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GIMP Starter

Learn the basics of GIMP through practical examples

Fazreil Amreen

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BIRMINGHAM - MUMBAI

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Fazreil Amreen, unless asked, does not reveal his name. It is his nature to present his work in order to introduce himself. He is a citizen of a beautiful country, Malaysia and appreciates most aspects of life with joy and laughter. To avoid living a stereotypical, boring life, he holds on to this motto, "making it big", wherever he goes. Being a video game player, since the 8-bit era, he enjoys challenging virtual life, where nothing can stop him (which would be his motto in virtual life).

He loves trying out new things, especially those that require creativity. He does the same at work, and this lets him to get to know about the latest tools to aid the software engineering process, which is why they call him a Software Configuration Management Engineer. He loves open source software, and uses it as far as possible, even to help others. He wants to make some video game of his own if it is a rewarding end. Follow him on twitter at `@fab52`.

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Instant GIMP Starter

Welcome to *Instant GIMP Starter*. This book is written to provide motivation for anyone to start using GIMP. Readers will be exposed to the features of GIMP, which will be enough for them to start using the tool. Each topic in this book will get the reader into the action of creating various wonderful works of art. Along the way, readers are also introduced to the new techniques and tools within GIMP.

The documentation contains the following sections:

So, what is GIMP? introduces GIMP and its features to the reader.

Installation explains to the reader how to start using it.

Quick start – A tour around GIMP enables the user to get familiarized with the basic concept of using GIMP.

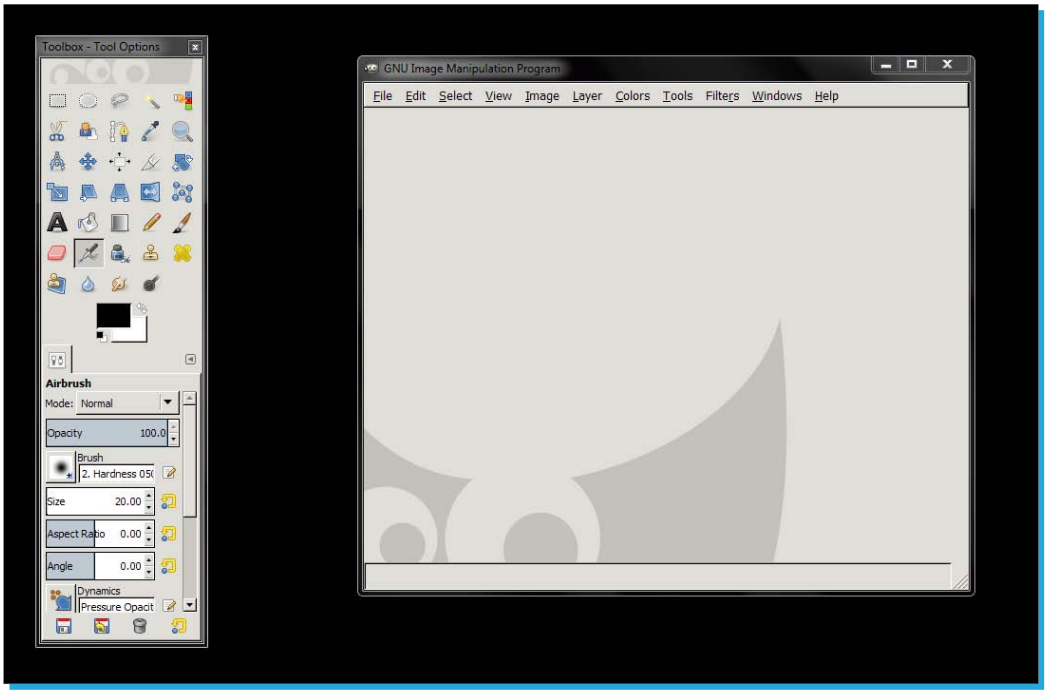
Top 5 features you'll want to know about draws the reader into action on how to work with GIMP and start getting creative.

People and places you should get to know provides guidelines to the reader on discovering various resources that could help and also get them inspired.

So, what is GIMP?

GIMP stands for **GNU Image Manipulation Program**. It is an open source program that users can use to retouch images and also create their own drawings; it is a complete painting tool.

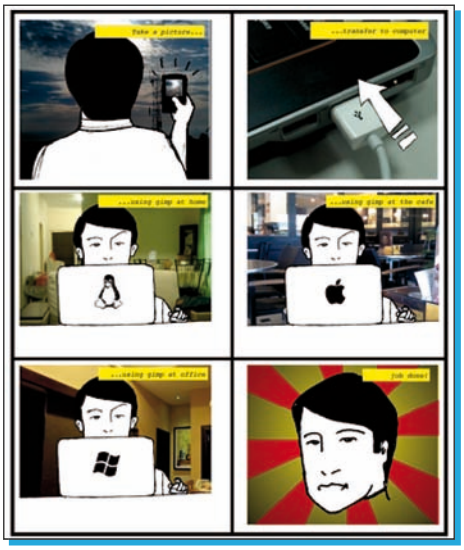
Remember a picture where you wished that you could crop out unnecessary object that spoils the whole picture? Now you can do exactly that, or even better make that picture your piece of memory with beautiful effects.



Throughout the book, I will use GIMP Version 2.8.2, installed on Windows 7. GIMP is available for Windows, Linux, or Mac machines; all of these are free.

The user experience should be equivalent between Windows, Linux machine, and Mac. I often take pictures with my digital camera or my phone. When I come home, I just plug the device into my Linux machine and transfer my pictures to the USB drive. I might use it on my Linux machine to retouch pictures or work on some designs and later bring the USB drive to my personal laptop to continue working on it. GIMP enables you to bring your work around without any problem.

I even use GIMP at work. I don't have to worry about licensing or service subscriptions. You may read them at `http://www.gimp.org/about/COPYING`. What makes GIMP so usable is that I can perform certain tasks faster. I work with lots of images to be inserted into websites or documents. I have experienced working with thousands of images that need to be edited before submission. At times like these, there is no room for trial and error. GIMP allows us to perform scripts (known as Script-Fu) by which I can do a 5-minute job in a matter of seconds. I will tell more about this later in this book.



GIMP is also available as a portable app, where you can copy data into an USB drive and open it in any Windows machine without installing it. This book, however, does not cover the portable app.

Installation

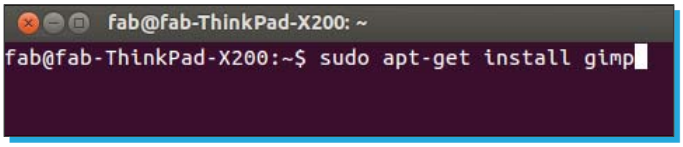
In a few easy steps, you can install GIMP and get it set up on your system.

Step 1 – what do I need?

Before you install GIMP, you will need to check whether you have all of the required elements, as listed in the following items:

- 256 MB of minimum memory is needed, though 1 GB is recommended for smoother work
- Disk space of minimum 100 MB
- For a Linux machine, GIMP requires an X Window System running on the machine

While we're on the subject, in the following screenshot, there is the one and only step shown to get GIMP installed on Ubuntu:



Open up terminal and issue the following command:

```
sudo apt-get install gimp
```

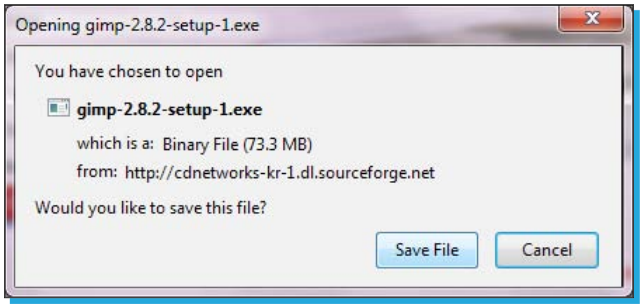
Step 2 – downloading GIMP

The easiest way to download GIMP is from `http://www.gimp.org/downloads/`. There is a link to the latest version of Windows Installer on the website.

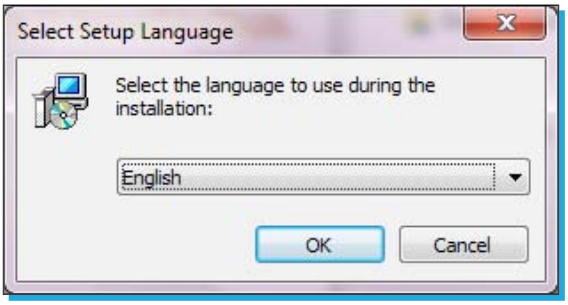
Step 3 – setting up installation

To set up the installation, follow these steps:

1. Find the executable downloaded, and double-click on it to begin, as shown in the following screenshot:



2. Select the preferred language for use during installation.

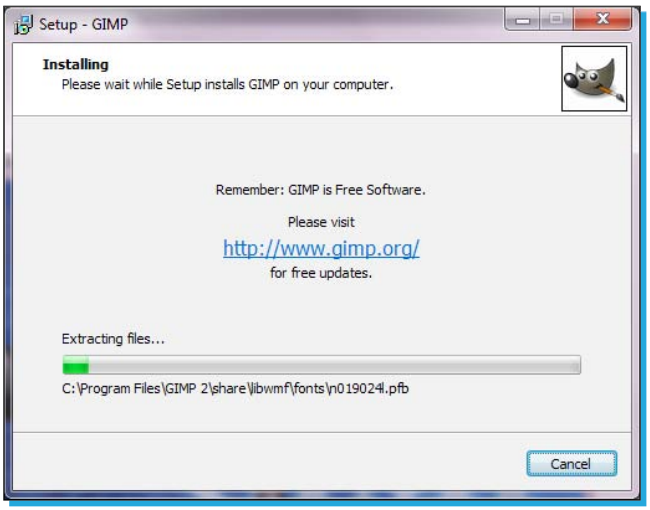


Step 4 – installing

To begin installing GIMP, follow these steps:

1. The installation begins after clicking on the **Install** button, as shown in the following screenshot:

2. On the following screenshot, the installer is unpacking its content and loading it into the machine. Please wait for the process to finish.



3. The final screen for the installation indicates that the installation is successful. Then, click on the **Finish** button to end the installation process.

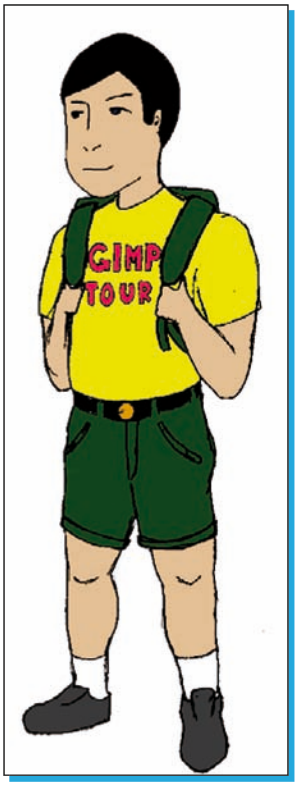
And that's it!

By this point, you should have a working installation of GIMP and are ready to spark creativity.

Quick start – a tour around GIMP

Let's take a tour around GIMP for a start. This tour will give you an exposure to basic tasks to do with GIMP. Along the way, we will introduced to the GIMP conceptual idea that makes it different than some of the other image manipulation programs.

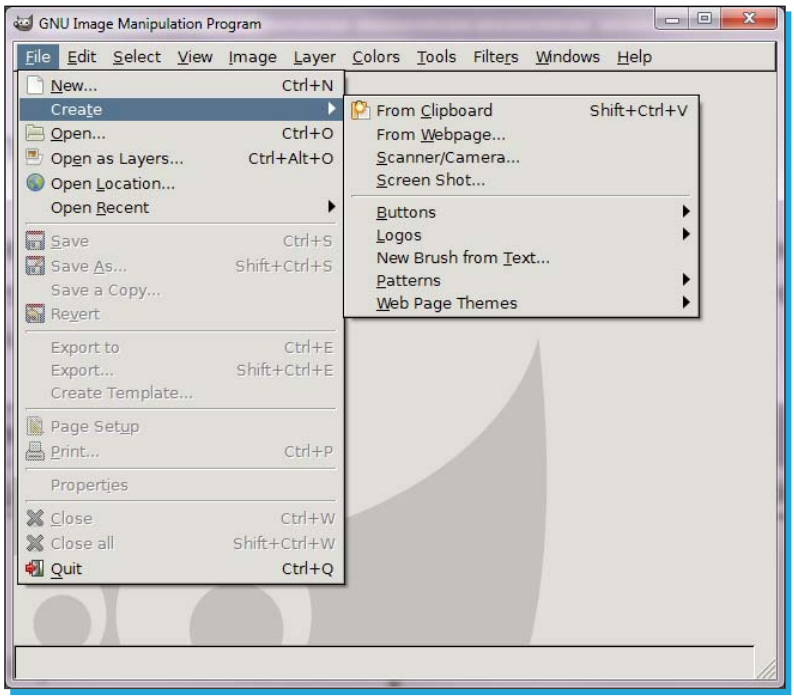
We will go to produce the following image:



Step 1 – creating a new file

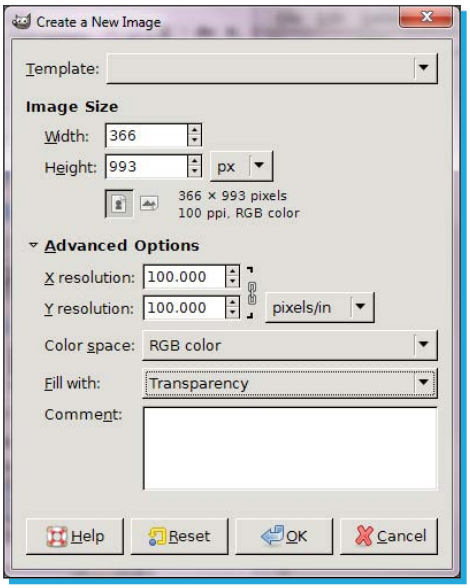
Working with GIMP requires you to work on canvas, just like an artist would do. In GIMP, the canvas is a file on your system. You may have a clean canvas (a new file), or you may also work on an image obtained from various sources.

The **File** menu presents you with a number of options. From here, you can create a clean canvas by selecting **New**. From the next screenshot, we can see that there is an extensive menu for **Create**. You may start to import images copied from somewhere else, scan them, or take a screenshot to begin with.

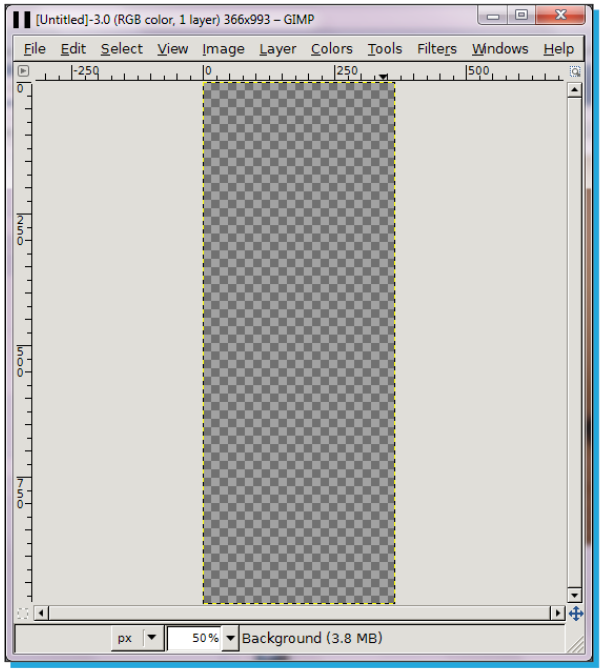


To create a new canvas, follow these steps:

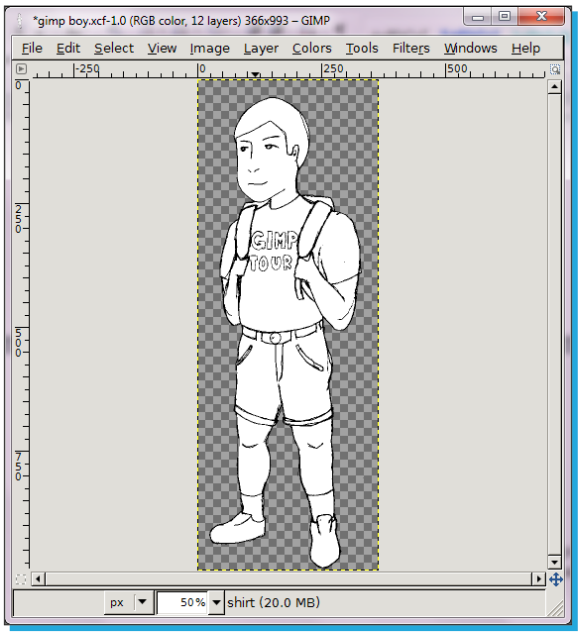
1. Click on **File**.
2. From the menu, click on **New**.
3. Now the **Create a New Image** dialog box will appear. Adjust the width and height. Before clicking on **OK**, set the background to be filled with nothing by selecting **Transparency**.



Now you have the canvas to work on your first art, as shown in the following screenshot:



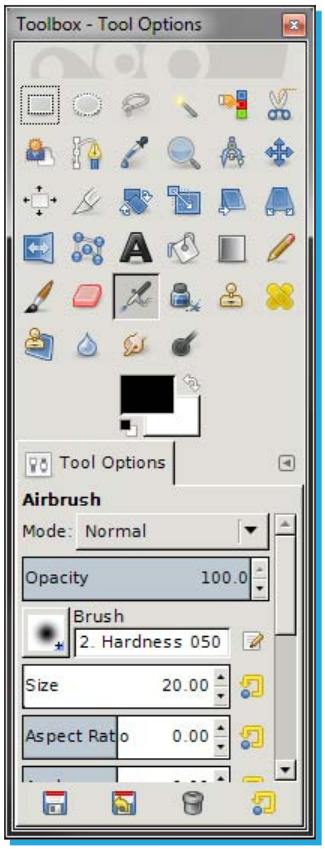
If you have hand drawn the outline of the picture and scanned it previously like I do, locate the scanned picture on your machine, and all you got to do is drag the file into the canvas. If you happen to have a stylus pen, you could easily draw on the canvas.



Step 2 – setting the picture for painting

It is the perfect time to introduce the toolbox. The **Toolbox** option provides you with a set of tools to complete your work. The collections of tools here involve tools to select areas, painting, transform, and touch-up tools.

1. If the **Toolbox** window does not show up, press *Ctrl* + *B*. Following is a screenshot of the **Toolbox** window.



The previous screenshot consists of two parts, the tools and also tool options that further define the properties of the tool. The default installation of GIMP puts the **Toolbox** window and **Tool option** together, but they can be separated. It is one of the GIMP feature to be able to dock windows together or separate them according to user preference.

2. Click on **Windows** and choose **Dockable Dialogs** to expose various dialog boxes that you might want to bring up front while working.

   If you're not sure how to go with each item of the menu, place the cursor on the icon, and a tooltip will appear together with a shortcut key in bold. At the bottom of the **Toolbox** window is the color chooser, where user can select an active color and alternative color, making painting easier when these colors are switchable.

