

ART Quick Start Guide

VisualCAD/CAM 2025

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MecSoft Corporation

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Table of Contents

Quick Start	3
Resource Guide	6
About this Guide	7
1 Useful Tips.....	7
2 About the ART Module.....	7
3 Using this Guide.....	8
4 Watch the Video!.....	9
Getting Ready	10
1 Running VisualCAD/CAM.....	10
2 About the VisualCAD Display.....	10
3 Launching the ART Module.....	11
4 Loading the Part Model.....	12
5 Strategy.....	14
6 Basic Steps.....	14
Creating ART Operations	16
1 Create Project Workspace.....	16
2 Create Sweep Operation.....	18
3 Create Puff Operation.....	23
4 Create 3D Relief Operation.....	31
Export as Meshes to CAD	39
More Resources	41
Index	42

Quick Start



ART Module 2025

[Prefer Printed Documentation? Click Here!](#)

[What's New](#) | [Quick Start Play List](#)

[Quick Start Guides](#) for each [VisualCAD/CAM](#) module are available in both PDF and Video format. Refer to the following information to access these resources:



How to Access the Quick Start Guide Documents

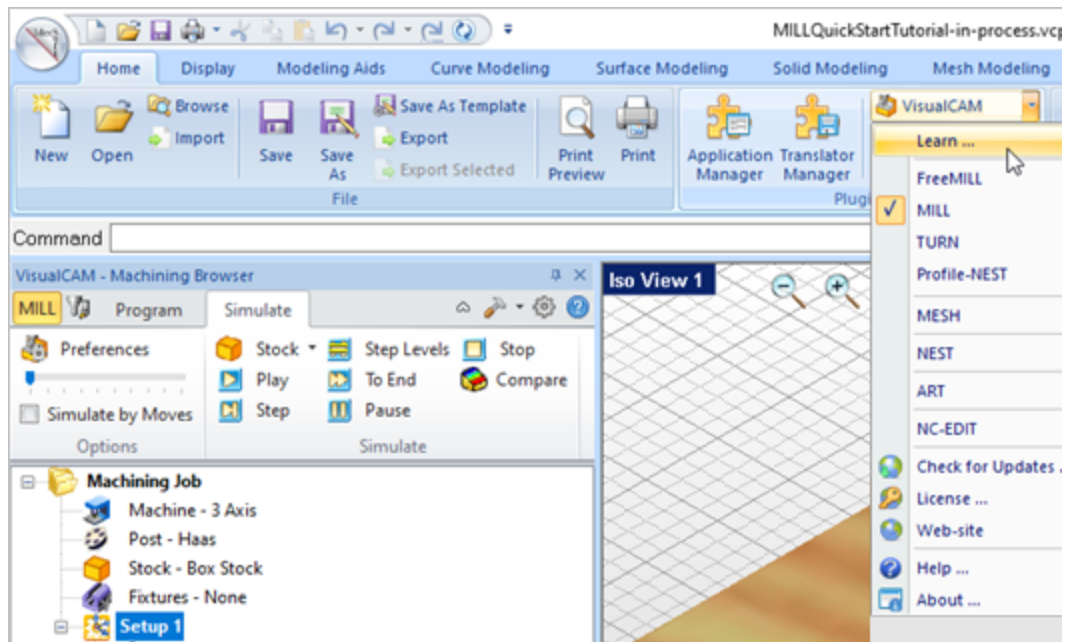
To help you quickly get started in working with each module, select one of the Help buttons located on the [VisualCAD/CAM Learning Resources](#) dialog.

You will find:

- Quick Start Guides
- What's New documents
- Online Help links

The [Quick Start Guides](#) will help you step through an example tutorial which will illustrate how to use the module. To access the [Learning Resources](#) dialog:

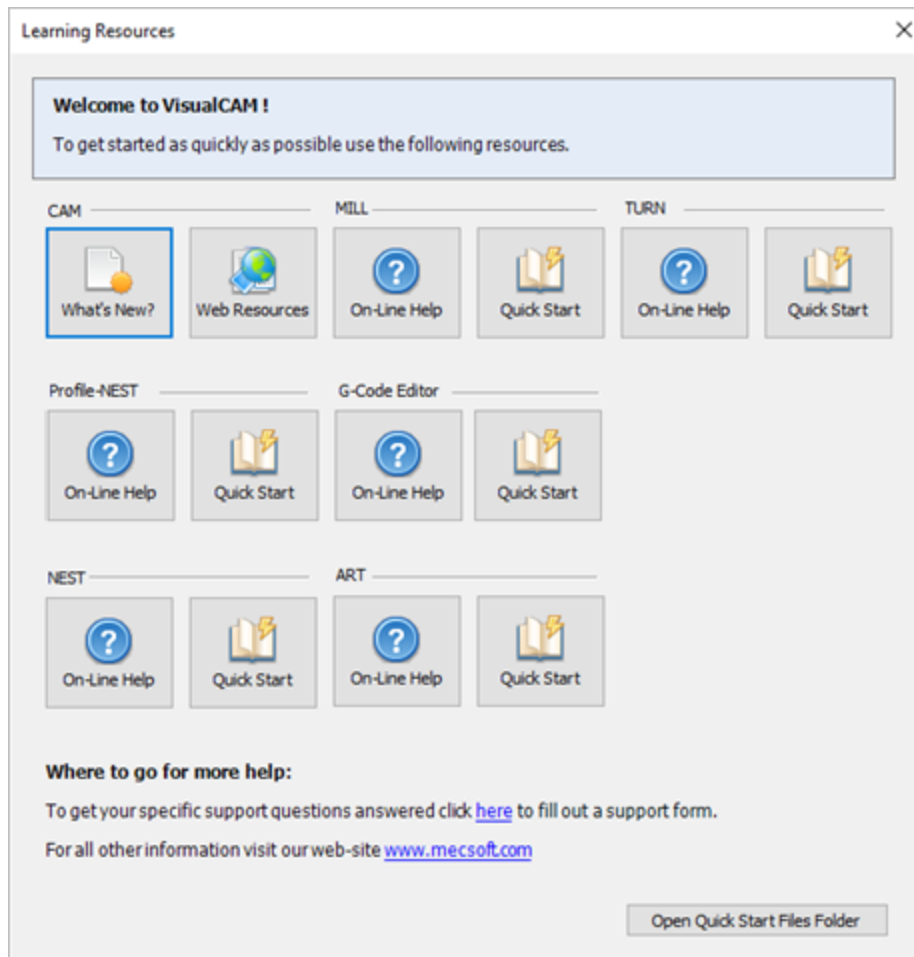
1. From the [VisualCAD Home Ribbon Bar](#), drop down the Main menu and select [Learn ...](#)



To access the Learning Resources dialog in VisualCAM

2. Select a document from the [Learning Resources](#) dialog to get started using the module of your choice.

 You can also select the [Open Quick Start Files Folder](#) button located at the bottom of the dialog to open the [Quick Start](#) folder where the source files (start and completed versions) are located.



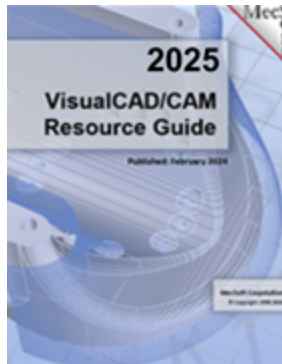
Learning Resources Dialog

Resource Guide

Download this PDF Guide for a list of the available [VisualCAD/CAM Resources](#).



2025 VisualCAD/CAM Resource Guide



The 2025 VisualCAD/CAM Resource Guide!

18 Pages

Lists PDF downloads and Online resources including [Quick Start Guides](#), [Reference Guides](#), [Exercise Guides](#), [Tutorials](#) and [More](#).

[Prefer Printed Documentation? Click Here!](#)

[What's New](#) | [Quick Start Play List](#)

About this Guide

3.1 Useful Tips

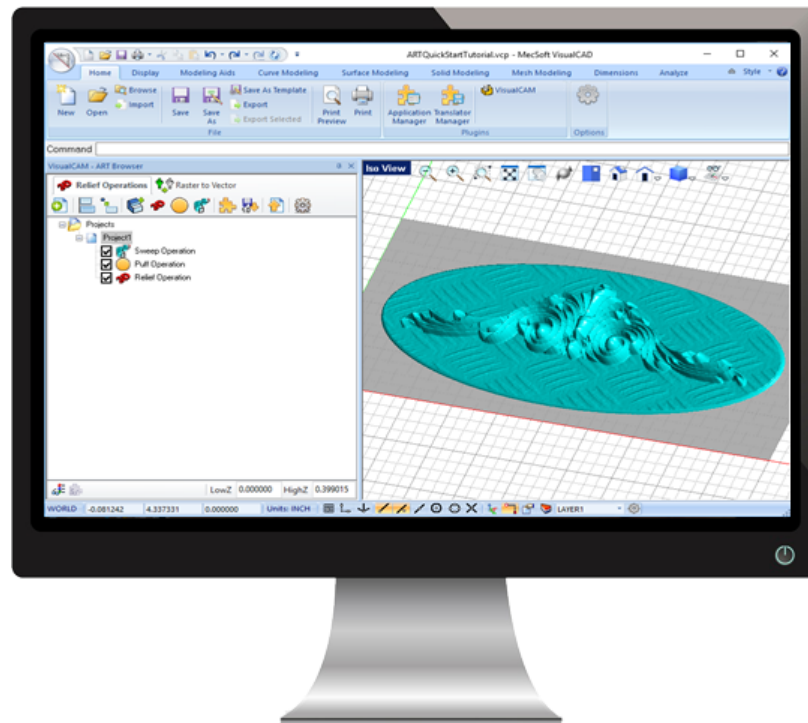
Here are some useful tips that will help you use this guide effectively.

1. Copy the tutorial part files in a location other than the installation folder to make sure you have read/write privileges to the files.
2. Once you start working with the tutorial file, save your work periodically!
3. Don't stress out too much if you are having trouble with the tutorial. Call us or send us email and we can help you out.
4. Most of all have fun!

3.2 About the ART Module

VisualCAM's ART module ([VisualART](#)) is used to convert artwork into geometry suitable for machining or 3D printing. To accomplish this, the user utilizes modeling techniques unique to the ART module that are found within the "[Relief Operations](#)" tabbed browser window or the "[Raster to Vector](#)" tabbed browser window. These modeling operations augment the traditional modeling methods available in [VisualCAD](#). A simple and well thought out user interface makes this system one of the most intuitive and easy to use ART packages in the market.

ART's capabilities enable you to create 3D reliefs as well as wireframe geometry from picture files. You can work with bitmap images such as [.bmp](#), [.jpg](#), and [.gif](#) files as well as native CAD geometry. Then you can use [VisualART](#) with its selection of tools, variety of bitmaps and operations to create different shapes.



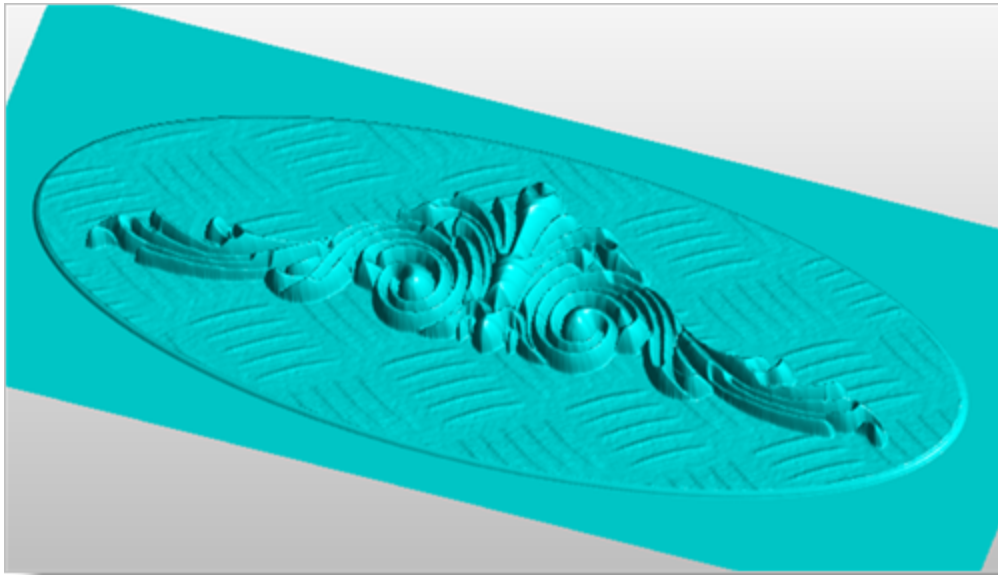
The ART Module Quick Started Guide

3.3 Using this Guide

If you already installed [VisualCAD/CAM](#) successfully on your computer and are now looking at the blank screen of [VisualCAD](#) and wondering what to do next, this is the guide for you. This guide will explain how to get started in using [VisualART](#) to program a simple part through an example.

This guide will illustrate creating relief operations using [2D](#) curves using the various functions available in the [ART](#) module. We will start with [2D](#) curves and end up with a [3D](#) mesh geometry shown in the preceding page that is suitable for being manufactured. The focus of this tutorial is to create 3D shapes that would be difficult to model using traditional [CAD](#) modeling methods.

This guide has two associated [VisualCAD](#) files that you can find located in the [QuickStart](#) folder under the installation folder of this guide. The first file is a completed file that contains all of the completed relief operations and represents the file that you should end up with after working through the tutorial. The other file is a starter file that contains only the geometry. Use the completed file as a reference. Copy the starter file and use this file to begin each tutorial.



ARTQuickStartTutorial_Completed.vcp

3.4 Watch the Video!

Want to see a video demonstration of this quick start guide? Just click on the play list below and watch the ART Quick Start Guide video.

