TFR Icon Creation Tutorial

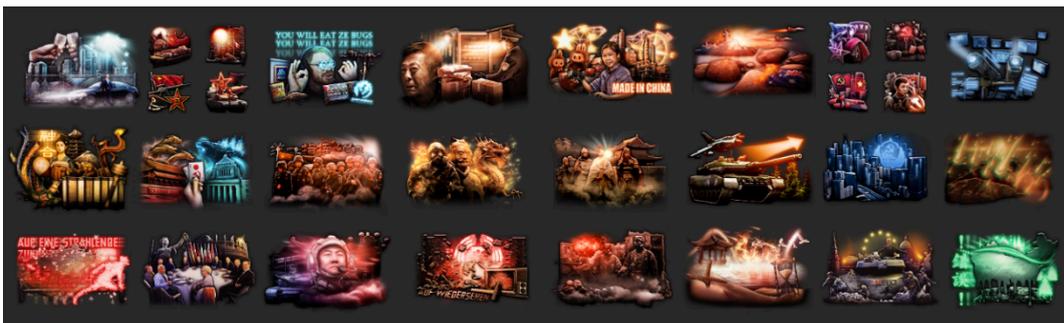## Chinese Version 2.0

Draft

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Figure 1: These are icon designs from several talented graphic artists. There are even more excellent creations within the TFR game. We salute the creators!

TFR Icon Creation Tutorial - Chinese Version 2.0 (TRANSLATED)

Created by TFR-CN, referencing tutorials from Sudin, Rev, the 1.0 tutorial, and various

0. Preface :

In March of 2025, the Chinese TFR production team created a tutorial that systematically explained the creation of icons for The Fire Rises. Over the following six months, this tutorial helped many new graphic designers take their first steps in creation, beginning to unleash their creativity on image editing softwares. However, with continuous updates of the TFR mod and the refinement of GFX artists' skills through practice, the mod's icons have made tremendous progress in just a few months. The old tutorial is no longer able to keep up with the fast-changing landscape of TFR icon creation. This tutorial aims to summarize creative experiences and promote new creative approaches. Building upon the work of experienced graphic designers, it provides a practical learning path for beginners and those who want to learn new methods of creating. If you don't know where to start and want to create new TFR-style icons for your fan works, the TFR Submod you're developing, or for the TFR development team itself, your answers will be found here.

This tutorial will provide both some basic and widely-used

advanced techniques. If you have any questions about icon creation, this tutorial, or want to inquire about other icon creation methods, I recommend you ask me (Bondrewd) and other experienced graphic designers in the #fan-content, #ru-fanart, and #cn-fanart channels of https://discord.gg/tfr.

Software Support:

This tutorial is entirely based on Adobe Photoshop. Theoretically, icons can also be created using unofficial web-based versions of Photoshop such as Photopea, Paint.net, and Ibis Paint. However, due to its comprehensive features, extensive editing options, and vast number of related tutorials, Photoshop remains the best solution for creating TFR icons and other fan-made content for Hearts of Iron 4.

I am using Adobe Photoshop 2024, Version 25.0.0.37. Please note that there may be some functional differences between newer and older versions of Photoshop.

This tutorial does not provide download links, so please find the software resources yourself. I personally recommend that creators of Hearts of Iron 4 related fanart choose the 2022-2023 versions of Photoshop, because the newer Photoshop 2024 and 2025 versions

may not support the lighting effects feature, which is crucial for creating icons for Hearts of Iron 4 mods. The 3D features have also been removed in Photoshop 2024 and 2025. Older versions of Photoshop may have some missing features (however, for those still using older devices, using an older version of Photoshop can provide a smoother creative experience and is still a better choice compared to other software mentioned above).

Image Collection :

Source images for icons are generally sourced from search engines such as Bing, Google, Yandex, and Baidu. If images cannot be downloaded or saved properly, you can obtain them directly through screenshots. With the advancement of AI image generation, you can also choose to use AI to generate images, provided that the essential details remain intact.

After collecting the images, you can use online background removed websites such as remove.bg and Baidu AI Image Assistant to quickly remove image backgrounds, but note that some complex scenes may require manual correction. You can also use the "Quick Selection" and "Select Subject" tools in Photoshop, although the

results may vary depending on the Photoshop version.

When collecting images, you will often encounter unconventional file formats. Therefore, it is recommended to install a tool that supports batch conversion of formats such as DDS and WebP to Photoshop-compatible formats (such as XnConvert), as well as plugins that improve Photoshop format compatibility. The quality of these tools varies, and some may contain adware or viruses, so please choose your software sources carefully.

I have compiled a list of commonly used tool websites at the end of this article. You can click here to quickly go to the end of the article to access them.

Regarding the "TFR Style"

The TFR logo was once simply described by a friend as "a trending YouTube video thumbnail made into a Hearts of Iron IV icon." Although this description doesn't perfectly match the actual style of the TFR logo, it's sufficient to help most beginners quickly understand the icon's style.

Figure 2 shows the Soviet economic policy tree, in standard TFR-style icons.

Using this as an example, I will introduce some basic characteristics of TFR icons.

Compared to the popular TNO (The New Order)-style icons, TFR icons are more vibrant and brighter, with a more exaggerated visual effect, reflecting the rapid advancements of the 2020s. Most of the icon materials are composed of real-world objects, with only a small portion using various artwork materials. Some icons also utilize AI-generated materials to address the difficulty in collecting materials for certain themes. TFR icons are mostly placed on larger, wider canvases without borders, and their overall shape is more rectangular, which is a major distinguishing feature from other mod icons. Of course, icon styles are not inherently superior or inferior; as an enthusiast of a particular art style, one should not use their preferences to show superiority in other modding and art communities, nor should they mock or belittle works and art in other styles.

Due to the lack of borders, TFR icons offer greater freedom and

openness in composition. Whether it's a simple stacking of images or an attempt to construct a scene, it can be considered TFR style.

TFR icons place considerable emphasis on the overall effect of the national focus tree, striving for harmony in the entire set of national focus tree icons. Therefore, currently, the icons on a single national focus tree in the main mod are usually required to be created by the same artist from beginning to end. Thus, if you need to create icons for the main TFR mod or its submods, it is essential for the artist to try to control the overall effect of the national focus tree while maintaining consistent quality and improving efficiency.

Figure 3: The diverse icon styles in the one-year anniversary teaser campaign.

