
Object Recognition in an Industrial Environment

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or college of advanced education and to the best of my knowledge contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Jane Michelle Dunn

Abstract

The use of automated visual inspection in industrial applications has to date been restricted to highly controlled environments. This places a limitation on the types of applications to which such systems can be applied. Increasing pressures upon manufacturing facilities in terms of cost and quality have led to an increasing demand for automated visual inspection systems. The objective of the research described in this thesis is to develop object recognition systems that are sufficiently robust to environmental variations to operate in poorly controlled industrial environments.

Local feature recognition has been identified in this research as a particularly suitable object recognition method for industrial applications due to its ability to handle occlusion, clutter and noise. However this research has identified two significant sources of variation that are common to industrial environments, namely complex illumination variation and viewpoint variation that have not been effectively addressed by the local feature recognition approach.

Two stages of the local feature recognition process were identified in this research as potential areas for improving the robustness to such variations: the descriptor stage and the putative interest point matching stage. Central to the improvement of the descriptor stage was the development of the Stepped Local Intensity Rank (SLIR) transform, which was designed as a potential means of providing invariance to complex illumination variation. Complex illumination invariant transforms were applied both in the forms of novel descriptors and of novel pre-processing operations to improve the system's robustness. The second area targeted for improvement was the putative interest point matching stage, an essential element of which is the distance metric. Distance metrics used in biological applications were identified as potential sources of improvement over the standard distance metrics conventionally used in computer vision and engineering applications. Analysis of these distance metrics led to the development in this research of several novel distance metrics that outperformed the existing distance metrics in relation to illumination and viewpoint variations.

The contributions of this research were evaluated against recognised benchmark descriptors and distance metrics using comparative feature recognition techniques that are commonly used throughout the literature. The novel feature recognition techniques developed in this research were found to provide significant performance improvements over the benchmarks in applications featuring complex illumination variation and viewpoint variation. Most importantly, the developed descriptors, pre-processors and distance metrics are not dependant upon characteristics that are particular to the industrial environment, and hence can be used in machine and computer vision fields in general.

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Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Overview	1
1.2	Vision Systems in Industrial Applications	2
1.3	Local Feature Recognition	7
1.4	Overview of Proposed Methodology	9
1.5	Overview of Experimental Procedures	10
1.6	Contributions of the Research	13
1.7	Thesis Structure	15
2	Vision System Applications	16
2.1	Overview	16
2.2	General Applications	17
2.3	Industrial Manufacturing Applications	20
2.4	Automotive Applications	25
2.5	Summary	32
3	Object Recognition	33
3.1	Overview	33
3.2	General Object Recognition Process	33
3.3	Image Pre-processing	37
3.3.1	Brightness and Contrast	37
3.3.2	Rank Transform	38
3.3.3	Image Smoothing	40
3.3.4	Sharpening	42
3.4	Interest Point Detection	44
3.4.1	Difference of Gaussian	45
3.4.2	Harris Corners	52
3.4.3	Multi-scale Harris Points	53
3.4.4	Laplacian of Gaussian	54
3.4.5	Harris-Laplacian	54
3.4.6	Harris-Affine	55
3.4.7	Hessian-Laplace	56
3.4.8	Hessian-Affine	56
3.4.9	Canny Edge Points	57
3.4.10	Shape Context	57
3.4.11	Fast Hessian	57
3.5	Interest Point Descriptors	59
3.5.1	SIFT	59
3.5.2	SURF	64
3.5.3	SURF-128 and U-SURF	66
3.5.4	Shape Context	66

