Gondorian Armor
tutorial by Cahik

Getting plate armor to look right was really pain for me. But after several tries i manage how to make it look fine. So i wrote this tutorial for anyone who want to scratch skin plate armor.

I start work on model, after I finish all changes on model I ussaly make completely new UVmap for model. Mainly cause I find EA's mapping confusing sometimes and I don't like overlaying mapping.

So obviously first step is to get the right shape of armor. This is much easier if you have your own UV map but it is not necessary. You can obtain the same result using EA's mapping it just take more time.

Here is the place i start from. Just plain UVmap. You can see basic shape of armor. I adjust shape by coloring it pink on the skin and the i watch in 3ds max if it fits the model correctly.
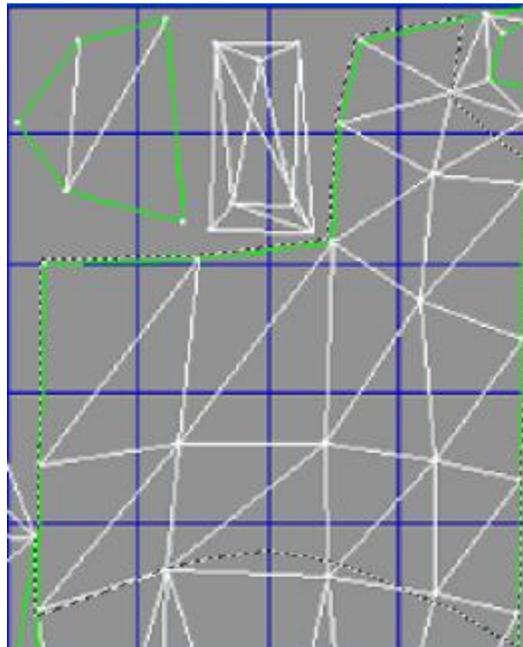
One thing i consider really important when skining things like metal or leather is that those arent solid color materials. It it much easier to get these things to look right if you don't start with solid color. Fortunatly Photoshop has tool that can help with this. It is called Brush Dynamics or something like that. Image below shows where you can find it. I use the icon on the left so i remove it from the rigt menu, but normaly you have here bookmark called Brushes.
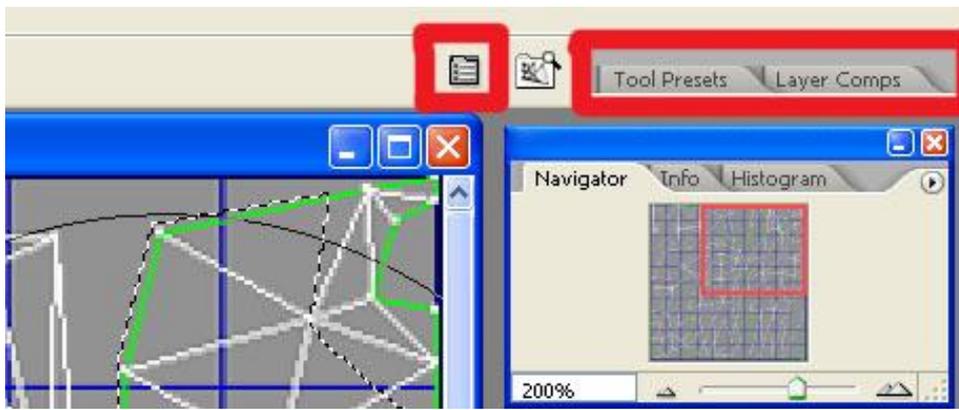
This tool allows you to use random size of brushes or random colors within the interval you set here. I will show my setting, but best way is to mess around with setting cause you can get really nice things by using this tool.
