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Texture Mapping as a Fundamental Drawing Primitive

Paul Haeberli
Mark Segal
Silicon Graphics Computer Systems*

Abstract

Texture mapping has traditionally been used to add realism to computer graphics images. In recent years, this technique has moved from the domain of software rendering systems to that of high performance graphics hardware.

But texture mapping hardware can be used for many more applications than simply applying diffuse patterns to polygons.

We survey applications of texture mapping including simple texture mapping, projective textures, and image warping. We then describe texture mapping techniques for drawing anti-aliased lines, air-brushes, and anti-aliased text. Next we show how texture mapping may be used as a fundamental graphics primitive for volume rendering, environment mapping, color interpolation, contouring, and many other applications.

CR Categories and Subject Descriptors: I.3.3 **[Computer Graphics]:** Picture/Image Generation; I.3.7 **[Computer Graphics]:** Three-Dimensional Graphics and Realism - *color, shading, shadowing, texture-mapping, line drawing, and anti-aliasing*

1 Introduction

Texture mapping[Cat74][Hec86] is a powerful technique for adding realism to a computer-generated scene. In its basic form, texture mapping lays an image (the texture) onto an object in a scene. More general forms of texture mapping generalize the image to other information; an "image" of altitudes, for instance, can be used to control shading across a surface to achieve such effects as bump-mapping.

Because texture mapping is so useful, it is being provided as a standard rendering technique both in graphics software interfaces and in computer graphics hardware[HL90][DWS+88]. Texture mapping can therefore be used in a scene with only a modest increase in the complexity of the program that generates that scene, sometimes with little effect on scene generation time. The wide availability and high-performance of texture mapping makes it a desirable rendering technique for achieving a number of effects that are normally obtained with special purpose drawing hardware.

After a brief review of the mechanics of texture mapping, we describe a few of its standard applications. We go on to describe some novel applications of texture mapping.

2 Texture Mapping

When mapping an image onto an object, the color of the object at each pixel is modified by a corresponding color from the image. In general, obtaining this color from the image conceptually requires several steps[Hec89]. The image is normally stored as a sampled array, so a continuous image must first be reconstructed from the samples. Next, the image must be warped to match any distortion (caused, perhaps, by perspective) in the projected object being displayed. Then this warped image is filtered to remove high-frequency components that would lead to aliasing in the final step: resampling to obtain the desired color to apply to the pixel being textured.

In practice, the required filtering is approximated by one of several methods. One of the most popular is *mipmapping*[Wil83]. Other filtering techniques may also be used[Cro84].

There are a number of generalizations to this basic texture mapping scheme. The image to be mapped need not be two-dimensional; the sampling and filtering techniques may be applied for both one- and three-dimensional images[Pea85]. In the case of a three-dimensional image, a two-dimensional slice must be selected to be mapped onto an object's boundary, since the result of rendering must be two-dimensional. The

*2011 N. Shoreline Blvd., Mountain View, CA 94043 USA

image may not be stored as an array but may be procedurally generated[Pea85][Per85]. Finally, the image may not represent color at all, but may instead describe transparency or other surface properties to be used in lighting or shading calculations[CG85].

3 Previous Uses of Texture Mapping

In basic texture mapping, an image is applied to a polygon (or some other surface facet) by assigning texture coordinates to the polygon's vertices. These coordinates index a texture image, and are interpolated across the polygon to determine, at each of the polygon's pixels, a texture image value. The result is that some portion of the texture image is mapped onto the polygon when the polygon is viewed on the screen. Typical two-dimensional images in this application are images of bricks or a road surface (in this case the texture image is often repeated across a polygon); a three-dimensional image might represent a block of marble from which objects could be "sculpted."

3.1 Projective Textures

A generalization of this technique projects a texture onto surfaces as if the texture were a projected slide or movie[SKvW+92]. In this case the texture coordinates at a vertex are computed as the result of the projection rather than being assigned fixed values. This technique may be used to simulate spotlights as well as the reprojection of a photograph of an object back onto that object's geometry.

Projective textures are also useful for simulating shadows. In this case, an image is constructed that represents distances from a light source to surface points nearest the light source. This image can be computed by performing z-buffering from the light's point of view and then obtaining the resulting z-buffer. When the scene is viewed from the eyepoint, the distance from the light source to each point on a surface is computed and compared to the corresponding value stored in the texture image. If the values are (nearly) equal, then the point is not in shadow; otherwise, it is in shadow. This technique should not use mipmapping, because filtering must be applied *after* the shadow comparison is performed[RSC87].

