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Example-Based Microstructure Rendering with Constant Storage

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Rendering glinty details from specular microstructure enhances the level of realism, but previous methods require heavy storage for the high-resolution height field or normal map and associated acceleration structures. In this paper, we aim at dynamically generating theoretically infinite microstructure, preventing obvious tiling artifacts, while achieving constant storage cost. Unlike traditional texture synthesis, our method supports arbitrary point and range queries, and is essentially generating the microstructure implicitly. Our method fits the widely used microfacet rendering framework with multiple distribution functions (NDFs) like GGX by a detailed local solution, with a small amount of runtime performance overhead.

CCS Concepts: • Computing methodologies → Rendering; Reflectance modeling.

Additional Key Words and Phrases: Rendering, surface microstructure, glints, constant storage, procedural by-example noise

ACM Reference Format:

1 INTRODUCTION

Microstructure rendering of glinty details [Yan et al. 2014] has brought a new level of realism to rendering specular highlights, making it a core effect in computer graphics. This method and subsequent work uses high-resolution normal maps to explicitly define every microfacet normal. However, very large normal maps are required to cover enough surface area without obvious repetition. For example, Yan et al. [2018] used a resolution of one micron per texel, which
requires a 10K × 10K normal map to cover just one square centimeter. Worse, hierarchical acceleration structures over these normal maps are needed for efficient pruning of non-contributing normals, making the storage problem even more severe. Designing normal maps of that size, which moreover need to allow for seamless tiling, requires additional tedious effort. These are key issues reducing the practicality of the prior solutions.

Although texture synthesis methods are ubiquitous, few of them are suitable for the microstructure rendering task. Earlier image quilting techniques [Efros and Freeman 2001; Efros and Leung 1999; Wei and Levoy 2000] and recent neural texture synthesis methods [Gatys et al. 2015; Jetchev et al. 2016; Zhou et al. 2018] are synthesizing an image starting from a core example image. The problem is that, if we would like to query the synthesized image say at index (100K, 100K), the method has to actually synthesize the image all the way up to that point, which is a clear violation of our constant storage need. A dynamic point query (giving the exact value anywhere on the synthesized image in constant time) is needed instead.

On the other hand, procedural noise methods, such as Perlin noise [Perlin 1985], Gabor noise [Lage et al. 2009] and texton noise [Galerne et al. 2017], use a few parameters to control the appearance of a non-repeating noise function over an infinitely large space. By-example noise methods [Galerne et al. 2012; Gilet et al. 2012; Heitz and Neyret 2018] offer more artist controllability by providing an example texture and blending patches from it at different querying positions. These methods require no additional storage, and support on-the-fly point queries. However, for microstructure rendering, we need not only a normal map, but also the corresponding acceleration method for pruning non-contributing regions. Unfortunately, none of these methods currently support min-max queries in an arbitrary range. Such a range query capability (returning the range of normals in any region on the synthesized image, again without actually generating it) is a necessary component of the solution to our problem.

We present a method that implicitly generates the normal map along with a range query capability, so that it can directly fit into the microstructure rendering framework of Yan et al. [2016], but with much lower storage requirements. Our method builds upon by-example noise methods to maximize artist controllability, and generates normal maps by blending patches from input examples. We support dynamic point queries and range queries on the implicit normal map generated using any by-example method, as long as the blending operation is monotonically increasing (as will be defined in Sec. 4.5). With our method, we are able to render microstructure with non-repetitive patterns, with constant storage cost and a small performance overhead over previous methods.

2 RELATED WORK

In this section, we organize the related work into two basic categories. We first briefly review previous work on microstructure rendering and capture, then introduce related work on texture synthesis and general procedural appearance.

Microstructure rendering. Surface reflectance in computer graphics is typically described using microfacet theory [Torrance and Sparrow 1967], which uses smooth analytic functions such as Beckmann [Beckmann and Spizzichino 1987] and GGX [Walter et al. 2007] to model the distribution of surface normals. More recently, Yan et al. [2014] introduced the idea of using patch-local normal distribution functions (P-NDFs) to accurately compute the spatially and directionally varying appearance from explicit specular microstructure such as bumps, brushes, scratches and metallic flakes. The microgeometry is defined using extremely high resolution normal maps. Yan et al. [2016] proposed a position-normal distribution method to accelerate computation, which was later extended to handle wave optics effects [Yan et al. 2018]. All these methods share a common problem with storage cost: the microstructures have to be defined at resolutions of 1 – 10 microns per texel, which either requires very large textures (and associated acceleration structures) or leads to tiling artifacts.