3. Click on the magic wand icon . Then, by clicking on the hair of the boy, the hair will be selected.

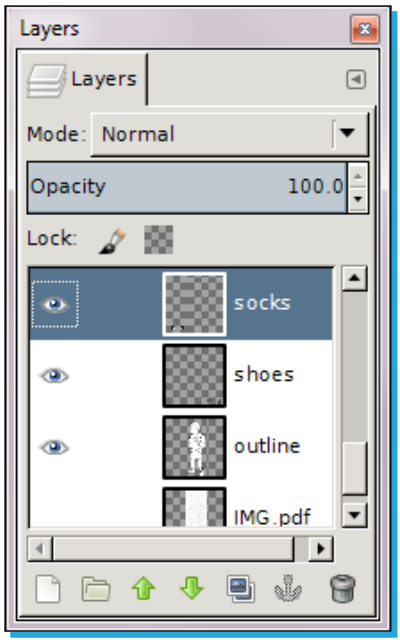
4. Now, duplicate the layer, so we can have a layer exclusively for his hair. This step involves working with layers.

Step 3 – create layers

It is a good idea to have a layer for each part of the image. Hair, shirt, skin – all should have their own layer. This way you can paint each part without accidently filling other parts.

The concept of layers is important when you are working with GIMP. Think of it as if you are drawing on different set of papers or transparencies that you may cut and rearrange before you paste them on the drawing board.

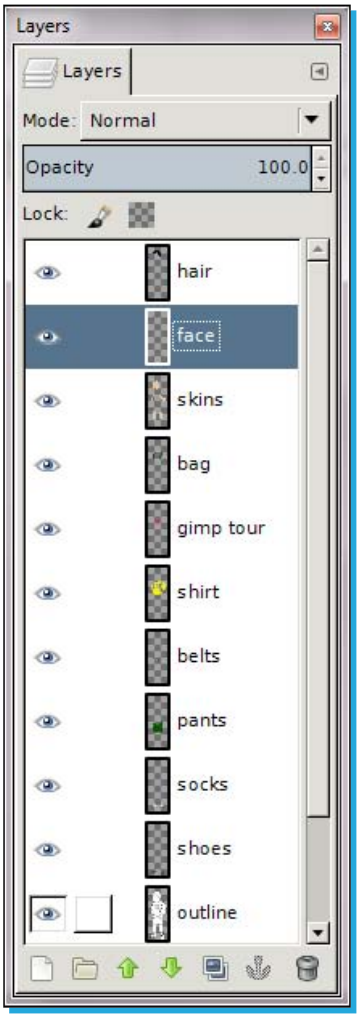
The **Layers** dockable window can be accessed from **Windows** | **Dockable Dialogs** | **Layers**. The **Layers** window is useful to navigate between layers. Refer to the following screenshot:



To navigate between layers, follow these steps:

1. Drag a layer to the icon to quickly create a duplicate of the layer.
2. Press *Ctrl* + *I* (or click on **Select** | **Invert**) to select the opposite part and delete it. Now you have a layer specific for a part.
3. Create a layer for each of the parts. The layers should be aligned and overlapped on top of the original outline. To rename the layers, double-click on the layer name or click on the layer and press *F2*.

The following is a screenshot of how the layers should look:



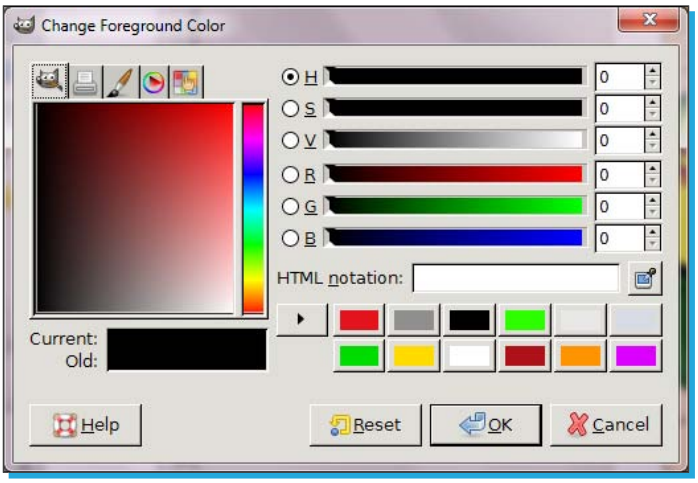
There are various controls that can be used from the **Layers** window alone. You may set certain layers' visibility by clicking on the eye icon and control how it blends with other layers by selecting the mode.

Layers are best used when composing images. Each of the images can be on a layer, so it is easier to adjust them around images on other layers. These layers can be organized to let certain layer sit on top of others. To do so, drag the layer to the top to make it sit on top of the other image.

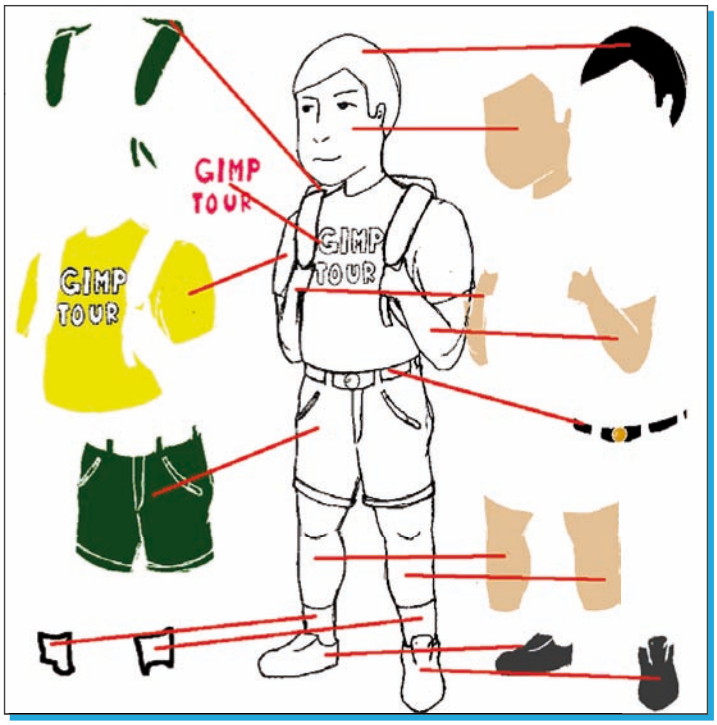
Step 4 – coloring

This is going to be the best part. When the layers are duplicated and separated, it is easy to paint them. The trick to color carefully, so that the colors stay inside of the parts, is to select outside of the parts using the magic wand, and invert the selection (shortcut keys are *Ctrl + I*). Having done so, follow these steps:

1. Click the **Paintbrush Tool** , and pick a color of your choice and paint away.
2. To select another color, click on , and you'll be given a menu, which has a set of colors to choose from:



3. It is up to you to pick any color from the spectrum. Once done, click on **OK**, and you're back to the canvas.
4. Repeat the select-and-paint process for each part. To illustrate the separate layers being colored, let's look at the following screenshot:



Every fill on the drawing is separated by layers to enable each layer to be modified without affecting the others. You may also specify the opacity of individual layers.

This concludes a brief tour of GIMP. These few basic steps are just the tip of the iceberg. It is amazing what GIMP has in store for you.

Top 5 features you'll want to know about

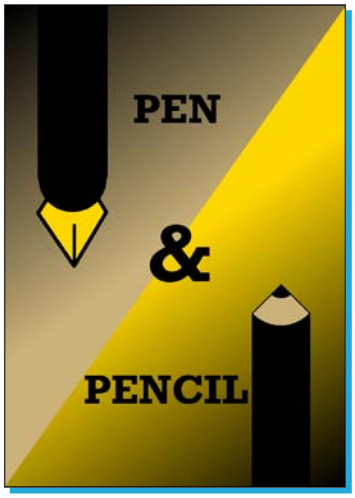
This is the most interesting section of this book. In this chapter we are actually going to discover how to work like an artist.

The five topics that we are going to look at are how to:

- Draw a poster
- Make precise diagrams (infographic)
- Combine multiple pictures
- Install plugins
- Use filters

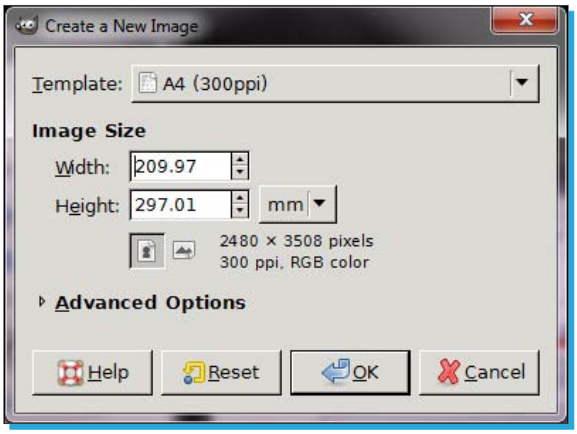
Drawing a poster

A poster is a drawing that carries a powerful message. A poster usually contains message in text and images to complement the message. A poster may contain a very limited amount of colors. We will go step by step to produce the following poster:



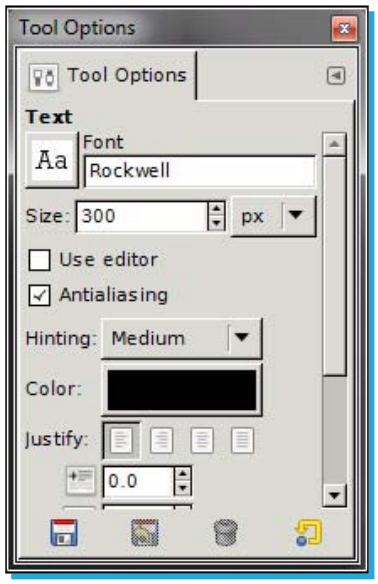
To produce a poster, follow these steps:

1. Create a new file by clicking on **File** | **New** (or keyboard shortcut *Ctrl* + *N*), and you'll be presented by this new file menu:

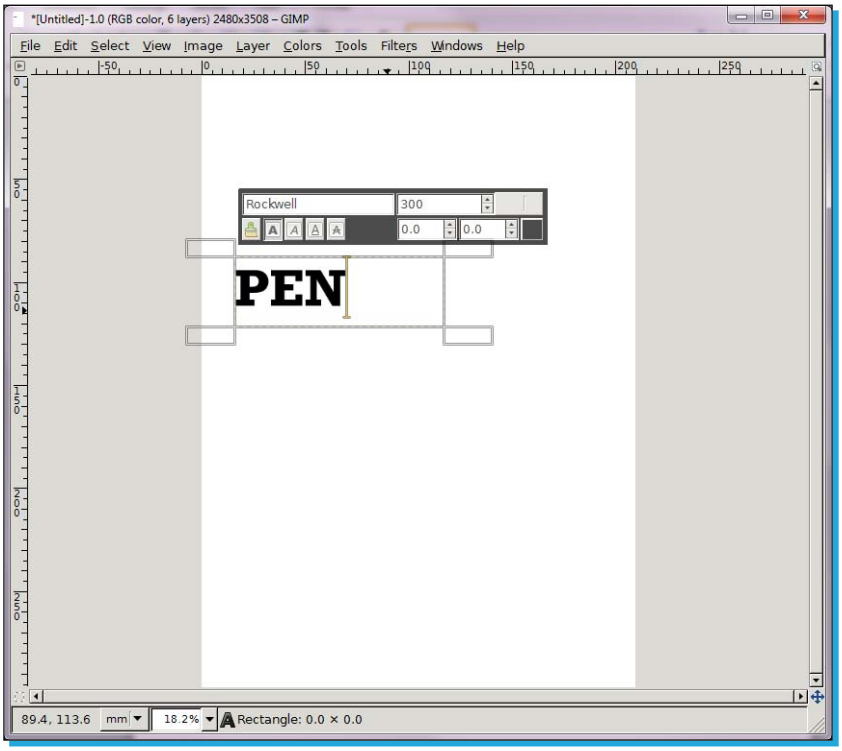


Let's have a setting optimized for an A4 print; choose the **A4 (300ppi)** template for this drawing. It is going to be a large canvas with **2480 x 3508** pixels. A large canvas means the image created will be a very high-resolution image, suitable for printing. A low-resolution would cause the image to get blurry and jagged when printed.

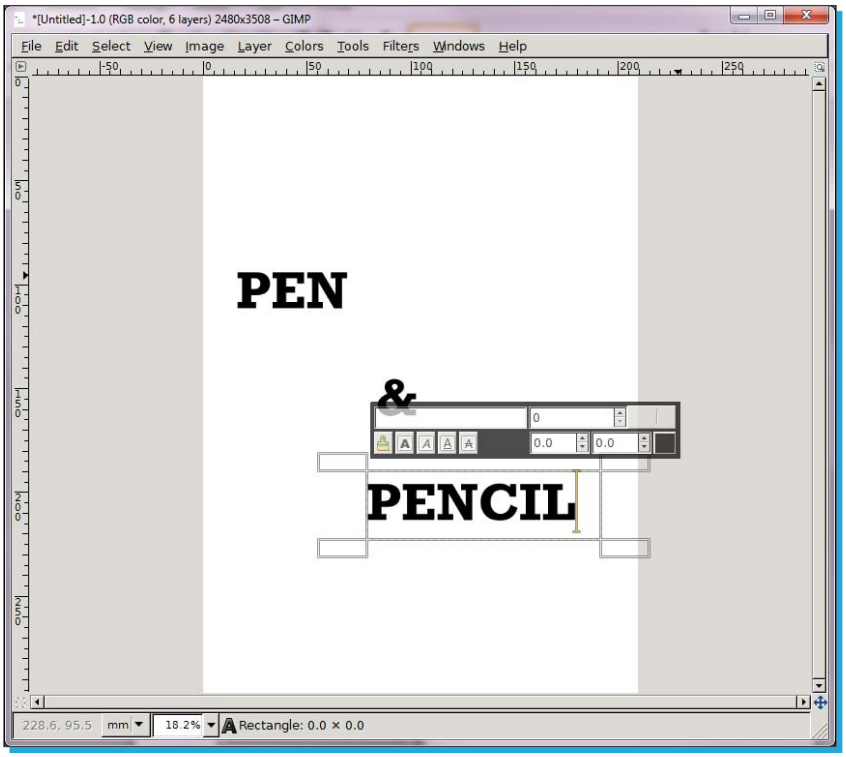
2. Click on the **Text Tool** option to start putting text on the canvas. The setting of the text can be modified at the tool options. Here, I choose **Rockwell** font.



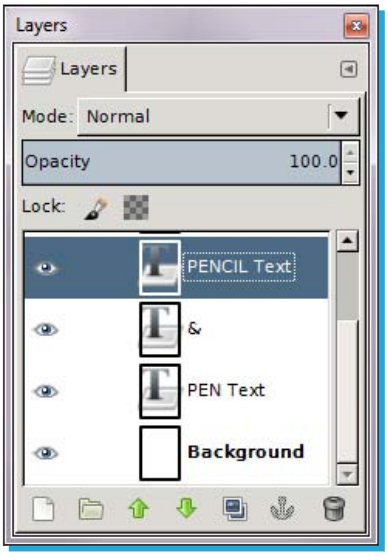
3. Now let's write PEN on the canvas. Click-and-drag to form a rectangle on the canvas. Type PEN at the placeholder, as shown in the following screenshot:



4. Make another two rectangles for & and Pencil.

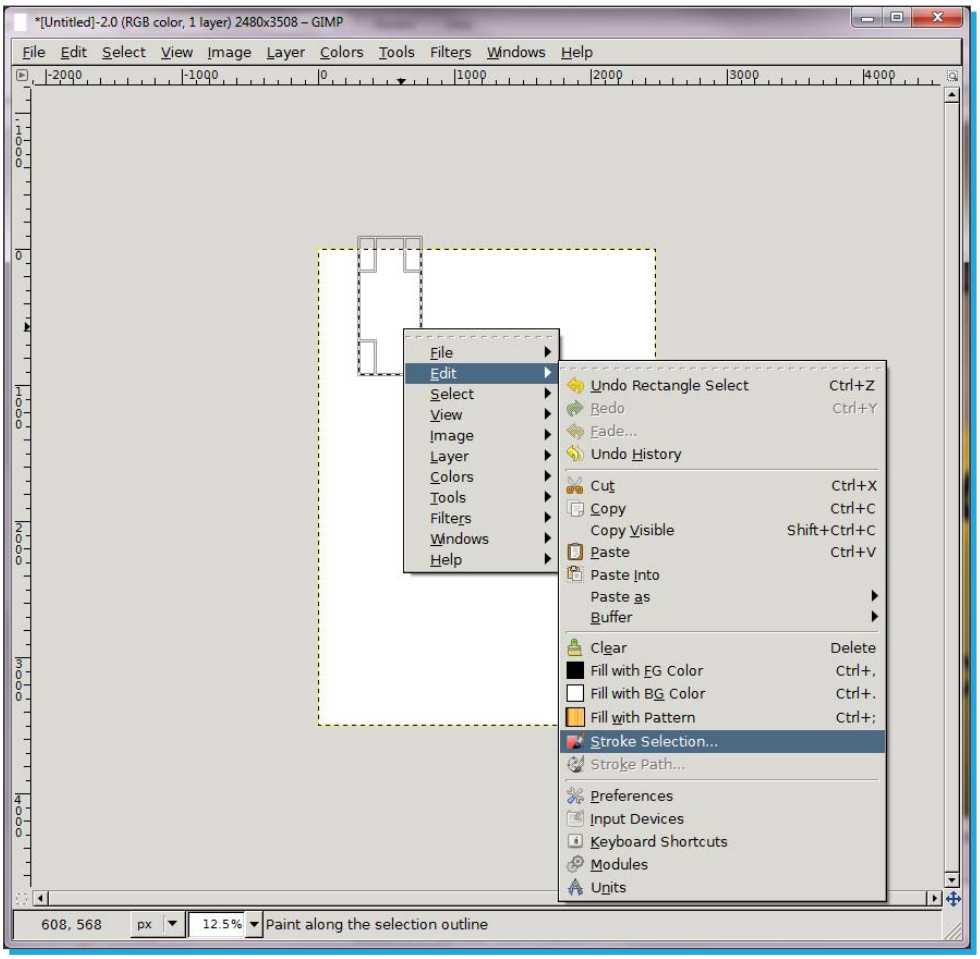


You should have created three text layers; your layers menu should look like the following screenshot:

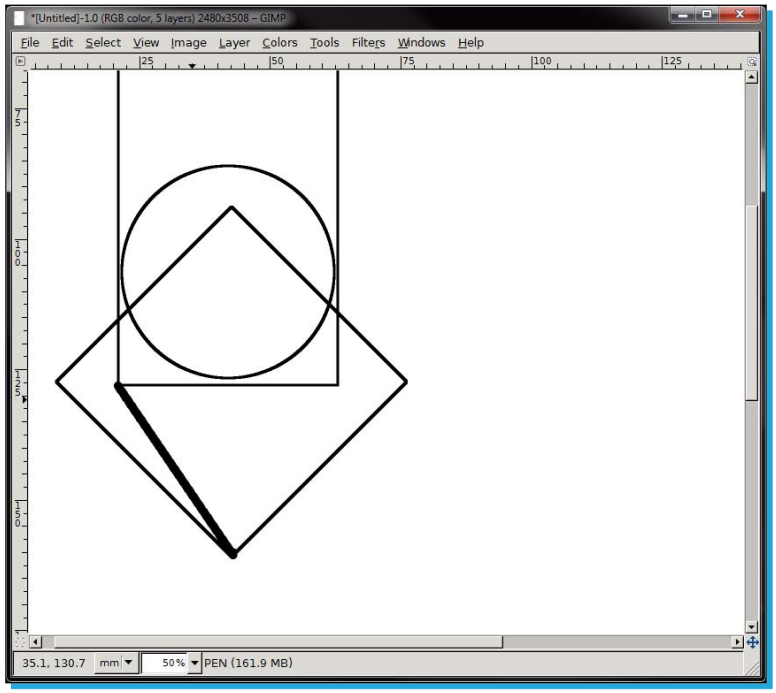


Now let's attempt to make a drawing of a simple fountain pen. To do so, follow these steps:

1. To make a geometrical shape, we could use the selection where you begin by forming a rectangle selection, and put a stroke to the selection, as shown in the following screenshot:

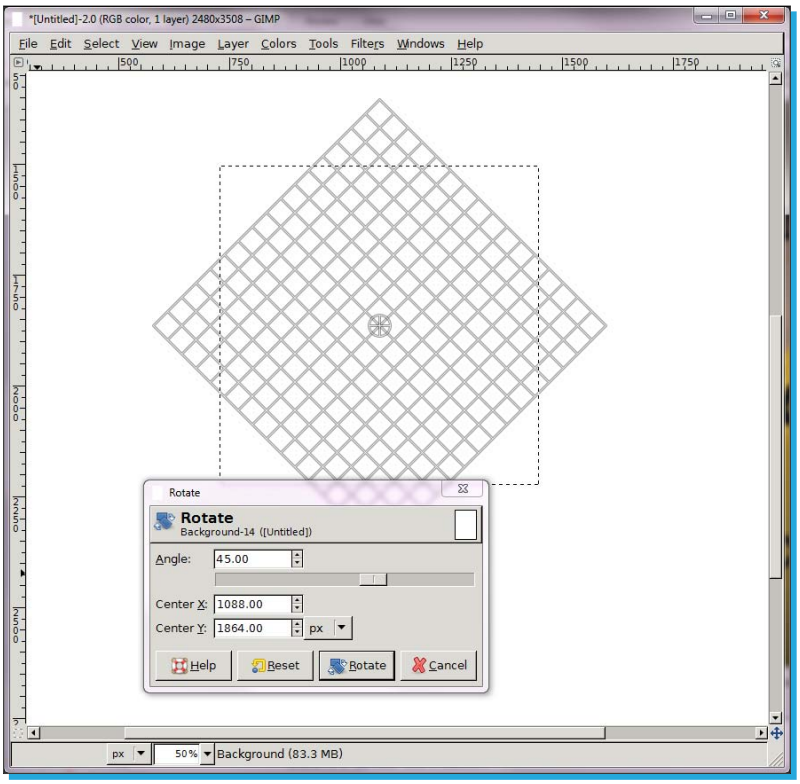


2. This requires a few steps to form the fountain pen shape, as shown in the following screenshot:

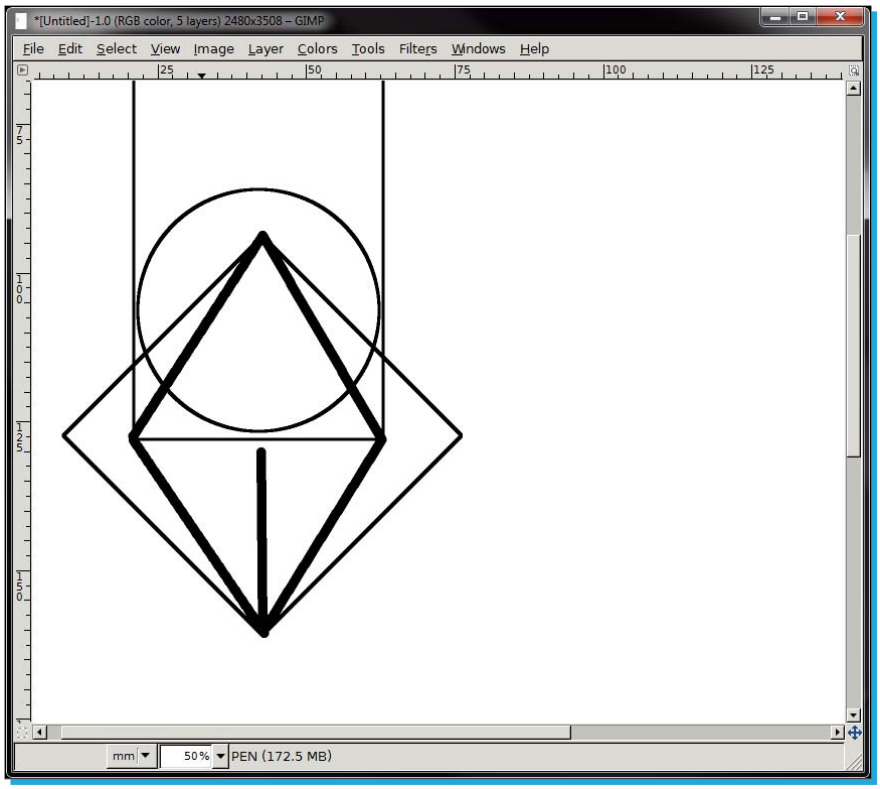


The previous screenshot contains a rectangle, a circle, and a rotated square. Each of them requires a selection formed using a rectangle, circle, and square. Then, a stroke is applied to the selection to form the shape.

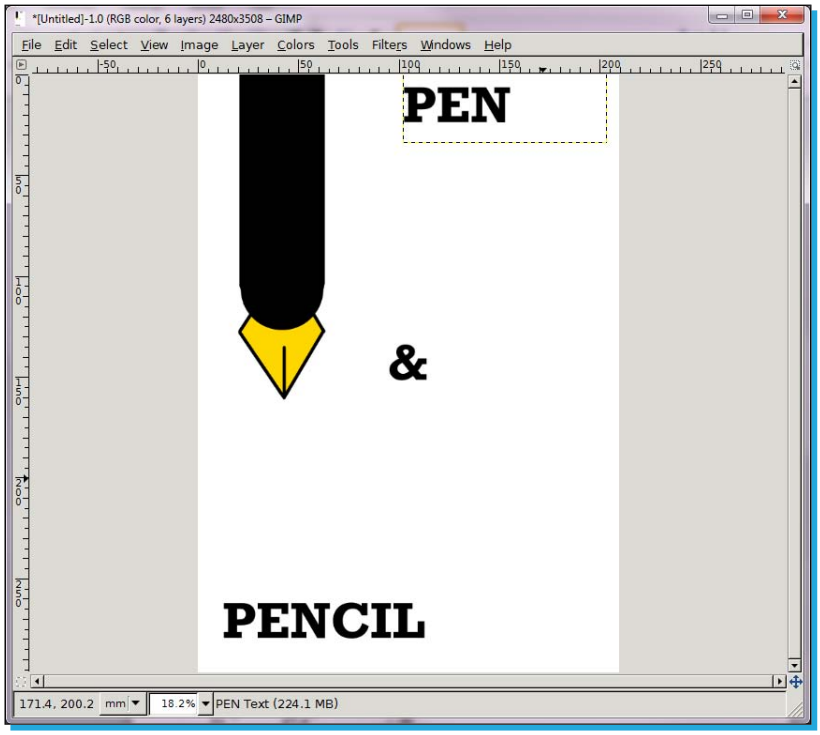
3. Rotating the square is a bit tricky. Use the **Rotate Tool** option to do so. Create a square selection first (*Ctrl* + drag to form a square), click on the **Rotate Tool** option, and click-and-drag the selection of the square to 45 degrees. You may also use the rotate menu box; this way the rotation is more precise. Refer to the following screenshot:



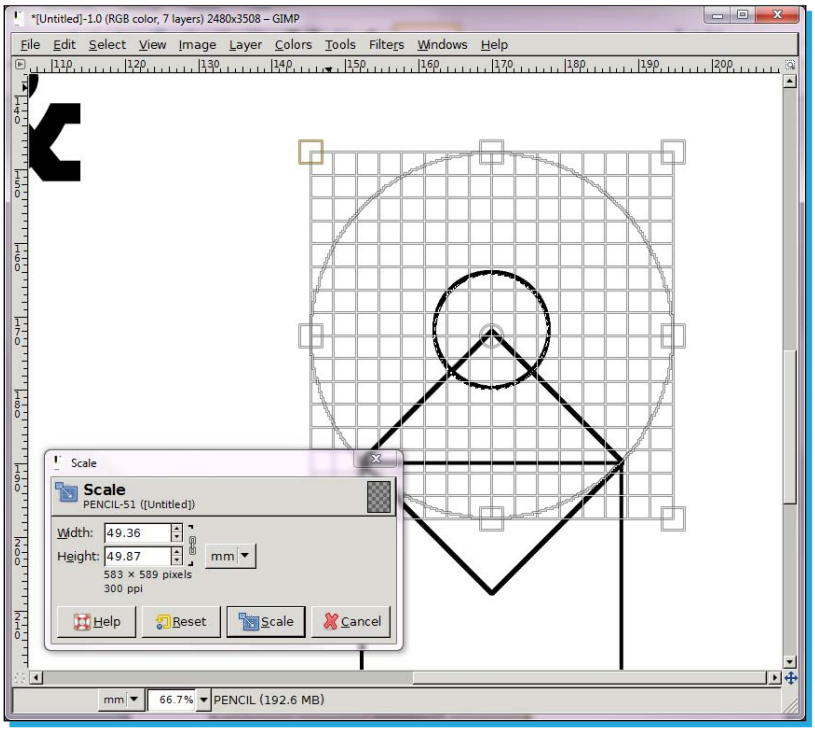
4. Complete the outline with the **Pencil Tool** option. Click a start point, and hold the *Alt* key to draw a straight line. Use the edges on the strokes for your guide to make a fountain pen tip.



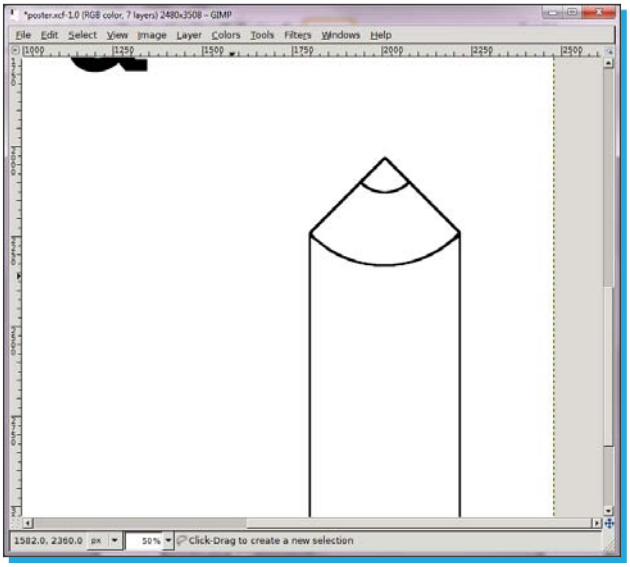
5. Now you should be getting used to forming geometrical shapes. Remove unnecessary lines using **Eraser Tool** option. Use the **Bucket Fill Tool** option to fill in with colors.



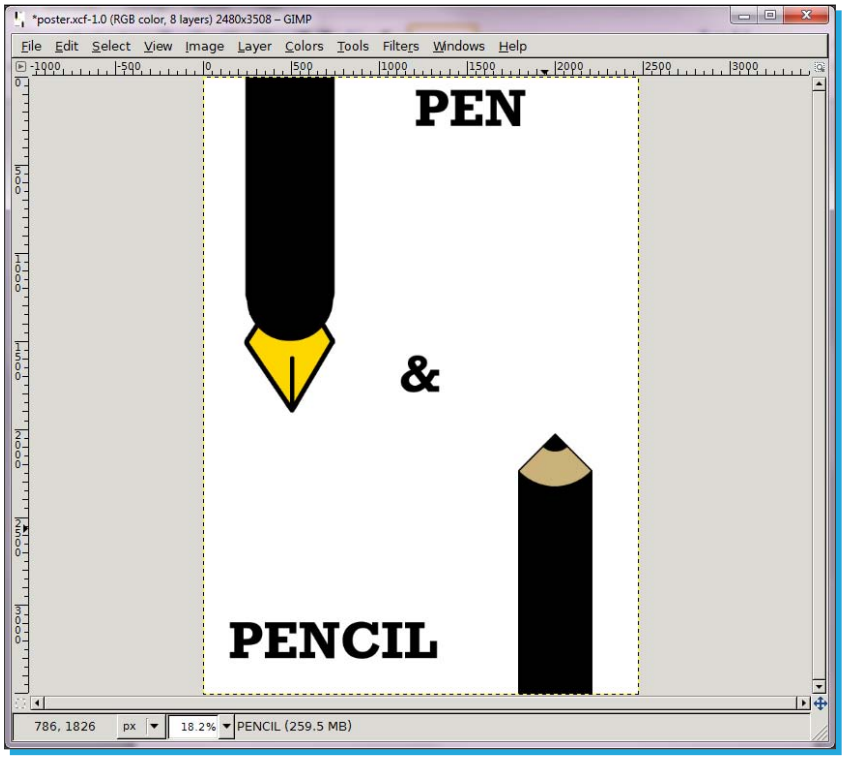
6. To draw a pencil on the other side is simpler than a fountain pen. The basic shape to form is shown in the following screenshot:



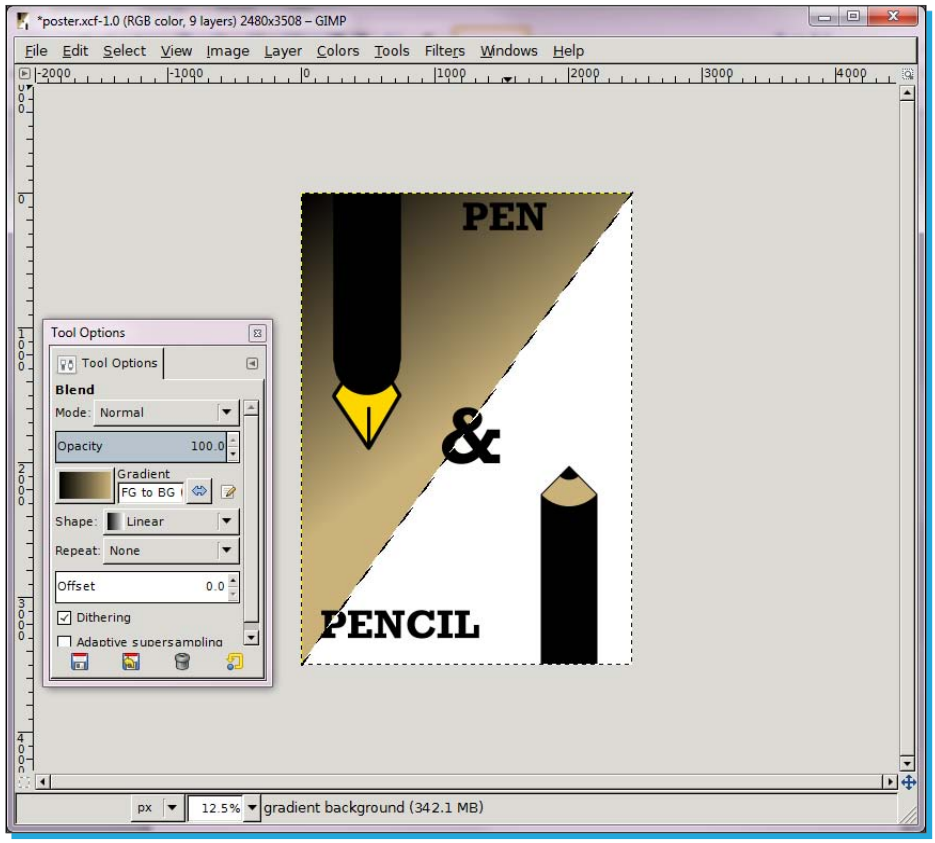
7. Notice, there are two circles; they were generated by clicking on the round selection tool, and holding *Ctrl* + *Shift* while dragging the cursor from the tip of the pencil.



8. Erase the unneeded lines, and start filling the drawing with colors. It should look like the image shown in the following screenshot:



9. Now let's paint the background that I would like to look like a triangular gradient design. Using the lasso tool, in orderly fashion, click at the top-right corner, bottom-left corner, top-left corner, and finally click the top-right corner where we started; a triangular selection is formed.
10. Set up a gradient fill to have settings like the following, and drag from top-left corner to the center of the drawing:

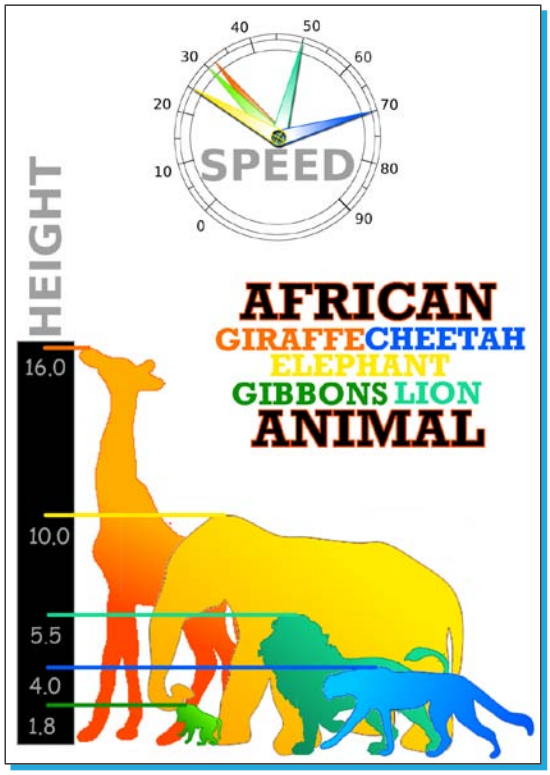


11. Repeat the same process for the other half.
12. To quickly invert the selection, to select the other half, press *Ctrl* + *I*.

13. Rearrange the words using the **Move Tool** option, so they align in the center of the poster. Now we have a poster ready for print!

Drawing an infographic

Infographics are everywhere these days; they provide diagrams to visualize information. Infographics are different than posters. While many consider that they look the same, infographics carry visualization of data in a precise manner. Precision of the drawing is very important. We are going to create an infographic to educate people about African animals.

