



PaintShop Photo Pro X3

Suitable for older versions

Layers and Their Uses

Level :: Beginner

PaintShop Pro like many other graphic, photographic and painting software work with layers. There are many different types of layers in PaintShop Photo Pro X3. So what are they and what what is their function?

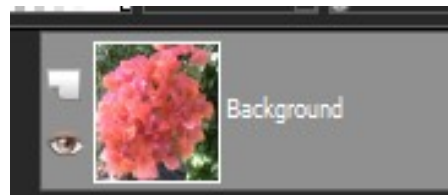


Did you know that PaintShop Pro can open as many as 500 layers! However, I would not recommend putting it to the test unless you have a very high powered PC with lots of RAM.

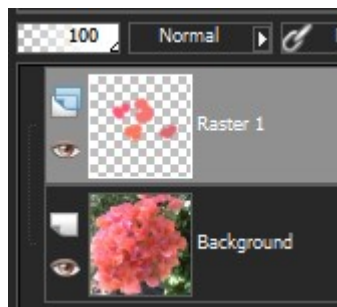
Without layers we would not be able to make the applications to images and objects that we do.

Below is a brief outline of each type of layer and what you can do with it.

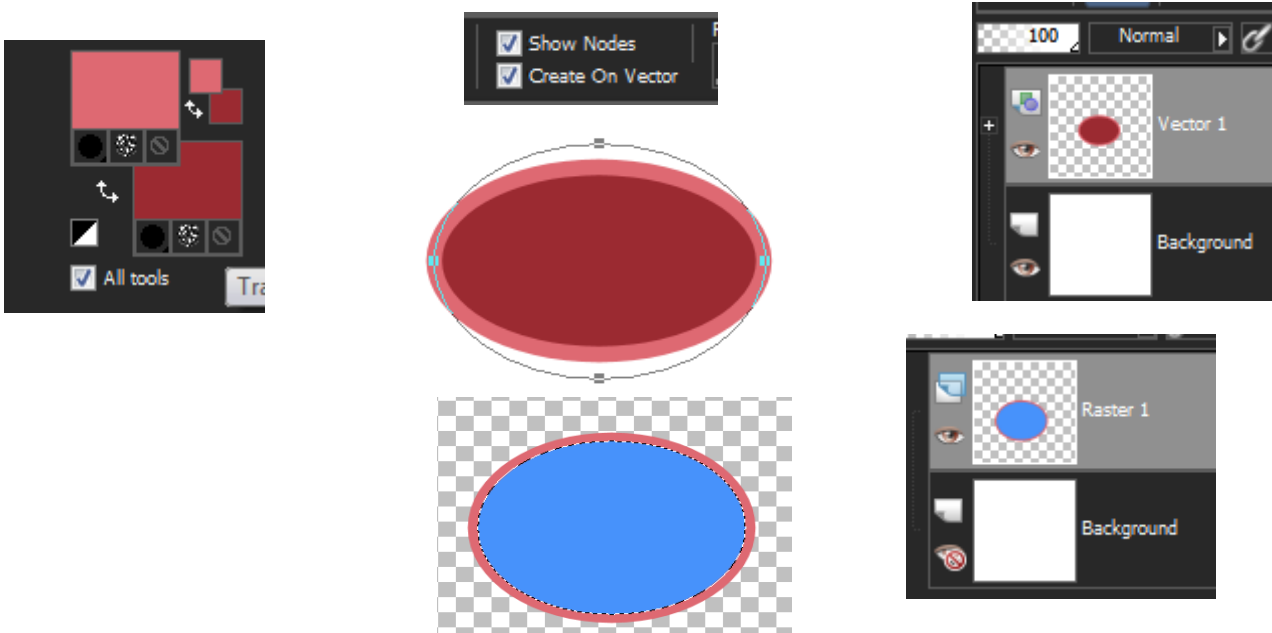
1. Background :: This is not necessarily a layer like other layers mentioned below, but a specific type of raster layer that is the base of the image. When you open an image in PaintShop Pro, especially a .jpg it is classed as a Background image and basically on one layer.