[Here is a link to the complete 2023 Video Play List](#)

Getting Ready

4.1 Running VisualCAD/CAM

Locate the [VisualCAD/CAM 2023](#) shortcut on your desktop and double click to launch the application.

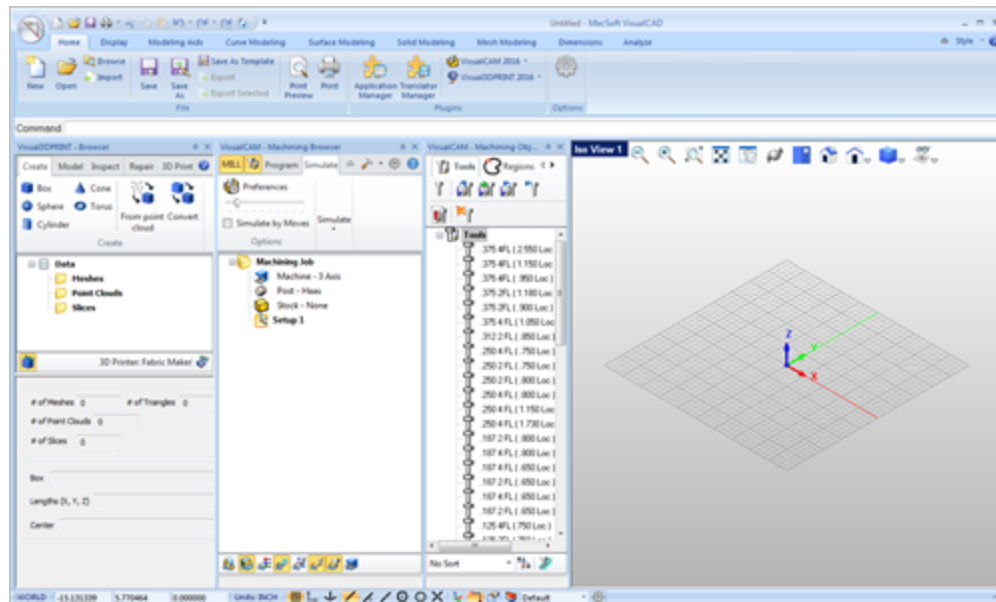
Alternatively you can also click on the Windows [Start](#) button and select [All Programs](#). Go to the program group containing [VisualCAD/CAM 2023](#). (The name of this program group will usually be called [VisualCAD/CAM 2023](#), unless you specified otherwise during setup.)

Once you locate the program group, select it and then select [VisualCAD/CAM 2023](#) to launch the application.

If the installation was successful, upon launching of [VisualCAD/CAM 2023](#) you should observe a menu entry called [VisualCAM 2023](#) on the [Home Ribbon Bar](#) menu of [VisualCAD](#).

4.2 About the VisualCAD Display

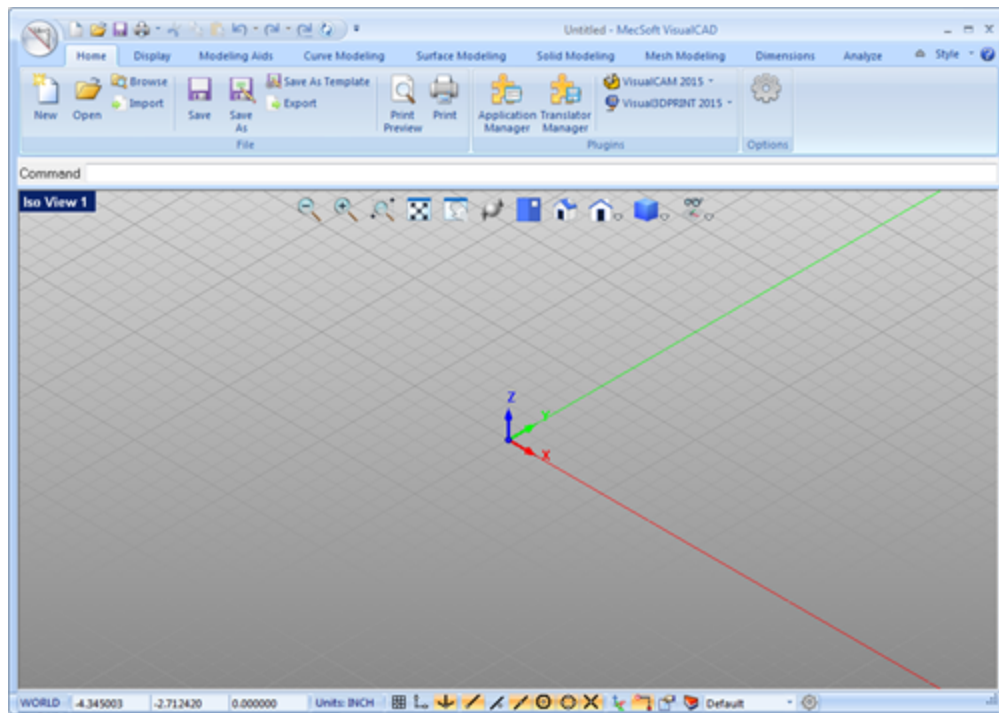
Before we begin, let's talk a bit about the [VisualCAD](#) display. When you run [VisualCAD](#) for the very first time, your screen may look this.



These windows on the left belong to plug-in modules that are currently loaded. For now, let's close all of them.



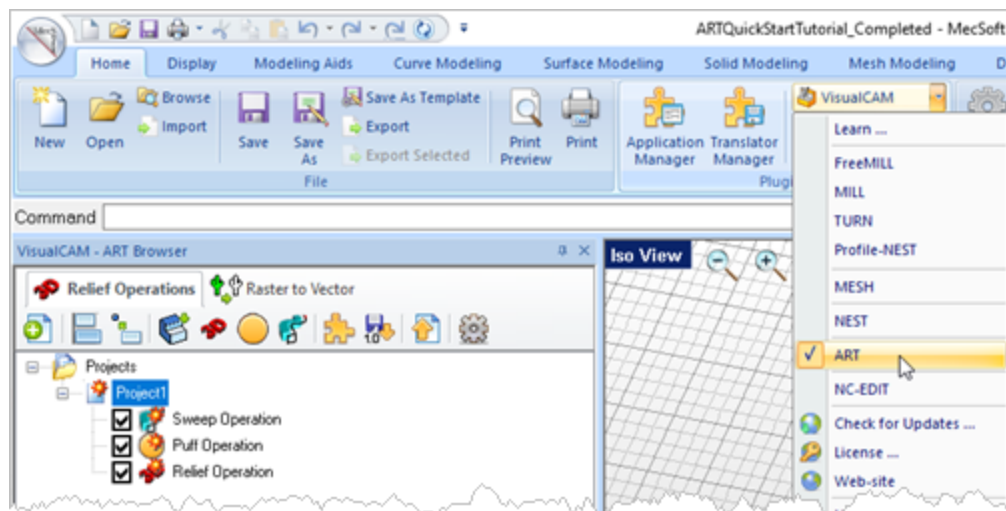
With all plug-in modules closed your screen will look like this:



4.3 Launching the ART Module

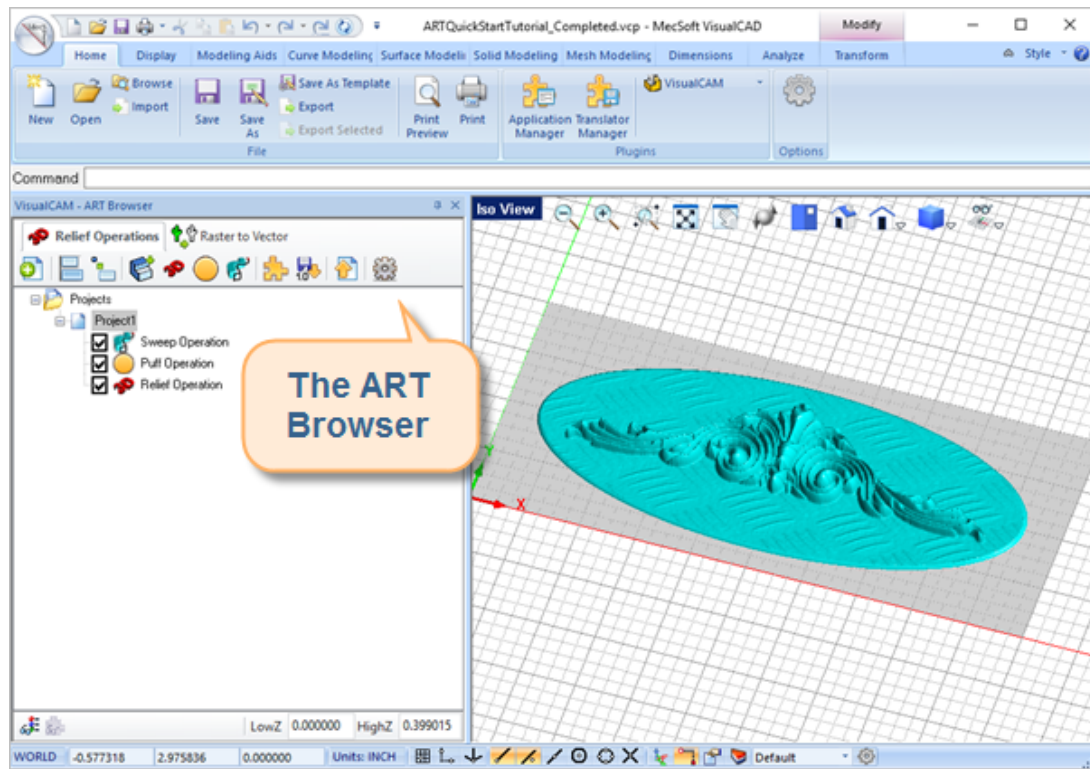
To launch the [ART](#) model:

1. Drop down the [VisualCAM 2023 Main Menu](#).
2. Select [ART](#).



You will see one docking dialog called the [VisualCAM –ART Browser](#).

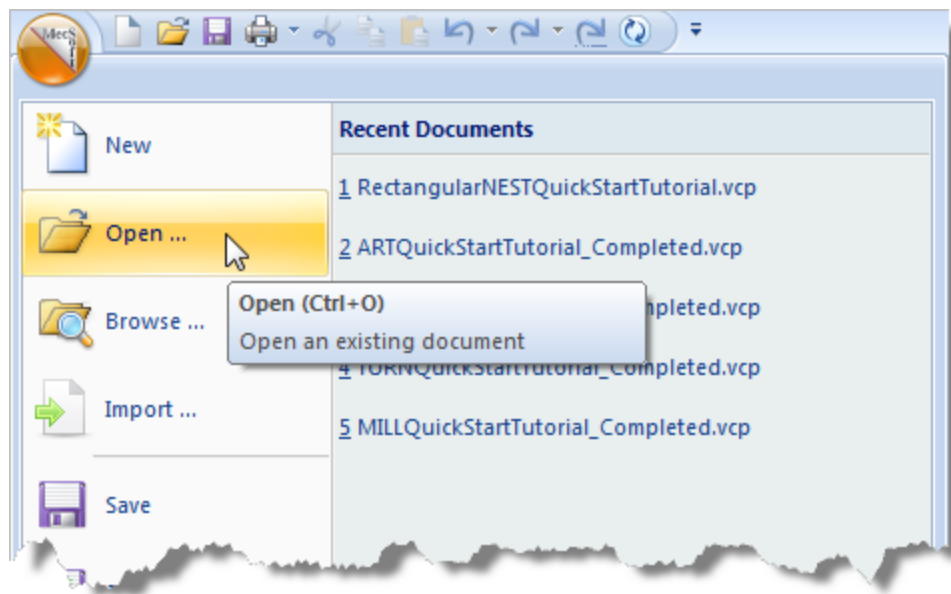
The [ART Browser](#) contains two tabs named [3D Relief Operations](#) and the [Raster to Vector](#).



4.4 Loading the Part Model

“Part” refers to the geometry that represents the final manufactured product. You can create parts within [VisualCAD](#) or import geometry created in another [CAD](#) system. Bitmaps such as [.bmp](#), [.jpg](#), and [.gif](#) files can be loaded when using [3D Relief](#) or [Raster to Vector](#) operations.

1. From the [VisualCAD](#) main menu, pick [Open](#)



2. From the [Open](#) dialog box, select the [ARTQuickStartTutorial.vcp](#) file from the [C:\ProgramData\MecSoft Corporation\VisualCAM 2023\QuickStart\](#) folder. As mentioned before, it is advisable to make a copy of this part at a suitable alternative folder so that you have write privileges to modify the part.

