

Image Position and Meaning

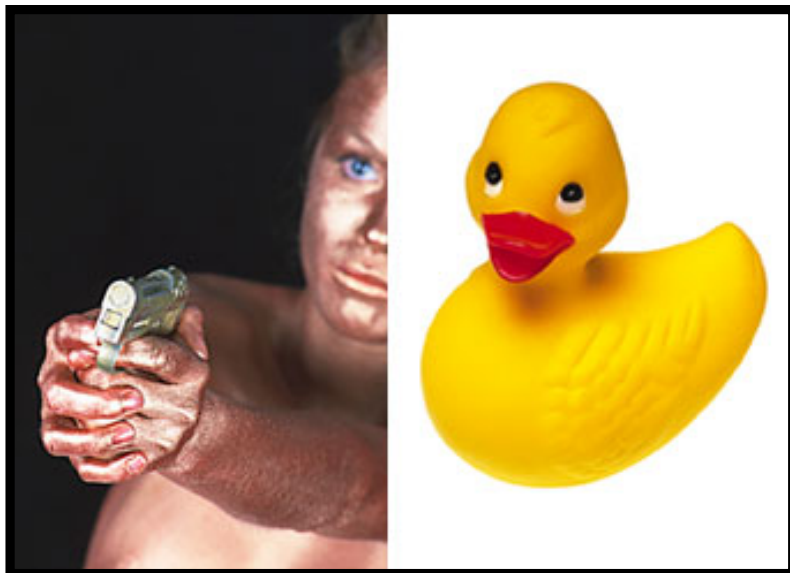
An important consideration of photomontage is its meaning. A collection of images in a confined area does not necessarily constitute a photomontage any more than a cupboard full of flour, sugar, and chocolate chips constitutes cookies.

The fun thing about meaning in a photomontage is that it takes advantage of the way we are conditioned to make us find meaning. Whenever we see two or more images side-by-side, we are conditioned to try to figure out what they mean. My theory is that we get trained this way because we know how to read. When we read, we are looking at different graphic elements placed side by side in order to convey information that the elements wouldn't have if they existed independently.

The Reading Order

In the absence of information telling us to do something different, when we see images together, we "read" them left to right, top to bottom. The order that we read the images in changes the meaning we get from them.

This means something:



The gun creates a sense of menace, but the duck following immediately afterwards negates any feeling of danger.

Photoshop Technique: [Combining Images](#)

This means something different:



The rubber ducky triggers pleasant thoughts of warm baths, Sesame Street, squeek toys. The sudden appearance of a woman with a gun is unsettling.

Changing the Reading Order

The reading order goes left to right, top to bottom, just as when we read text on a page, unless the creator does something to change this order. The primary ways to do this are by changing [position](#), [scale](#), [focus](#), [opacity](#) and [color](#).

Position



Although the objects are of relatively similar size and color, the eye is directed to move from the upper left to the left center, to the bottom left, by the position of the objects.

Photoshop Technique: [Position](#)

Scale

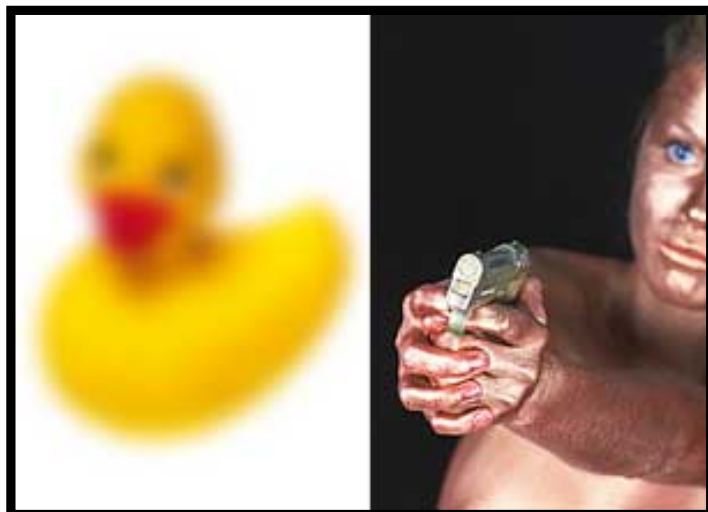


The first thing we look at is the frying pan, even though it is in the last place we'd look, all things being equal.

