How to Create a Natural Pastel Photo Effect in Photoshop

Mike June 11, 2015 Photo Editing, Tutorials 13 Comments

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FILTERGRADE

HOW TO CREATE A **NATURAL PASTEL PHOTO EFFECT** IN PHOTOSHOP

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A pastel is defined as “a soft and delicate shade of color”. Pastels are not overly intense or elaborate. They don’t detract from the rest of an image or design. They simply add a clean and subtle look.

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That probably explains why pastel styles are so popular in photo editing. One of my favorite photography blogs, The Black Workshop, is full of images that take from this style.

With the right shades, you can add so much to the depth of an image and still keep it looking natural.

This tutorial will walk you through creating your very own pastel photo effect in Photoshop. Pin It!

Want a fast and easy way to get pastel photo effects and natural tones in Photoshop? Our FilmTone Photoshop Actions include 25 unique looks for your photos. Plus, you'll get a handy kit of real film grain to overlay on your images. Purchase FilmTone Now.

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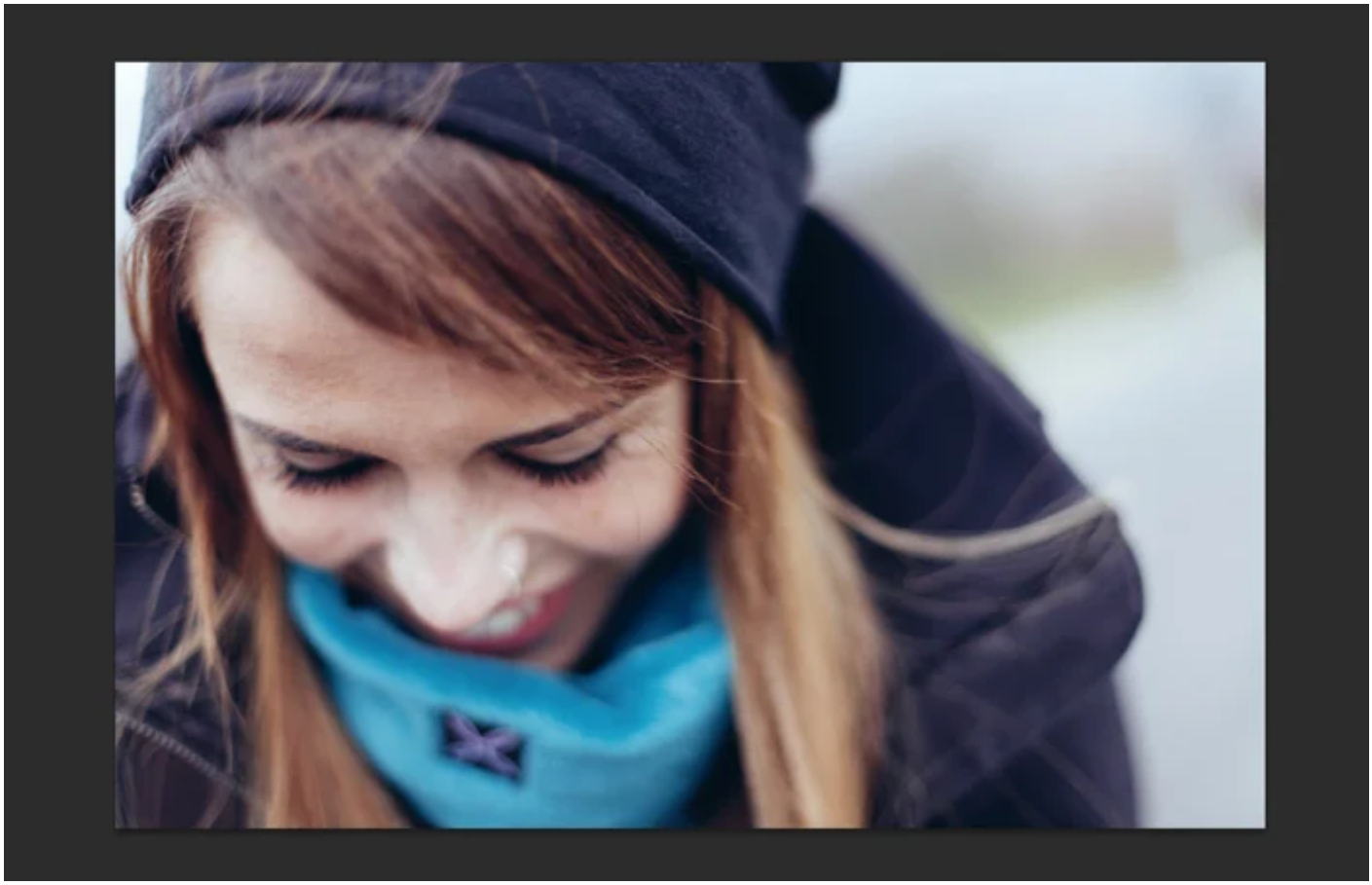

