



# THE ALTERNATIVE PRESENT

A DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT

BY SAUL VILLEGAS

THE HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROPOSAL  
FALL 2020

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

## Abstract

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Altering your color perception with the use of digital media allows the viewer to encounter a different experience of what is perceived in the physical world. Photographs and their ability to capture details of the environment creates an opportunity for people to remember data on a picture plane via a physical print or digital, conceptually representing a reality. Speculative Future Design enables the artist to create an alternative representation while analyzing current status and the needs of people in their habitat, regardless of their geographic location.

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Speculative Design is one of many disciplines that can allow us to touch what is ahead, and this illumination of possibility is in and of itself a meaningful and powerful act of creativity, but it is only when we connect this back to new behaviors in the present that we have actually changed the probabilities of one future outcome or another and hopefully shifted towards a preferable one.<sup>1</sup> -J. Paul Neeley

I seek to connect with The Humanities Institute (THI) for an Undergraduate Fellowship to allow engagement in the Arts & Humanities by producing a Digital Photography portfolio. The series will be produced through photography and digital design. My technical tool of choice is Photography and editing software to enhance and manipulate photographs, giving them an exaggerated sense of perspective and place. *The Alternative Present* is a series designed to utilize the idea of (Speculative Futures) to depict an alternative to our current state of understanding of the world while offering a new view in current time. The series is produced through the lens of an ecocentric versus anthropocentric point of view by eliminating traces of human conquest and praising nature in all its glory. The idea of a duality of past art historical paintings inserted into a current state of place was beautifully rendered by the artist Alexey Kondakov.<sup>2</sup> By placing figures in the photo scene, the artist was able to create a parallel into a fictional present residing within the past with the stylization of the artist's contemporary design fused with historical works.

My intention is to create abstract energy waves and a vibrational visual field through landscapes<sup>3</sup> that will have a similar effect as the duality of history portrayed by Kondakov. However, the *history* will be portrayed as a dreamlike environment where the personal histories of the viewer becomes a mindscape and transcends them into a sublime experience, where time

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<sup>1</sup> <https://speculativeedu.eu/j-paul-neeley-after-the-speculation-is-where-the-real-work-begins/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://alksko.com/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://art.ucsc.edu/news\\_events/senior-show-saul-villegas](https://art.ucsc.edu/news_events/senior-show-saul-villegas)

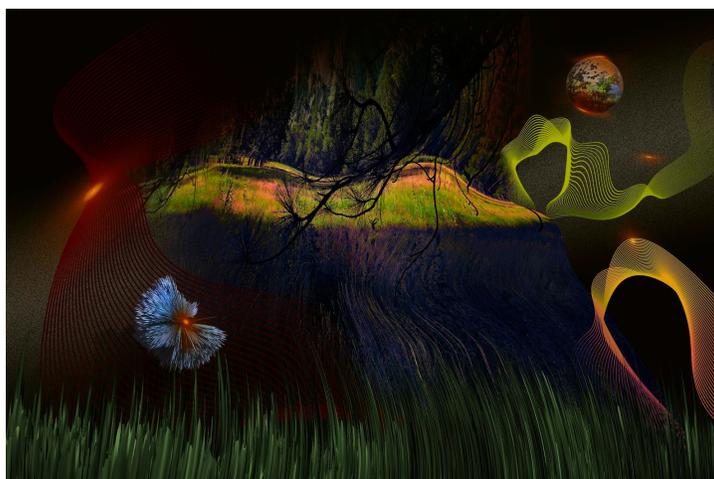
and place only exist as a paradigm—shifting one’s perspective of reality. The present then is the vehicle to the future while having a ‘daydream’ effect, metamorphosing with each individual's experiences.

**Can an altered photograph play a role in shaping an alternative present and allow a person’s philosophy to be experienced through a digital manipulation encounter?<sup>4</sup>**

### Research Processes

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Research interests in the areas of: Psychology, Oneirology, Philosophy, History of Photography manipulation, Colorimetry field guides, Creative practice, Speculative Futures.



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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frobt.2018.00101/full>

Each photograph will be designed to channel a state of an alternative present. The series (of 24) will be developed and designed to be sequenced in the stages of alertness—dreams.

### **Timeline**

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**November 29, - December 06, 2020:** Field Research/preliminary photographs for sites

**December 07-21, 2020:** Research concept, design editing, creative practice

**December 07-21, 2020:** Research concept, design editing, creative practice Curatorial Stage 2

**December 22 - January 14, 2021 Final Edits & Sequencing including Research paper**

**January 15-26, 2021 Submit to Mixbook for printing**

**January 28, 2021 Submit photo book to The Humanities Institute**

### **Project Requested Funds**

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Funds will help facilitate the photography series and help support the purchasing of equipment necessary for on the field research and photography sessions.

**\$500**

[Amazon Wish List](#)

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**Art Portfolio:** <https://www.modernobysaulvillegas.com/>

**Research Art Project:**

Submitted to—

The Humanities Institute | University of California, Santa Cruz

on November 16, 2020

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