
Subject: Re: Image plot on back wall
Posted by [davidf](#) on Fri, 19 Nov 1999 08:00:00 GMT
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Martin Schultz (m218003@modell3.dkrz.de) shows that the Germans do too have a sense of humor when he writes:

> OK. I guess, I see clearer now: it's not objects that I don't like, but
> the applications that are built on objects! ... Nowadays it seems we have to *talk*
> to these machines and *ask* them to *please* try to accomplish at least
> a tiny fraction of what we had in mind.

Even though your program didn't actually produce anything on the display (typical for object graphics programs, by the way) when I tried to run on my machine, it did manage to capture some of the flavor of object graphics programs. :-)

But RSI never claimed this stuff wasn't low level. They just haven't come up with much in the way of higher level tools. And I'm not sure we want them to anyway. Heck, you will find *much* better IDL programs than RSI puts out just by looking around the web. How come Liam Gumley has to write a TV command that actually works on the machines we run IDL on!? And images are IDL's thing, for goodness sake.

But to give RSI some credit, they do have new things in each new release that make object graphics easier to use. In IDL 5.3, I think (I couldn't get my old beta fired up for some reason, so I couldn't try this), they now have these handle-like things you can put around your lights. Sort of like the lights we use in the theater. That way you can *see* the lights in your scene and physically move them around and position them. That will make things a LOT easier to work with.

The thing that absolutely makes object graphics so impossible on occasions is that you get absolutely no feedback on what has gone wrong. Since *everything* is possible, object graphics doesn't care if you rotate the surface under the rug where it can't be seen. Maybe that is where you intended to put it. Meanwhile you sit and stare at an empty screen for hours, whispering every incantation you know, hoping upon hope that *something* might show up to give you your bearings.

I'm telling you, I only have so much patience for staring at a black rectangle on the display that is suppose to be an image. I finally, yesterday, had to ask RSI for an example that worked. At first they pointed me to their Show3_Object example in the example/objects directory, which I had already examined, since that is exactly what I was trying to do. But that example worked as well as mine did: a black rectangle instead of the image. Don't these people look at the output of these programs before they pass them off as examples of how to write programs!?

But eventually I did get a working example. That is the only way I would have discovered, I think, that a 24-bit image was required. I tend, like many people, to be *way* to naive when it comes to believing what I read.

So, OK, it was a frustrating day. But I learned a couple of new things, and knowledge that comes too easy isn't fully appreciated. What I know will help me sell books. What I can't figure out is why RSI believes that their customers, who have no such financial incentive to spend hours learning this on their own, will be willing (or able) to give up direct graphics for this.

Cheers,

David

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