



KÄTE HAMBURGER CENTRE  
FOR APOCALYPTIC AND  
POST-APOCALYPTIC STUDIES



UNIVERSITÄT  
HEIDELBERG  
ZUKUNFT  
SEIT 1386

APOCALYPSE  
QUARTERLY  
4/23

A large, stylized illustration of a landscape. The sky is a gradient of green and yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The ground is black, and there are several dark, leafless trees. The overall style is graphic and minimalist.

# IMAGINING THE END OF TIME



# IMAGINAR **EL FIN** DE LOS **TIEMPOS**

HISTORIAS DE ANIQUILACIÓN, APOCALIPSIS Y EXTINCIÓN

EXPOSICIÓN TEMPORAL  
DEL 14 DE DICIEMBRE, 2023 AL 31 DE MARZO, 2024  
MUSEO NACIONAL DE ANTROPOLOGÍA

Entrada libre  
Martes a domingo, 9 a 18 h

Av. Paseo de la Reforma y calzada Gandhi, col. Chapultepec Polanco,  
Alc. Miguel Hidalgo, C.P. 11560, Ciudad de México

Informes: [atencion.mna@inah.gov.mx](mailto:atencion.mna@inah.gov.mx)  
[mexicoescultura.com](http://mexicoescultura.com)



Käte Hamburger Centre  
FOR APOCALYPTIC AND  
POST-APOCALYPTIC STUDIES



UNIVERSITÄT  
WUPPERTAL  
51075 ESSEN



**CULTURA**  
SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA



**INAH**



**INBAL**

# DEAR READERS,

Together with the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, CAPAS proudly presents the exhibition *Imagining the End of Time: Stories of Annihilation, Apocalypse, and Extinction*. Since you might not have the opportunity to visit the exhibition at the National Museum of Anthropology and History in Mexico City in person, you will find background information and an insight into some of the artworks on display in this issue's lead article (pp. 3-8).

Also in this issue, we introduce you to the first edited collection published by CAPAS, *Worlds Ending. Ending Worlds: Understanding Apocalyptic Transformation*,

which features a range of cutting-edge thinkers dealing with the apocalypse today (p. 9). And as always, we wish to give you a glimpse into the many activities of CAPAS, such as our participation in the International Film Festival about Ageing and Old Age (pp. 10-11), this year's cooperation of CAPAS' Apocalyptic Cinema with the International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg or various workshops in which CAPAS members and fellows have participated.

The CAPAS team wishes you an interesting and inspiring read and a joyful Christmas holiday for those who celebrate!

If you have feedback concerning the newsletter, please let us know: [capas@uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:capas@uni-heidelberg.de)

## IMAGINING THE END OF TIME STORIES OF ANNIHILATION, APOCALYPSE AND EXTINCTION by Adolfo Mantilla Osornio

**In the Mexican context, there is a recurring presence of narratives and images depicting annihilation, apocalypse, or extinction scenarios. These narratives form a complex tapestry that, woven through various dimensions embedded in cultural systems, influences how events are perceived and narrated as experiences marking the end of time. To delve into this intricate interplay, the Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies at Heidelberg University, in collaboration with the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, is organizing the exhibition *Imaginar el Fin de los Tiempos: Historias de Aniquilación, Apocalipsis y Extinción* (Imagining the End of Time: Stories of Annihilation, Apocalypse, and Extinction) at the National Museum of Anthropology and History in Mexico City.**

The exhibition will be on view at the National Museum of Anthropology and History in Mexico City from December 14, 2023 to March 31, 2024.

The exhibition aims to explore the multifaceted aspects of a complex cosmopoetic and cosmopolitical scenario. It takes contemporary narratives surrounding the "Great Acceleration" as a starting point, investigating how

these narratives manifest in cataclysmic imaginaries and apocalyptic depictions rooted in modern storytelling. These modern narratives, influenced by the Judeo-Christian eschatological tradition, served as a modulating force in Meso-

american consciousness within the Mexican context.

A substantial portion of present-day stories and representations attribute a potential sixth mass extinction episode to the phenomenon known as the Great Acceleration. Within this framework, factors labeled as anthropogenic form a network of various contributors, collectively suggesting a scenario where the Earth System is envisioned on the brink of annihilation. The narratives surrounding the Great Acceleration, shaped by a consciousness influenced by the concept of universal time, are believed to document the rise and crisis of the modern world. Nevertheless, in certain instances, a distinctive form of connection emerges. This connection

involves fossilized life forms' remnants, combined with expressions from diverse aesthetic dimensions, forming an experiential and communicative sphere. This sphere paints a picture of the multitude of mechanisms that contribute to the formation of a poetic expression centered around annihilation.

In the Nahua tradition within the Mesoamerican context, the concept of the end of time is rooted in mythical stories passed down through various practices. These stories, embedded in numerous narratives, were highlighted in various codices. By deriving meaning from cosmo-historical dimensions, these codices shaped the way certain events are remembered in modern consciousness. Termed as visions, where diverse

In a vaguely defined space created by various elements, a prominent upright figure with human-like features interacts with other elements in the image. Notably, two entities with skull-like shapes stand out. One appears suspended in the air, while the second lies on a supportive surface, enclosed within a kind of showcase. The space between these three entities is made up of vibrant colors that, while separating them, also creates a sense of proximity. Surrounding this interaction is a space defined by a relatively stable surface, yet filled with small elements that hint at organic existence. The scene's background is shaped by a seemingly flat surface outlining the place's depth, and a rectangular gap suggests another space, creating an impression of infinite depth. Thus, Arturo Miranda Videgaray's artwork, titled "Encuentros" (2009), portrays a world comprised of vaguely identifiable entities existing at the edge of definition, yet collectively forming a distinctive whole.





Ernesto Muñiz's artwork, titled "Coronavirgen" (2023), emerged as a deliberate challenge to the Catholic faith by drawing inspiration from the ongoing environmental crisis. Through the collage technique, Muñiz crafted an image of the Virgin, featuring an oxygen mask and substituting the sacred heart with the representation of SARS-CoV-2. Since 2010, the artist has employed this technique to create pieces that juxtapose celestial figures with earthly elements. Muñiz chose to display the initial version of this artwork on the street just a day before the global confinement prompted by the widespread transmission of SARS-CoV-2 was announced. For the artist, this image served as a prelude to both the end and the beginning of a new era, incorporating a reference to planet Earth to underscore the global scale of the unfolding catastrophe.

**Ernesto Muñiz:** *Coronavirgen*, 2023 | Collage | Private collection, Mexico

events are seen as apocalyptic, these depictions seem to draw from a mythical past and later integrate into a historical consciousness, being recognized as omens of future events. Various depictions, emerging at the intersection of cosmogonic and historical dimensions, were used to describe the destruction of the Mesoamerican world. They were also reshaped within discursive mechanisms originating in other consciousnesses, acquiring post-apocalyptic dimensions.

In Christian eschatology, the Book of Revelation, also known as the Apocalypse of John, is particularly significant in shaping beliefs about the end of the world and the establishment of God's final kingdom. John's visions on the island of Patmos are symbolic units that, as they traverse multiple spheres of perception, conceptualization, and symbolization of time, contribute to the emergence of eschatological awareness in the Novo-Hispanic sphere. Thus, through various adaptation mechanisms, the apocalyptic narrative complex extends beyond the narrative boundaries of the Book of Revelation, encompassing other experiences of annihilation.

A 1959 artwork by Adolfo Quinteros captures a scene where a man, a woman, and an infant appear to be fleeing from an explosion. In the foreground, a woman embraces a man and a child in a desolate setting, while in the background, a prominently depicted mushroom cloud suggests a nuclear explosion. The artwork, titled "The Last Warning", hints at a potential apocalyptic event, as suggested by the title and depicted scenario.

**Adolfo Quinteros:** *El último aviso*, 1959 | Wood engraving in black ink on paper | Collection Academia de Artes, Mexico



Especially for artists like Antonio Luquín, who views modernity as a reference that implies a temporality and, consequently, a finite point, depictions of extinction are shaped by processes associated with ideas of progress, science, and development. These processes transform into entities that generate images filled with nostalgia for the remnants of civilization. Civilization is often portrayed as a graveyard of objects that once symbolized humanity's core values. In these settings of vanished worlds, science, alongside other tenets of modern Western culture, be-

comes a part of a figurative realm after its depletion. Thus, through the landscapes, Luquín creates portraits of a space marked by its expiration—an illustration aiming to encapsulate the imaginations of extinction.



**Antonio Luquín:** *Los herederos de la tierra*, 2017 | Oil on canvas | Collection Galería Urbana, Mexico



**José Guadalupe Posada:** *Dialoguito de mamá tierra con don Cometa Halley* (detail), s/f | Direct letterpress printing | Private collection, Mexico

In the Mexican context, various imaginaries emerging from modern apocalyptic consciousness are intertwined with catastrophic events, allowing for the exploration of a broad spectrum of depictions concerning the eventual decline of the modern project. These narratives articulate a nuanced amalgamation of poetics and cataclysmic representations, shaping scenarios of catastrophic events that permeate modern imaginaries. Expressed through di-



**Adolfo Mantilla Osornio** is an Academic Coordinator for the Academy of Arts, in Mexico. He studied ethnology, German studies, art history, and anthropology. Throughout his work, he focuses on the fields of anthropology, art history museology, cultural management, postcolonial studies, as well as in semiotics, communication, and culture economics. In 2022 he was a fellow at CAPAS.

verse means, these stories acquire cosmopoetic dimensions, seemingly rooted in the apocalyptic axioms generated by pre-modern eschatologies. Among the diverse forms through which these conceptions manifest are scenarios depicting atomic annihilation or various catastrophes associated with the collapse of the modern project.

