

# Vignettes

Subtlety is the key

Vignettes allow you to concentrate the viewer to the most important part of the image without them being aware of it

No vignette



# Subtle vignette



# Heavy vignette



## How to create a vignette:-

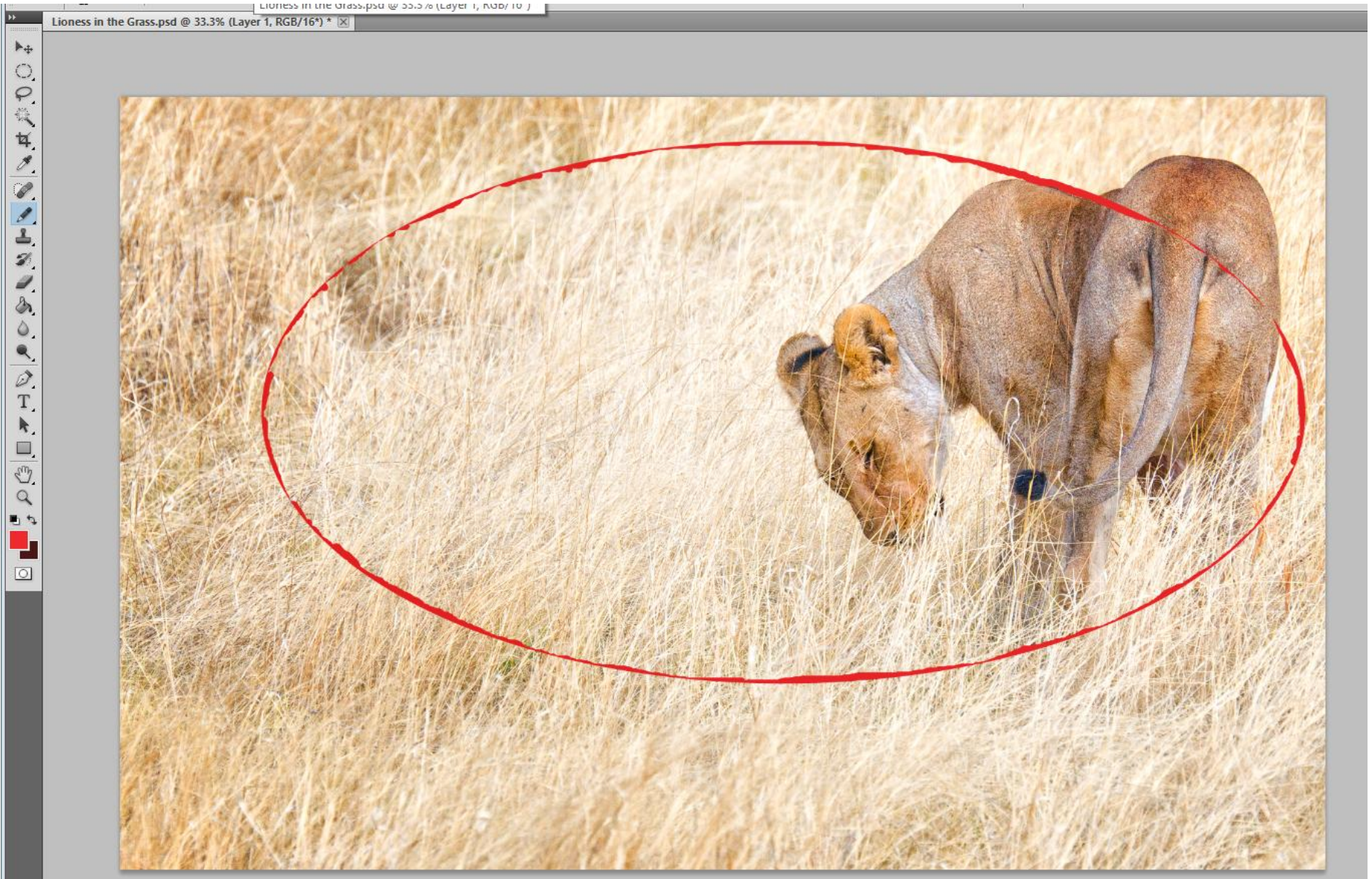
- Use a preset in your editing software
- Create a shape using the rectangle/oval selection tools in Photoshop
- Create a freehand shape using the Lasso tool in Photoshop
- Use freehand brush strokes in Photoshop

