

Sketching Magic

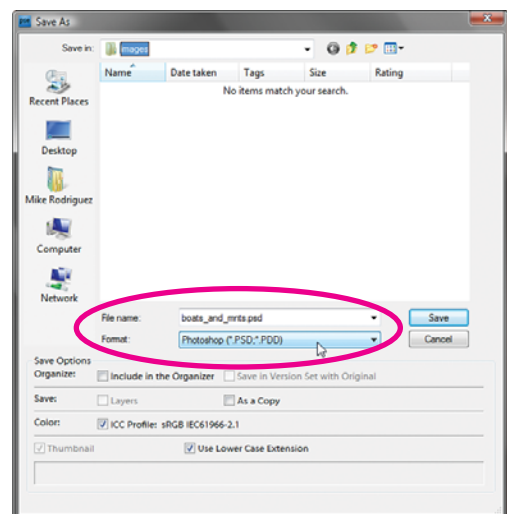
By Mike Rodriguez | While I derive great satisfaction from creating a well-composed, nicely lit, tack-sharp exposure with my camera, there are times when my creative side craves variety. I have always admired the artist's ability to take a blank sheet of media and create a beautiful piece of art using colored pencil, watercolor, chalk, charcoal, or any other style. This straightforward sketch technique, borne out of the creativity of subscriber Christell Faul (see Page 18) produces a nice "sketch" effect using layers, filters, blend modes, and a little bit of brush work. It also offers plenty of room for experimentation and personalization.

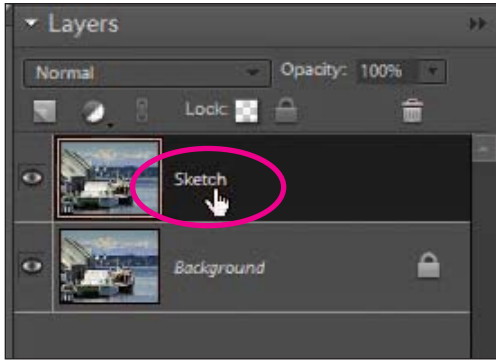
1 Select an image and open it in Elements. Images rich in color and contrast work particularly well for this project. Before beginning, let's create a copy of our original photo and save it as a Photoshop file. Go to **File > Save As** and give your new project a name. From the Format pop-up, select the Photoshop (.PSD) format, and click Save.

EXTRAS: GET THIS IMAGE!



Go to the Subscriber Extras area to download the image used in this tutorial and find a list of links to discussions of the technique (and results) in the Elements Village forums. www.PhotoshopElementsUser.com

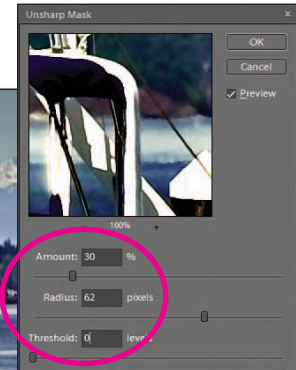




Renaming your working layers is an excellent habit to get into when working on complex projects.

2 Duplicate the Background layer in the Layers palette by pressing **Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J)**. To keep things straight, double-click the name of this duplicate layer, name it “Sketch,” and press **Enter (Mac: Return)**.

3 Target the Sketch layer by clicking on it in the Layers palette and choose **Enhance > Unsharp Mask**. The settings you use here will vary, depending on the image and its resolution. Your goal is a high-contrast, crispy, overly sharp look, so play around with the settings and adjust them as necessary. Try these settings first: Amount, 20; Radius, 60; Threshold, 0. (If you’re using a high-resolution photo, the Amount and Radius numbers will likely be higher.) Our example’s settings ended up being 30, 62, and 0.



Play with the settings to get a crisp, high-contrast look.