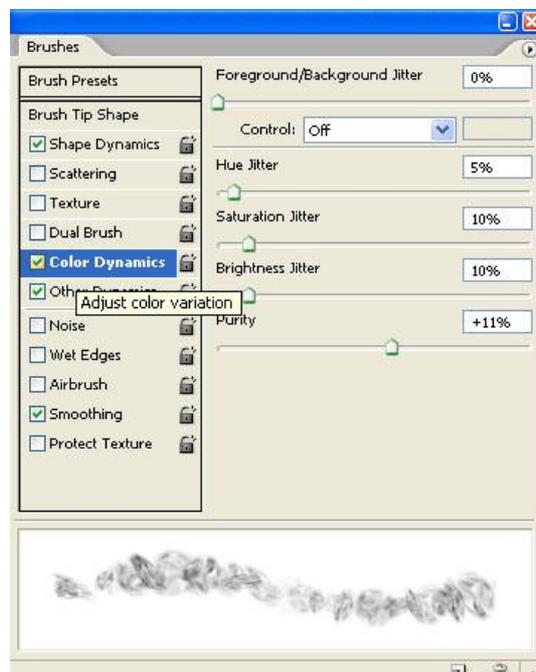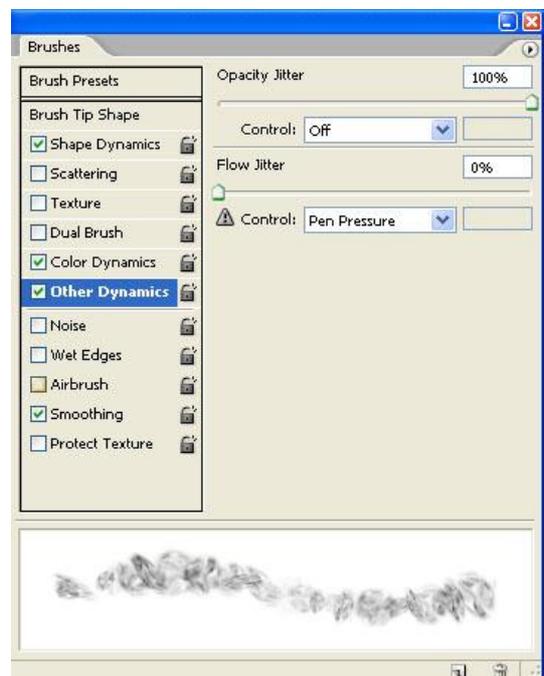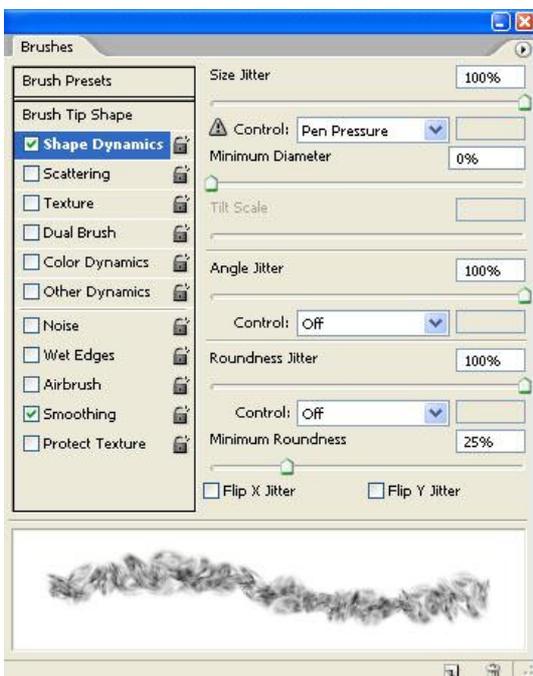
I consider most things selfexplain here. I suggest to use some brush with irregular shape. It's much better that normal circle one. You get like thousand of those around the net, so take a look around. With those setting it takes bit longer to color the shape of armor cause you have Flow on brush settings vary from 0% to 100% but the result is worth of it.
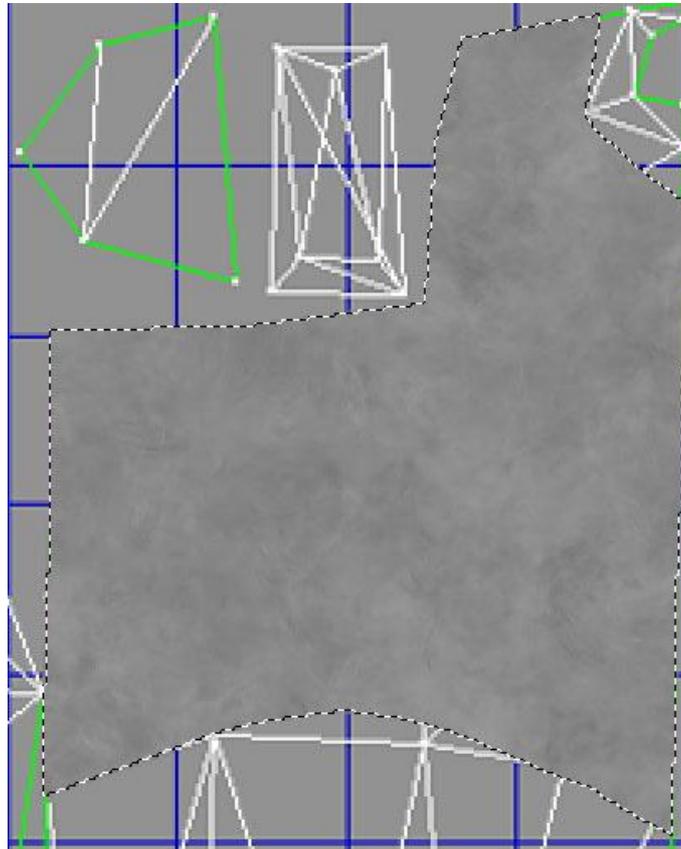
Now for basic highlights. I take Dodge tool set on highlighrs with 0% hardness and exposure around 15%. I also use Brush Dynamics once again, this time for Shape dynamics and Other Dynamics where you can set random exposure. I suggest setting Exposure Jitter to 30%. Then I get Burn Tool set on Shadows with approximately same setting as for highlights and add some shadows.
