

Creating a Miniature Environment

This quick assignment takes real photographs and manipulates them so they appear to be fake, miniature versions of the real thing.

We need to begin by picking a good photograph for this exercise. I have a few pictures you can use if you wish, but you are also free to go online and find an image of your own. Keep the following in mind as you search for a suitable image...

- The photograph should be taken from above as most people are used to looking down on models
- There should be no or little sky and horizon, and any sky or horizon that is visible should be short and even and not go off into the background forever
- Keep unnecessary item in the foreground to a minimum
- The lighting should be coming from one source, as models are usually lit by only a lamp or single overhead light
- Lots of people or overly complicated buildings do not work well because both would be very difficult to build and would require a model builder to spend an enormous amount of time on the project

Let's get started...

1. Open Photoshop
2. Go into the Pictures folder inside the tutorial folder and choose an image you like (as it says above, you are free to go on the Internet and find an image of your own, but be sure to follow the image selection suggestions above), for these directions, we will use the image below...



do you know what this is?

3. Save your image to your personal folder as **miniature**
4. Press Q to enter Quick Mask mode – you can tell you are in Quick Mask mode because the words 'Quick Mask' will appear in the image's title bar



5. Click the Gradient Tool



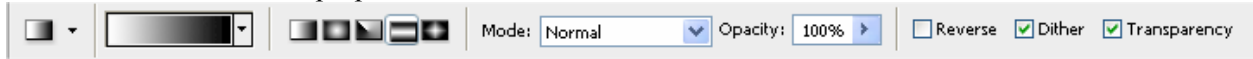
if you do not see the Gradient Tool, right click the Paint Bucket Tool and select the Gradient Tool

6. Press D to set the foreground and background colors to the default black and white

- Click the Switch Foreground and Background Colors button to set white as your foreground and black as your background colors

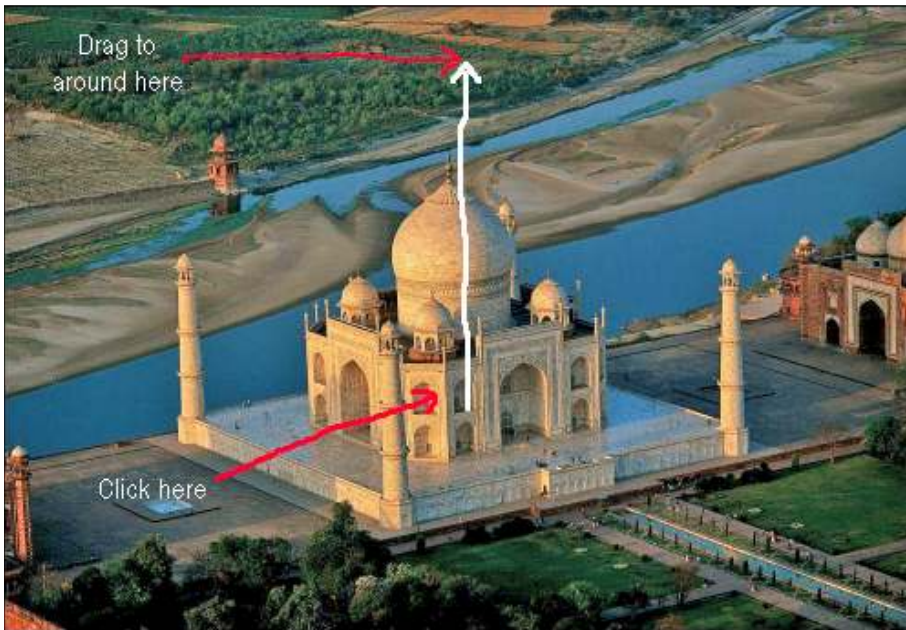


- Set the Gradient Tool properties to match those below...

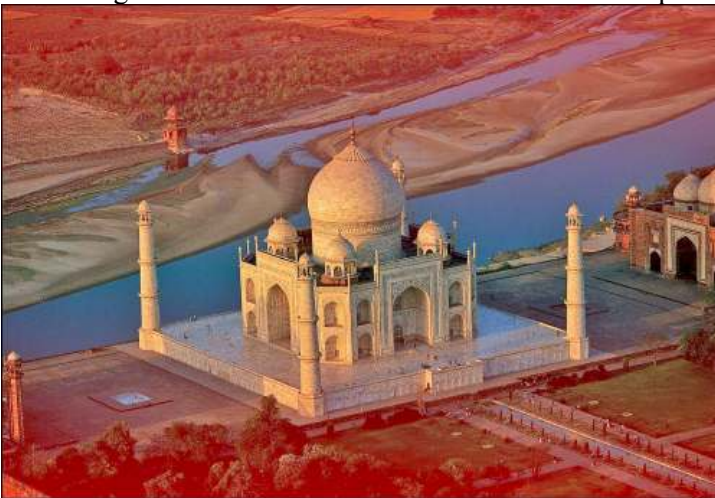


be sure the gradient you are using is the Foreground to Background gradient and the gradient type you are using is the Reflected Gradient