3.2 Image Warping

Image warping may be implemented with texture mapping by defining a correspondence between a uniform polygonal mesh (representing the original image) and a warped mesh (representing the warped image)[OTOK87]. The warp may be affine (to generate rotations, translations, shearings, and zooms) or higher-order. The points of the warped mesh are assigned the corresponding texture coordinates of the uniform mesh, and the mesh is texture mapped with the original image. This technique allows for easily-controlled interactive image warping. The technique can also be used for panning across a large texture image by using a mesh that indexes only a portion of the entire image.

3.3 Transparency Mapping

Texture mapping may be used to lay transparent or semi-transparent objects over a scene by representing transparency values in the texture image as well as color values. This technique is useful for simulating clouds[Gar85] and trees for example, by drawing appropriately textured polygons over a background. The effect is that the background shows through around the edges of the clouds or branches of the trees. Texture map filtering applied to the transparency and color values automatically leads to soft boundaries between the clouds or trees and the background.

3.4 Surface Trimming

Finally, a similar technique may be used to cut holes out of polygons or perform domain space trimming on curved surfaces[Bur92]. An image of the domain space trim regions is generated. As the surface is rendered, its domain space coordinates are used to reference this image. The value stored in the image determines whether the corresponding point on the surface is trimmed or not.

4 Additional Texture Mapping Applications

Texture mapping may be used to render objects that are usually rendered by other, specialized means. Since it is becoming widely available, texture mapping may be a good choice to implement these techniques even when these graphics primitives can be drawn using special purpose methods.

4.1 Anti-aliased Points and Line Segments

One simple use of texture mapping is to draw anti-aliased points of any width. In this case the texture image is of a filled circle with a smooth (anti-aliased) boundary. When a point is specified, it's coordinates indicate the center of a square whose width is determined by the point size. The texture coordinates at the

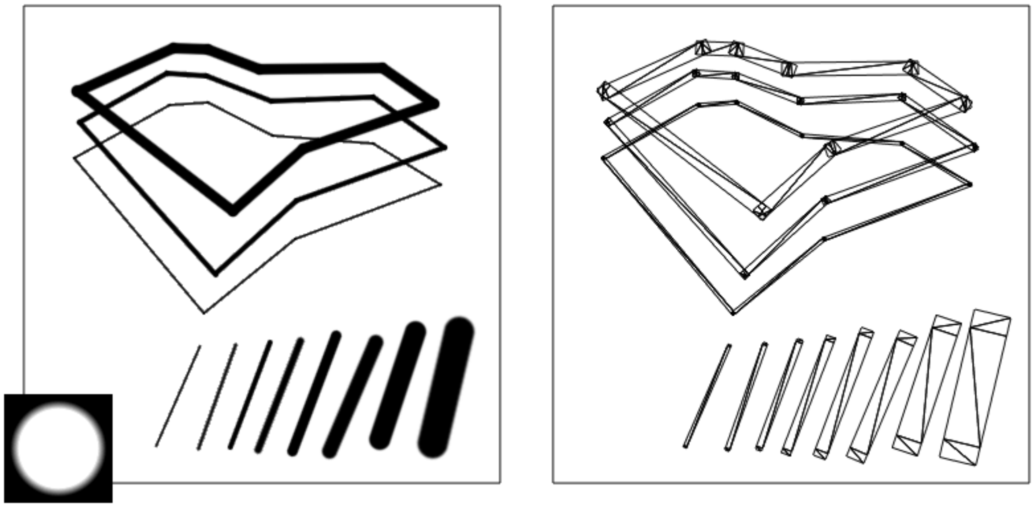

Figure 1. Anti-aliased line segments.

square's corners are those corresponding to the corners of the texture image. This method has the advantage that any point shape may be accommodated simply by varying the texture image.

A similar technique can be used to draw anti-aliased, line segments of any width[Gro90]. The texture image is a filtered circle as used above. Instead of a line segment, a texture mapped rectangle, whose width is the desired line width, is drawn centered on and aligned with the line segment. If line segments with round ends are desired, these can be added by drawing an additional textured rectangle on each end of the line segment (Figure 1).

