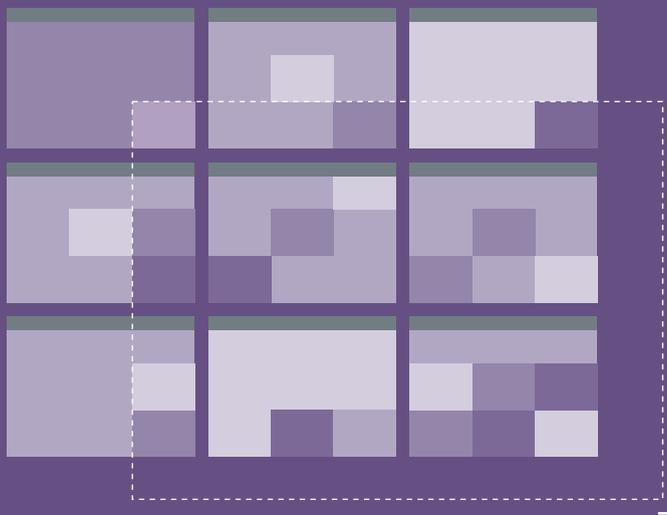






Illustration: Vincent Marcone, Website: mypeetskeleton.com

Photoshop Skills



Creative type

Various artistic techniques can be applied to text in *Photoshop*. One of the most effective is using fonts as typographic textures...

Something cryptic occurs when type is used in a different fashion to its designed purpose. A font used as a texture will obscure a message, rather than clearly communicate it. This technique can etch a variety of emotional scenarios into your imagery.

In this tutorial, the type will be reminiscent of a lost memory that can just barely be recalled. You will learn how to sculpt fonts so they seem to disappear within certain elements of the layout. The written word will become a part of the imagery, rather than a

well-placed label used for identifying its surroundings.

Sometimes the perfect font for your image just isn't available within your roster of type styles, and so it's useful to incorporate photographs of type; we will resurrect a font that was etched into a gravestone over a century ago. Our photograph contains the perfect gothic style needed for our overall design, and learning this procedure will arm you with the ability to trace or create your own font.



DOWNLOAD

Click here to download the files you need to complete this tutorial

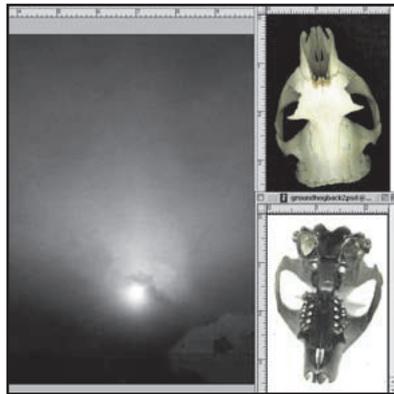
Artwork and expertise by Vincent Marcone:
www.mypeetskeleton.com.

Part 1: The backdrop

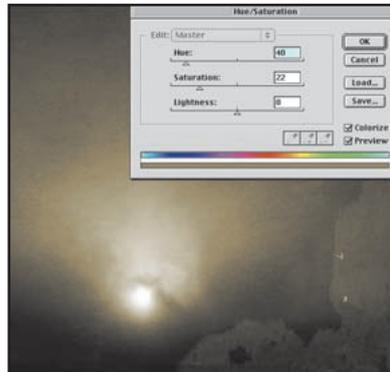
The typography needs a background and textures to play off it. The first step is to create a foundation for the fonts...

Scanning bulky objects

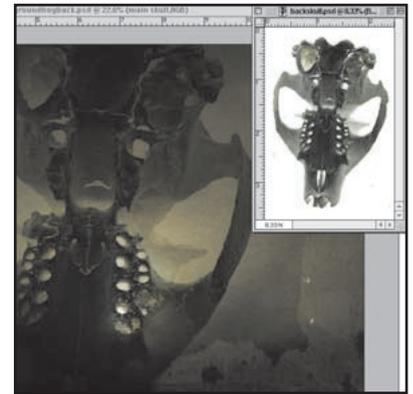
Scanning objects that you find is a method that works amazingly well. In this case, a real groundhog skull was scanned in. The key to effectively scanning a three-dimensional object is to remove any other surrounding light source. Simply take the lid off the scanner, centre your object on the glass and drape it with some sort of opaque fabric. This skull was simply draped with a black leather jacket, resulting in an image that's as clear as a photograph.



1 Open the files `backskull.psd`, `background.psd` and `frontskull.psd` (within your download), and consider how these objects can work with each other within the composition. Keep in mind that the layout will emphasise the JH moniker. (See opening image.)



