

Decode Art

Digital methods for digital collections

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Welcome and presentation

Presentation of the instructors for today:

- Karoline Liv Vildlyng
- Max Odsbjerg Pedersen

Background and premise of the workshop:

- Digital collections are increasingly an intrinsic part of contracts and user involvement strategies for museums, archives and galleries - we need to know how to approach them and learn from digital collections as an independent medium

#1 Peer-led discussions

1. Pair up with the student next to you and discuss your expectations of the workshop today
2. What do you expect to know after the workshop that you do not already know?
3. What are your current experiences in working with digital collections and/or digital methods?

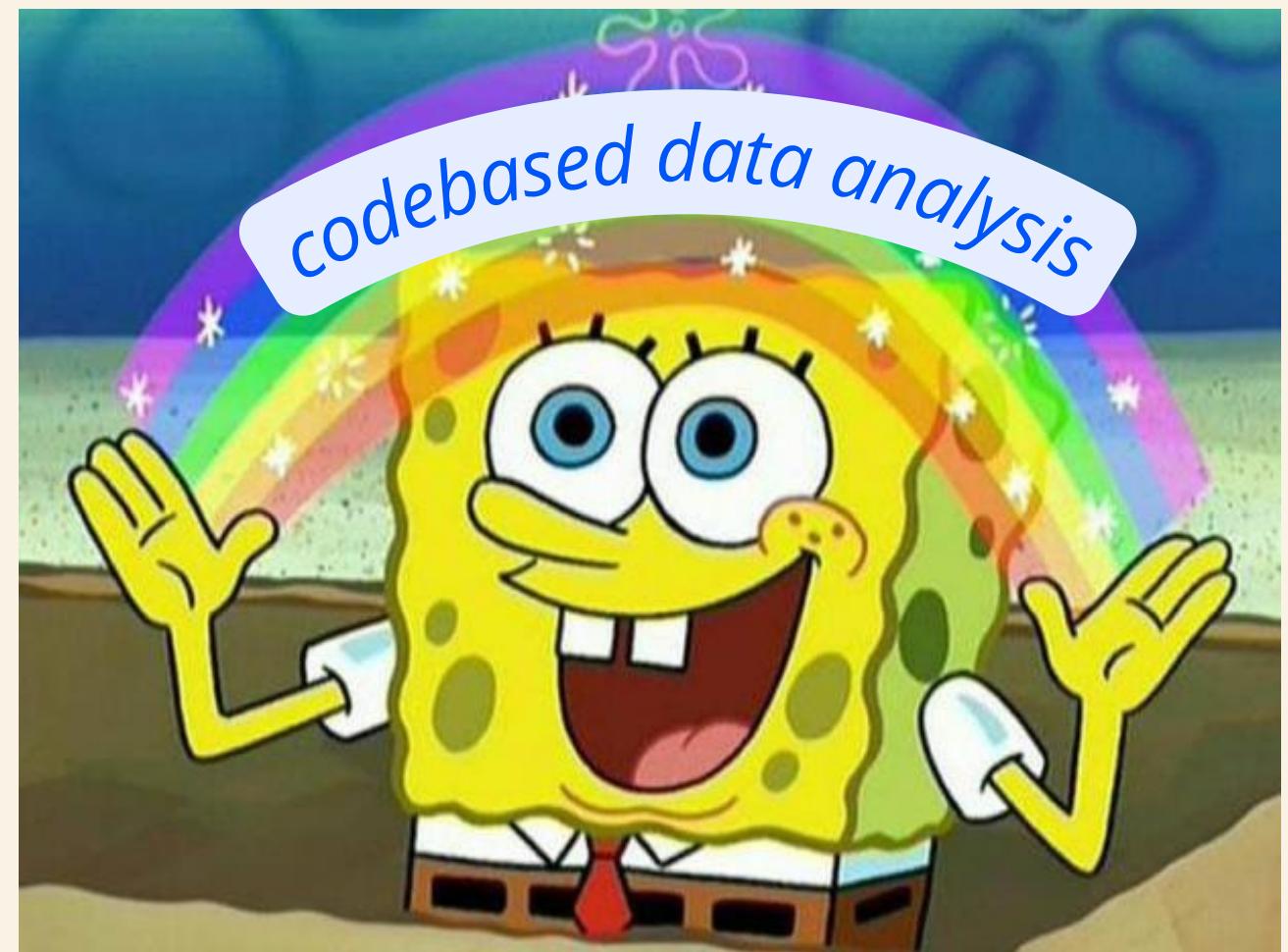


What will you know after this workshop?

