

# THE COLOR WASH

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A color wash is when the Advanced Composition Photographer places an overall color shift onto the entire photograph. You could think of it as a colorcast, only intentional.

Using color in this manner is a powerful tool for sending a visual message to a viewer of the photograph.





Here is a 'straight' version (without color wash) of the first photograph in this Creativity Prompt.

There is nothing wrong with this version.

However, the idea was to convey the warmth and color of late autumn. The first version, with the warm color wash, really accentuates that feeling. It has the desired effect, much more so than the straight version!



Does this image have a color wash?

Yes, it does. The idea was to add a blue color wash to increase the feeling of a cold wintry day. In our mind, this example goes overboard, and it becomes unrealistic.



Does this photograph have a color wash?

No, it does not. This is a different technique called 'Monochrome Color'. In monochrome color, the vast majority of colors present within the scene are near each other on the color wheel.



This photograph has a color wash, and it was created in post-production. A color wash can be created using post-processing or by placing a filter in front of the lens at the point of taking the picture.

This photograph has a better outcome than the winter skiing photograph. It presents a believable setting while also enhancing the mood of a desert sunset.



Here is a 'straight' version of the desert photograph.

The use of the color wash has definitely increased the mood, appeal, and visual strength of this photograph!



#### Assignment:

Go through your portfolio of photographs. Select five that you feel would be improved by applying a color wash to create mood or send a stronger visual message. Use post-processing to create your color wash. You can try these different techniques-

- Adjust the color balance.
- Change the hue/saturation slider
- Create a blank image file of a color, and then layer it over your photograph. Change the opacity and blending options.
- Apply existing filters from your editing program or that you find online. This is a good application for presets and actions.





Both of these photographs used a filter attached to the front of the lens to create a color wash effect. Lens filters are another way to create a color wash.



### Assignment:

Acquire several filters to put in front of your lens and create a color wash. You don't have to buy fancy glass filters, (if you don't want to). You can buy colored gels. These are very inexpensive, and they can be found at some camera supply stores or at art and craft stores. If you use color gels. Play around with twisting the gel in front of the lens to create an even more interesting effect as the gel bends the light and creates reflections.



The ultimate challenge in a Creativity Prompt is asking you to take charge of 'every element' within your photograph. In the two example photographs above; every color, the color wash, and the background were carefully selected for a visual effect.



### Assignment:

For this Creativity Prompt, I want you to create a minimum of three photographs where every element in the photograph was hand selected by you for both color and shape. Make sure you incorporate a color wash. You can go wild with this prompt. Take notice how the pineapple is covered in tinfoil and the stalk has been spray painted silver. Use your creativity to your maximum potential!



Another type of color wash is known as a multi-color wash. You'll often find these types of color wash filters in Presets and Actions, as well as with many apps that have filter options. The above photographs have a multi-color wash applied.



For my example, I will be using the image on the left and Photoshop CC.

Make sure to look at the pixel count of your original photograph, and then make a note of it. In our example photograph, the pixel count was 2000 pixels wide by 2000 pixels tall.

In our example photograph, notice that there is an angular change in lighting from the bottom left to the upper right.

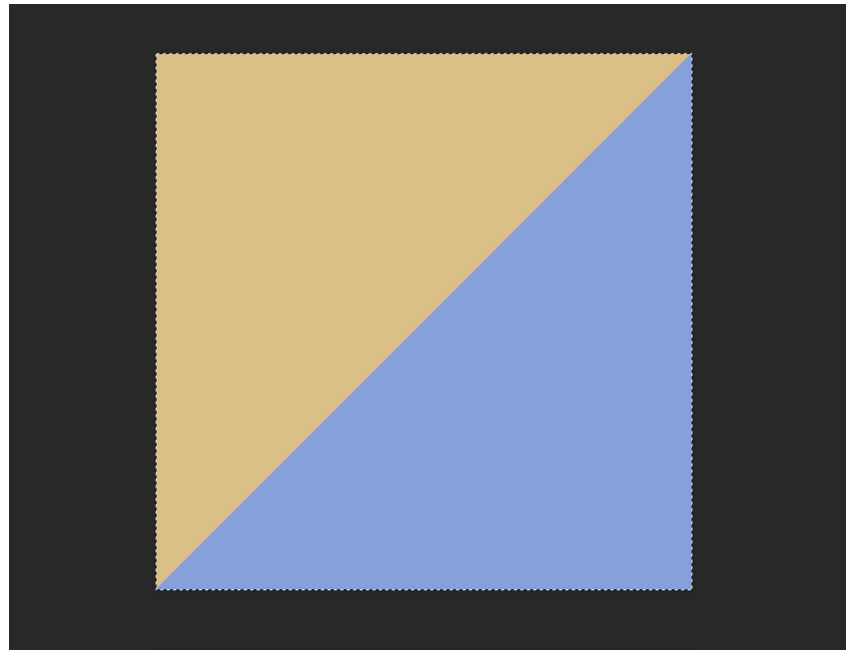
The left side has a dull warm light. The right side has a dull bluish color. We are going to enhance these colors using a multi-color wash in post-production.

This is not a necessary feature (having a certain type of lighting or color already present in the original image) for applying a multi-color wash to a photograph. It was simply my reasoning for choosing this particular shot.



### Assignment:

Follow the steps below using your editing program and create a multi-color wash on one of your photographs.

