

# Our Story-- A Digitization of Human Culture

Image Processing & Art: How Modern Artists are  
crafting the 21st Century Narrative

Featuring the works of Jim Campbell, Idris Khan, and Jason Salavon

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# The 21st Century & Image Processed Art

In a 2011 article, “Digital Art and Culture: A 21st C. Paradigm Shift” by Max Eternity for Truthout, a nonprofit organization new publisher, the author comments on the entanglement of present-day human culture with digital technologies as inevitable. With internet culture, most of the images we encounter have been photographed, scanned into the computer, and digitally processed or altered. “Our lives are increasingly defined by how we engage and interact with the world digitally... digital technology [has] revolutionized] our cultural engagement... it is essential [to us now]” exclaims Ed Vaizey, Minister for Culture and Communications in the UK. In this presentation we explore briefly...

What role did photography play in shaping human culture? How is culture reacting to digital forms of art?

## HOW ARE REAL ARTISTS SHAPING THIS DIGITAL PERSPECTIVE IN THEIR UTILIZATION AND REINTERPRETATION OF ART AND TECHNOLOGY?

### Commissioned Artist



How society sees me



How my parents see me



How my clients see me



How my friends see me



How I see myself

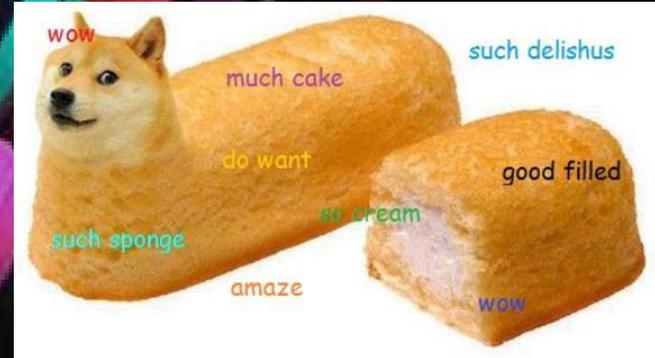


What I actually do

Y'ALL GOT ANY MORE OF THEM



SPICY MEMES?



**Image Processing (n.)** The analysis and manipulation of a digitized image, especially in order to improve its quality

**Research:** For many art historians, computer processing more easily unveil the secrets of art and its historical past lost to time. IP4AI is an organization that recognizes the beneficial collaboration between computer science and art. The development of this cross discipline catalyzed art history research and has evolved into an innovative solution for digital regeneration of damaged artworks, in the detection of identifying fakes from genuine copies, and much more. IP presents a window to the past in art.

**Media:** Image processing paved the way for simple internet memes, GIFs, and animations to come to life for pure entertainment. Such technology changed the film, television, and digital industry immensely, with impacts resulting in animation films, 3D animation and art, and internet culture. IP quintessentially dominates art culture in the present.

**Contemporary Art:** IP allows contemporary artists to challenge the limits of traditional mediums and catapult new boundaries for the future. Whether through sculpture, public installations, screenings, photography, or video reels, IP makes possible new dimensions of story-telling. Like the smear of paint or residue of charcoal, the unique data arrangement and utilization of imagery statistics narrates the story of its artist and of the world they live in for future examination.

# JIM CAMPBELL

- An SF-based digital artist known for his LED light works, mixing film, movement, and other digital media into his installations
- Graduated from MIT in 1978 with a BS in electrical engineering and mathematics
- Most famous for his work “Scattered Light” in the fall of 2010 at various locations in HK, NYC, etc
- Other Public Commissions:
  - ICC Building Hong Kong 2014
  - Salesforce Tower 2017

\*All pictures/ photographs shown belong to Jim Campbell & was taken from his website\*

## Enlightening the Public

In an interview with Nicole Cappleman in 2015, Campbell identified himself as an “electronic artist,” acknowledging that since his early days in the cross-disciplinary field, new media artists has risen exceptionally in the last 20 years. He notes, while his earlier work was interactive, his current work seeks to engage the viewer into responding to their perception of his work as well as to push them into understanding the work from his own perspective.<sup>3</sup>

Andrei Tarkovsky highlights Campbell’s mastery of “sculpting in time,” where Campbell’s manipulations of digital light crafts images that redirect and explore how human brains analyze image-processed visual information. His immersive perspective works utilizes processed visuals in ways that exemplify the unique adaptation of the human’s brain, emotions, and thoughts to the electronic era of art, questioning reality and illusions in the context of time.

# JIM CAMPBELL // Salesforce Tower 2017

“A DIARY OF THE DAY THAT YOU WILL SEE AT NIGHT...”<sup>6</sup>

“The tallest tower in San Francisco will also be a beacon of public art.”<sup>7</sup>

Using the top nine floors of the 61-story, 1070-foot high rise, the exhibition integrates 11,000 LED lights to translate computed lighting patterns that display an important image. This image constitutes and varies from a collage of images taken by six cameras scattered about the city, showcasing day to day traffic, the weather, its inhabitants, and the hustle and bustle of the SF streets.<sup>8</sup>

Campbell intends for this piece to connect the city in a direct way that advertises a digital representation of San Franciscan culture through streamlining the city’s everyday behavior. The piece should blend into the SF skyline, he insists in his KPIX CBS interview, that its representation of the city becomes a part of the city.<sup>9</sup>

Senator Dianne Feinstein remarked, “[Mr. Campbell was very adamant that he doesn’t want it to be a billboard.”<sup>10</sup>

Campbell works on this \$4 million dollar budget project from his “White Light” studio, where he cases the low-resolution lights in perforated aluminum and plans to face his lights inward towards the side of the building rather than the traditional outward. Unlike the harshness of a Times Square screen, Campbell’s aluminum lights helps reflect light on the surface in order to cast and achieve a soft luminous image that will make it glow rather than to blind.

