This new Blur filter in CS6 gives you a really easy way to create the miniaturization effect you see all over the web, where a photo is transformed to look like a tinytoy model (well, think of it more like an architectural model). Using this filter is easy *if* (this is a big if) you have the right type of photo. Ideally, you'd use one where you photographed from a high point of view, looking downward, and the higher you are, and the steeper the angle, the better it helps sell the idea that you're looking down on a scale model.
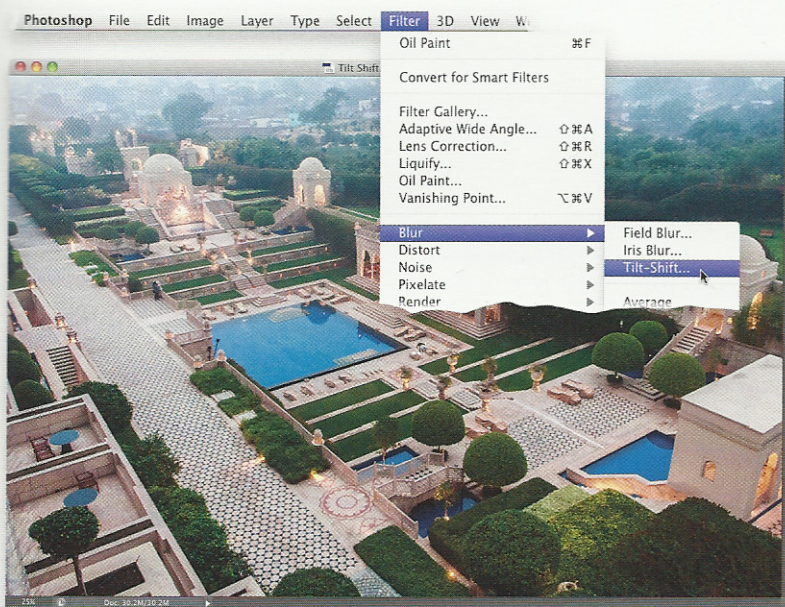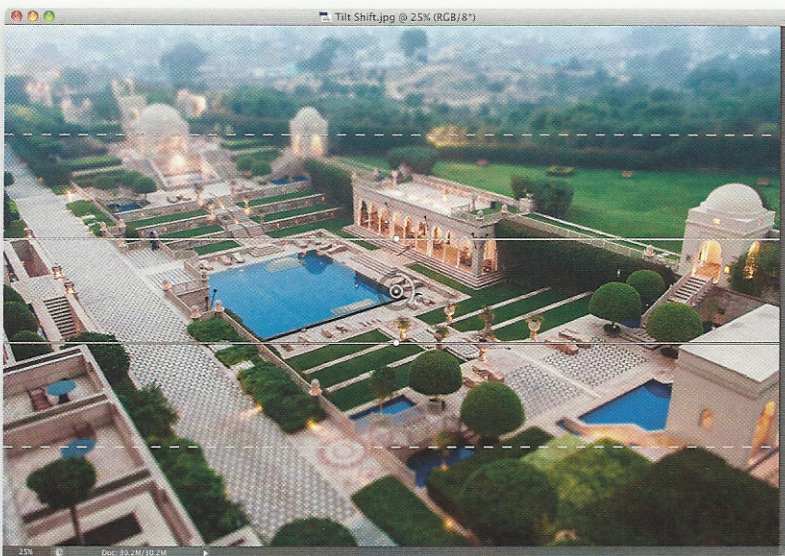
Tilt Shift Effect (Using the New Blur Gallery)

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Step One:
Open the image you want to apply the effect to (be sure to read the intro above to make sure you use the right type of image, or this effect will look pretty lame. Of course, as always, you can download the image I'm using here from the book's downloads page mentioned in the introduction). Now, go under the Filter menu, under Blur, and choose **Tilt-Shift** (as shown here).

Step Two:
When you use any of the three filters in this section of the Blur submenu, you're using what Adobe calls the Blur Gallery, which is an entirely new, interactive, on-screen way to work with your images. You'll notice it places a round pin in the center of your image, and above and below that are two solid lines, and then two dotted lines. The solid lines show you the area that will remain in focus (the focus area), and the area between each solid line and dotted line is transition, where it fades from sharp to blurry. The wider the distance between the solid and dotted lines, the longer it takes to go from sharp (inside the solid line) to totally blurry (outside the dotted line). *Note:* To remove a pin, just click on it and hit the Delete (PC: Backspace) key on your keyboard.

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Step Three:

You control the amount of blur by clicking on the gray part of the ring around the pin, and dragging around the ring. As you drag, the ring turns white to show you how far you've gone, and the actual amount of blur appears in a little pop-up display at the top of the ring (as seen here). I totally dig adjusting the blur this way, but if it gets on your nerves (hey, it could happen), there is a Blur Tools panel that appears over on the right side of your workspace with a Tilt-Shift section. You'll see a Blur slider there, so if you want to go "old school," you can drag that slider and use it to choose how much blur you want. In our example, I clicked-and-dragged the ring (the Blur amount) to 39. While we're here, look inside the two horizontal solid lines. See how that area is sharp and in focus? Okay, now look at the area outside those lines until you reach the dotted lines. See how it transitions to blurry? Got it? Got it!

