

EN

koen
taselaar

→ *end and*

Dutch artist Koen Taselaar presents his first solo exhibition in France with a project designed specifically for the monumental nave of the art centre.

Describing himself as a «visual omnivore», Taselaar draws inspiration from a variety of sources, including punk music, fanzines, comics, and skateboarding culture, alongside the history of art, architecture, and design. He reimagines these influences through a lens of curiosity and creativity, shaping them into something uniquely his own.

At the heart of *End And* is a monumental 19-meter-long tapestry, produced especially for this exhibition. The work is a homage to the Apocalypse Tapestry in Angers, one of the great masterpieces of medieval art. Koen Taselaar was invited to create a contemporary response to this iconic work, using its themes of apocalyptic imagination as a springboard for his own exploration of humanity's enduring fascination with the end of the world.

In his tapestry, the artist takes an encyclopedic approach to apocalyptic narratives, which have appeared throughout history, weaving them together with his signature humorous and inventive style. By blending these dark themes with absurdity and wit, the artist transforms his work into a «black comedy» that highlights the cyclical nature of doomsday predictions. Despite the recurring fears, these imagined ends have never materialized, offering a perspective that balances reflection with optimism in the face of today's challenges.

The exhibition extends beyond the central tapestry, featuring sculptures, drawings, furniture, and smaller tapestries. Together, these works create an immersive and dynamic environment, inviting visitors to reflect, rest, and engage with Koen Taselaar's distinctive and colorful visual world.

"The concept of apocalypse feels incredibly relevant today, given the wars, political polarization, pandemic, and climate concerns of recent years. Being invited to create a response to the Apocalypse Tapestry (1380) inspired me to consider how humanity has grappled with similar fears across History.

While the topic may sound heavy, my intention is to approach it with humor and perspective. Over time, many apocalyptic predictions have proven unfounded, and their absurdity can even become amusing.

My tapestry aims to be a kind of 'black comedy' — a reflection on humanity's endless habit of imagining catastrophic endings that never quite come true."

Koen Taselaar, 2024

the tapestry

end and

2024-2025, jacquard tapestry, 19m x 3,5 m

the narrators



glass sponge

Beneath a Gothic baldachin reminiscent of the one housing the first Reader (or narrator) in the Angers Apocalypse Tapestry (1373), stands a curious creature. It is a Hexactinellida, or glass sponge, one of the oldest living organisms on our planet, found on the seabed. In the perfect conditions, it can live to be 10,000 years old. Thanks to its exceptional lifespan, it bears witness to our history and is an ideal narrator to introduce 'End And', a great tale of the Apocalypses woven by Koen Taselaar.

Following him, other beings who have lived on Earth for a long time take it in turns to continue the story. Using black and white speech bubbles, they recount the historical events they saw unfold. Periods marked by destruction, involving species, places and populations. These events, which brought worlds to an end, form part of the apocalyptic narratives imagined by mankind, forged by mythology, religion and literary and cinematic fiction.



greenland shark

The Greenland shark is the vertebrate with the longest life expectancy, sometimes reaching over 300 years. Here it tells the story of the Lisbon earthquake in 1755. This disaster, followed by tsunamis and fires, destroyed the city and killed more than 60,000 people.

cookie the cockatoo

Cookie the cockatoo died at the age of 83 in a Chicago zoo, breaking the longevity record for its species.

ammonite

The Ammonoidea (ammonite) shell disappeared 66 million years ago at the end of the Cretaceous period. It is a reminder of the mass extinction of its congeners, namely the dinosaurs, which disappeared at the same time.

Cookie tells the story of the bombing of Hiroshima by the American atomic bomb on 6 August 1945 during the Second World War. An event that heralded the dawn of the nuclear age and the prospect of mankind's self-destruction.

ming

At over 500 years old, the Ming shell was the oldest animal ever observed when it was discovered in 2006. It tells the story of the 'Discovery of America' at the end of the 15th century, which initiated the large-scale European colonisation of the American continent, contributing to the disappearance of 90 % of the native population.

eschatological beliefs



the book of revelations

Set against a backdrop of flames are representations of various eschatologies, the term used to describe stories about the end of time. The Lake of Fire and the Four Knights of the Apocalypse come from the biblical story of John of Patmos, who can be seen at the very top, reclining in his cave. His *Revelations* (the literal meaning of the Greek word 'Apocalypse') are central to the great Angers Tapestry.

However, the proclamation of the end of time is not exclusive to the Christian religion. The notion of the Apocalypse runs through many cultures and is at the heart of numerous myths and religious beliefs.



the prophet zoroaster

In ancient Iran, the prophet Zoroaster advocated a non-linear concept of time, an apocalyptic view of the end of all things.

mayan calendar

Many eschatological fears and beliefs converged on 21st December 2012. This date corresponds to the end of a 5126-year cycle in the Mayan calendar. It was therefore interpreted as the definitive end of time, forecasting various scenarios of planetary cataclysms.

ragnarörk

In Norse mythology, Ragnarörk is an apocalyptic tale. The wolves Sköll and Hati chase the sun and hunt the moon across the sky, plunging the world into darkness and endless chaos.

joachim de fiores

Depicted in black and white, the Italian monk Joachim de Fiore was a 12th-century theologian who influenced apocalyptic thought in the Middle Ages. He introduces a new section of the tapestry that invites us into the imaginary world of medieval fears.

figures of the antichrist

Haunted by the figures of the Antichrist and the demons of Christian eschatology, by the flames of hell and a bestiary of dragons, these terrifying representations take their place in an architecture of towers and keeps of fortified castles filling the whole space.

