Photoshop ative ®

THE WORLD'S NO
PHOTOSH
& ELEME

Photoshop CC   File   Edit   Image   Layer   Type

RETOUCH PORTRAITS
Discover the power of frequency separation for editing your shots

COLOR HALFTONE

EXPLORE LAYER MASKS
Learn to supercharge your images with paint-splat effects and colour

7 PROJECTS TO MASTER
FILTERS
COMPLETELY TRANSFORM PHOTOS AND DIGITAL ART

PLUS! 18 pages of Elements guides
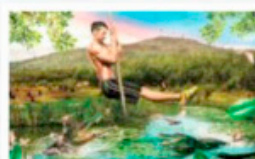
ADD NOISE

OIL PAINT

ACCENTED EDGES

GET SURREAL WITH LAYERS
Composite fantasy artwork with layer masks, brushes and more

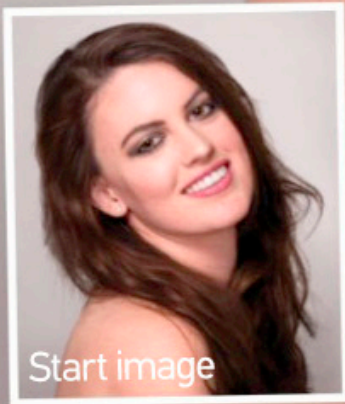## ACHIEVE REALISM
Master natural lighting and creating depth

Start image

Essentials

Works with

Elements   **CS**   **CC**

What you'll learn

How to retouch colour corrections without damaging skin textures

Time taken
1 hour

Expert

John Ross

"If you can master frequency separation, you can make your adjustments more seamless than ever.

"With 20 years' experience in the field, I educate photographers and retouchers by expanding their knowledge through my website **www. TheArtofRetouching. com**. I also carry out comprehensive live classes in New Haven, Connecticut."

# Retouch with frequency separation

Learn this technique for retouching colour corrections without losing the natural texture and beauty of an image

Nothing is more breathtaking than the natural beauty of an image. While it's your job as the retoucher to tone down blemishes, removing the imperfections completely makes your image look dull and fake. So how do you determine if you're on the right track with your colour and texture corrections, and how do you know if you've gone too far?

Achieving subtle adjustments that retain natural transitions is something that frequency separation can definitely help you with. Frequency separation gives you the ability to split an image in two different layers – the texture and colour components. This means that you can isolate everything that is related to colour and light on one layer, and everything that has to do with texture on another. The high frequency is your texture, while the low frequency contains the colour and light information of your picture – both frequencies collectively form your image.

Take your Photoshop skills to the next level with this technique, and get ready to master frequency separation. Subtlety is key; after all, it's the natural flaws that make a model more enchanting.
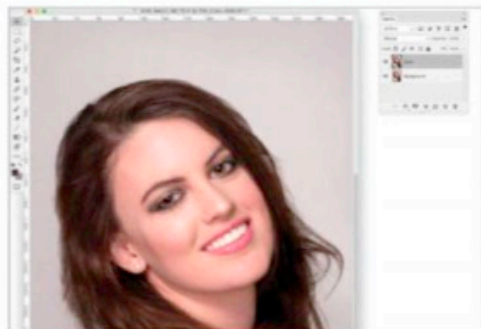
Create merge visible stamp

01 Frequency separation is usually done after you've already made initial adjustments to your photo. Once satisfied, you need to take a snapshot of everything you've done so far. Press Shift+Alt+Cmd/Ctrl+E. Rename the new layer to Colour.
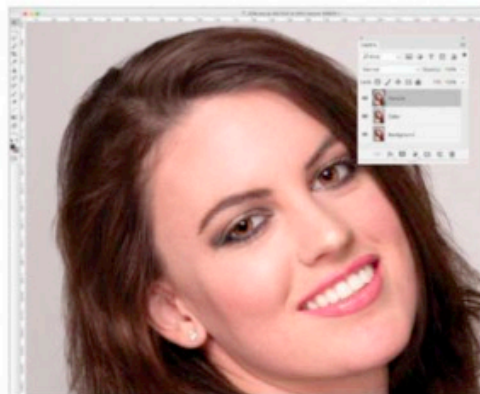
Duplicate merge visible stamp