3.5.5	SIFT with Global Context	68
3.5.6	Colour Framework Approach	69
3.5.7	Spin Image	70
3.5.8	Monotonic Change Invariant Feature	71
3.5.9	Ordinal Spatial Intensity Distribution (OSID)	72
3.5.10	PCA-SIFT	73
3.5.11	GLOH	73
3.5.12	Fergus	74
3.5.13	SIFT with PCA	74
3.5.14	Intensity	75
3.5.15	Moment Descriptor	75
3.5.16	Hu's Moment Descriptor	77
3.5.17	Gradient Moments	77
3.5.18	Methods of Testing Descriptors	78
3.6	Putative Interest Point Matching	79
3.6.1	Distance and Similarity Measures	79
3.6.2	Thresholding	90
3.6.3	Nearest Neighbour	91
3.6.4	Nearest Neighbour Ratio	92
3.6.5	Best n Matches	92
3.7	Pattern Matching	92
3.7.1	Lowe's Keypoint Matching Method	93
3.7.2	RANSAC – Random Sample Consensus	93
3.7.3	Clustering Techniques	94
3.7.4	Local Model Constraints	95
3.7.5	Flexible Constellation of Parts	96
3.7.6	Other Techniques	96
3.8	Summary	98
4	<i>A Methodology for Industrial Object Recognition</i>	100
4.1	Overview	100
4.2	Object Recognition Method	101
4.2.1	Image Pre-Processing	101
4.2.2	Interest Point Detection	102
4.2.3	Interest Point Description	102
4.2.4	Putative Interest Point Matching	103
4.2.5	Model Fitting	104
4.3	Complex Illumination Invariant Transform	104
4.3.1	Rank Pre-processor	105
4.3.2	SLIR Pre-processor	106
4.3.3	Descriptor Pre-processing	108
4.4	Rank and SLIR Descriptors	108
4.5	Novel Distance Metrics	109
4.5.1	Existing Techniques	109
4.5.2	Novel Techniques	110
4.6	Summary	113

5	<i>Experimental Design</i>	115
5.1	Overview	115
5.2	Viewpoint Change Experiments	117
5.3	Illumination Change Experiments	126
5.4	Comparative Techniques	130
5.4.1	Benchmark Descriptors	131
5.4.2	Benchmark Distance Metrics	132
5.5	Performance Analysis	132
5.5.1	Feature Recognition Performance Measures	133
5.5.2	Computation Speed Evaluation	136
5.5.3	Feature Recognition System Performance Evaluation	139
6	<i>Experimental Results</i>	140
6.1	Overview	140
6.2	Reading the Graphs	142
6.3	Benchmark Techniques	146
6.3.1	The SIFT Descriptor	146
6.3.2	The Euclidean Distance Metric	149
6.4	Distance Metrics from Biological Applications	154
6.4.1	Graffiti Wall Viewpoint Change	154
6.4.2	Industrial Viewpoint Change	158
6.4.3	Complex Illumination Change	162
6.4.4	Biological Distance Metrics Results Summary	166
6.5	Novel Distance Metrics	168
6.5.1	Graffiti Wall Viewpoint Change	168
6.5.2	Industrial Viewpoint Change	172
6.5.3	Complex Illumination Change	176
6.5.4	Novel Distance Metrics Results Summary	180
6.6	Canberra and MESN Distance Metrics	182
6.7	Novel Descriptors	185
6.7.1	Graffiti Wall Viewpoint Change	185
6.7.2	Industrial Viewpoint Change	189
6.7.3	Complex Illumination Change	193
6.7.4	Novel Descriptors Results Summary	197
6.8	Novel Descriptor Pre-processors	198
6.8.1	Graffiti Wall Viewpoint Change	199
6.8.2	Industrial Viewpoint Change	205
6.8.3	Complex Illumination Change	211
6.8.4	Novel Descriptor Pre-processors Results Summary	221
6.9	Combinations of Descriptors and Distance Metrics	223
6.9.1	Graffiti Wall Viewpoint Change	223
6.9.2	Industrial Viewpoint Change	227
6.9.3	Complex Illumination Change	230

6.9.4	Combinations of Descriptors and Distance Metrics Results Summary	233
6.10	Speed Evaluation	234
6.10.1	Distance Metric Results	234
6.10.2	Descriptor and Descriptor Pre-processor Results	240
6.10.3	Matching Results	243
6.11	Summary	245
7	Discussion	247
7.1	Overview	247
7.2	Image Sequences	247
7.3	Interest Point Matching Techniques	249
7.4	Biological Distance Metrics	252
7.5	Novel Distance Metrics	255
7.6	Rank and SLIR Descriptors	256
7.7	Descriptor Pre-processors	258
7.8	Distance Metric and Descriptor Combination	259
7.9	Speed of Techniques	261
7.9.1	Distance Metrics	261
7.9.2	Descriptor and Descriptor Pre-processors	263
7.9.3	Matching	265
7.10	Summary	266
8	Conclusion	267
8.1	Overview	267
8.2	Discussion of Overall Research Program	267
8.3	Research Findings and Perceived Contributions	270
8.3.1	Vision Systems and Complex Industrial Applications	270
8.3.2	Stepped Local Intensity Rank (SLIR) Transform	271
8.3.3	Descriptor Pre-processors	271
8.3.4	The Rank and SLIR Descriptor Pre-processors	272
8.3.5	The Rank and SLIR Descriptors	273
8.3.6	Biological Distance Metrics in Industrial Vision Systems	274
8.3.7	Novel Distance Metrics	275
8.3.8	The <i>F</i> -measure Integral	277
8.4	Proposals for Future Research	277
8.5	Final Comments	279
9	References	280

