

Put photorealistic drawing tools at your command



XaraTM Xtreme 5

The Official Guide



Bonus Chapter

Photographic Retouching

This is a bonus chapter from the book *Xara Xtreme 5: The Official Guide* by Gary David Bouton
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Gary David Bouton

Bonus Chapter

Photographic Retouching

Believe it or not (and this chapter will prove it), not only can you perform minor photographic image corrections with Xara Xtreme, but you can also perform *significant* image edits, using both vector shapes and copies of bitmap images. Because all photo retouching has to eventually result in a bitmap image, shapes you draw in Xara are converted to bitmap format when you export a design to JPEG, PSD, or a host of other formats Xara offers. Additionally, Xara features Live Effects, bevel edge shapes, soft shadows, transparency—all these embellishments meld to an underlying photo so any edits are undetectable. You'll find that the precision with which Xara can add a shape that's smaller than a photo's pixels makes your work go like a charm. This chapter takes you through removing an object from a photo, stitching a series of photos into a panorama (have an 11-inch by 14-foot picture frame handy), and in general, performing work that will go unnoticed in a photograph. Your *talents* will definitely be noticed, however.

Removing a Mistake in a Photograph

One of the most difficult challenges facing a digital retouching professional is taking something out of a photograph. You or your client don't want anything grafted in to hide the unwanted object, and therefore you're obliged to get resourceful and scout in the scene for clues that tell you what *would* be in the space if the object weren't there. The following sections lead you through a little detective work, a reasonable approach to the assignment (using Xara's feature set), and the steps to follow to replace a foreground object with extensions of the photo's background content.



Download and extract the contents of Chapter14.zip, which contains everything you need to work through this chapter's tutorial steps. Put the files in a new folder you create, and put the folder in a location that you can easily access from within Xara (such as the Desktop). Name the file something easy to remember, such as your pet, your high school, or your mother's maiden name.

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Bottle's gone.xar is the completed tutorial file for your examination after you work through the steps.

Reconstructing a Scene's Ground Plane

Figure 1 shows the photo you'll be retouching: A stagehand spoiled a lovely tabletop scene by leaving his migraine medicine smack in the center of the photo. Let's assess the damage to be repaired first, beginning with the immediate pill bottle's surroundings:

- The white cutting board needs to be restored, except it's not pure white; it has diffuse lighting falloff from the lamp.
- The wire basket of oranges is partially obscured by the bottle. This is a tough one because the wire is a complex geometry and the oranges have a noticeable texture and not a solid fill like the orange swatch on the Color Line.
- The second wooden cutting board is barely visible, but it has visual complexity that needs to be replicated.
- A little bit of the tabletop Formica is hidden by the pill bottle.

Let's tackle the restoration of the white cutting board first.

1. Create a new portrait orientation page. Press CTRL-ALT-I and then locate the Remove the bottle.png file on your hard disk to import the photo. The photo is fairly high-resolution. Resize the image until its dimensions are 6" wide by 7 1/3" high.
2. Open the Object gallery, lock the current layer so the photo doesn't accidentally move, and then click the New button so you have a new layer on which to add shapes to hide the bottle. If necessary, click the bottom layer title to make the New button available.
3. Choose the Pen Tool, best for quickly creating straight-line shapes. Click a point at the upper-right corner of the cutting board and then click a second control point below the bottle but at the right edge of the board. Click a third point at lower left and a fourth point at the top edge of the board (to the left of the bottle). Then close the shape at the beginning point with a single click.

FIGURE 1 Kids, don't mix drugs with professional design work.

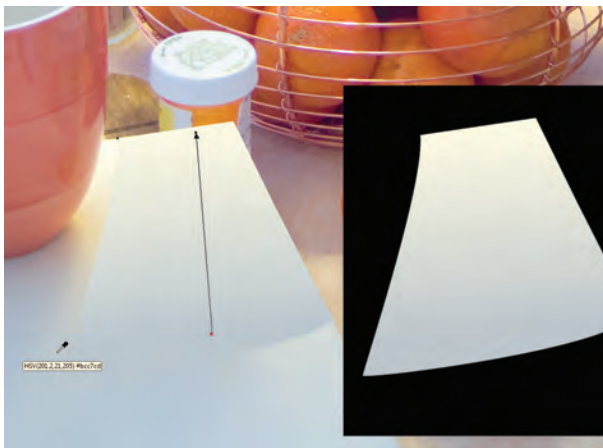


Not in keeping with rest of the scene!

4. If necessary, choose the Shape Editor Tool with this shape still selected and drag the bottom edge a little to make the line a curve. The idea here is to *over-retouch* a little, extending your work into areas that don't really need it, just to keep a smoothness to your retouching shapes.
5. Choose the Fill Tool, and then drag almost perfectly vertically from the top of the shape to the bottom. The lighting falloff on the cutting board looks linear, so the default linear gradient you've applied is appropriate. Now let's change the colors in the gradient to match the photo.
6. Click the top gradient point with the Fill Tool to highlight and select it, and then drag the Color Picker from left of the Color Line into the page—don't release the mouse button. While holding the mouse button, move around a photo area that you see is the ideal color for the top of the replacement shape. Make sure the outline for the shape is set to No Color. A quick way to do this—is with the line selected—choose None from the Set Line Width drop-down box on the Standard Bar.



