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NOTE: Our voicemail system is monitored 24/7. If you leave a voicemail here after hours/weekends/etc., I should be able to track one of the guys down to help you.

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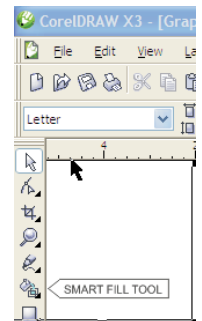
Smart Fill & Create Boundary Terrific New Corel X3 Functions!

Roy Brewer, CRM

For those who remember DesignCAD, this new tool will be very welcome. It, like our trusty old CAD program, will fill an area until it detects an object; that is, it will fill a non-closed shape.



Consider these three lines. If the Smart Fill cursor is clicked inside the intersecting lines, that area will be filled with the default fill. Surely with a bit of thought you can find several uses for this simple application of the tool, but there are countless advanced uses for this.



The cowboy inset is a vector clip art which has been positioned on two circles. We wish to use this as an applique for a plaque. We want the areas in between the cowboy and the circles to be cut out. All we have to do is use the Smart Fill Tool to select these (4 areas) then “unfill” them and give them an outline color and thickness that will vector. Finally, select everything and then **Effects > Create Boundary** to create the cut path for the outer boundary of the applique.



Lasering Photographs

Roy Brewer, CRM

Lasering photographs on certain substrates (wood, marble, glass?) is undoubtedly the most challenging task with which we are asked to assist. Those who frequent the Internet newsgroups have seen scores of posts like, “I just got my laser and am comfortable with everything except photographs which are coming out terrible; can someone tell me how to laser a photograph on glass?” It is obvious that these new laser operators expect a “step *a* through *z*” solution. I’m sorry to tell you that there is not a secret series of steps and settings that will *always* yield a product with which you will be happy. First I have to tell people that many photographs do not lend themselves to being laser engraved; for some of these, no amount of work will give an acceptable product. Hence, be careful how you market your ability to laser photographs. I strongly recommend that you have a few “before and after” examples in your showroom so you can detail to your customer what you really need to turn out a great product. Beneath the counter (or in some way, out of normal sight) it would be a great idea to have one or more **unacceptable** “before & after” examples also.

Chose your experts carefully. Another problem with learning to laser photographs is the fact that there is so much contradictory advice available. Article writers, sales reps, suppliers of materials, all have developed ideas that seem to work for them, but in many cases are exactly the opposite of what another “expert” suggests. You will find, for instance, both of the following in recent trade journal articles:

“...for best results, laser with 600dpi or greater”
“...definitely 200dpi or less.”

The following is far from a complete “step by step” solution, but is a collection of concepts, tips and tools with which *yours truly* has found to yield best results. Many of the following are moot points since, more often than not, you really don’t get a choice; your client has only one photograph or file they can provide.

- ♦ **Color or black & white?** My experience is that the more information with which you have to work, the better. Therefore, if given a choice, take the color. On the other hand, it is easier to visualize the end result if you start with b&w, but you’ll have less control in improving it. Assuming you have a copy machine, many have found it very helpful to immediately make a b&w copy of any color photo you are considering lasering; this tends to give us a visual idea of how much work we’ll have to do.
- ♦ **Grayscale?** A recent trade journal article, by one of our best known Corel experts, said that since the laser can’t handle color, the first thing we should do is convert a file to grayscale, or if we’re starting with a color hardcopy that we should scan it in grayscale. I strongly disagree with this. I have found that I want as much information in the file on which I’m working as long as possible. I find this makes masking, adjusting the tone curve and other modifications much faster and more effective.
- ♦ **High or Low Resolution?** I engrave most photographs on most mediums at 200 DPI. If I’m scanning a photograph, I have never been able to get better results by scanning at any DPI greater than 200 (or whatever I plan to laser). As with color, however, if I’m given a high resolution photo, I do all my adjustments in the high resolution before doing a Resample (see below) at the very end of the project.
- ♦ **Never resize or stretch a photo.** While little or no difference is detected while on the PhotoPaint or CorelDraw screen, you’ll typically destroy your lasered output if you grab a selection handle and resize either proportional or non-proportional. Always use the Resample function to get the final size and resolution you desire.
- ♦ **Do not rotate a photo in CorelDRAW**(or any other vector based program). If rotation necessary, scan it at rotated angle (best) or rotate in Corel PhotoPaint (or other raster based program). The exceptions: It is OK to rotate by a multiple of 90degrees. It is OK to mirror &/or invert even in CorelDRAW or other vector based program.
- ♦ **Request** (but then, as always, take what you can get!) from your client:
 - 1) Photo the actual size of finished engraving.
 - 2) Individual faces should be 1” or larger.

