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VIDEO DISC

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Your guide
Jeff Morgan

Create an Orton-effect image

Turn a digital image into dreamy, ethereal print using a technique that replicates the Orton Slide Sandwich

Known as an Orton, this creative technique produces colourful and punchy – yet soft and dreamy – images. It's ideal for flowers and warm landscapes, but also works if images are flat and pale.
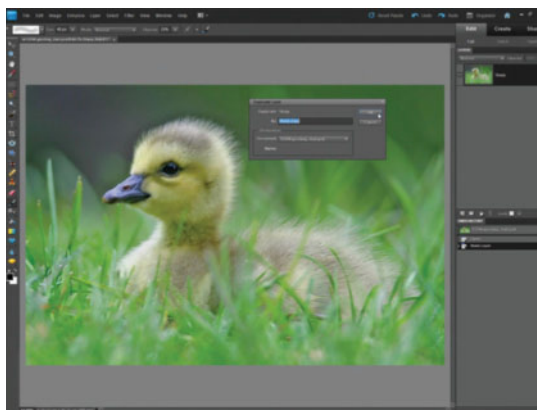
The Orton Effect is named after photographer Michael Orton, who originated the technique back in the days of film. He would set up his tripod and capture two images on colour transparency film; one of which would be two-thirds to a stop overexposed and sharply focused, the other image would be one-and-a-half to two stops overexposed and well out of focus. After

processing, these two film images would be sandwiched into a slide mount, ready for projection.

Using slide film for this technique isn't simple. To get a good result you need the right degree of overexposure, as well as the correct amount of blur, and this varies a little for each subject. It's also hard to determine if you have a good subject, as not all images work well with it.
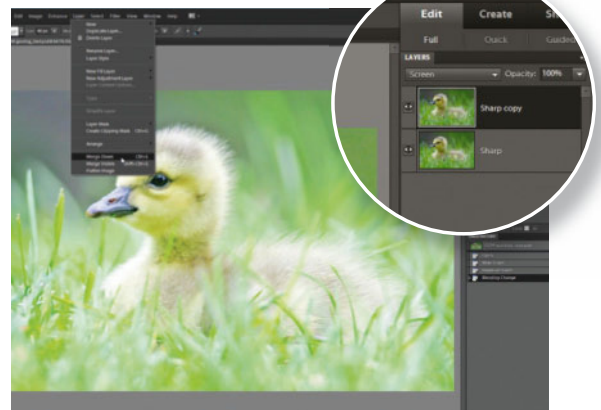
Fortunately, this technique is much easier to put into practice in the digital world because you only need one sharp image; the out-of-focus severely overexposed version can be created in Photoshop. Let's try it out…

STEP BY STEP ## How to get the Orton look

Duplicate layers

1 Open orton_start.jpg from the Video Disc. First display the Layers palette by clicking Window>Layers. Double-click on the layer called 'Background' and rename it 'Sharp'. Duplicate this layer, by going to Layer>DuplicateLayer, and click OK.

Give it some punch

2 Now change the Blending Mode for the 'Sharp copy' layer from Normal to Screen; this will make the image much appear brighter and punchier. Then select Layer>MergeDown, which will flatten the image back down to a single layer.
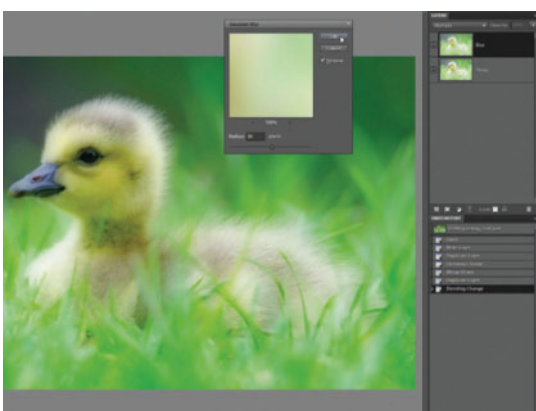
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Checklist ✔

What you'll need
Photoshop Elements 9
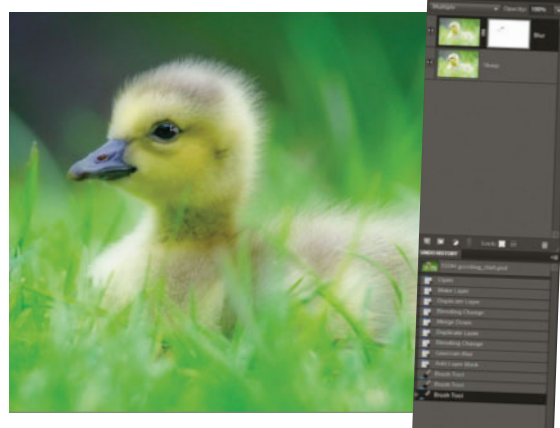
How long it'll take
15 minutes

The skills you'll learn
✔ How to duplicate and combine layers
✔ How to change Blending Modes
✔ How to apply Layer Masks

Blur the layer

3 Duplicate the 'Sharp' layer again, by selecting Layer>DuplicateLayer, but this time rename the copied layer 'Blur' and then click OK. Change the Blending Mode for the 'Blur' layer from Normal to Multiply. Select Filter>Blur>GaussianBlur. The amount of blur you set will depend on the image; for our image we set the amount to 30, then click OK.

Look into the eyes

4 Now add a Layer Mask using Layer>LayerMask> RevealAll. Hit B to select the Brush tool and choose a soft brush of around 50 pixels, set Mode to Normal and Opacity to 25%. Hit D, then X, to paint in black. Make sure you're painting on the mask and make a couple of light strokes around the eye to sharpen it up. Then click Layer>FlattenImage, and you're done! ■

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Super Tip!

"The amount of Blur you apply in Step 3 will vary. Most often, blur is best in the range of 10 to 20. No two images work quite the same with the Orton effect, so try brightening or darkening the start image with the midtone pointer in Levels if it looks either too dark or too light at the end."