

# Aquarelle++ 2

## Tutorial

My last creation of a filter trying to emulate the look of an aquarelle painting comes from a long period of attempts, with up and down phases of positive or negative results.

### Preamble

Aquarelle was my starting point for painting, when I was a child, and I always considered difficult to achieve good results, so that very soon I moved towards oil and acrylic means. My last aquarelle was a reproduction of a Renoir painting, done “di prima”, without any preparation (pencil sketch) before as well as without any correction during and at the end of the process. I was satisfied with it and it remained my “canto del cigno”. I have to clarify in this preamble that I do not have in mind paintings created by painters who wanted to simulate oil while using aquarelle (there are many), because in those there is a kind of “loss of identity” in my personal opinion (at least for what is concerned a digital simulation).

### The filter

Aquarelle++2 is a complex (*but not “complicated”*) filter. Because of this complexity the base filter is accompanied by a “presets” management front-end.

The source image may be classified as belonging to one of seven types:

1. "portrait",
2. "flower",
3. "forest",
4. "animal",
5. "landscape",
6. "seascape",
7. "cityscape".

Otherwise is considered “generic”

## Steps of the filter (for technical curious)

- **creation of a new image** (*the original remains unchanged*)
- **preliminary adjustment of hue/saturation and brightness**
- **blur** (*to reduce fuzzy borders among the various colours*)
- **“quantize”, i.e. reduce the colours palette to a predefined number of colours**
- **apply a colour area borders “distress” procedure for portrait**
- **apply a colour area “gradient” procedure for all other types**
- **add an aquarelle gray texture(\*)**
- **use a copy of the original to re-gain the hue**
- **apply a border**
- **add a coloured aquarelle texture(\*)**
- **apply a gaussian blur to the borders for portrait**
- **add a “paper” texture(\*)**
- **apply a “curve”**
- **flatten the outcome (opt.)**

## Logic behind the process

When painting using aquarelle colours on a plain sheet of paper, each area which receives a “stroke” (*which is really not a stroke but a colour drop*) will have the borders with a more intense content of colour. This is simulated by a gradient application, but because this effect, while nice on the generality of cases, may cause a not nice look for portraits, for that kind of source image the colour dispersion is simulating by “distressing” then blurring the borders of each area.

Another typical aspect of an aquarelle painting on paper is the presence of some “stains”, “blots”.

This is achieved thru the use of overlaying patterns.

But I’m not using *Artificial Intelligence* to write my simple filters, therefore the process cannot foresee which is the best pattern to use for that specific

**image; I prepared a set for each kind of patterns (gray, coloured, ageing...) among which the user can choose.**

**What I did is to choose – in my personal opinion – usually a different texture for each different type of image (as defined above).**

**Also for the frame there is a variety of possibilities.**

**From these considerations, I inferred that a good help could have been the creations of “presets”, and that’s the reason for having a front-end application to choose among the presets.**

**Using directly the main filter the user can get every combination he likes, but once the user envisages the opportunity to “repeat” some choices then a preset can be defined and used/reused.**

## Practical hints

The filter(s) are released with predefined presets, one for each type of source image; each preset is a plain text file with a defined “syntax” (have a look inside), then a “set of presets” is grouping them and has a name which is referenced in the front-end filter (default is *MyPresets*).

The suggestion is to start practicing with the filter(s) using the default values. Then modifications to deal with the personal taste can be added, step by step. Below a sample of one preset and the presets folder provided.

file **Animal.txt**

**aquaPatt=grey-aqua-texture-4R.jpg**

**paperPatt=PaperSeamless\_Leaky\_Garret.jpg**

**aquaOverlay=aqua\_lay\_42-44\_animal.jpg**

**finalLook=6**

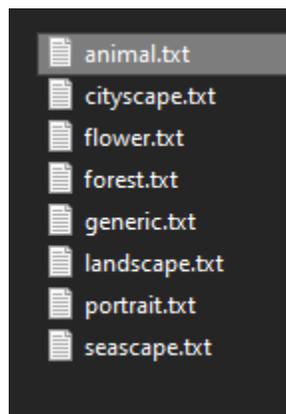
**whiteBorder=1**

**grungeBorder=FF\_Grunge\_H01\_20\_13.png**

the left part of the line is fixed (*the program looks for a line starting with paperPatt= for instance*)

the right part is the name of the texture (either one of those released together with the filter(s) or one created by the user); it has to be a texture “active” in Gimp.

