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Improving Monocular Depth Estimation with Global Depth Histogram Matching

Anonymous CVPR submission

Paper ID ****

Abstract

The ABSTRACT is to be in fully-justified italicized text, at the top of the left-hand column, below the author and affiliation information. Use the word “Abstract” as the title, in 12-point Times, boldface type, centered relative to the column, initially capitalized. The abstract is to be in 10-point, single-spaced type. Leave two blank lines after the Abstract, then begin the main text. Look at previous CVPR abstracts to get a feel for style and length.

1. Introduction

Estimating depth from images is an important open problem with applications to robotics, autonomous driving, and medical imaging. Dense depth maps are useful precursors to higher-level scene understanding tasks such as pose estimation and object detection.

However, traditional approaches to depth estimation, such as stereo, suffer from lower performance when confronted with small angles or faraway objects. More exotic approaches use FMCW or time-of-flight LiDAR technologies, but these approaches are currently expensive and bulky.

The most promising solution to these issues uses deep learning and convolutional neural networks to perform *monocular depth estimation*, estimating dense depth maps from single RGB images. However, this problem is under-constrained due to *inherent scale ambiguity*, the unresolvable tradeoff between size and distance in single images. In practice, this issue commonly manifests itself in many monocular depth networks, and indeed, Wonka et. al. (cite) showed that if the method has oracle access to the ground truth median depth, then correcting the output of the CNN to match this median depth produces better depth maps both qualitatively and quantitatively.

In this paper, we go further and show that by augmenting the RGB image with a histogram of global image depths, we can achieve substantially improved performance (and generalizability) over state-of-the-art monocular depth estimators. By performing an exact, weighted histogram match-

ing on the output depth map of the depth estimator, we can match the depth histogram of the scene to the depth histogram of our estimate. This histogram matching is described in (cite) and is flexible enough to accommodate different pixel reflectances in the RGB image. Finally, this histogram can be captured relatively inexpensively using only a single pixel single-photon avalanche diode (SPAD) and pulsed laser illumination diffused over the field of view, representing a significant improvement in cost and simplicity over multi-pixel LiDAR arrays with expensive scanning mechanisms. It is worth noting that SPADs of this type have already made their way into existing smartphones, such as the iPhone X, and will likely play a role in future mobile sensing platforms as well.

Our method is not without limitations. It still requires a laser and single-pixel LiDAR detector, and as such, is sensitive to ambient photons. Being a variant of histogram matching, our method is unable to transpose the values of pixels (i.e. if pixel a is farther than pixel b in the input, it will be farther than pixel b in the output). In other words, our method is not able to resolve ordinal depth errors (errors where an object is wrongly placed closer or farther relative to another object). Finally, our method is non-differentiable, and is therefore unsuitable for end-to-end optimization of multi-part networks.

- We introduce the idea of augmenting an RGB camera with a global depth histogram to address scale ambiguity error in monocular depth estimators.
- We analyze our approach on indoor scenes using the NYU Depth v2 dataset. We demonstrate that our approach is able to resolve scale ambiguity while being fast and easy to implement.
- We build a hardware prototype and evaluate the efficacy of our approach on real-world data, assessing both the quality and the ability of our method to help generalization of monocular depth estimators across scene types.

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2. Related Work

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et. al [16] provide a simple and concise method that also achieves an exact histogram match while being very fast. In the image reconstruction space, Swoboda and Schnörr [20] use a histogram to form an image prior based on the Wasserstein distance for image denoising and inpainting. Rother et. al. [1] use a histogram prior to create an energy function that penalizes foreground segmentations with dissimilar histograms. In a slightly different vein, Zhang et. al. [24] train a neural network to produce realistically colorized images given only a black-and-white image and a histogram of global color information.

Our method is essentially a modified form of the algorithm in [16], modified for our particular use case. Also worth noting is the fact that most algorithms compute histograms from existing images, whereas our method measures the depth histogram indirectly using photon arrivals.

3. Method

In this section, we describe the measurement model for a single-pixel time-of-flight lidar sensor under diffuse, pulsed laser illumination.