Of course, the creation of TFR's icons is not static. Over several months of development, from creative concepts to technical

capabilities, TFR's icon style has undergone significant changes and made considerable progress. In the current TFR mod, the icon style exhibits a "blooming of a hundred flowers" phenomenon (Translator's Note: ChatGPT told me this is a Chinese idiom meaning "diverse styles thriving simultaneously") – our talented artists freely pour their inspiration and ingenuity into their creations, painting their unique colors in a world engulfed in flames.

The biggest differences between the new and older TFR-styled icons are::

- The icons have a more three-dimensional feel, representing a significant improvement over the flat, paper-like texture of earlier icons;

- Extensive use of lighting effects has been incorporated, resulting in more pronounced light and shadow contrasts, making the icons appear more dynamic and vibrant;

- The composition methods are more flexible and diverse, not limited to just a few simple approaches;

- Different styles and editing techniques from various modules have been integrated into the TFR icons, allowing them to evolve by incorporating the best aspects of different approaches.

In the future, TFR's icon creation will be further developed, and I will update this tutorial accordingly . However, this tutorial will not

cover all icon creation styles in detail; I will begin with a simple, standard TFR-style icon.

1. Basic Editing Techniques：

In this chapter, I will give a step-by-step explanation on how to create a basic TFR-style icon, starting with creating the canvas.

Step 1: Create A Suitable Canvas

The standard canvas size for TFR national focus icons is 170*150 pixels, with a maximum size of 200*150 pixels. The size can be adjusted according to needs and preferences. It's important to note that when creating TFR icons, a blank space of 38 to 40 pixels should be left at the bottom to avoid obscuring the national focus title.

The icon canvas width should ideally not exceed 210 pixels; otherwise, the adjacent national focus icons will be squeezed together and become cluttered after implementation.

Figure 4

The required canvas sizes for creating other types of icons can be

found in the image below:

Figure 5: Reference dimensions for various icon canvas sizes. (Translator's Note: Excuse the bad translations, I just put it into google translate)

Here, we'll first create a slightly larger canvas of 180*150 pixels; most of the subsequent work will be performed on this canvas.
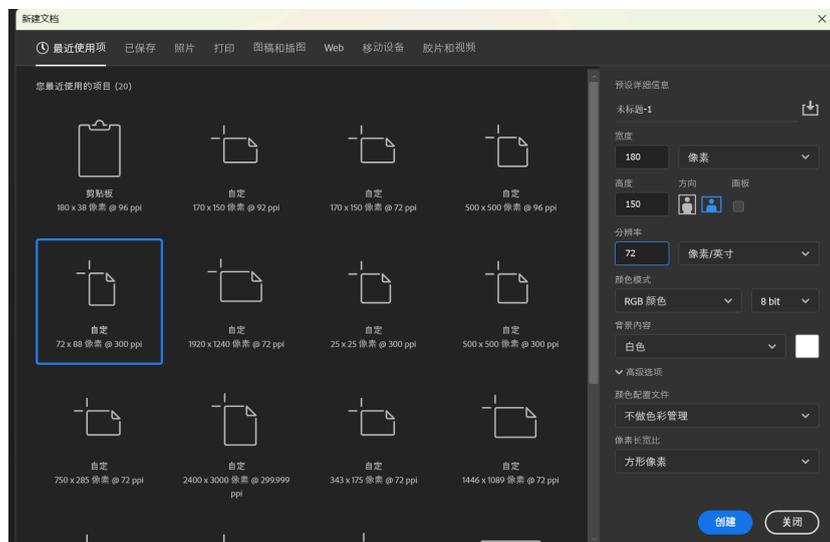

图 6 创建画布，分辨率一般设置为72像素

Step 2: Placing the Elements

Now, we need to find some material to serve as the main part of the icon. I've chosen Mr. **Zhang Weiwei** (yes, him again), who is very

popular in the Chinese community, as the instructor for this icon tutorial – I will demonstrate the complete steps for creating a TFR-style national focus icon together with him.

Figure 7: We meet again, and it's still the same... I like you.

In Photoshop, we can quickly select objects using the Object Selection Tool or the Select Subject tool. For overly complex subjects, it may be necessary to manually select the object using the Lasso Tool.
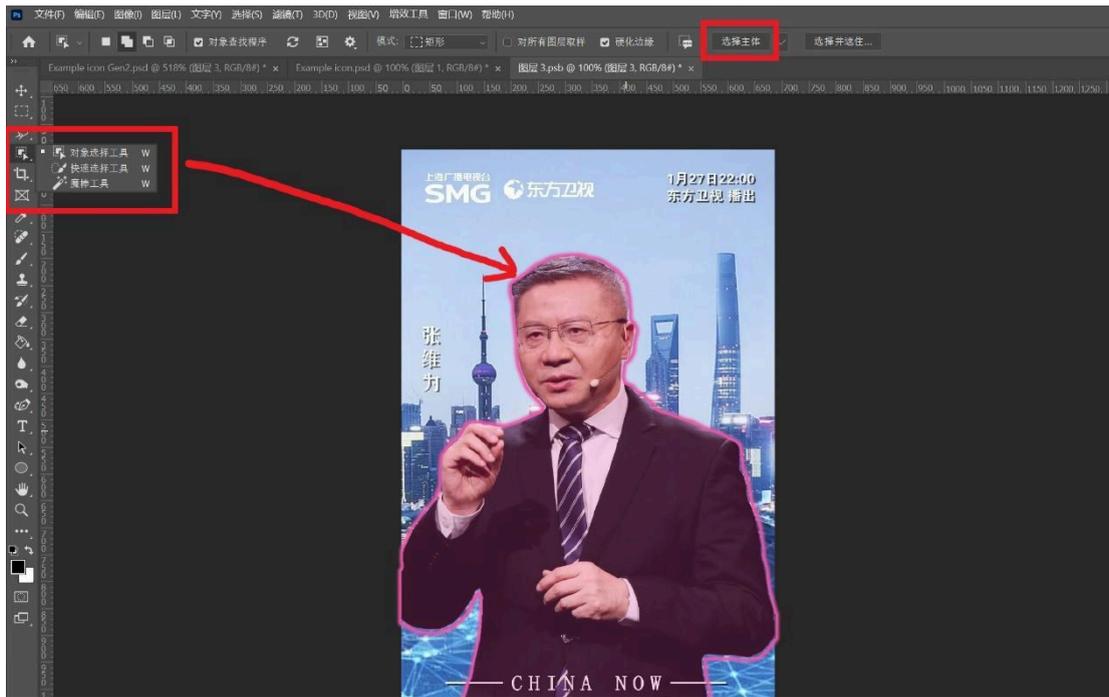
Figure 8: Koko Space is here! (Translator's Note: That is way too small for me to translate. My apologies)

It can be noticed that Zhang Weiwei's right elbow in the original image appears to have been cropped. In this case, the missing part can be easily filled in using a brush tool.

