

Preppers is an exhibition about doomsday preppers — the global subculture of people who prepare for the collapse of society. Preppers collect specialised gear, practice survival skills, and hoard violent knowledge. They gather in communities and clubs as well as online. Prepping is a hobby but also a world-view, with its own distinct aesthetics, vocabulary, and consumer products.

This exhibition considers the prepper phenomenon as an expression of wider cultural anxieties. Today catastrophe looms on many fronts — whether environmental collapse, disruptive technology, rising political nativism, or another financial crash. While established power systems fail to address these great challenges, preppers are hard at work planning for the worst. In this moment of great uncertainty, they understand that chaos also represents an opportunity.

The *Preppers* exhibition is part of a series on this theme. The project began with experimental presentations at galleries in Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth, now culminating in a major exhibition at Fremantle Arts Centre. This iteration features five contemporary Australian and international artists producing sculpture, video, installation, and print art.

The art in this show draws on internet and consumer culture, as well as actual experience within prepping communities. It emphasises the aesthetics of rugged survival gear, high-performance materials, specialist technology and tools. In the hands of the artists involved, these tools take on new capacities to express the paranoia, ambivalence, absurdities and hope in an uncertain future. The artists involved are Tiyan Baker (NSW), Loren Kronemyer (USA/TAS), Guy Louden (WA), Dan McCabe (WA) and Thomas Yeomans (UK).

Tiyan Baker is a Malaysian Bidayuh-Anglo Australian artist making video, sound and installation art. She uses field research and documentary techniques to explore our emotional context within wider socio-political settings. Baker is a recipient of the 2019 Fredman Foundation Travelling Scholarship, was a finalist in the 65th Blake Prize and the winner of the Macquarie Digital Portraiture Award. Originally from Darwin, NT, Baker currently lives and works on the Gadigal lands known as Sydney.

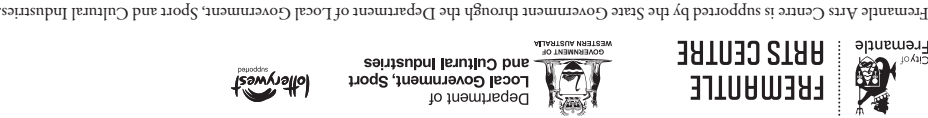
Loren Kronemyer is an artist living and working in remote Iutrwita / Tasmania, Australia. Her works span interactive and live performance, experimental media art, and large-scale worldbuilding projects exploring ecological futures and survival skills. Kronemyer has exhibited widely and participated in international residencies and festivals. She received the first Masters of Biological Arts Degree from Symbiotica Lab at the University of Western Australia, and is a PhD candidate at the University Of Tasmania.

Guy Louden is an artist and curator based in Fremantle / Walyalup. Louden has curated for the Perth International Art Festival, Moana, and Success, and exhibited at galleries in Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, and Fremantle. He often makes art about the near-future using installation, writing, and digital techniques. Louden holds an MA in Art History from the University of Manchester and a Master of Art Curating from the University of Sydney.

Dan McCabe is a visual artist raised in Brisbane and based in Fremantle / Walyalup. Since graduating Honours at the Queensland College of Art, he has exhibited widely across Brisbane, Perth, Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne, and participated in international residencies. McCabe's practice often considers global urbanism and its impact on the natural environment. In his work, concept drives materials and method — he has produced sculptural installations, video, photography and wall-based compositions.

Thomas Yeomans is a London-based artist making video, digital, and sculptural work. Yeomans received an MA from the Royal College of Art and a BA from Slade School of Art. He has exhibited in solo exhibitions in London and Manchester, and group shows widely and prominently. His work adopts the methods of new media and often deals in futuristic and apocalyptic themes. *Preppers* is his first exhibition in Australia.

The artists would like to thank Tom Freeman and the FAC team.



PREPPERS

- Tiyan Baker (NSW)
- Loren Kronemyer (USA/TAS)
- Guy Louden (WA)
- Dan McCabe (WA)
- Thomas Yeomans (UK)

Fremantle Arts Centre
Saturday 16 November 2019 – Monday 27 January 2020

Prepping is a thriving global movement expressed in a rich and varied media culture. The videos in *E.O.T.W.A.W.K.I.*, assembled by the artists in *Preppers*, showcase this culture. Survivalist social media supports a “tactical” consumerism, which packages violent individualism into specialised trucks, clothes, guns, and knives. Hardcore doomsday preachers appear alongside niche DIYers in apocalyptic YouTube communities. Meanwhile, the culture is sustained by a growing sense, even among experts, that we are living in societies on-the-brink.

