

TEN THOUSAND FACES

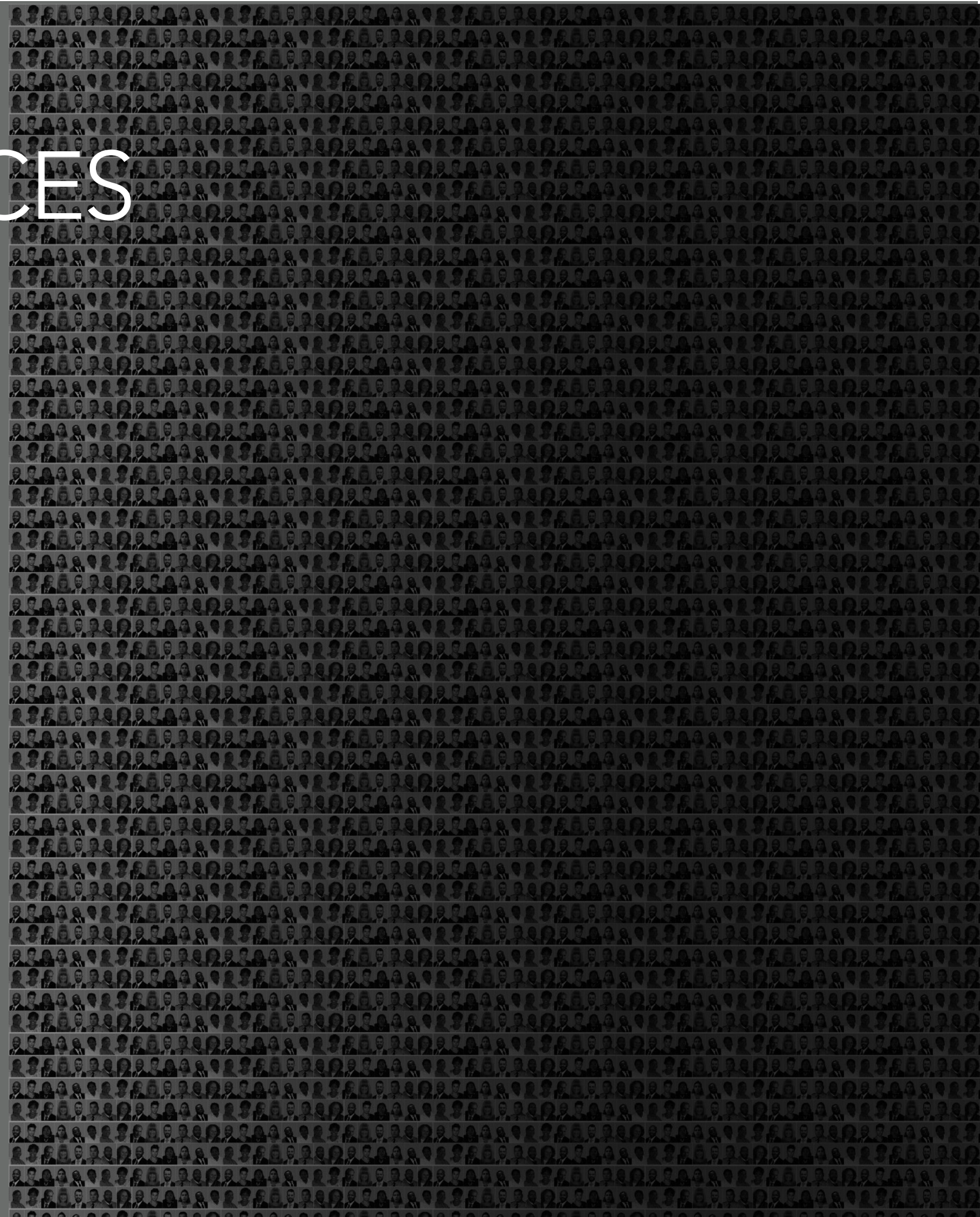
A COVID-19 MEMORIAL

FALL 2020

CHAD RESS
MFA Candidate
UCSB Department of Art

In conjunction with

UCSB MAT PROGRAM
Special thanks to Professor
George Legrady + Mert Toka



TEN THOUSAND FACES

A COVID-19 MEMORIAL

Inspiration

“ The doctor remembered the plague at Constantinople that, according to Procopius, caused ten thousand deaths in a single day. Ten thousand dead made about five times the audience in a biggish cinema. Yes, that was how it should be done. You should collect the people at the exits of five picture-houses, you should lead them to a city square and make them die in heaps if you wanted to get a clear notion of what it means. Then at least you could add some familiar faces to the anonymous mass. But naturally that was impossible to put into practice; moreover, what man knows ten thousand faces? ”

Camus, Albert. *The Plague*

TEN THOUSAND FACES

A COVID-19 MEMORIAL

Description

(1 of 2)

The intersection of forensic aesthetics and computational photography. In Camus's *The Plague*, Dr. Bernard Rieux is overwhelmed by the increasing death toll, and recalls the anecdote of ten thousand deaths occurring on a single day during the plague at Constantinople. When the Doctor asks "...for what man knows ten thousand faces", his rhetoric is an effort to humanize the scale of the loss and counter the lack of empathy inherent in the bureaucratic systems through which he operates.

