

## Ideas to improve the Vectorstyler Layers Panel

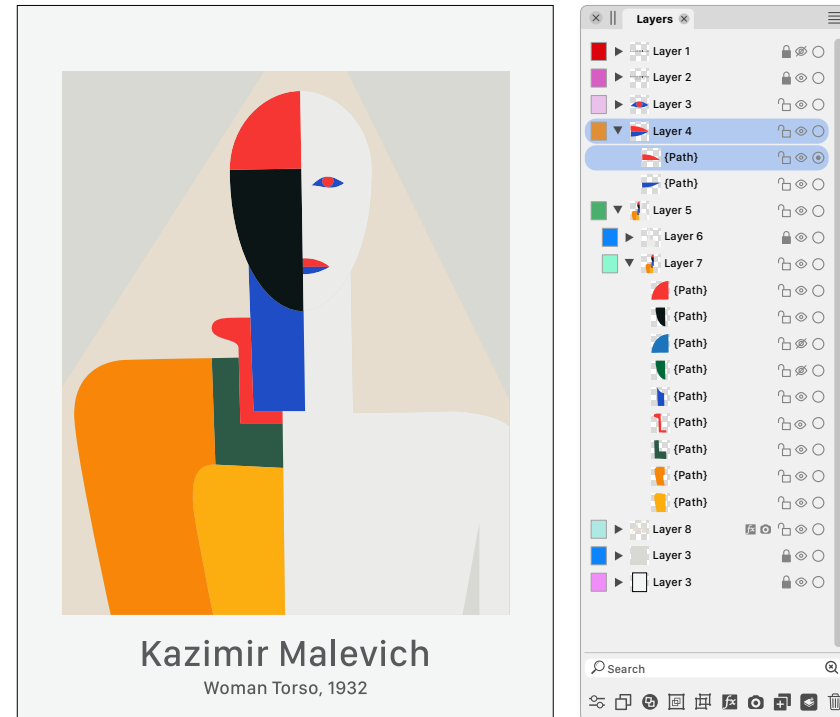
I would venture to say that Vectorstyler is unbeatable in its vector operations capabilities and the apparent ease with which it is done compared to other programs. On the other hand, the user experience and user interface design leaves room for improvement.

I would like to highlight the Layers Panel. This important tool to organize, distribute and manage objects can be improved. Both in design and functions. There illustrator is unbeatable with features like:

- move object(s) to another layer  
(without unfolding and digging into stacks)
- paste remembers layers
- release groups to layers

I have reflected on this and noted my ideas and recommendations in the following step-by-step approach with reasoning and examples. Respecting the existing design as much as possible as a starting point.

Vectorstyler has a very lively open forum where a lot can be said. The developer responds and communicates well and has a deep backlog. I feel free to make suggestions like this completely without obligation. I hope that the developer and the users and myself of course benefit from it.



The setup I've used to illustrate my ideas. The current Vectorstyler Layers Panel with an realistic situation to test ideas.

# The Layers Panel and my problems

First of all, I want to get an overview of the functions of the Layers Panel. What are the functions and what is the order of importance. This can of course differ per user. An icon/logo designer hardly needs any layers, while a cartographer quickly has a vertical screen full of layers and sublayers.

## Layers Panel functions

- separate design elements
- stack and arrange order
- turn on/off
- lock/release
- select objects
- distribute objects
- assign integral layer properties