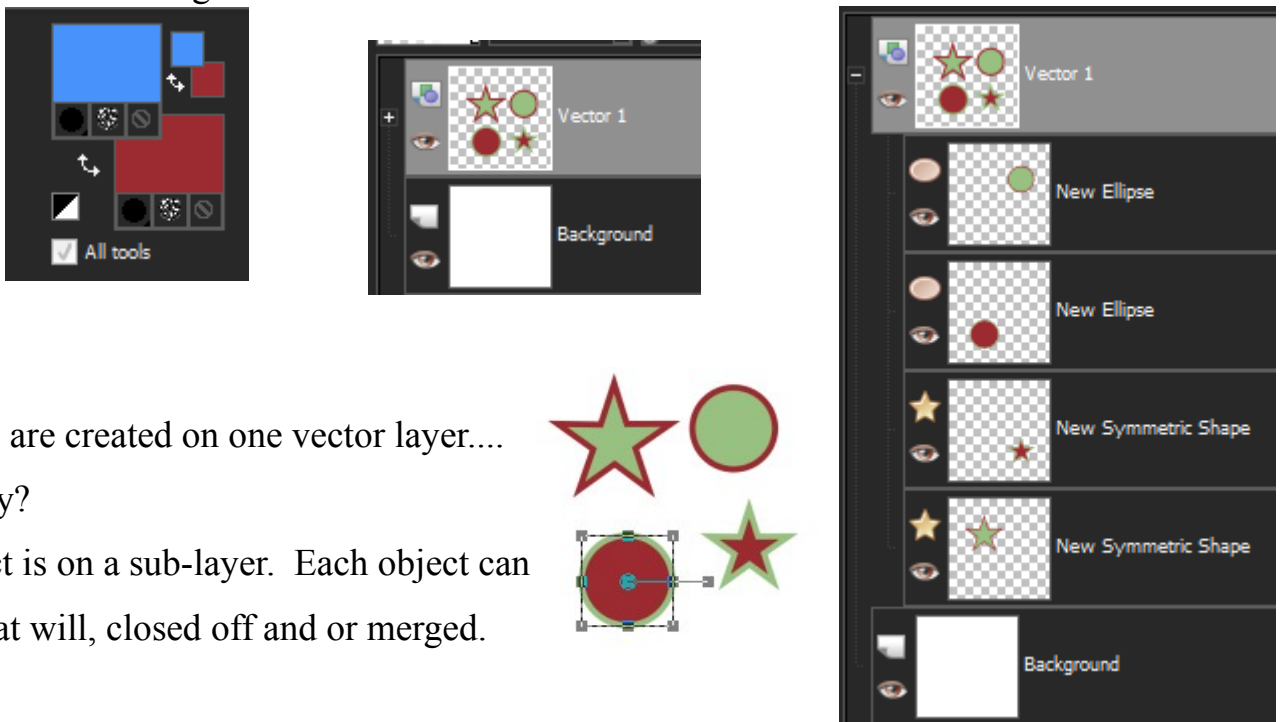
2. Raster Layer :: This is the standard layer for editing images or graphics. The layer only contains raster data which are composed of pixels. Sometimes rasters do not resize well.



3. Vector Layer :: On vector layers you can only add vector objects, ie: drawing with the pen tool, lines, ovals and squares etc. Selecting foreground and background colours with fill the object and give it a border. Add 'show nodes' and the object will have editing nodes. Vectors are better at resizing than rasters. The vector layers must be rastersized before adding any type of media.

