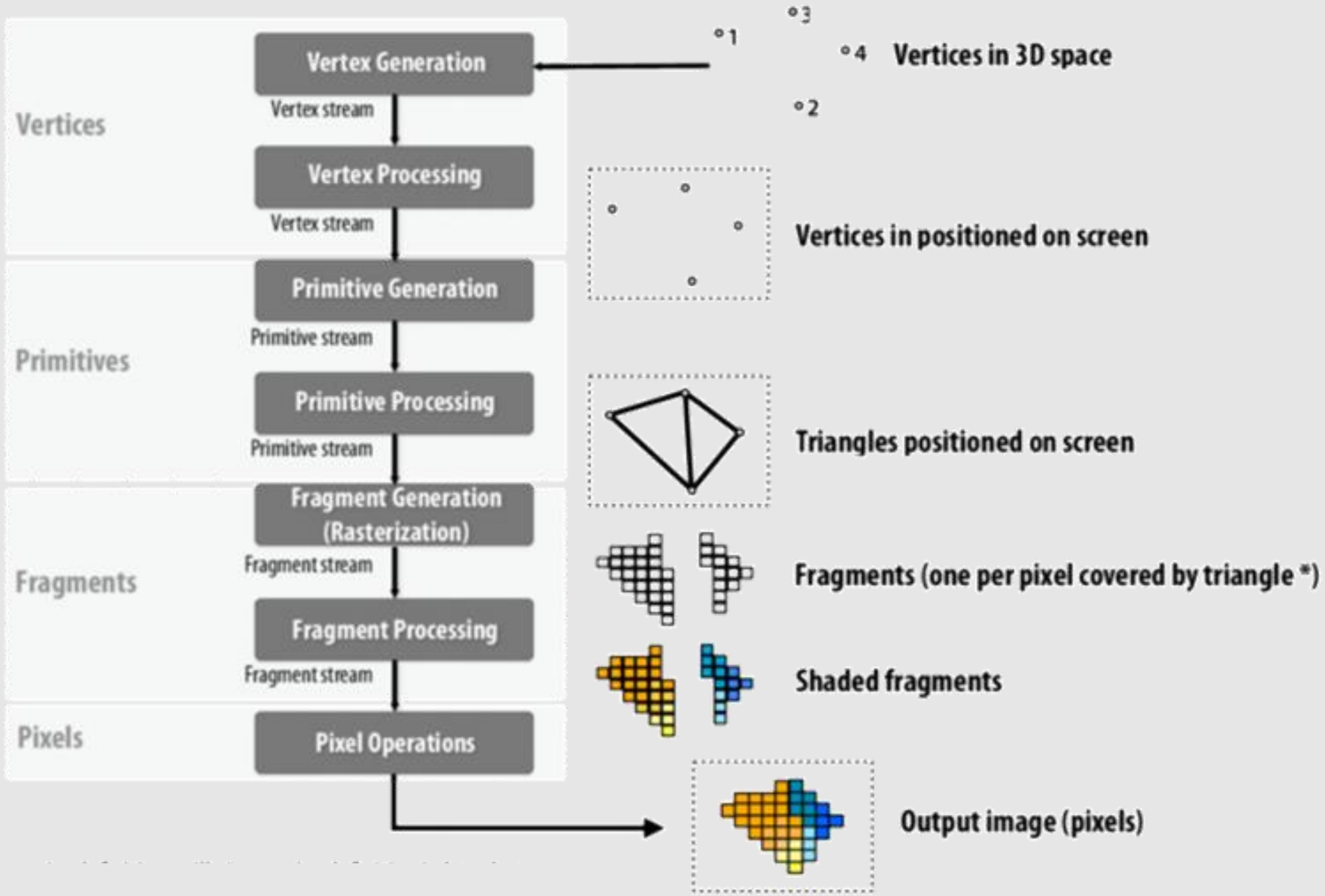
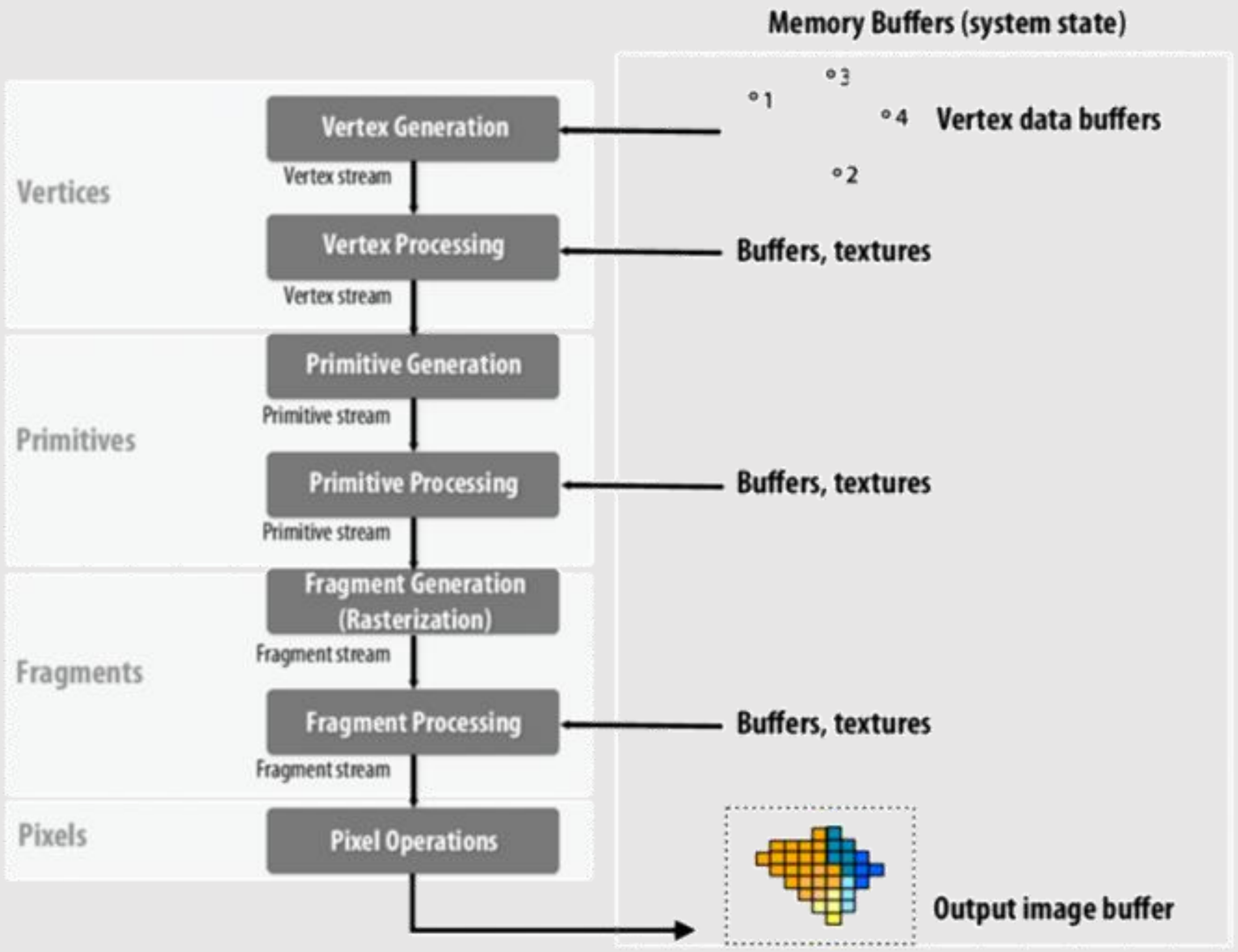
Special Topics in A1: Graphics APIs & Architecture

- The Graphics Pipeline
- Graphics APIs
- Deferred Shading
- Graphics Architecture

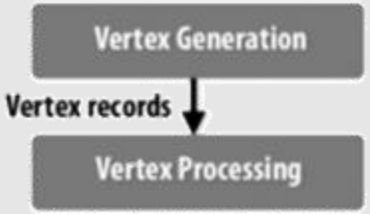
The Graphics Pipeline



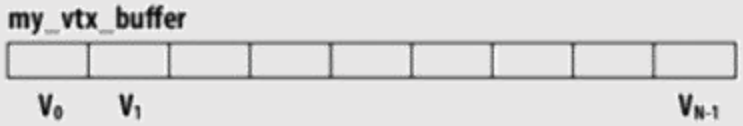
The Graphics Pipeline



Assembling Vertices

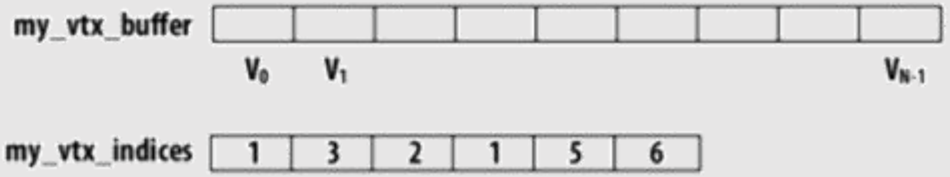


Contiguous version data version



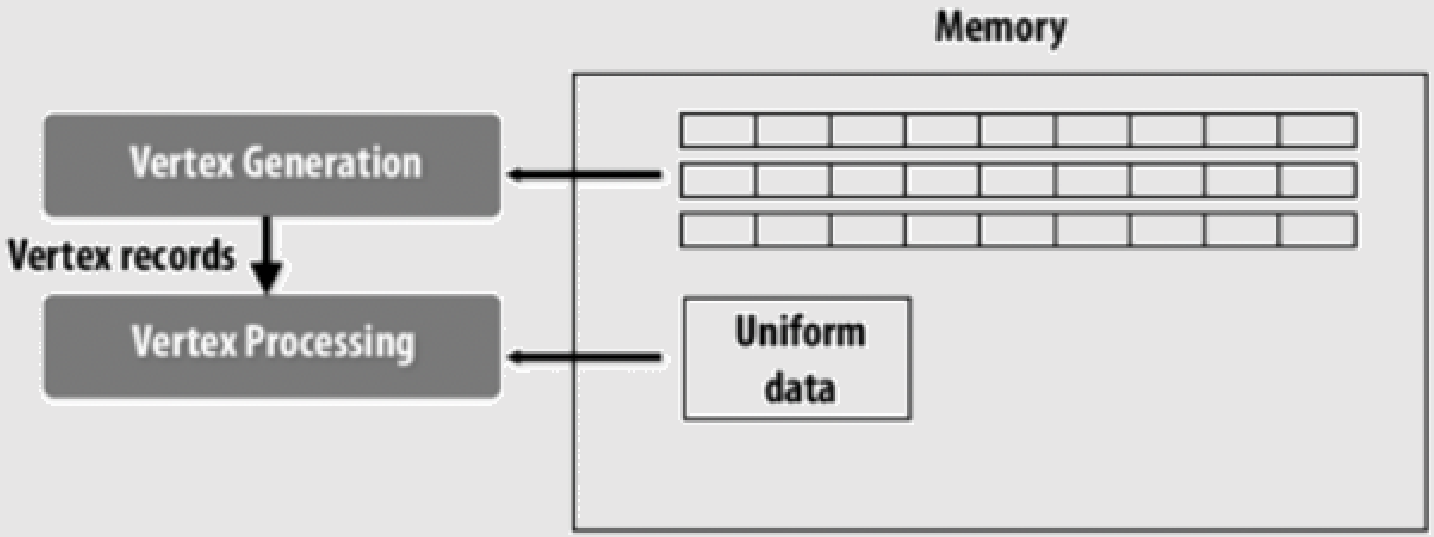

```
glBindBuffer(GL_ARRAY_BUFFER, my_vtx_buffer);
glDrawArrays(GL_TRIANGLES, 0, N);
```

Indexed access version ("gather")




```
glBindBuffer(GL_ARRAY_BUFFER, my_vtx_buffer);
glDrawElements(GL_TRIANGLES, 6, GL_UNSIGNED_INT,
               my_vtx_indices);
```

Vertex Shader

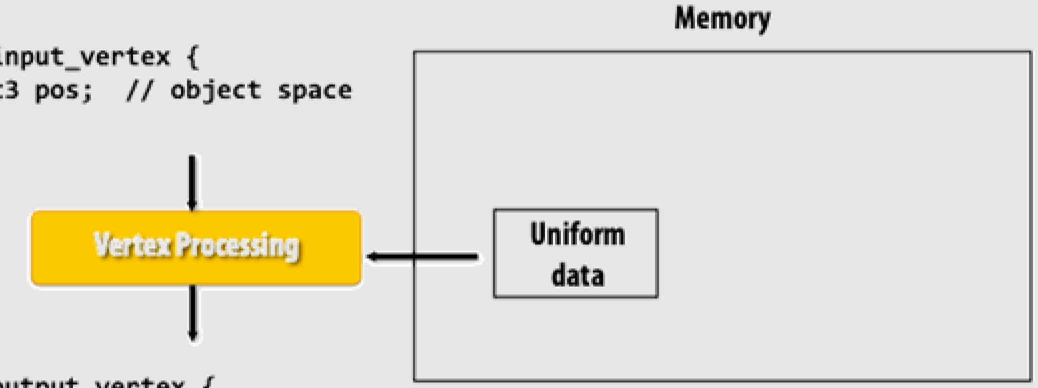


- **Uniform data:** read-only input data to vertex shader
  - Example: object-to-clip-space vertex transform matrix

- Vertex processing operates on a stream of vertex records + read-only "uniform" inputs
  - Easily amendable to parallelism

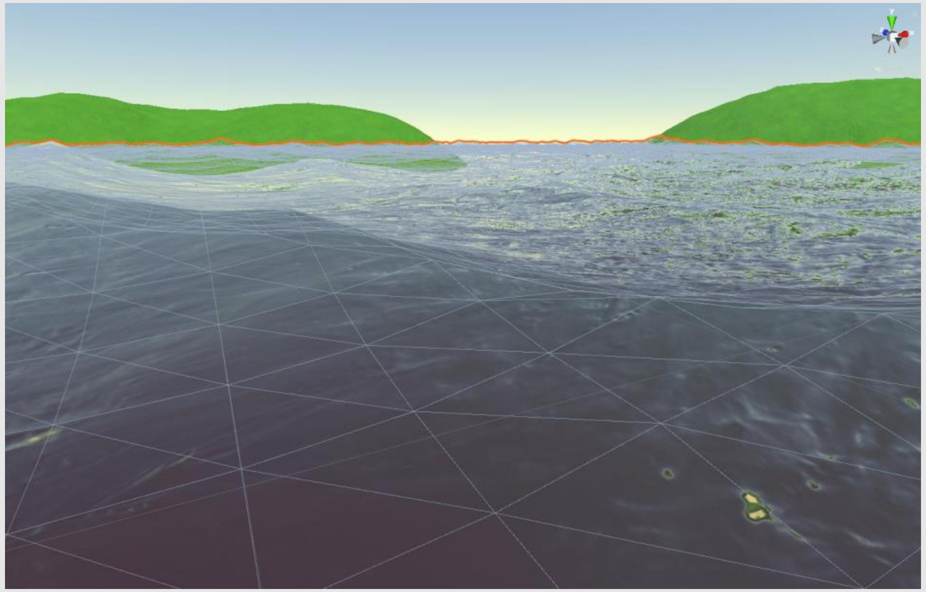
Vertex Shader

```
struct input_vertex {
   float3 pos;  // object space
};
```




```
struct output_vertex {
   float3 pos; // NDC space
};
```

