

ESSENTIAL AFFINITY PHOTO

Image Editing Techniques Using Affinity Photo for Desktop

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Introduction

It was mid 2015 when I first learned of Affinity Photo. A member of my website contacted me to ask if he would be able to use my book *Essential Photoshop* with Affinity photo. At the time Affinity Photo was only available on the Mac and I was only using Windows. I had though seen several supposed Photoshop replacements in the past, none of which were very satisfactory. This made me very sceptical and I replied saying that I couldn't advise them, but I doubted my current book would apply to Affinity Photo.

As it turns out they did purchase my book and they wrote to me a couple of months later. They said that by following the book they could do almost all the exercises and a lot of the book translated to Affinity Photo. This sparked my interest and the following year when I purchased my first Mac, I also invested in Affinity Photo.

From the very first time that I opened Affinity Photo I was impressed. Not only was the software very affordable it provided a real alternative to working in Photoshop. Also, being an experienced Photoshop user, I found I could work very easily in Affinity Photo. There were only a few advanced features that worked slightly differently, and I was

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quickly able to master these. This was genuinely a viable alternative to Photoshop.

I would love to tell you that this was the catalyst for my writing an Affinity Photo book, but it wasn't. It was only following the repeated requests from my website subscribers that I was finally convinced to write this book. As I've been writing, I have noticed more and more Affinity Photo books launching. Having reviewed several of these I can honestly say some are good but assume a level of knowledge that most people don't have. Others though are very basic and often take the approach of explaining features, but not how or why you would use them. And unfortunately, there are others that are poor and appear to be written only to cash in on the popularity of Affinity Photo.

I'm therefore now convinced that my website members are right. Affinity Photo is an excellent photo editing tool but there is a real need for a book that explains concisely how to use it well.

Who is this book for?

I'm hoping that you find this book a little different from the others currently available. Most importantly, it's written for photographers. Whilst others may also benefit, it's intended to help photographers who want to improve and enhance their photography. And if you're someone who doesn't have significant photo editing experience with Affinity Photo or Photoshop you will probably find it ideal. It's called Essential Affinity Photo because it explains the essential skills and techniques that will help you quickly master this software. If you learn the information and practice the skill in this book, you will be able to tackle many of the most common photo editing tasks (and some not so common) using Affinity Photo.

Alternatively, you may be someone who has tried to use Photoshop in the past and struggled. What I've tried to create in this book is a resource that simplifies the skills and knowledge you will need. I've also been quite ruthless in removing the fluff or padding from its pages. This should allow you to make fast progress where you will

be able to quickly see results, whilst working in a professional manner.

If you are an advanced Photoshop user, it's likely you will find a lot of similarity with Photoshop. There are some features of Affinity Photo that possibly don't work as well as Photoshop, but equally there are features that are much better developed. What I can say is that your familiarity with Photoshop may well leave you scratching your head for a while as some "core" features are probably different to Photoshop. That's where this book comes in. It will allow you to transfer your skills to Affinity Photo and quickly work at an advanced level with the software.

Although I'm reluctant to claim this is a book for all levels of user, everyone who uses Affinity Photo will probably find something of value in its pages.

What's in The Book

This isn't really a book in the traditional sense but is more of a course in book format. It will guide you step-by-step from understanding the basics, all the way to applying quite complex editing. By the time you've completed the book you should know more about Affinity Photo than most users.

I also want to stress that this book doesn't provide a complete reference of all the Affinity Photo tools. If that's what you're looking for, you need to look for a different book. What you will find though are the core tools and concepts explained. Once you understand these you will find you can use Affinity Photo for your photo editing with great confidence.

Here is a little of what you can expect in the rest of the book.

The Affinity Personas

Affinity Photo is a very broad and powerful piece of software. To help users work effectively with its many features, the people at Serif (who developed Affinity Photo) have organised its tools into groups. These

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are Personas and are organised around a task you might need to perform. For example, you can use the Export Persona to export completed images to share with others.

Understanding the different Personas and how their different tools are organised is fundamental to working effectively in Affinity. If you don't have this, you can easily become confused when tools somehow seem to vanish and later reappear.