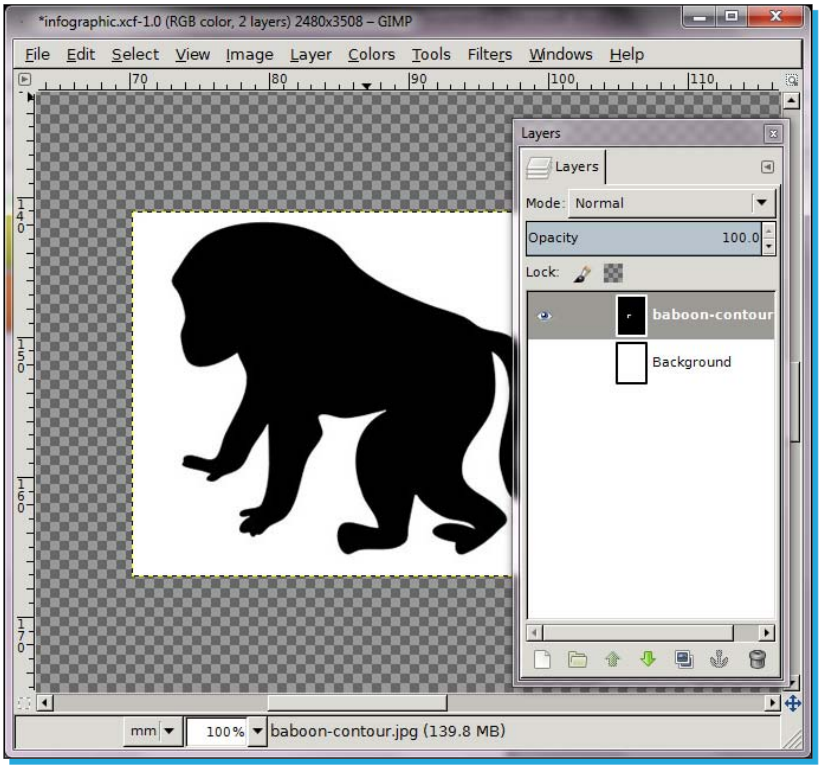


Here is the plan. I had been browsing the Web and found some interesting facts about African animals. The following table shows the facts that I found out:

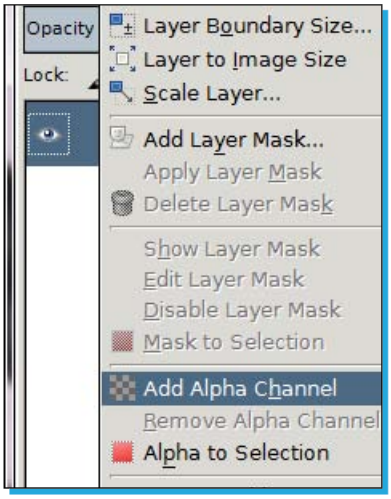
	Giraffe	Elephant	Baboon	Lion	Cheetah
Speed	32 mph	25 mph	30 mph	50 mph	70 mph
Height	16 ft	10 ft	1.8 ft	5.5 ft	4 ft

I also found some clip art for each animal to copy over to GIMP. Use your Internet browser, and go to `http://www.freeclipartnow.com/animals`. I would like to create this document in an A4 size image. To do so, follow these steps:

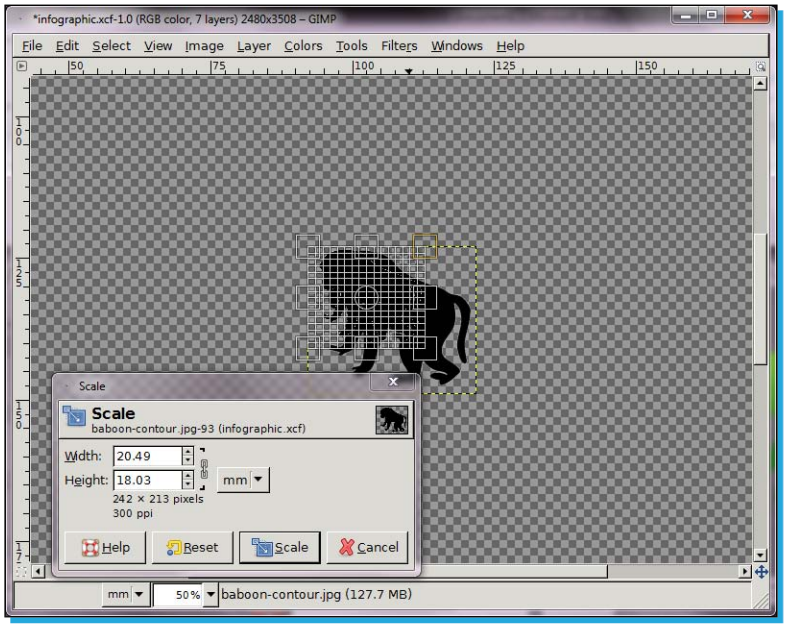
1. Click on **File** | **New,** and create an A4 size canvas.
2. Drag the picture into the canvas.



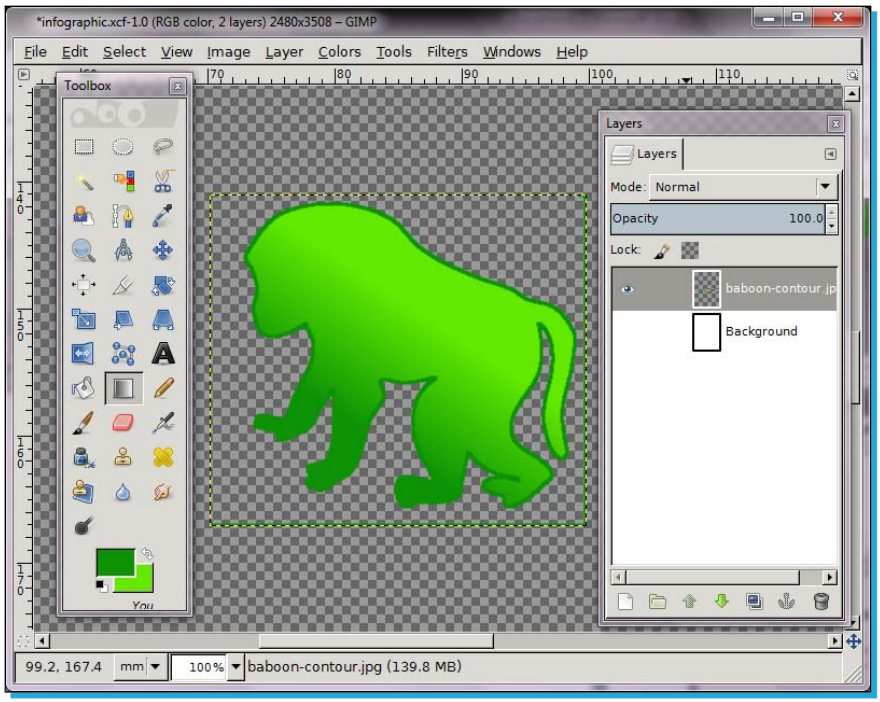
3. If the image does not have a visible alpha channel, please add one from the layer content menu:



4. Remove the other surroundings, so that we are left with the shape of a baboon.
5. Resize the picture so that the picture is proportionate with the other pictures. Use information from the table to set the height. I represent 1.8 feet with 18 mm, as 1 foot is represented as 10 mm.

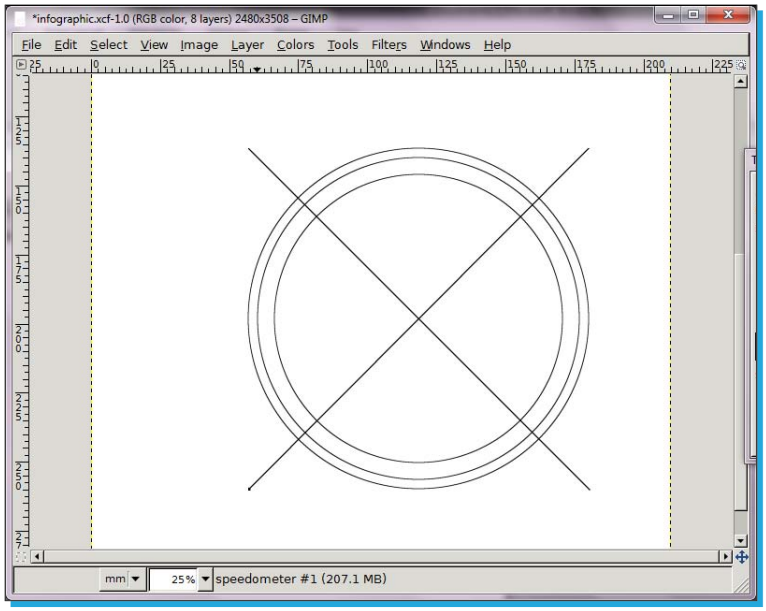


6. Select the shape with a magic wand so that it is easier to work with. Add a gradient to fill the shape and stroke the outline. The result should look like the image shown in the following screenshot:

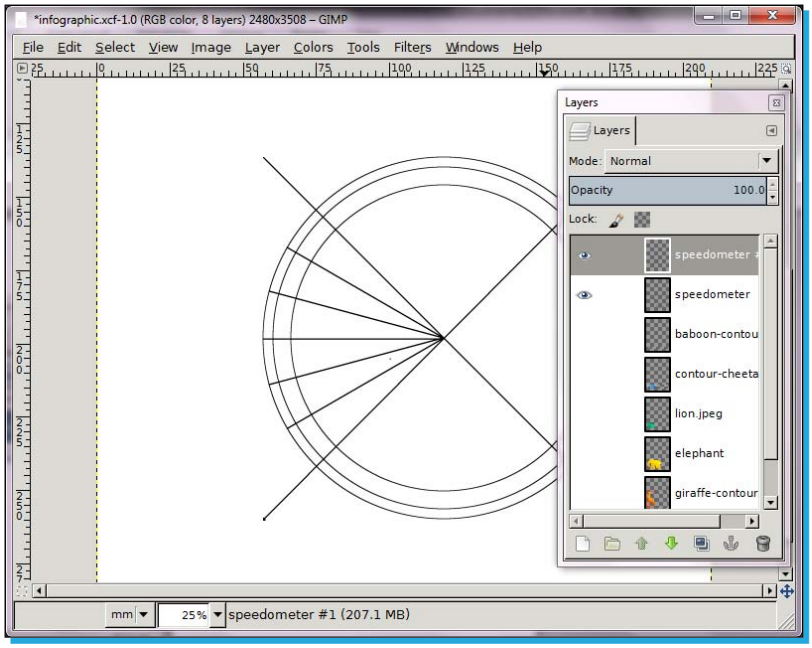


7. Repeat the process for lion, cheetah, elephant, and giraffe.

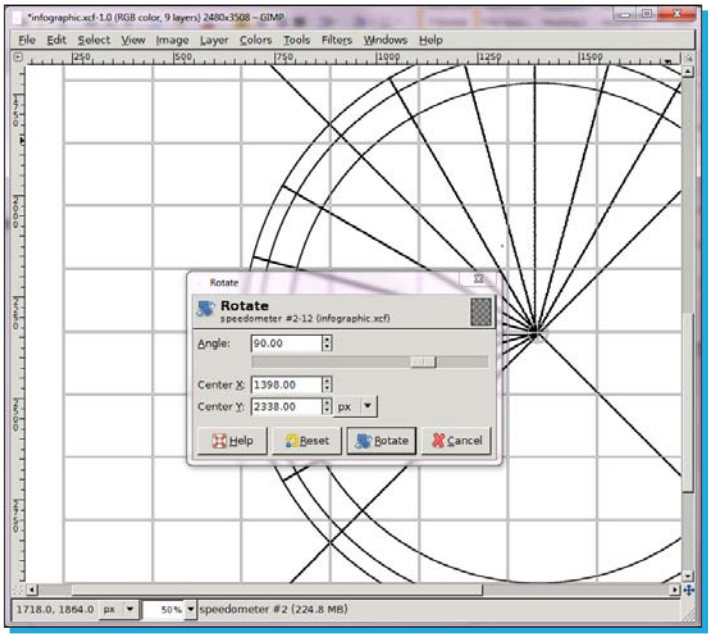
8. Now for the speedometer, draw a basic guide, as shown in the following screenshot:



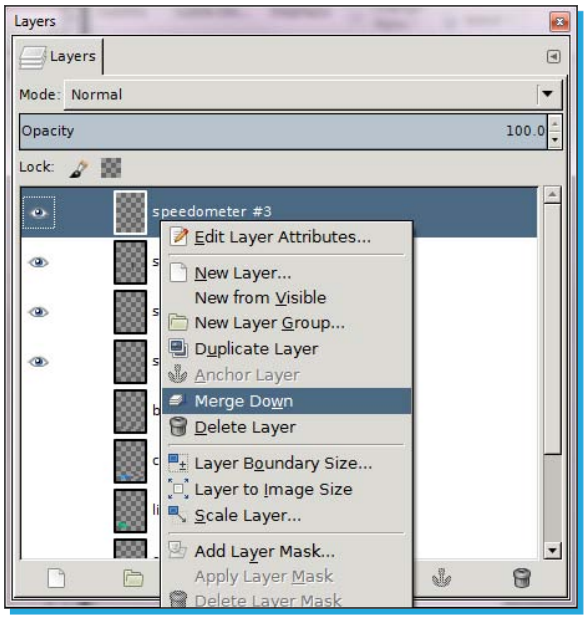
9. On the top of another layer, create radii of the circles. These will be the levels on the speedometer.



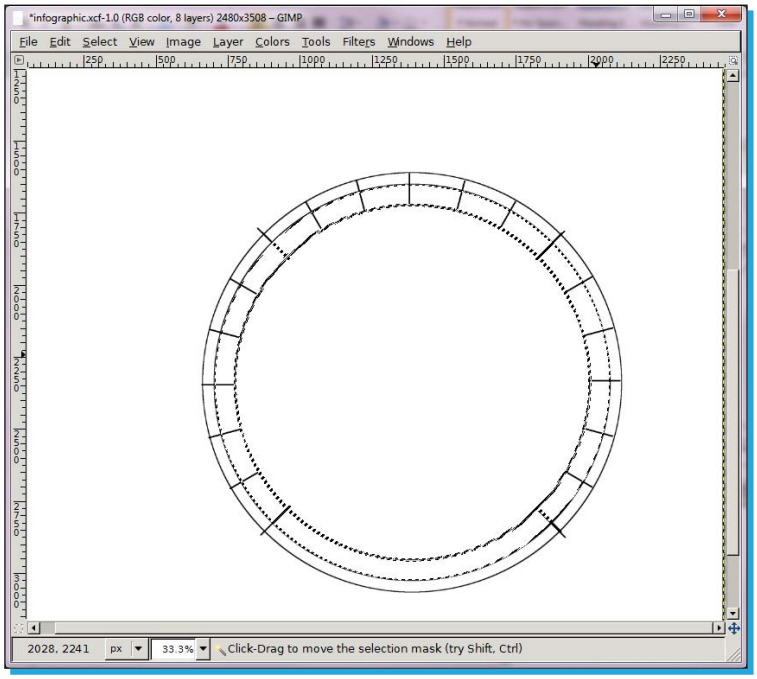
10. This enables the layer to be copied and rotated to fill other quadrants.



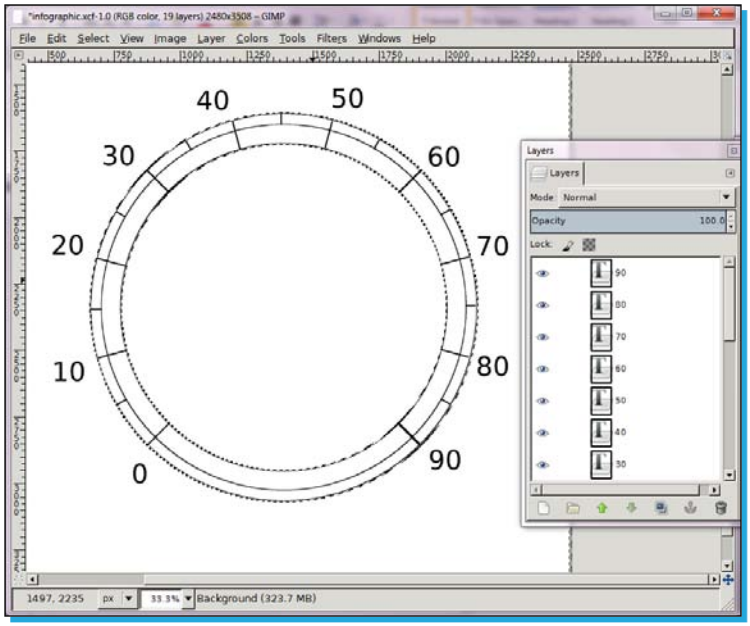
11. After the second quadrant, rotate to fill up until the third quadrant merge all three quadrants. Refer to the following screenshot:



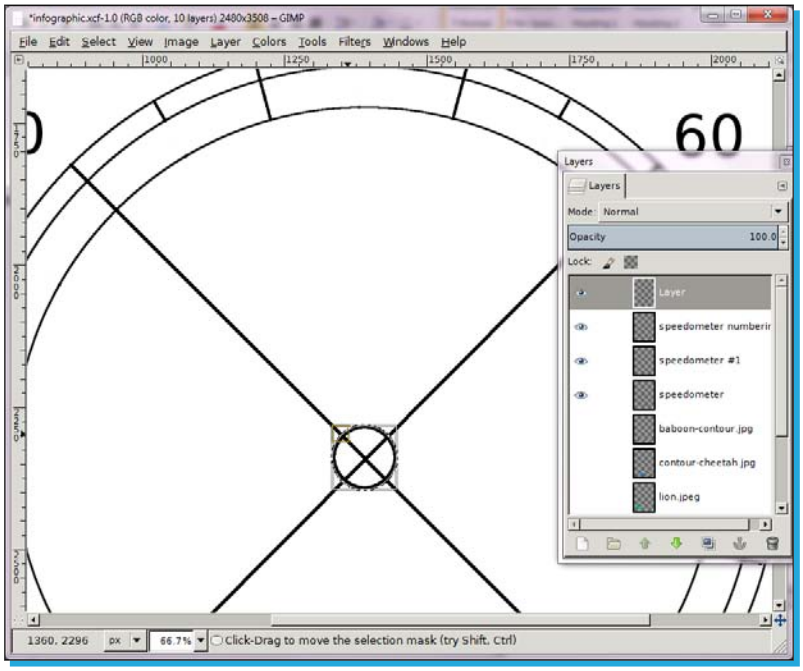
Now we have a near complete speedometer:



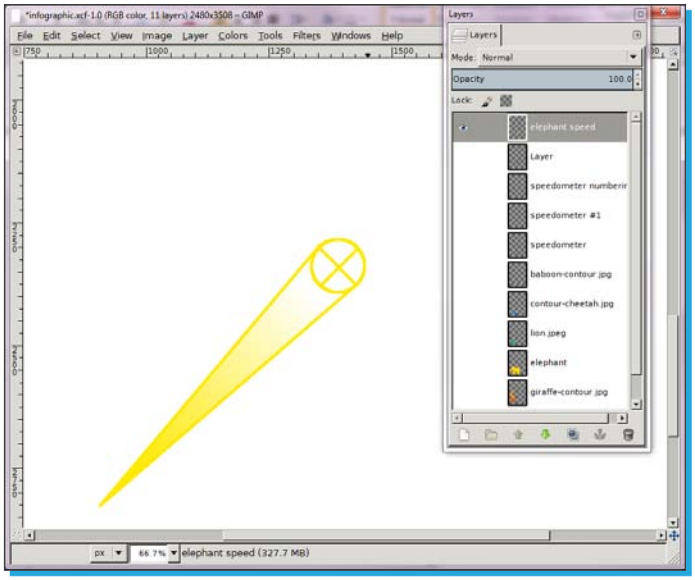
12. Clean up the speedometer and put the labels for each level.