Figure 9

Then, by cropping out the unnecessary parts, the extracted image can be placed onto the main canvas. After placing it on the canvas, **the image should be converted into a smart object**, and then

scaled to avoid blurring due to subsequent scaling.

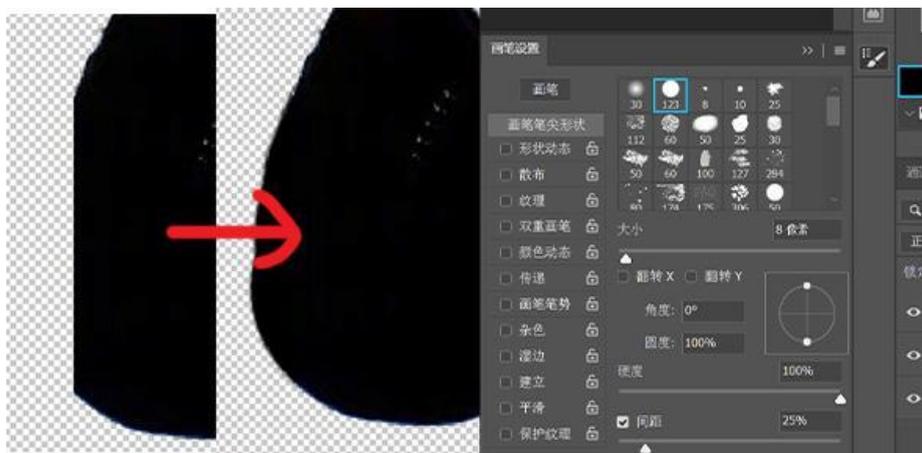If you are concerned that a large number of large-sized smart objects will occupy too much computer storage space, you can try scaling the image to a size slightly larger than the canvas before converting it into a smart object. This ensures sufficient clarity for the icon while minimizing storage space usage.
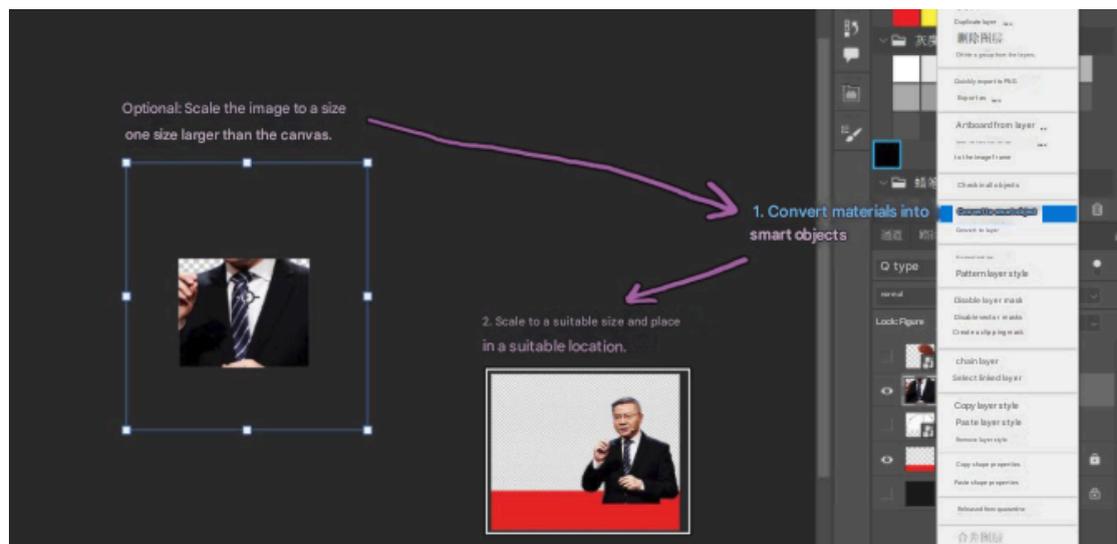

Figure 10 shows the steps.

Before beginning further editing, **please ensure that the assets remain as smart objects**. This will greatly facilitate subsequent adjustments and prevent changes in icon clarity due to scaling.

Step 3: Adding Effects

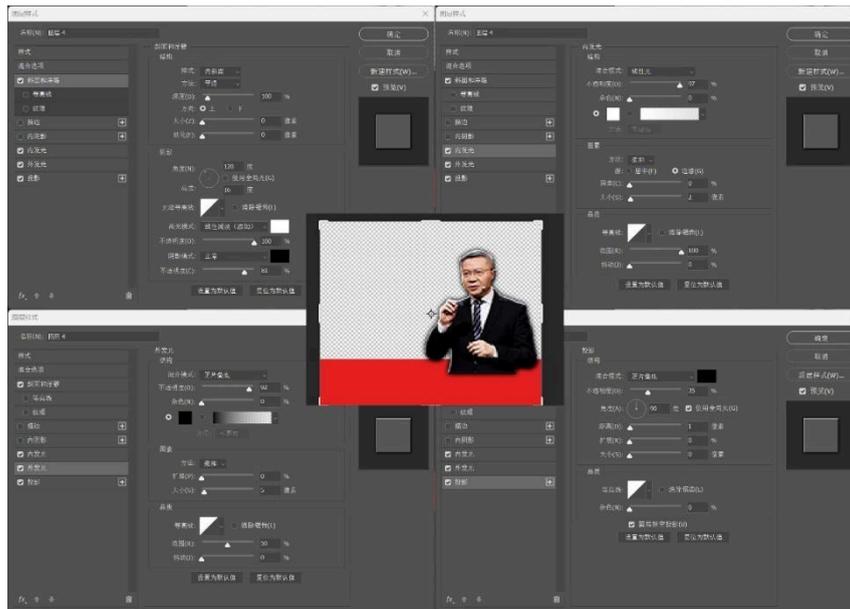Now, let's add a layer style to Mr. Wei Wei.

Figure 11: The angle of the bevel and relief should be adjusted according to the actual situation and light source position; some settings are based on AhNeo's configuration.

Please note that the layer style settings shown are for reference only. If you find that these settings are no longer suitable when creating other icons or editing other images, you can adjust the values and add new layer styles to make your icons more visually appealing.

Additionally, you can try using other layer styles to make the icon's colors more vibrant and lively. At this point, the editing of this image is basically complete... or is it?

It can be observed that after the above editing, the image still exhibits a paper or plastic sheet texture. Therefore, we need to further adjust the material using Camera Raw.

