
SCRATCHSIM: A PROCEDURAL SYNTHETIC DATA PIPELINE FOR SURFACE SCRATCH DETECTION

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ABSTRACT

While automated defect detection such as the detection of surface scratched is an important aspect in industrial quality control, the scarcity of annotated defect data make this task challenging. This paper presents a procedural rendering pipeline that generates large-scale annotated synthetic training data using BlenderProc, with configurable material appearance, camera modes, and domain randomization, producing automatic COCO-format annotations. To show the potential of our approach, we evaluate four training strategies, namely synthetic-only, real-only, mixed, and fine-tuning from synthetic weights, across two objects with different material properties and three lightweight edge-deployable detectors, YOLOX, YOLO26, and LW-DETR. Our evaluation show that fine-tuning from synthetic weights consistently outperforms real-only training, and that mixed training effectively recovers performance under scarce real-data conditions, with findings validated across both convolutional and transformer-based architectures. The proposed approach enables scalable defect detection without the burden of large real annotated datasets, making it practical for on-device industrial inspection. The pipeline scripts, 3D model, and both synthetic and real annotated scratch datasets for a glossy toy Ferrari car will be made available through the project website upon acceptance.

Keywords Synthetic data generation · Surface defect detection · Domain adaptation · Edge deployment

1 Introduction

Industrial quality control in large-scale manufacturing relies on reliable and fast defect detection. Effective defect detection raises product standards in terms of service life, performance, and safety, while its application in early production stages can reduce risk, waste, and rework, contributing positively to efficiency and sustainability [1]. Although manual visual inspection remains prevalent, the need for automated solutions is well established. Human inspection, while flexible and intuitive, is labor-intensive, difficult to scale, and inherently inconsistent, with fatigue adversely affecting accuracy [2]. As modern manufacturing continues to increase production speed and throughput, manual inspection becomes more and more infeasible [3].

Rapid advances in deep learning have shown great potential for automated defect detection, offering high accuracy and real-time performance. However, these capabilities depend on large amounts of annotated training data. In practice, defect samples are rare, with only a small fraction of production output depicting defects [4]. This limited data availability makes models prone to overfitting, reduced accuracy, and poor generalization. Synthetic training data is a

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promising way to address this problem. Procedural rendering pipelines [5, 6] allow the generation of large quantities of fully annotated images that can replace or supplement real data. This approach gives full control over data quantity, quality, and content, but synthetic images do not always represent real-world conditions accurately enough. Synthetic data has been successfully applied across various industrial tasks using procedural rendering frameworks such as BlenderProc [6] and NVIDIA Isaac Sim [7], and combining synthetic with real data has shown promise in bridging this gap [8, 4]. Increasing realism and applying domain randomization are two common strategies to further improve synthetic-to-real transfer, yet how to best configure and use synthetic data remains an open question [9]. To address this in terms of generating realistic surface scratch data and identifying plausible training configurations, this paper presents a procedural pipeline for generating annotated synthetic data for surface scratch detection, applied to two objects with distinct material properties: a glossy toy Ferrari car and a matte powder-coated industrial grip. We generated multiple synthetic datasets, two for a glossy toy Ferrari car and four for a matte industrial grip, utilizing varying pipeline configurations, and used them to benchmark four training strategies across three lightweight edge-deployable detectors, with all models evaluated on real images to assess synthetic-to-real transfer. In summary, the key contributions of this work are:

- A procedural rendering pipeline (see Figure 1) for generating annotated synthetic training data for surface scratch detection, supporting configurable material appearance, camera modes, and domain randomization, with annotations automatically produced in COCO format [10].
- We present a comparative evaluation of four training strategies (synthetic-only, real-only, mixed synthetic and real, and fine-tuning a synthetically pretrained model on real data) tested on three lightweight edge-deployable detectors (YOLOX [11], YOLO26 [12], and LW-DETR [13]) and two objects with distinct material properties.
- Publicly released scratch datasets for a glossy toy Ferrari car, comprising both real-world manually annotated images and synthetically generated samples, to support future research. We do not release the industrial grip datasets due to intellectual property restrictions.

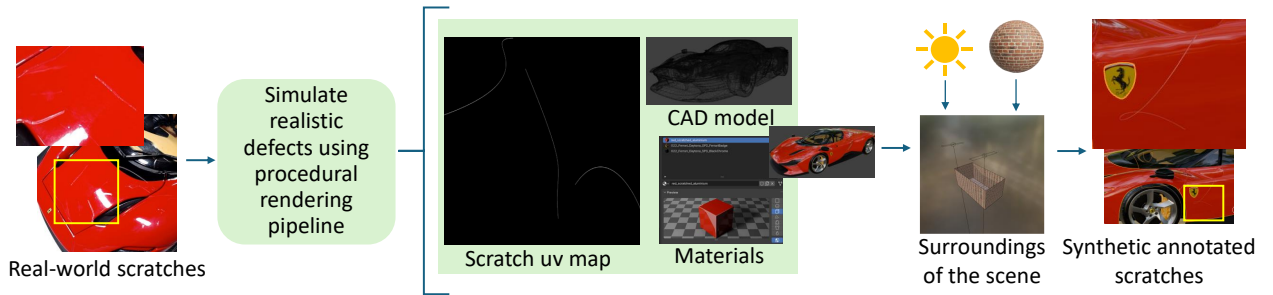


Figure 1: Overview of the proposed procedural rendering pipeline utilizing Blenderproc [6] for synthetic scratch data generation. A CAD model is combined with procedurally generated scratch UV maps, PBR materials, and randomized scene surroundings to produce photorealistic images with automatic pixel-level annotations, guided by the appearance of real-world scratches.

2 Related works

Industrial defect detection has shifted from traditional computer vision methods towards deep learning, as classical approaches are sensitive to noise, lighting, and complex backgrounds [14]. CNNs have improved on these limitations through superior feature extraction and adaptability [14, 1], yet supervised methods still require large, well-labelled datasets that are costly and scarce in industrial settings [15]. Data augmentation techniques such as flipping, rotation, and scaling are widely used to combat overfitting and expand small datasets [8, 4]. While effective, augmentation introduces no genuinely new information, leaving performance still dependent on the quantity and quality of the original data [9]. Synthetic data generation has emerged as a more complete solution to data scarcity, with early work by Shotton et al. [16] demonstrating that large synthetic datasets can enable real-time pose recognition invariant to appearance variation, motivating broader adoption across vision tasks. Methods broadly span GAN-based image synthesis, diffusion models, and 3D rendering pipelines [17]. GAN-based approaches can produce diverse images but struggle with precise annotation control and require large training sets themselves [18, 19]. Diffusion models such as Stable Diffusion [20] and DALL-E 3 [21] have shown impressive image quality, yet similarly offer limited control over precise object-level annotations and geometric scene properties. Recent work by Kühn et al. [22] explores an end-to-end diffusion-based pipeline for industrial surface defect synthesis, finding that synthetic-only training does not

replace real data but can yield modest gains when combined with it. While both generative approaches show promise for data augmentation, a thorough exploration of generative AI for controllable industrial defect synthesis lies beyond the scope of this work. Instead, 3D rendering pipelines offer full scene control, automatic annotation, and independence from real data. Prior work by Weinmann et al. [23] demonstrated that synthesizing training data from measured material and illumination characteristics enables material classification under complex real-world conditions, highlighting the value of appearance-faithful synthetic rendering. Frameworks such as BlenderProc [5, 6], as demonstrated for 6D pose estimation in [24], and GPU-accelerated simulators such as NVIDIA Isaac Sim [7] simplify the creation of annotated synthetic datasets at scale. Domain randomization further reduces the domain gap by randomizing non-essential scene properties, improving generalization without the effort of photorealistic rendering [25, 26, 27, 28]. Several strategies exist for incorporating synthetic data into training. Models trained solely on synthetic data often underperform due to the domain gap, motivating combined approaches that use small amounts of real data through hybrid datasets or fine-tuning [29]. Kim et al. [30] showed that hybrid training can achieve near-maximum performance with up to an 80% reduction in real data.