The Develop Persona

If you're photographing in RAW format (and I'm assuming you are), you'll need to convert your RAW files into pixel-based images before editing them with Affinity Photo. This is the role of the Develop Persona. If you attempt to open a RAW file with Affinity Photo you will find yourself automatically in the Develop Persona. You can't make any changes to a photo until you've used the Develop Persona to adjust and convert your RAW file to an image.

It's the Develop Persona that we will be using to make basic corrections to our photography. After that we can use the other Personas to add creative effects and more complex adjustments.

Layers

Layers are one of the most powerful tools and now appear in most photo editing packages. They also form the basis for working with images in Affinity Photo. Layers give you non-destructive editing meaning you can control and even remove an adjustment. They also provide powerful capabilities using controls like Opacity and Blending Modes which you will make full use of as the book progresses.

Layers are so integral to photo editing that we're going to cover them early in the book. This ensures you have the knowledge and skills to work effectively in the Photo Persona.

Healing and Cloning Tools

In photography, you often encounter situations when you need to remove an unwanted object from a scene. It may be removing a

person from the background or some litter from the ground. You may find that your sensor is dirty, leaving unwanted spots that you need to remove from your images. This is where we make use of the Healing and Cloning tools.

Using several of these you will learn to make seamless repairs to your photos. You will be able to remove unwanted objects from an image without leaving any visible trace. You will also learn how to move objects within the frame as well as how to create copies of objects that blend cleanly with the photo.

Tone & Colour Adjustments

Whilst you can manipulate tone and colour within the Develop Persona there will be times when it's better to do this in the Photo Persona. Here we will look at some powerful tools that allow you to control the tone, colour and saturation in your photos. You will also look at how to use layers for this so you can take advantage of powerful masking features.

Dodging & Burning

The technique of dodging and burning predates digital and is an essential skill to develop with Affinity Photo. Originally this was a key technique in the darkroom to make some areas of the image lighter and make others darker. When we apply these changes to an image, we can use them to reveal detail that wasn't immediately visible before. We can also use them to "hide" areas to make them less distracting.

Ultimately, we use this technique to guide the attention of our viewer around the image. When used properly, it can create a much more appealing and interesting image. You will learn several Dodging & Burning techniques that you can apply to enhance and improve your photography.

Masks

Masks are important when editing photography because they allow you to apply local adjustments. Usually when you edit an image, you

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apply your changes globally across the entire image. By using Masks, you can limit and control where you apply adjustments.

Masks, together with layers, create one of the most powerful and important tools of Affinity Photo. It's this ability to target adjustments onto specific areas that allows you to create beautiful photography. This skill really does separate the professional from the amateur.

Sharpening & Blurring Filters

If you haven't done a lot of photo editing already, you might be surprised to learn that your photos aren't sharp. Yes, they may be in focus but that isn't enough to make them appear really sharp when displayed on the screen or printed. To make your photos look their best you need to learn how to selectively sharpen some areas whilst blurring others.

The Export Persona

Having finished editing your photo, you need to save the image to ensure it's available in the future. But saving an image in Affinity Photo doesn't mean you can share it with others to view. Affinity Photo uses a special format for saving your work. If the person you want to share your photo with doesn't also have Affinity Photo, they won't be able to view your image.

If you want to share your photos on the internet or on social media, you will need to first export them from Affinity Photo. Whilst you can Export an image using the menu in Affinity Photo, Affinity's Export Persona has a lot more power. You can use the Export Persona to slice up your photos to create different versions of the same image. This chapter will teach you all about it's surprising power.

How to get the most from this book

Please don't dip in and out of this book. You need to cover each of the lessons or chapters in order and in full before moving to the next. You should also avoid the temptation to skip any of the material you may think you already know. We cover most tools and techniques only

once before using them again in later chapters. If you miss something, you risk not being able to understand later parts of the book.

If you've purchased the paper copy of this book, I'm expecting you to annotate the book and fill it full of sticky tags and markers. If you find something useful add a coloured tab to bookmark the page. And of course, you can do the same in the eBook using the bookmark and notes features of most eBook readers and software.

