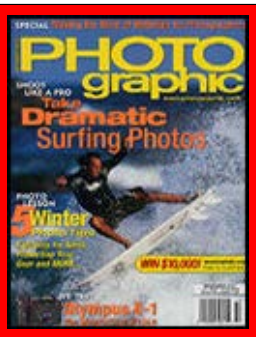

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From the Archives

Wright Design 2.1

Jack and Sue Drafahl, May, 2001

Underprocessed image with correction to photographic curve via gamma control in Wright Design. Notice how new points have been placed on the curve allowing it to bend the midtone data to a brighter range.

Fractal images created with Wright Design and third-party plug-in filters from KPT5.

Versatile and easy-to-use image-editing software

As the digital world races through 2001, photo-editing software programs continue to be key members of the digital darkroom. New output devices keep surfacing faster than you can buy them, but they are lost without the editing software.

Most of photos need some kind of modification of exposure, color balance, sharpness, dust and scratch removal, gamma changes, cropping and dozens of other efforts to achieve image perfection.

Wright Technologies has actively been involved in software development since 1985 and their mission is "To fundamentally change the way people visually communicate." They offer "All in One" creative design software products to satisfy all levels of photographers, Web designers, graphic designers and publishers. Their goal is to provide an easy method for people to create, view, enhance and share high-resolution digital photos.

Wright Design 2.1 is a photo-editing program designed for photographers who want to take edited photos one step further and create composite images for illustration, advertising, and promotion. This program includes all the standard photo-editing tools, plus the ability to mix both bitmap and vector graphics in the same image.

At the heart of the program is the Real Pixel Technology that allows photographers to manipulate large images in real time. It provides high-speed viewing of images across the Internet and best of all, each application is object orientated. Every

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Left: stock image of painted wooden face. Right: edge-effects filter is used on entire image.

Underexposed color slide with correction to brightness and contrast.

vector, raster, image or text is treated as an object, capable of containing indefinite layers.

Wright Design 2.1 has its own way of doing things, so it might require you use the help functions or the manual at first. We were so used to Adobe Photoshop and Corel Painter that it took a bit for us to get accustomed to the location of the various editing controls.

When you first start Wright Design, you will notice the absence of the many editing menus you are accustomed to seeing. The floating toolbox is replaced by tool strips that run along the top of the screen, several pulldown menus, and function keys from 1-9. Pressing any of these function keys will activate the desired menu and pressing it again will make it go away. We found this system to be a very fast and efficient use of screen space. The three PDF tutorial files were very helpful in educating us where everything was located, so we were quickly on our way to editing some images.

One of the first things we try when editing a new image is color-balance adjustment. Wright Design has a color-balance menu under the "Objects" pulldown called "Color Selections" that displays a color ring-around as well as variables for exposure correction. You can set the menu for fine or coarse corrections depending on how much adjustment is needed. If your image lacks detail in the shadows, or has a color shift in one part of the curve, then select the "Color Curve" menu under the "Image" pulldown menu. With this editor you can bend each color curve individually and see the results immediately displayed on the screen. If you just need to correct for contrast or exposure, a smaller brightness and contrast menu is also located under the "Image" pulldown menu for quick visual adjustments.

Moving on to our favorite editing function, the clone tool, we see that

Wright Design's is very easy to use. Simply set the copy point with the Alt key plus the left mouse button, and you are quickly ready to remove scratches or repair other image defects. Wright Design's cloning tool lets you repeat elements and easily touch up mistakes.

Another of our favorite tools is the object selection. We use this tool to select an object and paste it on a new background to form composite images. At first we had trouble locating this tool, but finally located it in the vector and bitmap selection tools at the top of the screen. Besides this tool, you can also select a variety of basic shapes, Bezier or straight curves. If you do decide to work with Bezier curves, an additional button allows you to select a specific object and bend the curves to better fit the shape you desire.

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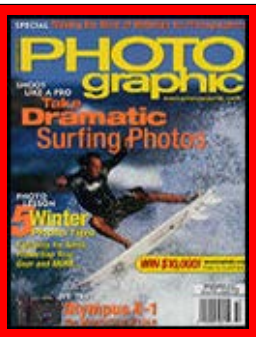

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Four images on left are layered onto single image on right using the many advanced layering features of Wright Design.

