

Sabbatical Report
For
Wayne Muromoto
Spring 2011

Submitted
October 24, 2011

Acknowledgements

Before detailing my sabbatical activities, I would like to thank the Leeward Community College administration for providing me with the sabbatical. Besides being able to address the goals of my sabbatical request, the time away from my teaching responsibilities helped me “recharge my batteries,” as they say. I was able to reengage myself in my own art and creative activities, spend long hours walking (rather...”hobbling” due to knee surgery) on the beach and thinking about my personal teaching pedagogy and how I would improve my day-to-day teaching, and reflect upon my professional goals. I also had more time to work with the software and technology. The field of digital art constantly changes due to innovations in technology, and keeping up with the changes while also teaching a full load of courses can be daunting. The sabbatical gave me time to catch my breath, catch up, and catch a new headwind. For that, many thanks.

Stated goals

My sabbatical request included the following goals I wished to accomplish:

1. A rewrite of at least my Art 107D Intro to Digital Photography class handouts. The handouts take the place of a required textbook in my classes and it was in sore need of global upgrading and updating.
2. Work on my own artistic and creative endeavors, including starting on a photographic documentary and initial development of art for my own art show.
3. Building up my own core competence in the field of digital art to keep up with new technologies and innovations.

In general, I believe I accomplished these goals, although in particular, I didn’t do as much as I had expected, because my lofty expectations exceeded my grasp. But what I did, I managed to do with great success.

1. Rewriting of class handouts

The most important, central goal of the sabbatical was to have the time to revamp my handouts. It turned out that with the time allocated, I was able to fully rewrite my most important set of handouts, that for Art 107D: Introduction to Digital Photography.

Art 107D was among the first classes I taught at Leeward Community College, and has become easily one of the most popular introductory level courses in the Digital Art Program. There are enough sections to require two (and sometimes three) instructors, it is taught both at the main campus and at the satellite Waianae campus, and engages many students from the general student population who may not be actively seeking a focus on digital arts.

When I first started teaching some 11 years ago, there was no satisfactory single textbook on digital photography suitable for an entry-level college course. The textbooks available either focused solely on traditional photography theory and processes (“wet lab” darkroom work and photography theory and practice) or solely on digital processes, without any discussion on photo theory underpinning both digital and traditional film photography. So that was the genesis of my own self-generated tutorials. If not, students would have had to purchase at least two or three different books to cover the processes and materials involved in digital photography as an academic course.

Our campus was the first in the UHCC system to offer such a course for the general student population. (HCC offered a course in digital photography but it was limited only to graphic design majors, and was a very limited introduction to digital photography in relationship to studio photography.) We developed a track record and a good deal of experience teaching digital photography because we were the first. I have given workshops in how to teach digital photography at Leeward CC and at Hawaii Community College. I’ve worked with journalism students at University of Hawaii—Hilo campus. Honolulu CC and Hawaii CC have taken our class outline and syllabus as models for their own Art 107D classes they hope to offer. We currently also offer Art 207D Intermediate Digital Photography and a certificate in competence in Digital Art—emphasis on photography. It therefore behooves us to make sure our foundation course, Art 107D, continues to be strong and updated.

I wrote my own handouts to create a series of modular, progressive episodes that took the student from basic photographic theory and practice to an intermediate degree-level command of the medium. The lessons started from picking and using a camera, to setting up a computer, basic shooting techniques, exposure theory, traditional concepts of f-stops and shutter speeds, photo history, to

the particulars of the “digital work flow,” how to process and prepare a digital photographic image in software.

As software and processes changed, I kept up by rewriting the chapters, or kludging and reediting old chapters, but over the years, the need for a major overhaul became apparent. While the basic, overall outline of the content remained the same, changes in technology made it necessary to complete rewrite whole chapters, many from scratch.

This objective, however, was really difficult to do in the middle of also teaching a full load of classes, when I would be teaching, grading, and also reediting and rewriting other class handouts.

The sabbatical gave me time to rewrite nearly the entire curriculum of Art 107D. The experience of rewriting was as follows.

