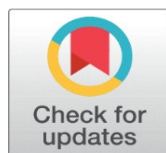


# DIGITAL PHOTO DRAWING: EXPLORING THE SYNERGY OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND ILLUSTRATION

Sonal Morwani<sup>1</sup>✉, Dr. Kritika Agarwal<sup>2</sup>✉

<sup>1</sup>MVA. Sem I, Department of Applied Arts, Rajasthan School of Art, Jaipur, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Arts, Rajasthan School of Art, Jaipur



## Corresponding Author

Ms. Sonal Morwani,  
[morwanisona.sm.98@gmail.com](mailto:morwanisona.sm.98@gmail.com)

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## ABSTRACT

The integration of photography and digital drawing represents a dynamic convergence of various styles and themes. The relationship between photography and illustration has evolved over time, especially with the advent of digital technology. The combination of the two has opened up new possibilities for creative thinking, allowing artists to explore and express their ideas in innovative ways. This blend explores the harmony between capturing real-world movement through a camera lens and enhancing those images through digital drawing techniques. This allows for the addition of imaginative elements, transforming the ordinary into something extraordinary.

This paper talks about the evolution of the new art form digital photo drawing (a combination of photography and illustration) and how it is providing a unique opportunity for artists and advertisers to communicate their creative thinking. The article further contrasts digital photo drawing with other related art forms to develop a better understanding of its unique characteristics, techniques, and objectives. It also sheds light on the Indian artists and advertisers practising this art form.

**Keywords:** Digital, Art, Photography, Digital Photo Drawing, Illustration.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of technology, digital art mediums are growing rapidly. The emergence of new mediums has given artists new opportunities and freedom to represent their thoughts and ideas. But this has also led to a lot of confusion between the mediums practised by the artist. The artists are practising the varied mediums but are still struggling to name the art mediums properly. This becomes very frustrating and creates a confusing state among the artists and the audience. The art of digital photo drawing or photo illustration is widely practised. Digital photo drawing is the synergy of photography and illustration, a fascinating blend of artistic creativity and technological innovation. This process involves using photographs as a starting point for creating illustrations, leveraging the unique qualities of both photography and illustration to produce artwork that is both visually compelling and conceptually rich. It is very much unsatisfying that even after being widely practised the art still needs to get recognition. The creators are aware of the art but they are still facing difficulty in naming the art. However, it is getting recognition under the big umbrella of mix-medium which makes

it much more difficult to understand the parameters of the art and somehow it is losing its own identity. This paper aims to talk about the characteristics of the art and to develop a better understanding of the art of digital drawing on photo or digital photo drawing. Further, it will study Indian artists working in the field to develop better knowledge about the art.



Figure 1: #23 Creative Mom Of Three Uses Photoshop To Turn Her Children's Daily Life Into Magic.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The research employed a qualitative approach, an exploratory research design examining existing literature on drawing on photos or Digital Photo Drawing. The research also conducted a content analysis of artists' works to identify the unique visual elements that distinguish drawing on photos from other related fields. Moreover, the primary data was collected through interviews, and observations and the secondary data collected from books, magazines, websites, social media, videos, etc. were taken into consideration to achieve the objectives of the study.

## 3. DISCUSSION

The practice of drawing on photos began as a way for artists to enhance their images or to create an artefact. Experimenting with the photographs can be dated back to the 19th century, when Indian artists converted black and white photographs to coloured pictures, to impress the emperors (November 26 and Guides). The artist not only converted the photographs to coloured ones but also painted decorative elements on the pictures that added an alluring charm to the images. This art flourished during that period but with the advent of technology, it started losing its impact.



Figure 2: Portrait of an unidentified nobleman (Hand-Painted Photogharh)

With the advancement of technology, the art of digital photo drawing started to flourish providing artist freedom to explore, experiment and express their ideas. An emerging artist Ben Rubin popularly known as Subway Doodle, created an imaginative series of artworks. He is a Brooklyn-based artist and creative director at The Mint Farm (*SUBWAY DOODLE* —). While studying in an art collage he was not satisfied with analyzing and replicating techniques of

accomplished artists, he found this to be a setback for his artistic journey. Although he was intrigued by the work of Mort Walker from his youth. From his college days, he had the urge to create his unique artistic style (*Monsters in the City: New York City-Based Artist Subway Doodle Talks Art, Humor and Amusement*). This led to his artistic journey towards a new art style drawing on photos or digital photo painting.

