Sketch-based Facial Synthesis: A New Challenge

Deng-Ping Fan\textsuperscript{1}, Ziling Huang\textsuperscript{2†}, Peng Zheng\textsuperscript{3†}, Hong Liu\textsuperscript{4}, Xuebin Qin\textsuperscript{3} and Luc Van Gool\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1}Computer Vision Lab, ETH Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland.
\textsuperscript{2}Information and Communication Engineering, University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan.
\textsuperscript{3}Computer Vision, MBZUAI, Abu Dhabi, UAE.
\textsuperscript{4}Digital Content and Media Sciences Research Division, NII, Tokyo, Japan.

\textsuperscript{†}Contributed equally

Abstract

This paper aims to conduct a comprehensive study on the facial sketch synthesis (FSS) problem. However, due to the high costs in obtaining hand-drawn sketch datasets, there lacks a complete benchmark for assessing the development of FSS algorithms over the last decade. As such, we first introduce a high-quality dataset for FSS, named FS2K, which consists of 2,104 image-sketch pairs spanning three types of sketch styles, image backgrounds, lighting conditions, skin colors, and facial attributes. FS2K differs from previous FSS datasets in difficulty, diversity, and scalability and should thus facilitate the progress of FSS research. Second, we present the largest-scale FSS study by reviewing 139 classical methods, including 24 handcrafted feature-based facial sketch synthesis approaches, 37 general neural-style transfer methods, 43 deep image-to-image translation methods, and 35 image-to-sketch approaches. Besides, we elaborate comprehensive experiments on the existing 19 cutting-edge models. Third, we present a simple baseline for FSS, named FSGAN. With only two straightforward components, \textit{i.e.}, facial-aware masking and style-vector expansion, FSGAN surpasses the performance of all previous state-of-the-art models on the proposed FS2K dataset by a large margin. Finally, we conclude with lessons learned over the past years and point out several unsolved challenges. Our open-source code is available at \url{https://github.com/DengPingFan/FSGAN}.

Keywords: Facial sketch synthesis, facial sketch dataset, benchmark, attribute, style transfer

1 Introduction

Facial sketch synthesis (FSS) aims to generate gray-scale sketches from RGB images of human faces (image-to-sketch, I2S) or the other way around (sketch-to-image, S2I) \cite{1, 2}. FSS is commonly used by law enforcement or in surveillance to assist in face recognition and retrieval, based on a sketch drawing from an eyewitness \cite{1}. It is also used in mobile apps, such as TikTok and Facebook, for entertainment. Besides, it is an attractive topic in digital entertainment \cite{3}. As such, research into FSS has achieved significant progress over the past decade.

Different from other face-related datasets, such as those for face recognition \cite{13}, face detection \cite{14}, face key-points detection \cite{15}, face alignment \cite{16}, face synthesis \cite{17}, which can be manually labeled by annotators with limited training, face sketch datasets are much more difficult to obtain because only professional artists can produce high-quality ground-truths (GTs). Due to
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## Table 1
Comparison with other FSS datasets. Att. = Attributes. In [4] and [5], CUFS is divided into 268 and 338 images for training and testing.

| Dataset      | Year | Pub. | Total | Train | Test | Att. | Public | Paired |
|--------------|------|------|-------|-------|------|------|--------|--------|
| CUFS [1]     | 2009 | TPAMI| 606   | 306   | 300  | √    | √      | √      |
| IIIT-D [6]   | 2010 | BTAS | 251   | 58    | 173  | √    | √      | ×      |
| CUFSF [7]    | 2011 | CVPR | 1,194 | 500   | 694  | ×    | √      | √      |
| VIPSL [8, 9] | 2011 | TCSVT| 1,000 | 100   | 900  | √    | ×      | √      |
| DisneyPortrait [10] | 2013 | TOG  | 672   | -     | -    | ×    | ×      | √      |
| UPDG [11]    | 2020 | CVPR | 952   | 798   | 154  | ×    | ×      | ×      |
| APDrawing [12]| 2020 | TPAMI| 70    | 70    | 140  | ×    | √      | √      |
| **FS2K (Ours)** | 2022 | Submit | 2,104 | 1,058 | 1,046 | √ | √      | √      |

the high costs of obtaining professional sketches, existing image-sketch datasets [1, 2, 12] are relatively small with limited diversity. This shortage in datasets has limited the development, especially for data-hungry deep learning models.

In addition, how to evaluate FSS still remains an open question. Structural similarity (SSIM) [18] is one of the most widely used metrics for evaluating image quality, so also it is typically used to evaluate the performance of S2I models. Nevertheless, the characteristics of facial sketches are very different from RGB-based facial images, which makes it difficult to apply the current evaluation metrics to I2S tasks. Therefore, a new objective and quantitative metric, which is also highly consistent with human assessment, is needed for benchmarking the FSS task.

Moreover, due to the lack of high-quality datasets and proper evaluation metrics, different FSS models (e.g., [1, 2]) are usually built and tested upon diverse training and testing datasets (sometimes because they want to learn a different style of sketches), as well as with different evaluation methods. Hence, it is difficult to provide fair and comprehensive comparisons. Further, many cutting-edge transformation models (e.g., CycleGAN [19], UNIT [20], Pix2pixHD [21], SPADE [22], DSMAP [23], NICE-GAN [24], DRIT++ [25]) designed for related image-to-image transfer tasks, could potentially be employed in FSS tasks. However, these models lack performance evaluation for this task, again because of the shortage in datasets and evaluation metrics, as mentioned above. Therefore, thorough and extensive comparisons and evaluations of FSS-related models, on a standard FSS dataset with unified evaluation metrics, are long overdue. To this end, we have introduced and maintain an online paper list (https://github.com/DengPingFan/FaceSketch-Awesome-List) to track the progress of this fast-developing field.

### 1.1 Contributions

In this work, our goal is to solve the discussed issues (i.e., limited datasets, metrics, and benchmarks) and further contribute a new challenge for the FSS community. Our main contributions are:

1) **FSS Dataset.** We build a new high-quality FSS dataset, termed **FS2K**. It is the largest (see Table 1) publicly released FSS dataset, consisting of 2,104 image-sketch pairs with a wide range of image backgrounds, skin patches, sketch styles, and lighting conditions. Therefore, a new objective and quantitative metric, which is also highly consistent with human assessment, is needed for benchmarking the FSS task.

2) **FSS Review and Benchmark.** We conduct the largest-scale FSS study, reviewing 139 representative approaches including 24 methods using handcrafted features, 37 models for the general style transfer task, 43 GAN-based works, and 35 I2S transfer algorithms. Based on our FS2K, we adopt the SCOOT metric [27] and conduct a rigorous evaluation of 19 state-of-the-art (SOTA) models from the perspective of content and style.

3) **FSS Baseline.** We design an efficient GAN-based baseline, termed **FSGAN**, which consists of two simple core components, i.e., facial-aware masking and style-vector expansion. The former is utilized to restore details of the facial components while the latter is adopted to learn different styles of the face. FSGAN serves as a unified baseline model for both I2S and S2I tasks on our newly built FS2K dataset. Our code is available at https://github.com/DengPingFan/FSGAN.

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1 Establishing an FSS dataset drawn by professional artists is more challenging than other face datasets, e.g., face attribute datasets [26], which is why the largest existing FSS dataset, i.e., CUFSF [7], has only ~1K images in the past 13 years. Although FS2K is only ~2 times larger than CUFSF, we still took one year to create such a high-quality dataset.
Fig. 1 Left: Our FSGAN (I2S) learns from artist drawings and intelligently turns an input photo into a vivid face sketch. In contrast, the five cutting-edge style transfer approaches cannot obtain visually appealing results. Only UPDG [11] and Pix2pixHD [21] perform relatively well, but they generate worse content and style than FSGAN. Right: Given a sketch, our FSGAN (S2I) can also transform the input into a vivid facial photo. Meanwhile, the results from the five representative deep learning models are either structurally damaged (i.e., CycleGAN [19], NICE-GAN [24], UGATIT [28]) or blurry (i.e., Pix2Pix [29]). More results can be found in Fig. 9-12.

4) Discussions and Future Directions. In addition to an overall performance assessment, we also conduct an attribute-level evaluation, present detailed discussions, and explore some promising future directions.

2 Related Works

In this section, we first conduct a complete literature review of the existing FSS datasets. Then, in the second part, we discuss the taxonomy of facial synthesis and highlight particularly innovative and successful approaches for this task, including traditional facial synthesis, neural style transfer, image-to-image translation, and deep facial synthesis. The taxonomy of deep facial synthesis is shown in Fig. 4. A summary of the models including their key innovations, datasets, code links, and citation information and so on can be found in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4.

2.1 Dataset

We first outline four classical datasets for the FSS task, i.e., CUFS [1], CUFSF [7], VIPSL [9], and IIIT-D [30], and three portrait sketching datasets [11, 12], which are the basis for building most FSS models [31].

CUFS [1] is one of the earliest and most commonly used datasets. It contains 606 photo-sketch pairs, which include 123 samples from the AR face database [32], 188 samples from the CUIHK student database, and 295 samples from the XM2VTS database [33]. For each sample, a sketch drawn by an artist and a corresponding photo are provided, where each photo is taken in a frontal pose under normal lighting conditions and maintains a neutral expression. All three sub-databases use solid backgrounds, which can be cyan, white, and blue, etc. However, real-world scenes are complex and diverse, and it is impossible to guarantee that every photo will be captured in such a fixed environment. Besides, all the sketches in this dataset were created by the same artist, so they are of limited style.

CUFSF [7] is another commonly used database for assessing the performance of FSS models. It contains 1,194 photo-sketch pairs, collected from the FERET database [34]. All sketches were drawn by an artist after viewing the corresponding photo. This dataset has a similar photo collection environment to CUFS, but is more challenging. Because the photos in the dataset undergo illumination changes, each face has low contrast with the background, and each sketch contains exaggerated shapes.

VIPSL [9] contains 200 face photos collected from the FRAV2D [35], FERET [34] and Indian face databases [9]. Different from CUFS and CUFSF, VIPSL has five sketches for each face, drawn by five artists with different styles, while viewing the same photo under the same conditions as CUFS.
Fig. 2 Representative image samples from our FS2K. The collected images depict diverse scenes according to different selection criteria, such as various lighting conditions (i.e., low-light, sunny), ages (i.e., child or adult), backgrounds (i.e., clean or colored), head angles, facial expressions (e.g., serious, smiling, laughing), hair styles (e.g., black, blonde, long, short), and accessories (i.e., hat or earrings).

IIIT-D [30] consists of three types of sketch databases, including a viewed sketch database, semi-forensic sketch database, and forensic sketch database. All photos are derived from the CUHK student database and IIIT-Delhi Sketch database [6]. The first viewed sketch database contains 238 sketch-digital image pairs, with all sketches drawn by professional artist based on a given photo. The second sub-database has 140 sketch-face image pairs, where all the sketches are drawn by memory after the artist has observed the corresponding photo. The third forensic sketch database consists of 190 sketches which are drawn by a sketch artist according to the description of an eyewitness, based on their recollection of a crime scene. IIIT-D contains multiple styles of sketch portraits, making it more challenging. However, obtaining forensic sketches is quite difficult, since they are usually derived from law enforcement investigations.

Portrait Sketching Dataset. Yi et al. [12, 36] provided two datasets that simulate artistic portrait drawing (APDraw). The first dataset [12] contains 140 pairs of face photos and corresponding sketch portraits, all drawn by a single portrait artist. This was later extended a larger dataset in [36], which has 952 face photos and 625 portrait sketches. For the collected photos, 220 of them are from three famous painters, and the remaining 212 photos are from a photography website. It is worth noting that the photos and portraits in this dataset are not paired. Finally, Disney Research published a portrait dataset [10] composed of 24 faces from the face database [37] and 672 sketches from seven artists under four levels of abstraction. Besides, they also provided each stroke as a transparent bitmap to be used later to create new sketches.

Unlike existing datasets, we provide a more challenging, high-quality, attribute-annotated dataset, which is currently the largest dataset of facial sketches. The new dataset contains a total of 2,104 pairs of photos and sketches, 1,058 of which are used for model training and the remaining for evaluation. The strengths of our dataset include, multiple drawing styles, highly accurate alignment between sketches and photos, multiple attribute information, complex backgrounds, etc. Detailed comparisons of the datasets are shown in Table 1.

\[2\]https://vectorportal.com/
2.2 Traditional Facial Synthesis

In the early years, researchers used heuristic image transformations to interactively or automatically synthesize facial sketches [3, 38–42]. However, these methods tend to generate artificial and inexpressive sketches that lack the artistic style. Therefore, in recent years, more attention has been focused on learning-based facial synthesis schemes, whose taxonomy is shown in Fig. 3. These can be categorized into Bayesian inference models, subspace learning models, representation learning models, etc.