02 Create a duplicate of Colour and place it on top, naming it Texture. These two copies will serve as your high and low frequency layers that we will work on.
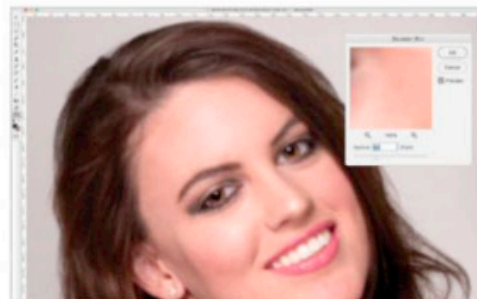
Apply a Gaussian Blur

03 To create the layer that will contain all the colour and the light information on your image, select Colour and go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur. This will throw away the texture. There's some judgment here, as you review the preview on the dialog box that pops up.

Expert tip

Make careful edits

Be wary not to overdo step 4 by going beyond 3.0 pixels. Increasing the pixel radius too much will result in a bad frequency split, where colour and light information may seep in to your texture layer. Frequency separation must not be overdone. Because this technique tends to be more of a trend, most retouchers overuse the tool and go overboard with it. Toning down your use of frequency separation helps you avoid the pitfall of making the technique the sole focus of your picture.
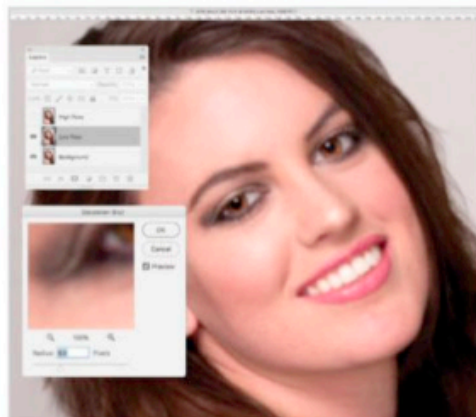

Find the blur balance

04 Adjust the blur by increasing the pixel radius (slide the slider to the right) until all the texture is gone based on the preview. This number is usually around 2.0 pixels to 5.0 pixels. This image needed 6.0.
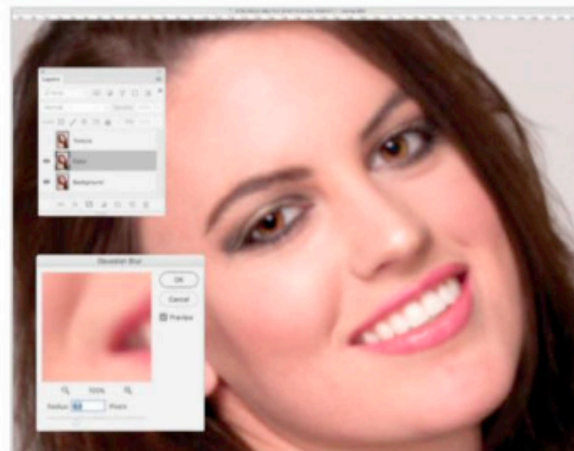

Create the texture layer

05 To create the texture layer, select Colour, as we still need to retain everything we've just thrown away. Go to Image>Apply Image, and on the layer drop-down menu, select Colour.
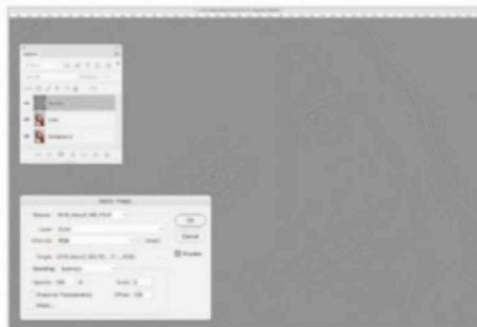

