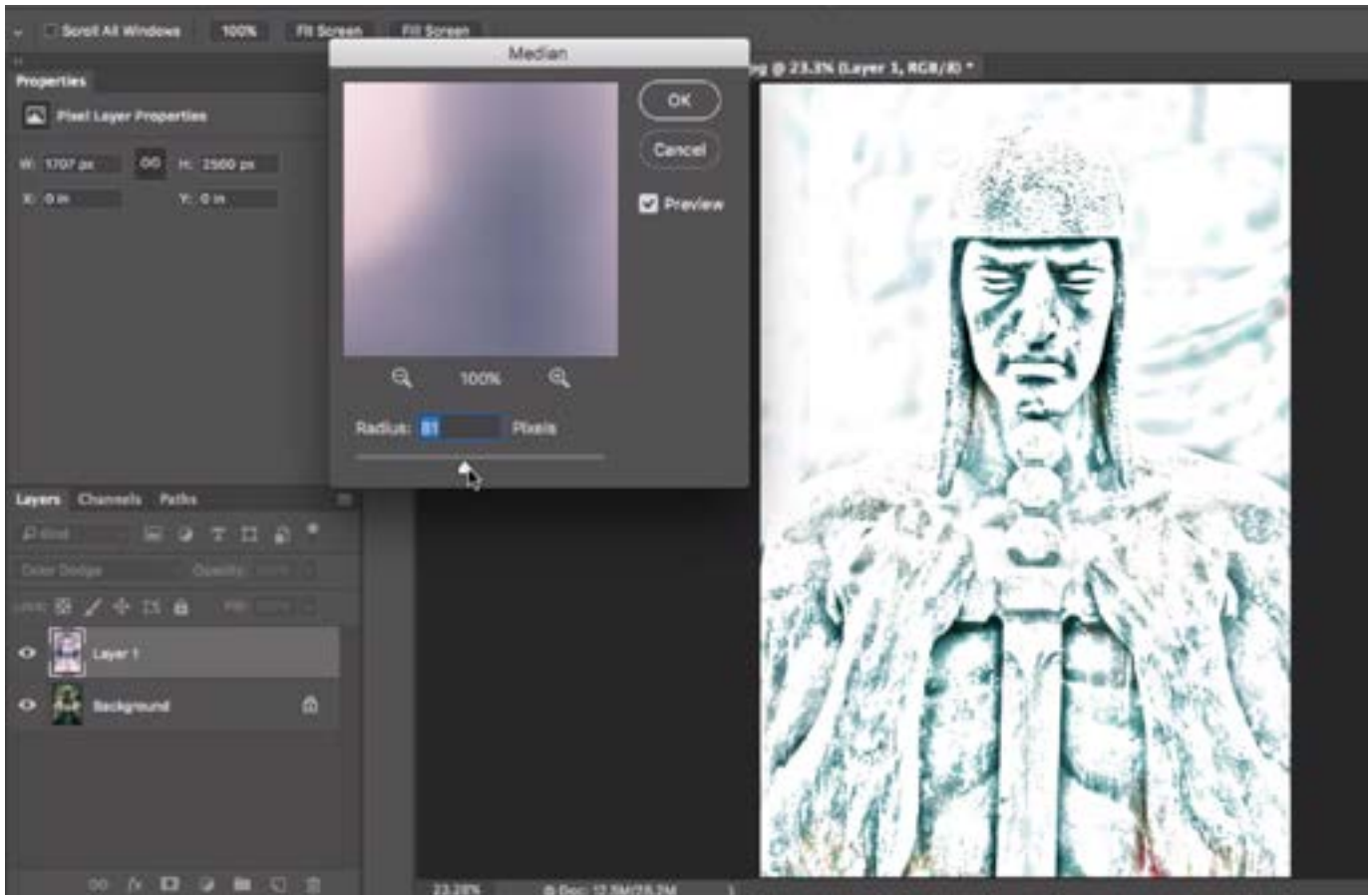video
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Photos to Sketch

This video lesson will cover how to create a sketched effect from a photographic image.

Photos to Sketch in Photoshop

In this lesson, we're going to take a photograph and apply a creative technique that will turn it into something that resembles a sketch or drawing.

With your image open in Photoshop, first duplicate that background/image layer. To duplicate a layer, I like to use the keyboard shortcut Command+J (Ctrl+J on Win). Then, use the Blending Mode menu at the top of the Layers panel to change the blending mode of the top layer to Color Dodge. Next, invert that layer by using the keyboard shortcut Command+I (Ctrl+I on Win).
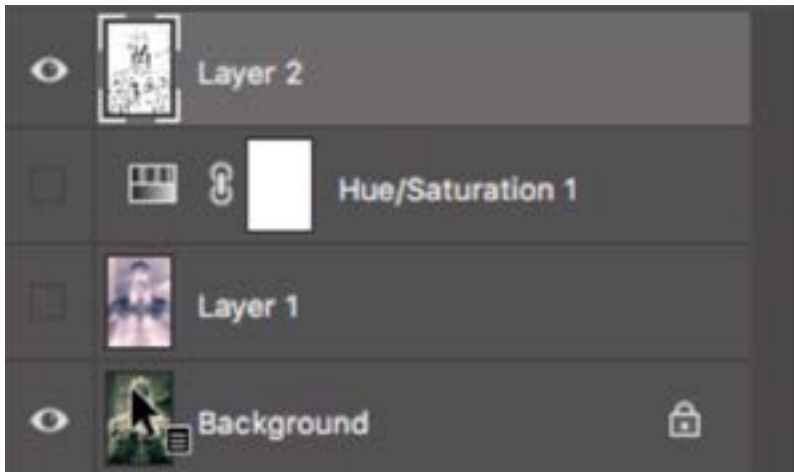
The image will likely look white at this point, and that's ok. From the Filter menu at the top of the screen, choose Noise > Median. A dialog box will appear, inside of which is a Radius slider. The setting you want may vary here, but I usually keep this slider somewhere in the middle (see screen shot on following page).

