

Photoshop Shadow Techneque

By Jens Selvig

This file is intended for the use of my friends and fellow Photoshop users. I retain all rights to this work, but I do grant permission for Users Groups to publish this in their newsletters provided they include the complete file and send me a copy of the issue the article is published in.

This technique is designed to make an image that is floating over the background with the light coming from the upper left. I create a background in my example but it would be a trivial exercise to use another image for the background. I have included along with this text an image illustrating the result of the technique described below. Probably this file will not be of great interest to those who are very familiar with Photoshop, but then I have learned from some pretty surprising sources on my journey through Photoshop Land!

Some notes: When I refer to the image, I am speaking of the photograph or scanned in part of the file and not the border area.

In this technique I am working on a gray scale image however these methods will work basically the same way for color images in RGB, but you need to work on all channels of the image simultaneously.

1. Scan image. My example is a gray scale image that is scanned at 150 dpi.
2. If you have not acquired the image from Photoshop open it,

then do the following: IMAGE>CANVAS SIZE (add about 1 or 2 inches to each dimension so you will have some room to work in)

3. IMAGE>CALCULATE>DUPLICATE, this gives you a copy to work on in case a mistake is made and you need to start over. Also you can make up several versions to compare results.

4. Use the Rectangular Selection Tool to select the gray scale image area leaving the border, which should be white, unselected. SELECT>SAVE SELECTION, this will create a second channel which will be used later on.

[Or use the “Magic Wand Tool” to select the border area, which is set to the background color, usually white. This will only work if there is a difference between the background color and the image border pixels. Assuming you have a clean straight edge, SELECT>INVERSE to get the image area selected, Now you can SELECT>SAVE SELECTION.]

5. Deselect the image . Zoom in on the upper right corner of the image. Use the pen tool and click on the very corner of the image, then click on the bottom right corner and finally on the left bottom corner. (IF you hold the shift key down while moving the pen tool to each new location it will be constrained making getting proper alignment much easier!) In the pen window choose

save path and name this path RB1. You will see a path listed in the window with an arrow in front of the name you choose. Click on the check mark in front of the name you have used for your first path, this will turn off and hide the path. If you fail to do this you will end up with more path than you expect! Now you need to create a path in the same manor going from the upper right to upper left and then to the lower left corners of the image. Name this path LT1. Be sure to save this second path and leave it checked in the paths window visible.

6. SELECT>LOAD SELECTION. Open the brushes window, double click on one of the empty brush windows. Create a new brush with these settings: Diameter 100; Hardness 0; Spacing 20; Angle -45; Roundness 8, set the opacity level to about 30 and in the popup menu choose lighten only.

(Diameter for our purposes determines how wide our bevel will be. Diameter works out to be twice as wide as the bevel will be.) Select White for the foreground color.

7. In the Paths Window click on the path, LT1. Choose the Paintbrush in the Tools Menu. Now in the paths window choose stroke paths, this is located in the pop up menu, top left corner.

[Try different opacity levels in the Brushes Window or repeat the stroke paths command to get the most pleasing result. I often will apply this technique several times changing the Diameter of the brush. I like the depth this adds. Turn off the path in the paths command by clicking on it.]

8. Next we want to darken the right and bottom edges of the image. In the Brushes window choose Darken Only in the popup window. Click on the first path we created earlier, RB1.

This time we want black for our foreground color. Change the brush settings: Diameter 100; Hardness 0; Spacing 20; Angle 45; Roundness 8, set the opacity level to about 20. Again we choose stroke paths command in the Paths window. This will darken the edge of the image.

[When you are done turn off the path in the paths command by clicking on it. The Selection Marquee can be turned off by choosing `SELECT>HIDE SELECTION` or simply Command-H will do it too. The selection stays active even though it is not visible.]

9. Now we need to put in the border around the image.

`SELECT>INVERSE` now `FILTER>NOISE>ADD NOISE [400]` next `STYLIZE>EMBOSS [135,3,100%]`. This will give a nice background for the image to sit on, of course this is a pretty subjective sort of concept.

10. Go back to the brushes window and edit the brush you made earlier, or make a new one. This time you might want a little longer diameter and perhaps an angle of say 60 degrees. Again we click on the path for the right and bottom of the image. This part is a little tricky but since I can do it I suspect most other photoshopers can too. Zoom in on the upper right corner of the image. Choose the `RECTANGULAR SELECTION TOOL`, hold down the command key, and start making a selection inside the image area. We want to select the part of the border just above the image all the way to the very right edge of the image.

We need to do the same for the lower left portion of the image. We are doing this to keep part of our shadow effect from showing though in the wrong places. Now stroke the path as we did in steps 6 and 7. Your image now should have a floating look with the light source in the upper left hand corner.

11. I like to set off the image by placing a thin black line along the shadow side and a slightly white line along the opposite side. In the brushes window be sure darken is selected, opacity should be 100%, and that black is the foreground color. Choose the line tool, make sure it is set to write a thin line like 2 - 4 pixels wide, Zoom in on the image at the top right corner, and click on the image corner, hold down the shift key, and drag down to the bottom corner and release the mouse button. Do the same for the bottom of the image. Change the foreground color to white and select Lighten in the Brushes Window and opacity should be 100%, this time you do the left and top sides only you will be drawing in white.

[You can use the fill command to put any sort of background into the border that you choose. Of course you do have to set up the pattern first, which is really a whole other topic]

Note: I scanned the included image with a HP IIC scanner in BW mode. I did lighten the shadow areas a little before scanning. I used the twain module to acquire the image directly into Photoshop version 2.5.1b5. The Photoshop file is saved in PICT format with JPEG compression of lowest quality, which gives the most file compression. I use a Quadra 950 stocked only with 24 megs of RAM. I usually leave Photoshop set to a 10 meg partition unless I plan on working on a large file, in which case I set the partition to the maximum size of free

memory leaving a bout 750k free for the system to use. I have encountered very few errors or crashes while using the latest version of Photoshop.

I would appreciate any comments. If you enjoyed this file send me a postcard. The folks at my US Post Office really do need the work and I would like the feed back!

I find Photoshop to be one of the most exciting applications available today. Also if anyone needs further help with this technique please E-Mail me here on American Online to: JJSIII and I will attempt to solve your problems. I also can be reached on the Billings Apple Users Group BBS, 406-256-3454 24hrs 8N1 up to 9600.

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