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Mission Control: A Space Odyssey, or An Artist Reimagines NASA Space Center Houston

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Abstract

Abstract: This work is a series of digitally altered photographs that were taken at NASA Space Center Houston. The artist transforms and reinterprets these iconic themes to meditate on the creative role of the human imagination in so-called techie or "non-fuzzy" endeavors, and also to suggest that we eschew these rigid distinctions. The images explore the role of the human imagination both in solving the technological and engineering challenges for the Apollo missions, as well as in continuing to inspire us today, as we reflect on the meaning of these historic feats to the wider human experience, evoked here through image titles referencing popular culture.

Author/Artist Bio

Dante Kirkman is a teen artist/photographer and public school student from Palo Alto, California. His work expresses his viewpoint and experience as a Black youth coming of age in 21st century America. This includes his love of boxing and car culture, as well as his unique activist and technologist perspective, growing up in Palo Alto, with the neighboring influences of East Palo Alto and Stanford. He works in various media and is currently working on a project about the many faces of young black coders.

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Artist Statements for Mission Control: A Space Odyssey.

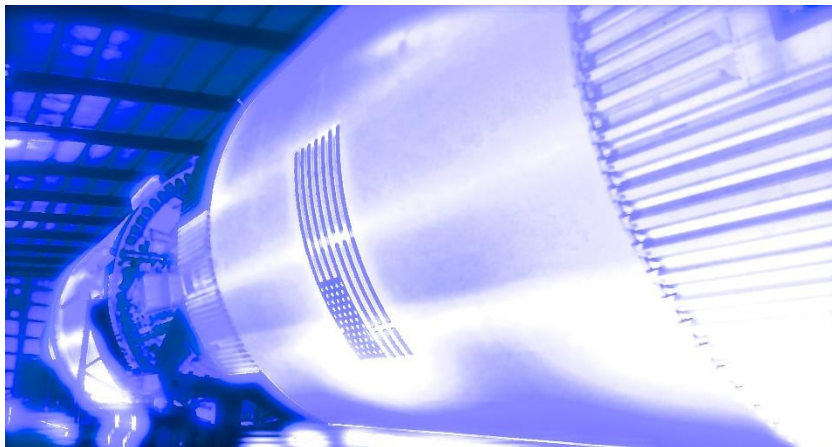
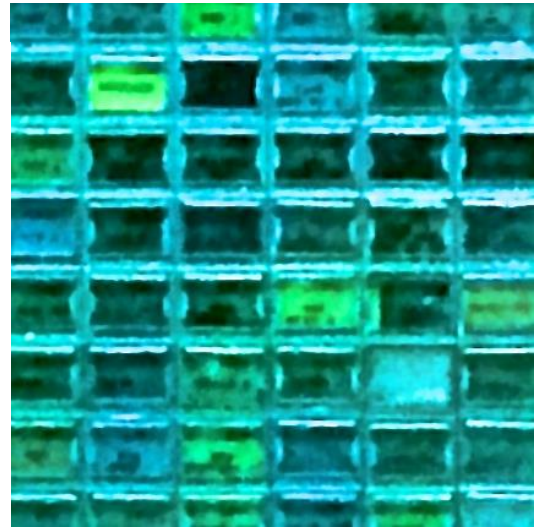
Dante Kirkman

Pop culture reference in the title is to the Stanley Kubrick film 2001: A Space Odyssey.



Ground Control to Major Tom: The iconic red phone still sits at Historic Mission Control in Houston. Though retired from duty, it remains ever vigilant. I focus attention on its stalwart constancy by digital enhancements and blurring of the periphery. The phone becomes a symbol for the daring and dedication of the historic space team. Pop culture reference in the title is to David Bowie's "Space Oddity".

Zero Hour 9 am: This digitally altered close-up of the Mission Director's computer control panel at Historic Mission Control suggests the orderly complexity of the vast space mission, and the rough and ready quality of the entire operation, if you think of how much they accomplished with the technological advances of the 1960s, which today are probably outdone by your smartphone. Pop culture reference in the title is to Elton John's Rocket Man.



Planet Earth Is Blue Artist Statement: Saturn V is the rocket that took us to the moon on the Apollo missions. I use digital enhancements evoke the sense of travel in space, where it's dark and cold, looking back on our blue gem of a planet. The emphasis on the structural grid lines together with a focal point on the bars of the American flag reminds us of the massive engineering accomplishment embodied in this rocket. Pop culture reference in the title is to David Bowie's Space Oddity.