



Moonrise

A quick painting project in Photoshop: Moonrise, done entirely with .abr brushes and the default brushes, with a bit of know how about layers, merge modes, blurring and gradients.

This project was done very quickly to fill a need ... something I'd forgotten to render up in 3D, and suddenly I was out of time.

It was done in PS Elements 9, using brushes you can buy through Renderosity and the DAZ marketplace – and I'll list the resources as we go through the project.

Have fun!

Best wishes,

Jade

First, working from the bottom layer and on up, you want to create the sky layer.

This was a very simple gradient, from deep warm purple to warm orange, which was intended to represent city lights.

If you haven't already set the image size, do it now:

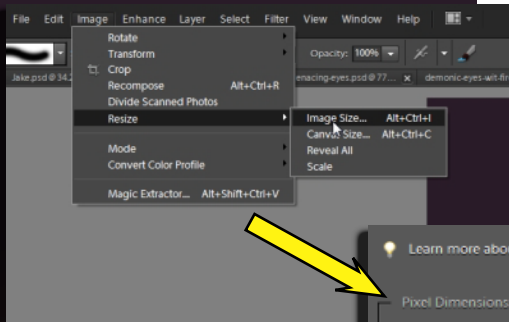
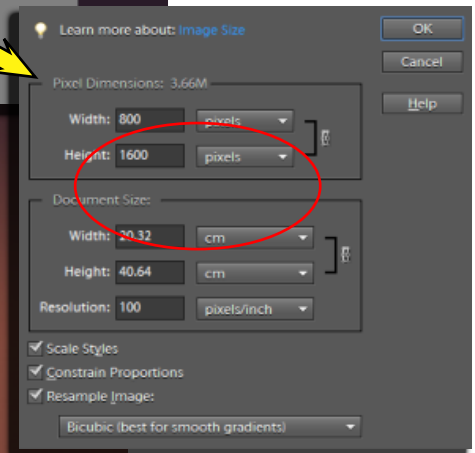
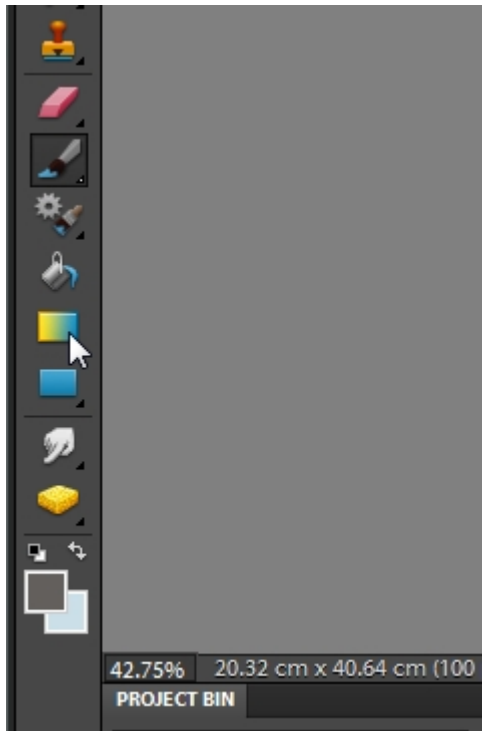


Image > Resize > Image Size



then pick the colors using your color picker.

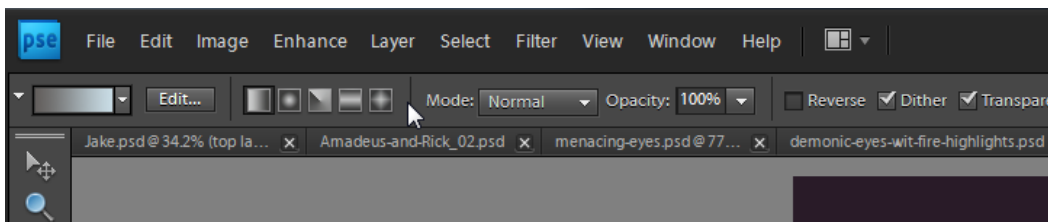
You want to choose the *darkest* color and the *lightest* color to be seen in the sky layer (which is the bottom layer of your painting). Let Photoshop make the graduated fade for you...