This book uses practice exercises throughout. Early in the book, the exercises are numbered and numbered and spread throughout the chapter. Their purpose is to help you better understand the information being presented. Later in the book, once you've gained a foundation knowledge, you will find the entire chapter has become an exercise to follow.

Be sure to download the accompanying files from my website and use them to follow the examples. 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 using a Mac computer. But if you're using a Windows computer it will still apply. The Mac and Windows versions of Affinity Photo are virtually identical and if you can work with one you can use the other.

There are though some differences in the keyboard shortcuts because of the different keyboard layouts. For example, the Windows PC has Ctrl and Alt keys where the Mac has Command and Option keys. As I'm working on a Mac, I have shown the Mac keystrokes first and the Windows equivalent next. In this way anyone using either a Mac or a PC will be able to follow the entire book.

I developed this book using Affinity Photo version 1.6.7 for the Mac. At the time, this was the latest version of Affinity Photo available. As I bring the book to conclusion, I'm aware that 1.7 is already in beta

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test. If by the time you're reading this there is a later version, don't despair. The tools and concepts covered in this book will continue to apply to future versions of Affinity Photo. I can say this with confidence as these are the core building blocks of good photo editing software. Yes, some of the screens may change slightly in future versions and new features introduced. But if you learn to work with Affinity as outlined in this book, you will be able to apply your knowledge to future and past versions of the software.

I will end this introduction by saying thank you for purchasing my books.

Legal Stuff

Trademarks

At times in this book, I may mention companies and their products. Many of these names will be registered trademarks and copyrighted. I recognise all such trademarks and copyrights and their use in this book is purely editorial. There is no intended breach of either trademark or copyright.

Disclaimer

Whilst I have made every effort to ensure the information in this book is accurate and factual, it does represent my approach and views. 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 email using robin@lenscraft.co.uk. I will then include any corrections in future versions of the book.

ONE

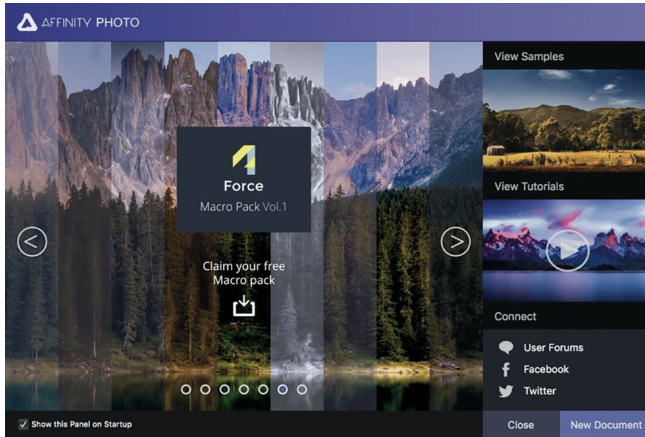


Understanding the Affinity Photo Interface

When I first began using Affinity Photo, I thought the software had a mind of its own. Each time I worked on a photograph the interface looked different and tools that I had been using suddenly vanished. Having talked to quite a few Affinity users, it appears this “orientation” problem is a common one. If you feel like you don’t understand Affinity Photo, don’t worry. By the end of this chapter you will be completely comfortable with the changeable Affinity Photo interface.

Launching Affinity Photo

When you first click the icon to launch Affinity Photo, you see a Start-up screen like that shown below.



The Affinity Photo start-up screen

This screen shows information that you might find helpful when editing your photos. In the large central area, you can see a series of revolving images with links to the internet. Some of this is advertising but some can be more useful and is why I personally still have the screen displayed at start up. For example, in the screenshot above you can see the option to claim a free Macro pack.

On the right-hand side of the screen are the links to download sample files which you can examine. Some of these demonstrate quite advanced editing techniques so it may be best to complete this book before examining them. You will also find links to view Affinity Photo tutorial videos and if you're Social Media minded, there are other useful links. All this information is helpful, and I recommend you explore it further once you have completed this book.

If you don't want to see this Panel at start up, click the small tick-box to the lower left of the screen. When clicked, this will toggle the tick mark off and on.

