As formerly seen on Suite101.com.
Written by Jon Jonas of Archinature

M-Color

In a past issue I mentioned using http://www.motivesys.com M-Color as a way to do easy full 24 bit (16.7 million color) elevations, site plans, etc. inside of AutoCAD. For those of you who actually use it here's a quick tip for you. We like to create a elevation and then play with its colors, add bitmaps, touch up the sky and give it clouds, etc. To do this we need to get the M-Color file from and MCL format which is proprietary into PhotoShop. While M-Color can save out images as BMP, TIF, GIF, JPG, PDF, PS, etc. the PDF and PS can generate parsing errors when trying to bring them into PhotoShop. The raster conversions can take M-Color a long time and the files generated aren't very clean. You can also copy to clip board and paste the raster image into PhotoShop, but this is still difficult due to memory limits and file sizes. Instead by saving the image out to a PS file and importing it into Corel Photo Paint you can then save the image out as a 600-dpi non-antialiased image of pretty good quality. The colors sift as you switch from a CMYK to an RGB format, but other than that, it's the best method we've found for converting the data. For those of you who still haven't looked at the program, don't let this set you back. We use it on about 50% of our projects now for both site design and elevation color studies and find both the clients and the city appreciate the drawings. It's a simple program to use and fairly inexpensive for what it does. I can generate in about 4 to 8 hours a complete set of colored elevations compared with how long it takes to generate a complete 3D rendering.

Inside AutoCAD

If you subscribe to the IAC email AutoCAD tips, you may have noticed that Monday's tip was telling you how to change the color of an object in AutoCAD without changing it's layer. Please, don't do this. It makes your drawing hard to edit, and annoys your drafters! Always try whenever possible to make all your settings global - Dimension Scale, Linetype Scale, Object Colors, Object Linetypes, Thickness, Elevation, etc. When you have to change something in your drawing it is always much easier to change it once and have everything on that layer, dim style, etc. be effected, rather than have to individually change every object.

That having been said here's a common problem. When you change the dimension scale your text doesn't change its size. The ticks, spacings, and everything else enlarges or shinks but not the text. The problem here is that some people in the STYLE command set the height of text from 0" to a specific number. If you do this it overrides the dim scale and the text won't change height. Switch the STYLE height back to 0" and the dims will be fixed. Your existing Text and Mtext will not change size to zero.

Object Properties Toolbar

In keeping with the theme of "don't change individual object settings", I find I dislike having on my screen a bunch of extra pulldowns that I don't need. I like having the Object Properties Toolbar working, but only to view which layer is current, and for changing which layers are on and off, frozen and thawed, etc. I don't need the Control Linetype, Control Lineweight, Control Color and Control Plotstyle. Since even at a high resolution on a large monitor these take up far too much space I prefer to simply remove them. Unfortunately you can't remove them by right clicking on the toolbar, picking Customize, and picking the button Customize. It doesn't work. You can't move them, re-arrange them, add them or subract them from a toolbar. It would appear as it you were stuck with all or nothing. Instead make a backup of your ACAD.MNS file and open in WordPad or NotePad the file ACAD.MNS from ACAD 2000's support directorty and search for Object Properties (about 1/5th of the way down) you'll find the following:

```
**TB_OBJECT_PROPERTIES
ID_TbObjectP   [_Toolbar("Object Properties", _Top, _Show,
2, 1, 1)]
               [_Control(_Layer)]
               [--]
               [_Control(_Color)]
               [--]
               [_Control(_Linetype)]
               [--]
               [_Control(_Lineweight)]
               [--]
               [_Control(_PlotStyle)]
```

Now create your own new toolbar that looks like this:

```
**TB_JON_OBJECT_PROPERTIES
ID_TbObjectP   [_Toolbar("Object Properties", _Top, _Show,
2, 1, 1)]
               [_Control(_Layer)]
```

Now that that's done save a your new ACAD.MNS file and restart AutoCAD. You'll find upon right clicking on the toolbars 2 Object Property Toolbars listed. You can run either one, or both even - whichever you prefer. As a side note the "`[--]`" creates a vertical bar on the toolbar.