



*Luanne
Cohen*

*Luanne
Seymour
Cohen,*

on

*Creative
Director
at Adobe
Systems,
shares some
super tips
for
working
with
layers
in Adobe®
Photoshop® 4.0*

BEGINNER

Layers





Drop shadows are easy to create using layers in Photoshop 4.0. In this example, the framed picture is on its own layer (picture frame). The area around the frame is transparent, allowing the background to show through.

CREATING DROP SHADOWS USING LAYERS

1. Make a copy of the first layer (picture frame) by dragging the layer name to the New Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers palette. This copy (picture frame copy) is placed on top of the original layer.



Layers palette

The active layer is highlighted and has a paintbrush icon next to it. The eye icons let you turn layers visibility on and off.

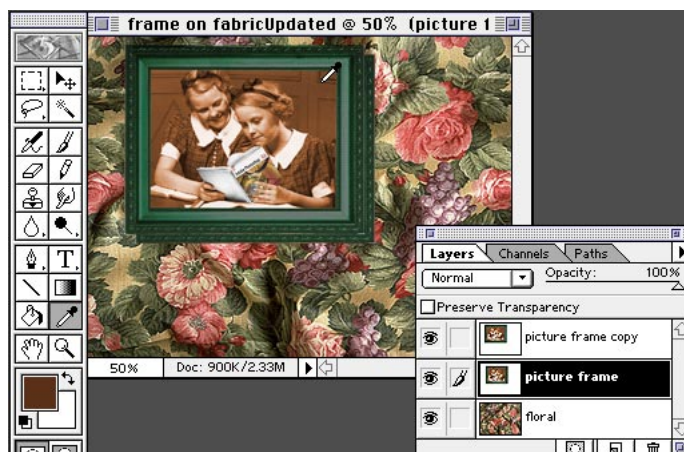
2. Select the original “picture frame” layer in the palette, and then use the move tool to offset the layer (which is underneath the copy). Release the mouse button when the layer is slightly offset. This will become the drop shadow. At this stage, the original and the copy are the same color(s).



Finetuning

The arrow keys on the keyboard allow you to move the layer in one-pixel increments.

3. For a more realistic shadow, select a foreground color other than black. In this example, we used the eyedropper tool to select a dark brown from the image.



CREATING DROP SHADOWS USING LAYERS

4. Choose Edit > Fill. Select Preserve Transparency, and fill using the foreground color.



Preserve Transparency

There are typically a thousand ways to do everything in Adobe Photoshop, but selecting Preserve Transparency is the trick that makes this technique the fastest way to create a drop shadow.

5. Use the Gaussian Blur filter (Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur) to soften the shadow. Here we used a radius of 7.0 for a 72-ppi image. For higher resolution images, you'll need to use a greater radius value.



Shadows

Shadows add the illusion of three dimensions and are rarely hard-edged. Blurring the shadow adds realism and makes the main image stand out.

6. Combine the drop shadow with the background using the Multiply mode in the Layers palette.



Multiply mode

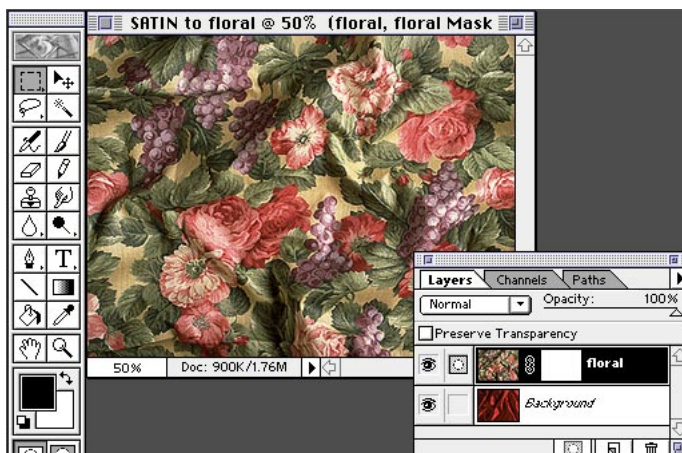
Using the Multiply mode on the shadow layer gives the effect of adding the shadow value and color to the texture and image of the background. This makes for a more realistic shadow since we usually see some texture and detail in real shadows.



