

國立交通大學

資訊科學與工程研究所

碩士論文

用於區塊繪圖之階層式儲存方式設計

A Hierarchical Primitive List for Tile-based Rendering



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中華民國九十八年九月

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## 摘要

在現今嵌入式系統中（如：手機、個人導航裝置等）往往資源相當受限。而具備分區塊式繪圖 (tile-based rendering) 特性的繪圖處理器，在此類應用中相當常見，其一次只處理畫面上的一個區塊，而非整個畫面，故其處理一個區塊所需的區塊深度緩衝器(Tile Z-buffer)及區塊畫面緩衝器(Tile frame buffer)只需與區塊大小相同即可，而非整個畫面。故傳統繪圖處理器中時常被重覆存取之深度緩衝器及畫面緩衝器，即可很容易的被整合至晶片中來有效降低對外部記憶體之存取。然而傳統的非階層式三角形名單之分區塊式繪圖處理器設計中，會在場景複雜度增高時，增大對儲存三角形列表之記憶體空間需求。在本論文中，將修改分區塊式繪圖處理器中記錄區塊中所屬三角形的動作 (tile binning)，使其能依據三角形不同邊界方框之大小、形狀及位置決定存放在何種階層的三角形列表中，能使用較少之三角形名單來記錄。並提出一個整合式的判斷方法，同時可以整合多種不同階層，且不論畫面中有何種三角形之邊界方框，都能以固定的判斷次數來選定三角形該被放在哪一個階層中。而此判斷方法也能很輕易以簡單的硬

體來實現，進而減少其判斷所需的時間。透過這些修改，讓此種繪圖處理器能在畫面複雜度不斷增高時，也能針對不同具有不同大小、形狀及位置的三角形之邊界方框做最有效的判斷，進而減少整體儲存三角形名單所需之空間。



# A Hierarchical Primitive List for Tile-based Rendering

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## Abstract

Tile-based rendering has been widely used in resource-limited graphic processing environments, e.g., for hand-held devices. Since large primitives may cover a significant number of tiles, they need to be recorded in the primitive lists of all related tiles. We propose a hierarchical primitive lists structure, which also copes with misaligned and non-square primitive problems, to minimize the primitive recording. Intended advantages include: reduced storage pressure, list building time, primitive retrieval counts for subsequent rendering, and primitive data accesses from external memory during rendering, and possibly enhanced data locality/resource utilization if layer-based rendering is exploited. Based on this structure, we propose a primitive-hierarchy fitting (hardware) algorithm which, for a given primitive of any size and shape, determines a best way of storing it in the structure. Experimental results on Doom3 and Quake4 show a 73% storage reduction using only square hierarchies or 78% with our full capability, compared with flat tile-based lists.

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# Content

摘要.....	i
Abstract.....	iii
誌謝.....	iv
Content.....	v
List of Figures.....	vi
List of Tables.....	viii
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2 Background and Related work.....	3
2.1 Typical graphics pipeline.....	3
2.2 Tile-based rendering.....	4
2.2.1 Tile-based rendering pipeline.....	4
2.2.2 Data structures for Primitive lists.....	6
2.3 The inefficiency of memory usage in tile-based rendering.....	7
2.4 ARM's square hierarchies.....	8
Chapter 3 Design.....	13
3.1 Layer design overview.....	13
3.1.1 Use of Rectangular layers.....	14
3.1.2 Use of Unaligned Grids.....	15
3.1.3 Summary.....	17
3.2 The Primitive-Hierarchy Fitting Algorithm.....	18
3.3 Primitive list design.....	26
Chapter 4 Evaluation Results.....	30
4.1 Evaluation Environment.....	30
4.2 Number of Layers versus Screen Resolution in Square Hierarchies.....	31
4.3 Storage Reduction of Proposed Design.....	40
4.4 Storage Requirement of Proposed List Buffer.....	43
4.5 Discussion.....	45
Chapter 5 Conclusion and Future Work.....	47
5.1 Conclusion.....	47
5.2 Future Work.....	48
References.....	51
Appendix A. Simulation Test Frame Images.....	52

# List of Figures

Figure 2-1	Typical 3D graphics pipeline .....	3
Figure 2-2	Tile-based rendering pipeline.....	4
Figure 2-3	Tile binning process .....	5
Figure 2-4	Linked-list implementation of primitive list .....	6
Figure 2-5	Percentages of primitive tile-coverage diagrams .....	7
Figure 2-6	Percentages of different bounding box shapes.....	7
Figure 2-7	ARM's square hierarchical primitive-listing .....	8
Figure 2-8	Flow-chart of ARM proposed layer selection algorithm .....	9
Figure 2-9	Use of ARM's square hierarchies .....	10
Figure 2-10	Rendering from hierarchical primitive lists .....	11
Figure 3-1	Layer design overview .....	13
Figure 3-2	Use of rectangular layers .....	15
Figure 3-3	Use of unaligned grids .....	16
Figure 3-4	Redundant access in hierarchical lists.....	17
Figure 3-5	The primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm.....	19
Figure 3-6	Tile-based Bounding Box construction.....	19
Figure 3-7	Effects of different reference side in our algorithm.....	20
Figure 3-8	Building lookup table and circuit for Layer ID generation.....	21
Figure 3-9	Circuit implementation of the primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm...22	
Figure 3-10	Circuit implementation of the primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm...24	
Figure 3-11	Comparator in integrated layer selection circuit.....	24
Figure 3-12	Primitive list design .....	26
Figure 3-13	Primitive list management in GPU .....	27
Figure 3-14	Square Hierarchical Primitive list management in GPU .....	28
Figure 3-15	Ours Hierarchical Primitive list management in GPU.....	29
Figure 4-1	Simulation flow and ATTILA architecture .....	30
Figure 4-2	Doom3 320x240 storage reduction percentages .....	31
Figure 4-3	Doom3 640x480 storage reduction percentages .....	32
Figure 4-4	Doom3 1280x1024 storage reduction percentages .....	32
Figure 4-5	Doom3 1600x1200 storage reduction percentages .....	33
Figure 4-6	Quake4 320x240 storage reduction percentages.....	33
Figure 4-7	Quake4 640x480 storage reduction percentages.....	34
Figure 4-8	Quake4 1280x1024 storage reduction percentages.....	34
Figure 4-9	Quake4 1600x1200 storage reduction percentages.....	35



Figure 4-10	Doom3 320x240 redundant reads .....	36
Figure 4-11	Doom3 640x480 redundant reads .....	36
Figure 4-12	Doom3 1280x1024 redundant reads .....	37
Figure 4-13	Doom3 1600x1200 redundant reads .....	37
Figure 4-14	Quake4 320x240 redundant reads.....	38
Figure 4-15	Quake4 640x480 redundant reads.....	38
Figure 4-16	Quake4 1280x1024 redundant reads.....	39
Figure 4-17	Quake4 1600x1200 redundant reads.....	39
Figure 4-18	Doom3 storage reductions by proposed design .....	40
Figure 4-19	Quake4 storage reductions by proposed design.....	41
Figure 4-20	Doom3 redundant reads by proposed design .....	42
Figure 4-21	Quake4 redundant reads by proposed design.....	43
Figure 4-22	Doom3 List buffer size requirements.....	44
Figure 4-23	Quake4 List buffer size requirements .....	44
Figure 5-1	Parallel Tile Renderer Architecture.....	48
Figure 5-2	Rendering sequence for Parallel Tile Renderers .....	49
Figure A-1	Doom3 frame 30 .....	52
Figure A-2	Doom3 frame 60 .....	52
Figure A-3	Doom3 frame 90 .....	53
Figure A-4	Doom3 frame 120 .....	53
Figure A-5	Doom3 frame 150 .....	54
Figure A-6	Doom3 frame 180 .....	54
Figure A-7	Quake4 frame 30.....	55
Figure A-8	Quake4 frame 60.....	55
Figure A-9	Quake4 frame 90.....	56
Figure A-10	Quake4 frame 120.....	56
Figure A-11	Quake4 frame 150.....	57
Figure A-12	Quake4 frame 180.....	57

# List of Tables

Table 3-1	Table for Layer Type Select.....	25
Table 5-1	Doom3, rendering with recursive-Z sequence.....	50



# Chapter 1 Introduction

3D graphic applications in embedded systems become more and more popular, such as 3D games, personal navigation devices, and graphical user interface. As we knew the embedded systems are designed for some specific applications. Accordingly, the system designers usually want to reduce the costs by limiting system resources. However, the 3D graphic applications in embedded systems become more complex than before. The trade off between performance, power, and storage of 3D graphic processing in such systems becomes an important issue.

There's a promising technique called tile-based rendering [1] has been widely use in those resource-limited graphic processing environments like ARM Mali [2], PowerVR SGX [3], and ATi Imageon 2380 [4]. Instead of rendering a full frame in one pass, this technique divides screen into many small blocks called tiles and rendering tile by tile. Typically, tile size is 32x32 pixels, such that we can use less than 10KBytes for tiled frame buffer and tiled Z-buffer to store runtime information to render a tile. Due to this low runtime storage requirement, we can employ a small on-chip memory to render a scene instead of a large off-chip frame buffer and Z-buffer. Localize runtime storage can greatly reduces the external memory traffic and possibly improve performance in GPU. However, this technique requires extra buffers called scene buffer to store all primitives' data and each tile has a corresponding primitive list to record which primitives should be rendered in this tile. Then the primitives will be sent to tile renderer in per tile basis when rendering in progress.

According to our observation, there's about 20% of primitives covered exactly

one tile, the other 80% of primitives covered more than one tile and will be recorded many times in different primitive lists. Although, it is necessary to record all these information, it is inefficient to record data in such method especially when 3D scenes get more complex. ARM has proposed a hierarchical primitive-listing [5] mechanism to record these large primitives which covered multiple tiles. Although this technique can reduce 73% of primitive storage compare to typical flat primitive listing, there still have some non-square and misaligned bounding boxes that ARM's patent would need more primitive lists to record. Also, the algorithm to choose appropriate layer to store the primitives needs to take multiple steps to finish in most of cases. In this paper, we propose two different hierarchies and a fast primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm. The results show that we can reduce primitive storage about 10% ~ 33% compare to use ARM's square hierarchies only. In addition, the proposed primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm can be implemented in a simple circuit to provide fast layer selection.

The main chapters of this thesis are organized as follows: In chapter 2, we would provide background knowledge for tile-based rendering, and related works would be introduced. In chapter 3, we would present proposed design. Chapter 4 would demonstrate the simulation technique and results of this work; some environment assumptions would also be listed in this chapter. And finally, Chapter 5, a summary would be made and some future work would be proposed.

# Chapter 2 Background and Related work

In this chapter, we will give an overview of typical graphics pipeline. Then, we will introduce the tile-based rendering; explain the differences between these two different GPU implementations. Also, the inefficiency of memory usage in tile-based rendering will be discussed. At the end of this chapter, we will present the details of a previous work related to this problem.

## 2.1 Typical graphics pipeline

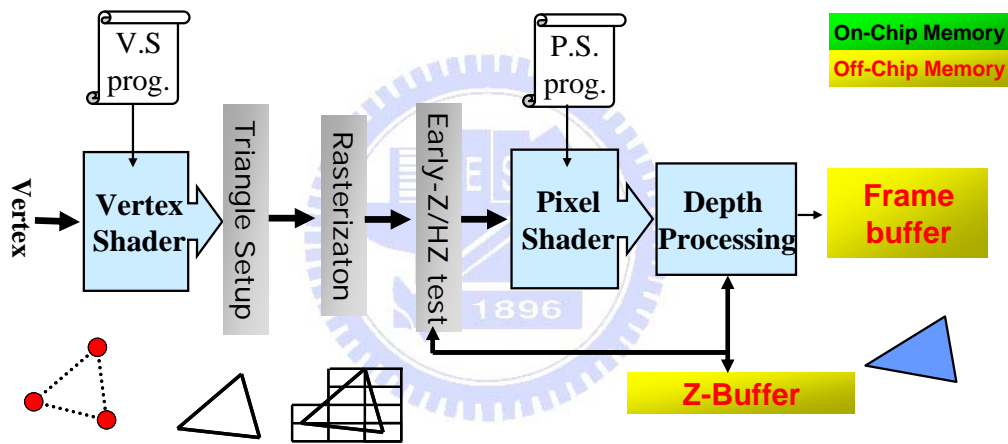


Figure 2-1 Typical 3D graphics pipeline

Typical 3D graphics pipeline can be showed as Figure 2-1. Each object in a 3D scene may be composed of many primitives, typically triangles. And each triangle consists of three vertices. The graphics pipeline will perform coordinate transformation on each vertex from object space to 3D scene space, and finally into screen space by vertex shader. And then, the triangle setup will assemble vertices into primitives. In rasterization stage, the primitive will be rasterized into many fragments according to its screen coordinates. These fragments will be tested by Early-Z or Hierarchical-Z test to filter out invisible fragments as soon as possible to reduce the

workload in pixel shader and Z-test. These fragments that passed Early-Z or Hierarchical-Z test will be sent to pixel shader to perform color shading and texture filtering. After fragment shading process in pixel shader, the final Z-test will perform on each shaded fragment to see if it should be displayed on the screen or not and then send to frame buffer and update corresponding value in Z-buffer according to the test result.

In this process, both Z-test and frame buffer are external memories which means that access these two buffers will cause extra latencies. As the 3D scenes become complex, there are more than ten times of visible fragments that need to access these two buffers since primitives are not process by any specific order and cause lot of external memory traffic.

## 2.2 Tile-based rendering

In this section, we will introduce the basis of tile-based rendering and its corresponding data structures. And finally discuss some observations and problems.

### 2.2.1 Tile-based rendering pipeline

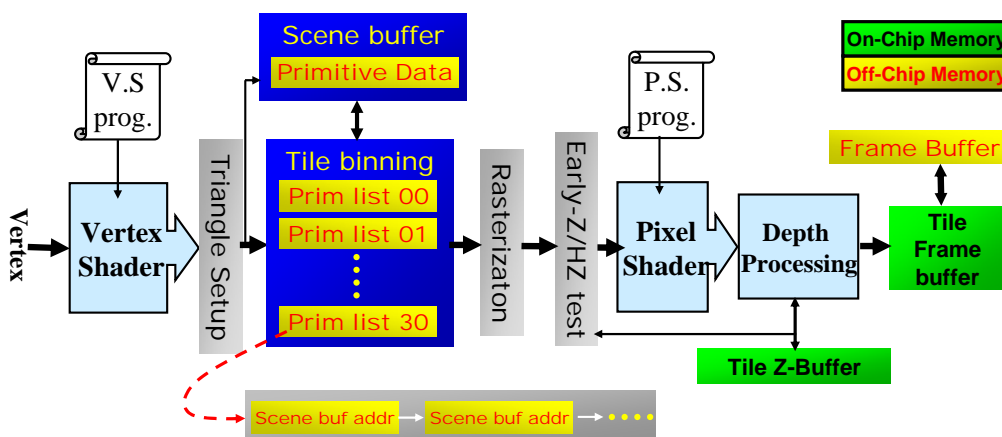


Figure 2-2 Tile-based rendering pipeline

As for the tile-based rendering GPU, instead of rendering a full frame at a time,

this technique render a small region of frame, called a tile which is typically 32x32 pixels, one by one. According to this characteristic, the temporary storage such as the Z-buffer and the frame buffer can be easily built in a chip, and thus significantly reduce the external memory traffic.

