Nuclear Powered Art

Curator: James Xue

Currently on show @BAMPFA

Curatorial Statement

If you have played Fallout: Shelter, then you should be able to recognize the cover picture. If you haven't, download it so that you can get a taste of the experience of living in a radioactive world. As the Japanese government decided to dump nuclear wastewater into the Pacific ocean, we should really start learning to live a radioactive life.

Dated back to 1951, nuclear power has been around for more than half a century. Massive nuclear power plants are established around the world ever since that time. In California, nuclear power consisting almost 10% of the state's energy portfolio. But nuclear power ain't free lunch for us. Radioactive waste is deadly to all living things. The way nuclear power is generated makes it hard to shut down once starts operating. And at 26 April 1986, we witnessed the true danger behind nuclear power in the Chernobyl disaster

Curatorial Statement

Quick fact for the day: we really need power, the more the better. Although it sucks staying at home, we have to admit that it is not the worst experience. We have Wi-Fi, smartphones, and TV to spend our time on. We have lights, fridges, and microwaves available for use 24/7. But electricity, or more generally, power is not free. Just this February in Texas, the winter storm pushed the electricity price for a single household to over $17000. (Washington Post, Feb. 22, 2021) As the population continues to boom, nuclear power seems to be one of our few choices. Unlike fossil fuel, using nuclear power doesn't produce any greenhouse gas. And nuclear power is really powerful relative to any other means of generating power. According to the US office of nuclear energy, nuclear power plants are producing maximum power more than 93% of the time during the year. That's about 1.5 to 2 times more than natural gas and coal units, and 2.5 to 3.5 times more reliable than wind and solar plants. (Office of Nuclear Energy, March 24, 2021)

Curatorial Statement

With the mixed blessing of nuclear power, the artists featured in "*Nuclear Powered Art*" envision the future of nuclear power and its impact on our life. Their work reflects on our complicated relationships with nuclear power, disaster, poverty, and underdevelopment.

Thanks to the great facilities here at BAMPFA, we can integrate the experience of the movie theater into the gallery, just as Erika Balsom mentioned in her work. "The moving image and sound effect creates a new spectatorship for the audience, rendering a passive yet active experience." (Erica Balsom, 8)

Some of the works on show are closely related to our life. "Objecthood," through the artistic presence of "non-art" context is the aim we are aiming at. (Michael Fried, 3) With the medium of painting and photography, artists on show exhibit modernism with "the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself." (Clement Greenberg, 1)

Collectively, the artists and their work created a multi-dimensional universe of potential life in the nuclear world. This collaboration between reality information and aesthetic language surely can communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about the nuclear issue, which is directly relevant to their lives. (Suzanne Lacy, 4)

Works Cited

Washington Post, Feb. 22, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/02/21/texas-high-electric-bills/

Office of Nuclear Energy, MARCH 24, 2021,

https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/nuclear-power-most-reliable-energy-source-and-its-not-even-close#:~:text=Nuclear%20Has%20The%20Highest%20Capacity%20Factor&text=This%20basically%20means%20nuclear%20power,than%20wind%20and%20solar%20plants.

Suzanne Lacy, Mapping the Terrain Intro

Michael Fried, Art and Objecthood

Clement Greenberg, Modernist Painting

Erica Balsom, The Movie Theater in/and the gallery

Checklist of works

“Nuclear Bubble”

László Moholy-Nagy,

Nuclear II, 1946, oil on canvas, 49 ¾ x 49 ¾ in.

Milwaukee Art Museum

In this post-modernism work, we can see the combination of creation and destruction. Created after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the artist presents a bubble of smoke, light and blood.

Checklist of works

“After the Glory”

Hong Seong-dahm, 2018

Busan Democratic Struggle Commemorative Association

This painting implies the problem that we are facing right now. The reliance on fossil fuel creates significant pollution for our environment. Nuclear power can solve this problem with ease.

Checklist of works

“Pound of Fuel to Light Chicago”

RelicPaper, 1957

Nuclear II, 1946, oil on canvas, 49 ¾ x 49 ¾ in.

Union Carbide Print Ad

In this vintage drawing, we can understand the vision of scientists in last century. At that time, all major nuclear plants accidents have yet to happen. People believe that they have unlocked the future of energy.

A pound of fuel to light Chicago

THAT'S ALL THE URANIUM needed to produce atomic power equal to the energy in 3 million pounds of coal. It could light the city of Chicago for a full day!

Atomic research is focused on developing an economical way to produce electricity from atomic energy. Scientists at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, which Union Carbide Nuclear Company operates for the Atomic Energy Commission, have already built experimental power producing reactors that are serving as a guide to commercial atom power plants.

Peaceful uses for the atom have also been found in the diagnosis and treatment of disease. Radioactivity is uncovering important facts about plant and animal growth. Industry uses the atom's radiation to control production processes, to test product quality, and for research.

The challenging field of atomic energy is not new to the people of Union Carbide. They have been pioneering in every phase of this exciting business—from the mining of uranium ore to harnessing the atom for our future comfort and well-being.

FREE: *To learn more about the atom and the tremendous strides made in the peaceful applications of atomic energy, write for the illustrated booklet "The Atom In Our Hands."*

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UNION Carbide · EVEREADY Flashlights & Batteries · LINDE Oxygen · BAKELITE, VINYLITE, and KRENE Plastics · Dynel Textile Fibers

Checklist of works

“Mural in Prypiat”

Polish artists, year unclear

This is a picture of a mural. The exact author of the mural is hard to locate. You can clearly see the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the background. No explanation needed for this photo. We strongly advise our audience not to visit this mural in person.

