

Design Beautiful Pages Mastering Masks

Test Your Skills Challenge 2

by Linda Sattgast

How To Avoid The “Blob” Effect

Using an artistic clipping mask tells the world that your page is, well, artistic. Most of the time a good mask design will use photos that are beautiful and stir something of awe and wonder in the viewer. Not always, but most of the time.

Since you can only see part of a photo clipped to a mask, you had better make sure that the photo is “readable.” In other words, you want the viewer to instantly understand what the photo is about, and, ideally, the photo should stir up a feeling of artistic wonder.

What you don’t want is the “Blob” effect. This happens when someone looks at the mask and says, “Huh?”

Take the following photo. I can tell it has fall leaves on it, but it doesn’t really make sense. It might work great on a rectangular grid with several other photos about autumn. But by itself on a mask it just makes me say, “Huh?”

What could we do to achieve our objective of masking a photo so it becomes art that inspires?

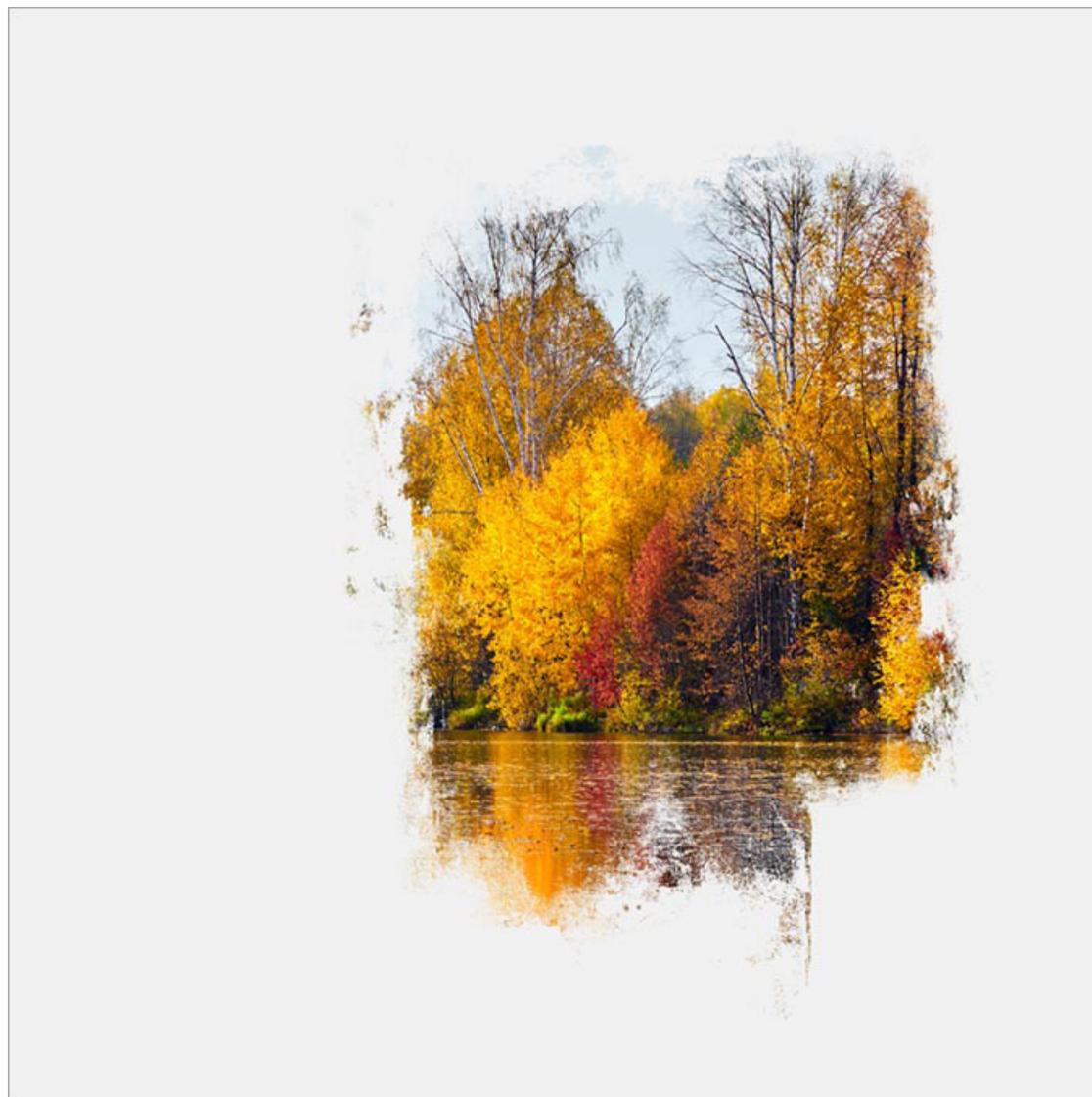


Here are two possibilities:

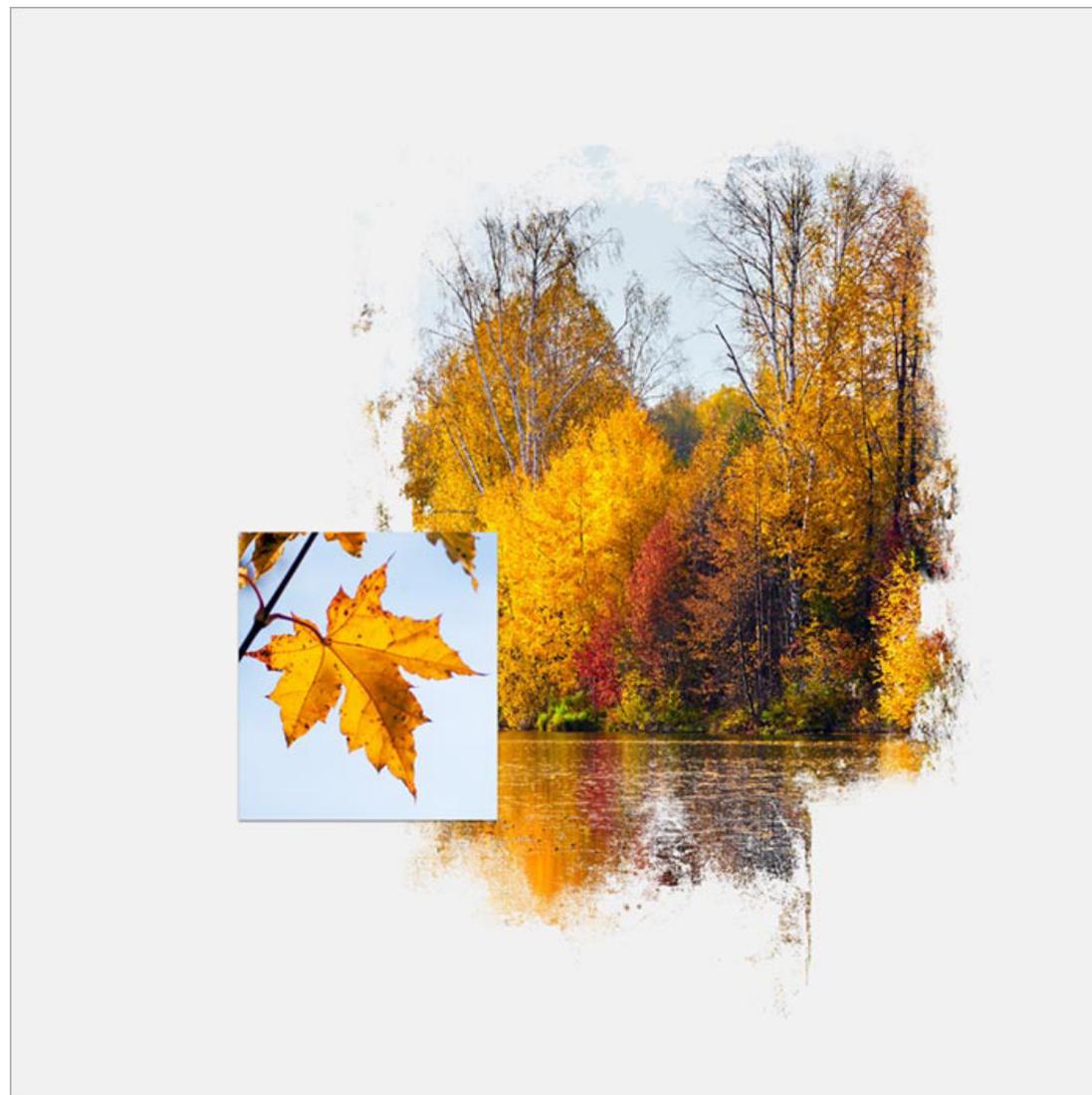
We could add a smaller photo of a single leaf that becomes the main focus. Here I'm using template #5.