You will know what SMK Open is and how you can use digital methods to pull data about the works in the collection

You will also know:

- What a pixel and an API are?
- (more) about how a computer sees or decodes images
- How you can find out which works in the collections have been exhibited the most (exhibit frquency)
- How you can create an overview of the most used colors in a painting



Learning goals for students

That you:

- Get a foundational understanding of how you can use digital methods to engage with, analyze and critically reflect on digital collections.
- Further develop a critical approach to digital collections, what you can learn from engaging with them, as well as what research potentials digital methods have
- That you feel confident exploring digital methods in future research work

Structure for the workshop

Første blok - Intro (50 minutter) First part (50 min)

- Intro to digital collections
- Key words for going forward
- What can we do with digital collections - and what can we not do?

Second block - hands-on code along with Max (45 min)

- Collecting data
- Transforming data
- Data analysis

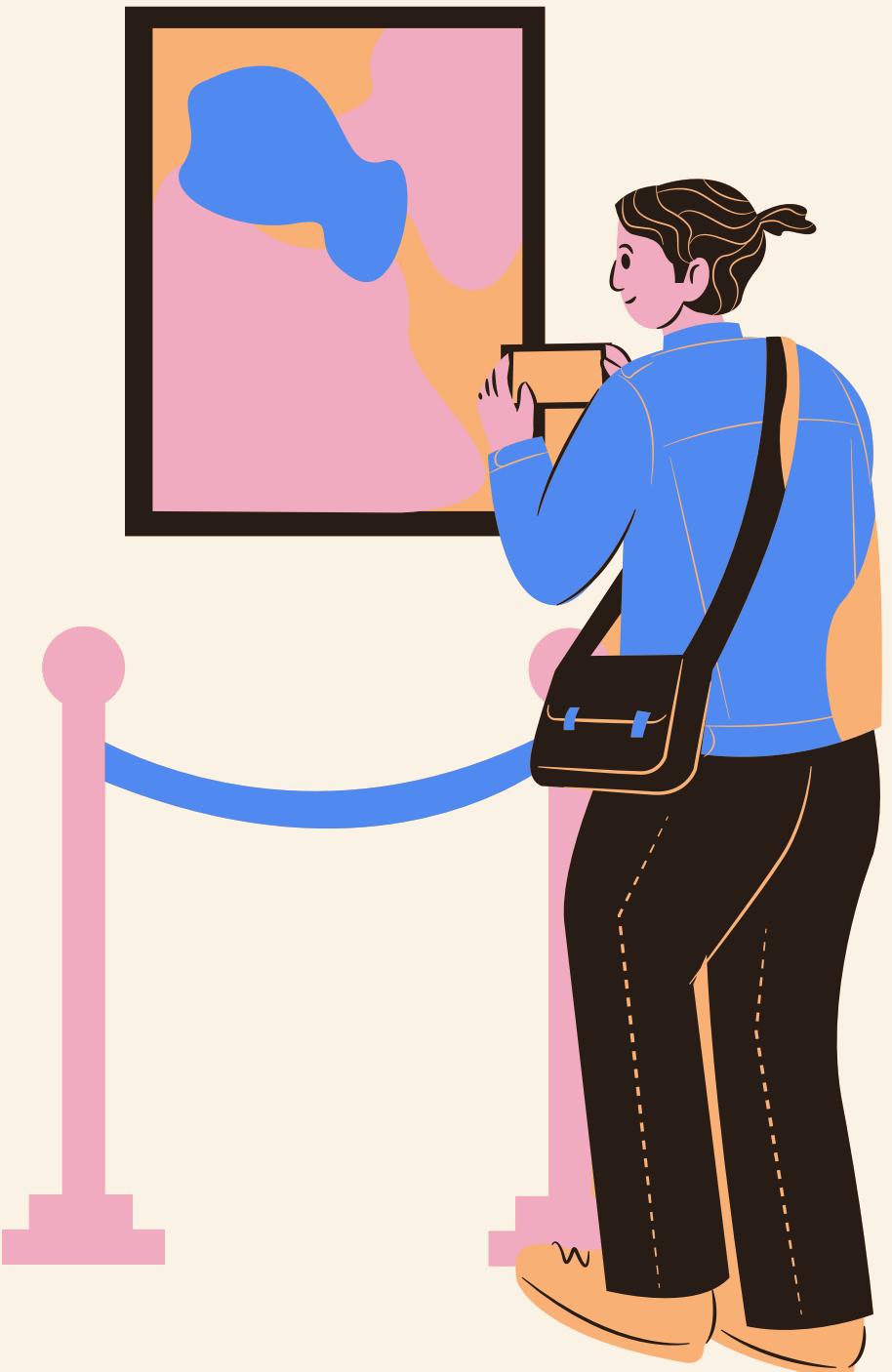
Third block - demonstrating next level and critical discussion (45 min)

