Recovering Shape by Purposive Viewpoint Adjustment

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Abstract

We present an approach for recovering surface shape from the occluding contour using an active (i.e., moving) observer. It is based on a relation between the geometries of a surface in a scene and its occluding contour: If the viewing direction of the observer is along a principal direction for a surface point whose projection is on the contour, surface shape (i.e., curvature) at the surface point can be recovered from the contour. Unlike previous approaches for recovering shape from the occluding contour, we use an observer that *purposefully* changes viewpoint in order to achieve a well-defined geometric relationship with respect to a 3D shape prior to its recognition. We show that there is a simple and efficient viewing strategy that allows the observer to align their viewing direction with one of the two principal directions for a point on the surface. This strategy depends on only curvature measurements on the occluding contour and therefore demonstrates that recovering quantitative shape information from the contour does not require knowledge of the velocities or accelerations of the observer. Experimental results demonstrate that our method can be easily implemented and can provide reliable shape information from the occluding contour.

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1 Introduction

There has been considerable interest in recovering information about the structure of a scene from sequences of images, assuming an observer in motion (e.g., work on optical flow [1] and shape-from-motion [2]). One common feature of these approaches is the use of known viewer motion in order to recover quantitative properties of the scene such as surface curvature [3]. Recently, however, there has been considerable interest in employing simple observer behaviors that either make the recovery of scene properties easier [4, 5, 6], or combine simple behaviors in order to perform complex tasks such as navigation and obstacle avoidance [7, 8, 9, 10]. These approaches rely on maintaining specific geometric relationships between the observer and the environment. However, without knowledge of viewer motion they only recover qualitative information about the viewed scene (e.g., relative depth ordering with respect to the fixated scene point [11]).

This paper presents a new approach that combines the above two paradigms in order to recover surface curvature from the occluding contour. We show that shape for a selected point on the viewed surface can be recovered from the occluding contour of two views. The only requirements are that (1) the surface point is projected on the occluding contour in both views, and (2) the viewing direction of the observer for one of the views has a specific relationship with the surface geometry at the selected point. The main idea of our approach is to use an active (i.e., mobile) observer that purposefully changes viewpoint in order to achieve such a well-defined geometric relationship with respect to a 3D shape prior to its recognition. We show that this relationship is characterized by specific image-computable quantities and enables an analysis similar to the one of Krotkov [12]. In addition, our approach does not require any knowledge of observer velocities or object models and assumes the use of a world-centered coordinate frame [4].

It is a well-known fact that the occluding contour is a valuable source of information about surface shape [13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18]. The occluding contour is the projection of the visible rim, the one-dimensional set of points that separates the visible from the hidden parts of a surface. There have been several approaches to deriving information about surface geometry from the occluding contour. These approaches are based on three important properties of the contour's geometry:

- The geometry of the occluding contour is surface-dependent
- The occluding contour is the projection of a limited set of surface points
- The geometry of the occluding contour is viewpoint-dependent

The dependency of the occluding contour's geometry on the surface has been investigated by several researchers. In fact, it has been shown that the geometry of the occluding contour severely constrains that of the underlying surface [13, 14, 16, 19]. The major problem, though, is that the occluding contour is created through a projection process and in general the information it provides is ambiguous, i.e., several different surface rims can project to the same occluding contour. This has been the major motivation for using the occluding contour to derive qualitative rather than quantitative information about the surface shape [16, 20, 21, 19]. On the other hand, approaches that derive quantitative shape descriptions from the occluding contour assume that additional information is available in order to adequately constrain the shape recovery process [22, 3, 14]. Such approaches require other means for deriving the additional shape information. For example, Cippola and Blake [3] use a moving observer to change viewpoint and measure the relative accelerations of image features near the occluding contour in order to measure surface curvature. Even though their approach is not very sensitive to errors in viewer motion, they assumed the existence of image features near the occluding contour and knowledge of the viewer's translational velocity.

The second property of the occluding contour suggests that it can provide only a limited amount of information about the complete shape of the surface. Indeed, the vast majority of visible surface points does not project to the occluding contour. If the only information available is the occluding contour of the surface from a particular viewpoint, then we can only hope to derive a qualitative description for the shape of the entire surface. For example, Barrow and Tenenbaum [13] attempted to constrain the recovery problem using additional smoothness assumptions about the surface but these assumptions do not hold in general.

The dependency of the occluding contour on viewpoint has been used to resolve both of the above ambiguities. A slight change in viewpoint will affect the geometry (i.e., curvature) and possibly the topology of the rim, and hence the occluding contour. Moreover, the set of rim points changes and therefore new constraining information about the surface shape becomes available. It has been shown that if we know how the occluding contour changes with viewpoint, we can derive a parameterization of the surface and determine its shape [14]. The issue here is how to accurately measure such changes in the contour's geometry when the viewing direction changes smoothly. For example, we must be able to measure how quickly surface points enter and leave the rim, a problem that requires the measurement of accelerations of image features in the vicinity of the rim [3], as well as knowledge of the viewer's velocity.

The basic assumption used by all of the above approaches was that the viewing direction is *arbitrary*. This means that the viewing direction is not related in any way to the geometry of the rim or the occluding contour. (For example, there are surfaces for which their rim is planar when viewed from a particular set of directions [17].) This is a reasonable approach, however, only if the observer cannot control their direction of gaze. When the observer has the ability to control their viewing direction, the choice of viewpoint(s) does not have to be arbitrary. Our approach uses an active observer to obtain a view based on the observed object's geometry in order to recover exact shape information from the occluding contour.

1.1 Active Shape Recovery

Our goal is to actively derive a quantitative shape description for surface points in the vicinity of the rim. We accomplish this goal by using properties of the occluding contour. The basic step of our approach involves selecting a point on the rim and recovering the surface shape (i.e., principal curvatures and principal directions) at that point. In addition, we present a strategy for applying this shape recovery step to neighboring surface points. The surface description is therefore incrementally extended by successively including new points on the rim and recovering the surface geometry for those points.

The main step of our approach is based on a relation between the geometries of a surface in a scene and its occluding contour: If the viewing direction of the observer is along a principal direction for a selected surface point whose projection is on the contour, the corresponding principal curvature at the point can be recovered. Hence, even though in general surface curvature calculation from the occluding contour of a single view is an underconstrained problem, for any given point there do exist viewing directions that make this recovery problem well-defined. If the observer can move to one of those special viewing directions, the ambiguities caused by the projection process can be resolved. We show that the observer can in fact deterministically find these special viewing directions by simply maximizing or minimizing a geometric quantity of the occluding contour (curvature at a point) while changing viewing direction in a constrained way. Furthermore, we show that we can recover the shape of the surface at the selected point (i.e., both principal curvatures) from the occluding contour of one additional view for which the selected point is projected onto the contour. Thus an active observer selects a point on the surface rim and purposefully moves to one of the special viewpoints in order to make shape recovery a well-defined problem.

The significance of our method lies in the use of purposive observer motion to achieve and maintain purely geometrical relations between a surface and its occluding contour in order to recover surface shape. Hence, there is no need to perform any velocity or acceleration measurements in the vicinity of the rim, a process requiring point-to-point correspondences in the images and precise knowledge of viewer motion. Furthermore, since there is a well-defined procedure to reach the desired viewpoint, the observer does not need to perform a complicated search in order to find it [23, 24].

Even though our approach is limited to the recovery of surface shape in the vicinity of a single point on the rim, we show that there is an important special case for surfaces of revolution, for which we can derive shape information for the complete set of rim points. In this case the observer actively "aligns" themself with the viewed surface in order to find a viewpoint giving complete surface information (i.e., one perpendicular to the axis of rotation).

We also present an extension to the above approach that recovers the shape of points in the vicinity of the rim. After the shape of a selected rim point is recovered, the observer changes viewpoint in order to bring a new surface point onto the rim and to recover its shape. Since our basic shape recovery step involves aligning the observer's viewing direction with one of the principal directions at the new point, it is important for this visual alignment process to require only small viewpoint adjustments. We show that if (1) the new point selected is in the normal plane of the previously selected point, and (2) the new point is sufficiently close to the previously selected point, then these adjustments will in fact be small and their extent will depend entirely on the intrinsic properties of the surface. This is a major difference from approaches using "passive" motion, where the points selected for reconstruction cannot be controlled.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. The next section reviews basic terminology. Section 3 discusses the relation between the geometries of the occluding contour and the

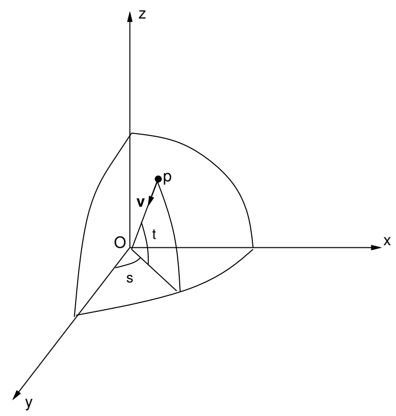

Figure 1: Viewing direction v is represented as the point $p = (\cos t \cos s, \cos t \sin s, \sin t)$ with $s \in [0, 2\pi), t \in [0, \pi)$.

surface, and presents the major result enabling us to actively recover surface geometry from the occluding contour. Section 4 uses this result to describe the main shape recovery step of our approach. Our results are then extended in the following two sections. Section 5 discusses shape recovery for the case of surfaces of revolution, and Section 6 describes the viewing strategy used to select a new point for shape recovery. Finally, Section 7 presents experimental results on synthetic images to demonstrate the applicability of our theoretical results.

