



PERSPECTIVES

Nic Hamilton and the Beauty of Incremental Change

The Melbourne-based image maker prepares to release *Nuxui*, a generative series examining the passage of time

TEXT ZINE

PUBLISHED 21 JAN 2022

[Nic Hamilton](#) may not like being called an artist, but his adroit approaches to album design, live music visuals, and latest NFT series, [Nuxui](#), prove otherwise. “Probably a reflection of me being insecure about my work,” he says, in an interview with [Yana Sosnovskaya](#).

Trained in architecture and having worked prolifically in graphic design, Hamilton’s visuals evoke deep textures, temperatures, and most evidently, the passage of time. Of course, artists spanning photography and sculpture have scrutinized the element’s corrosive effects on structures, cliffsides, and more—be it Angkor Wat or apartment abandonment in 1970’s The Bronx.

Thinking more conceptually and holistically now that he’s settled comfortably in a Web3 context, Hamilton is instead positing what time and decay can look and nearly feel like in the digital realm through 3D generative techniques; but also with a human touch, reworking and editing pieces which breed an almost alchemical transformation.

Yana Sosnovskaya (ZORA): Can you introduce yourself?

Nic Hamilton: My name's Nic Hamilton, I grew up in Tasmania, then I moved to Melbourne. I suppose I'd define myself as a "commercial artist" for most of my career, making work for other people. I've always done my own thing on the side, but never really had a proper crack at it as a practice. I still feel uncomfortable calling myself an artist in a way, but that's probably a reflection of me being insecure about my work.

About two years ago, I quit my corporate job that used to support me to go full-time on my own, and it was the best thing I ever did. I got paid a lot less, but I can't believe I waited until I was so old to piss off all the corporate work I used to do. I've never been happier doing my own thing. The whole NFT thing in the last year really got me excited about digital, online culture; I hadn't been excited about being on the "internet" since dance music forums in the 2000s around all these little sub-scenes I used to love—2008 in London, that dubstep, UK, funky scene. There was a whole dance music forum culture around that and I just loved that, and it feels the same now to me.

YS: You've been called, specifically by Dazed, a "video radical". How do you feel about that term and what does it mean for you?

NH: I feel like it's a clickbait headline. I just make videos, moving images. It's the same way, if you talk to [David Rudnick](#) at all, he'll say, 'I'm not an artist, I'm a graphic designer,' and people are like, 'But you can't just be a graphic designer, that's a commercial term.' It's like, 'No, that's what I've done in the past and that's what I will continue to do, even though it veers over into art.' I like that approach.

That was a really exciting time, I think that was when people started to say, 'Hey, I like your work,' and I was like, 'Wow, they like this stuff I do.' It was about the same time I started working with people like Darren Cunningham, aka [Actress](#), when I started working with other artists, specifically musicians. We had no commercial arrangement—we'd just talk and make stuff, and then at one point Cunningham was like, 'Hey, do you want to come to London to do this live AV show with me?' And I was like, 'Fuck yeah!'

YS: So the term 'artist' bothers you?

NH: I don't know, it feels like everyone's a bloody artist these days. I suppose it's laying bare your own ideas in a more vulnerable way: you don't have the idea of someone else's brief to hide behind. Or it just feels very serious and very one-dimensional in a way.

YS: But currently you work without a brief, correct? Specifically with the NFT space.

NH: With the NFT space, I just make what I like. I always have a back catalog of ideas I'm working on: a hard drive full of half-finished rubbish, the same way people who make stuff creatively have a backlog of ideas. At some point you'll sit down at night and have a glass of vodka, and be like, 'Oh, I'm going to open up that file.' Then you get in the zone and twelve hours later, you're like, 'This is cool, I've got something here,' and then when you wake up next morning, you're like, 'I've got to get back to it.' That's when you know that it's worth pursuing, which is what happened with Nuxui: it was actually a spinoff from a record cover I did. I was going to do a whole range of collateral for this label, a UK techno label...in the end it didn't work out for either of us, and we went our separate ways. And that forms the basis of the work I'm doing at the moment: one of those fragments from the hard drive.

YS: Looking at your past works, it seems like you're very selective about your clients—you're almost curating brands or people that you're working with.

NH: I'm pretty fussy when it comes to music. I have to like the music and the person. Unless there's a massive financial incentive, then I'm probably not interested. I'm the same with brands, but I can't afford to be as picky with apps—that's what pays my bills.

