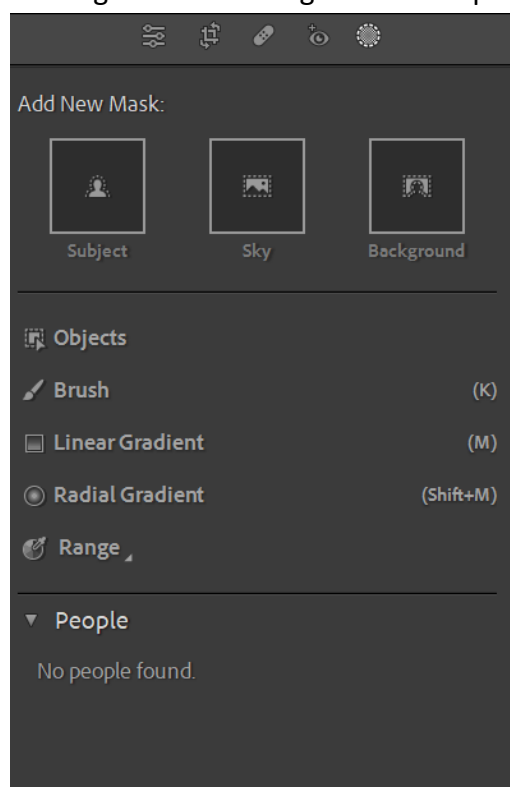# THE DIGITAL DARKROOM – 06

MASKS AND SELECTIONS (Lightroom classic and Adobe Camera Raw)

Selections are made in Lightroom by using the masking tools. These are found in the develop module of Lightroom. When you
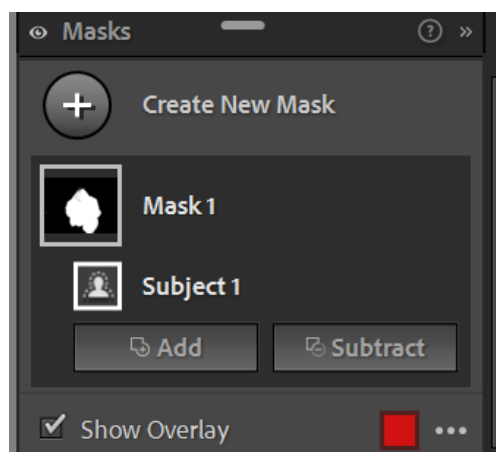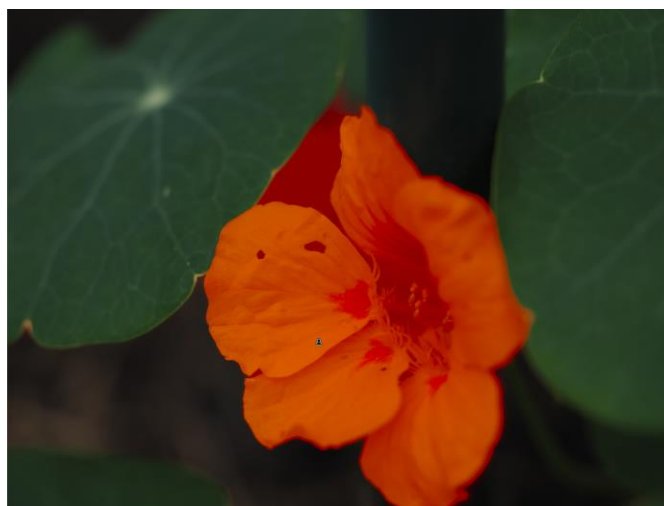

Masking Tools

Clicking on the masking tools icon opens a panel to select the various tools.

Three common selections are at the top of this panel –

- Subject
- Sky
- Background

SUBJECT SELECTION/MASKING A SUBJECT

When the subject masking tool is selected, a floating masking panel appears which shows the area which has been selected. The first mask is labelled Mask 1 and there is the subject mask just below that. In the image the subject is shown with a red overlay.

The overlay colour may be changed by clicking on the coloured square in the panel. Sometimes this is necessary when the subject itself is red. The red overlay may be toggled on and off by clicking in the ☑ box. If the red overlay doesn't appear when you start using a masking tool, click on the three dots at the bottom of the panel and select **Automatically Toggle Overlay**.

The red overlay in the image you are editing shows what has been selected and will be affected by any adjustments you make.

