

# Notes Tim Grey's Photoshop Workflow Talk

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The following is a summary of the main points that Tim Grey gave on February 28<sup>th</sup> to the DI SIG:

Tim believes that you should never edit the background layer. Instead, use adjustment layers. And avoid making copies of the background layer because files get too large. The following is a summary of how Tim uses adjustment layers to edit his photos.

1. **Levels:** Tim uses levels to adjust the white and black point. He emphasized the idea that in general you want to have at least some pixels be pure white and others black in order to maximize the tonal range of the image. Examining the histogram while making changes to the white and black sliders shows how much information is being lost. Choose the white point by holding down the alt key (option on Macs) and sliding the rightmost input slider gradually to the left. The display will turn black and as pixels are blown out, they will appear as colored dots. You have more latitude on the shadow side (left) and need to decide if you want a high contrast image with blocked up shadows or one that shows more shadow detail. This is a matter of artistic preference. The midtone slider is a basic brightness control. Sometimes keeping the image a little dark enhances the density and apparent color saturation of the image. Tend toward the darker but only just slightly darker.
2. **Color Balance Adjustment:** Tim believes that the best way to identify color casts is to purposely throw the slider way out of balance and then bring it back slowly. This should be done for all three sliders because the colors interact. You can use the up and down arrows to adjust the numbers in fine increments. Stick with the midtones – adjusting here will also change color balance in the highlights and shadows but the midtone changes will be emphasized. Uncheck preserve luminosity because preserving luminosity can cause significant contrast changes.
3. **Hue and Saturation:** Tim believes that most images can be improved with an increase in color saturation. Add a Hue Saturation adjustment layer and kick up the saturation... but generally not more than 20 because when you increase saturation too much you lose texture and get posterization

4. **Dodge and Burn:** Tim believes that you should never use the Photoshop dodge and burn tools because they act on the underlying image. Instead, an adjustment layer can be used. Make a new layer by using the new layer button at the bottom of the layers pallet while pressing the alt key set the blending mode to overlay and check the box to fill with 50% gray. Use the Paint Brush and reduce opacity to about 20%. Paint with black to burn and white to dodge, etc. This is just painting with light. Try a subtle effect. Click and hold until you finish an area because if you release the mouse and cross over painted areas you will increase the opacity. For example, if you paint with black at 20 %, and then release the mouse button and then paint the same area again you will end up with an opacity of 40%. Use the eraser to restore mistakes. [Question I wanted to ask: Why not simply paint over the error with neutral gray at 100% opacity?]
5. **Clone Stamp Tool:** Tim clones on its own layer. Duplicating a layer doubles the file size so instead, create an empty layer and put it just above the background. Rename it to *clone* or *clean* or something. The *Use All Layers* checkbox is incorrectly named. It should have been *Use All Visible Layers*. The *Use All Layers* check box at the top of the Photoshop is incorrectly named – it only uses visible layers. But it can create a problem because it will apply adjustment layer corrections twice. So make sure that only the source layer (background layer) is visible and paint the clone on the empty layer. An easy way to make sure only the background layer is visible is to alt-click the eyeball on the background layer
6. **Healing Brush:** In PS CS the healing brush can work on a separate layer now – in PS 7 it didn't work on it's own layer. This tool uses the underlying color and replaces it with the source texture. Use it just as you would use the clone stamp. Typical uses are to remove wrinkles in portraits and to get spots out of blue sky. The Healing Brush is used exactly like the Clone Stamp Tool. The healing brush is like the clone stamp except that it only applies texture – leaves the underlying color alone.
7. **Selections:** An easy way to make a selection is to use a channel that has the most contrast between the subject you wish to isolate and the background. Make a copy of the highest contrast channel. Open Levels. Maximize the contrast of the channel copy to create a silhouette. Clean up the area with paintbrush – paint out stray white or black pixels. Then create a selection from the

channel by clicking on that symbol on the bottom of the channel pallet. Control clicking on an alpha channel makes a selection where white areas are deselected and black areas are not. Use lasso to clean up rough areas.

