

LucisArt 3.0 ED/SE and Lucis Pro 6.0

By Susan Ruddick Bloom

This incredible piece of software owes its beginnings to the scientific community. It was created to enhance the detail of a scanning electron microscope. Its ability to discover detail in areas that seem devoid of any detail, is simply amazing. It is used in both the scientific and medical communities and also in the photography and art world.

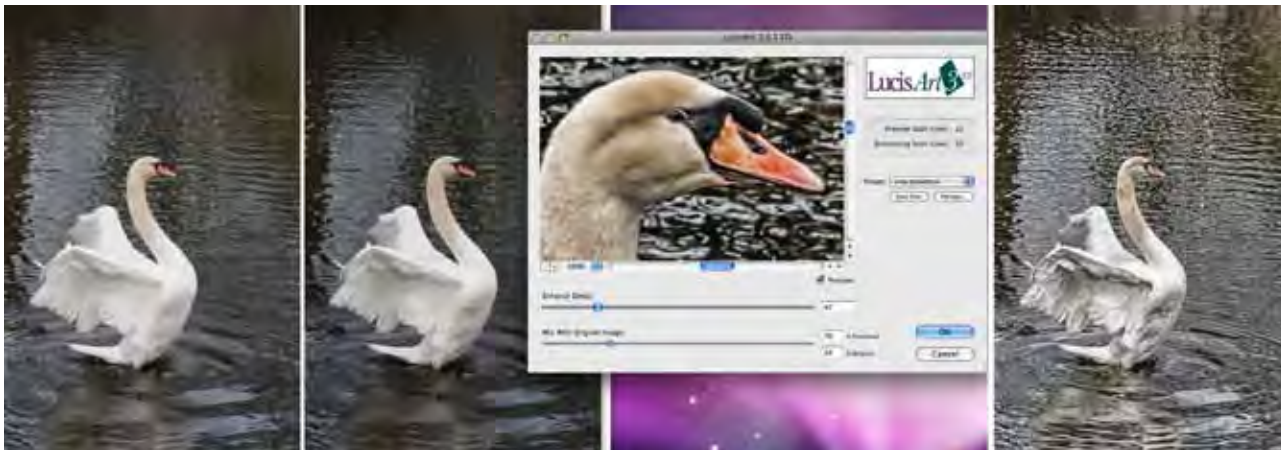
When I first saw a few examples it reminded me of HDR (High Dynamic Range) photography. There were lots of detail enhancements. The effect was one that looked more like an illustration, and less like a photograph. You will find that people will ask you if it is a photograph. There is a look that resembles air-brushing combined with a pen and ink outline. The effect is mesmerising.



Original of Burano street scene (left) and LucisArt 3 Version (right)



User interface and close-up of Before (left) and After (right)



Dutch Swan in Water Before and After with interface settings

Unlike true HDR, you only need one image, not a series of varying exposures. It does not have to be a RAW image, a lowly jpeg will do. A tripod and cable release are not required. You can use hand-held action shots easily. It can correct poor exposures, restoring over-exposed and under-exposed images.

I could hardly go to sleep the night I first gave it a test drive. It was addictive. I kept thinking of additional photos that I wanted to try with this technique. It performs best with detailed and complex images, even those with hidden details in the shadows.

For portraits, it works best on gritty-looking images of guys with beard stubble. That "look" may not be lovely on a lady, as every flaw on her complexion will be magnified. It will, however, be great on her eyes and hair.



Before and After with baby in ballet tutu

I've even used it on photos of babies. It is easy enough to mask in the smooth complexion. In our example of the baby in the ballet tutu, the LucisArt version was masked in using the enhanced eye and hair areas, restoring the original skin tone and texture.

It is astounding on fabrics, bringing in great texture and detail. Every crease and wrinkle will show. The weave of the fabric will be pronounced.

It is a great special effect on metal, like antique cars. It is especially beneficial on old, wrecked cars that are rusting in a field. The detailed grunge look is very effective.

