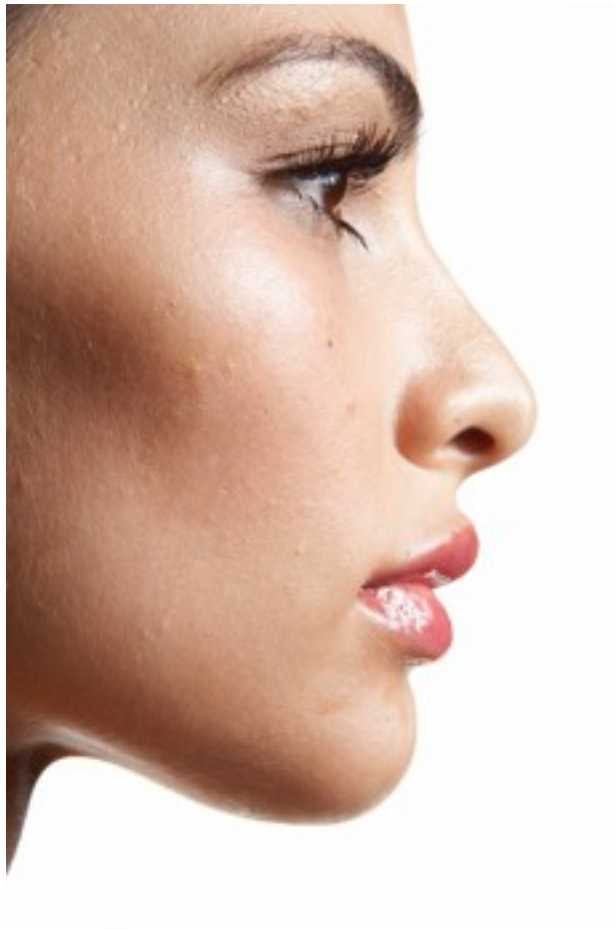


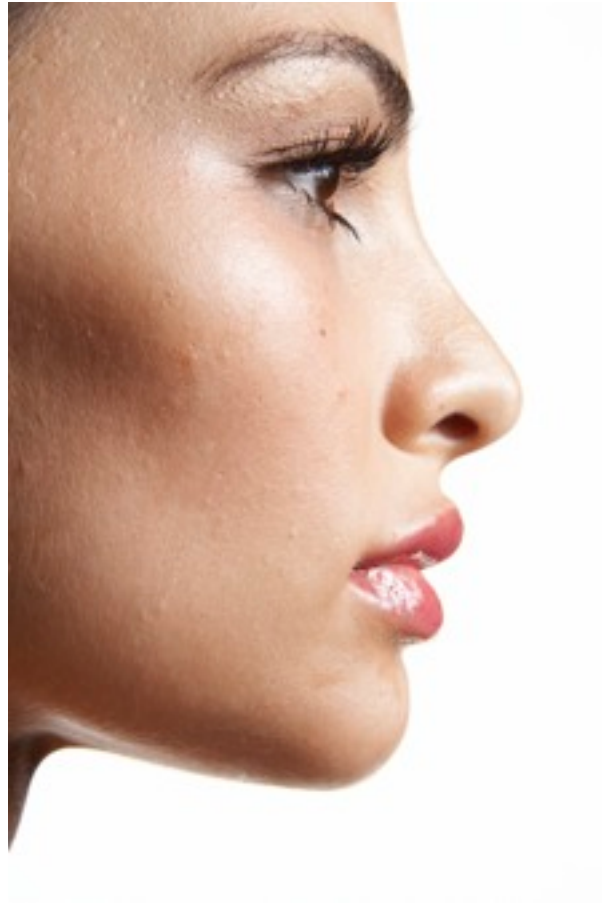
EFFECTIVELY USING THE LIQUIFY TOOL IN PHOTOSHOP CS3



LIQUIFYING CONSTRUCTIVELY

The Liquify tool is one of the most frequently used tools in Photoshop and at the same time it is probably one of the most misunderstood tools in the application. At least as far as utilizing it properly for what needs to be done. And lets face it, everyone loves to bend and squish an image into submission at some point. Its a lot of fun to experiment and show others that there is really nothing that you can't do.

