

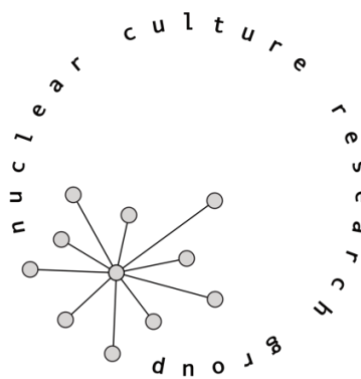
# Decolonising the Nuclear:

## Public lecture and research workshop

Nuclear Culture Research Group &  
Critical Ecologies Research Stream &  
Mountain of Art Research (MARs)  
Goldsmiths University of London, 2019

Tuesday 22 October 10.30 – 20.00

Wednesday 23 October 10.30 – 16.30



### Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October: Nuclear Decoloniality [Deptford Church Street]

- 10.30 Registration
- 10.45 Welcome and Introduction Ele Carpenter & Warren Harper
- 11.00-12.00 Artists Presentations: 20 mins each plus discussion: Chair: Ele Carpenter  
Lise Autogena, Kvanefjeld.  
Alex Ressel & Kerri Meehan, Ungurrookoolpum.
- 12.00-12.15 Break
- 12.15-13.00 Arjuna Neuman, *4 Waters: Deep Implicancy*. Film Screening and discussion
- 13.00-14.00 Lunch
- 14.15-15.15 Presentations: 20 mins each plus discussion: Chair Grit Ruhland  
Egle Rindzeviciute, Nuclear Cultural Heritage Research Network: Lithuanian Decommissioning.  
Saulesh Yessenova, Cold War nuclear reflexivity and the Anthropocene.
- 15.15-15.30 Break
- 15.30-16.30 Roundtable Discussion chaired by Warren Harper
- 16.30-18.00 Free time and travel to main campus in New Cross
- 18.00-20.00 Keynote Lecture: Goldsmiths Main Campus PSH LG02  
Gabrielle Hecht: Inside-Out Earth: Residues of the Anthropocene in Africa  
Chaired by: Ele Carpenter & Shela Sheikh

### Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October: Creative Resistance [Deptford Church Street]

- 10.30-11.00 Check in responses to the first day and keynote: discuss in small groups
- 11.00-12.15 Performance & Film Screening: Fathima Nizaruddin, *Nuclear Hallucinations* (2016)
- 12.15-12.30 Break
- 12.30-13.30 Artists Presentations: 20 mins each plus discussion: Chair Robert Williams  
Ignacio Acosta, Tales from the Crust  
Karen Cunningham, World-making and Un-Doing
- 13.30-14.30 Lunch
- 14.30 – 15.30 Film Screening: Autogena & Portway, 'Kuannersuit; Kvanefjeld' (2016)
- 15.30-16.30 Roundtable Discussion chaired by Bridget Kennedy
- 16.30 onwards Drinks in the Birds Nest Pub

Decolonising the Nuclear is generously supported by the CHASE Doctoral Training Partnership, Critical Ecologies Research Stream, and Mountain of Art Research (MARs) Department of Art, in partnership with Arts Catalyst, Art Action UK, MFA Curating and Goldsmiths University of London.

## The nuclear cannot be undone but it can be rethought

Nuclear technology has been developed through colonial practices of resource extraction, atomic testing on indigenous lands, exporting nuclear installations, paying off communities, deployment of nuclear weapons and radioactive waste storage. Many communities are already living through the slow violence of atomic tests, radioactive accidents and contaminated landscapes. Nuclear technology is at the heart of the military industrial complex, often outside democratic decision-making processes, yet it is often neglected in contemporary discourse around decoloniality, climate crisis and the Anthropocene.

The Nuclear Culture Research Group is considering what it means to decolonise our creative and academic research practices within nuclear culture. In an academic context this starts with tracing our own stories, expanding our networks and literature, working with and alongside communities, and leads to rethinking forms of knowledge and creative practices from new, or perhaps very old, perspectives. In the humanities, decoloniality starts with an attempt to re-couple the nuclear with colonial trajectories that have been neglected in order to isolate research into discreet work-packages for spurious reasons of security or in-depth scientific research. The very rationale of nuclearity is based on Western concepts of science, knowledge, and history. So what does it mean to rethink the nuclear creatively and holistically?