Dan McCabe appropriates the aesthetics and materials of luxury survival equipment and military tech. For *Preppers*, he combines custom camouflage patterns featuring native and introduced flora with menacing “tactical” materials such as gun-blued steel and carbon fibre. The artworks emphasise the hostility inherent in our relationship with nature and question the attraction of prepping. In the exhibition, these darkly reflective works appear as part of a large freestanding installation reminiscent of a fortified room or arms cage.

In *Bamboo Paradise*, **Tiyan Baker** investigates one of the more unusual online offshoots of the prepper subculture — the recent explosion of “primitive lifestyle” YouTube content coming out of South East Asia. Her three channel video installation is based on one such Cambodian YouTube channel, Survival Builder, that uses primitive construction techniques to make luxury structures in the jungle. In *Bamboo Paradise*, Baker’s research uncovers a sprawling YouTube industry, built around collective fantasies of village luxury, speculative primitive histories and latent desires for collapse.

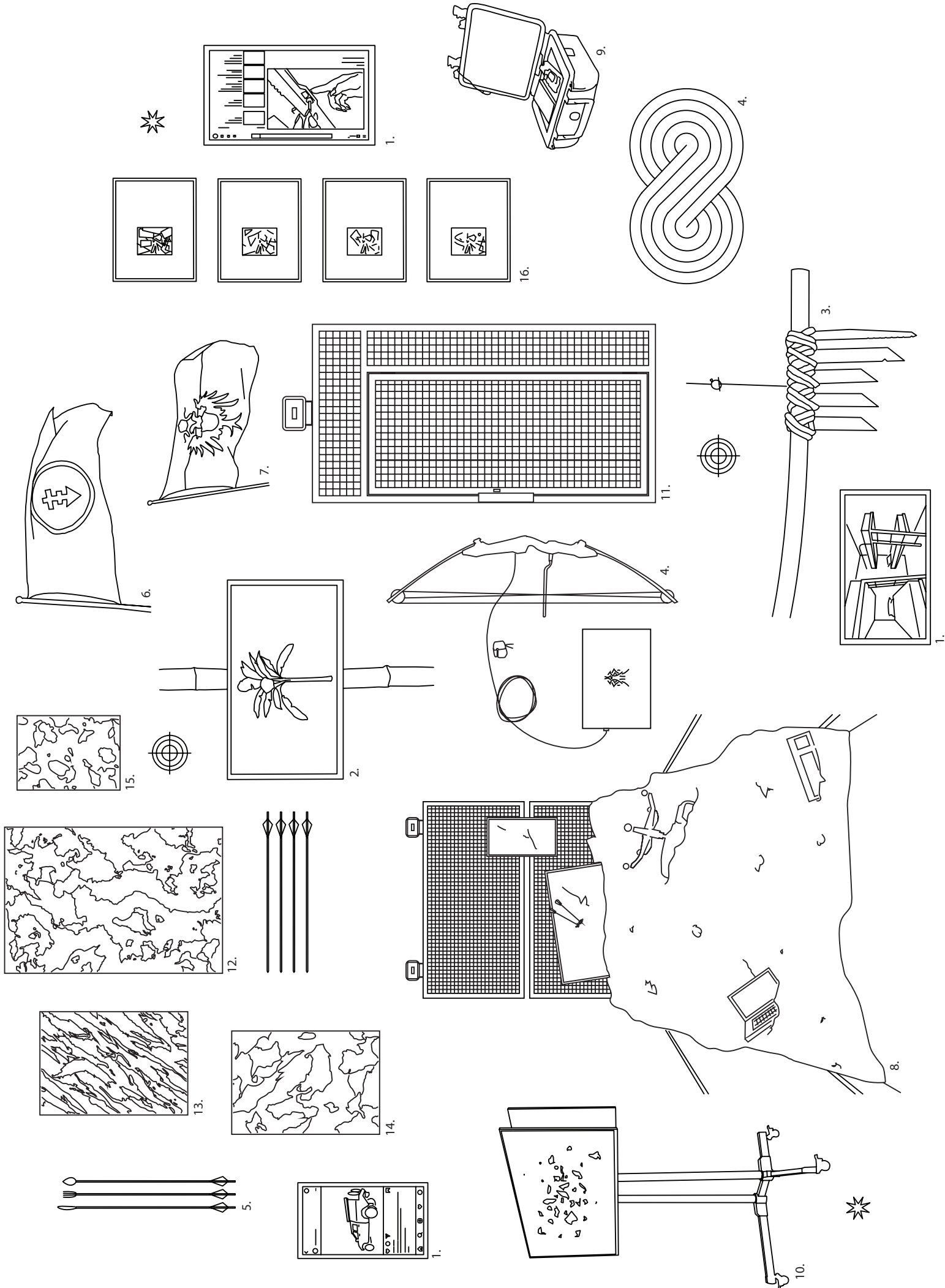
In his first show in Australia, **Thomas Yeomans** presents two computer-generated renderings on wall-mounted lightboxes. Each depicts a fictional flag that points to a diverging speculative future — one a mighty nation of queer alliance, the other a neo-imperial North America. These works speak to the way the current period of geopolitical uncertainty represents exciting as well as alarming possibilities. They frame a future built on new, post-national allegiances, a dream at the heart of much prepper ideology.