YS: How did you get into NFTs? Do you remember what the genesis piece was?

NH: It must have been about eighteen or fourteen months ago, me and a handful of other designer friends made a little Discord to talk about NFTs. People like Eric Hu, [David] Rudnick, and Ezra [Miller]. We were all wondering how we could fit in. At the same time, we had a Zoom call with Jacob [Horne] from Zora in the very early days, and we didn't quite know what Zora was at the time but knew it was cool and hit the spot. At the same time, Foundation was starting to spin up as

well. I minted a few experimental pieces on the very first Solana NFT thing, and then also a few on Zora. After that I just went parabolic in terms of interest. Then I saw other people doing projects, and I sat on the sidelines for a long time just following other people and collecting work.

YS: Has your artistic practice changed since you tapped into NFTs?

NH: Yeah. I tend to think about things more conceptually now, more in terms of bodies of work rather than a single image or a single video. Plus, I wasn't looking at it through an artist lens; I was looking at it through a product lens, like, 'This idea is done. Tick. Next one.' With the NFT stuff, I tend to think about it in terms of ongoing themes and ongoing techniques, explorations, and things that I'll probably go back to in time as well. I quite like the idea of having something that I'd continue to work on over a couple of years. And I like the idea of incremental change as a style or an approach: every time you revisit it, it slightly changes over time, and I begin to see that onchain or in an online gallery context.

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YS: How do you feel about the speculative aspect of NFTs? You've already gained traction within the community, and a fan base. Obviously, whenever your drop next happens, there are going to be flippers hunting your work.

NH: I think it's part and parcel of the whole thing. I don't feel overly excited about the speculation aspect, but I think it's the speculation and the community aspect that delineates it from traditional kinds of online art. And if people can make money from it on that, then good on them: I tried my hand at buying and selling NFTs for money, but I'd done pretty horribly. I tend to do better if I find artists that I like and I'll try and buy their work, things like [Mutant Garden](#) and [Solvency](#). There's a whole group of work from existing artists that are moving their digital practice into blockchain, NFT stuff. I really enjoyed seeing that kind of transition from people's practices, so I tend to buy that kind of work. And still trying to find the right bloody screens to show it on—buying NFTs and looking at them on a phone or computer is such a terrible experience.

YS: Were you able to gain financial freedom since you got into Web3?

NH: Not yet. I still do a lot of creative work with my distributed creative agency and we do stuff for brands and organizations. We're talking about what that means in the context of Web3, and quite picky about our clients, again. But all of us still work commercially. So it hasn't bought me financial freedom yet, but I do really appreciate the Ethereum I've made from the works that I've sold so far.

YS: You're launching [Nuxui](#) and you mention in the project description "the states of growth, change, and decay". Can you expand on the topics that you've chosen?

NH: I suppose this is where I have a lot of trouble: articulating these kinds of themes. But I think all the artwork I've done over time tends to be simulation and time-based. Because I work in CG, which is traditionally a very 'clean' medium, I quite like the immediacy of half-rendered images or noisy images—things that look like they've been

abandoned halfway through, or haven't been polished to a visual effects level. Once Nuxui is released, you'll see across the series of 333, they change quite a lot.

It's released in chronological order. The first ones are quite simple in their composition, colors, and lighting. As it goes through the 333, they grow over time. I tried to keep it to a single technique, but as I made these by hand over four months, I adjusted all the parameters and the techniques which gave them this feeling of growth. So when you look at them in sequence, I got excited, they started dying a bit, then I got really excited about them again, and they started to decay towards the end. Then I got another burst of excitement when I found some new colors I wanted to use. I suppose it's as much as anything about a process thing for me: the growth and decay, the excitement, the rigor, the waking up and going, 'Oh, actually, I hate all this stuff, I don't want to do this at all,' and then you share it with someone and they give you some feedback, and you're like, 'Actually, I can get back into this again.' It's that creative push-pull thing where you're like, 'I'm a genius; I'm a dickhead.'

YS: With digital, there's a lack of physical decay, it doesn't age in a traditional sense. It feels like this topic isn't fully explored yet. What's your take on that?

NH: That kind of stuff is super interesting for me, but my technical skills to implement something like that are not quite there yet. The projects I admire all have a time-based aspect to them, and that's something I definitely want to get more into in the follow-up to Nuxui. To actually bring the loose ideas I had about time and practice, but actually have that reflected in a real hard-coded, smart contract way onchain would be, I think, in ten years time. Looking at all the work that's coming out now, I'm really excited and interested to see how much of it is still around 'Is this a flash in the pan?'