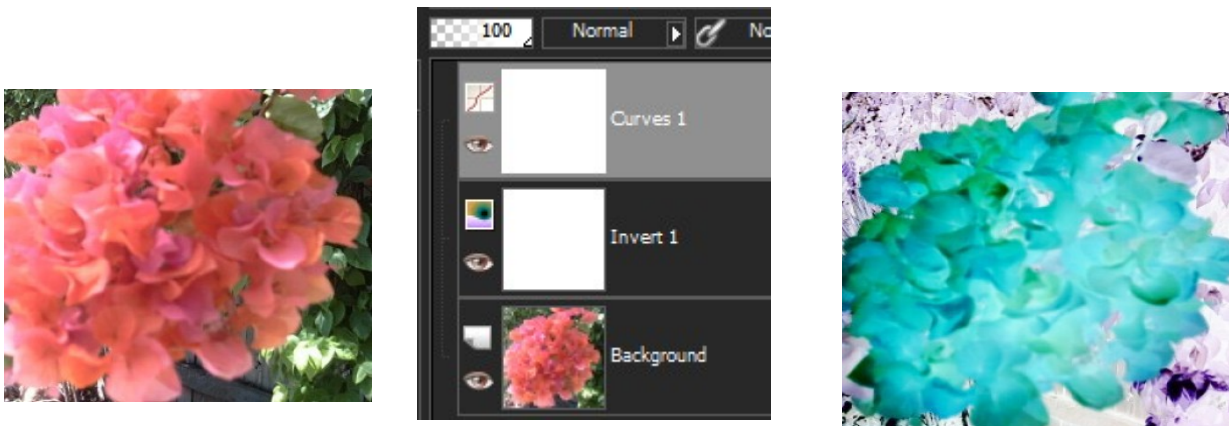
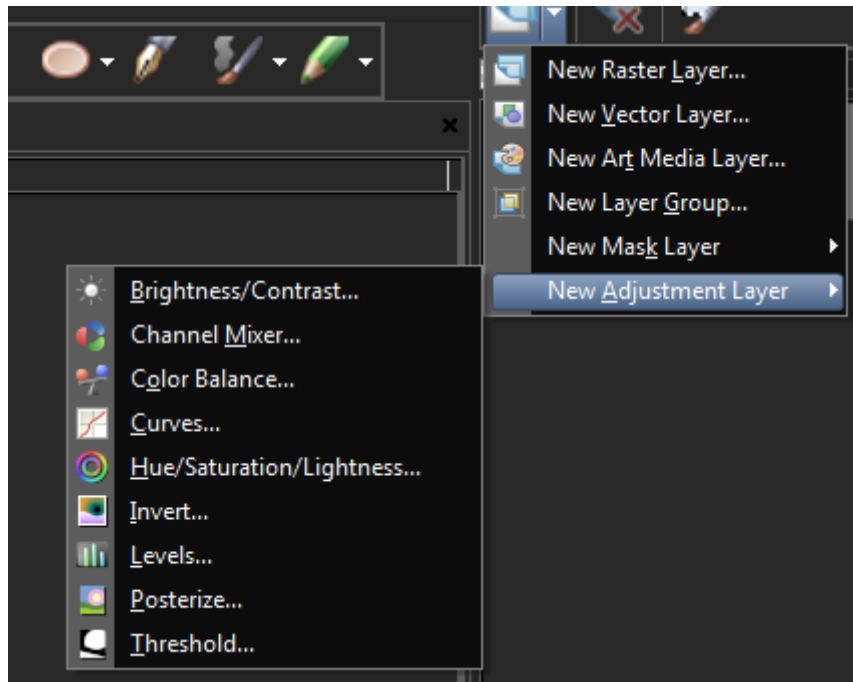


An object can be equally drawn on a raster layer. Untick Create On Vector and the object drawn, add a raster layer and draw the object. It can still be edited, however it is in raster mode. I used the magic wand to change the centre colour.



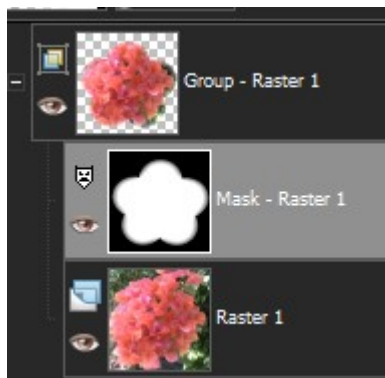
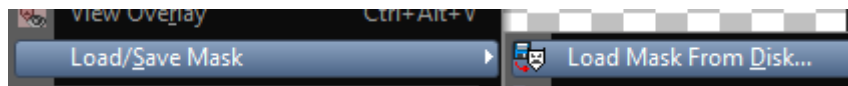
All objects are created on one vector layer...
 but are they?
 Each object is on a sub-layer. Each object can
 be moved at will, closed off and or merged.

4. Adjustment Layer :: The adjustment layer enables you to make changes to the image without affecting the background or base image, ie: applying curves, threshold and more.

