



Virtual Airplane - Materials and Textures: Create realistic aircraft models using free software: Blender, GIMP, and Inkscape

Witold Jaworski

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The four volumes of the "Virtual Airplane" series will teach you how to create the model shown on the cover. This guide assumes that you may know nothing about the 3D modeling software, so it starts the course from the very basics. In subsequent chapters the author builds a computer model of the P-40B fighter. Every step of this workflow is shown in numerous illustrations.

This third volume ("Materials and Textures") teaches how to "paint" a 3D digital model of a historical aircraft. While everybody can guess what the mesh modeling phase is (see Volume II for details), the methods revealed in this volume are the "secret weapon" of professional illustrators. In computer graphics the materials and textures are the magic wand, which transforms clay-like models into real, detailed objects. This volume contains:

- Introduction to powerful Cycles renderer. It describes its node-based UI and basic concepts;
- Introduction to Cycles materials. The author presents them with the example of aircraft skin and canopy glass;
- Description on how to set up a realistic environment for a flight scene in Blender;
- Introduction to Cycles textures (5 lessons) and a real-life case of texturing workflow (10 lessons). It gradually introduces Readers to mesh UV-unwrapping and composition of all required textures (bump maps, reflectivity maps, diffuse maps, etc.). At the end of this volume you will know how to prepare convincing surfaces for a realistic "hard surface object" (as a WW II fighter);
- Introduction to GIMP (raster image editor);
- Introduction to Inkscape (vector image editor) and its powerful "raster effects" (the SVG filters);
- Real-life examples of using all these three programs (Blender, GIMP, and Inkscape) for composing various textures.

In the 20th century you could make an aircraft model from paper or plastic. At the beginning of the 21st century the time has come for yet another variation of this hobby: computer models. The primary goal of the "Virtual Airplane" series is the popularization of this new branch of scale modeling. To make this hobby more affordable, the author exclusively uses the free (Open Source) software. However, this publication may also be useful to all who want to apply the free, powerful 3D graphics suite to other purposes.

Supplementary downloads for these series include various resources (drawings, samples, add-ons) as well as the models and textures created in every lesson from volumes: II, III, and IV.

Technical note: "Virtual Airplane" is a "picture book". This volume contains 1110 illustrations, which significantly increase its size (it may take longer to download this book). These illustrations look best on a color display of appropriate resolution. Thus the **Kindle Fire** tablets (especially the HD and HDX versions) provide the best reading experience. You can also read it on PC computers or other tablets, using the corresponding free **Kindle applications** (for Windows, Mac, and Android). The book from this site is not optimized for the iPads.

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