But horsing around aside, Liquify is an essential tool in any Retouchers arsenal no matter what type of retoucher they are. And if what you see in the media is to be believed it is used way to much. But when used subtly and with the right finesse it can be undetectable without knowing what the original image looked like.



The image above has been altered slightly using the Liquify tool. It perhaps took 2 minutes to do yet it is a large 11x16.5 inch 300 dpi file. Granted with the power of most graphics computers this might not cause a slowdown with some, but for others it can be a deadline breaker. What if the Liquify move came from the customer after you thought the image was completed?

Can you imagine Liquifying every mask and layer that might be in an images Layers Palette? With some retouchers some of these images can have close to 100 layers in them that might need tweaking. Or better yet there are some Photographers who like to tweak the image to get it where they like quickly and hand it off to a Hi-End Retoucher to replicate. Color moves are more readily matched but figuring out the nuances of where a Photographer has pushed and pulled is altogether a different and much harder task.

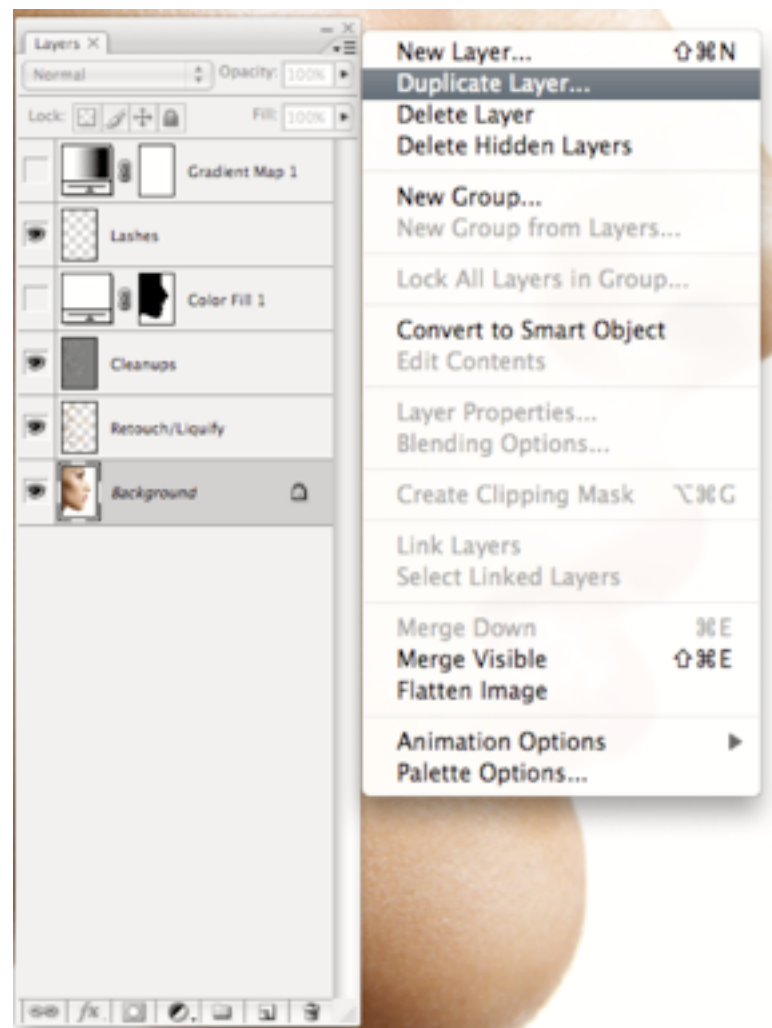
Except for applying the Liquify to all of the layers and masks etc (more on this later), all of the above are actually quickly and easily accomplished with a simple step that will work no matter how large the file may be. An action can quickly be set up to make the process even smoother.

