

HOW TO SELECT IT

THE ART OF OBJECT SELECTION USING
AFFINITY PHOTO

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How To Select It
The Art of Object Selection Using Affinity Photo

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INTRODUCTION



One of the most important skills in photo editing is the ability to create accurate selections. It's what I like to call a multiplier skill because it will multiply the power of your other skills. For example, when you can accurately select and adjust areas of an image, the quality of your photography will rise above those who can't. Or perhaps you need to move an object. But if you can't accurately select it, you won't be able to move it.

The possible uses and needs for selections are virtually endless.

Unfortunately, many new photo editors look for shortcuts to developing this skill. Instead, they want AI Tools that automatically do the work for them. This is a mistake for several reasons:

1. They won't develop their selection skills.
2. They won't understand the power and limitations of the tools they already have available. What's possible with these tools is truly amazing.
3. AI tools often fail to match what a skilled photo editor can achieve, at least if you rely entirely on AI and don't use other tools to fix its mistakes.

INTRODUCTION

Invest time and effort in developing your selection skills, and you will be richly rewarded - often in unexpected ways.

With a little effort and armed with the knowledge in this book, you can easily produce accurate selections, often in a matter of minutes. This book explains how the different Affinity Photo Selection Tools work and how to control them. By learning the strengths and weaknesses of each tool, you will learn how to choose the right tool for a task. You will also learn how to combine the different tools for better results and special techniques that aren't immediately obvious.

By the end of this book, you will be able to produce selections that match the quality of professional photo editors and graphic designers.

This book is divided into two sections. The first is a series of progressive chapters presenting the selection tools and techniques you can use in Affinity Photo. Please follow these in order as each chapter builds on the previous one. The second section then has five challenging examples for you to apply what you learned in the book's first part. Please be sure to attempt these with the practice images provided, but only once you have completed the book's first section.

PRACTICE IMAGE DOWNLOADS

Throughout this book, you will find a series of practical exercises that you are expected to complete. These reinforce your learning and the information in the book; not everything can be described by words alone - some things you need to experience for yourself.

To follow the exercises, please take a moment to download the practice images that are provided on the following page of my website:

<https://lenscraft.co.uk/learn-photo-editing-books/useful-downloads-books/>

The download also contains the images for the examples in the book's second section.

INTRODUCTION

NOTE ON AFFINITY PHOTO VERSIONS

This book features screenshots from Affinity Photo 2, release 2.4.2, the latest at the time of writing. If you are using a later version of Affinity Photo, please don't worry. Whilst there may have been minor changes, most tools we use will remain largely unchanged as they have for years. In fact, I'm confident you could apply this book to the early versions of Affinity Photo 1 and still achieve excellent results. That's because these tools form the core of Affinity Photo, and I'm confident they will continue to work the same way for many years.

AMERICAN/ENGLISH SPELLINGS

Some of the terms used in this book have American spellings, which may differ from English spellings. As I was born and live in the UK, I use English spelling in the book **UNLESS** it relates to a software feature with an American spelling.

MAC AND WINDOWS USERS

The illustrations in this book were taken from the Mac version of Affinity Photo 2. This should not cause problems if you're a Windows PC user, as the software is consistent across Mac and Windows. And where I've mentioned keyboard commands or shortcuts, the Mac version is usually shown first, followed by the Windows PC version.

TRADEMARKS

Throughout this book, various organisations and their products may be mentioned. Any references to copyrights, trademarks or product names are made purely in an editorial capacity. No copyright infringement is intended; the author recognises and respects all Trademarks and Copyrights.

INTRODUCTION

DISCLAIMER

Whilst I have made every effort to ensure the information in this book is accurate and factual, it does represent my approach to photo editing. Some may disagree with this or have alternative techniques, but I have not intentionally made any omissions or errors. If you find something you believe needs to be corrected, please email me at robin@lenscraft.co.uk

Thank you, and I hope you enjoy this book.

CHAPTER 1

BASIC MARQUEE SELECTION TOOLS

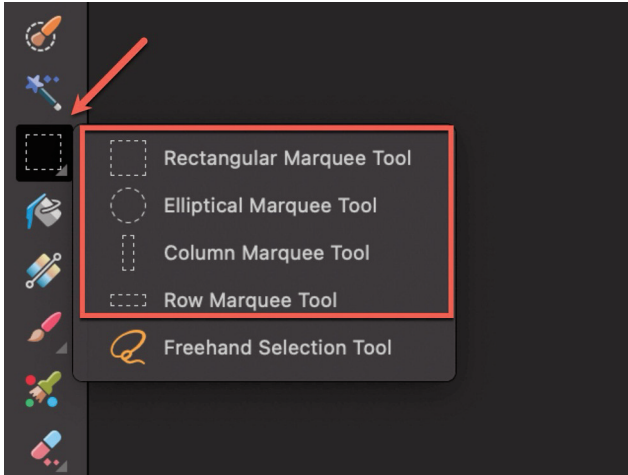


Did you skip the Introduction? If so, please take a minute to read it, as it contains the links to the practice images for his book.

