

How to:
Make a Carving with Photoshop

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General concept:
This tutorial will help you make a carving effect using Photoshop.

Specific steps:

1. First, pick a background texture that is suitable for carving. A wood or stone texture is best. Open the RGB image in Photoshop.
2. Next, set up a black and white image of whatever you want to carve. **NOTE** - whatever is in white will be what is embedded into the background.
3. Copy the black and white selection, and paste it as an alpha channel in your textured background. To do this, select your background image and open the Channels palette (Window, Show Channels). Click the new channel button next to the trash can at the bottom of the window.
With the new channel active, paste the copied black and white graphic (Ctrl-V).
4. If you need to, use the Move tool to center the graphic in the channel or use Free Transform (Ctrl-T) to scale the graphic.
5. Make a new layer above the background texture.
6. Click on the new layer's name to activate it, open the Channels palette again, and Ctrl-click the graphic you've stored in Channel #4. This should bring up a selected outline of your graphic.
7. This step is **optional** but provides a nice effect. Feather your selection (Select, Feather) so that the edge of the carving will be slightly rounded. I suggest Feathering 1 pixel. The higher the number, the more rounded it will be.
8. Now fill the selection with black (press "D" to get default colors, then press Alt-Backspace to fill the selection). Now it is safe to deselect your image, press Ctrl-D.
9. By this point you should have the image you are about to carve as black on your background texture. If you don't have this, figure out what you did wrong.
10. Now you have to emboss the graphic, choose Filter, Stylize, Emboss and set the direction of light and the amount of relief to however you want. Adjusting the height setting determines the depth of the carving.
11. Once you apply the filter, the result will be a 50% gray graphic with lighter highlighted edges and darker shadowed edges that make it look like the gray graphic is recessed into the background.
12. From the pop-out list of blending modes (should be on Normal now) in the Layers palette, choose Overlay. 50% overlay is neutral and the gray should disappear, play with this setting until it looks right.
13. To increase the contrast between the carved and uncarved surfaces, create an Adjustment layer of the new layer you embossed. To do this load the graphic as a selection as you did before (Ctrl-click its name in the Channels palette) and then Ctrl-click the new layer icon on the Layers palette, next to the trash can.
14. In the new adjustment layer, choose Levels for the Type. Move the Input Levels slider to adjust the overall tone you like, and then move the white Output Levels slider to the left to darken and reduce contrast.

15. You can now add a shadow, this step is **optional**. Add a new layer above the adjustment layer. Load the Channel #4 selection as you did before. This time invert the selection by pressing Ctrl-Shift-I, and now fill it with black by pressing "D" and then alt-backspace.
16. Deselect (Ctrl-D) and blur the edges of the shadow (Filter, Blur, Gaussian Blur; I use a radius of about 5 pixels). Offset the shadow to your taste by dragging with the move tool (or using the arrow keys) in a direction that matches the lighting created by the embossing.
17. To lighten the shadow move the Opacity slider in the layers palette.
18. Trim the shadow by Ctrl-clicking the Level's Adjustment Layer thumbnail in the layers palette (thumbnail, not the writing!). Now with the shadow layer active, click the Add Layer Mask icon, on the left at the bottom of the palette. This adds a layer mask to the graphic.
19. You should now hopefully have a nice carving!

Software required:

Name; PhotoShop (if more than one program was used then repeat these steps)
Version; 4.01
Platform; Win/Mac
Status; Shareware demo available, otherwise purchase from Adobe.
Source; Adobe, Tucows, Infomac, Download.com, etc.