Dealing with Buffers

Here is another easy to follow tutorial, in which I will show you some of the tips that I learned, and figured out that really helps me !

I hope with this, you won't be scared by z-buffers anymore…:0)

I am using Paint Shop pro 9 and don't you mind my French-glish…:0)

First, what does the Z-buffers ?
Simple. They basically tells the game if the object is behind the sim (or another object, wall etc.) OR in front of the sim (or another object, wall etc.) .
They are made using different shades of gray,
Darker = near (in front of simmies or objects)
Lighter = far (in back of simmies or objects).

Of course, there is more to know about them buffers, but I noticed a general big annoying problem :BLEEDING !
And to avoid bleeding through walls, etc…this is all we need to know about Z-buffers !…isn't it great ?

Let's begin !

Ok, first thing first, <u>EXPORTING IS THE KEY</u>
This is one thing that I figured out.
The Sims Transmogrifier will creates the ALPHA
CHANNELS and the Z-BUFFERS for you.
You don't want that !!!

Have you ever see a maxis object that bleeds
into walls **?**
Of course not !, Maxis objects are made perfect.
(I am not talking about the style, or the
color…lol)

So when creating a new object for the Sims, why
not use the same buffers that the object you
cloned uses **?**, after all, they are made perfect.

For it to happen, you need to <u>EXPORT PROPERLY</u>

Now read
carefully….one
zoom, one
channel.
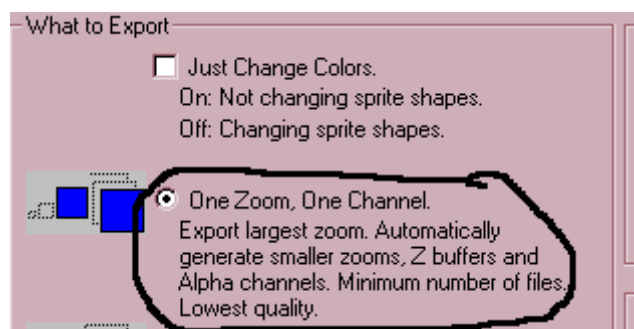
It says: Export largest zoom. Automatically generate smaller zooms, Z buffers and Alpha channels.

That is why if you prefer creating good looking objects and most important, good working objects, you won't export that way!

The way this Transmogrifier works, is that it will only export the P sprites, meaning, the made perfect Z-buffers and Alpha channels will be lost in the process.
Transmogrifier will then create new ones when importing your new object, cheap ones.

Take a look at that:
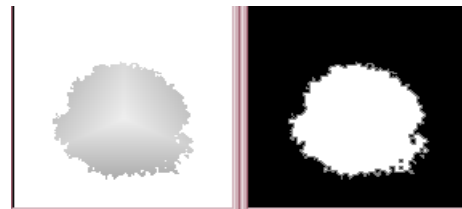
These are what I call cheap Alphas and buffers….
Timog acting here…have you ever see a squared flower bush?
I know, I also thought that exporting like that, I was avoiding messing up with buffers.

But it is a lie, and messing up in timog, with the axes, to try to fix bleeding and other problems won't do, because the problem is the cheap buffers.
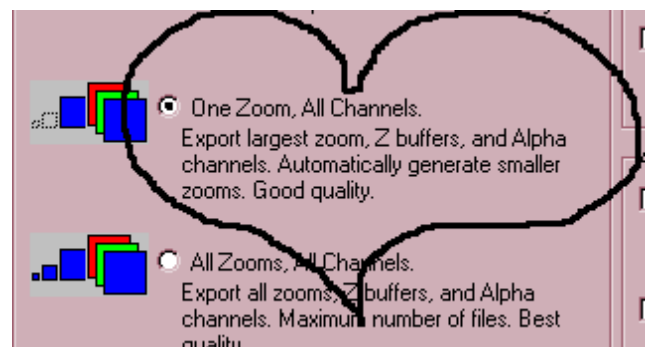
Bleeding isn't necessarily a matter of where the object is placed in the tile, then again, you are cloning from a perfect made AND placed Maxis object.

