



FUTURE WATCH

Understanding the Brain

As much as we know about the human brain, there's just as much we don't know. But the latest computer research at MIT suggests that we are closer to learning about its secrets than previously believed. Tomaso Poggio, a professor in MIT's Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences, has been working with his team on a computer model designed to figure out how the brain processes certain kinds of visual information when interpreting a series of photographs. The model they developed turned out to be as good as the best existing computer-vision systems—or, even better, actually as good as humans—at rapidly recognizing certain kinds of complex scenes.

“This is the first time a model has been able to reproduce human behavior on that kind of task,” says Poggio. He adds that his team's success at simulating one of the most complex systems of the brain has changed his perspective in a dramatic way. “It means that we may be closer to understanding how the visual cortex recognizes objects and scenes than I ever thought possible.”—*Logan Kugler*