

Part 1

> “Computer Generated Imagery”

1.

Over the decades “CGI” has been called many things and has penetrated nearly every aspect of our modern lives. It has evolved and has taken on many different names and spawned many new areas for both the technically inclined and the artistically inclined. Many new specialties have emerged but in nearly all cases the images/media is at least in part produced, edited and saved as digital files.

Now with the emergence of images as NFTs and the money associated with them, we are witnessing the biggest push in history to legitimize, evaluate, and value work that is the result of digital processing. An infinite number of every type of image imaginable, and many unimaginable types and styles are created, captured, and saved using many different tools, techniques and approaches.

The question is being raised (again) **what do we call it? What do we call the people that claim authorship and or ownership of these images?** *It is my suggestion that we have finally arrived at the time in our history to be recognized, accepted and valued for what we are AND what we are not.*

Fortunately we are traversing a path already well worn by our predecessors, the **photographers!** There are now many articles and opinions on the topic. If you want to research the historical relevance of photographs being legitimized and recognized in the “Fine Art” world and the future that will someday be art history, here are a few articles to get you started and help with the context of the rest of the discussion.

[When did Photography Become Art? | MOST INFLUENTIAL ART](#)

[When photography became art – Harvard Gazette](#)

[Paddy Scott: When Did Photography Become an Art? \(neocities.org\)](#)

The similarities that can be made between digital tools and cameras, photography, photographers, and the images they capture are too numerous to mention all at once. (And my hope is eventually we will expand the discussions to include things like copyrights/IP issues and controversial ones like metrics for excellence or determination of value. Yikes!)

2.

For now to avoid the many discussion pitfalls that plague these discussions **we should attempt to concentrate on the similarities between capturing photons “Photography” and capturing digits “Digitography”** and what we call the people that do it.. I want to draw parallels to process and not something subjective like content, quality, or style. In doing so we

can work toward consensus (in our community at least) and the acceptance of terms and how we can use them going forward.

“The Emergence of Digitographers”

I suggest that although some of us are artists, we are all “Digitographers” using computers as “camera”/capture devices and engaging in the act of “Digitography”. A screen is our viewfinder and it enables us to capture images of places and things far beyond the physical world and even to grab pieces of imaginary visions when we are skilled enough to execute it properly, OR when we get lucky and have a “happy accident” that results in “I’ll just save that one because it’s awesome.”.

It was a happy accident that led me to a courtroom and mediation over the rights to hold someone responsible for publishing an image that was mine but not submitted by me for print. The person that submitted it made the argument that a person can not copyright an image of something that someone else can make using the exact set of “parameters”.

(In another document if there is enough interest I will lay out in greater detail the relevant parts of the proceedings but for now just say it falls into law already in place for our old friends the photographers. “You snap it. You own it.” This is why there can be multiple images of the Eiffel tower, and the photographers that took them each hold the rights to their image, even though the image is of the same thing.)

This brings forth the issue of the content of the imagery we produce, and is it “created” or “found”? Created or found needs to be addressed in order to be able to make the necessary distinctions between artists/creators and digitographers. Here is where it gets sticky because people want to start talking about “value” at this point in the debate.

We should not! The purpose of the debate is to establish known and accepted terms for what we do and what the nature of our process is. **Do we create or capture?**

It is my belief that the “create or capture” question is a far easier way to answer these questions. Due to the vague nature of the word artist, “created or captured” is easier to find agreement on. Do we *create* an image by giving a machine parameters? Knobs dials, sliders, and now word prompts? Are generated images like fractal art images? YES! But are they created? NO! Uncle “Benny” (Benoit Mandelbrot) himself told me personally that all the images are “found”. Every image he or any of us ever showed was, as he said, “a really beautiful find.”

To keep it simple my proposed general rule is that if it comes out of the machine (regardless of what you put into it) then the resulting image is a digigraph. It remains a digigraph unless or until it is altered again in some way by the hand of a human. This “touching” is what changes it from a 100% digigraph into an “edited image” and that is part of the artist’s process. The context of creation should be of no relevance to a prospective buyer or in any way

changes the value or any other thing about the image. The term digigraph ONLY addresses how it was made.

3.

Eventually we should discuss what constitutes a digigraph vs. a work of art. Along with that will come the discussion of what differentiates a digitographer from an artist. Can artists be digitographers and can digitographers be artists? Or both together? Is there more or less respect for one over the other? Should we value the work product differently or should an image just be an image regardless of how it is created? These are questions we will have to answer for ourselves or other people will apply their labels to us.