What struck me first was the mention of 'souvenir' in the title. Typically, we equate this to something we can take with us, a memento, a cheap knick-knack, something to remind us of the extraordinary places we've visited. With *Artifacts of the Presence Era*, the word has a different meaning that embodies the motivation for the piece. 'Souvenir' is considered in context as a commemorative, historical record. So no, you can't take it with you. In fact, if you stand there long enough, it will take you instead.

This piece falls on the opposite end of so many of the visualizations studied thus far, guided by metaphor alone and for purposes of aesthetic interaction versus salient exploration. I found it interesting that the piece was commissioned by the curators of ICA Boston. Although not unprecedented, such origins show the expansion of digital media in recent years. That this media was chosen and not another to commemorate the move to a new space is appropriate, especially given the Institute's standing in contemporary art.

The metaphor is similarly appropriate - a landscape to reveal the history of its experience. Much like the mighty Colorado, the visualization slices through the Grand Canyon of moments of visitors' presence. The suggestion here is that there will eventually be a enumerable large number of images at the bottom of the visualization in a compaction difficult to glean much meaning from. The excavation here becomes the ability to scroll through the images taken and examine it in its 'normal' form.

What works here is the interactivity of the piece and the noted acclaim it had for that particular feature. As mentioned above, users can excavate the visual geology, but unlike real geology and its lengthy timescales, users can also contribute to it. It would be interesting to see how the audience would react with a different time-scale parameter, if the frequency of capturing images changed to a shorter amount of time (I would posit that less frequent capture would fail to interest the audience or provide a meaningful threshold of activity to give them an idea of what is going on - but what of more frequent capture?). It is apparent that some users gleaned how it worked and added themselves to the strata, opposed to those who were merely captured.

Another question raised is the location of the installation. The authors mentioned that it was placed in an alcove near the front of the museum, and one clearly can see an archway entrance in the images. The inference made is that it was intended to be interacted with in proximity to a relatively high-traffic corridor. The thought then becomes why confine it to the building? It works well as a gallery piece, but that does not exclude it from installation in a public square or another open space in need of commemoration.

The major takeaway here lies in the abstraction it presents. Again, it provides an artistic approach and draws in the uninitiated user to evoke time and place. The visualization exists in a dynamic space of its own creation, opposed to a layering of static data merely gleaned from something dynamic. The paper raises an excellent point made by Erickson in that a visualization should allow for ambiguity and "provide grist for inferences" and share a meaningful story in an arc rather than a series of vignettes.

*Painterly*

My first impression was a lack of surprise or sense of novelty with a haughty Photoshop-
could-probably-do-this attitude. But whereas Photoshops probably does some fancy kernel-based raster manipulation, the algorithm described in the article provides a method that nearly, fully, almost captures the precise mechanical features that the act of painting entails. Over the course of the development of digital media, it has become increasingly possible to create (or recreate) paintings. What came to mind when reading this article was *Waking Life* and the technique of rotoscoping that has turned reality into a photorealistic reality and offers up an example of the pace of technology in this area.

What sets this method apart from others is perhaps the novel idea of simulating multiple brush sizes, a simple concept that had not been grasped in prior iterations of similar technology. Real artists use different brush sizes to effectively portray different levels of granularity in their work and this approach was taken when developing the algorithm. Interestingly enough, the method begins with the largest brushstroke in creating a constant color layer. From there, the detail is added in. It is an attempt by the developer to add a random element in the ordering of strokes in a layer, but the question raised there is whether strokes are globally random or random within a smaller section of the piece, and thus more analogous to how the IRL art might be produced? And again, since computers lack semantic analysis, the background and foregrounds might not be differentiated and outfitted with appropriate levels of detail, nor would human figures. The computer is far from approaching the level of Degas.

The work flat out states that it is difficult to simulate fluid flow and wet media, implying the simulation of watercolor, but ostensibly implying any form of liquid-based paint. This reminded me of a Foxtrot cartoon wherein Jason tries to extol the virtues of computer-based paint programs to Paige while she is engaged in the analog form of such activity. She then quips "can a computer do this?" and in the next panel we see Jason has a swirl of paint on his face, clearly due to Paige's artistic license. Although a stretch in rhetoric (a hilarious one at that), it highlights the limitations of such a 'painterly style'. It lacks a body. It lacks noise and residue that result as a fact of using physical substance. Nowhere in the method is there a subroutine for random errors or minor tremors to simulate the movement of a hand.

Granted, the method is extremely robust and offers another example of 'physics' and how we might go about modeling reality, even different styles of it. The history of art can be decomposed into its stylistic elements at the paintbrush level and analyzed for width, depth, curvature, radius, etc. The computer can speak a multitude of 'expressive visual languages'. But, like the Mac OS voices of yore, the language they speak is stifled and mechanical.

Photoshop indeed opened up new modes of 'visual language' but did not attempt to be close to physical art, it created something of its own sphere that had its own mores and aesthetic vocabulary. The fault lies with a method like this in attempting to come close to impressionistic, masterful, etc.