3.1. Measurement Model

Consider a laser which emits a pulse at time $t = 0$ with time-varying intensity $g(t)$ uniformly illuminating some 3D scene. We parameterize the geometry of the scene as a height map $z(x, y)$. Neglecting albedo and falloff effects, an ideal detector counting photon events from a location (x, y) in the time interval $(n\Delta t, (n + 1)\Delta t)$ would record

$$\lambda_{x,y}[n] = \int_{n\Delta t}^{(n+1)\Delta t} (f * g)(t - 2z(x, y)/c) dt \quad (1)$$

where c is the speed of light, and f is a function that models the temporal uncertainty in the detector. Single-photon avalanche diodes (SPADs) are highly sensitive photodetectors which are able to record single photon events with high temporal precision [?]. Since the event corresponding to the detection of a photon can be described with a Bernoulli random variable, the total number of accumulated photons in this time interval follows a Poisson distribution according to

$$h[n] \sim \mathcal{P} \left(\sum_{x,y} \alpha_{x,y} \eta \lambda_{x,y}[n] + b \right) \quad (2)$$

where $\alpha_{x,y} = r_{x,y}/z(x, y)^2$ captures the attenuation of the photon counts due to the reflectance $r(x, y)$ of the scene and due to the inverse square falloff $1/z(x, y)^2$. In addition, η is the detection probability of a photon triggering a SPAD event, and $b = \eta a + d$ is the average number of background

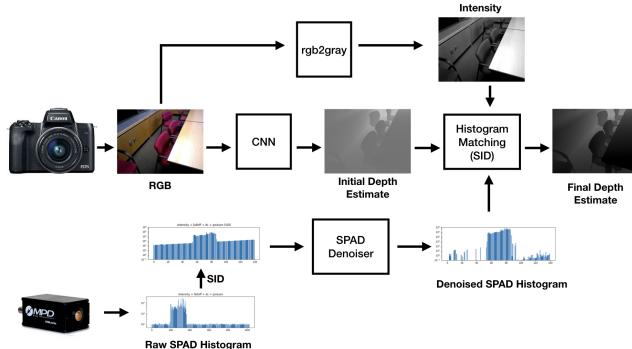


Figure 1: **Overview of the full pipeline** We use a CNN to get an initial per-pixel depth estimate. Then we perform exact histogram matching using intensity-weighted pixel values on the corrected SPAD data.

detections resulting from ambient photons a and erroneous “dark count” events d resulting from noise within the SPAD.

3.2. Monocular depth estimation with global depth hints

Given a single RGB image $I(x, y)$ and a vector of photon arrivals $h[n]$ described by equation 3, we seek to reconstruct the ground truth depth map $z(x, y)$. Our method has two parts. First, we **initialize** our estimate of the depth map from the single RGB image via a monocular depth estimator described below. Second, we **refine** this depth map using the captured measurements $h[n]$ via exact histogram matching.

Initialization The first step in our method is to produce an initial estimate of ground truth depth. Convolutional Neural Networks have been shown to produce accurate, if poorly-scaled, estimates of depth from only a single image. We therefore choose to initialize our depth map estimate $\hat{z}^{(0)}(x, y)$ using a CNN. However, any depth estimator reliant on only a single view may be used for this step. Furthermore, in the larger context of our algorithm, it is more important that the network predict the correct ordinal relationships between pixels - that is, to predict the correct relative ordering of pixels a and b , rather than to get all pixels exactly correct.

Exact Histogram Matching An image’s *histogram* is a pair of vectors (h, b) where h_i is the number of pixels of the image whose value lies in the range $[b_i, b_i + 1]$. Then, given a source image S with histogram (h_s, b) and a target histogram (h_t, b) , histogram matching generates a new image M such that $h_m \approx h_t$ and the pixel values in M are in the same relative order as in S . The full details of the exact histogram matching algorithm can be found in [16].

