Using Displacement Maps in Postwork

Tools Needed

*** Poser**

*** Photoshop**

*** Xero Filters**

Step 1 - The Incomplete Image

I used Poser 6 and the great PC prop, Romany Charms, to create this image. However, there was an additional element I wanted to add: the shadow of someone watching the sleeping woman cast across her legs.

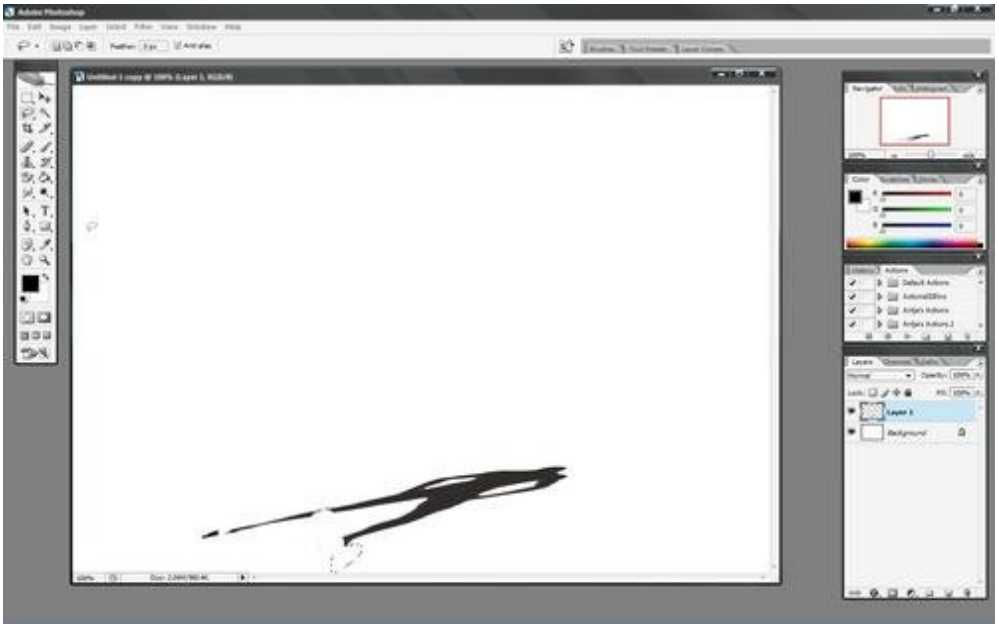
The probem I ran into was no matter how I posed M3 in the scene, I couldn't get the shadow I wanted so I realized it was simply something I was going to have to add in postwork (something I dread because I'm not very good at it).

Step 2 - Creating the Shadow

In Poser, I loaded a nude M3 (no need for textures or clothing since all I wanted was his shadow) and re-arranged the default lighting until I got a shadow I knew I could work with.

I then exported the image into Photoshop.

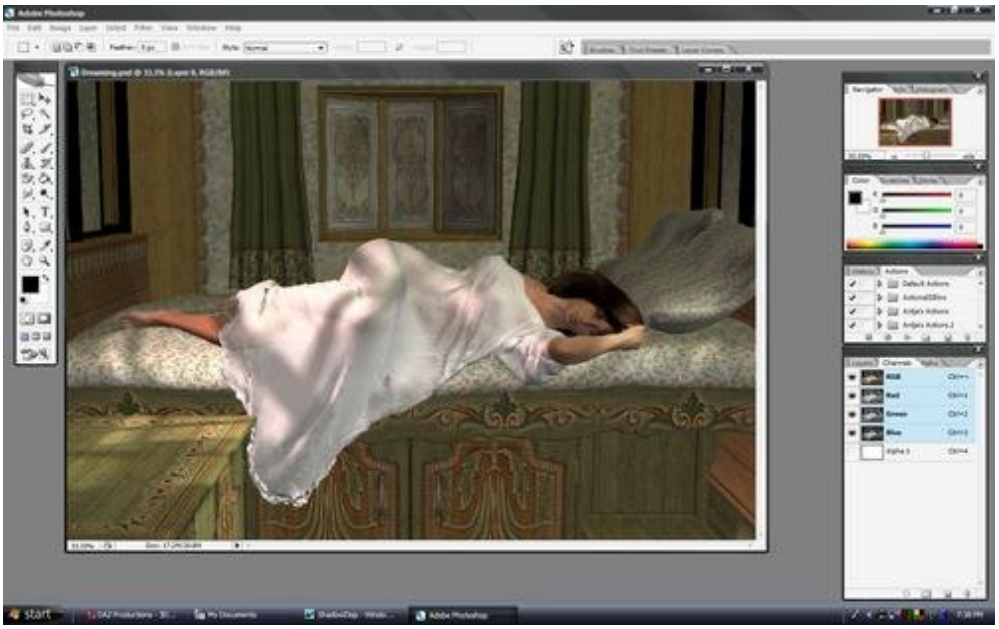
Step 3 - Working In Photoshop



Once inside Photoshop, I simply used the Magic Wand and Lasso tool to strip out everthing except for the need shadow.

With that layer ready, I opened up the main image as well.

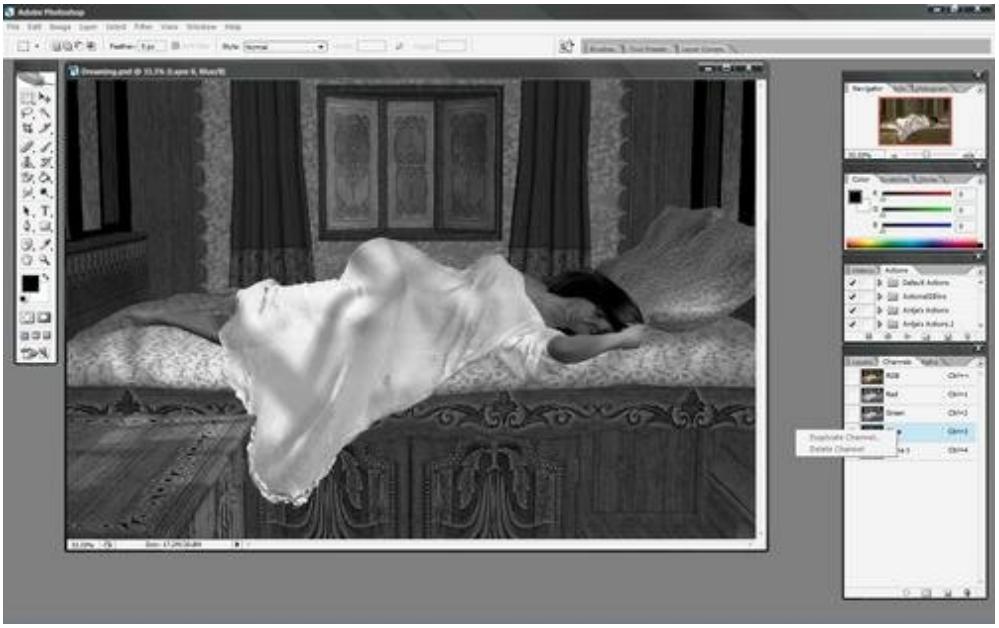
Step 4 - Chosing the "Right" channel



Opening the Channels box on the right (or wherever you keep the layers/channel pallette), you will see several color options.

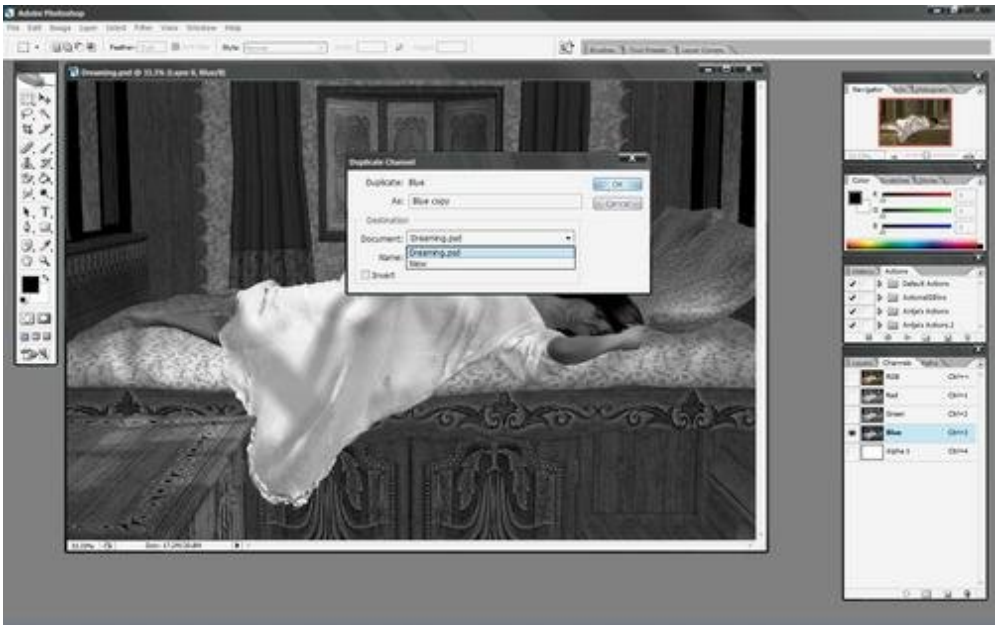
At this point, it's a bit of trial and error as you test which color channel offers the greatest contrast in the image.

Step 5 - Creating the Displacement Map, part 1



In the case of this image, the Blue channel offered the greatest contrast. So, highlighting the blue channel, I right-clicked on it and chose to "duplicate" the channel.

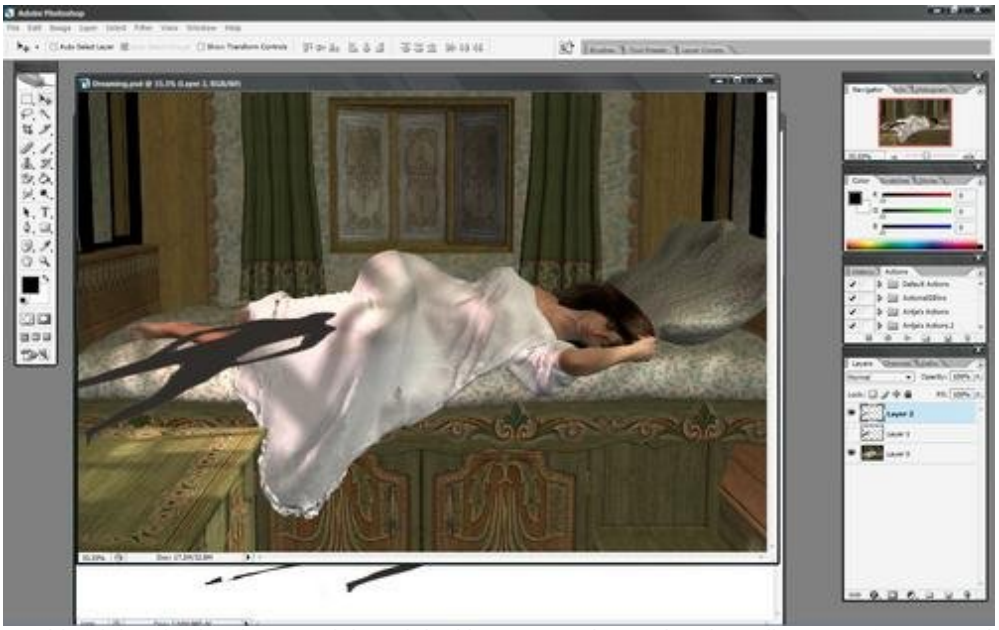
Step 6 - Creating the Displacement Map, part 2



Once I chose to Duplicate the channel, a new dialogue box opened up. In the destination box, the file was renamed "displacement".

To this new file I also applied a Blur> Gausian >.5 to it to soften the image a bit. Then I saved the newly created displacement map to a location I could easily find later.