Create a shape using the rectangle/oval selection tools in Photoshop



Here's the image with no vignette – after completing other editing

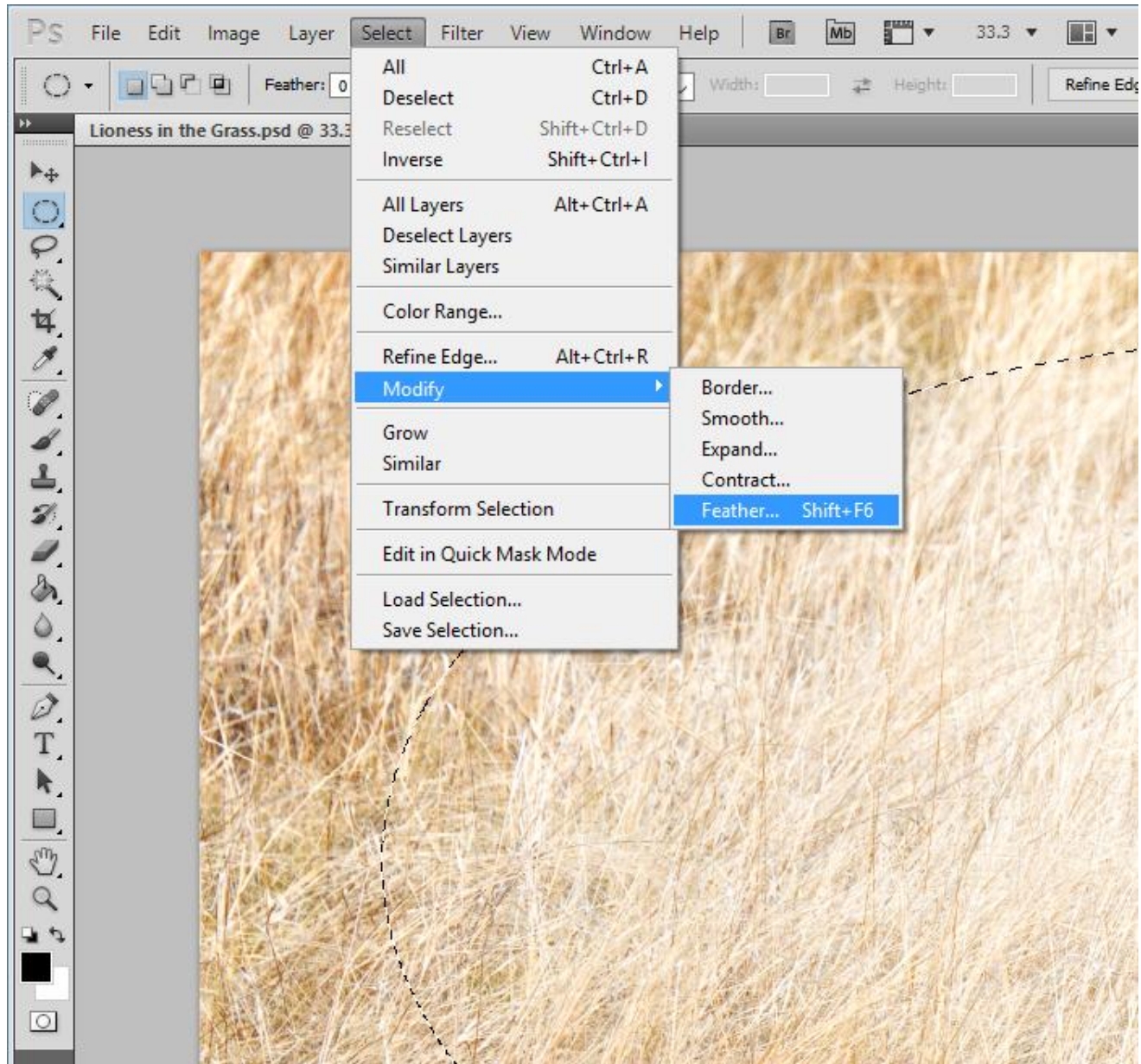
Choose the oval selection tool and draw an oval shape over the part of the image you wish to stand out.



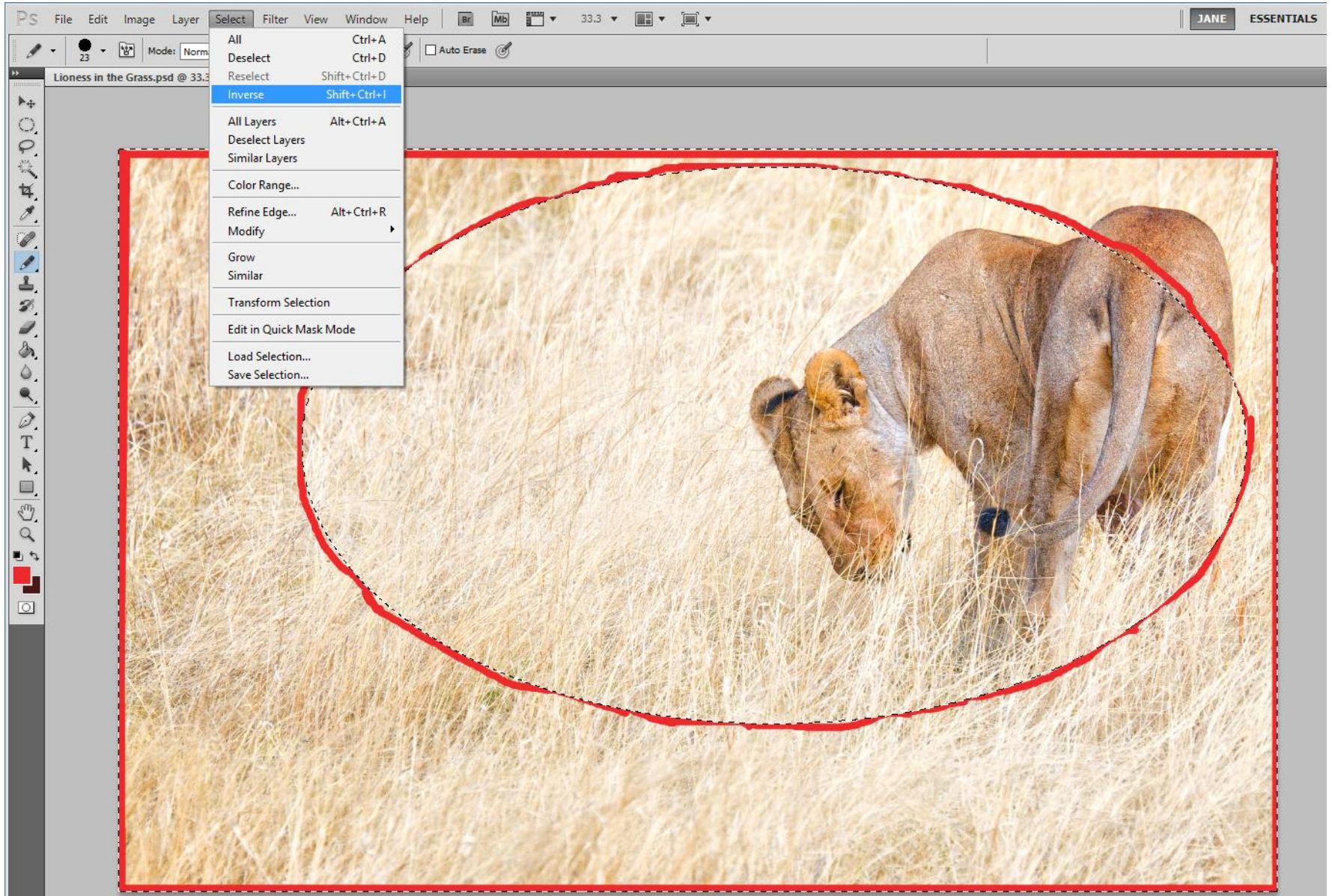
Your selection will show as “marching ants” in an oval shape