photoshop technique:

[Transform](#)

Focus



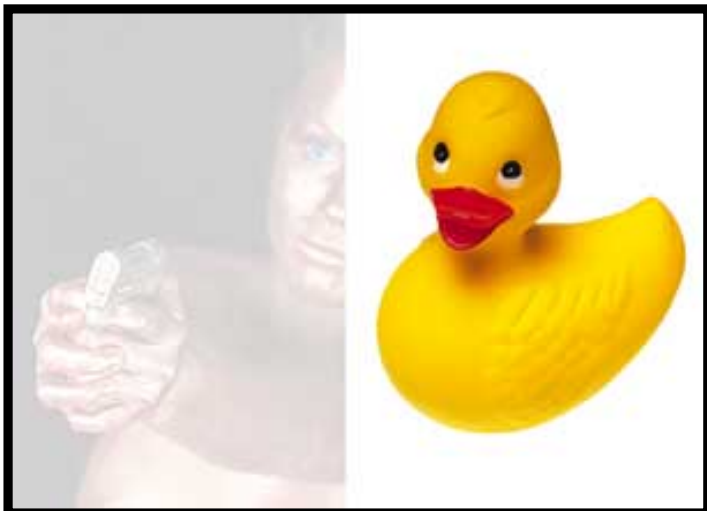
We *should* be seeing the duck first, but since it is out of focus, we automatically look at the figure, and hardly notice the blurry duck.

Since the human eye can only focus on things in one plane at one time, blurring can also be used to create the impression that things are in the distance or up close.

Photoshop Technique: [Gaussian](#)

[Blur](#)

Opacity



By fading out images, we pull the attention to the other images.

Photoshop Technique: [Opacity](#)

Color



The face takes up 80% of the graphic, and yet we see the duck first because of its saturated colors.

Photoshop Technique: [Color Reduction](#)

Static vs. Dynamic

static



dynamic



Even without any other images, how an image is "read" can be altered by its position within the frame. A static composition, where the image is centered, creates a sense of balance and stability. A dynamic composition where things are off-center and images may violate the borders of the frame, creates a sense of energy and movement.

Neither approach is "wrong". You must consider what you are trying to communicate with the placement of your graphics. What effect are you trying for?

Everything you've ever learned

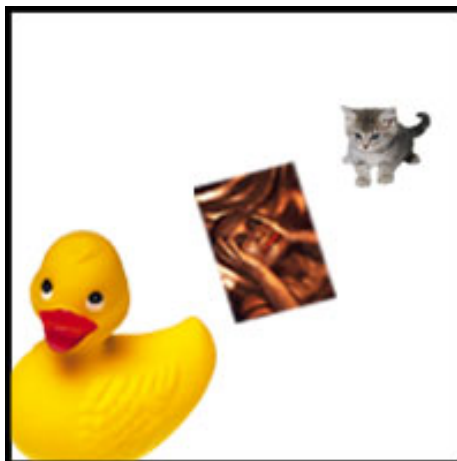
Photomontage is rooted in the way we perceive visual information. This is something we've been learning to do almost since we first opened our eyes. As you create a photomontage, think about, well, *everything* you know about **everything**. Draw from every resource you have, not just what you've learned in this class. Although, this can also be a good source of information. It all applies, somehow.

for example:

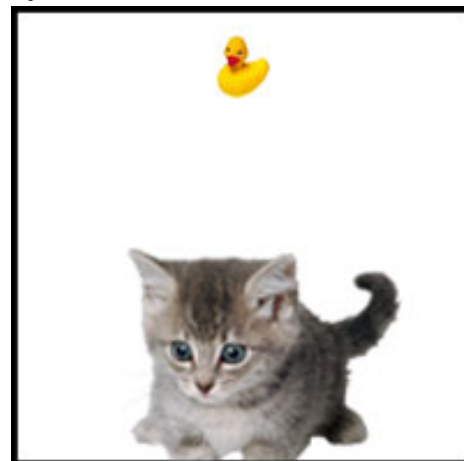
gravity



direction



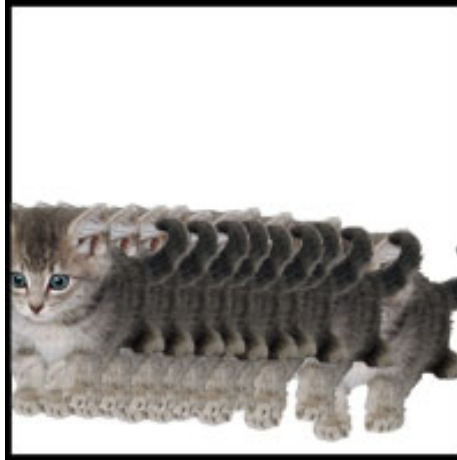
spatial



coinciding



speed



detachment



Combining Images

Step 1. Open the images. The image you are going to be moving to another is called the Source image. The image that you are moving the other image into is called the Target.

Note: The target image should be the size that you want the final piece to be. Set this by choosing **Image Size** from the Image menu, and typing new values into the Height and Width fields in the Document Size section.

Tip: If you want more area to work in, but don't want to change the size of the Target image, choose **Canvas Size** from the Image menu. Increasing the size here will give you more area to work in without changing the size of the graphics

Important Consideration: Resolution. Pay attention to the Resolution setting in the Image Size dialog box. Resolution is a measure of how much information is in the image. Too little and the image is blurry. Too much and it will take forever to print or download. Set the resolution to match the target output device (usually either a printer or a computer monitor). Usually this is 72 ppi for on screen display, and 200 to 300 for printing purposes.

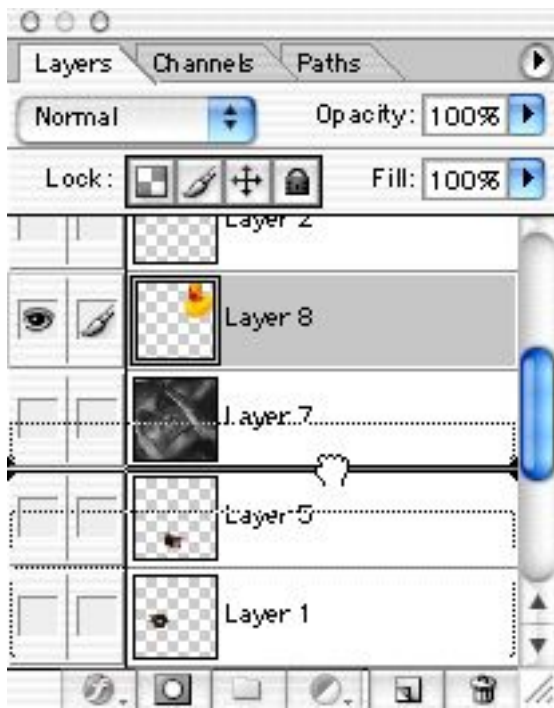
Step 2: Drag the Source image to the Target image using the Move  tool.

After getting the images in the same place, there is a wide variety of things you can do to them, such as:

Step 3: Move the graphics into position. There are two options for the position of images within layers, horizontal and vertical position and stacking order.

Horizontal and vertical position: Use the Move tool to drag the layer to the position you want it to be in by clicking on dragging on it in the image window. Before you can drag a layer, however, you must first make it active. To activate a layer, click on its name or thumbnail in the Layers palette.

Stacking order: As in Illustrator, Photoshop layers are drawn one in front of the other where layers overlap. This corresponds to the layers in the Layers palette. A layer that is below another layer in the Layers palette is behind that layer in the image. Change this order by clicking on the layer and dragging it above another layer in the palette.



When you are in the right position, a black line appears between layers in the layers palette to indicate the position the layer will move to.

When images are combined, many options open, such as:

Remove parts of the images using the Eraser tool, Layer Masks, or making selections and pressing the Delete key.

Rotate, scale and distort the image using the Transform command.

