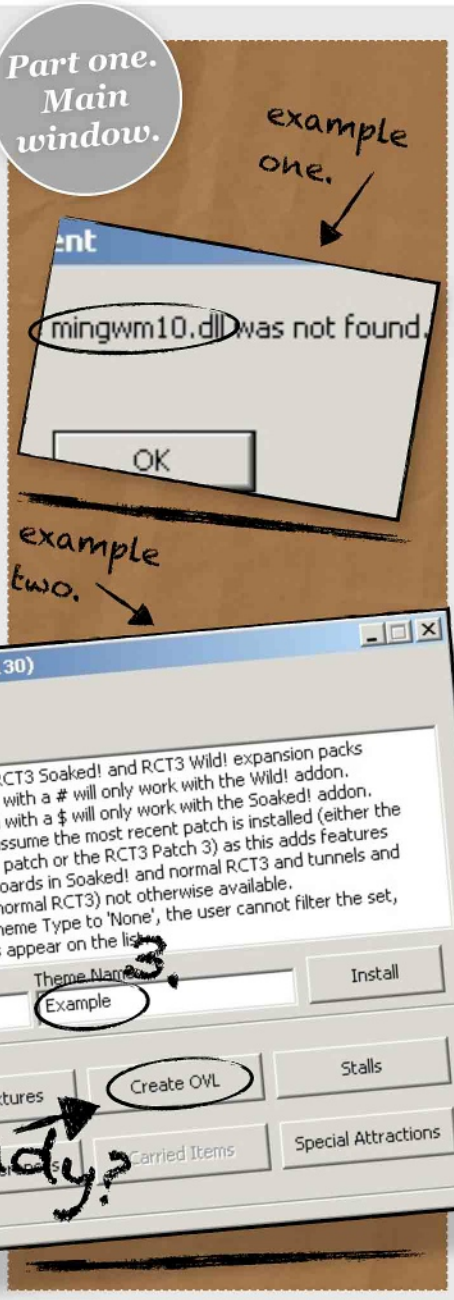
APB&J TUTORIAL #2

Importing: The way to the game.

Introduction.

In this tutorial, I will go over the process for importing a basic model into Rollercoaster Tycoon 3. If you missed the first tutorial, I highly recommend reading it. The Importer tends to appear intimidating at first, but is actually very simple once the time is taken to learn the process. Some of the examples have portions shaded in, this is only to draw your attention to the part of the window that is being discussed. If an error similar to example one appears when trying to run the Importer, download the .dll here to run the Importer. Extract it to the Importer's folder and try running the Importer again. If a window like example two appears, you installed the .dll correctly.



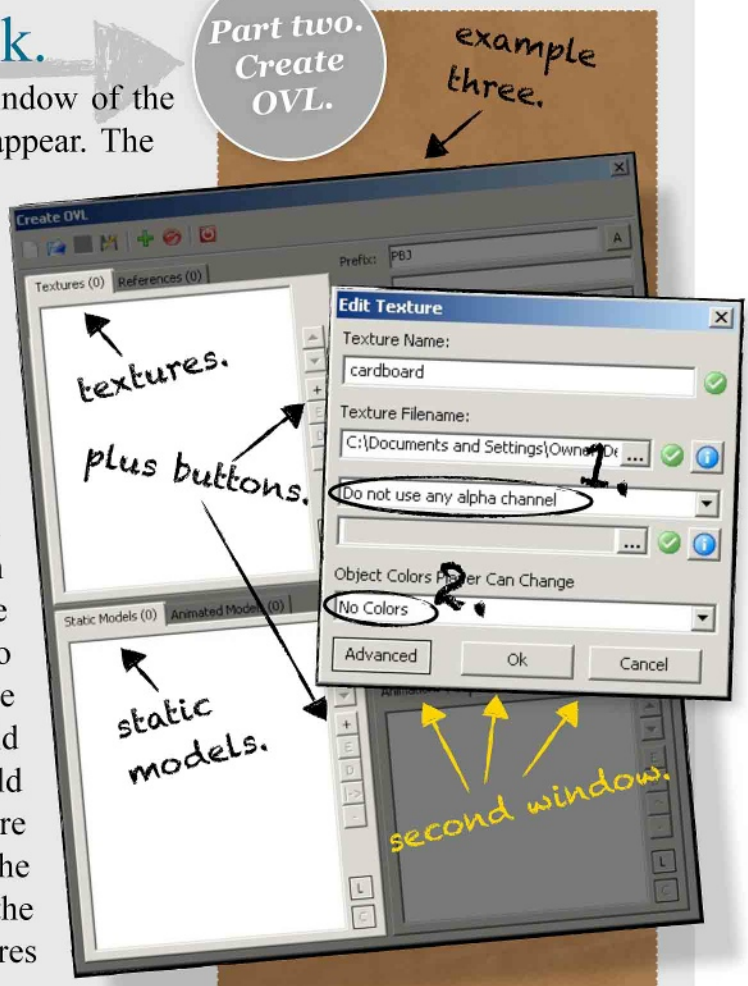
Getting started.

