

# THE END OF THE WORLD

February 28<sup>th</sup> 2024

Fieldwork into Performance (ANT/THEA 377W)

Emory University

## ARTISTIC/ETHNOGRAPHIC STATEMENTS

### Prologue 1\*

#### Depending on Your Perspective

Ensemble; Emi Fernandez, reader

### Prologue 2

#### Malfunction

Ensemble; directed by Josie Maier

### Act 1

#### Information Overload

Josie Maier, Emi Fernandez, Ava Coates, Kaitlynn Love, Anna Long

We learned about a variety of physical theater exercises from Augusto Boal, including a game titled “Lifting Someone out of a Chair” in which people push and pull on a person, preventing them from getting up from or sitting down on a chair. Additionally, we collected internet articles, social media posts, and poems about the end of the world. Our script was inspired by both the chair exercise and the quotes we discovered. The main idea of this scene is to convey how the massive influx of information on the internet about the end of the world can overwhelm and isolate. We must seek comfort in the community and pull ourselves away from the information apocalypse online.

### Act 2

#### Existential Crisis

Darya Dahi, Isabella Colindres, Kaleb Branch, Kimberly Gutierrez, Rose Xu

Our piece is inspired by the idea that our life is composed of “the end of the world” moments, meaning that in every stage of life, there are moments that make us feel like the world is going to end. Building off this idea, we divided life into 4 stages (juvenile, adolescent, middle age, and senior), from each stage of life we compose an “end of the world” scenario. They are each facing their own inner turmoil

**Act 3****The End of the World Is Just Around the Corner**

Deepak Katta, Krishna Sanaka, Sriram Ambadi

As researchers, we began by each selecting and reading an article regarding the end of the world in some way, including through religious mythology, the threat of nuclear warfare, and climate change. We synthesized our findings and decided that we wanted to convey the seemingly uncontrollable threat of nuclear warfare. As physical theater performers, we decided to employ Augusto Boal's equilibrium of the body with an object by featuring a scythe as a prop and by emphasizing fearful movement away from said prop as well as the weightedness of the prop in our piece. The main idea of our piece is that a seemingly peaceful day can quickly become devastating for even common people due to the looming threat of nuclear weaponry.

**Act 4****Doomsday's Bodyguards**

Ella Akridge, Anya Kasubhai, Han Li, Joey Lin, Melina Ross, Dennis Yi

We conducted research using various forms of media related to the notion of 'the end of the world' and compiled a list of different phrases, words, and themes among these sources, which included poems, video essays, and news articles. Additionally, we utilized one of Augusto Boal's physical theater of the oppressed techniques, 'The President's Bodyguard,' in which one person is surrounded by various individuals imitating their movements like a mirror, to convey and combine the different themes discovered through our sources. Our inspiration was drawn from the common use and mentioning of the infamous doomsday clock as a rhetorical device, measuring the end of humanity and alluding to our role in destroying the world in our articles. Our performance forecasts the future of mankind if we were to continue ignoring the problems we cause to our environment. It serves as both a warning and a reminder to the audience that we still have the power to take action and change the current trajectory of our world before time runs out.

*\*Sources for Prologues and Acts 1-4 Verbatim material from internet articles, social media posts, and poems. Movement inspired by Augusto Boal's physical theater exercises: The Machine of Rhythms, Lifting Someone out of a Chair, Equilibrium of the Body with an Object, The President's Bodyguards.*

**Act 5****Multispecies Encounters**

*A series of moments, using verbatim material from original fieldwork and interviews with more-than-humans.*

**Scene 1****Flow**

Han Li, Isabella Colindres, Kimberly Gutierrez

Our main focus is on the waterfall next to the Lullwater Lake. Using our observation of the waterfall's flow, background knowledge in human interventions, and emotional connections with the waterfall, we personified the waterfall to express its inner voice of freedom, joy, concern, and longing. Each person represents an emotional feeling of the waterfall: carefree and loving; concerned and upset; neglected and longing. By speaking from the river's perspective, we hope to bring awareness to the detrimental destruction brought by Humans to the free-flowing rivers of our world. We hope to remind people that Humans are as part of nature as all other living beings. Our destruction of the Earth brings destruction to us all.

## **Scene 2**

### **Aqua**

Anna Long, Melina Ross, Rose Xu

The focus of this scene is water, the origin and nurturer of life. Initially, we were attracted by the versatility of water, from liquid to gas, from peaceful to roaring. So we each individually conducted field works with different bodies of water, such as Lullwater Lake (Anna), a puddle (Melina), and a stream behind the Woodruff Library (Rose). The piece about the stream behind the Woodruff Library was inspired by an actual divergence of the watercourse, marked by the different conditions after the divergence. The different "fate" of the water signifies the fate of the earth, meaning that humans are at a fork to decide the future of the earth. Whether the future is hope or desperation depends on ourselves.

## **Scene 3**

### **Mother Nature Speaks**

Anya Kasubhai, Emi Fernandez, Josie Maier, Sriram Ambadi

For this scene, each group member interviewed a tree on Emory's campus, focusing on the trees' surroundings and what the end of their worlds might look like. We combined our interviews into a composite "tree", reflecting common ideas from each individual, and crafted a scene based on this dialogue. Our intent was to reveal the lengthy history of trees and the different ways in which they are now being affected by human interference. We also wished to give a voice to the voiceless in an effort to establish a stronger connection and more empathy with our environment. We hope to evoke a greater respect for trees and consideration for how we can better treat the trees within our day to day environments.

