Digital Photo Tinting

Jen White

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by Jen White

Revive the vintage technique of photo tinting with a quick adjustment layer and the Brush tool in Photoshop.

You will need:

- Adobe Photoshop or Photoshop Elements
- A vintage style photo

If you'd like to follow along exactly, you can**download the photo I am using by clicking on this link**.

Note: This encore tutorial was originally published by Sara Horton in May 2009.

Step One: Open a Photo

Open a photo (File > Open).

To follow along with me exactly, download the photo I'm using above.

Here are a few suggestions for photos that will work well with this technique:

- Close-up portraits of children
- Photos of children in fields of flowers or dressed up in cowboy clothing
- Photos of friends or family members wearing old-fashioned clothing

- Formal portraits

NOTE: Avoid using photos with bright, neon coloring and wild designs. Simple, classic clothing lends itself well to the hand-tinted look.

Step Two: Convert the Photo to Black and White

Press Ctrl J (Mac: Cmd J) to create a duplicate layer of the original image.

In Photoshop Elements:

- In the Menu Bar, choose Enhance > Convert to Black and White.
- In the dialog box, try the different Styles to see which one works best for your image. I'm choosing Portraits.
- If necessary, adjust the Intensity sliders until you get a look you like.
- Click OK.

In Adobe Photoshop:

- In the Menu Bar, choose Image > Adjustment > Black & White.
- In the dialog box, try the different Presets to see which one works best for your image. I'm choosing Darker.
- If necessary, adjust the Color sliders until you get a look you like.
- Click OK.

Step Three: Reduce the Effect of the Black and White

In the Layers panel, lower the Opacity of the black and white layer to around 85%.

The trick is to allow only a small percentage of color back into the photo. 85% works great for most images, but highly saturated images will need a higher percentage.

Step Four: Paint Color Back In

- Get the Brush tool.
- In the Tool Options, open the Brush Picker and choose a Soft Round Brush from the Default Brushes. Set the Opacity to 25% and the Mode to Normal.
  (PS: Choose a Soft Round Brush from the General Legacy Brushes. Set the Mode to Normal, the Opacity to 25%, and the Flow to 100%.)
- In the Layers panel, click on the Add Layer Mask icon.

This will add a layer mask to the black and white image layer and the mask should be active. You will know it is active when you see a border around the mask. If you are not sure if the mask is active, click on it.

- The Foreground Color Chip should be black, if it is not, press the letter X.
- Hover your cursor over the cheek of the subject.
- Press the Left or Right Bracket key until the cursor is approximately the size of the cheek. (See the image below.)
- Click once or click and drag in a small circle on each of the cheeks.

Here is what the image looked like before and after this technique:

Step Five: Save the New Image

- Save the new image (File > Save As) as a JPG file with a unique name.
- Close the working image without saving.