The concept of 'Nuclear Power' conflates atomic energy with nuclear weaponised state power; where nuclear policy is an instrument of the colonial and post-colonial state. How can we consider nuclear decoloniality and the techno-scientific determinism of post-colonial national identities?

We are very honoured that Professor Gabrielle Hecht will give a keynote public lecture on her current research into the Anthropocene on the Goldsmiths main campus on Tuesday 22 October at 6pm.

### Roundtable Questions:

- Nuclearity – what determines the category of the 'nuclear'. Who takes response-ability?
- Nuclear ethics: whose voices are represented in nuclear studies, histories, arts, sciences and humanities?
- What are the asymmetries of the nuclear Anthropocene within our own research?
- How do we connect the material traces of uranium, radioactive isotopes and waste across civil and military?
- Whose energy, whose contamination: how are we embedded in global nuclear networks?
- How do we engage with non-alignment and different perspectives on nuclear weapons policies?
- How does interdisciplinary research between art/anthropology/sociology/environmental studies change how we understand the nuclear?
- What are the nuclear humanities approaches to field research?
- What are our strategies and tactics for intergenerational cultural communication over deep time?
- What can we learn from wider indigenous land rights, especially around mining / toxicity?
- What kinds of nuclearity or critique is Science & Technology Studies enabling?
- What are the impacts of the Cold war on the present?
- Can we consider Soviet and American nuclear empires as a form of colonialism?

### Venues & Transport

Please note that the events will take place across two different campuses at Goldsmiths.

**Workshop** at MFA Seminar Room: Goldsmiths Art Department, Asquith Gibbes Building, Back Gate Lewisham Southwark College, 2 Deptford Church Street, London, SE8 4RZ (near the Birds Nest Pub).

You will need to register for the event in advance to ensure that you have guest access, please arrive promptly.

Mainline trains go to Deptford Station +10min walk. DLR: Deptford Bridge Station, +5 minute walk. Overground Line (orange) to New Cross, 10 minute walk. Overground Line (orange) to New Cross Gate, 20 minute walk. (see map)

**Gabrielle Hecht's Lecture** at PSG LG02: The Professor Stuart Hall (PSH) Building is on the main campus at the back of the college green. LG02 is on the Lower Ground Floor. Allow at least 20 mins walk from Deptford.

### Workshop Lunch

A healthy vegetarian/vegan lunch will be provided by Art Action UK on both days of the symposium. Donations of £6 go to Art Action UK's residency programme supporting artists dealing with post Fukushima issues to undertake residencies in the UK. Please bring cash if you can. There will be DIY tea, coffee and water throughout (do bring your own cup too).

**Ignacio Acosta** is a Chilean-born, London-based artist and researcher working primarily with photography to explore geopolitical power dynamics around minerals, their geographies and historical narratives. His interconnected research projects involve extensive fieldwork, investigative analysis, visual documentation and critical writing on sites and materials of symbolic significance. Acosta is currently exhibiting *Tales from the Crust* at Arts Catalyst in London, building on his research into extractive activities in Chile and Swedish Sápmi, honing in on ways in which local and transnational acts of resistance are making use of technologies (such as drones) in order to monitor the impacts of extractive industries and develop micropolitical strategies. Between 2012 and 2016, Acosta completed his Ph.D at the University of Brighton, UK, from which his thesis *The Copper Geographies of Chile and Britain: A Photographic Study* emerged. *Copper Geographies* (2018) is published by Editorial RM. He is part of *Traces of Nitrate* ([tracesofnitrate.org](http://tracesofnitrate.org)) a research project developed in collaboration with Art and Design Historian Louise Purbrick and photographer Xavier Ribas, which has been funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). <https://www.artscatalyst.org/ignacio-acosta-ales-crust>

**Lise Autogena and Joshua Portway** are investigating the conflicts facing the community in the region near the Kvanefjeld mountain in South Greenland; site of one of the richest rare earth mineral resources deposits in the world, and one of the largest sources of uranium. Greenland is a former colony of Denmark, an island of 56,000 people living across an area of 2.1 million square km. Since the 1960s a movement of anti-colonialist nationalism has been growing in the country, which is recognised as an 'autonomous administrative division' of Denmark, supported economically by the Danish state. Many people see the exploitation of mineral deposits as the only viable route to full independence. For generations the farming near Kvanefjeld has been Greenland's only agricultural industry. This way of life may soon be threatened, as Greenland considers an open pit mine proposed by the Australian/Chinese-owned company Greenland Minerals and Energy, which is expected to process over 1 billion tons of rare earth oxide and substantial uranium contents of £593 million pounds. Autogena and Portway's film 'Kuannersuit; Kvanefjeld' (2016) portrays a community divided on the issue of uranium mining, exploring the difficult decisions and trade-offs faced by a culture seeking to escape a colonial past and define its own identity.

