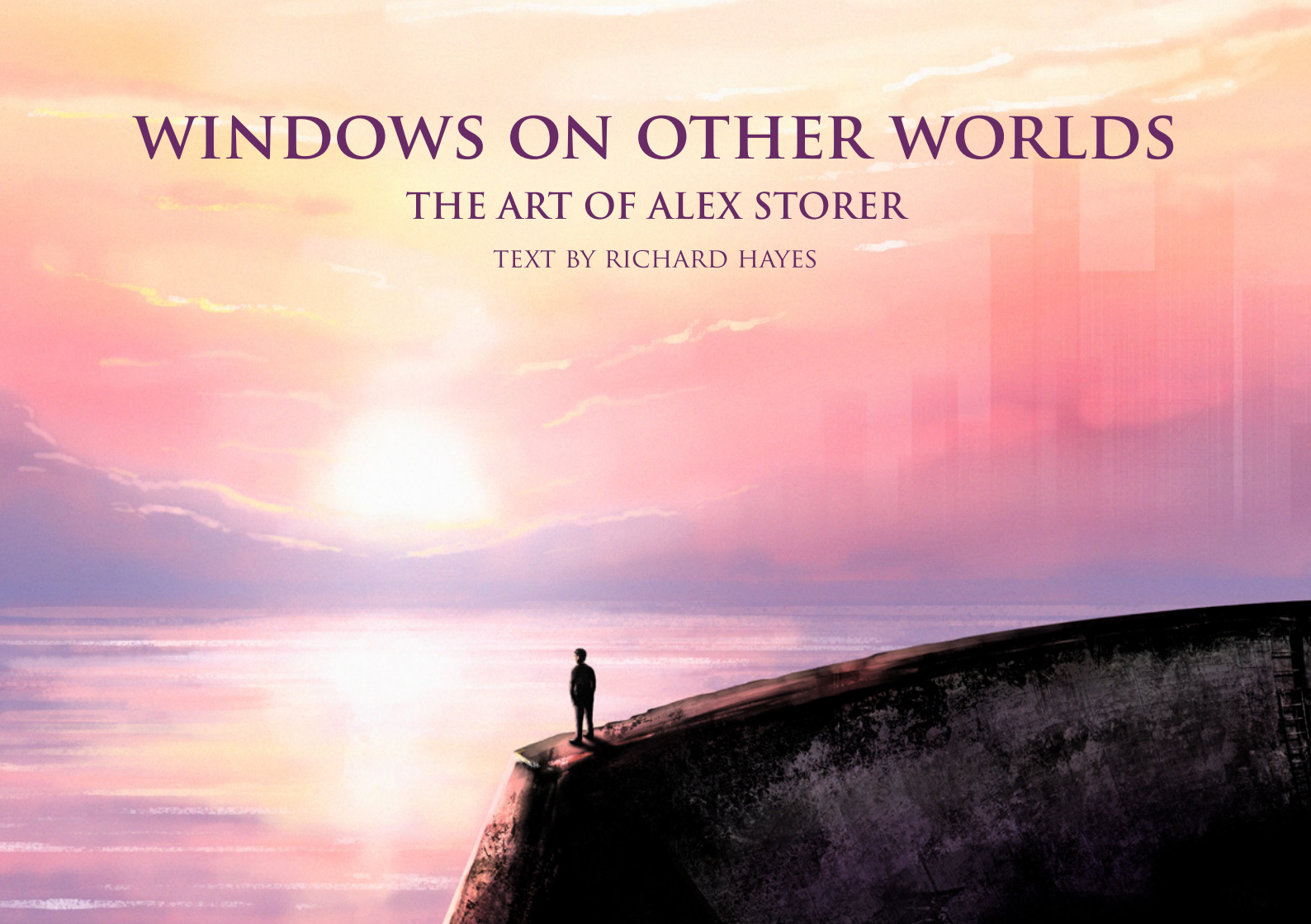


WINDOWS ON OTHER WORLDS

THE ART OF ALEX STORER

TEXT BY RICHARD HAYES



THE HUMAN IMAGINATION takes flight through the images of science fiction and space art. They capture scenes which we may never see ourselves, but which enable us to picture what might happen one day, or what might already exist in worlds beyond our everyday lives.

