

on nuclear pasts and radiant futures

30 November 2024 -9 February 2025

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CURATORIAL STATEMENT

SALT. CLAY. ROCK. On Nuclear Pasts and Radiant Futures is an artistic-curatorial research project on the politics of nuclear power and the storage of radioactive waste. How do we deal with the long-lasting toxic legacies of nuclear infrastructures? How does this relate to the energy crisis unfolding in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, paired with ongoing debates in the European Union about energy futures and the Green New Deal? The exhibition and public program at nGbK shares the results of extensive research carried out by the participating artists and the curatorial team in the form of newly commissioned artworks and a curatorial research display exploring connections between energy, politics, ecology, and social movements. While the title is inspired by the three materials—salt, clay, and granite—that are currently considered the most suitable for the underground storage of radioactive waste, it also refers to the need to engage with the different temporalities that arise from the deep time of nuclear half-life.

Over a two-year period (2023-2024), we investigated how nuclear industries and infrastructures affect our lives, delving into the production of nuclear energy and the storage of radioactive waste but also the ways in which impacted local communities coexist with its material, social, and economic consequences on a daily basis. We decided to focus on the situation in Germany and Hungary, not only due to the respective backgrounds of the curatorial team, which has enabled us to do in-depth research on-site, but also because the two countries have chosen radically different paths when it comes to nuclear energy. While Germany initiated its nuclear exit in 2023 with the shutdown of its last nuclear power plants, Hungary is currently building a new nuclear power plant, the heavily debated PAKS II. Despite these differences, both countries are faced with the challenge of finding suitable final repositories for their high-level radioactive waste, which, according to EU regulations, have to be located within national borders. This is an unresolved issue globally; with the exception of the Finnish final repository Onkalo, slated to open in 2025, other countries have yet to build safe storage sites for this high-risk by-product of energy production.

The exhibition SALT. CLAY. ROCK. connects the city of Berlin with rural places in Germany and Hungary that host nuclear infrastructures such as uranium mines, power plants, and waste repositories or have been and still are important sites of anti-nuclear resistance. Together with the commissioned artists, we visited impacted local communities to learn more about their perspectives and experiences. We traveled to remote villages, went on guided tours in both functioning and defunct power plants, visited local mining museums, walked down mine shafts to explore the underground world of the repositories, talked about folk dance, punk, and self-organized cultural work as driving forces of anti-nuclear resistance, and sat at dinner tables with pro-nuclear families, who shared with us the long history of Carnival parties organized by workers of the repository—all the while amazed and deeply impressed by the complexity, multiperspectivity, and conflictual nature of the issues we are addressing.

The exhibition presents nine new artistic commissions resulting from this situated and locally embedded research. Each artist has engaged with a particular site, focusing on specific aspects of our nuclear pasts and futures in order to articulate these through their diverse practices and approaches. Many of the works were created in dialogue with local communities, foregrounding their subjective visions and grassroots perspectives.

The exhibition is accompanied by a public program including guided tours led by the participating artists and curators as well as contributions by invited guests in the form of performances, discussions, and film screenings, which will offer additional perspectives on the key questions of the exhibition.

Over the course of the past two years, we have witnessed major shifts in the public discourse around nuclear energy, due to ongoing wars and the unfolding energy crisis, among other factors. The military targeting of nuclear power plants in Ukraine has shown how quickly we can become both "hosts and hostages of modern infrastructure," as the nuclear culture researcher Egle Rindzevičiūte pointed out at our research assembly in November 2023, while the Ukrainian media theorist Svitlana Matviyenko talks about a shift "from energy colonialism to energy terrorism." The energy crisis has not only exposed most European countries' problematic dependency on fossil fuels from Russia, it has also accelerated the search for energy alternatives. Here nuclear power has made a surprising comeback. Recast as clean and green, it is often cited as the only way we can satisfy our growing energy consumption if we want to renounce fossil fuels in favor of renewables. SMRs (Small Modular Reactors) are promoted as a flexible and affordable solution, with techno-scientific promises of using AI (Artificial Intelligence) for their future shutdown and rhetorical claims of the safe, cheap recycling of their radioactive waste.

There have also been far-reaching changes in the local contexts we have been working in: the city of Paks has lost control over its nuclear power plant, which was declared a "special economic zone" after the opposition won the municipal elections in mid-2024, while in Germany the project of citizen participation regarding the search for a final repository for high-level radioactive waste seems to be stalling as the "not in my backyard" mentality prevails. All these developments show that not only will nuclear energy and its toxic heritage remain relevant for a long time to come but so will its critical discussion.

RESEARCH SITES

BÁTAAPÁTI

Bátaapáti is a small village in Tolna County in southern Hungary, just over the hill from the village of Ófalu in Baranya County. In 2005, a referendum was held here about hosting the country's first geological repository for low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste, which was supported by 91 percent of the village's voting population. This occurred fifteen years after the unprecedented civic protest in Ófalu in the late 1980s, which successfully hindered the plan to build a repository there. One might ask: what led to such overwhelming support in Bátaapáti after such strong resistance in Ófalu? Answers might be found in the distinct histories of the two communities.

Bátaapáti has been struggling with depopulation and out-migration since the postwar period, when the village's German minority-80 percent of its population at the time—was forcibly displaced to Germany. During the period of state socialism, Bátaapáti was included on the "black list" of villages destined to die out, which was a widespread policy from the central government that impacted small rural communities by denying them funding and building permits. This planning policy especially discriminated against regions with German minority populations as many had supported German nationalism and Nazi Germany during the war. Bátaapáti shared in this fate, and based on accounts of the local community, the 1980s and '90s were characterized by an ever-increasing lack of future possibilities. This is the situation the Public Agency for Radioactive Waste Management (PURAM, established in 1998) stepped into, following the failed attempt by the state socialist regime to build a repository in Ófalu in the late 1980s. Located on the same granite rock formation, Bátaapáti was identified as a potential host for the repository. They were approached with plans for a new underground facility in response to earlier criticism regarding the possible hazards of aboveground storage. The Hungarian Geological Institute began research in the area in 1993, while PURAM launched a proactive information campaign, especially targeting village youth with the organization of video clubs and sports activities and promising compensation funding and job opportunities that would enable the village to thrive again.

Eventually built on the outskirts of the village, the repository transformed a wooded area that had once been a beloved meeting point for the local community into a high-security facility fenced off with barbed wire and watched over by security guards. Many villagers reminisce about summer nights spent by a campfire in the forest that once stood there. A dosimetrist working at the repository even uses an old photo of this spot as his desktop screen saver.

Different temporalities collide, overlap, and interweave in Bátaapáti. The slickly futuristic, sci-fiinfused design of the visitors' center suggests a technooptimistic attitude toward radioactive waste storage. A statuette of Saint Barbara, the patron saint of miners, guards the entrance of the repository's underground shaft and testifies to the work and knowledge of miners that has become obsolete due to this local industry's decline but was temporarily reactivated for the construction of the repository. Across the village, new playgrounds and other public infrastructures coexist with the intricately carved wooden columns of the folk architecture of the German minority that decorates traditional houses. Locals are still concerned about out-migration and the aging population. Even though their village is better off than most in the country, there is nothing to keep the youth from moving away. Local politicians complain that compensation funding comes with too many conditions and they cannot actually use it to benefit the community. No one wants to talk too much about the repository, except to affirm that it was the village's only chance for survival. A LED sign outside the mayor's office relentlessly flashes with information about radiation levels.