About the Artist

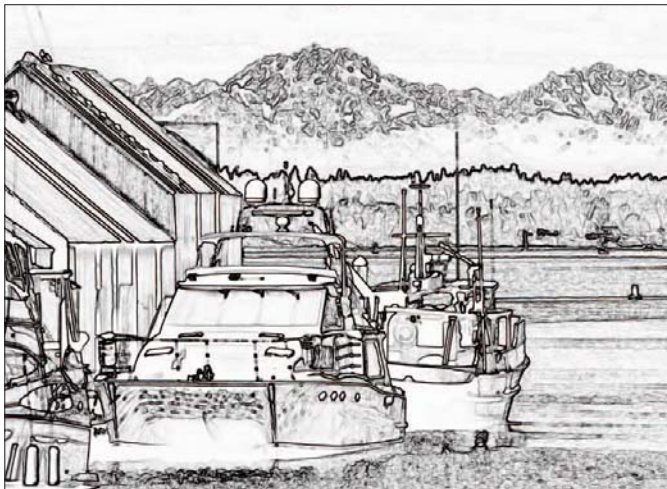
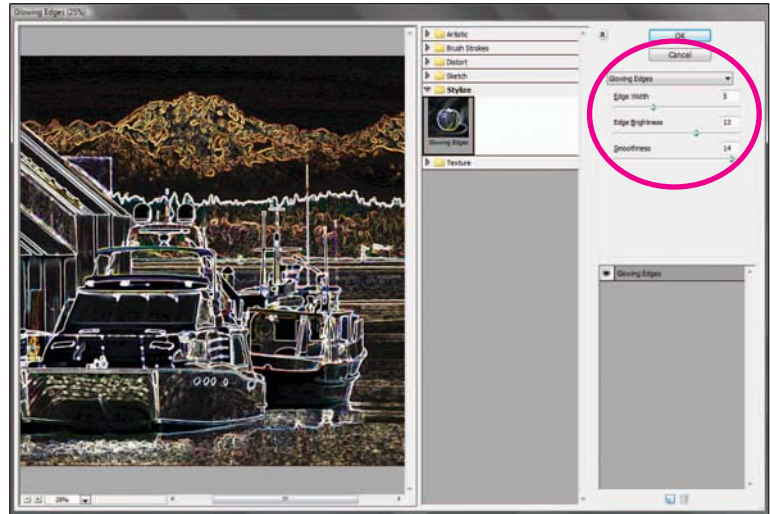
Christell Faul hails from southwest Louisiana, and is an experimenter at heart:

“I came up with the technique by just playing around with Photoshop Elements, combining effects, seeing the results and noting what works. I tried to combine different things I learned along the way, especially from the forums and from Photoshop Elements Techniques. Here, I like the thicker line that Glowing Edges gives, and Levels can get rid of noise and make a nice dark sketch.”



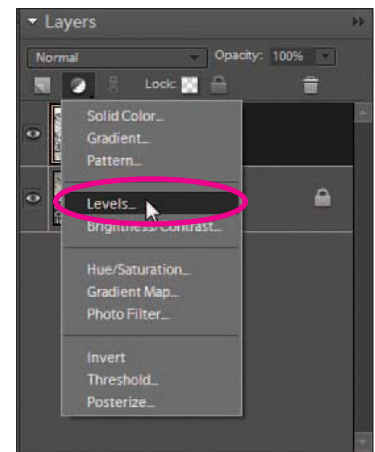
4 Go to **Filter > Stylize > Glowing Edges**. To give the end result a smooth, pastel type of texture, we want the edges created by this filter to be reasonably thick, bright, and smooth. Again, depending on the subject matter and resolution of your image, you may need to tweak the settings a bit until the edges in your image have the right look. The following settings did the trick for our example: Edge Width: 5, Edge Brightness: 13, Smoothness: 14.

When you're done, press OK. Your image will have a decidedly "neon" appearance.

