Type in Motion
May 6th, 2002
Handout 05
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Topic: Importing bitmaps/non-flash graphics and Mask layers

Flash can import many popular bitmap and vector image formats. Bitmap formats it will import are jpeg, gif, animated gifs, png, bmp, wmf, emf, and pict. Flash will also import Freehand vector graphics all the way back to version 7. And, it will import Adobe Illustrator files. When importing Illustrator files, any graphics on separate layers will remain on separate layers within Flash. However, it is recommended that you use Freehand graphics whenever possible because you will get more options when you import them. With vector images, Flash will only import 8 colors in any gradient. It's recommended not to use more than 8 colors for a gradient in Freehand or Illustrator if it will be imported into Flash. Flash will preserve transparency when importing GIFs, PNGs, and PICTs with transparency.

If you have Flash 5 and Quicktime 4 on your computer, you will be able to import a lot more file formats such as Photoshop (.psd), Quicktime movies (.mov), Quicktime Images, Silicon Graphics, Targa (TGA), and TIFFs.

Graphic files can be imported by going under <File> <Import>, browsing to the file you want, and selecting it. Or, you can <Edit> <Copy> a graphic to the clipboard from within another program, such as Freehand, and <Edit> <Paste> it into Flash. Use the <Import> command for the best results.

Mask layers can create windows through which you can see the contents of masked layers beneath it. It is much like the windows in the mail envelopes you receive with billing statements. Any painted or colored areas of a mask layer will show the content beneath it. Any white or transparent areas of the mask layer will hide the content of the masked layer/s. Flash uses the fills of graphic objects to create the mask window. You can mask more than one layer, as well as have unmasked layers all in the same movie. An unmasked layer will simply show its content in the final movie.

I'm going to show you how to import a bitmap jpeg image and create a mask layer above it with some text as the mask window. I'll use a jpeg image of a sunset. The mask layer will have the word "sunset" typed onto it.

1. Open a Flash document and name the first layer for your jpeg image. I'll name mine "sunset."
2. Go under <File> <Import>, browse to the image file you want to import, select it, <add> it if you are on a Mac, and click <Import> to import the image. It will come in as a grouped object called a "bitmapped fill." Any editing that you would want to do to it would require you first to go under <Modify> and <Break apart>. I won't need to break it apart for this tutorial. Note that I have sized the jpeg image in Photoshop, prior to importing, to match the movie's dimensions at 72 ppi.
3. Insert a keyframe at frame 105 in the sunset layer.

4. Create a new layer by clicking on the "+ layer" icon in the timeline. Name it "mask layer."
5. With the layer active, click in the first frame of the mask layer. Then select the text tool and type the word "sunset" on the stage rather large. I used a black fill color. Increase its tracking/kerning in the character palette so it spans across the image on the stage.
6. With the arrow selection tool, move the word to the top of the stage. In order to keep it stationary for a second when the movie first starts, insert a keyframe at frame 12 in the mask/text layer.
7. Make sure that only frame 12 of the mask/text layer is selected and go under <Modify> <Break apart> to break the text into an editable graphic. Insert another keyframe at frame 85 in the mask layer. In frame 85, drag the word to the bottom or below the movie stage window.
8. With frame 12 of the mask layer selected, go to the Frame palatte and select "Shape tweening" for this graphic.
9. With the mask layer selected, go to <Modify> <Layer> to get the layer properties window open. Select the radio button next to "mask" for "type." Then, click "OK."
10. Select the sunset layer, go to <Modify> <Layer> to get the layer properties window open again. Select the radio button next to "masked" for "type. Then, click "OK."
11. If you <Control> <Test movie> at this point, you will see the word "sunset" start at the top of the screen, drift to the bottom, and reveal the image beneath it. The rest of the movie stage will be white or whatever color you chose for the background color within movie properties. I'll set my background color to a golden orange.
12. In order to prevent the movie from looping, I'll create a new layer called "actions. " And set a keyframe at the very end of the movie with a "stop" action assigned to it.
13. I would like the movie to reveal the sunset photograph below the mask. So, I'll go to the "maskt" layer and delete any frames after frame 85. Select the last frame, and drag it back to the keyframe at 85. This should get rid of them.