

# AKVIS Chameleon V6.0 —

## Photo Collage Creation

Iris Yoffa

Scrapbooking has long held a prominent place among homo sapiens. We love to collect images and reminisce as we leaf through a book of old photos. With the introduction of the digital camera, this obsession has found a place on our computers as well. The challenge is to cut apart and paste together the pieces of the story,

AKVIS *Chameleon* is an image editing plug-in for image editing programs that makes creating photo collages (AKA scrapbooks) quick and easy. Creating precise selections and merging an image seamlessly into a background is handled very nicely.

*Chameleon* can take the collage process into interesting territory by offering some non-traditional ways to cause the various collage segments to interact, so you can find this tool handy for your artistic expression as well. *Chameleon* is known to work with Adobe *Photoshop*, *Photoshop Elements*, Corel (Jasc) *PaintShop Pro*, and Ulead *PhotoImpact* as well as numerous other unnamed image editing programs.



The plug-in has four modes for inserting a selection from an image into your collage-in-the-making.

**Montage** places the selection into a new background and makes the irrelevant parts of the pasted fragment fade away. The fragment does not change its color range or opacity.

**Chameleon** is similar to **Montage**, but adjusts the color range of the pasted fragment to match the background and smoothes the object's borders.

**Blend Mode** builds on the previous modes but also makes the pasted fragment semi-transparent so that the background image can be seen through the texture and relief of the fragment. The fragment dissolves into the background.

**Emersion Mode** embeds a fragment (selection) into a background, allowing the background to show through in places. This mode is intended for adding a fragment with complex boundaries. Unlike the previous three modes, this one requires a precise selection in the filter dialog.

*Chameleon* can be downloaded from the AKVIS site and used as a 10-day trial before purchase. You'll also find a *Flash* movie demonstrating an overview of the plugin and a User Guide (in PDF format) which includes step-by-step tutorials for each mode. There are detailed directions for using the filter in *Adobe Photoshop*, *Paint Shop Pro*, and *Corel Photo-Paint*. The installation was without incident and I printed out much of the User Guide to lead me through working through all the features.

So, here's the process as I used it in *Adobe Photoshop*. I opened up the image I wanted to use for grabbing a fragment. This was a family photo, about 42 years old, of one of my sisters. I used the *Photoshop* Lasso selection tool to make a rough selection that completely contained the piece of the image that I wanted. It also included pieces of the background.

I then clicked **Filter > AKVIS > Chameleon > Grab Fragment**. Next I opened the image I wanted to use as the background, a crop of a recent snapshot of a path at

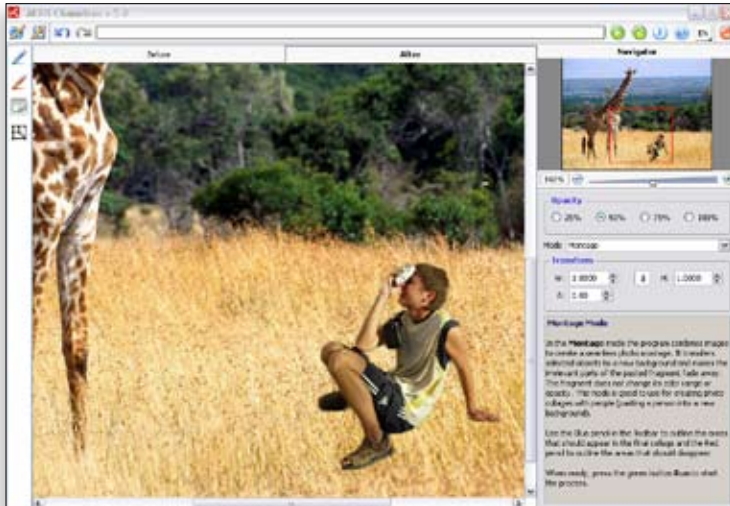


Saguaro National Monument East. I clicked **Filter > AKVIS > Chameleon > Make Collage**.

The AKVIS Chameleon dialog opened with the background image loaded and the fragment inserted and selected. In the settings panel I chose the **Montage** mode and set the *Opacity* slider to 50%. This last setting only affects the dialog, not the final result, and allowed me to see through the fragment for better placement on the background image.

The *Transform* tool allowed me to resize and reposition the fragment to better fit the rest of the image. It also allows for rotation and the unlocking of the width/height proportion.

Next I needed to define the “Keep” and “Don’t keep” areas of the fragment. I used the blue pencil to draw an outline inside the part of the fragment I wanted to keep for the collage and used the red pencil to draw a line in the area to drop into the background. There’s also an eraser to remove strokes



Chameleon screen-shot from [akvis.com](http://akvis.com)

outside the intended area. I pressed the *Process* button to see the result in the After tab.

If a redo is required, you can just switch back to the Before tab and redraw the contours. I used a very rough selection. Because my hand was not able to accurately trace the figure, I just drew inside the figure the best I could. The drop area was also defined roughly. The program did an admirable job of figuring out what to keep and what to fade out, and there was no fringing!

I didn't try adding a shadow by using a desaturated copy of the dancing girl and the *Transform* tool in the AKVIS dialog to distort the fragment into a shadow, but I certainly could have. You can also save fragments with defined keep and drop strokes for later use. Satisfied, I pressed the Checkmark button to apply the results to my *Photoshop* file.

Considering the ease of use and speedy results for this most basic first run, I have to give this a “must try.” The four modes provide a variety of ways to combine objects into a most creative result. So, hobbyist or artist, this plug-in can increase your productivity and give your whimsy the tools to express itself.

**About:** AKVIS *Chameleon* V6.0 - Photo Collage Creation

**Vendor:** Akvis

[www.akvis.com](http://www.akvis.com)

**Price:** Home – Plug-in (\$75 / €57)

Business – Plug-in (\$230 / €170)

**Required:** Image-editing program such as Adobe *Photoshop*, *Photoshop Elements*, Corel (Jasc) *PaintShop Pro*, and Ulead *PhotoImpact*, etc.