People In Spaces
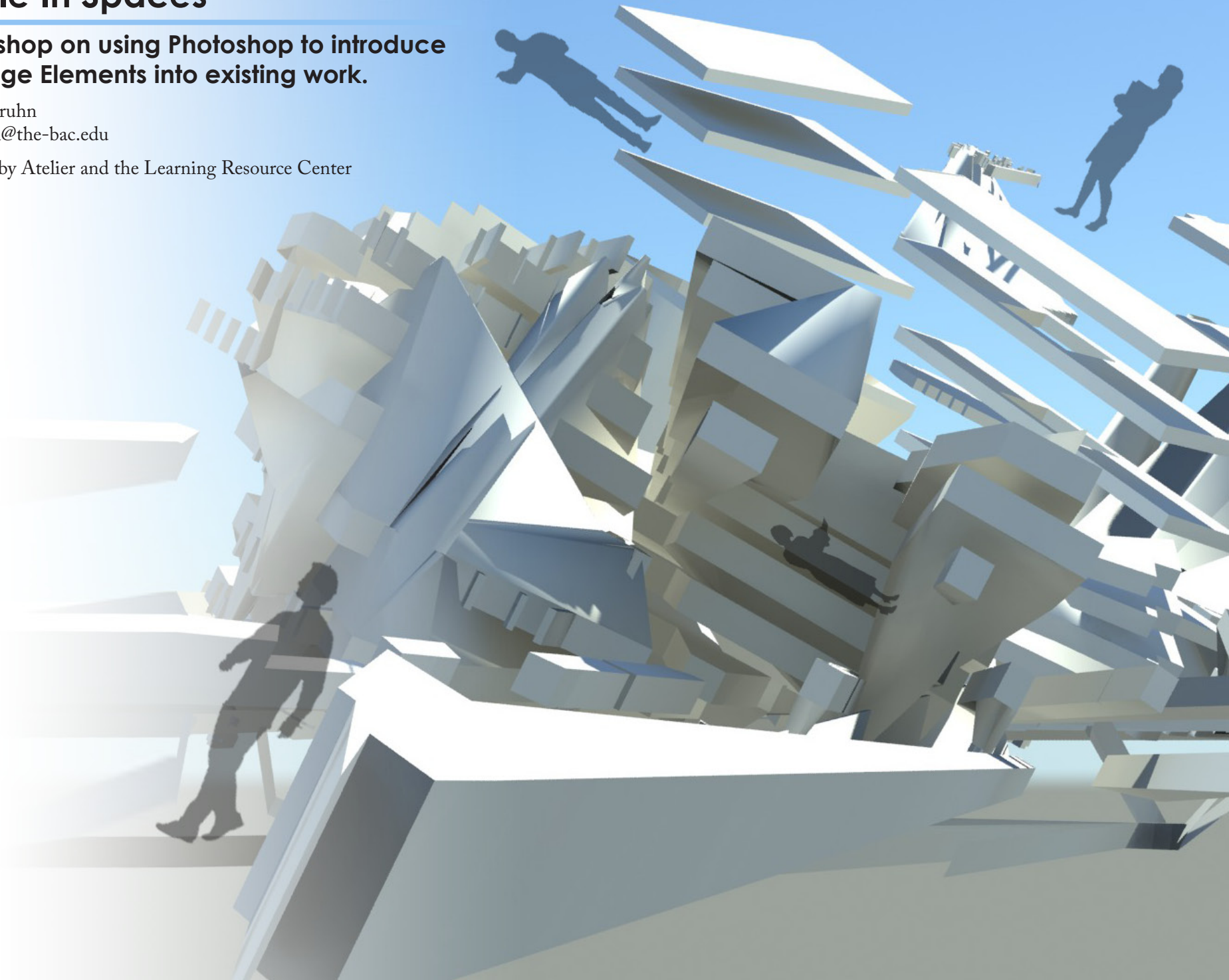
A Workshop on using Photoshop to introduce Entourage Elements into existing work.

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Layers

There, that's all there is to know. You're done. Just do it with layers.

Open up DemoScene.psd and have a look at the layers. The illustration over on the right side of this page is something of a lie. Each plant and person is not only its own layer, it is a collection of layers plus some extra stuff thrown on top. Turn them off and on to get an idea for what some of them do. Use the Selection Tool to move some around. Resize some. There is not much more to it than this. Just add people to your image. Isolate them from their backgrounds. Compose them well and integrate them correctly into the scene paying attention to direction of travel, lighting, shadow, color.

