

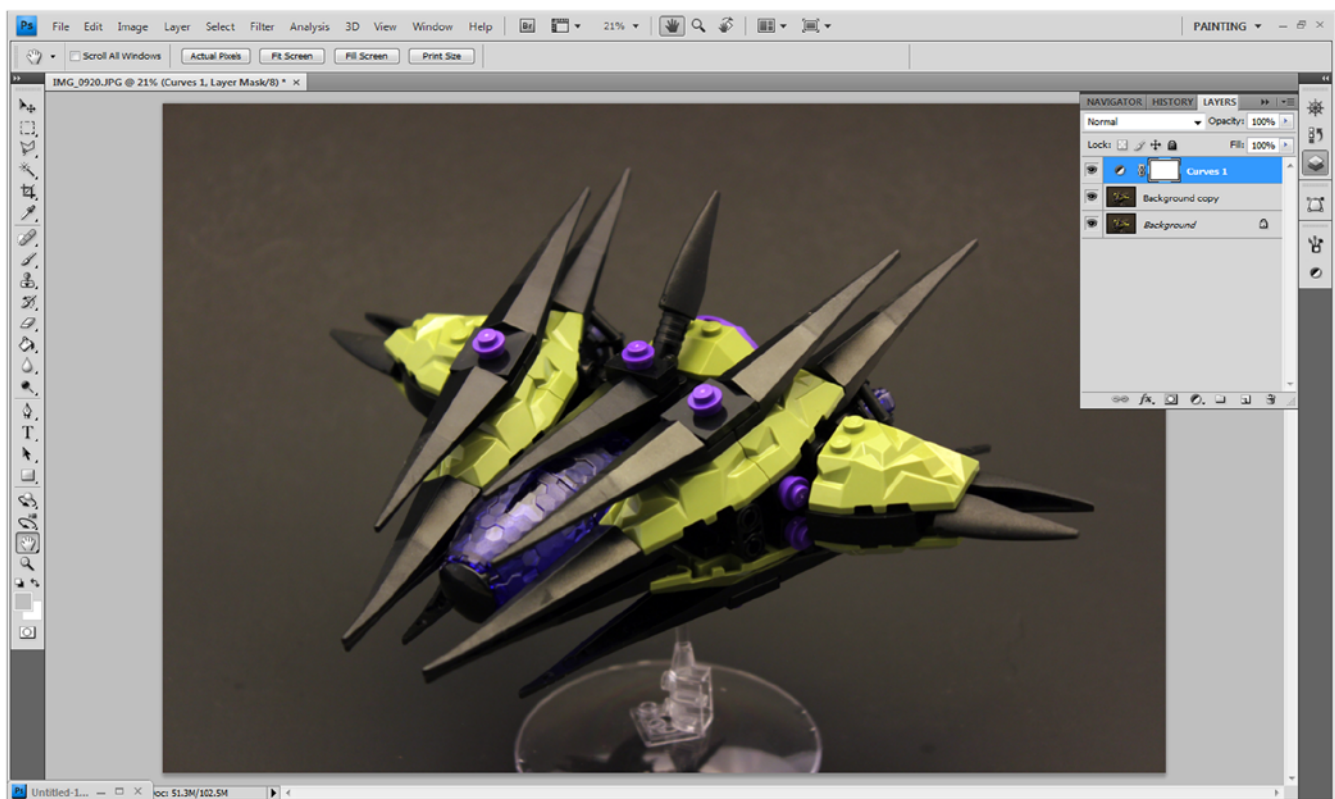
Editing

By Tyler (Legohaulic)

Adjustment Layers

We bring you a short tutorial on how to perform with some of the most useful retouching effects with Photoshop. You need to have a basic knowledge of Photoshop and, of course, there are more ways to get the same results and this is just one way to do it.

