PR 486: INTRO TO DIGITAL DESIGN TOOLS

RETOUCHING PHOTOS

RETOUCHING IS AN ART *AND* A SCIENCE!

When thinking about retouching, remember that there are not only several ways to approach it and that getting good at the mechanics of these techniques takes time and patience.

But never forget the *art* part of it!

The best retouchers are like artists — they pay attention to detail and make sure their hand is never seen. This means removing the item but then making sure the patterns are never obvious, no matter how small they are. It's paying attention to small details, like sidewalk cracks or the different colors of the sky or ground.

QUICK TIPS FOR RETOUCHING

▸ Always create a new layer for your retouch. This ensures your changes are non-destructive. Also, if you wind up doing several different types of retouches on a single image, you can label them so you know what adjustment is what.

▸ The advantage of doing your retouching on separate layers is that you can also adjust opacity on individual layers if you need to bring back some texture (this is especially true on skin and if you try to remove wrinkles; you don't want it to appear unnaturally smooth).

QUICK TIPS FOR RETOUCHING

▸ Many of the retouching tools have an option to sample from "Current Layer and Below" or "All Layers". Because you're working on a blank layer, make sure you choose one of these options. Use "Current Layer and Below" if it's available, otherwise just use "All Layers".

▸ Keep an eye on your history. Many retouch changes are incremental and your steps can add up quickly. Take frequent snapshots so you don't exceed your undo / history limits if something goes horribly wrong.

WHAT ARE THE TOOLS I CAN USE?

There are a whole host of tools to use for retouching.

▸ Clone Stamp

▸ Healing brushes (including the spot / patch tools)

▸ Content-Aware Move

KNOW THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB

Don't just start using tools willy-nilly! There are a few things you should assess before you start to do your retouching.

▸ What kind of removal are you trying to do? Is it a large object? A smaller object?

▸ How complex is the background behind the object? Are colors and tone similar? Do you have enough background to work with?

▸ How clean can you make your selections?

THE CLONE STAMP

The Clone Stamp is the old-school retouch tool. It's been around the longest in Photoshop. As the name implies, it clones a part of an image and creates a "stamp" with that sample. You can then stamp that image portion wherever you please.

The tool looks like this in the toolbar:

THE CLONE STAMP

The Clone Stamp works best:

▸ You're trying to duplicate something against a clean background.

▸ You're trying to remove something against a very clean background that has little variation in pattern, color, and / or tone.

The key is consistency in the background because the Clone Stamp *does not* do blending!

THE CLONE STAMP

To use the Clone Stamp, you have to sample a section of your image first before you start painting with it. A common mistake beginners make is forgetting to do the sample first.
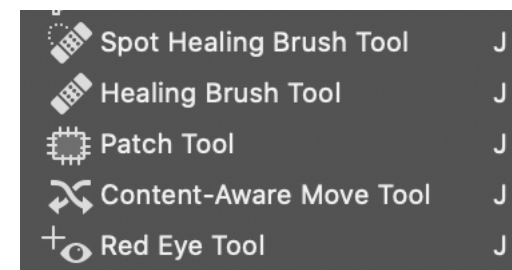
▸ Select the tool and you'll see a circle for your brush. You can adjust your brush size quickly by using the bracket keys ("[" and "]") to make the brush smaller or larger.

▸ Once you are satisfied with your brush size and know what you want to clone, hold down the Option key (Mac) or Alt key (PC). Click once.

▸ After this, move your cursor around and you'll see how the cloned area will look on top. You'll also notice a plus sign moving around, showing what is being sampled and cloned.

THE HEALING TOOLS

There are several healing tools available in Photoshop. These are the next evolution of the Clone Stamp.

‣ Healing Brush

‣ Spot Healing Brush

‣ Patch

‣ Content Aware Tool

‣ Red-Eye Tool

They are generally grouped together in the tool panel and look like this:

	Spot Healing Brush Tool	J
	Healing Brush Tool	J
	Patch Tool	J
	Content-Aware Move Tool	J
	Red Eye Tool	J

THE HEALING TOOLS

Unlike the Clone Stamp, the Healing Tools try to do their best to blend with the background or the surroundings of what you selected. More often than not, when you retouch, you'll use the healing tools. Just be aware of:

▸ Really big changes in background, color, tone, or pattern. You may have to make your selection smaller and take a little more time with it.

▸ Unintentional pattern repetitions. Sometimes you'll see that patches of dirt or grass repeat and while it's not completely obvious, you know that these types of patterns don't occur naturally. You might have to go back and add some imperfections to cover your tracks.

THE HEALING TOOLS

Each of the healing tools works slightly differently.

▸ The Healing Brush works just like the Clone Stamp. You have to sample a section of your image, hold down Option / Alt and click to get the sample, and then start brushing away. You will be able to view what is being sampled as you brush away.

▸ The Spot Healing Brush is essentially a shortcut. You don't have to sample an area first. If you start using that brush, it will try to sample the immediate area around the brush. Works well on small sample areas (like removing a single pimple on someone's skin).

THE HEALING TOOLS

▸ The Patch tool can work well against things such as grass, dirt, or sky. You will make a rough selection around the item you want to remove and then use your mouse inside the selection to find the area you want to replace it with.

▸ The Content Aware Move tool works similarly to the Patch tool in that you have to make a selection around something. This is good for duplicating items that aren't against a clean background (like fence posts in grass or moving a person elsewhere in an image).

THE HEALING TOOLS

▸ The Content Aware Move tool can also "extend" things like hair or the edge of a building.

▸ The Red Eye Tool does exactly what you think it does — it remove red eyes from photos. (This is also another Photoshop tool that has been around for a long time.) It's pretty straightforward, but one thing to keep in mind with this tool is that you might have to adjust how dark the correction is within the tool, especially as people might have light-colored eyes in real life as opposed to dark brown eyes.

PHOTOMERGE

Photoshop comes with several automation and merging tools. One of the most commonly used tools is the Photomerge, which helps create a single panorama from multiple images.

This can be found under File > Automation > Photomerge.

When shooting photos to stitch into a panorama, it helps to keep your camera's settings as consistent as possible (locking in shutter or aperture) and to turn slowly as you snap each shot. The more overlap, the easier it is for Photoshop to stitch everything together.

PHOTOMERGE

Once you add all the images and start the photo merge, you will have the option to adjust the final panorama, including correcting for lens distortion. The panel looks like this: