CMS.998/CMS.600: New Media Literacies  
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Lecture Notes  

Session 9, 3/9/07  
Learning Week  

- Lesson Plan: Photoshop and image editing  
  - The lesson plan is pretty adaptable – you can adjust it for any age  
  - Students were asked to bring in some images or objects to manipulate in Photoshop  
  - Taking the meanings that the student perceives to be in the original and changing them to involve new representations  
  - The idea is to be freeform, so that students can experiment and create their own meanings and methods  
  - The process is more important than the project  
  - At the end of the session, students would have a group discussion where they looked at each other’s work and evaluated and commented on it  

- Learning objectives  
  - Technical aspects  
    - Learn to use Photoshop  
  - Non-technical aspects  
    - Students should understand new ideas for what they can experiment with: inserting text into images, inserting images into other images, etc.  
    - The objectives could be adapted to particular subjects. For example, in a course on politics students could create images specifically useful for political campaigning  
    - In the critique and discussion part of the lesson, students should learn an appreciation for each other’s work and the variety of experience involved  

- Content: the use of Photoshop  
  - You can select a rectangular portion of the image with the marquis tool and whatever action you choose will apply only to that selected area  
    - If you then cut that area out, and paste it back in, you’ll create separate layers.  
    - In this way you can make as many separate layers as you choose  
    - There’s a move tool that allows you to move the layers around  
  - You can undo, if you decide you made a mistake  
    - The history can only remember a certain number of things  
  - There’s also a lasso tool, that allows you to select an area of the image like the marquis tool, only with the lasso tool the area doesn’t need to be rectangular
There’s the magnetic lasso too, which is sensitive to the differences in light in the image, and does thus it does some of the selecting work for you.

If it’s important to be really really precise though, I’d recommend just very carefully using the regular lasso tool. It gives you better results.

- Some examples of images with cut and paste jobs:
  - Photo of a hand giving the peace sign, but with the index and middle fingers cut off and floating in the air.
  - This is a simple cut and paste job, but it has all kinds of rich consequent meanings.
- Magic wand: this tool selects areas of the photo based on color contrast. You can make very fine selections, including individual pixels.
- Brush tool
  - You can draw on a second layer, and that way it’s easy to revert to the original image any time that you want to
  - The eyeball icon lets you choose which layer you want to see individually, without overlay from the other layers
  - There’s a link tool that lets you move multiple layers together, or you can unlink them to separate the layers
- Crop tool
  - Changes the overall frame of the image
- Erase tool
  - You can select particular shapes to erase with, such as a star
- Remember, you can always zoom in, zoom out, fit on screen, etc.
- Paint bucket
  - Fills in anything in a selection that is transparent
- You can delete a layer by simply right-clicking on the name of the layer and selecting “delete”
- Gradient tool: you can add color gradients to a layer, instead of just having a solid background
- You can easily change color photos to black and white
  - Threshold and Levels are other, more complicated tools that change the contrast and color scheme
  - Blur lets you make the image blurry

- Examples of Photoshop images
  - A New York City steam vent replaced by an image of a coffee cup, steaming up from the ground
  - i-zombie: taking iPod ads and replacing the silhouettes with images of zombies in headphones
  - iRaq – again playing on the iPod adds, this campaign used a silhouette from the Abu Ghraib torture photos, with white electrodes instead of headphones
  - Even very rudimentary, beginner Photoshop images can produce a lot worth talking about.
• Photo manipulation doesn’t have to be hidden. You can consider deliberately allowing it to be obvious that it is photo manipulation, and not clean and professional.

• Classwork: Build your own Photoshop images

• Class discussion of the images students produce
  o What do you think?
  o Were there any conventions operating that you weren’t initially aware of?
  o How crucial was the Photoshop software to producing your image? Did you fully use the tools provided by the software?

• The critique portion of the lesson plan is crucial
  o Encourage students to talk about how the Photoshopped images change meaning
  o Issues of media, representation, war, violence, political issues…
  o Where does fine art exist? Who defines it?
    ▪ One student makes an image of a red Calder sculpture pasted in front of the MIT Green Building, in place of the black Calder sculpture that actually sits in front of the Green Building.
  o How can you address the status of meaning without privileging the product over the process?