

# The Four Horsemen

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Victoria

APOCALYPSE,  
DEATH & DISASTER

NGV International | FREE | 31 August 2012 – 28 January 2013



Dramatic images of apocalypse, death, devils and witchcraft will feature as part of a fascinating look into early European thought in *The Four Horsemen: Apocalypse, Death and Disaster*, opening at the National Gallery of Victoria on 31 August.

The exhibition will present 120 artworks from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, when religious and social turmoil inspired dramatic images of death and catastrophe by European artists including Albrecht Dürer, Jacques Callot, Jacques de Gheyn II, Stefano della Bella and Francisco Goya.

Cathy Leahy, Senior Curator, Prints and Drawings, NGV, said, "The exhibition draws its title from the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: conquest, famine, war and death. The motif of the Horsemen was a familiar one in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, a period in which natural phenomena and events were seen as manifestations of divine providence and people

interpreted disasters and disease as warnings or punishments from God. The exhibition brings to life the dramatic visual imagery from a time of great chaos and upheaval."

The illustrated books, prints, manuscripts and paintings in the exhibition are predominantly drawn from the works of the NGV, including its internationally renowned Dürer collection. The exhibition also includes key loans from the State Library of Victoria and the Special Collections of the Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne.

Dr Petra Kayser, Curator, Prints and Drawings, NGV, said, "This was a period when the plague, famine and war were affecting the majority of the population in Europe and death could strike on a massive scale at any time. These circumstances led to a different awareness of mortality which is reflected in the visual culture of the period. Many images in *The Four Horsemen*, including book illustrations by Michael Wolgemut and prints by

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Hans Holbein, show Death personified as a skeleton, seizing individuals from all levels of society in the 'Dance of Death'."

*The Four Horsemen* is a collaborative partnership between the National Gallery of Victoria and the University of Melbourne. The exhibition has been co-curated by Cathy Leahy, Senior Curator, Prints & Drawings, NGV; Dr Petra Kayser, Curator, Prints and Drawing, NGV; Dr Jennifer Spinks, Australian Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne; and Professor Charles Zika, Professorial Fellow in the ARC Centre of Excellence, History of Emotions, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive and beautifully illustrated 100-page publication, available from the NGV Shop for RRP\$44.95. An exhibition forum will be held at the NGV on Friday 31 August with lectures from keynote visiting art historians Professor Jeffrey Chipps Smith (University of Texas) and Professor Dagmar Eichberger (University of Trier and University of Heidelberg). Bookings essential.

*The Four Horsemen: Apocalypse, Death and Disaster* will be on display at NGV International, St Kilda Road from 31 August 2012 – 28 January 2013. Open Wed–Mon, 10am–5pm. Entry is **FREE**. For more information on NGV programs, please visit [www.ngv.vic.gov.au](http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au)

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**Image caption:**

**Jan SAENREDAM**

Dutch (c. 1565) – 1607

**Hendrick GOLTZIUS (after)**

*Death surprising a young man* 1592

engraving

22.0 x 17.4 (sheet trimmed within platemark)

Bartsch 123: Hollstein 111

Special Collections, Baillieu Library, The University of Melbourne

Gift of Dr J. Orde Poynton 1959 (1959.3801.000.000)

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