



CHAPTER ONE

GHOSTS AND MEMORIES

Kevin Ames



Kevin Ames began his photographic career at the age of 12, when he sold pictures of a class field trip to his school-mates for a tidy profit. From this entrepreneurial and creative beginning, Kevin has become a recognized leader in the fast-evolving world of commercial digital photography.

“Whenever I’m using a camera, I’m not so much concerned with it as I am with the light,” Kevin says of his creative philosophy and process. “I love to control, and model, and make light work on whatever I’m photographing. It’s my passion when I’m behind the camera.”

His company, Ames Photographic Illustration, Inc., is based in Atlanta, Georgia, and serves clients on location or in the studio. Ames specializes in creating evocative images that promote its customers’ products, services, and ideals.

“Making photographs for people, being my own boss...I am doing what I’ve always wanted to do, since I was a child watching my parents develop photographs in their bathroom darkroom. I always knew I wanted to be a photographer, and so every day that I’m making photographs and creating is a perfect day.”

Kevin is much in demand as a teacher and speaker. He is a PhotoshopWorld Dream Team instructor at the semiannual PhotoshopWorld conference. Kevin is also a Software Cinema author and presenter at Dean Collins’s Photoshop Training Camp Live! events across the country. His training CDs include *Preserving Pixels—Non-Destructive Editing in Photoshop CS*, *Managing Digital*

REAL-TIME VISUALIZATION

Creative processes are as different and varying as the artists they serve. They are not formulas or recipes. They are methodologies useful on the journey to an end result.

Ansel Adams would look at a scene he wished to photograph and see the finished print. He named his creative process previsualization.

Jerry Uelsmann’s process of making photographs to be assembled later in the darkroom has been called postvisualization. On his Web site (www.uelsmann.net) Uelsmann says, “If you go into the darkroom with the agenda that you want a specific thing to happen, the anything that happens different from that becomes a mistake. If you’re open to accidental or spontaneous events and you can give up your total fixation with the expected result, you may have all kinds of results that might be equally satisfying or even more satisfying.”

Digital capture has given the photographer access to elements of a composition or even the final image that is almost instantaneous. Sometimes the challenge becomes knowing when the photograph is finished.

An image captured digitally is viewed in what is for all practical purposes real time. The impressions, ideas, and feelings of the moment are available for review right now while they are still fresh. Not hours or days into the future when they are at best memories.

My creative process is an amalgam of pre- and postvisualization, coupled with seeing the result in real time. I call it real-time visualization.



Go to www.peachpit.com/dreamteam.html to download files for this chapter.

continued on next page

KEVIN AMES, *continued*

Files and Photographs, The Digital Portrait from Many Images to One, and Retouching Beauty: Digital Makeup and Body Sculpting. He has taught classes at art schools and conferences around the world, including Fotographia Orvieto in Orvieto, Italy; Arthouse in Dublin; and the Commercial and Industrial Photographers of New England conference in Boston.

"I hope to teach the new way of thinking that digital offers," notes Kevin. "When I'm helping people learn the possibilities of digital, my main concern is to show the problem-solving abilities that are the underlying power of the tips and tricks. I want students to learn how to apply techniques creatively to get the visions in their heads out for others to see."

Kevin writes the "Digital Photographer's Notebook" column for *Photoshop User* magazine. His articles and reviews have appeared in *Studio Photography & Design*, *Photo>Electronic Imaging*, and *Digital Output* magazines.

He is a Certified Professional Photographer, a Certified Electronic Imager, a Photographic Craftsman, and an Approved Photographic Instructor. He has served as co-chairman of the Digital Imaging and Advanced Imaging Technology Committee and chairman of the Commercial Advertising Group for the Professional Photographers of America.

Kevin's first book is *Adobe Photoshop CS: The Art of Photographing Women* (Wiley Technology Publishing, 2004).

kevin@amesphoto.com

www.amesphoto.com.

REAL-TIME VISUALIZATION, *continued*

I begin with a feeling that evolves into a visual idea. I begin thinking about what the image might be, avoiding what it previously had been forced to be by the literal limitation of the camera's interpretation of a scene. I have learned to see beyond the camera and into the postproduction process. I see how my Photoshop work will tie the elements from ideas into a finished work.

