

Masking in Amorphium Pro

Using masking to paint, create effects and increase polygons

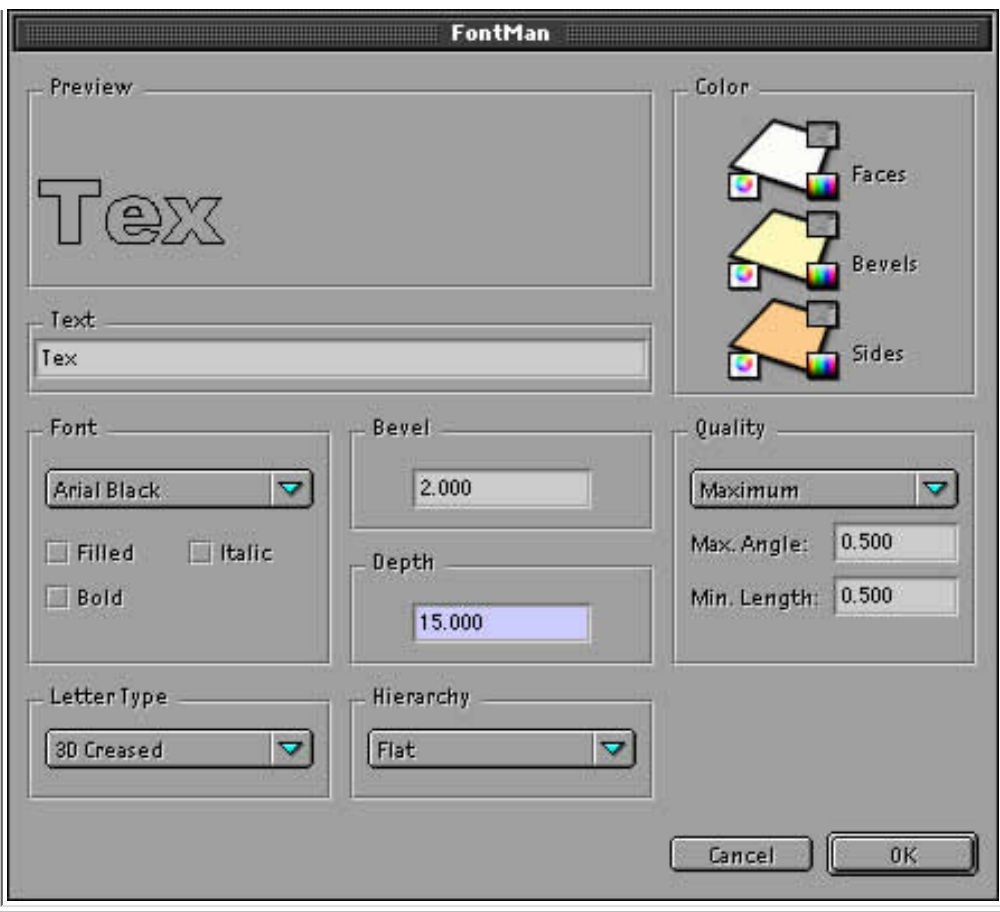
by David Nagel, Executive Producer
dnagel@digitalmedianet.com

Last week I reviewed Amorphium Pro 1.1 from Electric Image. Amorphium Pro is a 3D modeling and animation package targeted toward designers, with a particular bent toward Flash designers. Its features have been implemented in a way that 2D artists can understand very easily, and these features are quite robust. So I thought we'd take a more in depth look at one of these today—namely masking—and see how it fits into the overall workflow of Amorphium Pro.

