

Masking a Mask

1. Create some kind of background shape, in this case—a circle; fill it with color, stroke optional.
2. Obtain or create a pattern 'cluster' of other shapes to eclipse this circle, in this case—stars; these stars each are filled with a different color just to make it easier visually to differentiate.
3. Drag the cluster atop the circle so it partially eclipses it.
4. Select the circle, then Edit>Copy/Edit>Paste In Front; the uppermost circle will act as the Clipping Mask. (Clipping shape must be on top; Object>Arrange>Bring To Front if necessary.)
5. Select all and Object>Clipping Mask>Make (or R click>Make Clipping Mask).
6. View>Outline to remove the color and reveal the underlying paths. Use the Scissor Tool to cut the path of the circle right where it crosses the path of the star in an opportune spot where pattern transitions to circle.
7. Cut the path of the circle right where it crosses the path of the star on the other side, or end.
8. Between these broken points draw a path that traces the shape of the stars to close a new path between circle and stars. This alters the shape of the first Clipping Mask.
9. This achieves the look by alteration of the mask alone. If there is another image behind, copy/paste the new shape above all, and use it to create a second mask. The inside pattern becomes the outside shape.