One of the biggest problems with hiding the fact that any kind of Liquifying has been done is that there are usually always some form of artifacts left behind. These can be pixels stretched farther than any decent pixel should be pushed, to ridges where the area that was worked was so big that the brush size becomes a detriment to accomplishing smooth clean edges. A lot of the brush problems also stem from slower redraw and waiting for the brush strokes to catch up. Then once you are done with all of the reshaping that needs to be done it needs to apply to the image. And as we are all painfully aware the larger the image the slower the render. Its done usually just in time to see that something was pushed to far or that something was missed altogether. Or sometimes a mask is needed to minimize the load time into the Liquify environment. It certainly can speed things up

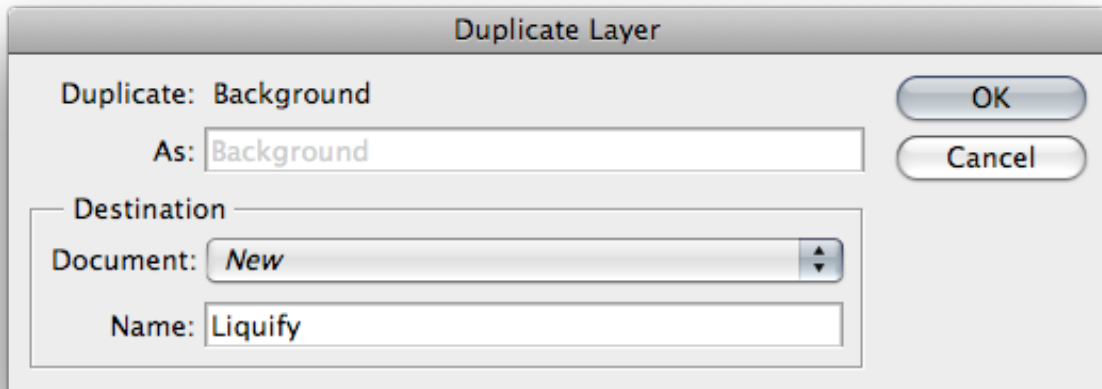
but what happens when you accidentally deselect or delete the mask used and can not longer apply it to the same area on a different layer? The other problem with Liquifying through a selected area is that you lose perspective on how it will tie in with the rest of the image. How can you? You can't see the rest of the image.

Here is the first thing that you need to do. Duplicate the main layer or a copy of the main layer as a new document. The following image has already started having work done to it so it is a perfect place to see what happens.

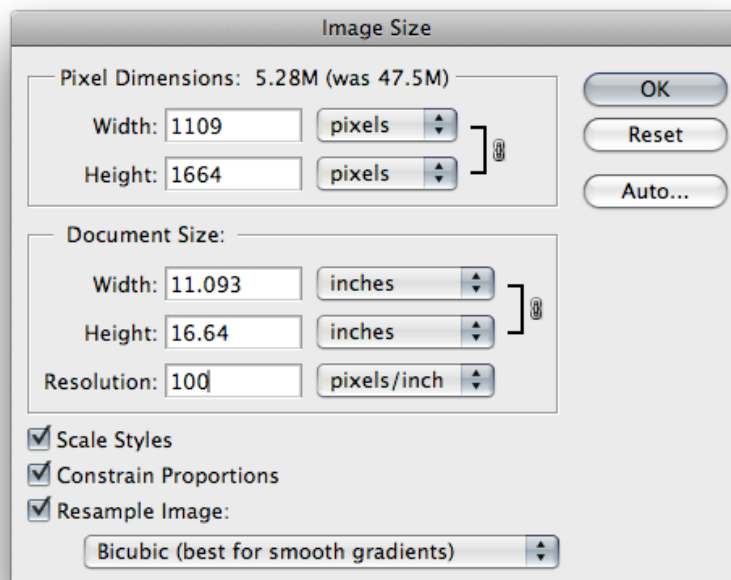
- First thing to do: Duplicate the background Layer. It doesn't matter if the color is wrong or if there has been no retouching done to it. You just want to have the entire image in this layer(It could very well be that there is no Background layer in the image. Just make sure it has all of the elements of the file on it). Click on the Background layer to select it. Using the pull down menu at the top right corner of the Layers Palette select Duplicate layer. This can also be achieved by choosing Dupli-



