

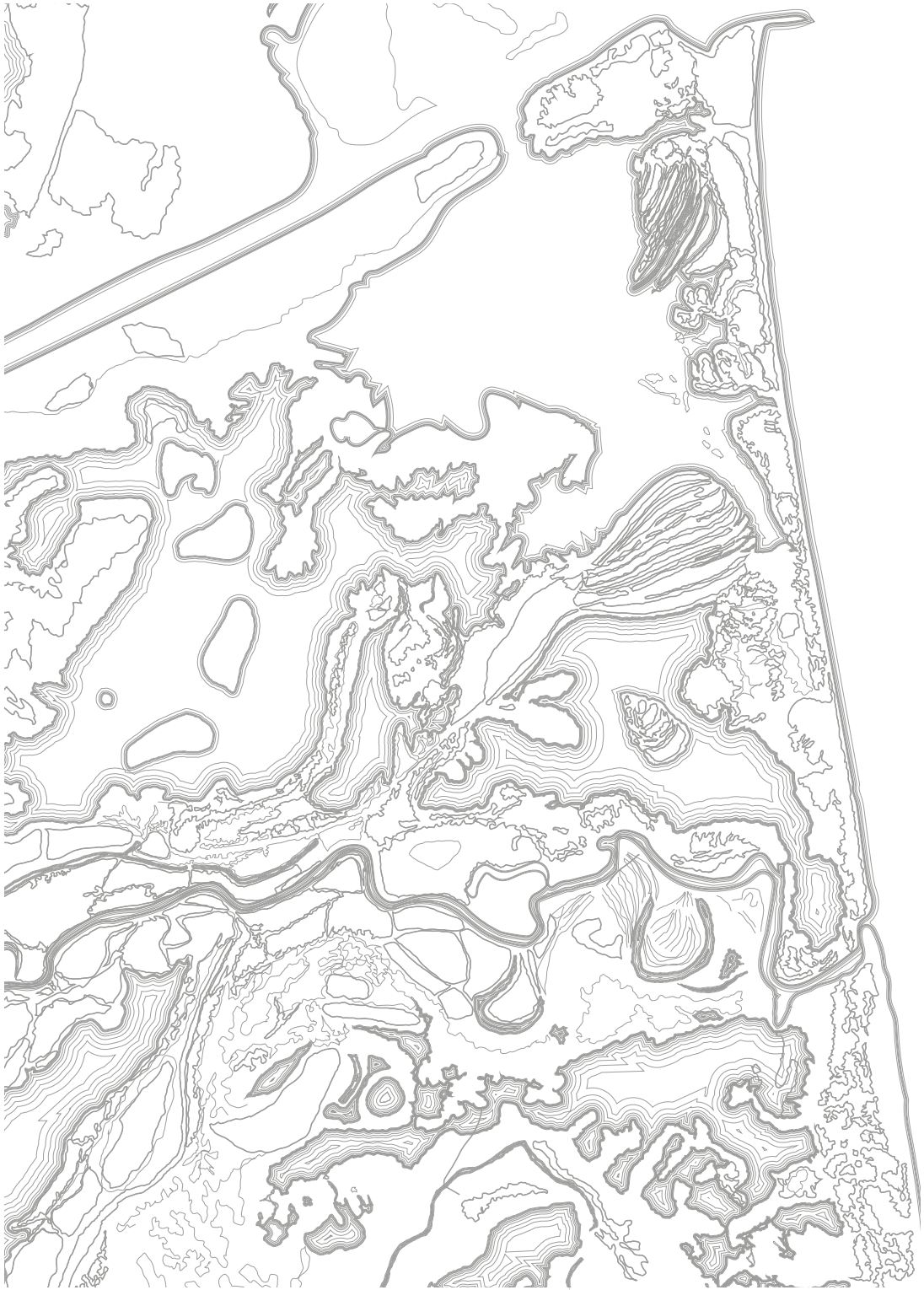
INHABITING CRACKS AT THE END OF TIMES

against accelerations

Federico **Cuatlacuatl** | Luis **Hernan**

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CAPAS KÄTE HAMBURGER CENTRE FOR APOCALYPTIC AND POST-APOCALYPTIC STUDIES
UNIVERSITÄT HEIDELBERG ZUKUNFT SEIT 1386
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Inhabiting Cracks at the End of Times

