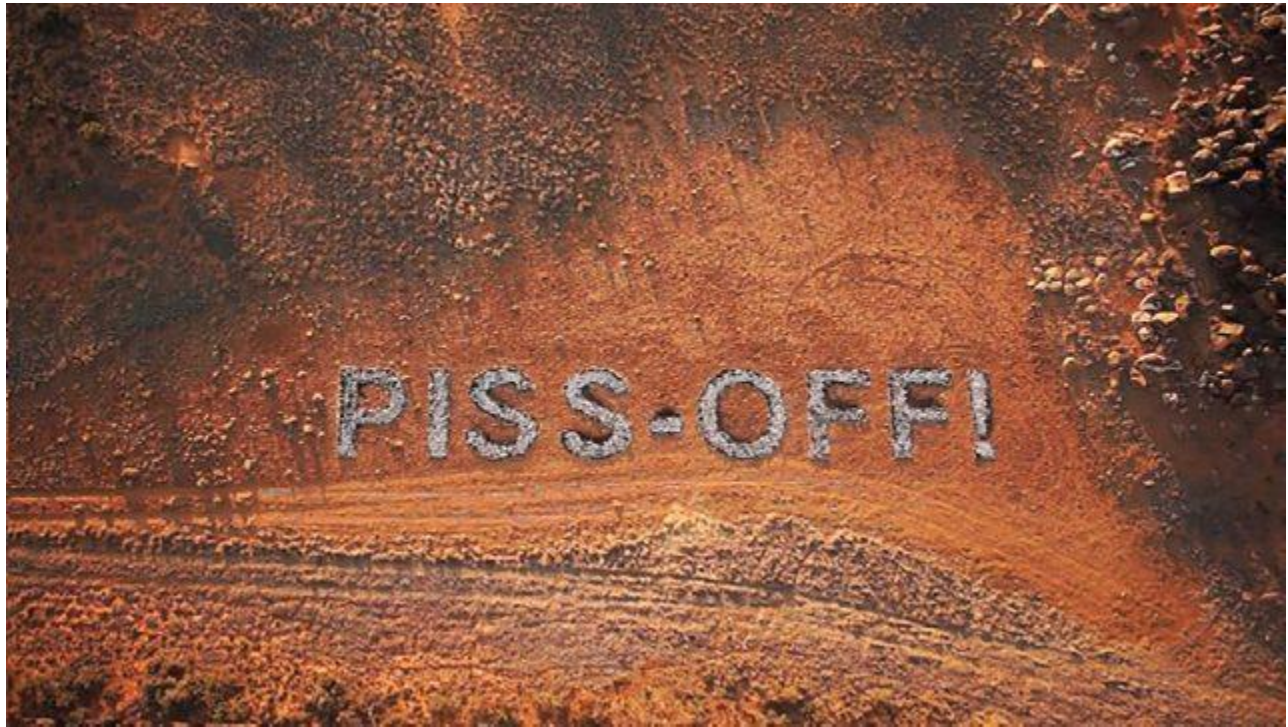


ARTTHROB



Student Review: 'When Tomorrow Comes'

By **Keren Bauman**

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*So when tomorrow comes
life gives us a big hug
a magic kiss to erase the political fuck
a magic kiss to bring out the
animal in us...*

*when tomorrow comes... finally Europe is
burning again- Europe is burning again
at last...at the end of times...*
–Volker Marz video installation

Curators Michael Titelstad, Jyoti Mistry and Jacki McInnes assemble works that visually depict what the apocalypse might look like, specifically in South Africa. Whilst some of the art works are newly

created specifically for this theme, others predate the exhibition. This subtle fact emphasises the strength and importance of the theme as a connective device for these heavily symbolic, philosophical artworks. It also highlights that the ideas being explored are not new and have troubled artists and society for some time. The curators seem to suggest that this fatalist assumption that 'life as we know it' will inevitably cease to exist stems from a two-part legacy. On the one hand, the Christian book of Revelations in the New Testament offers a deterministic view leading man to the apocalypse. On the other hand this end is constructed by the new prophets of doom such as the media, news, movies and various forms of popular culture. The prophets of doom sensationalise certain issues like; consumerism, pollution, terrorism and the growing divide between the rich and poor. These issues are used to construct a view of the world that is beyond repair. The artists both local and international resist hyperbole and these predictions of chaos by creating personal responses to this theme. This exhibition offers an un-sensationalised view of what the end could look like.