Camera Raw is located in the "Filter" dropdown menu at the top of the Photoshop window. Once opened, you can adjust various values to modify the image's texture, primarily **exposure, contrast,**

texture, clarity, vibrance, and saturation. Other settings can be adjusted as needed.

Figure 12: The numerical values can be adjusted as needed and do not need to be copied exactly.

Subsequently, we can also create a new layer for the image element by right-clicking the layer menu and selecting "Create Layer Style via Copy." Then, we can individually extract Mr. Wei's arm within the smart object, separating it into two layers for individual editing to enhance the sense of depth.

Note: Please use layering judiciously. Excessive layering may lead to software lag and significant storage space consumption, and severely impact future adjustments. If the desired effect can be achieved without layering, or if the effect of layering is not significant, then there is no need for layering.

After a series of adjustments, Mr. Wei finally became more lively/vibrant.

Finally, we group these separated layers together using the ▣ "Create New Group" option in the lower right corner of the interface. Then, we create a ▣ layer mask for the newly created group and use a low-hardness brush to soften the straight edges of the image elements. By using a layer mask to paint over the ▣ group, we can eliminate unwanted parts and blur the edges, preventing the blurred edges from turning black or white due to the influence of layer styles.

Figure 13

The icons should not have harsh, abruptly cropped straight edges like the example shown below. The edges should appear soft and smooth, and the design shouldn't be overly complex or time-consuming; a moderate level of detail is sufficient.

Figure 14: A negative example. Thanks to @oErmOS for providing it.

Then, you can save the PSD file by going to File > Save. After completing each part of the process, you should save the file promptly to prevent losing your progress due to unexpected events.

Step 4: Completing the Composition

Okay, now we've successfully placed Mr. Zhang on the canvas, but we can't just leave him all alone there, can we?

As a veteran of this tutorial series, I've decided to have Zhang Weiwei become part of this icon as an artist.

In other words...

Figure 15 Hmm... the apron and beret images are from Taobao – furniture and clothing materials can be obtained there.

So the question is, how can we get Zhang Weiwei to "wear" this outfit?

Figure 16

It's noticeable that this apron isn't very fitting. At this point, we
can enter the free transform mode, hold down the Ctrl key, and drag
the four corners and four sides to adjust the perspective of the image
until it fits. Then, use a layer mask to erase the unnecessary parts.
Afterward, adjust the position and size of the other elements until
they are roughly in the correct place.

Figure 17

Figure 18

Next, before finalizing the overall composition of the icon, we can try incorporating the golden ratio into the creative process to help guide the compositional design.
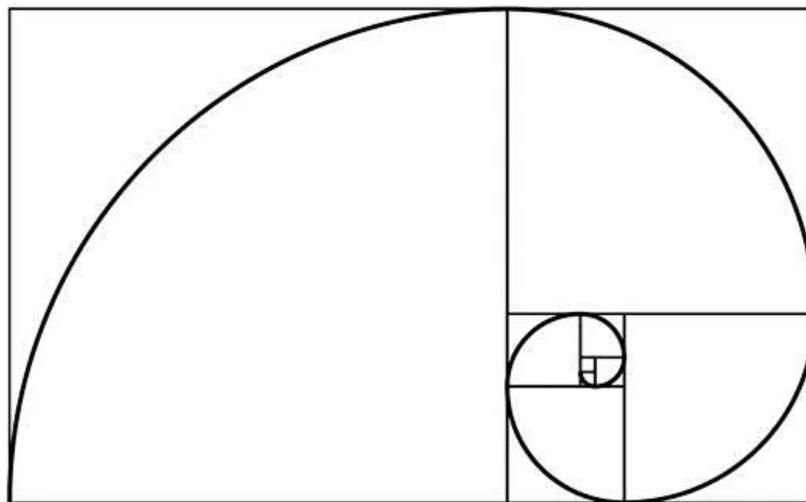

Figure 19

Using this method, we can transform complex icon compositions into simple fill-in-the-blank exercises. By simply collecting the necessary assets and placing them into the three designated slots on the canvas, the composition can be completed quickly. However, it's important to note that during this "filling in" process, attention must

still be paid to the spatial relationships and overlapping of the assets to avoid them being separated and resulting in a loose or disjointed icon. Furthermore, try to ensure that the icon largely fills the available space on the canvas, avoiding large gaps exceeding 1/8 of the total area. This will ensure that the icon appears consistent in size when implemented in the game.
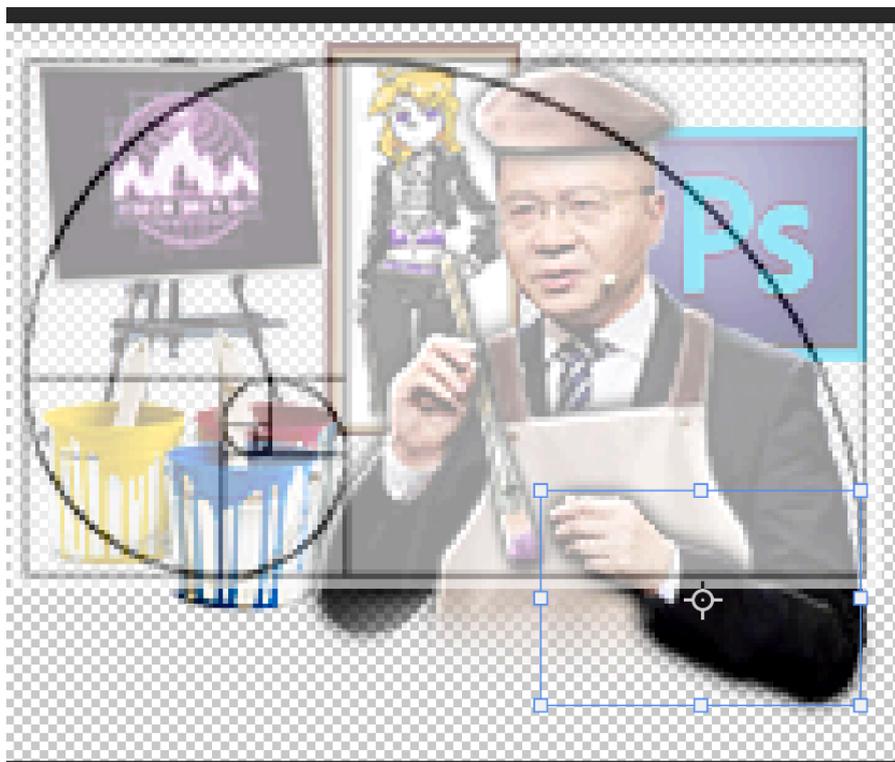

Figure 20: The TFR-chan illustration is from @PISXIV9966. Thanks to @Liu1571498750 and @orangestar17 for their help.

