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Title: Artifacts of the Presence Era: Using Information Visualization to Create an Evocative Souvenir

Authors: Viegas et al.

This paper describes a project called Artifacts of the Presence Era. This is an installation at a museum which records video and audio of patrons. This information is synthesized into a graph like visualization as an historical mark. Over a five minute period, a single indicative visual frame from the video feed is chosen. The amplitude of the audio captured is then used to cut out an image from the chosen picture. This cut image is placed on the top of the video graph. Every five minutes, a new image is added to the graph. Overtime, the lower images are shrunk and compressed. This gives the illusion of a mountain forming. There is a clear analogy between the video graph and rock sediment.

It is difficult to learn much from the graph. It is a nice “souvenir”, but it does not do enough to convey meaning. Most of the image is the static background. A fixed camera’s video does not change much. People may pass in front of the camera from time to time, but the rest of the image is static. Figure 3 is a clear example of this phenomenon.

Crushing the older images is a good idea for creating a nice visual effect. It also goes well with the rock sediment analogy. It unfortunately also obscures the hides the data from the past. It nearly impossible to see what is going on in the bottom most layers. The only information that is partially preserved is the audio wave form.

I think something could be done to incorporate more information from the dynamic parts of the images. The images are cropped before adding them to the graph. Perhaps they could be cut vertically in addition to horizontally. This would allow more freedom to focus on the dynamic parts of the image and avoid the static parts. This would of course lead to stretching of the images, or adding borders to the images prior to adding them to the graph.

Ultimately, I feel this project is a nice and interactive exhibit. It allows everyone at the museum to interact with emerging art. It also connects events over time. I can image a version set up in a home, taking snapshots once a day. This would create a really neat picture to hang on a wall. It could update daily and over the course of living in a place, would be a really nice and personal souvenir.
I really enjoyed this paper. It describes a technique for rendering a photograph as an impressionist art piece. It attempts to recreate an artist’s brush strokes in creating an impressionistic rendering of a real photo. Several results are presented, and they are very impressive. Somewhat complex algorithms are used to determine which strokes to draw and what shape those strokes should take. In order to allow some creativity, the program has several parameters which can be tweaked by the user.

Creating filters for rendering images is a useful endeavor. Photo-editing software often includes these types of tools. It is interesting to see how relatively simple the process can be. These types of tools are a sort of black box usually. This article is like taking a peak under the hood to see how these things are done.

The process appears to work fairly well. The man holding the tomatoes certainly looks like it was painted. If I only saw the final product, I doubt I could tell it came from an actual photograph. In many regards, the impressionist rendering looks like an extremely pixilated version of the photograph. I like that the rendering loses fine details, but still maintains the prominent features of the photograph. Looking just at the rendering, one is able to tell the person is wearing a dirty jacket, the person is carrying some kind of fruit, and the light is shining from the left side of the picture. The details which are lost or distorted include what type of fruit is being held, how ripe the fruits are (in the impressionist rendering, the tomatoes look like they may be squished or mushy), and it appears the person has a watch on in the impressionist work, but not in the real photograph.

This article makes me think about other rendering styles. I think it could be interesting to have a “CGI” rendering, where it appears that a computer graphics engine was used to generate the picture. Also a cell shaded rendering could be useful. I wonder how difficult it would be to create a renaissance rendering style. During the renaissance, the artists strived for photorealism. It may be difficult to take a photograph and distort it enough to appear like a painting which is attempting photorealistic quality.