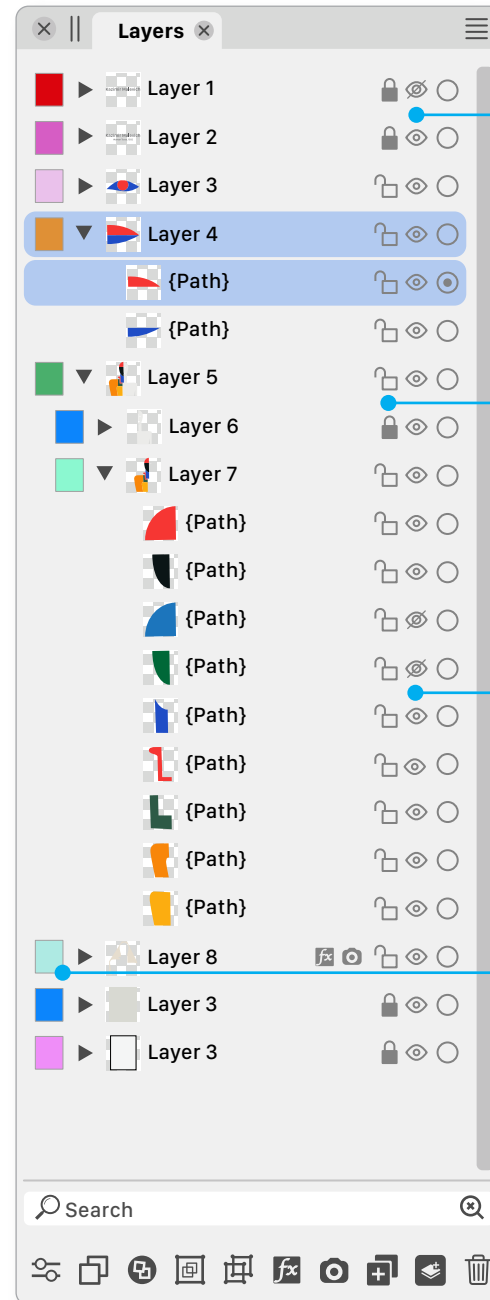
Having said that for reference, these are my major issues with the current Layers Panel.

## Design

- Poor navigation to the most important buttons
- Poor visibility of the main buttons

## Function

- Unable to move object(s) easy to another layer without having to unfold a layer and digging into the objects stack.



Poor VISIBILITY of onn/off buttons. Contrast between icons is minimal

Better contrast between lock/release button but a lot of REDUNDANT VISUAL INFORMATION on the right side of the panel

Difficult navigation in general, HIT a button. Narrow columns to SLIDE through if you want to toggle on/off