! By default, the [ProgramData](#) folder is "hidden" from view. Here are the steps to Show hidden files and folders:

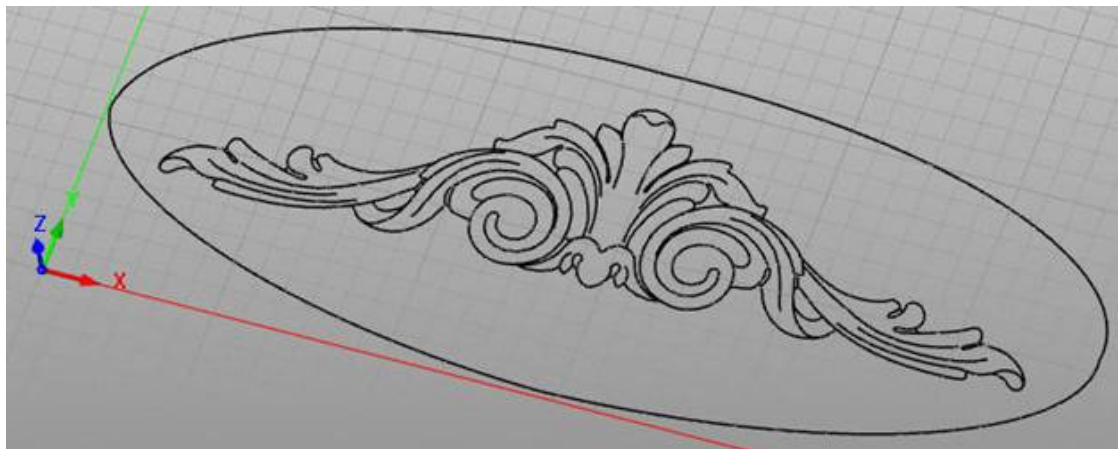
1. For [Windows 8](#) users: Go to [Control Panel > Appearance and Personalization > Folder Options](#).
For [Windows 10](#) users: Go to [Control Panel > Appearance and Personalization > File Explorer Options](#).
2. Select [View](#) tab and under advanced settings select [Show Hidden files and folders](#), clear the check boxes for:
 - [Hide extensions for known file types](#)
 - [Hide protected operating system files \(Recommended\)](#)

Advanced settings:

- ☒ Always show menus
- ☒ Display file icon on thumbnails
- ☒ Display file size information in folder tips
- ☒ Display simple folder view in Navigation pane
- ☐ Display the full path in the title bar (Classic folders only)
-  Hidden files and folders
 - ☐ Do not show hidden files and folders
 - ☒ Show hidden files and folders
- ☐ Hide extensions for known file types
- ☐ Hide protected operating system files (Recommended)
- ☐ Launch folder windows in a separate process
- ☒ Remember each folder's view settings

3. Click [Apply](#) and [OK](#).

The part appears as shown below.



ARTQuickStartTutorial.vcp

4.5 Strategy

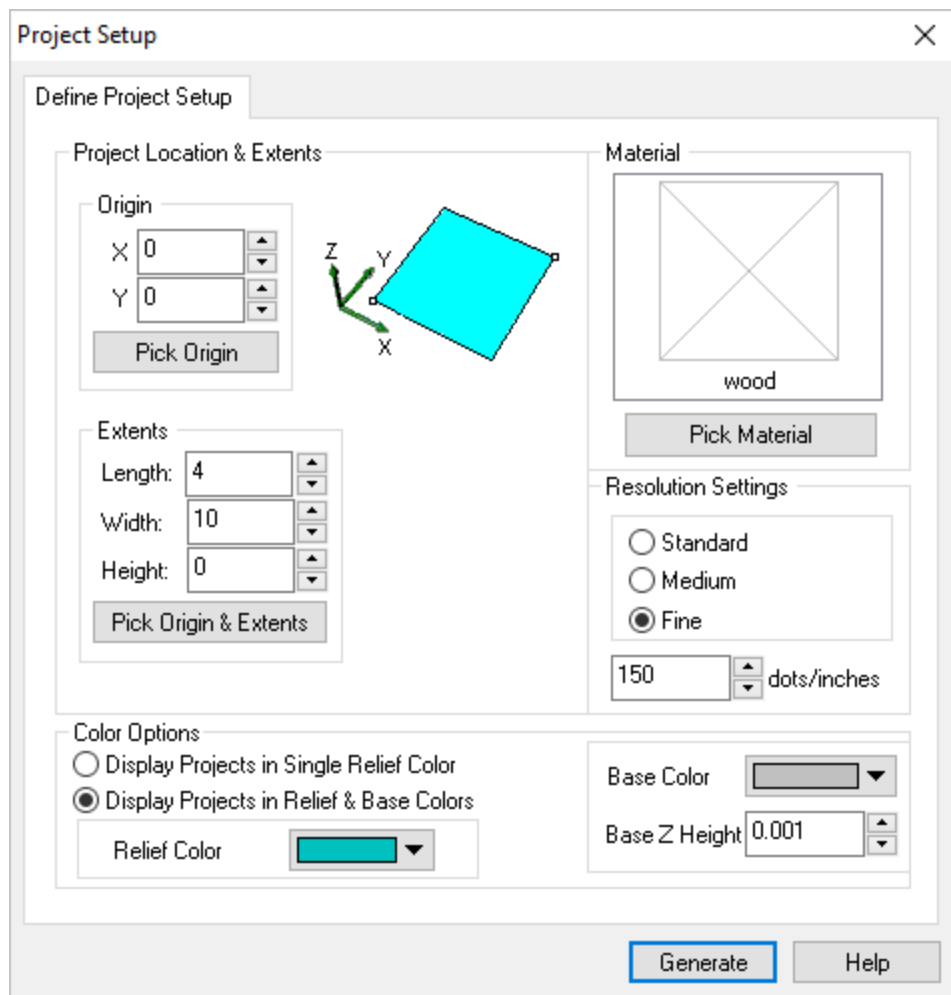
We will restrict the project extents to be [10 inches x 4 inches](#). This example will include three operations; [Sweep](#), [Puff](#) and [3D Relief](#). We will go through each of these three relief operations to create [3D](#) shapes so that the user has a better understanding of how the [ART](#) module works.

4.6 Basic Steps

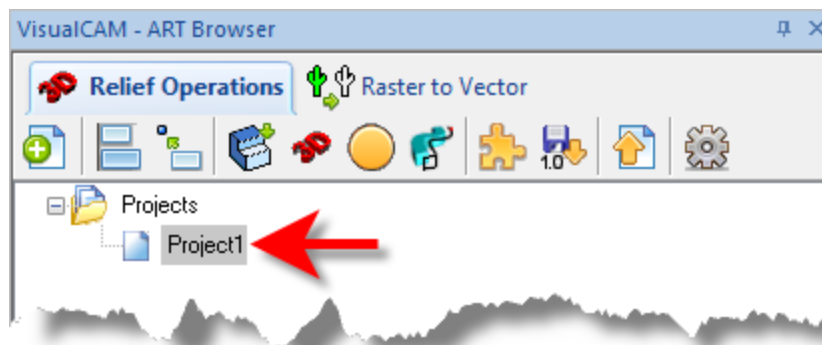
The following steps will be followed in creating relief shapes. Some of these steps will have to be performed just once and others may have to be repeated to create the reliefs.

1. First we will create the [Project Workspace](#).
2. Then we will use the [Create Sweep](#) operation.
3. And after that we will use the [Create Puffed](#) operation.

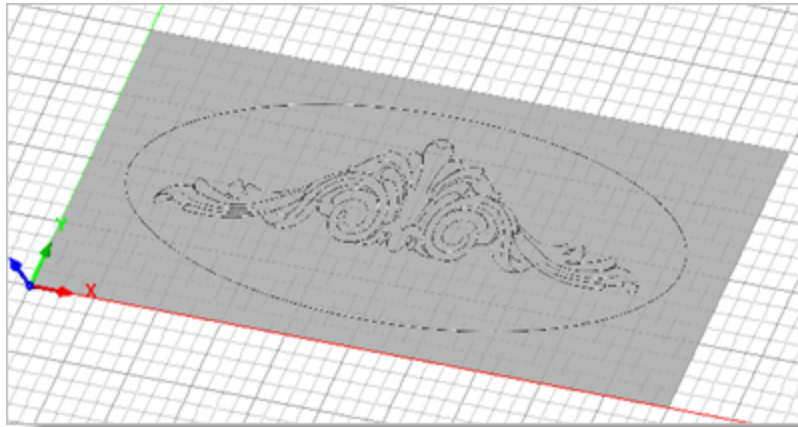
4. Then the [Create 3D Relief](#) operation.
5. Finally we will [Export](#) the part as [Meshes](#) to use as CAD geometry.



3. Click [Generate](#). The project workspace icon now appears under the [Projects](#) folder in the browser area. The project workspace name defaults to "Project1" but can be renamed by right clicking on "Project1" and selecting [Rename](#) from the list.



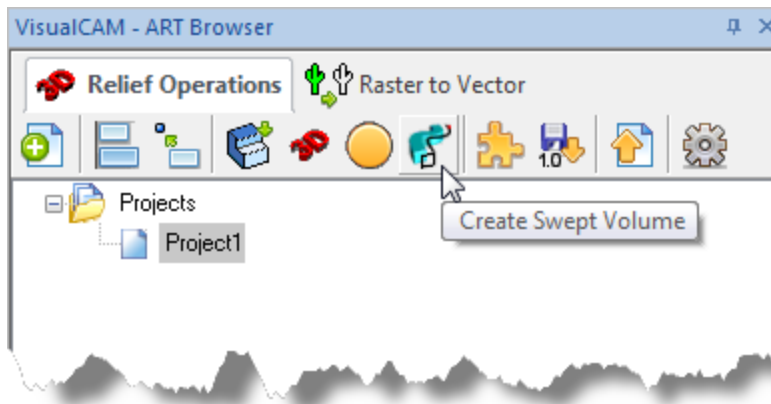
The project workspace will also be displayed in the graphics screen as shown below.



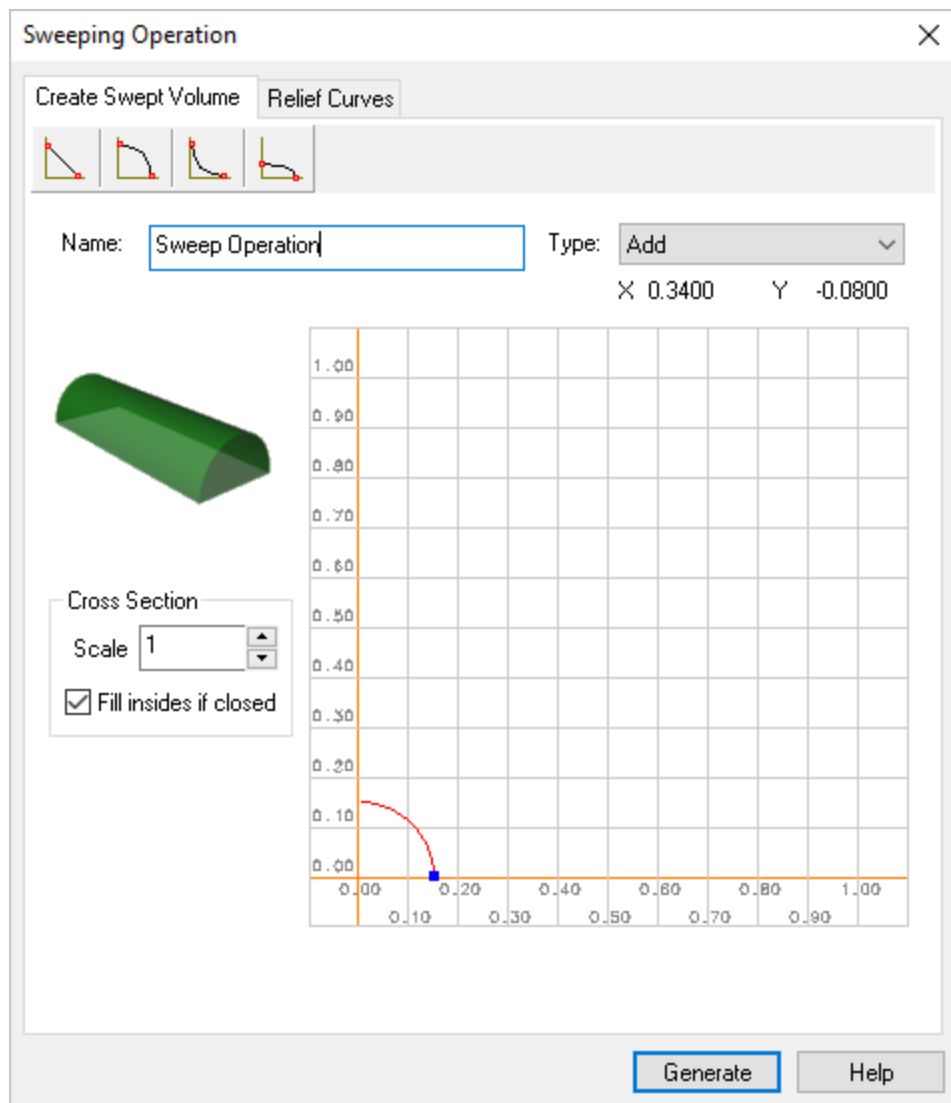
5.2 Create Sweep Operation

The [Create Sweep Operation](#) allows you to sweep a cross-section shape along the selected rail curve to generate a swept volume. The cross section shapes are selected from a predefined set. The rail curves can be any 2D curve, such as straight lines, arcs, ellipses and [NURBS](#) curves modeled in [CAD](#). This is a very useful function typically used to create borders, highlights and even 3D text shapes.