4.2 Air-brushes

Repeatedly drawing a translucent image on a background can give the effect of spraying paint onto a canvas. Drawing an image can be accomplished by drawing a texture mapped polygon. Any conceivable brush "footprint", even a multi-colored one, may be drawn using an appropriate texture image with red, green, blue, and alpha. The brush image may also easily be scaled and rotated (Figure 2).

4.3 Anti-aliased Text

If the texture image is an image of a character, then a polygon textured with that image will show that character on its face. If the texture image is partitioned into an array of rectangles, each of which contains the image of a different character, then any character may be displayed by drawing a polygon with appropriate texture coordinates assigned to its vertices. An advantage of this method is that strings of characters may be arbitrarily positioned and oriented in three dimensions by appropriately positioning and orienting the textured polygons. Character kerning is accomplished simply by positioning the polygons relative to one another (Figure 3).

Antialiased characters of any size may be obtained with a single texture map simply by drawing a polygon of the desired size, but care must be taken if mipmapping is used. Normally, the smallest mipmap is 1 pixel square, so if all the characters are stored in a single texture map, the smaller mipmaps will contain a number of characters filtered together. This will generate undesirable effects when displayed characters are too small. Thus, if a single texture image is used for all characters, then each must be carefully placed in the image, and mipmaps must stop at the point where the image of a single character is reduced to 1 pixel on a side. Alternatively, each character could be placed in its own (small) texture map.

4.4 Volume Rendering

There are three ways in which texture mapping may be used to obtain an image of a solid, translucent object. The first is to draw slices of the object from back to front[DCH88]. Each slice is drawn by first generating a texture image of the slice by sampling the data representing the volume along the plane of the slice, and then drawing a texture mapped polygon to produce the slice. Each slice is blended with the previously drawn slices using transparency.

The second method uses 3D texture mapping[Dre92]. In this method, the volumetric data is copied into the 3D texture image. Then, slices perpendicular to the viewer are drawn. Each slice is again a texture mapped

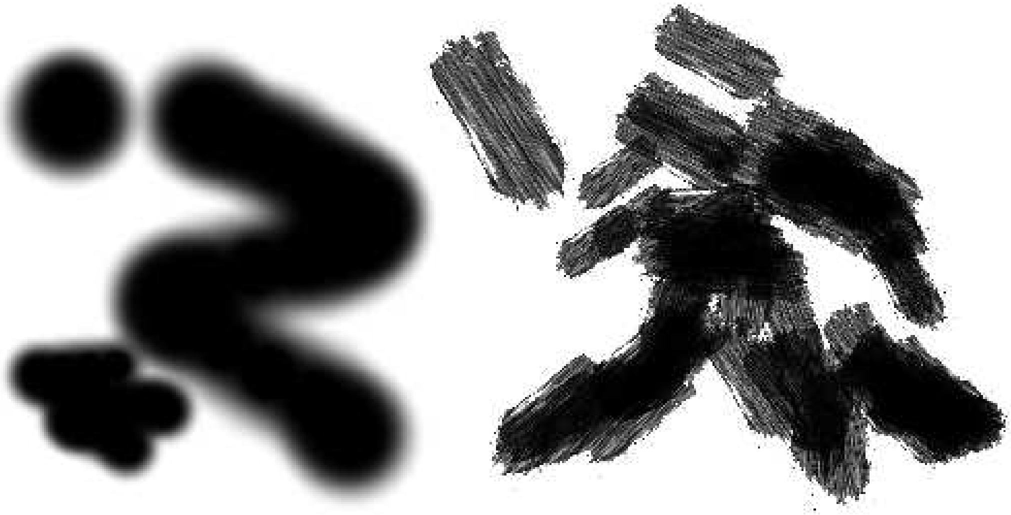

Figure 2. Painting with texture maps.