1 input vertex ⟶ 1 output vertex
independent processing of each vertex



Vertex Shader Program *

```
uniform mat4 my_transform;   // P * T

output_vertex my_vertex_program(input_vertex in) {
    output_vertex out;
    out.pos = my_transform * in.pos; // matrix-vector mult
    return out;
}
```

- Vertex shaders provide per-vertex operations that change vertex attributes (position/normal/uv)
  - Example: fluid simulation

* (Note this is pseudocode, not GLSL syntax)

Vertex Shader

Vertex Shader Program *

```
uniform mat4 my_transform;   // P * T

output_vertex my_vertex_program(input_vertex in) {
    output_vertex out;
    out.pos = my_transform * in.pos; // matrix-vector mult
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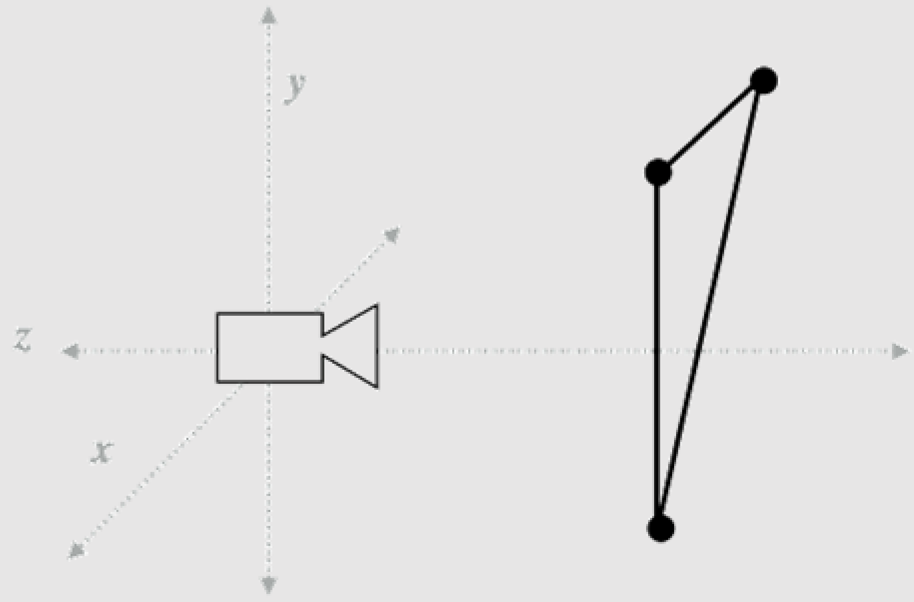
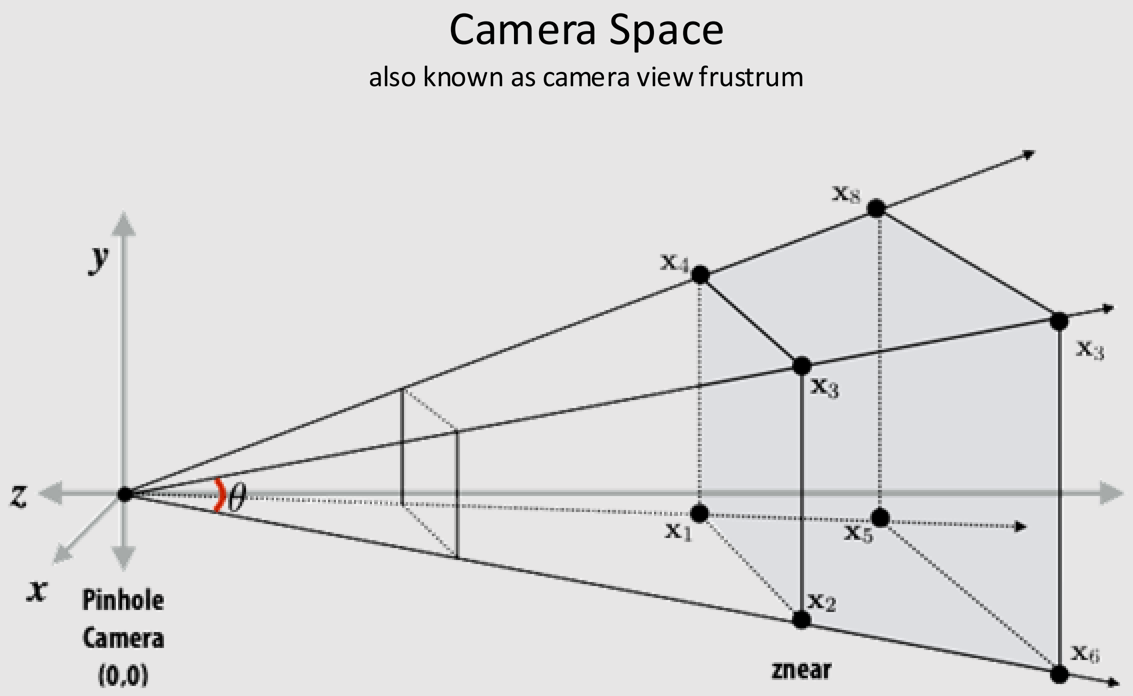
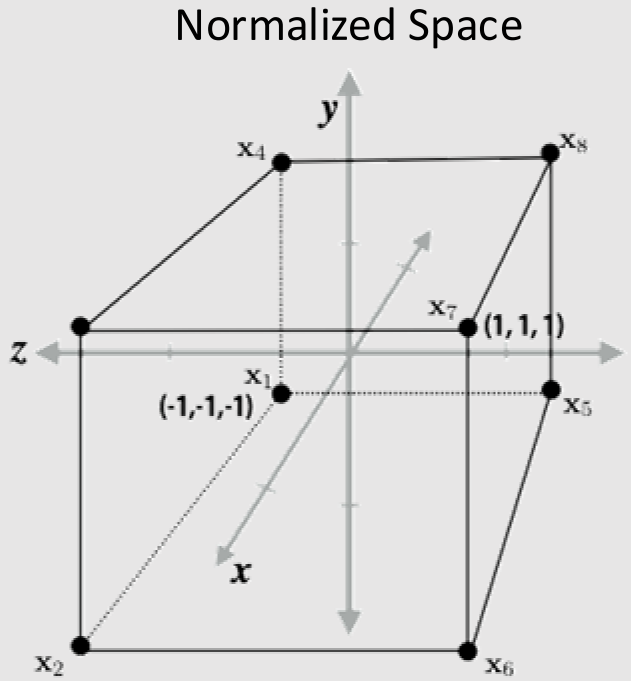
```



Transform triangle vertices from world-space coordinates into camera space

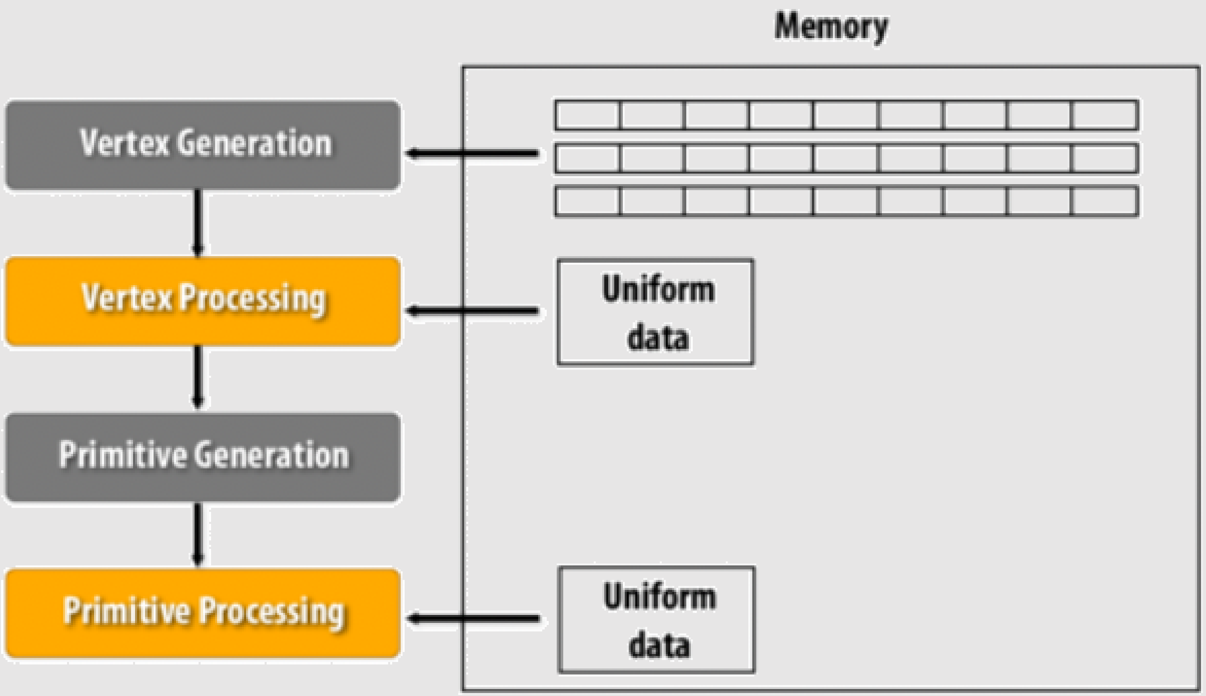
Vertex Shader

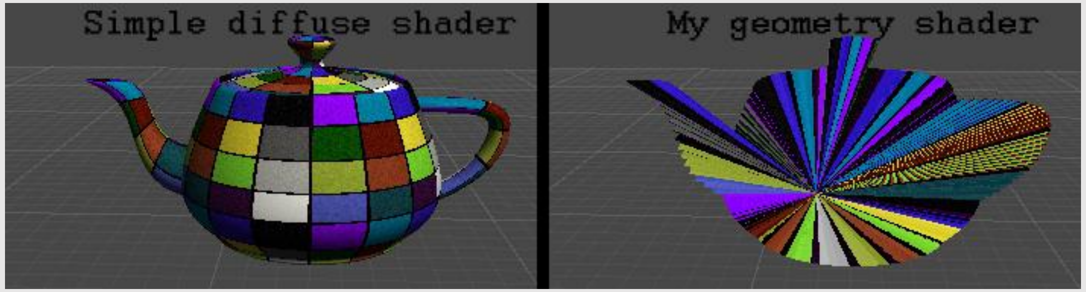




Apply perspective projection to transform triangle vertices to normalized coordinate space

Geometry Shader





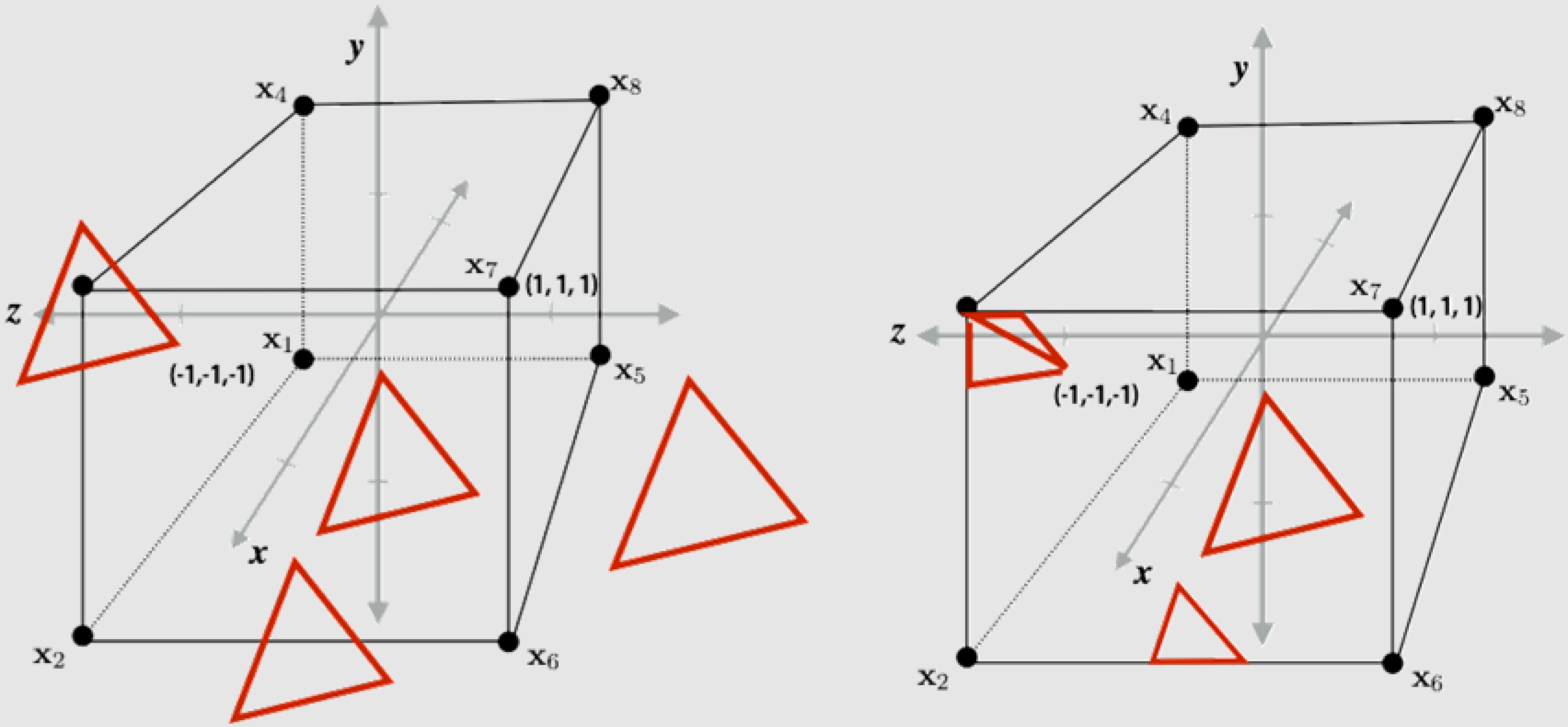
Some guy in Unity having a hard time with geometry shaders (2014) Unity