Regarding detection algorithms, single-stage detectors such as the YOLO series [31, 11, 12] and Single Shot MultiBox Detector (SSD) [32] offer fast inference with low computational requirements, making them well suited for real-time defect detection on edge devices [33]. More recently, transformer-based single-stage detectors such as LW-DETR [13] have shown competitive real-time performance while offering a viable alternative to CNN-based approaches. Two-stage methods such as the R-CNN series [34, 35, 36] prioritise accuracy at the cost of higher latency, making them less practical for on-device deployment. Given the practical requirement for real-time inference on edge devices, single-stage lightweight detectors are the natural choice for this work, and hence we benchmark YOLOX [11], YOLO26 [12], and LW-DETR [13], spanning both CNN- and transformer-based architectures. For procedural rendering, we adopt BlenderProc [6], an open-source framework that addresses the data scarcity challenge outlined above through built-in domain randomization.

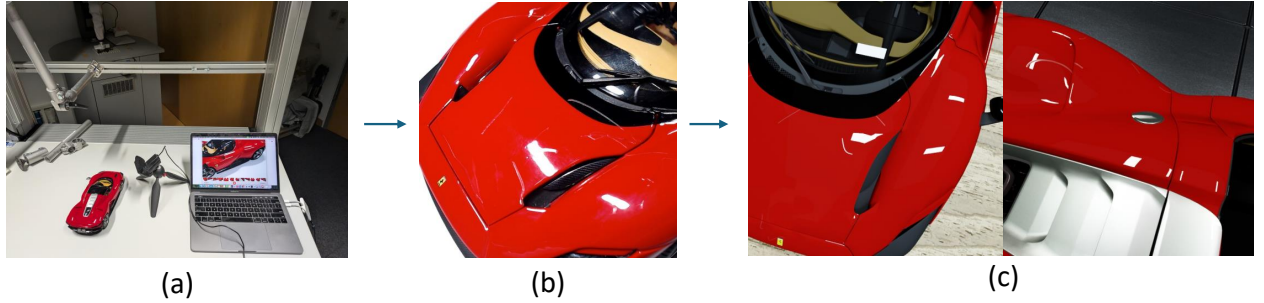


Figure 2: Application of the material pipeline to a toy Ferrari [37, 38], used as the car object in the synthetic scratch datasets. (a) Real data capture setup, (b) real image of the toy Ferrari, and (c) simulated material (multiple rendered views) applied in BlenderProc [6] with adjusted reflectance and surface roughness parameters to match the glossy automotive finish.

3 Methodology

In this section, we present our approach for the generation of annotated synthetic high-quality training data for scratch detection.

3.1 Synthetic Data Generation Pipeline

We built our synthetic data generation pipeline on BlenderProc [6], a modular procedural rendering framework based on Blender and its Python API. It was chosen for its open-source availability, strong documentation, active community support, and suitability for scientific use. BlenderProc [6] provides key components for scalable synthetic data generation while retaining the flexibility to implement application-specific functionality through the underlying Blender API. An overview of our pipeline for generating synthetic defect data for scratches is shown in fig. 1. The following subsections describe details of our synthetic defect data generation pipeline.

Geometry preparation The object of interest is represented by a CAD model prepared for realistic rendering. Geometric refinements, such as bevels and subdivision surfaces, are applied where needed to enhance visual realism. The model is scaled to a 1:1 ratio using the known physical dimensions of the real object. A UV map is then generated to support the projection of both the base material and the procedurally generated scratch maps. If the model contains

regions that are not intended to appear in the final renders, these are isolated into separate UV islands by placing seams accordingly.

Material construction The material is constructed procedurally and comprises three layers: a surface appearance model, procedurally generated scratches, and their interaction.

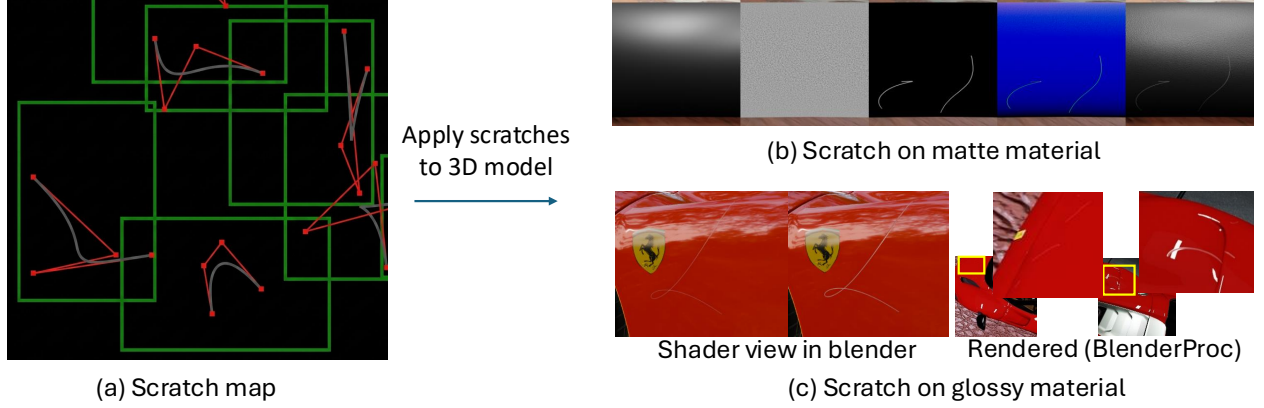


Figure 3: Scratch generation and application. (a) Generated scratch map with annotations. (b) Stages of scratch application on a matte material (left to right): blank object, surface bumps, applied scratch mask, resulting normal map, and final result. (c) Effect of scratch intensity on a glossy material (left to right): strength 0.1 and strength 1.0.

Surface appearance modeling. The surface appearance is modeled procedurally to approximate the real object’s material characteristics. As a first object, we considered an industrial grip with a matte, powder-coated surface. Since a powder-coated surface exhibits surface irregularities at multiple scales, with fine granular roughness from the coating particles, two noise textures varying in scale and level of detail are mixed to capture both frequency components and achieve a visually representative result. The combined noise texture is used to generate a height map, from which a normal map is derived and applied to the object via UV mapping (see Figure 3(b)). For glossy automotive surfaces, the surface appearance is governed less by microscale geometry and more by the optical properties of the paint system itself, which typically consists of a pigmented base coat and a transparent clear coat contributing high specularly. This multi-layer characteristic is approximated by adjusting the material parameters towards higher specularly, lower surface roughness, and increased reflectance, without requiring noise blending. This allows the pipeline to reproduce the visually distinct appearance of an automotive finish, as shown in fig. 2.