When you're ready, click either the "New Document" button to create a new empty document. Alternatively, click the Close button to close the start-up screen and start with an empty interface. You can't really do much with this though until you open an image for editing.

Understanding Personas

Affinity Photo documentation and videos talk a lot about Personas. This can sound a little confusing at first but it's not so bad once you become used to it. To help you understand Personas, let's complete a simple exercise.

Exercise 01.01

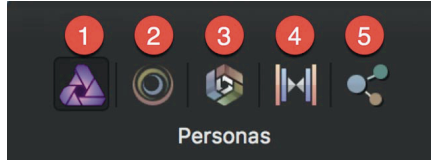
Start by opening the image file “Chapter 1 RWhalley_2007_IMG_5706.jpg” which accompanies the book. If you haven't downloaded the accompanying files yet, you can use any JPEG format image.

To open the image, select “File | Open...” from the menu. This will display a dialog where you can navigate folders and choose the image to open. When the image opens, Affinity Photo will look like the screenshot below.



Affinity Photo interface and Persona icons

At the top left of the illustration you can see a red rectangle surrounding five icons. These icons represent the different Affinity Photo Personas. You can see a closeup of the icons below with each persona numbered.



Affinity Photo Persona icons

You can select a Persona by clicking one of the icons. When the persona loads, the layout and tools displayed in interface changes. Each Persona's optimised for a different editing task and displays the tools required for that activity. If you're familiar with Photoshop, this is the same concept as the Photoshop Workspace.

The available Affinity Photo Personas are:

1. The Photo Persona. This is the default Persona in Affinity and used for editing pixel-based image, such as a photo. Don't worry if you're not familiar with term "pixel-based", it just means an image. I'm using it here because it's a term you will see used in the Affinity Photo software. As Photo Persona is the default Persona, you will use it for all your editing. You only need to switch to one of the other Personas when you want to carry out some special processing, best done in that Persona.
2. The Liquify Persona. A collection of tools that you can use to distort or deform images or areas of an image. For example, you might use these tools in fashion photography retouching to alter the shape of a model.
3. The Develop Persona. Used to correct and adjust photos, it's one of the most useful Personas for the Photographer. It's also used to convert RAW format photos into pixel-based images. If you open a RAW file in Affinity Photo, it automatically opens in the Develop Persona. You can only adjust RAW files in the Develop Persona.
4. The Tone Mapping Persona. Used primarily in HDR photography. It can though be useful in adjusting non HDR images to add special effects.

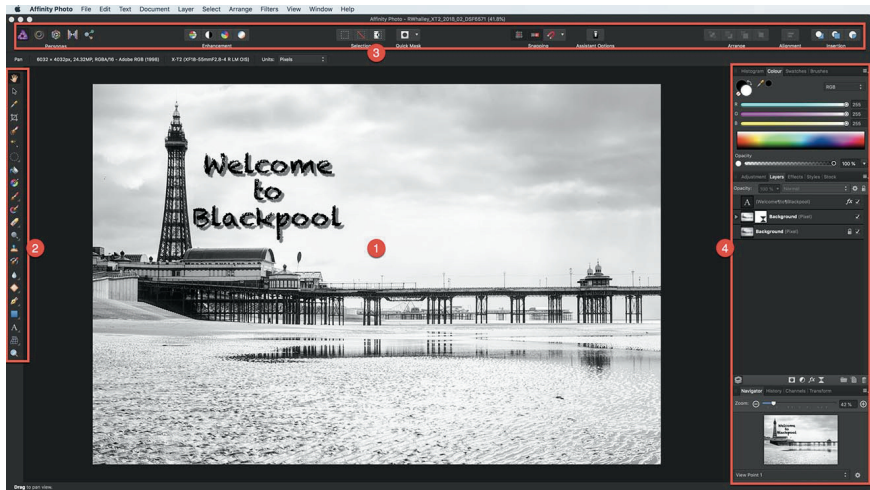
5. The Export Persona. Used to export finished images. When you save an image in Affinity Photo, it saves the image in the Affinity Photo Format. This isn't a regular image format and non-Affinity users won't be able to read the files. To share an image with others you first need to export the image to one of the many image formats (JPEG, TIFF, PNG etc.) supported by Affinity Photo.

