An Introduction to Masks

by

Ken Rathjen

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Masks

Purpose: To block out one portion of an image and reveal another.

Masking: A method for creating a selection outline as an independent channel, which you can then edit and save like any other image.

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The Photoshop Challenge:

Accurately Place a Mask Over the Flower

How About this Challenge

Place a Mask Over the Ivy and its Branches

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Masks

- PS masks isolate & protect parts of an image (think of masking tape).
- When you create a mask based on a selection, the area not selected is masked and protected from editing.
- With masks, you can create and save time-consuming selections and then use them again.
- In PS you can make temporary masks called quick masks.
- You can also make permanent masks and store them as special gray scale channels called alpha channels.
- Channels do not print. You use the Channels palette to view and work with alpha channel.
- A key concept in masking is that black hides and white reveals. Shades of gray partially reveal.

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Mask Tools

- Brushes
- Quick Selection
- Quick Mask
- Eraser Tool
- Color Range
- Refine Mask
- Channels

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Using Quick Mask, select the Budda statue

- Click the Quick Mask icon (last one)
- Notice the gray color in layers palette indicating that you are in Quick Mask mode
- Select a soft brush, size 65 pixels
- Make sure mode is Normal
- Use this brush to rough out a mask, we will refine it later.

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Painting the Budda Statue

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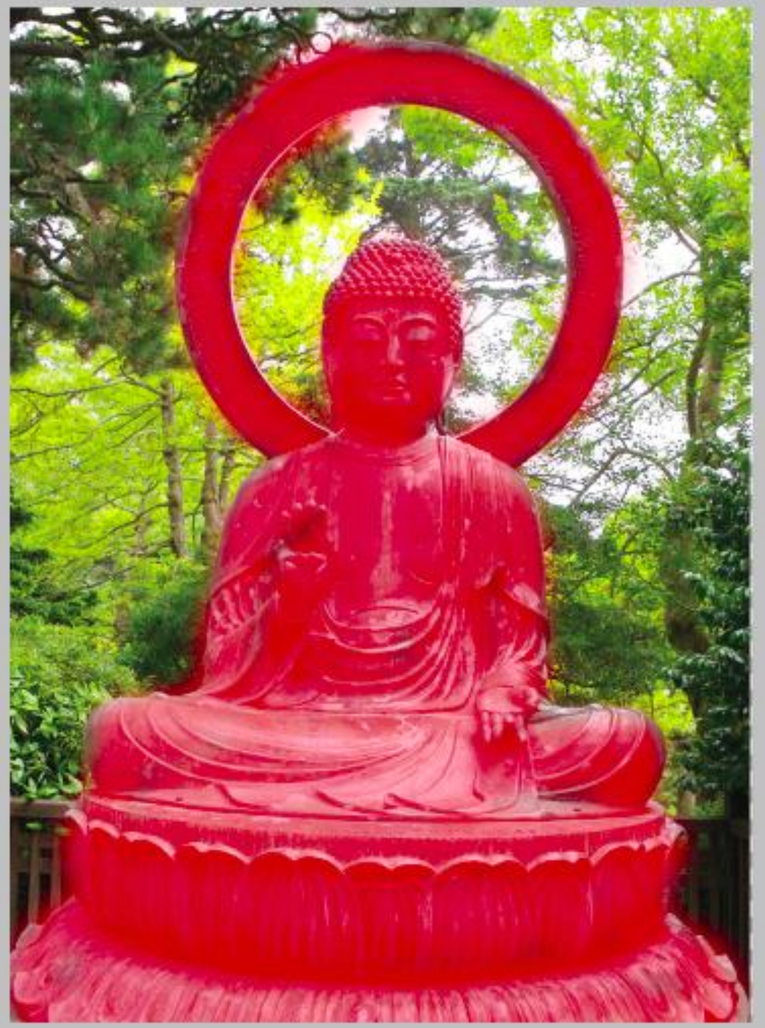
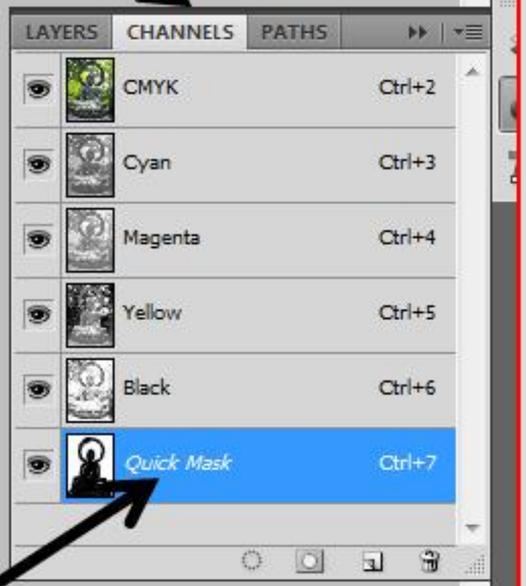