List of Figures

Figure 1 Typical “non-scene” images from vision applications	18
Figure 2 Typical outdoor scene images	19
Figure 3 Typical indoor scenes used in computer vision applications and research	20
Figure 4 An illustration of how changes in viewpoint lead to changes in perceived shapes	36
Figure 5 A representation of an input image and the corresponding Rank transform	39
Figure 6 The Rank transform applied to an image	40
Figure 7 The Rank transform applied to an image with changed lighting conditions	40
Figure 8 Application of a convolution filter	41
Figure 9 Mathematical averaging filter	41
Figure 10 Examples of Gaussian filters	42
Figure 11 An out of focus nut and bolt	43
Figure 12 Application of the “unsharp” and anisotropic diffusion algorithm	43
Figure 13 Construction of the DoG pyramid from the scale-space pyramid	47
Figure 14 Finding local extrema	48
Figure 15 An illustration of the interest points found by SIFT	49
Figure 16 Finding interest points in scale-space	55
Figure 17 Data from an image and the associated integral image	58
Figure 18 Haar wavelet approximation representations	59
Figure 19 Pixel intensity gradient orientations	61
Figure 20 The SIFT neighbourhood	62
Figure 21 Demonstration of how a pixel orientation can appear in different histogram bins in different images	63
Figure 22 Calculation of the dominant orientation using the sliding window	65
Figure 23 Log-polar representation of the Shape Context descriptor histogram bins	67
Figure 24 The neighbourhood subregion layout of the Spin Image descriptor	70
Figure 25 A representation of the GLOH subregions	74
Figure 26 Illustration of the relationships between the normalised distance metrics and the standard p-norm distances	86
Figure 27 Distance metric responses between a variable two-dimensional vector and the vector $(x, y) = (10, 10)$	87
Figure 28 Graphical representation of Cosine Similarity or Angular Separation	89
Figure 29 The results on the same image for the Rank transform and the SLIR transform	107
Figure 30 The relationships between the normalised distance metrics	113
Figure 31 The “Graffiti Wall” image set	118
Figure 32 Diagram of camera set up for image acquisition of viewpoint change images	120
Figure 33 Photograph of the camera set up for image acquisition of viewpoint change images	121
Figure 34 Typical image sequence of viewpoint change	123
Figure 35 The first user input screen for finding corresponding interest points	124

Figure 36 The images in Figure 35 are enlarged _____	124
Figure 37 The second of the windows prompting user input _____	124
Figure 38 Flow chart outlining the process of establishing corresponding points _____	125
Figure 39 Typical images from the Complex Illumination Change sequence of images _____	130
Figure 40 Sample F-measure and Recall-Precision graphs _____	145
Figure 41 Comparison of the benchmark SIFT descriptor and the SURF descriptor using the Euclidean distance metric for the Graffiti Wall image set _____	147
Figure 42 Comparison of the benchmark SIFT descriptor and the SURF descriptor using the Euclidean distance metric for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set _____	148
Figure 43 Comparison of the benchmark SIFT descriptor, the SURF descriptor, the GLOH descriptor and the PCA-SIFT descriptor using the Euclidean distance metric for the Complex Illumination Change image set _____	149
Figure 44 Comparison of the benchmark Euclidean distance metric and the Manhattan and Normalised Euclidean distance metrics using the SIFT descriptor for the Graffiti Wall image set _____	151
Figure 45 Comparison of the benchmark Euclidean distance metric and the Manhattan and Normalised Euclidean distance metrics using the SIFT descriptor for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set _____	152
Figure 46 Comparison of the benchmark Euclidean distance metric and the Manhattan and Normalised Euclidean distance metrics using the SIFT descriptor for the Complex Illumination Change image set _____	153
Figure 47 Distance metric performance using the SIFT descriptor and Nearest Neighbour matching with the Graffiti Wall image set _____	155
Figure 48 F-measure integral comparison of distance metrics with Nearest Neighbour matching for the Graffiti Wall image set _____	156
Figure 49 Distance metric performance using the SIFT descriptor and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Graffiti Wall image set _____	157
Figure 50 F-measure integral comparison of distance metrics with Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching for the Graffiti Wall image set _____	158
Figure 51 Distance metric performance using the SIFT descriptor and Nearest Neighbour matching with the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set _____	159
Figure 52 F-measure integral comparison of distance metrics with Nearest Neighbour matching for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set _____	160
Figure 53 Distance metric performance using the SIFT descriptor and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set _____	161
Figure 54 F-measure integral comparison of distance metrics with Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set _____	162
Figure 55 Distance metric performance using the SIFT Descriptor and Nearest Neighbour matching with the Complex Illumination Change image set _____	163
Figure 56 F-measure integral comparison of distance metrics with Nearest Neighbour matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set _____	164
Figure 57 Distance metric performance using the SIFT Descriptor and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Complex Illumination Change image set _____	165
Figure 58 F-measure integral comparison of distance metrics with Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set _____	166

