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Gradient Tool
(Lightroom/Photoshop Users)

William Clelland

Applicable for users of Lightroom and Photoshop.

Note: When reading this document, please expand the view to the whole width of your screen. You will then be able to see the screenshots from Lightroom and Photoshop clearly.

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Gradient Tool - Applications

- Blend from one colour to another

- Blending multiple images

- Enhancing/refining areas of light and shade in an image

There are various applications of the Gradient Tool.

It has been used to transition from one colour to another across an image (e.g. the background or an object). I do not have an example of this.
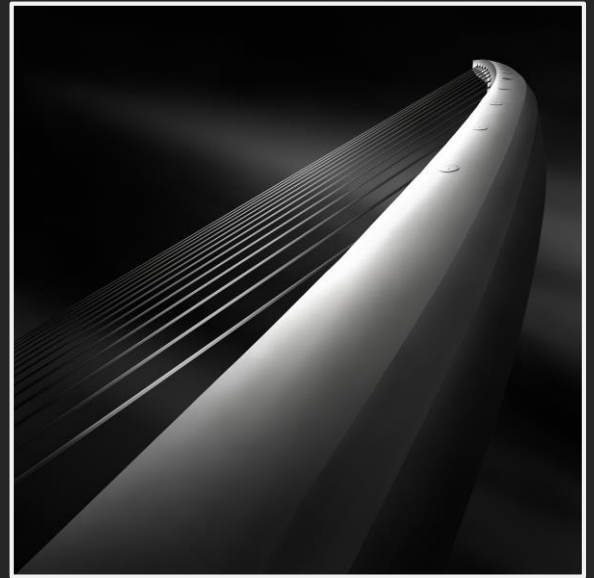
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It can be used to blend multiple images together.

The example shown is a composite of 5 images. As it was shot under daylight conditions, the brightness of the scene changed slightly between each image.

The gradient tool can be used to smooth the 4 transitions between the set of images.
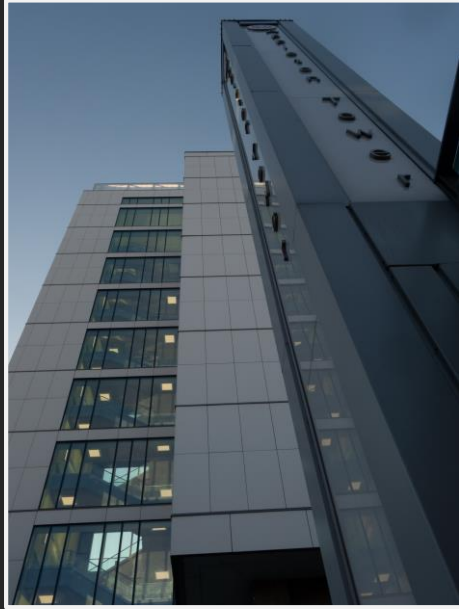
Gradient Tool - Applications

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Julia Anna Gospodarou

It is often used in fine art architectural photography to give a greater 3D look to the subject and to add interest to the background.

The example here is the Appleton Tower in Edinburgh. The images are the original raw file and a heavily processed final image.

The tower at the front (with the name) is only a few meters tall while the building at the back is a few storeys high. My camera was held low (below knee level) to take the shot.

The gradient tool was used to add interest to the sky.