First, I had to just catch my breath and step away from the handouts. I needed some time to think about the general purposes and goals of the class and how best to address them.

Then, based on the goals envisioned, I looked at each and every aspect of the handout, including the format and means of delivery. Since my first Digital Photography class, I have been duplicating the handouts and passing them out as stapled black and white copies. This amounted to thousands of pages of paper and the subsequent cost of reproduction to Leeward Community College. I wanted to cut down on the paper usage. Perhaps the handouts could be reproduced on a DVD and/or online? My handouts were already converted to the PDF format for sending electronically to Duplicating Services, why not use it as a format for electronic distribution, perhaps as an eBook?

I played with formatting, studied how to make an eBook, struggled with learning about the new techniques of making an electronic document. One particular glitch took me several days to figure out, because there was no easily found tutorial for a particular format I wanted my documents to have. When I found out how to do it, it took only a matter of seconds. It was really easy; but the eBook development is so new that there was no one clear tutorial to do the things I wanted to do.

In the end, I realized that “easier is better,” and in order retain certain formatting styles and the ability to change chapters on the fly, I would retain the PDF formatting, and distribute the handouts on a weekly, chapter by chapter basis, at least for the time being, as I continue to enhance and reedit the handouts. The handouts would now be electronic only. Formatting the handouts into an eBook format would have necessitated distribution via an online bookseller. I wasn’t ready for that yet, and still prefer to distribute the handouts via Lulima, our college’s own online system, tightly integrated with the grading and other materials for our courses.

So for those and other reasons, I settled back on PDF formatting. Perhaps in the future I will still pursue an eBook or interactive DVD option and require students to purchase it. But for now, I will continue to offer the handouts for free as PDFs from Laulima to the students, who appreciate the fact that they don't have to buy an expensive textbook.

With the formatting issues solved, I dove into content rewriting. In some cases, I just needed to tweak some of the chapters. In many cases, I had to discard and rewrite entire chapters to clarify new processes in software. In all cases, I added more "how to" photographs, screen captures and diagrams to make the processes easier to understand.

Because of this extensive rewriting, I averaged from one to two chapter rewrites a week. At the end of the spring and into early summer, I often went back to earlier chapters and would rewrite the rewrites in light of what I learned rewriting later chapters, so it was a very circular, organic process.

An example of the rewritten chapters is in Appendix 1.

The rewrites appear successful. I am finding greater student understanding and success in my current classes. There is less confusion and I can observe students going through the handouts step by step and successfully creating the right kind of formatting for their digital files.

Don Oberheu, the other current Digital Photography instructor, and I are using the same handouts. Don uses the handouts so all Art 107D classes are taught uniformly. He has also kindly agreed to use it and thereby find errors in editing and content that will be corrected and reedited, as well as give me feedback on how successful the new version is with his students at the Waianae campus.

Now that the printed format is more or less what I want it to be, I am now considering adding digital movie tutorials, as I have done with my online Art 112 and Art 113D classes. The need for digital movie tutorials is not as great in Art 107D, since it is taught "in class" and not online, but I do see that some students could benefit from watching a process over and over again in order to grasp what they might have missed from my lecture/demonstration and handouts. That will be for my next iteration of the tutorials, possibly in spring 2012.

2. My own creative endeavors

A secondary goal of my sabbatical was to have the time to work on my own art. An art teacher, after all, should be engaged in his/her own artwork in order to maintain some amount of legitimacy.

While working on the chapter rewrites, I took time to do my own photographic and artistic work. Some of the photographs made their way into the appropriate chapters as examples. Others were done for my own personal artistic creativity. Still others were shot in preparation for a long-term goal of having a show of my photographs. One of the goals of the sabbatical was to kick start my own artwork, with the purpose of having a one-person show.

The show I envision will be a documentary photographic look at Waialua, on the North Shore. When I first graduated from my undergraduate university and returned to Hawaii, one of my first freelance jobs was to document the Waialua/North Shore community for the fledgling Ethnic Studies' Oral History Project at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I took archived photographs of people's old photographs and shot more photographs of the plantation town for documentation. This was the first community that the Oral History Project covered. After the project ended, I moved on, eventually ending up in the graduate degree program of Fine Art at the University of Hawaii.

