



Shedding light

The William Morris Studio puts custom lamps in their best light using Adobe® Photoshop® CS2



Words—and even traditional photos—cannot accurately describe the stunning details of the custom Craftsman-style lamps that Renee and William Morris produce in their Benicia, California, studio. Although William used photos of the lamps to showcase them online and in print, he was increasingly dissatisfied because the photos did not do justice to the lamps. To solve this problem, he became an expert in digital photography and Adobe Photoshop CS2 software.

“What I saw in my lamps was not reflected in the photos I took of them,” says William Morris. “Adobe Photoshop was liberating; it allowed me to accurately reproduce the craftsmanship of our lamps in images.”

Capturing craftsmanship

The award-winning husband and wife lamp designers craft each lamp by hand. William hand-turns and mills every lamp base and spindle from natural hardwood, while Renee forms the lamp shades from translucent mica and parchment. The work is mindfully done, with William hand-shaping and carving pieces, adding inlays and etchings by hand, and applying his own dyes for signature colorings. Renee accents the lamp shades with creative, hand-cut designs and dried leaves that she has collected and carefully selected for their beauty and form.

William Morris Studio lamps are displayed in galleries throughout the United States; the studio also has a presence on the Web and markets its work through printed catalogs and other sales materials. William is responsible for photographing the lamps for inclusion in marketing materials. Initially he was disappointed with how photos of the lamps appeared in print and online.

“You can take a simple photograph of a lamp, but because of the lighting extremes involved when a lamp is lit, it is almost always overlit in some areas, and dark in others, and the details you want to show fade into the background,” he explains. “My photography wasn’t capturing the essence of our craftsmanship.”

Meeting artistic and customer expectations

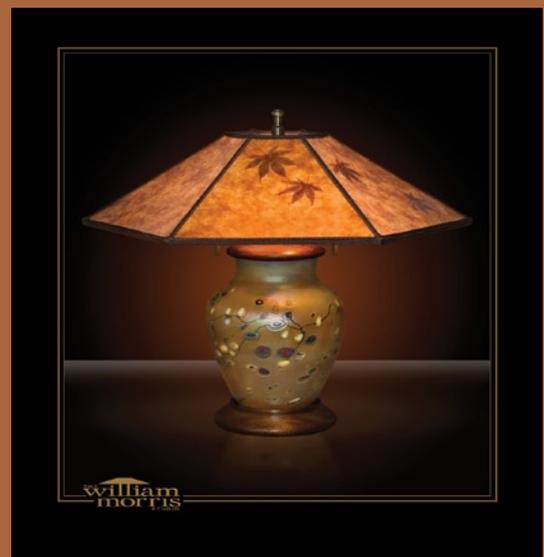
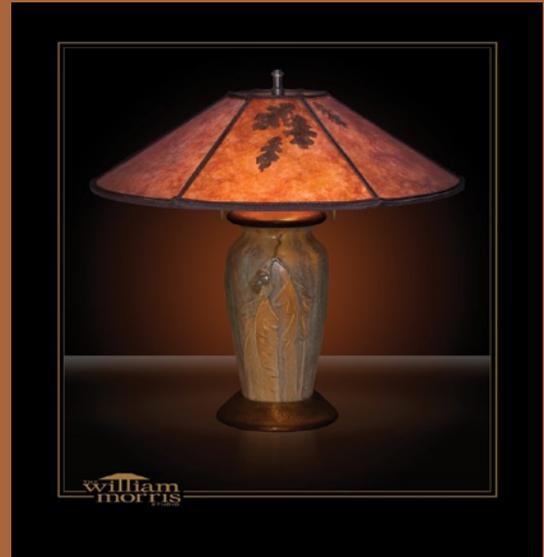
William became passionate about making their lamps look as beautiful in print and online as they appeared in person. He realized that to do so he not only had to develop new ways of photographing lamps, he also had to learn how to process the resulting images digitally to meet his artistic expectations and convey an accurate representation to potential customers.

