

How To Make a Transparency Map

Transparency Maps are included in many of the products you can download and/or buy for Poser and Daz Studio. What are they exactly? What do they do? They allow us to take a long trenchcoat for instance, and have it render as a mid-length waist coat, or even to allow it to render with a split down the tail. Transmaps are used to simulate lace decoration on clothing, they're used to make a piece of clothing semi-sheer, they're used on hair models to give the hair the proper layered look, they're used to make a material semi-see through like glass or crystal. They allow us to simulate torn or ripped clothing.

Transparency maps are often referred to as "*Transmaps*" in Poser slang, or shorthand, and they give us a great deal of versatility.

Making a transparency map really isn't all THAT hard to do. It's mostly just a matter of knowing what you want, and what parts of your particular map to edit to achieve what you want. Here's what you actually will need in order to make a transparency map :

- An image editor, such as Corel Photopaint, or Paint Shop Pro, or Photoshop/Photoshop CS, etc.
- An object or clothing or whatever model that you want to adjust the transparencies on.
- A working knowledge of your image editor of choice, and a basic grasp of it's tools.
- Poser, or Daz Studio, though this tutorial will be geared towards applying the end result in Poser. I don't own or use D/S so I'm not qualified to give instructions for applying the end result in Daz Studio. Sorry.
- A lot of patience, a good vocabulary of your favourite expletives, some more patience, and a good soft pillow to bang your head into later on. ;)

Okay then. You have all of the above? Great. Ready to get going then. Alright, first step, open up your image editor of choice. For me, this is Corel Photopaint 8, so some of the menu items and locations may not necessarily be the same as what's in Photoshop or Paint Shop Pro. You will probably have to do some cross-program translating, but hopefully it will be more or less self explanatory. Hopefully. :)

Alright, we're going to use the DAZ CIS Operative's trench coat as the example for this tutorial. So, once you have your image editor open, go up to Open File, and navigate to where the CIS textures were placed in your Runtime by the DAZ installer. (If you don't have the set and are a platinum club member and want to follow along, it's located at Daz and is a Platinum Club item for \$1.99 USD, and can be found right

here.) You want to select the factory-installed base texture map for the Daz CIS Trenchcoat.

For reference, that is located generally at this path :

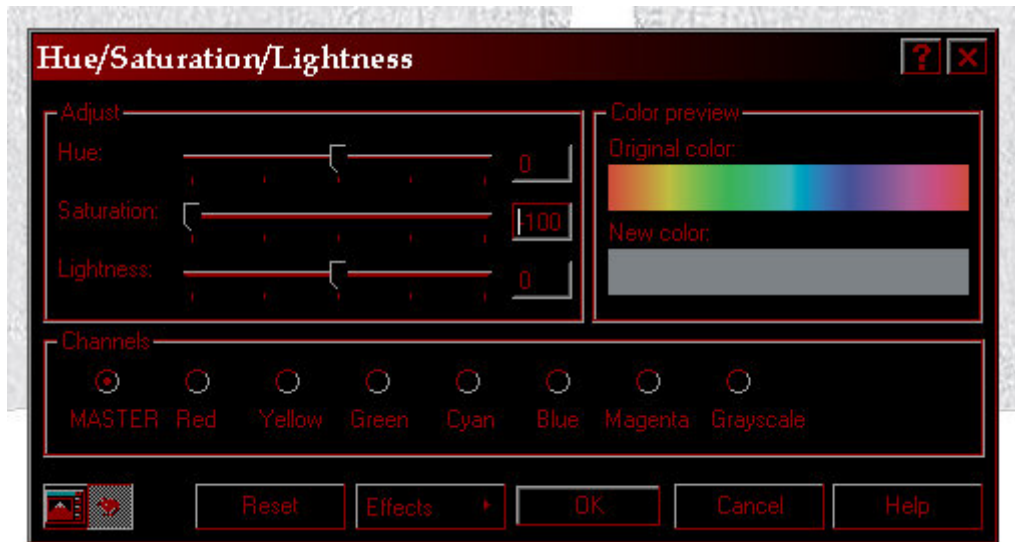
[Runtime/Textures/DAZ/Clothing/MilMan/M3/CIS/M3CISTEX2.jpg](#)

Alright, select the M3CISTEX2.jpg file, and click ‘Open’ to get it open in your image editor. Now, now, no swearing yet. You haven’t even started! :)

The first thing you want to do is make the image truly greyscale, or black and white. To do this, go up to your file menu, and select Image → Adjust → Hue/Saturation/Lightness. (Or whatever it’s called in your program.)