The camera is the tool to capture the parts, pieces, and moments of time that will make up the composition. With stills or landscapes, I shoot with the camera on a tripod, tethered to my PowerBook. I see the images as I make them. I'll change the aperture to vary the depth of field, the exposure to increase the dynamic range, and the shutter to introduce or eliminate motion. I'll wait as the light washes a scene, shooting this variation caused by time alone.

I shoot, see the result, change it, shoot again, observe, follow my intuition, shoot and review some more. In my mind's eye the final image takes shape as the elements appear on the screen.

I work the same way when photographing people. I do take the camera in hand (still shooting to the computer if possible) and interact with my subjects. I move in close for images of eyes or lips. I climb ladders and shoot with a wide-angle lens. I will go across the studio and use an extreme telephoto. Photography with digital cameras gives the feedback to know when I've "got it!" That is important because once I have the shot, I can begin to play, experiment, and go wild. The model sees the results as we make the images and begins to push them further, too. We talk, point at the screen, and discuss what's working and what isn't. We go back on set and play some more. There are no limits. Instead there are possibilities.

New ideas generate from the photographs appearing on the screen. Nothing is left unexplored. Images I never would have attempted with film because I "knew" they wouldn't work or I wouldn't "like" the results now flow into my visual vocabulary. I am free.

Real-time visualization is a creative process that has evolved for me through years of making photographs painstakingly on film. I have learned the procedures that create "proper" exposures, lighting, and compositions. I have studied and applied parts of previsualization and postvisualization to my work. I have evolved my creative processes. Digital photography is another step in my creative journey. The promise that real-time feedback holds is freedom to create with fewer limits. Take your ideas, your camera, your lighting tools, and your photography to a new place.

Create freely.

GHOSTS AND MEMORIES

Birthdays are remembrances of beginnings, events, and moments to dream of future times. Several cool people started their lives on the same date as I did, including actor Maurice Chevalier; Olympic star Jesse Owens; the amazing Barry White; NBA star Yao Ming; and the second *American Idol* winner, Ruben Studdard. In my time, many interesting things have happened on my birthday—among them, John and Jackie Kennedy were married, and Nikita Khrushchev became leader of the Soviet Union. And decades later on that same date, agreements were signed that reunified his wall-divided Germany.

One of my fondest childhood birthday memories is the launch of Gemini 11. Two space shuttle missions have started on my natal date. And it is the only date to have its own *wiki* (a Web site that celebrates a subject).



Figure 1

My birthday is also the last time in recent memory *The Wall Street Journal* ran a 34-point banner headline across its front page (Figure 1). That date was the beginning of recovery from the horrific events of the day before. I was born on September 12.

In 2001 my birthday was somber, to say the least. Greetings and good wishes for the day were tinged with sadness and colored with stunned disbelief as clouds of smoke poured from the pyre of the fallen World Trade Center towers.

The events of September 11, 2001, moved everyone on the planet. Around the world, people worked to understand what had happened and why, and struggled to cope with their feelings.

After days of watching the coverage, I remembered that I had photographed some skylines of New York City from the apartment of a friend in Greenwich Village. From 20 floors up, the view included the Twin Towers. I remember pressing the lens of my Nikon F3 tightly to the window to make some photographs on Fuji 400 ISO color



Figure 2

negative film. A quick search through my archives turned up one of the only photographs of the World Trade Center I'd ever made, taken on June 23, 1995 (*Figure 2*).

I put the 4x6 print by my workstation in the Atlanta studio and thought about it for months. The summer of 2002 rolled around, and I found myself in New York again. Once more I was staying in my friend's 20th-floor apartment. I stared out the windows at the towerless scene. I could see the towers in my head. They just weren't there. It was very hard for me to grasp their loss and the loss of all the victims and rescuers who perished when the towers were destroyed that day.

Shortly before dusk, I set up my Kodak DCS 760 (a digital version of the Nikon F3) on a tripod, the lens once again firmly against the glass. With the camera connected to my computer, I used Kodak's Camera Manager software to change shutter, aperture, and ISO settings from the computer. I made a series of photographs as the sun was setting and continued shooting until the sky was dark. The next morning I shot the scene again, making sure that I never touched the camera for fear of moving it ever so slightly. Perfect registration was important for two reasons. Noise reduction was one (check out the sidebar). And the other was the photograph haunting my mind.