However, for our purposes, we need to modify our algorithm to accommodate differing per-pixel weights. We can account for squared depth falloff

SPAD Denoising

- Talk about histogram matching in the ideal case, jump straight to intensity
- Talk about histogram matching in our case, and how it approaches the ideal case. Discuss the following corrections
 - Ambient/DC - Use [?] to justify looking for large edges, then the ambient estimate to get rid of the noise floor.
 - Falloff
- Talk about how the histogram matching works with intensity considerations applied, briefly.
- We don’t address jitter or poisson noise.

$$h[n] \sim \mathcal{P} \left(\sum_{x,y} \alpha_{x,y} \eta \lambda_{x,y}[n] + b \right) \quad (3)$$

Given a SPAD with histogram h according to the above equation, we first process the SPAD to remove the effects of some of the terms. First, we

3.3. Implementation Details

For the Monocular Depth Estimator, we use pretrained versions of the the Deep Ordinal Regression Network (DORN) [] and the DenseDepth Network. The exact histogram matching method is as described in [].

4. Simulation

4.1. Implementation Details

- Number of bins used, depth range, laser parameters, use of intensity image.
- Using

NYU Depth v2 The NYU Depth v2 Dataset consists of 249 training and 215 testing scenes of RGB-D data captured using a Microsoft Kinect. We used a version of DORN pre-trained according to [6] as our CNN.

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5. Hardware Prototype

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5.1. Setup

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- Description of hardware used
- Images of scenes used

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6. Discussion

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		$\delta^1 \uparrow$	$\delta^2 \uparrow$	$\delta^3 \uparrow$	$rel \downarrow$	$rmse \downarrow$	$log10 \downarrow$
450	DORN	0.846	0.954	0.983	0.120	0.501	0.053
451	DORN + median rescaling	0.871	0.964	0.988	0.111	0.473	0.048
452	DORN + GT histogram matching	0.906	0.972	0.990	0.095	0.419	0.040
453	Proposed (SBR=10)	<u>0.903</u>	0.970	<u>0.989</u>	0.091	0.422	<u>0.040</u>
454	Proposed (SBR=50)	0.906	<u>0.971</u>	0.990	0.089	<u>0.410</u>	0.039
455	Proposed (SBR=100)	0.906	<u>0.971</u>	0.990	<u>0.090</u>	0.408	0.039
456	DenseDepth	0.847	0.973	0.994	0.123	0.461	0.053
457	DenseDepth + median rescaling	0.888	0.978	0.995	0.106	0.409	0.045
458	DenseDepth + GT histogram matching	0.930	0.984	0.995	0.079	0.338	0.034
459	Proposed (SBR=10)	0.922	0.982	<u>0.994</u>	0.082	0.361	0.036
460	Proposed (SBR=50)	0.925	<u>0.983</u>	0.995	<u>0.081</u>	0.348	<u>0.035</u>
461	Proposed (SBR=100)	0.926	0.983	0.995	<u>0.081</u>	0.346	0.035

Table 1: Simulated Results on NYU Depth v2. Bold indicates best performance for that metric, while underline indicates second best. The proposed scheme outperforms DenseDepth and DORN on all metrics, and even outperforms the median rescaling scheme, which has access to the true median depth value.