“The artist began drawing various furry monsters on his iPad back in 2011 as a means to pass time while travelling from Brooklyn to Manhattan on the subway” (Uptas). His work features snapshots of New York City train cars and passengers with fantastical creatures interacting in amusing and mischievous ways. He began by taking pictures of his surroundings on the train and drawing over them, finding the process enjoyable enough. The artwork features larger-than-life creatures engaging with real-world surroundings, such as hanging on sleepy riders, sneaking sips of coffee, and being similarly engrossed in their phones (“ABOUT SUBWAY DOODLE”).



Figure 3: Artwork 1 by Subway Doodler



Figure 4: Artwork 2 by Subway Doodler

To develop a better understanding of digital photo drawing, the art was compared with other related genres.

#### 4. PHOTOGRAPHY VS DIGITAL PHOTO DRAWING.

- Photography captures a moment or it is a way to represent reality. On the other hand, digital photo drawing allows the addition of imaginative elements and shifting the mood and atmosphere of the picture captured by the artist.
- Photography is more about capturing light whereas digital photo drawing requires more time and skill because artists need to be good at both photography and drawing. They also need to know about things like how to arrange objects in a picture.
- In photography software like Photoshop is used to enhance the picture while in digital photo drawing the artist uses Photoshop and Procreate to add drawing elements to a photograph.

The two mediums are unique in their manner and have their own identity. Photography is to capture reality. On the other hand, digital photo drawing gives a lot of freedom to the artist to be more creative with the photograph. The artist further enhances the picture by adding imaginative elements to represent their thoughts and ideas.

#### DOODLE VS DIGITAL PHOTO DRAWING.

- The purpose of doodling was aimless and didn't serve a specific purpose beyond passing time. Doodling is moreover related to rough drawing without thinking. While in digital photo drawing doodle art can be practiced on

photographs to express ideas. This process combines the original photo with different types of drawings to make a new visual composition.

- Doodling requires no talent, skill, or special training and there is no pressure to create a meaningful doodle or accurate drawing or series. It can be playful, geometric, linear, shaded, etc. However, digital photo drawing is intentional and requires special skills. It requires a focus on accuracy, attention to detail, and the ability to use digital tools effectively.
- Doodle often requires a pen, pencil and paper, and does not require any special tool, on the other hand, digital photo drawing requires special tools like a camera, pen tab, and software.

In brief, doodles and digital photo drawings are distinct approaches to creating artwork. Doodling is simply an aimless drawing activity that people do when they are bored. Digital photo drawing is an intentional form of art and represents the ideas of the creator.

## **DIGITAL PHOTO MANIPULATION VS DIGITAL PHOTO DRAWING.**

- Digital manipulation creates an image that is far from the original picture (Agarwal) whereas in digital photo drawing the artist plays around reality and adds drawings to the photograph.
- Digital manipulation can be highly imaginative and can be far from reality while in digital photo drawing reality plays an extremely important role as artists draw elements around the subject in the photograph.
- Photo manipulation is more labour-intensive and requires a higher level of skill and knowledge of the software. On the other hand, digital photo drawing requires more skills in drawing.

Both techniques have their unique place in the digital art world, catering to different creative needs and skill sets. Digital photo manipulation and digital photo drawing depend on the artist's goals, their skill level, and the specific project they are working on. Digital photo manipulation focuses on manipulating existing photographs through editing techniques like cutting, copying, pasting, and transforming, whereas digital photo drawing involves elements through digital hand-drawing or painting over photographs.

For performing this art the artist begins with capturing pictures from daily life making sure that none of the pictures are blurry and while managing the space for drawing. The collection of photographs serves as the foundation for the illustration. Once a photograph is captured and selected, the artist begins to explore its potential as a starting point for an illustration. This involves musing on ideas and themes derived from the photograph, such as the relationships between people, the time of day, weather, and location. After setting the composition, he/she starts to draw elements by adding lines, shapes, colours, and textures with the help of software like Photoshop, Procreate etc on a laptop, iPad or phone. After completing the drawing he/she blends the photograph and illustration making them compatible with each other and finishing the artwork. It seems to be very simple and easy but is a laborious and time-consuming process, as it requires a lot of time in just the ideation, requires patience, as a very small mistake can lead to hampering the artwork. Moreover, if the idea is interesting but the execution is not up to the mark, then it will be kitsch or vice-versa.