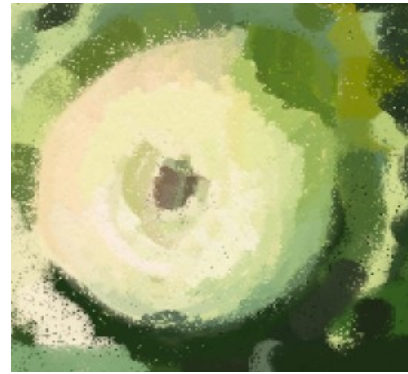
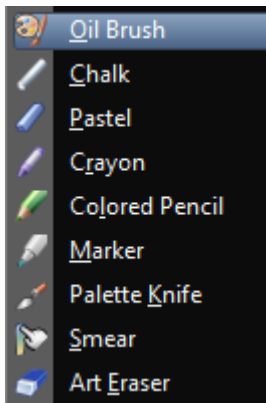


The Adjustment Layer has created what looks like two blank layers, but one is invert and the other curves that were applied to the image, but can't see it in the actual layer. However, the background image is unchanged.

5. Mask Layer :: The mask layers are very suitable to create effects to images and hides some aspects of the Background image. Create, download or use the default masks in PSP by using the Layers, Load Mask from Disk.

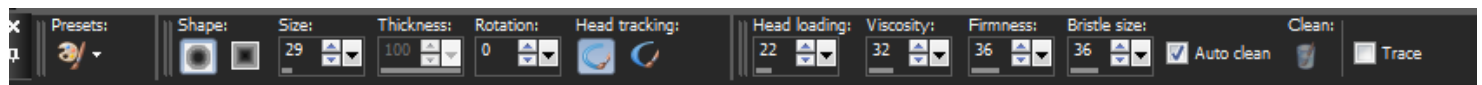
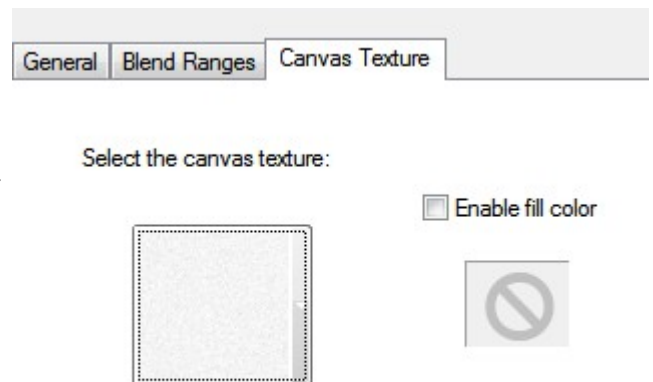


6. Art Media :: Art media layers enable the user to open a photograph, select art media tools which will add the new art media layer above the image. On this art media layer you can paint, draw and use any tools and textures without affecting the background image. Great for photopainting.



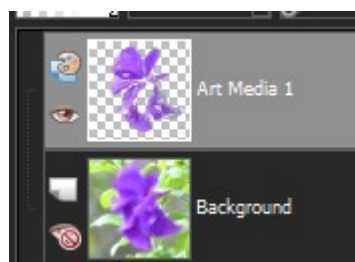
Select an image, choose a brush from the Art Media selection (for the above painting I used the Pastel brush). Automatically Art Media layer will be added. Double click on the layer to select a texture to paint with.

As soon as a brush is selected the Art Media controls become visible.