The Salesforce Tower project is projected to be viewable by fall 2017.

# IDRIS KHAN // Layering Experience

- A British based Artist known for his photography and skill at image processing layering
- Graduated from the Royal College of Art in London in 2004 with a Master's Degree with Distinction in Research
- Addresses cultural and historical narratives in the investigation of layering experience through repetition and superimposition.
- Experiments with secondary source materials and the isolation of photography and time

Idris Khan's visual layering of paintings and re-interpretation of photographs exhibit the new wave of artists interpreting their digital art. His pieces use intense visual layering and IP. In an interview with Natalie Hanman, Idris identifies Photoshop and Final Cut Pro as his favorite piece of technology and main tool in making art. His photographs, widely known for their synthesized nature, rely on these two software in achieving their final image.

Victoria Miro describes the brilliance of Khan's aesthetic in translating the culture of the age we live in. "The density and precision of his images allude" to the excessive amount of info in this technical age, while the saturation and recreation of the photographed images creates an illusion that challenges the viewer to engage slower, question, and respond more thoughtfully to his work.

Gosforth photography

# IDRIS KHAN // My best shot

Idris first gained traction and notoriety for his use of digital technology to overlay multiple repeated subjects of visual and textual images such as the very famous Bernd and Hilla Becher house, every late Constable painting, and most personally, every page of the Qu'ran. These images convey layers an accumulative depth of the subject and of its author, combining the entirety of the work as a whole rather than separated individual pieces results in images reminiscent of drawing and painting than photograph, by through IP.

While it took two months to digitally incorporate every single page, Khan compiled a homage piece to his former and familial religion of Islam. Raised a Muslim by his Pakistani father, Khan photographed 1,953 pages of his father's own book of the Qu'ran, in which he condensed into the computer using his notable layering technique. The end result the creation of "my best shot" as displayed behind this text.

# IDRIS KHAN // Conflicting Lines Exhibition

In his Conflicting Lines exhibition at Victoria Miro Mayfair in 2015, Khan explores new interpretations of photography through his works through the interpretative C-Type prints of his photographs. In this collection, Khan solicits viewers to focus on the breaking lines and points of scribbled text of which Khan had repeated scribbled, erased, and scribbled over again in 2000 layers. A response to the barrage of present-day media of the horrors of the Middle East, Khan attempts to mimic the culture of conflict that is unavoidable in present day. Furthermore, he uses the process of C print to develop his photographs of his work.

First, procure a digital file through scan or photograph, then after it's been color corrected, profiled, and resized, the file passes to a Raster Image Processor that translates the digital file into info that printers can read. Using Red Green and Blue lasers to produce the image onto photographic paper. After processing the file transferred on paper is available in final print.

# JASON SALAVON

- Chicago based artist with a career in making computer generated art through the manipulation and reorganization of data by writing software
- Graduated from the University of Texas Austin with a BA and from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with an MFA in 1997
- Began as an artist and programmer in the video game industry initially
- Subjects typically consist of pre existing media which he reconfigures by compilation or code, bringing typically qualitatively remarked pieces and looking at them quantitatively
- Also known for his reinterpretation of statistical data into visual images

In 2013, Eric Bryan, a writer for Art Auction magazine, labels Jason as one of the 50 most collectible artists under 50 years old, raving about Salavon's work, in their promiscuity, "illuminates how technology infiltrates our culture and consciousness.

Jason's self description of his work claims that his pieces occupy a space between cultural sampling and data mining, blending the two together and insisting on their connected impacts. His algorithm based art is nothing short of futuristic, and his scripting codes seek to create haunting representations of human culture, career, and attitude towards technology.

In his Tedx talk "Form and Data," he asserts the composites he create, the art he conglomerates speak very much for themselves, as indicative of how much the data allows it to. "Data talk[s] as loudly as my intention... it is very hard to silence the data." He

# JASON SALAVON // The Master Index

One of his most recent and impactful works reflects on his collaboration with the University of Chicago in their compilation of a numbered list of Wikipedia's articles. The stark juxtaposition between popular cultural names, objects, destinations, and activities ranked above or below these subjects paint a vivid picture as to who we are and what we value in society.

Taking into account the importance behind the statistical data that ranks the pages according to how many times it has been visited, Salavon says that he "explores" the human interaction with digital images by placing the articles on a Word doc format and simply stating the grotesquely humorous piece. In its simplification the images we are left with summarizes us as a world community and seeks the opposite of isolation, in connecting all of us who are a part of the digital world.

# Summary

We see Jim Campbell, using the camera as a means to collect data to produce his work which seeks to represent our culture and make known of who, what, and the environment of which shapes human culture.

Idris Khan uses the camera and the computer as means to capture already photographed images and compile them into creating a new definition of it in the new age. He also depends on IP to composite his art. In conflicting lines, rather than showcasing his performative paintings, and uses the camera its essence and bring it back to modern digitization.

Jason Salavon uses custom computer software to reinterpret existing media that we see in our world today that impacts our culture and who we are. Our culture is defined by the examination of internet-based data, and Salavon concentrates on the visual representation of these images as the subject of the camera.



# Exploration and the Future

The application of image processing in 21st century art and culture is indicative in explaining the world around us and in creating the story of who we are as a society.

Image processing adds new elements to the story-telling perspective for the conglomerate down to the individual. For modern artists, using image processing, they are able to convey their own interpretation as well as their environment's and the sources from which they draw upon.

“Digital Technology not only creates our future, it is also a medium for artistic expression.”

-Chris Coleman, digital artist

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