

ART BEYOND THE LENS

WORKING WITH DIGITAL TEXTURES BY SARAH GARDNER

ART BEYOND THE LENS



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{ *introduction* }

Several years ago I started to explore the world of digital photography with little anticipation as to how far this journey would take me.

Having used a 35 mm SLR throughout my days at college and university I was no stranger to the principles of photography. However, since graduating in 1994, with an Honours degree in Fine Art from the Nottingham Trent University, the digital age has taken photography to whole new, and positively amazing, heights. Suddenly a world of possibilities has exploded and the technical effects once painstakingly mastered in the darkroom are now achievable on a desktop! Gone is the necessity for a darkroom, chemicals, and expensive experimenting. Today, in contrast, there is a new breed of photography and with it a new breed of photographer. At first, the idea of computer editing over the specialist undertakings of a darkroom felt far too sterile for my liking. The physicality of producing photographic prints, which I loved, seemed lost in the convenience of a new digital age. Having said that, I was intrigued and utterly baffled by the work some photographers were producing. I was seeing finished “effects” that I had no prior understanding of. I frequented popular photo-sharing Internet sites and forums, spending hours trying to ascertain just “how” photographic artists were incorporating beautifully rendered effects into their work. I recall playing with every slider and tool

in Photoshop to create the effects of irregular grain, rough blurs, and paint-like qualities, sadly to no avail. I was determined to master these beautiful qualities that made modern digital photography look centuries old, torn from the pages of romantic illustrations or the enchanted paintings of childhood dreams. I was captivated, and my love of photographic art reignited. I persevered with my efforts and after a lot of worthy research I soon discovered a basic functionality, in Photoshop, that allowed two, or more images to be merged together!

The concept behind Photoshop’s Layers wasn’t entirely unfamiliar to me! I had previous undertaken similar experiments with photographic film while studying at college some 18 year previously. I spent hours experimenting with development methods, double and partial image exposures, keen to use processing as a way of extending the arm of photographic creativity. After graduating I neglected my photography for many years and during that time technology raced away. Today, in the new world of digital cameras and editing software I have been able to develop my photographic art to a point far beyond anything I could have dreamt of as a film-based photographer all those years previous. I have broken away from my conventional training and embraced new self-taught techniques through the latest technologies.



I spent the next couple of years mastering the transition from film and darkroom to digital and computer. Once I'd discovered the creative magnitude to modern day digital editing software I instinctively returned to where I had left my work some 18 years prior. I started to explore the effects of *layering* two pictorial-based images together. From here I progressed to using specific *Textures*, which the industry had so aptly named, in combination with pictorial-based images. Suddenly working creatively was accessible to me again and my work flourished.

I believe there is no right or wrong way when it comes to producing art, digital or otherwise. Art is a question of taste, style, and interpretation. But there is, I believe, an intuitive nature that defines my style and gives me a predisposition towards my artistic endeavours. What works for me may not work or feel right for another. My working practice is as personable as I am, so whether I choose to work with paint and canvases or pixels and Photoshop the outcome is not defined by a series of prescriptive steps or instructions. Digital photography is within itself a paradox of rules and

creativity. Photography is still very much governed by principles which dictate correct exposure, shutter speed, and metering, etc. Yet in almost absurd contradiction processing can be limitless where suddenly there are no longer any governing rules to keep me on the straight and narrow. I find this truly inspirational, as a tool, as it gives me the creative freedom I crave.

I rarely accept compromise when it comes to quality, and digital art produced on a computer is no different. At the end of the day I want to enhance my work and not compromise it to the effects of digital

mastery. I want to incorporate textured elements into my work that are natural, organic, and empathetic to my subject and composition. Although my working style is very aesthetic and attractive the application of Textures often goes deeper than just producing work with “pretty effects”! I will always be an artist before I’m a photographer, and although new technology is exciting and inspirational there comes a point when its application has to be more than just an excuse to use it! I’m confident with my intentions and while I have spent the last few years mastering this new craft I have never let my technical pursuits overshadow or detract from what I’m attempting to bring to my photographic work.

Being just a photographer is not enough; I’m motivated and inspired by non tangible qualities such as emotional atmosphere, spiritual depth, the unspoken word, and hidden narrative. Through the introduction of Textures I have effectively extended the arm of my photographic work to produce a marriage between the visual and the emotional, something my camera alone cannot achieve. It’s quite simply . . . ART BEYOND THE LENS.

Through the pages of this book I wish to share with you my work, my passion, and some of the steps I have taken to establish my craft as a digital photographic artist. I want to inspire you to find and develop your own working style and ultimately become intuitively more creative.

Sarah Gardner



The background of the left page is a dark, textured surface with a repeating pattern of small, stylized floral or foliate motifs in a slightly lighter shade of dark grey or black.

CHAPTER

BACK TO ART

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The background of the right page is a light, off-white or cream color with a subtle, mottled texture. A large, thin, dark arc, resembling a stylized 'C' or a partial circle, is drawn across the page, starting from the top right and curving down towards the bottom left.

{ONE}



An artist's journey

As a child I showed a great fondness for drawing, painting, and craft activities. So it was no real surprise to my parents that I turned out to be quite a creative individual. Every school project was neatly thought through and presented, every art project respectfully undertaken.

My family supported me with enthusiasm. My parents never once questioned my decision to study art, nor did they ever discuss career aspirations with me; instead they simply let me fulfill my desire to immerse myself in my art. My grandparents bought me my first artist's easel while my parents supplied me with paints and pastels. My father was also instrumental, in supporting my photographic studies, by loaning me his Olympus OM40 single-lens reflex (SLR) camera.

Although I studied photography at school, it was very basic, and unfortunately there is little that I

remember about the experience. It wasn't until I reached college at age 18 that I really embraced photography. It was there that I first started to progress and move away from conventional photographic practice. Probably because I was an art student as opposed to a photography student, my teachers granted me more creative freedom to experiment rather than hone technical skills. Interested in darkroom processing, I looked to Man Ray's solarization techniques for inspiration. I recall layering negatives together and partially exposing multiple images. It's clear, looking back, that these early experiments gave me my first taste for creative developing and processing. My early photographic work was unfortunately short lived, as my time in the darkroom was limited by my course structure. Once at the university, I was not given the opportunity to return to the darkroom. Eventually my creative photography ceased altogether, and it wasn't until just four years ago that I rediscovered this lost passion.



Created using multinegative exposures, 1991.

A question of art

After college I secured a much sought after place at the Nottingham Trent University studying fine art. I was confident that I would continue to ride the waves of success that had initially secured me a privileged space on their degree program. I'd accomplished top grades, recognition, and distinctions for my artwork while at college. However, the transition to the university was fraught with change and challenge. Being an art student at school was very different from being an art student at the university. It was no longer acceptable to just be competent in my technique as a painter; I had to justify my intentions. My strengths became my weaknesses, and for the first time in my life I was required to look inwardly for my motivation, rationalization, and inspiration. My work as a painter had to mature, evolve, and become justifiable. My style changed significantly from detailed life paintings to larger abstract works of art.



Untitled abstract painting in acrylic, 1992.

Even today my photographic art originates from conceptual ideas that manifest themselves from within. I'm personally invested in my photography, and I draw my intentions from my need to communicate that investment. There is so much more to my creative photography than just the act of taking, and processing, a photograph.

Painters who influenced my style

Before I go any further, I want to make it clear that I've never considered myself to be much of an authority when it comes to art history. Furthermore, whether the work of those artists who provided inspiration did so intentionally or not is neither here nor there. It's what I *took* from experiencing their work that is of fundamental importance.

For various reasons, like most of us I'm drawn to different styles, concepts, and ideas, some of which are conventional and others that are more obscure and personal. Either way, it's my *likes* and *dislikes* that have helped me to define my preferences. My *likes*, become my *taste*, and my *tastes* define my *style*.

The Paris-based Impressionists are perhaps my favorite of all painters: Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Pierre Renoir, and Camille Pissarro. From thick chunky surfaces, beautiful tones, and pigments, to rendered skies and brushwork, the Impressionists were among some of the first painters who introduced a physical element to their painting technique, which brought more to their work than just a pictorial quality.

Just as I had done with my earlier photographic darkroom experiments, these painters had gone beyond the boundaries of pictorial composition—they were taking painting to a new level. From the super sized to the super white, from Monet's lily ponds to the super huge canvases of abstract painter Mark Rothco and minimalist

painter Robert Ryman, these painters went beyond the boundaries of their two-dimensional surfaces. Their huge canvases created mood with an emotional edge, their hues conveyed atmosphere, and their rendered surfaces created a dynamic tactile presence.

Minimalism: Hidden in the absence of detail

Although there were many artists who inspired me and formed part of my degree studies, there were definitely a couple who continued to influence me beyond my time at the university.

In 1993 I visited the Tate Gallery in London to see a one-man show by American artist Robert Ryman, a minimalist painter who at the time I knew very little about. After seeing Robert Ryman's exhibition, I became a big fan and went on to discover the work of Canadian artist Agnes Martin. I connected with Ryman's white palette and use of rendered canvases. I regarded Martin's use, and creation of space, to be simplistic and brilliant. Both artists exhibited installations of small, framed whitewashed art pieces that hung together, creating walls of unity between their art and their method of presentation. Together, these two painters influenced a creative shift within my own work at a time when I was still only in my first year at the university. The impact from the discovery of the minimalist art movement remained with me right through to graduation.

Painting with a digital canvas

In 1994 I graduated with a bachelor of arts honors degree in fine art. My paintbrushes were soon stored away in favor of a career in marketing. I spent nine years working my way up the corporate ladder, during which time I

was fortunate enough to work with some of England's leading creative agencies. I worked on several marketing campaigns that received industry recognition and learned a great deal about the power of imagery in advertising.

By 2003 I decided to take a career break and start a family. The arrival of my daughter was the start of a new chapter in my life. I had no idea at the time that she'd become my muse and provide the grounding and redirection that would ultimately lead me full circle back to my love of photography.

The moment came several years later, in 2007, when, I recall, a friend had booked a portrait session for her baby daughter. When she showed me the resulting photographs, I decided to take up the challenge of photographing my own children. Little did I know the magnitude of this challenge and just how far it would take me.

Although I had studied photography briefly at college, I never considered my skills as a photographer very strong. I had the preconception that professional photographers held technical knowledge in the highest regard, above creativity. I didn't share this mind-set and knew I would always put creative vision before technical ability. But I was keen to have a go, and before I knew it I was trialing my way through digital SRLs and purchased my first, semiprofessional camera—a Canon D40.

Digital photography proved to have a steep learning curve! I can honestly say that I wasn't initially impressed. I was used to working with film, and although that had been many years before, I found digital images in comparison to be lacking in clarity, sharpness, and depth. Convinced I was operating my new camera correctly, I sought Internet forums through which I could find some much-needed advice. I started connecting with like-minded photographers from all around the world. I was relieved to discover I wasn't alone and shared the same frustrations that many other new photographers were experiencing. I can't praise enough those who

were willing to share, provide insight, and offer genuine support. I conversed daily with photographers—some professional, others keen amateurs. Together we shared our work, ideas, and concepts, and I learned a great deal in a short space of time. But I was still frustrated in the knowledge that I was standing at the forefront of the latest technology with so much still a mystery.

Film, on the other hand, had never presented so many frustrations; in retrospect it had seemed unquestionably simpler. Although my experience processing film had been limited, for the majority of the time I had succumbed to the convenience of sending my rolls of 35mm film to a lab for development. But suddenly digital photography changed all that. I could now extract and process my own images directly on my desktop. Suddenly it meant that I was in control, of not just my image capture but the entire creative process.

Digital processing was like nothing I had experienced before. There were no rules, no rights and wrongs, no direction. In desperate need to gain some insight, I sought out tutorials, books, and more advice. It was

within these early days, while hunting for direction, that I stumbled across photographers who used additional digital processing techniques—textures!

Discovering textures

I was intrigued with the rough blurs, scratches, and soft grain of digital textures, which allowed photographers to inject another layer of creativity into their work. The concept behind processing with textures took me back to my earlier days in the college darkroom overlaying negatives together. I started collecting *free* digital textures and would play for hours on my computer. I would work through tutorials, exploring new ways of producing results. The more I learned, the more I started to feel myself pulling away from these methods, opting instead to use those that I had discovered for myself. I started to identify a more personal way of working, one that was perhaps more intuitive than the methods suggested in the structured tutorials I had previously undertaken; I started to forge my own working style.



Examples of my first textured images, 2008.

Gaining confidence to work intuitively

I was highly motivated to learn all I could about digital photography and processing. I have worked relentlessly over the past few years to master my techniques of processing with textures. I have learned a lot, and I've disregarded

even more. It has never been my aim to become an expert on Photoshop; my only intention has been to become competent at processing my images to a standard that was personally satisfying. Breaking away and becoming confident enough to work intuitively was as much about listening to my own aspirations as it was about not allowing myself to be swept along by popular consensus.





