

HOW TO CUT AROUND OBJECTS IN PHOTOSHOP AND OTHER RASTER EDITING PROGRAMS QUICKLY EG FOR USE IN SKETCHUP

INTRODUCTION

This Tutorial briefly describes a quick semi-automatic method that can be used to cut around objects in Photoshop and other raster editing programs eg Paint Shop Pro. These images can then be imported into Sketchup eg people, plants, anything !!! It is particularly useful for objects whose edge is very difficult to define eg Hair, Animals Fur, Leaves on Trees etc

GML MATTING PLUG-IN

Go to the Graphics and Media Lab Web Site

<http://research.graphicon.ru/>

Download the GML Matting Plug-in:

http://research.graphicon.ru/component?option=com_remository/Itemid,31/func,fileinfo/id,52/

This Plug-in has been tested and works well for Photoshop and Photoshop Elements.

The Help file states that it works for the following raster editing programs:

Adobe Photoshop

Adobe Photoshop Elements

Corel Paint Shop Pro (earlier versions were Jasc Paint Shop Pro)

Macromedia Fireworks

PhotoFiltre Studio

Serif PhotoPlus

IrfanView

GIMP

It should therefore be useful to many SketchUp users.

INSTALLATION

Ensure that the Plug-in is installed into the Plug-in folder. For Photoshop Elements it is:

C:\Program Files\Adobe\Photoshop Elements 4.0\Plug-Ins

The install might prompt you for this path if its not picked up automatically. (2nd prompt on install).

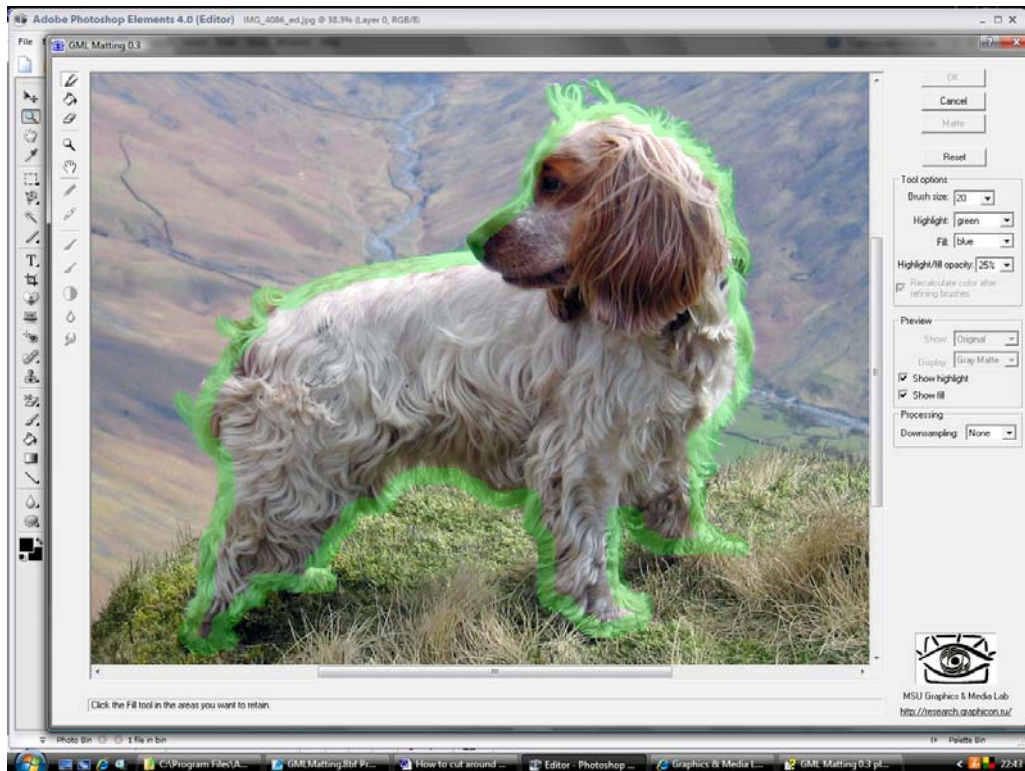
OPERATION

The GML Matting Plug-in is Semi-Automatic:

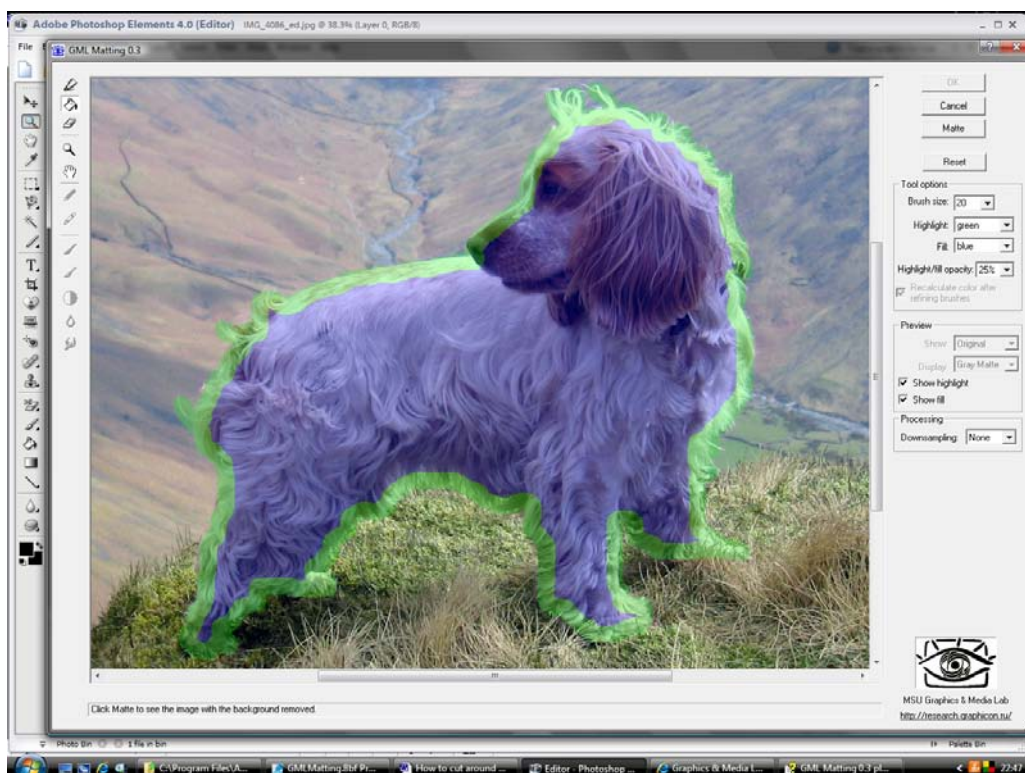
- The user defines the edge of the object of interest as roughly or as accurately as you require (this is the manual, user driven part).
- From this (green) boundary and (blue) fill that the user defines, the software will then automatically try to lock onto the boundary that you have defined with more precision and cut the object of interest for you.

METHOD

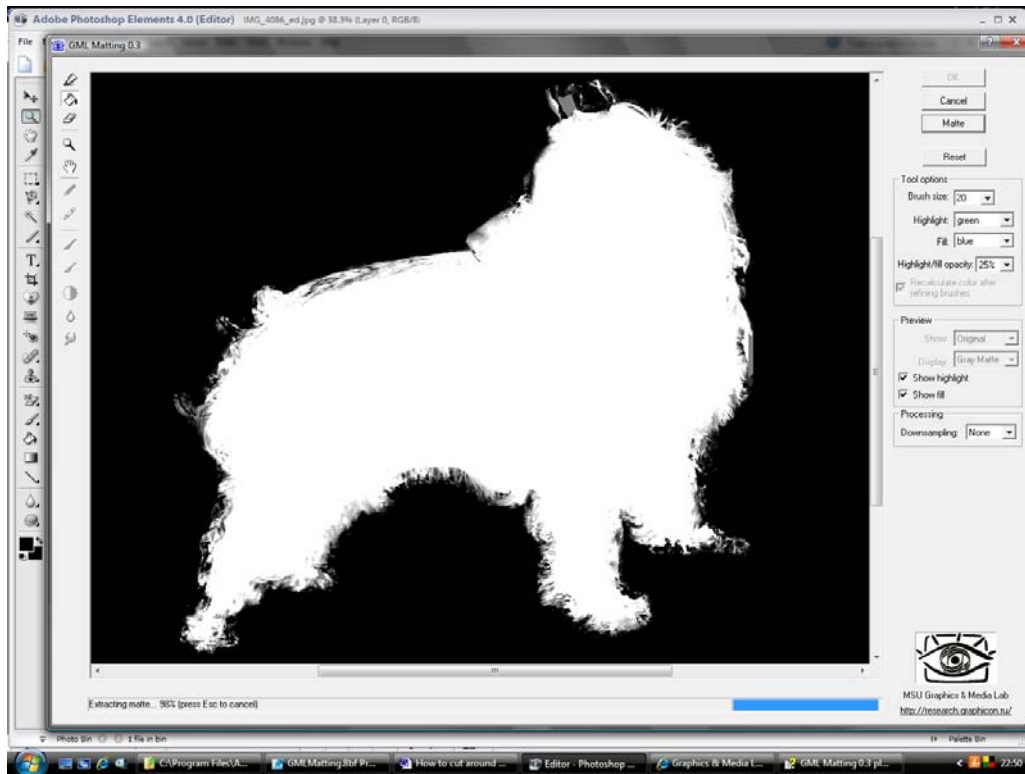
1. Define the edge of the object with the highlighter tool (green boundary). Ensure that a closed boundary (polygon) is defined - 2 minutes.