Although it's helpful to know about the different Personas in Affinity Photo, we won't be using them all in this book. That's because you don't need to use everything to create great photo edits. In fact, trying to use all the available tools will probably cause your work to suffer.

The title of the book is "Essential Affinity Photo" so we will be covering the essentials of the software for the photographer. The most important Personas from that perspective are The Photo Persona, The Develop Persona and The Export Persona. Let's take a closer look at each of these now so you can become familiar with the elements of the 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 for the Photo Persona below with an image open for editing.



The Photo Persona interface

In the Photo Persona you have access to lots of tools to help you manipulate photographs and add special effects. Unlike the Develop Persona (which we will cover shortly), the Photo Persona is more about manipulating and adding finishing touches to an image.

Along the top edge of the screen you can see the menu. Each of the Affinity Personas has a menu and the commands will change depending on which of the Persona's 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 these later in the book, but only those that you really need to know about. Remember, this book is "Essential Affinity Photo".

In the centre of the screen (1), you can see the Image Preview area. This shows a preview of the image that you're editing and reflects the adjustments you've applied to it. In the example you can see the converted black and white image and the additional text "Welcome to Blackpool". This is a very simple example of the editing that you can perform with the Photo Persona tools.

Over on the left side of the interface (2) you can see the Tools Palette. This contains useful tools that you can use to edit and apply effects to

your image. For example, you can add the “Welcome to Blackpool” text using the Art Text tool. We’ll be looking at a few of these tools throughout the book, but only when you need to use them.

Along the top of the screen (3), you can see the Quick Access Toolbar. This contains different icons for features you might want to use whilst you’re working on your images. The left-hand group of icons, used to access the Personas, you’ve already seen. As you switch between the different Personas, the icons displayed in the Quick Access Toolbar will change. Don’t let this confuse you.

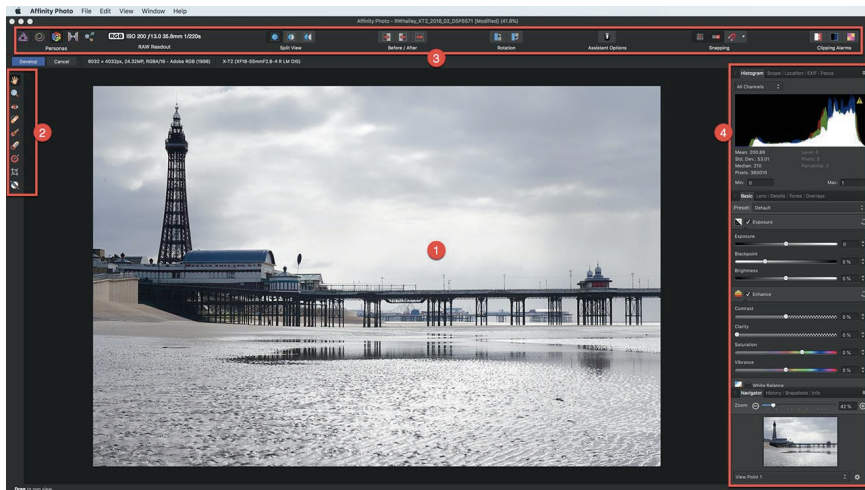
Just below the Quick Access Toolbar and over to the left side of the screen, is the Context Sensitive Toolbar. This is unnumbered in the illustration, but we will be using it in combination with the tools in the Tools Palette. When you select a tool in the Tools Palette, the configuration options for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

Over on the right side of the screen (4), is a series of windows. These are known as the Studio Panels and contain tools and information to help you edit your images. In common with the other interface elements in Affinity Photo, the Studio Panels also change as you switch Persona. There are though some common Studio Panels that you will find in more than one Persona. The Navigator Panel (which allows you to zoom in and move around an image) is an example of a Studio Panel that appears in multiple Personas.

