



Challenge Images: Beach Huts & Rome Stairway

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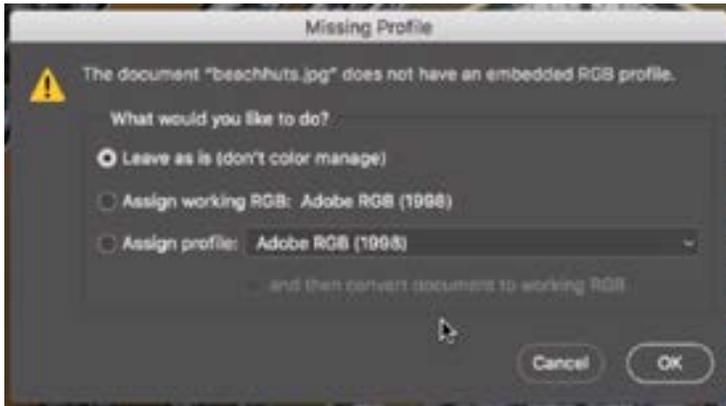
In this lesson, we're going to work on some challenge images that were sent by Masters Academy members. One of the images contains colorful beach huts along with some distracting elements. We will use some retouching techniques to remove the distractions and optimize the image. The other image features a spiral staircase, looking straight up into a large window. With this photo, we're going to use some techniques for evening out the color of light, as well as some techniques for retouching the brownish areas in the window.



In the challenge image on the left, we will use some retouching techniques to remove the trash bin between the huts and the seaweed pile in the sand. In the image on the right, we will learn some techniques for evening out the color of light and retouching the brown panels in the window.

Beach huts image

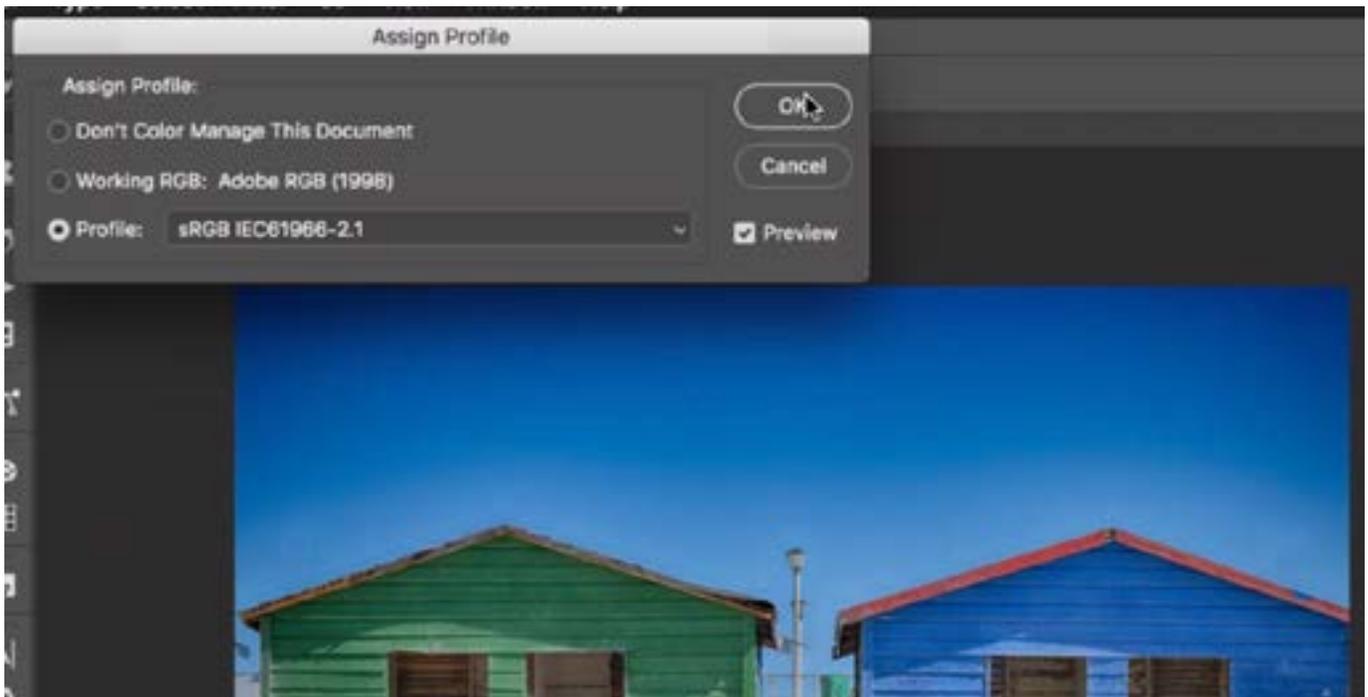
Missing Profile warning From Adobe Bridge, we'll double-click on the beach huts photo to open it in Photoshop. With this particular image, a "Missing Profile" warning pops up on our screen, asking us what we'd like to do. You sometimes end up with a missing profile if you are saving out the image for use on the Internet. I would like to choose one of the more commonly-used profiles from the Assign Profile menu, BUT there is no way to preview what these profiles would look like before opening the image. Because of this, I like to choose the "Leave as is" option and then click OK. We will assign the profile in the next step.



If the image you're trying to open has no profile assigned, this warning will appear.

With the image open in Photoshop, we'll go to the Edit menu and choose Assign Profile. (The only time I'll use "Assign Profile" is when the profile is missing or incorrect.) Within the Assign Profile dialog box, we'll choose the Profile option at the bottom and make sure that the Preview check box is turned on so that we can see how the image looks with the various profiles. We'll use the Profile

menu to switch between the different profiles, choosing the one that makes the image look most desirable. In the video example image, that is the sRGB profile. Then, we'll click OK.

