

# ADVANCED LAYER MASK TECHNIQUES

Welcome to my tutorial on Advanced Layer Mask Techniques. I'll be showing you how to use Layer Masks to take the Invisible woman from totally visible to partially invisible.

Figure 1 shows the original, from color samples I did on a Fantastic Four page, and Figure 2 shows the finished version.

In this case, we pretend the editor has called and said, "*We need you to make Sue Storm partially invisible!*"

After cursing the editor, his parents, and their next seven generations of children (I suggest you do this *after* they've hung up), it's time to get to work.



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This will take a fair bit of prep work to accomplish making Sue partially invisible. The first thing I do is use my flats layer to select all of Sue, and copy her to a new Layer - Figure 3.

Figure 4 shows her isolated on her own Layer, with the checkerboard transparency showing all around her.

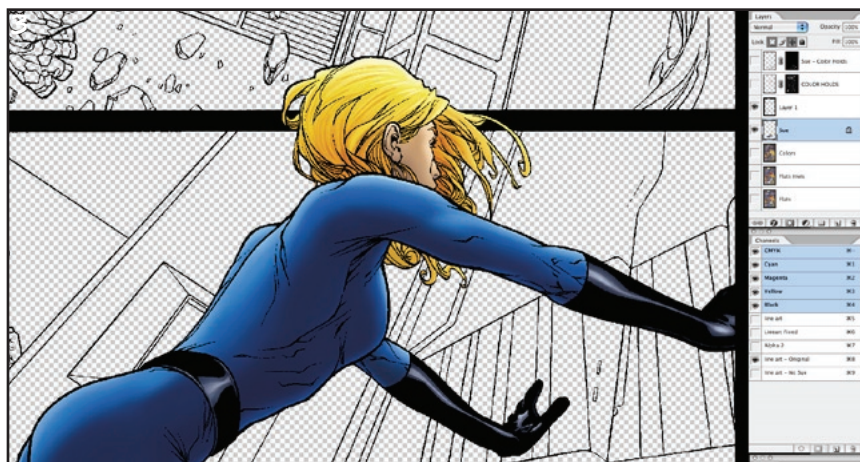


Figure 5 - next I select all the lineart that makes up Sue removed. First I selected the lineart with the lasso tool, zoomed right in so I could see all the details, Intersected it with the lineart channel, then made the lineart channel active, and deleted to white.

Next, I made a new Layer on top of everything, named it 'Sue - Color Holds',

and used my active selection to make a Layer Mask, similar to the way you make one for color holds.

This, as you've probably guessed, will be for the *color holds* on Sue's lineart.

For now, I fill it with 100%K, and set the Layer Mode to 'Multiply'. I will be changing the Layer Mode to 'Normal' Later. For now, it just makes things easier to see on-screen if it's set to Multiply. On 'Normal', you get a fuzzy grey outline showing at times, and I find that distracting.