When making a selection not all pixels are 100% selected or unselected. These show up as shades of gray in an alpha channel. When you convert an alpha channel to a selection you may also find it easier to visualize the selected area using the quick mask (press q toggles the quick mask on and off). Paint with white to select, or paint with black to deselect. The problem with visualizing selections with the marching ants is that it only shows pixels that are 50% or more selected. If they are less than 50% they won't show, so use the quick mask.

#### **8. Extract Filter:**

- a) Make copy of the background layer because the extract filter deletes unselected area.
- b) Choose filter > extract
- c) Paint along edge with as small a brush as you can. Include all of the transition areas
- d) Use the paint bucket and fill the closed in area – make sure that the area to be extracted is completely enclosed.
- e) The green will be analyzed for transitions by PS CS
- f) The extract filter works best on areas of subtle transition like hair, but works poorly on areas with sharp, well-delineated transitions.

#### **9. Simple Method To Convert image to black and white:**

- a) Create a hue and saturation layer
- b) Make an empty layer
- c) Fill with black (alt [option on Mac]) click in empty layer
- d) Change the blending mode of the black layer to color blend mode
- e) Go to hue and saturation layer and adjust hue to improve tonal range around
- f) Create a levels adjustment layer and the other layers you would normally do

#### **10. More complicated method (but provides better control)**

- a) Open the channels palette

- b) Examine each channel and see what you channel you like best and use that as a starting point. Usually the green channel and sometimes the red channel. Most problems are in the blue channel
- c) Look at each of these channels and decide what parts of the image you like then...
- d) Make RGB channel active
- e) Make sure the layer is active and open the Channel mixer
- f) check Monochrome
- g) Adjust the channels according to taste starting with the channel you liked best (example: green 100%, red 0% blue 0%). Then adjust the three to produce the final image.
- h) The final mix should have the three percentages add to approximately 100% -- it doesn't need to be exact.
- i) Leave the Constant on 0%
- j) Next for a different effect, you can let a little bit of color show through. To do this reduce the opacity slightly 90-95% gives a good effect. Or you can paint in color at about 40 %

### 11. Sharpening: High Pass Filter

- a) Make copy of background
- b) Set to overlay blend mode
- c) Go to Filter>other>high pass with a radius of about 3.1 (but you can go as high as 10 px)
- d) You will not have any sharpening artifacts
- e) HPF method creates an enhanced edge contrast. You can get more kick by using one of the other contrast adjusting blend modes such as soft light, pen light, etc. You can adjust the amount of the effect by changing the opacity.

12. **Color Contamination:** If you have a glow or some weird color change on part of the picture try this...

- a) Select the color you want to paint with like the lime green for the leaves of the palm...
- b) Alt click and set green as the foreground color...100% opacity
- c) Paint that color and then hit **color** as the blending mode...and the texture of the green palm will show through the painted area.

13. **Color Cast from faded Photo** Suppose Picture is faded and has a strong pink/magenta cast

- a) Dupe image layer
- b) Blur layer with Filter>blur>average
- c) Invert this layer to get the complement to pink/magenta

- d) Choose blending mode ---**color**
- e) Decrease the opacity of the layer to eliminate the cast

#### **14. Multipass sharpening:**

Tim is not a great fan of multipass sharpening. Believes the best sharpening is done after image is resized. Pointed out that Bruce Fraser's expertise is offset presses, which require considerably greater sharpening than inkjet printers.

You always lose info when going from analog to digital and this creates the need for sharpening in the digital environment. Tim believes that all images should be sharpened ever so slightly more than sharpening for viewing on the monitor.

An exciting new **Microsoft power toy** is under development and should be release next quarter. The toy demonstrated allowed the user to adjust Windows' color management (currently accessible only by using registry editing).

Finally, Tim mentioned **Raw Shooter by Pixmantecs**. This Windows-based raw converter was developed by former Phase One developers. Tim thinks it is good software, and it's free!