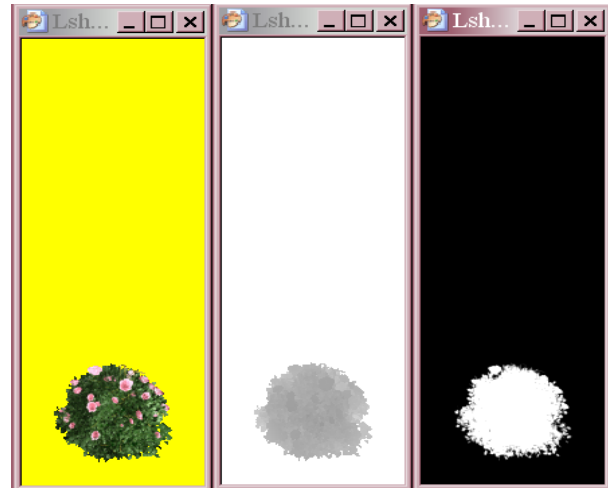Now take a look at the maxis ones,
the perfect ones:
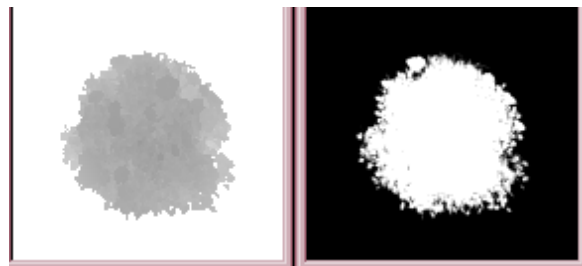
That's more like it!
This is what you get when exporting

 THE RIGHT WAY:
Exporting ONE zoom All channels, OR All zooms All channels is the only ways to be able to use the maxis Z-buffers.

One Zoom, All Channels.
Export largest zoom, Z buffers, and Alpha channels. Automatically generate smaller zooms. Good quality.

All Zooms, All Channels.
Export all zooms, Z buffers, and Alpha channels. Maximum number of files. Best quality.

By exporting that way
you'll get all the files:

I'll get to the Alpha channels a little further on;
they are the easiest ones to deal with.

Now you are ready to create your brand new
object, using the z-buffers of the one you just
cloned. You want that new object to be a tiny bit
smaller than the Maxis one, to avoid some cloning
in the Z sprite.

Assuming you already know how to put your own
graphic on the P sprite, I'll just show you mine,
and then we move on to the next step. (Don't
forget to increase color depth to 16 million)
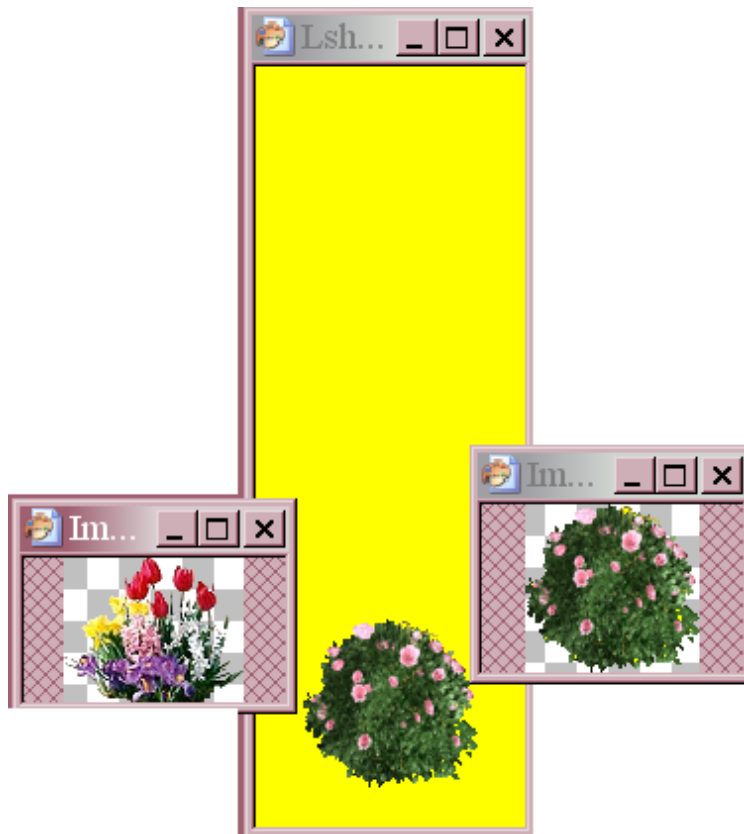
You'll do an image information for the maxis bush, to see its size, than resize your own flower bush to be a tiny bit smaller; like in the picture above.
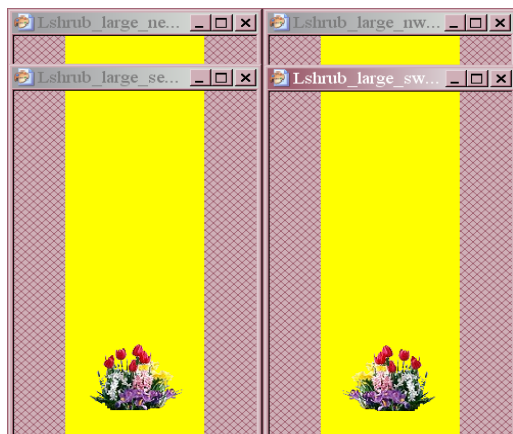
Once your done resizing your bush, copy it and paste it on you P sprites, and if you do like me, for bushes,
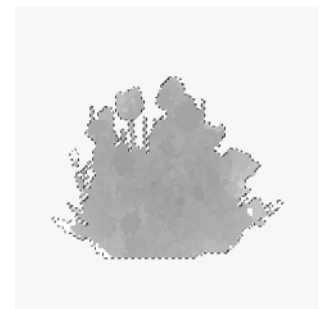
I simply mirror it on the 2 other views :0)