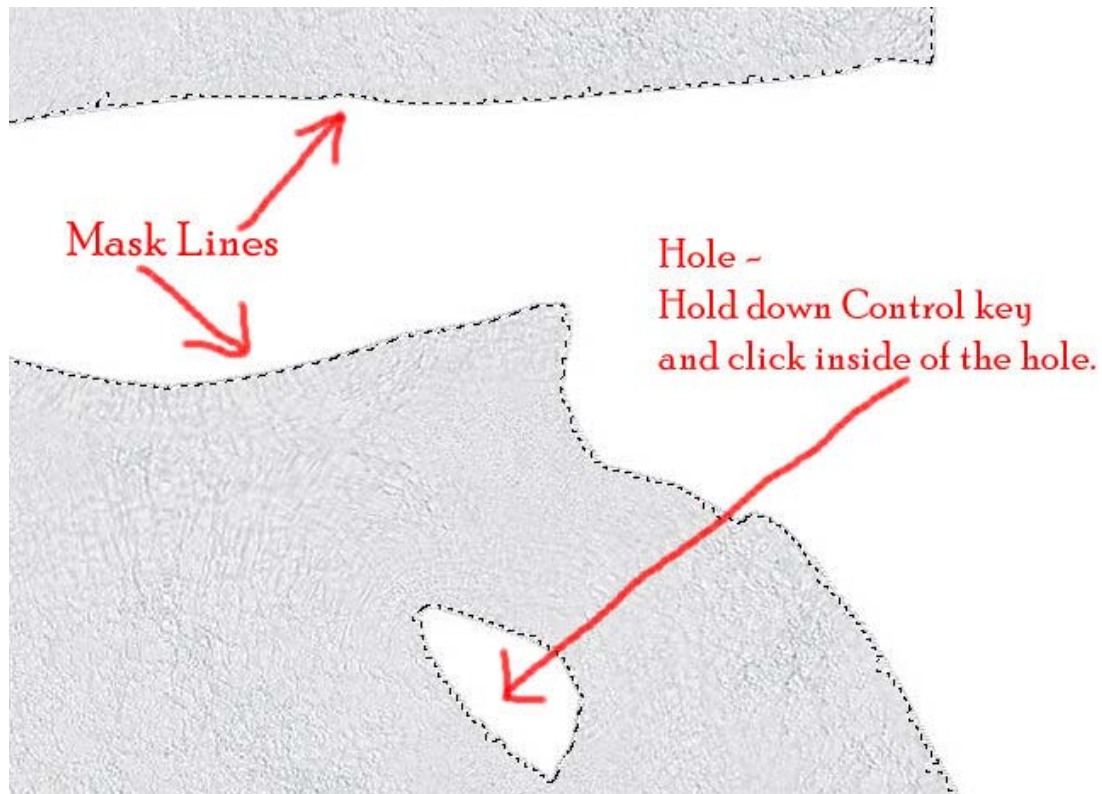


Now, once you have the dialogue open for the Hue/Saturation/Lightness, you need to drag the slider for Saturation all the way down to -100, or 0%.



Click okay, once you've gotten the saturation down all the way to the end. If there's any colours on your texture map, this will take the image down to purely black and white, or greyscale. That's good. That's what you want. I promise. Now, the next thing you do is create an object from the background. Then you want to duplicate that object, or layer. You don't HAVE to do this, but I strongly, STRONGLY recommend that you do. You want to duplicate the layer so that you have a copy of the original grey-scaled texture map in your file just in case you make a mistake and need to start over. It just saves you a few steps in your workflow if that's the case, is all. So. Duplicate the layer, then set the layer opacity down to 0% and name it 'Original Map.' Then rename the layer your going to be working on as 'Edited Map.' Or something along those lines. Just some kind of designation so you can tell the layers apart is all. :)

Now, take your Magic Wand Mask tool, and click in the white space surrounding the shapes of the coat. Hold down the CONTROL key, and then click inside of any openings or holes that are in the middle of the coat's shapes. You want to make sure that the ONLY things outlined by the mask is the coat shapes itself. You don't want the white space showing in the holes or such. Make sure you've gotten all of the holes control-clicked and selected with the mask lines. It should look something like this :



Alright. Once you've got the coat shapes selected with the magic wand, you want to select your FILL tool. Select the pure BLACK colour for your fill colour. Make sure the opacity is set at 0%. You want the colour to be completely solid and not let anything show through it. Now click **OUTSIDE** of the mask lines until all of the white space around your coat shapes has been painted solid black. Now go in and click inside of the holes of the coat shapes to make that black as well.