**Karen Cunningham** is an artist and PhD candidate in the School of Art at Edinburgh College of Art, funded by the College of Arts, Humanities & Social Science Research Award. Her research began with Marshallese navigational 'stick charts'; unique geometric devices constructed from narrow sticks or palm spines and cowry shells carefully bound together with plant fibres made in order to aid navigation within the Marshall Islands of the central Pacific. Karen has utilised stick charts as research objects, operationalizing them as a point of departure from which to consider relationships between epistemology, materials, making and un-making. Her practice-based research employs processes of un-doing in order to disassemble and tease apart objects and images which speak to instances of erasure and ideas of mastery within practices of world-making and un-doing related to the nuclear culture of the Marshall Islands. <http://www.karencunningham.org/>

**Gabrielle Hecht** is the Frank Stanton Foundation Professor of Nuclear Security at CISAC, Senior Fellow at FSI, Professor of History, and Professor (by courtesy) of Anthropology. Her current research explores radioactive residues, mine waste, air pollution, and African Anthropocenes. These interests are coalescing into a series of essays, provisionally titled *Inside-Out Earth: Residual Governance Under Extreme Conditions*. The first of these have appeared in [Cultural Anthropology](#), [Aeon](#), [Somatosphere](#), the [LA Review of Books](#), and elsewhere. Hecht's 2012 book *Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade* offers new perspectives on the global nuclear order by focusing on African uranium mines and miners. An abridged version appeared in French as *Uranium Africain, une histoire globale* (Le Seuil 2016), and a Japanese translation is due out in 2021. Gabrielle Hecht holds a PhD in History and Sociology of Science from the University of Pennsylvania (1992), and a bachelor's degree in Physics from MIT (1986). She serves on numerous advisory boards, including for the Andra, France's national radioactive waste management agency.

**Arjuna Neuman** is an artist, filmmaker and writer. His film *4 Waters: Deep Implicancy* looks at the history of knowledge that leads up to the invention of the nuclear bomb and the total violence and lethal abstractions that come with it. The film challenges Eurocentric knowledge, and travels to the Marshall Islands, to look at the nuclear afterlife there, and to speak to indigenous nuclear refugees effected by the tests. Selected projects include collaborations with Lorde Selys and Rachel Dedman as *Radio Earth Hold* at the Serpentine Gallery, London (2018); *Qalandia Biennial* (2018); *Gasworks*, London (2018); and *Navel*, Los Angeles, (2017). With Shahira Issa at *Sharjah Biennial* (2017). And solo projects including *Bold Tendencies*, London (2018); *Soy Capitan Gallery* (2017); *NTU Centre for Contemporary Art*, Singapore (2017); the *56th Venice Biennale* and *SuperCommunity* (2016); *Industry of Light*, London (2017); the *Haus Der Kulturen der Welt* (2016); at *Ashkal Alwan* (2016); and the *Beirut Art Centre*, Lebanon (2015). As a writer he has published essays in *Relief Press*, *Into the Pines Press*, *The Journal for New Writing*, *VIA Magazine*, *Concord*, *Art Voices*, *Flaunt*, *LEAP*, *Hearings Journal* and *e-flux*. He also grows tomatoes and chillis in his studio. <http://www.arjunaneuman.com/>

