

## IT ENDS HERE

Human nature and the road to redemption or hell  
Martin Firrell | The Vaults  
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It Ends Here by public artist Martin Firrell mines popular culture for insights into the conditions for war or peace, for happy co-existence or mutual annihilation.

The project suggests a viable strategy for living peacefully that can be applied to anyone's daily life.

In the past, Firrell has worked extensively with text, often as light projections onto landmark buildings including St Paul's Cathedral (public artist in residence/tercentenary commission, 2008), The National Gallery, Wellington Barracks (artist in residence with the household division of the British Army, 2009), and The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

It Ends Here deploys constructed and installed text in four rooms of The Vaults underneath Waterloo Station.

Each room explores an aspect of human nature and the road to redemption or hell.

## MASS CULTURE

Martin Firrell

More often than not, popular culture is looked down on by 'serious' critics or commentators as thin or inconsequential. And yet pop culture has immense power to reach people simply by virtue of its popularity.

I wanted to use IT ENDS HERE to 'call out' certain ideas in genre works like science fiction and highlight their potential value when applied practically to our daily lives.

It's my belief that we need guidance on living well from works of public art because the traditional sources of guidance (and control) are (happily) ineffective or redundant.

Rather than refer to the lives of saints and martyrs, we can refer to the fictional lives of characters with powerful messages about self-generated meaning, truthfulness, humanity, peace-making, the costs of inhumanity and the status of war as failure acted out.

The original Apes book, 'La Planète des Singes' by the French novelist Pierre Boulle, was published in 1963, the year I was born.

Ever since I can remember, I have been fascinated by Boulle's inverted world. Why do we find it so attractive to tell ourselves that story of power inversion, ape supremacy, and human servitude?

And what does the idea of human servitude - the human in crisis - tell us about the kind of animal we really are?

There is not doubt we are a warring and violent species, but we are also redeemed by something else - by our capacity (weak though it is) to see beyond immediate hurts and imagine an alternative to retaliation.

With It Ends Here, my intention was to explore the deeper value of Planet of the Apes' particular corner of pop culture, locating truths that cast light on our attempts to live humanely in an over-crowded and tension-filled world.

[www.dawnofapes.co.uk](http://www.dawnofapes.co.uk)

## MARTIN FIRRELL

Martin Firrell has been described variously as a typographer, a designer, a writer, a campaigner, an activist, an artist, a provocateur, a benign propagandist and a documentarian.

He has raised questions about the politics of aging, individual liberty, the right to personal idiosyncrasy, cultural diversity, gender equality, faith, climate change, masculinity, what constitutes a meaningful and purposeful life, hero worship, fair and truthful government, and the quality of human lived experience.

He has used cinema screens, newsprint, the internet, portraiture and video interviews of culturally significant figures like Howard Jacobson, April Ashley, Johnson Beharry VC, and A C Grayling; and large-scale digital projection onto landmark buildings.

Firrell has used popular culture as raw material, investigating philosophical value in the

Carry On series with MetaFenella – an interactive video portrait of Carry On Screaming star Fenella Fielding ([www.metafenella.com](http://www.metafenella.com)).

Firrell is currently completing Metascifi, a practical guide to life inspired by the commanders, diplomats, scientists and aliens of American television science fiction.

*I am interested in connecting with people who are as perplexed and as hopeful about life as I am. I am interested in the power of popular culture to disseminate sound ideas about how to live productive, intriguing and valuable lives.*

*I realise none of us has ever travelled this way before and so we have to rely on each other for good ideas about how to live life well.*

*I set out to explore what constitutes a good life and share some of those ideas in public.*

[www.martinfirrell.com](http://www.martinfirrell.com)