The Color Picker samples the exact pixel color under it. It does not sample an *average* color from an area in the document. Therefore, when matching photo colors, you either move the cursor around a little until you've visually matched a color, or you come real close and then use the Color Editor to refine the color match by dragging in the Color field and using the Hue slider in HSV mode. Digital photos often contain a little noise, modulating exact colors from pixel to pixel; as a consequence, a little work is necessary to visually match the color of a shape to its underlying photo equivalent.



7. Perform step 6 with the bottom (end) gradient point, matching the color of the cutting board at left to the end of the gradient. Don't worry that the right side of the gradient doesn't match the color of the board at its right side. You're not finished yet.

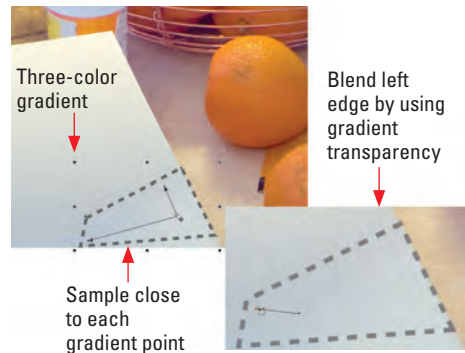
As with traditional oil painting, the process of removing something from a photo uses a build-up technique; you *layer* two or more objects until you visually arrive at

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a seamless integration of photo and vector shapes. You have Xara's Feathering and Transparency features to help you blend shapes. Let's add a second shape to even out the light falloff on the cutting board.

1. Press **ESC** to deselect all objects. With the Pen Tool, click four points to create a shape that covers the bottom edge of the shape you added in the previous steps, with its right edge matching the edge of the photo's cutting board. Peek ahead to the illustration here for reference.
2. Choose the Fill Tool, and then with the shape selected, choose the Three Color Fill type from the drop-down list on the Infobar. Choose Simple from the Fill Tiling drop-down and choose Not Repeating.
3. Drag the bottom fill control point to the lower-right corner of the shape to position it, and then choose the Color Picker and drag over the photo color to match this area. You can see that this shape you created has different corresponding colors at three of its edges, so a three-color fill suits the bill.
4. Hold **SHIFT** and then drag on the left-facing fill control point; doing this breaks the default configuration of the Three Color Fill type and you can now freely move the control handles any way you like. Drag this control handle to the left edge of the shape, where it meets the photo. Use the Color Picker to fill this control handle with the corresponding photo color.
5. Repeat step 4 with the top control handle. If you want to reposition it, remember to hold **SHIFT** while dragging.

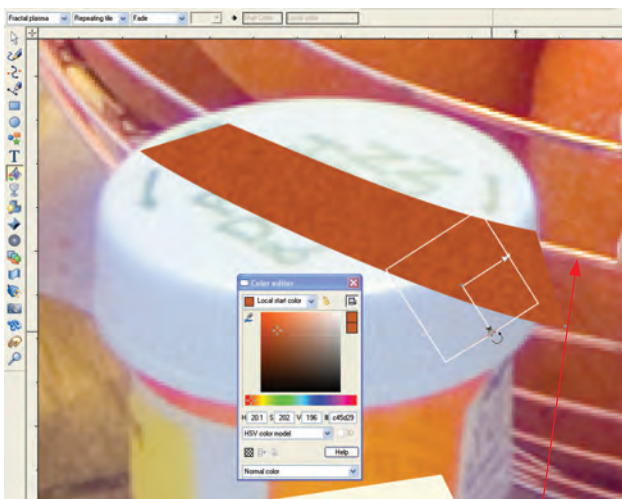
6. You're 90% of where you want to go now—the left edge is slightly visible; this calls for the use of transparency to blend the edge away. Choose the Transparency Tool, and begin a drag to set 100% opaque about one-third from the left of the shape, dragging up and to the left to end the opacity just inside the shape. Move the transparency points for this linear type of transparency to achieve invisible mending.



Working Back to Front on the Basket

Restoring some of the wire and the oranges is the next step; you're working back-to-front to ensure that there are no gaps in your retouching work and that the work is smooth. Therefore, restoring some of the oranges is first, and then the wire repair work will go on top—so you can overshoot the oranges areas a little, and the wire drawings you'll create will hide edges.

1. Zoom into the area where the cap of the bottle hides the wire basket and oranges. Begin by creating a shape that approximates one of the missing areas over an orange; consider drawing a curved strip shape that fits between the wires of the basket. You can break the shape up later and recolor it to suggest the individual oranges. The Shape Editor Tool is a good drawing tool for this step because it produces smooth curves.
2. Choose the Fill Tool, and then choose Fractal Plasma from the Fill Type drop-down list. At very small scale, Fractal Plasma looks like the bumpy surface of an orange and replicates digital photography noise.
3. First, click the center control point for the fill. Its default color is white and it needs to be one of the lighter shades of orange in the orange photo, so the darker color suggests the bumps on the photo of the orange. Drag the Color Picker over to a lighter area of one of the neighboring oranges, and then click one of the outer fill handles. Drag the Color Picker over to a darker area of the photo oranges.



Sample shades from neighboring image area

4. You might want to adjust both fill colors for the fractal manually by using the Color Editor. Once the fill color is compatible with the photographic oranges, drag one of the outer fill handles toward the center of the shape to scale the fractal pattern until it looks to be the same size as the bumps on the photo oranges. Drag up or down to rotate the fill; use your artistic eye to simulate an orange texture here.