BODA

Situated in southwestern Hungary near the regional capital of Pécs, Boda is a small village with 464 inhabitants. Historically, it is in an agricultural region known for its vineyards and winemaking, but since 1957 the hills of the West Mecsek Mountains have also been the site of Hungary's largest uranium ore mine. The mine, which provided the Paks Nuclear Power Plant with uranium, was shut down in 1997 for economic reasons. During our research, we learned that uranium mining went hand-in-hand with extensive geological investigations, made possible by an underground research laboratory that was set up within the uranium mine. In 1953 scientists began studying the unique Boda Claystone Formation (BCF), and already in the late 1980s they started discussing it as a potential host for high-level radioactive waste, aware of the need to find safe storage for the Paks power plant's spent nuclear fuel. Unfortunately, with the shutdown of the rest of the mine, the underground research laboratory was also flooded-a painful loss for Hungary's scientific community.

In spite of this setback, exploratory test drilling of the Boda Claystone Formation continued through the 1990s and 2000s until today, and since 1999 the Public Limited Company for Radioactive Waste Management (PURAM) officially considers the BCF a potentially suitable rock formation for safely hosting high-level nuclear waste.

As one of the leading geologists working at PURAM explained to us: the emphasis is on "suitable" they are not looking for the "ideal" rock formation but rather the rock formation about which they have the most knowledge, in order to ensure safe storage conditions.

Boda's long-standing mayor Győző Kovács, in office since 1990, has been instrumental in making these investigations possible and forming an alliance with neighboring villages to claim compensation funding from the government. He stresses that only test drillings are taking place in Boda, and therefore any concerns or protests are unfounded as the repository will be located elsewhere; it needs to be built in an area where no drilling has happened and the rock formation is intact. This particular "not in my backyard" attitude is not shared by the Pécs-based environmental activist group Green Youth, who claim that the research concerning the BCF is not convincing enough and that another question has to be addressed: what if there is no suitable storage site for high-level radioactive waste within Hungary's national borders? Geologists still advocate for investigating the Boda Claystone Formation, even though doubts about its suitability have also surfaced from within the scientific community. Their main concern, however, is that the exploratory drilling is stalling due to funding issues and diverging political interests, thus impeding further research.

Currently, the blue construction containers dotting the outskirts of Boda testify to the momentary suspension of investigations. The information park set up by PURAM to communicate about the storage of high-level nuclear waste is undergoing renovations. Within the park, the Boda Claystone Formation has been exposed for visitors to see. At this spot, we realized the field trip led by artists Csilla Nagy and Rita Süveges, with the participation of an activist from Green Youth, a former uranium miner, a hydrogeologist from PURAM, and the mayor of Boda, who invited us to cap off the evening with his "Atomic Cuvée," symbolically interweaving the diverse histories and possible futures of the region.

ERZGEBIRGE (THE ORE MOUNTAINS)

The traditional mining region of the Erzgebirge (often translated as the Ore Mountains) in Saxony looks back on more than eight hundred years of mining history and was the center of German uranium mining.

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Uranium was discovered in the sixteenth century as a by-product of the mining of silver and tin. At that time, the heavy, black, and previously unusable mineral was called "pitchblende." It was not until the twentieth century that the mineral gained an economic and strategic importance with the discovery of nuclear fission and its role as a lucrative primary energy source.

During the Cold War arms race, the Wismut company was founded in 1946 as a Soviet joint-stock company in Saxony and Thuringia. Its purpose was to supply uranium for the Soviet atomic bomb project of the late 1940s. The rapid expansion of uranium mining and the hasty settlement of workers led to the disappearance of villages and forests as huge tailings heaps were created from mining excavations, and the landscape was irretrievably contaminated. Uranium mining took place under strict secrecy and security under Soviet management and then, after 1953, as a joint venture of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Soviet Union.

The GDR was the fourth-largest uranium producer in the world. More than two hundred thousand tons of radioactive raw material were supplied to the Soviet nuclear industry over the course of forty-four years under the code name "Wismut." This made Wismut the largest Soviet company abroad. The uranium mined there covered 60 percent of the USSR's nuclear program, providing a crucial element for the Cold War.

The mining, processing, and reprocessing of uranium by SDAG Wismut took place at various locations in a forty-square-kilometer area shared between eastern Thuringia and western Saxony. One of the most important areas was the Johanngeorgenstadt district, where old ore mining shafts were reopened for uranium mining. The first mining site was Schlema (1946–1990), followed by Aue and Schneeberg, and then Königstein and Freital (near Dresden) as well as three mining operations in the Ronneburg area and an opencast mine in Lichtenberg. Important uranium processing plants were located in Seelingstädt (near Gera), another in Königstein, and also in Crossen (near Zwickau).

After the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in April 1986, a GDR-wide environmental movement was formed in which activists collected and published information about SDAG Wismut. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, Wismut's uranium mining was discontinued. Wismut AG was transformed into a federally owned limited liability company with the task of decommissioning the remaining facilities and remediating the region above and below ground, including the estimated five hundred million tons of radioactive waste generated during mining. Today, fifteen hundred square kilometers of soil are suspected of being contaminated with radioactivity and heavy metals. Environmental activists consider this an environmental catastrophe of unknown proportions,

with the number of victims of lung cancer due to radiation exposure assumed to be in the five-digit range.

GORLEBEN

Gorleben, a village in the Wendland region of Lower Saxony, lies on the western side of the nearby former East-West German border. Its name has become synonymous with anti-nuclear protests and nuclear waste management in West Germany. When commercial nuclear energy production began in 1960 with the commissioning of the Kahl Nuclear Power Plant, the issue of handling its waste quickly followed. In the 1970s, the state of Lower Saxony expressed its willingness to host nuclear waste disposal centers. However, when Gorleben was unexpectedly chosen as a waste site in 1977, it sparked a broad protest movement consisting of activists, farmers, and politically engaged citizens. This movement remains one of a kind and has left a lasting impact on the history of political resistance and protest in Germany. Although Ernst Albrecht, the former Minister-President of Lower Saxony (from the Christian Democratic Union party), declared in 1979 that plans for building a reprocessing plant for radioactive waste in Gorleben would be abandoned, the Gorleben salt dome continued to be examined for suitability as a potential nuclear repository for some time afterward.

After decades of dispute over Gorleben as a site for a nuclear waste repository, the reprocessing facility for highly radioactive waste there is currently being dismantled. This is because scientific investigations of the salt dome ended in 2020 with the conclusion that Gorleben is not suitable as a repository. Beginning in 2024, four hundred thousand tons of salt are to be brought into the shafts to backfill them. However, this is not the end of the nuclear waste storage issue in the Wendland.

Nearby, the aboveground interim storage facility in Gorleben still contains 113 CASTOR containers holding high-level radioactive materials. CASTOR is an acronym that stands for "Cask for Storage and Transport of Radioactive Material," and until 2011, when the last CASTOR arrived at Gorleben, protests against these transports regularly made national headlines. Without a final high-level storage solution, radioactive material will continue to be stored aboveground at Gorleben. According to the Federal Office for the Safety of Nuclear Waste Management (BASE), a decision about the final repository is not expected before 2046, with other sources suggesting that the search may take as long as until 2076. This means that nuclear waste will likely remain at Gorleben for some time, even though the current interim facility license expires in 2034.

