postcards from the distressed edge

Create an interesting frame around photographs with grungy, distorted, decorative, or otherwise manipulated edges. It's Edge Anarchy doing what it was born to do.

a TUTORIAL for
Edge Anarchy from the Texture Anarchy suite.

digital anarchy

infinite and scalable textures.
[from Digital Anarchy]

A common effect you see with photographs or images is grungy, distorted, decorative, or otherwise manipulated edges. This creates a more interesting frame for the image, and is something Edge Anarchy is meant to do. [figure 1]

[figure 1]

01- install the preset

To work with this tutorial, you will need our texture preset and a starting image. A 'preset' is a pattern that we have already created for you to work with.

The preset and image are on the Digital Anarchy website, at the following location. Please copy or type this location into your browser (Internet Explorer, Safari) to download the file: http://www.digitalanarchy.com/tutorials/texture_distressed.zip

Unzip to get two files. [figure 2] The image file 'chairs.psd' is the Photoshop file that you will add edges to.

The other file, called 'distressed.prs', is the preset file. Copy the preset (.prs) file into the Edge Anarchy folder in your Photoshop application folder. That location is: Photoshop\ Plug-Ins\ Digital Anarchy\ Presets\ Edge Anarchy. [figure 3]

* We have pictured Macintosh folders here, but the path is the same for Windows.
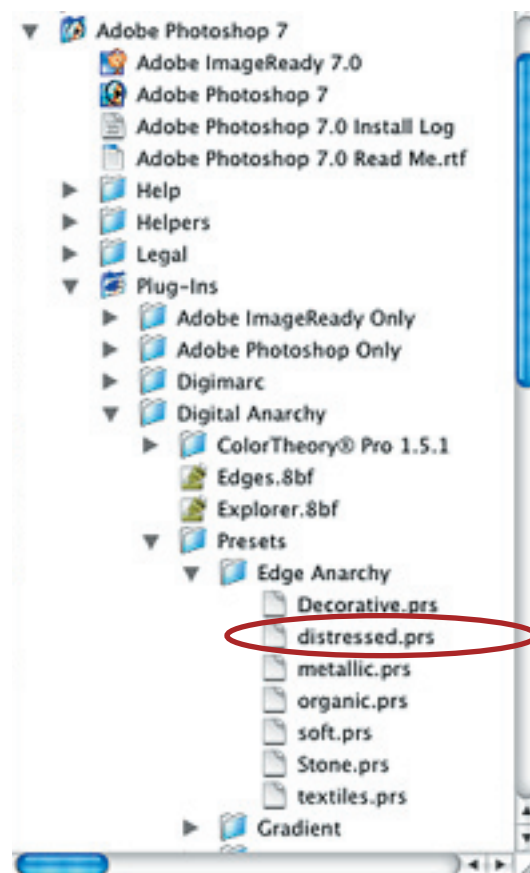
[figure 3]

[figure 2]

02– apply Edge Anarchy

Open the 'chair.psd' image in Photoshop. Apply Edge Anarchy by going to the menu Filter > Texture Anarchy > Edge Anarchy.

[figure 4]

Once inside Edge Anarchy, open up the Preset Manager. That is the button with a 'square' icon at the top right. [figure 4] Scroll to the 'Distressed Edges' category and select the 'Basic Smoke' preset. [figure 5]

This applies a kind of smokey, whispy edge to the image. Which is cool, but let's make a few adjustments to explore the plug–in.

[figure 5]

03– gradient falloff

The most important part of creating our distressed effect is to adjust the 'Falloff Gradient'. [figure 6] The Falloff Gradient controls how the edge fades, what parts of the edge fade, and how the tint and bump blend in with the original image.
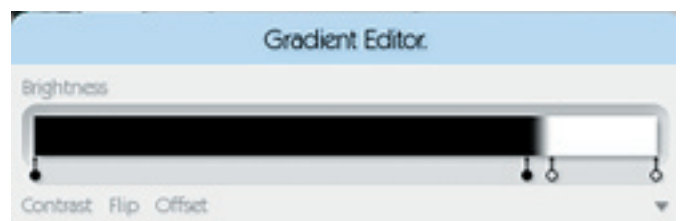
Initially, the preset gives about as much transparency as possible and as little tint/bump as possible. [figure 7a] Click on the Falloff Gradient, and move the middle sliders to the right so that most of the grey tone is eliminated. [figure 7b]

[figure 6]

[figure 7a]

[figure 7b]

This causes a severe erosion of the edge with very little shading or texturing from the tint channel, which is exactly what you need for distressed edges. You want the texture to cut into the edge of the image, but usually, you don't want fancy graphics along that edge.

So, by adjusting Falloff Gradient, we go from wispy [figure 8a] to crispy. [figure 8b]

Now let's make the edges rougher and the current tendrils of noise less fluffy. Why? 'Cause we're just like that.

[figure 8a]

[figure 8b]

04– roughen the edges

To solve this problem, let's zoom out a bit and create more dense noise.

'Noise', by the way, is pixels with randomly distributed color levels. In this case, we are working with noise of various grayscale values. You can use noise to blend a selection into surrounding pixels, or to create unusual textures. The Texture Anarchy suite uses noise a lot, as do some of Photoshop's built–in filters.

When you hover over the Preview Window, three Transform buttons appear. The rightmost one is Scale. [figure 9] Click and drag Scale to the left to zoom out and enlarge the texture that is cutting into the 'chair' image. Dragging to the right will zoom in/scale down.

All of Edge Anarchy's noises are procedural, which means they are mathematically generated. You can zoom in and out as much as your heart desires, without any pixelation or degredation of quality. There's no numeric input, so just Scale until the tendrils look right. [figure 10]
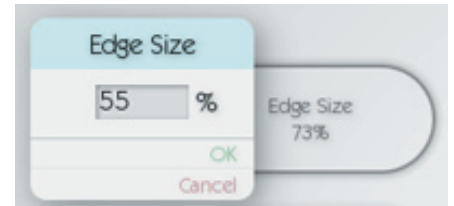

[figure 9]

[figure 10]

05- adjust the edge size

Once you get your tendrils correctly positioned, there's one last step. Right now the noise is cutting too deep into the image. We want a distressed edge, not a distressed image. So we need to adjust the 'Edge Size'. [figure 11]

Edge Size does have a numeric value input. so we can accurately adjust it down to around 55%. Still, we suggest that you scrub the value back and forth to see what kind of effect it has on the edge. You're basically setting how deep the noise can cut into the image. [figure 12]

In conclusion, the areas of Edge Anarchy that you really should experiment with are Edge Size and Falloff Gradient, and how they interact with the parameter 'Cutout Noise' to produce the edge that you see.

[figure 11]

[figure 12]