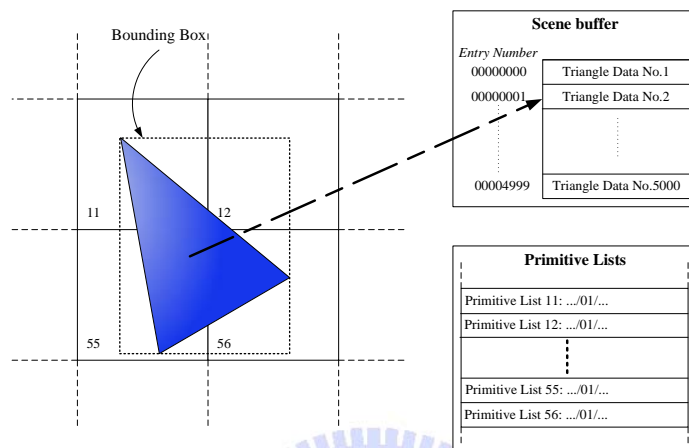


Figure 2-3 Tile binning process

Figure 2-2 shows the diagram of the tile-based rendering pipeline. The process before triangle setup is exactly the same as that of the typical graphics pipeline. After triangle setup, the data of the transformed primitives will be stored in an extra storage called scene buffer. Also, each tile on screen has a corresponding external storage called primitive list which records the primitives rendered in this tile. After storing all primitives of a frame into the scene buffer, the tile binning process will be performed. As Figure 2-3 shows, the tile binning process will begin with the bounding box test which is formed by the primitive's maximum X and Y and minimum X and Y values of its transformed vertices' coordinates. This bounding box will be used to check which tiles are covered by this bounding box. If a tile is covered by the bounding box, then the scene buffer address of this primitive will be recorded into the primitive list of the tile. After all primitives in this frame are sorted into tiles, then the rendering

process will begin in tile base. The disadvantage of this method is that the pixel process must start after all primitives in current frame have been sorted into tiles. Fortunately, this latency may be hidden by doubling scene buffer and primitive lists to process multiple frames simultaneously.

### 2.2.2 Data structures for Primitive lists

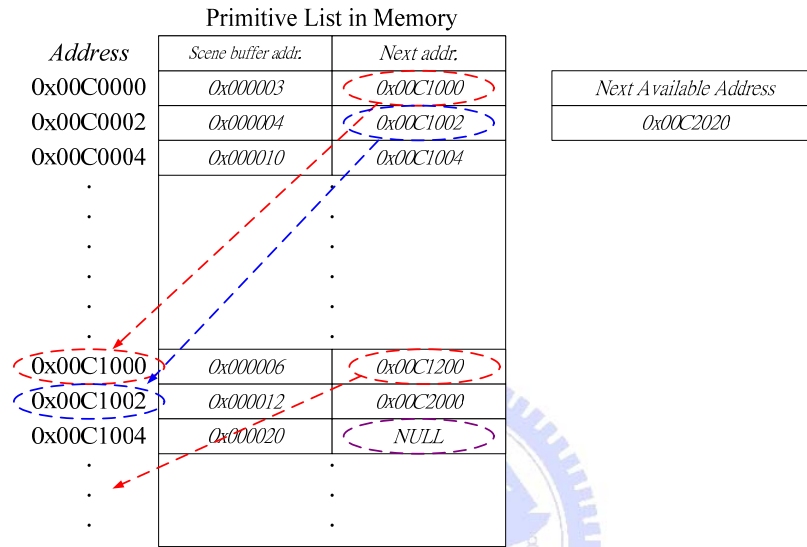


Figure 2-4 Linked-list implementation of primitive list

Figure 2-4 shows the implementation of primitive lists. Each tile has a corresponding entry in the memory region. And each entry consists of two fields, one for the scene buffer address of a primitive and the other for the next record address. This implementation can ensure that no internal fragmentation in each list, but storage redundancy is very serious since it records every data with a corresponding next address. If a NULL is found in the next address filed, for example, 0x00C1004 in Figure 2-4, it means that the record is the end of the current primitive list.

Another way to implement the primitive list structure is using fixed-size storage in which every tile has a corresponding entry in memory with a fixed number of fields to record scene buffer addresses. Although this method is very efficiency in list



retrieving, the internal fragmentation problem is very serious in it.

### 2.3 The inefficiency of memory usage in tile-based rendering

Figure 2-5 below is the statistic information from Doom3 and Quake4. We have test 20 frames from 600 frames with 30 frames as interval with various screen resolutions. And the tile size 32x32 pixels.

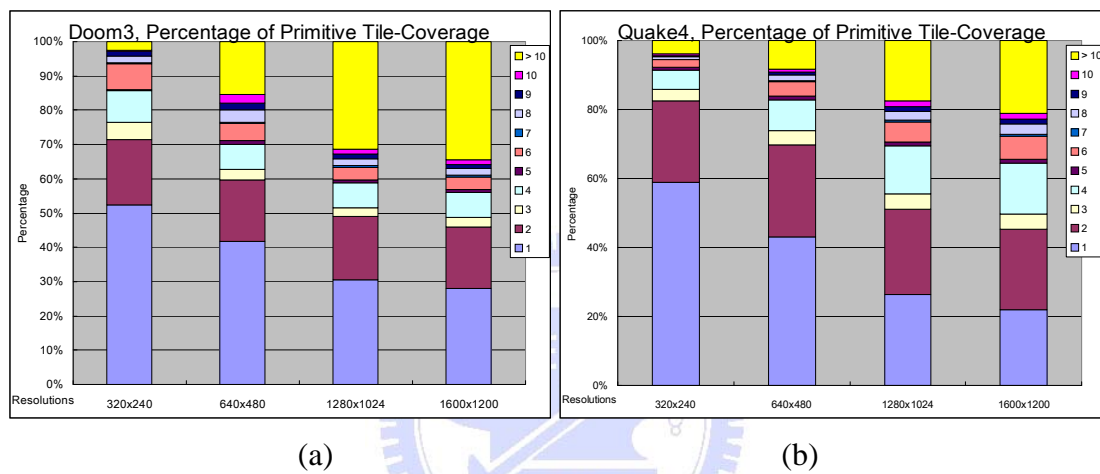


Figure 2-5 Percentages of primitive tile-coverage diagrams for various test cases

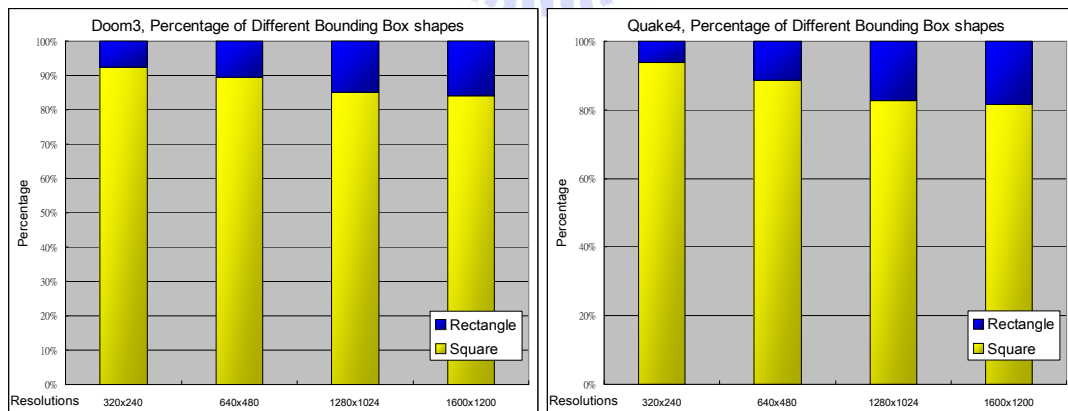


Figure 2-6 Percentages of different bounding box shapes for various test cases

Figure 2-5 shows the percentage of primitive tile-coverage for various test cases. As the resolution gets higher, the primitives' bounding box cover more tiles which means we will record the same scene buffer address for multiple times. Although, it is

necessary to record this information in order to render the whole frame correctly, it is not a very efficient method to do. There's another thing can be observed in this tile-coverage diagram. Some primitive covers 2, 3, 5 or 7 tiles, which means these bounding boxes are in rectangular shapes. Such that, the statistic of different bounding box shapes are shown below.

Figure 2-6 is about what shapes of primitives' bounding boxes are. This bar-chart is again the average value from 20 frames from 600 frames with 30 frames as interval of Doom3 and Quake4 with various screen resolutions. The shapes of primitives' bounding boxes on screen are 7% to 19% in long and thin rectangle.

## 2.4 ARM's square hierarchies

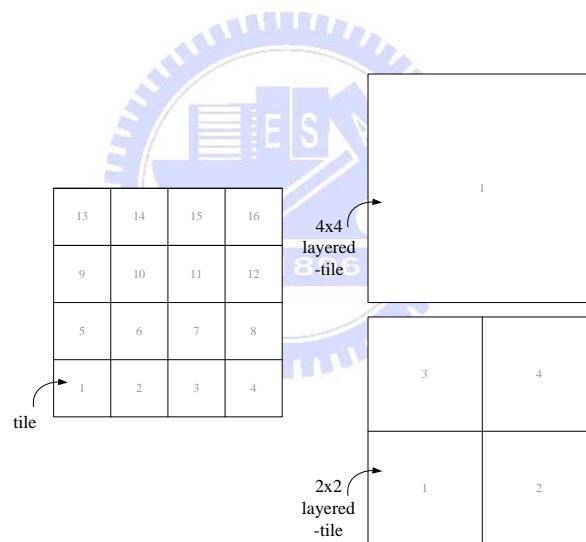


Figure 2-7 ARM's square hierarchical primitive-listing

ARM has proposed a hierarchical listing mechanism [5] to store primitive lists in tile-based rendering. As Figure 2-7, the left one is called bottom layer which is the same as typical flat tiling mechanism, each entry represents a screen tile. The other two layers are called grouped layers; each entry is grouping by multiple screen tiles to form an NxN layered-tile. For example, a 2x2 layered-tile consists of 4 tiles in bottom

layer, 2 tiles in height and 2 tiles in width. A 4x4 layered-tile consists of 16 tiles in bottom layer, 4 tiles in height and 4 tiles in width and so on. These extra layered-tiles have their own primitive lists to store primitive address in scene buffer. And every layered-tile in upper layer can be use to represent the tiles it represents in bottom layer, which means we can use less primitive list storage if we can store primitives in these layers. For instance, if a primitive's bounding box covers tile 1, 2, 5 and 6. We can record this primitive with only one record in primitive list of layered-tile 1 in 2x2 layer instead of 4 records in tile 1, 2, 5, and 6's primitive lists. Although this mechanism can reduce lot of list storage size, it requires to going through all layers to get all corresponding primitive information in rendering a screen tile instead of typical flat primitive list which traverses its own primitive list only.

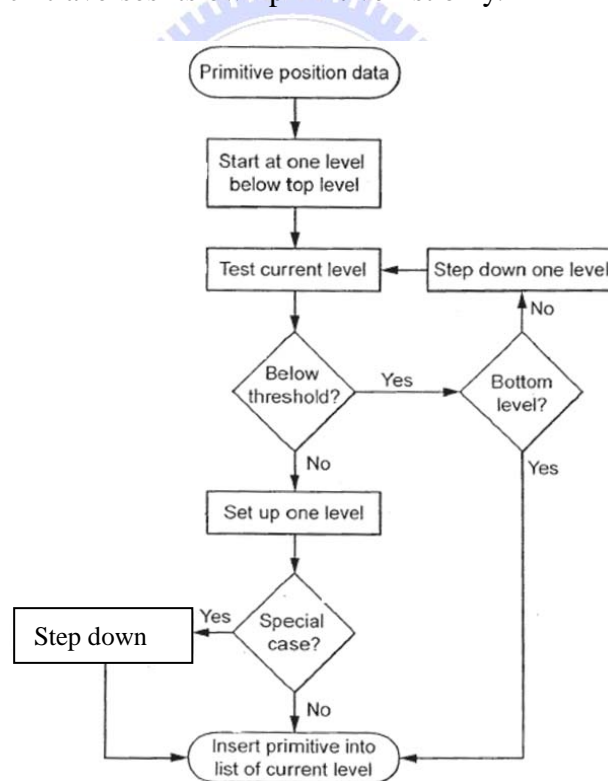


Figure 2-8 Flow-chart of ARM proposed layer selection algorithm

As Figure 2-8 shows, this patent proposed an algorithm that test primitives layer

by layer, to choose which layer in hierarchy should be used to store this primitive during tile binning process. This algorithm starts with one layer below top (the highest) layer, if number of (layered-)tiles covered by input primitive's bounding box is below a threshold (e.g., 4) then step down one layer, repeat this process until number of (layered-)tiles covered by bounding box which no longer below a threshold or it reaches a bottom layer. Furthermore, if it is below the threshold then we store in one layer above current layer or if it is in the bottom layer then we store this primitive immediately. Finally it checks if this primitive is a misalignment one or not. If it's, step down one layer and store primitive into current layer; if it's not, store to current layer.

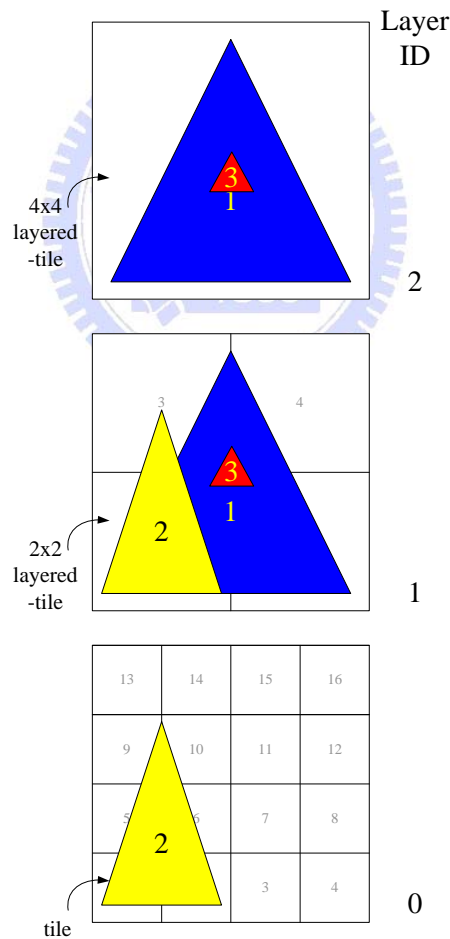


Figure 2-9 Use of ARM's square hierarchies

As Figure 2-9 shows, the testing procedure for triangle No.1 will start from layer 1 which is one layer below top layer. Triangle No.1 covers 4 layered-tiles in layer 1 which excess threshold then we step up one layer to layer 2 and check it is special case or not. Triangle No.1 will be identified as normal case and then store in layer 2. The triangle No.2 will be tested from layer 1, too. And found that it is below threshold which needs to step down one layer to layer 0. Triangle No.2 covers 6 tiles in layer 0 which excess threshold and will be step up one layer and so on. Triangle No.3 is used to demonstrate special case which called misalignment. Triangle No.3 covers 4 layered-tiles in layer 1 and will be step up one layer to layer 2. Then this triangle will be identified as special case because this triangle is lying on the boundary of multiple tiles across different layers which need to step down one layer and store in layer 1.

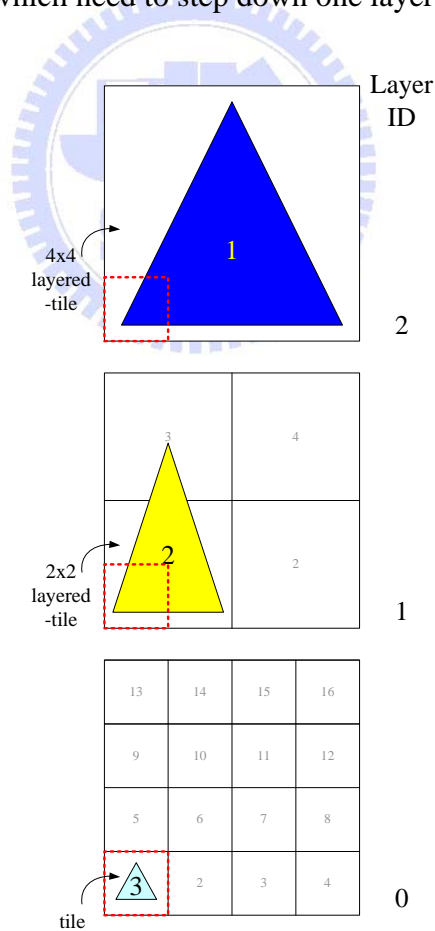


Figure 2-10 Rendering from hierarchical primitive lists

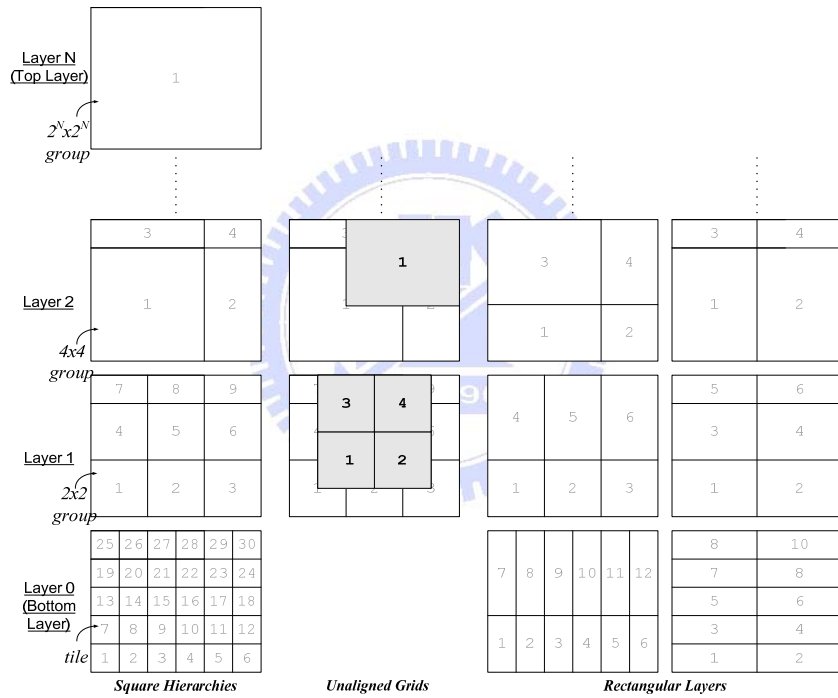
After tile binning process, all primitives in current frame are binned into different layers of square hierarchical primitive lists according to the size and position of primitives' bounding boxes. Rendering a tile from such hierarchical primitive list, it needs to traverse all layers to find out which layered-tile covers current rendering tile and then fetch corresponding primitive list to render. As Figure 2-10 shows, if we need to render tile No.1 of screen, we need the primitive lists of tile No.1 in layer 0, layered-tile No.1 in layer 1 and layered-tile No.1 in layer 2 in order to draw the correct results.

