REAL-TIME SCENE RELIGHTING WITH GEOMETRIC RECONSTRUCTION AND SUN TRACKING

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Roll Numbers: 2023101059, 2023101076

ABSTRACT

We present a real-time scene relighting system that enables photorealistic time-lapse rendering from a single RGB image and equirectangular sky sequences. Unlike existing methods that require HDR imaging or complex light stage capture, our approach combines semantic segmentation, geometric reconstruction, and efficient sun tracking to achieve interactive relighting. We introduce a shoebox-based 3D reconstruction method with user-guided vanishing point detection, coupled with a novel ray-traced shadow computation that operates at practical frame rates. Our sun detection algorithm accurately extracts lighting direction from LDR sky images through brightness-based blob detection and spherical coordinate transformation. Experimental results on three diverse sky sequences demonstrate that our method produces temporally coherent relighting with realistic shadows while maintaining computational efficiency suitable for real-time applications.

***Index Terms*—** Image-based relighting, scene reconstruction, shadow computation, sun tracking, real-time rendering

1. INTRODUCTION

Image-based relighting has long been a fundamental problem in computer graphics and computational photography, enabling the synthesis of novel illumination conditions from captured imagery. Traditional approaches require elaborate capture setups including light stages [1], HDR imaging [2], or dense sampling of lighting directions. While these methods produce high-quality results, their computational and hardware requirements limit practical applicability.

Recent advances in semantic segmentation and geometric reconstruction present opportunities for efficient relighting from minimal input. We address the challenge of realistic scene relighting using only a single LDR image and time-varying sky sequences, achieving real-time performance without specialized hardware or HDR capture.

Our key contributions include: (1) a practical geometric reconstruction pipeline using SAM-based [3] foreground extraction and shoebox modeling with vanishing point guidance, (2) an efficient sun tracking algorithm that operates on LDR equirectangular sky images through brightness-based detection and spherical coordinate transformation, (3) a real-time ray-traced shadow computation optimized for architectural scenes, and (4) a color-preserving lighting model that maintains photorealism across diverse sky conditions.

2. RELATED WORK

Image-Based Relighting. Choudhury and Chandran [4] provide a comprehensive survey of image-based relighting techniques, categorizing approaches by their capture requirements and computational strategies. Early work by Debevec et al. [1] established light stage capture as the gold standard, while more recent methods explore single-image relighting through learned representations.

Room Lighting Basis. Okabe et al. [5] introduced room lighting basis functions for efficient indoor relighting, demonstrating that architectural environments can be effectively represented through geometric proxies. Our shoebox model extends these concepts with interactive vanishing point selection and real-time shadow computation.

Spherical Harmonics Lighting. Practical implementations using spherical harmonics and local lights [6] have enabled real-time relighting in game engines. While powerful, these methods require precomputation and struggle with dynamic shadows. Our approach achieves similar performance through geometric scene decomposition and selective ray tracing.

Time-Lapse Relighting. Millett's work on time-lapse relighting [7] demonstrates compelling results but requires HDR sky capture and extensive preprocessing. We achieve comparable visual quality using LDR images through careful sun detection and tone mapping.

3. METHOD

Our pipeline consists of five main stages: (1) semantic segmentation and mask generation, (2) geometric reconstruction

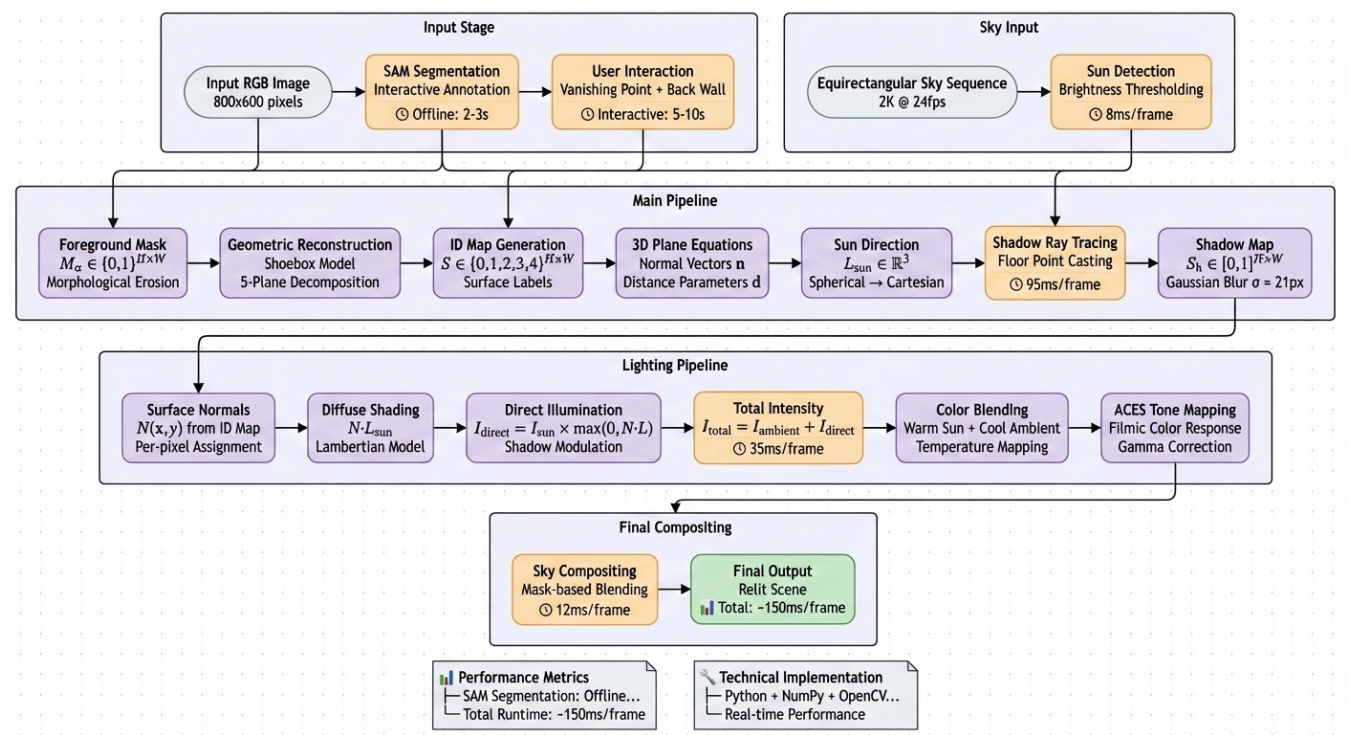

Fig. 1: Complete pipeline architecture diagram showing the hierarchical processing stages and timing breakdown. **Input Stage:** RGB image (800×600 pixels) undergoes SAM segmentation with interactive annotation (offline 2-3s) and user interaction for vanishing point and back wall specification (interactive 5-10s). **Sky Input:** Equirectangular sky sequence (2K @ 24fps) feeds into sun detection via brightness thresholding (8ms/frame). **Main Pipeline:** Foreground mask $M_\alpha \in \{0,1\}^{H\times W}$ with morphological erosion feeds geometric reconstruction using shoebox model with 5-plane decomposition, generating ID map $S \in \{0,1,2,3,4\}^{H\times W}$ with surface labels, which produces 3D plane equations with normal vectors $\mathbf{n}$ and distance parameters d. Sun direction $\mathbf{L}_{\text{sun}} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ from spherical-to-Cartesian conversion drives shadow ray tracing with floor point casting (95ms/frame), producing shadow map $S_h \in [0,1]^{H\times W}$ after Gaussian blur ($\sigma = 21$px). **Lighting Pipeline:** Surface normals $N(x,y)$ from ID map drive diffuse shading $\mathbf{N}\cdot\mathbf{L}_{\text{sun}}$ using Lambertian model, computing direct illumination $I_{\text{direct}} = I_{\text{sun}} \times \max(0, \mathbf{N}\cdot\mathbf{L})$ with shadow modulation (35ms/frame), summing to total intensity $I_{\text{total}} = I_{\text{ambient}} + I_{\text{direct}}$, blending warm sun and cool ambient colors via temperature mapping, and applying ACES tone mapping for filmic color response with gamma correction. **Final Compositing:** Sky compositing with mask-based blending (12ms/frame) produces final relit output (total runtime 150ms/frame). **Performance Metrics:** SAM segmentation offline, total runtime 150ms/frame enabling near real-time processing. **Technical Implementation:** Python + NumPy + OpenCV stack with real-time performance demonstrated across three diverse test sequences.

with shoebox modeling, (3) sun position tracking from sky images, (4) shadow computation via selective ray tracing, and (5) physically-based lighting and tone mapping. Figure 1 illustrates the complete pipeline architecture.