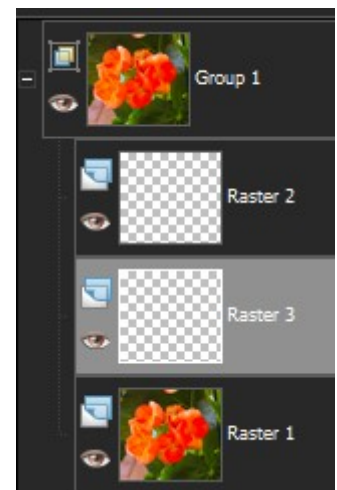
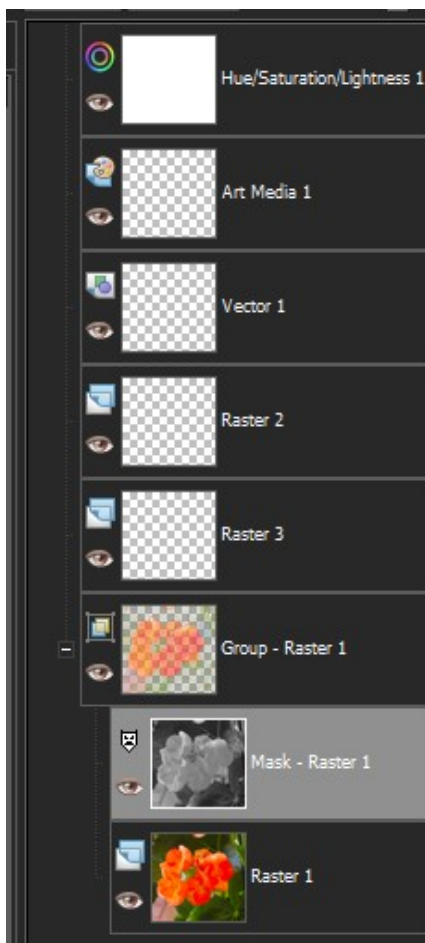
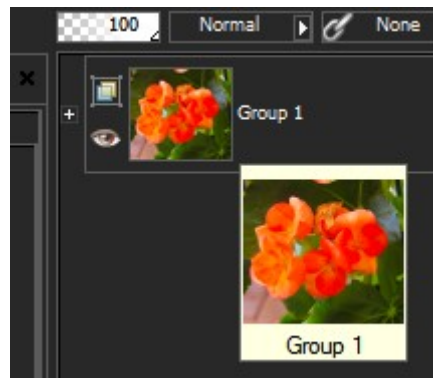
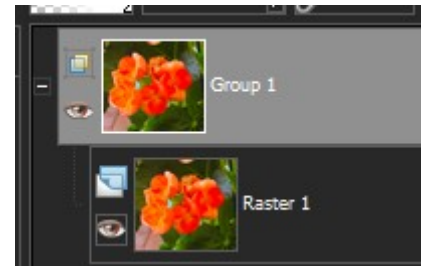
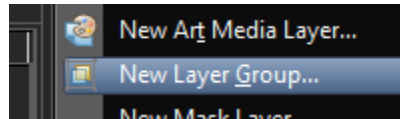
Adjust settings to achieve some interesting finishes. Add a tick in the Trace box and this will pick up the colours from the background image.

With the eye closed on the background image you are not able to paint on the transparent canvas. Open the eye and commence painting. You can create as many art media layers as you like to do different parts of the painting.



7. Group :: Grouping layers is effective if you need to apply applications to all layers at once. A good feature to use if you are going to have lots of layers.

Make a New Layer Group from the Menu bar, Layers or the Layers palette drop down.



Adding raster layers within the groups, click on the background image and choose a new layer.

If a layer is added outside the group, it can be dragged down into the group.

To close the group layers visibility, click on the minus – icon.

You can add any layer, however I'm not sure this would be practical

To merge all the layers, right click and Merge Group.

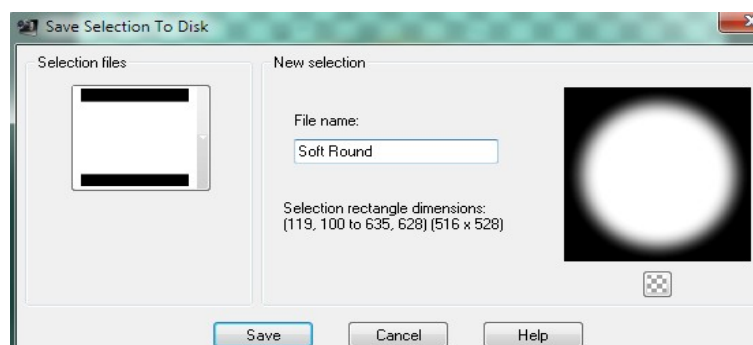
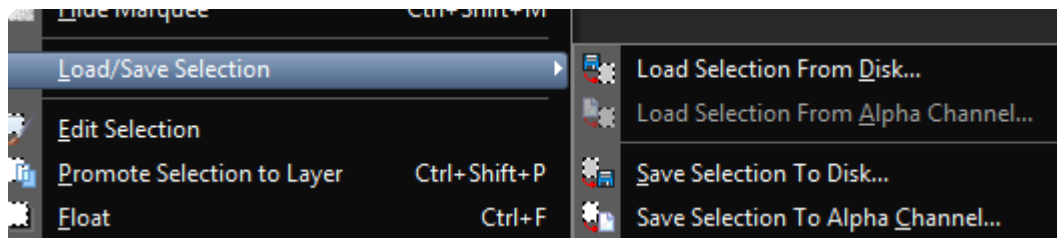
9. Selections :: A selection is just that, a selection of an image until you promote it to a full layer. Once the selection is on its own layer it can be modified and not affect the background image.

