

CREATIVE Photo Effects # 1

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The hand-colouring of images has been a part of Photography since the earliest days. In it's infancy, photography was more closely associated with the traditional Arts and for quite some time tried to emulate the 'look' of art media. During these early days, and especially before the invention of a usable color film process, the only way to achieve a 'color' photograph was to paint the color on the actual print. Thus, hand-colouring was developed to a high standard and became part of most studios daily routine.

Hand-colouring and painting onto prints is still very popular as many artists love the hands-on practical side of image making. Digital colouring of images is just another method of achieving a print that is different from traditional color photography. Hand-colouring also frees you to be as creative as you wish and not be restricted by the 'real' colors in a subject or scene.

For the digital artist, Adobe Photoshop (and Corel Painter) provides a very easy means of colouring an image, as has already been shown, and we will now take this idea further by using a more hands-on method rather than the automated methods previously shown.

Traditional photo-printers, when expecting to hand-color the print later, needed to prepare the print in a specific way, the print needed to be low contrast and sepia toned, to allow the best results when the hand-colouring was applied with translucent dyes. Since the digital method of applying color used in this technique also uses translucent color, we can replicate the same process of preparation of the image.

**Preparing the
Digital Image**

Select and Open an Image

The first step is to choose the image you want to color and open it in Photoshop.

For this technique I have chosen to use a portrait that was originally shot with black and white film and scanned. Although I will be aiming for a 'realistic' look with the color, it is the technique that is important since this can be applied to any image for more 'creative' work e.g. landscapes.

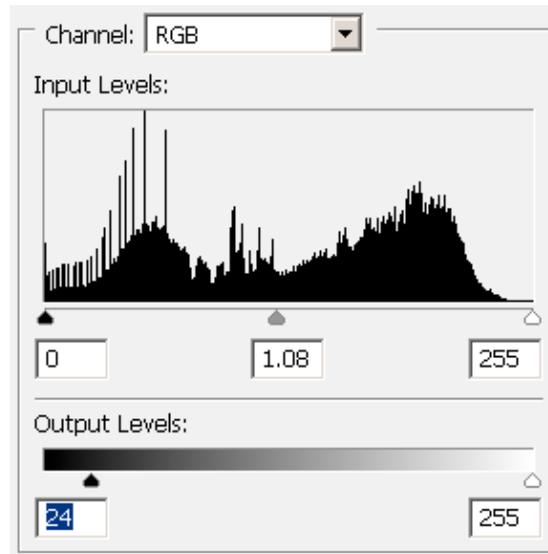
If you are starting with a color image use the monochrome conversion method described in the previous chapter to remove the color and create a mono RGB image.

Lighten Dark Tones

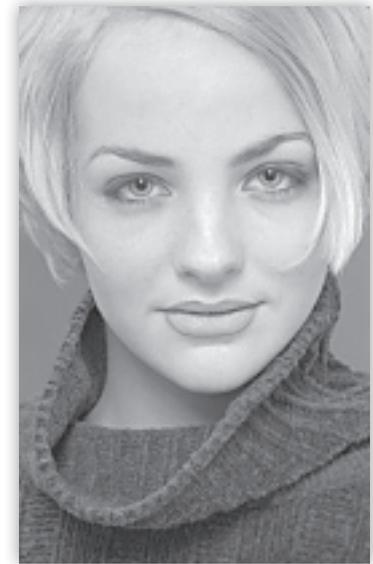
Once your image is open, use a Levels Adjustment Layer to lighten the lower tones by dragging the *black point* slider on the *Output Levels* tone scale as shown below.



Original photo



Levels Adjustment to lighten the dark tones and reduce contrast.



Note the tones in the sweater are now lighter. This will help when applying the translucent color.

If starting with a black and white original, as here, convert it to mono RGB *after* reducing the contrast with the Levels Adjustment. This could equally be done before reducing the contrast but you might as well work with the smaller file size in the original grayscale mode for efficiency.

Important Note: Remember, we cannot add color to a grayscale image using these techniques, the image must be in RGB mode.

Use the Image/Mode/RGB Color menu command to convert a grayscale image to RGB.

For authenticity, you may wish to add a light sepia tone using one of the toning methods described in Chapter #1. Do this with a separate layer, DO NOT apply color to the original *Background* image. The toning is not essential and should be decided on an image by image basis and the 'look' you want to achieve. Also, since we are adding color anyway, keep any toning quite light.