If you're not familiar with the graduation fill tool, here's a great place to learn it.

It works like a bucket fill, but it uses *two* colors ... And you can also set loads of cool effects with it, if you notice the extra tools that appear at the top of the workspace, when you select the graduated fill tool.

For this project, leave it simple. You want a perfectly simple graduation from top to bottom of the image ... But don't let this stop you from playing with the tools at this time, because you'll learn a lot by just fiddling around with them! (The best way to learn is to play ... kids know this. There's no reason they should have all the fun.)

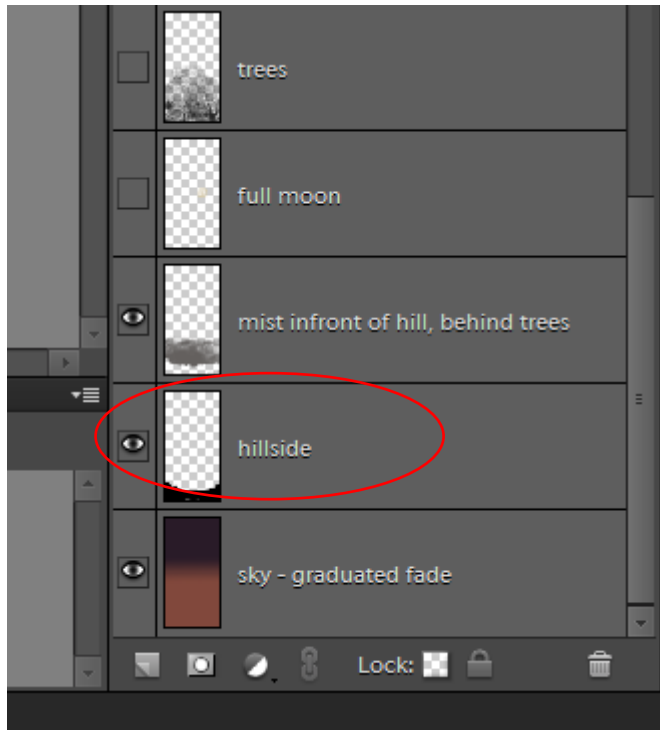
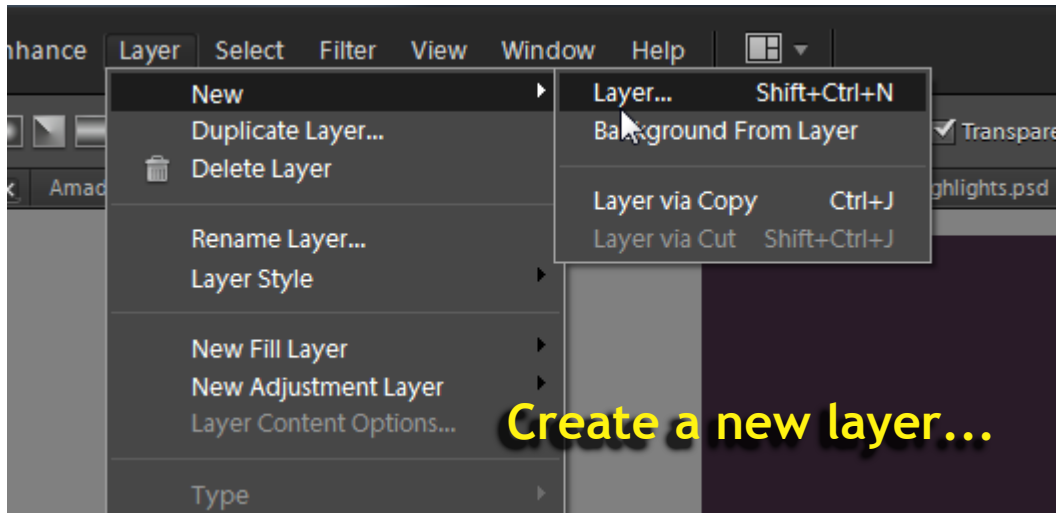


For this project, leave the gradient fill tool set up on its defaults, and when you have your colors picked out, draw a line on the "canvas."