Feather the selection – usually to the largest number available –  
Select → Modify → Feather (say 250 pixels)



Invert the selection (so the outside of the image is active) – Select → Inverse  
The inverse “marching ants” selection should look like this

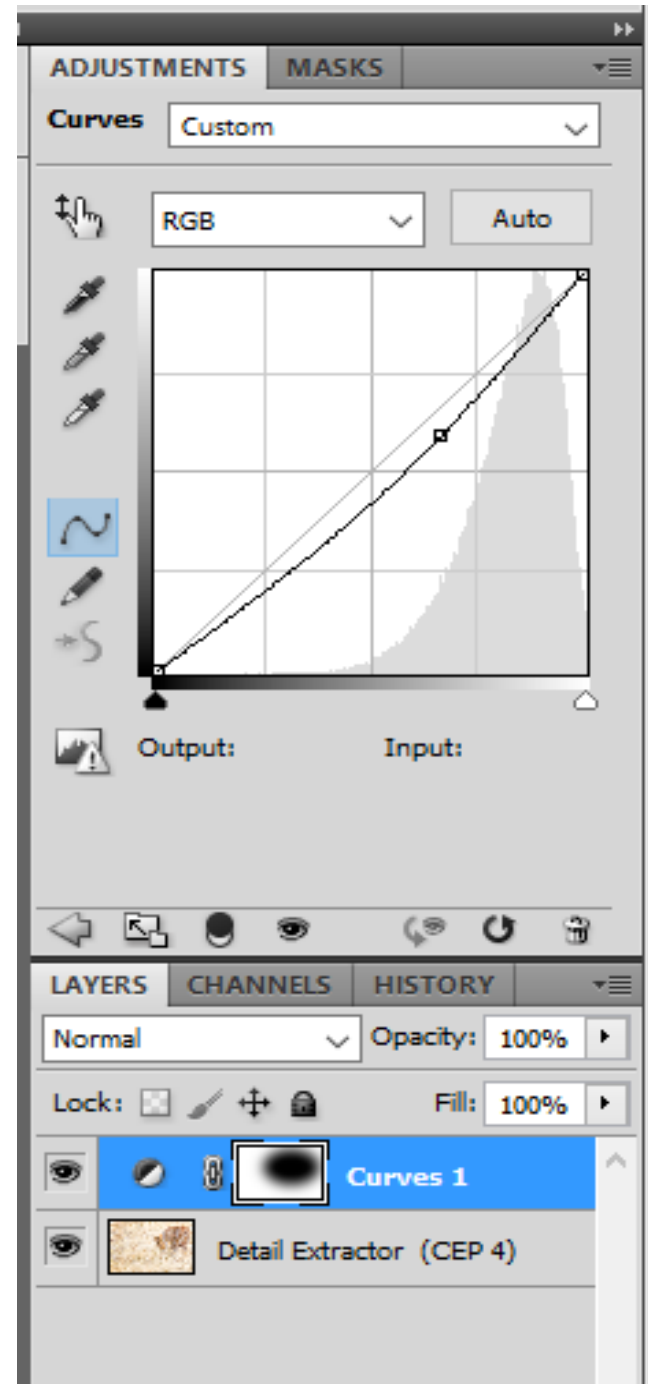


Create a Curves Adjustment Layer –  
Layer → New Adjustment Layer → Curves

Pull the diagonal Curves line down somewhere in  
the top right hand quarter of the Curves dialogue  
box.

As you move the Curves line you will see the  
edges of your image darken.

You will also see that the Curves Adjustment Layer  
has a mask showing the area being darkened in  
white, and the viewer focus area in black.