Scratch generation. Scratches are synthesized procedurally on a black canvas of 8192×8192 pixels. For each mask, $N \in [17, 25]$ scratches are generated, with the count drawn uniformly at random to ensure variety across training samples. Each scratch is defined by a bounding box of random size $s_{\text{box}} \in \left[\frac{s_{\text{canvas}}}{10}, \frac{s_{\text{canvas}}}{4} \right]$, where s_{box} denotes the bounding box dimensions and s_{canvas} denotes the canvas size. This range was chosen to reflect the typical physical size of real scratches observed on the objects, and each scratch is placed at a random position within the canvas boundaries. Inside each bounding box, four points are sampled at random and used as the start point, end point, and two intermediate control points of a cubic Bézier curve, which approximates the irregular, curved geometry of real surface scratches. Once all curves have been rendered onto the canvas, a Gaussian blur is applied to soften the edges and suppress aliasing artefacts. The image is then downsampled by a factor of two and normalized, reducing memory footprint while yielding smooth, consistent intensity values. Figure 3(a) shows a visualization of the resulting scratch mask combined with annotations to aid understanding of the following workflow.



Figure 4: Allowed (white) and disallowed (black) viewing angles for scratch visibility (left). Overlaid original rendering on mask (right) to show that scratches generated as desired.

Viewing-Angle restriction. While rendering scratches on round objects, the viewing angle near the edges becomes too shallow to reveal the scratch geometry, resulting in scratches that are invisible in the rendered image yet still annotated, introducing false positives into the training data. To address this, scratches at excessively shallow viewing angles are suppressed during rendering. This is implemented in the Blender material nodes by computing the dot product of the unit surface normal $\vec{n}$ and the unit camera viewing direction $\vec{v}$, such that $|\vec{v} \cdot \vec{n}| > t$, where $t \in [0, 1]$ is a user-defined threshold controlling the maximum permitted viewing angle relative to the surface normal. The resulting restriction is

visualized in Figure 4, where white regions indicate areas in which scratches are rendered and black regions indicate suppressed areas.

Scratch application The proposed scratch generation approach is object-agnostic and can be applied to any 3D object, provided an appropriate material approach is selected based on the surface type. We applied our approach on two materials as presented in Figure 3(b) and (c). For coated or painted matte surfaces, shown in Figure 3(b), the scratch mask value v_{scratch} and a randomised depth factor $d_{\text{scratch}} = v_{\text{scratch}} \cdot r$, with $r \in [0, 1]$, modulate multiple material properties simultaneously. For roughness, v_{scratch} is added to the base roughness (clamped to $[0, 1]$), simulating surface roughening independent of depth. For colour, d_{scratch} mixes the surface colour toward a metallic grey, representing exposed substrate. The metallic component is increased by $2 \cdot d_{\text{scratch}}$, clamped above the base value, to simulate bare metal exposure at greater depths. Surface normals are attenuated by v_{scratch} to simulate removal of the coating texture, while scratch normals are blended in proportional to d_{scratch} . Finally, a small negative displacement proportional to d_{scratch} is applied for geometric realism.

For smooth glossy or reflective surfaces, shown in Figure 3(c), a simpler approach is used, where the scratch mask is applied as a normal map perturbation with a controllable strength parameter, allowing the depth and visibility of scratches to be varied. In addition, colour modifications are performed in HSV space for better control over scratch appearance.

Camera Positioning To ensure comprehensive scene coverage and capture the full range of lighting and material appearance changes across the object surface, the camera viewpoint is varied for each frame. For each frame, a target point is sampled uniformly on the object’s visible surface by selecting a polygon with probability proportional to its area, then sampling a random point on the selected quad via bilinear interpolation with two uniform parameters $l_1, l_2 \in [0, 1]$. Two camera modes are implemented. In the close-range mode (randomcam), the camera is placed on a spherical shell centred on the target point with radius $r \in [2, 5]$ cm, altitude $\beta \in [30, 90]$, and azimuth constrained within ± 20 of the surface normal. In the tripod mode, the camera height is sampled in $[12, 16]$ cm, with horizontal position sampled on a disk of radius 7.5 cm centred on the target point. The tripod mode was used exclusively for the glossy toy car object, reflecting a more controlled, fixed-distance acquisition setup. For the matte industrial object (grip), both modes were employed to provide a greater variety of viewpoints and scales. Each candidate pose undergoes validity checks: (1) camera lies within room boundaries, (2) no obstacle within 1 cm of the lens, (3) neither camera position nor near-frustum vertices lie inside the object mesh (verified via dot-product sign test against closest-surface normals), and (4) excluded surface regions are not visible (verified via frustum containment and ray casting). Invalid poses are resampled.

Environment and Lighting The design of the object’s surroundings was heavily influenced by the implementation of [39], which generates photorealistic datasets for 6D object-pose estimation using BlenderProc [6]. An empty room is constructed from five planes (four walls and a floor), all sharing a single PBR material chosen at random for each scene from the texture library provided by [40]. Two fixed overhead light sources, positioned on opposite ends of the room and slightly offset in the same direction we used to illuminate the scene. Each light can be controlled independently in colour and intensity, producing a wide variety of lighting conditions that also depend on the object’s position within the room. This configuration simplifies ensuring sufficient visibility by constraining light intensities accordingly, which proved necessary as heavily randomised lighting caused details to be obscured by over- or underexposure in initial testing. This domain-randomisation-centred approach, with varying materials and lighting across scenes, is intended to shift the model’s focus towards the object of interest and improve robustness to environmental changes, while avoiding the need to model a specific predetermined location. The resulting environment and lighting setup can also be seen as part of the full pipeline in Figure 1.

Automatic annotation Annotations are generated without manual intervention by utilizing an Arbitrary Output Variable (AOV) node that exports the applied scratch mask as rendered from the camera’s perspective. The AOV output is binarised (thresholding near-black pixels), and connected components are labelled to identify individual scratch instances. The resulting per-pixel segmentation is passed to a COCO-format [10] annotation writer, which automatically computes bounding boxes for each labelled region, producing detection-ready ground truth alongside each rendered image.

Pipeline execution The pipeline follows a nested loop controlled by two parameters, the number of scenes S and the number of frames per scene F , producing $S \times F$ images in total. For each scene, the scratch mask, material properties, object pose, background, and lighting are randomised. Within a scene, only the camera pose changes between frames. This keeps scene generation efficient while still producing diverse viewpoints. All images are rendered at 640×640 pixels using Blender’s Cycles engine with PBR shading.

4 Comparison using edge-deployable baseline detectors

To validate the suitability of our generated synthetic training data for defect detection, three lightweight real-time object detectors are used across the two object’s datasets. For the industrial grip, we use YOLOX-S [11], an open-source convolutional detector chosen specifically because its permissive license allows commercial deployment. We evaluated two models for the toy Ferrari car datasets, YOLO26-n [12], a small convolutional detector from the latest YOLO generation designed for fast and accurate detection, and LW-DETR-Tiny [13], a compact transformer-based detector that achieves real-time performance while offering a fundamentally different architecture, allowing findings to be assessed across both model families.