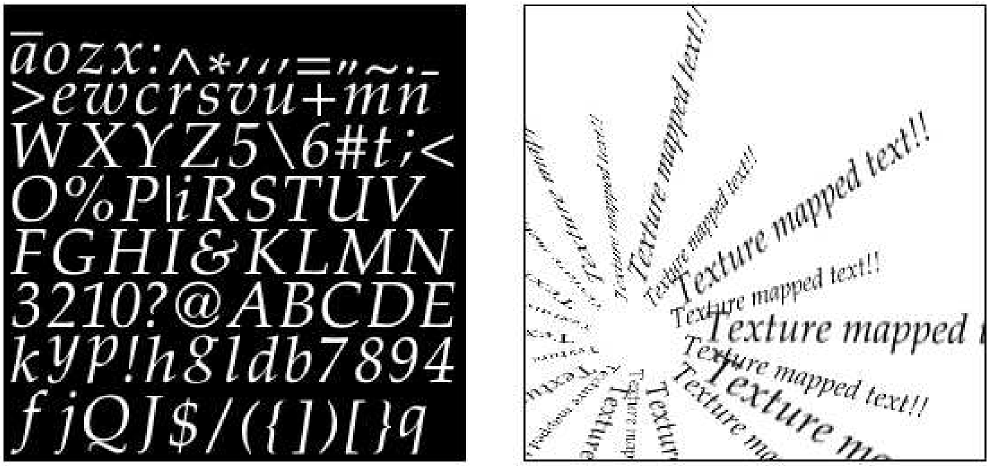

Figure 3. Anti-aliased text.

polygon, but this time the texture coordinates at the polygon's vertices determine a slice through the 3D texture image. This method requires a 3D texture mapping capability, but has the advantage that texture memory need be loaded only once no matter what the viewpoint. If the data are too numerous to fit in a single 3D image, the full volume may be rendered in multiple passes, placing only a portion of the volume data into the texture image on each pass.

A third way is to use texture mapping to implement "splatting" as described by[Wes90][LH91].

4.5 Movie Display

Three-dimensional texture images may also be used to display animated sequences[Ake92]. Each frame forms one two-dimensional slice of a three-dimensional texture. A frame is displayed by drawing a polygon with texture coordinates that select the desired slice. This can be used to smoothly interpolate between frames of the stored animation. Alpha values may also be associated with each pixel to make animated "sprites".

4.6 Contouring

Contour curves drawn on an object can provide valuable information about the object's geometry. Such curves may represent height above some plane (as in a topographic map) that is either fixed or moves with the object[Sab88]. Alternatively, the curves may indicate intrinsic surface properties, such as geodesics or loci of constant curvature.

Contouring is achieved with texture mapping by first defining a one-dimensional texture image that is of con-

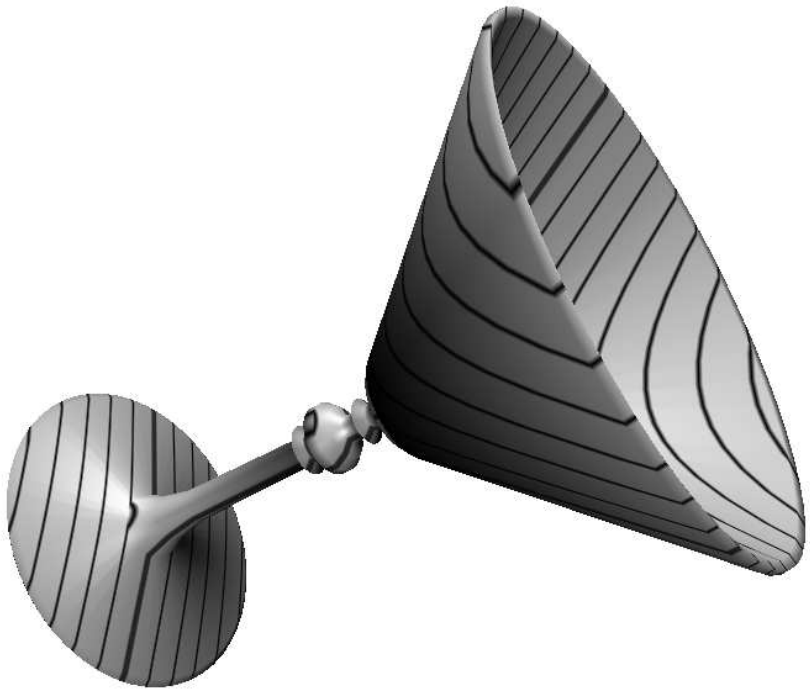

Figure 4. Contouring showing distance from a plane.

stant color except at some spot along its length. Then, texture coordinates are computed for vertices of each polygon in the object to be contoured using a *texture coordinate generation function*. This function may calculate the distance of the vertex above some plane (Figure 4), or may depend on certain surface properties to produce, for instance, a curvature value. Modular arithmetic is used in texture coordinate interpolation to effectively cause the single linear texture image to repeat over and over. The result is lines across the polygons that comprise an object, leading to contour curves.

A two-dimensional (or even three-dimensional) texture image may be used with two (or three) texture coordinate generation functions to produce multiple curves, each representing a different surface characteristic.