Download the Ghosts and Memories folder from www.amesphoto.com/learning. These photographs are copyrighted. You are free to use them only to do the steps in this chapter and to play with the techniques. Please don't make prints, post them on the Internet, or distribute them. Thanks. I appreciate your respect for my work.

NOISE REDUCTION

Digital photographs made in low light can be noisy, noisy—did I mention noisy? Film loves long exposures. Comparatively, digital camera sensors don't. As the exposure time increases, they can generate huge amounts of random electronic “grain,” otherwise known as *noise*. The key to reducing noise is that word *random*. No single digital photograph will have the same noise pattern. Hmmm. Here is a simple technique that makes that randomness work for us.

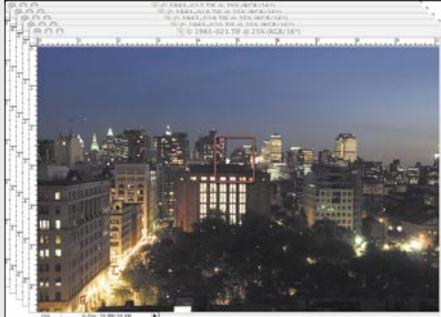


Figure 3

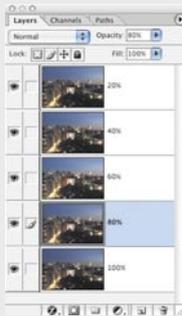


Figure 4



Figure 5

When I shot the skylines, I made five exposures each of the dusk and morning scenes. I processed the Raw files into 16-bit TIF files, opened them all up in Photoshop CS, and dragged them into a single five-layer file (Figure 3).

Here's how to use this technique on five long exposures you have made.

1. Select the Move tool from the Toolbox, or press “v.”
2. Click one of the open images, and hold down Shift as you drag the file on top of another file. Be sure to keep Shift held down until after you have released the mouse button. This aligns the two images in perfect pixel-to-pixel registration.
3. Close the first file that was dragged onto the base file (it now has two layers in the Layers palette) by pressing Command-W (PC: Control-W).
4. Repeat for the remaining three files. The layer stack will have five layers when you are finished.
5. Double-click the Background layer and rename it 100%. Click OK.
6. Highlight Layer 1. Set the Opacity to 80%. (Tip: With the Move tool selected, press 8. Bingo! The Opacity window reads 80%.) Rename the layer 80%.
7. Highlight Layer 2. Make the Opacity 60% and rename the layer 60%.
8. Highlight Layer 3. Change its Opacity to 40%. Name it 40%.
9. Highlight Layer 4. Set the Opacity to 20% and rename it 20%. Your Layers palette will look like that shown in Figure 4.
10. Flatten the image and save your work.

Here's the payoff. The enlarged area shown in Figure 5 is from the red square in Figure 3. The *Before* image is of a single frame of the dusk scene. The *After* image is the average of the five different dusk photographs, complete with random noise and in perfect registration. Look, Ma, no noise!

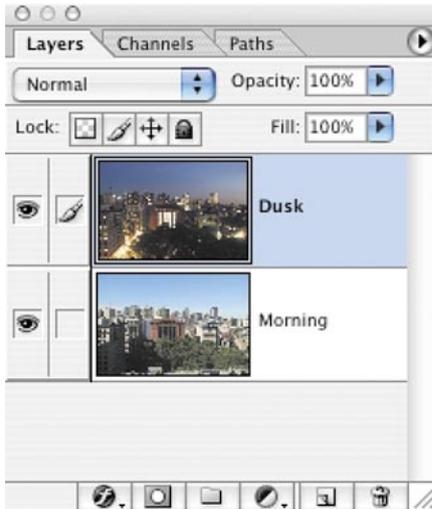


Figure 6

NOTE

In Mac OS X 10.3, the keyboard shortcut for Feather Selection (Command-Option-D) un-hides the Dock instead. Turn this feature off in System Preferences: Open the Keyboard & Mouse pane, click the Keyboard Shortcuts tab, and uncheck the "Automatically hide and show the Dock" box.

