

o use MacRTrace, you should first launch the MacRTrace program by double-clicking its icon in the Finder. You will generally then want to open the scene file you wish to render by choosing Open Scene File from the File menu. MacRTrace will show the Options Window, begin to the scene into memory.

MacRTrace supports Balloon Help. If you want to know what something does (a button, a menu item, or something else on the screen), choose Show Balloons from the Help menu (at the right), and point the cursor at it.

While MacRTrace is reading the scene, you can change any settings in the Options Window. For specific information on the rendering options, see The Options Window, or use Balloon Help. Depending on the settings of the Allow background tasks in the Preferences Window (see The Preferences Window), the response time may be jerky. It is jerky but quite useable at the default setting. Once you have decided on and set your options, you are ready to render. You tell MacRTrace that you are ready to render by clicking on the Render button.

If the scene is very complex, MacRTrace may not have finished reading it by the time you have set the options you want. In this case the name of the button will be Render Next. It still does what you want, though; when you click Render Next, MacRTrace remembers that you want to render now, and will begin rendering as soon as is is done reading the scene. This is particularly useful on extremely complex scenes, which can take many minutes to read; by clicking Render Next you ensure that the render will being at the earliest possible moment.

If you are creating an animation, the name of the button will be Render & Save. This name reflects the fact that MacRTrace saves its animation frames on the fly, and therefore must save to disk whenever it renders an animation. Clicking on Render & Save results in a window prompting you for the file (if it's a QuickTime animation) or files (if it's a series of PICT files) to save the animation to. If it's a QuickTime animation, you will also be able to specify the compression settings next. Finally, MacRTrace will begin rendering the frames, one at a time, and saving each to disk after it is complete.

You can at any time open another scene file by selecting Open Scene File... from the File menu. When you do this, MacRTrace will discard any scene information

already in memory, and will read in the new scene. A scene file may be either an .sff file or a .scn file (see The Simple File Format).

You can use all features of the MacRTrace program while a render is in progress, subject to the jerkiness discussed above. Therefore, you can change the options while a render is occurring. These changes will not effect the current render, which will continue to use the settings which were in effect when the Render button was clicked. At any time during or after the render, the Render button may be clicked again to start another render. If there is a render in progress, it will be aborted, and a new render will begin, using the new options.

Animations are saved to disk as their frames are rendered, but individual renders (those done with animation turned off) are not saved unless you specifically ask. To save an image, choose Save Image... from the File menu. You will be prompted for the filename and location, and MacRTrace will save the image. MacRTrace saves its images in PICT form, so they should be readable by most Macintosh graphics or word processing applications.