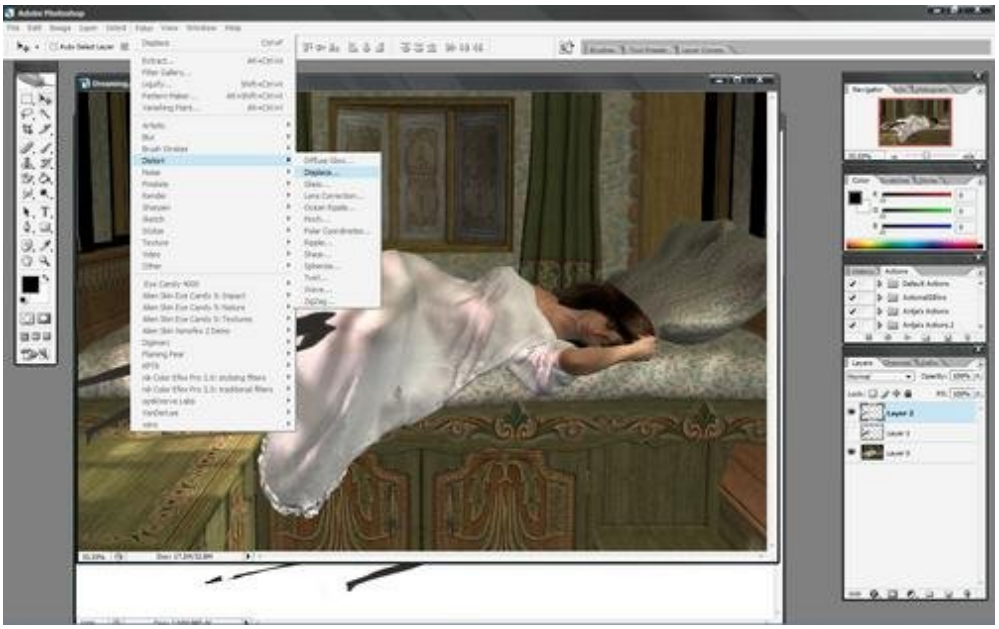
Step 7 - Combining Layers



Now, I simply combined the shadow layer and the original image together, using the Edit > Transform > Scale tool to stretch and position the shadow to where I wanted it.

At this point, the shadow looks poor as it is too rigid and too opaque, but that will be fixed in the next step.

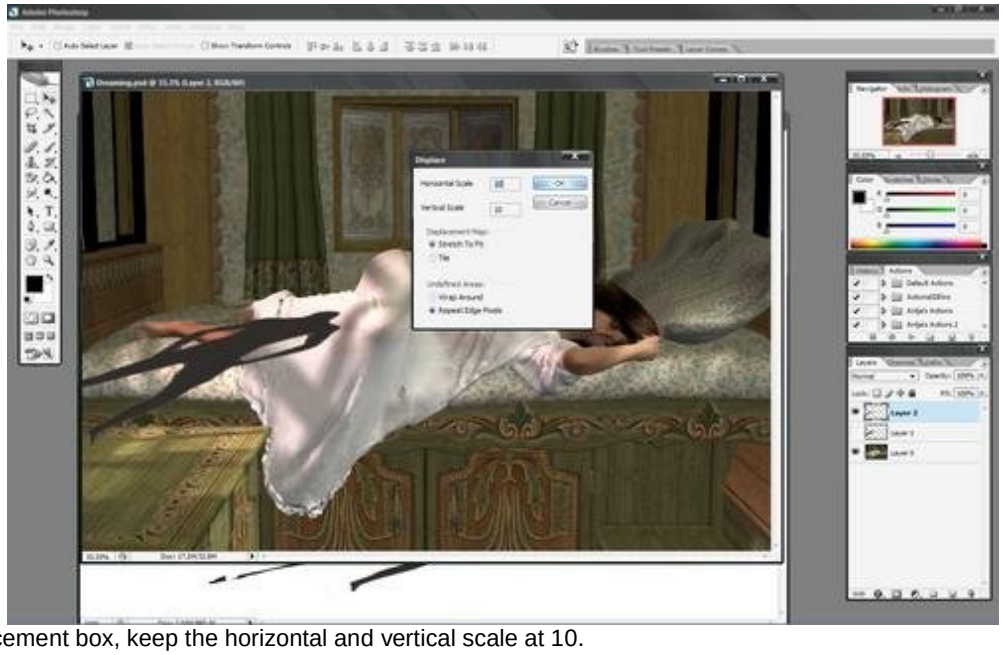
Step 8 - Using the Displacement Map, part 1



In the toolbar above, select Filter > Distort > Displace.

This will open up a new dialogue box within Photoshop.

