

# Light Painting Photoshop Workflow

## 1. Import all images as a stack in Photoshop.

### From Lightroom:

Select all photos in Grid View or on film strip on bottom of loop or develop view. Right Click and choose **Edit In > Open as Layers in Photoshop**. See Fig. 1

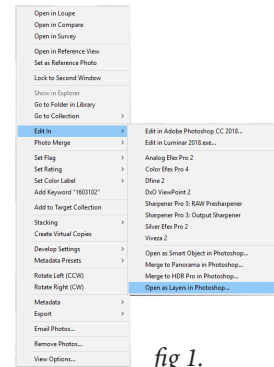


fig 1.

### From Photoshop.

Go to **File > Scripts > Load Files into Stack** (See Fig. 2 & 3)

1. Browse to images you'd like to use in the Load Layers dialog box. Select them, and then click OK.
2. If you're unsure of the alignment of your images, click on the "Attempt to automatically align source images" check box before clicking OK.

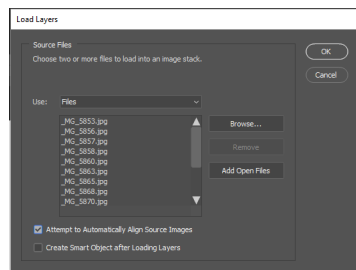


fig. 3

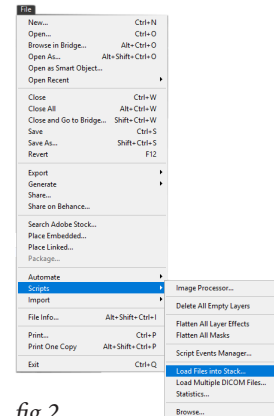


fig 2.

## Preparing the Images in Photoshop

1. Create an action to prepare each layer (just to save time)
  - A. If your actions panel is not visible, open it by choosing **window > Actions**. See fig. 4
  - B. Create a New Action Set using the file folder icon at the bottom of the Actions Panel fig. 5 circle 1). Name it **Light Painting**
  - C. Create a New Action by clicking on the new action icon at the bottom of the Actions Panel (fig. 5 circle 2). Name it **Lightpaint Layer Prep**. Set a keyboard shortcut (a Function key with a modifier) and click **Record**.
  - D. In the Layers panel, with any layer selected, choose the **blending mode** drop down menu (the one that says **Normal** by default) and set it to **Lighten**. This will make it so that only pixels that are lighter than the pixels below them will be visible on this layer. Next choose **Layer > Layer Mask > Hide All**.
  - E. On the Actions Panel hit the **Stop** button (square button at bottom of panel)

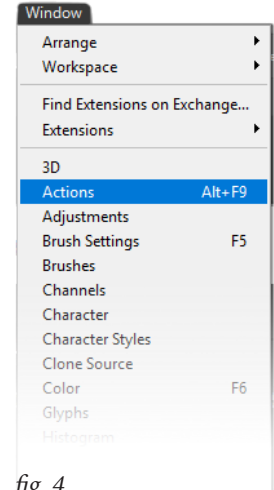


fig. 4

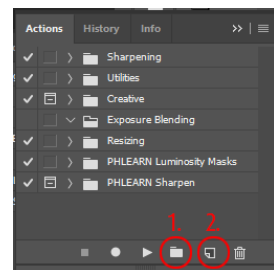
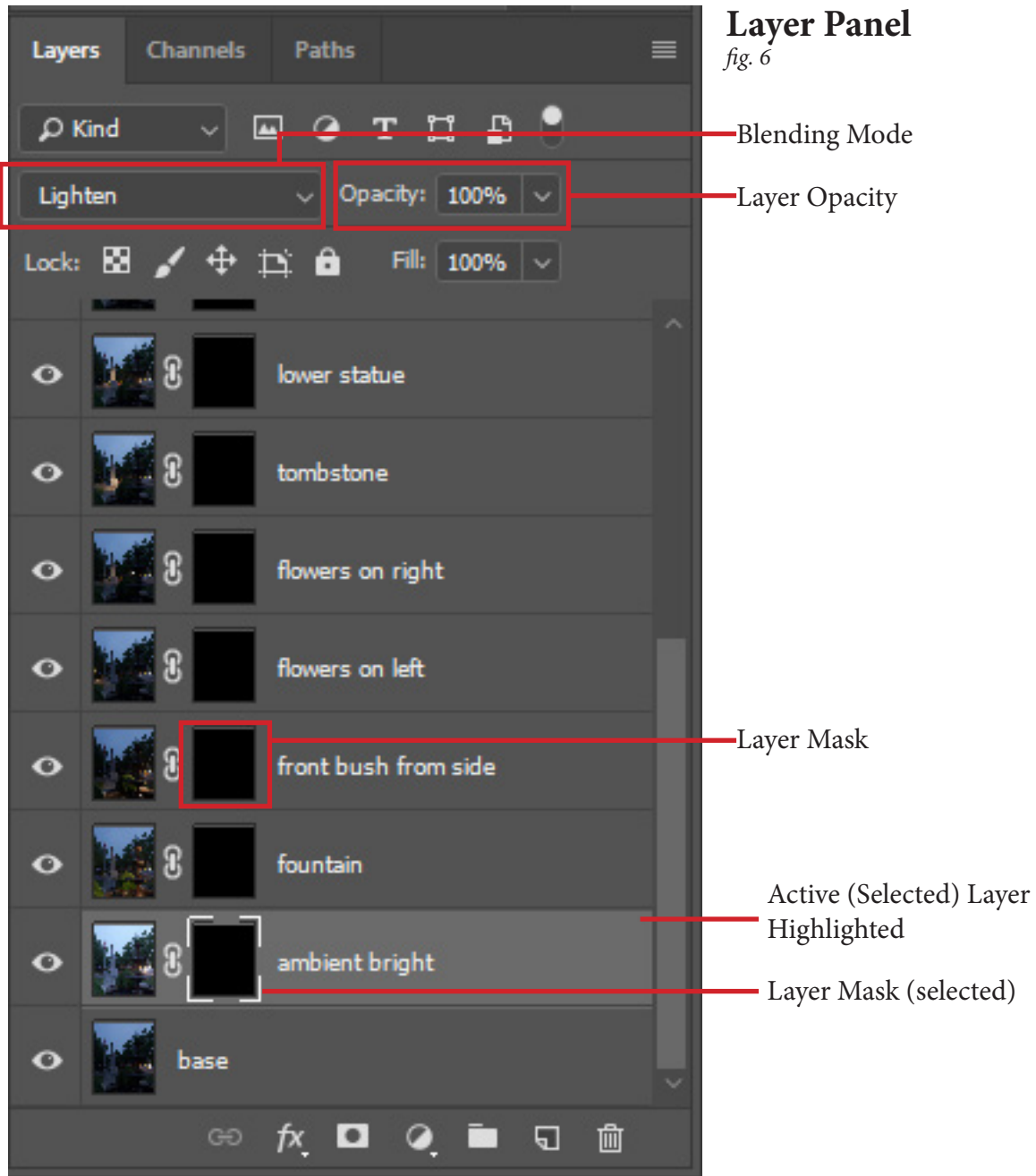