Select the Selection Tool, decide which type from the Selection Type; I chose an ellipse and added a feather of 45 to give a soft, faded edge. If you want the selection to be a solid edge, make feather 0.

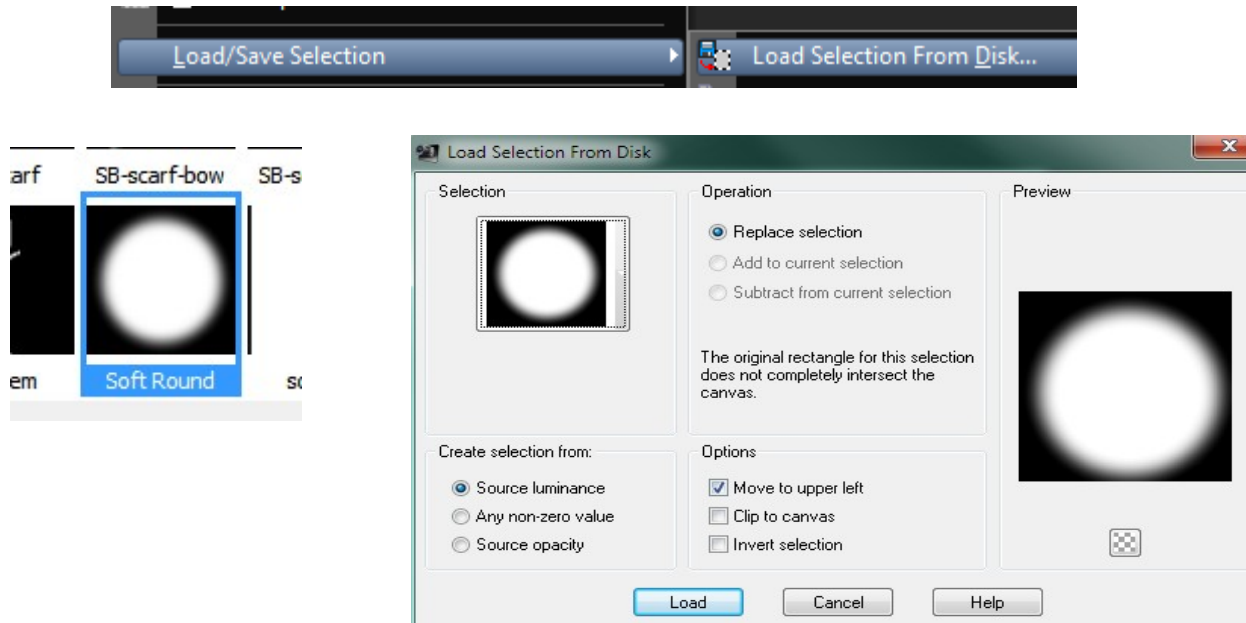


Right click on the Background in the Layers palette, Promote Selection to Layer.

A selection can be saved as an Alpha Channel as well as saving the selection to Disk.