The color-ID is large and placed on A PRIME POSITION whithout any further major functionality. Not that important

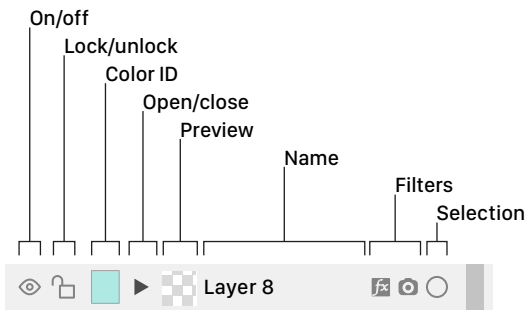
# Step 1

## Better accessibility main buttons

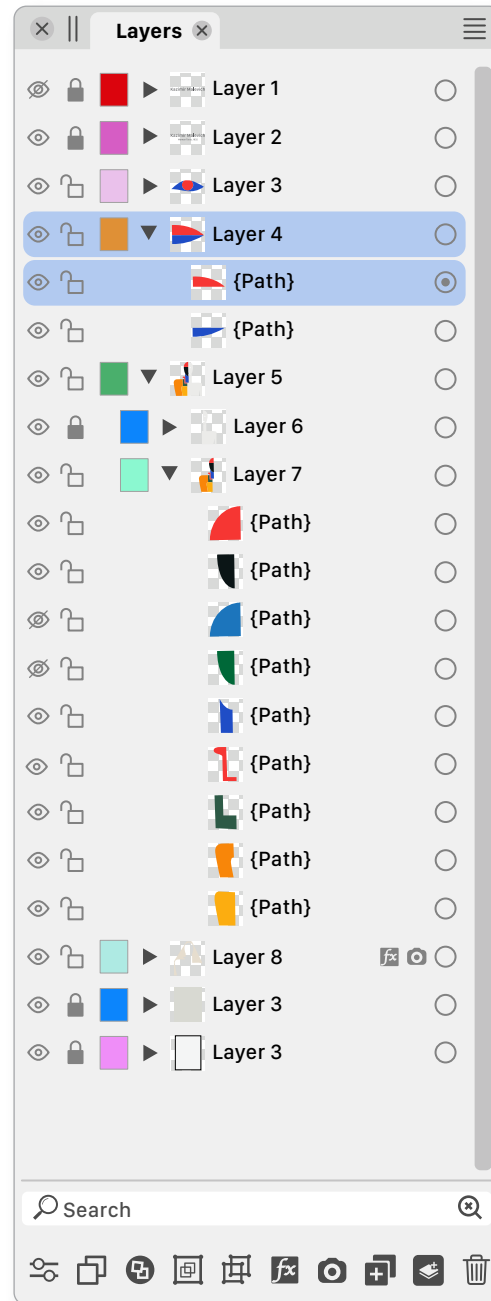
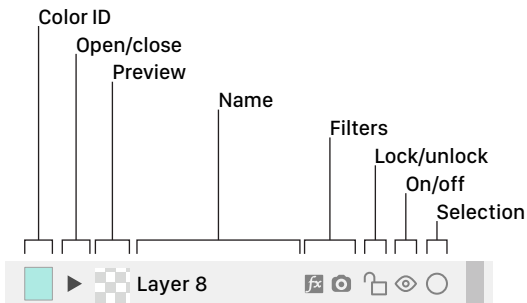
The layer panel is usually placed on the right hand side of the canvas. By moving the most often used buttons from the right to the left side of the panel, the distance from the center of the user drawing pane to the buttons can be reduced. This can accomplish a significant improvement in accordance with 'Fitts's Law'.

