

Endings - GOULD GALLERY (Room overview)

How do we know it's the end, can be found in the Gould Gallery, on Level one of MOD.

DIGITAL SIGNAGE BOX (DSB)

It reads:

Everything has an end. Nothing lasts forever. This too shall pass.

We may often try to avoid thinking about endings, but saying goodbye to people, places and things that are important to us is inevitable. What happens when time ends and how do we feel about it? How do we mark endings?

Content warning:

This gallery will explore concepts of endings, dying, death and memorialisation. You may feel uncomfortable or distressed considering these topics. If you experience distress, you can contact support services like Lifeline at 13 114 or Kids Help Line on 1800551800.

Credits:

Shroud - Junior Major

Research and conceptual development - Kansas Bird, Intern

Lighting - Lachlan Turner

Soundscape - John Craig, Intern

Soundscape - Macaulay Library, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Interview - Uncle Moogy, Aboriginal elder and cultural advisor

Interview - Shannon Beresford, End of Life Doula, Your Path Guide

Interview - Bec Lyons, End of Life Doula and Funeral Director

Interview - Rosemary Wanganeen, Griefologist, Healing Centre for Griefology

Interview - Venerable Thich Phước Tấn OAM

Interview - Annamaria Fratini, Social anthropologist

Research - Stewart Moodie, State Medical Director, DonateLife

Decals & Graphic design of data display - WTT

Cosmic Ray Detector - Robert Hart

CONTENT WARNING

This gallery contains an interactive survey station and extensive written & diagrammatic information. Please seek a MODerator, should you require assistance.

ACCESS SEATING

The Gould gallery features a few seating options: before you enter, to the right against the walkway wall is a bench seat.

Additionally, in the gallery itself, bean bags are provided.

WEBSITE TEXT

Everything has an end. Nothing lasts forever. This too shall pass.

We may often try to avoid thinking about endings, but saying goodbye to people, places and things that are important to us is inevitable.

What happens when time ends and how do we feel about it? How do we mark endings?

In this gallery space we are inviting visitors to ponder things often not confronted. Our feelings about endings aren't always clear, and the more we think about it, neither are endings themselves. Consider a range of endings of differing scales, star death, extinction, our own mortality, the ending of languages and a pending endings due to climate change. Are endings cleanly drawn lines set in stone?

In the gallery space we ask you to respond to a variety of questions prompting your personal opinions in relation to others. Is there such a thing as a good death? Should your digital existence be erased following death? Is your body still your property after you die? Do you believe in an afterlife?

Hear from people who often think about death due to their jobs, personal experiences or research interests. And compare the different ways we may treat the body upon passing.

DELVE DEEPER

Endings are rarely clean, definitive lines; they're more often complex, blurred transitions.

Consider the death of stars. Following a life cycle of a few million to trillion years, when stars run out of nuclear fuel, they die. Some massive stars collapse, exploding as a supernova. Others swell to become red giants, forming a planetary nebula. Upon ending, they generate new forms. The oxygen in our lungs, the calcium in our bones, the iron in our blood, the silicon in our technology, and all the Earth's gold were formed and released by earlier generations of stars. What seems like a clear endpoint

is actually a process of transformation.

Extinction, too, complicates the notion of an absolute end. Species don't always disappear in an instant. Often, they dwindle over time, leaving traces in genetic relatives or in ecosystems that shift around their absence.

In our own mortality, death also resists simple definition. There are differing medical, ethical, and cultural thresholds for determining when life truly ends. Common definitions can differ from brain activity and heartbeat limits. Even after death, parts of us live on through memories, the people we've influenced, and in the biological elements that return to the earth.

The languages we speak face gradual endings. They can fade from common use as speakers age and younger generations adopt dominant tongues. Yet often languages leave behind fragments in phrases, place names, or cultural practices. Sometimes those languages we think have ended are merely sleeping. We can see this with the revitalisation of the once thought extinct Kurna language.

Hovering in a space between continuity and crisis, our world attempts to balance through climate change. We're not yet at an end but face the impending transformation of ecosystems, weather patterns, and ways of life. Each of these endings, rather than a sharp break, is more like a transition or evolution. A shift in form and presence that ripples forward, reshaping what comes next.

The Gould gallery on Level 1 is a large rectangular room (approx. 7m long x 14m wide):

Entrance to the Gould Gallery, is through midpoint between two white, 10m x 10m, ceiling to floor, diaphanous curtains which extend across the length of the gallery walkway.

At one end of the gallery, to your left are ceiling to floor windows which overlook the MOD. outdoor courtyard.

On the corner back wall (left-hand side of the gallery space) are white text which reads: *HOW DO WE KNOW IT'S THE END?*

To the right of the text on the back wall, are 5 individual but connected wall displays which show information in written and visual diagrams in black, white and grey.

Artwork highlight (Complex artwork)

Underneath and to the right of every information display is a clear, Perspex box, each containing an artefact or object and further information pertaining to the theme.

Box 1 - How often does a star die?

Topic - Deep Time

Endings have been happening across time, deep time. In this section we look at the death of stars, and how they have a symmetry to our own lives and deaths, but on a much larger time scale. Accompanying this section is the object of a Cosmic Ray Detector which picks up cosmic rays which have been spit out by faraway stars exploding.

What happens when stars die?

When will our sun die?

Stars die/ matter is born: The elements we breathe, build and live with today came from the death of ancient stars.

How long do stars shine?

Endings happen at cosmic scales

Inside the display box sits the Cosmic Ray Detector.

A small mechanical structure, made from electrical board with wires extending to a brass cylinder (15cm in length), which connects to a blue panel, known as the Muon background counter.