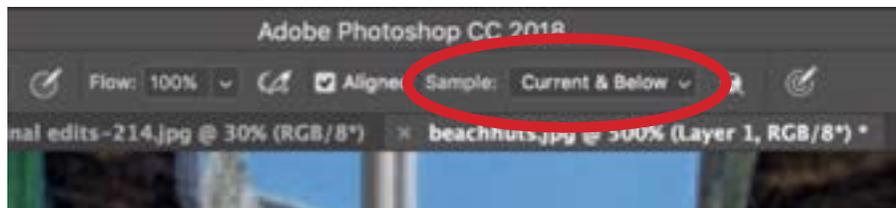


Here, we accessed the Assign Profile dialog via the Edit menu. We chose the Profile option and can now use the menu to assign a profile, previewing each menu option in the main image window.

Trash bin retouch The first retouching job we’re going to tackle is the green trash bin. The challenge is that it’s located behind a wire mesh fence. In order to remove the trash bin while keeping the fence intact, we’re going to copy parts of the fence from the clean area to the left of the bin and then paste that content over the area with the bin.

We’ll activate the Clone Stamp Tool, which is designed to create an exact copy from the source area to paste onto the target area. The cursor will turn into a round tool tip that we can resize by using the left and right bracket keys ([]). To use the Clone Stamp Tool, we will hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) and click on the source area (the area we want to copy). Then we’ll release the Option key and position the round cursor over the area we want to retouch. A preview of what we’re pasting will appear inside the round cursor and it can be a good idea to make the cursor large so that we can more easily line up the content. With the cursor large, we will click once to establish alignment. Then, we can immediately use the undo command (Command+Z; Ctrl+Z) because the cursor was TOO large. We only did this so that the tool tip knows the correct alignment and positioning. We can then make the tool tip much smaller again so that we can paint with more precision. We’ll click and drag in order to “paint” the source content over the retouch area.

It’s always a good idea to apply retouch work on a new, empty layer. Click on the New Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel to add an empty layer just above the image layer. When using the Clone Stamp Tool on an empty layer, we need



When using the Clone Stamp Tool on an empty layer, The Sample menu must be set to Current & Below or All Layers.

to make sure that Sample menu is set to Current & Below. The Sample menu can be found in the Options Bar that runs above the main image window.

Looking at the wire fence, there are two vertical dividers, one of which is right next to the trash bin. We'll sample an area on the farther vertical divider and then match up that sampled area to the divider closer to the bin. We'll make the cursor large and click to establish alignment. Then we'll undo, make the brush smaller again and we'll click and drag to replace the contents with the area we sampled.



The Clone Stamp Tool is used to copy fence area from the left and paste it over the trash bin on the right.

Sometimes, when trying to line up objects (like the vertical fence divider), you'll accidentally click in the wrong place, or the retouch job will be off by a few pixels. If that's the case, first use the Undo command (Command+Z; Ctrl+Z). The tool will have locked in the positioning, but you can adjust it by using a keyboard short-cut. Hold down the Shift and Option keys (Shift and Alt on Win) and then use the arrow keys on your keyboard to nudge the retouch work left, right, up or down. Then go ahead to click and drag on the image, pasting the source content onto the retouch area. We'll paint in the clean fence area, moving to the right until the big vertical pole starts to show up. If we accidentally paint some of the pole into our retouch area, it's no big deal, because we're retouching on a separate layer. We could simply activate the Eraser Tool and erase the unwanted pole.

We will then use the Clone Stamp Tool to sample another clean area of fence to the left of the trash bin. We'll sample an area from the top of the fence so that we can use it to line up with the top of the fence where the trash bin is. We'll line up the cursor so the horizontal lines match and then start painting, covering as

much fence area as we can before we start adding unwanted content. To finish removing the trash bin, we'll continue this process, sampling areas of clean fence and then painting over the bin, taking care to make sure that the grid lines of the fence match perfectly.

Seaweed removal Next, we're going to remove the distracting pile of seaweed that's sitting below the beach huts. When it comes to removing objects like this, I will try to isolate the object so that it's completely surrounded by content that is all the same. In this example, we'll isolate parts of the seaweed so that it is completely surrounded by sand and is no longer attached to the vertical poles under the hut.



We will break up this pile of seaweed into smaller chunks so that it can more easily be removed.

There appears to be a line where the sand changes color a little, so we'll use that line to clone across horizontally. Working on the top, retouching layer, we'll activate the Clone Stamp Tool and Option+click (Alt+click on Win) on the line in the sand to the left of the seaweed pile in order to copy. Then, we'll hover the round cursor over the seaweed, making the cursor bigger as needed to line up the content just



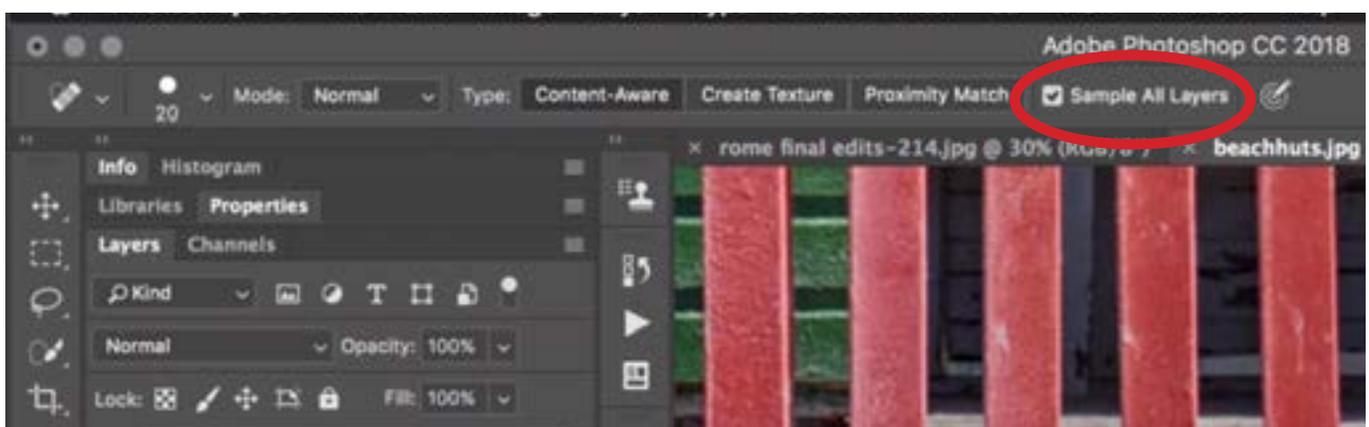
The Clone Stamp Tool is being used to copy sand area on the left and line it up over the seaweed area on the right. We're temporarily using a large brush in order to better see how things are lining up.