Step 1. Open your desired photo in Photoshop.

I'm going to be using this lovely photo from Splitshire. Pro tip – use an image with a lot of natural light and exposure. Pastels work on any image, but look best with bright airy colors.

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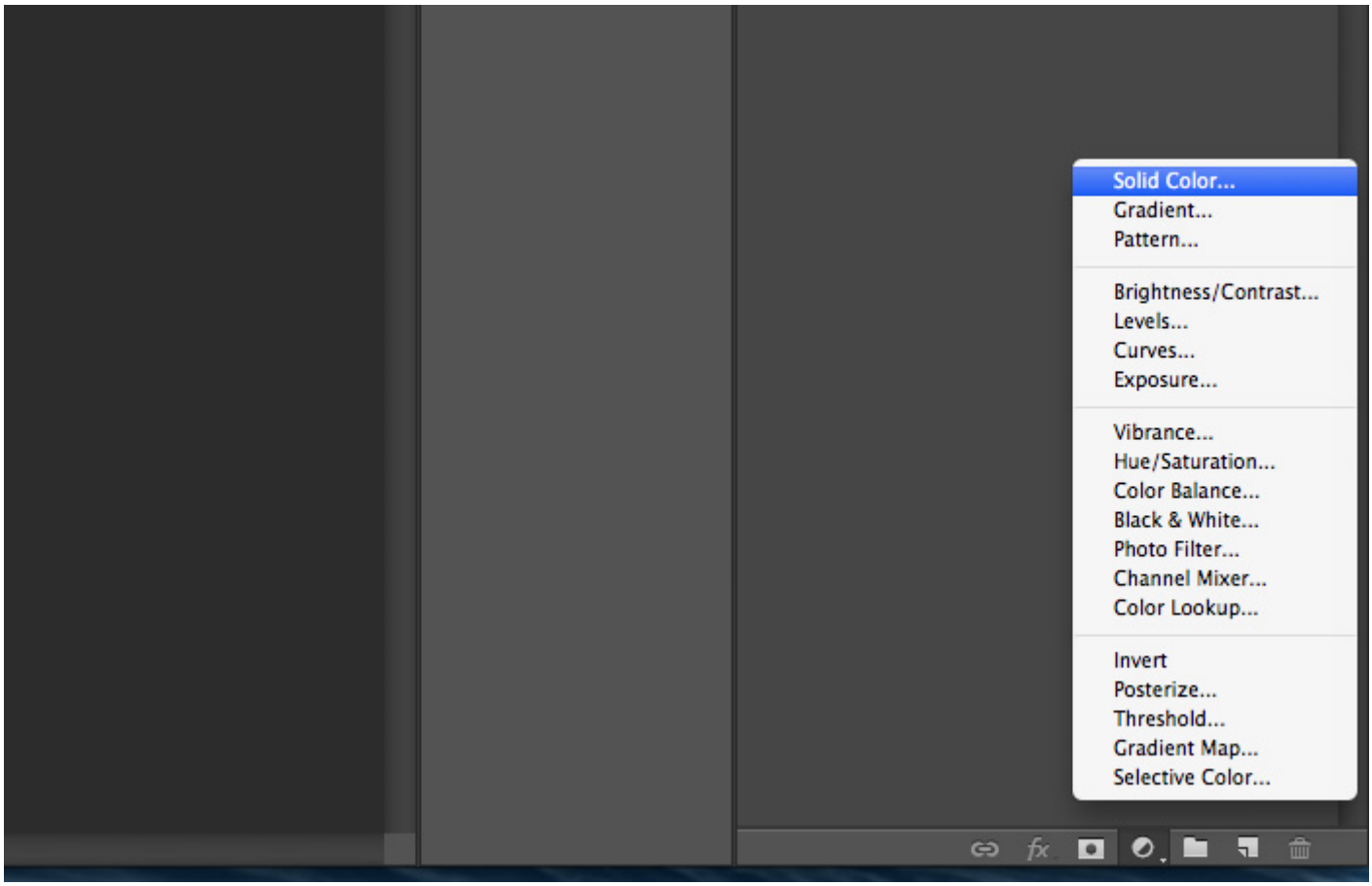

