

## Enhancing Color (PE4)

We have all taken pictures that turned out very dull. The question is, what can we do to "punch" them up? In this tutorial I will focus on how to use Selections to add color and a little drama to our pictures.

### Photo #1

Here is a photo of a foggy day in a neighborhood. There are two things of interest: the haze and the stop sign.

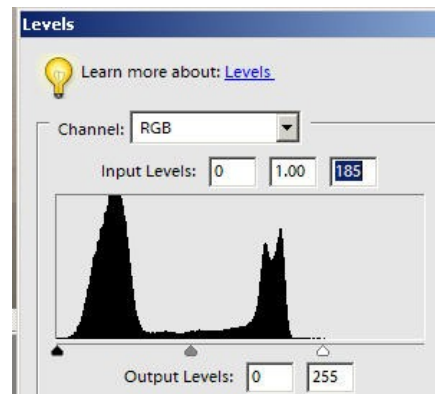


The first thing I want to do is crop the picture to eliminate the distracting foreground. To start, I save the file as a PSD file, and then crop. Here's what I get.

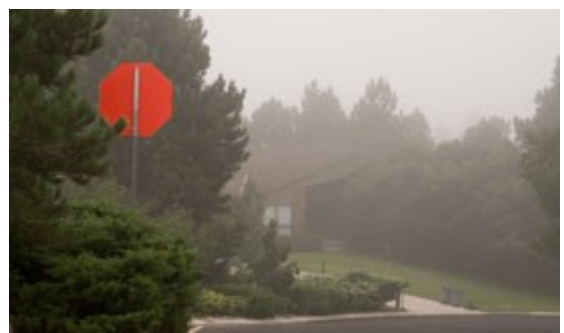


Now I want to add some intensity to the left side of the picture to balance out the foggy area on the right. I make a copy of the

background layer and rename that layer "stop sign". Then I choose the **Zoom** tool and zoom in on the stop sign to make it larger. I select the **Polygonal Lasso Tool** and click and drag around the outline of the stop sign until the red part of the stop sign is a Selection. To be able to use it more than once, I save the selection using **Select > Save Selection** and name the selection stop\_sign. Now, **with the stop\_sign selection still active**, I add a **Levels layer** to the picture and move the right triangle to the start of the data in the image. This brightens up the red color of the stop sign, while leaving the rest of the picture unchanged.



For even more emphasis, I reload the "stop\_sign" selection, and add a Hue/Saturation Layer with the Red Saturation at +50. This is the end result.



In both cases, I am taking advantage of how Photoshop Elements applies the selection areas to the masks of the adjustment layers. Everything outside the selections is changed to black on the mask, leaving the mask white within the selected areas. Then any change I apply on the adjustment layer will only affect the white areas under the mask and therefore within the selections.

## Photo #2

This is a photo of a yellow flower, growing through a sidewalk. The picture is very grey and dull. The goal is to add color to the flower and brighten the picture.



We first save a version as a PSD file and copy the background layer. Zoom in on the flower, and select the yellow flower and part of the upper stem using the Magic Wand Tool with the tolerance set to 30 and check marks in the anti-alias and contiguous boxes. Save that selection as "yellow\_flower" using **Select > Save Selection**. With the selection still active, add a **Levels layer** and move the right hand triangle to the start of the curve. Then continue inside the leading upper edge of the curve until the flower is a brilliant yellow, but not so much that it washes out the detail of the flower. That brightens the flower. That

looks pretty good, but we need to do one more thing to bring out the flower. Click on the copy of the background layer and select the tool for the **Elliptical Marquee**. Set the tolerance for 20 pixels and drag an ellipse around the flower and its stem. The tolerance setting can vary depending on the actual photo you are modifying.



To help isolate the flower from the background, we invert the selection using **Select > Inverse**. Then choose **Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur** with a Radius of 15 pixels. Trim away the extraneous material using the **Crop Tool** set to 8" x 10" and we have our final picture.



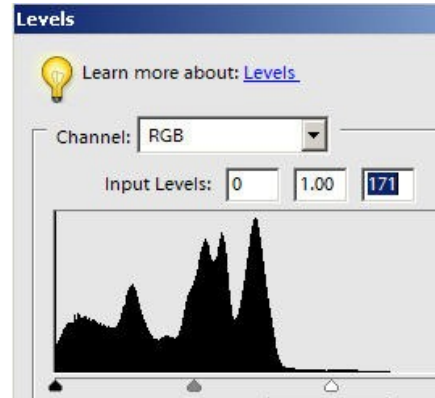
### Photo #3

This one is fun and the end result is a surprise. Here is a photo of a Home Depot store on another grey day.



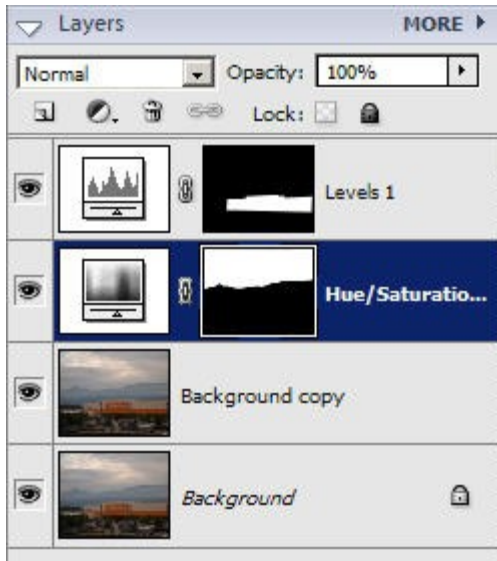
Save a copy as a PSD file and create a copy of the background layer. Then use the Polygonal

Lasso Tool to select the outline of the upper portion of the Home Depot store. Save that selection using **Select > Save Selection** and make it "home\_depot". To add some punch, add a **Levels layer** and move the white triangle part way down the start of the ramp on the right. (This is an "eyeball" adjustment: moving the triangle to "what looks good".)



Next, use the **Magnetic Lasso Tool** to outline the sky above the mountains. The Magnetic Lasso works well here because of the clear contrast boundary between the mountain ridge and the sky. Fill in the selection at the corners of the photo using the **Rectangular Marquee Tool** in the "Add to selection" mode. Pause here long enough to Save your selection using the menu choice **Selection > Save Selection**. Give it a name, like "sky", and save it.

With the selection still active, add a **Hue/Saturation layer** and increase the Saturation to + 60. Your layers palette will look like this.



The final image has some pop and color, and is shown below.



So the bottom line is: use selections together with adjustment layers to add color and punch to your photos. Experiment on your own, and have fun.

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