In the patent, it uses only square fashion like 2x2, 4x4, and NxN layered-tile to illustrate their hierarchies. Although this patent claims we can group tiles in any fashion, it doesn't provide any examples and corresponding layer selection algorithm. This paper will implement the hierarchical list ideas and use different grouping rules to see the effects for the storage size. Also, a new layer selection algorithm which can be easily implemented by hardware will be proposed.

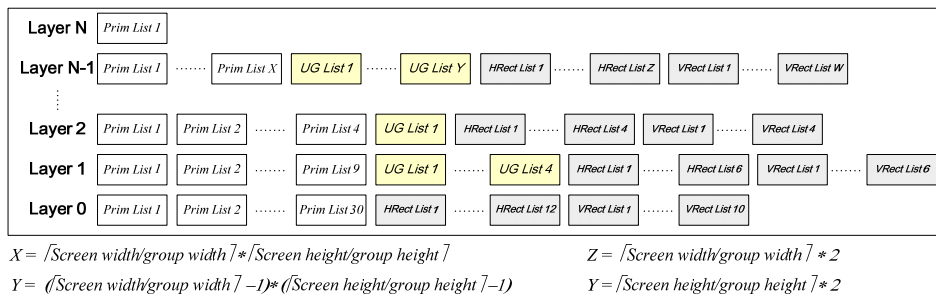
# Chapter 3 Design

In this chapter, we will introduce our layer design according to our observation and a simple algorithm to classify primitives into different layers will be proposed. Finally, a layer-based rendering will be introduced which can further reduce external memory traffic in rendering progress.

## 3.1 Layer design overview



(a) Hierarchical primitive list structure showing all possible hierarchies and shapes



(b) Memory organization for the hierarchical primitive list structure in (a)

Figure 3-1 Layer design overview

Figure 3-1 shows the overview of our new design layers, the left most part is as same as ARM's demonstration in their patent. Layer 0 represents the bottom layer which every entry is as same as screen tile, layer 1 represents 2x2 layer, layer 2 represents 4x4 layer and so on. Based on the mechanism proposed by ARM, we introduce unaligned grids to store misalignment primitives and rectangular layers to store primitive of non-square shapes in the middle and the right most of the figure. Details will be discussed in section 3.2 and 3.3. Figure 3-1(b) is the organization of primitive lists in memory. The Prim list presents square hierarchy method's primitive lists. The UG List represents unaligned grids' lists. And the HRect (Horizontal Rectangle) List and VRect (Vertical Rectangle) List represent the primitive lists of rectangular layer in high or wide shape. And the X, Y, Z, W indicates the largest layered-tile IDs in upper layers.

### 3.1.1 Use of Rectangular layers

Since high and wide rectangle shapes of primitives are common, we introduce a new layer called rectangular layer to store these kinds of primitives. Except the layer that includes all tiles in screen in single layered-tile, every layer has a corresponding rectangular layer including the bottom layer. As Figure 6(b)(c) show, there are two types of this rectangular layer. First is in high rectangle shape and second in wide rectangle shape. The rules to form these layers are; divide the screen into half based on how many tiles in vertical and horizontal directions of screen to align bottom layer's tile. The width of high rectangle shape is exactly the same with the corresponding layer's group width. The height of the wide one is also the same with corresponding layer's group height.



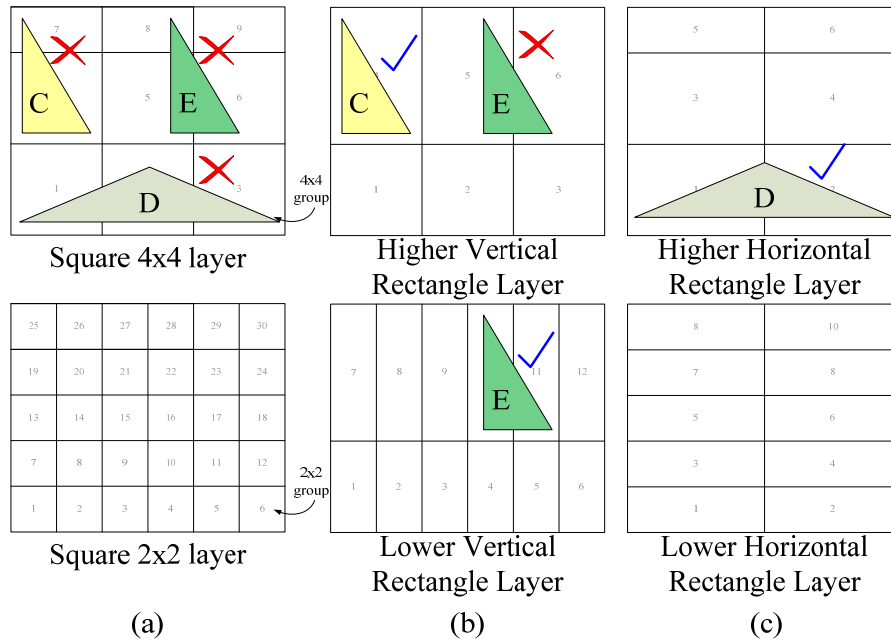


Figure 3-2 Use of rectangular layers. Figure shows all possible results of primitive-hierarchy fitting and final selections

The rule to classify the primitives into this layer is depending on the difference between tile-based bounding box's width and height. If the difference between height and width of bounding box reach a threshold (e.g., 2, 4 tiles), then this primitive will be recognized as in rectangular layer. In the Figure 6(c)(c), the primitive *C* and *D* will be recognized as in rectangular layer. In the Figure 6(c)(c), the primitive *C* and *D* will be recognized as in high and wide shape, such that *C* and *D* can be stored in rectangular layer with less primitive lists. In this type of layer, we will encounter the misalignment problem. For example, primitive *E* in Figure 6(b) is a misalignment one. Either 2x2 or 4x4 grouped layers' rectangular layer, primitive *E* covers two groups. In this case, we still store primitive *E* in rectangular layer but step down one layer from where it originally chose as long as it is not the bottom layer.

### 3.1.2 Use of Unaligned Grids

In this section, we will introduce a grouping method to store misalignment

primitives. In this layer, each grouped layers have a corresponding unaligned grid except the layer that includes all tiles in screen in single layered-tile and bottom layer. As Figure 3-3(b) shows, this grid starts from  $(0 + \text{group-width}/2, 0 + \text{group-height}/2)$  with same group size to its corresponding grouped layers. For instance, the misalignment primitive **A** in Figure 3-3(a), both 2x2 grouped and bottom layers for this primitive requires 4 layered-tiles are recorded. If this unaligned grid is applied, this primitive **A** can be recorded in this unaligned grid with only one primitive list in Figure 3-3(b).

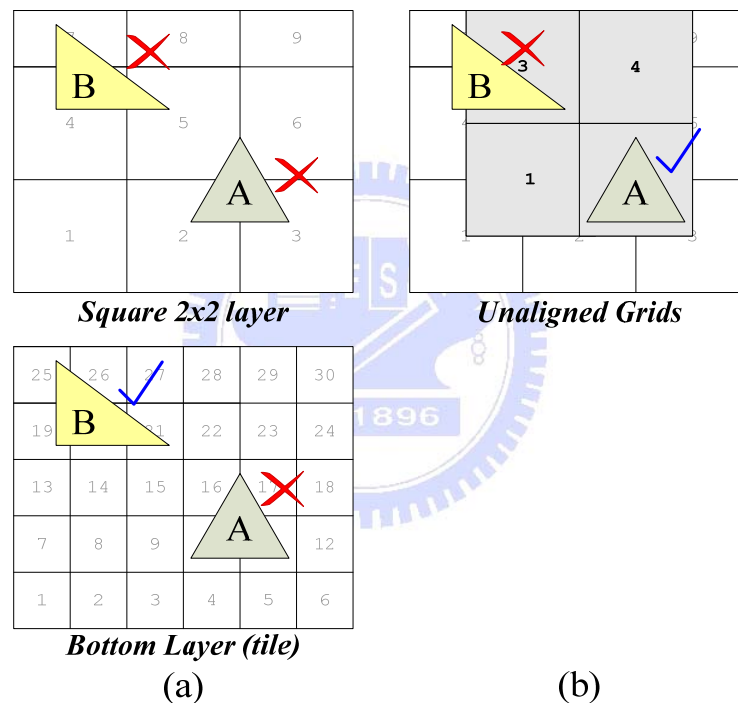


Figure 3-3 Use of unaligned grids. Figure shows all possible results of primitive-hierarchy fitting and final selections

In Figure 3-3(a), there's another example primitive **B**. This primitive is also a misalignment one, but it can not be fit in 2x2 grouped layer's unaligned grid, because these grids are begin from  $(0 + \text{group-width}/2, 0 + \text{group-height}/2)$  which means there have some tiles this grid cannot be covered. In this case, the primitive **B** will be stored in square hierarchy and step down one layer as ARM's patent did. There are two main rules to decide a primitive can be put in this grid or not. First, this primitive must be

misalignment. Second, the primitive's bounding box need to pass the boundary check which tests this primitive whether it can be covered in this layer or not.

### 3.1.3 Summary

In this section, we will show the extra overheads in such design. In a hierarchical layer design can reduce storage size requirements, but every primitive in any layered-tile of upper layer will be processed by the tiles it represents. However, some of primitive in the upper layer may cover only half of the area in layered-tile. This would cause extra traffic to fetch these primitives.

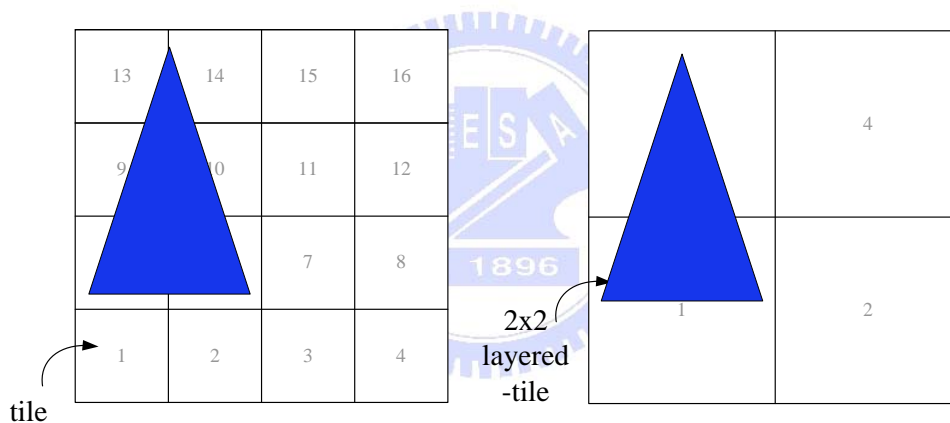


Figure 3-4 Redundant access in hierarchical lists

As Figure 3-4, the triangle above will be store in 2x2 layer and the bounding box test result shows this triangle covers two layered-tiles in 2x2 layer, which means tiles 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13 and 14 would need to access this triangle when rendering in progress. If we do use typical rendering hardware and policy, we would generate some redundant access in runtime.

To add these extra layers, we will need extra primitive lists to record scene buffer addresses of primitives for these layers. Total number of original primitive list is,

$$\lceil \text{ScreenWidth} / \text{TileWidth} \rceil \times \lceil \text{ScreenHeight} / \text{TileHeight} \rceil$$

To add ARM's square hierarchies, we would need extra lists below. Assume we have layers from 0 to N,

$$\sum_1^N (\lceil \text{ScreenWidth} / \text{LayeredTileWidth} \rceil \times \lceil \text{ScreenHeight} / \text{LayeredTileHeight} \rceil)$$

To add our rectangular layer, we would need extra lists below. Assume we have layers from 0 to N, and layered-tile in layer N can use only one list to includes the whole screen,

$$\sum_0^{N-1} (2 \times \lceil \text{ScreenHeight} / \text{LayeredTileHeight} \rceil + \lceil \text{ScreenWidth} / \text{LayeredTileWidth} \rceil \times 2)$$

To add our unaligned grids, we would need extra lists below. Assume we have layers from 0 to N, and layered-tile in layer N can use only one list to includes the whole screen,

$$\sum_1^{N-1} [(\lceil \text{ScreenWidth} / \text{LayeredTileWidth} \rceil - 1) \times (\lceil \text{ScreenHeight} / \text{LayeredTileHeight} \rceil - 1)]$$

### 3.2 The Primitive-Hierarchy Fitting Algorithm

To selection of a suitable layer for primitives much faster, we will improve the algorithm proposed by ARM. The primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm we proposed to select appropriate layer in square hierarchy is in Figure 3-5.

**Step 1.** Represent primitive with tile-based bounding box  
**Step 2.(a)** Select the shorter side of the bounding box as reference side  
**(b)** Perform  $\text{ceil}(\log_2 \text{length-of(Ref-Side)})$  to get layer ID  
**Step 3.** Check the input primitive on selected layer is misalignment or not  
**Yes)** Step down one layer and store this primitive  
**No)** Store this primitive into selected layer

Figure 3-5 The primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm for square and aligned

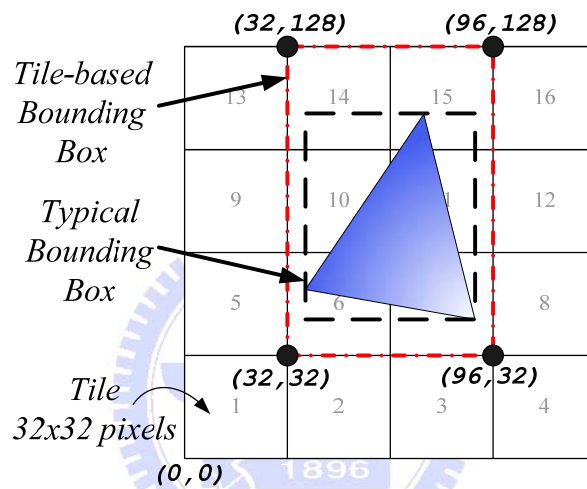


Figure 3-6 Tile-based Bounding Box construction. Inner one is the typical bounding box, and outer one is the tile-based bounding box. The width of tile-based bounding box is 2 and height is 3.

To understand this algorithm, we need to define layer ID first. The bottom layer is layer 0, 2x2 grouped layer is layer 1, 4x4 grouped layer is layer 2 and so on (as Figure 3-1(a) shows). The boundaries of these layered-tiles are power of 2 and groups together to form upper layers' layered-tiles. Assume we are using 32x32 pixels as our tile size. When the primitive comes, we first construct its tile-based bounding box as in Figure 3-6. The reason to construct such tile-based bounding box is reducing the complexity of computation circuit. The advantage of such bounding box is that it can easily find out the tile-based length of this bounding box and figure out misalignment or not by searching low-order bits of its coordinate directly. To build such bounding

box we will round down minimum X and Y value to nearest multiple of 32, if it is on the boundary then leave it on that boundary. And round up the maximum X and Y value to nearest multiple of 32, if it is on the boundary then shift it to next multiple of 32 in order to detect the correct tile-based length of bounding box. Also, the coordinates of tile-based bounding box are all multiple of 32 which can reduce computation complexity of hardware.