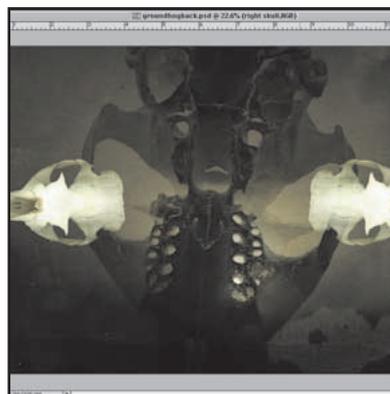
2 Colourise the file `background.psd` using `Command+U` (Mac) or `Ctrl+U` (PC). Drag the Saturation slider until the colour is rather dull, and the Hue slider until the colour appears brown. This unsaturated hue will allow room for the Overlay effects.



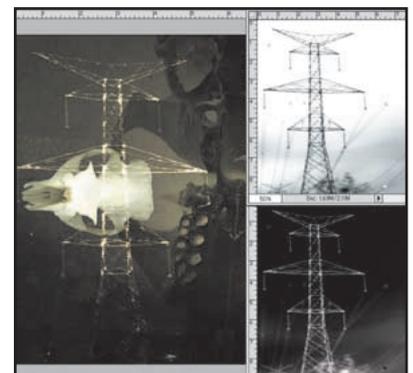
3 Place the `backskull.psd` file into the centre of the image, so that the top and bottom of the layer bleed off the composition. Then, use the Multiply option from the Layers palette, so that the skull is partially silhouetted over the sun spot.



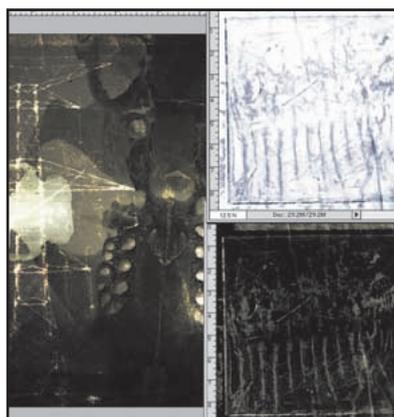
4 Drag the `frontskull.psd` to the left of the composition. Use the Transform tool to turn the layer until it's perpendicular to the central skull. By using `Command+T` (Mac) or `Ctrl+T` (PC), you can manually rotate this layer. Once this has been completed, copy the `frontskull` layer and flip the image (`Edit>Transform>Flip Horizontal`), then place the mirror image on the right side of the illustration.



5 Select Screen from the Layers palette to create each of the front skulls. This will remove the black areas from the layer, so that the skull is cleanly superimposed over the backdrop. The core of the foundation has now been set up.



6 Open the file `wiretower.psd` and invert the image using `Command+I` (Mac) or `Ctrl+I` (PC). Take the negative image and drag it over the backdrop so that the tower overlaps the first skull. Select Screen from the Layers option, so the tower creates a ghost-like impression on the composition.



7 To roughen the current image, open the file `texture.psd`. Again, invert the image via `Command/Ctrl+I`, so that the texture can be screened over the composition.



8 Place the file over the backdrop and screen it in. This new layer offers an electric and ephemeral feel to the layout. Use the Levels option (`Command/Ctrl+L`), and slide the arrows back and forth until the noise of the texture is adjusted properly to the backdrop.



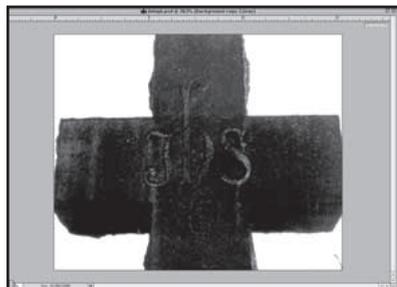
9 A closer view shows that the texture helps merge all the different components of the image. The layers, such as the skulls, the towers and the backdrop, seem less segregated from each other with this overlapping noise.

Part 2: Recycled fonts

This font has been etched onto stone for 100 years. We'll take the necessary steps to resurrect the type in a digital form...

The Pen tool

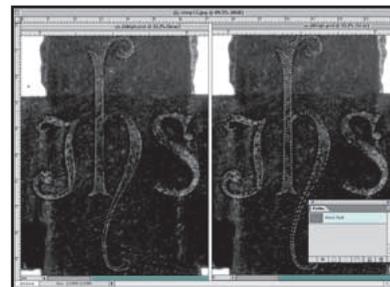
The Pen tool has many sub-tools. If you click on the Pen tool within the Tools palette, new tools will appear. The Free Form pen enables you to draw rough paths around an object as it creates its own nodes, which you can then adjust. The Add Anchor Point pen provides new points within curves (should you need them). The Subtract Anchor Point pen works in the opposite way. The Convert Point pen will reverse your curves completely should you click on a node.