Now, you need to CUT the selected coat shapes inside of the mask lines. Then paste it RIGHT back onto the document as a new object, or layer. Name that layer 'Black Base' and RENAME the 'Edited Map' layer to 'White Shapes.' Drag the 'Black Base' layer so that it is beneath the 'White Shapes' layer, but still above the 'Original Map' layer. Make sure your 'White Shapes' layer is your active/selected layer. Is it? Good.

Now, select your FILL tool again, and choose the pure WHITE colour for your colour. Like with the black fill, make sure the opacity is completely solid and won't allow things to show through the paint. Click **INSIDE** each of the coat shapes with the white colour and fill them with solid white. The reason you do this is because you want the white to be as pure and untextured as possible. If it's grainy, or has little bits of texture showing, it will affect your transparency map later on. You also want the contrast between black and white colours to be as stark as possible, too.

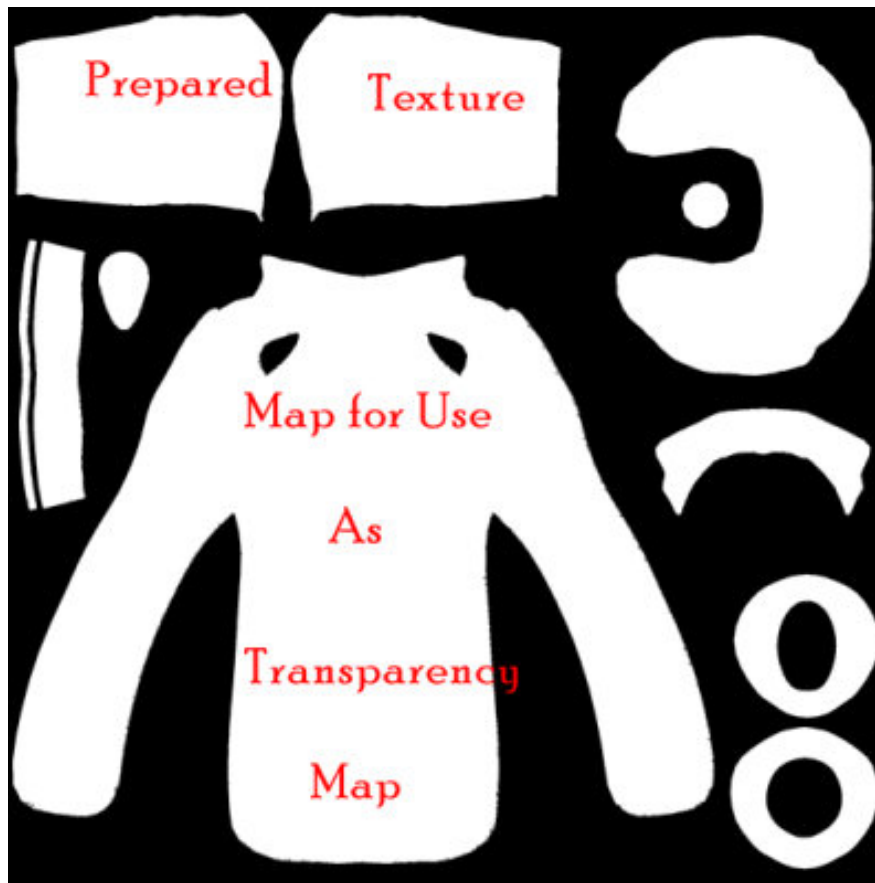
Depending on the texture map for whatever item you're doing this with, you may need to go back in with the BRUSH tool and a 0% opacity/totally solid white colour on the brush and manually paint in some areas that are a little frayed or showing some black through that the mask tool didn't quite 'catch' when you selected the different parts of the texture map. Look for areas that look something like this, and with the brush tool and a solid white colour, fill them in white.



You don't have to be TOO anal about this. And some texture maps are better than others. With the map for the CIS Trench Coat there's an awful lot of 'frayed' edges after doing this part of the process. Hit the worst ones with white paint to make the shapes as solid and intact as possible, but don't drive yourself insane trying to get every last little single pixel that's there. (Yes, you with the blood shot eyes from staring at a zoomed in by 1600% picture for an hour, I'm talking to you. :p)

NOW you can start doing the REAL work! Save your file. Make SURE you choose **SAVE AS** and save it to a brand new FILE NAME. I would suggest, for the moment, using a .psd save format, so that you can come back to THIS stage later and work from here if you want to, now that you've gotten all the annoying preparation work out of the way.