5 Generated datasets

Datasets were created for two objects, a matte industrial grip and a glossy Ferrari toy car (see Figure 3), to evaluate the impact of synthetic data on model performance. For each object, both synthetic and real datasets were produced. All synthetic datasets contain 10 000 images each, split into 7 000 training, 2 000 validation, and 1 000 test images following a 70/20/10 ratio. Images are rendered at 640×640 pixels with five frames per scene. All real images were captured using a Logitech HD Pro C920 webcam, cropped to 640×640 pixels, and manually annotated in COCO format [10]. It includes both clean and freshly scratched examples to test detection performance and measure false-positive rates.

Ferrari toy car datasets Two synthetic datasets were generated for the Ferrari toy car using the tripod camera mode and the glossy material configuration described in section 3.1, featuring either a randomized or white static background (modeled) similar to the capture setup for automatic visual inspection. The real dataset contains 116 images captured in front of static background under different lighting conditions and camera angles, split into 82 training, 18 validation, and 16 test images.

Industrial grip datasets To increase scene variation and study the effect of color and camera randomization on model generalization, four synthetic base datasets were created for the industrial grip by combining two color modes, tricolour and randomcolour, with two camera modes, randomcam and tripod. The tricolour mode selects one of the three real color variants of the grip for each scene, closely matching the object’s actual appearance. The other mode randomcolour instead randomizes the surface color and roughness for each scene, increasing visual diversity and making the model less dependent on a specific color. Two real datasets were captured for the grip. The first contains 120 images taken in front of five different backgrounds under varied lighting and camera angles, used for training. The second contains 120 images taken against a static background under controlled lighting conditions, used exclusively for evaluation.

6 Implementation details

All training and evaluation was performed in a Docker container running within a SLURM job on a GPU cluster containing NVIDIA A100 SXM4 40 GB GPU’s (4 GPUs for LW-DETR and 1 GPU for the YOLO series of detectors).

The YOLOX-S model [11] was trained on the industrial grip datasets, using a batch size of 64 for 125 epochs with validation every 10 epochs for synthetic and mixed runs, and a batch size of 4 for 50 epochs with validation every epoch for fine-tuning, with the default YOLOX learning rate scheduler and augmentation pipeline. The epoch counts were determined from preliminary experiments showing AP stagnation around these points. For the toy Ferrari dataset, YOLO26 [12] and LW-DETR [13] were each trained with batch sizes scaled proportionally to the dataset size to maintain stable gradient estimates: scarce real-data splits used $bs = 2$ (10%), $bs = 4$ (25%), and $bs = 8$ (50%), while full-dataset and mixed-data runs used $bs = 16$ (real 100% and fine-tuning) or $bs = 32$ (synthetic-only and all infused configurations). YOLO26 was trained for 150–300 epochs depending on the regime (150 for real-only and fine-tuning, 200 for synthetic baselines, 300 for infused mixes), whereas LW-DETR used a fixed 90-epoch schedule throughout. To account for training variability, both models were evaluated across three independent runs, with results reported as mean $\pm$ standard deviation.

During synthetic dataset generation, the visibility threshold t was determined empirically through visual inspection and set to 0.4 for the industrial grip and 0.55 for the toy car.

7 Evaluation

This section presents the quantitative and qualitative results of all conducted experiments across both objects (see Figure 3).

Table 1: Detection results on the toy Ferrari datasets for YOLO26 [12] and LW-DETR [13]. **Green (dark)** = best result, **Green (light)** = second best (comparing mean values). **WB** = synthetic images rendered with a white background similar to real image capture setup (default: random background).

Training Regimes	YOLO26 [12]				LW-DETR [13]	
	mAP50	mAP50-95	Precision [†]	Recall [†]	mAP50	mAP50-95
<i>Baselines</i>						
Real (100%)	0.6100 ± 0.0255	0.4024 ± 0.0040	0.7024 ± 0.0623	0.5489 ± 0.0042	0.5350 ± 0.0303	0.3657 ± 0.0080
Synthetic	0.4513 ± 0.0282	0.3000 ± 0.0199	0.4828 ± 0.0650	0.4683 ± 0.0297	0.3817 ± 0.0129	0.2430 ± 0.0108
Synthetic (WB)	0.4067 ± 0.0244	0.2590 ± 0.0237	0.4811 ± 0.0653	0.3824 ± 0.0674	0.3260 ± 0.0111	0.2023 ± 0.0091
<i>Real Only — Scarce</i>						
Real (10%)	0.0561 ± 0.0076	0.0207 ± 0.0030	0.0053 ± 0.0008	0.3775 ± 0.0595	0.2380 ± 0.0234	0.1507 ± 0.0275
Real (25%)	0.0428 ± 0.0053	0.0162 ± 0.0046	0.1198 ± 0.1012	0.1274 ± 0.0810	0.3553 ± 0.0272	0.2433 ± 0.0101
Real (50%)	0.3229 ± 0.0364	0.2119 ± 0.0264	0.3771 ± 0.0240	0.3841 ± 0.0381	0.4070 ± 0.0397	0.2617 ± 0.0466
<i>Synth + Real Mixed (Infused)</i>						
Synth + Real (10%)	0.5065 ± 0.0385	0.3431 ± 0.0293	0.6221 ± 0.1220	0.4781 ± 0.0242	0.3873 ± 0.0121	0.2470 ± 0.0090
Synth (WB) + Real (10%)	0.4319 ± 0.0115	0.2767 ± 0.0068	0.5526 ± 0.0535	0.4314 ± 0.0516	0.3867 ± 0.0187	0.2387 ± 0.0060
Synth + Real (25%)	0.5479 ± 0.0496	0.3760 ± 0.0309	0.6232 ± 0.0287	0.5424 ± 0.0239	0.5120 ± 0.0113	0.3407 ± 0.0095
Synth (WB) + Real (25%)	0.5979 ± 0.0259	0.4327 ± 0.0169	0.5793 ± 0.0250	0.6176 ± 0.0736	0.5113 ± 0.0327	0.3320 ± 0.0161
Synth + Real (50%)	0.6345 ± 0.0197	0.4291 ± 0.0254	0.6914 ± 0.0475	0.5686 ± 0.0306	0.6067 ± 0.0154	0.4180 ± 0.0061
Synth (WB) + Real (50%)	0.6722 ± 0.0023	0.4951 ± 0.0096	0.7384 ± 0.0739	0.6192 ± 0.0449	0.6357 ± 0.0246	0.4220 ± 0.0078
Synth + Real (100%)	0.6913 ± 0.0327	0.4628 ± 0.0219	0.8280 ± 0.0218	0.6197 ± 0.0371	0.6633 ± 0.0159	0.4577 ± 0.0091
Synth (WB) + Real (100%)	0.7064 ± 0.0083	0.5038 ± 0.0085	0.8085 ± 0.0743	0.6405 ± 0.0174	0.6830 ± 0.0221	0.4593 ± 0.0211
<i>Fine-tuning (Synth → Real)</i>						
Finetune Synth → Real	0.6798 ± 0.0208	0.4639 ± 0.0286	0.7991 ± 0.0963	0.5938 ± 0.0431	0.6903 ± 0.0261	0.4800 ± 0.0255
Finetune Synth (WB) → Real	0.7227 ± 0.0233	0.5067 ± 0.0118	0.7642 ± 0.0260	0.6520 ± 0.0425	0.6910 ± 0.0207	0.4603 ± 0.0227

[†] Precision (P) and Recall (R) are Ultralytics-specific single-threshold metrics, not produced by LW-DETR’s COCO API

7.1 Experiments on the toy Ferrari datasets

This section presents the quantitative results, qualitative observations, and ablation studies for the toy Ferrari datasets. All models are evaluated on a separate test set of real images that the models have not seen during training.