Blending one image gradually into another is easy to do using layers in Photoshop 4.0. In this example, we will blend the red satin fabric from one layer into the floral fabric on another layer by using a layer mask on one of the layers.

BLENDING FROM ONE IMAGE TO ANOTHER

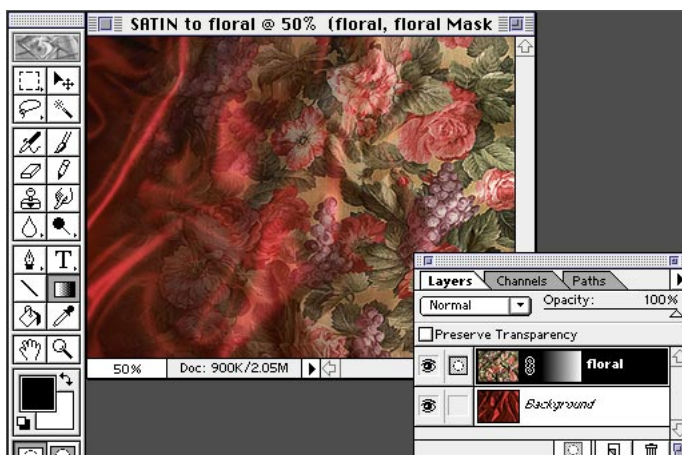
1. Select the top layer (floral) and choose Layer > Add Layer Mask > Reveal All.



Layer masks

You can create layer masks two ways. Choose Add Layer Mask from the Layers menu. Or you can create a selection and choose Select > Save Selection. Instead of creating a new channel, choose the mask option from the Channel pop-up menu.

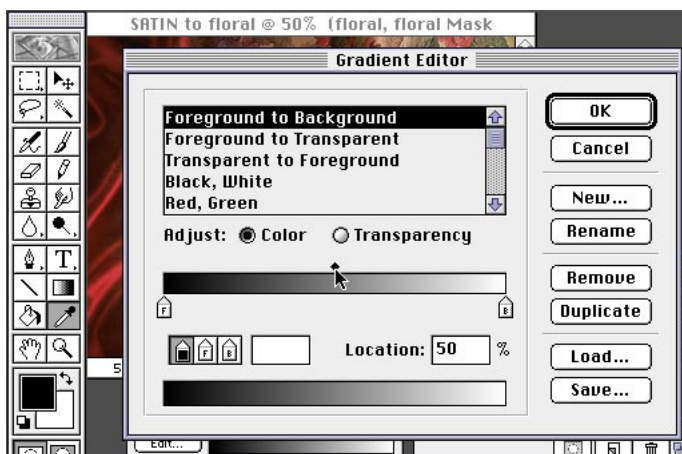
2. With the layer mask selected, choose the gradient tool and create a gradient. Make sure your foreground and background colors are black and white. Remember that you are drawing on a layer mask that is grayscale. The areas that are white and gray will reveal the color image. The areas that are solid black will block it out.



Gradients

You can use any angle for your layer mask gradient. If you want a small transition area with larger solid areas of the two images, draw the gradient vector well inside the image areas instead of from edge to edge.

3. You may want to experiment with different mid-points for the blend. Double-click the gradient tool icon to bring up the Gradient Tool Options palette. Select Edit, and here you can set the midpoint. Then redraw the gradient in the layer mask.