YS: Your background is in architecture, correct?

NH: Yeah. I trained as an architect: went to uni and practiced for a few years in my early twenties. I just hated it. So I got out of that.

YS: Your work has two main components, texture and light, which I would assume are also very important components of architecture. It feels like texture is a very haptic kind of experience, but you've chosen

to use it in digital. What interests you about creating textures in digital space?

NH: I think you're right, it probably comes from my architecture background and doing architectural images for so many years, introducing that feeling of tactility and light into a digital thing. It's quite a fun thing to play with as well. It's very easy to experiment with textures and lights—there's such a huge spectrum of things you can do when you combine geometry, texture, and light together. I suppose it's like a mini architectural fantasy: what if you could make houses out of translucent plastic or ice? Architecture's all brick, wood and concrete. What if it was more fantastical, more material-based, more ephemeral, more psychedelic?

YS: Nuxui is a generative project but with handmade finishing. Can you share more about how you chose this approach?

NH: Yeah, I'd call it a hybrid generative project. The 3D techniques that generate all the geometry—all the shapes and layouts and stuff—that's a generative system. I generated them all using generative techniques, but then I went back through—I didn't intend to do this—and tweaked every single one by hand. I wasn't really happy with a lot of them. I felt like I had to work harder on it, which is probably entirely in my own head.

I didn't need to go back through and do that, but I wanted the feeling of bringing out all that handwork on each of these—a deliberate touch. Especially when it came to the lighting and how cooked the colors get, or how reductive they are, or how grainy they are, I wanted to be able to hand-curate that stuff. It made it feel like I was owning the work rather than it being spat out. I have a lot of respect for projects like [Fidenza](#), which is an [art block](#)-favorite. Initially I thought, 'Oh, this just feels fake to me.' But then I went through and read [Tyler Hobbs](#) talking about how he endlessly worked out these parameters and had to tweak it so when the algorithms spat out those images, there were no 'misses' in there. In a way I feel like it's the same kind of process, albeit mine's more of a brute-force method, where someone like Tyler Hobbs was much more sophisticated in the way they would actually curate and detail their work through code and maths.

YS: Is this your first generative experience or have you done something before?

NH: I've messed around with generative stuff, reaction-diffusion techniques. You know how there's always new 3D techniques and generative techniques that come out every year? There's always white papers, and I tend to jump on them and find the implementations of them that I can use, but I've never really identified as a generative artist at all. I'm more into spatial arrangements or pseudo, figurative kind of imagery.

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YS: Back to the beginning of our conversation when you mentioned that dubstep forum: What happened to that forum? How did the community evolve?

NH: I think it evolved from a very good place based around music and people, which is the connection, and devolved into a super toxic, pseudo-racist, pseudo-homophobic kind of space full of 20-year-old dudes that were really into what we call dubstep today, which

is also EDM. When I was into that, there was a club called Plastic People in London around that time that had Kode9, Zomby, and those early people on the fringes doing quite sophisticated, unique sounds. And the fact that there was an internet forum based around those sounds to discuss was super exciting. And that IRL URL connection was just really amazing for me, because it was quite a niche thing at the time: I'd just moved to London at the time, so it was an amazing way for me to meet people and make friends based around music. Then you'd get on it and you'd start chatting to people in the smoking area, and they'd be like, 'Oh, I'm working on an EP,' and you'd be like, 'Oh, let me make some art for you.' That's how a lot of these relationships started.

YS: Do you think any sub-communities are gonna survive the mass adoption of Web3? Ten years from now, if we look back, what might be left?

NH: It's so male-dominated that it does have a similar feeling to what happened in the early days. It's more of a smaller group of what you'd call the 'heads,' but then as it gets financialized—I can't speak as a middle-aged white man, I'm part of that demographic—I feel like it will get watered down over time. There's certain pockets that are very good, there's some Discords I think have got amazing mixes of people and others much less so. Everything's heightened as well: all the ups and the downs are so amplified.

YS: I've got just four questions, blitz-interview style. Chaos or order?

NH: Chaos, always.

YS: Nature creation or human creation?

NH: Nature creation.

YS: Dystopia or utopia?

NH: Utopia.

YS: Design or art?

NH: Always art.



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