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Mix up the color values as you replace the missing areas in the oranges. You can actually create a shape of one or two of the oranges and then slightly alter the color values by using the Color Picker in combination with fine-tuning the colors in the Color Editor. Also consider the same technique used earlier for blending a shape into the cutting board—blend your fake orange into a real one with the Transparency Tool in Gradient Type. You create a shape that's slightly larger, and then fade the shape into the existing area. Once you've made enough orange fractal fills in shapes to cover the pill bottle top, you add the missing basket wires:

1. With the Shape Editor Tool, first click the Make Curve button on the Infobar so you're drawing smooth curves. Then click the Smooth Join button because you're going to draw the wires as smooth arcs, using two control end points along the path.
2. Click a little to the right of the edge where one of the five or six wires is hidden by the bottle cap; click a second point to end the curve a little to the left of where one wire is hidden. SHIFT-click to end the line, but keep the line selected. Drag control points and handles to refine the curve as necessary.
3. Set the line width to 1.3 pixels by typing this value into the Set Line Width box on the Standard Bar (then press ENTER). It's simply the correct width and was defined through trial and error. Often, pixels in a photo correspond to a fractional value when you're working with vectors.
4. SHIFT-click on the Color Editor icon to the left of the Color Line—this brings up the Color Editor all set to define line color, not fill color.
5. Drag the Color Picker from the Color Editor to a position over the corresponding wire in the photo. Keep the Color Editor open.
6. Notice that there is shading on some of the basket wires; they're darker at the bottom than on top. Big Trick Time: Because the wires are only a few pixels wide, the finished exported image won't show any trickery if you simply duplicate the wire you just drew, put it behind the original, nudge it down by 1 pixel, and recolor it the darker color of the photograph wire. This trick works because when you export the finished piece to bitmap file format, Xara Xtreme's anti-aliasing feature goes to work—one pixel (plus a fraction) in height will resolve

in the finished bitmap as a smooth, continuous part of the photograph. Press **CTRL-SHIFT-O**; on the General tab, set the “Nudge size” to 1pix and then click OK to close the box.

7. With the wire selected, press **CTRL-K** to duplicate it. Press **CTRL-SHIFT-B** to put the duplicate one level back in the stack of shapes on this layer. Press the **DOWN ARROW** key to nudge down 1 pixel.
8. Drag the Color Picker from the Color Editor to on top of the darker wire color.
9. That’s it for the technique. Repeat these steps to create the other replacements for the basket wires.

One or two of the wires cannot be reproduced this way because they arc toward the table lamp and change color from left to right. Not a problem: You can create the wire curve with the Shape Editor, go to **Arrange | Convert Line To Shape** to convert the line to an editable shape, and then apply a Linear Fill type to the shape. Open the Color Editor to control the colors on the gradient line by clicking on the top drop-down list in the Color Editor. Choose the Local Start color or Local End color from the options, and then use the Color Picker to sample the appropriate colors for each. The Local Line color in this situation should be set to None to avoid an outline around the new shape.

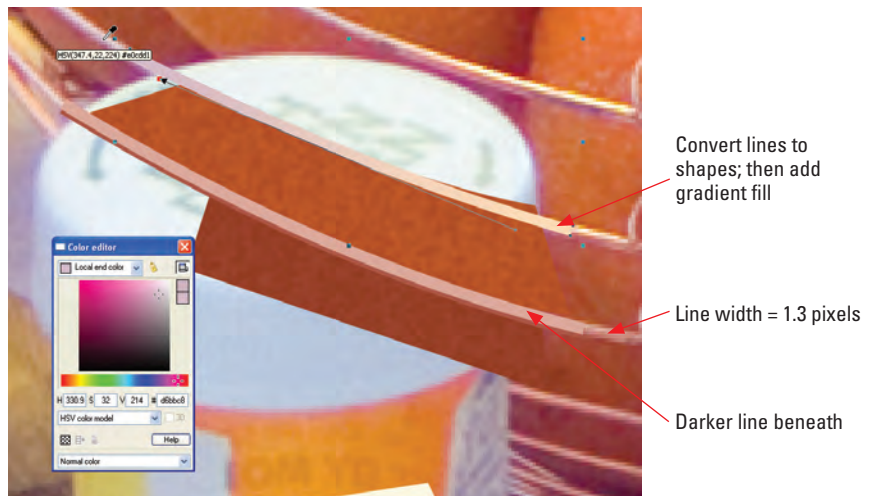
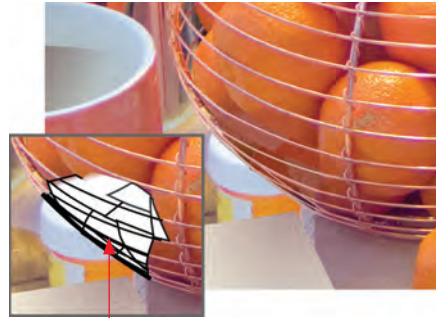


Figure 2 shows both the reconstituted oranges and, at left, the shapes used to fill in the hidden areas. Notice the transparency gradients.

