

Movie 4 (Chapter 7 extract)

Masking and Extractions

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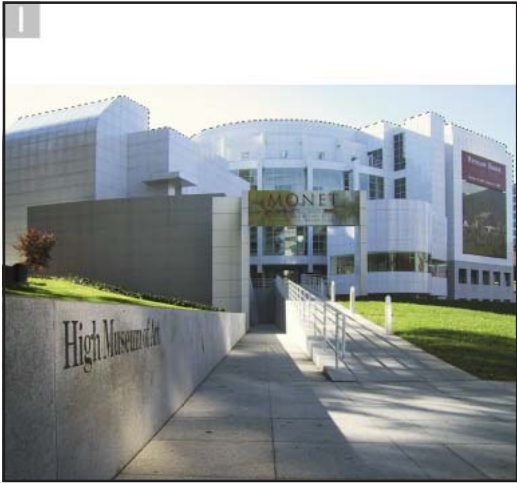
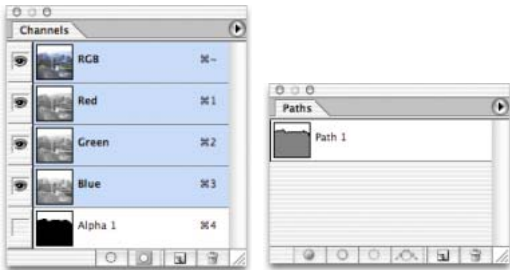
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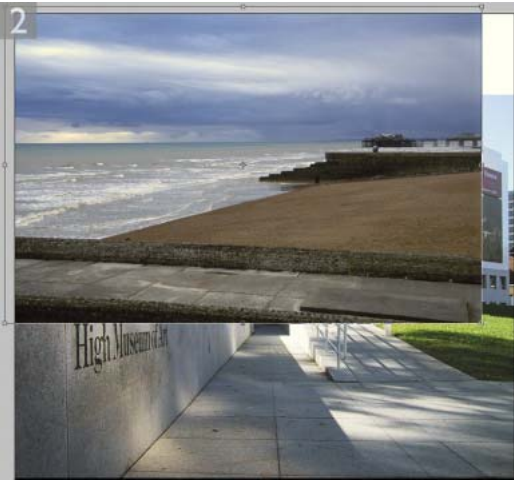
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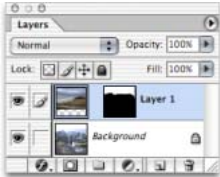
1 Here is a relatively straight forward montage task, where I wanted to add a new sky to the picture and have it extend above the building. Because the photograph was cropped quite tightly, I added extra white canvas to the top of the frame and began by making a selection of the sky area. A simple way of doing this is to select the magic wand tool, set the tolerance to around 12 and click in the sky area. You can see here an example of the selection saved as a new alpha channel mask. My preferred method was to draw a pen path of the building and save as a new path in the paths palette.



2 I then looked for an image with an interesting sky, opened it, selected the move tool and dragged the beach image across to the museum image, to add it as a new layer. This new layer needed to be scaled up slightly, so I chose Edit ⇒ Free Transform and dragged the corner handles so as to make the sky fit the width of the picture.



3 Once I had scaled the sky to match the dimensions of the master image, it was time to cut out the sky, which I did by loading the mask I had created earlier. I activated the pen path and hit **⌘ Enter** **ctrl Enter** to convert the path to a selection. Alternatively, I could have **⌘ ctrl** clicked the alpha channel I had pre-saved to reload the magic wand selection. I then clicked on the Add New Layer mask button at the bottom of the Layer palette to convert the selection to a layer mask, hiding all but the sky of Layer 1.