While contemporary individual and collective consciences may not operate within Mesoamerican apocalyptic cosmological frameworks, cosmological elements consistently shape narratives and depictions in the cultural context of Mexico. Stories of earthquakes, epidemics, and other catastrophic events still portray the collapse of spaces. For instance, in Rarámuri traditions, a unique connection with cosmic forces is apparent, and Wixárika narratives blend Amerindian and Christian traditions, highlighting the systematic and periodic recreation of the world through rituals. Together, these depictions outline a complex imaginary realm filled with diverse tales of annihilation, apocalypse, and extinction. ●

MUSEO NACIONAL DE ANTROPOLOGÍA  
PROGRAMA ACADÉMICO

15 DE DICIEMBRE, 2023

CONFERENCIAS

Ponentes del Käte Hamburger Center for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies (CAPAS)

11 h

Imaginar el fin de los tiempos:  
historias de aniquilación, apocalipsis  
y extinción

**Adolfo F. Mantilla Osornio**

12 h

Extinciones pre-antropocénicas:  
la historia profunda del Apocalipsis

**Robert Folger**

13 h

Modalizaciones contemporáneas del  
apocalipsis en el Cono Sur de América

**Alejandra Bottinelli**

14 h

RECESO

15 h

Nepantla, entre el tiempo  
mesoamericano y el espacio virreinal:  
reflexiones acerca del fin del mundo  
en el Centro de México

**Patricia Murrieta-Flores**

16 h

La preparación para el fin del mundo  
como profecía, predestinación y  
espectáculo mediático

**Robert Kirsch**

17 h

Teniendo en mente la brecha entre los  
mundos: extinción, cambio climático y  
preparación para el fin del mundo

**Emily Ray**

Ágora Central  
Sala de Exposiciones Temporales

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ZUGANGS  
SEIT 1386

EXPOSICIÓN TEMPORAL

# IMAGINAR EL FIN DE LOS TIEMPOS

HISTORIAS DE ANIQUILACIÓN, APOCALIPSIS Y EXTINCIÓN

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INAH



#SCIENCE  
APOCALYPSE

# WORLDS ENDING. ENDING WORLDS

## NEW EDITED COLLECTION

by Jenny Stümer

Just in time for Nikolaus, CAPAS's first edited collection, *Worlds Ending. Ending Worlds: Understanding Apocalyptic Transformation* came out in early December. The book is the first in our open access series *Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies*, which we are publishing with DeGruyter, and available for download here: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110787009/html#contents>. With this book, we tried to look at apocalypse from various angles and disciplinary perspectives in order to offer a versatile discussion of the many ends of worlds that have occupied us since the early days of CAPAS.

To give you a sense of what to expect from the book, here is the lay down: Featuring a range of cutting-edge thinkers dealing with the apocalypse today (including a few favourite former CAPAS fellows), the collection highlights the polysemic nature of apocalypse, demonstrating that apocalyptic transformations – the various shapes of “across”, “beyond”, and “other

side” implied by the end – productively entangle intriguing points of conjunction between seemingly disparate subject areas.

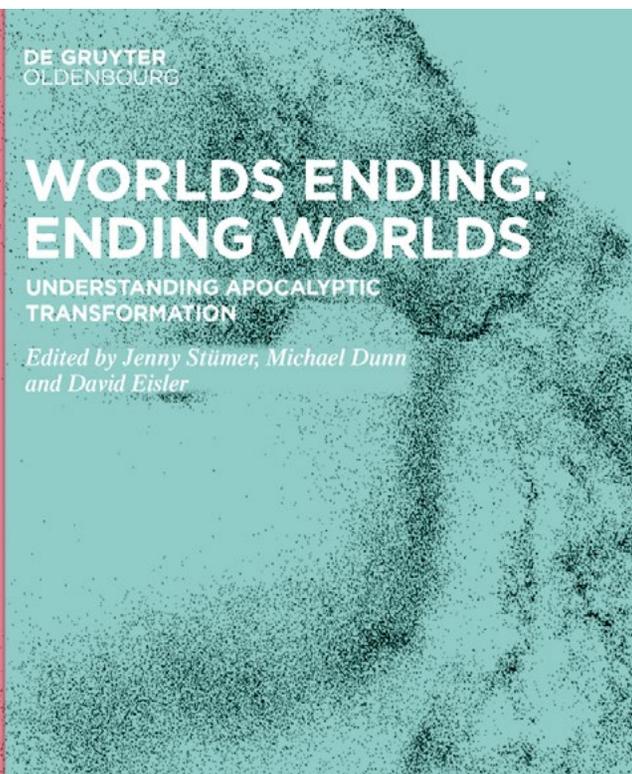
Moving from old worlds to new worlds, from world-ending experiences to apocalyptic imaginaries and, finally, from authoritarianism to activism and

advocacy, we begin to map an emerging (if age-old) and timely ground for debate. Combining traditional eschatology and philosophical conceptualisations of world and worlding with a range of historical and contemporary apocalyptic understandings and practices, the multifaceted field we are aiming to contour makes visible the myriad ways in which collective imaginations of apocalypse underpin ethical, political, and, sometimes, individual aspirations. The apocalyptic imaginary, in other words, problematises the “World” as an inevitable background to doom and destruction; instead fracturing (and potentially rethinking) the ways humans and non-humans inhabit and belong to this Earth.

Highlighting the continuous role of eschatological apocalypticism in the mobilisation of diverse movements, performances, and ideas that grapple with the means of world-making and world-breaking politics, we seek to engage apocalypse as a mode of converging different perspectives into a productive conversation and provide key points of reference for understanding old and new predicaments that are transforming our many worlds.

●●● [read more online](#)

[capas.uni-heidelberg.de](https://capas.uni-heidelberg.de)



APOCALYPTIC AND  
POST-APOCALYPTIC STUDIES



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#SCIENCE  
APOCALYPSE

## THE END OF LIFE

### INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ON AGEING AND OLD AGE

As part of CAPAS' transdisciplinary approach, the Centre participated in the Second International Film Festival about Ageing and Old Age, "Perspectives through time" (*2o Festival Internacional de Cine sobre envejecimiento. Miradas a través del tiempo*), which took place simultaneously in Uruguay, Mexico, Chile, and Germany from November 23 to 26, 2023. CAPAS collaborated with the Interdisciplinary Ageing Center (CIEn) of the University of the Republic of Uruguay, the Interdisciplinary University Seminar on Ageing and Old Age (SUIEV) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the UNAM Film Archive, the Center for Critical Studies in Contemporary Culture (CECRITICC) of the Autonomous University of Querétaro, Mexico, the Romanic Seminar, and the Center for Ibero-American Studies (HCIAS) at the University of Heidelberg. This collaboration between various universities and cultural spaces made it possible to reach broad regional and international audiences, and to include a range of important perspectives from different gender, social, and age groups.

Together with our partners in Uruguay, we organized a workshop with a focus on the end of life as apocalypse. Panelists Robert Folger (CAPAS director), Susan Watkins (Leeds Beckett University, CAPAS fellow), Timo Storck

(Berlin University of Psychology, CAPAS fellow), and Carlos Ossa (University of Chile) discussed the shorts films shown at the festival on the premise that apocalypse not only denotes world endings on a global scale, but is also a

One of the short films awarded in the CAPAS special prize category “End of life: apocalypse” is *Storage* by Mexican director Anette Diep.

The documentary follows the life of Margarito. In a house under construction, he separates the garbage he has collected during the day with the same old hands he will later use to count the pills for his schizophrenic son Beto.

relevant concept when portraying the experiences of individuals. Apocalyptic ideas associated with ageing are prevalent in current discourse, and terms like “silver tsunami” and “demographic time bomb” used to describe an ageing society, express a fear of radical socio-economic and cultural changes. On the level of the individual person, ageing is perceived as a loss of agency due to the bodily and mental transformations that the passing of time brings about, leading to the gradual disappearance of the person’s known world. Highlighting the affective and psychological dimensions of ageing, both for the person concerned and their social environment, the panelists discussed emotions such as melancholia and mourning, shared insights on the ethics of care, and shed

light on situations of particular vulnerability. Inspired by Robert Folger’s conceptual ideas of “the time that remains” (Agamben), a particular apocalyptic temporality, the conversation centered around the end of an individual world, a time and space when past, present and future are not perceived as linear, but coincide. Discussing how this particular temporality opens up the possibility of closure, and staying true to the etymology of ‘apocalypse’, the panelists analyzed moments of revelation in the films. Revelation in that sense can be understood as the construction of a narrative that, at the end, gives meaning to the entire life lived.

Bringing together scholars from philosophy, psychoanalysis, literature, and cultural studies, the workshop thus provided an opportunity to discuss new approaches to experiences of the ends of worlds and times related to ageing, which are complementary to canonical narratives. In this light, the objective of the festival was to consider, diversify, and deepen aspects of old age and ageing; and to construct non-stigmatized representations of ‘the end of life’.

