A1: Seeing is Believing

Jessica-Ann Murray
u3142933

Contents:

Goals:

Conspiracy theorists are starting to get a voice with the use and help of social media, and so a fake conspiracy about life on another planet or an alternate reality is not the craziest thing to be suggested/faked.

For the assignment I decided to make a fake Instagram account for a conspiracy theorist. They would post “real leaked images from NASA” of life on another world/ alternate reality where sea creatures such as jellyfish, whales, octopus etc. could be seen flying in the sky instead of underwater. They will come in many forms such as realistic, translucent and even ghostly appearances, all while striving to look as “realistically fake” as possible.

Context

Funny posts:
I began looking for Instagram posts similar to my conspiracy idea and couldn't find much but I found these couple of posts (below) that were "leaked NASA pictures" and thought they were pretty funny. While mine weren't going to be exactly humorous or super obviously fake, this was where I got my idea for turning my images into a series of conspiracy Instagram posts.originally my idea was a fake science page with fake news about "new evidence suggests..." but after seeing these I felt it was better suited to my idea.

https://www.instagram.com/p/BN_6ToKD-aS/?igshid=izkfqnfwlc9n

https://www.instagram.com/p/B3LnzOaB14l/

https://www.instagram.com/p/Bp4fNk1H32q/

Inspiration pages:
I then began to look for inspiration closer to what I was wanting to accomplish with my fake Instagram page and found these two classic flat earther/conspiracy pages that were as about ridiculous as expected but exactly what I was looking for. While mine weren't going to be quite as ridiculous these the images I made were still in the theme of fake conspiracy reveal "new worlds discovered" or "leaked NASA images from world like ours!".

https://www.instagram.com/flat_earth_conspiracy/?hl=en

https://www.facebook.com/FlatEarthToday/

https://medium.com/@nnwasokwa/sell-a-reality-without-using-words-fastest-way-to-do-it-da6416be821

I then started diving into work by other people who are good at photoshop to find inspiration and came across these two series of images by Rama Krisna Mukti Adi and Ted Chin. Both have made some amazing surrealist images, and many had sea creatures and similar themes to what I was going for with mine. I fell in love with their images and tried to achieve something similar with my own. There is also a link to series of images I found on Pinterest and while they aren't exactly what I was going for I found them inspirational and really amazing to look at.

https://www.boredpanda.com/surreal-digital-art-kresna-rama/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic

https://www.thisiscolossal.com/tags/photoshop/

https://www.reddit.com/r/photoshop/comments/rdecy7/a_fishy_alternate_reality/

https://www.pinterest.com.au/pin/563018677897318/

Image 1, Beach

1080px X 1080px

Image 2, Camping

1080px X 1080px

Image 3, Lake

1080px X 1080px

Image 4, Forest

1080px X 1080px

Process: Image 1, Beach

My image was constructed fully in Photoshop using images from Creative Commons sites. I began by picking a background image of a beach and a colourful beach/night sky to use as an overlay for colour and stars. I also found an image of a planet in which I used the same technique of adjusting the blending mode seen in screenshot 1. For both I used either lighten or screen to achieve a seamless base image.

Then I found images of jellyfish, selected them, and masked them to cut them out. I went through about 10 different jellyfish (cutting and placing in the image) before I found some that I liked enough to use in the final product. Masking is new to me, so it was a struggle as Ive been taught using layers and not non-destructive editing (lots of duplicate layers instead of masking). I rewatched the masking tutorials to finally understand how it works and why it is better and I'm happy to say I get it now. Moving on I again changed the blending mode, this time to luminosity, this seemed to work best after many tries and gave an interesting effect where they were in "black and white", but the colour of the background showed through. This worked well as it gave them a translucent look which is normal for a jellyfish. After changing the blending mode some of them were still a bit dark so I had to play around with the levels/ saturation to make them all similar and cohesive across the image.

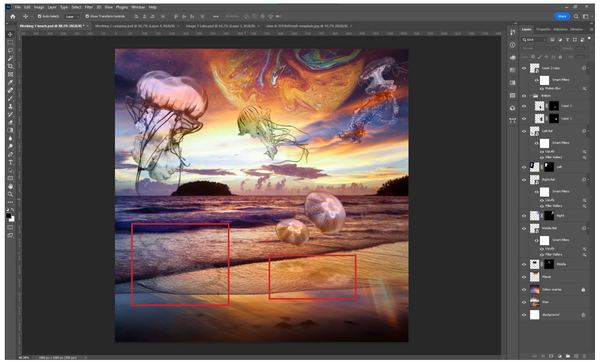
Finally, to finish I made sone reflections in the water to give a better illusion of being real. These took a lot of work, but I began by duplicating the jellyfish, flipping vertically, and using the skew transform option to angle them more realistically. Then I had the issue of them being flat on the water so on each of them I applied an ocean ripple filter. This again took a lot of fiddling around for a while to get the desired effect of being on water. I then changed the opacity and used the liquify tool to bend them to the water shape a bit better particularly at the front where there are waves.