Quantitative analysis Table 1 summarises detection performance across all training regimes. Training on the full real dataset (100%) establishes the performance baseline, with YOLO26 achieving mAP50 = 0.610 and mAP50-95 = 0.402, and LW-DETR reaching mAP50 = 0.535 and mAP50-95 = 0.366, confirming a consistent advantage for YOLO26 on this single-class dataset (see Table 1, Baselines). Synthetic-only training yields substantially lower scores for both models (YOLO26: 0.451 / 0.300; LW-DETR: 0.382 / 0.243), reflecting the *domain gap* between rendered and real images. Under scarce real-data conditions (10% to 25%), both models struggle to learn meaningful detectors, with YOLO26 falling below mAP50 = 0.06 and LW-DETR below 0.36. Infusing synthetic images alongside real data provides a clear remedy, where at 10% real data YOLO26 recovers to mAP50 = 0.507 (from 0.056 real-only) and LW-DETR to 0.387 (from 0.238), with performance scaling consistently as the real fraction increases. At full infusion (100%), both models surpass their real-only baselines (YOLO26: 0.691 / 0.463; LW-DETR: 0.663 / 0.458), demonstrating that synthetic data acts as a useful regulariser even when all real data is available (see Table 1, Synth + Real Mixed). The best results are achieved by the two-stage fine-tuning strategy, where *Finetune Synth (WB) → Real* attains the best YOLO26 scores across all metrics, except precision (mAP50 = 0.723, mAP50-95 = 0.507, P = 0.764, R = 0.652), while for LW-DETR, *Finetune Synth → Real* yields the highest mAP50-95 (0.480) and the WB variant leads on mAP50 (0.691) (see Table 1, Fine-tuning).

Ablation Table 1 includes paired white-background (WB) / non-WB runs and varying real-data fractions, allowing two factors to be isolated.

Effect of random colored background: Since the real images were captured against a static white background, synthetics rendered on non-white backgrounds carry an inherent appearance mismatch. Without any real data, synthetic data with white background still hurt performance (YOLO26 mAP50: −0.045; LW-DETR: −0.056; see Table 1, Baselines), indicating that matching the background alone is insufficient without a real-domain anchor. Once real images are present the effect reverses: at 25% infusion WB adds +0.050 mAP50 for YOLO26 (0.598 vs. 0.548), with further gains at 50% and 100% (+0.038 and +0.015; see Table 1, Synth + Real Mixed), while LW-DETR remains largely unaffected. The same pattern holds in the fine-tuning regime, where WB pre-training yields +0.043 mAP50 for YOLO26 but negligible change for LW-DETR (+0.001 mAP50 / −0.020 mAP50-95; see Table 1, Fine-tuning), suggesting the convolutional backbone is more sensitive to background appearance than the transformer-based architecture.

Effect of real-data fraction in mixed training: Increasing the proportion of real images in the infused regime consistently improves performance for both models (Table 1, Synth + Real Mixed). For YOLO26, mAP50 increases from 0.507 at 10% real data to 0.548 at 25%, 0.635 at 50%, and 0.691 at 100%. LW-DETR follows the same pattern, reaching 0.387, 0.512, 0.607, and 0.663, respectively. Across all real-data fractions, mixed training clearly outperforms the corresponding real-only setting. In addition, the 50% infused configuration already surpasses the 100% real-only baseline (mAP50) for both YOLO26 (0.635 vs. 0.610) and LW-DETR (0.607 vs. 0.535), suggesting that synthetic data offers a complementary benefit beyond simply compensating for limited real-data availability.

Qualitative analysis Figure 5 compares real-only and synthetic-augmented training under scarce data conditions. With

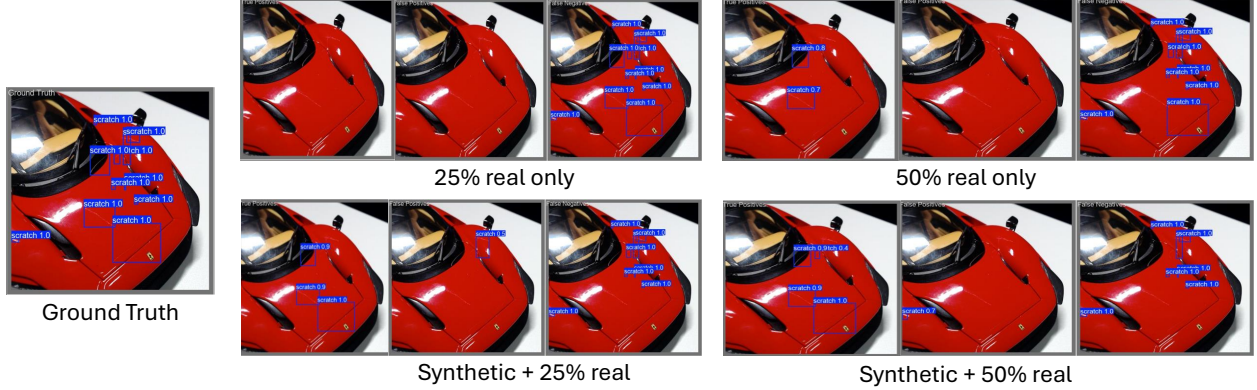


Figure 5: Qualitative detection results (toy Ferrari test set) comparing real-only versus synthetic-augmented training under scarce data conditions. Each column (left to right) shows a representative true positive, false positive, and false negative for four configurations: 25% real only, 50% real only, Synthetic + 25% real, and Synthetic + 50% real.

25% real data alone, the model fails to produce meaningful detections, resulting predominantly in false negatives. At 50% real only, some detections appear but false negatives remain frequent. Infusing synthetic data at 25% real already yields more true positive detections, and this further improves at 50% infused, with false negatives decreasing in both cases. This indicates that combining synthetic and real data has a clear positive impact even when real training images are scarce.

7.2 Experiments on the industrial grip datasets

This section presents results for the industrial grip datasets using YOLOX-S [11], selected for its permissive license suitable for commercial deployment. All models are evaluated on a separate test set of real images that the models have not seen during training.

Training regime Four training regimes are evaluated: purely synthetic, mixed (synthetic + real), fine-tuning (synthetic weights initialized and then trained on real data), and real-only as a baseline. Four synthetic dataset variants are considered, formed by combining two color modes (tricolour, randomcolour) with two camera modes (randomcam, tripod). Full details of each mode are provided in Section 5.

Table 2: AP and AR on the industrial grip test set across all training regimes using YOLOX [11]. Green (dark) = best result, Green (light) = second best.