4.7 Generalized Projections

Texture mapping may be used to produce a non-standard projection of a three-dimensional scene, such as a cylindrical or spherical projection[Gre86]. The technique is similar to image warping. First, the scene is rendered six times from a single viewpoint, but with six distinct viewing directions: forward, backward, up, down, left, and right. These six views form a cube enclosing the viewpoint. The desired projection is formed by projecting the cube of images onto an array of polygons (Figure 5).

4.8 Color Interpolation in non-RGB Spaces

The texture image may not represent an image at all, but may instead be thought of as a lookup table. Intermediate values not represented in the table are obtained through linear interpolation, a feature normally provided to handle image filtering.

One way to use a three-dimensional lookup table is to fill it with RGB values that correspond to, for instance, HSV (Hue, Saturation, Value) values. The H, S, and V values index the three dimensional tables. By assigning HSV values to the vertices of a polygon linear color interpolation may be carried out in HSV space rather than RGB space. Other color spaces are easily supported.

4.9 Phong Shading

Phong shading with an infinite light and a local viewer may be simulated using a 3D texture image as follows. First, consider the function of x, y, and z that assigns a brightness value to coordinates that represent a (not necessarily unit length) vector. The vector is the reflection off of the surface of the vector from the eye to a point on the surface, and is thus a function of the normal at that point. The brightness function depends on the location of the light source. The 3D texture image is a lookup table for the brightness function given a reflection vector. Then, for each polygon in the scene, the reflection vector is computed at each of the polygon's vertices. The coordinates of this vector are interpolated

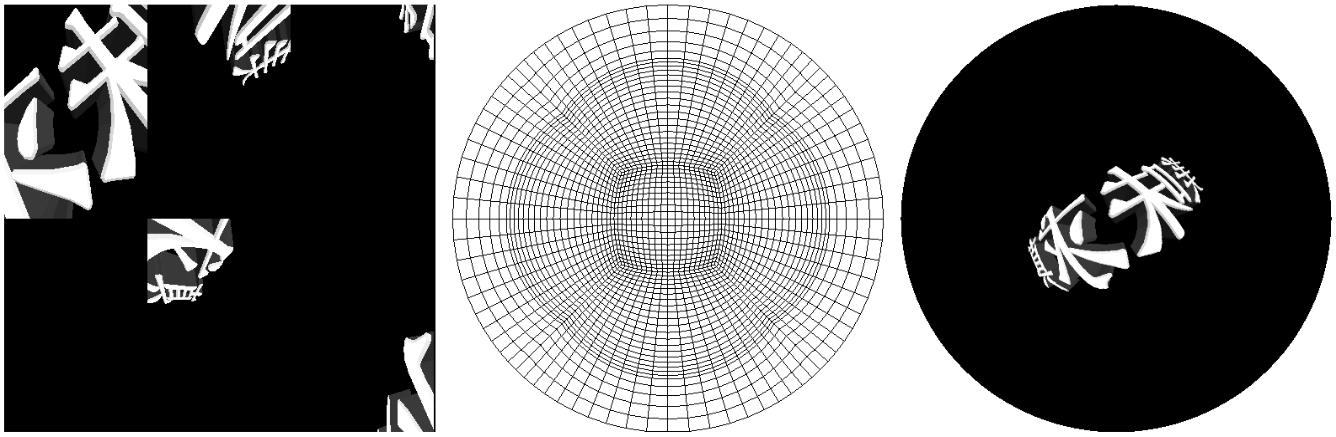

Figure 5. 360 Degree fisheye projection.

across the polygon and index the brightness function stored in the texture image. The brightness value so obtained modulates the color of the polygon. Multiple lights may be obtained by incorporating multiple brightness functions into the texture image.

4.10 Environment Mapping

Environment mapping[Gre86] may be achieved through texture mapping in one of two ways. The first way requires six texture images, each corresponding to a face of a cube, that represent the surrounding environment. At each vertex of a polygon to be environment mapped, a reflection vector from the eye off of the surface is computed. This reflection vector indexes one of the six texture images. As long as all the vertices of the polygon generate reflections into the same image, the image is mapped onto the polygon using projective texturing. If a polygon has reflections into more than one face of the cube, then the polygon is subdivided into pieces, each of which generates reflections into only one face. Because a reflection vector is not computed at each pixel, this method is not exact, but the results are quite convincing when the polygons are small.