2 Viewing Geometry

Let S be a smooth, oriented surface in $\Re^3$, viewed under orthographic projection along a viewing direction ξ. Viewing directions be can thought as points on the unit sphere S^2, with s and t being the slant and tilt of the camera respectively (Figure 1).

Let x be a parameterization of S and $p = x(u, v)$ be a point on S. The partial derivatives $x_u(p), x_v(p)$ of x with respect to u and v define $T_p(S)$, the plane tangent to S at p. The *rim* of S is the set of those points p for which $T_p(S)$ contains a line parallel to ξ. The *occluding contour* of S is the projection of the visible rim on the image plane (Figure 2). The shape of the occluding contour depends on S and the viewing direction. Our goal is to use this contour information to recover a description for the parameterization x at points of S in the vicinity of the corresponding rim points.

Local surface shape (i.e., curvature) is completely expressed by the first and second fundamental forms of S with respect to x [25, 26]. Specifically, let $N(p) : S \rightarrow S^2$ be the Gauss map of S, assigning a unit normal vector $N(p)$ in the direction of the vector product $x_u \wedge x_v$ at every point $p \in S$. The normal section of S along a direction ξ in $T_p(S)$ is the plane curve produced by intersecting S with the plane of ξ and $N(p)$. The second fundamental form, $II(p)$, gives an expression for the curvature of this curve at p. $II(p)$ has a single maximum and minimum, k_{n_1} and k_{n_2}, along the principal directions e_1 and e_2, respectively. We can use these two quantities, called the principal curvatures of S at p, to compute the curvature of the normal sections along any other direction using Euler's formula:

$$k_n(\phi) = k_{n_1} \cos^2 \phi + k_{n_2} \sin^2 \phi \tag{1}$$

where ϕ is the angle between the new direction and e_1. Hence, we can recover the local shape

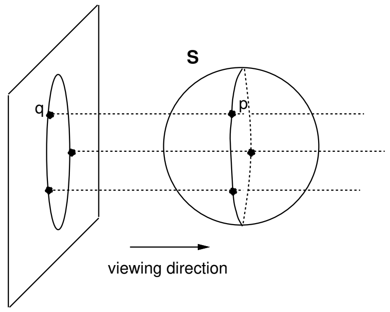

Figure 2: Point p on the rim of the sphere S is projected to the occluding contour point q on the image plane.

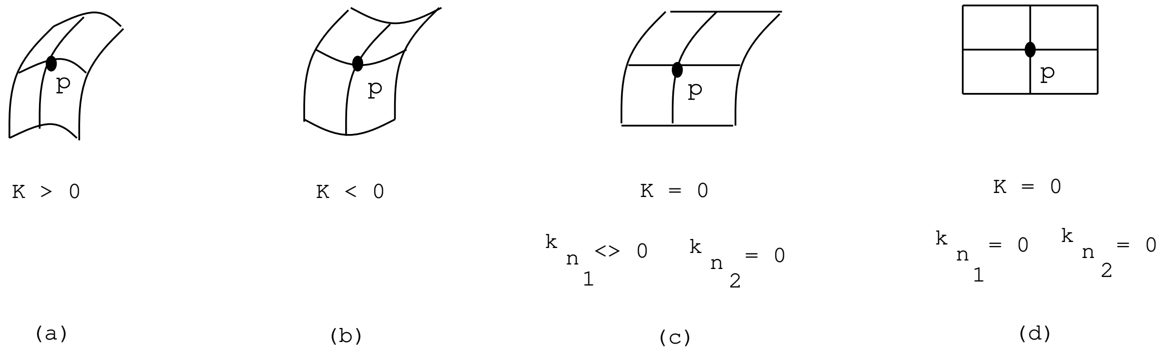

Figure 3: Classification of the surface point p based on K: (a) p is elliptic, (b) p is hyperbolic, (c) p is parabolic, and (d) p is planar.

of S completely from the principal curvatures of S. A qualitative description of the local shape of S can be given by looking at the sign of their product $K = k_{n_1} k_{n_2}$, the Gaussian curvature of S at p (Figure 3).

Our goal is to recover the principal directions and principal curvatures at selected points on S. We will assume that p is not an umbilic point, i.e. a point where all directions are principal directions. In the vicinity of non-umbilic points there exists a special parameterization $x(u, v)$ of S such that the tangents to the curves $x(u, v_0)$ and $x(u_0, v)$ (u_0, v_0 constant) are along the principal directions. These curves are called *lines of curvature* and their properties are intrinsically related to the underlying surface. Therefore they serve as a natural basis for describing a surface [27, 28]. In the rest of the paper x will refer to such a parameterization.

The geometry of a point on the occluding contour and the information we can derive from it depends on whether the point is a projection of an elliptic, hyperbolic or parabolic point. This qualitative classification is therefore especially important in order to evaluate the results of our approach.

3 Local Surface Geometry from Occluding Contour

The problem of recovering surface geometry from the occluding contour has been mainly studied under the assumption that the viewing direction is *arbitrary*. This means that the viewing direction is not related in any way to the geometry of the rim or the occluding contour. For example, there are surfaces for which their rim is planar when viewed from a particular set of directions [17]. The assumption that the direction of gaze is arbitrary immediately excludes such viewpoints from consideration since the rim is not always planar [26]. This is a reasonable assumption, however, only if the observer cannot control their direction of gaze. Unfortunately we can only derive a limited amount of information from the occluding contour when this assumption is in effect.

Let p be a point on the visible rim of S when viewed from direction ξ and let q be its projection on the image plane. There are three main results describing what can be recovered from the shape of the occluding contour under orthographic projection and from an arbitrary viewing direction:

- We can recover the surface orientation at p (i.e., $T_p(S)$ or $N(p)$) from ξ and the tangent to the occluding contour at q. This is because, by definition, $T_p(S)$ contains both ξ and the tangent to the occluding contour [13].

- Let k_o be the curvature of the occluding contour at q. Then k_o and the Gaussian curvature K of S at p have the same sign [16, 27].

- If k_n is the normal curvature of S at p along ξ, then $K = k_n k_o$ [16, 27, 14].

Similar results hold for perspective projection where the plane of projection is not positioned at infinity, and for the case where $k_o = 0$ [27]. Because K is defined as the product of two curvatures on the surface (i.e., k_{n_1}, k_{n_2}), these results suggest that if we know k_o then we only need to measure one curvature on the surface instead of two. In fact k_n and k_o determine the second fundamental form at p. This was the main idea behind the surface reconstruction approach of Cipolla and Blake [22, 3].

The above results are important but they also imply that if we have no additional information about the shape of the viewed surface, the information provided by the occluding contour is primarily qualitative. However, when the observer can actively control their viewing direction, they can exploit the existence of directions that allow the derivation of complete information about the surface. We show this by presenting three simple corollaries to a result of Blaschke [26]. Blaschke's result is analogous to Euler's formula and relates the curvature of the occluding contour with the principal curvatures of S at the rim:

Theorem 1. (Blaschke) *Let ϕ be the angle between ξ and e_1. Then,*

$$k_o^{-1}(\phi) = k_{n_1}^{-1}\sin^2\phi + k_{n_2}^{-1}\cos^2\phi \tag{2}$$

Corollary 1. *If ξ is along the principal direction e_1 at p, then $k_o = k_{n_2}$* [1,2].

Corollary 2. *Let ξ, ξ' be two distinct viewing directions in $T_p(S)$ from which p is visible, and let k_o, k_o' be the curvatures of the occluding contour at the projections of p. If (1) $K \neq 0$ at p, (2) $\xi = e_1$, and (3) the angle between ξ and ξ' is known, then we can compute k_{n_1}, e_2, and K at p.*

Corollary 3. *Let p be a non-umbilic point on the visible rim of S with $K \neq 0$. Let $\phi \in [0, 2\pi)$ be the angle between $\xi \in T_p(S)$ and e_1. (1) If p is elliptic, the function $k_o(\xi)$ takes its minimum and maximum values only when ξ coincides with one of the principal directions. (2) If p is hyperbolic, $k_o(\xi)$ is well-defined only when $|\phi| < \arctan\sqrt{\frac{k_{n_1}}{-k_{n_2}}}$ for $\phi < \pi$, or*

[1]The corollaries also hold for e_2 and k_{n_2}.

[2]This is also mentioned in [26].