- Recently added to OpenGL in 2007
  - As such, not many people use it

- User can retarget geometry connectivity by specifying tessellation operations
  - Example: computing vertex shader on coarse geometry and then subdividing a surface in the geometry shader

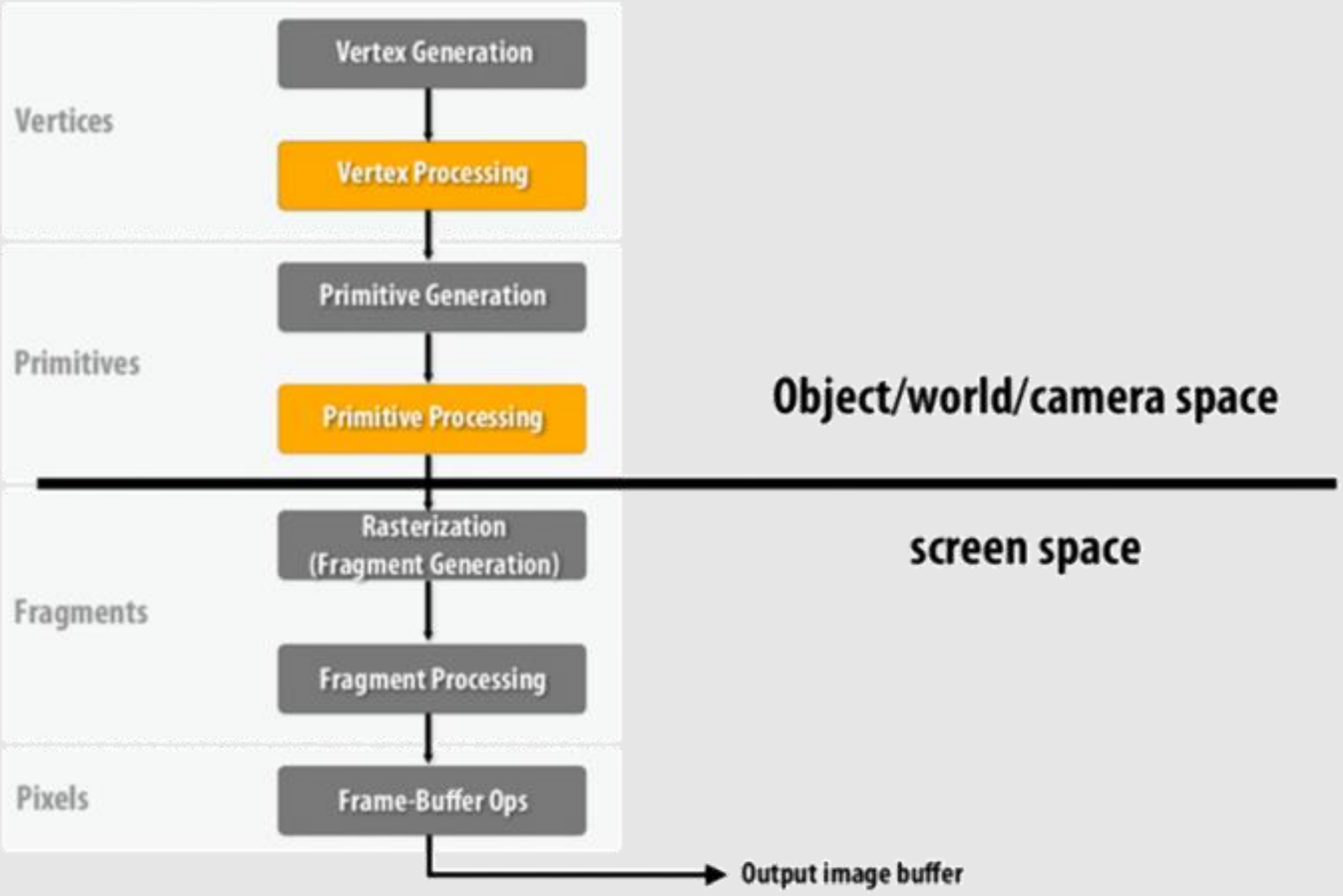
** Also referred to as "Primitive Shader"

Geometry Shader (Clipping)

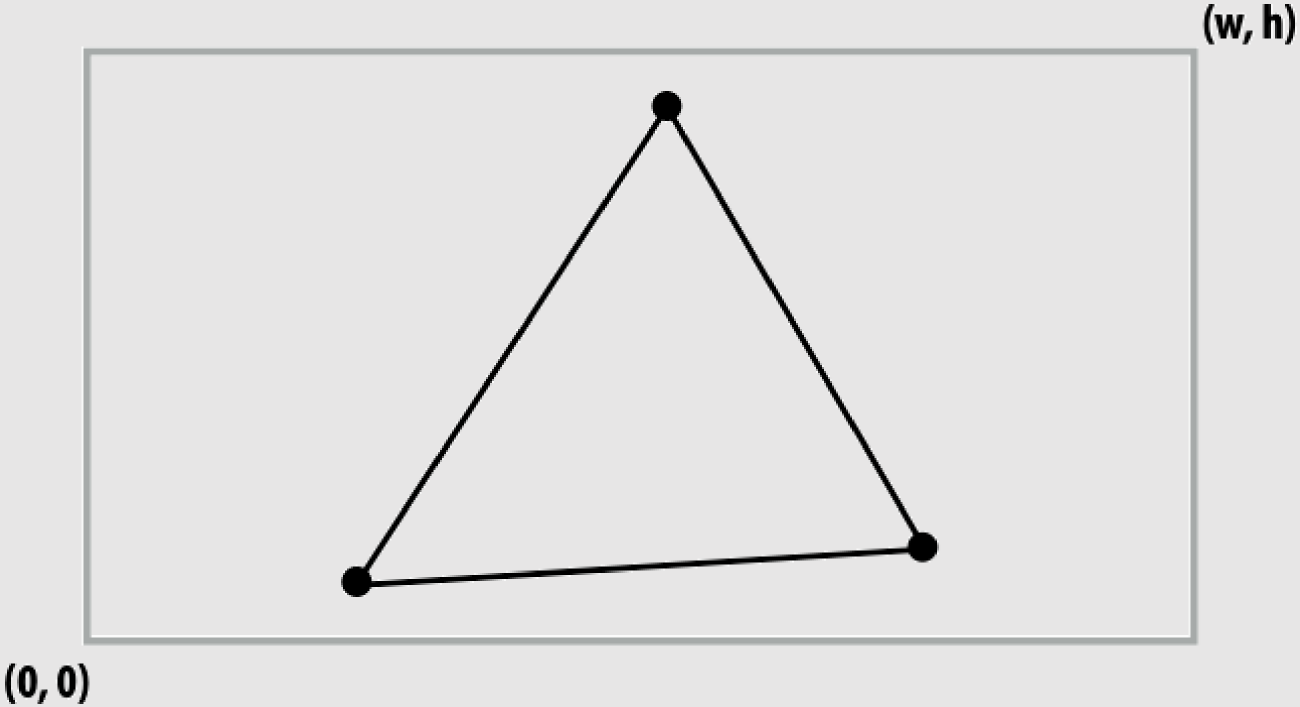


Discard triangles that lie complete outside the unit cube (culling)
May create additional triangles

Change Of Space

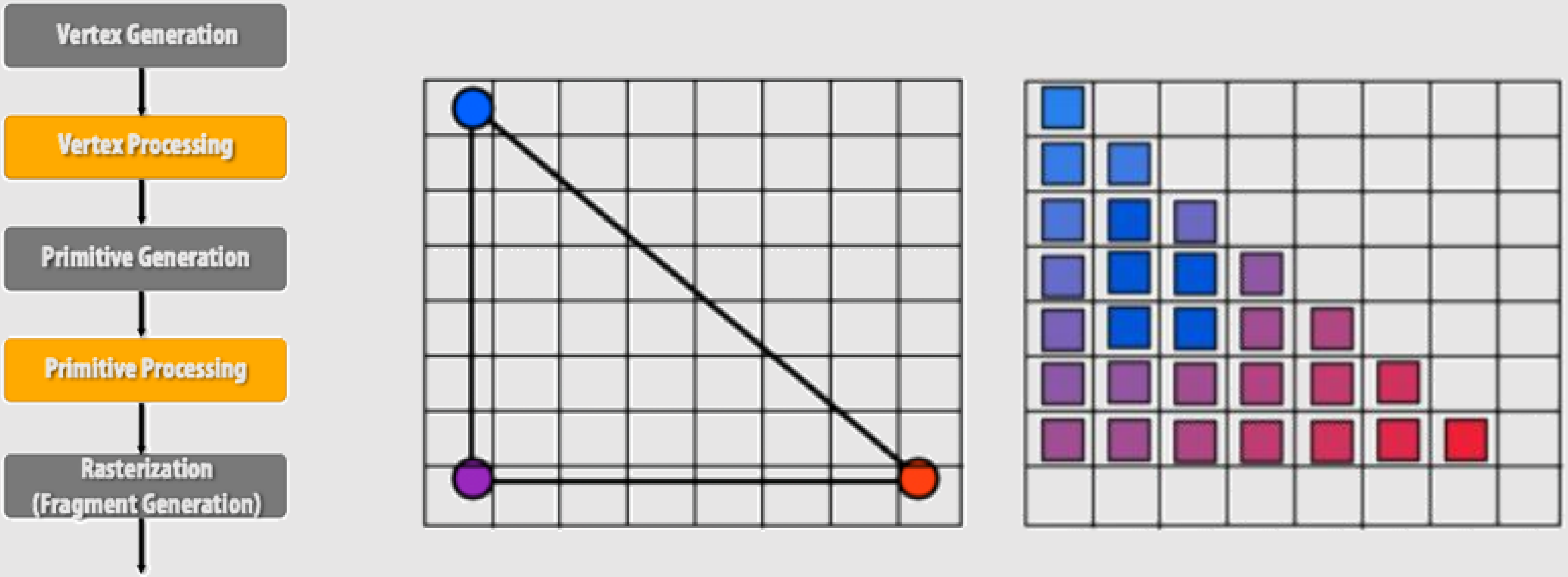


Transform To Screen Coordinates



Transform vertex (x,y) positions from normalized coordinates into screen coordinates
(based on screen [w,h])

Fragment Shader




```
struct fragment      // note similarity to output_vertex from before
{
   float  x,y;       // screen pixel coordinates (sample point location)
   float  z;         // depth of triangle at sample point

   float3 normal;    // interpolated application-defined attribs
   float2 texcoord;  // (e.g., texture coordinates, surface normal)

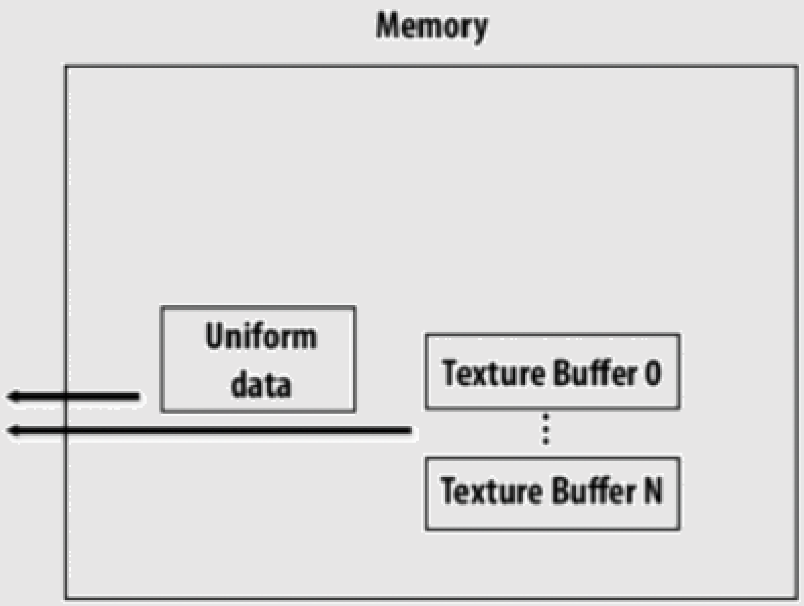
}
```

- Separate triangles into fragments
- For each fragment, compute the output RGBA

Texturing

```
struct input_fragment
{
   float  x,y;
   float  z;
   float3 normal;
   float2 texcoord;
};
```

Fragment Processing




```
struct output_fragment
{
   int    x,y; // pixel
   float  z;
   float4 color;
};

texture my_texture;

output_vertex my_fragment_program(input_fragment in)
{
    output_fragment out;
    float4 material_color = sample(my_texture, in.texcoord);

    for (each light L in scene)
    {
        out.color += shade(L) // compute reflectance towards camera due to L
    }
    return out;
}
```

- Textures stored as images in memory
- Most expensive part of rasterization
  - Texture caching is a popular solution

