

CMS.998/CMS.600: New Media Literacies
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Lecture Notes

Session 9, 3/9/07
Learning Week

- Lesson Plan: Photoshop and image editing
 - The lesson plan is pretty adaptable – you can adjust it for any age
 - Students were asked to bring in some images or objects to manipulate in Photoshop
 - Taking the meanings that the student perceives to be in the original and changing them to involve new representations
 - The idea is to be freeform, so that students can experiment and create their own meanings and methods
 - The process is more important than the project
 - At the end of the session, students would have a group discussion where they looked at each other's work and evaluated and commented on it

- Learning objectives
 - Technical aspects
 - Learn to use Photoshop
 - Non-technical aspects
 - Students should understand new ideas for what they can experiment with: inserting text into images, inserting images into other images, etc.
 - The objectives could be adapted to particular subjects. For example, in a course on politics students could create images specifically useful for political campaigning
 - In the critique and discussion part of the lesson, students should learn an appreciation for each other's work and the variety of experience involved

- Content: the use of Photoshop
 - You can select a rectangular portion of the image with the marquis tool and whatever action you choose will apply only to that selected area
 - If you then cut that area out, and paste it back in, you'll create separate layers.
 - In this way you can make as many separate layers as you choose
 - There's a move tool that allows you to move the lagers around
 - You can undo, if you decide you made a mistake
 - The history can only remember a certain number of things
 - There's also a lasso tool, that allows you to select an area of the image like the marquis tool, only with the lasso tool the area doesn't need to be rectangular

- There's the magnetic lasso too, which is sensitive to the differences in light in the image, and does thus it does some of the selecting work for you.
 - If it's important to be really really precise though, I'd recommend just very carefully using the regular lasso tool. It gives you better results.
 - Some examples of images with cut and paste jobs:
 - Photo of a hand giving the peace sign, but with the index and middle fingers cut off and floating in the air.
 - This is a simple cut and paste job, but it has all kinds of rich consequent meanings.
 - Magic wand: this tool selects areas of the photo based on color contrast. You can make very fine selections, including individual pixels.
 - Brush tool
 - You can draw on a second layer, and that way it's easy to revert to the original image any time that you want to
 - The eyeball icon lets you choose which layer you want to see individually, without overlay from the other layers
 - There's a link tool that lets you move multiple layers together, or you can unlink them to separate the layers
 - Crop tool
 - Changes the overall frame of the image
 - Erase tool
 - You can select particular shapes to erase with, such as a star
 - Remember, you can always zoom in, zoom out, fit on screen, etc.
 - Paint bucket
 - Fills in anything in a selection that is transparent
 - You can delete a layer by simply right-clicking on the name of the layer and selecting "delete"
 - Gradient tool: you can add color gradients to a layer, instead of just having a solid background
 - You can easily change color photos to black and white
 - Threshold and Levels are other, more complicated tools that change the contrast and color scheme
 - Blur lets you make the image blurry
- Examples of Photoshop images
 - A New York City steam vent replaced by an image of a coffee cup, steaming up from the ground
 - i-zombie: taking iPod ads and replacing the silhouettes with images of zombies in headphones
 - iRaq – again playing on the iPod ads, this campaign used a silhouette from the Abu Ghraib torture photos, with white electrodes instead of headphones
 - Even very rudimentary, beginner Photoshop images can produce a lot worth talking about.

- Photo manipulation doesn't have to be hidden. You can consider deliberately allowing it to be obvious that it is photo manipulation, and not clean and professional.
- Classwork: Build your own Photoshop images
- Class discussion of the images students produce
 - What do you think?
 - Were there any conventions operating that you weren't initially aware of?
 - How crucial was the Photoshop software to producing your image? Did you fully use the tools provided by the software?
- The critique portion of the lesson plan is crucial
 - Encourage students to talk about how the Photoshopped images change meaning
 - Issues of media, representation, war, violence, political issues...
 - Where does fine art exist? Who defines it?
 - One student makes an image of a red Calder sculpture pasted in front of the MIT Green Building, in place of the black Calder sculpture that actually sits in front of the Green Building.
 - How can you address the status of meaning without privileging the product over the process?