By following the image editing steps described above (or you can simply right-click the layer, copy the layer style, and paste the layer style), we can process the remaining materials in the same way and then save the file.

Figure 21: The TFR character illustration is from @PISXIV9966, and the apron and beret are from

Taobao.

(Yes, Taobao. You can find furniture and clothing materials there.)

This icon is nearing completion, but it still has some serious problems: it lacks depth and dimensionality overall, and is far from being a satisfactory TFR icon. Further adjustments are needed to complete this icon.

Step 5: Final Adjustments

First, we can manually draw shadows on the parts of each element that are obscured by other elements using a black brush to enhance their sense of depth.

Figure 22: Shadows can be added appropriately to areas that are backlit, far from the light source, inherently dark, or obscured by other layers.

The previous layer styles and Camera Raw settings can also be further adjusted.

Subsequently, we can create ⬛ adjustment layers. After placing all the icon layers into the same group, you can apply a clipping mask to the group to make post-production adjustments to the overall effect of the icon. Next, I will briefly introduce several commonly used adjustment layers:

Hue/Saturation can be used to adjust the color and saturation of icons, and can also adjust the saturation and hue of a specific color individually. Vibrance adjusts the overall saturation and natural saturation of the icon.

Brightness/Contrast adjustments can modify the overall brightness and contrast of a layer, addressing issues such as icons being too bright or too dark, or having low contrast.

Gradient mapping allows you to color the entire icon based on its

brightness, mapping different brightness levels to different colors (typically mapping the left side to darker areas and the right side to brighter areas), thereby achieving color adjustment and special effects. The specific gradient colors and layer blending modes can be adjusted according to the actual situation.

Color lookup allows you to quickly adjust the tone and style of an image. By using preset color lookup tables (LUTs), you can add different color effects to icons. You can obtain color lookup tables from various graphic design communities.

Color balancing allows you to adjust the colors of highlights, midtones, and shadows in an icon separately to correct color imperfections or create specific color effects.

Using adjustment layers avoids the need to individually adjust each layer's elements to modify the icon's style and tone, significantly reducing post-production work. For more information on adjustment layers, you can search for related tutorials on various video websites.

Figure 23: The previous layer styles and Camera Raw settings can be further adjusted.
The hat was colored using a Color Overlay – Hue blending mode.

New graphic designers often encounter issues during icon creation where assets and effects extend beyond the canvas boundaries, resulting in cropping at the edges, as shown in the background image of the party flag below.

To avoid this, you can create a pure black and a pure white layer at the bottom of the layer list to check if any glow effects or assets extend beyond the canvas boundaries, ensuring that no assets or effects are cropped by the canvas edges.

Figure 24: A negative example, thanks to @FCC for providing it.

And just like that, a standard TFR-style icon is complete. Save the PSD file and export the icon as a PNG image, then hand it over to your beloved developer to integrate it into the project.

Figure 25: It's finished... or is it?

2. Advanced Editing Techniques:

One of the biggest characteristics of the new generation of TFR icons is that they extensively utilize new processing techniques to optimize the overall visual appearance of the icons.

It's important to note that the **purpose** of advanced processing **is to optimize the overall appearance of the icon**; in other words, these processes are **not** necessary steps in creating TFR icons. If excessive glare, over-smoothing, or smoke effects actually reduce the icon's legibility and make the image look messy and cluttered, then something has gone off track. Furthermore, I recommend that you begin learning the content of this chapter only after mastering the basic skills and fundamental Photoshop operations and techniques mentioned above. (Translator's Note: Bondrewd is talking about 1. Basic Editing Techniques) ~~Don't expect to achieve everything overnight or try to learn everything at once.~~

In this chapter, I will start with a simple neon effect and introduce some advanced material processing methods. The following steps do not need to be performed in any particular order; you can follow your own preferences or whatever your situation calls for.

Neon Effects

If we want to transform the TFR logo on the canvas into a neon-effect layer, we can add the following layer styles as shown in the image below:
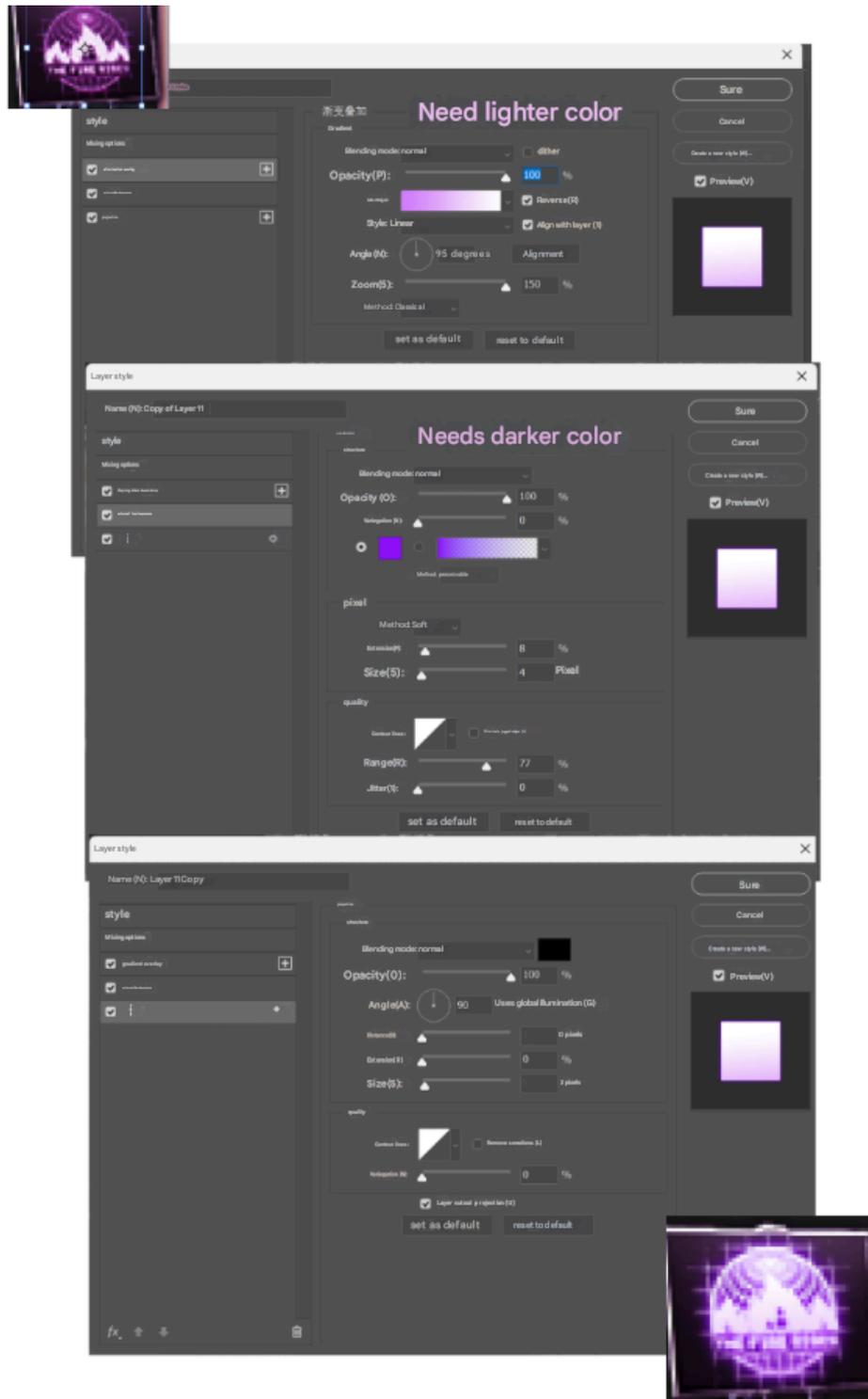

