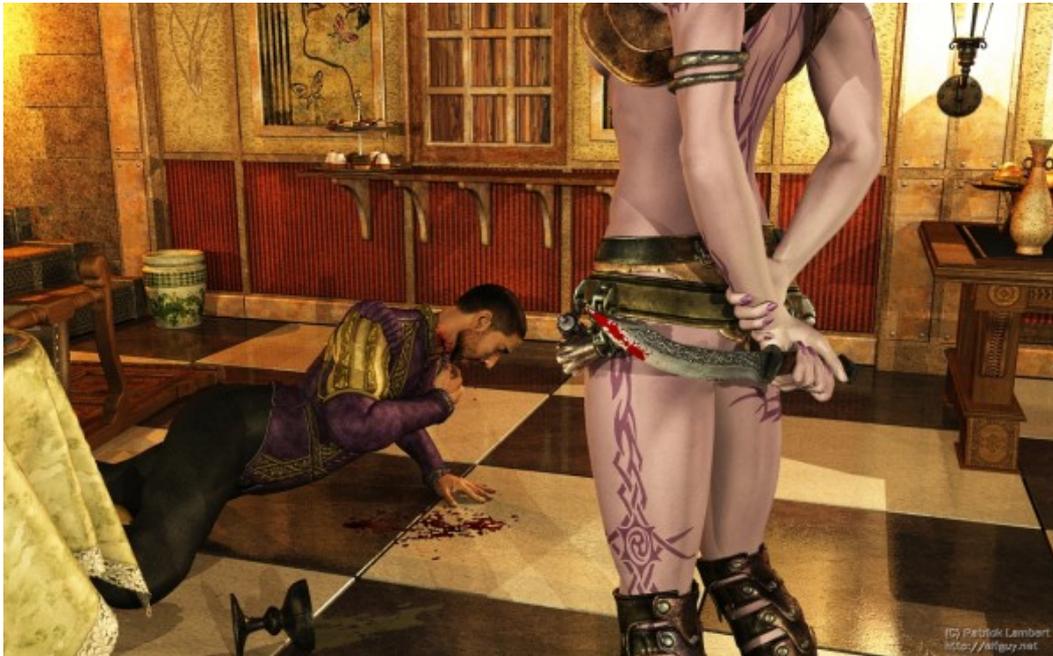


The Making of Agony