## **Scene 4**

### **The Silent Symphony**

Deepak Katta, Joey Lin, Kaleb Branch

For our research group, each individual interviewed different flowers within Emory University's Lullwater Preserve. In conducting this research, we utilized the concepts of environmental and

social interactions as guiding frameworks for our inquiries and observations. From our findings, we crafted a composite character, the 'flower,' and created a questing and answering scenario between this being and ethnographers, exploring the delicate relationship between nature and human action. The main themes revolved around the interconnectedness of all living things, the impact of human activities on the delicate balance of nature, and the potential consequences of environmental disruption. The scene aims to evoke a sense of connection and empathy between humans and the natural world, emphasizing the vulnerability of the ecosystem.

## **Scene 5**

### **Houseplants at the End of the World**

Ava Coates, Dennis Yi, Kaitlyn Love

Our group interviewed the houseplants in each of our care—a Monstera Plant, a Bonsai Tree, and a Pitcher Plant. We found that there is a strange dynamic that exists between a plant and its owner; though these plants are made to survive in their natural habitat without aid from another being, while inside, they exist under the whims of a 'higher Power,' their caregiver. When a houseplant is neglected or its atmosphere changes when, say, when the owner goes home for winter break, houseplants slowly come to terms with the abrupt shift in reality. They are left to their own devices to ponder the end of their world.

## **Scene 6 Kittens at the End of the World**

Darya Dahi, Ella Akridge, Krishna Sanaka

Our group interviewed a set of four cats living at the apartment of a fellow student that one of our group members had known previously. In conducting our interviews of the cats, we observed their interactions with other cats, humans, and perhaps most significantly, with a lure meant to capture their attention. We conducted our observation through written notes and drawings. In observing the cats, we made parallels to human behaviors by emphasizing common pursuits while being careful to avoid overly anthropomorphising the animals. Ultimately, we hope to convey the similarity between different species and call attention to human behaviors through discussing cat behaviors.

## **Act 6**

### **Human (and AI) Exchanges**

*A series of moments using verbatim material from original research interviews.*

## **Scene 1 Jack Daniels**

Ava Coates, Emi Fernandez, Josie Maier

We each interviewed two Emory students from different major fields: STEM, Business, or Humanities. The interviews focused on each person's own view of "the end of the world", how

those views have changed, and how their major or major classes may relate to their views. In order to create a script, we pulled quotes directly from our interviews, creating composite characters arguing about the potential end of the world. Our scene is meant to read as a conversation between 20-somethings and bring a bit of comedy to the very heavy topic of “the end of the world”. Sometimes the only way to approach an overwhelmingly dark topic is through the lens of comedy.

### **Scene 2 Untitled**

Kaleb Branch, Krishna Sanaka, Anya Kasubhai, Kaitlynn Love

Each member of our group interviewed two people with ties to areas of the world saliently affected by climate change or human activity, whether this boils down to extreme weather events, high levels of pollution, or otherwise. In synthesizing the findings of our interviews, we uncovered a broad range of views regarding climate change, varying on axes relating to both awareness and perception of control. We decided that we would best do justice to our informants by displaying all of these views in our theater piece. We hope to convey that the consistent fighting over climate change and its reality leads to overlooking the very real harms that people face due to its effects.

### **Scene 3 Does the World End with Time?**

Sriram Ambadi, Darya Dahi, Deepak Katta

Our group conducted ethnographic interviews to uncover affective responses to the concept of the world ending, speaking with individuals of varying ages. Each interview evolved uniquely, revealing deep insights into the emotions of an innocent elementary schooler, a stressed college student, and an introspective older adult. This method allowed us to capture the raw, unfiltered essence of their experiences and societal concerns. Through our scene, we hope to offer a window into the diverse psyches influenced by the notion of the world ending, highlighting the innocence of youth, the pressures of young adulthood, and the reflective wisdom that comes with age. Our narrative seeks to evoke empathy and a sense of urgency, emphasizing the need to address the societal issues exacerbating these emotional responses.

### **Scene 4 It's Time to Think About the Future**

Ella Akridge, Anna Long, Joey Lin, Dennis Yi

Our research group conducted ethnographic interviews with students from diverse backgrounds at Emory University, and we explored their subjective perspectives on the end of the world and how they approached the uncertainties it holds. We created composite characters, pulling certain quotations from each interview, that expressed the unique views on what lies ahead, incorporating elements of faith, optimism, fear, and pragmatism. The scene seeks to invoke a sense of contemplation and reflection on how we view the end of the world, as well as the

future in general, and prompt the audience to consider their own beliefs about the future and how they would approach the uncertainties that lie ahead.

### Scene 5 Now or Never

Kimberly Gutierrez, Isabella Colindres, Melina Ross, Han Li, Rose Xu

Our scene aims to portray how different beliefs/ideologies hold up this world. Even though many people hold very different opinions, they are dependent upon each other. We each choose a type of ideology that we are interested in and conduct interviews with some interlocutors. We interviewed Hippies, Catholics, philosophers, Physics students, and AI (ChatGPT 4.0). Through talking with those people, we found patterns of recurring themes and ideas and discovered that many seemingly opposite ideologies have the same ultimate aim even though their approaches might be drastically different. Each ideology may be different, but the combination of these ideas is what shapes the world. Like the red string, we are all tangled in a web of information: together we bring meaning to our world. We don't know what the end of the world will look like. Not even our best technology, AI, can tell us. But we are sure that our thoughts, our beliefs, and our passions are the columns that support our world.