here's the original image

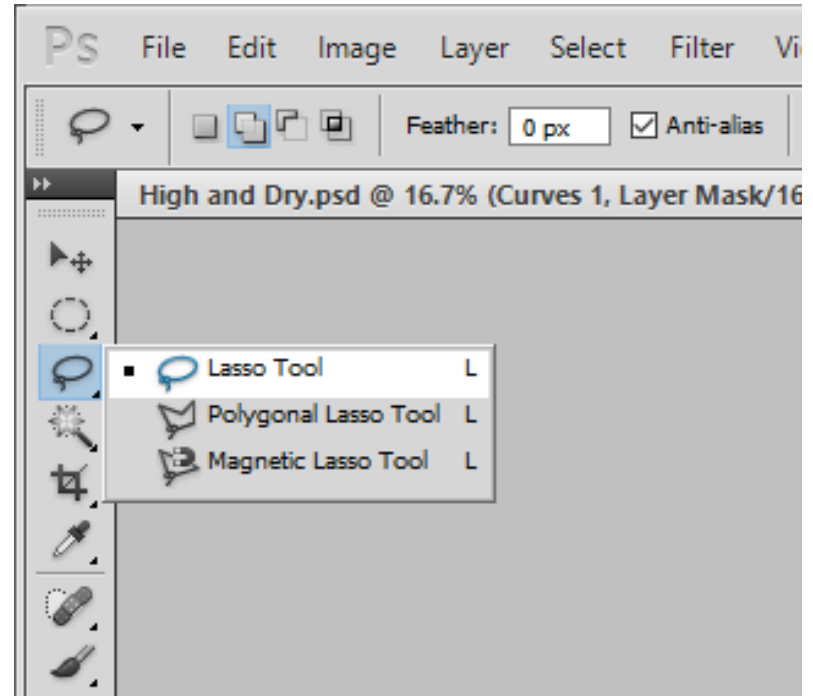
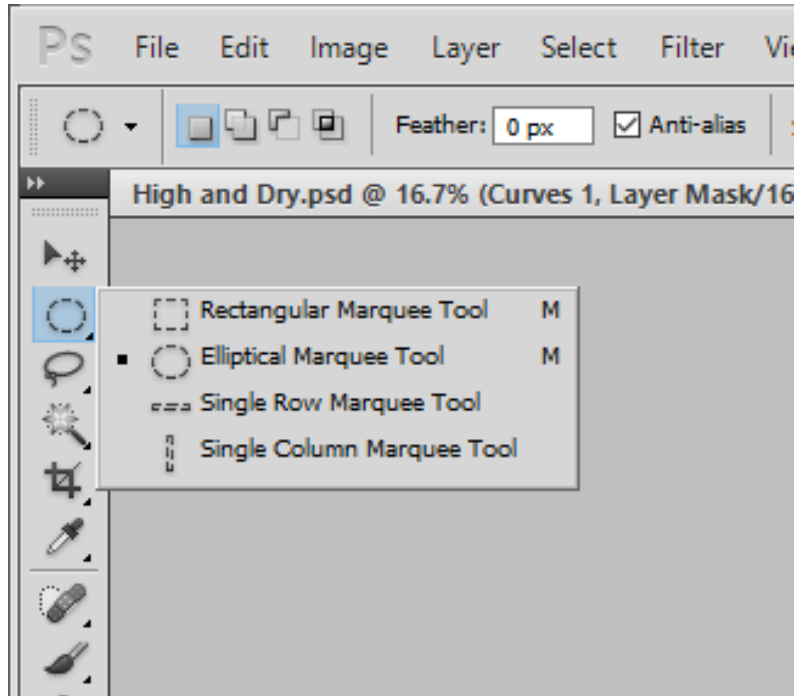


and here's the result after vignetting



To select the shape for your vignette, there are a number of selection tools available, including the Elliptical marquee tool – from which you may choose either a circle or a square

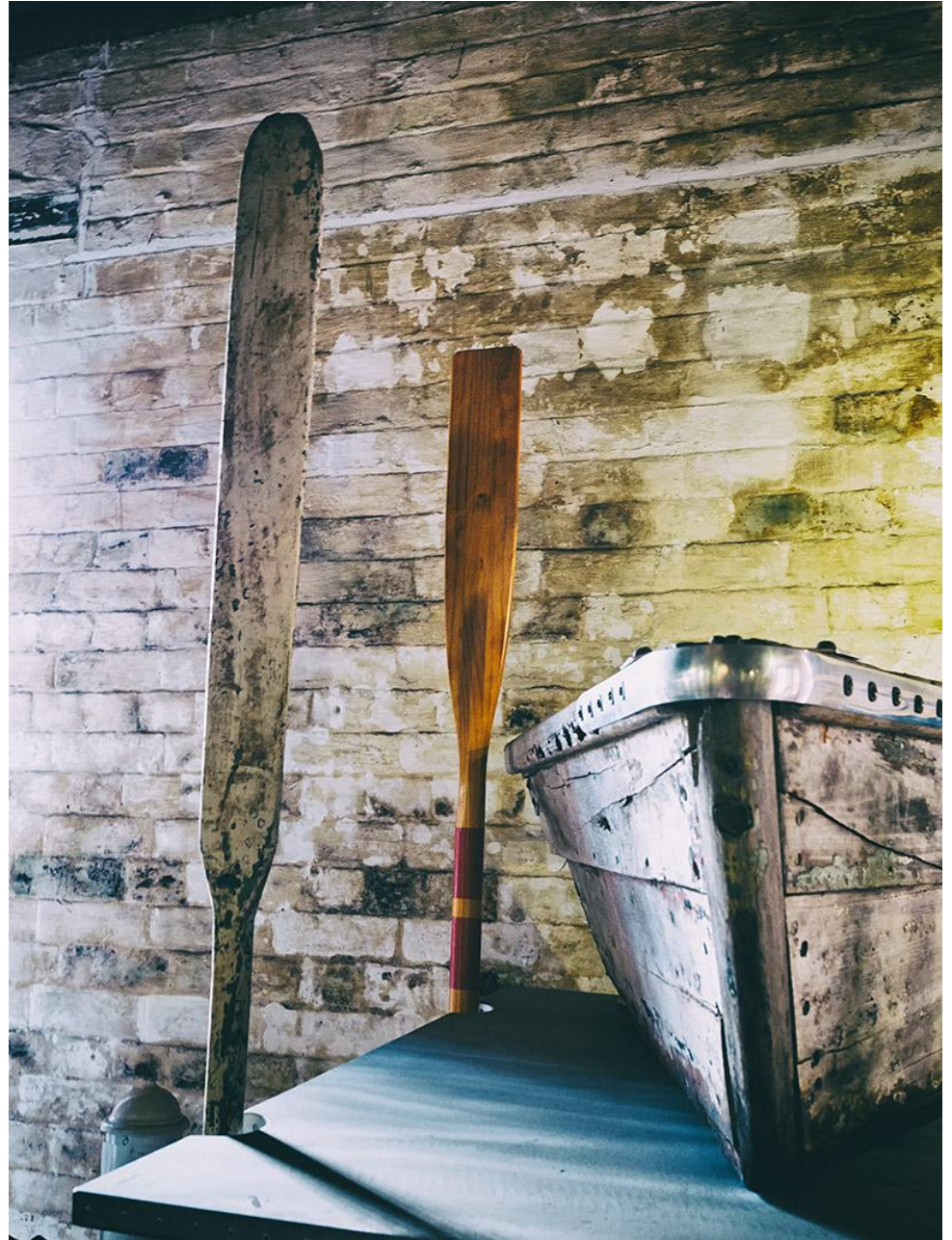
Or you may choose to use the Lasso tool to draw a freehand shape



