

CREATING A “PEN AND INK” SKETCH WITH A WATERCOLOR WASH



33.1



33.2

ABOUT THE IMAGE

Flowering Urn Nikon Coolpix 950 digital camera, Fine Image Quality setting, original 1,200 x 1,600 pixel image has been cropped and converted to a 1,152 x 1,600 pixel, 5.8MB .tif file

Of all the different art media there is, I particularly like watercolors with their often-blurry edges and transparent colors. Very loose “pen and ink” sketches with loosely defined shapes and lines with lots of character can also hold my interest. I think the looseness of these two types of artwork is what appeals to me. They can be suggestive and yet, leave enough undefined to allow your imagination to fill in the remaining parts, quite like reading a book versus seeing a movie made from the same story.

The photograph in [Figure 33.1](#) shows an urn that I found on the front porch of a fancy home in Charleston, South Carolina. You might not think that it is possible to turn this digital photograph into a fine-art quality print

on watercolor paper; but it is—try it. This is one of the many images in this book that just doesn't show well printed in the book compared to what it looks like printed full-size on quality textured fine-art paper with a photo-quality inkjet printer—it really does look quite good.

This technique shows how to transform a digital photo into a watercolor-like image and a “pen and ink” sketch, and then how the two can be combined to become a “pen and ink” sketch with a watercolor wash. Because it really is two techniques in one, it is a long technique. However, it is well worth trying on the urn image, and then on one or more of your own photos. I think you will like the results.

STEP 1: OPEN FILE

- Choose **File > Open** (Ctrl+O PC, Cmd+O Mac) to display the **Open** dialog box. Double-click the \33 folder to open it and then click the **urn-before.tif** file to select it. Click **Open** to open the file.

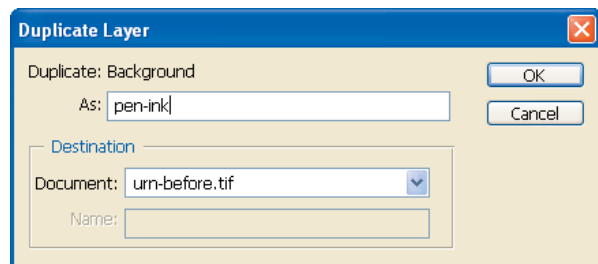
STEP 2: DUPLICATE LAYER

- Because both a watercolor painting and a “pen and ink” sketch are needed, you need two layers. Duplicate the **Background** layer by choosing **Layer > Duplicate Layer**. When the **Duplicate Layer** dialog box appears, type in **pen-ink** to name the image, as shown in [Figure 33.3](#), and then click **OK**.

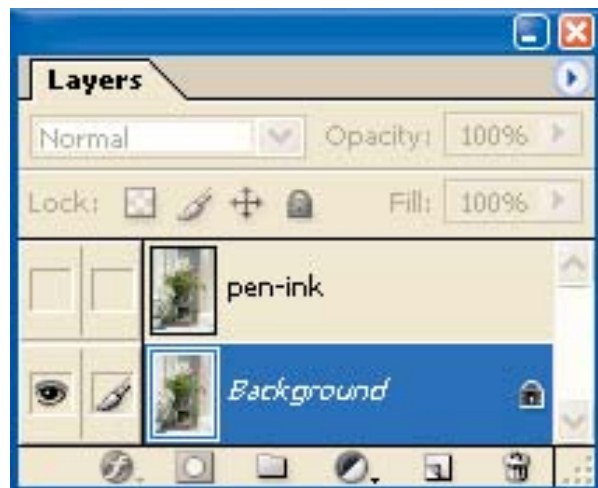
STEP 3: TRANSFORM ONE LAYER INTO A WATERCOLOR PAINTING

Adobe Photoshop CS does have a watercolor filter, but in most cases, I find that it makes the images too dark with too many odd-looking brush strokes. Therefore, let's use another approach.

- Click the **Background** layer in the **Layers** palette to make it the active layer.
- Click the **Layer Visibility** icon in the left column in the **pen-ink** layer to hide the top layer. The **Layers** palette should now look like the one shown in [Figure 33.4](#).
- Choose **Filter > Artistic > Dry Brush** to get the **Dry Brush** filter in the **Filter Gallery** dialog box. Click in the preview window and drag the image around until you can see a few flowers. Begin experimenting with the settings for **Brush Size**, **Brush Detail**, and **Texture**. I used **2**, **8**, and **1**, as shown in [Figure 33.5](#). Click **OK** to apply the settings.



