karim.el-refai@berkeley.edu Berkelev, CA el-refai.github.io

Education

University of California, Berkelev

Berkelev, CA

M.S. Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences

May 2026

B.A. Computer Science | Cumulative GPA: 3.85

May 2025

• Undergraduate Coursework: Foundations of LLMs, Intro to Machine Learning, Microfabrication, Computer Graphics, Convex Optimization, Computer Architecture, Robotic Manipulation and Interaction, Nanorobotics, Data Structures and Algorithms, Advanced Algorithms, Discrete Math and Probability Theory, Designing Information Devices, Foundations of Data Science

• Graduate Coursework: Deep Reinforcement Learning (Top 11 out of 220 students), Computer Vision

Experience

Nvidia

Santa Clara, CA

Software Engineer Intern

May 2025 - August 2025

Working on mapping and path planning with autonomous vehicles

Berkeley Artificial Intelligence Research (BAIR) Lab

Berkeley, CA

Undergraduate Researcher

January 2022 - Present

• Conducting research in robotic grasping and manipulation and computer vision techniques in 3D reconstruction and tracking advised by Professor Ken Goldberg; published papers in IEEE Robotics conferences including ICRA, IROS and CASE

Head Teaching Assistant for UC Berkeley Upperdiv/Graduate Robotics Courses

January 2023 - Present

- Running discussion sections and hosting office hours for the introductory upper-division/graduate robotics class of 300 students and the advanced graduate robotics course of 100 students
- Developed an entirely new robotics lab for students that takes them through the entire process of building a simple robotic system using object segmentation, PID control, and trajectory planning with bezier curves

Research & Publications

R2R2R: Scaling Robotic Manipulation Data Without Dynamics Simulation or Robot Hardware

- Real2Render2Real (R2R2R) is a scalable pipeline for generating data to train generalist manipulation policies without dynamics simulation or teleoperation
- R2R2R can generate thousands of robot trajectories in IsaacLab with just a smartphone scan of an object and a recording of a person manipulating the object
- Modern RGB + Proprioception based imitation learning frameworks and VLA models (Vanilla Diffusion Policy, π_0 -FAST) can then be trained on R2R2R data without requiring any teleoperation data!

Creating Accurate Digital Twins via Bimanual Robot Handoff and Gaussian Splat Merging March 2025 • A bimanual robot picks up and scans objects from multiple viewpoints, then it hands off the object to the other arm

getting views of previously occluded points. We then merges the scans into a single, visually-accurate 3DGS model Gaussian Splatting for Tracking Human and Robot Manipulation of Objects - ICRA 2025

- Built a state-of-the-art computer-vision algorithm and robotic system for densely mapping and tracking objects in the real world for robots to work with humans on long-horizon tasks
- Implemented on a UR5 robot with a wrist-mounted depth camera and tested on sequential pick and place with 12 consecutive successes and 6DOF tool-in-gripper visual-servoing

Language Embedded Gaussian Splatting for Mobile Robotics - Oral Presentation IROS 2024 June 2024

- Heavily modified power and network system of mobile robot with custom 305 degree FOV camera setup to autonomously traverse large-scale environments (workspaces, kitchens, cafeterias) and build a 3D map of the environment with language-embeddings in real-time
- We use the language embeddings in the map to query the map for the presence of a given item and if it is present the robot will traverse to the object and retrieve it

Storytelling With Action Guidance - EMNLP Findings 2024

June 2024

- Reframing the task of storytelling with large language models (LLMs) to a search problem through a two-model feedback loop: one LLM generates story content, and another, auxiliary LLM, is used to choose the next best "action" to steer the story's future direction
- This approach produces stories that are 85% more preferred than previous works and allows small open-source models, such as Llama-2-7B, to outperform GPT-3.5-Turbo

Onboard Tracking of 160+ MPH Autonomous Racecars Using Multi-Input EKF

May 2023

- Developed a computer vision pipeline in C++ with ROS2 to preprocess incoming LiDAR and RADAR readings on fully autonomous race cars traveling 160+ mph at rates of 20Hz and 5.5Hz respectively
- Fused these sensor measurements with an extended Kalman filter that produces readings on a car's position, orientation and velocity at 200Hz with an average positional error of 17cm

Skills

- Programming Languages: Java, C, C++, Python, SQL, HTML, CSS, JavaScript, RISC-V
- Tools & Libraries: PyTorch, ROS, ROS2, OpenCV, Docker, Git, React, Tensorflow