This is a good time to adjust your basic colors, if you find they're not quite right. Tweak until you have just what you want, and then ...

Ah ... But do you draw from the top down, or from left to right? Well, give it a go and see what happens! Cool, right?

You probably guessed. Create a new layer. Each individual element of the painting is done in its own layer.



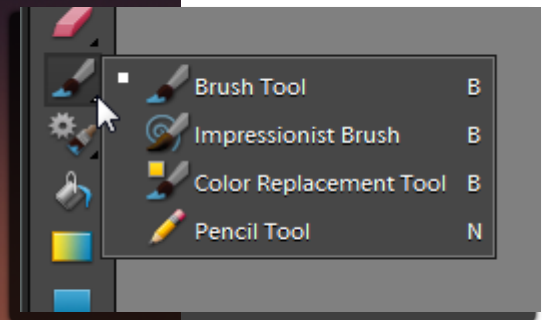
Here's a handy tip: name each layer! As you go on, getting more and more used to working with layers, you can wind up with projects involving *scores* of them, and any one layer might have a tiny effect or just a few brush strokes in it. It can get very difficult to find just the layer you want to work with. If you forget to name the layers when making them, you can do it later. Double-click on the layer (which will have an exotic default name such as Layer 9, Layer 10, and so forth) and type in the dialog.

Create a new layer. You can do this from the LAYER menu, at the top of the screen, but *as the layers accumulate they stack up in the bottom right corner of your workspace.*

With your second layer created ... I've called mine "hillside" ... it's time to paint in the next thing you'd expect to be stacked up in front of the basic sky layer. So...

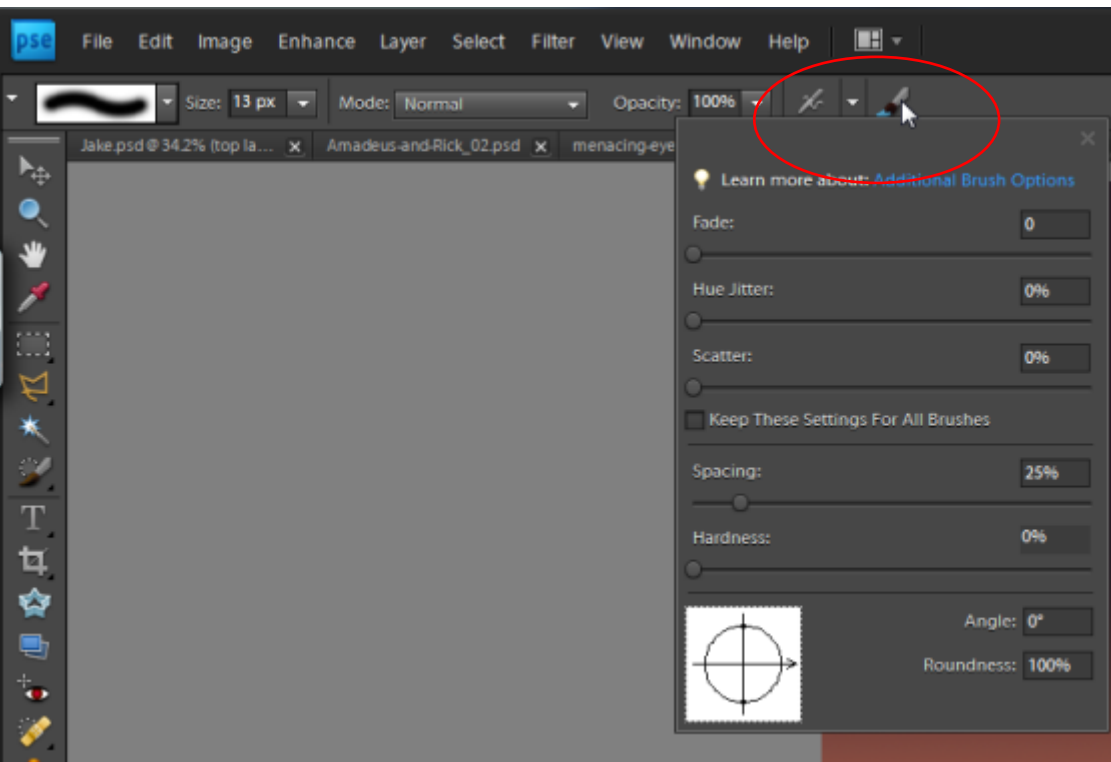
On the face of it, this one looks like a bit of a no brainer! Just select your brush tool set the size of it, and the opacity, and, uh, paint the outline of a hill-side.