The festival has set up the special prize category “End of life: apocalypse” (*El fin de la vida: apocalipsis*) for CAPAS, and Robert Folger and Theresa Meerwarth of CAPAS were part of the academic committee that selected the leading short films. We were thrilled with the range of invaluable contributions and are excited to announce that the leading short films in our prize category were *Aurora, 2068* (Sonhador Filmes, Brasil), *Juan* (Alejandro González Clemente, Spain), *Now & Then: Notes from a Fragmented Life* (Pamela Falkenberg, USA), *Songs for after a revolution* (Eduardo Soutullo, Spain), and *Storage* (Anette Diep, Mexico). ●



# APOCALYPTIC THINKING IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

Workshop Report by Jenny Stümer

**In November we organised a workshop around the notion of apocalyptic thinking in the Anthropocene. The idea was to interrogate apocalypse not simply as an object of knowledge that is explicitly (or solely) tethered to biblical redemption and religious revelation, but may also describe a practice, a method, or a genre that is particularly apt at exploring the ominous and often contested framework of the "Anthropocene".**

In fact, part and parcel of the inspiration for this workshop was a sense that the Anthropocene, however problematic as a term, in its various encounters with escalating climate emergency, looming nuclear threat and the ongoing repercussions of colonization, militarization, and racial capitalism, might generate an important reframing of 'the end of the world', whereby apocalypse allows for a much broader reconfiguration of the temporal, spatial, and sensible orientation of how we make sense of the various predicaments of our many worlds. Apocalypse, in the realm of anthropogenic apocalyptic thinking, in other words, would no longer simply describe a theological object but also emerge as an exercise that operates, as Derrida has long argued, "as a theme, a concern, a fascination, an explicit reference and the horizon ... *of a work or a task*" (1984, 30) and which, according to Hurley, therefore "does as much as it represents" (2018, 451).

Testing the grounds for such an approach, the workshop found its way into these ideas by focusing on a range of cultural and political imaginaries that grapple with potential

and actual upendings of worlds, suggesting a range of responses (helpful or not) to the various predicaments the planet and its many worlds are currently facing.

Tellingly, in popular discussions about the end of the world, the cultural politics of apocalypse are often stuck in a binary between attempts to prevent the end (thereby running the risk of largely supporting a problematic status quo) or unreserved enthusiasm to bring about the end already (thus submitting to a fantasy of radical rupture as the only means to achieve real change). In both cases, apocalypse operates as a kind of fantasmatic catalyst that has little to say about the ongoing challenges of anthropogenic shifts and human-made world-breaking/making. However, apocalyptic thinking may also speak to exhausting measures of endurance, difficult attempts to make do or efforts to simply live on in the impasse. It may invoke other ways to imagine, conceive of, remember, or desire the world and its aftermaths. And, it may serve as a particular, and at the very least critical lens into a present that feels bereft of its future or inadequate in dealing with a complex past.

Structured around a series of intriguing talks (special thanks to our excellent speakers!) and a lively group discussion with current CAPAS fellows, we used the day to explore dynamics of world-making and world-breaking through trajectories of what we termed ‘apocalyptic thinking’ in order to explore how the notion of an end of the world or the ends of worlds may open new vistas for cultural and political analyses that engage with the various gridlocks that fuel the emergencies of the Anthropocene.

Former CAPAS fellows Florian Mussgnug (who rushed in from Rome and made it on time!) and Christine Hentschel (who joined us on rather short notice, thereby saving the day!) as well as current fellow Vincent Bruyère opened the day with an intriguing panel discussion, introducing the notion of ‘late-presentism’ (Mussgnug) ‘earthlikeness’ (Bruyère) and ‘edgework’ (Hentschel) in order to lead us down the path of different directions of understanding (temporal, representational, and practical) that apocalyptic thinking might provide.

Whereas Florian Mussgnug problematized the notion of apocalyptic presentness and the means of living in the impasse, Vincent Bruyère discussed the future as a present without duration in relation to space settlement, and Christine Hentschel finally reconfigured the use of Günther Anders’ famous inclination of the “Frist” in the context of anthropogenic emergencies and climate activism in particular.

These thought-provoking talks also inspired much debate about specific structures of feelings emerging in the Anthropocene and the question of how people find orientation in an obdurately apocalyptic world, as well as considering the political consequences of these orientations. What kind of investments are upheld and why? What is the role of adaptation and preparedness

and how do we cope with trivial revelation, indifference or ambivalence?

Opening the discussion to all participants, we ultimately grappled with the very meaning of apocalypse as practice (rather than object) or discursive strategy and began a conversation about its implications for the works of specific scholars and intellectual fields at large. While there was no broad agreement in the room on any of these issues (and that seemed to be the point!) we explored, inspired by Jean Luc Nancy, the role of apocalyptic thinking for intellectual debate at large— interrogating being in common and being apart in crisis.

In the afternoon, the group was joined by Dipesh Chakrabarty, whose work had left traces on our discussions throughout. Chakrabarty attended the workshop online from Chicago and gave an intriguing talk, discussing his 2023 book, *One Planet, Many Worlds*, and thereby complementing the debate by drawing attention to the fissures between planetary doom and the un/making of specific worlds. Skeptical about the use of apocalypse more generally, Chakrabarty posed many a question to the room which prompted a lively and differentiated discussion about the potentials and limitations of apocalyptic thinking. His generous interest in the subject and attentive engagement with the group once more highlighted the multifaceted approaches to apocalypse and apocalyptic thinking that had already emerged throughout the day and saturated the final discussion with sparks of controversy and excitement.

This closing conversation thereby marked a vital and much appreciated finale to a discussion that turned out to have much to offer in debating the various ends of our worlds, but which, nevertheless, has only just begun.

To be continued... ●



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

# KATIE BARCLAY

### What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?

**Katie Barclay:** Much of my research focuses on early modern Europeans and their emotions, and that is closely wrapped up with faith practices. For early modern Christians, the apocalypse was a central part of everyday imaginaries, shaping how people thought about their lives, relationships, futures, and ends. At the same

time, we live in a world where the 'end' is held out as something within reach; this is perhaps especially the case in places like Australia where the impacts of climate change are very visible. So for me, apocalypse is shaped by a Christian imaginary of 'end points' and 'transformations', but also considered from a contemporary perspective

as we grapple with our own 'end'.

### What is your fellowship trying to achieve?

My research is exploring how families who believe they are living at the end of the world create conditions for feeling safe and building futures for themselves and their children. It was inspired by the many contemporary children who feel deep anxiety for our futures, and the parents, teachers, and governments who are themselves concerned by their emotions. My project explores early modern European families, who also believed they were living at the end of the world, but nonetheless pursued futures for themselves and chil-

dren. I consider how they did this and also how they might provide insight into how people live with uncertainty and pursue new types of futures. As a historian, I use a broad range of historical sources to build a picture of human experience, and I use theories and methods from the history of emotions to denaturalise feeling and to attend to how emotion acts as a structure for social and cultural life.

### What do you hope to take with you from the project and its results?

Before I got here, I was looking forward to working with people thinking about similar topics, and particularly saw this as an entry point into some German scholarship which I knew was fruitful but which I hadn't really looked much at. Very quickly, however, I realised that the breadth of thinking that had been done about this already in the Centre added some 'deep veins' to strands I had noticed but not deeply considered. This has been quite invigorating, and I feel like I am benefiting from readings and themes that I may not have noticed, or might have taken a long time to do so.

### To get some practical advice: What would be the three things you would definitely need in a post-apocalyptic world?

My post-apocalyptic world is utopian, so we're not so much struggling to survive as considering what it means to flourish. And I think every utopia requires music, wine, and good company.



**Katie Barclay** is Professor, Head of Historical and Classical Studies, and Director of the Fay Gale Centre for Research on Gender at the University of Adelaide. Her main areas of research include the history of emotions and family life and the history of subjectivity and identity creation, especially with respect to gender.



#FELLOW  
APOCALYPSE

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT DAVID WILSON

**What were your first thoughts when you saw the cfp for the fellowship?**

**David Wilson:** My first thought was how interesting, innovative, and timely the CAPAS call was for these fellowship applications. To me, this advertised university fellowship program was seeking out scholarship on a crucial issue – apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic possibilities – that humankind now faces

and academics struggle mightily to understand. The CAPAS call had intriguing connections to my ongoing work on prevailing imaginaries currently being used to govern and restructure cities. I pursued the opportunity immediately.

**What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?**

From my individual perspective and my disciplinary training (in geography), the apocalypse is the termination of current life and living across the planet earth (delivering a kind of ending and a pathway to a new beginning). To me, this notion of the end of the world, as prophesied in the Book of Revelation, is the short-hand entry-point for understanding this concept. A diversity of forces and processes, many of them on the present horizon of distinctive possibility, may deliver an apocalypse in, for example, nuclear catastrophe, irreparable climate change, world wars, massive earthquakes, or meteor collisions with earth.



**David Wilson** is Professor of Geography and Urban Planning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, affiliated with the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory. He is currently investigating neoliberal redevelopment in European and Asian cities.