At the time of this writing, the Covid-19 pandemic has claimed more than one million lives worldwide, with statistical peaks surpassing ten thousand deaths per day. Using GAN networks, I will generate photographic portraits which stand as referents to victims of the virus, creating a digital memorial. The initial dataset used to generate the portraits will be populated using portraits of actual victims, adding "some familiar faces to the anonymous mass", as Dr. Rieux suggests, while composing a base of digital 'DNA' which injects a trace-of-truth into the piece; It's fragments, however microscopic, will be contained in all subsequently generated portraits.

TEN THOUSAND FACES

A COVID-19 MEMORIAL

Description

(2 of 2)

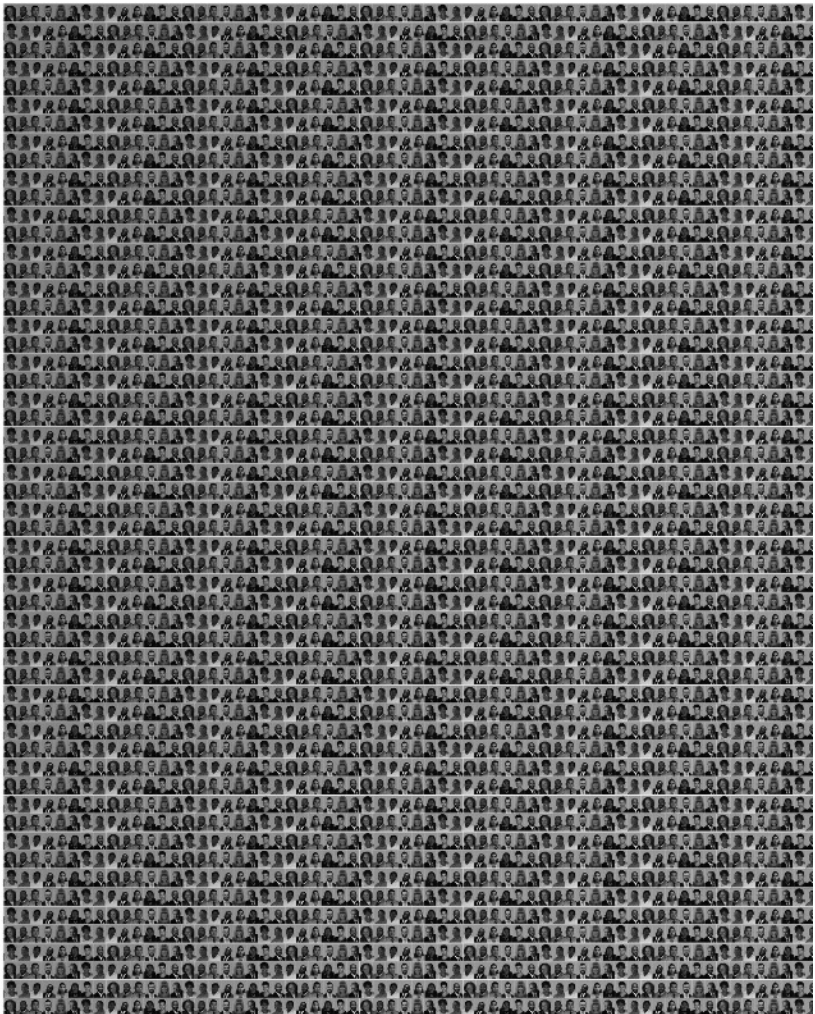
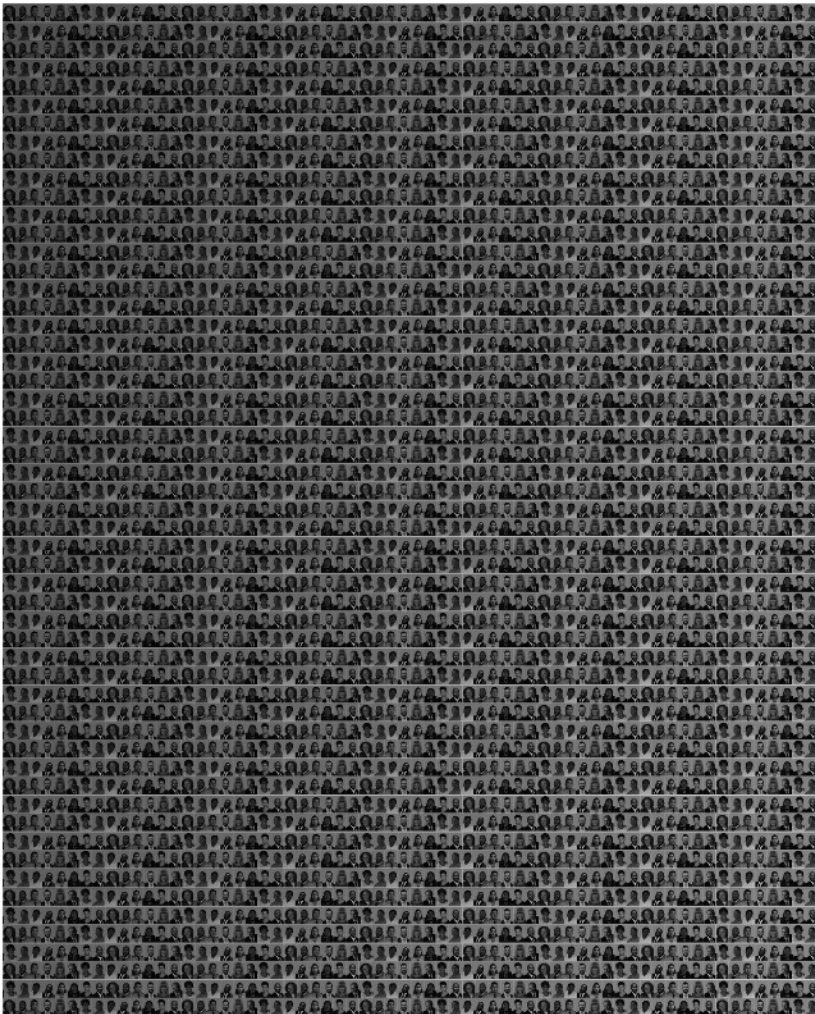
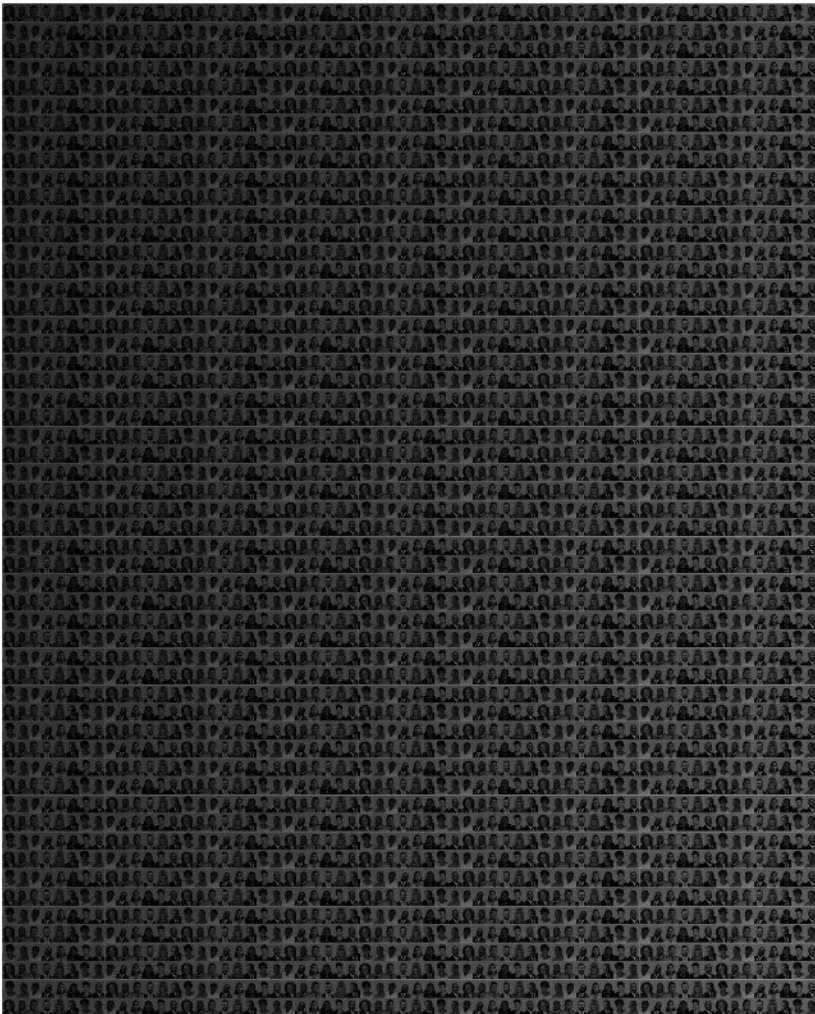
Both the initial data set and the generated images will be representative of the actual statistical makeup of Covid-19 victims. This will emphasize the disproportionate rate at which minorities currently suffer from the disease.

The generated images will be displayed in black & white, extremely small in scale, and organized in a grid, creating an abstracted typology(geneaology) of those who have succumbed to the disease. By blurring fact and fiction via traditional and computational photography, the piece will answer Dr. Rieux's question, but will it humanize the loss?