There's only one thing that can go wrong, and it's worth mentioning here. Folks new to Photoshop can inadvertently pick one of the other tools hiding *behind* the brush icon:



And you can wonder where in the world your brush vanished to. Luckily, it's easy to get it back, so long as you know the menu is hiding back there.

However, if you've never explored the brush tools (or if it tends to be pot luck when you do this), it's time to take command here, rather than letting Photoshop take you along for a ride. So...



When it comes to brushes, in Photoshop you name it, you can configure it; which is where a lot of new users can become rather overwhelmed. It's one thing spotting color onto a photo to touch it up, but what's all the rest of this stuff?

Well, **Hardness** is just what it sounds like: how much is the brush blurred or softened? **Fade** - same deal. "**Spacing**" is not so intuitive. You can paint a dotted line by setting the spacing high, or an unbroken line by setting it low, or zero. **Angle** sets the angle of the brush "point" you're painting with, and you notice there's a dynamic tool, looks a bit like a compass, to set this.

Handy! **Roundness** sets the degree to which the brush's impression, or appearance, is squished. 100% on the Roundness means you get the whole brush. 50% on this setting gives you a brush impression that is only half as high. By playing around with these settings, you can make most .abr brushes do amazing things.

You're going to be painting with those in a moment, so it's a good thing to know about Angle and Roundness before you start.

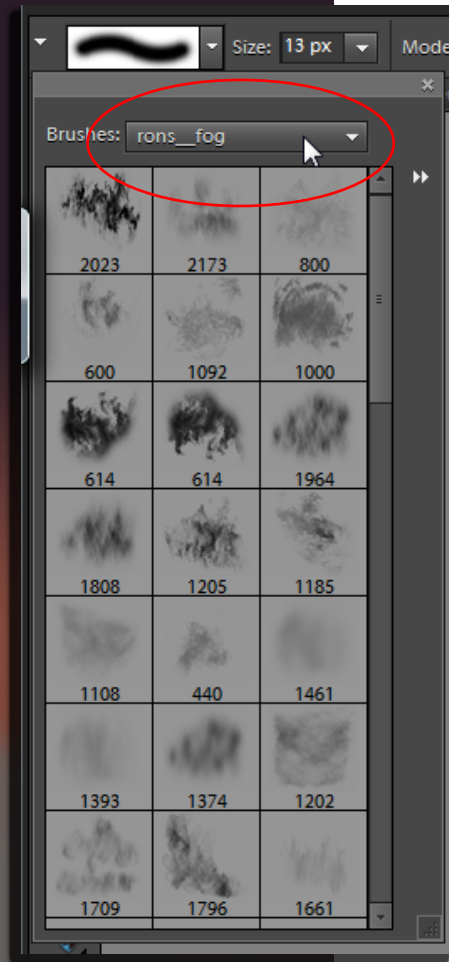
So choose a nice big, hard brush and paint in your hillside. Done? Great. Next...