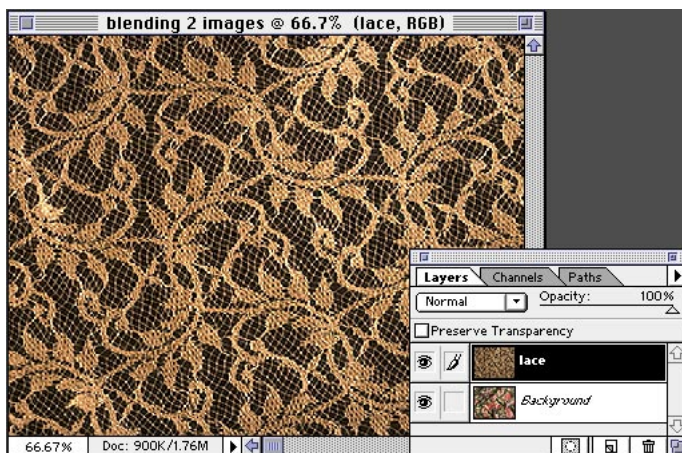




Blending parts of one layer into another is easy to do using the layers sliders in Photoshop 4.0. In this example, we will show just a few of the hundreds of possible combinations you can use when you play with the options in the Layer Options palette.

BLENDING LAYERS WITH THE LAYER OPTIONS PALETTE

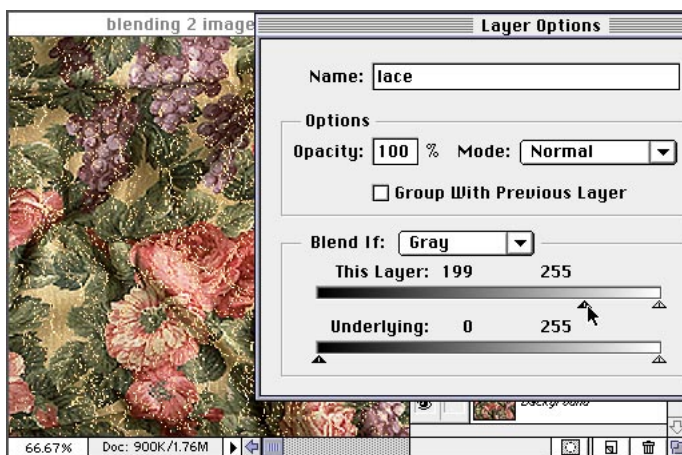
1. Create or open an image that has two layers you want to blend together. In this example we want to reveal the lower layer image through the dark background color from the lace layer. Select the top layer.



Shortcuts

Throughout this document, "Command/Ctrl" means Command on the Macintosh and Ctrl on Windows. "Option/Alt" means Option on the Macintosh and Alt on Windows.

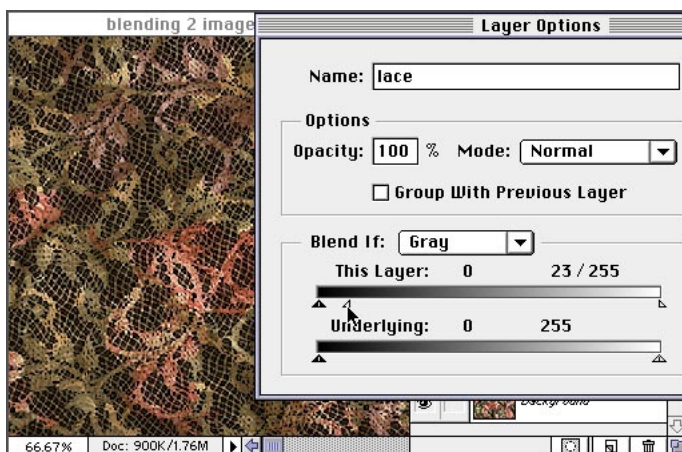
2. Double-click the layer name in the Layers palette to bring up the Layer Options dialog box. Since we want to drop out the dark background on the lace layer, we will move the shadow triangle on the This Layer slider to the right.