**What is your fellowship trying to achieve?**

My fellowship research is interested in deepening our understanding of how cities and urbanization in the present moment are being built across the world. My work conceives of the current building processes of cities as being guided by a complicated deploying of imaginaries that itself root in apocalyptic visions and apocalyptic spatialities (I am specifically chronicling that Dracula-like apocalyptic images, metaphors, metonymies, and other tropes are crucial to accelerating the building of current gentrification, race-class ghettoization, and socio-spatial polarization).

**What do you hope to take with you from the project and its results?**

From developing and situating my project in CAPAS over these more than four months, I will take with me at least two key epiphanies that immediately come to mind. First, I will embody a remarkably heightened appreciation for how social, scientific, and humanities based knowledges can inform each other in a substantive way. Secondly, I will leave with a new-found appreciation for how complicated apocalyptic imaginings can be and how they are wielded as political tools to advance a wide array of urban (and other) political projects. The end product, I anticipate, will be a book produced that will exhibit nuance and sly insight as a result of, first, judiciously integrating and entangling social scientific analysis with humanities rooted insights, and second, recognizing apocalyptic imaginings as crucial resources to fostering urban political projects.

●●● [read more online](#)

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# CAPAS EVENTS

TUESDAY

09  
01

🕒 11.15 AM – 12.45 PM 📍 Neue Universität,  
Lecture Hall 14, Heidelberg

CAPAS Lecture Series

## “AGEING, APOCALYPSE AND ADAPTATION”

Public Lecture by Susan Watkins (Leeds Beckett University, UK).

TUESDAY

16  
01

🕒 11.15 AM – 12.45 PM 📍 Neue Universität,  
Lecture Hall 14, Heidelberg

CAPAS Lecture Series

## “AFGHANISTAN, APOCALYPTIC ENCOUNTERS, AND THE MAKING OF THE EARLY MODERN WORLD”

Public Lecture by William Sherman (EUNC Charlotte, US).

WEDNESDAY

17  
01

📍 Karlstorkino

Apocalyptic Cinema

## SILENT MOVIE SPECIAL WITH LIVE MUSIC BY GRAMM ART PROJECT

🕒 6.00 PM

## THE END OF THE WORLD / VERDENS UNTERGANG

Directed by: August Blom  
(1916)



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ve.

🕒 8.00 PM

## THE PLAGUE IN FLORENCE / PEST IN FLORENZ

Directed by: Otto Rippert (1919)

Scientific commentary: Thomas Christensen (Head of Preservation, Danish Film Institute), Thomas Meier (CAPAS Director).

TUESDAY

23  
01

🕒 11.15 AM – 12.45 PM 📍 Neue Universität,  
Lecture Hall 14, Heidelberg

CAPAS Lecture Series

## “FEELING SAFE AT THE END OF THE WORLD: RAISING EARLY MODERN CHILDREN”

Public Lecture by Katie Barclay (University of Adelaide, Australia).

TUESDAY

30  
01

🕒 11.15 AM – 12.45 PM 📍 Neue Universität,  
Lecture Hall 14, Heidelberg

CAPAS Lecture Series

## “FEAR OF BREAKDOWN – PSYCHO- ANALYSIS OF TIME AFTER THE END OF TIME”

Public Lecture by Timo Storck (Psychologische Hochschule Berlin).

TUESDAY

06  
02

🕒 11.15 AM – 12.45 PM 📍 Neue Universität,  
Lecture Hall 14, Heidelberg

CAPAS Lecture Series

## “APOCALYPTIC PRESENT(ISM): CONSTRUCTIONS OF TIME”

Public Lecture by Marcus Quent (Berlin University of the Arts).

WEDNESDAY

07  
02

📍 **Karlstorkino**  
**Apocalyptic Cinema**

## **DOUBLE FEATURE: DECOLONIZING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

🕒 **6.00 PM**  
**AFRICAN  
APOCALYPSE**

Directed by:  
Rob Lemkin (2020)



🕒 **8.00 PM**  
**HEART OF DARKNESS**

Directed by: Nicolas Roeg (1993)  
Scientific commentary: Rob Lemkin (film director), N.N.

FRI-SAT

15-16  
03

🕒 **8.00 PM** 📍 **Karlstorbahnhof**  
**Dance Performance & Workshop**  
**“HOW SOON IS NOW?”**

The new production, “HOW SOON IS NOW? performing cities”, by the DAGADA dance company explores individuals facing global challenges, delving into emotions and actions. From the kick-off on December 16, 2023, until the performance on March 15, 2024, a group of Heidelberg residents will form a dance chorus based on discussions, writings, and rehearsals. This creative process involves collaboration with experts at CAPAS.

In conjunction with the performance, there will be a workshop at CAPAS on 16th of March, 2024, which will look at the topics of emotions and individual behavior in view of the current global challenges from a scientific perspective.

Info: <https://www.dagada.dance/aktuelles>  
<https://www.karlstorbahnhof.de>



All CAPAS events at [www.capas.uni-heidelberg.de/events.html](http://www.capas.uni-heidelberg.de/events.html)



#PUBLIC  
APOCALYPSE

# EMPATHETIC, DIGNIFIED, AND CULTURALLY SENSITIVE IN GRIEF AND DEATH

Workshop report by Rolf Scheuermann

How do different cultures and religions cultivate a deeper understanding of how to deal with death and dying, mourning and remembrance? This was one of the questions addressed by the participants who met in Berlin for the Day of Victim Assistance and Victim Protection.

**On Tuesday, November 14, 2023, participants gathered for the Day of Victim Assistance and Victim Protection, an event organized by the German Victim Commissioner at the *Tagungswerk Berlin*. The assembly, comprising approximately two hundred attendees, included German federal victim commissioners and representatives from various German victim support organizations. The primary focus of the gathering was to explore how individuals affected by acts of violence could be treated in an empathetic, dignified, and culturally sensitive manner.**

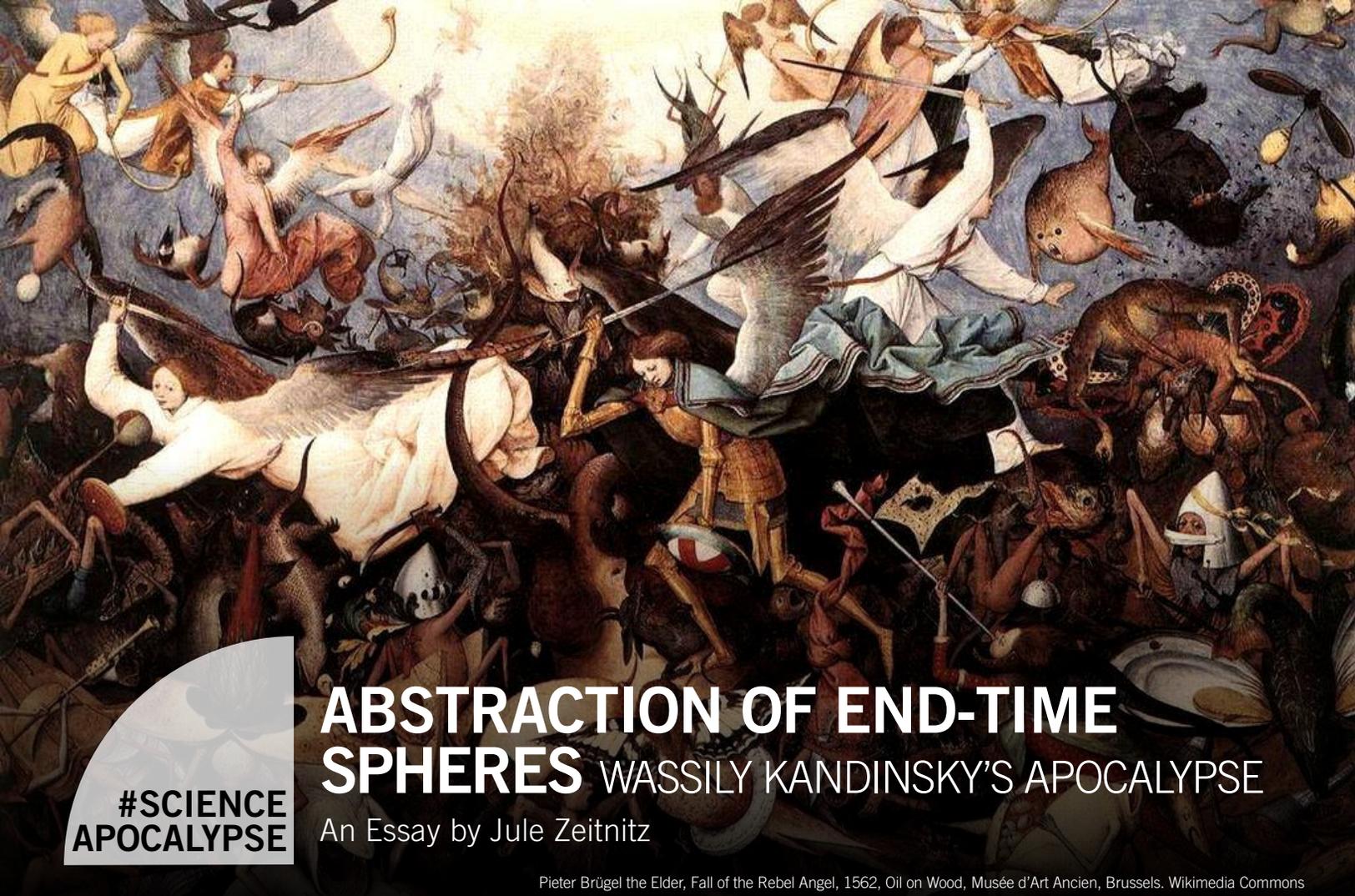
Esteemed presenter Shelly Kupferberg guided the program, commencing with a welcoming speech by Angelika Schluck, State Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Justice. Following this, Richard Sonnenschein, the European Commission's Director of 'Criminal Justice' in the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, delivered a brief lecture introducing the Commission's propositions to enhance the rights of victims in the European Union. Subsequently, a panel discussion delved into the current state of victim support in Germany and the potential implications of the proposed changes to the EU Victims' Rights Directive.