Or we could use a photo that is more “readable.” It doesn’t make us say, “Huh?”



I decided to do both. I used the more readable photo with the mask but also kept the smaller photo of the single leaf.



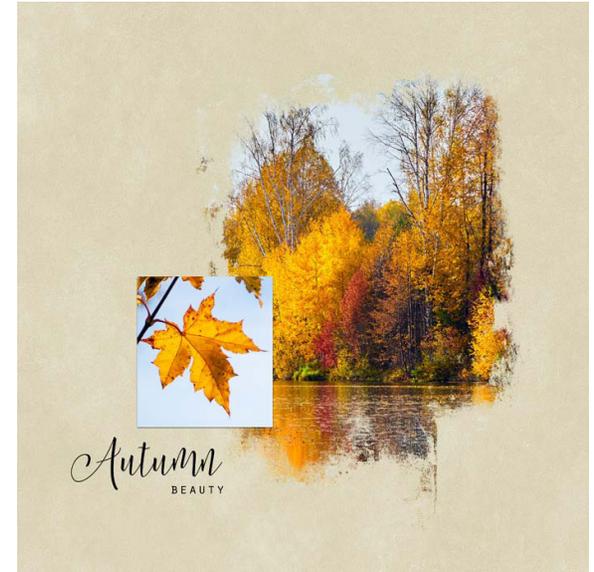
Then I added a word art title created using two words in different fonts and sizes.
Which word art placement would you choose and why?



Neither placements are “wrong.” I simply chose the word art on the left because it made a nice diagonal line with the photos, so to me that made it a little bit stronger.



Now let's choose some background paper.
Which papers would you definitely NOT pick and why?
Which papers are possibilities? Which one would you pick?



Here are my paper comments:



The grungy paper doesn't fit with the photo.



Aaaaarrggghhhh!



This makes the mask and photo stand out.



Very busy pattern competes with photo mask.



The plain colors on the last two papers match with colors in my photo... I wonder if it might be too similar overall. But I like the color.



See which paper I chose:

I chose Paper #3 (light beige) and paper #4 (the orange patterned No-No paper) and blended them together! (I know. Sneaky.)

I placed Paper 4 above paper 3, changed the blend mode to Soft Light and lowered the opacity to 70%. This provided a hint of pattern and a warmer color.



Here's what I did to finish the page:

- Add a white stroke outline and custom drop shadow to the photo
- Add a red stroke outline around the entire page
- Add a fall cluster in the lower left corner that continued the diagonal flow.

