

## Portraits in Photoshop...

CCCC Fourth Tuesday, Sept. 23

**Levels** Before you start with anything else, get the exposure (levels) correct. If you start with color and then levels, the colors will shift as you chase the correct exposure. (Just like in the color darkroom!). Note, you may be able to use the eyedropper(s) to correct most of the color in Levels.

Now, adjust your color. Color is THE most important part of a portrait, people may not know anything about 'color', but they do know skin color! Use your favorite color adjustment layer to get it right!

**Clone tool.** I use this to remove unwanted objects like tree branches, extra catch lights in the eyes and major 'fixes' like adding an ear/tooth/smile from another image. Always create a NEW LAYER to work on! Most of what I do now is done by the Healing brush, which is MUCH easier to use and control.

**Healing Brush.** I used to use the Clone tool as my main retouching tool in portraits, but the Healing brush has really taken over in most of the areas where I would have used the Clone tool. The purpose of the Healing brush is to change TEXTURE. Usually to remove texture, like wrinkles, pores and skin blemishes. Like the Clone tool, the Healing Brush needs a source to work from and sometimes it is very hard to find a large enough smooth area as the source. Again, be sure to create a separate layer to work on! For skin repairs, I usually reduce the size of the image and then select a neutral grey as the background color and then CROP the image to include the entire image, then, drag the left side of the crop area to the left to ADD to the image by about 50%. This gives a great 'smooth area'. The results look like they are overdone and they are. After you are through with the Healing layer, reduce the Opacity to about 60% or whatever looks good to you. (IF you allow it to be a white or black background, when you use the Healing Brush, it sometimes leaves streaks along the path of the tool. When I use the Healing Brush, I set the Brush Hardness to 100%. Anything less tends to bleed over with a soft edge when you get near an eyebrow or other contrast shift.) While most of the time we want to reduce texture, if you need to ADD texture due to an area that is 'blown out' select an area of texture as the source and Heal the blown out area with that texture.

Now, we'll whiten the teeth, taking the yellow out. Use the lasso tool to select the teeth. Accuracy is nice, but we are creating a mask and you can always add or subtract from a mask later. After you have your selection, do a Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue and Saturation. With all these layers going it is wise to pick a layer name you will remember like HNS Teeth. When the window opens, from the Edit menu, select Yellow and reduce the saturation slider... Not too much or you'll make the teeth look grey. When you are happy with the color, you can up the Lightness to brighten the teeth. Not too much or they will 'glow' ... Teeth aren't near the problem they were now that many folks are using whitening products, but there's always the stuff you shot years ago...

Now, we'll whiten the eyes, taking the red out. Use the lasso tool to select the eyes. You will need to change the lasso from 'new selection' to 'add to selection' (squares in the upper left) if you want to get the second eye in the same mask. Accuracy is nice, but we are creating a mask and you can always add or subtract from a mask later. After you have your selections, do a Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue and Saturation. With all these layers going it is wise to pick a layer name you will remember like HNS Eyes. When the window opens, from the Edit menu, select Red and reduce the saturation... Not too much or you'll make the whites of the eyes look grey. When you are happy with the color, you can increase the Lightness to brighten the eyes. Not too much or they will 'glow' which may look great on a mother-in-law or and ex, but...

After the face is where you want it, you may want to add or remove shadows to give depth or remove bright distracting areas. This is where I use a Dodge and Burn layer. Go to Layer > New Layer, name it DNB and set the Mode to Soft Light and check the box Fill with soft light neutral color 50% grey. Then, select the Brush Tool with an opacity between 6 and 20% and using Black, you can Burn in areas that are too bright and selecting White, Dodge (lighten) areas that are too dark. Work gently, stroking the area several times to build up or remove the density. Make sure that the brush tool isn't too big that it covers dark and light at the same time as it will add to both areas and make a mess! Many wrinkles are just areas of light next to areas of dark. By adding dark to the light areas and light to the dark areas, the contrast is reduced and the wrinkles are less noticeable.

Gaussian Blur. Before Healing Brush and with some skin textures, the Healing Tool just doesn't work and I drop back to the Clone Tool and follow up with Gaussian Blur. After all of the other adjustments are made, SAVE-AS the image, then flatten it and drag the background layer to the 'copy machine' and make a copy. Select the copy and Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur and set the amount too high, maybe 20 (so that you can reduce the opacity to an acceptable level later. If you try to guess, you may guess too little and not be able to increase it!) Click OK and then, with the copy still selected, click on the mask icon to create a mask for this layer. With the Brush tool selected and black at 100% go over the hair, the eyes, lips, clothes and most everything except the skin texture that you are trying to 'hide/blur'. If you 'miss' change to white and go over the goofs. After you have the areas set, reduce the opacity of the layer until it looks good to you.

There are many other Photoshop tools that you use for other images that can be applied to portraiture. Some tools work well, while others fail spectacularly. It is up to you to find the ones that work for you and stick with them. I stuck with the Clone

tool long after the Healing brush came in, just because that is what worked for me.  
Now, I would NOT go back unless the Healing brush just didn't work for an image.