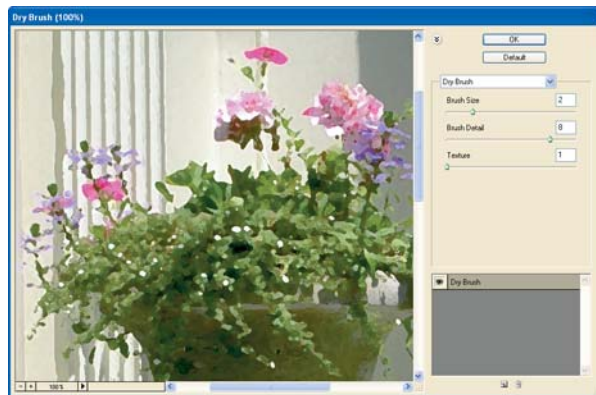
33.3



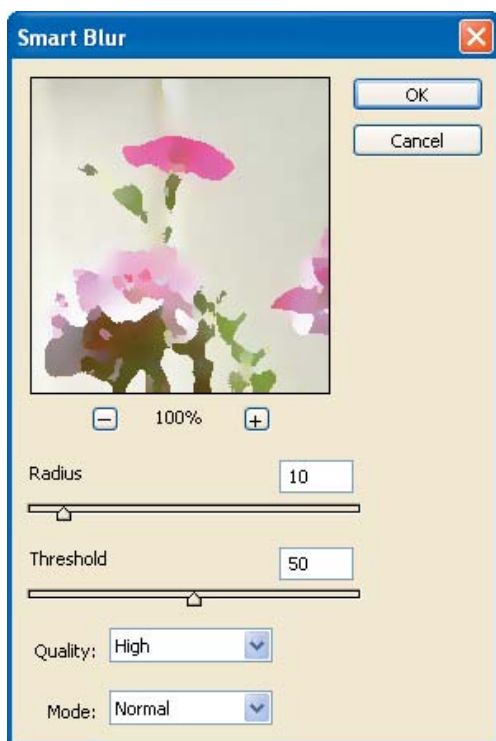
33.4

To soften the brush strokes and make them look more like a watercolor wash, use a blur filter.

- Choose **Filter > Blur > Smart Blur** to get the **Smart Blur** dialog box shown in [Figure 33.6](#). Try using a **Radius** of **10** and a **Threshold** of **50**. Also,



33.5



33.6

make sure you have **Quality** set to **High** and that **Mode** is set to **Normal** before clicking **OK** to apply the settings.

For this particular image, these few steps produce a realistic-looking watercolor. After using many images and trying many different techniques to create watercolor paintings, I’ve concluded there are many variables and settings for each of many different techniques; what works on one image, may work poorly on another. In general, these steps work well on images that are about 1,600 x 1,200 pixels in size and have been taken with a digital camera.

On larger files, and when photographs have been scanned with a flat-bed scanner or negatives or slides have been scanned with a film scanner, the same techniques work well if you first apply a light **Gaussian Blur** to the image. The larger the files, the better this technique seems to work provided that you’re working with a good-quality image with minimal grain. Sometimes, you may also find that an image can be made to look more like a watercolor painting if you apply some of these filters more than once. Experimentation is the key to getting what you want.

STEP 4: TRANSFORM SECOND LAYER INTO A “PEN AND INK” SKETCH

The next step is to turn the “pen-ink” layer into a “pen and ink” sketch. While most Photoshop experts use and recommend the **Find Edges** filter to make line drawings, I find I usually get much better results with a hidden option in the **Smart Blur** filter. The results, as you’ll see, can be quite outstanding.

- Click the **pen-ink** layer to make it the active **Layer**.
- Choose **Image > Adjustments > Desaturate** (**Shift+Ctrl+U** PC, **Shift+Cmd+U** Mac) to remove all color.
- Choose **Filter > Blur > Smart Blur** to once again get the **Smart Blur** dialog box. This time, set **Quality** to **High** and **Mode** to **Edge Only**.

Finding settings that show the vertical lines on the columns while not adding too many lines around the flowers is important. To do this, click in the preview box inside the **Smart Blur** dialog box and drag the preview image until you see the column.

- Try setting **Radius** to 25 and **Threshold** to 35. Click **OK** to apply the settings. Have patience as the **Smart Blur** filter can take some time to process.
- You may be surprised to see what now looks like white lines on a black ink scratchboard, but this is okay — choose **Image > Adjustments > Invert** (**Ctrl+I** PC, **Cmd+I** Mac) and you see black lines on a white background sketch, as shown in [Figure 33.7](#).