During further sessions before and after lunch, attendees had the opportunity to participate in various workshops tailored to their interests. Johannes Eurich, Director of the Institute for the Study of Christian Social Services at Heidelberg University, and Rolf Scheuermann of CAPAS, Heidelberg University, conducted

two workshop sessions on the theme "Empathetic, Dignified, and Culturally Sensitive in Grief and Death."

The workshop sessions aimed to cultivate a deeper understanding of dealing with death and dying, as well as grief and remembrance, in various cultural and religious contexts. After brief introductory speeches by the organizers, participants were encouraged to share their own experiences and pose questions. The group then engaged in discussions on situational approaches for handling grief and remembrance with empathy and cultural sensitivity.

Before the Day of Victim Assistance and Victim Protection 2023 was ceremonially concluded by Pascal Kober, Commissioner for the Victims of Domestic Terrorist Activities of the Federal Ministry of Justice, the organizers of the individual workshops presented the takeaways of the sessions to the assembly. ●



#SCIENCE  
APOCALYPSE

# ABSTRACTION OF END-TIME SPHERES

## WASSILY KANDINSKY'S APOCALYPSE

An Essay by Jule Zeitnitz

Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Fall of the Rebel Angel, 1562, Oil on Wood, Musée d'Art Ancien, Brussels. Wikimedia Commons

**At the beginning of the 20th century, Europe was facing a unique situation, reflected in the interests and worldview of the population. New technical and scientific developments such as radio waves and x-rays, as well as the emerging Theosophy Movement, characterized this period. The First World War brought with it an unprecedented level of devastation. Not necessarily in the number of casualties, as the plague had left its mark in European memory, but in the extend of the threat of total destruction in relatively short time due to newly developed war techniques. The use of poison gas for example expanded the apocalyptic image catalogue.**

Art is and has always been one of the most valuable sources for approaching the inner world; the values, contemporary dreams, desires and concerns of societies. Despite the great influence of the performing arts and literature, the focus of this essay will be on the visual arts, primarily painting.

Styles such as Impressionism are an expression of the desire to bring a more subjective perception to the canvas. Expressionism went one step further and aimed to bring this subjective perception, combined with inner, personal and emotional processes, to the outside world. Abstraction

presents another step towards detachment from the material, mimetically reproduced world, opening up new spheres that had previously not been visible in this way. In the early 20th century, both new worlds and new catastrophic scenarios were opening up. To what extent did the inner world of European artists, formed by these circumstances, of manifest itself in painting? One possible answer to this lies in the various works of art with sometimes more, sometimes less explicit apocalyptic pictorial themes. Due to the increasingly subjective possibilities of representation, there were no longer any formal limits as to what the end

times should look like and abstraction in particular paved the way for a multilayered contemplation of the apocalypse.

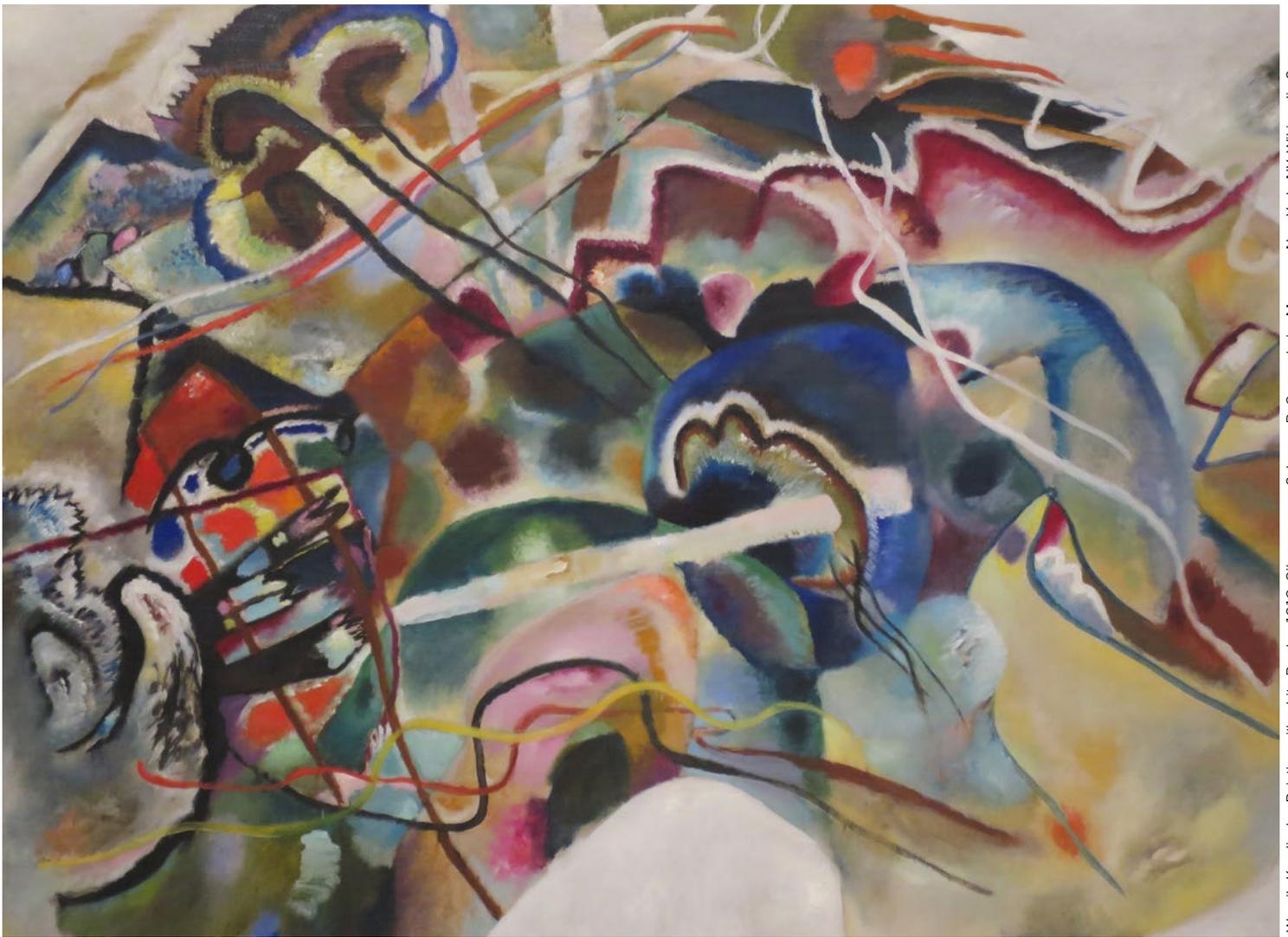
**“In the early 20th century, both new worlds and new catastrophic scenarios were opening up.”**

One of the most famous representatives not only of abstraction and early 20th century painting in general, but also of the artistic representation of eschatology, is Wassily Kandinsky. He can serve as a prime example for the artistic processing of such themes, as he not only created visual art, but also left behind a large number of writings and publications in which he explored his understanding of abstraction, space, time and eschatological ideas.

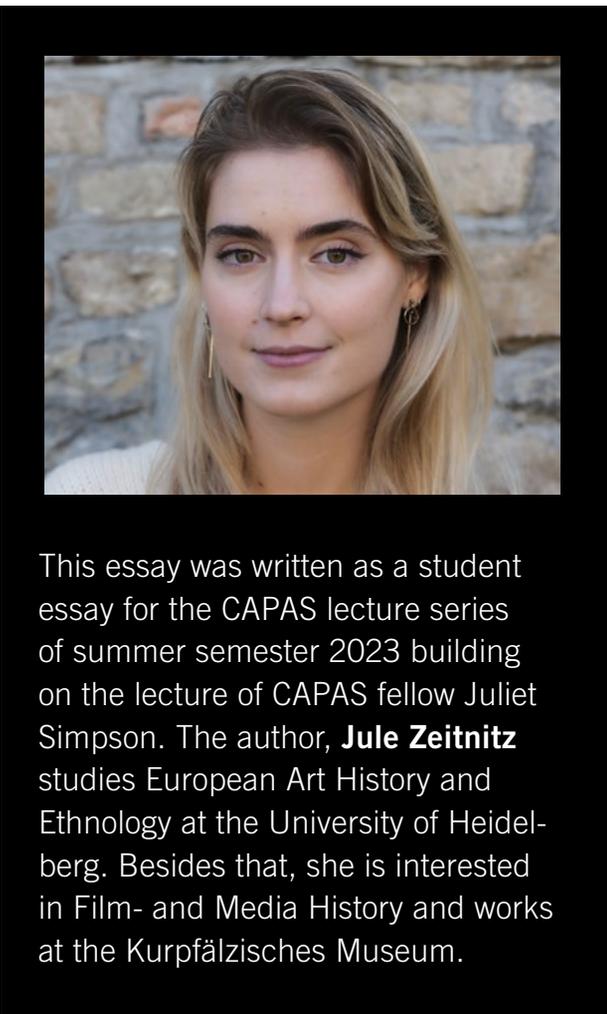
In this essay, I would like to argue that Kandinsky found a deeply personal approach to apocalyptic representations in his progressive development of an abstract painting style, breaking away from the physical and temporal boundaries of the material world and the painting that imitated it. Works of art that deal with the apocalypse have always existed, but the aim here is to show that Kandinsky created his own, innovative iconography for his version of it, in which he worked with the dissolution of spatial and temporal dimensions.