- The colors of the Danish Golden Age - visualization and analysis of colors in digitized paintings
- Critical reflections - the end of qualitative analysis?

An intro to digital collections

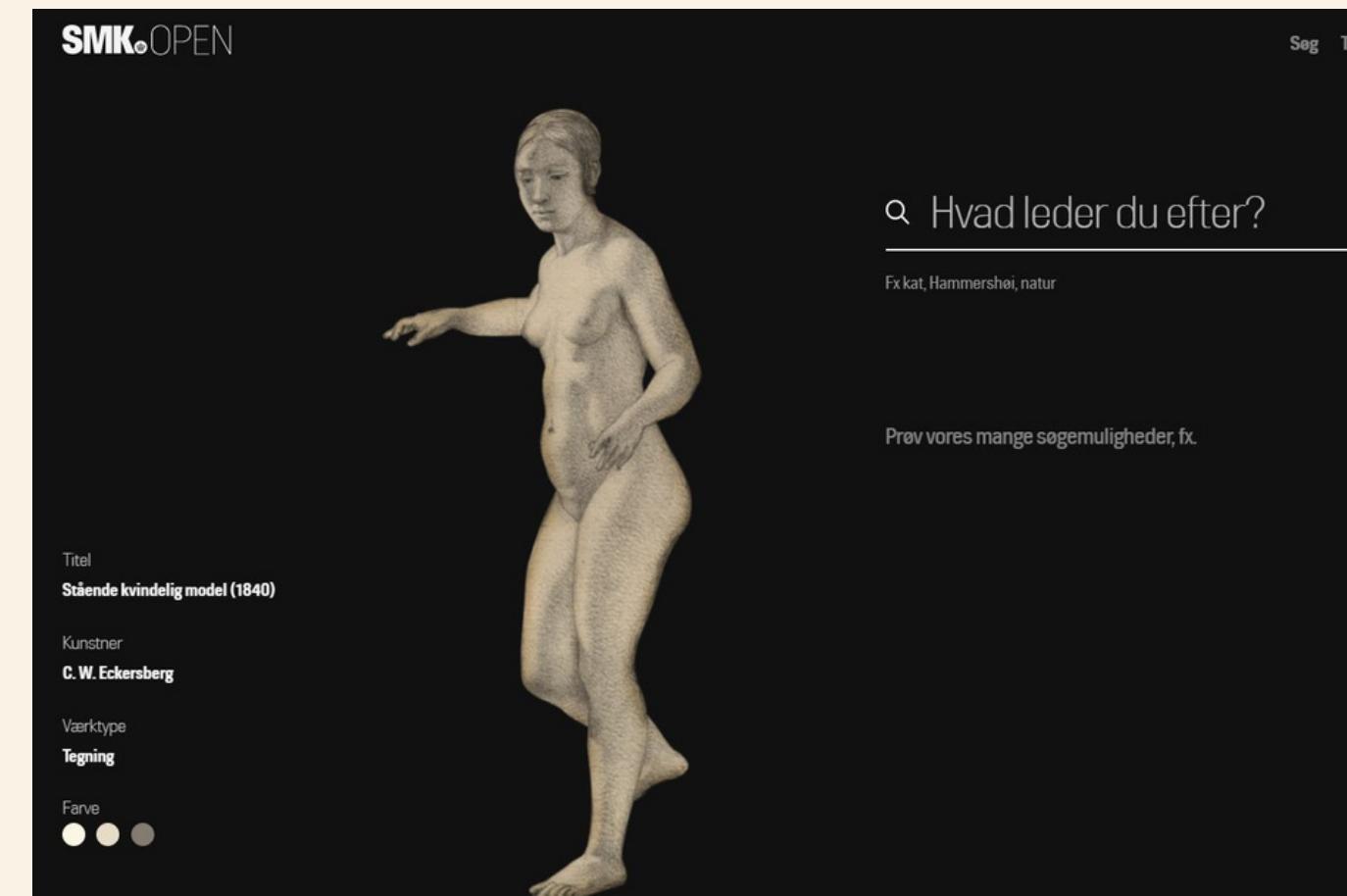
Digital collections are

- A shared descriptor for a group of digitally archived artefacts, art objects or texts that are digitized, often to ensure proper conservation or to ensure greater accessibility
- [SMK Open](#) is The National Gallery's digital collection
- Around 70.000 works are registered digitally with title, name of artist and other metadata - around 40.000 are archived just with photographic depictions (without metadata)
- Many of the works in the digital collection are otherwise stored in warehouses and not exhibited in the museum space



An intro to digital collections

- You can search works via key words like title, colors, themes, name of the artist or a free text search
- AI or artificial intelligence categorize the works and deliver the search results based on the search input
- Microsoft Vision Services report which motives they find in the images
- There are several layers of curation or bias in the process: which works are digitized and based on what criteria? How searchable are they?
- Example of one such bias in our own collections: Greenlandic media in the digital archive of Mediastream



An intro to digital collections

- Digital collections can provide an opportunity to see and analyze works across time and space
