

## Picturing the End

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7 December 2024 -  
17 February 2025

**Tiyan Baker, Joseph Breikers, Michael Cook, KC Green, Kinly Grey, Guy Louden, Dana Lawrie, Tracey Moffatt, and Grant Stevens. Curated by Llewellyn Millhouse.**

Just like myths of creation, visions of "The End" help us make sense of the world. Looking into our future, we hypothesise threats to our culture and community as a warning to our contemporaries. While stories of the apocalypse may be as old as time, they do feel particularly present in 2024. A recent global pandemic, the spectre of climate change, an uptick in imperialist warfare and a shift in the global power dynamic reverberate through popular culture, stirring our public anxieties.

We may wish to respond to the threat of the future by returning to the safety of the past. Closing the borders and battenning down the hatches, many of us long to return to a simpler time; a time of monoculturalism, "village" communities, craft economies and patriarchal family values. Regressing to an idealised past may appear more and more attractive, yet it does little to sway the trajectory of global politics, global economies and our global environment.

Rather than retreat to the past, the artists in *Picturing the End* meet with narratives of decline and doom head-on. Reflecting on, subverting and remixing how we collectively imagine "The End", these artworks compel us to dwell on the difficult and ominous without the hyperbole and righteousness of doom and gloom. In contemplating images of "The End", we are given the opportunity to reinvest our energy and attention in the challenges of a shared future, rebuilding trust and solidarity in the public good.

↑  
MAP



## Artist Biographies

Centring her Bidjath culture, **Tiyan Baker's** work draws on historical

research, digital processes and material play to trace unseen

relationships between words, place

and stories. Baker was born and

raised in Darwin, and currently lives

and works on the Awabakal and

Worimi lands known as Newcastle.

**Joseph Breikers'** work often

employs humour and language

to explore areas of slippage and

overlap. Drawing on strategies of

the absurd, Breikers seeks to find

new ways of understanding the

nexus between social, political and

cultural practices.

Raised in Hervey Bay and currently

residing on the Sunshine Coast,

Bidjara man **Michael Cook's** iconic

photographic tableaux explore the

legacy of colonisation by inverting

and reconstructing icons of

Australian identity.

**Kenneth Clark (KC) Green** is a

webcomic artist from Massachusetts

best known for producing a

comic strip that experienced viral

popularity across social media

platforms over the past decade.

**Kinly Grey** is a Brisbane based

artist often combining science,

myth, memory and dreams. Their

site-specific installations poetically

represent our inner

worlds and social realities.

**Tracey Moffatt** is one of Australia's

leading contemporary artists.

Born in 1960 in Brisbane, Moffatt

has exhibited nationally and

internationally since the mid-1980s,

becoming the first Indigenous

artist to represent Australia with a

solo exhibition at the 2017 Venice

Biennale.

**Dana Lawrie** is a Brisbane based

artist working with expanded

notions of self-portraiture. Through

experimental approaches to

painting, pigment and textile,

Lawrie's practice reflects on

permanence and impermanence,

mortality, and the mortal body.

**Guy Louden's** work explores the

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## Picturing the End

Felix McNamara

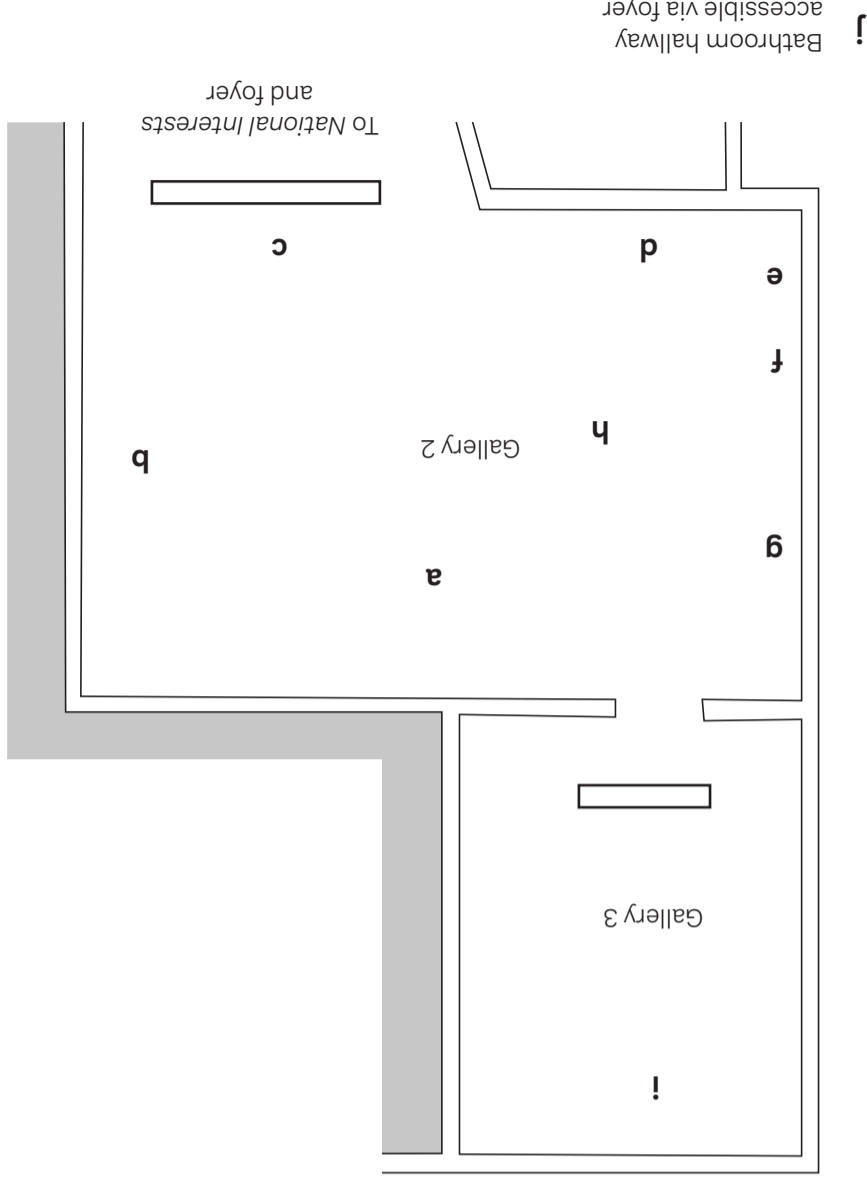
The contemporary cultural obsession with “the end”—of society, civilisation, the planet—appears to have accumulated over multiple centuries of revolution, industrialised warfare, speculation of nuclear Armageddon, etc. The post-Enlightenment or modern world has tended towards linear, as opposed to circular, conceptions of time and history, and with linearity comes arcs and declines, starts and ends.