The Marquee Selection Tools are the easiest to understand but also the most limited. Despite this, they can be extremely useful and are an excellent place to start. This is because they demonstrate many features we must use when creating Selections in Affinity Photo. In addition, the other selection tools in Affinity Photo share many of their features. We will, therefore, use these simple tools to understand how to control the more powerful tools we cover later.

You will find the Marquee Tools in the Tools Palette of the Photo Persona. This is usually located on the left side of the interface when editing a photo.

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Location of the Marquee Tools in the Affinity Photo Tools Palette

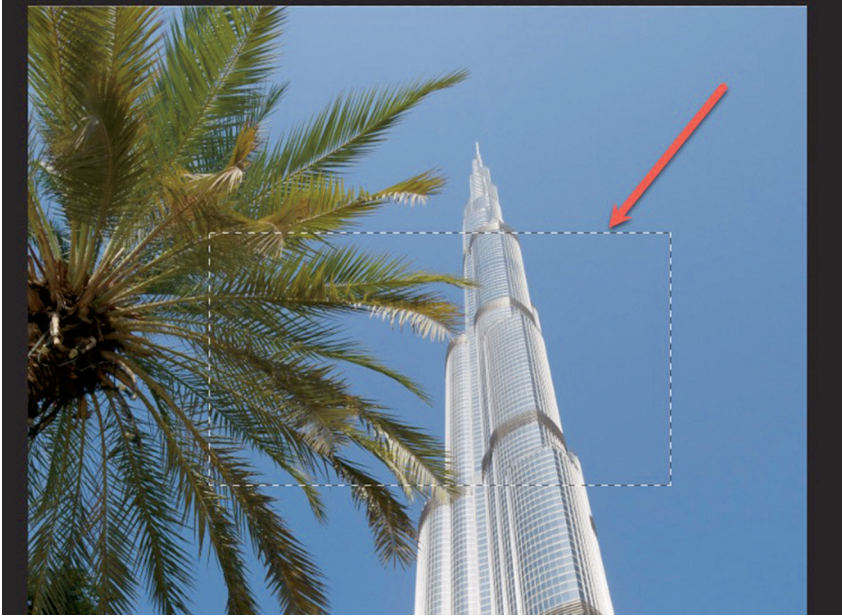
The Marquee Tool, or should I say tools as there are four, share a group along with the Freehand Selection Tool (which we look at later). As these tools are all grouped in the Tools Palette, the icon for any tool could be visible. If the icon for the tool you want to use isn't visible, click on the icon and hold your mouse button until the group is displayed. You can then click the tool that you want to use.

There are four different Marquee Tools, the main difference between them being the shape of the selection they create. We will start by examining the Rectangular Marquee Tool.

THE RECTANGULAR MARQUEE TOOL

The Rectangular Marquee Tool produces a rectangular or square selection. Once the tool has been selected by clicking it in the Tools Palette, position your mouse pointer over the open image. You can then click, and while holding down the mouse button, drag with the mouse. As you drag, the selection appears, as shown in the example below.