After building up the tile-based bounding box, we will select an appropriate layer to store input primitive in square hierarchies. Since all length and positions of tiles and layered-tiles are power of 2. The relationships between layered-tiles in different layers are power of 2, too. To determine which layer should use to store current primitive we might have multiple choices like shorter side, longer side or average length of tile-based bounding box. Because of the power of 2 characteristic of layered-tile's length in each side, we can use this side's tile-based length to perform  $\log_2$  operation to figure out which layer in hierarchy should we put the primitive in. If the length of the side is not multiple of two, the result of  $\log_2$  operation will contain both integer and non-zero numbers after decimal place. In order to find fittest layered-tile, we will perform a ceiling operation after  $\log_2$ , such that we can round up to nearest layer which can use exactly one layered-tile to cover this bounding box's width or height.

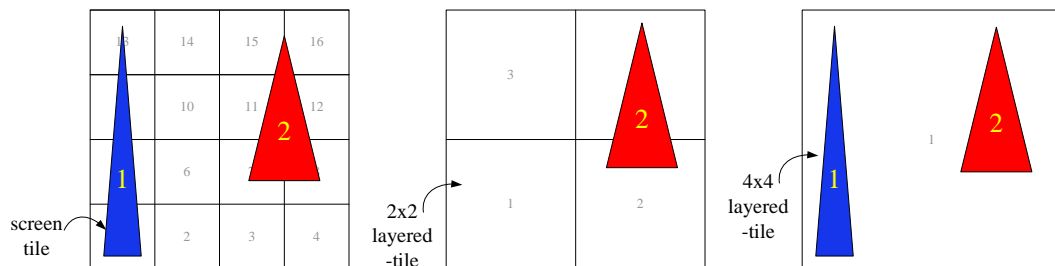


Figure 3-7 Effects of different reference side in our algorithm

As Figure 3-7 above, if we choose longer side of triangle No.1 as reference side and perform  $\log_2$  and ceiling operations, we will get layer ID is 2 and store it with a 4x4 layered-tile. Although, we can record this primitive with only one layered-tile, most of the screen tiles covered by this 4x4 layered-tile are not covered by this primitive. And it generates 12 unnecessary accesses in rendering. If we choose shorter side as our reference side, triangle No.1 will be recorded in layer 0 with 4 tiles. And this selection would make the shape of final selection result more suitable for this primitive and reduces unnecessary accesses in rendering. If we take another triangle, said triangle No.2 as example. If we choose longer side, this primitive will be recorded in layer 2 which generates 10 useless accesses in rendering. Otherwise, if we choose shorter side as reference side, this primitive will be recorded in layer 1 with 2 layered-tiles which generates 2 useless accesses in rendering. In our algorithm, we choose shorter side as reference side to discover a balance between useless accesses in rendering and storage size requirements.

Length	Input (DCBA)	layerID
1	0001	000
2	0010	001
3	0011	010
4	0100	010
5	0101	011
6	0110	011
7	0111	011
8	1000	011
9	1001	100
10	1010	100
...	...	100
15	1111	100

**Layer ID Generation:**

if ( Input >  $8_{10}$  )  
 $LID = 100_2 (4_{10})$

else

$LID_{bit-0} = A + BD + CD'$   
 $LID_{bit-1} = A + B + CD$   
 $LID_{bit-2} = 0$

Figure 3-8 Building lookup table and circuit for Layer ID generation

Although the logarithm and ceiling functions will need complex circuit and longer cycle time to finish, our implementation will use a simple way to replace these calculations. Typically, implementation of hierarchical primitive list will use limited layers to ensure hardware's simplicity. So we can build a lookup table for this logarithm and ceiling operation, and this table can be further reduced via Karnaugh Map. As Figure 3-8 shows, assume we have five layers in our implementation with Layer ID 0 to 4. If length of reference side is larger than  $1000_2$  ( $8_{10}$ ) in tiles, then output the layer ID  $100_2$  ( $4_{10}$ ) directly. The others we can use LSB 4-bit from length of reference side in tiles as input to generate 3-bit layer ID. Let input bits from bit-0 to bit-4 be A, B, C, and D. The output bit-0 can be expressed by  $A + BD + CD'$ , bit-1  $A + B + CD$  and keep bit-2 always zero. Combine the rules above; we can build the Layer Select Logic to get the Layer ID in a simple circuit.

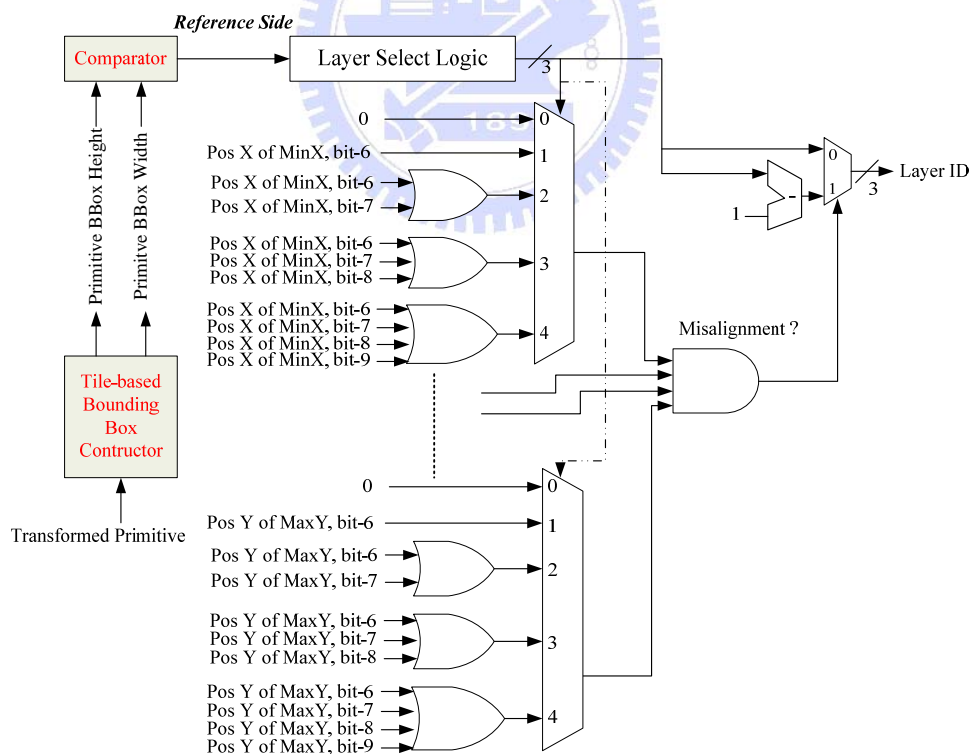


Figure 3-9 Circuit implementation of the primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm. Note that this circuit is a combinational logic. The algorithm steps simply indicates flow of signals, but not states



To detect the misalignment, we can use an intuitive way since the length of both sides of layered-tiles in square hierarchies are in power of 2; such that we can detect misalignment by directly detect the low-order bits of 4 coordinates (maximum and minimum X, Y) of tile-based bounding box. Put these rules and Layer Select Logic together, we can form our circuit of layer fit algorithm.

Figure 3-9 shows the circuit implementation of primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm. The comparator takes the input primitive's tile-based bounding box's width and height in number of tiles. Then output shorter side as reference side to the Layer Select Logic. The output of Layer Select Logic will be the layer ID. And the four multiplexors will check the maximum and minimum X, Y positions' values to see whether the primitive in selected layer is misalignment or not. Since typical tile size is 32x32 pixels, the coordinates including tiles and groups must be a multiple of 32. We can determine the input primitive is misalignment or not by checking the low-order bits of its tile-based bounding box's coordinates. If it is a misalignment then outputs layer ID -1 (step down one layer). If it's not, outputs the selected layer ID from Layer Select Logic.

As the layer design described in section 3.1, we design two new layers called unaligned grids and rectangular layers. Both these designs have a same characteristic with square hierarchies. For unaligned grids, the height and width of a layered-tile is exactly the same with corresponding layered-tile in square hierarchies. For rectangular layers, the width of vertical rectangle and the height of horizontal rectangle are exactly the same with corresponding layered-tile in square hierarchies. Due to this characteristic, the Layer Select Logic used in Figure 3-9 can be applied in choose appropriate layer to store primitive in unaligned grids and rectangular layers.

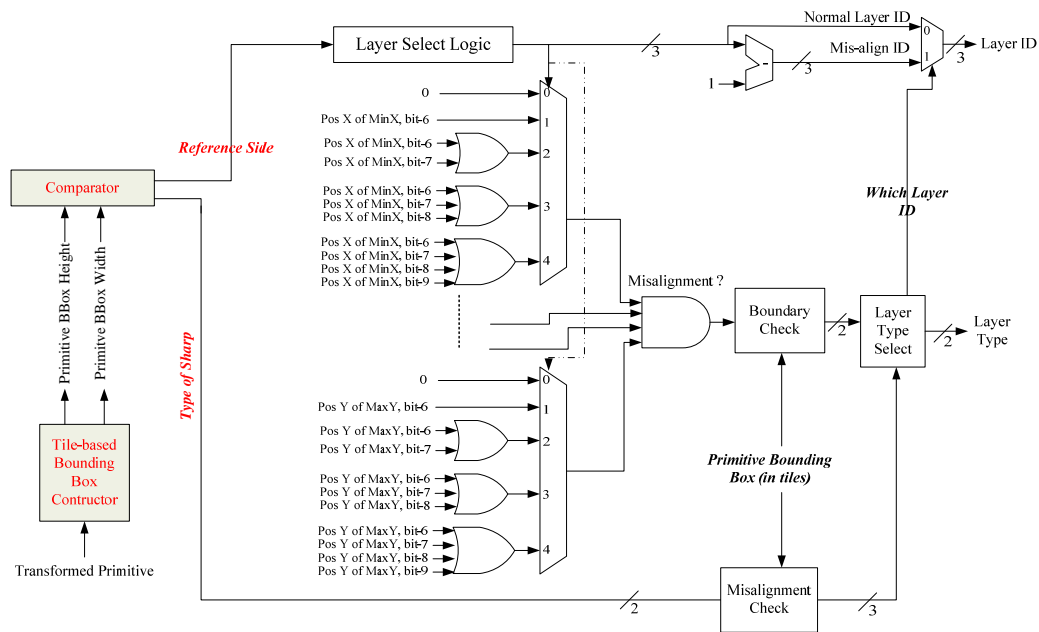


Figure 3-10 Circuit implementation of the primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm, with fittings to rectangle and unaligned grid variations included

Integrate unaligned grids and rectangular layers with this algorithm. We need to give priorities in order to choose which type of layer is more appropriate to use. In our implementation, the rectangular layer has highest priority and then unaligned grid in the next place, finally square hierarchy is the lowest one. Also, we need to add an output to indicate what type of layer to use along with layer ID.

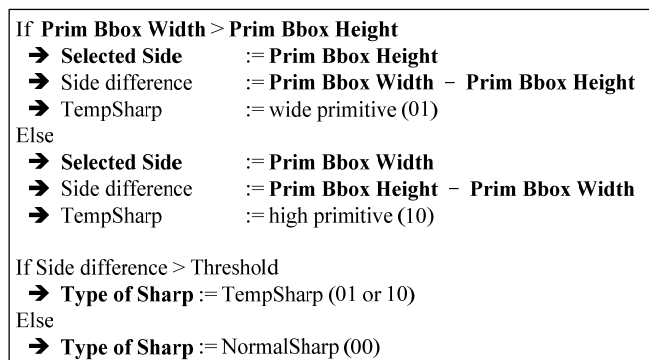


Figure 3-11 Comparator in integrated layer selection circuit, with behavior description only

Table 3-1 Table for Layer Type Select

<i>Misalignment</i>	<i>Type of Sharp</i>	<i>Layer Type</i>	<i>Which Layer ID</i>
No (00)	Normal (000)	Normal (00)	0
No (00)	Wide Prim. (010)	Horizontal Rectangle(01)	0
No (00)	High Prim. (100)	Vertical Rectangle (10)	0
Yes (01)	Normal (000)	Inter-group (11)	0
Yes (01)	Wide Prim. (010)	Horizontal Rectangle(01)	0
Yes (01)	High Prim. (100)	Vertical Rectangle (10)	0
Yes, but boundary check failed (10)	Normal (000)	Normal (00)	1
Yes, but boundary check failed (10)	Wide Prim. (010)	Horizontal Rectangle(01)	0
Yes, but boundary check failed (10)	High Prim. (100)	Vertical Rectangle (10)	0
No (00)	Wide Prim. but misalignment (011)	Horizontal Rectangle(01)	1
No (00)	High Prim. but misalignment(101)	Vertical Rectangle (10)	1
Yes (01/10)	Wide Prim. but misalignment (011)	Horizontal Rectangle(01)	1
Yes (01/10)	High Prim. but misalignment(101)	Vertical Rectangle (10)	1

Figure 3-10 shows the implementation of the whole primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm. The priorities of these different types of hierarchies are encoded in the lookup table as Table 3-1 shows. As Figure 3-11 shows, once the comparator determines this input bounding box whether it is a high or wide rectangle, this primitive will be stored in rectangular layer corresponding to selected layer ID. But if misalignment is found in Misalignment Check, then it will output this information together to Layer Type Select in order to make the correct layer decision. The unaligned grid will be used if this bounding box is misalignment and passed the Boundary Check. Finally, if this bounding box cannot be classified as either rectangular or unaligned grid, then this primitive will be stored in square hierarchies.

### 3.3 Primitive list design

As section 2.2.2, the typical data structure of primitive list would have serious storage waste or internal fragmentation. In this section, we will propose a primitive list design to reduce these problems.

Address Accumulator		List Buffer					
50*N		Scene buffer addr.1	Scene buffer addr.2	Scene buffer addr.3	. . . . .	Scene buffer addr.N	Next addr.
0		0x000003	0x000005	0x000007	. . . . .	. . . . .	NULL
N		0x000004	0x000005	0x000008	. . . . .	. . . . .	10N
2N		0x000010	0x000011	. . . . .	. . . . .	. . . . .	NULL
.		.	.	.	.	.	.
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.		.	.	.	.	.	.
.		.	.	.	.	.	.

Figure 3-12 Primitive list design

As Figure 3-12, we combine multiple scene buffer addresses as one block with a next address pointer in last entry of it. The block size  $N$  is power of 2 which can be 4, 8, 16 and 32 or higher. This **List Buffer** is initially unassigned, once a primitive list requires a record it will check the **Primitive List Index Table** first.

Primitive List Index Table			Address Accumulator
<i>Tile ID</i>	<i>Entry Address</i>	<i>Next Address</i>	<i>Counter</i>
[1]	$2N$	$2N + 6$	6
[2]	$N$	$10N + 4$	$N + 4$
[3]	0	5	5
.		.	
.		.	
.		.	
.		.	
.		.	
[70]	$5N$	$5N + 10$	$N + 10$
.		.	
.		.	
.		.	
.		.	
.		.	

Figure 3-13 Primitive list management in GPU

As Figure 3-13 shows, each tile has a corresponding entry in the **Primitive List Index Table** which records the starting address of its primitive list in **List Buffer**, also the next available address for recording scene buffer address and a **Counter** to record how many primitives have been record into this primitive list. This **Primitive List Index Table** is initially empty, once we require a scene buffer address to be recorded in a specific tile’s primitive list, it will check the **Entry Address** of corresponding entry in **Primitive List Index Table** to see it is **NULL** or not. If it is a **NULL** means this entry is the first time to be used, then it will check **List Buffer**’s address accumulator to see the address of next available block in **List Buffer** and then assign this address into this **Entry Address**, also the address accumulator would plus  $N$  into it. If it is not **NULL**, it will check if **Counter** field reaches multiple of  $N-1$ , if it is, it means that this block is full, then request for a new block in **List Buffer** and assign this new block’s address into current block’s **Next address field**. Others, simply write the scene buffer address into the address indicate by **Next Address** field and update this **Next Address** and **Counter** fields after writing the address into it.