- Digital collections can make artefacts and works accessible for larger parts of the population and make possible that you can study protected texts or works of art for your exam projects without having to gain access to museum warehouses and archives
- Are we actually seeing the artefact?



Discussion: What is the difference between seeing an object, text or artwork physically or online?

Key words and terms

1. Note down what each term is/means
2. Afterwards we will go through them together
3. Count how many you got right along the way

Data

Pixel

Library

API

Programming language

What can we do with digital collections?

Creative re-use or remix culture

- Digitized cultural objects can be downloaded, remixed, shared and used

Works can be compared from quantitative criteria

- From variables like size, year of completion, materials used and where they have been exhibited



Bodil Manz, [Brevvæg 1671 & Opslagstavle 2015](#), CC BY-SA 4.0. Baseret på
Pieter Jansz. Coeckelberghs, Trompe l'oeil med en brevvæg med Christian V's
proklamation, 1671, KMS1902.

What can we do with digital collections?

Digital collections or archives can also give us insight into

- What has been written in Danish newspapers in the last 300 years
- What specific hand craft was produced by Danish fishermen at the West Coast in the 1880s
- How this otter amulet from The Steven Michaan Collection of North American Tribal Art

Digital collections make it possible to see artefacts from all over the world - they transgress physical boundaries and borders



What can we *not* do with digital collections?

