Poser basics

Poser is probably the least useful program you will learn in this class. It is truly a program in search of a use. Still, making little people scowl at you and run around is kind of fun. You may be able to use it to make poses you can draw from. Or you can take an intellectual approach and study the different expressions in a face. At the very least it will give you insights into 3D creation.

INTRODUCTION

A long time ago (millions of years in computer age), there were interface designers whose goal was to completely change the way we deal with computers. It didn't really work, but some of their efforts are still visible in modern programs.

Poser is one of these programs. The interface is different than what we are accustom to, and can be maddening at times. There are many different things you can do in Poser, but a sheet like this is best used to introduce you to some simple Poser concepts and techniques.

WORKSPACE

Before you do anything, open up the program and look at the workspace. That cluster of buttons on the middle left are the camera controls. Play with them and see what they do to your view of the pre made man in the box. You might find that as you move your view around things will move in small increments until (vroom) things go shooting off into space never to be found again. Don't fret - in the menu bar, go to Edit/Restore/Camera. You can also use this menu if your figure gets all twisted up - not uncommon as you will see. Oh, and while we are on camera controls - whenever you see a little triangle in Poser it means there is an old-fashioned menu lurking behind it - these are useful.

Below the Camera Controls are little spheres where you can select how your model quickrenders for viewing. Try them. Choose any you like - The ones further to the right tend to make the program run slower, but give you a better impression of how the final rendering will look.

The main window is where your figure is. Click on him with the double-pointed (third editing tool) tool and a part of him will highlight. Below the window it will tell you what part you just selected. This will be important later. Double click on a part and you will get a box with two tabs. One of these tabs will let you modify the size (and other things) of the body part you selected.

Now try to drag different body parts around. Poser uses hinges on everything, so some things might not move as you expect. You can drag things around in different ways by using the first four editing tools located over the main window. Experiment. You can also select body parts (or the entire body) to move using the pop-up menu at the bottom of the main window.

The last thing you should do here is try all the little buttons on the right and left of the main window. These change things like window size, background color, movement style, and number of viewing windows. If you haven't noticed already when you put your mouse over a button somewhere on the screen it will tell you what that button is. And sometimes it is in plain English.

THE LIBRARY

Select any part of the figure in the main window and hit the delete key to get rid of the guy in that window. We are going to go to the library and put in someone else.

The library is in a "drawer" on the far right of the workspace. If it isn't open click on the handle to open it. You will find they couldn't make the hierarchy in the library drawer more confusing if they tried. Click on any of the boxes and a little triangle will appear near the top signaling a hidden menu - just use this menu to get to anything and forget about the designer's failed attempt at a snazzy interface.

To add a figure, go to Figures in the library menu (under that little triangle - remember?). You've got your choice of anything from naked people to dogs to robots to skeletons. When you highlight one you can use the double check mark at the bottom of the library drawer to add it to your main window. If you want to add a second figure, navigate to it and again click on the double check-mark. To replace your current figure in the window use the single check mark.

You might wonder why different figures are assigned different Poser versions. This is because the internal definitions of them are different. In other words - you cannot successfully put Poser 4 hair on a Poser 5 body. Also, in general the higher the Poser number, the more changeable the parts of that model can be.

TABS AT TOP

At the top of the workspace are different tabs that allow you to do different things. In the Hair window you can grow hair on a Poser 5 model (just follow the steps, but make sure you have your coiffure's licence).

In the materials window you can assign different materials (image maps and bump maps) to your model, so you can make that shiny gold woman you always dreamed of.

In the Face window you can take a mug-shot photo (jpeg or Photoshop format) and put it on your model. Make sure you line up the face markers on the left and click the "Apply to Figure" button.

RENDER

Before you render your "scene" go to the Render/Render Options menu and select the settings you think are best. Remember you can change the pixel size of your final render. Then go to Render/Render. After you do this go to File/Export/Image to save as a PSD (Photoshop) file. If you move anything in your main window the final render will go away, so export your image right away.

ANIMATE

Hidden at the bottom of the workspace is a drawer with animation controls in it. Here you can set the number of frames and test your animation. To start out, slide the main slider half way across and change your figure and/or view. Press the play button on the left to see what happened. There are more controls and details for animation under the "key" image.

To render your animation go to Animation/Make Movie. Your Quicktime movie will open in Poser, but will also be saved wherever you specified for playing in Quicktime .