fig. 5

F. Click on the layer you just masked (there should be a black thumbnail on the layers panel beside a thumbnail of the image). Rename the layer by specifying what is lit in that layer (“trees on right” for example). If you can’t remember what was lit (because the image disappeared when you added the mask) Hold the **shift** button and click on the black thumbnail to disable the layer mask (you’ll see a red **X** through the layer mask thumbnail) and you’ll see the contents of that layer again. Label the layer and shift click again on the mask to restore it.



## 2. Work in the Layers Panel

- A. In the Layers Panel (if it's not visible access it from the menu at **Window > Layers**) rename each layer to what is lit and then click the keyboard shortcut for your action. Then select the next layer down and repeat. Don't mask your base layer, but drag it to the bottom of the stack when you find it. Rename and mask all the other layers.

## 3. Masking In the Light

- A. From the layers panel, start immediately above the base layer. Select the layer by clicking on it. From the tools pick your brush by pressing **B**. If a tool other than the brush comes up, then click on the selected icon on the toolbox. A flyout menu with other tool options will appear. Select **Brush**.

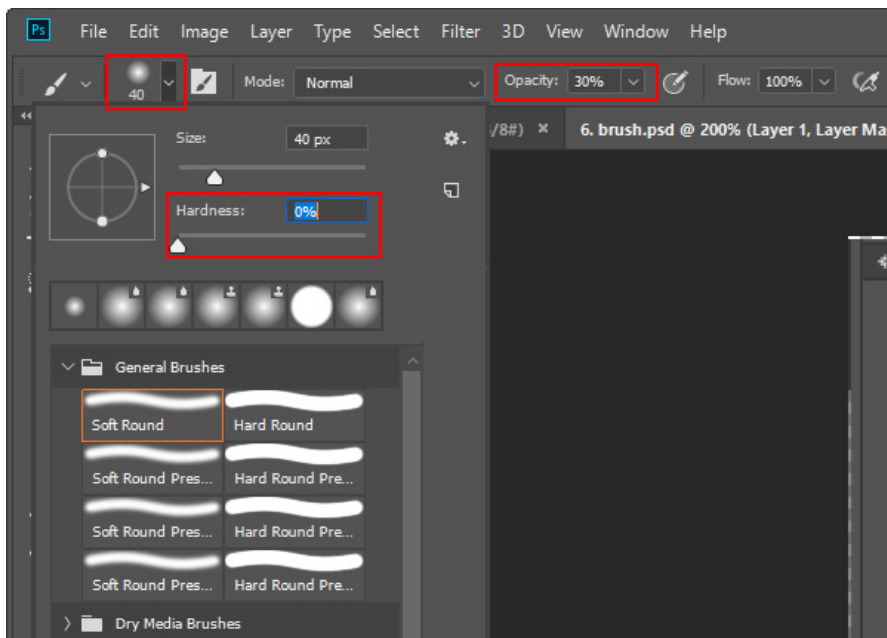


fig. 7  
Setting Brush options

- B. In the Options Bar ( fig 7, the bar right under then menu) set the opacity of the brush to 30%
- C. Click on the brush tip preview. Choose a large brush and set the hardness to 0. You can also control the brush size using the **square bracket keys** (left square bracket for smaller, right for larger). Then use the **Shift** and the **square bracket** keys to control hardness. Use **Shift** plus **Left Square Bracket** and hit it a bunch of times to make the brush soft.
- D. Hit the **D** key to set your colors to their defaults. Then click **X** key to swap foreground and background colors. You should have white as the foreground color.
- E. Click on the layer mask for the layer (the box beside the layer image thumbnail).

- F. Paint with your cursor over the area that is lit. Each click and drag will add a bit more light until the flash effect is fully present. Add light to taste on the layer your working on.
- G. If you paint in something you'd like to paint out, then click the **X** key to change the foreground color to black, and as you paint black, the image will vanish.
- H. Move up the stack, repeating the process for each layer.

### **Helpful Hints**

If you need to see what is lit on a layer before painting in the mask, shift click on the layer mask to disable it and preview the layer, then shift click again to turn the mask back on.

If a layer looks too bright, you can select it in the layers panel and move the opacity slider to adjust the amount of the lighting effect.