The first step I take is to duplicate the original layer so that I have something to revert back to should I need it. I then create new adjustment layers for all the changes I will be making. This allows me to go back and edit these adjustments as individual layers instead of it being permanent. I always start off with creating a Curves layer adjustment. You can almost always use the “Auto” adjustment and it will adjust it for you. Sometimes it does not work as well on some images. If that’s the case, the Curves can be adjusted manually.

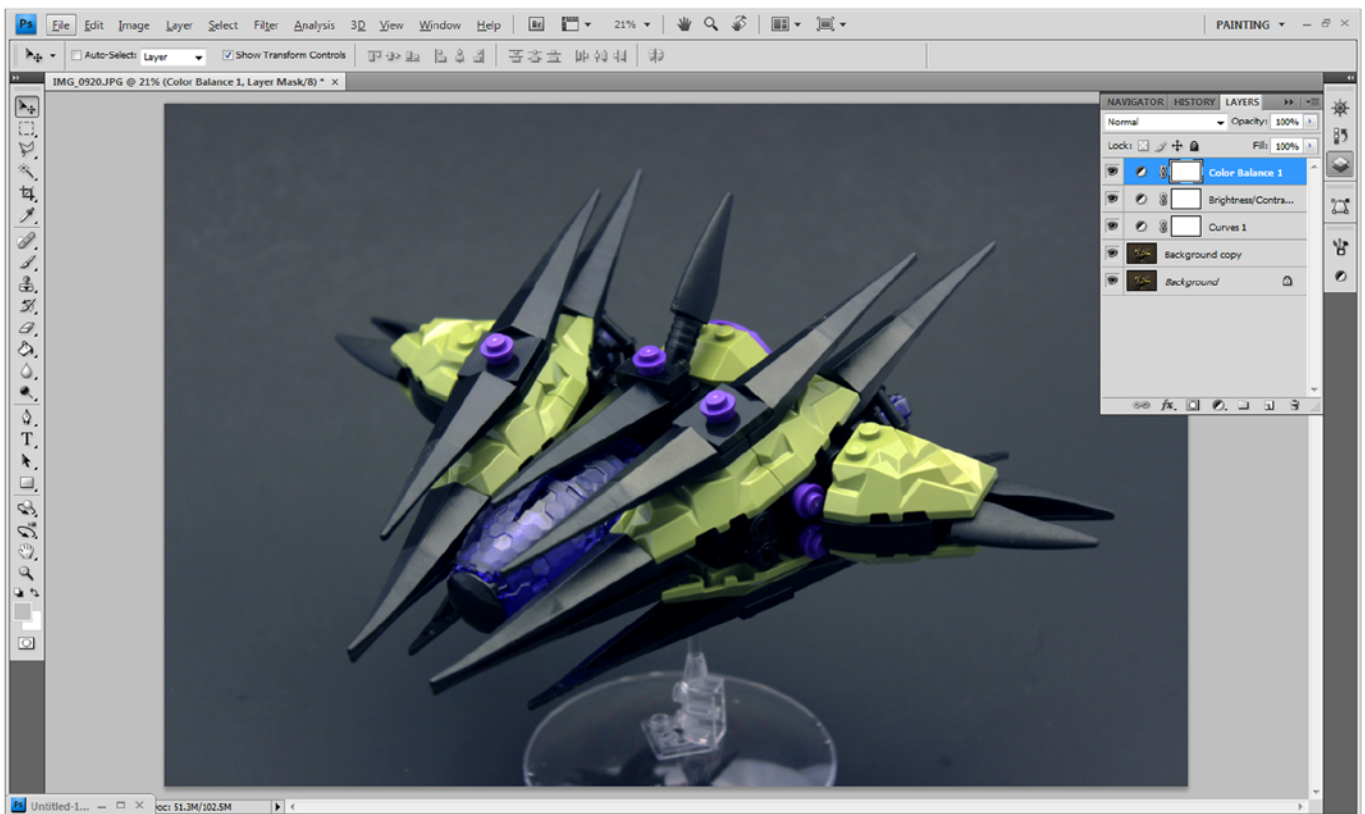


The editing process is really where the magic happens. Making small adjustments to the curves, levels, colors and contrast can really bring your model to life.

