

ESSENTIAL AFFINITY PHOTO 2

THE QUICKEST WAY TO LEARN AFFINITY PHOTO
2 DESKTOP

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INTRODUCTION



It was mid-2015 when I first learned about Affinity Photo. A member of my Lenscraft website asked if I would consider writing an Affinity Photo book, like my Essential Photoshop book. At the time Affinity Photo was only available on the Mac and touted by some as a replacement for Photoshop. Although I had seen several supposed replacements over the years, none were very satisfactory. This made me sceptical that Affinity Photo would be any different. It was only after buying my first Mac, and the growing demand for a book, that I decided to investigate it further.

From the very first time that I opened Affinity Photo, I was impressed. Not only was the software affordable, but it was high quality and truly provided a viable alternative to Photoshop. Also being an experienced Photoshop user myself, I found I could quickly transfer my knowledge to the new software. This was finally the new, powerful photo editor that the market seemed to be demanding.

It's now November 2022 and the popularity of Affinity Photo has continued to grow. As I write this, version 2 of the software has just been released with some exciting new features. I've therefore decided to update my book to include these (where relevant) and share my latest thinking to help you learn the software. Whilst readers of my earlier

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book may recognise some of the image examples, the entire book has been updated and rewritten.

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

I hope that you find this book a little different from others that may be available. Most important is that it's written for photographers by a photographer. While other users may benefit, it's intended to help photographers who want to improve and enhance their photographs. If you're someone who doesn't have previous experience with Affinity Photo, you will probably find it ideal.

It's important to understand why the book is called Essential Affinity Photo. This is because it explains the essential skills and techniques that help you quickly master using the software. In doing so, it cuts out the many options and alternatives that software like Affinity Photo offers. You don't need to know 80% of what Affinity Photo can do to make a photo look good. What you do need to know is the 20% of essential features. That's what this book describes and will help you to master.

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS BOOK

To get the most value from this book, please don't dip in and out of the different sections; at least not initially. The chapters and sections have been carefully arranged in a sequence to:

1. Help you learn the material.
2. Minimise repetition and unnecessary information.

What this means is that you need to understand the information in each chapter before moving to the next. When you skip a chapter or section, it's extremely likely that you will miss something important. This will make understanding later material difficult. The organisation of the material keeps this book concise. Information, features, and tools are introduced at the point you need to know about them, not necessarily where you expect to find them grouped.

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This book also contains many practice exercises. Early in the book, the exercises are numbered. Their purpose is to reinforce the information presented and highlight additional points. It's therefore important to complete them, by downloading the supporting sample images and following along in Affinity Photo. Later in the book, once you've gained a foundation knowledge, you may find an entire section or chapter becomes an exercise to follow and may not necessarily be numbered.

Please be sure to download the accompanying files from my website. You will find them on the "Downloads for Books" page which you can reach with the link <https://lenscraft.co.uk/learn-photo-editing-books/useful-downloads-books/>. Most people learn best by doing and not just by reading. Where you make changes to an image, be sure to save them at the end of each chapter. You will return to reuse some of these as you progress to later chapters in the book.

COMPUTERS, OPERATING SYSTEMS & SOFTWARE VERSIONS

I've written and illustrated this book with the Mac version of Affinity Photo 2 for Desktop, but it still applies if you're using a Windows PC. The Mac and Windows versions of Affinity Photo 2 are similar and what applies to one will apply to the other.

Some minor differences do exist in a few areas, and these are highlighted in the book when important. One of these is the keyboard shortcuts, because of the different keyboard layouts used by the Mac and PC. For example, the Windows PC has Ctrl and Alt keys whereas the Mac has Cmd and Option keys. As I'm working on a Mac, I have shown the Mac keystrokes first followed by the Windows equivalent.

Although I developed this book using Affinity Photo 2 for Desktop, a lot of the material can still be applied to earlier versions of the software. What you may not realise is that very few changes in the essential features in most software releases. If it did, we would all be struggling to relearn how to use every new release. That's a scenario that wouldn't benefit the software companies and they know it. But when you learn

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Affinity Photo using the material in this book, you will find yourself able to work with any future releases.

