

VisualPrefs_eng

COLLABORATORS

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REVISION HISTORY

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Chapter 1

VisualPrefs_eng

1.1 VisualPrefs documentation

VisualPrefs 1.0 (23.7.97) by Massimo Tantignone

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1.2 What is VisualPrefs?

WHAT IS VISUALPREFS?

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VisualPrefs is a patch which allows you to customize with great freedom many aspects of the look of the Amiga GUI.

If you do want to see for yourself what VisualPrefs is able to do, just take a look of the preview image supplied with this archive.

Using a comfortable preferences editor, you can configure many details like:

- different light/dark colors for active or inactive windows edges
 - the thickness of all four window borders (also with system gadgets)
-

- the height of window/screen titlebars regardless of the font used
- the system gadgets style (also for MUI/KingCON/ClassAct titlebar gadgets)
- the exact look of the BOOPSI and GadTools 3D frames
- the look of GadTools proportional gadgets
- the position of window titles (centered in dragbar or in whole titlebar)
- the fill color of inactive window borders

... and also other interesting things. By the way, VisualPrefs contains all the functionality (and more) of my previous patches Prop3D and CenterTitles.

You can configure individually the GUI of each different screen opened by your applications, as well as define a global GUI look.

I know there are other programs doing some of this, but none of them has **all the features** offered by VisualPrefs.

This program is shareware, but you can use it for a while without having significant **limitations**. Also, the registration fee is very small (\$6/10DM if you want the keyfile by e-mail, \$8/14DM if you want it by normal mail).

Please read carefully all of the documentation, as there are some things about VisualPrefs that you need to know.

This first release of VisualPrefs is intended as a birthday tribute to Amiga, and as such it was released intentionally on July 23. :-)

Due to my studies, I can't promise anything about the future development of VisualPrefs (except that there will be some). Probably it will proceed very slowly. BUT, I will do anything in my power to fix any bugs you should find in the current version as soon as possible.

However, keep in mind that I won't be able to do anything (except maybe answer e-mail) roughly from July 27 to September 20, 1997, because I'll be in vacation. :)

1.3 All the features of VisualPrefs

FULL LIST OF ALL THE FEATURES OF VISUALPREFS

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- o Seven new pens for a more accurate GUI rendition. These pens can be choosen independently for every screen, including the Workbench one.
- o Possibility to define different shine/shadow pens for active and inactive window borders. Never again those white and black edges! Now you can have windows with plastic-looking borders, similar to the X-Windows look (example: borders with a mid-blue background and light/dark blue edges).
- o Possibility to set the fill color of inactive window borders. This,

together with the previous feature, gives you complete control on the window borders appearance.

- o Ability to always keep square the screen and window titlebar gadgets.

Now, even with large fonts, you won't have those ugly tall & narrow gadgets in the titlebar anymore.

- o Ability to increase the screen and window titlebar height without changing the screen font.

- o Possibility to change width and height of the sizing window gadget, as well as of the arrow gadgets. This allows to modify the thickness of right and bottom window borders to finally have a correct aspect ratio even with square-pixel (1:1) screenmodes. Window borders up to 32-pixel thick! (Useful for very high resolutions, like 1600x1200...)

- o Possibility to set the desired thickness for each of the four window borders also when they don't contain system gadgets.

Now you can have, for instance, top and bottom window borders four-pixel thick just like the left and right ones, rather than two-pixel thick as usual.

- o Four (for now) different system gadget styles: Standard (but with fully scalable images), XEN (like SysIHack), and two new styles among which there is one that loosely resembles the NeXTStep look (or, if you REALLY want, the Windoze95 look :).

- o You can choose to have "normal" scrollbars, scrollbars with a recessed frame, scrollbars with a knob hole, or both (SysIHack-style). [Note: the knob hole is only possible with BOOPSI propgadgets.]

- o Possibility to freely configure the look of GadTools gadgets frames (and, more generally, of all BOOPSI frames). Simple borders, double borders, two-color borders, rounded borders, XEN borders, with any background color, even a dithered one. Furthermore an optional new mode to render "pressed" gadgets, more realistic than to simply switch the border colors.

- o Possibility to also modify the look of the gadgets added to the titlebar by MUI, KingCON and ClassAct.