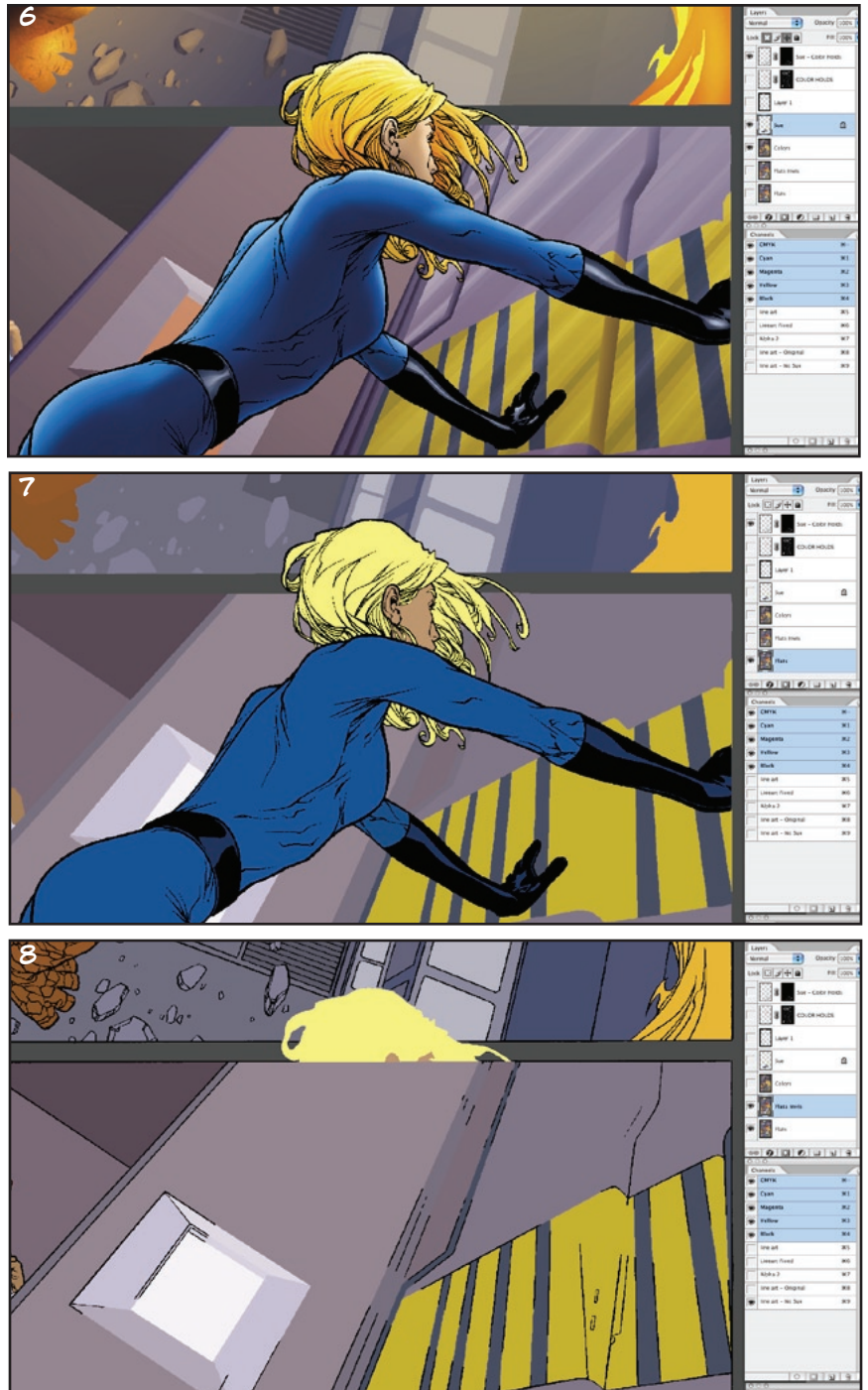


Figure 6 shows the layers, with the 'Sue - Color Holds' Layer turned on, and all the rest of the lineart turned off.

The next problem is working with flats. You'll end up with two sets of flats - one with Sue, and one with all the background behind her.

Figure 7 shows the original flats. I make a copy of this layer, and rename it to 'Flats Invis' - this where I start rebuilding all the backgrounds behind Sue, removing her entirely.

Figure 8 shows the results with the modified lineart, minus the color holds for Sue - I've completely reflat- ted the background, and now I'm ready for the next stage - drawing new lineart to replace all the 'broken' lines.



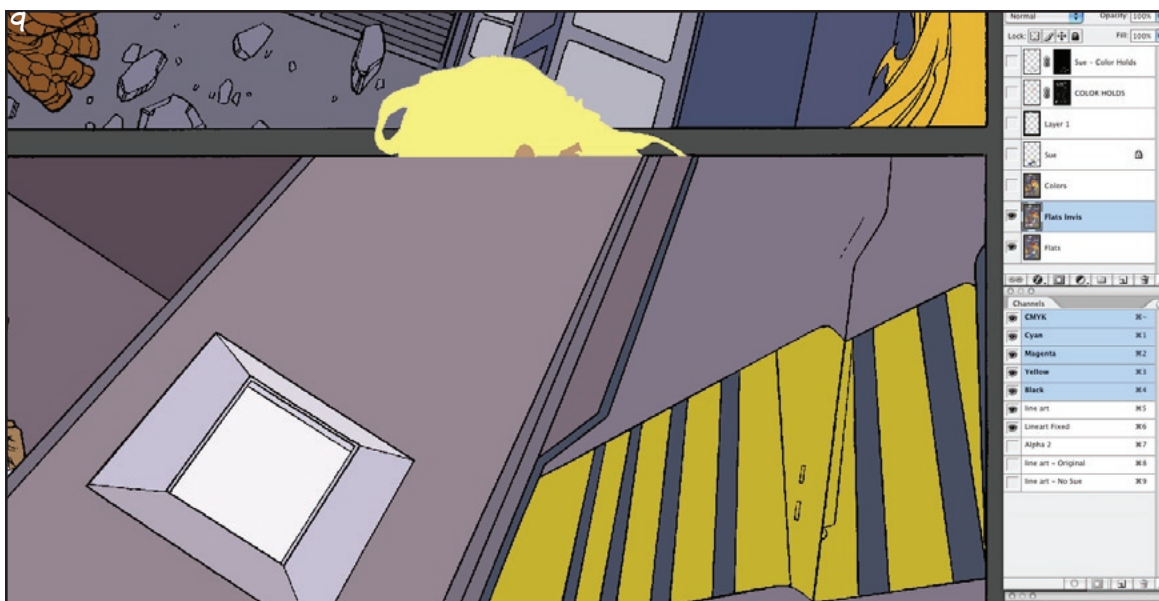


Figure 9 - Using Paths, the Pencil tool and Lasso tool I draw new lineart to fill all those gaps. I do this on a new channel, 'Lineart Fixed', to keep it separate from the

rest of the lineart.

Re-drawing lineart can be tricky, as you have to ensure there are no sudden changes to thickness in lines from the original line to the new version, or they'll stick out like a sore thumb.

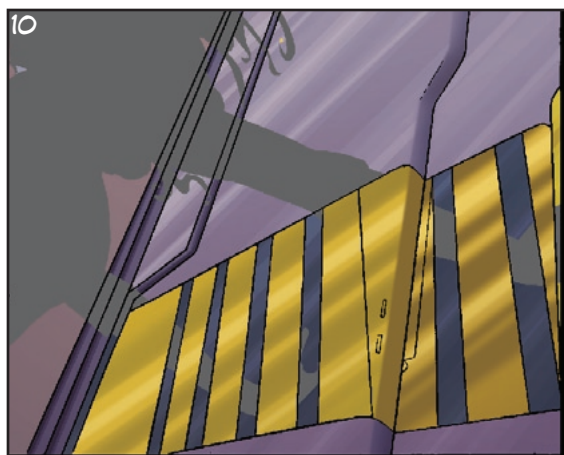


Figure 10 - Using the new flats, I re-color all the backgrounds behind Sue, starting with the Caution Strips. This doesn't take long, about fifteen minutes from start to finish, as I can just use all the same colors from the original.