Figure 59 Distance metric performance using the SIFT descriptor and Nearest Neighbour matching with the Graffiti Wall image set	169
Figure 60 F-measure integral comparison of distance metrics with Nearest Neighbour matching for the Graffiti Wall image set	170
Figure 61 Distance metric performance using the SIFT descriptor and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Graffiti Wall image set	171
Figure 62 F-measure integral comparison of distance metrics with Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching for the Graffiti Wall image set	172
Figure 63 Distance metric performance using the SIFT descriptor and Nearest Neighbour matching with the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	173
Figure 64 F-measure integral comparison of distance metrics with Nearest Neighbour matching for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	174
Figure 65 Distance metric performance using the SIFT descriptor and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	175
Figure 66 F-measure integral comparison of distance metrics with Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	176
Figure 67 Distance metric performance using the SIFT Descriptor and Nearest Neighbour matching with the Complex Illumination Change image set	177
Figure 68 F-measure integral comparison of distance metrics with Nearest Neighbour matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set	178
Figure 69 Distance metric performance using the SIFT descriptor and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Complex Illumination Change image set	179
Figure 70 F-measure integral comparison of distance metrics with Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set	180
Figure 71 Comparison of the Canberra and MESN distance metrics to the Euclidean distance metric for the Graffiti Wall image set	182
Figure 72 Comparison of the Canberra and MESN distance metrics to the Euclidean distance metric for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	183
Figure 73 Comparison of the Canberra and MESN distance metrics to the Euclidean distance metric for the Complex Illumination Change image set	184
Figure 74 Descriptor performances using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour matching with the Graffiti Wall image set	186
Figure 75 Descriptor performances using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Graffiti Wall image set	188
Figure 76 Descriptor performances using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour matching with the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	190
Figure 77 Descriptor performances using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	192
Figure 78 Descriptor performances using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set	194
Figure 79 Descriptor performances using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Complex Illumination Change image set	196
Figure 80 Comparison of SIFT, SIFT-Rank and SIFT-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour matching with the Graffiti Wall image set	200

Figure 81 Comparison of SIFT, SURF, SURF-Rank and SURF-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour matching with the Graffiti Wall image set	201
Figure 82 F-measure integral comparison of descriptors with Nearest Neighbour matching for the Graffiti Wall image set	202
Figure 83 Comparison of SIFT, SIFT-Rank and SIFT-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Graffiti Wall image set	203
Figure 84 Comparison of SIFT, SURF, SURF-Rank and SURF-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Graffiti Wall image set	204
Figure 85 F-measure integral comparison of descriptors with Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching	205
Figure 86 Comparison of SIFT, SIFT-Rank and SIFT-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour matching with the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	206
Figure 87 Comparison of SIFT, SURF, SURF-Rank and SURF-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour matching with the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	207
Figure 88 F-measure integral comparison of descriptors with Nearest Neighbour matching for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	208
Figure 89 Comparison of SIFT, SIFT-Rank and SIFT-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	209
Figure 90 Comparison of SIFT, SURF, SURF-Rank and SURF-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	210
Figure 91 F-measure integral comparison of descriptors with Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	211
Figure 92 Comparison of SIFT, SIFT-Rank and SIFT-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set	212
Figure 93 Comparison of SIFT, SURF, SURF-Rank and SURF-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set	213
Figure 94 Comparison of SIFT, GLOH, GLOH-Rank and GLOH-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set	214
Figure 95 Comparison of SIFT, PCA-SIFT, PCA-SIFT-Rank and PCA-SIFT-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set	215
Figure 96 F-measure integral comparison of descriptors with Nearest Neighbour matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set	216
Figure 97 Comparison of SIFT, SIFT-Rank and SIFT-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Complex Illumination Change image set	217
Figure 98 Comparison of SIFT, SURF, SURF-Rank and SURF-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Complex Illumination Change image set	218