Knowing the look that you want to achieve in the final photo is important to know before you even start shooting.



Starting Image



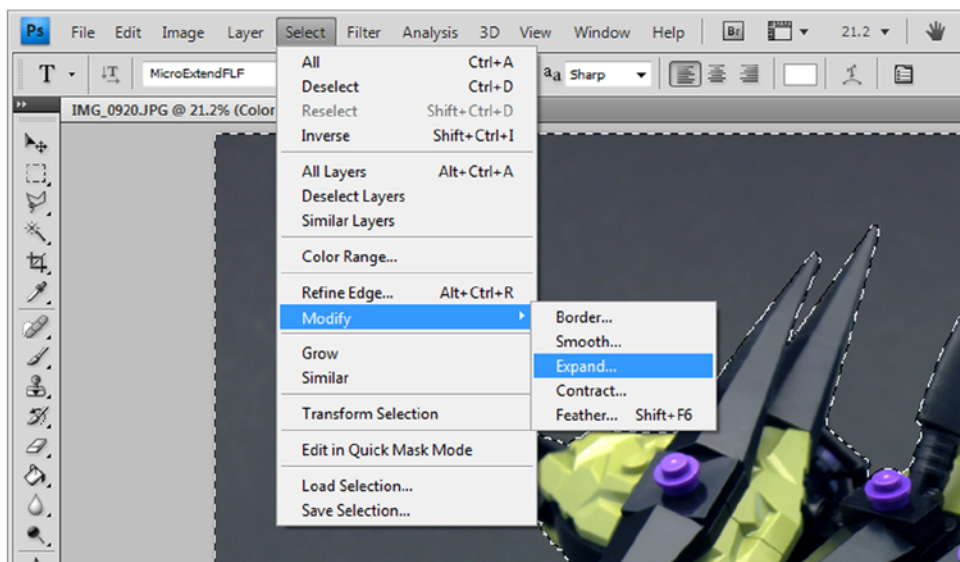
Ordinarily I would create a Levels adjustment layer to bring up the blacks. But they are already very dark so I ignored the Levels adjustment. I then added an adjustment layer for Brightness and Contrast and brought the Contrast down.

Possibly the most important step in editing is the Color Balance. I create a Color Balance adjustment Layer and start moving the sliders. The raw image was a bit too warm and I wanted a very cold looking image. So I added more blue, green and cyan. I also did this to the shadows and highlights of the image to make sure that everything stays unified in color.