TEN THOUSAND FACES

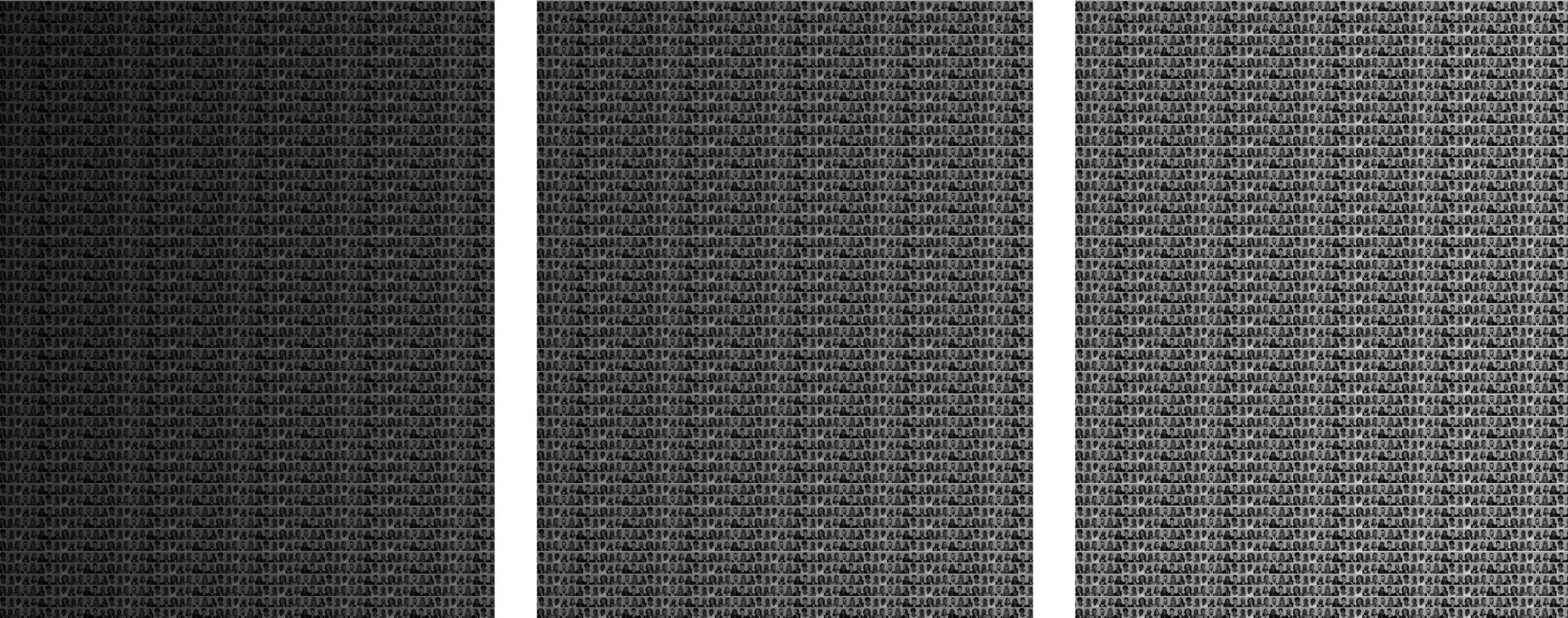
A COVID-19 MEMORIAL

Mockup / Sketch



TEN THOUSAND FACES

A COVID-19 MEMORIAL



Mockup / Sketch

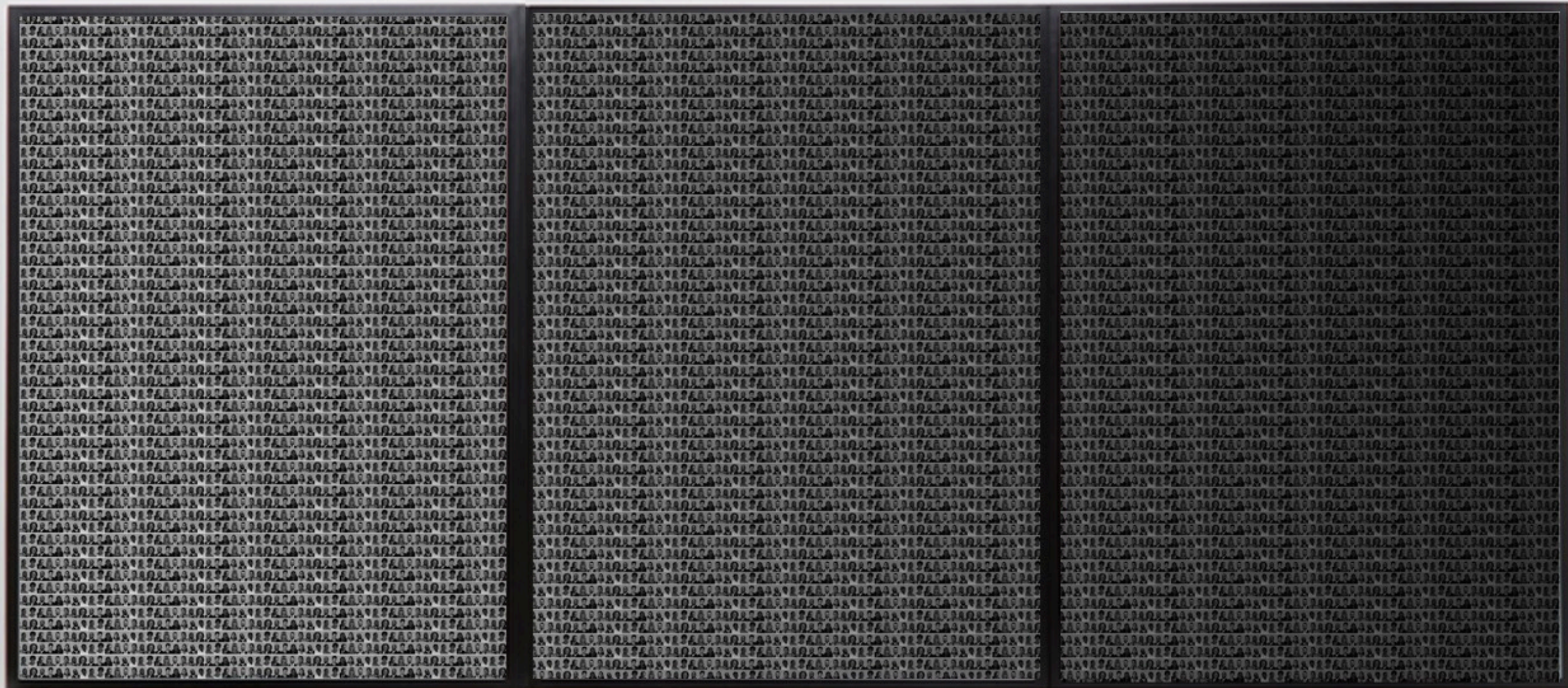
TEN THOUSAND FACES

A COVID-19 MEMORIAL

Mockup / Sketch

TEN THOUSAND FACES

A COVID-19 MEMORIAL



Mockup / Sketch

TEN THOUSAND FACES

A COVID-19 MEMORIAL

Software Used

Generated Adversarial Networks, Photoshop, Lightroom

<https://thispersondoesnotexist.com>

<https://github.com/NVlabs/stylegan2>

<https://github.com/lucidrains/stylegan2-pytorch>

TEN THOUSAND FACES

A COVID-19 MEMORIAL

Dataset Makeup

Statistics from CDC and APM Research
(independently funded organization):

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#demographics>

<https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race>

TEN THOUSAND FACES

A COVID-19 MEMORIAL

Ethical Considerations

(1 of 2)

Avoiding bias in neural network data sets:

Trevor Paglen and Kate Crawford, *ImageNet Roulette*

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/art-project-exposed-racial-biases-artificial-intelligence-system-180973207/>

<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/imagenet-roulette-trevor-paglen-kate-crawford-1658305>

TEN THOUSAND FACES

A COVID-19 MEMORIAL

Ethical Considerations

(2 of 2)

Images are sourced from NYTimes archive of covid-19 obituaries:

[https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/obituaries/people-died-coronavirus-obituaries.html
action=click&algo=random_desk_filter&block=editors_picks_recirc&fellb
ack=false&imp_id=419513850&impression_id=cfba2162-
f567-11ea-8e6f
fba9a8276e90&index=2&pgtype=Article®ion=footer&req_id=620509
723&surface=home-featured](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/obituaries/people-died-coronavirus-obituaries.html?action=click&algo=random_desk_filter&block=editors_picks_recirc&fellback=false&imp_id=419513850&impression_id=cfba2162-f567-11ea-8e6f-fba9a8276e90&index=2&pgtype=Article®ion=footer&req_id=620509723&surface=home-featured)