Texturing

```
output_vertex my_fragment_program(input_fragment in)
{
    output_fragment out;
    float4 material_color = sample(my_texture, in.texcoord);

    for (each light L in scene)
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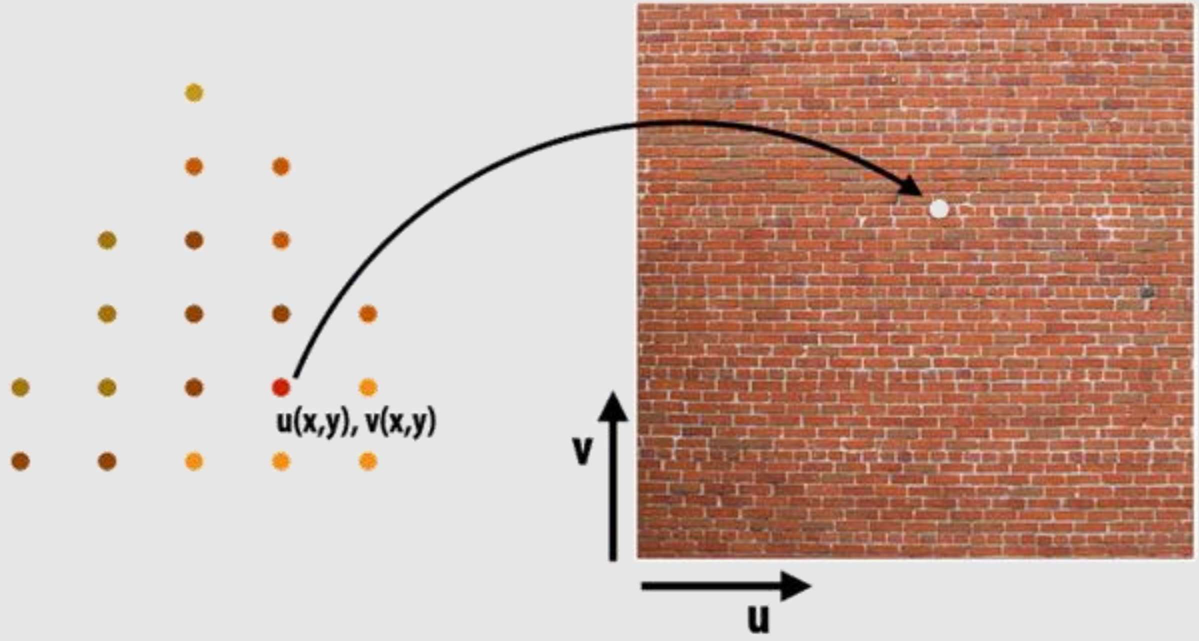


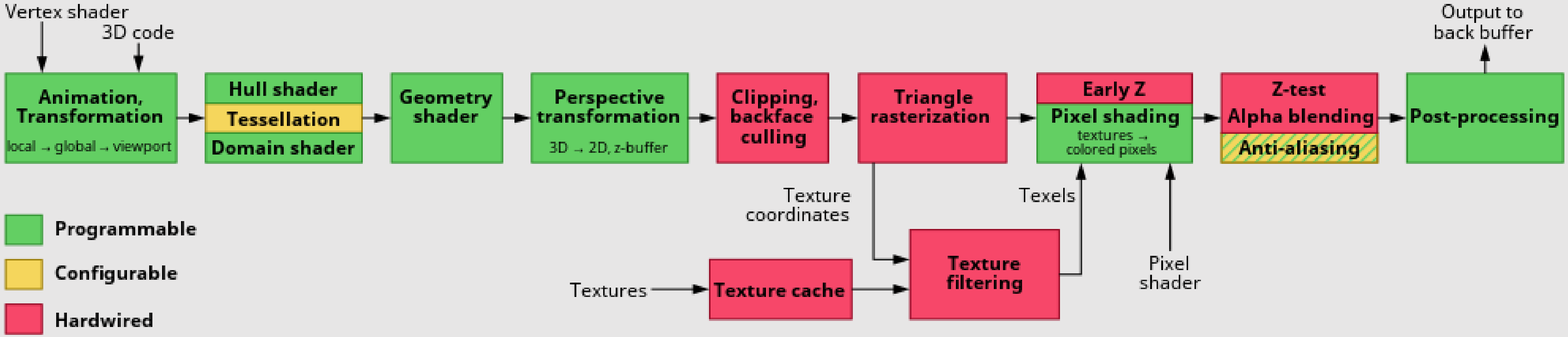
Texture is just a buffer of values

Map (x,y) coordinates to (u,v) texture coordinates and looks up texels

The Texture Pipeline

- Texture interface: an I/O + cache for textures
  - Texture lookup exhibits a lot of spatial locality (bilinear/trilinear)
- Built-in texture filtering operations
- Texture operations are fixed-function
  - Designed to be hardware optimized since the logic is always the same

Surface Maps via Adaptive Triangulations (2023) Schmidt et. al.

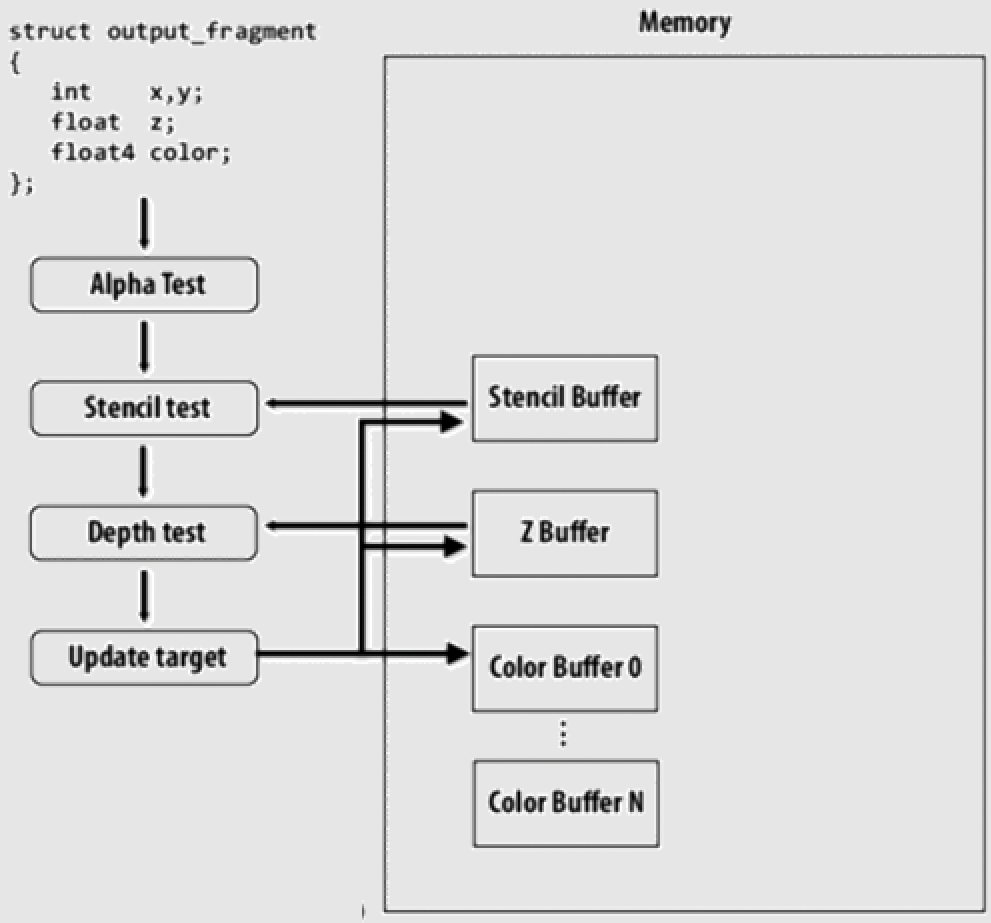


Texture Atlas

- In old school 2D video games, expensive to load different images
  - Different images meant different cache locations
    - More cache conflicts
  - IO was expensive
- Important assets combined into one image
  - Frequently referenced meant frequently in cache
- Modern video game architectures have better memory/caching/IO
  - No need for texture atlases
  - Still common to keep all assets pertaining to one character in same texture

Minecraft (2011) Mojang

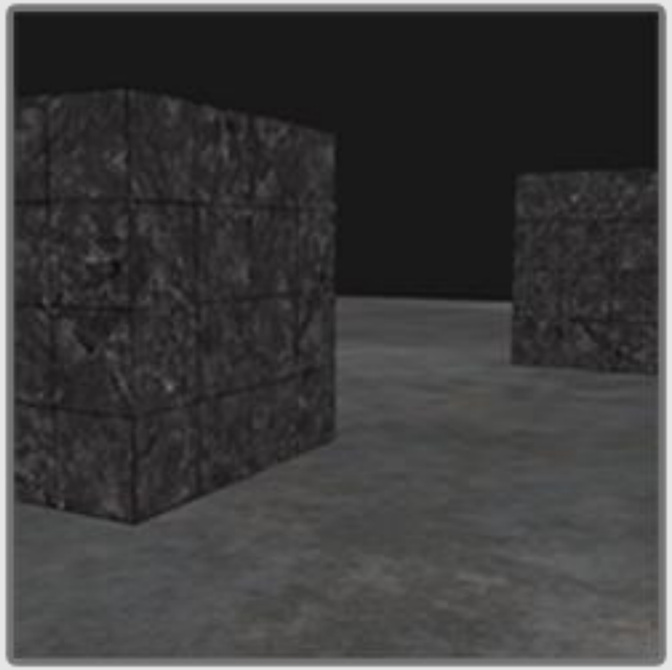
Frame-Buffer Operations



- **Alpha Test**
  - Allows fragments with alpha value greater/less than a constant specified by the user to pass
- **Stencil Test**
  - Allows fragments that pass a user-defined per-pixel function to pass
    - Stored in stencil buffer
    - Example: mattes + masking
- **Depth Test**
  - Allows fragments that are closest in depth to pass
    - Stored in Z-buffer
- **Update Target**
  - If pixel passes, modify stencil depth and color buffers
  - Reads can be done in parallel, writes require locking

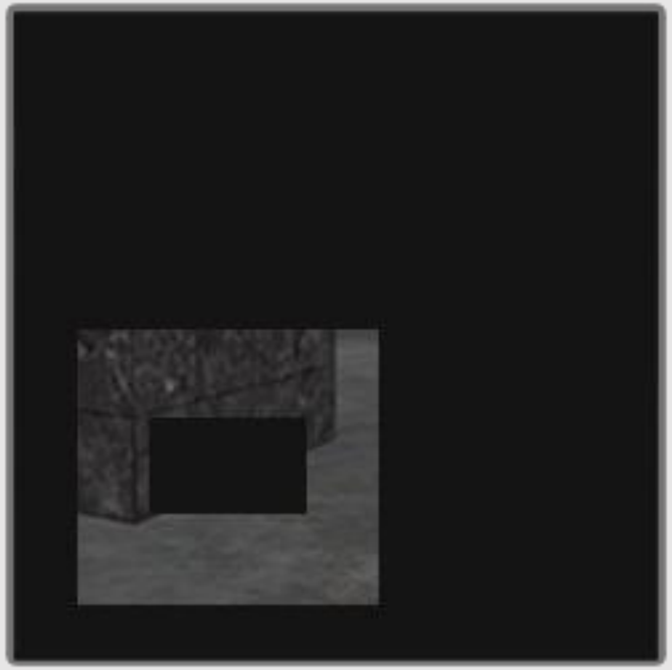
Stencil Test

Color Buffer



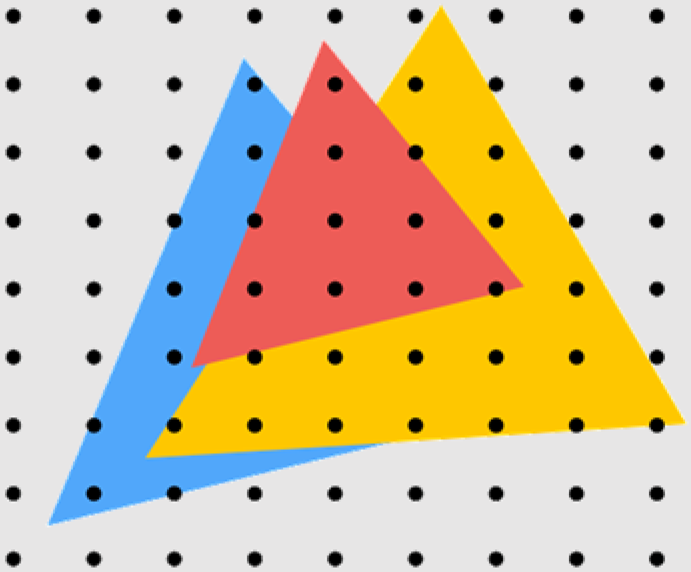
Stencil Buffer

Result

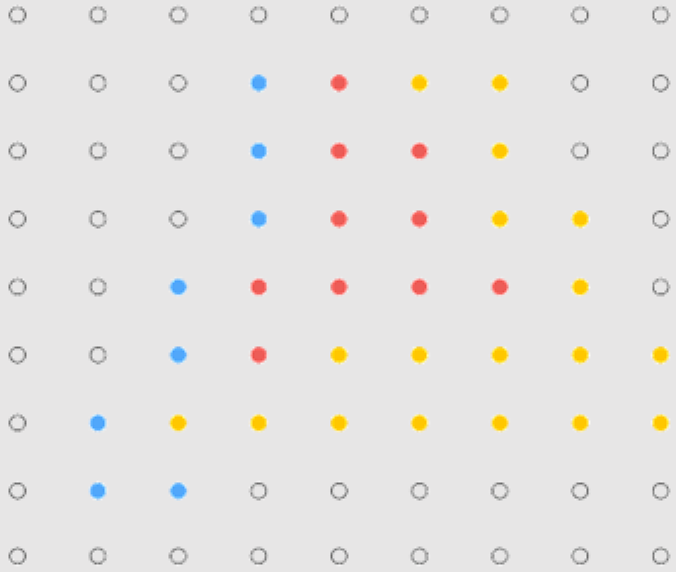


Depth Test

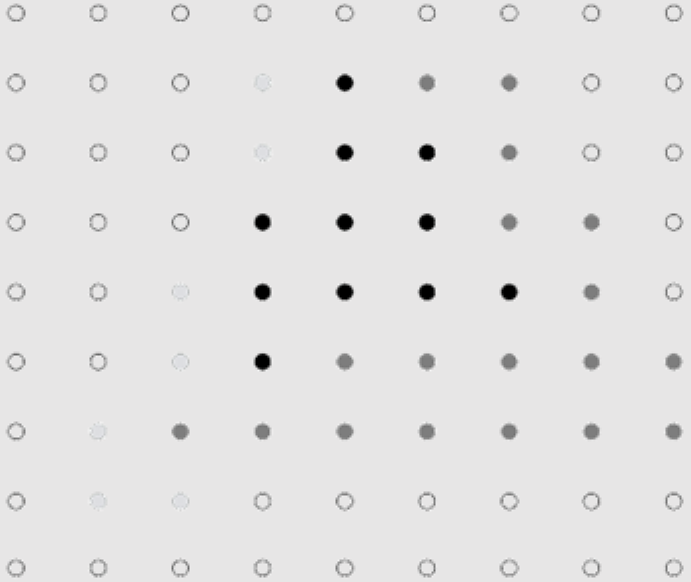
Primitives



Color Buffer



Depth Buffer



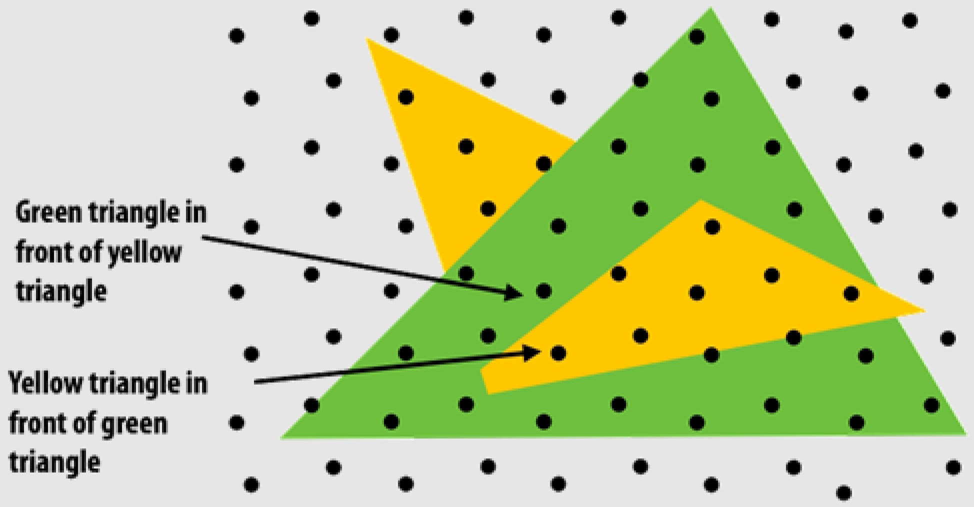
```
depth_test(tri_d, tri_color, x, y) {

