Photoshop Can Mimic Hand Rendered Sketches

By Prof. Jose R. Buitrago, University of Georgia College of Environmental Design

Figure 1. Current photograph illustrating the before restoration work.
Images: Prof. Jose R. Buitrago

David Harvey, a postmodern culture sociologist declared on his book entitled; The Condition of Postmodernity, that time equals money. A conclusive statement that many landscape architects can relate with, especially at times where the work load and budget constraint required the quick and efficient creation of graphics and illustrations.

Practitioners are familiar with Adobe Photoshop CS2 capabilities to create quick, fast, efficient photorealistic photomontages. Although, some professionals may argue that photorealistic imagery might look too good to be true.
Some even describe them as too generic, cold, and even sterile since it lacks the “artistic-designer” feel of traditional hand graphics media – the true measure for gauging the talent of the designer. Now, the newly revised version of Adobe Photoshop CS2 is capable of marrying the best of digital rendering with a hand rendered feel.

To illustrate this concept, a simple photomontage image has been created using Adobe Photoshop CS2. The client requested specifically a hand sketch drawing illustrating the restoration proposal of a French colonial home in Baltimore, Maryland. This “hand sketch” drawing was required by the historical preservation architectural committee for approval and consideration of the home owner’s proposal to restore the converted 1950’s garage-studio back into a garage. Figure 1 illustrates the before-existing converted garage-studio. The homeowners are proposing a new French colonial style garage door, changing the concrete driveway to brick, and traditional shrub edge along the perimeter of the driveway. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the proposed French colonial garage door and bricks to be use in the photomontage.
Creating A Photo Montage

To create this simple photomontage, the original “before” picture was open and set as a base (Background Layer) on the layer management floating window of Adobe Photoshop CS2. Make sure the paper size and resolution are adequate for final printing and the color mode is set to RGB. Several layers have been created for further manipulation of specific photographic elements such as the garage door; pavers, walls, and shrubs, as illustrated in Figure 4.

The Background (Base Image) layer was placed on the bottom of the list and the Shrub layer was placed on the top of the list. Adobe Photoshop users are aware that the order of the layers in the layer palette reads from top to bottom, thus it will follow the same order visually in the drawing depending on the vertical placement in the palette. Since the Base Image is the “background” layer, this layer should be placed at the bottom of the list allowing everything else to lie visually on top without being screened.

The garage door and pavers images were opened, then copied and pasted into the base image on their own layers. Then using a combination of the Marquee, Polygonal Lasso, and Eraser tool, all the extra information of each image (piece of the puzzle) was cropped. That is the case of the garage door picture, where the door was the only visual element preserved from the original picture. Then using the Perspective tool, the garage doors were aligned using skew – stretch – transform to follow the perspective lines of the base-background image. The perspective tool is located under Edit command at the top of the tool bar. Select Edit and then scroll down to select Transform and then Perspective.

![Figure 4. The garage door transformed to follow the base image perspective, the paving layer cropped and transformed and multiple shrubs created by copy and paste.](image)

Learning Curve

The learning curve for mastering the Perspective tool is short for those who are computer savvy. Exploration and trial and error are the keys to master this tool. The Pavers were added in the same process and technique of the garage door. The shrubs are multiplied by using the Copy and Paste commands. The shrubs act as a screen and soften the hard-non-photorealistic edge created by the paver overlay on the base image. The original shrub was copied from the base image. Similarly, some touchup on the wall was done by copying and pasting a segment of the wall using the background image as a source. Image 4 showcases the progression of the...
photomontage. Adobe Photoshop users are aware that the perspective tool might create a little distortion and also change the scale of the image being transformed.

![Figure 5. The Graphic Pen popup menu option window.](image)

**Next Steps**

After completing your photomontage, it is a good idea to save two copies of your drawing. One copy is for keeping all the Adobe Photoshop layers intact saved with the PSD extension. The second copy is to flatten all of the layers (to create a simple image before printing) by going to Layer and Flatten Image. This will combine all of your layers into one background layer and help to reduce the file size for printing or e-mailing. Once the image is flattened, you can save the finished image in the format of your choice (jpg, tiff, or pdf). In the event that further revisions are required; the original Photoshop document will enable the user to make further revisions as needed.

![Figure 6. Image after changing to grayscale mode.](image)

**Rendering Techniques**

Once you have completed Flattening all layers on the second copy, the next step is to explore different rendering techniques using the Filter tool option.
The Filter tool is located in the menu bar. Select Filter and a popup menu window will open. Scroll down the list and select Sketch, then select Graphic Pen. This action will launch the Graphic Pen window menu option as illustrated in Figure 5. To the right of the Graphic Pen filter preview window, there is a sample of the texture of the graphic pen. At far right of the preview window are several filter options such as stroke length, light/dark balance, and stroke direction. The default color for the Graphic Pen is teal. Once you reach your desired sketch look, hit the OK button to apply the Filter to the image.

To change the teal color to traditional graphite pencil color (grey) as seen in Figure 6, simply change the Image mode to grayscale. The Grayscale format is located under Image from the menu bar.
The Filter tool option offers a rich variety of artistic rendering options; from watercoloring, rough pastel, crosshatch, color pencil, and beyond. **Figures 7 through 10** illustrated the application of these filter options. It’s always good practice to create several copies of the original Adobe Photoshop document before applying different textures. Print your finished image using Adobe PDF. This will turn your drawing into an easy format to print or e-mail, plus reduce the file size considerably. Make sure that under “Print-Properties,” you select the correct page layout, paper size, color print, and under the Adobe PDF Setting you select High Quality Print.