

Creating a layer mask from transparency

Creating a layer mask from Transparency

Photoshop CS5 or later allows you to create a layer mask from transparent data on a layer. In other words, it allows you to split the contents of an existing layer into color and transparency data. In the example shown here I was able to take an existing paint layer from the image shown in Figure 1 and split it into a layer that contained all the color and tone information, masked with a layer mask that defined the transparency of the previously applied brush strokes. From there I was able to edit the layer and layer mask separately and this allowed me to carry out fine-tuned adjustments to the painting layers that would not have been so easy to accomplish before I had separated the layer into these two components. Another suggestion would be to take a paint layer, split it into a layer and a layer mask and then blur the paint colors to blend them better while still preserving the transparency of the brush strokes.

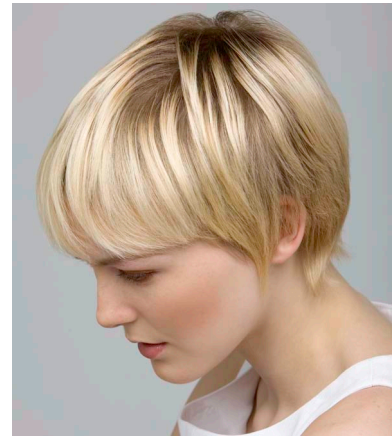
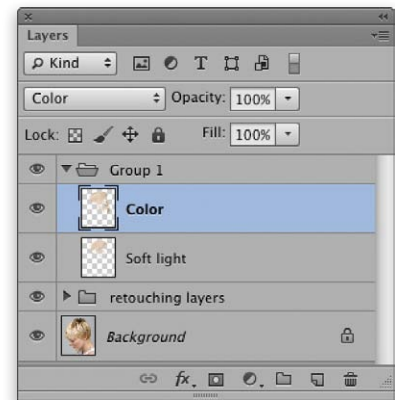
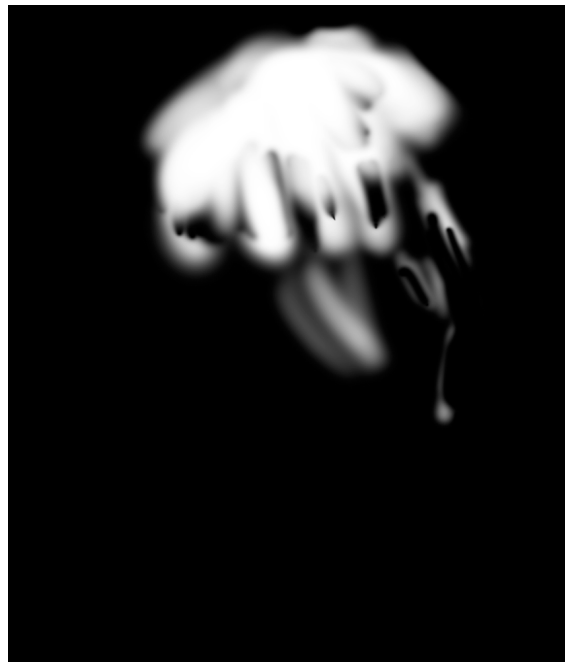
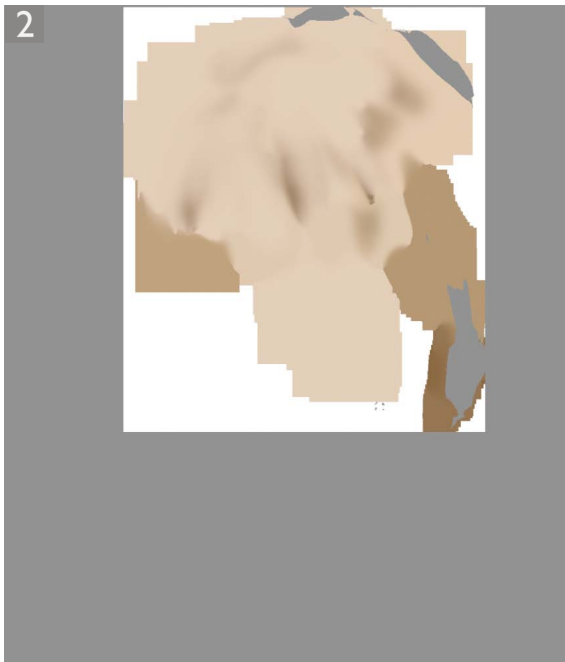


Figure 1 This shows a before shot of the photo that was edited here.



1 This shows a photograph taken from a step-by-step technique in which I applied two paint coloring layers to remove the dark roots from the model's hair. On one layer I painted with the layer set to Soft Light blend mode and on the other I painted with the layer set to the Color blend mode. I was able to do a fairly convincing job of removing the roots, but suppose I wanted to fine-tune the brush strokes? I selected the Color layer shown here, went to the Layer menu and chose Layer Mask ⇒ From transparency. I then did the same thing with the Soft Light layer.



2 Here you can see how the Soft Light layer pixel layer and layer mask looked when separated in this way and viewed independently. As you can see, the pixel layer looks rather surprising, but the combination of this plus the mask layer still produced the same end result. Next I was able to target the pixel layer and the mask independently and make fine-tuned edits to both to achieve a better overall look from the paint layers.