

'Our Founder' Series

These images are intended to be displayed as an ensemble of small dye sublimation prints, arranged in a horizontal row and having large black lacquered frames. The allusion is to portrait miniatures in the tradition of Holbein or Clouet. The title refers to the galleries of portraits of founding fathers found in corporation board rooms. All images began with the same captured video image of an actor, and have been processed/synthesized using software that I created running on Silicon Graphics machines.

I have included a single unframed specimen print as well as a snapshot indicating the intended framing style.

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FOUNDERS SERIES

These images are an outgrowth of a preoccupation that I have had for some years with the question of surface in synthetic images. For me this question is very much bound up with the aesthetics of the 'painterly'. Traditionally, this term has been associated with a sensitivity to the material properties of the painting medium and with their evocative potential... with 'paint as paint'. At first glance, it may seem inappropriate to attempt to apply such terms to computer generated images - given the latter's absolute and literal superficiality.

In a beautiful and prescient passage in 'The Life of Forms in Art' Henri Focillon says, 'Finally, if modelling be interpreted as the actual life of the surfaces, then the various planes that compose it are not merely a garment draped across nothingness, but are, rather, the point at which the internal mass meets with space.' This for me is both a haunting critique of traditional 3D graphics and a call to arms.

If surface is not to be virtual or purely projective (as it is, for instance, in the case of texture mapping, bump-mapping, displacement mapping, etc.), how do we reconcile its inherent materiality with the immateriality of the computer medium? As the little old lady says in the hamburger ad, 'where's the beef?'. I think that the answer lies in our definition of matter.

Far from being something dead or inert that is carved, molded or beaten into form, I think that matter is immanence itself. Thus, as any painter knows, surface becomes both arena and process. As Focillon puts it: '... form is not only, as it were, incarnated, ... it is invariably incarnation itself'. Thus if we oppose the Cartesian notion of matter as extension (just as 3D graphics could be considered 'pure analytic extension') with a more Deleuzian stance, we have an escape from our dilemma, for what is more immanent than the computer medium? I imagine the computer as what Deleuze calls a 'pure interior' and its screen less as a window than as a petri dish.

Considered from this vantage point, surface becomes a pretty exciting place indeed. Far from being an appliqué, it is more a substantial domain which is frothing with emergence. These surfaces are explorations in this domain.

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I believe that we are in the midst of not only a technological revolution but also of a conceptual revolution which is being fueled by researches into emergent systems, non-linear dynamics, genetic algorithms, etc. - all enabled by the computer medium. Thus are being created not only new media, and new forms but new matter.

On a technical front - these images are all transformations of the same digitized face of an actor. They were generated using software which I have been developing over a number of years. This software comprises a scripting language coupled with a large body of image processing, brushing and rendering algorithms.

More recently I have been using the genetic algorithm to breed populations of 'intelligent brushes' - each having its own genetically determined nervous system (in the form of a neural network). Different species of these brushes interact to form an ecosystem having its own complex dynamics - generating or transforming images in the process.

The images were rendered on Silicon Graphics machines and printed on a Kodak dye-sublimation printer.