

With climate change becoming increasingly concerning, the future of earth and human existence as we know it is destined to change in dramatic ways.

Mars exploration and the idea of colonizing the red planet are no longer considered science fiction as more thought and investigation is going into this concept. Very recently a mars rover discovered methane gas on the planet, another potential sign of life. While NASA just held a competition to build houses on Mars via robots and 3D printers.

This is destined to be a new era of intergalactic exploration for human beings.

It's interesting to think that the last wave of colonization here on Earth is still relatively recent, especially for us in New Zealand, but also with the settlements of Europeans to America and Australia. Specifically with these three new-world countries there are still so many symbols of colonialism. The result of populating and reshaping these new lands and cultures is certainly being felt.

Upon conceiving of this exhibition I wanted to take these ideas into account and consider them in an interplanetary context. Of course there are no indigenous beings on Mars we will be stealing from or oppressing, but how do we conquer a new land as a global enterprise, peacefully, intelligently and sustainably? What conflicts will arise, how do we police a new territory and how will the relationship between Man and A.I play out in this future civilization?

I wanted to pose some of these questions to the viewer, while using icons from 17th & 18th century colonialism as a historical visual link. Having lived in New Zealand, Australia and the U.S - I find great inspiration and fondness for these historical symbols. We have done this kind of expedition before, so what can we learn from the past?

Of course this will take place in the future, so what technology will assist us in our mission and how will it be financed? I imagine this to be bank rolled by the giant tech companies, rather than State Governments, as they possess the extreme wealth needed for this type of project. Geoff Bezos of Amazon, the world's richest man, when referring to spending his fortune was recently quoted saying "The only way I can deploy this much financial resource is by converting my Amazon winnings into space travel." The painting "Same Light Year Delivery" depicting a Mars Rover towing a covered wagon with an Amazon logo on the side, is a tongue-in-cheek vignette of this sentiment. Parodying America's westward expansion in a martian context with Amazon delivering the entire package.

Furthermore the painting Land Ho! Captain Musk, features an Endeavor-style ship,

cruising the intergalactic currents, blazon with a Space X logo. This is a reference to the billionaire Elon Musk's company and subsequent space exploration project.

The idea of private corporates funding Martian colonies puts security and policing in a vulnerable position. In the painting "Data Miner" we see an enslaved human astronaut working the rocky plains monitored by a Facebook drone. A sinister prophecy of tech-giant surveillance. Facebook is already under scrutiny for stealing all our personal data, therefore what will the situation be if they have sovereignty of the land?

These single frame vignettes of Martian life juxtaposed with colonial imagery are a device used to entertain, and puzzle the viewer. One can't help but piece together a narrative. This reliance on flat iconography is one I employ often in my work.

This has digital roots as the design of these paintings are all computer aided, the perfect birthplace for these futuristic concepts. Icons create instant messages and are reminiscent of emoticons and memes that are the contemporary currency of communication.

In "Science and Religion" we open up a conflicting notion of these two concepts sitting together harmoniously. I assume people will still demand Faith on a new planet yet this very idea is contrary in nature. We observe a satellite hovering above a small colonial Church. Is this delivering the sermon from Earth, or could this technology simply be a metaphor for God? And how is our Faith expanded or tested when we pray on a new planet?

In the same way a band creates a concept album, I envisioned this show as a concept exhibition, each painting is a sum of parts to the entire feeling of this new Martian existence. I have talked about the narrative pieces, but other works display the landscape in literal and abstract ways.

The surface of Mars is barren and rocky with mountains and canyons. The terrain and colors are monotonous compared with Earth however there is still an inherent beauty. I collected many photos taken from various Martian rovers in my research, many in high quality. These vast landscapes are completely awe inspiring, especially considering they're 224 million kilometers away. The color palette is obviously inspired directly from the planet in hues of red and orange, and sometimes turquoise reflections are seen in rocks.

I love to use intensely saturated color as a tool in my work. I like to make combinations vibrate and bounce off of each other with assaulting and violent combinations. This technique exacerbates the digital properties of the design and aides in the optical and narrative illusions within each painting. The jagged black

border of "Gas Prophecy" is reminiscent of the mosaic of images Nasa receives when image data is transferred from Mars to Earth. Essentially puzzle pieces traveling through time and space via satellite.

Linear gradients are used as a device in a few of these abstract landscape paintings. This can be seen as an abstraction of the repetitious Martian landscape. They also have a dynamic quality to them, representing ideas of travel, speed and energy all synonymous with space travel.

From the point of view of a human astronaut that has seen nothing but red rock for months, do these landscapes start to stifle and trick the mind? This concept is the main premise for the painting "My Eyes Are Starting To Play Tricks On Me".

Science textbook covers from the 60's 70's & 80's have also been used as a point of aesthetic reference. These retain a familiar and comforting visual, and create a stage for various icons and symbols to populate a single plain, again aiding the viewer in a narrative sequence.

This style is evident in "Call Home We Found Water" & "The Red Planet Waltz". The Red Planet Waltz is in reference to The Blue Danube Waltz, the piece of music by Johann Strauss famously used in Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film "2001: A Space Odyssey" still one of the most ominous and prophetic stories of space travel and artificial intelligence. As in the film, the painting makes the comparison of Rocket launch, deployment and landing to a ballet, as an intensely complicated piece of choreography.

I have refrained from using gleaming futuristic imagery opting for more of a retro-future aesthetic in execution and points of reference. This is very much a tool that I use as an artist. Instead of alienating the viewer with a tech inspired future, I find a modernity in yesterdays design being tomorrows technology reimaged. This assists the viewer in considering these paintings as plausible scenarios for tomorrows reality.