

Do a double take

Merge two images into one to create a fantastic abstract portrait that places one subject within another for striking results



Jordan Butters: Double exposures originate from the days of film photography whereby the photographer would expose a scene and then take another exposure without winding the film on to the next frame, thereby exposing the same frame of film twice.

Fast-forward to the DSLRs we use today and using multiple exposures is a commonly used technique, although you might not realize it. HDR images are a classic example of combining multiple exposures. They can also be used to combine two or more short exposures of a moving object to create the effect of a single long exposure, emphasizing the motion in the scene.

Aside from practical uses, they can also be used for artistic effect. Try combining a classic high-key portrait with an everyday shape or texture to create an abstract image. Here, I used an image depicting the natural world as my fill image for a thought-provoking link between humans and nature.

To achieve the effect digitally you'll need to use Photoshop, Elements or a similar image-editing package, but if you have a Nikon DSLR, it can be done in-camera (see right). Before we get to the editing part, capture the images; you'll need at least two pictures to work with, but there's no reason why you can't merge three, four or even more exposures once you know the basic technique. Strictly

Exposures with Nikon

Nikon digital SLRs allow you to perform double exposures in-camera. Press the Menu button on the back of the camera and select the Shooting Menu. Scroll down until Multiple exposure is highlighted and press OK. Pick the number of shots – start with two while you familiarize yourself with the technique. For this style of portrait, set Auto Gain to Off before highlighting Done and pressing OK. Now simply take your shots. Note that if you take your first shot and take no action for 30 seconds, the camera will end Multiple exposure mode. After each multiple exposure, you'll need to head back into the menu and enable the function each time.

speaking, you can merge any images – skip to the Photoshop part of the guide for this, but follow the full step-by-step to learn how to create a similar abstract portrait for yourself.



1 Set up your camera With your camera in aperture-priority mode, select spot metering; this will ensure your subject is exposed correctly. Then dial in positive exposure compensation to ensure the camera overexposes the sky. Select an ISO of 100 and an aperture of around f/5.6 – bear in mind here that you may need to use a wider aperture if you find that the scene isn't bright enough.

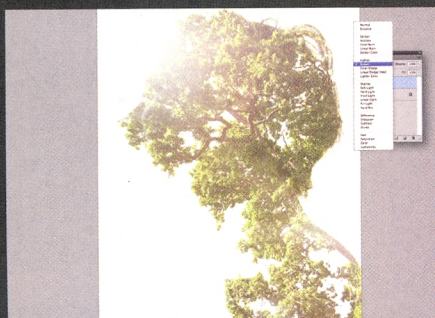


2 Position your subject Position your subject against a bright background, such as the sky on a bright day. A profile shot works much better than a face-on image for this technique as the shape of your subject's face is more identifiable in profile. Try to avoid any scenery creeping into the background, too. If the background isn't bright enough, you can add more exposure compensation.

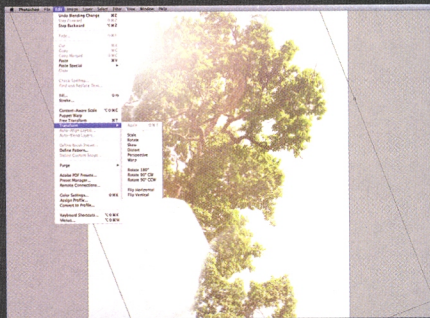


3 Shoot your second subject Choose an evenly lit scene and take your second shot. Consider the placement of your first subject in the frame and compose the shot with this in mind. This picture will effectively fill the silhouette in the first image so choose a scene containing interesting shapes or textures. Alternatively, raid your archive for an image that links with or gives meaning to your subject.

Finishing in Photoshop



4 Import Open your fill image in Photoshop and go to **Select>All** and **Edit>Copy**. Open the portrait shot and go to **Edit>Paste** to drop one image on top of the other. In the Layers palette, select the top layer and change the **Blend Mode** to **Screen**. Any overexposed areas will be blown out to white when combined.



5 Adjust the fill image With the fill layer selected, use the **Move Tool** to position the fill image. You can also use the Transform tools by going to **Edit>Transform** to scale, rotate and flip your fill image. I also used the **Flip Horizontal** command in **Edit>Transform** menu to get the best position for my fill image.



6 Adjust the curves To bring out the details, add a Curves adjustment layer by clicking on the **Add new fill or adjustment layer** button in the Layers palette and selecting **Curves** from the menu. In the **Adjustments** palette, drag the middle of the curve downwards to bring out detail in the mid-tones.

**IMAGE
DETAILS**

Kit: Canon EOS 5D Mk II &
Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8L
Mode: Aperture-priority
Exposure: 1/320sec at
f/5.6 (ISO 100)

OUTDOOR

INDOOR

PORTRAITS

CREATIVE

PHOTOSHOP

**Final image**

The result is a unique double-exposure portrait that wouldn't look amiss hanging in a fine-art gallery.