Step 2. Create a Solid Color Adjustment Layer.

In the bottom of the layers panel click the circle icon to and create a “Solid Color” adjustment layer. This will allow us to add a color overlay to our entire image.

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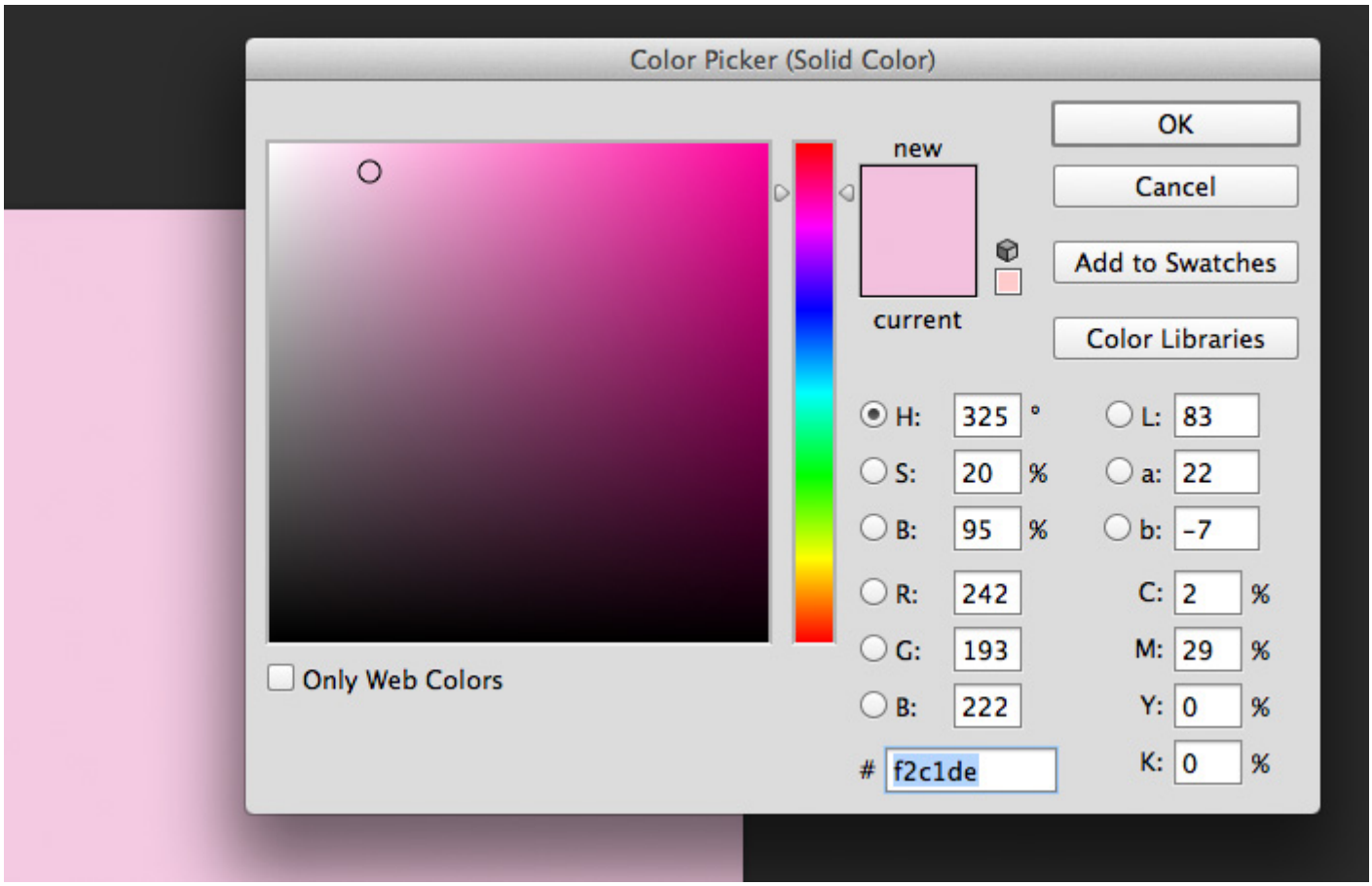

