

## On Nuclear Pasts and Radiant Futures: Research Assembly at nGbK introduces *SALT. CLAY. ROCK.*



Design: Katarina Sevic

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Research Assembly

***SALT. CLAY. ROCK.***

***On nuclear pasts and radiant futures***

November 17–19, 2023

nGbK am Alex, Karl-Liebknecht-Straße 11/13, 10178 Berlin

Free admission

Accessible with wheelchairs and strollers

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**The two-year artistic and curatorial research project *SALT. CLAY. ROCK.* tackles the pasts and futures of nuclear infrastructures in Germany and Hungary. In the first year, work group members and artists have visited places and communities that host uranium mines, power plants and waste repositories, or that have been important sites of anti-nuclear resistance. From November 17–19, they will present the preliminary results of their research at neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (nGbK) along with contributions by activists, artists, researchers, and thinkers, who are invited to share their insights on nuclear cultural heritage, anti-nuclear movements, energy futures, and the ‘green transition’.**

Germany and Hungary have chosen radically different paths concerning nuclear energy. While Germany completed its nuclear exit in 2023, Hungary plans to expand its nuclear capacity with the heavily debated PAKS II reactor. Despite these differences, both countries are challenged by the ongoing search for final repositories for their high-level radioactive waste, which has to be found within their national borders. Globally too, this is an unresolved issue, as most countries have yet to create safe storage for this high-risk by-product of energy production.

Inspired by the three types of rock—salt, clay, and granite—that are considered suitable ‘containers’ for nuclear waste storage, *SALT. CLAY. ROCK.* takes a situated and site-specific

approach to artistic research. Artists are invited to engage with different places and communities across Germany and Hungary—from tiny villages to industrialized small towns—that host nuclear infrastructures (such as uranium mines, power plants, and waste repositories), or that have been important sites of anti-nuclear resistance. These sites are often in relatively remote locations on the peripheries of public attention, yet important to the local communities living there who are also the ones most directly impacted by this uneasy future heritage. *SALT. CLAY. ROCK.* sets out to inquire how artistic research can approach people's experiences, what perspectives it can offer, and how it can engage trans-locally with very different places, people, and situations.

In the past months, the project's work group members and artists have visited nuclear power plant training centers, waste repositories' hi-tech multimedia 'showrooms', peeked into reactor control rooms, and walked down the dark shafts of former uranium mines and recently built underground storages. They have been to the Gorleben Archive—the living memory of the Wendland resistance, talked to activists about the future of anti-nuclear movements, and listened to the story of the Hungarian village Ófalu, where villagers resisted a waste repository in the 1980s thanks to their self-organization. They learned about the 'nuclear elite' of Paks, the underground life of the Morsleben repository and their extravagant Carnival parties, and about the struggles of the tiny village of Bátaapáti to survive and escape depopulation, which was only possible due to a trade-off made to host its repository. They admired the former Wismut SDAG's uranium-glass plate collection, glowing under blacklight in the uranium museum of Bad Schlema, and wondered how to critically reflect on this intriguing materiality.

The research assembly is the first public event of the two-year *SALT. CLAY. ROCK.* project, where the work group members and participating artists will share the experiences of their first research visits and fieldwork. Additionally, activists, artists, researchers, and thinkers are invited to share their insights on nuclear cultural heritage, anti-nuclear resistance, energy futures, and the 'green transition'.

On November 17, **Eglė Rindzevičiūtė**, a London-based political sociologist from Lithuania, will present her research on the communities, materialities and locations of nuclear cultural heritage, followed by a conversation led by artist **Anna Witt** on the past and future of anti-nuclear resistance with activists from **Ende Gelände**, **Gorleben Archiv** and the **Green Youth of Pécs**. The evening comes to an end with a collective listening session by the artist group **PPKK**, who draw a poetic analogy between nuclear waste and human metabolism.

On November 18, the Berlin-based author **Max Haiven** invites participants to come together to imagine other futures in the sci-fictioning workshop *Writing After Their Future*, followed by **Nowhere Kitchen**'s collective cooking and eating session. The afternoon will start with a reading of the workshop's sci-fi texts and a collective conversation with *SALT. CLAY. ROCK.*'s participating artists and invited guests on the different sites they have been investigating, as well as on their respective artistic approaches to the sites.

Afterwards the program enters the realms of deep time in an in-depth conversation with geologist **Péter Molnár**, who has dedicated decades of research to the clay rock in Boda that would potentially host Hungary's final repository. The assembly then re-surfaces to contemplate our relationship to 'Comrade Sun' with philosopher **Oxana Timofeeva**, who will introduce her notion of *Solar Politics* and give impulses for further discussions on energy

futures. This will be the topic of the last panel with transformation researcher **Andrea Vetter**, architect **Moritz Maria Karl**, and ecofeminist thinker **Theresa Deichert** on the challenges of a 'green transformation'. They will also address how nuclear energy has recently been re-cast as 'green energy' by those who advocate for a nuclear techno-fix to climate change.