LEGAL STUFF

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Disclaimer

I have made every effort to ensure the information in this book is accurate and factual, but it does represent my opinions and approach. Some may disagree with the information I present, but to the best of my knowledge, there are no omissions or errors. If you find something you think I need to correct, please contact me by emailing robin@lenscraft.co.uk. I will then include any corrections in future versions of the book.

Thank you to everyone feeding back on the first version of this book. Your comments, suggestions, and queries have helped to greatly improve this second edition.

ONE

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF AFFINITY PHOTO



When I first began using Affinity Photo, it felt as though the software had a mind of its own. As I worked on editing my photography, the user interface and tools seemed to continually change. And it appears, I'm not the only person who feels like this. Having talked to and exchanged emails with many Affinity Photo users over the years, this appears to be a common problem.

In this essential first chapter, we will start by exploring the Affinity Photo user interface. It explains the various components of the software and how you can use the flexibility they offer. You may be tempted to think you can skip this because you already understand the software; please don't. I promise you there will be things in this chapter that you don't know, and which will make the rest of this book easier to follow.

PLEASE DON'T SKIP THIS CHAPTER!

LAUNCHING AFFINITY PHOTO

When you first launch Affinity Photo, you will see a start-up screen like the one shown below.

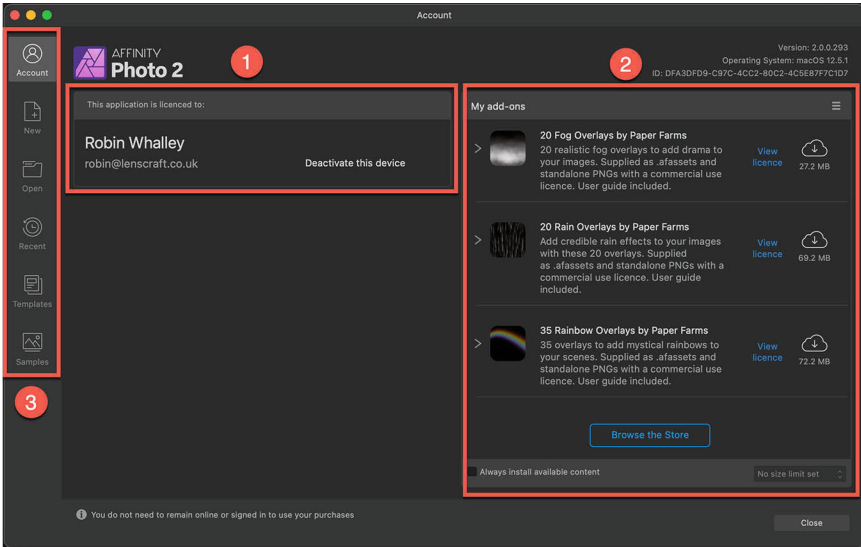


Figure 1 - The Affinity Photo Account dialog

This dialog shows the Account page which links to your account on the Affinity website. Here you can see that the software is licensed to me (1) and links to my account.

If you purchase any Add-ons on the Affinity website, they then appear on the right of the dialog (2). Add-ons include things like Brushes and Overlays which you can then use with Affinity Photo.

Each entry in the list can be expanded to show more detail of what's available, for example, Brushes, Images and User Guides. To the right of the entry, you might see a small cloud icon with an arrow inside. This indicates that the Asset or Add-on is available for download. Click this icon and the asset is downloaded and installed to your copy of Affinity Photo. A Tick then replaces the cloud icon to show the Add-on is installed and ready for use. Below the list of Add-ons, there is a button to "Browse the Store". Click this and it will open your computer web browser, taking you to a page where you can purchase further Add-ons.

At the bottom right of the Account dialog is the Close button. Click this and it closes the Account dialog, leaving you with an empty screen.