1 This picture features a gravestone that was placed in the ground in 1892. The beautiful gothic type suits the initials that will be centred within our image. It just proves that it's always handy to have your camera with you. The JH will be the centrepiece of our overall layout.



2 Use the Pen tool to carefully trace the perimeter of each letter. To use this tool effectively, you'll need a bit of practice getting used to adjusting curves according to specific nodes. If you haven't used this tool before, the best way to understand its tracing properties is to make circles. The Pen tool is an extremely important aspect of all types of digital design. It's definitely worth getting to know.



3 Once you've traced a path around each letter, open the Paths window from your Window option in the top menubar. At the bottom of this new palette you'll notice a series of symbols. Click the symbol of the circle constructed by a series of dots. This will revert your path to a selection.

Tracing an object

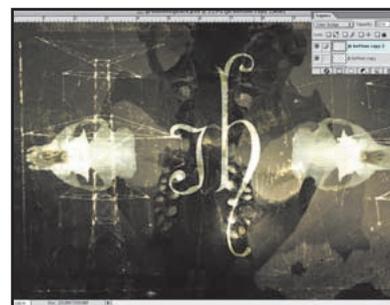
When tracing an object with the Pen tool, especially type, the rule is to remember that the fewer the number of nodes or anchor points you have, the smoother your tracing path will be. This is important with type; the curves should flow into each other without any hint of choppy line work. If you need to adjust the nodes further, click on the anchor point with the Command (Mac) or Control key (PC) pressed down. The Pen tool icon will change into a white arrow tool, with which you can manoeuvre the points and curves in any direction.



4 Using the Marquee tool (lasso or square), drag the selection into the main image and place it between the two side skulls. Nudge the selection until it looks completely central in the layout.



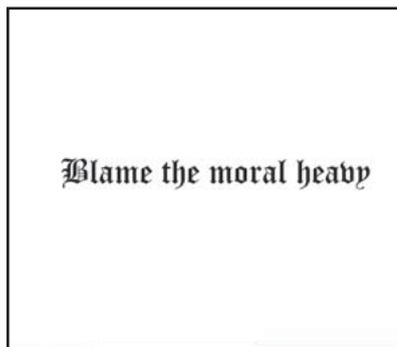
5 Fill in the selection with a slight shade of grey (off-white). Make sure the type is placed beneath the texture layer to maintain the same roughness within it. Deselect the type (Command/Ctrl+D) and select the Colour Dodge option from the Layers palette.



6 The type isn't quite bright enough. Duplicate the type layer and adjust the opacity of the second layer to 50 per cent. The type now stands out enough to be a focal point, yet maintains some of the textures that lie beneath it.

Part 3: Fonts as textures

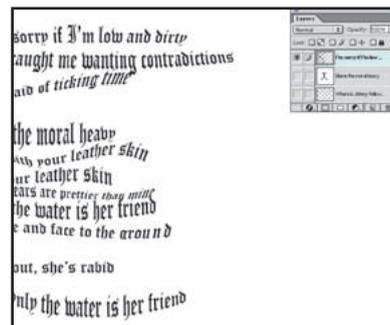
Next, we'll experiment with typography as texture, creating a subtle backdrop that can barely be read...



1 Open a new file and pick any ornate font that's available to you. In this case, the font is Old English Text, but any font with an ancient feel will work within the composition. Using the Type tool, complete a line of text at approximately 30pts.

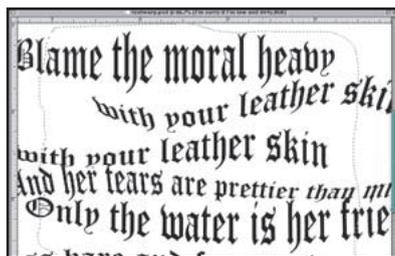


2 Highlight your text, and select the 'T...' box within the Type menubar (directly below the top menubar). This button will open an interface that offers you several options for warping your text. In this case, the selected style is Bulge.



3 Create a collective list of body copy using different styles to warp each individual line of type. Even though the type is meant for texture, some of the words will be legible, and the clever use of words will add mystery to your composition. Try out several different warp effects.

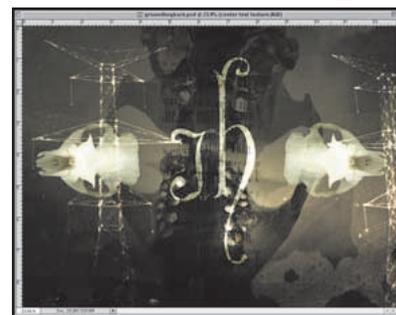
Part 3: Fonts as textures, continued...