## **5. INDIAN CONTEXT**

### **SAMAR KHAN**

His art journey began in childhood when he used to draw on the last pages of his notebooks. Being a software engineer he continued his hobby. Samar was intrigued by the work of Subway Doodle and soon his hobby evolved into his passion, a unique form of art that he began to share with the world. Following the footsteps of Subway Doodler, he started drawing over photographs that he captured during his commute, creating a unique blend of reality and imagination. Shortly, he started gaining recognition for his work titled "Metro-Doodle". It quickly became a platform for him to express his creativity, thoughts, and ideas and a source of entertainment for others ("Art Portfolio | Metrodoodle | New Delhi").

Samar's artwork features science fantasy and fiction elements, inspired by TV shows, movies, books, and games. He prefers to draw monsters and aliens, aiming to create artwork that offers a break from reality and takes viewers to a world of imagination and possibilities. His process involves capturing photographs, sometimes inspired by the doodle idea, and then sketching over these images using a drawing application on his phone. Each doodle typically takes him around 3 to 4 hours to complete.

Samar's journey with Metro-Doodle has not only allowed him to share his creativity with the world but also to explore new avenues in art and freelance work, such as taking on art-related projects on his weekends. His story is a testament to the power of creativity and the impact of sharing one's passion with others (Vivek Dikit).





Figure 5: Artwork 1 by Samar Khan



Figure 6: Artwork 2 by Samar Khan

## AASTHA KALIA

A growing artist from India Aastha Kalia is also practising the art of digital photo drawing. She is a trained designer and from her college days, she was intrigued by the work of Mr. Doodle. In the hassles of building a career, she had clarity about one thing that she wanted to do something around doodling. She is an enthusiast and is keen to experiment, while exploring she started to draw on photographs and shared her work on social media. Her art was appreciated and she started receiving orders for the art. Initially, she started receiving orders the digital photo drawings as a gift for people who wanted to surprise their loved ones with something new. Following to this companies also started approaching her to promote their products (Kalia).



Figure 7: Art it Loud social media post on: Moody to foodie



Figure 8: Art it Loud social media post for the promotion of Range coffee.

## 6. ROLE OF DIGITAL PHOTO DRAWING IN ADVERTISING IN INDIA

Marketers have the urge to try new things to attract the target audience's attention to spread awareness or increase the product's sales. NGO "Goonj" has used the art of digital photo drawing in their advertising campaign "Little Needs" (COTW, *Little Needs -Goonj, Material Donation Can Make a Difference*). The campaign communicates about the basic needs of underprivileged people and people affected by disaster casualties. It awares and motivates the audience to donate material so that unprivileged people can meet their needs. In the campaign, they showed a photograph of an unprivileged person and drew some basic things like footwear, gloves, lamps, cloth etc. The ad effectively communicates the advertiser's message that only a few people can understand the needs of such people and with material donations, this small gesture can bring a small change in the lives of people.



Figure 9: Ad 1 by Goonj NGO



Figure 10: Ad 2 by Goonj NGO

Similarly, P&G has also used this technique in their advertisements, to spread awareness about the importance of education. They released a poster on International Women's Day with the idea "Shape her skills today, To build a tomorrow" (PGShiksha (@pgshiksha) • Instagram Photos and Videos) highlighting the importance of women's education. The ad shows a photograph of a girl drawing on a blackboard and through a digital photo drawing an architect's hard helmet is drawn on her head, showing her dream to become an architect. Through the ad, an effective marketing message is communicated about the importance of girls' education and how P&G Shiksha is supporting the cause.



Figure 11: P&G Shiksha social media post on International Women's Day



Not just the NGOs but the product-based companies are also making use of this art. Black Swan Life, Agency has used the art of digital photo drawing in their advertising campaign “Crusoe - Men's Innerwear”. This campaign communicates the idea “wake-up to the adventure inside you” (COTW, *Wake up to the Adventure inside You! – Campaigns of the World®*). The campaign emphasizes a new standard of comfort and support, aiming to keep men relaxed throughout the day. The ad promotes Crusoe's innerwear line, which is designed with ultimate comfort and support in mind to ensure a relaxed state throughout the day. This advertising showed a photograph of a person and drew over photos, elements like a bike, helmet, tracking etc. The ad effectively communicates the advertiser's message about the basic needs and preferences of men, focusing on the quality and functionality of their innerwear products.