Figure 11 - More Progress re-coloring. The left and right half of the door, in yellow doesn't quite match, but I can adjust that later.

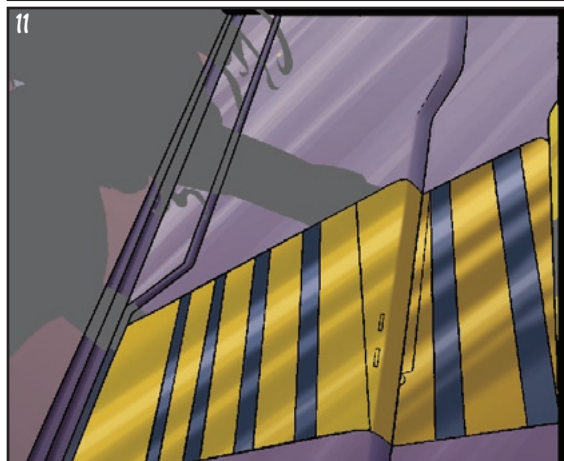


Figure 11 - more work, coloring the wall behind Sue.





Figure 13 - the finished background, all colored.

Figure 14 - This shows the new background, Sue, and the new lineart that runs behind Sue. We're just about ready to make her partially invisible.



Figure 15 - Now I select Sue again, so I can make the Layer Mask for the 'Sue' Layer. The actual 'Sue' Layer won't be changed at all, just the Layer Mask for this layer.

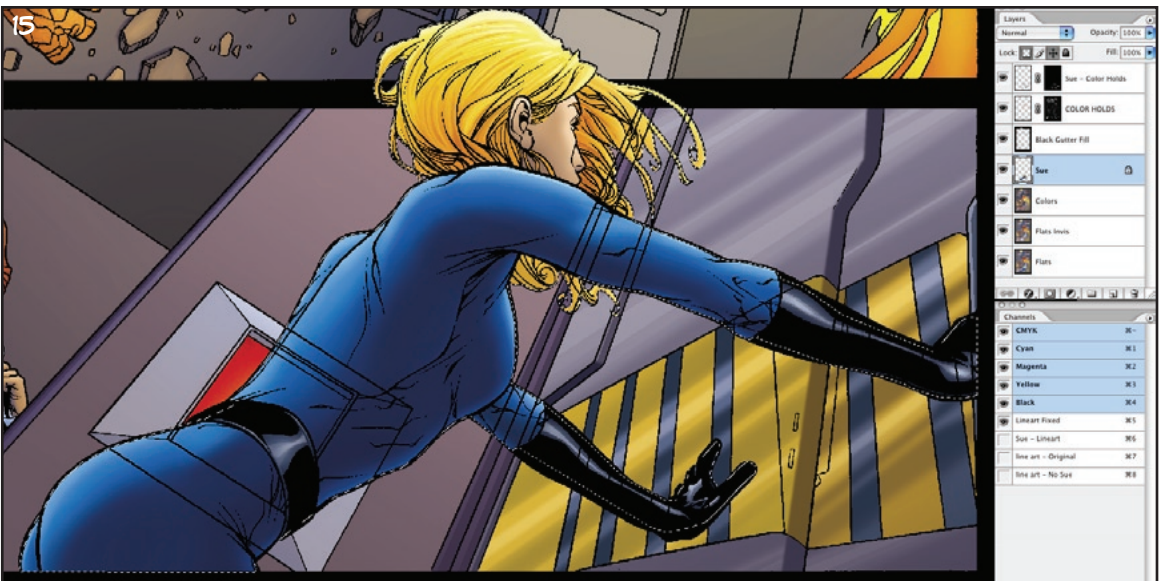


Figure 16 - With my selection active, I click on the Layer Mask icon in the bottom of the Layer palette. This uses your selection to create the Layer Mask.

If you don't have a selection active, your Layer Mask will be completely filled with white, and you'll have to make your selection, select the Layer Mask channel, and create your mask manually. Trust me, just do it the easy with an active selection the first time.

Figure 17 - On the layer 'Sue', you can now see two icons. The one with the checkerboard pattern and the little squib is the Layer, while the one that mostly black with the little white squib is the Mask.

Figure 18 - The Layer.

Figure 19 - The Layer, and the selection you used to make the Layer Mask.

Figure 20 - The resulting Layer Mask. Where it is Black the layer will be completely transparent; where it's White, the Layer will be completely opaque. Eventually, we'll have shades of grey - the darker the grey, the more transparent those parts of the Layer will be.

By now, you've probably starting to understand how we're going to make Sue Storm partially invisible!

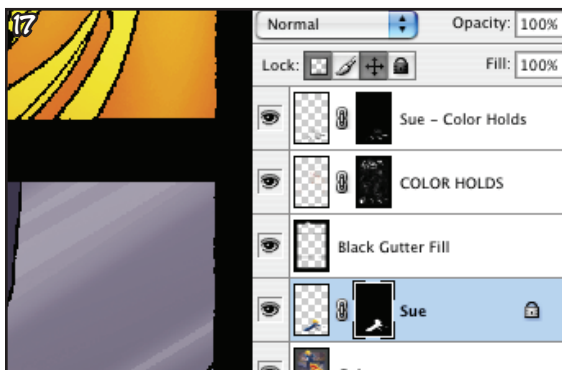
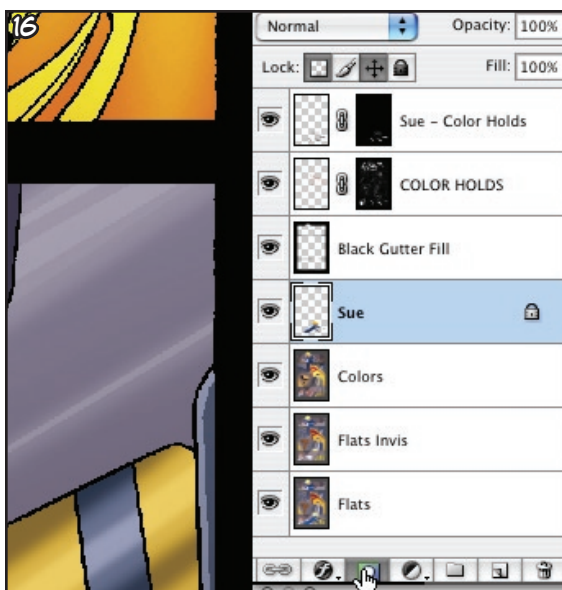