Since explicit microstructure is costly to store, a series of methods were designed to model specific effects. Jakob et al. [2014] introduce a procedural BRDF that produces glitter effects from implicit mirror flake distributions without explicitly storing the underlying microstructure, but is not extensible to other kinds of microgeometry, such as brushes and scratches. Raymond et al. [2016] model surfaces as the mixture of a base surface and a collection of 1D scratches, later extended by Werner et al. [2017] for wave optics effects and by Velinov et al. [2018] for real-time performance; these methods work well for scratches but do not support other appearances. The method of Zirr and Kaplan (2016) dynamically adds micro-level details to a predefined macro-scale BRDF, but is focused on real-time performance, not on accurate simulation of the appearance of a given microgeometry.

Detailed appearance measurement. Several approaches measure real-world samples and use the measured data to render, either directly or indirectly. Dong et al. [2015] used an interferometry device to acquire the microstructure of brushed metal, but they still use statistical reflectance models to fit the measured data for rendering. Other methods [Graham et al. 2013; Nagano et al. 2015; Nam et al. 2016] aim at measuring accurate heightfields; these could be used with glint rendering methods, but seamless extension of the data with larger surface areas remains a problem, which could be addressed by our method.

Texture synthesis. We wish to generate non-repeating appearance, which is also the goal of texture synthesis. Texture synthesis methods can be categorized into three different kinds. The first kind is by expansion: starting from a small texture, they dynamically “grow” a new larger texture. Representative work of this kind ranges from the classic image quilting methods [Efros and Freeman 2001; Efros and Leung 1999; Wei and Levoy 2000] to modern solutions using Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) [Jetchev et al. 2016; Zhou et al. 2018]. These methods, however, are not applicable to our problem – to query the value at a specific location on the generated texture, the texture has to be actually generated from its original position to the query. This violates our goals of zero dynamic memory consumption and minimum performance overhead.

The second kind of related texture synthesis work is tiling methods, such as Wang tiles [Cohen et al. 2003; Wang 1961]. These methods first create small tiles from the input texture. These tiles are designed to allow seamless stitching to others, and are thus used...
as building blocks to generate larger textures. The tiling methods can support point queries; however, since the number of tiles is usually limited due to the difficulty of satisfying the seamless tiling property, repeated tiles are often visible as artifacts.

The third kind is blending methods, also known as by-example noise methods. They assume that any point on the resulting texture is blended from several patches from the input texture (example). Different blending methods of the example patches are possible, from simple linear blending (prone to “ghosting” artifacts), to more advanced variance preserving [Yu et al. 2011] and histogram preserving [Heitz and Neyret 2018] methods. These methods are procedural and we demonstrate that they can be adapted to our needs, specifically by designing a suitable point and range query for normals and their Jacobians. Our method does not depend on a specific blending method, and we will show different appearances in Sec. 6 for different choices.

Other procedural appearance. Many efforts have focused on designing procedural noise functions, such as Perlin noise [Perlin 1985] and Gabor noise [Lagae et al. 2009], which give non-repeating values over the entire 2D or 3D space. The noise can be later thresholded and post processed in other ways to produce appearance variations that mimic terrain, rust, marble, etc. The noise functions often provide the functionality of point query (the value at any position) and approximate range average query (approximate average value in a given range) for anti-aliasing, but do not support range min-max query (exact minimum and maximum values in a given range), which is a crucial property needed by our method (Sec. 4.3).

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Rendering details from microstructure

Our method builds upon the framework of microstructure rendering by Yan et al. [2016], where the microstructure is defined using a high resolution normal map. The normal map is a continuous, differentiable function that returns a 2D normal \( n(u) = (n_x, n_y) \) (dropping the implicit z-coordinate) for any given 2D \( u = (u, v) \). A uv-parameterization on geometric primitives is required to map the normal maps to surfaces. Removing this assumption (so that our method applies to any geometries without need for uv-parameterizations) would be an interesting future work direction.

