

What this is about

Many workers advocate always taking digital images in Raw to allow maximum flexibility in processing. But what if you want to do “pixel-type” edits in Photoshop? Traditional methods preclude this. But Smart Objects, first introduced with Photoshop CS2, offer a new world of possibilities.

With Smart Objects you can put your Raw files into Photoshop, edit them and still retain the ability to reprocess the raw data. It’s non-destructive editing taken to a higher level.

If you happen to use Lightroom for basic editing, there is the option to export an image as a Smart Object making for a pretty seamless workflow using Lightroom and Photoshop.

An example

The original image, as edited in Lightroom, needs some more attention.

In particular, straightening the converging verticals is not (as yet) an option in Lightroom.

The good news is that we can do this – non-destructively – in Photoshop.



The original Raw file, as edited in Lightroom.

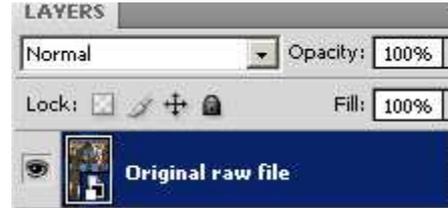
In Lightroom



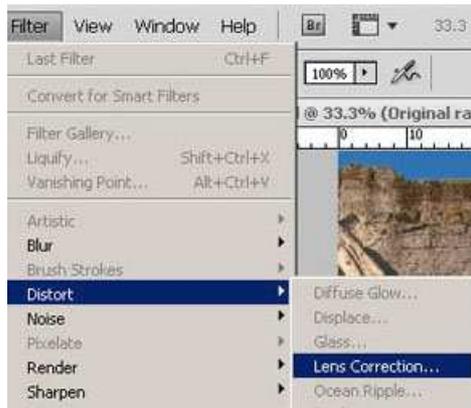
Right-click on the image and choose “Edit In”
And then “Open a Smart Object in Photoshop”.

In Photoshop

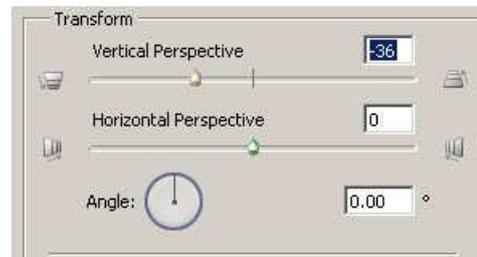
The thumbnail in the layers palette shows that this is a smart object.



We'll use a Photoshop Filter to correct the perspective



- Choose Filter > Distort > Lens Correction



A value of -36 for the Vertical Perspective straightens-up this image.

Ideally we would have processed the raw Image differently for the sky and the stonework.

No Problem.

Make a copy of this Smart Object so we can re-edit it in Camera Raw.

- Choose Layer > Smart Objects > New Smart Object via Copy.

NB Do not simply copy the layer in the normal way as this doesn't produce the independent smart object we need.



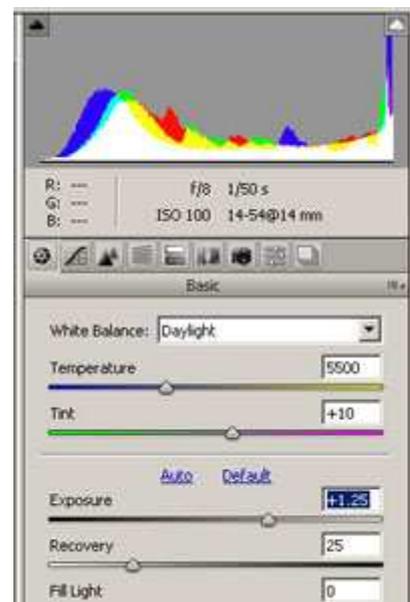
Re-edit Raw
file



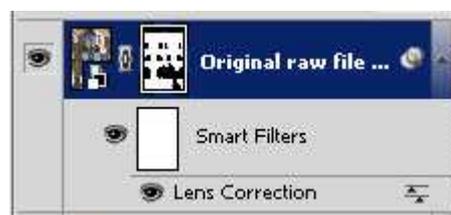
- Double-click the layer thumbnail to re-open the file in the Adobe Camera Raw processor.

- An increase in the exposure value brings out the detail in the stonework.

The advantage of this workflow is that we can re-visit this edit as much as we like without any image quality deterioration.



Add a layer
mask to blend
the two smart
object layers.



The layer mask has been added to the smart object.

In other circumstances, the layer mask that comes with the Smart Filter could be used to effect how the filter is applied.

NB

If we wanted to alter the Smart Filter settings we would double-click on the words "Smart Filters" in the layers palette.

A final
“tweak”

Having finished the smart object work, this image is improved by a little local dodging & burning on the stonework. The good news is that the dodge & burn tools work a lot better in CS4 than with earlier versions.



The dodge and burning is carried out on a new layer.

This is what it actually produces...



Back in Lightroom, a post-crop vignette darkens the edges of the image which is now ready to print.

