

**In my End is my Beginning**  
Dialectical Images in Times of Crisis  
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## ***Apocalypsis cum figuris, today***

For the first time in history, the apocalypse is happening live. It is an archetypal, primordial figure that has permeated the Western imagination. Something epochal is happening. Perhaps Mariupol, Bucha, Gaza represent the most faithful and ruthless ‘adaptations’ of the distant prophecy of John. We sit in front of our televisions, stare at our computers and smartphones. And, in real time, we become spectators of an apocalypse that generates in us different emotional states: horror and compassion, but also helplessness and the urge to push the pain to the margins of daily life, depriving traumas of all traumatic charge.

We are witnessing a senseless yet real war, dreadful, above all hyper-visible, composed of images that make any commentary fragile: we are forced to seal our lips before the ‘unverifiable’.

These are omens of the decline of the West. Frames of a bloody circus. Reports from a waste land, fatally wounded, with no place for God or redemption. Glimpses of an escalating alarm casting ominous shadows over us: nuclear war and the extinction of the last human being.

The revival of a medieval darkness, surfacing in the heart of the most advanced, digital modernity. In the foreground, scenes of the senseless invasion by Russian troops. In the background, the deafening noise of bombs that continue to erase life. A calvary. A barbaric massacre.

Destroyed cities, devastated schools and kindergartens, wrecked hospitals. Mass graves. Mass rapes. Children killed without mercy. Executed men. Ruins, blood, bodies.

Death, death, only death.

In this theater of Evil, there is something perversely spectacular. Unlike in the Gulf War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, now we do not participate in the horror of the Ukrainian and Israeli battlegrounds through the eyes of a few brave witnesses alone.

The media (such as television, internet, social network) deliver to us every minute an overwhelming flow of images impossible to falsify or manipulate, mainly captured by reporters. These are images that ask us to be reassembled into a sort of mental film.

This is what has been happening live every day for months, a few thousand kilometers from the safety of our daily lives. Apocalypse on earth. Something which Banksy echoes.

2023. Borodyanka, 50 km from Kyiv. No sign of life. Death was omnipresent. The landscape, littered with ruins, resembled relics of an apocalypse. A few days ago, in this end-of-history scene, some murals emerged, like visual stumbles.

Black-and-white frames of a single sequence. A young judoka takes down a man, an evident reference to Russian President Putin, suspended by the International Judo Federation after the invasion of Ukraine. And then: on some marble blocks, two children play on a seesaw that is actually a *cheval de frise*, a defensive obstacle used by Ukrainians. Finally, a ballerina dancing on a boulder, performing with a ribbon; and a young girl attempting an acrobatic move amid the ruins of a skyscraper.

Photographer Ed Ram shared these images on his social media, asking: "I wonder if it might be a #Banksy or an imitation?"

Finally, on his Instagram profile, the street artist who has made anonymity their authority claimed these guerilla writings as their own, additional chapters of the dramaturgy they have been arranging for years, committed to intertwining art and testimony.

Until then, faced with the absurd, real, and dreadful trauma of Ukraine, this original, special correspondent for the social and political emergencies of our time had remained silent. Not as a form of desertion, but as an acknowledgment of his own helplessness.

Months after the conflict began, Banksy chose to go to Ukraine. And, as he had done in the West Bank, he left his clandestine iconography on fragments of bombed architecture, treading a line between journalism, estrangement, and dark humor. Inverted tales: the chronicle is viewed with a skewed gaze. In a dreadful scenario of war, here are some naive, free characters. They are unconscious heroes who oppose Evil with the power of imagination, the strength of hope.

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This is Banksy's ethical, aesthetic, and political program, as stated by himself in the tweet he pinned in his account: "Our generation thinks it's *cool* to not care. It's not. Effort is *cool*. Caring is *cool*. Staying loyal is *cool*. Try it out".

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