$|\phi| - \pi < \arctan\sqrt{\frac{k_{n_1}}{-k_{n_2}}}$ *for* $\phi \geq \pi$*. For these directions,* $k_o(\xi)$ *takes its maximum value when* ξ *coincides with* e_1 *and it has no minimum value.*

Proof: If ξ is along e_1, $\phi = 0$ in Eq. (2). Corollary 1 immediately follows. For Corollary 2, note that k_{n_2} is derived using Corollary 1, and the fact that ϕ is known. Since $K \neq 0$, Eq. (2) is well-defined and we can use it with k_{n_1} as the unknown. The other principal direction is also computable since e_2 must lie on $T_p(S)$ and be perpendicular to ξ. In fact, ξ is perpendicular to the rim even though this does not hold in general [26].

Finally, the derivative of $k_o(\phi)$ is

$$k_o'(\phi) = \left(\frac{1}{k_{n_2}} - \frac{1}{k_{n_1}}\right) \frac{\sin 2\phi}{\left(k_{n_1}^{-1}\sin^2\phi + k_{n_2}^{-1}\cos^2\phi\right)^2} \tag{3}$$

In the case of an elliptic, non-umbilic point, $k_{n_1} \neq k_{n_2}$ and therefore k_o' becomes 0 for $\phi = 0$ or $\phi = \pi/2$, i.e., when ξ is along a principal direction. If p is hyperbolic, the expression in the denominator tends to 0 as ϕ approaches $\arctan\sqrt{\frac{k_{n_1}}{-k_{n_2}}}$ which is the angle between e_1 and the asymptote of the surface at p. In the interval $[\arctan\sqrt{\frac{k_{n_1}}{-k_{n_2}}},\ \arctan\sqrt{\frac{k_{n_1}}{-k_{n_2}}} + \pi]$ p becomes occluded and therefore $k_o(\phi)$ is undefined. In the interval where $k_o(\phi)$ is defined, Eq. (3) shows that $k_o(\phi)$ has a maximum only for $\phi = 0$ or $\phi = \pi$. □

Corollary 1 suggests that the principal directions at p form a special set of directions providing explicit information about surface geometry in the vicinity of p. Now assume that we are viewing p from a particular viewing direction and can measure the curvature of the occluding contour at p's projection. If somehow we can adjust our viewing direction to coincide with a principal direction at p and know what this adjustment is, Corollary 2 shows that we can derive the second fundamental form of S at p. This solves the shape recovery problem for p. The most important result is given by Corollary 3. It shows that the problem of finding the principal directions at a point can be treated as a simple maximization (or minimization) problem. We describe the implications of this result in the next section and show how it can be used by an active observer to find the principal directions at p.

4 Recovering the Local Geometry of a Surface Point

The basic step of our surface reconstruction approach is to select a point on the occluding contour and recover the local surface geometry for its corresponding rim point. We do not address the point selection problem directly. The reason for this is that we cannot decide *a priori* which point on the occluding contour will prove the most useful. This will depend on the context in which this approach is used. However, there are specific types of points for which our reconstruction method may not work. Therefore, our task will be to select a point on the rim for which we can ensure that our approach is effective. Below we first outline the main ideas, and in Section 6 present more details.

4.1 The Active Reconstruction Approach

Suppose we have selected a point p on the rim. For simplicity we will assume that p is at the origin. Corollary 3 says that if p is a non-umbilic elliptic or non-umbilic hyperbolic point, there are only two viewing directions in $T_p(S)$ for which k_o obtains a local maximum value (i.e., those for which the angle with e_2 is 0 or π) and two directions for which k_o obtains a local minimum. Our goal is to find one of these directions since they correspond to e_1 and e_2. We discuss the problem of finding e_2; e_1 is treated similarly.

Viewing directions in the plane $T_p(S)$ can be thought as points on a unit circle C, defined by the intersection of S^2 centered at p with $T_p(S)$ (see Figure 4). As the observer changes viewing direction on $T_p(S)$, the corresponding point moves on C. Our goal is to smoothly move this point on C until the viewpoint with maximum k_o is found. To do this we must answer two questions: (1) Which direction should the observer move on the unit circle, and

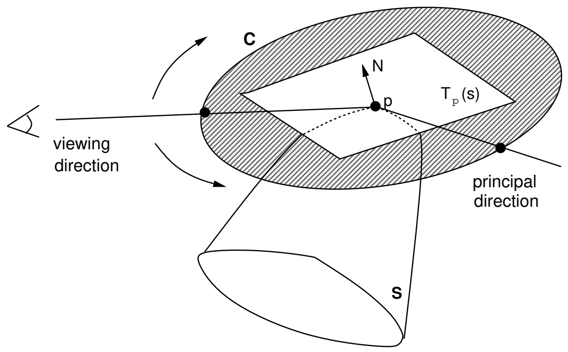

Figure 4: Viewing directions on $T_p(S)$. Viewing directions correspond to points on the unit circle C lying on $T_p(S)$ and centered at p.

(2) how can the observer detect when the viewing direction is equal to e_2 ?

We only have two possibilities for moving on the unit circle, either clockwise or counter-clockwise. Obviously, we prefer the minimal motion solution in which the desired extremum is attained with the smallest possible change in viewing direction. From Corollary 3 we know that if we move in the direction of increasing k_o, the first extremum we reach is a maximum. It easily follows from the local geometry of elliptic and hyperbolic points that this strategy will in fact produce the smallest viewing direction change (Figure 5). On the other hand, parabolic points do not have this property.

The second question, detecting when the viewing direction is equal to e_2, is partly answered by Corollary 3. It says that we can detect this event by detecting a local maximum of k_o. However, in order to detect this local maximum, p must be visible; k_o cannot be measured otherwise. The visibility of p is affected by the local surface geometry at p as well as by the global geometry of S. Ignoring for a moment the case where p is occluded by some distant point on S, we arrive at the following two conclusions: (1) If p is elliptic, we can align the viewing direction with either e_1 or e_2. Furthermore, the maximum possible direction change

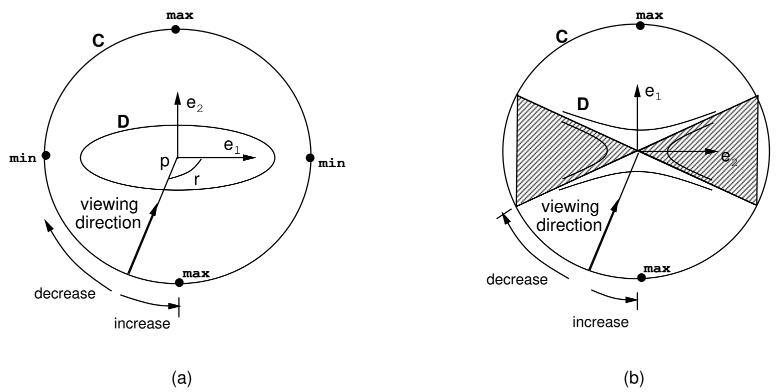

Figure 5: Finding the principal directions. Top views of the tangent plane are shown. The axes represent the principal directions, and the origin corresponds to the point of contact, p, with the surface. The viewing direction makes an angle r with the first principal direction. C represents the set of viewing directions on the tangent plane and D is Dupin's indicatrix for p. (a) p is an elliptic point. Clockwise change in viewing direction decreases k_o. The viewing direction can change by at most $\pi/2$ before a local minimum or a local maximum is reached. (b) p is hyperbolic. The only achievable extremum is a local maximum, obtained in this case by a counterclockwise rotation. Shaded areas, delimited by the asymptotes of the point, represent the directions where p is occluded. The maximum viewing direction change before an extremum is found in this case decreases to the angle between e_1 and the asymptotic directions. (Note that the axis labels have been reversed.)

before the alignment takes place is $\pi/2$ (Figure 5(a)). (2) If p is hyperbolic, we can align the viewing direction only with e_1. The maximum possible direction change in this case is determined by the point's asymptotes (Figure 5(b)).

These results suggest a simple algorithm to align the observer's viewing direction with e_2:

Step 1: Perform a small change of viewing direction on $T_p(S)$ and measure the difference between the previous and current value of k_o. If it increases then continue to change the viewing direction in the same way so that e_2 will be reached first. If it decreases, move the viewing direction in the opposite way.

Step 2: Continue moving in the same direction until k_o reaches a maximum. This viewpoint corresponds to e_2 and therefore the observer can stop moving and use the current value of k_o for k_{n_1}.

Step 3: Measure the total change of direction between the initial and final viewing direction. Corollary 2 says that this angle along with k_{n_1} and the initial value of k_o can be used to determine k_{n_2}.

4.2 Selecting Surface Points for Reconstruction

Any observer motion minimizing or maximizing k_o must take into account the effects of global surface geometry: Irrespective of its local structure, p may become occluded by distant points on S. The following proposition shows that (a) there are at least some points on the visible rim of S that cannot be occluded by S if the observer changes direction as described above, and (b) these points are easily detected on the occluding contour (Figure 6).