Editing

Background Removal

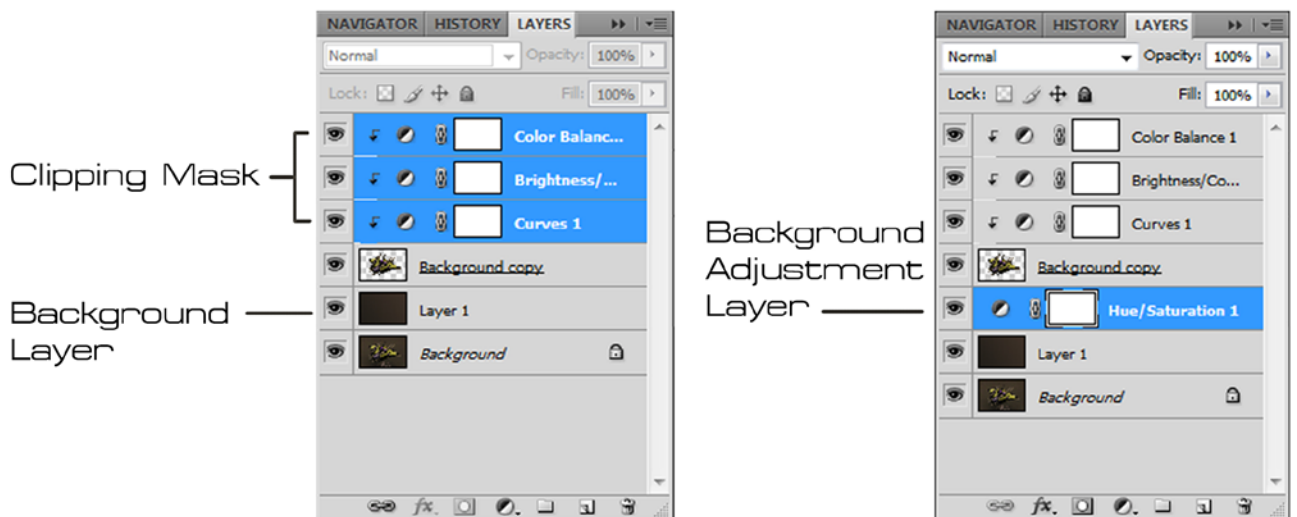
I often use the Magic Wand tool to select as much of the background as I can. You can adjust the tolerance as needed for the image you are working on. For this image, I had my tolerance set at 15. Some of the model may be selected but that is okay. Once you have selected as much as you can with the Magic Wand, you can use the Polygonal Lasso to refine your selection. Holding the Shift key will allow you to add to your current selection and holding the Alt key will let you subtract from it. I zoom in and use these to make sure I have clean selection around the model.



Once you have your selection go to, Select > Modify > Expand. I like to expand the selection by 2 pixels. After that I will, Select > Modify > Feather, and feather the selection by 1 pixel. This will cut into the model slightly but feather it just enough to avoid the jagged edge or the “halo” that sometimes is a result of selecting the background out of the model.

Many people frown upon using the Magic Wand tool for selecting things. By itself, it is a poor tool to use, but when combined with other tools, it can be incredibly useful.

Working in the highest resolution you can is the best option. You can always make something smaller when you are finished.