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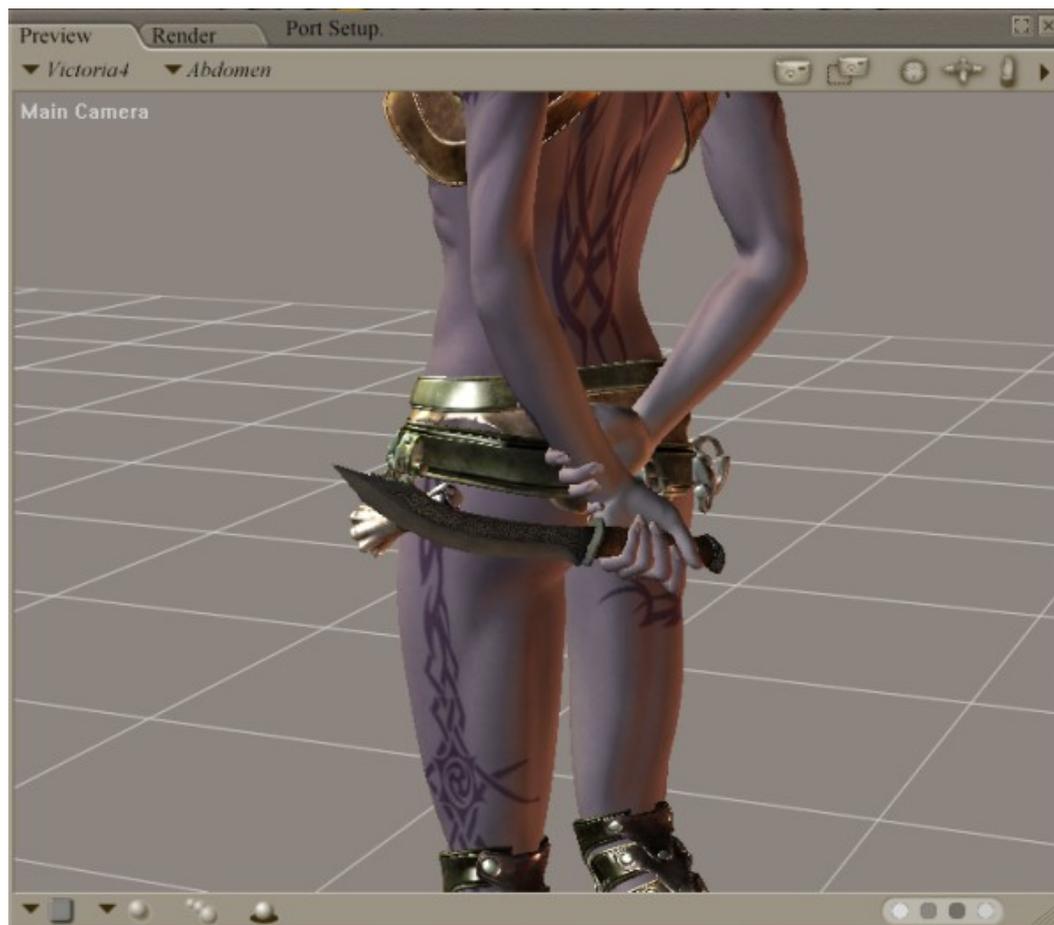
Introduction