Proposition 1. *(1) Let p be a visible, elliptic point on the rim of a smooth surface S when viewed from direction ξ under orthographic projection. Let q be the projection of p in the image plane and let l be the tangent to the occluding contour at q. Then, p is visible from every direction on $T_p(S)$ iff l does not intersect the occluding contour and is not tangent to it at any point other than q.*

(2) Let C be the occluding contour of S when viewed from direction ξ. Then there is at least one point on S projected in C that is visible from every direction in $T_p(S)$.

Proof: (1) (*Only If*) Consider the intersection of S with $T_p(S)$. If the intersection contains only the point p, then the intersection of any line $m \in T_p(S)$ with S will either be empty or equal p. Recall that while changing viewing direction, $T_p(S)$ is viewed "edge-on" and its projection is the line l. Since l is the projection of all lines in $T_p(S)$ (except those lines parallel to ξ), it follows that l will only intersect the occluding contour at q.

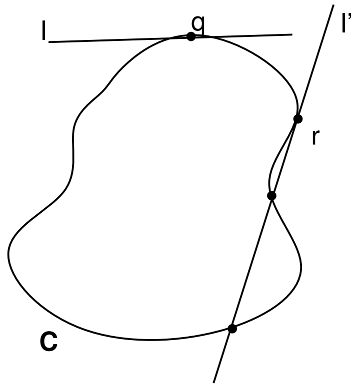

Figure 6: Determining the complete visibility of rim points. Since the tangent at q does not intersect the occluding contour elsewhere, q corresponds to a rim point visible from every direction in its tangent plane.

(*If*) Assume there is a viewing direction in $T_p(S)$ from which p is not visible. Let ξ' be the first such direction while moving clockwise (Figure 7). The viewing direction ξ' must contact S at p and at least one more point, say s. Now consider the intersection of S with $T_p(S)$. The intersection will consist of a set of closed curves and isolated points. Since p is elliptic there must exist a small disk in $T_p(S)$ centered at p that does not contain any other points of S. Therefore p and s must be in different components. We distinguish two cases, namely whether s is an isolated point or a point on a curve. If s is an isolated point then $T_p(S)$ must be tangent to S at s. But then s is also part of the rim when viewed along the original direction ξ. In addition, s must be on the visible rim because it is the first point that occludes p when changing viewing direction from ξ to ξ'. This implies that the projection of an imaginary line joining s and p will contact the occluding contour at two points, the projections of s and p.

If s is not an isolated point, let $Q \subseteq S \cap T_p(S)$ be the closed curve containing s. Now consider the family of lines parallel to ξ. One line of the family will contact Q, say at point r. This point, by definition, must be on the rim of S. It must also be on the visible rim,

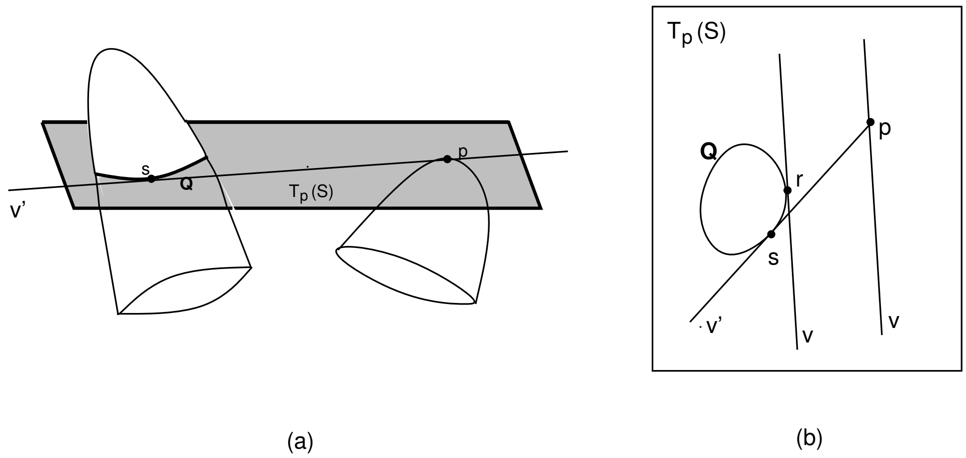

Figure 7: The effects of global occlusion. (a) A "side" view of $T_p(S)$. Viewing direction v' is the first direction in which p becomes occluded. s is the point occluding p from that direction. Q is the component of $S \cap T_p(S)$ containing s. (b) A "top" view of the tangent plane of S at p. v is the original viewing direction.

since otherwise the surface points occluding it would have already occluded p. Therefore the projection of the imaginary line joining s and p must contact the occluding contour at at least two points. $\square$

(2) Consider any point q on C that is also contained in the convex hull of C. Since C cannot be a straight line, q is by definition the only point in common between C and the tangent at q. But then q also satisfies the conditions of (1) above. $\square$

Figure 8 shows the results of applying Proposition 1 to the occluding contour of a candlestick. The proposition implies that the only points ensuring the correctness of the algorithm are elliptic. However, this is a *necessary* requirement for the presence of occlusion but not a *sufficient* one. This means that there are cases where the geometry of hyperbolic points can be recovered with our approach. In fact, shape recovery for hyperbolic points requires less observer motion on average since the extent of the visibility of these points is limited by their asymptotic directions.

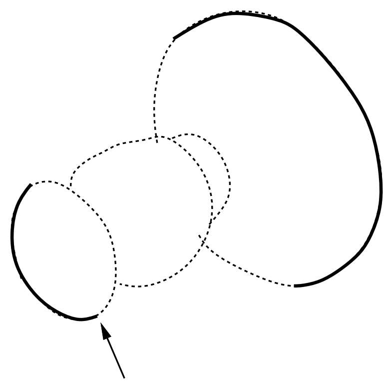

Figure 8: Selecting points for surface recovery. Solid lines on the occluding contour of a candlestick show the points that cannot become occluded while changing viewing direction in their tangent planes. The arrow indicates the point having the greatest curvature of all acceptable points.

5 Surfaces of Revolution

In the last section we presented an algorithm for recovering the shape of a single point on the surface rim. However, there are surfaces for which the local shape of a single rim point reveals global properties of the surface. Surfaces of revolution present an ideal example of such surfaces. The properties and appearance of surfaces of revolution and their generalizations have been studied extensively [27, 25, 29, 17, 30, 31, 28, 18]. Here, we focus on the specific relation between their global structure and the local shape of points on the rim.

Surfaces of revolution are formed by rotating a planar curve around a straight axis that does not meet the curve. Therefore, we can completely describe a surface of revolution by the axis and the generating curve. Approaches for recovering the axis of a surface of revolution have been mainly geared towards detecting symmetries in their occluding contour or outline [17], or utilizing their viewpoint-invariant properties [29, 30, 32]. The problem with detecting symmetries in the occluding contour is that the existence of such symmetries depends on viewpoint. On the other hand, the identification, detection and utilization of viewpoint-invariant properties is a non-trivial task. For example, in [32] the axis was recovered using a Hough transform-based technique. However, such a technique largely depends on the number of rim points actually detected. In addition, the axis is severely foreshortened for near-"top" views of a surface of revolution (i.e., when the viewing direction is almost parallel to the axis of rotation), limiting the applicability of methods relying on a single, arbitrary view to precisely recover the axis. Our active approach neatly lends itself to these problems in order to make them easier to handle. The idea is that if the viewer can align the viewing direction with a principal direction of a rim point, then shape and symmetry analysis of the occluding contour becomes especially simple. This is because one of the principal directions corresponds to a "side" view of the surface (i.e., a view for which the viewing direction is perpendicular to the axis of rotation). If the generating curve of the surface can be written in the form $y = f(x)$, then the recovery of the axis of rotation allows us to recover the generating curve directly from a side view. Even further, the surface rim from such a view is guaranteed to be completely visible. In the rest of this section we focus on surfaces of revolution whose generating curve has this property.