1

2

3

4



Process: Image 2, Camping

Similar to the first one I began by finding a base image and an overlay for a water effect again changing the blending mode for a seamless transition. With this one I wanted to keep the tent/grass/person clear of the water effect, so I had to cut and duplicate them to be on top of that effect. The water effect was to simulate the ocean in the sky without taking away from the space scene too much.

I again found images of sea creatures to use in the image and I found a few that had directive light on them. I thought this would be a challenge but because of the light from the head torch and tent, I was able to place them in a position to work with the light adding to the realism. The whale and remora as seen in screenshot 3 were positioned in the light of the head torch as they both had light at the front/underneath of the head. The school of fish I had issues with as the light was coming from above and there was no light source to match. I then just decided to flip them as they look relatively the same from either direction, and placed them near the tent. I also went down a slightly different route with these as I change the blending mode similar to the first one, but I used screen. Because of the blue ocean overlay, this gave them a translucent/ghost/bioluminescent look to them which just worked with the background.

Finally, I added in a planet as it is a running theme through the images for “leaked NASA images of other worlds” that adds to the realism of being on another planet. Again, I change the blending mode and opacity but also blurred the edges to bland into the background better.

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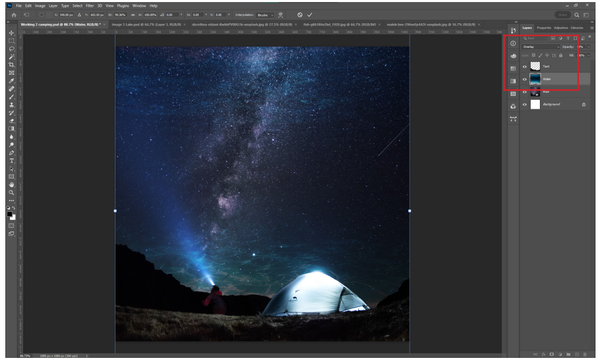

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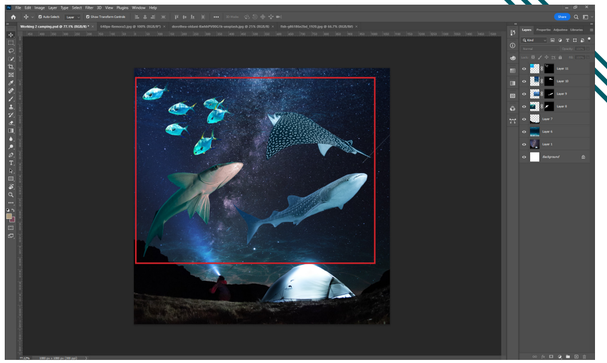

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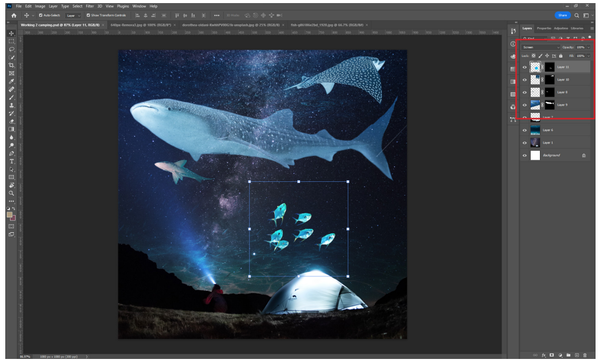

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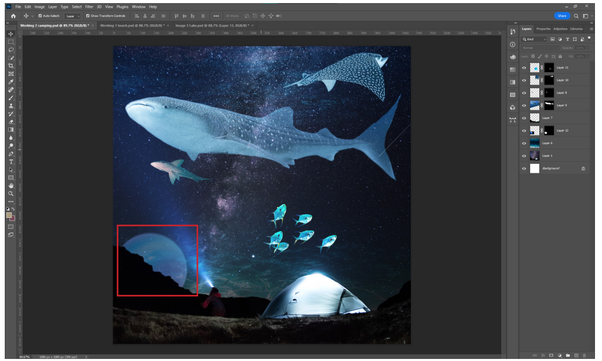

Process: Image 3, Lake

This third image was created a little differently from the last two as I felt I didn't need to add an overlay image onto it. I did however need to edit out tourists and some canoes as seen in the original image (compared to the screenshot). I achieved this by using the clone stamp tool and the blemish tool which allowed them to disappear almost seamlessly.

