

Timeframe X01

By Kirsten Bevin — January 4, 2024

Feed the A.I. multiple inputs and it triangulates one output. A fragment of this past, a little bit of that past, into something new-ish. Timeframe X01 blends themes from Nic Hamilton's digital art practice - strange but familiar objects in states of decay - and themes from 19th Century Tasmanian landscape paintings by John Glover, who was likewise interpreting a strange new familiarity. The images generated are tactile artefacts for inspection, everyday objects with a forgotten purpose draped in the understated Australian sublime.

Nic Hamilton has been making distinctly vibrant digital art for many years. The qualities of his work - growth, decay, object, atmosphere, light - are captured in NUXUI, a 333-piece collection of strange (yet familiar) objects, mechanic and organic fragments, tactile materials - decorative talismans / liquifying circuitboards (more here: https://mirror.xyz/kirstenbevin.eth/nub4g6bpSNIJ14DuTOkPvYpj_6rQU28u1aZHISxg0Go). An interplay of spatial and flattened elements flickers through all Nic's work. This includes layers of digital texture, scanlines and splitscreen, liquid noise, architectural structures and spaces, and frames /screens as intuitive 3D/2D viewport devices. Born digital, but anchored to the tangible world of urban and natural landscapes.

The objects that form Timeframe follow the same thread. They are a mechanic and organic weave. Look at them one way they are chiseled from the elements, tilt them in the light and they are synthetic material decaying into earth, always in a state of change.

John Glover moved to Tasmania in 1831 at age 64, named his new property after a local farm from his English Lake District childhood, and recorded the new place. He is considered the 'father of Australian landscape painting' because he captured something true about his adopted home, beyond the European Gaze. Most colonial painters applied European landscape painting conventions to the Australian scenery: idealised, picturesque, grandiose, sublime to the point of threatening. Either 1) amplifying the perceived harshness of the alien Australian environment, or 2) containing it in nostalgic familiarity. Painful homesickness and bravado in the painted messages passing at the ship speed (<100 days) between two islands opposite each other in every way.

Glover depicted the brightness of Australian sunlight on bushland and painted the local flora accurately. Many of his contemporaries were unable to resist doodling mature oak, birch, plane trees on their canvas, direct from their yearning memories of what a tree should be; shady, green, thick. Glover, on the other hand, noted the "remarkable peculiarity of the trees" in Australia which, "however numerous, rarely prevent your tracing through them the whole distant country".

You see this when driving today through 'Glover Country', the unremarkable yet breathtaking landscape in the north eastern quarter of Tasmania, where golden sunlight fans out across bleached grass from beneath these peculiar trees, passing through their stiffly warped dagger-shaped leaves that are olive in your hand and deep blue in the distance.

Like the old painter-settlers, the A.I. also finds it hard to resist its European Gaze. If you aren't vigilant, the oak, birch, plane trees creep in, the gardens become more English Country, the frames and structural elements are sneakily colonised by Italianate details.

In Timeframes, Nic-Hamilton-decaying-objects and the Glover-Tasmanian-landscapes are brought together into artefacts that blend the everyday (old but un-precious and preservation-agnostic fragments of a past era) and the sublimely decorative (landscape paintings) in a web-native form. The pieces are held in a web viewer space, and have been reprocessed and 'de-flattened' through gentle interactivity and aesthetics intuitive to gaming assets. 2020's brush-strokes are diffuse, normal, roughness and displacement maps, their own form of nostalgia. Applied to the frames and the painting in layers, the roughness and sheen is highlighted by light and rotation controlled by the viewer.

If these strange but familiar objects ever had a function it is as mementos. The output is not just a still image but a piece you engage with through inspection, moving the cursor and mouse to illuminate texture and edges, in a kind of digital touch.

Source: <https://paragraph.com/@kirstenbevin-2/timeframe-x01> Arweave:
ar://7PRiWWHJJNFuNIAJKdIMY-DIV4R5Y-7ZsD4_3P8Zl8Q