The street barricade is a symbol of radical politics, bound up in centuries of revolutionary history. But it also stands for terrible violence, and the upturning of social order. In *E-waste Barricade*, artists imagine our near future as the site of political upheaval. The barricade’s construction from recent electronic waste suggests a major reordering of our priorities and values. The work implies alternatively frightening and exhilarating possibilities — depending on which side of the barricade you stand.

Preppers often hoard or back-up files they believe will be important if the Internet were to collapse. **Guy Louden** presents an artwork that imagines such data in a post-apocalyptic world. An offline backup of Wikipedia has been made precious in a data-scarce future, becoming a quasi-religious object of worship. The work questions what is valuable about our Information Age — what have we built that is worth saving?

Hardcore preppers yearn for societal collapse, revelling in the idea of vindictive violence. This artwork shows a Pelican case, a symbol of the prepper subculture, in an endlessly replayed computer-generated destruction. Presented with the slick technology of product photography, this destruction appears darkly attractive. At the same time, Aesop’s fable *The Ant and the Grasshopper* is retold in a way that emphasises a malicious pleasure in others’ misfortune.

Loren Kronemyer presents a series of installations inspired by her experiences learning survival skills of trapping and marksmanship. Drawn from her collection of bushcraft manuals and time spent among shooting ranges, she subverts the masculine energy of these practices with playful yet menacing details. A diamond wedding ring holds back the trigger of a boar trap; a weapon is redesigned to measure the user’s heart rate; the tip of an arrow is fashioned from a piece of cutlery. By becoming intimately familiar with these skills and objects, she imagines new and queered visions of the dominant survivalist narratives.



1. Dan McCabe, *E.O.T.W.A.W.K.I.*, 2019, digital video, screen capture, found media
2. Tiyan Baker, *Bamboo Paradise*, 2019, digital video, bamboo, sisal rope, potted plants, some video footage provided by Survival Builder
3. Loren Kronemyer, *Feather-Spear Trap*, 2018, PVC, saw blades, rope, diamond ring
4. Loren Kronemyer, *Wounded Amazon of the Capitalocene 1*, 2019, lie detector, compound bow, targets, hay bales, accessories
5. Loren Kronemyer, *Wounded Amazon of the Capitalocene 2*, 2019, arrow shafts, custom broadheads, fletchings, serving
6. Thomas Yeomans, *Queer Sigil*, 2018, digital print on light box
7. Thomas Yeomans, *Royal America*, 2018, digital print on light box
8. Guy Louden, Dan McCabe, Loren Kronemyer, *E-waste Barricade*, 2019, e-waste, steel, zipties
9. Guy Louden, *Ark (II)*, 2019, Wikipedia backup, custom computer, gold leaf, hard case, custom fabric, rolling plinth
10. Guy Louden, *The Ant and the Grasshopper*, 2019, 2-channel digital video, looped flood lights
11. Dan McCabe, *Compound*, 2019, industrial enamel, steel, motion sensors and LED
12. Dan McCabe, *Red River Bicyc*, 2019, automotive carbon fibre vinyl on acrylic, stainless steel and “gun blued” steel
13. Dan McCabe, *Marlock Tiger Strike*, 2019, automotive carbon fibre vinyl on acrylic, stainless steel and “gun blued” steel
14. Dan McCabe, *Euco Splinter*, 2019, automotive carbon fibre vinyl on acrylic, stainless steel and “gun blued” steel
15. Dan McCabe, *Pommy Plane DP*, 2019, automotive carbon fibre vinyl on acrylic, stainless steel and “gun blued” steel
16. Guy Louden, *Capriccio 1-4*, 2017 giclee print from digital render