Step 1

Open the 16-bit files 1247-WTC01.tif, 1983-morning.tif, and 1983-dusk.tif in Photoshop CS. Tip: If you are using Photoshop 7.0, change them to 8 bit; use Image>Mode>8Bits/Channel. The noise-reduction steps have already been implemented.

Step 2

Select the Move tool. Click 1983-dusk.tif, hold down Shift, and drag it onto 1983-morning.tif (be sure to keep Shift held down until after you have released the mouse button). Click 1983-dusk.tif again, and press Command-W (PC: Control-W) to close it.

Step 3

Double-click the Background layer and rename it Morning. Rename Layer 1 Dusk (Figure 6).

Step 4

Click the title bar of 1247-WTC01.tif to make it the active file. Click the Paths tab to show the Paths palette, and Command-click (PC: Control-click) the path WTC to turn it into a selection. Choose Select>Feather and feather the selection by 0.3 pixels. Hold down Command (PC: Control) and then press "]" to copy the selection into its own layer.

Step 5

Using the Move tool, drag Layer 1 (showing the World Trade Center towers) onto 1983-morning.tif. Close 1247-WTC01.tif without saving it. Rename Layer 1 WTC. Choose File>Save As, and save 1983-morning.tif as a Photoshop document (.psd) file.

The World Trade Center was photographed with a film camera in 1995. The full-frame shot has a slightly different perspective and is much larger than the scene it is going into. The next section deals with sizing and placing the towers in their original position.

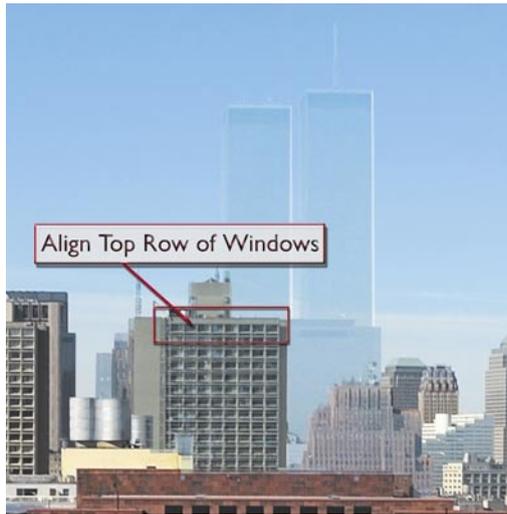


Figure 7

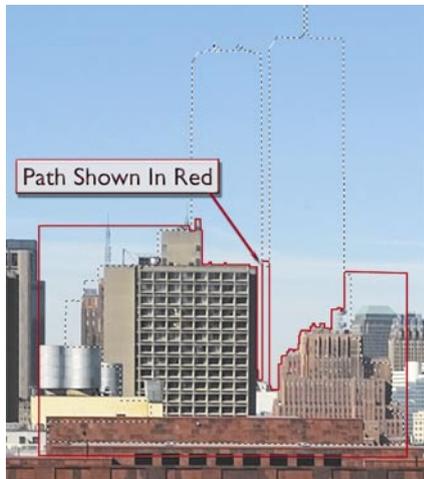


Figure 8

Step 6

Turn off the Eye icon for the Dusk layer. Set the Opacity of the WTC layer to 50%. Choose Edit>Free Transform (Command-T [PC: Control-T]). Click the Maintain Aspect Ratio link icon between the W and H number fields in the Options Bar (it looks like a chain link). Enter 46% in the W field. Drag the Towers layer until the top floor of the apartment building in front of them lines up as closely as possible (Figure 7). The foreground buildings of the WTC layer will not exactly match the background buildings of the Morning layer. This is not a problem, as the transformation is for position only. Click the Commit Transform checkbox in the Options Bar, or press Return (PC: Enter). Return the Opacity of the WTC layer to 100%.

Step 7

Hold down Command (PC: Control) and click the WTC layer thumbnail. This makes a selection of the pixels on that layer. Click the layer's Eye icon to hide it. The selection shows where the Twin Towers once stood.