There is a belief that Gorleben's selection as West Germany's radioactive waste repository was a political choice. Since the GDR had its own repository located right on the border with Lower Saxony in Morsleben, some speculate that Minister-President Ernst Albrecht also chose a location near the border in retaliation.

The anti-nuclear movement in the Wendland remains active today. For instance, the Gorleben Archive Association (Gorleben Archiv e.V.), which was founded in 2001, collects and preserves valuable materials related to Gorleben's nuclear resistance. The Citizens' Initiative for Environmental Protection in Lüchow-Dannenberg is still a key player and contact point for issues relating to nuclear waste storage and activist resistance. The self-organized Gorleben Prayers have been taking place every Sunday since 1989 near the interim storage site, where believers pray for peace, a definitive nuclear exit, environmental protection, a mindful approach to resources, and a non-violent triumph over exploitation, oppression, and injustice.

MORSLEBEN & BEENDORF

The Morsleben repository and its preexisting 300-resident host community of the same name is located in Saxony-Anhalt on the east side of the border with Lower Saxony, which formerly separated East and West Germany. From 1971 to 1991, and again from 1994 to 1998, approximately thirty-seven thousand cubic meters of low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste were moved into storage in the underground salt dome there. Morsleben is the first German final repository to be sealed under German nuclear law. It is managed by the Federal Company for Radioactive Waste Disposal (BGE), which is currently testing new waste storage techniques on site and is conducting stabilization work in order to prepare the mine to be sealed for good.

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) began commissioning nuclear power plants in the mid-1960s, with the Rheinsberg Nuclear Power Plant going online in 1966. Consequently, the need for a repository for low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste became clear. High-level radioactive waste, like fuel rods, was sent back to the Soviet Union for recycling. In 1971, the Bartensleben shaft in Morsleben was approved as a final repository for radioactive waste from the Rheinsberg power plant, and the first radioactive waste was test-stored using only mining techniques, without further safety measures. The repository was structurally completed later on and then given a permanent operation permit. From 1987 to 1996, the Morsleben repository was also used as an interim storage facility for twenty thousand barrels of toxic waste. The barrels were removed at the end of 1996.

In 2001, after suspending the delivery of more nuclear waste in 1998, the Federal Office for Radiation Protection (BfS) reassessed the repository and decided that no more radioactive waste would be delivered or temporarily stored there. Between 2003 and 2011, stabilization work became necessary in the central section of the Bartensleben mine, which was achieved by filling the destabilized sections with salt concrete to ensure the mine's safety for permanent closure.

The decommissioning plan includes comprehensive backfilling and full closure of the mine with salt concrete, thus permanently sealing the Marie and Bartensleben shafts. The closed repository should securely hold radioactive waste for all time, with no further need for maintenance. Since future water ingress cannot be entirely ruled out, the BGE is also testing particular underground sealing methods to ensure that radioactive waste remains isolated from both the rest of the mine and its wider environment.

In its in-house magazine Einblicke [Insights], the BGE states, "Experiences with the Morsleben repository show that old mines are only partially suitable for the final storage of radioactive waste." This is because there is an unnecessary amount of underground chambers with far too large a volume. According to the BGE, the storage site should include a rock formation several hundred meters deep that is stable, as watertight as possible, and capable of absorbing or withstanding the high temperatures emitted by the radioactive waste sealed within. Suitable host rock for safe containment over millions of years could consist of rock salt, claystone, or crystalline rock (granite), all of which are found in Germany.

ÓFALU

Ófalu, a small village of 320 inhabitants in Baranya County, Hungary, holds a unique place in the country's history as the most significant site for successful anti-nuclear resistance. This German-minority village traces its roots back to the eighteenth century, when German settlers repopulated the area abandoned in the wake of Ottoman occupation. It thrived throughout the nineteenth century but started to decline beginning in 1890, when a devastating vine disease crippled the local wine industry. This was aggravated by the rise of rural-to-urban migration and the aftereffects of the two World Wars.

Nestled among picturesque hills, Ófalu remained isolated for much of its history. In fact, it was so remote that a concrete road to the village was only built in 1973, which earned its residents the nickname *Heckentrapper*, or "bush jumpers." This remoteness has shaped Ófalu's unique cultural and historical trajectory in unexpected ways. According to a local anecdote, Ófalu's German population escaped the forced expulsion that followed the Second World War—a fate that befell many nearby villages, like Bátaapáti—simply because there was no road to the village. As a result, German minority culture has remained strong and well-preserved, with many residents still speaking the local German dialect, *Ohfalarisch*. However, Ófalu's isolation has also led to less fortunate consequences, including gradual depopulation, which has put the village at risk of dying out.

This might also have contributed to the village being considered as a potential site for a nuclear waste repository. Shortly after the Paks Nuclear Power Plant (PNPP) became operational in 1985, plans emerged to build a radioactive waste storage facility in Ófalu, ominously referred to as a "nuclear cemetery." The proposal came as a shock to the villagers, who were neither consulted nor informed. Initial discussions about the plan were met with resistance. When experts from the PNPP arrived in the village to hold information sessions, they were confronted by a local community determined to defend their home. What began as a critical exchange soon grew into a David-and-Goliath struggle between Ófalu and the powerful nuclear industry. This battle culminated in a major victory for the village: on 2 May 1988, the Baranya County Council's construction department refused to approve the building permit for the nuclear waste site near Ófalu.

The resistance movement was characterized by grassroots organization and led by the local German minority's folk dance group, which comprised village youth, many of them university-educated, who were eager to stand up for their community. In the previous years, the group had found a legal loophole allowing them to run in the local elections, which resulted in their victory over the official Socialist Party candidate. Having achieved a leadership position through public office, the group felt energized and liberated to speak out freely against authority—something that had been occurring more and more throughout the politically volatile period of the late 1980s, leading up to Hungary's political transition. As a result of their work, the largest anti-nuclear demonstration prior to the transition took place in Ófalu, involving four thousand people.

The villagers' eventual victory was not only a result of their perseverance but was also reflective of the fragility and unpredictability of the period's political landscape, which had also weakened the position of the Paks Nuclear Power Plant. The outcome of this struggle brought about significant changes: instead of seeking a merely acceptable waste storage site, the authorities were forced to look for a genuinely secure solution,

leading to the development of deep geological disposal rather than the previously planned surface-level facilities. By the time the PNPP approached the nearby village of Bátaapáti with plans to build a radioactive waste repository just over the hill from Ófalu and on the other side of the same granite formation, their communication and attitude had radically changed. Rather than issuing orders, they offered the village compensation funding and the promise of other benefits—an indication of how Ófalu's resistance had shaped the way these projects were to be handled in the future.

PAKS

Often referred to as the "Atomic City," Paks is best known as the city hosting Hungary's only nuclear power plant. Its first reactor block was put into operation and connected to the national electricity grid in 1983, and the completion of the fourth reactor block in 1987 marked the end of a twenty-year construction process that significantly altered the town's identity. Once a small, predominantly agricultural community, Paks evolved into a modern industrial center, with its population swelling from thirteen thousand to twenty-one thousand people.