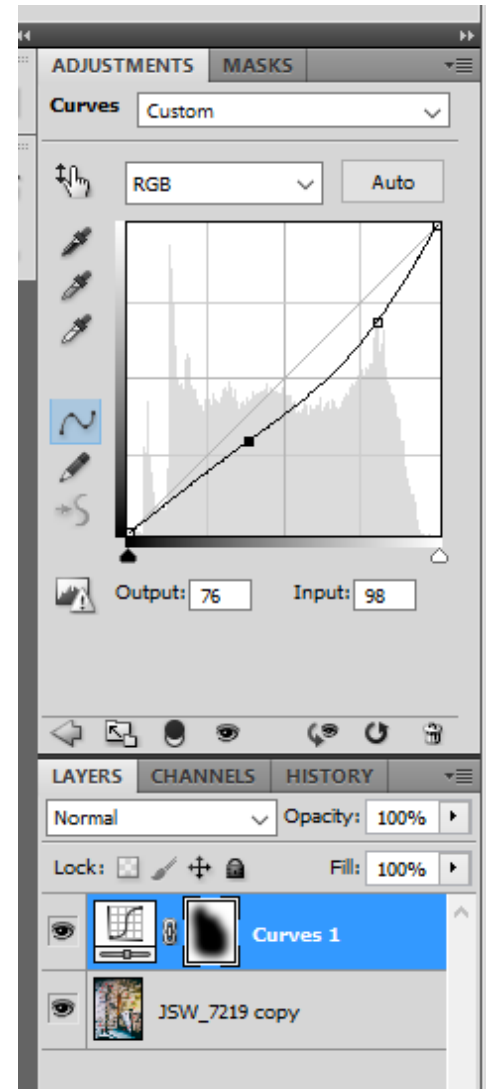
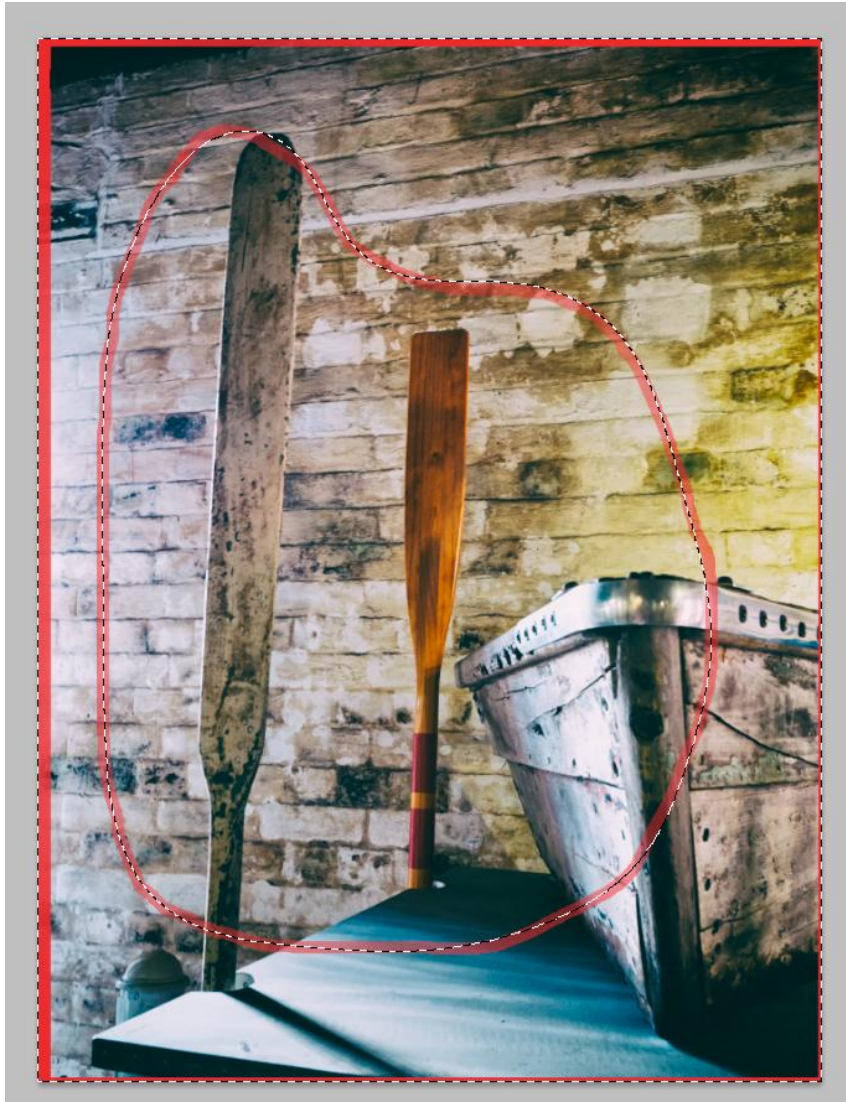
Any of these tools can be used to create your vignette shape. The process of creating the vignette is still the same.

Here's an image before any vignetting has been applied

I chose to use a freehand lasso tool to make my selection



Here you can see the mask showing the selected area and the curves adjustment layer.