Consider a point p on the rim of a surface of revolution when viewed from an arbitrary direction (Figure 9(a)). The two principal directions at p correspond to the tangents to the parallel and the meridian passing through p. Since the parallel is a planar curve, if the visual ray is tangent to the parallel at p it is contained in the plane of the parallel. Hence, it is perpendicular to the axis of rotation and the view corresponds to a side view of the surface. The occluding contour from such a side view is symmetric. Therefore, the axis of rotation (as well as the generating curve) can be recovered by simply using existing symmetry-seeking approaches (e.g., [29]) which are well-defined for such a viewpoint. However, the direction and position of the axis can also be constrained by recovering the principal curvatures corresponding to the parallels for two points on the rim of a side view (Figure 9(b)). This

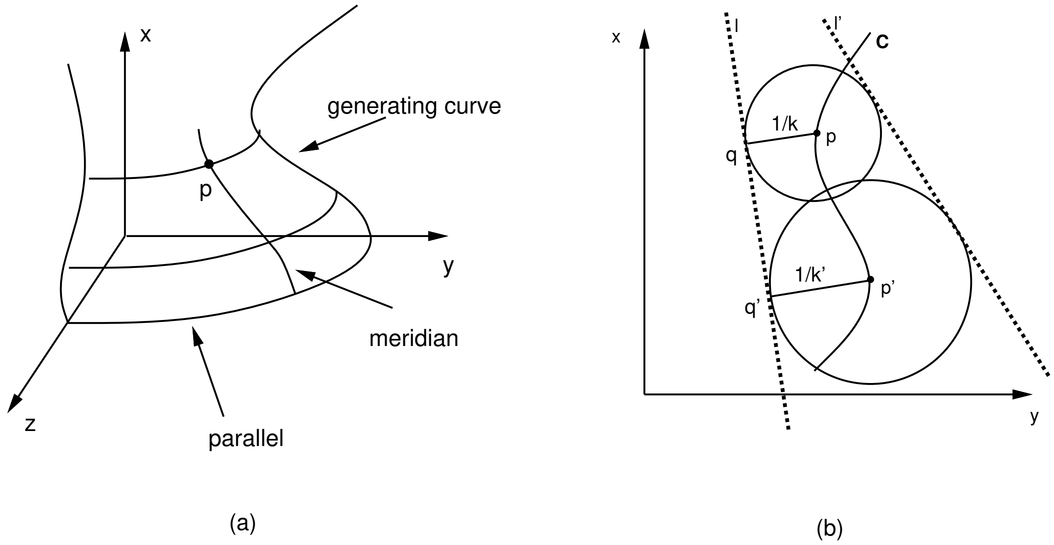

Figure 9: (a) A surface of revolution. The x-axis is the axis of rotation. (b) Constraining the axis of rotation from the principal curvatures of two rim points from a side view. Let the principal curvature corresponding to the parallels at p and p' be k and k' respectively. The distance of p and p' from the axis is $1/k$ and $1/k'$. The axis must also be perpendicular to the lines along pq and $p'q'$ since they are the projections of the planes of the parallels. Therefore the axis must be tangent to the circles of radius $1/k$ and $1/k'$, centered at p and p' respectively. There are at most two such lines that do not intersect the occluding contour C. The direction of the axis is the normal of the plane defined by the viewing direction and the line through pq.

approach is similar to one used by Richetin *et al.* [31] where the geometry of the occluding contour at two parabolic points was used to hypothesize the pose for surfaces that are straight homogeneous generalized cylinders.

The observer must choose between moving towards the principal direction of minimum curvature or moving towards the one of maximum curvature. Although the curvature extremum corresponding to a side view for a selected point is not known *a priori*, this choice is easy if the visible rim contains hyperbolic points. Recall that the only principal direction from which these points are visible is the direction of maximum curvature and that if the generating curve of the surface can be written in the form $y = f(x)$, then these points must be visible from a side view of the surface. Hence, the observer can select one hyperbolic point and align the viewing direction with the principal direction of maximum curvature (Corollary 3).

It is also easy to show a more general property of surfaces of revolution with this type of generating curve: If the viewing direction smoothly changes on the tangent plane of a selected rim point, this point will not become occluded if the viewing direction is approaching the direction of a side view. This fact can be used to decide how to change viewing directions on the tangent plane in order to approach a side view of the surface when no hyperbolic surface points are visible.

Our discussion above deals with a specific type of surface of revolution. However, it can be generalized to an arbitrary surface of revolution and to the case of straight homogeneous generalized cylinders where the axis is perpendicular to the cross-section. Consider the case where the observer selects a rim point that belongs to a parallel that is also a geodesic. If such parallels exist on the surface, our approach can be used to obtain both the top and the side views of the surface as well as its axis. Consider the case where the generating curve of the surface of revolution cannot be written in the form $y = f(x)$ (e.g., a torus). In this case, we can still recover the axis of rotation from the side view using occluding contour symmetries, and find points on the generating curve for which the tangent to the generating curve is parallel to the axis. These points belong to parallels that are geodesics and their principal directions correspond to the side and top views of the surface. Therefore, the observer can align their viewing direction with the top view for any type of surface of revolution.

Points on the rim that belong to geodesic parallels are also important because they can be used to recover the axis of surfaces of revolution and straight homogeneous generalized cylinders. The surface normal at these points lies on the plane of the parallels. The viewing direction corresponding to a side view also belongs to this plane. Therefore, we can recover the plane of the parallels. Since the axis of rotation is normal to this plane we can also recover the direction of the axis of the surface. It is in fact possible to detect such a point on the rim if it exists (without having already determined the axis).

The next section extends our basic shape recovery step by (1) selecting a new point on the surface in the vicinity of the previously selected point, and (2) applying the shape recovery step presented in Section 4 to the new point. We also briefly discuss how this two step approach can be used to select rim points that belong to geodesic parallels.

6 Extending Surface Recovery to Neighboring Points

Our main objective is to recover the complete shape description for a single rim point. In this section we consider an extension to this approach—selecting a new point and applying the shape recovery process to that point. We must consider two important issues in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of such an extension:

- The extent of the viewing direction adjustments needed to align the viewing direction with one of the principal directions at the newly selected point.
- The extent of the viewing direction adjustments *required* by our basic shape recovery algorithm in order to produce reliable shape information for the newly selected point. This is because if the viewing direction adjustment is close to zero, then numerical problems are introduced in the calculations of the principal curvatures from Corollary 2.

We will discuss the issue of selecting new points for shape recovery based on these two issues. The process has as a primary goal the removal of the first point from the rim and its replacement by a new point at which the first step will again be applied.

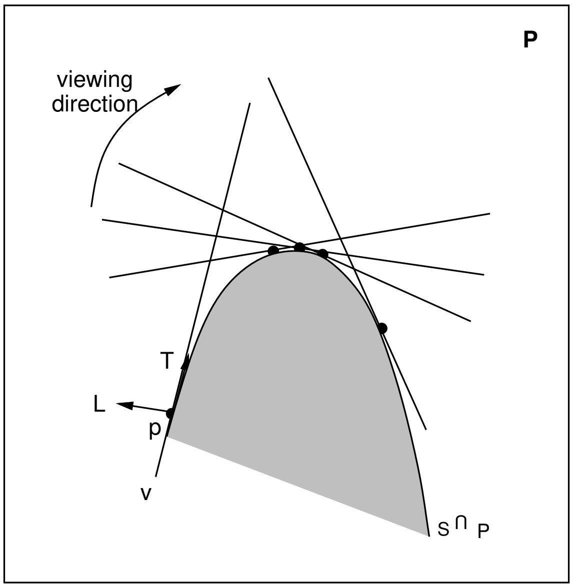

Figure 10: Removing p from the rim. The figure shows the intersection of a selected plane P with the surface. The viewing direction ξ changes in P and the visual rays graze the surface along the curve $\beta(s) = S \cap P$.

Let p be the previously selected point. After applying the shape recovery step, the viewing direction ξ of the observer is aligned with one of the principal directions at p, say e_2. We have seen that if we change directions in $T_p(S)$, p will not leave the rim. Therefore, we must change viewing direction in some other plane containing e_2. The important issues here are (1) which plane should be selected for changing the viewing direction, and (2) how much should the viewing direction change in that plane? The motivation for our approach is to ensure that the shape recovery step for the new point will need only small viewing direction adjustments. In other words, we require that the new viewing direction does not form a large angle with one of the principal directions at the new point.

Suppose we have selected a particular plane P passing through p and containing e_2, and that we continuously change viewing direction in that plane. As the viewing direction changes, the visual ray contained in P will graze the surface along a curve $\beta(s)$ also contained in that plane (Figure 10). Now suppose that we stop at a new viewing direction ξ'. The visual ray will now be tangent to $\beta(s)$ at some new surface point. The shape recovery step will now be applied to this point, attempting to align the viewing direction with e_2 at the point. We must therefore examine how the angle of $\beta'(s)$ with e_2 varies along s. The basic idea is to examine the properties of $\beta(s)$ in light of the following efficiency and reliability requirements:

- The efficiency requirement is that $\beta(s)$ should always form an angle with e_2 that is as close to 0 as possible. This means that we require $\beta(s)$ to approximate a line of curvature.

- The reliability requirement is that $\beta(s)$ should form an angle of at least ϕ^*, for some predetermined constant ϕ^* that depends on the reliability of the shape recovery step. This means that we require $\beta(s)$ to form an angle of at least ϕ^* with the lines of curvature corresponding to e_2.

The compromise between these two requirements is to require $\beta(s)$ to form an angle of exactly ϕ^* with the corresponding lines of curvature. This means that $\beta(s)$ is a *loxodrome* for the surface, i.e., a line on S that forms a constant angle with the lines of curvature. Therefore we should trace S along such a curve while changing viewing directions.

We show in the Appendix that if the selected plane P is the normal plane (i.e., the plane defined by the viewing direction and the surface normal at p) and if the viewing direction change on this plane is small, then the viewing direction adjustments during the shape recovery step will in fact be smooth and depend entirely on intrinsic properties of the surface. Specifically, we show that these adjustments are (to a first approximation) proportional to the geodesic curvature of the lines of curvature at p and inversely proportional to the normal curvature of the lines of curvature at p. This is an important result because it allows us to predict the performance of our active viewing strategy based on knowledge of the intrinsic properties of the surface.