BASIC MARQUEE SELECTION TOOLS

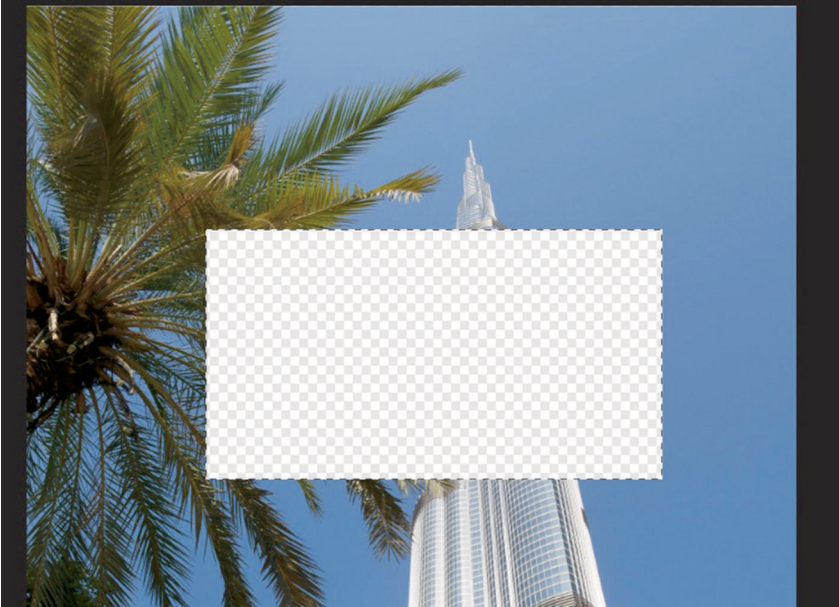


Drawing a selection using the Rectangular Marquee Tool

Here, we see the rectangular selection produced by the tool, marked by a dotted line. This dotted line is animated and often called “marching ants”. Inside these marching ants are the pixels of the image that are selected. Affinity calls this the Pixel Selection, but I also use the term Active Selection or just Selection.

After selecting an area of the image, pressing the delete key on the keyboard deletes the selection. This is shown in the following screenshot.

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Deleting part of an image using a selection

The pixels surrounded by the selection are now missing because they were deleted. Instead, we see a grey-and-white checked pattern. This indicates the area is now transparent, as there are no pixels.

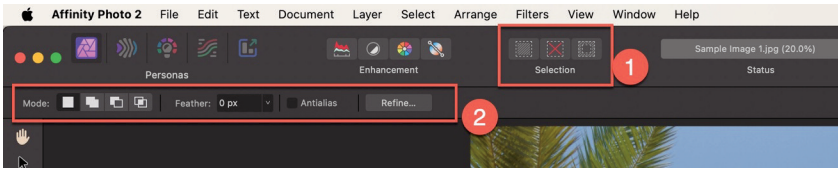
Now, look closely, and you will see the dotted line of the selection is still in place. This is much easier to see in the Affinity Photo software as the line is animated. The only way to remove the selection is by deliberately clearing it. There are three ways to do this:

1. Use the Select menu at the top of the Photo Person. You will see a Deselect option there, which clears the current selection.
2. Press the keyboard shortcut `Cmd + D` on a Mac or `Ctrl + D` on a Windows PC.
3. Click the Deselect icon in the Affinity Photo Toolbar. This is located at the top of the interface, immediately below the menu (see the screenshot below).

In the following screenshot, you can see the Selection icons indicated

BASIC MARQUEE SELECTION TOOLS

by box 1. Then, in Box 2, we have the Affinity Photo Context Sensitive Toolbar, which we will return to shortly.



The Affinity Photo Toolbars

By default, you should see the Selection icons in box 1, but it's possible that you won't. You also probably won't see the text "Selection", which appears in the screenshot. You can configure the Affinity Photo Toolbars to customise your display. To do this, right-click anywhere on the Toolbar. Then, in the popup menu, choose the "Configure" option. You can also use this menu to select the Text & Icon option, which displays the text under the various icon groups.

After selecting the Configure option, a dialog will open containing various icons. Additionally, dotted rectangles appear in the Toolbar. You can now drag and drop the toolbar icons to add or remove them.

Looking at the three Selection icons in box 1 above, the icons from left to right are

1. Select All – which will select the entire image.
2. Deselect – which removes the current selection.
3. Invert Selection – to invert the current selection.

Try the following exercise to test the icons.

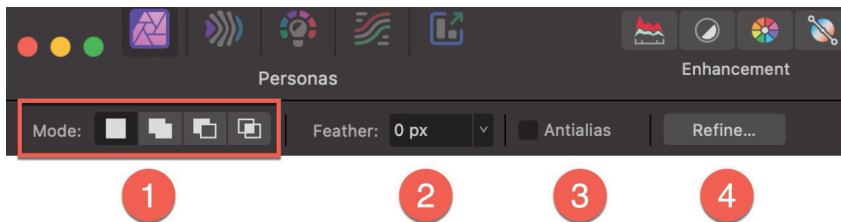
EXERCISE 1 – UNDERSTANDING THE SELECTION ICONS

- Open any image in the Affinity Photo Persona to use as an example

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- Click the Select All icon. You should now see the marching ants around the image's edge, which indicates that the entire image is now selected.
- Click the Deselect icon. The marching ants will vanish because the selection has been removed.
- Click the Invert Selection. You will now see the marching ants again around the image. That's because the inverse of no selection is to select everything.
- Click the Invert Selection a second time. The marching ants will vanish again because the selection is inverted again.

Let's examine the Context Sensitive Toolbar (box 2 in the illustration above) in more detail. The following screenshot indicates its controls.