To get started, three basic settings need to be made in the main window of the Importer. The first is the "Theme Type." This tells the Importer which theme type the set will appear under in the game's scenery menus. The second is the "Prefix." Think of the prefix as a personal trademark for all of your files. The third is the "Theme Name." The name chosen here will appear in the set's folder name. The folder name that would appear for my example would be "PBJExample." Keep in mind that this is not the name that will appear in the game.

Ready? The Upper Block.

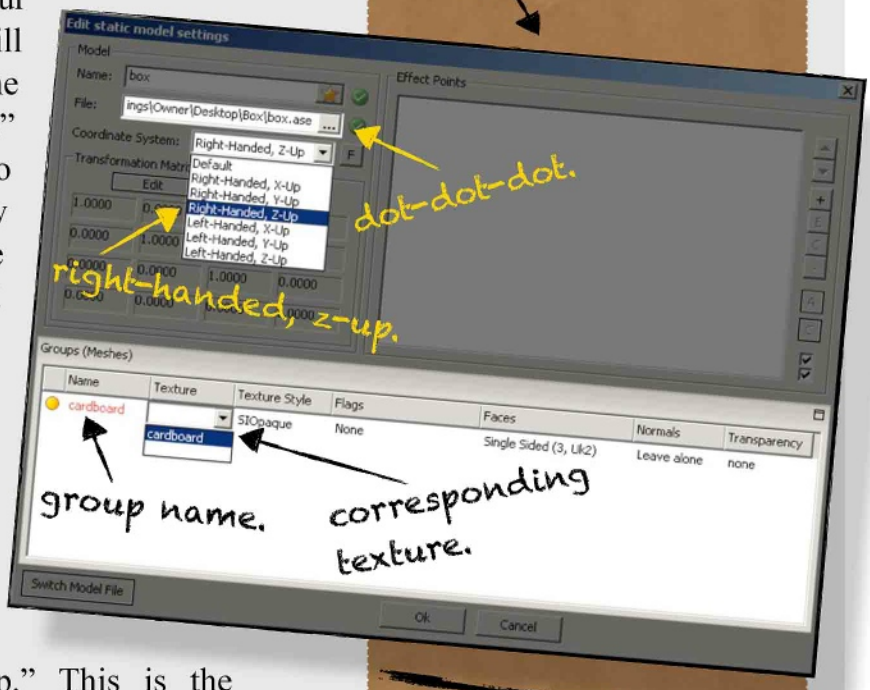
Part two. Create OVL.

Click the "Create OVL" button in the main window of the Importer and a window like example three should appear. The upper block is for adding the textures that were used in your model. Two tabs are at the top of the upper block, make sure the "Textures" tab is selected. Click the "Plus" button to the right of the upper block and select your first texture from where you had it saved. Click "OK" and a second window named "Edit Texture" should appear like on the right side of example three. Most of the settings in this window are fine by default unless your texture has an alpha channel or is set up to be recolorable. Both alpha channels and recolorable textures will be discussed in another tutorial. Match your settings to the ones I have circled for now. The first should be "Do not use any alpha channel" and the second should be "No Colors." Click "OK," and your texture should be listed in the upper block. If the model you are planning to import has more than one texture, click the "Plus" button again and continue to add the rest of the textures. Remember, you are only adding the textures for one model and not every model in the set.



The Lower Block.