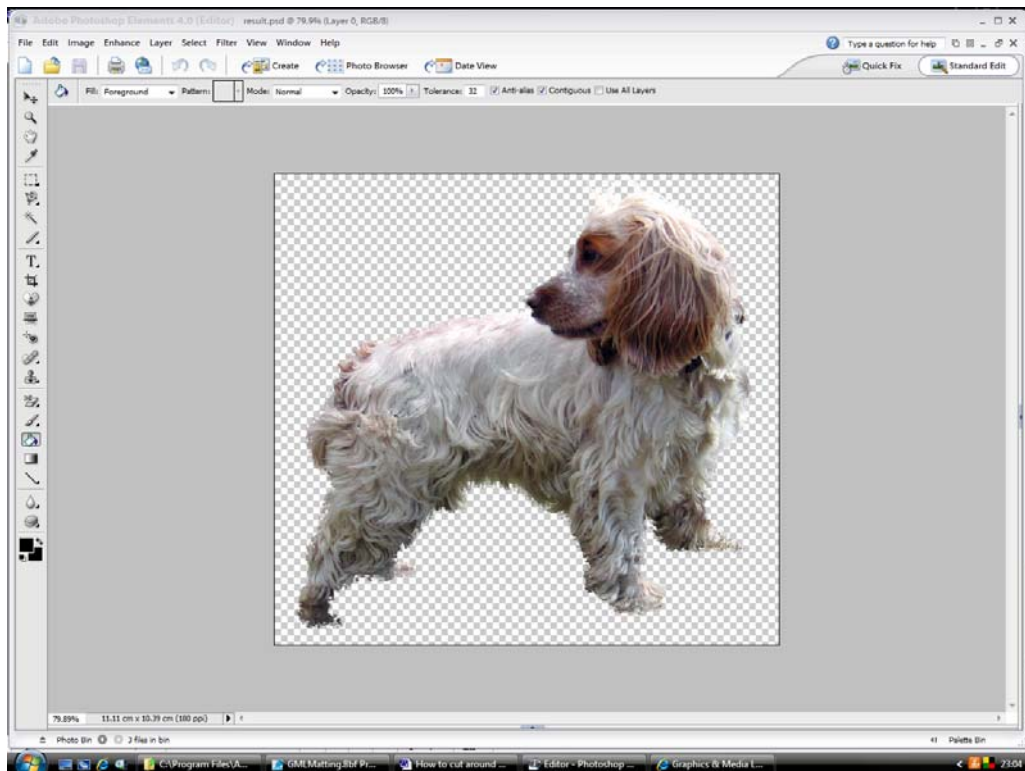
2. Fill the green boundary using the paint bucket tool (blue fill) – 2 seconds.