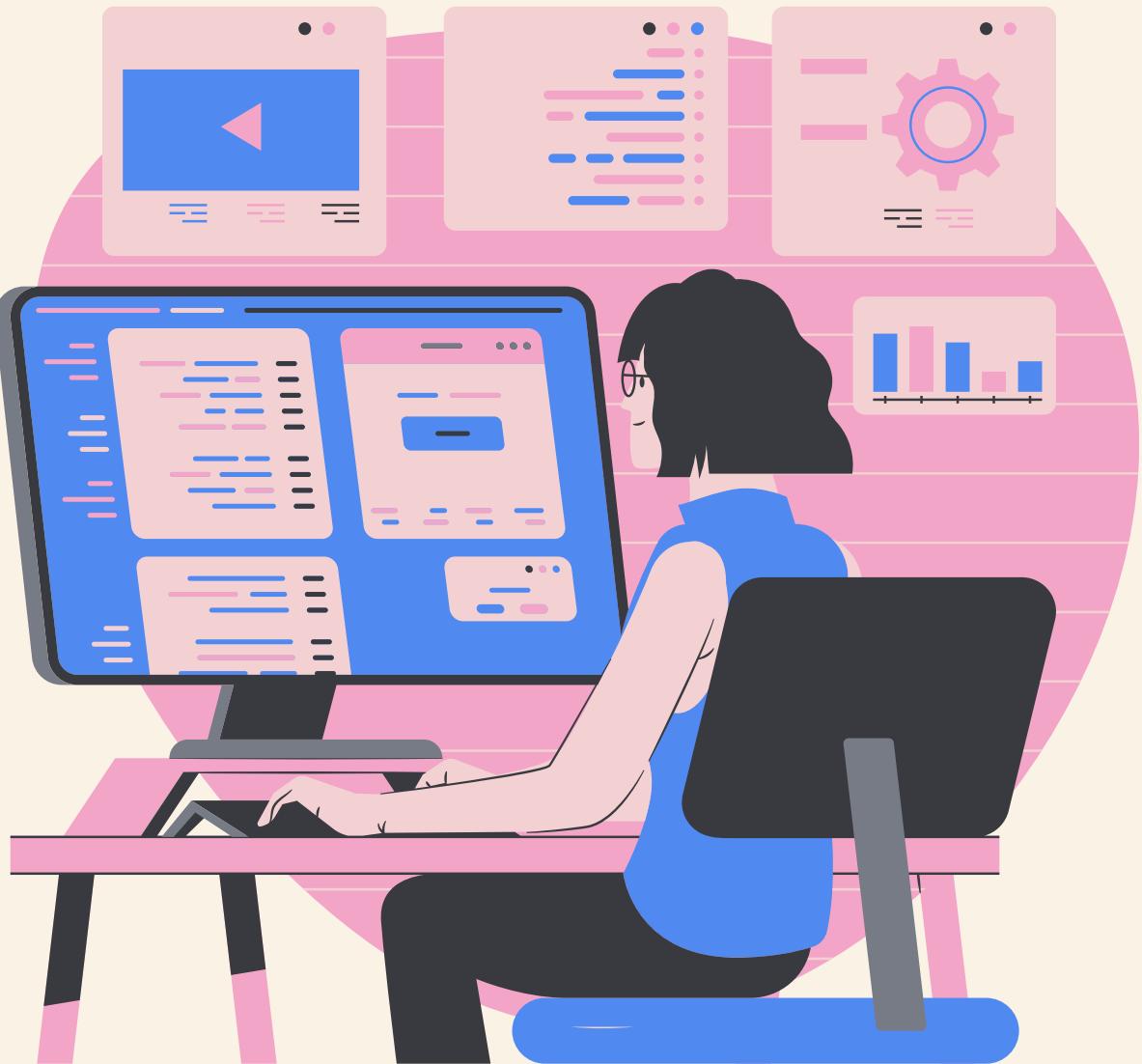
- As a rule, works in Denmark are protected under the law of copyright up until 70 years after the death of the author (this pertains to 2/3 of the SMK Open collection)
- If a work is copyrighted, you can only use it for private purposes, not distribution
- This is why we are using works from the Danish Golden Age in today's workshop



