



Anne Imhof (born in 1978)
Untitled, 2022
Oil on printed canvas (detail)
Pinault Collection, Paris
Photo: © Timo Ohler. Courtesy of the artist, Sprüth Magers and
Galerie Buchholz

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Exhibition produced with the exceptional
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Centre
Pompidou 

Apocalypse

Yesterday and Tomorrow

François-Mitterrand Site - Galleries 1 & 2

4 February - 8 June 2025

The Bibliothèque nationale de France is staging the first exhibition on the theme of the apocalypse. The word apocalypse is somewhat obscure, frightening even, conjuring images of the end of the world. It is a word that has echoed throughout Western societies and culture for two thousand years in reference to any larger-scale catastrophic event, and is often associated with today's climate concerns. But apocalypse actually means revelation, or unveiling. In the Bible, the Book of Revelation, also known as the Book of the Apocalypse, talks of a veil lifting on the timeless kingdom where believers will be reunited in celestial Jerusalem. It is a word infused with hope, meant to overcome our deepest fears.

From the Middle Ages to the present day, the exhibition traces the imagination surrounding this concept through works including some of the most prestigious manuscripts of the Apocalypse of John, rarely seen fragments of the Angers Apocalypse tapestry, Dürer's famous suite of engravings on the text, as well as numerous masterpieces, paintings, sculptures, photographs, installations, rare books and film extracts from the BnF collections and major public and private French and European collections (Centre Pompidou, musée d'Orsay, British Museum, etc.).

Over 300 works in total by artists such as William Blake, Odilon Redon, Vassily Kandinsky, Ludwig Meidner, Natalia Goncharova, Otto Dix, Antonin Artaud, Unica Zürn, Kiki Smith, Tacita Dean, Miriam Cahn and Anne Imhof.

The exhibition presented in the two galleries at the François-Mitterrand site opens with the "The Book of Revelation" section, plunging visitors into the heart of the Apocalypse of John, the most well-known apocalyptic text in the Western world. It provides the keys to interpreting the representations of the different episodes it comprises, from the Seven Seals to the Last Judgement, highlighting the original meaning of the narrative: the positive perspective of a revelation rather than a tragic ending. Through an exploration of this complex and infinitely rich text, outlining John's visions and the myriad stories woven together, the exhibition seeks to re-establish a connection with this 2000-year-old message of warning. Flamboyant illuminated manuscripts and major works – paintings, sculptures, drawings, stained glass and tapestries – all underscore the importance and influence of this text and its spread in the Middle Ages, while illustrating how this imagery has been cemented over time and continues to influence the modern-day world.



Saint-Sever *Beatus*
The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (detail)
Gascony (Saint-Sever), third quarter of the 11th century (pre-1072)
Manuscript painted on parchment
BnF, Manuscripts department

The second part of the exhibition, entitled “The Age of Catastrophe” is devoted to the prophesying of the Apocalypse in the arts, from Dürer to Brassai, touching on English apocalyptic sublime and German expressionism. It reminds visitors that the text spawned works considered as masterpieces of art history, thereby illustrating the deep-seated and enduring fascination of artists – and through them humanity itself – with this narrative intertwining plagues and the end of time with hope and the promise of a new world.

Far from being confined to a catastrophic vision of the apocalypse, the kind eulogised by post-apocalyptic literature, film and comics, the exhibition reconnects with its original meaning, focusing particularly on the “Day After”. This section presents a series of contemporary works, including monumental pieces (by Otobong Nkanga, Abdelkader Benchamma, etc.), in which this day after begins to take shape, imprinted with divine “anger” or disgruntled elements of nature. It is from this notion of the day after that the most inventive representations and fictions emerge, in many ways true to the message of the Book of Revelation in portraying catastrophe as the prelude to a new world order.



Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)
The Apocalypse
8th plate: *The Seven Angels with the Trumpets*
Latin Edition 1511
Woodcut
BnF, Prints and Photography department

General curator

Jeanne Brun, Deputy Director of the Musée national d’Art moderne - Centre Pompidou in charge of collections, with the collaboration of **Pauline Créteur**, research fellow to the Associate Director of the Musée national d’Art moderne - Centre Pompidou

Curators

François Angelier, journalist and essayist

Charlotte Denoël, Head of Medieval Manuscripts, BnF Manuscripts department

Lucie Mailland, Head of Philosophy and Religion, BnF Philosophy, History and Human Sciences department

Retrospective « L’Apocalypse en 25 films indispensables » from 12 February to 2 March 2025 at the Cinémathèque française, in partnership with the BnF
More information on: www.cinematheque.fr

BnF | François-Mitterrand - Galleries 1 & 2

Quai François-Mauriac, Paris 13
Tuesday to Saturday 10am > 7pm
Sundays 1pm > 7pm
Closed Mondays and bank holidays

Full information (including reduced rate and free admission conditions) on :
www.bnf.fr/en