“I started out with the goal of producing online and print catalogs that made our lamps appear as they should,” says William. “In the process, I fell in love with digital photography and Adobe Photoshop.”

Beauty in imagery

William’s digital photos are so beautiful that customers have told him his photographs are more gorgeous than his lamps—and his lamps are stunning. He’s now an expert in presenting the lamps and spends several hours each week photographing them, making them look as realistic as possible with Adobe Photoshop CS2.

To capture its true beauty, William Morris shoots each lamp base and shade separately then composites them using Photoshop CS2. He then places the composite image into a clean, simple background for easy viewing.



Renee Morris painstakingly handcrafts each lamp shade, using translucent mica and parchment combined with leaves and other natural materials.



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William Morris, partner, William Morris Studio

William has become a serious amateur photographer and a big fan of technology—especially Adobe Photoshop. To automate many of the more mundane parts of his photography workflow, William has set up 30 different actions in Adobe Photoshop CS2, including merging visible layers and blurring edges. Using these actions in Photoshop gives him more time to continuously refine his images for catalogs, sales materials, and publishing on the Web.

Discovering new ways to capture images

William has found new ways to capture his lamps and enhance their images. For instance, he discovered that he could achieve better results if he shot the lamp base and shade separately, because shooting them together creates unattractive hot spots and shadows. After shooting each component separately, he uses Adobe Photoshop CS2 to composite them. The pen, clone, and mask tools in Adobe Photoshop CS2 allow him to remove the lamp bases and shades from their backgrounds and place them into a clean, black background for easy viewing.

William shoots in Raw format and brings the images into Photoshop CS2, where he works non-destructively using adjustment layers, a feature that allows him to apply edits to images without touching the original image itself. He uses levels for adjusting colors as well as creating a soft, beautiful fringe of light around the lamp images. He also removes highlights from the lamps and paints them back in to make the highlights look both beautiful and realistic.

Moving to Photoshop CS2

For William, upgrading to Photoshop CS2 was essential for two reasons: Smart Objects and Adobe Bridge. Smart Objects lets William work faster by selecting portions of an image that he has already adjusted and moving the selections into a new image so he can leverage past work.

Company

William Morris Studio

Benicia, California

www.williammorrisstudio.com

Challenge

Display handcrafted lamps in print and online marketing materials exactly how they appear in person.

Solution

Use Adobe Photoshop CS2 to eliminate hot spots and shadows, composite images, adjust lighting, and enhance imagery.

Benefits

Images of the lamps in marketing materials are now as beautiful—or even more so—as the lamps themselves.

Tool Kit

- Adobe Photoshop CS2
- Apple Power Mac G5 running Mac OS X



William Morris is as passionate about the loving care and artistry that goes into his lamps as he is about the way they are presented online and in catalogs. Photoshop CS2 helps him present his lamps in print and online materials so that their beauty shines through.



Adobe Bridge streamlines his workflow because sorting, finding, and ranking images enables him to stay more organized and spend less time sorting through images. "I love being able to select preview sizes in Adobe Bridge," he says. "It sounds like a small enhancement, but anything that allows me to maximize productivity and creativity is a huge plus."

William is also excited about the Smart Sharpen feature in Photoshop CS2 and believes it will make it easier to fine-tune sharpness in his images than was possible using previous Photoshop sharpening tools. "Adobe continually advances Photoshop with each new version, so upgrading is never a question for me," says William.

For William and Renee Morris, Adobe Photoshop software has become as essential as the hardwood, mica, and other natural materials they use to maintain their creative energy toward life and art. "The Mac and Adobe Photoshop have transformed the left-brained process of photography and processing images into a right-brained process that is fulfilling and full of discovery for artists like me," William says. "Photoshop CS2 helps keep our designs—and our presentation of them—exciting and always evolving."

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