

# ELEMENTS

## DIGITAL PAINTING TUTORIAL SERIES : WEATHER

The 'elements' series is a guide to basic 2D Digital painting and can be followed in most software packages supporting paintbrushes and layers. Each month, 2 or 3 professional artists will cover a specific theme or 'element', resulting in 2 or 3 different styles and techniques which can be viewed side by side. This month we will be doing skin.

### SUBJECTS:

Issue 21, September - SANDSTORM  
Issue 22, October - TWISTER  
Issue 23, November - RAINSTORM  
Issue 24, December - SNOWSTORM  
Issue 25, January - HEAT WAVES



*Created In:*

Adobe Photoshop 7

In this first part of our new Elements series, cartoon and comic artist, Carlos Cabrera shows us how to transform a basic given scene into the first of five different weather conditions. This month, he tackles:

*Sandstorm*

This tutorial is perfect for anyone who is looking to create a sandstorm effect in any landscape painting (Fig00 – base image).

First of all, open the image you want the sandstorm to be added to, then change the Color Balance of the entire image to something similar to the following settings: Shadows -2, +11, +18; Midtones +85, 0, -62; Highlights +23, 0, -4. With these settings you should achieve an orange atmosphere (Fig01). Alright, now you're ready to create a new layer and paint the shape of your sandstorm with a brown colour (RGB 196, 147, 81). I decided to paint a triangular

shape in order to increase the size of the effect over the other objects in the scene (Fig02). Now go to Filter > Distort > Wave and apply a nice distortion to your shape. Pay close attention to this step; when you finish applying the wave effect, press Shift + Ctrl + F (Fade), change the opacity to 50, and you will see your last wave effect duplicated with a nice opacity. Repeat this step 3 or 4 more times and you will create a perfect cloud shape. These effects have much



Fig01



Fig00

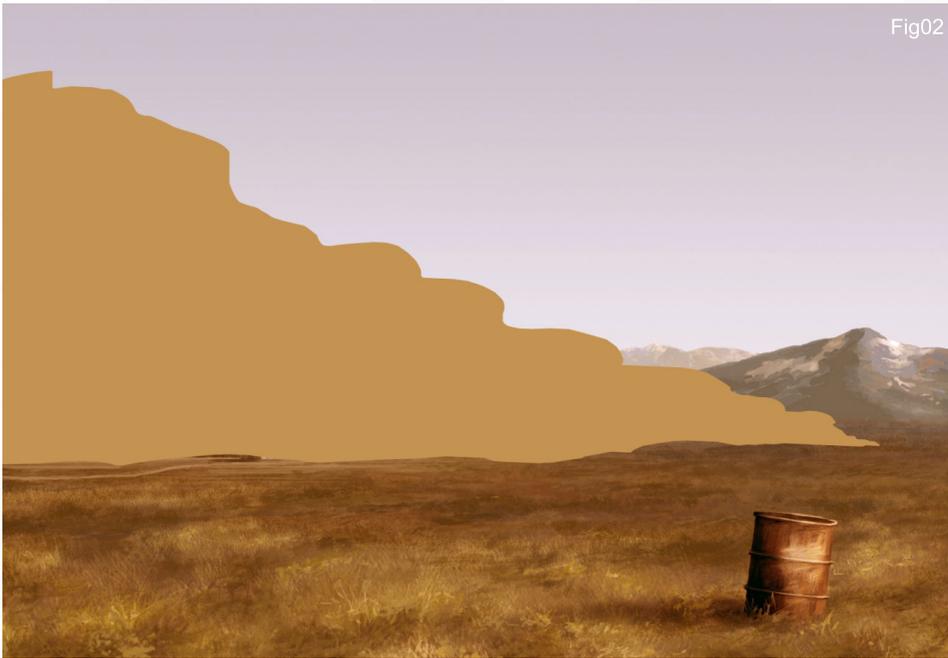


Fig02

better results if you change the parameters of the wave filter before applying the fade effect (Shift + Ctrl + F) (Fig03 - 04).