I found my images of octopus that I wanted to use as seen in screenshot two and again used selection and masking to cut them out. What is not seen is the 3-4 other octopus I went through as well as some cuttlefish. I changed this image about three or more times before finally finishing on these octopus as it just never sat right and took a lot of changing and chopping.

After finally deciding the hard work began! The centre octopus didn't require too much work after the masking, I mostly adjusted the saturation to match the duller colours of the background, the reflection however took much more effort. I made my way through many filters to try imitating the ripple effect in the water, finally finishing on the ocean ripple again with different settings. I also used the liquify tool in an attempt to make it appear as if it is moving with the ripple, and in the end I think came out almost spot on.

The next big task was the octopus on the mountain as it had to appear as if it was actually on the mountain. For this one I had a go at puppet warping which is not something I have used much. In the end I think it worked out well having moved the lower limbs to bend over the edges of the mountain. I then struggled with colour and lighting as it is very bright and the area is very shadowed, after playing around with it for a while I found my solution. In screenshot four you can see I have used a clipped layer into the octopus. For this I made a square selection on a new layer above the octopus (on the mountain) and then applied a black-transparent gradient effect to the square. I then clipped this to the octopus layer creating a shadow effect to match the background. I also duplicated the octopus, made it black and applied a blur to make a shadow for underneath it.

For the tentacle in the sky, I applied the same techniques/colour adjustments as the first two but used the masking technique to blend it into the clouds. Using black with a 100% soft brush, I slowly painted away the base of the tentacle where it meets the clouds to softly blend it. The clouds are wispy which allowed for a more seamless blend.

Finally, I added a planet the same way as the others by masking and adjusting the blending mode.

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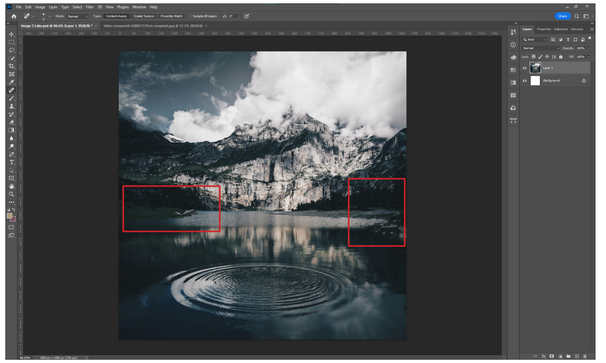

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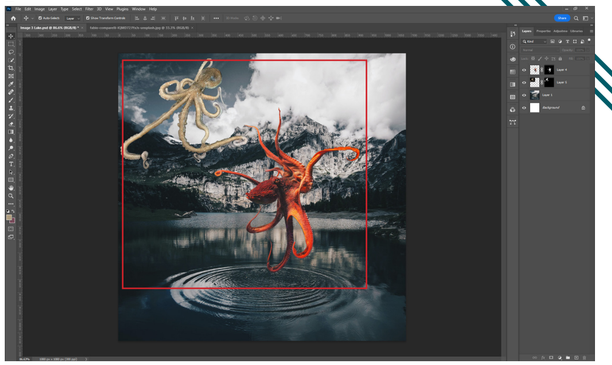

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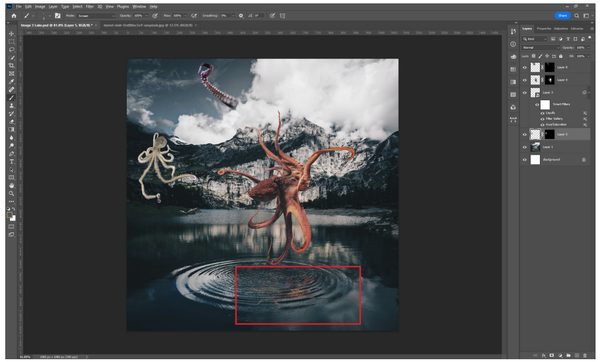

