

“CDE”

[Common Desktop Environment]

This piece was created for X Inside Inc. They needed an image for their licensed software version of CDE (*Common Desktop Environment*). The software is a set of building blocks for the Graphical User Interface (GUI) for PCs running the UNIX operating system. We decided we wanted the piece to feel of direct interaction with the software, as well as incorporating the letters C, D and E. The D for “Desktop” was to be the most important element in the image.



After discussing the project with my client, I had him email me as many screen captures as he could, showing examples of the interface. These were all

screen resolution (72 dpi) GIF images. I converted them to 32bit color Pict files in Photoshop, then applied them as texture maps to several flat shapes in Extreme 3D. I adjusted the levels of the pieces to create the floating scene. I had to duplicate the shapes many times to get enough for the receding landscape.

I then created a large (roughly 7” x 7” x 300dpi) Texture Explorer background in Photoshop. I applied this as a texture map to a large shape under the floating rectangles in Extreme 3D.

For the sky, I started with a clip art photo of clouds and adjusted the angle using the free transform tool in Photoshop. I played with the color using the Hue/Saturation tool, then applied a black to transparent gradient on the lower half to make it look like it was receding into the background.

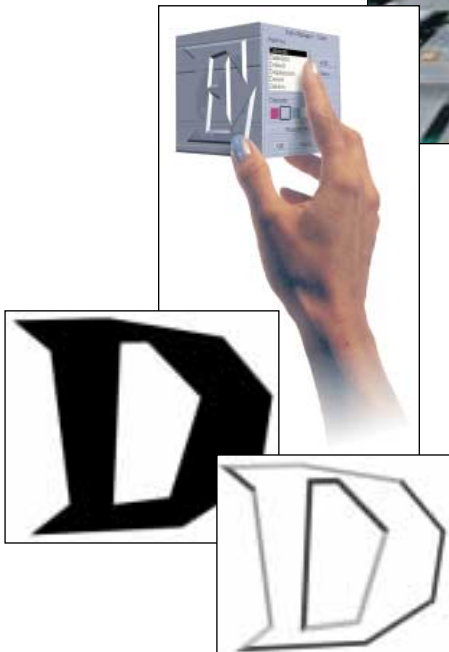
I placed the final render of the floating screens on top of the cloud background. This completed the backdrop for the illustration.

At this point I had to consider how to create the beveled “D” look to the image. In Illustrator I used a D I liked and gave it a beveled look using Vector Effects 3D Transform. I placed a copy of my backdrop image in Illustrator to help me get the proper placement. I created an empty box the same size as my placed Photoshop artwork so I could open the Illustrator files at the exact same size and resolution as my Photoshop file. I created the bevels using shades of gray, leaving the rest of the D transparent. I saved that as one file.



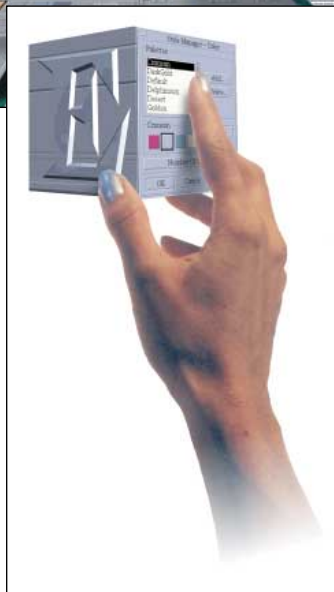
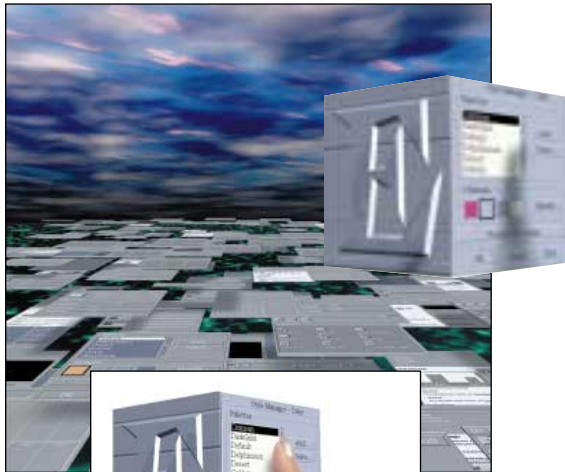
I then created a D that ran along the very outer edge of the bevel and filled it with black and saved that as a second file.

To apply the bevels and mask in Photoshop, I opened the solid D file in Photoshop as a grayscale at the same



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I always render 3D objects with an alpha channel. This is a blessing for simplifying the compositing of several images in Photoshop.



resolution as my backdrop image. I copied it to a new channel in my backdrop image. I used the solid D channel as a layer mask on my background image.

For the bevel, I opened the bevel file as grayscale and copied the image to a new layer above my background. I wanted to keep some of the white areas of the bevel, so I just lowered the opacity of the bevel layer until it gave me the desired effect.

To create the “E” box, I built a cube in Extreme 3D with texture maps of screen captures, then used the 3D type tool to create a beveled “E.” I placed the E right against one face of the cube. I shot a photo of my sister’s hand (with silver nail polish) and ran that over to a 1-hour photo service (it was a tight deadline). I scanned the hand to Photoshop and used the dodge and burn tools along with some cloning to touch up the photo. I placed the photo on a layer above the rendered “E” cube. Between the cube and hand layers I inserted another layer and painted in some of the shadows. Once satisfied I copied the cube to my backdrop file and placed it beneath the D bevels, and placed the hand above the bevels. This gave the look of the cube being inside the D and the hand reaching in from the outside.

For the little spheres in the letter “C” I created a nice texture in Photoshop using Texture Explorer (I get a lot of mileage out of that plug-in). I saved the texture as a pict and used it as a texture map in Extreme 3D. I placed the spheres and set the lighting to roughly match other elements in the piece. I rendered the shapes with an alpha channel to aid my placement in Photoshop. For the “Introducing the Desktop” sphere, I simply used

one of the screen captures my client sent me and applied the KPT Glass Lense filter - no fancy 3D work there. This would also have worked with the smaller spheres, but I wanted a little “authentic” depth.

At this point the image was near completion. I just needed something to set the “E” cube off of the background. I inserted a layer between the backdrop and the cube, copying the D layer mask from the background. I airbrushed in a yellow glow and adjusted the layer transparency to properly set off the artwork.

Finally I duplicated the original solid D channel I had created earlier. I applied a gaussian blur filter, then offset the channel to the lower right. In a new layer behind everything I loaded the blurred D as a selection and filled it with black. I adjusted the transparency of the layer until I had a drop shadow I liked. Finis!

Hardware used: Powermac 9500 with 64 mb RAM, 2 gb hard drive; Sony 200sf 17” monitor; Wacom 6x9 tablet; LaCie Silverscanner; APS DAT drive; Epson Stylus ProXL color printer.

Software used: Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Kai’s Power Tools, KPT Vector Effects, Macromedia Extreme 3D.