The research of Professor Rose-Carol Washton Long is fundamental to the thesis, above all her publication „Kandinsky’s Abstract Style: The Veiling of Apocalyptic Folk Imagery“, dated 1975, as well as Professor Juliet Simpson’s lecture „Time Beyond Time: Revelatory Worlds – Imagining the Eschaton in Object, Image and Word, 1919-1933“ as part of the





Wassily Kandinsky. Painting with white border, 1913, Oil on canvas, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY. Wikimedia Commons.



This essay was written as a student essay for the CAPAS lecture series of summer semester 2023 building on the lecture of CAPAS fellow Juliet Simpson. The author, **Jule Zeitnitz** studies European Art History and Ethnology at the University of Heidelberg. Besides that, she is interested in Film- and Media History and works at the Kurpfälzisches Museum.

2023 lecture series „Apocalyptic Space and Time“ organized by the Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies (CAPAS). Finally, the aforementioned publications by Kandinsky himself not only provide a generous insight into the artist's theories, his engagement with apocalyptic themes and

his artistic and ideological ideas, but also act as a mirror of the art world and society of the early 20th century.

It is no exaggeration to say that reality was shaken at the beginning of the 20th century (Friedel et al. 2017). X-rays, radio waves and Einstein's theory of relativity called any previously irrefutable space-time assumptions into question. Nothing in the world seemed to be certain any more, at any time a new invention or discovery could throw the former generally accepted knowledge overboard, at any time a new conflict or widespread war could disrupt the structure of an entire continent. An all-encompassing end of the world as we had known therefore no longer seemed like a terrifying vision to help us to live a God-fearing life, but all too realistic.

●●● [read more online](https://capas.uni-heidelberg.de)  
[capas.uni-heidelberg.de](https://capas.uni-heidelberg.de)

#FELLOW  
APOCALYPSE

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT TIMO STORCK

**What were your first thoughts when you saw the cfp for the fellowship?**

**Timo Storck:** I had already heard about CAPAS before, so when I saw the call for applications, I merely thought: Let's go then...! What fascinated me most about CAPAS and about the idea to become a fellow was to think about "the post" in terms of transgressing anything that can be thought so far. Or to deconstruct any fixed image of an "afterwards".



**What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?**

Since I am a psychologist, there is not much consideration of apocalyptic and postapocalyptic thinking in my discipline so far, in terms of research topics. There is, however, a more general awareness of various

crises that challenge mental health and resilience. Since I am also a psychotherapist, I embrace this in the consulting room more often than in lab. Images of breakdown have always been something patients are bringing to sessions, both personal and on a larger scale. Finally, since I am also a psychoanalyst, the idea of a breakdown is of key interest for me, also in terms of interdisciplinary encounters with philosophy and other fields.

**What is your fellowship trying to achieve?**

In my CAPAS project I explore views on non-linear time. That means, I focus on how "later" events have an impact on

"former" ones, or even set these into motion. For example, in trauma we see how something rather trivial can serve as kind of an entry lane to suffer the full emotional impact of disastrous events "from before". In psychoanalysis, we have concepts like "fear of breakdown" to think about the mutual back-and-forth impact of events onto each other. "Fear of breakdown" means that someone lives in constant fearful expectation of an upcoming event – which actually has already happened but couldn't be mentally represented or worked through in a proper way. With these preparatory works in mind, I will then explore temporality and imageries of decline a) in mental illnesses and b) in fiction (e.g. tv series).

**What are the aspects you are looking forward to at CAPAS?**

I am strongly looking forward to working together and getting to know the different perspectives of my fellow fellows from different regions, disciplines etc. Most prominently, I like the idea of using discourse as a method to arrive at new input and conclusions. Therefore, I also look forward to combine working on my CAPAS project with the research in my working group.

**To get some practical advice: What would be the three things you would definitely need in a post-apocalyptic world?**

Something to take notes, probably. Do note pad and a pen count as two items? Then I'd go for these two, alongside a person to discuss life after the end with.

**Timo Storck** is Professor for Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy at Psychologische Hochschule Berlin. His research focuses include conceptual skills in psychotherapy, conceptual research and methodology, psychoanalytic theory of illness and film psychoanalysis.

●●● read more online

[capas.uni-heidelberg.de](https://capas.uni-heidelberg.de)

#PUBLIC  
APOCALYPSE



# APOCALYPTIC CINEMA

MEETS THE 72nd  
INTERNATIONAL FILM  
FESTIVAL MANNHEIM-HEIDELBERG

## THE APOCALYPTIC ENTERS SUBTLY

Not a classic end-time film: in [FAMILY PORTRAIT](#) (2023), the feature film debut of US director Lucy Kerr, the apocalypse subtly enters the life of a large American family. On November 22nd, the Apocalyptic Cinema series collaborated with the 72nd International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg (IFFMH) in the screening of *Family Portrait* at the sold-out Gloria Cinema in the heart of Heidelberg's city centre. Part of the CAPAS film series is an expert commentary and public discussion after the film. This time, the film director discussed the end-time imaginary in the film with one of the CAPAS directors, Robert Folger.



With *Family Portrait*, Lucy Kerr opens up access to end-time worlds of experience that are complementary to conventional depictions and narratives of apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic scenarios. A family comes together on a huge estate in Texas. For the mother, Barbara, there is nothing more important than organising a family photo - until she disappears without a trace. Only one of the daughters, Katy, seems to be interested in what happened to her mother while the rest of the family is seemingly in denial about the disappearance.

Director Lucy Kerr drew inspiration for *Family Portrait* from the works of poet Edgar Allan Poe, director John Carpenter, and philosopher Roland Barthes, who interpreted family photos as an attempt to achieve immortality. During the discussion, Lucy Kerr emphasized that she found herself finally to be understood when hearing about CAPAS selecting her film to be part of the Apocalyptic Cinema series. Robert Folger opened the discussion with the connotation that a family can be perceived as one world; when a family member is lost, this world experiences a tremendous change, an upheaval. It is the end of the world as the family knew it before.

Furthermore, drawing on Frank Kermode's theory in his work *The Sense of an Ending* that one can only tell a story if one has an end in mind, one of the apocalyptic interpretations of the film is that there is something happening outside of the story. Surely, something is impeding, although the 'end' is not discussable for most of the characters. Paradoxically, when looking at a family as an institution with its intergenerational setting, it is meant to be a story that never ends. Generation after generation lives. Thus, taking a family portrait is an attempt to document the family, freeze a moment in time, and thus immortalize the family.

The family in the film cannot process the loss, since they are not talking about it. Psychoanalysis explains that when somebody is unable to process the loss of a loved one through mourning, it becomes melancholia. Concluding on that, Lucy Kerr emphasized that she aimed to show that not processing the loss of a family member within the family erodes and with that erases the family.

Also, the film was developed during the pandemic, which led the director to question the collective need of so many people to deny the facts and ignore what was happening. Interestingly, the main protagonist is moving forward in the film but keeps getting pulled back, since unlike her, the family is unable to see that one life in their family ended. This paralysis, a situation of being stuck, of not being able to move forward, can also be a form of apocalypse.

The film and the theoretical discussion notably moved everyone in the cinema; one could tell through questions raised by the public and voices in the audience. A win for all participants, and an exciting outlook for all prospective meetings. ●



The **International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg (IFFMH)** was celebrating its 72nd edition this year from 16 to 26 November. Festival visitors could discover current films by international directors and welcome a large number of guests and filmmakers from all over the world. The programme included over 60 films by rising stars of the international film world, works by established filmmakers and cinematic rediscoveries.



#FELLOW  
APOCALYPSE

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT SUSAN WATKINS

**What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?**

**Susan Watkins:** As you probably know, higher education in the UK, especially in the humanities, has been under sustained attack from the central government – the government recently tweeted about

‘cracking down’ on ‘low value’ degrees – and by this they mean humanities degrees for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (lots of members of the government have humanities degrees themselves, but that’s OK if you’re



**Susan Watkins** is Professor of Women’s Writing at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Leeds Metropolitan University, UK. Her research focuses on contemporary women’s writing and feminist theory, with particular interests in dystopia, apocalyptic fiction, ageing and the future.

posh). So, these are apocalyptic times for anyone teaching and researching English Literature, but also for the humanities in general, where there is a crisis in the perceived value of the humanities, who it is for, what it does that is worthwhile. In the context of other apocalyptic changes like Brexit, Covid, anthropocentric climate change and right-wing populism, we need more than ever to sustain research and study of the humanities, literature and culture. I often think of the ‘slow apocalypse’ described in something like Octavia Butler’s *Parable* novels (written in the 1990s but set in 2024 onwards), where there is no one all-consuming destructive apocalyptic event; instead, there is a horrible endurance of a series of slowly-occurring apocalyptic changes to society and culture. And people be-

lieve for a long time that these can be remedied.