Figure 21 - I load Sue as a selection before I start any grads - it takes less time than having photoshop figure out the grad for the entire Layer.





Figure 21 - First, I make sure that I have the Layer Mask Channel active, and not the CMYK Layer - notice the channel that is active (highlighted in blue in the Channels Palette).

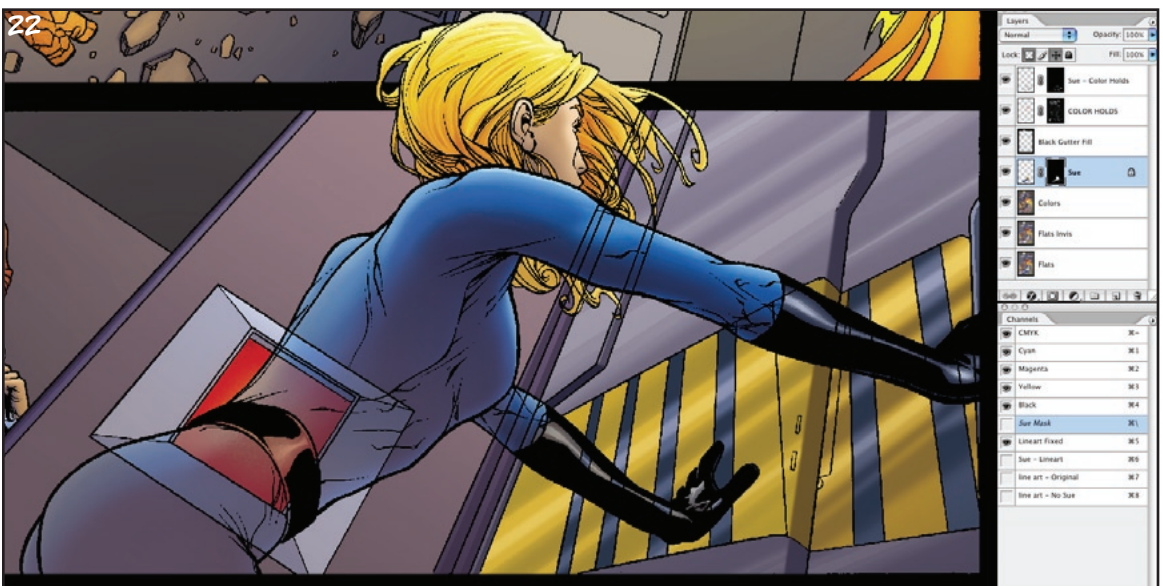
I use the Linear Gradient tool, with foreground color set to Black, a grad that goes from Foreground to Transparent, and 70% opacity. Starting at the bottom, I make my first grad, going from the bottom left, up to about her shoulder.

I don't go above her shoulder - we don't want her face, or the top of her head becom-

ing transparent as it overlaps the previous panel.

Figure 22 - I turn on the lineart to see how it looks with the background lineart showing through Sue. The wall panel looks fine, but the area around her hair and upper arm blows. I'll fix these on the color holds.

I'll turn Channels and Layers off and on frequently to check and see how it's all holding up, and make sure it's all integrating properly.



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Figure 23 - I make another grad, this time starting between her hands, and going up to about her ear - you can see the grad tool being stretched across in this image.



Figure 24 - I switch from the Linear to Radial Grad, and change my foreground color from Black to White.

Starting from the top of her head, I make a grad going down where her breast meets her left arm.

This grad reverses the 'invisibility effect.' I do this to ensure her head and face are fully opaque, so previous grads aren't making those areas partially transparent.

Figure 24 - The result

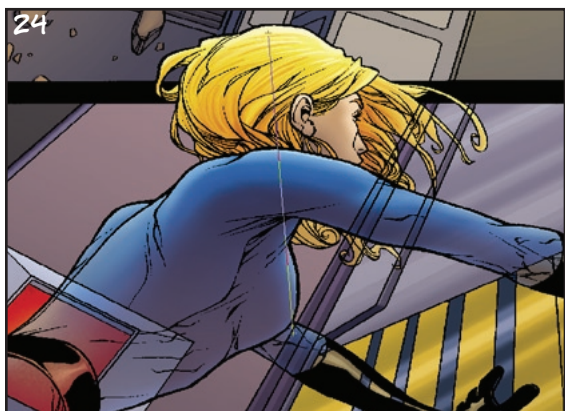




Figure 26 - I switch to the Airbrush tool, still using White as the foreground color on the Layer Mask Channel, I airbrush along

the bottom of her arms, make them less transparent where it is darkest, to add a little variation to the invisibility.