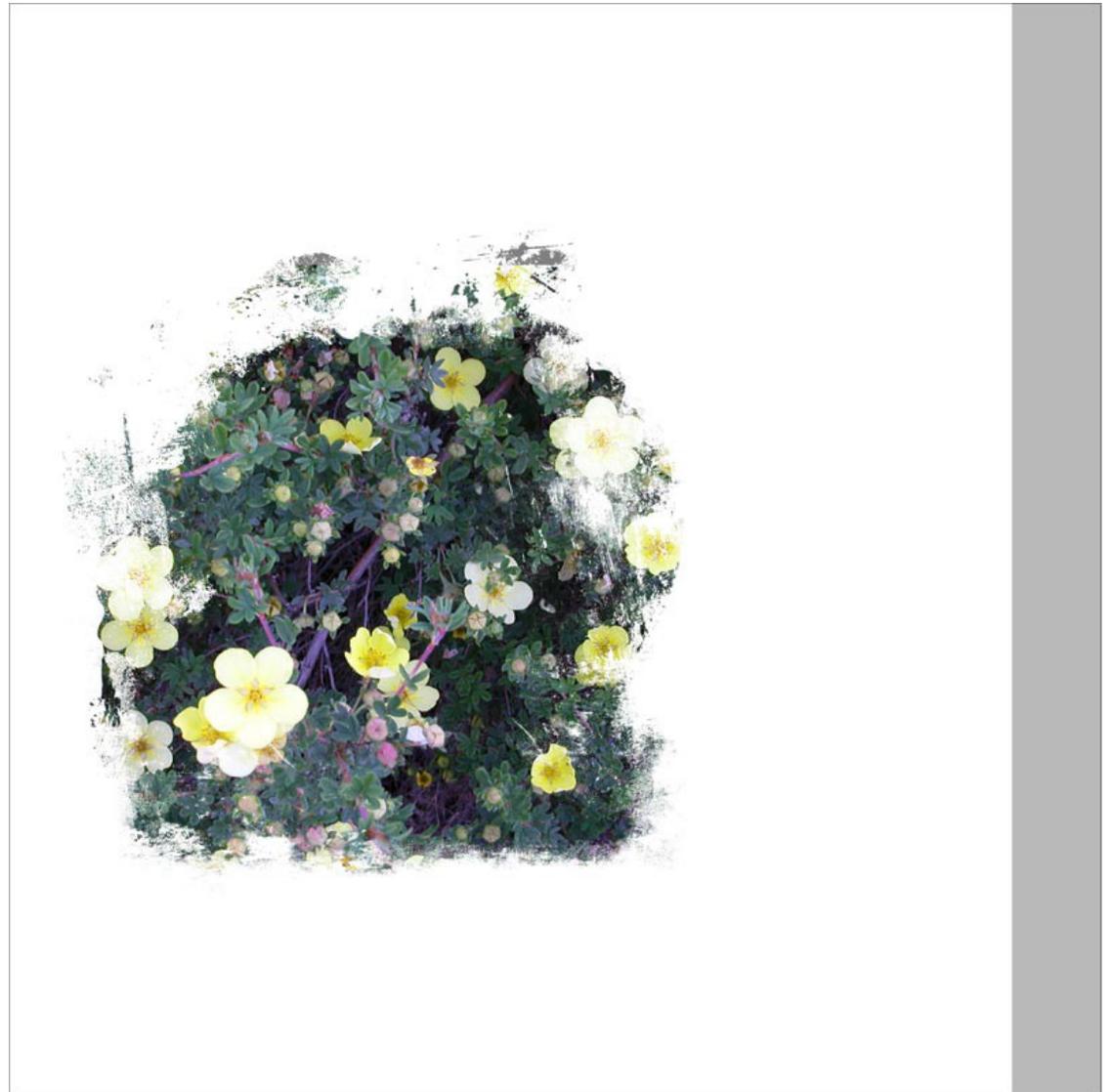
Credits

Single Leaf photo and page by Linda Sattgast
Class/Template: QwikLearn-Design Beautiful Pages
Kit: Sweetie Pie by Brandy Murry
Fonts: Caleigh and Orator Std Regular