Click Channels



Notice Italicized -Tells you it is temporary. You can save it as a selection

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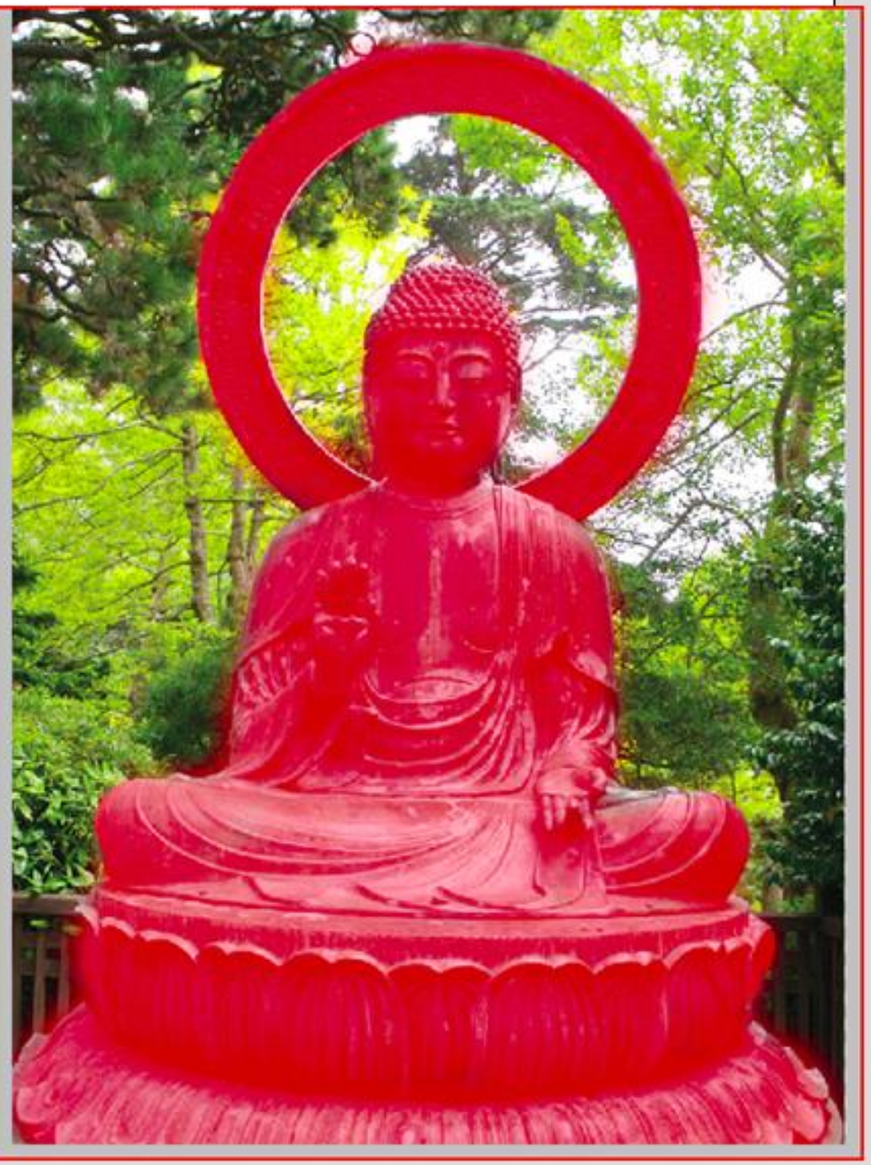
Refine the selection

- Use a small hard brush to refine the selection.
- Use black to add to mask.
- Use white to subtract from mask.
- Press “X” to switch white & black paints.
- Press CTRL & Spacebar and click to zoom in.
- Press ALT & Spacebar and click to zoom out.



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Things to Remember re: Quick Masks

- Quick Masks are temporary. They disappear as soon as you deselect.
- If you save and close a file while in Quick Mode, the quick mask will show in its own channel the next time you open the file.
- If you save and close your file while in the Standard mode, the Quick Mask will be gone!