CHAPTER

A WORKING STYLE



{TWO}



I would definitely describe myself as a *visual* person. I obtain a greater understanding of the world around me, and practically most things, if I can see them. I'm an introvert with a mind brimming full of ideas and concepts, which, for the most part, I lack the time to instigate. I'm a romantic and a spiritualist and believe in life's opportunities. I can easily withdraw from the busy world around me and lose myself for hours in only the company of my hobbies. Although I'm a creative individual, I regard myself as an artist foremost. Being creative is, by definition, to create. Yet it's through my photographic textured work that I purposefully produce art. Being an artist differs from being creative through its intent. Because art, by definition, should, through the deliberate arrangement of items, address both an emotional and an intellectual response.







How textures bring nostalgia and emotion to my work

I work intuitively, layering up textures uniquely. I'm adding my own identity to the surface of my images by branding them and making them my own. Textures add a surface veil; they seal, between their layers, the idea that time has moved on.



Portraits from the 2009 Milton Keynes Fringe Festival exhibition collection.

When I paint, I love nothing more than rendering the surface of my canvases, cutting through thick paint with a brush or palette knife. It's the same when processing with digital textures, albeit less physical. I'm manipulating surface qualities that go beyond the pictorial content of my photographic composition. The results may be aesthetic and pleasing,

but for me they're also incredibly emotional. It's my intention that my work no longer looks crafted from a digital age, but instead takes on the appearance of aged and treasured pieces of fine art. Whether traditional or contemporary, I'm extending the "story," deepening the narrative, and giving strength to my work's silent voice.



Exhibition Collection

Milton Keynes Fringe Festival 2009

In 2009 I exhibited a collection of photographic portraits, in collaboration with the Catch Light Collective, for the Milton Keynes Fringe festival. This series of portraits, taken of my daughter across a two-year time span, examined a visual bridge between childhood age and spirituality. As a photographer I take photographs, I preserve memories. I wanted to illustrate how these moments balance, between her young age of 5 years and her older spiritual self.

My use of textures throughout this series was pinnacle in strengthening the mood and portraying the idea that these moments were special, personal, and spiritual. Textures aided the illusion that these images existed outside of a time frame, yet, in contradiction, the image capture itself was about a specific moment. The resulting paradox, between the moment and the memory, satisfied my intentions for this set of work.

Portrait from the 2009 Milton Keynes Fringe Festival exhibition collection.



Portraits from the 2009 Milton Keynes Fringe Festival exhibition collection.



Portraits from the 2009 Milton Keynes Fringe Festival exhibition collection.



Portrait from the 2009 Milton Keynes Fringe Festival exhibition collection.







Waiting for Rain (2008)

This is one of my favorite pieces that I included in this series of work. The day was humid and overcast, the sky thick with slumberous clouds. I knew I wanted the sky to contribute to the composition as much as the image of my daughter walking away from me. Here my use of texture helped me create a big sky full of atmosphere, indulgent like a heavy oil painting, aged and historic.

Portrait from the 2009 Milton Keynes Fringe Festival exhibition collection.

A question of inspiration or influence

To be inspired is to experience the gift of uplifting energy as the mind opens to the possibilities of new ideas. We talk about being inspired as a precondition of creative action. To feel that burst of energy that's required to take on a new project or create works of art. It's certainly a term I use frequently, but it's not license to blatantly copy another artist's work.

I often wonder if there is any such thing left as an original idea! I have certainly found myself, in the past, to be strongly influenced by other artists and photographers whose work I find desirable. It's hard not to be influenced by those we look up to. I know that inspiration and influence work hand in hand, and we often cannot avoid being affected by what we are exposed to or seek out.

It's amazing to think that I'm now able to contribute to the vast pool of inspiration that's so valuable to new photographers. Regardless of how much inspiration we actively seek, it's what we do with it that counts. It's how we channel the gift of inspiration, granted to us by others, into positive and constructive endeavors that are healthy to our own development.

Developing a signature style

I was truly able to develop my own signature style when I decided to break away from what everyone else was doing and follow my own creative desires. Finding my niche, or style, wasn't about reinventing the wheel; it was about finding *continuity* within my work that pleased me. I progressed from student to practitioner, taking my newly acquired skills and using them in a way that satisfied me, above anyone else.

Photography workshops offer the perfect example of how style can differ dramatically from one photographer to another. Everyone is given the opportunity to photograph exactly the same subject, yet all come away with differing results. Candidates may have different cameras, different lenses, a different angle from which to take their shot, different lighting ideas, and different processing methods. It's these differences that define our style and make our work as individual as we are.

Today I fully embrace photography as my choice of craft, through which I produce my art. Developing a reliable level of confidence in my work came quickly as I practiced and progressed. My work has a strong identity because early on I understood the importance of following my own artistic aspirations. I believe in my skills and respect my weaknesses. I continue to learn and develop my portfolio as and when I can. I run my own photography business, but above all I love what I do and do what I love!



Portrait from the 2009 Milton Keynes Fringe Festival exhibition collection.



CHAPTER {THREE}

SHOOTING WITH TEXTURES IN MIND



Throughout this chapter, I'll explain and offer valuable insight as to the advantages "shooting with textures in mind" can provide. You'll learn why obtaining the right image capture is essential.

Negative space and the right composition

Negative space is the term that photographers use to describe an area of composition that isn't occupied by anything specific. It's a void or a space with no real defining quality; it's the counterbalance for the subject, the space left over. I'm not sure the word *negative* really sums up just how important this element of composition can be. It was easier for me to comprehend its value when I started to acknowledge that my finished image was no longer created entirely in camera. Although a texture is, in essence, a surface quality that's applied afterward, the contribution of textures to overall composition is often neglected when shooting. Textures are somewhat subjective, applied like the layers of paint or varnish on an artist's canvas. They seal in emotion, character, and even narrative. They add more than just their scratches, blurs, and rough grains. They must be allowed to reside comfortably in the composition, and although some consider the application of textures to be no more than a finishing touch, I think that their success depends greatly on a little forward thinking. I like to give careful consideration, when composing my shots, to how I will eventually come to use selected textures in my processing.







I generally compose to *the rule of thirds*, positioning my subject slightly off center. I try to obtain as much negative space as possible when setting up my shots. This gives me more creative freedom and later provides grounding for my textures. I'm a strong believer that not every image should, or can be, textured successfully. Processing with textures is about finding a balance, and that balance goes beyond the technical nature of its

application. Every texture, whether soft and tonal or extreme and dramatic, should have its place; it should rest easily within the framework of my composition. A texture shouldn't suffocate, detract, or smother its accompanying subject. It's the incorporation of negative space that brings room and breathing space within my compositions so that both the image and my selected texture can cohabit and work in unison.

Negative space may derive from many factors, such as background space, blurred foregrounds, or the addition of a gradient fill (discussed in Chapter 5). Regardless of where it originates from, it offers a clear destination by which my textures can manifest their unique qualities. Compositional *negative space*, such as skies and distinct areas of blur, can become home to some of my stronger textural elements. I'll fade, etch, and render these areas of otherwise "nothingness," leaving my subject clear and strong to stand its own ground.

My photographic work is undertaken in two equal halves: my initial image capture and processing. Both are just as important to the overall success of my finished image. Being mindful of my intentions before I even pick up my camera reaps its rewards and makes processing that much easier. I fully engage with this second half of the process, as this is where I add a deeper layer of creativity. I go beyond what my camera alone can achieve to create work that is personally instinctive, intuitive, and has a great emotional presence.





Shirelands (2009)

Shirelands is a series of seven images commissioned by a local art gallery in 2009. I was briefed to produce a series of photographic artwork that explored the quintessential English countryside. I was eager to use this opportunity to illustrate the beauty of the countryside, both through my camera and through processing techniques. My grandparents instilled a great fondness in me for the Buckinghamshire landscape, one that I still hold dear today. The beauty of living in Buckinghamshire, with its rolling lush green hills and vales, is that it's very much on my doorstep; it's simply down every footpath, road, or lane. I certainly didn't travel more than a few miles to capture these images. The physical distance set aside, the emotional journey was what I wanted to illustrate—the process of looking back, reminiscing, recalling idle strolls on a summer afternoon hand in hand with my grandmother and perhaps the faint sounds of yesterday's village green echoing back to me now. My application of textures was paramount to creating a sealed environment. Like treasured possessions under the safeguard of tissue paper, forever sealed behind their own veil of implied time, textures cannot help but imply a passage of time; after all, they are obtained from worn, faded, and deteriorated surfaces. They're witness, in some small way, to the never-ending flow of time.



{tip}

Most landscapes are photographed or painted on a “landscape” orientation but the images in the *Shirelands* collection were all photographed on a “portrait” orientation. The skies provided the negative space, covering 75% of the composition. I wanted to create the illusion of large vaulted skies in which my textures could be most visible and effective. Each image still works to the rule of thirds with the subject seated at the bottom of the composition.





Shirelands is perhaps the most nostalgic collection of work I've produced to date. For me the series encapsulated my memories, like faded dreams and reoccurring echoes from the past. My camera alone could not have achieved this; with all its technical advancements it can only take me so far, the rest is left to my artistic discretion.

Backgrounds

How light and dark backgrounds work differently

You have now seen just how effective the use of negative space can be for providing a clear destination for textured layers. Extending on this, let's take a closer look at backgrounds. Whether I'm photographing still

life or taking portraits in the park, my background will play a vital role in the effectiveness of my selected textures when I begin processing. The reason my background is important is that different textures work differently once layered over a light or dark background. Put color and hue aside for a moment and try to think of backgrounds in degrees of tonality. As a general rule, textures will lighten dark backgrounds





and darken light ones. However, if my backgrounds are extreme—for example, brilliant white or jet black—most textures will struggle to yield any workable results. Having said that, these creative limitations can be worked through, but they are tricky. By paying a little more attention to my initial setup, I can make my

processing workflow a lot easier. Backgrounds are just as much a part of my composition as is negative space and the subject, and they deserve a little preplanning. When working with textures, there are definitely some advantages to selecting, where I'm able, a background that falls in a general midtone range.

Today I shoot with a wide range of background options. But I recommend starting with backgrounds that are of a middle tone, as these are by far the easiest to work with. I'm now confident enough to shoot with extreme light and dark backgrounds, as I have learned to overcome some of the initial difficulties that are inherent with these types of backgrounds.

Processing with extreme backgrounds can be trickier, but it is not impossible by any means. In Chapter 5 I'll discuss how gradient fills can help you to process extreme backgrounds, and I'll show you just how easy this technique is to master.







For the most part, I still shoot with midtone backgrounds. I feel more at home working within the subtle tonal palette that midtones offer. Through my experience of working with textures, I have come to instinctively know which qualities I'm looking for in a background. There are no hard-and-fast rules, no rights or wrongs. But like negative space I do prefer clutter-free backgrounds that are on the lighter side of the midtone scale.



{tip}

Identifying midtones is easy—simply think of the world in degrees of black and white. All the colors that fall into the gray areas are your midtones. The best midtones are those grays that sit right in the middle of the grayscale. I often opt for a cream, soft pink, gray, or aqua-colored background for still life work.

From plain to textured

When photographing still life setups, finding great backgrounds can be hard work. However, because I process with textures I can rely on them to take the hard work out of it! Plain backgrounds can be fused with textures to create genuine areas of interest. Textures can give plain backgrounds a new lease on life and create a somewhat romantic, shabby chic, or vintage ambiance. You know by now that I like nothing more than showing off great textures when working with large areas of negative space.



I adore how the textures instantly add a surface element that otherwise didn't exist. Suddenly a texture can transform a background and make the image look as if it has been placed on canvas or parchment. This is perhaps the "purest" use of textures and demonstrates with full effect the balance that is required between texture and subject. In this instance, textures are very much apparent and are allowed to shine in all their glory.







Working with bokeh

Bokeh is the Japanese term for blur, and blur comes in an array of delightful effects. We all love the sparkling jewels of sun flare bokeh through to the creamy soft blurs found in the gradients that fall just outside of focus. Bokeh works just like negative space and plain backgrounds, creating a wonderful anchor for textural creativity.



Bokeh occurs when an extremely shallow depth of field (DOF) is achieved through the use of a small aperture setting. (Depth of field is covered in Chapter 6.) I prefer to work between $f/1.4$ and $f/2.8$, especially when shooting floral compositions. I don't want to place a hard texture over the top of those dreamy blurs. So the secret is to take the edge off my selected texture first by giving it a

subtle blur. This simple trick throws my textural overlay into my composition so that it no longer looks as if it has been placed on the surface. Blurring textures creates the illusion that they are further back in my composition than those areas that remain sharp, and in focus. This simple, yet effective trick supports the beautiful depth of field that I've achieved through my initial image capture.