Preset folder **MyPresets**



## STARTING THE FILTER(S)

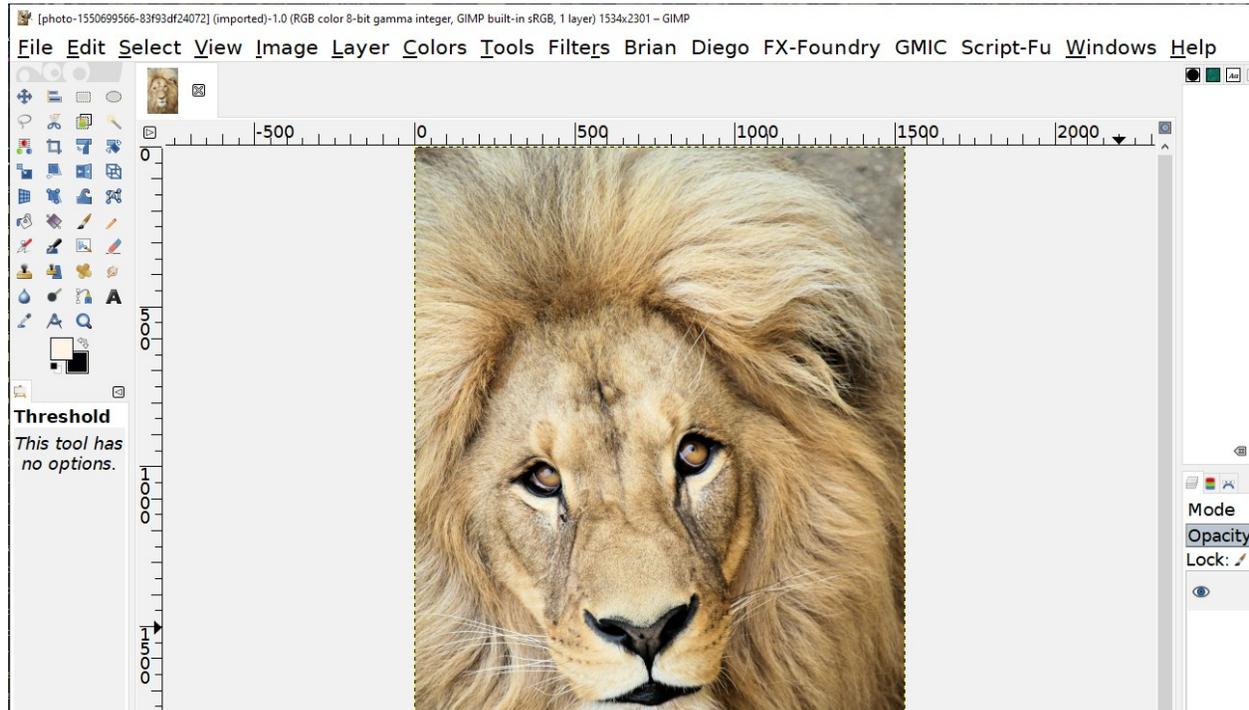
Let's consider the first start(s) of the filter(s).

We assume you have:

- installed both filters under plug-ins
- installed (and activated if you are using Ofnuts' AddonCollectionManager) all textures packs