right. We'll click the mouse button to establish where the cloning should apply and then immediately Undo (Command+Z; Ctrl+Z). Then, we'll switch to a smaller brush so that we have more precision for doing the actual cloning. We'll click and drag to apply the Clone Stamp Tool, creating a gap between the pole and the rest of the seaweed. We'll then do the same thing in between the two poles and then again on the right pole. We're basically isolating the seaweed into smaller chunks so we can more easily remove them.



The Clone Stamp Tool was used to separate the seaweed pile into chunks. The isolated chunk on the left will then be removed with the Spot Healing Brush.

Next, we're going to use the Spot Healing Brush in order to remove the isolated chunks of seaweed. After activating the Spot Healing Brush, we'll need to make sure that the "Sample All Layers" check box is turned on (It's located in the Options Bar above the main image window.). This will allow the tool to use the content from the underlying image layer in order to fill in the area we specify. If this setting were kept off, it would only be able to sample from the active retouching layer, which is mostly empty.



When using the Spot Healing Brush on an empty layer, or a layer that is separate from the image layer, you'll need to make sure that the Sample All Layers check box is turned on.



The Spot Healing Brush is used to remove the isolated chunks of seaweed. Afterwards, we are only left with the seaweed that is in front of the two poles.

We'll use the Spot Healing Brush to paint over one of the isolated chunks of seaweed, making sure that it's completely covered before releasing the mouse button. We'll do the same thing with the seaweed on the right.

Now, the only seaweed remaining is what's right in front of the two poles. We'll again activate the Clone Stamp Tool and use it to sample from a clean area on the edge of a pole. We'll line up that sampled edge on the lower part of the pole (where the seaweed is) and paint, replacing the seaweed with the source area we copied from. The same thing will be done on the other pole.



The Clone Stamp Tool is used to remove the seaweed from in front of the poles.

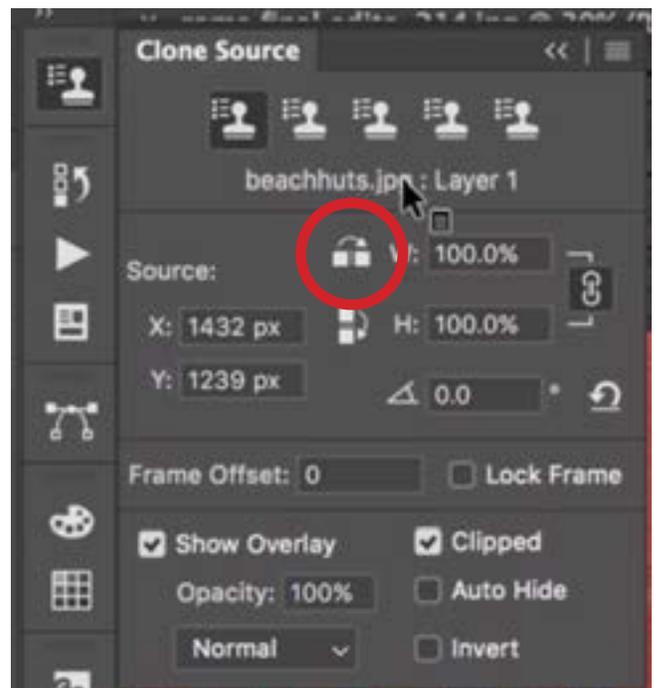
Now that the unwanted object is removed, we need to clean things up. After using the Clone Stamp Tool a good amount, it's common to have repeating shapes that can make it appear obvious that we did retouch work. We'll use the Spot Healing Brush to make sure that any repeated shapes and/or textures are broken up.



The Spot Healing Brush is being used to break up any repeating elements caused by the Clone Stamp Tool.

There was a darker line in the sand that ran below the beach huts and this line got removed when we did the retouch work. If we wanted to replace it, we could copy content from the area beneath the hut on the right and use it to fill in the area beneath the hut on the left. The only risk here is that it could look obvious that there is a repeating element. To make it less obvious, we'll use some settings located in the Clone Source panel. These settings will allow us to scale, rotate or flip the copied content as we paste it to a new location. If the Clone Source panel is not already visible in your interface, go to the Window menu and choose Clone Source.

We'll activate the Healing Brush for this job because it will try to match the retouch area to the surrounding area. We'll make sure that the Sample menu (in the Options Bar) is set to Current & Below. Then, we'll click on the flip horizontal icon within the Clone Source panel. This will cause the tool to paste a mirror image of the area that was copied and will therefore not look exactly the same. We'll Option+click (Alt+click on Win) in an area of the darker sand beneath the hut on the right and then hover the round cursor beneath the hut on the left, lining up the darker line in the sand before clicking and dragging with the brush. Then, I like to activate the Spot Healing Brush to break up some of the details in the retouch area so that it doesn't look like an exact copy of the area on the other side of the photo.