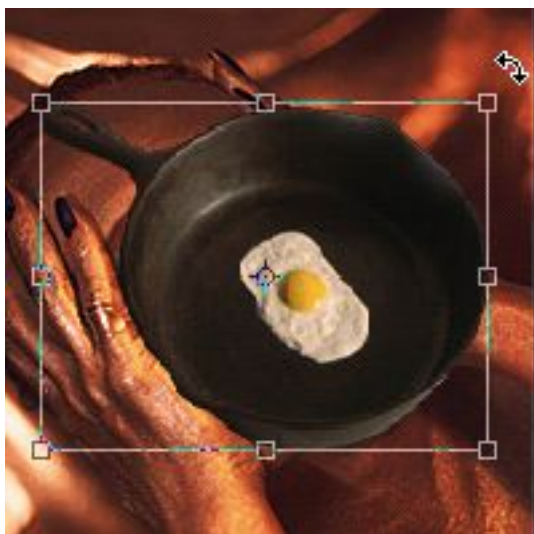
Change the way the image blends with underlying images using Opacity settings.

Rotating, Scaling and Distorting a Layer

Step One: Activate the layer you wish to change by clicking its name in the Layers palette.

note: this does not work on a [Background Layer](#).

Step Two: Choose Free Transform from the Edit menu. A bounding box appears around the contents of the layer.



Step Three: Drag the Handles. Alter the image by dragging the control handles of the bounding box (the little squares in the corners and the middles of the sides of the bounding box). When the image appears as you like it, double-click inside the bounding box, or hit the Return key.

- **scale:** Drag a corner handle. To keep things in proportion, hold down the Shift-key.
- **rotate:** Move the cursor to just outside one of the corner handles. The cursor will change to a two-pointed curved arrow. When you see the change, click and drag clockwise or counter-clockwise.
- **distort:** Hold the Command key (the apple key, Mac) or the Control key on the PC, and drag a corner.
- **skew:** Hold the Command/Control key and drag a side handle.

Note: you can also flip a layer by clicking on a side handle, and dragging it across the layer until the image flips over. It is easier, however just to choose Transform: Flip Horizontal or Transform: Flip Vertical from the Edit menu.

Gaussian Blur

The Gaussian Blur is one of the two most useful Photoshop filters (Unsharp Mask is the other).

Without getting into a lengthy explanation of the mathematics, the way blurring occurs in nature (such as when things are too far away to focus) has been carefully calculated, and this mathematics is used in the Gaussian Blur filter to create a very natural blur. This isn't used by other filters such as Blur and Blur More, and those should be avoided for that reason.

To blur an image:

1. Activate the layer by clicking on its name in the Layers Palette.
2. Choose Blur: Gaussian Blur from the Filter menu. The Gaussian Blur dialog box appears:



3. Make sure the Preview box is checked. This will make the filter preview dynamically as you adjust it, showing what the results of the filter will be before you click OK.

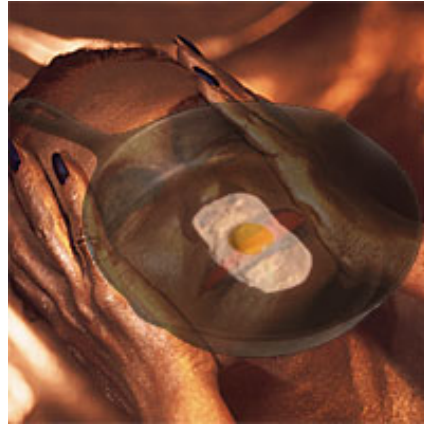
4. Drag the slider beneath the word Radius to the right. Look at how the image changes. Move the slider to the left or to the right to decrease or increase the effect. When you see something you like, click OK.

Opacity & Blending

By default, the Opacity of a layer is set to 100%. This means that it completely hides the layers underneath it. Reducing the opacity can reveal the underlying layers through that layer.



skillet opacity 100%



skillet opacity 65%



skillet opacity 35%

To change the opacity of a layer:

1. Choose the layer in the Layers palette.
2. In the upper right-hand corner of the Layers palette is the Opacity setting. Highlight the number and type in a new value, 0% to 100%, or click the arrow to open the Opacity slider. Drag the slider to the left to decrease the opacity.