If the mask has not covered all the subject or if it has covered too much, then there are add and subtract buttons to enable the selection to be made more accurately. Note that when you select either add or subtract, you will need to select a tool to make the change. Often this will be the brush tool.
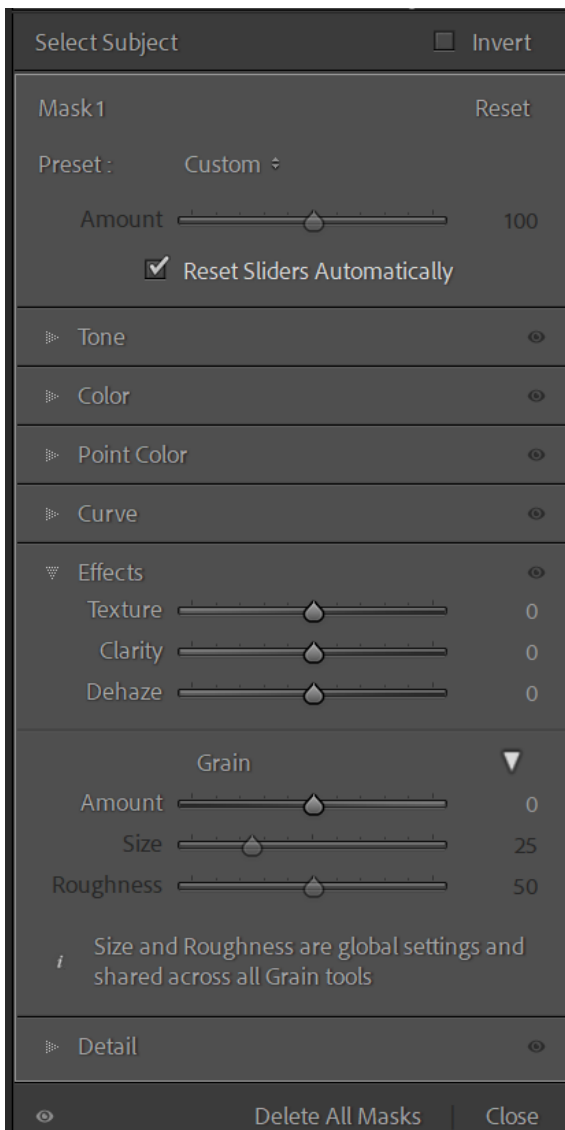
Once a mask has been made a panel appears on the right above all the usual adjustment panels. This panel will have the Mask number (or label) at the top, indicating that this panel is to be used to make adjustments to the masked area. (Do not use the basic and other panels below as these are global adjustments. The mask is a local adjustment).

This panel has tone, colour, point colour, Curve, Effects and Detail panels contained within it for making local adjustments to the selected mask. Clicking on the triangles at the side will open that local adjustment panel.

Just underneath the Mask number (or label if you have made labels) there is an amount slider and this may further refine the adjustments you have made.

SELECTING/MASKING THE SKY
One of the built in AI mask selections is the SKY mask tool. There are a few things to note about sky selection.

If there is a building projecting into the sky area it may also be selected and this will be indicated by the red overlay tint on it as well. This will obviously need to be removed from the sky selection.

Here the sky mask is clearly affecting the church spire.