Figure 26: The colors can be freely combined, but the inner color must be lighter than the outer

Subsequently, the layers can be placed into a group, and a gradient overlay with a hue/color mode can be added again to create a gradient neon effect.
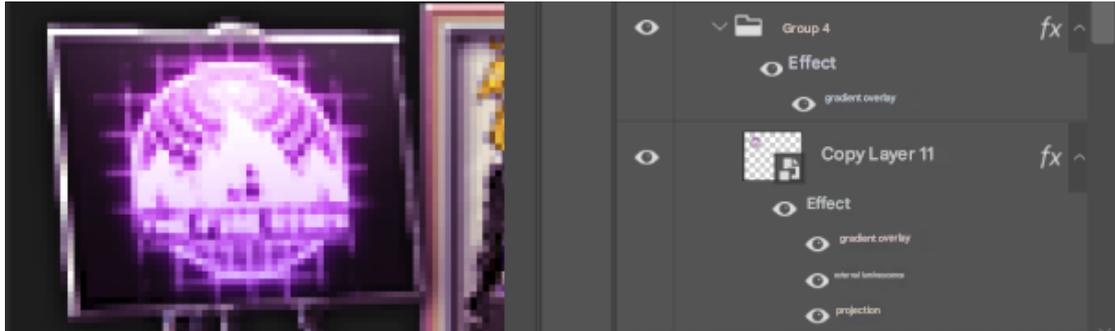

Figure 27

Finally, add the lighting effects according to the following tutorial to complete the neon light effect, and then save the file.
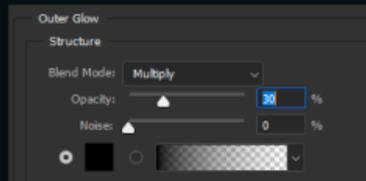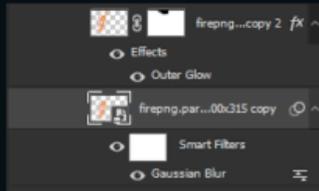
Figure 28: Is always worth revisiting; thanks to Trun for providing the tutorial.

Figure 29

Flame Effects

The process for creating the flame effect is similar, with some overlapping techniques, and both methods utilize light processing with the `trun` function.

First, drag and drop the flame asset onto the canvas. Since we want to create purple flames, we need to use color overlay – specifically, hue coloring. This step can be omitted for normal orange flames.

Figure 30

Duplicate the layer, change the blending mode to Screen, add a filter—Blur—Gaussian Blur, and place it below the original layer.

Figure 31

Duplicate the layer and move it to the top of all the assets. Change the blending mode to Linear Dodge (Add) (you can also use Screen or Hard Light depending on the situation). You can also add a blur gallery effect—Path Blur—to simulate the effect of rising flames. Adjust the values and path settings as needed. The previous neon effect can also be enhanced with trailing or motion blur effects using the same method.

Figure 32

Use a layer mask and a soft black brush to paint over the unnecessary parts.

Figure 33

Subsequently, further adjustments can be made as needed.

Figure 34

Finished. Save the file. The above steps can be adjusted according to your specific needs; everything depends on the final result you want to achieve.

Figure 35

Simple Cloud and Fog Effects

Drag and drop the cloud and fog assets to the appropriate position on the canvas, erase any unnecessary parts, and then adjust the opacity as needed.

Figure 36

Next, duplicate the layer and add a Gaussian blur, then drag the duplicated layer below the original layer. You can then place it in a layer group, make minor adjustments using a clipping mask, save the file, and you're done. You can also try adding a path blur to make it look more dynamic.

Figure 37

Figure 38

Rim Lighting

Hold down the Ctrl key and left-click on the layer with the mouse to load the layer selection (as shown in the image).

Figure 39

Then, in the top menu bar, click "Select" > "Modify" > "Feather," and set the feather radius to 4 pixels. Create a new layer above the image, set the layer blending mode to Linear Dodge (Add), and then use a brush with 0 hardness and 50-70% opacity to paint along the edges of the selection with a color corresponding to the desired

lighting effect.

Figure 40: Doesn't require much paint; just lightly dab some paint in the areas where the light

effect is needed.

Then, the same method was used to process the other backlight materials, the files were saved, and the process was complete.

Figure 41

Manually-added Shadows and Highlights

When faced with materials that lack depth and appear too flat (or are inherently two-dimensional), or when the light and shadow areas of the material don't match the light source position, you can

try manually painting in highlights and shadows after adjusting the image in Camera Raw.

It's important to note that you don't need to redraw the original TFR-style material into a "metal sculpture" (heavily stylized look with strong bevels, deep shadows, and rigid highlights). You simply need to use a black or white brush with 30% opacity and 0 hardness to paint shadows in areas that are backlit, away from the light source, inherently dark, in clothing folds, or where other layers or parts of the material itself are obscuring the area. Paint highlights in areas illuminated by the light source, areas that are inherently brighter, or protruding areas. You can also add outlines to the edges of different parts of the material to achieve a more three-dimensional effect compared to the original material. If the edges of the highlights and shadows are too harsh, you can use the blur tool to soften them.

This step can eliminate some of the layering steps; it's recommended to choose the method that is relatively more efficient based on your preferences. After simply applying the changes, save the file and export the icon as a PNG image.

Figure 42: This can be drawn simply; it doesn't need to be too complex.