Extract command

The Image ⇒ Extract command is able to intelligently isolate an object from its background. While automatic masking can sometimes make light of tedious manual masking, it can rarely ever be 100% successful. However, the enhancements added since version 6.0 certainly do make the Extract command a very workable tool now, including the means to separate an object based on texture content as well as color. Before using the command, you may find it helpful first to duplicate the layer which is to be extracted. The active layer will be displayed in the Extract dialog window. You then define the outline of the object using the edge highlighter tool. This task is made easier using the Smart Highlighting option, which is like a magnetic lasso tool for the Extract command. Smart highlighting will work well on clearly defined edges and can be temporarily disabled by holding down the **⌘** **ctrl** key as you drag. You have to highlight the complete edge of the object first (excluding where the object may meet the edge boundaries) and then fill the interior with the Extract fill tool (clicking again with the fill tool will undo the fill). The Extract command eraser tool can be used to erase highlight edges and when using the edge highlighter tool, you can toggle between highlighting and erasing by holding down the **⌥** **alt** key. When the edges and interior fill are completed, click on the Preview button to see a preview of the extraction, or click OK to make an immediate extraction. The edge touchup tool can be used inside the preview window to add definition to weak edges – adding opacity where it sees transparency inside the edge and removing opacity outside of this edge. The cleanup tool will merely erase transparency from the extraction or restore erased transparency when you **⌥** **alt** drag.

As you define the highlight edge, wherever possible, you want to select a small size brush and aim to draw a narrow edge. Where there is overlap between the object you want to extract and the background, you need to draw a wider edge.

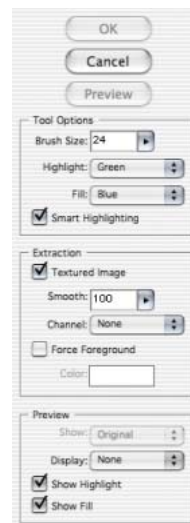


Figure 7.15 The Extract command options:

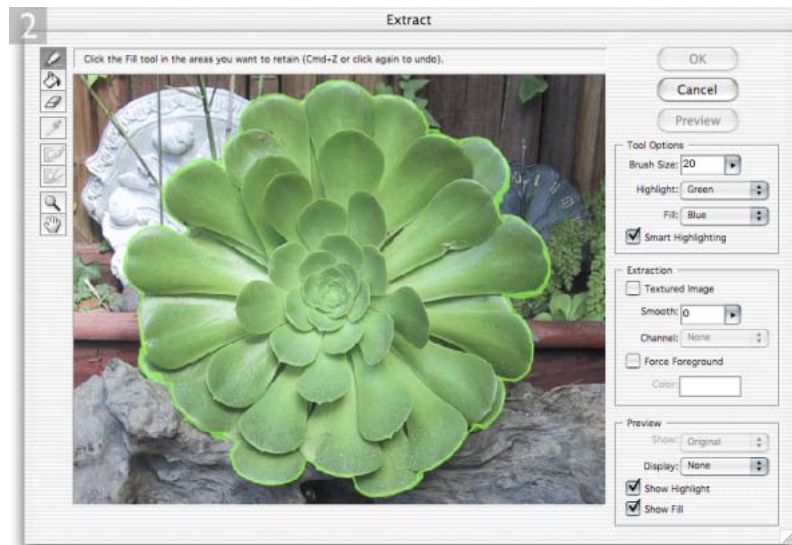
Tool Options Enter a value for the highlight or eraser brush size and choose a color for the Highlight and Fill displays. Smart Highlighting helps auto-detect the edges as you define a highlight edge.

Extraction The smoothness can be set anywhere between 0 and 100. If the preview shows an incomplete pixel selection, increasing the smoothness value will help reign in the remaining pixels. Force Foreground is useful where the object interior edge is particularly hard to define and the interior pixels are of a similar color value. Select the eyedropper tool to sample the interior color and check Force Foreground. Textured Image will take into account differences in texture as well as color.

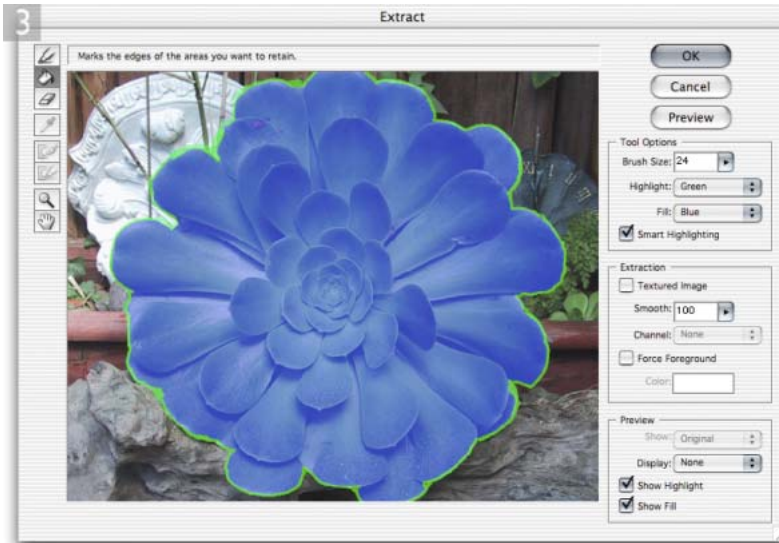
Preview The view choices can be switched between the original image and the current extracted versions. The Show option allows you to choose the type of matte background to preview the extraction against. This can be the standard, transparent, Photoshop background pattern, gray, white, black or any other custom color.