When casting about for a theme for a photo show, I returned to the notion that a new look at Waialua would be a really great idea for a show. It had been, after all, about 32 years since I had worked on the Oral History Project, now called Center for Oral History, and currently associated with the College of Social Sciences (<http://www.oralhistory.hawaii.edu/>). That, in itself, was historical. If we could put together the shots I took of Waialua then, obtain permission to reprint photographs from the Oral History archives that I helped document of Waialua from the plantation's earliest beginnings over 100 years ago, and show the community now, without a sugar plantation, it would be a very interesting display of a community over the many decades and over many changes.

I began some preliminary shooting and then met with the current heads of the UH Oral History Project, Warren and Michie Nishimoto. They were very supportive and enthusiastic about the idea, and agreed to allow me to reproduce whatever photographs I wanted to use in the show. Warren and Michi were also hosts of a community radio show, so I was invited to be a guest on one of their shows to talk about my project, with the hope that it would stir more support in the Waialua community. I also did preliminary work on finding a venue for the show, settling on either the Linekona Art Center or the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii. Both venues, however, have a waiting list of several years. In any case, I'm just starting on the documentary photography work.

Samples of photo shoots from my Waialua Project



At the Waialua Farmers Market, 2011.



Processing and packing Waialua asparagus.



Sunday band concert, Waialua.



The Waialua Hongwanji Temple. I thought it was abandoned but on this day, a memorial service was being held.

Besides the Waialua documentary project, I shot photographs of various locations and events. Shooting so much for myself helped me to hone my own photographic skills, something I don't do as much when I'm teaching and have to focus on helping scores of students work on their skills.



Lanai, 2011.



Prince Lot Hula Festival, Moanalua Gardens, 2011.



Prince Lot Festival.



Prince Lot Festival.



Cherry Blossoms, Kyoto, Spring 2011.



Kyoto, 2011.

Besides photography, I engaged in several other creative projects and community and campus endeavors, including:

- Finishing the rewrites of SLOs for Art 107D and Art 207D.
- Judged student art with James Goodman at the Kapolei High School's invitational Student Art Show.
- Judged high school student art for the statewide High School and Middle Schools Scholastics Art Show.
- Began the first of a series of anecdotal, creative essays in *The Hawaii Herald* about life with a pet dog.
- Created and currently maintain the Urasenke Foundation of Hawaii web site:

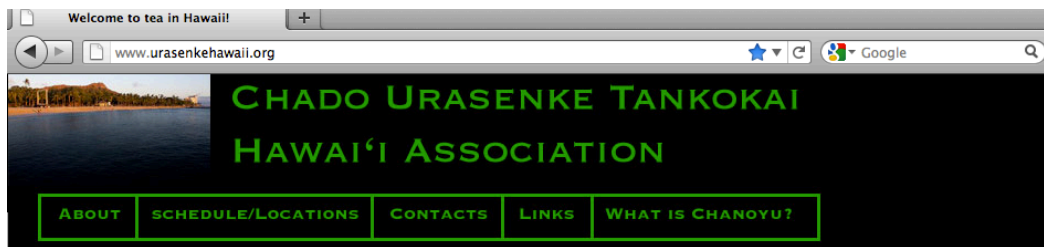


PHOTO SCRAPBOOKS

Welcome to the web site for the Chado Urasenke Tankokai Hawai'i Association, the organization for tea in Hawai'i.

Photo: Dr. Gensitsu Sen performs tea for the memory of the fallen sailors entombed at the Arizona Memorial and for world peace at Pearl Harbor, Summer 2011.

On Facebook (you will need a Facebook account):



和 敬 清 寂

The four precepts of tea: Wa, Kei, Sei and Jyaku, or Harmony, Respect, Purity and Tranquility.