Okay!

Now the z-buffs…
You'll see, this is rather simple.
Simply take your magic wand, and click anywhere
in the yellow of one of your just created P sprite.
Copy it, and then paste it as a new
layer on the corresponding Z sprite.

Then click again in the pale gray (use to be yellow
in the P sprite) and with your flood fill tool, fill it
with 100% white at 100% opacity.
Then go to selection and invert.
Now that you have only the flower bush part
selected, look at your image…
Mine is a little big even though I resize it, and
you can clearly see that there is some white
parts, my bush is a bit larger than the Maxis
one… I'll have to clone a little!

To be able to clone, you have to merge visible.
Otherwise it won't let you use the clone tool.
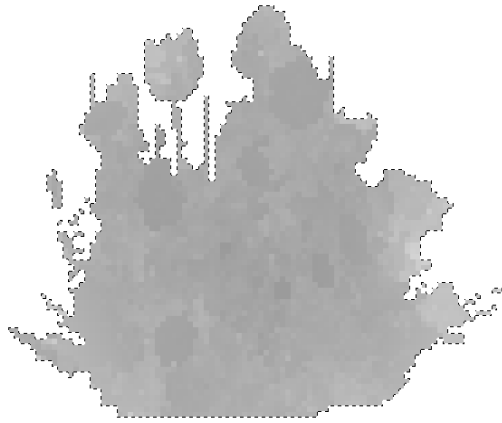
Here's what it looks like when I am done cloning those little white spots. Now that one of the z-sprite is done, you can easily copy it and paste it as a new layer on your other z-sprite, and then again mirror it for the 2 other views.

The buffers are done!…that was simple huh ?

You can apply this to just any other objects you want to create.
And if your own image is a bit different from the one you cloned, then try to find another Maxis object that would fit the shape or parts of your object, to use it's buffers…

You'll just have to export ONE zoom, All channels for this object too, to be able to use it's buffers.

Here is another example…

I made a shelf, and use the z-buffers from this end table:
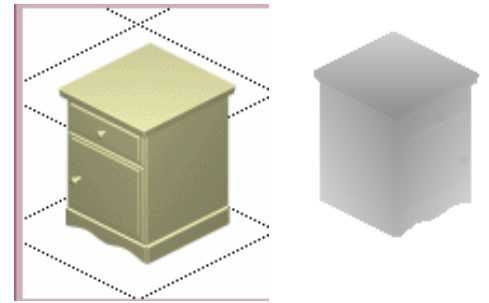
Here is the results:

Then again, the buffers are perfects, and my shelf doesn't bleed through walls, even when put against one.

So remember…always use the Maxis already made perfects, z-buffers. You'll prefer cloning a bit and sometimes more than a bit !…than have to try to fix your object over and over !

In some cases, you cannot, because there are no objects matching the shape of yours…like for my doll stroller.

So I had to export the cheap way… lucky me, my object doesn't bleed!