The city's landscape changed dramatically during this period. Entire housing districts were constructed, including the now iconic Tulip Houses, and the inner city was reshaped by the addition of socialistrealist buildings intended to project a sense of modernity and progress. Initial social tensions between the original residents and newcomers were gradually eased through substantial social and cultural investments. These included the construction of a cultural center, a school, nurseries, a swimming pool, sports facilities, and a gallery—amenities that provided a shared sense of community and an improved quality of life for all. Over time, the nuclear power plant's presence became naturalized, creating a consensus among residents about the plant's necessity for Paks's prosperity.

A new chapter for Paks began on 14 January 2014, when Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced an agreement with Russian President Vladimir Putin to expand the nuclear power plant with the addition of two new reactor blocks. This expansion was, in part, a replacement plan as the existing reactor blocks are set to be decommissioned between 2032 and 2037 (though further extensions of their operating life are still under consideration). While many in Paks initially welcomed the project, our research there revealed that the early enthusiasm has faded as it has become apparent that the new investment project, known as Paks II, operates with a special status, and its expected local benefits have become increasingly uncertain.

During a visit to the power plant, we learned that the Paks II project is managed by a separate company, Paks II Zrt., which mostly employs new personnel at higher wages than those working at the existing plant. This division has created a sense of inequality and unease among the original workforce. Adding to the growing discontent, a recent political shift has dealt a significant blow to the city. On 1 August 2024, shortly after municipal elections resulted in an oppositional mayor being elected in Paks, the Hungarian government passed a decree designating the area of the nuclear power plant as a "special economic zone." This tactic, first introduced in 2020, channels tax revenues and control over large-scale investments away from local municipalities and into the hands of regional authorities, where Hungary's ruling party Fidesz maintains stronger control. For Paks, this decree represents a major financial setback; the city faces an estimated 37 percent budget cut, severely limiting its financial autonomy and resources. This development has cast uncertainty over the future of Paks and its ability to benefit from the very project that was once seen as vital by the community.

RHEINSBERG &

The Rheinsberg Nuclear Power Plant was the first such plant in the GDR, and it belonged to the first generation of research and experimental power plants for electricity generation globally. In operation from 1966 to 1990, the plant was shut down after German reunification and is now the first nuclear power plant in the world to be completely dismantled. The dismantling is considered a test run for future dismantling processes, which will occur in the near future due to the German nuclear phaseout. However, the preservation of the reactors as architectural monuments is still on the table, and the problem of storage for its highly radioactive components has not yet been solved.

As one of the largest companies in the region, with 650 workers during the time of its operation and more than 100 workers today for its dismantling, the Rheinsberg plant has an important place in the region's self-image. For some time, the Rheinsberg City History Association has been working on the establishment of an information center or museum on the local history of the nuclear power plant. Today, the plant's administration building enjoys historical preservation status as a prime example of GDR industrial architecture, joining the ranks of such local buildings as the Rheinsberg Castle, a prime example of the so-called Frederician Rococo.

The current operating company is a ful-After the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster, ly state-owned subsidiary of the federal government anti-nuclear resistance became a central concern of named Entsorgungswerk für Nuklearanlagen GmbH the East German environmental movement. At first, the (EWN). It is responsible for the plant's dismantling and Chernobyl disaster was not reported in the East German the disposal of all of its parts. Since September 1998, media, and this led to many GDR citizens being uninfollowing the decommissioning of the former GDR's formed about its dangers such as acid rain and therefore Morsleben nuclear repository in 1997, Rheinsberg's unable to protect themselves. In order to counteract radioactive waste has been transferred to the North the glaring information and communication deficit and Interim Storage Facility near Lubmin. Rheinsberg's disto undermine the state monopoly on information, the mantled machines, components, and equipment as well Berlin Environmental Library (Umweltsbibliothek) was as radioactive items such as nuclear fuel, parts of its founded in 1986, which, together with the Green-Ecoreactor core, and the reactor pressure vessel are now logical Network Arche, became centers for oppositional stored at the site of the former Greifswald Nuclear Powenvironmental work. er Plant. ENW was also responsible for the disposal of the low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste, which was stored in the plant's own repository at Rheinsberg in the first years of its operation and has for many years polluted the site's groundwater.

From today's perspective, it is almost unimaginable, but the cooling water for the Rheinsberg Nuclear Power Plant came from the Stechlin nature reserve. The eponymous Lake Stechlin (Stechlinsee) located there is one of the most well-known lakes in the Mecklenburg Lake District, which became famous through a description in Theodor Fontane's 1862 travelogue *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg* [Wanderings through the Mark of Brandenburg].

The lake is considered the most beautiful clearwater lake in northern Germany and is popular with divers because of its visibility depth of up to eleven meters. However, the lake is becoming more and more cloudy. For over sixty years, the depth of visibility has been studied by researchers at the Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, which has a laboratory set up there. With its LakeLab, the institute generates high-resolution data investigating how water bodies react to changing conditions, such as nutrient pollution, global warming, and invasions of non-native species. It should be emphasized that the laboratory also collected data continuously throughout the time of the nuclear power plant's operation, which means that there is incomplete but nevertheless extensive data on the lake. Due to the use of its water for cooling, Lake Stechlin warmed by several degrees during the nuclear power plant's operation, which led to a change in the lake's flora and fauna.

The warming water was an important reason for the GDR's environmental movement to focus on nuclear energy's effects on the area around the nuclear power plant, even though the East German government did not allow any criticism of nuclear power and to some extent suppressed it. As in West Germany, nuclear energy was considered a core technology of the future in the socialist state, through which the growing demand for energy was to be met via an alternative to brown coal.

ARTISTIC POSITIONS

1

Something Man-Made Is Here Katarina Šević

2 Overcoming Time Csilla Nagy & Rita Süveges

3

50 Million < - > 1 Million (This One Life) Sonya Schönberger

4

Nobody Dreams of Nuclear Power Plants Dominika Trapp

5

Prometheus Unbound, Total Sacrifice. For Three Voices, Sung Sadly but with Vigor András Cséfalvay

6

Dancing on a Volcano Anna Witt

7

Pitch and Blende Ana Alenso

8

Radiant Lake Marike Schreiber

9

Taking Time Krisztina Erdei & Dániel Misota

NN Curatorial research

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EXHIBITION PLAN

Ana Alenso

Pitch and Blende

2 hammer drills, drill supports, hoses, drill steel, cartridge casings, 0.50 BMG bullets, 3 photographs (framed, 60 × 80 cm), data sheets of hammer drill, 2024

ner artistic work, Ana Alenso deals with our global dep endence on resources and the ecological al, and economic exploitation political, socia hand in hand with it. Mines, mining, and related issues have been a longstanding focus for the artist. As part of SALT. CLAY , she expanded er research to nium mining and the contemporary post-mining land scape of the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains) in Germany ing on Johanngeorgenstadt and Schlema, t concentra towns with a key role in the history of uranium mining in the Ge man Democratic Republic (GDR). The effect ces of this important industry for and con the GDR are still being discussed and dealt with today will probably not be conclusively clarified in the futur To this day, the social, health, and above all the ecolog ical ef ects of uranium mining shape the coexistence of and nonhuman life in the region. Since the end of humar g, Wismut GmbH—the successor company of th minin t-German corporation of the same name (W Sovi G)—has been remediating the legacies of uranium SDA mining, with no end in sig

In her installation, Alenso has set up two hammer drills, which confront each other like military enemies. These drills were once used to mine uranium ore underground in Aue and Bad Schlema within the Erzgebirge. The equipment, borrowed from Wismut GmbH, was carefully cleaned and assessed for residual radioactivity; nevertheless, radioactive contamination still lingering inside the equipment—though harmless to visitors of the exhibition—cannot be ruled out. The hammer drills not only symbolize the effects of underground work on the human body—in addition to the radiation of uranium, miners were exposed to pollutants, radon, and emissions from the rock and dust—they also stand as a symbol for the violence anchored in human actions toward nature as well as the violence that uranium may unleash with its radioactive potential.