I use strong textures to add roughness to those creamy blurs, obliterate halos and steep gradients. Texture can magically create some amazing effects as they are layered through the outer edges of soft bokeh. I use them to deeply render surfaces and create a dynamic quality of light and space. Using textures in this way instantly produces whimsical connotations, the results of which are romantic, like adding song to silence or movement to stillness. The results are reminiscent of the qualities favored by watercolor painters.



{tip}

Choose chunky, rough textures that are strong, because when you blur them their hard edges are diminished and subtler details lost. Try a soft Gaussian blur that will successfully create the illusion of throwing texture into a composition. I make sure I remove all traces of texture from my focal points, as they need to remain sharp and pierce through to my foreground.

Shooting with natural light

Studio or natural, flash or reflector, finding the right “light” immediately gives your work a distinctive look. I’m classified as a “natural light” photographer, as I prefer, whenever I can, to use only natural light. Coupled with a little bounce from my reflector, I’m more than often impressed with the results. There is a clarity that comes from using natural light, above studio or flash lighting, which I feel looks authentic and lends itself to my particular style of photography. Whole books have been written on the subject of lighting, and it’s certainly fundamental to all photography, but for the purpose of this book I will keep it relevant to working with textures.

The biggest advantage to shooting with natural light is that it’s beautifully defused and soft. I prefer to

work with cooler daylight than bright sunshine. When working indoors, I’ll set up by a full-length window and position my subject either directly to the side or at 45 degrees to my light source. When shooting on location, I’ll avoid shadows and strong contrasts, opting to set up somewhere with a little shade. If that’s not possible, I’ll create my own with my reflector or a defusing canopy.

The reason I aim to shoot with a lower contrast is twofold. First, I can be sure to capture the finer delicate details (especially when working with floral setups), and second, when it comes to processing I have the flexibility to introduce additional contrast from my textures without overdoing it.



Why is it important to shoot with textures in mind?

Image capture and processing with textures don't work in isolation from one another; they work together. You can't

just throw a texture over a badly composed image and hope to make it into a great piece of photographic artwork. Initial composition is very important for obtaining the right foundation on which to further develop.



CHAPTER {FOUR}

DIGITAL TEXTURES EXPLAINED





I'm pretty excited about this chapter because this is where I can finally share with you my insights into working with digital textures. Today, I use them throughout my photography, and looking back at my work as a painter, as well as the work of the magnificent painters who influenced me, it is obvious that working with textures was a natural progression.

The right textures

Working with the right textures really has been the key to my success. I have experimented with so many styles and types of textures that I can now clearly identify those that will work well and those to avoid.

Unfortunately, if you start off working with the wrong textures, it can be hard to recover from that initial experience. I have shared this frustration, and even today other photographers will contact me feeling puzzled that they can't produce good results with the textures they're working with. More than often, this is because different textures work differently with differing compositions, and when incorrectly matched they fail to yield workable results.

Throughout this chapter I want to explain why that is, and how textures can be manipulated and applied to give you the results you seek within your own work, just as I do.





My first texture was designed out of pure necessity to establish a good quality texture that worked well when applied. Scratched metal was a logical starting point, as its silvery quality produced fine detailing with no color cast.

What is a digital texture?

A digital texture is quite simply a photographic image of an abstract surface within its own right. Although this photographic image may have undergone a few wonderful transformations of its own; in essence, it's just another JPEG image file.

Frustrated with not being able to find digital textures that produced the results I was after, it made sense to create my own. This way I could be sure to use and incorporate the textural elements that I wanted to see translate across into my photographic compositions.

Developing my own textures was a harder task than I had initially perceived. I have learned more about textures through the process of producing my own, perhaps more than I've learned from just applying them.

To create a good texture, as with most things, one has to specifically design it for the task at hand. With both the experience of working with textures and developing my own, I know there is no such thing as a "one texture fits all" scenario. The requirements always change, if only subtly, from composition to composition, and the development of a diverse portfolio of textures is essential to meeting all my creative needs.



Don't judge a book

Textures are by default not very inspirational in their raw condition. They're messy scratched image files that take on a solid appearance in their unused state and often fail to display the beautiful qualities and effects that they can produce. So it's easy when shopping for a new set of textures to be drawn to those that look "pretty" on first appearance. But as you will see, a texture, married with its selected blend mode, can produce very different results than those suggested by its first impression. If you're going to purchase your textures, or even better have a go at creating your own, there are a few key issues to consider, but the texture's initial raw state shouldn't be one of them.



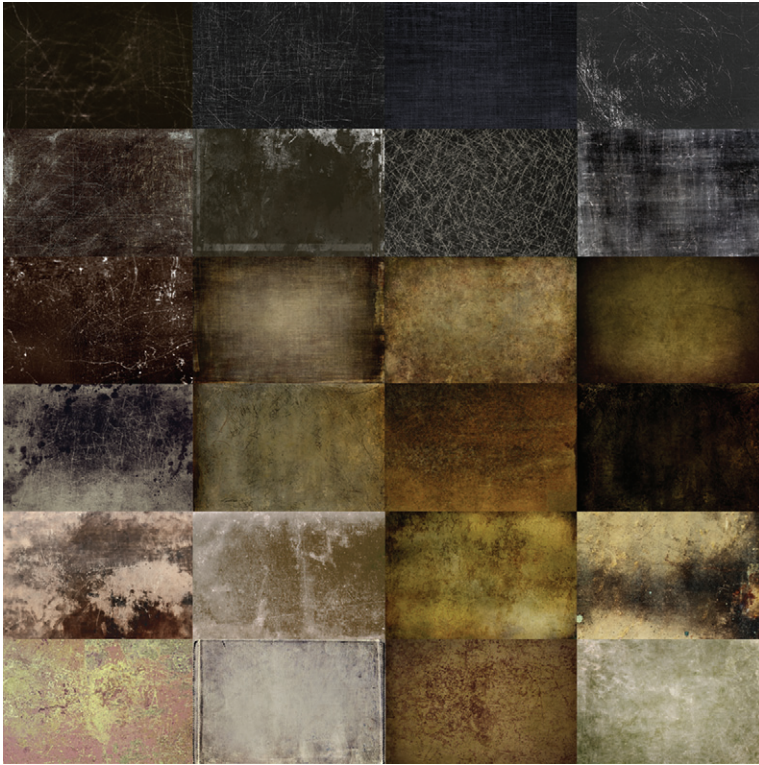
Making textures from the right source material

I have seen textures made out of all sorts of things; I think the most bizarre was a dog's fur coat! Personally, I believe the initial source of a texture is quite important. I use textures within the processing of my digital photography for a handful of reasons: from heightening the emotional connection to suggesting old charm or whimsical sophistication. It's therefore required that the textures I use support this application.

As I mentioned previously, different textures are suited to different jobs because different textures behave differently depending on the way they are blended. Today my texture portfolio has a varied range, from delicate to really intense and grungy textures. But all of them have one thing in common—they're all made from photographic images that are empathetic to art itself.

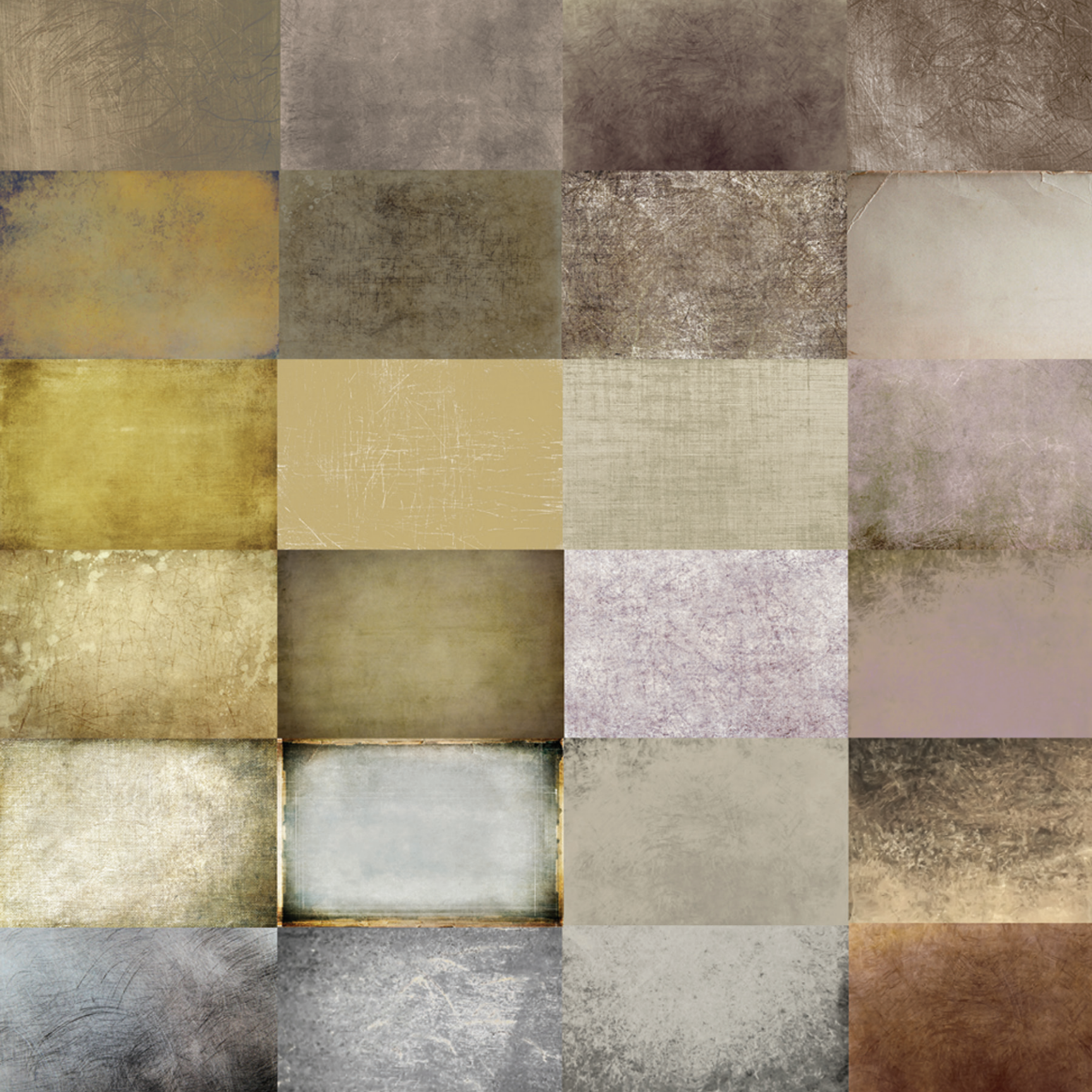
The image opposite illustrates a comprehensive collection of textures across a light tonal range.





Above and opposite illustrate a comprehensive collection of textures across dark and mid tonal ranges.

Take a look back through the pages of history. Art has been created on almost all types of surfaces, from cave walls and plaster frescos to refined canvases, glass, and metals. These surfaces erode and decay, paints peel, and plaster cracks. So it makes sense that if I'm attempting to create visual effects through the use of modern-day digital textures, they should be sourced from naturally deteriorated surfaces—specifically the types of surfaces that, in their prime, an artist would have selected on which to produce art. Examples might include eroded stone, cracked plaster, aged paper, worn leather, threadbare canvas, vintage fabric, crumbled brick masonry, scratched metal, rusty sheets of painted metal, and peeled paint.



Processing textures

Image capture is only the starting point when it comes to creating my own textures. There are additional steps within Photoshop that will maximize a texture's effects and creative scope. When working on a new texture, I will increase contrast, remove original coloring, add tints, invert, crop, blur, and even go as far as to blend two or more textures together. I guess you could say I texture my textures! It's fun to have a bit of a play by adding vignettes, gradient filters, and fillers, but I'm always mindful of how a texture should perform, and that must come first.

How scale is important

Some of the textures in my portfolio have small refined details; others have large blocks of intensity. When initially selecting a texture for a composition, I think paying attention to scale is of real importance.

When processing a large vaulted sky or landscape, I will always select a texture that is in keeping with the overall scale of my composition. I don't want to use a texture that's too large, because this will make my composition appear reduced and small. This has nothing to do with the intensity in which I use a texture, but instead it refers to the scale of the texture's marks and scratches. Likewise, when I'm processing a composition of pretty blooms from the garden, I can be more generous with my texture selection and use those of a larger scale. Selecting textures that complement the scale of my composition ensures that the balance between my image and the texture appears natural and authentic.