Step 3. Choose your pastel color.

Then when the color picker appears, change your color to a nice pastel shade. For this tutorial I decided to go with a soft pink, **hex code #f2c1de**. After finding the perfect color, click OK.

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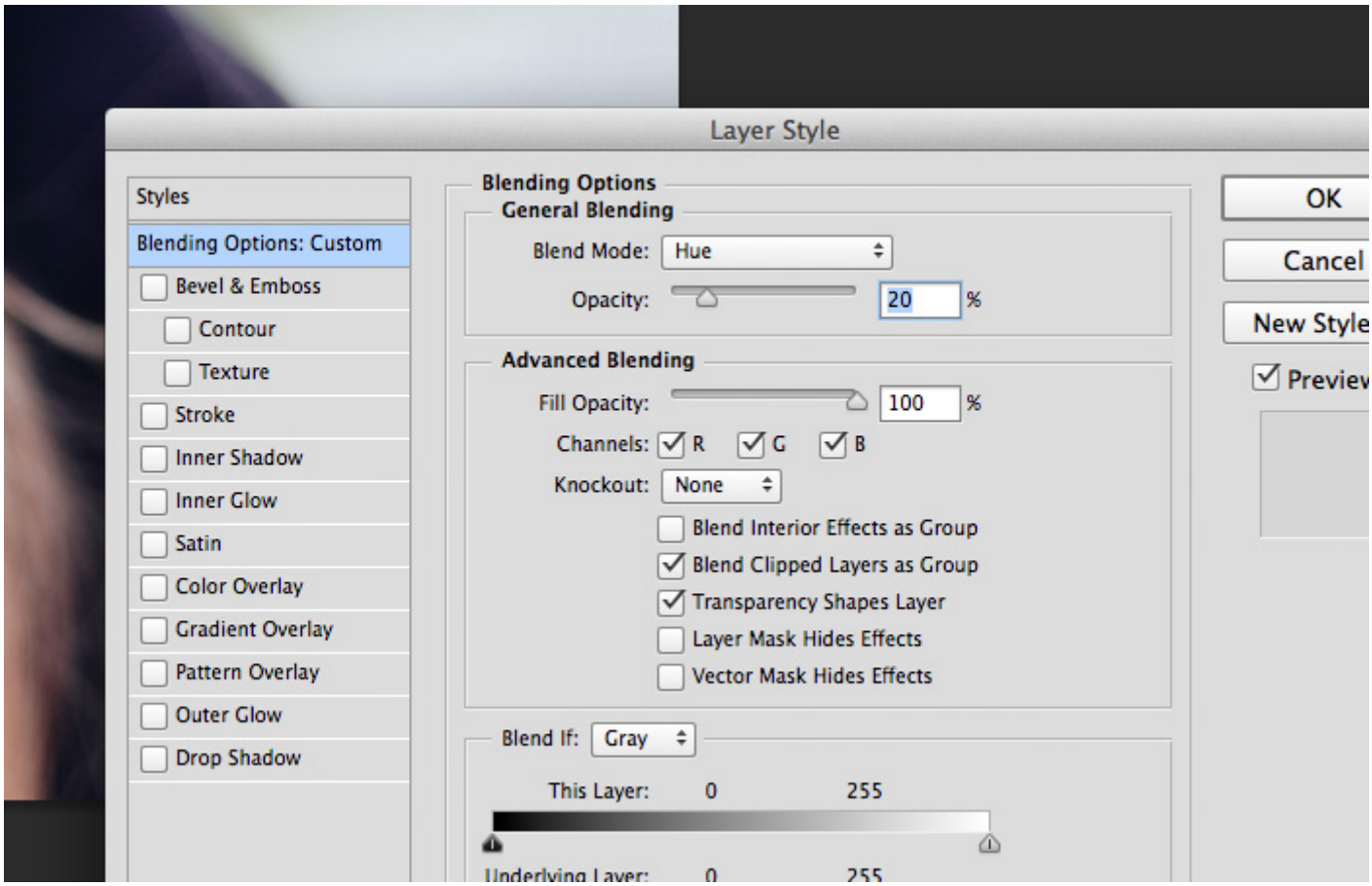