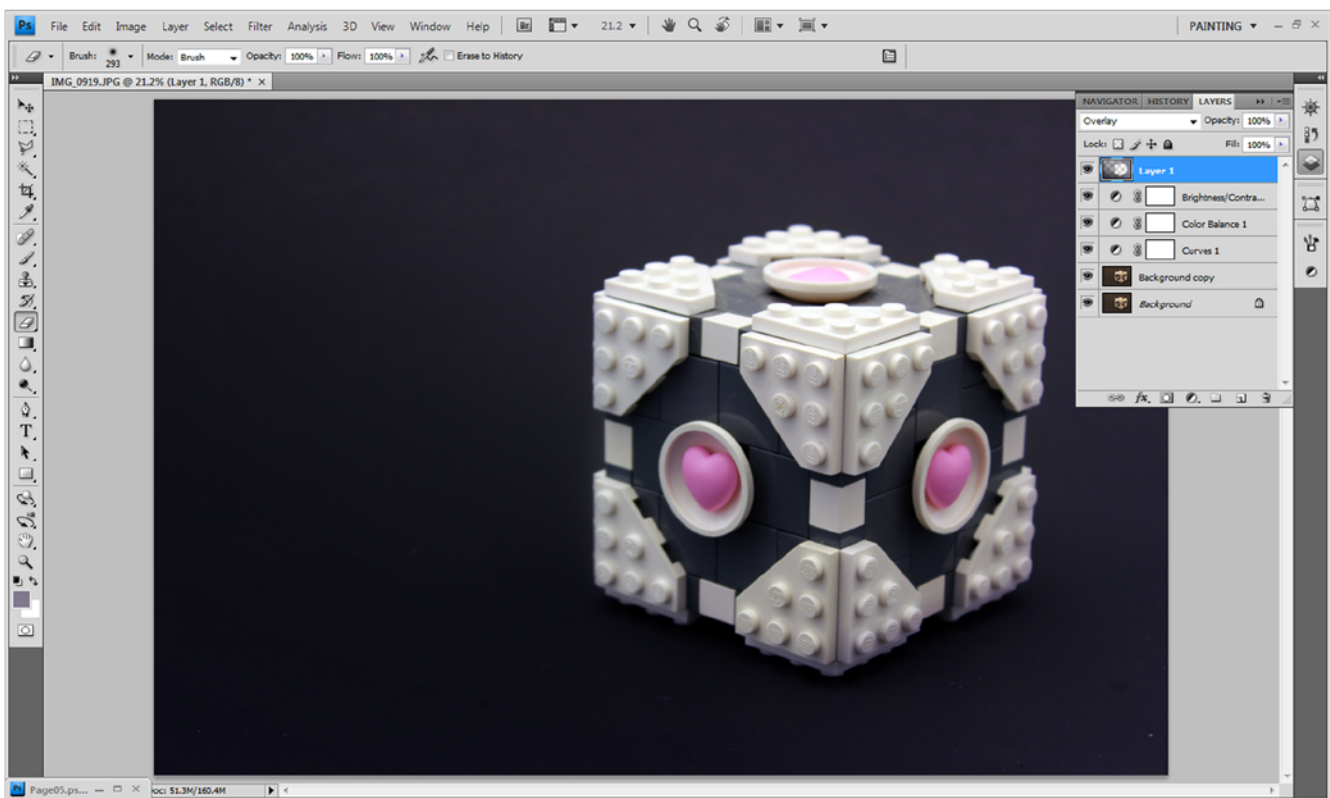
My next step after deleting the background is to create a new layer underneath the layer with the model on it. I also select my adjustment layers and create a Clipping Mask so that they will only affect the model and not the background. On my new layer I like to create a gradient using the darkest and lightest tones of the original image. I can then create a separate adjustment layer for the background that will allow me to adjust the hue, saturation or color to whatever I want.

You could also change the background to any image you want. With the model being on its own layer, you can also move it around the page or duplicate it to make an entire squadron.



Editing

Background Removal (Cont.)