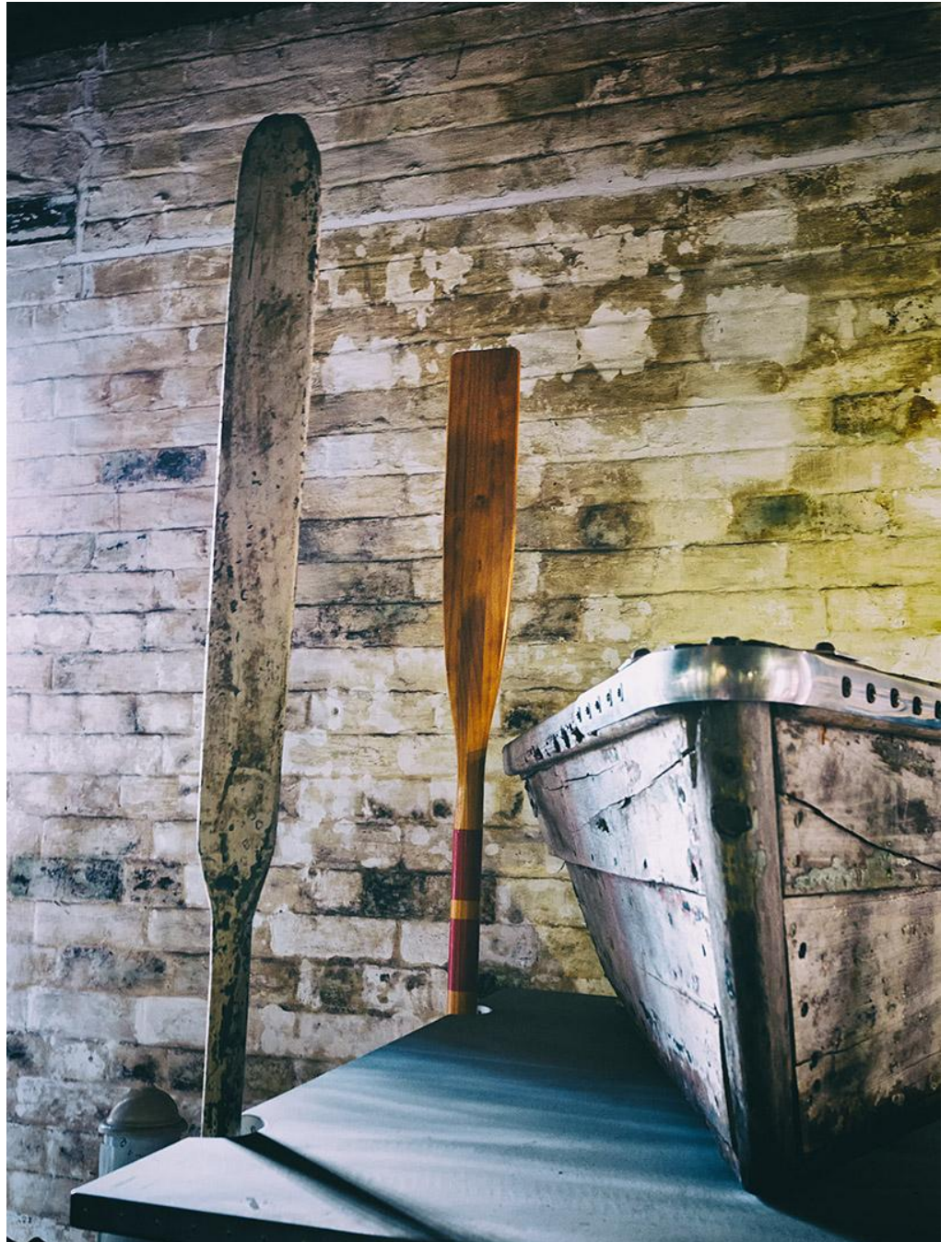




Before .....



... and After

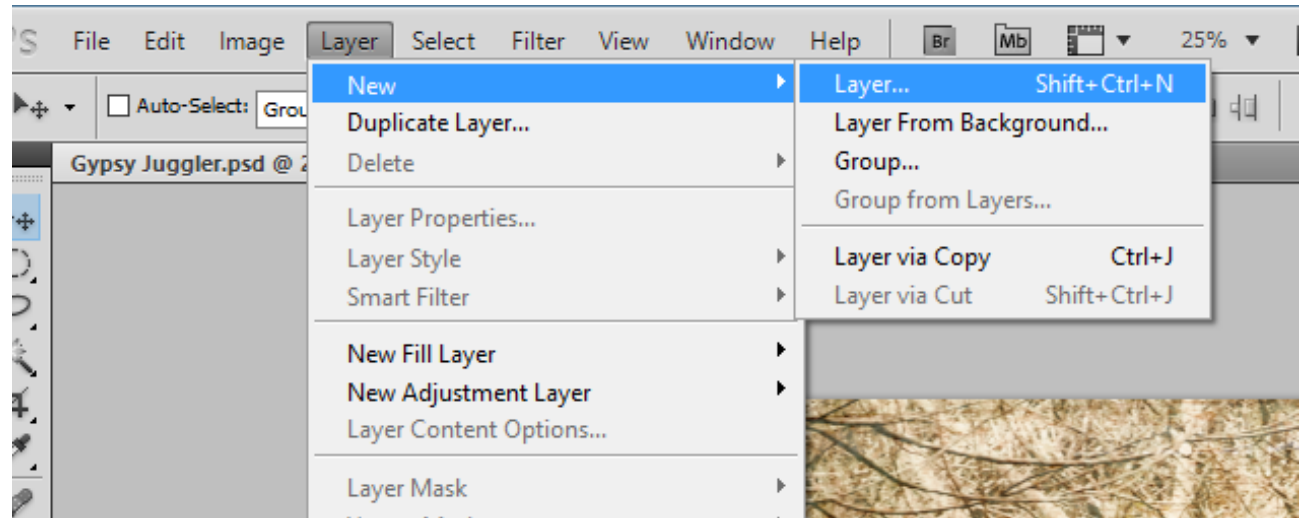


There is another method of vignetting that I sometimes employ, and that is to use freehand brush strokes to draw the viewer to the subject.