This is a short tutorial showing how I create a typical piece of digital art, in this case the one shown above called **Agony**. You can view a high res version [here](#). The three programs used in creating it were Poser 7, Vue 6.5 and Paint.NET. There was also a long list of 3D packages, available from the DAZ3D, Xurge3D, ShareCG, Renderosity and RuntimeDNA sites.

Before starting on the scene, I try to get some good inspiration. In this case, I wanted to picture a violent scene, with a lot of contrast. The contrast of the beauty of life, versus the ugliness of death. The cakes and fruits in the background, versus the blood and spilled drink. And finally the almost nonchalant pose of the assassin, contrasted with the agony suffered by the dying man. This is the premise I start with when I sit down in front of the computer.

Characters



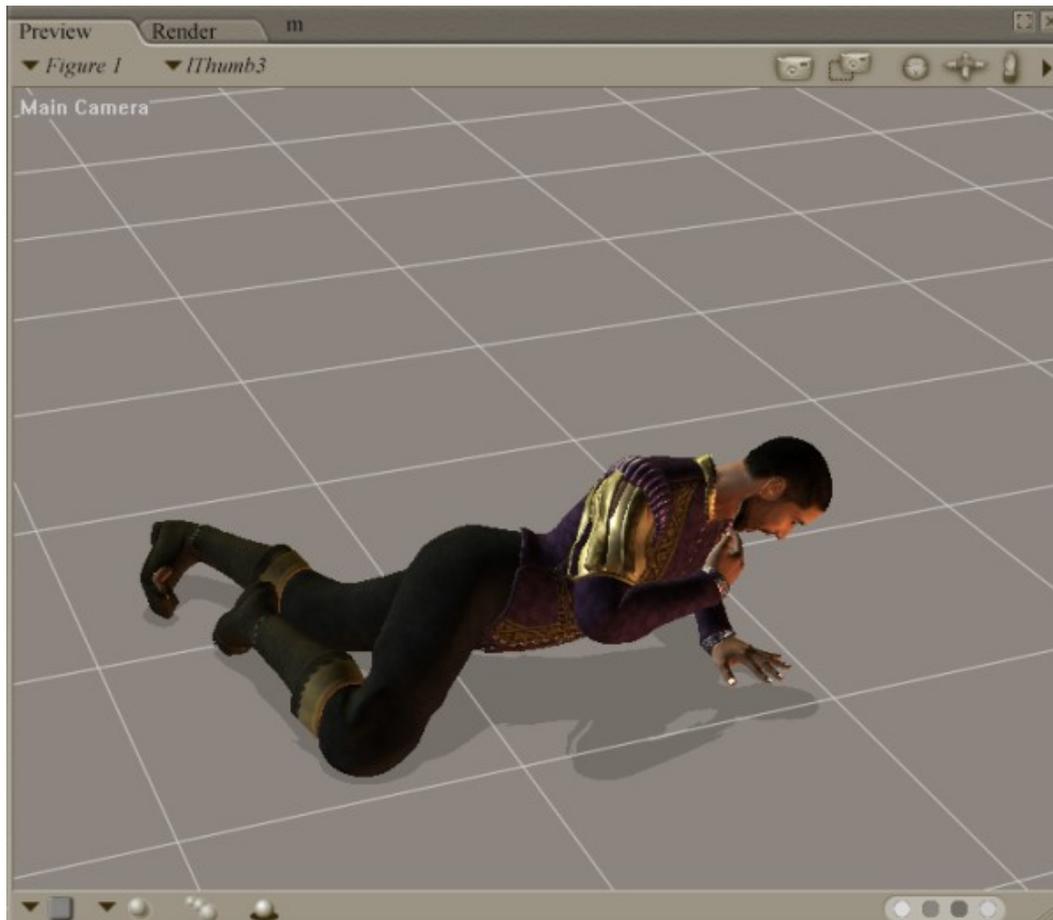
When I start a project, I usually start with the characters, but not always. In this case I started with the elf girl. I don't keep presets of V4 characters so the way I start a new character is always the same. I load V4, then apply the Shoulder Fix injections, then the DAZ default, Morphs++ and Muscles morphs from the Pose folder. Then I pick a texture, in this case the Mara character from Renderosity. Usually I would then work on the head, but in this case the head won't be seen.

I never use premade body morphs. Instead, I play with the BodyBuilder, Definition, Young and Fitness dials, and then go through each body part and adjust things like neck and belly thickness, hip size, arms thickness and so on. Then, I position the camera approximately the way it will be in the final render and I adjust some muscle values. One thing to keep in mind is that for some reason, definition is less obvious when rendered in Vue than with a typical Poser render, so I tend to use slightly increased values.

The next step is the pose. Again, looking from the angle I'll be using, I position everything manually. The one preset I often use is the Aery Soul Justice pose set for the hand holding the knife.

Once I'm satisfied with the body, I add the outfit. In this case, it's the Aery Soul package Hear No Evil, or at least part of it. Note that it doesn't support all the morphs I added, so there is typically a lot of manual positioning, and for the butt I had to use the Poser Morphing Tool to close some poke through. The dagger is a prop from the DM Legends pack. Once this is all

done, I save the scene.



