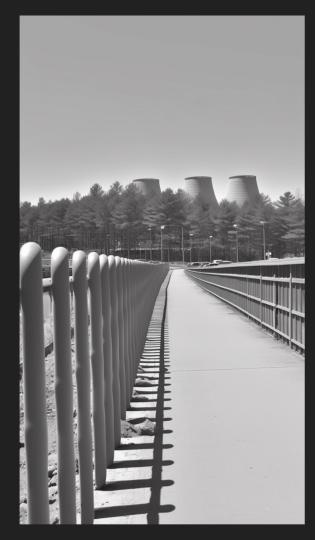# Presence in Space

Colin Dunne | MAT 255

I find myself constantly drawn to the idea of presence. Though very literal and objective by definition, applying the idea of presence proves more nuanced and fleeting. As an artist, I find myself and my work constantly influenced by the environment around me. Traditional landscapes often explore the idea of nature being separate from people promoting the intrinsic value the environment holds. My work explores this same idea of separation and absence but through the means of exploring the remaining presence. Though it is clear the horrendous impacts man-made infrastructure has, when looking past the anger, frustration, and despair there's something oddly beautiful and aesthetic apart from just the commercial convenience. In the same regard nature makes me feel small in a world so much larger than myself, so do these man-made aesthetics that are culminations of countless years of knowledge, collaboration, and decisions made well beyond my time at a global scale. I believe this contrary feeling relies on presence.

But presence does not limit itself to infrastructure. This concept is reflected in my body of work because of my relationship with generative AI. This body of work represents not only my hope but my fear and despair as a traditional artist. For me, these are the feelings that lie in the presence found in these pieces and the tools of AI used in the process to make them.

Midjourney

oil rig lit up at night in ocean, view from beach, reflective lighting, calm ocean waves, monochrome, high contrast, light clouds --weird 250 --ar 16:9 --style raw --s 250

Midjourney

oil rig lit up at night in ocean, view from beach, reflective lighting, calm ocean waves, monochrome, high contrast, light clouds --weird 250 --ar 16:9 --style raw --s 250
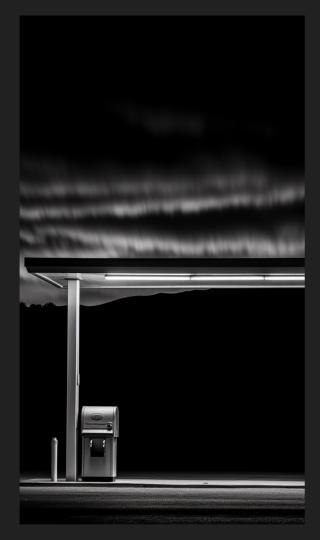
Midjourney

chain fence entrance to nuclear power plant, mid day, road, pine trees, monochrome, high contrast --weird 250 --ar 9:16 --style raw --s 250z

Midjourney

empty parking lot, calm night, street lights repeat into distance, dim light, monochrome, high contrast --weird 250 --ar 16:9 --style raw --s 250

Midjourney

empty gas station at night, calm clouds in sky, three quarters view, monochrome, high contrast --weird 250 --ar 9:16 --style raw --s 250

Midjourney

empty parking lot, calm night, street lights repeat into distance, dim light, monochrome, high contrast --weird 250 --style raw --s 250 --ar 16:9

Stable Diffusion

looking up at power lines, mid day, monochrome, high contrast
Steps: 20, Sampler: DPM++ 2M Karras, CFG scale: 7, Seed: 992625036, Size: 960x540, Model hash: 6ce0161689, Model: v1-5-pruned-emaonly, Version: v1.6.0

Stable Diffusion

empty highway bridge, mid day, monochrome, high contrast
Steps: 20, Sampler: DPM++ 2M Karras, CFG scale: 7, Seed: 817425033, Size: 960x540, Model hash: 6ce0161689, Model: v1-5-pruned-emaonly, Version: v1.6.0

These images were generated not only with Stable Diffusion and Midjourney, but a full course worth of built up insights. For one, as seen with some of the produced examples I often find that a wide range of results can come from the same prompt. With Stable Diffusion I dedicated time to testing this through the wide range of results that can come from only changing the sampling method ([link to MAT post](#) and [link to graph](#)). I choose to use Euler a as my primary sampling method because of these results and that a majority of stable diffusion documentation use it as such as well.

Especially in the case of Midjourney, there will be an imposed style either chosen by the developers or as a product of the selection of training images. Either way this impacts results considerably and at times causes Midjourney to make the text prompts feel more suggestive than in control. I believe the "weird" parameter best counteracts this. Although there isn't much explanation in the [documentation](#) of it, the results vary widely but more often than not lead to results that distance themselves from imposed styles and create results that could be considered more "original". I find breaking through the imposed style critical for Midjourney and have largely built my methods around such. Heavily utilizing the weird parameter, I aim to first establish style and aesthetic. Then utilizing the variation feature, I pick favorable elements in results and begin to narrow down. For this reason, I find great results can be achieved from the same text prompt but can become refined and differ greatly by going down different paths with the variation feature.