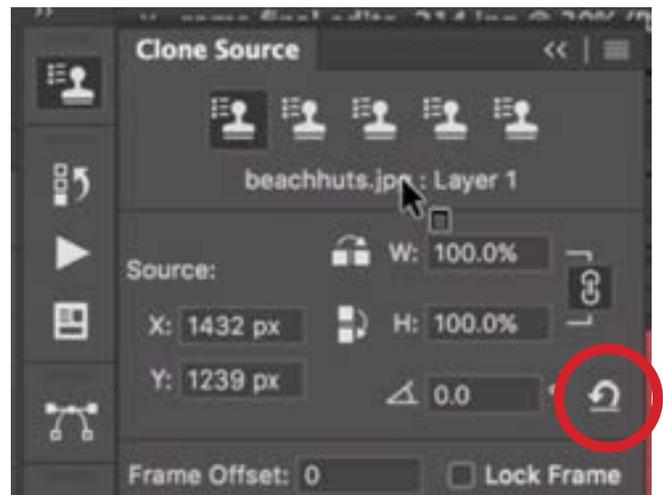


The Clone Source panel is shown above. We want to take the sampled content and flip it horizontally when pasting it to the retouch area, so we are turning on the flip horizontal setting.

Aligned setting When using the Clone Stamp Tool or the Healing Brush, there is a check box in the Options Bar that you should be aware of. This is the Aligned set-

ting and it determines whether or not the tool remembers where you first clicked to apply some retouching. When this check box is turned on, we can use the tool to sample from one area and then click over the retouch area to establish the alignment. Then, as we continue to paint to apply the retouching, the tool will remember that initial click. We can release the mouse button and start painting again as many times as we'd like and the tool will still maintain the same alignment. If the Aligned check box is turned off, the tool will not remember where you initially clicked so you will need to establish the alignment over and over again. For this reason, I generally keep the Aligned check box turned on.

Clone Source reset We mentioned earlier that you can use the settings in the Clone Source panel to take the sample content and paste it at a rotation, at a different size or completely flipped. Because these settings change the way the tool works, it's always a good idea to reset all of the Clone Source settings when you're done using the tool. This way, it won't create problems for you the next time you go to use the tool. Reset all Clone Source settings by clicking the little "u-turn" icon on the right side of the Clone Source panel.



Clicking the circled icon will reset all of the Clone Source panel settings.

Rome Staircase Image

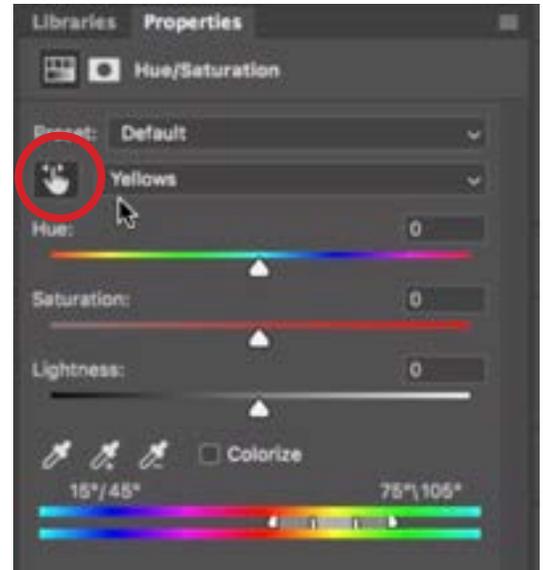
Color matching The first thing we want to do with the image of the spiral staircase in Rome is some color matching. We would like to alter the yellow hue on the ceiling so that it matches the yellow hue on the spiral staircase.



In this image, we want to make the yellow hue on the ceiling match the yellow hue on the stairs.

We'll do this with a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer so we'll click on the Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and choose Hue/Saturation from the pop-up menu. The Hue/Saturation Properties panel will appear.

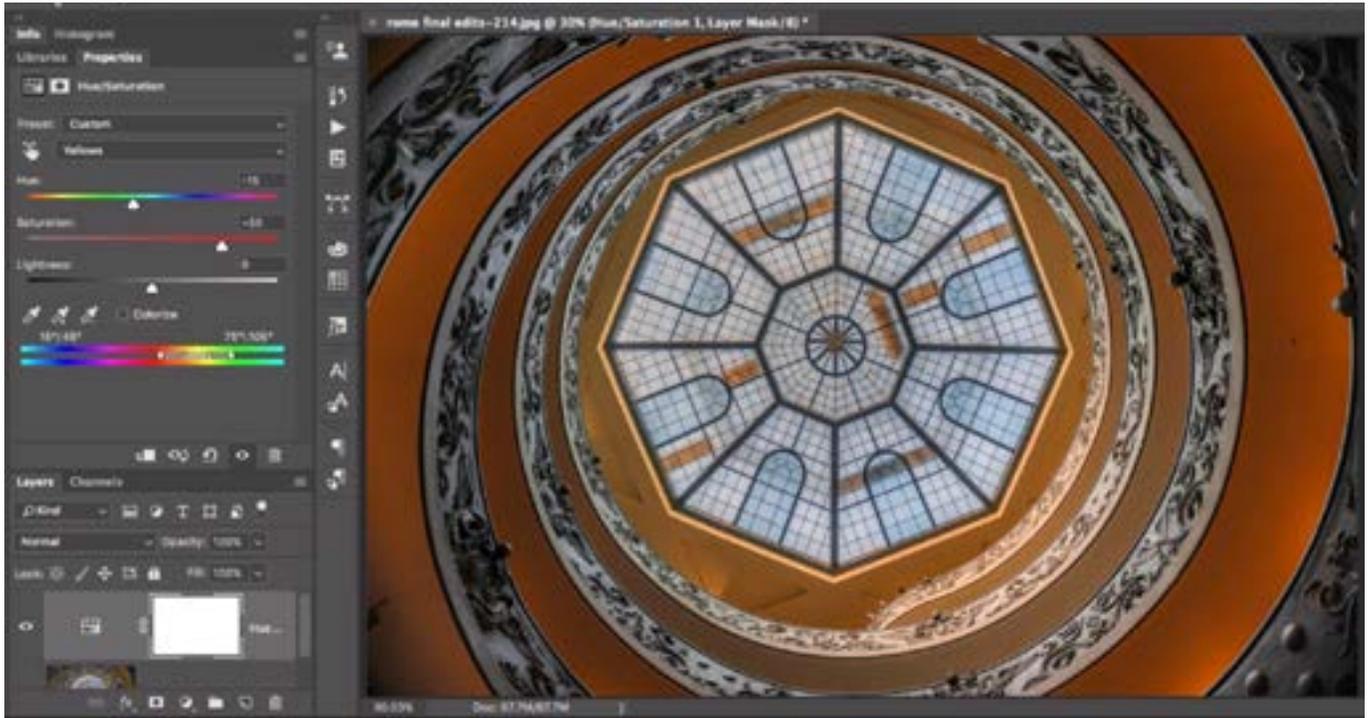
We want the adjustment to affect only the yellow hue on the ceiling and not the rest of the colors in the image. We'll turn on the targeted adjustment tool, which looks like a little hand icon in the upper left corner of the Properties panel. We'll use this tool to click on the yellow hue in the ceiling. When we do this, the color menu in the Properties panel will automatically be set to Yellows and the specific color range we clicked on will be targeted by a series of bars in the gradient at the bottom of the panel. This represents the color range that will be affected by the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. Looking more closely at this gradient, we can see that the yellows are fully targeted and there are some greens and oranges that are partially targeted as well.