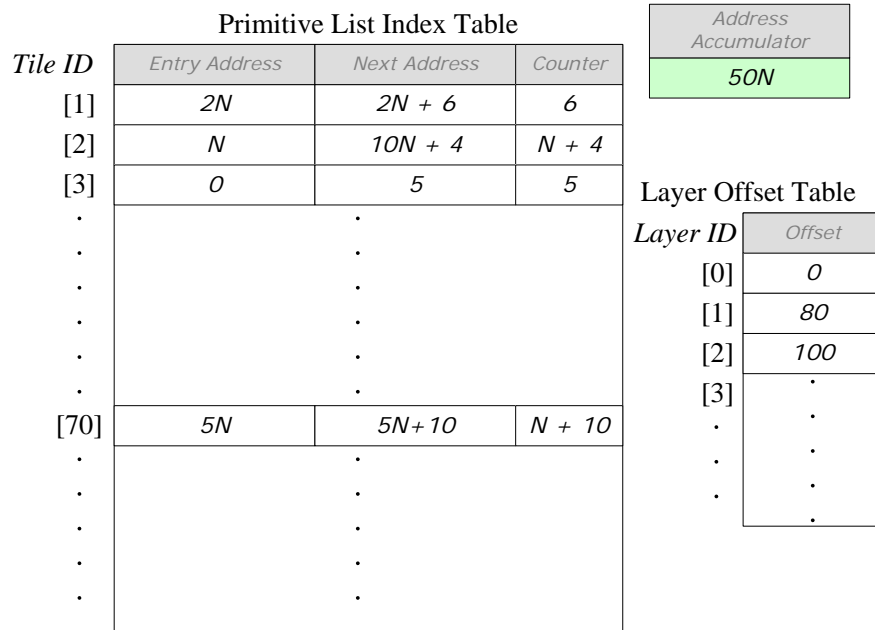


Figure 3-14 Square Hierarchical Primitive list management in GPU

If we are using a hierarchical primitive list structure like square hierarchies, we can simply add a **Layer Offset Table** to indicate base address of each layer. As Figure 3-14 shows, the **Primitive List Index Table** remains the same, all tiles and layered-tiles have a corresponding entry in it but into several different segments. First segments for bottom layer's tiles and second segments for layer 1's layered-tiles and so on. Once we need to find an entry in **Primitive List Index Table**, it needs to add (layered-)tile ID and base address in **Layer Offset Table** together and then this result can be used to index corresponding entry in **Primitive List Index Table**.

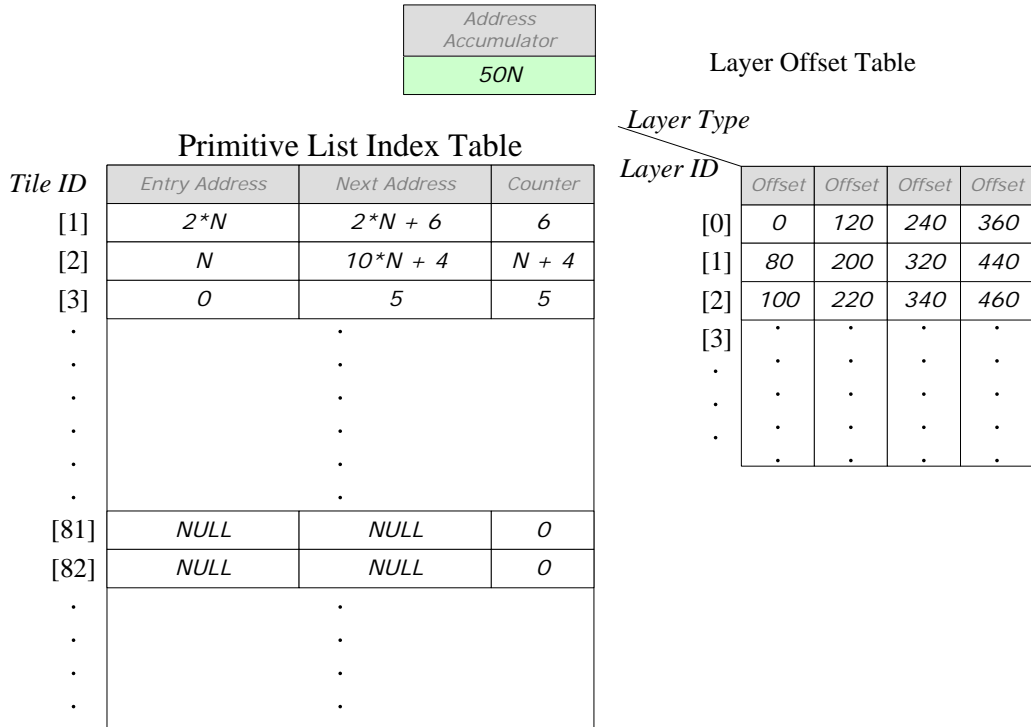


Figure 3-15 Ours Hierarchical Primitive list management in GPU

In our design, we have three different types of hierarchies. To index such multiple hierarchies in same **Primitive List Index Table**, we need to modify the structure of **Layer Offset Table**. As Figure 3-15 shows, the Layer Offset Table need to be extended to two dimensional, one for layer ID and one for which type of hierarchies. In our design, we have three different hierarchies, but the rectangular layers have two variants so we need two entries for rectangular layers. Such that, we will have a two dimensional **Layer Offset Table** with  $NumberOfLayers * 4$  entries.

Since we have a generalize storage for records in primitive list, we only need to add entries in Primitive List Index Table without enlarge size of List buffer.

# Chapter 4 Evaluation Results & Discussion

In this section we will demonstrate our simulation results. We first describe our evaluation environment and the characteristics of the input frame data (in section 4.1 and 4.2). Then, we show and analyze the simulation results of memory requirement and memory traffic overhead in rendering of our method. Finally, the discussion will be shown.

## 4.1 Evaluation Environment

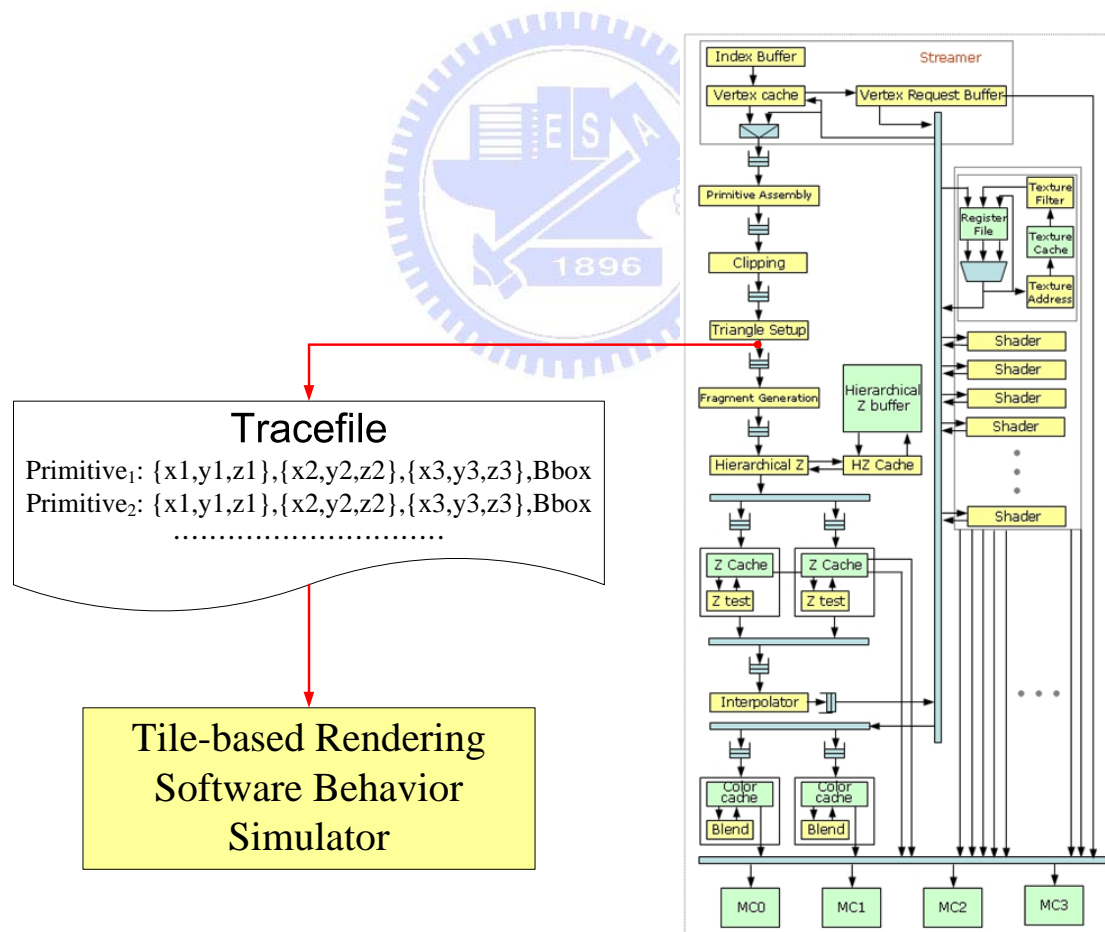


Figure 4-1 Simulation flow and ATTLA architecture



We choose Doom3[7] and Quake4[8] as our benchmarks with resolution 320x240, 640x480, 1280x1024 and 1600x1200, 20 frames from frame 30 to 600 with 30 frames as interval. Figure 4-1 shows the architecture of GPU simulator ATTILA[6] and in which stage we dump the transformed primitives from. Then use this dumped tracefile as input to our tile-based rendering software behavior simulator. Our simulator reads these transformed vertices data from tracefile and evaluates storage size and memory access traffic in rendering of primitive lists. The results below are average of the five frames and tile size is 32x32 pixels. The algorithm in section 3.2 is also applied.

## 4.2 Number of Layers versus Screen Resolution in Square Hierarchies

### Hierarchies

First we will look at the relationships between number of layers and screen resolutions. The first part of this section will show the storage reduction rate from various resolutions and number of layers. And second part of this section will show the access traffic in rendering.

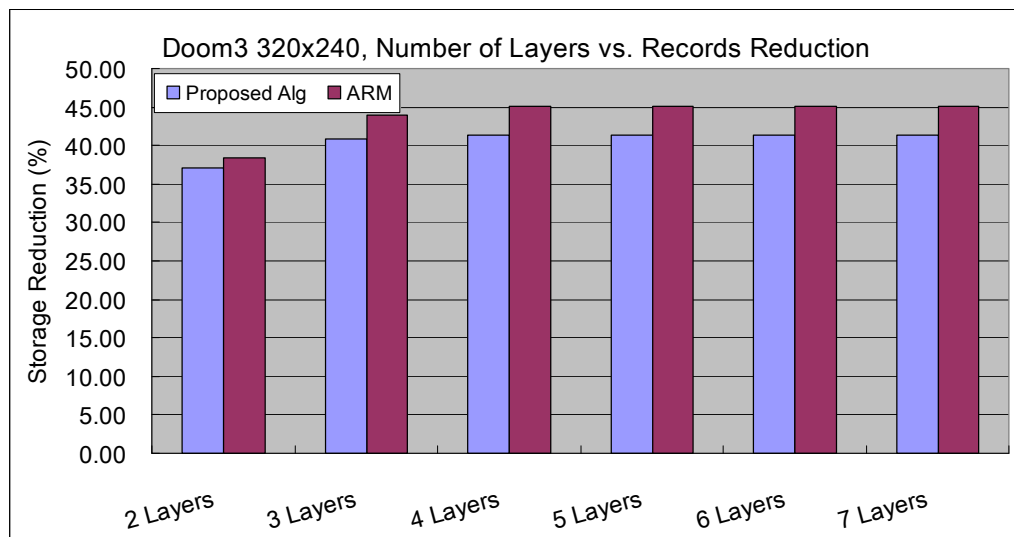


Figure 4-2 Doom3 320x240 storage reduction percentages by using square and

aligned hierarchies versus flat list version

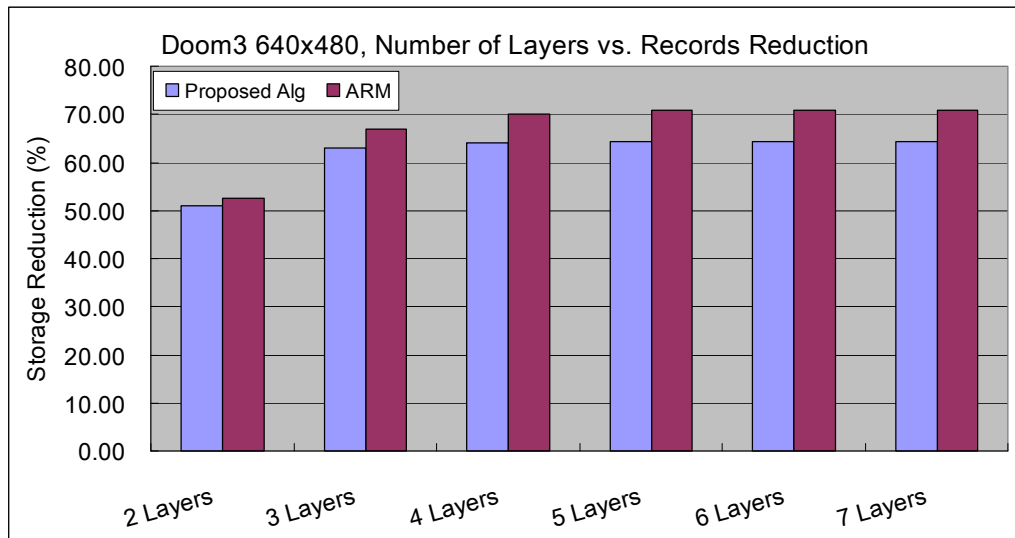


Figure 4-3 Doom3 640x480 storage reduction percentages by using square and aligned hierarchies versus flat list version

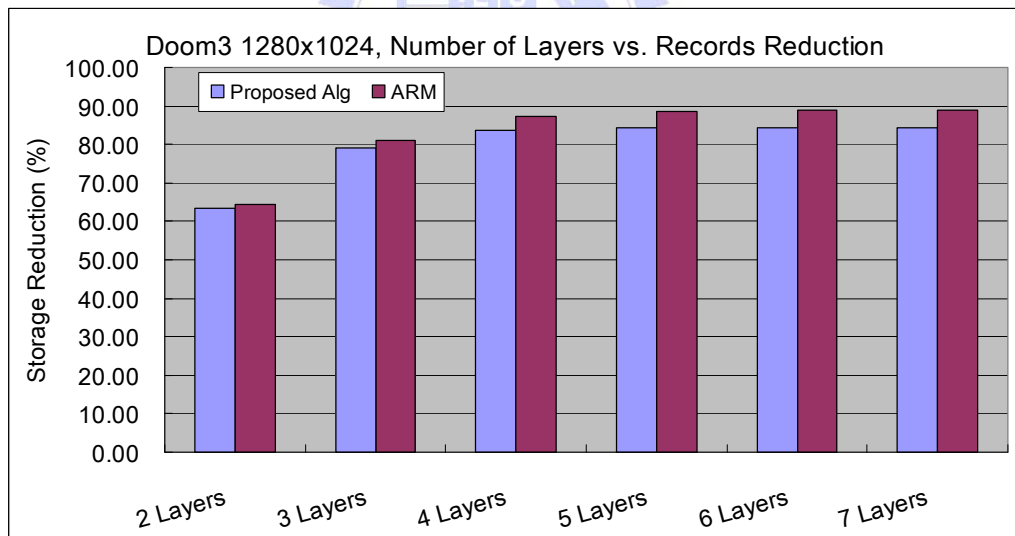


Figure 4-4 Doom3 1280x1024 storage reduction percentages by using square and aligned hierarchies versus flat list version