**Dr Fathima Nizaruddin** is a film maker and Assistant Professor at the AJK Mass Communication Research Centre Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi India. She completed her practice based Phd with CREAM at the University of Westminster, London, in 2016; and her MA in Screen Documentary at Goldsmiths in 2010. Nizaruddin's films including *My Mother's Daughter* (2011) and *Nuclear Hallucinations* (2016) have been screened internationally. *Nuclear Hallucinations* explores the anti-nuclear struggle against the Kudankulam Atomic Power Project in South India, and was given a special mention at the Uranium Film Festival in Berlin. The film engages with the documentary form and it is centred around the anti-nuclear struggle against the Kudankulam Atomic Power Project in South India. In a context where cases of sedition and waging of war against the state are filed against anti-nuclear protesters, the film attempts to question the totalitarian nature of pro-nuclear assertions through comic modes. Satirical impersonations, performance and ironic renderings of jingoistic rhetoric work together to form a narrative that explores the tragic absurdity of constructing nuclear power plants on a tsunami affected coast. This narrative tries to ascertain the relation between the production of "scientific facts" about the "safe" nature of the nuclear project and violence against anti-nuclear protestors, including police firing. Anti-nuclear activists, villagers and performers who appear in the film engage with the farcical dimension of these "facts" and this raises larger questions about how authoritarian knowledge claims are asserted through the documentary form.

**Alex Ressel and Kerri Meehan** are artists from the UK and Australia currently living and working at Injalak Arts Centre in Gunbalanya, near to the Nabarlek former uranium mine and Ranger Uranium mine in the Northern Territory of Australia. Working closely with the local Aboriginal community, Alex and Kerri are learning to rethink the nuclear landscape in relation to country, kin and temporality, drawing on 60,000 years of cultural knowledge. They are making a series of works that help to map nuclear colonisation through mining and waste, re-valuing the ancient and contemporary experience of place, knowledge of radiation and the global material trace of uranium. Sickness Country is an area within Kakadu National Park, Australia, that has been known as a sacred and dangerous place for thousands of years. According to ancient and living stories, disturbing the earth, taking rocks away, camping, harvesting crops or getting cut in Sickness Country could have grave consequences. In the 1950s, uranium prospectors looking for ore in Australia's remote North found rich mineralisations close to the surface in areas of Kakadu. In 2017 the artists visited the area and recorded conversations with people, hoping to understand more about Sickness Country. They wanted to find out how cultures that have occupied the land for more than 60,000 years developed knowledge about uranium, an element which is implicated in many of the world's most dangerous and secretive narratives. Their work 'Sickness Country' is an hour long radio artwork made on location and broadcast on [Resonance 104.4FM](#) on 18 October 2017. Their artwork 'Ungurrookoolpum' is an interactive documentary made through a visit to a former uranium mine situated on the edge of Litchfield National Park in the Northern Territory. The former open cast mine has been transformed into a recreational lake, raising concerns about radiological contamination and nature. The work presents a range of voices speaking on Ungurrookoolpum (Rum Jungle), a remote place in a large country, where distance can lead to forgetting. The work considers how the unseen potential dangers of an old mine can be overlooked in 40 years, and poses the challenge of how radioactive waste may be remembered in 1000 years?

**Eglė RINDZEVIČIŪTĖ**, PhD in 2008 and Docent in 2012 in Culture Studies at Linköping University. Rindzeviciute directs the AHRC research networking project Nuclear Cultural Heritage: From Knowledge to Practice and is a Co-I at the international research project Atomic Heritage Goes Critical. Currently Associate Professor of Sociology at Kingston University, UK; and Visiting Research Fellow at the School of Public Administration in Gothenburg University, Sweden. Author of *The Power of Systems: How Policy Sciences Opened Up the Cold War World* (Cornell University Press 2016), co-editor of *The struggle for the long-term in transnational science and politics: forging the future* (Routledge 2015). Profile page at [Kingston University](#).

**Saulesh Yessenova** (PhD. McGill University, 2003) is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada. She was brought up in Kazakhstan, then part of the USSR. Her academic career has brought her to Canada, but she still focuses on Kazakhstan for her research and writing. In her current project, she looks at Soviet nuclear arms (and space) race infrastructures, seeking to examine nuclear weapon testing and spaceflight as novel scientific and political practices that substituted for direct military engagement during the Cold War. These practices were mediated by specific systems of governance and labour mobilization that co-produced new habitats, nature, technology, and people's experiences of them. The production of these new spaces as well as their enduring significance in the post-nuclear age as heritage, legacy, burden, and opportunity are at the core of her analysis. [www.sauleshyessenova.com](http://www.sauleshyessenova.com)

<https://nuclear.artscatalyst.org/>