Now, if in spite of the Maxis buffers, your object bleeds when you test it in the game, Don't worry, it is rather simple to fix. While in the game, try to look for which part and rotation of your object is bleeding… Then go back in your paint program, and either darken the bleeding part, or lighten it. Using your lighter/darker tool. Choose the opacity and brush tip size you think you need, to achieve that.

Simple, if the bush shows in north view, through walls, then the game thinks the bush has to be in front of the wall : the part that bleeds is too dark. Lighten this part a little…then test again. Be sure to only retouch that part. If this is right, then copy that fixed buff to the other corresponding z sprite and mirror it.

Now the Alpha Channels.

Those are very easy to do. Transmogrifier will also create some for you when you export one zoom, one channel.
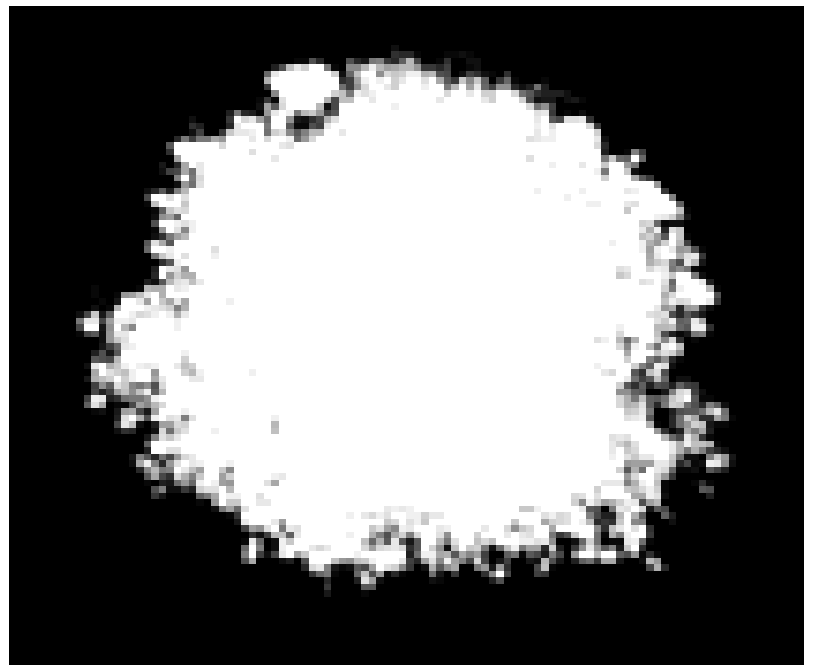
But they will have a nasty dark gray line around the white part, creating a white halo in the game:

Ok, this image has been zoom in a lot, but you can still see that annoying gray line.
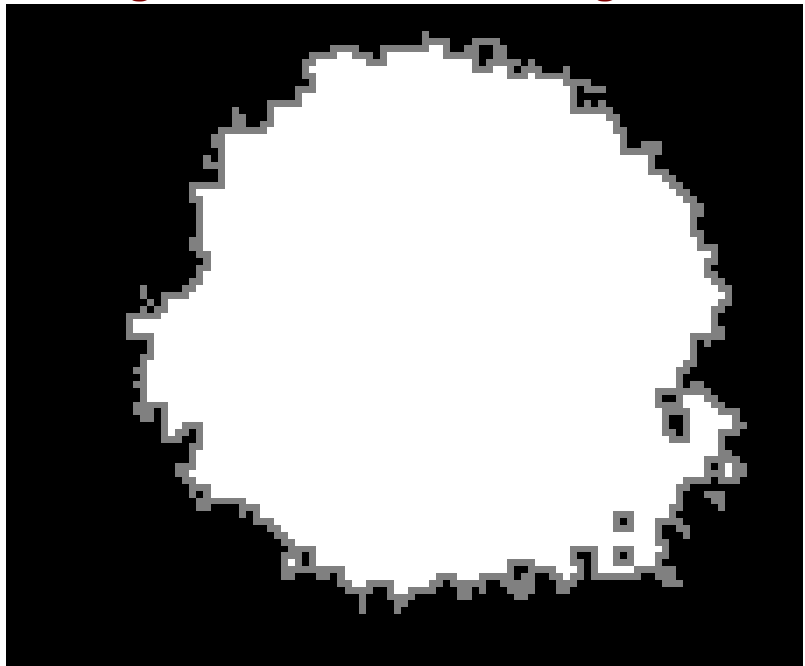
Now take a look at the Maxis perfect Alpha Channel:

Ok, again zoom in real big...but see the gray line is faded and it gives a much better look in the game.