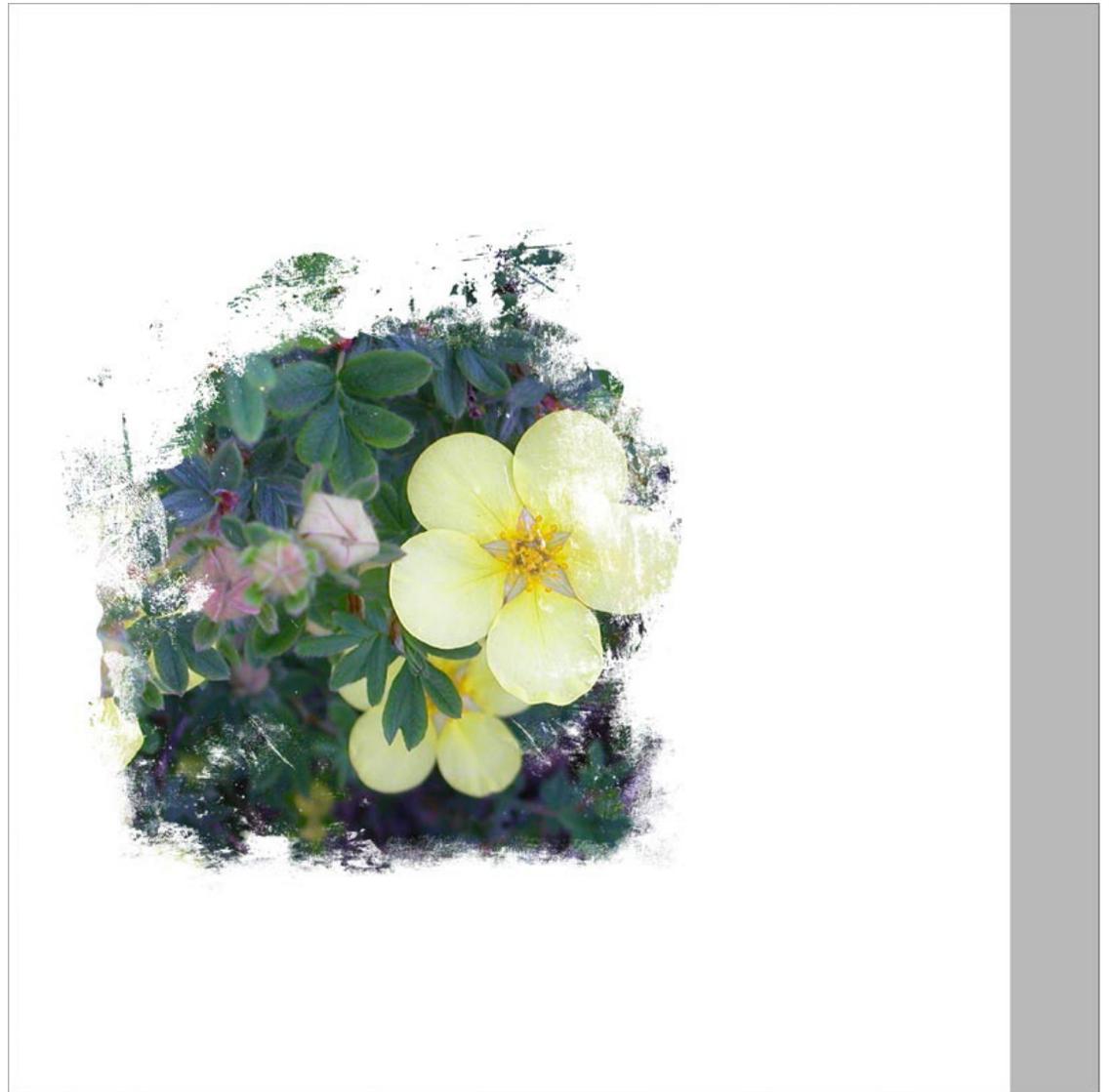
Want to see another example of the BLOB Effect?