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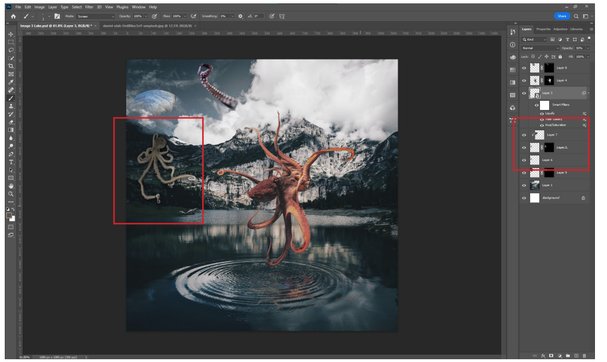

Process: Image 4, Forest

This image was again different in a few ways, the first being a much more enclosed space than the other three, having little to no sky at all. It is also a little less clear with a foggy haze and a blurry subject in the foreground. Still, I felt it worked in the way I wanted it to despite being unable to place a planet in the image.

I then spent a long time trying to decide on what sea creatures to use that would work in the space, finally deciding on the turtle and seahorse. These were a real challenge in terms of colour and lighting. I spent a good portion of time trying to adjust different things like hue/saturation, RGB levels, curve levels etc and nothing seemed to be working. I stopped and thought about it for a bit and remembered a technique I used for something some time back. I used a sepia colour filter, and in doing so made them a colour that was more cohesive with the background as seen in screenshot two.

Also seen in screenshot two is the new placement and adjustments made to blend into the background better. For the turtle I wanted it to appear as though it was flying in under the branch and so I had to then make a duplicate of the branch to go over the turtles back. Similarly for the seahorse I had to make it appear as though its tail was wrapped around the tree. This one took a bit of extra work as I had to use the puppet tool again to position it where I needed to then cut out areas of the tail.

Finally, I had to fix the colours/shading to match the environment on both the sea creatures and the overall image. For the sea creatures I went through again a series of adjustments/overlays to no end as nothing appeared to be working for me. I then tried the dodge and burn tools to be able to make them darker/lighter where I needed it to be. These worked really well particularly on the seahorse as I was able to keep the base of the tail/top of the head light and “in the sun” while the rest was in the dark of that corner. I also used it to make a shadow from the branch on the turtles back.

The last things I did were, make a a large square box filled white and apply a motion blur effect on it to appear as fog and adjust the saturation of the overall image slightly.

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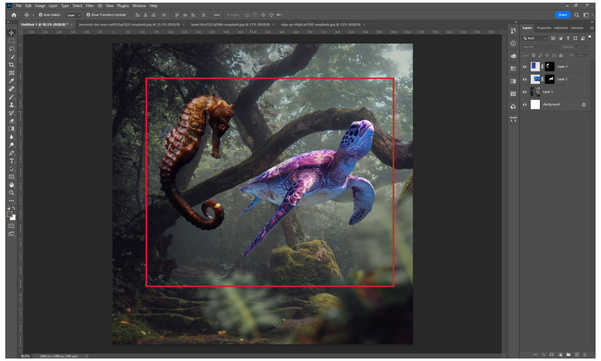

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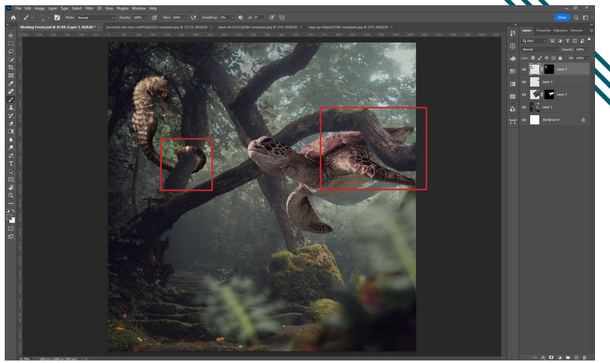

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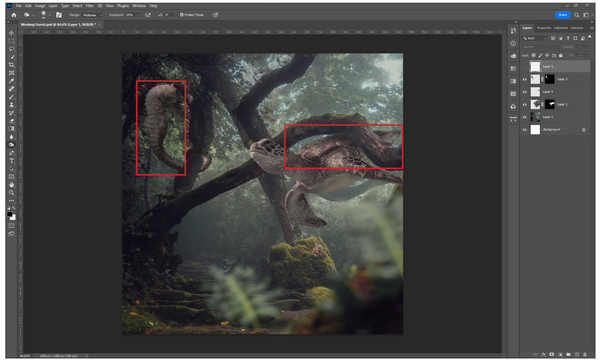