Step 4. Change the layer blend mode to Hue.

Double click the “Solid Color” layer and change the blend mode to Hue. This will overlay it appropriately with the other hues in the image. Then lower your opacity to around 20%. I’ve found this to be the best amount for slight coloring without overdoing it.

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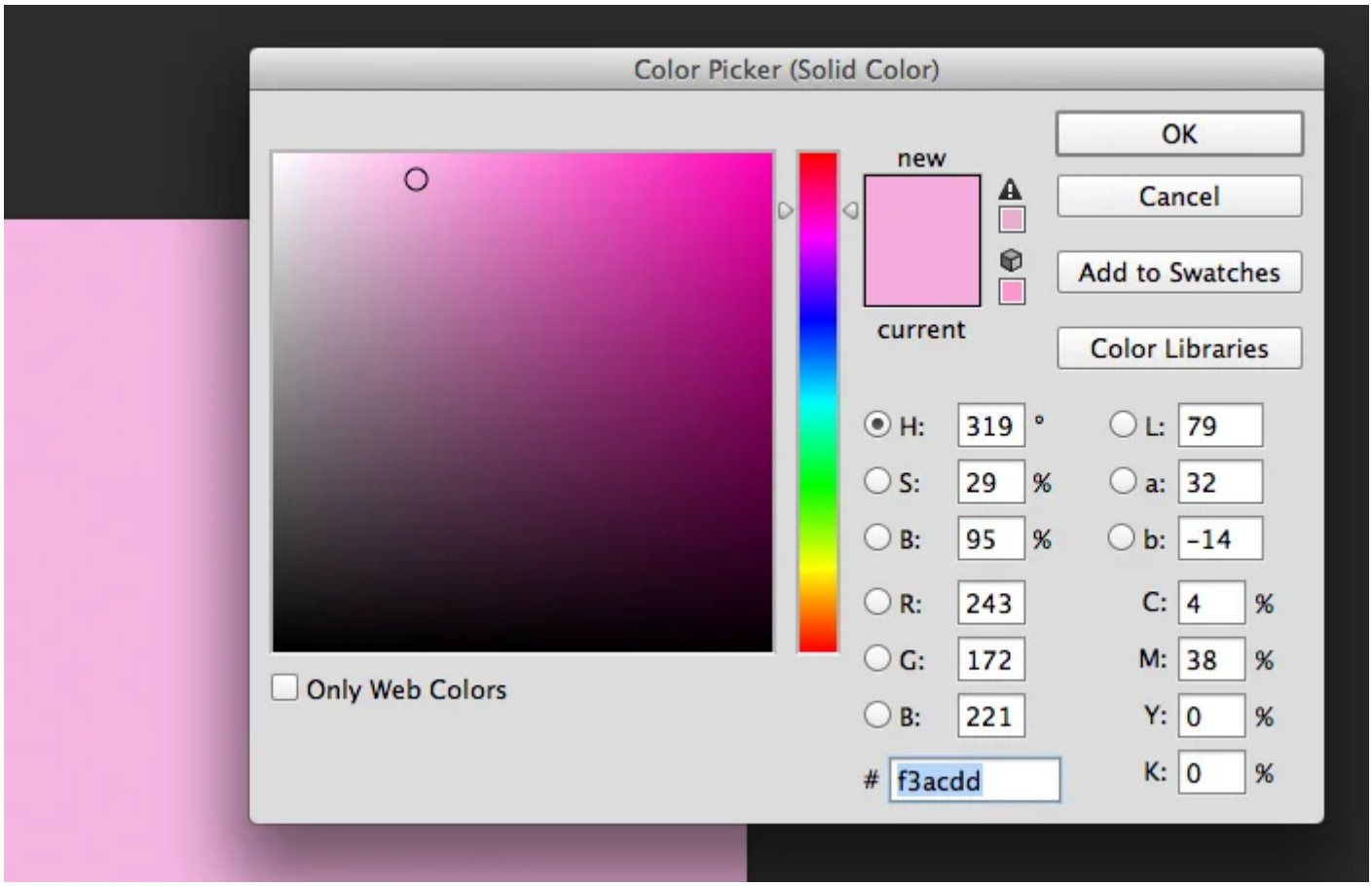

