

ModelConverterX

Your flight simulator development toolbox



User Manual - Version 1.4

SceneryDesign.org



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Chapter 1

Introduction

ModelConverterX is a tool whose primary function is, as the name already implies, to convert models. The tool allows you to import models from different formats and can then export them to other formats. For example you can import your old SCASM macros or COLLADA files made with SketchUp and export them into the FSX MDL format. But also exporting to the 3DS or OpenFlight format is possible. A second functionality for ModelConverterX is as a model viewer. You can view a 3D presentation of your object. A third functionality is to make minor changes to your object, like changing a material parameter or an attachpoint.

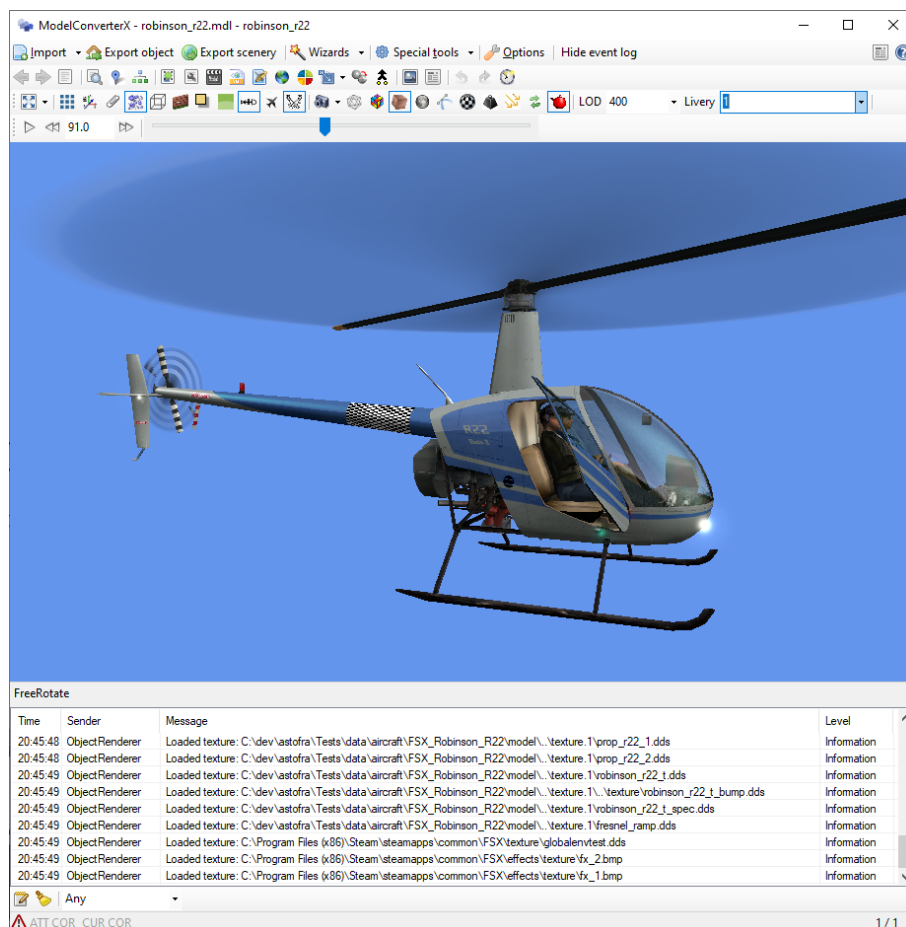


Figure 1.1: A model loaded in ModelConverterX

The layout of the rest of the manual is as follows:

- Chapter 2 discussed how to install ModelConverterX.
- Chapter 3 gives you a quick start by describing how to do some common tasks using ModelConverterX.
- Chapter 4 describes the user interface and the options.
- Chapter 5 describes the various editors that can be used in the tool.
- Chapter 6 describes the wizards that are available in ModelConverterX.
- Chapter 7 describes the special tools that ModelConverterX contains.
- Chapter 8 describes the various file formats that can be read by the tool.
- Chapter 9 describes the various file formats that can be written by the tool.
- Chapter 10 describes the options you can set for ModelConverterX.
- Chapter 11 provides background information that might be useful while using ModelConverterX.
- Chapter 12 describes how to get support for ModelConverterX.

Chapter 2

Installation

2.1 Prerequisites

Before you install ModelConverterX, please make sure that you have the following prerequisites installed on your computer:

- Microsoft .NET framework 4.0
- Microsoft Visual C++ 2015-2019 runtime files. If you run a 64 bit operating system, make sure to get the x64 version, else get the x86 version.
- To be able to export files in the formats used by FS2004, FSX or Prepar3D you need the Software Development Kit (SDK) of the specific flight simulator version you are working with.

2.2 Installation

Installing ModelConverterX is really simple, you can just unpack the ZIP file that you downloaded into a folder of your choice. This ZIP file contains everything that you need.

If you are upgrading from an older version of ModelConverterX, you can overwrite the existing files with the newer files from the ZIP.

The first time that you run ModelConverterX, the tool will automatically try to set most options for you. For example, based on the registry entries the paths where flight simulator and the SDK tools are installed will be filled in for you.

Chapter 3

Quick start

In the rest of this manual all the details of the ModelConverterX user interface and the available tools are explained. This chapter is a quick start to get you going even faster. It explains how to perform some common tasks on your models with ModelConverterX.

3.1 Convert COLLADA to MDL

This quick start will show you how you can convert a COLLADA model and its textures to the MDL format so that you can use it in Flight Simulator or Prepar3D. You need to take the following steps:

1. Import the COLLADA (DAE) object into ModelConverterX. You can do this by pressing the **Import** button and selecting the file or by dropping the file onto the ModelConverterX preview control. See Figure 3.1.
2. Open the **Material editor**.
3. Go to the **Textures** tab, see Figure 3.2.
4. Select the folder where the textures should be saved.
5. Select DDS as texture format.
6. Since this model has textures named like texture0.jpg, etc, it is likely that these names are not unique. Therefore press the **Prefix all with model name** button to make sure all texture names are prefixed with the model name.
7. Press the **Save textures** button to convert all textures to DDS. Figure 3.3 shows the Material Editor after converting.
8. Close the **Material editor**.
9. Export the object to MDL. Press the **Export object** button to bring up the dialog. Select the filename you want for the MDL file and also the MDL version you want, e.g. FSX or P3D v4. See Figure 3.4. Once you click the **Save** button the object is written to the selected location.

Now you have your MDL object and the textures in DDS format, you can now use your COLLADA object in your scenery.

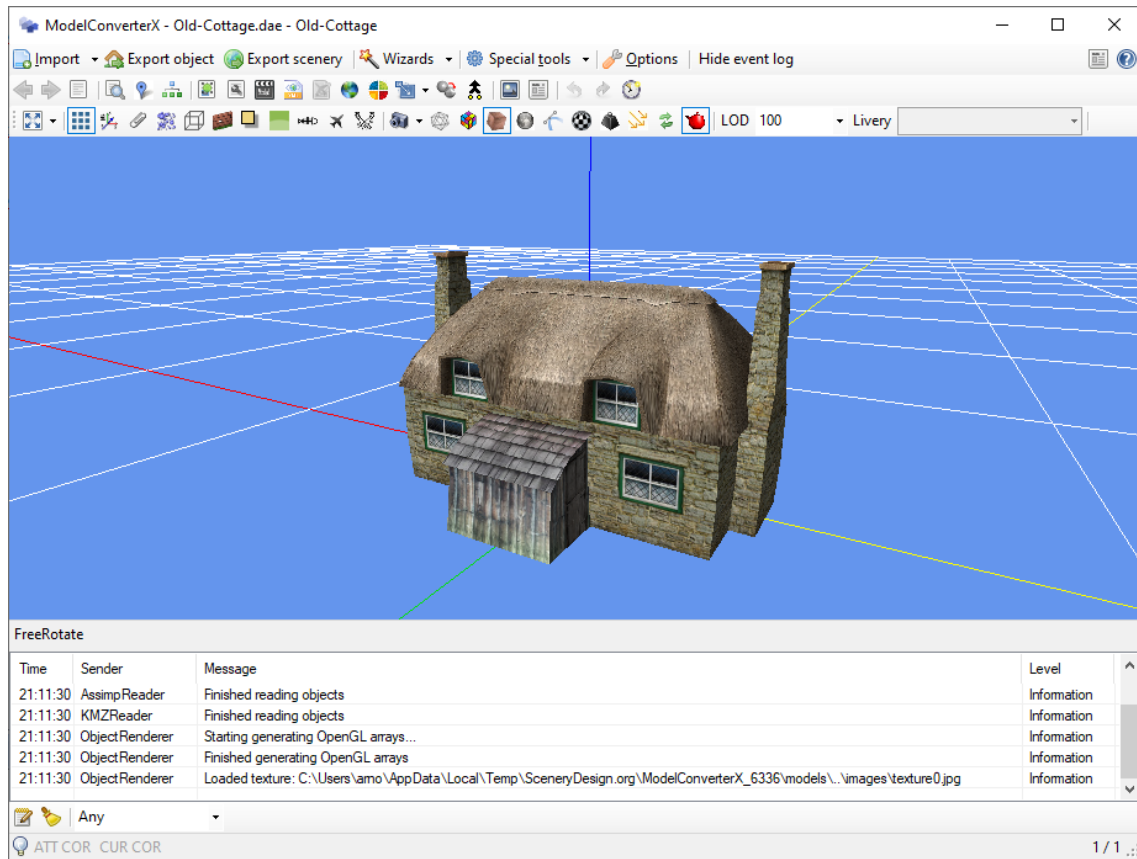


Figure 3.1: After loading the COLLADA object into ModelConverterX

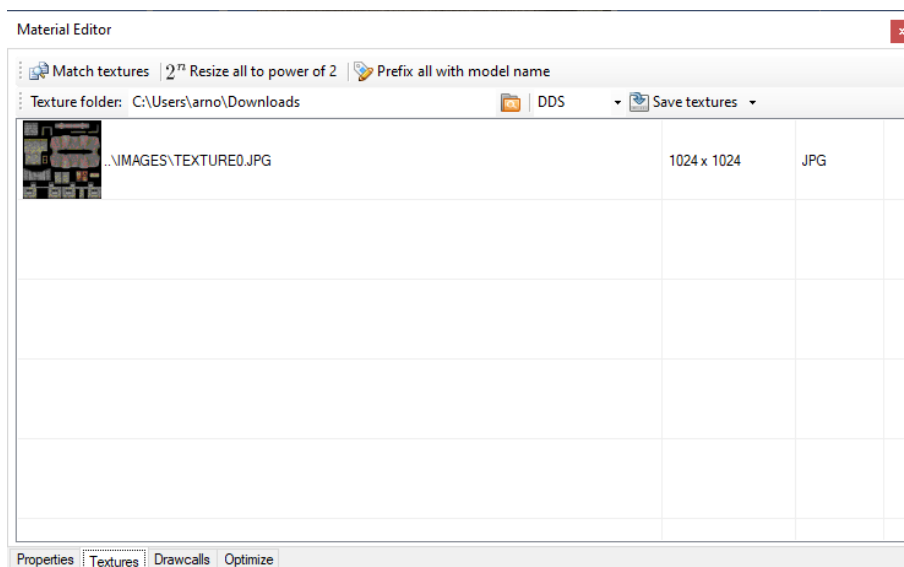


Figure 3.2: The texture tab of the material editor

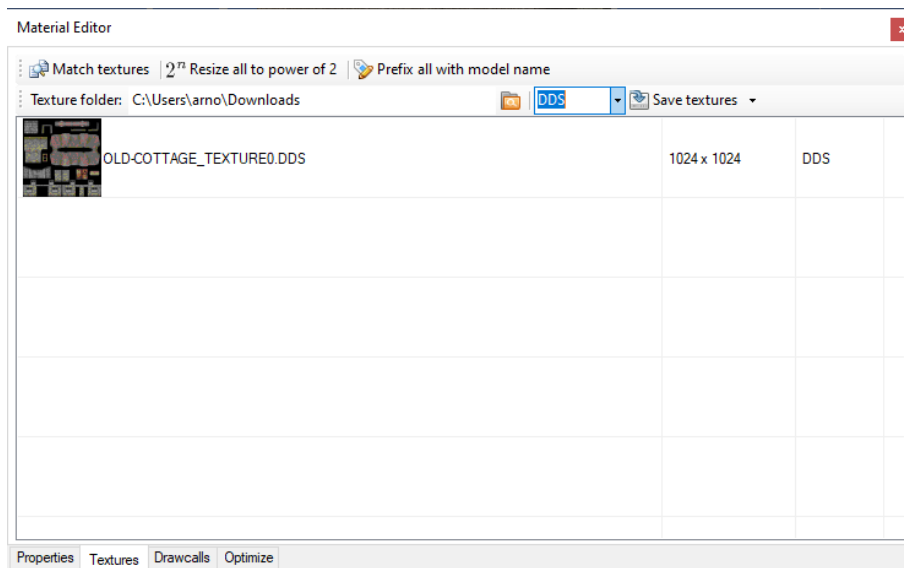


Figure 3.3: After converting textures to DDS

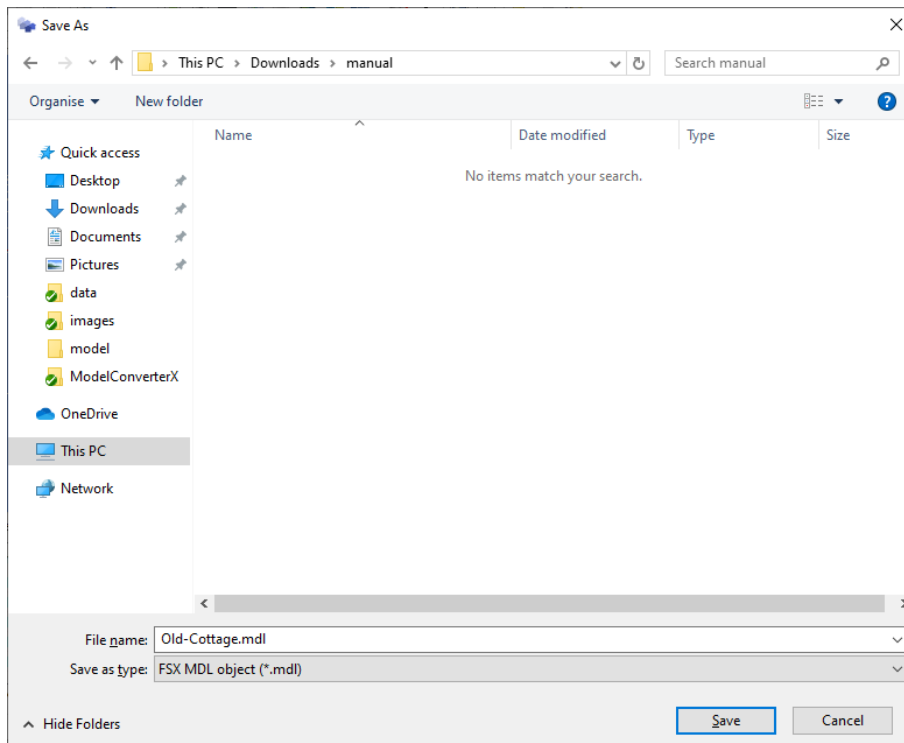


Figure 3.4: The export object dialog

3.2 Add a night texture to an object

This quick start shows you how you can add a night texture to an object that doesn't have one. For this example we will work with the cottage model that was converted to MDL in the previous section. You need to take the following steps:

1. Import the object.
2. Open the **Material editor**.
3. Go to the **Properties** tab.
4. Select the material that should have the night texture.
5. Select the **Add night texture** template, see Figure 3.5.
6. Press the **Apply** button to apply this template to the material.
7. A night texture has now been added to the material, see Figure 3.6.
8. To store the changes you made you need to export your model again to an MDL file. Use the **Export object** button to do so.

Now your model has a night texture added. You will have to create the actual texture file yourself in your favorite graphics program and put it in the texture folder of your scenery.

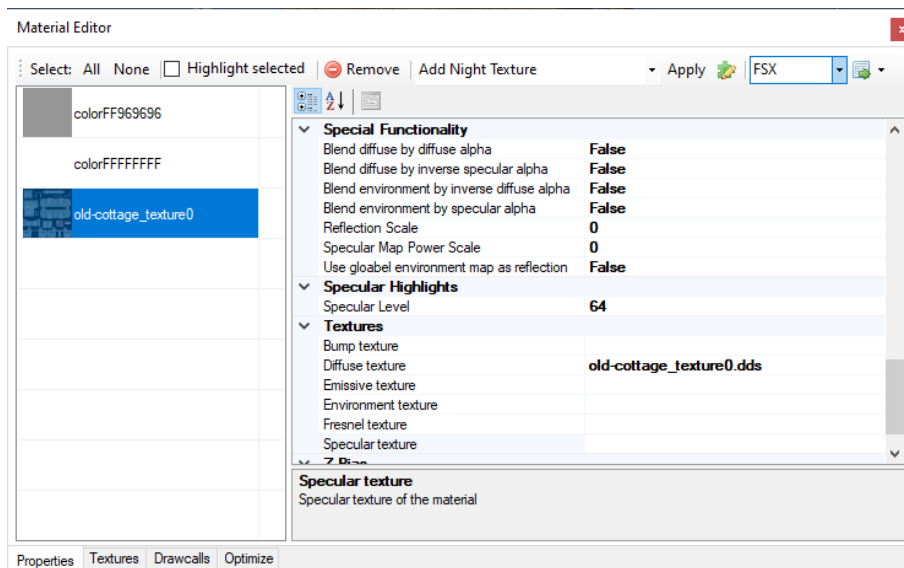


Figure 3.5: The material editor before applying the template

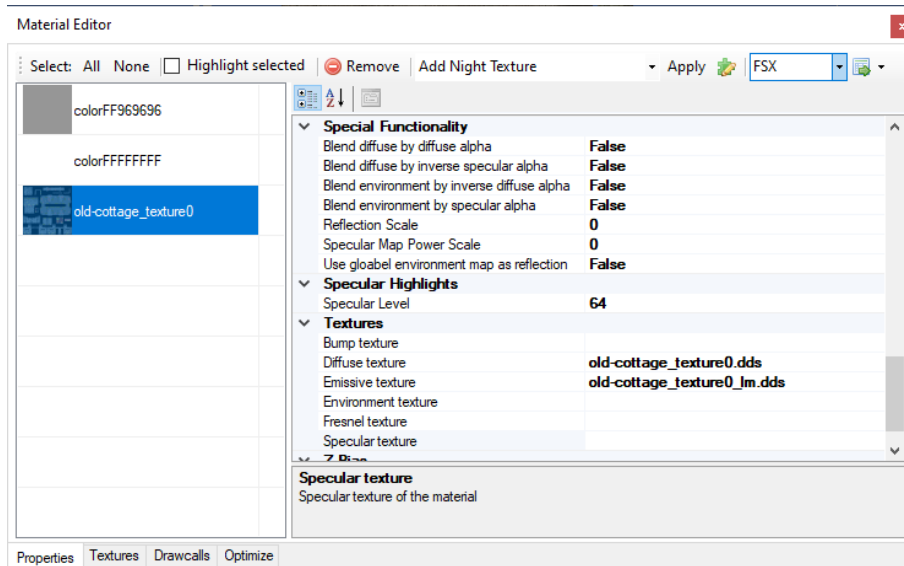


Figure 3.6: The material editor after applying the template

3.3 Add a special effect to an object

This quick start shows you how you can add a special effect to an object. We will add smoke to the chimney of the cottage object that was used in the previous sections. You need to take the following steps:

1. Import the object.
2. Make sure that **Display attached objects** is enabled in the preview. See Figure 3.7.
3. Open the **Attached object editor**.
4. Click on the **Add** button to add a new attached object.
5. Select **Effect** from the dropdown list.
6. In the properties of the attached effect select the filename of the special effect you want to use. For this example we will use `fx_SmokeStack.fx`, which is a default effect from FS.
7. Adjust the position of the effect so that it shows at the right location on your model. In this case we positioned the object on the chimney of the cottage. See Figure 3.8.
8. Since we want to add another effect on the second chimney, we will duplicate the attached effect with the **Duplicate** button.
9. Adjust the position of the duplicated effect to match the second chimney in the model. See Figure 3.9.
10. Close the **Attached object editor**.
11. Make sure that **Display particle effects** is enabled, so that the effect itself is rendered in the preview. It is better to leave this option disabled while you are positioning the effect, as else it is hard to see the reference cross. You will now see the object with two effects added, see Figure 3.10.
12. To store the changes you made you need to export your model again to MDL file. Use the **Export object** button to do so.

Now your model has a special effect added to it. If you are not using a default FX file, make sure you put the FX file in the effects folder of FS.

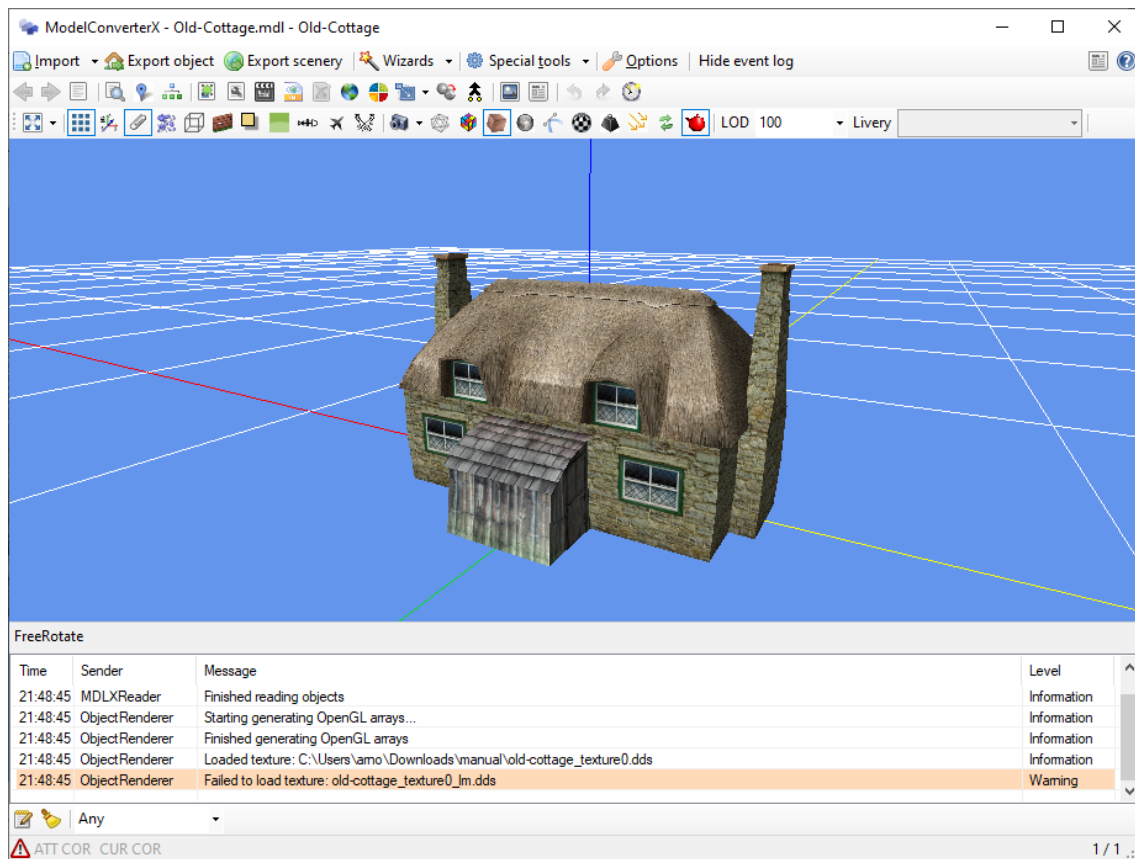


Figure 3.7: After loading the object and selecting the display of attached objects

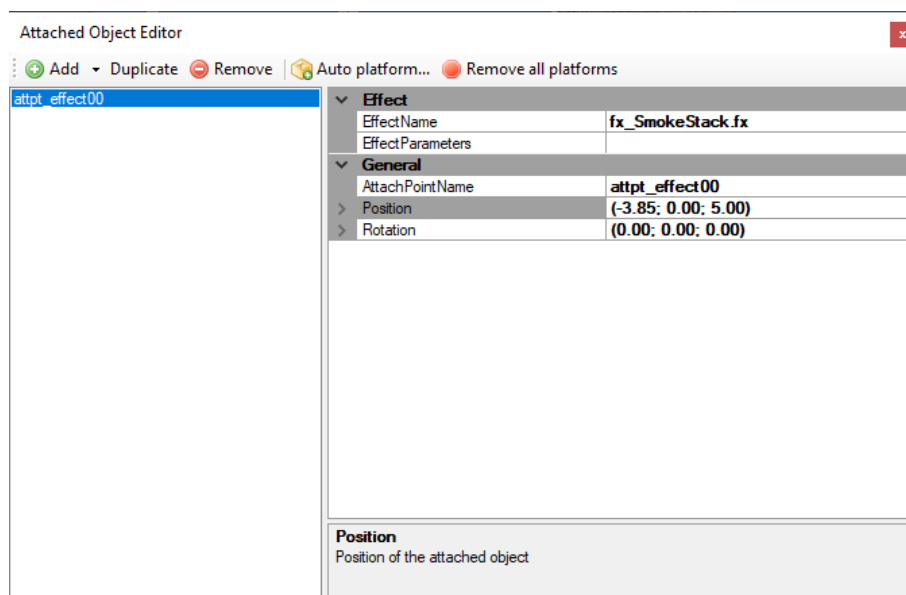


Figure 3.8: After adding the first effect

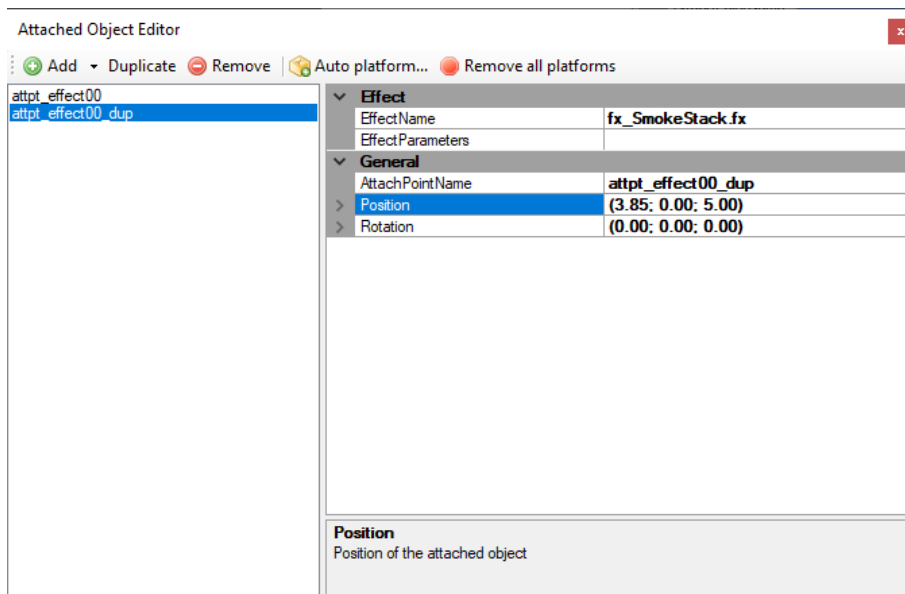


Figure 3.9: After duplicating the effect

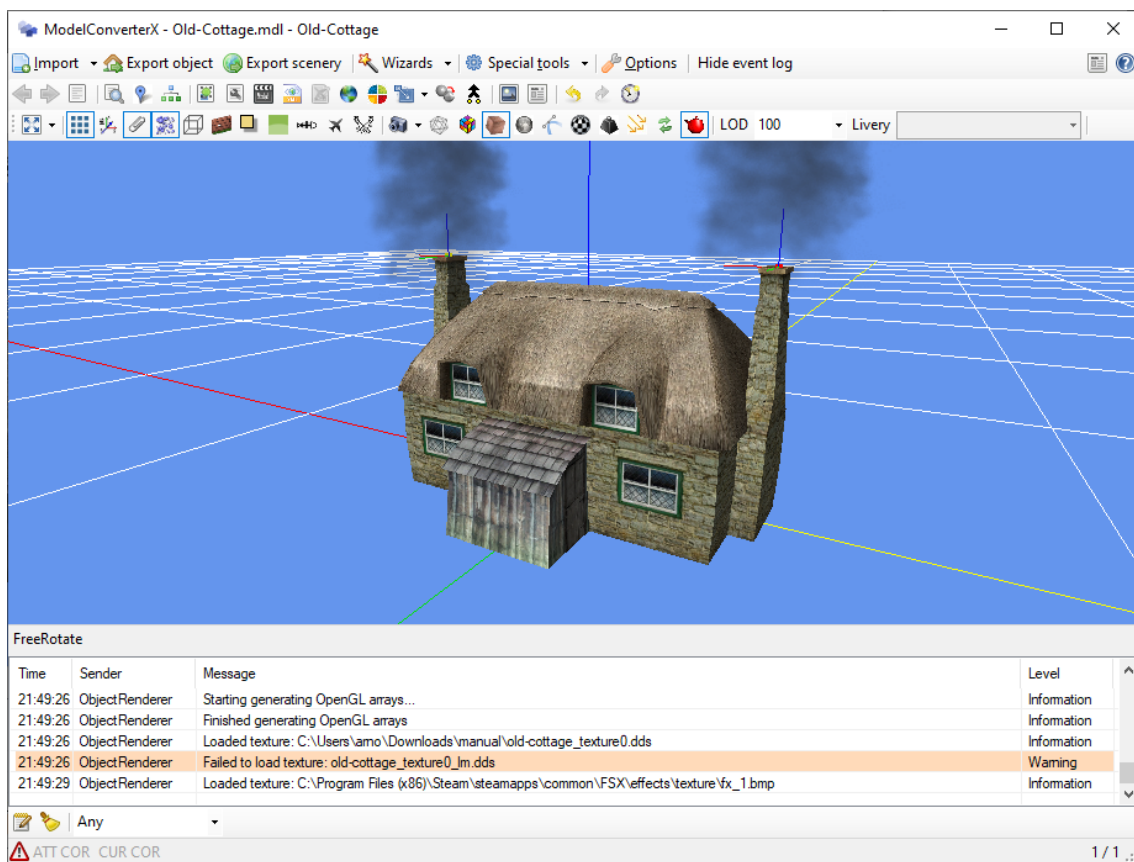


Figure 3.10: The object with the effects after selecting the display of particle effects

3.4 Add a PBR material to an object

This quick start shows you how you can update a model to a PBR material for Prepar3D v4.4. We will use the same cottage model as the previous sections. You need to take the following steps:

1. Import the object.
2. Open the **Material editor**. See Figure 3.11 for the standard properties view in **FSX** mode.
3. Select the **P3Dv44_PBR** mode to see the attributes that apply to PBR materials, see Figure 3.12. You will see that different texture types now so for the PBR material.
4. Make sure that you set the **Is PBR material** attribute to true, see Figure 3.13.
5. Add the smoothness/metallic texture and normal texture that you want to use for the PBR material see Figure 3.14.
6. To store the changes you made you need to export your model again to MDL file. Make sure to export it as a P3D v4.4 MDL. Use the **Export object** button to do so.

Now your model has a PBR material. You will have to create the actual texture files yourself in your paint program and put them into the texture folder of your scenery.