Set 8-bit parameters

06 There is a slight difference when it comes to frequency separation regarding your image bit size. For 8-bit images, select Subtract for the Blending drop-down menu. Set the Scale to 2 and Offset to 128, and make sure the Invert tickbox is unchecked.
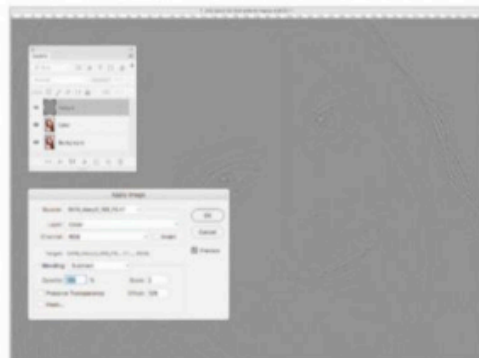

Set 16-bit parameters

07 For 16-bit images, select Add for the Blending. Ensure the Scale is set to 2, Offset is 0, and the Invert tickbox is checked. Remember it's best to make adjustments according to the bit size that your client wants from you. Afterwards, click OK.
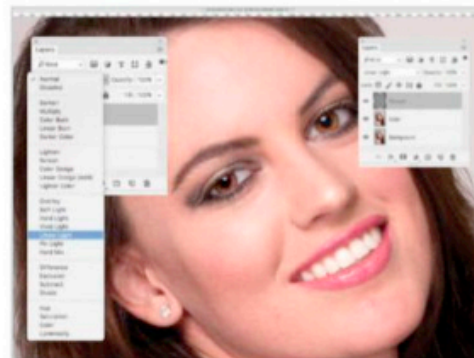

Separate your layers

08 For your layer's blending mode, select Linear Light. We have now effectively separated the two frequencies. It should look exactly as it did before. If, for whatever reason, it doesn't look the same, go back and start over.
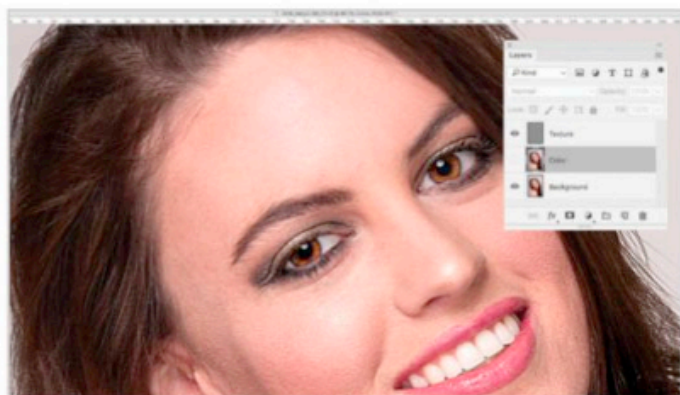

Test the texture layer

09 Now that you have successfully separated frequencies, you might want to see exactly what you have accomplished. Click the eye icon on your Colour layer to make it invisible. This will show you an image that has no colour and light information, but retains all the texture of your image.
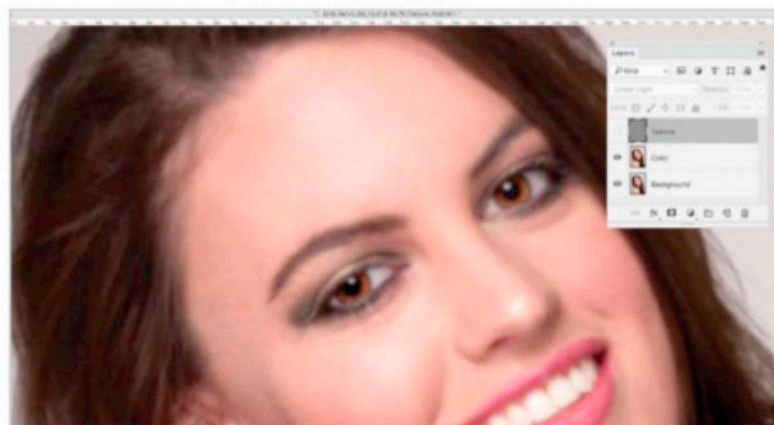