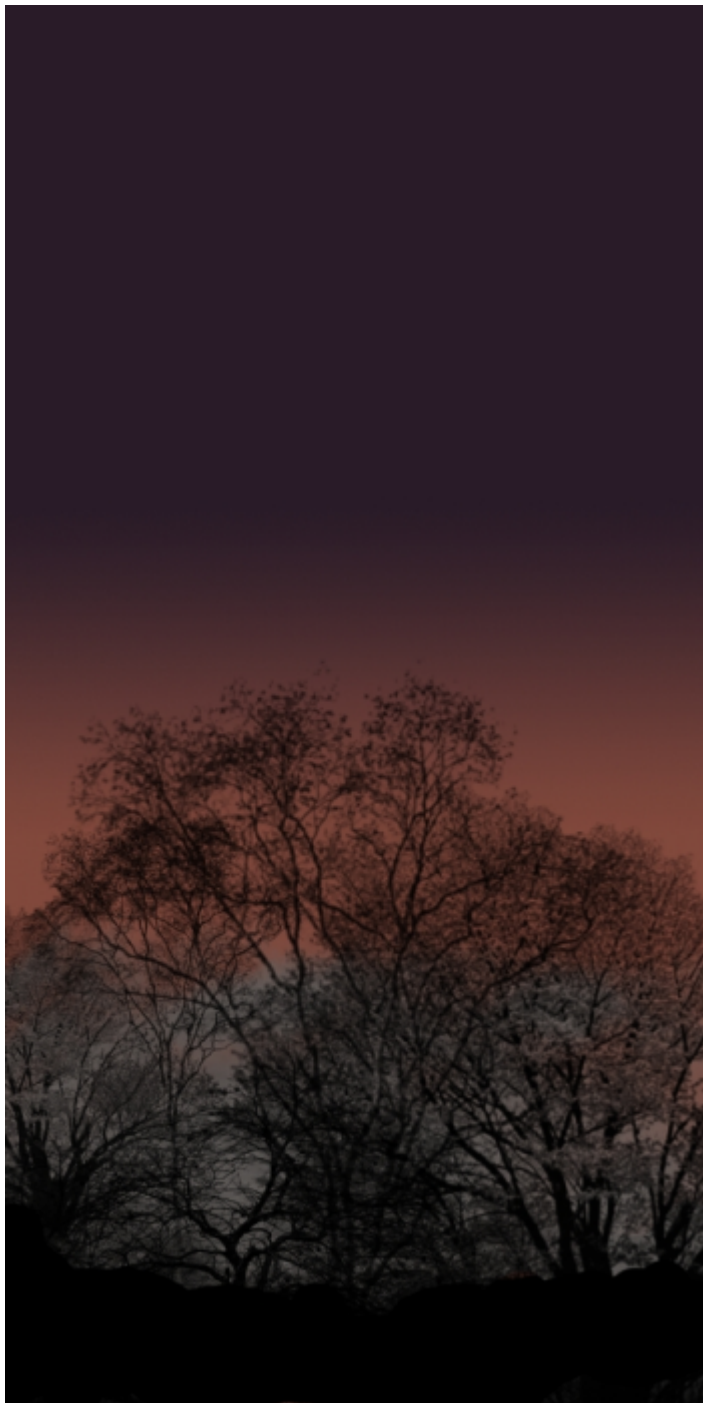
Create another layer on top of the hillside. Call it something like “Mist on the hillside.”

Now, you want to pick a color for the mist, and in my painting it was blue-gray, but yours will be affected by the colors you chose for the sky. Pick over and over, till you get it just right.

To paint the mist, you can set your default brush to soft and semi-transparent and hand paint it. Or you can do it super-quick, and use an .abr brush. I used “Ron’s Fog,” which you can find at the DAZ marketplace. The brushes are frequently on sale there and at Renderosity; it’s worth starting a wish list and keeping tabs on what you like.

Paint in your mist with mouse clicks, *not* by dragging out brushstrokes...






Painting with .abr brushes is a bit like that old game you played as a kid, where you cut shapes out of a potato and used poster paint to stamp impressions onto paper. (You never did that? You missed half the fun of being a kid!)

The only big thing you need to know about this is that you click the mouse to make an impression. *Don't* drag the mouse ... you're not painting with your own brush strokes, you're stamping pre-made images into the canvas. So...