We used the targeted adjustment tool (circled) to click within the image on the color we wanted to change. This automatically changed the color menu to Yellows and targeted the yellows in the gradient.

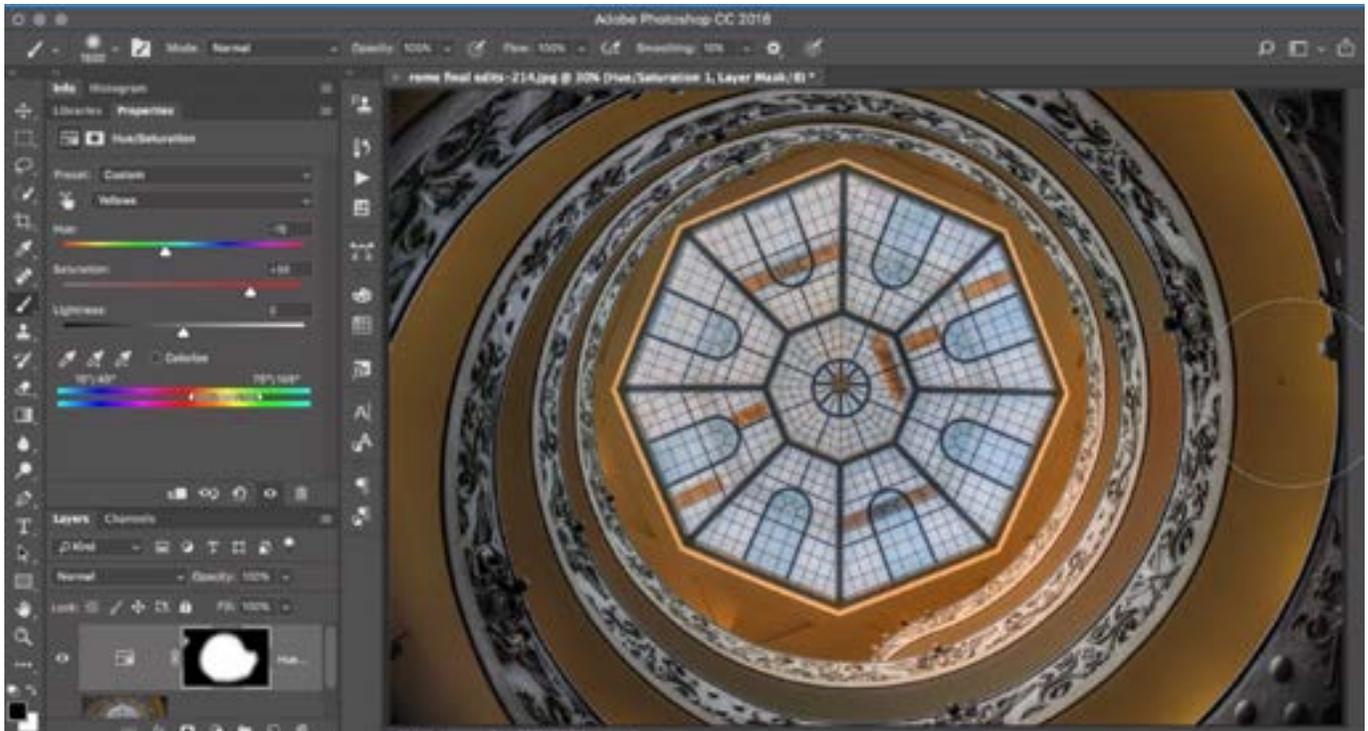
Now, we're going to drag the Saturation slider up, only paying attention to the yellow on the ceiling and ignoring the rest of the photograph. The goal is to make it just as colorful as the yellow hue on the staircase, but we'll be able to go back and adjust it more later if necessary. Comparing the two areas we're trying to match, the color on the ceiling is more yellow-green while the color on the stairway is more yellow-orange. We will try to shift the color of the ceiling to be more orange and we'll use the Hue slider to do that. We need to determine how far, and in what direction, the Hue slider should move, so we'll look to see where the yellow color of the ceiling is located on the gradient. Then, we'll look to see where

the yellow/orange hue is located on the gradient. This is the color we want to end up with. In this example, the orange/yellow color we want is located just a little bit left of the yellow color of the ceiling. This means that the hue shift we need will require us to move the Hue slider a little to the left, so that's what we'll do.



In trying to match the yellow on the ceiling to the yellow on the stairs, we worked in the Properties panel for the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, moving the Saturation slider to the right. We also moved the Hue slider to the left, shifting the color from a yellow/green to more of a yellow/orange.

