



Cumberland Public Library

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Jennifer Cournoyer
Teen/Reference Librarian

YART Teen Program Showcase September 16, 2013

Ghost Portraits!



Prep:

Ahead of time, we went out and took 20 or so pictures around the library and library grounds and preloaded them onto thumb drives so the teens would have a nice choice of backgrounds (we had about a bazillion thumb drives in the lost and found box).



You could have them pull images from the internet as well, but we wanted to avoid any copyright issues and we also wanted the teens to have a photo that was completely original.

On the day of the program, we had a black fabric background against which we took the teens' pictures. They could choose their pose, etc.



Then we would transfer the images onto a laptop, give them a thumb drive with the backgrounds, and they were off. Of course some students needed a little more one-on-one than others, but there were two staff people and that seemed to work fine.

Don't be intimidated by the directions below! They are very step-by-step, so the process looks a bit long and tedious, but the teens had no problem with following the instructions and most teens made two or three different portraits in less than 90 minutes.

Once the portraits were finished, we printed them out on photo paper so they could take them home. Those teens who wanted to also left an email address with me and I sent them the digital image.



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Ghost portrait process in Pixlr

- 1) Go to **pixlr.com** and choose the advanced editor.
- 2) Choose "Open image from computer" and open the image you want to use as the background for your ghost.
- 3) Now for your ghost: Go to File -> New Image. In the window that pops up, make sure that you put in the dimensions of the picture as big as you can (4000x4000 pixels) and check off the box next to "Transparent" before you click "OK."
- 4) To add in the picture of yourself over the transparent background, go to Layer -> Open Image as Layer and open your photo. If there's a lot of blank space around you, you can cut down the size of the image using the Constraint tool in the Tools box on the left.
- 5) Erase as much around yourself as possible using the eraser tool from the menu on the left hand side. This leaves a checkered transparent background around your picture. You can adjust the eraser settings in the gray bar at the top of the screen.
- 6) Shrink the image size (Image -> Image Size) of the picture of you until your ghost is a good size to fit into the background image. Keep in mind that the two images you're looking at might be at different magnifications – in the Navigator window on the right hand side of the screen, you can change the percentages for each image to match so that they're at the same magnification to help you figure out the sizes.
- 7) Use the magic wand selector in the Tools box to select the transparent area around the picture of you.
- 8) Go to Edit -> Invert Selection to switch the selected area from the transparent section to the cutout of you.
- 9) Copy this selection and paste it into the background image. You can move it around by choosing the arrow from the Tools box.
- 10) In the Layers window, make sure that the layer with your picture in it is selected and click on the little box in the lower left corner and change the Mode to Screen. You can fade out your ghost even more by playing with the Opacity – the lower the percentage, the more faded you'll be.
- 11) Select the background layer and make the picture look old by going to the Adjustment menu and choosing Old Photo, Sepia, or Desaturate, or make it look like a night vision camera image by going to the Filter menu and choosing Night Vision.
- 12) Select the layer with your picture and Desaturate it in the Adjustment menu to fade the color from your ghost.
- 13) Still on the layer with your ghost in it, open up the eraser options in the gray bar at the top of screen, and change it to a large, soft brush (one of the blurry ones, and you can adjust the size and blurriness of it using the Diameter and Hardness sliders at the bottom of the box). Erase a little bit around your legs to make your ghost float a little bit, and erase a little bit around the rest of your picture to make your ghost look less substantial and blur any sharp edges, like you're fading into the background.
- 14) To save the image, go up to File -> Save, name your picture with your name, slide the Quality bar up to 100%, and click "OK." After you click "OK," you'll be able to choose to save it to the USB drive so we can bring the picture upstairs and print it out!