Typo / Photo / Graphix's

Analogue

Typography Neil Fletcher

Photography John Holden

Yun Chen

BLAH, BLAH, BLAH
For more examples of abstract photographics, as well as faxed and heavily lacerated typographics, check out Substance's groundbreaking tome *Blah, Blah, Blah*, which was first published in 1996. Rare copies are available from www.imagesof substance.com

➜ PHOTOSHOP

ABSTRACT TYPE

Substance's Oscar Goldman uses original photography and a little *Photoshop* layering to create hand-crafted, traditional typography that's strikingly fused with computer-based portraits from the cyber age

➜ When asked to produce a tutorial based on the techniques I have developed while working at Substance, my immediate response was to develop a tutorial that had a strong bias towards "organic design". After all, too many illustrators these days produce glossy fashion-orientated images.

At Substance, we believe that the computer is slave to its master and therefore produce our images by hand – often incorporating analogue photography. Throughout this tutorial, we want you to consider firstly how you produce *Photoshop* images, and secondly how you interact with your computer. Hopefully, as a result, you'll find ways to challenge the orthodox and fuse human spirit with the computer to produce something entirely unique.

All of our images start with traditional computer set typography. These simple black and white prints are then processed by hand and augmented by the machine. This distinctive fusion of analogue 35mm photography and distressed texts works well once in *Photoshop*.

The layering of images is critical to the construction of our illustrations. *Photoshop* features a bevy of image adjustments to distort, warp or refine your graphics. It is a satisfying way to distort and distress what were very simple textual elements. So try to think outside of your 17-inch TFT screen and you'll produce independent, hand-crafted organic design. Set aside your preconceptions and you'll soon be creating your own images of substance.

Illustration by Chi-Yun Chen
**Tutorial by Oscar Goldman**
www.imagesofsubstance.com
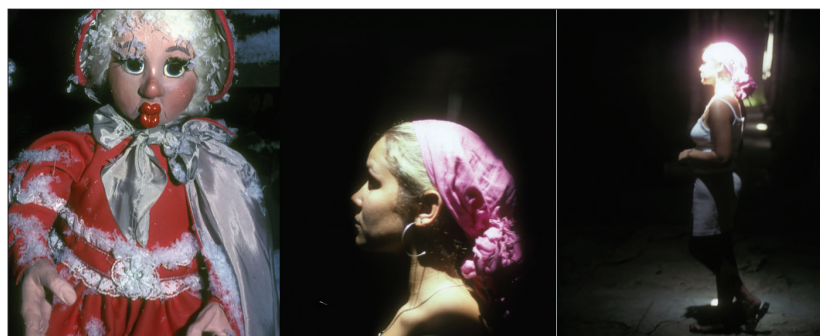
1 Select an image from your archive of analogue 35mm images. Here we used an original A4 flat print taken from a family holiday during a Turkish Summer, but you could also use a transparency. Consider the image's depth of tone, contrast, colour values and focal point.
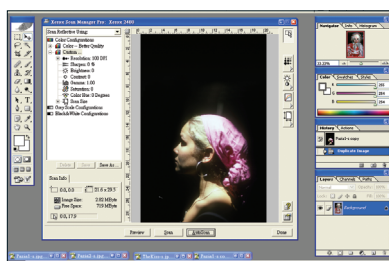

2 Once you're happy with your chosen image, scan it at a high resolution and import the result into *Photoshop*. If you have time at this stage, it's a good idea to scan a small selection of two or three images before you continue the process. This ensures that you'll have more than one image to work with at a later stage.

3 Once you have successfully scanned your portrait images at a high resolution, make sure you save them correctly before getting started. Go to File→SaveAs (Shift+Ctrl+S), set the file resolution to 300dpi and the Image Mode to CMYK Format A4 (Portrait).
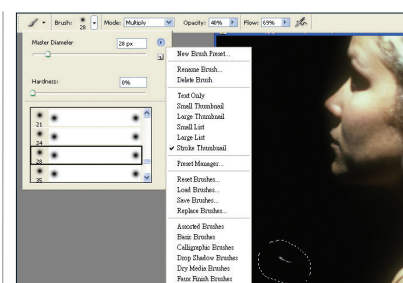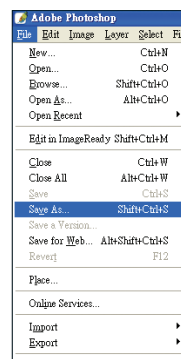