13. Let's draw the guide for the speedometer needle; we only need to find the center of the circle.



14. Create a needle that points to zero, and color them according to the animal colors.



15. Now rotate the needle to show the speed of the animal. Add a drop shadow right after that. Click on **Filters | Light and Shadow | Drop Shadow** to add the drop shadow.

While we're on the subject:

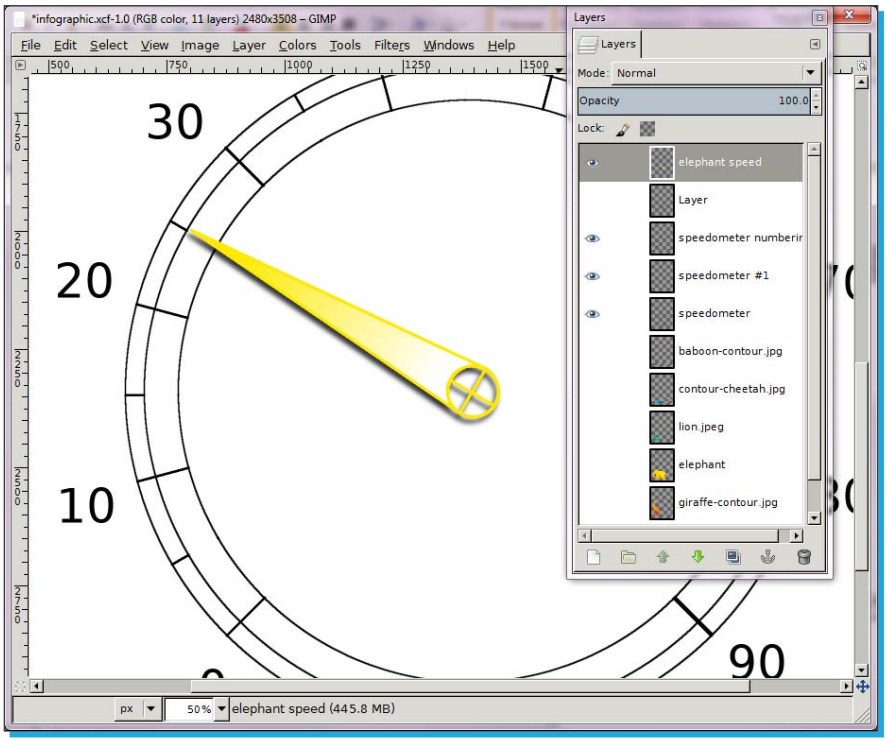
How do I calculate the rotation angle of the needle? Consider the following values.

Speed of elephant = 25

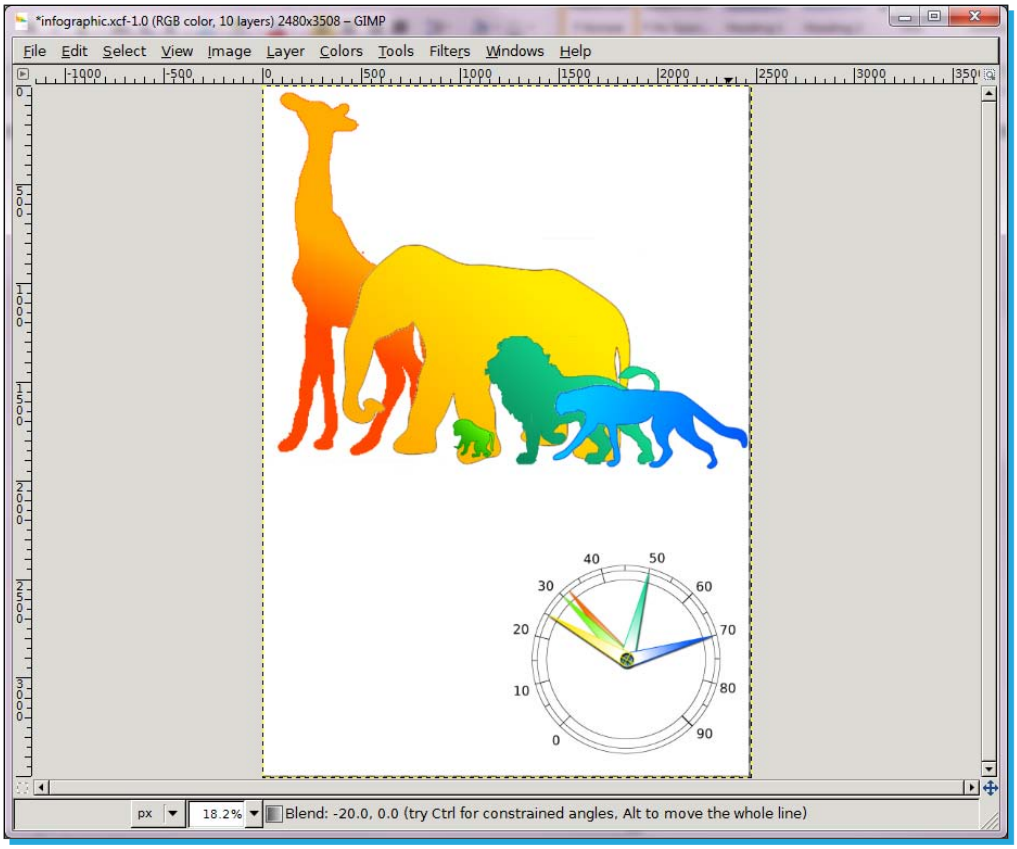
Full quadrant indicator = 120

Which makes rotation: $\frac{25}{120} \times 360° = 75°$

The result is shown in the following screenshot:

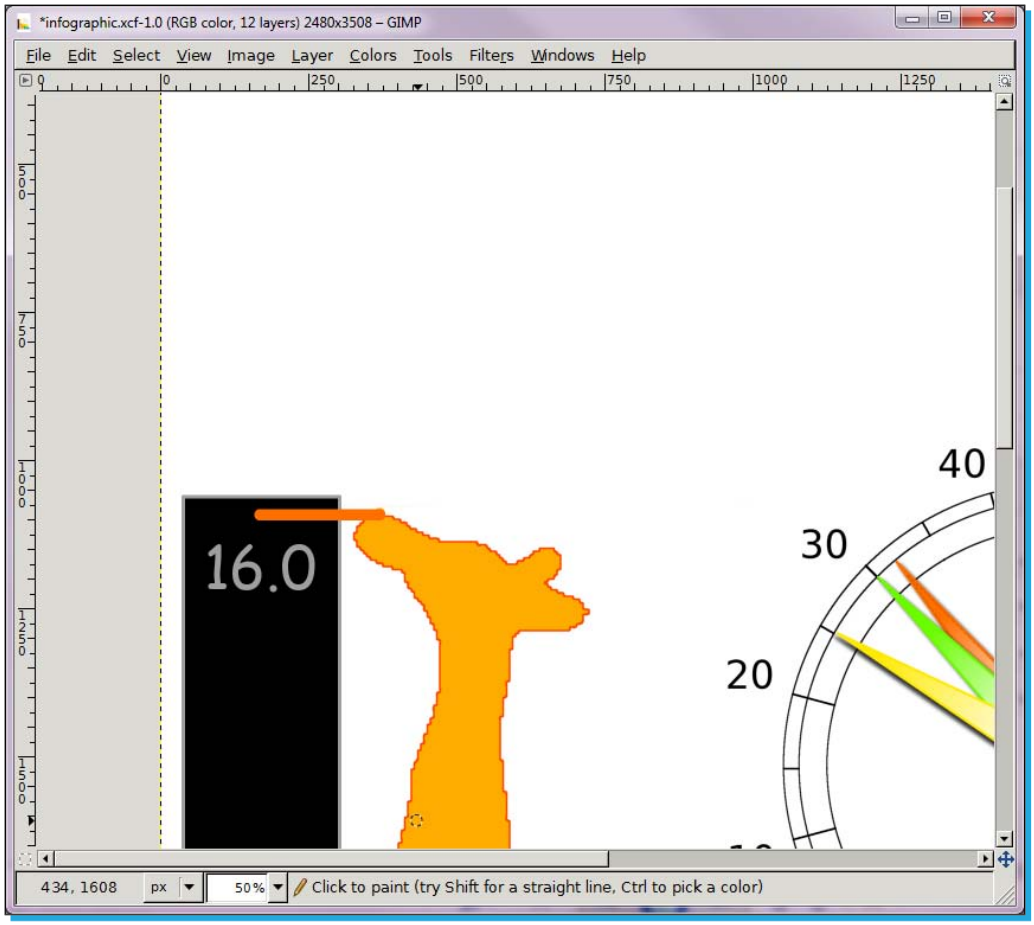


The overall picture would look like the following screenshot:

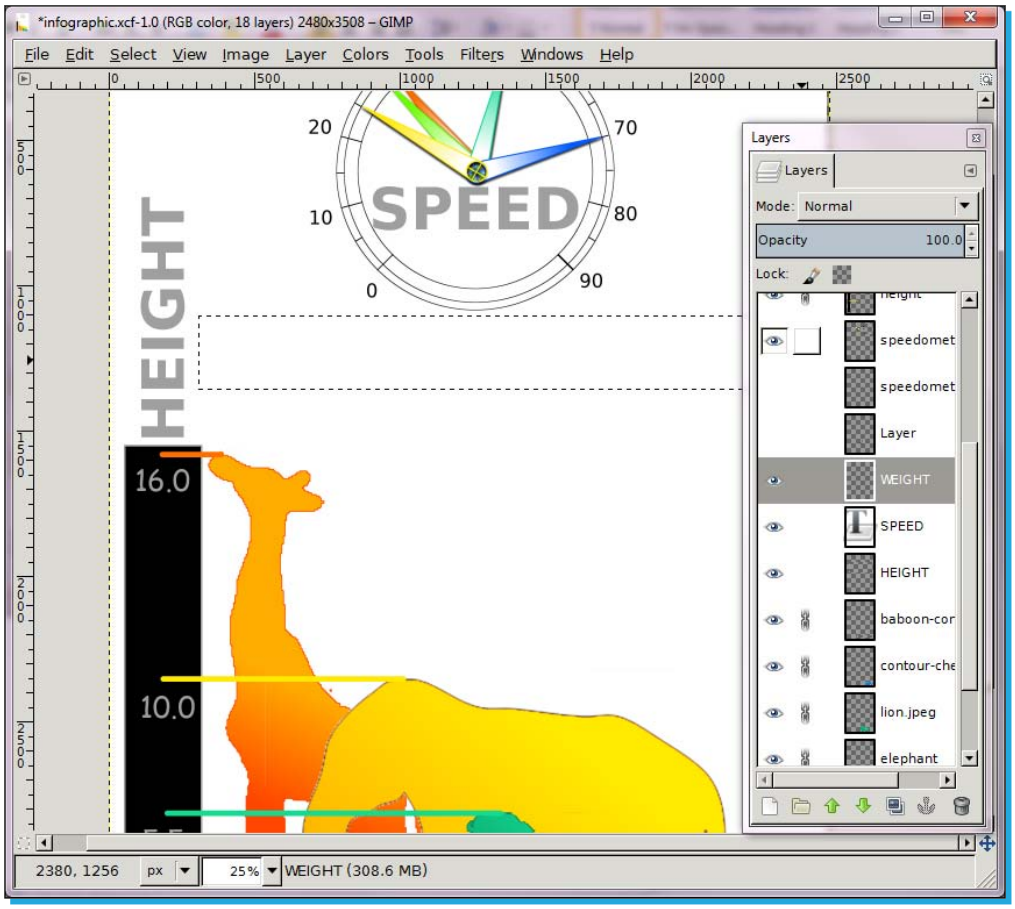


16. Now we are going to create an indicator to for the height of the animals. For that, we will use the pencil tool to create a straight line.

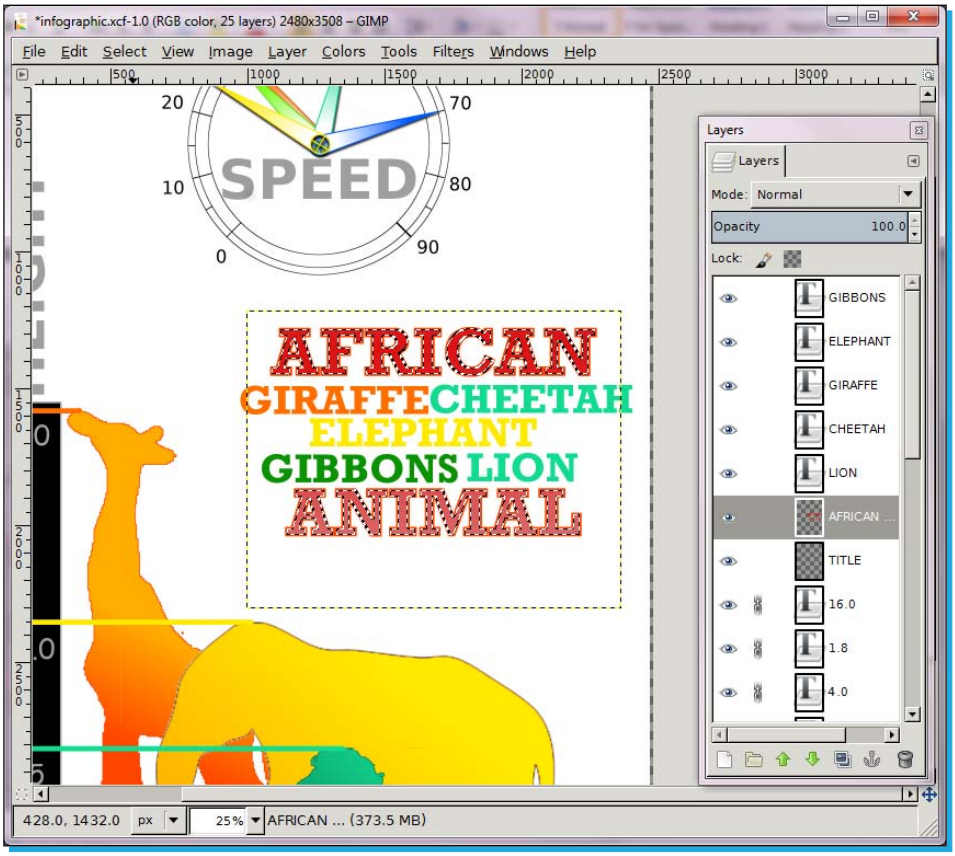
17. Click at a point, hold down the *Shift* key, and it will form a straight line.



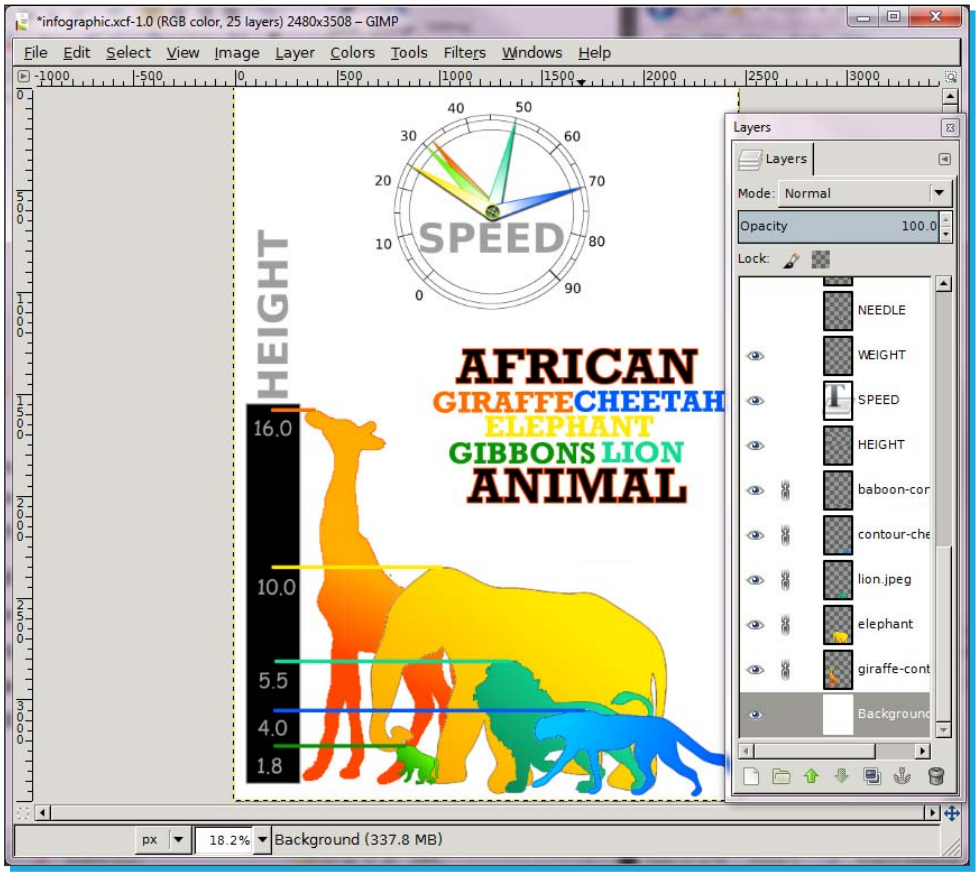
18. Add a text to make clear that each image represent height and speed of the animals.