Step 5. Create a second Solid Color Adjustment Layer.

This time choose a slightly darker shade of your desired color to create a contrast with the previous adjustment. I went with the **hex code #f3acdd**.

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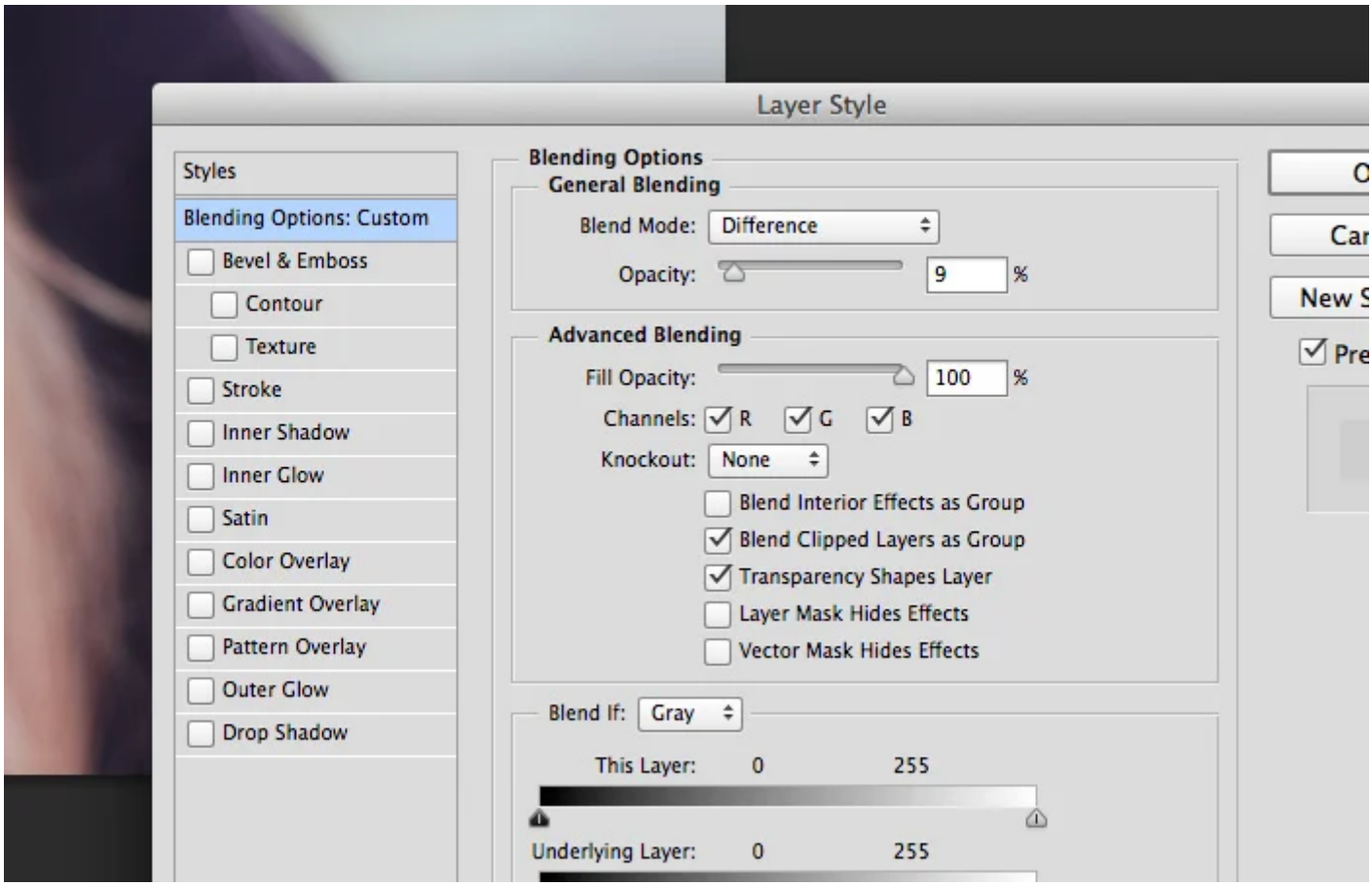