The controls of the Rectangular Marquee Tool in the Context Sensitive toolbar

The first group of four icons (1) are to change the selection Mode of the tool. You do this by clicking one of the icons. The four icons from left to right are

- New. When this icon is clicked, the tool produces a new selection each time it's used. If there is an existing selection at the time, it is cleared when the new selection is made.
- Add. When this Mode is used, the tool will add the selection to the existing selection.
- Subtract. This Mode removes an area from an existing selection
- Intersect. This will intersect a new selection with an existing one so that only the common area remains.

Let's look at an exercise to understand how these four modes work.

EXERCISE 2 – SELECTION TOOL MODES

- Open any image in the Affinity Photo Persona and choose the Rectangular Marquee Tool in the Tools Palette.
- In the Context Sensitive Toolbar at the top of the interface, click the first Mode icon to use the “New” selection mode.
- Move the mouse pointer over the image, then click and drag. As you drag, a rectangular selection appears, surrounded by marching ants. You can then release the Mouse button to complete the selection.
- Repeat the previous step but in a different area of the image. Notice that when you release the Mouse button, the first selection is replaced by the new one.
- Switch to the Add Mode by clicking the icon in the Context Sensitive Toolbar.
- Repeat the process of clicking on the image and dragging with the mouse to create a new selection. Notice that the new selection has been added to the existing one so that marching ants can surround both areas. This is the difference between the New and Add Modes. You can use either of these to create an initial selection, but only the Add Mode continues to add to it. The New Mode always replaces an existing selection.
- In the Context Sensitive Toolbar, click the Subtract Mode icon to select it.
- Repeat the step of clicking on the image and dragging with your mouse. When you do this, be sure the new selection cuts across part of the area surrounded by the marching ants. Alternatively, you can click inside the area surrounded by the Marching Ants to start.
- Now, when you release the mouse button, the area you just selected is removed or subtracted from the existing selection.
- In the Context Sensitive Toolbar, click the Intersect Mode icon.
- Repeat the step of clicking and dragging on the image to create

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a selection. As you did before, ensure this also cuts across part of the selection surrounded by the marching ants.

- Notice that when you release the mouse button, only the area common to the existing and new selection is now selected. In other words, only the intersection between the two remains.
- Finally, click and drag with your mouse to select part of the image that isn't already selected. When you release the mouse button, the Marching Ants vanish this time. This is because no part of the new area has already been selected.
- It's a good idea to click the New Mode icon before closing the image to complete the exercise. Leaving the Intersect Mode selected may cause confusing results in the future.

Having covered the Mode icons, let's look at the Feather Control (2) in the Context Sensitive Toolbar. This contains a single slider with a default value of 0 and can be used to feather the edge of our selections.

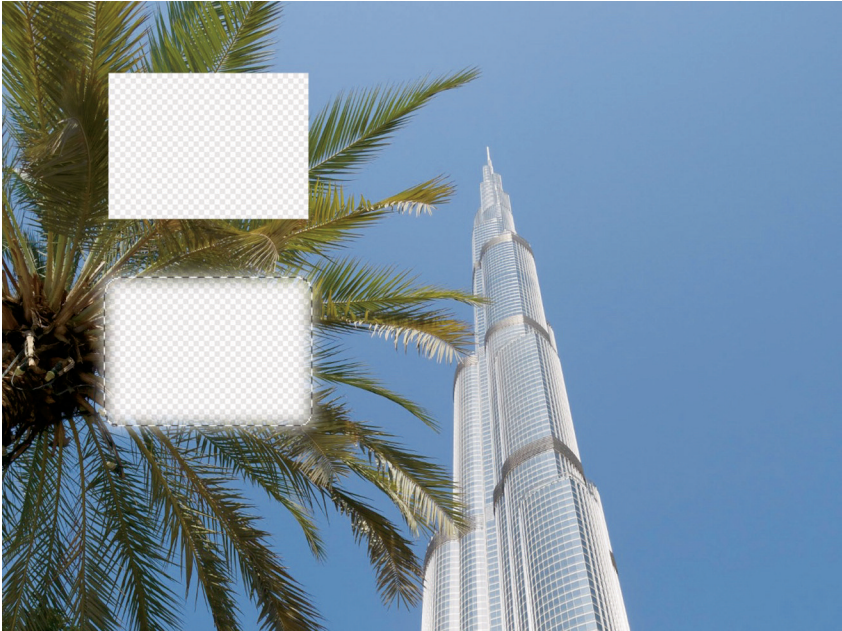
EXERCISE 3 – UNDERSTANDING THE FEATHER SLIDER

