# 10 LEVITATION EFFECTS WITH PHOTOSHOP MASKING

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Levitation photos usually consist of two simple layered photographs, one of the subject on a stool or ladder, and one of an empty background. With the subject layer arranged in the palette stack on top of the background, add a layer mask to the subject and then use the Pen tool to select the area around the stool. Delete the selected area with Select>Modify> Feather set to 2px.

You may notice in your image that there are discrepancies in toning or shading between the subject and background layers, made apparent by the hole you just created. To fix this, lightly apply the Dodge and Burn tools to the background layer at around 15% Exposure, using a large brush at 0 Hardness. The goal is to create a seamless transition between the two layers so that no evidence of the stool remains in the final image.

Any additional blemishes can be cleaned up using the Clone Stamp and Healing Brush tools. To add realism, incorporate a shadow by flattening the layers and using the Burn tool set to Midtones at around 25% Exposure and brushing in the area underneath the subject. At this point, the image can be edited like any photograph, and any additional toning or effects are up to you.
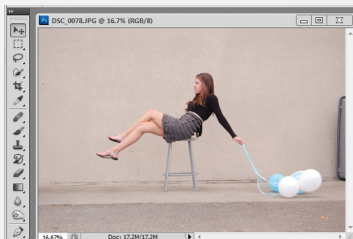

11 COMPOSITE FIRE EFFECTS

JACK CROSSING
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When applying fire to a subject, it's best practice to gather a variety of fire images – the more images the better. A lot of the time you'll only need a small section of the image, but it's good to have more options with various heights, colours and lengths. Once you've chosen the burning object, you need to drop the fire images in above the subject.

To get the fire to blend, apply either the Overlay, Screen or Lighten blending modes to the image layer, which will make it seem transparent and fit nicely with the subject below. It also helps to brush sections of the fire back in or out using a layer mask.

You can duplicate the background layer, apply the Distort>Glass Filter and brush it in behind the subject subtly using a layer mask. This will simulate heat haze, the shimmering effect you see above fire. You can also add smoke as well as lighting and colour effects to create authenticity. Make sure these effects are above the fire images and the subject in the layer stack so everything blends together nicely.
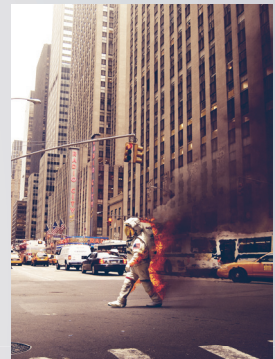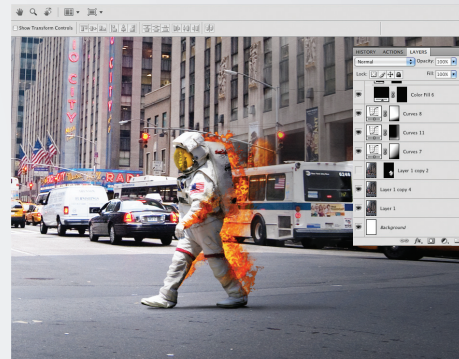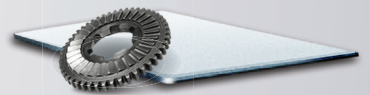

12 CONSTRUCT GLOBAL LIGHTING
Use Photoshop to unite individual images into believable composites

CLINT DAVIS
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001 |
Shadows are created using two layers. One is black with an Overlay blending mode set to retain highlights, while a duplicate layer is set to Normal with a low Opacity value to control brightness

002 |
Each element is carefully cut out with the Pen tool combined with Refine Edge for the more complicated parts. Clip by 2px within the subject lines to avoid any unwanted background spill

003 |
Global changes include a warm Photo Filter adjustment layer and a grungy texture set to Overlay. Scattered dust created with the Clouds filter and some layer masking unites the image into a solid composite

004 |
The model, tanks and ground all have a similar light source. The helicopter and explosion were flipped horizontally – one reason why sourcing unevenly lit images makes them more versatile

005 |
You can always try and plan similar lighting, but when sourcing and shooting images for compositing, expect to at least have some uneven lighting. Perfectly even lighting can sometimes look artificial