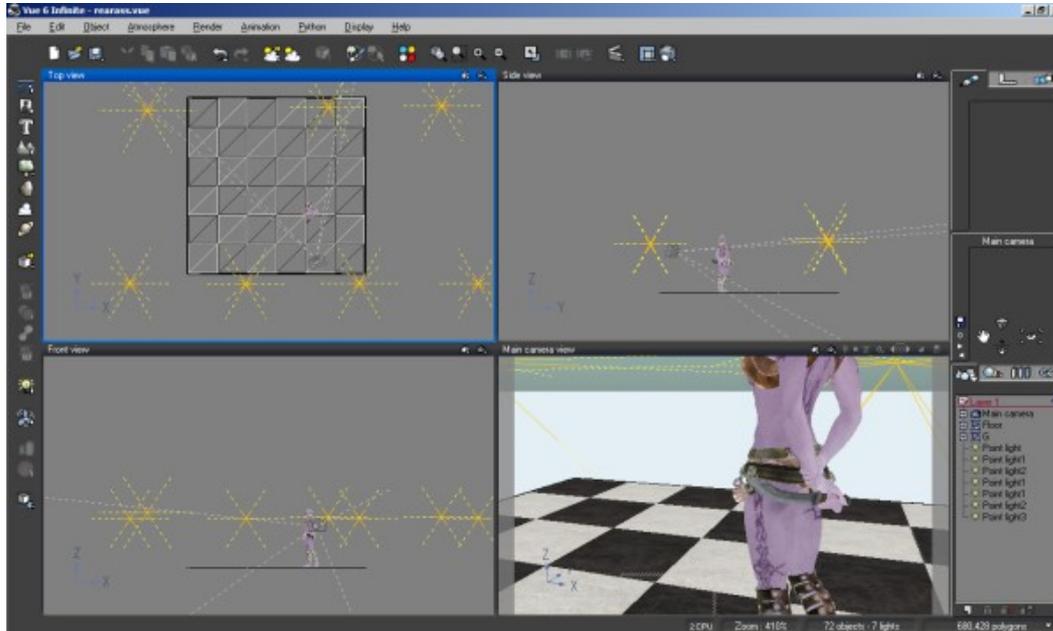
The work I do on the male is much less. Since I rarely use men I have a much smaller library of stuff for him. This character is M3, using the default body build, and a free texture called Jarome. In his case I loaded a preset pose from the Couple Poses package, and I tweaked it to have the look I wanted. The outfit is then added, which is the Nobleman outfit from Xurge3D. You may notice some poke through in the screenshot, but that's alright since when I import it in Vue I'll be deleting most body parts. Once done I save this scene in another file.

Room

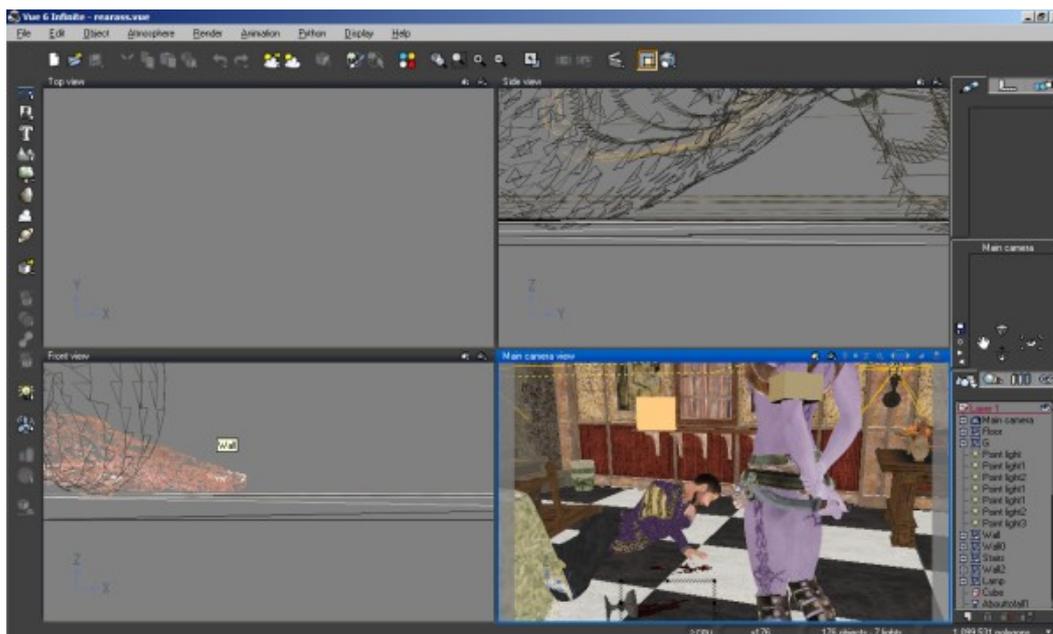
Now that the characters are ready, I fire up Vue and set some default settings that I typically use for an interior scene. First I delete the sun, then I go to the Atmosphere Editor and set the Light Balance to 95%. This ensures that I will get a very high contrast render, instead of a washed out one, and I really hate working with the sun since it causes so many issues with shadows, so instead I'll be putting out lights myself. Then I go in the Render Settings and set the render size to Widescreen.