Turn off the folder called "Tints." See the important changes it makes to the colors of some plants.

Look at the layers around "Left Guy". See he has a Hue/Saturation correction that makes him just a little less peach colored and a little less vibrant. See he has his own hand crafted shadow.

Close this file. Time to make our own composition.
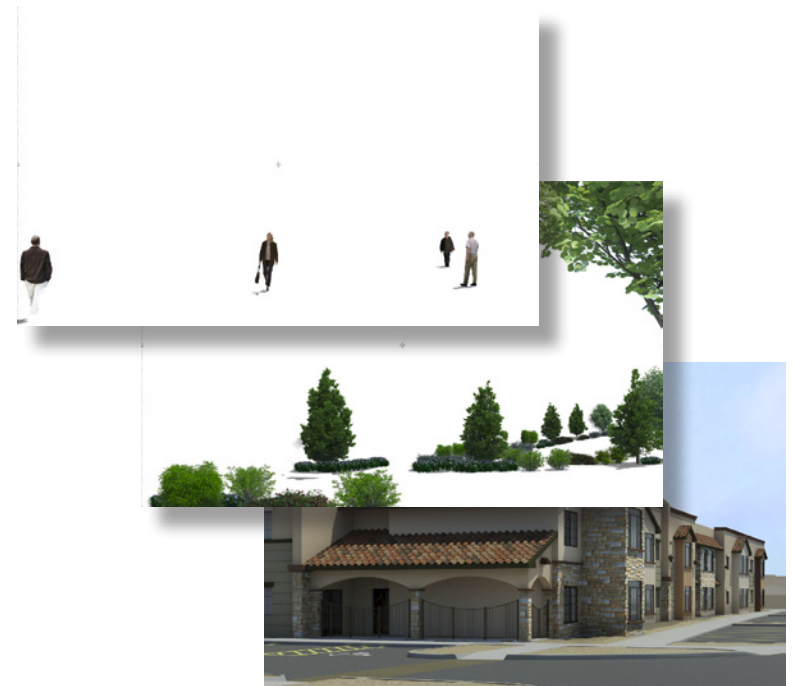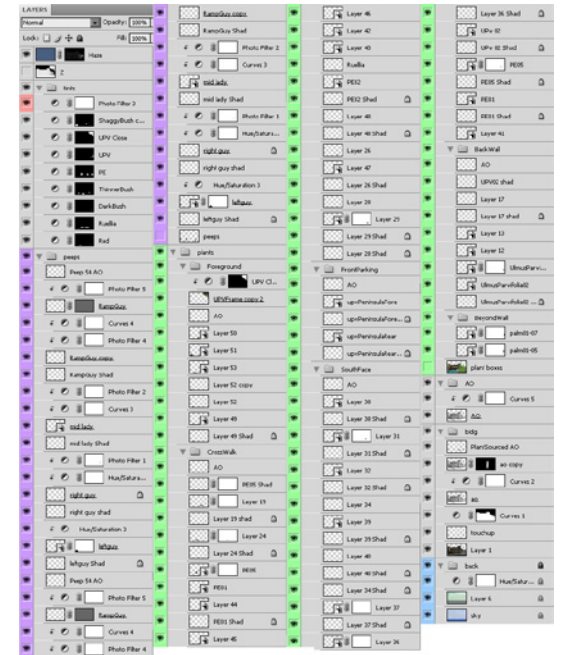
Layer Tools

The Select Tool is used to move and resize layers quickly. When you first run Photoshop you may have to pick the Selection Tool and go to the Control Panel at the top of the program and turn on "Auto Select" and "Show Transform Controls."

The Layer Panel is a panel that shows every layer in a document. You can use this panel to select layers and change the draw order. Layers higher up in the panel are drawn later, therefore "on top" of layers lower in the list.

Use the panel to duplicate layers and add layer masks. Also use the panel to create clipping masks; either off the menu or by clicking on the line between two layers. The top layer becomes "contained in" or "clipped by" the lower layer.

Layer Masks

Layer Masks are critical to the efficient use of Photoshop to combine images into collages. Each layer contains color pixel information. This is what you would normally think of as the layer, the part you can see. A layer can also have an associated mask that specifies the opacity of the layer; how see through is it. The mask can be painted on with regular Photoshop tools. Use the Create Mask button to add a mask to a layer. Paint on a mask with black to hide the layer. Paint on it with white to reveal the layer. If you alt-click on a mask in the layer palette you are shown the mask as a gray scale image. You can paint on it regularly. You can even paste other image data into the mask when it is visible.