For reference once again, what you have now in your image editor should look something like this (without the red text, obviously!) :



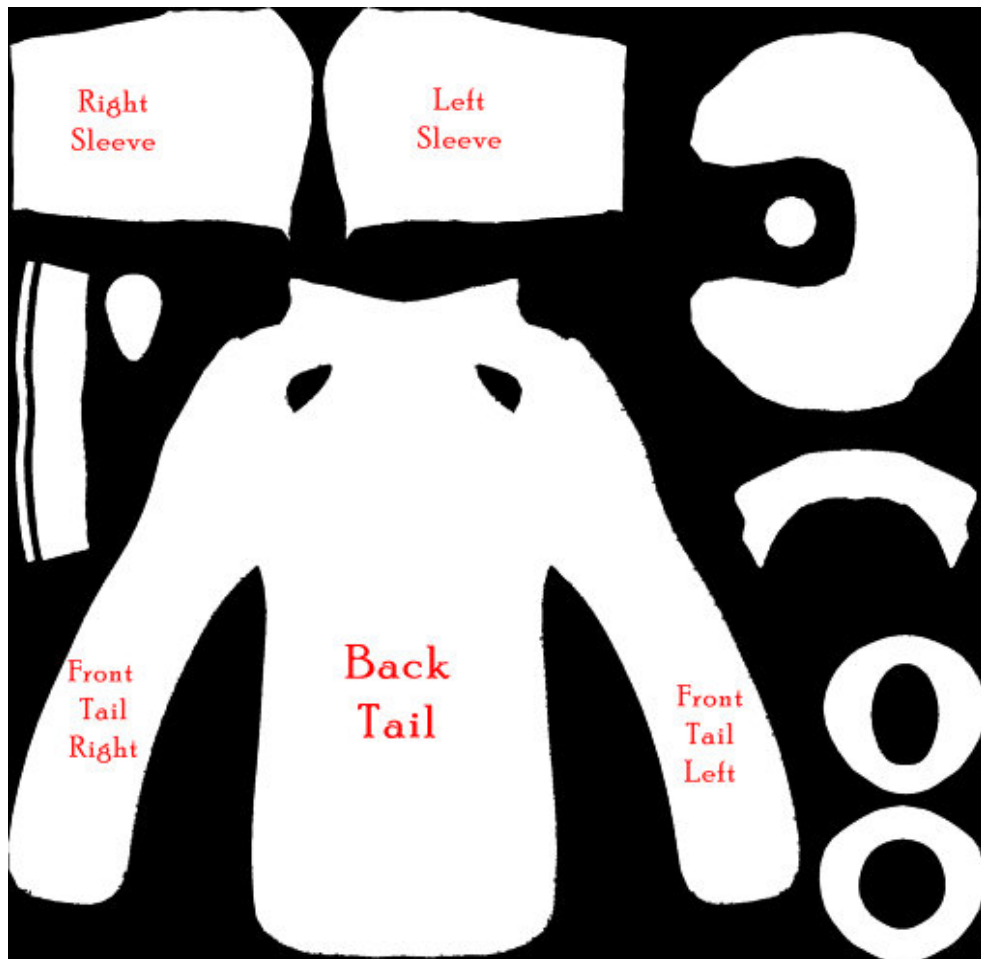
Okay, good! You've earned a break! Take a breather, go to the kitchen, get yourself a cup of coffee. No, don't kick the cat out of your way while walking to the kitchen. Really. It's only natural for them to insist on trying to run a figure 8 between your ankles when your walking! Get yourself some coffee, maybe a bit of jerky or whatever little snack you like. Take a wander back out to the computer when your ready to continue. I said no kicking the cat! No, don't throw any shoes out the window at the neighbour's barking dog either. Bad!

Okay, getting back to the transmap. :)

Once you've hit this stage, you've gotten all the preparation work done and out of the way, and you DEFINITELY want to make sure you save this as a .psd file so that you can load it up again if you make a mistake. This will keep you from having to do the prep work all over again, and using the .psd format will keep your layers intact. Which is what you want. Just please, please, please, make **SURE** you have saved as a .psd and saved it to a NEW NAME so that you do NOT overwrite the Daz original texture map for the coat! If you overwrite the original jpg texture map you'll be in for a bright white ugly surprise next time you go to use your trenchcoat! The most sure way to avoid overwriting the original file is to make a folder in another

location in your Textures folder and save the map to that. For me, I've just got a Childe of Fyre folder inside of Runtime/Textures and I have a bunch of subfolders in there as I do a bit of this kind of work for my own personal artwork.