With both programs open, now I decide what elements I'll need for the basic scene. I load the floor prop from the DMR DreamArt package in Poser, save it, and then import it in Vue, which loads Poser save files directly, positioning it, and then I import the girl.

I position the camera, and add lights. The way I work lights for an interior scene is trying to emulate how lights would be positioned in a real life situation. In this case, I set two rows of lights along non existing walls. For interior lights I typically set the strength around 30, and shadow value to 70%. I also set the color value of the lights based on the type of scene I want. For a fantasy scene like this I'll set them to a pale orange, with the one that's going to be near the stairs being dark orange.

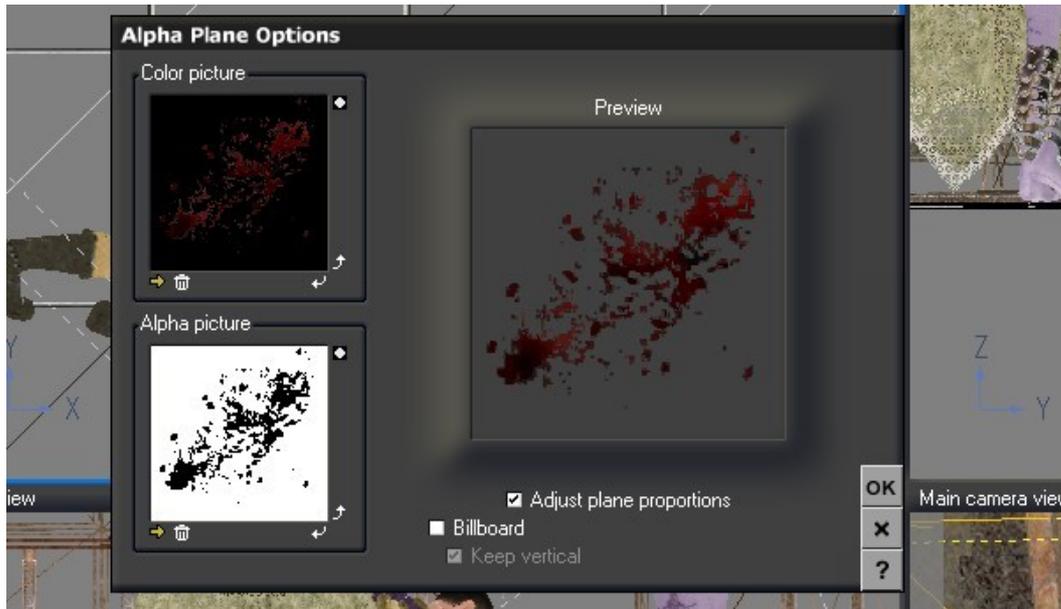


Once this basic scene is done, I do a lot of test renders to get the camera and girl exactly the way I want them. This is a crucial step since everything I add after is based on this initial setup. Once that's done, I start loading the components of the room. In this case I used the wall from DMR DreamArt twice, the wall and stairs from DM CormacsLoft. The way I load items is always one at a time in Poser, then saving them and importing them in Vue.



Once that's done, I import the man character, and then work on building the scene. I add the lamp, tables, pot, fruits, cake, plate, chair, bottle, and so on. I also add the arm band at this point, from the Exnim Sorceress package. The reason I add it in this

step is that its made for the other arm, so I prefer to manually position it in Vue.

