

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Full name:	William Steadman
Proposed name of project:	Price of Progress
Describe your project using 5 key words:	
AI Technology	
Infrastructure	
Pollution	
Environment	
Interconnectivity	

Provide a short summary of the proposed project: 100 words

This photographic project examines the relationship between man-made infrastructure, the natural environment and pollution. It explores how these elements interact and influence one another. I integrate AI into my creative process through tools such as Photoshop's Generative Fill and by creating datasets from my own images to produce fully AI-generated visuals. By drawing parallels between AI as an emerging technology and its effects on the natural world, my work seeks to provoke thought on the environmental consequences of technological progress and our role within these evolving systems. Overall, it serves as a reminder that each new technology may bring unforeseen effects on the environment.

Provide a detailed description of the proposed project (250 words)

What is the subject/concept/theme that you are exploring? What are your motivations behind making the work? What are the medium(s) in which you will work? What are the methodologies you will be employing?

Within this project, I explore the concept of encroachment on the natural landscape through visuals including man-made infrastructure. This includes various methods of electricity production as well as infrastructure that connects human civilisation but may disrupt the natural world. I also utilise AI technologies within my practice in order to make commentary on it both as a rapidly advancing field of technology, as well as one that has profoundly negative effects on the landscape, indirectly affecting wildlife and ecosystems through the peripheral infrastructure necessary for such a technology to exist. This project acts as a way for me to not only raise environmental awareness, but to also highlight AI as a new artform while acknowledging its potential unsustainable nature.

Throughout this project, I also aim to ensure ethical practice has been carried out when utilising AI, mitigating issues surrounding intellectual property and ownership. I do this by minimising the use of third-party datasets, with the exception of Photoshop's generative fill as I have taken a minimal approach to using this to edit my own image. I primarily create images through Exactly.AI, where I have uploaded my own images as the dataset to train an AI model in order to generate images that do not infringe on other creators' work. I also plan to exhibit the resulting work in the

form of a projected slideshow, with transitions created through Runway.AI, an AI model that has the capability to create surreal transitions between images.

STRUCTURE

Timeline and milestones

Include a breakdown of the plan and milestones of the proposed project for the academic year. Consider the tasks, processes or activities necessary to complete in order to create the proposed body of work.

START DATE	END DATE	ACTIVITY OR TASK DETAIL
01/10/2024	07/10/2024	Conduct research in order to outline subject matter and themes.
08/10/2024	14/10/2024	Begin initial experimentation with generative AI
15/10/2024	21/10/2024	Research the workings of generative AI to understand certain ethical implications
22/10/2024	28/10/2024	Conduct first AI image generation experiment
29/10/2024	01/11/2024	Look into methods of using AI that may be more ethically inclined
02/11/2024	05/11/2024	Research a specific infrastructure site that represents the subject matter
06/11/2024	09/11/2024	Photographic Shoot
10/11/2024	13/11/2024	Conduct second experiment – AI as a tool for editing (revealing the unseen)
14/11/2024	18/11/2024	Research methods of displaying imagery in video format, including AI in the process
19/11/2024	22/11/2024	Conduct third experiment – Runway.AI and its uses for animated transitions
23/11/2024	27/11/2024	Research the various forms of infrastructure that encroach on the landscape
30/11/2024	01/12/2024	Find an AI model that allows input of a custom dataset
02/12/2024	04/12/2024	Research artists/artworks that share an environmentally conscious theme
05/12/2024	06/12/2024	Research artists/artworks that have employed AI in the process
07/12/2024	10/12/2024	Gather images to use for dataset and conduct fourth experiment – Using Exactly.AI to generate images using a custom dataset

21/01/2025	27/01/2025	First shoot – Pylons + Roads
28/01/2025	03/02/2025	Research AI's energy consumption
04/02/2025	10/02/2025	Second shoot - Reservoirs
11/02/2025	17/02/2025	Research various instances of reservoirs having a negative impact on local ecosystems
18/02/2025	24/02/2025	Third shoot - Powerplants
25/02/2025	03/03/2025	Fourth shoot – Sustainable forms of electricity production (turbines, solar panels etc.)
04/03/2025	10/03/2025	Final shoot – Untouched landscapes
11/03/2025	17/03/2025	Begin selection process of images. Decide which will be edited with AI and which will be left unaltered
18/03/2025	24/03/2025	Compile all images to create an updated and varied dataset
25/03/2025	31/03/2025	Generate Images using custom dataset
01/04/2025	07/04/2025	Begin editing process of all images ready for exhibition
08/04/2025	14/04/2025	Input selected images into Runway.AI to create smooth and surreal transitions between them
15/04/2025	21/04/2025	Research various forms of sound design that may utilise AI or support the theme/
22/04/2025	28/04/2025	Compile the video files and soundtrack in Premiere Pro ready for exhibition
29/04/2025	05/05/2025	Purchase projector, curtains and speaker system for the exhibition space
06/05/2025	15/05/2025	Install equipment into the exhibition space.
16/05/2025		Swansea Exhibition Opening

Budget

Add the expenditure and appropriate details of your proposed project on this page. Provide information about the quotes for services/ products/ fees in the description field. Though we cover your printing costs within the department for anyone wishing to use print as a final form for their major project, please cost them based on real world cost.

Description	Cost
Fuel for driving to shoots across the country	~£200
8 Months of monthly payments with initial discount for 3 months: Adobe Creative Cloud (Needed for Photoshop AI, Lightroom and Premiere Pro)	~£370
6 Months of monthly payments: Exactly.AI subscription (required to train AI model and generate images)	~£120
3 months of monthly payments: Runway AI	~£45
4K Projector	~£500
Acoustic blackout curtains	~£250

Speaker system	~£350
TOTAL COST	~£1835

Describe the developmental opportunities, experiments and processes you have undertaken, what did you get out of them, and how will you use them to support your proposed project? (200 words max)

This project led to many new processes through experimentation and have significantly impacted my plans for my final piece. Using Dall.E, I experimented with the use of a generic GAN system and discovered that the source images are used regardless of whether the original creator has been accredited or not. This led to ethical concerns regarding intellectual property, so I decided to experiment further with methods that may potentially avoid this infringement. I then moved on to Photoshop's Generative Fill AI, where I used my own work as a base image and utilised the AI to change aspects of the image, minimising the use of other assets. However, I was still concerned about copyright issues and the morality of using someone else's work in order to create my own. After thorough consideration and research, I decided that I wanted to create my own dataset, with my own images as input. I then discovered that Exactly.AI fulfils this purpose, allowing me to train an AI model using my own uploaded images. This breakthrough has potentially solved the problem, as I have no moral concerns when the work being generated is derivative of my own pre-existing imagery.

What are the main risks and challenges to your project meeting its aims? What will you do to manage these risks? Mitigation (100 words max)

The main challenge I may potentially face is the unpredictability of results when using AI to generate imagery. The only way to mitigate this is to carefully consider each prompt I provide as well as experimenting with different prompts as much as possible. A problem with this is the limitations placed upon the number of possible image generations due to my subscription to Exactly.AI being capped at 260 generations per month. This can be mitigated by constant experimentation, making the most of this limit over each month I have access to the program.

PRACTICE-BASED EXPERIMENTS

Include examples of your practice-based experiments, that you have developed during this project. (add to this pdf between 20-30 pages) include photographs, screenshots, process images, texts, notes, references, links to videos made, audio files or other files.