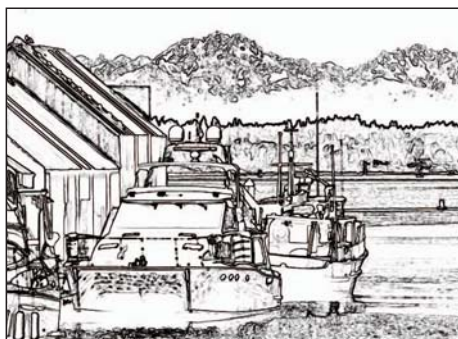


Using the Invert command after the Glowing Edges filter finally starts to bring out the "sketch" look.

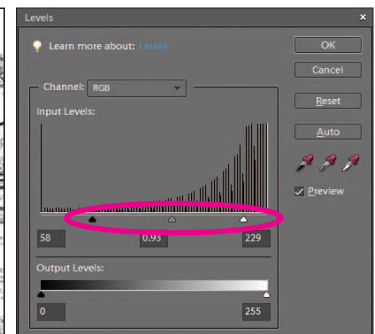
5 With the Sketch layer still the active layer, press **Ctrl-I (Mac: Command-I)** to invert the colors of the image. The image should have a "sketchy" look to it. We're not quite there yet, though. Press **Ctrl-Shift-U (Mac: Command-Shift-U)** or go to **Enhance > Adjust Color > Remove Color** to desaturate the layer.



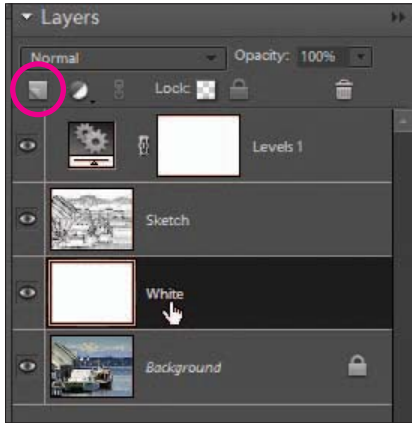
6 It's time for a Levels adjustment, and we'll use an adjustment layer, which will let us to tweak the setting later if necessary. On the Layers palette click the **Create Adjustment Layer** icon (the black and white circle) and choose Levels. In the Levels dialog, use the white triangle slider to brighten the light areas, the black slider to darken the lines of the sketch, and the gray slider to adjust contrast in the midtones. Click OK when you're happy with the look.



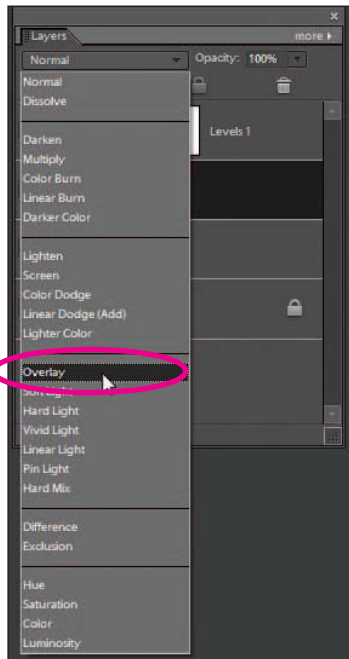
Move the black, white and gray point sliders to further define the edges and the highlights.



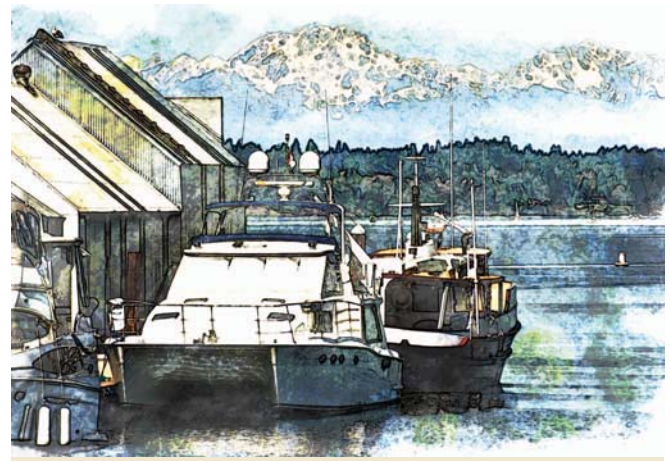
7 We need a new layer filled with white, directly below the Sketch layer. Click on the Sketch layer in the Layers palette, and hold down the **Ctrl key (Mac: Command)** while clicking on the New Layer icon in the Layers palette. (Holding the Ctrl key creates the new layer below the active layer instead of above it, which is where it's normally created.) To fill it with white, make sure that white is set as the Foreground color (check the color chips at the bottom of the Tool palette), and press **Alt-Backspace (Mac: Option-Delete)**. Double-click the name of this layer and change its name to "White."