- Determine the area of your image you wish to be the focus – this will be the main structure in the image – and click in the center of this area and drag to the top of the image – keep in mind that it does not matter if the line is perfectly straight (in fact, it adds originality to your image if it is not perfectly straight) and it is not necessary to drag the line all the way to the top of your image, you will need to try dragging from different points and different distances a few times until you get something that works



- Your image should now have nice red bars across the top and bottom



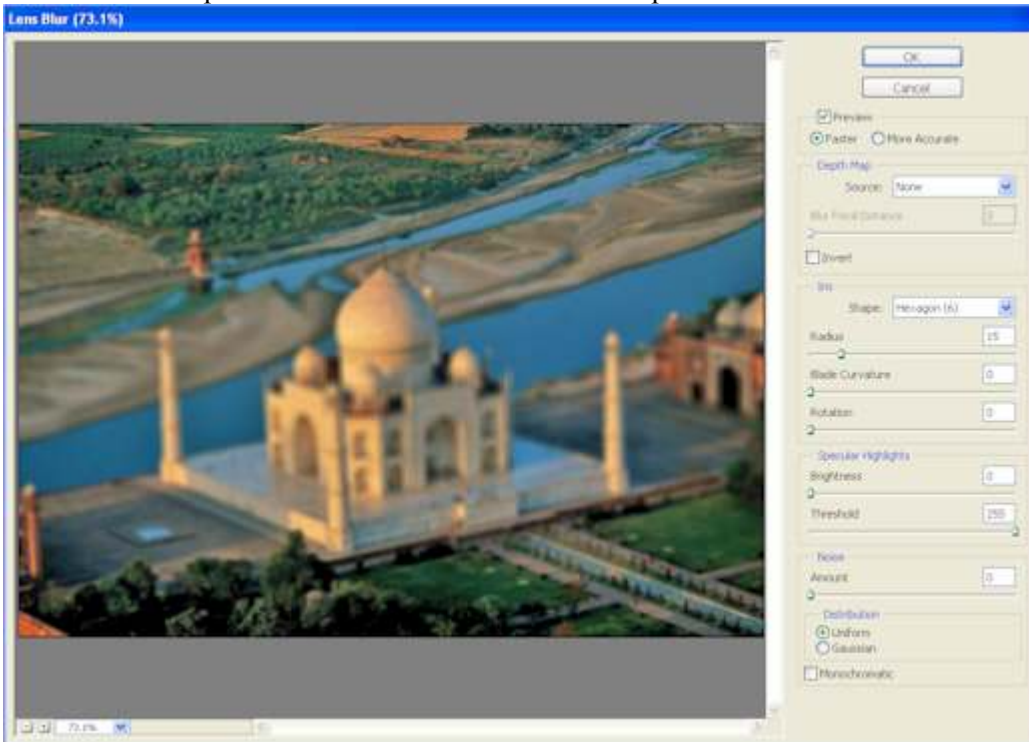
the red areas indicate the different parts of our image that will be changed when we apply a filter in the coming steps

11. Press Q to leave Quick Mask mode – notice that you now have a selection area, as indicated by the marching ants

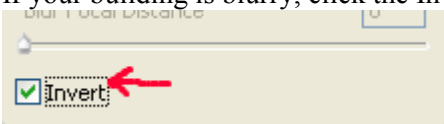


notice that my building is selected, but don't worry if yours is not – it actually does not matter at this point if the focus of your image is selected or if the area above and below it is selected, either way will work as we can adjust the selection in the following steps

