



GSCCC



GULF STATES CAMERA CLUB COUNCIL
STATES OF OKLAHOMA, TEXAS, LOUISIANA,
MISSISSIPPI & FLORIDA

VOLUME LI

NUMBER 11

NOVEMBER 2017

3 Good Reasons to Use Layers in Photoshop

By: Sarah Hipwell

If you shoot RAW, in general, you will be editing those files in Adobe Camera Raw (ACR), Lightroom or some other RAW editor. This may be all the post editing that you require. However, if you are like me, I finish my editing in Photoshop. Why? Because I use layers and they play an essential part of my workflow.

Layers are definitely where the real magic in Photoshop happens. They were introduced way back in version 3.0. I am a long-time user of Photoshop, so using layers in my workflow is second nature.

How do layers work?

In Photoshop, there are many types of layers. You can add text to your image using a Type Layer. You can duplicate any type of layer. By using a Layer Style, you can add a drop shadow or other effects to your photo. For example, you may want to color correct a portrait image by using a [Curves Adjustment Layer](#).

In this article, I'll give a brief overview of how layers work and go on to explain why I use the following go-to in my workflow:

1. Adjustment Layers for non-destructive editing
2. Layer Masks
3. Smart Objects

The Layers Panel

Let's go over to the Layers Panel and I'll walk you through how layers work. Here is an example of a simple vector image of a mountain range with a sunset. There are six layers stacked on top of one another, that make up the final image. By clicking on the eye icon, you can turn the visibility of each layer off and on.

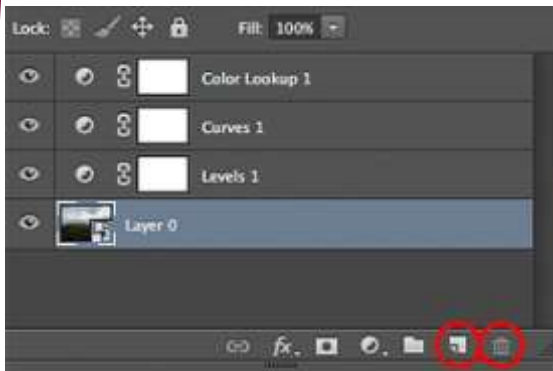
(right) Different layer types in Photoshop



However, in Photoshop, you can do a lot more with layers. You can delete a layer by clicking on it and dragging it to the little trash can at the bottom of the panel. You can also duplicate a layer by dragging it down to the icon beside the trash can, which creates a copy of that layer. A layer can be moved by clicking on it and dragging it up or down the stack. You can reduce the opacity of a layer, thereby allowing some or all of the image layers



(above) Six layers stacked on top of each other to form a picture in Photoshop



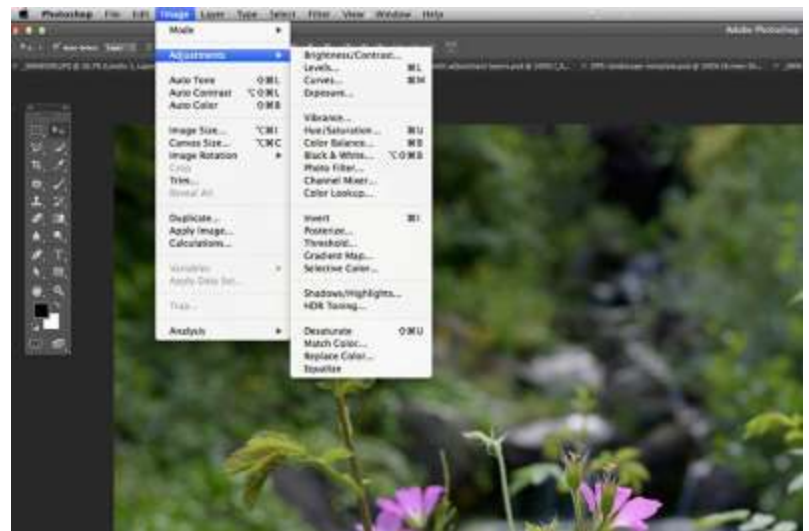
ers underneath to show through, depending on how much you reduce the opacity.

(left) Duplicate and delete layers in the Layers Panel using the tools circled in red.