4 Now you can remove any blemishes. Highlight the spot and surrounding area with the Lasso tool. Select a suitable brush from the toolbar. When applying strokes to a damaged area, remember to incorporate a dark tone using the Eyedropper tool to sample existing colour from the image.
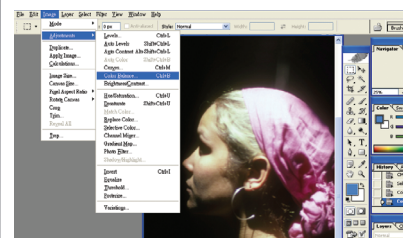

5 Slight colour discrepancies are bound to occur during scanning. To rectify these, go to Image→Adjustments→ColourBalance (Ctrl+B) and subtly alter the settings until you're happy. Remember to save your file!
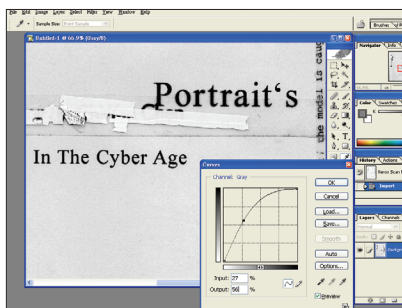
➜ PHOTOSHOP
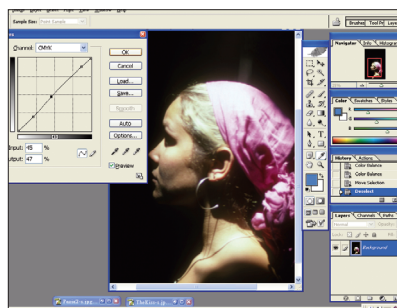
6 *Photoshop*'s Curves function (Image→ Adjustments→Curves) can help refine your image. Selecting point icons will enable you to plot black, grey or white points to alter the balance of your portrait further. Keep clicking the Preview option to refer to your original image. Experimentation and patience is advised at this stage.
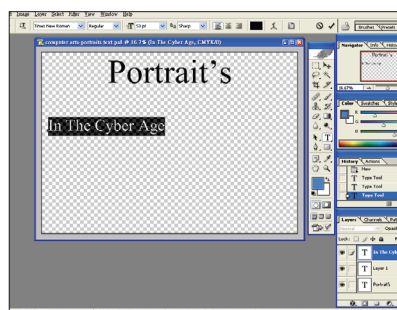

7 Now set your typographic headlines in black and white using an illustration package of your choice and print the text onto non-coated white A4 paper. Simple, uncomplicated typographic treatments will work best, especially if they're kept large – ideally, above 24pt. Make scratches with a scalpel to make key elements more "edgy".
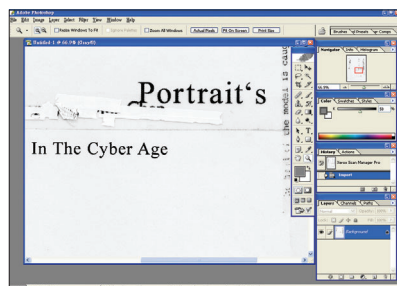
8 Now print out multiple A4 copies of each piece of text. Trial and error is key here, as a spontaneous attitude will keep your typography fresh and vigorous. Here, a mixture of Tippex and Scotch Tape was applied to distort the text. Apply your treatments free hand, as overworked renderings look clumsy and unprofessional.


9 Now scan your typography back into *Photoshop* and play around with the contrast using *Photoshop* filters. Go to Image→Adjustment→Curves (Ctrl+M) and play around with the levels until you're happy. Experiment with the Input and Output levels to distress the image even further.
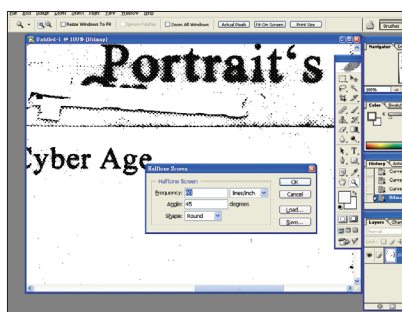

10 To make a combination of contrasting typographic elements, convert each scanned image to create a unique palette of typographic forms. Go to Image→Mode→ Bitmap. The dialog that appears will enable you alter the graphic nature of each element. Alter the Resolution and Method and then select Halftone Screens.