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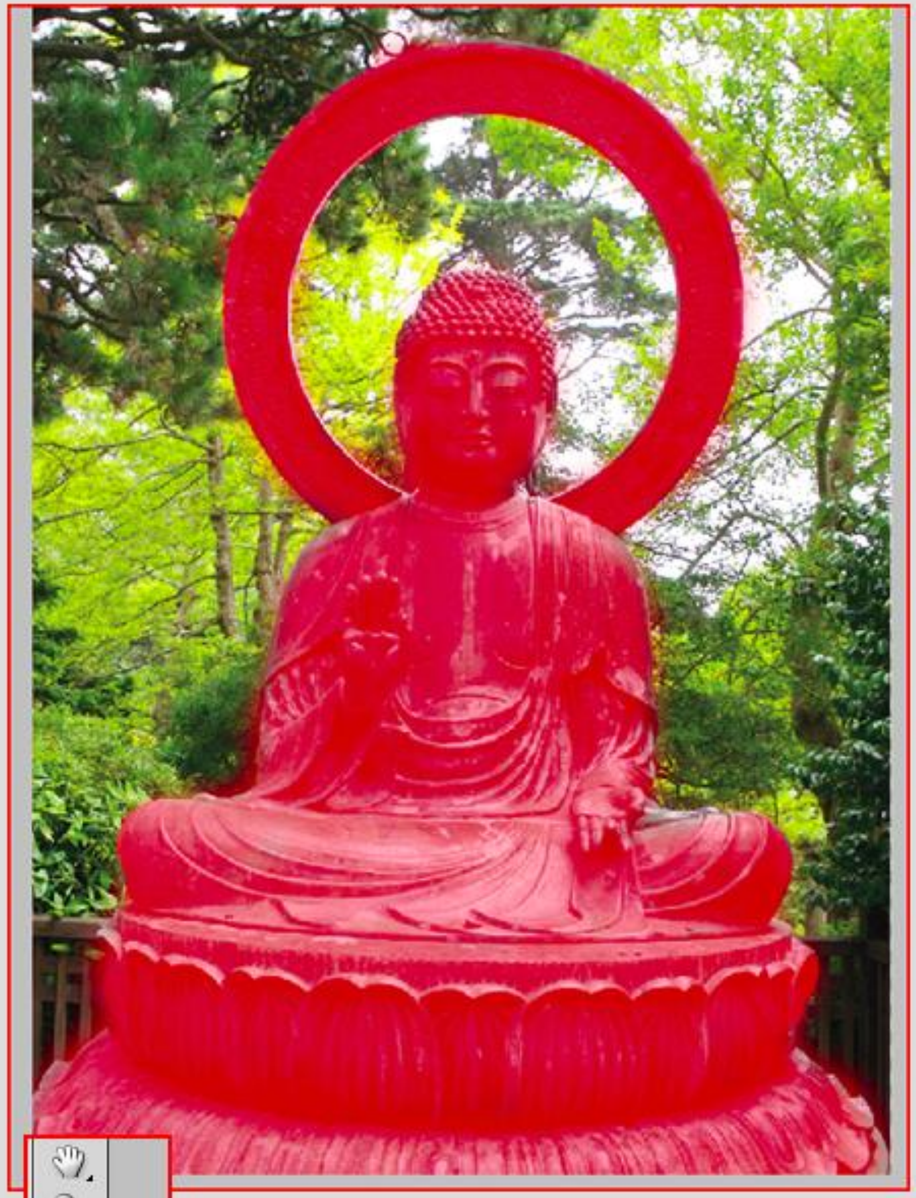

Quick Mask Mode

Standard Mode

Press to switch between Quick Mask & Standard Modes

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Creating an Alpha Channel

- Go into Standard Mode.
- Click the Save Selection As Channel button at the bottom of the Channels palette.

Double Click Alpha 1 and change name to Budda

Note: Alpha 1 Channel Saved

You can edit the mask in an Alpha Channel using painting tools, editing tools and filters

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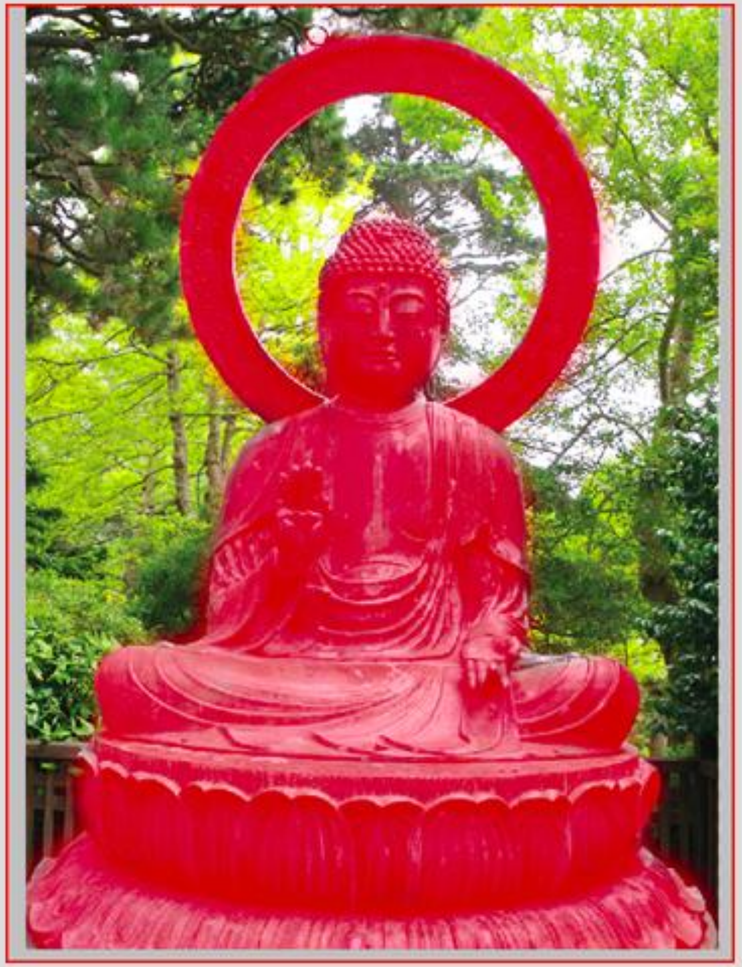
To Create a Montage Using Budda



- Place PS in Standard Mode with Budda outlined with dots, copy it.
- Open an image to serve as a bkgrd.
- Paste Budda into background image.