Clicking the New Layer icon while holding down the Control key will create a new blank layer *underneath* the currently selected layer.



8 Here's where your own creativity starts kicking in. Click on the Sketch layer to make it active, pull down the Blend Mode menu at the top of the Layers palette, and choose Overlay. Your sketch will completely disappear. That's OK, though. We'll fix it in the next step.



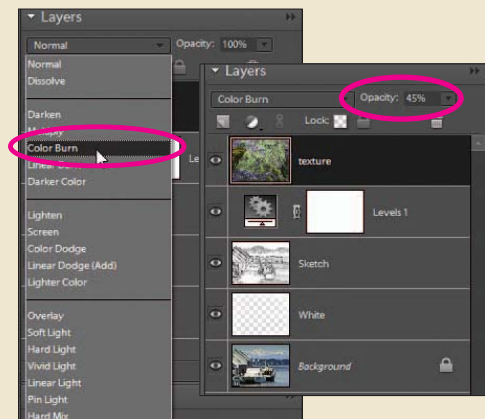
Sketch Effect with Textures

For a more detailed, intense, and darker look, try using textures with your sketch. Here's how:

Open an image featuring some good, crunchy texture—rough concrete, tree bark, peeling paint, a rusty surface, or, in my case here, a lichen-covered rock. The texture image should have the same or similar dimension and resolution as the sketch file. Press **Ctrl-A (Mac: Command-A)** to select the entire image and copy it by pressing **Ctrl-C (Mac: Command-C)**. Switch back to your sketch file and click on the top layer on the Layers palette. Press **Ctrl-V (Mac: Command-V)** to paste the copied texture as a new layer.

The texture will completely cover your sketch, but once again, Blend Modes come to the rescue. With the texture layer active, pull down the Blend Mode menu in the Layers palette and choose Color Burn. You're welcome to try others, but I found the results either too subtle or just plain weird. Color Burn, however, really deepens the color and adds some nice texture to the sketch. If the effect is too intense, simply lower the opacity of the texture layer. In my example, I lowered it to 45%.

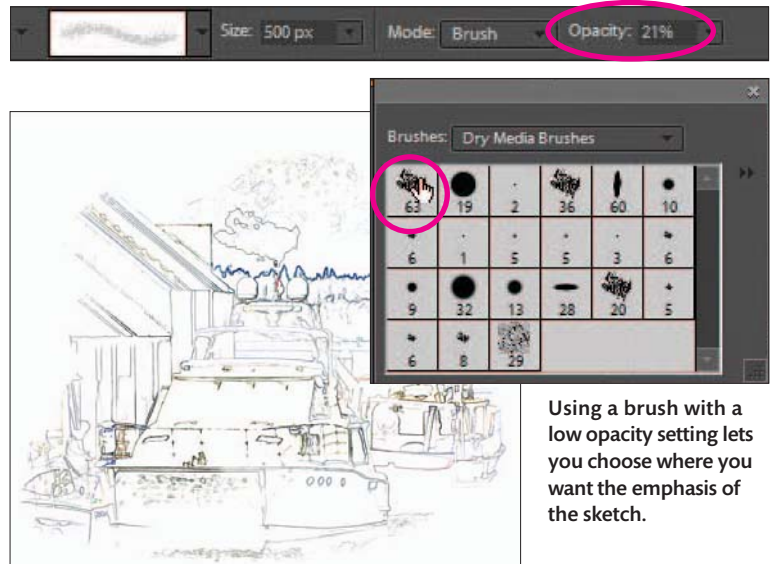
(For more on using textures with Photoshop Elements, see Diana Day's tutorial on Page 30 of the March/April 2009 issue of *Photoshop Elements Techniques*.)