Figure 12: Ad 1 by Black Swan Life, Agency



Figure 13: Ad 2 by Black Swan Life, Agency

## 7. CONCLUSION

Photography and illustration are two varied art forms, when they are combined a new art form is emerged i.e. Digital photo drawing, a whole new world of creativity. Digital photo drawing is a unique art form that combines the realism of photography with the creativity of digital illustration. This process not only captures the movement and details of the real world but also allows for the addition of imaginative elements, transforming ordinary scenes into extraordinary work of art. It allows the artist to see things differently which grabs the attention of the viewers. The artist clicks pictures of the common subjects from day-to-day life and adds a surprising element through their drawings to the image, making the artwork stand out.

The art is not just limited to artists, even the advertising agencies are also interested in the art. Marketers are also using this art to communicate their marketing message and attract the audience to boost sales and spread awareness. Organizations like Goonj NGO, P&G Shiksha, Black Swan Life, Agency etc. have applied the technique for communicating



and attracting the audience. This highlights that the art is highly potential and appealing in grabbing the attention of the viewer.

The art of digital photo drawing is more than an art form, it pushes the boundaries of perception and reality. It transcends the traditional art forms, engaging viewers to think beyond reality. It allows artists to innovate and imagine not just the world we live in but to the world which is still unknown to mankind. It expands the boundaries of thinking and perceiving things around us. It also opens up a world of fantasy while still being in reality, giving freedom of expression and imagination in a concrete world.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None

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S.No.	Figure No.	Description	Source
1.	1.	#23 Creative Mom Of Three Uses Photoshop To Turn Her Children's Daily Life Into Magic.	<a href="https://www.boredpanda.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/This-is-what-happens-when-you-have-a-creative-mother-at-home-5a9f996e9cc0a_700.jpg">https://www.boredpanda.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/This-is-what-happens-when-you-have-a-creative-mother-at-home-5a9f996e9cc0a_700.jpg</a>
2.	2.	Portrait of an unidentified nobleman (Hand-painted Photogharh)	<a href="https://sarmaya.in/guides/painted-photography-a-very-indian-love-story/">https://sarmaya.in/guides/painted-photography-a-very-indian-love-story/</a>
3.	3.	Artwork 1 by Subway Doodler.	<a href="https://themintfarm.com/subway-doodle-2">https://themintfarm.com/subway-doodle-2</a>
4.	4.	Artwork 2 by Subway Doodler.	<a href="https://themintfarm.com/subway-doodle-2">https://themintfarm.com/subway-doodle-2</a>
5.	5.	Artwork 1 by Samar Khan.	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/software-developer-who-brought-concept-metro-doodle-india-c4n-india/">https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/software-developer-who-brought-concept-metro-doodle-india-c4n-india/</a>
6.	6.	Artwork 2 by Samar Khan.	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/software-developer-who-brought-concept-metro-doodle-india-c4n-india/">https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/software-developer-who-brought-concept-metro-doodle-india-c4n-india/</a>
7.	7.	Art it loud social media post on: Moody to foodie.	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C0ilBLfSfoC/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C0ilBLfSfoC/</a>
8.	8.	Art it loud social media post on: It takes a lot to be a "Man".	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/ClJlUJWjyoDA/">https://www.instagram.com/p/ClJlUJWjyoDA/</a>
9.	9.	Ad 1 by Goonj NGO.	<a href="https://campaignsoftheworld.com/print/goonj-little-needs/">https://campaignsoftheworld.com/print/goonj-little-needs/</a>
10.	10.	Ad 2 by Goonj NGO.	<a href="https://campaignsoftheworld.com/print/goonj-little-needs/">https://campaignsoftheworld.com/print/goonj-little-needs/</a>
11.	11.	P&G Shiksha social media post on International Women's Day.	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C4PPzVwlhLD/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C4PPzVwlhLD/</a>
12.	12.	Ad 1 by Black Swan Life, Agency	<a href="https://campaignsoftheworld.com/print/crusoe-mens-innerwear/">https://campaignsoftheworld.com/print/crusoe-mens-innerwear/</a>
13.	13.	Ad 2 by Black Swan Life, Agency	<a href="https://campaignsoftheworld.com/print/crusoe-mens-innerwear/">https://campaignsoftheworld.com/print/crusoe-mens-innerwear/</a>