#1 – Adjustment Layers

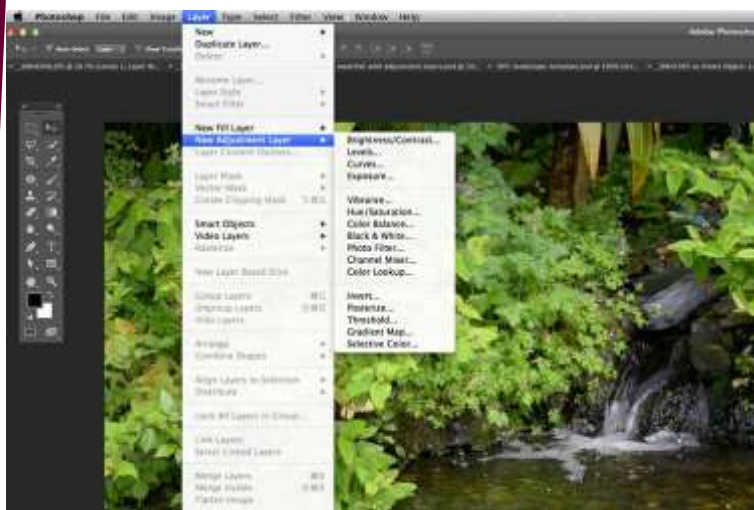
Without a doubt, when Adjustment Layers were introduced into Photoshop 4.0 it meant that users could unleash the magic of Photoshop by [editing non-destructively](#). Prior to this, you had to duplicate the image first to preserve the original, as edits were permanently made to the layer. Adjustment Layers are key in any photographer’s workflow.

As a precautionary note, Adjustments under Image in the Options Bar is not the same as creating an Adjustment Layer via Layer>New Adjustment Layer. The former will apply edits directly to the layer that



(above) Applying edits through Image>Adjustments will affect the image permanently

you are working on, where as an Adjustment Layer adds a layer above the working one. These edits can be redone or discarded without altering the pixels of your original image.

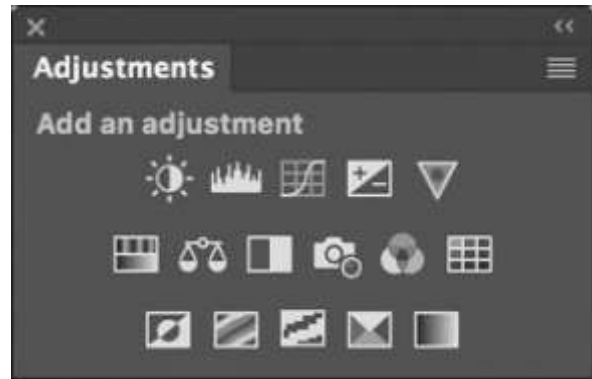


(left) Working non-destructively by adding a New Adjustment Layer via the Layer tab in the Options Bar.

Adjustments Panel

As with the Layers Panel, the Adjustment Layers has its very own panel too. The icons represent the 16 different layer adjustments available in Photoshop. Some are used more than others. Adjustment layers apply the correction to all the layers below them, without affecting any of the layers above.

Once I do my initial edits in ACR, I'll finish off my post-processing in Photoshop using Adjustment layers. I like to use Levels, Curves and Selective Color & LUTs to add the



(above) Adjustment Layers has its own panel with 16 icons representing the different options.



necessary contrast and color corrections. As each Adjustment Layer is used and stacked on top of each other, it is essential to reduce the opacity of each layer.

(left) How Adjustments Layers can add color correction and bring out the details in the image in a non-destructive way

What about areas of your image that don't require the same amount of editing as other parts?

#2 – Layer Masks

When adding an Adjustment Layer in Photoshop, it applies the adjustment to the whole image. But, sometimes you need to make adjustments to only one area or separate parts of an image. This is where Layer Masks come in handy. When you add a new Adjustment Layer, it automatically adds a white Layer Mask (white reveals and black conceals).

For example, in the image of the waterfall, it was necessary for me to mask the water with each adjustment layer, otherwise, the highlights would have been blown out.



The water in the image on the left has not had masks applied when global edits were added using Adjustment Layers.

Masks were used on the water in the image on the right to preserve the highlights.

In the following image of this landscape in the Dublin mountains, the day was quite overcast. I wasn't happy with the sky, so I decided to try a different one. By using the Layer masks, I was able to mask out the original sky. I used the [Pen Tool](#) for this but you can use the Brush or the Quick Selection Tool and then fill the area with black.

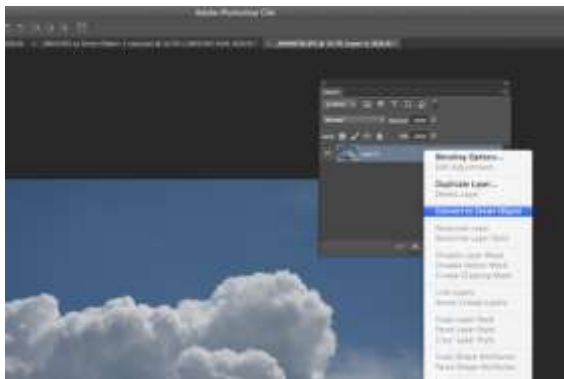
The new sky image underneath was put under this layer so that it showed through the mask, similar to a cut-out. I then added more Adjustment Layers to color correct the image so that the new sky looked seamless.