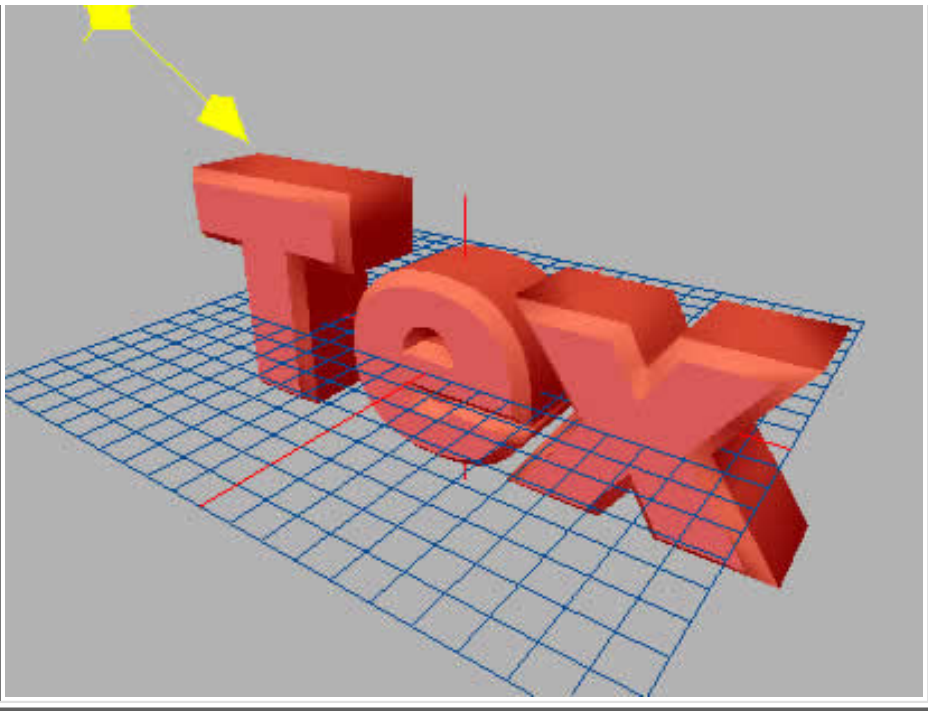
If you haven't already, you ought to download the demo from <http://www.amorphium.com>. (It's available for Mac and Windows.) For this tutorial, we're going to be working with 3D text to create a dripping effect.



To get started, we're just going to launch Amorphium and delete the default sphere that appears. Select the text tool from the Mesh palette, and click in the center of your composition window. A dialog box will appear asking you to fill out the information about your text.



I'm going to alter my depth to 15 and my text to read "Tex." I'll use Arial Black (which all of you should have), but this can be done with any font that Amorphium can deal with. (Some fonts don't work right in Amorphium.) I'm also going to change my face, bevel and side colors to something more neutral.

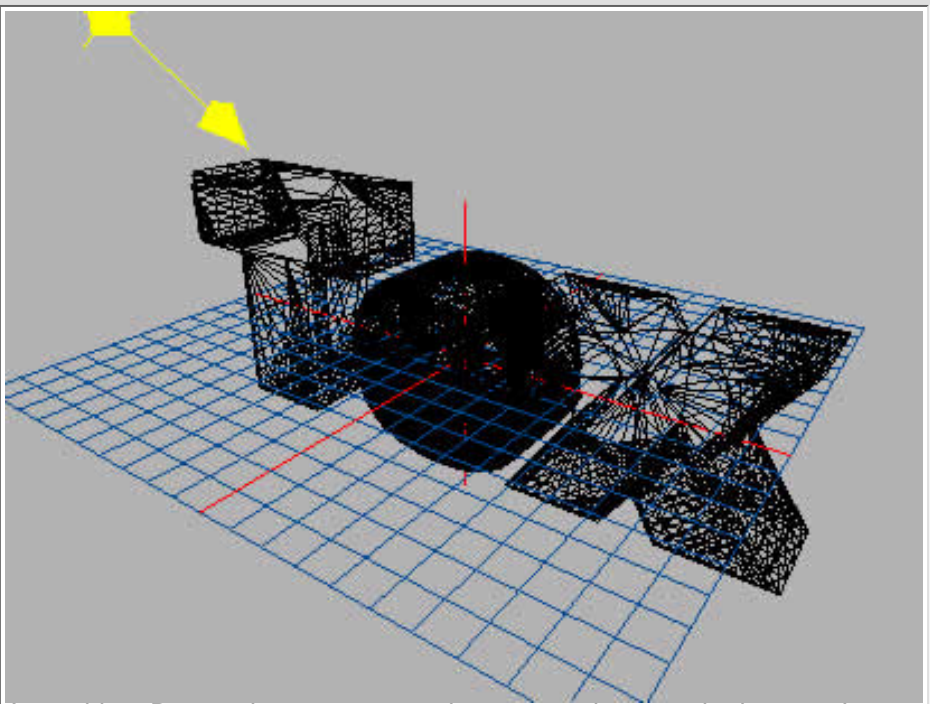


Now we're going to go straight into masking. Click the Mask button in your menu bar. By default, the mask paintbrush will be selected. Go ahead and use this tool. We're just going to mask off the upper half of the text so that when we do our dripping, we don't have to worry about affecting the parts of the text that will remain the same.



Masked areas are red.