- Open an image to use for the exercise in the Affinity Photo Persona
- Choose the Rectangular Marquee Tool in the Tools Palette on the left side of the interface. Then, in the Context Sensitive Toolbar, ensure the Feather slider is set to 0 and the Mode is set to New.
- Click and drag on the image to produce a new small rectangular selection. As it's difficult to see the edge of the selection using only the marching ants, press the delete key on your keyboard. This will delete the selected area from the image.
- In the Context Sensitive Toolbar, increase the Feather slider to 100
- Click on the image to create a new rectangular selection in a different area. This time, when you release the mouse button, the corners of the selection are slightly rounded. The Feather

BASIC MARQUEE SELECTION TOOLS

setting caused this by applying a feathered edge to the selection

- To see the edge more clearly, press the delete key on your keyboard to delete the selected area of the image. The screenshot below shows this.



Effect of feathering the edge of a selection

- Now, let's draw a third rectangular selection in another part of the image
- Once you have drawn the new selection, return the Feather slider to 0. Then, press the delete key on your keyboard to delete the selected area of the image.

Notice how the third selection still has a feathered, soft edge even though the Feather slider was set to 0 after it was drawn. That's because Affinity Photo uses the Feather setting when you draw the selection. Changing the Feather setting after a selection has been made

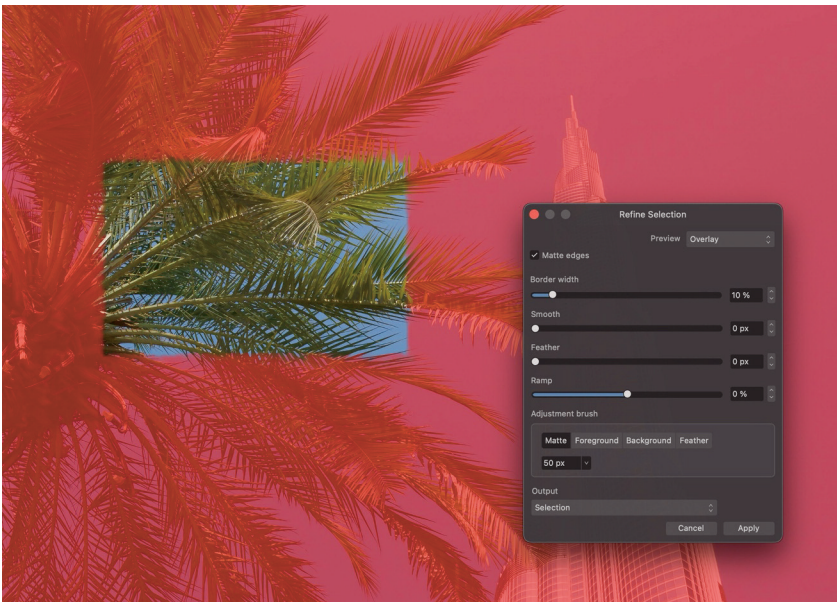
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doesn't affect it. This is an important point that frequently catches people out, even experienced users.

You can now close the image without saving it to complete the exercise

The Antialias feature adds a semi-transparent pixel along the edge of a selection to help smooth the appearance of jagged edges. Most of the time, you won't notice the difference when viewing a selection unless it's magnified beyond 100%. However, the difference is noticeable when you adjust the image using the selection. The Antialias setting helps to blend them with the rest of the image. The benefit of using this over the Feather option is that we retain the accuracy of the selection. Feathering is used to soften an edge noticeably or to produce a soft transition

The final control in the Context Sensitive Toolbar is the Refine button (4). When we click the Refine button, a dialog opens with tools that we can use to refine the current selection. You can see this in the following screenshot.



The Refine Selection dialog, accessed from the Refine button in the toolbar

BASIC MARQUEE SELECTION TOOLS

Here, the selection created with the Rectangular Marquee Tool has been converted to a Quick Mask (covered later). This is why we see a red overlay covering areas of the image that aren't selected. We only see the image clearly within the selected region.

The screenshot also shows the "Refine Selection" dialog, which contains sliders and tools for refining the selection. Don't worry about how to use these now; we'll cover them in detail later in the book.

The Rectangular Marquee Tool is suitable for selecting large, square areas of an image. It may not seem very useful on its own, but as you will learn later, we can combine it with other tools for much greater accuracy. It's also allowed us to cover several features in the Context Sensitive Toolbar. This is important because you will find those same controls working in the same way in many of the other selection tools. By understanding how they work with the Rectangular Marquee Tool, you will know how to use them with other tools.

Now, let's look at another feature that can be used with the Selection Tools

End of Sample

Please go to <https://lenscraft.co.uk/project/how-to-select-it-book/> to purchase this book.

Thank you