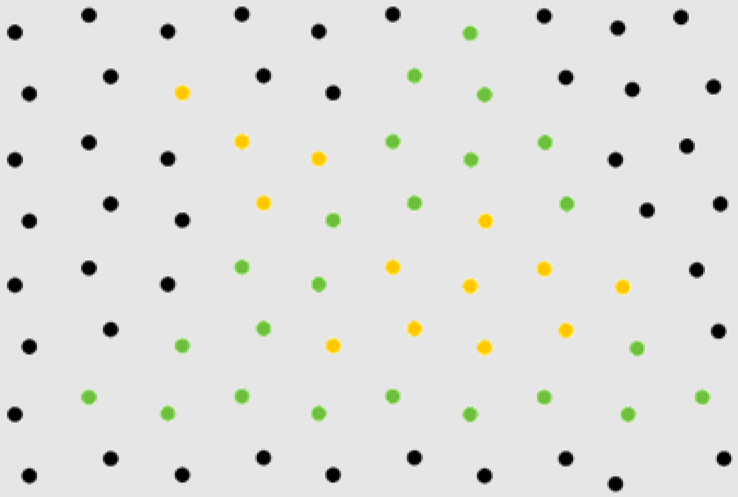
  if (pass_depth_test(tri_d, zbuffer[x][y]) {

    // triangle is closest object seen so far at this
    // sample point. Update depth and color buffers.

    zbuffer[x][y] = tri_d;     // update zbuffer
    color[x][y] = tri_color;   // update color buffer
  }
}
```

Depth Test

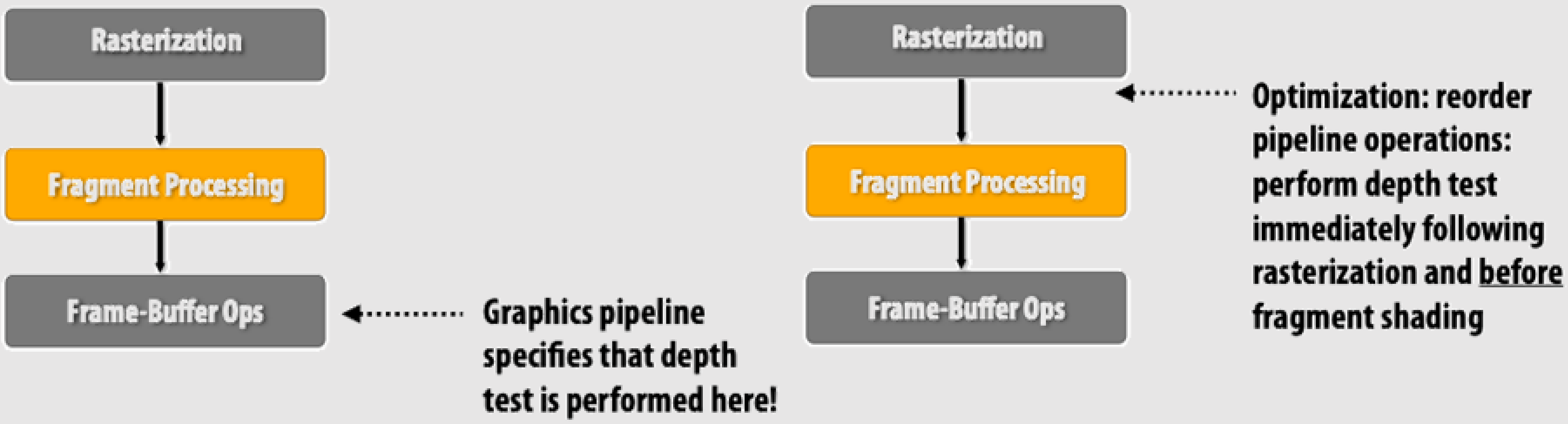




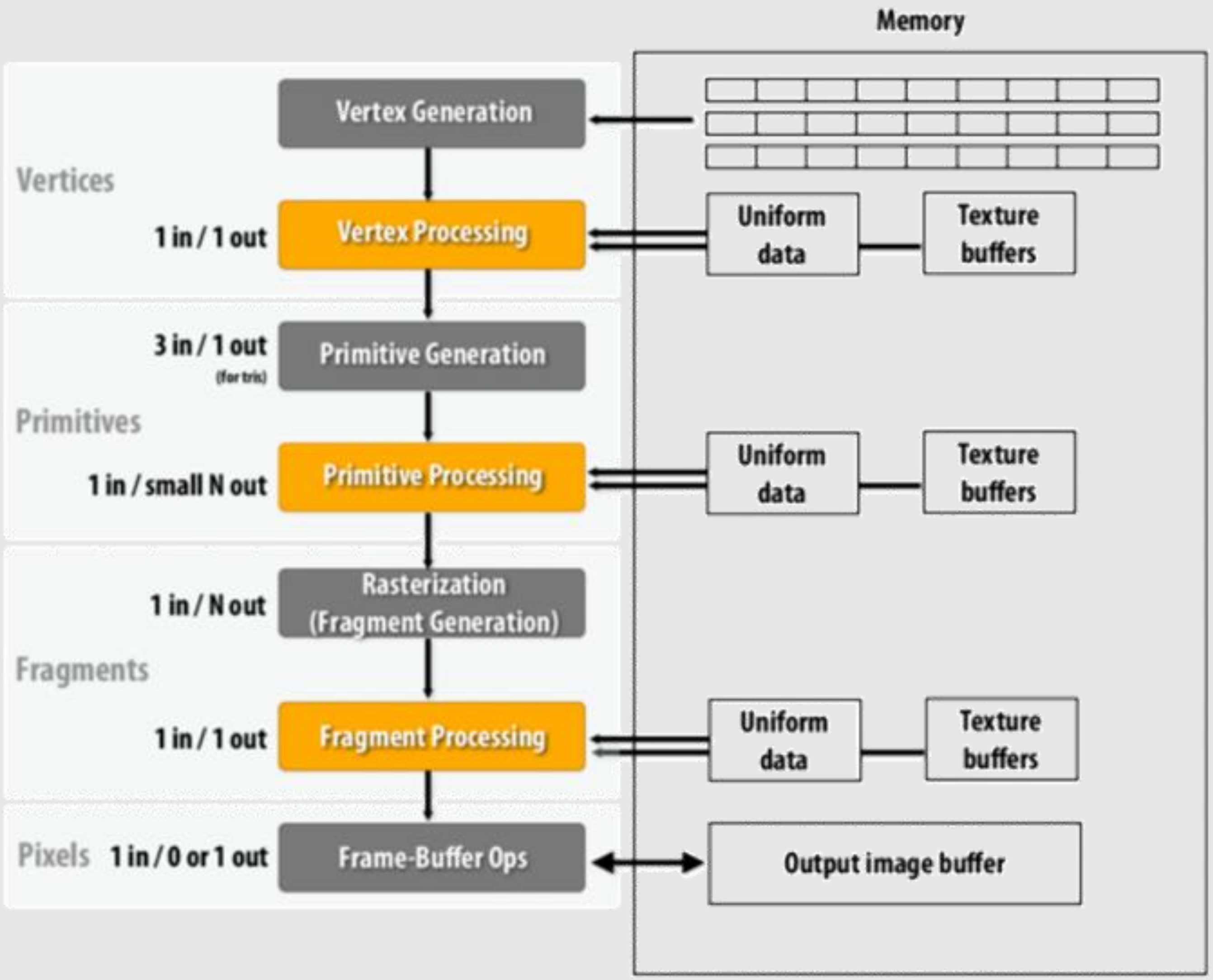
- **Q:** Does depth-buffer algorithm handle interpenetrating surfaces?
- **A:** Yes! Occlusion testing is done at a sample granularity

Early occlusion-culling ("early Z")

- **Why are we shading fragments only for them to fail depth testing?**
  - Early Z culling checks depth before shading fragments
    - Only provides benefit if closers triangles rendered first!
    - Application developers should submit geometry in front-to-back order
- A GPU implementation detail
  - Not reflected in the graphics pipeline abstraction, but it's still there



The 3D Graphics Pipeline



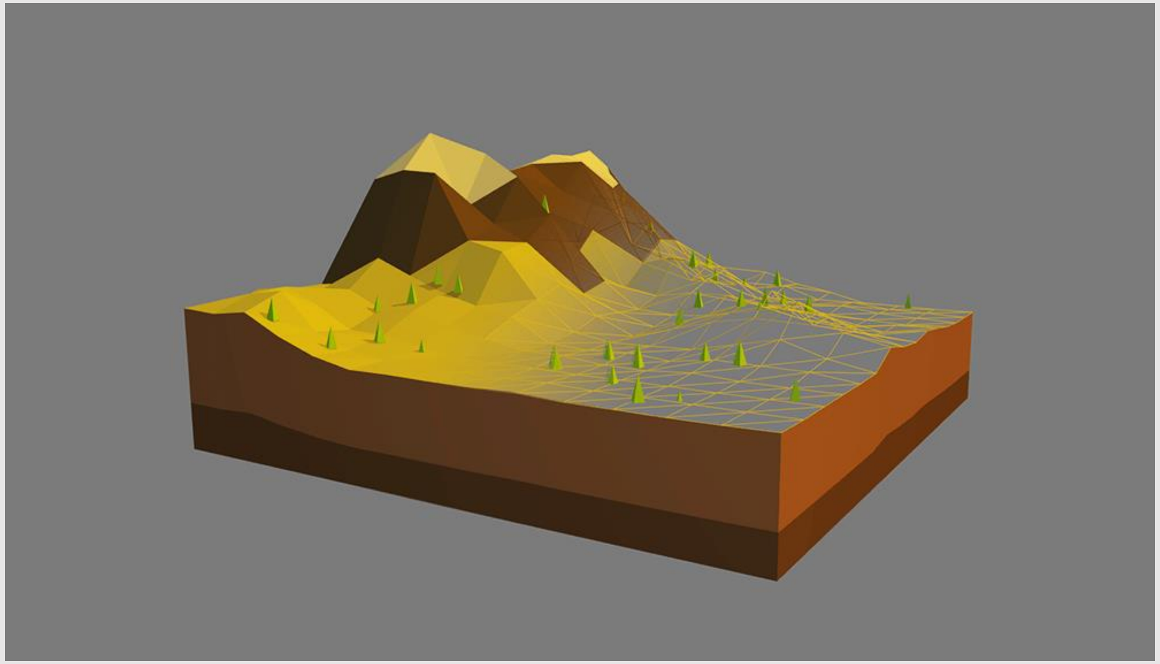
- ~~The Graphics Pipeline~~
- Graphics APIs
- Deferred Shading
- Graphics Architecture

Graphics APIs

- OpenGL
  - Shaders written in GLSL
  - Cross-Platform support
- Vulkan
  - The cooler OpenGL
  - Provides more control & performance on GPU
- DirectX
  - Microsoft graphics package
  - Direct3D is the suite-specific tool for 3D graphics
- Metal
  - Apple graphics package
  - Written in Objective-C and Swift
  - Dedicated Metal Shading Language
    - Integrated Metal debugger in Xcode

Graphics APIs on the Web

- WebGL
  - JavaScript API for running GLSL code in browser
    - Web port of OpenGL
  - Still runs on GPU
  - Easier for sharing code/applications
- WebGPU
  - Run GPU commands in browser
  - Successor to WebGL
- Three.JS
  - Higher level graphics framework
  - Uses WebGL under the hood

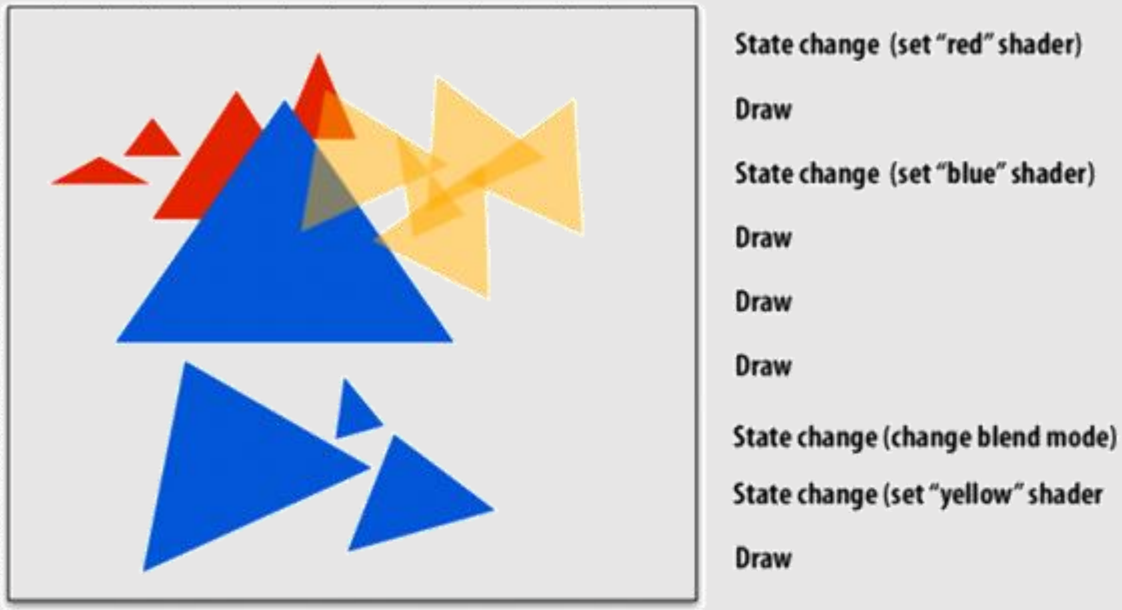


Three.JS

Programming the Graphics Pipeline

- Graphics programming is a state machine
  - Every draw **operation** changes the active output's **state**
  - Not all state changes are the same cost

- Expensive state changes:
  - **Changing targets (texture)**
    - Requires texture cache flush, hurting texture bandwidth
  - **Changing shaders**
    - Forces the pipeline to a stop and flushes contents
    - Trashes any prefetching data due to change in access patterns



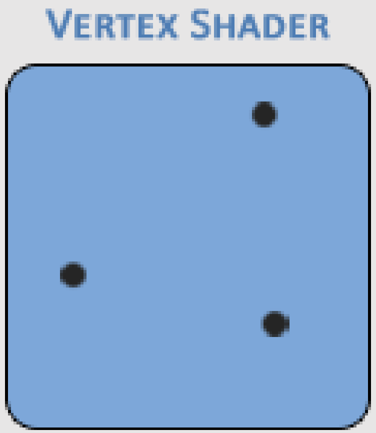
Binding Vertex Shaders