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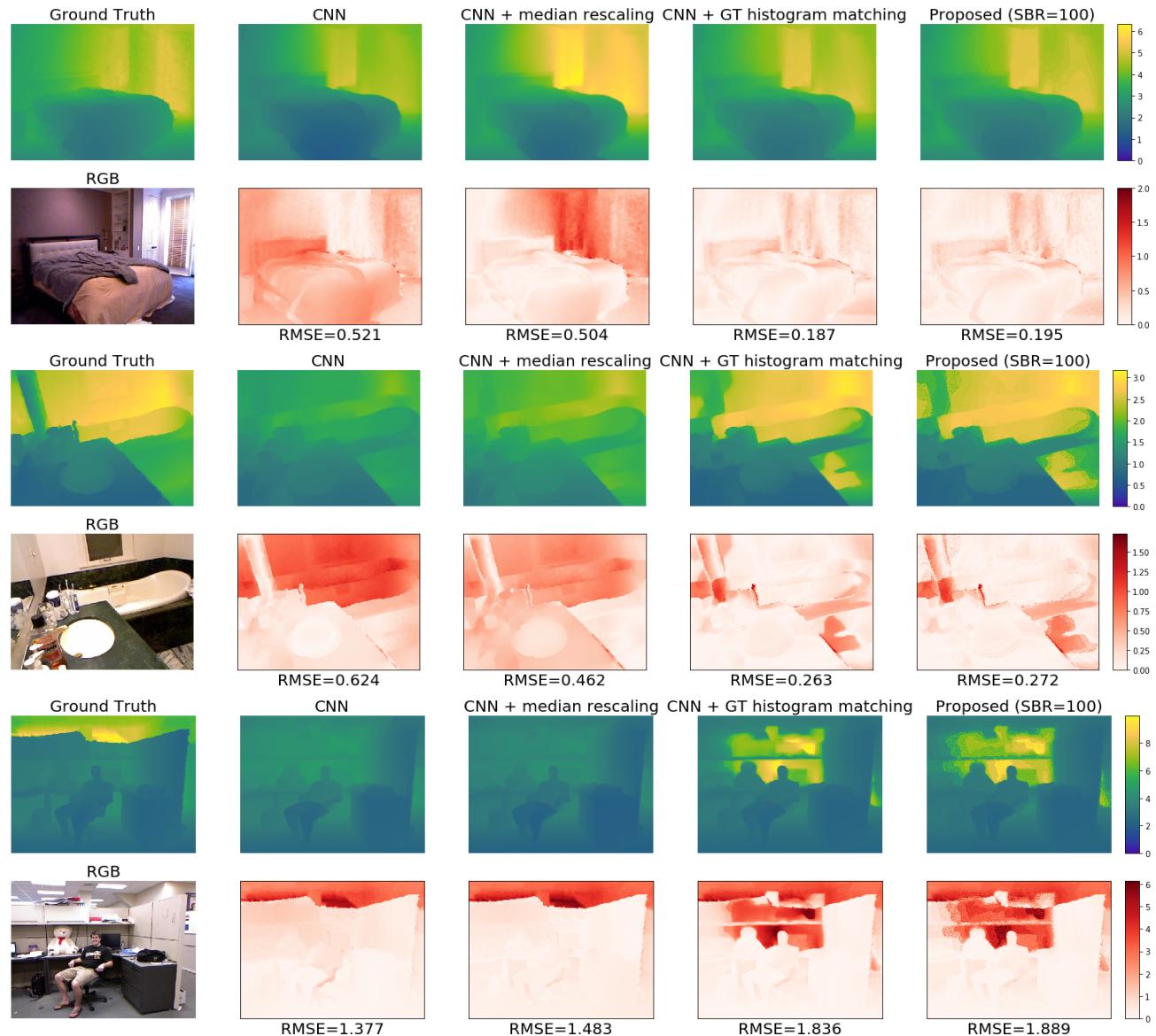
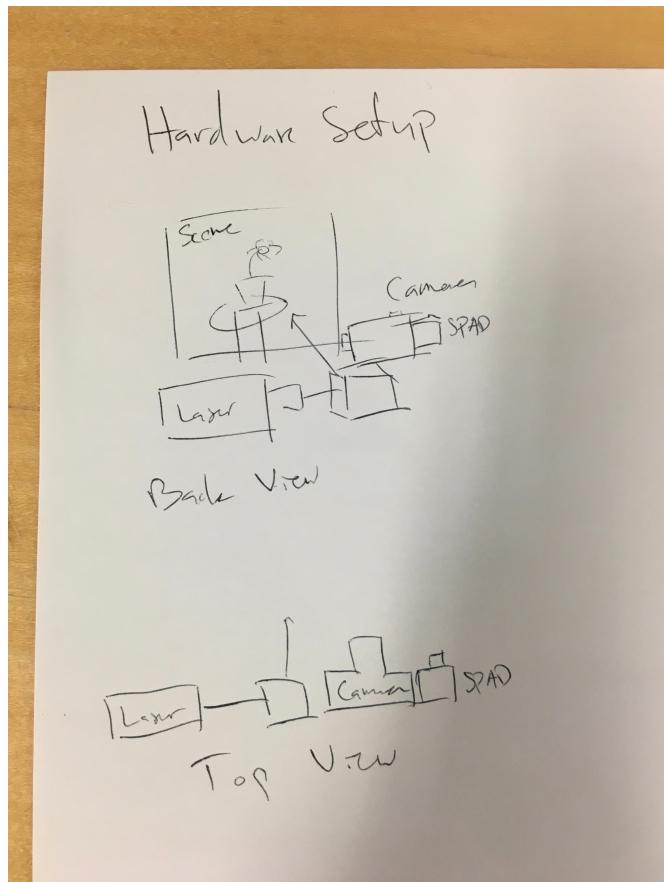


Figure 2: Selected Results on DenseDepth. First two examples demonstrate capability of proposed method to correct initial scaling/translation errors. Last example shows potential pitfall when ordinal depth is predicted incorrectly.

