

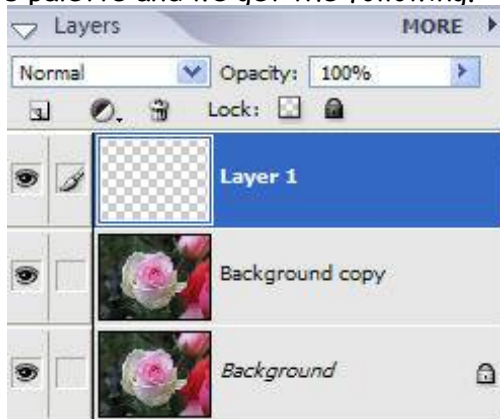
Photoshop Elements SIG - September 14, 2005  
by John Durrett - SIG Co-lead

**Creating Vignettes**


This month we will show you how to create a vignette around a subject of interest. Usually you would use a vignette around a portrait or a specific item in the photo where you want isolate the subject of the photo. Let's use a rose as our subject.




After saving a working copy of the rose, I like to duplicate the background layer. That helps protect the original image. Then to create the mask, click on the new layer icon in the layers palette and we get the following.



Now double click on the words Layer 1, and rename the layer Mat. We want to fill the Mat layer with a pleasing color. To do this I

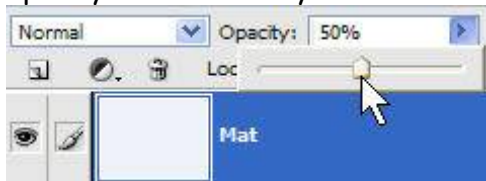
recommend using the Eye Dropper tool  and selecting one of the colors of the flower. I like to change the default on the eyedropper to 3x3 pixels so I don't just get an isolated pixel. Let's try a light shade of white, such as this.



When we click with the Eyedropper, the color in the Foreground Color box changes to what we have sampled. Now, with the Mat layer active (the mat layer is still blue on the palette), select the Bucket tool . Move the bucket over the photo and click once. This will fill the Mat layer with the white color. Don't panic when your photo on the screen turns white. That's just the top Mat layer that you are seeing. Now for the magic.

First add texture to the Mat layer. With the Mat layer active, Select Filter > Noise > Add Noise. Set the noise characteristics to 8%, Gaussian Distribution and Monochromatic, and click OK. You will see a texture in the Mat layer now. For a nice effect you could also add Filter > Brush Strokes > Crosshatch. That gives the mat a nice Wheat Thatch Paper look (thanks to Janee of myjanee.com for her mat concept).

Now to create the vignette, we need to be able to see the flower. To do that we reduce the Opacity of the Mat layer to around 50%



Next, select the Elliptical Marquee tool and set the Feather to 50 pixels (the number will vary depending on your photo). Click and drag your mouse over the photo to create an ellipse around the flower. NOTE: You can save yourself a lot of pain if you click on the Space Bar on your keyboard while you are making the ellipse. Then you can re-center the ellipse, release the Space Bar and continue expanding or contracting the ellipse with the mouse. Your photo should look something like this.



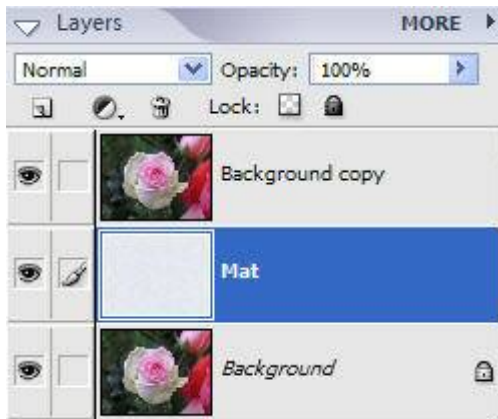
Next, do something really scary and hit the Delete key. The section of the Mat layer over the rose will disappear and you will have created your vignette. For the finishing touches, move the Opacity back up to 100% for the Mat Layer. Then deselect the elliptical selection by selecting Ctrl+D. Your final picture will look something like this.



The feathering gives the photo a gradual transition from the mat to the subject.

#### Another Vignette Approach

Photoshop is an equal opportunity tool. You can achieve the same result many different ways. For this approach, make the Mat by filling it with a color, adding texture using any combination of Filters, and then move the Mat layer underneath your copy of the background layer. Create your ellipse around the rose while viewing the copy of the background layer as your top layer. Remember to keep the ellipse feathered to 50 pixels. Your layers palette should look like:



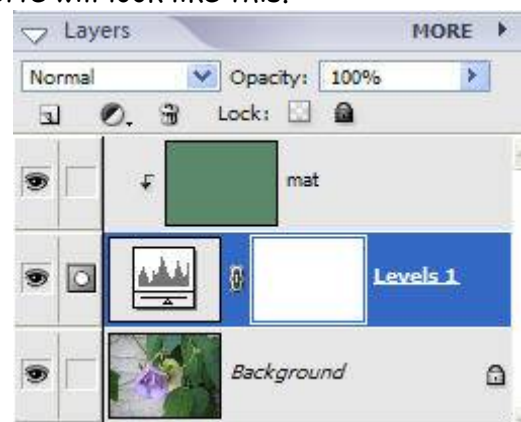
Now, click on the top **Background copy** layer to activate it. Your elliptical selection should be still active (the marching ants are marching). From the menu, choose **Select > Inverse**. Your selection will change to everything outside the ellipse. Now, be brave: click the **Delete** key. If you did it right, the picture will look exactly like the way we did the first vignette technique. To finish, type **Ctrl+D** to deselect the selection.