Here's an image (after all other processing has been completed)



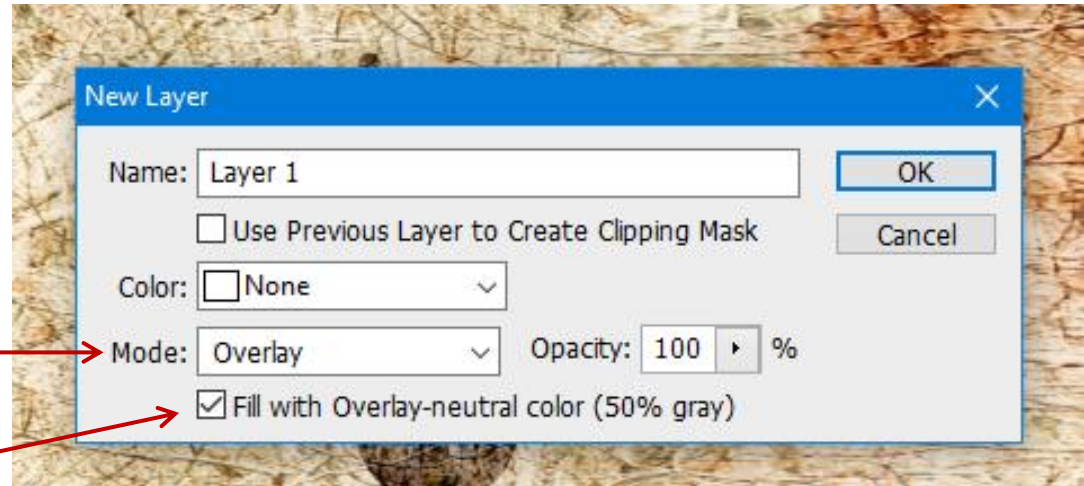
Create a new layer:-  
Layer → New → Layer



A new dialogue box will appear:

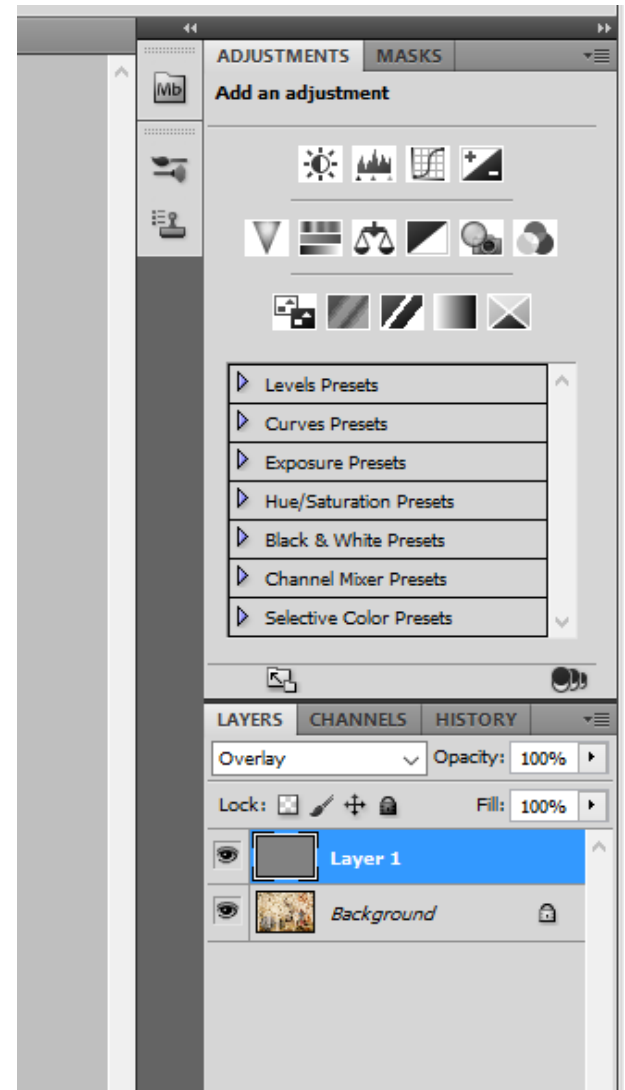
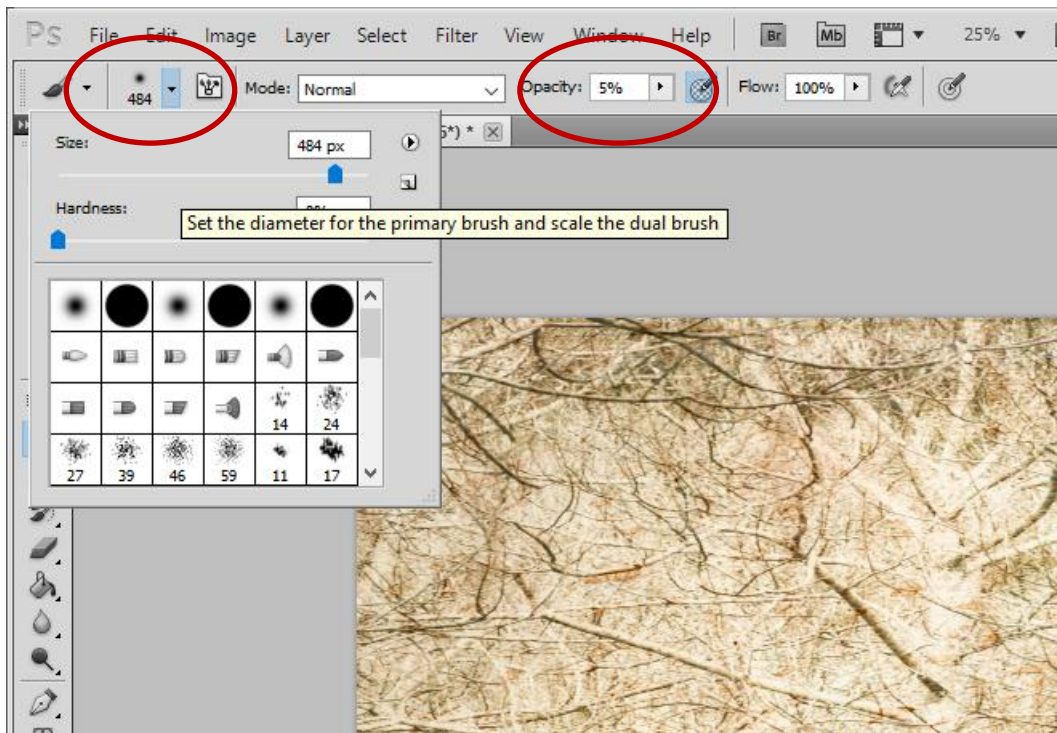
Select Overlay Mode,