Anyway. Once you have the file saved to a .psd format, now you want to make sure you've got the white layer selected/current. Click on your ERASER tool. Okay, THIS is the part where you really need to learn the ins and outs of the particular texture map you're working with. You need to know what part of the map corresponds to what part of the object inside of poser. Believe it or not, the big coat-shaped part in the middle of the texture map is NOT showing the entire coat at all. It's showing the tail, the hip, and the two front tails of the trench coat. I've labelled the parts of the map that are going to be pertinent to what I'm doing with it in this tutorial.



Now, with the knowledge of the texture map and what parts correspond to what, you can take that eraser tool, make sure it's set to 0% opacity so that you're actually erasing ALL of the paint, not leaving a semi-transparent trail behind, and from here, you just start 'painting' but with using the eraser tool rather than the brush tool.

This is where things start to get a bit resource-intensive. You might work differently, but for me, I find that having Poser opened with the coat loaded into the scene helps a lot, as I will go between Corel and Poser frequently to test-render my transmaps as I work, while I'm trying to get what I want.

For the purpose of this lesson, we're just going to remove the tails, and the sleeves of the coat, and make it into a bit of a sleeveless vest type of object. That's a pretty simple transmap job, and we'll cover the more intensive transparency work a bit later.

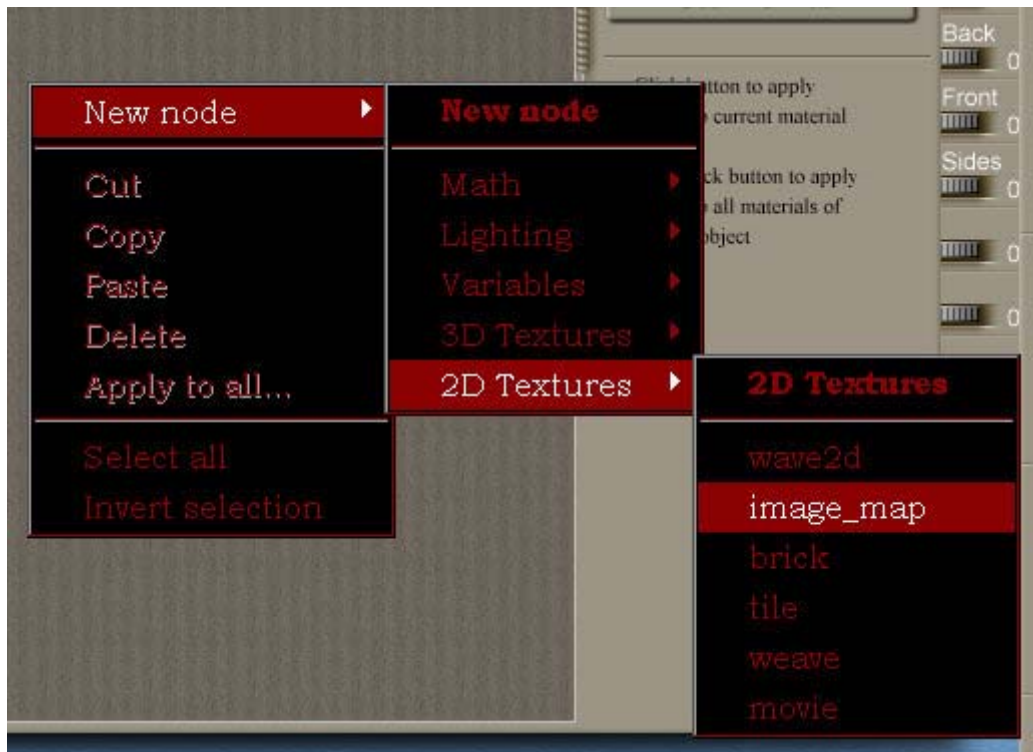
Alrighty then! Load up Poser. Drive your partner crazy tapping your fingers on your desk while you wait for it to open. Load the Daz CIS trenchcoat into the scene. No, don't load Mike, you don't need him yet. ;) I promise. Just the trench coat. Got it? Good. Now go back to your image editor, and pick up that eraser tool. Okay, since the sleeves are clearly obvious, we're going to start with that. Make sure you have the 'White Shapes' layer selected/active. Now you want to erase ALL of that white up at the top where the sleeves are. Make sure you **ONLY** erase from the sleeves; don't spill over into the other shapes.

It should be noted at this point, that depending on how you achieved the black under-layer, you may discover when you start erasing that you have nothing underneath where the arms are. If that's the case, you need to either re-do the black fill on the Black layer, or you need to delete the black layer, create a new layer, move it under the white layer and fill the new layer with black. It is **VERY** important that the under-layer be completely solid black. If it's not, your transparency mapping won't work right when you render. White areas are the 'visible' part, and black areas are the 'invisible' part.

