

Pep Ventosa's Method Using Affinity Photo

By Andy Mills LRPS

Pep Ventosa is a Spanish (Catalan) photographer and artist who publicised a technique for creating art by blending multiple layers of images of an object taken from many different angles, or in a circle around an object:-

<https://www.pepventosa.com/>

The technique is simple in concept and produces pleasing abstract results. To create a 'Pep Ventosa' image of a tree, for example, you take a photograph of the tree then take one pace to your left then take another photograph of the tree then take one pace to your left then etc until you have done a full circle around the tree and got twenty or more images of the tree. It helps to ensure all images have some clear object, such as the tree trunk, that can form an anchor to align the images when post processing.

An alternative approach is to keep the camera still (on a tripod) and rotate the object being photographed e.g. this is suitable for photographing a vase of flowers – as used in this document for explaining the method. In this method you should be able to use the vase as the point of reference to align images in post processing.

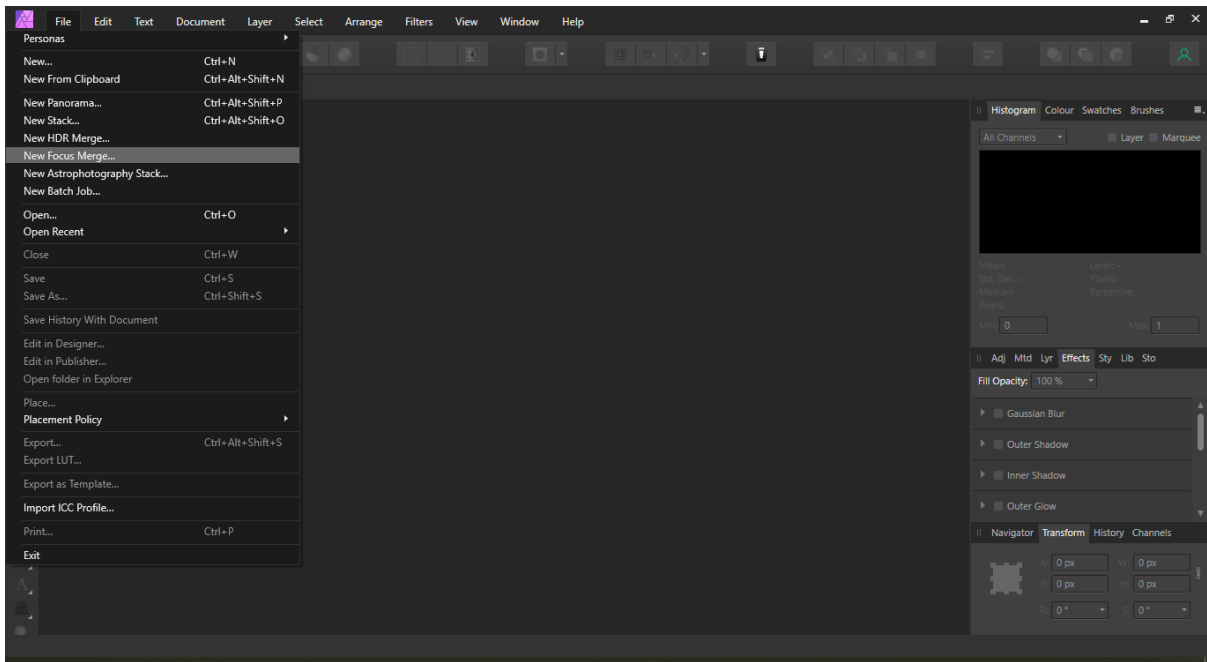
Another variation is to move the camera in an arc one pace at a time, rather than a circle, whilst still centering each photo on the main object. If the images all have one main object that will assist with manual alignment of the images when post-processing. You may choose to have a few images of the main object which are clear and use the blending technique for creating an artistic background to the main object. This is all down to your own preferences and styling i.e. your artistic intent.

You can of course do some preparation of the images before merging them to increase the variances, such as white balance, contrast, saturation, etc. You can manually remove undesirable objects in each image before merging if you wish – it is usually easier to remove undesirable objects and artefacts before merging them.

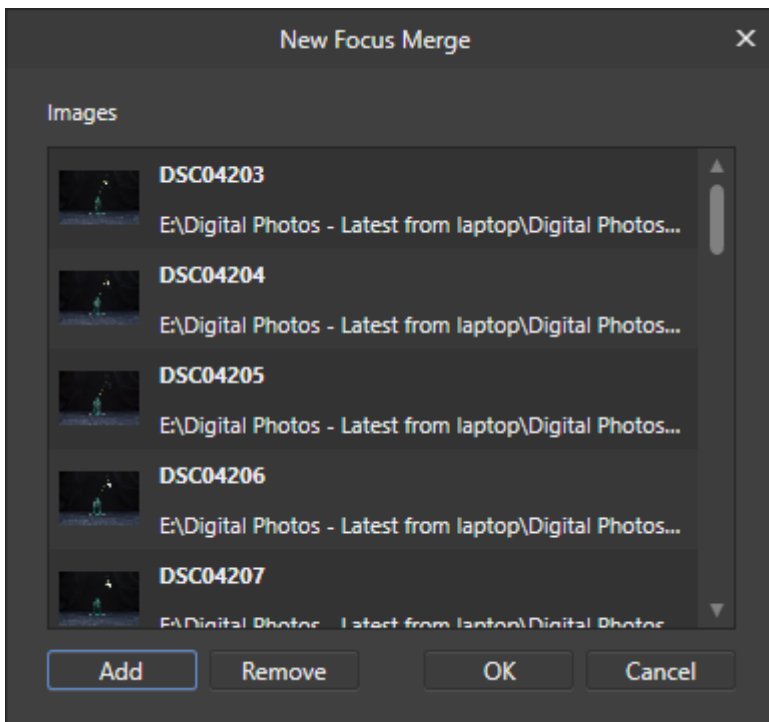
The images can then all be loaded into Affinity Photo and merged into a single combined image using any of several methods. This document explains two approaches to merging the images to create a Pep Ventosa style image using Affinity Photo.