- o Compatibility with the KingCON scroller: forever gone the "overlapping arrow gadgets" problem.

The same applies to SCMSG, SE and CPR.

- o All the capabilities (and more) of my previous Prop3D patch are directly integrated. You can configure every aspect of GadTools proportional gadgets and arrow buttons!

- o Window titles can be placed in the center of the dragbar or in the

- center of the whole titlebar, just like with the CenterTitles utility. :-)
- o Possibility to define the color used to draw the symbols contained in window border gadgets (except for the XEN/SysIHack style which uses instead 3D images).
 - o Possibility to fill the recessed areas of XEN 3D images with the desired color.
 - o You can modify the preferences with a comfortable editor featuring a preview zone similar to the one of the system Palette editor.
 - o Possibility to save default settings but also custom settings for particular screens. Example: Wordworth, PageStream and TypeSmith don't support window borders with a non-standard thickness? No problem, you only have to change the settings for their screens.
 - o The preferences editor allows you to edit all system standard pens (like backgroundpen, textpen, fillpen...) of the Workbench screen and to save them in a way that is totally compatible with the Palette editor. In fact, together with another program (FullPalette) I'm about to release (you find a beta version on my home page), it becomes a complete replacement for said editor. For other screens, instead, it's only possible to modify the added pens (to avoid to interfere with the handling of the GUI preferences done by the programs which opened them).
-

In the future it isn't impossible that I'll add the ability to load custom images from disk for window border gadgets; this, of course, only if there will be enough demand for it.

The same holds true for any other idea that will be suggested to me.

1.4 Limitations of the unregistered version

LIMITATIONS OF THE UNREGISTERED VERSION

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In the unregistered version there are no disabled features, but:

- You can only save/use up to 10 (ten) screen definitions;
- If you save more than 5 (five) screen definitions, a requester will appear each time you run the GUI editor;
- Only two screens at a time can use the global template.

That's it. If you want unlimited screen definitions, unlimited template use and no requesters, please consider **registering!** :-)

1.5 Requirements for VisualPrefs

REQUIREMENTS FOR VISUALPREFS

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An Amiga computer with AmigaOS 3.0+.

A display mode with square (1:1) pixels is strongly suggested.

Also a graphic card could be useful (but not required).

1.6 How to install VisualPrefs

THE INSTALLATION

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The installation is very simple; just use the supplied Installer script.

If you want to do a manual installation, follow these instructions...

First of all, copy the following files onto your hard disk:

+-----+

| VisualPrefs To any directory (for example C:) |

| Prefs/GUI To SYS:Prefs |

| Prefs/GUI.info To SYS:Prefs |

+-----+

If you want, you can also copy the "GUISample.pre" file to SYS:Prefs/Presets, but it isn't really mandatory.

Now you must add a line to your Startup-sequence (alas, it is not enough to put it into User-startup), IMMEDIATELY BEFORE the one with the "C:IPrefs" command: _____

Run > NIL: <dir>/VisualPrefs

Where <dir> is the name of the directory VisualPrefs resides in.

Example:

+-----+

| ... |

| Run > NIL: C:VisualPrefs |

| C:IPrefs |

| ... |

+-----+

Finally, if you were using the programs "Prop3D" and/or "CenterTitles", remove them from your User-startup or WBStartup drawer.

1.7 How to use VisualPrefs

THE USAGE

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After the installation you must reboot. Then you can begin to use the GUI editor to modify the interface's look.

I advise you to "play" a little with the editor at this point, before coming back here to read the rest of the documentation.

In fact, the editor is rather intuitive, however there are some important things to speak about that will be more understandable if you already know the editor's basic structure.

Note: the term "DrawInfo pens" refers to the pens (colors) used for the various elements of the GUI, such as light/dark edges, text, background, etc. You find the list of DrawInfo pens at the left side of the editor window.

[The GUI editor](#)

[Editing the GUI of single screens](#)

[Defining a default configuration](#)

[The pen mode](#)

[Color locking](#)

[Special patches](#)

[Limitations of the unregistered version](#)

1.8 The GUI editor

The GUI editor

With the editor you can set many aspects of the GUI, like the DrawInfo pens, the style of window border gadgets, the width and height of the window sizing/arrow gadgets and the exact look of gadget frames.