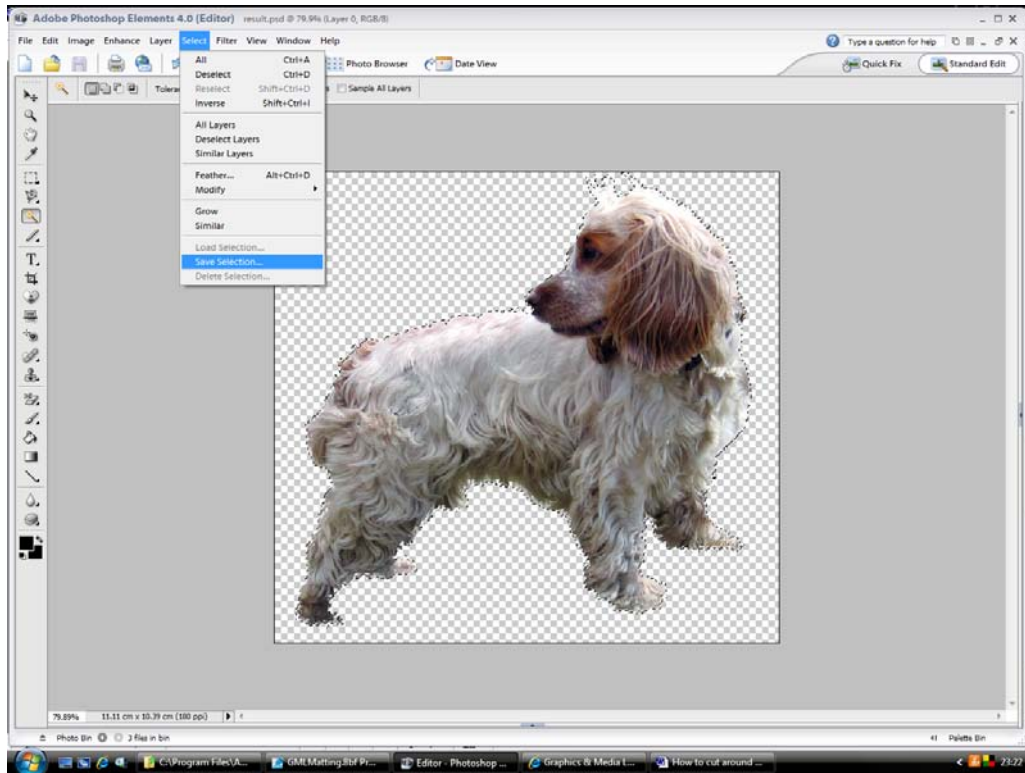
3. Click “Matte” Button – the rough boundary is automatically adjusted to something more accurate, as the software attempts to work out your area of interest more precisely– 10 seconds.



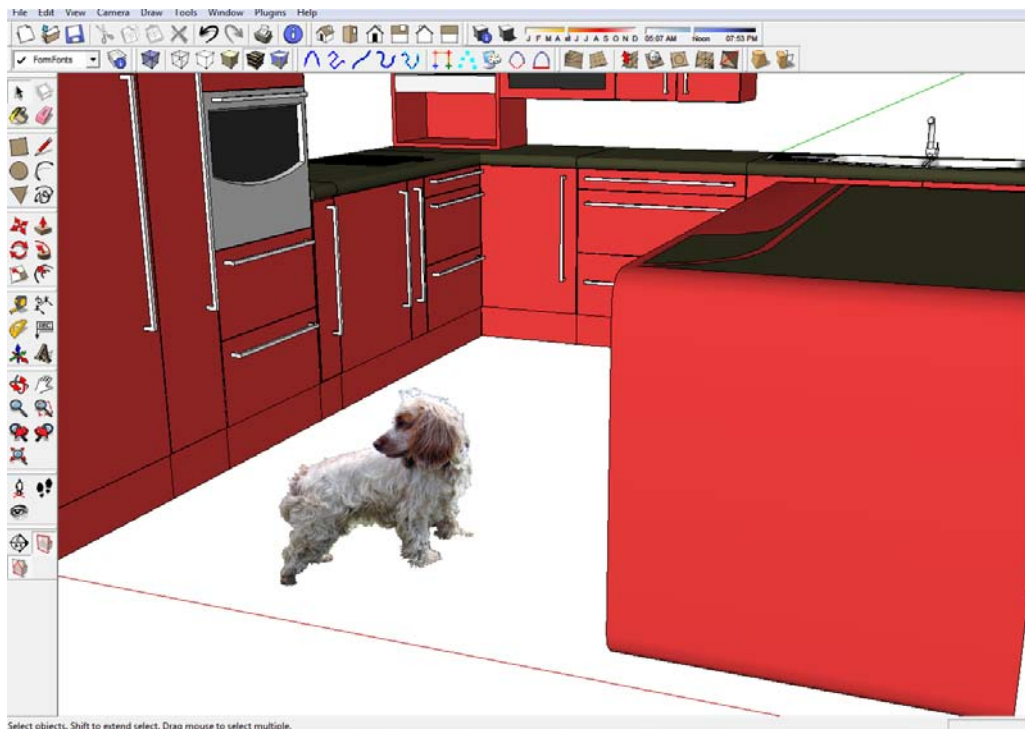
4. Result – this image can now be saved eg as a *.png (to preserve the transparent background layer) and inserted into SketchUp.