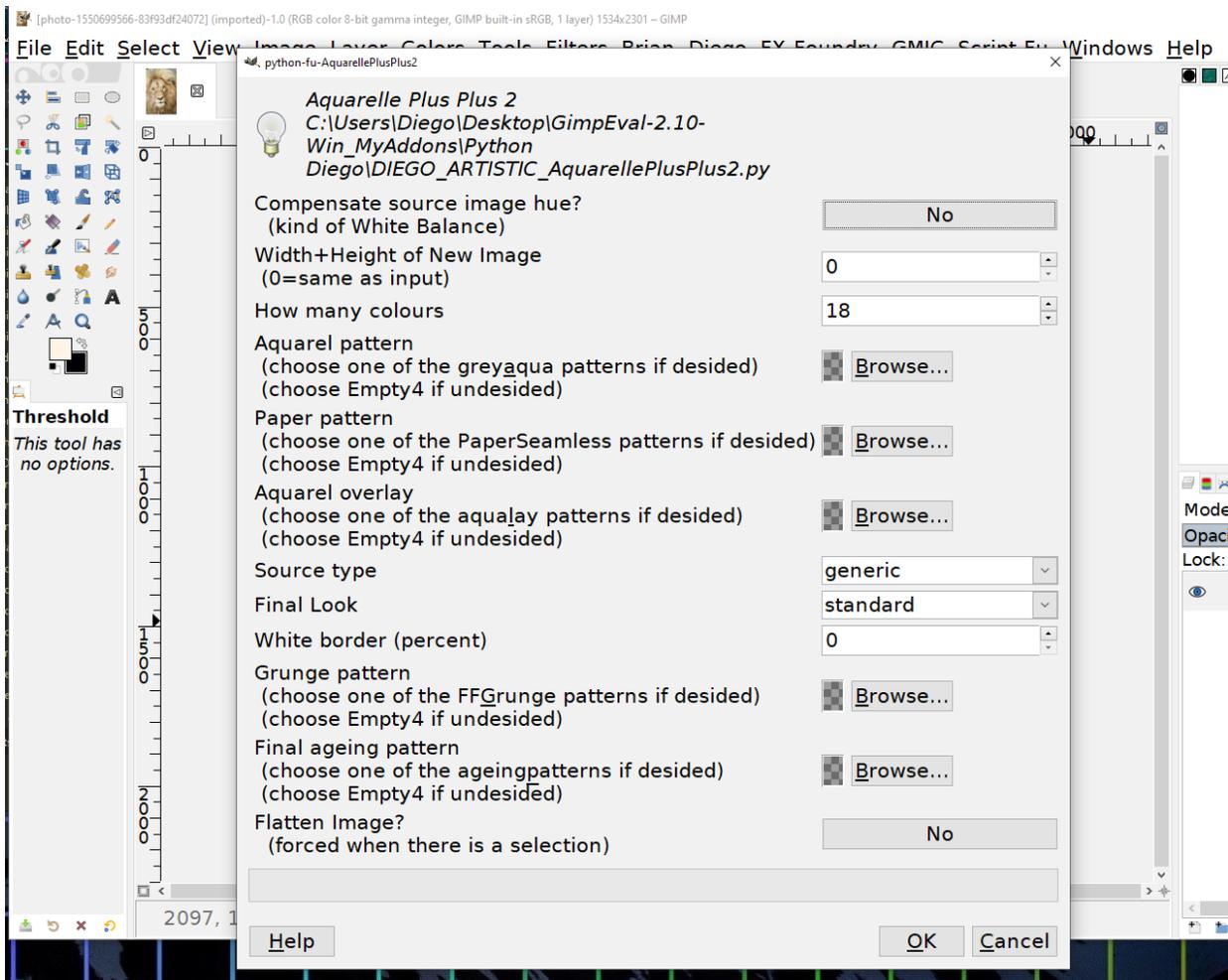
### Step1: OPEN AN IMAGE

In the tutorial we choose a Lion.