With a life-long passion for immersing himself in science fiction, Alex Storer became captivated by the visionary space art of the 1970s and 80s with its powerful images of travel to other planets and times. He uses his talent to develop those themes into ever more fascinating and evocative pictures of the cosmos.

As a professional graphic designer with a background in fine art and traditional hand-rendered illustration, Alex uses initial sketches to produce work through Photoshop, usually in layers for flexibility of composition, though he may occasionally treat some pieces like real canvases.

His style and technique are immediately identifiable. Dramatic scenes of other worlds, views of interplanetary and interstellar spaceflight which may yet come to fruition, and haunting visions that seem to come from the deeper recesses of the mind all have a strong emotive impact and remain in the memory.

Whether they are used to provide book cover images to promote imaginative stories, or visions of the future which inspire us, this is original artwork at the forefront of speculation as to what might be.

In these pages we explore a few of Alex's amazing pictures, so join us in travelling to places beyond the limits of our normal experience. Expand your imagination into new realms...



TOMORROW

A COUPLE STAND on a hill overlooking a mist-shrouded valley. This is not Earth – the mist merges into alien purple clouds and a vast moon of this planet hangs in the sky.

The yellow sun of this system, so similar to our own, blazes out above the horizon. We see a glow on the night side of the moon, so we are viewing it from a planet which reflects full sunlight from its surface, oceans and atmosphere. There is life on this world – grass covers the hill – and the couple are relaxed as the man touches the woman in a gesture of affection or love. It is a world much like our own in so many ways.

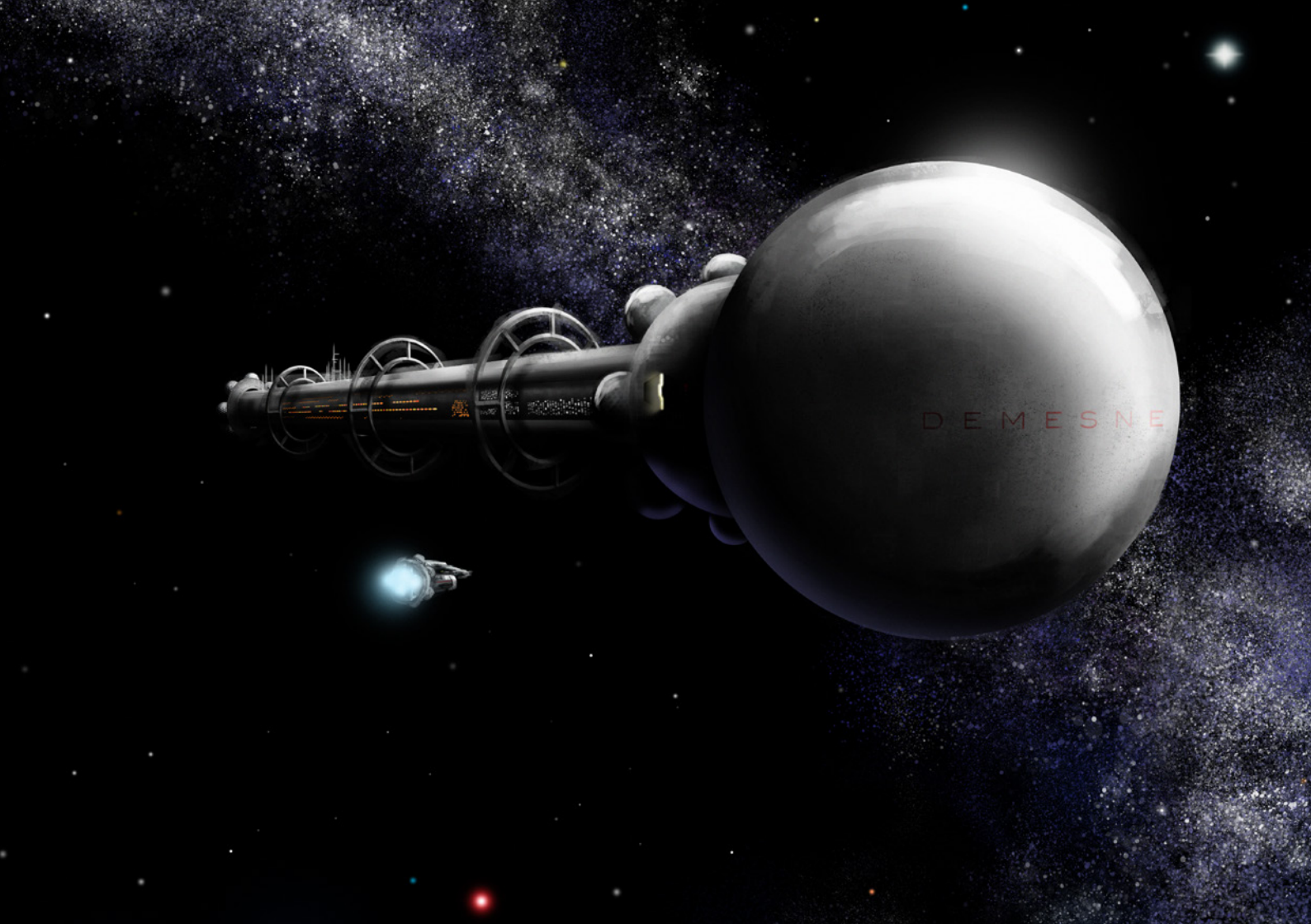
They watch a spaceship as it moves through the sky, but they show no surprise – this is a familiar sight to them. Indeed, the woman seems to be more interested in looking at her companion than the passage of this marvel of technology. This is a society which accepts interstellar travel, and all the benefits that it brings, as a fact. It has brought humans to this planet, and serves their needs. It may even represent our own future.