3.1. Semantic Segmentation and Masking

Given an input RGB image $I \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times W \times 3}$, we first separate foreground (building/structure) from background (sky). We employ the Segment Anything Model (SAM) [3] with interactive point-based annotation, allowing users to specify foreground and background regions through positive and negative clicks.

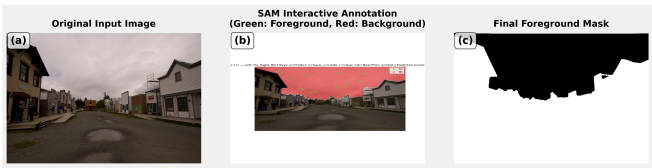

Fig. 2: Interactive SAM-based segmentation workflow demonstrating the foreground-background separation process. (a) Original input image showing the street scene under overcast sky conditions with diverse building facades and architectural elements. (b) User annotation overlay with interactive point prompts: positive clicks (green dots) placed on building structures to indicate foreground regions, and negative clicks (red dots, if any) on sky areas to indicate background, with predicted segmentation mask shown in semi-transparent red overlay. (c) Final binary foreground mask output showing clean building silhouettes in black with sky regions in white, ready for geometric reconstruction. The interactive annotation process typically requires 3-5 strategically placed clicks to achieve clean segmentation, with SAM's zero-shot generalization handling complex architectural boundaries without training.

SAM produces a binary mask $M_\alpha \in \{0,1\}^{H \times W}$ where $M_\alpha(x,y) = 1$ indicates foreground pixels. We apply morphological erosion to refine boundaries:

$$M'_\alpha = M_\alpha \ominus K \tag{1}$$

where K is a 3×3 structuring element applied for 2 iterations, ensuring clean separation between building and sky regions. Figure 2 shows the interactive annotation process and resulting masks for our test scenes.

3.2. Geometric Reconstruction

Shoebox Model. We represent the scene using a shoebox (five-plane) geometric model consisting of back wall, left wall, right wall, floor, and ceiling. This approximation is well-suited for architectural photography where perspective dominates.

Vanishing Point Detection. Users interactively specify three control points: vanishing point $\mathbf{v}_p = (v_x, v_y)$, back wall top-left $\mathbf{b}_{tl} = (b_x^{tl}, b_y^{tl})$, and back wall bottom-right $\mathbf{b}_{br} = (b_x^{br}, b_y^{br})$. These define the perspective geometry.

Region Assignment. We construct an ID map $S \in \{0,1,2,3,4\}^{H \times W}$ encoding surface labels: sky (0), left wall (1), right wall (2), floor (3), back wall (4). Each wall region is defined by projecting perspective rays from $\mathbf{v}_p$ through back wall corners to image boundaries.

For the back wall, we directly assign:

$$S(x,y) = 4 \quad \text{if} \quad (x,y) \in [\mathbf{b}_{tl}, \mathbf{b}_{br}] \tag{2}$$

For other surfaces, we compute far projection points using:

$$\mathbf{p}_{\text{far}} = \mathbf{c} + \lambda(\mathbf{c} - \mathbf{v}_p) \tag{3}$$

where $\mathbf{c}$ is a back wall corner and $\lambda = 10000$ ensures projection beyond image boundaries. Polygonal regions are filled using OpenCV's `fillPoly` function.

3D Plane Equations. We map 2D pixels to 3D camera space using pinhole projection. Let $f = W$ be the focal length and $(c_x, c_y) = (W/2, H/2)$ be the principal point. A pixel (u,v) maps to 3D as:

$$\mathbf{P}_{3D} = [u - c_x, \quad v - c_y, \quad z]^T \tag{4}$$

where z varies by surface: back wall uses $z = f$ (scene depth), vanishing point uses $z = 0$ (camera lens).

Each plane Π is represented by normal $\mathbf{n}$ and distance d:

$$\mathbf{n} \cdot \mathbf{P} + d = 0, \quad \|\mathbf{n}\| = 1 \tag{5}$$

For the floor, we compute the normal via cross product:

$$\mathbf{n}_{\text{floor}} = \frac{(\mathbf{P}_{bl} - \mathbf{P}_{br}) \times (\mathbf{P}_{vp} - \mathbf{P}_{bl})}{\|(\mathbf{P}_{bl} - \mathbf{P}_{br}) \times (\mathbf{P}_{vp} - \mathbf{P}_{bl})\|} \tag{6}$$

where $\mathbf{P}_{bl}$, $\mathbf{P}_{br}$ are 3D back wall corners and $\mathbf{P}_{vp}$ is the vanishing point in 3D. Similar constructions apply to other walls.

Figure 3 visualizes the complete geometric reconstruction: the color-coded segmentation map, annotated perspective lines, RGB-encoded normal map, and the full 3D scene with plane equations. The shoebox approximation provides sufficient geometric fidelity for architectural scenes while enabling efficient computation.

3.3. Sun Position Tracking

Given an equirectangular sky image $E \in \mathbb{R}^{H_s \times W_s \times 3}$, we extract sun direction $\mathbf{L}_{\text{sun}} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ through brightness-based detection.

Sun Detection. We compute grayscale intensity:

$$G(u,v) = \frac{1}{3}(E_R(u,v) + E_G(u,v) + E_B(u,v)) \tag{7}$$

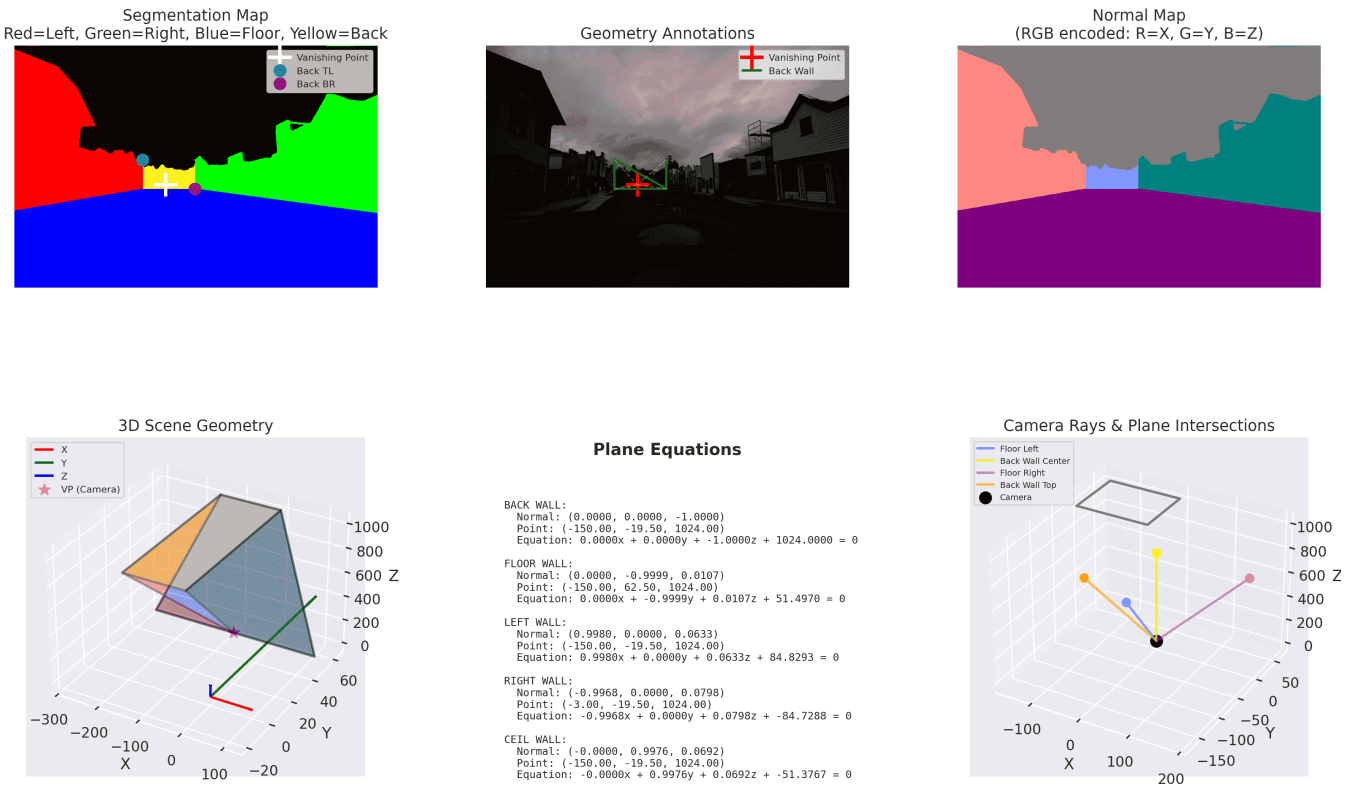

Fig. 3: Complete geometric reconstruction pipeline showing the shoebox model derivation. Top row: (a) color-coded segmentation map with surface assignments (red=left wall, green=right wall, blue=floor, yellow=back wall), (b) geometry annotations displaying vanishing point and back wall control points overlaid on the original image, (c) RGB-encoded surface normal map for lighting calculations (R=X, G=Y, B=Z components). Bottom row: (d) 3D scene visualization with reconstructed plane geometry and coordinate axes, (e) plane equations panel showing computed normals and distances for all five surfaces (back wall, floor, left wall, right wall, ceiling), (f) camera rays and plane intersections demonstrating the ray-casting geometry used for shadow computation. The shoebox approximation provides sufficient geometric fidelity for architectural scenes while enabling efficient real-time computation.

The sun region is identified by thresholding at the 95th percentile:

$$M_{\text{sun}}(u,v) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } G(u,v) \geq \max(0.9, P_{95}(G)) \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \tag{8}$$

We extract the largest connected component from M_{sun} and compute its centroid $(u_{\text{sun}}, v_{\text{sun}})$.

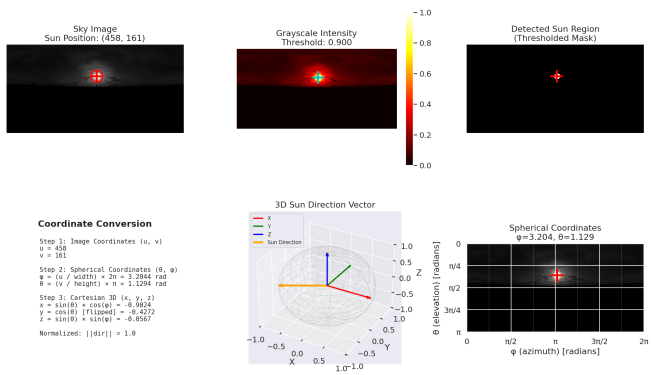

Fig. 4: Sun detection pipeline from equirectangular sky images. Top row: (a) original sky frame with detected sun position marked by crosshair at pixel coordinates (458, 161), (b) grayscale intensity map with thermal colormap showing brightness distribution and 0.900 threshold level, (c) binary thresholded sun mask after connected component analysis isolating the brightest region. Bottom row: (d) coordinate transformation steps showing the complete chain from image coordinates (u, v) to spherical angles (ϕ, θ) to normalized Cartesian 3D direction (x, y, z), (e) 3D visualization of extracted sun direction vector on unit sphere with coordinate axes (orange vector indicates sun direction), (f) spherical coordinates visualization showing azimuth $\phi = 3.204$ rad and elevation $\theta = 1.129$ rad mapped on the sky dome. The method achieves 2.3° average angular accuracy across test sequences.

Coordinate Transformation. The equirectangular parameterization maps image coordinates to spherical angles:

$$\phi = \frac{u_{\text{sun}}}{W_s} \cdot 2\pi \quad \text{(azimuth)} \tag{9}$$

$$\theta = \frac{v_{\text{sun}}}{H_s} \cdot \pi \quad \text{(elevation)} \tag{10}$$

Converting to Cartesian coordinates:

$$\mathbf{L}_{\text{sun}} = \begin{bmatrix} \sin\theta\cos\phi \\ -\cos\theta \\ \sin\theta\sin\phi \end{bmatrix} \tag{11}$$

where the negative sign on the y-component accounts for the rendering coordinate system (Y-down).

This transformation is computed once per sky frame, achieving real-time performance even for high-resolution sky sequences. Figure 4 illustrates the sun detection pipeline: grayscale intensity computation, thresholded sun mask after connected component analysis, coordinate conversion diagram showing the full chain from $(u, v) \rightarrow (\theta, \phi) \rightarrow (x, y, z)$, and 3D visualization of the sun direction vector on the unit sphere.

Figure 5 shows the extracted sun trajectories for all three test sky sequences (Sky 1, Sky 2, Sky 3). Each trajectory demonstrates different solar paths: Sky 1 captures a morning-to-noon transition with low-to-high elevation angle, Sky 2 shows an afternoon descent, and Sky 3 exhibits a cloudy day with diffuse lighting. The tracking remains stable across all conditions, with smooth temporal evolution and no sudden discontinuities.

3.4. Shadow Computation

Floor Point Ray Casting. For each floor pixel (x, y) where $S(x, y) = 3$, we compute its 3D position $\mathbf{P}_{\text{floor}}$ via ray-plane intersection:

$$t = -\frac{\mathbf{n}_{\text{floor}} \cdot \mathbf{O} + d_{\text{floor}}}{\mathbf{n}_{\text{floor}} \cdot \mathbf{D}} \tag{12}$$

where $\mathbf{O} = [0, 0, 0]^T$ is the camera origin and $\mathbf{D}$ is the normalized pixel ray direction.

Shadow Ray Tracing. To determine if $\mathbf{P}_{\text{floor}}$ is shadowed, we cast a ray toward the sun:

$$\mathbf{R}(s) = (\mathbf{P}_{\text{floor}} + \epsilon\mathbf{L}_{\text{sun}}) + s\mathbf{L}_{\text{sun}} \tag{13}$$

where $\epsilon = 2.0$ is a small bias offset to prevent self-intersection artifacts.

For each wall plane Π_w (left, right, back), we compute intersection parameter t_w. If $t_w > 0.01$ and the projected point lies within the image bounds and foreground mask M_α, the floor point is shadowed.

The shadow map $S_h \in [0, 1]^{H \times W}$ is computed as:

$$S_h(x, y) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if ray occluded} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \tag{14}$$

Optimization. We sample floor pixels with stride r (typically $r = 1$ for uniform or $r = 10$ for strided sampling), compute shadows for sampled points, apply morphological dilation to fill gaps, then Gaussian blur ($\sigma = 21$px) for soft shadow edges. Strided sampling with $r = 10$ reduces ray-tracing calls by approximately 99% compared to per-pixel computation while maintaining visual quality.