and tick the box to Fill with 50% gray

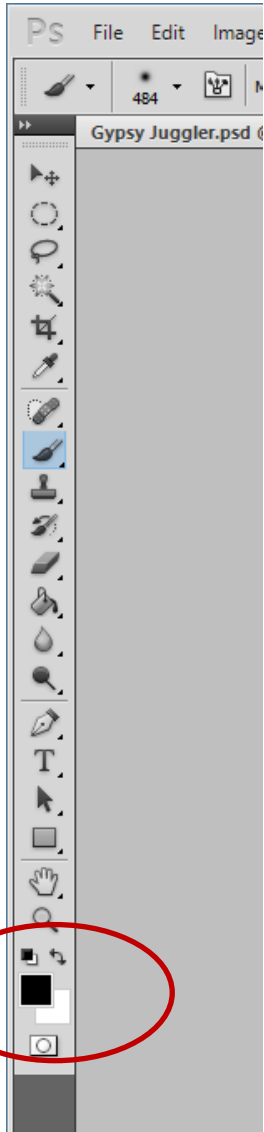


You will notice that a new layer has appeared which looks like it is filled with gray, but you can still see your image through it, as if it wasn't there.

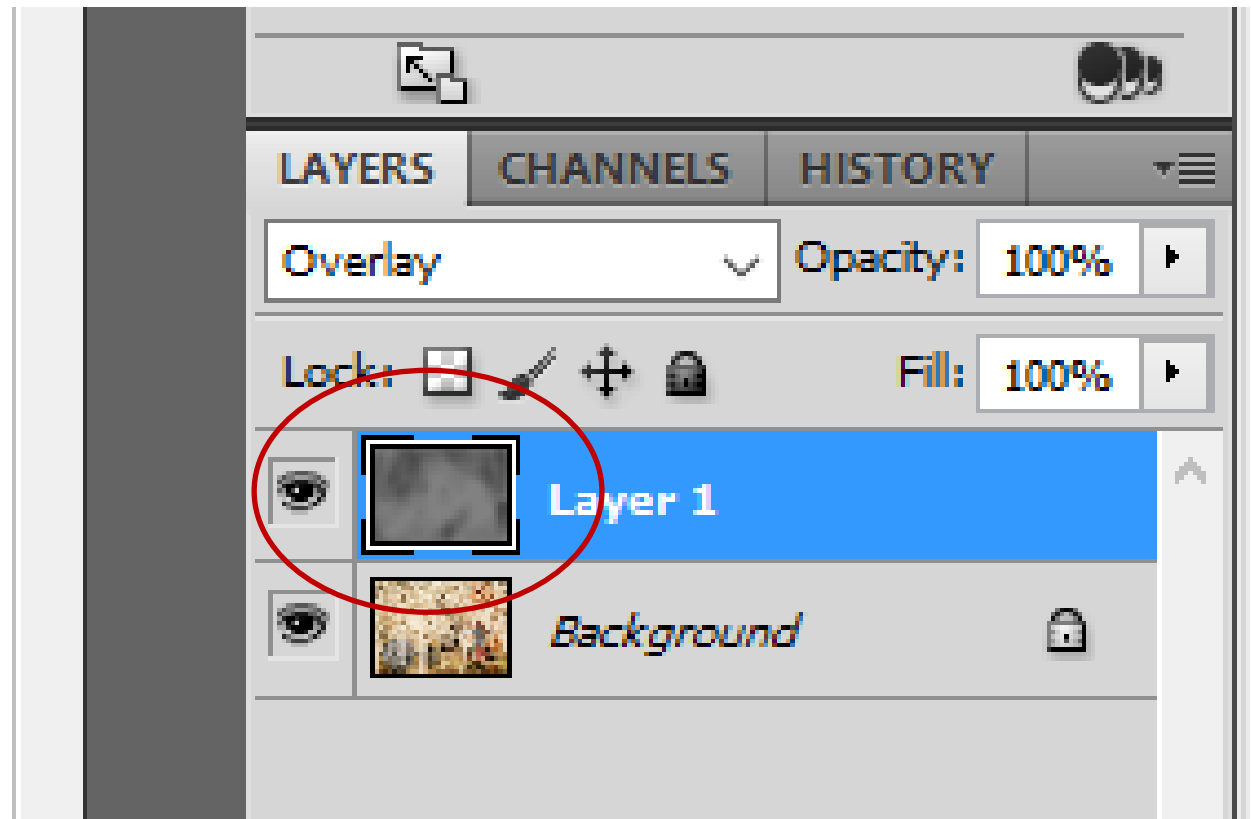
Select the Brush tool – with a large size and soft edges, and lower the Opacity to about 5%.



Make sure the foreground colour is set to black – and start painting the areas you wish to darken.



You will notice that as you build up brush strokes on the image, you will be able to see the areas that you are darkening on the 50% gray layer.



Before .....



After .....





One advantage in using either of these methods is subtlety – you are in control of how much you darken the edges of your image.

Another advantage is that you have the ability to refine and adjust your vignette at any time:-

You can revisit the Curves Adjustment Layer and modify the diagonal line, or if required reduce the Opacity of that layer

You can revisit the 50% Gray Layer, and use the brush to add further dark areas, or alternatively, change the Foreground colour to white, and lighten some areas.

These methods can also be used to produce a light vignette – however be aware that light vignettes should be used sparingly (most judges don't like them), and the image needs to suit this treatment



So, the aim of the exercise is to direct the viewer's eye to the subject in an unobtrusive manner.

Great results are achieved by experimentation and constant practice

Try it for yourselves