19. Use your creativity to make the title and the legends for the color-coded animals, as shown in the following screenshot:



20. Finally, the infographic is done, as shown in the following screenshot:

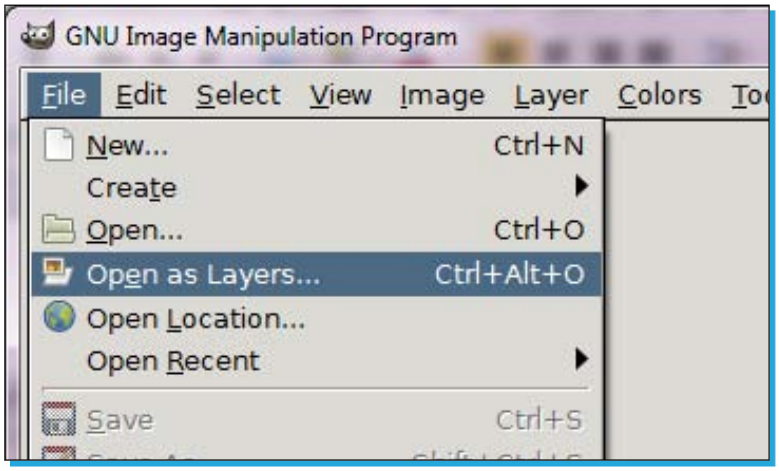


Combining multiple pictures

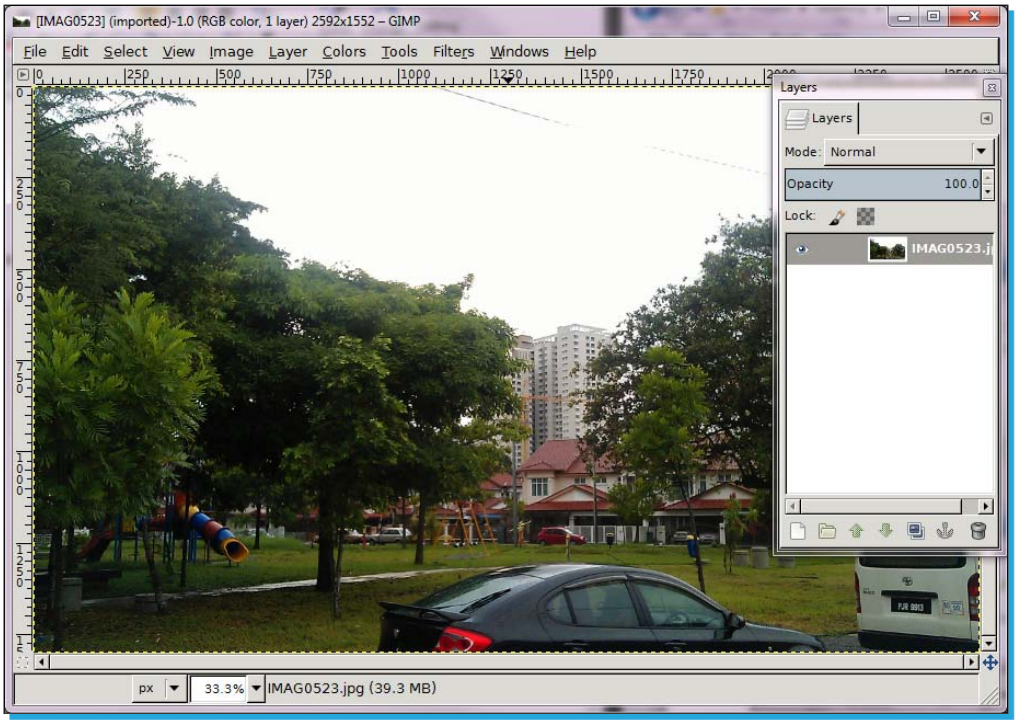
In this section, we will learn how to produce a picture composed of multiple pictures.

To do so, follow these steps:

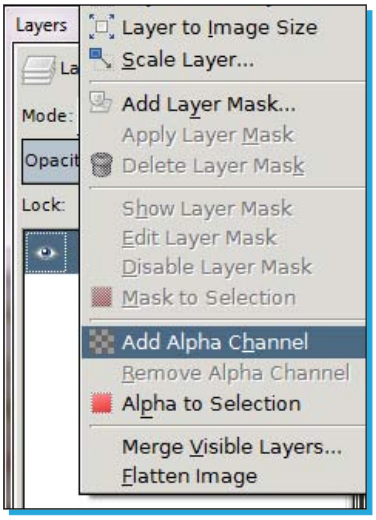
1. First, we choose a picture and open it as layers, as shown in the following screenshot:



Following is the picture I selected:

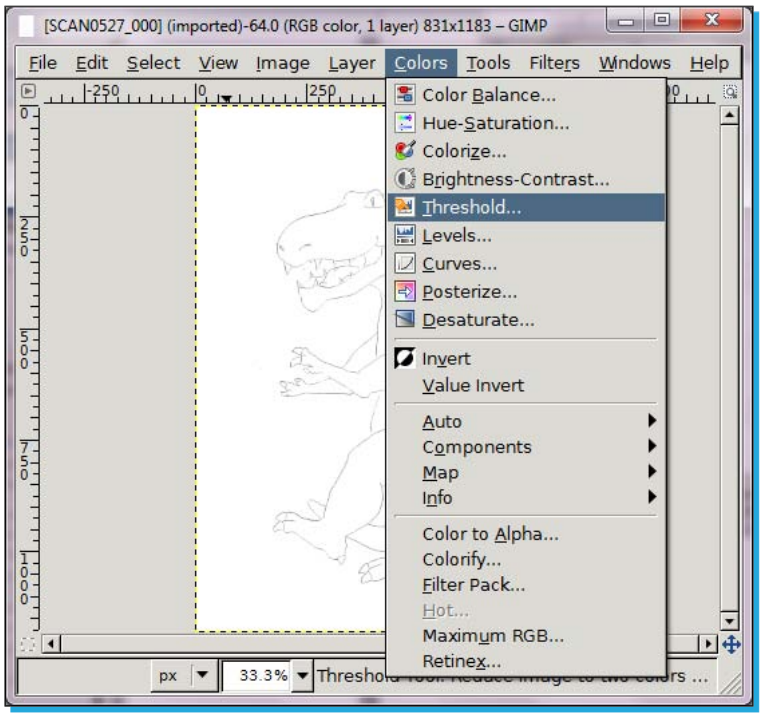


2. Add an alpha channel to the picture so that it exposes transparency, as shown in the following screenshot:



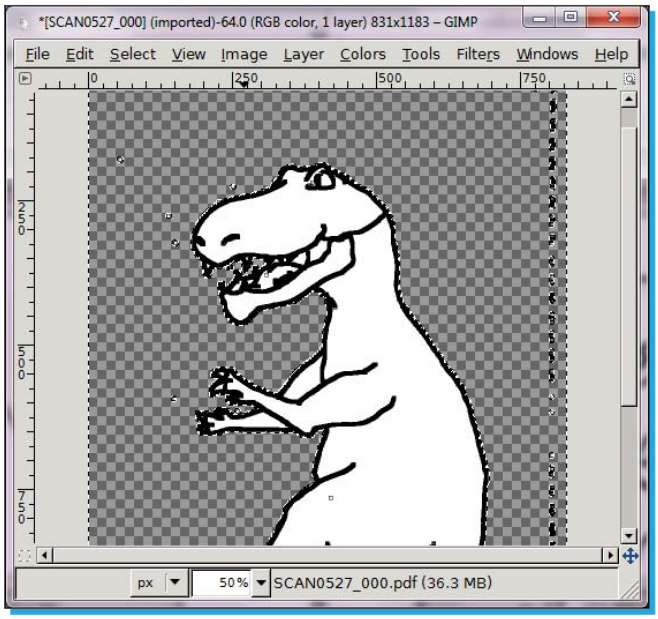
3. Use a magic wand to select the sky.
4. Cut it out and paste it as a new layer.
5. Shift the layer backward, so it lies at the back.

Leave the picture for a while; we are looking into drawing a monster on the background. I drew a picture of a monster on my sketch book and scanned it. Therefore, I can open it using GIMP. We can use threshold setting to get the outline clearer.

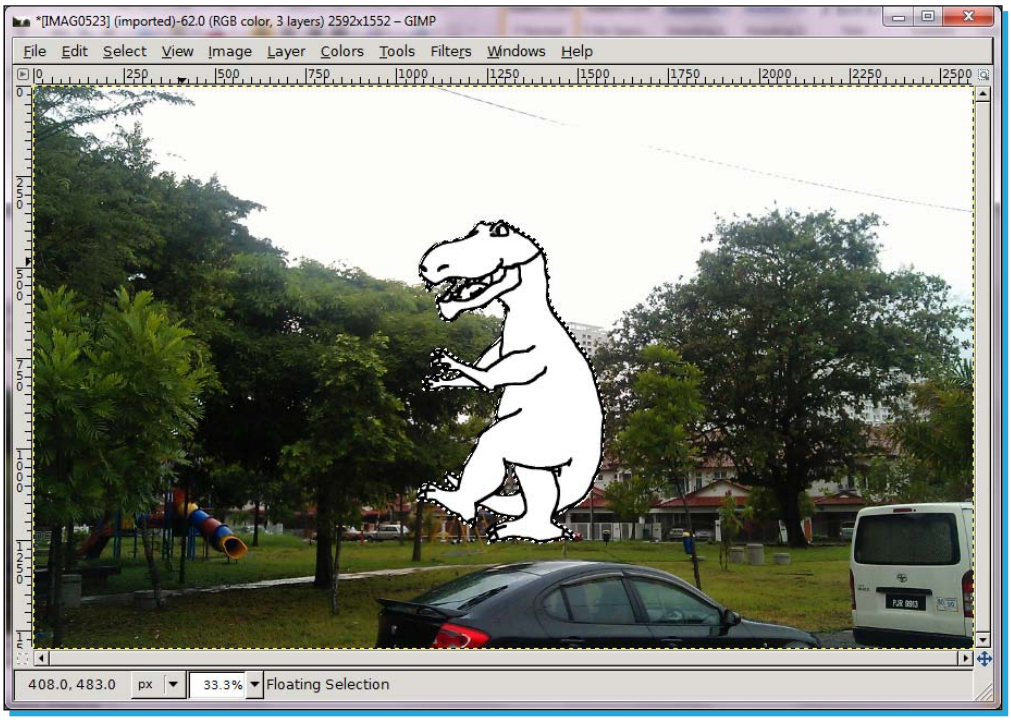


To draw a picture on the background, follow these steps:

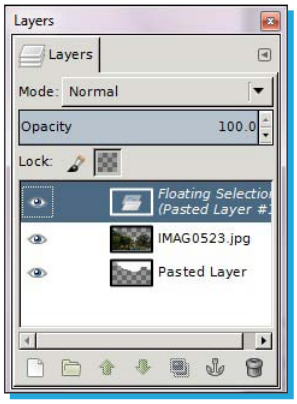
1. Use **Select by color** to select the outline of the monster.
2. Clean up the picture, and delete the background, so we can only get the monster.



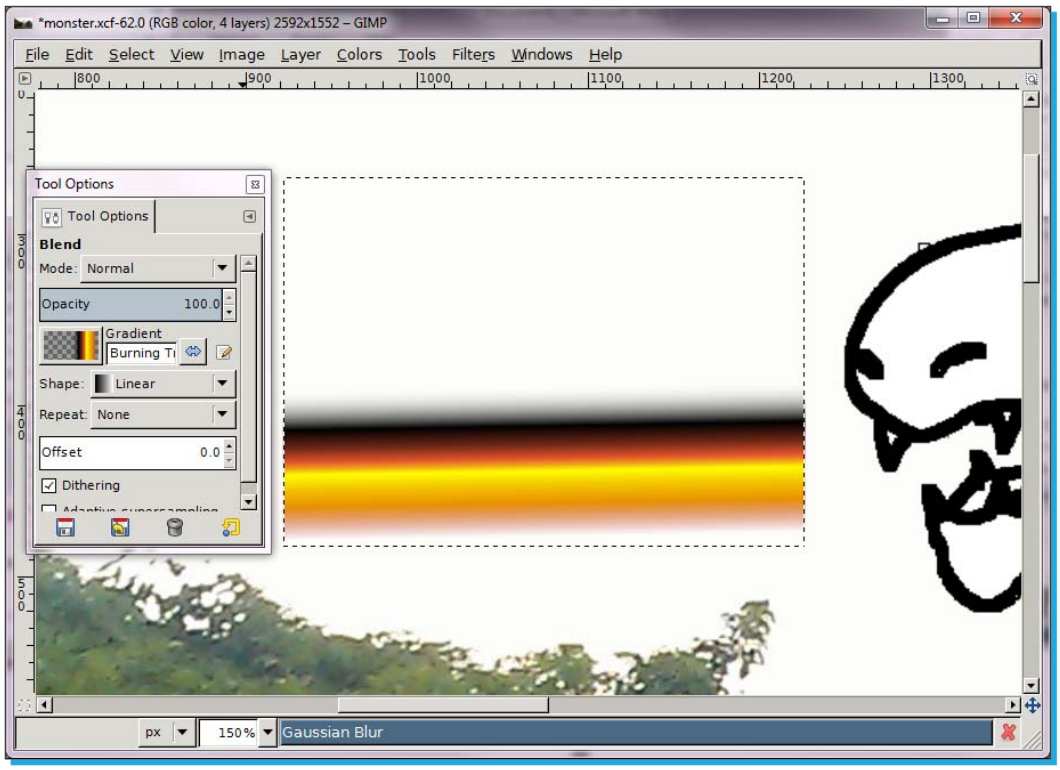
3. Copy the monster and paste it over in the picture we were working on earlier.



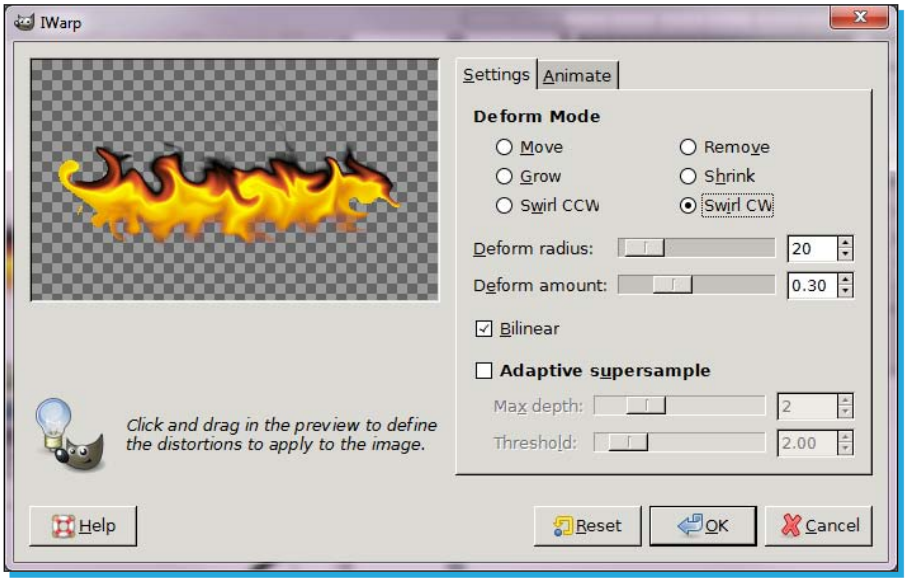
4. Anchor the layer, and adjust the layer so that the monster falls at the back of the scenery.



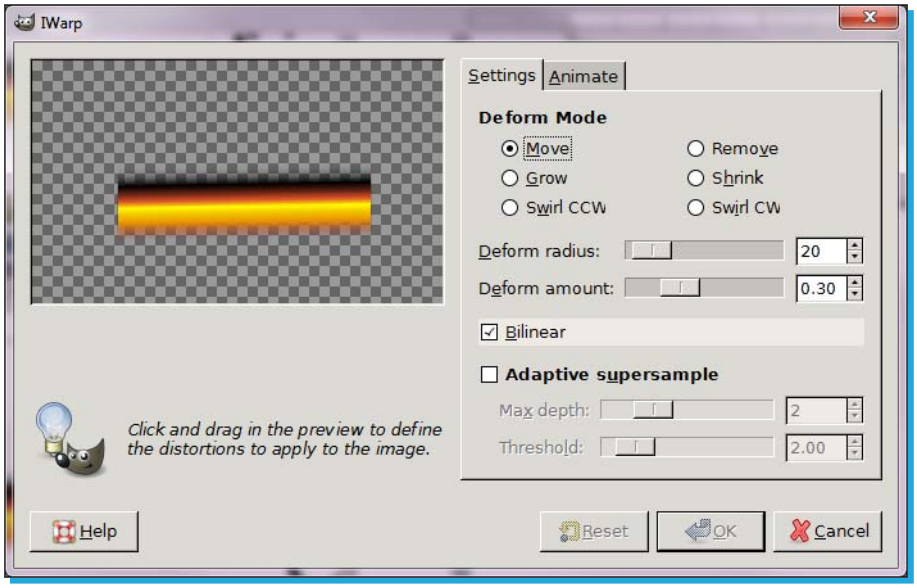
5. Next step is to create the fire. For that, create a new layer, and select a portion of the layer near the mouth of the monster. Fill the selection with a gradient, as shown in the following screenshot:



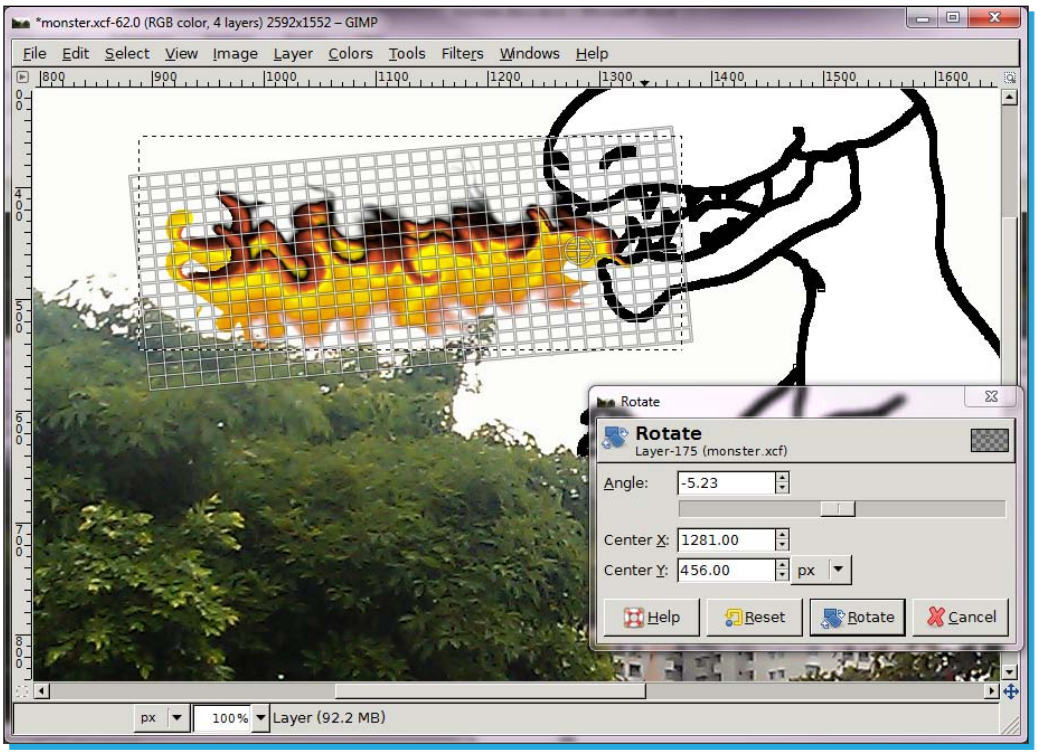
6. Deselect the rectangle, and select a bigger portion of the layer.
7. Go to **Filters** | **Distorts** | **IWarp** to shape the fire to the gradient. Smudge the gradient pointing up. Use the **Swirl CCW** or **Swirl CW** option to create a beautiful effect of fierce fire.