Notice that the area selected is wider than the existing skyline. Buildings that stood in front of the towers in 1995 no longer exist. Hide and reveal the WTC layer to see what I mean. For the next step, leave the WTC layer hidden.

Step 8

Choose the Pen tool from the Toolbox. Draw a path that follows the skyline of the current buildings from the Morning layer inside the selection area that outlines the WTC. The path has to reach up into the space between the towers (Figure 8). Extend the path around the outside of the selection down below the section of the NYU library (the rust-colored building bordering Washington Square). Double-click the work path in the Paths palette, and rename it Path 2. (If you want a shortcut on this project, use the predrawn Path 1 that is in the download images when the directions ask you to work with Path 2.)

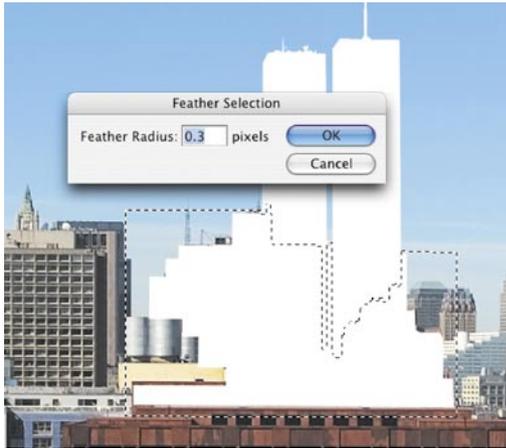


Figure 9



Figure 10

Step 9

Deselect the WTC layer selection (Command-D [PC: Control-D]). Make the Morning layer active, and click the New Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers palette to add a new layer. Drag Layer 1 under the Morning layer. Fill Layer 1 with white: Choose Edit>Fill, and select White from the Contents pop-up menu.

Step 10

Command-click (PC: Control-click) the WTC layer to bring back the selection of that layer. Highlight the Morning layer. Hold down Option (PC: Alt) and click the Add Layer/Vector Mask icon at the bottom of the Layers palette. The outline of the selection from the WTC layer appears as white in the new layer mask.

Step 11

Click the Paths tab. Command-click (PC: Control-click) Path 2 to load it as a selection. Press Command-Option-D (PC: Control-Alt-D) to bring up the Feather Selection dialog. Enter 0.3 pixels (Figure 9). Click OK.

Step 12

Click the Layers tab. Highlight the layer mask of Morning by clicking its thumbnail; a layer mask icon appears next to the Eye icon. Fill the selection with white. The keyboard shortcuts are “d” to set the default colors (white is the foreground color) and Option-Delete (PC: Alt-Backspace). The missing skyline reappears. Deselect (Figure 10).

Steps 7 and 10 through 12 have to be repeated for the Dusk layer. If only there were a way to copy layer masks. Well, don’t tell *anybody*, but there is! Here’s how...

Step 13

Click Dusk’s thumbnail to make that layer active. Click and hold Morning’s layer mask icon, and in one motion (that is, don’t release the mouse button) drag it to the Add Layer/Vector Mask icon, and then

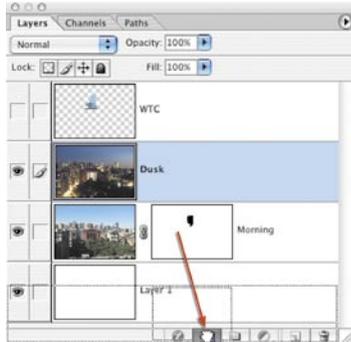


Figure 11

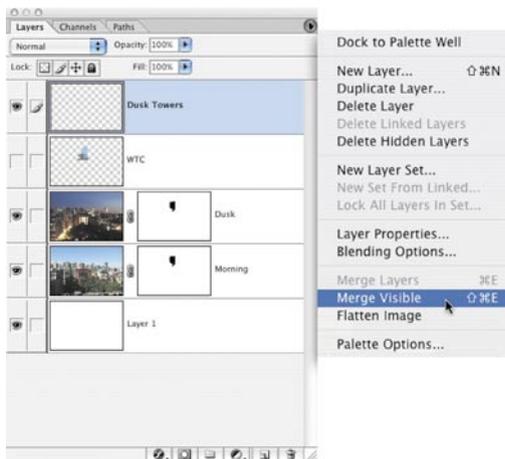


Figure 12

TIP

Wouldn't it be nice if there were a shortcut for step 2? Yes, it would be—and there is! (You knew I'd say that, didn't you?) For the first part, hold down Command-Option-Shift (PC: Control-Alt-Shift) then press “n.” Continue holding down those keys and then press “e” to do the second part. Cool, easy, and fast!