Against Accelerations

EXHIBITED WORK

Federico Cualtlacuatl

Luis Hernan

TEXT

Laura Mark

COVER

Federico Cualtlacuatl

BACK COVER

Luis Hernan

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The Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies at Heidelberg University (CAPAS).

CAPAS is a centre for advanced study dedicated to understanding how communities and individuals imagine, experience, and respond to the destructive and transformative capacities of apocalypse. Every year, renowned researchers from around the world join our fellowship program to examine how catastrophes and end-time scenarios shape an increasingly apocalyptic world, while also considering the political, cultural, and scientific practices tirelessly working against these pressures.

CAPAS & the Fine Arts

Open exchange with diverse audiences and collaboration with partners from the worlds of art play an essential role in enabling CAPAS to engage with a wider public and establish dialogue on how to tackle pressing societal challenges, not only offering an opportunity to address fears and anxieties, but above all creating a space for the transformative potential of 'world-ends'. Viewed in this way, apocalypse reveals the lived consequences of the overlapping crises we face: the persistent legacies of colonization and capitalism alongside the rising challenges driven by artificial intelligence, climate change, nuclear warfare, economic insta-bility, and other forces that are rapidly reshaping how we experience time, space, and the very fabric of our world.

CAPAS Research

At the heart of our work lies the concept of apocalyptic experience: apocalyptic imaginaries emphasize how people navigate historical and present crises, ruptures, and transformations. They reflect the anticipated and actual collapse of systems, the expectations raised by radical, catastrophic change, and the feelings, outlooks, and attitudes toward real and imagined endings. BIOPOLITICS explores the power to make live and let die within apocalyptic experience. It examines governance under global capitalism and sustained colonial violence, tracing intersections with migration, ecological crises, AI, and other infrastructures of control, while highlighting how life is contested, reimagined, and sustained amid systemic pressures.

A Site of Constant Crossing

Laura Mark

The heavily defended geographical border between the United States and Mexico is one of the world's most prominent international divides. Spanning around 2,000 miles, it is heavily controlled, funded and militarised. It is overwhelmingly visible and plays an increasingly symbolic role in political and cultural debate.

As the Chicanx theorist, poet and artist Gloria Anzaldúa phrased it, borders are where 'the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it haemorrhages again'. Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) is an important text when considering the biopolitics of the US-Mexico border and it challenges the image of the border as a simple dividing line. She points at the border as something which is constructed, that is done by human intervention, and that causes damage. It forces places – and people – apart.

[Left] *Boca Chica Cartography*
Luis Hernan, 2025

She writes of the divide as a ‘1,950 mile-long open wound / dividing a pueblo, a culture / running down the length of my body / staking rods in my flesh / splits me splits me / me raja me raja’.

In her work, the US-Mexico border not only runs through geographical space and across land, but is enacted upon bodies and impacts these bodies. It marks the border as an act of differentiation carried out amongst, and to, people.

This exhibition brings together the creative practice of two of the 2026 fellows of the Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies whose projects aim to critique and disrupt the border. The work they show draws on the influence of Anzaldúa but also begins to consider the US-Mexico border as a space — and time — of apocalypse.

Here, standing at the borderlands of Mexico and the United States, it is possible to see the apocalypse manifested through its biopolitics: the relations of the individuals, groups and communities who are forced to leave.

