

Toward a New World Order

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Artspace Centre for Contemporary Art, Sydney

After a six-month negotiation with the New South Wales Department of Housing I gained permission to use a large open lot in the Sydney harbour front suburb of Woolloomooloo. The lot had been vacant since 1981 when a mysterious explosion levelled the building that had stood there for many years. Once the rubble had been cleared, the ground beneath was discovered to be unstable and the site was condemned for development. This foreshore area, reclaimed from Sydney Harbour's tidal mudflats in the 1850s, has seen periods of significant social upheaval – from the driving out of the Indigenous population in the early days of European settlement, to the current gentrification process that is changing the face of what was once a working class neighbourhood. Woolloomooloo's story is one of failed resistance and uncertain survival in the face of commercial interests. My installation takes its title from a 1990 speech to U.S. Congress by President George H.W. Bush in which he described his objectives for post-Cold War global governance in co-operation with post-Soviet states. Bush's newly announced foreign policy that would help realize his New World Order was regarded by the Christian and secular hard right in the U.S. as heralding the One World government that was to bring about the downfall of humankind – the "End Times" as prophesied in the Bible. My project took inspiration in part from the survivalist movement that gained strength from New World Order conspiracy theories. The survivalist movement's clarion call is sounded whenever a threat to the status quo can be identified, such as economic crisis, natural and manmade disasters, pervasive geo-surveillance, pandemics, and the collapse of the social order. My intention was to create a post-apocalyptic archaeological site, seemingly frozen in time. There are also a number of historical and cinematic references, which include the rock-cut tombs of the Benedictine abbey Montmajour near Arles in southern France, and the casting of a giant bell - a symbol of transcendence as depicted in Tarkovsky's "Andrei Rublev".

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