release...BANG! The silhouette of the towers instantly appears in the night sky (Figure 11). Copying layer masks is one of many time-saving shortcuts I have learned from Adobe's own Senior Digital Imaging Evangelist, the fabulous Julieanne Kost; kudos and thanks!

Day and Night, Night and Day

My original idea was to portray the faded outlines of the towers against an everyday skyline. Thinking about memories, I began to realize that they truly become painted in our minds as they change through time. The terrorist attacks and their aftermath are marked as time passes. So are the memories of where the towers once stood. The photograph I saw in my mind had to show ghosts and memories *moving in time*, not a frozen reality.

Step 1

Highlight the WTC layer by clicking its thumbnail. Hide it and the Morning layer by clicking off their Eye icons.

Step 2

Make a new layer at the top of the stack, and rename it Dusk Towers. Hold down Option (PC: Alt) and select Merge Visible from the Layers palette menu at the top right (Figure 12). This copies the visible layers to the active layer—here, Dusk Towers (for this to work, make sure you keep Option [PC: Alt] held down until you see the new layer thumbnail appear).

Step 3

Hide the Dusk Towers and Dusk layers. Reveal the Morning layer by clicking its Eye icon back on.

Step 4

Using the ultracool shortcut in the Tip, hold down Command-Option-Shift (PC: Control-Alt-Shift), and then press “n” followed by “e.” Morning and Layer 1 have been copied onto the new layer. Rename it Morning Towers. Reveal Dusk Towers by clicking on its Eye icon.



Figure 13



Figure 14

Step 5

Change the blending mode of Morning Towers to Lighten. Turn off the Eye icons for all the layers except Morning Towers and Dusk Towers. Make a new empty layer, and copy Morning Towers and Dusk Towers to it (Command-Option-Shift [PC: Control-Alt-Shift] and “n” and then “e”). Rename the layer Lighten.

Step 6

Click the thumbnail of Dusk Towers to highlight it. Press Command-J (PC: Control-J) to make a copy of it. Drag Dusk Towers Copy to the top of the layer stack.

Step 7

Set the blending mode of Dusk Towers Copy to Pin Light, and then double-click the layer name and rename the layer Pin Light. Click the Add Layer/Vector Mask icon on the Layers palette to add a layer mask to Pin Light.

Step 8

Select the Brush from the Toolbox. Make it a soft-edged 125-pixel 100% Opacity brush. Set black as the foreground color. Paint over the magenta posterized trees. Paint over the sky as well. Set the brush to 50% Opacity. Paint over the tops of the buildings that line the street on the left, the rooftops of the buildings on the right, and the rooftop in the foreground. Your layer mask will resemble *Figure 13*.

To see the mask view shown in *Figure 13*, hold down Option (PC: Alt) and click the thumbnail of the layer mask. Option-click (PC: Alt-click) the mask thumbnail again to return to the regular view of the image. The layer stack has seven layers at this point (*Figure 14*).

Step 9

Highlight Morning Towers. Duplicate it by pressing Command-J (PC: Control-J). Move it up to the top of the layer stack. Rename the layer Color Burn.



Figure 15



Figure 16

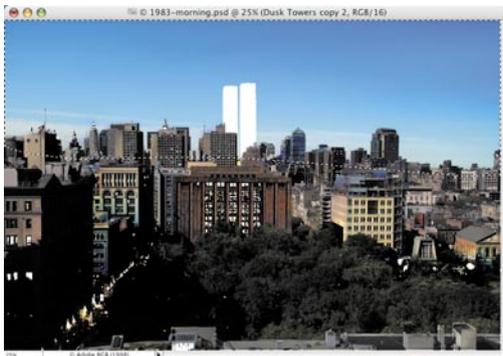


Figure 17

Step 10

Change the blending mode to Color Burn. Ouch! Too much! Lower Color Burn's Opacity to 50%. Much better. This layer is going to add some contrast to selected areas of the composition.