Okay, so erase completely, all of the white for the left and right sleeves off of the transparency map. Now save your .psd file, and then export a .jpg version of the transmap to the folder you created in Textures. What you have should look just like the previous image, but with a big black space where the sleeve shapes once were. Something like this :

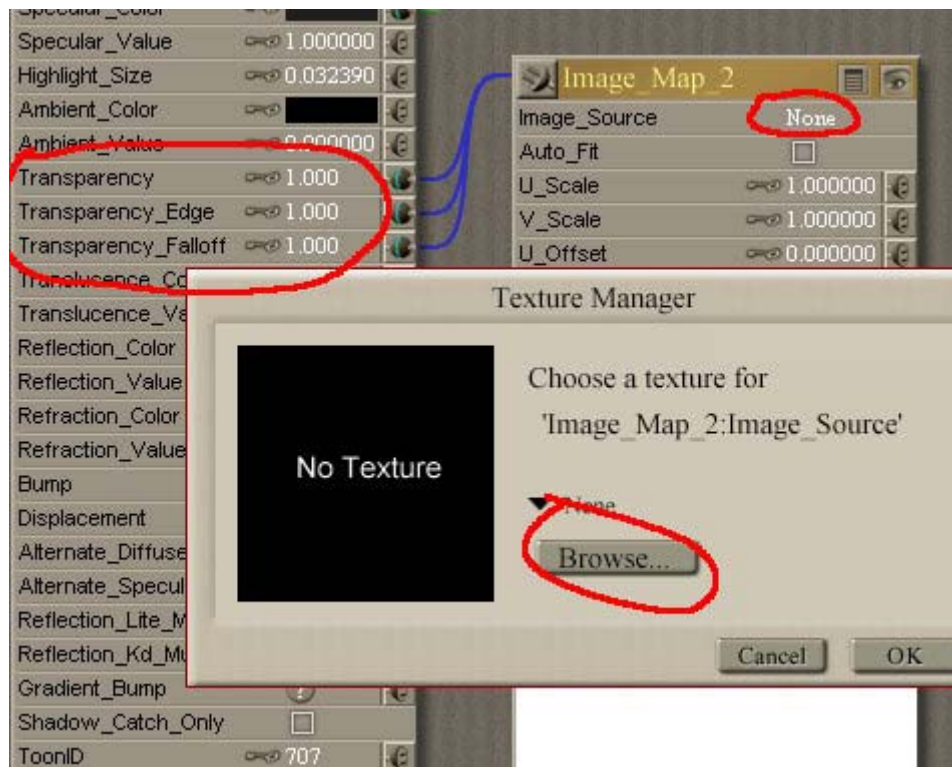


Now go over to Poser. Go to the material room, once you have the trench coat loaded into the scene. On the main 'coat' material of the trench coat, right click anywhere in the empty grey space to the right side of the Poser material nodes. Select 'New Node' from the menu that pops up. Then 2D Textures → Image Map.



Now you'll have a brand new (and thus far not connected to anything) node sitting in your materials section. First thing you want to do, is connect the new (empty) node to "Transparency," "Transparency Edge," and "Transparency Falloff." Once there's a line connecting the empty node to the three transparency settings, make sure you set all of their values to 1.000. As soon as you set the 'Transparency' to 1.000, you will see the main coat material in the preview window fade out. That's fine, that's normal.

