

Photo Peeling Off The Wall Effect in GIMP

Introduction

This will show you how I was able to make a photograph look like it had been painted on a wall and was peeling off. The photo is on Flickr at...

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jancyclops/559573516/>

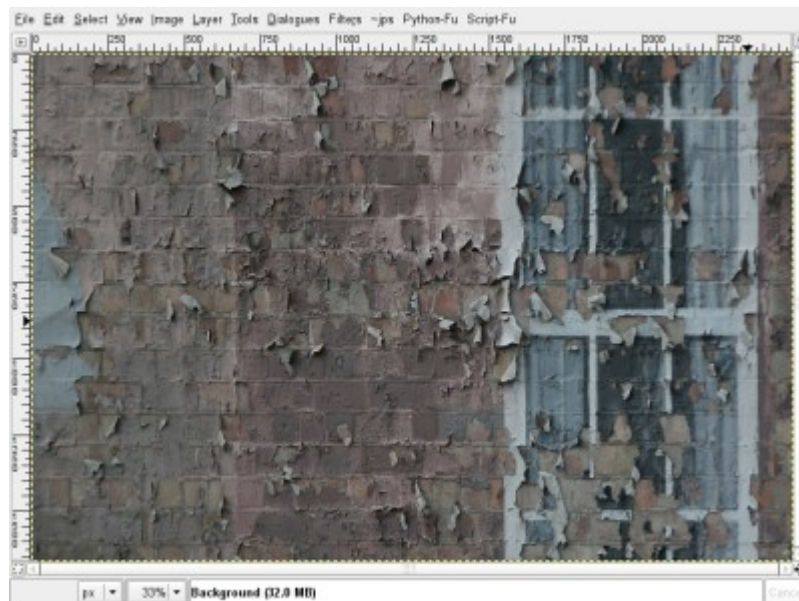
This tells you how I did it using The GIMP. However, as it is basically a mixture of using a layer mask and overlaying layers, it should be usable for other software as well.

Requirements

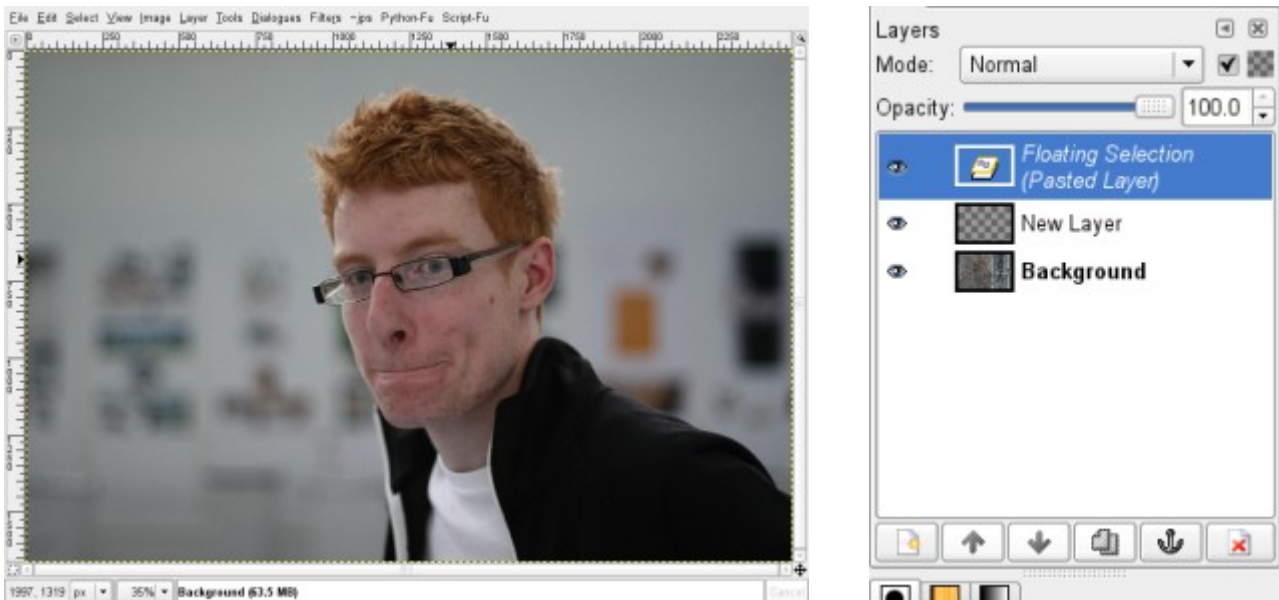
Although the effect is down to the photo processing software, the peeling paint really was a wall with paint peeling off it. You need that photo and another one which is going to look as if it is peeling off.