2.2.1 Bayesian Inference Models

Bayesian inference exploits evidence to update the states of the sketch components over probability models, which has been widely used in FSS [43]. In [44], Chen et al. firstly introduced an example-based facial sketch synthesis system that uses a non-parametric sampling algorithm to learn subtle sketch styles. Later, the embedded hidden Markov model [45] was used to model the non-linear relationships in photo-sketch pairs followed by a selective ensemble strategy to generate facial sketches [46]. Wang and Tang [1] followed a similar idea but considered face structures across different scales, using a multi-scale Markov random field (MRF) to build the relationships between photo-sketch pairs. Xu et al. [47] proposed a hierarchical compositional model that considers the regularity and structural variation of faces. These methods have made great progress in generating sketches, but they only consider simple controlled conditions, ignoring variations in lighting and pose. Zhang et al. [48] addressed this by simultaneously considering patch matching, intensity compatibility, gradient compatibility and shape priors, resulting in better visual effects. However, MRF-based models have two major drawbacks: (1) They struggle to synthesize unseen facial information; (2) Their optimization is NP-hard. Zhou et al. [49] used Markov weight fields and cascaded decomposition to build a robust facial synthesis system, which uses a linear combination of candidate patches to approximate new sketch patches. Wang et al. [50] built a non-parametric model to transform a photograph into a portrait painting, where an MRF is used to enhance the spatial coherence of the style parameters, and an active shape model and graph-cut model are used to learn the local information of facial features. Wang et al. [51] presented a transductive learning method to synthesize facial sketches, which employs an on-the-fly optimization process to minimize the loss on the given test samples. Peng et al. [52] designed a superpixel method built on the Markov model, which improves the flexibility without dividing the photo into regular rectangular patches. Then, they not only used the Markov network to model the relationships between image patches, but also retained many visual aspects of the cues (such as edges) through multiple visual features [53].

2.2.2 Representation Learning Models

Sparse coding and dictionary learning, a.k.a. representation learning, are used for the FSS task [43]. Ji et al. [54] demonstrated that personalized features are not effectively captured through the synthesis process. As such, several works [54–56] use different regression models, such as k-NN [54], Lasso [54], multivariate output regression [55] and support vector regression [56], to build the transformation between photos and sketches. To improve the quality of the generated facial sketches, Wang et al. [8, 9] used the local linear embedding (LLE) [57] to estimate an initial sketch or photo, and then introduced a sparse multi-dictionary representation model that can focus on high-frequency and detailed information. However, most representation-based models assume that same representations are shared by the source input and the target output, which limits the local structures of a particular style in the synthesis process. To relax this constraint, Wang et al. [58] introduced a semi-coupled dictionary learning method, in which a linear transformation is used to bridge the gap between two different domain-specific representations. Gao et al. [9] also took a two-step algorithm [56] into consideration, presenting a selection scheme to generate the initial pseudo-images and introducing a
sparse-representation-based enhancement (SRE) to synthesize sketches.

### 2.2.3 Subspace Learning Models

Subspace learning has been widely studied in FSS task [43], which is to learn a low dimensional manifold space embedded in a high dimensional space [59]. Tang and Wang [60–62] proposed a series of example-based approaches based on the linear eigen-transformation method. These methods are global linear systems and they cannot fully explain the relationships between photo-sketch pairs, because such a transformation is not a simple linear relationship. Liu et al. [63] used the LLE to handle this problem, making photo and sketch patches have manifolds with similar local geometric shapes in two different image spaces. However, the pseudo-image generation and the representation learning are divided into two independent processes, leading to sub-optimal results. Huang and Wang [64] proposed a joint learning framework, which contains domain-specific dictionary learning and common subspace learning.

### 2.2.4 Combination Models

Recently, some works are to explore the combination models, which combines different machine learning models, e.g., combing Bayesian inference and subspace learning methods. Berger et al. [10] proposed a model to simulate the styles of the different artists and the process of abstraction, which can be used for facial sketch synthesis. Song et al. [65] introduced a real-time FSS method, which first uses a k-NN algorithm to find the top-k similar local patches, then uses linear combination to compute the corresponding sketch image, and finally uses image denoising technology to enhance the visual quality. However, the model [65] is still time-consuming due to the k-NN process, so Wang et al. [66] addressed this problem by replacing offline random sampling with an online scheme that is further combined with a recognition weight representation. Most existing traditional methods are fully dependent on the scale of the training data, so Zhang et al. [67] presented a robust model trained on a template stylistic sketch. The model includes representation learning, MRF, and a cascaded model. Li et al. [68] proposed a free-hand sketch synthesis method, combining a perceptual grouping model with a deformable stroke model. The work in [69] introduces an adaptive learning method that combines representation learning and a Markov network. Men et al. [70] proposed a common framework for interactive texture transfer with structure guidance. Their model dynamically implements the synthesis process using multiple channels, including structure extraction, structure propagation, and guided texture transfer.

### 2.3 Neural Style Transfer

Recently, neural style transfer (NST), which aims at generating visually appealing images via the neural networks, has been introduced into the FSS task [71]. Specifically, NST is used to render a content image in different styles. NST methods...
can be categorized into optimization-based online methods and model-based offline methods.

### 2.3.1 Optimization-Based Online Methods

In optimization-based online NST methods, a given input image is iteratively optimized with the goal of matching the desired CNN features, including both the photo’s content information and artistic style information. Gatys et al. [74, 75] made the first contribution to this field, using a classical CNN (i.e., VGG [76]) to render an image with famous painting styles. Later, Li and Wand [77] demonstrated that parametric NST methods tend to neglect the spatial layout, leading to less visually plausible results. They therefore proposed a non-parametric neural method that combines a deep neural network with classical MRF-based texture synthesis. Selim et al. [78] extended the classical NST [75] to portrait painting, using the gain map to constrain the spatial information, with the aim of preserving the facial structures while transferring the target style. Berger and Memisevic [79] proposed an approach that makes use of long-range consistency constraints to preserve the global symmetry properties, and applies texture generation to inpainting. However, most NST methods output blurred style images, which are therefore not photo-realistic. To address this, Luan et al. [80] introduced photo-realism and segmentation regularization into the classical NST model [75], constraining the transformation from the input to the output via the local affinity in the color space. Liao et al. [81] presented a novel weakly supervised NST model, which is based on patch matching and does not rely on a large-scale training set. Later, Gu et al. [82] theoretically proved that reshuffling deep features can minimize both the global and local style losses simultaneously. They therefore proposed an objective function that combines reshuffling loss with a classical content loss to help extract more powerful features. In [83], Zhang et al. introduced a few-shot learning model, which first used two classical

### 2.3.2 Model-Based Offline Methods

Optimization-based online methods achieve satisfactory results, but there are still some limitations. One major drawback is the slow computational speed and high cost because of the online iterative optimization. To address this issue, several works introduce a feed-forward network to mimic the optimization objective of style transfer [71].

**End-to-End Models.** End-to-end models can be divided into those that design a basic deep neural architecture and those that introduce a new loss function. For basic architectures, Johnson et al. [87] took advantage of the benefits of the neural network and optimization-based NST model and proposed a method for training a feed-forward network using a new perceptual loss. TextureNet [88] follows a similar idea, but with a different neural network architecture. Both [87] and [88] are real-time style transfer methods. Chen and Schmidt [89] introduced a style swap operation to exchange the patches with visual context and those with style, further formulating a new optimization objective that aims to learn an inverse neural network for arbitrary style transfer. In terms of methods based on loss function, CartoonGAN [72] was presented to transfer real-world photos into cartoon-style images. It consists of two novel loss functions that were designed to preserve clear edge information and cope with the stylistic difference between photos and cartoons, respectively. Instead of employing the Gram loss
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Similar to Image2StyleGAN [85], Richardson et al. [85] enriched the local and global style patterns by identity loss to preserve the content structure. AdaIN layer, a style-attention module and a new introduced SANet, which takes advantage of an auto-encoder based network for photo-realistic style transfer. Meanwhile, Park and Lee [171] proposed an Avatar-Net that enables multi-scale transfer for any styles. The key innovation is a “style decorator” that semantically aligns the content and style features. This module not only matches the feature distributions but also preserves the detailed style patterns. Jing et al. [172] revisited the normalization methods in NST and claimed that the current normalization-based NST is sub-optimal, due to its reliance on manual designs. To address this issue, they introduced dynamic instance normalization, combining the original instance normalization with a dynamic convolutional process, designed to achieve flexible and more efficient arbitrary style transfers. More recently, Lin et al. [173] proposed a Laplacian pyramid network for fast high-quality artistic style transfer, which transfers low-resolution style patterns via a drafting network and revises the high-resolution local details via a revision network.

Li et al. [157] proposed to use one deep model to synthesize multiple texture images, employing a selection-based sub-network to encode the style information into a one-hot vector in which each bit represents a specific style. At the same time, Chen et al. [158] decoupled the style and content via separate network components, and proposed a flexible model built on a classical auto-encoder and a newly defined StyleBank layer. The auto-encoder is designed to learn the content information, while the StyleBank layer is responsible for learning the different styles. Besides, the StyleBank can easily be utilized for incremental learning, where a new unseen style can be added and trained into the module. Wang et al. [160] proposed a coarse-to-fine training procedure for fast multi-model style transfer, which learns artistic style at multiple cues, including color, coarse texture pattern and fine brushwork. Lu et al. [164] developed a new framework for fast semantic style transfer, which consists of a reconstruction module and a feature decoder. The reconstruction module is designed to approximate the optimization process in [75], which extracts the stylized features by minimizing the corresponding content and style losses. Then, the reconstructed features are fed into the decoder, which is based on a classical

Feature-Based NST. Recently, several researchers have begun using a small number of parameters to characterize each style, i.e., changing the parameters in the normalization layer for style transfer. Dumoulin et al. [155] made the interesting observation that normalization layers can reflect the statistical properties of different styles. Therefore, they scaled and shifted the parameters in these layers, while keeping the convolutional parameters unchanged, to obtain better NST. Further, they introduced flexible conditional instance normalization, enabling style transfer to be achieved by simply changing the normalization parameters online. Ulyanov et al. [159] improved their previous TextureNet [88] by simply applying normalization to each individual image rather than a batch of images, which they called instance normalization. Moreover, they also demonstrated that the style transfer network with instance normalization can converge faster than that with batch normalization, while achieving visually better results. Later, Huang and Belongie [161], following a similar idea, introduced adaptive instance normalization into the GAN model, aligning the content and style features. Li et al. [165] further used the first few layers of a pre-trained VGGNet [76] to extract the feature representation. However, they replaced the AdaIN layer with whitening and coloring transformations, enabling the universal style transfer.

Along this line, LinearTransfer [170] integrates both a whitening and linear transformation into an auto-encoder based network for photo-realistic style transfer. Meanwhile, Park and Lee [171] introduced SANet, which takes advantage of an AdaIN layer, a style-attention module and a new identity loss to preserve the content structure while enriching the local and global style patterns. Similar to Image2StyleGAN [85], Richardson et al. [73] improved the classical StyleGAN with a novel encoder network that learns many style vectors that are fed into a pre-trained generator, forming an extended $W^+$ latent space.

Improved NST. Although the NST models achieve satisfactory results, they tend to oversimplify the transferring procedure, resulting in distorted and unwanted style patterns. Sheng et al. [167] proposed an Avatar-Net that enables multi-scale transfer for any styles. The key innovation is a “style decorator” that semantically aligns the content and style features. This module not only matches the feature distributions but also preserves the detailed style patterns. Jing et al. [172] revisited the normalization methods in NST and claimed that the current normalization-based NST is sub-optimal, due to its reliance on manual designs. To address this issue, they introduced dynamic instance normalization, combining the original instance normalization with a dynamic convolutional process, designed to achieve flexible and more efficient arbitrary style transfers. More recently, Lin et al. [173] proposed a Laplacian pyramid network for fast high-quality artistic style transfer, which transfers low-resolution style patterns via a drafting network and revises the high-resolution local details via a revision network.

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[75], which is widely used in NST, Mechrez et al. [90] built their NST model on a new contextual loss without data alignment that compares similar local semantic regions while considering the context of the entire image. The previous models are limited by the training data, so a style-aware content loss [91] was used to train an auto-encoder that can overcome this issue.