As an example, consider the case of surfaces of revolution. Suppose that the viewing direction of the observer is aligned with the principal direction corresponding to the parallels. Now suppose that the observer changes viewing direction on the normal plane at p and eventually selects a new point p' for shape recovery, as outlined above. If p belongs to a geodesic parallel, no viewing direction adjustments will be necessary during the shape recovery step at p', i.e., the viewing direction is also tangent to the parallel through p'. On the other hand, if the geodesic curvature of the parallel through p is non-zero, some viewing direction adjustments will be necessary. In fact it can be shown that if the observer repeats this process and selects points $p', p'', p''', \ldots$, these points will asymptotically approach a geodesic parallel if such a parallel exists. To illustrate this, let us assume for simplicity that the axis of the surface of revolution is vertical and the point initially selected is p. Then, it is easy to see that the new point selected will be below $T_p(S)$ if the surface normal is pointing upwards. This means that the new point will be on a parallel below the parallel through p. Therefore if there is a geodesic parallel below the parallel through p, the points selected will approach the geodesic parallel.

7 Experimental Results

In this section we demonstrate the applicability of our active shape recovery approach. We have implemented a prototype system that (1) automatically selects points on the rim of an object, (2) tracks these points while changing viewing direction on their tangent plane, and (3) computes the curvature of the occluding contour at the selected points in order to detect the viewpoints where it obtains an extremum value. Figure 11 shows the two object models used in our experiments. Our experiments were performed by synthetically generating

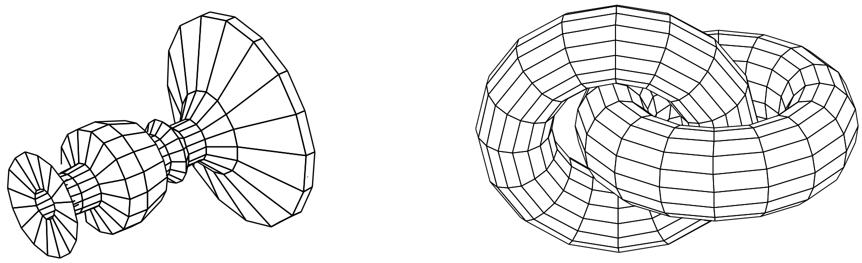

Figure 11: Models used for the experiments.

images given a polyhedral object model and an observer constrained to move only in a circle of viewing directions around the object. The occluding contour of the model for the current viewing direction was displayed and updated as the viewing direction changed smoothly.

The system allows interactive rotation of an object with a single degree of freedom [33]. Therefore, viewing direction changes were constrained to lie on a predetermined plane Π. In our examples this plane is defined by a horizontal line in the image plane and the viewing direction (i.e., the projection of this plane to the image plane is a horizontal line). Recall that the process of aligning the viewing direction with a principal direction at a point requires that the viewing direction changes on the point's tangent plane (Figure 4). Hence, the one degree of freedom in rotation allowed us to detect the principal directions only for points tangent to Π. Our system automatically identified these points by finding the points where the occluding contour was tangent to a horizontal line. These points were automatically detected, labeled and subsequently tracked while the viewing direction changed smoothly (Figure 12).

Point tracking was performed using a simple algorithm. Note that since the viewing direction changes on the plane tangent to the selected points, they will always remain in view and the occluding contour will always be tangent to a horizontal line at these points. We use

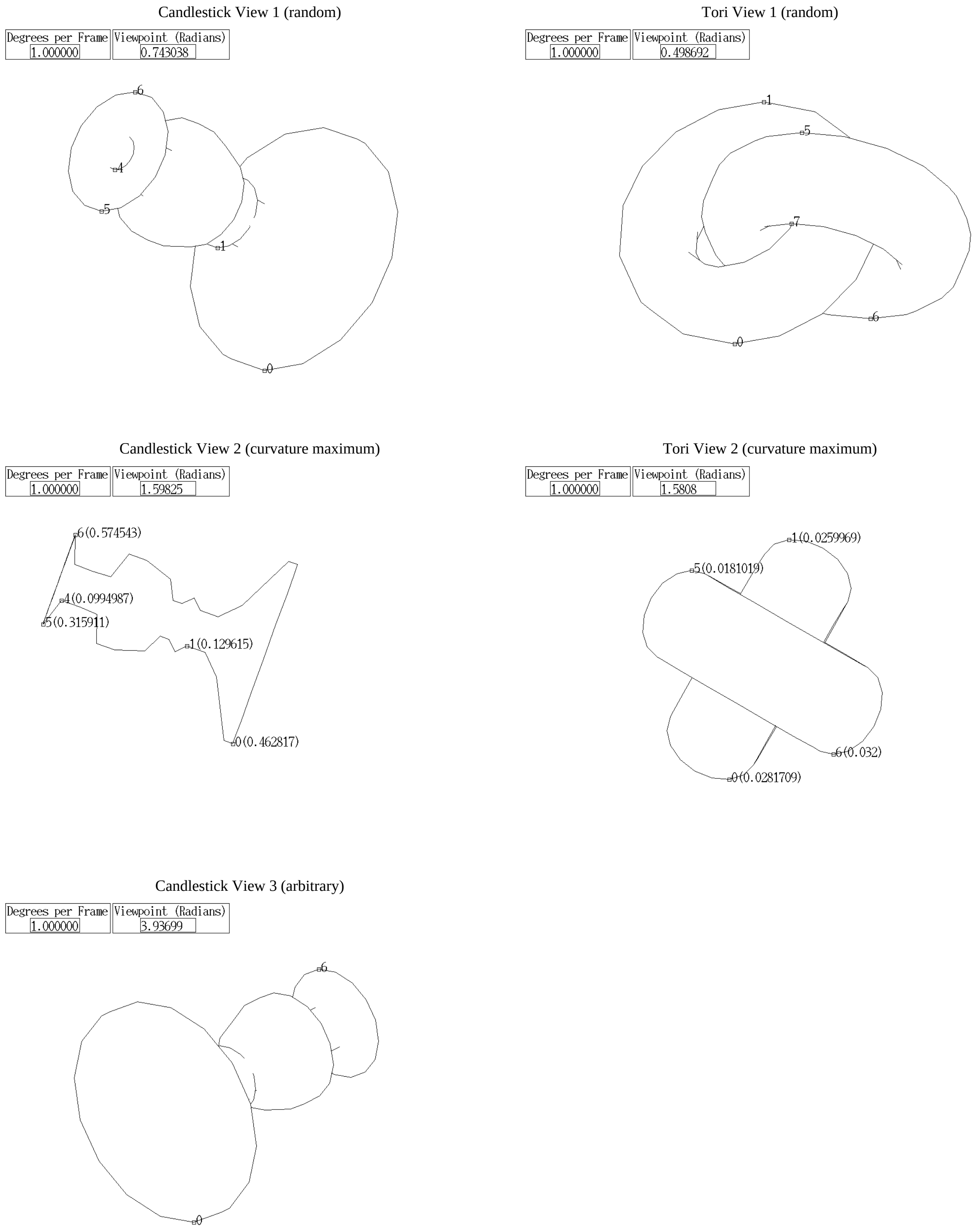

Figure 12: Snapshots of the occluding contour of the two models as the viewing direction changes. The numbered points are the points being tracked. Views 1 and 3 correspond to arbitrary views of the candlestick (left) and the tori (right). View 2 corresponds to the view where the curvature of the occluding contour at the selected points is maximum (shown next to each of the points).

this observation to track points in subsequent frames by searching for points on the occluding contour having horizontal tangents in the vicinity of the previously selected points. Occlusion is detected when this simple tracking step fails. Figure 12 shows some of the tracked points for the two models. The points were initially selected and labeled for the viewing direction $\xi = 0$. Note in View 1 of the candlestick, the only remaining unoccluded points are the points $0, 1, 4, 5$ and 6. Also, note that after a rotation of 3.93 radians the only unoccluded points are the points 0 and 6, exactly as predicted by Proposition 1 (i.e., the tangents to the occluding contour at these points do not intersect the contour).

Computing the curvature of a piecewise linear curve is a non-trivial problem; our goal however, was only to estimate how the curvature at the selected points varies with viewpoint. For this purpose, the occluding contour in the vicinity of the detected points was approximated with cubic B-splines [34] and the curvature was measured at the points where the tangent to the spline was horizontal. Even though splines have the effect of smoothing high curvature parts of a curve, we found that even with the actual rim curvatures being underestimated the curvature maxima were very distinct. In the case of polyhedral models, smooth viewpoint changes can result in an arbitrary number of model vertices entering and exiting the polyhedral rim. Hence, the shape of the rim changes in a very discontinuous fashion, a problem not encountered with smooth surfaces where topological changes of the rim are not as frequent. This fact resulted in discontinuities in the curvature estimates, which ideally should vary continuously with viewpoint. However, Figure 13 shows that the major peaks and valleys of the curvature estimates are clearly visible even in the presence of the discontinuities caused by the polyhedral approximation.