Blending sliders

Use the sliders in the Layer Options palette to define which pixels will appear in your composite image. For example, if you want to hide all the dark areas, move the shadow slider to the right. All the pixel values between 0 and the new shadow value number will not show in the composite image.

3. Another effect might be to have the floral background show through only the highlighted areas of the lace. To do this, split the highlight slider triangle by holding down the Option/Alt key and drag it to the left.

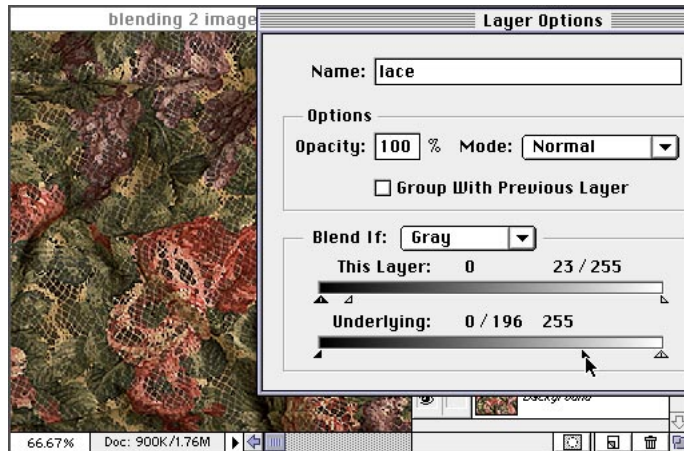


Smooth blending

For smoother transitions, you can split the triangles in half. Hold down the Option/Alt key while dragging the triangle, and it will split. For example, in step 3 the range for highlight values is now between 23 and 255. This means that all the pixels between those two values will appear with only some of their original colors.

BLENDING LAYERS WITH THE LAYER OPTIONS PALETTE

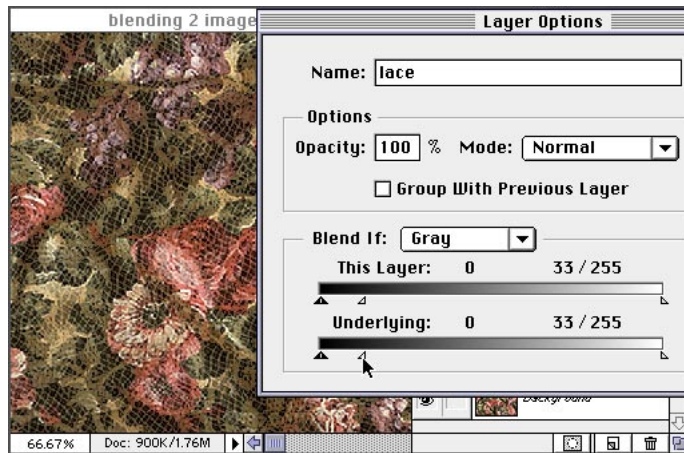
4. In this example we created the effect of applying the lace texture to the fabric while still retaining the folds and shadows of the underlying fabric.



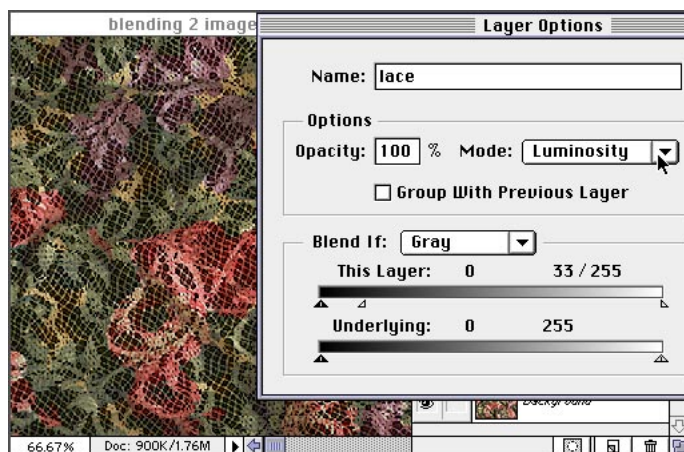
Previewing

Turn the preview button on while you experiment. This allows you to see what the result will be as you try different modes and layer-blending combinations.

