

Improve Your Reference Photographs using PhotoShop. by Sheila Hogge

Published in *'the Artist'* November 2004

Part 3. Correcting Perspective.

The camera lens will always distort perspective to a certain degree, sometimes it is obvious, other times it is not.

Such distortion is most common in street scenes when a wide angle lens is used. This causes the buildings to appear to lean inwards over the street and is an unwanted distraction when a photograph is to be used as reference. (Photo 7.)



Photo 7. Original Photograph. The buildings appear to lean over the street due to distortion by the camera's lens.

Import the image into Photoshop, sharpen, adjust the tonal range, rescue shadow detail, if required as described in Parts 1. and 2.

Then go to Image in the menu > Canvas Size. Adding height and width to the canvas in the New Size options will increase the working area around the image. The larger the distortion the larger the working area required.

Fit the window to fill the screen using keys  Command and 'o' (zero) [Control 'o' for PC's.]

To select the image use the Rectangular Marquee Tool (the 'M' key). Include all of the image in the selection. To start the correction go to Edit in the menu > Transform > Distort. Click with the mouse on the top left hand square and keep it held down, pull outwards horizontally. The Marquee Tool selection lines remain vertical. Use

these as the guide to bring vertical architectural detail on the walls of the buildings close to this line and so to the vertical. Release the square. Repeat this process for the top right hand square. Applying and removing a grid, as already described, during this process can also be of added assistance in aligning the verticals. Now any further finer

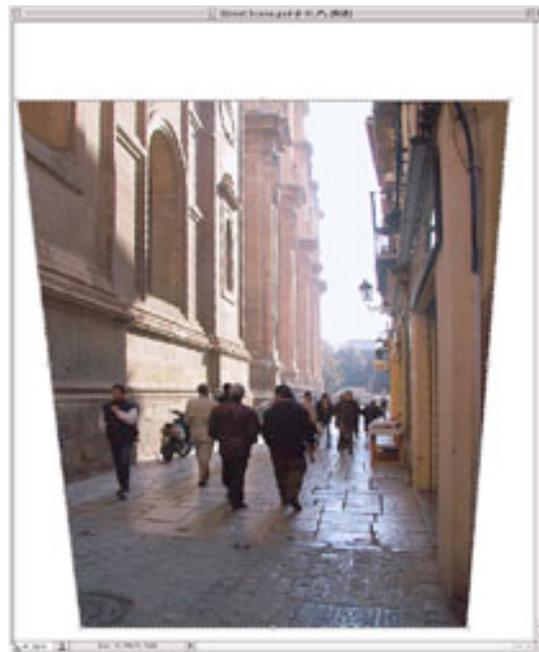


Figure 3 Correcting the Verticals. The top of the image has been pulled out. The amounts needed may vary on either side, as seen here.

adjustment can be made. (Figure 3.)

This has corrected the verticals but has also foreshortened the view. Here graphically illustrated by the squat stature of the people.

To correct this, click on the top central square on the



Figure 4. Correcting the Height. This is achieved by pulling up the top of the image, restoring people and buildings to the correct proportions.

dotted selection line. Keep held down and pull upwards keeping the square in a central position, until the people are restored to their correct proportions. Then release the square. This will have also corrected the height of the buildings. (Figure 4.) To apply the transformation, double click near, but not at, the centre of the selected area. Deselect the area using  Command and 'D'. (Control 'D' for PC's.)

Your image now has the corrected perspective. Work from this or decide on a new composition using the Crop Tool as described in Part 1. (Photo 8.)



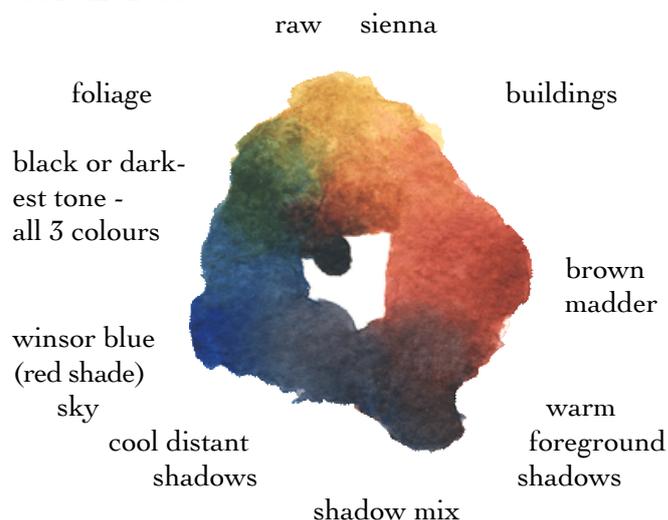
Photo 8. The final adjusted image, cropped to recompose the street scene

If you have no printer or wish to scale from your on-screen image, apply a grid.