Figure 13 also shows how the absolute value of the curvature of the occluding contour at the selected points varies with viewpoint. Note that the candlestick and the torus are surfaces of revolution. Therefore, a "side" view corresponds to the viewing direction that is a principal

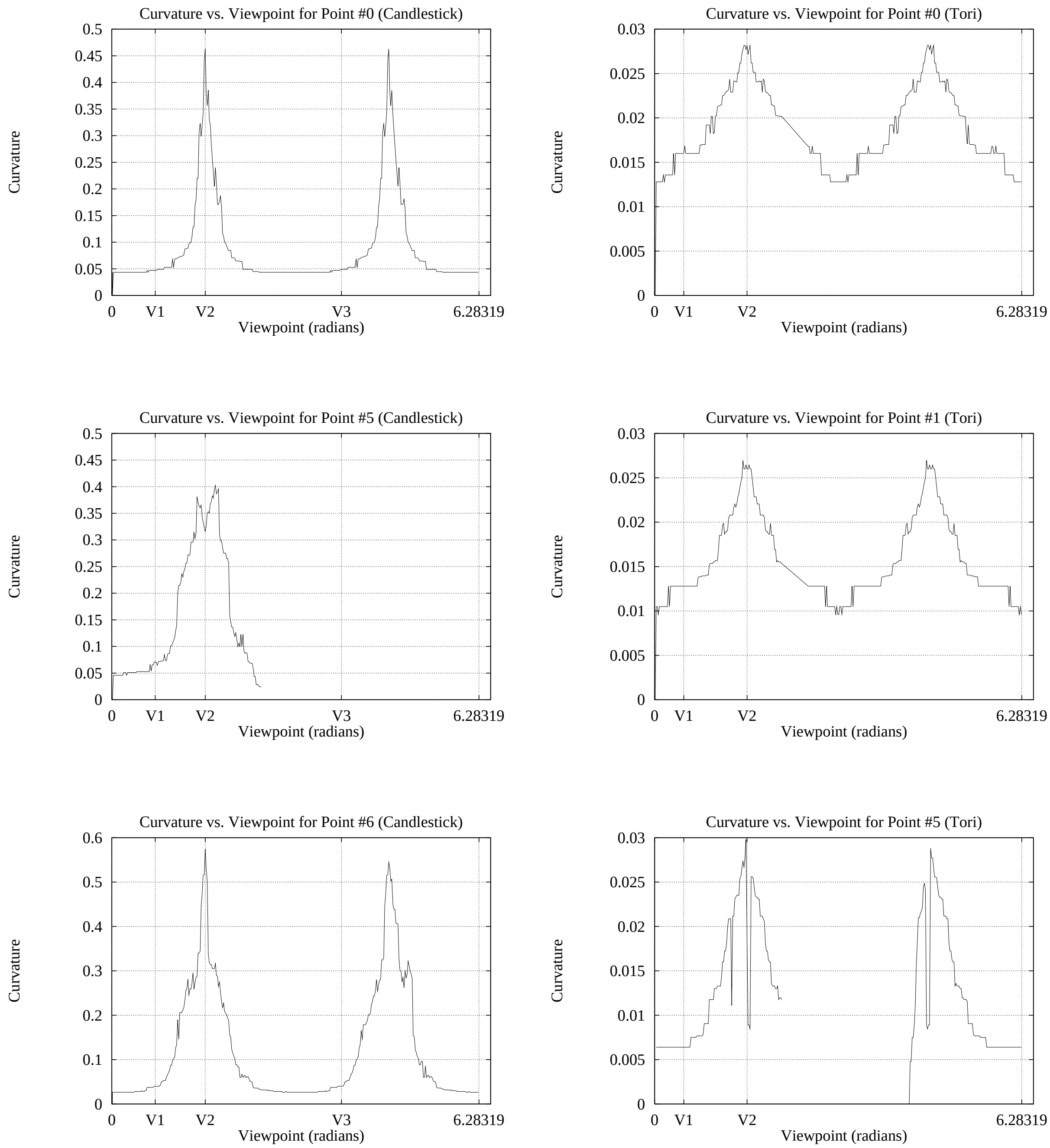

Figure 13: Curvature variations with respect to viewpoint at the selected points on the occluding contour. The models (candlestick on the left and tori on the right) were rotated a total of 2π radians. The curves for point 5 on the candlestick and on the tori end at the viewpoint where their occlusion is detected. The curve for point 5 on the tori spans the complete interval for which the point is visible

direction for all points on their rim (i.e., the direction is tangent to the surface parallels). This is illustrated by the fact that the curvature maxima and minima occur at the same viewing directions for the selected points. View 2 of the candlestick and the tori corresponds to the appearance of the contours at the points where the curvature at the selected points obtains a maximum. The views in fact correspond to side views of the surfaces as expected. Also, note that in the case of the candlestick, the curvature maxima are much larger than the minima (over an order of magnitude), whereas in the case of the tori the extremal values are not very different. This is because the difference in the values of the principal curvatures at the selected points on the candlestick is much larger than for the two tori.

8 Conclusions

We have demonstrated that an active observer can follow a very simple viewing strategy to recover exact shape information at selected rim points. Furthermore, this strategy is based purely on the computation of a simple property of the occluding contour (curvature at a point). Our experimental results show that this strategy is readily implementable and because of its simplicity and its low computational requirements, is very suitable for real-time implementation.

The use of an active observer is the most crucial aspect of our approach. The observer's ability to *purposefully* change viewpoint enables them to reach the special viewpoint where the shape of the occluding contour provides complete and exact surface shape information. Moreover, our approach demonstrates that recovering quantitative shape information from the occluding contour does not necessarily require knowledge of the velocities or accelerations of the active observer. The reason is that observer motion is not used to merely change the shape of the occluding contour (as in the existing approaches), but it is used to change it in a well-defined way, factoring out the need for differential measurements involving viewer motion. This is a major step towards qualitative, active vision, allowing the use of a world-centered coordinate frame and incomplete knowledge of the observer's motion.

We believe that our active approach of moving towards viewpoints that are closely related to the geometry of the viewed surfaces is a very important and general one. Consider, for example, the problem of obtaining a "face-on" view of a planar curve (or a texture element). This problem has been studied extensively in the past and several approaches exist that *hypothesize* planar views of the surface, based on information from a single viewpoint (e.g., [35, 36]). We are currently investigating an approach similar to the one presented in this paper that enables the observer to change viewpoint in order to obtain a face-on view of the contour.

Appendix: The Extent of Viewing Direction Adjustments

Let us assume we have recovered the principal curvatures at p and the viewing direction ξ is along the principal direction e_2 at p. Now assume that the observer changes viewing direction on the plane of ξ and the surface normal at p in order to introduce new points to the rim. We show that the viewing direction adjustment that will be needed during the shape recovery step is proportional (at a first approximation) to k_{g_2} and inversely proportional to k_{n_2}, the geodesic and normal curvatures of the line of curvature corresponding to e_2. This is an important result because it allows us to predict the performance of this active viewing strategy based on intrinsic properties of the viewed surface. It follows that the performance of our strategy smoothly degrades as the surface becomes more complicated (i.e., k'_{g2} and k'_{n_2} become large). We first present some concepts from differential geometry for the study of curves on surfaces.

The Local Geometry of Surface Curves

Let $\alpha(s) : I \rightarrow \Re^3$ be a curve parameterized by arc length (i.e., $|\alpha'(s)| = 1$). Consider the unit tangent and unit normal vector, $t(s)$ and $n(s)$ respectively, at point $\alpha(s)$. We can describe the curve with two quantities, its curvature $\kappa(s)$ and torsion $\tau(s)$, where $\alpha''(s) = \kappa(s)n(s)$ and $(t(s) \wedge n(s))' = \tau(s)n(s)$. The vectors $t(s), n(s), t(s) \wedge n(s)$ describe an orthogonal coordinate frame, the *Frenet frame* centered at $\alpha(s)$. This coordinate frame can be used to locally describe the curve based on the values of κ and τ at $\alpha(s)$.