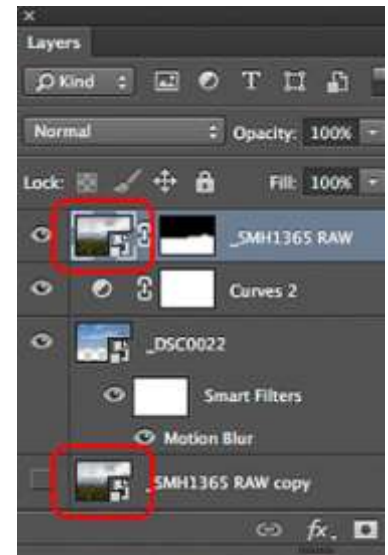
#3 – Smart Objects

Adobe really defines Smart Objects in a neat nutshell. *Smart Objects preserve an image's source content with all its original characteristics, enabling you to perform nondestructive editing to the layer.*

So for photographers, this is fantastic news. Now, when you apply edits to a layer that is a Smart Object, you can transform, scale, rotate, warp, apply filters or layer masks. The quality of the image will not be degraded even though it is a raster image !



So how do you convert an image to a Smart Object? It is simple, right click on the layer and select Convert to a Smart Object. You will see a small icon on the thumbnail image that tells you that the layer is now a Smart Object.



If you edit your images in Camera Raw, you can then export the image into Photoshop as a Smart Object. Hold the Shift key and the Open Image button turns to Open Object.

This means that at a later date, you can return to Camera Raw to re-edit by double clicking on the layer thumbnail. Alternatively, when you have the Camera Raw dialog box open, at the bottom there is what looks like a link on a website. This link actually takes you to the Camera Raw Workflow Options. You can check the box Open in Photoshop as Smart Objects to set that as the default in ACR.

Conclusion

Layers can play an important role in your post-production.

- You can separate parts of the image and edit them without affecting other parts of the image.
- Converting your image layers to a Smart Object allows you to move the new image around, edit it, and resize it without affecting the resolution of the original image.
- You can add multiple layers on top of each other and put them into groups.
- You can apply filters and effects to layers independently, e.g. drop-shadow, color adjustments, etc.

[Blend Mode options](#) can change the appearance of each layer

You can reduce the opacity on a layer. This is particularly useful when using Layer Adjustments to fine-tune the edit to create a subtle effect.

The main take away from using Layers in Photoshop is that the whole process is working non-destructively.

*Judged October 2017**Mono Projected
Judged by Plano PC*

| Title | Maker | Club | Score | Award |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------|--------|
| Let Us Talk | Julie Cheng | Houston PC | 13 | 1st |
| Lucky | Linda Medine | Louisiana PS | 12 | 2nd |
| Do You Still Love Me ? | Mary Horn | Oklahoma CC | 12 | 3rd |
| Old Faithful by Full Moon | Andy Lay | Cowtown CC | 12 | 1st HM |
| Honduran Dreams | Larry Golden | Dallas CC | 12 | 2nd HM |

*Color Projected
Judged by Plano PC*

| Title | Maker | Club | Score | Award |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------|--------|
| Princess Cecilia | Yvonne Miller Nixon | Northlake CC | 13 | 1st |
| Windmill Sunset | John Pickles | GNOCC | 13 | 2nd |
| Sombre | Houston Brown | Dallas CC | 13 | 3rd |
| Fireworks Shower | James Gamble | Houston PC | 12 | 1st HM |
| Watch Dog | Bob Green | Oklahoma CC | 12 | 2nd HM |

*Photojournalism Prints
Judged by Plano PC*

| Title | Maker | Club | Score | Award |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------|-------|--------|
| Highway Heartbreak | Andy Lay | Cowtown CC | 13 | 1st |
| Thrills and Spills | Ron Shue | Cowtown CC | 13 | 2nd |
| We got This! | Tammy Robin | Lafayette PS | 13 | 3rd |
| Mudder | Larry Petterborg | Dallas CC | 12 | 1st HM |
| HIT BY PITCH | Patrick Bullock | Louisiana PS | 12 | 2nd HM |

*Photojournalism Projected
Judged by Plano PC*

| Title | Maker | Club | Score | Award |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------|--------|
| Ringside Knock Down | Randy Carr | Oklahoma CC | 14 | 1st |
| Coming Home | J. D. McClung | Oklahoma CC | 13 | 2nd |
| Play At Home 05 | Derrell Dover | Oklahoma CC | 13 | 3rd |
| Mom I Don't Want to Fight | Gregory Daley | Lafayette PS | 12 | 1st HM |
| We Will Survive | Patrick Bullock | Louisiana PS | 12 | 2nd HM |

Sarah Hipwell

is an independent professional photographer based in Dublin. She specializes in high-quality corporate, stock and portraiture photography. Her background is in Design. She received her BA in Hons Design from the University of Ulster, Belfast. She has many years commercial design experience working as a designer and as a trainer for large multimedia companies. See more of her work at SarahHipwell.com or at 500px.