Getting Started

First of all I took a photo of a wall with paint peeling off it. I did this specifically for the texture so I could do something along these lines. This one was taken at Gabriel's Wharf on the South Bank in London in between Blackfriars and Waterloo Bridges.



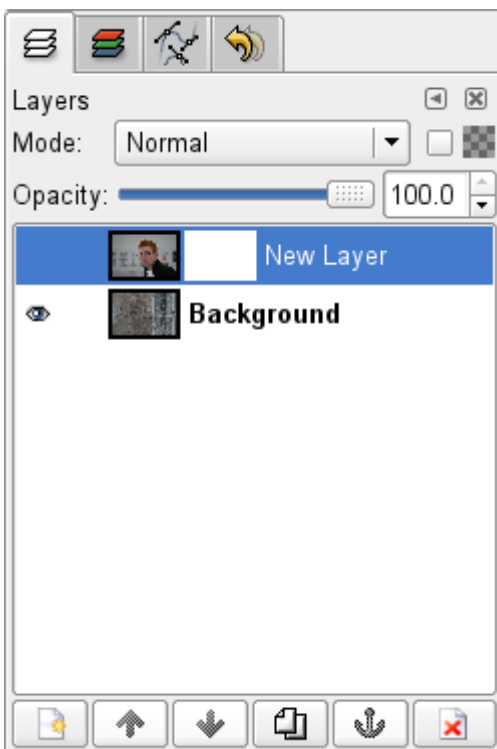
Then I opened a portrait I took. It really could have been anything but this was one I had handy. Both photos need to be the same size. The one of the wall was not as it came out of the camera because I took it at an angle, so I had to use the “perspective” tool in GIMP to straighten it up. I then cropped out as much of the middle as I could get without including any transparency but keeping the 3 to 2 aspect ratio. As it happens, it came out 2496 x 1664 so I resized the portrait photo (which was as it came out of the camera) to that size. The Canon EOS uses the 3 to 2 aspect ratio which is why I did it.



Once you have resized the second photo so it is the same as the first, create a new layer and paste it in. It will look like the above. Anchor the floating selection to the new layer by clicking the anchor icon in the Layers window.

Masking off the bits you don't want to see

Now add a layer mask to the new layer. To do this, make sure the new layer is selected (it should still be after you have anchored the floating selection to it), right-click it in the Layers window and choose Add Layer Mask... from the menu or, in the main window, click Layer > Mask > Add Layer Mask... You will get another dialog box asking what you want to initialise the layer mask to. By default it have the top of the list selected. Make sure it is White (full opacity) which is the default on my copy of The GIMP.



Now, go into the Layers window (Ctrl+L).

With the new layer selected, click on the “eye” icon to the left of the photo thumbnail so it doesn't show any more (left). This will make the layer invisible.

Once you have done this you can mask off bits of the photo underneath which you want to show through to new layer. Although you will be adding the mask based on areas of the background, you will actually be working on the now invisible layer.

I chose the Free Select tool (below, left) with the mode set to “Add to the current selection” (below right). I also checked the Antialiasing box and feathered the edges of the mask with the radius set to 5.0. I'm not



sure exactly how this affects the overall result but I wanted some blending without it being too much. If I had used a smaller original, I would probably have used a small radius.



