

AKVIS Chameleon V6.0 — Photo Collage Creation

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Scrapbooking has long held a prominent place among homo sapiens. We love to collect images and reminisce as we leaf through a book of old photos. With the introduction of the digital camera, this obsession has found a place on our computers as well. The challenge is to cut apart and paste together the pieces of the story,

AKVIS *Chameleon* is an image editing plug-in for image editing programs that makes creating photo collages (AKA scrapbooks) quick and easy. Creating precise selections and merging an image seamlessly into a background is handled very nicely.

Chameleon can take the collage process into interesting territory by offering some non-traditional ways to cause the various collage segments to interact, so you can find this tool handy for your artistic expression as well. *Chameleon* is known to work with Adobe *Photoshop*, *Photoshop Elements*, Corel (Jasc) *PaintShop Pro*, and Ulead *PhotoImpact* as well as numerous other unnamed image editing programs.



The plug-in has four modes for inserting a selection from an image into your collage-in-the-making.

Montage places the selection into a new background and makes the irrelevant parts of the pasted fragment fade away. The fragment does not change its color range or opacity.

Chameleon is similar to **Montage**, but adjusts the color range of the pasted fragment to match the background and smooths the object's borders.

Blend Mode builds on the previous modes but also makes the pasted fragment semi-transparent so that the background image can be seen through the texture and relief of the fragment. The fragment dissolves into the background.

Emersion Mode embeds a fragment (selection) into a background, allowing the background to show through in places. This mode is intended for adding a fragment with complex boundaries. Unlike the previous three modes, this one requires a precise selection in the filter dialog.

Chameleon can be downloaded from the AKVIS site and used as a 10-day trial before purchase. You'll also find a *Flash* movie demonstrating an overview of the plugin and a User Guide (in PDF format) which includes step-by-step tutorials for each mode. There are detailed directions for using the filter in *Adobe Photoshop*, *Paint Shop Pro*, and *Corel Photo-Paint*. The installation was without incident and I printed out much of the User Guide to lead me through working through all the features.

So, here's the process as I used it in *Adobe Photoshop*. I opened up the image I wanted to use for grabbing a fragment. This was a family photo, about 42 years old, of one of my sisters. I used the *Photoshop* Lasso selection tool to make a rough selection that completely contained the piece of the image that I wanted. It also included pieces of the background.

I then clicked **Filter > AKVIS > Chameleon > Grab Fragment**. Next I opened the image I wanted to use as the background, a crop of a recent snapshot of a path at

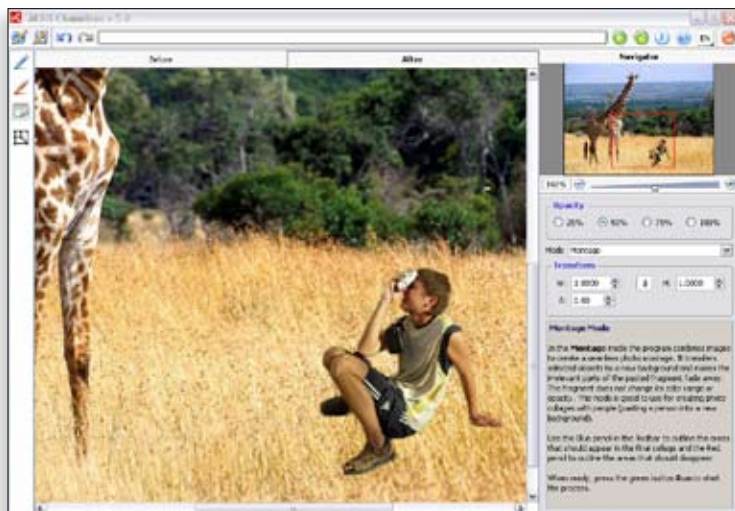


Saguaro National Monument East. I clicked **Filter > AKVIS > Chameleon > Make Collage**.

The AKVIS Chameleon dialog opened with the background image loaded and the fragment inserted and selected. In the settings panel I chose the **Montage** mode and set the *Opacity* slider to 50%. This last setting only affects the dialog, not the final result, and allowed me to see through the fragment for better placement on the background image.

The *Transform* tool allowed me to resize and reposition the fragment to better fit the rest of the image. It also allows for rotation and the unlocking of the width/height proportion.

Next I needed to define the “Keep” and “Don’t keep” areas of the fragment. I used the blue pencil to draw an outline inside the part of the fragment I wanted to keep for the collage and used the red pencil to draw a line in the area to drop into the background. There’s also an eraser to remove strokes



Chameleon screen-shot from akvis.com

outside the intended area. I pressed the *Process* button to see the result in the After tab.

If a redo is required, you can just switch back to the Before tab and redraw the contours. I used a very rough selection. Because my hand was not able to accurately trace the figure, I just drew inside the figure the best I could. The drop area was also defined roughly. The program did an admirable job of figuring out what to keep and what to fade out, and there was no fringing!

I didn’t try adding a shadow by using a desaturated copy of the dancing girl and the *Transform* tool in the AKVIS dialog to distort the fragment into a shadow, but I certainly could have. You can also save fragments with defined keep and drop strokes for later use. Satisfied, I pressed the Checkmark button to apply the results to my *Photoshop* file.

Considering the ease of use and speedy results for this most basic first run, I have to give this a “must try.” The four modes provide a variety of ways to combine objects into a most creative result. So, hobbyist or artist, this plug-in can increase your productivity and give your whimsy the tools to express itself.

About: AKVIS Chameleon V6.0 - Photo Collage Creation

Vendor: Akvis
www.akvis.com

Price: Home – Plug-in (\$75 / €57)
Business – Plug-in (\$230 / €170)

Required: Image-editing program such as Adobe *Photoshop*, *Photoshop Elements*, Corel (Jasc) *PaintShop Pro*, and Ulead *PhotoImpact*, etc.