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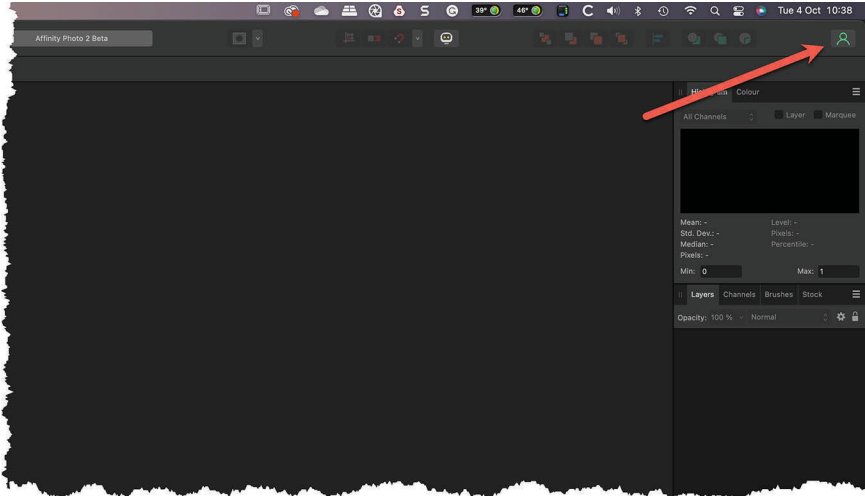


Figure 2 - Accessing the Account Dialog using the Account icon in the toolbar

You can reopen the account dialog at any time by clicking the Account icon in the toolbar at the top right of the interface.

In addition to the Account dialog, there are several other dialogs you can access using the icons (3) on the left. These are:

- New – which can be used to create a new empty image document.
- Open – launches the Open dialog where you can select an image to open and work with.
- Recent – displays a list of files that you've recently worked on, together with a thumbnail for each.
- Templates – which can be used for image layouts (outside the scope of this book).
- Samples – containing sample images which you can download from the Affinity website to open. These can be helpful to understand how different effects are built up in Affinity Photo, but at the same time, their complexity can be overwhelming. The example images often involve advanced editing techniques, and you may find yourself becoming lost if you don't have the knowledge in this book.

You can also access many of these dialogs from other areas of the Affinity Photo software. For example, if you select New from the File menu at the top of the interface, you will see the New Document dialog displayed. You will also see that it's the same dialog we have been looking at above.

Now let's discuss what has been a common area of confusion for many Affinity Photo users. The Personas.

UNDERSTANDING THE AFFINITY PHOTO PERSONAS

Affinity Photo makes extensive use of something it calls Personas. This can sound a little confusing at first, but you will soon become used to the idea. There are five of these Personas and each one is like a separate area of Affinity Photo. They are:

- Photo Persona
- Liquify Persona
- Develop Persona
- Tone Mapping Persona
- Export Persona

The best way to understand these is to think of Affinity Photo as being like your house. In your house, you will probably have separate rooms, each with a different function. You might have a bedroom where you sleep, a bathroom where you wash, a kitchen where you cook etc.

When you go into one of these rooms, you immediately recognise it as a room. It has walls, a ceiling, at least one door, possibly a window and a floor. But then, there may be things you find in a room that allow it to serve a special purpose. For example, there is a bed in the bedroom or a cooker in the Kitchen. And it's the same with the Affinity Photo Personas.

Each Affinity Photo Persona is like a room in a house. The different Personas all have common features like menus and tools. Because of these, you recognise them as part of Affinity Photo. But then the Personas also have special features that are designed for a specific purpose and which you only find in that Persona.

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To help you become comfortable with Personas, let's complete a simple exercise. You will find a lot of exercises in this book, and they are an important part of the learning process. Be sure to spend time completing them, even if you need to return to them later.

EXERCISE 1.1 – UNDERSTANDING PERSONAS

Begin by opening the image file “Chapter 01 – Sample 01.jpg” which accompanies the book. If you haven't yet downloaded the accompanying files, you can use any JPEG format image.

To open the image, select “File | Open...” from the menu. This will display a dialog where you can navigate to different folders on your computer and choose the image to open.

When the image opens, Affinity Photo will look something like the screenshot below.



Figure 3 - Affinity Photo screen layout when first opening an image file

Don't worry if the layout of your screen isn't exactly like mine, we'll fix that shortly.

In a house, we can move the furniture around to suit our preferences. In each Affinity Photo Persona, it's the same. You can move and change

different elements of the interface to suit your preferences. Later I'll show you how to do this for yourself.

Now look at the top left of the illustration, where you can see a red rectangle around five icons. These icons represent the different Affinity Photo Personas. You can see a closeup of the icons below with each Persona numbered.