Front cover:

SCENE FROM A DREAM

The imagery of dreams provides no end of inspiration – sometimes you experience a dream so vivid and real that it stays with you forever.





DEMESNE

DEMESNE (LEFT)

A VAST SPACESHIP stands out against the infinity of the interstellar void. It has the distinctive design of an Enzmann starship, the huge front globe holding the deuterium propellant that powers its nuclear fusion drive, with living quarters extending behind. Many lighted windows show that it is crewed, and several generations may live and die on board before it reaches its destination.

The engines of this spectacular craft achieve speeds to a significant percentage of the speed of light, but they are now silent. We think that it might have already achieved its cruising velocity, except for the existence of a smaller spacecraft which is approaching under power – such a hazardous transfer is unlikely during the voyage. No, this starship is stationary, probably before the start of its journey.

Perhaps the final members of the crew are arriving before their epic voyage begins, anticipating the challenge of what awaits them – and their descendants.

INTO THE UNKNOWN (RIGHT)

SWIRLING CLOUDS OF gas in space signify the most destructive object in the universe – a black hole. But a rotating black hole may also represent something else – a portal through a wormhole to another place or time.

We see a spaceship travelling towards the event horizon, but this is no experimental flight. It is a large, powerful vessel with many crew and passengers. They may be explorers, or possibly colonists who seek a new home in another universe. Either way, they would not knowingly be going to their own destruction, so they must have knowledge of what to expect when they get there.

But are the mechanics of black hole transfers so well established that they can possibly have complete certainty? It may be that something is driving them to take appalling risks to leave behind what they already know. Why are they willing to risk everything to travel into the unknown?





AWAKENING (LEFT)

H.G. WELLS' DYSTOPIAN science fiction novel *The Sleeper Awakes* is the basis for *Awakening*.