monsters of modernity

the year without a summer

As if to foreshadow today's climate concerns, non-stop rain marks the start of a new chapter. It alludes to the year 1816, which was called the 'Year Without a Summer' because of its constant rain and a climate disrupted by the eruption of the Indonesian volcano Tambora.



mary shelley and lord byron

Lord Byron and Mary Shelley spent that rainy summer isolated on the shores of Lake Geneva (Switzerland). It was there that Byron created the Vampire and Mary Shelley invented the creature Frankenstein. This monster, the product of the wild scientific experiments, initiated the new imaginary world of science fiction, which would later be embraced by literature and the cinema.



iron monster

An iron monster is advancing with heavy, arrogant steps into this new technological era. The rise of railroads in the United States paved the way for the development of commerce, industry and a capitalist economy that would transform the face of the world.



atomic weapon

The technological monsters invented by authors of fiction crossed paths with reality with the advent of atomic weapons and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. For the first time in its history, humanity acquired the weapons of its own self-destruction, on a global scale.

the great disappointment

However, the millenarian fears of religion have not completely disappeared. The American preacher William Miller predicted the return of Christ in 1844. Many of the faithful prepared to leave the earthly world by giving up all their possessions. Nothing happened, however, and the frustration was so great that the episode became known as 'The Great Disappointment.'



godzilla

Godzilla, the prehistoric lizard awakened by the atomic tests and sowing terror in our cities, is an emblematic figure of cinematic popular culture. For a post-war Japan in ruins, it also represents an allegory for the country's traumas and anxieties. Within the tapestry, it ushers in a new chapter of post-nuclear apocalypses.

robots

This new industrial era is also the era of robots, which have been the subject of numerous literary and cinematographic stories, such as the one in the play *R.U.R* (Karel Capek, 1920), the *Maschinenmensch* in *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927) or the *Terminator* (James Cameron, 1984).

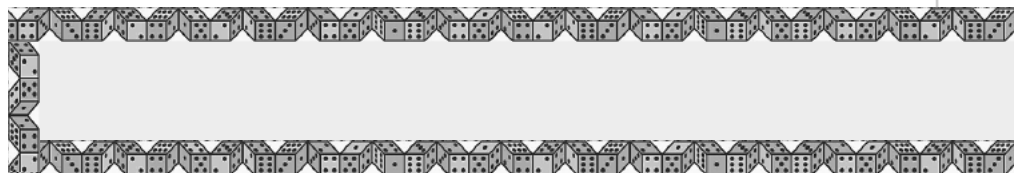
futur scenarios

new fears

At its height during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Bloc in the 1950s and 1960s, the nuclear threat now gives way to other scenarios that are tainting our future with new fears.

limitless AI

A paperclip garland embodies the invisible threat posed by the exponential development of algorithms and AI (Artificial Intelligence). In 2003, the philosopher Nick Bostrom illustrated the dangers of hostile AI through the absurd hypothesis of the 'paperclip maximiser,' a machine programmed to generate so many paperclips that it could destroy the world. Koen Taselaar gives form to this theory by using Clippy, the icon of the first virtual assistant invented by Microsoft in 1997, which quickly disappeared without success.



koen taselaar

bio- graphy

Born in 1986 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, Koen Taselaar continues to live and work in his hometown.

Koen Taselaar is a well-known figure on the Dutch art scene, recognized for his diverse practice, which includes drawing, screen printing, ceramics, and tapestry. His Kaleidoscopic, imaginative works are filled with humor and an eclectic mix of references, drawing viewers into a vibrant and playful universe.

His works are included in the collections of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (Rotterdam), Groninger Museum (Groningen), Centraal Museum (Utrecht), and the Hermitage (St. Petersburg).

In 2024, he exhibited at the Depot Boijmans (Rotterdam), Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, Kunstinstituut Melly (Rotterdam), and Centraal Museum (Utrecht). That year, he also received the Officine Saffi Award (Milan, Italy) for his ceramics.

Koen Taselaar is represented by Andriess Eyck Gallery in Amsterdam.

acknowledgments

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In collaboration with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, CAPAS - Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies at the University of Heidelberg (Berlin - Germany).

For the production of artworks :

tapestries : TextielLab Tilburg (The Netherlands)

ceramics : Merijn Haenen | steel structures : Phil Procter.

selection from the CCCOD bookshop

koen taselaar publishing

Sing your life, Rarities and B-Sides, impression risographie, 14 sur 200 exemplaires, 2017

Koen Taselaar, *Rollable Ramblings*, éd. Jap Sam Books, 2021

books on the history of tapestry

Revue 303 « Tapisseries et Tentures », n° 135, éd. 303, 2015

Benoit-Henry Papounaud, *La tapisserie française, du Moyen-âge à nos jours*, éd. du Patrimoine, 2017

books on the apocalypse

Régis Burnet, Pierre-Edouard Detal, *Armageddon, Une histoire de la fin du monde*, éd. PUF, 2024

L'âge atomique, Les artistes à l'épreuve de l'histoire, collectif, éd. Paris Musées, 2024

Apocalypse hier et demain, collectif, éd. BNF, 2025

Jean-Paul Engelibert (dir.), *Revue La Licorne, « L'apocalypse, une imagination politique, XIX^e-XXI^e siècles »*, éd. PU Rennes, 2018

pop culture and science fiction books

Nicolas Méra, *Godzilla est né à Hiroshima, la vraie histoire des icônes de la pop culture*, First Editions, 2024

Kurt Vonnegut Jr, *Le pianiste déchaîné*, éd. SF, 2010 (1952 1st publication)

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