During rendering, a spatial footprint \( \mathcal{P} \) (i.e. coverage on the texture) can be approximated by the renderer as a Gaussian \( G_\mathcal{P} \); this footprint can be as large as the pixel projection onto the surface, but is typically smaller (leaving some work to pixel multi-sampling). To evaluate the surface BRDF for the footprint \( \mathcal{P} \), we need to query the distribution of the surface normals within the footprint, i.e. the patch normal distribution function \( \mathcal{P} \)-NDF. To do that, for every position within \( \mathcal{P} \), we check whether its normal is close enough to a query direction \( s \), where the closeness is defined using another Gaussian \( G_s \) specifying an “intrinsic roughness” of the microstructure. The query can be written formally as

\[
D_p(s) = \int G_p(u) N(u, s) \, du,
\]

where \( N(u, s) = G_s(n(u) - s) \) is a 4D function of \( u \) and \( s \) called position-normal distribution, where \( u \) represents the texture coordinate (surface position), and \( s \) represents the normal. Fig. 2 illustrates the position-normal distribution in a simplified flatland case (1D position, 1D normal). Using this definition, the resulting \( D_p \) becomes a replacement of the smooth NDF in the classic microfacet model.

Since the 4D position-normal distribution \( N(u, s) \) is complicated, Yan et al. [2016] approximate it with a mixture of \( k \) Gaussian elements in 4D, such that \( N(u, s) \approx \sum_{i=1}^{k} G_i(u, s) \). Each Gaussian element is defined as

\[
G_i(u, s) = c_i \exp\left(-\frac{1}{2} (x - x_i)^T \Sigma_i^{-1} (x - x_i)\right),
\]

where \( c_i \) is a constant for normalization, \( x = (u, s)^T \) is a 4D column vector, and \( \Sigma \) is the covariance matrix computed from the Jacobian of the normal \( n(u) \).

The query of the \( \mathcal{P} \)-NDF at \( s \) thus becomes

\[
D_p(s) \approx \sum_{i=1}^{k} \int G_p(u) G_i(u, s) \, du,
\]

where each term of the sum has been simplified to calculating the product integral of two 2D Gaussians (since the two dimensions of \( s \) are given as a query and are constant with respect to integration), which results in an analytical solution.

In theory, Gaussians have infinite support, so every term in the above sum contributes a non-zero quantity. In practice, though, we can truncate the Gaussians, thus introducing small but perceptually negligible error. In the following, we assume truncation at 3 standard deviations. Thus any Gaussian footprint query can be bounded by a square query.

As shown by Yan et al. [2016], converting each texel of a well sampled normal map to a single Gaussian element typically gives good results in practice. Therefore, the number of Gaussian elements \( k \) is usually in the millions. To avoid calculating every Gaussian.
element’s contribution to every query, Yan et al. [2014] build a min-max hierarchy over the normal map. The hierarchy is a tree structure, where each node stores the range of normals in its child nodes. With the hierarchy, a group of Gaussian elements can be pruned together if the bounding box of the normals is far from the query s, meaning its contribution is negligible, given the Gaussian truncation approach mentioned above. The idea was later extended [Yan et al. 2016] to a 4D acceleration structure over both positions and normals, which is essentially multiple hierarchies for the Gaussian elements contributing to certain ranges of normals.

3.2 Procedural by-example noise

The key idea of by-example noise generation is to create a new image patch by blending multiple patches, picked up from different places on a given example. To make this process procedural, at any place on the synthesized noise, we need to know which patches are selected to blend. This is usually done by partitioning the infinite planar domain into regular regions (triangles, quads, etc.), where each region is associated with a unique random seed that is used to pick random patches from the example. Within each region, the blending weights vary linearly. We will describe these weights along with our choice of regions in more detail in Sec. 4.2.

During the noise generation, differences emerge in different choices of patch blending methods. Here, we introduce three representative methods: linear blending, variance preserving blending [Yu et al. 2011], and histogram preserving blending [Heitz and Neyret 2018].

Linear blending is the most straightforward. It is a simple weighted average of all K inputs:

\[ I_t = \sum_{i=1}^{K} w_i I_i, \quad (4) \]

where \( w_i \) is the weight of the \( i \)-th input \( I_i \) at a specific position.

Variance preserving blending builds on top of the linear blending:

\[ I_p = (I_t - \bar{I})/W + \bar{I}, \quad (5) \]

where \( W = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{K} w_i^2} \) is the L2-norm of all the weights, and \( \bar{I} \) is the (uniform-weighted) average of all the inputs. Histogram preserving blending considers an additional operation and its inverse to the variance preserving blending. That is, it computes a mapping \( G \) that maps the histogram of the example into a 1D Gaussian distribution. There are three steps: apply the mapping \( G \) to standardize (transform into a standard normal distribution) the example, then perform variance preserving blending, and finally apply the inverse mapping of \( G \) to obtain the blended result. This can be written as

\[ I_h = G^{-1}[G(I_h)]. \quad (6) \]

Determining which of these blending methods gives the best visual effects in which scenarios is beyond the scope of our paper. Our method works with all blending methods, as long as they satisfy a monotonicity property, as will be analyzed in Sec. 4.3.