11 It's wise to create a variety of typographic layouts and scan them independently so that you have access to complementary images during the construction process. Have fun utilising the many halftone screen options. Here, a line screened with halftone was employed before using the Brightness/Contrast function to sharpen the image.
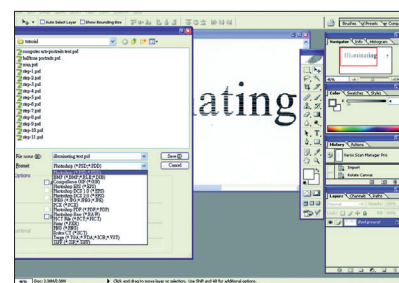
12 Once you've accumulated a variety of images, save them within a single project folder. Choose the *Photoshop* file format so that you can edit the images further. Once they're saved, print out the files as black and white laser prints. Viewing these materials will help during illustration.
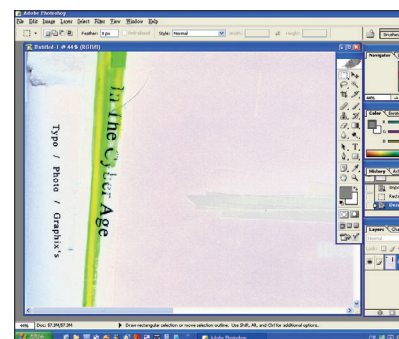
13 It's useful to incorporate one or more non-typographic elements into your graphic palette to add texture to your illustration. Here, a combination of brown packing tape, Tippex, Scotch Tape and day-glo markers was applied and scanned-in as background image material.
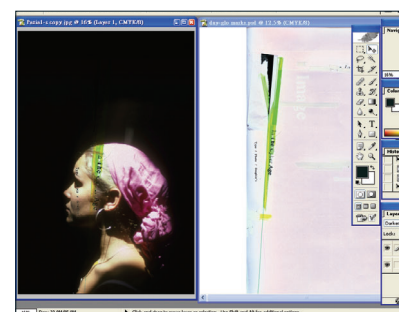

14 Open your portrait image and its background textures. To layer your image, first select the background texture and drag it onto the portrait image using the Move tool. Now select Layer→New→ Layer and a New Layer box will appear. Change the Mode to Darken and move your floating layer (background texture) to a position of your choice.

⊙ KEEP IT SHARP

Text generally "sits up'" better on an image if its tonal values fall between 0-35 per cent of black (if black or dark coloured text) and 70-100 per cent of black (if a light or white coloured text is needed). The basic colour value of your photograph is instrumental to the legibility of the final composition, so make an informed choice or the contrast between text and image will not be sharp and results will be less effective.
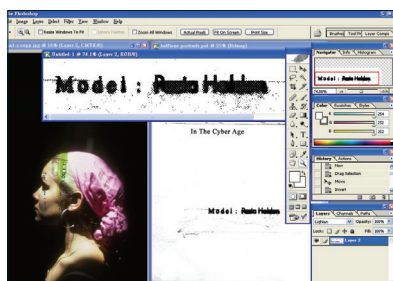
15 Now select any typographic element from your scans and, using the Rectangular Marquee tool, open a new file by choosing File→New (Ctrl+N). Next, use the Move Tool to drag the typographic element to the new file and repeat for any other elements you wish to move.
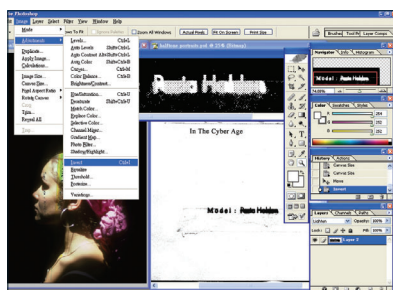

16 Interesting effects can be achieved by using Greyscale or Bitmap images only, as they have a greater contrast tonally and the results are more graphic than when using CMYK or RGB files. To balance the darker tones, invert a variety of typographic elements using Image→Adjustment→Invert.
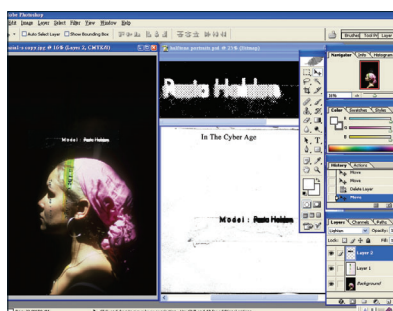

17 To build up your final composition, you'll need to start adding additional elements, such as scanned text or other textures. To place an inverted image from a newly created file onto your portrait image, drag your selected inverted image using the Move Tool onto Portrait and select Mode→Lighten from the Layers Menu.