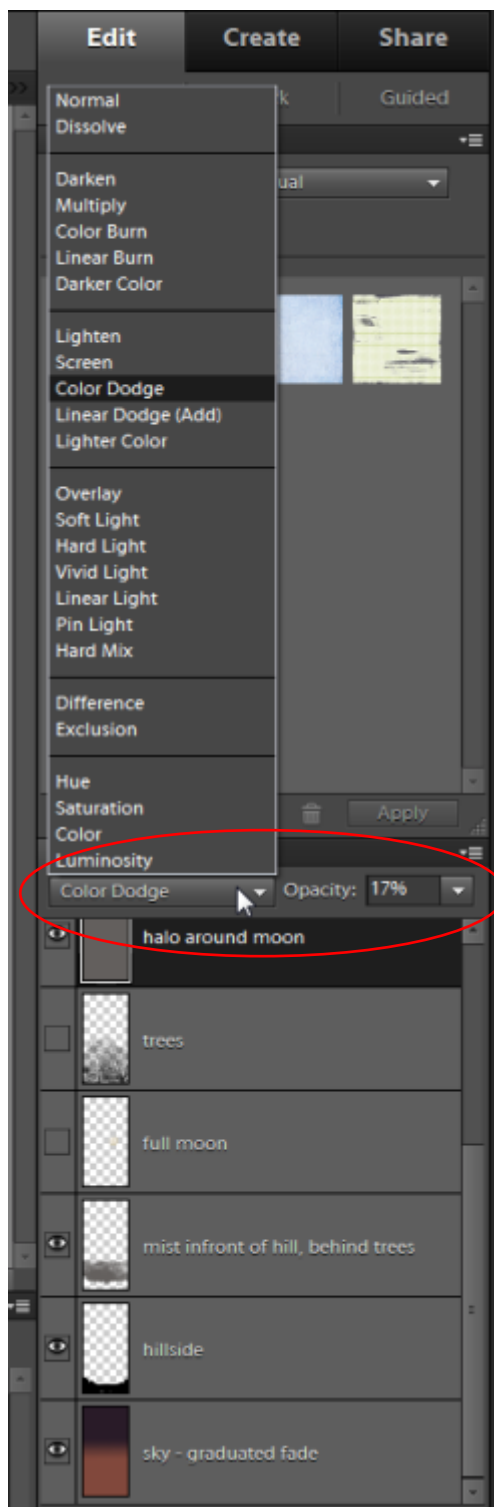
Create a new layer called (!) Trees, and load up your trees brush set. Pick what you need and stamp them in over the mist in silhouette, in black. My trees are wintry, skeletons. Yours could be summertime trees. For this, I used some of the brushes from Leaves And Trees ... I'd love to tell you who designed them and where to get them, but the artist put nothing into the brush set, and I can't remember. Google for ".abr tree brushes!"



Next, yep, you guessed ..
Make a new layer. Call it
something like “Mist in
front of the trees.” Load
up your mist/fog brushes,
choose one you like, and
paint/stamp it in.

One mistake new folks
make with this kind of
work is that they can get
the picture elements out
of scale. Remember that
to look good all elements
in the shot have to be *the
right size* ... so look hard
at the mist you’re painting
in, and make sure it
doesn’t look like a small
object seen up close. You
can have brushes giving
you wisps of smoke or
steam, but if you used
these to represent mist
faaaar away, they’ll just
look wrong (and the re-
verse is just as true ...
mist/smoke/fog far away
doesn’t look right coming
out of a candle a few feet
away). It’s a simple rule,
but you’d be surprised
how often it’s overlooked.

You might like to play
around with the opacity
on this mist layer ...
Notice, you can configure
each of your layers...



Down in the bottom right corner of your screen, your layers are stacking up. Now, notice that you have some controls right on top of them: your merge mode, and your opacity.

Clicking the merge mode will cause a menu to fly up ... and here's where you can either find yourself in candy-land or in a world of confusion, all depending on how much fun you're having playing around with this stuff.