8. Then click on the **Move** radio button, as shown in the following screenshot:

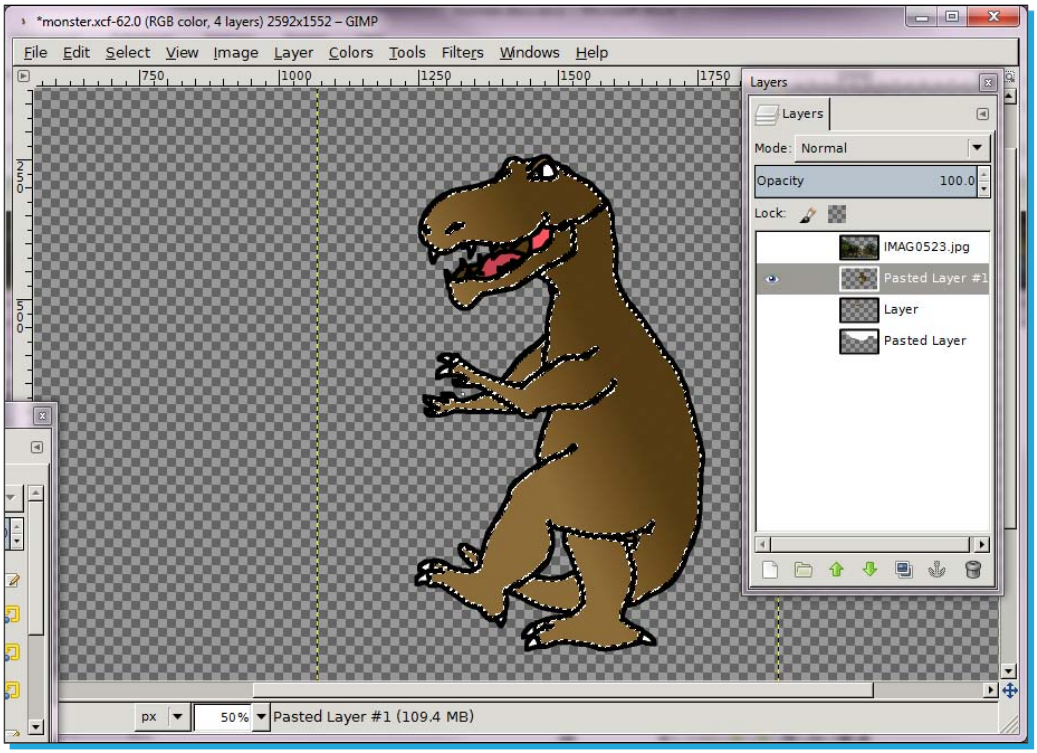


9. Now that we have a fire-breathing monster, try to do some adjustment to make the fire slanting to the position of the head. Use the **Move Tool** and the **Rotate Tool** options to do so.

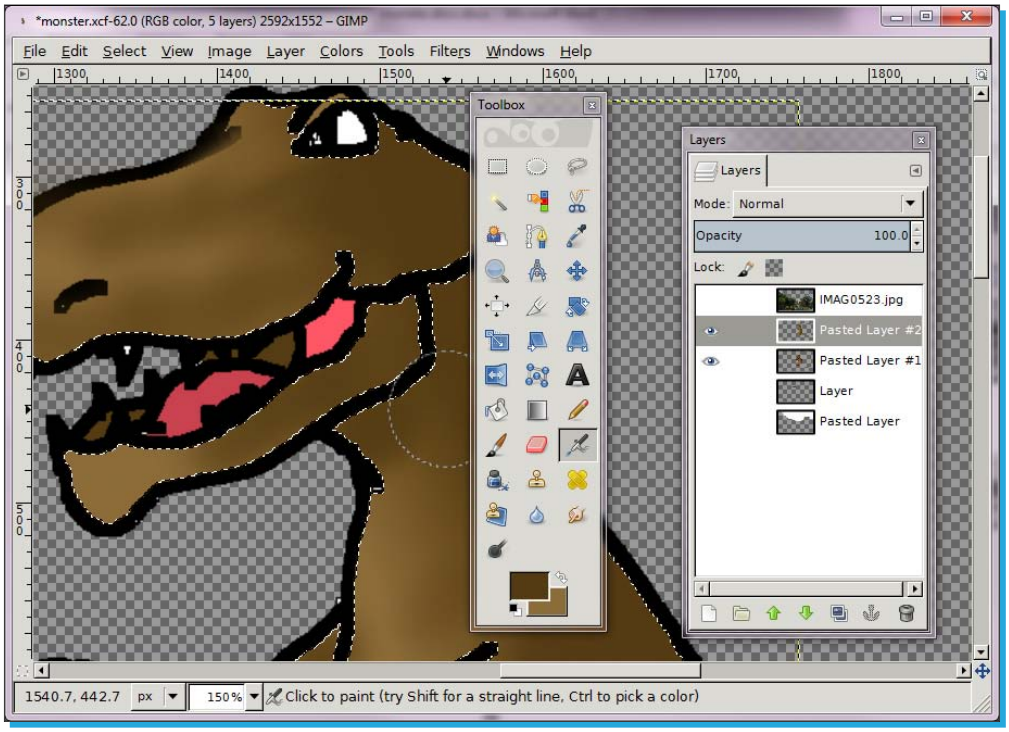


Now let's color the monster. To do so, follow these steps:

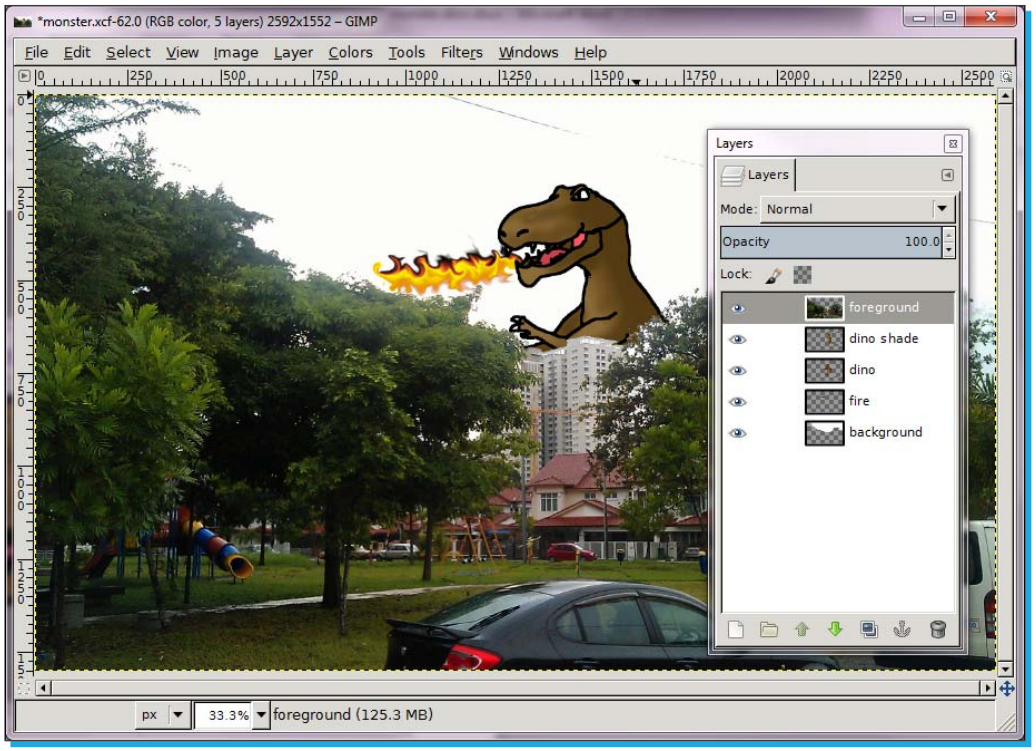
1. Apply a gradient on the monster.



2. Finally, give the monster some shades using the **Airbrush Tool** option.



Now, we came up with a fire-breathing monster, terrorizing the neighborhood. How cool is that!



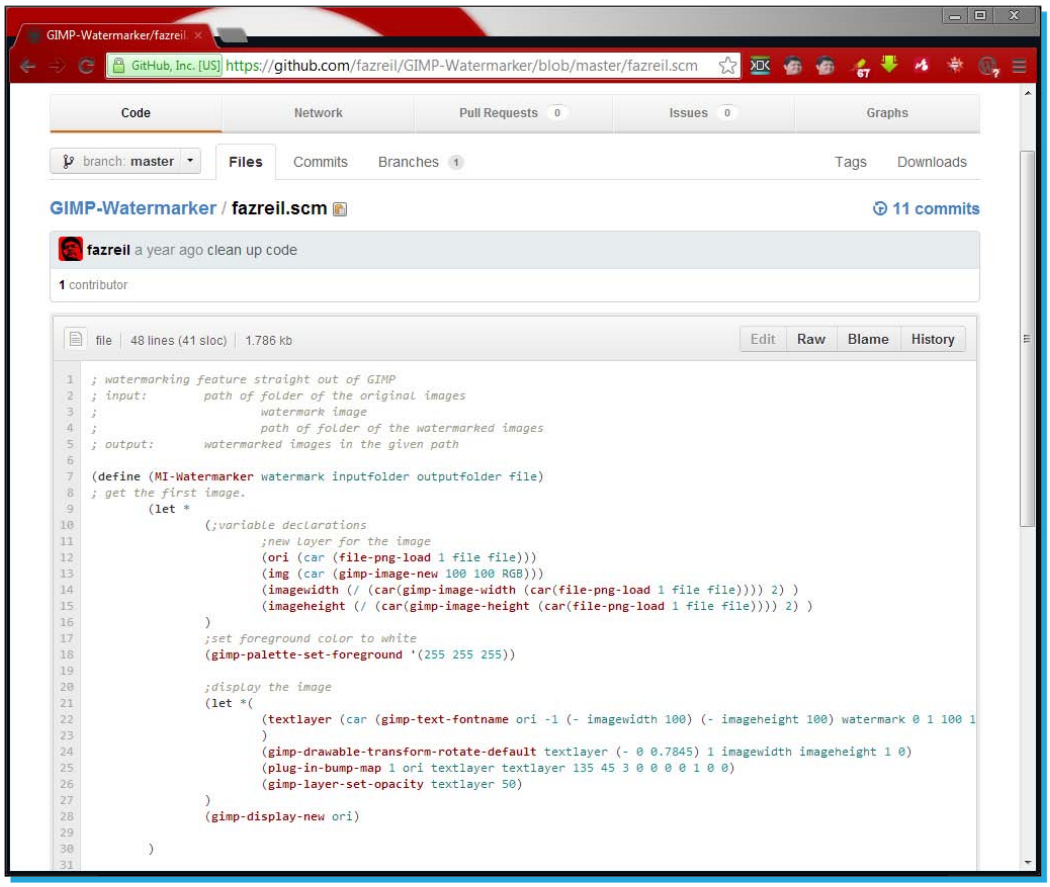
Plugins

Plugin are a very interesting part of GIMP. I am not going to explain how to install plugins step by step. But, the plugin being advanced, I will have to explain how to install one.

Plugins can bring new functionalities to GIMP. It might be a basic batch rotation or a fantastic vector drawing plugin that draws graphics based on complex mathematic calculation.

I will be using my own watermarking plugin that puts a watermark on a batch of images. Follow these steps:

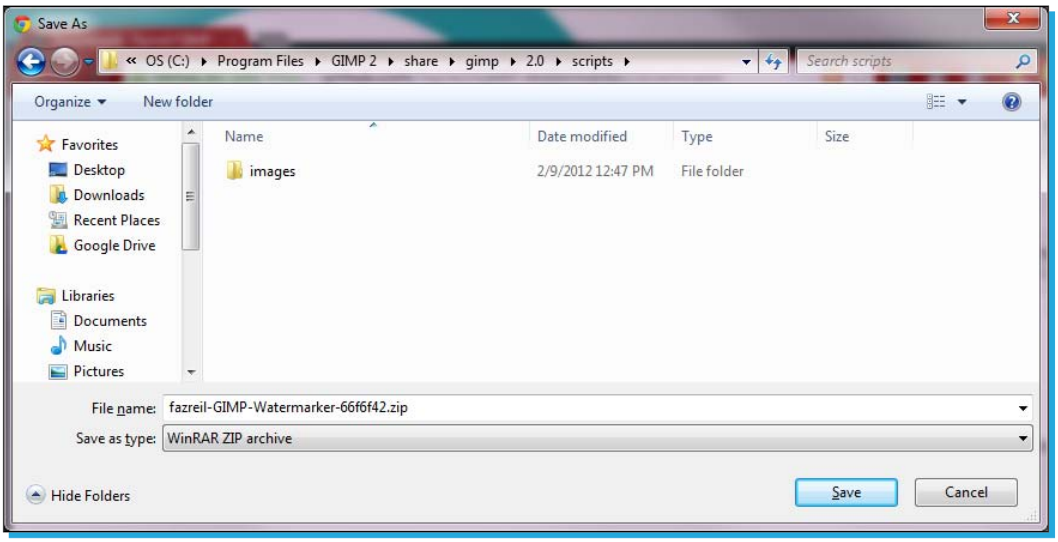
1. Browse to `https://github.com/fazreil/GIMP-Watermarker/blob/master/fazreil.scm`.



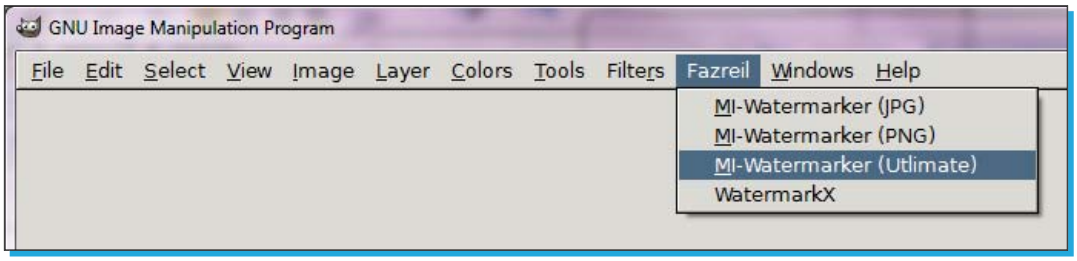
   This page shows a plugin I made for GIMP.

2. Now, download it from the page.

3. Unzip the downloaded file to the script directory in your GIMP installation folder. My setup follows the path, `C:\Program Files\GIMP 2\share\gimp\2.0\scripts`, as shown in the following screenshot:



4. Restart GIMP 2.0.
5. After you have restarted the server, it will look like the following screenshot, with a new item in the menu:



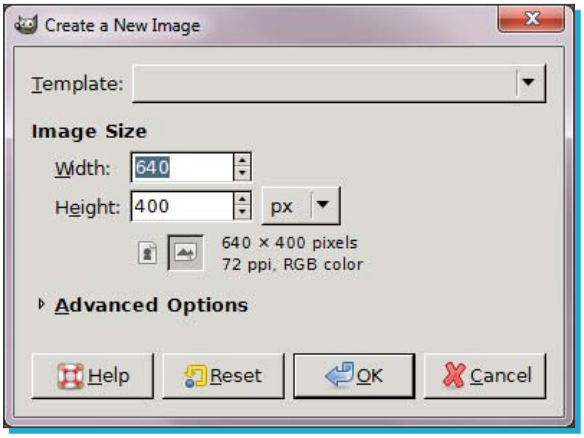
There are many places where people keep their written plugins; you might find them if you search in a search engine or head to `http://registry.gimp.org/`. Happy hunting and installing!

Using filters

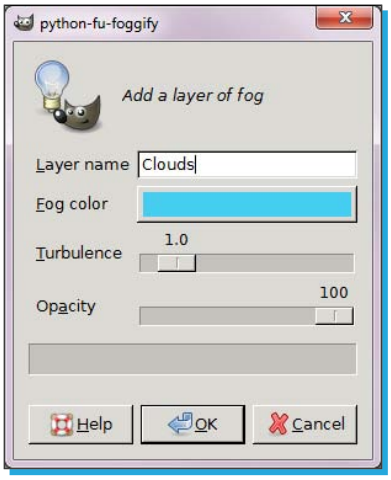
Filters are a very cool feature in GIMP. We've used some filters in our work before (like the IWarp when creating the fire effect). This time we are going to use more filters to create the following picture:

To create the previous picture using filters, follow these steps:

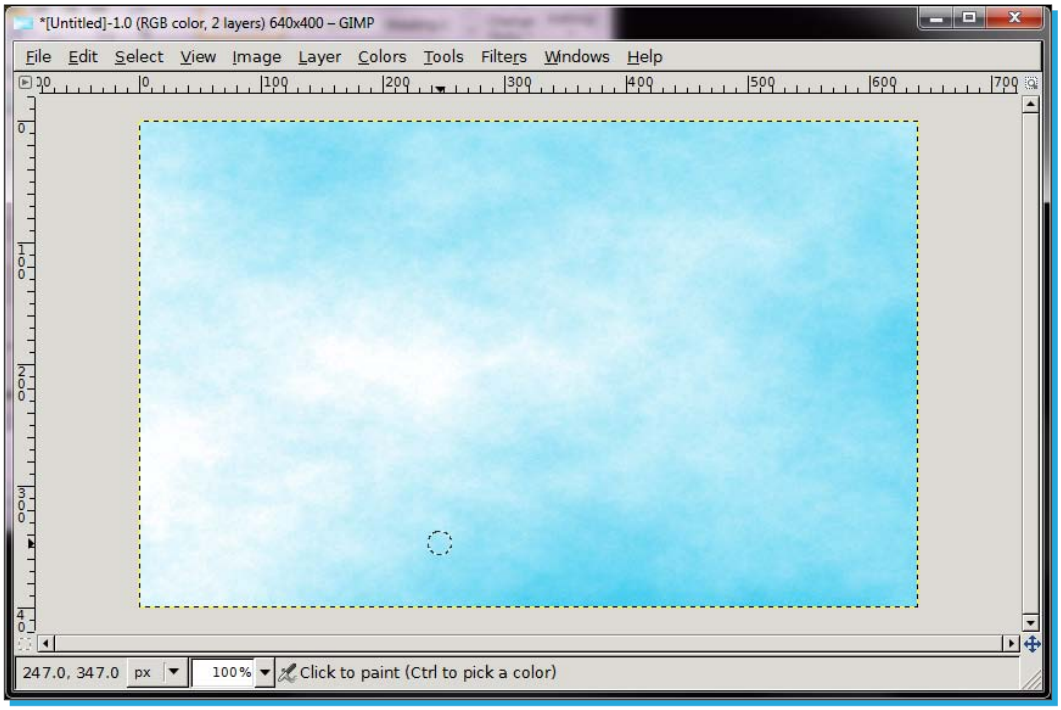
1. To create a new image, follow the settings shown in the following screenshot:



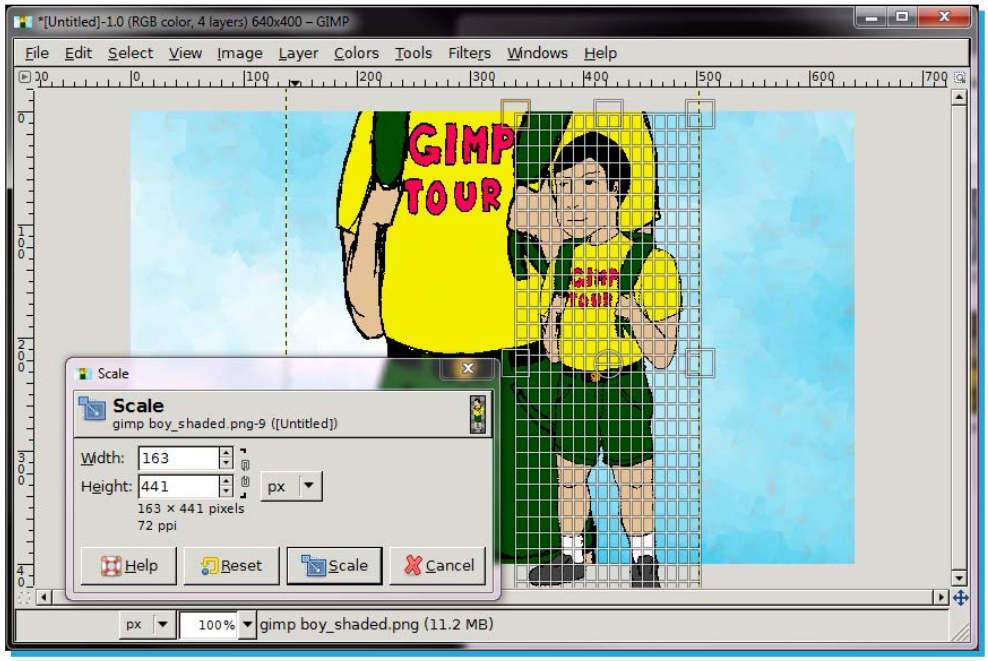
2. Render a blue fog as the background. Click on **Filters | Render | Fog,** and you will be presented with the following menu:



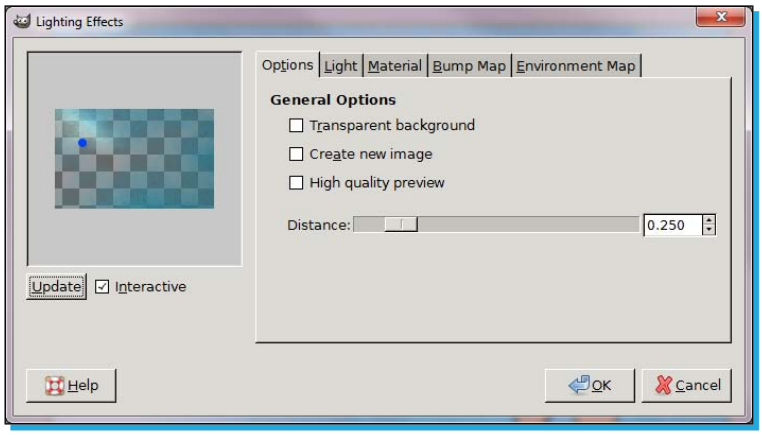
You will have a very random pattern of fog, as shown in the following screenshot:



3. I am going to paste the GIMP boy as a new layer to this drawing.
4. Copy and paste a picture of your choice into a new layer.
5. Use the **Scale Tool** option to shrink him to a smaller scale. Hold down *Ctrl* while dragging, to maintain the aspect ratio. In the following screenshot, notice that the GIMP boy is too big to fit in this picture.



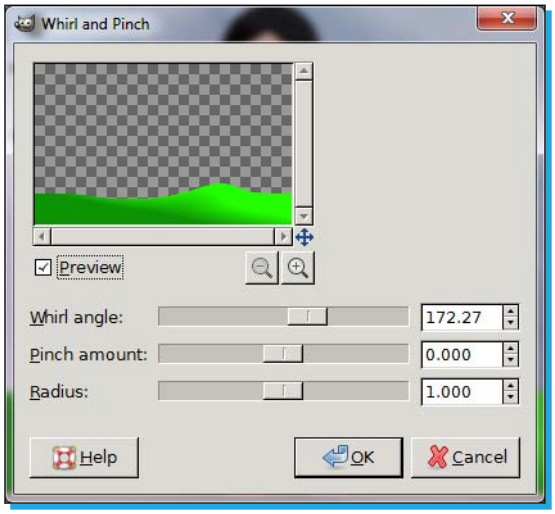
6. Add a lighting effect by clicking on **Filters | Light and Shadow | Lighting Effects**.



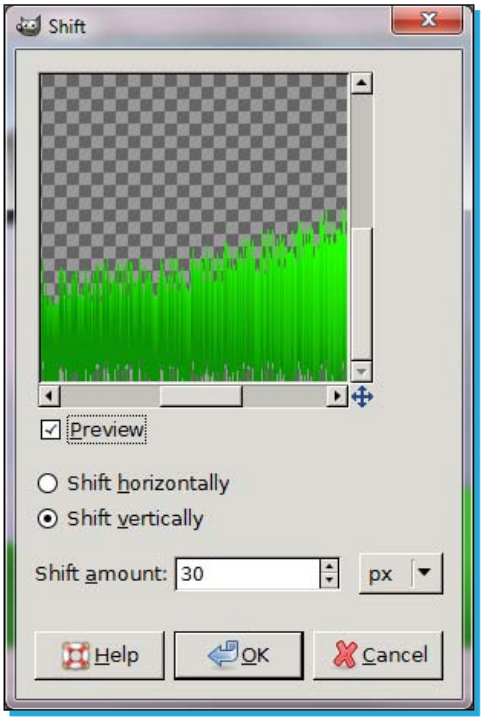
7. Now, the surrounding looks better with the effect. Next, add in `Fin` just for fun, as shown in the following screenshot:

8. Use a new layer, and fill the bottom part with a gradient. This is an easy way to render grass on the canvas.

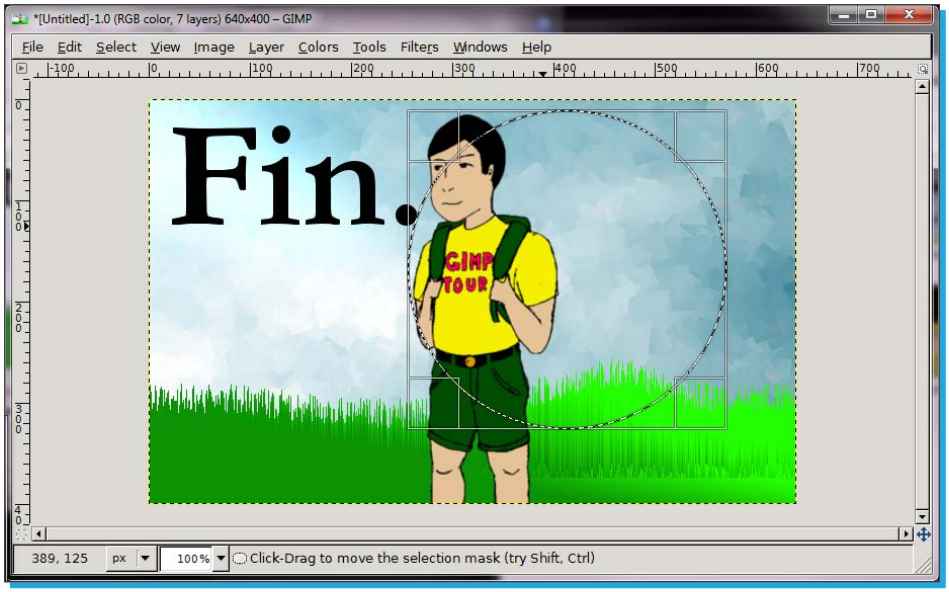
9. Use whirl and pinch (**Filters** | **Distorts** | **Whirl and Pinch**) to make the gradient looks wavy.



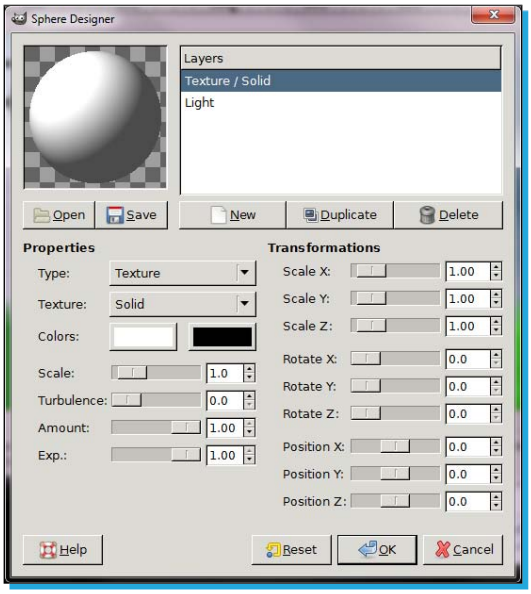
10. Apply a shift effect to put grass on the gradient by clicking on **Filters** | **Distorts** | **Shifts**.



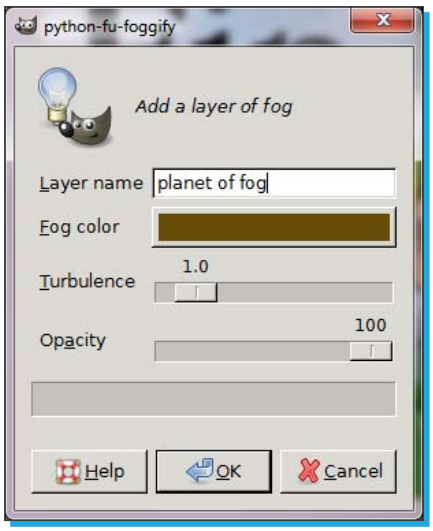
11. Notice that the grass went to the top, and to shift the grass to the bottom of the canvas a little bit, use the **Move Tool** option.
12. This is my favorite part; I would like to render a planet into the scene. Make a circle selection by holding *Ctrl* + *Shift*.



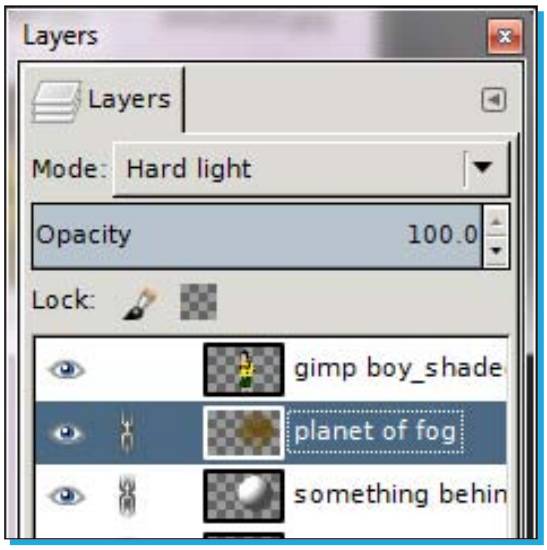
13. Click on **Filter | Render | Sphere Designer** to create a sphere.



14. By clicking on **OK**, you will see a big sphere behind the boy.
15. Duplicate the sphere layer, and add in a fog effect just on the sphere.

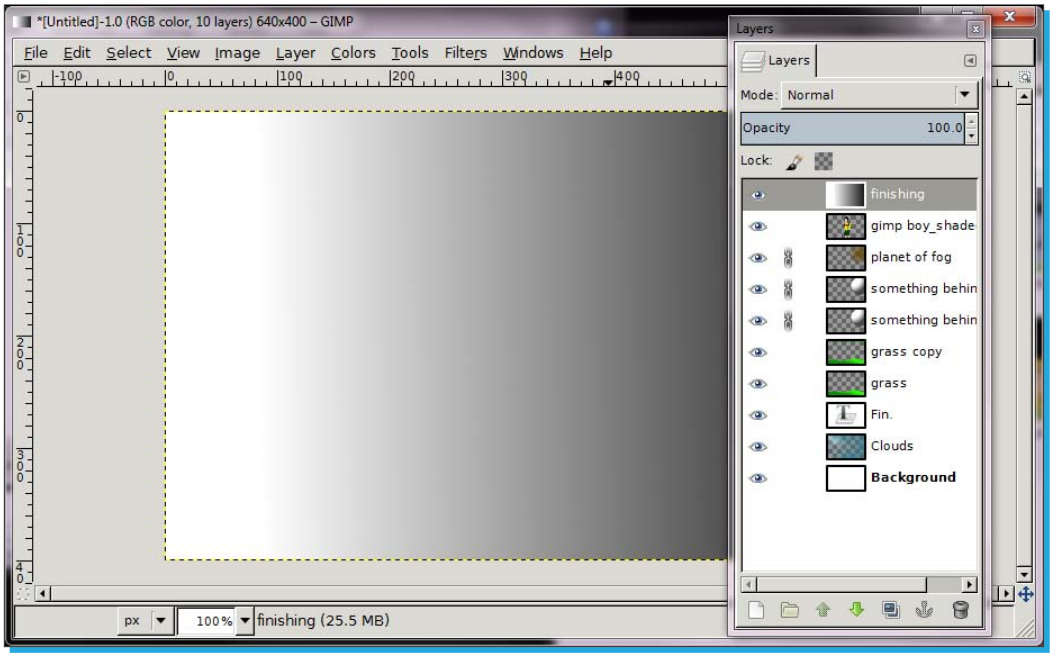


16. Adjust the new layer by selecting **Hard light,** as shown in the following screenshot:

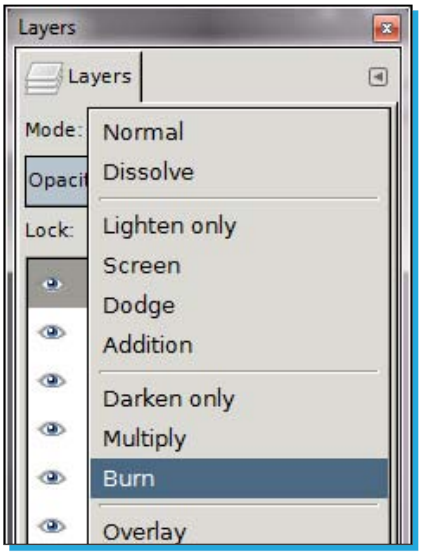


The result is a beautiful planet in the background, as shown in the following screenshot:

17. For the finishing touch, create a new layer and put a gradient on top of the picture.



18. Set the mode to **Burn**.



There it is, the GIMP boy has finished his journey to get him started to GIMP. He is now looking for adventure in finding new advanced techniques of GIMP!

People and places you should get to know

If you need help with GIMP, here are some people and places that will prove invaluable.

Official sites

- Homepage: `http://www.gimp.org/`
- Manual and documentation: `http://docs.gimp.org/2.8/en/`
- Wiki: `http://wiki.gimp.org/index.php/Main_Page`
- Blog: `http://www.chromecode.com/` (Martin Nordholts' Blog)
- Source code: `git://git.gnome.org/gimp`

Articles and tutorials

There are countless tutorials and articles on the Web, covering various aspect of GIMP. You may search for specific task to do in a search engine (Google, Bing, Yahoo) and might end up visiting exciting websites with clear explanations on how to do it. GIMP users are everywhere, and their posts on the Web extends to picture albums, source codes, and also video tutorials. Following are some sites that are regular resources to GIMP users:

- `http://gimpmagazine.org/`
- `http://www.pixel2life.com/tutorials/gimp/`
- `http://the-gimp.deviantart.com/`

`If you're really into learn how to make scripts:`

- `http://www.adp-gmbh.ch/misc/tools/script_fu/func/index.html`
- `http://lithwww.epfl.ch/teaching/rdf/support99/SchemeTut.html`

Community

If you are looking to get involve in GIMP, the following links are useful for you:

- Official mailing list: `https://mail.gnome.org/mailman/listinfo/gimp-user-list`
- Official forums: `https://bugzilla.gnome.org/buglist.cgi?product=GIMP`
- Unofficial forums: `http://gimpchat.com/`
- Official IRC channel: `irc://irc.gimp.org/#gimp-users`
- User FAQ: `http://www.gimp.org/docs/userfaq.html`

Blogs

The following unofficial blogs provide excellent inspiration and clever techniques to use GIMP:

- `http://blog.meetthegimp.org/`
- `http://www.jraleigh.com/my-publications/gimpfiretutorial.html` (reference while writing the section on combining multiple pictures)
- `http://gimp-university.blogspot.com/`
- `http://gofreegimp.wordpress.com/`
- `http://www.gimpforphotos.com/`

Twitter

If you are twitter user, I must mention these twitter pages:

- `https://twitter.com/GimpChat`
- `https://twitter.com/GimpScripts`
- `https://twitter.com/GIMPMagazine`
- `https://twitter.com/gimpTips (provide ideas of artwork techniques)`

For more open source information, follow Packt at `http://twitter.com/#!/packtopensource`.

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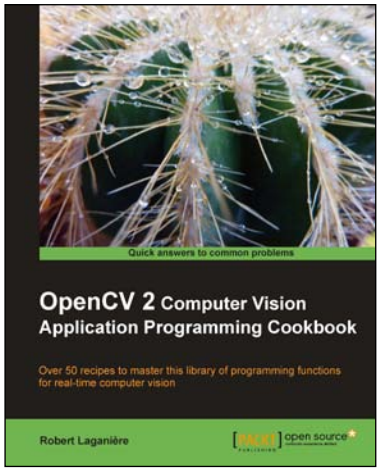

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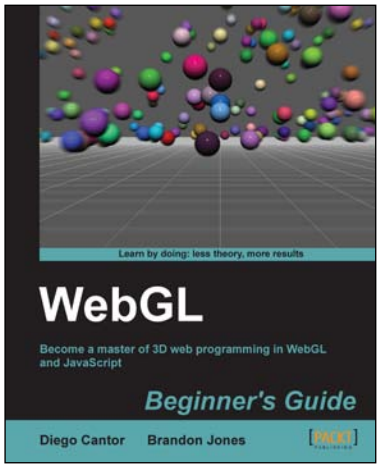

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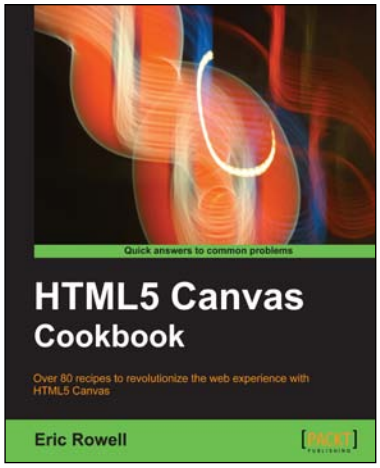

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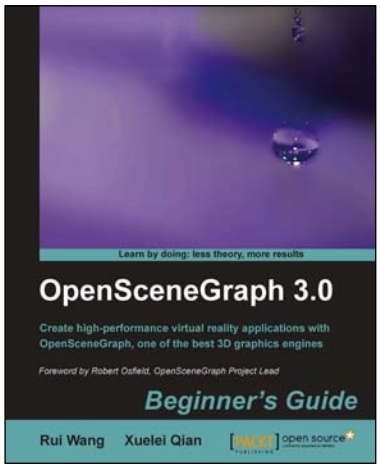

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