### Vignettes Using the Elemask

Just to show some more tools for you to use, we will show how to do vignettes using the mask capability of Photoshop Elements. Start with this photo of a snail vine in bloom. Next, add a **Levels** layer, but don't do anything other



than click **OK**. (Judy DiFrancesco showed you how to use the Elemask in the PE SIG Notes from April 13, 2005. That's what we are setting up here.) Then, we will add a new layer and rename it **Mat**, sample the vine leaves with the Eyedropper tool and fill the **Mat** layer with a medium green color. Now, hold down the **Alt** key and point your cursor to the line between the **Levels 1** layer and the **Mat** layer. When your cursor turns into two circles (the grouping icon), Click. The Layers palette will look like this.



In order to see the flower on the vine, reduce the **Opacity** of the **Mat** layer to around 50%. Now, click on the white rectangle in the **Levels 1** layer. This is the mask. Type **D** to be sure your foreground and background colors are set to the default black and white.

Select the **Elliptical Marquee** tool, set the **Feather** to 50 pixels, and create an ellipse over the snail vine's flower. The ellipse will be off-center, but we want it that way. In the previous vignettes you would hit the **delete** key, but not here. We will use the mask. Select a **hard round Brush** and increase the size of the brush to around 175 pixels. Be sure the **Opacity** of the brush is at 100%. Now paint over the ellipse in the mask layer. Notice that as you paint, the image of the mat within the ellipse is removed. Also notice that

only the mat within the ellipse is removed, with the exception of the feathered area. Painting the mask black within the ellipse keeps the upper mat layer from showing up in the final picture. Select Ctrl + D to deselect the ellipse.

To add some texture to the Mat layer, click on that layer and add Filter > Noise > Add Noise followed by Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur. We need to add one more layer. Since the Mat layer is now active, select the Text tool and click on the photo in the lower right area. Change the color of the text to a very dark green, and type Snail Vine. Resize for the photo. This photo uses the Matura MT Script at 72 pt. I also used the Styles and Effects Palette, and chose Bevels from the drop-down menu beside the Layer Styles. Then I chose the Simple Sharp bevel from the available selections. That added some depth to the text. The final picture follows.



### Creative Control Using the Elemask

The main reason to use a mask is for the creative control you have over the picture. For example, suppose in the previous example, we had not used an ellipse to focus our selection. If we just used a black brush to reveal the flower, we could have very easily

ended up with a different creation. In this case, I used a soft black brush and varied the size of the brush and the Opacity as I worked the picture. That way I could uncover only a limited amount of the flower at a time. If I wanted to reverse any of what I had created, I switched the color of the brush to white and painted to reveal the mat again. This is what I created.



### Conclusion

Adding a vignette to a photo can add focus and drama to a picture. Photoshop Elements offers many different artistic approaches and techniques for creating individual vignettes.

[For a color version of this write-up, open your Browser and go to <http://www.computerbooters.org/>. Choose Photoshop from the SIG Notes and get the pdf file for Sept 2005. The file will download and open on your computer. You can then save it to your hard drive. ]



## *Terms for September 2005 PE SIG Meeting*

### **Layers palette**

Background layer  
Copy of Background layer  
Creating new layers  
Renaming layers  
Foreground color  
Background color  
Changing the Foreground/Background color  
Eyedropper  
Bucket tool  
Applying Filters  
Creating mat layers  
Changing Opacity of layers  
Elliptical Marquee selections  
Feathering selections  
Deselecting selections  
Grouping layers  
Using Elemasks  
Setting Foreground/Background colors to default values  
Using Brushes  
Changing Brush sizes and opacity  
Creating Vignettes

### **Creating Mats:**

#### **Wheat Thatch Paper:**

1. Fill a new layer with color.
2. Filter > Noise > Add Noise. More noise makes the paper darker.
3. Filter > Brush Strokes > Crosshatch. Experiment and find a setting you like.

#### **Cotton Scroll Paper:**

1. Make a new layer and fill it with color.
2. Filter > Noise > Add Noise. About 10%. Distribution is Gaussian, and check the Monochromatic square.
3. Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur. Radius around 4%. Repeat until you like the appearance. Don't forget Ctrl + Z to undo any filter effects.