- Assisted with the planning and development of the 2011 Urasenke School of Tea Ceremony's annual Summer Seminar. As chief operations officer of the Hawaii Urasenke Tankokai, the organization for Urasenke tea students and teachers in Hawaii, I submitted materials for a commemorative book, planned the group's participation in exchange tea ceremonies, chose ceremonial gifts, and so on. Over 450 participants came from Japan, the United States and Europe to participate in

workshops. Special tea ceremonies for world peace were held at the Arizona Memorial and the Honpa Hongwanji. The Arizona Memorial event was broadcast by live feed back to Japan by NHK.

- Received the *Toritata Shihan* rank in the 450-year-old Japanese martial art tradition called the Takeuchi-ryu. The Toritata Shihan rank is the highest level given so far to an American, and is a full license to teach the techniques, philosophy and esoteric knowledge of the art. Interestingly, as part of the school's tradition, I was given a martial name, Minamoto Hitotsuna. This symbolically "adopts" me into the Minamoto family of samurai, one of the main warrior houses from the classic period of Japan. Since my first undergraduate degree was in Japanese literature, this was an interesting and curious piece of tradition for me.

There was of course, more that I wanted to do in terms of creative projects, but orthoscopic knee surgery in early January, 2011, hampered me from further activities. I spent a good month doing therapy three to four times a week for a month, and then weekly thereafter. My knee still continues to keep me from doing as much as I want to do, although I did recover full strength back and the ability to use my leg in general, everyday activities.

3. Building up my own core competence in the field of digital art to keep up with new technologies and innovations

I had hoped to attend some workshops in early spring but finances and the knee surgery precluded travel at that time. The Photoshop World spring workshops were being held in Orlando, Florida and I decided that the long plane ride would have aggravated my knee. I do intend to attend the spring Photoshop World in spring 2012 in Washington, D.C., or at the latest, in 2013.

In lieu of attending the workshops, I worked on my photographic projects and read relevant technical manuals and digital photography books, kicked around the software and pushed and pulled at the image editing technologies. What I learned was refined and added to my Art 107D, Art 207D, Art 113D and Art 112 classes that I am currently teaching. I refined my knowledge of panoramic stitching and HDR (High Dynamic Range) photography using Photoshop. I figured out grayscale color mixing in Lightroom from rudimentary, preliminary tutorials only now appearing in magazines. I upgraded my web design and creation skills by actually producing a web site. I learned about online blogging by developing and maintaining a blog page. For me, a lot of learning happens by doing, especially because textbooks and manuals for digital production lag a bit behind the emerging technologies.

This method of self-education probably came about when I first was learning how to use computers “on the job” in the mid-1980s. When one of the first Macintoshes came out with a visual interface and PageMaker software, there was no one to really teach us working professionals how to convert from the old typesetting machines to digital technology. A rep from Apple and the computer store came by, tried to help us with setting up the connection between the Macintoshes and the new typesetting machines, and left us alone with this scant information. From there, it was up to us to push, prod and pull the system into a kind of uniform workflow. After a couple of frustrating months, we had it up and running, and then became a test bed for prototyping and testing other Apple bilingual page layout programs. Again, it was a matter of the vendors telling us, “here it is, you guys figure out what you can do with it, and we’ll try to fix the glitches as you find them.”

In many ways, in order to stay ahead of the curve, many of us digital creatives still have to push and prod the software to see how far we can take it. The difference is that nowadays, we have a wider shared learning community. We have the Internet. We have up-to-date online sites and magazines, but in the end, a lot of the learning is still “hands on,” albeit with better support from more written sources.

As I continue to teach, I find that the best way for students to learn digital art is by this “hands on” approach. We work through a tutorial together, they do a project themselves, they learn, and then we move on and apply more techniques, gradually accumulating skills, creativity and technical innovation.

One student this semester commented that my projects “are made for student success,” as long as the student goes through the tutorial and then is personally creative in their own projects. I like to think that my own development as an artist and educator has influence me in the way that I teach, and therefore, in the way that I have managed to learn myself during the sabbatical.