The scale of the texture used will, by illusion, imply an inherent size to my work. To understand this fully, it's worth considering perspective for a moment. Large objects appear in the foreground, and small objects







appear in the distance. If I were painting a small canvas, my brush strokes would be more visible than those used on a larger canvas (although the brush strokes would probably be the same size). As a photographer, I can determine the size of my work when I print it. But the application of a textured surface can imply a scale all by itself. For example, if I were to apply a large-scaled texture to a landscape image, my audience could assume this was a relatively small image, simply because the texture

selected implies a closer proximity. On the other hand, if I select a small-scaled texture, I would be implying greater distance and my audience could gain a sense of greater scale.

Cheating with scale can also yield some pretty interesting effects, so it's worth experimenting. Remember, blurring textures can create the illusion that they reside in the background of a composition. For more information on depth of field, refer to Chapter 6.



Varying scale

Often there may be a varying degree of scale within my photographic composition, especially if I'm shooting with my favorite lens (50mm f/1.4). I'm a big fan of the shallow depth of field that large apertures bring to my photography. I rarely shoot above f/2.8, as I find it hard to resist the soft smooth blurs that shooting with wide apertures produce.

If within my compositions I'm able to include some additional foreground elements, even better. These foreground blurred areas add to my composition's negative space. They produce a sensational depth of field range from blurred, to sharp, to blurred again. An image capture such as this offers me the advantage of being able to fully utilize both small- and large-scaled textures together.

{ *tip* }

Try to use large-scaled textures for smaller close-up compositions and smaller scaled textures for larger compositions. The right scale will produce a more balanced and natural look.



Layers, blend modes, and opacity

You now know that textures are just digital files like any other digital photograph. It's how I proceed to *blend* them over my selected image that turns them from flat solid images to translucent ones. Most Photoshop versions, and certainly the most recent versions of the program, allow me to blend images. Working with layers and blend modes took a little getting used to, but these techniques are relatively straightforward and basically are just tools that allow me to build up individual textural photographic elements by layering one photographic file on top of another and so on. Textures are saved as JPEG files and are solid in that state. Once opened and copied onto an exciting image, they become *layers*. These layers can then be made translucent through the selection of different blend mode options.



Blend modes are simply magical! They transform a solid image into a translucent one by blending a combination of the texture and the background image's light, dark, and middle tones. This change, or transformation of your texture's state, suddenly makes way to a wealth of tantalizing creativity.

Blend modes explained

I have painstakingly followed relevant tutorials that have made a general presumption that the image I've selected can be textured in the same way that the tutorial demonstrates. It took me a while, and a lot of frustration, to realize that many instructional tutorials overlook the most significant insight when it comes to using blend modes; and let's face it, blend modes are the key to working successfully with textures, so this part is really important!

The effect of any given blend mode on a texture is the resulting combination of both the texture and the background image's tonal range. Why? Because of how Photoshop's blend modes actually work. It's that fancy science bit that produces the results, not the texture alone.

Photoshop is an amazing program, and its blend modes are no exception. They make their calculations based on *both* the texture and the image. It's pretty simple really—the word *blend* kind of gives the game away. But although this concept is relatively straightforward, it's often completely overlooked.



Be sure not to confuse transparency with opacity, as they are very different! Opacity is used later, after you have selected your blend mode, to reduce a texture's given strength. Here I use the term *transparency* to explain how Photoshop's blend modes transform the state of any given layer.

{tip}

When you select a blend mode, it will automatically show you the results at 100%. This can sometimes look overpowering. In this case, take the Opacity slider right back to 0% and then gradually increase it to where you're happy with the effects. I find this is the best way to ensure I don't overdo it when working with extreme blend modes.

{tip}

If in doubt, or you're just starting to work with digital textures, stick with midtone textures as they yield the widest creative range across all the blend modes.

So what does a blend mode blend? It assesses the levels of tone (light, dark, and midtone) across both the image and the selected texture, and then it produces a blended result accordingly. Therefore, the same texture will, with absolute certainty, vary slightly or dramatically depending on the initial image it's blended with. Having said that, there are some generalizations that have helped me to know which textures to use for different compositions.



Pretextured images.

Although there are 24 blend modes, apart from Normal, for the purpose of working with textures I stick to the following four: Multiply, Screen, Overlay, and Soft Light.

Multiply

Multiply is a darkening blend mode. It will blend to leave textured areas where light areas reside. This is the blend mode I use to “fill” and “see” texture appear in areas of my composition that are completely white or very pale. Therefore, this blend mode is great for filling in overexposed skies, white backgrounds, or adding a little vintage warmth and tone. I often find that whenever I select this blend mode I reduce the opacity down to between 5% and 20%.



Blended with the Multiply blend mode, shown at 100%.



Blended with the Screen blend mode, shown at 100%.

Screen

Screen is a lightening blend mode that is the reverse of Multiply. It will blend to produce a milky, lightened result wherever there are midtones and darks. So this blend mode is brilliant at lightening an overall composition or giving a faded look. But it's rendered useless at providing any texture to white or very pale areas of my compositions.

Overlay and Soft Light

These are contrasting blend modes. They blend by increasing your composition's contrast and saturation through the added contrast that is gained from the texture selected. Strong textures can result in powerful, rich effects, whereas pale delicate textures are less effective. I rarely use the Overlay blend mode, as it's often too strong for my taste, even with the opacity reduced. However, Soft Light can always be relied on to produce good results. These two blend modes work with both the darks and the lights within a composition, adding a stronger contrasted result.



Blended with the Overlay blend mode, shown at 100%.



Blended with the Soft Light blend mode, shown at 100%.





One of the biggest advantages when working with digital textures is that their creative range is extensive. It's the blending that takes place between the image and the textures that allows so many creative variations. When designing my own digital textures, I have been mindful of the way they blend through Multiply, Screen, and Soft Light as well as compositional light, dark, and middle tones. Take a look at the range of textures in my portfolio on pages [57](#), [58](#) & [59](#). A good portfolio of textures needs to include a range of textures that are light, dark, and neutral in tone. This is because each, when blended,

over specific light, dark, and middle tones, will produce different results.

Tints and color casts

Some textures also bring with them their own beautiful colors and tints. More than often these are warm browns or oranges with the odd cool blues or greens. The advantage for textures hosting their own colors or tints is that when blended the color also becomes translucent, and a color cast or tint is carried across with the texture.



Warm tinted textures produce lovely golden warmth; in contrast, blue or green textures produce a somewhat cooler color cast. These tints bring another level of creativity to my processing. However, they can be tricky to work around, especially when it comes to removing texture from unwanted areas of a composition. I cover how to successfully remove texture in the next chapter.

{ *tip* }

Avoid color casts by converting your texture to black and white first or by reducing the color saturation. Also try changing a texture's color range yourself to create your own desired effect.



Pictorial layers

Although the majority of my textured work is based on using textures created from surface qualities, I have used floral images as well. Using two pictorial images over one another takes me back to my earliest photographic processing experiments in the darkroom at college. Working with multiple pictorial images can produce some beautiful and interesting effects and can provide pattern and interest where originally there was none. In “Table Top Fairy,” I have used both a canvas texture and an additional image taken of the tree blossom to provide interest to the plain wall behind the little girl.



“Table Top Fairy”

This image is very special to me, as it is one of the first portraits I took of my daughter in 2007 when I was first experimenting with digital processing. It was inspired by the Victorian photographers who used to sit children on items of furniture or tabletops. This was often to depict wealth, but in my case I used the table to illustrate my daughter's growing confidence and her independence to do things unaided. At four she was old enough to sit comfortably on the tabletop without the fear of falling. She is also cradling the bloomed branches of the garden's cherry tree, which was planted in the year she was born. These large branches strengthened the implication of growth and progress.

“Table Top Fairy,” 2007. Later this image was included in the collective work exhibited as part of the Milton Keynes Fringe Festival collection in 2009.



CHAPTER

PROCESSING INSIGHTS

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{FIVE}



How to prepare an image for Texturing

Although I encourage you to find your own style, I also appreciate what one can gain from taking a closer look at how other photographers process their work. I have spent, it's fair to say, many hours in front of my computer over the past few years trying to perfect the "look" I aspire too. I've tried some complicated actions and followed some painstakingly complex tutorials to finally reach a conclusion that, in retrospect, is incredibly simple. Today, I just use a handful of steps, through which I prepare my photographic images. I use Photoshop for all my processing requirements and, as with most photo editing software, there is often more than one way to achieve a given result. I have certainly found that some photographers prefer different methods to the ones I use and vice versa. I work in a way that feels comfortable and intuitive. I certainly don't need to know all the ins and outs of every slider and tool in Photoshop, nor do I need to attempt to use them all.





Today my processing workflow is simple, easy to follow, and, perhaps most important, effective for achieving the look I desire. Digital photography is complex enough without the added frustration that processing can bring. I think image processing should be enjoyable, be creative, and allow one the freedom to evolve his or her working practice. Sometimes I have to remind myself that processing is an extension of my creativity, and as such I should grant it the same level of playfulness and free it from unnecessary technical intervention.



Before and after preprocessing examples.

A Quick Word on Actions

Before I get started, I just wanted to mention Photoshop actions. These are prerecorded adjustment steps that can be replayed automatically. At the click of a button, they can transform my images in seconds, which makes them so useful when it comes to batch processing. Creative and workflow actions are becoming increasingly popular, with more photographers and studios developing and selling their own. I have in the past purchased actions myself. But today I use only my own. I believe that learning to process my own images is fundamental to developing my own signature style. I have, however, learned a great deal by stripping actions back and exploring exactly what they do to my images. Sometimes there is maybe just a single element within an action that works for me, so I'll locate it, and reproduce it, in isolation. The danger with relying on actions, especially those that I haven't written myself, is that they don't always produce consistent results, because my initial images aren't always consistent. I have spent a great deal of time getting to know the individual steps that are inherent with all good actions. By doing this I'm now able to write my own that will produce the tailored results I specifically seek, giving me total control over my own processing workflow.

Preprocessing Workflow

Preprocessing is the term I use to describe the initial steps I take when first preparing an image to be textured. These steps are repetitive and don't require any individual adjustment, so to save time I have written them into an action. It's a subtle little action that makes a great deal of difference.



Before and after preprocessing examples.

Identifying my image

Before running my preprocessing action, I need to select the images I'm going to work with. I'll make my selection based on the criteria that I discussed in Chapter 3—that is, good *negative space*, bright with even lighting, satisfactory tonal range, and a defined area of focus.

Image preparation is probably the most important part of my entire processing workflow. I cannot stress enough just how important it is to create the right foundations from which to build textured photographs.

Regardless of whether you shoot in RAW or prefer JPEG, the following processing steps remain unchanged. The only difference is that if you're starting out with a RAW file, you'll need to convert it first into a workable format. I prefer to do all my processing in Photoshop because the program provides me with the ongoing tools I need to progress to working with textures.

My own preprocessing action is comprised of just *three* steps, and, for the purpose of this book, I'm going to extract them so that I can explain why I use them and what they do.



1. *Lightening with a Screen Blend*

First, my *preprocessing* action lightens my image. There are several ways of doing this, and it's often the first step in any good action. Whether it's done with a Levels or a Curves adjustment or a duplicated image layer, set to a screen blend. All of the aforementioned methods are preferable over using a Brightness/Contrast adjustment, as this can easily blow out highlights.

STEPS: Lighten with a Screen Blend

- {one} To duplicate your background layer, right-click your background image in the **Layer's window**.
- {two} Select **Duplicate Layer** from the submenu. A popup window will prompt you to rename the layer if you wish (this is especially useful if you're creating actions).
- {three} Set the **Duplicated Layer's** blend mode to **Screen**.
(The Blend Mode drop-down menu is located in the top left corner of the **Layer window**.)
- {four} To the right of the Blend Mode menu is the **Opacity** slider (by default it's always set to 100%); reduce down to 20%.
- {five} To finish this adjustment, you must flatten your layers. To do this, select **Layer/Flatten Image** from the main menu. (Alternatively right-click on the **Layers window** and select the **Flatten** command from the popup menu.)



2. Reducing image contrast

Second, my preprocessing action slightly reduces my image's contrast, which in turn reduces color saturation slightly. I know that my textures will add their own color casts and contrast later on, and because I don't want my image to become overly saturated or weighted down by heavy contrasts, I choose to reduce my image's overall contrast in preparation.

STEPS: Reduce Image Contrast

{one} From the top menu select **Image/Adjustments/Brightness/Contrast**. (Alternatively, you can select the "Create a new fill or adjustment layer" icon from the bottom of the **Layers window**. This method will automatically create a **layer mask** so that you can remove unwanted adjustment effects from your image.)

{two} Reduce the Contrast slider down to -20.

{three} Note: If you choose to make this adjustment from the **Layers window**, you'll need to flatten your image before proceeding (as previously explained).