The mask does not need to be visible to be painted on. You can paint on the mask while looking at the color information. This is a very powerful way to tweak a mask. You just paint on it so it looks right.

Spend some time making some layers and painting on them, painting their masks and otherwise manipulating them. Start to get familiar with the tools. These tools should become second nature to you in time.

Alt-Click to make clipping

New Layer

New Mask
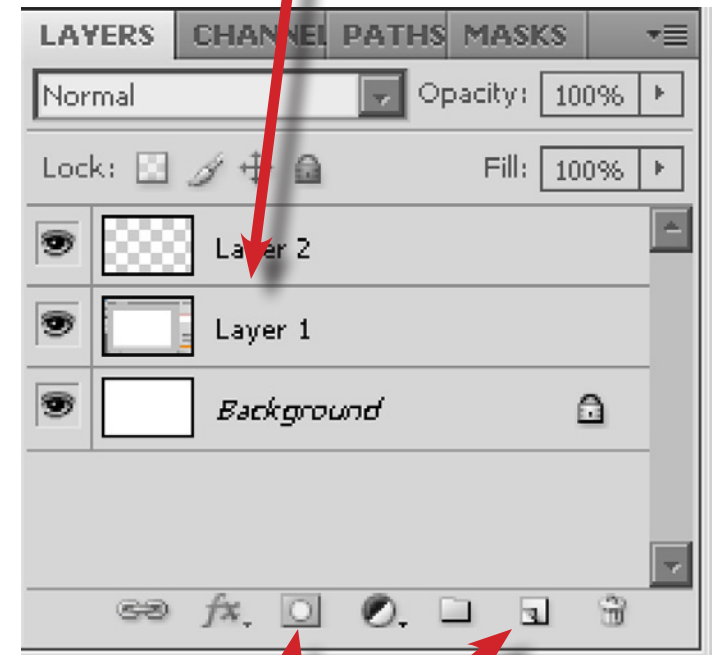
Rules of Perspective

When adding people to a scene, if you are interested in maintaining a believable look, you should remember some of your basic rules of perspective.

- Camera at eye level puts everybody's eyes on the horizon; camera above lowers eyes, camera below raises eyes.

- Parallel lines converge to a vanishing point on the horizon
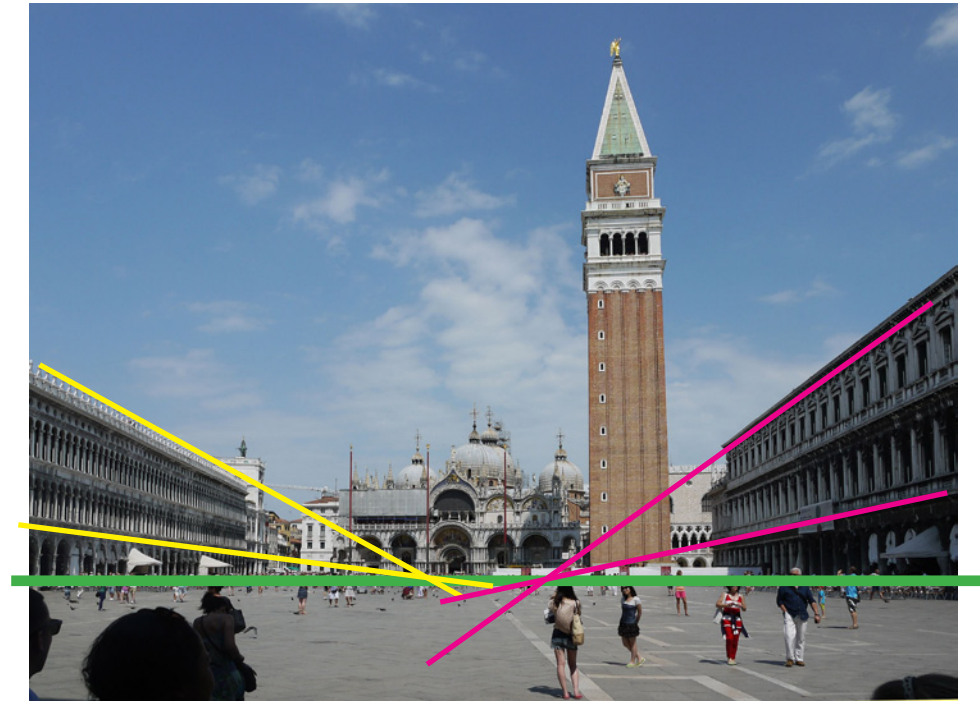
What if your parallel lines converge to different vanishing points?

