

## PHOTOSHOP FOR SURFACE DESIGN – CLEANING THE BACKGROUND OF A SKETCH

- **The safest way to clean the background of a sketch is to use layer masks**
  - With layer masks the background will not be erased before applying the mask, so you can still adjust the edges of the elements. Layer masks are non-destructive, which means you can go back and re-edit the masks later without losing the pixels they hide
- **Before working with the background it's good to keep the original sketch safe as a Background layer and to make a duplicate layer for cleaning the background**
- Use one or a combination of selection tools, e.g. Magic Wand or Select → Color Range (keep Fuzziness to minimum), for selecting the background
  - It might be easier to first create a high contrast Levels adjustment layer, and use that to make the selection: Do Layer → New Adjustment Layer → Levels. Drag the black, white and grey Input Levels sliders for turning the background solid white or black. Adjust the levels so that the sketch will be different tone than the background. Select the background with the Levels layer activated
  - *You can delete the high contrast Levels layer after the selection is made*
- **Create the mask with the background selected: activate the sketch layer → do Layer → Layer Mask → Hide Selection (OR click Add vector mask from Layer panel)**
- Layer mask appears as a black and white thumbnail next to the layer thumbnail. If you want to modify the layer mask, you need to activate the mask thumbnail
- In order to see how the background was cleaned, you can create a solid color layer and place it underneath the masked sketch layer. Do Layer → New Fill Layer → Solid Color (OR click Create new fill or adjustment layer → Solid Color from Layers panel). Select a contrasting color with Color Picker. (After cleaning the background you can delete the solid color layer)
- **With layer mask activated Ctrl + I converts it to positive/negative**
- **With layer mask activated you can hide more pixels from the layer by drawing with black (000000) and reveal by drawing with white (ffffff)**
- You can make **the layer mask visible by activating layer mask while pressing Alt**
- If you still have some small pixels left in your background, you could try some methods for cleaning (make mask visible by pressing Alt and activating the mask):
  - Do Filter → Noise → Dust & Scratches. Adjust Radius for cleaning small pixel areas (Note that it might also adjust the edge between background and element)
  - OR if you have only few bigger elements in your sketch: with Magic Wand (use Add to selection method and Contiguous ticked) select only the elements and do Select → Inverse and do Edit → Fill → Black
- Softening the edges of elements (especially for digital prints):
  - Do layer mask as mentioned. Make mask visible with Alt click → double-click the mask thumbnail, Select and Mask window opens. There you can add Smooth or Feather to soften the edge, and with Shift Edge is possible to make the selection more narrow
- When you are happy with cleaning the background, apply the layer mask with **Layer → Layer Mask → Apply (OR right click on layer mask → Apply Layer Mask)**
  - *It might be good to keep the file with layer mask saved if you need to still continue cleaning the background later*