In this case I used the object selection tool set to a rectangle to remove the sky from the spire.
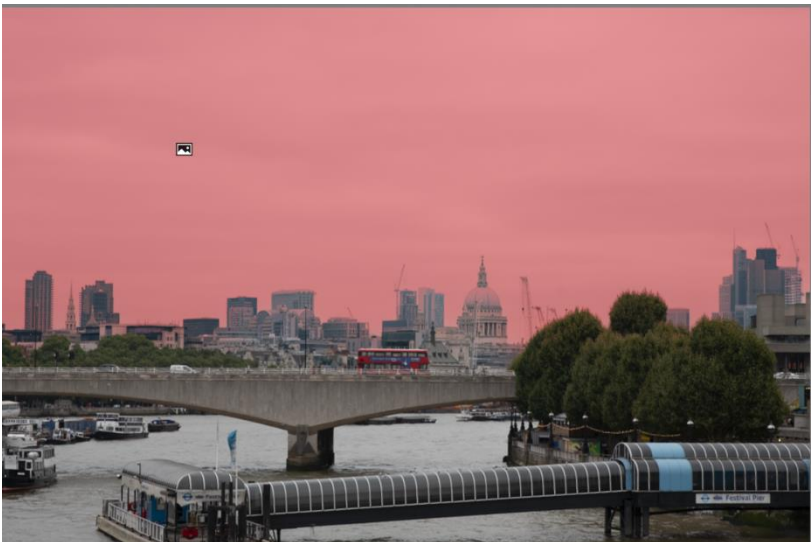
(Note: the object selection tool may be set for using as a brush or as a rectangle)
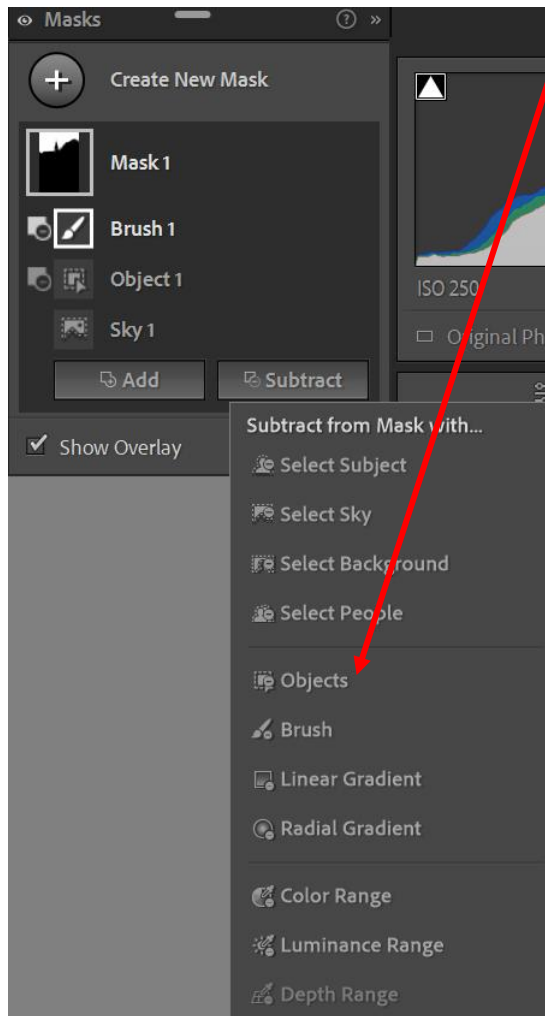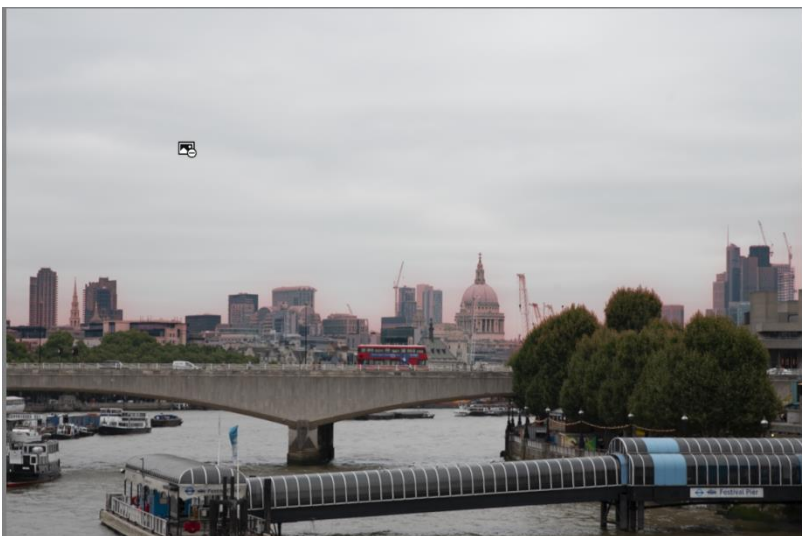
Another problem may arise when the sky and the distant foreground are very similar in tone. The sky selection may overlap the foreground. The following image shows this problem.


Here the sky is light and the buildings are also light.

When the selection sky masking option is selected, the selection mask covers part of the buildings.

