

Figure 4-32.



Figure 4-33.

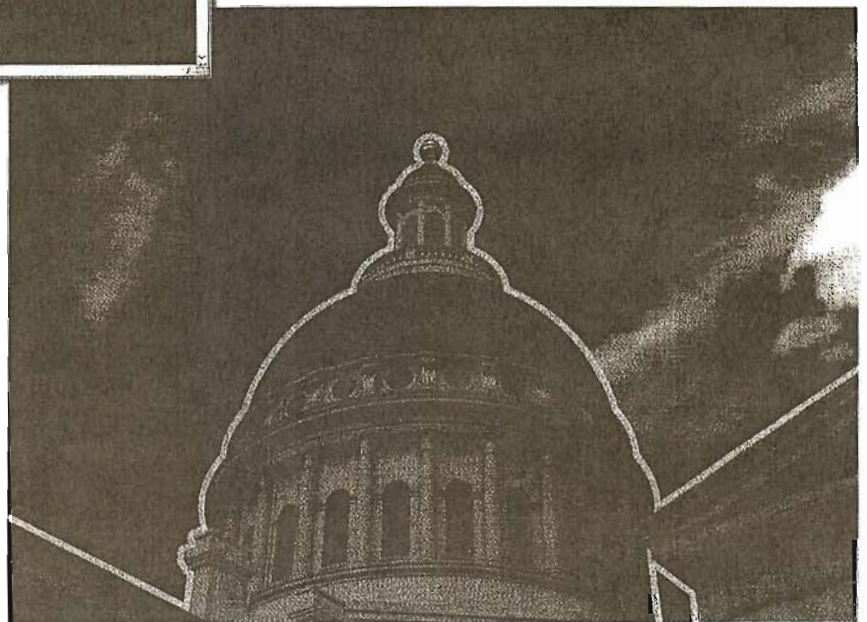



Figure 4-34.

1. *Open two images, one foreground and one background.* Open *iStock courthouse.psd* and *PhotoSpin fireworks.jpg*, both located in the *Lesson 04* folder inside *Lesson Files-PScs2 1on1*. Photographed by Matt Duncan, the courthouse is a nifty enough piece of architecture, but the composition lacks luster. A structure like this deserves a celebration—hence the fireworks. The result of four photographs set on separate layers and combined with the Screen blend mode, the fireworks image is precisely the sort of over-the-top background that our sleepy courthouse needs. For reference, both images appear in Figure 4-32.
2. *Click the lasso tool in the toolbox.* Or press the L key. As I said, the lasso tool (Figure 4-33) can be difficult to control. But I'd like you to experience the tool for yourself so you can decide what you think of it firsthand.
3. *Try dragging around the courthouse.* The portion of the building I'd like you to select appears highlighted in Figure 4-34. Trace along the yellow line to select the area inside the building. (The orange-red sky represents the region outside the selection.)



The lasso is exceedingly flexible, scrolling the image window to keep up with your movements and permitting you to drag outside the image to select the extreme edges. But it completely drops the ball when it comes to precision. If you're anything like me, you'll have a heck of a time getting halfway decent results out of it.

4. **Deselect the image.** Assuming your selection looks like garbage, choose **Select**→**Deselect** or press **Ctrl+D** (⌘-D on the Mac) to throw it away and start over. Now that we've seen the wrong way to do it, let's see the right way.
5. **Select the polygonal lasso tool in the toolbox.** Click the lasso icon to display a flyout menu of additional tools, and then choose the polygonal lasso. Or just press the **L** key (or **Shift+L** if you skipped the Preface). The polygonal lasso lets you select straight-sided areas inside an image by clicking at the corners.
6. **Fill the screen with the image.** Many of the areas that we want to select exist on the perimeter of the photograph. When selecting such areas with the polygonal lasso, it helps to have a little extra room to work with. So click the  icon at the bottom of the toolbox or press the **F** key to enter the full-screen mode, which surrounds the image with an area of gray pasteboard. Scroll the image (spacebar-drag) until you can see about an inch of pasteboard below and to the right of it. Then zoom in so your screen looks something like the one in Figure 4-35.