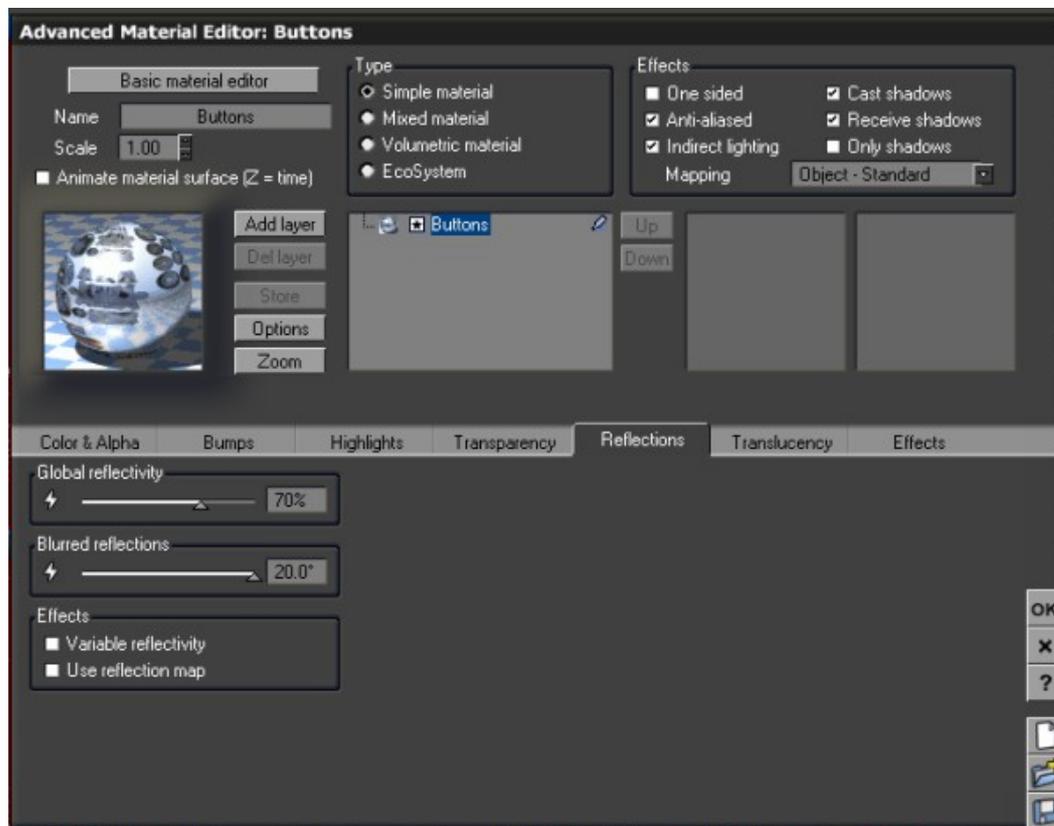


The special effects, the blood and spilled drink, are made in various ways. The drips are objects with a blood texture I made, while the two patches on the floor are alpha maps, with the right color.

Material tweaking

Tweaking materials may seem like a small thing, but it's the most complex and time consuming part of the whole process. It's crucial for metals to look right, cloth to look like cloth and not plastic, and so on. It's also highly dependent on the lighting of the scene. I modify in some way every single material, and the finished scene has 178 materials.

For the skin, what I'll usually do is copy the diffuse color to the highlight color, and set the value around 13 and size to 34%. Eyes and lips require different settings but are not an issue in this case. For cloth and leather, I put a grey highlight and set the value to something that looks nice. For metallic shaders, the first thing I do is remove the reflection map. One thing Poser vendors love to do is put reflection maps, but I always remove them, since it gives an artificial result. I set the reflection around 70%, color reflected light around 95%, highlight value to 100% and size around 40%. This varies based on the lighting and how much reflection you want to have.



The bump value of everything also needs to be adjusted. For skin, a value around 0.003 is usually fine. For anything else, it varies. I usually try a value and do a test render of that area, and then tweak as needed.

Once everything is ready, I render at twice the resolution I will use, so usually 2560x1600. This ensures that no aliasing happens, and also helps in giving a sharper result.

Post-work

Once the render is done, I bring it into Paint.NET for post work. I don't do much in post. In this case, I added the blood on the blade and neck from water splash photos, and then I add a small sharpen filter, increase the saturation slightly, and add my signature. The whole process took 4 hours, and the render took 45mins, which is average for my scenes.