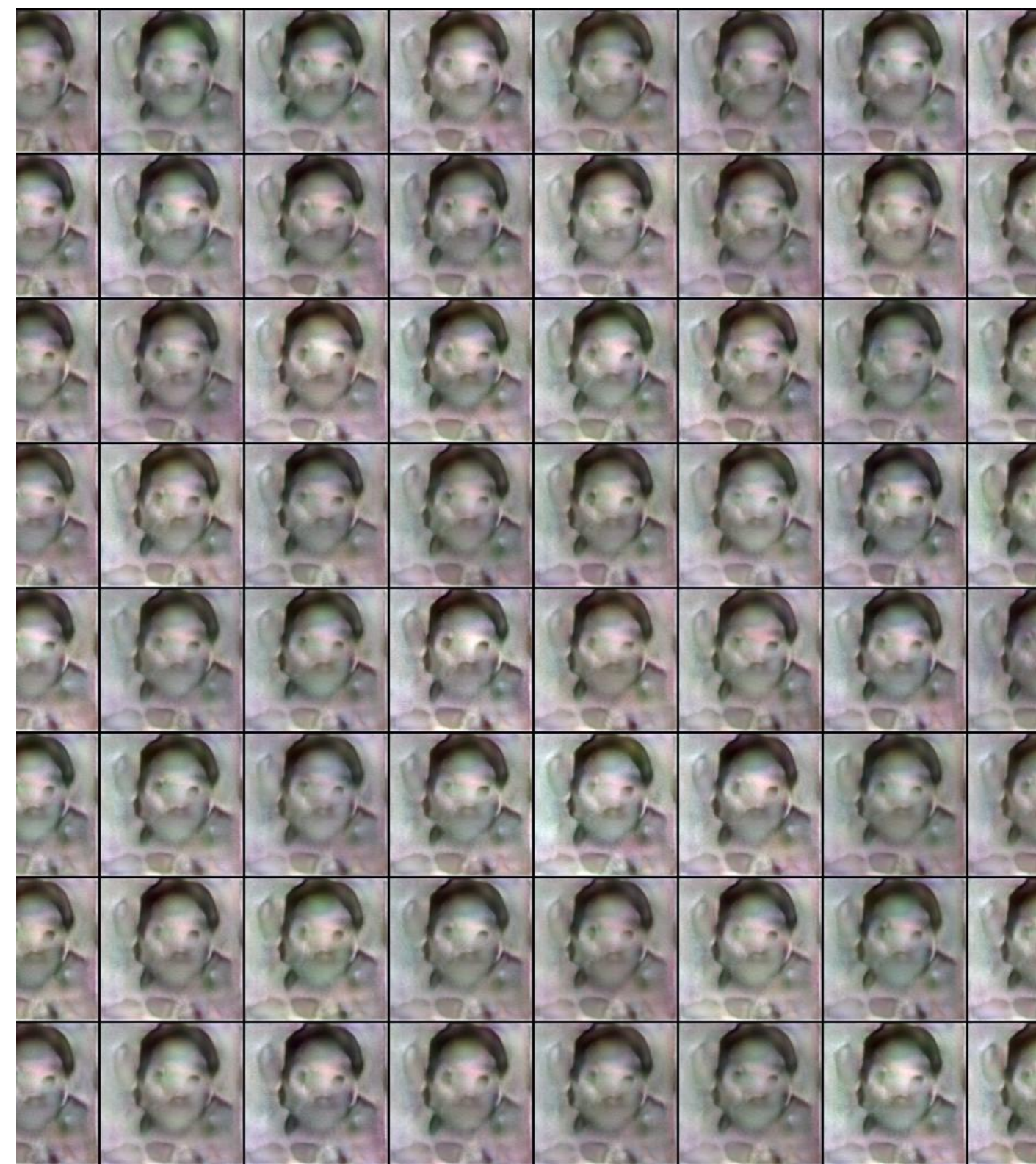
TEN THOUSAND FACES

A COVID-19 MEMORIAL

In-progress Documentation



1 % COMPLETE



IN PROCESS < 30% COMPLETE



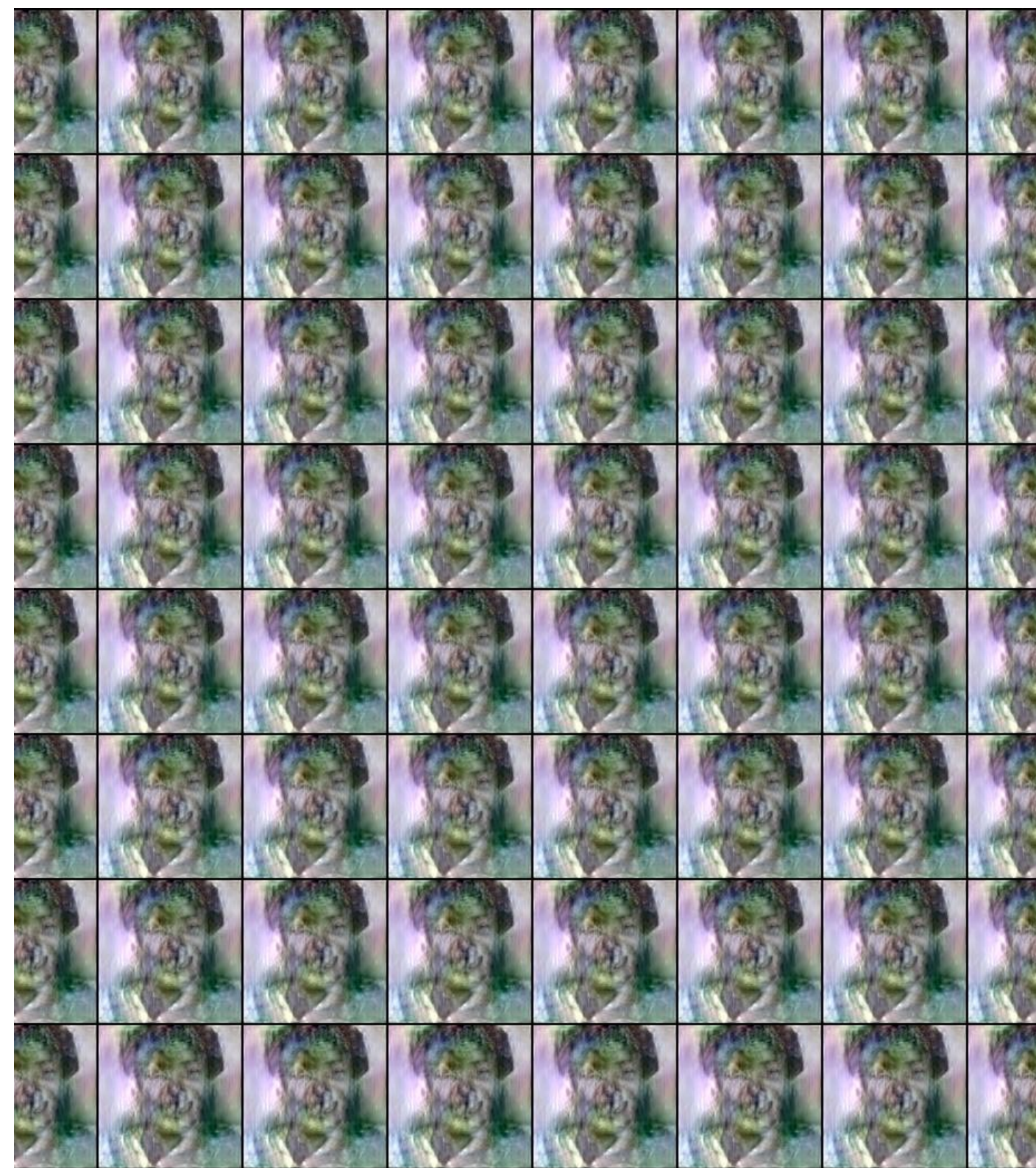