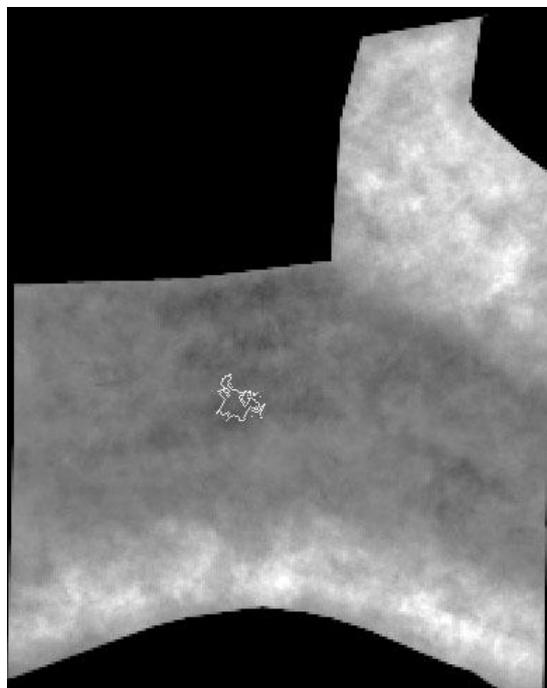
Now i want to add some small detail. Small brushes (size 3 – 7 if you skin on 512*512 skin) with hardness around 50% and higher exposure are good thing to do that.
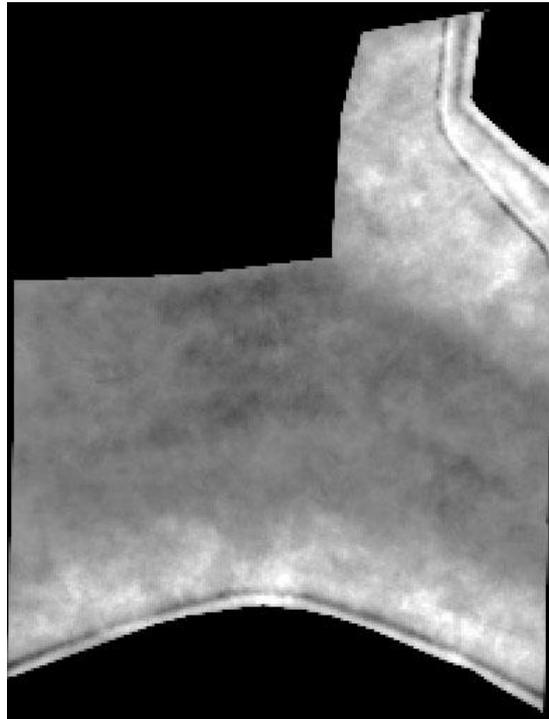
At this step I want to add Tree of Gondor on this armor. Someone can do that in the same style as those small details on previous step, but with some good settings you can make it much easier. First you need good image of the symbol you want to add on armor. Then you need to trace it to new layer. I normaly use grey color for it, but for better showing i use red here. In fact it doesnt matter since the layer will be transparent in the end.

Now go to Blending Options of the layer where you have the tree. And mess around with setting for Drop Shadow and Bevel and Emboss. I use those.