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Li et al. [157] proposed to use one deep model to synthesize multiple texture images, employing a selection-based sub-network to encode the style information into a one-hot vector in which each bit represents a specific style. At the same time, Chen et al. [158] decoupled style and content via separate network components, and proposed a flexible model built on a classical auto-encoder and a newly defined StyleBank layer. The auto-encoder is designed to learn the content information, while the StyleBank layer is responsible for learning the different styles. Besides, the StyleBank can easily be utilized for incremental learning, where a new unseen style can be added and trained into the module. Wang et al. [160] proposed a coarse-to-fine training procedure for fast multi-model style transfer, which learns artistic style at multiple cues, including color, coarse texture pattern and fine brushwork. Lu et al. [164] developed a new framework for fast semantic style transfer, which consists of a reconstruction module and a feature decoder. The reconstruction module is designed to approximate the optimization process in [75], which extracts the stylized features by minimizing the corresponding content and style losses. Then, the reconstructed features are fed into the decoder, which is based on a classical

[75], which is widely used in NST, Mechrez et al. [90] built their NST model on a new contextual loss without data alignment that compares similar local semantic regions while considering the context of the entire image. The previous models are limited by the training data, so a style-aware content loss [91] was used to train an auto-encoder that can overcome this issue.

Feature-Based NST. Recently, several researchers have begun using a small number of parameters to characterize each style, i.e., changing the parameters in the normalization layer for style transfer. Dumoulin et al. [155] made the interesting observation that normalization layers can reflect the statistical properties of different styles. Therefore, they scaled and shifted the parameters in these layers, while keeping the convolutional parameters unchanged, to obtain better NST. Further, they introduced flexible conditional instance normalization, enabling style transfer to be achieved by simply changing the normalization parameters online. Ulyanov et al. [159] improved their previous TextureNet [88] by simply applying normalization to each individual image rather than a batch of images, which they called instance normalization. Moreover, they also demonstrated that the style transfer network with instance normalization can converge faster than that with batch normalization, while achieving visually better results. Later, Huang and Belongie [161], following a similar idea, introduced adaptive instance normalization into the GAN model, aligning the content and style features. Li et al. [165] further used the first few layers of a pre-trained VGGNet [76] to extract the feature representation. However, they replaced the AdaIN layer with whitening and coloring transformations, enabling the universal style transfer.

Along this line, LinearTransfer [170] integrates both a whitening and linear transformation into an auto-encoder based network for photo-realistic style transfer. Meanwhile, Park and Lee [171] introduced SANet, which takes advantage of an AdaIN layer, a style-attention module and a new identity loss to preserve the content structure while enriching the local and global style patterns. Similar to Image2StyleGAN [85], Richardson et al. [73] improved the classical StyleGAN with a novel encoder network that learns many style vectors that are fed into a pre-trained generator, forming an extended $W^+$ latent space.
| # | Model | Publ. | Year | Code | Component | Dataset | assist. | Cite. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | EFSGNs [44] | ICCV | 2001 | - | Active Shape Model, Non-parametric Sampling | E | - | 157 |
| 2 | Nonlinear [63] | CVPR | 2005 | - | Local Linear Preserving, Eigentransform | Y | - | 386 |
| 3 | E-HMM [46] | TCSVT | 2008 | Embedded Hidden Markov Model, Selective Ensemble | Y | - | 163 |
| 4 | HCM [47] | PAMI | 2008 | Graph. Minimum Description Length | C, D, BW, E | - | 92 |
| 5 | MRF [1] | PAMI | 2009 | Code | Multi-scale Markov Random Fields | Y | - | 842 |
| 6 | LPR [48] | ECCV | 2010 | - | Local Evidence Function, Patch Matching, Shape Prior, MRF | Y | - | 116 |
| 7 | LRM [54] | ICIG | 2011 | - | Local Regression, kNN | Y | - | 19 |
| 8 | MOR [55] | HCI | 2011 | Multivariate Output Regression | Y | - | 20 |
| 9 | MDELR [8] | ICIG | 2011 | - | LLE, Dictionary Learning, Sparse Representation | Y, BX | - | 54 |
| 10 | SVR [56] | ICIP | 2011 | - | Support Vector Regression | Y, BX | - | 30 |
| 11 | SCDL [58] | CVPR | 2012 | - | Sparse Coding, Semi-coupled Dictionary Learning | Y | - | 596 |
| 12 | MWF [19] | CVPR | 2012 | - | Markov Weight Fields, Cascade Decomposition | Y, E | - | 165 |
| 13 | SR [59] | TCSVT | 2012 | - | Sparse Neighbor Selection, Sparse-Representation Enhance | Y, BX | - | 179 |
| 14 | SAPS [10] | Tog | 2013 | - | Edge Detection, Shape Deformation | B | - | 105 |
| 15 | BEM [60] | ECCV | 2014 | Project | kNN, Linear Estimation, Sketch Denoising | Y, D | - | 121 |
| 16 | Transductive [51] | TNNLS | 2013 | - | Probabilistic graph model, Transductive Learning | Y, CU | - | 162 |
| 17 | CDFSL [64] | ICCV | 2013 | - | Coupled Dictionary and Feature Space Learning | Y | - | 173 |
| 18 | RobustStyle [67] | TIP | 2015 | - | Sparse Representation, Multi-scale Selection | Y | - | 47 |
| 19 | SFR [79] | TCSVT | 2012 | - | Superpixel, Markov Networks | Y, BY | - | 101 |
| 20 | MR [55] | TNNLS | 2016 | - | Markov Networks, Edge Enhancement, Alternating Opt. | Y, BY | - | 90 |
| 21 | DSM [68] | IJC | 2017 | Project | Perceptual Grouping, Deformable Stroke Model | A, B | - | 31 |
| 22 | AH [70] | NIPS | 2017 | - | Adaptive Representation, Markov Networks | T, R | - | 74 |
| 23 | RS [66] | PAMI | 2018 | - | Offline Random Sampling, Locality Constraint | Y, CU | - | 90 |
| 24 | CFIT [70] | CVPR | 2018 | Github | PatchMatch, Guided Texture Transfer | E | Sm. | 15 |

### General Neural Style Transfer

| # | Model | Publ. | Year | Code | Component | Dataset | assist. | Cite. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 | SRT [74, 75] | CVPR | 2016 | Github | Parametric Texture Mode, Representation Inversion | E | - | 3434 |
| 26 | CRR [76] | CVPR | 2016 | Github | MPRF Priors & CNN | E | - | 559 |
| 27 | FNS [87] | ECCV | 2016 | Github | Image Transformation and Loss Network, Perceptual Loss | F | - | 6249 |
| 28 | MGNAs [46] | TCSVT | 2016 | Github | Markovian Deep-Net-Work, Markovian GAN | E, I | - | 1096 |
| 29 | TextureNet [88] | IJCV | 2016 | Github | Generator Network, Descriptor Network | E | - | 736 |
| 30 | RIDC [78] | TP | 2016 | Project | NST [75], Gain map, Two-step Method | H | Sm. | 155 |
| 31 | FPST [89] | NeurIPS | 2016 | Github | CNN, Style Swap, Inverse Network | F, P | - | 245 |
| 32 | ILR [79] | ICLR | 2017 | Github | Transformed Gramian | E | - | 35 |
| 33 | CCT [166] | ICLR | 2017 | Github | Conditional Instance Normalization | G, E | - | 748 |
| 34 | CPC [156] | CVPR | 2017 | Github | Spatial Control, Scale Control | C | - | 319 |
| 35 | DCT [157] | CVPR | 2017 | Github | Photorealism Regularization, Segmentation | E | Sm. | 43|
| 36 | FFN [158] | CVPR | 2017 | Github | VGG Loss Network, Diversity Loss, Incremental Learning | L | - | 181 |
| 37 | StyleBank [158] | CVPR | 2017 | Github | Encoder-Decoder Network, Style Extractor, Layer | E, F | - | 325 |
| 38 | ICN [159] | ICVC | 2017 | Github | Instance Normalization, Jules Generator Network | E | - | 736 |
| 39 | HRCNN [160] | CVPR | 2017 | Github | VGG Loss Network, Style/Enhance/Refine Subnet | E, F | - | 119 |
| 40 | ICNN [161] | ICCV | 2017 | Github | Adaptive Instance Normalization | F, P | - | 792 |
| 41 | ICNN [162] | ICCV | 2017 | Github | RCNN[163], Temporal Consistency Loss | J, K, E | - | 92 |
| 42 | DNNFR [164] | ICCV | 2017 | Github | Lightweight Feature Reconstruction, Feature Detector | F, P | Sm. | 92 |
| 43 | WCT [165] | NeurIPS | 2017 | Github | Multi-level stylization, Whitening and Coloring Transforms | F, L | - | 480 |
| 44 | VAT-DIA [81] | TOG | 2017 | Github | Weakly-supervised Image Analysis, Nearest-Neighbor Field | G, E, N | - | 326 |
| 45 | DF [82] | CVPR | 2018 | Github | Neural Feature Refinement, RefineNet Loss | G, E | - | 92 |
| 46 | CartoonGAN [72] | CVPR | 2018 | Github | GAN, Semantic Content Loss, Edge-promoting Loss | E | - | 195 |
| 47 | MNet [166] | CVPR | 2018 | Github | Meta Networks, Image Transform Networks | F, E | - | 1250 |
| 48 | Avatar [167] | CVPR | 2018 | Github | Style/Content Encoder, Mixer Network, Decoder Network | E, F | - | 85 |

Table 2: Summary of popular related works. These can be categorized into four types: Traditional Facial Synthesis, General Neural Style Transfer, Deep Image-to-Image Translation, and Deep Image-to-Sketch Synthesis. Publ.: Publication information. Year: Publication year. Code: The link of the corresponding open resources. Component: The key components of each model.
auto-encoder, to generate the stylized image. Shen et al. [166] designed a meta-learning framework, in which a meta network is used to approximate the stochastic gradient descent in [75], with a stylized image as input and corresponding image transformation networks as output. Moreover, this model has minimal parameters and can run in real-time. Finally, Chen et al. [168] proposed the first deep model for stereoscopic style transfer, which contains two components, i.e., StyleNet and DispOcNet. Then, a standard decoder with a warp module and a fuse scheme is used to fuse all the domain information and extract the mid-level feature for generating a better stylized image.

**Others.** Li and Wand [154] enhanced their MRF-based NST method [77] via a Markovian generative adversarial network with adversarial learning, reducing the number of calculations. Furthermore, [156, 169] introduced additional constraints over the stylization results by controlling the spatial location, color information, spatial scale and stroke size. Moreover, they also extended the existing methods [87, 88] to synthesize high-resolution images via a coarse-to-fine model with downsampling-stylizing and upsampling-stylizing. Gupta et al. [162] studied the instability problem in existing NST models based on the technique of Gram matrix matching, and claimed that the instability is correlated to the trace of the Gram matrix of the style image. Therefore, they presented a recurrent convolutional network (RNN) for real-time video style transfer. More recently,
Deng et al. [238] introduced a transformer-based style transfer framework, which aims to reduce content leak and achieve unbiased stylization.

2.4 Image-to-Image Translation

Image-to-image translation (I2I) [239] is a hot topic in computer vision and machine learning, where the goal is to transform the input image from a source domain to a different target domain, while retaining the intrinsic source content and transferring the extrinsic target style. Current I2I models are typically built on a generative adversarial network, and can be categorized into supervised, unsupervised, semi-supervised, and few-shot I2I.

**Supervised I2I.** Supervised I2I uses aligned image pairs as the source and target domain in order to learn a transformation model that can convert the source image into the target image. One representative I2I method is Pix2pix [29], which applies a conditional GAN (cGAN) [240] to the task. The main difference from the original cGAN is that the generator in Pix2pix is a U-Net [241]. However, Wang et al. [21] observed that the adversarial training in Pix2pix is unstable, preventing the model from generating high-resolution images. Therefore, they extended the original Pix2pix with a new feature matching loss, which can generate high-resolution images of size $2048 \times 1024$. Zhu et al. [178] proposed the BicycleGAN, which includes a conditional VAE and a conditional latent regressor GAN, to resolve the collapse problem, and achieved improved performance. Further, to reduce the loss of semantic information in the Pix2pixHD model [21], Park et al. [22] introduced a SPADE-based generator, which adds spatially-adaptive normalization into the generator of Pix2pixHD so as to enhance the semantic information throughout the network. However, SPADE adopts only one style code to adjust the overall style of an image, which is unsuitable for generating high-quality images and controlling the changing of the target image. To address this shortcoming, Zhu et al. [197] presented the SEAN model, which contains a new semantic region-adaptive normalization layer to enhance the style information.