That's just a sign that your groups of lines aren't parallel in plan. No worries, they still converge on the horizon.

Give it a Try

Open Skateback.jpg and skater.png in Photoshop.

Tile the windows, either with Window: Arrange: Tile or use the buttons next to the menus.

Just click on the skater. Hold the mouse button down and drag him into the scene. You don't get any visual feedback other than a drop cursor, but that's OK. Just drop him in the scene. And you there you are.

Now ou can move and resize him until you are happy. You can use alt-move to make some quick copies. Use your favourite Photoshop techniques and filters to dress your scene up a bit.

I guess this is a good time to mention that you don't have to use these skills just to plainly add people. This layer manipulation toolkit is pretty hand for more generic collage creation too. See next page...
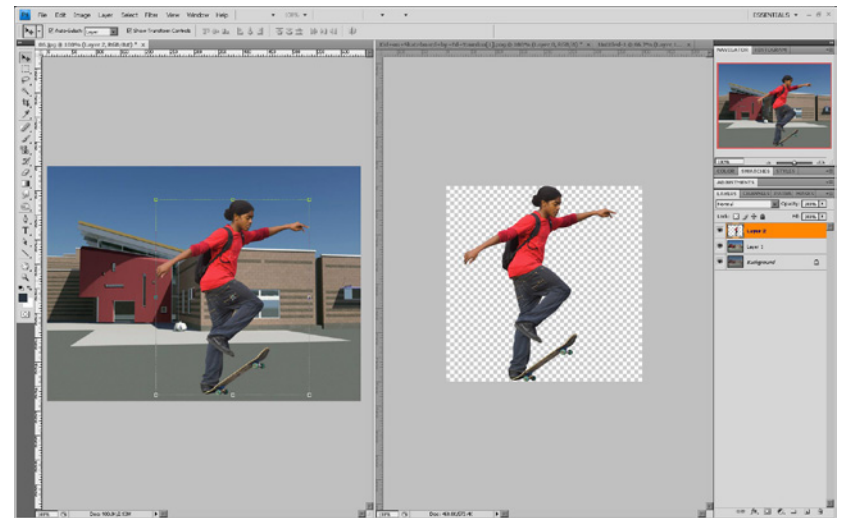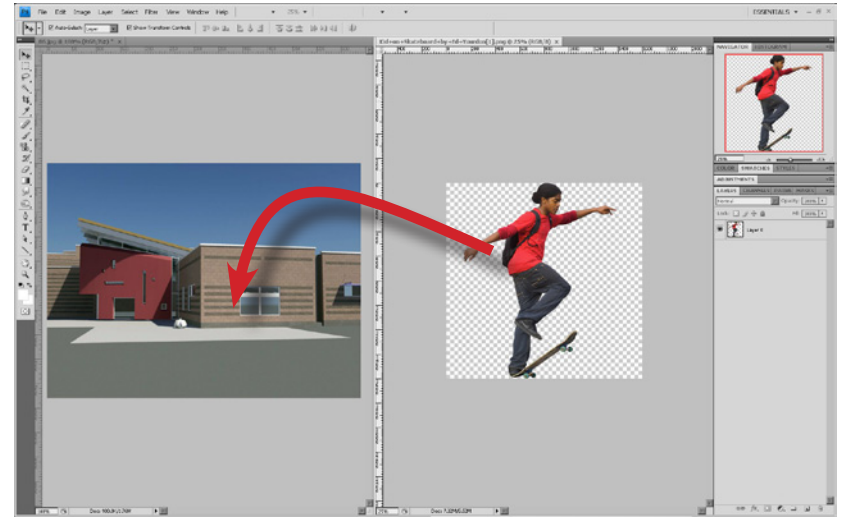
Some Collages
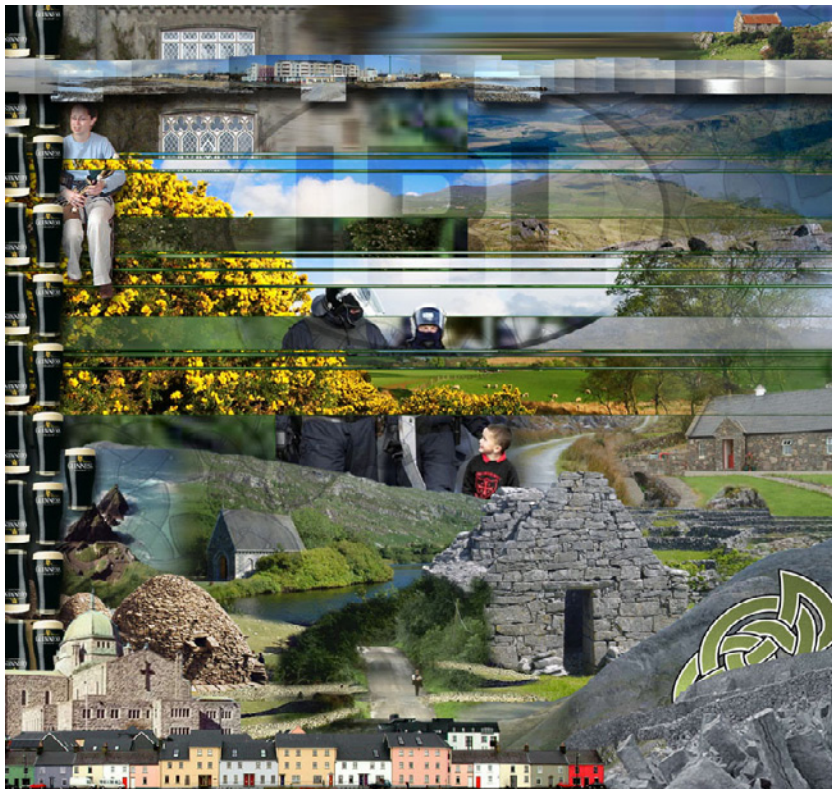
Smart Objects