18 Building your image piece by piece, it's useful to create several typographical images. These "Layers" are stored within the Layers menu. It's important to include numerous typographic elements to aid the illustration process. *Photoshop* layers are flexible and independent, so you can easily move them to suit your compositional needs.
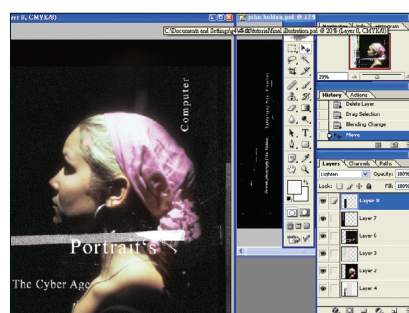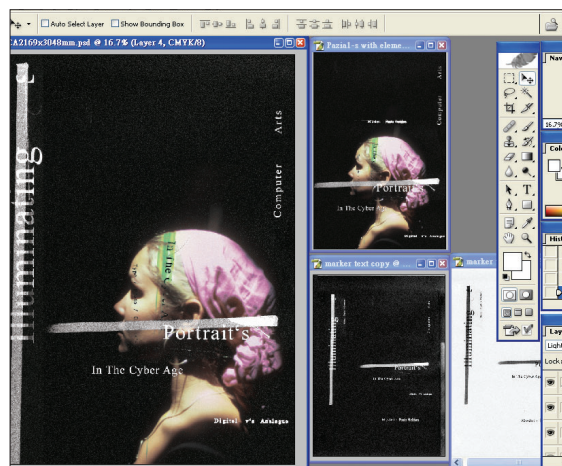

19 You can now start to refine your illustration. Here, we were dissatisfied with our production credits, and thought that the image lacked a little in terms of colour. So we decided to add new elements. We applied the new credits on a new layer in the Layers menu and altered them by choosing Adjustments→Hue/Saturation (Ctrl+U).
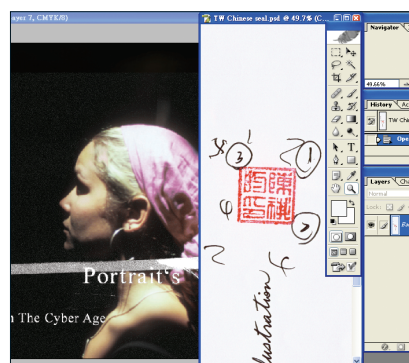
20 As a final touch, we scanned in a Chinese seal as a CMYK file and cleaned it up. We then distressed it by exploiting the filter functions within the main menu. Afterwards, we repeated steps 15-17 to add this final layer to the composition. *Photoshop* layers make moving and arranging original and new elements really easy.
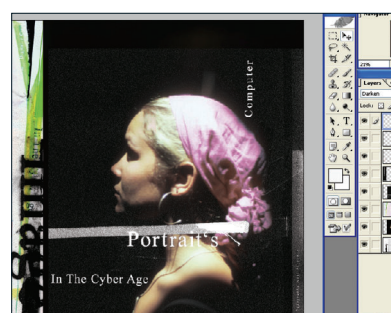
21 It's important to supply your illustration with the appropriate resolution, format and file size (if it's intended for publication). Should your work be a single-page illustration like this, remember to leave a 3mm bleed around the perimeter of your image to allow for trimming requirements.
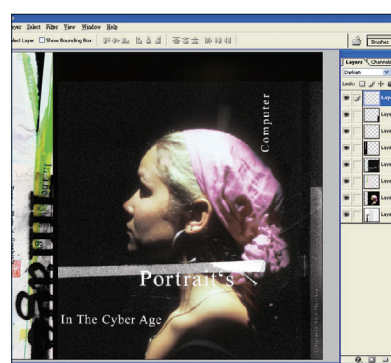
22 Once you are finished, it's always advisable to print out your illustration at 200 per cent so that you can check for any unwanted blemishes. Coloured inkjet prints are preferable to black and white, and remember to pay attention to print separations. If you have access to match proofs, so much the better. **arts**

TAKE CONTROL

Consider your requirements from the start and use your computer as a tool – don't let your programs define your images for you. *Photoshop* filters are great for enhancements, as they aid the illustration process, but they should not define it. There are far too many illustrators generating images driven by *Photoshop* "effects", so consider your options carefully. It's the human component fused with the computer that will lead to a distinctively rendered illustration.

GO ORGANIC

In illustration, the human element is vital, and how you manipulate your textual layouts will make your images unique. A single media can work well, but a combination of multiple mixed media, such as dry transfer lettering, masking tape – and any number of scribbles in biro, crayon or pencil – will really add to your work. Stencils can lead to dynamic results and I often scratch certain elements to aid the distortion process.