**Unsupervised I2I.** Collecting paired data is not practical, because it is labor-intensive. Therefore, several unsupervised I2I models have been proposed to train two different generative networks under the constraint of a cycle-consistency loss, which means if we convert a zebra image to a horse image and then back to a zebra image, we should get the very same input image back. Examples include CycleGAN [19], DiscoGAN [176], and DualGAN [175]. Later, Liu et al. [20] proposed an unsupervised I2I model (UNIT), in which the same latent code in a shared latent space is used to couple the two encoders.

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**Table 4** Summary of popular related works. Please refer to Table 2 for more detailed descriptions.

| #  | Model          | Publ. | Year | Code          | Component                                      | Dataset | Assist. | Cite. |
|----|----------------|-------|------|---------------|------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|-------|
| 1  | FCIL [206]     | ICMR  | 2015 | -             | Fully Convolutional Network                      | Y       | -      | 119   |
| 2  | DGCFL [207]    | CVPR  | 2017 | -             | Deep CNNs, Graphic model                        | Y       | -      | 147   |
| 3  | Scribbler      | CVPR  | 2017 | Project       | Encoder-decoder with residual connections, GAN  | Y, E    | -      | 390   |
| 4  | AAMN           | AAAI  | 2018 | -             | U-Net, Probabilistic Graph Model                 | Y       | -      | 64    |
| 5  | TextureGAN     | CVPR  | 2018 | Github        | Local Texture Loss, VGG Loss, Scribbler         | E, S, T | Bm. Tp.| 197   |
| 6  | SCC-GAN        | CVPR  | 2018 | Code          | Hybrid model, Shortcut Cycle Consistency         | AL, AK  | -      | 61    |
| 7  | ContextGan     | ECCV  | 2018 | Github        | Contextual Loss, Joint Representation, GAN       | Z, CH   | -      | 42    |
| 8  | ICIC           | IJCAI | 2018 | Github        | Markov Random Neural Fields                      | Y, CU   | Bm. T  | 18    |
| 9  | PS*28-MAN      | FG    | 2018 | Github        | Multi-Adversarial Networks, CycleGAN            | Y, CU   | -      | 87    |
| 10 | DualT          | TIP   | 2018 | Github        | Deep Features, Inter-Inter-Domain Transfer       | Y, CU   | -      | 36    |
| 11 | MDAL           | TNNLS | 2018 | Github        | Domain alignment, Interpreting by Reconstruction | Y, AG   | -      | 27    |
| 12 | PAG-GAN        | WACVW | 2018 | Github        | Attribute Classification, Conditional CycleGAN   | Y, CU   | -      | 36    |
| 13 | Geo-GAN        | BOSIGH| 2018 | Github        | Geometry Discriminator, CycleGAN                | Y, CU   | -      | 14    |
| 14 | PL-HRC [220]   | arXiv | 2019 | Github        | Cross-to-Fine, LSAG, VGG Loss                    | I, S, T, AT, Cm | - | 12 |
| 15 | DELR [221]     | TNNLS | 2018 | -             | Coupled Autoencoder, Low-rank Representation    | Y       | -      | 21    |
| 16 | Col-cGAN       | TNNLS | 2018 | -             | Collaborative Loss, cGAN, Deep Collaborative Nets | Y, CU   | -      | 42    |
| 17 | CFSS [223]     | ICCV  | 2019 | -             | Knowledge Transfer, Teacher-Student Net         | Y, CU   | -      | 11    |
| 18 | CFPSS          | -     | -    | -             | Outline and Shading Branch Networks, Pix2pix     | E, SV   | -      | 25    |
| 19 | CT [224]       | IJCAI | 2019 | Github        | Shape and Appearance Generators, Two-stage       | S, AC, E| Fl, Bm., Sv. | 34 |
| 20 | ADP [225]      | CVPR  | 2019 | Github        | Hierarchical GAN, DT Loss, Local Transfer Loss  | AS, Fl, Bm., Sv. | - | 63 |
| 21 | APDrawing++    | TPAMI | 2020 | Github        | APDrawing, Line Continuity Loss                  | AS      | Fl, Bm. | 9     |
| 22 | UDG [226]      | CVPR  | 2019 | Github        | Asymmetric CycleGAN, Cycle-consistency Loss      | BJ      | Fl, Bm. | 14    |
| 23 | UDG [227]      | CVPR  | 2020 | Github        | Cartoon Representation Learning, GAN             | Y       | Attr.  | 20    |
| 24 | Edge [228]     | ECCV  | 2019 | Github        | Sketch Refinement with Dilations, Pix2pixHD      | AC, I   | -      | 15    |
| 25 | DeepFaceDrawing| ECCV  | 2019 | Github        | Composition/Appearance Encoder, P-Net, Stacked GAN | Y, CU   | Fl     | 38    |
| 26 | DeepFaceDrawing| TOG   | 2020 | Github        | SketchRefinement /Deconv-COCo, Device- and- Corner strategy | E, Y    | -      | 8     |
| 27 | CA-GAN [231]   | TC    | 2020 | Github        | Composition/Appearance Encoder, F-Net, Stacked GAN | Y, CU   | Fl     | 38    |
| 28 | 1DA-CycleGAN   | FR    | 2020 | -             | CycleGAN, Identity Loss, Recognition Model       | Y, CU   | -      | 20    |
| 29 | IFAM-GAN       | SPL   | 2020 | -             | Identity-preserving Adversarial Model, U-Net     | Y, CU   | -      | 5     |
| 30 | MvD [234]      | TIP   | 2020 | Github        | CNNIN [19] Features, Hand-crafted Features      | E, Y    | -      | 8     |
| 31 | MG-SARL [235]  | TFS   | 2021 | Github        | Self-Attention Residual, Multi-scale Gradient    | Y, CU   | -      | 3     |
| 32 | GANSketching   | ICCV  | 2021 | Project       | Weight Adjusting, Cross-domain Fine-tuning       | CH, AL  | -      | 3     |
| 33 | DoodleFormer   | Arxiv | 2021 | -             | Transformer, Part Locator and Part Sketcher Networks | CK     | -      | ...  |
feature space can represent image pairs in different domains. Meanwhile, Taigman et al. [177] presented a domain transfer network (DTN) to transfer a sample from one domain to another. They employed a compound loss function, which consists of a multi-class GAN loss, an $f$-constancy component, and a regularizing component that encourages the generator to map samples from the target domain to themselves. Li et al. [195] proposed the Stacked Cycle-Consistent Adversarial Network (SCAN), which uses a stacked network architecture with cycle-consistency to increase the image translation quality and generate higher-resolution images. SCAN is built on a coarse-to-fine framework, in which the coarse stage is used to sketch a result in low resolution, and the refinement stage is employed to improve the result through a novel adaptive fusion block. More recently, Zhang et al. [198] proposed a CoCosNet for exemplar-based image translation, which contains two sub-networks. The first embeds the inputs from different domains into a feature domain that depends on the semantic correspondence. Meanwhile, the second uses a series of denormalization blocks to progressively synthesize the target images. Zhou et al. further extended the CoCosNet with full-resolution semantic correspondence learning [204], with the main difference being the use of a regular and GRU-based propagation applied iteratively at each semantic level.

Despite their potential, cGAN-like models tend to collapse during training. The work in [192] therefore introduced an MSGAN model that uses a mode-seeking regularization to handle this issue. The proposed regularization can be embedded into most existing cGAN frameworks, such as Pix2pix. Further, Zhang et al. [185] presented a HarmonicGAN for medical disease diagnosis, which takes the manifold into account and introduces a smoothing term on the affinity graph to enforce consistent mappings during translation. By rethinking the standard GAN model, Chen et al. [24] proposed a NICE-GAN with the key idea of coupling discriminators and encoders, i.e., reusing the discriminator parameters for encoding the input. Zhao et al. [200] proposed ACL-GAN, which utilizes a new adversarial consistency loss instead of a cyclic loss to emphasize the commonality between the source and target domains.

However, current models are typically deterministic at inference, making them inflexible for many practical scenarios. Therefore, Ramasignhe et al. [201] introduced a generalized generative model to address, which they called Conditional Generation by Modeling the Latent Space. During inference, this model dynamically observes the latent code by learning and updating an approximator, which it then applies to find the optimal solutions corresponding to multiple output patterns. More recently, Xu [202] observed that a well-trained styleGAN generator can be used as a learned loss function for extracting hierarchical features that have strong transferability to both generative and discriminative tasks. Also, focusing on the issue of latent features, Liu et al. [203] introduced a Divo framework for preventing model collapse and achieving diverse conditional image synthesis. Their model takes contrastive learning into account and employs a novel contrastive contrastive loss.

Ma et al. [181] introduced an attention module into a GAN for instance-level I2I translation. The proposed deep attention-based encoder decomposes two different sets of samples into a highly-structured latent space, where the instance-level correspondence can be found by the joint attention mechanism, and the generator outputs the translated image according to the input of two different latent codes. Based on CycleGAN [19], Tang et al. [194] introduced an attention-guided GAN (AGGAN), which integrates the classical attention mechanism into a generator that can detect the most discriminative semantic objects and produce high-quality images. Besides, Tang et al. [193] further extended their AGGAN to solve the cross-view transfer problem, i.e., when there is little or no overlap in different views. Further, they proposed a new SelectionGAN that utilizes a two-stage scheme with a multi-channel attention selection module. Kim et al. [28] later proposed a novel attention module with a new normalization function, which they integrated into a GAN model to flexibly supervise texture and shape variations. MUNIT [186] and ELEGANT [187] simultaneously decouple the image representation into a domain-invariant content feature and a target style feature, and then recombine the content and target code to synthesize a new image via a generator. Note that MUNIT uses AdaIN [161] to achieve the recombination, while ELEGANT does
so by exchanging certain parts of the latent codes. To improve the results, Cho et al. [190] took advantage of the whitening-and-coloring transformation and proposed the GDWCT model, which achieves competitive image quality. Wu et al. [191] later proposed the TransGaGa model to tackle the I2I translation task for complex objects. This model uses a VAE to decompose each domain into a geometric space and an appearance space, and further uses two transformers to transform each feature into the target-style image. Ma et al. [188] argued that the content of an image is shared across domains, while the style is specific to each domain. Based on this, they proposed the EGSC-IT model, which uses AdaIN and feature masks to transfer styles from the source image while maintaining semantic consistency. Sendik et al. [195] proposed CrossNet to relax the consistency constraints in CycleGAN-like models, which often contain information irrelevant to the I2I task. During training, CrossNet uses three new cross-consistency regularizations to constrain the learned image translation operators. To improve the content representation ability, Chang et al. [23] proposed DSMAP to leverage the relationship between content and style. Specifically, the model maps content features from a shared domain-invariant feature space into two separate domain-specific ones. Further, DRIT++ [25] uses two image generators, two content encoders, a content discriminator, two attribute encoders, and two domain discriminators to embed an image into a domain-invariant content space and a domain-specific attribute space.

However, most unsupervised I2I methods struggle to handle more than two domains, since the generator is usually dependent on each corresponding domain pair. Therefore, Choi et al. [182] introduced the StarGAN model, which uses just one generator to perform the I2I task for multiple domains. Specifically, they designed a special discriminator with an auxiliary classifier, which not only discriminates whether the input is true or false but also distinguishes which domain the input belongs to. Besides, they also modified the conditional GAN [29], where the input is the image together with the domain label. Meanwhile, [183] presents the ModularGAN, including a generator, an encoder, a discriminator, a reconstructor and a transformer, to map an image into multiple domains. The main difference between ModularGAN and StarGAN is that ModularGAN contains multiple special transformers that transform the input to a better representation according to the attribute conditions. However, both StarGAN and ModularGAN are restricted to discrete conditional distributions. To address this, GANimation [184] was proposed to generate facial animation movements under the control of the activation magnitude of each action unit (AU). More recently, Choi et al. [152] further improved their StarGAN, introducing a new style encoder and a mapping function.