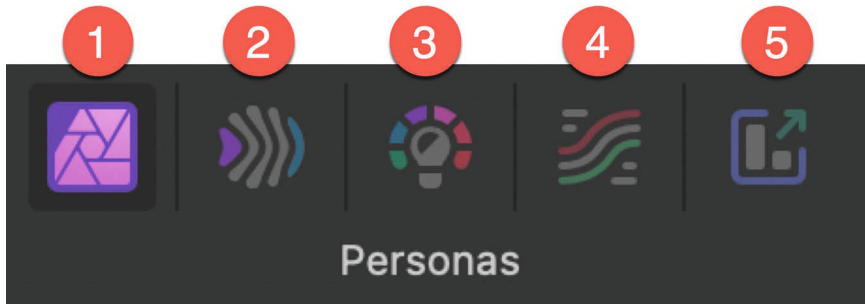


Figure 4 - Affinity Photo Persona icons in the toolbar

What you may or may not see when you look at your copy of Affinity Photo is the word "Personas" below these icons. That's because you can set the toolbar containing the Personas to display icons or the icons and text. The default is "Icons Only" but as we are learning Affinity Photo, let's set it to "Icons And Text".

To do this, right-click anywhere on the toolbar containing the icons using your mouse. This displays a small popup menu where you can choose between the two display options. Select the "Icons And Text" option and you will see text appear below the different groups of icons in the toolbar:

When you launch Affinity Photo, it opens in the Photo Persona by default. This is the most important Persona and is where you will do the majority of your photo editing work. The available Affinity Photo Personas are:

1. Photo Persona. This is used for editing images like the JPEG image we have open. Affinity Photo sometimes refers to images

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as being “pixel-based” because the image is created from pixels. You only need to switch to one of the other Personas when you want to carry out a special task needing that Persona. It’s just like moving into the kitchen in your house when you want to cook food

2. The Liquify Persona. This can be used to distort and deform images. A good example is using its tools for portrait retouching to alter the shape of a model. We won’t be covering the Persona in this book as the tools are quite specialised.
3. The Develop Persona. We use this to correct and adjust photos and it’s probably the only other essential Persona for photo editing. Whilst you can use it to edit any pixel-based image, it’s the only Persona you can use to edit a RAW file. When you open a RAW file in Affinity Photo, it automatically switches to the Develop Persona. You first need to “Develop” the RAW file to an image before you can use the other Personas. It’s why we opened a JPEG file for this exercise and didn’t use a RAW file.
4. The Tone Mapping Persona. We use this primarily for processing HDR photography. It can however also be useful in adjusting non-HDR images to add special effects. Again, this isn’t an essential Persona, and we don’t cover it in this book.
5. The Export Persona. We can use this to export finished images. When you save an image in Affinity Photo, it’s saved in a special Affinity Photo format which only Affinity products can read. To share an image with other people, you first need to export it to one of the many viewable image formats like JPEG, TIFF, PNG etc. This is another non-essential Persona as you can export images directly from the Photo Persona. Despite this, we do cover the Export Persona later in the book as many users find its features valuable.

You can do most of your photo editing work using only the Photo Persona and Develop Persona. As you are trying to learn Affinity Photo, you should concentrate on these and can mostly ignore the other Personas once we have completed this exercise.

With the sample JPEG image open, click on the icon to switch to the Liquify Persona. This is the second icon from the left in the Personas group of icons. If you are unsure which this is, hover your mouse pointer over the icons. After a moment, a tool tip is displayed to identify the icon. This is a useful feature shared by many of the icons in Affinity Photo

After switching to the Liquify Persona, you will still see the image open in the centre of the screen.



Figure 5 - Image open in the Liquify Persona

On the left of the screen are the Liquify Tools which can be used to push, pull, and distort the image. You can see an example of a few having been used on the image in the screenshot. After processing, you would apply the changes to the image using the “Apply” button to the top left of the interface. But as applying the changes would directly affect the pixels of the image, click the “Cancel” button. This discards any changes and returns you to the Photo Persona.

Next, click on the Tone Mapping Persona to switch to that.

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Figure 6 - Image open in the Tone Mapping Persona

You should then see the image open in the centre of the screen. On the left side, you will see a group of Preset thumbnails which can be applied by clicking with the mouse. When you click a Preset, it applies the adjustments to the controls on the right-hand side of the interface. Each time you select a new preset from the list you will see it change the adjustment controls.