Break - 10 minutes



Hands-on code-along with Max

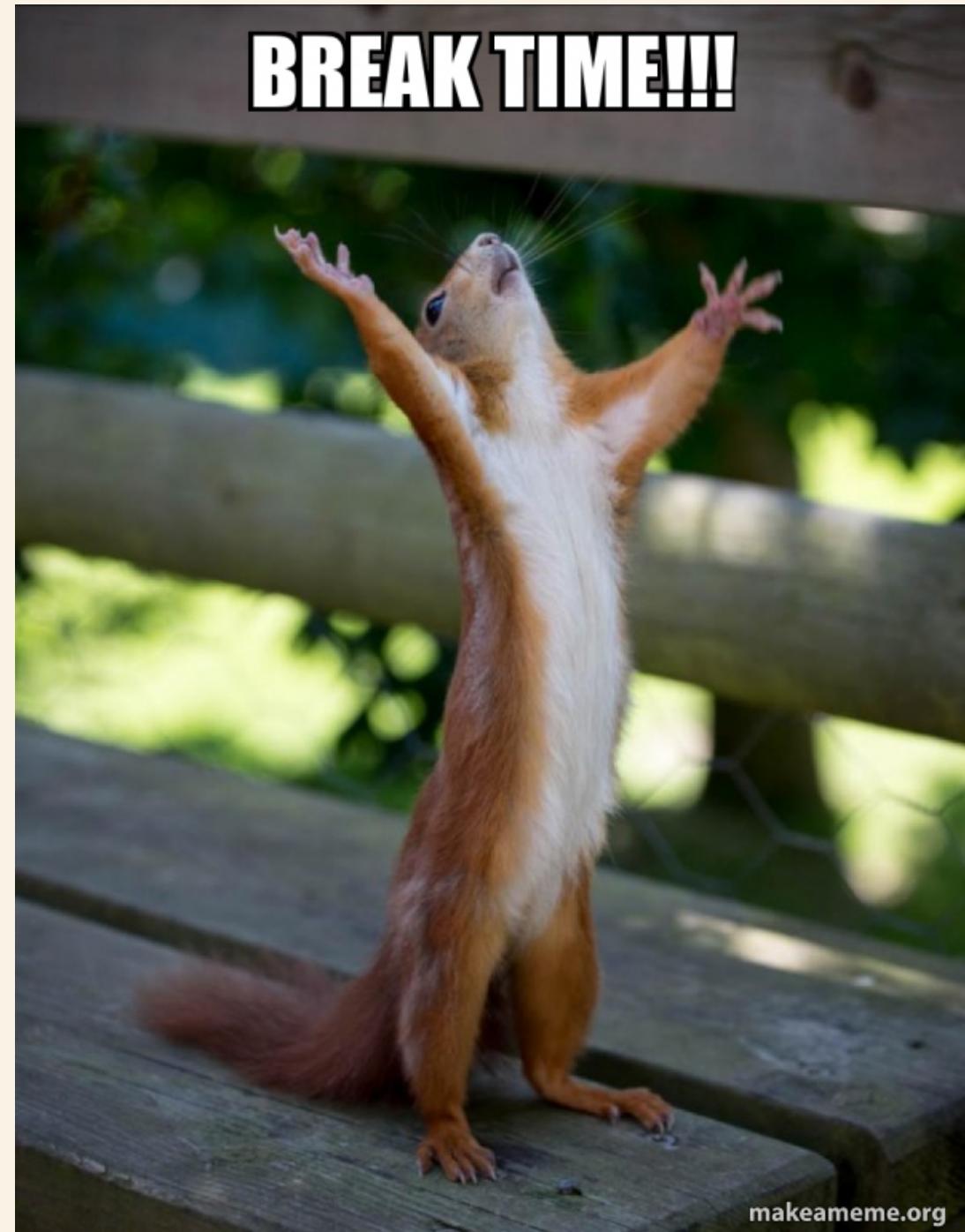


First step

Go to

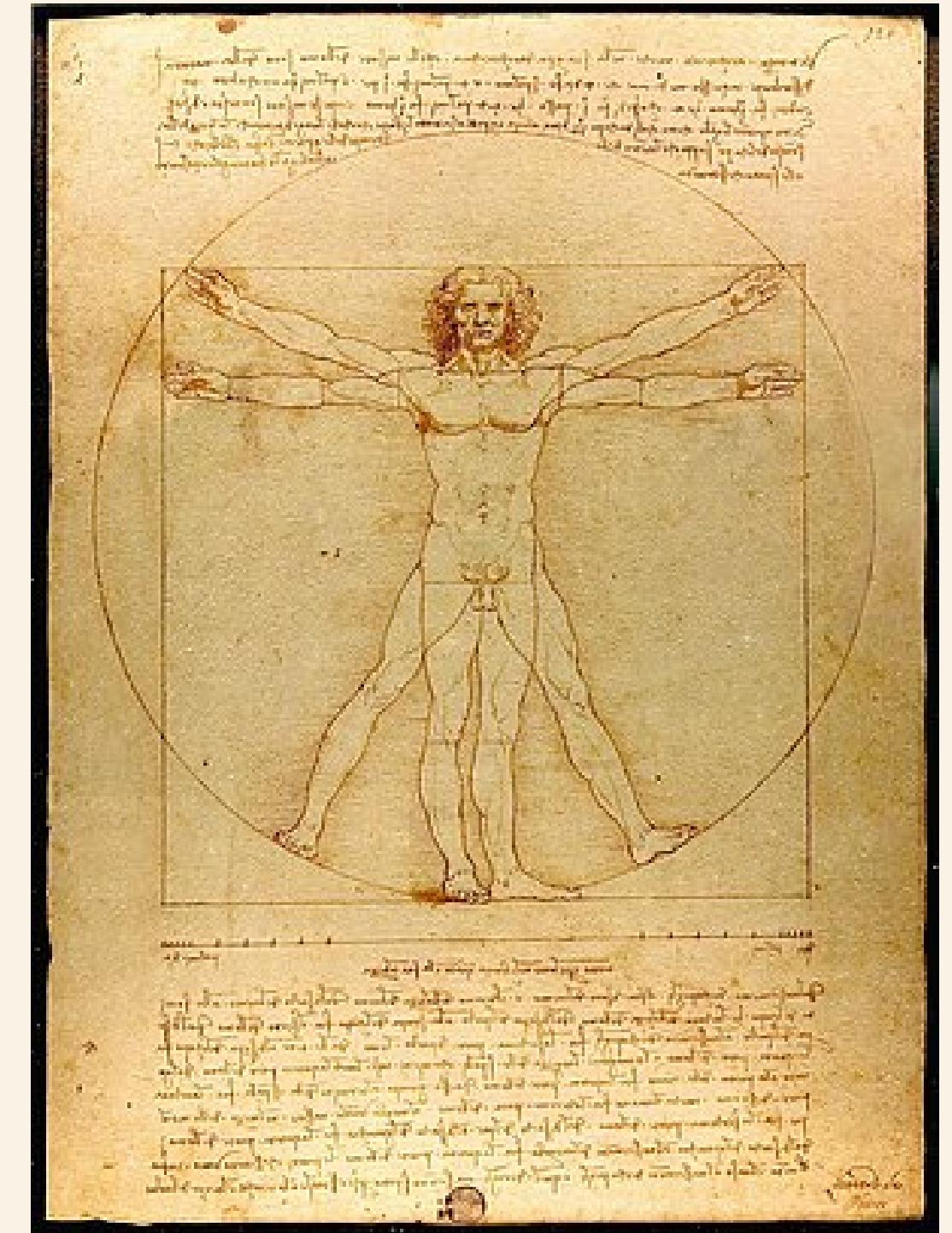
**[https://github.com/maxodsbjerg/Af
kodKunsten](https://github.com/maxodsbjerg/AfkodKunsten)**

Break - 15 minutes



Critical reflections - is this new?

- The amalgamation of technology and art is not new - museums and archives have always been highly technical spaces
- Quantitative methods have been used within the arts and studies of art and literature for centuries



Critical reflections - is this new?

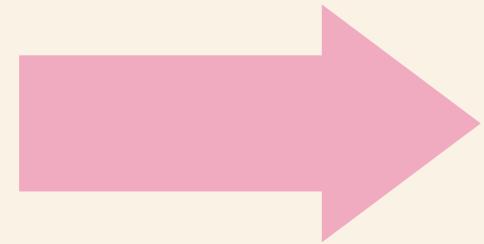
"Museer har altid udgjort en teknologi og benyttet sig af teknologier (...) Kunstmuseerne fungerer nu som en slags teknologier, der transformerer genstande til kunstværker eller udstillingsgenstande, fikserer dem i en bestemt form og ideelt set fastholder dem uforanderligt sådan for evigheden. I samme greb gør kunstmuseerne værkerne sammenlignelige på tværs af historiske perioder og geografiske placeringer, så de i stedet for en rituel forankring opnår en komparativ modalitet, hvor udviklingslinjer, brudflader og forskelle kan gøres til genstand for studier"

Hejlskov Larsen et al. (2015) *Cybermuseologi – kunst, museer og formidling i et digitalt perspektiv*

Critical reflections

- When artworks or data is separated from one context (the physical museum space) and is implemented into another (the digital collection) that entails new limitations and fixations

