



### **Sunday the 23rd - Three Radioactive Fairytales**

1 day workshops, mediating on planetary, geological and revolutionary time.

*How do we try and think in relation to the cosmic and planetary time of rocks? Or perceive the epic post-human temporal shifts of radioactive afterlives? How might we learn to trace an invisible x-ray like vision that attempts to see ultra-violet light and atomic decay?*

As part of the solstice celebrations, and the cultural bridge project bringing together BOARC with Kulturverein Leipzig and Bistro 21, this session will pivot around the above enquiry, using several stories, visual artefacts and sound works from the former East Germany as its point of departure, providing a ground for collective discussion about how lessons of the past might echo into the current political context.

Starting at 10am the format for the day will include a morning body work session for those wanting to join, a presentation and lunch which we'll prepare together. This will be followed by a more open discussion.

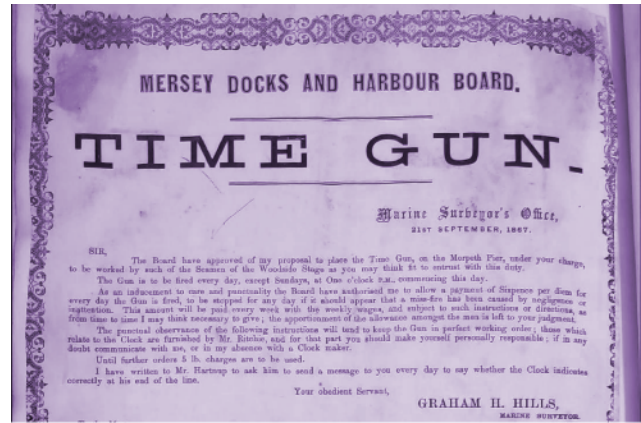
Participation for the day is £8 with food, cooked together, included.

### Three Radioactive Fairytales

Writing about a project by the Berlin-based artist Susanne Kriemann, 'Library for Radioactive Afterlife' (of 2016), in which the artist assembles archival material, found objects, literature, and photographic works to investigate the literal and political invisibility of radioactivity from uraninite – also known as pitchblende – mined in the former German Democratic Republic's Ore Mountains and Leipzig region, the brilliant scholar Esther Leslie tells a sad story beautifully, a semi-fiction housed in critical theory: When he fled the Nazis, Walter Benjamin left Germany, carrying only one suitcase that contained very little, and one of the things it contained was an X-ray of his own chest – diagnosing heart failure. Benjamin was with the estranging perspectives enabled by the X-ray, for him it communicated in a photographic language we were yet to learn, the language of ionising radiation, microwaves and photons: originating from the electron cloud of an atom. He was captivated by the strange light of phosphorescence, 'light that decays' and occupies the edges of the spectrum: ultra-violet and infra-red – the kind of lights which let human eyes see the world differently. He was fascinated by the fact that radiation could not be seen by eyes, but it could be seen on photographs. For Benjamin, Leslie proposes, there was an ultraviolet and infrared kind of knowledge too – accessed via imagination and fantasy. The X-Ray, opened-up a conceptual and allegorical space where cultural praxis and products had afterlives and knowledge could be comprehended in the form of lightning flashes, recurring, mutating, like radiation, not necessarily ever decipherable as a whole, but gradually permeating our horizon of understanding. This experimental reading takes the Benjaminian idea of ultraviolet knowledge and the aesthetics of afterlives as its guiding principle. Part short story, part history and part critical reflection on the chronopolitics of nuclearity, it will trace the lost utopian imaginings of the former East Germany - from Ernst Bloch and Christa Wolf, to the artist Carlfriedrich Claus - so as to explore the current potential of the kind of out-of-kilter perspectives located in the ultra-violet knowledge of x-rays and radioactive rocks; the cosmic stories held inside moon stones; the slow time of revolution and the linguistic and aesthetic registering of traumatic shifts.

*Sarah E. James is an art historian, writer and curator. She teaches at the Liverpool School of Art and Design, LJMU. Her research specialisms are contemporary art; postwar art; the art and material culture of the former Eastern Bloc; the visual cultures and exhibition practices of the Cold War, including the unofficial exhibition practice of artists in Eastern Europe. She has published two monographs: Common Ground: German Photographic Cultures Beyond the Iron Curtain, published by Yale University Press in 2013, and Paper Revolutions: An Invisible Avant-Garde, published by the MIT Press in 2022. She has written numerous articles and chapters, and over the last twenty years, around 90 essays and reviews for the international art press.*

You can find out more about Sarah's work here <https://www.sarahedithjames.com/>



Our Solstice event is being offered as part of our Cultural Bridge Partnership with Kunstverein Leipzig (KVL) and Bistro 21 Leipzig for which we have received funding to cover their week long stay at BOARC, our hosting and administration for this. This money is coming from the British Council, UK Art Councils (inc ACE), Goethe-Institut London, and Fonds Soziokulture.

More info here: <https://www.cultural-bridge.info/>

Outside of COVID-19 recovery grants this is the first time BOARC has received support affiliating us directly with a government funding body. This has raised questions about how a small not-for-profit like BOARC should position itself in relation to the soft power of state-based cultural funding, particularly in light of the genocide taking place in Gaza and the calls of STRIKE Germany.

We understand that Cultural Bridge results from great efforts by people within these funding bodies to keep necessary European connections open post-Brexit, and entered into this agreement due to our commitment to cross-cultural dialogue. However, we have been increasingly alarmed at developments in Germany and see the violent state silencing, and censorship of those in opposition to Israel's war as a direct violation of freedom of speech and attack on civil liberty.

We believe it is vital to create a space for conversations that might be inhibited elsewhere and in institutional and regularly publicly funded spaces in the UK and Germany. For us this means maintaining relations with our grass roots partnership organisations (KVL and Bistro 21), whose work is becoming increasingly precarious. However as an active part of civic society, we are also questioning how we can respond to the UN's call for cultural organisations to do all they can to urge state parties to

oblige by their obligation to prevent genocide and also provide our solidarity and support to others when they do so.

Link to Strike Germany: <https://strikegermany.org/>

**BOARC strongly denounces the UK and German governments' continued support of Israel's war on Gaza and failure to recognise the state of Palestine.**

**We openly invite those wishing to think and organise against the brutality of the occupation to use the space and offer further subsidies for group stay or day use so that this work can happen. Please get in touch if the building and its resources might be of support.**

We have signed the Strike Germany letter. This is a call to withhold labour and presence from German cultural institutions. We intend to use our participation in Cultural Bridge to address how our cross cultural affiliation might be used to support freedom of expression and freedom for Palestinians. We will do this by emphasising the importance of STRIKE Germany's demands to 1) protect artistic freedom, 2) remove ambiguity in definitions of Anti-Semitism so it can be structurally addressed 3) and combat anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia and look to consider interventions at grass roots level whilst hoping to engage state funders in these discussions.

BOARC aligns itself with the Boycott, Divest and Sanctions Movement and strongly opposes any potential legislation by the UK government looking to silence its efforts. <https://bdsmovement.net/>

We draw your attention to Sarah's recent essay '[Taking a Stand](#)' for Art Monthly for a wider overview of the situation in Germany and can provide a pdf. for those requiring access.