Like with the Liquify Persona, you would click the “Apply” button to apply the changes to the image pixels and return to the Photo Persona. But as this is an example, click the “Cancel” button. This discards the adjustments and returns you to edit the image in the Photo Persona.

You can now close the image by selecting “Close” in the “File” menu. It’s quite likely Affinity Photo will prompt you to save the changes you have made to the image. Please select the “Don’t Save” option after which the image is closed, returning you to the empty interface.

You can learn more about the different personas in this YouTube video I published <https://youtu.be/6nD5kyO5BSM>. Whilst the video uses version 1 of Affinity Photo, you will be able to see the similarities and the information remains relevant to version 2.

Now it’s time to take a closer look at the Photo Persona interface.

THE PHOTO PERSONA INTERFACE

The Photo Persona is the main and default working area in Affinity Photo. You can see a screenshot of the interface below with our sample image open for editing.

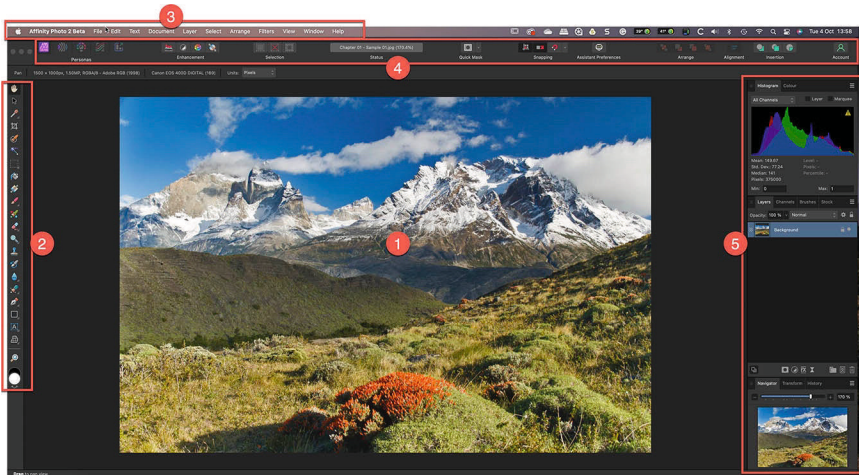


Figure 7 - Photo Persona interface elements

In the centre of the screen (1), you can see the Image Preview area. This shows a preview of the image that you're currently editing, and it reflects any adjustments you've applied. It's possible to open multiple different images for editing. You would then see separate tabs along the top of the screen, each displaying the name of an open image. Clicking a tab then switches you to edit that image.

Over on the left side of the interface (2), you can see the Tools Palette. This contains tools that you can use to edit and apply effects to your image. For example, you can add text using the Art Text tool or you could remove unwanted objects using the Inpainting Brush Tool. As with the toolbar icons we looked at earlier, you can hover your mouse over any of the tools to display the name of that tool. We'll be looking at several tools throughout the book, but only when you need to use them.

It's also possible to position the image in the preview area. This is particularly useful when it's magnified to a level where it's too large to fit the available space. If you look at the top icon in the toolbar, you will see it shows a hand. This is the View Tool which you can select by clicking with your mouse. Now when you move your mouse pointer over the image, you will see it change to a hand. You can then click and hold down your mouse button to drag the image around the preview area. It's also possible to move the image around using a device like an Apple Magic Mouse. Using a Magic Mouse, position the mouse pointer over the image preview. You can then reposition the image by moving your finger around on the top of the mouse.

Along the top edge of the screen (3), you can see the menus. Each Persona in Affinity Photo has a set of menus, and the commands change depending on the Persona you are using. The Photo Persona has the most extensive menu options and includes access to many special effect filters and tools. We'll be looking at some of the more useful of these throughout the book.

Along the top of the screen (4), you can see the Quick Access Toolbar. This contains icons for different features you might want to use whilst editing images. We've already looked at a couple, like the icons used to access the Personas. As you switch between the different Personas, the icons displayed in the Quick Access Toolbar will change. It's also possible to customise which icons appear in the toolbar, but I suggest not doing this. It can be extremely easy to become confused when customising the Affinity Photo interface.

Just below the Quick Access Toolbar, and usually over to the left side, is the Context Sensitive Toolbar. This is unnumbered in the illustration, but we will be using it in combination with the tools in the Tools Palette. When you select a tool in the Tools Palette, its controls appear in the Context Sensitive Toolbar.