Because of the massive uranium deposits in the Erzgebirge, Wismut SDAG quickly became the largest producer of uranium for the Soviet nuclear program and played a key role in the Cold War nuclear arms race. Furthermore, Wismut was organized like a military enterprise or a "state within a state" and enabled the USSR to become a nuclear superpower. Regrettably, the role of uranium in global conflicts is not a thing of the past. In addition to attacks on nuclear infrastructure, weapons with uranium ammunition are reportedly being used by both warring parties in the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The use of these weapons can have far-reaching and long-term consequences for the civilian population and makes it difficult to rebuild affected areas because the effects of uranium are so difficult to remediate.

The hoses of the hammer drills, which are part of their compressed air and cooling systems, are arranged in the shape of an infinity sign and form a closed circuit. This illustrates the temporal dimension of uranium, which shapes the past and at the same time shows a future that cannot be overlooked and lies beyond human imagination. The cycle also highlights how underground mines are globally interconnected due to their social and environmental impacts. Not only are they often linked in the global supply chain system, but they are also emblematic of the insatiable urge to expand and the impulse for exuberant extraction, which is taking place all over the world.

> Special thanks: Augusto Gerardi Rousset, Susann Krächan (Wismut GmbH), Simone Müller (Wismut GmbH), Lukas Oertel, Matthew Jonathan Raven.

András Cséfalvay

Prometheus Unbound, Total Sacrifice. For Three Voices, Sung Sadly but with Vigor

Video opera (20 min), 3D print, PLA, resin, 2024

Inspired by *Prometheus Unbound*, a lyrical drama written by the English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley and published in 1820, András Cséfalvay has crafted a three-act animated video opera that reflects on the human quest for unlimited energy and the price we are willing to pay for it. His starting point is the story of Prometheus, one of the Titans in Greek mythology, who stole fire from Olympus to give to humanity in the form of knowledge, technology, and "civilization," for which he was punished by the gods. Cséfalvay combines ancient mythology with science-fiction aesthetics to ask: How ready are we to trust the power of knowledge and put our faith in progress? How does our desire to dominate nature inform our thinking about nuclear energy?

The video work unfolds these questions with the help of three mythological figures-Prometheus, Asia, and Cosmia—who all represent different positions. Drawing on his in situ research at the Bátaapáti repository for low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste in Hungary, Cséfalvay takes the repository's underground tunnels and its system of concrete containers used to package waste and transforms them into the backdrop of a conversation sung between his protagonists. They discuss the ultimate utopia of moving from nuclear fission to fusion and thus releasing the endless energy we so desire in order to satisfy the needs of our unsustainable ways of life. The figure of Prometheus calls for his release from captivity and, in exchange, promises to equip humanity with this knowledge. But is this the path we want to take, and if so, what does it really entail?

"The utmost goal of culture is domination," the nymphs sing. "How can I change something without force? That is the ecological question!" At the heart of Cséfalvay's work lies the current societal debate about energy futures, the desired green transition, and the climate emergency we are now experiencing on a planetary level. Is a technological fix possible or even desirable? Is there any room for techno-optimism? The artist prompts us to think about the relationship between humanity and nature and the dilemma that more knowledge often leads to more domination: "I want to know you, so you don't have power over me. But I don't want to know you so much that I could overpower you." His mythological creatures stress the more-than-human implications of our actions.

PITCH AND BLENDE

In this new work, Cséfalvay brings together his longstanding interest in the entanglements of science, knowledge, and power with his cross-genre practice of combining conceptual visual arts and experimental music to attempt a project of dystopian vet hopeful world-building through mytho-poetic and speculative storytelling. Insisting on the usefulness and reality of fiction, he invites us to explore far-reaching philosophical questions and delve into the relationship between culture and technology, using humor to hone his critical reflections. Bátaapáti and its repository are not only present in the video opera through its animated scenography; Cséfalvay also includes a subtle collaborative element. He recorded the voices of children from the village's primary school chanting the refrain of the opera in Hungarian and transformed it into the murmur of the sea that visitors to the exhibition may perceive as a sort of fantasy language.

> Special thanks: Students and teachers of the Bátaapáti Primary School (Nóra Antal, Hedda Panna Balázs, Leila Bölcsföldi, Balázs Bretán, Maja Bretán, Rózsa Bujdosó, Nóra Cser, Hugó László Csipak, Kevin Dezső, Tamás Farkas, Artúr Forray, Adél Füle, Dalma Füle, Noel Heilig, Damiján Dáriusz Koroknai, Dóra László, Noémi László, Linett Martonosi, Jázmin Varga, Elizabet Vígh, Izabell Vígh, Gábor Tornóczky), Gabriela Šaturová, Peter Mazalán, Eva Šušková, Monika Kuhn, Lucia Urban, Robert Kolář, Ema Pisarčíková, Erzsébet Attiláné Kuris.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Krisztina Erdei & Dániel Misota

Taking Time

Three-channel video installation, 2024

Krisztina Erdei and Dániel Misota's work is the culmination of a long-term engagement with the community of Bátaapáti, a small village in Hungary's Tolna County, whose outskirts have hosted a final repository for low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste since 2011. Their project explores the complex social, economic, and cultural implications of living in proximity to this nuclear waste storage site, blending community-based participation, artistic intervention, and personal storytelling. The artists' primary focus is on the villagers' intimate, non-official narratives of their lives in the shadow of this looming nuclear facility. For over a year, Erdei and Misota frequently returned to Bátaapáti, building relationships with residents of all ages and backgrounds and collecting personal stories that evoke different ways of living, working, and loving throughout the village's turbulent history over the past two centuries. Through telling these stories, they juxtapose politically and economically significant "grand narratives" with personal memories, examining how the presence of the repository reshapes the community's collective memory, space, and day-to-day experiences.

The central film of the three-channel video installation portrays Bátaapáti through a series of short scenes with cinematic reenactments of the collected stories, cocreated and performed by local community members. By reshuffling locations and protagonists, the artists engage the residents in a dynamic reflection on their shared history, contemplating the vast timescales framed by the radioactive waste stored nearby. This condensed account of the village's history is framed by the slow-moving, almost static scenes of the other two videos. In one of them, the camera explores the organic texture of the repository's underground tunnel walls, contrasting them with the carefully crafted crates of radioactive waste. The other video lingers on the lonely church tower of Üveghuta in a forest near Bátaapáti, which is the sole remnant of a once thriving Germanminority village whose buildings have otherwise been entirely reclaimed by nature. The tower serves as a testament to historical changes that took place over time: the rapid economic decline following the collapse of the region's viticulture as well as the rural-to-urban outmigration that occurred in the early twentieth century, which was further compounded by the forced displacement of the village's German population after the Second World War. The juxtaposition of these two environments—the radioactive waste repository and the abandoned settlement—invites us to consider how very human yet volatile personal concerns and desires are

suspended between grand narratives of history and catapulted into the unfathomable more-than-human scale of deep time.