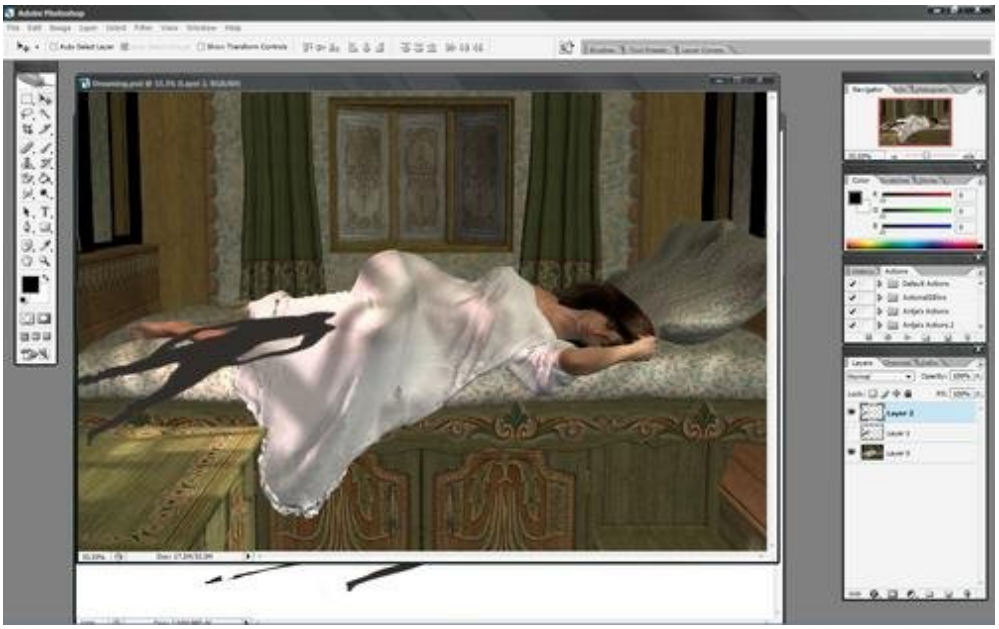
Step 9 - Using the Displacement Map, part 2



In the Displacement box, keep the horizontal and vertical scale at 10.

Stretch to fit the displacement map and repeat edge pixels.

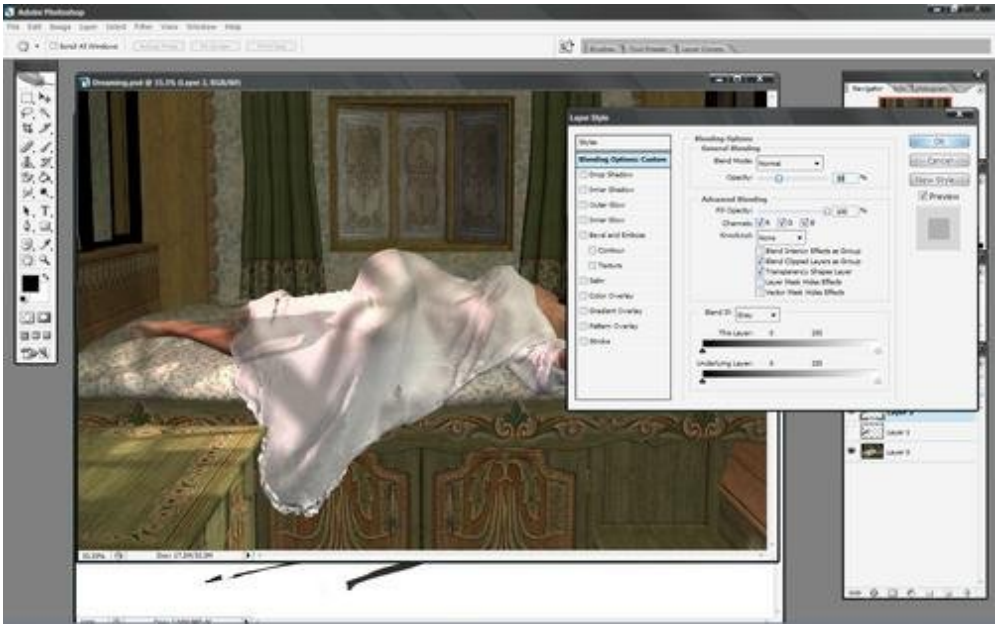
Step 10 - Using the Displacement Map, part 3



The dialogue will now prompt you for a displacement map, so simply point it to the one created a few steps back.

In this image, you can see how the map affected the shadow layer as it now seems to be more draped over the woman than it was before.

Step 11 - Blending



Right click on the shadow layer to open up the Blending Options.

Keep the blend mode set on Normal and simply slide the Opacity lever until the shadow matches as close as possible to the other shadows in the image.

Step 12 - Using Xero Filters

Using Xero's free filters, found here: http://www.xero-graphics.co.uk/downloads.htm, I did a little finishing work.

First, I utilized the Bad Dream filter to exaggerate and darken the colors a bit. I find that helps an image and adds depth to it if you're planning on making it Black and White.

Step 13 - Finishing Up

The last thing I did was use Xero's Grayscaler filter, adjusting contrast and brightness to taste.

It's finished and no one will ever know it had to be pieced together.

I hope this helps your understanding of displacement maps and their possible uses.