The border can no longer be described as purely an administrative, political barrier or a critical point of surveillance between two countries — in the case of the US-Mexico border — an economically robust and powerful nation-state and another that is less wealthy and powerful. But it is a place of beginnings and ends. The border is a space where multiple worlds have collided multiple times and where colonial capitalist modernity is created. It is here where languages, territories and identities are constantly erased and recreated through multiple levels of displacement and destruction.



the insistence of life from within death

flora and fauna restoring itself

the soil screaming through its imposed skin

the landscape removing and shedding off the imposed layer of skin

the skin of the moon embedding itself once again on the land

cyclical temporalities embellishing itself onto the land

to honor the womb of the land

to enact gestures of conservation

to honor the dim light of dawn at the end of times

to channel the end of times as a source of agency

the end of times as a non-linear multidimensional portal

to deregulate temporalities

to disrupt and decelerate the forces of biopolitics

how to recalibrate catastrophe for productive means

to re-posture and pivot oneself towards the strength of fire

how to inverse the accelerations of biopolitics?

[Right] Of the series *Quemar las Patas del Imperio*
Federico Cuatlacuatl, 2025

In this context, Luis Hernan's work within the exhibition explores the colonial underpinning of the space port in Boca Chica, Texas and its impact on the small community at the end of the border, where SpaceX tells us the 'future of humanity is unfolding in plain view for the public'. Hernan's research, which has moved from the digital to the speculative humanities, is inspired by Latin-American literary traditions and explores the interface between stories, narrative and architecture as central to the way that we inhabit and make sense of architecture and urban space. He is particularly interested in the political, social and spatial aspects of the future, examining the continuities of empire and colonialism in ideals of progress, modernity and utopia. His work in the last few years has focused on the architectures and infrastructures in the borderlands between Mexico and the United States, inspired by utopia and the end of worlds.

In this exhibition Hernan's detailed line drawings and haunting photography of Boca Chica use SpaceX's launch site as a way of exploring the destruction present at this borderland site, and how it is being enacted through the utopian promise of a better future. At Boca Chica, the creation of life from a mythological perspective clashes with the destruction of the very same place. Utopian narratives promising to improve life through technology go hand-in-hand with a violent destruction of the status quo.

SpaceX's launch site at Boca Chica is an example of the interconnected relationship between racial capitalism and authoritarian neoliberalism, expropriation of spaces and communities, and the resistance against these processes. Here, Hernan's work makes this visible.

Hernan's drawings and photographs sit alongside the work of artist Federico Cuatlacuatl. In this exhibition Cuatlacuatl's evocative film stills and large-scale charcoal drawings address Nahua indigenous immigration, social art practice, and cultural sustainability. Building on his own experience as an undocumented immigrant and previously holding DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), Cuatlacuatl's creative practice centres on the intersectionality of transborder indigeneity. His work is shaped by the colonial marginalisation and disenfranchisement faced by indigenous communities in Mexico while being deeply rooted in the challenging socio-political and economic relations between Mexico and the United States. He smuggles indigenous Mexican traditions and culture to the United States, reclaiming his ancestral Nahua lineage, land, and language.

The stills shown on large banners throughout the exhibition come from Cuatlacuatl's film *Quemar las Patas del Imperio* (To Burn the Feet of the Empire). The film references Cuauhtémoc, the last Mexica *Tlatoani* (leader), whose feet were burned by the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés as a torture mechanism to relinquish the Mexica empire's wealth, thought by the Spaniards to be gold instead of corn. This film, alongside Cuatlacuatl's drawings, explores the intersection of transborder indigeneity, migrant indigenous diasporas and Nahua futurisms. It artistically and emotionally amplifies ancestral knowledge from Nahua cosmologies that has been preserved despite adverse circumstances in Central America.

