

Aidan McPhee

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Thompson Rivers University (Expected 2026)

AN EXPERIMENTAL TRIO

This special issue of Future Earth Journal: Explorations in Art and Generative AI showcases the work of visual art students from the Fall 2024 Selected Topics course *Explorations in Art and AI*. Each featured artist engaged with generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) to create original artworks that respond to and reflect on current conversations in art and technology. Through their unique practices, these students explored Gen AI as a tool, a collaborator, and/or a conceptual influence.

The artworks featured here—and in the exhibition held at the TRU Art Gallery from March 17–29, 2025—highlight the cultural, ethical, environmental, and creative dimensions of using Gen AI in artistic production.

Aidan McPhee is one of the participating artists whose work exemplifies this exploration.

AI Tool: ChatGPT

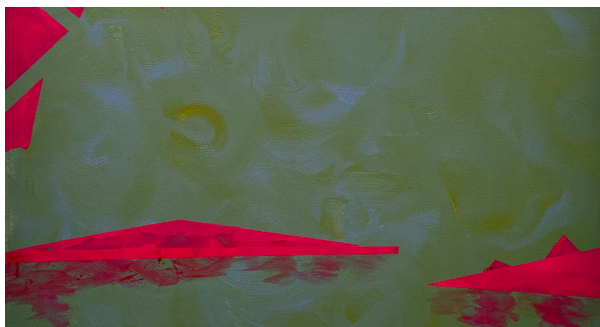


Figure 1. An Experimental Trio [1] (2024) by Aidan McPhee. Acrylic on canvas, 24" × 36" (Image credit: Nicole Favron)

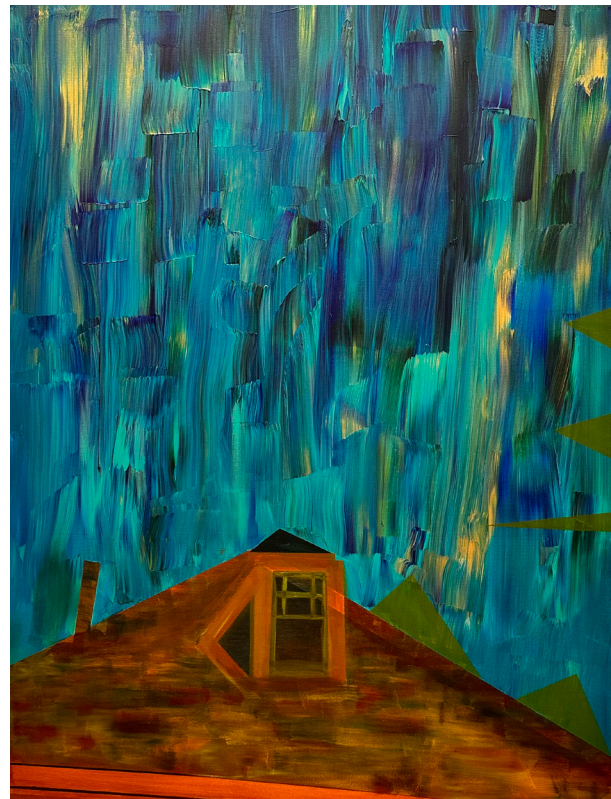


Figure 2. An Experimental Trio [2] (2024) by Aidan McPhee. Acrylic on canvas, 24" × 36" (Image credit: Nicole Favron)



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Figure 3. An Experimental Trio [3] (2024) by Aidan McPhee. Acrylic on canvas, 24" x 36" (Image credit: Nicole Favron)

ARTIST STATEMENT

In my project I set out to challenge the ideology of certain AI artists. While I believe my values hold strong in the finale, part of the project was to ask what other people thought of my own ideology. Could I have let my own ego get the better of me, and bring my own skills into question? After viewing my work and my statement I hope you will have reached a conclusion.

I used AI to generate my colour palettes for a series of 3 paintings. I combined this with my interest in geometric landscape painting. I stuck to what I know during the process. Layering shapes while using tape to create edges. This has been a part of my artistic process for a few months now and it has

really engaged me in finding new ways to innovate my own art.

I mentioned that I wanted to challenge the ideology of certain AI artists, without mentioning names, I was particularly critical of someone who believed that AI was the only entity that could complete their vision, and that their own brain was insufficient. I disagreed, stating that our own brains could complete our vision of what was desired. Albeit much slower than what an AI could produce. I further state that if the AI is the one creating "your" vision, is it really yours.

Reference Photos and Colour Palette

For the technical aspects of my paintings, I had a few issues. The first and most prominent issue I faced was my own critiques of my art during the process. Mainly with the colours the AI generated for me to use. I hated the mix of colours I was using, and I hated the lack of cohesion. It took me a while before I was able to embrace them and accept that this was the point of my project. The other issues were financial, I had stated in my proposal that I wanted the paintings to be 6x6 feet, I encountered financial challenges during the process and could not afford to go that large. As such I had to compromise a little. For the same reasons, my works are in acrylic, and I had not incorporated oil paint into the final layers as I had originally wanted to. That said, I don't believe it has caused my project to be compromised in any way regarding my work's quality.

Process

As a critique of AI artist [Daniel Ambrosi's](#) work, which employs generative AI to produce a final painting-like work from his photographs, Aidan created his own paintings based on photographs. Aidan used CHAT-GPT to interpret his photographs and to assign the photograph a colour palette. He then used those images and the colour palettes as references for his paintings.

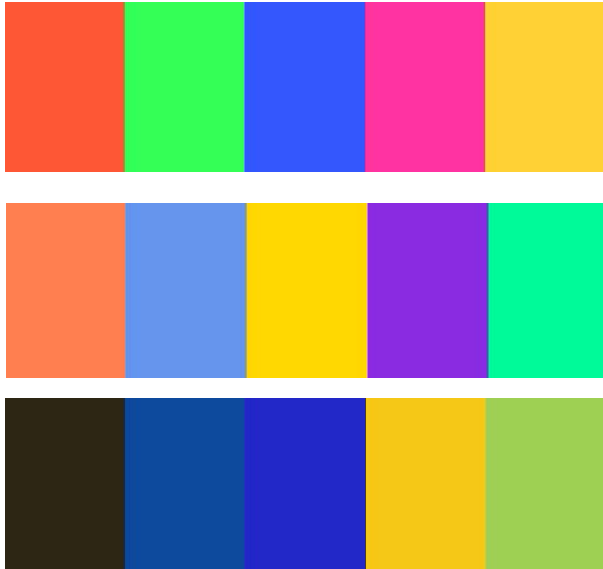


Figure 4. Colour Palettes,#1-3 generated by Chat-GPT



Figure 5. Northern Light Thing, Reference photo #2 (Image credit: Aidan McPhee)



Figure 6. Pumpkin Patch, Reference photo #3 (Image credit: Aidan McPhee)



Figure 7. River, Reference photo #4 (Image credit: Aidan McPhee)



Figure 8. An Experimental Trio [exhibit installation] (2024) by Aidan McPhee. Acrylic on canvas, 24" × 36" (Photo credit: Twyla Exner)



Exhibit Installation (2024) (Image credit: Twyla Exner)