To fix the problem use subtract and then in the drop-down menu select sky. This means you are subtracting the sky from itself. Just the area that is not sky is left with the red overlay tint.
(The sky algorithm in subtract sky is different to just the sky algorithm.)
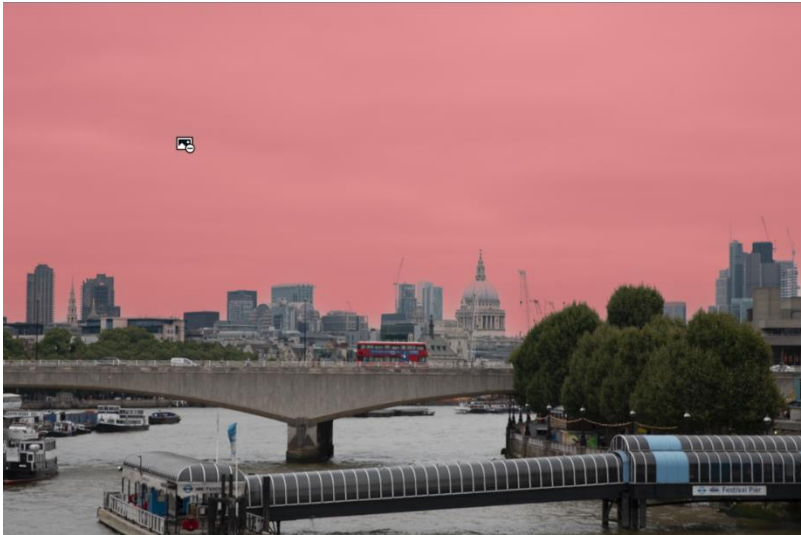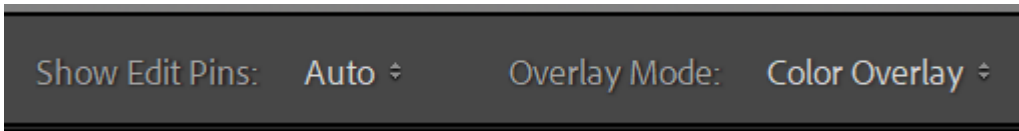
Now select the invert option
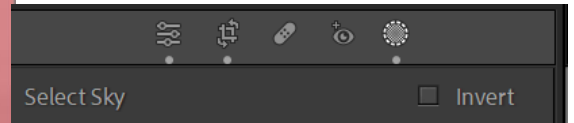
Now only the sky will be selected.

The masking pins (edit pins) may be turned off if needed. At the bottom of your image preview screen, you will find a Show edit pins pop-up menu. Change auto to never from this. If you don't see the show edit pins pop-up menu then press the T key on your keyboard to show the tools.

If you want to temporarily hide these edit pins, press the H key on your keyboard. The pins remain hidden while this key is pressed.
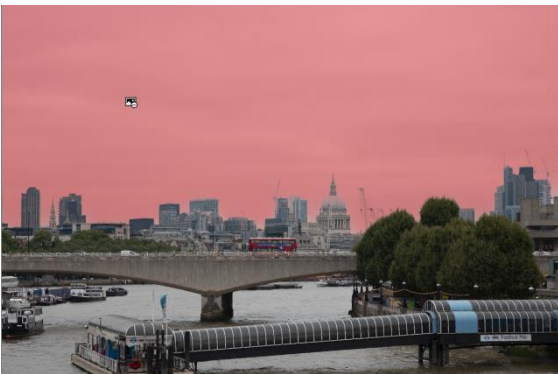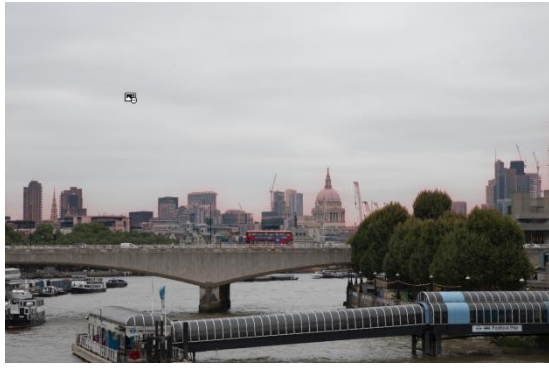
SELECTING/MASKING THE BACKGROUND

There are times when selecting the background mask gives an undesirable result. An example of this is shown by the image on the left.

Selecting the background mask gives the result below. Almost the entire image has been selected. Only part of the trees is not selected.