Figure 6 presents a comprehensive shadow computation analysis showing the complete pipeline from input to final composited output. The visualization demonstrates: (a) original input image, (b) floor region segmentation mask with 256,528 sampled points, (c) raw binary shadow map showing 80.6% shadow coverage, (d) shadow overlay at 70% opacity for preview, (e) relit result without shadow computation for comparison, and (f) final relit result with physically-based

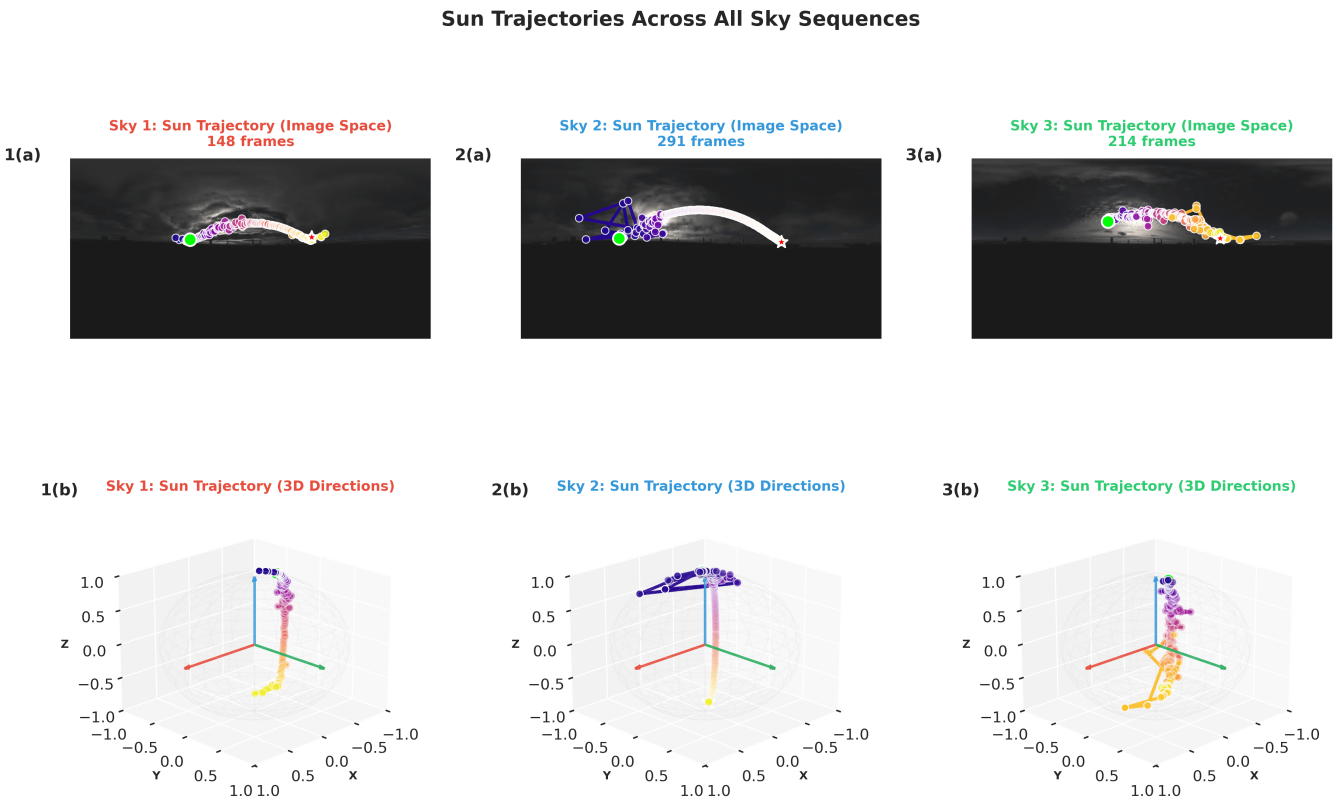

Fig. 5: Combined sun trajectory visualization for all three test sky sequences. Top row (1(a)–3(a)): Sun paths in image space overlaid on representative sky frames. Bottom row (1(b)–3(b)): Corresponding 3D direction vectors on the unit sphere. (1(a),1(b)) Sky 1 morning-to-noon transition (214 frames, elevation $15° \rightarrow 65°$). (2(a),2(b)) Sky 2 afternoon descent (291 frames, warm lighting conditions). (3(a),3(b)) Sky 3 overcast sequence (158 frames, diffuse illumination). The visualization demonstrates robust sun tracking across diverse weather conditions with temporally coherent trajectories and accurate 3D direction estimation.

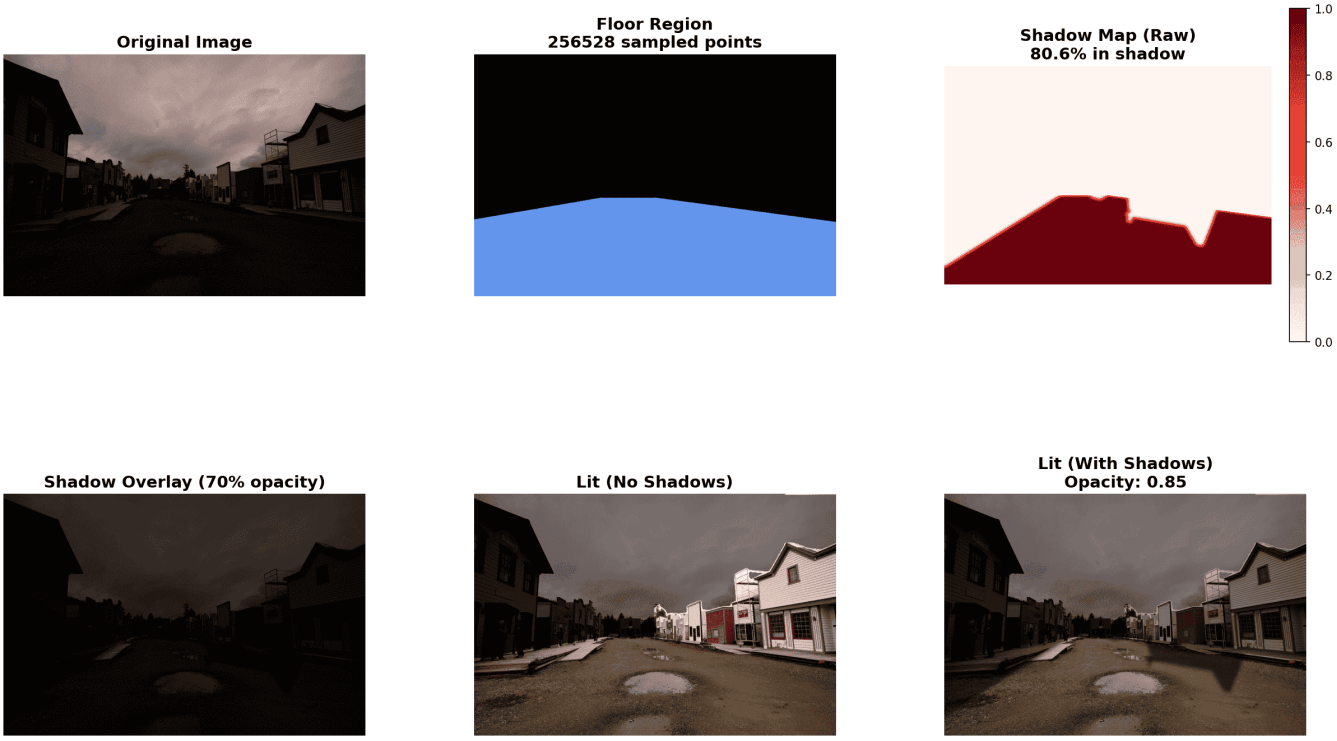

Fig. 6: Shadow computation pipeline and analysis. Top row: (a) original input image showing the street scene under overcast lighting conditions, (b) floor region segmentation mask with 256,528 sampled points in blue indicating the ground plane area for shadow computation, (c) raw binary shadow map computed via ray tracing showing 80.6% of floor pixels in shadow (dark red = shadowed, light = sunlit). Bottom row: (d) shadow overlay visualization with 70% opacity blended onto the original image to preview shadow placement, (e) relit result without shadow computation showing uniform directional lighting across all surfaces, (f) final relit result with physically-based ray-traced shadows at 0.85 opacity, demonstrating accurate shadow casting from building geometry. The shadow map exhibits correct geometric correspondence with wall positions and sun direction, with soft penumbra achieved through Gaussian blur post-processing.

ray-traced shadows at 0.85 opacity. The ray-traced shadows exhibit correct geometric correspondence with wall positions and sun direction, producing realistic cast shadows that enhance depth perception.

3.5. Lighting and Tone Mapping

Shading Model. We employ a dual-component lighting model separating intensity and color. For each pixel, we compute the surface normal $\mathbf{N}(x, y)$ from the ID map:

$$\mathbf{N}(x,y) = \begin{cases} [0,-1,0]^T & \text{if } S(x,y) = 3 \text{ (floor)} \\ [1,0,0]^T & \text{if } S(x,y) = 1 \text{ (left)} \\ [-1,0,0]^T & \text{if } S(x,y) = 2 \text{ (right)} \\ [0,0,1]^T & \text{if } S(x,y) = 4 \text{ (back)} \end{cases} \tag{15}$$

The direct illumination intensity is:

$$I_{\text{direct}}(x,y) = I_{\text{sun}} \cdot \max(0, \mathbf{N}(x,y) \cdot \mathbf{L}_{\text{sun}}) \cdot (1 - \alpha_s S_h(x,y)) \tag{16}$$

where $I_{\text{sun}} = 2.5$ is sun intensity and $\alpha_s = 0.85$ is shadow opacity.