<<the opacity setting

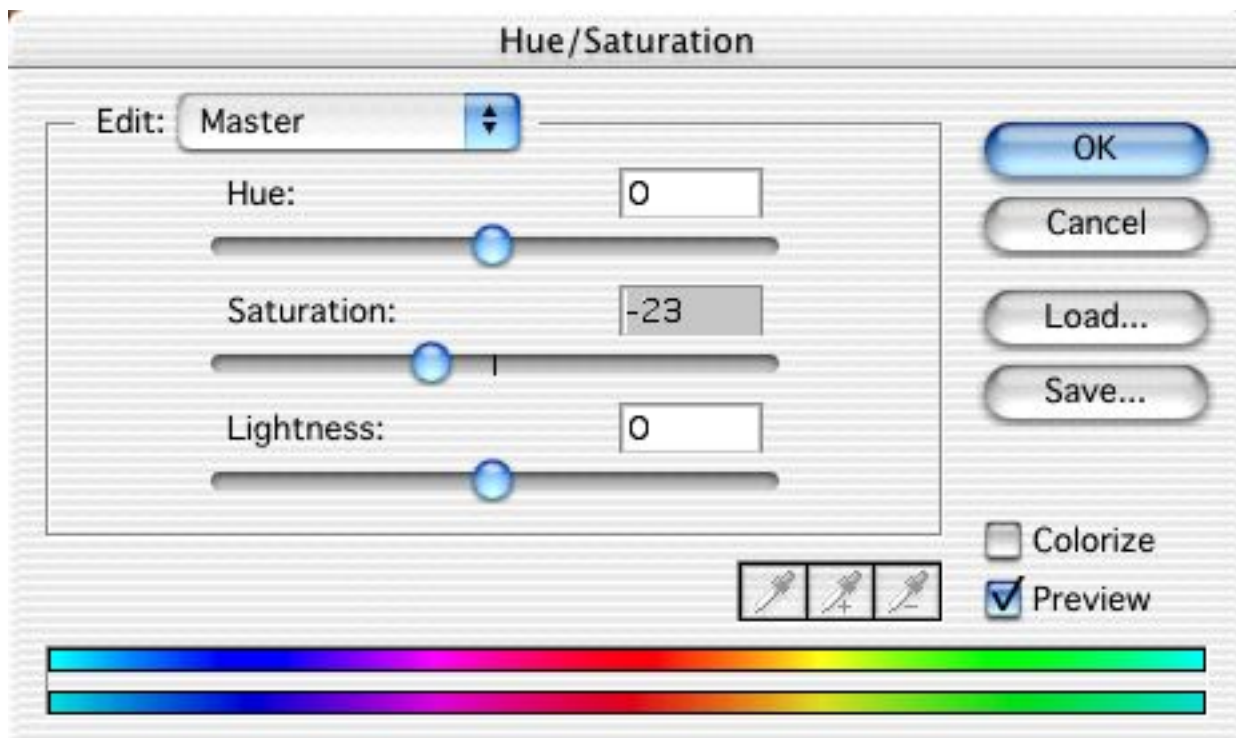
Reducing Color

Photoshop's functions can be separated into three areas. About 40% are geared to photomontage, 40% are geared toward adjusting colors, and the remaining 20% to "other".

There are very many ways to adjust colors. One of the easiest (though not necessarily the best, the best being the Curves palette) is the Hue/Saturation command.

To reduce the amount of color in a layer, shifting the image closer to grayscale:

1. Make the layer active by clicking on it in the Layers palette.
2. Chose Image: Adjust: Hue/Saturation. The Hue/Saturation palette opens.



3. Make sure Preview is checked. This will show the change in the image, allowing you to get it just the way you want it before clicking OK.

4. Drag the Saturation slider to the left. The further left, the less color will be in the image. Push the slider entirely to the left for a grayscale image.

5. Don't touch any other settings. Click OK.

Note: the Hue setting can also be a fun creative tool for changing all the colors in the image to different colors. The Lightness setting is not useful and should be avoided.