2 ways of fixing Alpha Channels

The first one, when exporting one zoom, all channels.

Again, use your magic wand and click anywhere in the yellow of your P sprite, copy it, paste it on the corresponding A sprite (A=Alpha)
Select the gray part (use to be yellow in the P sprite) and with your flood fill tool, fill it with 100% black, 100% opacity.

Then selection and invert. Now that only the object is selected, with your flood fill tool again, this time fill up your object with 100% white, 100% opacity.
KEEP THIS SELECTED…you need it…did I scared you with my big letters?

With your object still selected, you're going to recreate that faded gray line, using your soften tool, 100% opacity.
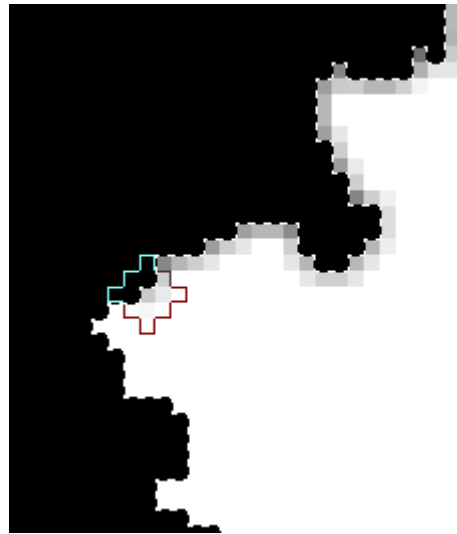
Personally I always use size 3.

Zooming in real big, go
around the edges of your
object like this:
If you don't do this part,
your object may look too
sharp in the game…
You want to keep only your
object selected, so you
don't soften the black part, otherwise you'll get a
yellow halo in the game.

Here is the result, when all done soften.

NOTE: the little pixels that stick out, you may find them too dark if soften, they might look too white in the game.

TIP: the black part is the part that doesn't appears in the game, the white part is, obviously the one that shows.
The black part has to be 100% opaque, but the white part could be darker…for curtains for example, a ton of gray would make that part transparent…

Another way of fixing Alpha Channels, when previously exported one zoom, one channel.

Now, another way to fix Alpha Channels… is actually the same way…but because you have only the P sprites in the folder when exporting one zoom, one channel, you'll have to re export your object, one zoom, all channels, after you imported it to recreate that faded gray line.
The same way, you can fix the Alpha Channels, for all the other objects you have…if they need it.

Opening them A sprites, you'll see that annoying gray line…so do like previously, fill up the white part with 100% white, 100% opacity, while only your object selected, then soften all around the edges.
And you are done !!!

## 2 or more tile objects vs. Alpha Channels

2 important things to remember

ONE:
When exporting an already made 2 tiles or more object, you have to export: All zooms, ALL Channels. Otherwise you'll have to fix each an every part of that object in all rotations, in Timog.

TWO:
Those have to be done the same way, except for the edges that will touch the other edges of the other sprites…
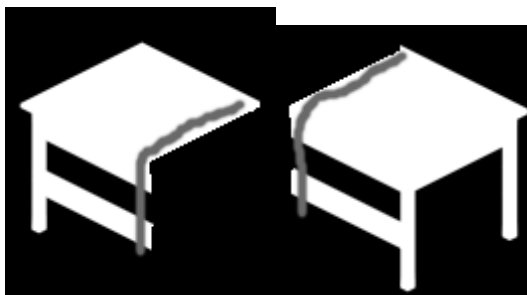
The gray lines show where it is important
<u>NOT TO SOFTEN</u>…
the object meets there, and if you soften those
edges, you'll have white lines,
separating your object in the
game…

The same will apply to any 2 tile or more objects!

What's fun in using maxis buffers, is that
nothing stops you from taking several parts of
several different objects, to create yours!

To have a dining surface, or any surface that
allows your simmies to eat or place an object, you
could use a buffer from a higher EP, for the
surface…and why not using another buffer, from
another object for the legs of your new table…?
After all, the buffers make no distinctions about
Eps!

Of course, the buffers themselves won't turn your object into a surface, but the plates, vase and news paper etc. won't bleed through it!

ALL DONE!

Don't hesitate if you have any problems, questions or comments or if you think I missed something !...I love truth. email me !

Thank you,
Rosemary :0)