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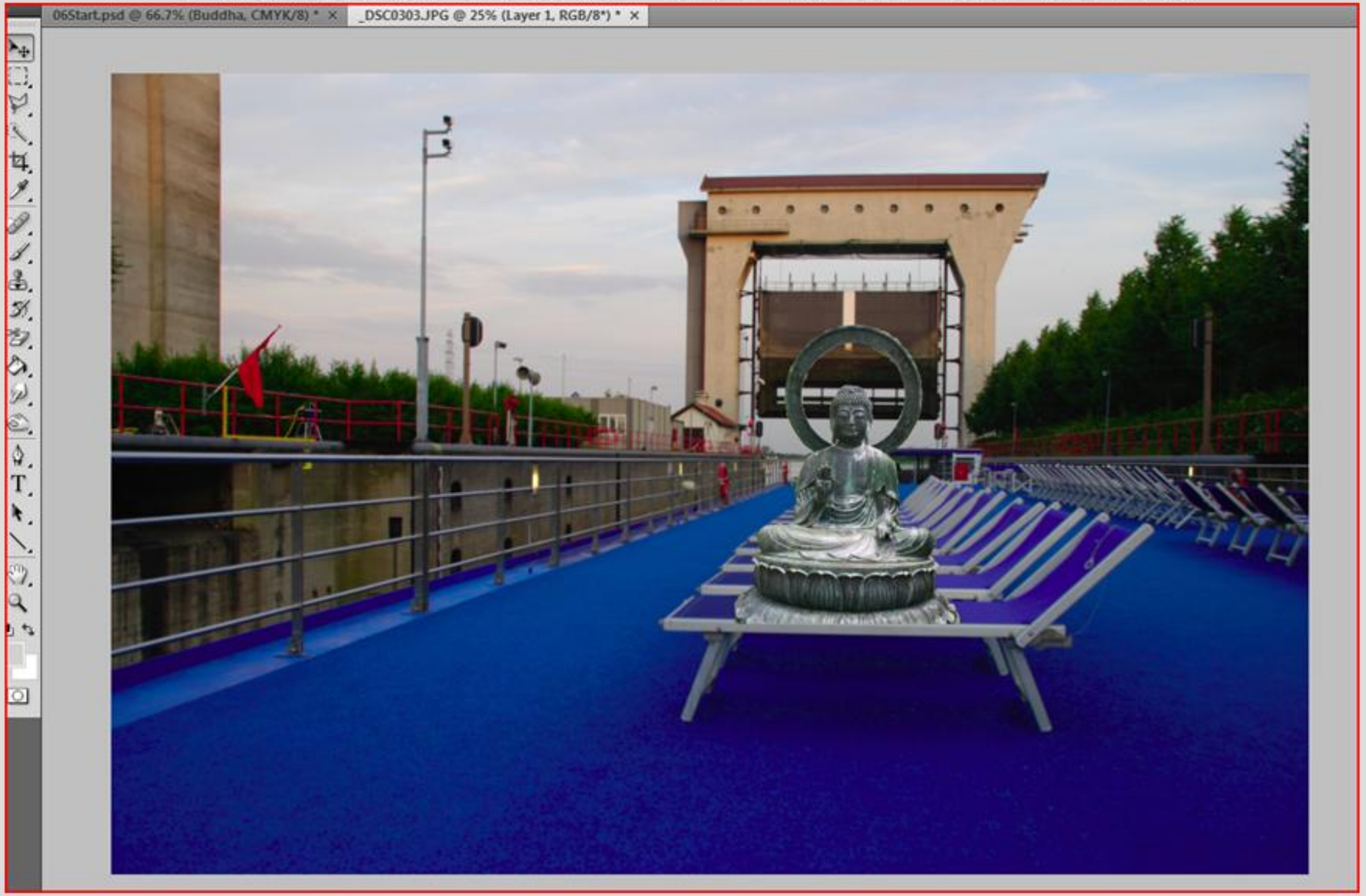
Budda now on the Cruise