The exhibition originally shown in Johannesburg at the Wits Museum of Art was brought to the Michaelis Gallery in Cape Town. The various artworks all placed in close proximity to each other, invite the viewer to reflect and contrast the ideas being explored in each respective artwork. The intimate space of the Michaelis Gallery is beneficial in ensuring the ideas explored in the artworks are carried across and brought to mind when facing each artwork. As one moves from one artwork to another, one is not sure whether any of them are utopian visions for the future as the artworks become increasingly cynical and dark.

Willem Boshoff's landscape photographs entitled *Earth Signal (white ash)*, 2014, center upon imagining what Mother Nature would say to man if she could speak. The four, same-sized and framed aerial shots of the rocky Karoo contain the words piss-off. The words in each photograph are made using different naturally-found materials from the Karoo. Considering the ongoing pressure to pursue shale gas and the damage fracking has on the Karoo landscape, Boshoff rightfully imagines that Mother Nature would have something disdaining to say.



Volker Marz, *Endlich Brennt Europa Wieder*, 2015 – 2016. Mixed media installation, Dimensions Variable

Whilst pondering on Boshoff's vast landscapes, the song from Volker Marz's video is heard looped in the background. The catchy tune repeats the words *when tomorrow comes* (the verse seen at the

introduction to this review) indicating a seemingly playful way of saying something profound. Marz, a German artist imagines a dystopian vision of Africa by removing it from Europe's past and current influence. His *Armageddon* is a return to nature, where a hybrid between man, monkey and dog will dominate the land and Europe will burn to the ground. Part of this work consists of an installation of sculptures and paintings, found in the upstairs gallery. The sculptures, some of which are displayed hanging from the roof, others are grouped together on a low block have an allegorical, religious feel. The phallic transpires as a clear symbol of war and European government control. The combination of sinister irony and historical symbols creates a new world which is better off yet still retains some sort of the past on its skin. Almost as if suggesting a counter revolution – a going to back to where we came from.

Also in the upstairs gallery Steven Cohen's video performance entitled *The Cradle of Humankind*, 2012 echoes a return to the beginning of mankind when man was closer to nature. Filmed at the Sterkfontein and Swartkrans caves, Cohen transports the viewer to the beginning of mankind where there is evidence of man's first controlled fire and the first hominid fossils were found. Cohen imagines the history of evolution using his own body to recreate a new cycle of mankind. In this new beginning or end (one is not sure which) ash, smoke, fire, stilettos and neon-lights all form part of the *Armageddon*. His body is doubled having an ape figure attached to his torso. His movements slow and expressive emerge from this doubled torso and seem to suggest the first movements of man. The soundscape echoes his idle gestures and the combination offers a rethinking of time.



Jacki McInnes, *Sleeps with the fishes*, 2016. Photographic image produced in association with Leon Krige

Returning to the gallery downstairs, each artist continues to transport the viewer to diverse locations. *Sleeps with the fishes*, 2016 by Jacki McInnes is a massive landscape photograph shot in a mine dump. The composition of the figures in her image directly mimics Gericault's *Raft of Medusa* which is symbolic of the shipwreck in which one-hundred and thirty Frenchmen died in 1819. The ship, due to bad navigation was stranded in Africa and because of the lack of life boats 147 passengers were sent onto a hastily built raft, left to die. McInnes draws a parallel between post-Apartheid South Africa and the hypocrisy of the French ruling class who selected fellow citizens to get off one sinking ship and onto another. This story seems to relate both to xenophobic attacks and the government's greed which helps specific people instead of the general public. The powerful image

in combination with mafia title seems to suggest that the fate of the figures seen in the image has already been decided along with other citizens deemed social miscasts. The South African government is renowned for its corruption scandals including the Marikana massacre in which forty-four mineworkers were shot dead by police. McInnes image proposes that South Africa, an already sinking ship will continue to overlook the lives of many of its citizens.

As opposed to the media saturated world in which events are constantly being interpreted for us, the exhibition with its lack of explanatory labels, encourages self-reflection as a means of understanding. The artworks deal with themes of politics, religion, and history which deepens their intellectual understanding. Suggestion is made in various artworks to rethink linear time, perhaps suggesting a refocusing on the present through an excavation of the past, but a past reinterpreted aside from the concrete textbooks which dictate the world for us. As is seen in the wide range of artworks, each artist explores the local, choosing to speak for themselves rather than for others and in turn the viewer is asked to focus on the immediate rather than the predetermined future.