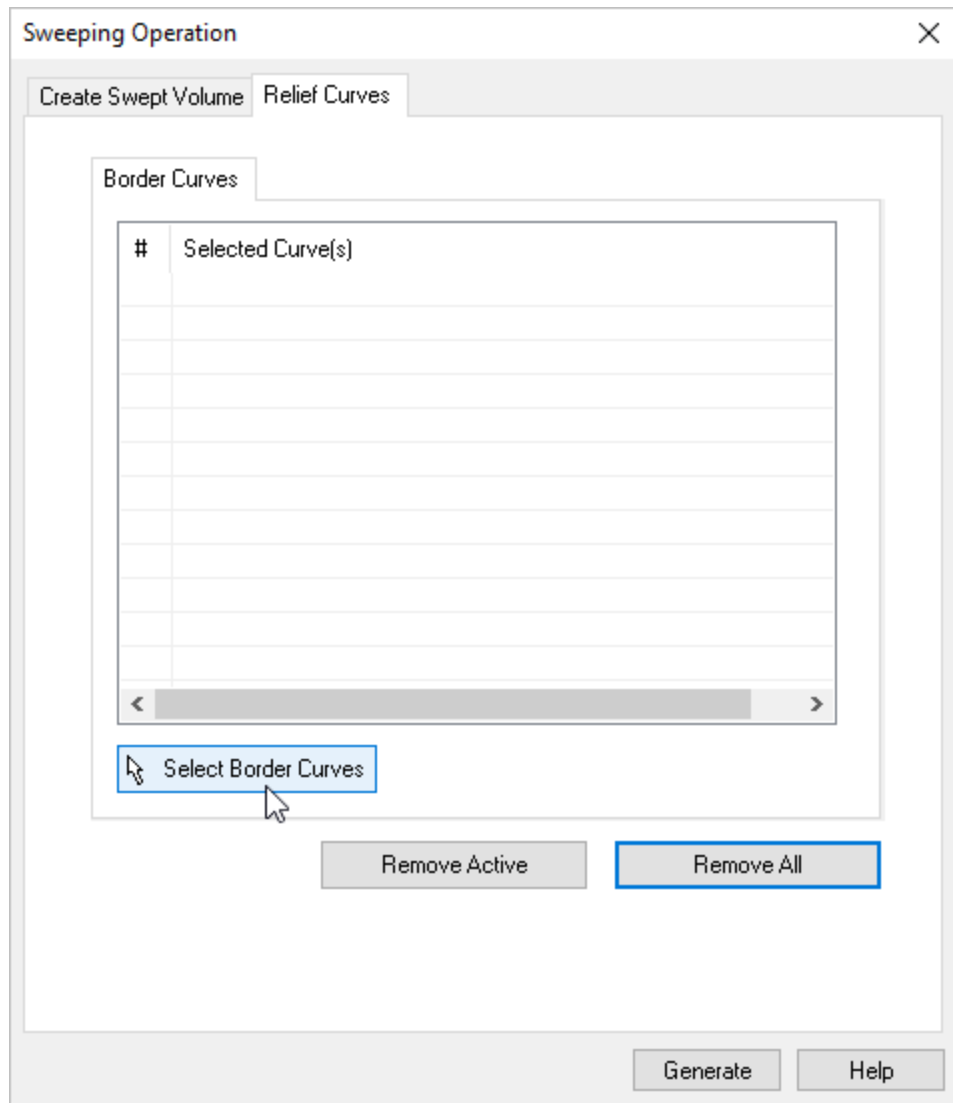
1. Select the [Create Swept Volume](#) icon from the [3D Relief Operations](#) toolbar to display the dialog.



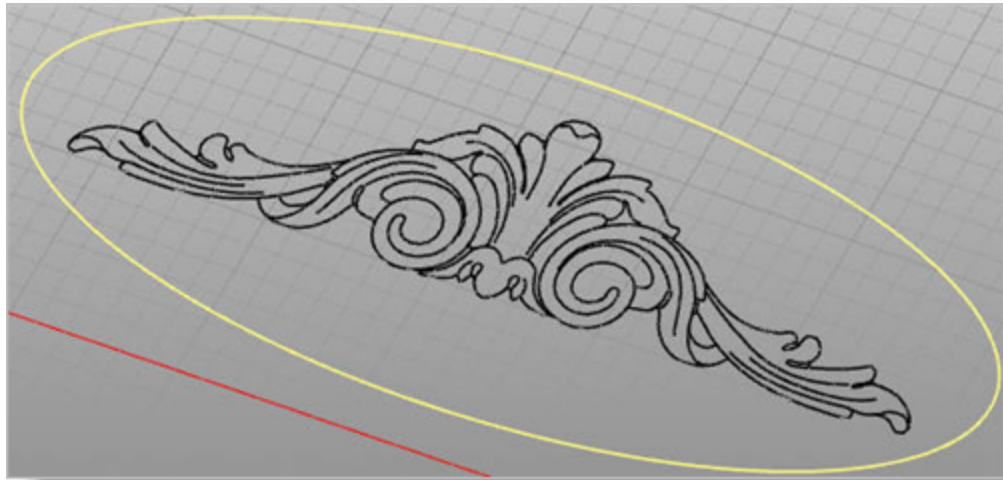
2. Under the [Create Swept Volume](#) tab select the cross section shape to be [Convex Arc](#) from the toolbar at the top. Refer to the dialog shown below.
3. Set the [Type](#) to [Add](#) and under [Cross Section](#) set the [Scale](#) to [1](#).
4. Then we'll set the X coordinate for arc radius by dragging the point on the arc in the [Sweep](#) operation dialog to approximately [0.15](#) as shown.
5. Also, check the box for [Fill insides if closed](#).



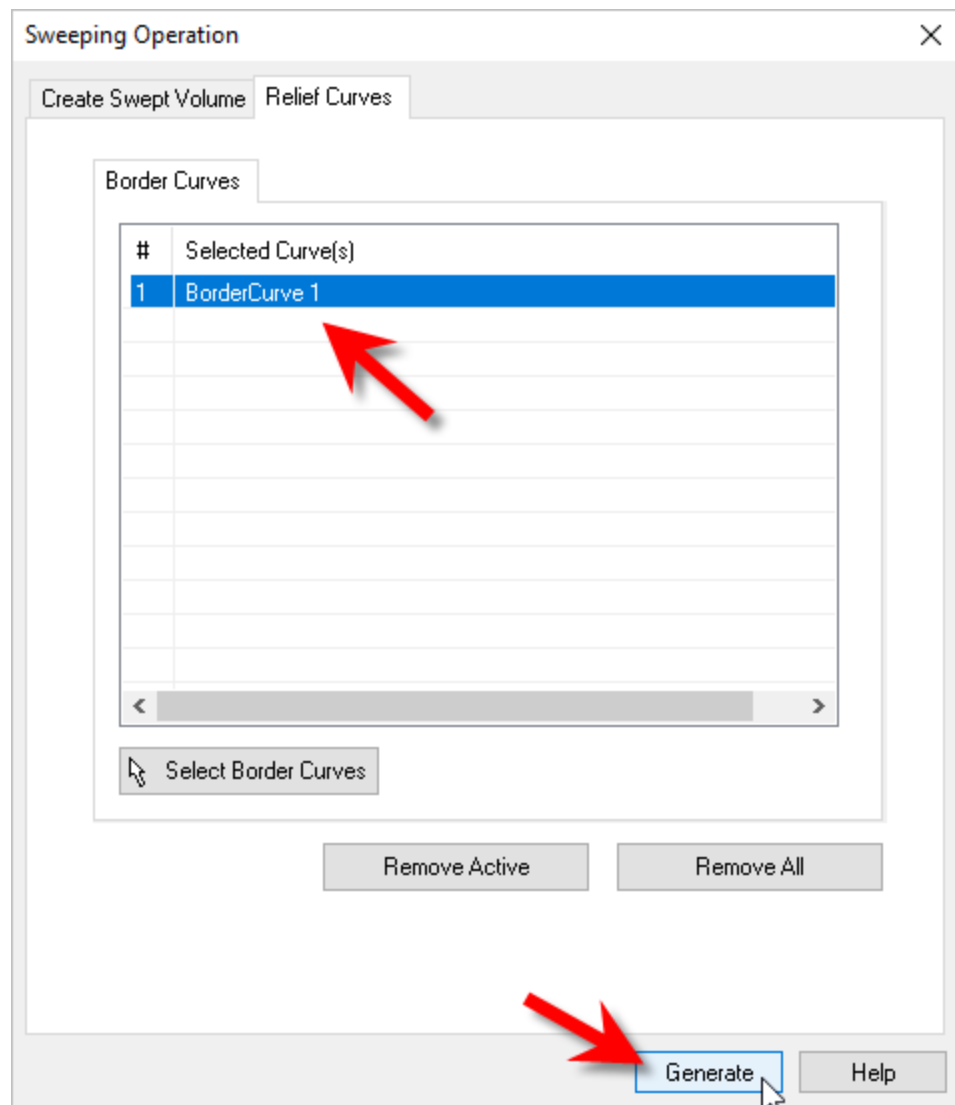
- Now select the [Relief Curves](#) tab and then pick the [Select Border Curves](#) button. The dialog will minimize to allow you to select geometry.



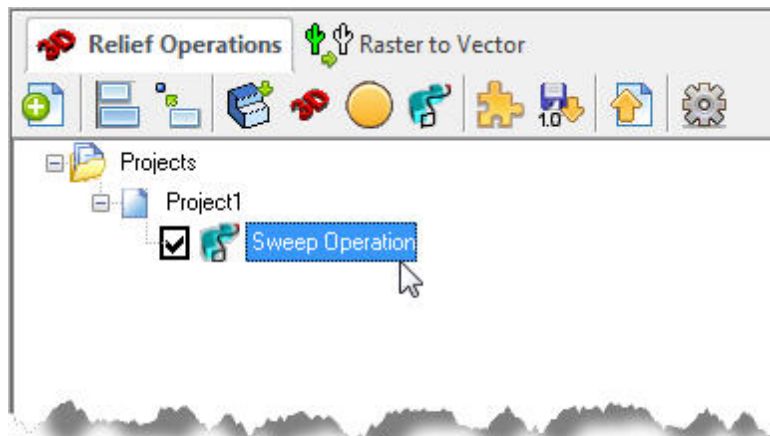
7. Select the outer ellipse and then **right-click** or press **Enter**. The dialog will reappear and display the name of the curve we just selected in the list box.



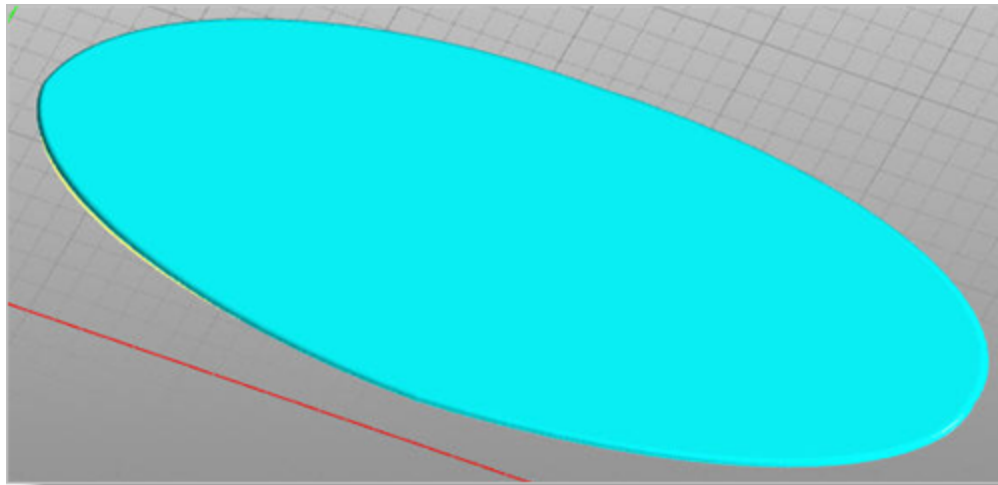
8. Now we pick [Generate](#).



9. A [Sweep Operation](#) icon is added to the [ART Browser](#) project tree as shown.



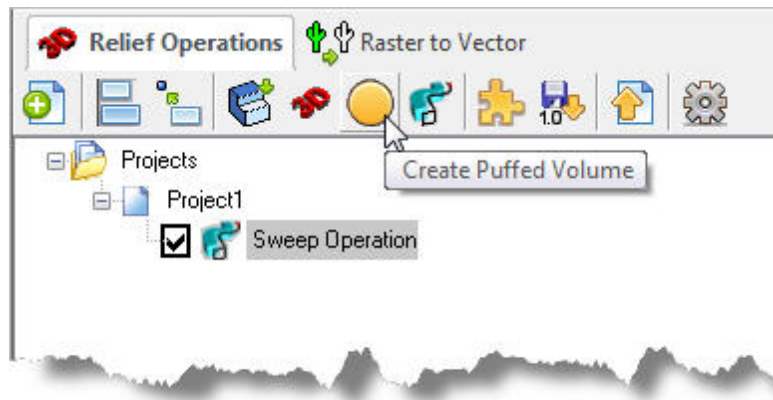
10. The result of the [Sweep Operation](#) will also be displayed in the graphics window.



5.3 Create Puff Operation

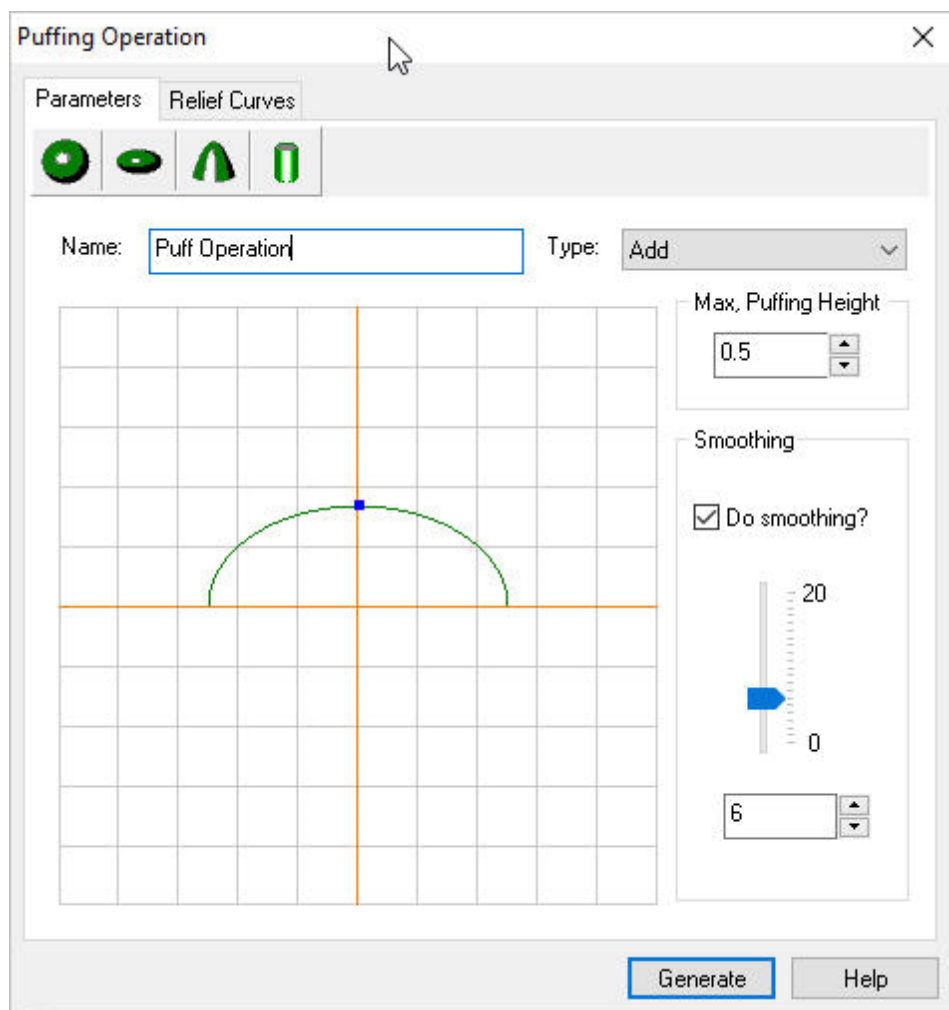
The [Create Puff Operation](#) allows you to select one or more border curves and puff up the insides using a shape function that can be selected from a predefined list. The shape of the puff can further be affected by selecting detail curves inside the border curves. This will be illustrated below.