Now start drawing on the mask. Although you can't see the top photo, it is the layer mask for that layer which you are drawing your selection on.

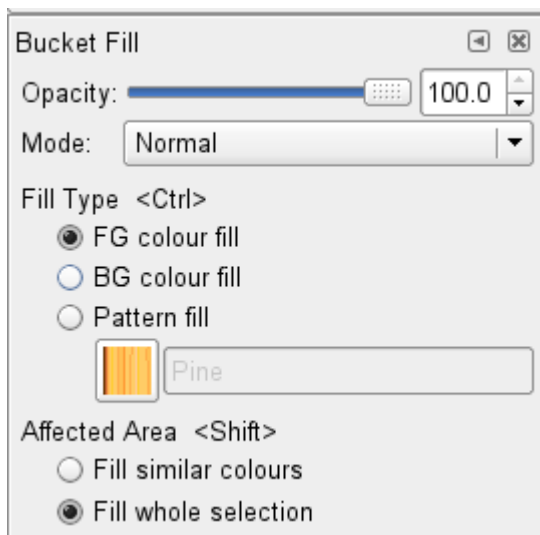
You will want to select any areas where you can see the brick through the paintwork. On the finished photo, the brick will show through on that as well.

On this bit of wall, you can see that some of the paint has started peeling off but is still attached to the wall. Where that has

happened and you can see the back of the layer of paint, you want that to show through as well.

Because the selection mode is set to "Add to current selection..." your newly selected bit of wall will not, of course, replace the one you just did. I found that Ctrl+Z will remove the last piece of the selection and not the whole lot (a problem I found with some other software I used several years ago).

Making the background show through



Once you have finished selecting areas to be made transparent on the top layer, apply the layer mask. This is in the same menu you used to add the layer mask in the first place, so you either right-click in the Layers window or use the Layer > Mask menu option.

Now select Bucket fill. If the foreground is black make the Fill Type "FG colour fill". If the background is black make it "BG colour fill". If neither is black, set the foreground to black and use "FG colour fill". You get the idea. You are going to be filling the lot with black.

Check the radio button for "Fill whole selection" in the Affected Area section of the toolbox.

Now click somewhere inside one of the bits you have selected. You won't see anything happen, of course, because the top layer, on which you have been working, is still invisible. Call up the Layers window (Ctrl+L) and click next to the thumbnail for the new layer. The "eye" icon will reappear in that window and the layer will show up. You will be able to see

through the bits you masked off but the result will be far from finished.



As you can see above, the photo now looks very flat, except where you can see the back of the layer of paint as it has curled over but not dropped off the wall.

To make the photo look as if it has been printed straight onto the brickwork, we need to change the opacity mode. When I first tried doing this I didn't mask out bits of the top layer to allow the brickwork and I tried the displacement filter but the end product was not really what I was aiming for.

Go to the Layers window (Ctrl+L) and, making sure the new layer selected, change the layers mode by choosing "Overlay" from the drop down box. You will get something like the photo below and will probably not be able to see the top layer very well.



Finishing it off

What I did to make the photo look right was to duplicate the new layer until I could see the portrait clearly. In my version this meant duplicating it three times, so I ended up with five

layers (the background and four copies of the portrait). I found this made the overall photo look too red. Depending on your photo you may either not get the same problem or a different colour may become too strong. To get around this I desaturated two of the layers (click on Layer > Colours > Desaturate from the menu in the main window). I also reduced the saturation in one of the other layers without desaturating it. To do this, click on Layer > Colours > Hue-Saturation... and then use the Saturation slider in the Modify Selected Colour section of the dialog. I actually adjusted the saturation with the Master button selected rather than just choosing red.

My photo now looked like this.



This wasn't quite what I wanted either but it was pretty close. I then flattened the image, using Image > Flatten Image from the menu in the main window. That reduces the photo to a single layer. I then adjusted the brightness and contrast from the Layer > Colours > Brightness-Contrast... option in the main menu. I increased both until I was happy with the final result.



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