By default, the pasteboard is a light gray that too closely matches the gray of the building. I recommend that you darken the pasteboard to increase the contrast. Click the foreground color in the toolbox; change the first three values to H: 0, S: 0, and B: 50 (medium gray); and click OK. Get the paint bucket from the gradient flyout menu (or press the **G** key twice) and Shift-click in the pasteboard. Finally, press **L** to return to the polygonal lasso.

7. **Select the bottom-right building.** The yellow arrowheads in Figure 4-35 point to the seven corners you need to click. Start by clicking at the corner labeled **1**. There's no special reason to start at this particular corner; it's as good a point of reference as any. Then move the cursor down to corner **2**, stopping a bit beyond the edge of the roof. As you do so, a straight line connects the cursor to **1**. Make sure the line follows the edge of the roof and then

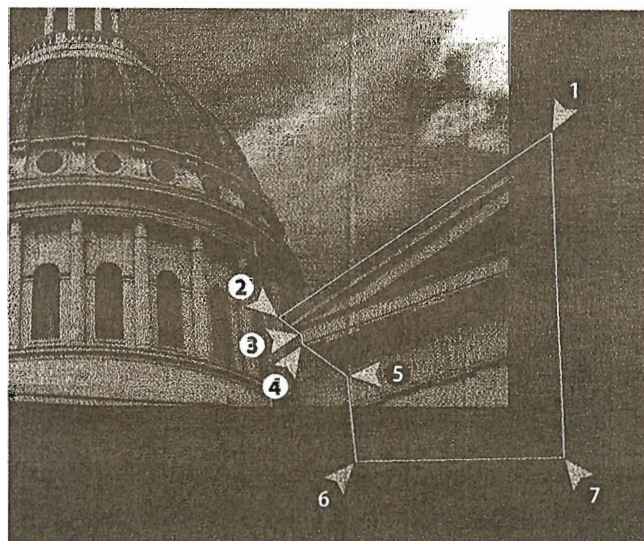


Figure 4-35.

click to set the corner in place. (Notice that we're simplifying this corner of the building; that's okay, because it will ultimately be incorporated into the selection around the dome.)

Keep clicking the corners in the order indicated in the figure. Don't worry too much about making these points perfectly precise; if anything, err on the side of overlapping the building instead of the sky. After you click at corner ⑦, you have two options for completing the selection:

- Click corner ① to come full circle and close the selection outline.
- Double-click at ⑦ to end the selection and connect points ① and ⑦ with a straight segment.

8. *Select the elliptical marquee tool.* The central dome comprises a series of arcs, circles, and other ellipses. You could try to select these shapes using the lasso. Or you could use a tool better suited to ellipses. Press the M key a couple of times (Shift+M if you skipped the Preface) or select the elliptical marquee from the marquee tool flyout menu.

9. *Select the elliptical area around the base of the dome.* This shape is illustrated by the red ellipse with the inset selection outline pictured in Figure 4-36. This turns out to be a tricky step, so read the following paragraph before you begin.

Press the Shift key and drag with the elliptical marquee tool to add the new ellipse to the existing straight-sided selection. (Shift always adds to a selection, Alt or Option subtracts.) After you begin your drag, you can release the Shift key.