1. Select the [Sweep](#) operation we just created. Then, select the [Create Puffed Volume](#) icon from the 3D [Relief Operations](#) toolbar to display the dialog.

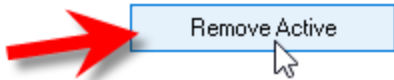


2. The **Puffing Operation** dialog will pop up. Then, select the **Sphere** icon from the toolbar.
3. Now set the **Type** to **Add** and the **Max. Puffing Height** to **0.5**.
4. Select the point on the arc to modify the puff cross-section
5. Under **Smoothing**, make sure the box is checked and then set the smoothing scale to **6**. You can use the slider, the up/down arrows or simply enter the value.

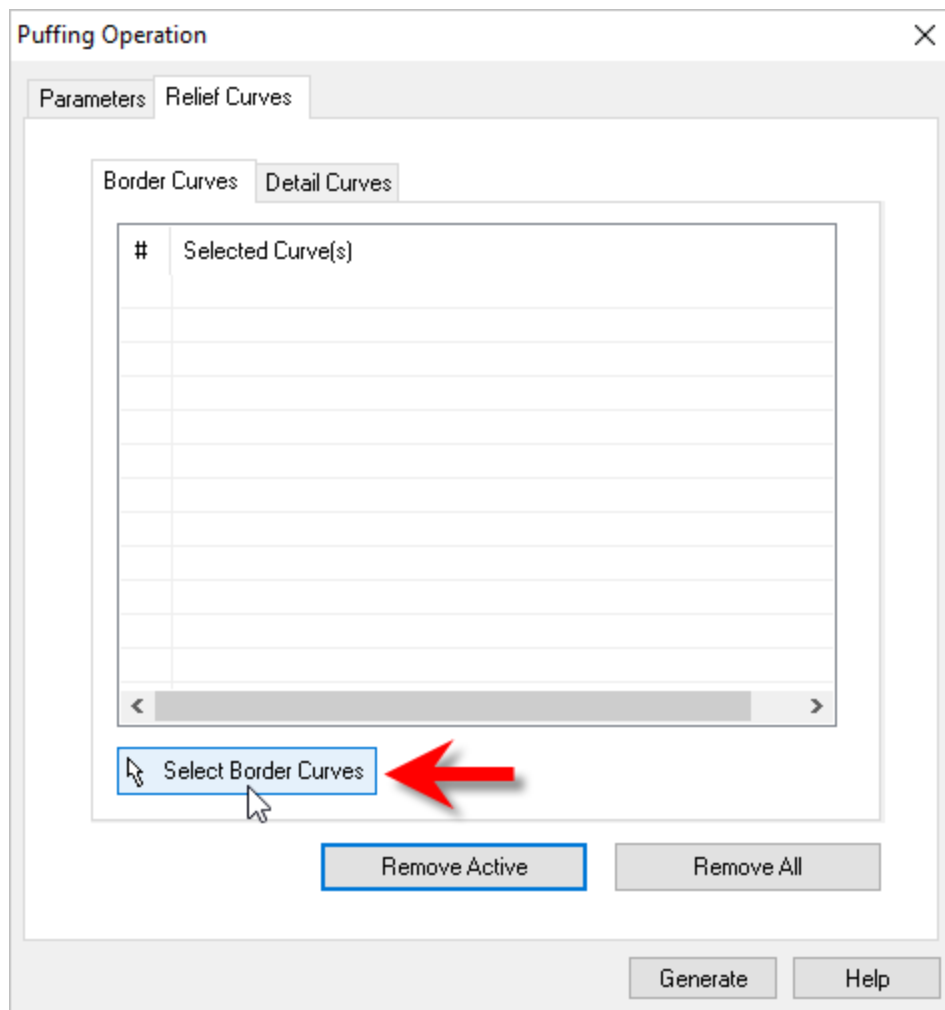
The dialog should now look as shown below:



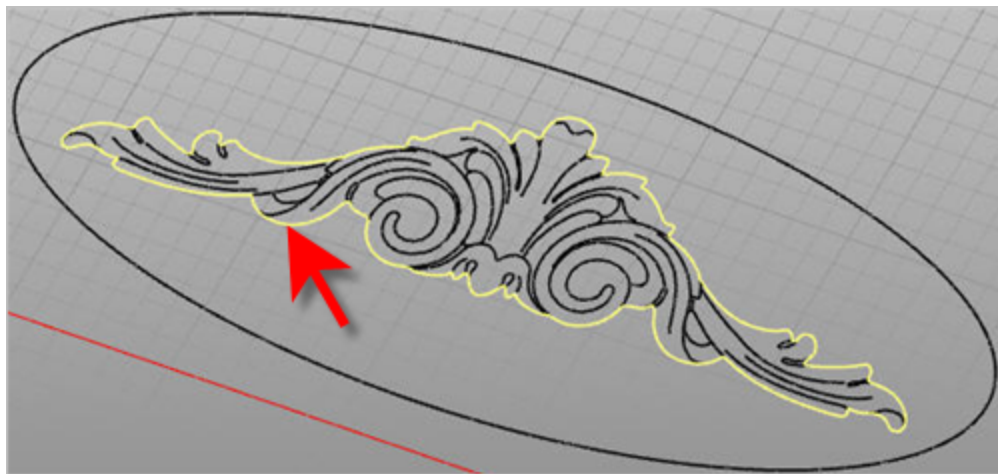
6. Next, select the [Relief Curves](#) tab. This tab contains two sub-tabs named [Border Curves](#) and [Detail Curves](#).
7. Select the default border curve [BorderCurve1](#) from the previous operation and then pick the [Remove Active](#) button to remove it from the [Selected Curve\(s\)](#) list.



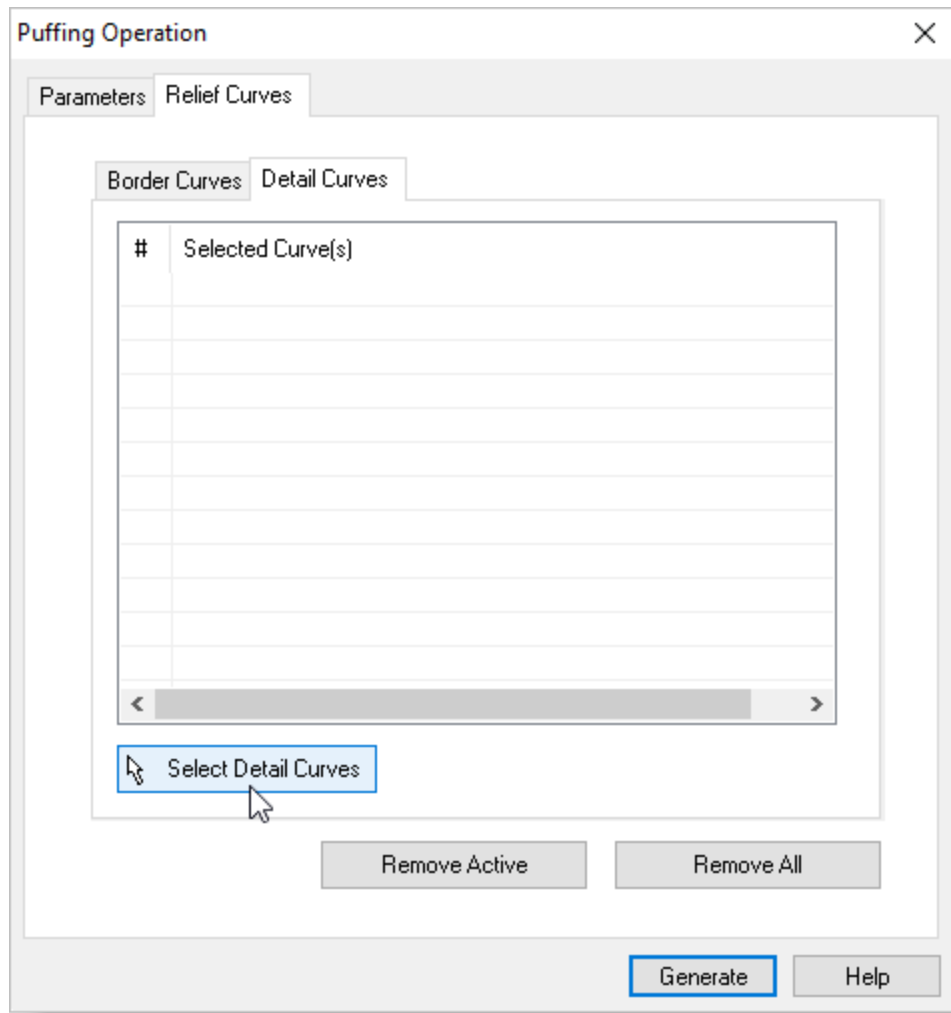
- © 2025 MecSoft Corporation



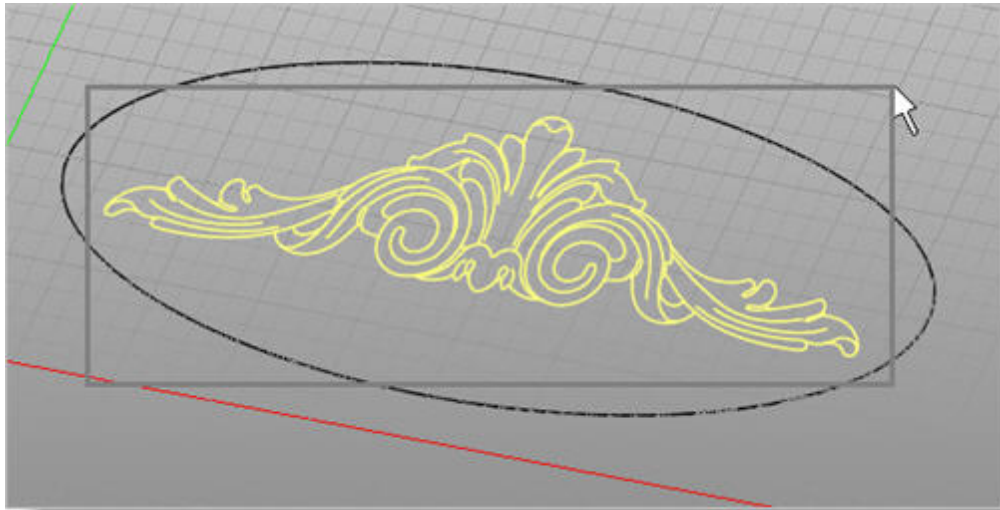
9. Now, we'll select the border profile of our relief geometry as shown below. [Right-click](#) or press [Enter](#) and the [Create Puff Operation](#) dialog will reappear.



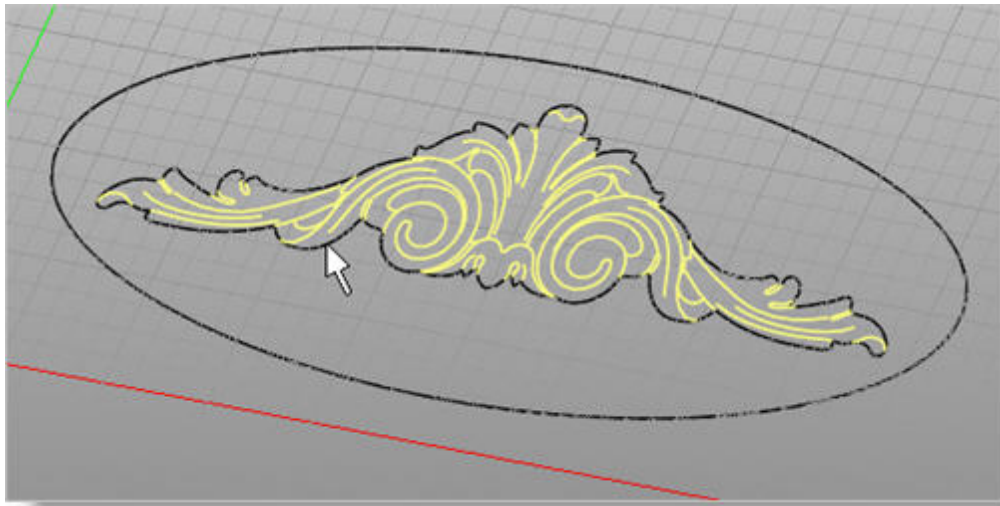
- Next, select the **Detail Curves** tab and pick the **Select Detail Curves** button. Again, the dialog will minimize to allow you to select geometry.