The work reflects on the interwoven layers of past, present, and future and the broader tensions between human and nonhuman forces in the Anthropocene. It challenges the dominance of official scientific documentation and historical narratives by prioritizing lived experience over archival material, creating a dialogue between the local cultural context and global issues such as ecology, radioactive decay, and human impact on the environment. Inspired by the rich social and cultural fabric of the region, the project raises critical questions about the relationship between material evidence, isolation, and memory. It serves as a powerful commentary on how anthropogenic markers, like the "nuclear cemetery" of the repository, extend the village's temporal horizon into the unimaginable future, confronting us with the transience of human life against the backdrop of an enduring radioactive legacy.

> Special thanks: Réka Kuris, Attiláné Kuris, Jázmin Kuris, Dávid Durgonics, Balázs Zele, Kata Kocsor, Zsófia Margetin, Levente Farkas, Tamás Farkas, Artúr Forrai, Martin Braun, Mirtill Forrai, Attila Schafer, János Nagy, Mónika Illésné Nagy, Csaba Illés, János Horváth, Jánosné Horváth, Sándor Torac, József Utasi, József Sári, Józsefné Sári, Sándorné Oláh, Elizabet Víg, Izabell Víg, Anett Vígné Csereklei, Gábor Máté, Dorottya Tóth, Zsoltné Tóth, Gábor Tornóczky, Gáborné Tornóczky, András Zele, Andrásné Zele, Zoltán Ferenczi, Zoltán Kern, students from the primary school in Bátaapáti, Szebeni Workshop Creative Photography Group.

Csilla Nagy & Rita Süveges

Overcoming Time Installation with one-channel video audio, and ceramic objects, 2024

Csilla Nagy and Rita Süveges were invited to work on a special site-specific format for *SALT. CLAY. ROCK.* and to create an artist-led field trip to one of our Hungarian research sites. The artists chose the small village of Boda, where the Public Limited Company for Radioactive Waste Management (PURAM) is currently conducting exploratory drilling to determine whether the claystone formation below the village is a suitable final repository for the country's high-level radioactive waste. Nagy and Süveges juxtapose the invisibility of these nuclear infrastructures—with test drilling sites marked only by inconspicuous blue containers on the outskirts of the village—and the deep time of nuclear half-life, the hidden yet enduring presence of radioactive waste for millions of years to come.

On one of the hottest days of the summer in mid-July 2024, a performative-participatory gathering took place at PURAM's "info park" in Boda, culminating in a communal pit-firing session. Using this ancient technique of transforming clay into ceramics, the artists created hexagonal shapes inspired by power plant fuel rods. They were inspired as well by "nuclear semiotics," an interdisciplinary field of research which tries to imagine how we can communicate about radioactive waste repositories' toxicity and locations to future generations of humans and nonhumans. How do we warn them? What symbols and language do we use? Could fired clay be an effective means of communication? After all, ceramic objects are often the only remaining traces of ancient civilizations, from which archaeologists interpret how people once lived.

Csilla Nagy and Rita Süveges use pitfiring as a metaphor to visualize the otherwise invisible infrastructure of nuclear waste storage and grapple with "deep time" through the collective experience and witnessing of this material's transformation. One of the biggest challenges of high-level radioactive waste containment is that it generates heat, which is why it needs to be stored in deep geological repositories where its heat and radioactivity can be contained. For their installation in the exhibition the artists have arranged the hexagonal shapes, pit-fired in Boda, in a long line, referencing nuclear fuel rods-the main source of high-level radioactive waste—as well as the drilling cores used in the geological investigation of potential repository sites. The fragile materiality of fired clay associatively evokes the risks and dangers of nuclear waste storage.

TAKING TIME

Nagy and Süveges also reflect on how a small village negotiates the responsibility of taking decisions that will impact generations to come. By intervening at the PURAM info park at the outskirts of Boda, they reclaimed a space occupied by the official discourse of the radioactive waste management company, bringing more critical perspectives. As part of their artist-led field trip, they organized an open-air roundtable which included the mayor of Boda, a former uranium miner, a hydrogeologist working for PURAM, and an environmental activist from the nearby regional capital of Pécs. The lively and at times heated conversation, attended by mayors from neighboring villages as well as geologists, engineers, and other stakeholders in radioactive waste management, sketched out fascinating connections between regional uranium mining, geological investigations that began during socialism and were conditioned by political transitions and neoliberal change, and the perspectives of local mayors who strive to ensure futures for their villages through exploratory drilling compensation funds. Boda and the surrounding region were revealed to be a "sacrifice zone" of local mining, with the human costs of extractivism yet to be accounted for; there is little information on how miners' health has been impacted, other than through personal stories of illness, disability, and premature death. This was shared during the roundtable, making tangible the need to more transparently inform and communicate the potential risks of hosting a final repository.

The history of mining is also a history of solidarity—this is captured in the video created by the artists for the exhibition, which poetically documents their in situ intervention, including spontaneous moments such as when the miners and geologists participating in the discussion started singing a miners' song in a moving display of cross-disciplinary solidarity between professions dedicated to working underground.

Special thanks: Gyula Dankó, Amadé Halász, Zoltán Kern, Júlia Konkoly-Thege, Balázs Kovács, Győző Kovács, Péter Molnár, Gergely Ofner, Gergely Papp, László Wesztl.

OVERCOMING TIME

Marike Schreiber

Radiant Lake

Multimedia installation with bar sculpture, medal, jewelry box, wallpaper, and audio, 2024

In September 2024, Marike Schreiber realized an artist-led field trip as part of SALT. CLAY. ROCK. with the former Rheinsberg Nuclear Power Plant in northern Brandenburg and the surrounding Stechlin ature reserve as her destinations. Interested in this unique entanglement of nuclear energy production and nature preservation, her artistic research focused on Lake Stechlin, which once played a crucial role as the natural "cooling system" of the power plant and is widely known for its remarkable water quality and rich biodiversity as a freshwater lake. In 1959 the Department of Experimental Limnology (the study of inland waters), a branch of the Central Institute for Microbiology and Experimental Therapy in Jena, was established here with the primary aim of studying the effects of the nuclear power plant on the lake. This resulted in one of the most comprehensive long-term data series of limnology globally. In 1992, after the German reunification, a new research institute with an experimental station on Lake Stechlin was established. It received its present name "Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries" in 2000, following its inclusion in the Leibniz Association. Today scientists working here predominan ly focus on the impact of climate change on the lake's ecosystem, drawing on the long-term data collected during the operation of the nuclear power plant.

In the frame of *SALT. CLAY. ROCK.*, the Rheinsberg Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP) and its history are central to examining the legacy of nuclear infrastructures. In 1966 this was the first nuclear power plant to go into operation in East Germany (GDR), and in 1995 it was the first to begin being decommissioned and turned into a "greenfield."