At the right side of the GUI editor's window there is a listview with several options to configure the basic appearance of the gadget and window frames.

Above it is a preview display reflecting the current settings.

At the top left side of the editor's window there is a cycle gadget allowing you to flip through various configuration pages for specific aspects of the GUI look and behavior. These pages, also, can have sub-pages.

Above it is a text display gadget indicating the name of the current screen, with a chooser gadget ("<") to go to the [screen selection section](#).

Note that the effects of the various options in the listview at the right side of the editor's window depend also on the colors you've chosen for the screen's DrawInfo pens. If you choose the same color for more than one pen, some options will seem to have no effect!

The cycle gadget below the palette has a special purpose that will be explained in the section "[The pen mode](#)".

1.9 Editing the GUI of single screens

Editing the GUI of single screens

You can edit the parameters of single screens. You can select the screens to edit by clicking the "<" gadget in the top left of the window. Then you can double-click on a screen name from those in the listview.

For a screen to be edited the first time, it must of course be already open, otherwise it won't appear in the listview.

Any subsequent time the editor will open a clone of the screen if the "real" one is not open.

Names of screens not already saved in the preferences file will appear in a "highlight" color.

You can also inhibit VisualPrefs from operating on certain screens, by clicking on the cycle gadget ("Patch"/"Ignore") at the bottom right of the window. If you select "Ignore", the name of the screen will appear recessed and VisualPrefs won't patch it at all.

VisualPrefs recognizes screens by comparing their public name (or title if they aren't public) with the name saved with the GUI editor.

You can modify this name with the string gadget; in particular, to make it match a larger class of screens, you can add a #? at the end.

This is NOT true pattern matching, however: wildcards don't work inside the name, only at the end (and only the "#?" couple).

You can delete a screen definition using the "Delete" gadget, but only if the GUI editor is not present on the corresponding screen. Also you can't delete the definition for the Workbench screen. If you attempt to do so, an error message will be displayed.

If the screen associated to the definition you delete is still open, its name will remain in the list, but it will return to a "highlight" color, which indicates its definition won't be saved into the preferences file.

For any change to take effect, you must then click on "Use" or "Save" on the main editor panel.

Note that the GUI editor remembers the settings of all "visited" screens, so you'll need to select "Use" or "Save" only once at the end of your editing session.

VisualPrefs will attempt to close and re-open the Workbench screen each time you change something significant in its configuration; screens of other applications will have to be manually closed and re-opened for all changes to be correctly applied.

1.10 Defining a default configuration

Defining a default configuration

You can define a default configuration ("template") which will be used for all screens lacking an entry in the preferences file. To do this, just edit the parameters of any screen to reflect your desired default settings, then select "Save as template" (or "Use as template" for a temporary change) from the "Project" menu.

You'll be asked some questions about how the DrawInfo pens will have to be determined by VisualPrefs for the various screens, then your default template will be saved.

DON'T click on "Save" or "Use" now, but simply quit the editor, or else the default template will also be saved as the current screen's settings!

1.11 The pen mode

The pen mode

As you already know, each DrawInfo pen has a color index associated to it. VisualPrefs, with its GUI editor, allows you the greatest flexibility in the selection of colors for the DrawInfo pens of a screen.

Why? Some screens, when they change their depth, remap the colors of their palette in a different way than others (the Workbench screen is a perfect example of this, as it always remaps four of its eight colors to the end of its palette).

So it's not always sufficient to simply assign a fixed color index to a pen.

For this reason, each pen has a "pen mode" that determines how its color index is recalculated when the screen's depth (i.e. number of colors) is different than what it was the LAST TIME you used the GUI editor on it to edit (and save) the pen's color.

To set the pen mode of a pen you use the cycle gadget ("Absolute"/"Relative") located below the palette in the "Pens" page of the GUI editor.

Let's see how this works; we'll indicate with "n" the generic number of colors of a screen.

1) If the pen mode is "Absolute", the pen will always use exactly the absolute index of the color AS IT WAS WHEN YOU SELECTED IT; this can go from 0 to n - 1.

If, later, this color index doesn't exist on the current screen because

there are too few colors, the result is undefined (most likely the wrong color will be used).