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STEP 5: BLEND LAYERS

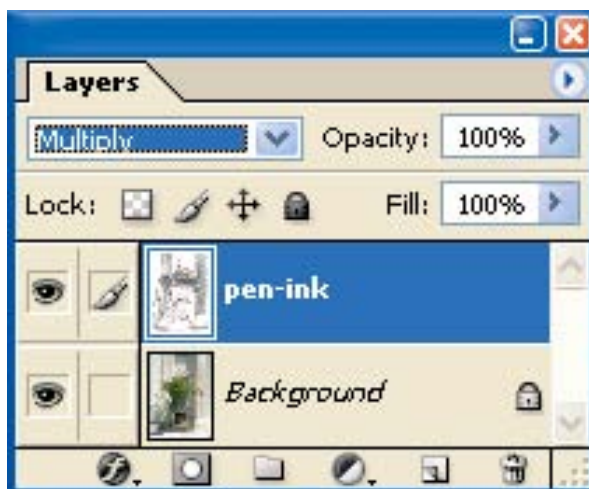
At this point, you have learned two techniques and you have two entirely different images made from the same digital photo — a watercolor-like image and a “pen and ink” sketch. We now want to combine these two layers.

- Click the **pen-ink** layer to make it the active layer.
- In the **Layers** palette, click in the **Blend Mode** box and choose **Multiply**. Leave **Opacity** set to 100%. The **Layers** dialog box should now look like [Figure 33.8](#).

STEP 6: MAKE FINAL COLOR ADJUSTMENTS AND ADD YOUR SIGNATURE

Now is the time to make a few creative color adjustments.

- To lighten the image, use an **Adjustment Layer** so that you can go back and make changes if desired. Choose **Layer > New Adjustment**



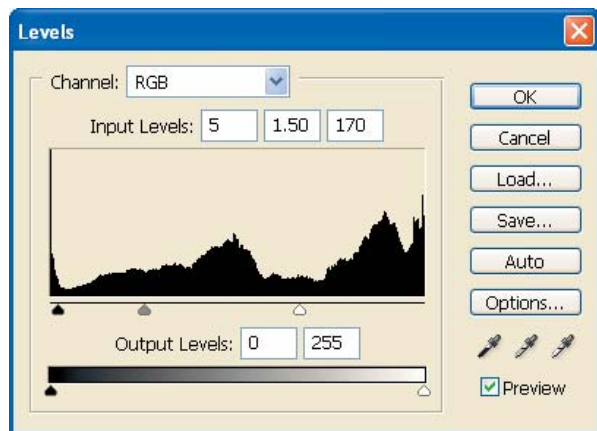
33-8

Layer > **Levels** to get the **New Layer** dialog box. Click **OK** to display the **Levels** dialog box. Set **Input Levels** to 5, 1.50, and 170, as shown in **Figure 33.9**. Click **OK** to apply the settings.

The final step is to adjust the colors as you’d like them. You have both Adobe Photoshop CS and an artistic license to create as you’d like to create, so try making the image turquoise, purple, and green with yellow flowers, as shown in **Figure 33.2**!

■ Once again, to allow you the opportunity to go back and change your settings use another **Adjustment Layer** to make changes to the colors. Click on the **pen-ink** layer and choose **Layer** > **New Adjustment Layer** > **Hue/Saturation** to get the **Hue/Saturation** dialog box. Set **Hue**, **Saturation**, and **Lightness** to +120, +20, and 0, as shown in **Figure 33.10**.

Because we used **Adjustment Layers**, you can now go back and double-click the **Levels 1** or **Hue/Saturation 1** layers and make changes to the settings

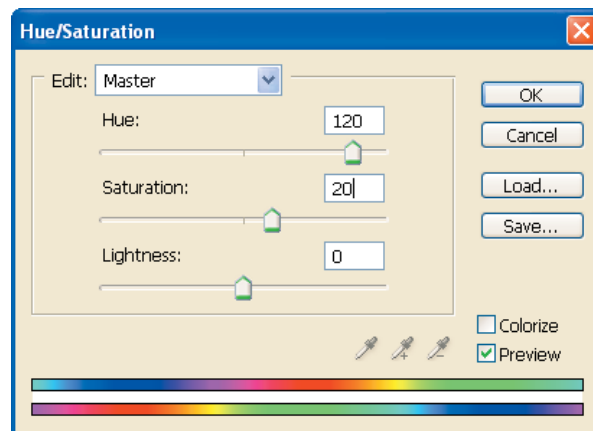


33.9

until you get the results that you want. You may also try using some of the other color commands, such as **Color Balance** or even **Replace Colors** if you want to replace the yellow flowers with another color.

Also, don’t forget to add your signature—it adds a nice touch to your painting. If you want, you could also hand paint more of the flowers yellow. Some of them seem to be lacking a bit of color on the left side of the image. A good tool for painting the flowers is one of the watercolor brushes. You also may want to put a soft edge on the image by using a soft eraser on both the ink layer and the painted layer. Save your file and it is ready to be printed.

While this image looks reasonably good on a computer screen, it *really* does look exceptional when printed on a fine-art watercolor paper with a photo-quality inkjet printer. I used an Epson 2200P printer and the Epson Watercolor Paper – Radiant White—the print is excellent and archival. Printing on quality fine-art paper is essential to getting a print that you’ll be proud to frame.



33.10