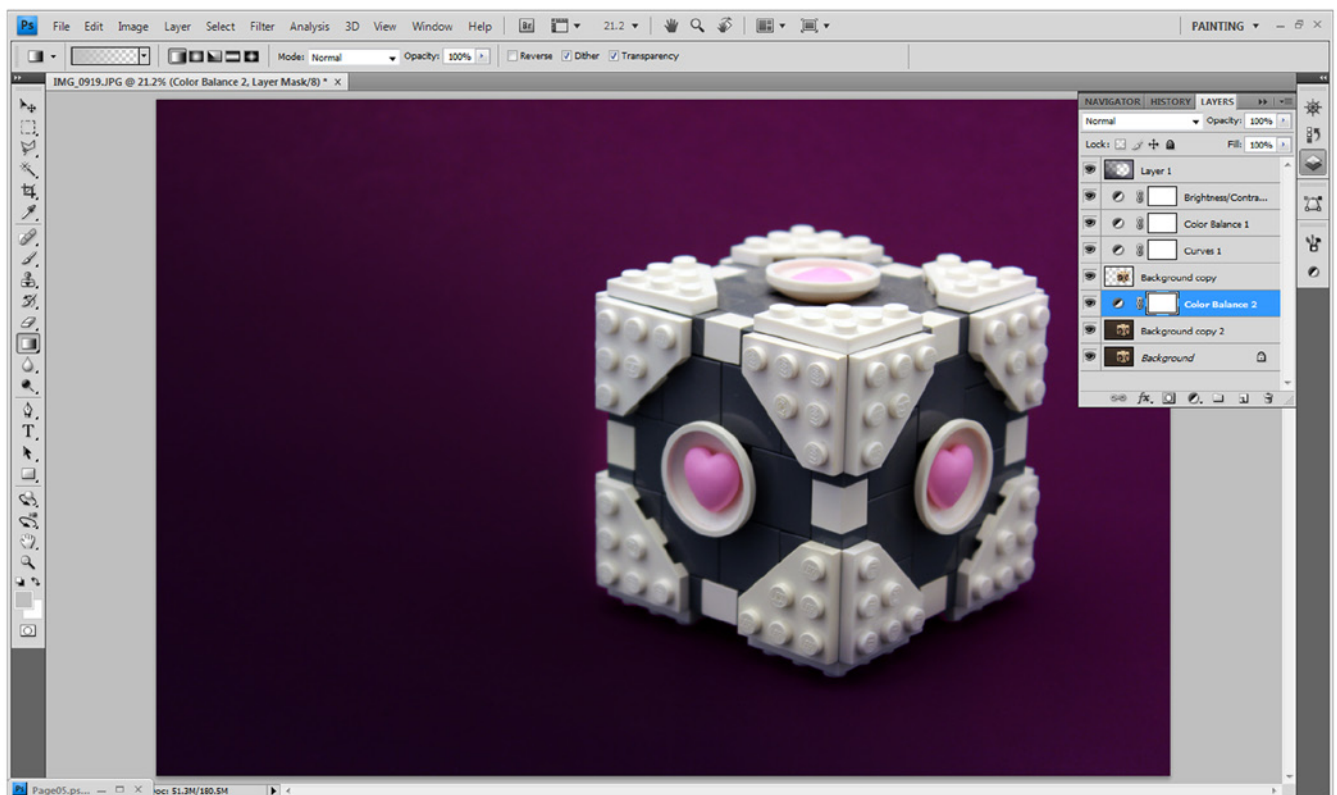
After adding adjustment layers to the image, I create a new layer on top of everything. I set this layer to Overlay. Using the gradient tool, (set to Foreground to Transparent) I pick colors from the background and begin adding gradients towards the model. I like to determine which area is brighter and enhance the brightness by adding a lighter color. I can then make the opposite side darker. This will overlap the model which can look good sometimes. If you do not like it, you can simply erase with a soft edge brush or select around the model to remove the gradient overlap.

Models that are sitting on the background material can be tricky to remove or clean up since there will be a shadow beneath the model.



Starting Image

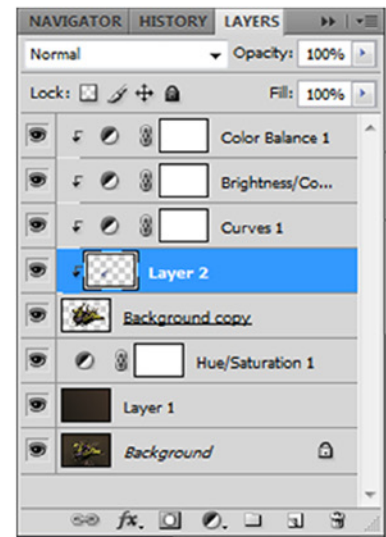
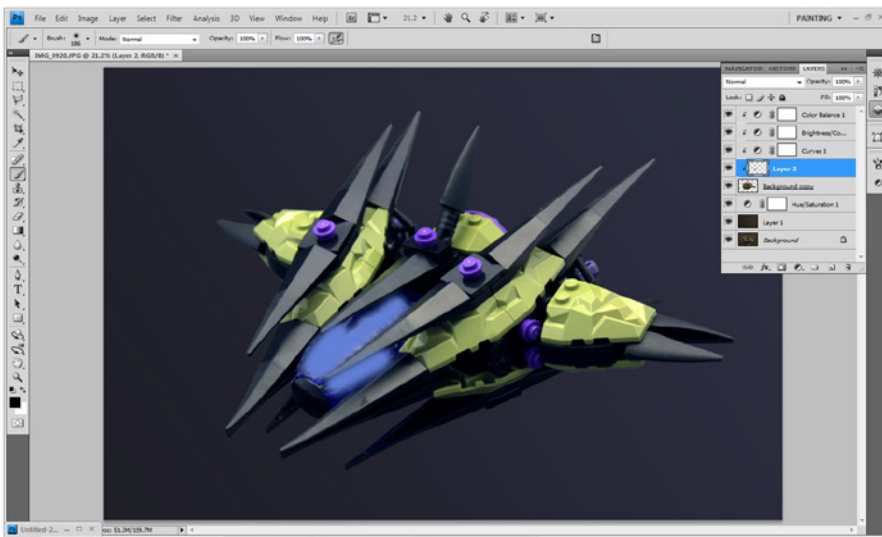
You can even take it a step further if you want to change the color of the background. Simply select the background (including the model's shadow) and remove it. Duplicate the original layer beneath it, and add color balance adjustment to the new layer. You can now change the colors of the background without changing the colors of the model. You can also add other adjustments if you wish to change the brightness or saturation.