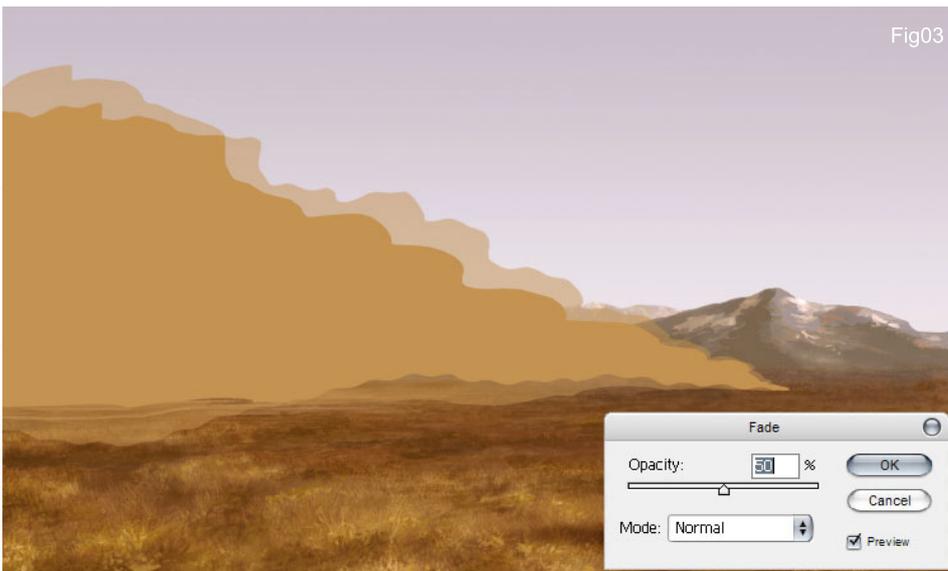


Fig03

Well, we now have a good cloud shape; the colour is OK and the shape is perfect, but it needs more detail. You can now either search through your personal collection of textures to find a good photographic image of a mammatus cloud, or you can search the Internet for some good images. We need this photograph to add a realistic touch to our sandstorm shape. Select your chosen mammatus cloud photograph and search for a good shape within it. When you find what you're looking for, select it with the Lasso tool and paste it into a new layer. Change the layer's blend mode to Overlay and move your mammatus cloud into your sandstorm shape (Fig05).

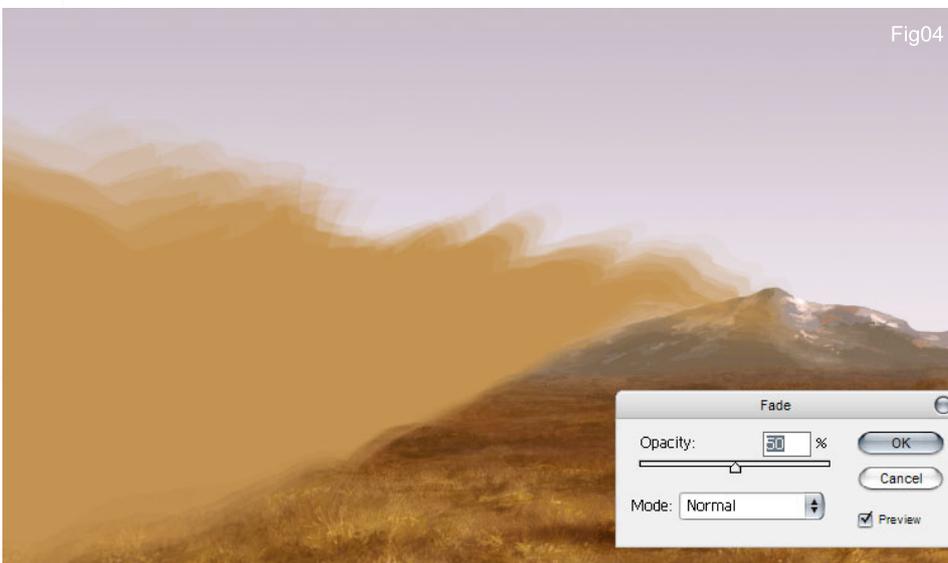


Fig04

As you can see, the pasted photograph looks good but we don't yet have the quality that we need. Remember that we are using this photograph only as a base from which to paint our own clouds. Now create another layer and change the blend mode of it to Overlay, and set it to 80% opacity; select a grey colour and start painting your own clouds. (**Note:** don't use white in Overlay blend mode for the clouds because the white colour will burn the image below, and we don't want a shiny cloud we need a matte brown one.) So, paint the highlights using grey on your sandstorm cloud, and then - with black or a dark grey colour - start painting in some shadows. Play around with the opacity of your brush to achieve some interesting shapes. (**Tip:** if you use the numbers on your keyboard whilst painting then you can quickly and easily change the opacity of your brush - try it! This short-cut is very helpful.)

Let's now go back to our cloud to smooth the edges. For this you can either use the Smudge tool (R) or paint several strokes using a low opacity brush (I always use the latter technique). When you finish you should have an image such as Fig06.