```
// shader code is a string made to look like c++ code
const char *vertexShaderSource = "#version 330 core\n"
   "layout (location = 0) in vec3 aPos;\n"
   "void main()\n"
   "{\n"
   "   gl_Position = vec4(aPos.x, aPos.y, aPos.z, 1.0);\n"
   "}\0";
}
```

```
// create vertex shader reference
unsigned int vertexShader;
vertexShader = glCreateShader(GL_VERTEX_SHADER);

// bind vertex shader to reference
glShaderSource(vertexShader, 1, &vertexShaderSource, NULL);

// compile shader
glCompileShader(vertexShader);
```



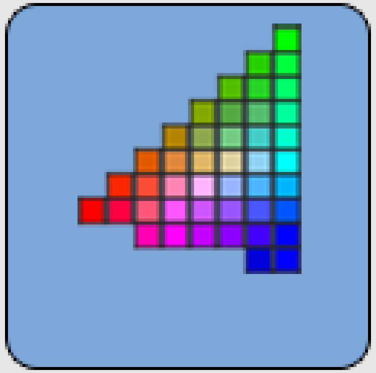
Binding Fragment Shaders

```
// shader code is a string made to look like c++ code
const char *fragmentShaderSource = "#version 330 core\n"
   "out vec4 FragColor; \n"
   "void main()\n"
   "{\n"
   "   FragColor = vec4(1.0f, 0.5f, 0.2f, 1.0f);\n"
   "}\0";
}
```

```
// create fragment shader reference
unsigned int fragmentShader;
fragmentShader = glCreateShader(GL_FRAGMENT_SHADER);

// bind fragment shader to reference
glShaderSource(fragmentShader, 1, & fragmentShaderSource, NULL);

// compile shader
glCompileShader(fragmentShader);
```

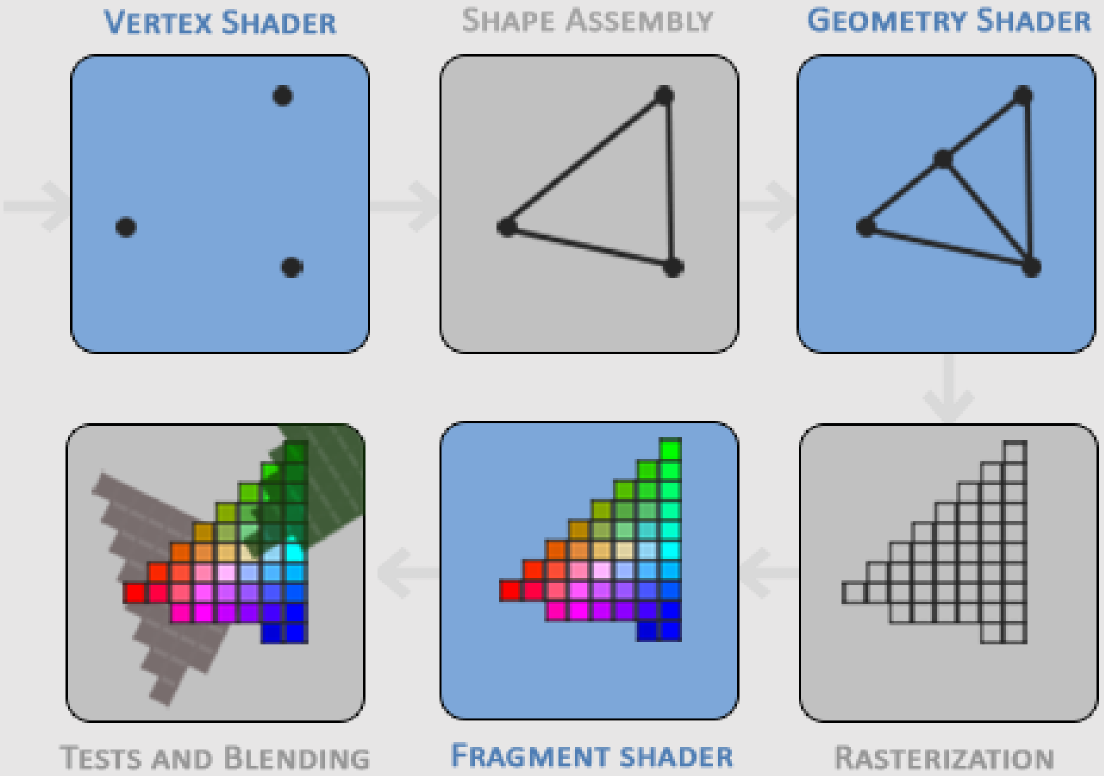


FRAGMENT SHADER

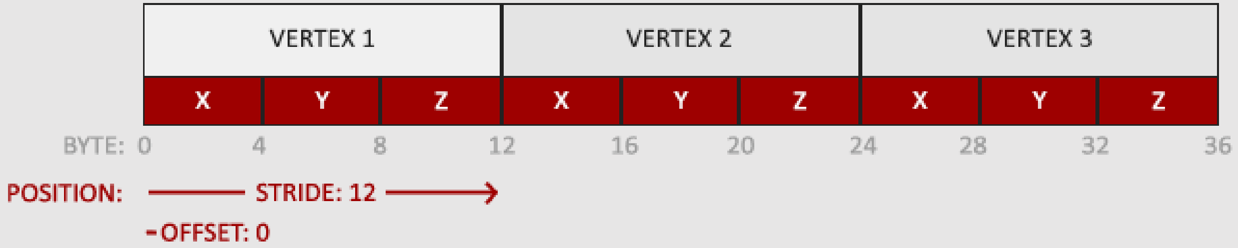
Creating A Graphics Program

```
// create shader program reference
unsigned int shaderProgram;
shaderProgram = glCreateProgram();

// bind vertex and fragment shaders
glAttachShader(shaderProgram, vertexShader);
glAttachShader(shaderProgram, fragmentShader);
glLinkProgram(shaderProgram);
```



Binding Shaders



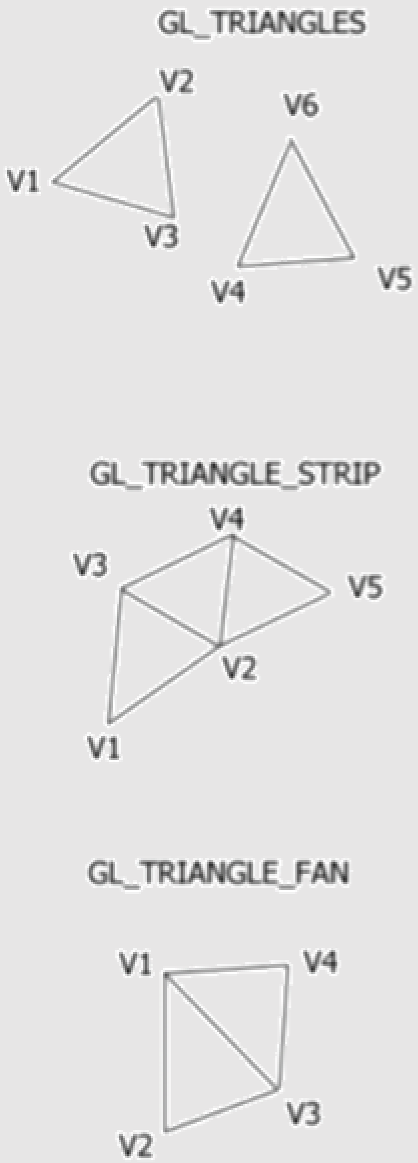

```
// create a Vertex Array Object VAO for multiple VBOs
glBindVertexArray(VAO);

// create a Vertex Buffer Object VBO
// bind vertices array to VBO
glBindBuffer(GL_ARRAY_BUFFER, VBO);
glBufferData(GL_ARRAY_BUFFER, sizeof(vertices), vertices, GL_STATIC_DRAW);

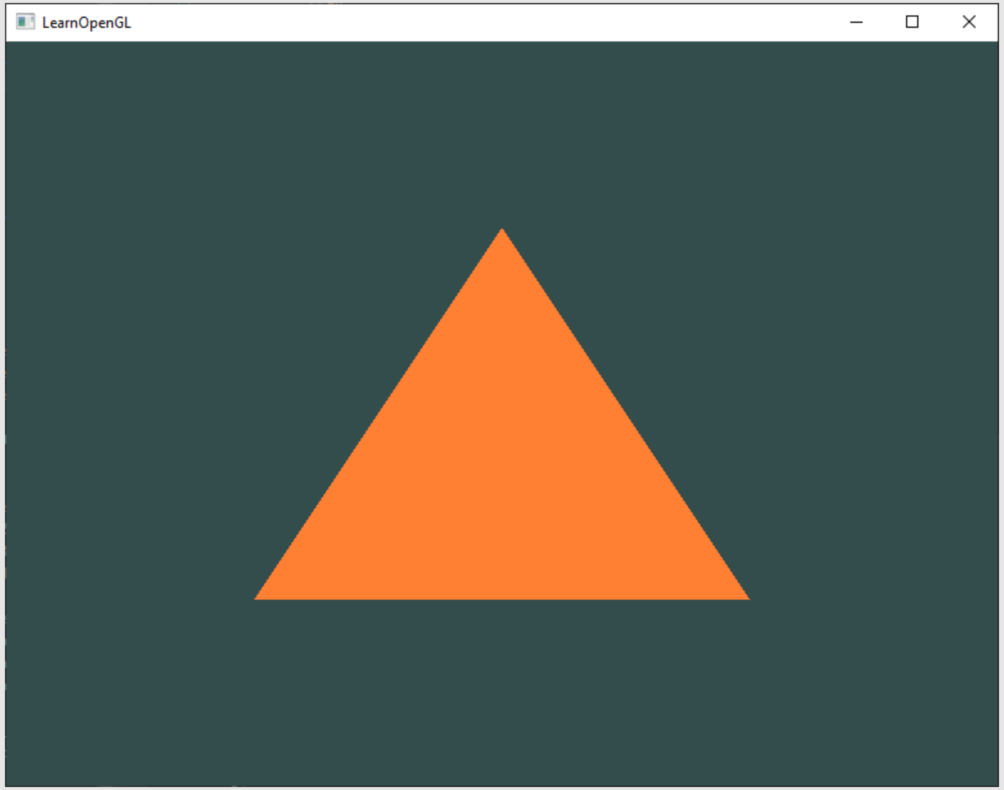
// specify how vertices will be parsed
glVertexAttribPointer(0, 3, GL_FLOAT, GL_FALSE, 3 * sizeof(float), (void*)0);
glEnableVertexAttribArray(0);

// enable shader program and vertex buffer
glUseProgram(shaderProgram);
glBindVertexArray(VAO);

