

NUCLEAR DEFERRAL CURATORIAL STATEMENT

I have been to that place that you should never go.

Located 420 metres below the Earth's surface, and accessible only by navigating through over five kilometres of tunnels, Onkalo is the world's first deep geological nuclear waste repository. Hewn into bedrock at 61°14'08.02"N 21°28'58.69"E on Finland's southwest coast, the facility is intended to isolate high-level radioactive material from people and Earth's biosphere for the next 100,000 years. The nuclear barons refer to this as "final disposal", although it is perhaps more accurately described as *deferral*, since we have no way of being certain that Onkalo will remain effective for even a fraction of that timespan.

To enter Onkalo is therefore to venture into the far-future. My experience there prompted me to reflect upon the encounter between humanity and ecology, and to view its documentation as future cultural heritage. However, since radioactivity is a form of energy for which people have no sense for—you cannot see it, hear it, smell it, or feel it—I found myself taking two sideways glances. For this I picked up my camera in an attempt to visualise nuclear harm, rather than merely continue to write about it. This impulse is to be expected, for as John O'Brian has stated: "Wherever nuclear events occur, photographers are present. They are there not only to record what happens, but also to assist in the production of what happens."

The first series of images catalogue select human artefacts and other details—such as plastic pipes, painted walls, drilled test holes, and mosses—that will be inadvertently entombed along with Finland's radioactive material. The medium selected to do so is stoneware ceramic fired at 1200°C so as to withstand a five kilometre ice shield, as well as other radiation, magnetic, and chemical interferences. Original copies of the tablets on display have been deposited into chambers measuring 5x5x3 metres which are nestled deep inside salt deposits dating more than forty million years old. The facility, known as the Memory of Mankind and located at 47°33'19.82"N 13°38'43.74"E in Hallstatt, Austria, has been purpose-built within saliferous (i.e., flowing) rock that will have wholly-encased the works by 2050 with no foreseeable imbrication (i.e., overlapping) points. The stoneware medium and salt storage method promises to preserve the images for at least 10,000 years.

The second series has been printed and exhibited with bare photographic archival materials that are known to fade and decay in a mere one hundred years. This is deliberate, for the images chase a string of green lights which are designed to lure us towards a refuge chamber. To be used only in the event of an emergency, it is such details that remind us that Onkalo is a gravely dangerous place, in which even now we don't truly belong. These are however temporary measures and impermanent installations which will be removed when Onkalo is entombed sometime in the next century. No intruder after this date will find refuge there.

Several hours after I had resurfaced, although the stars could not have feasibly changed I saw each differently. What responsibilities follow from bringing down to Earth the nuclear processes of stars? To encourage the viewer to take such a biospheric point-of-view in lieu of visiting Onkalo for themselves, I have chosen to juxtapose my images with several of Andrew Hustwaite's sculptures which evoke the Brownian motion of cosmic clusters and strands. Indeed, whilst it is now a commonplace to say that all life and matter shares its origin in these cosmic nuclear processes, relatively few also know that our own Milky Way will experience a galactic collision with Andromeda in four billion years, thereby ending the possibility of all life on Earth. In this way, we can be sure that some form of nuclear ending is certain.

All of this is perhaps sobering thinking. As it is for me. Aldo Leopold went so far as to suggest that "[o]ne of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds". So the question remains: why share such thoughts at all? Through *Nuclear Deferral* I hope to awaken more people—and particularly Minister Josh Frydenberg—to two alternative futures in which nuclear harms will be inflicted upon us from both above and below. We can't conceivably do much about the former, but we can ameliorate the latter. That is to say, I don't want to suffer alone in the space between nuclear living and nuclear dying, anymore.

N.A.J. Taylor

NUCLEAR DEFERRAL
PRICE LIST

N.A.J. TAYLOR

For 10,000 years

Archival print on archival stoneware ceramic
200x200x70mm
\$10,000 for the set of five. Unframed. Edition of 2.

For 100 years

Archival print on archival paper
594x841mm
\$500 each. Unframed. Editions of 5.
(Also available at A3 for \$100 in editions of 10.)

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ANDREW HUSTWAITE

11 Tetrahedral Cluster

3mm steel rod, brass plated
\$750

50 Tetrahedral Strand

3mm steel rod, with black paint, and penetrol
\$3,000

20 Tetrahedral Cluster

4mm steel rod, copper plated
\$1,250

30 Tetrahedral Cluster

3mm steel rod, black powder coat
\$1,750

11 Tetrahedral Cluster

5mm steel rod, with white paint
\$750

11 Tetrahedral Cluster

5mm steel rod, black powder coat
\$750

40 Tetrahedral Cluster

5mm steel rod, white powder coat
\$2,500

50 Tetrahedral Strand

5mm steel rod, white powder coat & penetrol
\$3,500

120 Tetrahedral Halo

Steel, Black/white paint & penetrol
\$7,500