5. This example is similar to the one in step 4 except that we moved the highlight slider for the Underlying layer. The result is a much lighter image.



6. Experimenting with different modes will give you even more options for interesting visual effects. In this example, we split the highlight slider triangle for the lace layer. This allows some of the colors of the floral fabric to come through the light-colored lace. To give the colors more punch, we used the Luminosity mode.

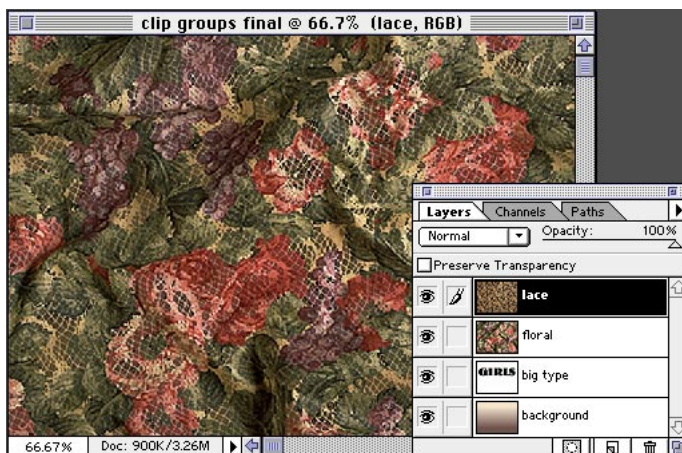




Sometimes you want to mask or crop more than one image with the same shape. To allow for the most flexibility, use a clipping group with your layers. In this example we used type as the masking layer and two different fabric layers. We wanted to leave them on separate layers to allow for more experimentation.

MASKING SEVERAL LAYERS WITH ONE IMAGE

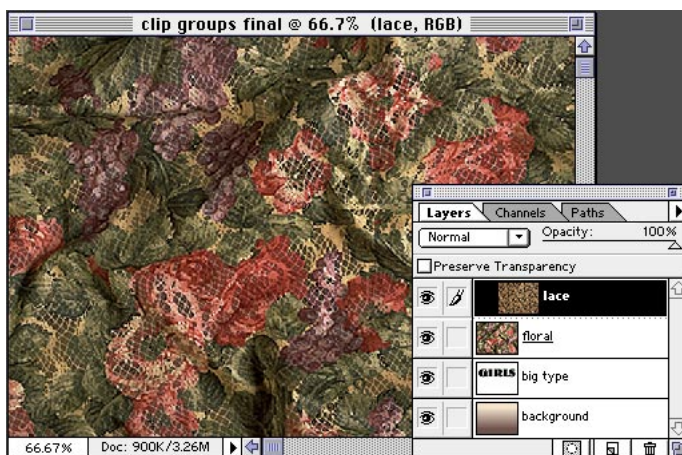
1. Open or create a file that contains all the layers that you want to mask through a common mask. The layer that will mask the others should be the bottom-most layer. In this example we will mask both the lace and the floral layers with the big type layer. Remember to put your mask shape on a transparent background.



Base layer (mask)

The shape that masks all the layers in the clipping group must be on a transparent background or the effect will not work. The masking shape is created by every pixel on the base layer no matter what color it is. The edge of the mask shape is wherever there is a pixel next to a transparent area.