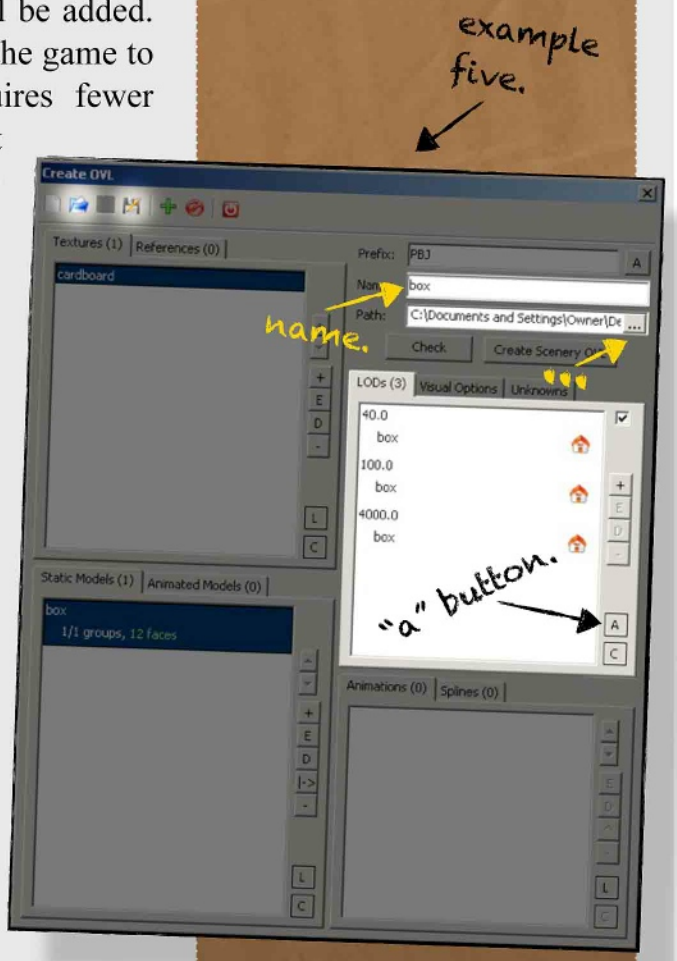
Now that all of the textures have been added, it's time to move on to the lower block where your model that you exported from Sketchup will be added. Two tabs are at the top of the lower block, make sure the "Static Models" tab is selected. Click the "Plus" button to the right of the lower block and a new window should appear like in example four. Click the "Dot-Dot-Dot" button and select the exported model from where you had it saved. Click "OK." Before anything else is done, the "Coordinate System" must be changed. If this is not done, the model will not be oriented correctly in the game and will likely end up on its side! Click the drop down menu just below the "Dot-Dot-Dot" button and select "Right-Handed, Z-Up." This is the coordinate system that is always used for Sketchup.



Lastly, the textures that were added in the upper block must be assigned to the corresponding groups in your model. Look towards the bottom of the window; to the left of the group name should be a yellow circle. This yellow circle indicates that a texture has not been assigned to that group yet. To assign a texture to a group, click the blank space just to the right of the group's name and a drop down menu should appear with a list of the textures that were added in the upper block. Select the one that corresponds to the group and the yellow circle should turn green. If the model contains more than one group, continue to assign the corresponding texture to each group. An array of settings continue to the right of the group name, all of these are fine in their default setting and will be discussed in another tutorial. Click "OK," and the model should be listed in the lower block.

Wrapping it up.

With the upper and lower block finished, it is time to switch to the right block where the level of detail values will be added. When the user zooms out, levels of detail are used by the game to gradually change an object into a form that requires fewer resources. What is usually done by custom content creators is the creation of multiple models for the same object. Each one of these models has fewer and fewer triangles and sometimes lower quality textures. In this case, no levels of detail will be used just to keep things simple. Who wants to go create another version of their model now anyway, right?



In the right block, make sure the "LODs" tab is selected and then click the "A" button on the right of the right block. This will automatically fill in three different values for the model. Next, a name for the .ovl must be chosen. In my case, I wrote in a name that will help me remember which model is in the .ovl. Lastly, a location to save the .ovl file must be chosen. Click the "Dot-Dot-Dot" button, find a location, and click "OK." Try to start a habit of keeping .skp (sketchup), .ase (exported), and .ovl (imported) files organized. It will help greatly when making large sets.

Click "Create Scenery OVL" when all the steps have been finished. Occasionally an error appears at this point. One of the most common errors mentions a name containing "non-alphanumeric" or "non-AscII" characters. If this error does

appear, “Continue” can be clicked without running into any trouble. What the error usually means is a space has been used in the name of a file. For example, if I name my .ovl “The box,” an error is going to appear because there is a space between “The” and “box.” An easy fix is to change the name to “The_box.” In the future, try to avoid spaces in names.

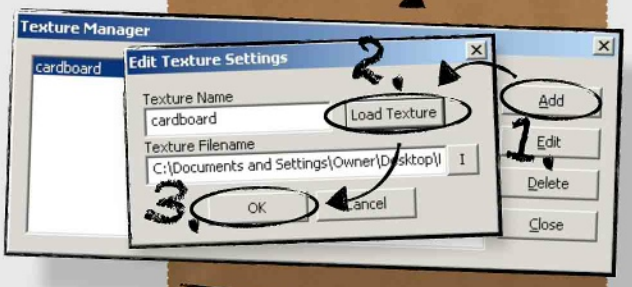
Once the .ovl has been created, the window can either be closed or a scenery file can be saved that can be opened again later to edit the .ovl. To save a scenery file, click the floppy disk icon at the top left of the window. To open a scenery file, click the blue folder icon in the top left of the window.