Figure 27 - Now I start tweaking the lineart on Sue. First, I switch to the 'Sue - Color Holds' Layer, then load itself as a selection, and delete the contents of that layer, so I'm left with an empty layer, and the selection.



Figure 28 - I switch to my 'Colors' Layer, copy, and paste onto a new layer.

Then I move that layer to top in the Layers Palette.

I want to use part of the background for Sue's outline, which is why I copy, paste, and re-arrange the order of the Layers.



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Figure 29 - You can see the new layer by itself here. Note that I keep Transparency, and Movement locked in the Layers Palette,

so I don't accidentally move, or add any extra color outside of the color holds.

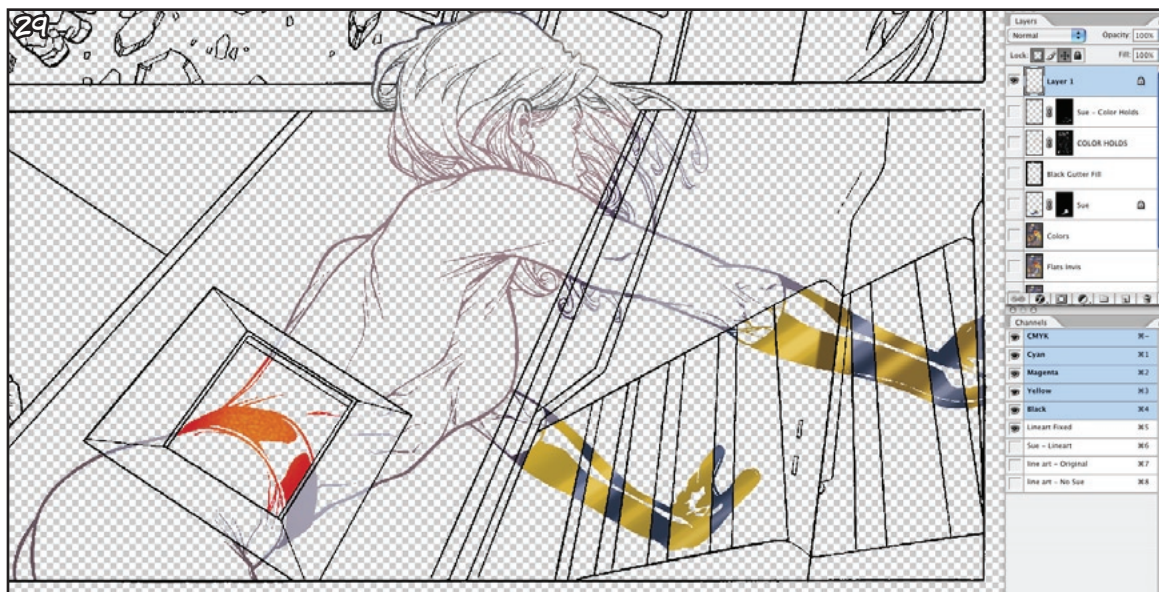


Figure 30 - Using Hue/Saturation, I adjust the layer so that the colors are darker, and more saturated than the background the layer came from.

Figure 31 - I check and see how the color hold layer is working with the partial invisibility layer. The bottom, by her hip looks find, but the upper part where Sue is less transparent looks too light, and the color hold by her face and hair look awful,

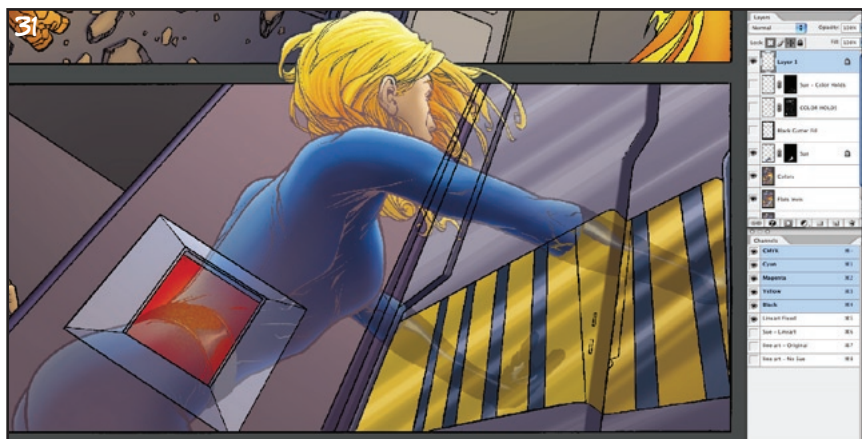




Figure 32 - I change the mode of the Grad tool from 'Normal' to 'Darken', and set my foreground color to 100%K.



Figure 33 - I decide I don't need to keep the new layer and the 'Sue Color Hold' layers separate anymore, and merge them, Preserving the Layer Mask.



Figure 34 - The two layers are now merged, and we still have the layer mask for the color holds. If you don't hit Preserve, your merged layers will not have a Layer Mask anymore.