Others. Semi-supervised learning, in which a small number of labeled samples and abundant unlabeled data are used to train the desired model, has been extensively studied. For semi-supervised I2I, Gan et al. [180] introduced a semi-supervised method for cross-domain joint distribution matching, called the Triangle Generative Adversarial Network. It consists of four neural networks, i.e., two generators and two discriminators, which learn the bidirectional mappings between different domains with a few paired samples. Usually, supervised, unsupervised, and semi-supervised learning require significant data for training. In contrast, humans can learn from limited exemplars and achieve remarkable results. Benaim and Worf [179] were the first to take the few-shot scenario into consideration, proposing a one-shot unsupervised domain mapping method, called DistanceGAN. Its key innovation is to learn a unidirectional mapping function that maintains the distance between a pair of samples. Dong et al. [174] later introduced a zero-shot semantic image synthesis framework, which synthesizes a new image under the guidance of a natural language description. In [135], Liu et al. explored how to translate source images to analogous images with target conditions, without model having seen the target class during training. Therefore, they proposed a few-shot unsupervised I2I translation model, called FUNIT, which is built on a few-shot image translator and a multitask adversarial discriminator. Although FUNIT somewhat alleviates the reliance on domain annotations, they are still needed during training. To address this issue, Anokhin et al. [196] proposed the high-resolution daytime translation (HiDT) model, which contains an Adaptive U-Net architecture and an enhancement post-processing. The Adaptive U-Net combines AdaIN and skip-connections to
Deep Facial Synthesis last mainly focuses on facial sketch synthesis. The works can be divided into three categories. The first aims to translate any sketch images into their corresponding RGB images. The second tries to improve the performance and quality. The related image generation. This framework trains a classical GAN model with one or more sketches. This new method requires pair-wise data for training. To handle this problem, Yi et al. [2] proposed an APDrawing to transform an input face image into its corresponding APD image, in which a hierarchical GAN model is built by combining both a global and a local network. Then, they further proposed an APDrawing++ [12], in which they used an auto-encoder to refine the subtle facial features and presented a novel line continuity loss to enhance line continuity of APD. However, both of these APDrawing methods require pair-wise data for training. To improve the performance, Yi et al. [2] proposed a novel SDEdit algorithm, which hijacks the reverse stochastic process of stochastic differential equations based generative model [242]. The SDEdit transforms a stroke painting or an image with strokes to the expected image, while preserving the overall structure.

2.5 Deep Photo-Sketch Synthesis

Deep photo-sketch synthesis is a recent branch of the FSS task, in which deep learning is used to improve the performance and quality. The related works can be divided into three categories. The first aims to translate any sketch images into their corresponding RGB images. The second tries to convert any RGB images into sketch images. The last mainly focuses on facial sketch synthesis. General Sketch-to-Image. Xian et al. [210] proposed the TextureGAN model to synthesize an image under the supervision of a sketch, color, and texture. TextureGAN consists of a ground-truth pre-training module and an external texture fine-tuning part. Then, Lu [212] et al. introduced a two-stage contextual GAN to achieve sketch-to-image generation. This framework trains a classical GAN model with a newly defined loss, which represents the joint distribution and captures the inherent relation between a sketch and its corresponding image. Inspired by image in-painting [243], You et al. [20] proposed the PI-REC model, which contains three phases: an imitation phase, generating phase, and refinement phase. PI-REC is progressively trained using only one generator and one discriminator. The ISF introduced in [226] is a gating-based approach, which allows a single generator to be used to generate distinct classes without feature mixing. Recently, Gao et al. [228] proposed EdgeGAN for object-level image synthesis given a freehand scene sketches. This framework contains two sequential modules: foreground generation and background generation. Yang et al. [229] presented a deep plastic surgery model to simulate the coarse-to-fine painting process of human artists. Chen et al. [230] proposed a local-to-global framework to allow any user to produce high-quality face images. Their model consists of three modules, including a component embedding module, a feature mapping module, and an image synthesis module.

General Image-to-Sketch. Song et al. [211] proposed the first deep stroke-level photo-to-sketch synthesis method, which is a hybrid model with a shortcut cycle consistency constrained by a VAE-style reconstruction loss. As the default setting of I2I and NST, both can synthesize artistic portrait drawing (APD) images. However, they do not meet practical requirements because APD images usually have a highly abstract style and contain special graphic elements. Therefore, Yi et al. [2] proposed an asymmetric cycle-structure GAN [36], which contains a relaxed forward cycle consistency loss (a.k.a. truncation loss) to prevent the reconstructed photo from being noisy, and a strict cycle consistency loss to enhance the performance. This method also uses multiple local discriminators to ensure the quality of the facial portrait drawings. Different to portrait drawing, Wang et al. [227] observed the behavior and properties of cartoon paintings and proposed three different representations considering surface, texture, and shape information, respectively. In addition, they also released the new SketchyCOCO dataset to better train and evaluate the performance of their model. Based on Pix2pix, Li et al. [225] designed a two-branch network (called im2Pencil) to implement photo-to-pencil translation, which can simulate sketch outlines and shadows. Wang et al. [236] presented a GAN sketching method to rewrite GAN with one or more sketches. This new method uses regularizations to preserve the original GAN’s diversity and image quality, while matches the generated sketch images with users needs through
a cross-domain adversarial loss. Bhunia et al. [237] introduced a new transformer architecture to generate various yet realistic creative sketches, consisting of two networks. The first part locator networks aim to capture the coarse structure by observing the relationship between local patterns. And the second part sketcher network follows the standard GAN, which aims to synthesize high-quality sketch images.

**Photo-Sketch Synthesis.** Zhang et al. [206] were the first to use a fully convolutional neural network (FCNN) to build a deep photo-to-sketch synthesis model. Then, the works [107, 209, 214] integrated deep features into probabilistic graph model learning, achieving better performance than traditional models [1, 49]. To make the network more flexible, Zhang et al. [213] took the key idea of CycleGAN and proposed a novel pGAN, which uses a special parametric Sigmoid activation function to reduce the effects of photo priors and illumination variations. To improve the quality of the generated photo/sketch, Wang et al. [215] introduced a synthesis method using multi-adversarial networks (PS²MAN). Their model uses two U-Nets to generate high-quality images from low to high resolution. To achieve the same goal, Zhang et al. [217] further proposed a facial sketch synthesis by multi-domain adversarial learning (MDAL), which overcomes the defects of blurs and deformations. The basic idea behind MDAL is the concept of “interpretation through synthesis”, which is built upon two diverse generators.

Kazemi et al. [218, 219] proposed an improved version of CycleGAN, which focuses on the facial attributes during the portrait synthesis process. Zhang et al. [221, 223] introduced two methods by combining an auto-encoder and traditional subspace learning, which is more effective than the traditional FSS methods. Besides, Zhu et al. [222] proposed a collaborative framework that exploits the interaction information of two opposite generators by introducing a collaborative loss. However, due to the lack of large-scale training data, it is difficult to train a good model. Therefore, Zhu et al. [224] proposed to use classical knowledge distillation to learn two well-defined student mapping networks via two strong teacher networks. More recently, the works in [232, 233] introduced identity-aware models, which use a new perceptual loss to train a better image generative model, and thus consider the downstream task, e.g., face recognition, as the final goal. Yu et al. [231] proposed a new composition-assisted generative adversarial network, which helps synthesize realistic facial sketches/photos by using facial composition information. By leveraging the relationships between features, [235] implemented a multi-scale self-attention residual learning framework for face photo-sketch conversions. Finally, the method proposed in [234] does not need any images from the source domain for training, enabling it to leverage both deep features (extracted from convolutional neural network) and handcrafted features flexibly.

Fig. 5 Statistics and examples from the FS2K dataset. Please refer to Sec. 3 for details.
3 Proposed FS2K Dataset

In this section, we introduce the proposed FS2K. Some example images are shown in Fig. 2. We describe the details of FS2K in terms of two key aspects, namely dataset collection and data annotation. Overall, FS2K includes 2,104 photo-sketch pairs, which are split into 1,058 for training and 1,046 for testing. The complete dataset is available at https://github.com/DengPingFan/FS2K.

3.1 Data Collection

To establish a long-lasting benchmark, the data should be carefully selected to cover diverse scenes from different views, such as lighting conditions, skin colors, sketch styles, and image backgrounds. To this end, we introduce FS2K, a new high-quality dataset for the FSS task.

Our FS2K includes 2,104 photos from real scenes, the Internet, and other datasets. The majority, however, come from CASIA-WebFace [244], which is a large-scale (i.e., 500K images) labeled dataset of faces in the wild. CASIA-WebFace was collected from the IMDb website and contains well-organized information, such as name, gender, and birthday. Thanks to the rich and clean open-source data from CASIA-WebFace, it could be used to build our high-quality and representative benchmark. We manually selected 1,529 images to cover a large span of major challenges faced in realistic scenes, such as varying background, hair style (e.g., long, short), accessories (e.g., glasses, earring), and skin information (e.g., patch image on a given face).

Because the photos selected in CASIA-WebFace are taken from a single angle, multi-angle face images for the same person are missing. To this end, we invited eight actors to take 98 photos under different settings (e.g., lighting conditions, face angles). In addition, to further increase the diversity, we also collected some children photos and some faces with smaller face-to-image ratios. The remaining 477 face photos come from other free stock photos websites, including Unsplash, Pexels, Pngimg, and Google.

3.2 Data Annotation

There are four types of annotations in our FS2K, including sketch drawing, sketch style, color, contour feature annotations.
3.2.1 Sketch Drawing

**Participants.** Three senior artists (including two male and one female) from the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute were hired to take part in the study. All three participants had normal or corrected to normal vision. None of the participants suffered color-blindness or color-weakness. The participants ranged in age from 20 to 23 years, with an average of five years of professional experience in sketch drawing.

**Apparatus.** The three artists drew all sketch images with the assistance of a Copy Table LED Board. Fig. 6 shows the copy table we used and an example (Fig. 6 (d)) of a face sketch drawn by our artists. The touch switch region in our device supports three levels of adjustable brightness, so the artists could use the button to change the brightness they desired. This helped them locate the contours of facial features according to the photo information from the bottom of the LED board. Moreover, this equipment also helped to ensure content similarity and face alignment between sketches and corresponding photos. At the same time, the drawings retain the artist’s sketch style.

3.2.2 Sketch Style Annotation

Our FS2K contains three different styles, which enrich the diversity of sketches, as shown in Fig. 7. This enables different artists’ skill to be captured, while the same time making FS2K more challenging than previous FSS datasets.

We created a balanced dataset to facilitate the comparison of different methods, i.e., the number of the images with the three different styles are equally distributed. Specifically, in the training set, the number of samples with style1, style2, and style3 are 357, 351 and 350, respectively. In the test set, they are 619, 381, and 46, respectively.

3.2.3 Facial Feature Annotation

Sketches are rapidly executed freehand drawings, which have less attribute information than the original images, e.g., facial texture, facial expressions, facial posture, etc. Therefore, it is difficult to restore real images (i.e., S2I task) based on a single sketch image. Meanwhile, in real-world applications, we can use auxiliary facial information (such as gender, accessories, hair style) to better narrow down a suspect in a database. Following [245], we added some additional facial feature annotations, including gender, smile, face pose, hair condition, hair color, earring, and skin texture. We hired two data annotators to label all photos and performed cross-checking to ensure the accuracy of the final annotations. An overall summary of the labels can be found in Table 5, while the details of each are described below.

**Gender.** Gender is a high-level human attribute commonly used in traditional face databases such as CelebA [26] and LFW [246]. It has been extensively studied in face detection and recognition [247–249]. Therefore, we carefully labeled all photos in FS2K with gender attributes. Specifically, there are 574 male photos and 484 female photos in the training set, and 632 male photos and 414 female photos in the test set.

**Smile.** Smiling is a basic human action that represents a positive emotional state. As such, many studies have focused on smile detection [250, 251], or used smile as an attribute for recognition [252]. Therefore, we also consider smile as a key attribute in our dataset. Specifically, the training set contains 645 smiling people and 413 with no obvious expression, while the test set contains 670 smiling people and 376 with no expression. We make sure that the proportion of smiling people in the training and test sets is as close as possible.

**Face Pose.** The facial attributes may cover only a small part of the image, but the photo is usually dominated by the effects of pose [253]. Moreover, pose will affect the performance of face recognition [254], tracking [255], and synthesis [256]. Therefore, the facial pose is useful auxiliary information. We define a portrait with the head rotated within 30 degrees as a frontal face pose. According to this definition, the training set has 917 frontal photos, while the test set has 872. The remaining have side face poses.

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9 The [https://www.scfai.edu.cn/english/](https://www.scfai.edu.cn/english/) is one of the four most prominent art academies in China. The three senior artists are all from the Design Academy.