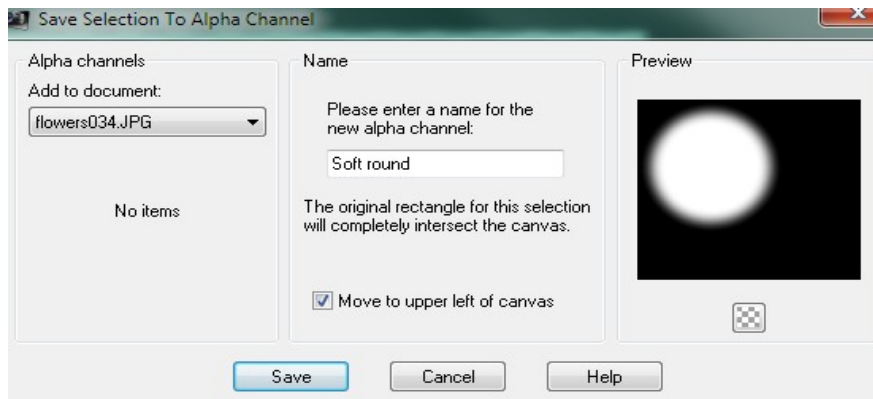


Open a blank canvas about 500x500 add a new raster layer, go to Selections and Load/Save Selection, Load Selection from Disk. Find the selection you saved.



Tick the box under Options, Move to upper left. The selection will be placed in the middle of the canvas! Before you deselect or promote the selection, fill with colour or an image.





Similar effects are created with the Alpha Channel. An Alpha Channel is a transparent image... similar to a mask.

Alpha Channel is a place where selection marquees can be stored.

Once the selection marquee has

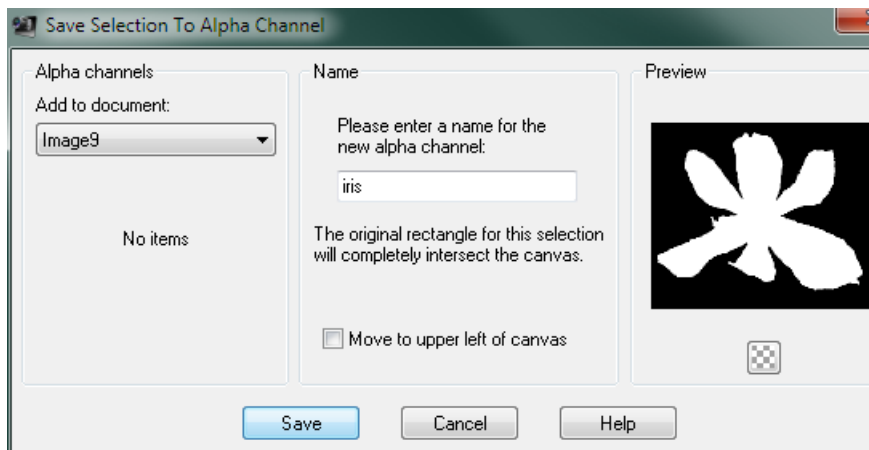
been saved as an Alpha Channel, then also saved as a .pspimage file, it is permanently embedded into the image. What this exactly means is, you can retrieve the selection from the Alpha Channel even after the file has been closed then reopened. This is very helpful if you wish to reuse them at a later date, or share. When the image has been reopened in PSP, open Selections, Load/Save Selection - From Alpha Channel.

Right click and save the below image and open into PSP, Promote Background to Raster Layer. With the magic wand, tap in the background area - Feather 0, Tolerance 28, Add(Shift) mode and RGB Value match mode.

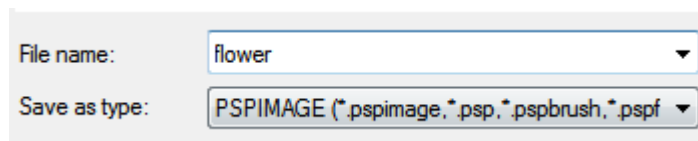


Once the whole background is selected go to Selections and Invert.

Selections, Save Selection to Alpha Channel. Give the selection a name and Save. The marquee is now saved to Alpha Channel.