Finished textured image.
See Chapter 3.



3. Increasing clarity

Finally, my *preprocessing* action adds a *High Pass* sharpen to my image. This type of sharpening strengthens only the *edges* within my image; thus, it doesn't introduce an excess of unwanted grain or noise, which is inherent with other methods.

STEPS: Effective High-Pass Sharpening

- {one} Duplicate your background image (as previously explained).
- {two} Set the Blend Mode to **Soft Light** (leaving the opacity at 100%).
- {three} From the main menu, select **Filter/Other/High Pass**.
- {four} The **High Pass** window will open; set the Radius to 4 (for a stronger sharpen, increase up to 8).
- {five} Flatten the layers (as previously explained).

I sharpen my images twice, once here within my preprocessing action and again at the end. Conventionally, all sharpening is left entirely to the end. However, textures can appear fragmented if oversharpened. Including a high-pass sharpen at this stage of my preprocessing workflow optimize my image before I move on to applying textures.



Finished textured image. See Chapter 3.

Final adjustments and fine tuning

I run my preprocessing action as a batch command from Photoshop's Bridge. However, some images may require additional attention. It goes without saying that I try to ensure the best possible composition when taking my initial shot, but there may be the odd wayward hair, skin blemish, or telegraph pole that needs removing. Photoshop's Clone tool, by default, isn't very good at cloning over textures. It's unbelievably hard work and yields only limited success. So it's definitely worth removing any unwanted artifacts before I apply textures.

Preprocessing and cloned before and after examples.



{tip}

When addressing skin tones, I'll also turn to the Clone tool. Set at a very low opacity, such as 10%, it can lift and subtly lighten dark shadows under the eyes and around the nose of my subject. I select a point of preferred skin tone from which to clone, preferably from my subject's cheek or forehead. I only ever subtly clone over shadows, because to completely remove them can look false and unnatural.



Preprocessing and cloned before and after examples.

Levels Adjustments

Photoshop's Levels feature examines an image's darks, midtones, and whites. A Levels adjustment allows you to manipulate these ranges, for example, to increase contrast, brighten, or open up your image's shadows. The term *open up* applies specifically to the midtone range and professional printing labs highly recommend that photographers slightly open up their images, prior to printing, to achieve a better result. As my preprocessing action has already lightened my image with a Screen blend, I reserve a Levels adjustment for only those images that require an additional lift.



Preprocessed with an additional Levels Adjustment. For finished textured image see pages 134 and 135.

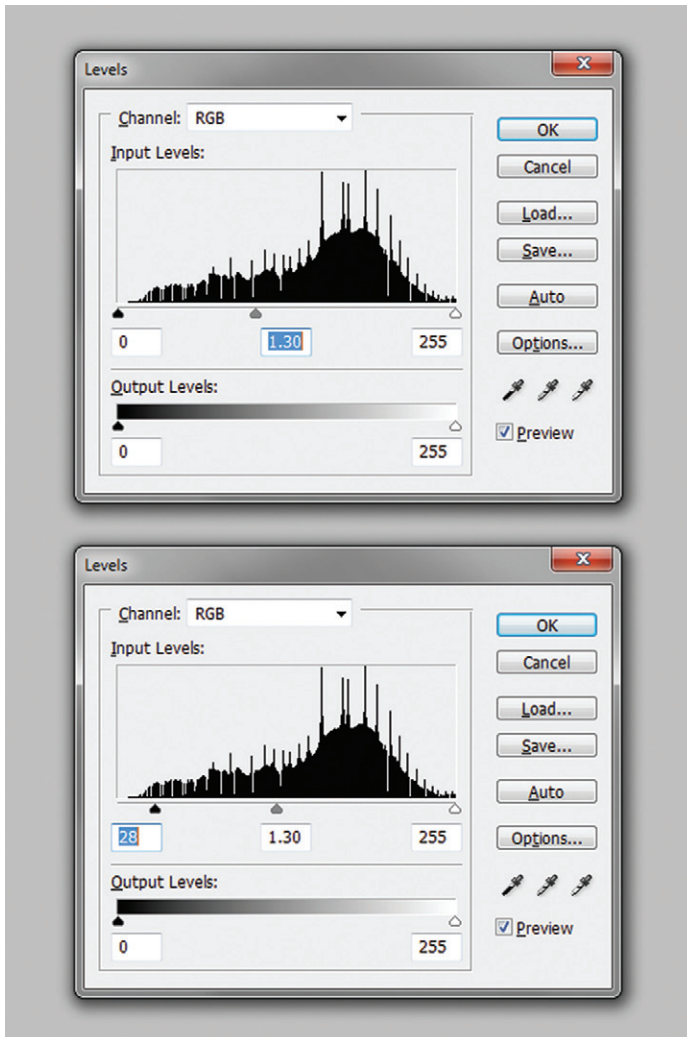
STEPS: Make a Levels Adjustment

{one} Click on the “Create a new fill or adjustment layer” icon found in the Layer window’s bottom tool bar.

{two} The Levels Adjustment window will open; by default the Channels are set to RGB (later in this chapter I’ll explain more about selecting and making individual Channel adjustments); for this adjustment, keep to the combined RGB channel.

{three} To open up your image’s shadows, move the Input Levels mid-tones slider (the gray one, located at the bottom of the Input Level histogram), to the left, from the default setting of 1.00 to 1.30.

{four} Likewise, to increase contrast (your image’s darks), move the Input Levels darks slider (the black one, located at the bottom right of the Levels histogram) toward the left, from default setting 0 to 28. (This is useful if you feel the midtone adjustment has left your image a little too hazy.)



Illustrates the two aforementioned adjustments.



First Save

My preprocessing is now complete and I'll systematically save my image. I now have two saved images, the original one straight out of the camera (SOOC) and my preprocessed image. I'm now ready to start working with textures safely knowing I have a saved pretextured version to fall back on if needed.



Processing with textures

Processing with textures is by far my favorite part of the workflow process. In Chapter 4 I explained how Photoshop's blend modes work and the best way to ensure their optimal use, so now let's take a closer look at the application of textures and how to apply them and effectively remove them.

Pure texture

The way in which I apply textures to my photography varies depending on the creative outcome I wish to achieve. Whether I want to apply a texture as a whole or just selective parts of it is, again, a question of personal and creative taste. The images that follow have been processed by applying complete textured layers. Each texture is used in its entirety; this purest application works perfectly for floral and still life images. The results are reminiscent of old and faded prints. None of the texture is removed; instead, each texture contributes to the overall deterioration of the image to create delicate, Victorian-like pieces of photographic art.

This is the purest application of textures, whereby each additional layer is allowed to contribute to the finished image in its entirety. However, this method of application can be too overpowering for portrait photography. Within my portrait work I like to completely remove texture from my subject's face and body, leaving the textures to enhance my image's *negative space* and *backgrounds*.





Effective texture removal

Mastering the art of removing or partially applying textures is key to their success. I use two techniques: a *Layer Mask* and one that I refer to as the *paint away technique*. Both have their advantages, and but the second is my favorite. I don't think I should take the credit for inventing this process by any means, but I certainly didn't learn it from anywhere. I developed this technique, very early on, out of the need to be able to successfully remove textures without causing an imbalance in hue and tone.

Using a mask layer effectively

Conventionally, Photoshop's Layer Mask is considered the best practice when it comes to removing unwanted texture. However, I reserve this method for use only

with those textures that have very little, or no, coloring of their own. Let me explain why.

Consider that textures have two inherent qualities: their physical appearance (those lovely scratches and rough blurs) and their tonal qualities (their color). It's their color, or tint, that can cause the problems, because the Layer Masks feature, or more crudely the Eraser tool, removes not only the texture's marks and scratches but its coloring as well. So cutting through a highly colored texture or removing areas of it results in tonal discrepancies between the original background image and the texture layer. What is actually required is a method by which the texture's marks and scratches are smoothed away. Photoshop offers several ways to do this; I could *blur* them away, *clone* them out, or "paint" over them.



Example before texturing.

The “paint away” technique

Faced with this problem, I developed, and still use, a technique of effectively removing texture that doesn’t produce any unsightly tonal discrepancies or halos; and what’s more, it’s incredibly simple to use.

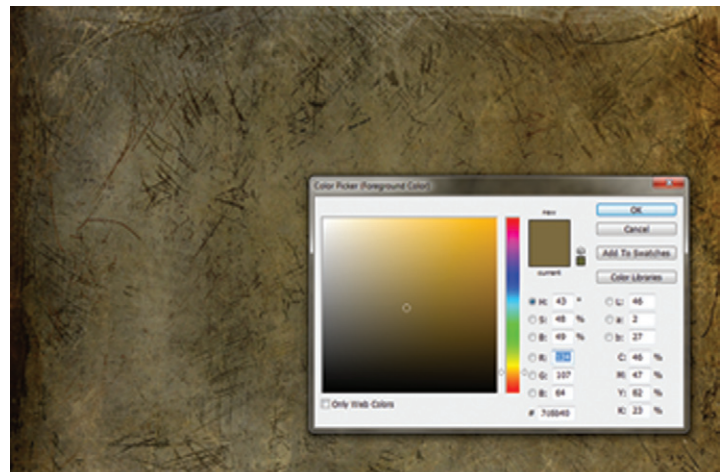
STEPS: 1. Selecting Your “Paint” Color

{one} Open a Texture file you wish to work with; either grab the texture with the **Move** tool and drag it over onto your image’s open frame or alternatively you can **Select/All** from the main menu **Edit/Copy**. Close file and then **Edit/Paste** onto your image. (Either way, your texture has created a new layer over your Background layer, and both layers are now displayed in the **Layer window**.)

{two} Select the **Move** tool (from the Tool Bar menu), and expand or decrease your texture so that it covers your background image.

{three} Click the **Set Foreground Color** box (from the Tool Bar menu); the “**Color Picker (Foreground Color)**” box will open. Now use the **droplet cursor** to select a color from the area within the texture you wish to remove.

Example of the Color Picker (Foreground) window.



STEPS:

2. Setting Your Brush, Strength, and Opacity

- {one} Select **Brush** (from the Tool Bar menu).
- {two} Directly under your main menu you’ll see an option that allows you to set the brush’s size, hardness, and opacity.
- {three} Select a **large soft** round feathered brush; adjust the brush’s pixel (px) size to suit your image size and the brush size you wish to work with.
- {four} To remove all traces of marks and scratches, leave the opacity at 100%. (To lighten marks and scratches, reduce the brush’s opacity to between 35% and 50%.) You can also adjust the brush’s hardness, decreasing its softness for more intricate areas.

STEPS:

3. Identifying Where to Apply the Brush

- {one} Now select your texture’s desired **Blend Mode**, leaving the opacity at 100%. (You’ll now be able to see your background image through the Texture layer.)
- {two} Verify in the **Layers window** that your Texture layer is highlighted in **blue**. Now proceed to apply your brush and color directly to your Texture layer.
- {three} To verify that all marks and scratches have been successfully removed, switch the texture’s **Blend Mode** back to **Normal** (remember once you’re happy that all the unwanted texture has been “painted” over, revert back to your selected blend mode).
- {four} Reduce your Texture layer’s **Opacity** to suit your preference.

Processing example

The “paint away” technique on a single texture

This processing example shows how simple and effective the “paint away” removal technique is. It successfully removes the rough blurs and scratches from a texture without producing unsightly haloes or tonal discrepancies that a conventional Layer Mask produces. In this example I just want to add a little subtle texturing to the sky, enhancing the clouds.

STEPS: The Paint Away Technique

- {one} Start with selected image (this becomes the Background layer).
- {two} Work through my preprocessing workflow adjustments and save.
- {three} Select **{Sky}** texture and copy across onto the Background layer. (Before setting a blend mode, use Photoshop’s Foreground Color droplet to select a color from the area where to remove the Textures marks and scratches; in this case, a light fawn color.)
- {four} Now set the blend mode to **Multiply**.
- {five} Using the previously selected color and desired brush settings, “paint away” the unwanted texture; in this case, the marks and scratches from the cornfield and the girl’s body.
- {six} To verify all unwanted texture has been removed successfully, switch the blend mode back to **Normal** to verify. Once happy, revert the blend mode back to **Multiply** and proceed to set the desired Opacity.
- {seven} Now reduce the Textures Opacity slider from 100% to 28%.
- {eight} To finish **Flatten** all the layers and apply a finishing Curves adjustment; finally, sharpen and save (details of these final adjustments are covered later in this chapter).



Starting image SOOC.



Processing and save.