10 Fig. 6 (a) presents the copy table, which has an LCD backlight. It requires a high voltage input of 100 ~ 240V and 0.6A working current. Its size is A4 (i.e., 300 × 200 × 3.5mm) in Fig. 6 (b), and the luminous intensity is 300~350LM. Therefore, it has become the most popular copy table product, after the aluminum alloy copy table, for animators (see Fig. 6 (c)).
**Hair Status and Color.** Hair is a saliency feature of the head that may change in different situations. Even if there is sufficient information in the internal features of the face for recognition, manipulating the hair can have a negative effect on the performance [257, 258]. Moreover, facial synthesis and retrieval systems often use hair as an important cue [259, 260] to improve the quality of generated images. For FSS, although the sketches contain the contour of the hair, the corresponding color information and hair status (with or without hair) are missing. Therefore, in FS2K, we provide annotations of the hair status, which includes four general colors (*i.e.*, black, brown, red, and blond) and another status (*i.e.*, bald or wearing a hat), as shown in Fig. 5. In other words, for faces with hair, we mark the color information directly, while cases of thinning hair or wearing hat are marked as separate attributes. The statistical results of this annotation can be found in Table 5.

**Earrings.** The simplified characteristics of sketch drawings lead to unclear earring contours. Meanwhile, as shown in Fig. 5, earrings in real photos are clearly visible. Therefore, in FS2K, we provide annotations for whether or not earrings are present, which can help the model training. Specifically, the training set has 209 people with earrings, and the test set has 187.

**Skin Texture.** Skin texture provides a large amount of detailed local information and is used as an important feature for face recognition [261, 262]. However, this important information is completely lost in sketch images. Therefore, we clip a small patch from the real photo and use it as the skin texture, as shown in Fig. 7. To provide more information for future research, we also include the average RGB value for the corresponding lip and eyeball region.

4 Proposed FSGAN Baseline

4.1 Problem Definition

Facial synthesis (FS) aims to generate target representations of human faces based on the given inputs. This process can be formulated as \( X_o = F(X_i) \), where \( X_i \) and \( X_o \) denote the input and output (*e.g.*, RGB images and sketches) of facial representations, and \( F \) indicates the synthesis function. In this paper, based on the overall architecture of [2, 12], we propose a baseline model, FSGAN, for both the I2S \( X_{ske} = F(X_{img}) \) and S2I \( X_{img} = F(X_{ske}) \) task, inspired by pix2pixHD [21]. Instead of focusing on direct image-level facial synthesis, we propose a two-stage “bottom-up” facial synthesis architecture, as shown in Fig. 8. Hence, our FSGAN consists of two cascaded stages built upon multiple generative models (*i.e.*, GANs).

The first stage is comprised of five parallel GANs, which are designed to synthesize the local facial components separately. Given an input, four facial regions (*e.g.*, left eye, right eye, nose, and mouth), as well as the rest of the input, are cropped and fed into their corresponding GANs in the first stage for synthesizing key facial features. These synthesized facial component patches are then stitched together to obtain the intact facial representation. Since the local facial patches are synthesized independently, the connecting region of the stitching, as well as their appearances, are inconsistent with each other. Therefore, the second stage is introduced to further refine the results by taking the global structure and texture into consideration. In this stage, the style vectors of the facial sketches are utilized to assist the synthesis.

4.2 Facial Components Synthesis

Almost all human faces have the same global structure. The differences lie in the details of the local facial components, such as eyes, eyebrows, nose, and mouth. To capture more details of different facial components, the first stage of our model synthesizes them separately. Specifically, given a facial input, the four key patterns, including the left eye, right eye, nose, and mouth, are first detected by MTCNN [263]. The input \( X_i \) is then divided into five parts, \( X_{parts} = \{X_{leye}, X_{reye}, X_{nose}, X_{mouth}, X_{rest}\} \), based on the detection results. These include the left eye, right eye, nose, mouth and remaining components. For these parts, five parallel GANs are utilized to synthesize their corresponding patches. Therefore, the problem can be formulated as \( G_{parts} = \{G_{leye}, G_{reye}, G_{nose}, G_{mouth}, G_{rest}\} \) and \( D_{parts} = \{D_{leye}, D_{reye}, D_{nose}, D_{mouth}, D_{rest}\} \), where \( G \) and \( D \) indicate the generator and discriminator, respectively.

First, the four GANs for synthesizing the left eye, right eye, nose and mouth have the same architecture. Each GAN consists of a generator...
Fig. 8 Pipeline of our FSGAN baseline for the I2S task. It consists of two stages: 1) facial components synthesis and 2) facial synthesis. Please refer to Sec. 4.2 and Sec. 4.3 for more details.

and a discriminator. The generator is designed as an encoder-decoder, which consists of an encoder, a bottom connection and a decoder. The encoder is composed of three convolutional blocks, each of which is a combination of a convolutional layer (with a kernel size of 3 and stride of 2), a batch normalization layer and a ReLU activation layer. Meanwhile, the second bottom connection consists of nine bottleneck residual blocks that are similar to [264]. Finally, the decoder is built upon three deconvolutional blocks, which consist of a deconvolutional layer, a batch normalization layer, and a ReLU activation layer. Note that the GAN, which is used for synthesizing \( X^\text{rest} \), is similar to the previous described ones. However, the encoder contains four convolutional blocks and the decoder contains four deconvolutional blocks, in order to achieve larger receptive fields.

The discriminators of the above five GANs are the same. Each consists of three cascaded convolutional layers (with a kernel size of 3 and stride of 2) followed by global average pooling. Then, a \( 1 \times 1 \) convolutional layer and a sigmoid function are used to predict the probability of the generated results being real or fake.

Based on the above design, the first stage of FSGAN is able to restore details of the facial components in both the I2S and S2I tasks. At the end of this stage, the synthesized patches are stitched together to restore the intact facial synthesis result \( X^\text{intact} \). Since the patches are synthesized by different generators, their overall appearances are inconsistent, which becomes even more obvious in the stitched result. To address this issue, the stitched result is then fed to the next stage to adjust and refine the global structure and appearance.

4.3 Facial Synthesis

To address the inconsistency issue of the output from the first stage, we introduce the second stage, which is designed as another GAN model inspired by Pix2pixHD [21], for local detail refinement and global structure adjustment.

In this stage, we use the multi-scale discriminators \( D_{fs} \) and the coarse-to-fine generator \( G_{fs} \) following Pix2pixHD [21]. Specifically, the generator \( G_{fs} \) consists of two sub-networks \( G_1 \) and \( G_2 \), both of which follow on encoder-decoder architecture, as shown on the right of Fig. 8. We sample the output of the first stage using a downsampling operation with a sampling rate of 50%. This newly sampled image \( X_{\text{intact}}^{1/2} (\text{height}/2, \text{width}/2) \) is
then fed into the first sub-network \( G_1 \), which is designed to capture global features. The other sub-network \( G_2 \) is employed to capture the local details, which takes the output of the first stage as input. We use both concatenation and element-wise addition operations to fuse the style, local, and global information. Specifically, the concatenation is used to combine the style feature maps and the output of \( G_1 \) and generate a new fused feature map. Then, the element-wise addition is utilized to combine this new feature map with the latent feature of the encoder part of \( G_2 \). Finally, we use the decoder part of \( G_2 \) to generate the final output \( X_o \). It is worth noting that the style vector can control the style of the generated sketches, which helps improve their quality and diversity. Besides, the style of the real photo is often fixed, and independent from the artists’ style. Therefore, we introduce the style information in the I2S task, but exclude that in the S2I task.

### 4.4 Loss Function

We use a combination of several loss functions to train our model. We denote \( X \) and \( Y \) as the input and its corresponding ground truth, respectively. For simplicity, we define \( G(X) \) as the generated output of the given input \( X \), and \( D_k(X, Y) \) as the corresponding predicted probabilities of the \( k \)-th discriminator. Then, we denote the \( i \)-th layer feature extractor of discriminator \( D_k \) as \( D^i_k \), where \( k \) is the index of the discriminator.

**Adversarial Loss.** We use the adversarial loss [265] to make the generated image more visually appealing. The adversarial loss we use is defined as:

\[
L_{adv}(G, D) = \mathbb{E}_{X,Y}[\log D(X, Y)] + \mathbb{E}_X[1 - \log D(X, G(X))].
\]

**Feature Matching Loss.** Similar to [21], we use the feature matching loss to improve the adversarial loss based on the \( k \)-th discriminator. The feature matching loss is defined as:

\[
L_{fm}(G, D_k) = \mathbb{E}_{X,Y} \sum_{t=0}^{T} \frac{1}{N_t} \left\| D^i_k(X, Y) - D^i_k(X, G(X)) \right\|_1,
\]

where \( T \) denotes the total number of layers in each discriminator and \( N_t \) is the number of feature maps in the \( i \)-th layer. This loss is used to match the intermediate feature maps of the real and synthesized image, making the generator produce multi-scale statistical information. Besides, it not only stabilizes the training process but also restores highly realistic outputs.

**Perceptual Loss.** To maintain perceptual and semantic consistency, we use a perceptual loss [87] to measure the difference between the original image and the corresponding synthesized image. We extract the perceptual features from the \( i \)-th layer activations of a pre-trained VGGNet [76], which is denoted as \( \phi_i(\cdot) \). The perceptual loss is defined as follows:

\[
L_{per}(G(X), Y) = \mathbb{E}_{G(X), Y} \sum_{i=0}^{t} \left\| \phi_i(Y) - \phi_i(G(X)) \right\|_1.
\]

**Pixel-Wise Loss.** The \( L_1 \) distance between a generated image \( G(X) \) and ground-truth \( Y \) is regarded as the pixel-wise loss, which is defined as:

\[
L_1(G(X), Y) = \frac{1}{h \times w} \sum_{(i,j)=(0,0)}^{(h,w)} \left\| Y(i, j) - G(X)(i, j) \right\|_1,
\]

where \( (i, j) \) and \( (h, w) \) are the pixel coordinates and the (height, width) of the output, respectively.

**Style Classification Loss.** Similar to [182, 183], we define an auxiliary classifier to predict the sketch style of the generated image. For any generated image \( G(X) \), the style classification loss is defined as:

\[
L_{sty}(G, S, c) = \mathbb{E}_{X,c} \left[ l_{ce}(S(G(X)), c) \right],
\]

where \( l_{ce}(\cdot, \cdot) \) is the cross-entropy loss, \( S(\cdot) \) is a CNN that outputs the probability over different styles, and \( c \) is the label of a given artist’s style. Note that we only use the style classification loss in the second stage for the I2S task.

**Overall Loss.** Finally, the overall loss function for the multi-scale discriminators is:

\[
L_{D \sim (D_{part, s}, D_{fs})} = \sum_{i=1}^{K} -L_{adv} + \lambda_{fm}L_{fm},
\]

and the overall loss function for generator is:

\[
L_{G \sim (G_{part, s}, G_{fs})} = L_{adv} + \lambda_{fm}L_{fm} + \lambda_1L_1 + \lambda_{per}L_{per} + \lambda_{sty}L_{sty}
\]
where $\lambda_{fm}$, $\lambda_1$, $\lambda_{per}$, and $\lambda_{ sty}$ are hyperparameters that control the importance of the feature matching loss, perceptual loss, pixel-wise loss, and style classification loss, respectively.

### 4.5 Implementation Details

We use PyTorch [266] to implement the proposed FSGAN. The experiments are conducted on an NVIDIA V100S.

For the I2S task, we set $\lambda_{fm} = 25.0$, $\lambda_1 = 25.0$, $\lambda_{per} = 12.5$ to train the model in the facial components synthesis stage, and set $\lambda_{fm} = 100.0$, $\lambda_1 = 100.0$, $\lambda_{per} = 50.0$, and $\lambda_{ sty} = 100.0$ for facial synthesis. The Adam optimizer [267] is used for training the whole network. The initial learning rates for the generator and discriminator are $2e-4$ and $1e-5$, respectively. The other hyperparameters of the optimizer are set to the default values as recommended in PyTorch. We set the number of epochs to 50. All generators and discriminators are trained iteratively.

For the S2I task, we set $\lambda_{fm} = 50.0$, $\lambda_1 = 50.0$, and $\lambda_{per} = 0.2$ to train the neural network for facial components synthesis stage, and set $\lambda_{fm} = 100.0$, $\lambda_1 = 100.0$ and $\lambda_{per} = 0.2$ for facial synthesis. We again use the Adam optimizer, with initial learning rates of $2e-4$ for both the generators and discriminators. The training strategy is almost the same as that for the I2S task. However, we set the number of epochs to 400, freezing the weights of the facial components synthesis module after 250 epochs, and further training the facial synthesis module for the remaining epochs.

### 5 Benchmark

In this section, we provide comprehensive comparisons and analyses of the existing models on our newly proposed dataset, in terms of both the I2S and S2I tasks.