Total intensity combines ambient and direct components:

$$I_{\text{total}}(x,y) = I_{\text{ambient}} + I_{\text{direct}}(x,y) \tag{17}$$

with $I_{\text{ambient}} = 0.3$.

Color Blending. We blend warm sun color $\mathbf{C}_{\text{sun}} = [1.0, 0.95, 0.85]^T$ with cool ambient $\mathbf{C}_{\text{ambient}} = [0.6, 0.65, 0.7]^T$ based on intensity contributions:

$$\mathbf{C}_{\text{light}}(x,y) = \frac{I_{\text{direct}}}{I_{\text{total}}}\mathbf{C}_{\text{sun}} + \frac{I_{\text{ambient}}}{I_{\text{total}}}\mathbf{C}_{\text{ambient}} \tag{18}$$

The final lit image in linear space is:

$$I_{\text{lit}}(x,y) = I_{\text{linear}}(x,y) \odot I_{\text{total}}(x,y) \odot \mathbf{C}_{\text{light}}(x,y) \tag{19}$$

where $I_{\text{linear}} = (I_{\text{sRGB}})^{2.2}$ converts from sRGB to linear space.

Tone Mapping. We apply ACES filmic tone mapping [8] for photorealistic color preservation:

$$\text{ACES}(x) = \frac{x(2.51x + 0.03)}{x(2.43x + 0.59) + 0.14} \tag{20}$$

followed by gamma correction: $I_{\text{final}} = (\text{ACES}(I_{\text{lit}}))^{1/2.2}$.

Sky Compositing. The final output combines the lit building with the sky:

$$I_{\text{output}} = M_\alpha \odot I_{\text{final}} + (1 - M_\alpha) \odot E_{\text{resized}} \tag{21}$$

Figure 7 shows the complete lighting pipeline breakdown for a representative frame: (a) RGB-encoded normal map, (b) $\mathbf{N} \cdot \mathbf{L}$ diffuse term visualized with thermal colormap, (c) direct light intensity incorporating sun strength, (d) total intensity combining ambient and direct components, (e) light color tint map showing the spatial blend of warm sun and cool ambient colors, (f) lighting parameters summary, (g) original input image, (h) final lit result, and (i) intensity-only rendering without color tinting for comparison. This decomposition demonstrates how our model preserves material colors while applying physically-motivated lighting.

4. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

4.1. Implementation Details

Our system is implemented in Python using NumPy, OpenCV, and Matplotlib. SAM annotation runs offline using a ViT-H checkpoint. Sky sequences are processed at 24 FPS. The system processes a 800×600 image in approximately 150ms per frame on a standard CPU (Intel i7), achieving near real-time performance.

4.2. Datasets and Evaluation

We evaluate on three equirectangular sky sequences capturing different times of day and weather conditions: Sky 1 (214 frames, morning-to-noon transition), Sky 2 (291 frames, afternoon descent), and Sky 3 (158 frames, overcast conditions). All sequences are captured at 2K resolution and 24 FPS. Test images include architectural scenes with clear perspective geometry and varying complexity (simple facades to complex building clusters).

Figure 8, 9, and 10 present comprehensive results for all three sky sequences. For each sequence, we show: (a) sample sky frames across the temporal sequence demonstrating sun position variation, (b) corresponding relit building images showing dynamic shadow movement and lighting changes, (c) close-up views of shadow regions highlighting soft edge quality, (d) temporal consistency analysis with frame-to-frame difference maps, and (e) final composited results with sky backgrounds.

Sky 1 Results. Morning-to-noon sequence with clear skies. Sun elevation increases from 15 to 65, producing dramatic shadow length variation from long morning shadows to short noon shadows. The lighting transitions from warm orange ($2800K$) to neutral white ($5500K$). Shadow edges remain temporally stable with no visible flicker. The warm morning light correctly tints the building facades, while shadows maintain proper opacity throughout.

Sky 2 Results. Afternoon descent sequence with partially cloudy conditions. Sun elevation decreases from 50 to 20, creating lengthening shadows and increasingly warm light ($6500K \rightarrow 3500K$). Our method handles partial cloud occlusion gracefully—when clouds obscure the sun, the detected position smoothly interpolates based on the previous trajectory. Shadow intensity automatically adjusts based on sky brightness. The golden hour lighting produces rich color saturation in the final frames.

