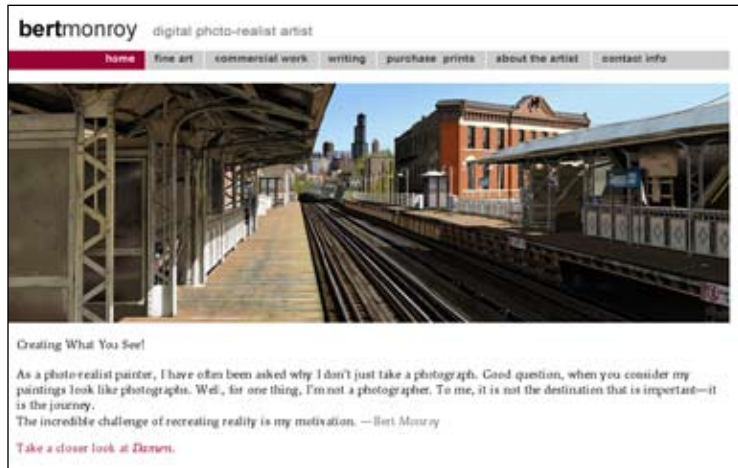


Photoshop Studio with Bert Monroy: Digital Painting

Donna Kamper,

If you've never run across the name Bert Monroy, take a moment to look at www.bertmonroy.com. The Chicago train station shown there (and on the cover of the book) is not a photograph. It's an image created by Monroy.



If you click on the image (shown above), the next page tells you that:

- The actual image size is 40 inches by 120 inches.
- The flattened file weighs in at 1.7 Gigabytes.
- It took eleven months (close to 2,000 hours) to create.
- The painting is comprised of close to fifty individual *Photoshop* files.
- Taking a cumulative total of all the files, the overall image contains over 15,000 layers.

Several closeups are displayed if you scroll down a little farther. The attention to detail is incredible. Look closely at the screenshot at right, taken from his site. Each bolt is unique. Each has a different shadow and

pattern of wear. This small section is representative of the image as a whole.

Monroy terms himself a “hyper-realistic” painter, in that unlike photographs, which have a single focus, every element of his paintings is sharp, clear and exactly in focus. If a building in the distant skyline shows seven rows of windows, you can be assured that seven rows of windows are indeed visible from that vantage point (making allowance for seasonal tree growth and intervening construction).

In the book, the process becomes clear. While he works from photographs to capture detail and relationships, they don't form any part of the final image. They are used as references.

Working from multiple photographs (and *Google Earth*), Monroy begins with a sketch on paper. He replicates the sketch in *Illustrator*, laying out initial perspective lines and recreating each element as an outline or vector shape. Monroy then transfers the shapes to *Photoshop* and uses them as guides to recreate each element.

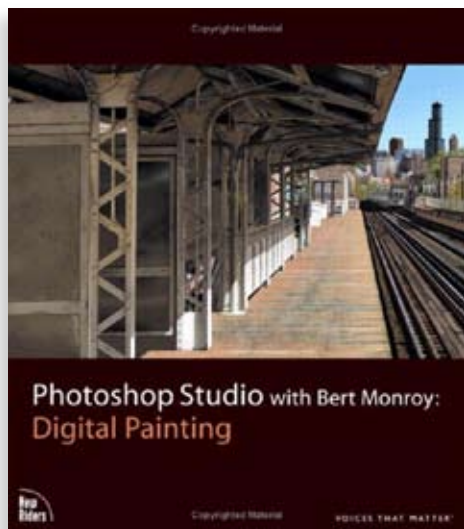
This book is about how Monroy goes about that recreation process and it's a wondrous read indeed! You don't have to aspire to hyper-realistic



Photoshop users of every level will learn something just reading this book, whether he's explaining the importance of lighting and shadows or how to create "concrete." If you open a blank image and work through some of the steps, you'll really learn something. Of course, that may only be that it isn't as easy as it looks, but that's valuable information as well.

The book is heavily illustrated in color, with multiple examples of the progress including screen shots. *Damian*, the train station, isn't the only image he references. He begins with *Oakland*, an image of the Oakland Fox Theater. In ten pages, you see the process he followed to recreate a stone façade.

The first step is a grid to define each block of the wall. A realistic sandstone texture is created, but of course that's only the beginning. The wall must be aged and cracked with bubbles showing where the sandstone is beginning to flake. And of course each of the blocks is treated individually. Once that's done, the spaces between the blocks are created and then shadows are added in the appropriate places.



In another image, *Oyster Bar*, rain is falling outside a New York restaurant. Each puddle, reflection, rain streak and raindrop ripple is there. The manhole cover, the mesh of a waste basket, the street signs – all perfectly recreated.

Lunch in Tiburon was inspired by a group of friends eating lunch. The very weave of the tablecloth is recreated as are the individual granules of pepper inside the pepper shaker. No detail is too

small to be noticed and replicated. Reflections, warping, folds, shadows and highlights are all inserted in his work exactly where they occur in real life. This book explains exactly how it's done.

Check out the website. Look at the details. If this is the sort of thing that interests you, then you'll find the book an absolute delight. Highly recommended to anyone who appreciates digital imagery, not just *Photoshop* users.

About: *Photoshop Studio with Bert Monroy: Digital Painting*

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Below: from Lunch in Tiburon. When I say "detailed," I mean "detailed."