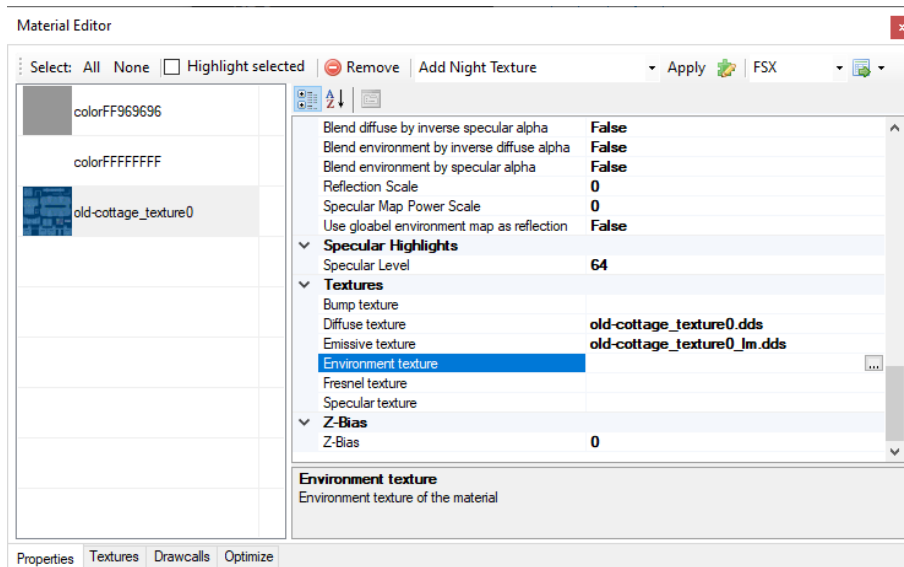


Figure 3.11: The material editor showing the FSX material attributes

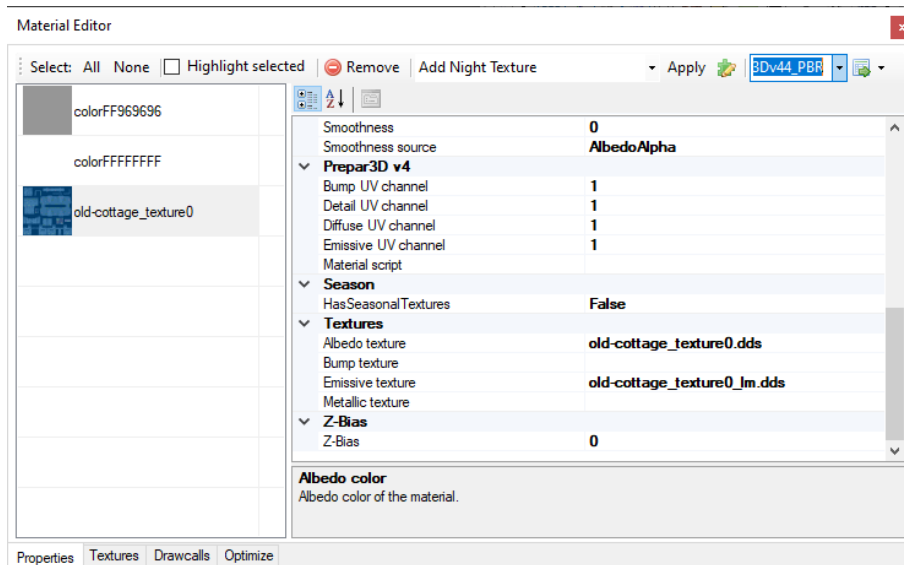


Figure 3.12: The material editor showing the P3D v4.4 PBR material attributes

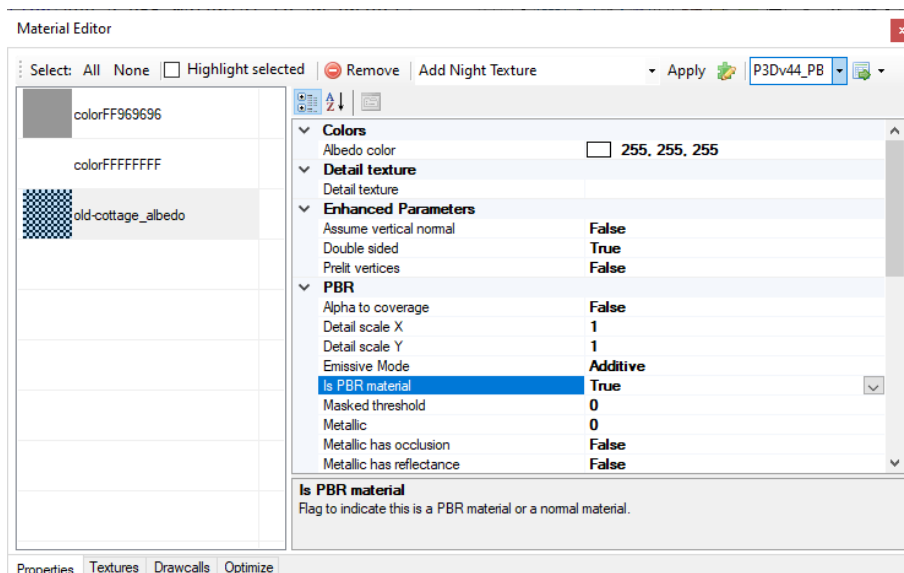


Figure 3.13: Enabling the PBR material

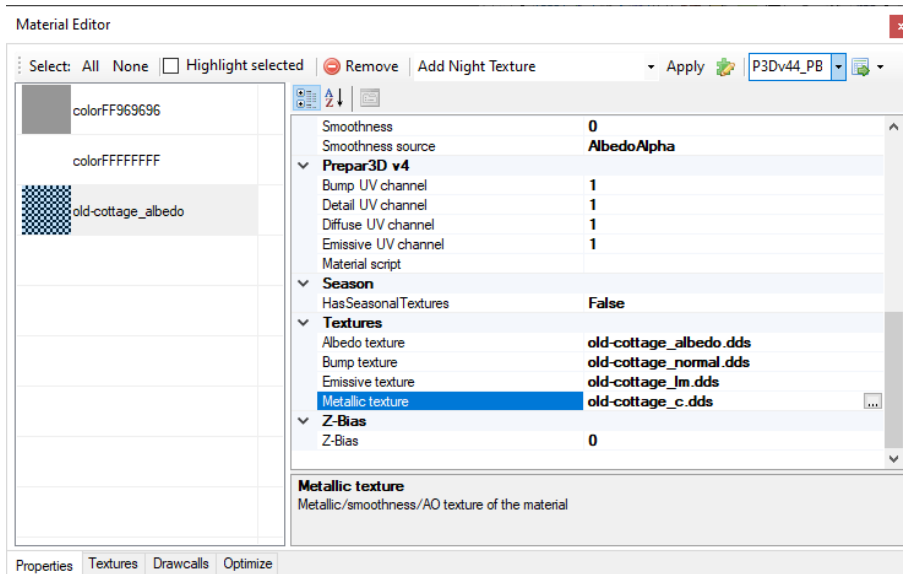


Figure 3.14: Adding the PBR textures

3.5 Add a landable platform to an object

This quick start shows you how you can add a landable platform to your object. You need to take the following steps:

1. Import the object. We will not use the cottage, but an object with 3 apartment buildings instead. See Figure 3.15.
2. Make sure that **Display attached objects** is enabled in the preview. See Figure 3.15.
3. Open the **Attached object editor**.
4. Now there are two approaches you can take, choose the one that best fits your model.
5. Manual platform
 - (a) Click on the **Add** button and select **Platform** from the dropdown menu.
 - (b) Change the position of the platform so that it is positioned on top and in the middle of the roof of your building, see Figure 3.16.
 - (c) Change the length and width attributes so that the size of the platform matches the size of your roof, see Figure 3.16.
 - (d) After some trial and error you will have your platform positioned correctly, see Figure 3.17.
6. Automatic platform
 - (a) Click on the **Auto platform** button.
 - (b) Select the texture that is used on the roof from the list, see Figure 3.18. If your model does not use a different texture for the roof you can skip this step and only filter the polygons of the platform based on their normal vector.
 - (c) If your roof is slightly tilted, adjust the normal value used as filter. In this object the roof is flat, so we can leave the value at 1.0.
 - (d) Press the **Run** button to calculate the platforms.
 - (e) You now have a platform on top of all 3 buildings that exactly match the polygons of the roof texture, see Figure 3.19.

7. To store the changes you made you need to export your model again to MDL file. Use the **Export object** button to do so.

Now your model has a landable platform on top and you can land your helicopter on it.

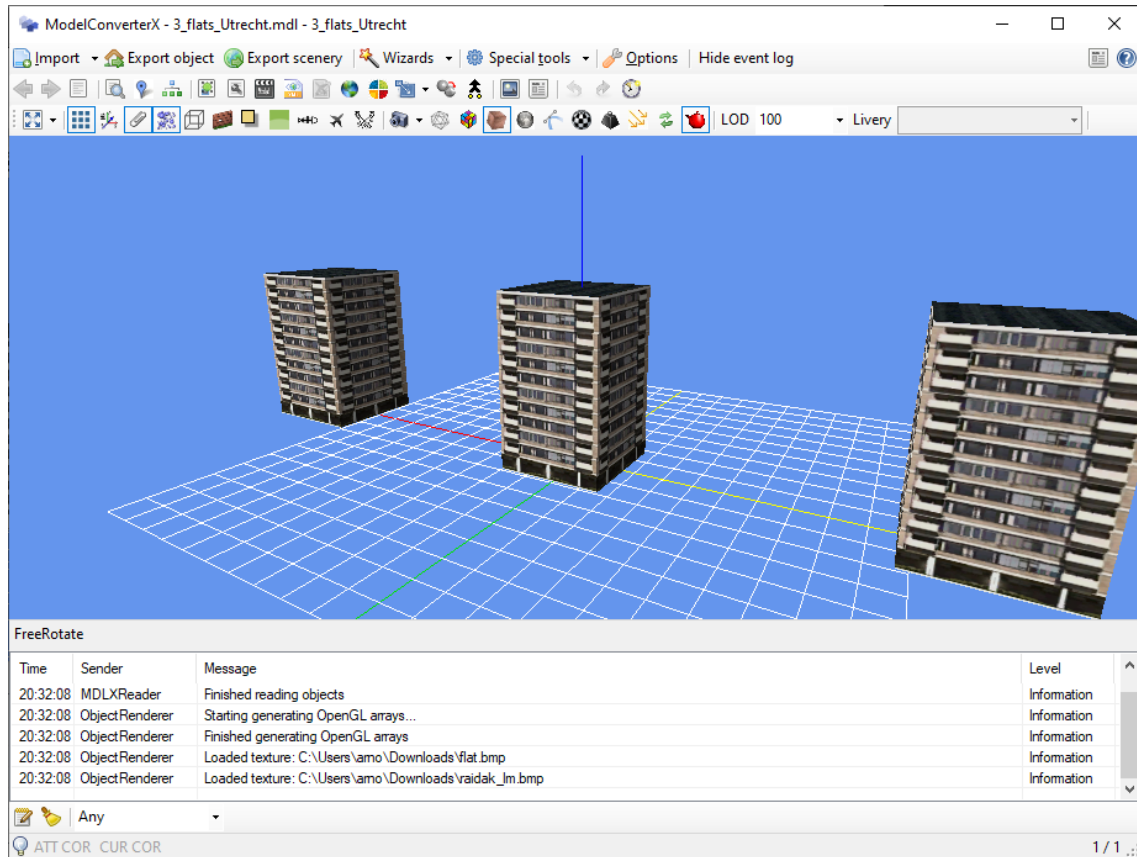


Figure 3.15: The object with 3 buildings

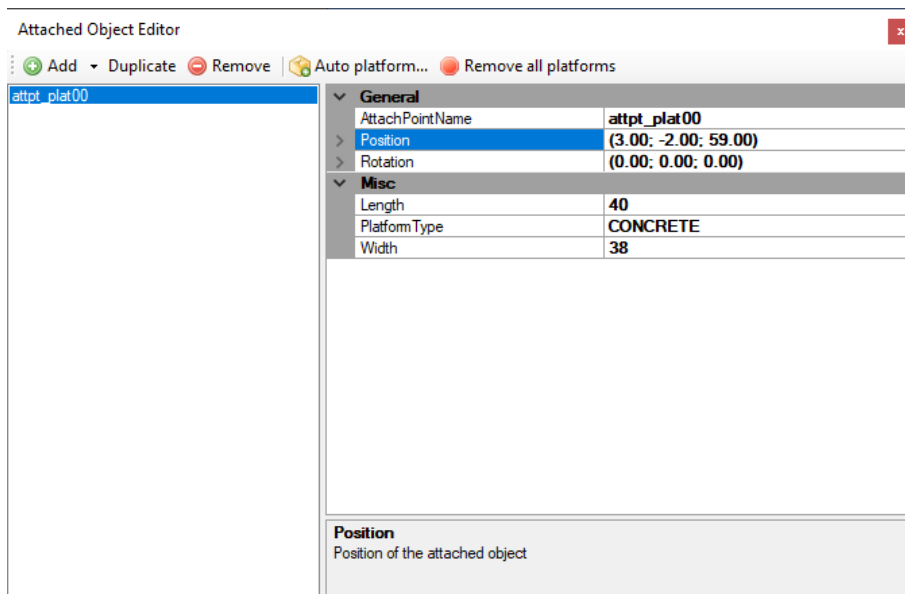


Figure 3.16: The attributes of a manual platform

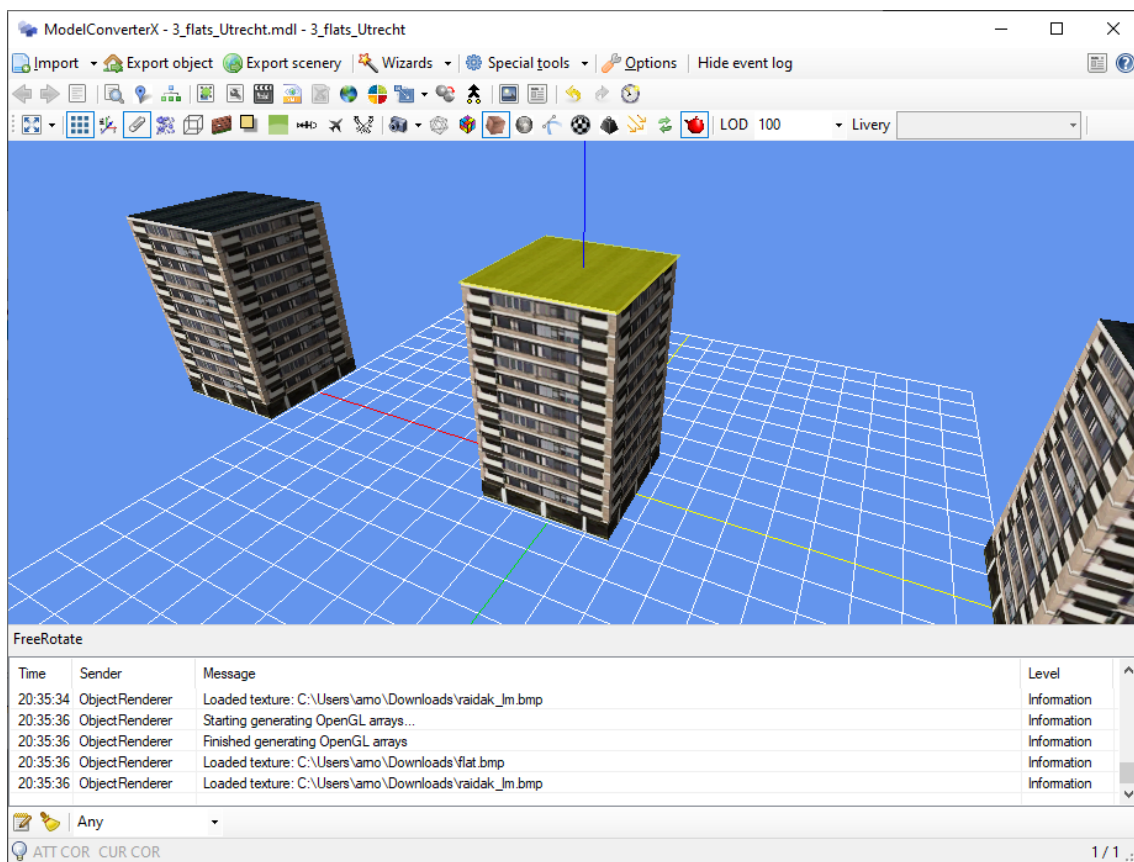


Figure 3.17: The platform on top of the middle building

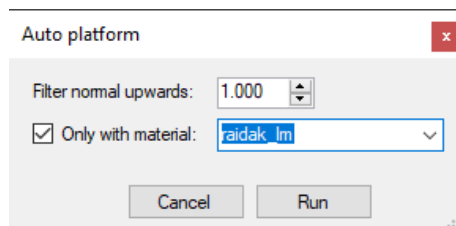


Figure 3.18: The attributes of the automatic platform

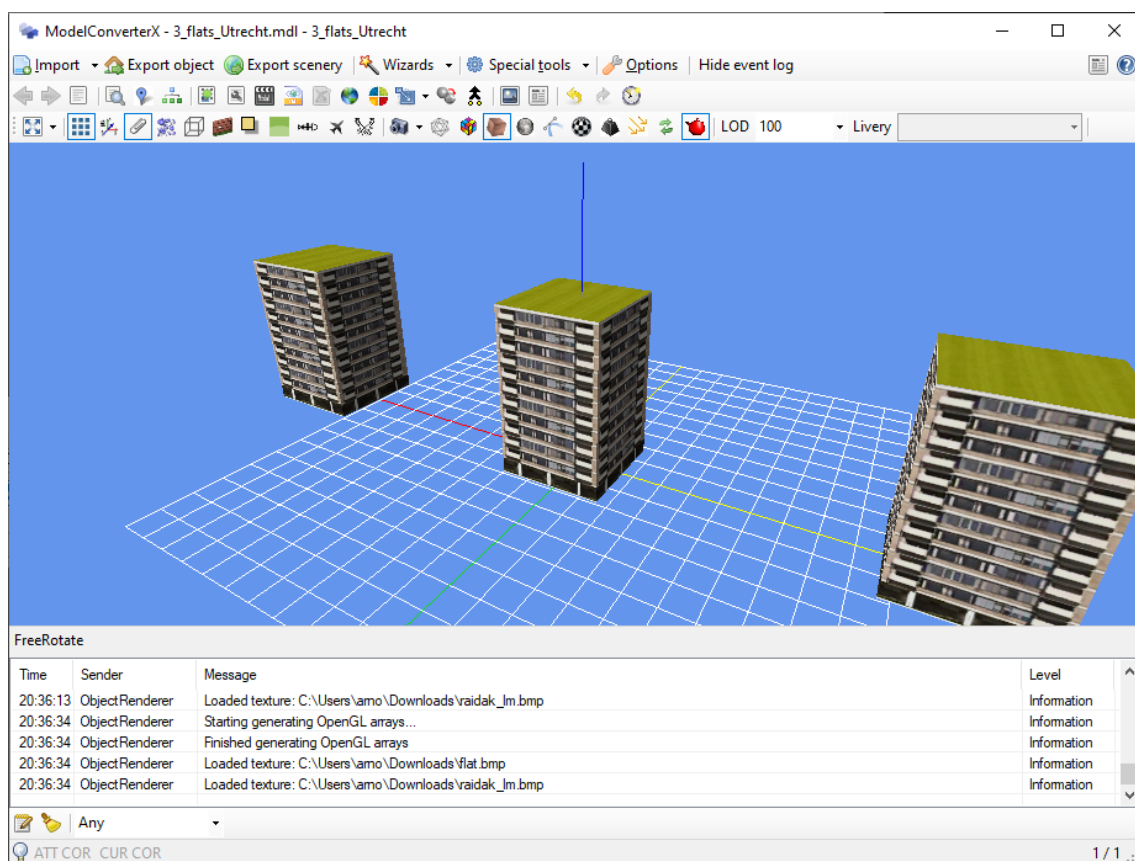


Figure 3.19: Three platforms on top of all buildings

Chapter 4

User interface

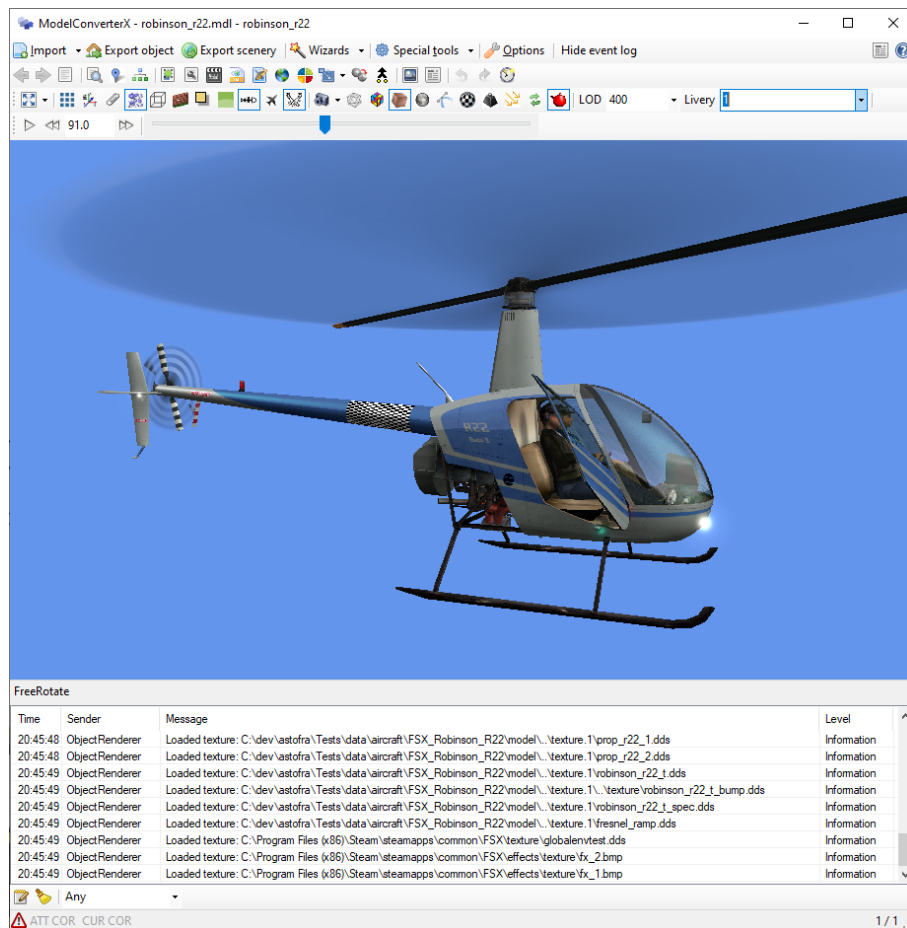


Figure 4.1: Main window of ModelConverterX

All your activities in ModelConverterX are performed from the main screen, see Figure 4.1. In this window you can identify the following elements:

- The 3D preview of the object in the center, see section 4.1 for more information about using the preview.
- The toolbar at the top from where you can perform actions and open editors. See section 4.2 for more information about the buttons on the toolbar.

- The event log with messages, warnings and errors about reading and writing objects at the bottom. See section 4.3 for more information about the event log.

4.1 Preview

The preview displays a three dimensional view of your object, see Figure 4.2. The preview in ModelConverterX tries to mimic how Flight Simulator will render you object as much as possible. Please note that PBR materials are not yet supported in the preview, so although you can set them in the material editor, the effects are not shown in the preview.

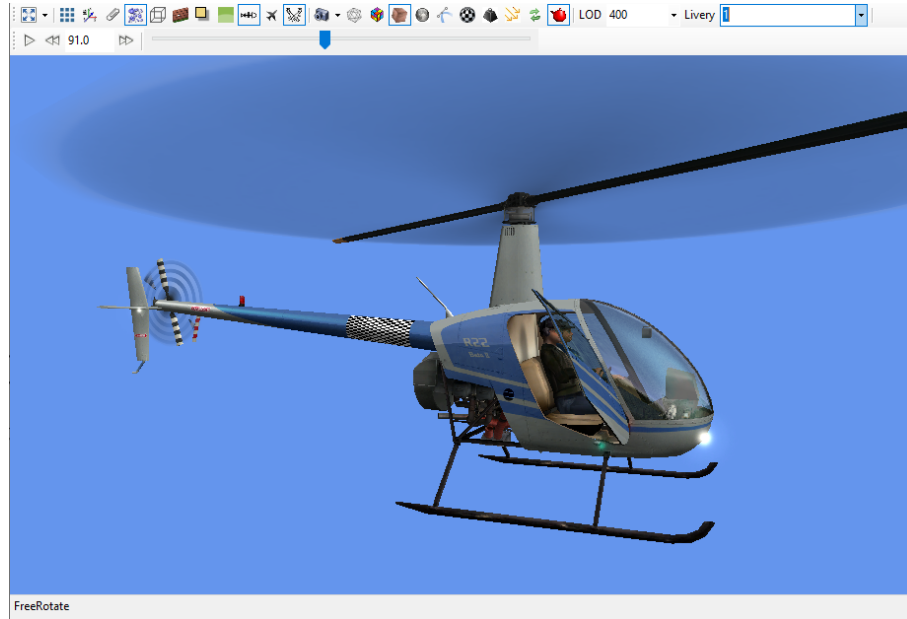


Figure 4.2: Object preview

If you drag the left mouse button you can rotate the preview around the center of the current view. If you drag the right mouse button you can pan the object, so that you can view it from a different position. With the mouse wheel or the + and - keys of the keyboard you can zoom in and out.



Figure 4.3: Preview toolbar

At the top of the preview is a toolbar, see Figure 4.3, where you can configure how the object is shown in the preview. The following buttons are available in this toolbar:

1. **Reset view** restores the preview to the initial position, this ensure that the entire object is within view. Using the small arrow next to the button you can also bring up a menu where you can select **Default view** as well, this can be used to set a default view position in case the object is too big and therefore zoomed out too much.
2. Toggles the display of the **Grid** in the preview.
3. Toggles the display of the **Normals** in the preview.
4. Toggles the display of **Attached objects** in the preview.
5. Toggles the display of **Particle effects** in the preview.
6. Toggles the display of **Bounding boxes** in the preview.

7. Toggles the display of **Crash boxes** in the preview.
8. Toggles the display of **Shadows** in the preview.
9. Toggles the display of the **Ground plane** in the preview.
10. Toggles the display of **Bones** in the preview.
11. Toggles the display of **Aircraft.cfg points** in the preview.
12. Toggles the display of **Spotlights** in the preview.
13. Sets the **Camera direction** of the preview. You can select free rotate mode or one of the 6 sides to see the object in an orthogonal view.
14. Sets the rendering mode of the preview to **Wireframe**.
15. Sets the rendering mode of the preview to **Coloured faces**.
16. Sets the rendering mode of the preview to **Textured faces**.
17. Sets the rendering mode of the preview to **Night textures**.
18. Sets the rendering mode of the preview to **Normals**. In this mode the faces are coloured based on their normals, , see Figure 4.6. This can help you to spot inconsistencies in the normals.
19. Sets the rendering mode of the preview to **Texture coordinates**. In this mode the faces are coloured based on their texture mapping, see Figure 4.7. This can help you to spot inconsistencies in the texture mapping.
20. Sets the rendering mode of the preview to **Bone weight**. In this mode the faces are coloured based on weights of the different bones, see Figure 4.8. This can help you to check if the bone weights are assigned in a balanced way.
21. Toggles the display of the **Light toolbar**, see Figure 4.4. In this toolbar you can specify the direction where the light comes from using an azimuth and elevation angle. This way you can vary the lighting direction on your object.
22. **Reload textures** will reload all textures used on the object from this. This can be useful if you changed the textures externally from ModelConverterX.
23. Toggles the use of the **Complex shader**. When ModelConverterX uses the complex shader it will use all textures in the preview (bump map, detail map, specular map, etc.). With the simple shader only the diffuse and emissive textures are used. The simple shader can give better performance and on some older graphics cards the complex shader might not work.
24. The **LOD** dropdown list allows you to select which level of detail you want to be displayed in the preview.
25. The **Livery** dropdown list allows you to select which livery should be displayed on the model. This function is mainly used for aircraft models.

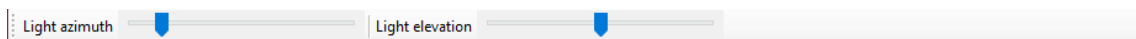


Figure 4.4: Preview light toolbar

When your object contains animations, the preview will also show an Animation toolbar, see Figure 4.5. Using this toolbar you can control the state of the animation. You can use the mouse to drag the slider to any frame desired. The following buttons are available:

1. **Play/Pause** starts the animation or pauses the animation. When the animation is playing the animation frame will automatically be increased by a timer. When you pause it the animation will stop at the current frame.
2. **Rewind** decreases the animation frame by one.

3. The **Animation frame** textbox shows the value of the current animation frame. You can also type in the number of the frame you want to see in this textbox.
4. **Forward** increases the animation frame by one.
5. With the **Frame slider** you can change the animation frame from the first to the last frame by dragging the pointer on the slides.

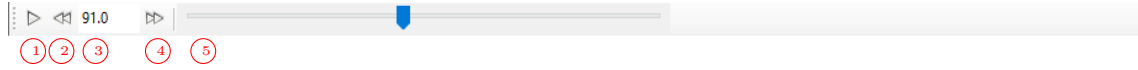


Figure 4.5: Preview animation toolbar

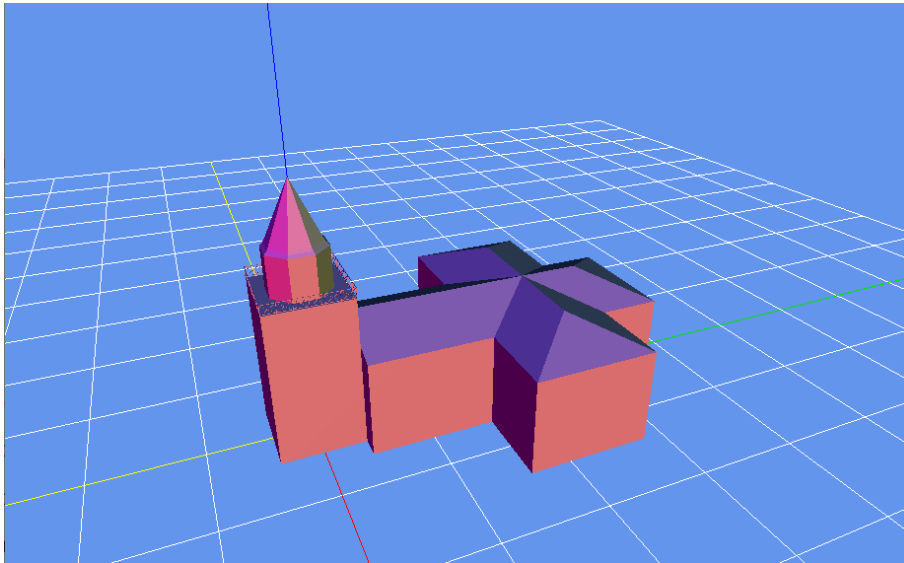


Figure 4.6: Normal rendering mode

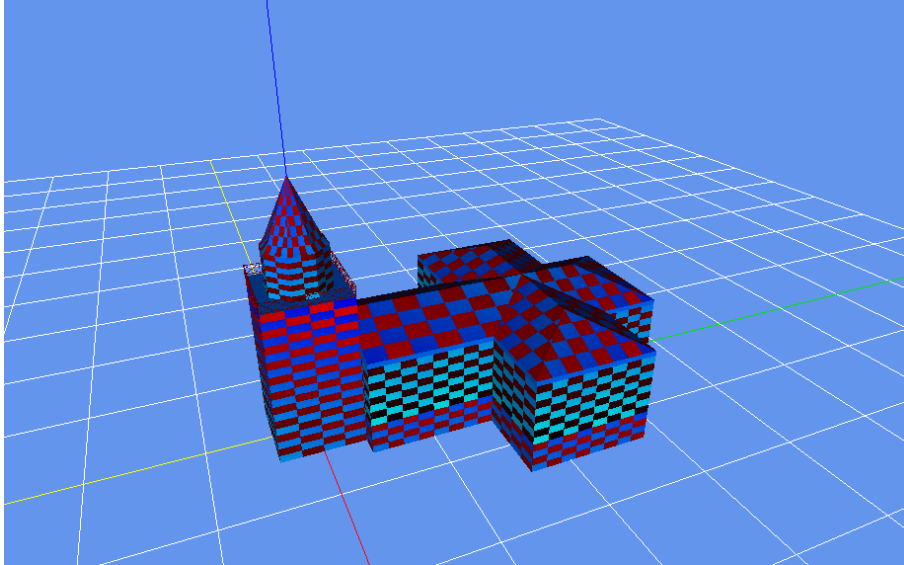


Figure 4.7: Texture coordinate rendering mode

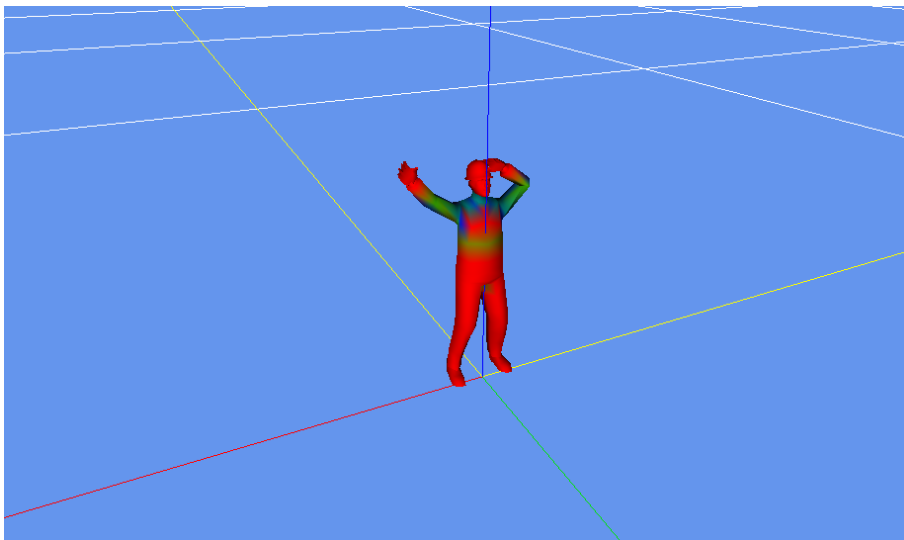


Figure 4.8: Bone weight rendering mode

4.2 Toolbar

The buttons on the toolbar, see Figure 4.9 are used to begin most actions in ModelConverterX. The toolbar consists of two rows. The first row contains buttons to import and export objects and to start wizards. The second row contains the buttons to start specific editors on the loaded object.

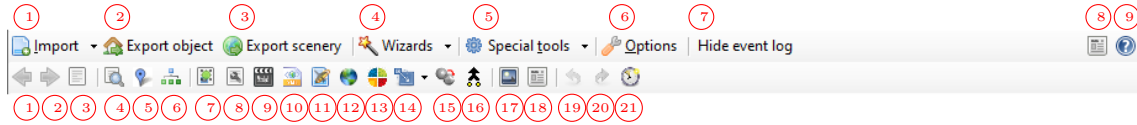


Figure 4.9: Toolbar

In the top row you find the following buttons, they are marked with the red number at the top in Figure 4.9:

1. The **Import** button allows you to select a file that you want to load into the tool. This can be a file that contains a single object, but also a file that contains a whole scenery. See section 8.1 for more information about the supported formats.
2. The **Export object** button allows you to export the currently selected object to various formats. See section 9.1 for more information about the supported formats.
3. The **Export scenery** button allows you to export an entire scenery, e.g. all objects and placement information, to various formats. See section 9.2 for more information about the supported formats.
4. The **Wizards** button opens a menu with the available wizards. The wizards in general provide an easy way to perform certain tasks. See chapter 6 for more information about the available wizards.
5. The **Special tools** button opens a menu where you can select various tools. See chapter 7 for more information about the available tools.
6. The **Options** button opens the options window, where you can set all the options for ModelConverterX. See chapter 10 for more details.
7. The **Hide event log** button hides the event log, so that more screen space is available for the preview.
8. The **Manual** button opens this PDF manual.
9. The **About** button opens the about window that shows information about the version of ModelConverterX that you are using.

