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Subject: how IDL or ION returns an alpha image (32 bits)  
Posted by [aleks.franca@gmail.co](mailto:aleks.franca@gmail.co) on Fri, 31 Aug 2007 20:41:28 GMT  
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Hy all!!

I'm having a hard time with this problem about alpha channel. I wish someone with experience in it could help me.

I need to generate an image with transparency. This image will be used on top of other image in another application out of idl. It's a web application. I based on 2 routines from idl examples that work with alpha and process images in IDL: "alphacomposite\_doc.pro", and "alphaimage\_obj.pro". I need to have the image with the alpha channel on the OUTPUT. Is this possible??

Any help would be appreciated

Aleksander

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Subject: Re: how IDL or ION returns an alpha image (32 bits)  
Posted by [Rick Towler](#) on Tue, 04 Sep 2007 20:13:48 GMT  
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I don't think you can do this directly in ION script. While individual objects in the ION\_SCRIPT\_BUFFER might contain alpha channels, \*I think\* the image is "flattened" as it is rendered and output as ION\_IMAGE. This seems to be the case with any rendered OG output as the IDLgrWindow and IDLgrBuffer Read methods only return 3xNxM arrays. (I smell a feature request)

You can do it in IDL using WRITE\_PNG. The documentation is a bit vague on this, but at least with 6.4 WRITE\_PNG you can create RGBA images. Ignore the TRANSPARENT keyword as this is meant for binary transparency with 8-bit images. Just write a 4xNxM array as shown in the example code. Because you can't render to an RGBA image, you'll have to do all of the compositing yourself if you have more than one image.

If you need to do this in ION Script, you can have IDL generate a temporary .png file using WRITE\_PNG and you can insert that in to your generated page. When I did this I had to do it the hard way, generating the file and then dealing with cleaning it up. ION Script may have some functions that make this easier now.

-Rick

aleks.franca@ wrote:

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