Filling In the Photographic Gaps

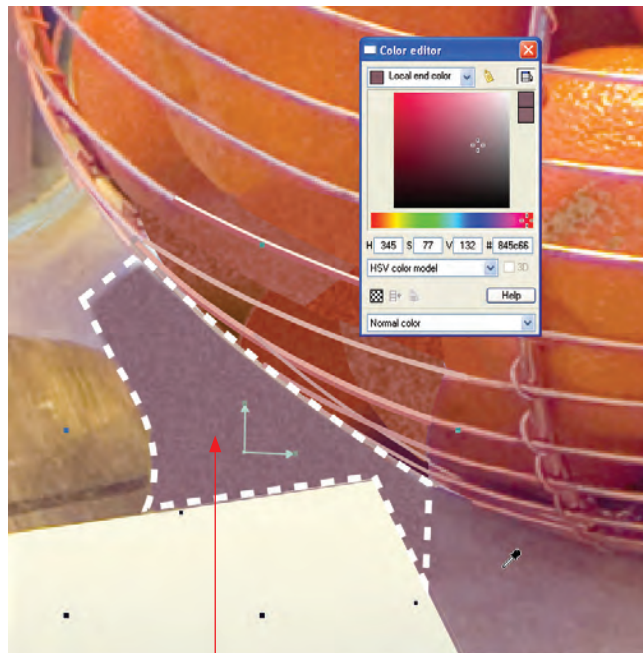
A few minor yet noticeable areas still need to be restored. The oranges are casting a soft, slightly noisy (diffuse, as when light scatters on a rough surface) shading on the countertop, and the wooden cutting board is missing an edge. Let's knock these areas off with some more fractal fills, an almost universal fix for photographs. Your success depends only on how you structure the fractal.



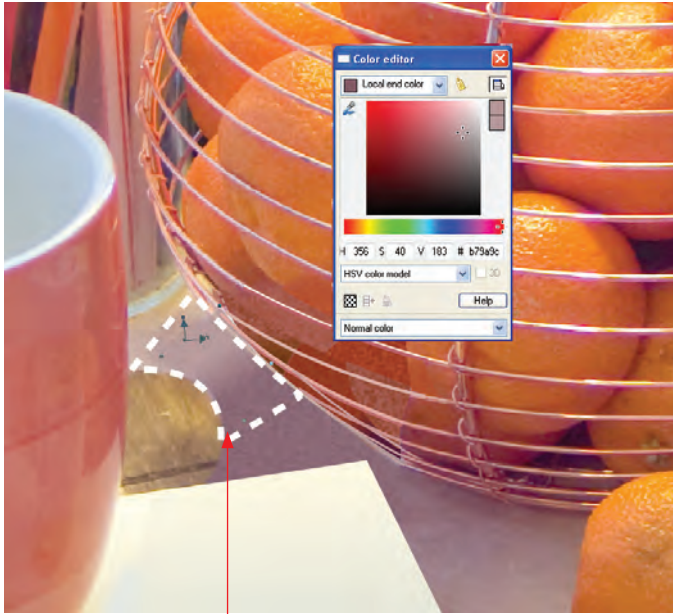
Apply linear transparency for blending

1. Create a shape over the pill bottle, between the bottom of the orange basket and the white cutting board.
2. With the shape selected, choose the Fill Tool, and then set the type to Fractal Plasma. Set the center and outer colors to match the neighboring photo areas, exactly as you did when retouching the oranges.
3. Drag one of the outer fill control handles away from the center of the shape until the grain look of the fill matches the grain you see in the photo. Then drag up or down to rotate the fill until it looks compatible with the shading on the countertop. Press CTRL-C to copy the shape. You won't paste the shape but instead will paste its properties in a moment.
4. Above this shape is the only remaining piece of the bottle cap. It's a shade lighter than the piece you just created. First, create the shape piece for the lighter fractal fill.
5. With the shape selected, press CTRL-SHIFT-A to paste the properties of the shape you copied to the Clipboard in step 3. With the Color Editor,

FIGURE 2 Use gradients to keep colors in motion in your retouching, exactly as you see them in photography.



Fractal plasma



Feathered Fractal Plasma shape with Linear Transparency

click the fill handles one at a time, and lighten the overall color of the shape. Because you pasted the previous shape's properties, the grain looks the same, and the colors are very similar, so editing the colors will only take a moment or two. Add Linear Transparency to help blend the two shapes as you did in the previous exercise for the cutting board.

6. Drag the Feather slider on the Standard Bar to about 1 pixel. As with a gradient transparency, feathering shapes helps blend them with photo areas and other shapes.

Adding Shade Where It's Expected

You're almost home. What is missing from this perfectly retouched photo is something that the bottle hid yet is not immediately obvious: the basket should be casting a shadow on the white cutting board—specifically a very soft, circular shadow. Here's how to finish the piece:

1. Create a shape (the Pen Tool is good here) that covers the top right edge of the white cutting board and then scoops at the bottom, more or less like a fat pie wedge.
2. Select the top piece you replaced the top of the counter with and copy it (CTRL-C).
3. Select the shape you created in step 1, and then press CTRL-SHIFT-A to paste the Fractal Plasma properties and its colors to the new shape. Adjust the colors of the fractal's center and outer points if necessary, by sampling colors from existing areas.

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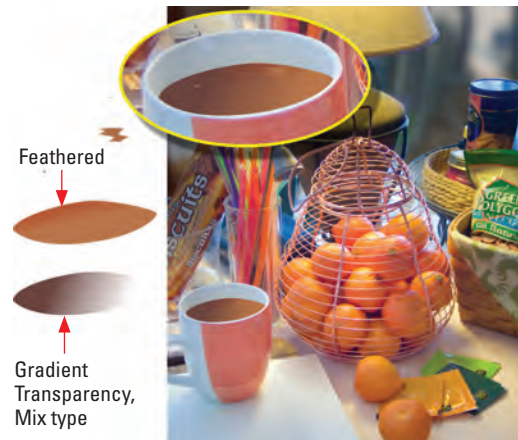
4. Choose the Transparency Tool, and set the Transparency Shape to Circular in the drop-down list on the Infobar.
5. You may need to click the center point and set the transparency to 0%, using the slider on the Infobar.
6. Click the outer transparency handle. It should be set to 100%; drag the Infobar slider if it isn't. The 100% transparency areas should blend invisibly into the white cutting board.