Training Regime	Real		Synthetic		Mixed		Fine-tuned	
	AP	AR	AP	AR	AP	AR	AP	AR
real baseline	0.234	0.317	–	–	–	–	–	–
randomcolour_randomcam	–	–	0.089	0.145	0.275	0.359	0.319	0.389
randomcolour_tripod	–	–	0.011	0.030	0.217	0.314	0.282	0.354
tricolour_randomcam	–	–	0.196	0.243	0.316	0.396	0.303	0.384
tricolour_tripod	–	–	0.110	0.159	0.237	0.330	0.275	0.359

Quantitative analysis Table 2 summarizes average precision (AP) and average recall (AR) on the industrial grip test set of real images for all four regimes. For the mixed training results reported here, all available real images (120) were used; the effect of incrementally adding real data is examined separately in the ablation study. Training on synthetic data alone falls below the real baseline in all configurations. tricolour_randomcam comes closest with AP 0.196,

while `randomcolour_tripod` collapses to AP 0.011, highlighting the importance of randomised camera viewpoints as well as realistic coloring. Mixed training recovers performance across all variants and surpasses the real baseline clearly when `randomcam` variants are used, with `tricolour_randomcam` reaching AP 0.316 and AR 0.396. Fine-tuning proves to be the most consistent strategy, with all four variants exceeding the real baseline. `randomcolour_randomcam` achieves the best overall result of AP 0.319 and AR 0.389, and even the weaker tripod variants yield a meaningful gain over training on real data alone.

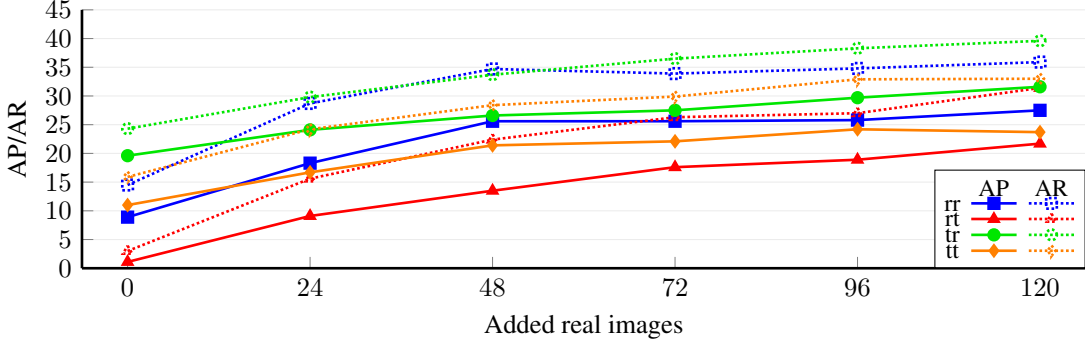


Figure 6: AP and AR as real images are incrementally added during mixed training for each training regime (rr: `randomcolour_randomcam`, rt: `randomcolour_tripod`, tr: `tricolour_randomcam`, tt: `tricolour_tripod`). The AP values are presented in this plot as percentages for better visibility.

Ablation The effect of incrementally adding real images to the synthetic training set is examined in Figure 6. A consistent trend is observed across all variants, where performance increases with more real data, though marginal gains diminish in later stages. `randomcolour_randomcam` (**rr**), while performing poorly as a purely synthetic model, improves substantially during the first two stages (up to 48 images), reaching performance comparable to `tricolour_randomcam` (**tr**) by that point. **tr**, which starts with superior metrics, improves more gradually but continues to gain throughout all stages, reaching only around 60% of its total improvement by stage two, compared to 90–95% for **rr**. We hypothesise that this difference stems from dataset balance. Since **tr** closely resembles real images, each additional sample further closes the domain gap without disturbing the distribution. **rr**, by contrast, benefits greatly from early real examples but begins to stagnate once real images exceed roughly 48, at which point they start to overrepresent the real domain and destabilize the mixed dataset.

Qualitative analysis In addition to the quantitative analysis, Figure 7 shows a selection of qualitative results across all three objects. For the silver object, the two combined training strategies closely mirror the ground-truth annotations, while `real_baseline` produces a false positive and a false negative, and `synthetic_tr` only produces a false positive. For the black object, one scratch is found by all models, a second is missed only by `real_baseline` and `synthetic_tr`, and the third is missed entirely. The red object represents the most difficult case, where two scratches go undetected across all models and `real_baseline` and `synthetic_tr` missing the third as well. Overall, the results highlight clear room for improvement while demonstrating the positive impact of combining real and synthetic data during training.

8 Conclusion

This paper presented a procedural rendering pipeline for annotated synthetic scratch data generation and evaluated four training strategies across two objects with differing material properties and three lightweight detectors. Results consistently show that synthetic-only training falls short due to the domain gap, yet synthetic data remains highly beneficial when combined with real images. Mixed training effectively recovers performance under scarce real-data conditions, while fine-tuning from synthetic weights proved the most robust strategy, outperforming real-only training across all architectures and datasets.

Despite these gains, fine and low-contrast scratches remain challenging across all strategies. Future work could explore higher-fidelity material simulation, advanced domain adaptation techniques, and active learning to prioritize the most informative real samples. The procedural nature of the pipeline also opens the door to simulating defects under challenging real-world conditions such as dust, mud, and contaminated or weathered surfaces, which are difficult and costly to capture in real annotated data. Extending the pipeline to other defect types and object geometries would further validate its generality.

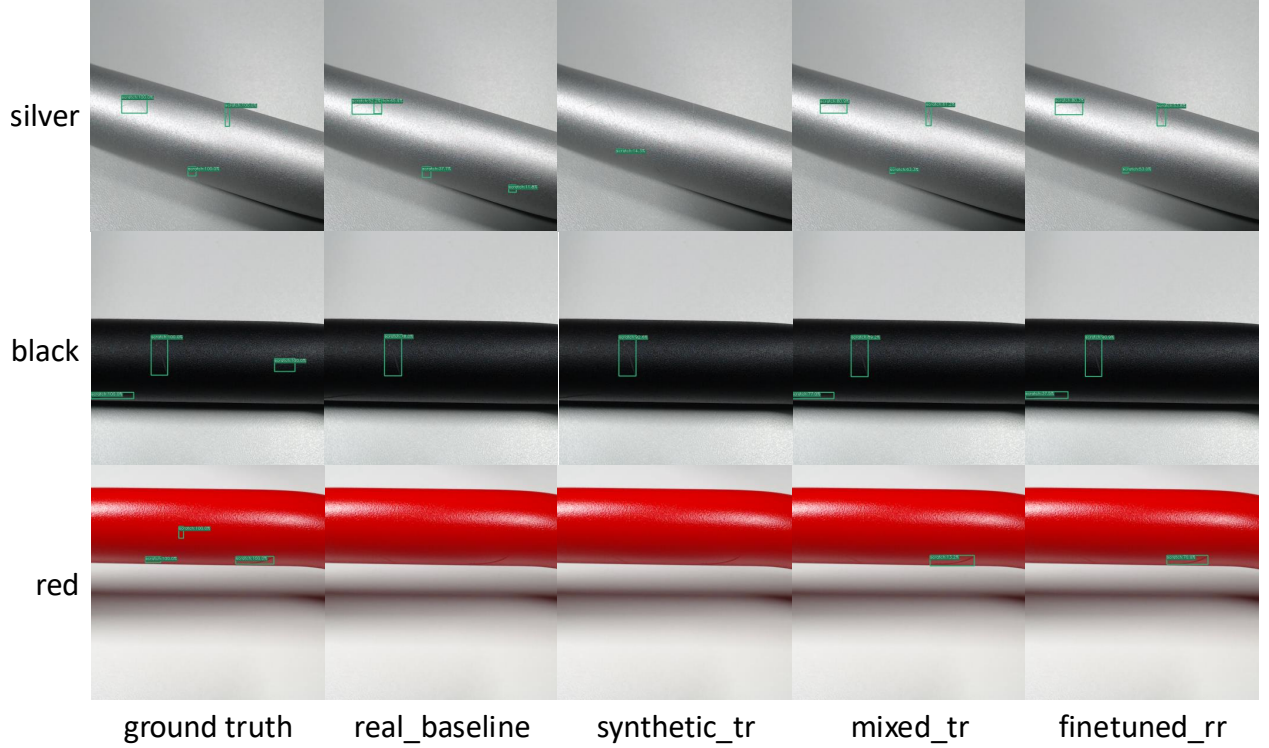


Figure 7: Qualitative results using industrial grip datasets. All images were created using a confidence threshold of 0.1 and a NMS (non-maximum suppression) threshold of 0.3.