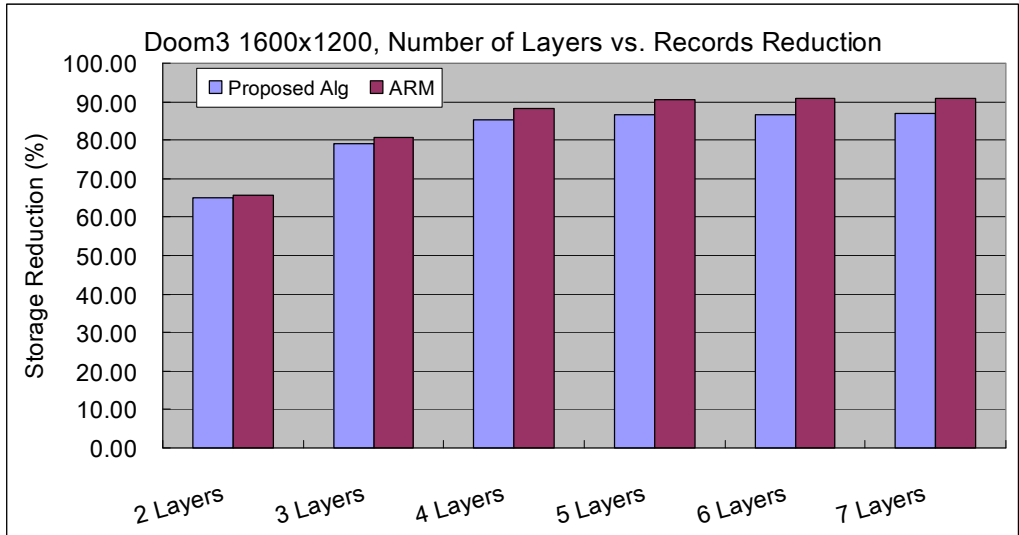


Figure 4-5 Doom3 1600x1200 storage reduction percentages by using square and aligned hierarchies versus flat list version

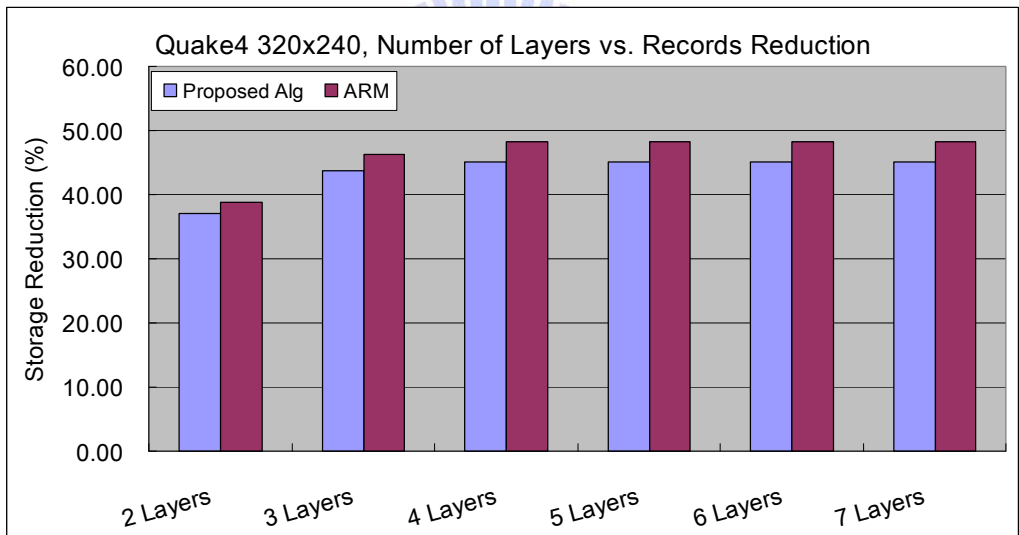


Figure 4-6 Quake4 320x240 storage reduction percentages by using square and aligned hierarchies versus flat list version

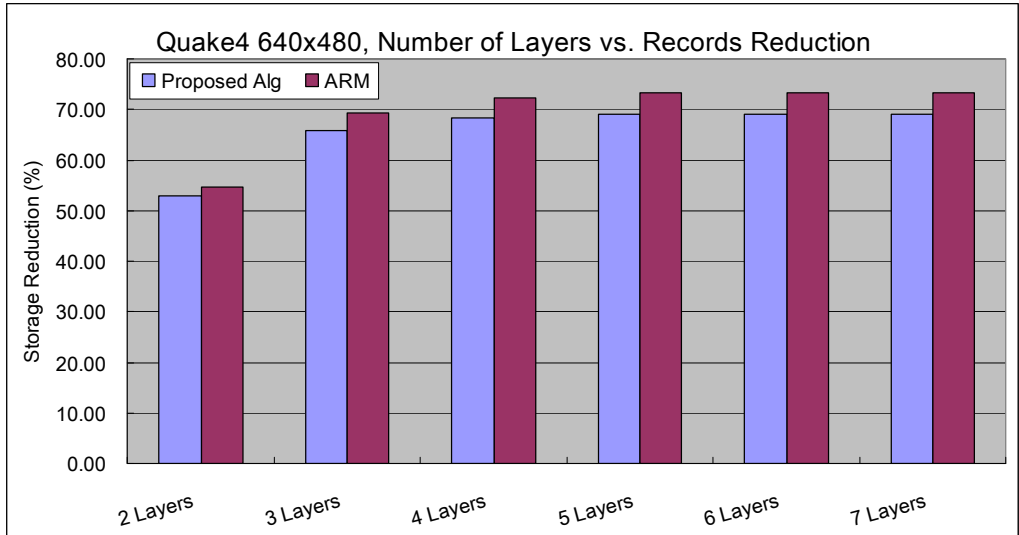


Figure 4-7 Quake4 640x480 storage reduction percentages by using square and aligned hierarchies versus flat list version

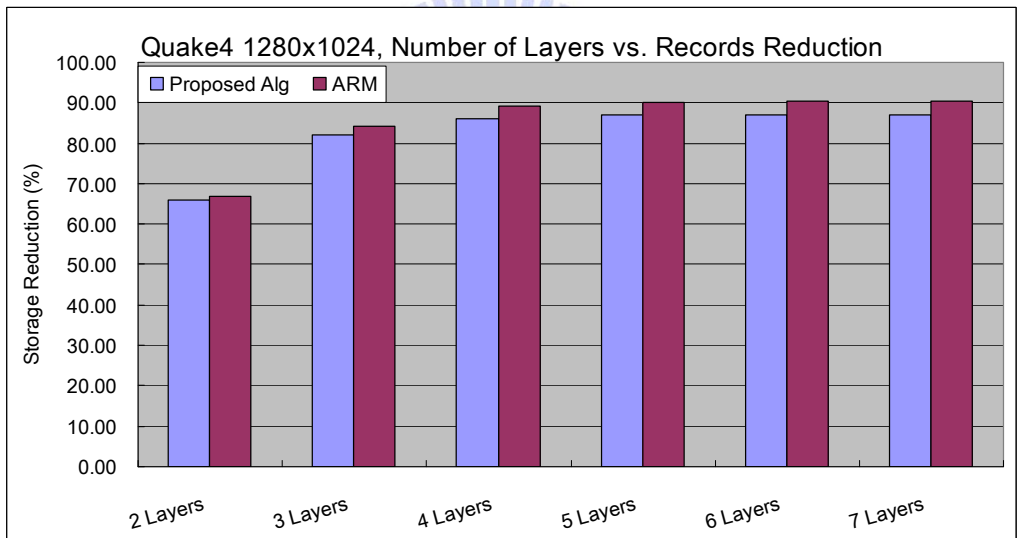


Figure 4-8 Quake4 1280x1024 storage reduction percentages by using square and aligned hierarchies versus flat list version

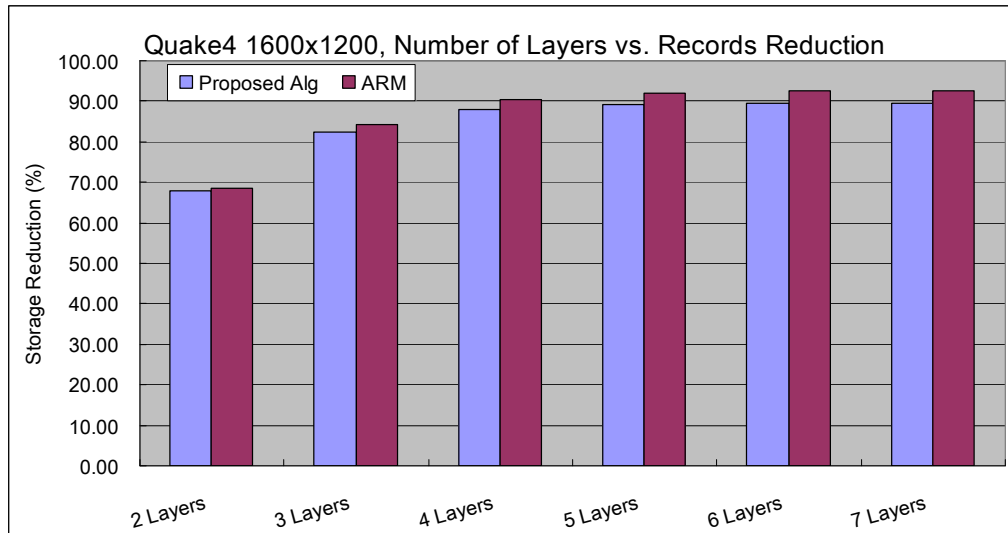


Figure 4-9 Quake4 1600x1200 storage reduction percentages by using square and aligned hierarchies versus flat list version

As Figure 4-2 to 4-9 shows, the y-axis is the percentage of storage reduction compare to typical flat tile-listing. And x-axis is different number of layers; the different number of layer setting from 2 layers that's typical tiling with 2x2 grouped layer, 3 layers is typical tiling with 2x2 and 4x4 grouped layers, and so on. Different color of bars are using square hierarchies with ARM's algorithm or ours primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm. In lower resolution 320x240 in both benchmarks, three layers is enough for these two resolutions, since both of them use more layers which cannot gain more storage reductions. For higher resolutions, four layers would be a good choice, since the difference of size reduction between four and five layers is not significantly obtained. As the observation in section 2.3, there's less primitives that overlap on exact one tile as the screen resolution gets higher. The result in Figure 4-2 to 4-9 shows the same characteristic, as the resolution gets higher then this square hierarchies can save more storage.

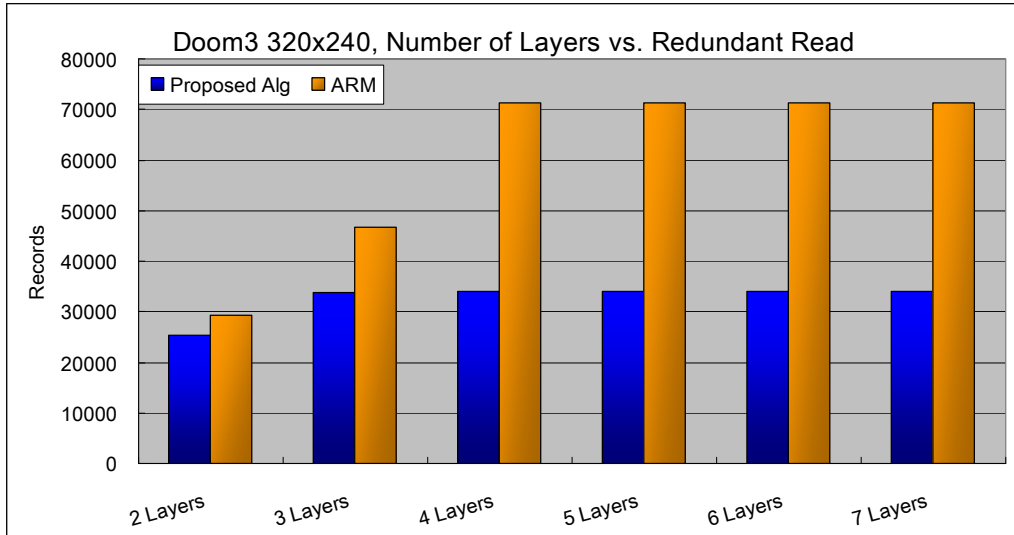


Figure 4-10 Doom3 320x240 redundant reads by using square and aligned hierarchies

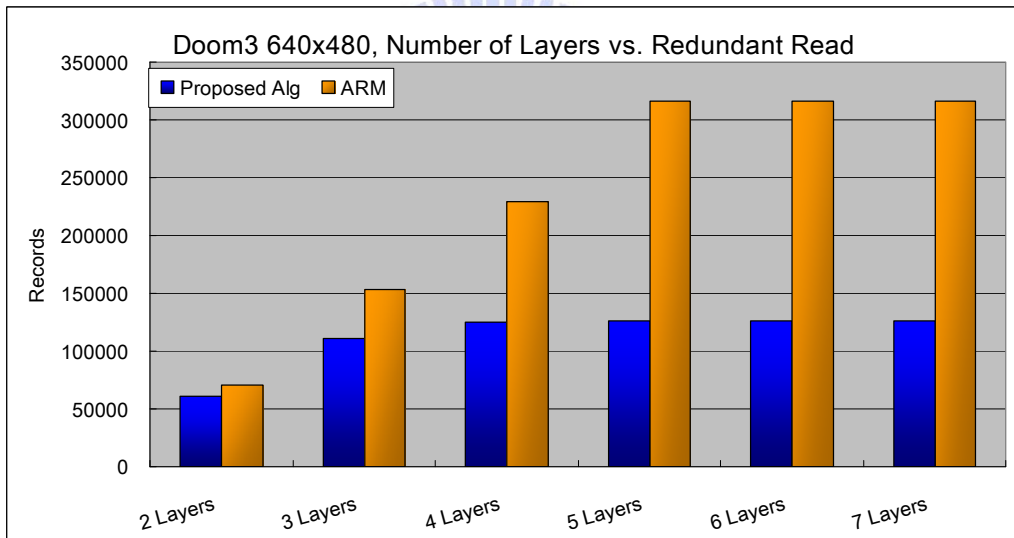


Figure 4-11 Doom3 640x480 redundant reads by using square and aligned hierarchies

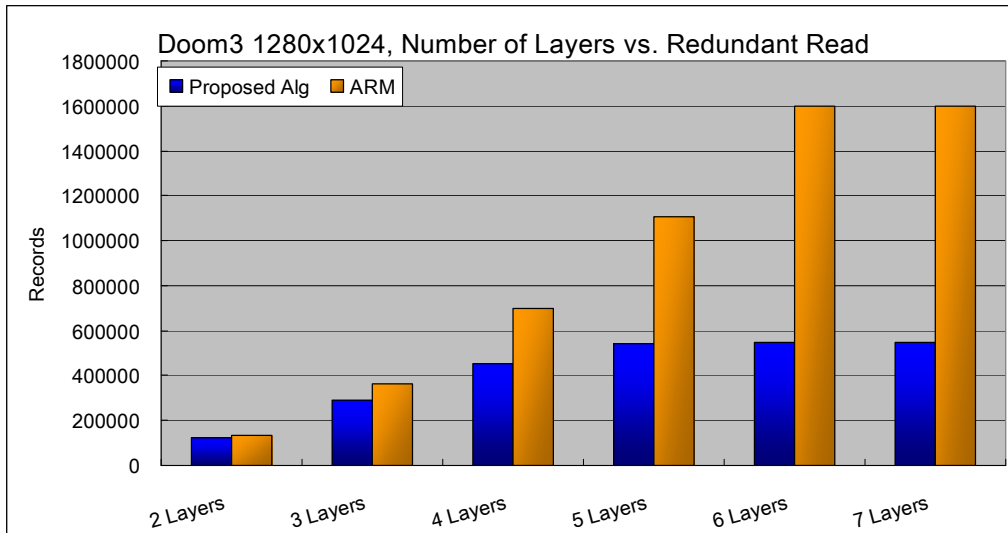


Figure 4-12 Doom3 1280x1024 redundant reads by using square and aligned hierarchies