If everything has been saved, close the window so you are back in the main window of the Importer. If you need to make another .ovl, click the the “Create OVL” button again and repeat the same process for your next model.

The birth of an icon.

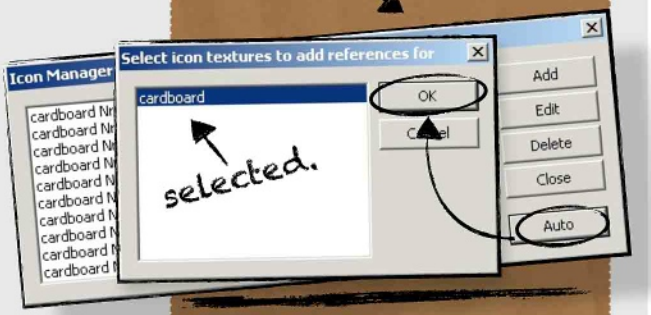
Icons are the “map” to your set and can often determine how easy the set is to use. Two settings, icon textures and icon references, determine what is used for an icon. Icon textures are the images that are used for the icons. Icon references are important but are not interacted with often since there is a button that sets up icon references automatically. Many creators make an “icon sheet.” This icon sheet consists of many icons stacked into one image. Icon references are then added to the image to tell which part of the image is an individual icon so that part of the image can be used for a piece of scenery. Icons are always 64x64, and remember the power of two rule for textures that I mentioned in tutorial one? That rule also applies to icon textures.

example six.



In the main window of the Importer, click the “Icon Textures” button and a window should appear like in example six. Click the “Add” button to the right of this window and another window should appear like in example six. Click the “Load Texture” button and locate your icon texture from where you had it saved. Click “OK” and the icon texture should appear in the list. Click “Close” and you should be back in the main window of the Importer.

example seven.



Click “Icon References” and a window should appear like in example seven. Click the “Auto” button and another window should appear. Make sure the icon texture you would like to create icon references for is selected and

then click “OK.” In my case, 16 references were made since the icon texture I used was 256x256. Each one of the 16 references corresponds to a 64x64 tile on my 256x256 icon texture.

What’s in a name?

When choosing names for your set, keep in mind that names can have an enormous effect on how easy your set is to navigate. Names in the game are always placed in alphabetical order, so it is best to name objects in an order of detail. “4h Cardboard box” will appear with all of the 4h objects whereas “Box Cardboard 4h” will appear with all of the boxes.

Click the “Text Strings” button in the main window of the Importer and a window should appear like in example eight. Click “Add” and another window should appear like in example eight. In this window are two text fields. One called “Name” and the other called “Text.” It is not necessary to fill in the “Name” field. Once “OK” is clicked, the name in the “Text” field will automatically be copied to the “Name” field anyway.

What I like to do is make the first name I add to the list my set name and then add all of my object names. This is very convenient as will be seen later on. Names can be edited by using the “Edit” button. Click “Close” so you are back in the main window of the Importer.

Back to the OVL!

Click the “Scenery” button in the main window of the Importer and a window should appear like in example nine. Click the “Add” button and another window should appear like in example ten.