12. Click Filter then point at Blur and select Lens Blur to open the Lens Blur window

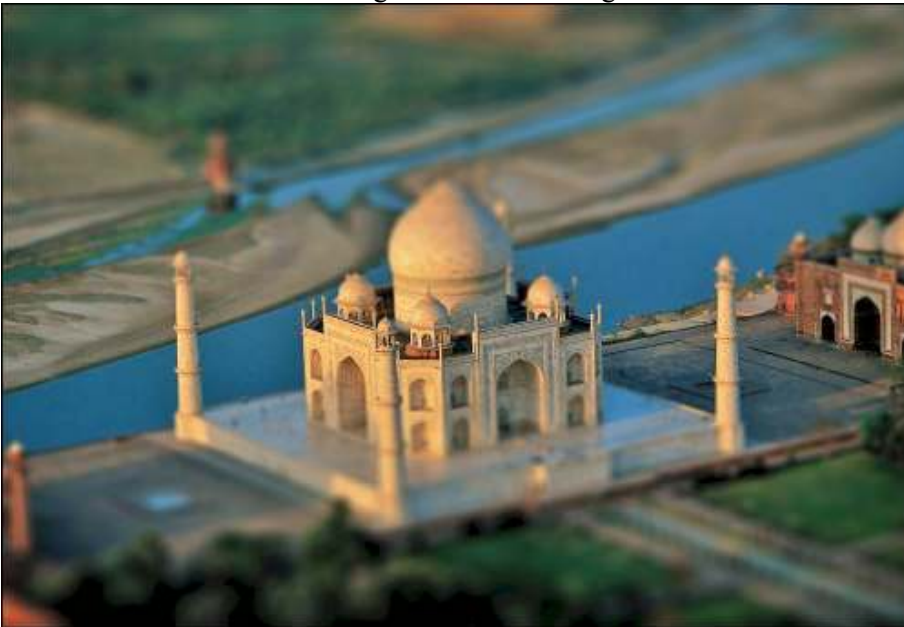


13. If your building is blurry, click the Invert checkbox to shift your selection

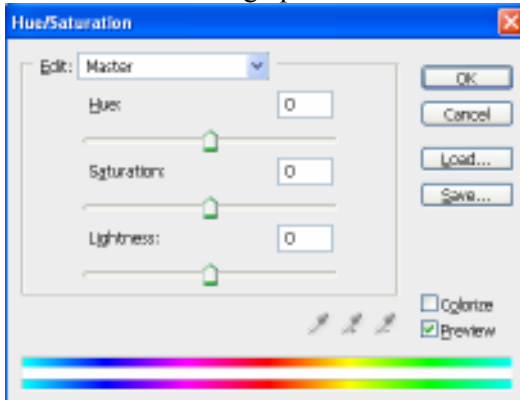


14. Make the following settings adjustments:
 - a. Iris section

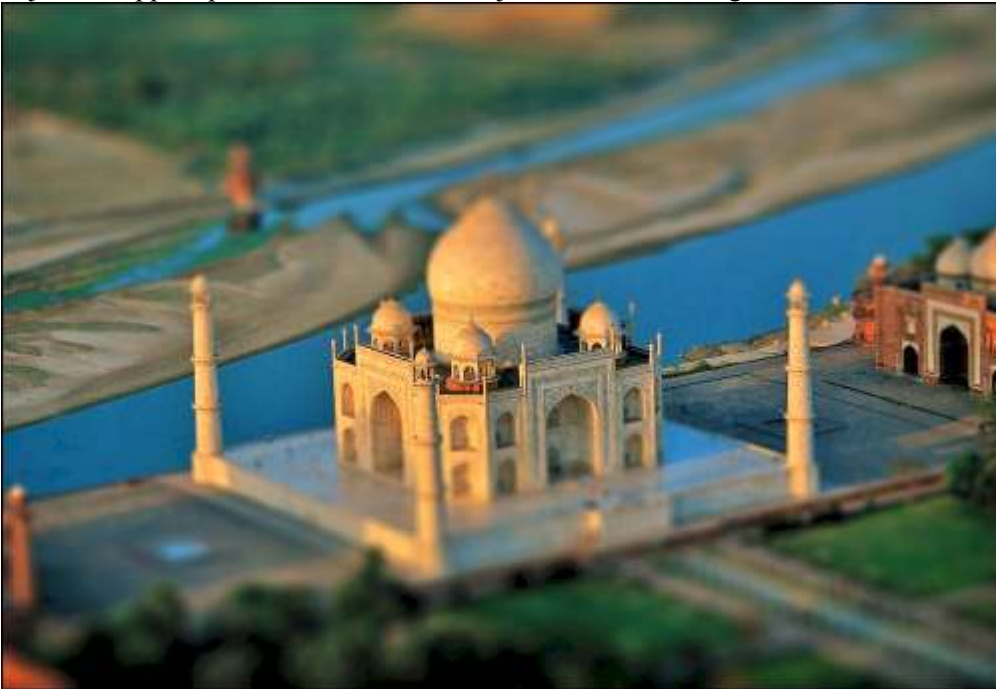
- i. Shape controls the shape of the lens Photoshop is using to alter the image – the default Hexagon (6) is the most natural looking so just leave this setting alone
 - ii. Radius controls the amount of blur – try a setting between 30 and 50 until your building appears to stand out and the background is blurry but you can still determine what objects are
 - iii. Blade Curvature and Rotation will not have much impact on what we are doing, so let's just leave them alone
 - b. Specular Highlights section
 - i. Brightness controls how bright the blurred white parts are, so start at around 20 and adjust the amount from there until you have something that you like
 - ii. Threshold determines the point at which the bright blurred area turns white, start with an amount of around 245 and adjust it from there
 - c. Noise section
 - i. We don't want to add noise, so leave these set to their default settings (Amount = 0; Distribution = Uniform; Monochromatic unchecked)
15. Click OK – Photoshop may take a few seconds to apply the filter, so be patient
16. Press Ctrl+D to deselect
17. You should now have something similar to the image below...



18. Press Ctrl+U to bring up the Hue/Saturation window



19. Increase the Saturation to around 20 to make the image brighter and colors more vivid – we want the objects to appear plastic and fake – and adjust it until it looks good



20. Save your image in your folder

The transformation is now complete...