Conclusions

While I wanted to do more (such as rewriting my Art 112 lessons), I feel gratified that I had done a near-complete rewrite of my Art 107D lessons. It was in the most need of rewriting. And while I wanted to do rewrites of other class lessons, I find that having redone Art 107D, I can now focus on tweaking the other class lessons weekly, since the necessity of rewriting Art 107D lessons this semester has been largely relieved. So I am currently doing minor edits of my Art 107D lessons while doing larger rewrites of my Art 112, Art 113D and Art 207D lessons.

Therefore, I feel that the sabbatical was instrumental in not only allowing me time to rewrite Art 107D’s lessons, but it has also impacted on the upgrading the quality of the other class’ tutorials this semester.

I still hope to one day turn the Art 107D handouts into a single-book/manuscript format, but I think it needs perhaps one or two more semesters’ worth of refining and editing, along with Don Oberheu’s input as a different teacher in a different classroom environment.

I had overly ambitious hopes for my own personal endeavors, but I did manage to get started on my documentary project, did some of my own photography work, and started a web site, a blog and got back into creative writing again. Part of the problem in terms of time to do so many projects was the knee surgery. It took up not just physical rehab time, but also sheer time in recuperating, rearranging my schedule and adjusting to moving a bit slower for a couple of months.

My own learning regime was fruitful, but I still want to attend a Photoshop World conference in 2012 or 2013 to obtain the most up-to-date techniques and processes currently being developed.

Appendix 1: Art 107D Rewritten Tutorial Sample Pages

The following are sample pages taken from the PDF handout for Chapter 16, a tutorial on special Lightroom “fixes” for portrait photography. For brevity, I am not including the whole lesson. I rewrote the process as I improved my own understanding of the technical application, and also redid the page layout to make it appear more appealing, converted the sample images to color since I didn’t need to worry about it appearing in black-and-white Xeroxes, made the images bigger since I didn’t have to worry about saving on paper, and basically made the lessons more visually understandable and easier to read. I thought turning the handouts dealing specifically with the Lightroom image editing program would be differentiated by making those particular chapters look like pages of folder paper, hence the blue ruled lines and “holes” for a three-ring binder.

16

Lightroom 5

Brushes, local fixes, and so on...

Lightroom: more stuff...
1. Brushes
2. Special effects
3. etc., etc..!

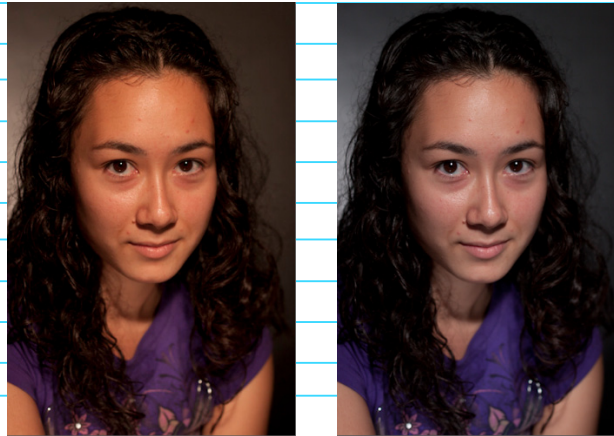


Top left: Ashley Vendetta, Top right: Jamie Lee, Bottom left: Ralph Acidera, Bottom right: Jesse Davis.



There's a lot to learn in Lightroom, but we are going to wrap up most of the basics in this chapter, leaving some of the finer points for a later class. When you are working on your self-portrait, there are a number of LR "tricks" and special effects that you can use to add more "zing" to your image. It's not necessary to use any of these effects, but you may find that they could be helpful in getting the mood and feel that you are striving for. In addition, some of these "tricks" will be really helpful in your future projects and photo shoots. This is how you should work on your self-portraits.

So let's look at this photo I took of a student, Wendy Thompson.