The type of work that you use Affinity Photo for will determine which of the possible Studio Panels you will need to use. A Graphic Artist for example, will likely use tools like Brushes and the Artistic Text tool together with the Colour and Brush Panels. But they probably have less use for colour correction and warping tools that the Studio photographer uses. In this book we are looking at Affinity Photo from the perspective of a general photographer and we won’t use some of the tools.

The Develop Persona Interface

The Develop Persona helps you prepare and correct photography. It's therefore one of the main Personas (along with the Photo Persona) that we will be using in this book. It's also the default Persona for any RAW files that you want to process. You can see an example of the interface below.



The Develop Persona interface

You will notice that there are some similarities between the Photo Persona and the Develop Persona.

In the centre of the screen (1) is the Preview Area. This displays the image you are editing together with any adjustments that you've applied.

Over to the left side of the interface (2) is the Tools Palette. This contains tools to edit your photographs with. For example, there's a Redeye Removal tool to remove any redeye when taking photos of people. Another example is the Blemish Removal tool for removing unwanted spots or marks. Notice that there are far fewer tools in this Persona than in the Photo Persona.

Along the top of the screen (3) we again have the Quick Access Tool-

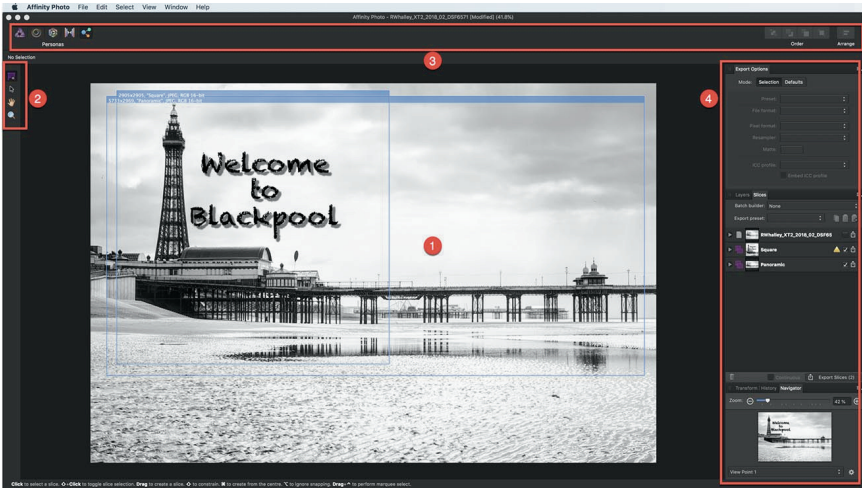
bar. This looks like the one in the Photo Persona but some of the icons are different. For example, we have Preview Options that allow you to compare the original photo with the edited photo.

Over to the right-hand side of the interface (4) are the Studio Panels. As mentioned previously, you will see some of these in other Personas such as the Photo Persona, but some are unique to the Develop Persona. For example, the Basic Panel allows you to adjust elements like the Exposure Contrast and Saturation of the photograph. The Develop Persona's geared towards correcting and adjusting photographs and its tools reflect this. Although it's tempting to think of the Develop Persona as a RAW converter, it can edit other types of image file such as TIFF and JPEG images.

The Export Persona Interface

In the Export Persona you will find tools to help you save the image you're editing to an image file. When you edit an image in Affinity Photo and save it, it's saved in a special Affinity Photo format that only Affinity applications can read. To create a "regular" image in a format that others can view you will need to export your work from Affinity. You can do this using the Export Persona which includes several useful tools.

You can see an example of the Export Persona interface in the screenshot below.



The Export Persona interface

In the centre of the screen (1) is the preview of the image you're exporting. In this example you can also see two blue rectangles on the image preview. These are areas you can set up which allow you to export portions of your finished image. This is a very useful feature for a graphic designer but can also be useful for photographers who want to create different versions of an image.

Again, on the left-hand side of the interface (2) we have the Tools Palette. But in this Persona, there are only a few tools available. Similarly, along the top of the interface (3) we have the Quick Access toolbar but again this has only a few icons.

Over on the right-hand side of the interface (4) are the Studio Panels.