Appendix

A Automatic annotations using our procedural pipeline

One of the major advantages of synthetic data is the ability to generate annotations automatically in the data generation pipeline. More precisely, it is necessary to know which pixels depict scratches and to use this information to create annotation data.

The applied scratch mask contains exactly this information, as it directly encodes which pixels of the resulting image contain scratches. The *AOV Output* node in the material graph is responsible for supplying this information after rendering. AOV stands for “Arbitrary Output Variables”; the node receives the applied scratch map as input and exposes it as an output accessible after rendering.

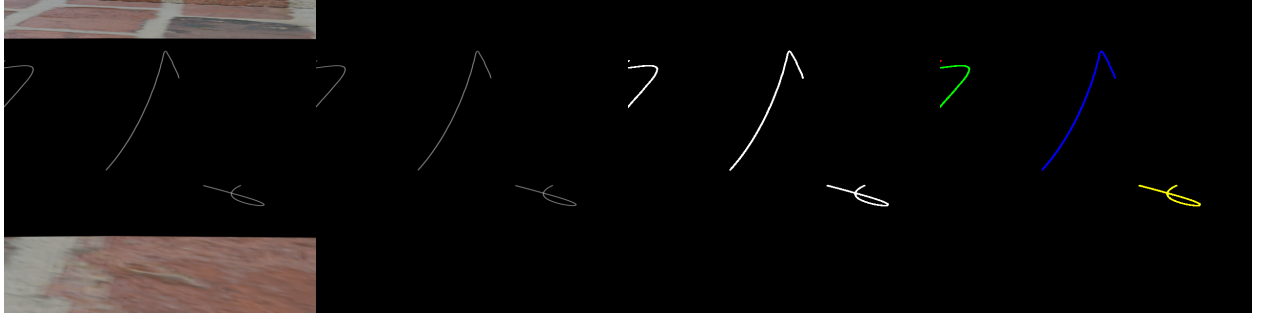


Figure 8: Stages of scratch annotation (left to right): scratch positions in the scene, as provided by the AOV Output node, converted to a binary representation, and individually labeled scratches.

The image data provided by the AOV node only returns the applied mask, coloring everything else black, as shown in fig. 8. To extract the needed information, the RGB image is converted into an array encoding each scratch pixel as 1

and everything else as 0. In practice, an array of the same size as the image is initialized with ones, and every pixel with a value of (0, 0, 0) or (1, 1, 1) is set to zero. A labeling function then assigns a unique label to each connected island of ones, so that each pixel is identified as either background or a specific scratch instance. This segmentation data is passed to the COCO annotation writer implemented in BlenderProc [6], which produces a .json file containing all annotations, including bounding boxes, required for detection tasks.

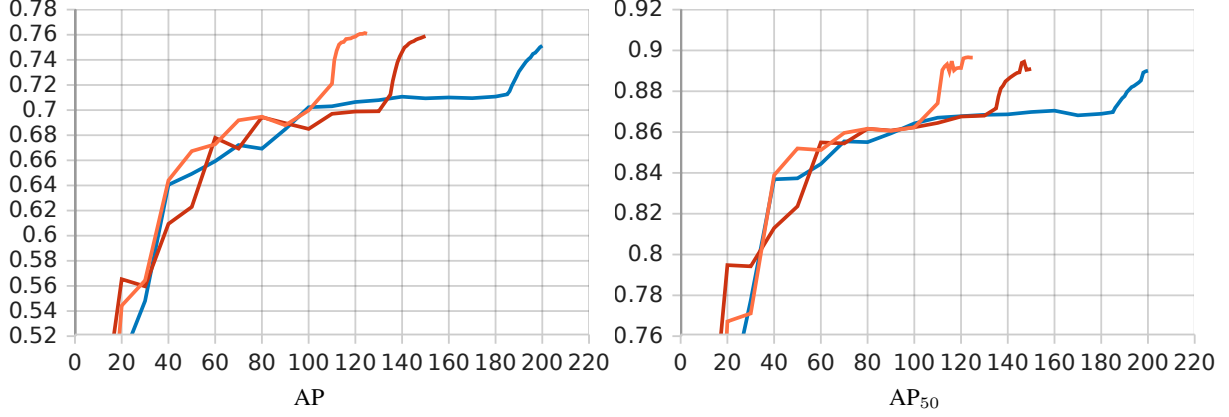


Figure 9: AP (left) and AP_{50} (right) of `synthetic_rr` on the industrial grip dataset, showing stagnation around epoch 125.

B Training Epoch Selection

To avoid overfitting to the synthetic domain, training runs were monitored by tracking AP and AP_{50} on the validation set throughout training. Figure 9 shows the stagnation curves for the `synthetic_rr` experiment on the industrial grip dataset. Both metrics plateau around epoch 125, after which gains become negligible. This value was therefore chosen as the maximum number of training epochs for all experiments. Analogous behaviour was observed across all other configurations.

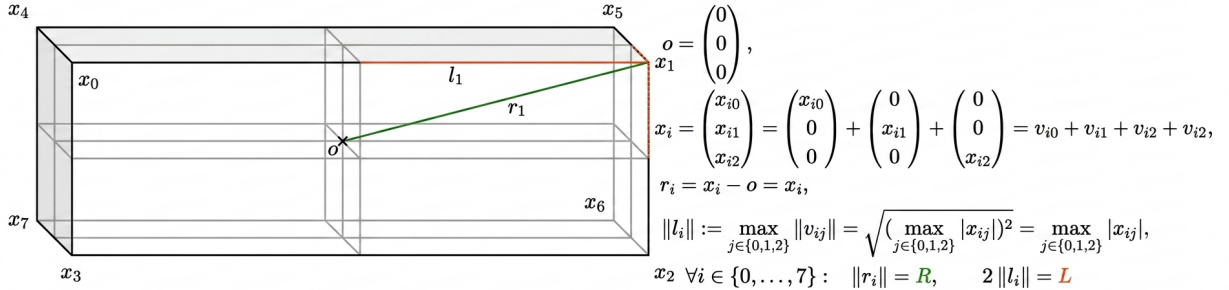


Figure 10: Reach and length computed from the bounding box after setting the origin to its centre.

C Object Positioning via Bounding Box

To correctly place and scale the object in the scene, its origin is set to the centre of its bounding box. All corner coordinates are then expressed relative to this centre in object space, making the geometry symmetric about the origin.