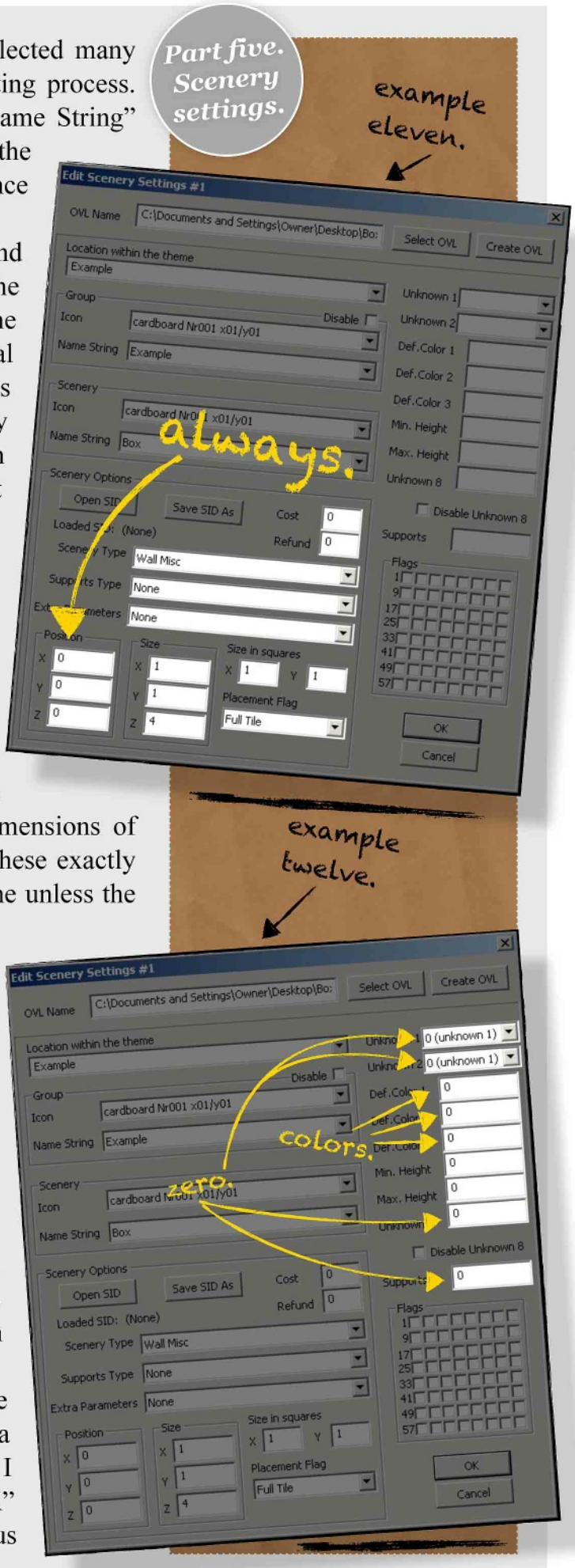
Click the “Select OVL” button in the top right of the window and select the .ovl that was created earlier. The next field below is “Location within the theme.” This name only appears for a folder within the set’s main file. If you are not sure what to write in, “misc” will do. The “Group” box contains an “Icon” field and a “Name String” field. These two fields correspond to the name for the set and the icon for the set. Select the icon reference for the set’s icon, and remember how I said to make the set name first in the Text Strings? Here is where it helps. The name should

be right on top, and since the set name must be selected many times in a large set, it greatly speeds up the importing process. The "Scenery" box also contains an "Icon" and "Name String" field. These two fields correspond to the name for the object and icon for the object. Select the icon reference for the object's icon and the name for the object.

In example eleven, I normally leave "Cost" and "Refund" at zero. The value in the "Refund" is the amount of money it will cost the user to remove the item. A negative value must be inserted for an actual refund to be given. "Scenery Type" mainly effects which menu the object appears under. Here I usually leave all my objects set to "Wall Misc" for no reason in particular other than the ease of selecting it. Most of the Scenery Type settings are logical, for example, setting the Scenery Type to "Particle Effect" will make the object appear in the object menu instead of the wall menu. Also, just like the particles in the game, the object will disappear when the user is not building. The next setting, "Supports Type" is left to "None." The "Extra Parameters" settings is similar to the "Scenery Type" setting, however, leave this set to "None" for now. "Position" fields are always set to zero. For the "Size," set the approximate dimensions of your object in meters, but don't stress over getting these exactly right. The "Size in squares" is usually going to be one unless the object is abnormally large. The "Placement Flag" is commonly set to "Full Tile." Most of the other settings for the "Placement Flag" are logical but the most commonly used are "Full Tile" and "1/4 Tile."

Lastly, take a look at example twelve where the unknowns will be filled in. The first two, "Unknown 1, 2" are always left at zero. The next three, "Def. Color 1, 2, 3" are used when the object is recolorable and set the default paint colors for the object. Since my object is not recolorable, I have left these set to zero. The next two, "Min. Height" and "Max. Height" are easiest to leave set to zero yielding no limit in height. The last two, "Unknown 8" and "Supports" are also left to zero.

Click "OK" when all of the settings are complete. If nothing happens, you have missed a setting. Double check to make sure everything I covered has a setting made and try clicking "OK" again. You should now be returned to the previous



window with the object now in the list. If you have more than one object, click "Add" again and keep going until all of your objects have been added. Click "Close" when you are done and you should now be back in the main window of the Importer.

Congratulations!

Look at you! That's all there is to it. Now back in the main window of the Importer you're ready for one of the best parts of creating custom content. Click the "Install" button like in example thirteen and you should be ready to go test out your set. If you don't have the game installed in its default install location then the Importer may ask you for an alternative place to save your set.

Before you close the Importer, you will want to save a .thm file which can be opened later. Click *File*, and select "Save Theme File." This file can be opened later by clicking *File* and selecting "Open Theme File."

example thirteen.