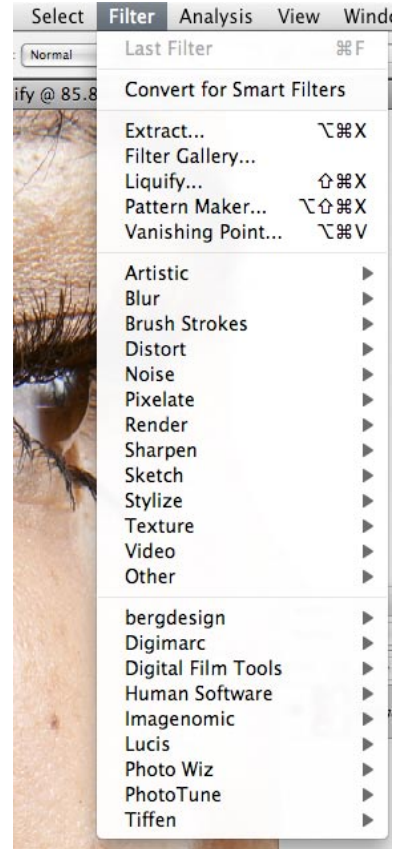
cate from the Layer pulldown in the Menu bar. When the Duplicate Layer dialog box pops up name the layer and document anything you'd like. I went with Liquify. So long as its very different from the originals name. Click OK and a new Image should appear on screen with the name you chose.



- Once the image is open proceed to Image Size from the Image pull-down in the Menu Bar. Select the Resolution Box and enter 72 or 100. Make sure that Constrain Proportions and Resample Image are selected. If they aren't then the images physical dimensions will be different from the original images.



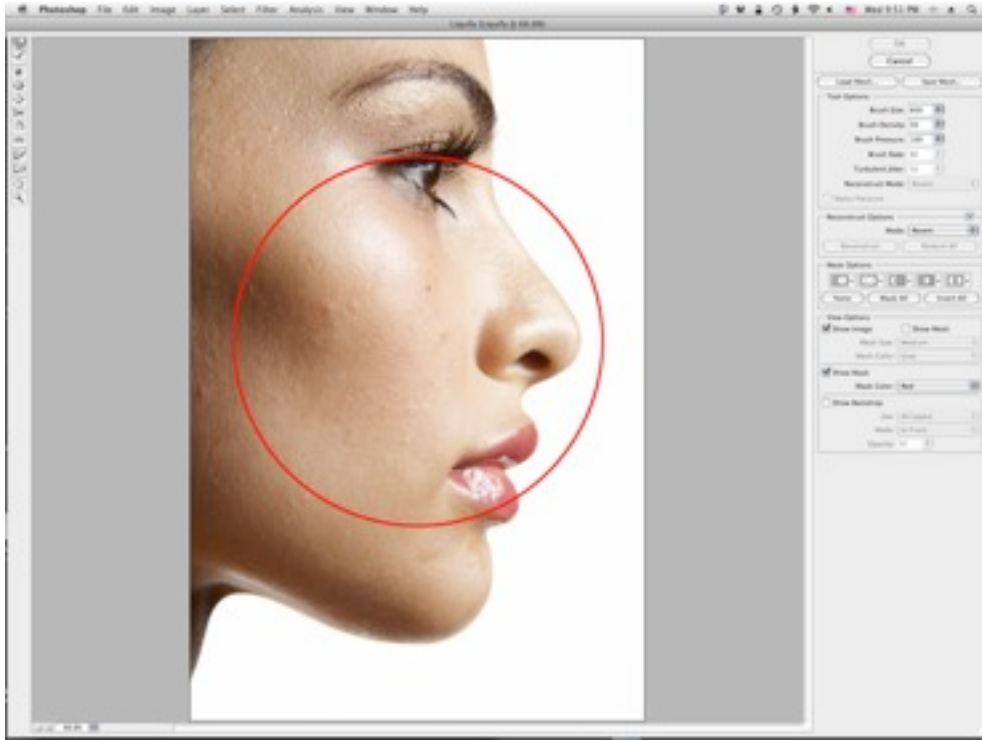
- Now that you have a new image its time to launch Liquify from the Filters pulldown in the menu bar.