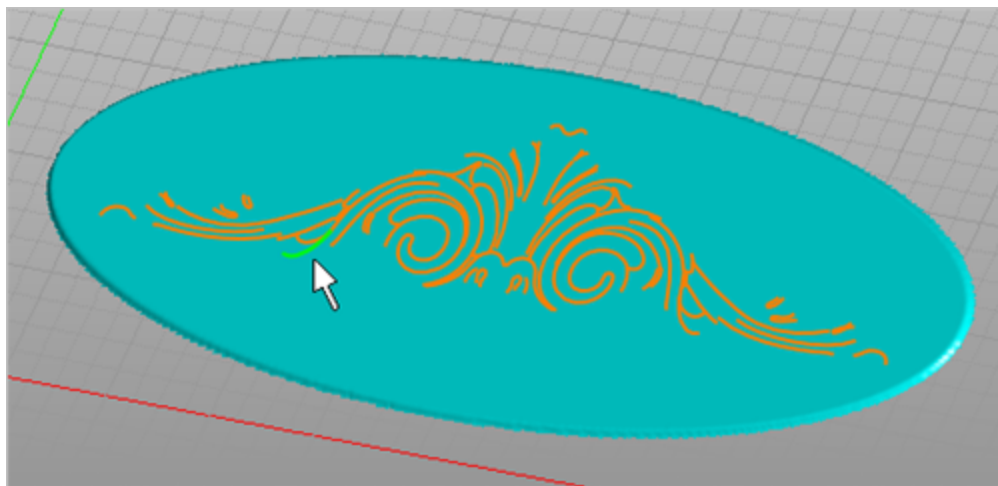
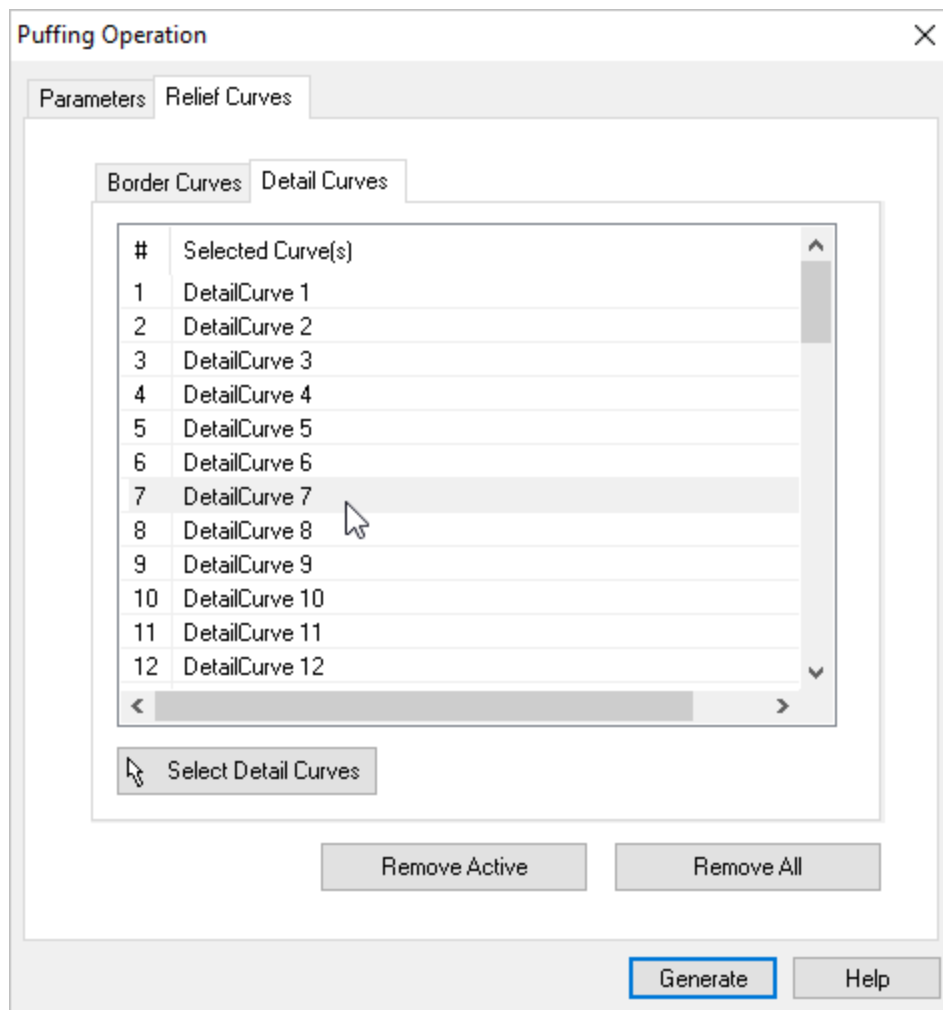
- Now, while pressing the left-mouse button, drag a selection window around the detail curves.



12. If the selection window captures unwanted curves as we have done here, you can exclude them by pressing the **CTRL** key and then selecting the curves you want to exclude. When the details curves are selected, **right-click** or press **Enter** to complete the selection.



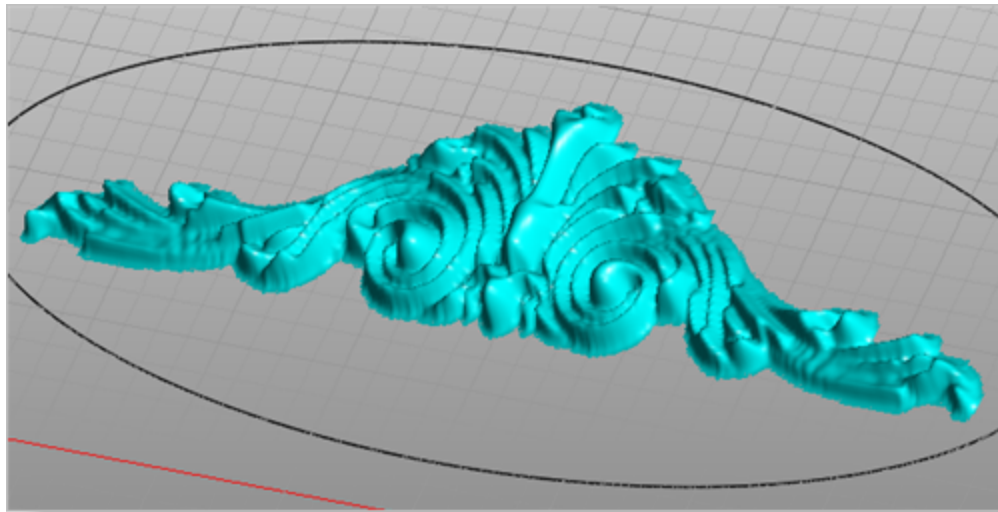
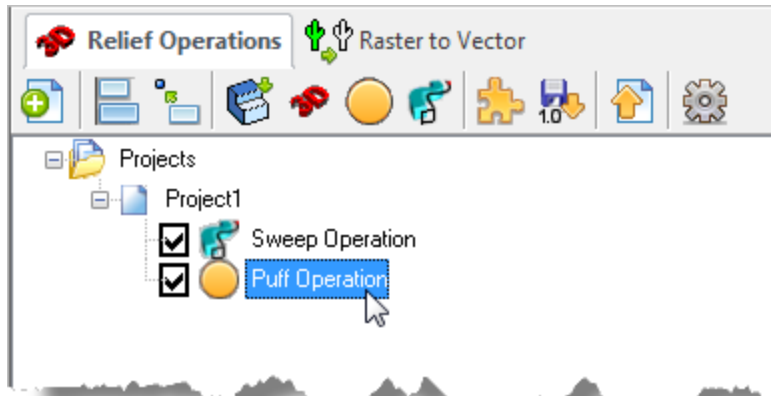
Note that selecting a **Curve** from the list also highlights it in the graphics window.



Alternatively, you can select one or more curves listed in the dialog and then pick the [Remove Active](#) button to remove them from the list.

13. Now with our [Detail Curves](#) selected, we can pick the [Generate](#) button.

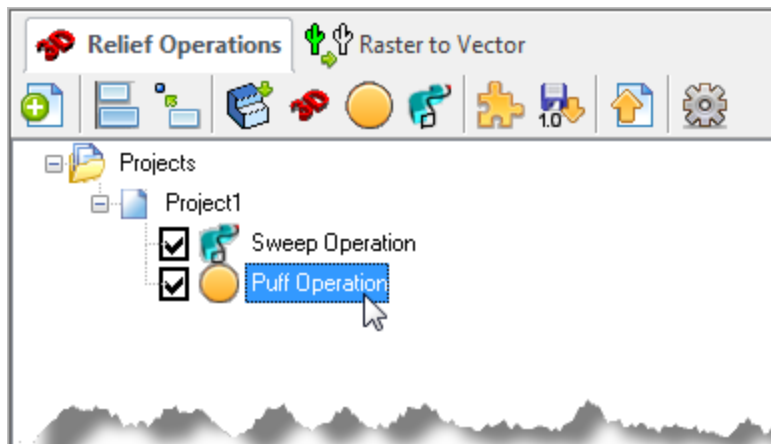
This will create a [Puff Operation](#) icon and append it to the end of the project tree in the [ART browser](#) as shown above. If this icon is not highlighted as shown above, select it and the geometry created by the [Puff Operation](#) will be displayed in the graphics screen as shown below.



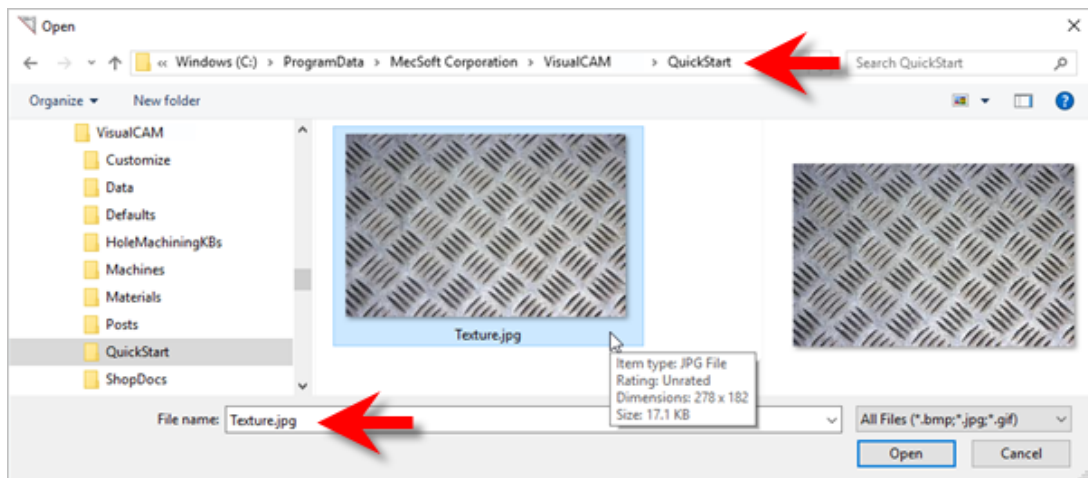
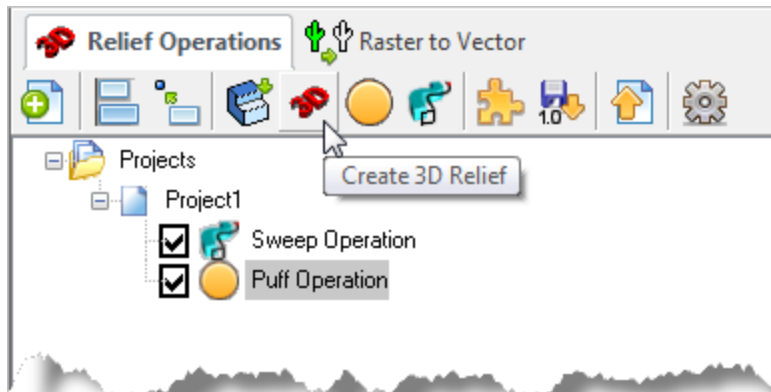
5.4 Create 3D Relief Operation

The [Create 3D Relief Operation](#) allows you to convert a color bitmap image to gray scale image, which in turn will be converted into a 3D model by assigning a height value to each of the pixel gray scale values in the gray scale raster image. Thus the darker the gray value, the lower it will be in height. This process can be quite useful in creating 3D geometry out of hard to model images such as a texture map.