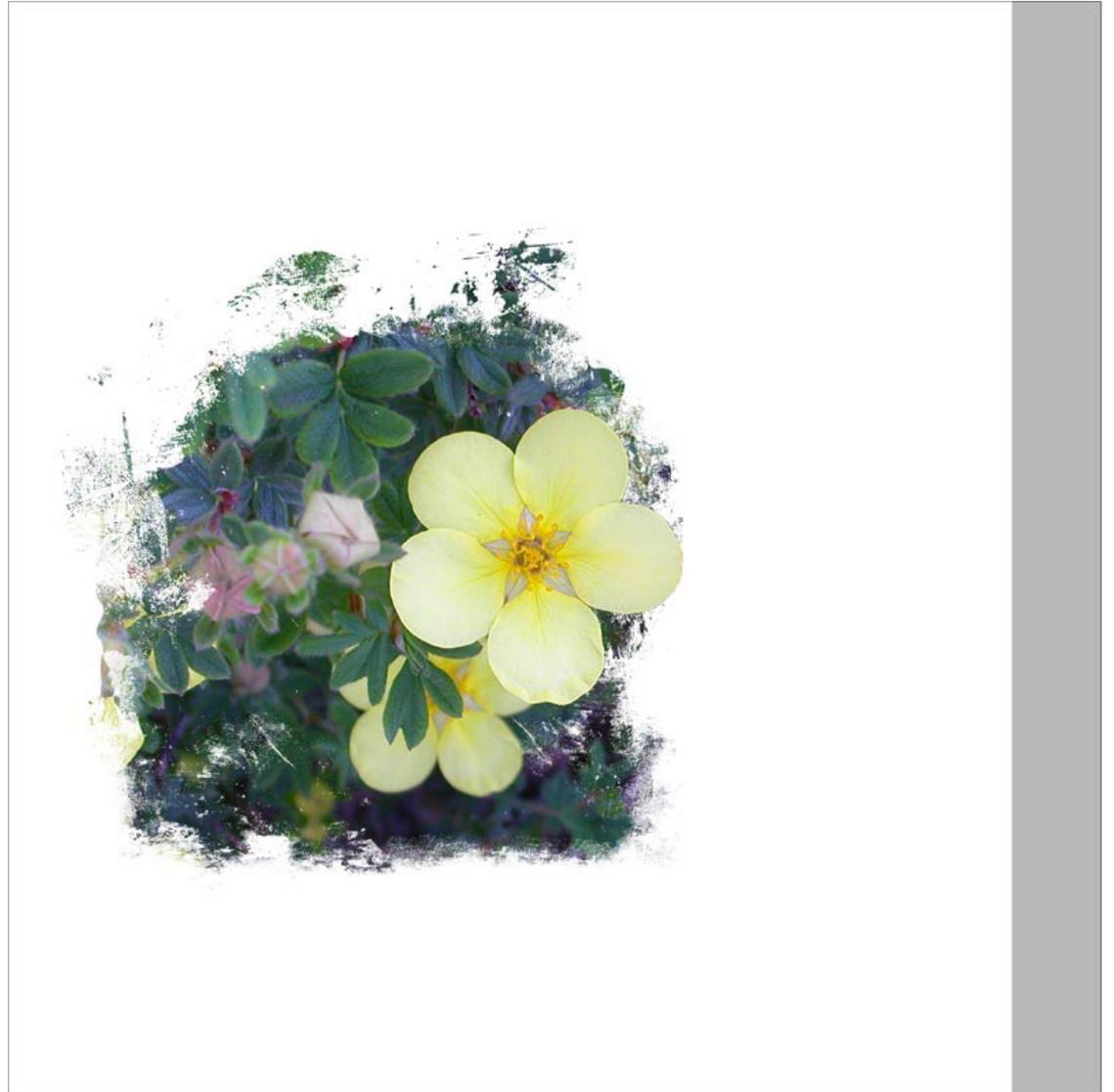
Here's an OK photo clipped to a mask. It's obviously of flowers, but there's no focus and it's kind of random. Can we improve it?



Here I adjusted the zoom and focus of the image...



And then I did an out-of-bounds effect with the flower to make it stand out.



Here's how the finished page would have looked if I hadn't changed the photo. Nice page. But the mask image is a bit "blobby."



Here's my finished page with the refocused image. Much better!

Credits

Photo and page by Linda Sattgast
Class/Template: QwikLearn-Design Beautiful Pages
Kit: Farmhouse Style by Melissa Renfro
Fonts: Caleigh and Orator Std Medium

Moral of the story: Make the image “readable.” Don’t make the viewer say, “Huh?” and wonder why you took the trouble to mask a photo. Often a specific focus is better than a general uninspiring view.

Linda Sattgast

