ANIMATING WITH PUPPET WARP

Introduction
Puppet Warp is a relatively new feature in Photoshop that allows you to creatively distort an image. It can also be used to animate those distortions - let’s see how to do that.

Procedure
Make a new file and, in the timeline panel at the foot of the screen in the Motion environment, create a Frame Animation.

In the Layers panel, create a new layer with a transparent background; call it something like Figure. The layer should be transparent.

Next, draw or place the image to be animated in that layer. Again, the layer must be transparent around the figure.
Right click to the right of the Figure layer name and choose Convert to Smart Object.

Now choose Edit - Pupper Warp from the top drop down menus.

The figure will be covered with a mesh and the cursor will convert to a pushpin icon. Uncheck Show Mesh in the top toolbar to hide the mesh if you want.

Now left click with the pushpin to set markers on the mesh for where you want the joints to be:
Copy the layer four times by dragging it down to the New Layer icon in the Layers panel. You will end up with five identical layers, each with the same image and the same set of pins in Puppet Warp.

Hide all but the lowest two layers and select the second (it will probably called Figure Copy). Double click on the Puppet Warp feature under the name:

The joints will become visible. Hover the cursor over them and drag them to move the figure.

You can select more than one pin with Shift-Select. When you’re done, press Enter or Return to lock in the Puppet Warp changes. Now hide the first layer, select the third layer, make it visible, and again double click on Puppet Warp to activate. Change that layer in its turn.
Make all five layers different, then create five frames in the Timeline. Have just one layer visible in each frame, the layer matching the frame number in sequence.

Change the duration of each frame as you want to slow the animation down. You can also Tween with opacity (though this doesn’t work well for more than a couple of frames) and - if you’ve moved the figures - Position. Generally the best way to animate with this method is to use a series of individual puppet warp frames.

Chris Yonge  20160118