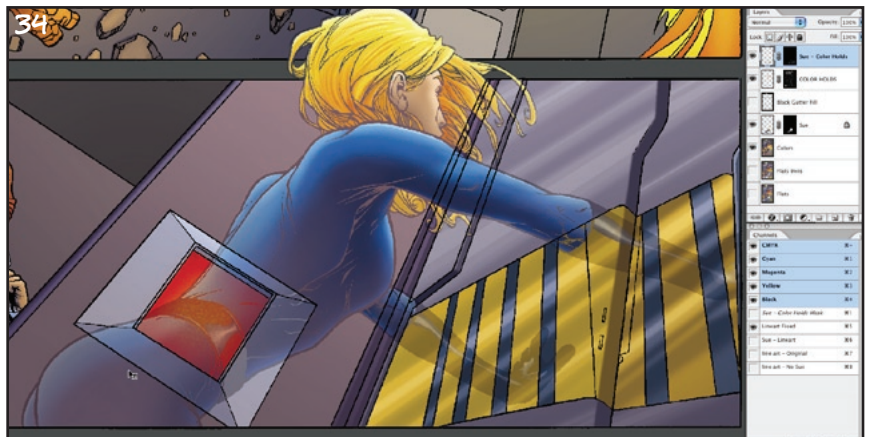


Figure 35 - I load the color hold as a selection, for faster grads. With a straight Linear Grad, they're pretty quick, but Radial grads tend to take longer to perform. Making a selection drastically cuts the time for a Radial Grad.

Figure 36 - I make a radial grad, using 100% K, set to 'Darken' mode, starting in the middle of her head, and going down as shown.

Figure 37 - The resulting grad, making the color holds darker at the top.

Figure 38 - Another grad, from her shoulders out.

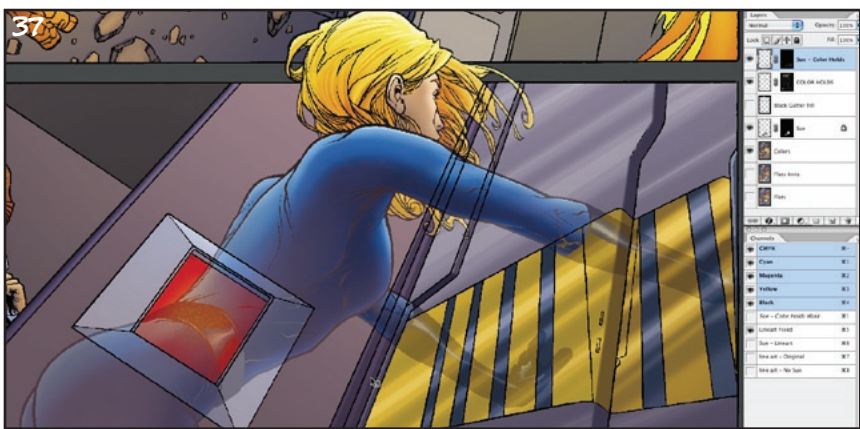




Figure 39 - Another Grad, from her arm down.



Figure 40 - The result.

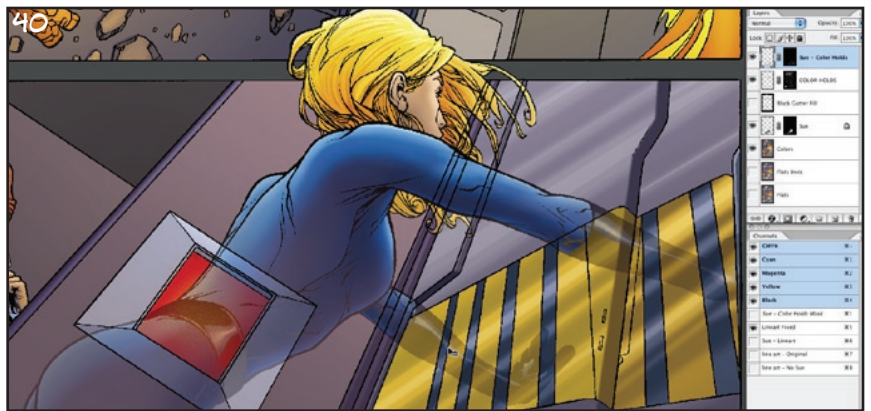


Figure 41 - I switch to the airbrush, set it to Darken mode, and darken the under side of her gloves.



Figure 42 - From here, I continue with the airbrush, touching up different parts of the color hold to make them darker where I want it.



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Figure 43 - I reduce my selections to the fixed lineart that runs behind Sue. Here's where you start to see me screw up, and how I fix things.



Figure 44 - I'm happy with the way the lines on the wall panel show through Sue's waist, but they also run through her hair, and arms, which look like crap.



Figure 45 - I delete the lineart, in order to fill again with a color that will barely show through.

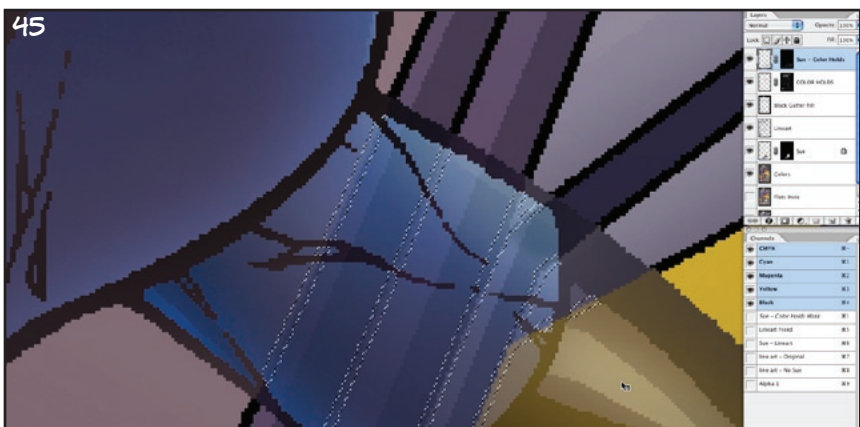


Figure 46 - I zoom in on her hair, and start erasing the lines that run across it, and also notice I need to make some of the lineart darker at the edges of her hair.