Well done—in fact, that migraine is gone completely! One of the lessons here is that if you look at the colors used in this assignment, they are *duller* than you'd imagine and the hues aren't exactly what you'd expect. This is one of the wonders of using a Color Picker extensively in photo retouching. You shouldn't trust your eyes to match colors; your brain is too easily influenced by stimulating colors. Happily, the Color Picker doesn't have a brain.

Do take a look at Bottle's gone.xar, the finished example. In Figure 3, we move into *outrageous* photo retouching and actually put a hot beverage in the empty mug on the cutting board. This sort of stuff “plays” with the audience because there is very little visual detail in liquids (the *glass* that holds the liquids has much detail, however). Additionally, the audience *anticipates* some liquid in the mug—so its artificial appearance is not easily noticed, and it's not the focal point of the photo.

FIGURE 3 With the investment of a little time, you can use Xara's features to make significant changes to bitmap images.



Create a Panorama

Panoramic images—the sort you might have seen spanning a wall at a restaurant—are lovely to look at, and basically a one- or two-click effort using either Xara or Magix Panorama Maker, a utility outside of Xara that you can launch from within Xara. The next sections take you through how to set up your photography and how to arrange the images in Xara's workspace.



The Magix Panorama Maker has one or two differences from the internal panorama-making engine in Xara. The Magix Panorama Maker is not limited to using six photographs in the composition as Xara is. Also, the Magix Panorama Maker can create 360-degree images a web audience can interactively view by dragging in a web-page window.

The Rules of Good Panorama-tography

The success with which you enjoy a wider-than-life view of a photographic scene depends mostly on your photographic skills; the Panorama Maker works fine but works even better if you keep the following in mind:

- Make your visual content interesting. Watch the lighting and watch that you have the proper focal distance.
- Use a tripod and overshoot. If you think you captured a panorama in five pictures, take five more. You won't get the same lighting and camera angle twice.
- Allow at minimum a 10% overlap in visual content and rotate the camera on the tripod. An overlap of 25% is better but not always feasible.
- Try not to pan up or down as you shoot from left to right. The Panorama Maker *crops* visual data that doesn't have any matches from frame to frame. You could, therefore, wind up with a panorama that's 4 feet wide and 6 inches high.

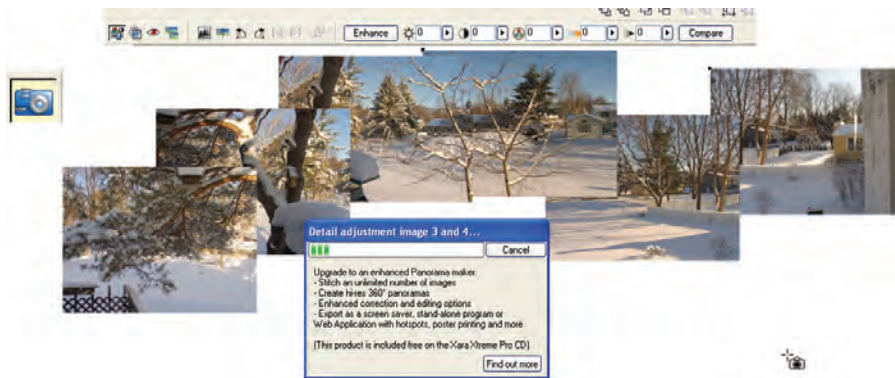
Creating a Panorama

If you have the images you downloaded or some of your own, time's a'wastin' and the following steps are not brainteasers. Follow along and see how quickly and professionally Xara stitches a sequence of stills into a super-widescreen wonder:

1. Press CTRL-ALT-I to import your photos. In the Import dialog box, either CTRL-click the photos in the folder you want in the panorama or use a marquee-select technique. Click OK and the images are imported, slightly offset so you can immediately see that you have imported all of them and then arrange them.
2. Roughly arrange the photos in sequence from left to right on the page. If you're running out of room on the page, press CTRL-A to select all; then in the Scale Width or Scale Height field on the Infobar, type **25** or some similar small value and then press ENTER to scale all the photos down. Xara does *not* change the photos' pixel count; the bitmaps are smaller in dimension size but much higher in resolution.

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3. Overlap the pictures to make it clear to Xara which calculations will be performed on the series. You don't have to be neat—Xara does the stitching correctly, but it needs to know which pictures should overlap one another.
4. With the photos selected, choose the Photo Tool on the Toolbar. Click the Create Panorama button and choose to let Xara do the stitching in the following dialog box. Then sit back for a moment or two as your pictures are processed. Click and move the resulting image away from the original photos to appreciate the final product.



Adjust Your Finished Panorama

When a bitmap is selected and you choose the Photo Tool, you can make a number of tonal and color corrections right from the InfoBar. Figure 4 shows a before-and-after with the example panorama photo; it's usually best to color-correct the finished photos instead of trying to correct each individual picture beforehand.

