



THE

LAST FRAME

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St. Albert Photo Club's Monthly Newsletter



Photo/Dan Riedlhuber - Illustration/Al Popil

Retoucher Christine talks about using art books to help with retouching.

While waiting in line at the cashier at Superstore we all tend to glance at those magazine covers such as Elle and Vogue.

Cover models stare back at us with flawless skin, perfect make-up, and not one strand of hair out of place.

They seem too perfect to be real. Well folks, in fact they are!

This illusion of perfection is primarily the result of photographic retouching.

On January 11th, a well-attended meeting of the St. Albert Photo Club wit-

nessed retouching artist Christina Zasedko demonstrate both traditional retouching as well as some of the current digital wizardry.

She began working part-time for a studio while still in high school and continued there while studying

at NAIT, enrolled in their Photographic Technology program.

After graduating from NAIT in 1985, she developed an interest in photo retouching.

She led to attendance at the Winnona Institute in Chicago, where she stud-

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ied photographic retouching.

Coming back west, she found employment as a photo retoucher for Con Boland.

This lasted for four years. She then went on her own for awhile before spending eight more years working for St. Albert photographer Victor Post.

RETOUCHING DEFINED

Loosely defined, traditional retouching can be defined as the alteration or the optimization of a photographic image, either before printing (negative retouching) or after printing (print retouching).

The end result is a more precise rendition of the visual goals intended by the photographer for a particular image.

A retouching artist requires hand skills as well as visual judgment and discrimination.

These are learned skills based on information gleaned from both experience and background.

NEGATIVE RETOUCHING

Negative retouching has essentially fallen out of favor in the photographic industry.



Tools of the trade, dyes, paints and pastels.

Increase in the use of small-format camera systems, such as 35mm, and advances in darkroom technology, are two major reasons.

Negatives smaller than 120-size film are very difficult to work on, either with an air brush, or manually.

When enlarged to a standard print size, however, any microscopic flaw in paint/manipulation will produce a very obvious error.

In print retouching, paint is usually opaque, or the very least semi-transparent.

It is also a cumulative process, or building up paint over an area.

When dealing with the negative, which must be transparent or semi-transparent in its final phase, the cumulative nature has an effect of limiting the amount of tone manipulation possible for a print.

PRINT RETOUCHING

Print retouching is performed primarily on portrait and wedding photography, but is also conducted with fine art images, such as toning down hotspots, or possibly adding leaves to "dead"

tree branches.

The most difficult area of colour retouching is in learning to mix colors to a desired hue and shade, and in matching colors in paint to print colors.

Without delving too deep into the science of colour theory (which is beyond the scope of this article), all colors are derived from combinations of the three primary colors.

Mixtures of colour which are half of each of two primary colors produce the secondary colors, also three of them.

Still more colors can be produced by combining

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Print retouching.

primaries with secondary. These are known as tertiary colors, and there are six of them.

The air brush is brush which utilizes a stream of compressed gas to apply liquid pigment to a surface, rather than with bristles or hair using conventional brushes.

When retouching with brushes, colors are placed in a palette (mixing tray) and then allowed to dry.

The chosen brush is then moistened and dipped into the color before applying it to the print.

Brushes of different sizes are used for both mixing and carrying color, as well as for manual retouching.

A 4-hair brush is a great tool to use for applying paint for fine-detail work.

A full brush that is tapered at its end holds more dye than a 4-hair brush; thus it is good for larger areas.

Christina demonstrated for us the “dry-dye” technique on an image of a yellow lily.

The dye comes in a cake

form in a wax base.

The dye is simply rubbed on the print with a Q-Tip.

This technique gives you more control than with a liquid dye.

The whole idea is to tone down the hotspots but not eliminate them.

For example, if you eliminate the highlight on someone’s nose, the nose will appear larger than it really is.

Keeping the highlights where they are supposed to be is important when retouching people in photographs.

DIGITAL

Traditional print retouching techniques have become somewhat of a lost art with the ever-increasing popularity of digital photography and computer software programs such as Adobe Photoshop.

Using one or a variety of the Tools options in these programs, almost any imperfection can be made flawless, often in much less time than through print retouching.

The first step Christina recommended whenever

you open file in Photoshop, is to go to the Levels feature.

Here, you can fine-tune your image in each of the three color channels.

This is preferable to using the Auto feature.

Using the Curves feature next, you can set both the white point and the black point in your image; this sets the contrast range of your image.

The Healing tool is used to repair blemishes.

Lines under the eyes can also be filled in a bit.

In print retouching, you can only reduce the highlights when retouching age lines.

exploring are the Lasso tool (it selectively adjusts only one area), and the Eraser tool (permitting you to clean out what you don’t want).

Both the Shadow/High-light filter and the Red-Eye feature offer one-click corrections.

Another common feature is that one can copy features from one image and paste it in another.

As an example, if the eyes in a selected bridal portrait are better in a subsequent image, you can copy the eyes from the latter photo and place them in the former image.

The next time you look



Chris explains that art books can help in retouching.

Working digitally, however, you can also lighten the shadows as well as reduce the highlights.

Eye-lash lines and half-closed eyes can be rebuilt much easier as well when working digitally.

Working with the Opacity at 100% keeps your pixels sharp.

Other features worth

at your own photographs, think about the improvements that could be applied to them.

Don’t think that the print you receive back from your lab is the final version.

Get out those paints or scan your favorite image experiment!