9 Activate the White layer and select the **Eraser tool (E)** in the Tool palette. Pull down the Brushes menu in the Options Bar at the top of the screen and choose a brush. Different brush tips will produce different results, and again, it really helps to experiment for the things you like.

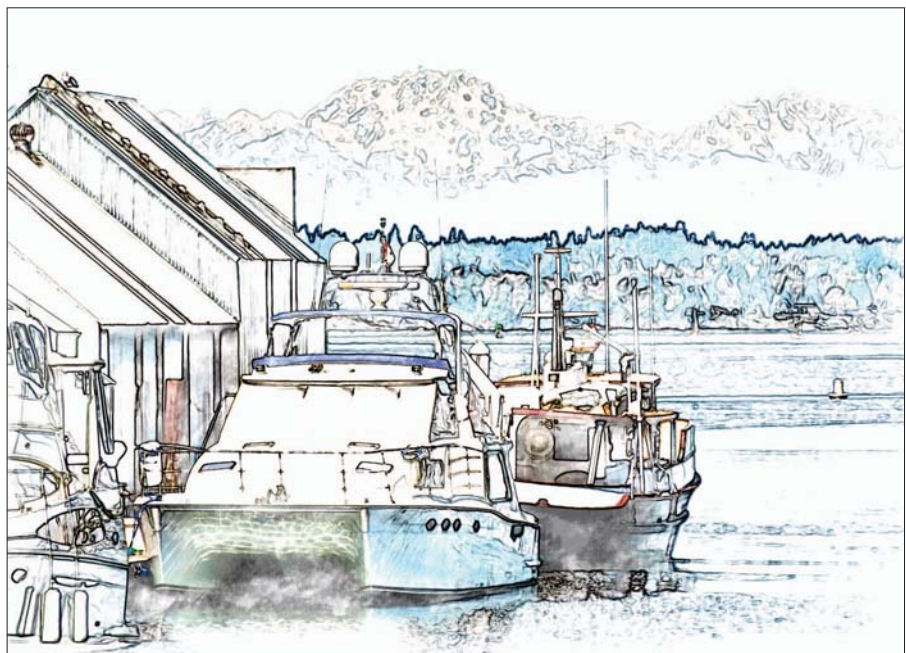
For this project, I used the Pastel on Charcoal Paper brush, which is #63 in the Dry Media Brushes preset. Before erasing, lower the opacity of the brush (in the Options Bar) to somewhere between 15% and 25%.

Using a fairly large brush size—use the **]** and **[** (left and right bracket) keys on your keyboard to increase or decrease the size of the brush—begin erasing the White layer. Your sketch should gradually begin to appear. Make another pass or two with the Eraser over those areas of the sketch you'd like to emphasize with detail or color intensity. Continue erasing until you are happy with the look.



10 Now that your erasing is complete, you can do a bit of experimenting with the blend mode of the Sketch layer. One option that often works well is Soft Light (which I used in the image on Page 15). You might also find that the Hue, Saturation and Color modes offer some subtle variations.

The nice thing about this approach is that, if you want to start over with different brushes or settings, just click on the White layer, choose **Select > All**, refill it with white and start erasing all over again. ■



The final image with the Blend Mode set to Overlay.

Mike Rodriguez is an Adobe Certified Expert and Photoshop Instructor, holds a master degree in Educational Technology, and has over 16 years of teaching experience. His current teaching assignments include various technology courses as well as a beginning digital photography course. He contributes video tutorials to photoshopelementsuser.com and layersmagazine.com, and his stock photography is sold through istockphoto.com.