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Photoshop Workflow

Prior to opening photoshop, I had carried out a series of edits using Lightroom and converted the image to monochrome.
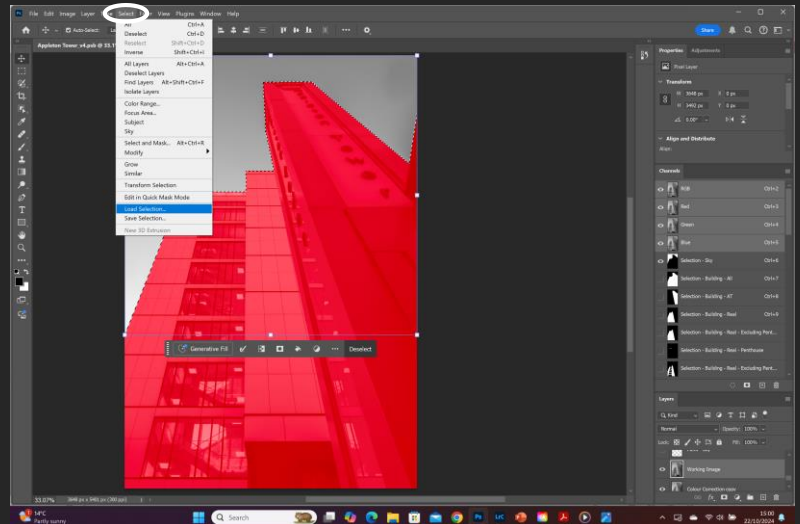
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Photoshop Workflow

To conduct the processing, it is necessary to create a series of selections for each distinct element of the scene (there were over 30 selections for the scene above).

The Pen tool was used to make the selections.
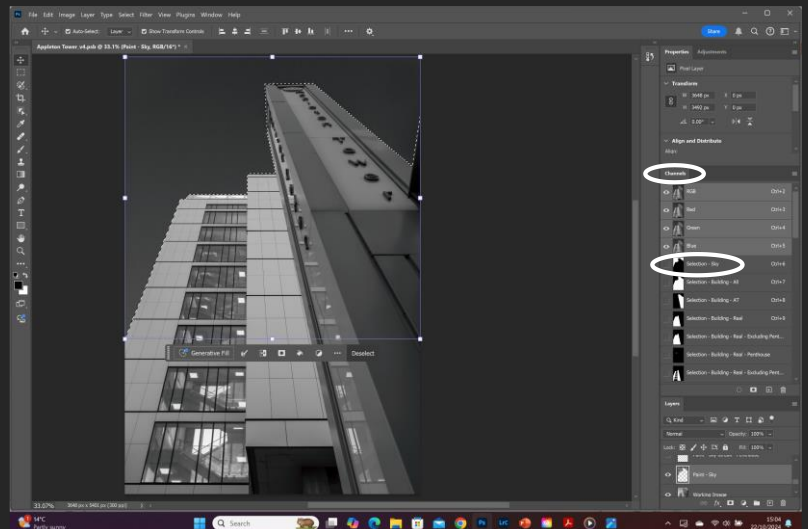
Photoshop Workflow

In this image the sky has been selected.

On the menu at the top, click on '**Select**' and click '**Load Selection**'.

You will be asked to name the '**Channel:**'. If you are likely to have multiple selections, it is important to have a clear/consistent naming convention.

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Photoshop Workflow

To select a particular channel, press Ctrl (Windows) and click on the channel – in this case the Sky. You should see dashes surrounding your selection).

I then edited the image to darken the sky.

Photoshop Workflow

To apply a gradient to the selection (in this case the sky), click on the '**Gradient**' tool on the left hand toolbar (a white rectangle with a gradient from dark to light inside).

On the top toolbar, click on the 3rd dropdown menu from the left. This will give various options (including colour transitions). As this is a monochrome image, I selected the first option under the '**Basics**' folder.

It is best to build-up the transitions gradually, so set '**Opacity:**' to a low level (e.g. 10%.

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Photoshop Workflow

There are five types of gradient that can be applied (boxes in the top toolbar). The leftmost box is the linear gradient.

In this example, I have drawn a vertical line (seen to the left of the image) from top towards the bottom. This applied the gradient to the selection (dark at the top and light at the bottom). You can apply this a number of times until you get the transition you would like.

Note:
I would normally draw the line on the image. I have drawn it to the side to make it more visible.
You can also start/finish drawing the gradient outside the image.

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There are other (more interesting?) gradients.

The one shown above (fourth box from left) is the Reflected Gradient.

The last box is the Diamond Gradient which I also used to create the final image.

The Gradient Tool has been used at a low capacity to gradually add interest to the sky.

The image also incorporates the edits made to the other channel selections. All of the main surfaces on the tower/building were flat and so I did not see a need to use the gradient tool here.