

Sketch for 'decay chart' wall relief The Nuclear Sanctuary

The Nuclear Sanctuary

An industrial relic of the nuclear, which stands as testament to France's un-remitting determination to harness and control nature.

The Nuclear Sanctuary is a pilgrimage through the complex culture of Nuclear France. Contained within the site of the decommissioned nuclear power plant - Chooz A. The additional layer of the Nuclear Sanctuary, is a figurative and literal descent into the history and future of the French nuclear story.

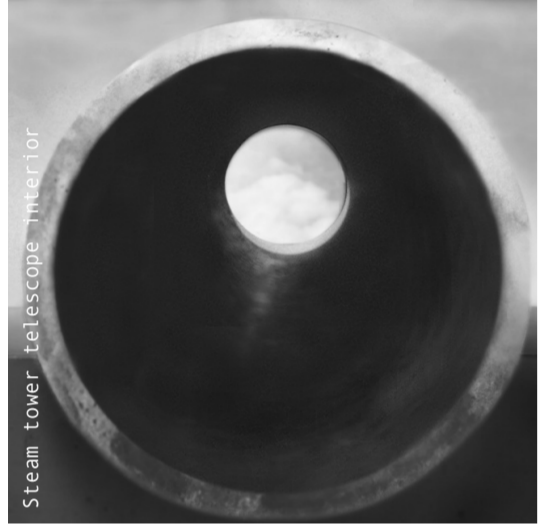
The pilgrim is offered a window into nuclear modernity from the turn of the 20th Century. Far beyond a domestic energy source, the cultural, economic and political program of nuclear France has been prised open and reconstructed. A captivating tale of human desire to control the elements at any cost - France's nuclear legacy holds great monumentality and mystery. The mountain sites and subterranean caverns of the Nuclear Sanctuary imbed the complex story within its walls. Invoking sacrality, the sanctuary looks to safeguard the story for future generations, establishing a nuclear folklore for all to engage with.

This guide outlines a trail of key elements within the sanctuary that hold significant symbolism and act as a collective portrayal of French nuclear culture/modernity.

Le Jardin Atomique

Constructed on Chooz A's former communications site, the 'Atomic Garden' can be viewed as a site marker - locating the beginning of the pilgrimage. Constructed from concrete and excavated blueschist-like granite rock the grounds stand as a memorial to the wider French nuclear landscape, both constructed during the expansion of the nuclear state during the 20th/21st century and excavated overseas for uranium mining purposes.

In commemoration of France's nuclear vision a recreation of architect Claude Parent's concrete telescope reaches towards the sky. A symbolic gesture in line with the nuclear optimist's bold ambitions for French modernity to harmoniously embed energy creation into the French landscape and cultural ideal. Peering into the monument a circular view frames the sky above Chooz B's steam towers - the billowing steam a symbol synonymous with the French nuclear landscape.



Descending through the memorial's excavated planes - forms and symbols related to France's global radioactive ruins amalgamate to form a series of sculptural monoliths, before another series of deep excavations and carves create a visual connection to Chooz B across the Meuse and the caverns of Chooz A 200 metres below.



Steam tower telescope

As a series of sporadic moments, they join together as a reminder of both the 'idealised' nuclear landscape and the resultant land exploitation overseas. The concrete-garden, a clearly man-made intervention, with its brutalist forms sharply juxtaposing the natural surroundings can be viewed as a combined memorial to the nuclear landscapes of the past nuclear-era which will be laid to rest and forgotten.

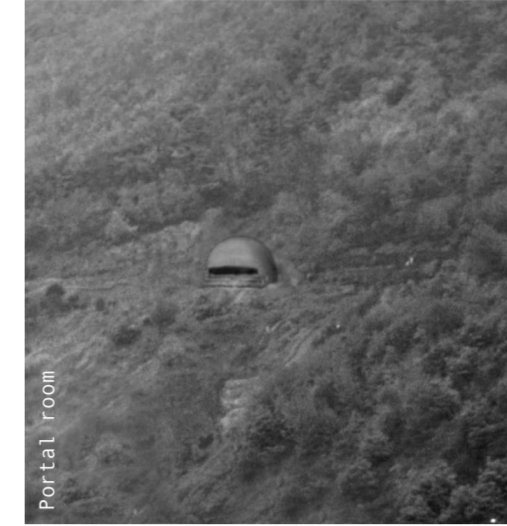
Nuclear Portal

State Compass - As a mapping of the French nuclear state, the compass acts as a situated point for orientation and understanding the scope of the nation's nuclear endeavour. Reaching every corner of the country, each node presented on the dial marks a significant site in the nuclear state's expansion.