IN PROCESS < 30% COMPLETE



IN PROCESS < 30% COMPLETE



IN PROCESS < 30% COMPLETE



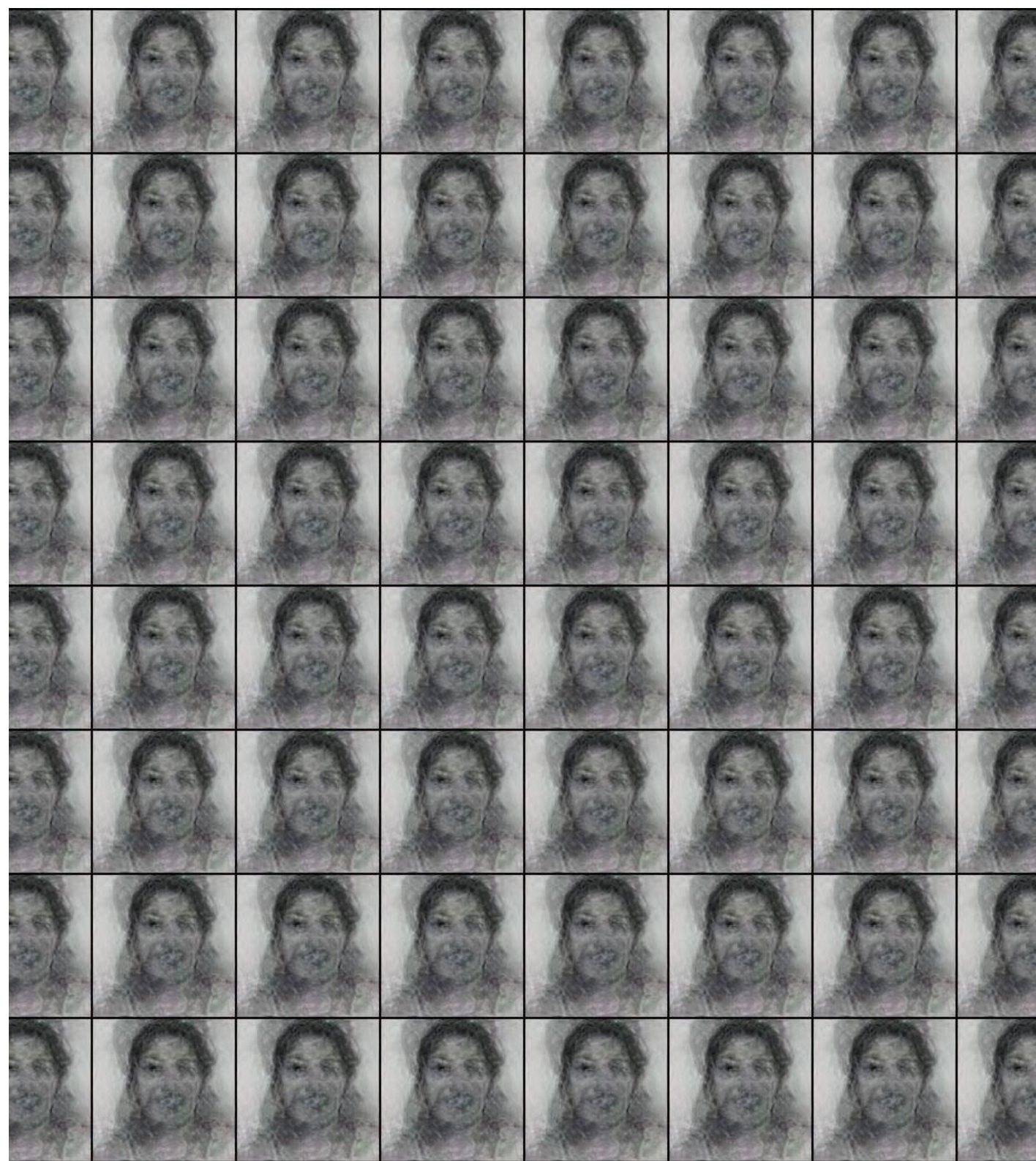
IN PROCESS < 30% COMPLETE



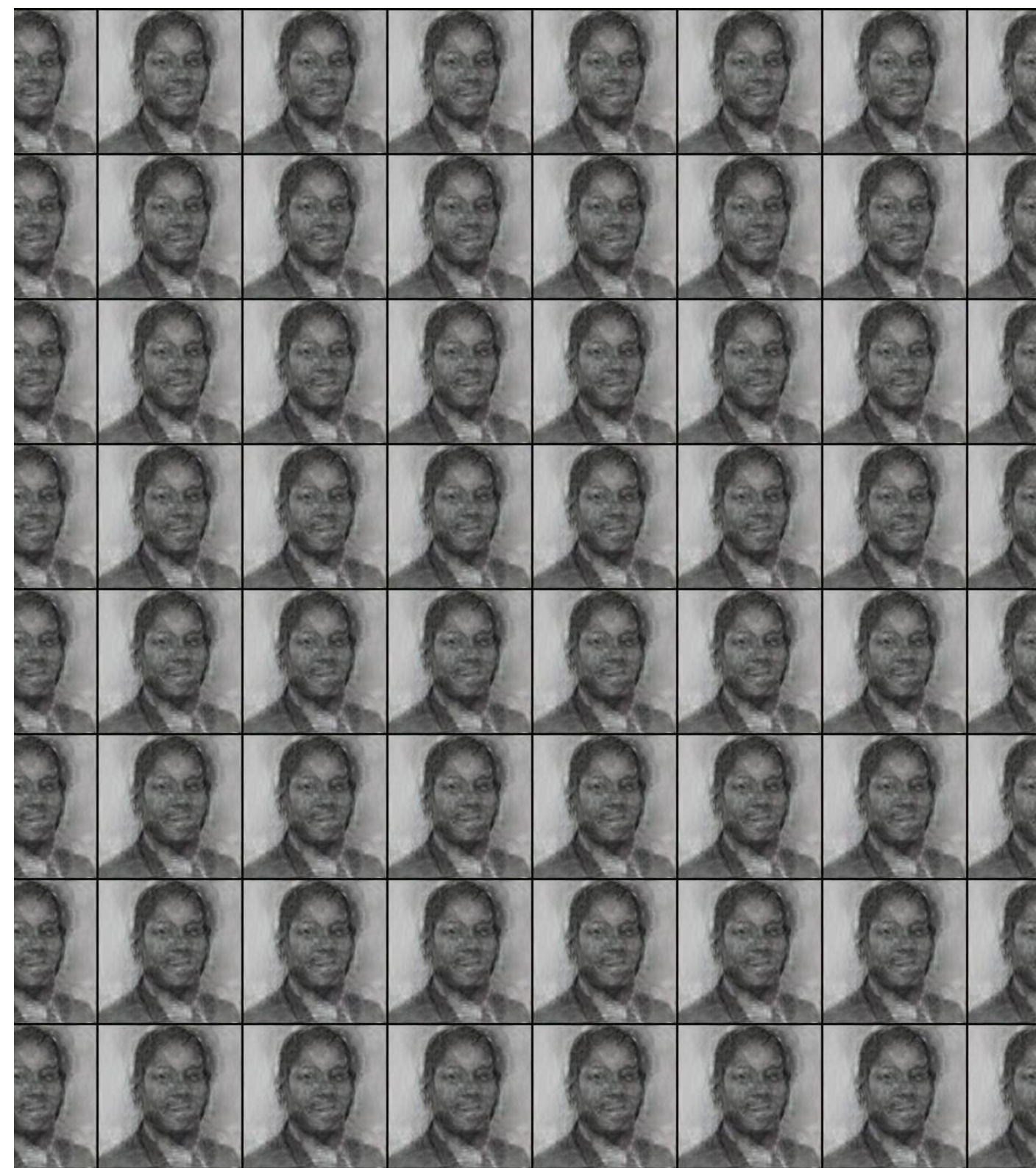
IN PROCESS < 30% COMPLETE
(detail)



IN PROCESS < 30% COMPLETE
(detail)



IN PROCESS < 50% COMPLETE



IN PROCESS < 50% COMPLETE



IN PROCESS < 50% COMPLETE



IN PROCESS < 50% COMPLETE