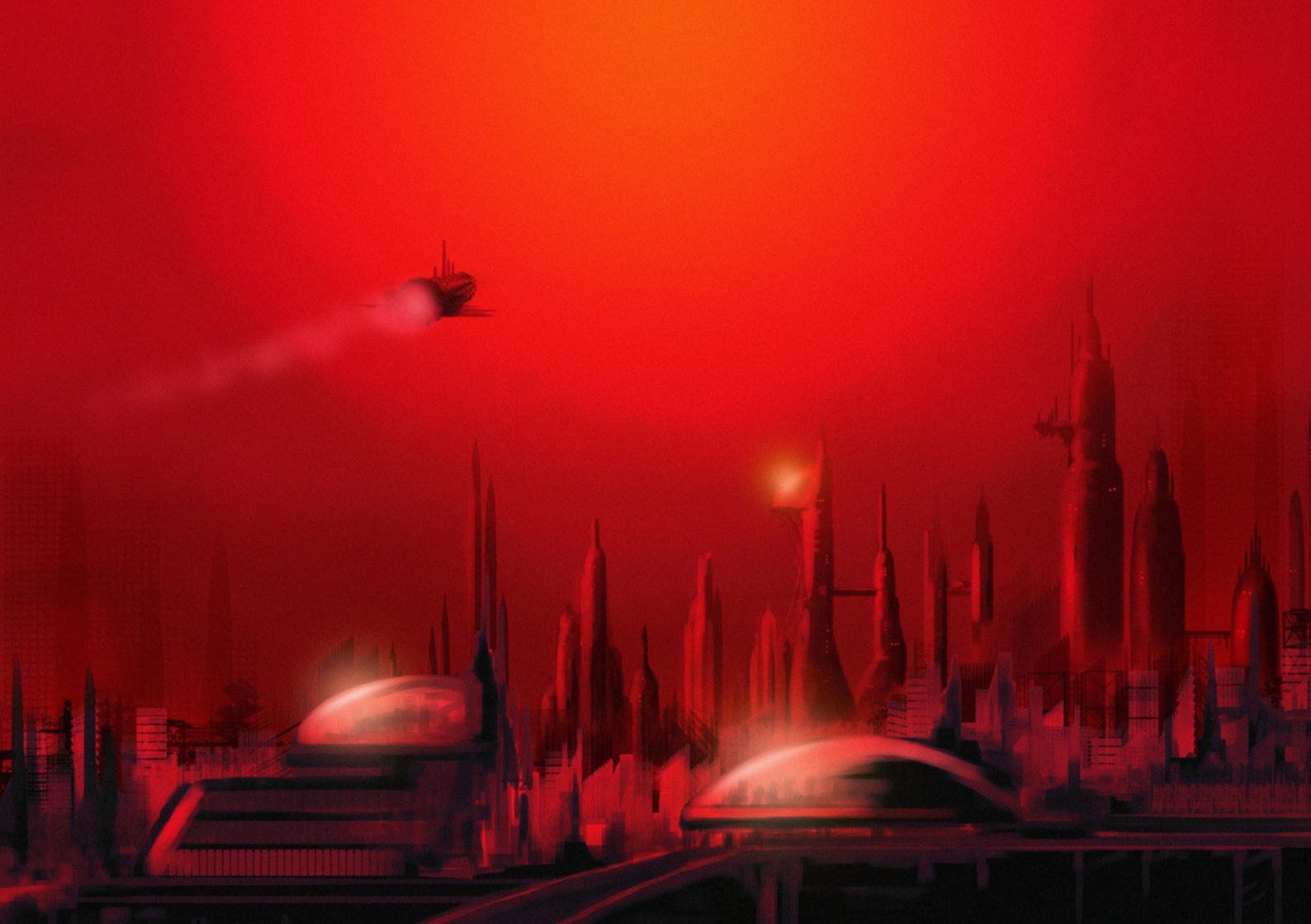
An inhabitant of late nineteenth century London awakes after being in a coma for over two hundred years to find his city drastically transformed. He sees the amazing advances in technology – and the horrors – which have developed whilst he slept.