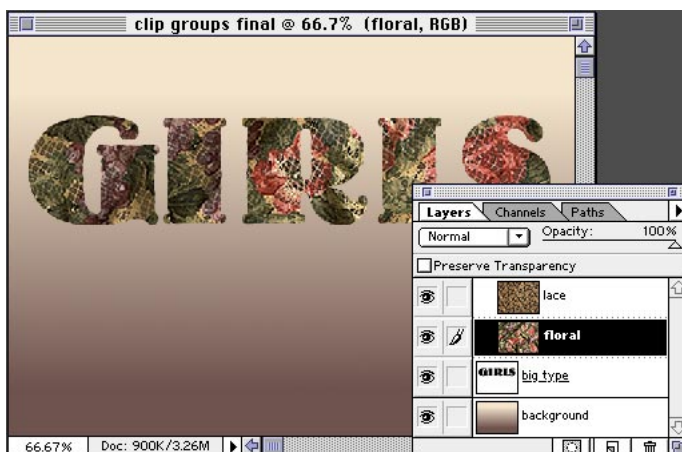
2. Make a clipping group by holding the Option/Alt key and clicking between the layers that will be in the group. Notice how the cursor changes to indicate that you are making a clipping group, and the Layer thumbnail indents.



Group modes

All clipping groups have a base layer. This is the bottom layer in the group, and it defines the shape of the mask through which all the other layers in the group are displayed. The base layer defines the mode and transparency of all the layers in its group.

3. Option/Alt click between all the layers that will be in the clipping group. Note: You can move layers around within a group, but once you move a layer outside of the group, it will no longer be masked by the base layer.



Clipping groups

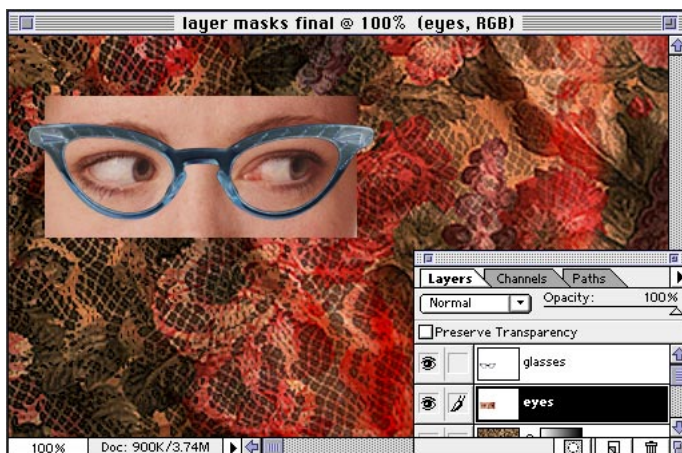
As you click the lines between the layers to make a clipping group, they become dotted lines. The base layer is the one with the underlined layer name.



It's easy to add a layer mask to a layer and draw or paint on that mask. But sometimes you want to mask specific areas of an image that are not easy to create on a blank layer mask. This technique demonstrates how you can create layer masks from any selection made on any layer.

CREATING LAYER MASKS FROM SELECTIONS

1. In this example we just added the layer with the eyes, but we want the eyes to show through only the glasses lenses.



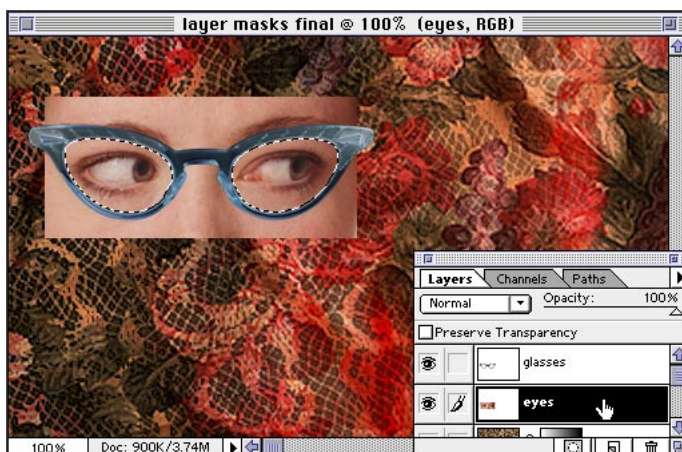
2. Sometimes it's easier to hide all layers except the ones you need to create the selection. Use the selection tools to create a selection that defines the area you want to mask. In this example, we turned off the eyes layer even though it will eventually contain the layer mask.