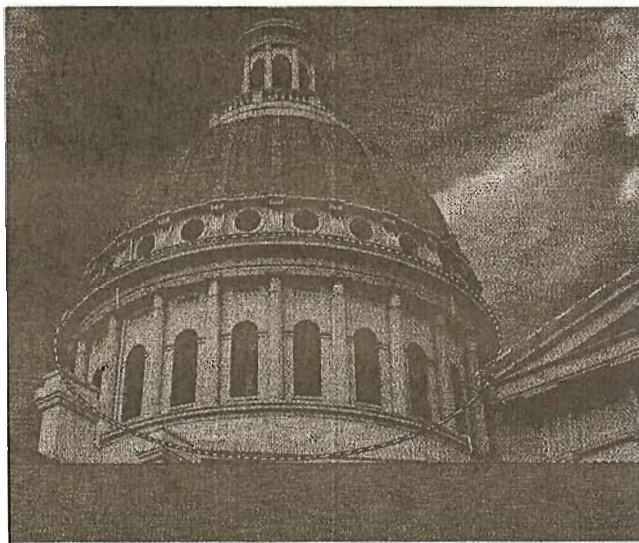


Figure 4-36.

PEARL OF WISDOM

As you drag, remember that you can press the spacebar to move the ellipse on-the-fly. When you get it into position, release the spacebar and continue dragging. When the ellipse is properly sized (as in Figure 4-36), release the mouse button.

10. *Add two more ellipses to the selection.* Press the Shift key and drag a couple more times to add two more elliptical areas to the selection. These areas

appear outlined in red and yellow in Figure 4-37. Remember to choke the selection into the dome—don't let it drift out into the sky. And feel free to ignore the little outcroppings and other surface details that fall outside the ellipses. Their absence will not be noticed when we add the fireworks.

11. **Add the tower to the selection.** As illustrated in Figure 4-38, the tower of the courthouse can be expressed as a combination of five ellipses (which I've outlined in red) and a four-sided polygon (in yellow). If you want the practice, you *could* draw the selection manually. Press the Shift key and trace each of the red shapes with the ellipse tool. Then press L to switch to the polygon lasso, press the Shift key, and click around the polygon.

However, it occurs to me that all this ellipse-drawing might cross the line between good practice and sheer tedium. So in a moment of uncharacteristic charity, I've gone and drawn the selection for you. Here's how to get to it:

- Choose **Select**→**Load Selection**.
- Make sure **Document** is set to the present one, **iStock courthouse.psd**.
- Set the **Channel** option to **Tower**. (It follows Right Side, the Step 7 selection, and Central Dome, the product of Steps 9 and 10.)
- Select **Add to Selection** from the **Operation** options. This will add the tower to the existing selection.
- Click the **OK** button.

I'll show you how to save your own selections in Lesson 7 ("Refining a Selection with a Quick Mask," Step 26, page 224). In the meantime, just be thankful it's there. I really do spoil you.

12. **Select the polygonal lasso.** Click the polygon lasso icon in the toolbox or press L to grab the tool.
13. **Select the lower section of the structure.** Press the Shift key and click around the remaining portions of the building. By my reckoning, you're looking

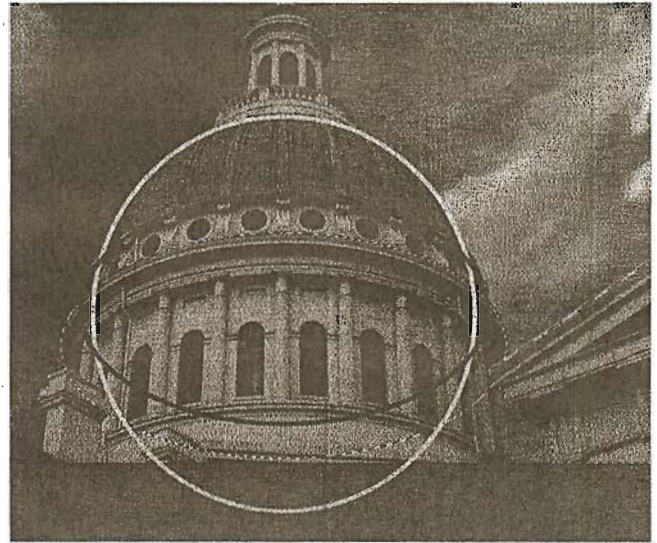


Figure 4-37.