Method One (the cheats method):

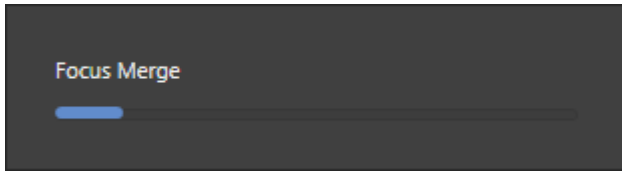
Open Affinity Photo. Click on File -> Focus Merge:



Add the image files comprising the set of photographs of the object. In this worked example I am using multiple images of a single snowdrop flower in a small green bottle and a black velvet cloth as the background:

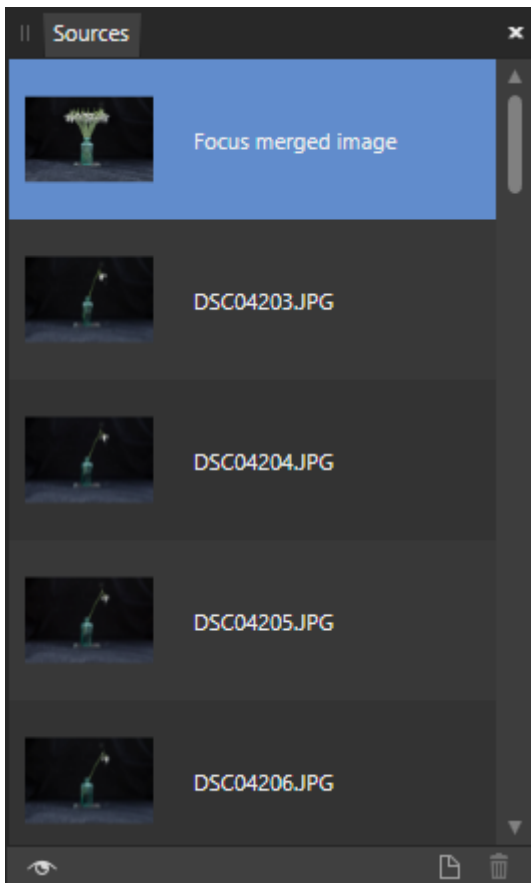


Click OK to begin Focus Merge

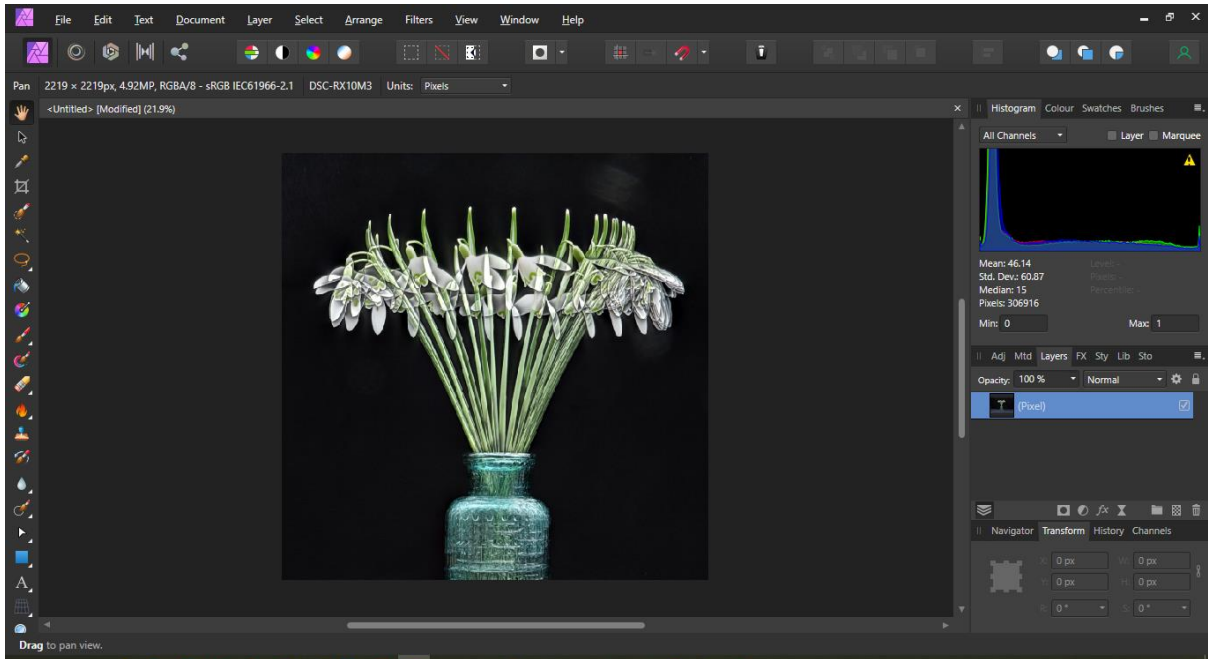


The Focus Merge procedure automatically aligns the images thus avoiding the need to do that manually. The computer is usually better at aligning images than a human.

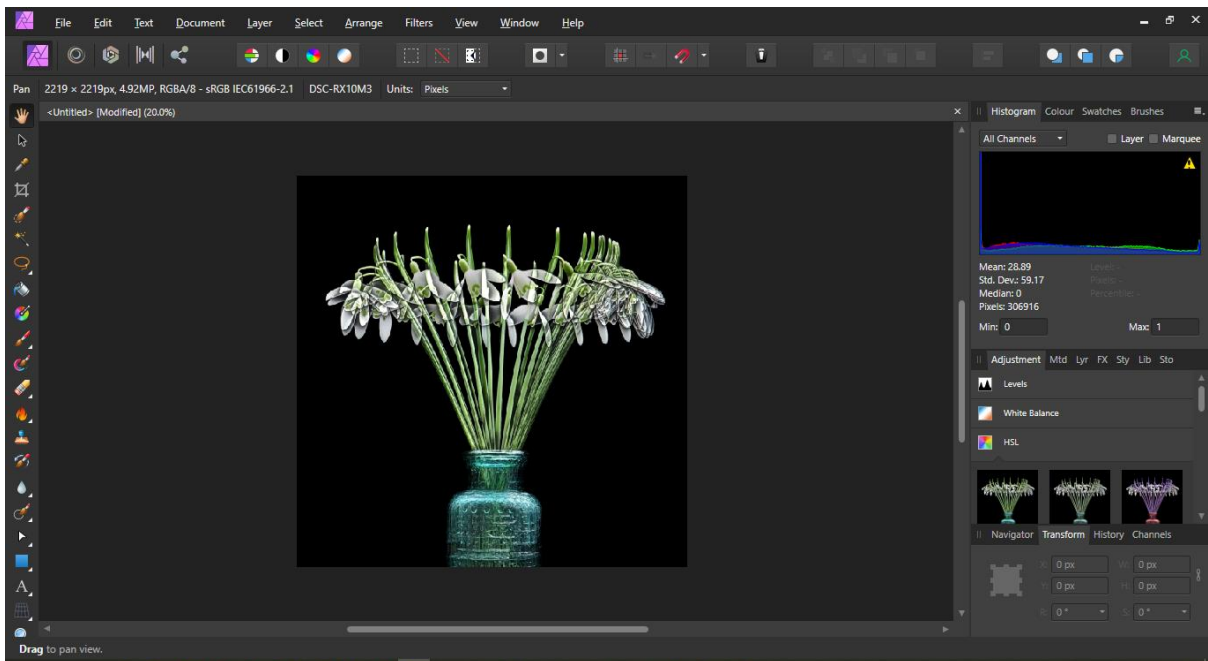
When the computer has completed merging the images you can still edit any individual layers or just use the resultant merged image:



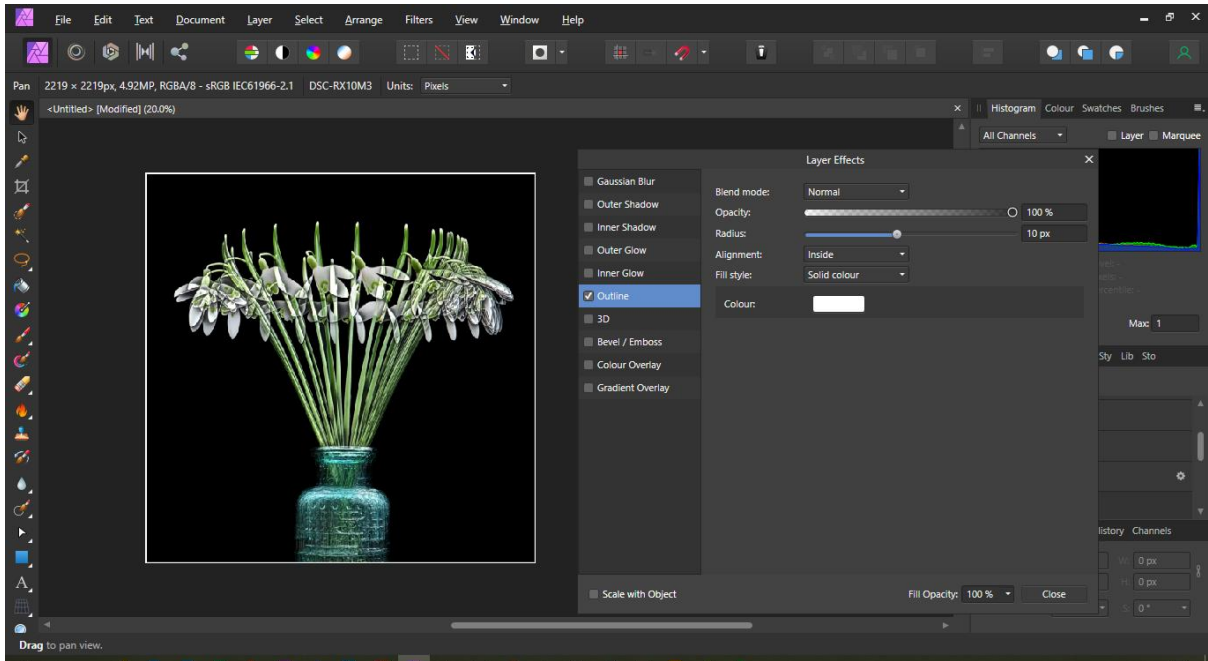
You can crop the merged image if you wish:



If necessary, you can edit the image by changing the brightness, contrast, saturation, white balance, etc. in the usual way. The background can be adjusted too if appropriate – I have darkened the background:



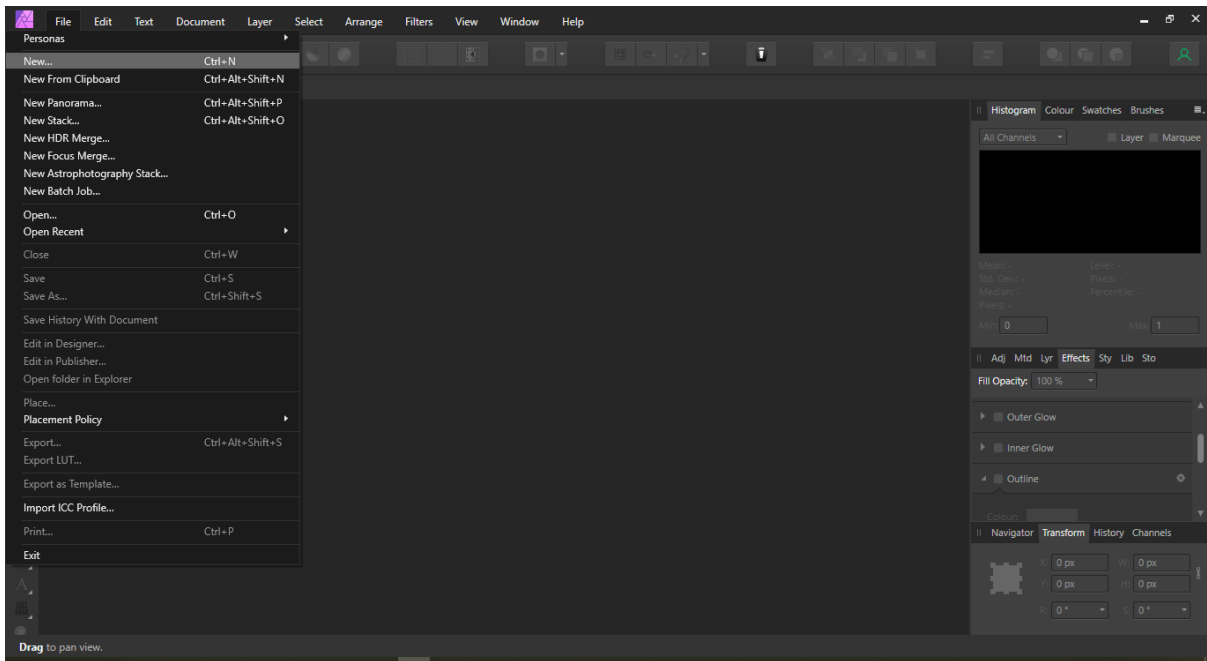
You can add an outline to the image if desired, such as when it is to be displayed on a black background:



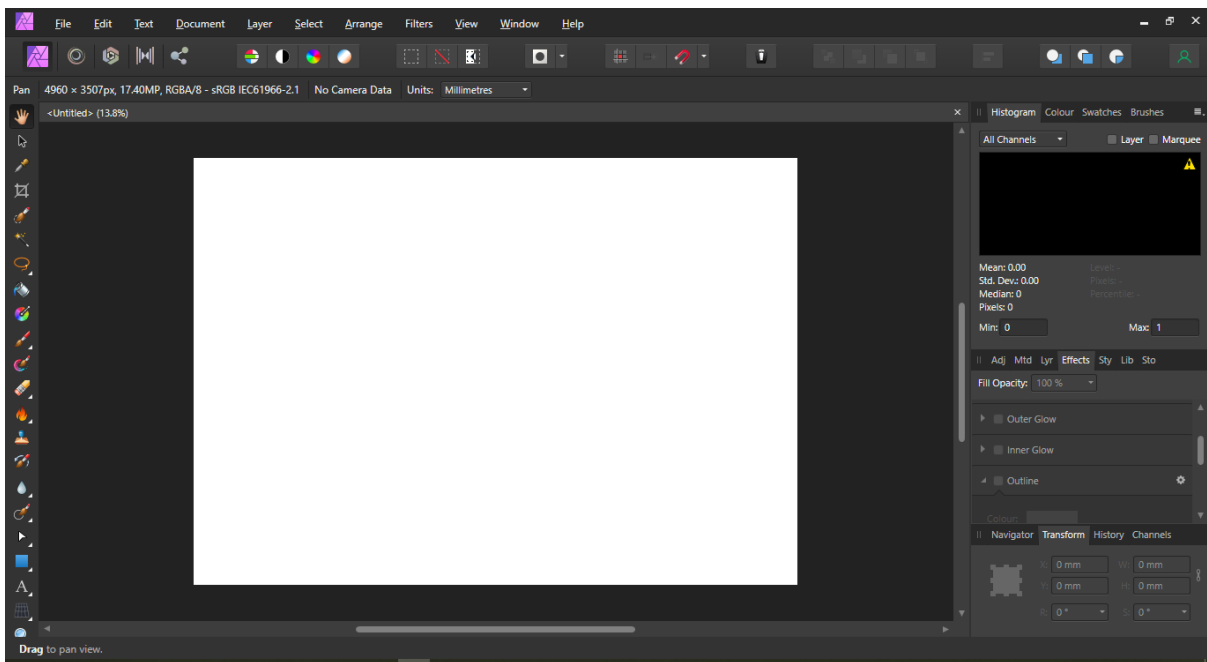
The resultant image looks like multiple flowers in a vase but there is an interesting overlap like they are slightly translucent.