4 Link the lines of type to each other by clicking the empty square available beside each layer. You will notice that the symbol for a chain appears when doing this. Once you have all the layers 'chained' together (not including the background), use Command/Ctrl+E to merge the layers. Select a chunk of text with the Marquee Lasso tool and drag it into the main image.



5 Place the chunk of text directly behind the JH, so that these initials are more prominent within the layout. Select the Multiply option from the Layers palette and adjust the position of the textured type until it feels centred.



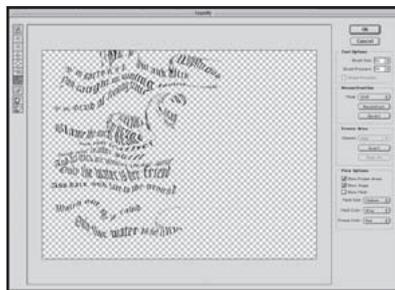
6 Create duplicates of the 'chunk' layer, and build a column of type that runs up and down the middle of the composition. By doing this, you have emphasised both the focal point of the illustration and the symmetrical design.

Part 4: Liquifying letters

The more warped your text looks, the more dreamlike the letters will feel as a backdrop...

Asymmetrical symmetry

Don't be afraid to play against your symmetrical design with a little asymmetrical detail. The backdrop within our image has inconsistencies within its reflection, and the skull in the middle of the image is slightly tilted. The wire towers play against the balanced arrangement and the text also floats across the surface, free from the pattern. The contrast between mirrored and unmirrored images encourages the mind's eye to search the illustration more deeply.



1 Go back to your original merged file of type, and duplicate the layer. Once you've done this, take the layer into the Liquify interface by going to the Image option within the top menubar and selecting Liquify (or Shift+Command/Ctrl+X). Mess up the type with each of the tools as best you can.



2 Drag the layer of freshly warped words into the illustration and invert the colour so that it is white rather than black (Command/Ctrl+I). Then, from the Layers palette, select the Overlay option. The words should now appear as if they are floating over the texture.



3 Repeat this process until the entire backdrop is worked in with overlaid text. Adjust the opacity in some cases to add a little inconsistency into the image. Don't think too hard about what should go where; concentrate instead on how the texture feels in certain areas.

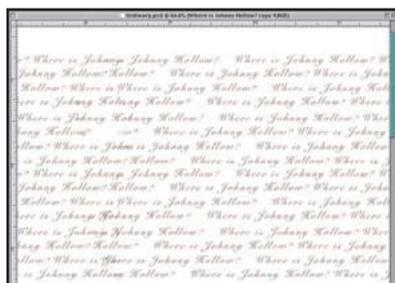
Part 5: Stream of thought

As a finishing touch, a torrent of words running from left to right will be tossed into the mix...

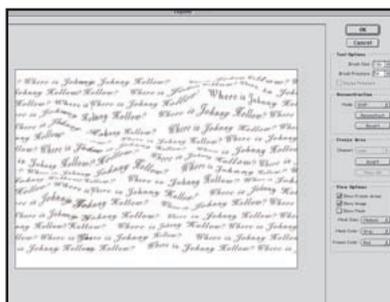


Photoshop Special

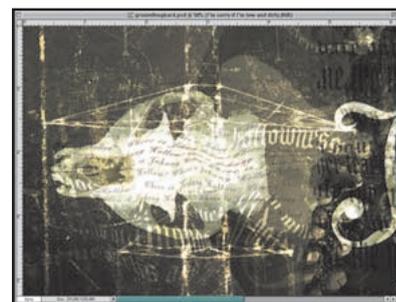
Issue 30 of *Computer Arts Special* is an essential buy for Photoshop users, with 37 pages of tutorials — including the first ever Photoshop 7 tutorial — plus profiles and an eight-page PS7 review. The issue is on sale until 10 April.



1 Using a slight brown hue, repeatedly type out a line of thought that reflects the feel of the image into a new file. This text is meant to contrast with the distorted type in the illustration, by maintaining clarity within its appearance. The size of the type should be considerably smaller, at approximately 8 or 9 points.



2 Take portions of the type and liquify the contents of the stream. Do not warp the words too harshly; just a slight wave should do the trick, and using the Twirl tools with a large brush should be enough adjustment. Get the words to look like they're almost being pushed by wind or water.



3 Place the text so that it extends itself across the entire layout, over both the horizontal skulls and the JH initials. Finally, select the Multiply option from the Layers palette, and copy the layer as many times as required until the entire horizon has been covered in one swooping stream of text. **ca**