Alas, there's no way I can give you a Royal Road to learning this. You have to play. You have to make like the kid with the building bricks, and try everything. See what works, what doesn't, and slowly but surely, it'll all "stick" in your mind to the point where you'll do it without even thinking about it.

Messing about with your Mist Over Trees layer is a great place to start. If nothing else, play with the opacity on the mist layer.

As you go on, leaving behind the simple process of touching up photos and starting to actually *paint* in Photoshop, you'll use layers more and more, and you'll come to rely on the merge modes, the opacity tool, and one other tool that we'll be looking at soon: the Filters.

More about that in a moment. For now, if you have your mist looking good, it's time to make a new layer. Call it Moon, and get ready to learn one more neat thing about layers!



In my painting, you see how the moon is **BEHIND** the trees, even though I created the Trees layer first. Here's the neat trick: *Layers can be dragged up and down through the image.* This is going to save you loads of work in your future projects, and will also free you to create layers in any order and then drag them this way and that to experiment with different effects.

Right now, load up your Moon brushes and select the full moon. I used the Moon Brushes by an artist called Hawksmont, which I think are available at either Renderosity or at Deviantart. I'd love to remember which, but the memory escapes me. Try Googling "Hawksmont Moon Brushes". You're sure to find them.

Set your color; set your bush opacity; get the size right. Click, don't drag. Then select the little image of the moon you just painted, drag it into the right place. Then grab the whole layer and drag it **UNDER** the trees.



The next item up is the ring around the moon. Create a new layer and call it Ring Around Moon or similar. Drag the layer UNDER the trees, because any glow in the sky ought to be behind the trees, right? Right.

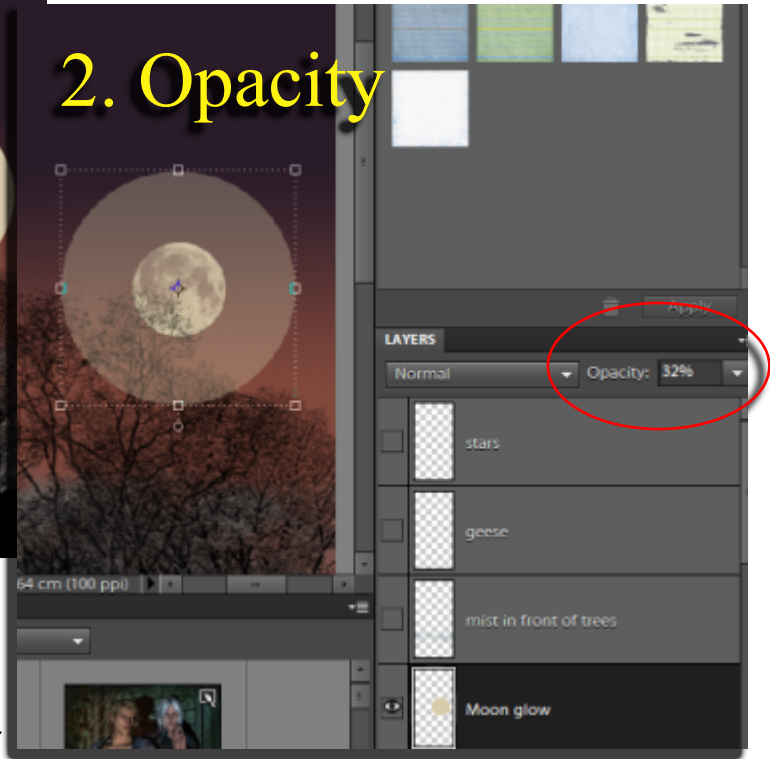
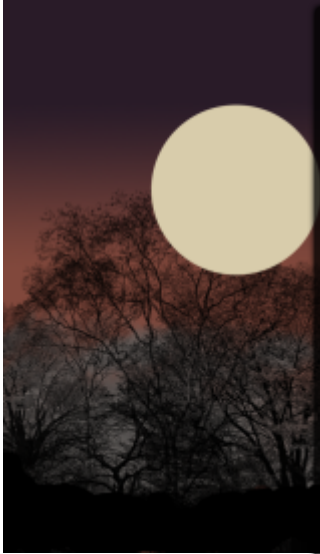
To paint in the glow around the moon, you want a big brush. Choose something the right size on your brush size picker. Choose something close to the color of the moon, and paint a good, hard, solid disk right on top of the moon...