A new left to right order of elements is created which is more logic and parallel to the order of importance: 1. is the layer on. 2. is the layer unlocked. 3. Is it the right layer. Etcetera.

New order



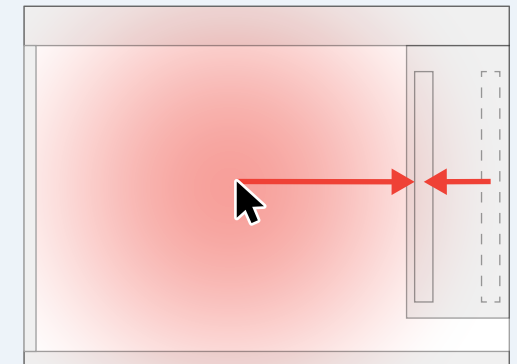
Old order



### What is Fitts' Law?

Fitts' law states that the amount of time required for a person to move a pointer (e.g., mouse cursor) to a target area is a function of the distance to the target divided by the size of the target. Thus, the longer the distance and the smaller the target's size, the longer it takes.

Likewise, the distance between a user's task/attention area and the task-related button should be kept as short as possible.

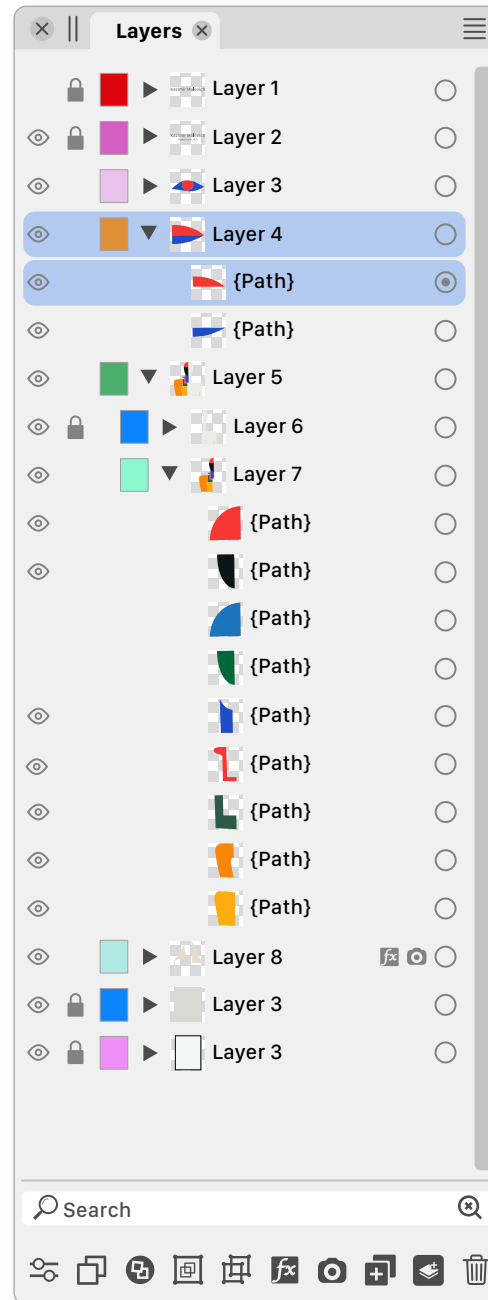


## Step 2

### Remove redundant information

Following the the 'remove redundant' design philosophy already embedded\* in the VS layers panel it is good to follow this principle for the buttons as well.

Removing redundant button information cleans up a lot. Puts the emphasis on what's important to know. Less noise. Clear at a glance.



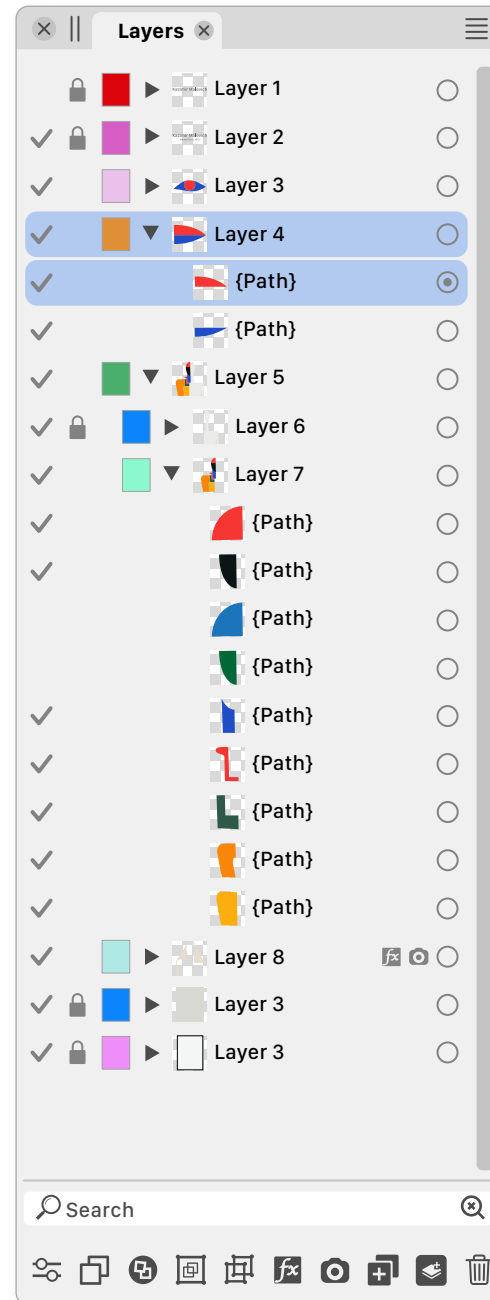
\* The 9 objects in layer 7 should also get a turquoise color ID when labeling everything.

## Step 3

### Better symbology

A layer is not visible or invisible by itself, but on or off. Objects that are white, transparent or outside the drawing pane can be invisible to the user but the layer is on.