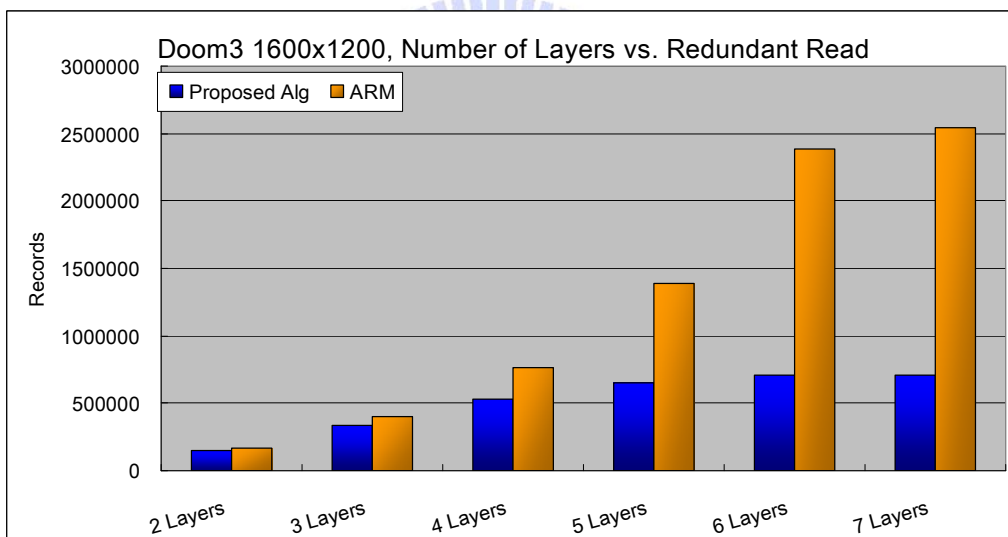


Figure 4-13 Doom3 1600x1200 redundant reads by using square and aligned hierarchies

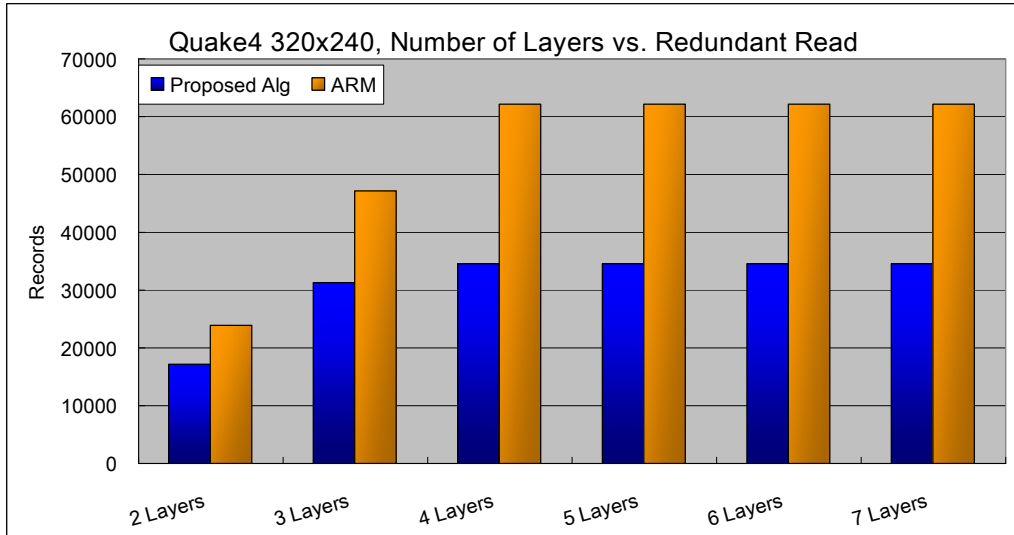


Figure 4-14 Quake4 320x240 redundant reads by using square and aligned hierarchies

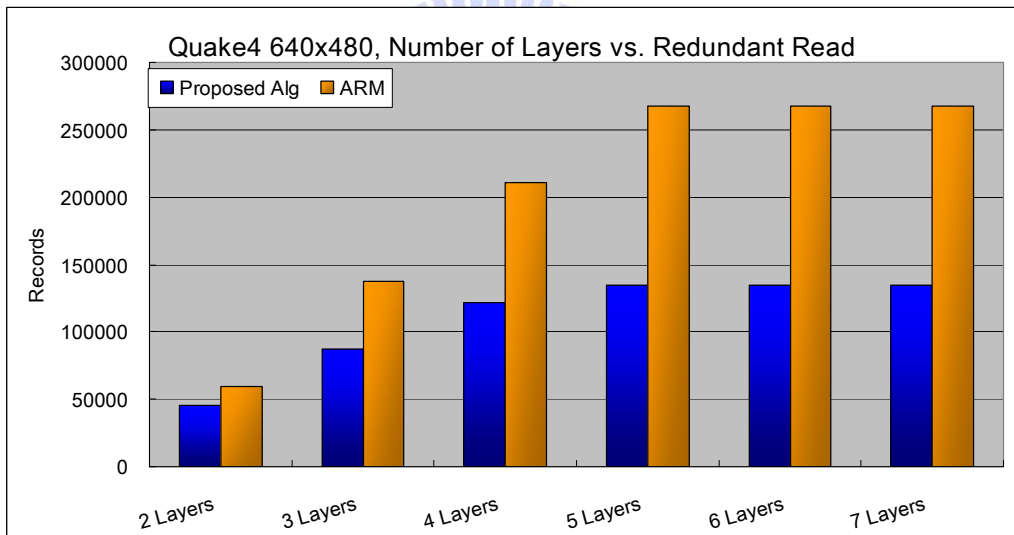


Figure 4-15 Quake4 640x480 redundant reads by using square and aligned hierarchies



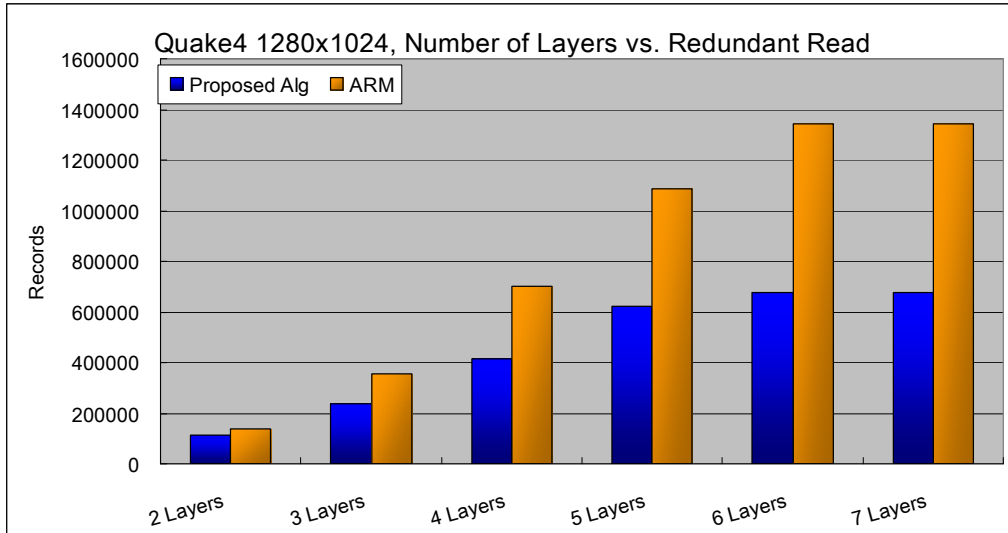


Figure 4-16 Quake4 1280x1024 redundant reads by using square and aligned hierarchies

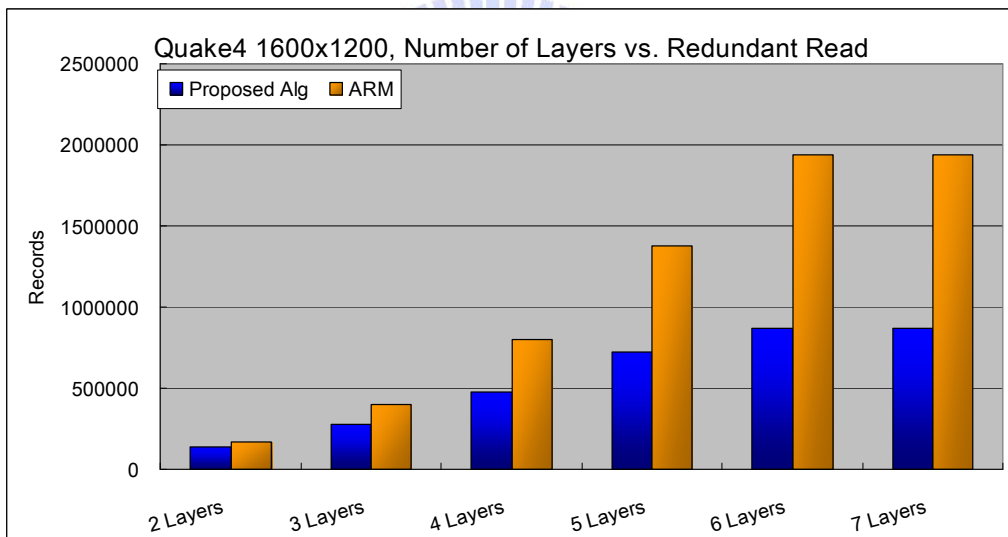


Figure 4-17 Quake4 1600x1200 redundant reads by using square and aligned hierarchies

As Figure 4-10 to 4-17 shows, the y-axis is the total number of redundant records read during rendering. And x-axis is different number of layers with different color of bars for ours and ARM's algorithm. From the figure above, we can see that our method would lead to about 5% more storage usages compare to ARM's method. The results from Figure 4-10 to 4-17 show the advantages of our primitive-hierarchy

fitting algorithm. Our algorithm can choose better layer than ARM did. Such that, the redundant reads in our design are significantly lower than ARM in any benchmarks and resolutions.

### 4.3 Storage Reduction of Proposed Design

The effect of applying unaligned grids and rectangular layers will be shown in the following. The baseline is using square hierarchies only. The number of layers will be fixed by the results we observed above. For lower resolution 320x240, we will use three layers in the following experiments and for the higher resolutions, we will use four layers.

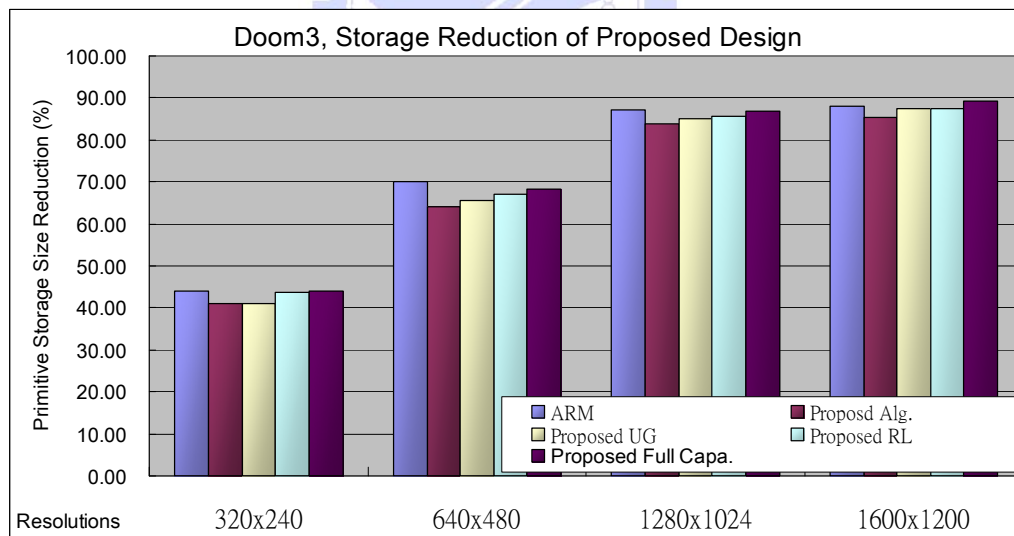


Figure 4-18 Doom3 storage reductions by proposed design versus square and aligned version

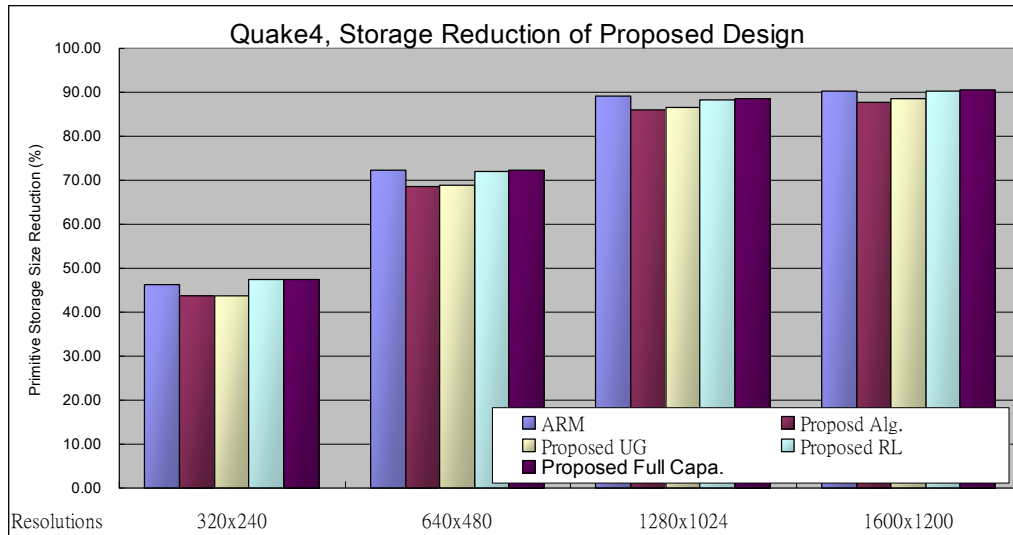


Figure 4-19 Quake4 storage reductions by proposed design versus square and aligned version

Figure 4-18 and 4-19 shows the percentage of storage reduction compare to use square hierarchies only with both ARM's and ours algorithm, when adding grouping methods we described it in section 3.1. The unaligned grids can reduce tile list size about 1% to 10% since the misalignment primitive varies from 2% to 20% in various test cases with our algorithm, but still a little bit more than ARM's algorithm with square hierarchies only. For the rectangular layer, we set different thresholds for different resolutions according to how many tiles need to cover the height of screen. For instance, in 320x240 we need 8 tiles to cover the height of 240 pixels, since rectangular layers split screen into two parts, so we require the difference of primitive's height and width need to be larger than 2 tiles in order to use these layers more efficient. For the same reason, we choose 4 for 640x480, 8 for 1280x1024 and 10 for 1600x1200. Although the high and wide rectangle of primitives is about 35% in our observation in section 3.1, the result here is a bit different. One reason is the threshold; another reason is some of primitives are lying in the middle of the screen and it requires two or more groups to record. Again, when applying our rectangular layer and our algorithm, we still need a little bit larger storage than ARM did.

When apply both unaligned grids and rectangular layers together, we can achieve 5% of storage reduction compare with our algorithm and square hierarchies only. The storage reduced by both type of layers can not be added together directly. It caused by the primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm sets higher priority for rectangular layer and part of misalignment primitive will be covered into this layer and no longer seen as a misalignment. When apply both layers together our storage size requirement will be more like ARM did.

