

Nik Software's Viveza

by Darrel Priebe

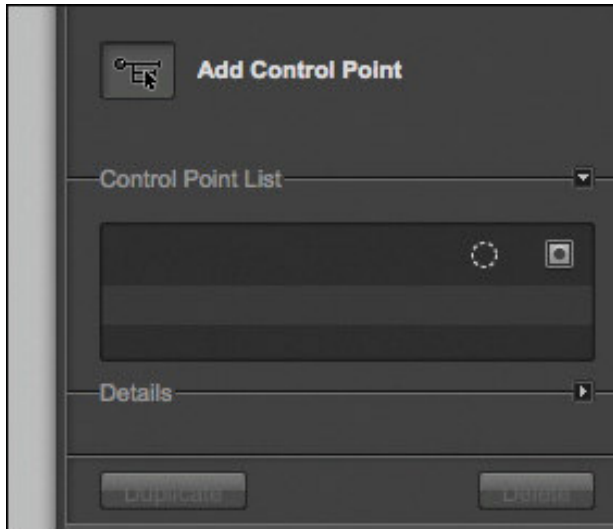
Viveza is a fun and easy-to-use plug-in for Photoshop or Photoshop Elements that can quickly make dramatic improvements in the colors and light of your images without the tedious and time-consuming work of making selections and using layer masks.



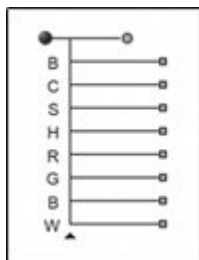
OK, tell the truth. How many of you have wished for a way to make your pictures more stunning, with rich colors and beautiful shades of light, but either don't want to learn, or don't want to use Photoshop's time-intensive selections, layers and masks? Ah! A lot of heads are nodding out there. Well, your wishes have been answered, because Viveza by Nik Software will do just that! Viveza can make your pictures more beautiful by enhancing color and light in selected parts of your image, but without having to make selections and masks to isolate the area you want to enhance.

Imagine you have a nice picture of a flower in a garden, but the lighting is rather flat, and the colors don't have much sizzle. Also, the background elements are too prominent and distracting. Open the image in Photoshop, or Photoshop Elements, since Viveza is a plug-in that works in both programs. Then under the Filters Menu, choose Viveza. Take a moment to think about your image, and decide what enhancements you want to make to the picture. In the picture below, I decided to enhance the whites and yellows in the center of the flower, and to darken the red flowers and green leaves in the background and foreground, so they didn't distract the viewer from the main subject, the white rose. Or is it a chrysanthemum?

Using Photoshop, I would have started by making a selection of the rose, then feathered the edge of the selection and hoped that the edges didn't look too artificial after adjusting the colors in the flower. But with Viveza, no selections are needed! Just click on the *Add Control Point* button, and then click to place that Control Point on the white flower petal. Next, drag left or right to set the size of the circled area where the changes will occur. Now begin making brightness, contrast and saturation adjustments by dragging left or right on each slider to increase or decrease that adjustment, and watch the changes occur right before your very eyes. What could be easier?



Control Point showing the Size, Brightness, Contrast and Saturation sliders



All Control Point Sliders (Size, Brightness, Contrast, Saturation, Hue, Red, Green, Blue, & Warmth)

Clicking the preview button lets you see a before and after picture of the total changes you have made. Just add another Control Point, and drag the sliders to adjust the controls for each area of the picture you want to modify. You can expand the number of sliders from 4 to 9 to include Hue, RGB colors, and Warmth as shown in the box above. If you want to see the effect of a single Control Point adjustment, just click the check mark in the Control Point List to toggle on or off that adjustment. Since there are no selections, there are no unsightly edges to detract from the enhancements you have made. Wow, its digital magic! You can make dramatic changes in selected areas of your picture in a very short amount of time.

I made 3 changes to the flower picture with 3 Control Points, lowering the brightness, contrast and saturation to reduce the 2 background elements (red flowers & green leaves), and increasing them along with the warmth slider to bring out the white rose. When I was finished adding Control Points and making adjustments, I clicked OK and the changes were made as a new layer in my Photoshop document. You can see the before and after picture below. All those color adjustments were made quickly and with a minimal effort - no tedious selections, and best of all, no unsightly selection edges! A free 15 day trial is available, and you have got to try this program to see its magic. There are easy-to-follow tutorials and examples of using Viveza online at www.niksoftware.com



Original Flower with no adjustments. Photo by Darrel Priebe.



Flower after 7 Control Points added in Viveza - No selections or masks were used.

How does U-Point technology work? Each Control Point identifies the unique elements where it is placed, including the position, color, saturation and texture. Changes made with that control point affect similar elements within the range of the size slider. The effects of the Control Points are smoothly applied to create a seamless result without any edge selection effects.

Viveza has many more controls for the advanced user, including:

- The ability to make the Viveza layer a Smart Object (in Photoshop CS3 only) to modify it later. First make your image a Smart Object, and then Viveza acts as a Smart Filter which can be reopened and modified at any time.
- Using the selective tool to create a layer mask so the Viveza adjustments can be selectively painted on using Photoshop's or Element's brush, lasso, marquee, and gradient tools.
- Control over the default settings for the Control Points.

Room for Improvement: I would like to see more control of the Size slider for each control point. If you have the same color/texture in multiple parts of the picture, the U-Point will affect them all if they are in the circle, even if you only want it to affect one flower out of several for example. I would like to see the Option key modify the Size slider from a circle into an oval, so different shapes can be made by dragging the circle/oval to fine tune the area affected by each U-Point. This would speed up the work flow even more, and allow a finer degree of control over the area where changes are made. While there are work-arounds for this issue, they add time to the process, and a means of better adjusting the size of the Control Point area is needed.

Viveza is a powerful, easy-to-use tool for Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, which gives the photographer precise control of the color and light in a photographic image without the necessity of creating selections or layer masks. It works very well, is fun to use, and the results are worth the price if you want to make the very best images possible in your digital darkroom. From now on, Viveza will be a regular part of my post processing work in Photoshop.

Price: The list price is \$249.95 if you buy it direct from Nik Software online. The discounted price at B&H Photo was \$209.95. The student/faculty price at Academic Superstore was \$144.95. Support Policies: Both phone and email support is offered. Contact Nik Software, Inc. by phone at (619) 725-3150, Monday - Friday from 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM (PST) or via email at service@niksoftware.com

Compatibility:

Windows 2000 Professional, Windows XP Home Edition, Windows XP Professional, Windows Vista, Pentium III 1GHz or better, 256 MB RAM, Adobe Photoshop 7 through CS3, Adobe Photoshop Elements 2.0 through 6.0, or Adobe Photoshop plug-in compatible application.

Mac OS 10.4 and later, G4, G5, Intel® Core™ Solo, Intel Core Duo, Intel Core 2 Duo, Intel Xeon 256 MB RAM Adobe® Photoshop® CS2 – CS3, Adobe Photoshop Elements 1.0 – 4.0, or an image editing application that accepts Adobe Photoshop plug-ins compatible filters, Apple® Aperture™ 2.1 (available May, 2008).

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