The Median Filter is being applied to a duplicate of the original image layer.

After doing this, you will have some color left in the image and you can get rid of that with an Adjustment Layer. Create a Hue/Saturation Adjustment layer by clicking on the Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and choosing Hue/Saturation from the menu that appears. Within the Properties panel, move the Saturation slider all the way to the left, removing any leftover color from the image.

Now, you can choose to change the way the top, "sketched" layer interacts with, or combines with, the original image layer below it. To do this, you'll need to create a merged visible duplicate, which will take all of the layers and act as if you flattened the image, but it will do this with duplicates of the layers. All of the visible layers will stay separate and intact, but you will also have an additional layer that is a combination of all of those individual layers.

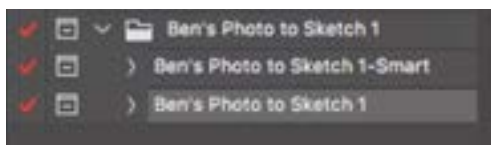**The top layer is a combo of all layers beneath it.**

To create a merged visible duplicate, make sure the top layer is active and then go to the Layer menu, hold down the Option Key (Alt on Win) and choose Merge Visible. Alternatively, you can use the keyboard shortcut Shift+Option+Command+E (Shift+Alt+Ctrl+E on Win). The new, merged layer will appear at the top of the Layers panel.

In the Layers panel, turn off the eyeball icons for all of the layers except for the top, merged layer and the bottom, original image layer. With the top layer active, use the Blending Mode dropdown menu to experiment with different blending modes, which will change the way the sketched version of the image blends with the original version of the image. The blending modes that I would use are Multiply and any of the modes in the contrast section, which starts with Overlay and ends with Hard Mix.

Left: The original image layer. Middle: The sketched version of the image was combined with the original image using the Multiply blending mode. Right: The sketched version of the image was combined with the original image using the Screen blending mode.

Using the Photo to Sketch Action I have created an action that applies the sketch technique covered in this lesson and that action is included within the class materials area on the video lesson page. To load an action file into Photoshop, simply double-click on the name of the file on your hard drive. Note: If the file is zipped, you will first have to unzip it before double-clicking to load the action. When you

The Photo to Sketch actions, loaded into the Actions panel.

double-click on the file name, Photoshop will likely come to the forefront on your screen, indicating that the action has been loaded. The action can be found within the Actions panel. If the Actions panel is not currently visible on your screen, go to the Window menu and choose Actions.

If double-clicking on the file name does not work, you can alternatively load an action by clicking on the little menu icon and the top right corner of the Actions panel and choosing Load Actions.

To use this action, start with your original, background layer, open the Actions panel, select the "Ben's Photo to Sketch 1" action and then click on the Play button at the bottom of the Actions panel. When you do this, Photoshop will do all of the work in creating the sketched look. It will stop at the point where the Median filter dialog box appears, giving you the opportunity to set the radius slider at your desired setting. When you click OK, the action will continue, giving you the end result that we created in the previous part of the lesson.

There is a secondary version of the action which has the word "Smart" in the title. This action will do the same thing, but it will first convert the original image to a Smart Object. If you apply a filter to a Smart Object, you can always go back and change the settings later. The other advantage to using a Smart Object here is that you can double-click on the thumbnail for the original image layer and, since it's a Smart Object, it will open in a new window. You can then make changes to this original image and when you click Save and close the image, all of those changes will be updated in all instances of that Smart Object in your original document and the effect will be updated as well.

Applying the effect to a video This sketch effect can also be applied to video clips. First open the video clip in Photoshop. When you do this, the clip will automatically be stored inside a folder called "Video Group 1" in the Layers panel. Make sure that this group is what's active in your Layers panel and then go to the main menu and select Layer > Smart Objects > Convert to Smart Object. Then, select the "Ben's Photo to Sketch 1-Smart" action from the Actions panel and click the play button. Again, the action will stop on the Median filter dialog so that you can choose a setting and click OK to continue playing the action. When the video has the filter applied to it, Photoshop may have a difficult time playing it because it has to apply the filter to every frame of the video. I recommend exporting the video first and then playing it in another video-playback application. To export the video, go to the File menu and choose Export > Render Video. A dialog will appear where you can specify your video settings and then click the Render button.