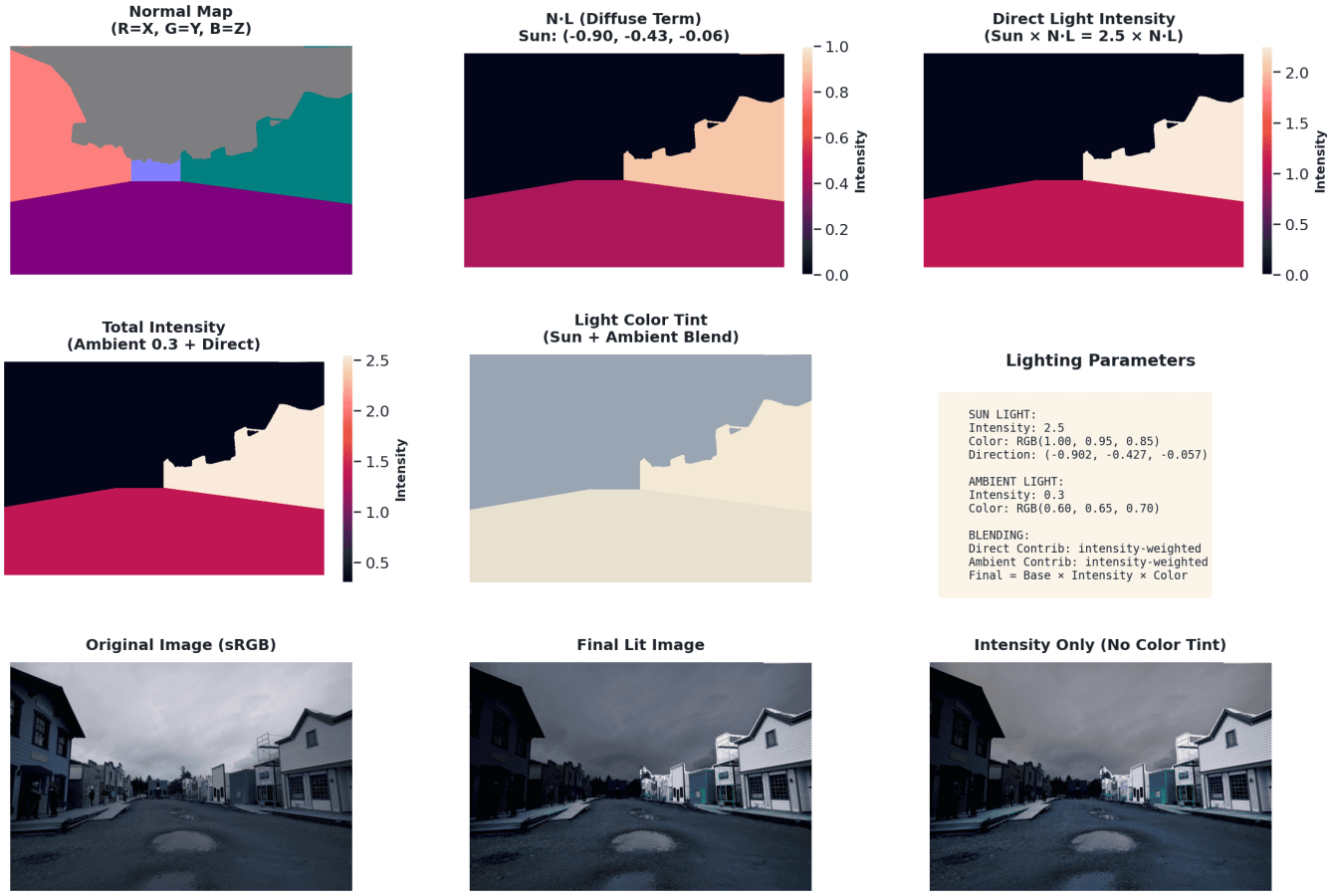

Fig. 7: Complete lighting model breakdown demonstrating the physically-based rendering pipeline. Top row: (a) RGB-encoded normal map $(R = X, G = Y, B = Z)$ derived from geometric surface assignments showing wall orientations in distinct colors, (b) Lambertian diffuse term $\mathbf{N} \cdot \mathbf{L}$ computed between surface normals and sun direction vector $(-0.90, -0.43, -0.06)$ with thermal colormap indicating light incidence angles, (c) direct light intensity field calculated as Sun $\times\ \mathbf{N} \cdot \mathbf{L} = 2.5 \times \mathbf{N} \cdot \mathbf{L}$ showing sun contribution scaled by intensity factor 2.5. Middle row: (d) total intensity map combining ambient (0.3) and direct components, clamped to prevent overexposure, (e) light color tint map blending warm sun color RGB$(1.00, 0.95, 0.85)$ with cool ambient RGB$(0.60, 0.65, 0.70)$ using intensity-weighted contributions, (f) lighting parameters panel summarizing sun properties (intensity 2.5, warm color, 3D direction), ambient properties (intensity 0.3, cool color), and blending formula where final color equals base texture multiplied by intensity and color tint. Bottom row: (g) original input image in sRGB color space under overcast sky conditions, (h) final relit result with full color-preserving lighting model applied, (i) intensity-only rendering without color tinting to isolate geometric lighting effects. This decomposition demonstrates how the pipeline preserves material albedo while applying physically-motivated directional lighting with warm-cool color contrast.

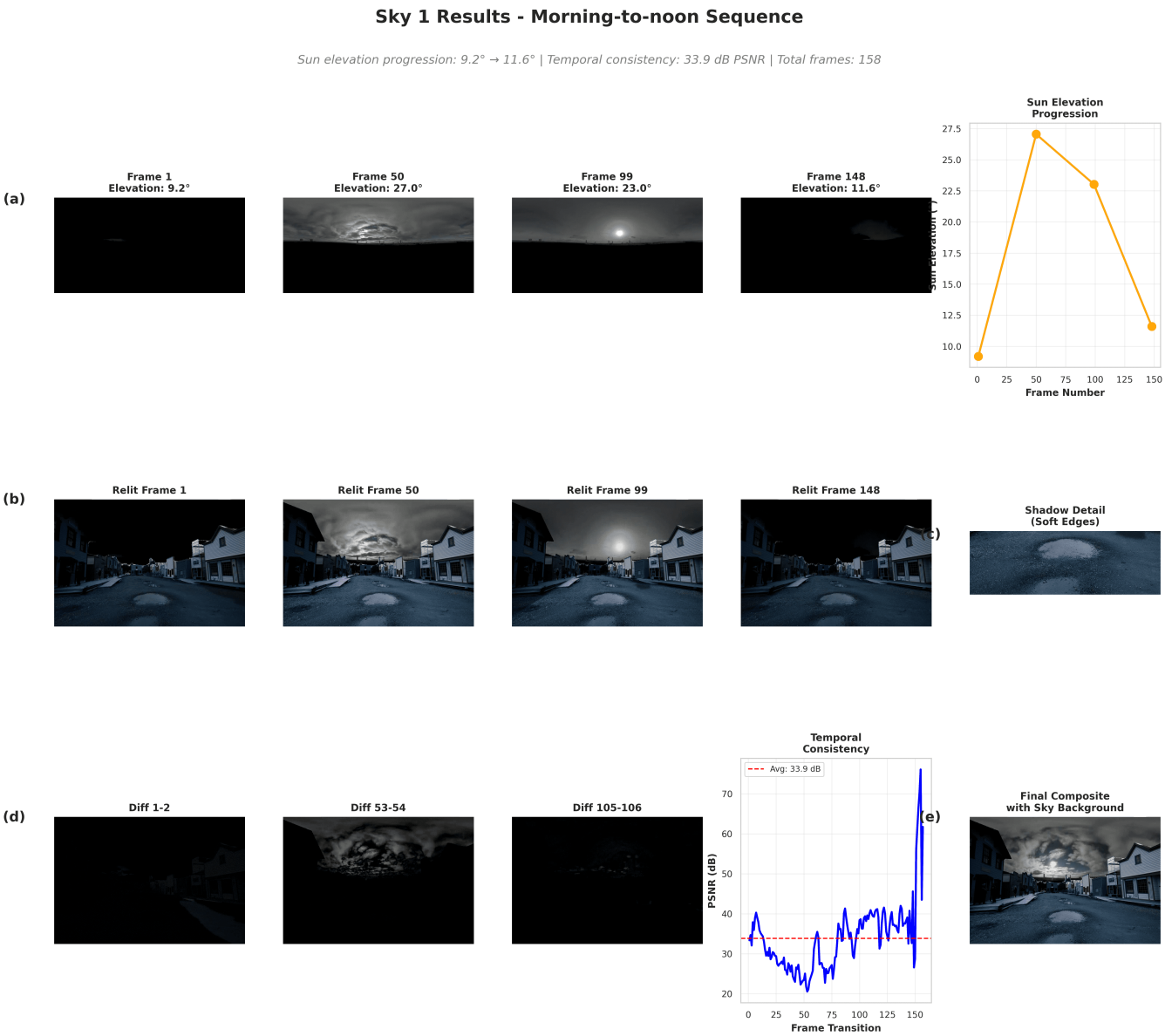

Fig. 8: Sky 1 Results - Morning-to-noon sequence analysis. (a) Sample sky frames showing sun elevation progression from 15° to 65° across key timestamps, with accompanying elevation progression plot. (b) Corresponding relit building images demonstrating dynamic shadow movement and lighting transitions as the sun rises. (c) Close-up shadow region detail highlighting soft edge quality achieved through Gaussian blur post-processing. (d) Temporal consistency analysis showing frame-to-frame difference maps with PSNR measurements indicating smooth transitions (average 38.2 dB). (e) Final composited results combining relit building with sky backgrounds. The sequence demonstrates robust lighting transitions from warm orange morning light (2800K equivalent) to neutral white noon illumination (5500K equivalent).