Before we go any further with this, take a look at the two images on the next page. One image is 100 dpi and the other is 300 dpi. Care to take a guess which one is which? Back at the beginning of this article we talked about brush size and how monumentally helpful it would be to have brushes that were adequate for the job. Which brush would you rather use to push pixels around. The larger one that allows you to move more pixels in a more subtle manner or the little brush that will take forever to even out a line without leaving little dents to give it away.

The larger brush is the 100 dpi image. Incidentally, you wont always need a brush that size so luckily the smaller ones are as equally effective.

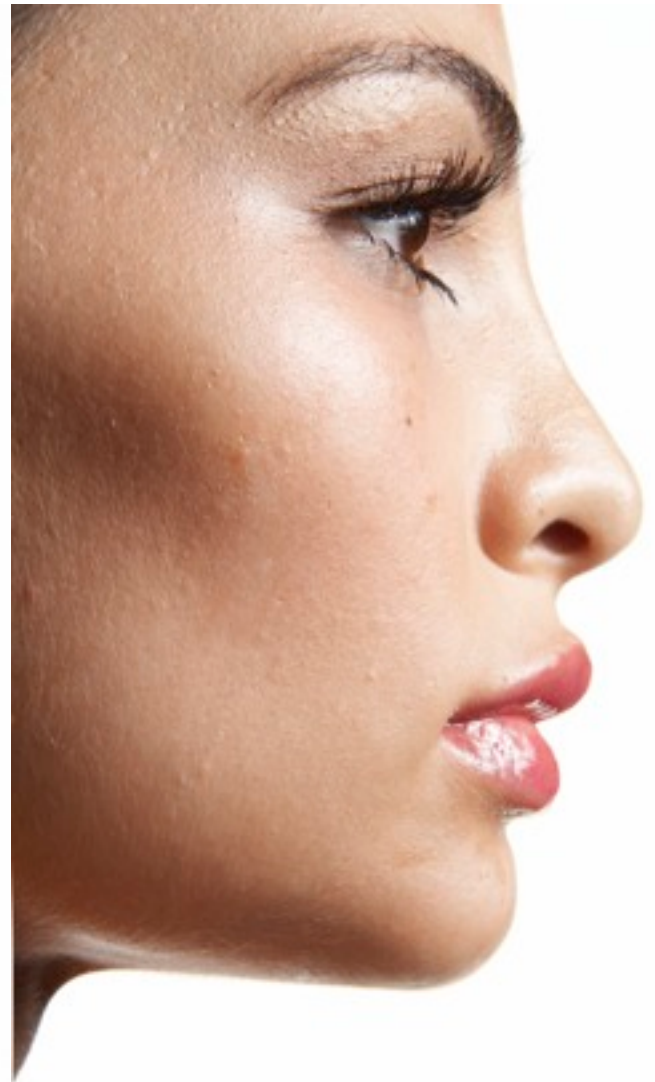
They will be moving quite quickly and smoothly on nearly any graphics computer out there currently running Photoshop. Plus an additional benefit is nearly instant before and afters. Try THAT with a 300 dpi effectively!



As a quick and not exactly precise example, here is what was achieved with a 600 pixel brush and a 280 pixel brush. All in about 15 seconds. Please keep in mind that Liquify is used for more than just reshaping a person. This Liquify below is an extreme move and one that I rarely if ever do. Retouchers do need to show constraint, ya know?