Viewing layers

To quickly turn off all layers except the one you want to work on, Option/Alt+click the eye icon for that layer in the Layers palette. To turn all the layers back on again, again Option+click the layer's eye icon.

3. Once your selection is made, turn on all the other layers (Option/Alt+click on the eye icon). Make the layer that will contain the layer mask the active layer in the Layers palette. Don't deselect the selection you made in step 2!

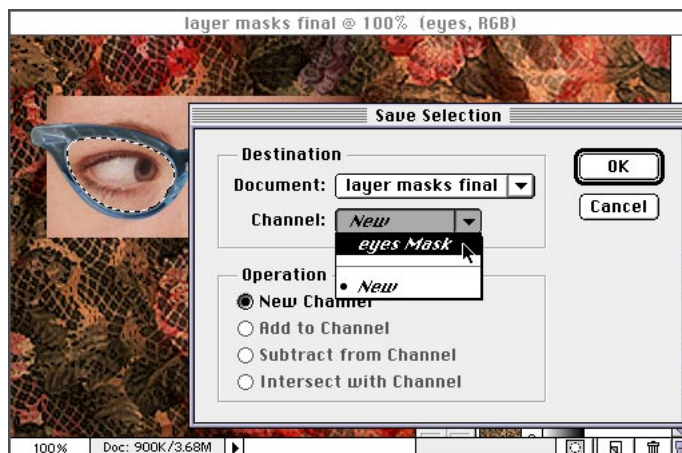


Selections on layers

You can make a selection on any layer, and if you click a different layer in the Layers palette, the selection is still active. This is a real time-saver, because you select the area only once, but you can make changes to that same area on several different layers without reselecting each time.

CREATING LAYER MASKS FROM SELECTIONS

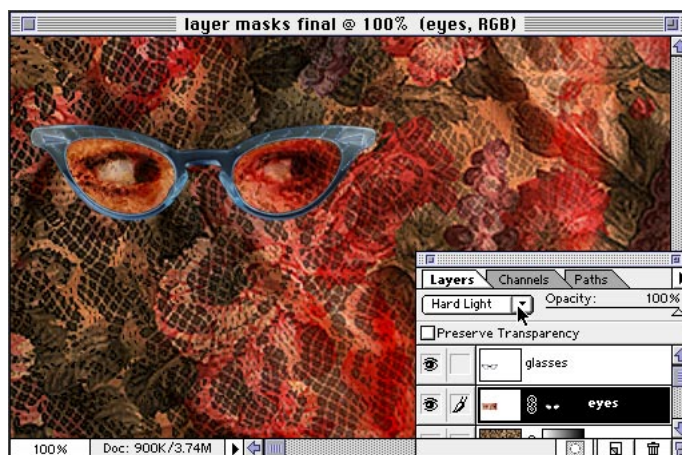
4. Choose **Select > Save Selection**. Use the Channels pop-up menu to select the Mask option that will be named after the currently active layer. Instead of saving a channel to the Channels palette, this will save the selection as a layer mask to your layer.



Layer masks

Layer masks are really just alpha channels that are attached to a layer. You can edit them just as you do channels. To view the mask as full size, hold the Option/Alt key and click the thumbnail of the layer mask in the Layers palette. To return to the layer view, Option/Alt+click the thumbnail again.

5. Once your selection is saved as a layer mask, it will appear as a thumbnail next to the layer thumbnail in the Layers palette. In this example we switched the layer mode to Hard Light for a more transparent effect.



Layer masks on/off

You can temporarily turn the layer mask off without discarding it. Simply Shift+click the layer mask thumbnail in the Layers palette. Click it again to turn it back on.

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