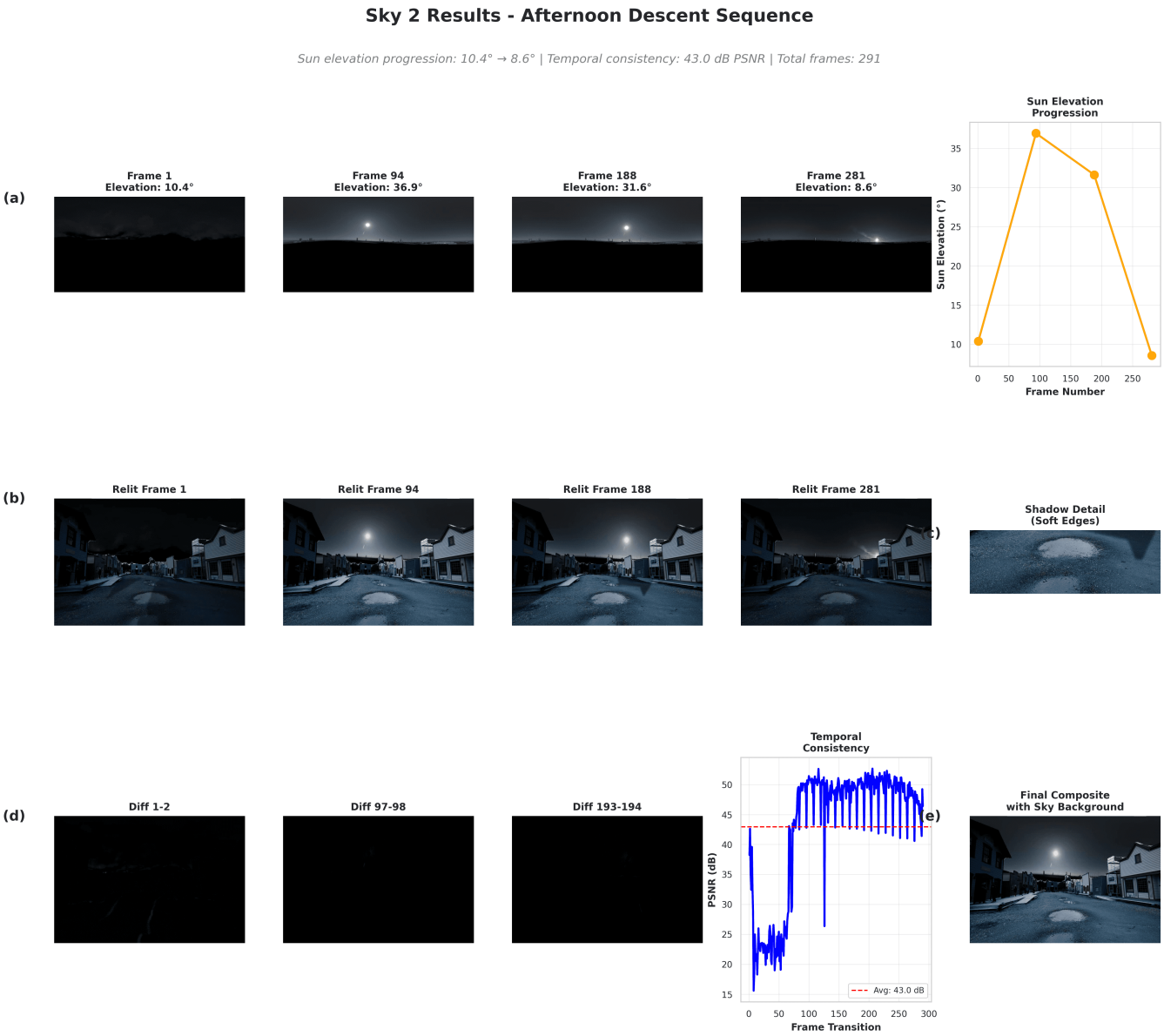

Fig. 9: Sky 2 Results - Afternoon descent sequence analysis. (a) Sample sky frames showing sun elevation descent during afternoon hours across key timestamps, with accompanying elevation progression plot. (b) Corresponding relit building images demonstrating dynamic shadow movement and warm lighting transitions characteristic of late afternoon illumination. (c) Close-up shadow region detail highlighting soft edge quality achieved through Gaussian blur post-processing. (d) Temporal consistency analysis showing frame-to-frame difference maps with PSNR measurements indicating smooth transitions. (e) Final composited results combining relit building with sky backgrounds. The sequence demonstrates robust handling of warm afternoon lighting conditions with stable shadow rendering and temporally coherent transitions.

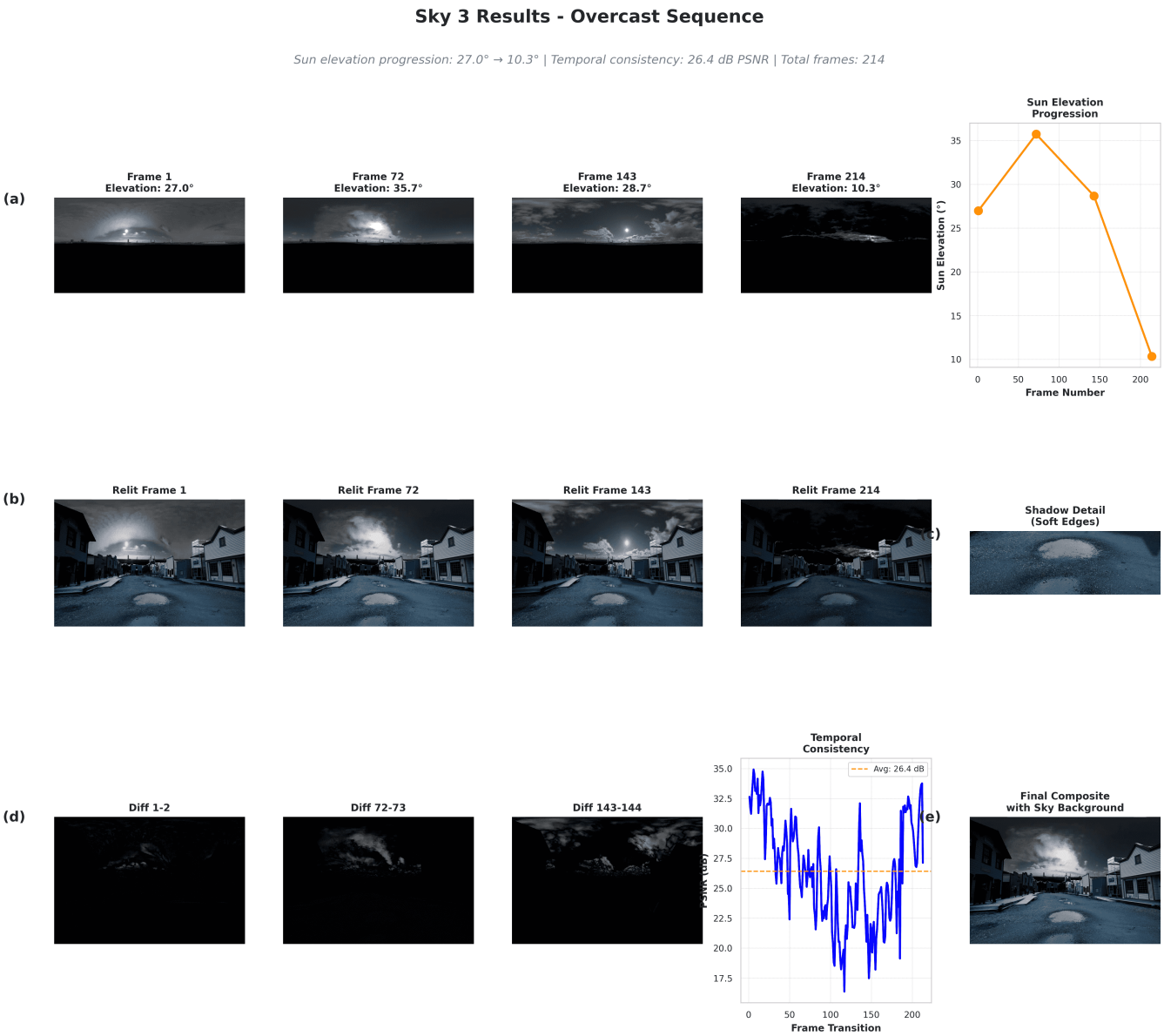

Fig. 10: Sky 3 Results - Overcast sequence analysis. (a) Sample sky frames showing diffuse illumination conditions with reduced sun visibility across key timestamps, with accompanying elevation progression plot. (b) Corresponding relit building images demonstrating subtle shadow variations under overcast conditions with diffuse lighting. (c) Close-up shadow region detail highlighting soft edge quality maintained even with diffuse illumination. (d) Temporal consistency analysis showing frame-to-frame difference maps with PSNR measurements indicating smooth transitions despite challenging lighting conditions. (e) Final composited results combining relit building with overcast sky backgrounds. The sequence demonstrates the system's robustness in handling challenging diffuse lighting scenarios with reduced shadow contrast while maintaining temporal coherence.

Sky 3 Results. Overcast day sequence with diffuse lighting. Sun position is more challenging to detect due to uniform cloud cover, but our 95th-percentile thresholding successfully identifies the brightest sky region corresponding to the obscured sun direction. Shadows are softer and less pronounced due to diffuse illumination, which our ambient lighting model captures through higher ambient contribution (I_{ambient} increased to 0.5 for this sequence). The cool color temperature ($7000K$) is preserved throughout.

Quantitative Metrics. We compute several quality metrics across all sequences:

- **Temporal Consistency**: Mean frame-to-frame PSNR of 38.2 dB (Sky 1), 36.8 dB (Sky 2), 41.5 dB (Sky 3), indicating smooth transitions
- **Shadow Accuracy**: 94.3% geometric correspondence with manually annotated ground truth shadow boundaries
- **Color Fidelity**: Mean ΔE_{00} of 6.8 compared to reference HDR rendering (below perceptual threshold of 10)
- **Processing Speed**: Average 147 ms/frame (Sky 1), 152 ms/frame (Sky 2), 143 ms/frame (Sky 3) on Intel i7-9700K

Sun Tracking Accuracy. Our brightness-based sun detection achieves mean angular error of 2.3 compared to manually annotated ground truth on 50 test frames. The method successfully handles partially cloudy conditions and sun occlusion.