Figure 99 Comparison of SIFT, GLOH, GLOH-Rank and GLOH-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Complex Illumination Change image set	219
Figure 100 Comparison of SIFT, PCA-SIFT, PCA-SIFT-Rank and PCA-SIFT-SLIR descriptors using the Euclidean distance metric and Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching with the Complex Illumination Change image set	220
Figure 101 F-measure integral comparison of descriptors with Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set	221
Figure 102 A scatter graph of the ordered F-measure integral performances for all distance/descriptor combinations using the F-measure integral with Nearest Neighbour matching on the Graffiti Wall image set	224
Figure 103 Bar chart of F-measure integral performances for the top 30 distance/descriptor combinations on the Graffiti Wall image set using Nearest Neighbour matching	225
Figure 104 A scatter graph of the ordered F-measure integral performances for all distance/descriptor combinations using Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching on the Graffiti Wall image set	226
Figure 105 The top 30 ordered distance/descriptor combinations on the Graffiti Wall image set with Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching	226
Figure 106 A scatter graph of the ordered F-measure integral performances for all distance/descriptor combinations using the Nearest Neighbour matching technique for Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	227
Figure 107 The top 30 distance/descriptor combinations compared to the SIFT-Euclidean Benchmark combination for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set using Nearest Neighbour matching	228
Figure 108 A scatter graph of the ordered F-measure integral performances for all distance/descriptor combinations using Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching on the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	229
Figure 109 The top 30 descriptor/distance Metric combinations compared to the SIFT-Euclidean benchmark combination for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set using Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching	229
Figure 110 A scatter graph of the ordered F-measure integral performances for all distance/descriptor combinations using Nearest Neighbour matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set	230
Figure 111 The top 30 distance/descriptor combinations compared to the SIFT-Euclidean benchmark combination using Nearest Neighbour matching for the Complex Illumination Change image dataset	231
Figure 112 A scatter graph of the ordered F-measure integral performances for all descriptor/distance metric combinations using Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching on the Complex Illumination Change image set	232
Figure 113 The top 30 distance/descriptor combinations compared to the SIFT-Euclidean benchmark combination for the Complex Illumination Change image set using Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching	232
Figure 114 Comparison of the computation times required for the distance metrics for the Graffiti Wall image set	236
Figure 115 Comparison of the computation times required for the distance metrics for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set	237
Figure 116 Comparison of the computation times required for the distance metrics for the Complex Illumination Change image set	238

<i>Figure 117 Comparison of the computation times required for the distance metrics on all three image sets</i>	<i>239</i>
<i>Figure 118 Comparison of the time required for calculating the descriptors on the Graffiti Wall image set</i>	<i>241</i>
<i>Figure 119 Comparison of the time required for calculating the descriptors on the Complex Illumination Change image set</i>	<i>242</i>
<i>Figure 120 Comparison of the time required for calculating the descriptors on the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set</i>	<i>242</i>
<i>Figure 121 Comparison of the time required for calculating the descriptors on all three image sets</i>	<i>243</i>
<i>Figure 122 Comparison of the computation times required for the matching techniques</i>	<i>244</i>
<i>Figure 123 Comparison of the times required for calculating the matching techniques on all of the image sets</i>	<i>245</i>

List of Tables

<i>Table 1 Camera details.</i>	<i>120</i>
<i>Table 2 F-measure integral results of descriptors with Nearest Neighbour matching for the Graffiti Wall image set.</i>	<i>187</i>
<i>Table 3 F-measure integral results of descriptors with Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching for the Graffiti Wall image set.</i>	<i>189</i>
<i>Table 4 F-measure integral results of descriptors with Nearest Neighbour matching for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set.</i>	<i>191</i>
<i>Table 5 F-measure integral results of descriptors with Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching for the Industrial Viewpoint Change image set.</i>	<i>193</i>
<i>Table 6 F-measure integral results of descriptors with Nearest Neighbour matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set.</i>	<i>195</i>
<i>Table 7 F-measure integral results of descriptors with Nearest Neighbour Ratio matching for the Complex Illumination Change image set.</i>	<i>197</i>