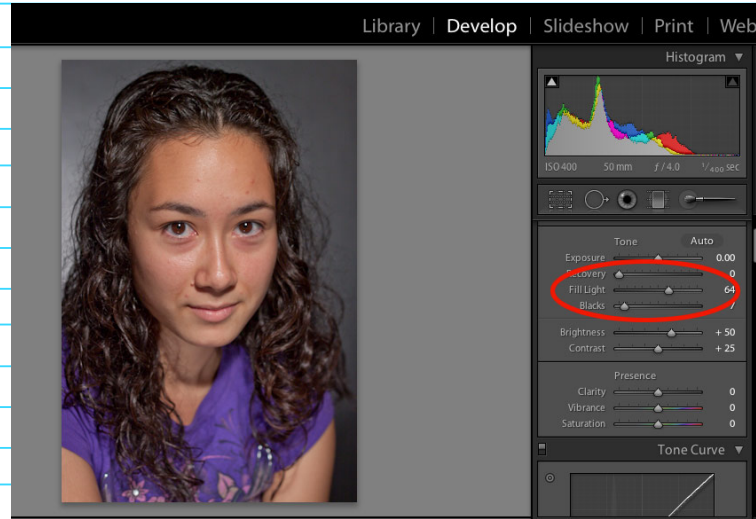


First you should do general "global" fixes. That means adjusting the entire image in terms of cropping, color balance, and tonality.

The photo looks pretty good, compositionally, but when I tried the **White Color Balance Selector** on the gray background, I immediately realized that the image was much too "warm." The original image on the left looks like she has a major case of sunburn, while the color-balanced image on the right looks much more "real" in terms of her actual skin tone.

Then I tried to adjust the tonality of the image, trying to bring out more of the darks, while holding back the lights from "blowing out." So that means I did a lot of work with the Fill Light slider. When I did that, the details in her dark hair stand out more, even though I didn't blow out the light tones of her skin.

I also bumped up the Clarity and Saturation ever so slightly. I don't want to do too much, though, because this feels like a "subdued," quiet kind of image.



What I notice, though, is that Wendy has really nice skin tones overall, but she does have some blemishes here and there.

There's a fix for that. I really recommend you do this to your own self-portrait, especially if you have skin blemishes. Don't overdo it and make it look "fakey," but do just enough fixes so that you can get rid of those blemishes. After all, if you are love with someone, you don't pay attention to those pesky little minor blemishes. You love what's inside the person, right? The problem is that when you look at a photo, you can't avoid seeing those blemishes. The camera doesn't know "love." It only sees what it sees. And it gets in the way of seeing the "inner beauty" of someone. So that's my reasoning for using these technique. At the top of the Develop Panel, just below the Histogram, is a row of icons. You know what the Crop Tool does. We're going to look at two other tools which enable "local" fixes.

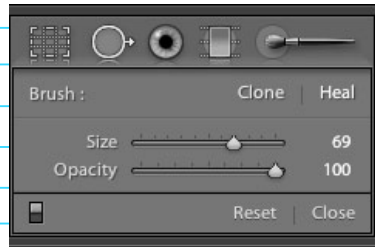
Always work from global to local. That is, work from major changes to the entire image to local changes that affect only a small part of the image.

The Spot Removal Tool



The Spot Removal Tool looks like the symbol for "Male." It is a circle with an arrow on the right side. This tool is used to remove dust marks, spots, etc. from a scanned image, and it is very, very handy to

remove blemishes and minor skin imperfections from faces. Here's how it works. What it does is take a portion of an area that is free of spots or blemishes, and it "grafts" it over an area you want to cover.



1. When you click on the icon, its controls appear below it. You first have to choose what style of Brush you are going to use, a Clone Brush or Healing Brush. The difference is this: a Clone Brush will simply take one part of the image, such as a clean, blemish-free part of a cheek, and stick it right on another section. This looks somewhat fakey, though, if the tonality and color of one part of the skin is different from the part you want to cover. It will look like patches. But it really does cover up some major problems. The Healing Brush Tool tries to blend the two parts together to create a blended, softer type of fix. What you have to do is try both and see which one works best. My own inclination is to choose the Healing Brush first. You play with the Size Slider to change the size of the effect, and the Opacity Slider to make the cover-up more or less transparent.