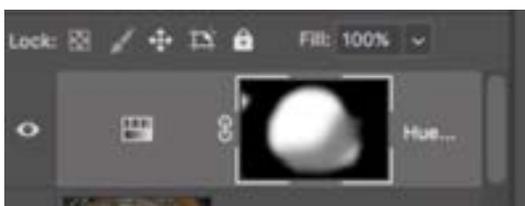
The entire image has shifted in color and we only wanted the change to occur in the yellow part of the ceiling, so we will paint on the layer mask attached to the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer in order to hide the color change in all areas except for that ceiling area. When we add black to a layer mask, we are preventing the layer from being visible in the areas that are black. When it comes to adjustment layers, the black “paint” will hide the adjustment, so we will activate the Brush Tool and choose a large, soft-edged brush. We’ll make sure that the foreground color is set to black and we will paint over the staircase part of the image, hiding the effect. We can now continue to tweak the Hue and Saturation sliders.



The Hue/Saturation adjustment layer affected all of the yellows in the image, and we only wanted the change to occur in the ceiling. Here, we're painting with black on the layer mask attached to the adjustment layer in order to hide the effect in all areas except for the ceiling.

The changes have taken us in the direction we wanted, but the effect is a little too extreme in the area beneath the bottom right quarter of the window. We'll

need to lessen the effect a bit here. If we simply paint with black over the area, it will remove the effect completely. That's not what we want. Instead, we'll lower the opacity of the brush to 50% by using the Opacity setting located in the Options Bar above the main image window. By using the brush at half strength, we can lessen the effect without removing it completely. We'll use the brush to paint over the area of the ceiling that was too saturated.



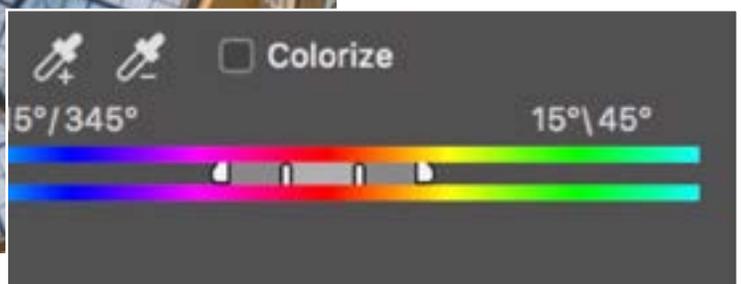
This is the thumbnail for the layer mask attached to the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. You can see that we applied the black brush at half opacity in some areas because they appear gray in the layer mask.

Removing distracting elements in window The next thing we're going to work on with this image is the distracting brownish rectangles in the window. We could either tone them down or remove them completely. Toning them down would be faster, so let's first look at how we could do that.

We can use another Hue/Saturation adjustment layer to tone down the look of the brown rectangles, so we'll click on the Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and choose Hue/Saturation. We can use the settings in the Properties panel to isolate the brown areas because they are a different color from the rest of the skylight. We'll again make sure that the targeted adjustment tool (the little hand icon) is active within the Properties panel. Then, we'll use it to click on one of the brownish rectangles. This will automatically change the color menu (within the Properties panel) to Reds and it will isolate the red color range that we clicked on within the bars on the color gradient. This means that the Hue/Saturation settings are only going to affect this targeted color range, which includes mainly reds, but also some orange and magenta.