Both Marike Schreiber's artist-led field trip and her work for the exhibition explore this history, highlighting its contradictions and controversies. An important point of departure is the nuclear power plant's main gate, which to this day features a peace dove, an omnipresent political symbol of the GDR that referenced the "peaceful atom," the allegedly peaceful use of nuclear energy in the midst of the Cold War. When the RNPP was opened, all the workers who participated in its construction received one of two thousand specially minted medals. The front side showed the peace dove within a drawing of an atom, while the back side read: "In recognition of your contribution to the first nuclear power plant of the GDR, Rheinsberg, 9.5.1966." Marike Schreiber's work also addresses the legacy of the Umweltsonntage (Environmental Sundays), a series of events in the 1980s initiated by Reinhard Dalchow, a pastor at the Protestant church in the nearby village of Menz. The goal of these Sunday gatherings was to spark an open discussion about the environmental impact and consequences of energy production in the GDR. The first event was dedicated to water and water pollution, as these were not publicly discussed topics at the time. With a "water reception" held at the church—an institution that often served as a safe space for resistance movements in the GDR—the organizers strived to call attention to the importance of clean drinking water.

All these elements are combined and translated into sculptural form in Marike Schreiber's work, reflecting her ongoing interest in the visualization of scientific data via images, models, and more metaphorical concepts. She redesigned the workers' medal and created a bar sculpture for the water reception, both of which were first activated during the artist-led field trip and now form part of her installation. Instead of taking flight, the iconic peace dove sits still and looks us straight in the eye in an uneasy reference to current wars and their (mis)use of nuclear infrastructures as well as the systemic change heralded by the shutdown of the Rheinsberg power plant in the late 1990s. The bar sculpture is a multi-layered construction-meant to represen the deep layers of the lake—while its octagonal shape and the way the drinking glasses are arranged on the bar reference the twenty-four basins of the LakeLab on Lake Stechlin. The hanging containers filled with lake water oint to the discrepancy between the lake's reputation for clean water and the fact that it has been polluted for years. During guided tours of the exhibition, visitors will be invited to use the bar and collectively reenact the water reception.

The exhibition will conclude with an *Umweltsonntag* (Environmental Sunday) as the closing event, with Marike Schreiber, retired Pastor Reinhard Dalchow, and paleontologist Björn Kröger as guests.

Special thanks: AG Rheinsberger Bahnhof, the Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Reinhard Dalchow (initiator of Environmental Sundays), Jörg Möller (City History Association of Rheinsberg), Grit Ruhland (sound recording).

Sonya Schönberger

50 Million <-> 1 Million

(This One Life)

Multimedia installation with wallpaper, video, and salt rocks, 2024

In her multimedia installation, Sonya Schönberger explores connections between local mining history and radioactive waste storage in the former salt mine of Morsleben in Saxony-Anhalt, which served as the GDR's final repository for low- and intermediatelevel radioactive waste and now remains as a final waste repository. The installation focuses on the unique salt there and the history of the Bartensleben shaft in Morsleben and the Marie shaft in Beendorf, which is connected to it. Both communities play an important role in Schönberger's artistic examination. Both towns were located in the highly controlled border area, where employees of the radioactive waste repository needed permits to work unless they lived there. Beendorf is home to a small, volunteer-run museum that focuses on the history of forced labor in the Marie shaft during the Nazi era. Schönberger juxtaposes this recent history with the vast timescales encapsulated by the rock salt's deeptime history and the future that the stored nuclear waste will inhabit.

Potash and rock salt mining in the Oberen Allertal region originated in Beendorf, where entrepreneur Gerhard Korte commissioned the region's first mine shaft. His mining company was called "Gott mit uns" (God with us). The shaft, named after Korte's wife Marie, was inaugurated in 1897. Until 1969, potash and rock salt were extracted from Marie and the neighboring mine Bartensleben, which began operations shortly after Marie. The two mines are interconnected underground, and together they now form the whole of the Morsleben repository.

The landscape of Beendorf is dominated by a massive salt pile excavated from below the ground. Schönberger connects this overground remnant of salt mining with the immense cosmos lying just beneath it. A camera journey reveals the vast dimensions of the interconnected shafts, showing the network of tunnels and chambers carved into the salt where, starting in 1944, forced laborers from across Europe were made to work for the Nazi arms industry. Schönberger includes quotations from these laborers, drawn from Björn Kooger's extensive 2004 publication *Rüstung unter Tage* [The Arms Race Underground], which documents the injustices and crimes that occurred in the mine. The presence of these testimonies actively resists the burial of this history as the repository itself is being sealed and closed for good.*

RADIANT LAKE

Salt rocks from the mine, which Schönberger has transported into the exhibition space, act almost like quotations in stone. They are relics of two hundred fifty million years of history; Morsleben and Beendorf's rock salt are anchor points for geological time, hinting at the vast time scales involved in both the past and the future of these places. This salt formation, currently used to store low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste, was formed during the geological epoch known as the Zechstein and was moved to its current location through tectonic shifts and pressure from deeper geological layers. This quality of having survived movement underlines why salt is gualified as a material for the permanent storage of radioactive waste: it is non-brittle, ductile (malleable), yet hard. Thus, it meets many of the criteria sought after in the search for a suitable final repository. The main task of the Federal Company for Radioactive Waste Disposal (BGE), which runs an information center in Morsleben about their underground research, is to identify suitable areas within the salt mine for potential final storage that will last for the next million years.

> * Kooger, Björn. Rüstung unter Tage. Die Untertageverlagerung von Rüstungsbetrieben und der Einsatz von KZ-Häftlingen in Beendorf und Morsleben [The Arms Race Underground. The underground relocation of the arms industry and the deployment of concentration camp prisoners in Beendorf and Morsleben], 2004

> > Special thanks: Anna Byskov, Swantje Claußen (BGE), Hildegard and Klaus Ebel, Christian Guinchard and Laetitia Ogorzelec (LaSA, Laboratory of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Franche-Comté), Claus Hansper, Claire Kueny (ISBA Besançon), Péter László Horváth (BGE), Annette and Torsten Kniep, Flo Maak, Sven Petersen (BGE), Karla and Hartmut Schulze, Christof Zwiener.

50 MILLION < - > 1 MILLION

Something Man-Made Is Here

Sound installation in loop, graphic score, 2024

Katarina Šević's participation in SALT. CLAY. ROCK. is two-fold: she is the author of the project's visual identity, and she has created a new work for the exhibition that draws on her research for the graphic design. Unlike other commissioned artists, whose works are connected to a specific site and are thus locally embedded, Šević's focus is more overarching, but with a particular interest in the interdisciplinary research field of "nuclear semiotics" and the diverse visual languages connected to nuclear culture, spanning pro-nuclear advocacy, radiation warning messages, and anti-nuclear resistance. Nuclear semiotics is a particularly challenging, speculative, and conceptual field as it strives to transcend the temporal and cultural limits of language, communication, and meaning and to confront the (im)possibility of warning future generations of human and nonhuman beings about the dangers of radioactive waste. This means that designs, signs, or signals have to be invented that will remain comprehensible for at least one hundred thousand years; it challenges us to "think with" the deep time of the nuclear half-life and to imagine communication with creatures living in the far future.