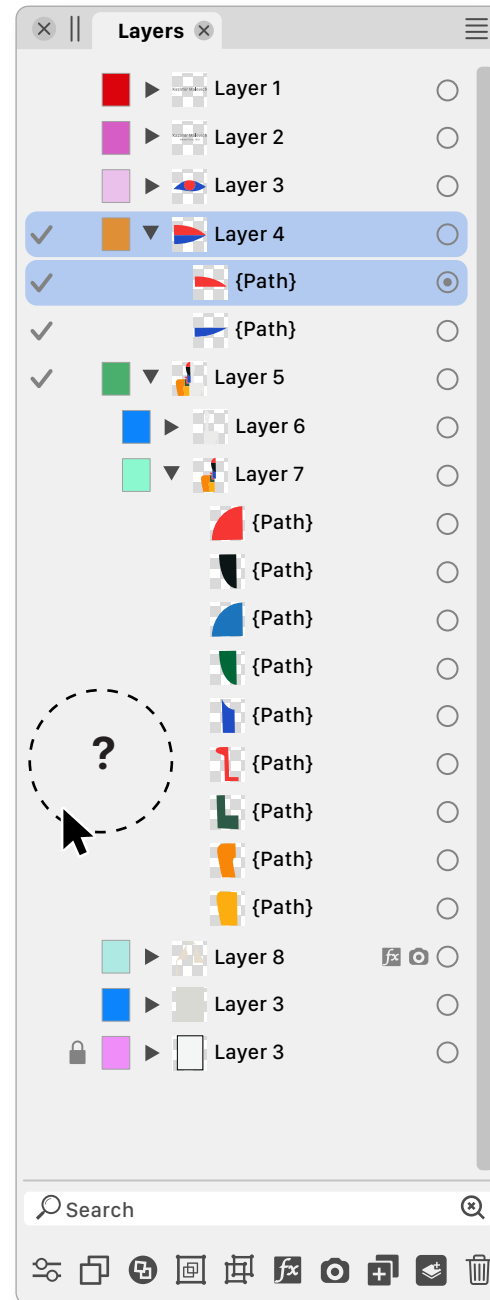
So a checkmark would be a better icon to symbolize this than an eye. The eye icon is now fashionable but an additional advantage of using a checkmark is that it is a more simple symbol that has a better shape contrast with the other symbols. In particular compared to the select/active symbol (radio button).



## A new problem

With the removal of redundant information a new problem emerges. It becomes difficult to navigate (find the button spot) when many layers are off and unlocked.

I think I need some guidance.



## Step 4

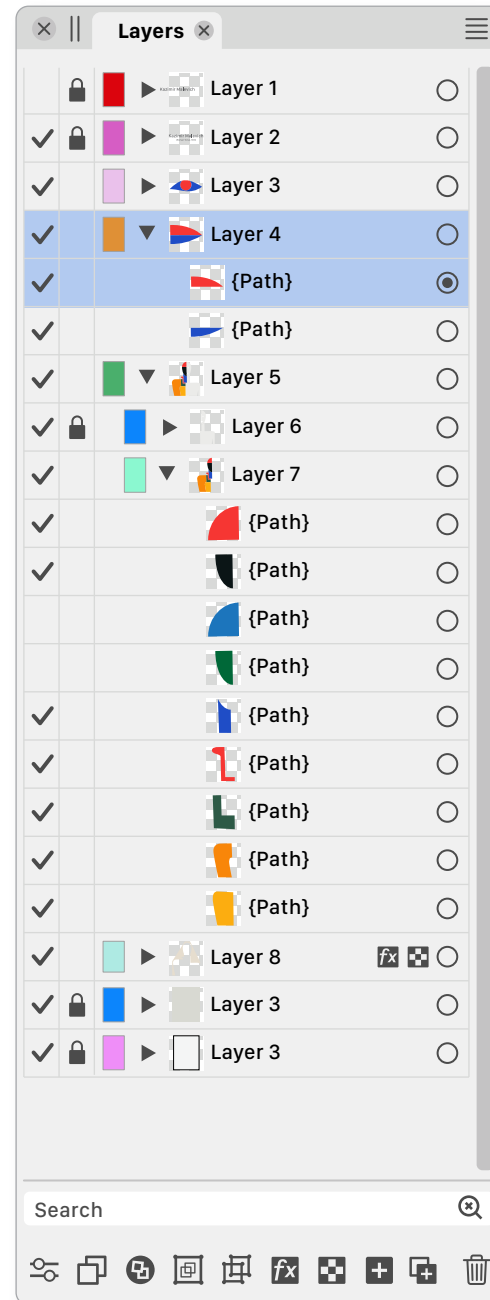
### It's a pity but... guidelines

More beautiful without but necessary. The advantage of removing redundant information does not outweigh the aesthetic disadvantage of guidelines.

Now you can find the target spots even if all on/off and lock/unlock icons were off.

Also made a few minor changes:

- changed the weight of the checkmark
- changed the weight of the 'selected' radiobutton-on
- sized rectangle Color ID smaller
- several new alternative icons in footer
- removed one of the two magnifying glasses



## Step 5

### Create function to move object(s) to another layer

A most desired feature!