4 PROCEDURAL MICROSTRUCTURE RENDERING

In this section, after some definitions, we first describe how to query the infinitely synthesized microstructure at a given point; this follows previous by-example synthesis methods, with modifications for querying normals and their Jacobians. Second, we describe our approach to query the range of normals that occurs within a given square range of the infinite microstructure; this is a key innovation over previous work, based on the range minimum query (RMQ) data structure. Third, we show how to use this range query to isolate contributing texels within a given footprint.

4.1 Definitions

Before we proceed, we first define the terminology we are going to use:

- **example** – the given input normal map (not necessarily tileable),
- **example patch** – a square patch from the example,
- **target** – the infinitely large planar domain on which we synthesize the microstructure, and
- **target patch** – a square patch on the target that is formed by blending several example patches.

We specify our goals formally as:

1. **point query** – given a texture coordinate \( u \in [-\infty, \infty]^2 \), query the normal map value \( n(u) \) and its Jacobian \( J(u) \) of the implicitly synthesized microstructure at a time complexity of \( O(1) \), and

2. **range query** – given a square target patch \([u_1, u_2]\) (top-left and bottom right corners), query the interval that tightly bounds the values within the patch, \([n_{x_{\min}}^n, n_{x_{\max}}^n, n_{y_{\min}}^n, n_{y_{\max}}^n]\), also at a time complexity of \( O(1) \).

In the next subsections, we will introduce the point query and the range query, then describe how these two operations are used together for fast \( P^\text{-NDF} \) queries during the rendering process.

4.2 Point query

The point query operation consists of two different parts. First, based on the point query’s location, it finds the target patch it stays in and the corresponding example patches. Second, it performs blending from different points on different example patches. These parts are...
similar to the by-example texture synthesis methods introduced in Sec. 3, with some modifications.

As Fig. 3 shows, the target is covered by overlapping example patches. The example patches are squares, and they overlap each other by half the edge length. Thus, any target patch is the blended result of four different example patches. The blending weights are bilinearly interpolated within the patch.

We partition the target into a square grid of target patches. Each target grid vertex is assigned a random number (seed) computed by hashing its index \((i,j)\). This random number is used to locate a specific example patch. Based on the relative position of the point query inside the target patch, we immediately know which four example patches are being blended at this point.

The second step is to get the value \(n\) and its Jacobian \(J\) at \(u\) on the implicitly synthesized microstructure. It is straightforward to calculate the blended normal value \(n\). Since we already know the four positions on the example patches, we can immediately get \(n\) by applying the blending methods using Eqns. 4, 5 and 6 or any other methods.

We also need to compute the blended Jacobian \(J\). One immediate way is to perform the same point query of normals at four adjacent locations, then compute the Jacobian using central finite differences. However, this method is slower due to multiple queries, and depends on the fixed step size of the numerical differentiation. Instead, we use a fast and accurate analytic solution, described in the Appendix.

4.3 Range query

Suppose a pixel footprint \(P\) (a square bounding the truncated Gaussian) is given on the microstructure. We would like to perform subdivision of the pixel footprint to prune areas with non-contributing normals. Essentially, the pruning scheme needs to answer the question: is the queried normal value contained within the interval of normals of a given patch, i.e. between its minimum and maximum values?

Our insight is that we do not need to explicitly build any hierarchy, as long as we are able to answer the query for minimum and maximum normal values, given any positional range on the implicit microstructure. Since any target range is blended from four patches on the example texture, our range query problem becomes two sub-problems. First, querying the minimum and maximum values on the example texture. Second, computing the combined min-max interval as we blend the four query results from the example.

4.4 Range minimum query

The first task is a classic algorithmic problem known as the Range Minimum Query (RMQ). In 1D, the RMQ problem can be solved within \(O(1)\) runtime and \(O(n \log n)\) precomputation time and storage, using the sparse-table algorithm [Bender and Farach-Colton 2009]. As Fig. 4 shows, the key idea is to precompute the answers to all possible range queries of length \(2^k\), where \(K\) is a positive integer.

For a general query from the \(i\)-th element to the \(j\)-th element, i.e. one with length different from a power of 2, it takes constant time to find two precomputed range queries, such that (1) one starts at \(i\) and the other ends at \(j\), (2) they are of the same length and (3) their union covers the entire range \([i, j]\). Then the minimum of the general query \([i, j]\) is the minimum of the two precomputed minima. Note this algorithm gives the exact minimum (not a conservative approximation); the same approach can be used for a range maximum query.