Using the InfoBar options of Brightness, Contrast, Saturation, and Color Temperature on your finished panorama is fairly intuitive (don't use Blur—it's an Effects adjustment). However, the most significant changes you can make to your picture come through the Levels dialog box. The corrected image at bottom used only the Levels box first, and then a few saturation and color temperature adjustments. Brightness level adjustment can produce such a dramatic improvement to photos that you should use it *first* and then work your way through the other sliders on the InfoBar (click the triangle button to reveal a slider for each adjustment).

In 24-bit images such as JPEGs, one way to evaluate the exposure is by addressing only the brightness, of which there are 256 levels from blackest blacks to whitest whites.

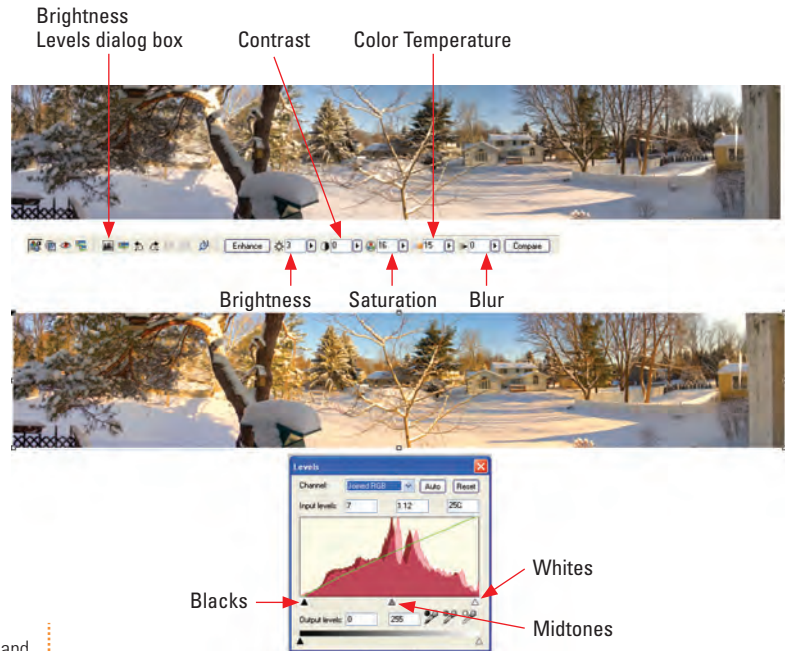


FIGURE 4 Perform brightness and color adjustments after you’ve built your panoramic photo.

The histogram at the top of the Levels box tells you how many pixels in the image lie in the darks at left, the midtones in the center, and the highlights at right. You can usually tell that a photo is awful by eyesight alone, but the histogram can tell which tonal areas the flaws are in. For example, there are a lot of pixels populating the upper midtones in the winter panorama—so many, in fact, that all this visual information is blocking up the details in this tone zone.

You correct the tones (which in turn can reveal blocked-in colors) by dragging the sliders left and right. Xara makes intelligent and smooth changes to the tones by redistributing the tone properties for all the pixels in the photo; this is more refined than a simple brightness and contrast adjustment. The photo at bottom shows more midtone detail, and the histogram shows the original tone distribution in light red and the *corrected* distribution in dark red.

To correct the brightness values in a photo try the following steps:

1. Begin with the midtone slider. The midtone range on a photo is where the most visual detail usually resides, such as facial tones in portraits. If this range looks too washed out, drag the Midtone slider to the left.

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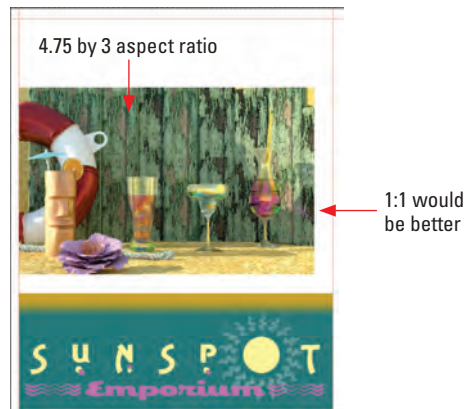
If midtone details appear blocked in—as does the original panorama—you drag the slider to the right.

2. Restore some of the blacks with the Black slider. You don't affect the midtones in a corrected photo significantly by dragging the Black slider to the right. It adjusts the lower tones the most visually and can restore some of the “heft” in a well-balanced photo, while maintaining much of the adjusted relationship between tones in the midrange.
3. Drag the White slider to the left to add a touch of crispness to the photo. Pure whites can become dull; what you're doing is telling Xara that the whites in the photo should be assigned to more image pixels and the previous white values redistributed at a lower point in the histogram.
4. Readjust your settings before closing the Levels box. A balance is always a tricky thing in retouching and exposure correction. When you change one range in Levels, you change the others, so you'll need to work back and forth between all three sliders before you're satisfied.

Once the photo is tonally balanced, you can better evaluate other changes you want to make. This winter panorama was stitched together from a clear December morning that displayed a nice bluish cast on the snow, at the price of making the warm browns of the trees look unappealing. But it was difficult to see this problem with areas tonally blocked in. On the Infobar, make a little Color Temperature adjustment toward warm colors (drag the slider to the right) and increase the saturation some to bring out colors subdued by the cold color cast. This finally makes an interesting picture even more interesting and professional.

Use Content-Aware Sizing

Suppose you took a fantastic photo for a catalog and you're all set to lay out the design in Xara (after reading Chapter 9 on Xara's text and desktop publishing features). Then at the last moment, the call comes in that the catalog is supposed to be in portrait orientation after you took that great landscape picture.