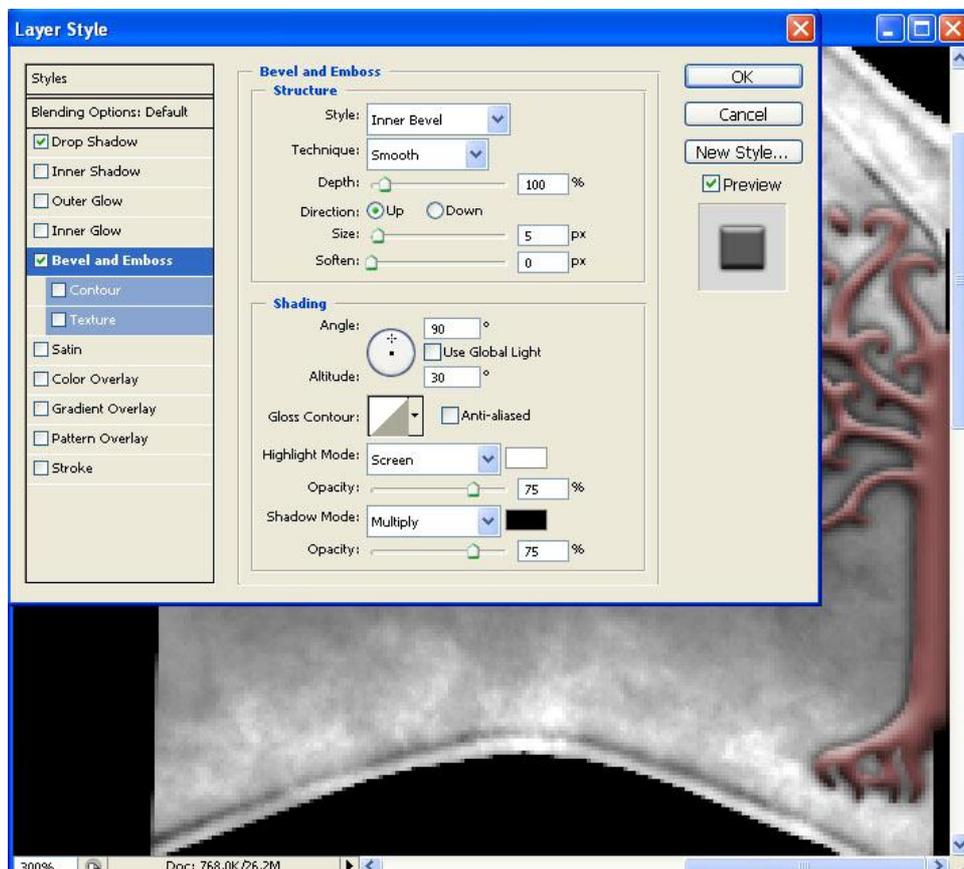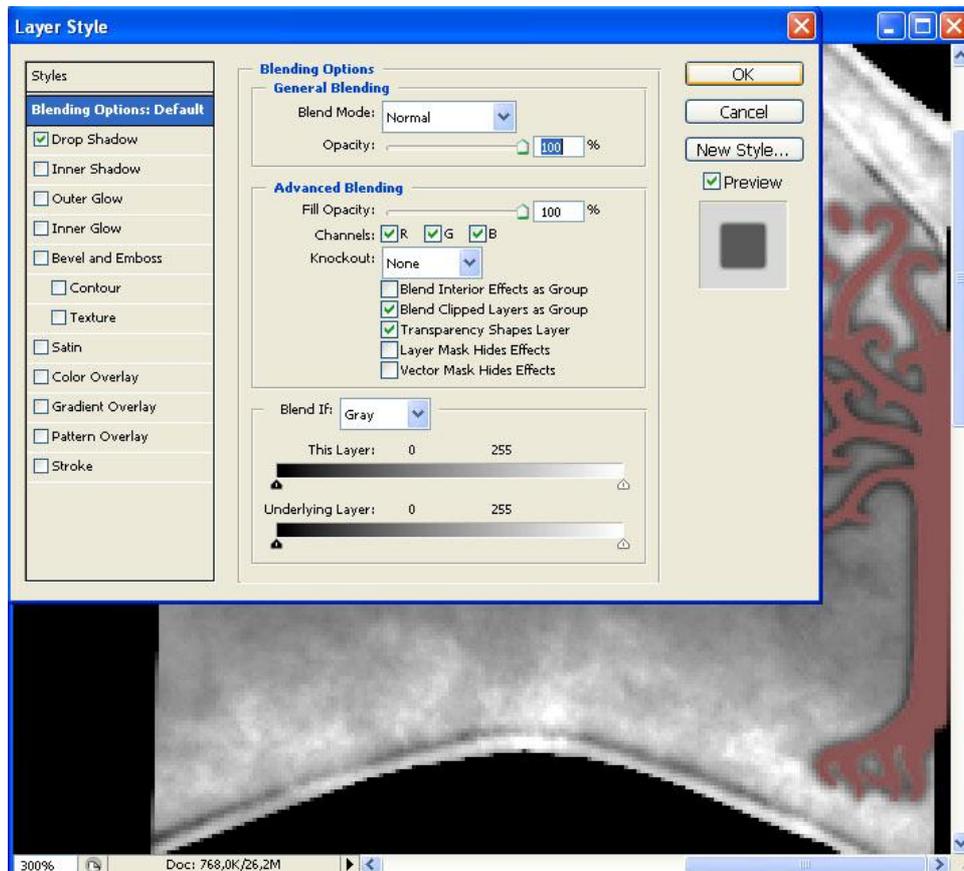
Now set Fill of that layer to 0% and voala. The only thing that lefts from the layer are highlights and shadows and this is what we need. You will probably need to set light direction more propertly to fit the direction of light that you have on the rest on the armor, but this is good place to start from.