Step Four:

For this particular miniaturization effect, I think it looks better if you compress both of these areas—making the in-focus area smaller and the transition area smaller. Here's how: Click directly on the top solid line and drag inward toward the round pin thingy in the middle (and yes, thingy is the official name given by the International Board of Unsure Naming, or the IBUN). Get it nice and close (as seen here). Now, do the same thing with the bottom solid line, moving it up toward the round pin thingy. Next, drag the center of the top dotted line in closer to the top solid line (as shown here), and then do the same to the bottom dotted line.
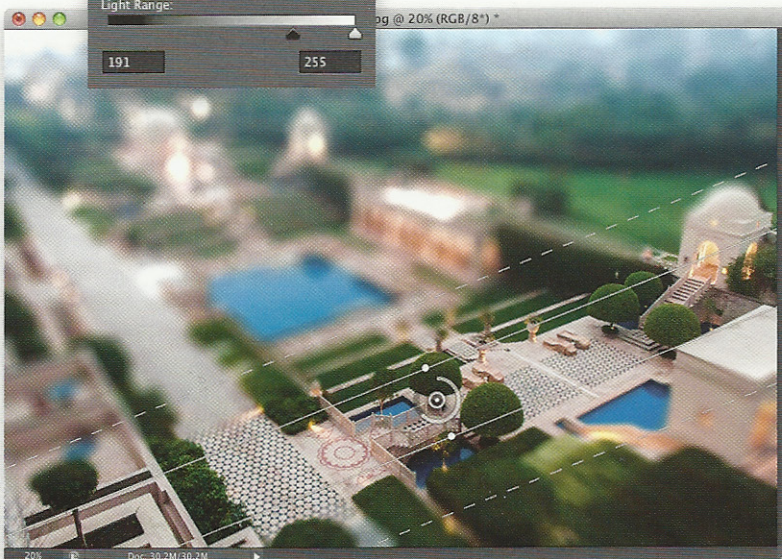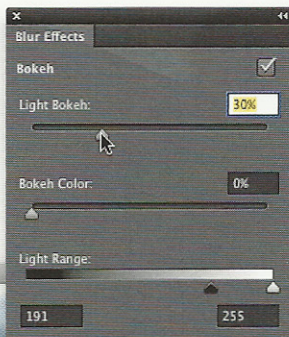
Step Five:

Now, we're going to rotate our in-focus area (and blur, and the whole shebang), so we're just focused on the area we want (which, in my case, is the stairs and bridge near the bottom-center of the photo, as shown here). First, click directly on the center of the round pin thingy and drag it over to that area (put it right near those stairs). Now, to rotate your Tilt-Shift blur, move your cursor over the white center dot on the solid line above the pin, and you'll see it turn into a two-headed rotate arrow. Just click-and-hold on that white dot and rotate by dragging your cursor left/right. So now, it's pretty close to being where and how we want it, but there are some more options you'll want to know about: The first is over in the Blur Tools panel, under Tilt-Shift, and it's the Distortion slider. It lets you change the shape of the blur (I thought it looked best over at 100%, as shown here). Once you add Distortion, if you turn on the Symmetric Distortion checkbox, it makes your blur look really bad and distorted. I personally haven't come up with a reason why I would ever turn this on, unless I was angry at my photo. I also increased my Blur to 50 px.

Step Six:

There is another set of controls in the Blur Effects panel (shown here; it appears below the Blur Tools panel): The top one is kind of useful—it lets you increase the highlights in the blur area, which can be nice for some outdoor portraits, so I dragged it up a bit here (notice the brighter highlights in the top left?). However, this is a *very* sensitive slider, and if you drag too far, it looks like someone dropped a highlights grenade into your image, so use this sparingly. There's a Bokeh Color slider that adds color to your blur and depending on the image, it's either very subtle or a little visible, but like the Symmetric Distortion checkbox, I don't use it.
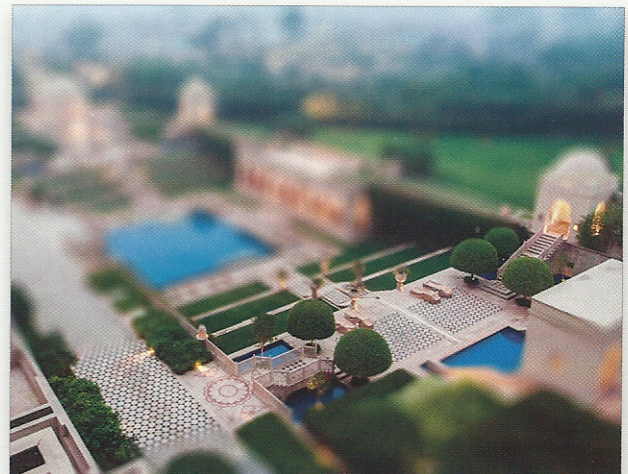
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Step Seven:

When you're done tweaking your blur, press the **Return (PC: Enter) key** to apply it. There are a few more controls in the Options Bar: One is the Focus amount, and it's set at 100% (sharp focus) by default. If you lower that amount, it makes the in-focus area start to blur. The more you lower that amount, the blurrier the in-focus area gets (I haven't found a use for this one yet). Next is the Save Mask to Channels checkbox, which lets you save the area you've masked (using this tool) to a channel (in the Channels panel) in case you want to edit it later (like adding noise to it, or removing all the color, etc.). You can reload that channel and the masked area becomes selected. Lastly, there's a High Quality checkbox, which gives you a better quality blur, but it just takes longer to apply. By the way, if you want to actually see the mask this filter is building, press-and-hold the letter **M** on your keyboard (you can see what the mask looks like here at the bottom). Some other handy shortcuts: Press **P** to hide the blur (press it again to bring it back), and press-and-hold **H** to hide your round pin thingy and all the lines from view.

Before

After