**LET’S LOOK**

What words would you use to describe the mood, or feeling, of this piece?

Which details in this image are realistic or even familiar? Which seem to be imagined or altered by the artist?

If this artwork were a song, what song would it be? Why did you make that connection?

Imagine this picture is the middle image of three on a story board. What would the images before and after look like?

Some viewers might feel sad or anxious after seeing this image. How would you support a friend who was feeling this way? What advice might you give them?

**ABOUT THE ARTWORK**

A vast urban landscape is illuminated by the golden light of a setting sun. Layers of orange hues appear like low mountains in the distance. A winding river snakes into the foreground, its water reflecting the warm light. The beauty of the sunset is contrasted by an empty and ruined city. Decayed roads, abandoned buildings and broken structures are the only evidence that humans once inhabited this place. A solitary figure perches atop a tall tower near the center.

*Sundown* is a digital amalgamation, or combination, of several images. Like much of Portlock’s current work, this picture was created with 3D gaming technology. It is a simulation that combines real and imagined spaces. Portlock bases his artwork on the abandoned and foreclosed properties within biking distance of his home in Philadelphia. The silhouetted figure in *Sundown* is reminiscent of the iconic 36ft tall statue of William Penn atop Philadelphia’s City Hall. This familiar symbol appearing within an alternative and desolate setting might lead viewers to wonder what possibly may have led to this destruction.
Ekphrastic Poetry
Ekphrastic poetry is poetry written about a piece of art. Percy Bysshe Shelley draws on this tradition in his poem Ozymandias. Read this poem together, and make a list of any connections you can make between it and the visual imagery of Sundown. Write your own ekphrastic poem about this or another work by Tim Portlock. You can find images of his art at www.timportlock.net.

The Course of Empire
Examine The Course of Empire, a series of five paintings created by Thomas Cole in the 19th Century. They depict the rise and fall of an imaginary city across many years. Cole wanted to highlight the desolation of the American wilderness during a time of intense expansion Westward. He also shows that hope exists in the eventual resurgence of nature after the effects of human destruction. Imagine Sundown to be part of a similar chronological series. Using digital media, layer new elements to create the image that would follow this one. What would rebirth and hope look like in this place?

Sustainable Cities
Many scientists theorize that we are living in the Anthropocene, an era in which humans are the dominant influence over the Earth’s climate and environment. Several cities have been recognized for being leaders in clean energy and climate solutions, hoping to avoid the foreboding future shown in Sundown. These cities include: Copenhagen, San Francisco, Vancouver, Stockholm and Singapore. Research these places and make a list of the ways they are fighting the climate crisis and improving the lives of their citizens. Next, plan and make a drawing of your own sustainable city complete with notes about key features and ideas that make it a hopeful place.

ABOUT THE ARTIST
Born in Chicago, Tim Portlock began his career as a community-based muralist and studio painter. In his twenties, he began experimenting with digital media platforms. He has since mastered a variety of tools, from gaming software to 3-D animation.

One of Portlock's lifelong interests is the relationship between the places we live and who we become. Portlock's art focuses on what happens to communities when traditional urban-based industries close down, leaving behind empty buildings, unemployment and other problems. He intends for his work to be “visually unsettling” and not neatly categorized. Portlock creates haunting, post-apocalyptic urban landscapes, often seen from an aerial perspective, or a bird’s eye view. He depicts worlds in which industrial culture has come and gone, leaving certain classes and communities in ruin and without hopeful prospects. The first step in his creative process is to do research. Portlock speaks with experts in economics, urban planning, and sociology, and values the ways that current research can inform his art.

Tim Portlock lives and works in St. Louis and Philadelphia and is an associate professor in the Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Art at Washington University.