Clearly this is not suitable. To create a more suitable mask, first delete this mask. Along side of the name Mask 1 will be three dots. Click on these and **select delete Mask 1**

Now select the sky as in the method described above under selecting sky. Use the subtract sky and then invert to get a clean sky mask.
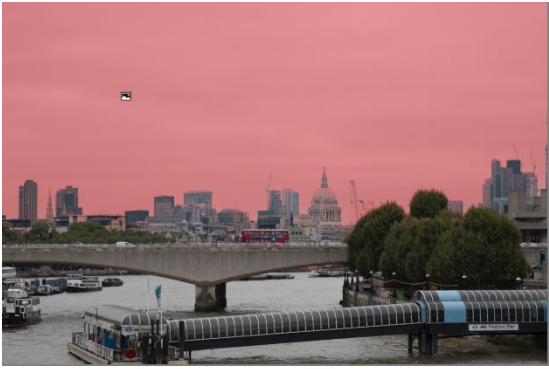
The sky mask is then inverted and if the resulting mask as shown above still contains a little of the sky selected, then use subtract and select sky. This will then result in a clean mask of the selected area.
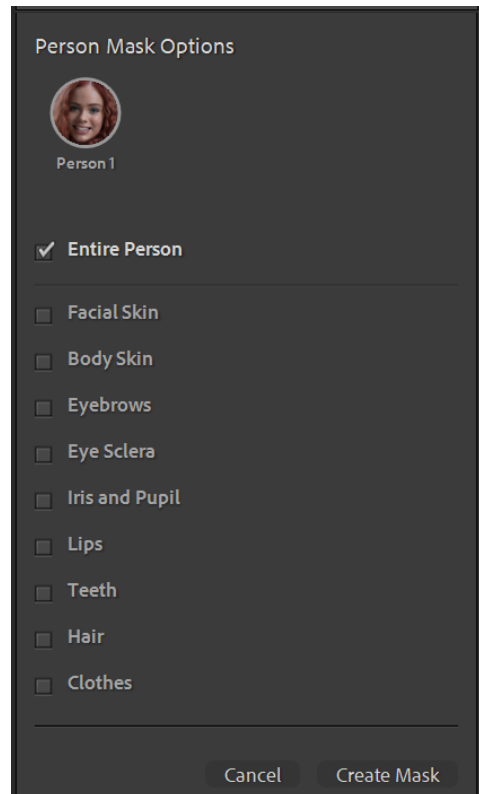
The Background mask works well with portraits.

For this image, the background is easily selected just by using the background mask.

SELECTING/MASKING PEOPLE

The masking tool will detect people in a scene. If there is more than one person, the tool detects this and offers masks for each person.

The tool first detects the person, then if you click on the small round image of the person in the mask, a panel opens up where either the entire person may be selected or the components of the person.

Once you select some of the parts then an option is available to create separate masks for each part or to create a composite mask. It is better to select the separate masks so that each part may be edited separately.

If there are more than one person then if two or more require the same adjustments two or more people can be selected and a composite mask made for them. You also have the option of creating separate masks.

Some tips for editing using the person masks:
- **Iris and Pupil** – use the shadow slider to increase the brightness, a bit of contrast and maybe a bit of texture to make the eyes pop.
- **Eye sclera** – reduce saturation to remove blueness or yellowness in the eye sclera, then exposure slider to brighten if required.
- **Teeth** – reduce saturation to remove yellowness, exposure to brighten the teeth.
- **Hair** – increase the shadow slider, and add a slight bit of texture.

OBJECT SELECT/MASK

You may use this tool in one of two ways. The first tool is the paint brush – just paint over the object, you don't have to be accurate. The tool will find the object. Remember there are the options of add or subtract if needed.

The second way to use this tool is to draw a rectangle around the object using the square tool and the tool will find the object and mask it.

The object tool is very useful and is usually very accurate.

BRUSH TOOL FOR MASKING

The brush tool is very handy for adding to or subtracting from another mask which has not been selected fully or over-selected. While it can be used by itself, it is best used to modify other masks.

COLOUR RANGE MASK

- Sample a single colour in the image click on the colour you wish to sample.
- OR click and drag an area around the colours you want.

- OR Shift + click to add multiple colour samples (up to 5 colours).
- To remove an existing colour sample within the colour range mask, click SUBTRACT, then colour range and click the sample colour you wish to remove.
- The Refine slider is used to widen or narrow the range of selected colours.

LUMINANCE RANGE

Select a point or area in the photo using this tool. All areas with the selected range of brightness will become a selection. This way, you can make precise adjustments to just those levels of brightness in a photo. To select a luminance range within the mask area, do any of the following:

- Adjust the **Luminance Range** slider to define the endpoints of the selected luminance range.

- Click+drag an area on the photo you want to adjust. It is recommended to select a small area to narrow down on a specific luminance range.

Select the **Show Luminance Mask** check box to view the luminance information of the photo in black and white representation. The part in red colour shows the actual area masked by the Luminance Range Mask.