The contrast reduced image is at right and, at left, after applying a subtle sepia tone effect. The image is now ready to hand-color.



Now we can start to add the hand-colouring. We begin with large areas of the image that need the same color. In this example these will be: Sweater, Hair, and Face skin color. Then later we will apply color to smaller, more detailed parts of the image: Eyes, Lips and Eye make-up.

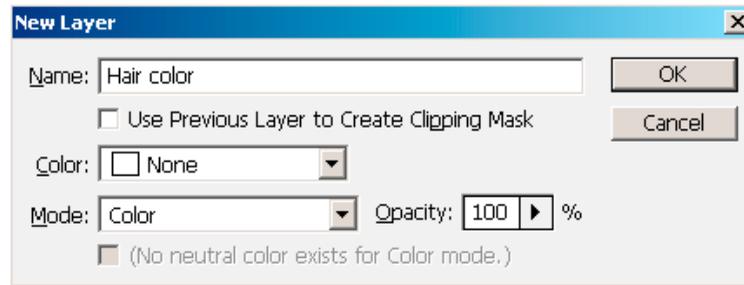
Before rushing in try to have some idea of what you want to achieve; think about the overall color scheme for the image so you can choose appropriate colors for each part of the subject. This will produce a more coherent final image. For this portrait, since the model obviously has blond hair, we will aim for a typical blond hair, blue-eyed color scheme with warm but delicate skin color. The sweater color will also be warm but quite dramatic to add a solid base to the head of the model.

We will start with the hair. We want to add the color for each part of the image on a separate layer so that we have complete flexibility for making changes and to preserve the original *Background* image layer intact.

Create a new layer above any existing layers so that the color is applied on top of any toning color. To create a new layer press Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+N; this opens the New Layer dialog where you can set several options for the layer at once. In the New Layer dialog, give the layer the name 'Hair color' then click on the arrow next to the 'Mode' box to display the drop-down list of blending modes and select the 'Color' blend mode. When the New Layer dialog looks like the screengrab below, click OK or press the Enter key to create a 'Color Mode' layer.

**Starting to
Hand Colour**

**Creating a 'Color
Mode' Layer**



To add color to the image and preserve the original tonal values the layer must be set to the Color blending mode. If you forget to set the blend mode here you can always set it in the Layers palette.

Hand-colouring is typically done with translucent color medium, akin to watercolours, which gives a more subtle effect than an opaque medium like acrylic paint. To achieve this effect we need to preserve the original tonal values of the image; to apply color to the image whilst preserving the original tonal values we need to use the *Color blending mode*.

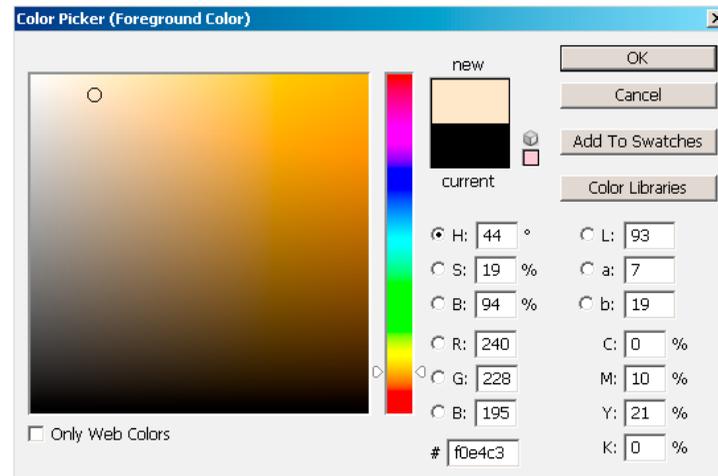
Note: It is the translucency of the medium that retains the photographic qualities of the image whilst at the same time allowing artistic application of the color.

Painting the Hair

Next, use either the Swatches palette or click in the Foreground Color box to open the Color Picker dialog and define your 'blonde' hair color.



Choose a color for the 'blonde' hair. Here I have chosen a warm, light 'sand' color using the Color Picker dialog.

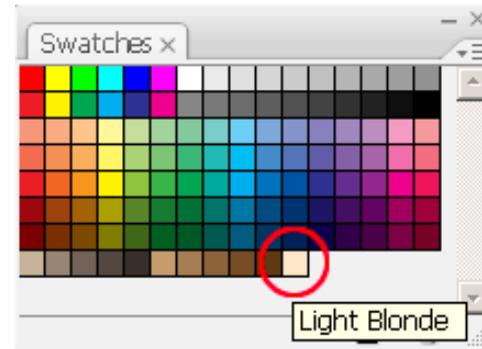


When you define a new color in the Color Picker it is a good idea to save the color as a swatch so that you can instantly retrieve the color later. Once you are happy with the color, click on the Add

to Swatches button. This opens the Color Swatch name dialog where you can give the color a useful name. In this example I have called the color 'Light Blonde' but you can choose whatever name makes sense to you.