### Step2: START THE MAIN FILTER

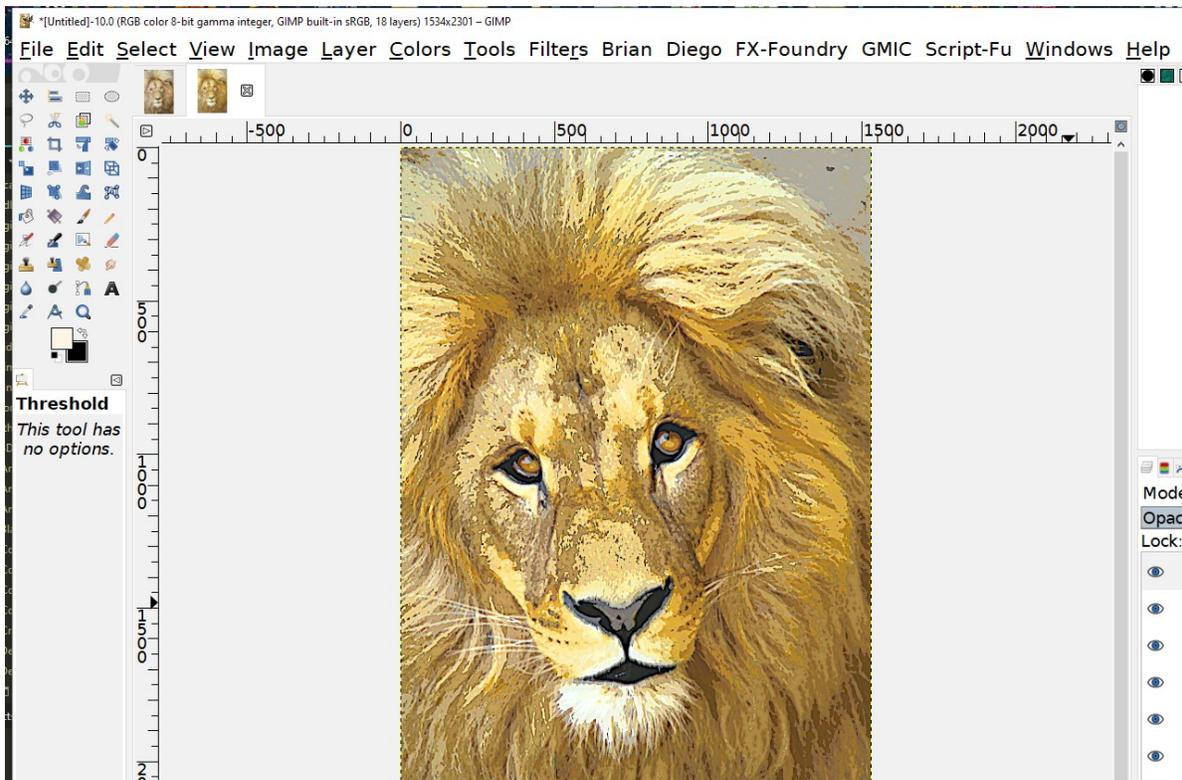
To initiate in the simplest way we start using the Main filter without the “help” of the Front-End Presets Manager



**As you can see, the filter starts without the addition of any optional texture. In any of the texture you find an empty pattern (BTW it's called Empty-4). Also, the image type is left to the default "generic".**