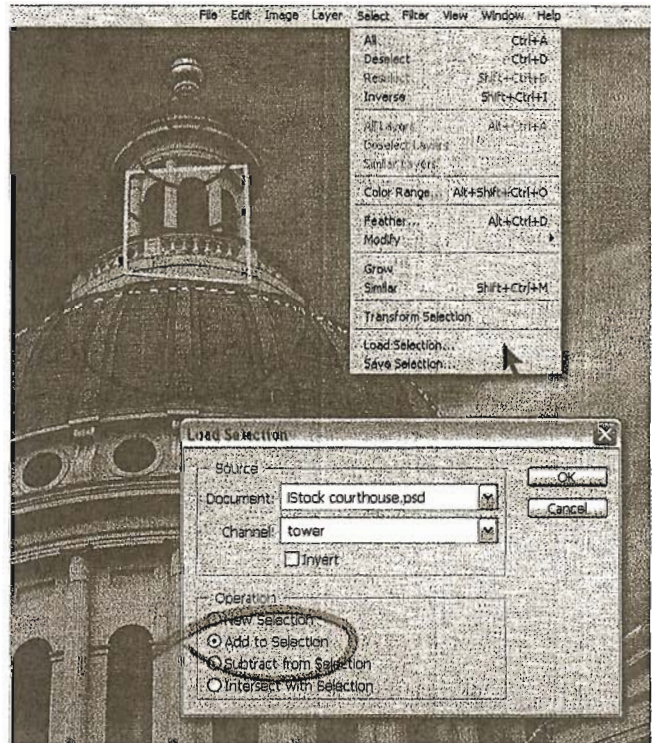


Figure 4-38.

at a grand total of 17 corners, all indicated by the proliferation of yellow arrowheads in Figure 4-39. It's a complex selection—especially along that geometric column on the left side of the dome—so don't feel like you have to pull it off in one pass. As long as you have the Shift key down, you can add areas to your selection in as many pieces as you like.

If you find yourself struggling, failing, or on the brink of tears, go ahead and use my 17-point selection outline, which is ready and waiting for you. Choose **Select→Load Selection**. Set the **Channel** option to **Left & Bottom**. Turn on **Add to Selection** and click **OK**.

However you get there, the entire courthouse—from one extreme to the other—should appear encased in one great animated selection outline. Granted, we've rounded off a few details here and there, but nothing that the viewer's going to miss.