At this point, don't worry about the transparency on the disk or the lovely blur you see on this. Just whop a sold disk of pale color onto the painting, right where the moon-glow ought to be, because you're going to do everything else by configuring the layer.

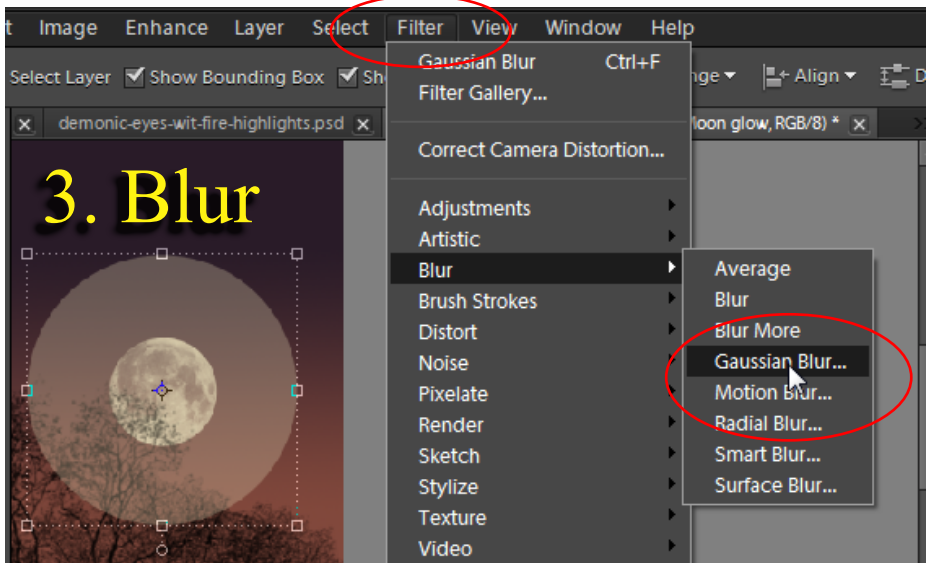
Trust me, it's actually easier this way, and I'll show you how on the next page. When you see how easy it is, come back to this page to see the lovely result!

1. Paint the disk

2. Opacity



Opacity and Gaussian Blur. Tweak them till they look good. Go back one page to see the results. Remember for next time!





Painting in a skein of geese across the face of the moon is just a nice touch; you don't have to do this, but I liked it.

The geese are painted in their own layer; they're dead black, in silhouette and clicked in with the mouse.

If you're adding birds to daytime skies, you can add them in dark blue or purple. As a basic rule, the further away something is, the bluer and paler it will look due to the volume of atmosphere between your eye and it. The way mountains look blue with distance.

These birds are from a fantastic set called Ron's Birds, which you can find at the DAZ Marketplace. Numerous brush sets of birds are available; the quality varies, so shop around and have a look at reviews before buying. The price will *usually* reflect the quality. Cheaper brushes can be a bit "rough," and free ones...!



The last layer of all to paint is the stars. Just set your brush to white, small, and 100% and start clicking. As you go, make some stars smaller and fainter by changing the opacity and brush size.

If you were working on a painting that was photo-realistic, you'd also work in faint colors and give some of the stars a mistiness, but I left them very plain here because this piece was never intended to be photo realistic. It's art, and it was very quick, but the number of techniques rolled into it is quite considerable. Get a grasp on these aspects of Photoshop and you have plenty of skills to apply to future projects.

This ebook was made
in Serif Page Plus.

Copyright by Jade,
November 2012.

All Rights Reserved.