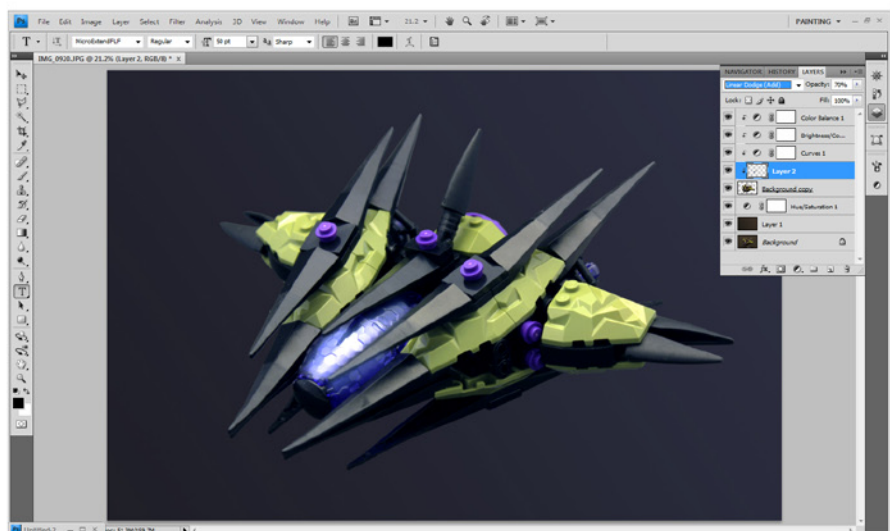
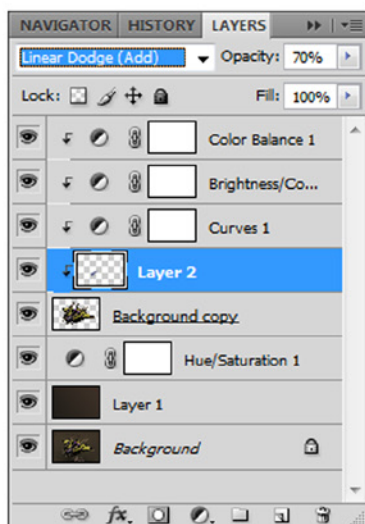
Little spots or dust particles can easily be removed with the Spot Healing Brush Tool.