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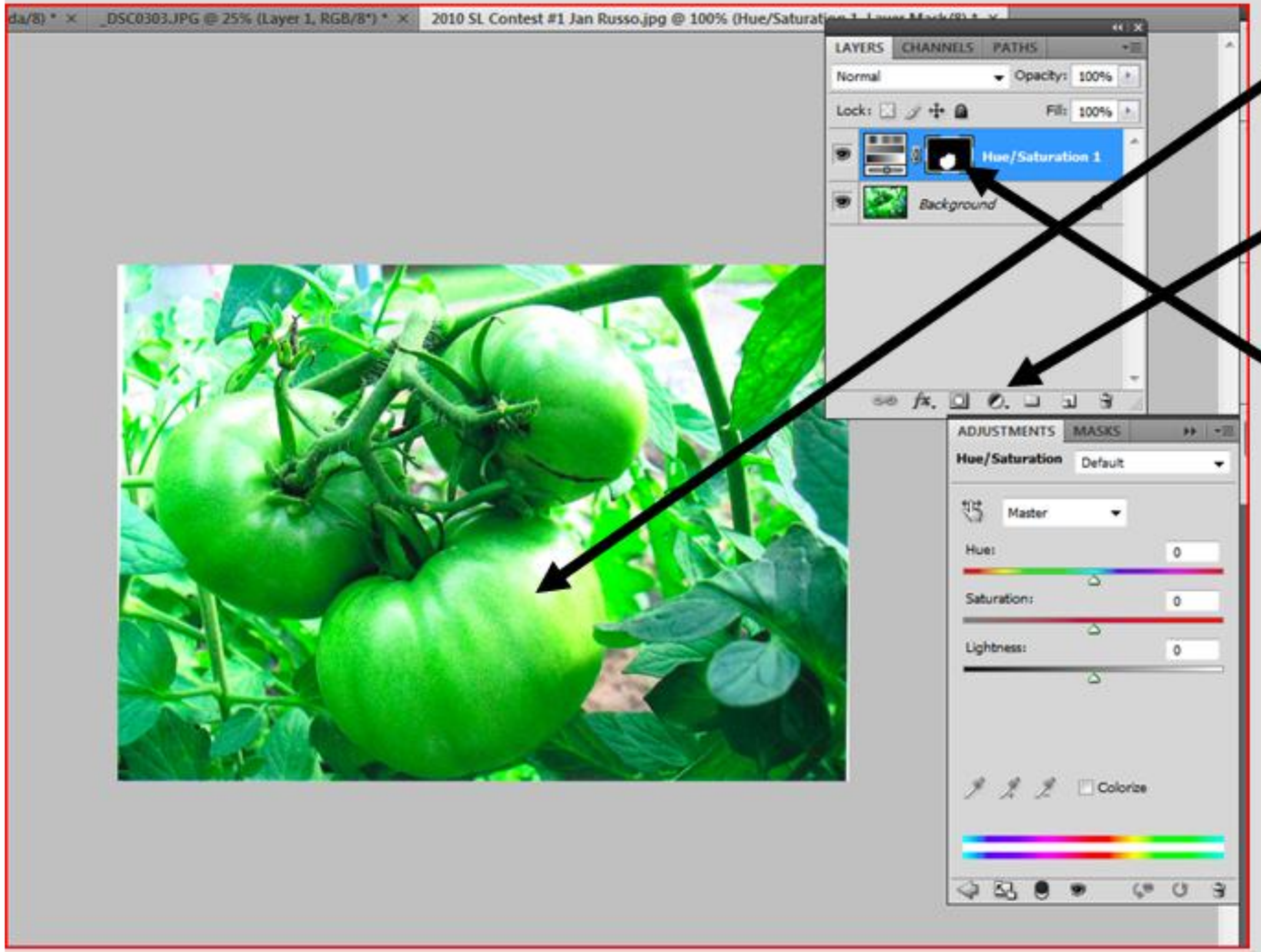
Changing Colors using Adjustment Layer and Mask



First Select a tomato using selection tool.

Then create an Adjustment layer, use Hue/Staturation.

Holding Alt, click on Mask

Next repair Mask using black & white and even gray.