**What is your fellowship trying to achieve?**

My project is about how we view ageing in apocalyptic terms in the Global North, as a disaster for both the individual and society. For example, we use phrases like the ‘silver tsunami’ and ‘demographic ticking time bomb’ to refer to the implications of an ageing population, and we think of ageing as a process of apocalyptic personal decline. Instead, I want to think about how we could view ageing as a process of adaptation – in the cultural studies sense of adapting texts from one medium to another (e.g. novel to film). Theorists of adaptation in the humanities have moved away from discussing how *faithful* an adaptation is to its source text and towards thinking of it as a creative space for improvisation. Perhaps we could think about ageing in those terms instead? I will be looking at how speculative fiction is capable of adapting ideas and sources in order to offer different visions of ageing and the future.

**To get some practical advice: What would be the three things you would definitely need in a post-apocalyptic world?**

I think a huge ‘Prepper’ style bunker – that’s the only thing that’s going to cut it. But you couldn’t share that with everybody, which is inherently unequal/ unfair and that’s a big problem. I think I’d be like the mother figure in *The Road* – just call it and say time’s up.

#PEOPLE  
APOCALYPSE

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT VINCENT BRUYERE

**What were your first thoughts, when you saw the call for applications for the fellowship?**

**Vincent Bruyere:** Probably something like this: “I can’t believe there are still places that not only show such a degree of commitment to humanistic inquiry but

are also willing to put forward interdisciplinary collaboration rather than tried and tested disciplinary boundaries, and take the risk of bringing people together in the hope that they will work together and produce something interesting. How

often does one come across an opportunity like this one? I have to be part of it.”

**What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?**

I am interested in the apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic dynamic as a humanist fantasy that pitches culture in survivalist terms. It is like a bottom line to which it is always quite easy to revert when running out of arguments and ideas. On the one hand we picture wastelands in which books, canonical works, and the memory of a different time mattered as never before, while on the other departments of humanities are closing, enrollment dwindling, and academic presses folding in.

But I am also interested in the apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic dynamic as method, and even as a pedagogy; that is, as a way to frame and approach objects found in the historical record. A lot of energy tends to be spent in humanistic inquiry, especially in early modern studies, on placing objects in their time, which usually means the time of their production/publication—whatever stands for inception.

In my work, I tend to privilege the context in which objects from the past survived, or, depending on the scenario, did not survive. The post-apocalyptic lens brings attention to non-traditional ways of doing historical or historically-minded work with texts and objects from the past. It brings me to ask how we can picture a different future for the study of the past, and more specifically for a particular way of accessing the past through literary and artistic work. Or, how can we summon a non-reactionary argument and wasteland fantasies, when it comes to making a case for interpretive work, close reading, and cultural analysis as a way to generate knowledge?

**What are some of your favourite pop culture references to the/an (post)apocalypse)?**

I keep coming back to *Contagion* (Soderbergh, 2011) in my work. But my guiltiest pleasure, the one I’m not even willing to redeem through scholarship remains *The Day After Tomorrow* (Emmerich, 2004).



**Vincent Bruyere** is Associate Professor of French and affiliate faculty in the Center for the Study of Human Health at Emory University in Atlanta. His research draws on literary theory, visual culture, and the history of the body in an effort to assess the impact of end-time scenarios on modes of humanistic inquiry, especially on modes of valuing the historical record.

#PUBLIC  
APOCALYPSE

# END TIME

by Robert Folger

## THE NEW FEAR OF THE END OF THE WORLD



Catastrophism and apocalyptic depictions of real existential threats stifle the ability to act, according to the main thesis of author Christian Jakob (2nd from left) in his new book.

Discussing with him were Kira Vinke (3rd from left), project leader at the Center for Climate and Foreign Policy of the German Council on Foreign Relations in Potsdam, Robert Folger (right), director of CAPAS, and moderator Katrin Gottschalk (left), chief editor of the *taz*.

On October 18, Christian Jakob, author and journalist at the Berlin *tageszeitung* (*taz*), presented his latest book-length publication in the Rote Salon (Red Saloon) of the iconic Volksbühne (People's Theatre) in Berlin. His book is titled *Endzeit. Die neue Angst vor dem Weltuntergang* (End Time. The New Fear of the End of the World). The first part of the presentation was a round table with the author including Kira Vinke, project leader at the Center for Climate and Foreign Policy of the German Council on Foreign Relations in Potsdam, Robert Folger, director of CAPAS, and moderator Katrin Gottschalk, chief editor of the *taz*. The group discussed key topics and ideas in Jakob's book.

Christian Jakob's starting point is rampant fears, particularly among younger people, in the face of a polycrisis (ecology, war, political and economic instability, pandemics). The fears, he argues, suffocate hopes and visions for a livable or even better future. *Endzeit* explores the reasons and consequences of these fears with a particular focus on the role of the media.

The discussion at the roundtable revolved primarily around Jakob's main thesis that catastrophism and apocalyptic framing of real existential threats evoke feelings of powerlessness, despair and apathy, and ultimately stifle agency and the pursuit of already existing and possible avenues

toward solutions of our current problems. Jakob countered the arguments that apocalyptic framings of crises may be necessary to provoke actions as well as that sober assessments of existential risks could be abused or could inspire denial narratives by underscoring the seriousness and complexity of our perceived end times.

The prevailing focus on the climate crisis in the discussion of a book about a polycrisis and ubiquitous fear implicitly buttressed Jakob's argument that we need a holistic approach instead of fear-guided single-mindedness. The book presentation concluded with a reading by the author.

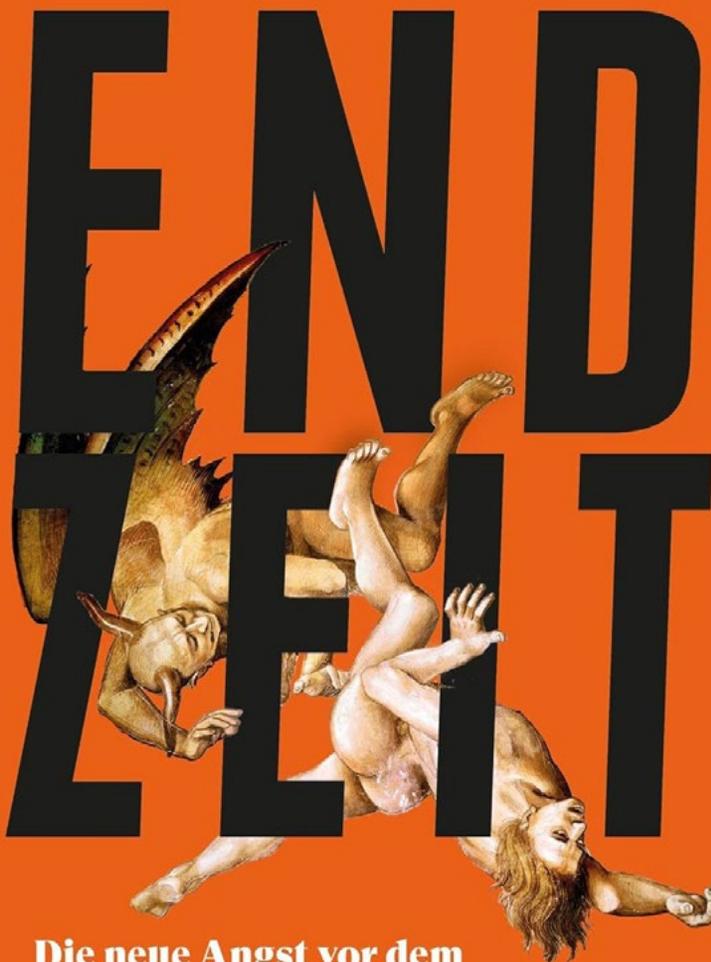
# APOCALYPSE NOW?

## ABOUT THE BOOK

In a world full of crises, the fear of the end is growing, especially among young people. And it's not just about climate change: ecology, war, inflation, and pandemics are combining to create a polycrisis and undermine the belief in a future that can be shaped – something that many no longer seem able to imagine.

With analytical acumen, Christian Jakob examines the causes and consequences of these fears on our society: How and why do the media contribute to a negatively distorted perception today? How does the fear of collapse influence the relationship between parents and children? How are right-wingers and profiteers fuelling fears of doom? What consequences do these have for democracy? And what makes some people capable of acting while others feel powerless?

**Christian Jakob**



**Die neue Angst vor dem  
Weltuntergang und der  
Kampf um unsere Zukunft** Ch.Links VERLAG

**“Christian Jakob is an  
absolutely  
independent spirit  
with a strong  
sense of justice.”**

*Jean Ziegler*

Jakob dissects the mechanisms of doomsday fears and shows why, despite everything, there is still reason for optimism.