Cyan represents the shadows, and yellow represents the highlights.
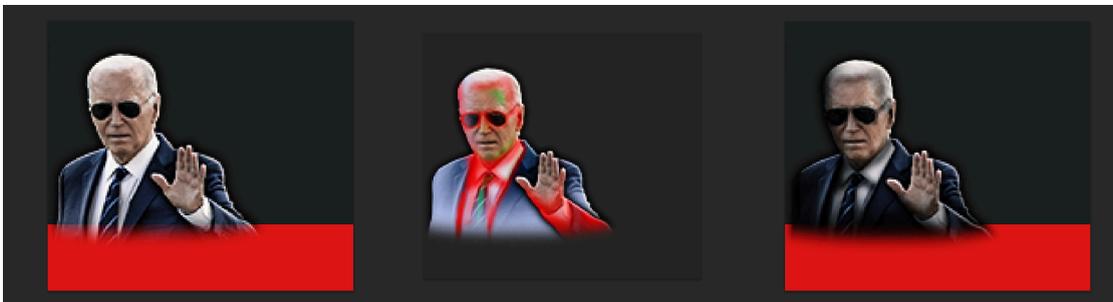
Figure 43: Another example from ahneo.

Light blue represents stronger, larger shadows, red represents finer shadows, and green

represents highlights in overlay/screen blending mode.

Still use a black or white brush with 30% opacity and 0% hardness for drawing.

Figure 44: Here's a comparison. In most cases, if a problem can be solved using Camera Raw, it's

best to avoid manually adjusting highlights and shadows.

As a reminder, you should avoid spending too much time and
effort on this step. Not every part mentioned above needs to be
drawn, and you don't need to draw every single element. If Camera

Raw can achieve a good result, then there's no need to spend excessive time on this step. Finally... remember to save frequently while drawing highlights and shadows.

Flag Editing

In this section, I will briefly explain how to edit flags. Many thanks to AhNeo for his guidance in handling this part and writing the tutorial.

First, place the flag image you want to edit onto the icon canvas and add basic layer effects. You'll notice that the flag appears very flat at this point, like a piece of cardboard with a flag pattern printed on it.

Figure 45

Next, use a black brush (75% opacity, 20% flow; these settings can be adjusted as needed) to color the darker areas. Then, switch to a white brush with the same settings and apply color to the unpainted areas and the raised parts of the folds. Perfection is not necessary at this stage, as the main goal is to establish the basic light

and shadow relationships.

Figure 46: Painted with a black brush.

Figure 47: Used a white brush.

You can then try adding some extra shadows and highlights, and add some larger, softer shadows below the flag or in the backlit areas to give the flag more depth. You can also use blurring to refine some of the details.

Finally, adjust the brightness, contrast, and saturation settings as

needed, then save the file and proceed with other processing steps.

Figure 48

(To be continued)

3. Other Related Icon Designs:

在学会国策图标创作后，当你再上手去制作剩下的其他类型图标时，一般情况下都不会遇到太多困难，只需要在限定画布中完成创作即可。不过针对不同类型的图标，仍有一些需要注意的事情，接下来我将分别进行讲述。

图 49

(1). National Spirit

Typically, national spirit icons need to be created on a 68*68 pixel canvas. Graphic designers must clearly express the theme of a national spirit within this limited space. The national spirit icon should fill the entire canvas as much as possible, while also maintaining a consistent visual style with other national spirit icons, as shown in the image below:

Figure 50: Praising Neru

Aside from this, there are no significant differences between the production process of national spirit and national focus icons; the only requirement is to ensure that the icons clearly convey their themes. Regional modifiers are very similar to national spirits, so we won't go into further detail here.

(2). Ideology

Ideological icons, compared to national policy icons, will feature more pronounced contrast and metallic textures, ensuring that they can express the maximum characteristics of an ideology or political system on a 68*68 pixel canvas.

Figure 51

As shown in the image, TFR's sub-ideology icons typically do not use excessive neon or flame effects; the overall texture resembles a badge, giving it a more three-dimensional and layered appearance. In terms of color scheme, the gradients and colors of the ideology icons are also richer. AhNeo has provided a PSD file of his ideology icon, which you can find in the quick start package.

(3). Balance of Power

The production process for power balance icons is very similar to that of national policy icons. The only thing to note is that power balance icons are usually positioned at opposite ends, so the two icons should complement each other as much as possible. You may need to incorporate some clever design elements into the composition.

(4). Texticon / Small Icons

To clearly represent things like political parties, political forces, specific resources, military-industrial organizations, or other mechanisms on a tiny canvas smaller than 50*50 pixels, you need to try to achieve the best possible effect with the fewest elements, avoiding too much clutter that would result in an indistinguishable

mess.

4. Precautions

Here, I will compile some common problems and misconceptions I've encountered during past graphic design exchanges and learning sessions, along with relevant precautions, to help new graphic designers avoid common pitfalls during their learning process.

(1). Ensuring consistency and harmony in color scheme and style

When creating icons for a national focus tree, you need to ensure that your icons match the overall color scheme and style of the entire focus tree, maintaining a consistent and harmonious appearance. A national focus tree primarily using red should not have green icons, and vice versa.

(2). Balancing efficiency and quality

Many graphic designers try to pour as much effort as possible into each icon to ensure it's perfectly presented to the players. While striving for excellence is commendable, every graphic designer needs to understand that they might spend hours on a single icon, but players won't. Players won't be scrutinizing every tiny detail and nuance of your icons with a magnifying glass, so there's no need to spend excessive time creating flawless icons. What most mods truly

need is a large number of usable icons.

(3). Avoiding Excessive Editing

Whether adding lighting effects or drawing highlights and shadows, the purpose of these advanced techniques is to present players with a clear and recognizable icon that effectively conveys its meaning. Players should be able to understand the icon's meaning at a glance. If the edited icon becomes blurry or difficult to discern, then a new approach needs to be considered, or the icon should be abandoned altogether.

(4). All writings in the world are essentially plagiarized. (Translator's Note: AKA "Inspiration")

When you're lacking creative ideas and don't know where to start, you can try referencing the composition, material selection, and processing techniques of other excellent works. While studying other people's work, try to understand "why the creator did it this way," thereby absorbing and internalizing mature ideas from other designers and overcoming creative blocks.

(5). Experiment and innovate more

There is no single correct approach to creative work. While mastering fundamental skills and ensuring the quality of the final product are essential, you can and should experiment with new techniques. Innovations in composition and editing can inject new

vitality into community-based fan art creation.