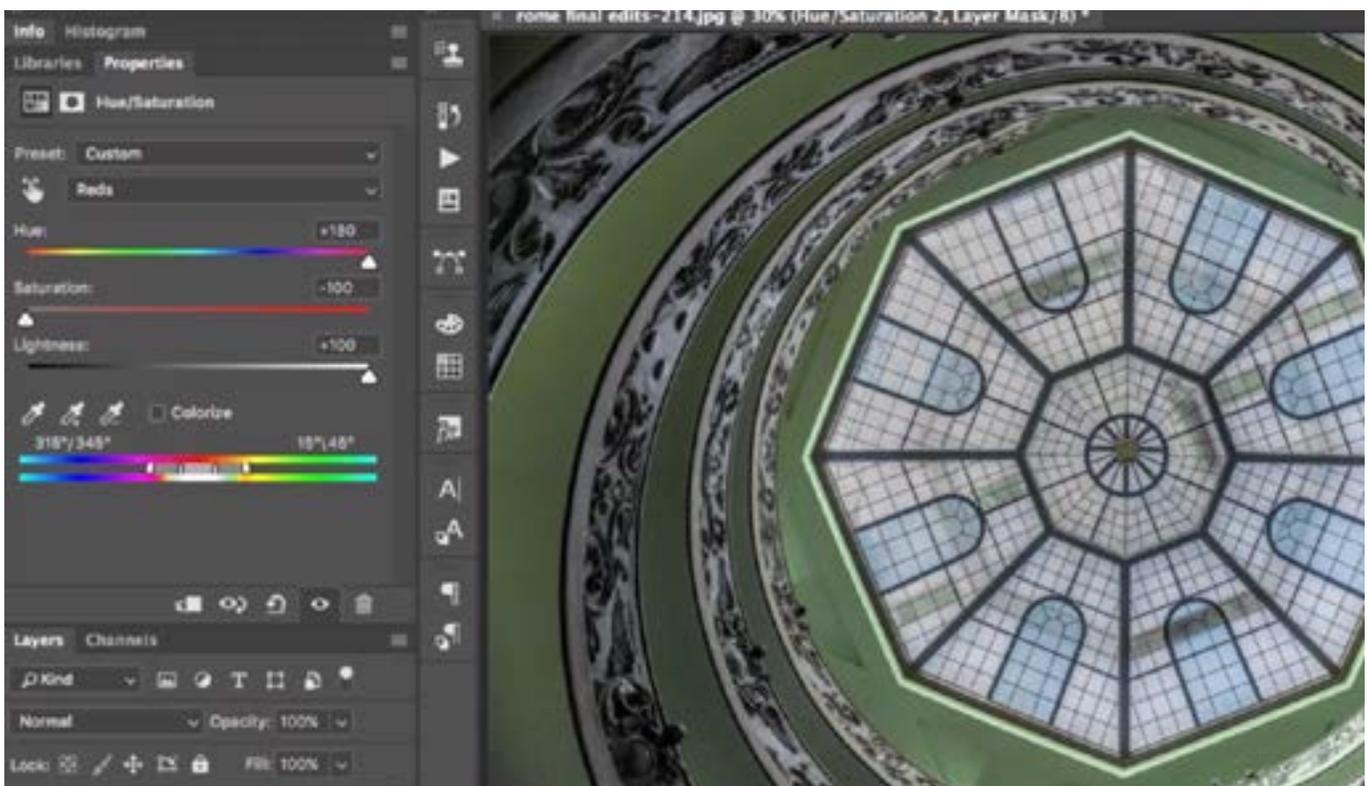


We want the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer to target the brown/reddish rectangles in the skylight so we used the targeted adjustment tool to click on one and you can see the color range targeted in the Properties panel (below).



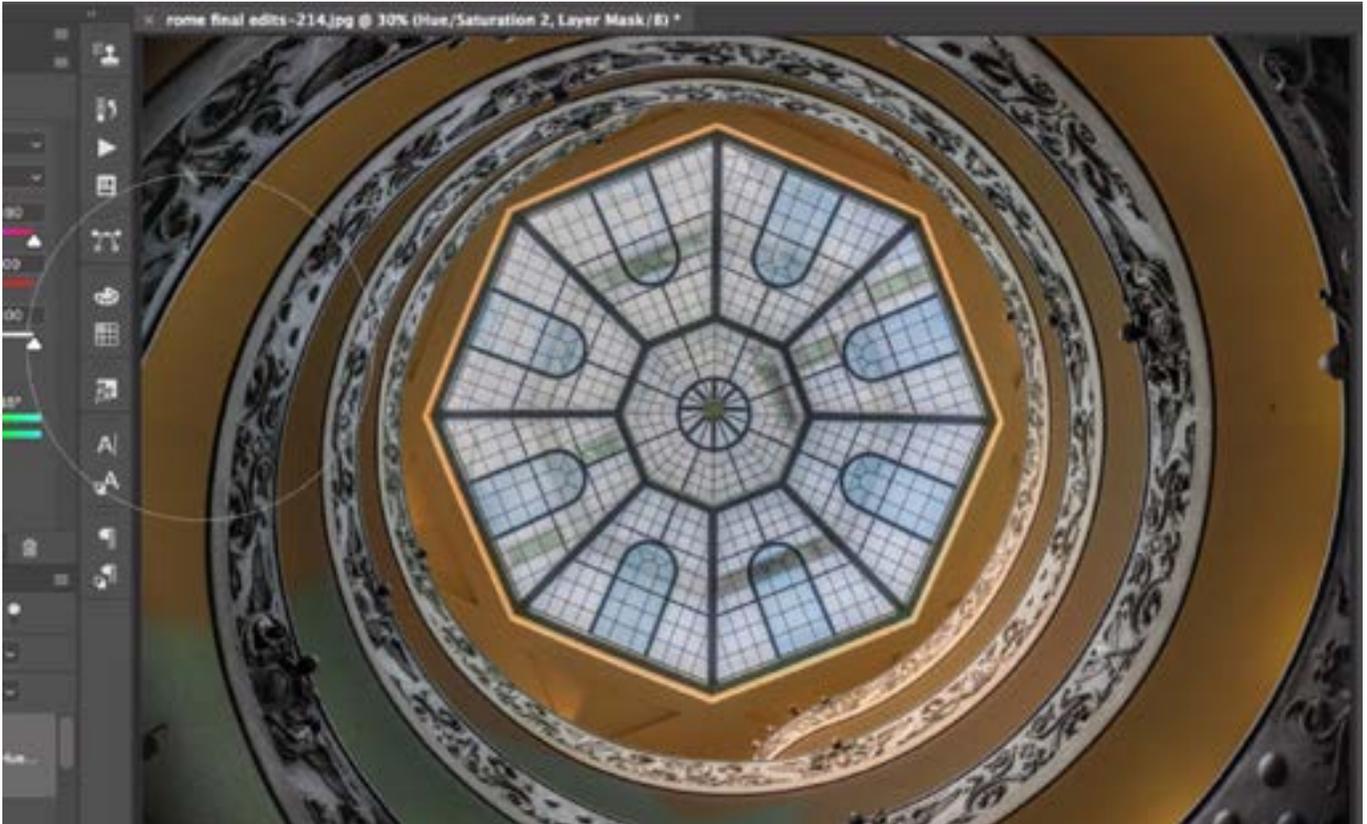
Now we're going to use the Hue/Saturation sliders to try and shift the color of the brownish rectangles so they more closely match the blueish color of the rest of the window. When we move the sliders, this will change the targeted color across the entire image, and that's ok. We'll use the layer mask to isolate the rectangles later.

In the Properties panel, we'll need to move the Hue slider to try and shift the color of the rectangles from a brownish color to a blueish color. Because these colors are so different from each other, we'll need to move this slider a lot. In the video example, I just played around with it, moving the slider back and forth until I got as close as possible to the desired hue. I also needed to move the Saturation slider far to the left and the Lightness slider far to the right in order to make the rectangles match the surroundings as closely as possible.



With the red hues targeted with the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, we moved the Hue, Saturation and Lightness sliders so the brown areas in the window more closely matched the rest of the window.

Now we can see that this color shift affected the yellow/orange hue on the spiral staircase, and we didn't want that. To remove the effect in that area, we'll activate the Brush Tool and use a relatively hard-edged brush (with the foreground color set to black) to paint over the staircase, removing the effect from the stairs.