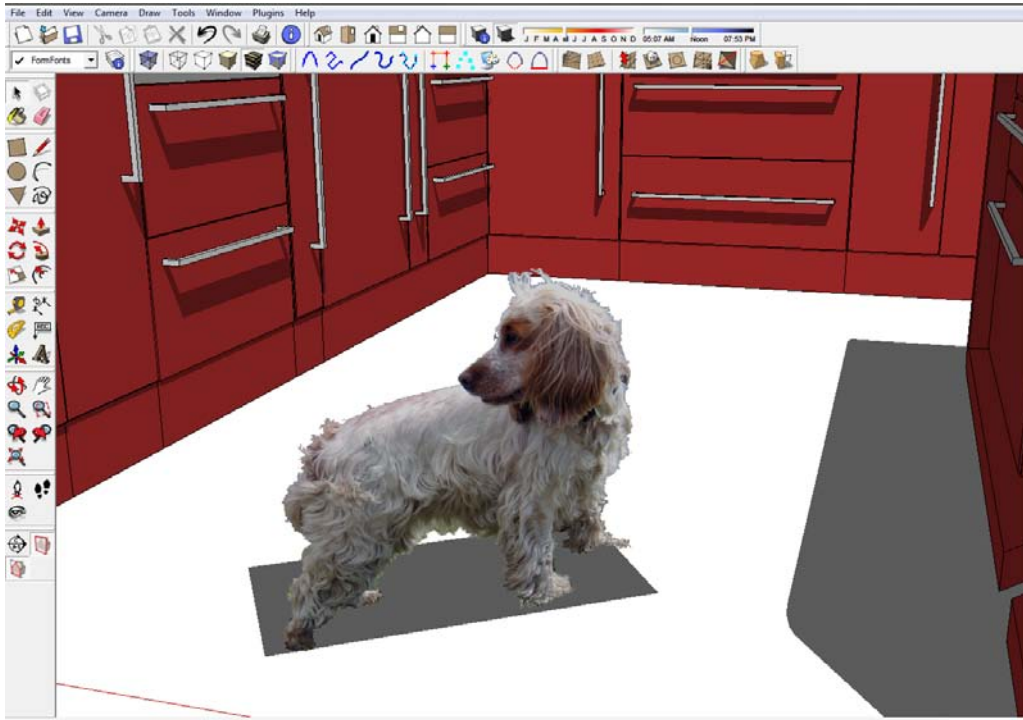
5. The image can now be selected easily (as it has been cut out), by using:
 - a. Magic Wand Tool – Click on the Background
 - b. Select – Inverse
 - c. (Optional) Select – Save selection (useful for future use if required).



6. The image can now be inserted into SketchUp



7. By default, images do not cast shadows. But note, the rectangular shadow if you turn shadows on, and activate shadows for the image (R Click image – Shadows – Cast / Receive)



8. This might not be important, depending upon how you are going to use the image in SketchUp. However, if you do want the image to cast the correct shadow, eg in this case a dog shape – see the link below to another very useful tutorial.

SUMMARY

9. The method described can be used to cut-out images very quickly for use in SketchUp. It is a very useful method for fuzzy boundaries eg hair, fur, plants etc.
10. If the boundary is defined more accurately by the user – a better result is obtained. (The example shown here in this tutorial was done very quickly for demo purposes).
11. However, the whole point of this method is that it is a quick semi-automatic method. If you are going to spend hours defining a single boundary around an object very accurately, there is no need to use this method, the standard tools available in Photoshop can be used instead.
12. It is a trade off between accuracy of the boundary required and speed.
13. Alternatives to using this method are:
 - a. Standard Photoshop Tools
 - b. Photoshop Magic Extractor (not as good IMHO).
14. The selection boundary can be saved with the image if required (step 5).
15. This selection boundary can then be used to create a path or vector layer and finally cut out a face in SketchUp which corresponds to the outline of your image. This face will then cast the correct shadow. See Alan Fraser's excellent tutorial, which tells you all about it:

<http://www.sketchucation.com/forums/scf/viewtopic.php?f=22&t=6687>