physical artefact

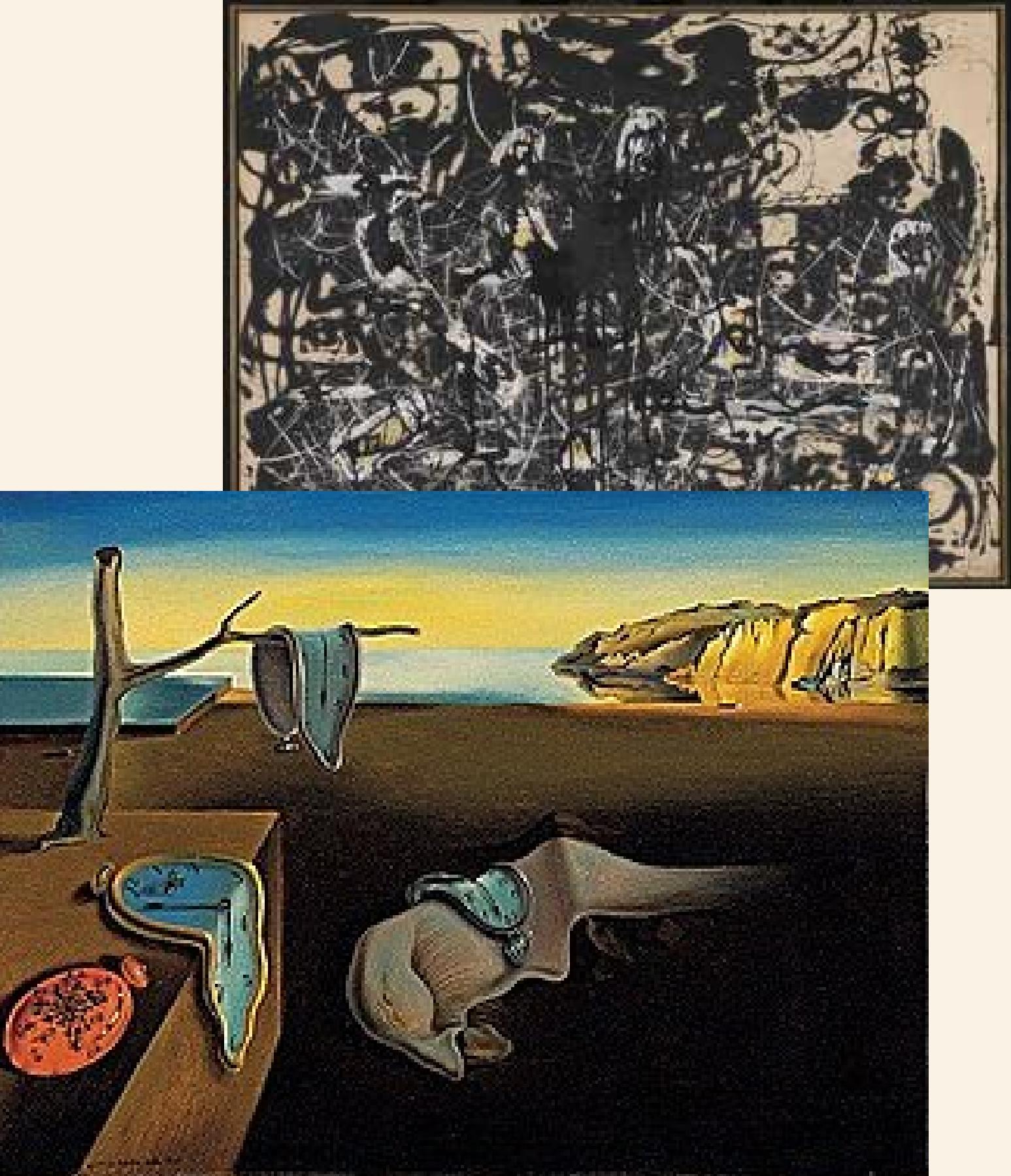


digital depiction

- The aesthetic and qualitative sciences are often criticized for being 'anecdotal'
- But are quantitative sciences neutral and objective?

Critical reflections

- No software is perfect and a computer cannot see an artwork or artefact like a human being (yet)
- AI-example: computers have trouble decoding works with high degrees of abstraction or unrealistic imagery
- A point of criticism is that the tool can end up dictating the method - instead of the other way around



Critical reflections - and answers?

Digital methods do not replace traditional methodologies in the humanities

- They are a supplement to existing scientific research practices
- Through digital methods we can create insight and perspective we would otherwise have difficulty creating
- They can be a way to automate otherwise manual workflows
- They can be a way to create new discussions and reflections about otherwise well known material
- They can be flawed and have blind angles just like traditional methods

**Before you leave - please give us
feedback via the link below**

**[https://www.survey-xact.dk/LinkCollector?
key=UADDX2WLPCN](https://www.survey-xact.dk/LinkCollector?key=UADDX2WLPCN)**

**Thank you for listening and
participating today!**

**If you have questions, you are
always welcome to contact us at:**

kavk@kb.dk

maop@kb.dk