Checklist of works

“Pica-don”

Renzo Kinoshita, 1978

Studio Lotus

This is a video presentation played in the theater. Made by Japanese team, this film is extremely shocking and terrifying. Indeed, the power of nuclear bomb always reminds us of the danger of utilizing nuclear power

Checklist of works

“Abandoned Animals of Fukushima”

Yasusuke Ota, 2018

The Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 is already 10 years ago. But the consequence of Fukushima’s nuclear power plant damage has yet play out. The land of Fukushima is deserted, and the stored waste water in Fukushima is about to be dumped into the ocean.

Checklist of works

“Urban Light”

Chris Burden, 2008

Photograph: Nick Ut/AP

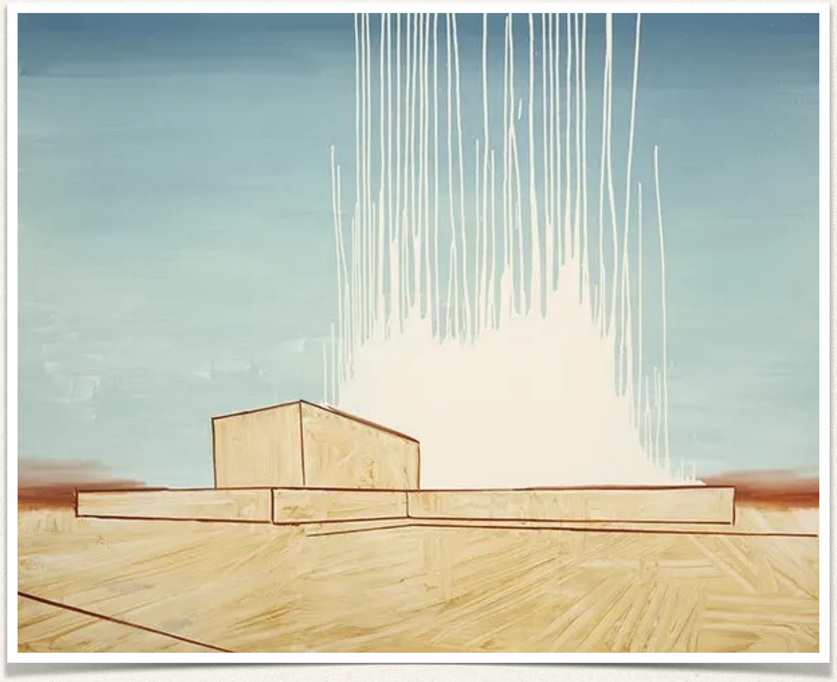
Maybe many of the audience don’t know, but Chris studied nuclear physics at college. On one hand, these street lights looks like the Cooling tower in nuclear power plants. On the other hand, the urban light comes from the nuclear power plants, which looks terrifying from previous works.

Checklist of works

“Power Plant in Iran”

Tacita Dean, 2010

Whitechapel Gallery



We can debate the good and bad about nuclear power. But many countries are struggling to even develop their own nuclear power plants. The picture shows a rough scratch on Iran’s nuclear power plant, which draws US and other countries attention.

Checklist of works

“Purple”

John Akomfrah, 2017

The Curve, Barbican Centre

And here we go, an installation about the actual nuclear power plants. These massive cooling towers are the signature of nuclear power. And it’s great to have a person as a contrast in the frame.

Checklist of works

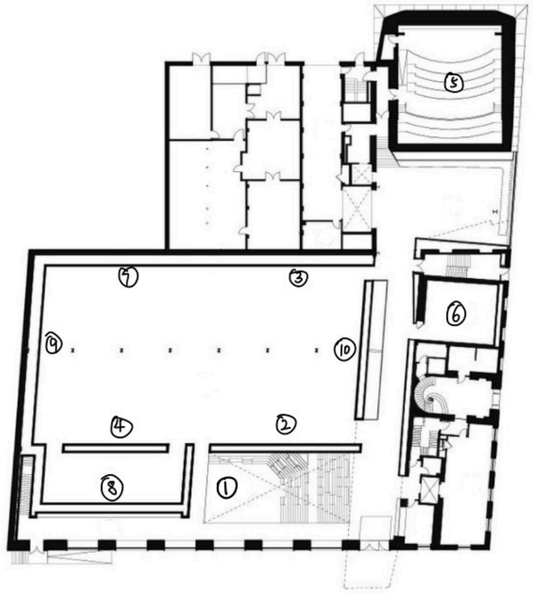
“Horizontal - Vaakasuora”

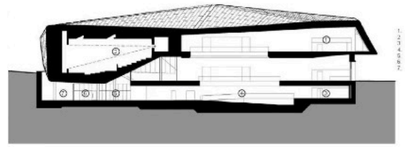
Eija-Liisa Ahtila, 2011

Marian Goodman

Nuclear power is the most promising clean energy we have now. Color power and wind farms are just way too unstable to meet our needs. We can have a clean environment with nuclear energy. But when you consider the potential cost, is it worth it?

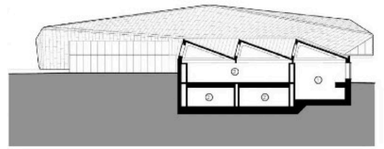
Layout





SECTION A-A

1. CAFÉ
2. LARGE THEATER
3. LOBBY
4. EXHIBITION GALLERY
5. FILM LIBRARY AND STUDY CENTER
6. ASIAN ART STUDY CENTER
7. WORKS ON PAPER AND CONCEPTUAL ART STUDY CENTERS



SECTION B-B

1. FORUM
2. EXHIBITION GALLERY

① : Nuclear Bubble

② : After the glory

③ : Pound of Feul to Light Chicago

④ : Mural in Pryp'iat

⑤ : Pica-don

⑥ : Abandoned Animals of Fukushima

⑦ : Urban Light

⑧ : Power Plant in Iran

⑨ : Purple

⑩ : Horizontal