This work explores what happens when borders are present and when communities are forced to resettle, and how they restore,

Notes on Mitigating the End of Times

Federico Cuatlacuatl

in the dim light of dawn, an ending and a beginning becoming one

the search for the thin line of light, a moment in time

ephemerality manifesting as the sacred end of times and the beginning

to other possibilities

the end of times and new other possibilities collapsing into one another

death and life becoming one and unbecoming their separateness

to allow for the burning of what needs to burn

to nourish and nurture fire in your hands and in our hearts

the calm and the storm aligning with one another

the blooming of alternative futures from within the fire

Censored and erased before it registers

There is a serpent, an older monster that devours and destroys. A shattering of the earth that swallows and plunges into the underworld.

Conception and redemption. Creation and destruction. An ancient statue sculpted in obsidian. Life and death as a single process.

[The dark earth of the unconscious]

Craters carved by rocks falling from the sky, the shattering not of the earth but of dreams.

[a tremor that travels through the body]

[a curtain of light raining down on me]

IV

Bridle and saddle wild horses *Los mesteños de Fray Martín*
which are one an the same, a cliché carried over tongues and cultures
A wilderness that dries off.

Hot, sultry evening when the future is postponed, pushed further away by exploding rockets and the sound of cumbias blasting over the mudflats a land that has known these rhythms since the first migration south

Music reverberating out of cheap amplifiers and wafting
like the banks of mist at the crack of drawn, covering everything.

resist, and maintain cultures through, and despite of, oppressive systems which attempt to erase. It creates alternative realities, other worlds, and a future through non-western conceptions of space and time.

Joining the practices of Cuatlacuatl and Hernan is an interest in understanding the way that borders become places of centring resistance. Their work aims to interrupt time and create moments where a capitalist, colonial direction of time is suspended. Out of this pause, comes a chance to delve and excavate alternative cosmologies and ways of inhabiting the future.

As the author Rolando Hinojosa wrote in *Estampas del Valle* the border is not an impenetrable line of protection but a site of constant crossing, of conjunction and of disjunction. It is through the work of Hernan and Cuatlacuatl that we can see the Mexican-US border in a different dimension.

The Land is Mudflats

Luis Hernan

I

The land is mudflats and marshes. *Si uno pone el pie puede sentir cómo se hunde lentamente en la tierra, casi imperceptible* And on special days it trembles. It starts at the sole of your feet a vibration that comes from somewhere deep in the earth *pero eso, se entiende, depende del lugar en donde te pares. De este lado del río el trémulo apenas se siente.* A core that vibrates and shatters violently along a sinewy dividing line a snake with its belly close to the underworld.

The land is spectacle. Fold out chairs and cold pizza wrapped in tinfoil. *Del otro lado del rio es un picnic, comida en Tupperwares, tacos de guisado que comemos en silencio en la caja de una troca, esperando* The promises of roaring engines and metal tubes that shatter in a million pieces raining down on us. *esperamos, igual que los sedimentos de televisiones y chanclas que arrastra el rio al otro lado* It's seagulls and coyotes that follow the faithful and wait, hopeful *son solovinos que se pierden de vez en cuando y terminan aquí, ellos no saben de redención*

The land is mudflats and marshes. Silence of centuries of concealment and erasure, mythologies of wild horses and hardy explorers that tamed the land.

II

A shattering of the earth and a descent into darkness. The underworld populated by the figures denied by centuries of silence and forgetting, an enforced rewriting of a land washed by a writhing serpent that moves violently over the parched soil with the force of monsters and contradiction.

Piper plovers and rattle snakes that hide in wild grasses scorched by the fire of failed promises. Coyotes and seagulls descending on snowy plovers that haven't heard of redemption. Least terns that abandon a land of shifting waters and sands that redraw the lines of boundaries in a different language, when hardy pioneers tamed wild horses.

A barrier erected

Shifting sands images that come and go like the barriers like anchors on the land

III

Wailing prophecies among the ashes of propellent liquid and space-grade alloys hammered into the body of a monster that stands silently a totem marker of a land conquered and centuries silenced with the roaring of engines that make the ground tremble and shatter.

Spectacle of cleansing border agents standing at the gate *Sus papeles por favor* and are you a citizen of the great fatherland.