

APOCALYPTIC LANDSCAPES

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he idea of apocalypse as an end-of-world landscape pervades literature and art. As far back as the Old and New Testament Books of Revelation, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse lay waste to the earthly terrain with war, famine, plague, and death. Each subsequent generation

has its own view of the apocalypse: from Dante's *Inferno* and Renaissance visions of the Last Judgment to 20th-century influenza pandemics and post-World War II panics about nuclear war. In the wake of these events, artists, writers and cinematographers respond to the trail of despair, destruction and human suffering with a form of expression that could be considered post-apocalyptic. Today, global warming and climate change are the new faces of the apocalypse, taking on the aspect of a landscape in chaos, in which the sea levels will rise, the ice will melt, and the world will end in our lifetime.

After climate apocalypse, what form will the next apocalypse take? Although the apocalypse carries the idea of catastrophe and destruction from its ties to the heritage of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the etymology of the word contains alternate readings: as Derrida shows, « apocalypse » comes from the ancient Greek « ἀπο-κάλυψις, » literally « un-veiling, » « un-folding, » or « revelation, » which thus open the notion up to ideas of evolution, renewal, and creation, from those of a return to harmony to the birth of a new order. In this light, the « apocalyptic landscape » is no longer just a visual or written staging of catastrophe, but equally the representation of something revealed, the fixing onto the page or image of a process of unveiling in which artists play an

essential role. To what extent can this process of unveiling be realized in the landscape, an interpretation of reality among many? Is the apocalyptic landscape made uniquely of representation, or also of notification, sign, horizon? Is the apocalyptic landscape an « after, » the result of renewal – or perhaps a « before, » subject to change or unveiling to come? What of the personal is contained in the idea of apocalyptic landscape, as an interior or intimate space, either of body or psyche? What forms do apocalyptic thinking take: tragedy or romanticism? science or science fiction? In a sense, events of mass destruction come and go; the apocalypse is always with us. Is it inevitable that human beings live under the shadow of the apocalypse ?

The 2020 FIGS Conference at the University of Pennsylvania will explore these and other questions in the context of the apocalyptic landscape as represented or staged in literature and the arts by French and Italian artists and creative minds throughout history to the present.

We welcome a variety of perspectives and fields of study, including (but not limited to):

- Cinema and media studies
- Arts
- Manuscript studies
- History, historiography
- History of classical traditions
- History of ideas, philosophical doctrines
- Philology, language, and literature
- Translation studies
- Intertextuality, trans-textuality
- Eco-critique, eco-studies
- (Trans)gender studies
- Disability
- Trauma narratives, affect theory
- Colonial / postcolonial literature
- Religious studies
- Media coverage
- Sociology, psychology
- History of science
- The question of the inexpressible

Please send a title and a 250-word abstract with your name and academic affiliation to : upennfrenchitalian@gmail.com
by January 18th, 2020.
Presentations should be given in English and not exceed 15 min.