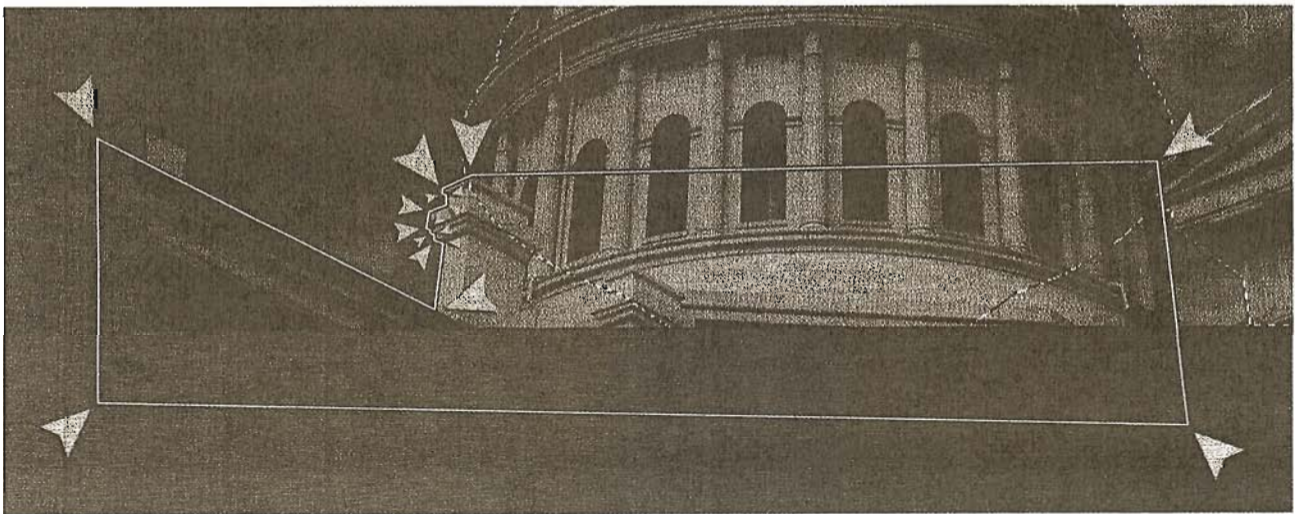
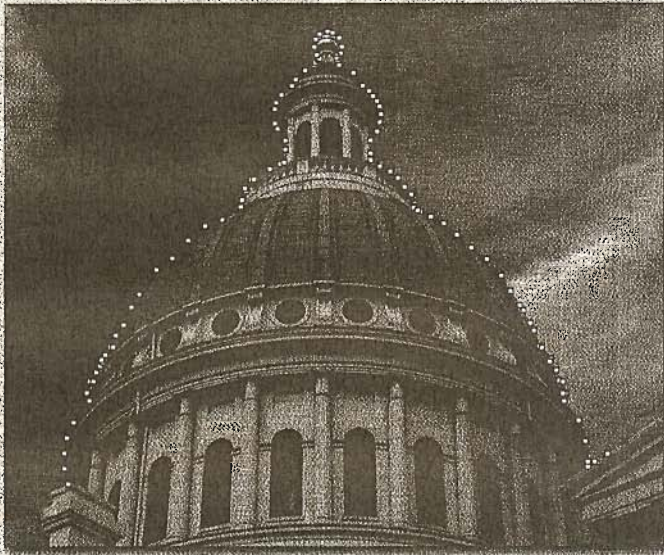


Figure 4-39.

14. **Drag the courthouse into the fireworks image.** Press and hold the Ctrl key (⌘ on the Mac) to get the move tool and drag the selected portion of the courthouse from *iStock courthouse.psd* into the *PhotoSpin fireworks.jpg* image window. Before you drop the building into place, press and hold the Shift key. Release the mouse button and then release both keys. Shown in Figure 4-40 on page 122, the result is spectacular but hardly credible. However impeccable the building's perimeter, its lighting and coloring broadcast that it's nowhere in the remote vicinity of a fireworks display. Thankfully, we can suggest otherwise using layer styles.

The final lasso tool, the magnetic lasso, is one of the most amazing selection tools in Photoshop's arsenal. No kidding, this tool can actually sense the edge of an object and automatically trace it, even when the contrast is low and the background colors vary. But as miraculous as this sounds, the magnetic lasso has never won the hearts and minds of Photoshop users the way, say, the magic wand has. Why? Part of the reason is that it requires you to work too hard for your automation. Perhaps worse, the tool makes a lot of irritating mistakes. Even so, the magnetic lasso can work wonders, especially when tracing highly complex edges set against relatively evenly colored backgrounds.

Select the magnetic lasso from the lasso tool flyout menu. As when using the polygonal lasso, click along the edge of the image element that you want to select to set a point. Next, move the cursor—no need to drag, the mouse button does not have to be pressed—around the image element. As you move, Photoshop automatically traces what it determines is the best edge and lays down square *anchor points*, which lock the line in place. In the figure below, I clicked the bottom-left corner of the courthouse dome and then moved the cursor up and around to the right.



Some other techniques:

- If the magnetic lasso traces an area incorrectly, trace back over the offending portion of the line to erase it. Again, just move your mouse; no need to press any buttons.
- Anchor points remain locked down even if you trace back over them. To remove the last anchor point, press Delete or Backspace.
- Photoshop continuously updates the magnetic lasso line until it lays down a point. To lock down the line manually, just click to create your own anchor point.
- Of the various options bar settings, the most useful is Width, which adjusts how close your cursor has to be to an edge to “see” it. Large values let you be sloppy; small values are great for working inside tight, highly detailed areas.