Here, we're painting with black on the layer mask for the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer in order to remove the blue/green color shift from the spiral stairs.

If we were not able to shift the color of the brown rectangles to the desired color using a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, there is a different technique to try. We'll create a new, empty layer at the top of the Layers panel. Then, we want to set the foreground color to match the desirable blue color of the window. With the Brush Tool active, we'll hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) to temporarily access the Eyedropper. We'll use the Eyedropper to click on one of the windows that has the desired, desaturated blue color. This will set that as the foreground color. We can then release the Option key to go back to the Brush Tool. We'll use

the Brush Tool to paint the sampled color over the rectangles we want to change. This will completely obscure the areas with paint, but that's ok. We'll then change the blending mode of this layer to Color or Hue (we used Color in the video example) so the effect looks good.

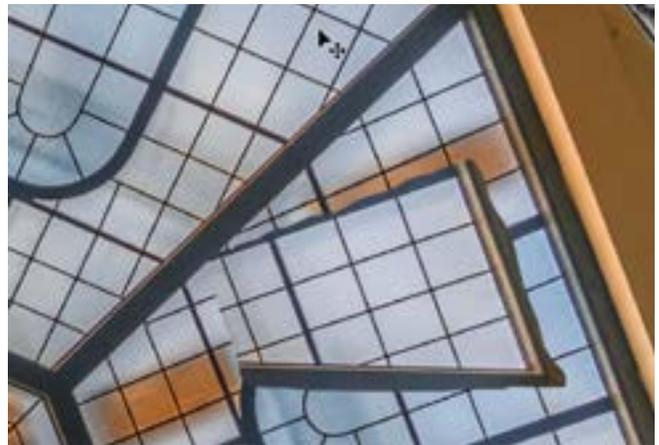


Left: On an empty layer, we painted over the brown spots using a color sampled from the blue area of the window. Right: The blending mode of this layer was set to Color.

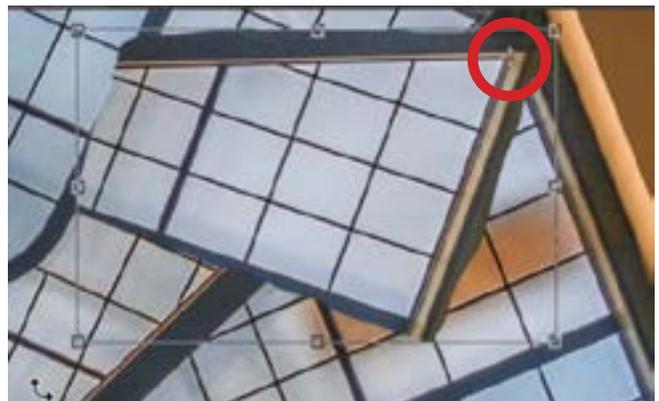
Now let's say that we want to remove the brown areas completely. If that's the case, we'll need to use some retouching techniques. In the video example, we hid the two layers that were designed to tone down the brown areas (from the technique above), because these won't be used in the process of removing them completely. Normally, I'd first turn to the Clone Stamp Tool for a job like this. However, the angles and shapes of the individual window panels vary greatly, and that's going to create a problem for the Clone Stamp Tool. Instead, we're going to make selections around specific areas of window, copy those selections to their own layer and then use them to cover up the brown areas.

We'll zoom in on the first area we want to retouch. Within one of the geometric window shapes, the brown area is above an arch shape. We'll make a selection around the panels below the arch shape, since they perfectly reflect the panels on the top. The Polygonal Lasso Tool can be used to make this type of selection. If we're working directly on the image layer, we can jump the selection to its own layer by using the Keyboard shortcut Command+J (Ctrl+J on Win). If, instead, there is more than one layer or adjustment layers, we'll need to copy the contents of all those layers onto its own layer and we can do that by going to the Edit menu and choosing Copy Merged.

We'll use the Move Tool to position this copied window segment over the segment with the brown spot. It will obviously need to be flipped in order to cover the spot correctly. We'll go to the Edit menu and choose Transform > Flip Horizontal. We'll need to rotate the piece into place but we will first line the corner of the window up with the corner of the window in the image layer. Then, we'll activate the Free Transform feature by using the keyboard shortcut Command+T (Ctrl+T on Win). The Free Transform handles will appear around the layer. Because one of the corners is already lined up, we'll drag the crosshair from the center of the Free Transform box and position it over the lined-up corners. This little crosshair determines the pivot point. We'll now click and drag outside of the Free Transform box in order to rotate the content so that it best matches the window underneath.



The area under the arched window was selected and copied to its own layer. We'll need to flip this layer so it matched the window on the underlying image layer.



Here, we lined up the corners and activated the Free Transform feature. We positioned the pivot point over the corners (circled).

If it's hard to tell whether the content is lining up correctly, we can change the blending mode of the layer to Darken or Multiply. This will allow us to see the lines of the underlying window so it's easier to tell when things are lining up.

Sometimes, you won't be able to align content simply by scaling and rotating. If that's the case, you can use the Distort command, which is part of the Free Transform feature. This will allow us to adjust the four corners of the layer independently of each other. We'll go to the Edit menu and choose Transform > Distort. Alternatively, we could hold down the Command key (Ctrl on Win) while using the Free Transform feature. This will temporarily activate the Distort command for the entire time that the key is held down. We can now drag the four transform corners independently of one another so that we can precisely line up the layer with the underlying layer.



The Distort command allows us to move each Free Transform corner independently of one another, and that's what we're using here to line things up.

When we're finished, we'll hit the Enter/Return key to lock in the transformation and then set the blending mode back to normal. If there is any extra, unwanted content around the edges of the layer, we can use the Eraser Tool (or we could paint on a layer mask) in order to remove it.