#### 5.1 Experimental Settings

##### 5.1.1 Evaluation Metrics

For the I2S task, the most popular facial sketch metric is the structural similarity index metric (SSIM) [18, 43]. However, it ignores the perceptual similarity between a prediction and the ground truth. Therefore, we further adopt the recently proposed structure co-occurrence texture (SCOOT) metric [27], which provides a unified evaluation for both structure and texture. For the S2I task, we still adopt the widely used SSIM metric to evaluate the synthesized faces. Our evaluation toolbox is available at https://github.com/DengPingFan/FS2KToolbox.

#### 5.1.2 Compared Models

To evaluate the performance on the I2S task and S2I task, we present the empirical results of 19 representative approaches and our newly proposed FSGAN baseline.

#### 5.1.3 Training/Testing Protocols

All compared methods are selected based on three criteria: a) widely regarded technology, b) open-source code, c) state-of-the-art (SOTA) performance. The models are trained and tested on our FS2K with the image sizes specified in their papers. If size setting is not provided in their paper, $512 \times 512$ is utilized as default.

### 5.2 Overall Results and Analysis

#### 5.2.1 I2S Task

We first provide a performance summary of the I2S task in terms of both SCOOT and SSIM.

| #   | Model    | Pub.          | SCOOT↑ | SSIM↑ |
|-----|----------|---------------|--------|-------|
| 1   | DualGAN  | Yi et al. ICCV| 0.261  | 0.324 |
| 2   | FST      | Chen et al. NeurIPS | 0.271 | 0.460 |
| 3   | NST      | Gatys et al. CVPR | 0.273 | 0.326 |
| 4   | Pix2pix  | Isola et al. CVPR | 0.275 | 0.438 |
| 5   | ACL-GAN  | Zhao et al. ECCV | 0.278 | 0.404 |
| 6   | WCT      | Li et al. NeurIPS | 0.282 | 0.369 |
| 7   | AdaIN    | Huang et al. ICCV | 0.303 | 0.365 |
| 8   | UNIT     | Liu et al. NeurIPS | 0.304 | 0.504 |
| 9   | TSIT     | Jiang et al. ECCV | 0.307 | 0.441 |
| 10  | DRIT++   | Lee et al. ICCV | 0.308 | 0.492 |
| 11  | CartoonGAN | Chen et al. CVPR | 0.319 | 0.400 |
| 12  | UGATIT   | Kim et al. ICLR | 0.323 | 0.457 |
| 13  | NICE-GAN | Chen et al. CVPR | 0.327 | 0.473 |
| 14  | CycleGAN | Zhu et al. ICCV | 0.348 | 0.435 |
| 15  | MDAL     | Zhang et al. TNNLS | 0.355 | 0.466 |
| 16  | UPDG     | Yi et al. CVPR | 0.364 | 0.471 |
| 17  | Pix2pixHD | Wang et al. CVPR | 0.374 | 0.492 |
| 18  | APDrawing | Yi et al. CVPR | 0.375 | 0.464 |
| 19  | DSNAP    | Chang et al. ECCV | 0.378 | 0.493 |
| 20  | FSGAN (Ours) | 0.405 | 0.510 |

Because the S2I task needs to restore more detailed information of the RGB images, more training epochs are required.

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11] Because the S2I task needs to restore more detailed information of the RGB images, more training epochs are required.
Deep Facial Synthesis

Fig. 9 From left to right: input face, ground truth (GT), DualGAN [175], FPST [89], NST [74, 75], Pix2pix [29], ACL-GAN [200], and WCT [165]. We mark the three styles with blue, green, and red boxes for each result. Zoom-in for details.

Fig. 10 Comparison of AdaIN [161], UNIT [20], TSIT [199], DRIT++ [25], CartoonGAN [72], UGATIT [28], NICE-GAN [24], and CycleGAN [19]. Their inputs and GTs are shown in Fig. 9.

scores. Quantitative results and qualitative comparisons are shown in Table 6 and Fig. 9-11, respectively. The experimental observations indicate that our FSGAN baseline achieves better results. For further analysis, we divide all compared methods into three categories based on their SCOOT score:

- score $\leq 0.3$
- $0.3 < \text{score} \leq 0.35$
- $0.35 < \text{score}$

Analysis. Methods in the first group achieve a SCOOT below 0.3. These include DualGAN [175], FPST [89], NST [74, 75], Pix2pix [29], ACL-GAN [200], and WCT [165].

As shown in Fig. 9, DualGAN, NST, and WCT suffer from structural distortion, where many local facial details are lost. The images produced by the DualGAN are poor and it is difficult to detect facial components in them. This explains why it has lower SSIM and SCOOT scores. In addition, compared with other results, Pix2pix and FPST generate blur results. In terms of visual appeal, ACL-GAN seems to achieve satisfactory results, yielding a higher SSIM score. However, ACL-GAN reproduces the original facial structure almost exactly, lacking artistic style.

The second group includes AdaIN [161], UNIT [20], TSIT [199], DRIT++ [25], CartoonGAN [72], UGATIT [28], NICE-GAN [24], and CycleGAN [19], whose SCOOT scores range from 0.3 to 0.35.
As shown in Fig. 10, the synthesized sketch images are better in terms of structure-preserving compared to the first group. However, except for AdaIN, all models are thrown off by the complex backgrounds (see the hair region in the second row). Besides, the results of CartoonGAN seem to alter the color of the input images, leading to lower SSIM scores.

MDAL [217], UPDG [36], Pix2pixHD [21], APDrawing [2], DSMAP [23] and the proposed FSGAN are categorized into the third group, which can generate sketches without distortion or losing too much of the global details. However, UPDG and APDrawing miss some details in the hair region, leading to poor visual effects.

APDrawing introduces a lot of extra strokes, especially for the first sketch style. Besides, APDrawing usually results in a lack and distortion of the local structure, as can be seen in the fair region. Meanwhile, the sketches generated by UPDG have better style elements, but the model cannot handle complex backgrounds. Pix2pixHD generates relatively good sketches with global structure and clean background, but it does not generate the best facial components. For example, in Fig. 11 (e), the region around the eyes is unclear, and many details are lost. Take the third style, for instance, the eyeglasses are partially lost, while the eyeball is completely black. We further observe that DSMAP and MDAL tend to achieve better sketch images, but with distortions in local facial information. Finally, our proposed baseline can synthesize high-quality sketches that focus on the global structure and local details, while taking diverse styles into account. Moreover, as shown in the highlighted boxes (with green, blue and red), we find that the outputs of our proposed FSGAN are more similar to the ground-truth, compared to other SOTA models.

### 5.2.2 S2I Task

We report our experimental results in Table 7 and Fig. 12. We find that our FSGAN achieves the best results on our challenging FS2K compared to the existing SOTA models.

#### Analysis

From the results in Fig. 12, we observe that most compared methods are unable to successfully recover accurate images, revealing that...
Deep Facial Synthesis

(a) Input  (b) GT  (c) AdaIN  (d) FNS  (e) NST  (f) FPST  (g) WCT  (h) ACL-GAN

(i) CycleGAN  (j) DeepPS  (k) DRIT++  (l) DSMAP  (m) DualGAN  (n) NICE-GAN  (o) Pix2pix

(p) SPADE  (q) TSIT  (r) UGATIT  (s) UNIT  (t) pSp  (u) Pix2pixHD  (v) Ours

Fig. 12 We select 19 classical models, including AdaIN [161], FNS [87], FPST [89], WCT [165], ACL-GAN [200], CycleGAN [19], DeepPS [229], DRIT++ [25], DSMAP [23], DualGAN [175], NICE-GAN [24], Pix2pix [29], SPADE [22], TSIT [199], UGATIT [28], UNIT [20], pSp [73], and Pix2pixHD [21], for qualitative comparison.

(a) Input  (b) GT  (c) pSp  (d) Ours

Fig. 13 Visual diversity of the data generated for S2I task.

The S2I task is more complicated than I2S. We argue that this is because the sketches are highly abstract, and the loss of valuable information makes it difficult for neural networks to restore the original image. We also observe that the high-resolution models, such as Pix2pixHD and ours, tend to output more visually appealing results.

The results presented in Fig. 12 show that FNS and FPST fail to transfer the sketches into colored images. SPADE and Pix2pix generate poor results with facial outlines (e.g., Pix2pix) or black backgrounds (e.g., SPADE). Five models (i.e., NST, WCT, DeepPS, DSMAP, and UNIT) produce noise patches in salient regions, which corrupt the global facial structure. Meanwhile, AdaIN, ACL-GAN, DualGAN, and UGATIT perform better than the above-mentioned models, but result in unrealistic cartoon-style images. Only CycleGAN, NICE-GAN, TSIT, pSp, and Pix2pixHD overcome various challenges and achieve good results in terms of facial completeness. In particular, the eye regions from Pix2pixHD [21] and pSp [73] are better than other models. However, compared with the results of our model, the facial features of Pix2pixHD are relatively inferior, because they are learned by a pixel-wise rather than block-wise strategy. Although pSp [73] can generate high-quality results, its results lack diversity compared with ours. For example, pSp generates the similar facial expressions under two different sketch styles, while our model can synthesize diverse contents, as shown in Fig. 13.

5.3 Attribute-Based Analysis

5.3.1 SCOOT Metric Results

To provide a deeper understanding of the models, we present an attribute-based performance evaluation in Table 8.

Analysis. Hair is one of the dominant features of the head. In Table 8, we find that most models achieve slightly better or comparable performance on images without hair than with, except for three models, such as AdaIN, CartoonGAN, and CycleGAN. Meanwhile, we find that red and black hair are the most challenging and easiest to detect/reconstruct, respectively. We argue that this is because images with red and black hair make up the lowest and largest (>40%) proportion
Table 8 Comparison of 19 state-of-the-art models in terms of attribute-based performance on the I2S task. Here, w/ H = hair visible, w/o H = hair invisible, H(b) = brown hair, H(bl) = black hair, H(r) = red hair, H(g) = golden hair, M = male, F = female, w/ E = with earrings, w/o E = without earrings, w/ S = with smile, w/o S = without smile, w/ F = frontal face, w/o F = non-frontal face, S1 = style1, S2 = style2, and S3 = style3.

| Model    | w/ H | w/o H | H(b) | H(bl) | H(r) | H(g) | M | F | w/ E | w/o E | w/ S | w/o S | w/ F | w/o F | S1 | S2 | S3 |
|----------|------|-------|------|-------|------|------|---|---|------|-------|-----|------|-----|------|----|----|----|
| DualGAN  | 0.320| 0.398| 0.310| 0.342| 0.276| 0.395| 0.382| 0.282| 0.292| 0.331| 0.313| 0.343| 0.318| 0.354| 0.364| 0.247| 0.424|
| FPST     | 0.459| 0.481| 0.442| 0.492| 0.383| 0.481| 0.492| 0.411| 0.416| 0.469| 0.448| 0.481| 0.455| 0.486| 0.515| 0.351| 0.597|
| NICE-GAN | 0.325| 0.347| 0.317| 0.349| 0.256| 0.347| 0.339| 0.306| 0.305| 0.330| 0.316| 0.344| 0.324| 0.338| 0.372| 0.241| 0.417|
| CycleGAN | 0.343| 0.526| 0.410| 0.470| 0.322| 0.526| 0.478| 0.377| 0.391| 0.449| 0.425| 0.461| 0.438| 0.439| 0.503| 0.319| 0.538|
| MDAL     | 0.354| 0.563| 0.348| 0.380| 0.292| 0.363| 0.369| 0.333| 0.329| 0.360| 0.345| 0.372| 0.352| 0.365| 0.436| 0.257| 0.446|
| UDGP     | 0.362| 0.411| 0.349| 0.390| 0.290| 0.411| 0.390| 0.325| 0.336| 0.371| 0.356| 0.379| 0.363| 0.370| 0.423| 0.259| 0.448|
| APDrawing| 0.374| 0.395| 0.349| 0.322| 0.322| 0.395| 0.380| 0.369| 0.356| 0.380| 0.370| 0.385| 0.373| 0.390| 0.456| 0.227| 0.524|
| pix2pixHD| 0.374| 0.392| 0.365| 0.403| 0.307| 0.385| 0.392| 0.351| 0.343| 0.378| 0.371| 0.392| 0.371| 0.381| 0.462| 0.212| 0.508|
| DMAP     | 0.375| 0.431| 0.357| 0.405| 0.422| 0.431| 0.409| 0.343| 0.354| 0.383| 0.369| 0.393| 0.377| 0.381| 0.437| 0.276| 0.423|

Table 9 Comparison of 19 top models in terms of attribute-based performance on the I2S task. Please refer to Table 8 for details.