Text reads: Can we detect the death of stars here in the gallery?

The Cosmic Ray Detector flashes blue light when a muon, an elementary particle born from the collision of high-energy cosmic rays with the earth's atmosphere, travelling to us from far away stars exploding.

Box 2 - How has the extinction rate changed?

Topic - Extinction

Although endings happen to us as individuals, they can also happen on mass scales, in collectives. Extinctions are ongoing and are currently being driven at a much faster pace by human impacts.

Inside the display box are two examples of fossils of megafauna, on loan from Shaun O'Sullivan from UniSA Biosciences.

Fossil one, is part or piece of the Thylacine cynocephalus jawbone which measures approximately **7 cm**, with sharp pointy teeth intact. The last known Thylacine died in Hobart Zoo in 1936.

Fossil two, is part of the jawbone of the Thylacoleo carnifex, or the marsupial lion, found at Naracoorte, SA. This fossil is smaller in length, wider with one long tooth, measuring 5 cm] Canifex lived from 2 million years ago and became extinct about 40,000 years ago.

Box 3 - How do people die from around the world?

Topic - Us and Mortality

We end. But what is death? What happens when our time ends? Or what counts as death? In this section we explore causes of mortality, and why the line between life and death may be blurry due to legal, cultural, religious, and medical definitions. The objects accompanying this theme are Pacemaker, Organ Donation Form and Candle.

Inside the display box is a small candle (10cm in diameter and 10 cm high) burning brightly, along with a pamphlet which reads; Register to be an organ and tissue donor.

Text next to it reads; You can register to be an organ and tissue donor on the online Australian Donation Registry. South Australia is the only state or territory where you can indicate your preference on your driver's licence.

There is also a model of a pacemaker, a device that is used to detect heart rate irregularities and then send electrical impulses to help it beat at a normal rate and rhythm.

The pacemaker is an oval shaped, metal device – it sits on a grey velvet pouch.

Box 4 - Languages can disappear. Why?

Topic - Language

The things that connect us and that we share have endings. What comes next and how do things evolve? This section explores the ending of language and culture, both from a cultural and technological perspective. The accompanying objects for this section are a series of books demonstrating different types of languages and their potential changes over time.

Inside the display box are four different language documents.

Item one: a book titled; Decoding Gen-Z Slang by Devon Knott

Text underneath reads: Does anyone still yeet? Slang moves so fast that this book published in 2021 is already way out of date. Language is evolving.

Item 2: A rectangular card depicting lines of various emoji's, signs and symbols.

Text reads, Can you understand the story in emoji's written by Bing Xu in 2010?

Item 3: an orange book, the book spine reads, in silver text: FORTRAN Programming, Watters.

Text reads, FORTRAN (FORmula TRANslation): FORTRAN is one of the oldest high level programming languages. Developed in the 1950's, it is still used in many nuclear reactors.

Item 4: The Kurna Dictionary – Kurna Warra Pintyanthi/ Kurna Warra Karrpanthi

This Kurna dictionary published in 2021 represents over 30 years of research and revitalisation efforts.

Box 5 - Ecosystems under threat – Tuvalu’s preparing to become a digital state.

Topic - Climate Future

Time is running out to shape the ending you want. There are impending endings, or endings we can see happening in front of us. In this section we focus on the ending of place. The accompanying object for this section is bleached coral.

Inside the display box is a piece of white coral, (30cm in length and 15cm height) Underneath text reads, Coral reefs are under threat. Warmer ocean temperatures and other stressors cause coral bleaching which can damage and destroy reef ecosystems.

INTERACTIVE COMPONENT - The SURVEY STATION

By the entrance to the gallery is an interactive station which will ask the user a series of questions about death, dying and memorialisation. The visitor responds indicating the scale of agreement or disagreement with the provided statement. Suspended high above you in the gallery are approximately 40 hanging blinds (predominantly white however, a few black) in a row, one behind the other.

According to your response to the question, the blinds will adjust and move up and down representing your perspective above you. The black blind will show [your response), the white blind will show the average of other people’s responses as a bell graph.

On the interactive station/ kiosk, black text reads:

What do you think about endings: Tap to start

More text:

By clicking enter I acknowledge that I am over 25 years old and that my responses will be collect for research about people’s opinions about endings. The questions asked here could be quite personal around dying, death and memorialisation. Look up to see your responses affect the data sculpture.

Tap to enter

You have three choices: Death, Dying, Memorialisation

Which will you choose?

Once you have made your choice, you will be asked to respond to a statement on a scale of agreement to disagreement. Example questions include: I would live my life differently if I knew when I was going to die, I want some or all of my organs donated, My digital existence should be erased following death.

SOUND ELEMENTS

In this gallery, you will hear a soundtrack.

The soundtrack pulls from the themes of extinction and life after death. The last calls of a species, the O'o (kawaii oh oh – if you watch a Youtube video like [this one](#) at 0.32 secs maybe help too?) bird echo throughout the room, a male waiting for a response that never comes. The background soundtrack is fuzzy, like a far travelled radio signal, representative of the dust and particles from long dead stars. The sound is inspired by the sonification of radio-telescope images of nebulas and galaxies. Within it, the beating rhythm of a pulsar star, the crackle of cosmic dust entering the atmosphere, and the hum of dying stars that will continue to travel across space long after the star itself has died.

WHERE TO NEXT?

This concludes the audio description track for “How do we know if it’s the end?” in the Gould Gallery, by Access2Arts for MOD. Please continue to the next MOD. Gallery space to your right along the hallway.