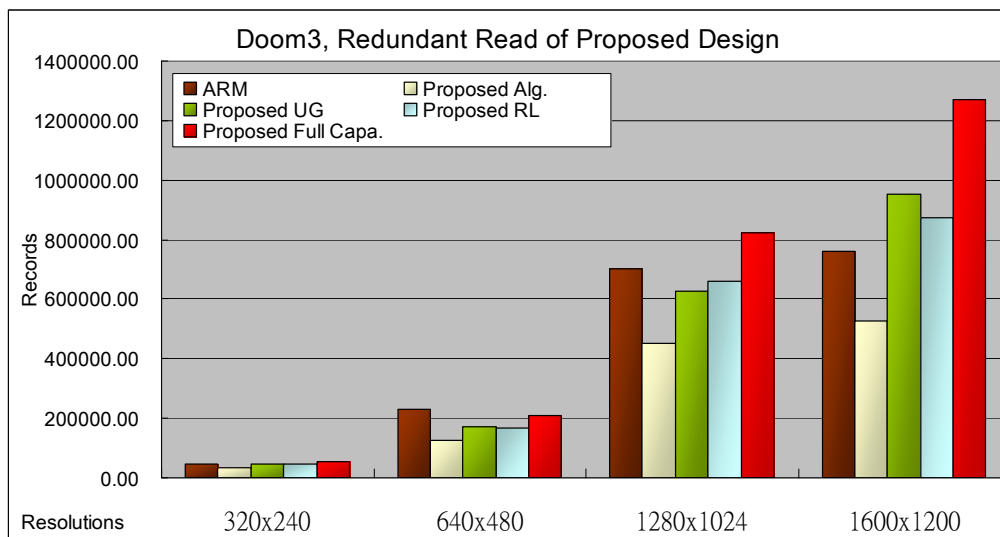


Figure 4-20 Doom3 redundant reads by proposed design

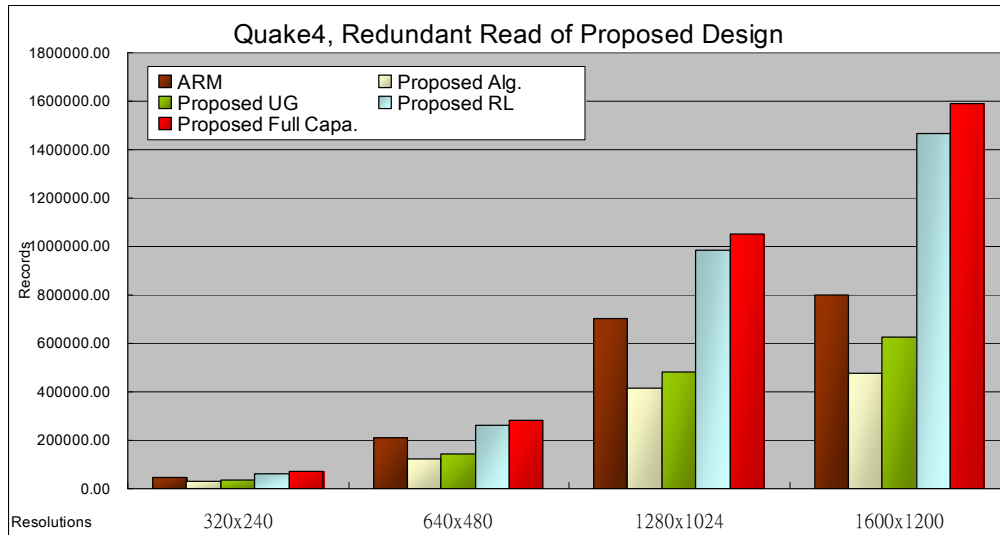


Figure 4-21 Quake4 redundant reads by proposed design

Figure 4-20 and 4-21 above shows the redundant reads by proposed layer designs. In both figure, we can see that when adding our layer designs together, the redundant reads are significantly higher than ARM did. The reason for this result is that many misalignment primitives are now can be recorded in higher layer which would lead to more unnecessary traffics. And the rectangular layer, some of the primitives are lying across multiple horizontal rectangle or vertical rectangle layered-tiles. Such that, combining both leads to this result.

#### 4.4 Storage Requirement of Proposed List Buffer

In this section, we will evaluate the storage size requirement between various size of block used in our List Buffer with square hierarchies only.

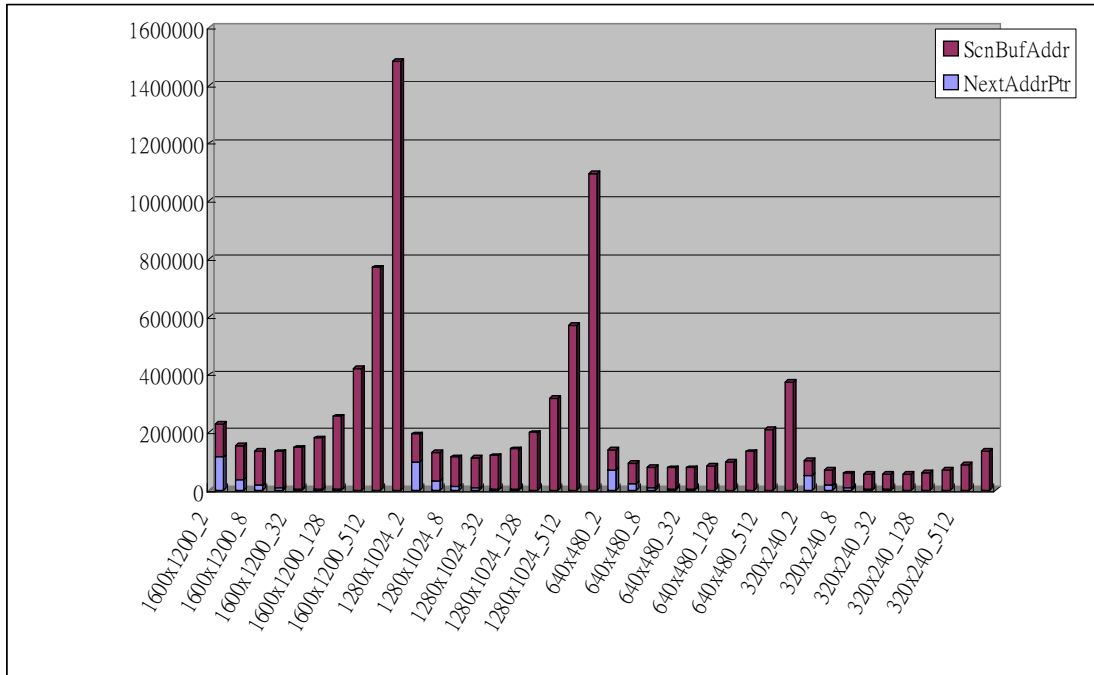


Figure 4-22 Doom3 List buffer size requirements

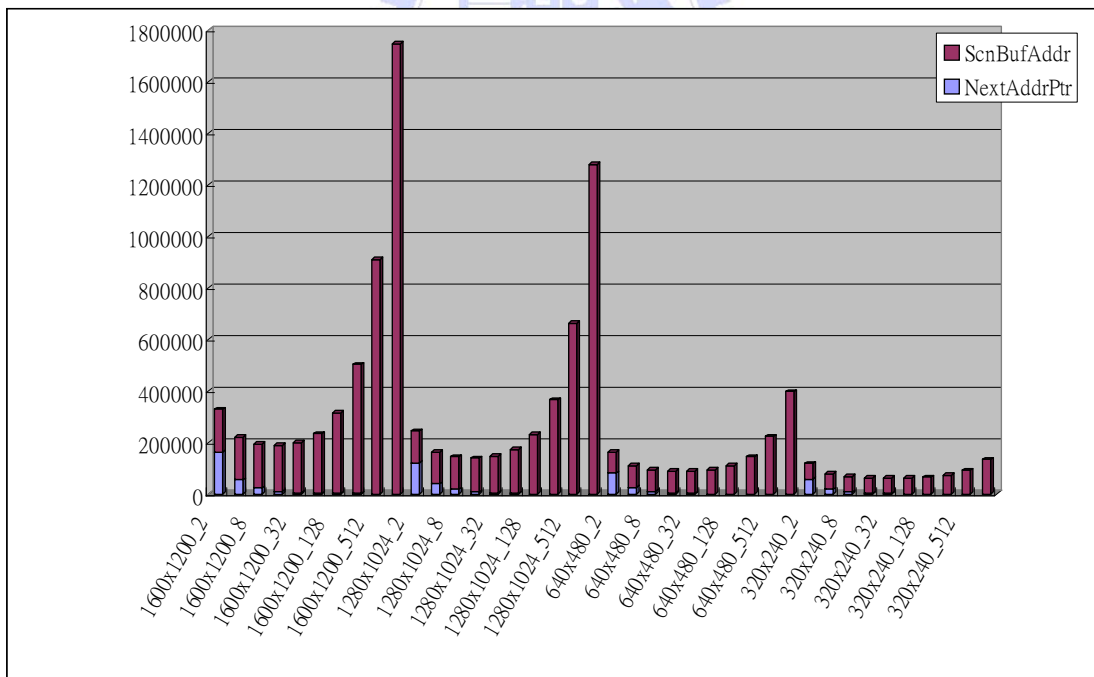


Figure 4-23 Quake4 List buffer size requirements

As Figure 4-22 and 4-23 shows, the y-axis is the total number of records need by List Buffer. And the x-axis is various test cases and sizes of blocks in List Buffer. The block sizes we choose are 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512 and 1024. And both results show that when use 8 records in a block can have a balance between List Buffer storage requirement and access time. Which means 7 records for scene buffer pointer and 1 for next block address for a block in List Buffer will be the best choice.

## 4.5 Discussion

The results in section 4.2 show we can reduce storage requirements by using hierarchical primitive lists. Although misalignment primitive is not major problem in this square hierarchy, the size reduction is still not ignorable. Especially when resolution and number of layer get higher, there will be thousands of primitives are misalignment. The reason we ignore these primitives that can not cover by unaligned grids is that this kind of primitive only holds 8% in average of all misalignment primitives, so we ignore this amount of primitives. The purpose of choosing thresholds in rectangular layer is to use these layers efficiently. If the threshold is too low, the primitives would easily fall into this layer and cover only a few of tiles in rectangular layer's group which cause extra traffics. So the trade off between traffic and storage reduction by rectangular layer need to be considered carefully.

Although, the result of our primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm can have significantly less redundant traffic when using square hierarchies only, when applying all layers design seems not. But the generalize the primitive list storage List Buffer, we can add any different shapes of layered-tiles we want. For such hierarchical

primitive lists structure design, we need to trade off between storage size, data traffic and circuit complexity when implement into hardware to get best performance and cost ratio.





# Chapter 5 Conclusion and Future Work

## 5.1 Conclusion

In this paper, we proposed two different grouping methods and a primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm to enhance the hierarchical mechanism. When we use unaligned grids and rectangular layers together, it can further reduce the primitive storage by 5% compare to use ARM's square hierarchies only. Also, a new primitive-hierarchy fitting algorithm is proposed which only requires simple circuit to classify primitives into different types of layers. Considering that embedded 3D application become popular and complex, then the corresponding hardware must be developed. We believe tile-based rendering is a suitable technique for such devices. Although it requires external memory to store its primitives' information, the method we proposed can reduce size to satisfy such devices' environments.

## 5.2 Future Work

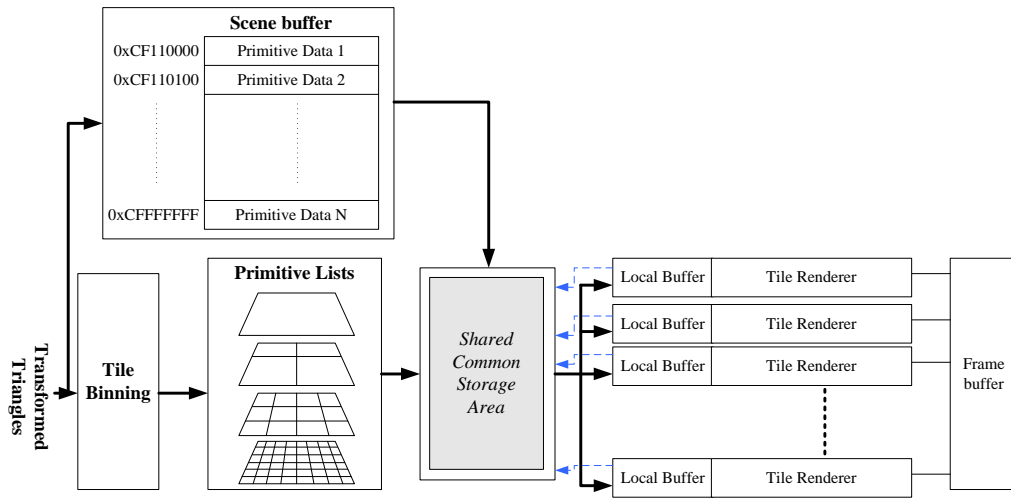


Figure 5-1 Parallel Tile Renderer Architecture

As Figure 5-1 shows, after tile binning process, the primitives have been classified into hierarchical primitive lists. In pixel processing stages, assuming we will have multiple tile renderers and each of them responsible for drawing a tile in screen. All of these renderers will fetch required primitive lists and primitive data from Shared Common Storage Area, it might an indexable buffer or cache.

There's an important characteristic of hierarchical primitive lists structure. Once a primitive is identified to store on the layered-tile of upper layer in hierarchy. This primitive will be rendered by the tiles covered by this layered-tile. And the hierarchical primitive lists gather these primitive with sharing properties to upper layers. If we render primitives in upper layer first within a specific region, we can exploit very useful data locality for these primitive data and records in primitive list.

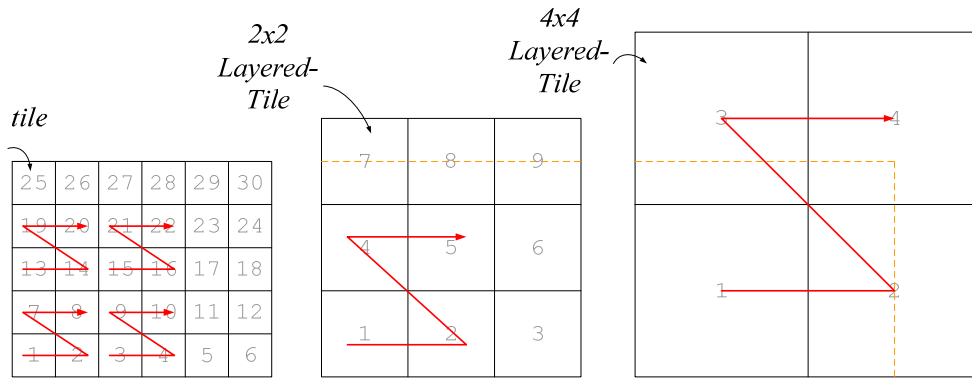


Figure 5-2 Rendering sequence for Parallel Tile Renderers

To render from such hierarchical primitive lists structure, we can use a special render sequence called Recursive-Z [10] to control tile rendering sequence. As Figure 5-2 shows, the tile rendering sequence of screen will be like the alphabet 'Z'. And each time this recursive process traverse through 4 layered-tiles in upper and lower layers. For example, the first four tiles to be rendered are 1, 2, 7 and 8. Then, this process will step up a layer to Layer 1 and choose 2x2 layered-tile No. 2. And this time, the tiles covered by 2x2 layered-tile No.2 will be rendered, that is tile 3, 4, 9 and 10. Once 2x2 layered-tiles 1, 2, 4, and 5 have been traversed. This process will step up to Layer 2 and choose next 4x4 layered-tile to traverse. The advantage of this process is that no matter how many tile renderers we have, this rendering sequence can keep the primitives in upper layer can be shared by current rendering tiles.

The preliminary result, we set primitive list and primitive data with separate caches. And cache for primitive list is 4-way set-associative and each way with 512-entry, replacement policy depends on maximum reusable times it have. For example, a primitive in a 2x2 layered-tile have maximum reusable times for four. Once it is referenced, then this reusable times will be decreased by 1. If there's a conflict in cache, it would check whether the new reusable time larger then it was. If it is, replace it. The cache for primitive data is 2-way set-associative and each way with

256-entry and 2 primitives per line with same replacement policy as cache for primitive list. We test by Doom3 with frame 30 and various resolutions; the hardware setting is four tile renderers share caches for primitive list and primitive cache.

Table 5-1 Doom3, rendering with recursive-Z sequence

	List cache hit rate		Primitive cache hit rate	
	Seq	RZ	Seq	RZ
320x240	74.4%	81.4%	60.9%	64.5%
640x480	75.0%	86.4%	69.6%	73.7%
1280x1024	77.3%	92.7%	78.5%	80.6%
1600x1200	73.9%	81.0%	92.2%	84.3%

As the Table 5-1 shows, we can achieve better cache hit rate and reduces memory traffics with recursive-Z in most of the cases. Once the number of records in primitive lists become more. The cache hit rate will be down for both caches due to cache lines for primitive list and primitive keeps replaced by incoming primitives. Because of the renderers will not finish a primitive or primitives of a layer in same time. The cache lines will be replaced due to number of records in primitive lists become more. If we increase number of ways or entries for cache, we can improve this problem but it will need larger cache and increase chip area. So we may need a better solution for this problem which might need to control rendering speed between rendering tiles to reduce this cache conflict problem.

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## Appendix A. Simulation Test Frame Images



Figure A-1 Doom3 frame 30



Figure A-2 Doom3 frame 60



Figure A-3 Doom3 frame 90



Figure A-4 Doom3 frame 120



Figure A-5 Doom3 frame 150



Figure A-6 Doom3 frame 180





Figure A-7 Quake4 frame 30



Figure A-8 Quake4 frame 60



Figure A-9 Quake4 frame 90



Figure A-10 Quake4 frame 120



Figure A-11 Quake4 frame 150



Figure A-12 Quake4 frame 180