| Model    | w/ H | w/o H | H(b) | F | w/ E | w/o E | w/ S | w/o S | w/ F | w/o F | S1 | S2 | S3 |
|----------|------|-------|------|---|------|-------|-----|------|-----|------|----|----|----|
| DualGAN  | 0.320| 0.398| 0.310| 0.342| 0.276| 0.395| 0.382| 0.282| 0.292| 0.331| 0.313| 0.343| 0.318| 0.354| 0.364| 0.247| 0.424|
| FPST     | 0.459| 0.481| 0.442| 0.492| 0.383| 0.481| 0.492| 0.411| 0.416| 0.469| 0.448| 0.481| 0.455| 0.486| 0.515| 0.351| 0.597|
| NICE-GAN | 0.325| 0.347| 0.317| 0.349| 0.256| 0.347| 0.339| 0.306| 0.305| 0.330| 0.316| 0.344| 0.324| 0.338| 0.372| 0.241| 0.417|
| CycleGAN | 0.343| 0.526| 0.410| 0.470| 0.322| 0.526| 0.478| 0.377| 0.391| 0.449| 0.425| 0.461| 0.438| 0.439| 0.503| 0.319| 0.538|
| MDAL     | 0.354| 0.563| 0.348| 0.380| 0.292| 0.363| 0.369| 0.333| 0.329| 0.360| 0.345| 0.372| 0.352| 0.365| 0.436| 0.257| 0.446|
| UDGP     | 0.362| 0.411| 0.349| 0.390| 0.290| 0.411| 0.390| 0.325| 0.336| 0.371| 0.356| 0.379| 0.363| 0.370| 0.423| 0.259| 0.448|
| APDrawing| 0.374| 0.395| 0.349| 0.322| 0.322| 0.395| 0.380| 0.369| 0.356| 0.380| 0.370| 0.385| 0.373| 0.390| 0.456| 0.227| 0.524|
| pix2pixHD| 0.374| 0.392| 0.365| 0.403| 0.307| 0.385| 0.392| 0.351| 0.343| 0.378| 0.371| 0.392| 0.371| 0.381| 0.462| 0.212| 0.508|
| DMAP     | 0.375| 0.431| 0.357| 0.405| 0.422| 0.431| 0.409| 0.343| 0.354| 0.383| 0.369| 0.393| 0.377| 0.381| 0.437| 0.276| 0.423|

of all data, respectively. Thus, the models are unfamiliar/familiar with these attributes.

In addition, we also notice that females (F) are more challenging than males (M) for almost all models, since women usually have diverse accessories and hairstyles. For example, the models tend to perform worse on images with earrings (w/ E) than those without. Also, the facial images with smiles are more challenging than those without smiles. Interestingly, existing models achieve diverse performance irrespective of the color of hair (e.g., H(b), H(bl), H(r), H(g)). Finally, compared to style 1 (simple lines) and style 3 (i.e., repeated wavy details), we see that style 2 (long strokes) is the most challenging for all models.

5.3.2 SSIM Metric Results

In addition to the SCOOT metric results, we also provide the SSIM metric results for the I2S task in Table 9.

Analysis. We find that the overall performance tends to be similar to the SCOOT metric results.
most existing facial synthesis models [21], our model has a two-stage GAN architecture for both I2S and S2I tasks. Besides, a sketch style vector is introduced to enable diversified style synthesis in the second stage of the I2S task. Therefore, the ablation studies on the I2S task are conducted on the following two key components: (1) the facial components synthesis stage, and (2) the style vector assisted generation. Note that we adopt the same hyperparameters described in Sec. 4.5 during our ablation experiments.

Table 10 shows the ablation results for the I2S task. We find that the facial components synthesis stage increases the SCOOT and SSIM scores by 1.31% (relative) and 2.67%, respectively, while the style vector further increases them by 6.30% and 4.72%. As illustrated in Fig. 14, without the multi-patch strategy, the lines in the synthesized lips are often missing structure details. Meanwhile, with the multi-patch stage, the lines become smoother. Moreover, the synthesized drawings are messier without the style vector component and may introduce shadows in the lip regions.

For the S2I task, an ablation study is conducted to validate the effectiveness of the facial components synthesis stage, as shown in Table 11. Similar to the I2S task, we find that the multi-patch component achieves a large performance gain (i.e., 3.3%) over the baseline model. Fig. 15 provides examples of the results produced by our model and the model without the facial components synthesis stage. As we can see, our model with facial components synthesis captures more details and ensures more realistic overall appearance (see Fig. 15(c)).

6 Discussion

Although human facial sketch synthesis has achieved significant progress, there is still a large room for improvement. In this section, we summarize the possible future research directions related to FSS, as follows.

1. Datasets. Due to the relative shortage of professional sketch artists, achieving large numbers of images remains an open problem, impeding the development of FSS. Furthermore, more diversified sketch (or drawing) styles are needed for building more attractive models and achieving better synthesis results. To address these issues, we believe novel data augmentation techniques

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**Table 10** Ablation study of FSGAN on the I2S task.

| Setting | multi-patch | style vec. | SCOOT↑ | SSIM↑ |
|---------|-------------|------------|--------|-------|
| Baseline | ✓           | ✓          | 0.381  | 0.437 |
| FSGAN   | ✓           | ✓          | 0.386(+1.31%) | 0.500(+2.67%) |

**Table 11** Ablation study of our model on the S2I task.

| Setting | multi-patch | SSIM↑ |
|---------|-------------|-------|
| Baseline | ✓           | 0.43Y |
| FSGAN   | ✓           | 0.503(+3.3%) |
and transfer learning strategies [270–272] designed for FSS are promising directions of study.

(2) Models. Currently, most SOTA models are trained with a large number of paired images and sketches [11, 21] to overcome data shortages. However, more attention could be paid to techniques like few-shot [273], semi-supervised [274], weakly-supervised [275] and self-supervised [276] learning to achieve the style transfer with limited datasets. Besides, developing novel human-in-the-loop [277] models is another promising direction, which would provide more interactive options to users for generating and editing personalized styles. Interactive models could also serve as drawing tools provided to professional artists for facilitating the creation of sketches and other styles of drawing. Furthermore, FSS in the wild is still challenging, because the image quality, including resolution, noise, and background, varies drastically. In addition to the above-mentioned techniques, basic model units could also be focused on for the development of new techniques. For example, most current models are built upon CNN [278] units. Therefore, more exploration of other frameworks, such as MLPs [279] and Transformers [280, 281], could also be conducted.

(3) Evaluation. Evaluation metrics are essential for the development of new models and the benchmarking of existing ones. Currently, several quantitative evaluation metrics [18, 282] and human visual ranking methods [65] are used. However, as these aim to provide relatively objective and fair comparisons between all models, the different applications of FSS are not taken into consideration. This may lead to biased or unreliable evaluation on certain tasks. Therefore, more task-specific evaluation metrics and methods could be another important direction for future research.

(4) Applications. Currently, the only direct applications of FSS (I2S and S2I) are entertainment and law enforcement [1, 43]. With the development of FSS techniques, many other promising applications could also be implicitly or explicitly facilitated by FSS research, such as art design, animation production and so on. In addition to these industry applications, we believe that FSS methods and ideas could also benefit other fields of research. For example, sketches could be used to assist image resizing [283], super-resolution [284], etc. Further, the sketches usually contain the most conspicuous information of an image and can be therefore be considered compressed versions of RGB images [285]. This characteristic makes sketches useful for the image compression task. Besides, the S2I task can be considered a specific case of image super-resolution in a broad sense, because both tasks aim to reconstruct detailed RGB images from the given inputs. The difference is that the input of S2I is high-frequency information, while that of the standard super-resolution task is the low-frequency information of the original image.

7 Conclusion

We have presented a complete review for the facial sketch synthesis (FSS) problem. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first systematic study on deep FSS in terms of both sketch-to-image and image-to-sketch tasks. To achieve this, we established a new challenging dataset, named FS2K. We also introduced a copy table for the proposed FS2K to address the alignment issue between the sketches drawn by artists and the original images. With a two-stage architecture, our proposed simple baseline, FSGAN, achieves the new state-of-the-art performance. Finally, as the largest existing survey (i.e., 139 literature methods) and benchmark (i.e., of 19 cutting-edge models), we have revealed that the development of this field is still in its infancy. The main goal of this paper is therefore to spark novel ideas rather than rank all benchmarked works. It isn’t easy to benchmark all of the existing models due to the prosperity of the field. We hope this review will attract the community’s attention and yield exciting follow-up directions, such as generating vivid sketches with music, developing cartoons from sketches, synthesizing sketch videos, fake face [286], etc.

Conflicts of Interests

The authors declared that they have no conflicts of interest to this work. We declare that we do not have any commercial or associative interest that represents a conflict of interest in connection with the work submitted.
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Deng-Ping Fan received his PhD degree from the Nankai University in 2019. He joined Inception Institute of Artificial Intelligence (IIAI) in 2019. He has published about 50 top journal and conference papers such as TPAMI, IJCV, TIP, TNNLS, TMI, CVPR, ICCV, ECCV, IJCAI, etc. His research interests include computer vision, deep learning, and saliency detection. He won the Best Paper Finalist Award at IEEE CVPR 2019, the Best Paper Award Nominee at IEEE CVPR 2020. He was recognized as the CVPR 2019 outstanding reviewer with a special mention award, the CVPR 2020 outstanding reviewer, the ECCV 2020 high-quality reviewer, and the CVPR 2021 outstanding reviewer. He served as a program committee board (PCB) member of IJCAI 2022-2024, a senior program committee (SPC) member of IJCAI 2021, a program committee members (PC) of CAD&CG 2021, a committee member of China Society of Image and Graphics (CSIG), area chair in NeurIPS 2021 Datasets and Benchmarks Track, area chair in MICCAI2020 Wshp.

E-mail: dengpfan@gmail.com
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-5245-7518

Ziling Huang received the B.S. degree in electrical engineering from North China Electric Power University, Beijing, China, in 2015, and the master degree in Electrical Engineering from National Tsing Hua University, Hsinchu, Taiwan in 2020. She has been pursuing her Ph.D. degree at the Department of Information and Communication Engineering, Graduate School of Information Science and Technology, the University of Tokyo since September 2020. She was an intern student at National Institute of Informatics, Tokyo, Japan, in 2019, and at ByteDance, Beijing, China, from 2019 to 2020. Her research interests include computer vision and machine learning.

E-mail: huangziling@nii.ac.jp
ORCID iD: 0000-0003-3241-7911
**Peng Zheng** is pursuing his master degree in Visual Computing and Communication programme from Aalto University and University of Trento. He was a research intern at Inception Institute of Artificial Intelligence (IIAI) from March 2021 to October 2021. He has been a research assistant in MBZUAI since January 2022. He serves as the reviewer of IEEE TPAMI. His research interests include computer vision and machine learning, especially on common information mining and person search.

E-mail: zhengpeng0108@gmail.com
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-4087-5237

**Hong Liu** obtained his Ph.D. degree from Xiamen University, China, in 2020. He is now a JSPS Fellowship researcher at the National Institute of Informatics, Japan. His research interests include large-scale image retrieval, Riemannian-based machine learning, and deep adversarial learning. He has published about 20+ papers in top journals and conferences such as TPAMI, IJCV, TIP, CVPR, ICCV, ECCV, ICLR, etc. He was awarded the Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award of the China Society of Image and Graphics, JSPS International Fellowship, and Top-100 Chinese New Stars in Artificial Intelligence by Baidu Scholar.

E-mail: hliu@nii.ac.jp (Corresponding author)
ORCID iD: 0000-0001-5318-6388

**Xuebin Qin** obtained his PhD degree from the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, in 2020. Since March, 2020, He is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Computing Science and the Department of Radiology and Diagnostic Imaging, University of Alberta, Canada. His research interests include highly accurate image segmentation, salient object detection, image labeling and detection. He has published about 10 papers in vision and robotics conferences such as CVPR, BMVC, IJPR, WACV, IROS, etc.

E-mail: xuebin@ualberta.ca (Corresponding author)
ORCID iD: 0000-0001-9875-983X

**Luc Van Gool** received the degree in electromechanical engineering at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in 1981. Currently, he is a professor at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium and the ETH in Zurich, Switzerland. He leads computer vision research at both places, and also teaches at both. He has been a program committee member of several major computer vision conferences. His main interests include 3D reconstruction and modeling, object recognition, tracking, and gesture analysis, and the combination of those. He received several Best Paper awards, won a David Marr Prize and a Koenderink Award, and was nominated Distinguished Researcher by the IEEE Computer Science committee. He is a co-founder of 10 spin-off companies.

E-mail: vangool@vision.ee.ethz.ch