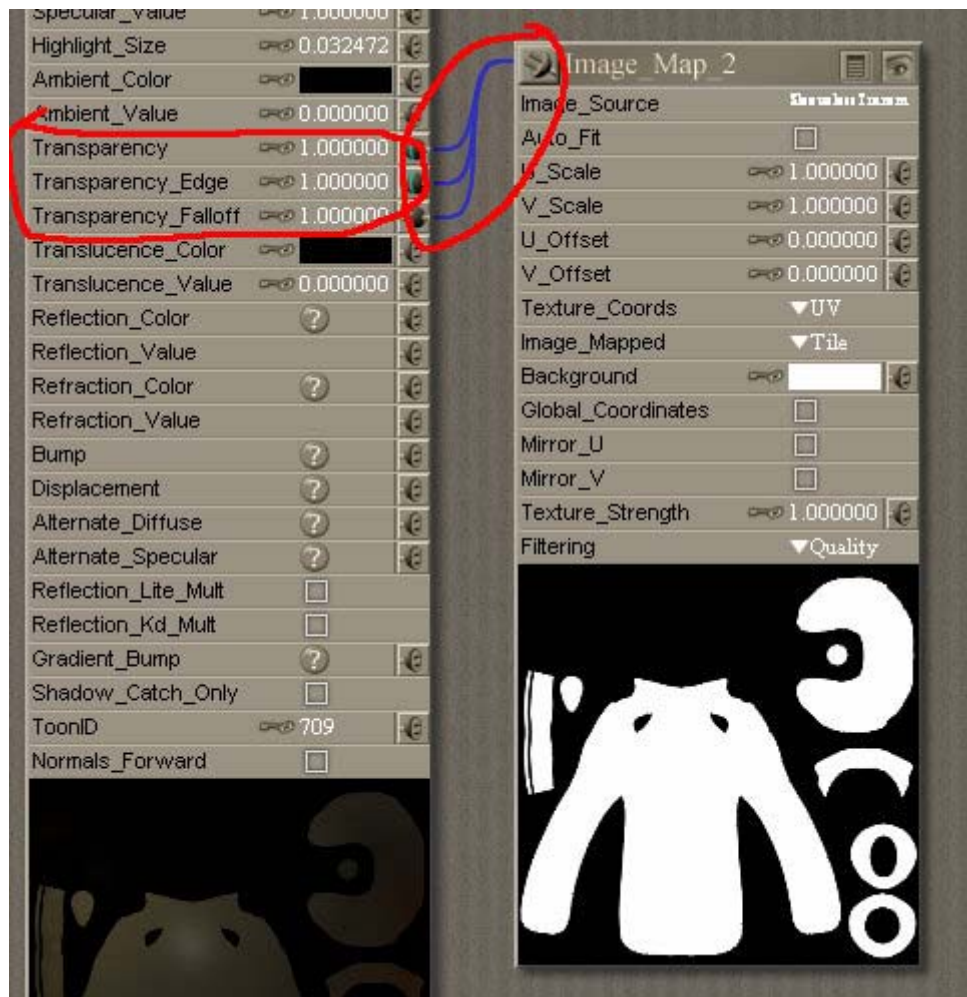
Now look to the empty node at the right. Where it says 'Image Source' at the top of that node, click on the word 'None.' This will pop up a dialogue window labelled 'Texture Manager', asking you to select a texture. There will be a 'Browse' button. Click Browse. Navigate to where you saved the .jpg version of the transmap from earlier. (Remember when I said to save the .psd AND export the .jpg? This is why. :p)



Select the transmap you just made from the windows file browse dialogue, and click 'OK.' As soon as you've clicked okay and Poser has loaded the new transmap into the nodes, you'll see that the coat comes back into a solid appearance. Now repeat this step for all the other material zones on the coat. Once you've applied the new transmap to the sleeves material zone, you'll see in the preview window that all of the coat except for the sleeves is perfectly solid in preview. This is a good way of double checking your work before you test render, actually. From here, you can tell that the transmap is reading correctly and setting the sleeves to be invisible for rendering.



At this stage, the above image is what you should have in your preview window inside of the material room. You've applied the new transmap to all of the material zones of the coat, and you've set the three 'transparency' settings to 1.000, and Poser is now reading both the default Daz texture map as well as your new transparency map on the coat in the preview window. Here's what you should have on the right side of the material room, on the nodes :



Alright then. What we've got isn't bad; we've obviously got a sleeveless trench coat, but we wanted to get rid of the tails, too. The back tail as well as the front tails. So, leaving Poser sitting in the material room as is, go back to image editor, and the open file with the transparency map. Once again, making sure the 'white' layer is selected and active, take your eraser tool, and start erasing the tails. I labelled where the tails are in the image up above, you can scroll up there for reference if you need to, though you'll really only find out through experimentation exactly where the 'top' of the tails is on the map. Erase the tails, then EXPORT the transmap (do NOT save over your psd yet!!!) to the folder from before, and if you want to keep the sleeveless full length map, then you just save the current file as a jpg with a new name. If you don't want to keep it, then just overwrite the already-saved jpg.

Now, go back over to Poser.

