Create a Holiday Greeting Card

Why buy pre-made cards when it's so easy to make your own?

By Bert Monroy

For today's show, Leo and Patrick asked me to demonstrate how to make a holiday greeting card in Adobe Photoshop. Watch the show to see how you can spread holiday cheer in your own way.

Instructions

1. To create a holiday greeting card, start with a file that has the dimensions you want the card to be. Fill the background with a festive color. I chose a bright red.

2. In a new layer, create a brick pattern using a tutorial from a previous show.

3. Select a small portion at the bottom area of the brick wall, centered and large enough to resemble the hearth of a fireplace. Send the selected area to its own layer (Layer>New>Layer via Cut). The resulting new layer will appear in front of the layer of the wall. In the layer's palette, move it to a position behind the wall.

4. Using the Levels command (Image>Adjustments>Levels), darken the layer of the brick wall and lighten the layer with the cut-out section of the wall.

5. In the layer with the cut-out wall, select and delete most of the area, leaving behind a half-brick vertical section.

6. Move the half-brick section over to butt up against the edge of the brick wall along the inside of the cut-out hole.

7. With the Skew command (Edit>Transform>Skew), grab the center handle on the edge facing the opening of the wall and skew it upward a small amount, just enough to create the illusion you are seeing the side edge of the bricks on the wall.

8. Create a new layer behind the layer with the skewed edge. Using the Polygonal Lasso tool, select an area that follows the angle of the skewed bricks and is about one and a half times the thickness of the skewed bricks.

9. Choose a dull yellow for the foreground color and black for the background color.

10. With the Gradient tool, in Radial Gradient mode, add a gradient to the selected area from the bottom up.

11. Apply the Texturizer filter (Filter>Texture>Texturizer) with Sandstone for the Texture and Bottom for the Light Direction. Deselect.

12. In the Layers palette, choose the layer above the layer you just completed, which should be the layer with the half bricks. Choose Merge Down from the pop-up menu in the palette to merge the two layers into one.

13. Duplicate the layer and flip it horizontally (Edit>Transform>Flip Horizontal). Move it over to butt up against the other edge of the inside of the hearth.

14. In a new layer, select an area that covers the hole in the back of the hearth. Make sure it does not extend below the bottom edge of the skewed sides. Give it a gradient and filter as you did a few steps ago for the sides.

15. Create a new layer above the others and select a rectangle to simulate a mantelpiece. Here you will apply a wooden texture that appears in a previous tutorial.

16. The mantelpiece should cast a shadow onto the brick wall. In a layer above the brick wall, create a shape that will serve as the shadow and fill it with black. Bring down the opacity of the layer enough to look like a shadow and clip it with the layer of the wall. Clipping is done by pressing the Option (or Alt key in Windows) button and clicking between the two layers you want to clip in the layers' palette.

17. Now you will create the fire. In a new layer, with a brown color, paint a shape you want the logs to be. Make sure you use a hard brush and not one with soft edges. Apply the Craquelure filter (Filter>Texture>Craquelure). Set the settings to produce a believable wooden bark.

18. With the Burn tool, darken the bottom of the log. With a bright yellow and the Paintbrush tool set to Overlay, lighten the top edge of the log. Duplicate and scale it down and flip it to add additional logs to the fire.

19. In a new layer, make some brush strokes in white (normal brush mode). Here you will apply a tutorial I did on an earlier show where I created fire.

20. If you follow that tutorial to the letter, you will have the fire sitting in the middle of a black box. Go to the Layer Styles dialog box for that layer. In the Blending Options portion of the dialog box, move the left (dark) sliders on both bars at the bottom of the box inward to make the

black disappear and allow the black of the logs to show through. Holding the Option (Alt) button allows you to separate the black handle into two to soften the effect.

21. In a new layer below all the others you will create the floor of the fireplace. Choose the Gradient tool and set the mode to Foreground to Transparent. With a yellow color, create a gradient starting below the fire outward toward the bottom of the image. Apply the Texturizer filter as before but change the Light Direction to From Top.

22. Turn the eye off for the background in the Layer's palette and merge all the others by choosing Merge Visible from the pop-up menu in the palette.

23. Create a layer mask for the resulting layer (Layer>Add Layer Mask). I use Reveal All so I can see what I am doing. With the Gradient tool, reset Foreground to Background and with White in the Foreground and Black in the Background, create a mask from the center of the fireplace outward to form a vignette effect.

24. Add your text.

Downloads

Download a high-resultion version of the card I made on the show.

Bert Monroy is a photo-realist painter and Photoshop expert. You can find more information about Monroy at his website. His latest book is "Photoshop Studio with Bert Monroy."

Originally posted December 10, 2002

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