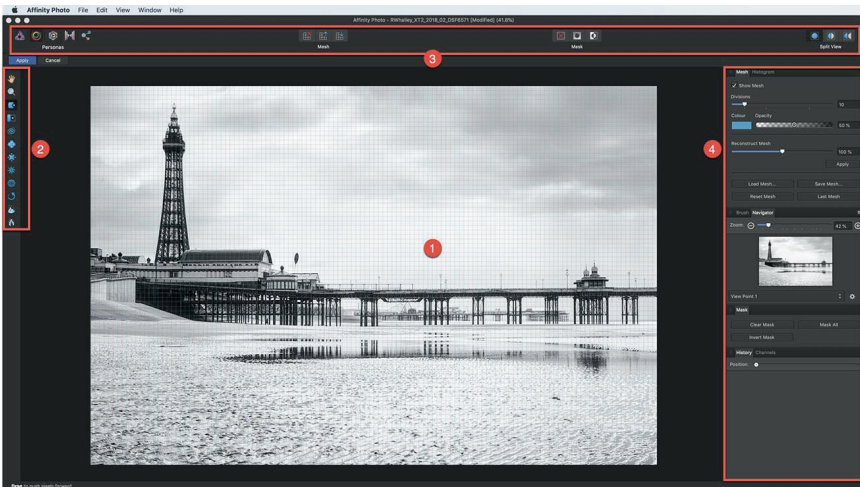
To export an image from Affinity Photo it's possible to use the menu option in the Photo Persona. You don't even need to use the Export Persona at all. But, the advantage of using the Export Persona is the tools it includes. We will look at the different ways of exporting your images from Affinity Photo later in the book.

Other Personas

As mentioned previously, there are a couple of other Affinity Personas in the software. These are the Liquefy Persona and the Tone Mapping Persona. We won't be covering these in this book as they aren't essential to editing photography. We will though take a very quick look now so that you can acquaint yourself with them.

The Liquefy Persona

The Liquefy Persona provides lots of tools that allow you to distort and manipulate images. It's best to explain this using an example which we will consider in a moment. First though, let's look at the interface which you can see below.



The Liquefy Persona interface

If you read the descriptions of the other interfaces, you should immediately recognise the same core elements in this Persona. In the centre of the screen (1) you have the preview of your image reflecting any changes you make. Over on the left-hand side of the screen (2) you have the Tools Palette with the available tools for the Liquefy Persona. At the top of the screen (3) you have the icons of the Quick Access toolbar. And on the right of the screen (4) you have the Studio Panels.

Let's try a quick exercise to help you better understand the power of the Liquefy Persona.

Exercise 01.02

Start by opening the sample image from Chapter 1 of this book. As this is a JPEG file it will open in the Photo Persona.

Click the Liquefy Persona icon at the top left of the Quick Access toolbar. This will open the image in the Liquefy Persona.

In the tool palette on the left of the screen select the Liquify Twirl Tool. The icon for this is the fifth one down from the top and looks like a swirl.

As you move your mouse cursor over the image preview, you will see that it changes to a circle with a small cross in the centre. The circle shows the size of the brush you're using, and the cross is to indicate the centre of the brush. You can increase the brush size by pressing the] key on your keyboard or reduce it by pressing the [key. To see the twirl effect clearly, set your brush size to large.

Position your brush over the flowering bush in the centre foreground of the image and then click and hold your left mouse button. As you continue to hold the mouse button down, it applies the twirl effect. This continues for as long as you hold the mouse button down. Release the button and the effect stops.

You can see an example below after applying the effect to the image.



Applying a liquify effect in the Liquefy Persona

In this screenshot, the arrow 1 indicates the Liquefy Twirl Tool icon. Arrow number 2 indicates the effect applied to the image. Around the outside of this area you can see a “wire mesh” in blue. This mesh covers the entire image, showing the distortion applied by the tools.

There are some very useful features in the Liquefy Persona if you are a Studio Photographer or you do a lot of beauty retouching. It’s worth taking a few minutes to experiment with the different tools. It can also be a lot of fun.