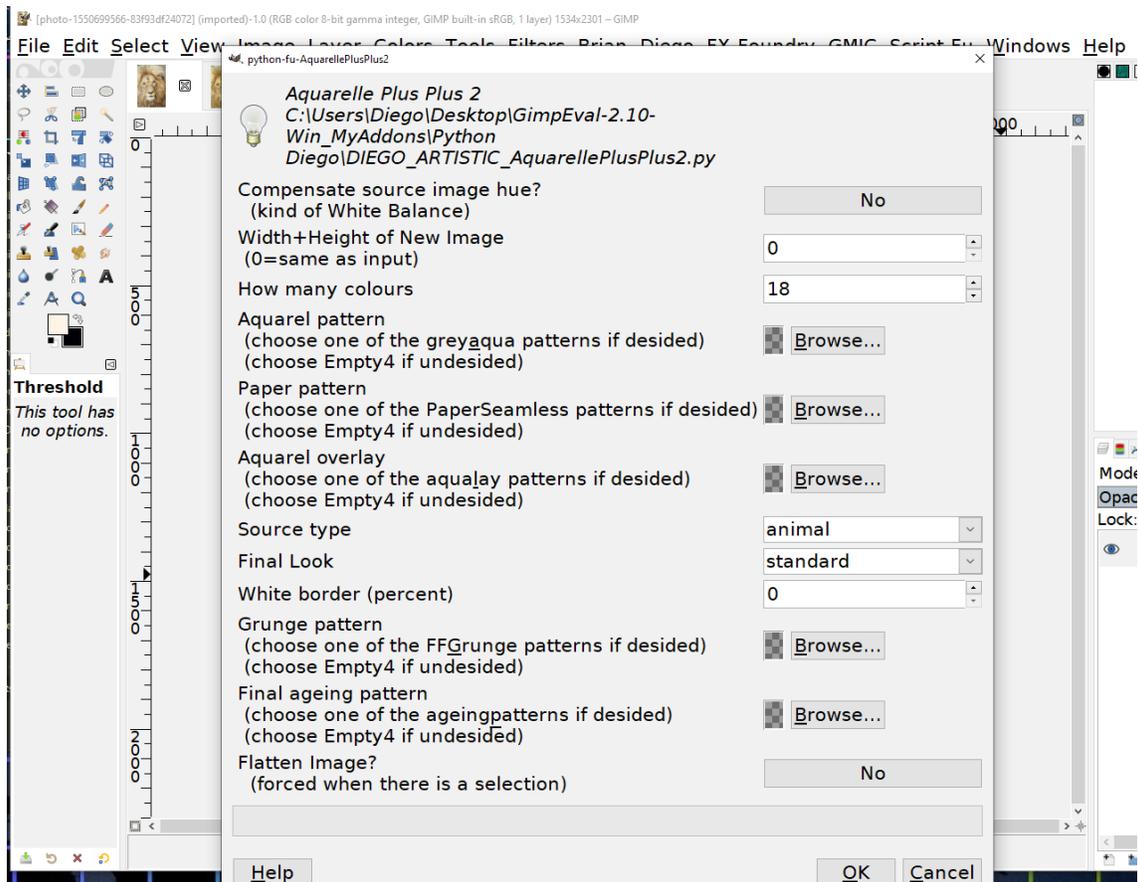
**Step3: LOOK AT THE STANDARD OUTCOME**

**This is the standard outcome you get.**

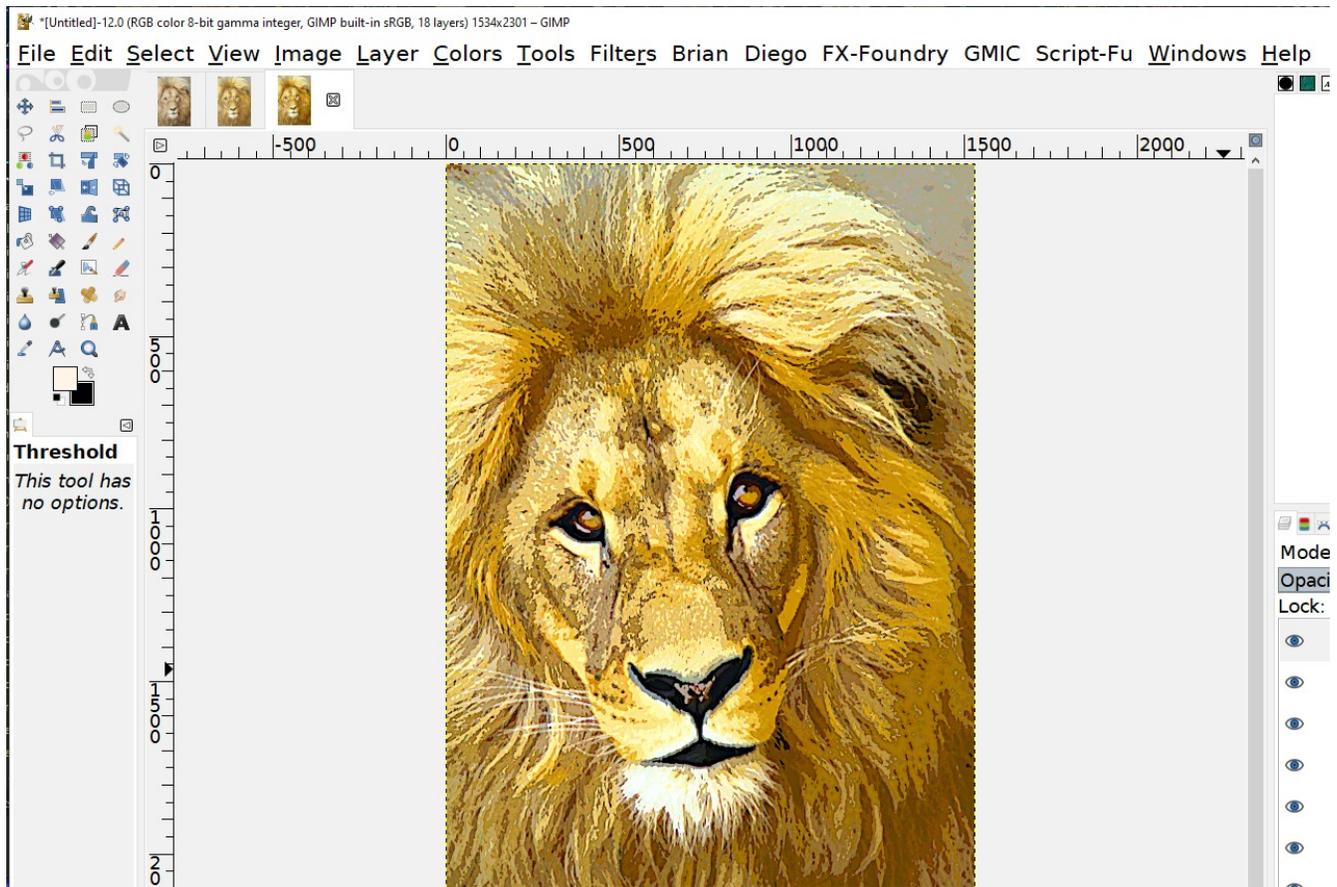