If you're sure you just want to bring in a layer, resize it and move on then that's OK. But if you aren't sure how you are going to place it and you might shrink it down. Then make it big. Then small. Then rotate... over the course of the final image's life, you should consider making your layer a Smart Object.

A Smart Object is like an AutoCAD XREF or an InDesign image link. It is a link to a separate image document (this separate document can be contained inside this document or live in a separate file). It retains its full resolution even if you shrink it down very small. As a bonus, some filters such as Gaussian Blur are applied non-destructively to Smart Objects. This allows you to go back and tweak settings.

Open up RSandSO.psd. One of the people is a normal layer, the other is a Smart Object. Resize them both very small. Resize them back large again. See the quality difference?

You can make any layer a Smart Object just by right clicking on it in the layer panel and choosing Convert To Smart Object.

Motion Blur

People in your scene may be moving. Sometimes you can add that extra touch of realism by having them blur either in whole or in part.

Open up kitty.psd.

I like to think this kitty's tail should be wagging. To show that, we'll add some blur to it. There are a number of ways to accomplish this and which one will work best depends on the image at hand. Usually the first thing to do is make a selection of the part that should be moving and copy it to its own layer.

Three ways I'll mention right now:

Radial Blur - on the menu under Filter: Blur: Radial Blur. Use a Blur Method of Spin and how ever much amount you want. Note that the blur center is relative to your whole image so it can take a bit of chasing to find it. This works best for things like arms, legs and tails that swing on an arc and have a still end and a blurrier end.

Motion Blur - on the menu under Filter: Blur: Motion Blur. Just set an amount and an angle and you are done. This works best for whole objects moving along a path. Use it also for reflections in streaky material such as brushed metal or semi-glossy floors in perspective.

Distort : Blur : Un-Distort - This is a little weird. Take the layer you want to add motion blur too, Distort it so one end is very wide. Blur or Motion Blur the layer. Then reverse the distortion so the layer returns to regular shape. When you shrink the wide part, you shrink the amount of blur it received. This is a way to create the appearance of variable motion blur.

When you are finished with whatever technique you use for the blur, you will probably need to work some masks on the blurred layer and the base layer behind it to make the seam harder to see.

If you're feeling rich, there are third party plug-ins for motion blur which might offer some better alternatives.

Tinting

Since your base scene and your entourage come from different places, there is a chance that they won't match well in brightness and color cast. A poorly colored person can be as distracting to a scene as a circus clown.

Open up foam.jpg and the two tintpeeps. Drag and drop the people into the foam image. (Ooops, looks like you have to do some quick masking to isolate the guy. That's OK, I'll wait... done? Cool.)

We'll use two different approaches to changing the tint on these two people.

Match Color - select the kimono lady. Go to the menu, Image: Adjustments: Match Color. For Source, pick "foam.jpg", this very picture. For Layer pick "background", the part of the image with the scene in it. See how the lady now blends in nicely. It's too much for me, so I use some Fade to make her look a little more human. This is up to you.