Wait until you see what it does to brick and stone masonry, and dirt and gravel. Grasses become majestic. Water, especially with a ripple or wake, becomes a churning design element.

Original image masked with the LucisArt version.

It will pick up details, that you didn't know were there, in heavily shadowed areas.

It is very user friendly, with just a few sliders to create the look you would like. It is quick. LucisArt 3.0 ED/SE is currently available in Australia. ED (Enhance Detail) allows you to mix the enhanced image with the original one. SE (Special Effect) gives you various artistic effects (Winslow, Sculpture, Plaid 1, 2 and 3).



Lucis Pro 6 interface

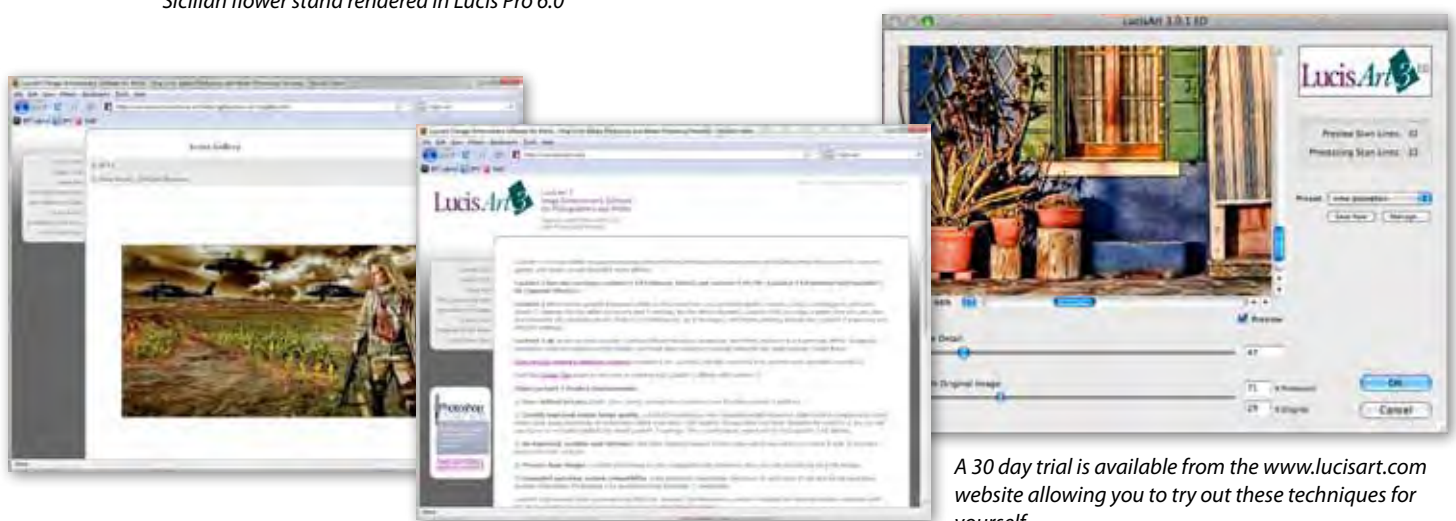
Lucis Pro 6.0 is available in the United States and requires a dongle. The dongle must be inserted into the USB drive in order for the program to work. Version 6.0 allows you to separate the channels and enhance the detail on each channel separately. It is a bit pricey. The price may keep the competition at bay, making this your secret photo weapon. Image Content Technology LLC is making plans to create a distributorship in Australia to market this latest version of their product.

The interface allows you to combine the colour or a percentage of the original image back into the effect. You can also Fade the effect, immediately following its usage, as you do with any filter in Photoshop.



Sicilian flower stand rendered in Lucis Pro 6.0

If you are a purist about the sanctity of pure photographs, this program may not be for you. If you like the illustrative look of these examples, prepare for many sleepless nights, as you comb through your archives for photos that will be enhanced by this software.



A 30 day trial is available from the www.lucisart.com website allowing you to try out these techniques for yourself.




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