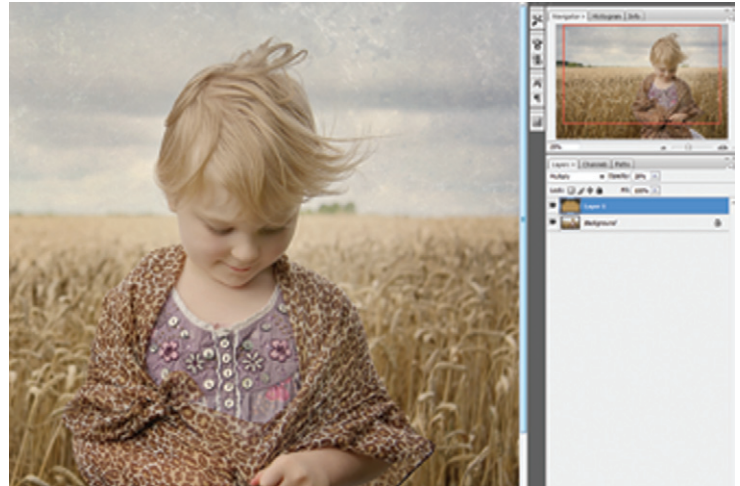
Select first texture and identify color.



Set Mutiply blend mode.



"Paint away" the unwanted part.



Verify.



Set Opacity to 28%.



Flatten curves, sharpen, and save.

Layering multiple textures

Using a single texture can be effective, but when using multiple textures an even greater sense of creative freedom can be obtained. Multiple textures provides instantly more scope through which to be artistic and produce highly personal and original effects. At least 90% of my textured work is done through the application of multiple textures; I rotate them, invert them, crop them, and even blur them. There are many possibilities, and within this versatility lies the freedom to take photographic creativity to a new level.

The “paint away” technique on multiple textures

This technique is so straightforward that it’s easy to repeat with every additional texture applied. Just remember to select your “Paint” color before proceeding to set the blend mode.

Here I’ve continued to apply additional textures to the image used in the previous example. Again using the “paint away” removal method, I’ve been able to process this image further, creating a really beautiful, faded vintage look.



Finished image from previous example.



Introducing a second texture.



Introducing a third texture.



Final multitextured image.

Flatten

I proceed to Flatten my work at this stage; however, if you wish to return to your work, save it as a PSD file. This format allows you to keep your layers intact so that you can return to them at any time. Once you have completed your processing and you're happy with the outcome, you'll need to flatten all the layers down to just one in order to make any further finishing adjustments.

Beyond the textured

Gradient Fills, Levels, and RGB Tinting, Black-and-White conversion, and the introduction of Solid Color layers are additional techniques that I use to take my textured work further and unlock more creativity.

Dramatic: Conversion and RGB tinting.







Faded: Solid color background.

Gradient Fills

Recently I have noticed that my processing style has evolved somewhat, and I have found that my work is getting progressively lighter. I often receive questions from other photographers asking me how I obtain the level of soft light in my photographs. The answer is that this “light” was never actually captured by my camera at all. I have Photoshop’s Gradient Fills to thank for this injection of light. For the majority of the time, I just use a white Gradient Fill to pour in a little extra light to the edges of my composition. Using a Gradient Fill in this way can open up the extremities of my composition and fade out darker blocks of color. For the most part I use a white gradient fill because it’ll pick up tints and colors from my use of textures or additional RGB tints. The use of Gradient Fills enhances negative space, and when applied with a radial configuration it can add additional light anywhere within my composition.



Delicate: Cream gradient fills.



Delicate: Pale blue gradient fills.

{tip}

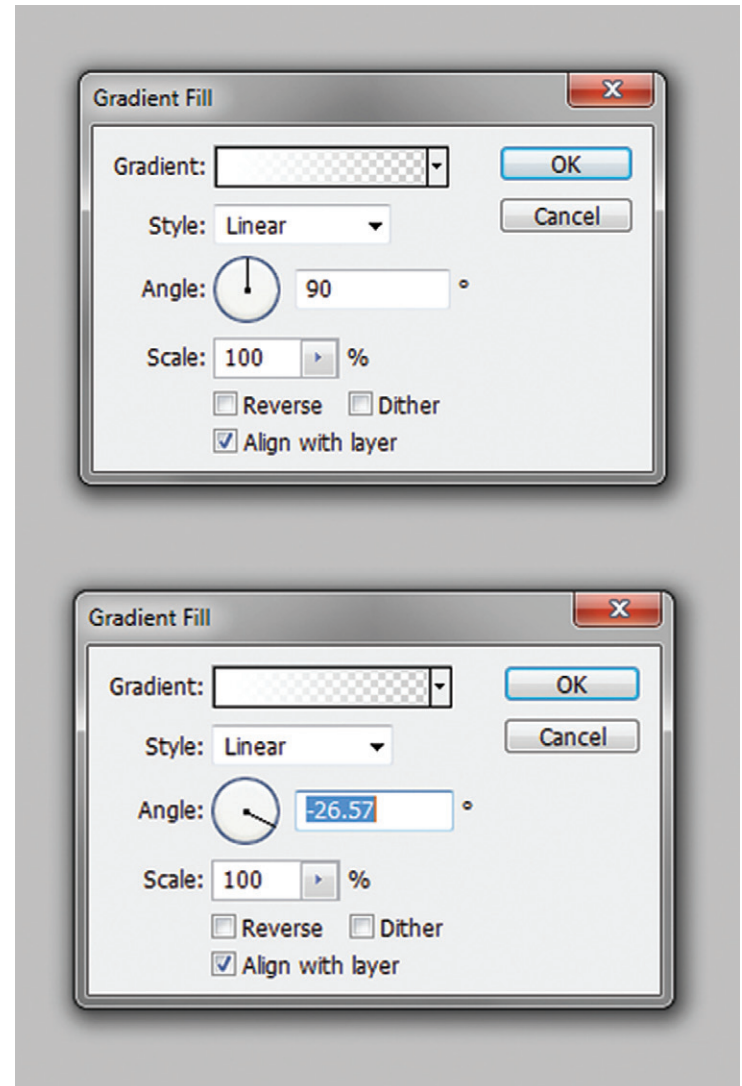
When I use the Gradient Fill I try to establish the direction of my natural light source and use the Gradient Fill to enhance it. Working contrary to a natural light source looks unnatural, and it would be more obvious that it's been added later.



Above: Gradient Fills introduced from the left and right sides to fade out the extremities of the image.

STEPS: Introducing a Gradient Fill

- {one} Before selecting the **Gradient Fill**, make sure your **Foreground color** is set to “white” (or the color of your choice).
- {two} Click on the “**Create a new fill or adjustment layer**” icon (found at the bottom of the **Layer window**). Select **Gradient Fill** to open its window. From here you’ll be able to control the gradients **Style**, **Angle**, and **Scale**.
- {three} Once you’re happy with the effects of your applied **Gradient Fill**, use the automatically installed Layer Mask to remove any of the Gradient Fills you wish.



Top image shows default setting; the image below shows the altered Gradient Fill angle.

Processing example

Introducing Gradient Fills

This processing example shows how I use different textures to subtly build up both textural elements as well as tone. The textures I've selected work to defuse and softly render the brick wall and bunting in my original photograph. I don't want to select really hard textures for this composition, as the overall theme is delicate and pretty. I have applied, in step three, two white Gradient Fills to open up the extremities of this image, creating the illusion of more light.

STEPS: Introducing Gradient Fills

- {one} Start with selected image (this becomes my Background layer).
- {two} Use the Photoshop Clone Tool to remove shadows from under the girl's eyes and even skin tones. Then work through the processing adjustments and save.
- {three} Apply two "white" Gradient Fills; the first to the upper left and a second, softer one, to top right of the image.
- {four} Select **{Sunday's Chair/English Manor Collection}** texture and copy across onto my Background image. Before setting a blend mode, use Photoshop's Color Droplet to select a color from the area where I want to remove the textures marks and scratches; in this case a soft pink.
- {five} Set the blend mode **Soft Light**.
- {six} Use the color selected to "paint away" the unwanted marks and scratches from the girl's face, arms, and body. To verify if all the texture has been removed, I switch the blend mode back to **Normal** to check. Once happy, I revert the blend mode back to **Soft Light** and proceed to set the desired Opacity.

{seven} Reduce the Layers Opacity slider to 80%.

{eight} **Repeat {step four}**. Select the second texture **{Antique/English Manor Collection}**. This time the color is a soft pink.

{nine} Set the blend mode **Overlay**.

{ten} **Repeat {step six}**, switching the blend mode back to **Overlay**.

{eleven} Reduce the Levels Opacity slider to 20%.

{twelve} **Repeat {step four}**. Select the third texture **{Cherry Tree/English Manor Collection}**.

{thirteen} Set the blend mode to **Soft Light**.

{fourteen} **Repeat {step six}**, switching the blend mode back to **Soft Light**.

{fifteen} Reduce the Levels Opacity slider to 50%, sharpen, and save.



Starting image.



Process and save.



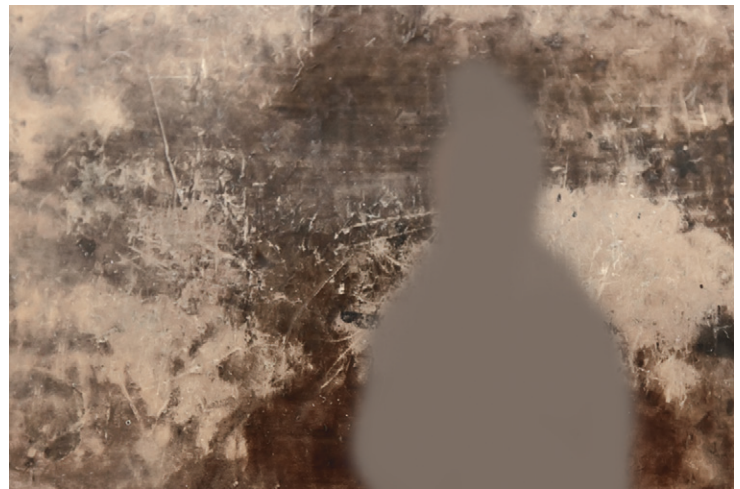
Apply two gradient filters.



Select the first texture and identify color.



Set Soft Light blend mode.



"Paint away" the unwanted part and verify.



Set Opacity to 80%.



Select the second texture and identify color.



Set Overlay blend mode.



"Paint away" the unwanted part and verify.



Set Opacity to 20%.



Select the third texture and identify color.



Set Soft Light blend mode.



"Paint away" the unwanted part and check.



Set Opacity to 50%, flatten, sharpen, and save.

Gradient fills on extreme backgrounds

In Chapter 3, I mention that tonal backgrounds provide me with a clear advantage over extreme ones. Most textures don't perform very well on brilliant white or very dark backgrounds, so the easiest solution is to add in some tonal color with the addition of a Gradient Fill. In the first example, a pink Gradient Fill is applied to the top right and another to the bottom left; these were added after my preprocessing workflow and before I started applying my textures. The second example shows that I introduced a stone-colored Gradient Fill halfway through layering my textures so as to add some grounding for my finishing textures.



Original SOOC.



First gradient fill applied from top right.



Second gradient fill applied from bottom left.



Textured to finish.



Original SOOC.



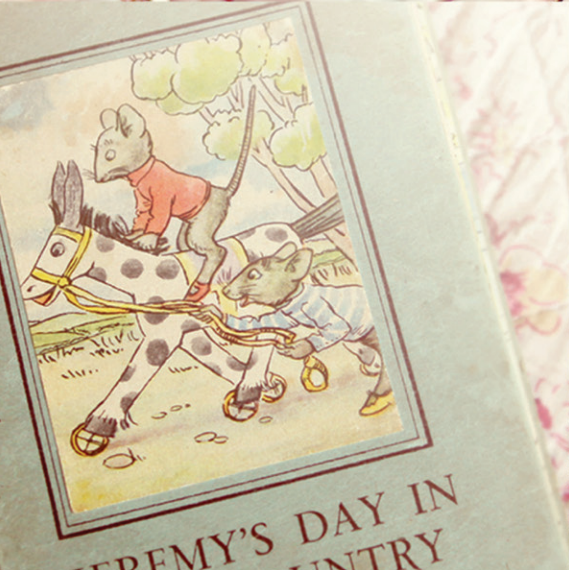
Partially textured.



Gradient fill applied from left side.



Textured to finish.



Levels RGB tinting

Previously within this chapter I've explained how valuable Photoshop's levels can be at lifting a photograph's midtones. This adjustment tool has lots to offer beyond just its effect on midtones. When you open the Levels window, you'll see it's set, by default, to a combined RGB channel. This is displayed above the Inputs histogram. This box also enables you to select each channel separately. By selecting the Red, Green, or Blue channels, you can make alterations to their corresponding Input and Output levels and by doing so, you'll be able to add creative "tints" to your photographs. Fully utilizing the levels' individual RGB channels gives you the creative scope to produce quick and effective vintage and retro tints to your images, just as I do.