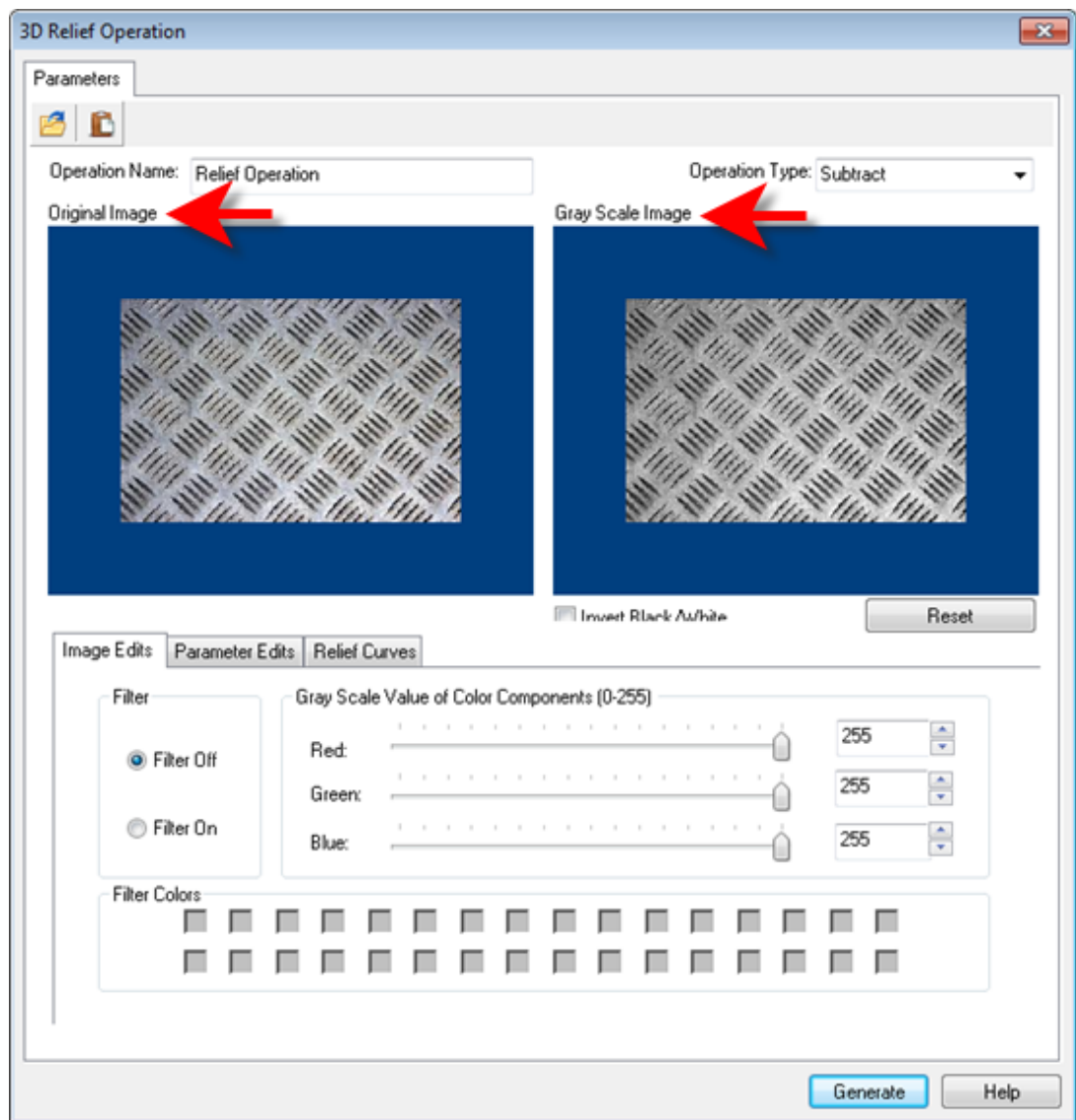
1. From the [ART Browser](#), select the [Puff Operation](#) that we just created.



2. From the **3D Relief Operations** toolbar, select the **Create 3D Relief** icon and the file browser will display.



3. Now, select the **Texture.jpg** bitmap image file located in the **QuickStart** folder and then pick **Open** and the **3D Relief Operation** dialog will display.



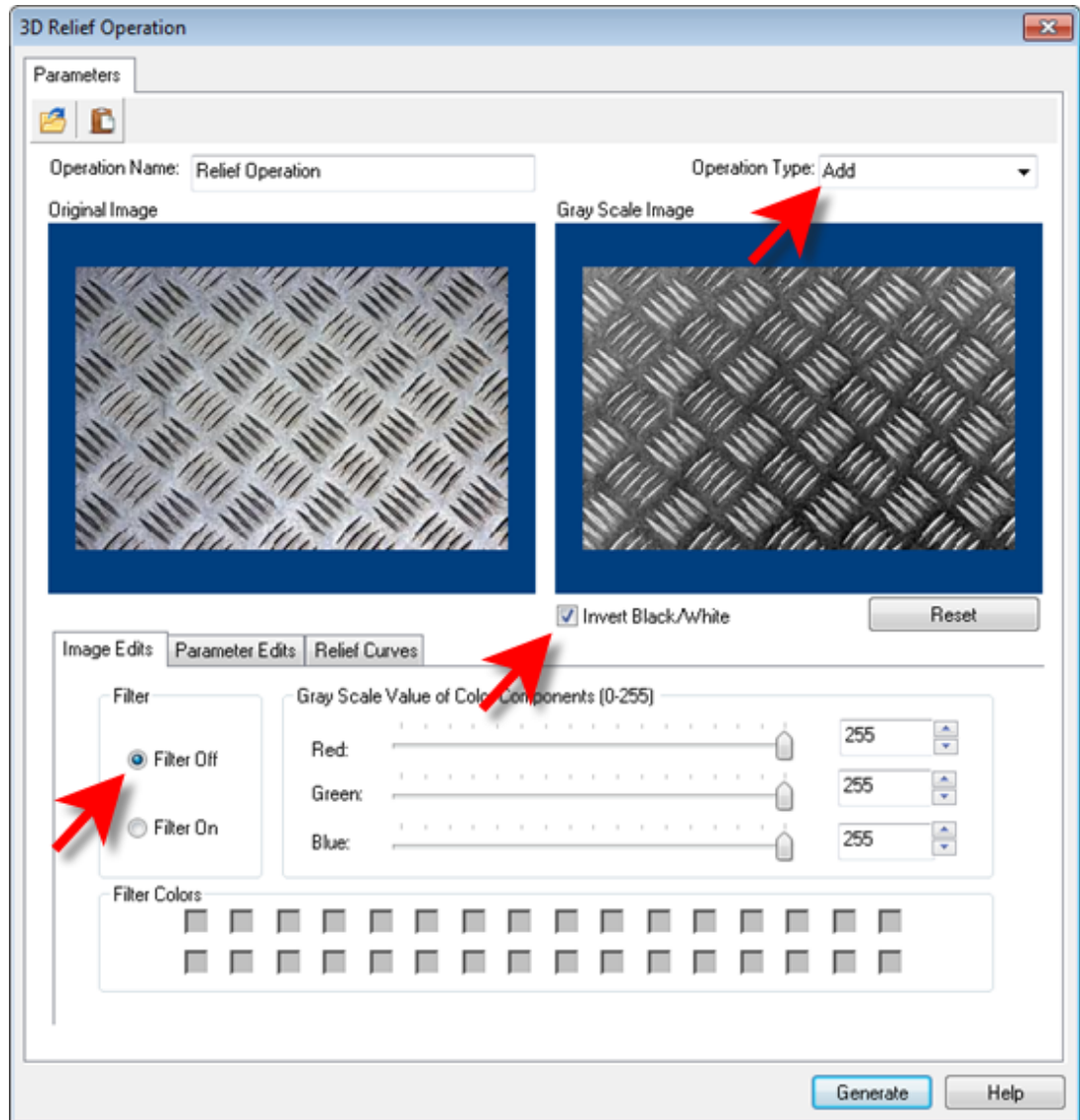
Note that the **Original Image** is displayed on the left and the resulting **Grey Scale Image** preview is on the right.

4. First we'll change the **Operation Type** to **Add** and then check the box to **Invert Black/White**.
5. Then on the **Image Edits** tab, make sure **Filter Off** is selected. This will update the **Gray Scale Image** preview on the right.

! If you turn on the **Filter On** button you can selectively remove colors from the bitmap image from consideration in the color to gray scale conversion process. You can also control the how the gray scale values ought to be mapped to the color values under this scenario using the corresponding slider controls. The dialog will

dynamically update the resulting gray scale bitmap on the dialog as you modify these controls.

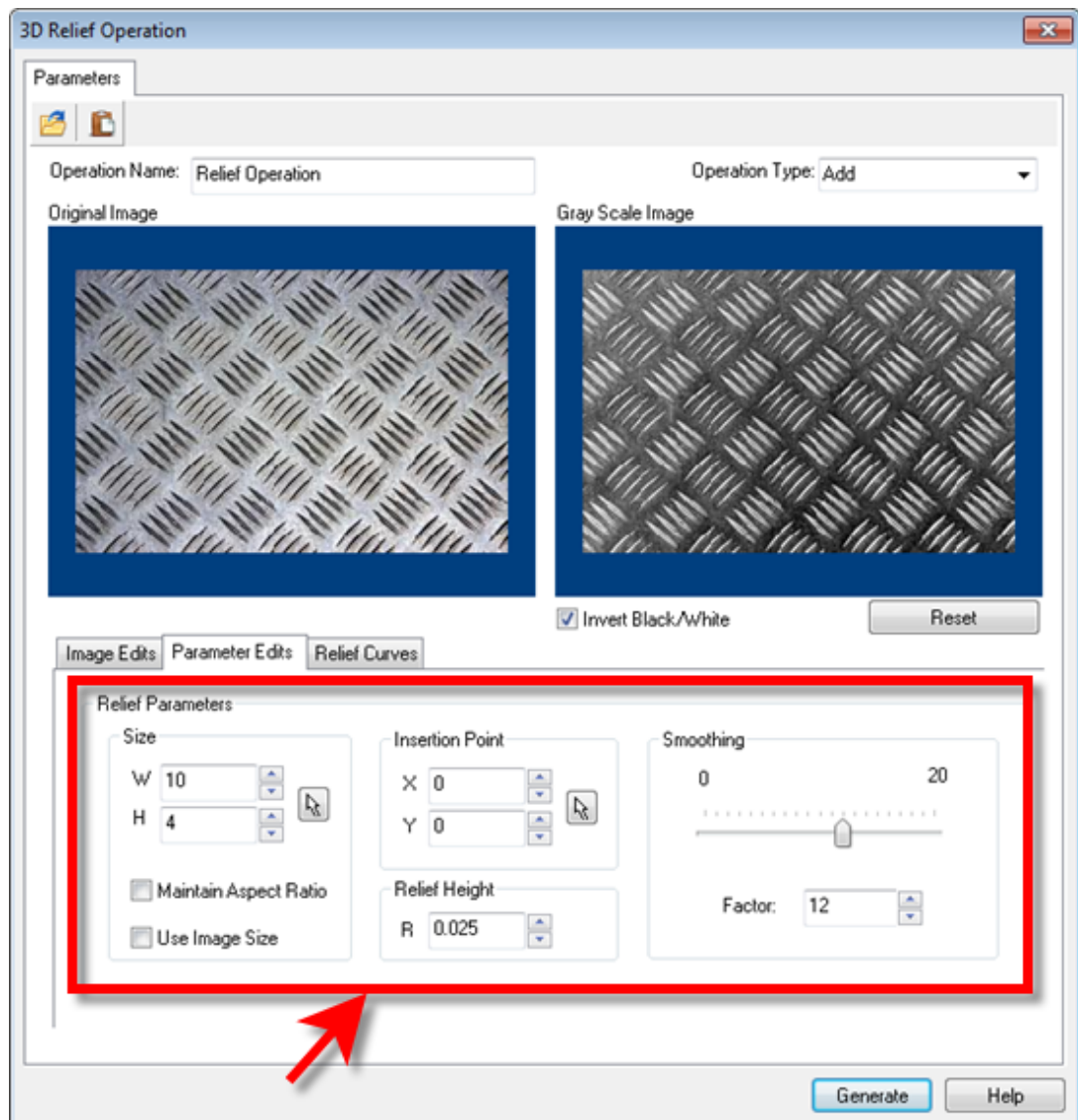
Your dialog should look like this:



6. Now, select the [Parameter Edits](#) tab and uncheck [Use Image Size](#) and then also uncheck [Maintain Aspect Ratio](#).
7. We'll also change the [Width \(W\)](#) to [10](#) and the [Height \(H\)](#) to [4](#) to scale the image to our project size.
8. In the future, you can also select the [Pick](#) button. This allows you to select two diagonal points to define the relief width and height.

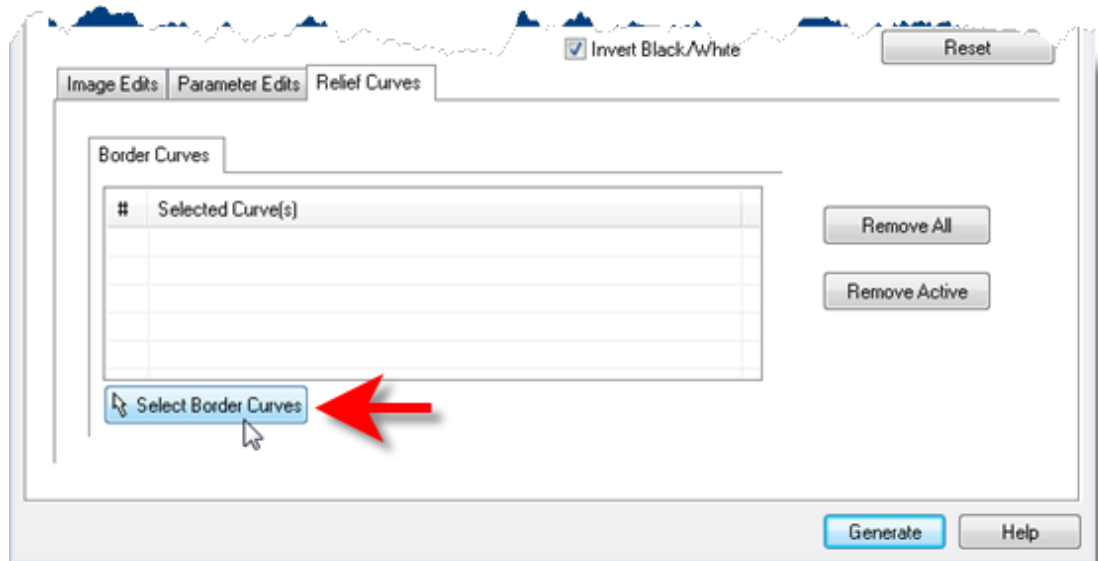
9. Next we'll change the **Relief Height (R)** to **0.025**. This means that white pixels on the gray scale image will be assigned a height value of **0.025** and black pixels will be assigned a height value of **0.0**. All other gray scale values will be assigned a height between these two values.
10. Now, under **Smoothing** we'll type in a value of **12**. You can also use the slider or up/down arrows to set this value. **Smoothing** is performed to remove any abrupt changes in height from pixilation in the graphics file.