Monochrome Projected

1st Place

“ Let Us Talk ”

By Julie Cheng

Houston PC



**Clubs
Participating**

Monochrome Projected

2nd Place

“ Lucky ”

By Linda Medine

Louisiana PS

Monochrome Projected

3rd Place

“ Do You Still Love Me ? ”

By Mary Horn

Oklahoma CC





Color Projected

1st Place

“ Princess Cecilia”

By Yvonne Miller Nixon

Northlake CC

**Clubs
Participating**

Color Projected

2nd Place

“ Windmill Sunset ”

By John Pickles

GNOCC



Color Projected

3rd Place

“ Sombre ”

By Houston Brown

Dallas CC

PHOTOJOURNALISM Prints

1st Place

“ Highway Heartbreak ”

**By Any Lay
Cowtown CC**



PHOTOJOURNALISM

Prints

2nd Place

“ Thrill and Spills ”

**By Ron Shue
Cowtown CC**



PHOTOJOURNALISM Prints

3rd Place

“ We Got This ! ”

**By Tammy Robin
Lafayette PS**

**Clubs
Participating**



PHOTOJOURNALISM Projected

1st Place

“ Ringside Knock Down ”

**By Randy Carr
Oklahoma CC**

Clubs Participating

PHOTOJOURNALISM Projected

2nd Place

“ Coming Home ”

**By J. D. McClung
Oklahoma CC**



PHOTOJOURNALISM Projected

3rd Place

“ Play At Home 05 ”

**By Derrell Dover
Oklahoma CC**



Don Pederson , APSA,PPSA

1933-2017

Don Pederson, long time member of PSA, GSCCC and Houston Photochrome Club passed away September 18 in Houston, Texas, after an extended illness. Don was a devoted member of both PSA and GSCCC, serving in a number of capacities for both organizations. He was Membership Regional Director for Region 8. Don joined Houston Photochrome Club in 1979 and held continuous membership from that time serving in various offices including President, Vice President and Membership Chairman. His favorite activity was helping new photographers find their way. He was an excellent teacher and his workshops were always well received.



Competition Club Totals

| Mono Projected | |
|------------------|----|
| Cowtown CC | 43 |
| Dallas CC | 39 |
| GNOCC | 33 |
| Houston PC | 40 |
| Lafayette PS | 40 |
| Louisiana PS | 40 |
| National Park PC | 34 |
| Northlake CC | 9 |
| Oklahoma CC | 42 |
| Slidell PC | 33 |
| West Bank CC | 34 |

| Color Projected | |
|------------------|----|
| Central Texas PC | 31 |
| Cowtown CC | 38 |
| Dallas CC | 40 |
| GNOCC | 45 |
| Houston PC | 45 |
| Lafayette PS | 39 |
| Louisiana PS | 41 |
| National Park PC | 40 |
| Northlake CC | 20 |
| Oklahoma CC | 45 |
| Slidell PC | 38 |
| West Bank CC | 33 |

| PJ Projected | |
|---------------|----|
| Central Texas | 14 |
| Cowtown CC | 43 |
| Dallas CC | 38 |
| GNOCC | 35 |
| Lafayette PS | 35 |
| Louisiana PS | 39 |
| National Park | 32 |
| Northlake CC | 8 |
| Oklahoma CC | 49 |
| Slidell PC | 33 |

| PJ Prints | |
|--------------|----|
| Cowtown CC | 46 |
| Dallas CC | 43 |
| GNOCC | 40 |
| Lafayette PS | 45 |
| Louisiana PS | 41 |
| Oklahoma CC | 41 |

All winning images are
Displayed on the GSCCC
Website.. Take A Look !!
<http://www.gulfstatesccc.org/>



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/260653404312222/>

THANK YOU!

Thanks to all the participants in the competitions and Congratulations to the winners for those magnificent images. Special thanks to last months' competition judging clubs:

Plano Photography Club

And last, but not least, thanks to our collaborators, your ideas keep this Newsletter interesting.

40th Annual Heard Nature Photography Contest

2018 SUBMISSION DATES:

February 3 – 25, 2018

www.heardnaturephotographers.com/about-the-contest

[com/about-the-contest](http://www.heardnaturephotographers.com/about-the-contest)

More info in December newsletter

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