#### **Step4: ENTERING THE SOURCE TYPE**

**But you may also choose to enter the proper source type: `animal.jpg`**



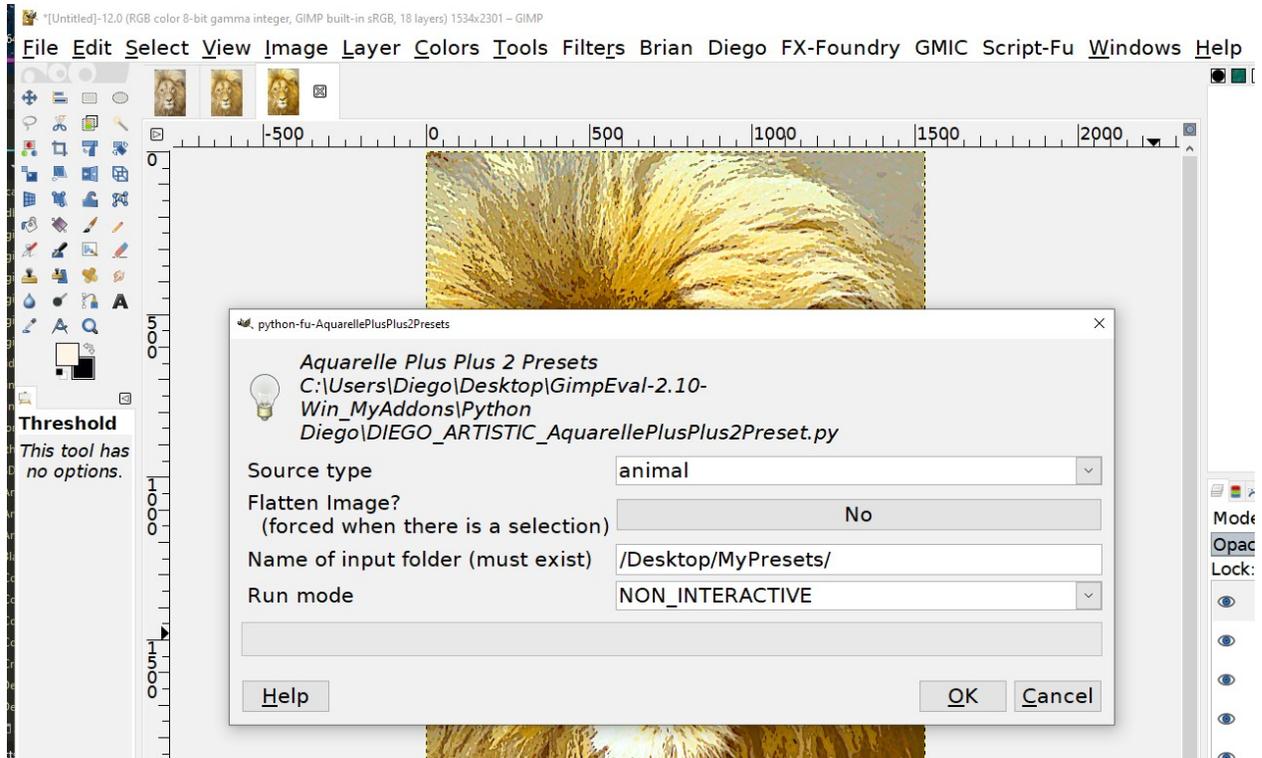
**Step5: LOOK AT THE STD OUTCOME FOR ANIMAL**