With the collapse of the USSR in 1991, secular eschatology turned to a tone containing threads of both triumphalism and ennui. Francis Fukuyama’s “End of History” thesis—claiming that liberalism’s geopolitical and therefore ideological defeat of both soviet socialism and fascism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century defined the end point of man’s historical evolution and struggle—recast an obsession with “the end” as both victory and problem simultaneously. Was the threat of some kind of “end” necessary to escape the boredom offered by “post-historical, neoliberal consensus consumer society?”

This spiritually deprived, assumedly affluent middleclass boredom of the pre-War on Terror, “Clinton Boom” 90s years (or Keating-Howard years for those of us in Australia)—depicted in male liberal novels like *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* (1991), *Infinite Jest* and *Fight Club* (both published in 1996)—is an era that, in the face of MAGA, plenty of contemporary secular eschatologists would love to time-travel back to (the opening musical skit of *Portlandia* (2011–2018) was “The Dream of the 90s is alive in Portland”). Both sides of the recent US election re-tooled Rosa Luxemburg’s famous formulation of “socialism or barbarism” for their own political project; “liberalism or barbarism” vs. “MAGAism or barbarism.”

Part of today’s obsession with “the end” as Alex Hochuli, George Hoare, and Phillip Cunniffe wrote in their 2021 book, is an obsession with “the end” of “the End of History.” Of course, according to Alexandre Kojève—who acted as a (potentially untrustworthy) Hegel whisperer

## Exhibition Map



### a) Tiyan Baker

*Bamboo Paradise*, 2019  
3 channel video installation,  
bamboo structure, sisal rope

### b) Michael Cook

*Invasion (Kangaroo)*, 2017  
*Invasion (Laser Girls)*, 2017  
*Invasion (Finale)*, 2017  
inkjet prints, framed  
Collection of Scott Gibson and Tony Denholder  
Courtesy the artist and Jan Murphy  
Gallery, Brisbane

*Why does the sea rush to shore*,  
2024  
*Why do the stars glow above*,  
2024  
oil on board, painting rags, wire

### g) Dana Lawrie

*Why does the sun go on shining*,  
2024

### h) Kinly Grey

*our detritus tells our fortune*,  
2024  
biological material, found Magic 8  
Ball fortune teller

### c) Tracey Moffatt

*DOOMED*, 2007  
digital video, looped, 00:09:21  
Edited by Gary Hillberg  
Courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

### d) Guy Louden

*Gimdark*, 2024  
white metal cast of Warhammer  
sprue  
Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan + Brown  
Strumpf, Sydney.  
With support from UNSW Faculty  
of Arts, Design and Architecture.

### i) Grant Stevens

*Feelings*, 2024  
real-time procedurally generated  
computer graphics with sound  
Audio consultant: James Peter

### j) Joseph Breikers

*// cf // dj! // si // /nägn/*, 2024  
looped mp3, hidden speakers and  
media player

### f) Shrimp Jesus, 2024

digital drawing, framed  
digital print

### e) KC Green

*On Fire*, 2013  
digital drawing, framed

**Felix McNamara** is a cultural critic writing on aesthetics, architecture, art, and politics. He currently teaches at the University of Melbourne and writes on Substack at Corporate Total Art.

*Picturing the End* offers many “pictures” of contemporary culture’s fascination with “the end.” Even in such cases where “the end” is conceived of purely in negative terms, the very fact that such a conception triggers productive aesthetic reaction suggests an underlying message of hope and opportunity. “The end” occurs many times in many ways, “the end” ends, and art endures.

On such ambiguity and contradiction, the works of this show rests. Across the show’s three chapters, ideas of “the end” are considered with respect to (western) civilisational decline or “fall” collapse of the tech-utopianism promised by the internet and its cultures, and narratives of apocalypse which deal with the misanthropy perhaps inherent to much contemporary reflections, fears—and even joyful prayers—for “the end” of humanity in general.

Man’s historical evolution. What has happened since then was but an extension in space of the universal revolutionary force actualized in France by Robespierre-Napoleon.”

It’s not surprising that in a world in which history and/or civilisation is claimed to have “ended”—in both positive and negative senses—over and over again, through World Wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions, pandemics, famines, ecological disasters and genocides—is one in which “ending,” collapse, or apocalypse maintains significant and enduring space in the human imagination. The history of history’s “end”—as a matter of both liberation and despair—often simultaneously, as Adorno and Horkheimer wrote in 1947’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—must assume cast this creative obsession with ending, collapse and apocalypse as a matter of political, ethical, and metaphysical ambiguity.