Test the colour layer

10 This time, to see what your Colour layer looks like on its own, simply click on the Texture layer's eye icon to make it invisible. This in turn shows you an image that's devoid of texture, yet has all the colour and light information in your image.
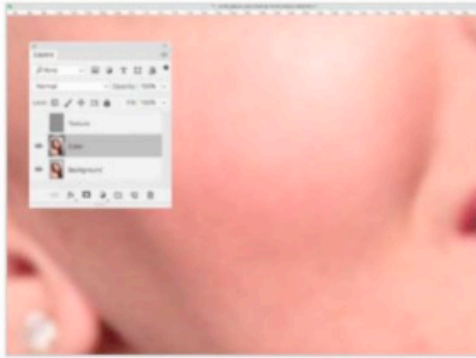
Make colour corrections

11 Why would you separate frequencies in the first place? It is so you can adjust your image information independently. For instance, by selecting your Colour (or Lowpass) layer, you can effectively Heal out the colour of a model's blemishes without damaging or affecting the texture.
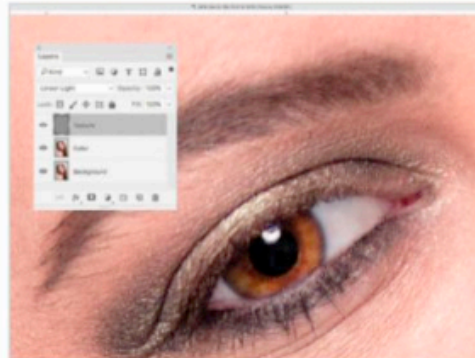

Make texture corrections

12 Likewise, you can Heal or Clone the texture of a blemish separately by selecting the Texture (or Highpass) layer. Select your Healing Brush or Clone Stamp tool and work on the Texture layer, then correct a section of the skin while retaining its original colour.
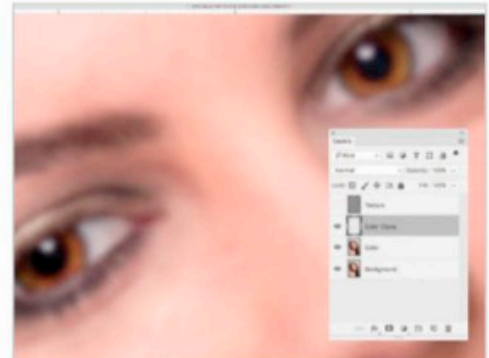

Blend skin colours

13 Create a blank layer between the Colour and Texture layers. You use a Healing Brush or Clone Stamp to even out the colours. Alternatively, set the Brush tool Hardness to 0 and Opacity to 10%, hold down the Alt/Option key, and sample a colour from a shiny skin patch.
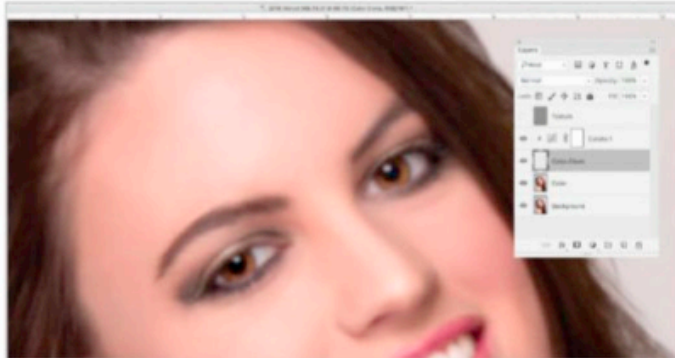
Flatten and smooth colours