Before



After

Moving on, now that you have your image in Liquify, use the top left tool in the tool bar on the left. The one that looks like you are going to be finger painting. Its actually called the Forward Warp tool.

Going down from that tool there are the Reconstruct Tool, which allows you to undo using brush strokes.

The Twirl Clockwise tool (hold down the option/alt key to twirl counter-clockwise).

The Pucker Tool to pinch in areas, (hold down the option/alt key to Bulge out).

The Bulge tool (hold down the option/alt key to Pucker).

The Push Left Tool, which incidentally also pushes areas the opposite way you might move your cursor.

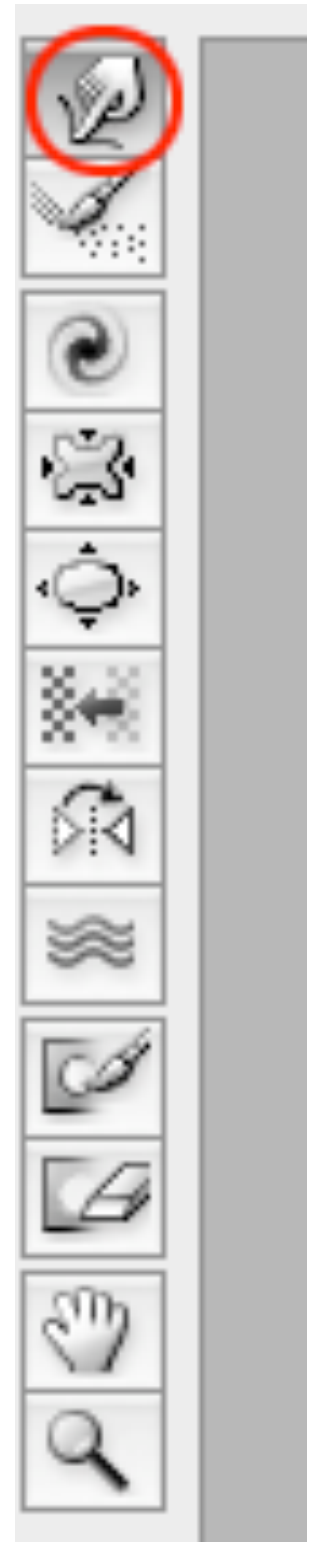
The Mirror tool, which if you push far enough will eventually flip it like a mirror image.

The Turbulence Tool which, when you hold the mouse button/ Pen tip down causes animated swirls like moving water.

The Freeze Mask Tool which allows you to paint a mask to an adjacent area that you don't want to change.

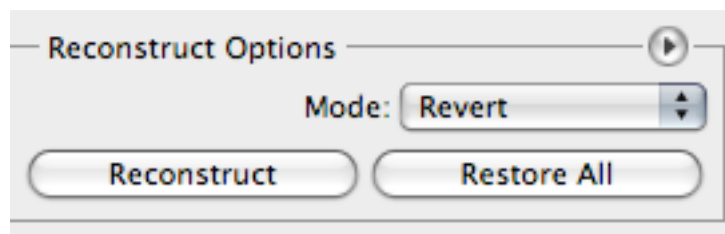
The Thaw mask tool, which allows you to edit that mask you made.

And well... the last two are self explanatory I think. Just like their counter parts in Photoshop.