In this image, we see him witnessing the vast skyscrapers, flying machines and other futuristic devices which have changed the world beyond anything he could have imagined. Although he discovers that he is now the richest man alive, he finds that there is chaos and disorder in society. His stance demonstrates his stunned amazement at what he sees.

FIRST LIGHT (RIGHT)

A RED GIANT star dominates a planet's sky, and a city spreads out before us in its unearthly light. We ask ourselves whether the city is in its dying days as a result of an expanding sun – perhaps the remnants of a civilization are surviving in its domed structures. Obviously whoever lives there needs the domes as well as the buildings; perhaps the atmosphere has perhaps recently become toxic. Are we witnessing the last stages of a once-great society?

Or could this be the civilization's normal existence and its inhabitants have learned to survive in what simply looks to us like a hostile environment? It may be thriving within the structures that we see – it might merely be an image of the time of day when little is going on, as the city wakes.





ARTEFACT (LEFT)

HISTORY IS REplete with examples of the rise and fall of empires. Great civilizations that have flourished during their moment in the sun, but then declined, leaving only the decaying remains of their buildings and artefacts.

A lone human approaches the remains of a vast structure from a bygone age. The ancient ruin is shrouded with the vegetation and decay that comes from long neglect. From his appearance we see that his is a primitive society where the technology that created this artefact has long disappeared.

But a more disturbing thought occurs to us. Possibly this is the distant future of our own Earth. Through some catastrophe at which we can only guess, the human race has degenerated into a prehistoric state, and can now only stare with astonishment at what once was, little understanding what it may have represented, or might yet have been.

RUIN (RIGHT)

THERE IS A poignancy in seeing the ruins of civilizations that have come and gone. Now they are just a reminder of what once was. An abandoned spaceport is quiet and still, overgrown with the vegetation that covers the surface of this planet. It has long since ceased to function, just like the ruined spacecraft lying, useless and decaying, on its landing pad.

We wonder why this facility was left to the mercies of nature by those who once occupied it, but there may be a clue in the way it was built. It is supported by a massive column, raising it high above the planet's surface – something on the ground must have presented a risk.

Perhaps the danger may have been the plant life itself – pervasive and all-consuming. Did the original inhabitants manage to avoid it by fleeing, or did they end their days trapped in the confines of a structure from which there was no escape?



FAÇADE (BELOW)

CREATING THE COVER artwork for Alice Sabo's novel *Façade* provided Alex with the opportunity to visit a fantastic scene, where gothic architecture of the past and futuristic technology collide.



DISCOVERY (ABOVE)

A VOYAGE OF discovery has led two astronauts to a planet where they look out from a high ledge at the view beyond. Plant life seems to cover every inch of the jagged rocks and hangs in trails below the ledge on which these explorers stand.

Most stunning, though, are the enormous mushrooms which spread along this slope – they clearly thrive in this place, exposed to the elements. But there may be even stranger things in this alien world – one of the astronauts points in what seems to be amazement at some sight beyond our view...



THE WORLD OUTSIDE

A BEAUTIFUL GIRL looks through a window at an unknown world outside. She is relaxed and calm, so we know that the environment inside this barrier is comfortable and secure. It may be the interior of a habitat or spacecraft on the surface of this planet.

She looks out with interest at this alien terrain, and holds her hand against the window. The gesture may suggest a wish to be outside and to appreciate this world to the full. But what is on the other side may be hostile – the sky is thick with oppressive clouds, and there is no trace of life on the surface. A waterfall cascades from what must be a plateau, where perhaps the planet offers entirely different, and less stark, surroundings – is that what she seeks?

But if we look closely, we see rents in her left sleeve. Has she just returned to this realm of safety from a dangerous trip outside? Maybe it is the sun of this world that she salutes, as it sets beyond the distant jagged mountains, and she yearns for the familiar world of her home that it represents. Or does she fear what the night will bring?



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