I don't know if it's possible. I'm not a programmer but IF/THEN/ELSE possible this idea would be a nice solution without adding any new buttons. How it works:

#### 1. Select the object(s)

Manually on the canvas or with the selection radiobutton(s) in the layers panel. Multiple by holdig shift.

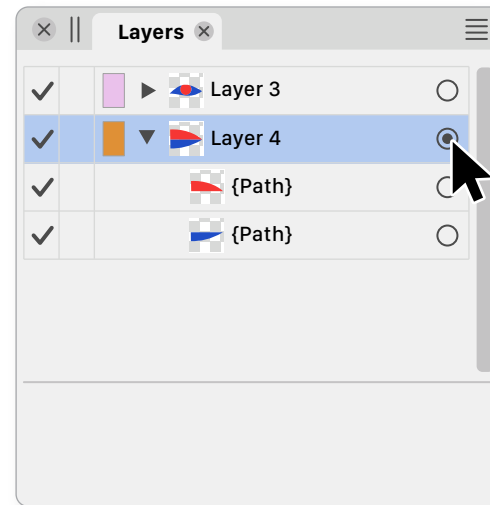
The object's layer(s) radiobutton(s) is/are activated in the Layers panel.

#### 2. In the Layers panel

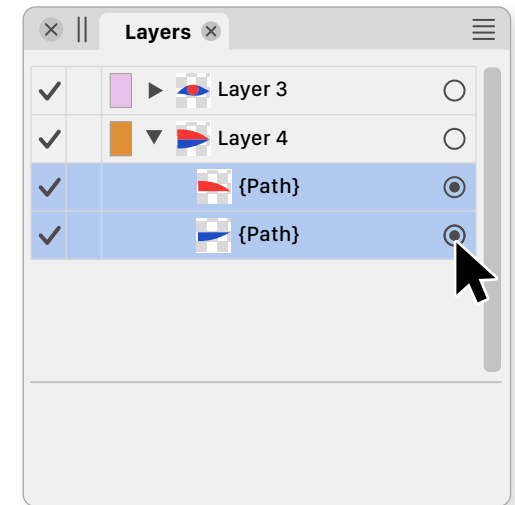
Click the inactive radiobutton of the target layer to which you will move the selection. The objects are moved to the target layer.

The target layers radiobutton becomes activated while the earlier layers become inactive. Object(s) keep status 'selected'. Awaiting further actions.