Now let S be a smooth, oriented surface, and let $\bar{\alpha}(s)$ be a smooth curve on S. We can locally describe $\bar{\alpha}(s)$ using a coordinate frame similar to the Frenet frame called the *Darboux frame* (Figure 14). Consider a point p on $\bar{\alpha}(s)$. The Darboux frame is defined by $N(p)$, the normal to the surface, $T(p)$, the tangent to $\bar{\alpha}(s)$, and $V(p) = T(p) \wedge N(p)$. Note that the $T - V$ plane is the plane tangent to S. The vector $\bar{\alpha}''(s)$ defining the curvature of $\bar{\alpha}(s)$ can be

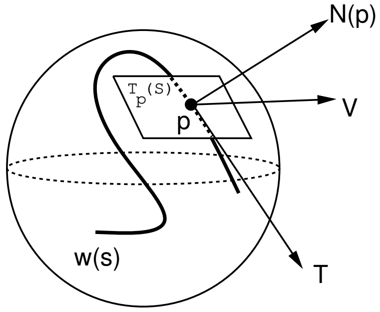

Figure 14: The Darboux Frame. $w(s)$ lies on a sphere S, and p is a point of $w(s)$. $N(p)$ is the surface normal, $T = w'(s)$, and $V = T \wedge N(p) \in T_p(S)$. The Darboux frame is the orthonormal coordinate frame of T, V, N.

analyzed in terms of two components, a tangential component (i.e., on $T_p(S)$) in the direction of V, and a normal component in the direction of N. Therefore we can define the curvature of $\bar{\alpha}(s)$ in terms of the curvatures of its projections k_g, k_n on the tangent plane of S and on the $T - N$ plane, respectively. k_g is called the *geodesic curvature* of $\bar{\alpha}(s)$ and k_n is the curvature of the normal section of S in the direction of T. Intuitively, the geodesic curvature measures how "far off" the $T - N$ plane the curve actually lies. We show that the geodesic curvature of the lines of curvature is closely related to the strategy employed by the observer to select new points for shape recovery. Intuitively, the geodesic curvature of the lines of curvature measures how the arc length of a curve in the e_1 direction changes as one moves along the e_2 direction.

The curve $\bar{\alpha}(s)$ can be locally described by the vectors T, N, V and their derivatives. These derivatives can also be expressed in terms of the three frame vectors:

$$\frac{dT}{ds} = k_g V + k_n N \tag{4}$$

$$\frac{dV}{ds} = -k_g T - \tau_g N \tag{5}$$

$$\frac{dN}{ds} = -k_n T + \tau_g V \tag{6}$$

where τ_g is called the *geodesic torsion* of $\bar{\alpha}$.

The Dependence of the Viewing Direction Adjustments on k_{g_2}

Intuitively, the dependence on k_{g_2} is not unexpected: Recall that k_{g_2} measures how far off the plane of ξ and $N(p)$ the line of curvature actually lies. On the other hand, the curve $\beta(s)$ traced by the visual ray that originally passed through p lies on that plane (Figure 15). Therefore, one should expect a connection between the angle of $\beta'(s)$ and k_{g_2}. The following result shows that there is a very simple relation between them:

Proposition 2. *(1) Let $\beta(s)$ be the intersection of S with the plane defined by ξ and $N(p)$ ($\beta(0) = p$, $\beta'(0) = \xi$). If ξ is along the principal direction e_2 then*

$$k_{g_2} = -\frac{d\phi}{ds} \tag{7}$$

where k_{g_2} is the geodesic curvature of the line of curvature along e_2 at point p, and $\phi(s)$ is the angle between $\beta'(s)$ and the second principal direction at $\beta(s)$.

(2) Let $\xi' = \beta'(s)$ be the new viewing direction on the plane of ξ and $N(p)$. If θ is the angle between ξ and ξ', then for values of θ close to 0 we have

$$\phi(\theta) \approx -\frac{k_{g_2}}{k_{n_2}} \sin\theta \tag{8}$$

Proof: (1) The Darboux trihedron for $\beta(0)$ is composed of the vectors $T(0) = \beta'(0)$, $N(\beta(0)) = N(p)$, and $V(0) = T(0) \wedge N(\beta(0))$, where $N(\cdot)$ is the Gauss map for the surface. We use a second-order Taylor series expansion and Eqs. (4)-(6) to find $T(s) = \beta'(s)$ with respect to $T(0) = \xi$:

$$
\begin{aligned}
T(s) - T(0) &\approx s\frac{dT}{ds} + \frac{s^2}{2}\frac{d^2T}{dT^2} && (9)\\
&\approx s(k_g V + k_n N) + \frac{s^2}{2}(k_g V + k_n N)' && (10)\\
&\approx -\frac{s^2}{2}\left(k_g^2 + k_n^2\right) T + \\
&\quad \left[s k_g + \frac{s^2}{2}\left(k_g' + k_n \tau_g\right)\right] V + \\
&\quad \left[s k_n - \frac{s^2}{2}\left(k_n' - k_g \tau_g\right)\right] N && (11)
\end{aligned}
$$

where all coefficients of s are evaluated at $\beta(0)$. Now note that $\beta(s)$ is always on the $N - T$ plane and therefore $T(s) \cdot V(0) = T(0) \cdot V(0) = 0$, or $(T(s) - T(0)) \cdot V(0) = 0$ for all s. Constraining the V-component of Eq. (11) to be identically equal to zero we get

$$k_g = 0 \tag{12}$$

The geodesic curvature k_g can be expressed in terms of the geodesic curvatures of the lines of curvature using Liouville's formula:

$$k_g = k_{g_1} cos\psi + k_{g_2} sin\psi + \frac{d\psi}{ds} \tag{13}$$

where ψ is the angle between $\beta'(0)$ and e_1. But $\beta'(0)$ is equal to e_2, and therefore $\psi = \pi/2$. Noting that $\phi = \pi/2 - \psi$ and combining Eqs. (12) and (13), we get the desired result. □

(2) ξ' will be tangent to $\beta(s)$ for some s. Therefore, $\xi' = T(s)$. We use Eq. (11) to get a first order approximation of s for values close to 0:

$$s \approx \frac{[T(s) - T(0)] \cdot N}{k_{n_2}} \tag{14}$$

Note that $[T(s) - T(0)] \cdot N$ equals $\sin\theta$, where θ is defined as above. Now using Eq. (7) and a first-order approximation for $\phi(\theta)$ we get the desired result. □

Finally, we can draw three conclusions from Eq. (8):

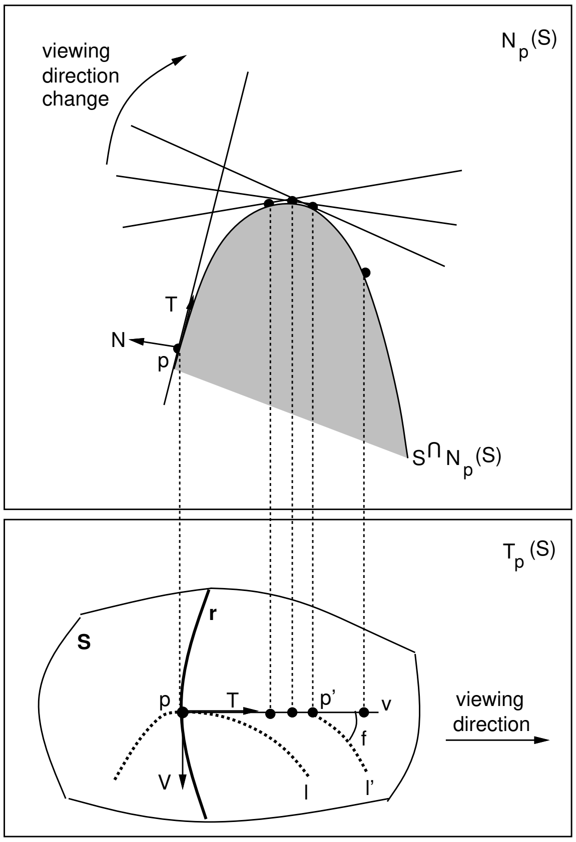

Figure 15: Changing directions on the T-N plane. Top: $N_p(S)$ is the T-N plane. The visual ray initially grazes the surface at p in the direction T. N is the surface normal at p. As the viewing directions change on this plane, the visual ray traces the curve $\beta(s) = S \cap N_p(S)$. p' is the new point selected for shape recovery. Bottom: A view of the tangent plane at p. The plane $N_p(S)$ and the traced curve are viewed "edge-on". The viewing direction change stops when the visual ray grazes p'. l and l' are the lines of minimum curvature passing through p and p', respectively. The shape recovery step will require a rotation by an angle of f on the tangent plane at p' in order to align the viewing direction with e_2 at p'.

- If $k_{g_2} = 0$, no viewing direction adjustments will be done during the shape recovery phase if the viewing direction changes in the plane of ξ and N_p in the second step. The curve $\beta(s)$ traces a part of the line of curvature associated with e_2. This can happen only if that line of curvature is also a geodesic.

- $\phi(\theta)$ can grow arbitrarily large with decreasing values of k_{n_2}. If k_{n_2} is close to 0, the surface is locally flat in the e_2 direction. Therefore, in such a case the approximation is not valid. However, this problem is inherent to the use of the occluding contour for shape recovery in the case of almost flat surfaces. The reason is that if the surfaces are locally flat, surface points will enter and leave the rim at arbitrarily large rates. This problem will also exist for methods that measure image velocities in the vicinity of the rim (e.g. [3]), since they require that the image points or features are not widely separated on the surface.

- Eq. (8) can also be used as a means to approximate k_{g_2}: After a small rotation by θ in the plane of $N(p)$ and ξ, the shape recovery step will produce a value for $\phi(\theta)$. Hence, we can use the equation to approximate k_{g_2}. This means that we will be able to completely describe the line of curvature corresponding to e_2 in the vicinity of the previously selected point.

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