**As you see there are differences in the outcome, because the filter performs some steps specific to the image type.**

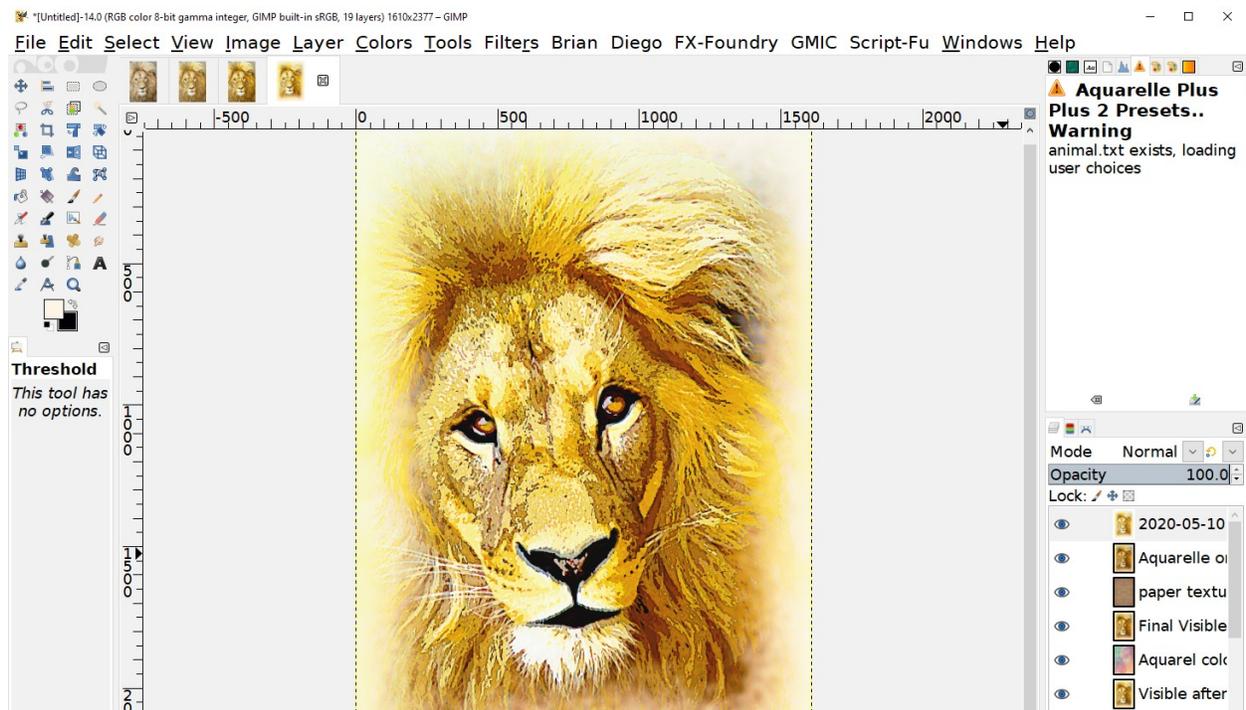
### **Step6: START THE FRONT-END PRESETS MANAGER**

**To complete your first contact with the filter(s), now choose to start the Front-End Presets Manager.**



**STEP7: Look at the result when choosing the specific Preset**

**Here the result.**



As you see there are again differences, the most visible maybe is the frame.

*Note: if you change the RUN\_MODE, the Main Filter is started instead of the Front-End*

## MY CONCLUSION

Dear users,

in spite of the fact that these filters are complex (i.e. created with many bits and bytes) the use can be extremely simple.

A) if you like the raw look, just use the Main Filter, simply specifying the source image type

B) if you like the full processed look, just use the Front-End Filter, again simply specifying the source image type