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Musings on Bigger, Brighter, and Better Pixels

Recently, my husband and I visited the impressive Louvre Museum in Paris. I had been to the spectacular space more than 30 years ago as a high-school graduate while spending the summer in Europe. Although a lot has changed in 34 years, thankfully, much of the classic museum remains. It is filled with treasures from around the world—marble sculptures from Italy, relics from Egypt and Persia, paintings from the renaissance movement within Europe, to name a few. We spent six hours wandering the many galleries mesmerized by the immense talent of those individuals who used their hands and imaginations to create such beautiful works of art.

One of the most famous pieces of the Louvre collection is Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. She is the highlight of the museum, recognized at once by the masses of people

crowding around the small painting. In fact, after several attempts to attack the work, it now hangs behind a glass panel that is about 10 ft away from admirers. While you can't get close enough to scrutinize da Vinci's strokes, it is still an impressive painting to see. It was interesting, however, to view other works by da Vinci, at a closer glance, and see the similarity in style across his paintings.

So, why, you may ask, am I mentioning da Vinci's paintings? In light of today's bigger, brighter, and better pixels, I look at the interesting comparison between the level of detail in painting pixels of the past and what we strive to achieve in today's digitally produced images.

Back in the days of da Vinci, artists used paintings as their cameras, capturing moments in time. The craft was limited to those who had the immense talent to paint an image, achieving the perfect lighting and dimension. They created perfect pixels, using the physics of art, measuring to ensure an

image was as lifelike as possible. Sometimes they missed, but many created paintings that we often have to inspect carefully, to ensure they are authentic and not photographs. It is amazing that, with the limited tools available more than 500 years ago, these artists were able to create such detail and beauty.

Today, we aim to recreate that same beauty in motion imaging. With current technology, we strive to make pictures sharper, more vibrant, with color and contrast. One goal of the creative community is to make their art appear as realistic as possible, to enhance the viewer's experience. At the same time, consumers continue to crave this experience. Recent television and cinema productions show delivery of content with the buzzwords UHD, HDR, WCG, and such. We all want bigger, brighter, and better pixels to create more realistic images, providing more detail in definition, color, and range.

As I wandered through the Louvre on that wet wintry day, I was overwhelmed by the impressiveness of the art. Carrying my DSLR camera, I wanted to bring that art home with me, so I captured hundreds (yes, hundreds) of images. It's ironic, isn't it? Using my 16-megapixel camera, I captured hundreds of millions of big, bright pixels of works of art from more than 500 years ago.

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