The second method is to generate a single texture image of a perfectly reflecting sphere in the environment. This image consists of a circle representing the hemisphere of the environment behind the viewer, surrounded by an annulus representing the hemisphere in front of the viewer. The image is that of a perfectly reflecting sphere located in the environment when the viewer is infinitely far from the sphere. At each polygon vertex, a texture coordinate generation function generates coordinates that index this texture image, and these are interpolated across the polygon. If the (normalized) reflection vector at a vertex is $r = (\, x \quad y \quad z \,)$, and $m = \sqrt{2(z+1)}$, then the generated coordinates are x/m and y/m when the texture image is indexed by coordinates ranging from -1 to 1. (The calculation is diagrammed in Figure 6). This method has the disadvantage that the texture image must be recomputed whenever the view direction changes, but requires only a single texture image with no special polygon subdivision (Figure 7).

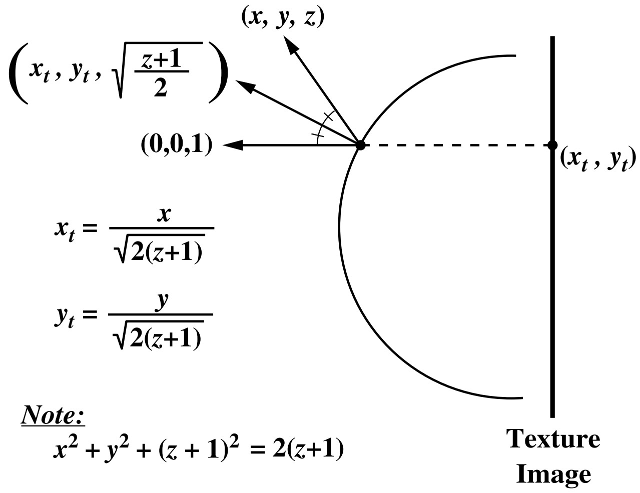

Figure 6. Spherical reflection geometry.

4.11 3D Halftoning

Normal halftoned images are created by thresholding a source image with a halftone screen. Usually this halftone pattern of lines or dots bears no direct relationship to the geometry of the scene. Texture mapping allows halftone patterns to be generated using a 3D spatial function or parametric lines of a surface (Figure 8). This permits us to make halftone patterns that are bound to the surface geometry[ST90].

Figure 7. Environment mapping.

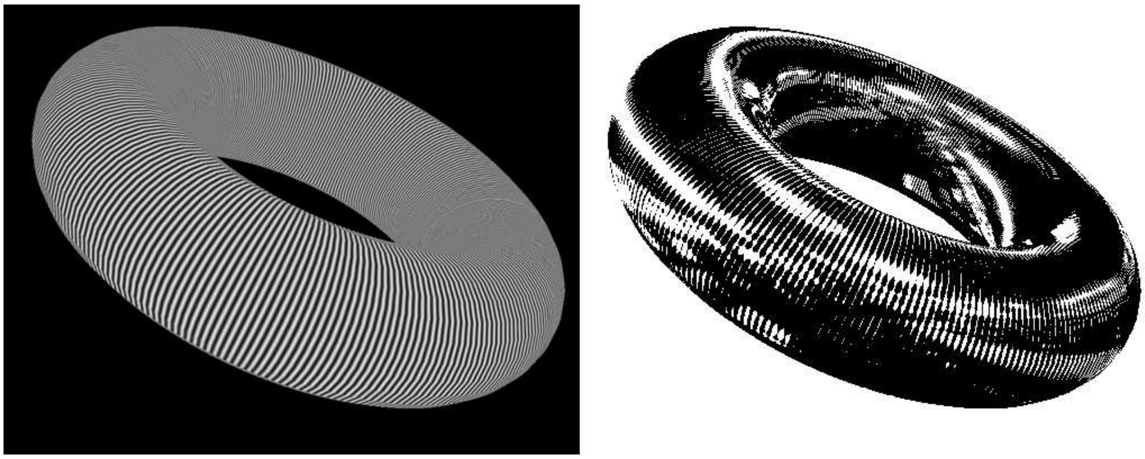

Figure 8. 3D halftoning.

5 Conclusion

Many graphics systems now provide hardware that supports texture mapping. As a result, generating a texture mapped scene need not take longer than generating a scene without texture mapping.

We have shown that, in addition to its standard uses, texture mapping can be used for a large number of interesting applications, and that texture mapping is a powerful and flexible low level graphics drawing primitive.

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