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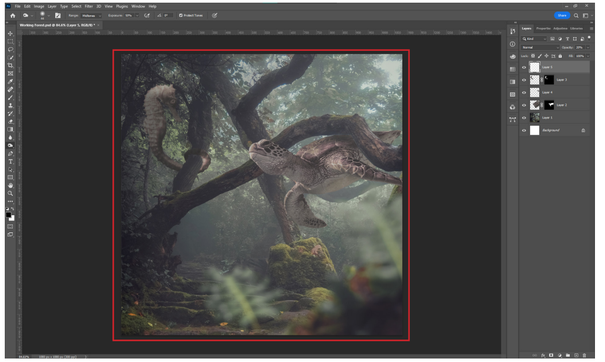

Application of Concepts

The main thing I have taken from the tutorial videos and theory work is the use of masking and non-destructive editing. As stated earlier when first taught how to use photoshop I mostly used an abundance of layers and duplicates to achieve my desired effect which I've come to realise is ridiculous. Masking has allowed for a margin of error as I can just paint back in what I cut too much off of whereas I had to do extra cutting or recutting of images before if I made a mistake.

In addition to this I really took away the colour theory and adjustments to do with RBG. When editing the levels of images now I've been looking at not just the overall levels but the RGB levels to balance out the colour better. I was also very interested to learn about how colours can cancel each other out making them appear more accurate/normal. For example, a blue image can be cancelled out by orange because they are opposites on the colour wheel. This has helped a great deal through this assignment by allowing for easier more thoughtful colour adjustments.

I also began looking for images with/without light sources more specifically instead of just an image I think looks good to help the image look more realistic. I specifically look for the direction of the light in regard to whatever base image I have used to make sure it won't be an opposite effect such as a person with the sun in their eyes but the sun behind them in the background. This is not something I particularly looked at when making images but have during the assignment particularly in image two.

I still haven't quite wrapped my head around the channels and the sizing of the images but I'm trying! I do try and match the quality of the placed image to the background so that they don't look too different but don't specifically look at the sizes of the images being used as I don't fully yet comprehend what happens when you change the size of the picture but I'm working on it.

Critical Reflection

Overall, I got the result I wanted but there were definitely some bumps along the way. I'm very happy with how they turned out, but each had its difficulties.

For image one, the beach, I was really happy with the use of the blending modes to create the background using two images. What I struggled with was finding images of jellyfish that worked. Some had too complicated of a background or some in a similar sense had really simple backgrounds, but the jellyfish blended into them too much for a clean cut. I went through about 10 different jellyfish through trial and error to find some that worked for me. I also had an astronaut that was in the image to begin with, I even had to puppet warp him and add a shadow to look how I wanted it but in the end it just wasn't really working for me and felt it best to leave it out of the image.

In image two the camping one I was really happy with the lighting situation. I felt I found some good images to work with the light of the torch and tent that were cohesive. The one part I'm not sure I achieved as well as the first was the blending of the background. I had an under-water ocean overlay on top of the starry sky. I think if I were to do this one again I would have just done a blue coloured overlay instead of the ocean as it has become a bit noisy against the already spotted/starry background.

For image three I did not do an overlay image on the background and instead had to edit out some tourists. I believe I achieved a really seamless edit on this and was happy with how it turned out. The other thing I was incredibly happy with was the reflection of the main (orange) octopus in the foreground as I had to give it a ripple effect to match the ripple in the background. I think if I were to do this one again, I would spend more time on the mountain octopus to create better shadowing and better puppet warping to mould it to the mountain. I also similarly to the first image went through a number of octopus and at one point cuttlefish images, to find something that worked. I ended up having to adapt my image with the orange octopus as I was I unable to find an exact image of what I wanted (an octopus swimming when it does the jet motion and is long and sleek).

Finally in image four I was really happy with how the turtle and mist turned out. I believe I achieved a relatively seamless affect with the turtle "flying" under the branch and the mist seems very natural to the image. The biggest struggle I had in this image was the shadowing of the seahorse to blend into the darker corner of the foliage. I tried many things such as using an image of a leafy shadow and changing the blending modes, cutting it out, changing opacity etc and nothing was really working the way I needed it to. I spent a long time on this and ended up using the burn and dodge tools to try and create the effect I needed. In doing so it is not as seamless as I had hoped but it was the best of the many different methods I tried.

The last one is actually my favourite as well as certain features of the third one. The third one I love with just the centre octopus and nothing else but for the purpose of the assignment I added in extra to put more effort in than just the one. The last one is my favourite as it is the simplest and possibly the most effective, I would even print it and put it on my wall!

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