A text by Daniel Tércio about *Spies - Apocalypse How*, a project by Filipa Francisco, directed by Sónia Baptista.

The performance is presented as part of Alkantara Festival 2026, at Jardins do Bombarda, Sala Valentim de Barros, on 20, 21 and 22 November.

It doesn't smell of napalm, it smells of popcorn

1.
We go into what might be a platform for departures or arrivals. The preamble to a journey to an unspecified place that might not exist at all. There's a door that does what doors do: it lets us go in and out. There are people arriving, others already waiting. There's a numbered ticket dispenser: an important device that establishes, at random, the order that things happen in. What are all those people there for? To board a spaceship, or for an audition? Are they there to await the end of the world, or simply to take part in a service company weekend? Are they hired assassins, or are they victims of a repressive system?

Apocalypse How is a multi-layered allegory of neoliberal capitalism. There are those who call it late capitalism, which basically means capitalism elevated to ever-higher levels of ravaging the planet and exploiting human and non-human beings, especially those at the bottom of the pyramid. Mark Fisher calls it "capitalist realism", since it creates "the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it"[1].

It's common knowledge: we're still deep in the capitalist system. We won't give up our consumer therapy, nor our multifarious, specialised desires. We can't go on without our popcorn and fizzy drinks, our hamburgers and vegan curries.

On a micro level, in medium-to-large sized businesses, capitalism says it wants to cement the relationships between workers, host group therapy sessions, simulate the circulation of intimacies. *Apocalypse How* is a succession of games in which we almost always lose. *Team building*, or its opposite. The bonds between people must be strengthened, even if it requires truncheon blows. All in the name of efficiency. Along the way, our private worlds overflow with emojis. But capitalism is like that: it's useful to turn workers into collaborators. After all, capitalism is intrinsically insidious and hypocritical.

2.
A nuclear cataclysm, or the threat of a meteor hitting the Earth, while possible, are not things we immediately expect to happen. It's already been 66 million years since a meteor, or a shower of them, wiped out the dinosaurs. It was the end of the dinosaur age. When will the human age end?

The question is actually this: when is the end of the world? In an essay on this subject, Slavoj Žizek writes: "what if the true end of time is not a mega-catastrophe but the endless repetition of the same endlessly deferred moment?

---

[1] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism. Is there no alternative?* Zero Books < https://files.libcom.org/files/[Mark_Fisher]_Capitalist_Realism_Is_There_no_Alte(BookZZ.org).pdf>

A moment epitomized by the standard coda to an episode of a TV show, asking us to wait until next week (or in streaming life, simply the next episode)"[2].

The end of the world continues in the next series. The end of the world is a mainstream show. A reality show we watch while eating sweet popcorn... or salty.

3.

Apocalypse How is a project of transferences. It couldn't be less like a team building, because it doesn't mimic emotion, but rather starts from the friendship between artists to then go somewhere else. All of them come from the world of contemporary dance. It's not the first time they've come together. The project **Spies**, which began in 1998, is already on its third edition. Filipa Francisco, Francisco Camacho, Miguel Pereira, and Sílvia Real, who've worked on it together before, this time invite Sónia Baptista to join them. But in truth they've always been around because here, in this territory, friendships are something real and legacies are respected.

"Respect", as the giant rooster would say, gleaming with the dawn's light.

Alkantara Festival is an organisation funded by República Portuguesa — Ministério da Cultura, da Juventude e do Desporto - DGArtes and by Câmara Municipal de Lisboa.

Alkantara Festival 2026 is co-produced by Centro Cultural de Belém, CAM - Centro de Arte Moderna Gulbenkian, Culturgest, MAAT, Lisboa Cultura - Teatro do Bairro Alto and Teatro Nacional D.Maria II.

[2] Slavoj Žizek. Against progress. Penguin Random House, 2025