After inventing a few new words, you read this section on Xara's new Content-Aware Sizing feature. Content-Aware Sizing is a mind-boggling series of math calculations that allows mere mortals to change the proximity of people and objects in a photo while scaling only those areas Xara thinks are not of foreground importance. Depending on the photo, you can make evenly spaced trees look bunched together and make a sailboat in a tiny pond look like the same sailboat adrift in an ocean. You don't have to crop or slice the photograph in any way; however, photos that have a lot of background detail need a little masking; this is where the new Mask mode enters the scene in version 5.

You'll use `Sunspot.xar`, and `sunspot scene.jpg`—the landscape-oriented image that you're going to make squarish to fit the layout—in the following tutorial.

Understand Content-Aware Sizing Capabilities

If you ever tried scaling something disproportionately in MS Paint, you quickly realized that you can only stretch the stretch-resistant canvas of bitmap images so far before your photo looks like a malfunction in the transporter room. Along these lines, Xara can apply Content-Aware Photo Resize by no more than a factor of 2 to any image. Xara wants your retouched photo to look good, and so do you; hence the limitation. Also, if you opt to create a mask to direct Xara on the areas of importance and relative unimportance, you cannot mask more than 50% of the photo, which is only fair considering what this feature can do. You have options for intelligently, selectively scaling a photo across its horizontal, its vertical, or both dimensions at once. Because Xara stores a lot of hidden data in the photo as it works its magic, you can't apply Content-Aware Photo Resize more than once to a photo, and photos you resize should be optimized after the process, partially for clean-up work Xara performs and also to standardize the image (removing hidden data) so the photo becomes as standard as when it was imported.

A Stretch of Imagination and Photography

The proof's in the viewing; open `Sunspot.xar` in Xara now, and then press `CTRL-ALT-I` to open the Import box and choose `sunspot scene.jpg`. The image is scaled for the layout, and there is no

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real reason for setting up individual layers in this example, so you proceed like this:

1. Xara's sizing engine would have a rough time discerning important content such as the glasses that are spaced too far apart from the less important yet highly detailed texture of the rough wood in the background. This is why there is a Mask Mode button on the Standard Bar. With the image selected, click the Lasso icon; a tint overlay appears in the document window. A Mask Enabled message box may appear to explain some rules of Mask mode. If you never want to see this box again in the future, make sure the Don't Show Me Again box is checked before you click Continue.
2. The Freehand And Brush Tool is selected for you by default. Because this is Mask mode, you are not drawing shapes; you need to draw closed paths around areas you want to protect from changes. The entire workspace is protected from change, and you only want the mask around the foreground objects, so you begin by drawing an outline around one of the glasses. This un.masks it, which is not the idea here—proceed to the next step to correct this.
3. Press CTRL-SHIFT-I to invert the masked areas. Now you have the glass masked and can freely draw around the other glasses, adding to the mask. You can also switch to any drawing tool of your preference at any time. If, for example, you feel most comfortable with the Shape Editor Tool, choose it and use it. Mask mode treats the product of the drawing tools differently than when Mask mode is toggled off. You can add to the mask without grouping shapes because you're not drawing shapes; you're editing a mask. You can also edit a completed mask by using the Shape Editor Tool.



If the control points for editing the mask are difficult to see, switch to the lowest Set View Quality by dragging the slider on the Standard Bar to the left. You'll then clearly see an unclosed path you need to close, and the control handles for the control points.

4. When everything you feel is important is masked, choose the Photo Tool, and then click the Content-Aware Photo Resize button on the Infobar. Click Close if a message dialog box appears.



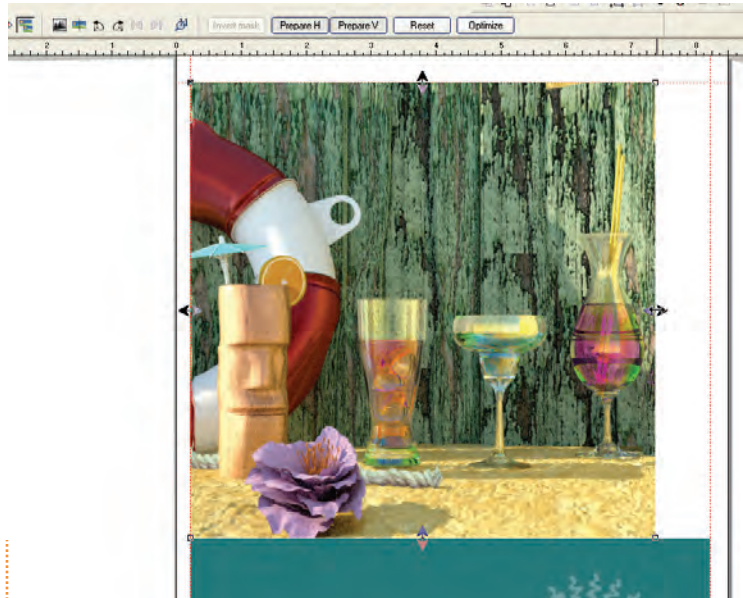


FIGURE 5 It's hard to believe that this landscape image is now practically the same height and width.