The best thing about the Width setting is that you can change it on-the-fly. While working with the magnetic lasso, press to make the Width value smaller; press to make it larger.

- To complete the selection, double-click or press Enter or Return. You can also click the first point in the shape. Press the Esc key to cancel the selection.

Photoshop's smartest lasso tool is clearly the most challenging to use. But it's usually worth the effort. And remember, you can always combine it with other tools.

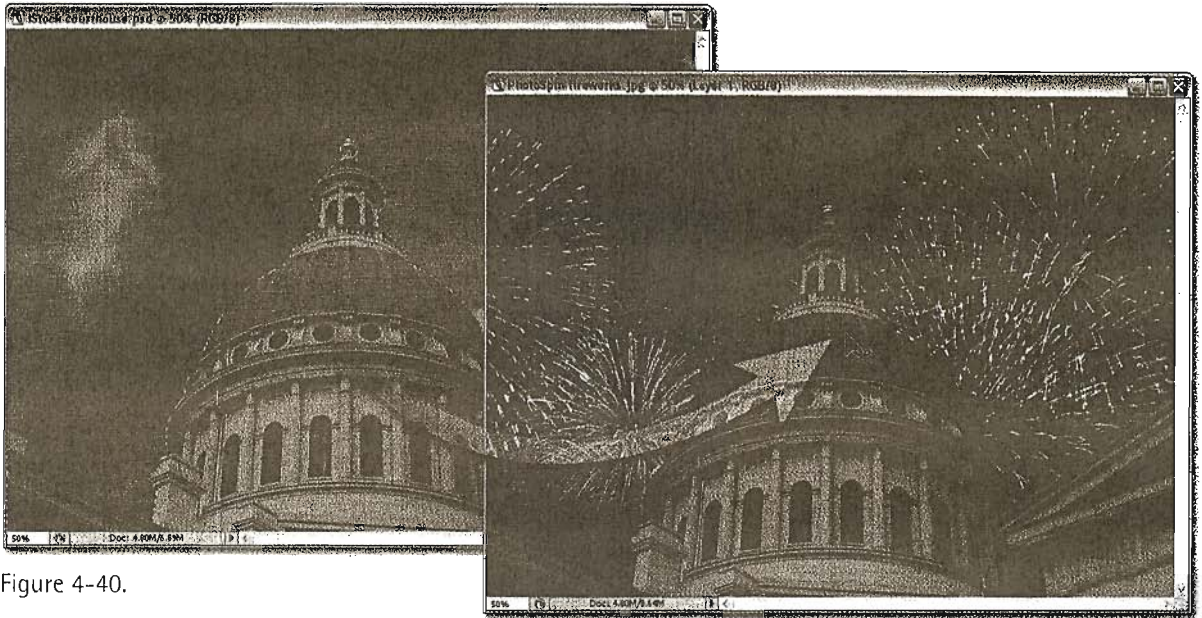


Figure 4-40.

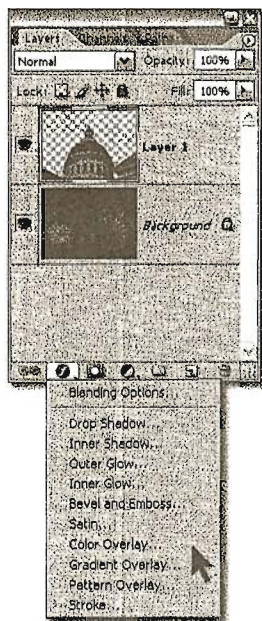



Figure 4-41.