In the bottom row you find the following buttons, they are marked with the red number at the bottom in Figure 4.9:

1. **Previous object**, activates the previous object in the scenery, when it contains multiple objects.
2. **Next object**, activates the next object in the scenery, when it contains multiple objects.
3. **Scenery object editor**, see section 5.1.
4. **Object information editor**, see section 5.2.
5. **Object placement editor**, see section 5.3.
6. **Hierarchy editor**, see section 5.4.
7. **Material editor**, see section 5.5.
8. **Attached object editor**, see section 5.6.

9. **Animation editor**, see section 5.7.
10. **ModelDef.xml editor**, see section 5.8.
11. **Aircraft.cfg editor**, see section 5.9.
12. **Earth curve correction editor**, see section 5.10.
13. **Season editor**, see section 5.11.
14. **Transform object editor**, see section 5.12.
15. **Level of detail creator**, see section 5.13.
16. **Merge object editor**, see section 5.14.
17. **Generate object image**, see section 5.15.
18. **Generate object report**, see section 5.16.
19. **Undo**, undos the last change made to the object.
20. **Redo**, redos the last undone change to the object.
21. **Change history**, see section 5.17.

4.3 Event log

In the event log, see Figure 4.10, you can see all the messages that the preview, object reader or object writer modules have generated. There are three types of messages in the event log:

- **Error** messages, which indicates that something really went wrong and ModelConverterX has stopped reading or writing your object. These kind of errors must be fixed before you can continue.
- **Warning** messages, which indicates that something went wrong during reading or writer your object, but that ModelConverterX tried to continue. It might be that the operation can still finish, but you should check if the warning is a problem for you.
- **Information** messages, that just inform you of something that happened. For example that a texture file has been loaded or that an export has started.



Time	Sender	Message	Level	
20:45:48	ObjectRenderer	Loaded texture: C:\dev\astofra\Tests\data\aircraft\FSX_Robinson_R22\model\...\texture.1\prop_r22_1.dds	Information	^
20:45:48	ObjectRenderer	Loaded texture: C:\dev\astofra\Tests\data\aircraft\FSX_Robinson_R22\model\...\texture.1\prop_r22_2.dds	Information	
20:45:49	ObjectRenderer	Loaded texture: C:\dev\astofra\Tests\data\aircraft\FSX_Robinson_R22\model\...\texture.1\robinson_r22_1.dds	Information	
20:45:49	ObjectRenderer	Loaded texture: C:\dev\astofra\Tests\data\aircraft\FSX_Robinson_R22\model\...\texture.1\...\texture\robinson_r22_t_bump.dds	Information	
20:45:49	ObjectRenderer	Loaded texture: C:\dev\astofra\Tests\data\aircraft\FSX_Robinson_R22\model\...\texture.1\robinson_r22_t_spec.dds	Information	
20:45:49	ObjectRenderer	Loaded texture: C:\dev\astofra\Tests\data\aircraft\FSX_Robinson_R22\model\...\texture.1\fresnel_ramp.dds	Information	
20:45:49	ObjectRenderer	Loaded texture: C:\Program Files (x86)\Steam\steamapps\common\FSX\texture\globalenvtest.dds	Information	
20:45:49	ObjectRenderer	Loaded texture: C:\Program Files (x86)\Steam\steamapps\common\FSX\effects\texture\fx_2.bmp	Information	
20:45:49	ObjectRenderer	Loaded texture: C:\Program Files (x86)\Steam\steamapps\common\FSX\effects\texture\fx_1.bmp	Information	▼
  Any ▼				

Figure 4.10: Event log

At the bottom of the event log you will find a toolbar with actions for the event log. With the **Save** button you can save the content of the event log to a TXT file. With the **Clear** button you can empty the event log. And using the **Filter** dropdown list you can select which type of messages you want to see. If you select **Any** all messages will show, if you select either **Information**, **Warning** or **Error** only messages with the appropriate event log level will be displayed.

4.4 Status bar

The status bar at the bottom of the ModelConverterX window gives you feedback about the the activities currently taking place, see Figure 4.11. During the import or export you will for example

see a progress bar to indicate how far that process is at the moment.

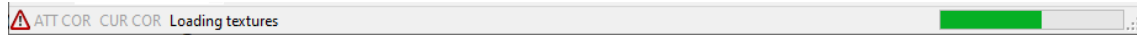





Figure 4.11: Status bar

In addition, in the left corner of the status bar an icon can be displayed to indicate the event log status. If there is no icon the event log is empty, but if there are entries in the log the following icons can be displayed:

-  Indicates that there is at least one information message in the event log.
-  Indicates that there is at least one warning message in the event log, there can also be information messages present.
-  Indicates that there is at least one error message in the event log, there can also be information or warning messages present.

4.5 Keyboard shortcuts

Most actions in ModelConverterX are performed with the mouse. But to make it easier to perform certain common actions the keyboard shortcuts as shown in Table 4.1 are also available.

Action	Shortcut
Next object	Ctrl-C
Open attached object editor	Ctrl-E
Open hierarchy editor	Ctrl-H
Open object information editor	Ctrl-I
Open scenery object editor	Ctrl-J
Open animation editor	Ctrl-K
Open level of detail creator	Ctrl-L
Open list of recently opened files	Ctrl-O
Open generate object report	Ctrl-S
Open material editor	Ctrl-T
Open generate object image	Ctrl-W
Previous object	Ctrl-X
Redo	Ctrl-Y
Undo	Ctrl-Z
Move object	Shift-M
Rotate object	Shift-R
Scale object	Shift-S

Table 4.1: Keyboard shortcuts

Chapter 5

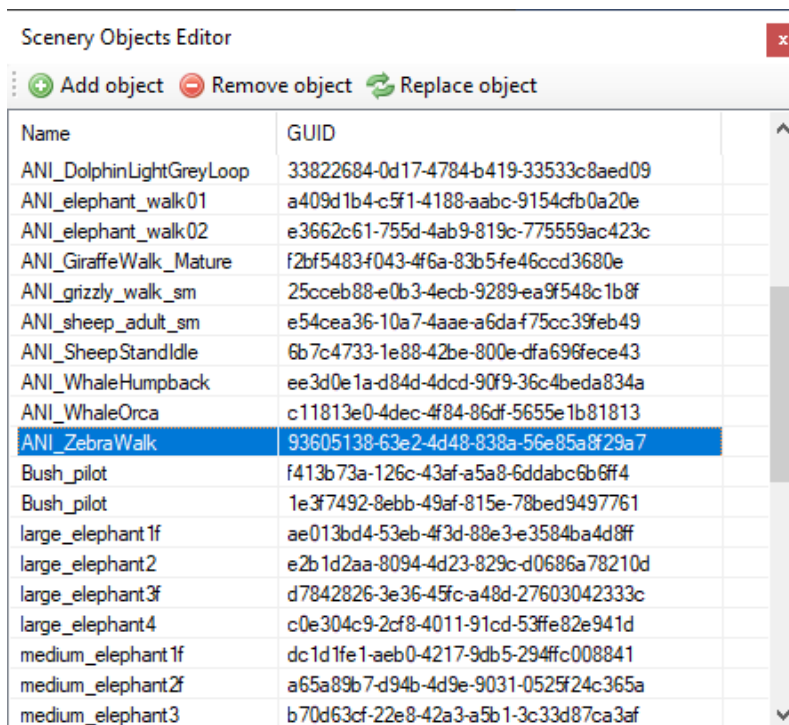
Editors

This chapter explains the different editors that are available in ModelConverterX. Their functions are described and how you can use them.

5.1 Scenery object editor

The scenery object editor gives an overview of all the objects in the current scenery, see Figure 5.1. They are shown in a list with their name and GUID. If you click on an object that object will be loaded in the preview window of ModelConverterX.

With the **Add object** button you can add an additional object to the scenery. You will be given a file selection dialogue to select the object you want to add to the scenery. With the **Remove object** button you can remove the currently selected object from the scenery. With the **(Replace Object)** button you can replace the selected object with an updated object. This retains the original GUID for that object.



Name	GUID
ANI_DolphinLightGreyLoop	33822684-0d17-4784-b419-33533c8aed09
ANI_elephant_walk01	a409d1b4-c5f1-4188-aabc-9154cfb0a20e
ANI_elephant_walk02	e3662c61-755d-4ab9-819c-775559ac423c
ANI_GiraffeWalk_Mature	f2bf5483-f043-4f6a-83b5-fe46ccd3680e
ANI_grizzly_walk_sm	25cceb88-e0b3-4ecb-9289-ea9f548c1b8f
ANI_sheep_adult_sm	e54cea36-10a7-4aae-a6da-f75cc39feb49
ANI_SheepStandIdle	6b7c4733-1e88-42be-800e-dfa696fece43
ANI_WhaleHumpback	ee3d0e1a-d84d-4dcd-90f9-36c4beda834a
ANI_WhaleOrca	c11813e0-4dec-4f84-86df-5655e1b81813
ANI_ZebraWalk	93605138-63e2-4d48-838a-56e85a8f29a7
Bush_pilot	f413b73a-126c-43af-a5a8-6ddabc6b6ff4
Bush_pilot	1e3f7492-8ebb-49af-815e-78bed9497761
large_elephant1f	ae013bd4-53eb-4f3d-88e3-e3584ba4d8ff
large_elephant2	e2b1d2aa-8094-4d23-829c-d0686a78210d
large_elephant3f	d7842826-3e36-45fc-a48d-27603042333c
large_elephant4	c0e304c9-2cf8-4011-91cd-53ffe82e941d
medium_elephant1f	dc1d1fe1-aeb0-4217-9db5-294ffc008841
medium_elephant2f	a65a89b7-d94b-4d9e-9031-0525f24c365a
medium_elephant3	b70d63cf-22e8-42a3-a5b1-3c33d87ca3af

Figure 5.1: Scenery object editor

5.2 Object information editor

The object information editor displays the basic information about the object and allows you to change part of this information, see 5.2. The list below shows which information is available, those marked with a * can also be edited after you press the **Edit** button:

- Name*
- GUID*
- Bounding box minimum and maximum values for each axis
- The number of animations, mouse rectangles and visibility conditions in the model
- Drawcall information, the number of drawcalls, triangles and texture vertices for each level of detail. If the **Show details** checkbox is checked one line of drawcall information will be shown for each material, instead of grouped per level of detail (see Figure 5.3)
- List of all textures in the model
- List of all attachpoints in the model

When you press the Edit GUID button, you can type or paste in a new GUID value. Then press the Edit button again to save it.

Object information

Name & GUID

museum

7a7b07ce-4496-47b9-9b96-81bb46571e22

Edit Set new GUID

Boundingbox

	X	Y	Z
min	-8.400	-12.600	0.000
max	16.000	11.200	6.000

Drawcall information

LOD	Drawcalls	Triangles	Texture vertices	Texture
100	4	44	92	

☐ Show details

Animations:
0

MouseRect:
0

VisCond:
0

Textures
amdak.bmp
ttext03.bmp
ttext06.bmp

Attachpoints

Close

Figure 5.2: Object information editor

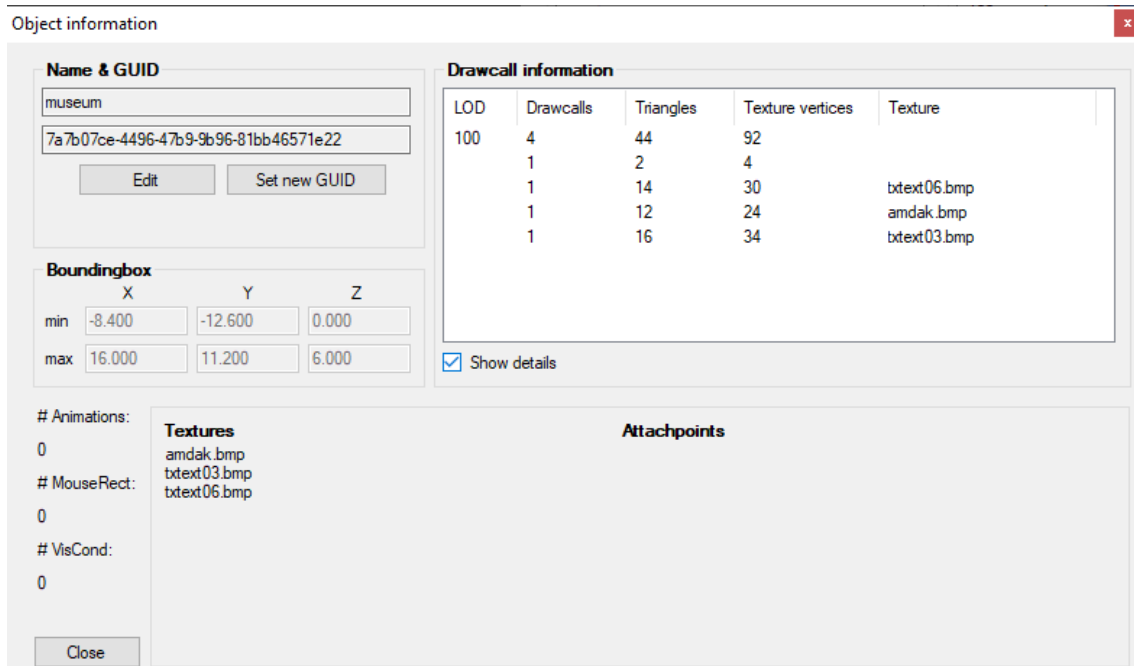


Figure 5.3: Object information editor details

5.3 Object placement editor

The object placement editor allows you to place the selected object at a specific location and also to view all locations that the object has already been placed at, see 5.4. It should be remembered that ModelConverterX is not a full functional object placement tool, this editor has been made for simple use cases where you want to quickly position the objects that are currently loaded in ModelConverterX. Therefore this means that you can only place objects in which the model is contained in the same scenery file.

On the left of the window you see a map with pins showing the locations where the object is placed. Different types of pins are used:

- A red crossmark is used to show the active object placement
- A red placemark is used to show other placements of the same object
- A green placemark is used to show the placement of other objects in the same scenery.

With the selection list at the top of the map, you can select different sources for the map. For example from OpenStreetMap, Google or Bing. You can also select if you want to see a map or imagery in the map view.

If you drag with the left mouse button you can update the location of the active object placement. If you drag with the right mouse button you can pan the map to a different location. With the mouse wheel you can zoom the map in and out.

On the right side of the editor you see a property list where you can edit the other properties of the object placement. This includes the heading, altitude, scenery complexity level and the various placement flags.

With the **Add** button you can add another object placement for the active object, while with the **Remove** button you can remove the currently selected object placement. If the active object has multiple placements, you can use the < and > buttons to cycle through them.

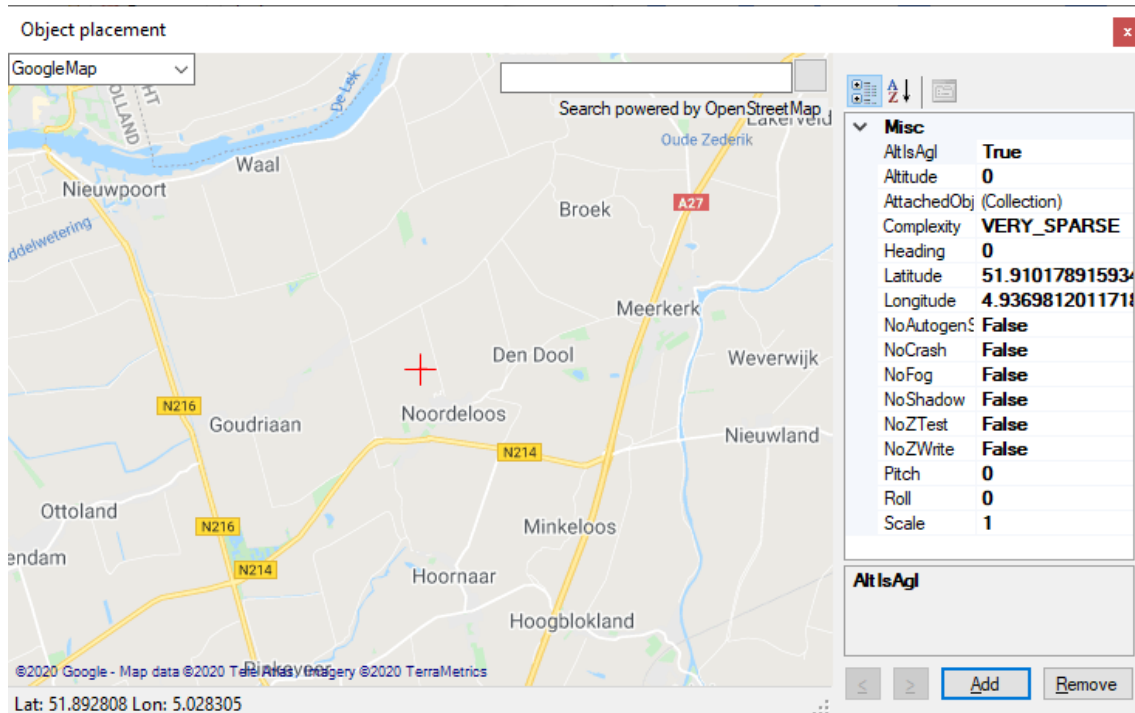


Figure 5.4: Object placement editor

5.4 Object hierarchy editor

The object hierarchy editor shows you the hierarchy of your object, see Figure 5.5. Each object is built up from various types of nodes. The following types are supported by ModelConverterX:

SceneGraphNode All node types are also a SceneGraphNode. A basic SceneGraphNode defines the level of detail, can have transformations and animations assigned and can have children nodes to define a hierarchy.

ModelPart This node defines the actual geometry of the object. It has a collection of triangles and uses a material.

AttachedEffect This node attaches a special effect to the object.

AttachedLight This node attaches a light to the object.

AttachedSpotLight This node attaches a spotlight to the object.

AttachedLibraryObject The node attaches a library object to the object.

AttachedPlatform The node attaches a hard platform to the object.

Bone This node defines a bone that can be used in a skin and bone animation.

CFGPoint This node defines a point as defined in the aircraft.cfg file.

On the left side of the hierarchy editor window you see a treeview of the node hierarchy, so you can see which children nodes a given node has. When you click on a node in the treeview, the panel on the right side will show all kind of details of the selected node. Depending on the node type the following information can be listed:

- Level of detail
- Transformations
- Animations

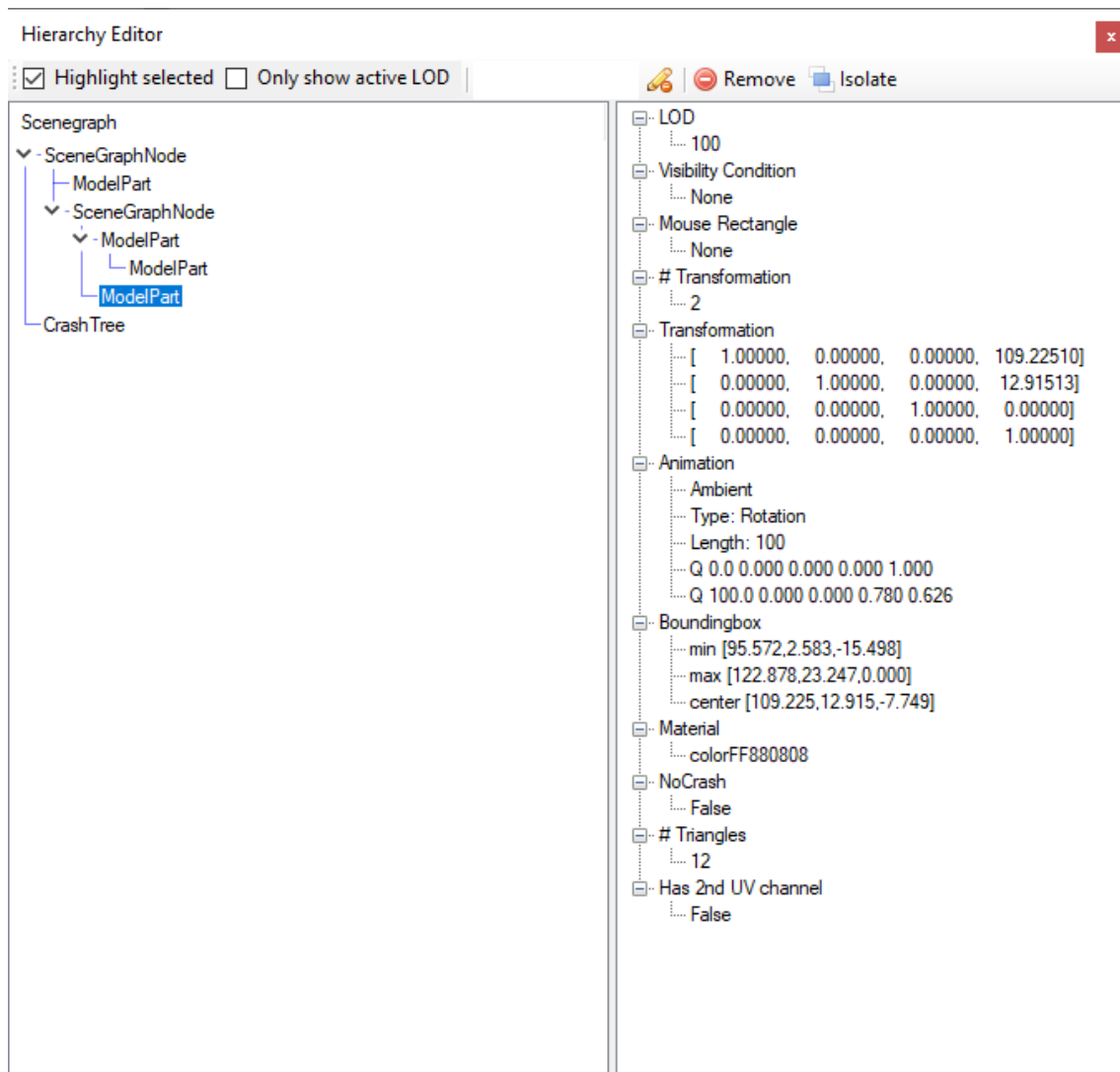


Figure 5.5: Hierarchy editor

- Visibility conditions
- Mouse rectangles
- Bounding box
- Material
- Triangle count

The **Highlight selected** checkbox in the toolbar determines if the node you select in the hierarchy editor is also highlighted in red in the object preview. When you check the **Only show active LOD** checkbox in the toolbar only the nodes of the currently active level of detail in the object preview will be shown in the hierarchy editor.

Using the search box in the toolbar you can search for a specific node. You can for example type part of a texture, attachpoint or visibility condition name and then only the nodes are shown in the treeview that contain this name. This can be useful to find a specific node quickly. If you enter a word like prop the editor will select only the parts tagged as propeller parts.

When the **Remove** button is pressed you can delete the currently selected node(s) from the object. When the **Isolate** button is pressed only the currently selected objects are retained and those will be used as the new object.

If you select a node in the treeview of the hierarchy editor you can also drag it onto another node. This will make the selected node (and all of its children nodes) a child of the node onto which you drop the node. This can be useful if you want to attach a special effect to an animated node of the object for example.

The following node attributes have a context menu to perform additional actions:

- Right clicking on the **# Transformation** label gives you the option to add a new transformation or animation to the selected node, see Figure 5.6. This option can be used to add a new animation to a static node for example. After clicking the desired menu option the new transformation or animation is directly shown in the list below.

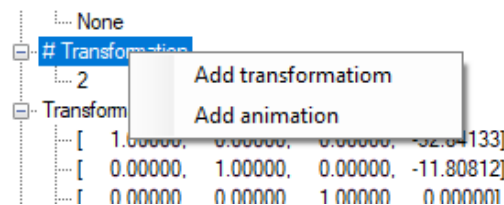


Figure 5.6: # Transformation context menu

- Right clicking on the **Transformation** label gives you the option to either edit or delete the selected transformation, see Figure 5.7. When you delete a transformation it is removed from the list directly. If you click the transformation editor window is opened where you can manipulate the transformation, see Figure 5.8. In the transformation editor you see the 4x4 transformation matrix at the top and you see a decomposition into translation, rotation and scaling at the bottom. You can edit either representation of the transformation. The dropdown list at the bottom also allows you to select the rotation order that is used when decomposing the rotation, see section 11.2 for more details. Once you click **OK** to close the transformation editor window, the transformation matrix in the hierarchy editor will be updated with your new values.
- Right clicking on the **Animation** label gives you the option to reverse, edit or delete the selected animation, see Figure 5.9. When you select reverse it reverses the order of the keyframes of the animations. When you select remove the animation is removed from the list. When you select edit the animation editor window is opened, where you can manipulate the animation, see Figure 5.10. In this editor you see all the animation keys of the animation. You can change the time, translation or rotation values of the keys. You can also add new

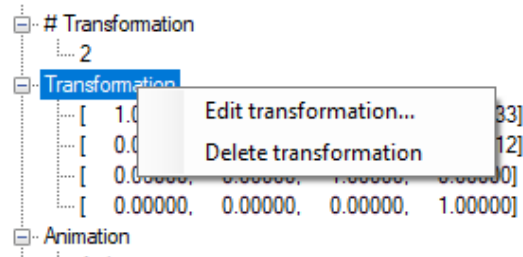


Figure 5.7: Transformation context menu

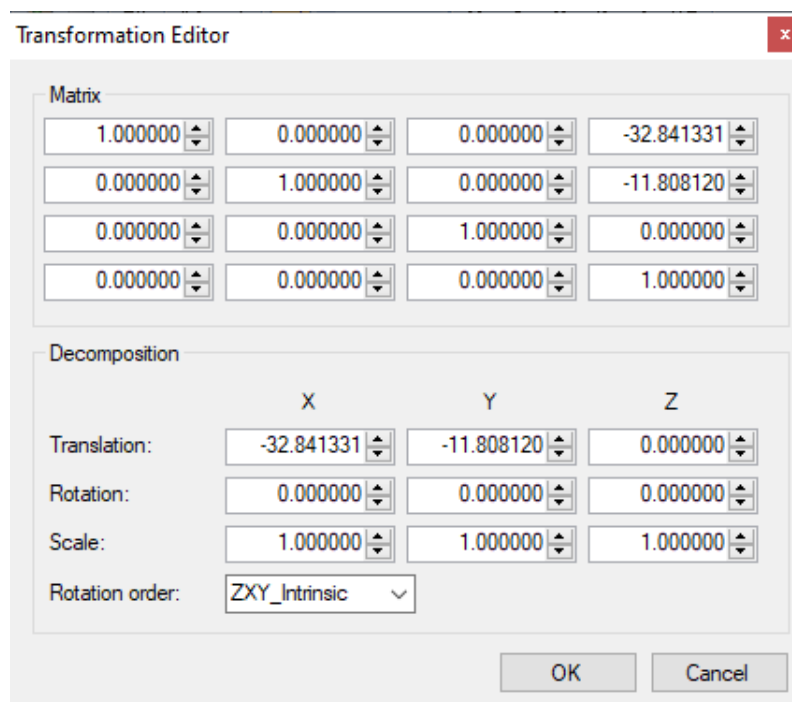


Figure 5.8: Transformation editor window

keys or remove existing keys. To help you modify the rotation quaternion keys, these are decomposed into rotations along the axes. With the dropdown list you can select the rotation order used for the decomposition, see section 11.2 for more details. Once you click **OK** to close the animation editor window, the animation in the hierarchy editor will be updated with your changes.

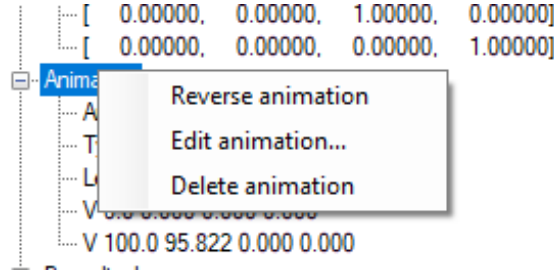


Figure 5.9: Animation context menu

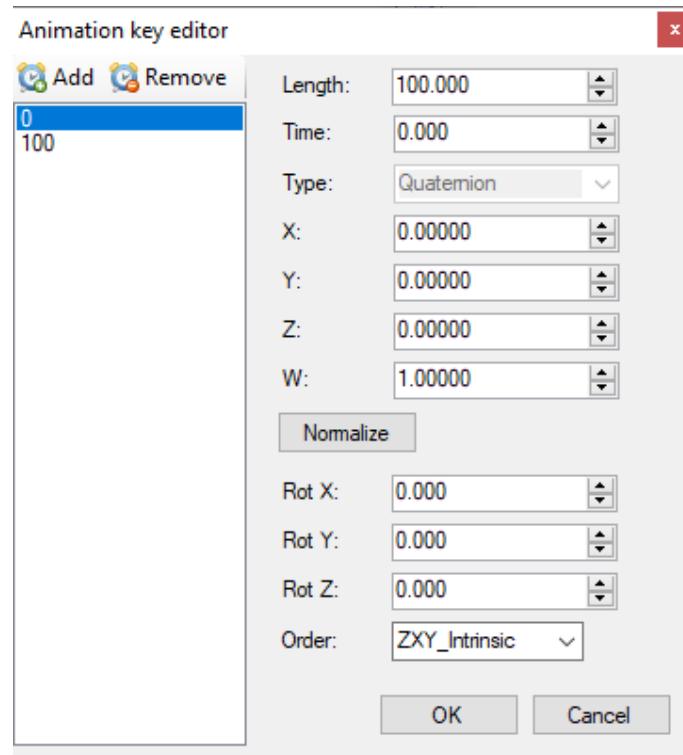


Figure 5.10: Animation editor window

5.5 Material editor

The material editor is the place to look for information and to modify the materials and textures used by the object. This editor has four tabs that allow you to edit different aspects of the material. Each of these tabs is discussed in the sections below.

5.5.1 Properties tab

The properties tab, see Figure 5.11 gives you a list of all materials in the object and allows you to modify the properties of each of them. On the left side of the tab you see the list of materials, while on the right side you see the properties of the selected material(s).

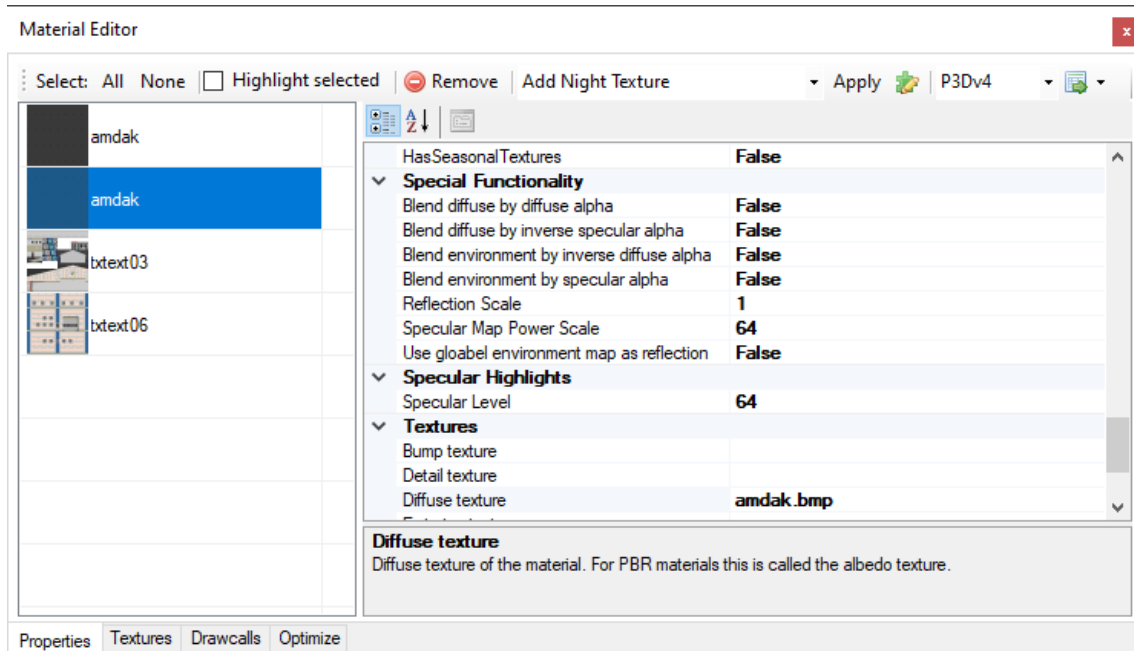


Figure 5.11: Material editor properties tab

If you have the **Highlight selected** checkbox checked the material that you have currently selected in the material editor will be highlighted in red in the preview of the object.

You can select multiple materials at once using the Control key, so that you can give a property the same value quickly. With the **Select All** and **Select None** buttons in the toolbar you can quickly select all materials or none.

With the **Remove** button you can remove the selected materials from the object. Removing the material will also remove the geometry that uses this material from the object.

There are many properties that can be edited for a material, but not all of these properties are applicable to each Flight Simulator version. Therefore there is a filter dropdown list at the right side of the toolbar. If you select a specific filter here, only the material properties that are applicable for that filter are shown. The available filters are:

- **All** shows all material properties.
- **Generic** shows only the basic material properties that are supported by almost any format on export. This includes the standard colours and textures for example.
- **FS2004** shows all properties supported by FS2004 models.
- **FSX** shows all properties supported by FSX models.
- **P3Dv4** shows all properties supported by P3D v4 models.
- **P3Dv44_PBR** shows all properties supported by P3D v4.4 models that use PBR materials.
- **X-Plane** shows all properties supported by X-Plane models.
- **AeroFly** shows all properties supported by AeroFly FS2 models.

There are common actions that you want to perform on your materials, for example to add an emissive texture to your material. To make such tasks easier the material editor has templates. In the template dropdown list you can select the template you want to apply, see Figure 5.12 and with the **Apply** button you can then apply it to the selected material(s). The following templates are available:

- Add night texture will add an emissive texture to your material, using the diffuse texture name and a suffix. The default suffix is LM, but this can be configured in the options.
- Add specular texture will add a specular texture to your material, using the diffuse texture name and a suffix. The default suffix is S, but this can be configured in the options.
- Add bump texture will add a bump texture to your material, using the diffuse texture name and a suffix. The default suffix is bump, but this can be configured in the options.
- Add detail texture will add a detail texture to your material, using the diffuse texture name and a suffix. The default suffix is detail, but this can be configured in the options.
- Add fresnel texture will add a fresnel texture to your material, using the diffuse texture name and a suffix. The default suffix is fresnel, but this can be configured in the options.
- Add metallic texture will add a metallic texture to your material, using the diffuse texture name and a suffix. The default suffix is C, but this can be configured in the options.
- Set default transparent sets all material properties so that an alpha channel determines the level of transparency. This mimics the set default transparent button in the GMax/3DS Max material editor.
- Set default opaque sets all material properties so that a material is shown opaque. This mimics the set default opaque button in the GMax/3DS Max material editor.

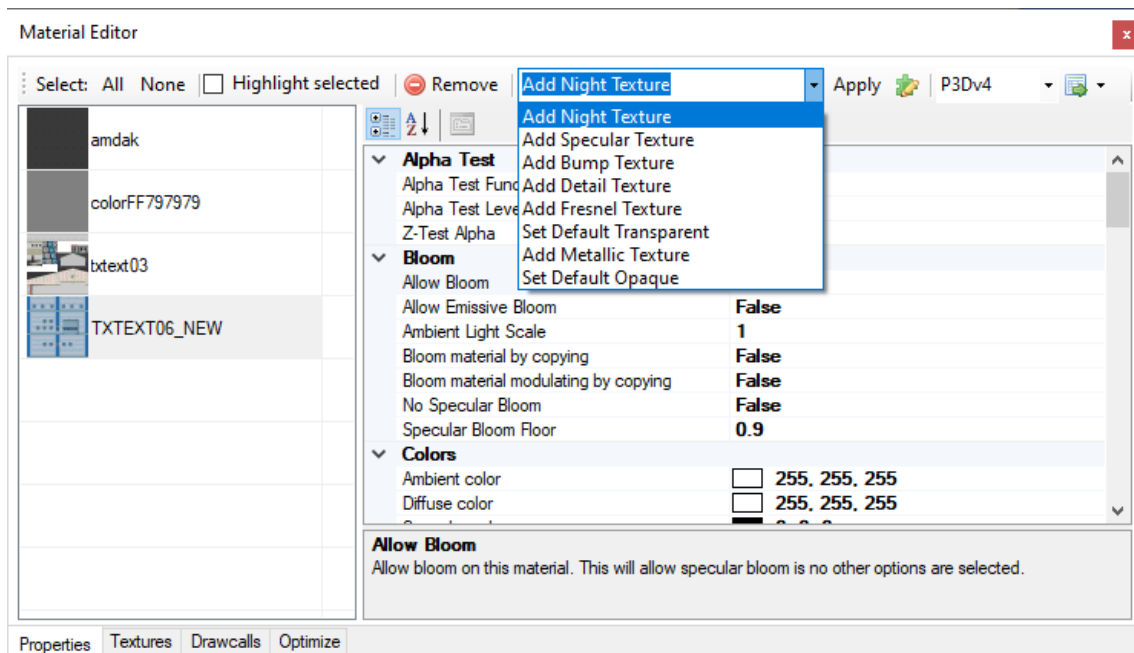


Figure 5.12: Material property templates

Besides these material templates that are available by default, you can also create your own templates. This is done in the material template editor, see Figure 5.13. This template editor has three areas you can work in:

- The panel on the left shows you all templates that exist. Using the **New** button you can add a new template, with the **Remove** button you can remove the selected template, and with the **Copy** button you can make a copy of an existing template. If you click on the small arrow next to the new button you will see a list of all materials in your object and you can make a new template that uses the values of the selected material.
- The panel in the middle shows the selected template. At the top you can edit the name of the template and below is shown a list of the attributes and values that are in the template.

With the **Remove property** button you can remove a property from the template.

- The panel on the right shows all material properties that are available for use in the template. You can select a property here and also assign it the value that should be used in the template. Once you press the **Add property** button it is added to your template.

Once you have made your own template, it will be available in the dropdown list of templates and you can use it like any of the default templates are used.

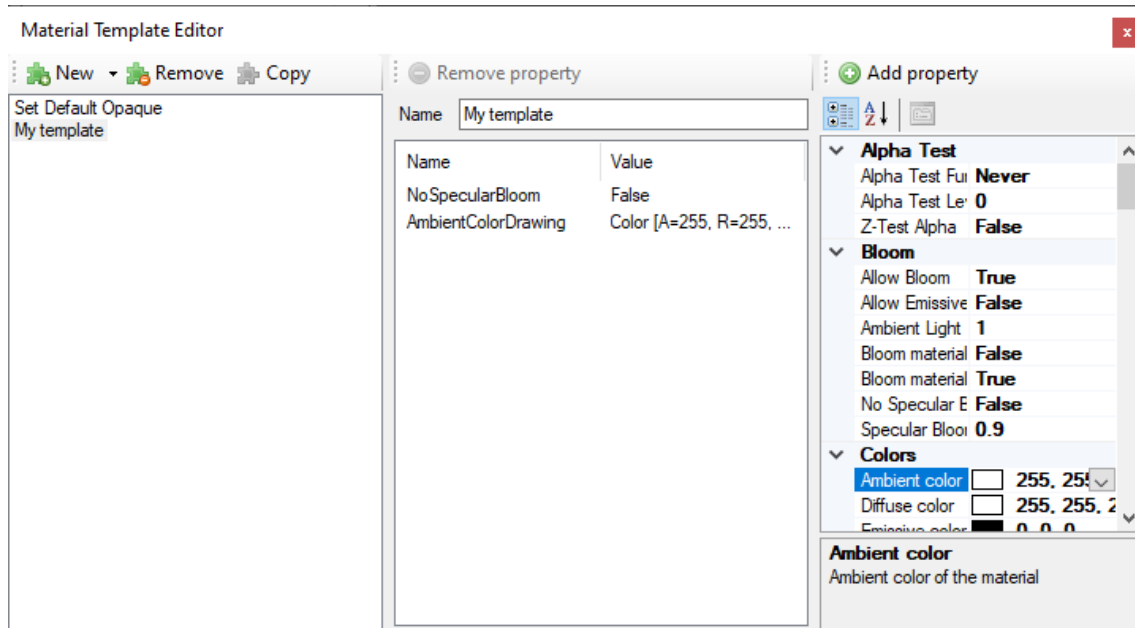


Figure 5.13: Material template editor

The button on the right of the material editor toolbar allows you to convert materials between different flight simulators, see Figure 5.14. This can be useful if you are converting models between different simulators. Table 5.1 shows the different conversions that are done.

Conversion	FSX to X-Plane	FSX to AeroFly	X-Plane to FS	AeroFly to FS
Remove diffuse texture alpha when used for reflection	✓	✓		
Convert bump map to standard format	✓	✓		
Combine specular map into bump map	✓			
Remove specular texture	✓			
Remove fresnel texture		✓		
Remove detail texture		✓		
Remove environment texture		✓		
Convert bump map to FS format			✓	✓
Split specular map from bump map			✓	

Table 5.1: Material conversions

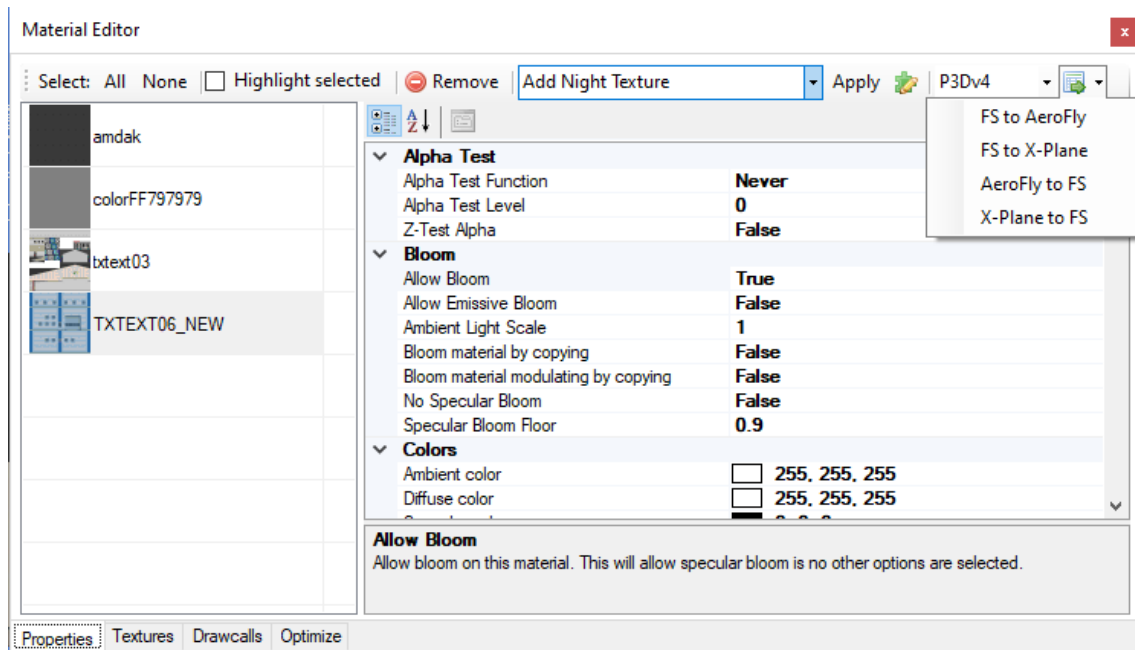


Figure 5.14: Convert materials

5.5.2 Textures tab

The textures tab, see Figure 5.15 allows you to perform various actions on the textures that are used on your object. The list contains all texture types that are used, so not only the diffuse texture, but also the other types like bump textures or emissive textures.

With the toolbar at the top you can perform the following actions on all textures that are used on the object:

- The **Match textures** function searches in the texture folder that is specified in the text box below the toolbar and when a texture is found that is the same as the one used on your model it will be replaced by the texture from the texture folder. This feature can be useful for example if you have converted your textures from JPG to DDS previously and you want to use the matching DDS textures on your model again. Matching the textures is done by checking if the pixels in the two texture images are similar enough to each other.
- The **Resize all to power of 2** function makes sure all your textures have a size that is a power of two. Flight Simulator only supports textures whose size is a power of two, so this function ensures that your textures meet this rule. Examples of texture sizes that are a power of two are: 256x256 pixels, 1024x1024 pixels or 512x1024 pixels. Models made with SketchUp often don't use textures that have this size. After you have resized all your textures to a power of two, you need to make sure that you save them to your texture folder again.
- The **Prefix all with model name** function will add the name of your model as prefix to all textures. This can be useful if the texture names used by the modelling tool are not unique. For example SketchUp often uses textures that are named texture0.jpg, texture1.jpg, etc. This gives conflicting names if you have multiple models with such names in your scenery. Let's assume your model is called **house**, then this function will name your textures houses_texture0.jpg, house_texture1.jpg, etc. After adding the texture name prefix you need to make sure that you save the textures to the texture folder again.
- The **Save textures** function will save all textures to the texture folder specified in the text box, using the format that has been selected in the format dropdown list. See section 9.3 for more information about the supported texture formats. If you click on the small arrow next to the save button you get a menu where you can select settings used while saving the

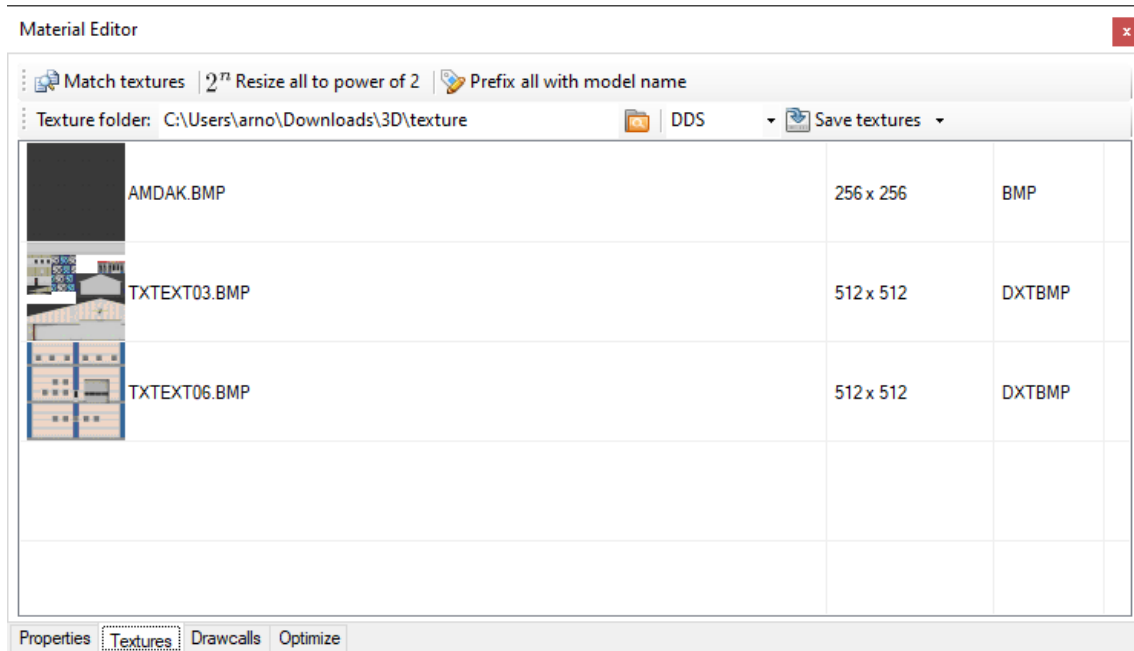


Figure 5.15: Material editor textures tab

textures, see Figure 5.16. The possible settings are:

- **Ensure size power of two** will make sure all textures have a size that is a power of two before saving them.
- **Overwrite existing textures** allows textures that already exist in the texture folder to be overwritten.

Besides the actions described above that apply to all textures at once, there are also a number of actions you can perform on individual textures. Most of these are accessible from the context menu that is shown when you right click on the row in the list of textures, see Figure 5.17. The following actions can be performed:

- When you double click on a texture in the texture list, the texture is opened in the texture converter window, see Figure 7.3. For more details on the texture converter see section 7.3.
- When you click on the name of the texture in the list, you will be able to change the name by typing in a new name. You need to save your texture to the texture folder again to make sure the texture with the new name also exists.
- The **Resize** context menu option allows you to resize the texture, the sub menu will show a number of power of two textures sizes that are near the current texture size.
- The **Format convert** context menu options allows you to convert this specific texture to another format, you can select the format to use in the sub menu. See section 9.3 for more information about the available formats.
- The **Flip vertical** context menu option flips the selected texture vertically. This is sometimes needed because not all modeling tools use the same origin for DDS textures.
- The **Remove alpha** context menu option removes the alpha channel from the selected texture.
- The **Normal map** context menu option allows you to convert a texture between the normal map structure that is used by tools like Photoshop and the normal map structure has used by Flight Simulator. The difference between those two representations are that some channels are shifted. You can convert a normal map in both directions using the sub menu options.

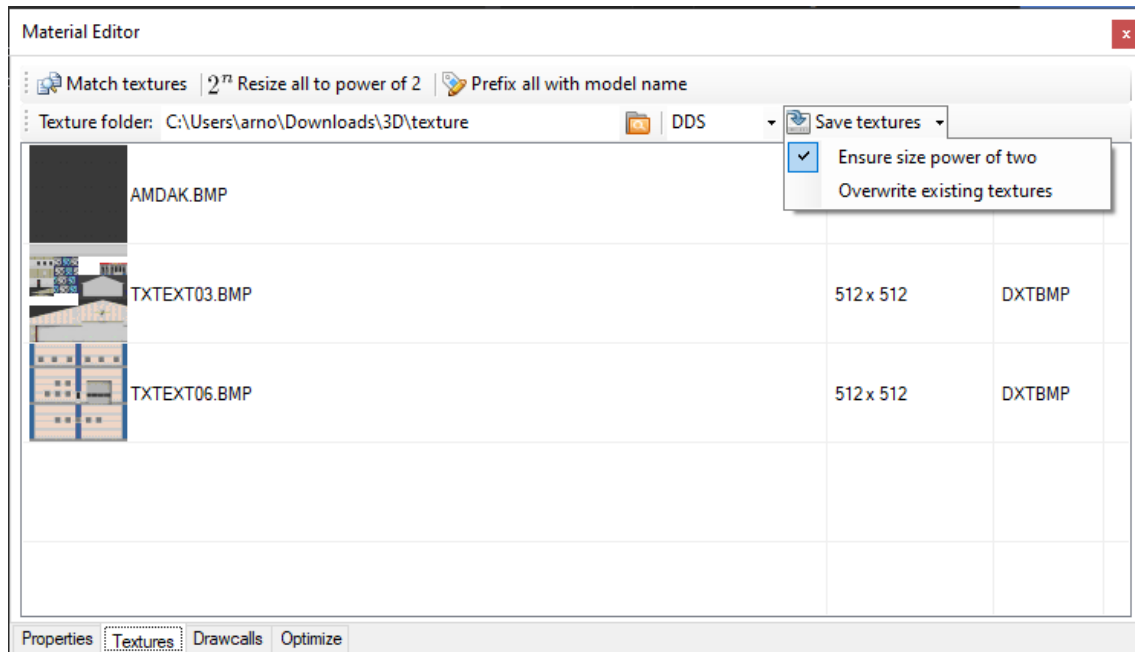


Figure 5.16: Texture save settings

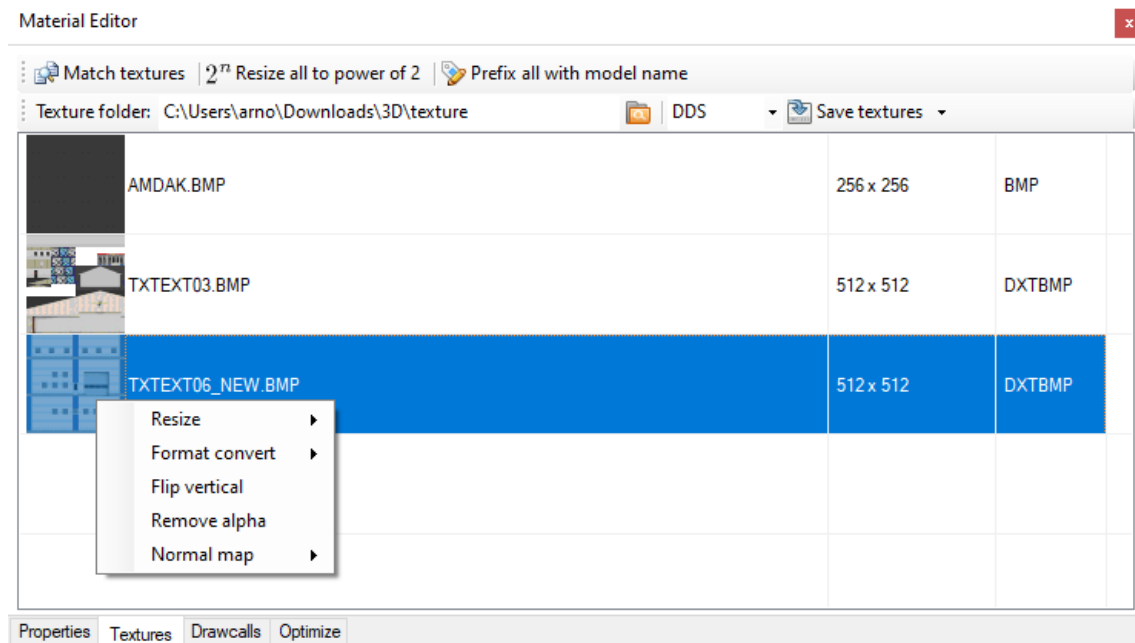


Figure 5.17: Texture context menu

5.5.3 Drawcalls tab

The drawcalls tab, see Figure 5.18 gives you the drawcall minimizer functionality. See section 11.3 for more background information on drawcalls. What the drawcall minimizer does is reduce the number of drawcalls in your object and thereby improves the performance.

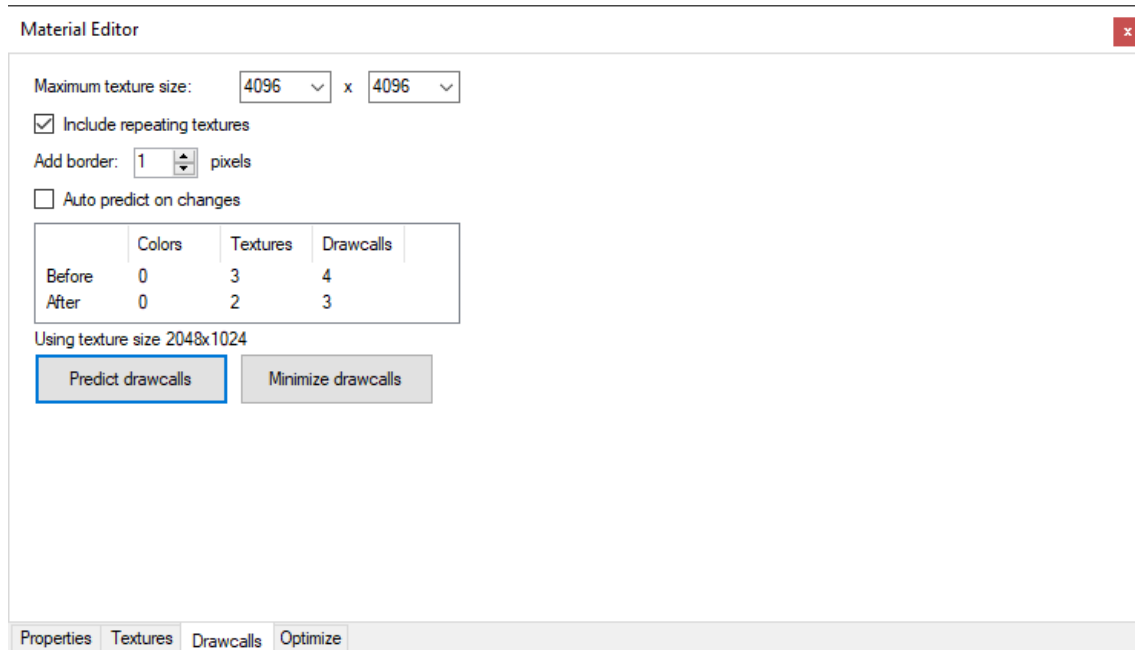


Figure 5.18: Material editor drawcalls tab

The following settings for the drawcall minimizer are available:

- The maximum **texture size** of the new texture that is generated. ModelConverterX will use the smallest texture sheet that can contain all your textures, but this setting defines the maximum size that can never be exceeded.
- With the **Include repeating textures** checkbox you can determine if textures that are tiled on your object should be included in the new texture sheet as well. If enabled the drawcall minimizer will repeat the texture as many times as needed in the new texture sheet.
- With the **Add border** checkbox you can determine if the drawcall minimizer should add a border around the texture before adding it to the new texture sheet. Sometimes adding a border can result in a better visual quality, but given that it alters the size of the textures it might also make it harder to fit them nicely on a new texture sheet. You can select the size of the border that is added as well.

When you have the **Auto predict on changes** checkbox selected, the number of drawcalls will be automatically predicted once you change a setting. But for complex objects it is better to keep this unchecked and manually start the prediction once you are happy with all objects, as the prediction can take some time.

With the **Predict drawcalls** button you can start a calculation of how much reduction the current settings will give you. The results will be shown in the box in the middle once the calculation is done. When you press the **Minimize drawcalls** button the reduction of drawcalls is actually applied to your object. Don't forget to save your textures after minimizing the drawcalls, the drawcall minimizer only updates the textures in memory, but does not save them to disk. You can do this from the textures tab.

And now that I have explained how you can use the drawcall minimizer, let's also give some background information about what this feature actually does. The first step of the drawcall minimizer

is to replace all colours in your object with a small texture of the same color. Afterwards the drawcall minimizer will try to combine all the different textures used in the object on a new texture sheet. This is like trying to make a collage of your photos on a page, where the drawcall minimizer tries to organize them as tightly packed as possible to use as few texture sheets as possible. Figure 5.19 shows an example of a combined texture sheet made by the drawcall minimizer.



Figure 5.19: Example texture sheet of drawcall minimizer

5.5.4 Optimize tab

The optimize tab, see Figure 5.20 shows you a list of materials that are very similar to each other, but have a few attributes that differ. Sometimes these differences are not intentional and by making sure all attributes are the same you can reduce the amount of drawcalls (see section 11.3 for more information on drawcalls).

If you right click on a material attribute in the optimize tab you get a context menu where you can select if the left or the right value should be used in both materials, see Figure 5.21.

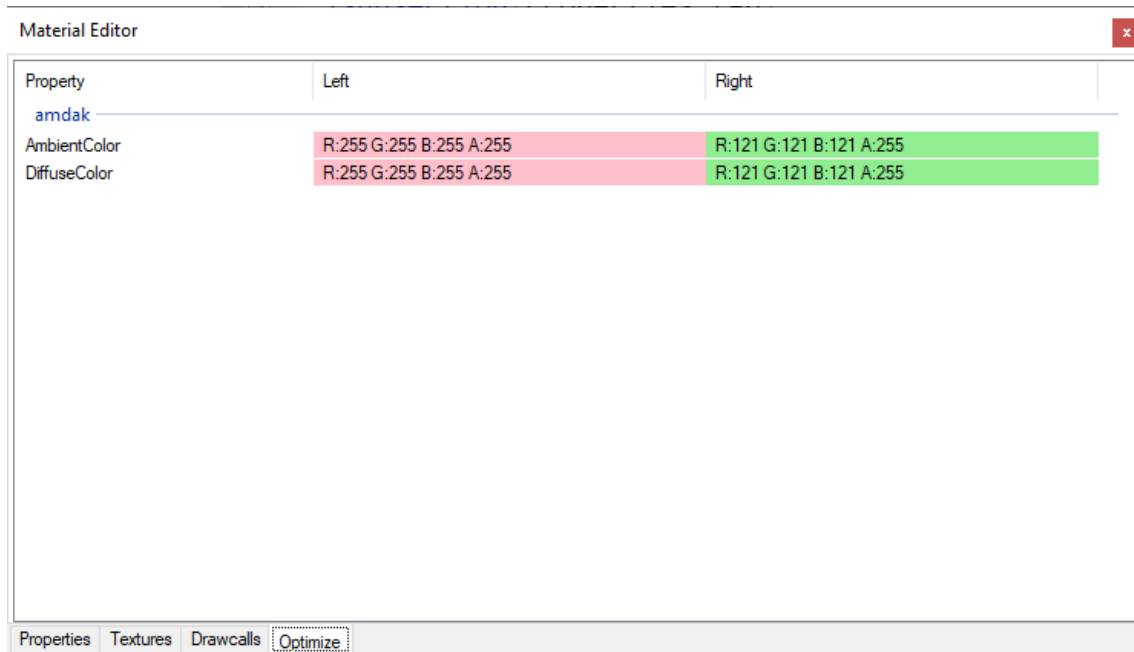


Figure 5.20: Material editor optimize tab

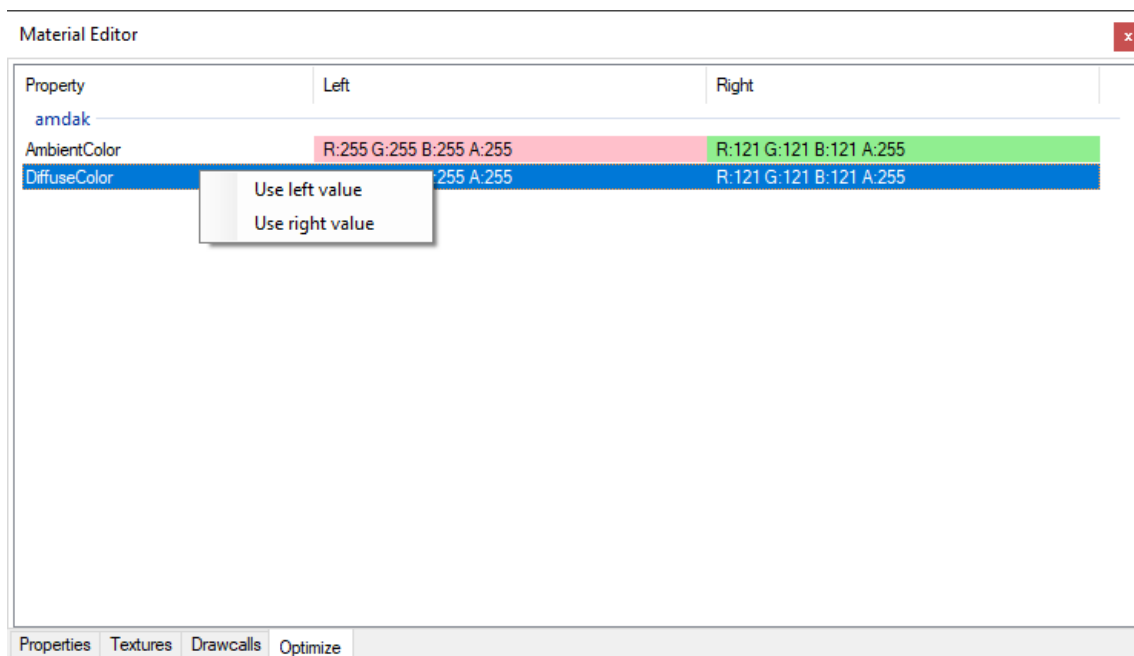


Figure 5.21: Material editor optimize context menu

5.6 Attached object editor

The Attached object editor lists all attachpoints of your object, see Figure 5.22. You can view or edit them using this editor. The following attachpoint types are supported:

- Effects
- Lights, on export to Flight Simulator ModelConverterX will make effect files for these automatically.
- Spot lights, on export to Flight Simulator ModelConverterX will make effect files for these automatically.
- Library objects
- Platforms
- Empty attachpoints

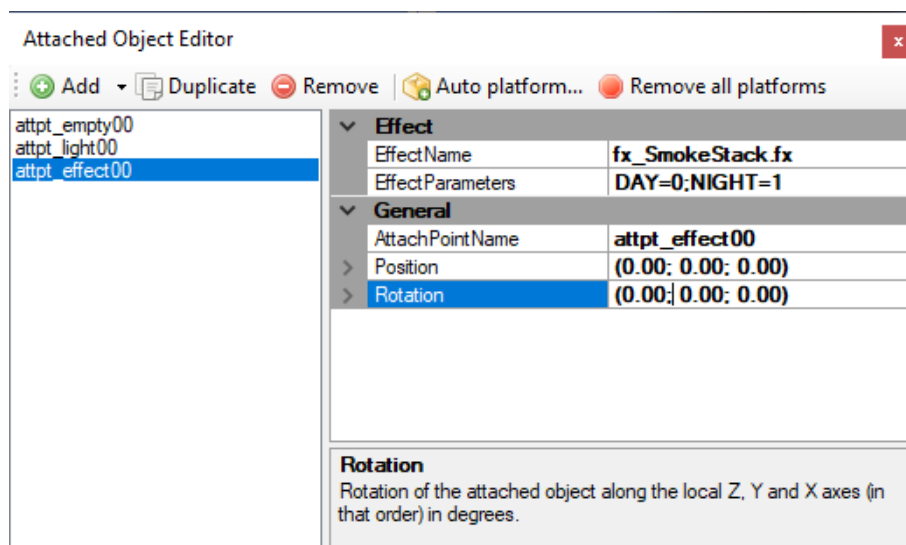


Figure 5.22: Attached object editor

On the left side of the window there is a list of the attachpoints in your object. If you click on an attachpoint, the properties will be shown in the right side of the window.

Using the **Add** button you can add a new attachpoint; clicking this button will bring up a menu where you can select the type of attachpoint you want to add. Using the **Duplicate** button you can also make a clone of an existing attachpoint, which is handy if you want to add another attachpoint that is very similar to an existing one. With the **Remove** button you can remove the currently selected attachpoint.

When editing an effect attachpoint, clicking the ... button for the effect parameters, will bring up the effect parameter editor, see Figure 5.23. In this editor you can select the parameter that you want to use and also the value or value range that it should have. Using the editor can be more efficient than typing all parameters by hand.

With the **Preset DAY/NIGHT** and **Preset DUSK/DAWN** buttons you can quickly add the effect parameters that are needed for showing an object only during dusk, dawn and night. Due to an issue in Flight Simulator, for an effect to appear in all four time periods you need to use two attachpoints with the parameters as set by these buttons.

When editing platform attachpoints you have two options on how to specify them. You can add a platform attachedobject via the Add menu and then specify the position (altitude) and length and width of the platform in the properties. When making a simple rectangular platform, MCX will create the platform object for you when you export your model.

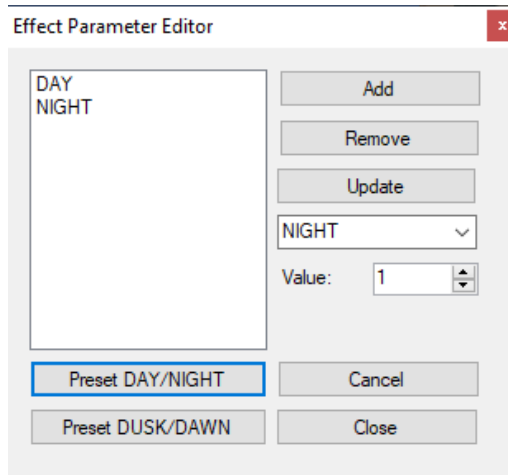


Figure 5.23: Effect parameter editor

When you want to add a platform that should follow the shape of your object there is another way to add them however, using the **Auto platform** function. Pressing this button on the toolbar brings up the Auto platform window, see Figure 5.24. In this editor you can select how much the normal of the triangle should be pointing upwards¹ and optionally you can also specify that only triangles with a specific texture should be considered. ModelConverterX will then make a platform of all triangles that meet these filter conditions. So if for example you select your roof texture and an upwards value of 0.7 you can quickly make a platform of your roof.

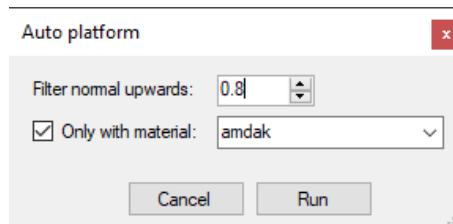


Figure 5.24: Auto platform window

Since platforms for more complexly shaped objects can result in many platform attachpoints, the **Remove all platforms** button in the toolbar of the attached object editor allows you to remove all existing platforms at once.

5.7 Animation editor

The animation editor displays information about the animations in your object and allows you to edit these animations, see Figure 5.25. The editor lists all animations in the object at the top and has a number of buttons to edit and control the animations at the bottom. When an animation is shown with a pink background color, it means this animation was not found in the modeldef.xml file. Such animations will not be exported correctly to Flight Simulator and you should fix them before exporting your object.

With the checkboxes in the list of animations you can select which animations are currently selected. Using the **Select all** button you can select all animations. Using the **Select none** button you

¹The value you enter here is the dot product of the triangle normal and the normal pointing upwards. A value of 1.0 means the normal points upwards, while a value of 0.0 is a normal that points horizontal, and a value of -1.0 is a normal that points downwards. So a value of 1.0 selects only triangles that point exactly upwards. If you want to select the triangles of a gabled roof you would have to use a lower value, for example around 0.7. If you select a value that is too low, ModelConverterX might also select your walls as platform.

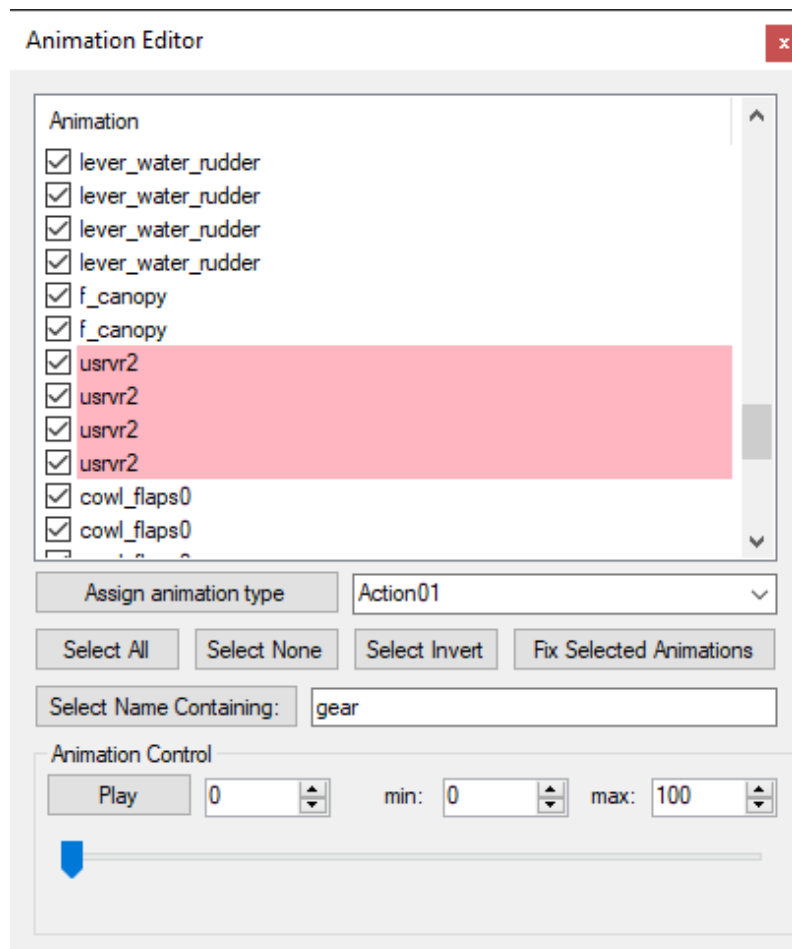


Figure 5.25: Animation editor

can unselect all animations. Using the **Select invert** button you can invert the current selection. Using the **Select name containing** button you can select all animations that contain the text value entered in the textbox to the right of the button. This way you can for example select all gear animations quickly.

Only the selected animations will be played in the object preview window. Using the **Play** button you can start and pause the animations. Next to this button the current animation frame is displayed in the textbox. If you specify a value in the min and max textboxes, the animation will only play between these selected frames. By default the max value is the length of the animation and the min value is zero.

Using the **Assign animation type** button you can change the animation type of the selected animations. The drop down box next to the button allows you to select which animation type should be used. The available types are read from the modeldef.xml file specified in Options.

Sometimes you want to remove an animation from your model and replace it with the static geometry at a specific frame of the animation. For example you need the landing gear of an aircraft to be always extended when you want to use the model as a static aircraft. With the **Fix selected animations** button you can do this. Make sure you select the animations you want to remove, move the animation slider to the desired value, and then press this button. The animation will then be removed and the static geometry will display at the selected animation frame.

5.8 ModelDef.xml editor

With the ModelDef.xml editor you can see the model definitions that are used by your object, see Figure 5.26. This editor can be used to inspect the definitions of a specific object and to make modifications to them.



Figure 5.26: ModelDef.xml editor

The toolbar offers you the following options:

- A textbox to enter text to search for in the modeldef.xml file.

- **Find previous** button to jump to the previous occurrence of the search text.
- **Find next** button to jump to the next occurrence of the search text.
- **Only show used** checkbox to determine if all entries from the modeldef.xml file are shown or only those used by the object.
- **Edit mode** button to toggle edit mode. When in edit mode you can modify the definitions in the XML file.
- **Save ModelDef.xml** button to save the modeldef.xml file as shown in the editor to disk. When the **Only save used** checkbox is enabled only the definitions used in the objects are saved to file.

5.9 Aircraft.cfg editor

The aircraft.cfg editor, see Figure 5.27, is a text editor used to modify the aircraft.cfg file of aircraft models. The advantage over using a normal text editor is that the aircraft.cfg editor is linked to the preview in ModelConverterX so it can highlight the CFG points you are working on, and any changes you make to their positions are shown interactively in the preview. To be able to see the CFG points you need to make sure their display is enabled in the preview.

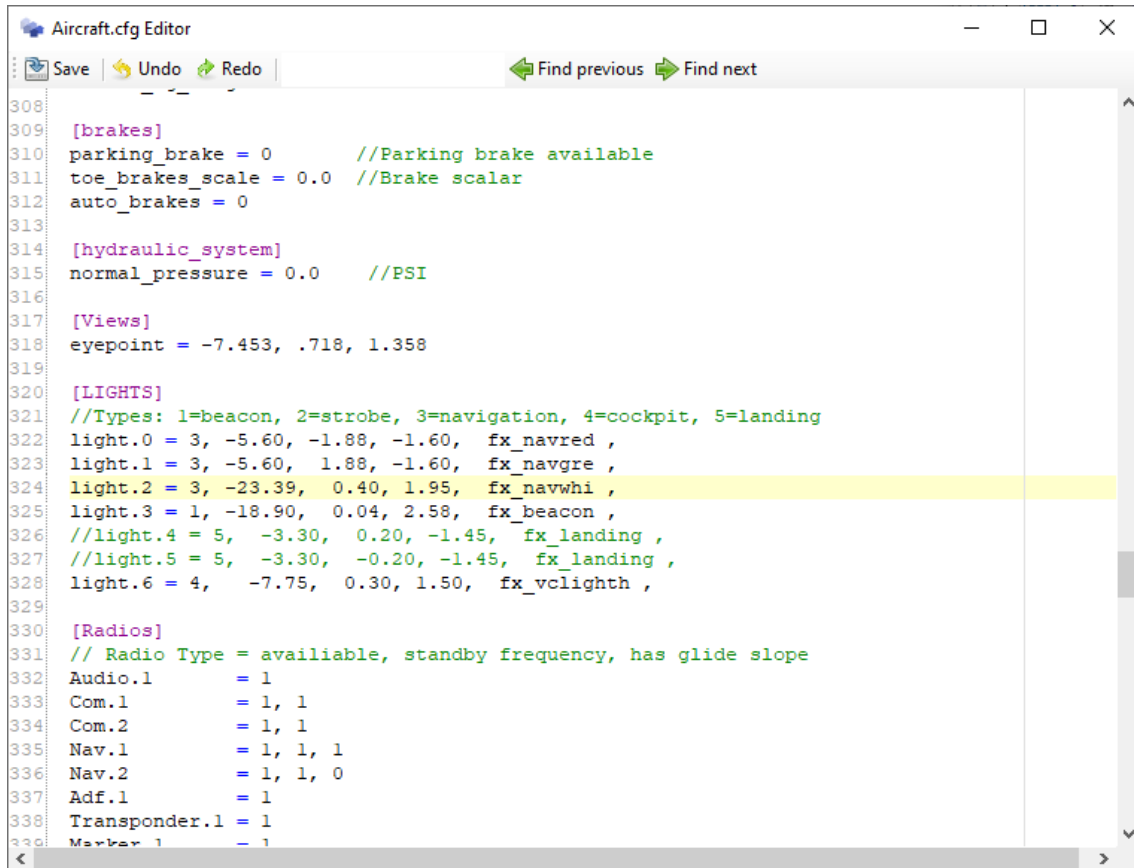


Figure 5.27: Aircraft.cfg editor

After you have made changes to the aircraft.cfg file you can use the **Save** button to save these changes to disk. With the **Undo** and **Redo** buttons you can undo and redo changes that you have made to the file.

Using the search textbox and the **Find previous** and **Find next** buttons you can search for specific text in the aircraft.cfg file. This way you can quickly locate the section you are looking

for.

5.10 Earth curve correction editor

MDL objects in Flight Simulator use flat earth coordinates. However they are placed in an earth that is curved. This means that for big objects you can see that they start to float the further you go from the reference point. Besides that there is an issue in Flight Simulator that causes attached objects that are further away from the reference point to appear at the wrong position. The earth curve editor, see Figure 5.28 can be used to correct both of these effects.

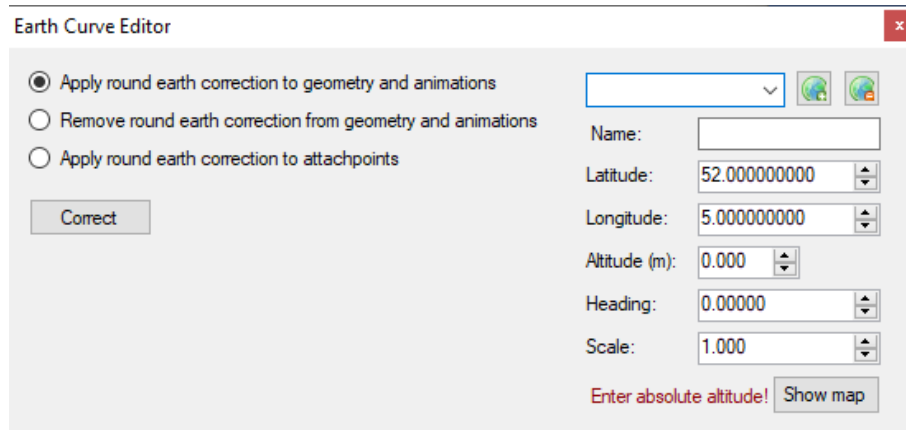


Figure 5.28: Earth curve editor

On the left side of the editor you can select one of the following options:

- **Apply earth curve correction to geometry and animations** is used if you have have an object that should follow the curve of the earth. For example a big building or a scene with multiple buildings in it. Based on the reference point you specify the editor will calculate the displacement that is needed to have all geometry and animations follow the curve of the earth exactly. The editor assume that your input model uses the FS2004 flat earth coordinates.
- **Remove earth curve correction from geometry and animations** is the reverse of the option described above and can be used to undo an earth curve correction that was applied to a model.
- **Apply earth curve correction to attachpoints** can be used if you don't want to correct your geometry, but still want to make sure that attachpoints line up with your geometry.

On the right side of the editor you can use the position control to specify the reference point that should be used for the earth curve correction. See section 11.1 for more information about using the position control. Once you have applied the earth curve correction, using the **Correct** button, you need to make sure that the object is placed at this reference coordinate in your scenery as well.

5.11 Season editor

When exporting FS2002 style ground polygons or Prepar3D v4 (and above) MDL files Model-ConverterX can support seasonal texture changes. This is controlled by the HasSeasonalTextures attribute in the material. The season editor, see Figure 5.29 can be used to define which seasons should be used in that case.

Using the checkboxes you can specify which season is needed for the area you are making your scenery for and for each active season you need to specify the start and end day (these are counted

from the start of the year, so day 1 is January 1st. The editor will automatically ensure that the seasons you have activated connect with each other.

The winter2 season is to define an additional winter season. In some areas of the world you need to define a period of winter without snow (winter), followed by a winter with snow (heavy winter), followed by a winter without snow again (winter2).

Active	Start day	End day
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spring	80	171
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Summer	172	263
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fall	264	354
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Winter	355	79
<input type="checkbox"/> HeavyWinter	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Winter2	1	1

Figure 5.29: Season editor

5.12 Transform object editor

ModelConverterX offers three different editors to transform the entire object. With these editors you can scale, move and rotate the object. Each of them is discussed in the following sections.

5.12.1 Scale object

With the Scale object function, see Figure 5.30, you can make the object larger or smaller.

Boundingbox		
min		max
-8.400	X	16.000
-12.600	Y	11.200
0.000	Z	6.000

X: 1.00000
 Y: 1.00000
 Z: 1.00000
☒ Lock axes
☐ Scale LOD values

Figure 5.30: Scale object

On the right side of the window you can enter the scale value for the X, Y and Z axis. If the **Lock axes** checkbox is selected the same scaling is applied to all three axes automatically. If the **Scale LOD values** checkbox is selected MCX will not only scale the object itself, but also adjust the level of detail (LOD) values so that the LOD switching still happens at the same distance.

On the left side you see the minimum and maximum values of the object bounding box. While you change the scale values, these bounding box values are updated so that you can see what the size of the object will be after scaling.

Only when you press the **Scale** button the object is actually scaled with the entered scale values. When you press the **Close** button the scale object window is closed without applying a scale.

5.12.2 Move object

With the Move object function, see Figure 5.31, you can move the object.

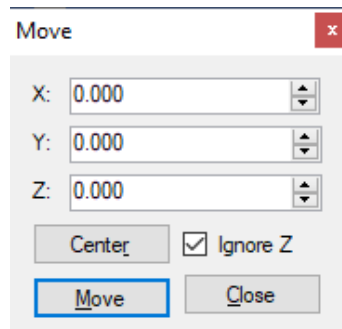


Figure 5.31: Move object

At the top of the window you can enter the offset along the X, Y and Z axes that should be applied to the object.

If you click the **Center** button ModelConverterX will calculate the X, Y and Z values that are needed to center the object. When the **Ignore Z** checkbox is selected the Z axis is ignored when calculating the offset needed to center the object, so if you want to keep your building on ground level it's better to leave this option checked.

Only when you press the **Move** button the object is actually moved with the entered offset values. When you press the **Close** button the move object window is closed without applying a movement.

5.12.3 Rotate object

With the Rotate object function, see Figure 5.32, you can rotate the object.

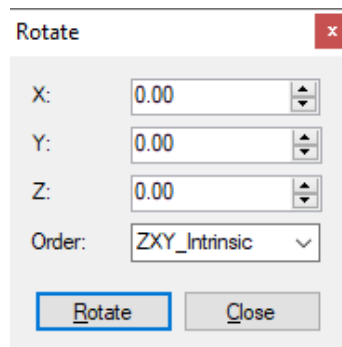


Figure 5.32: Rotate object

At the top of the window you can enter the rotation along the X, Y and Z axes that should be applied to the object. With the dropdown list below you can select the order in which the rotation is applied. See section 11.2 for more details about the rotation order.

Only when you press the **Rotate** button the object is actually rotated with the entered rotation values. When you press the **Close** button the rotate object window is closed without applying a rotation.

5.13 Level of detail creator

With the level of detail creator, see Figure 5.33 you can automatically generate a simplified version of your object that can be used as a lower level of detail version. See section 11.4 for more background information about levels of detail.

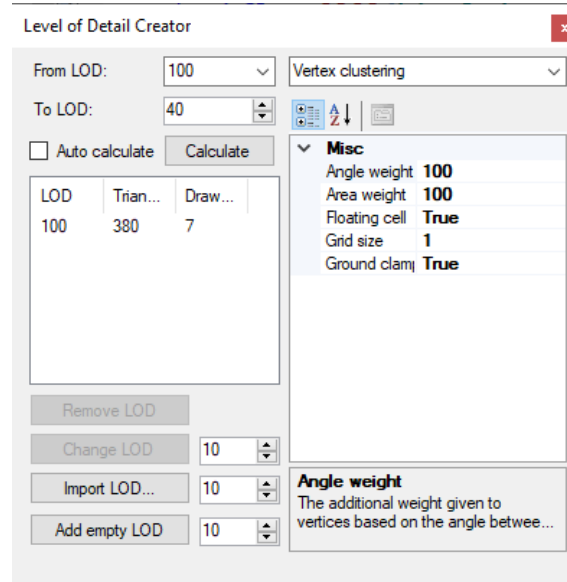


Figure 5.33: Level of detail creator

On the left side of the window you configure which level of detail you want to generate. **From LOD** specifies which level of detail should be used as input for the calculation, while **To LOD** specifies which for which level of detail the generated object should be used.

On the right side of the window you can select the algorithm that should be used and below that the parameters for that algorithm are shown. In section 5.13.1 and section 5.13.2 the details of the supported algorithms are discussed.

Once you have configured all parameters correctly, you can press the **Calculate** button to start the generation. If you select the **Auto calculate** checkbox the level of detail is automatically generated once you change one of the parameters. For complex models it is better to leave this unchecked as the calculation might take quite a long time.

In the box below the calculate button you can see all levels of detail that the object contains and the number of triangles and drawcalls for each of them is shown. If you click on a level of detail in this list, that level of detail will be selected for display in the preview. With the **Remove LOD** button you can remove the currently selected level of detail from the object. With the **Change LOD** button you can change the level of detail number; the textbox next to the button specifies the new level of detail value to use. This allows you to change the level of detail from 20 to 30 for example. With the **Import LOD** button you can select another file that will be loaded and imported as the level of detail value specified in the textbox next to the button. Thus this can be used to combine different models that each represent a different level of detail version of the object. With the **Add empty LOD** button you can add an empty level of detail with the specified value to the object

5.13.1 Vertex clustering

This section discusses the details of the vertex clustering algorithm. The basic principle of this algorithm is that a 3D grid with a specific grid size is calculated and all vertices that fall within the same cell of the grid are combined to one vertex. So if your object has many vertices close

together they will be combined into one and this results in a reduction of the complexity of the model.

An additional weight can be assigned to the vertices. Vertices with a higher weight have more influence on the combined vertex when different vertices in one grid cell are combined.

The following parameters can be set for the algorithm:

- **Angle weight** specifies the additional weight given to vertices based on the angle between the triangles they are part of. This gives vertices that are part of triangles with different normals more weight. This means that hard edges of the object have more impact on the clustered result.
- **Area weight** specifies the additional weight that should be given to the vertices based on the area of the triangle that the vertex is part of. This means that vertices that are part of big triangles, which contribute more to the visual appearance, get more influence on the clustered result.
- **Floating cell** determines if the vertex clustering algorithm uses floating cells or not. Floating cells are placed more optimally and therefore give better results in general.
- **Grid size** specifies the size in meters of the grid that is used for clustering the vertices.
- **Ground clamp** determines if vertices that are at or below ground level should get a big additional weight. This prevent them from floating after the vertex clustering.

Figure 5.34 shows an object and three different levels of details generated by varying the grid size of the vertex clustering algorithm.

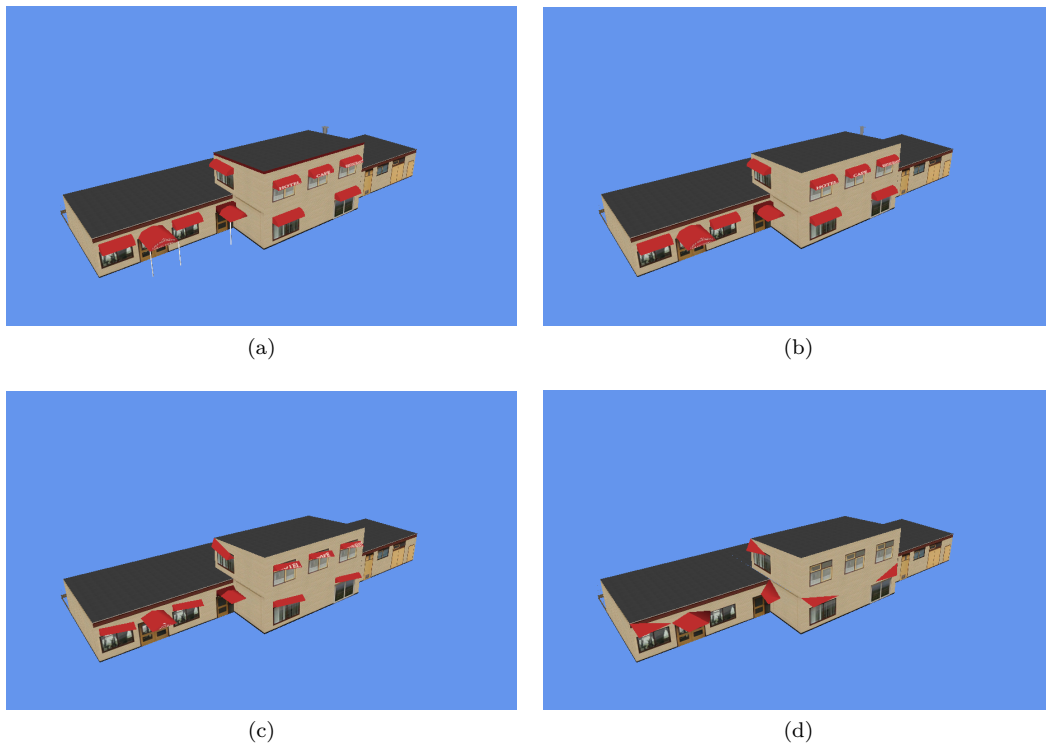


Figure 5.34: Example of vertex clustering object simplification. (a) original model with 380 triangles. (b) clustering with 0.5 meter grid resulting in 315 triangles. (c) clustering with 1 meter grid resulting in 143 triangles. (d) clustering with 2 meter grid resulting in 72 triangles.

5.13.2 Quadratic based error

This section discusses the details of the quadratic based error algorithm. The basic idea of this algorithm is that each edge (line connecting two vertices) of the object is given a score of how much it contributes to the appearance of the object. In the parameters, as discussed below, you will see that different aspects can contribute to this score.

To simplify the object edges are being collapsed, starting with the edge that has the lowest score. This is continued until the target for the amount of triangles is reached or until the error in the appearance of the object is bigger than a specified threshold.

The following parameters can be set for the algorithm:

- **Area penalty** specifies an additional penalty based on the triangle area when determining the edge score. This results in edge of big triangles being less likely to be affected by the simplification algorithm.
- **Ground clamp** determines if vertices that are at or below ground level should stick to the ground or not. This is to prevent buildings from floating in the air.
- When **Max error** is set to true, the optimization will stop once the specified max error value has been reached.
- **Max error value** specifies the maximum error value when the optimization should stop. This value is only used when Max error is set to true.
- **Preserve material** specifies that an extra penalty should be given to edges where two different materials meet. This results in these edges being less likely to be affected by the simplification algorithm.
- **Triangle target** specifies the target of the amount of triangles that the simplified model should have. It is given as a percentage of the amount of triangles in the object you start from.

Figure 5.35 shows an object and three different levels of details generated by varying the triangle target in the quadratic based error algorithm.

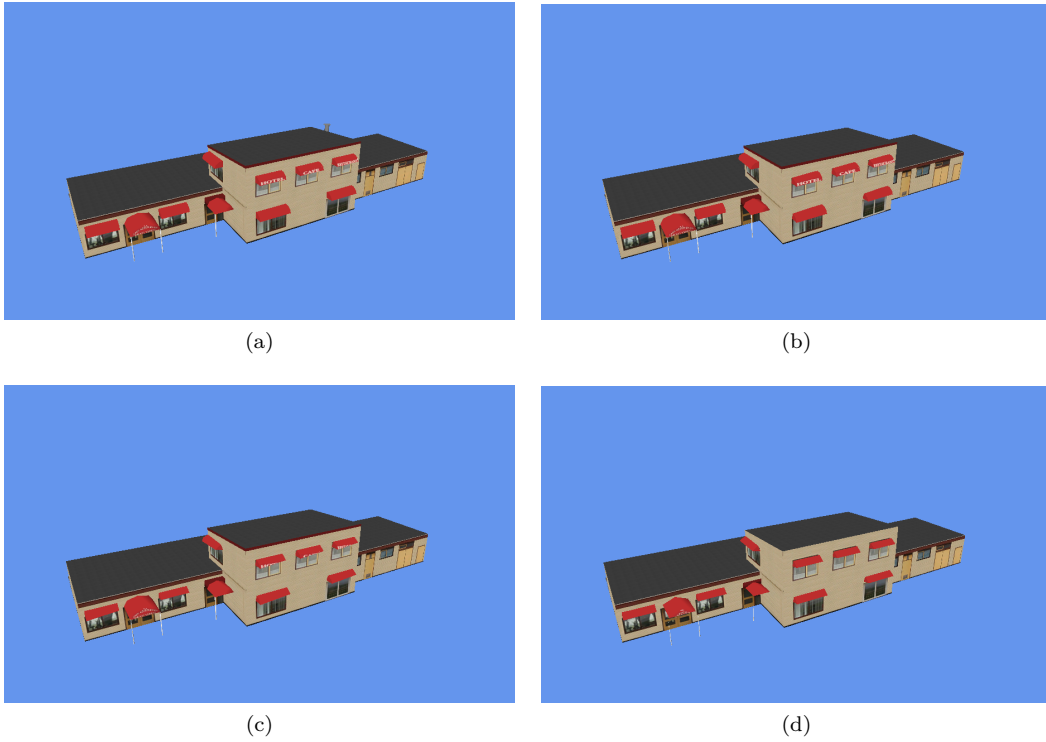


Figure 5.35: Example of quadratic based error object simplification. (a) original model with 380 triangles. (b) simplified model with 80% triangle target resulting in 304 triangles. (c) simplified model with 60% triangle target resulting in 226 triangles. (d) simplified model with 40% triangle target resulting in 152 triangles.

5.14 Merge object editor

Using the merge object editor, see Figure 5.36 you can combine multiple objects into one object. You can use this to combine multiple buildings into one object for example.

At the top of the editor you can specify which level of detail (LOD) should be used for the object that is inserted and which offset from the reference point of the currently selected object should be used. By specifying different levels of detail you can also use this editor to add simpler versions of your model as a LOD.

At the bottom of the window you can select which object should be merged; there are two options:

1. Using the **Load object** window you can load the object that should be merged from file.
2. If you have a scenery with multiple objects loaded, the list below the load object button will show the other objects in your scenery. You can select an object to be merged from this list as well.

Once you press the **Merge** button the selected objects will be merged into the currently active object with the offset you have specified.

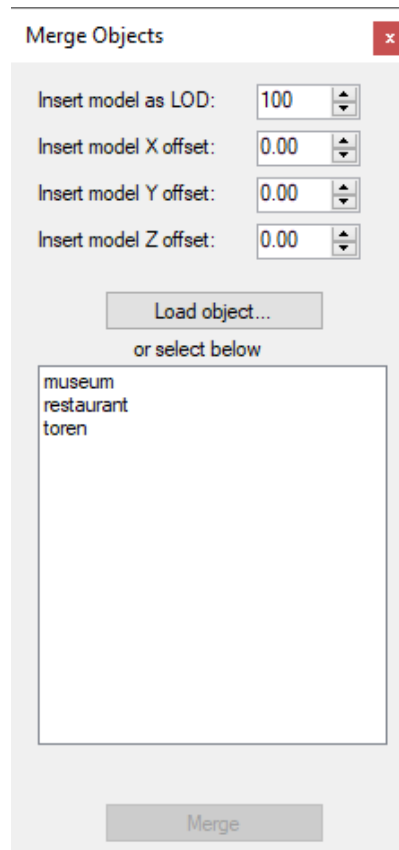


Figure 5.36: Merge object editor

5.15 Generate object image

Using the generate object image window you can create preview images of your object(s), see Figure 5.37.

To generate preview images you need to:

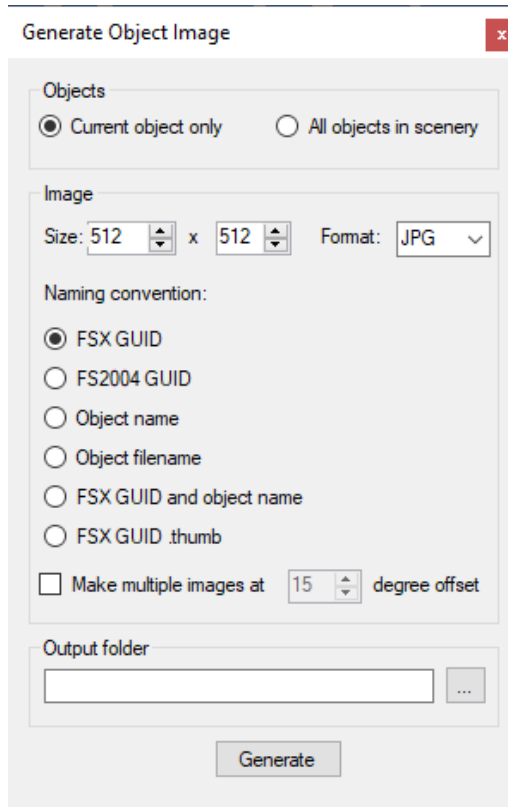


Figure 5.37: Save preview image

1. Select if you want to generate an image of the current object or all loaded objects.
2. Specify the size of the preview image and the format it should be saved in.
3. Select the naming convention of the generated file(s), the name can be based on the GUID, name or filename.
4. Specify if you want to make different images where the object is rotated by a specified angle between each image, this can be useful if you want preview images from all sides of your object.
5. Select the folder where the images should be stored.
6. Press the **Generate** button to make the images.

The images are captures of the object preview window, so any options like the grid or attachpoints that you have visible there will be part of your preview image as well.

5.16 Generate object report

Using the generate object report window you can create HTML reports of your objects, see Figure 5.38. You can configure which information is included for the objects.

To generate an object report you would take the following steps:

1. Select if you want a report for the current object or all loaded objects.
2. Specify which information should be included in the report, you can choose from:
 - Preview image of the object
 - Information about the level of details and drawcalls

Generate Object Report

Objects

☐ Current object only ☒ All objects in scenery

Include

☒ Object image

☒ Level of details and drawcalls

☒ Textures used

☒ Attached objects

Image

Size: 512 x 512

Output file

C:\dev\astofra\Tests\data\museum.html

☒ Show after generating

Generate

Figure 5.38: Generate object report

- Information about textures used
 - Information about attachpoints
3. Select the size of the preview images.
 4. Select the folder where the object report should be saved.
 5. Press **Generate** to start generating the report.
- Figure 5.39 shows an example of the object report that is generated.


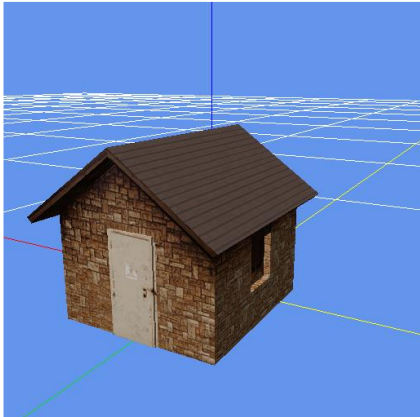
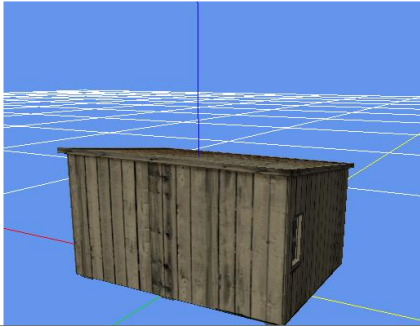
Object report for buildings.bgl		
File C:/Prepar3D%20v4/Scenery/Global/scenery/buildings.html		
Attachpoints		
Name	gen_outbuildingpropane01	
GUID	{4f31f1fb-b806-4882-bdc2-de9cba5cc74e}	
Bounding box	-2.076 < X < 2.076 -3.438 < Y < 3.438 0.000 < Z < 3.718	
Levels of detail	LOD 25 containing 19 triangles and 1 drawcalls LOD 50 containing 51 triangles and 1 drawcalls LOD 75 containing 82 triangles and 1 drawcalls LOD 100 containing 120 triangles and 1 drawcalls	
Textures	usb02_lily_gall_shedvscylinders_all.dds usb02_lily_gall_shedvscylinders_all_lm.dds	
Attachpoints		
Name	gen_outbuildingsmall01	
GUID	{2a347c4d-16e0-4327-82be-62f4e04b71ec}	
Bounding box	-2.667 < X < 2.182 -2.005 < Y < 1.730 -0.002 < Z < 2.766	
Levels of detail	LOD 100 containing 146 triangles and 1 drawcalls	
Textures	crew_a.dds	

Figure 5.39: Example object report

5.17 Change history

In the change history window you can see an overview of the changes and edits that have been made to the object, see Figure 5.40. The undo button will undo the last change shown in this list from your object.

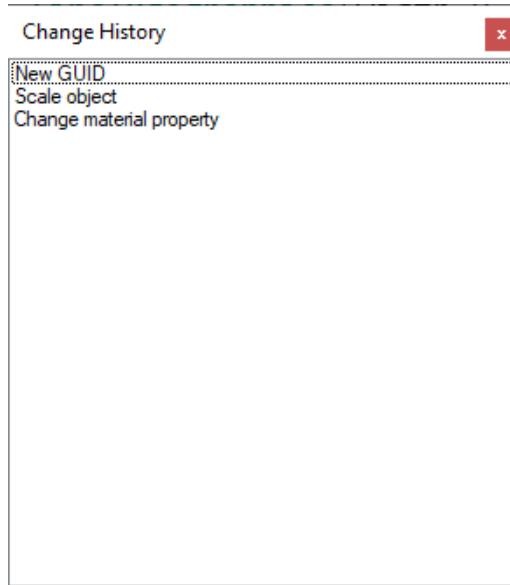


Figure 5.40: Change history

Chapter 6

Wizards

6.1 Convert and place object wizard

The convert and place object wizard, see Figure 6.1, is an easy way to convert an object to the format required by Flight Simulator and position it at a specific location in one process. This will also convert the textures of the object to the right formats. This can for example be used to quickly create a BGL file from a SketchUp object and have all textures converted on the go for you. It is primarily meant for users that quickly want to convert a single object. If you have many objects to place, it is often more efficient to make a library BGL of these objects.

When using the wizard you will fill in all details from top to bottom, the steps are:

1. Select the object that should be converted using the ... button.
2. Select the FS version that you want to convert the object to using the radio buttons.
3. Select the output scenery folder where the BGL file should be placed using the ... button. It will default to the Addon scenery folder of your selected FS version. Be aware that you need to select the base folder of your scenery, not the scenery subfolder that contains the BGL files.
4. Specify the output name, this will become the name of the BGL file. The default value is the name of the object that you loaded.
5. Specify the position where the object should be placed. See section 11.1 for more information about how to specify the position.
6. If you want existing textures to be overwritten select the **Overwrite existing textures** checkbox.
7. If you want all texture names to start with the output name, select the **Prefix texture names** checkbox.
8. If you want the number of textures to be minimized, select the **Minimize number of textures** checkbox. This will run the drawcall minimizer, as described in section 5.5.3, on the object. The dropdown list next to the checkbox is used to specify the maximum texture size that the drawcall minimizer will use.
9. If you don't want the object to suppress autogen objects, check the **No autogen suppression** checkbox.
10. If you want to disable the crashbox of the object, so that your aircraft can't crash into the object, check the **No crash** checkbox.
11. Press the **Convert** button once all settings are correct. This will create the BGL file and textures.

Convert Wizard

Input

Select file to convert:

Output

Select output folder:

Output name:

FS version:
☐ FS2004
☒ FSX
☐ P3D v1
☐ P3D v2
☐ P3D v3
☐ P3D v4
☐ P3D v4.4

Position

Name:

Latitude:

Longitude:

Altitude (m):
☒ AGL

Heading:

Scale:

Options

☐ Overwrite existing textures
☐ Prefix texture names

☐ Minimize number of textures

☐ No autogen suppression
☐ No crash

Figure 6.1: Convert and place object wizard

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6.2 Ground polygon wizard

If you use normal scenery objects for your custom ground polygons they will typically flicker, because the different textures have not been layered correctly. And for FSX and Prepar3D you will also run into the issue of floating polygons due to the curve of the earth. The ground polygon wizard, see Figure 6.2, is a tool that will help you to create a ground polygon BGL file without these issues.

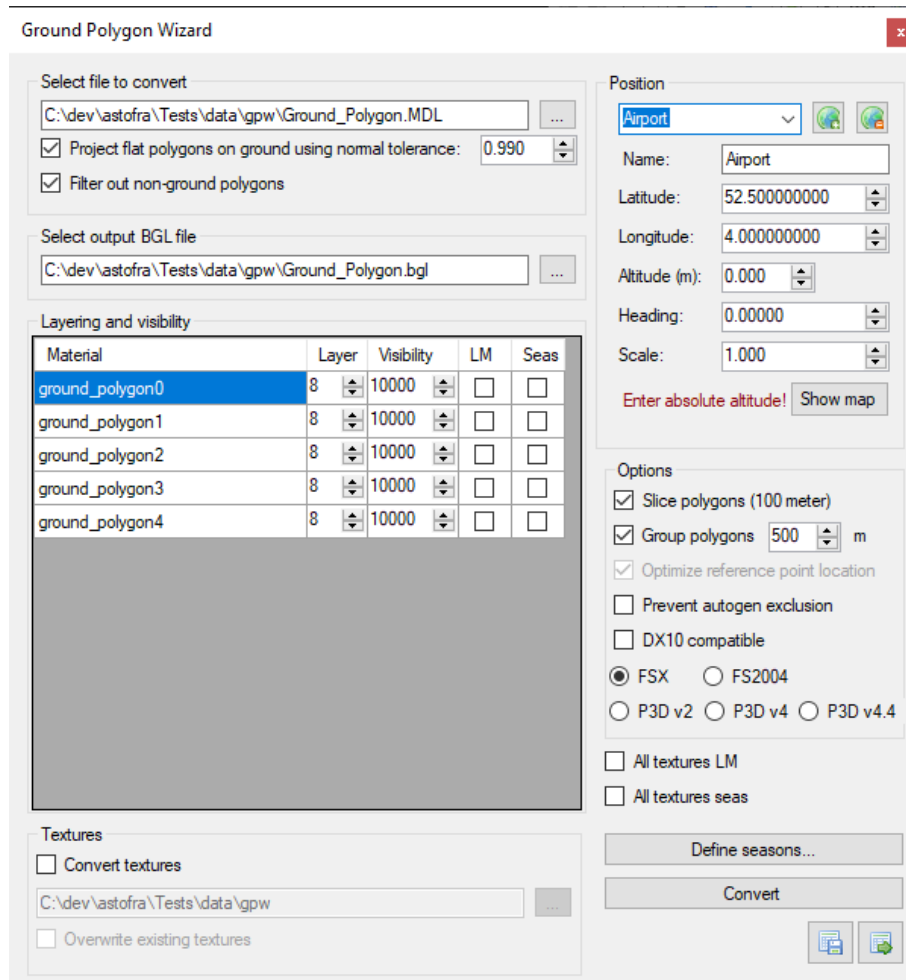


Figure 6.2: Ground polygon wizard

When using the wizard you will fill in all details of the window, the steps are:

1. Select the object that contains the ground polygons using the ... button. The checkboxes to **Project flat polygons** and **Filter out non-ground polygons** affect how your object is loaded from the specified file. By default both these options are enabled and that will give the best results in general.

Projecting polygons on the ground means that all polygons for which the dot product of the normal vector and the upwards normal is above the specified threshold value will be projected onto ground level. This lowers them to the ground. So for example the roof of a house will then become a ground plane.

Filtering out non ground polygons means that all polygons whose Z coordinate values are not zero will be removed from the object.

2. Select the output BGL file for the ground polygon using the ... button.

3. After selecting the object to convert, the list of materials in the object will be filled. In this grid you see the material name, layer, viability, night texture and seasonal texture status. You can alter any of these columns to specify how the ground polygon should be created.

For FS2004 and FSX the layer values are positive and typically an increment of 4 is used between the layers. The higher the layer number the more priority the texture has. For Prepar3D the layer values are negative, the more negative the number the higher the priority of the texture is. The wizard will make sure that the numbering convention of the selected output simulator is used, so if you enter positive layers, but export to Prepar3D that will be fixed.

The visibility value indicates at which distance the polygon should become visible. This is only supported for FS2004 and FSX output, else this column will be disabled.

The night texture (LM) checkbox indicates if this material has a night texture assigned. You will have to ensure yourself that the corresponding texture file also exists.

The seasonal texture checkbox indicates if this material has seasonal textures assigned. This is only supported for FS2004, FSX and Prepar3D v4 output, else this column is disabled.

4. With the **Convert textures** checkbox you can indicate if the textures of the object should be converted as well. If enabled, the output folder is specified in the textbox below (you can use the ... button to select the folder). With the **Overwrite existing textures** checkbox you can indicate if existing textures should be overwritten during the conversion.
5. Specify the position where the ground polygons should be placed. See section 11.1 for more information about how to specify the position.
6. In the options section select for which FS version you want to create ground polygons. Certain options might be disabled based on the version you select.
7. The **Slice polygons** checkbox determines if polygons should be sliced into pieces of 100 meter. To be able to follow the curve of the earth correctly your polygons need to be small enough, so when you disable this option make sure you slice them in your modelling tool.
8. The **Group polygons** checkbox determines if polygons are grouped together. These grouped polygons then become one object or reference point in the output BGL file. In general grouping the polygons together for a given area improves the performance in the simulator. With the textbox you can specify the size of the grid that is used for grouping.
9. The **Optimize reference point** checkbox determines if the reference point is placed optimally in the center of the object. When grouping polygons this option is always enabled.
10. The **Prevent autogen exclusion** checkbox determines if your ground polygons should prevent autogen object suppression or not. For FS2004 and FSX output a hack is used to prevent the suppression, for other versions the BGLComp placement flag is used.
11. The **DX10 compatibility** checkbox determines if the FSX output is written in such a way that it also works in DX10 mode of FSX. This however disables the use of night textures.
12. With the **All textures LM** checkbox you can quickly enable or disable the night texture status on all materials.
13. With the **All textures seas** checkbox you can quickly enable or disable the seasonal texture status on all materials.
14. With the **Define seasons** button you open the editor to define the seasons, see section 5.11 for more details.
15. Once all settings are set, you can use the **Convert** button to start the creation of the ground polygon BGL file.

With the **Save settings** button you can save all the settings that you made for the ground polygons to a file, so that you can reuse them later when you want to convert the same object again. With the **Load settings** button you can load them back in again.

6.3 Batch convert wizard

With the batch convert wizard, see Figure 6.3 you can apply the same operation on multiple files. This for example allows you to quickly convert a number of objects from one format to another, but you can also use it to modify objects quickly or to generate screenshots.

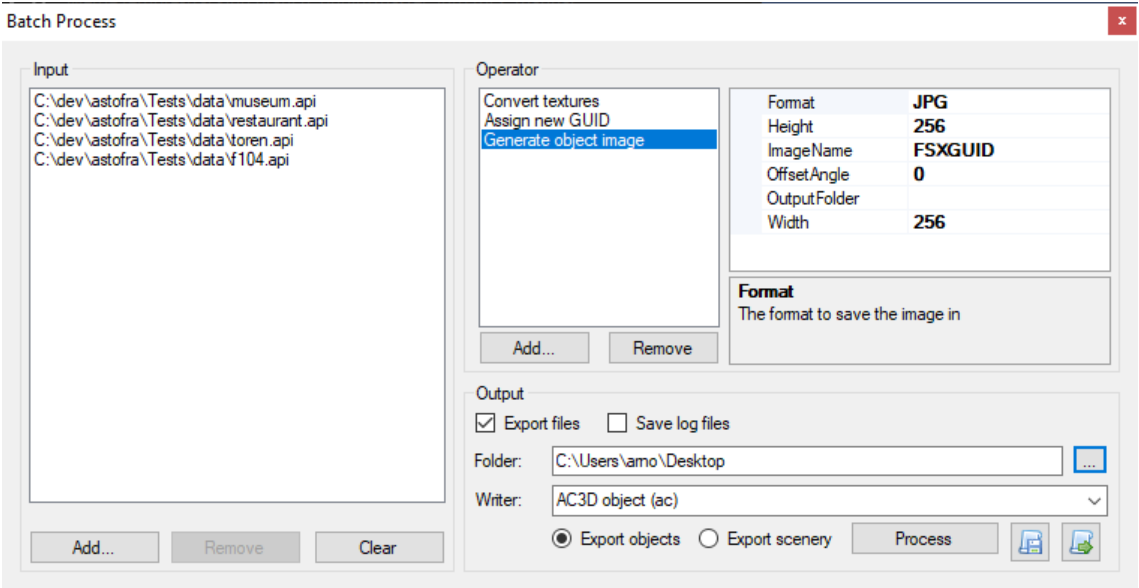


Figure 6.3: Batch convert wizard

On the left side of the wizard window you see a list of all files that should be processed. With the **Add** button you can add more files to the list and with the **Remove** button you can remove the selected file from the list. With the **Clear** button you can remove all files at once from the list.

On the top right of the wizard window you specify which operation should be performed on the files. With the **Add** button you can add a new operator to this list. When you click this button a menu displays a list where you can select the desired operator. See section 6.3.1 for an overview of the available operators. With the **Remove** button you can remove the currently selected operator from the list.

It is not required to select operators for the batch conversion. If you just want to convert from one format to the other, you can do so without using any operators.

The bottom right of the wizard is where you specify what kind of output should be generated. With the **Export files** checkbox you can specify if the wizard should do any export. For example if you want to make screenshots of objects, you will not want to export any files. With the **Save log files** checkbox you can specify if the log files from the export should automatically be saved as well. In the **Folder** text box you specify in which folder the exported files should be generated. With the radio button you can select if you want to **Export objects** or **Export scenery**. Based on this selection different writers can be selected in the **Writers** dropdown list.

Once you have all settings correct, you can press the **Process** button to start the batch operation. With the **Save batch settings** button you can store all settings you made to a file, so that you can run them again later on. With the **Load batch settings** button you can load such a saved configuration.

The sections below describe the operators that are available in the batch wizard and their parameters.

6.3.1 Add empty LOD

Description

This operator adds an empty level of detail to each object.

Parameters

LOD The level of detail value that should be assigned to the empty LOD.

6.3.2 Add placement

Description

This operator adds an object placement for each object.

Parameters

Altitude The altitude value of the object placement.

Heading The heading value of the object placement.

Latitude The latitude value of the object placement.

Longitude The longitude value of the object placement.

6.3.3 Fix animations

Description

This operator fixes all animations of the objects at the specified frame. This means that the animated part is replaced by a static part with the state of that frame.

Parameters

AnimationFrame The frame number of the frame at which the animation should be fixed.

6.3.4 Assign new GUID

Description

Assigns a new GUID to each object. If the scenery contains object placement for the object, that GUID will be changed to the new GUID as well.

Parameters

None

6.3.5 Assign material template

Description

Assigns a material template to each material in the object. This can for example be used to assign a night texture to the object. Some material templates are provided by default by ModelConverterX, but you can also make your own using the material template editor. See section 5.5.1 for more information about making material templates.

Parameters

Selected template The material template that should be applied.

6.3.6 Replace double sided materials by triangles

Description

This operator will replace all double sided materials by a set of additional triangles. See section 7.10 for more information.

Parameters

None

6.3.7 Flat shade

Description

Flat shades the object. See section 7.16.3 for more details.

Parameters

None

6.3.8 Generate object image

Description

Saves an image of the object to the specified folder. This functionality is similar to the editor that is available, see section 5.15 for more details.

Parameters

Format The image format in which the image should be saved.

Height The height of the image in pixels.

ImageName The naming convention that should be used for the image.

OffsetAngle The offset angle. When a value other than 0 is entered here, multiple images will be generated where the heading of the object is changed by offset between each image.

OutputFolder The folder where the image should be saved.

Width The width of the image in pixels.

6.3.9 Only keep highest LOD

Description

This operator will only keep the highest level of detail of the object and remove all other levels of detail.

Parameters

None

6.3.10 Convert materials

Description

The convert materials operator changes materials to conform to the specific requirements of different simulators. This is explained in more detail in the section about the material editor, see section 5.5.1. Table 5.1 shows the various conversions that are performed.

Parameters

FromVersion The flight simulator for which the model materials have been made.

ToVersion The flight simulator to which the materials should be converted.

6.3.11 Rename textures

Description

This operator will rename all textures in the object. The new name for all textures is the object name followed by an increasing number. Warning: this operator only changes the name of the diffuse textures.

Parameters

None

6.3.12 Center object

Description

This operator will center the object. If no placement information is included in the scenery, the object will just be centered based on the bounding box, where the Z value is ignored.

If there is placement information then the placement information of the object will also be updated, so that the object remains positioned the same after the loading origin of the object has been centered based on the bounding box.

It is also possible to specify that the input object uses a different projection when centering the object, this can be useful if they have been created from GIS data with a given projection.

Parameters

FSX Flag to indicate if the moved object should be corrected for the FSX earth curve or not.

LocalOrigin Flag to indicate if the projection uses a zero position.

Projected Flag to indicate if the input model uses a projection. When true the projection is used, else FS2004 flat earth coordinates are assumed.

Projection The proj4 string that defines the projection used.

ZeroLatitude Zero position latitude.

ZeroLongitude Zero position longitude.

6.3.13 Rename object

Description

This operator renames the object. When the scenery contains multiple objects the name is suffixed with an index number.

Parameters

Name The new name of the object.

6.3.14 Scale model

Description

This operator scales all models with the specified scale factor.

Parameters

ScaleLOD Flag to indicate if the LOD values should be adjusted when scaling the model as well.

ScaleX Scale factor for the X axis.

ScaleY Scale factor for the Y axis.

ScaleZ Scale factor for the Z axis.

6.3.15 Smooth shade

Description

Smooth shades the object. See section 7.16.4 for more details.

Parameters

None

6.3.16 Convert textures

Description

This operator converts the textures of the object to the specified format and saves them in the specified folder. It is also possible to minimize the number of drawcalls in this operator, like the drawcall minimizer in the material editor, see section 5.5.3 for more details.

Parameters

BorderSize Border size that is used by the drawcall minimizer.

MinimizeAmountTextures Flag to indicate that the number of drawcalls should be minimized.

OutputPath The folder where the textures should be saved.

OverwriteExistingTextures Flag to indicate that existing textures should be overwritten.

PrefixWithModelName Flag to indicate that all textures should be prefixed with the name of the object.

RequirePowerOfTwo Flag to indicate that the texture size should be a power of two. When set to true, textures that are not a power of two in size will be resized to the nearest power of two size.

TextureFormat The format in which the textures are saved, see section 9.3 for more information about the supported formats.

TextureSize The maximum texture size as used by the drawcall minimizer.

6.3.17 Match textures

Description

This operator is similar to the match textures function in the material editor, see section 5.5.2. It tries to find textures that are the same in the given folder and will update the object to use these textures.

Parameters

MinimumMatch The minimum match level required to match a texture. A value of 1.0 means that all pixels should match between the two textures.

TextureFolder The folder to search for the matching textures.

Tolerance The tolerance when comparing pixel values, when the difference between the pixels in the different textures is within this tolerance the pixels are considered to match.

6.4 Scene builder wizard

With the scene builder wizard, see Figure 6.4, you can construct one single object based on a scenery with multiple objects and object placements. This can be useful if you want your entire scenery to consist of a single object, for example if you want to convert to it another system that prefers to have an airport as one object, while Flight Simulator works more efficiently if you have

it split into multiple objects. What the scene builder does is use the placement information to determine the offset of each object and in that way combine all objects into a single scene.

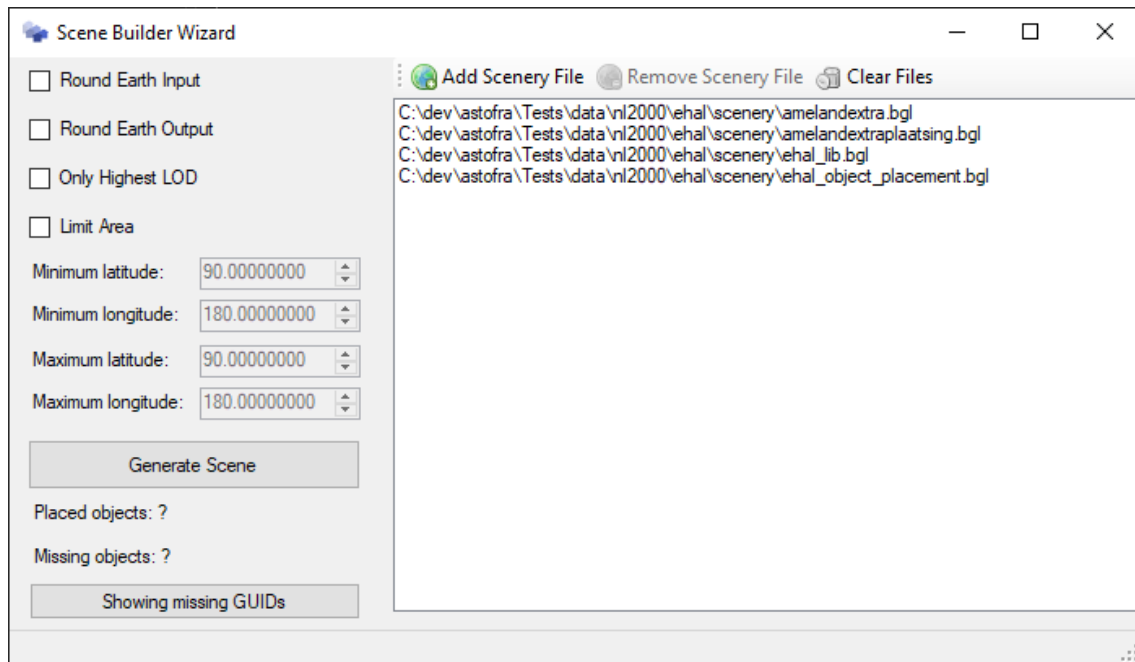


Figure 6.4: Scene builder wizard

On the right side of the wizard you see a list of scenery files that are selected to be processed. You can add new scenery files with the **Add Scenery File** button, while you can remove the selected item from the list with the **Remove Scenery File** button. If you want to clear the entire list you can use the **Clear Files** button.

On the left side of the wizard you can set options for the wizard. The following items can be set:

- With the **Round Earth Input** checkbox you can indicate if the input scenery has been corrected for the round earth or not. If so, the tool will first reverse this correction before building the combined scene from the objects.
- With the **Round Earth Output** checkbox you can specify if the combined scene that the wizard generates should also be corrected for the curve of the earth.
- When the **Only Highest LOD** checkbox is checked, the wizard will only use the highest LOD from each object in the scene. For sceneries where objects have different levels of detail you might otherwise get an unexpected result with certain objects only visible at specific level of detail values.
- When the **Limit Area** checkbox is checked, the scene builder wizard will only include object placements that are within the specified area. You can specify the minimum and maximum latitude and longitude values of this area using the text boxes below.

Once you are happy with all the settings you can press the **Generate Scene** button to start the generation. For a complex scenery with many objects and placements this might take a while. Once the wizard is done the combined scene object is shown in the preview window. The **Placed objects** and **Missing objects** labels show how many objects have been included in the combined scene and how many placements have been skipped because the referenced object could not be found. With the **Show missing GUIDs** button you can get a list of the GUIDs of the objects that the scene builder wizard could not include. Figure 6.5 shows an example of a combined object of an airport that was made with the scene builder wizard.

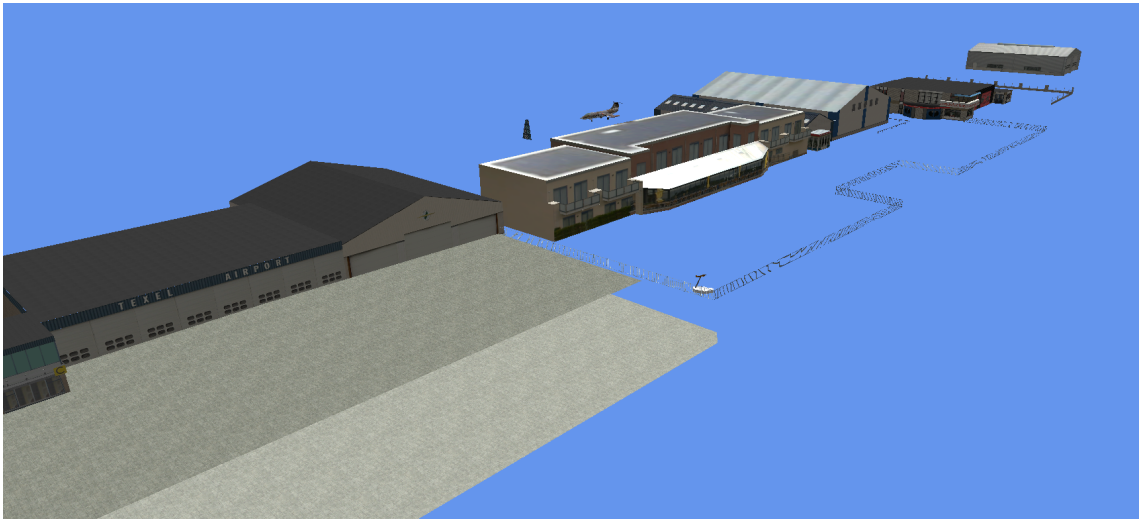


Figure 6.5: Merged scene made with scene builder

Chapter 7

Special tools

In this chapter all functionalities that are available via the special tools menu in the ModelConverterX toolbar are discussed.

7.1 GUID converter

With the GUID converter you can convert a GUID between the FS2004 and FSX notation. You enter the GUID in one of these two formats and then using the two arrow buttons you can convert it to the other notation. See Figure 7.1.

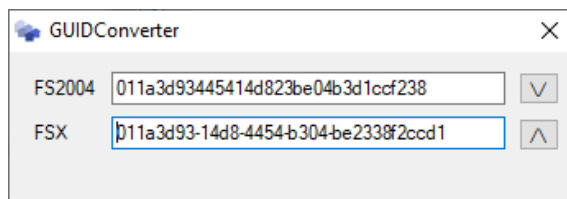


Figure 7.1: GUID converter

7.2 Coordinate converter

The coordinate converter can be used to convert coordinates between three different representations:

- Geodetic coordinates (latitude, longitude, altitude)
- Flat earth coordinates (XYZ from a reference position)
- Geocentric coordinates (XYZ from a reference position)

Figure 7.2 shows the converter window. When you change a coordinate in any of the representations, the other representations will be updated. This way you can for example calculate how big a polygon should be to accurately position in image for which you know the geodetic coordinates. But it can also be used to calculate how much offset the curved earth will have at a given location.

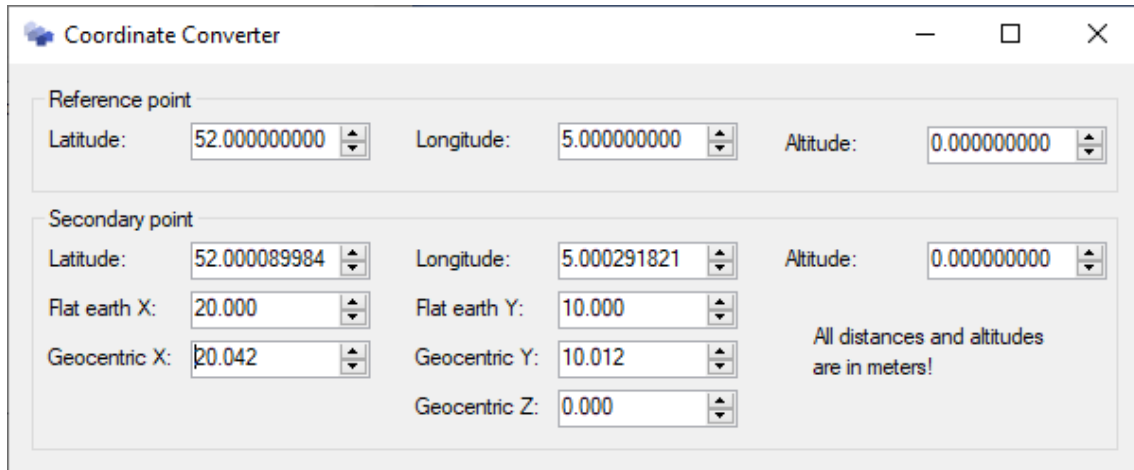


Figure 7.2: Coordinate converter

7.3 Texture converter

With the texture convert tool you can view and edit texture files, see Figure 7.3.

In the toolbar the following options are available:

- With the **Load file** button you can load a texture file from disk. See section 8.2 for more information on the supported formats.
- With the **Save file** button you can save the texture file to disk again. With the dropdown list next to the button you can select the format that it should be saved in. See section 9.3 for more details about the supported formats.
- With the **Set transparent color** button you can choose which color in the texture should become transparent. The alpha channel will then be generated based on this.
- With the **Convert normalmap to FS** button you can convert a normalmap to the FSX specifications. You load a texture made by a normalmap plugin and then save it to DDS after pressing this button.
- With the **Resize** button you can resize the texture to the specified size.
- Using the channel buttons you can select if you want to see all channels, or only the red (R), green (G), blue (B) or alpha (A) channel.

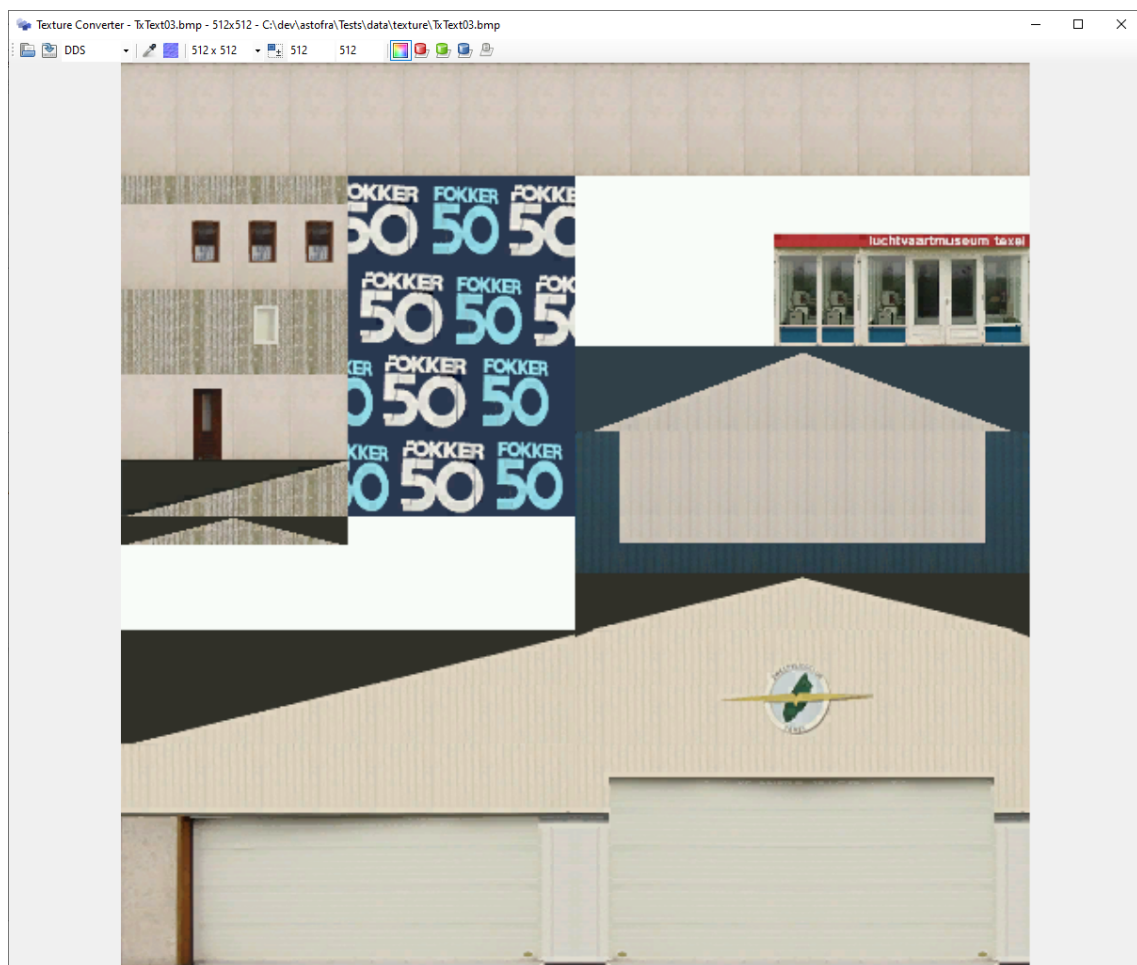


Figure 7.3: Texture converter

7.4 Missing texture finder

With the missing texture finder, see Figure 7.4, you can inspect your scenery and check if all textures referenced by the objects are present in the texture library as well.

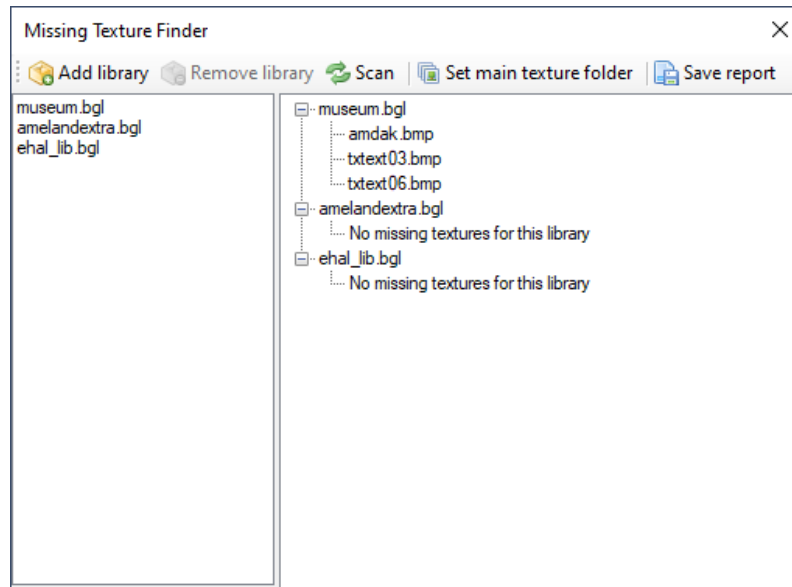


Figure 7.4: Missing texture finder

With the **Add library** button you can add the library BGL files for which you want the textures to be checked. The library BGL files are shown in the list on the left of the window. With the **Remove library** button you can remove the selected library BGL from that list again. Using the **Set main texture folder** button you can specify where the main texture folder is located, that way the missing texture finder will be able to check the texture folder of your scenery and the main texture folder as well.

When you press the **Scan** button the textures will be checked and in the treeview on the right the results are shown. For each library BGL file it will be reported which textures are missing. With the **Save report** button you can save the results to a text file.

7.5 MDL tweaker

With the MDL Tweaker, see Figure 7.5, you can make changes directly to the MDL file. This is fundamentally different from importing the object into ModelConverterX and making the changes there. The difference is that when you import the model in ModelConverterX it is read into the internal representation and on export it is saved to the MDL format again. This can result in minor differences in the MDL file. With the MDL tweaker you can modify the binary code of the MDL file directly, so that you are sure no other changes are made. The MDL tweaker is only for FSX and Prepar3D MDL files.

Using the ... button you select the MDL file that you want to tweak. Once it has been loaded the information fields are filled. You can now modify the following information in the MDL file:

- Name
- GUID
- Object radius
- Bounding box

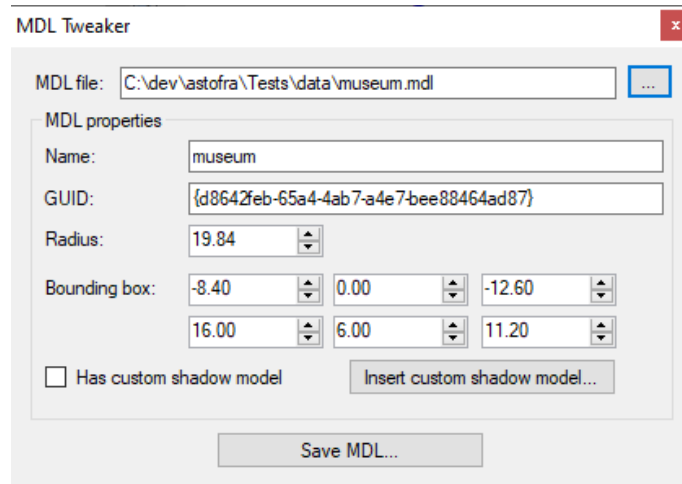


Figure 7.5: MDL tweaker

With the **Insert custom shadow model** you can select another model that should be used as the shadow model for your object. Sometimes using a simplified geometry for the shadow model can result in performance improvements. When the **Has custom shadow model** checkbox is checked the MDL file you loaded already has a custom shadow model.

With the **Save MDL** button you can save the changes you made back to the MDL file again.

7.6 Animation tweaker

With the animation tweaker, see Figure 7.6 you can create an animated object for FS2004 that has more than 1024 frames. MakeMDL has a limitation of 1024 built in, which at 18 Hz gives you almost one minute of animation time. Sometimes this is not sufficient and you want a longer animation.

You need to make the animation from an FSX MDL, as XtoMDL does support longer animations. You select this FSX MDL in the **Object to import** field. Next you specify the name of the FS2004 MDL file in the **FS2004 model to export** field. Once you press the **Export** button the tool will create an FS2004 MDL with the long animation from your FSX model.

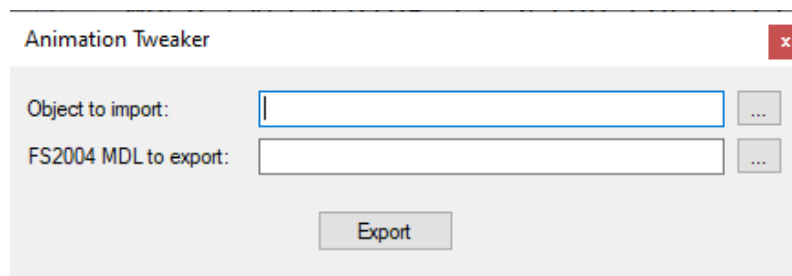


Figure 7.6: Animation tweaker

7.7 XML Apron to SurfaceType converter

With the XML Apron to SurfaceType converter, see Figure 7.7, you can make SCASM SurfaceType commands that ensure that your aprons are smooth and don't show dirt behind the wheels, based on BGLComp aprons defined in a XML file. This technique can be used if you want to see the photoreal scenery below the apron.

After selecting the **XML file** to load and the **SCA file** that should be written, you can press the **Convert** button and the SurfaceType commands will be written to the SCA file you have selected.

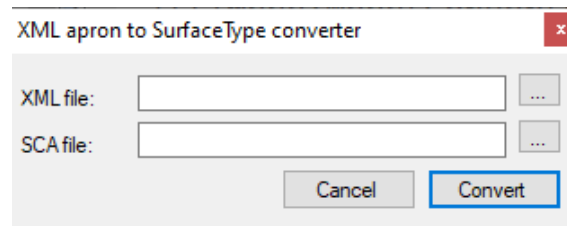


Figure 7.7: XML Apron to SurfaceType converter

7.8 Placement to SHP converter

With the placement to SHP converter, see Figure 7.8, you can create a SHP file for the position of each object in a scenery. This can be useful if you want to process the object placement information in a GIS tool or import it into another system that uses SHP files.

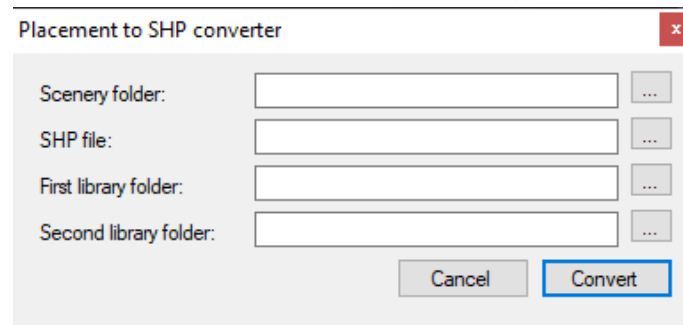


Figure 7.8: Placement to SHP converter

You need to specify the scenery folder of the scenery that you want to convert, the location where the SHP file will be written and optionally you can provide two additional folders where the tool will look for needed library BGL files. When you press **Convert** the SHP file will be written.

What the tool does is that it checks all BGL files in your scenery folder for object placement information. For each placement a point feature in the SHP file will be written, with attributes for the heading, scale, etc. The tool will also try to find the name of the placed objects, for this it will scan all BGL files in the scenery and the two library folders you selected. When the object is found in any of these files, an attribute with the name will be written.

7.9 SCASM Macro to XML placement converter

With the SCASM Macro to XML placement converter, see Figure 7.9, you can create a BGLComp XML file with object placement based on a SCASM file that contains Macro commands.

You need to specify the **SCA file** you want to read, the **XML file** that should be created. You also need to specify the **MDL folder** so that the object GUID information can be read from those files, the assumption is that the SCASM macro and MDL file have the same name. Lastly you need to specify the **API folder**, this is the folder where the SCASM macros are stored. This folder is used to find the long filename, in case the SCA file is using the short 8.3 character filename.

When you press the **Convert** button the XML placement file will be generated.

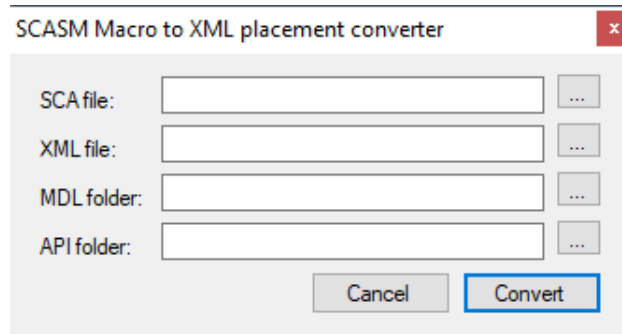


Figure 7.9: SCASM Macro to XML Placement converter

7.10 Replace double sided material by triangles

This function duplicates the triangles for all materials that have the double sided option enabled. It can be useful to have the double sided as geometry, if the system you are exporting to does not support this material attribute. Another advantage of creating them as geometry is that the lighting of the triangles improves.

7.11 Import names from XML

With this function you can load objects names from a XML file. When a FS2004 library BGL is loaded the objects have no names. With this function you can load the BGLComp XML file that was used to generate the library BGL. The filenames of the MDL files stored in the XML will then be used as names for the objects.

7.12 Export ground polygons to SHP

This function exports all ground polygons of the currently selected object to an ESRI Shapefile. This can be useful if you want to use the ground polygons in a GIS program, for example to overlay them on the photo scenery of the airport. This functions works best with ground polygons that are flat and haven't been corrected yet for the curve of the earth in FSX or Prepar3D.

7.13 Burn material colors into textures

When importing models from certain modeling tools it might be that a material has both a texture and a colour assigned. Some systems mix those two on rendering, while others don't do that. If your target system does not, you can use this function to mix the colour and the texture and store the result as a new texture.

7.14 Filter out ground polygons

This function removes all ground polygons from your object. Ground polygons are polygons that are level to the ground and within a certain distance. Sometimes old objects include ground polygons, like parking lots. In FSX scenery it is often more realistic to use photo scenery instead, so these have to be removed from the object.

7.15 Generate footprint object

When this option is selected a footprint of the currently selected object will be generated. This footprint projects all triangles of the object on the ground plane. The footprint object is then made the currently selected object.

7.16 Normals & Shading

7.16.1 Flip all triangles

When this option is selected all triangles in the object are flipped. This means they will be facing the other direction.

7.16.2 Flip triangles with inverse normals

When this option is selected all triangles where the normal of the triangle is inversed compared to the normals of the vertices are flipped. Having the triangle and normal vertices not the same can result in the triangle showing up dark in the object.

7.16.3 Flat shade object

When this option is selected all triangles in the object will be flat shaded. This means that the edges between different triangles will look hard, as the normal vector for the vertices on the edge is calculated to be equal to the normal of the triangle they are part of. See Figure 7.10 for an example of a flat shaded object.

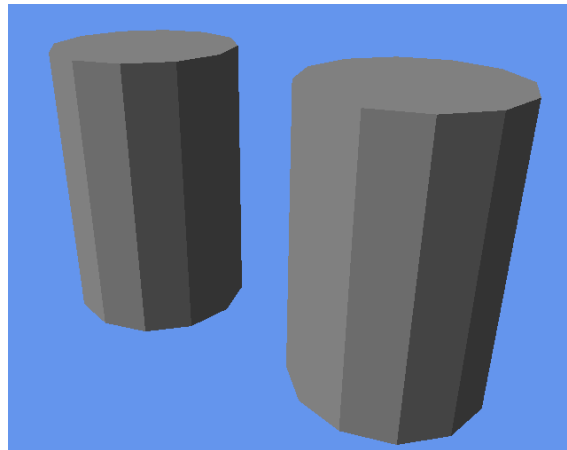


Figure 7.10: Flat shaded object

7.16.4 Smooth shade object

When this option is selected all triangles in the object will be smooth shaded. This means that the edges between different triangles will look smooth, as the normal vector for the vertices on the edge is calculated to be the average of the triangles that connect there. See Figure 7.11 for an example of a smooth shaded object.

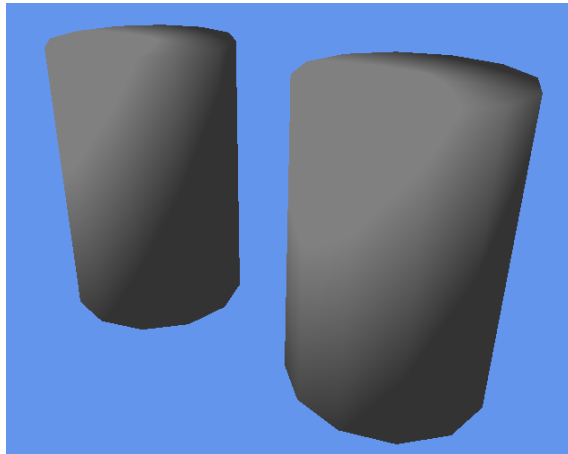


Figure 7.11: Smooth shaded object

Chapter 8

Readers

ModelConverterX contains various readers to be able to load objects, sceneries and textures from different formats. In this chapter these various readers are discussed.

8.1 Scenery and object readers

This section describes the details and limitations of the various object readers. See Table 8.1 for an overview of the supported features of the different readers.

8.1.1 AC3D

The AC3D reader is used to read objects from the format of the AC3D modelling tool. This format is for example used by the FlightGear simulator. ModelConverterX can read the basic geometry and materials from this format.

8.1.2 Assimp

ModelConverterX makes use of the Assimp library to read certain 3D formats. Geometry, material settings and animations can be read using the Assimp library. It should be noted that not all formats in the Assimp library support all these functionalities, e.g. some formats don't support animations for example. The following formats are read by ModelConverterX using Assimp:

- AutoDesk FBX
- COLLADA (DAE)
- Wavefront OBJ
- Stereolithography (STL)
- AutoCad DXF
- Blender project files

8.1.3 BGL

The BGL Format is the compiled scenery format used by Flight Simulator and Prepar3D. ModelConverterX can read scenery objects and their placement, excludes and effects from the BGL format. The various versions of the BGL format are supported (e.g. FS2002, FS2004, FSX, P3D v4, etc). When 3D objects are read from FSX and P3D BGL files, ModelConverterX uses the MDL reader for that. It should be noted that ModelConverterX can't read airport or terrain BGL files.

Format	Object mesh	Basic materials	Advanced materials	PBR materials	LOD	Mouse rectangle	Visibility conditions	Animation	Skin and bone animation	Attached objects	Friendly name and GUID	Object placement	Special effects	Excludes
AC3D	✓	✓			✓									
Assimp	✓	✓			✓			✓						
- FBX	✓	✓			✓			✓						
- COLLADA	✓	✓			✓			✓						
- STL	✓	✓			✓									
- DXF	✓	✓			✓									
- Blender	✓	✓			✓			✓						
BGL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- Pre-FS2004 BGL	✓	✓			✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- BGLComp BGL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CFG	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
DSF	✓	✓			✓							✓		✓
FLT	✓	✓			✓									
FSC	✓	✓			✓			✓						
KMZ	✓	✓										✓		
MDL	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
- Pre-FS2004 MDL	✓	✓			✓			✓						
- FS2004 MDL	✓	✓			✓			✓		✓			✓	
- FSX MDL	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
- P3D v2 MDL	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
- P3D v4 MDL	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
- P3D v4.4 MDL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
SCASM	✓	✓			✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	
Wavefront OBJ	✓	✓			✓									
X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
- FS2004 X	✓	✓			✓			✓						
- FSX X	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
- P3D v2 X	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
- P3D v4 X	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
- P3D v4.4 X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
XML	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- FS2004 XML	✓	✓			✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- FSX/P3D XML	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
X-Plane OBJ	✓	✓			✓									
3DS	✓	✓			✓			✓						

Table 8.1: Object and scenery reader capabilities

8.1.4 CFG

The CFG reader can read information from aircraft.cfg files, for example points for lights, center of gravity and such. These points of the aircraft can be shown in the preview and edited with the Aircraft.cfg editor (see section 5.9).

8.1.5 DSF

The DSF format is used by the X-Plane simulator for sceneries. ModelConverterX can read objects and their placement from the DSF format. To read the actual object information the X-Plane OBJ reader is used.

8.1.6 FLT

The OpenFlight format is commonly used by professional flight simulators. ModelConverterX can read 3D objects from the OpenFlight format, including geometry, materials and light points. ModelConverterX does not support the concept of switches or degree of freedom nodes.

8.1.7 FSC

The FSC format is used by the Abacus FSDS modelling tool. ModelConverterX can read geometry, materials and animations from this format. Since support for this format is not complete, it might sometimes be easier to export the model to MDL format from FSDS and then import that file into ModelConverterX.

8.1.8 KMZ

ModelConverterX can read objects and their placement from KMZ files that are typically used by Google Earth. The 3D objects inside the KMZ file are stored in the COLLADA format, so the Assimp reader is used to read those.

8.1.9 MDL

The MDL format is the compiled format for aircraft and scenery models of Flight Simulator and Prepar3D. ModelConverterX can read MDL files from the following FS versions:

- Pre-FS2004 aircraft MDL files
- FS2004 (aircraft and scenery)
- FSX (aircraft and scenery)
- P3D v2 (aircraft and scenery)
- P3D v4 (aircraft and scenery)
- P3D v4.4 (aircraft and scenery)

Of these the FSX and P3D formats are supported almost completely. For the older versions of the MDL formats certain features might be less complete or more buggy.

8.1.10 SCASM

The SCASM format is the input of the SCASM compiler that can make BGL files. With this reader you can read SCA source files, but also API and SCM macros. These formats were mainly used before FS2004. Older versions of the BGL format are also decompiled into SCASM code first, before they are read by ModelConverterX.

8.1.11 Wavefront OBJ

Wavefront OBJ is a relatively simple format that is supported by many modeling tools. ModelConverterX can read geometry and materials from this format.

8.1.12 X

DirectX X files are used as input into the XtoMDL and MakeMDL compilers used to make MDL files. ModelConverterX can also read those X files directly.

8.1.13 XML

The BGLComp compiler that makes the BGL files for FS2004, FSX and P3D uses XML source files that specify the placement of objects and which MDL files to include. ModelConverterX can also directly read those XML source files.

8.1.14 X-Plane OBJ

X-Plane uses OBJ files for its scenery and aircraft models. ModelConverterX does not support all features of X-Plane, but it can read the geometry and materials from the OBJ files.

8.1.15 3DS

The 3DS file format is the original format of the 3DS Max modeling tool. Many formats support this format, therefore it is common to use. However the format is also quite dated by now, e.g. having restrictions on the length of texture names from the DOS ages. ModelConverterX can read geometry, materials and animations from this format.

8.2 Texture readers

To display the textures of your object in the preview window, ModelConverterX contains readers for different texture formats. The following texture formats can be read by ModelConverterX:

- BMP (8 bit, 16 bit, 24 bit, 32 bit)
- Extended BMP (DXT1, DXT3, DXT5)
- DDS (DXT1, DXT3, DXT5)
- RAW/R8 format using the FS5 colour palette
- JPG
- PNG
- PSD
- SGI RGB/RGBA
- TGA
- TIF

Chapter 9

Writers

To export objects and sceneries from ModelConverterX you can use the different writers. There are two types of writers:

- **Object writers** that can save one single object and attached parts.
- **Scenery writers** that can save multiple objects, placement information, special effects and excludes.

Below the available writers are described in more detail.

9.1 Object writers

This section describes the details and limitations of the various object writers. See Table 9.1 for an overview of the supported features of the different writers.

9.1.1 AC3D

The AC3D format is used by the AC3D modelling tool and by FlightGear. ModelConverterX can export geometry and basic material settings to the AC3D format. Level of detail information is stored in the name of the parts.

9.1.2 AF2 TGI

The TGI format is used by AeroFly FS2 for 3D models. ModelConverterX can export geometry and basic material settings to the TGI format. Only the highest level of detail of the object is exported to the TGI format.

9.1.3 Assimp

The Assimp writer can export to various formats using the Assimp library. ModelConverterX can export geometry and basic material settings using the Assimp writer. Level of detail information is stored in the node names. The following formats are supported by this writer:

- COLLADA
- FBX (binary)
- Wavefront OBJ
- 3DS

Format	Object mesh	Basic materials	Advanced materials	PBR materials	LOD	Mouse rectangle	Visibility conditions	Animation	Skin and bone animation	Attachpoints
AC3D	✓	✓			✓					
AF2 TGI	✓	✓								
Assimp	✓	✓			✓					
FBX (ASCII)	✓	✓			✓					
FLT	✓	✓			✓					
FSDS	✓	✓			✓					
MDL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- FS2004 MDL (aircraft)	✓	✓	✓		✓					
- FS2004 MDL (scenery)	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓
- FSX MDL	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- P3D v2 MDL	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- P3D v4 MDL	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- P3D v4.4 MDL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wavefront OBJ (old)	✓	✓			✓					
X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- FS2004 X	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓
- FSX X	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- P3D v2 X	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- P3D v4 X	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- P3D v4.4 X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
X-Plane OBJ	✓	✓			✓					
3DS (old)	✓	✓			✓					

Table 9.1: Object writer feature overview

9.1.4 FBX (ASCII)

The FBX (ASCII) writer is an alternative to writing FBX files with the Assimp writer. ModelConverterX can export geometry and basic material settings to the FBX (ASCII) format. Level of detail information is stored as part of the object name.

9.1.5 FLT

The OpenFlight (FLT) format is used in many professional flight simulator and is used by the Presagis Creator tool. ModelConverterX can export geometry, basic materials and levels of detail to the OpenFlight format.

9.1.6 FSC

The FSC format is used by the Abacus FSDS modeling tool. ModelConverterX can export geometry, basic material settings and level of detail information to the FSC format.

9.1.7 MDL

The MDL format is used by Microsoft Flight Simulator and Prepar3D for the 3D objects. ModelConverterX uses the MakeMDL and XtoMDL tools from the SDK to export to the MDL format. ModelConverterX can export to the following MDL versions:

- FS2004 scenery MDL file
- FS2004 aircraft MDL file¹
- FSX MDL file
- P3D v2 MDL file
- P3D v4 MDL file
- P3D v4.4 MDL file

9.1.8 Wavefront OBJ (old)

The Wavefront OBJ (old) writer is an alternative to writing Wavefront OBJ files with the Assimp writer. ModelConverterX can export geometry and basic material settings to the Wavefront OBJ (old) format. Level of detail information is stored in the name of the parts.

9.1.9 X

The X file format is the input file for the MakeMDL and XtoMDL tools from the SDK. ModelConverterX can save the X file for the following FS versions:

- FS2004 X file
- FSX X file
- P3D v2 X file
- P3D v4 X file
- P3D v4.4 X file

¹Exporting fully functional aircraft to the FS2004 MDL format is not yet supported, animations, mouse rectangles and visibility conditions are not correctly exported.

9.1.10 X-Plane OBJ

X-Plane uses OBJ files for the 3D objects. ModelConverterX can export geometry, basic material settings and levels of details to the X-Plane OBJ format. X-Plane only allows one texture per OBJ file, this means that if your object uses multiple textures it will be exported as multiple OBJ files.

9.1.11 3DS (old)

This 3DS (old) writer is an alternative to writing 3DS files with the Assimp writer. ModelConverterX can export geometry and basic material settings to the 3DS format. Level of detail information is stored in the name of the parts.

9.2 Scenery writers

This section describes the details and limitations of the various object writers. See Table 9.2 for an overview of the supported features.

Format	Object models	Object placements	Special effects	Excludes	Attached objects	Ground polygons	Flatten
BGL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
- FS2004 BGL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
- FSX BGL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
- P3D v2 BGL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
- P3D v4 BDL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
- P3D v4.4 BGL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
BGL flatten							✓
BGL ground polygon						✓	
DSF	✓	✓		✓			
SCA ground polygon						✓	
TSC	✓	✓					
TXT	✓						
XML	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
- FS2004 XML	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
- FSX XML	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
- P3D v2 XML	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
- P3D v4 XML	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
- P3D v4.4 XML	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

Table 9.2: Scenery writer feature overview

9.2.1 BGL

The BGL format is used by Microsoft Flight Simulator and Prepar3D to store scenery. The BGL files that ModelConverterX writes can contain 3D models, object placement, effects, attached objects and excludes. ModelConverterX uses the BGLComp tool from the SDK to compile the BGL files. The following versions of the BGL format are supported:

- FS2004, including FS2004 MDL files as objects.
- FSX, including FSX MDL files as objects.

- P3D v2, including P3D v2 MDL files as objects.
- P3D v4, including P3D v4 MDL files as objects.
- P3D v4.4, including P3D v4.4 MDL files as objects.

9.2.2 BGL flatten

ModelConverterX can create a terrain flatten BGL file using shp2vec based on 3D objects. This can be used to make an accurate flatten based on a 3D mesh in a modeling tool. See Figure 9.1 for an example of a flatten made from a building shape.

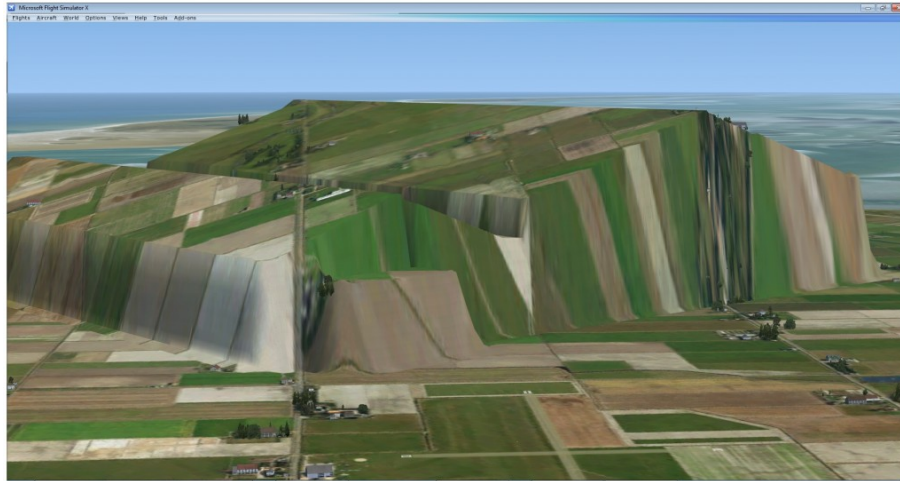


Figure 9.1: Flatten made from object mesh

9.2.3 BGL ground polygon

ModelConverterX can write FS2002 style ground polygon BGL files using the SCASM tool. The BGL files are used for custom ground polygons in FS2004, FSX and Prepar3D v1. The ground polygon writer supports night and seasonal textures.

9.2.4 DSF

DSF is the scenery format of X-Plane. ModelConverterX can export objects and their placement to the DSF format. The objects themselves are exported in the X-Plane OBJ format together with the DSF file.

9.2.5 SCA ground polygon

This writer creates the SCASM source file used for FS2002 style ground polygons.

9.2.6 TSC

TSC is the scenery format of AeroFly FS2. ModelConverterX can export objects and their placement to the TSC format. The content converter tool from AF2 is used to create the TSC file.

9.2.7 TXT

The TXT format is used to list the GUID and names of objects in a scenery. Some tools use these TXT files to know which objects are contained in a library BGL file.

9.2.8 XML

The XML format creates the XML files that are used by BGLComp to create scenery BGL files. ModelConverterX can export the following versions of the BGLComp XML format:

- FS2004.
- FSX (also used for Prepar3D).

9.3 Texture writers

ModelConverterX can write textures to various formats, this allows you to convert objects and their textures to different applications. Below the supported formats are described.

9.3.1 Generic

ModelConverterX uses the .NET functionality to write textures to the following formats:

- BMP
- JPG
- PNG
- TIF

9.3.2 DDS/DXT BMP

ModelConverterX creates DDS and DXT compressed BMP files using the ImageTool tool from the FSX or Prepar3D SDK. These texture formats are DXT compressed, which means that they take less space and can also be efficiently processed by the graphics cards. These formats support mip maps.

9.3.3 RGB

The RGB format is typically used in combination with the OpenFlight format. ModelConverterX can write textures to this format. This format uses no mip maps.

Chapter 10

Options

In the options window you can set all the options of ModelConverterX. There are different categories of options for the preview renderer, importers, exporters, etc. In the list on the left you can select which category of options you want to see and edit. The related options are then shown in the property list on the right side of the window. In the sections below all the available options are discussed.

The **Reset to default** button in the toolbar at the top of the window resets the currently selected category of options to their default values. The **Reset all to default** button resets all options categories at once to their default values

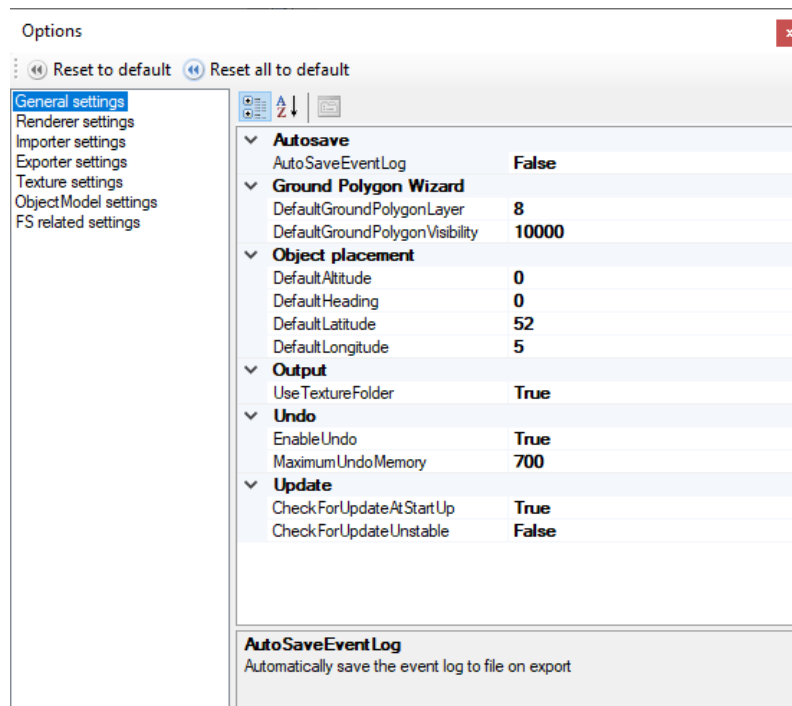


Figure 10.1: Options window

10.1 General settings

AutoSave

- **AutoSaveEventLog** Flag to determine if the event log should automatically be saved to a TXT file when you export an object.

Ground Polygon Wizard

- **DefaultGroundPolygonLayer** specifies the default layer value used for materials.
- **DefaultGroundPolygonVisibility** specifies the default visibility value used for materials.

Object placement

- **DefaultAltitude** specifies the default altitude value used when creating a new object placement.
- **DefaultHeading** specifies the default heading value used when creating a new object placement.
- **DefaultLatitude** specifies the default latitude value used when creating a new object placement.
- **DefaultLongitude** specifies the default longitude value used when creating a new object placement.

Output

- **UseTextureFolder** specifies what the initial location of the texture folder in the material editor will be. When set to true the initial value is the last used texture folder, when set to false the object folder is used as initial value.

Undo

- **EnableUndo** specifies that the undo functionality is enabled. ModelConverterX will use more memory when it is enabled.
- **MaximumUndoMemory** specifies the maximum amount of memory in MB that can be used to store previous versions of your object. If this amount of memory is passed, the oldest changes will be deleted and cannot be undone anymore.

Update

- **CheckForUpdateAtStartup** specifies if ModelConverterX should check if a newer version is available at startup. When a newer version is found you will be notified with a message, see Figure 10.2. When you click on that message you are taken to the download page of the development release. An internet connection is required to check for updated versions.
- **CheckForUpdateUnstable** specifies if ModelConverterX should notify you of updates for the unstable development releases as well. When set to false only notifications for updates of the stable releases are given.

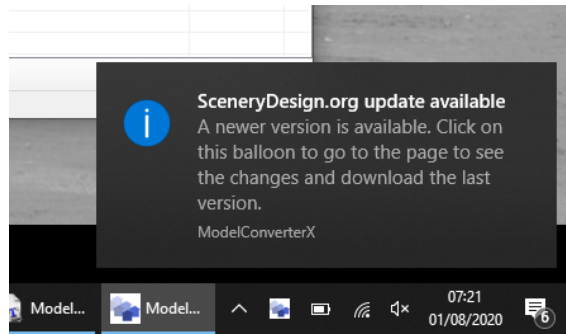


Figure 10.2: Update notification

10.2 Renderer settings

Colors

- **AttachPointColor** specifies the color used to render the attachpoint location.
- **BackgroundColor** specifies the color of the preview background at day.
- **BackgroundColorNight** specifies the color of the preview background at night.
- **BoneColor** specifies the color used to render the bones.
- **CFGCameraDefinitionColor** specifies the color used to render CFG camera definition locations.
- **CFGContactPointColor** specifies the color used to render CFG contact point locations.
- **CFGEngineColor** specifies the color used to render CFG engine locations.
- **CFGExitColor** specifies the color used to render CFG exit locations.
- **CFGFuelTankColor** specifies the color used to render CFG fuel tank locations.
- **CFGLightColor** specifies the color used to render CFG light locations.
- **CFGRotorColor** specifies the color used to render CFG rotor locations.
- **CFGSmokeSystemColor** specifies the color used to render CFG smoke system locations.
- **CFGStationLoadColor** specifies the color used to render CFG station load locations.
- **CrashBoxColor** specifies the color used to render the crashbox.
- **GridColor** specifies the color used to render the grid lines.
- **GridOriginColor** specifies the color used to render the grid lines that pass through the origin of the grid.
- **GroundColor** specifies the color used to render the ground plane.
- **NormalColor** specifies the color used to render the normal vectors.
- **SelectedAttachpointColor** specifies the color used to render the currently selected attachpoint location.
- **ShadowColor** specifies the color used to render the shadow.

General

- **PreviewEnabled** specifies if the preview image is enabled. Disabling the preview can reduce memory usage of ModelConverterX.

Grid

- **GridSize** specifies the total size of the grid in meters. For example if you specify 200 here and you have a step size of 10, you will see a grid with 20 squares.
- **GridStep** specifies the distance between the lines in the grid in meters.

Navigation

- **PanScale** scales the panning movement of the mouse. This allows you to tune how quickly you pan.
- **ZoomScale** scales the zooming of the mouse wheel. This allows you to tune how quickly you zoom in or out.

Particles

- **FadeParticles** specifies if particles of special effects are faded or not. Sometimes their behaviour can be studied better when fading is turned off.
- **PlaySounds** specifies if the sounds of special effects are played or not.

Rotation

- **DefaultRotationX** specifies the default rotation angle around the X axis. By changing this value you can modify the default orientation of your object in the preview.
- **DefaultRotationY** specifies the default rotation angle around the Y axis.

Shaders

- **ForceSimpleShader** specifies if the simple shader should be used, if set to false you can toggle between the complex and simple shader. On some older graphics cards the complex shader can't be compiled, so this can be used to force the simple shader.
- **ShowShaderWarnings** specifies if compilation warnings of the shader are shown in the event log.

Spot light

- **OnlyShowSelectedSpotLight** specifies if only the selected spotlight should be shown in the preview. When you have many spotlights this can make it easier to only see the one you are working on.
- **SpotLightStep** specifies the step in degrees between the lines that are drawn for the spot-light cone.

Wireframe

- **WireframeLineWidth** specifies the line width of the lines in wireframe rendering mode.
- **WireframeLineWidthHighlight** specifies the line width of the selected part in wireframe rendering mode. By making the lines of the selected part thicker, they are easier to spot.

10.3 Importer settings

AssimpReader

- **Animation frame duration** specifies how many seconds each animation frame takes. This way you can influence the speed at which the animation of your object shows.

DSFReader

- **Library list** specifies a list of library.txt files that are used to find library objects.

General

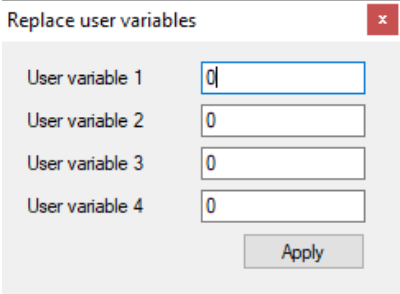
- **Debug mode** specifies if the debug mode is enabled. When debug mode is enabled additional information messages will be put in the event log. Not all importers support this function.
- **Replace effects by lights** specifies if ModelConverterX should replace special effects by lights on import. If set to true ModelConverterX will make light and spotlight attach points when effects for them are found. When they are imported as lights or spot lights it is easier to modify their settings. This function only works if you use the default ModelConverterX special effect names in your object.
- **Up axis** specifies which axis is used as the upwards axis of the model. Not all importers support this setting.

KMZReader

- **Use filename** specifies if the filename of the KMZ file is used as the object name. When set to false the name of the KML file that is stored inside the KMZ is used.

SCASMReader

- **Apply default scale** specifies if the default scale as specified in a comment in API macro objects should be applied when importing the object.
- **Create empty LOD** specifies if an empty level of detail should be added to the object on import.
- **Empty LOD value** specifies the value used when automatically adding an empty level of detail.
- **Line extrude radius** specifies the radius of the circle that is used when creating a tube from lines. In FSX and Prepar3D it is not possible to draw lines anymore, so these are turned into a 3D tube object of triangles.
- **Line extrude vertex count** specifies the number of vertices that are used for the circle when creating a tube from lines. Keep this number low to minimize the number of triangles that are added to your object.
- **Replace user variables** specifies if user variables used in API macros are replaced by user specified values or not. When set to false a default value of zero is used. When set to true a window is displayed as shown in Figure 10.3 where you can enter the desired values.



Replace user variables	
User variable 1	0
User variable 2	0
User variable 3	0
User variable 4	0
<button>Apply</button>	

Figure 10.3: window to specify user variables of API macros

- **Use conditions** specifies how conditions in the SCASM and BGL code should be processed during importing. The following values are allowed:

- **AlwaysTrue** means that any conditional check is considered to be true.
- **AlwaysFalse** means that any conditional check is considered to be false.
- **DefaultValues** uses the default values of all variables when checking the condition.
- **UserSpecified** uses user specified values for the variables when checking the conditions. A window as shown in Figure 10.4 will be shown during import so that you can enter the values.
- **VisibilityCondition** creates visibility conditions from the conditions.

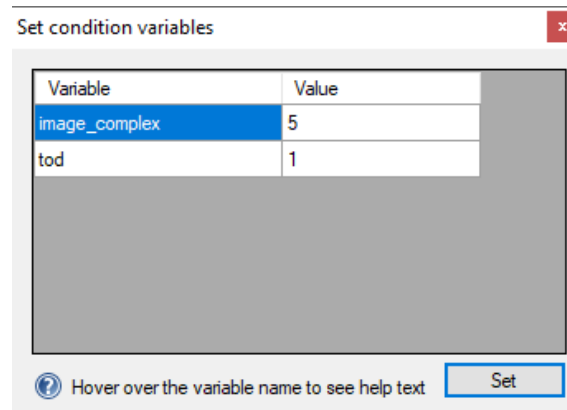


Figure 10.4: window to specify variables for conditions

XReader

- **Collapse gamepack matrices** specifies whether two specific scaling matrices that the gamepack adds to the X file should be collapsed into one matrix. The gamepack adds one matrix with scale 1024 and another with scale 0.000977, but due to rounding issues these do not result in an exactly identical matrix and leaving them can result in small offsets for big objects.
- **Parse frame name** specifies if the frame names should be parsed. If set to true frames with MR_ will be turned into mouse rectangles and frames with VT_ will be turned into visibility conditions.

10.4 Exporter settings

AC3DWriter

- **AC3D axes** specifies which directions are used for the XYZ axes when exporting to the AC3D format.

AeroFly

- **AeroFlyContentConverterPath** specifies the path to the content converter tool for AeroFly FS2, this converter is used to generate the AF2 specific formats.

BGLWriter

- **Create TXT list** specifies if a TXT file with the names of the library objects should automatically be created on export of a BGL file.
- **FS2004 BGLComp path** specifies the path to the FS2004 version of BGLComp.
- **FSX BGLComp path** specifies the path to the FSX version of BGLComp.

- **KeepMDL** specifies if the MDL files should be kept after exporting a BGL file.
- **KeepSCA** specifies if the SCA file should be kept after compiling a FS2002 style ground polygon BGL file.
- **KeepXML** specifies if the BGLComp XML file should be kept after exporting a BGL file.
- **P3D v2 BGLComp path** specifies the path to the Prepar3D v2 or v3 version of BGLComp.
- **P3D v4 BGLComp path** specifies the path to the Prepar3D v4 version of BGLComp.
- **P3D v4.4 BGLComp path** specifies the path to the Prepar3D v4.4 or v5 version of BGLComp.

BGLXFlatWriter

- **shp2vecPath** specifies the path to the shp2vec tool from the FSX or Prepar3D SDK.

FLTWriter

- **IgnoreSpecularColor** specifies if the specular color of the material should be ignored. When set to true a black specular color is used instead. When set to false the specular color from the material is used.
- **LODMultiplier** specifies the multiplier that is used to calculate the LOD distance based on the size of the bounding box.
- **TexturedPolygonsWhite** specifies if textured polygons should use a white diffuse color. When set to false the diffuse color from the material is used for textured polygons as well.
- **WriteATTR** specifies if ATTR files are written for the textures of the object.

FSCWriter

- **SetSmoothing** specifies if smooth shaded polygons are exported as a separate part with smooth shading applied.

General

- **Author name** specifies your name as author. Some formats support storing the author name within the object.
- **Debug mode** specifies if debug mode is enabled. In debug mode the writers provide additional debug messages in the event log. Not all writers support the debug mode.
- **Export highest LOD** specifies if only the highest level of detail should be exported. When set to false all levels of detail are exported.

MDLWriter

- **CrashboxGranularity** specifies the granularity used for creating the crashbox. The lower the value the more accurate the crashbox, but also the bigger your MDL will be. See Figure 10.5 for an example of the impact of different values. Only used when SetCrashboxGranularity is true.
- **FSX XtoMDL path** specifies the path to the FSX version of XtoMDL.
- **KeepASMFile** specifies if the ASM files are kept when exporting a MDL file with MakeMDL.
- **KeepXFile** specifies if the X file should be kept after exporting a MDL file with MakeMDL or XtoMDL.
- **MakeMDLPath** specifies the path to the FS2004 MakeMDL tool.

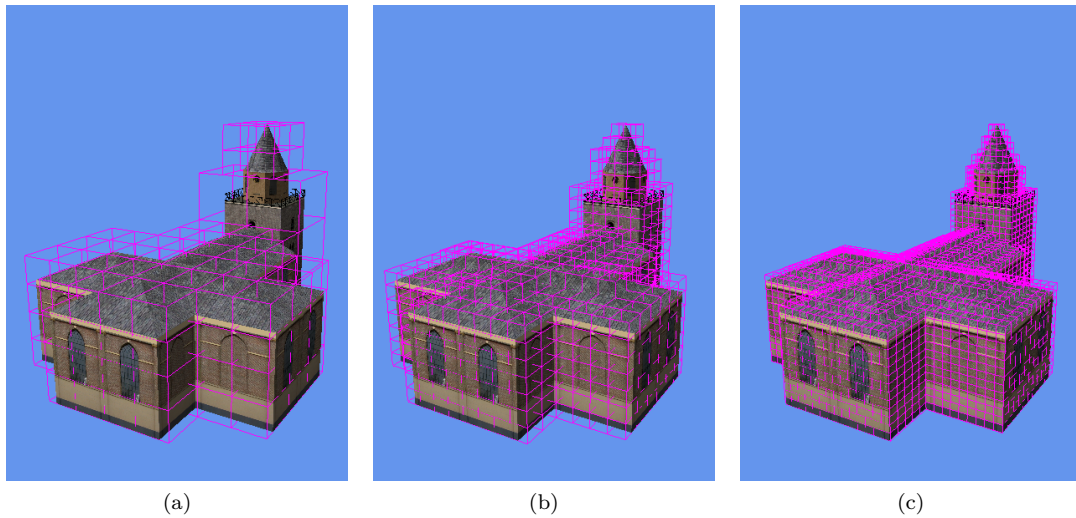


Figure 10.5: Example of different crashbox granularities for an object.(a) default value of XtoMDL (b) value of 2 (c) value of 1

- **NoCrash** specifies that no crashbox should be generated when exporting a MDL file.
- **P3D v2 XtoMDL path** specifies the path to the Prepar3D v2 or v3 version of XtoMDL.
- **P3D v4 XtoMDL path** specifies the path to the Prepar3D v4 version of XtoMDL.
- **P3D v4.4 XtoMDL path** specifies the path to the Prepar3D v4.4 or v5 version of XtoMDL.
- **PreserveGUIDOnExport** specifies if the GUID should be preserved when overwriting an existing MDL file. When set to true the GUID will be taken from the MDL file that you are overwriting.
- **SampleXML** specifies if a sample placement XML file should be saved with the object.
- **SetCrashboxGranularity** specifies if the CrashboxGranularity setting should be used. When set to false XtoMDL will use its default granularity.

XtoMDL

- **Keep** specifies if XtoMDL should save an XML file with the object definitions.

XWriter

- **DrawcallBatching** specifies if drawcall batching should be enabled when exporting an XML file. This can help improve performance, see section 11.3 for more background information.
- **DrawcallBatchingWorkingLOD** specifies if levels of detail should be retained when drawcall batching is enabled.
- **OnlyWriteTextureName** specifies if only the texture names should be written to the X file. When set to false the (relative) path is also written.
- **Use season material script** specifies if a material script is used for seasonal textures in Prepar3D MDL files. When set to false a visibility condition will be used instead.
- **ZBiasOffset** specifies the offset that will be given to polygons when exporting to FSX MDL files based on their ZBias value.

10.5 Texture settings

TextureLoader

- **BMPDDSEquivalence** specifies if BMP and DDS files should be considered equivalent when looking for textures. This is the default behaviour of FSX and Prepar3D. So if the model references a DDS file, but the texture folder contains a BMP file with the same name it will be used instead.
- **FlipDDS** specifies if DDS files should be flipped when they are imported. For FSX or Prepar3D DDS files this should be false, but if you import a model made for another application it can be that you need to change this setting for them to show correctly.
- **TextureSearchPath** specifies the search path that ModelConverterX uses when it looks for a texture. ModelConverterX will first look for a texture in the folder where the object is located, next in a texture subfolder of the scenery or aircraft, and finally it will check all folders specified in the texture search path. The first folder where the texture is found is used for loading it.

Two special values can be used in the texture search path:

- **[MCXTEMP]** expands to the temp folder where ModelConverterX extracts zipped formats, like KMZ files.
- **[FSPATH]** expands to the path of the preferred FS version. You can specify this preferred version in the FS related settings of the options.

When editing this setting the texture search path editor, as shown in Figure 10.6, will be displayed. With the **New entry** button you can add a new entry to the search path where you can type your desired path. With the **Add path** button you can select a folder that you want to add to the path. The **Remove path** button removes the currently selected path from the search path. The **Edit path** button toggles the edit mode, so that you can make changes to the currently selected path. With the **Up** and **Down** arrow buttons you can move the priority of the currently selected path in the search path, the higher in the list the more priority it has. When you press the **Cancel** button any changes you made are discarded, while if you press the **OK** button they are stored in the settings.

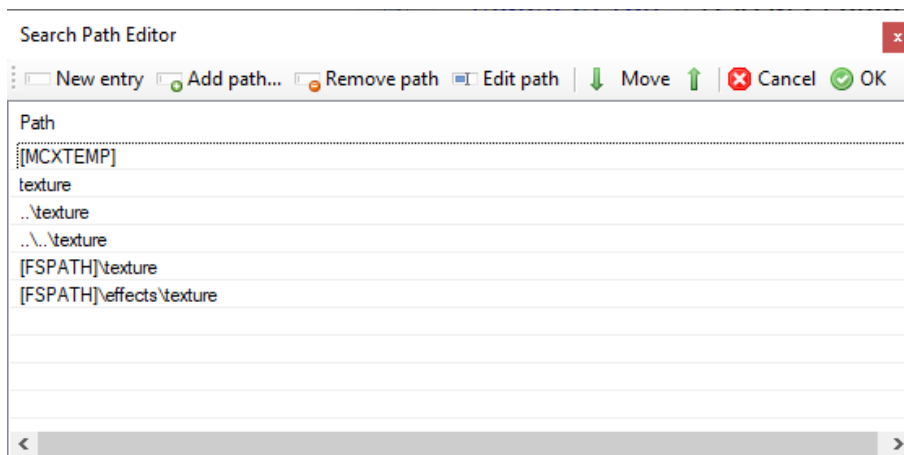


Figure 10.6: Texture search path editor

TextureWriter

- **AddMipMap** specifies if mip maps should be added to the textures that are written.
- **DefaultType** specifies the default texture type selected for exporting in the material editor.

- **ImageToolPath** specifies the path to ImageTool in the FSX or Prepar3D SDK. ImageTool is used to export DDS and DXT BMP textures.

Transparency

- **AlphaDetectionThreshold** specifies the threshold for detecting an alpha channel. Values below this value are not considered transparent. This setting is used to prevent incorrect reading of compressed formats like JPG or PNG.

10.6 ObjectModel settings

Level of detail

- **DefaultLOD** specifies the default level of detail value.
- **LODFOV** specifies the horizontal field of view in degrees that is used for calculations between viewing distances and level of detail values.
- **LODResolution** specifies the horizontal screen resolution in pixels used for calculations between viewing distances and level of detail values.

Optimize

- **CollapseModelParts** specifies whether modelparts with the same material should be combined into one modelpart. They are also moved as far upwards in the scenegraph as possible.
- **SmallTriangleLimit** specifies the area in square meters of a small triangle. Triangles with an area less than this value are removed during optimization of the object.

Placement

- **DefaultImageComplexity** specifies the default image complexity used when placing an object.

Shading

- **SmoothShadingNormalTolerance** specifies when a triangle is smooth shaded or not. When the dot product of the vector normal and the triangle normal is below the specified tolerance the triangle is considered smooth shaded.

Texture

- **AutumnTextureSuffix** specifies the suffix added to the diffuse texture name when adding autumn season textures.
- **BumpTextureSuffix** specifies the suffix added to the diffuse texture name when adding bump textures.
- **DetailTextureSuffix** specifies the suffix added to the diffuse texture name when adding detail textures.
- **FresnelTextureSuffix** specifies the suffix added to the diffuse texture name when adding fresnel textures.
- **HardWinterTextureSuffix** specifies the suffix added to the diffuse texture name when adding hard winter season textures.
- **MetallicTextureSuffix** specifies the suffix added to the diffuse texture name when adding metallic textures.

- **NightTextureSuffix** specifies the suffix added to the diffuse texture name when adding night textures.
- **SpecularTextureSuffix** specifies the suffix added to the diffuse texture name when adding specular textures.
- **SpringTextureSuffix** specifies the suffix added to the diffuse texture name when adding spring season textures.
- **SummerTextureSuffix** specifies the suffix added to the diffuse texture name when adding summer season textures.
- **WinterTextureSuffix** specifies the suffix added to the diffuse texture name when adding winter season textures.

10.7 FS related settings

FS

- **FS2004Path** specifies the path where FS2004 is installed.
- **FSXPath** specifies the path where FSX is installed.
- **ModelDefPath** specifies the path of the ModelDef.xml file that ModelConverterX should use to read animation, visibility condition and mouse rectangle definitions.
- **P3DPath** specifies the path where Prepar3D v1 is installed.
- **P3Dv2Path** specifies the path where Prepar3D v2 is installed.
- **P3Dv3Path** specifies the path where Prepar3D v3 is installed.
- **P3Dv4Path** specifies the path where Prepar3D v4 is installed.
- **P3Dv5Path** specifies the path where Prepar3D v5 is installed.
- **PreferredFSVersion** specifies the preferred FS version as used by ModelConverterX. This preferred version influences from where textures and effect files are read, but it also influences the format in which GUIDs are displayed.

Chapter 11

Background info

This section provides some interesting background information that might be useful to you while using ModelConverterX.

11.1 Position control

Multiple editors and wizards require you to specify a position, therefore these all use a common control that allows you to specify and save these positions. This section explains this control, which is shown in Figure 11.1.

In the latitude, longitude, altitude, heading and scale fields you can specify the details of the position that you want to use. To prevent you having to enter this information multiple times, you can save it using the button with the earth icon and the plus. This will add the position to a list of saved positions with the name you give it. The next time you want to use the same position you can just select it from the dropdown list and all details of the position will be filled in automatically.

If you want to remove a position from the list, you first select it in the list and then you press the button with the earth icon and the minus to remove it.

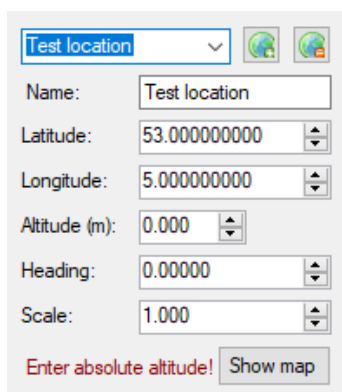
The image shows a 'Position control' dialog box. At the top, there is a dropdown menu labeled 'Test location' with a small arrow icon to its right. To the right of the dropdown are two small square buttons: one with a green globe and a plus sign, and another with a green globe and a minus sign. Below the dropdown, there are several input fields with labels: 'Name:' followed by a text box containing 'Test location'; 'Latitude:' followed by a text box containing '53.000000000' and a vertical spinner; 'Longitude:' followed by a text box containing '5.000000000' and a vertical spinner; 'Altitude (m):' followed by a text box containing '0.000' and a vertical spinner; 'Heading:' followed by a text box containing '0.00000' and a vertical spinner; and 'Scale:' followed by a text box containing '1.000' and a vertical spinner. At the bottom left, there is a red text label 'Enter absolute altitude!'. At the bottom right, there is a button labeled 'Show map'.

Figure 11.1: Position control

When you press the **Map** button a map window opens where you can see your position on a map, see Figure 11.2. You can select different map providers for the map image using the dropdown list at the top left. With the search box at the top right you can search for a named position, for example a city name.

Dragging with the left mouse button will move the currently selected position. The coordinates are automatically updated in the position control. Dragging with the right mouse button will pan

the map itself. With the mouse wheel you can zoom the map in and out.

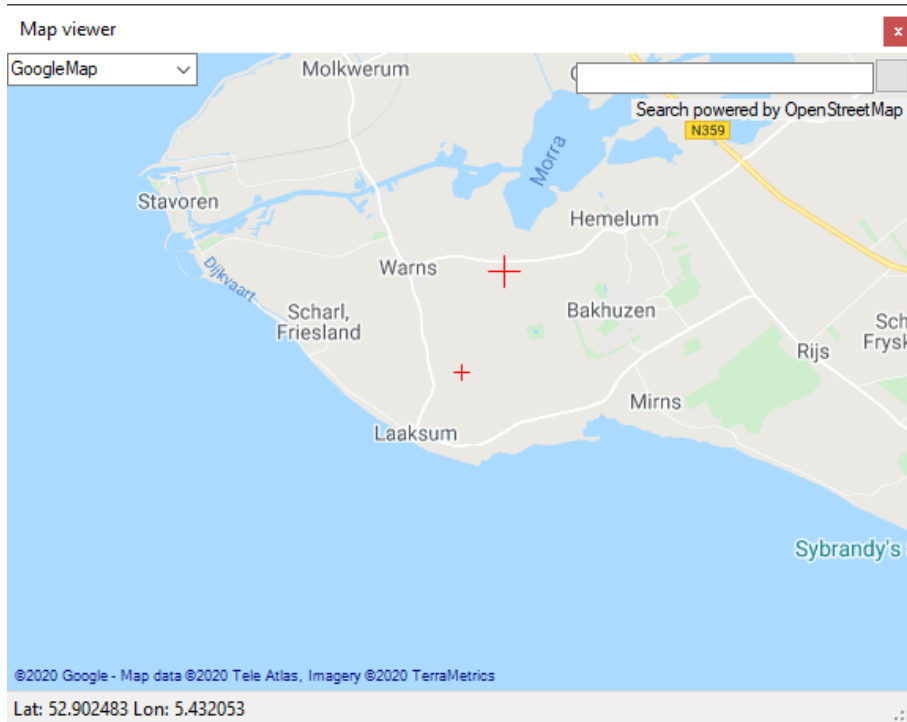


Figure 11.2: Map view of position

11.2 Rotation order

When you want to rotate an object around its axes there are different orders in which you can do this. In the **Rotate editor**, the **Transformation editor** or the **Animation editor** you can specify the order you want. But what do all those choices mean?

The first thing you can choose is in which order the different axes are rotated. For example you can first rotate along the Z axis, then along the Y axis and then along the X axis. That will obviously give a different result then when you would first rotate along the X axis, then along the Y axis and finally along the Z axis. So in the selection list you will be able to choose from the different orders in which the axes are rotated.

But you will also see that you have two choices for each order the axes are rotated, one being intrinsic and the other being extrinsic. What is the difference between them? Simply said an intrinsic rotation means that the axis are modified when you rotate the object. So for example when you first rotate along the Z axis, this means that the orientation of the X and Y axes also change. See Figure 11.3 for a graphical representation of this.

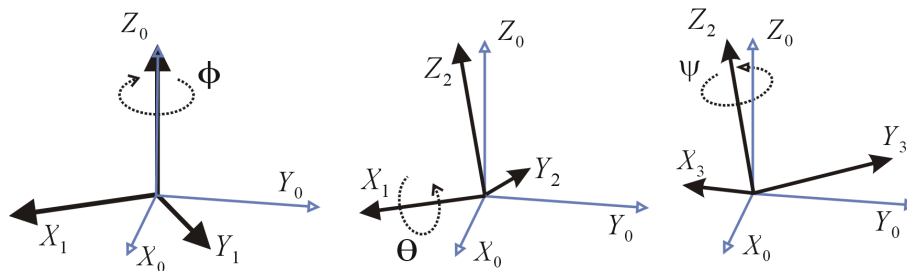


Figure 11.3: Example of intrinsic rotation

On the other hand extrinsic rotations means that the axes do not change. So if you rotate along the Z axis first, this does not affect the orientation of the other axis. See Figure 11.4 for a graphical representation of this.

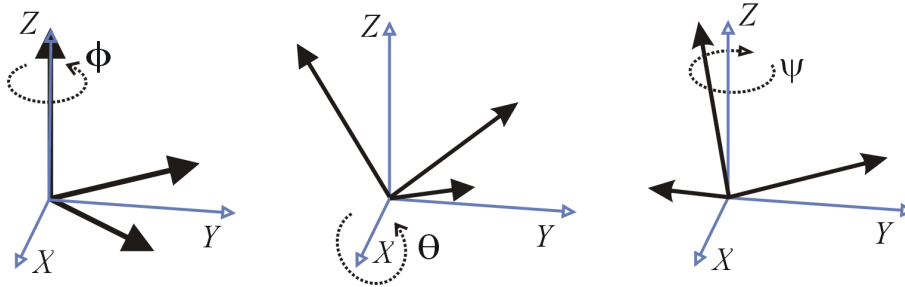


Figure 11.4: Example of extrinsic rotation

11.3 Drawcalls

One of the most important aspects for the performance of your object in the simulator is the amount of drawcalls that it has. So if you can minimize the number of drawcalls that will improve the performance a lot. In the **Material editor** there is a function for this. But what is a drawcall actually?

When the simulator needs to render your object on screen, it will first have to set the rendering state to the correct values. This for example means that a specific texture is activated or that settings affect the display of transparency are configured, etc. Once all these settings have been set up, the rendering engine will start to draw all triangles that use this material. This is called one drawcall, as all these triangles can be rendered in one call with the same settings. Switching to a different rendering state is a relatively expensive operation. So this means that every time you use a different texture, a different colour or some other material attribute that is slightly different, the rendering state has to be updated.

This means that to minimize the amount of drawcalls you need to use exactly the same material on your object. As soon as you change one attribute, you will get a different material and thus a different drawcall. With the dozens of attributes that an FSX material offers, it is quite easy to make a new drawcall, even though you might use the same texture.

So what can you do to minimize the amount of drawcalls? If you are using multiple texture sheets, it might help to put all of them on one bigger sheet instead. Or if you are using untextured materials with a colour, it might be easier to paint a corner of your texture that color and use that instead. Or if you have different material attributes set you could check if they really need to be different or not.

Figure 11.5 shows an object of a church as example. When I first designed this model it used about 10 different textures. The front, the side, the roof all had their own textures that I could easily map on the object. Later I combined all these textures into one sheet, see Figure 11.6 and this improved the performance of the object a lot. Originally I had part of the wall texture tiled, when I combined all the textures that was not possible anymore. But adding a few more polygons to get rid of the tiling was outweighed by the performance improvement of reducing the drawcalls.

Until now we have been talking about the performance improvements of reducing the number of drawcalls of a single model. But FSX and Prepar3D also include the concept of drawcall batching. This means that the rendering engine will combine the rendering of different instances of the same material into one single drawcall. So lets say that you use exactly the same material on two objects and that you placed 5 instances of each object. This means the rendering engine has to render 10 objects that use the same material. What drawcall batching does is render all triangles of these 10 objects in one go. So that means even more efficiency is gained.

There is one catch to this drawcall batching and that is that when enabled it will prevent the levels of detail, see section 11.4 from working. For relatively simple objects the drawcall batching will save more performance than adding levels of details, but for more complex objects it might be more useful to have the levels of detail working. So that is a choice you have to make as developer.

By default ModelConverterX will export all objects without levels of details in a such a way that their drawcalls can be batched. In the options you can specify if the level of detail or the drawcall batching has priority for objects that have levels of detail.

11.4 Level of detail

The concept of levels of detail is that you have different representations of your object, that vary in their complexity. And based on the how close you are to the object a different representation is shown. Figure 11.7 shows an example of the levels of detail in a default object in FSX. As you can see there are three representations that vary in complexity. When you are far away from the object the simplest representation is shown and as you get closer more detail is added.

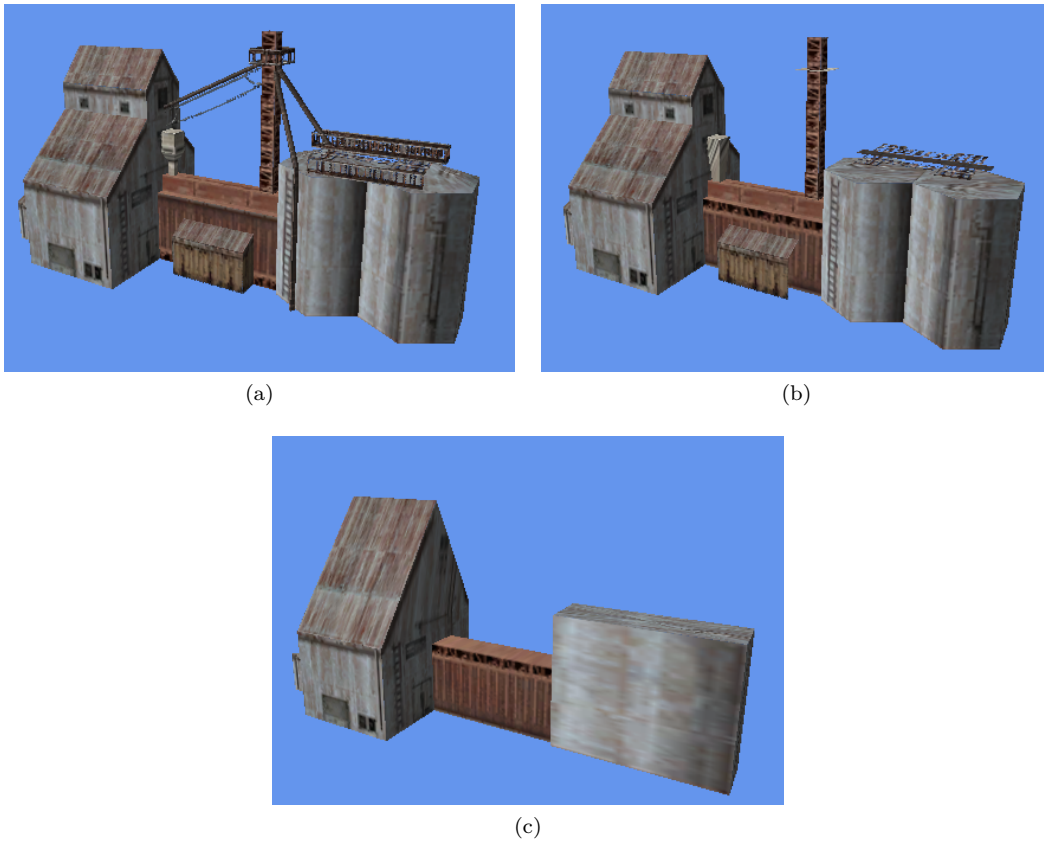


Figure 11.7: Example of level of detail. (a) LOD 100 with 257 triangles. (b) LOD 50 with 121 triangles. (c) LOD 10 with 38 triangles.

But if the object switches to the more detailed representation too late, that will be a visual distraction. So therefore it is important that the LOD values are tuned correctly. But what do those values 100, 50 and 10 as used in the example above mean? In Flight Simulator you don't specify the distance at which the levels of detail should switch. And that is a good thing, as the contribution that the object makes visually is not only determined by the distance. Somebody running the simulator on a monitor with a higher resolution has more pixels available and will therefore be able to see the detail from further away.

The LOD values represent the size that the object has on screen. Level of detail 100 will be shown

when the object is roughly 100 pixels wide(horizontally) on your screen, while the LOD 40 is shown when the object is around 40 pixels wide. So the higher the LOD value that you use, the later this version of the object will appear. Many objects use 100 as highest LOD, but you can also use higher values like 200 or 400 if your objects has small details that only need to show from very nearby.

Of course each level of detail that you add also makes your object bigger, as there are additional triangles and vertices that need to be stored. So you need to find a good balance there. A good rule of thumb is that each level of detail should contain around half of the triangle count of the next level of detail above it. So it probably doesn't make sense to add a level of detail when you only eliminate a handful of triangles.

If you want your object to disappear completely you can also add an empty level of detail. This will force the object to disappear before the normal distance that the simulator uses to display your object. If you have small objects that can't be seen from far away anyway, this can help to improve performance.

Chapter 12

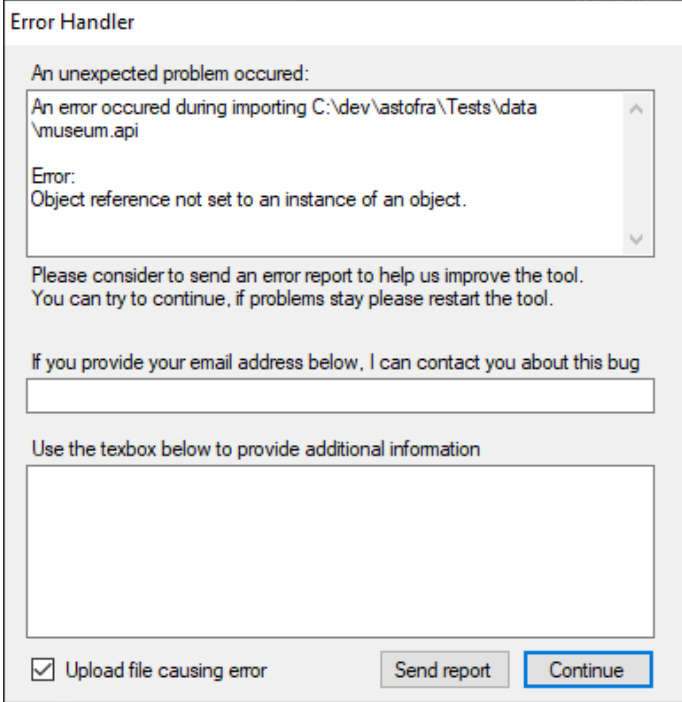
Support

12.1 Support forum

If you have any problems while using the program or if you have suggestions and other feedback to improve the tool, please let me know. Any report about an object or a texture not loading correctly will help me to improve the tool, so please be sure to report those. You can either contact me directly or visit the ModelConverterX subforum at FSDeveloper.com.

12.2 Reporting crashes

If you experience a crash while running ModelConverterX you will get a dialog to report the crash as shown in Figure 12.1. Please send error reports using this dialog, as that will ensure that I get all the details of where the crash happened. That's much more efficient than telling me in the forum that something crashed.



The image shows a Windows-style dialog box titled "Error Handler". It contains the following elements:

- A message: "An unexpected problem occurred:"
- A text box containing: "An error occurred during importing C:\dev\astofra\Tests\data\museum.api"
- A label "Error:" followed by a text box containing: "Object reference not set to an instance of an object."
- Instructions: "Please consider to send an error report to help us improve the tool. You can try to continue, if problems stay please restart the tool."
- A prompt: "If you provide your email address below, I can contact you about this bug" followed by an empty text input field.
- A prompt: "Use the textbox below to provide additional information" followed by a larger empty text area.
- At the bottom, there is a checkbox labeled "Upload file causing error" which is checked, and two buttons: "Send report" and "Continue".

Figure 12.1: Error reporting dialog

Chapter 13

Credits

The following persons or organizations deserve credit for helping me while creating this tool:

- Everybody who reported feedback on the previous versions, this helped me to improve the tool. A special thanks goes to the beta testers who dared to try my development releases that were sometimes a little buggy.
- Michael Garland for his papers on object simplification
- Colin Fahey for his C# OpenGL wrapper
- The ASSIMP for the library to read and write various 3D file formats
- Manfred Moldenhauer for the SCASM compiler and the permission to redistribute SCASM with ModelConverterX.
- Tom Gibson for reviewing this manual.

Chapter 14

User license

When using ModelConverterX you agree to the following user license:

I do hereby agree that I will only use ModelConverterX to edit and convert objects that I have created myself. I will not change the work of others, without their prior written permission. This does include any objects obtained by decompilation of BGL files.

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