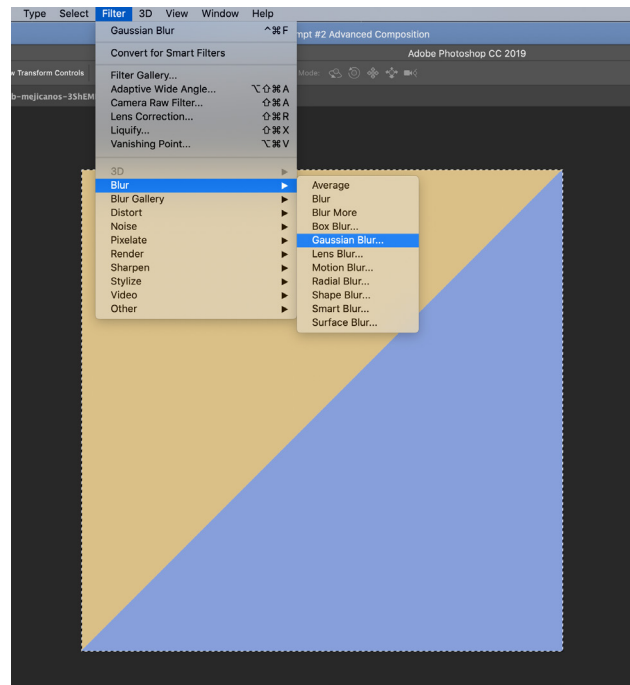


I created a new image file in Photoshop. I set the pixel count to 2000 pixels wide by 2000 pixels tall at 72 dpi. The background color does not matter, because I am going to cover it up.

Using the Polygonal Lasso tool, I selected a triangular pattern in the upper left.

Using the Color Palette, I created a warm tone hue and filled the selected area in the image file.

I then 'inverted' the selection, created a cool blue hue, and then filled the rest of the image area with this color.

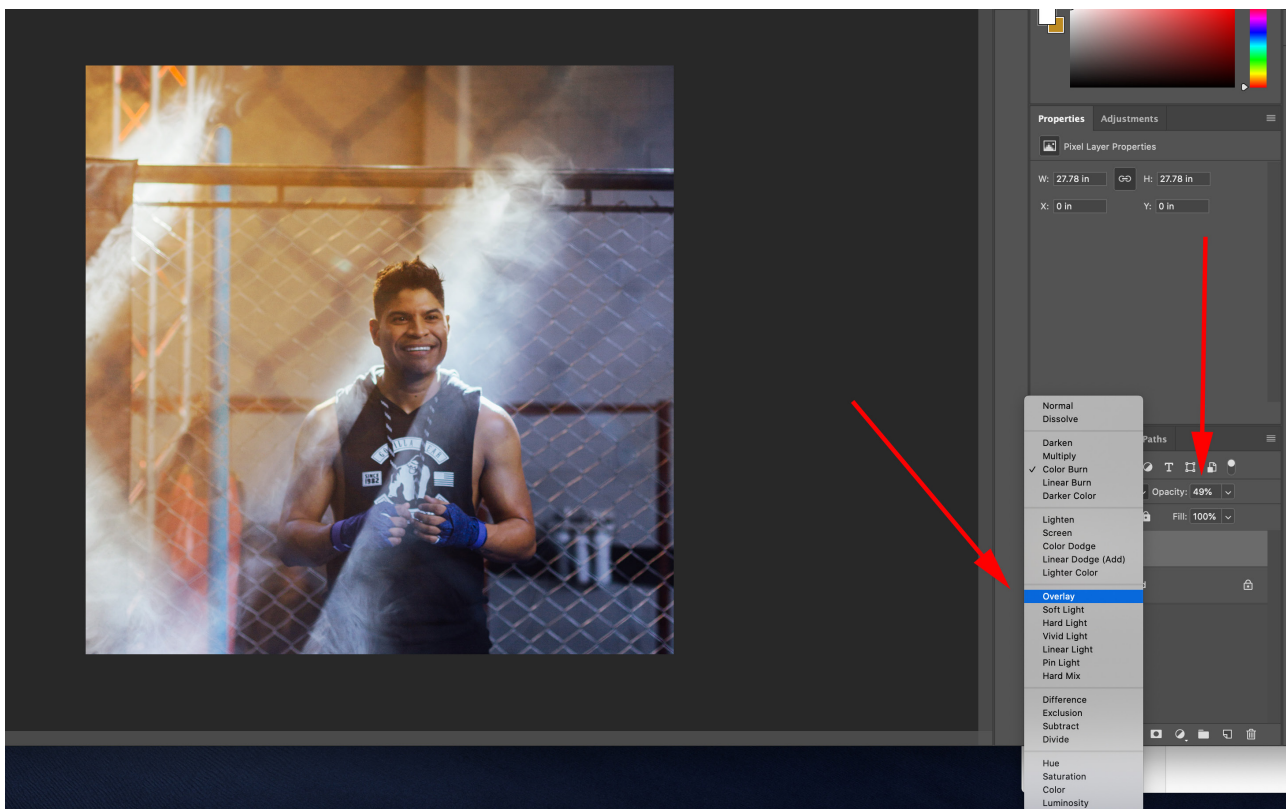


You can play around with various transition lines when creating a multi-color wash filter. For this example, I wanted a very soft transition. I used the Gaussian Blur filter to create it.





Here is my final created filter for the color wash.



I copied the filter file, and then pasted it over the photograph of the boxer thus creating a new layer. There are two settings that will have a very large effect on how your filter interacts with the original photograph below it in the layer stack: Opacity and Blending Mode. I played with these settings until I found a combination that I liked.



Here is my final photograph after using a multi-color wash.





Here is a before and after comparison.

Notice how the multi-color wash technique strengthened the man as the subject of the photograph. He quite literally pops out from his surroundings!