14 Once sampled, paint this highlight just outside that area. Then sample an area that's outside of the highlight, and paint over the highlighted area. This way, you can transition skin tones and make those shiny skin colours blend better. You can also apply some adjustments to either your Colour or Texture layer independently.
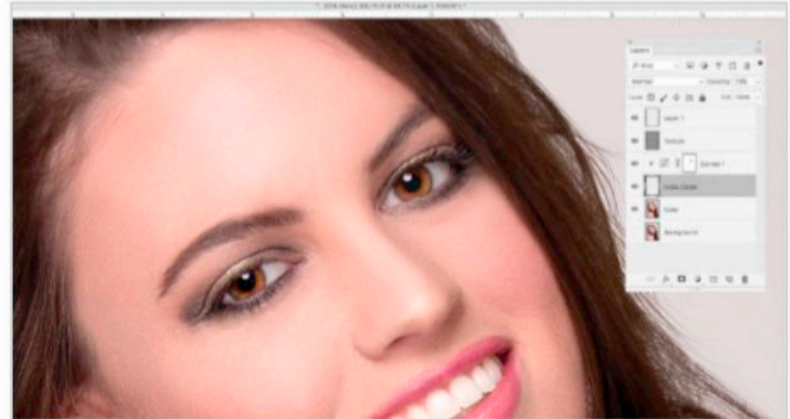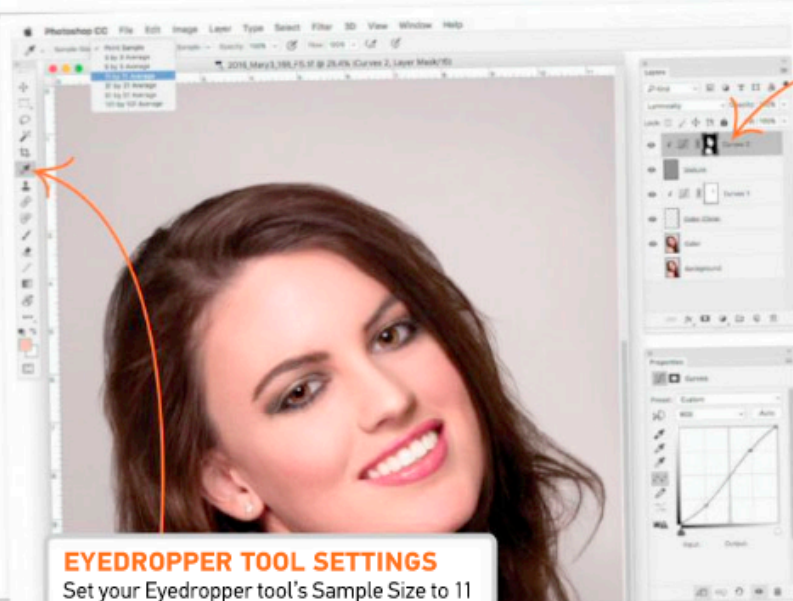

Modify the texture layer

15 Because this is a special type of layer, you can use the Burn tool at 5% Opacity to darken any textures that are too light. You can also hold down the Alt/Option key, and when the cursor changes to the Dodge tool, you can lighten any textures that are too dark.

Expert tip

Facial contouring with frequency separation

You can use the Dodge and Burn tool, the Healing Brush, or the Clone Stamp tool for more refined facial contouring. Because frequency separation enables you to edit textures and colours independent of each other, making facial contouring is simpler. This technique works when toning down the make-up of a model, as well as making colour transitions more seamless. However, be careful when you're contouring. Going too far may lead you to the point of damaging your overall image.

CLIPPING ADJUSTMENTS
Clipping adjustments help affect just the colours or just the texture of your image. You can set blend modes and opacities of adjustments accordingly to have more control over all of your revisions.

EYEDROPPER TOOL SETTINGS
Set your Eyedropper tool's Sample Size to 11 by 11 or 31 by 31 to sample a more general colour area instead of point-by-point.