The model's length is computed as twice the maximum absolute corner coordinate. Dividing the real-world object length, supplied by the user via

`object_length`, by this value gives the scale factor required for a 1:1 ratio. The object's *reach* is defined as the maximum distance it can extend from its origin in any direction, equal to the distance from the origin to any bounding

box corner multiplied by the scale factor to convert to world space. This quantity is used throughout the pipeline to prevent the object from clipping into surrounding geometry. Both values are illustrated in fig. 10.

D Qualitative results

We present additional qualitative results on the toy Ferrari dataset to further illustrate how combining synthetic and real data, or fine-tuning on synthetic weights before real training, improves detection performance compared to training on real data alone, using YOLO26-Nano and LW-DETR-Tiny.

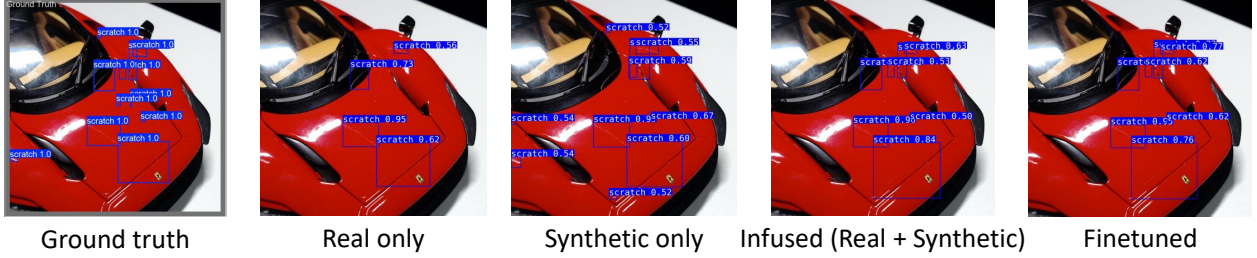


Figure 11: Qualitative detection results of LW-DETR-Tiny [13] on the toy Ferrari dataset with a confidence threshold of 0.5. Columns show, from left to right: ground truth, real only (100%), synthetic only, infused (Synthetic + Real 100%, white background), and fine-tuned (Synthetic (WB) $\rightarrow$ Real).

Figure 11 shows qualitative predictions from LW-DETR-Tiny across four training configurations. The real-only baseline produces the weakest results, with frequent missed detections. Synthetic-only training performs noticeably better, yielding more true positives. Infused training (Synthetic + Real 100%, WB) produces similar results to synthetic only, while fine-tuning achieves comparable performance with a slight reduction in false negatives, making it the most reliable configuration overall based on these results.

Figure 12 shows the same configurations at a reduced confidence threshold of 0.25. While lowering the threshold recovers some missed detections, it also introduces a notable increase in false positives across all configurations, indicating that LW-DETR-Tiny produces less calibrated confidence scores compared to YOLO26-Nano (see Figure 13).



Figure 12: Qualitative detection results of LW-DETR-Tiny [13] on the toy Ferrari dataset with a confidence threshold of 0.25. Columns show, from left to right: ground truth, real only (100%), synthetic only, infused (Synthetic + Real 100%, white background), and fine-tuned (Synthetic (WB) $\rightarrow$ Real).

Figure 13 shows qualitative predictions from YOLO26-Nano across the same four configurations. The results follow the same trend as LW-DETR-Tiny, with synthetic-only outperforming real-only and infused and fine-tuned configurations producing comparable results. However, YOLO26-Nano exhibits fewer false negatives overall, reflecting its stronger detection calibration at this threshold.

We present the full qualitative results of the scarce data analysis in Figure 14, covering all real-data fractions (10%, 25%, 50%, and 100%) alongside their synthetic-infused counterparts.



Figure 13: Qualitative detection results of YOLO26-nano [12] on the toy Ferrari dataset with a confidence threshold of 0.25. Columns show, from left to right: real only (100%), synthetic only, infused (Synthetic + Real 100%, white background), and fine-tuned (Synthetic (WB) $\rightarrow$ Real).

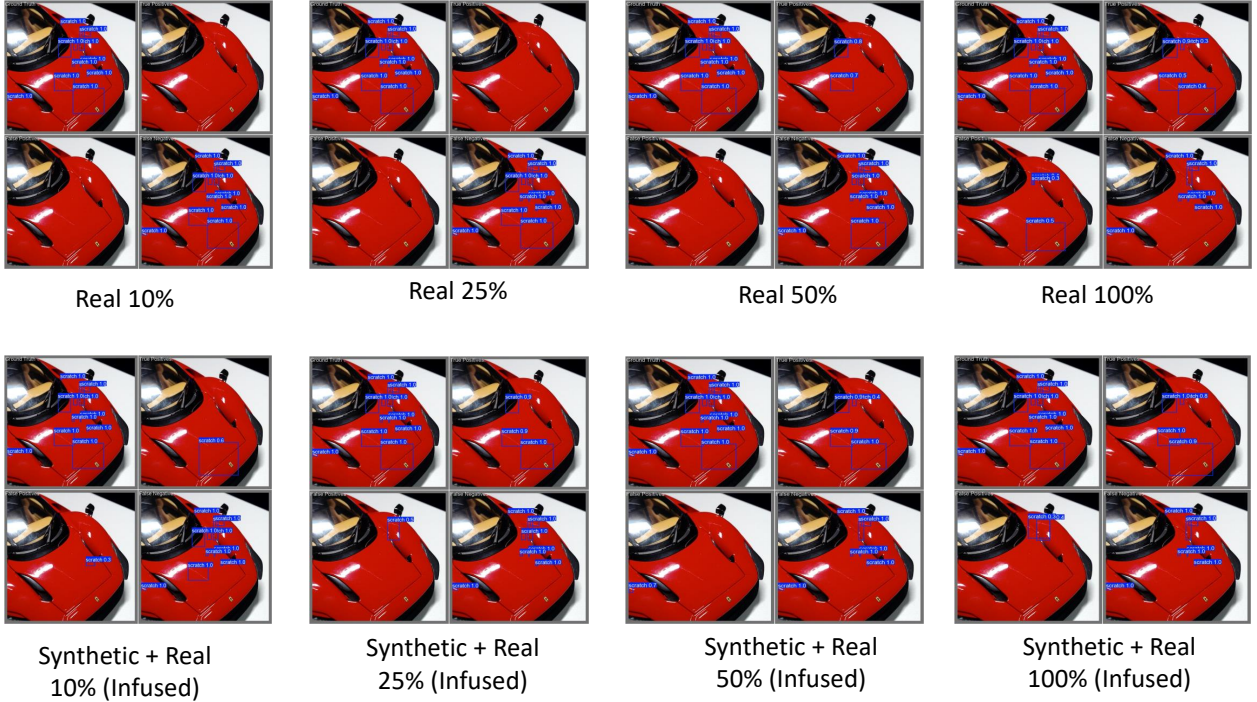


Figure 14: Qualitative detection results of YOLO26-Nano [12] on the toy Ferrari dataset. Columns show, from left to right: Real 10%, Real 25%, Real 50%, Real 100%, Synthetic + Real 10% (Infused), Synthetic + Real 25% (Infused), Synthetic + Real 50% (Infused), and Synthetic + Real 100% (Infused).

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