# PHOTOSHOP MASTERCLASS No 5

LAYERS IN PHOTOSHOP

One major difference between Lightroom and Photoshop is the ability to use layers in Photoshop.

The original image comes into Photoshop as a locked bottom layer named background in the layers panel. This layer should not be changed so that you may always get back to the original image. Changes should be made in separate layers stacked above the bottom layer.

 Note: in Lightroom it doesn't matter what order changes are made. But in Photoshop each layer directly affects the layers beneath it.
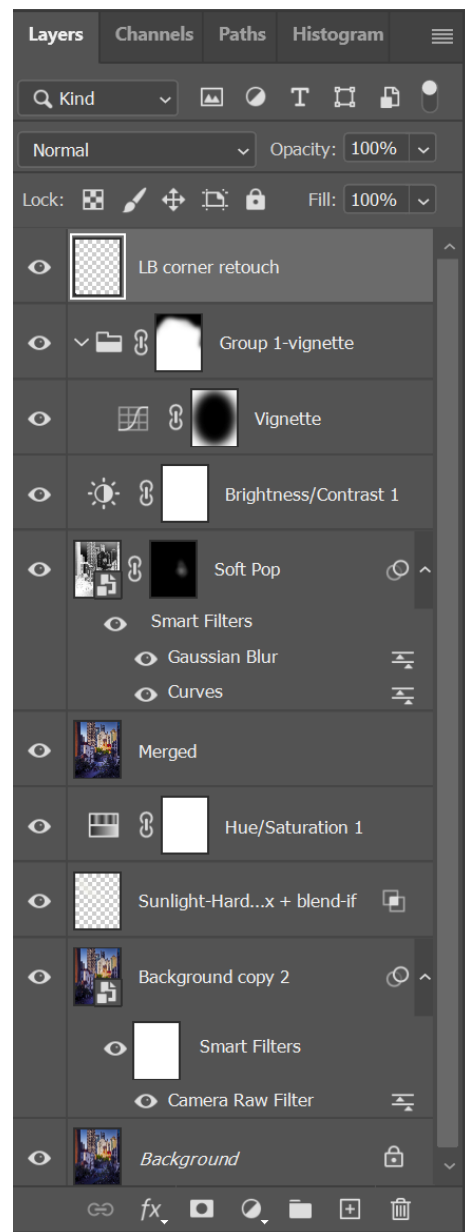
The layers panel for the above image is shown. You will see that there are several different layers. Note the padlock on the bottom background layer. This is protecting my original image. The eye icons on the left of each layer determine whether that layer is visible or not. To hide a layer, click on the eye icon and to reveal it again, just click where the eye icon was.

The second layer is a copy of the background layer. To create this use the shortcut keys Ctrl-J (PC) or Command -J (Mac). Alternately you may drag the background layer onto the new layer icon (the square icon with a plus sign at the bottom of the layers' panel.

This layer has been converted to a Smart Object layer indicated by the squares in the bottom right of the image thumbnail. It has then been taken into Adobe Camera Raw and adjustments made there. The advantage of first making this layer a smart object is that you can always revisit the adjustments made and make changes if necessary.

The third layer is formed by using the new layer icon and is to add some more light into the image coming from the left between the buildings – increasing the near sunset effect. This layer has been changed to the Hard mix blend mode and the opacity dropped to 80% and the fill slider set to 30%. Blend-if has also been applied to this image to control how it affects the layer beneath it. We will cover blend modes and blend-if in a separate session.

Our next layer is a hue saturation layer obtained by clicking on the new fill or adjustment layer – the icon at the bottom of the panel that is a half black, half white circle. Here the blue colour has been adjusted and the overall image slightly increased in saturation.

The next layer is a merged or stamped imaged. This prepares the image for the next stage of filters etc.

Moving on upwards - A soft pop action has been applied. This action first converted the image to a smart object so that adjustments could be made later if required. Filters in this action included Gaussian blur and some adjustments via curves.

Next is a brightness/contrast layer. This is again via the new fill or adjustment layer icon.

The next layer is a group which when opened contains just one layer with a vignette. To make further adjustments to the vignette, the layer was made into a group and a mask attached so that the adjustments could be made.

The final layer was a new blank layer for retouching the left-hand corner of the image.

Note: The first layer above the background layer is used for general retouching. Adjustment layers are then on top of this. Following this method allows changes to be made to the retouching layer and to the adjustment layers without the layers adversely affecting each

other. Sometimes it may be necessary to add another retouching layer to retouch any problem artifacts caused in the editing.

Note: It is a good idea to label the layers so you know what each one is doing.

Managing layers

Moving a layer from one document to another
Click on the layer you want to copy to another document. Use Ctrl-C (PC) or Command-C (Mac) to copy the layer. Now in the other document use Ctrl-V or Command-V to paste the layer.

Merging Two Layers into one layer
Click on the first layer you want to combine. Press and hold the Ctrl or Command key and click on any other layers you wish to combine. Then press Ctrl-E or Command-E to merge these layers into one.

Merging all layers to a new layer
Use Ctrl-Alt-Shift-E or Command-Option-Shift-E
This will flatten all layers down to the background layer.

Putting a stroke around a layer
Click on the add a layer style icon at the bottom of the layers panel. (This is the *fx* icon). Select stroke from the pop-up menu. The stroke options are now visible.
Inside – adds the stroke to the inside of the image and gives sharp corners
Outside – gives rounded corners and the stroke is on the outside of the image
Centre – rounded corners but not as much as outside.

Another method
Press and hold the Ctrl or Command key and click directly on the layer's thumbnail. This puts a selection around whatever is on the layer. Then from the EDIT menu, select Stroke and complete the dialogue to get the stroke. Then deselect by pressing Ctrl-D or Command-D.