Extending this 1D algorithm to arbitrary 2D queries is straightforward. As illustrated in Fig. 4, we precompute the answers to all possible square range queries of size \(2^k \times 2^k\), where \(K\) is a positive integer. For an arbitrary query, we can immediately locate four precomputed range queries of the same size that cover the entire query range, each staying in one of the four corners of the query range. The minimum of the general query is the minimum of the four precomputed minima. Then the 2D RMQ problem can be solved within \(O(1)\) runtime and \(O(n^2 \log n)\) precomputation time and storage, where \(n \times n\) is the resolution of the 2D array.

Note that the precomputed data in our 2D sparse-table algorithm is different from a mip-map style tree structure. Taking the 1D case as an example, a precomputed query in a tree structure must start at multiples of its length. However, the sparse-table algorithm precomputes for all possible starting points. The difference indicates why a tree structure only supports range queries within \(O(\log n)\) time.

Fig. 4. Top: 1D version of RMQ. For an arbitrary 1D query (here, \([2, 7]\), marked in red), we first find two precomputed range queries (\([2, 5]\) and \([4, 7]\)) with length \(2^k\); then the minimum of the query \([2, 7]\) is the minimum of the two precomputed minima. Bottom: 2D version of RMQ. For an arbitrary 2D query (here, \([2, 1]\) to \([6, 3]\), marked in red rectangle), we find four precomputed range queries: \([2, 1]\) to \([5, 2]\) (light purple), \([3, 1]\) to \([6, 2]\) (light blue), \([2, 2]\) to \([5, 3]\) (light green) and \([3, 2]\) to \([6, 3]\) (light yellow), with size \(2^2 \times 2^1\). The minimum of the query is the minimum of the four precomputed minima.
Algorithm 1 and the pseudocode to use it for our range queries in The problem of accurately combining the range queries from the values being blended. This property can be easily verified. Elementary operations used in the methods, such as additions/subtractions and multiplications/divisions by positive values, as well as linear operations with positive weights, clearly satisfy the property. The standardization operation in histogram-preserving blending is essentially equivalent to 1D optimal transport [Monge 1781] (recall that we blend the and the Jacobians to get a Gaussian element. Finally, we gather the contribution from the Gaussian element.

The min-max interval for the top levels might not be tight in the beginning. However, as the traversal proceeds until lower levels, min-max interval becomes more and more accurate, and converges to the tightest boundary on the finest level. The worst-case time complexity of the query is the same as in previous work [Yan et al. 2016]: it occurs when none of the texels within the footprint are pruned and have to perform the point query; however, this situation is rare.

5 IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

5.1 Example range precomputation and packing
Given an example range, the minimum and maximum normals need to be quickly computed. In our implementation, we use a 3D precomputed table to represent the minimum and maximum normal: two dimensions represent corner location in the example, and the third dimension represents the logarithm of query size. The table is computed recursively, starting from the finest level.
To save memory, we further pack four values (two for minimum normal and two for maximum normal) (the two values are the x and y components of the normals) into 64 bits. The four values are normalized into [0, 1], converted into 16-bit integers and then combined into a 64 bit value. In the end, our precomputed range query table is compact, about 14 MB for a 512 × 512 example texture.

5.2 Footprint coverage and multiple target patches
Each footprint might cover multiple target patches. We bound the footprint within each covering target patch and generate several small sub-footprints. We call these sub-footprints footprints, for simplicity.

5.3 Importance sampling
For a given shading point, we find four normals and Jacobians of the four texels around it to get four Gaussian elements. By picking an element proportional to its contribution to the footprint, then picking a normal from that element, we obtain the sampled direction. We validate the correctness of our importance sampling in Figure 6.

6 RESULTS AND COMPARISON
We have implemented our algorithm inside the Mitsuba renderer [Jakob 2010]. We compare against Yan et al. [2016] for quality validation. All timings in this section are measured on a 2.20GHz Intel i7 (images cores) with 32 GB of main memory. Unless otherwise specified, all timings correspond to pictures with 1280 × 720 pixels, except the Bent Quad scene with 512 × 512. In all of our results, we use histogram preserving blending [Heitz and Neyret 2018] as the blending method, except in Figure 10.

In Table 1, we report all the scene settings, computation time and memory costs for our test scenes. The memory cost in the table is for histogram preserving blending. The other methods (linear and variance preserving blending) cost slightly less than histogram preserving blending.