In this regard, Šević is especially interested in exploring the limits of language, meaning, and crossspecies communication. She has combined various visual sources (symbols and texts) gathered during her research into a graphic score (verse) that is freely interpreted by a chorus of voices. Although activated by human performers, she strives to create a more-thanhuman soundscape, incorporating sounds made by animals when communicating with each other as well as the technified sounds of artificial intelligence and digital media. Fusing meaning-making and world-building, Šević's audio work and graphic score are an exercise in imagination as well as a demonstration of conceptual thought regarding how we pass on information and share knowledge. She is inspired by the work of nuclear semioticians such as Thomas Sebeok, a Hungarian-born American polymath, semiotician, and linguist who studied human and nonhuman systems of communication. He proposed incorporating myth and ritual as a "folkloric relay system" and the establishment of an "atomic priesthood" as a vehicle for social transfer across time. Other semioticians considered genetically engineered species that could function as "living radiation detectors" for transmitting messages about radiation's hazards. The philosophers Françoise Bastide and Paolo Fabbri coined the idea of the "ray cat" and suggested that a particular animal species might be engineered that would change color in proximity to radioactive sites.

Nuclear technology has already been invented and cannot be unlearned. Its promise is a stable and abundant-almost limitless-source of energy, but it has also enabled the development of the deadliest weapon of destruction, the atomic bomb. For Šević, the issue of nuclear energy is inextricably linked to global peace movements and antimilitarism, while it immediately comes up against the limits of our security and communication tools. Low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste repositories are already in operation around the world, but the means of communicating their dangers to the future are yet to be invented. Concurrently, there are still no technical means of permanently protecting us from its potential hazards. These tensions and complexities are what Šević addresses in her work, moving between the need for communicative clarity around nuclear issues—its dangers and its power—and the unfathomable guestions of deep time and future life. Her sound piece becomes an uncanny "earworm" for the exhibition, resonating with the nuclear pasts and radiant futures that SALT, CLAY, ROCK, deals with.

Something Man-Made Is Here was created in collaboration with Sada Ensemble / Dóra Halas and Ned Stuart-Smith (voices) and Gábor Ripli (sound recording).

> Special thanks: Katalin Erdődi, Marc Herbst, Julia Kurz, Virág Major-Kremer, Vincent Schier.

Dominika Trapp

Nobody Dreams of Nuclear Power Plants

6 paintings (60 × 80 cm each), handmade paper, watercolor crayons, pressed plants, 2024

Dominika Trapp's work delves into the intimate relationship between the Paks Nuclear Power Plant (PNPP) in Hungary and its workers. Through in-depth interviews with employees spanning a wide spectrum of roles—from cleaning staff and technical school trainees to high-ranking engineers—Trapp explores their personal interpretations and embodied experiences of the reactor's inner workings. Her research focuses on their subjective visions of the power plant and nuclear energy in terms of the technology itself and their daily interactions with it.

The personal conversations led by the artist reveal the PNPP as an anthropomorphic technological entity, whose physical omnipresence, technological complexity, and far-reaching social and economic impacts on the city and the lives of its residents have become normalized and naturalized throughout the years. While many employees struggle to articulate their bodily reactions and emotions in the shadow of this enigmatic and often intimidating technology, their descriptions of the power plant convey a sense of it as a living, breathing force. Their motifs and metaphors are often sentimental, transcendental, even familial. The PNPP is framed in terms of belonging and identification, resembling the dynamics of a patriarchal family rather than a typical workplace.

Generational differences in perception also emerge as a key theme, reflecting broader shifts in humanity's understanding of technology. Older engineers who joined the plant shortly after its inauguration describe it with clinical precision, likening it to a mechanistic body, dissecting it through an anatomical lens. In contrast, younger employees have a more post-digital, sci-fi-infused perspective informed by video games such as *Minecraft*. These contrasting views highlight how evolving technological paradigms shape individual relationships with industrial environments.

Trapp's intricate and intuitive paintings aim to capture these complex associations, offering a multifaceted portrait of the nuclear power plant. She paints on hand-molded paper, incorporating pressed plants collected from around the fishing pond near the nuclear facility. This location also serves as the backdrop for many of the idyllic nature photographs exhibited in the PNPP's information center, which they merchandise as

calendars and postcards. Through this symbolic "greenwashing" and further naturalization on paper, Trapp subtly critiques the efforts to present nuclear energy as green and points to how nuclear infrastructures use environmental preservation to improve its public image.

> Special thanks: Petra Füzes, Antal Kovács, Andrásné Kovács, Miklós Takács, Róbert Doroghi, Dr. Katalin Gerákné Krasz, István Bartos, Zoltán Csanádi, Márk Rédl, András Farkas, Erika Schneider, Péter Nagy.

NOBODY DREAMS OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

Dancin<mark>g on a Volcano</mark>

Video installation in two parts, 2024

Anna Witt's two-part video installation is centered on the Wendland municipality of Gorleben, which became a symbol of the anti-nuclear movement and a center of critical debate surrounding nuclear energy use in Germany. After the former salt mine near Gorleben was designated a nuclear waste facility in 1977, the Wendland became home to one of West Germany's most significant and lasting grassroots protest movements of the postwar era. Witt explores how collective forms of protest have inscribed themselves into the bodies and biographies of activists and their families over generations, for which she conducted research in the Gorleben Archive.

The title *Dancing on a Volcano* is a metaphor for describing risky behavior. This phrase was originally coined by French statesman Narcisse-Achille de Salvandy to criticize the French royal family's excessive consumption on the brink of the French Revolution. This kind of behavior has parallels with today's predominant attitudes toward the looming climate crisis and the resurgence of pro-nuclear policies, while the title of Witt's artwork also reflects on the dangers and motivations behind activism. In the Gorleben Archive in the village of Lüchow, Witt discovered materials from a similarly named music festival, Dancing on the Volcano, organized on 4 September 1982 as a protest against the planned construction of interim storage facilities in the Gorleben Forest. The police used high-pressure water cannons against the protesters for the first time there, causing serious injuries to several people. A legal case challenging the police's actions went to the Federal Constitutional Court but was dismissed after ten years with no legal consequences. Eyewitness accounts of the protest describe the police's escalation but also reflect on the collective learning processes that emerged from the events among the protesters and convey how groups can develop autonomous, collective strategies for action. In this form of collective protest, skills and strategies such as standing firm instead of running, managing fear, empathizing with opponents, and constantly weighing collective goals against group welfare become essential.

In her large-format video installation, Witt works with local volunteers in the Gorleben Forest to experiment with practices of solidarity when confronted with a high-pressure water cannon. Rather than reenacting the events of 1982, Witt's performative experiment seeks to update the activists' collective skills for today. Her focus here is on the physicality and embodied nature of collective action. In the video, water becomes an abstract form of violence that the group confronts through collective action. Witt is interested in the ability for collective action to be activated and the prerequisites necessary for it to be so. In the second part of the video work, this concept is projected into the future, with young adults from the Wendland reflecting on their upbringing in a culture of resistance and how their experiences have shaped their views on tackling complex challenges and fighting for climate justice.

The video is embedded in a structure of yellow slats arranged in the shape of an X. The yellow X symbolizes the resistance against nuclear waste transports in the Wendland, uniting the rural population, the church, and anti-nuclear activists who came there to support the protests. The symbol originated in 1988, when it was used as a form of aesthetic protest along roadsides and in front yards along the route of the CASTOR transports from Wackersdorf to Gorleben. Today, it stands for "Day X," the point at which the 1.5-degree climate target becomes unattainable, thus condensing symbols of different generations and causes within the environmental movement.

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COLOPHON

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