

Bringing Vintage IMAGES TO LIFE

by Jane Long

I'm often asked about my *Dancing With Costicâ* series — how I came to start the series and what the process is. The series came about after chatting to a local framer who asked me if I did restoration work. I decided I'd find an image to restore and show him in the hope that I might get some work out of it. I found the *Costicâ Acscinte Archive* on Flickr and was fascinated with the images. I downloaded an image of a young couple, restored it, and recolored it, but it didn't seem to be enough. This couple was so serious, and I wanted them to be carefree, happy, and whimsical. My thoughts of traditional restoration went out the window!

I had a great response to this on social media and was feeling like I was only scratching the surface of what I could do with these images, so I went back to the archive, looking for something that would give me a bit more of a challenge. Sometimes images catch my eye, but it takes a while for the story to develop in my mind. The girl in *Innocence* is one such image.

ALL HANDS ON DECK

Originally I had only planned on having the larger boy, but the composition wasn't working well. When I stumbled across the smaller boy's sweet little face in the archive, I knew he was right for this shot.

The process is much the same for all of the images. First, I clean and restore the original image in black and white in Photoshop. Then, I adjust contrast as required and work out how to fix badly damaged areas, often copying and pasting patches or re-painting areas where it is impossible to restore the original. Then, I add a general dodge and burn to give the image more depth.

In *All Hands on Deck*, the props are also a combination of pieces I already had on file and items shot specifically for the image, such as the doors, candelabra, globe and sail. →

All Hands on Deck





A STITCH IN TIME

After that I start with the skin, masking out the areas I need. Most of the coloring is done in two layers, using blending modes, such as Color, Soft Light, Overlay, Multiply, or Screen. Sometimes I'll take a pattern or texture from another image and use the same technique to create color variation.

Occasionally I use a separate set of colors for highlights, midtones, and shadows, particularly for skin and hair. You have to really examine what you see and work out where light and color will be reflecting.

Once I'm happy with the main characters, I start building the backgrounds and complementary pieces, often shooting these to fit. I try to match the lighting and perspective of the original image. It has been very frustrating wanting green grass on a cloudy day when we haven't had rain for months!

INNOCENCE

I shot the fishbowl, watering can, and burning hoops (bracelets wrapped in paper and doused with lighter fluid) specifically for this image, taking care to match the lighting and perspective as best I could. The fish I had on file from an earlier shoot (sadly Doris the goldfish is no longer with us).

The background is a combination of six different images, each manually blurred to create depth of field.

FLOCK

Once I'm happy with the final composition, I add a series of tones and textures. This helps tie everything together and create some consistency across the series. There are a handful of Florabella actions that I use, but I turn off some of the layers and adjust the opacity. Finally, I sharpen the image with Nik's Sharpening tools. →

Innocence



Flock





Neptune's Bride

The series came about after chatting to a local framer who asked me if I did restoration work.

Underneath



NEPTUNE'S BRIDE

Ultimately these images lose their impact if you don't see the original. It is through the restoring and digitizing work of Cezar Popescu in that I am able to draw a rich source of inspiration. His dedication to the project is very admirable and I look forward to seeing more images to fire my imagination.

UNDERNEATH

Most of the images in the Costică Acsinte Archive are formally posed portraits. It was the convention of the time to have a serious face in images, which gives the impression of a very sombre community. I wanted to bring them to life as if they were someone you met yesterday.

The archive also reflects how many members of the community were involved in military service at the time, and this inspired Tall Poppies. I wanted to do something that was more about the archive itself and the people who served. →



Tall Poppies

TALL POPPIES

Sometimes my inspiration comes directly from the images, and other times I have an idea in mind and go looking for the pieces I need.

A FOND FAREWELL

I've learned the hard way to take my time and not take shortcuts; to not settle for "good enough." If that means hours and hours of work, I'm fine with that. Neptune's Bride is a good example of that because it took close to 40 hours to complete, with layer upon layer of individual items.

SWEETHEART

I find myself particularly drawn to the children in the archive. Even back then kids did the funniest things when photographed. But also I think they represent the greatest contrast between the way people lived in the '30s and '40s and the way we live and photograph now. ♦

Jane Long is a digital artist based in Brisbane, Australia. You can see more of Jane's work on her website at janelong.com.au or follow her on Facebook (Jane Long Photography). To see more of the Costicâ Ascinte, Archive visit the website at colectiacosticaacsinte.eu.

A Fond Farewell



Sweetheart