Figure 47 - You can see where I started adding dark grey to the lines that run across her arm above the glove. Even though I'm using a dark color, it shows up more like a light grey, and doesn't work.

This is because of the transparency of the grey from the airbrush. It doesn't just add dark color, but also changes the transparency, resulting in a washed out color.

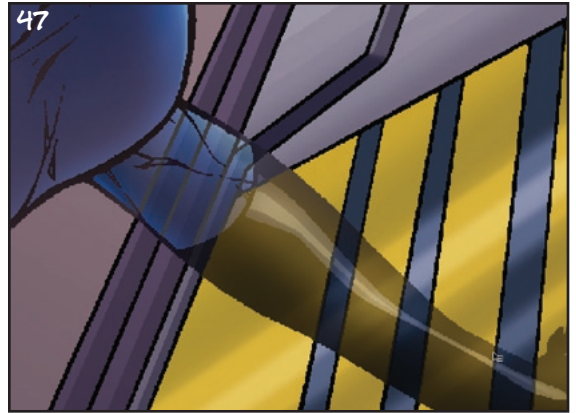


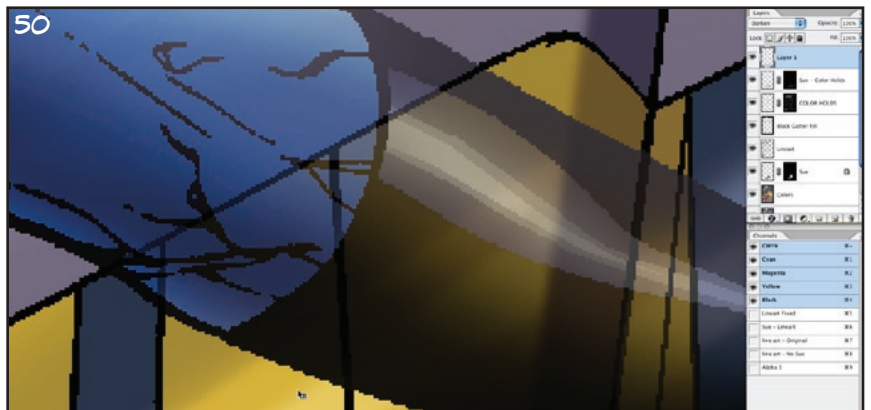
Figure 48 - Now I fix the problem by creating a new layer, setting the mode to 'Darken', what I should have done in the first place.



Figure 49 - Now I start airbrushing in the color holds for the lineart that runs behind Sue. Looks way better this time



Figure 50 - I keep working different parts of that lineart.



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Figure 51 - I Tweak the color holds in a few more areas.



Figure 52 - I create my Trapping Layer, and see a problem right off the bat. It's showing through some areas on the top layer, which is set to Darken mode.

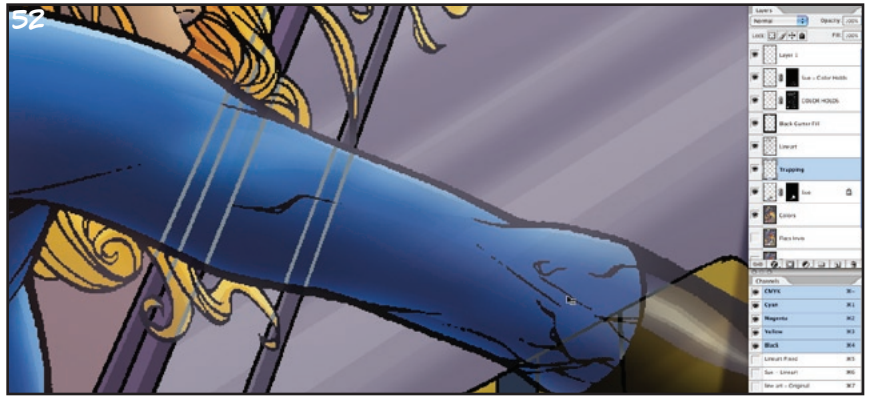


Figure 53 - I select the areas where the trapping shows through, and delete those spots on the trapping Layer.

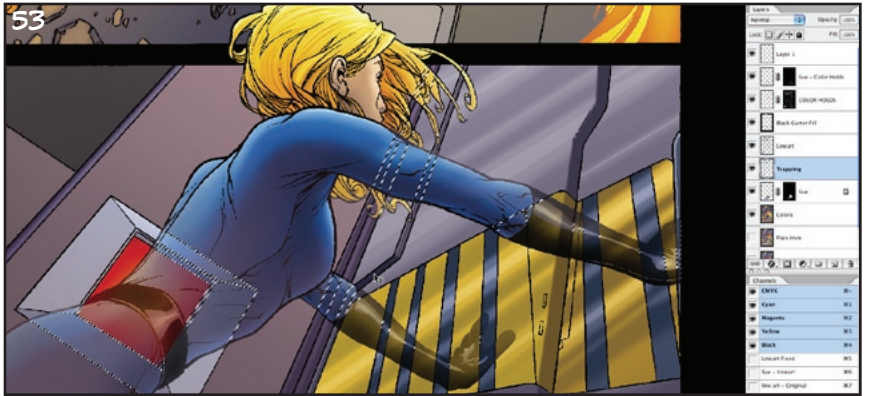


Figure 54 - The nearly completed partially invisible effect.





Figure 55 - Another reason the Layer Mask so handy. I select the Layer Mask Channel, and open up the Curves menu. Dragging the center down makes sure more transparent.