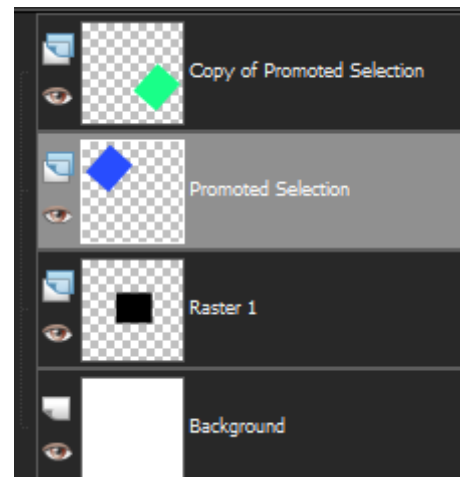
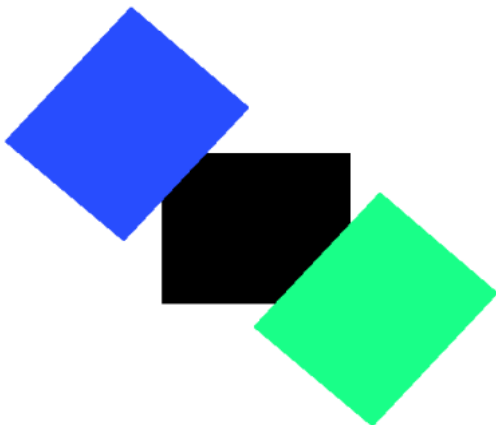
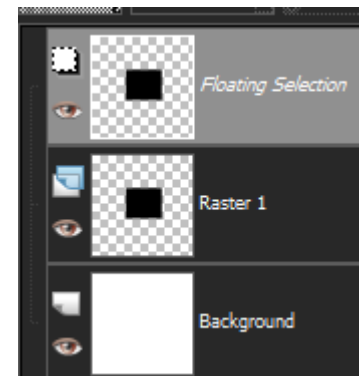
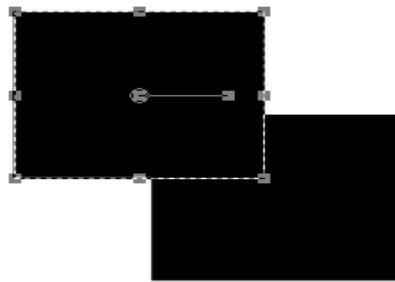
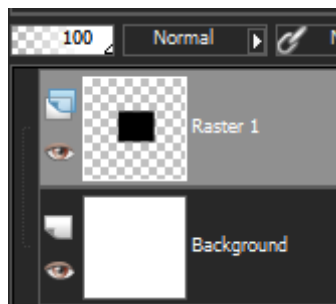
You may wish to save the selection embedded in the image. Go to the Menu bar, Save As and save the file as a .pspimage.



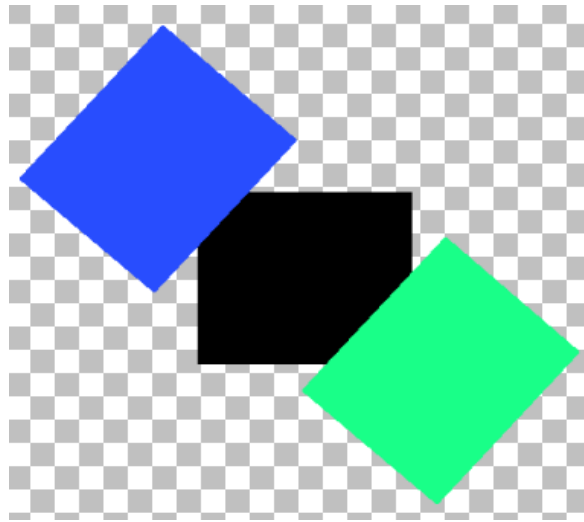
The Alpha Channel is now saved with the file for future use.

10. Floating Selections :: When creating a selection on one layer, you may need to move that selection to a different position. Creating a floating selection enables you to do this without affecting other parts of the selection or image. Once the selection is set in the correct position, it can then be promoted to a new layer.

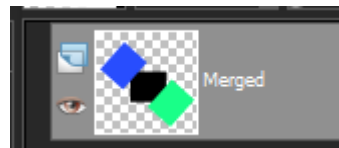
To float a selection go to the Menu bar / Selections / Float. When floating is complete, Defloat. This is found directly under Float. The Floating layer is then promoted to a new layer.



In order to recolour the selections, I used the magic wand, selected the particular layer and then flood fill.



I now have a background and three layers. If you wish to just have the squares, close the eye on the background, right click and merge visible. The background can be deleted if you wish.



I hope you enjoyed and at least learned something more about PaintShop Pro's Layers.



Painted in PaintShop Photo Pro X3 with Art Media Oil Brush