Over on the right side of the screen (5), is a series of panels. These are known as the Studio Panels and contain tools and information you can use when editing images. In common with the other interface elements, the Studio Panels change when you switch Persona. This doesn't

however mean that a Studio Panel found in the Photo Persona can't appear in the Tone Mapping Persona. Some of the panels will appear in multiple Personas. Also, because you can hide and rearrange these panels in each Persona, you may find your copy of Affinity Photo doesn't look quite like the screenshots we've been looking at. Let's look at how we can fix that next.

THE STUDIO PANELS

The best way to think about the Studio Panels is as a series of windows which you can open and close as required. You can also reposition the panels around the screen to suit your working preference. Here's a quick exercise to reset the visibility of the different panels to match my screenshots

EXERCISE 1.2 – SETTING STUDIO PANEL VISIBILITY

Open the "Chapter 01 – Sample 01.jpg" image that comes with the book. You should then see the image displayed in the Photo Persona.

Click the "Window" menu at the top of the Photo Persona interface.

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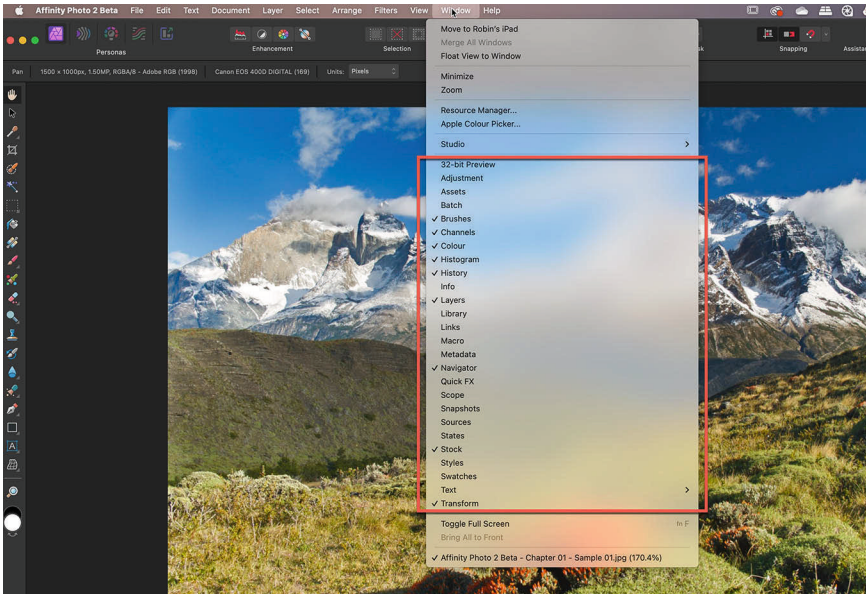


Figure 8 - Studio Panels in the Window menu

This displays a list of the different Studio Panels found in the Photo Persona. You will find the same Window menu in the other Personas, but it will contain a different list of Studio Panels.

You should also notice that there is a tick mark to the left of some of the panels in the list. These are the visible panels displayed in the interface. Those without a tick next to their name are currently hidden. Try clicking one of the entries with a tick next to it to hide that panel.

Next, I would like you to display the Macro panel by clicking it in the Window list. It's probably currently hidden in your copy of Affinity Photo

When this panel is displayed, it will probably appear on the left side of the interface, rather than the right. This is because Affinity Photo has what are called Studio Areas on both the left and right sides of the screen. These only become visible when one of the panels in that area is visible. When none of the panels in the left Studio is visible, you don't see it.

It's also possible to hide an entire Studio area using the Studio submenu. You will find this under the Window menu, just above the list of Studio Panels