// specify draw method
glDrawArrays(GL_TRIANGLES, 0, 3);
```



The ‘Hello World’ Of Graphics APIs



Hello Triangle, OpenGL

- Instead of printing, we want to draw
  - Easiest thing to draw: **a triangle!**
- Hardest part of Graphics APIs: getting the bindings correct
- If you can draw a triangle, you have your pipeline in order
  - Simply swap out shaders and data and go from there!

Tutorial: https://learnopengl.com/Getting-started/Hello-Triangle

- ~~The Graphics Pipeline~~
- ~~Graphics APIs~~
- Deferred Shading
- Graphics Architecture

Deferred Shading

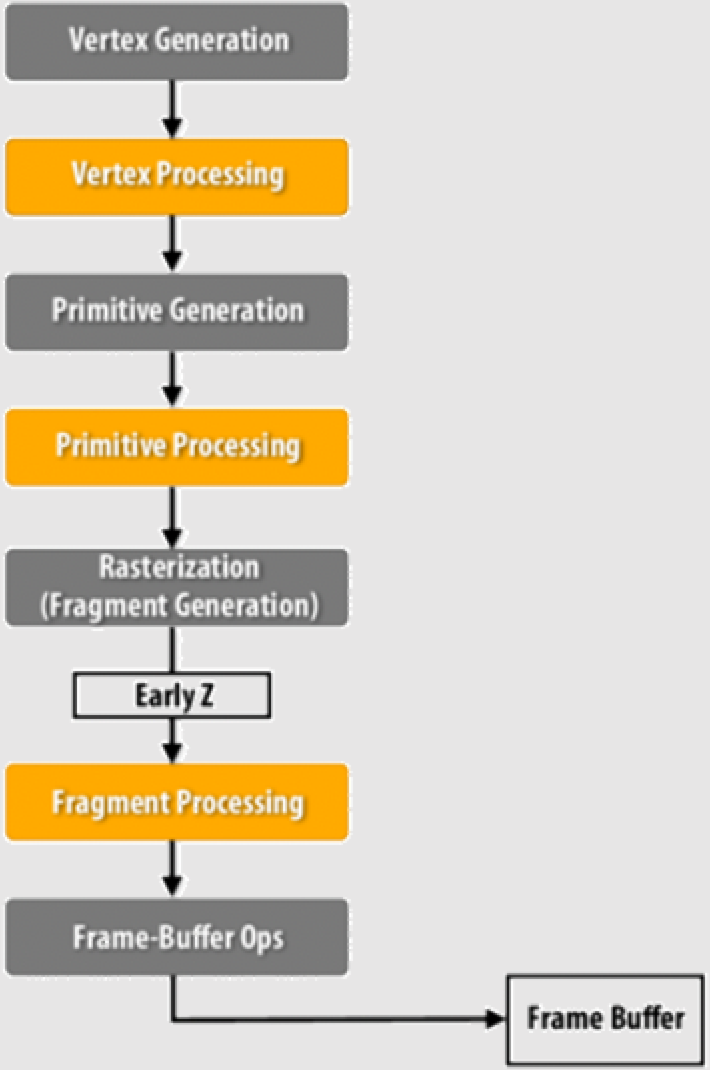
- Popular algorithm for rendering in modern games
- **Idea:** restructure the rendering pipeline to perform shading **after** all occlusions have been resolved
- Not a new idea. Implemented in several classic graphics systems, but not directly supported in most high-end GPUs
  - But modern graphics pipeline provides mechanism to allow applications to implement deferred shading efficiently

Assassin's Creed III (2012) Ubisoft

What was the first video game to use deferred shading?

Shrek (2001) Digital Illusions Canada

Feed Forward Rendering

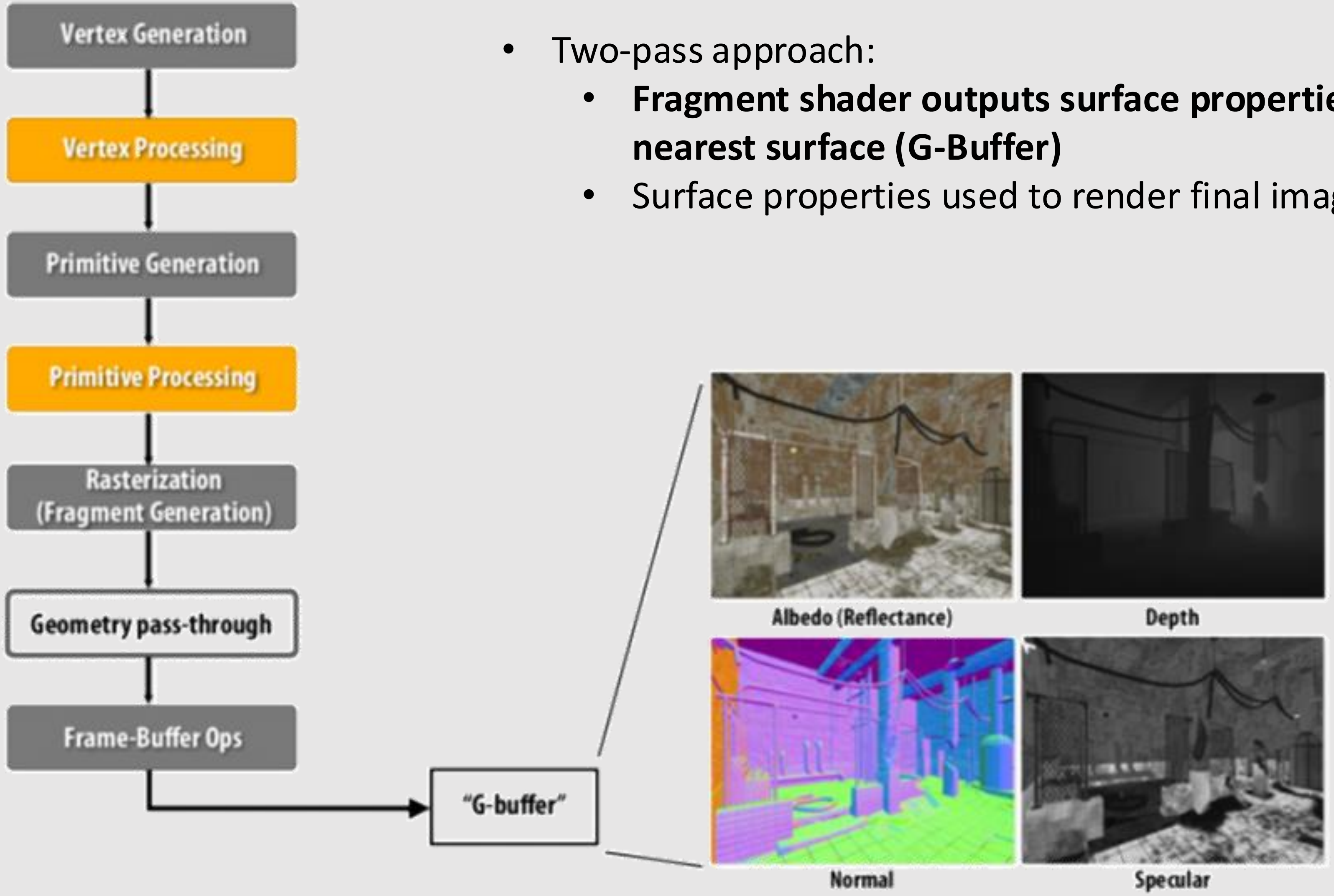


- Occlusion testing done after fragments have been generated

- **Best-case:** fragments provided near-to-far
- **Worst case:** fragments provided far-to-near
  - Even Early-Z cannot keep every fragment from being rasterized

Deferred Shading

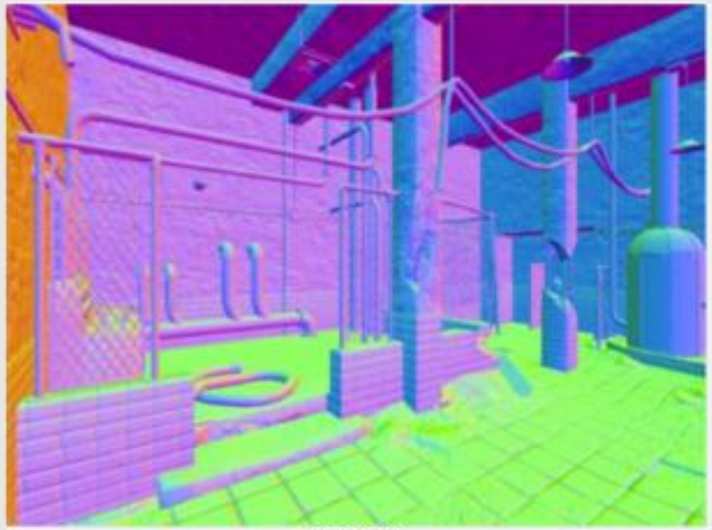
- Two-pass approach:
  - **Fragment shader outputs surface properties of nearest surface (G-Buffer)**
  - Surface properties used to render final image



Geometry Buffer

Albedo (Reflectance)

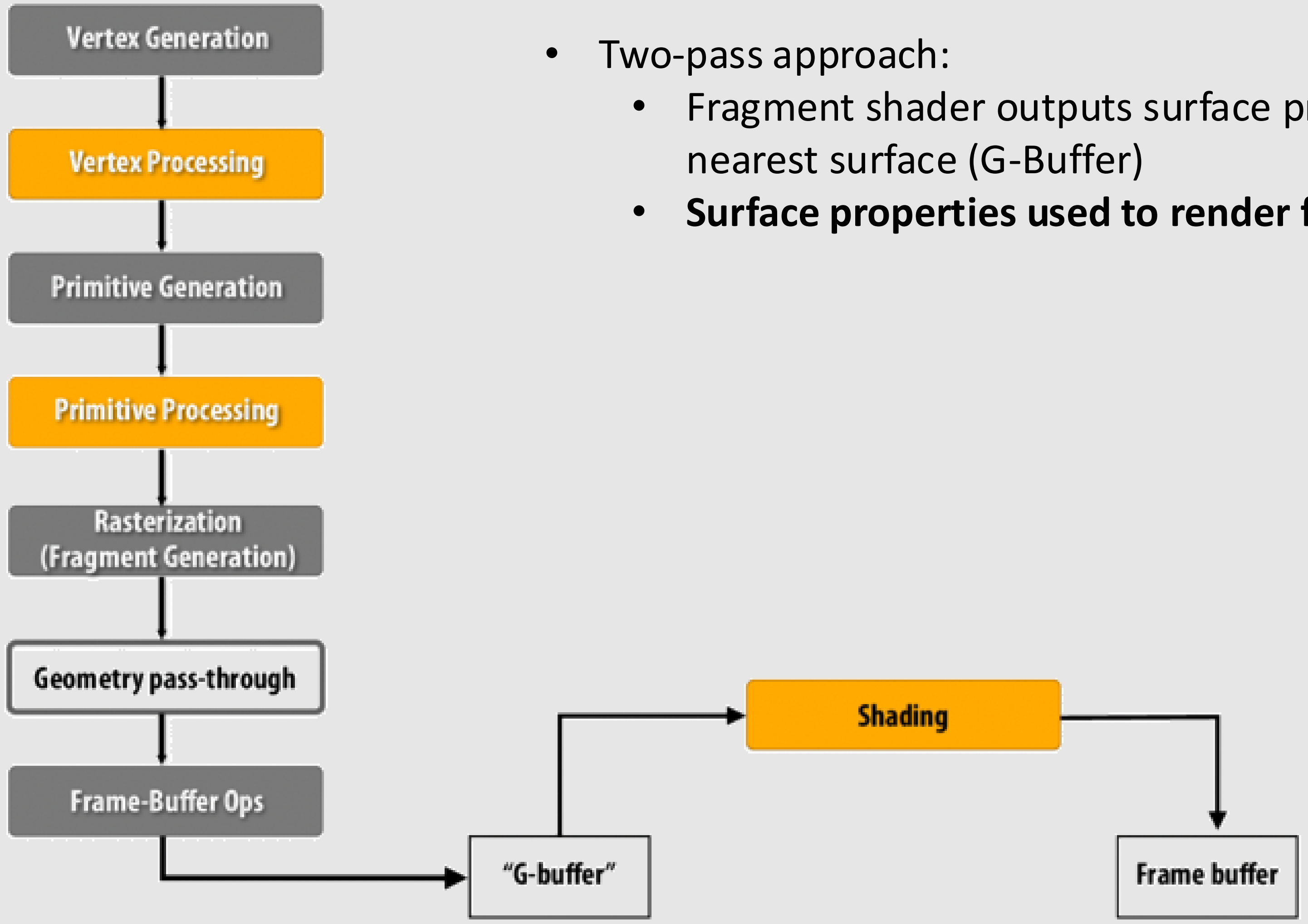
Depth



Normal

Specular

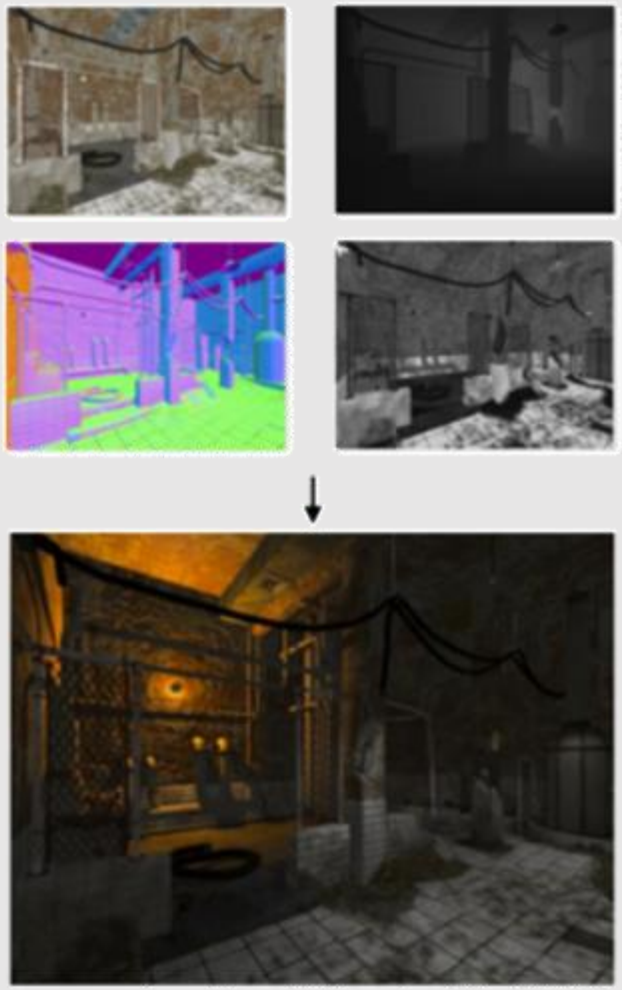
Deferred Shading



- Two-pass approach:
  - Fragment shader outputs surface properties of nearest surface (G-Buffer)
  - **Surface properties used to render final image**

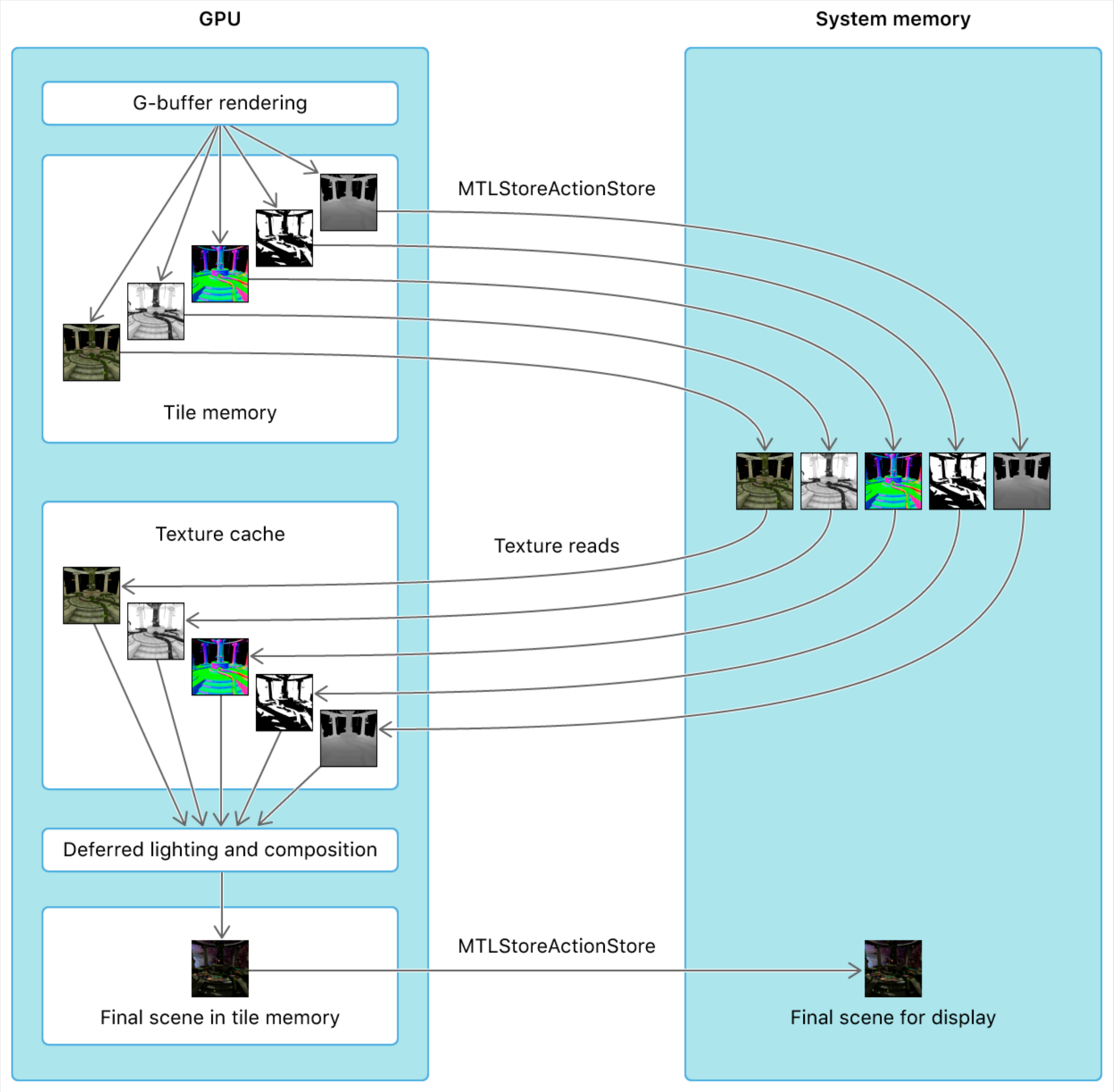
Two-Pass Algorithm

- **Pass 1: Geometry Pass**
  - Render scene geometry using traditional pipeline
  - Write visible geometry information to G-Buffer
- **Pass 2: Shading Pass**