5. Click the Prepare H and Prepare V buttons on the Infobar. In your own work, if you only need the horizontal aspect of the photo prepared for intelligent sizing, you only need to click the Prepare H button. Doing this saves a moment or two as Xara evaluates the overall image for changes.
6. After the image is prepared, the four sides of the image now have double-headed arrows you can drag. Drag the right-side arrow control handle as far as you can to the right. Perform the same maneuver with one of the handles that controls the vertical aspect until the overall image looks square. Figure 5 shows a fairly astounding transformation. The wood planks have been distorted, but they're so visually intricate that the audience won't detect it. The big deal is that the glasses remain undistorted, yet moved together, and the overall image now fits into the page layout beautifully.
7. Click the Optimize The Photo button when you're certain you don't want to perform any more magic sizing. In the Photo Optimize dialog box, you can choose a resolution for the image by clicking the Bitmap Size tab or accept the default by clicking Optimize. If you want the same resolution file as the one you began with, remember its resolution before optimizing. You can see the dpi setting for a selected bitmap on the status line.

8. When Xara returns you to the workspace and the optimized image, use the Selector Tool to scale the image to fit the layout. In this example, you will have some unwanted excess image at the top; with the image selected, choose the Shape Editor Tool and marquee-select the top two image control points. Then while holding CTRL (to constrain movement), drag down until you've cropped to the guides at top.



Uncorrecting Photos

There will be occasions when you want to stylize a photo instead of editing it to a photographic ideal. The Live Effect Tool opens a host of possibilities that are too varied and extensive to document in this chapter, but the procedure for applying any of the filters that ship with Xara Xtreme is quite simple. In a nutshell, photographic filters, including most any third-party Adobe-standard plug-in, can be applied to an imported photograph and also to vector objects, non-bitmaps. The effect is not a permanent state and you can remove and modify an effect applied to almost anything you draw or import.

Import Stretch limo.jpg to a new Xara document. It would be attention-getting to actually stretch this humble beetle, and more so without distorting the background. You cannot do this easily with Content-Aware Resizing because this Xara feature is intended to enhance and not visibly distort photos.

Here are the steps to apply a Live Effect using the Liquid Color Filter:

1. With the photo selected, choose the Live Effect Tool (the plug icon), and then click New on the Infobar.
2. Once Xara has read the plug-in filters, a menu appears. Choose Deformation Filter | Liquid Color.
3. In the Liquid Color box, you have a proxy window where you work, and for this example, click the upper-left style for distorting the proxy image, the Draw Tool. This tool drags areas of the photo around, but smoothly.
4. Set the Brush Size to its maximum of 100 and the Strength at about 30 so you don't create a car accident your first time out.
5. Use brisk, short, controlled strokes to first drag the front wheel to the right, then the area above the wheel, and finally the front windshield. This stretches the front. Areas such as the back of the front wheel shouldn't look distorted (by a lot), so you need to move them to the left, also.

6. If you make a mistake, you can click the Undo arrow, click Reset to totally undo your work without exiting the Live Effect, or—more prudently—choose the Remove Tool, set the Strength very low, and then tap, don't drag, in the mistake areas. Mastering the sensitivity of these tools takes a little practice. Fortunately, this isn't an image *you* took that you're messing up.
7. Perform the same edits on the back side of the VW, moving them in the opposite direction until the auto looks as though it can comfortably seat 47 circus clowns. Figure 6 shows the original photo and the Live Effect version near completion.
8. Click OK to apply the Live Effect. When you return to the drawing page, the Live Effect Tool is still chosen and your cursor has an *e* on it, indicating a Live-Effectuated object.

From this point, you can add another Live Effect filter. Delete the current effect (returning the photo to its original state) by clicking the appropriate button on the Infobar, and also commit the effect to a specific resolution. If, for example, you want to print this image to an inkjet, the best setting for the Live Effect would be anywhere from 225 to 300dpi. You specify this by typing a value or choosing a preset value in the Resolution Of Effect drop-down box on the Infobar.

Finally, whether it's a panorama, a Content-Aware photo resize job, or a vector retouched photo, File | Export is the key command for getting your work into pixel format within a file type that your audience can see. Press CTRL-SHIFT-E, choose the file format from the Save As Type drop-down list, name the file, and then click Export. In the following box, depending on the file format you chose, set the resolution of the file you need and any other options available for that file format, and then click Export.

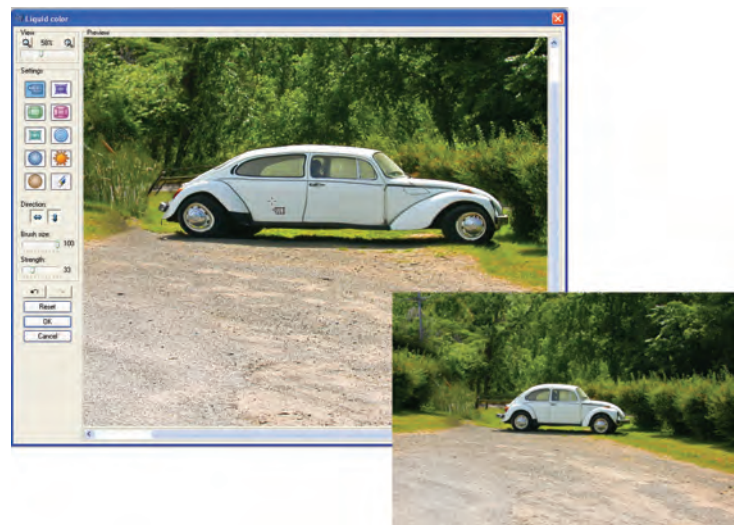


FIGURE 6 You can use the Liquid Color Live Effect when you cannot get the effect you want with Xara's Mould Tool.