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689 Figure 3: **Hardware setup**
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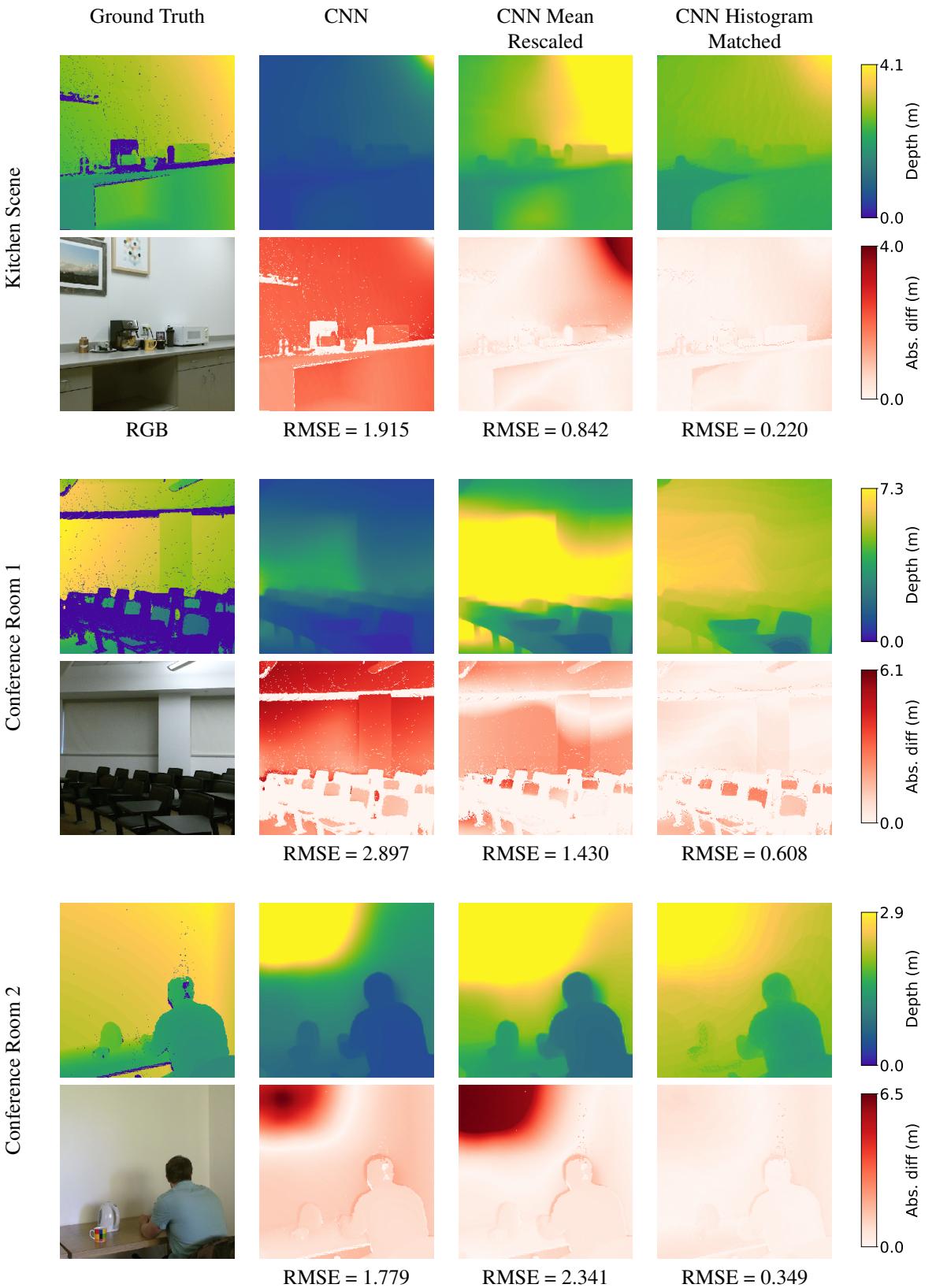


Figure 4: Captured results initialized using the MiDaS CNN. Second row shows absolute difference between above estimates and ground truth.