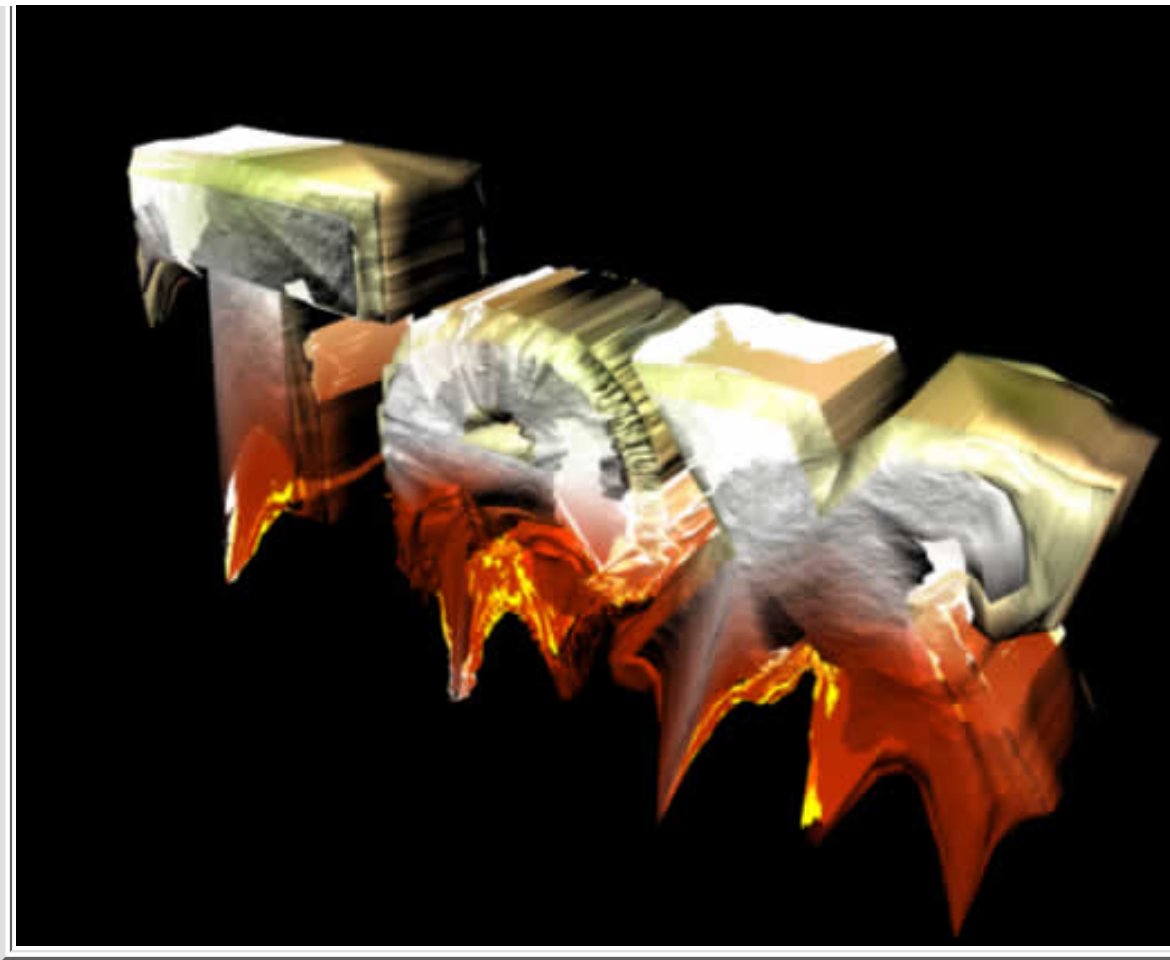
But before we begin melting our image, we're going to increase the polygons in the area we'll be working on. Why? Well, we want our drips to look like drips, not like dangling triangles. Increasing the polygon count in the unmasked areas will provide us, simply, with more geometry to work with.



Amorphium Pro can increase your polygon count in unmasked areas. Just go into the Composer, select the Quad tool and click on the object, in this case text. You can view a wireframe by selecting Display > Wireframe in the main Composer view.

To increase your geometry, we're going to go back into the Composer and click on the "Quad" tool in the Decimation palette. To increase the polygon count, just select the Quad tool and click on the text. Only the unmasked areas will be affected, so we won't have to deal with too much overhead from the increase in polygons. If you want even more detail, just keep click on the text with your Quad tool. (But you're going to experience significant slowdown if you do it more than a few times.)

So now that we have more polygons to work with, we're going into the Tools area of Amorphium. I'm going to use the Smudge tool to create my drip effect. If your machine is acting slow, make sure you stroke slowly as well, or you'll get some unexpected results. You can also increase you performance by switching your display mode to "White." The display menu is actually on the bottom of the interface, rather than the top.



And now our text is ready for animating or whatever else you want to do with it. So there's a quick look at how masking works in Amorphium Pro. In future installments, we'll cover more features of this versatile program. For more information or to download the demo, visit <http://www.amorphium.com>.