2) If the pen mode is "Relative", there are two possibilities:

2a) If the color index, when you selected it, was in the FIRST HALF of the palette (color 0 to $n/2 - 1$), then it will be treated as in the "Absolute" case, EXCEPT when there are so few colors that, maintaining its absolute index, it would end up in the second half of the palette (or even beyond). In this case, a fallback color index will be used.

2b) If the color index, when you selected it, was in the SECOND HALF of the palette (color $n/2$ to $n - 1$), then it will always keep the same offset, i.e. distance, from the END of the palette rather than from the beginning. So, for instance, color $n - 3$ will always be color $n - 3$ regardless from how many colors the screen has. Furthermore, if the screen has so few colors that, maintaining its offset from the end, the color would end up in the first half of the palette (or even beyond), a fallback color index will be used.

In the case of the Workbench screen, for example, you should set "Absolute" for pens using the first four colors and "Relative" for pens using the last four.

What you should do for pens using other colors in-between depends on many factors, one of which is whether or not you use some utility allowing you to set and lock all of the Workbench colors (rather than just eight of them).

1.12 Color locking

Color locking

As some programs change their palette while running (for example web browsers) you could need to lock the colors you assign to VisualPrefs-specific DrawInfo pens. In the "Color locking" page of the GUI editor you can do just that. There you find ONLY colors that VisualPrefs will use and that will NOT be locked automatically anyway by Intuition.

Note that this still doesn't guarantee to get the intended color for a pen: if you use color locking, you must also make sure the color you chose already exists when the screen is opened.

1.13 Special patches

Special patches

In the "Global" menu you find some entries that allow you to selectively activate some patches. They can add some overhead to the working of VisualPrefs, so you have a choice whether to use them or not.

Select "Patch KingCON" to tell VisualPrefs to patch the gadgets added by KingCON to window borders.

Select "Patch AmigaGuide" to tell VisualPrefs to correctly display the text in the toolbar gadgets of an AmigaGuide document (without the patch it is written in JAM2 mode, covering part of the gadget frame).

Select "Patch SAS/C" to tell VisualPrefs to patch the gadgets added by SCMSG, SE and CPR to window borders.

Select "Old XEN look" to tell VisualPrefs to use a XEN style for system gadgets that is more similar to the one of the original SysIHack patch (which first introduced it); otherwise VisualPrefs will use a XEN style that is slightly different from SysIHack's one.

For now you will only notice a difference in the sizing gadget.

1.14 Important notes and useful hints

NOTES AND HINTS

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The most important note of all: VisualPrefs works well with all programs respecting the rules, like adapting to the window border sizes, using system functions for creating/drawing gadgets, etc. Of course, badly written programs or programs using proprietary code for their interface (like MUI applications) will benefit very little from VisualPrefs.

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When using VisualPrefs you should disable all other similar patches, such as SysIHack, UrouHack, MagicFrames and MCP's FrameIHack, SysIHack, PropHack and NewGadTools options (but for this one see also the next note). Also, you should remove my previous Prop3D and CenterTitles utilities.

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NOTE WELL: If you use the "WBGauge" option of MCP, make sure that the "NewGadTools" option is ENABLED as well, or else there could be a crash (at least with some versions of MCP).

You can turn on "NewGadTools" without any conflict with VisualPrefs, as

long as you leave deactivated all individual patches.

It seems there is a partial incompatibility with the current release of the Picasso96 software, which causes a deadlock when VisualPrefs reopens the Workbench screen after a change to its settings.

You can avoid this by telling VisualPrefs to wait a little before reopening the screen. Just set the environment variable "VisualPrefs/WBOpenDelay" to a number indicating the duration of the delay.

A value of 50 means a second, 100 is two seconds, and so on; normally it should suffice 20 or less.

If you don't use Picasso96, you shouldn't need to set this variable.

VisualPrefs works best with 1:1 resolutions (i.e. with square pixels).

With other resolutions it works, but the results aren't always optimal.

Furthermore, in low-res (320×???) it still has some problems (better to set such screens to "Ignore" in the screen list).

Also, keep in mind that the GUI editor needs some space for its window; on small screens its user interface may not fit entirely.

If this happens, try reducing the size of its font with the FONTNAME and FONTSIZE tool types.