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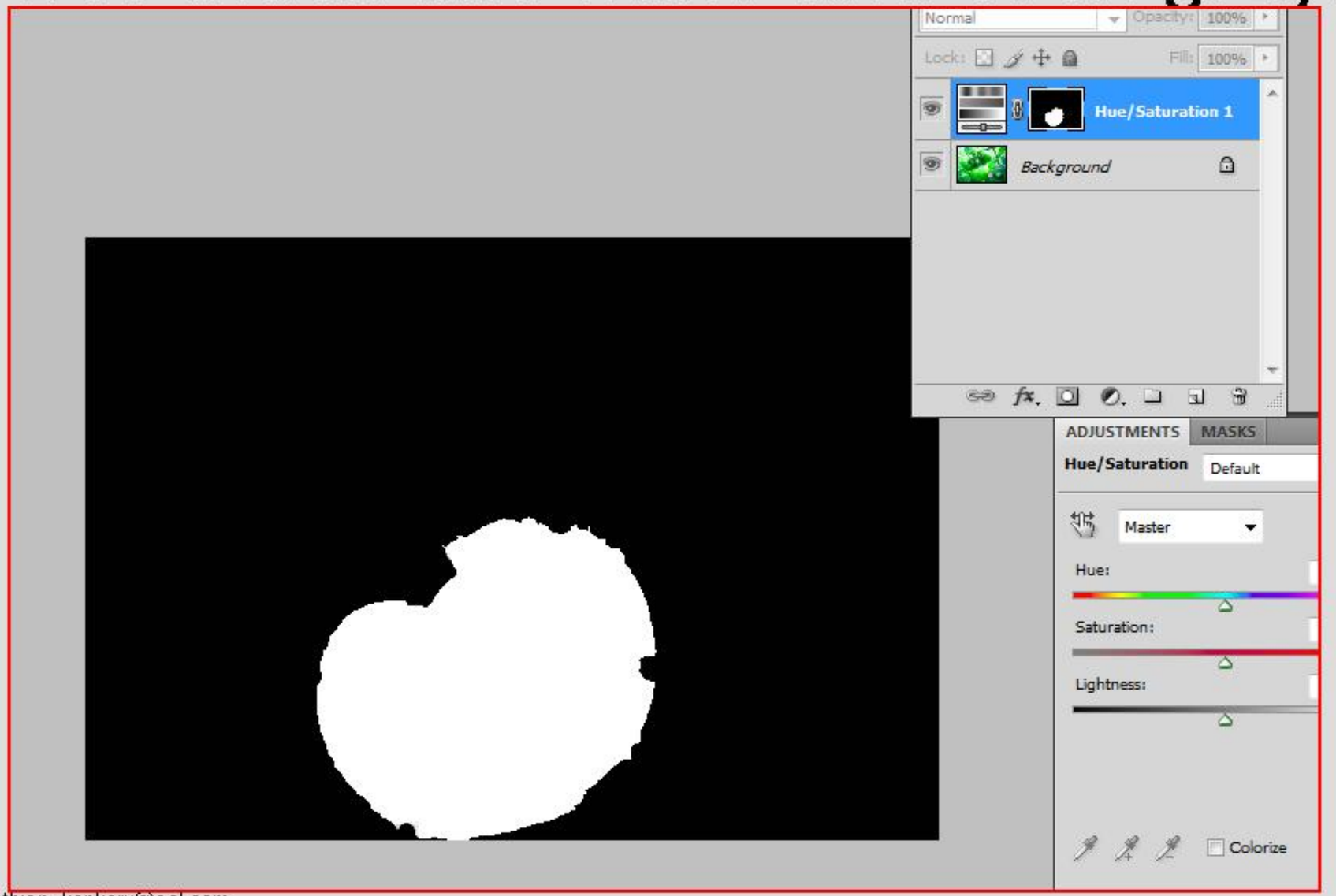
Now repair mask if needed.
Use black and white and even gray.



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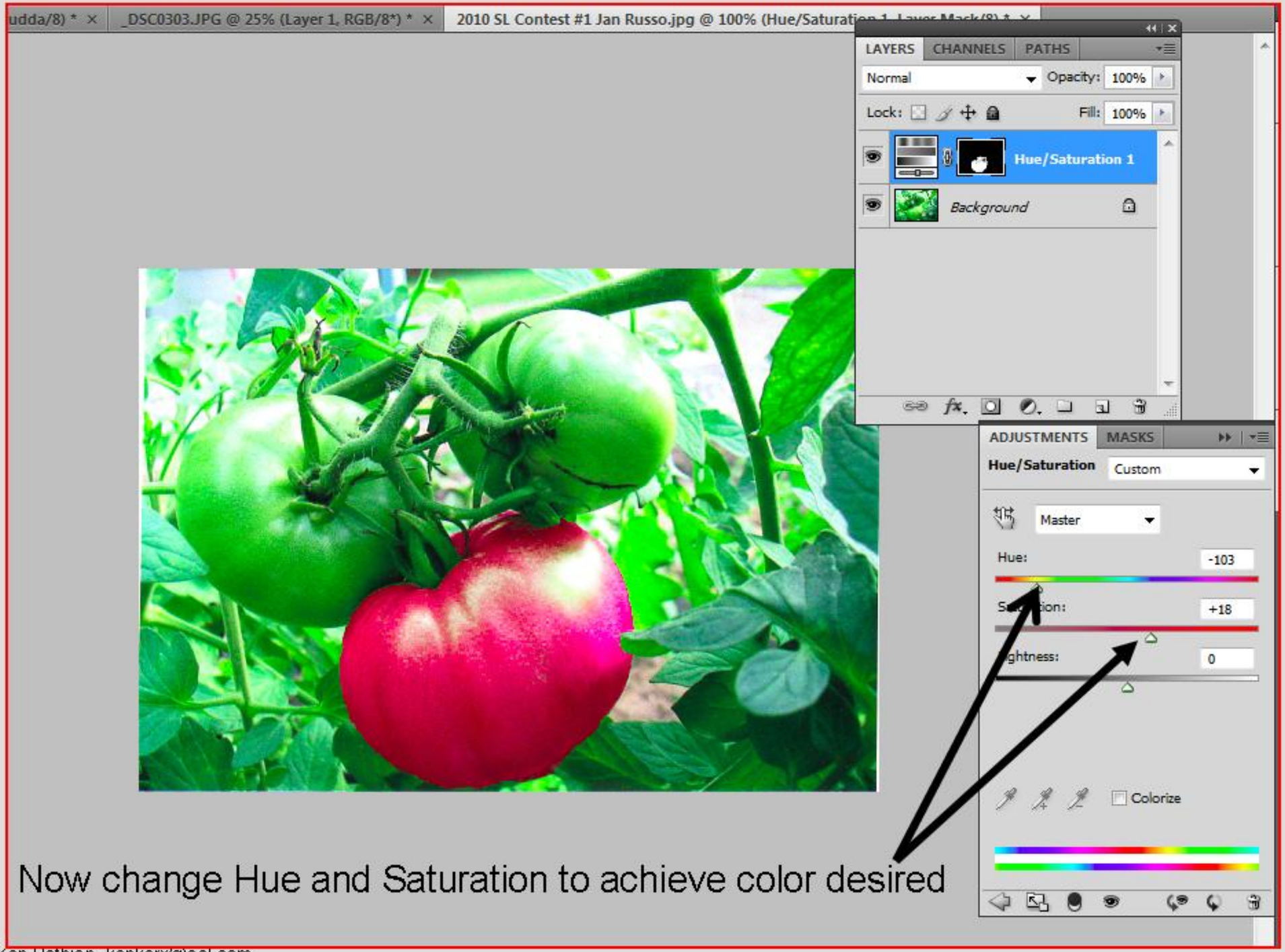