Publishing House: Ch. Links Verlag  
Publication date: 19.09.2023  
ISBN: 978-3-96289-206-7  
304 pages, German

Photo: "The 'Faro del Fin del Mundo' © Alejandra Bottinelli Wolleter



# FRONTIERS, IMAGES BEYOND THE END OF THE WORLD

by Alejandra Bottinelli Wolleter

At the Universidad Nacional de Tierra del Fuego, La Antártica y las Islas del Atlántico Sur (National University of Tierra del Fuego, Antarctica and South Atlantic Islands) (UNTDF), in Ushuaia, Argentina, the International Congress "[Fronteras, Imágenes más allá del Fin del Mundo](#)" ("Frontiers, Images beyond the End of the World") was held from 1 to 4 November 2023, with the participation of researchers and artists from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, France and Italy.

The conference brought together researchers and artists interested in exploring the concept of the border in the arts, wondering about the life of images and how, in particular, these are produced from a border point of view that considers the border as a metamor-

phic territory, a space of margin and inflection. The meeting was particularly interested in revealing subaltern experiences, as well as counter-narratives and resistances, which open up to the multiplicity of relations and reflections that could inspire the multiform territory

of Tierra del Fuego and Ushuaia as a “vortex” city as “border, shore and margin”, from where we wanted to rethink “the very idea of a delimited world”.

At the meeting I presented advances in my research on the indigenous peoples of Tierra del Fuego; thus, in my paper “Aparecer pueblos-mundos: imágenes para conjurar la destrucción de los mundos” (Appearing peoples-worlds: images to conjure up the destruction of worlds). I addressed various forms of restitutive intervention work on the image of indigenous peoples subjected to the destruction of their worlds in the context of the colonisation of the large island of Tierra del Fuego, in southern Patagonia. I approached photographic and audiovisual interventions that interrogate the history of the radical, apocalyptic violence exercised by the multiple alliance of European and Latin American businessmen and states against the peoples, nature, space and the integral experience of those who inhabited that part of the

world. I proposed to think about how, through imaginary montage, the re-appearance of worlds, of bodies, of their histories, their agency and their stories is produced. In turn, all of these factors produce the (apocalyptic) revelation of those experiences that were inserted into opacity or extreme visibility (as in the case of the predatory photographs of the colonial machine, taken by the Romanian businessman and coloniser Julius Popper), or rather made to disappear by genocidal and ecocidal colonial violence.

Likewise, I was interested in observing the ways in which, through the montage of times and memories, the images produce the revelation of the contemporaneity of these lost pasts in their quality of alterities that critically intercept and, with this, illuminate the present in its character of multiple crisis. In addition to this, I interpret how they allow us to re-create an imagination that lets us think of other possible futures with and from the experiences of these violated peoples-worlds. The proposal addressed the “novel-artefact” by Galo Ghigliotto, *El museo de la Bruma* (2019), some images belonging to Julius Popper’s album (1886-1887), and interventions made by the Colectivo artístico Última Esperanza and audiovisual works such as the documentary “Yikwa ni Selk’nam” (we are the Selk’nam) (2002), by Christian Aylwin.

The Congress was organised by the Facultad de Artes de la Universidad Nacional de La Plata (FDA-UNLP), the Área de Antropología Visual de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Buenos Aires (FFyL, UBA), the Universidad Nacional de Tierra del Fuego, La Antártica y las Islas del Atlántico Sur (UNTDF), Argentina, and the Universidad de Valparaíso (UV), Chile. ●



**Alejandra Botinelli Wolleter**

holds a PhD and Master in Latin American Studies from the University of Chile. She is Assistant Professor at the Department of Literature of said university. Her research and teaching work

addresses the figurations of the body in the current narratives of Chile, Argentina, and Peru, and the modalizations of modernity and modernisms in the discourses and intellectual writings of the late 19th century in Latin America. In 2021, she was one of the first fellows of CAPAS, which was founded this year.

#SCIENCE  
APOCALYPSE

## THE CLIMATE ENDGAME

**Wars, extinction of various species, climate catastrophes – the list of crises in daily news coverage goes on and on. As a result, one in three people regularly avoid the news. And the trend is rising, as the latest [Reuters Digital News Report](#) shows. But what kind of communication is needed to empower people to become part of the necessary transformation instead of retreating into their private spheres? Can this only be achieved through constructive and positive stories? Or would it be much more appropriate to talk more honestly about apocalyptic scenarios, collapse, and a “climate endgame” in light of climate science findings?**

In 2024, the Institute of Meteorology and Climatology at the University of Hanover and the Hanover University of Applied Sciences and Arts will embark on a transdisciplinary research journey into the potential of dystopian narratives in climate communication. A recent kick-off workshop in December 2023 brought together a group with a diverse set of perspectives:

climate scientists, social scientists, psychologists, journalists, and activists from various groups including Last Generation and Extinction Rebellion. Thomas Meier and Philipp Schrögel joined the workshop as representatives from CAPAS.

The starting point as well as namesake [for the project](#) comes from the stirring

article '[Climate Endgame: Exploring Catastrophic Climate Change Scenarios](#)' from 2022, which states: "Could human-induced climate change lead to a global societal collapse or even the extinction of humanity? At present, this is a dangerously under-researched topic." Reactions to this paper in the scientific community as well as [across the media](#) reflected [the ongoing debate](#) between the potential risks and benefits of using drastic and or apocalyptic messages and images in climate change communication.

But what potential do dystopian narratives offer for climate communication? What follows from accepting the possibility of a collapse, from considering that climate emergency can no longer be averted, but must be integrated into social fields of action?

In addition to the natural sciences – where the project partially originates – the transdisciplinary approach includes humanities and social science perspectives as well as arts and societal perspectives in order to explore how realistic such discourses on the future really are, as well as the anti-fatalism within these discourses. Literary scholar Emanuel Herold notes that "instead of clinging to the unrealisable goal of 'stopping' climate change, the aim must be to go beyond fantasies of doom and show the scope for a better future in a world transformed by the climate," and goes on to ask: "How is a desirable future even conceivable?

Climate scientists, social scientists, psychologists, journalists and activists discussed the potential of dystopian narratives in climate communication.

The upcoming project aims to design a series of events that conveys the difficult-to-accept state of research of an endgame situation in such a way that productive appropriation becomes possible in a network of actors from several social subfields. The project team understands 'productive appropriation' as any kind of acceptance of the topoi of the endgame paradigm, which needs to be considered in public commu-

nication. What cultural resources do we have to prevent our view of the future from being exhausted by forms of catastrophism? In a time far removed from utopia, is it not precisely appropriate to develop utopian narratives?"

We are excited to see what types of communicative formats and which results will arise from this project. One intersection with CAPAS will be an upcoming collaboration of our Apocalyptic Cinema with Herrenhausen Science Movie Nights by Volkswagen Foundation in 2024 at [Xplanatorium](#) in Hannover. More details will be revealed later! ●





#PEOPLE  
APOCALYPSE

NEW AT CAPAS

## MELANIE LE TOUZE

**What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?**

**Melanie Le Touze:** The answer to what the apocalypse means to me depends on the perspective from which you are asking the question. In the current discourse, it intertwines existential fear and ecological

concerns. This narrative serves as a lens through which one can explore the fragility of human existence and the precarious state of our planet. Initially, my perception of the apocalypse was shaped by familial fascination with world-en-

dings, so in my childhood, the apocalypse was always something I feared. Exposure to diverse apocalyptic depictions in science fiction expanded my understanding, revealing the potential for new beginnings and changes. Even during my studies in history and romance languages, my primary focus was on applying ecocriticism to literature or analyzing artistic productions from societies or groups that were exposed to catastrophes. My perspective evolved to view the apocalypse as an opportunity for resilience, adaptation, and renewal.

Now, I see the “apocalypse” as the ending of a world, rather than the ending of the world, as a philosophical mirror that reflects the anxieties and aspirations of the contemporary moment. I would consider it as an entry into a dialogue that transcends

individual perspectives and embraces the interconnection of humanity and the environment and explores alternative social structures.

**What are you trying to achieve in your current project?**

My research background has guided me towards exploring open and transparent scientific practices, promoting transdisciplinary research, and engaging non-academic audiences, particularly through artistic projects. Joining CAPAS’s scientific communication team aligns with my goal to transform and innovate communication methods and to share researchers’ insights. Collaborating with scientists from diverse fields at CAPAS offers me the opportunity to develop effective knowledge dissemination. I am eager to learn and grow in the field of science communication, focusing on questions related to the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic world. This opportunity allows me to contribute to informing and involving audiences beyond academia and creating new knowledge.

**What are the aspects you are looking forward to at CAPAS?**

Although I’m not an expert in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic issues, I look forward to get insights from fellow researchers and explore their research topics. As part of this interdisciplinary team, I aim to develop innovative communication strategies. My goal is to organize events that bridge diverse communities, intra-academic and beyond academics.



**Melanie Le Touze** supports the Science Communication team at CAPAS in expanding projects that bridge the gap between art and science. During her DAAD lectureships in Nantes and Bordeaux, she developed various initiatives that forged connections between the academic realm and the fields of theater, comics, cartoons, literature, photography, and activism.

●●● [read more online](#)

[capas.uni-heidelberg.de](http://capas.uni-heidelberg.de)

## IMPRINT

### Publisher

CAPAS  
Käte Hamburger Centre  
for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies

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The CAPAS-Newsletter is available online at:  
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