Editing

Adding Effects

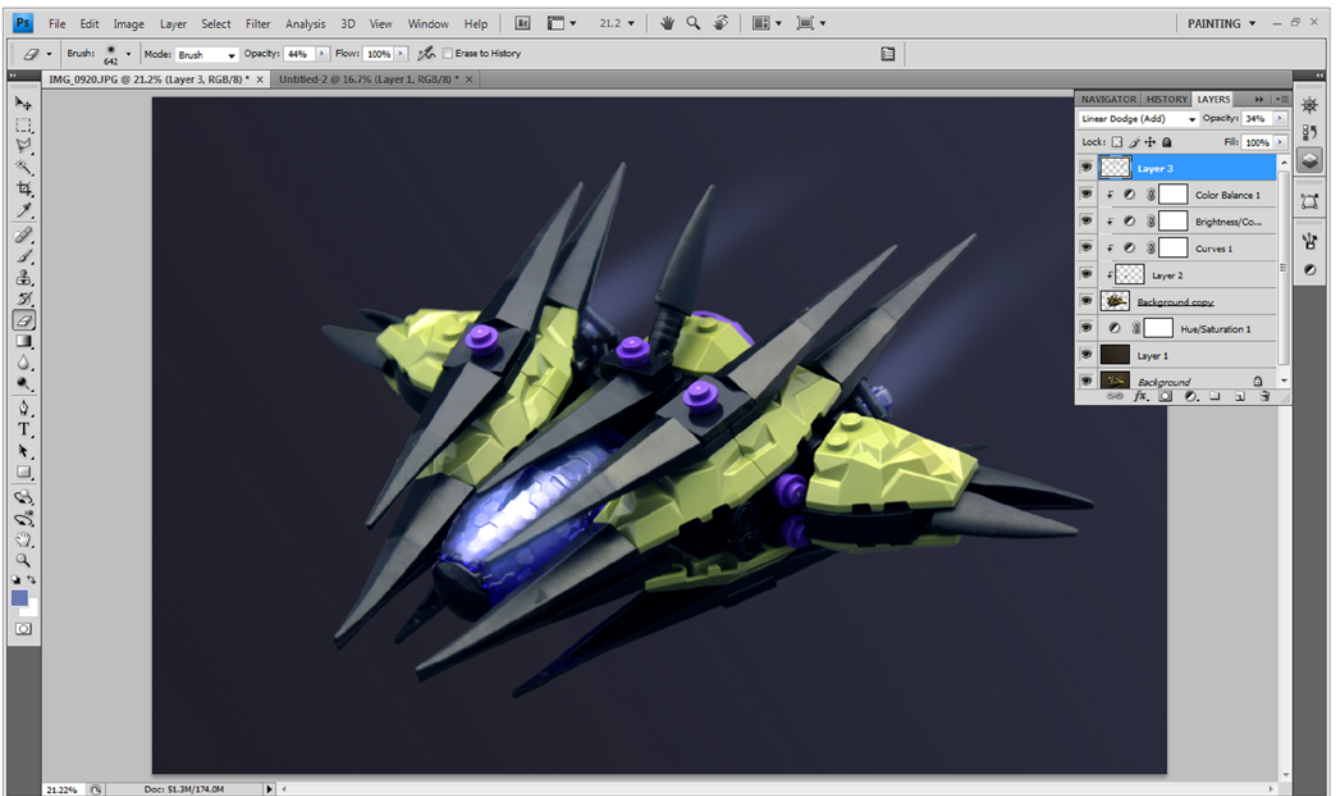


To add glow to things like the canopy, I started with a new layer right on top of my model layer. I sampled a color of the windscreen and used a soft edge brush to paint over what I wanted to glow. You can then set the layer's blend mode to Linear Dodge and reduce the Opacity of the layer to suit your liking.



Effects can be fun as long as they add to the model and do not detract from it. My goal in adding most effects is not to make it obvious. If something notices the effects first and the model second, I have overdone it. Subtlety is the best route to take in adding effects.

Effects could even include adding atmosphere or smoke to an image. Adding things in front of and behind the image creates more depth.



Adding engine effects is done almost the same way. However, you will need to make sure that you are working on a new layer that is not part of the clipping mask. Again, I picked a color of the model and painted two straight lines (holding shift + mouse click). I changed the blend model of the layer and the layer opacity. I could then erase them back with a soft edge brush at a low opacity to make them fade out. Using these same techniques you could add laser effects, debris, or countless other effects.

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