VisualPrefs greatly benefits from an utility allowing you to define and lock ALL Workbench colors, as opposed to just eight of them like you can do with the standard Palette editor.

There are several such utilities on Aminet, and there is also one written by me, "FullPalette", available on Aminet as util/wb/FullPalette16.lha (as I write this; the trailing number, 16, could have changed by now).

Of course I suggest you use this one. :-)

1.15 Is that all?

IS THAT ALL?

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No. I certainly forgot to mention something, so if you have any problem with the usage of VisualPrefs and/or the GUI editor, don't hesitate to ask me for clarifications.

1.16 So you want to be a registered user?

HOW TO REGISTER TO VISUALPREFS

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Please read carefully the following text!

The method of registration is very simple. You only have to print the **registration form**, fill it in and send it to **me** along with the required sum of money.

The registration fee is:

- \$6 (10 DM, or equivalent) for shipment of the keyfile by e-mail, or
- \$8 (14 DM, or equivalent) for shipment of the keyfile by normal mail.

For now I allow you to pay me in any currency, although in the future this could change.

Of course, if you pay me in italian Lire I will be happier... :)

You can choose between various methods of payment:

- o Send money in an envelope, together with the registration form
- o Make an international postal money order, and send the registration form in an envelope (specify "VisualPrefs registration" on the money order form)
- o Make a bank draft, and send it in the envelope together with the registration form

Sorry, at the moment I can't accept credit cards.

Furthermore, you can also send me the registration form via e-mail, to make sure I receive your order. But PLEASE put it ALSO in the envelope with the money or bank draft.

You can choose whether to receive the keyfile via e-mail or via normal mail.

- o If you decide to receive it via e-mail, please specify your e-mail address on the registration form.
- o If you decide to receive it via normal mail, please enclose a floppy disk into the envelope.

I will ship you the keyfile as soon as I have received BOTH the registration form AND the money. If you request a shipment via normal mail, please allow 2-8 weeks for delivery.

IMPORTANT NOTE: as stated elsewhere in this guide, I will be unable to do anything about VisualPrefs until September 20, 1997. This also includes shipping keyfiles! So don't worry if you don't receive anything before that date; from then, I'll catch up immediately with all the registration requests I'll have received.

I'll repeat my address here:

Massimo Tantignone

Via Campagnoli, 4

28100 Novara (NO)

ITALY

If anything is not clear, please write to me for more information. Thank you!

1.17 VisualPrefs registration form

VISUALPREFS REGISTRATION FORM

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Please print and fill in this registration form, then send it together
with the payment to:

Massimo Tantignone

Via Campagnoli, 4

28100 Novara (NO)

ITALY

8<-----CUT HERE-----

===== VisualPrefs registration form =====

===== valid for all countries =====

---- Please mark with an 'X' the boxes relevant to your choices ----

I would like to become a registered user of VisualPrefs. To this purpose,
along with this registration form, I'm sending (enclosed in the same
envelope, or separately if this form is sent via e-mail):

- The required sum of money (see below) as cash
- A bank draft for the required sum of money
- A document certifying the payment of the required sum (example: receipt)
- Nothing, because I have sent/will send a postal money order

I acknowledge that the required sum of money for the registration is:

- \$6 (10 DM, or equivalent) for shipment of the keyfile by e-mail, or
- \$8 (14 DM, or equivalent) for shipment of the keyfile by normal mail.

So, I want to receive my personal keyfile, as soon as possible, by:

- Electronic mail (e-mail) at the address specified below
- Normal mail (please enclose a floppy disk)

If the keyfile is sent via normal mail, I allow 2-8 weeks for delivery,
starting from the day the author will have received both the registration
form and the money.

My personal information is:

First name _____ Last name _____
Street _____ Number _____
City _____ State ____ ZIP _____
Country _____
E-mail address _____ @ _____
(Optional) Configuration of the Amiga I own _____

I guarantee that the keyfile I will receive won't be distributed and
will be used only by me on one or more computers owned by me.

Date _____ Signature _____

1.18 Translations to other languages

TRANSLATIONS

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Let me know if somebody wants to translate the documentation to german,
spanish, klingon or other widely spoken languages.

If I won't find translators, the documentation will always be only in
english and italian...

1.19 Thanks to...

THANKS TO...

