. Actually, it is broken into two different programs. These are not free, and that is why they are not also covered in this lesson. However, they are fairly inexpensive. One is about $4.99 and the other is like $14.99. They will be demonstrated in further lessons.



One of the drawing filters found in Fotosketcher, Pencil Sketch #2, is one of the best options available in illustrating photographs. The picture on the right (above) was done with this tool. If you were to look on the menu for this tool you would see that it has a number of different options available for your use. You can adjust it according to several drawing styles and adjust the components of each drawing style.



As you can see, now the picture on the right has changed. This has been done with 'Oil Pastel Sketch'. This allows you to control the stroke size and the amount of detail that you include.



Now, the picture on the right has been adjusted again with ‘Painting #5’. This is one of the only watercolor filters that really makes your photo really look like a watercolor painting. Much more so, in fact, than if you had applied a similar effect in Photoshop.

As a participant in this course, you are encouraged to download this program. It really seems to be one of the best programs available for the purpose of turning your books into illustrations. You are also encouraged to try out the various programs listed above, and to experiment with the multiple filters as much as possible.

FAQ

In my program the layers are not on the right side of GIMPShop as they are in the presentation. How do I fix this?

The layers are not on the right side just by default. When you first start using GIMPShop, the layers pallet is part of multiple tabs on the left hand side. To fix this, locate the layers tab, and then you can simply click and drag it to the right hand side. Drop it here, and it will be set up just like it is in the presentation.

Is it legal to take photos that are shared on Facebook and use them for your illustrations? Since we don't know who the artist is, there is no way to contact them.

No. It is still a violation of the artist's intellectual property rights. So, you can't use them.

What would you need to use in the color scale for print on demand books so that they are not too expensive to get printed?

If you really want to get your book printed for a low cost, you will want your photos to be printed in black & white. Printing your books with color can be really expensive. CreateSpace is one of the cheapest options out there for printing in full color, however. For example, you could get a 60 page book printed with full color photos, it is only going to cost you less than $5 per unit. This is dirt-cheap in comparison with many other publishing methods.

What can you do with Photoshop Elements?

You can do nearly everything with Photoshop Elements that you can do with regular Photoshop.

Does BeFunky work in layers?

No, unfortunately it does not. Although, you can use the photos that you save out of BeFunky and edit them further in GIMPShop and other programs.

How do you save your images when you are working with BeFunky.com?

The option to 'Save and Share' can be found on the top left of the page. You can save it to your computer as well as to share it on sites like Facebook and Twitter. It will also give you the option of whether to save it as a PNG or JPG.

Is the Free Adobe Download for CS2 better than the rest of these other free programs?

Yes and no. You have to recognize that each program has its own strengths. For instance, some of the effects on Fotosketcher look much better than the results of similar effects in Photoshop. Furthermore, different people have different goals, so one program can seem incredible to one person and be totally useless to another. That is why there are so many programs being shown in this course.

Is Pixlr any good?

Pixlr is a very good program. It is very similar to Photoshop. It was not highlighted here because Pixlr is not very helpful for the purpose of turning photos into illustrations.

Do you think Fotosketcher is better than Photoshop?

Fotosketcher is made for the purpose of turning photos into illustrations. So, it can be better to use in some respects. However, as we go on with this course you will see that you can do a lot more with Photoshop, especially when you use some of the plug-ins available.

What are the Mac programs that are similar to Fotosketcher?

They are PhotoSketcher and Sketcher.

Can you save photos from different programs and bring them into one program to layer them?

Absolutely. You can do this in both GIMPShop and Photoshop, as well as in other similar programs.

How do you find the owner of the photo if you really like it?

You shouldn't even try. Either go out and take your own photos or find a similar photo to purchase.

Which of the free Adobe downloads would you recommend: CS2, Illustrator, or Elements?

Photoshop CS2 and Illustrator are both great to use. You may even consider downloading the whole suite. They are large files, so it would take a while to download these.

Is it better to save your work as a JPG or a PNG?

JPG is more versatile.

If I purchase Photoshop CS2, how different would it from the current version?

CS2 would include most of the same features; however, they may be under different menu categories.

What is the name of the website with the low-price printing for color books?

It is CreateSpace.com. You can use the section 'Buying Copies of Your Own Book' to calculate what your printing cost will be. A 70 page 8x10 full color book, for example, would cost approximately $6. That is ridiculously cheap.

Is there any way to take a photo and make it look like a cartoon figure, say Peter in *Family Guy* for example?

We will be exploring more cartoon-like effects in future lessons, though it is doubtful that we will be able to make anyone look like Peter.

Where do you get the link to download CS2 if you don't have Facebook?

You can now find it in the member's area.

Where can you find Photoshop Action?

You can now find the link to the download page for Photoshop Action in the member's area.

Can people from other countries buy books on Amazon and CreateSpace?

Absolutely.

How much is does it cost to get the newest version of Photoshop (CS6)?

It cost $49.99 a month for the full creative cloud. However, by itself Photoshop only costs $19.99 a month.