



WE NEED to look at digital media in terms of what can currently be digitized: sound, image, and text—each with its own structures and principles of construction, from micro level (photon of light, nanosample of a soundwave) to macro (all light and sound energy). Only text is not physically part of the electromagnetic spectrum, only text cannot be described in terms of physically measurable energy, but it could be argued that text is the conceptual glue that gives rise to the digital world, reckoned in ones and zeros, representing conditions of *on* and *off*.

I. VOCABULARIES





Once we virtualize light and sound (via capture, recording, scanning, digitizing) and once we allow the textual manifestation of ideas and languages the same virtuality of physical phenomena, we have the rich contemporary environs of digital media. This is by no means a complete picture, but it is enough to generate the landscape we will be exploring in this volume.

New and Emerging

New vocabularies may well arise from the tools, processes, and shortcomings of digital production. One only needs to examine techniques

such as auto-tune and data moshing to realize that digital artifacts—byproducts of data compression, transmission, and digital signal processing—are *prima materia* for the next generation of digital media artists. Jeremy Rotsztain's action paintings, on the other hand, can be seen as a different kind of vocabular development—the *de facto* ongoing dialogue between pixel and vector, viewed as a mashup between high art and populist cinema.

Visual Vocabularies

Datamosh is the persistence of pixelated images in digital video, due to bad compression or transmission. Two notable examples of an appropriation of this technical glitch for its expressive qualities are Kanye West's *Welcome to Heartbreak* [9] directed by Nabil Elderkin, and Chairlift's *Evident Utensil* [10] directed by Ray Tintori.

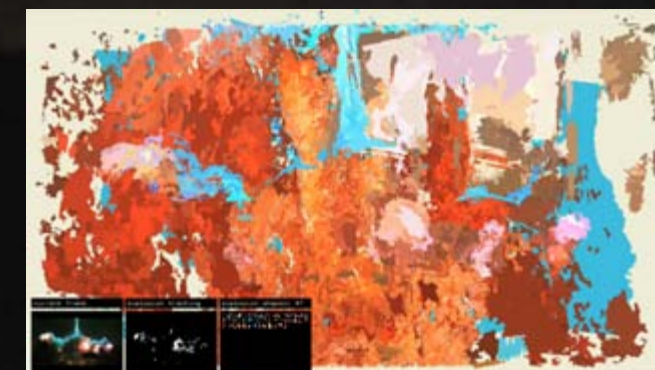
What emerges from the datamosh technique especially in Tintori's work is a redemption of the commonplace. The settings and shots of *Evident*





Utensil are mundane, nothing out of the ordinary: headshots of the band; the lead singer wandering through woods, fields, and streams; swimmers in a pool. But with datamoshing, the vocabulary of shot-to-shot transition is expanded to the pixel level, with selected elements of each shot in constant

flux, morphing into the next shot, generating unlikely blends of figure and background swirling in the frame, leaving psychedelic trails of multicolor pixels—digital liquid cinema!



Bitmap/Vector Dialectics: Action Painting

The series *Top 10 Movie Explosions*, a set of ‘action paintings’ by Jeremy Rotsztain [11], uses digital rotoscoping to transform cinema explosions by action directors like Michael Bay, Roland Emmerich, John Woo, and James Cameron. The effect is one of animated posterized imagery, reminiscent of trace bitmap features that convert bitmap images

to vectors in current design and animation tools such as Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Flash. These “Masculine Expressionism” paintings, however, use custom software (written in C++ and OpenFrameworks) to hybridize Jackson Pollock with the single pyrotechnic gesture that defines the action film genre.