Your dialog should now look like this:

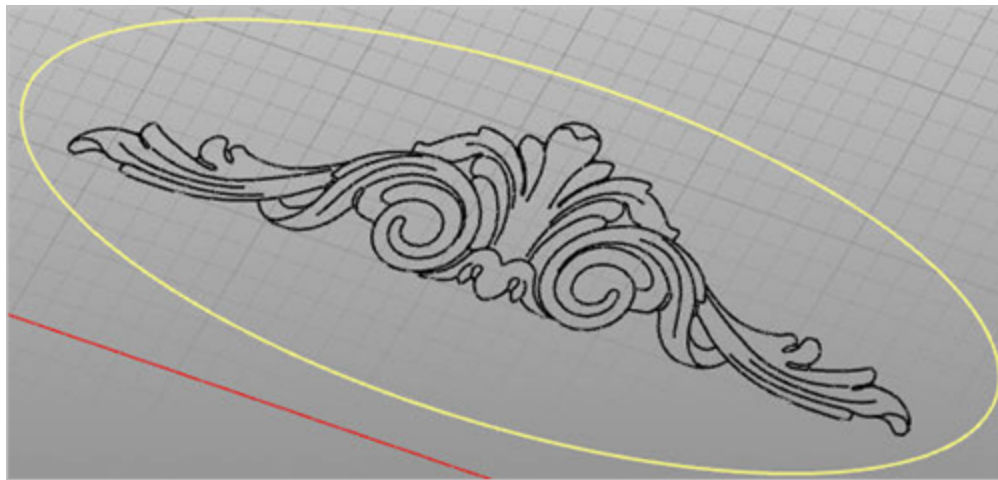


11. Now, select the **Relief Curves** tab and notice the **Border Curves** tab within. **Border Curves** are used to restrict relief geometry within the extents of the selected curves. Select the default **BorderCurve 1** from the previous operation and then pick the **Remove Active** button to remove it from the **Selected Curve(s)** list.

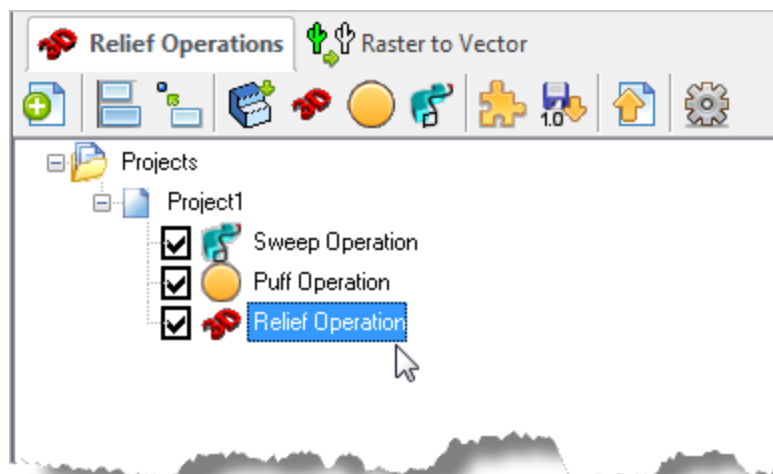
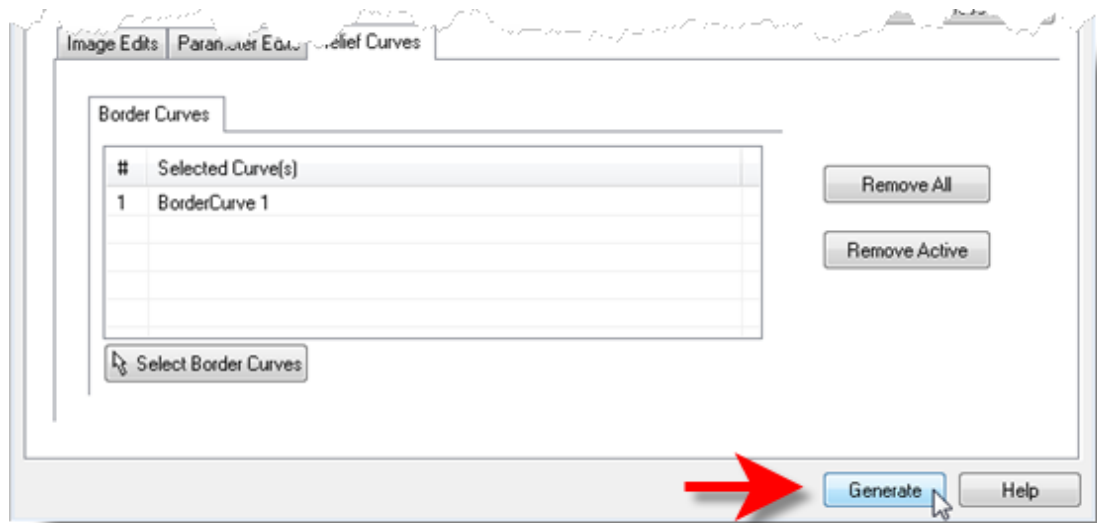
12. Now pick the [Select Border Curves](#) button. The dialog will minimize to allow us to select border curves.



13. For the border, select the outer elliptical curve and then [right-click](#) or press [Enter](#) and the dialog displays once again.

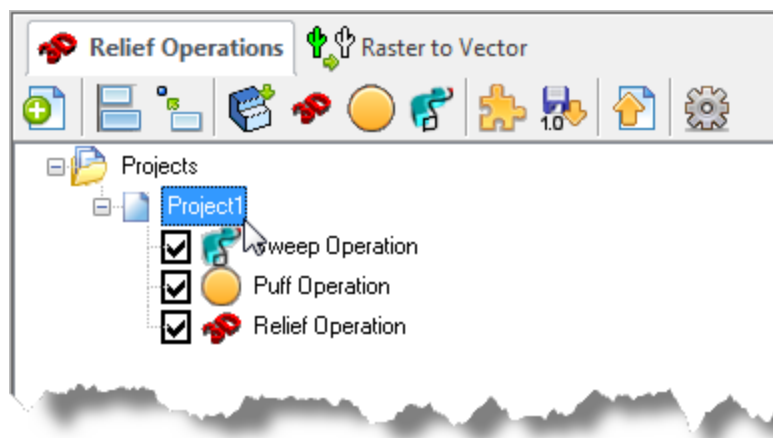


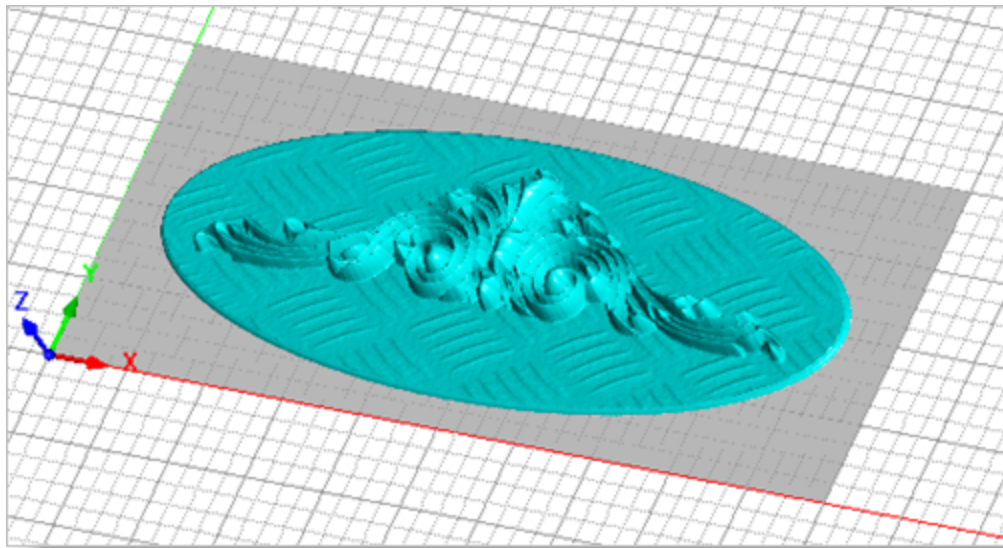
14. Finally, we pick [Generate](#) to create the [Relief Operation](#) and append it to the [Project Tree](#) in the [Art Browser](#).



15. Selecting an operation from the [Project Tree](#) will display it in the [Graphics Window](#).

16. To see all three operations we created together, select [Project1](#) from the [Project Tree](#).

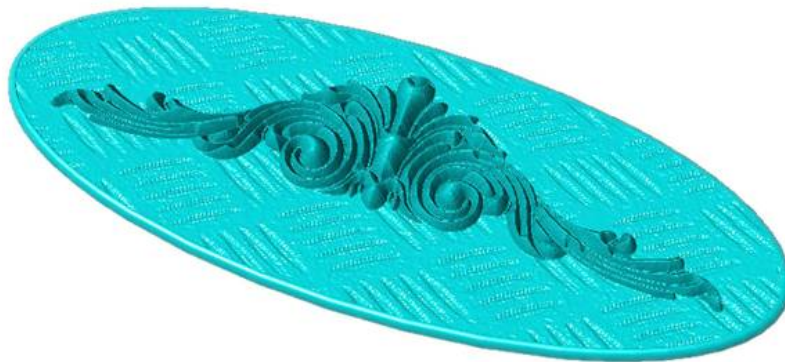




Export as Meshes to CAD

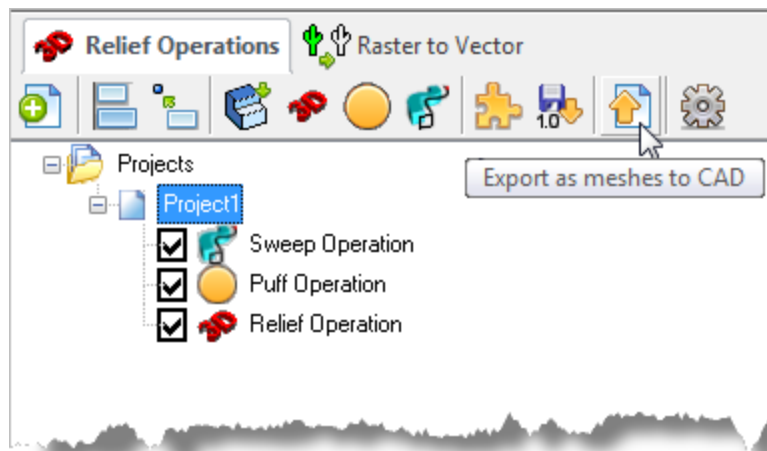
The resultant geometry obtained by the combination of all three operations that we have created thus far can be visualized by selecting the [Project1](#) icon under the project tree in the [ART browser](#). It should be noted that by selecting each individual operation in the project tree, the [ART](#) module will only display the geometry corresponding to the selected operation.

We can now export the project as a 3D mesh to be used within the CAD design system.



Completed Project Geometry

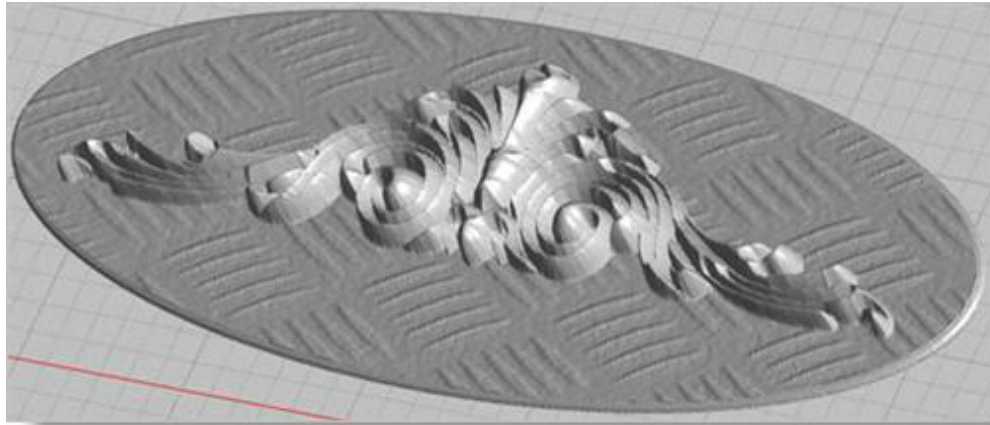
1. Select [Project1](#) and then from the [3D Relief Operations](#) tab, select [Export as meshes to CAD](#). Note that you must export the [3D Relief Operations](#) before the geometry can be used within the CAD system.



2. Once the export is completed, select the [Projects](#) folder at the top of the [Projects Tree](#) to see **ONLY** the CAD [mesh](#) geometry in the graphics window.

! Unless the [Export as meshes to CAD](#) function is used, the geometry will not be available to the [CAD](#) system. The display of the geometry in the graphics

screen, before the export is performed, is done by the [ART](#) system and the [CAD](#) system has no knowledge of the existence of this geometry.



Resulting 3D Mesh

This completes the [Quick Start](#) tutorial for the [VisualCAM 2023 ART](#) module.

More Resources

Download this PDF Guide for a list of the available [VisualCAD/CAM Resources](#).



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Index

- W -

Where to go for more help 41

- A -

About the ART Module 7
About the VisualCAD Display 10

- B -

Basic Steps 14

- C -

Create 3D Relief Operation 31
Create Project Workspace 16
Create Puff Operation 23
Create Sweep Operation 18

- E -

Export as Meshes to CAD 39

- L -

Launching the ART Module 11
Loading the Part Model 12

- R -

Running VisualCAD/CAM 10

- S -

Strategy 14

- U -

Useful Tips 7
Using this Guide 8