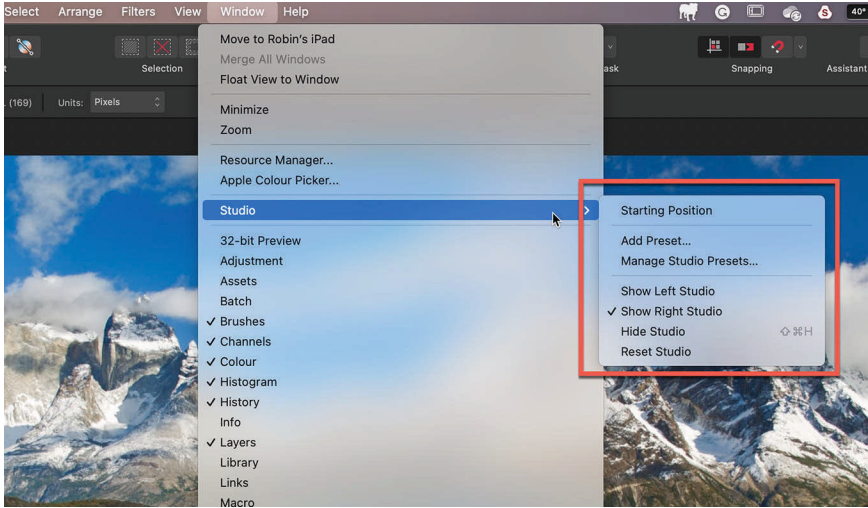


Figure 9 - Studio settings in the Photo Persona Window menu

In the Studio submenu, you will see options for “Show Left Studio” and “Show Right Studio”. You can use these to hide or display all the Studio Panels docked in that area. In this screenshot, you can see a tick mark to the left of the “Show Right Studio” option, indicating that it's currently visible

If you've been following this exercise, then it's likely your Right Studio is also visible and displaying Studio Panels. If it is, click the “Show Right Studio” option to hide it and you should see all the panels on the right of the interface vanish.

Now repeat this step to display the Right Studio and the panels it contains. After that, hide the Macro Studio Panel that you displayed previously. This should return your layout to the starting position before you began making changes

Another option in the Studio submenu is “Add Preset...”. You can use this to save the current layout of your panels. Then if you want to return

to this layout in the future, you can select your Preset in the Studio submenu

Click the “Add Preset...” option in the menu, which displays a small dialog where you can enter the name of the Preset to save. Enter the name “Starting Position” and click the button to save this. You should then be able to see your new Preset in the Studio submenu.

The final step of this exercise is to reset the Photo Persona Studio layout to the default. To do this, click the “Reset Studio” option in the Studio submenu

Your layout is now the default, and you have saved your previous layout as a Preset in case you want to return to it. I’ll be using the default layout for the Affinity Photo user interface for the rest of this book. Where we need to use Studio Panels that are hidden by default, we will make these visible when we need to.

CREATING AND SAVING IMAGES

So far, we have been working with a sample image file which you opened using the Open command in the File menu. When you have finished working with an image, you can close it using the Close command, which is also found in the File menu. Once you have opened an image in Affinity Photo, the file name of that image is added to the recently opened file list.

When you use the “File | Open...” command in the menu, Affinity Photo displays a dialog. You can then use the dialog to navigate to the folder containing the image you want to edit and then open it. But if this is an image you have worked on recently, it’s easier to use the “File | Open Recent” menu. There you will see a list of the file names which you can click to open. This avoids needing to use the Open dialog to navigate to the relevant folder.

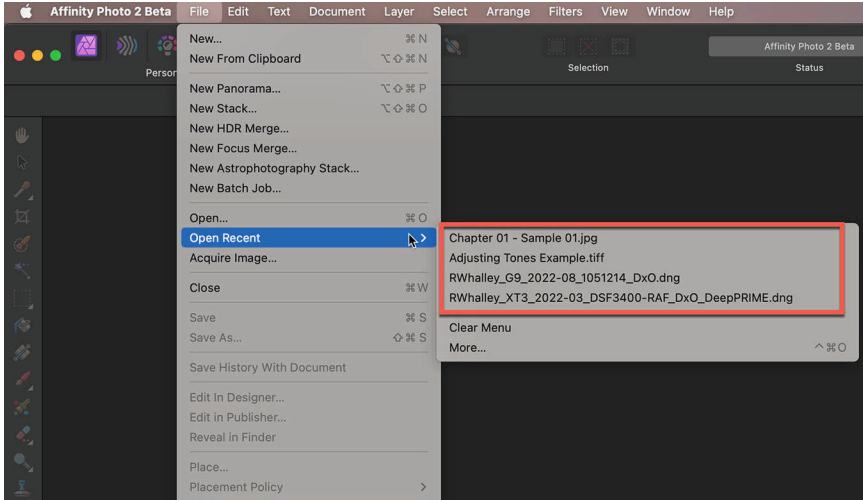


Figure 10 - The recently opened file list in the File menu

Below the list of recently opened files in the menu, is the option “Clear Menu” which clears the list. You will also see a “More...” command in the menu which opens the dialog we examined at the start of this chapter. The dialog then opens showing the “Recent” tab and displaying thumbnails for the recently opened images.