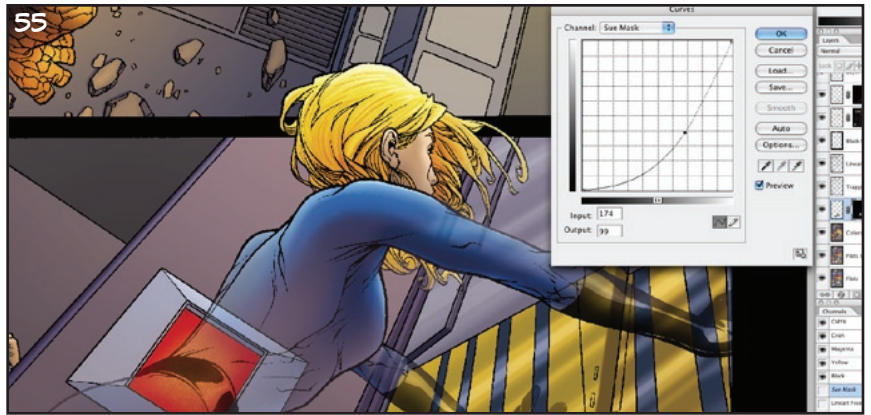


Figure 56 - ...while dragging it up makes her more opaque.

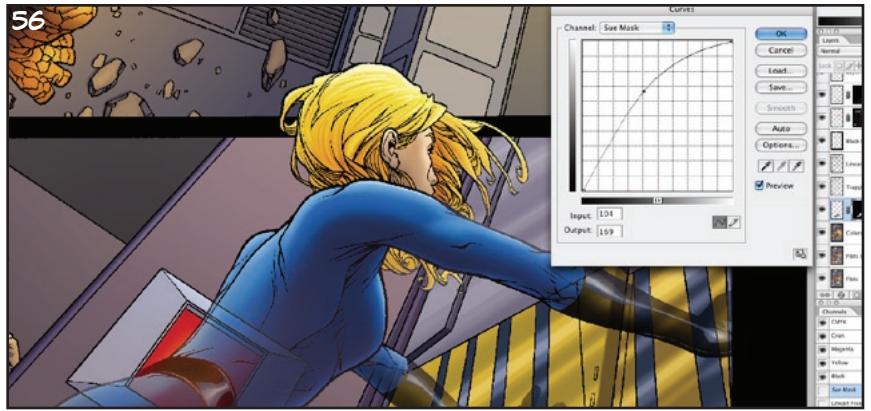


Figure 57 - Sue's Layer Mask layer by itself - the checkerboard pattern shows where she is partially transparent.

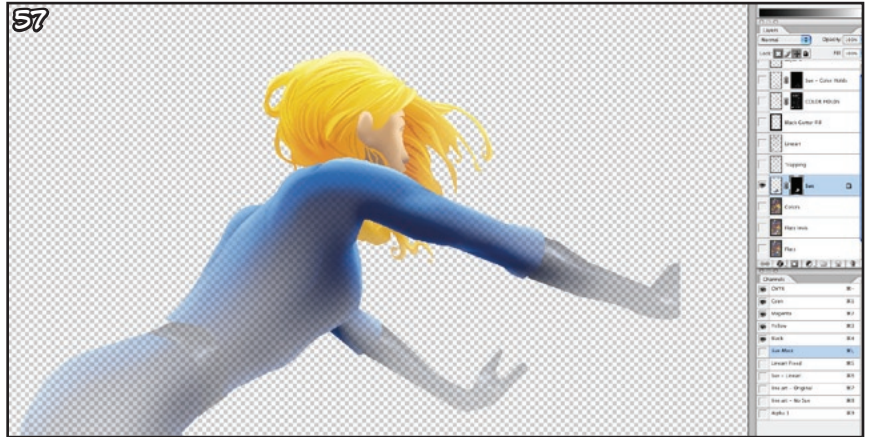
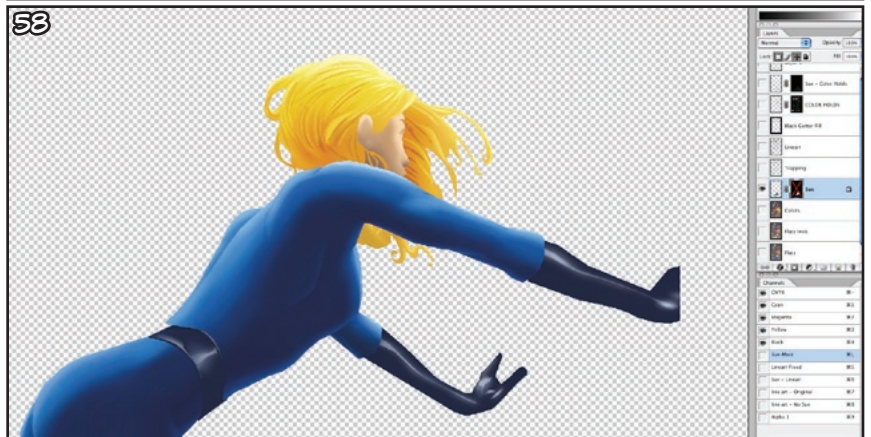


Figure 58 - Disabling the Layer Mask temporarily, you can see how the colors are unchanged from the original - by playing with the Layer Mask Channel, we get the effects we want, without destroying the original colors.



## Advanced Layer Masks

The final results, and the Before and After images. All told, about 20-25 minutes work total, from re-flattening, creating new lineart, re-coloring the background areas, creating the transparency and the new color holds.

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