Giving your work a color tint is just as personal as working with textures, so do experiment and find the combinations that yield the results you're looking for. Once you have found consistent adjustments that give you the results you seek, why not record them into your own action.



Examples of Tinting with Levels.

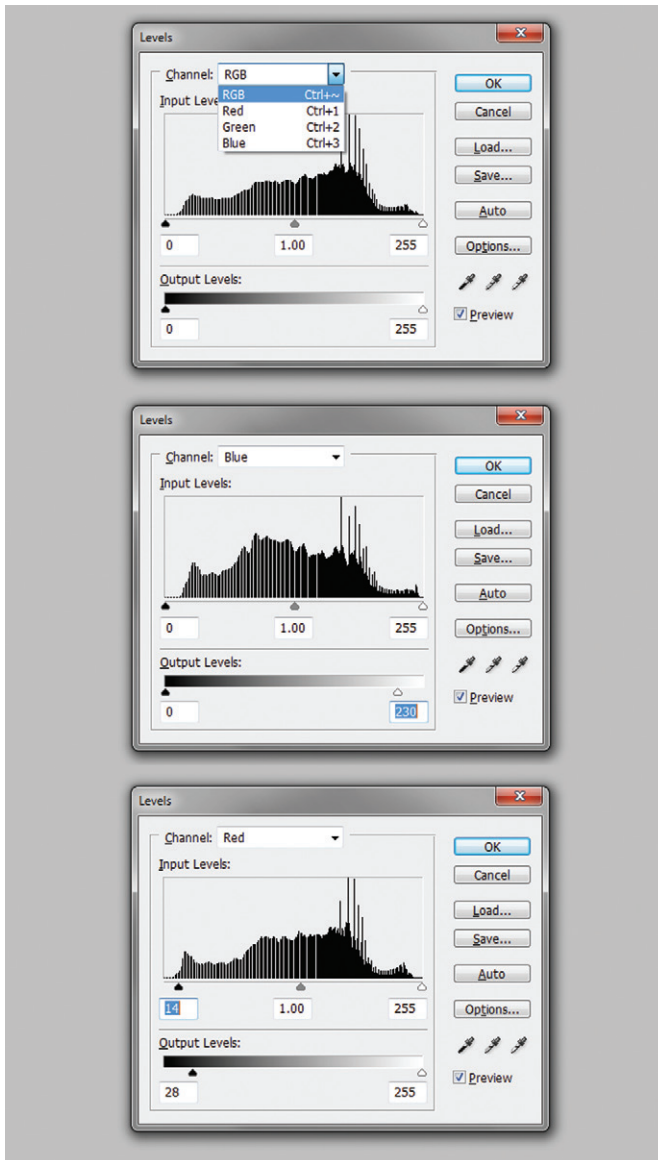
STEPS: Creating Vintage Tints with Levels

{one} Open the **Levels** window (as previously explained).

{two} Select **Red** from the **Channels** drop-down box. (The two adjustments I make within the Red channel help create a warmer retro look.)

{three} Adjust the **Input slider** from 0 to 14, and adjust the **Output slider** from 0 to 28. (Input Levels are displayed on the histogram, and the Output Levels are represented by the gradient bar.)

{four} Select **Blue** from the **Channels** dropdown box, and adjust the Output slider from 255 to 230. (Alternatively, for a cooler look adjust the Input slider from 255 to 235.)



Top Levels window shows the RGB Channels drop-down menu. The other windows show the red and blue adjustments.

{tip}

Levels adjustments work with a photograph's lights, darks, and midtones and not its color range. Therefore, the good news is that Levels RGB tints work on converted black-and-white photographs as well.

Black-and-white conversion

With most procedures in Photoshop there is more than one way of doing something, and black-and-white conversions are no exception. To convert my color photographs into black and white, I use gradient mapping.



Examples of Levels tinting on converted images.



Black-and-white RGB tinting examples.

STEPS: Black-and-White Conversion Using Photoshop's Gradient Mapping

{one} Before opening the Gradient Mapping window, make sure you have preset your **Mapping Foreground and Background swatches**. (For black-and-white conversions, click on the **Default Foreground and Background color** icon, located just above your color swatches in the main Tools bar. Also try replacing your white background color with soft pastel shade.)

{two} Click on the **"Create a new fill or adjustment" icon**, found in the Layers window menu bar. Select Gradient Mapping from the pop-up menu. This will open the Gradient Mapping window. (Here you have the added options to "reverse" or select other creative options if you wish.) Click OK.

{three} Use a **Levels** or a **Curves** adjustment to increase contrast for a high-key look, or soften to suit.

I always convert my photograph after I've completed my preprocessing workflow; that way I have a colored version saved to go back to later if I wish. I convert at this stage because I like to exploit the applied textures' colorings. I always have the option to convert the whole, flattened image at the end if I wish to.

Desaturating Textures

Desaturating my textures can also be beneficial when working on a black-and-white photograph, as this can reduce or completely illuminate the textures' coloring.

{STEP}

To desaturate, go to Main Menu and select **Image/Adjustments/Hue and Saturation**. Reduce the Saturation slider to extract color from your texture.



Original preprocessed Image.



Converted image using gradient mapping.



White gradient fills added.



Red and Blue Levels Tint applied.

Solid color layers

Some images that I want to texture are too pale or have too much white in them. You can successfully apply this technique to deliberately overexpose images. The application of a solid color effectively introduces tone (which comes from your choice of color) to those blown-out highlights.



STEPS: Introducing a Solid Color Layer

- {one} Click on the “Create new fill or adjustment layer” icon and select Solid Color from the pop-up menu.
- {two} The Solid Color window will open; select a soft pastel color (if you have a favorite color swatch saved, use the droplet tool to select it from your Swatches window).
- {three} Set your solid color layer’s blend mode to Multiply in the Layers window; now reduce the Layers Opacity slider down to below 20%.
- {four} Flatten.





Before and after examples of implying a Solid Color layer.



Background color layers

You can create hazier versions of the Solid Color layer by reversing the process and instead inserting your image over the top of a Solid Color layer.

STEPS: Introducing a Solid Color Background

- {one} Duplicate your **Background Image layer** (as previously explained).
- {two} Select a foreground color by clicking on the Foreground color swatch. This opens the **Foreground Color Picker** window. (If you have a favorite color swatch saved, use the droplet tool to select it from your **Swatches window**.)
- {three} With your original background image selected (highlighted in blue), go to the **Main Menu Bar** and select **Edit/Fill**.
- {four} Selecting your **duplicated image** in the **Layers window** now set your **Blend Mode** to **Multiply**, reduce the **Opacity slider** to increase the hazy quality.
- {five} To add a “pop” of contrast, **duplicate** your image again and set the **Blend Mode** to **Overlay**, reducing the **Opacity** slider accordingly.
- {six} Flatten, sharpen, and save.

Before examples on a converted image.





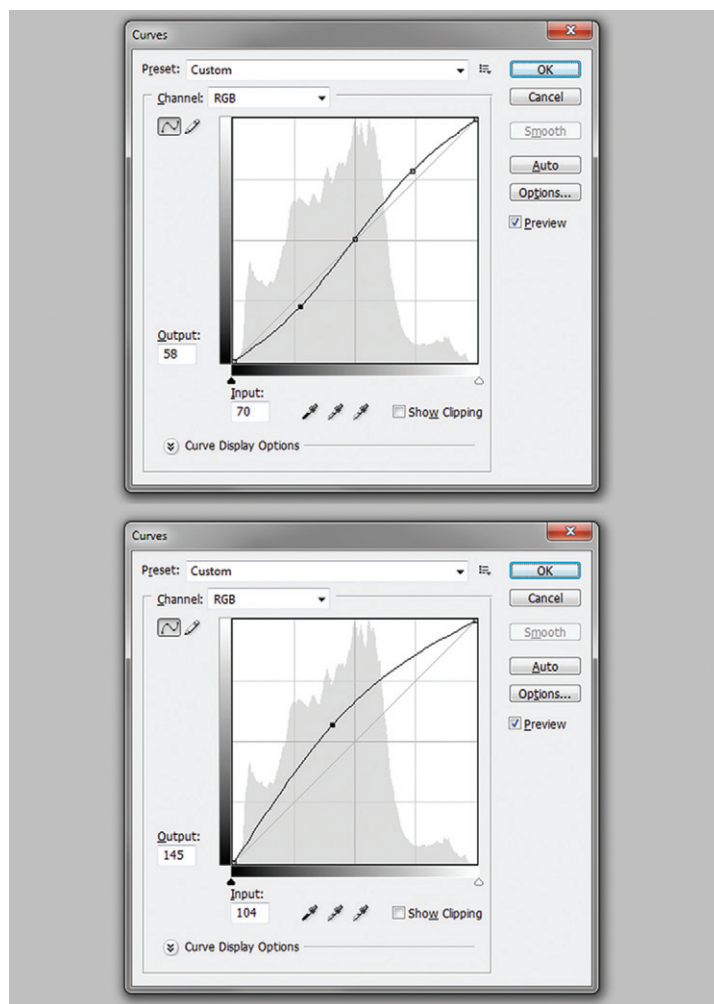
After example on a converted image.

Finish with a curves adjustment

Before finishing, I always consider whether or not my image could benefit from a subtle contrast or brightness “pop.” If so, I make a final Curves adjustment. Select a “S” shaped adjustment for added contrast and a “C” shaped adjustment to boost brightness.

STEPS: Making a Final Curves Adjustment

- {one} Click on the “Create a new fill or adjustment layer” icon, and select Curves from the pop-up menu.
- {two} The Curves window will open, and you’ll see a graph, histogram, and a diagonal line (it’s this line you’ll adjust).
- {three} To add overall contrast, you’ll need to create a subtle “S” shape, fixing the graph’s line in three points. Alternatively, to add a boost of brightness, create a subtle “C”-shaped adjustment with a single fixed point in the middle.



Examples of “S” and “C” Curves adjustments and their fixed points.



Final sharpen and save

When I have finished working on a photographic image and I'm truly happy with the results, I'll make my final sharpen. You'll recall I apply a high-pass sharpen as part of my preprocessing workflow, but this time I'm going to use a the Unsharp Mask tool. This method of sharpening is stronger than a high-pass sharpen, making it perfect to finish with.

STEPS: Add a Final Sharpen with an Unsharp Mask

{one} From the main menu select Filter/Sharpen/Unsharp Mask. The Unsharp Mask window will open.

{two} I recommend setting the Amount to 15% and the Radius to 50 pixels (leaving the threshold at level 1).



Example recipes

{Step 1} Preprocessing steps

{Step 2} Fresco II Texture {Artisan Collection}

{Step 3} SCREEN at 90%



Before example.





{Step 1} Preprocessing steps

{Step 2} Paintwash I Texture {Artisan Collection}

{Step 3} SOFT LIGHT at 90%

{Step 4} Etched II Texture {Artisan Collection}

{Step 5} SCREEN 30%



Before example.





{Step 1} Preprocessing steps including two “Pink” Gradient Fills

{Step 2} Scratched Texture {Artisan Collection}

{Step 3} SCREEN at 60%

{Step 4} Studio I Texture {Artisan Collection}

{Step 5} SOFT LIGHT at 40%

{Step 6} Soft Render Texture {Original Revised 2011 Collection}

{Step 7} SOFT LIGHT at 100%



Before example.





{Step 1} Follow preprocessing steps

{Step 2} Introduce “Landscape” Texture {English Manor Collection}

{Step 3} Blend with SOFT LIGHT at 100%

{Step 4} Introduce “Scrawl” Texture {Originals Revised 2011 Collection}

{Step 5} Blend with SCREEN at 35%

{Step 6} Introduce a Levels RGB Tinting adjustment to create a warmer vintage feel. See page [123](#) for details.

{Step 7} Increase contrast with a final Curves Adjustment



Before examples.