Step 6. Change the layer blend mode to Difference.

For this solid color, you'll want to set the blend mode to difference and the opacity anywhere between 8%-12%. These are the best settings to make it blend naturally.

At this point, we have a great looking pastel image effect. To add some additional depth, I suggest playing with the curves and vibrance adjustment layers.

Here is a final before and after of the image!

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13 Replies to "How to Create a Natural Pastel Photo Effect in Photoshop"

Emil Kadlic

January 3, 2016 at 5:11 AM

The tutorial shared here is very useful. I've been learning Photoshop photo editing and glad to know some amazing details to add natural pastel photo effect in photos. I really enjoyed studying the overall information. And looking forward to check out FilmTone as well. Thanks for a nice contribution.

REPLY

Mike

January 3, 2016 at 11:58 AM

Thanks Emil! Glad you enjoyed it.

REPLY

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joanna

August 31, 2016 at 7:43 AM

Wow! This is cool ? i really really want to know how to do this pastel color editing.. ?

REPLY

Mike

September 1, 2016 at 3:53 PM

Thanks Joanna! This tutorial should help a lot, we also have some time saving Photoshop Actions for this effect here: https://filtergrade.com/product/filmtone-natural-photoshop-actions/

REPLY

Nanda

September 6, 2016 at 3:37 AM

Thanks Mike. This help me so much. Been looking simple tutorials like this

REPLY

Mike

September 6, 2016 at 12:30 PM

Thanks Nanda, really glad we could help!

REPLY

Pingback: 50 Excellent Digital Photography Photoshop Tutorials – Smashing Magazine

Dogum gunu pastasi

April 6, 2017 at 6:20 AM

Thank you so much. Thanks for sharing.

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Mike

April 6, 2017 at 11:38 AM

Glad we could help, thanks for the support Dogum.

REPLY

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iwan

October 14, 2017 at 11:57 AM

Thanks Mike. nice simple tutorials . . .

REPLY

Mike

October 14, 2017 at 12:26 PM

Really glad to hear that Iwan and thanks for the support! If there is any other topic for Photoshop, Lightroom, or other editing programs you'd like us to cover on the blog, let me know. You can also find more tutorials and walkthroughs on our Youtube here: https://www.youtube.com/user/filtergrade

REPLY

Bee

June 8, 2018 at 12:26 PM

great tutorial! well instructed and written. I love learning new things about photoshop everyday!

REPLY

Mike

June 8, 2018 at 2:43 PM

Thanks so much for the kind words Bee. Pinning some of your posts, you have a great blog!

REPLY

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