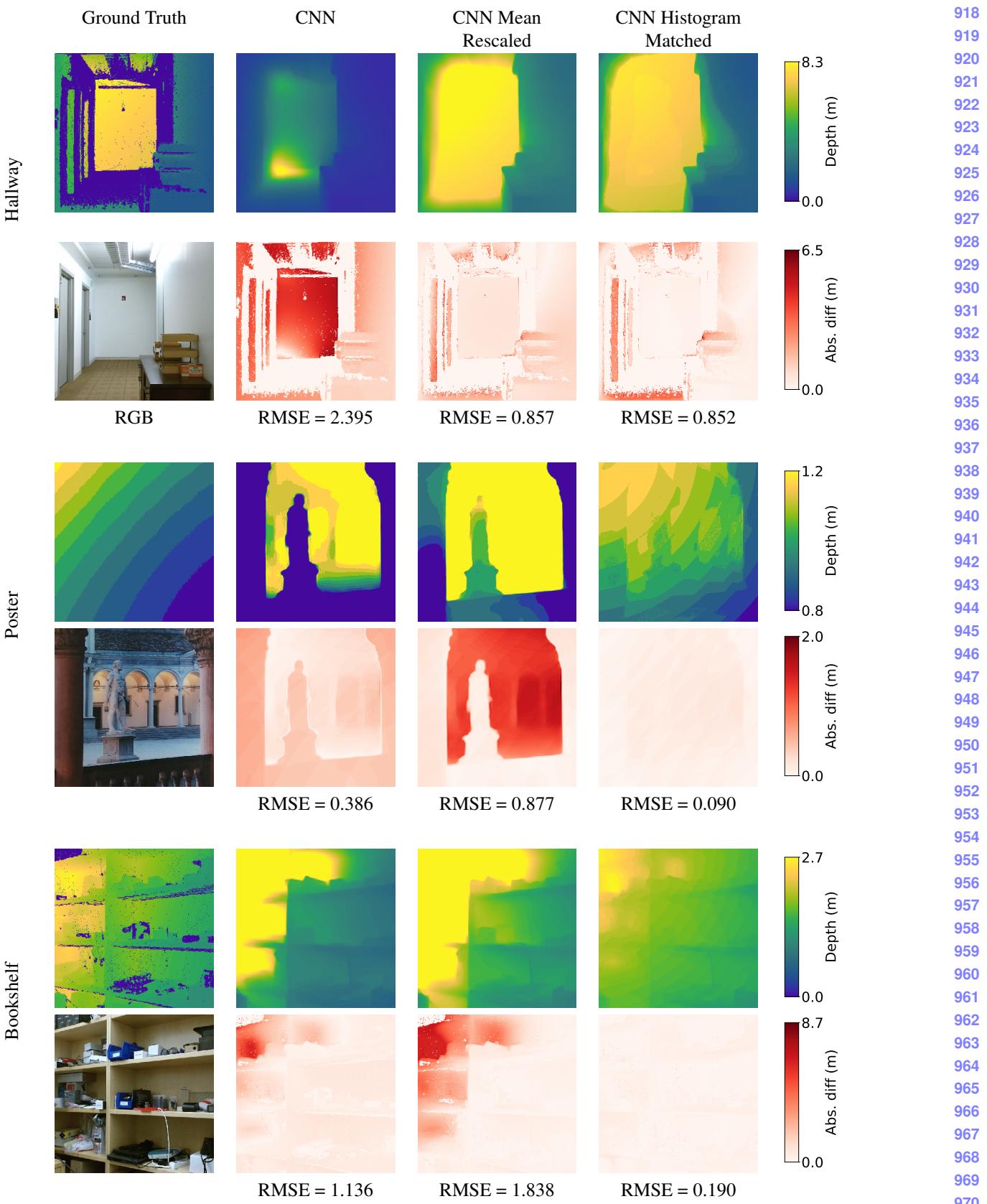


Figure 5: Captured results initialized using the MiDaS CNN. Second row shows absolute difference between above estimates and ground truth.