Lasering Photographs (cont.)

Typical steps to laser engrave a photograph.¹

- Knock out the background (done in Paint).²
- Make background black or white (depending on your output substrate).
- Remove “pimples” etc. (Paint, normally with the Clone tool).
- Adjust Tone curve and other possible modifications.^{3,4}
- Resample, if not already the resolution and size you want (Draw or Paint).⁵
- Use Mode to convert to Black & White (Draw or Paint).⁶
- Position in layout for final engraving (Draw).
- Laser it!

Footnotes:

1. Yes, we recommend PhotoGraV (a \$395 3rd party program to assist in lasering photos). The PhotoGraV program comes with excellent instructions so the above steps assume you are not using PhotoGraV.

2. Use masking tools, then delete selection or use the Cutout Tool (Cutout Lab in X3). Alternative? I still absolutely love Corel Knockout which is several times more efficient at removing a background, but does have a significant learning curve. Knockout is a \$150 add on for Paint.

3. Experts all agree that only the uninformed use the brightness/contrast tool. The Tone Curve is a little difficult to grasp, but well worth the time invested to learn.

4. The new Image Adjustment Lab (in both Paint & Draw) alone is reason enough to upgrade to X3.

5. In Paint: Image>ReSample
In Draw: Bitmaps>ReSample

6. In Paint12 and down, Image>Color Mode>B&W
In Paint X3, Image>Convert to B&W
Almost always we recommend one of the following B&W options:

Jarvis
Stucki
Floyd/Steinberg

Click on each one of these and determine which makes your photo look the best.

NOTE: Because of the dominance of the Corel Graphic Suite for laser engraving, this document does not go to the trouble to say “...or PhotoShop, Illustrator, Quark, Freehand...” The principles established here are so universal that *all* of these programs have the same tools, but may be named/positioned differently.

Procedural suggestion: Any time you are allowed to keep the photograph, run it through your (b&w) copy machine and then adhere the original right next to the copy. After completion of the job, make notes evaluating the results and the steps/settings you used.

You will find that after you have done 10, 20 or more you’ll be able to predict how any picture will come out as soon as you copy it and compare to your “library”. You’ll find this to be an invaluable teaching aid as you work additional employees into the process.

Upcoming Events and News

Our regular Corel Basics and Laser Basics classes continue on the 2nd Monday of each month. See our website www.engravingconcepts.com for all upcoming clinics and other events (trade shows, etc.).

HAWAII

For our customers and prospects in Hawaii, please be aware that we are scheduling a trip to your lovely islands in January. Keep an eye on the events section of our website for details. We have no firm plans but are considering a *Corel X3 Applied* clinic and possibly an Advanced Laser Clinic. If you have any suggestions, let us know!

DALLAS Area – December 1

Corel X3 Applied (9:00am-12:00) \$40/person

Xenotech Users' Clinic (1:00pm-3:00) No Charge

Advanced Laser Engraving Clinic (4:00pm-5:30) \$25/person

To sign up or for more details, email Jeanette@EngravingConcepts.com.

CONGRATULATIONS

Next time you see Randy, congratulate him on beating his prior Personal Best sales total -- and doing it in August! Randy received a trophy for his achievement and we didn't even make him engrave it himself.



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