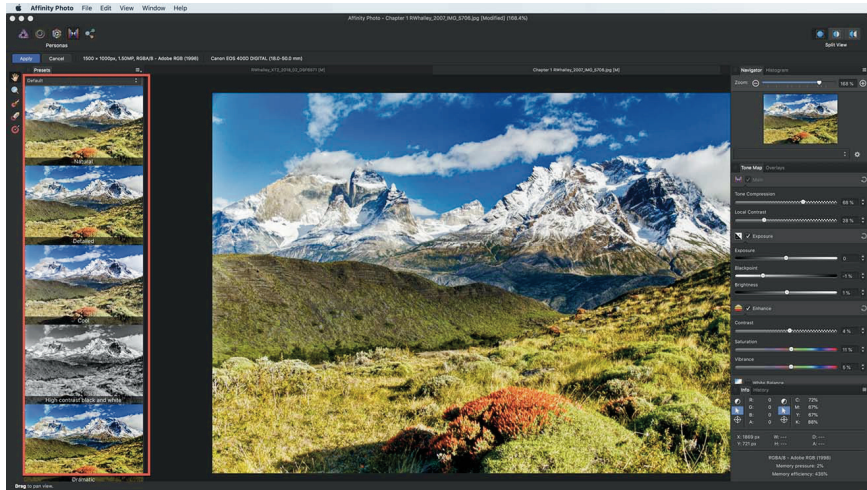
Once you’ve completed your editing, click the apply button in the upper left side of the interface, just above the Tools Palette. This applies the changes to your image, closing the Liquefy Persona, and returning you to the Photo Persona. If you would like to return to the Photo Persona without applying your changes to the image, click the Cancel button instead.

The Tone Mapping Persona

The Tone Mapping Persona is for working with HDR images. Typically, these are 32-bit images which require Tone Mapping before displaying correctly. The Tone Mapping Persona provides many tools to help you work with HDR images. But it also allows you to apply

tone mapping adjustments to any image. This means you can take any photograph into the Tone Mapping Persona and apply tonal adjustments to it. These can often be very effective and create interesting effects.

You can see an example of the Tone Mapping Persona interface in the screenshot below.



The Tone Mapping Persona interface

The interface of the Tone Mapping Persona is very similar in layout to the other Personas we’ve examined. There is the Preview window in the central area with the Tools Palette on the left, the Quick Access toolbar at the top and the Studio Panels to the right. In the above screenshot you can see an additional Studio Panel on the left side of the screen (outlined in red). This is the Presets Panel and provides fast access to Presets used to apply “complex” adjustments to an image with a single click.

In the Presets Panel you can see a preview of the current image showing how it would look like if that Preset’s applied. All you need to do to apply Preset is click on the image in the Panel.

Let's look at a quick example to help you understand the tools in the Tone Mapping Persona.

Exercise 01.03

1. Open the sample image for this chapter of the book in Affinity Photo. This will open in the Photo Persona.
2. Next, click on the Tone Mapping Persona icon at the top left of the interface. This will open your image in the Tone Mapping Persona after a short delay during which image pre-processing takes place.
3. Click on the “Detailed” Preset in the Preset Studio Panel on the left of the screen. As you do this you will notice the preview image changes to reflect the Preset adjustments. You may also notice that in the studio Panels on the right side of the screen, the adjustment sliders, update. If you didn't see this, click on the “Neutral” Preset in the Preset Panel whilst watching the adjustment controls on the right. The Neutral Preset resets the adjustments applied to the image. Use it if you want to reset the image to start again.
4. Be sure to click on Detailed Preset before continuing with this example.
5. On the right side of the screen in the Studio Panel marked Tone Mapping you will see two sliders. There is the Tone Compressor and the Local Contrast control. Move the Tone Compressor control from 100% down to 0% and then slowly back to 100%. As you do this watch the effect on the image in the preview area. This slider changes the strength of the Tone Mapping effect applied to the image. Tone Mapping is a technique used to take the tones in an image and change them to be new tones. Without getting too technical, you might take the lightest image tones (that are too light to display) and remap them to tones that are within the capability of the monitor to display correctly.
6. Now try applying an adjustment with the Local Contrast slider. You will notice this slider is the one creating the detail enhancement effect in the image. If you move the Local

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