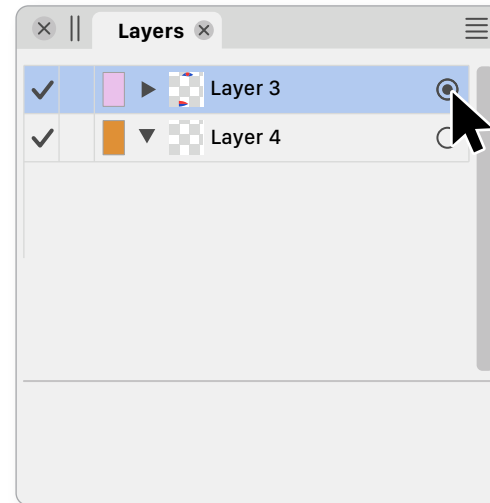
#### 1. Select objects



#### or multiple with SHIFT



#### 2. Moved to the target layer



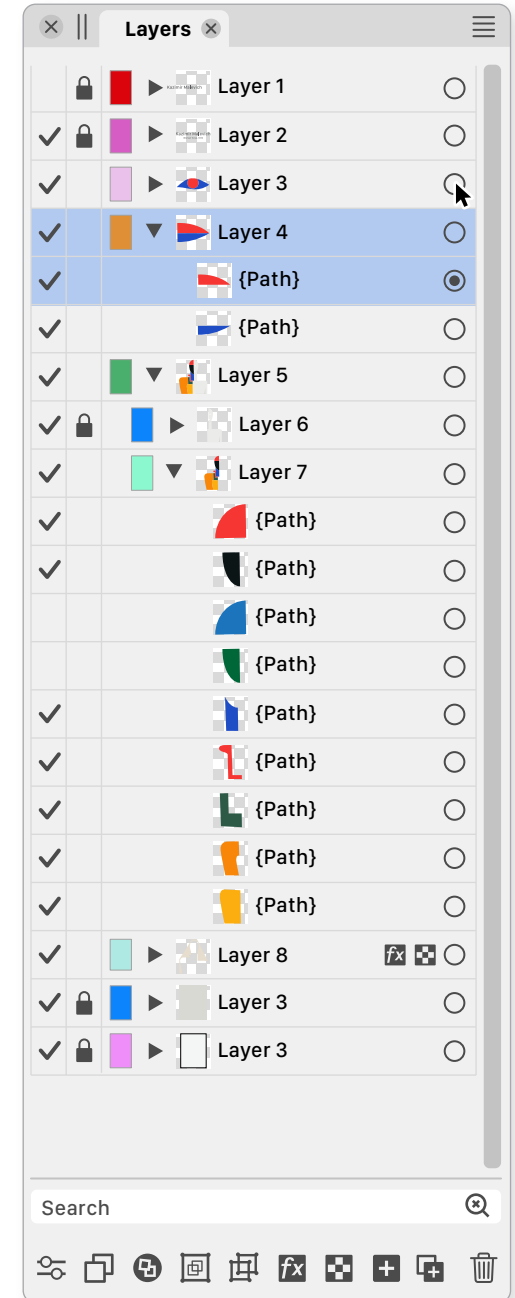
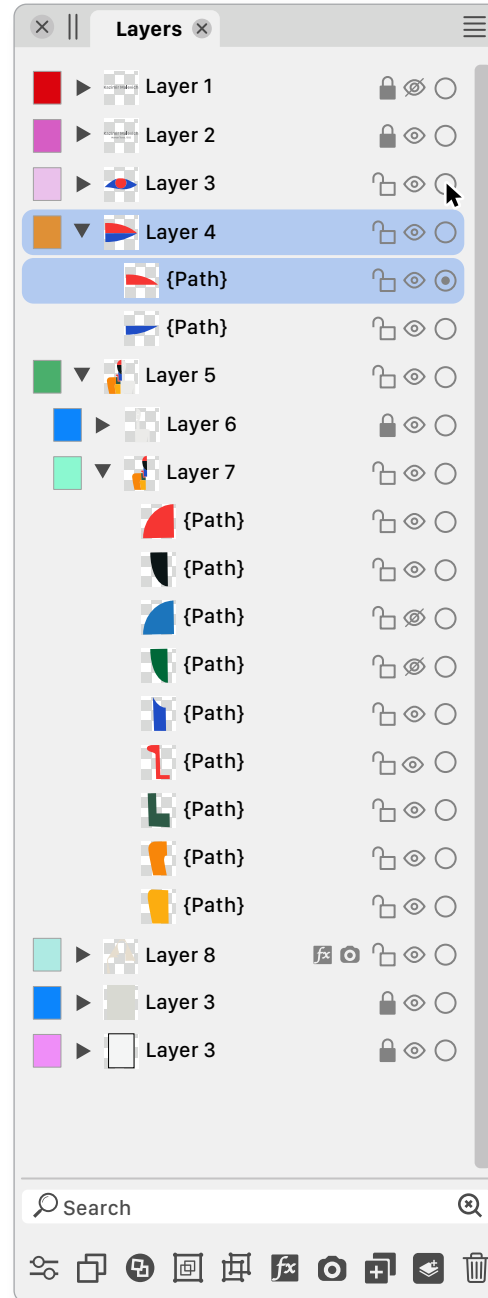


## Finally Comparing old to new

In short I think old is nicer but new is functionally better. The latter counts the most. In addition, I think there is still plenty of room for improvement in icon design, size, line, color and contrast.

I now hear people say, 'this is very similar to illustrator'. I don't think this is right. Changes are purely based on sincere grounds and science.

Why modern modern cars look similar  
To increase aerodynamic efficiency and try to appeal to the broadest possible audience on the global market.  
This also applies to UX and UI design.



## What would this look like in the hip Dark Mode?

A very quick exercise gives this result. To get an idea.

That's it!  
Regards, Ayo