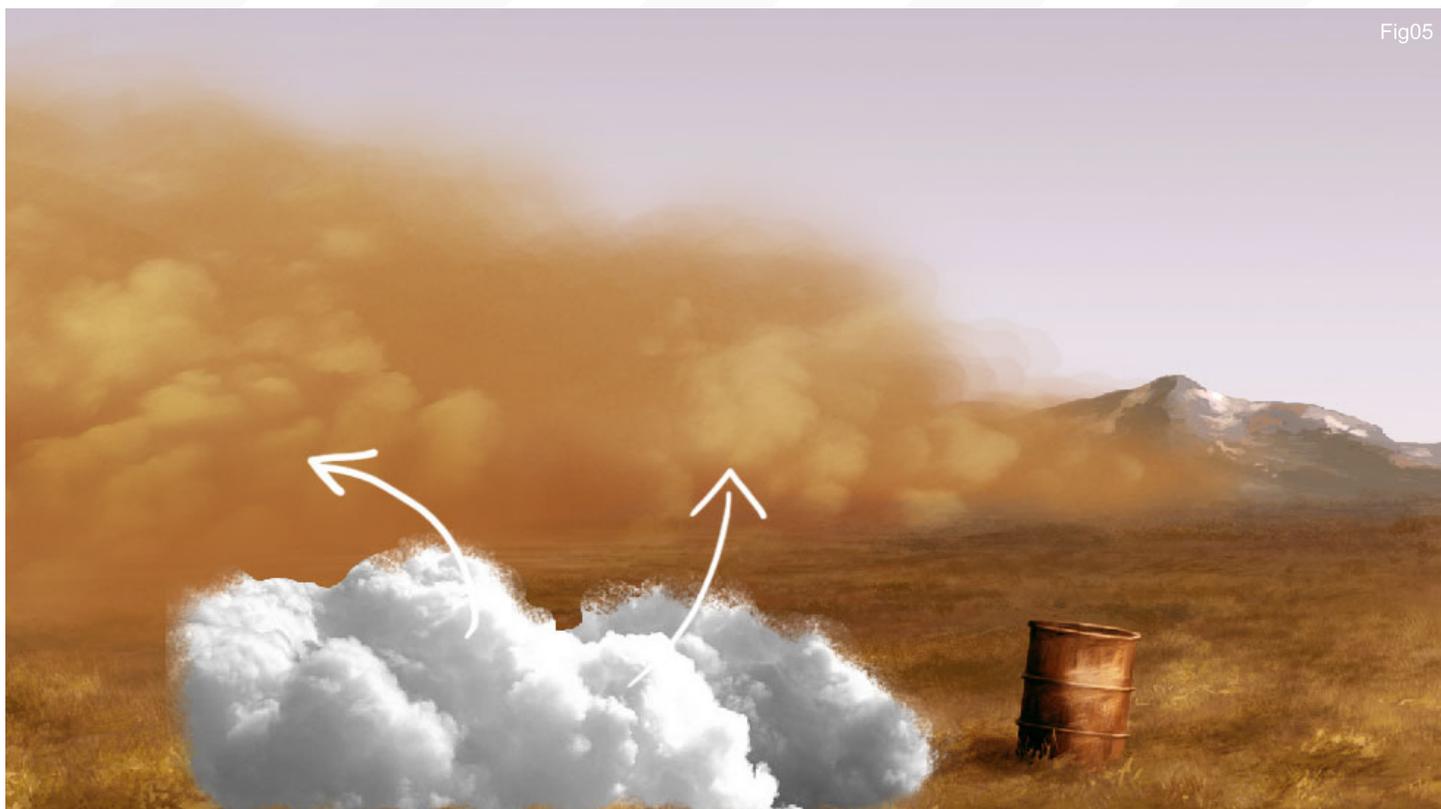


Fig05



Fig06

It looks good but it needs more light and shading work, don't you think? Check the bottom of the cloud: it doesn't have a great amount of shadows at the base, and so to fix this simply create a new layer in Multiply blend mode, and paint using a brown colour at the base of your cloud. When done, change the opacity of the layer to around 40%. Now create another layer in Overlay blend mode, and paint with a big soft brush at the bottom of the cloud. (**Note:** remember not to paint using a high opacity

brush - always use 50% or less when painting clouds or smooth surfaces.) The shadows are OK now, so let's start work on the highlights. Repeat the same procedure that we used for the shadows: create a new layer in Overlay mode and paint in the highlights using grey. Try to follow the direction of the clouds to create volume (Fig07). The cloud is now perfect... but where is the farm? We now need to show the farm again because it's an important object in this scene. Simply go to the background layer (the

one that holds the base painting) and select the farm using the Lasso tool (it doesn't have to be a perfect selection). Press Ctrl + J to duplicate the selection you just made into a new layer, and move it over the top of the cloud layer. Change the blend mode of this new "farm" layer to Luminosity, and move the opacity slider to about 10% (Fig08).

If you want, you can leave the painting at this stage, but if we go on to tweak the colours a little you will see just how much better it can look! To do this, create a new adjustment layer (from the black and white icon positioned at the bottom of the layer window) and select Color Balance. Click on the Shadows option (Colour Adjustment > Tone Balance) and move the sliders to Cyan -22, Green +12 and Blue +7. Then click on the Highlights button and move just the Yellow slider to -13. If you check your image now, the shadow changes into a greenish-grey. This shadow colour stands out the sandstorm effect.

You can then create another new adjustment layer and play with the curves. I always use



these last few steps to tweak my paintings, and it's also a good way to check if everything is OK or needs to be changed at the end.

The best way to learn Photoshop is simply to experiment with it. Try every tool, read tutorials and books - anything which will help you to learn this program. And practice. Practice all the time!

Next month: *Twister*



*Carlos Cabrera*

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