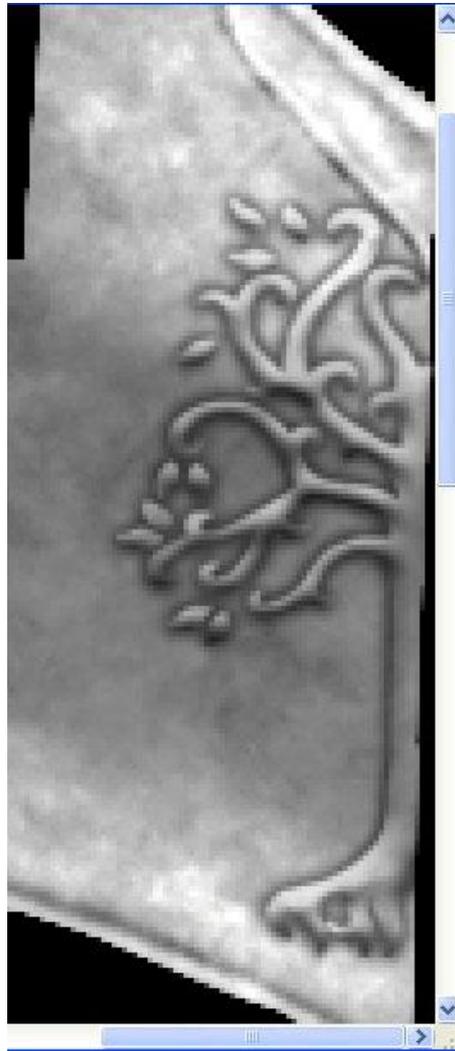
I will put few renders that i made during the skinning of this armor.
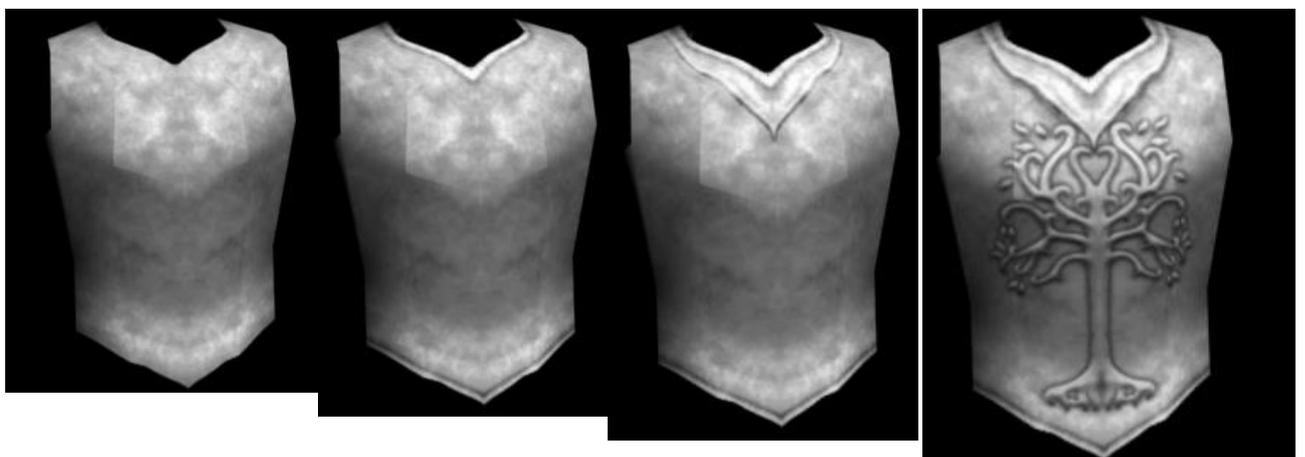
And here is final product Tower Guard of Gondor (need to get belt, i notice that right now).