Advanced Adobe Photoshop Elements Worksheet

This worksheet will cover the following areas:
- Placing Items behind other items using layers
- Adding Shadows
- Some useful Filters

Placing the Bollard Behind Railings

In this exercise you are going to learn how to layer items and make your bollard look like it's behind some railings or another item in your photo.

In this example I am going to place the bollard behind some railings in the picture so you can see it behind and through the railings.


Original Bollard in photo

New Bollard in Photo

First you need to choose the spot at which you are going to place the bollard. In this example I am going to place it on top of a normal bollard to replace it. Once you have chosen where you want to put your bollard you need to select that area using the box selection tool. Don't just select the exact area the bollard will be in, select a larger area around it as well.

Then copy and paste the selection. It should be pasted into a new layer, and exactly above the original section so that it doesn't look like there even is a new layer. I will call this new section the copied railings layer.

Now change the layer order on the layer window so that your bollard sits above the photo's layer but beneath the copied railings layer.

Copied Railings Layer

New Bollard Layer

Photo Layer
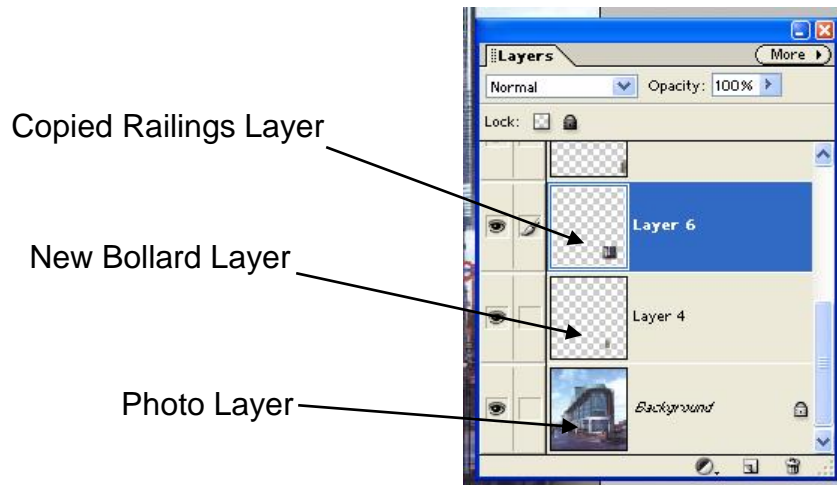
You now need to size and place the bollard in the position that you want it behind the railings. As the bollard is behind the new railings layer you wont be able to see where you are placing it. To see what you are doing you will need to make the new railings layer invisible. To do this you click the eye next to the correct layer.

Click on this eye to make the Layer invisible.

Copied Railings Layer

The eye will disappear, this makes that layer invisible, click it again to make the layer visible again. Position and size your bollard.

With the copied railings layer invisible the bollard just sits on top of the photos layer. But once it is made visible again it will sit on top of the bollard covering it.

Once you are happy with where your bollard is placed click on the space where the eye was to make the railings layer visible again. Now the bollard will be hidden behind the copied railings layer, and you want to be able to see it through the gaps in the railings.

To do this you have to erase the gaps between the railings of the copied railings layer so that you can see the bollard beneath. Zoom right in to the section you want to erase. Select the eraser tool. Set the size of the brush to either 1 or 3 pixels. Then click on the areas between the railings to erase it. As you are erasing this area from the copied railings layer you should begin to see the bollard layer showing through. Continue with this until you can see the bollard through all the gaps. It is sometimes hard to tell where you have erased and where you haven't as the photo layer is the same as the copied railings layer, so except for the bollard showing there is no way to tell you have erased anything. So if you find it easier you can make the photos layer invisible. This will mean that areas you erase where there is no bollard will appear white.

Photo layer is invisible. You can see the areas that are erased are white, and you can see the bollard between the railings.

Only the railings layer is visible. The white areas are the bits that have been erased.

The bollard is now visible behind the railings. All layers should now be turned on. This effect can make the bollards dropped into the photo more realistic.

Adding Shadows

Now you are going to learn how to add a shadow to your bollard. This will make the bollard look more realistic in your photo. First you need to look at your photo and determine the direction of the light and the shadows.

For example from top right to bottom left, which would make the shadows fall to the lefthand side of the bollard. Once you have determined this you then need to set up your bollard in ProDesktop so that the lighting falls on it from the correct direction before you save a jpg picture from it.

Firstly you have to copy your bollard and paste another one into your document. The two bollards will be identical, so the second one will be used as the original ones shadow. You now need to make the shadow grey as your bollard wont necessarily be grey. To do this select the layer your second bollard is on and go to the top menu bar, then Enhance - Adjust Colour - Remove Colour. This option removes all the colour from the selected layer converting it to Black and White.

Next you have to transform the bollard in to the desired shape of the shadow. Select the grey bollard and using the square selection markers drag the top one down to turn the bollard upside down.

Drag this marker from the top to the bottom
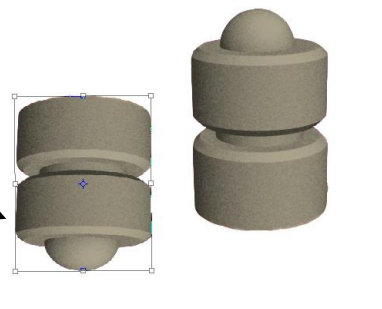
Then go to Image – Transform – Distort. This allows you to pull and push the bollard any way you want. Using this you can make your shadow long or short depending on lighting. If you have a long shadow the shadow should get wider the further away it gets from the bollard. You can also position them at whatever angle you want. If your shadow overlaps your bollard check the layer window and rearrange the order so that the bollard sits on top of the shadow.

Notice that your shadow still has the detail and shading of the original bollard, which wouldn't be there with a shadow, you would just have a solid patch of colour. To change this and make it look more like a shadow you will have to use some filters.

First we are going to get rid of the detail and make the shadow a solid colour. To do this we will use the Diffuse Glow Filter. Go to the top menu bar then Filters – Distort – Diffuse Glow.
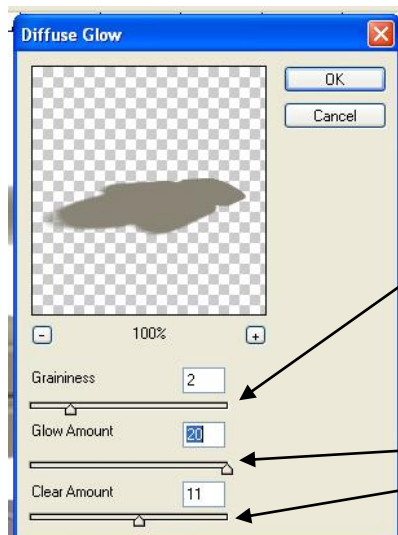
Set the graininess low to make the shadow look smoother

Set the Glow Amount and the Clear amount so that the bollard is a solid colour and you can no longer see the detail.

Now the Shadow is a solid colour. No wall that's left is to blur the edges, as shadows edges are never perfect lines exactly the same shape as the object. To do this you have to use another filter called Gaussian blur, and it blurs the edges.

Select the layer your shadow is on, the go to Filters – Blur – Gaussian Blur.

Gaussian Blur

OK
Cancel
☑ Preview

100%

Radius: 3.3 pixels

Choose the blur radius that you want. The lower the radius number the less the shadow blur and the higher the radius the more the shadow is blurred.

Gaussian Blur with
a radius of 3

Gaussian Blur with
a radius of 7

Gaussian Blur with
a radius of 10