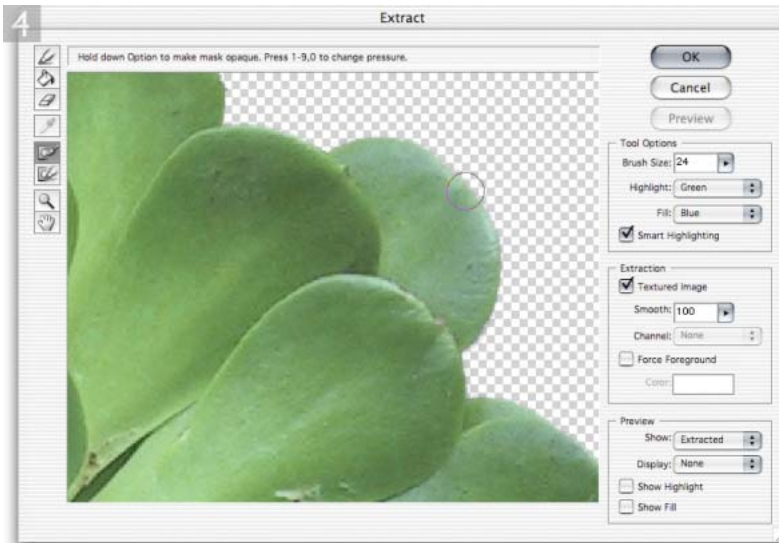
1 Here is an example of an ordinary photograph where I wanted to make a cutout of the large plant and remove it from the distracting elements in the background. I began by dragging the background layer to the Make New Layer button in the Layers palette. (This duplicated the background layer).



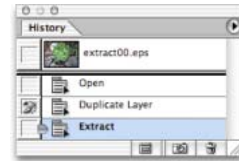
2 I then chose Filter ⇒ Extract. I selected the edge highlighter tool and started to draw around the edges of the leaves. You want the highlight edge to overlap the foreground and background areas. But the highlight edge must form a complete enclosure (you can ignore where the object meets the image boundaries). Notice that I had checked the Smart Highlighting box. This can make the edge drawing a little easier. The smart highlighting mode works in a similar way to the magic lasso and magic pen tool, it forces the edge highlighter tool to 'hug' the sharp edges as you draw. If you use a pressure sensitive pen, as you apply more pressure, you will produce a thicker edge.



3 When I had finished drawing the outline around all of the leaves, I checked the result carefully and used the eraser tool to delete any parts where the edge was untidy and I then selected the fill tool to click inside and fill the interior. You can use the edge cleanup tool to follow edges, adding opacity where the tool sees transparency inside the edge and removing opacity outside the edge.



4 To test the potential success of the extraction, I clicked on the Preview button. This applied the extraction to the image in the preview window only. I first checked the Textured Image button though and set the Smooth setting to 100. While in preview mode, you can edit the edges using tools within the Extract dialog. Here, I selected the cleanup tool and used it to erase unwanted pixels and held down the Option to restore pixels so far erased by the extraction.



5 I clicked OK to permanently apply the extraction to the Background copy layer. If for some reason I needed to go back to the original version, it was still available in the layer below. But more usefully, one can use the History palette to restore any detail that shouldn't have been erased during the extraction. Go to the History palette, set the history state one before the Extraction, as the history source and use the history brush to paint those pixels back in. If you want to erase more pixels, I recommend selecting the background eraser tool, described on page 57. Set the background eraser tool to Find Edges mode, click on a sample area to define the pixel colors you want to erase and paint around the outside edge.