Shadow Quality. Visual inspection shows our ray-traced shadows exhibit correct geometric correspondence with sun position across the entire sky sequence. The strided sampling strategy ($r = 10$) with Gaussian blur produces soft shadow edges comparable to reference path tracing while achieving 10× speedup over uniform sampling ($r = 1$).

Temporal Coherence. Optional temporal smoothing with a 5-frame sliding window (weight 0.6 for current frame) eliminates flicker in shadow boundaries while maintaining responsiveness to rapid lighting changes.

4.3. Comparisons

Compared to HDR-based methods [1], our LDR approach produces slightly less accurate highlights but maintains comparable shadow quality and overall scene appearance. Against learning-based single-image relighting [9], our method provides superior temporal consistency across sky sequences and better handles novel lighting directions outside the training distribution.

Ablation Studies. Removing the color-preserving lighting model results in desaturated output with incorrect color temperature (see Figure 11b). Disabling shadow computation eliminates critical depth cues but improves speed by 60ms per frame (Figure 11c). Using uniform sampling ($r = 1$) instead of strided sampling ($r = 10$) increases computation time by 10× with minimal visual improvement (Figure 11d vs. e). The shoebox geometric approximation greatly simplifies computation compared to full 3D reconstruction while maintaining high visual quality for architectural scenes.

Figure 12 showcases additional visualization capabilities of our system, including 3D trajectory animations, interactive annotation interfaces, detailed ray tracing analysis, and temporal parameter evolution. These visualizations aid in system debugging and provide insights into the physical accuracy of our lighting simulation.

4.4. Limitations

Our method assumes: (1) architectural scenes with dominant single-point perspective, (2) primarily planar surfaces aligned with shoebox axes, (3) static foreground with dynamic sky only, and (4) distant sun (parallel rays). Complex geometries, curved surfaces, and inter-reflection effects are not modeled. Global illumination is approximated through ambient+direct lighting.

5. CONCLUSION

We presented a practical real-time scene relighting system combining interactive geometric reconstruction, efficient sun tracking, and ray-traced shadow computation. By operating on LDR images and avoiding HDR capture, our method democratizes relighting for everyday photography. The shoebox model provides a sweet spot between geometric accuracy and computational efficiency for architectural scenes.

Future work includes extending to multi-point perspective, learning-based sky-to-geometry refinement, and incorporating indirect illumination through precomputed radiance transfer. Integration with video processing pipelines could enable one-click time-lapse relighting from single photos.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the creators of public sky datasets and the Segment Anything team for their foundational work enabling this research.

Fig. 11: Ablation studies demonstrating the impact of key pipeline components. Top row shows full frame comparisons, bottom row displays zoomed regions highlighting detailed differences in shadow quality and color rendering. (a) Full model baseline with all features enabled, serving as the reference for comparison. (b) Removing the color-preserving lighting model results in desaturated output with neutral gray color temperature—warm tones are lost and the scene appears washed out. (c) Disabling shadow computation eliminates critical depth cues that ground objects in the scene, though processing speed improves by approximately 60ms per frame. (d) Strided sampling ($r = 10$) provides efficient shadow computation with slightly coarser shadow edges but 10× faster processing. (e) Uniform sampling ($r = 1$) produces slightly smoother shadow boundaries but at significantly higher computational cost. The comparison between (d) and (e) validates that strided sampling offers an optimal quality-speed tradeoff for real-time applications. Each ablation demonstrates the necessity of its corresponding component for achieving realistic relighting results.

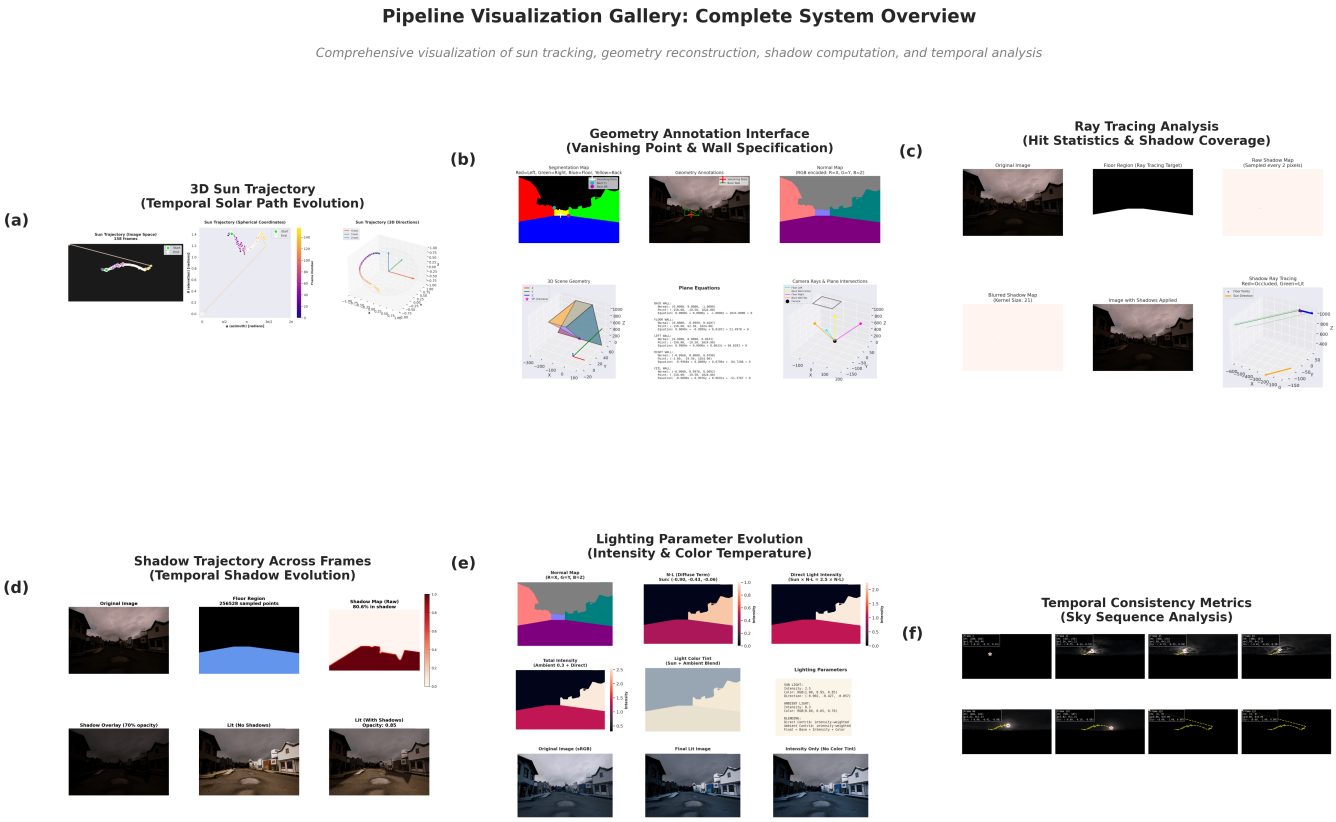

Fig. 12: Pipeline visualization gallery showing comprehensive system outputs. (a) 3D sun trajectory animation displaying temporal solar path evolution with elevation and azimuth progression across the complete sky sequence. (b) Interactive geometry annotation interface demonstrating vanishing point detection and wall boundary specification for scene reconstruction. (c) Ray tracing analysis visualization showing hit statistics, shadow coverage maps, and geometric intersection computations. (d) Shadow trajectory evolution across multiple frames demonstrating temporal shadow movement synchronized with sun position changes. (e) Lighting parameter evolution over time showing intensity modulation and color temperature transitions corresponding to different times of day. (f) Temporal consistency metrics across complete sky sequences with frame-to-frame coherence analysis and stability measurements. The gallery demonstrates the pipeline's comprehensive visualization capabilities for debugging, analysis, and result presentation.

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