Method Two (the manual alignment method):

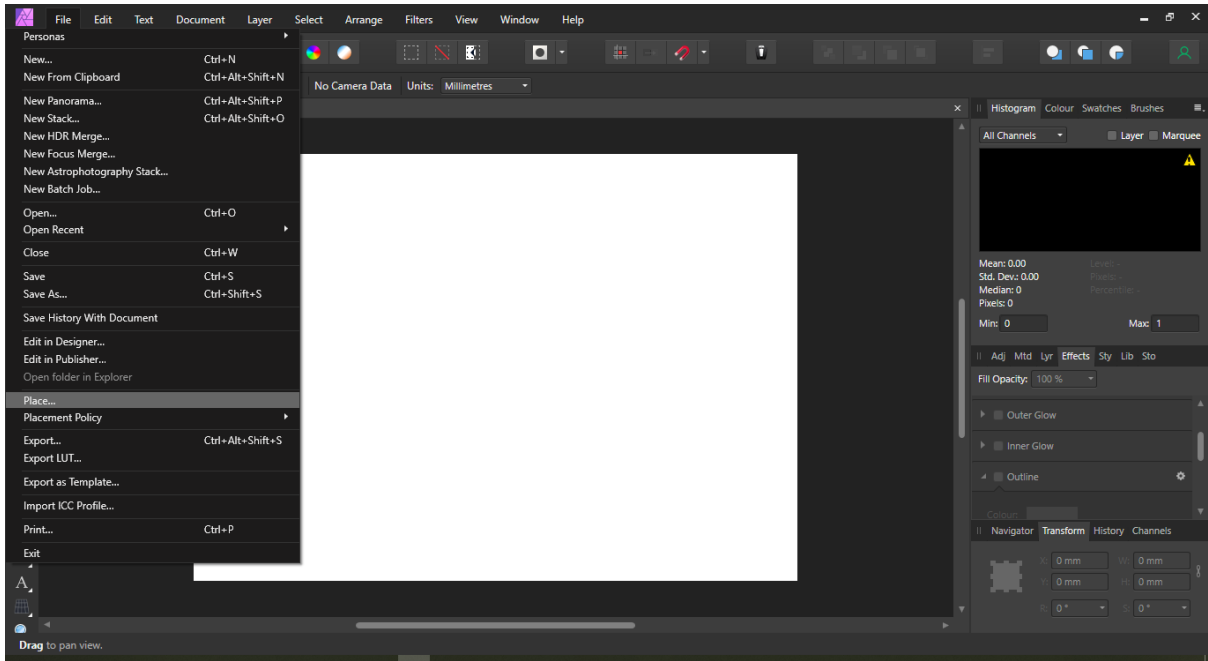
Open Affinity Photo. Click on File -> New:



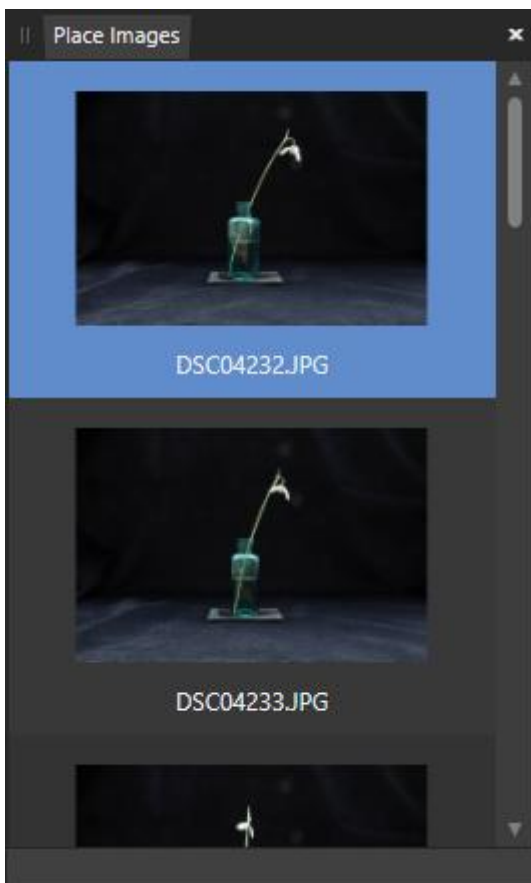
Create a new document such as a blank A3 or 16x12 print in landscape format:



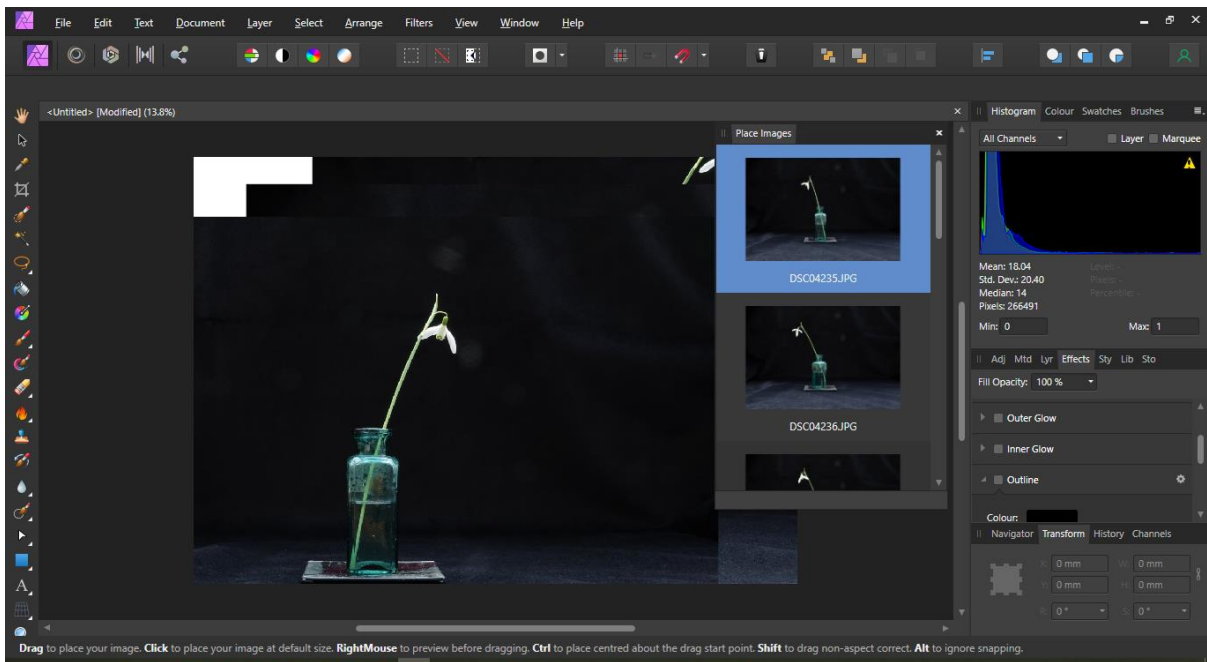
Then click on File -> Place:



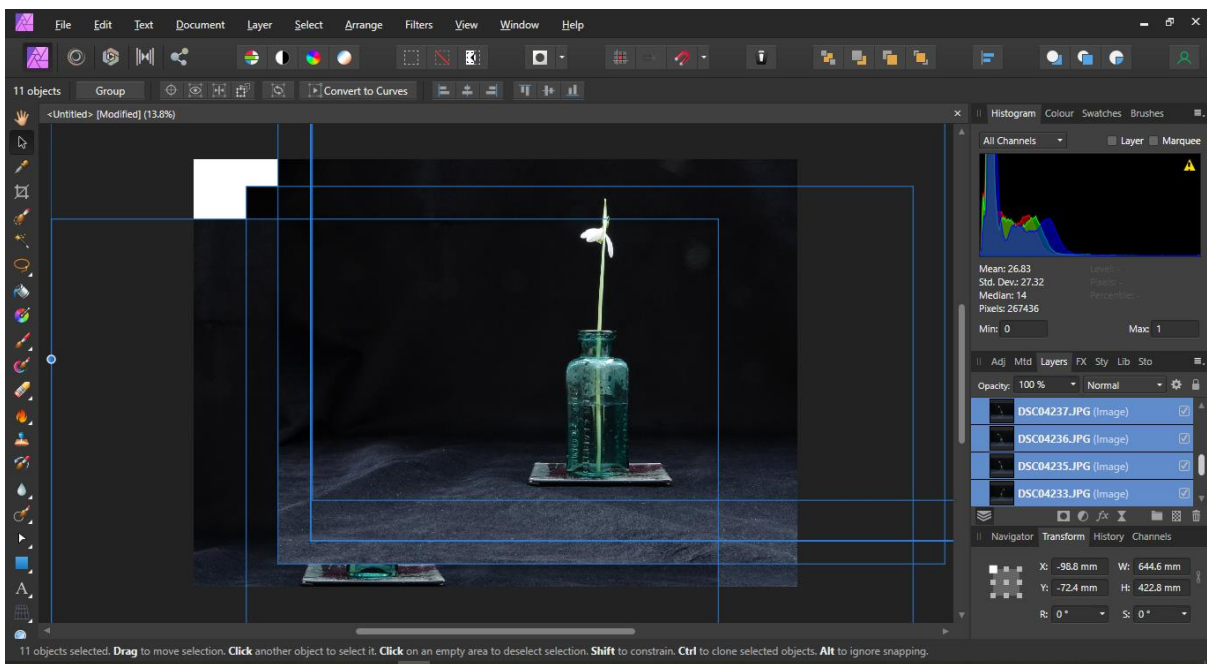
Select the multiple files you wish to merge:



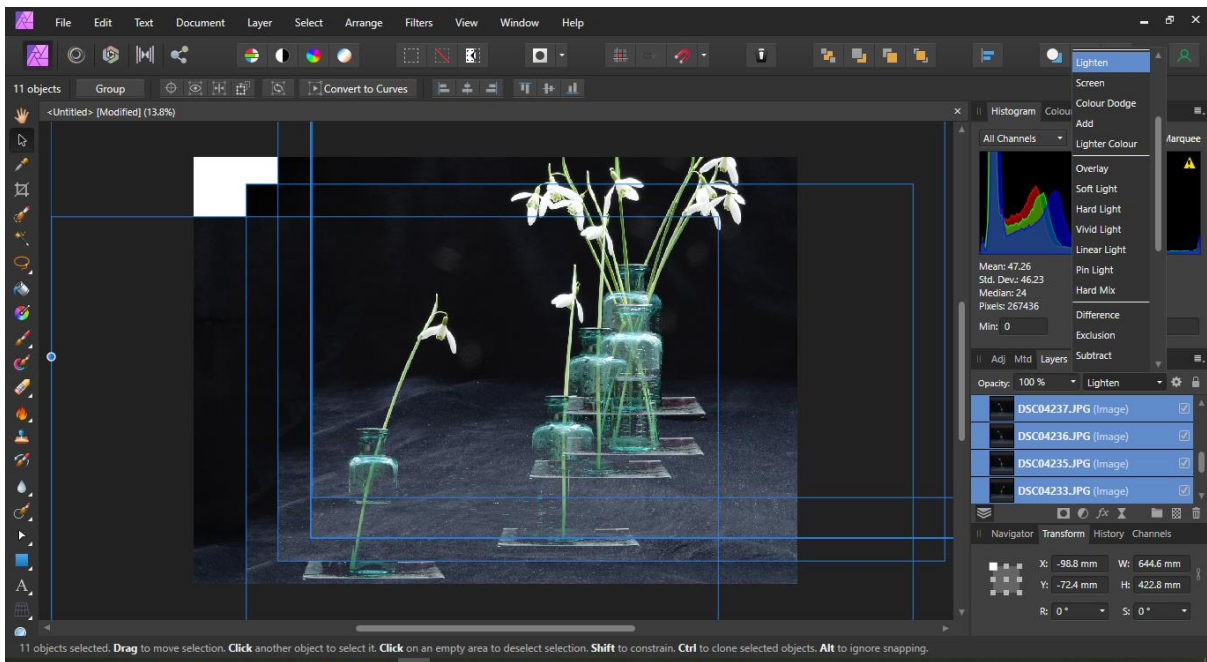
Manually place all the images as layers onto the blank document you created:



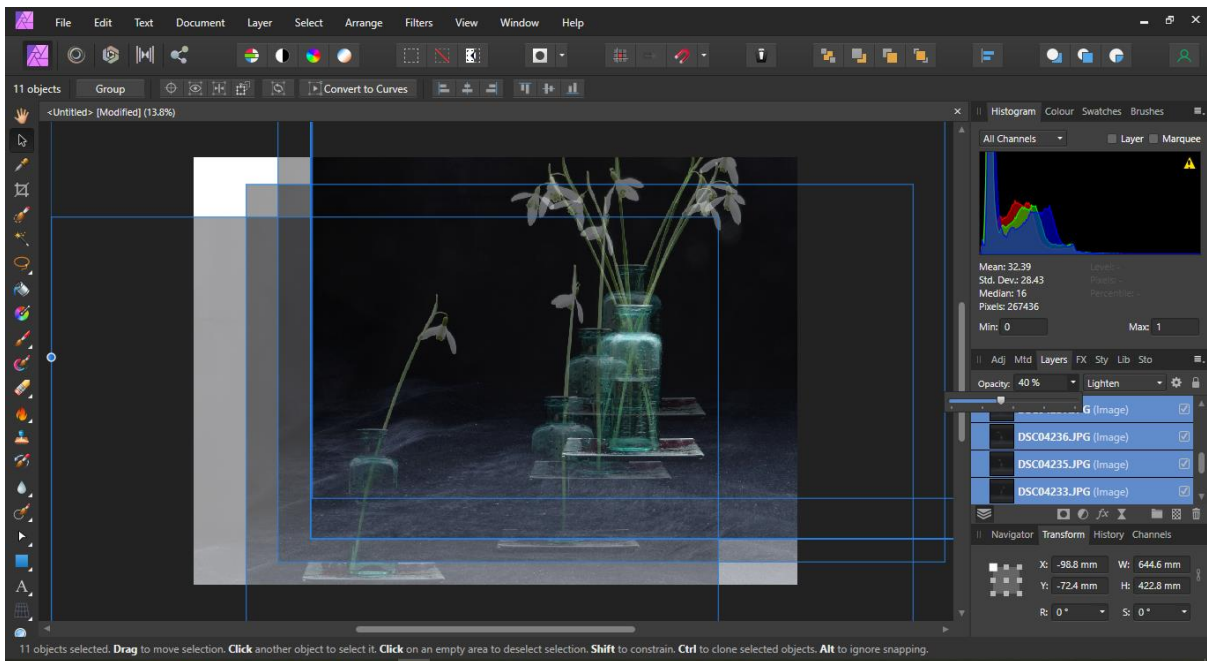
In the Layers panel on the right select all layers:



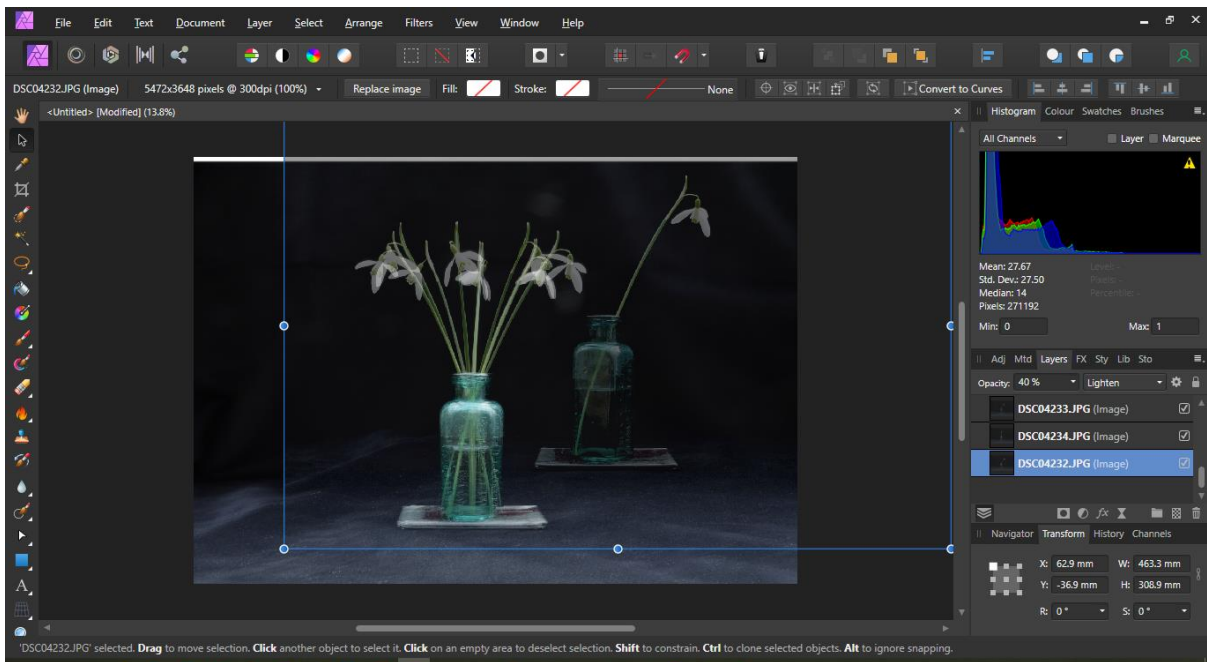
Change the blend mode to Lighten (or other blend mode if you prefer). By selecting all layers first you will be setting all layers to the same blend mode. If you want some layers blended differently you could select those layers separately and chose a different blend mode for them:



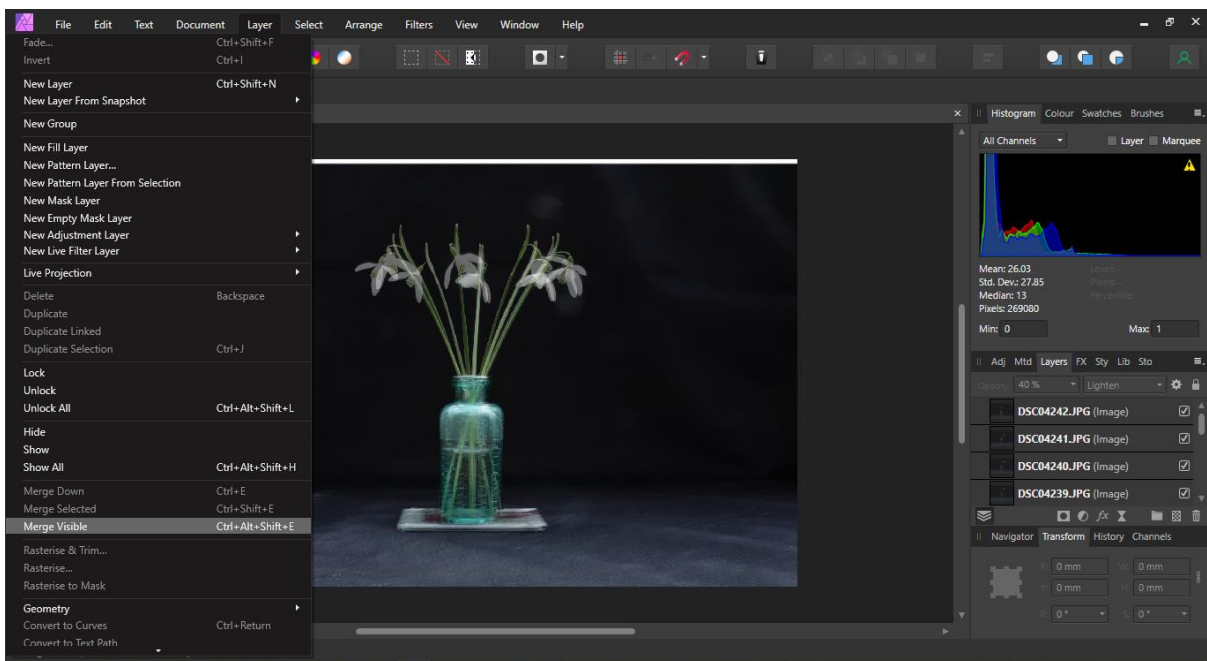
Set the opacity to 40% or 50% (to your own preference). Similarly, you could set different opacity levels for different layers e.g. set a lower opacity level for the layers containing less important objects and a higher opacity level for the main features/objects of the image:



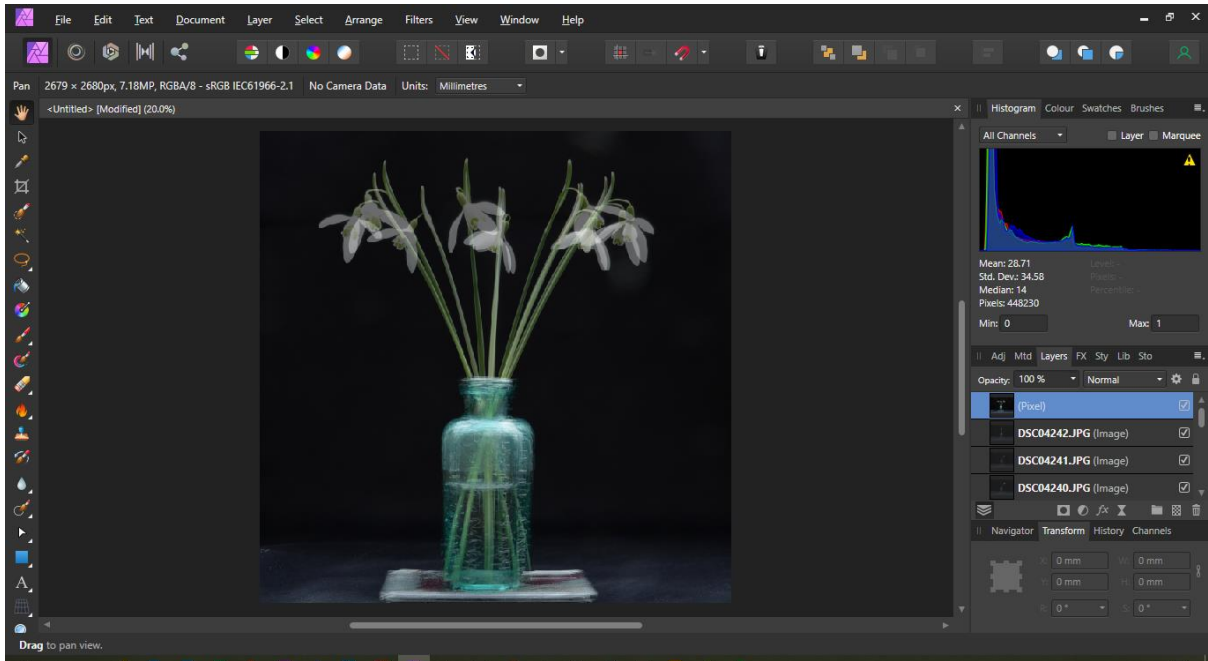
By selecting one layer at a time, in the layers panel on the right, manually move each layer, one at a time so they all align. If it helps, you could un-tick all layers and only tick those that you have correctly placed or are wanting to move:



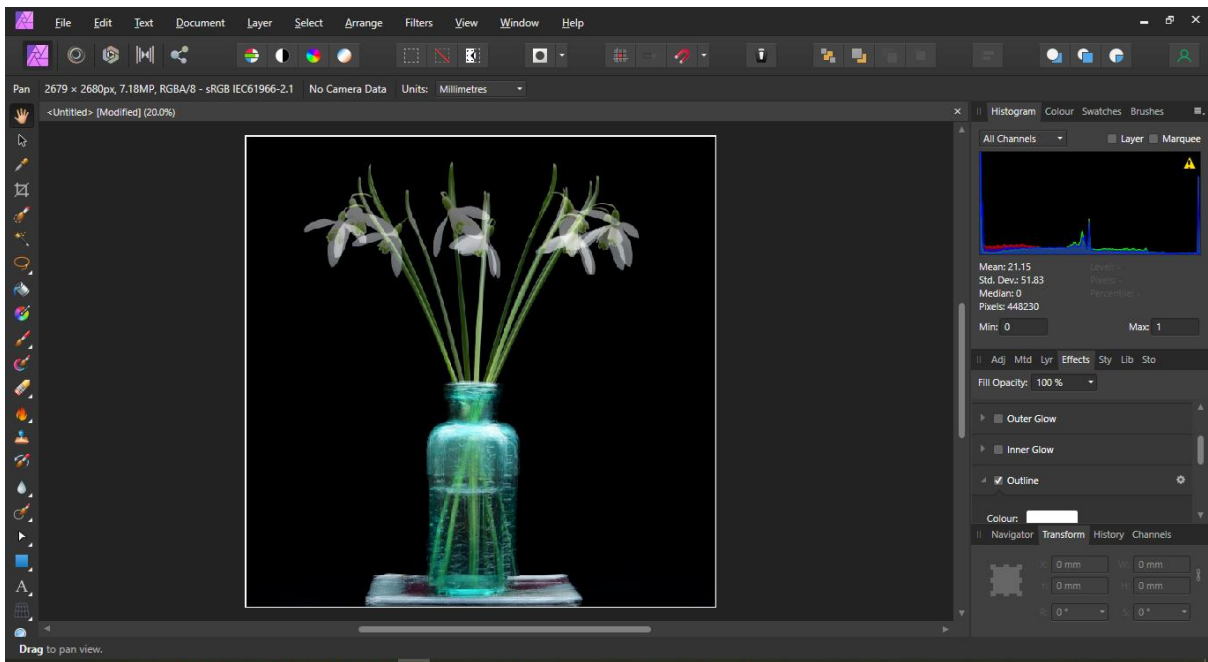
You can save the project at any time as a .afphoto file to retain all the layers.
 To consolidate the aligned images click on Merge Visible:



Crop your image then adjust contrast, brightness, saturation, white balance, etc in the usual way to your own preference:

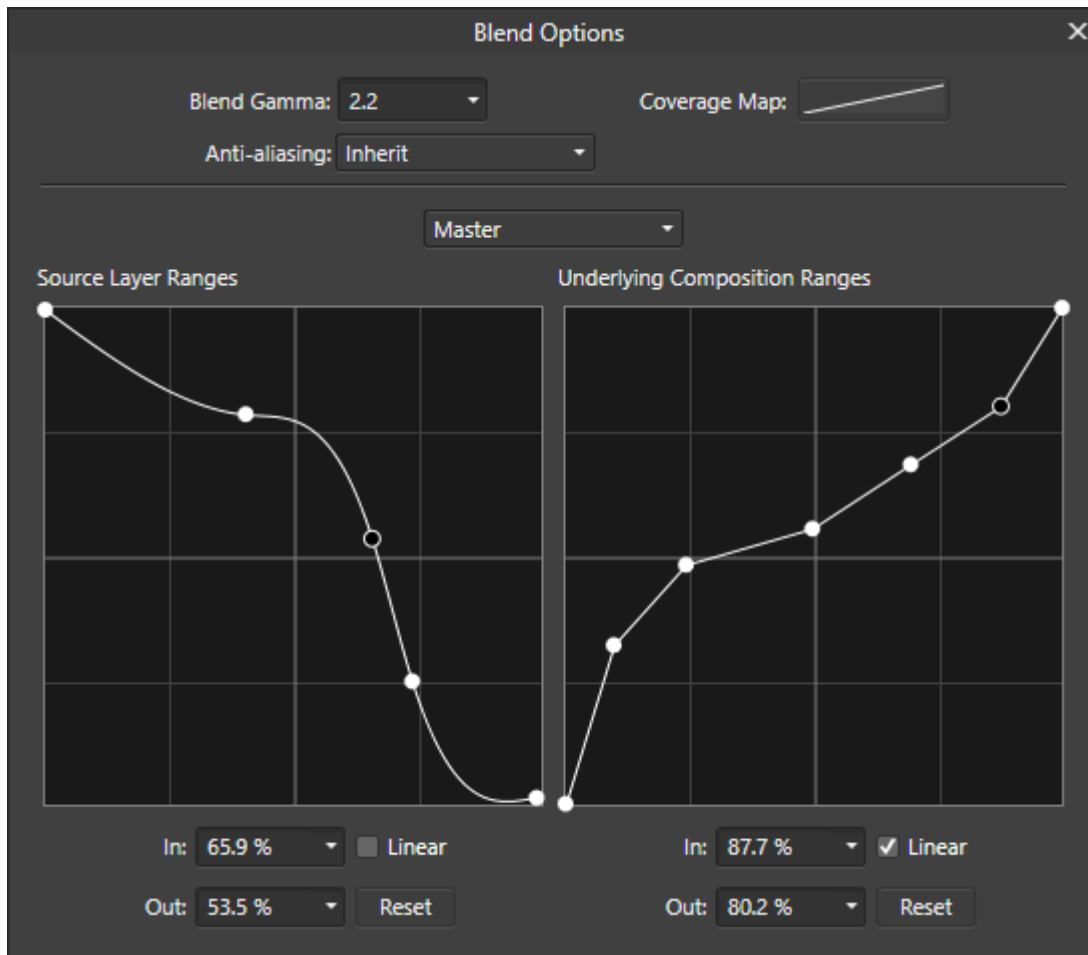


Adjust the background and add a border, if you wish:

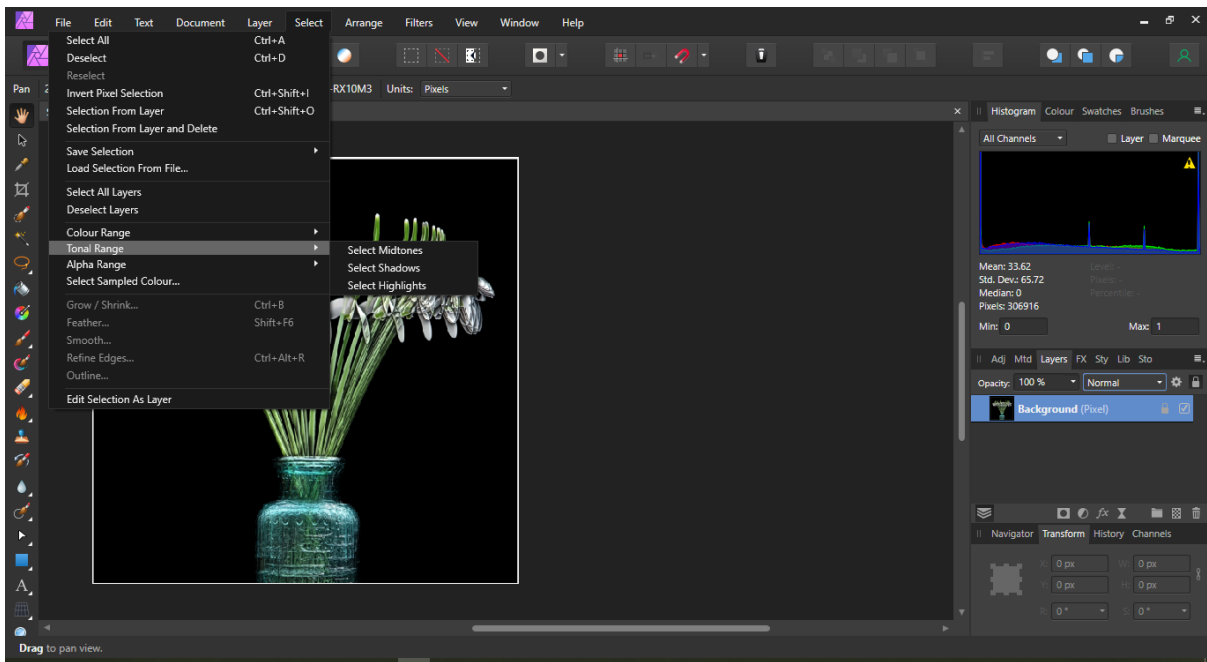


Advanced Blend Modes:

If you want to go beyond what the above two simple methods give you, Affinity Photo has infinitely variable blend mode controls. The little cog symbol in the Layers Panel on the right opens a pair of graphs which allows either curves or linear steps in the blend range. This makes the need for luminosity masks (as used in Photoshop) obsolete. However, if you like using luminosity masks you can set them up in Affinity Photo as macros for later use.



For convenience Affinity Photo has three 'luminosity masks' built in. They are called Tonal Range and are found in the Select menu:



When your image has distinct dark areas called 'Shadows' like the image used in this example, or Midtones or Highlights, these can be easily selected this way. You may need to use the brush tool to Add or Subtract some of the automatically selected tonal areas to manually refine the auto-selection. In the Select menu you can also invert the selection, so if you want to select everything other than the Shadows you can select Shadows then invert the selection to give you everything but the Shadows. You can also click on the Refine button to adjust the selection and to feather the edges of the selected area if needed.

These features in Affinity Photo are hugely powerful – just play with them and experiment a bit to become familiar.

Conclusion:

These methods for merging and blending multiple layers enable the photographer to create a limitless number of original creative designs similar to those created by Pep Ventosa or even something completely different of your own making. Learning how to handle layers in this way opens the door to many more possibilities too.

So go forth and multiply – or at least go and experiment with merging and blending multiple photos!

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