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For Images with Simple Colored Bkgrd use Color Range Tool to Create a Mask

- Window>Mask
- Click first icon top right corner of palette
- Click Color Range button to bring up Color Range dialog box.
- Select Image Option
- Set Selection Preview to Grayscale
- Click once in Green region
- Increase Fuzziness to obtain good mask
- Turn off Invert to see Black mask
- Next clean-up some of green edges

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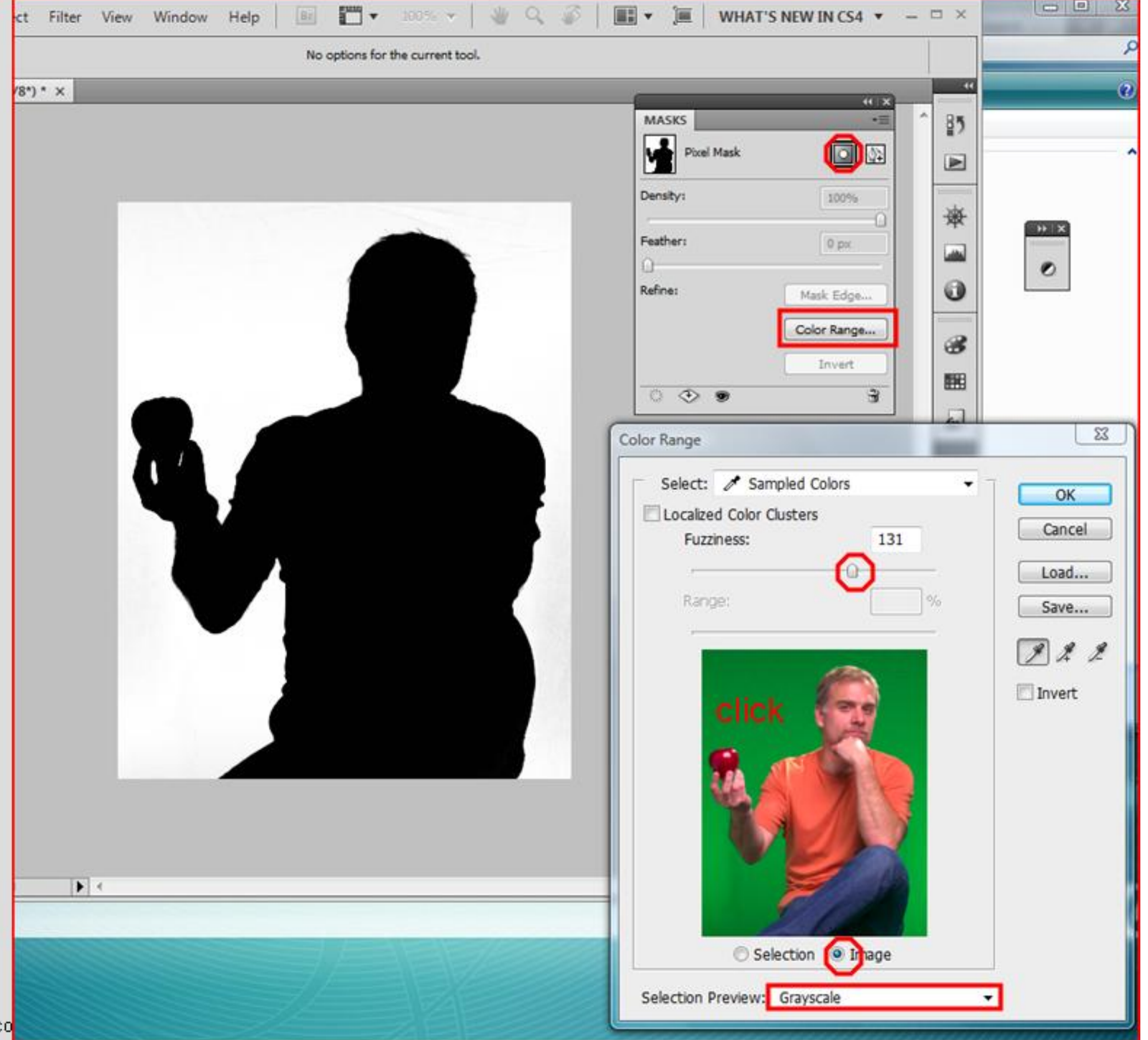