(6). Other Precautions

- If you want to create a new icon based on one you've made before, you should immediately save the project file with a new name in a suitable location to avoid overwriting the old icon;

- It is recommended to try using reliable third-party software to block Photoshop's network connection, to avoid being prompted by Adobe to purchase a genuine copy of Photoshop; (Translator's note: If you aren't up to doing this, just something like photopea)

- The reason Photoshop might not be displaying the brush cursor is that you have Caps Lock turned on.

- In the Edit > Preferences > Scratch Disks section, you can set the scratch disk to a different drive to avoid occupying space on the system drive.
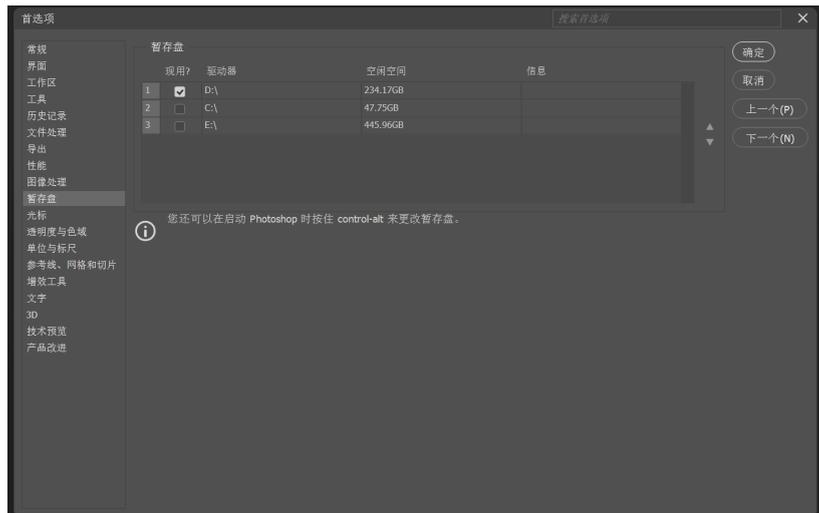
Figure 52

- It's okay to incorporate pop culture references into the icons, but don't make them offensive or inappropriate.

- Just a reminder again, remember to save your work frequently.

5. Conclusion

Thank you for reading this tutorial. We hope you've learned how to create a simple TFR-style icon. However, regardless of the style or type of icon, mastering icon creation requires long-term practice and experience. When you feel you've gained sufficient skills, consider joining the TFR development team or other community projects to contribute to the growing flame of creativity—and simultaneously hone your skills to create even higher-quality works.

Appendix

Collection of useful websites and tools

Here I have compiled some commonly used tool websites. Due to the nature of some websites, they may have become unavailable due to copyright or other issues by the time you read this tutorial. Please understand.

I will specifically mark those that require a VPN to access in mainland China.

Images

1 https://www.miankoutupian.com/

Free PNG Images website, containing a large collection of royalty-free PNG images.

2 https://www.pngegg.com/

Another website for PNG image resources (requires a VPN/proxy).

3 https://www.the-blueprints.com/

Includes a large amount of side-view images (direct connection speed is slow, using a VPN is recommended).

4 https://www.irasutoya.com/?m=1

Japanese free stock image websites (requires a VPN/proxy).

5 https://krikienoid.github.io/flagwaver/

Generate a waving flag; you can change the flag and adjust the wind speed and direction settings. Screenshots can be taken (requires a VPN).

6 https://www.alamy.com/

https://downpic.cc/alamy/

Download images from Alamy without watermarks.

(Direct connection speed is slow; using a VPN is recommended.)

7 https://ziyouziti.com/

https://zfont.cn/

https://www.fonts.net.cn/

Free font websites

8 https://www.doubao.com/

Doubao is a Chinese AI that can generate images, and its use should comply with Chinese cultural, ethical, and legal restrictions.

https://gemini.google.com/

Gemini, an AI from the United States, should be used in accordance with American cultural, ethical, and legal restrictions. (VPN access may be required.)

This seems to imply you'll face restrictions on both sides of the Pacific simultaneously, but consider it from a different perspective: you can use Chinese AI to

circumvent restrictions from the US, and American AI to circumvent restrictions from China, thus enjoying the benefits of technological advancements on both sides of the Pacific. This applies not only to Doubao and Gemini, but also to other large AI models from China and the US.

Of course, if you have a sufficient budget, using locally deployed AI image generation models can avoid all of these problems.

9   https://bylo.ai/

Free GPT-4o AI image generation website (requires a VPN/proxy).

10   https://lmarena.ai/

Free GPT/Gemini image generation, available without logging in. Find it in the menu bar below ⊞ ⊕ ⊠ ‹› and select the option ⊠ for image generation (requires a VPN/proxy).

Editing tools

1   https://dewatermark.ai/

https://www.watermarkremover.io/

Watermark removed, excellent graphic design skills.

2   https://clipdrop.co/relight

Relighting (requires a VPN)

3   https://www.remove.bg/zh

     https://www.koukoutu.com/removebgtool/all

     Quick one-click image background removal

4   https://clipdrop.co/remove-background

     https://www.photoroom.com/tools/background-remover

     Quick one-click image background removal (requires a VPN/proxy).

5   https://myedit.online/cn

     A collection of AI tools (requires a VPN/proxy).

6   https://replicate.com/

     Portrait restoration

Production Methods

1   https://tfr.997779.xyz (Translator's note: The link is broken)

     TFR custom super event displayer, the font differs slightly from the official font.

2   https://flag-creator.com

     A website for creating fictional national flags, containing a large collection of flag designs.

Others

1   https://www.mediafire.com/

     A free file uploading and sharing website, used to

circumvent Discord's file size limits, but sometimes the download speed is slow (a VPN or proxy is required).

2   https://drive.google.com/

Google Drive is faster than MediaFire (a VPN or proxy is required).

Related tutorial links

Here I've compiled some links to GFX tutorials created by other graphic designers on Google Docs.

1. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QtOWUDKS4mQHEiSBlSmrULQQ5OwRWOG39yAzYeCwxG0/edit?usp=sharing

Portrait tutorial from Svblockz

2. https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vTrESXQFCpOSs7yRTWp4MTIJEnvv1vuBExBRsrvitO76l_aogKnHfXn4U11DWsSx-LIYvRiCQoIyi23/pub

Portrait tutorial from Idenn

3. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GiPZ05FinCLI6QwuoXuS0b9MpkX9dJFJBE14XJZxoxo/edit?tab=t.0

Portrait tutorial from Increditard

4. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gVivS972B90vBGxLrx0eBfyY7S9qQPwgds15yQhs0fQ/edit?usp=drivesdk

Icon tutorial from Rev