Photo Filter - select the suit guy. Go to the menu, Image: Adjustments: Photo Filter. It defaults to a warming orange filter, but since this picture is so pink, let's try a magenta filter. For my taste, the built in magenta is just a bit too purple. You can click on the Color swatch and adjust it. I made mine a bit more red. Then for this guy, Preserve Luminosity is good and increase the density. Again, it's all to your taste.
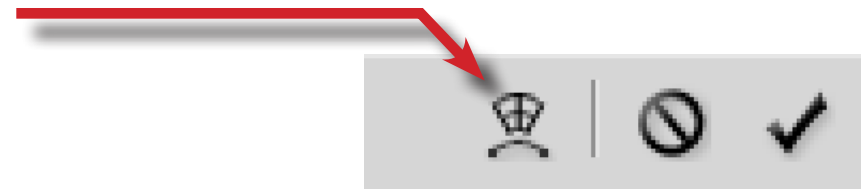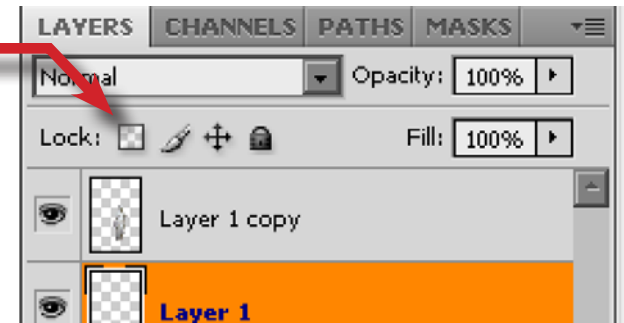
Shadows

Open crypt.jpg and sculpture.psd. Drop the sculpture into the crypt scene.

The easiest way to make a shadow is to just duplicate the person's layer (go ahead, duplicate the layer). Then resize and stretch one of the copies to the right shape. Since the sun is not in the same place as your eye, this is horribly inaccurate and most of the time that doesn't matter.

Once you have the duplicate placed where you want it, on the Layer panel click the Lock Transparency button; the first one after the word "Lock". Now go to the Edit menu and pick Edit: Fill: Black. This fills the shadow in with black. Now unlock the transparency and maybe add some Gaussian Blur. Now set the transparency down low.

Pay attention to the scene to see where the light is coming from and what the shadow quality is. Shadows can be very crisp and directional or very indistinct and fuzzy. Try to match the existing scene.

Watch out for the feet. They like to not line up. If you're running into trouble there, when you are already resizing the layer, hit the Warp button on the control panel (or you can get it off the menu, Edit: Transform: Warp).

Reflections

Reflections are the same as shadows only easier. You don't have to fill them in with black. They usually aren't at funny angles, they are just straight upside down.

Open treebr02.jpg and UnhappyWoman.psd. Drop the woman into the bedroom in the free area. Resize her so she fits well.

Duplicate the woman and stretch her so she is upside-down and her feet match up.

Decrease the Opacity. Add a mask to the reflection and fill it with a gradient to make it fade away. Throw on some horizontal motion blur.

I also put some Match Color on her to make her fit the room better.

Tea House

Just a quickie. Didn't even bother with shadows from the people. What I did do though is add some shadows cast on the two women in the middle to help pull them under the roof.

Do this by creating an extra layer for the shadows. Put that layer above the person. Select the shadow layer. On the Layers panel tiny menu select "Make Clipping Mask". Now turn down the transparency and maybe switch the blend mode of the shadow to Multiply or Overlay. You can paint black and white in the shadow layer and it will darken only the one layer below.

Rudolph

Use the people rendering to help size and place your entourage correctly.

The boy comes in with a background. You could get fancy and make a proper mask, that would be nice. But to be quick, just use Magic Wand to quickly grab all the white and hit backspace to delete it. There's probably a little fringe left, so Layers: Matting: Defringe and set it to 2 pixel. Now when you shrink him down he should look great.

Make some quick distorted shadows. See how the shadow from the top of the roof is fuzzy, that lets you know you can get away with some fuzz. Since people are closer to the ground than roofs, you don't want too much. But people are skinnier than whole buildings so you can sneak in a little more.

Shadows tend to be more blue than an overall scene, so rather than just make your shadows with black, use the eyedropper tool to pick up the color from an existing dark shadow. When you go to Edit: Fill, use Foreground Color instead of Black. That will help make your shadows look like they belong more than if they were hue neutral.