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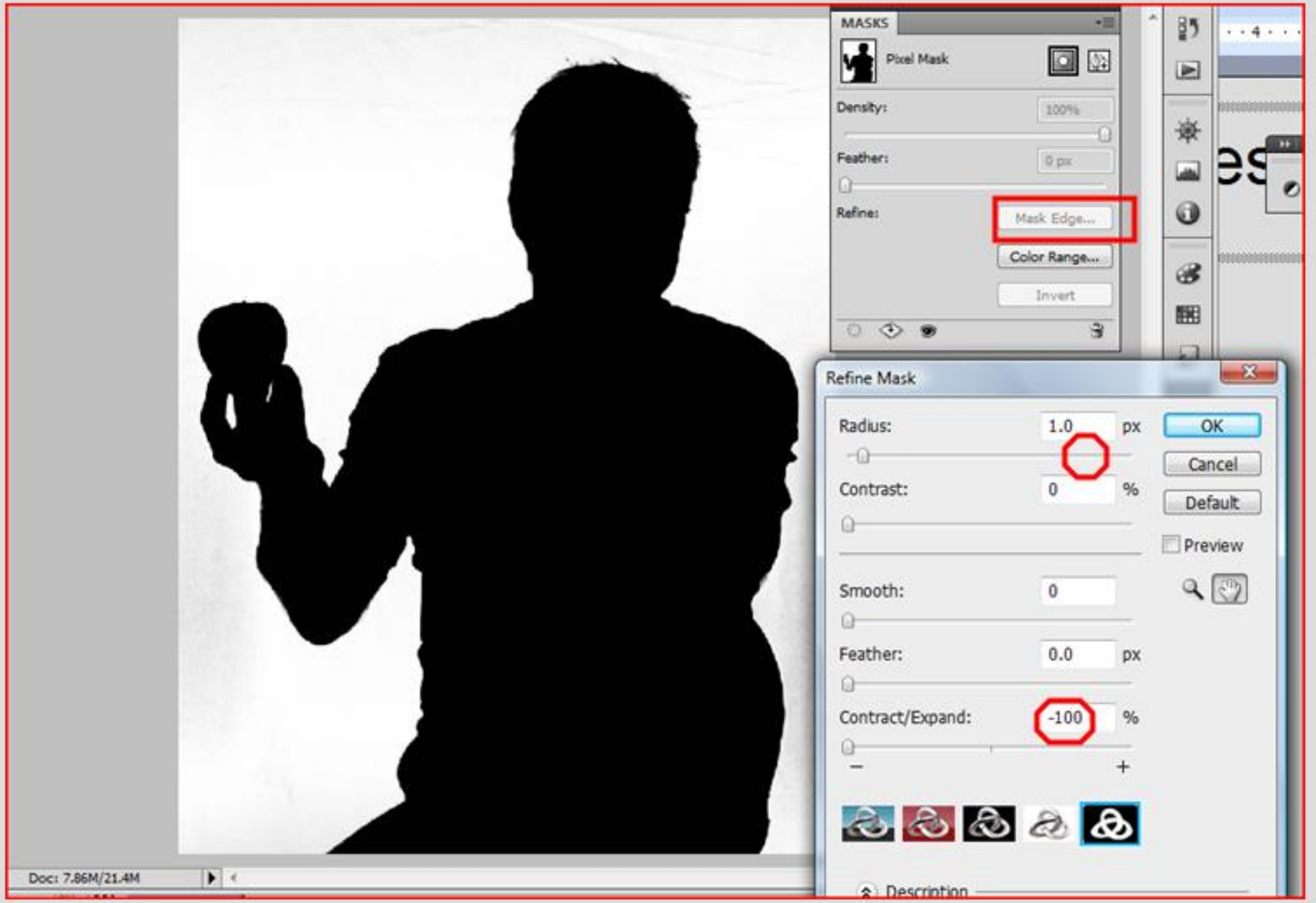
Clean-up Green Around Edges



Click Mask Edge, Select radius 1.0, Contract -100, others 0.0

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That's All Folks!

References:

Adobe Photoshop CS3 - Classroom in a Book – Adobe Press
Adobe Photoshop CS4 - Digital Classroom – Adobe Press
Adobe Photoshop CS4 one-on-one – Deke McClelland – deke Press O'Reilly

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