The alternative to opening an existing image is to create a new empty image document. You can do this in the File menu by selecting the “New...” option. This in turn opens the dialog from the start of the chapter but on the “New” tab as seen here.

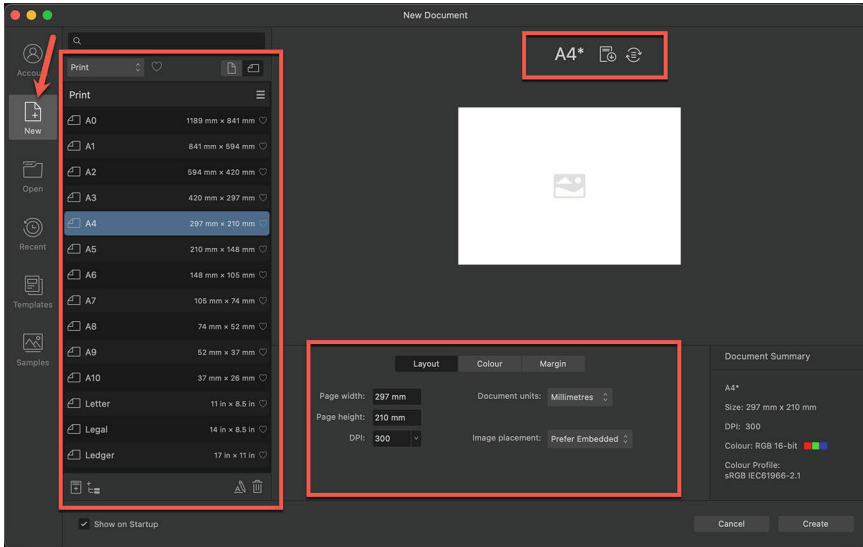


Figure 11 - The New image dialog

On the left side of the dialog, you can see a list of document Presets that come with the software. Clicking one of these adjusts the settings that you see at the centre bottom of the dialog. The settings are arranged into three tabs being Layout, Colour and Margin. Click one of these tabs to see the related settings which you can then change.

To the right of the dialog, is a “Document Summary” section summarising the currently selected settings. You might also notice at the top centre of the dialog is “A4*”. This is the title of the Preset selected in the panel to the right. The ‘*’ after the name indicates the Preset settings have been amended. It’s then possible to either save these as a new document Preset or save them to update the existing preset. You can do this using the two icons to the right of the title. When you hover your mouse pointer over one of the icons, you will see a tooltip indicating the icons’ function.

After selecting and/or configuring the document settings, click the Create button at the bottom right of the dialog. The dialog then closes, and you will see the new (empty) image document ready to work with.

After creating or working with an image you will probably want to save it. You can do this in the File menu by selecting either the “Save” or “Save As...” option. Using Save allows you to save any changes to a document or image that’s already been saved. If the document isn’t already saved, use the “Save As...” option. This displays a dialog where you can choose the location and set the name of the file to save.

When you save a document in Affinity Photo, it’s saved using the .afphoto format. This is a special format used by Affinity Photo and can’t be read by most non-Affinity products. This means that when you want to share a finished photo with someone else, you first need to convert it to a regular image like a JPEG or TIFF. The way to do this is by using the “Export...” command in the File menu or the Export Persona. We will be looking at these features later in the book. For now, you just need to be able to save your work as an Affinity Photo file.

To support you in better understanding how to save and create new documents, please watch my YouTube video <https://youtu.be/RChxuWyjaYc>. Whilst the video shows the previous version of Affinity Photo, much of the information remains relevant. The video is part of a course designed to help people wanting to learn the essentials of editing with Affinity Photo. It’s rather fast-paced in parts, but it will provide supplementary material to the information in this book.

Let’s now take a more detailed look at some of the tools found in the Develop Persona.

End of Sample

To continue reading please purchase this book from the [Lenscraft website](https://lenscraft.co.uk).

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