**Chair scene.** This scene shows a chair with two leather pillows (75cm wide), rendered using environment lighting. The leather pillows have a macro-level normal map and detailed microstructure bumps. The macro map covers 75cm × 75cm. The micro example normal map with resolution 512 × 512 covers 37.5mm × 37.5mm. In Yan et al. [2016], we synthesize an equivalent large normal map (10K × 10K) offline and use it for rendering. Compared to Yan et al. [2016], our method produces the same results, with only a fraction (0.11%) of memory cost. Regarding the time cost, our method has a small overhead (13%) over Yan et al. [2016].

**Laptop.** This scene shows a laptop with a roughened aluminum matte finish. It is rendered using a point light and environment lighting. The laptop is about 30cm wide. The input example 512×512 covers 3mm×3mm. In Yan et al. [2016], we use the same small input texture and tile it. In Figure 9, we can observe obvious repeating patterns in the results of Yan et al. [2016]. In Table 1, we report the memory cost of both methods. Our method costs 35 MB, while Yan et al. [2016] costs 62 MB for the same (small) normal map, as our range query tables are slightly more space-efficient than their hierarchy.

In Figure 10, we compare the results of our method with different blending methods: linear, variance preserving and histogram preserving blending. Our method does not rely on any specific blending method. We observe both variance preserving and histogram preserving blending provide acceptable quality.

In Figure 11, we compare the histogram preserving blending method used in our method with Wang tiles on the Laptop scene. We used the ASTex library for the Wang tiles implementation. We set the tile size as 128 × 128 with 16 tiles. The Wang tiles method yields obvious structured artifacts, due to the replication of a small number of tiles; the randomized distribution of the tiles is not sufficient to hide the pattern.

**Kettle scene.** Figure 8 illustrates a Kettle with brushed metal on the body under two small area lights and environment lighting. The kettle is about 30cm high. The input brushed metal normal map with 512 × 512 resolution covers about 9mm × 9mm. For Yan et

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**Fig. 7.** Rendered results of different normal maps on the Bent Quad scene.
Table 1. Scene settings, computation time and memory costs for our test scenes. #Tri. is the count of triangles in the scene. Intr. Rough. presents the intrinsic roughness of the material. Spp. represents sample per pixel for path tracing. Normal map (ours) and Normal map (Yan[2016]) represent the input normal map setting for our method and Yan et al. [2016]. The memory cost of our method includes the RMQ table cost, precomputed standardization cost and the input normal map cost.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>Intr. Rough.</th>
<th>Spp.</th>
<th>Normal map (ours)</th>
<th>Normal map (Yan[2016])</th>
<th>Time (min.)</th>
<th>Memory (MB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>303.0</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1024</td>
<td>512 (^2)</td>
<td>10 (10K) (^2)</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laptop</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>1024</td>
<td>512 (^2)</td>
<td>100 (512) (^2)</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kettle</td>
<td>175.3</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>1024</td>
<td>512 (^2)</td>
<td>32 (2K) (^2)</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BentQuad</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>1024</td>
<td>1 (K) (^2)</td>
<td>2 (1K) (^2)</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>148.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1024</td>
<td>512 (^2)</td>
<td>20 (512) (^2)</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 8. Comparison between our method and Yan et al. [2016] with a tiled texture on the Kettle scene. Normal map: brushed metal. The results are similar, but the memory cost of our method in only a small fraction (about 3%) of theirs.

In Figure 7, we show the results of Bent Quad with different BRDF types with different normal maps used as examples.

Bent Quad scene. Figures 7 and 12 show a simple scene with a 5cm \( \times \) 5cm bent quad with a scratched normal map illuminated by a textured light. The resolution of input isotropic noise normal map is 1K \( \times \) 1K, and covers 2.5cm \( \times \) 2.5cm. In Figure 12 we show the results with BRDF sampling only, evaluation only and their combination under the multiple importance sampling framework. We also show the result with environment lighting in the right image.

In Figure 7, we show the results of Bent Quad with different BRDF types with different normal maps used as examples.

Shoe scene. This scene shows a shoe with coated metallic flakes under environment lighting. We found that no existing blending method works well with flakes. However, we can easily fix this by using our method without blending (choosing each point from a single patch); the rest of the framework is unchanged. The blended normal maps will have visible seams. However, since every flake has a constant normal, its Jacobian is always zero and does not have to be re-computed from a normal map. Thus, discontinuities in the blended normal maps will not introduce any discontinuous artifacts during rendering. As shown in Figure 13, even though without blending the method produces boundary artifacts in the synthesized normal maps, this problem is not visible in the rendering results.