Sunday, November 19 is reserved for an internal working session between the work group members and participating artists, including a **workshop on climate-neutral artistic production** led by Elie Peuvrel (climate officer, nGbK) and the members of the *SALT. CLAY. ROCK.* work group, which is open to nGbK members.

The two-year research project will culminate in an **exhibition**, which will open at nGbK in November 2024.

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**Production:** Karoline Kerkai, nGbK (Germany), Dina Darabos, Kovács Kinga (Hungary)

**With contributions by** Ana Alenso, András Cséfalvay, Theresa Deichert, Krisztina Erdei, Ende Gelände / Kali, Gorleben Archiv / Anna Gäde, Green Youth Pécs / Júlia Konkoly-Thege, Max Haiven, Moritz Maria Karl, Péter Molnár, Csilla Nagy & Rita Süveges, Nowhere Kitchen (Pepe Dayaw), PPKK (Schönfeld & Scoufaras), Eglé Rindzevičiūtė, Katarina Šević, Sonya Schönberger, Marike Schreiber, Oxana Timofeeva, Andrea Vetter, Anna Witt, Working Group Image Archive Asse II (Susanne Kriemann, Judith Milz, Lena Reisner)

**nGbK work group:** Katalin Erdődi, Marc Herbst, Julia Kurz, Virág Major-Kremer, Vincent Schier

*SALT. CLAY. ROCK.* is funded by the Zero programme of the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation). Funded by the Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media).

The neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (nGbK) is financed by the Senate Department for Culture and Community.

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The funding from the "Fonds Zero" of the German Federal Cultural Foundation aims to support cultural institutions in testing climate-neutral forms of cultural production and new aesthetics with the lowest possible carbon-footprint. To this end, project-related emissions are to be avoided, reduced, or compensated according to nationally or internationally certified standards.

With this funding, nGbK is setting out on the path to greater sustainability. It enables the Kunstverein to position itself more clearly in sustainability discourses and to use its multiplier effect as an art institution. Through artistic-curatorial work, an aesthetic of sustainability can be developed on a human, non-human, social, economic, and ecological level, opening up new perspectives on future forms of coexistence.

In addition, the funding made it possible to create the position of a climate officer, who prepares a climate balance sheet for the entire institution and looks for potential savings in

emissions. One of the first concrete measures adopted was a ban on flights for routes that can be covered in less than eight hours by train.

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## Assembly Schedule

### **Friday, November 17**

Nuclear waste as nuclear cultural heritage, anti-nuclear activism and resistance, connecting past and future struggles

17:00–18:00

**Welcome & introduction to *SALT. CLAY. ROCK.***: guided tour by curators and selected artists through the assembly's research display

18:00–19:00

**Keynote (online) by Eglė Rindzevičiūtė** (political sociologist currently working on a new book, *Beyond Containment: The Making of Nuclear Cultural Heritage*)

19:30–21:00

**Conversation led by artist Anna Witt** on the pasts and futures of anti-nuclear resistance  
**Participants:** Ende Gelände / Kali, Gorleben Archiv, Green Youth Pécs / Júlia Konkoly-Thege

21:00–22:00

**Listening session with PPKK** on nuclear waste, human and post-human metabolism.

### **Saturday, November 18**

Energy futures and solar politics, imaginaries of the future and the deep time of nuclear waste storage

10:00–13:00

**Writing After Their Future: A Sci-fi Fictioning Workshop with Max Haiven.**

Please register until 15 November at [anmeldung@ngbk.de](mailto:anmeldung@ngbk.de)

13:00–14:00

Break with **Nowhere Kitchen**: collective cooking and eating

14:00–15:00

**Welcome & introduction to *SALT. CLAY. ROCK.***: collective reading of texts written during the sci-fi fictioning workshop, followed by the curators' and selected artists' guided tour of the research display

15:00–16:30

**Collective conversation with commissioned artists and guests** on their research and their artistic approaches to the German and Hungarian sites where they will be working.

**Participants:** Ana Alenso (online), András Cséfalvay, Krisztina Erdei, Csilla Nagy & Rita Süveges, Sonya Schönberger, Marike Schreiber, Working Group Image Archive Asse II (Susanne Kriemann, Judith Milz, Lena Reisner)

17:00–18:00

**Nuclear waste and deep time: a geologist's perspective (online)**

Conversation with the geologist Péter Molnár (Pécs, Hungary), led by Csilla Nagy & Rita Süveges

18:00–19:00

Break with **Nowhere Kitchen**: introducing their practice and collective eating

19:00–20:00

**Keynote by Oxana Timofeeva** on her book *Solar Politics*. Followed by a Q&A led by András Cséfalvay

20:00–21:30

**Conversation on energy futures and the challenges of the 'green transition'**

**Participants:** Theresa Deichert, Moritz Maria Karl, Andrea Vetter (online)

**Sunday, November 19**

Closed working session with the commissioned artists, *SALT. CLAY. ROCK.* work group, and nGbK team

13:00–15:00

**Workshop on climate-neutral artistic production** open to nGbK members

Please register until 15 November at [anmeldung@ngbk.de](mailto:anmeldung@ngbk.de)

**Press images:** <http://u.pc.cd/olhrtalk>

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