Images can be color balanced with the Color Selections menu. A color ring-around menu is to the left, and a brightness menu is to the right.

Another strip of tools along the top of the screen allows you to rotate, shear, add perspective, scale, and mirror the image. To the right of these buttons you will have numerical access where you can enter exact values for any correction. You can also access most of the image-editing controls by simply pressing the F2 function key. The paint style menu appears and includes the gamma control, brightness & contrast, hue & saturation, filter effects, tint adjustment, and gradient fill controls. Looks like you have it all by just the touch of a finger!

Since most image editing is done at a zoom-in level, you must pan the image as you edit. When you reach the edge of the screen and need to move to the next section, simply press the space bar and it automatically moves you to the next section. You don't have to tell it which direction to go, as it will always heads in the direction you are editing. This program always seems to be one step ahead of you!

If you want to try your hand at some creative effects, you can go to the "Image" pulldown menu and select the "Filter" menu. The filter list is short but does include some of the more common filters such as blur, sharpen, emboss, noise, and edge filters. Each filter then has more than a dozen other controls that expand your possible variations to hundreds of effects.

If you like some of the more complex third-party Photoshop plug-in filters, you can install them into the Wright Design directory, or set the preferences so they can be located. We tried KPT3, KPT5, KPT6, and Eye Candy filters and found that most of them worked very well with Wright Design. Many of these filters provide expanded editing capabilities that make Wright Design even more versatile.

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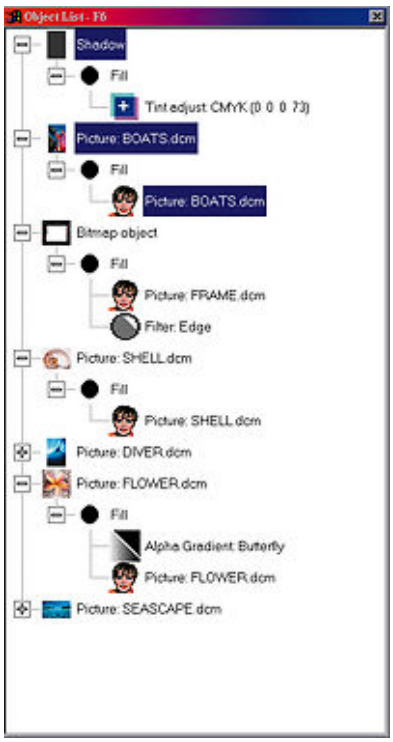
eDIGITALPHOTO

Stock image imported into Wright Design and altered with third-party plug-in filter from KPT6.

Stock image imported into Wright Design and altered with third-party plug-in filter from KPT6.



Menu showing how you can access and view the separate layers in a composite image.

If you want to add text to the image, select the text icon from the top tool box which creates text directly on the screen. You can add drop shadows, columns, bend to curves, graduate the fill colors, and convert to a vector or bitmap shape. The text can be ungrouped so that you can add effects to each individual letter.

Wright Design works in RGB, CMYK, grayscale, HSB, and Pantone color palettes. The program works with all the standard file formats including TIFF, JPEG, Targa, Photoshop PSD, PostScript EPS and Kodak Photo PCD. Alpha channels are accessed through the "Paint Style" menu with the F2 function control. The "Layers" menu is displayed when you press the F6 function key and will show each object and all the associated effects.

If that weren't enough, Wright Design 2.1 offers right mouse click functions just about everywhere, unlimited number of undos, text objects that can be scaled, rotated or skewed, and gamma control. It is very frugal with RAM and hard-disk memory and its object-based technology means any part can be individually changed any time. Whew! So how can you beat it for only $99? Currently it's available for Windows 95, 98, 2000 and NT. (Cross-platform versions are in the works.)

But wait....there's more. Wright Technologies recognizes the fact that there are different levels of digital photographic expertise and need, and offers two other solutions for your editing needs. If you want an entry-level version of Wright Design at a lower cost, give Wright Photo a try at $29. It offers fewer features, but still offers the ability to do most of the basic image editing.

Wright Design Professional offers features you never knew you needed. It

is designed for the professional image editor and illustration designer. Design Professional features multi-page layout that combines bitmaps, vectors and text all as editable objects. Designed for speed and performance, Wright Design Professional delivers a state of the art creation solution for only $199. For more information on any of the three programs, log on the Web at www.wrightna.com.

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