7 DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

Storage overhead breakdown. Figure 4 (left) shows the memory cost of our method and Yan et al. [2016] over varying resolutions. The resolution of the example texture in our method is 512 \( \times \) 512. The memory cost of our method stays consistent with varying texture resolution, while the cost of Yan et al. [2016] increases drastically. In Figure 4 (right), we show the memory cost of components in our method and Yan et al. [2016] for a normal map with resolution 2K \( \times \) 2K. The memory cost of our method includes three components: flakes, RMQ precomputed table, normal lookup table and Jacobian lookup table, while the memory cost of Yan et al. [2016] includes two components: flakes and hierarchy.

Our proposed method has several limitations. Our method is under the framework of Yan et al. [2016], so it inherits the limitation of handling only a single reflection, with no multiple scattering or layering. In addition, our method inherits the limitations of the by-example blending methods we use: namely, the restriction to textures with mostly stationary structure, without macroscopic features. Finally, our method does not resolve the problem of increasing computational cost for distant viewing (large footprints), which is also unsolved in previous work. In this case, the number of contributing Gaussian elements to be evaluated becomes large, resulting in expensive queries.

8 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

We have presented a method that allows rendering of specular glints from an arbitrarily large, non-repeating synthesized microstructure. Our method has constant storage cost and a small performance overhead. By designing point query and range query schemes for general by-example texture synthesis methods, we are able to dynamically and implicitly generate an infinite normal map, together with the required Jacobians and range queries. We demonstrate that our method produces plausible and controllable details, supports inputs from any source, and fits into a Monte Carlo rendering framework with multiple importance sampling. Our method can be treated as a standard BRDF, much like the common microfacet
Fig. 9. Comparison between our method and Yan et al. [2016] with a tiled texture on the Laptop Scene. The repeated pattern is visible in Yan et al. [2016]. Normal map: isotropic noise.

Fig. 10. Comparison between different blending method (linear, variance preserving and histogram preserving on the Laptop Scene. Normal map: isotropic noise. Linear blending has artifacts issues. Both variance preserving and histogram preserving blending provide acceptable quality.

Fig. 11. Comparison between our method using histogram preserving blending and Yan et al. [2016] with an offline generated texture ($5K \times 5K$ with 10 tiles) using Wang tiles [Cohen et al. 2003] on the Laptop scene. The results with Wang tiles suffer from tile artifacts: despite the randomization provided by Wang tiling, the repetition of a small number of base tiles is easily visible to the human eye. Part of the blended normal maps of both histogram preserving blending and Wang tiles are shown at the bottom right.

BRDF [Walter et al. 2007] but replacing the smooth NDF with our solution.

In the future, it would be interesting to optimize our method for real-time implementation on GPUs. Extending our method for rendering with wave optics, or making it work for surfaces without a uv-parameterization, could also be worthwhile directions.
**Fig. 12.** Our material model can be used inside a standard BRDF sampling/evaluation framework with multiple importance sampling. BRDF sampling alone (a) captures only a small fraction of scratches. Light sampling (b) captures illumination from the high-intensity parts of the HDR light texture onto the scratches. The combined result (c) has the benefits of both estimators. (d) shows the result with extra environment lighting.

**Fig. 13.** Comparison between our method (with blending), our method (without blending) and Yan et al. [2016] with a tiled texture on the Shoe scene. The normal map depicts metallic flakes as small constant regions. Our method (with blending) has an over-smoothing issue on the metallic flake normal map. However, using synthesis with no blending fixes this issue: while it produces normal maps with boundary artifacts, it does not visually affect the rendering results.

**Fig. 14.** Left: The memory cost of our method and Yan et al. [2016] over varying texture resolution. The resolution of the example texture in our method is $512 \times 512$. Our method has some overhead, but its storage needs are only proportional to the example texture. Even when the target resolution is just $512 \times 512$, our method still requires fewer resources than Yan et al., because our RMQ-based solution needs smaller data structures than previously used hierarchies. Right: The memory cost of components in our method and Yan et al. [2016] for resolution $2K \times 2K$. G. is short for standardization. Pos-nor is short for position-normal.

**REFERENCES**


We present detailed pseudocode of our algorithms in this subsection: building 2D sparse-table (Algorithm 1), using it for range queries (Algorithm 2), and performing top-down traversal (Algorithm 3).
Algorithm 3 Traversing the implicit hierarchy.