Adding a new color to the Swatches palette with a unique name.



You don't need to be too concerned with getting exactly the right color at this stage since we can 'fine-tune' it later once the hand-colouring has been applied.

Paint the Contour and Fill

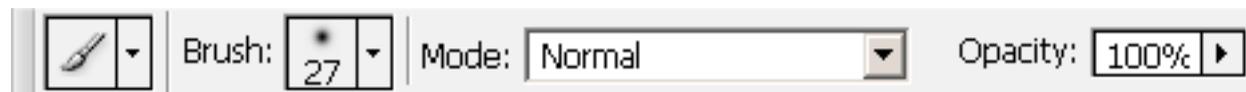
To actually add color to the hair, press the 'B' key to select the Brush Tool. The quickest way to paint a large area with a single color is to paint around the outside contour of the area and then fill the centre using the *Paint Bucket Tool*.

Note: You could of course use the selection tools to select the various areas but in this image it was quicker and more accurate simply to paint the contour; this choice will depend on the image used and the accuracy of the selection tools.



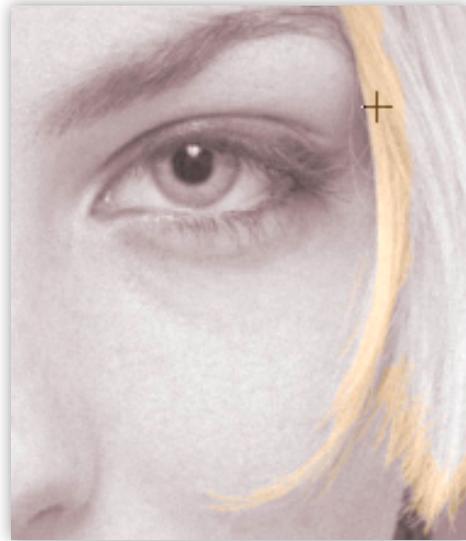
Paint the Hair Contour

Choose a suitable Brush Size from the Brushes options bar to paint the edge of the area you want to color. Adjust the brush size as required whilst painting to control the accuracy of your work; reduce the size to paint any fine details.

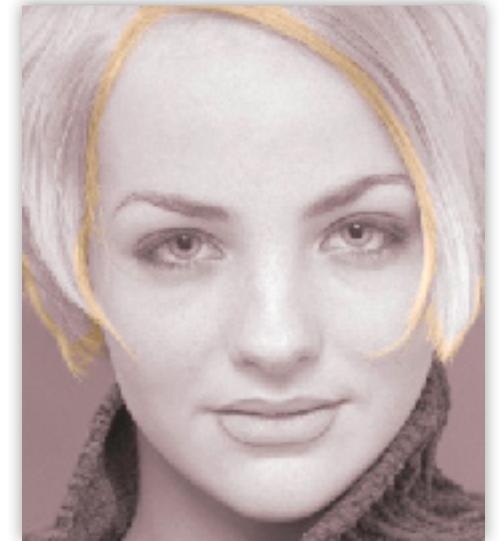


Now we have the Brush Tool active and our hair color chosen we can start to paint the contour of the hair on our Color Mode layer; use the Eraser tool to correct any mistakes whilst painting.

For parts of the subject where the detail is less solid, i.e. in this portrait stray hairs, reduce the Opacity of the brush to match the translucency of the detail being painted. This will produce a more realistic result than using solid color all of the time. It is this attention to detail that will make your results most convincing.



At left is a detail of the contour of the hair being painted. Note that where the hair is finer, the opacity of the brush was reduced. At right is the completed contour ready to be filled with color.



Fill-in the Hair Contour

Once the contour of the area has been painted, the rest of the area can be quickly completed by filling it with the Paint Bucket tool. The Paint Bucket tool fills a closed area with the selected color; if the contour has any 'holes' in it the paint bucket will spill out and fill the whole image. If this happens use the Undo (Ctrl/Cmd+Z) and find and fix any 'holes' in the contour. Check the area has been filled properly by zooming to 100%, paint over any missed parts.

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