

## TECHNIQUE



1. A gradient.



2. The gradient lightened.



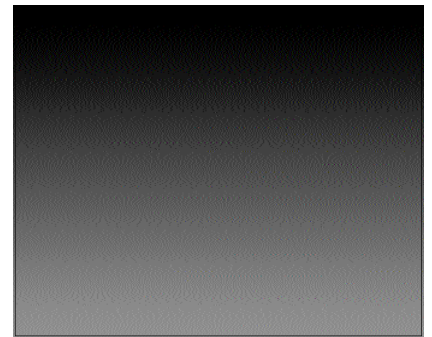
3. The gradient darkened.



4. The gradient with accentuated contrast.



5. Black and white points moved horizontally.



6. Black and white points moved vertically.

## MASKS – FINE TUNING GRADIENTS

Gradation is one of the hallmarks of continuous tone images. Gradients create smooth transitions. In most cases, you want to preserve them. On occasion, you want to modify them. Sometimes, you want to create them, most frequently in masks

Although gradients can be extremely complex and can yield extremely sophisticated results, once the basic principle behind them is firmly grasped, they are actually quite simple to create and use.

Start with Adobe Photoshop's Gradient tool. A gradient will be created between the start (where you click first) and end points (where you drag to). The start and end points may be placed anywhere on the canvas. Gradients can be drawn for any length at any angle.

The shorter the distance between the two points, the tighter the gradient will be with more abrupt tonal transitions. The longer the distance between the points,

the softer the gradient will be with smoother tonal transitions. Favor longer gradients with smoother transitions. They can always be tightened and repositioned by adjusting contrast. Reducing contrast will not produce the opposite effect; it will posterize the gradient.

Fine-tuning gradients is easy. Apply Curves to the gradient, most frequently used in a mask. You'll get a dynamic preview of its affects on the gradient. Reposition the midpoint of a gradient by lightening or darkening it. If you don't want the midpoint to move, place a point on the curve at the midpoint before making other adjustments to a gradient. Quicken a transition by increasing contrast; raise the highlights and lower the shadows. Move the black and/or white points horizontally to expand pure black and/or white areas. Move the black and/or white points vertically to turn black and/or white to gray. Gradients are extremely malleable. Using them, you can quickly and dynamically create sophisticated effects within images.