

Animal Hybrid Photoshop Project

Digital Art

Goal: Create a seamless hybrid of two animals or an animal and food item (or possibly another object). The end result should *almost* fool the viewer into thinking it is one image because of the skill with which you blend the two images. But you don't want to create a hybrid that looks so believable that the viewer just shrugs: there should be some element of surprise, impossibility, strange logic, and, above all, humor to the hybrid you create.

If you'll be using two animals, try selecting animals that are very different from one another. A horse and a zebra combination will not be as interesting as a gorilla/pigeon blend, for example. If you are using a piece of food and an animal, look for similar shapes between the two objects. See the Banana Swan on the following page for an example.

Steps:

- Research images online and decide what the subject matter will be.
- Make sure the images are of high quality (large file size) use (Images>More tools>Show sizes) to determine the file size of your images.
- Save any and all images with which you think you might work in a new folder in your personal class folder, and call it "HybridSourceImages"

- If working with animals, make sure that the direction the animals are looking in is the same. Make sure the angles of the heads/bodies match well enough to allow for a convincing hybridization.

- Create a new Photoshop file: 7.5" x 10" or 8" x 10", 300 dpi, RGB. You can choose the page layout, either landscape or portrait, whichever works best for your images.

- Bring your images into Photoshop. Each of your images will go into its' own layer. From here, there are a few ways to proceed.

METHOD 1:

One way is to turn down the opacity of the top layer enough to see through to the underlying layer. You'll almost certainly need to re-size one of the animals/objects, and will also, almost for sure, need to move one of them. Free Transform allows you to carry out both these actions, and also allows you to rotate an image. (Rotation is also very likely to be necessary.)

Remember to hold the shift key down as you scale your image (making it bigger or smaller): if you forget to do so, you will probably distort its proportions.

Once you've got the two animals more or less sized and lined up properly, you could make a very quick "reveal all" layer mask on the top layer (Layer – Layer Mask – Reveal all). Then, after clicking on the layer mask icon that just showed up in your layer palette, use the brush tool and brush black everywhere except where the part of the object you wish to use is located. (A black area on a layer mask will hide that area of the image on the layer associated with the layer mask; a white area on that same layer mask will let the image show through. Gray on a layer mask has the effect of letting the image partly show.) Use a smaller brush near the edges, and

use white instead of black to fix mistakes (e.g., where you may have masked out part of the image you actually wish to show). By doing so very quickly and without worrying about refining the selection, you'll get a good idea of whether your two animals/whatever are a promising combination. That's the advantage of this method: you get a pretty good sense of whether your combination will work in a very short span of time. Once you've done this work, and assuming things are looking good, you can then refine your layer mask in a number of ways. (See below.)

METHOD 2:

Another method would be to put in the time right away to make a careful selection around the edges of one of your two animals (or around the portion you intend to use). This could be done, at the start, using either the lasso tool, the magnetic lasso tool, or perhaps the pen tool (and "Paths")*. But at some point, you will definitely want to translate your selection, or path, into a black-, gray-, or white-filled area on a layer mask. DO NOT simply delete whatever portion of the image you plan on keeping invisible. Deletion may be the simplest method of subtracting part of an image, but it will make refining the blending of the two images together much more difficult, if not impossible!

As you refine your hybrid, you'll find the following to be important and useful considerations/methods/tips:

-Go to Select/Refine Mask and adjust the layer mask to improve it – for example, by feathering its edges.

-To add to the mask, paint white. To detract from the mask, paint black. To create translucency such that you can see both images, use a gray. (Darker gray masks more, lighter gray masks less.) Using gray on a layer mask is a good way to blend two images, and you'll generally find gray useful mainly in the zones of transition between the images.

[Keyboard shortcut: click the "x" key to switch back and forth between white and black while painting on the layer mask.]

-Pay attention to the color in both images. To make more of a seamless integration, you may have to adjust the hue, saturation, and value of one of the images (see Garsche's manta image below for an example of this). Either the Hue-Saturation or the Color Balance adjustments (both found under Image>Adjustments) can be effectively used to do so.

- Also note other visual characteristics of each image, such as texture. If one of your source images is grainier than the other, for example, you may try to make a more effective match between the two by adding a bit of "noise" (Filter>Add Noise) to the less grainy image.

Resources and Tutorials:

<http://petapixel.com/2014/11/11/photoshop-artist-creates-wacky-animal-hybrids-mostly-cute-sometimes-terrifying/>

<http://design.tutsplus.com/tutorials/quick-tip-combine-a-crocodile-and-a-frog-in-photoshop--psd-22326>