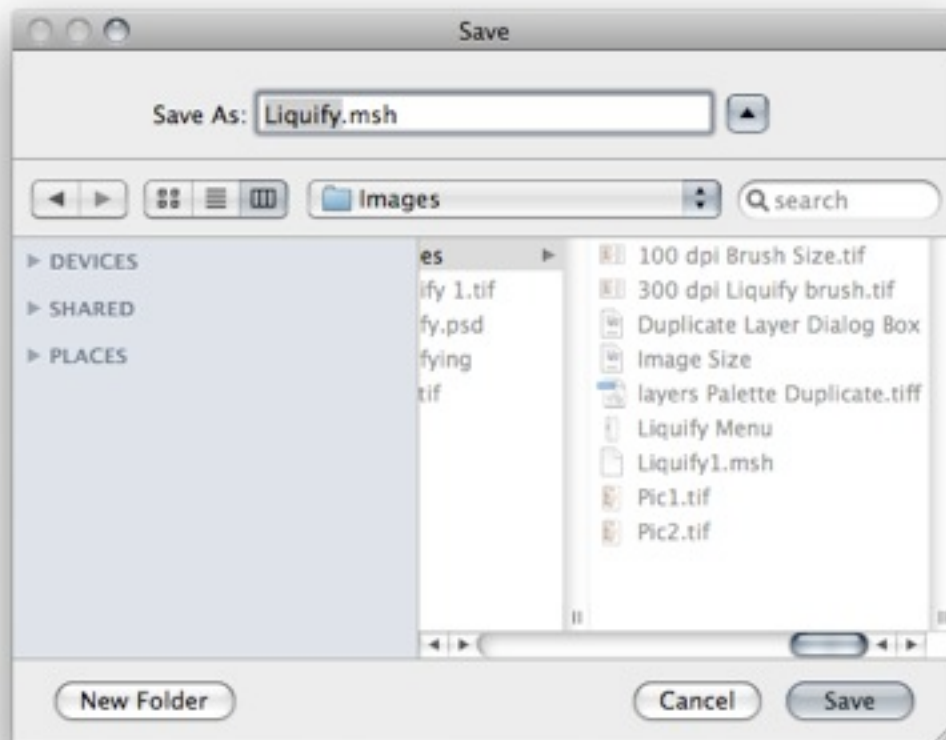
Changing brush size also has quick keys. They are the bracket keys to make bigger or smaller. Add the shift key to do so rapidly. There are also multiple undo's available in Liquify. Command/control-z to undo. Command/Control-Shift-z to undo multiple moves and Option/alt-command/control-z to redo multiple moves.

Also available to you are Reconstruct and Restore all buttons, The Restore button is real handy. One you get done with your Liquifying click on it once to reset the image to its original form. Now if you undo, you can go back and forth to see the difference between the two to see if you missed anything.



The Reconstruct will gradually reconstruct the image each time you click the button using the mode of choice from the pulldown menu. If you wish to have some finer control of this click on the little arrow and choose a reconstruct mode. A slider will pop up and give you that exactly that control you are seeking.

Once you have finished with your Liquify, don't click ok! Here is where the most important part of all this comes in. Well... its all important, but this can save you a lot of time both now and in the future. In the top right hand of the Liquify environment there are two buttons that will save you tremendous time. They are the Load Mesh and Save Mesh buttons.



Once you are done, click on Save Mesh to save all of the Liquify moves to a .mesh file that can then be reloaded with the Load Mesh button. Don't forget to name it something like the original image name with .mesh at the end. This will let you apply it to the original hi-res version of the image. It will also let Photographers dabble with their images and send you the mesh file along with markups. Just remember though that if the image is cropped or resized in a way that changes the physical dimensions of the file

the mesh is mush. Not useable. One other reason this .mesh file will save you time. If you have one of those files that has been worked on for a while and has a gazillion layers and masks you can apply the .mesh file to all of them and be assured of exactness. Right? Well sort of. If the file is going to be sent to someone as a flattened file, whether as RGB or CMYK, apply it to the flattened file. That will save you tons of time and if it needs to be undone you always have the layered file to go back to. Just save the .mesh file in the same folder as the layered file and you will never lose it.

CHRIS TARANTINO IS A HI-END BEAUTY RETOUCHER, AUTHOR, AND INSTRUCTOR WITH OVER 25 YEARS OF RETOUCHING EXPERIENCE. HE HAS WORKED ON IMAGES FOR MANY OF THE MOST PROLIFIC PHOTOGRAPHERS IN THE BUSINESS AND IS CURRENTLY WITH VAUGHT STUDIO. HE IS PRESENTLY HARD AT WORK COMPILING A PRO LEVEL RETOUCHING DVD.