15. *Choose the Color Overlay style.* Click the  icon along the bottom of the Layers palette and choose **Color Overlay**, as in Figure 4-41. Photoshop displays the **Layer Style** dialog box and fills the entire courthouse with red. Clearly, it's not the effect we want, but it will be soon.
16. *Bathe the building in an orange glow.* Here's how to change the color and the way it interacts with the courthouse:
 - Change the **Blend Mode** setting to **Overlay**. The red and building merge to create a sinister house of justice. Great for marching off to the gallows, bad for fireworks.
 - Click the red color swatch to the right of **Overlay** to display the **Color Picker** dialog box. Select a dull orange by changing the first three values to **H: 20, S: 70, B: 80**, as in Figure 4-42 on the facing page. Then click the **OK** button to return to the **Layer Style** dialog box.
17. *Darken the top of the tower.* I imagine that our courthouse is lit by ambient light from the fireworks reflecting off the ground and the surfaces of neighboring buildings. As a result, the light should decline as the structure rises. This means casting the top of the building in shadow.

Click **Gradient Overlay** in the list on the left side of the dialog box to make the effect active and display its options. Because the **Color Overlay** effect mixes with the **Gradient Overlay** below

it, Photoshop fills the building with an opaque fountain of colors. Let's change that:

- Set the **Blend Mode** to **Multiply**. This burns in the black and drops out the white, giving the building a dark base. It's a nice effect but rather the opposite of what I want.
- Change the **Angle** value to -90 degrees. Now the top is in the gloom, just like I want it.
- Reduce the **Opacity** value to 65 percent.
- You can position a gradient just by dragging it. Move your mouse into the image window to see the $\blacktriangleright+$ cursor. Then drag the gradient downward an inch to expand the shadow.

Confirm that your settings look like those in Figure 4-43 and then click **OK** to close the Layer Style dialog box and accept your changes.

Figure 4-44 shows the final effect, complete with radiant courthouse and bombs bursting in air. Granted, the composition demands a small suspension of disbelief. But given that it's all the product of a few polygons and ellipses, I'd rate it a soul-stirring success.

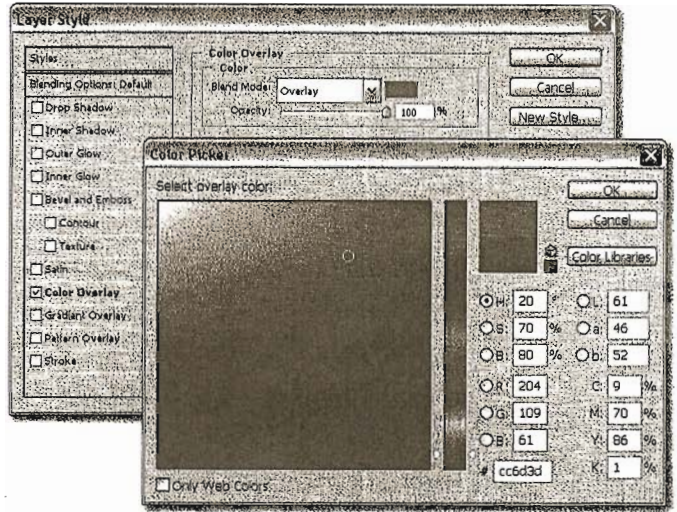


Figure 4-42.

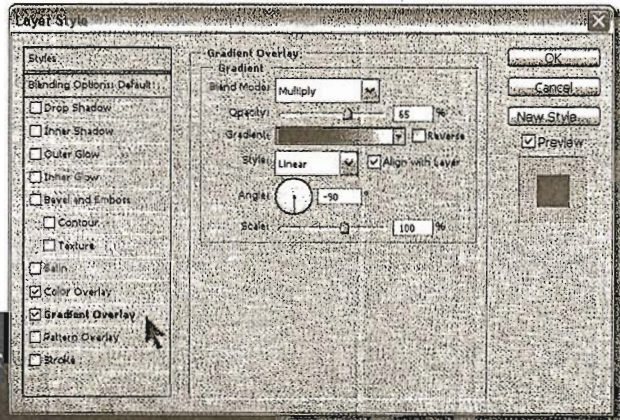


Figure 4-43.



Figure 4-44.