Chapter 13 - Revit Integration (3ds Max 2010 Architectural Visualization (Advanced to Expert))

Scott Rosenbloom

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Slowly but surely, Revit architecture is becoming the standard for architectural design. A major difference between software like Revit (known as BIM or Building Information Modeling) and AutoCAD is that in traditional CAD you draw with lines, arcs, and circles, whereas in BIM, you create objects such as walls, doors, and windows. With the release of Revit Architecture 2009, the rendering engine mental ray was introduced. Although you can achieve photorealistic results using it in Revit, 3ds Max provides additional advanced tools for modeling, rendering, materials, lighting, etc. In previous versions of Revit, the only way to bring data into 3ds Max was to export it as a DWG and then use the File Link Manager (the File Import command could also be used but would cause a loss of Revit-based 3D data). There were inherent problems using this method, including the inability to bring over material image maps with accurate mapping. Autodesk has introduced the FBX file format as a go-between for its multiple 3D design products. The file format contains much more data than the DWG format, including the new ProMaterials, daylight systems, photometric lighting, and daylight portals.

In this chapter, we will first take a look at what Revit is and why it is known as BIM or Building Information Modeling. Next, we will get into the heart of this chapter, Revit integration with 3ds Max. We will begin by stepping backward by going through the DWG method of working between the two pieces of software. There are still several features of the FBX file format that need further research; therefore, it is worth knowing how the original method works. Next, we will talk about the main point of this chapter: the FBX Method. We will first create a house in Revit and include within it materials and lighting. Then we will bring it into 3ds Max using the FBX file format. At this time, we will step aside and take a look at the files that were created at the moment of import. Within 3ds Max, we will explore how the imported objects are organized and how to modify their shape and materials. Next, we will go through the basics of preparing and rendering the building. As I mentioned earlier, several features still exist that the FBX method lacks that hopefully will be included in future versions. One of these features is the ability to link the imported FBX file back to Revit (as you can with the DWG format). We will go through a work-around that will allow you to use this linking feature with the FBX file format. Learning how to work between Revit and 3ds Max will expand your toolset, giving you a more robust design process.

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