The scene can be increased in width by using the original photograph as reference, extend the horizontal architectural details and add in the vertical ones that have been lost by the correction and/or the cropping.

Deciding on colours and mixes before starting to paint gives freedom to concentrate on the paint's application. (see Colour Test, Figure 5.) Having done this, minimal detail was sketched onto stretched paper, ensuring the correct perspective was retained. Highlights were preserved on the cathedral (left hand side) with masking fluid. I made quantities of fairly strong raw sienna and brown

Figure 5.
Colour Test



My first thoughts for this scene were to paint a tonal painting using only Winsor blue (red shade) and brown madder. However, as I always decide on colours, as far as I can, before starting to paint, I reconsidered and included raw sienna not to lose the feeling of the early morning sunny glow. This addition would give full colour. I use strong paint to see what are the deepest colours possible, adding water for the lighter tones.

madder in deep wells ready for use. On damp paper with a size 12 round sable brush I covered this entire area with a variegated wash using both colours. Any mixing occurred within the brush or on the paper. When dry, the shadows were painted to define the architecture. More brown madder was used in the foreground and more blue but less detail in the distance. When the masking fluid was removed edges of both shadow and highlights were hardened or softened where required. More colour was added to the lower foreground walls to suggest the stone blocks. Details were now well developed and so left at that.

The lamp glass, distance light areas and shop signs were masked and the sky washed in, adding a little brown madder to the blue and more water at the horizon. When dry the distant buildings, trees and figures were painted.

The buildings on the right were washed in using raw sienna on dry paper and details added loosely once dry with varying strengths and shades of shadow mix.

The bright reflective areas in the pavement were masked and then on dry paper with a strong shadow mix the pattern of joints was established. Then on damp paper colour was dropped in, shadow mix of varying proportions of the two colours to indicate shadows cast by the figures. Raw sienna and brown madder were used for the reflections from the bright

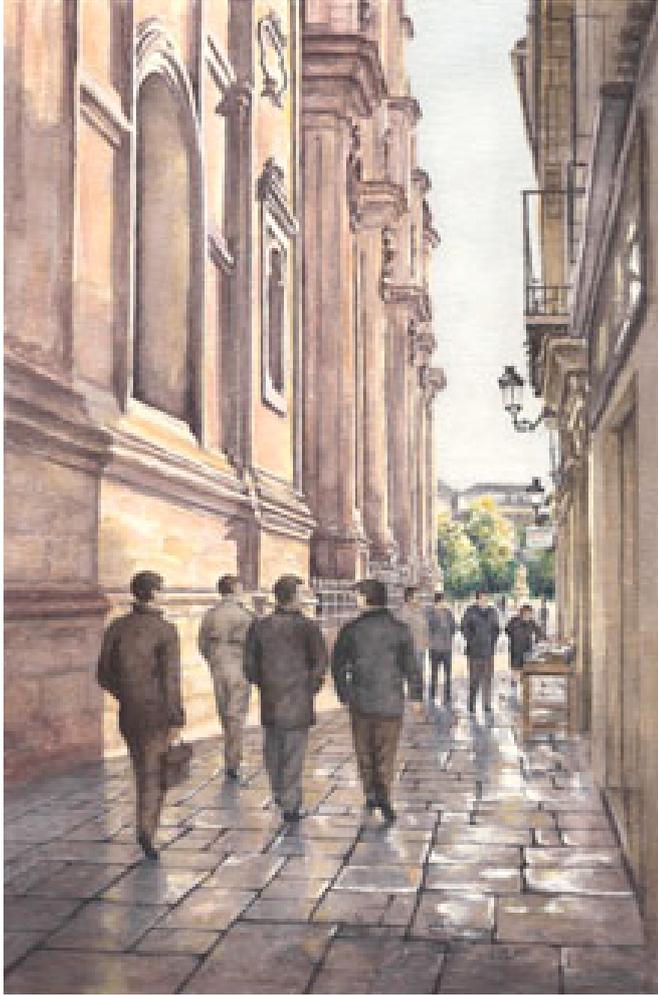


Photo 9. Towards Plaza de las Pasiegas, Granada
Transparent watercolour on Fabriano Artístico
300gsm rough paper. Size 51 x 34 cm.

walls. The foreground figures were then painted.

Shadow was washed in over the right hand buildings, figures and pavement, quickly but gently to minimise disturbance of the existing paint. Once dry all remaining masking fluid was removed and the highlight edges softened with local colour. The ironwork was added with black, made from a strong mix of all 3 colours.

This subject could easily be over tightened, so as the essence of the scene was complete, I left it to have a fresh look after a few days. Then in the pavement I reduced the amount of unpainted paper left in the closest foreground reflection as it took the eye down and out of the painting. Also the areas of raw sienna were strengthened and some of the retained unpainted highlights glazed to increase the feeling of the reflected sunlight.