Input:
\( T = \text{RMQ precomputed table} \)
\( N(u, s) = 4D \) position-normal distribution from the example
\( s_0 = \text{the queried half vector} \)
\( u_\text{min} = \text{min uv value of a pixel's footprint} \ P \)
\( u_\text{max} = \text{max uv value of a pixel's footprint} \ P \)

Output:
\( D = \text{contribution according to the query} \)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{function} & \quad \text{TRAVESERVILLE}(u_0, u_1) \\
& \quad N \leftarrow u_1, x - u_0, x \\
& \quad \text{if } N > 0 \text{ then} \\
& \quad \quad \text{inside} \leftarrow \text{include}(T(u_0, u_1), s_0) \\
& \quad \quad \text{else} \\
& \quad \quad \quad \text{inside} \leftarrow \text{include}(N(u_0, s), s_0) \\
& \quad \text{end if} \\
& \quad \text{if } \text{inside} \text{ then} \\
& \quad \quad \text{return } 0 \\
& \quad \text{end if} \\
& \quad \text{if } N == 0 \text{ then} \\
& \quad \quad D \leftarrow \text{gaussianContribution}(u_0, s_0) \\
& \quad \text{else} \\
& \quad \quad D \leftarrow 0 \\
& \quad \quad u_0[4], u_1[4] \leftarrow \text{subdivide}(u_0, u_1) \\
& \quad \quad \text{for all } i < 4 \text{ do} \\
& \quad \quad \quad D \leftarrow D + \text{TRAVESERVILLE}(u_0[i], u_1[i]) \\
& \quad \text{end for} \\
& \quad \text{end if} \\
& \quad \text{return } D \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{function} & \quad \text{TRAVESER}(u_\text{min}, u_\text{max}) \\
& \quad // \text{Find the minimum square-sized query.} \\
& \quad x \leftarrow u_\text{max}, x - u_\text{min}, x \\
& \quad y \leftarrow u_\text{max}, y - u_\text{min}, y \\
& \quad u_\text{min} \leftarrow u_\text{min} \\
& \quad u_\text{max} \leftarrow u_\text{min} + 2^{10g_1(\text{max}(x, y))} \\
& \quad \text{return } \text{TRAVESERVILLE}(u_\text{min}, u_\text{max}) \\
\end{align*}
\]

Algorithm 2 Querying the RMQ table.

Input:
\( T = \text{RMQ precomputed table} \)
\( u_\text{min} = \text{min uv value of the query} \)
\( u_\text{max} = \text{max uv value of the query} \)

Output:
\( n_\text{min} = \text{min normal of the query} \)
\( n_\text{max} = \text{max normal of the query} \)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{function} & \quad \text{QUERYRMQ}(u_\text{min}, u_\text{max}) \\
& \quad k \leftarrow \log_2(u_\text{max}, x - u_\text{min}, x + 1) \\
& \quad // \text{Read the precomputed RMQ table} \\
& \quad N_{\text{packed}} \leftarrow T[k] \cdot \text{unpckFrom64Bit}(N_{\text{packed}}) \\
& \quad \text{return } n_\text{min}, n_\text{max} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Variance Preserving Blending. In the variance preserving blending, extra linear operations are performed (see Equation 5) after linear blending, resulting in:
\[
J_v = J_l/W, \quad (8)
\]
where \( W = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{K} w_i^2} \) is the L2-norm of all the weights.

Histogram Preserving Blending. Additional standardization (\( \mathcal{G} \)) and inverse standardization (\( \mathcal{G}^{-1} \)) operations are performed in histogram preserving blending, which are non-linear operations. Since these two operations are precomputed in a table, we compute their derivatives along with the precomputed values. During blending, the Jacobian is then computed as follows:
\[
J_h = \mathcal{G}^{-1}[\mathcal{G}(n)_x] \cdot \left[ \mathcal{G}'(n) \otimes I \right]_0, \quad (9)
\]
where \( \mathcal{G}'^{-1} \) and \( \mathcal{G}' \) represent the inverse standardization and standardization derivatives, and they should be diagonal matrices, since we blend the two components of normal, \( n_x \) and \( n_y \), separately. \( \mathcal{G}(n)_x \) is the variance blended normal (see Equation 8) \( \left[ \mathcal{G}'(n) \otimes I \right]_0 \) represents performing the standardization operation on the input Jacobian, which is an element-wise matrix multiplication, and then followed by a variance preserving operation.