2. I zoom in on the image so I can really see the blemishes, and I work my way from top to bottom. The first thing I notice are some blemishes on Wendy's forehead. So I set the Spot Removal Brush to Heal, make the brush only



slightly bigger than the first blemish spot, and I place the cursor circle (the brush) on top of the first blemish. I hold down the mouse clicker and pull the arrow to extend it out to a clear area that I will use to heal the blemish. So here's the before and after shots of one area that I healed:

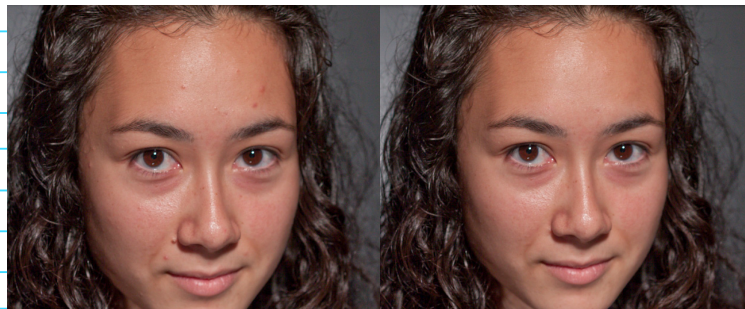


On the left you can see the big bump of a blemish, and on the right I have the blemish removed. That's almost like using really good makeup, in a way.



3. I continue to use the Spot Removal Tool to work on the rest of the face, working downwards. Now, the face may look like it's full of circles, but when I click on the Spot Removal Tool again to work on something else the Spot Removal Panel closes up and the circles disappear, giving us a view of what the photo looks like. You can always go back to this tool later on if you need to do more fixes. When I compare the before and after of Wendy, it looks MUCH better. Now, you have to realize, Wendy's a really beautiful lady in person, but the digital camera and harsh lights will bring out all the minor imperfections. So this really helps to bring out the beauty of Wendy.

The photo on the left is the Before version, and the photo on the right is the After version. The photo on the right is more like the Wendy I know.



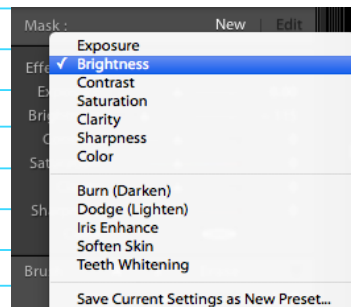
The Adjustment Brush Tool

There is another problem I noticed when working on Wendy's face, and it's a problem you'll face when working with women's faces in general. The digital camera will highlight contrasts, especially in strong light. That may be okay to give a tough, rugged, chiseled look for guys, but for women, you usually want a softer, gentler look. You could blur the image out a bit, but then it would just look like a blurry image; a mistake. So we are going to just soften the skin area, leaving the sharpness of the rest of the image alone. This is done with the Adjustment Brush Tool.

By the way, you should notice that the Adjustment Brush Tool can do a number of adjustments to a specific area. That's how you can make one area of an image in grayscale and another in saturated color, for example. You just brush on a "desaturated" effect on certain areas. This is the Adjustment Brush:



1. Click on it and its Menu will appear below it. You "brush" on the effect you want like your mouse is a brush, creating an effect only on the "local" area that you brushed. You have a range of effects you can choose from. **If you click on the button to the right of the word "Effect," you get a list of possibilities:**



2. To soften skin...you choose "Soften Skin"!!!

3. Then adjust the Brush's size so it is easy to handle (don't try to do the whole face at one time!!!!). You only want to soften the wide areas of skin, and



the problem areas like bags under the eyes, etc. You don't want to soften areas that are SUPPOSED to look sharp and in focus, like the edge of the nose, the eyebrows, the eyes, the hair, etc., so adjust your brush size accordingly and "brush" on the effect.

The effect is cumulative, i.e., it adds up, so if it's not soft enough, you can go over the area again and again until it softens up just right. But don't over do it. The trick is to make it look "natural."

After I finished softening the skin, I actually lowered the Saturation on the whole image to lesson the redness in parts of Wendy's face and to make the colors less strong. Now I see a really big difference, don't you think?