  - For each G-Buffer sample, compute shading
  - Read G-Buffer data for current sample
  - Accumulate contribution of all lights
  - Output final surface color for sample



Leadwerks Engine

Deferred Rendering on Apple Chips



Metal Developer Guide (2020) Apple

- Threads work to compute G-Buffer together
  - Contents too large to remain in cache, spill to memory
- Go to shading once G-Buffer fully computed
  - Requires reads back into cache

- ~~The Graphics Pipeline~~
- ~~Graphics APIs~~
- ~~Deferred Shading~~
- Graphics Architecture

Graphics Processing Unit

- Developed to efficiently scale the 3D Graphics Pipeline
  - Every step was fixed function

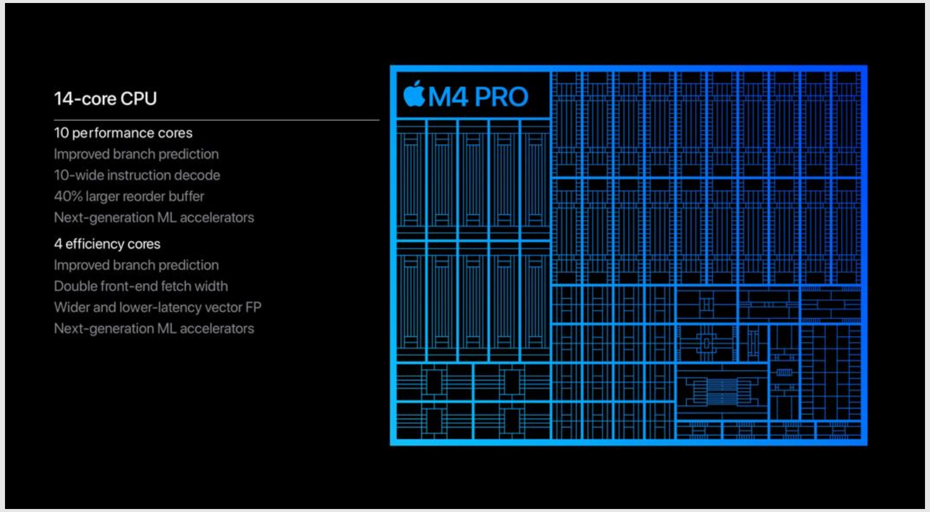
- General Purpose Graphics Processing Unit (GPGPU)
  - Allowed for customizable nodes known as **shaders**
  - What shaders do we have?
      - **Vertex shader**
      - **Geometry shader**
      - **Fragment shader**
    - Other shaders
      - **Compute shader**
      - **Ray tracing shaders**
    - Are frame-buffer operations not shaders?
      - These are toggle-able stages of the pipeline
      - You don't write code for them

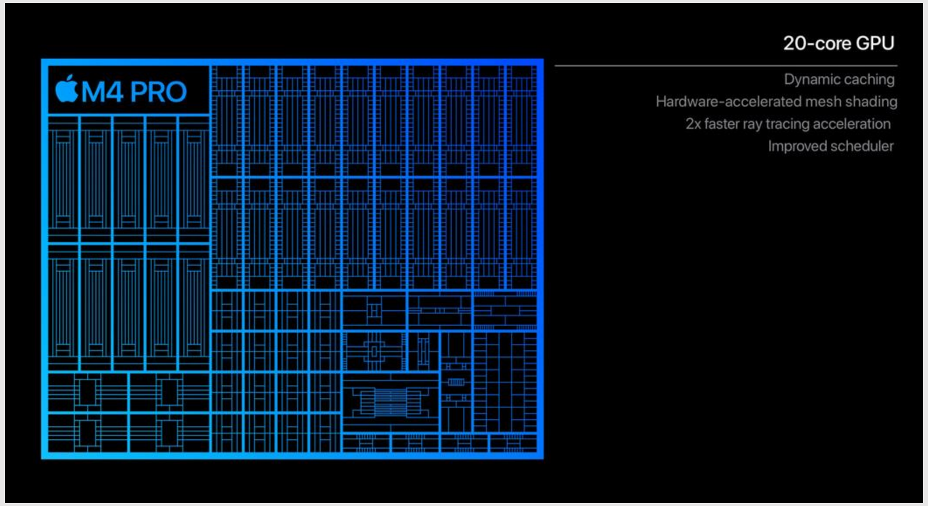
Nvidia Geforce 256 (1999)

Unified GPUs

- **Example:** Apple M4 Pro
  - 10 high performance cores
  - 4 high efficiency (low power) cores
  - 20 core GPU
  - Fixed-function media engine for video encoding/decoding
    - Frees up CPU + GPU during rendering
  - Neural engine for more efficient machine learning tasks
    - Supports most deep learning layers
    - Push for CoreML on Mac applications
  - Hardware accelerated shaders
    - Raytracing & Rasterization

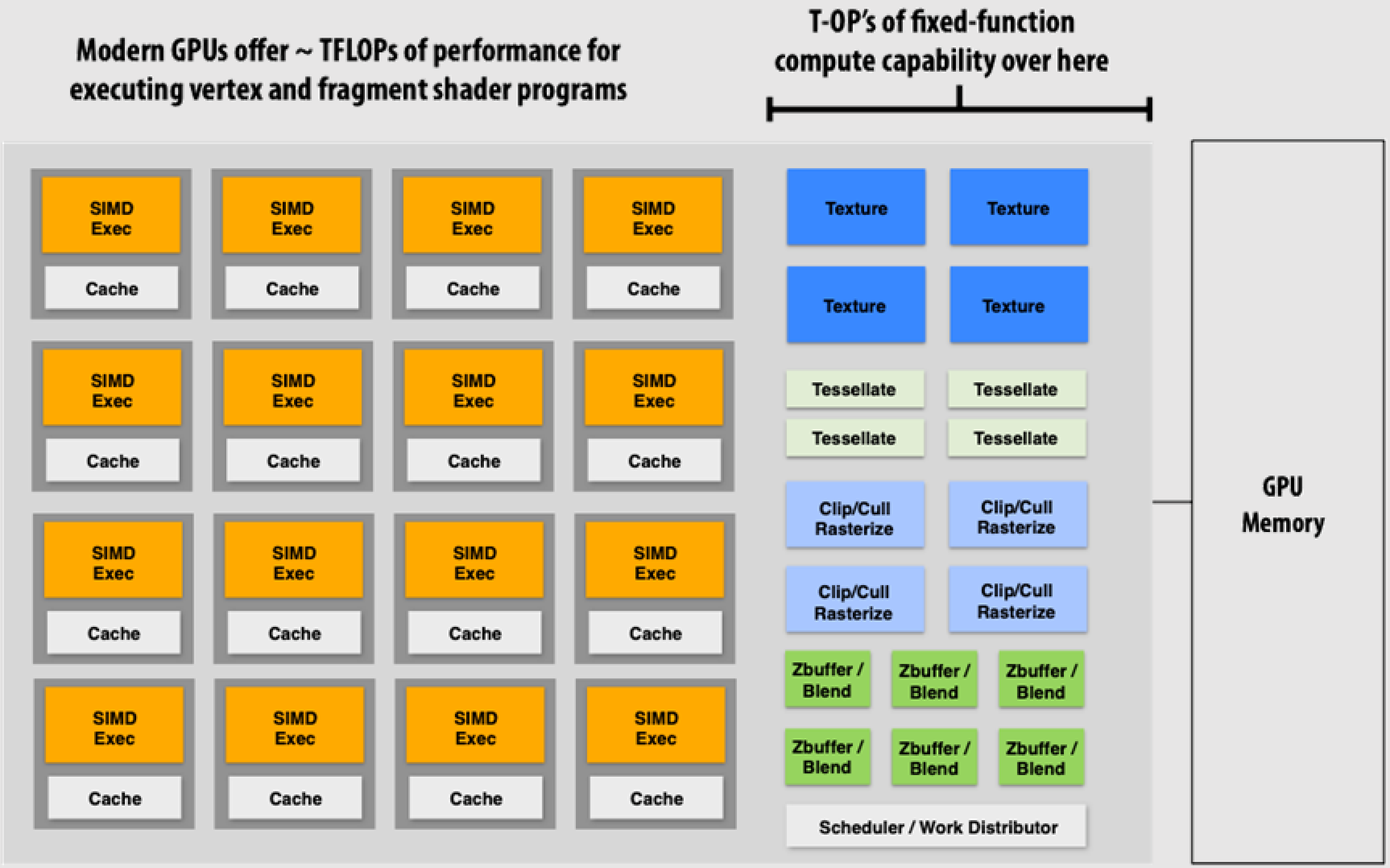
- **Design Philosophy:** run important workloads on the most efficient hardware for the job
  - Fixed-function provides efficiency and speed while freeing up general purpose resources high in demand



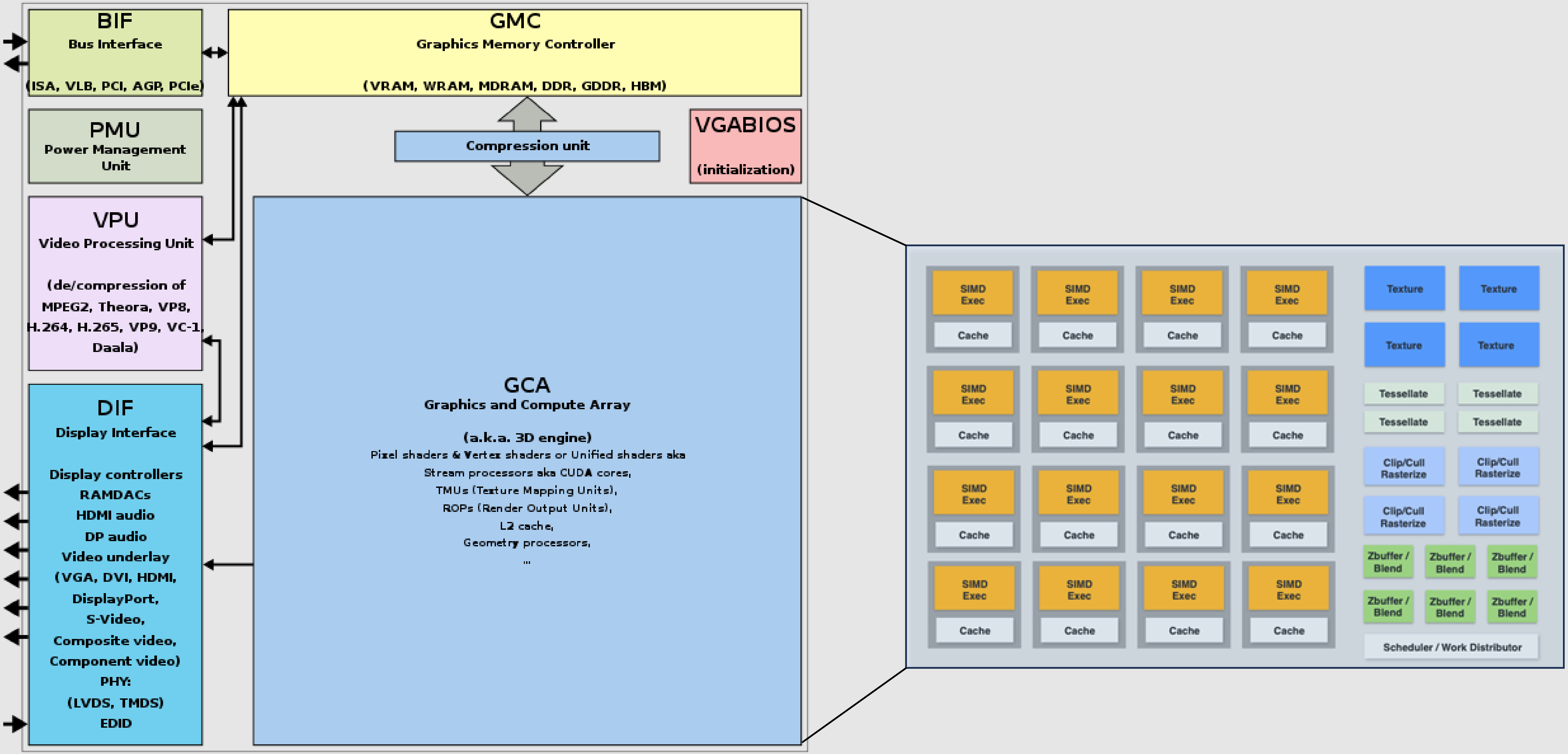


M4 Pro (2024) Apple

GPU Architecture

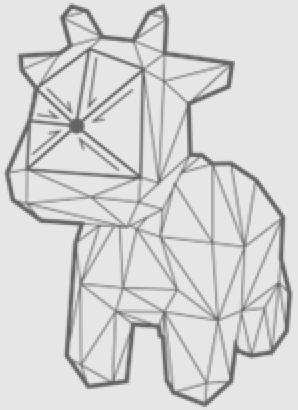


GPU Architecture



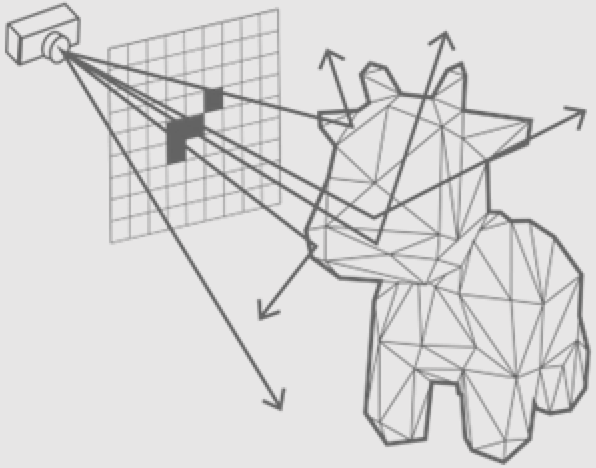
Course Roadmap

[A1: Rasterization]

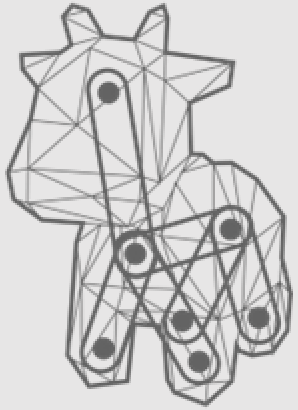


[A2: MeshEdit]

Next Time



[A3: PathTracer]



[A4: Animation]