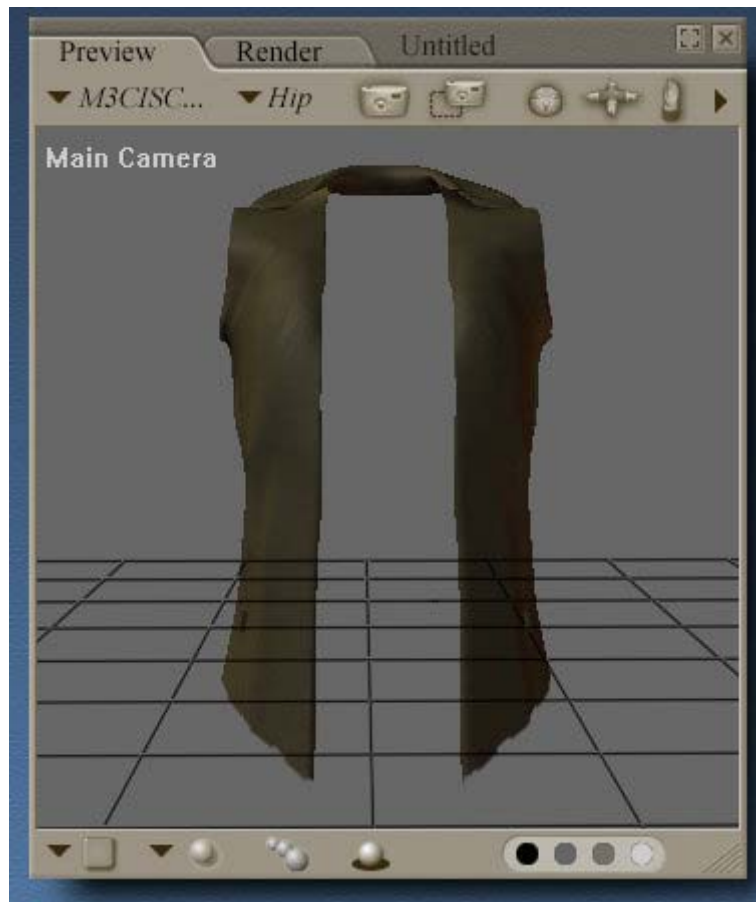
If you saved over your previous transparency map :

In the Materials room, just click on any part of the coat in the preview window. You don't need to go back through the whole browse process to get the transparency map to update. All you have to do is click anywhere on the front of the trench coat in the preview window to the left side of the materials room. It will load the nodes setup for that material zone, and when it does this, Poser will also update the transparency map on it's own to show the current state with the tails having been removed.

If you have NOT saved over your previous transparency map :

You'll need to go back through the whole browse process to select your new transparency map and apply it to the material zones of the coat. Make sure you do this for ALL of the material zones. I realize we're not going to be affecting all the material zones, but it's generally good practise to apply the transmap to the whole object and all of it's material zones. Doing this ensures that you haven't accidentally removed parts of the object that you don't want to remove.

Now, what you have in your preview window should look like a short, sleeveless shirt, instead of the full length, full sleeved, fully tailed trench coat that you first loaded into the scene. Your transmap may vary, depending on how high up you erased the tails, but this is more or less what we're after :



Now, what you have, can be used as a sleeveless vest or shirt for your Mike3, instead of putting him in that big clunky, heavy trench coat. And you didn't spend any money on a new piece of clothing, and you didn't spend three hours searching through all of the freebie sites looking for a sleeveless shirt or vest conformer for poor Mike. And it really didn't take you all THAT long to do, and it'll take you less time the more you do it.

Transmapping like this, you can take a single clothing item and turn it into any number of useful things. A waistcoat with short sleeves, three quarter sleeves, or even a long-sleeved waist length jacket. You can turn it into a regular length trench coat with only the back tail and sleeves of varying lengths. You can give the back tail of the coat a sort of 'split tail' appearance.

On the more advanced side, you can also do things like making the coat's tail(s) ragged and torn, showing rips and tears when rendered. Here's an example of this same coat with an alternate transmap to give the back tail of the coat a ripped and torn appearance, and no front tails at all :



Play around a bit and experiment. This transmapping could have been better, but it does display my point – the same coat that we just made a vest out of, with an alternate form of transparency mapping.

I was going for trying to give my Vincent's longcoat back tail a ragged, ripped up and beaten appearance for this picture, as he'd been traipsing through northeastern Nunavut for months, and had been through quite a bit of interrogation and combat along the way. Bits and pieces of his coat wound up spread from Alberta all the way through the northwest territories, and halfway across Nunavut itself. So I wanted to kind of try and show just how beaten up the coat itself was by this point in this image.

There's parts of the transparency mapping that I'm still not happy with and that I think

could have been done better if I could draw on my own with a mouse better than I can, but it does achieve the overall effect and get the point across.

This was done by using the eraser tool kind of haphazardly around the centre part of the prepared texture map and erasing bits and pieces of the back tail, but not all of it.

I also removed the left and right sleeves, as well as the left and right front tails of the coat, as Vincent does not use either the sleeves or the front tails. He likes his coat waist-length in the front, and sleeveless. ;
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If you've gotten this far, I hope this was of some amount of help to you. If there's any questions, concerns, or you just don't seem to be getting something, or can't understand something, don't hesitate to contact me. I can be reached by the following methods :

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Have fun experimenting!

~ Seliah