Last word on processing

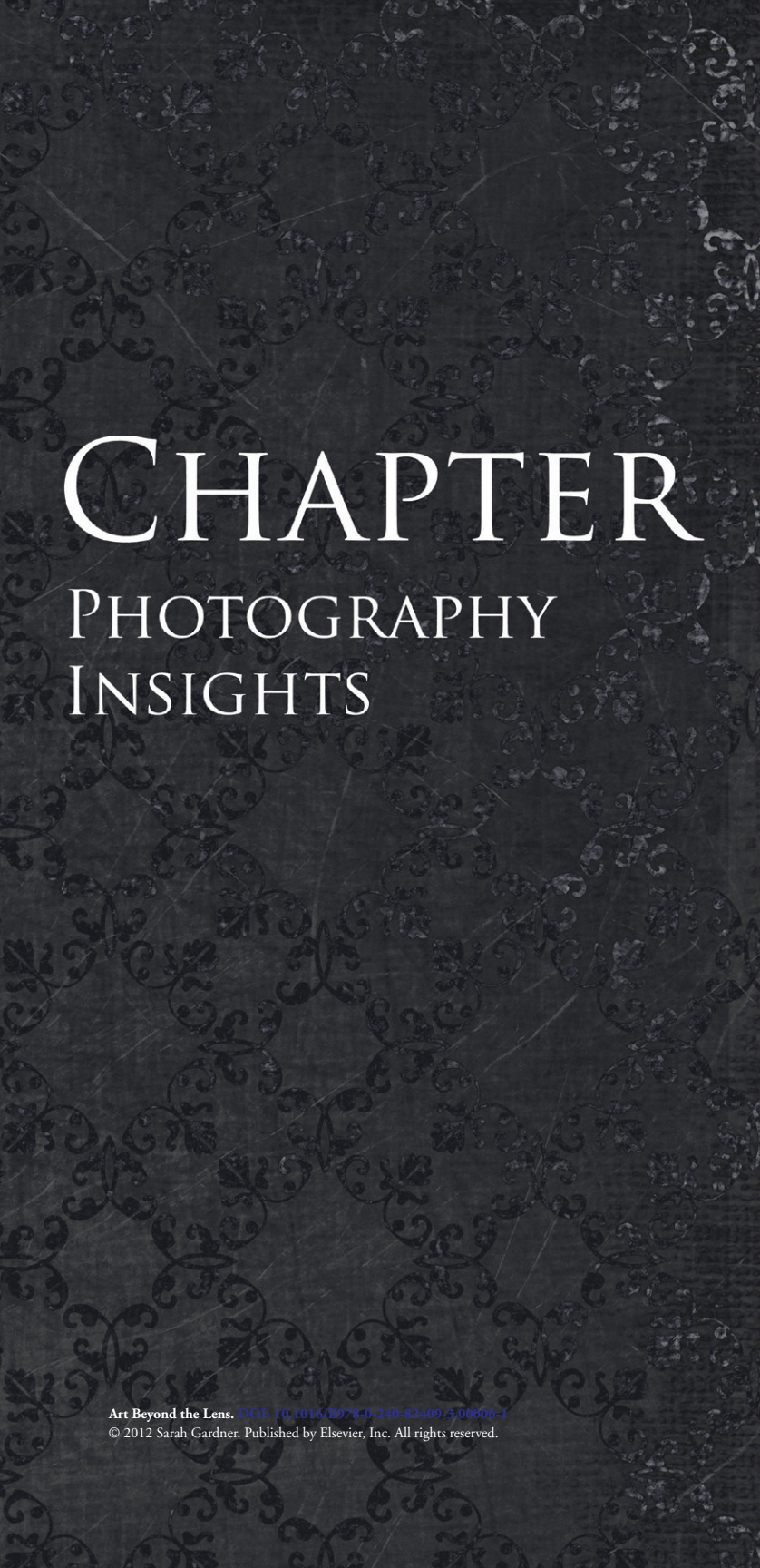
Although there is definitely a massive desire for knowledge and technological advancements within the media-rich world we now live in, I'm always mindful not to become a slave to processing rules and protocol.

Personally, I think that true creativeness lies within freedom and flexibility; and although in this chapter I have shared some of the methods I use, ultimately I want you to take ownership of your own creative development. I know myself that there comes a point where I can either take on new advice or disregard it. Sometimes knowing what *not* to do can be just as valuable as discovering that one breakthrough that will make all the difference.





Above all, being responsible for my own processing development has certainly enabled me to establish my skills faster than by just following step-by-step prescriptive tutorials. Copying and duplicating processes would have only gotten me so far; for me it's always been more about technique than technology. I hope you find the information I have detailed in this chapter useful. But these processes are still only a glimpse into my workflow, and subsequently they are based on my own preferences. At the end of the day, we all go about things differently, and it shows in our work. It's those differences that we should embrace; it's what makes *my work* mine and *your work* yours.



CHAPTER

PHOTOGRAPHY INSIGHTS



{SIX}





In Chapters 3 and 4 I explained how I shoot with textures in mind and how I proceed to process with them. However, I think it's also worthwhile to share some of my other photography practices.

ISO settings

Keep ISO settings as low as possible to reduce unwanted image noise

I want to be sure to avoid unnecessary grain or digital noise in my photography. To do this, I'll reduce my ISO setting as much as possible for the conditions. I like my shutter speed to be faster than 125/s, so I'll set my camera's ISO setting to give me that obtainable shutter speed at the aperture I'm working with. Ultimately, I want to start with a silky image in which I can control texture and grain through the application of textured layers.

Aperture priority

Work in AV (aperture priority) mode to ensure shallow depth of field

I like achieving a very shallow depth of field within my photographs. To do this, I need to reduce my camera's f-stop setting by as much as possible. This is determined by my lens selection, my favorite lens being my 50mm f/1.4. Depth of field is the distance between the nearest

and farthest objects in a scene that remain in focus.

Large apertures, with low f-stops, produce a shallow depth of field (DOF), whereas smaller apertures, with higher f-stops, increase the depth of field. Alternatively, I can place a greater distance between my background, middle ground, and foreground. The results mean I can decrease my aperture or work with a different lens that may not boast such a wide aperture setting. I like being able to achieve a shallow depth of field, especially when working with floral arrangements or portraits, as this helps to soften the backgrounds, making them ideal for texturing.

Prime lenses

Get moving with prime lenses and vary shooting angles

I prefer to work with prime lenses because they make me move around more. There is a big advantage to being on the move in that I'm forced to explore different angles and positions. Changing the angle in which I obtain my composition can make a big difference. Sometimes I compose my shots from above or lying down on the ground to gain a different perspective. Prime lenses are also sharper than zooms or telephoto lenses. They also boost better sweet spots (the area of optimal sharpness) across their aperture settings.



Exposure

Slightly overexpose to keep photograph's light and colors vibrant

I often increase my camera's exposure compensation by as much as 2+ stops deliberately to overexpose my photographs slightly. This results in brighter images that aren't heavy or dull. When working with textures, I don't need to concern myself with slightly overexposing some nonessential areas, such as skies or the foreground. These can be effectively "filled" with either a solid color wash or textures in processing, resulting in a soft contemporary look.

White balance

Customize white balance to avoid overly warm or "yellowed" greens and skin tones

Light from a north-facing window is said to be one of the best for portraiture because of its cooler tones. I agree, and I custom set my white balance on the cooler side.

I do this to deliberately ensure my photographs aren't too yellow or warm. I prefer to be in control of color casts and manipulate tints at the end of my processing with an RGB levels adjustment or by using a creative action. I don't like overly yellow grass or skin tones, so setting a cooler white balance gives me a softer, cooler, pastel palette in my initial photography.

Lighting

Identify the right light for the job

Finding the right light to work with is the biggest key to unlocking successful photography. I'm a natural light photographer and work with window light and defused daylight. I avoid direct sunlight, and when shooting outdoors I use my 5-in-1 reflector to bounce a little light back at my subject or provide shade. Shooting into low light can also yield beautiful summery effects. I use my camera to spot-meter my subject, ensuring I get my exposure right, and then use my reflector to bounce in a little more light.



Composition

Consider backgrounds, middle grounds, and foregrounds

By considering my backgrounds, middle grounds, and foregrounds, I can frame my subjects and create more dynamics within my composition. By using all three, I'm less likely to end up with flat-looking images. Areas of blurred foreground objects can provide much needed negative space in overcrowded compositions. This works especially well for shots taken out on location. Dappled light through trees can also add beautiful sparkling bokeh to my background. Whether I'm shooting a landscape or a vase of flowers, the principle is the same. I want foreground interest and background interest, and the middle ground is where I'll concentrate my focusing.

Focus

Self-select the auto focal points for precision focusing

This is really important because without accurate focusing, my shoots are simply no good. Soft focusing can be sharpened in Photoshop, but if my focus is out altogether I won't be able to take the photograph any further. I use my camera's individual auto focusing points, rather than manually focusing, mainly for convenience as unfortunately I find the camera is more accurate than I am! However, I avoid using the points that are on the outer edges of my sensor, especially when shooting with a low f-stop. This is because with my lens open to its maximum aperture, these points can incur distortion and the focal points aren't as accurate as those closer to the center of the lens.



CHAPTER {SEVEN}

PRESENTATION & DESIGN WORK





be inspired . be creative . be giving . be thankful



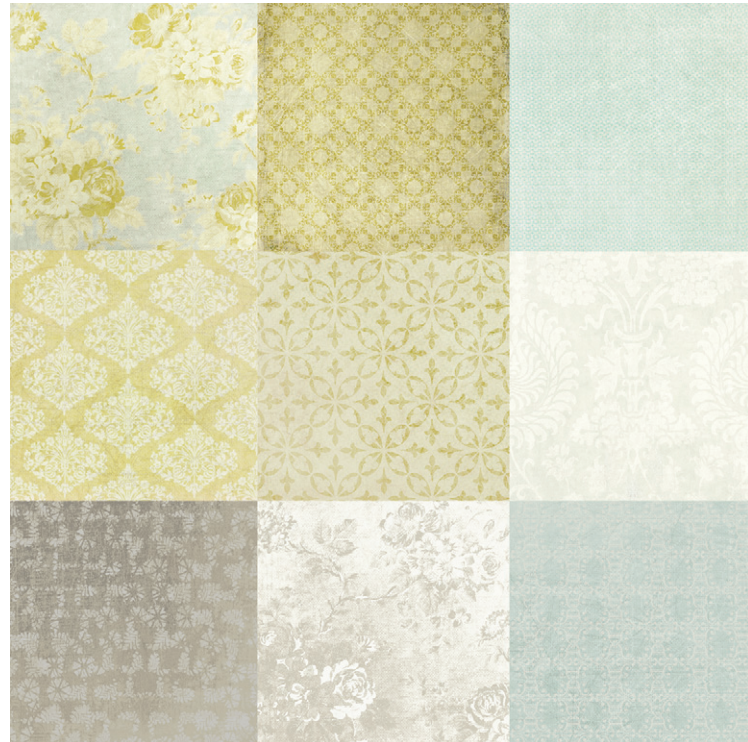
Digital presentation can account for so much these days. Clients, customers, and other photographers expect to be able to view my work by means of a website or blog. Being a professional photographer in the digital age means I have to be skilled in presentation as well as image making. From the design of wedding albums, promotional marketing material, client storyboards, and even my website displays, I don't exclude textures from this area of my business either! In fact, they make amazing backgrounds for web pages, marketing information, and general presentations.





Introducing digital papers and design ideas

Digital papers are easy and simple to make. I craft them from vintage designs, decorative fonts, brushes, and cutter shapes. In their initial state, designs can look too solid, yet with the application of a texture they can be transformed into more authentic styled art papers. Digital art papers are more in keeping with the style of my photographic work, and I use them for a variety of presentation ideas.



Client storyboard presentation

Presentation is just as much a part of my work as my photography. Therefore, I like to create my own design ideas.





Client work, weddings, and portrait shoots

Because I am a professional photographer, clients commission me to photograph their weddings and take pictures of their children. Although most of this type of photography isn't textured, I always include at least a couple of textured renderings within my client's finished collection.



Examples of textured paper design that can be incorporated into wedding album design.













{endnote}

Working with textures is no doubt complicated, and writing about them even more so! There has been a lot to share with you, and I hope you find it helpful and inspiring. But remember that although the magic lies in the marriage between your image, texture, and blend mode, the creativity sits firmly with you.

I have been working with textures for over four years, and I'm still discovering new ways to work with them. It's a process I have come to love and am certainly

passionate about. But if there is one thing I would like you to take away from this book, it would be that working with textures is creative, in the complete sense of the word. It's not prescriptive, or totally predictable, and it certainly shouldn't be accidental. It's personal, and how you use textures in your photography is an expression of yourself. So have fun, enjoy the process of learning, adapting, and most of all being creative.

Special thanks

An enormous thank you, to my beloved children, for your endless patience, the inspiration you have given me, and your willingness to step in front of my camera.

To my parents, Marilyn and David, for your never-ending love and support.

To my much loved and dearly missed grandparents, Nellie, George, and Joan. I know how proud you would have been as you always welcomed, with love and enthusiasm, every project I embraced.

To my closest and dearest friends who have given me the privilege of photographing their beautiful children.

A special thank you to Eva Ricci, of Eva Ricci Studios, for your support and friendship during this project. I wish you all the very best with your own photography and business endeavors.

And finally to my photography clients and digital artistry customers, for all your support, appreciation, and valued custom.

For more information, please visit www.sarahgardnerphotography.co.uk and www.sarahgardnertextures.com.

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