Making DAvatar Clothing

This guide is meant to compliment the first two I've written, Spriting and Shading. If you have not already at least skimmed through both of these (if you're familiar with spriting and shading) or read them in detail (if you're not) I'd highly recommend it, since this tutorial will only skim over topics like lineart, colour and shading except where different techniques are being used.

Some of the techniques used in this tutorial use advanced paint program features such as blur, texture stamping, and layer effects. A program such as Photoshop or GIMP is highly recommended.

Getting Ready

I'll be using Photoshop (PS) in this tutorial, but the tools should be similar any other advanced image editing application. If you're not familiar enough with your painting program to be able to easily identify and use the following tools, it's highly recommended that you seek out the user's manual and/or a tutorial on basic functions.

Pencil - This is your primary drawing tool.
Eraser - For undoing pencil marks.
Paint Bucket - Useful for filling large areas with colour.
Eye Dropper - Copying existing colours.
Line - Drawing straight lines
Rectangle/Oval Tools - for drawing boxes and circles.
Pattern Stamp Tool - for applying texture
Blur Tool - for smoothing out folds and shadows
Darken, Multiply, Lighten Brushes - for applying shading.

Setting Up Space

First thing to do is open a blank copy of the DAvatar in your program. DAvatar layers must all be 83 pixels wide by 159 pixels high at 72 dpi - this ensures that the absolute positioning used to line up the parts on the body works correctly. There is a copy of the DAvatar base called base.png in the Projects folder download.

Make a new layer. Time to decide what you want to make. A weapon? A piece of clothing? Hat? Shoes? A whole outfit? When you've made up your mind, plunder Google images for a source picture. I'll be doing Sephiroth from Final Fantasy for this example.


Don't mess with Sephiroth.. you wouldn't like him when he's angry...

A quick Google image search coughed up this picture on the first page. When choosing a source picture, try to get one that faces straight forward (matching the DAvatar orientation), to make your life easier. If you can't find a picture that matches in orientation, get as close as you can.

In a new document, open up your source picture and cut out the background if it's not too hard. Then start removing parts that you don't need. I'm going to take off the sword (because it's not going to fit in that orientation) and the head/hair for now. Grab your source image, and lay it over the DAvatar base on that blank layer you made. Chances are it's way too big, and even too tall.   Time to resize.
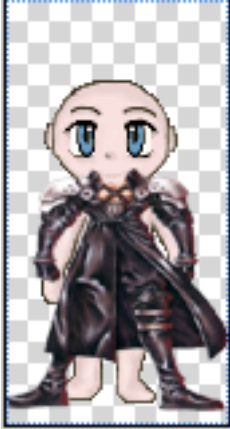
Better, but not in the right proportion. As you can see, Sephiroth is much taller and lankier than a DAvatar. I cut the source picture in two at the waist, so that I could adjust the bottom and top separately. Use your Resize, Cut and Paste, and Distort tools until you have something that fits over the DAvatar fairly well. It doesn't have to be perfect - this is only a guide, after all. I modified most of the areas - chest was stretched to make it bigger, arms and legs shortened and fattened, legs and arms rotated to line up, coat squished to be a little less wide. Now it's beginning to look like it belongs on a DAvatar. Try to make sure the source picture covers all of the areas it should - the sides of the body and arms tend to be particularly problematic. Sharpen up your source image and this step is complete.
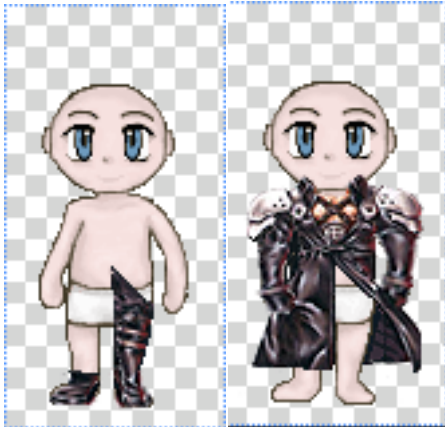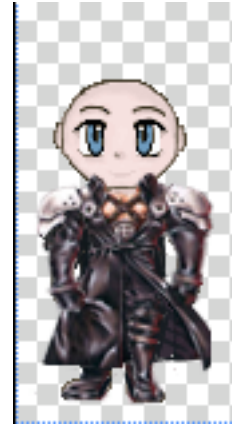
Keep the full size picture open and handy, too, for reference. (You may want to save your work here if you haven't already... computer crashes can be very frustrating.)

First of all, decide how many parts you need. Tops are layered over pants, and pants are above shoes in the default DAvatar system.* Because of this, I'm going to make Sephiroths' boots and pants into one item that will be Pants, and his coat/shoulder pads into another that will be a Top. Time to get cutting - Separate each of the parts you need onto separate layers. Chances are you'll have to fill in some missing bits. Remember that DAvatar clothing can be mixed, so it's best to make each item complete. The jacket is pretty good, but the pants are more than half missing. Let's start with the pants, then. On a fresh layer, take your pencil tool and trace the outline of where the pants should be. (These pants have to be fairly tall to fit under the coat.) Make a slightly curved line around the waist, and stick close to the legs for the rest. Pay attention to the leg outline and verify that you go on top of it or outside, but not smaller. Once you've got a basic outline, start drawing in the parts, using the source image as your template.

With the outline done, pick your colours from the source image and paint bucket them into the outlined areas. Make sure it's not exactly the same colour as your outline!

Select the fill colour(s) with your magic wand tool. Time for shading. With your source picture as reference, add in highlights with the Lighten brush tool, and shadows with the Multiply brush tool. After a bit of work, this is what the pants now look like. All done! Moving right along, it's time to get to work on the more complicated coat/armour top part.

*A note about layering. The Dynamic Avatar system is highly variable to the needs of the forum it is installed on, so if you're making clothing/accessories for a forum, check with your Admin about the layer order.

At this point, I decided to cut out the gloves from the remainder of the outfit and plunk them on a separate layer. Next, I went in to erase the remains of the chest from the original graphic. The collar also is a bit wrong, so I bent it outwards to accommodate the large DAvatar's head.

Now, time to carefully outline the coat and armour, just like the pants. The guide layer is faded out, while the outline is pencilled in on a layer above it. Remember to consult your reference picture! Only put lines where there is a definite edge - there's no need to mark every fold and crease, shading will do that quite well, a bit later. Once your outline is complete, start throwing in basic colours, just like the pants. Turn off the guide layer when you don't need it anymore. Here I've used dark purple for the basic colour, along with some dark brown for the chest straps and light grey for the armour. Time to shade it up.

Ahahaha! The one winged angel lives!

Did you notice I forgot to erase out the areas that cover the hands? Well, I did. That's something to keep in mind - if your clothing covers a part of the body it shouldn't, you'll spoil the effect. The gloves were done in exactly the same way, so I'm not going to show you step by step. Next up, hair.

You can do hair the same way as clothes, finding a source image, sizing it, tracing then shading the completed outline, or do it freehand. I prefer doing hair freehand, but either way works well.

Turn off all your layers except for the base body. With the pencil tool, block out the basic lines. I'll be using a purply grey instead of black for Seph's hair. No real mystery here... just outline the basic hair shapes. When filling in, remember to block off the openings before using your paint bucket - otherwise, you'll end up with a canvas full of colour instead of just the hair. Magic wand your basic hair colour, then dive on in with Screen brushes to lighten, and Multiply brushes to darken the right areas. By examining your source picture carefully, That's it. And now... all together.....

Finishing Up

Save each of your parts separately as .GIF files. Make sure you don't crop the images, as that will put them out of alignment with the avatar base. Before exporting, check your layers for ghost pixels by dumping a bright colour into the empty background to make them show up.

AHA! Ghost Pixels! See those white-ish areas next to the side of the right leg? Erase ghost pixels and then take out the background colour before you do a final save.

Other Things to Try

Adding noise with a Pattern Stamp tool or filter to put texture on clothing. (The Neo clothes were done this way.)

Blurring and blending for subtle shading after applying colour with the pencil. This tends to give softer looking clothes, like the trenchcoat, left.

Experiment. Have Fun. The only limits are your imagination...

~~~~~~

Questions, comments and concerns can be addressed to:
babysugarberry@hotmail.com

For the Art of Roleplaying

�֎ www.blackstardojo.org ✖