Okay, stream of consciousness.

I have a variety of planes, attempting to recreate the “vertical column” effect you sometimes see in specular highlights

They are planes with random smooth bumps derived from a 1/f noise image.

Let frequency be average frequency of the bumps

Amplitude be average height

The illusion seems to best occur with a small amplitude, low frequency surface, with the surface near horizontal, approx. meter below the camera. This makes sense, as the line of sight approaches the light direction the specular highlights become round.

The illusion does appear however, with higher amplitude, and slightly higher frequency surfaces. If the frequency goes to high the specularity breaks up into points and looks like junk

As an initial control I made a custom shader that calculated the specularity relative to a fixed point, so it appeared as a texture on the surface that does not move to stay oriented to the camera as a real specular highlight would. Turns out that that made the illusion stronger (in my opinion) and the “fixed” highlights really look like vertical columns.