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Many thanks go to my faithful (well, most of them anyway :) beta-testers,
without which the development of VisualPrefs would not have been possible.

They are, strictly in alphabetical order:

Alex Pagnoni

Amedeo Brunetti

Cristian Castellari

Daniele Franza

Davide Benuzzi

Davide Pellegatti

Donato Filippo Rasmussen

Eugenio Gori

Fabio Rotondo

Federico Pomi

Francesco Leoni

Gabriele Favrin

Gabriele Greco
Giorgio Maone
Giuseppe Ammendolia
Greg Baldwin
Lorenzo Morselli
Luca Danelon
Luigi Catuogno
Marco De Vitis
Matthew Gregan
Mirco Zanca
Nik Soggia
Paolo Lencioni
Paolo Luzi
Riccardo Giangualano
Roberto Braidotti
Rudi Chiarito
Simone Tellini
Stefano Dardari
Ubaldo Flora
Thanks again to all of you!

1.20 Future plans for VisualPrefs

FUTURE PLANS FOR VISUALPREFS

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Well... certainly I would like to add more image styles, the ability to use custom bitmap images for system gadgets, new windows and gadgets capabilities, and so on. Also, an interface for developers would be an interesting idea.

How much of this will be done depends on several issues, in particular:

1. How much time my studies will allow me to spend into Amiga programming;
2. Which features the future AmigaOS GUI will already have;
3. What kind of feedback I will receive from Amiga users.

So, if you want to see new features added to VisualPrefs, please register! ;)

1.21 Known bugs and problems of VisualPrefs

KNOWN BUGS AND PROBLEMS OF VISUALPREFS

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Ahem. Here you'll find some information about the problems you may currently

encounter using VisualPrefs.

- o Certain windows of some MUI programs (like IBrowse) appear empty if the top border's thickness is greater than (titlebar height increment + 2).

This is really a nasty problem, I don't know if I will ever be able to find a solution.

For now, set the top border to a value \leq (titlebar height increment + 2).

- o Even if you increase the titlebar height, MagicMenu will keep displaying a menu bar with an height of (font height + 3). I can't do anything about this, I've already e-mailed the author of MagicMenu and hope to hear from him soon.

- o If you use the SUPERLAYERS option in CyberGraphX 3, increasing the titlebar height leads to display problems. This, too, doesn't depend on VisualPrefs. I hope to contact the authors of CyberGraphX soon to discuss this issue.

- o Prop3D seemed to cause problems when used together with ARQ _AND_ MagicMenu, but I haven't been able to reproduce this bug yet. Now let me know if this still happens with VisualPrefs.

- o There are still some quirks in the GUI editor which I've been thus far unable to trace. Keep those bug reports coming... ;)

- o Display problems using Thor on the Workbench screen. It turned out this isn't due to VisualPrefs per se, but only to the choice of colors for your shine/shadow/fill pens. If you have this problem, try to select pens that are all as "near" as possible in the palette.

In particular, it should work if all of the pen indices give the same remainder when divided by 4 (example: pens 4, 5, 6 and 7).

1.22 Conclusion

CONCLUSION

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When you'll encounter a bug/problem/whatsoever, report it to me writing as much details as possible on what happened and on your system configuration at the time, including any patch or commodity running in background.

It's possible I already know about some bugs, but that they can't be fixed due to current limits of Intuition.

Please write also to say VisualPrefs works well on your systems, if it does!

You can also write suggestions for future enhancements, but keep in mind that I must always give absolute precedence to the elimination of bugs.

In fact, I'm not even sure to which extent it will make sense to continue

the development of this patch, because, whatever will be the successor of the current AmigaOS, it probably won't need VisualPrefs anyway (I hope!). So, for now I think it's more important to remove bugs and problems of the current version.

If you are an english speaker, please check the correctness of this documentation and report to me all grammatical or syntactic errors. ;-)

In the end, remember that VisualPrefs is an "ongoing" project and as such it can always undergo changes of plans (alas, sometimes they don't depend on my will).

That said, have fun with VisualPrefs!

Massimo Tantignone (tanti@intercom.it)

[<http://www.intercom.it/~amigaws>]

1.23 Some information about the author of VisualPrefs

AUTHOR INFORMATION

=====

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