Step 11

Hold down Option (PC: Alt) and click the Add Layer/Vector Mask icon at the bottom of the Layers palette. A new layer mask filled with black appears next to Color Burn's thumbnail. Holding down Option (PC: Alt) when you click the Add Layer/Vector Mask icon creates a layer mask that hides everything on the layer (black), instead of the default, which would be a mask that showed everything (white).

Step 12

Select the Brush from the Toolbox by pressing "b." Make white the foreground color, and set the brush's Opacity to 50%. Paint over the trees. They become darker (Figure 15). Change the Brush Opacity to 25%. Work on the edges of the photograph, darkening them slightly. Use the Brush to add contrast to some of the blues in the buildings and the yellow in the windows (Figure 16).

Step 13

Duplicate Dusk Towers one more time. Drag it to the top of the layer stack. Rename it Color Burn Inverted.

Step 14

Choose Image>Adjustments>Invert (Command-I [PC: Control-I]). Set the layers blending mode to Color Burn. At this point it might look like way too much contrast. We are going to use only part of this layer.

Step 15

Select the Lasso tool from the Toolbox ("l"). Draw a selection just above the rooftops of the buildings at the front of the skyline and around the entire sky (Figure 17).



Figure 18



Figure 19

Step 16

Click the Add Layer/Vector Mask icon on the Layers palette. The new layer mask on Color Burn Inverted is white above the roofline and black below it. The transition from the top of the image, with its extra contrast, and the bottom is a sharp line (Figure 18). The next step will soften this transition variably *and* interactively.

Step 17

The layer mask on Color Burn Inverted is active. Choose Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur (Figure 19). Set the pixel Radius to around 75 pixels. Click the Preview checkbox on and off to see the effect. What we're looking for is kind of a spotlight edge transition from the sky and the buildings in the background through the rooftops and fading completely in the trees and street. The buildings directly on the skyline still look a bit too cartoonish. In the next step...

Step 18

...we'll knock the effect down a little bit: Choose the Brush tool. Use the 125-pixel soft-edge brush at 25% Opacity. Paint with black over the tallest buildings, and bring their contrast down just a bit. Now lower the layer Opacity to (you guessed it) 50% (Figure 20). This enhances the difference between night and day.

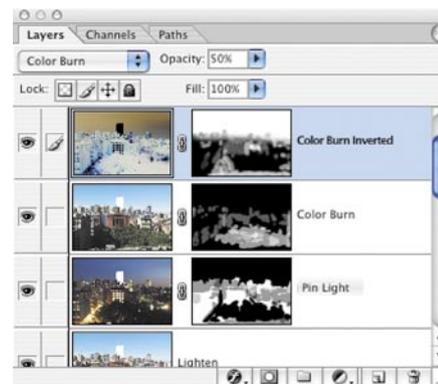


Figure 20



Figure 21

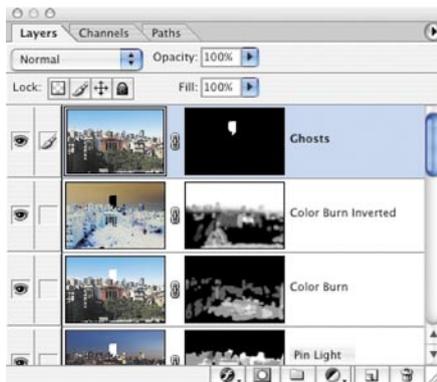


Figure 22

TIP

Paint with white on the shadow sides of the buildings on the lighted street to make them slightly darker (Figure 21).

Now it's time to turn the Twin Towers into the ghosts our minds see when we gaze at the places where they used to be.

Step 19

Duplicate the original Morning layer (the one with the layer mask that shows the dark silhouette of the towers). Drag it to the top of the layer stack. Rename it Ghosts.

Step 20

Make the Ghosts layer mask active by clicking it. Press Command-I (PC: Control-I) to invert the mask (Figure 22).

Our work here is done (Figure 23).



Figure 23