State Compass

An emblematic portrayal of France's nuclear empire in its quest for power. Centred around the marked site of Chooz A the compass can be read inside the portal observation deck - from here, the panoramic view stretches out in the direction of the French nuclear empire with the site of Chooz B in the foreground.



Portal room

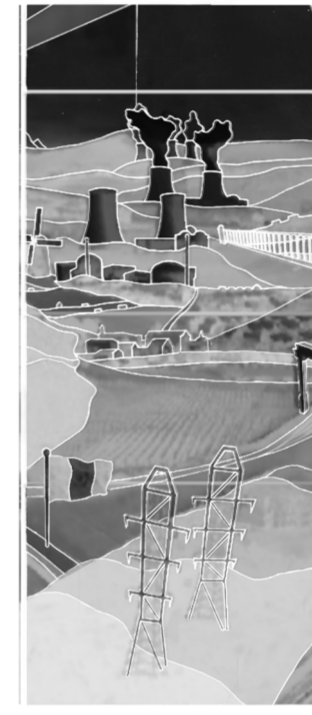


Portal room interior

The French Nuclear Complex - Within this 24ft long stained glass mural, France's nuclear legacy is captured in great detail. Depicted like a visual prophecy the window presents an overwhelming image of the nuclear story - a view into an unbridled nuclear world. By rotating the walls of the portal room (making use of WW1 bunker ball-bearing technology), the window is brought into light and the image emerges - its story can be read as one of nuclear hope and fear. Viewing the image as triptych one can start to read three conjoining 'worlds'. Central to the image France's nuclear state is situated between visions of utopic modernity and dystopian fallout either side. A graphic portrayal of the nuclear dichotomy which France's nuclear legacy continually flits between, a complex balance between hope and fear.



Stained glass



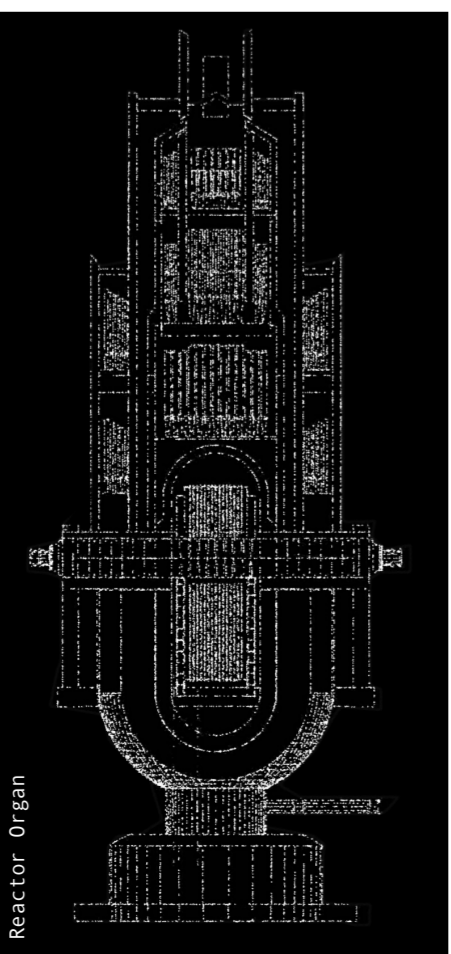
Caverns

Meuse Fountain - Situated at the entrance/lobby, the fountain signifies the sanctuary's connection to water and the river Meuse. The simple process of turning water into steam is key to the creation of energy and holds a significance within any nuclear site. The industrial plant's reliance on water is re-established through a re-working of the former inlet/outlet pipes, which transported water and steam for nuclear proceedings. The Meuse acted as a life-source and starting point for Chooz A's nuclear activity, its water syphoned away through various paths deep into the caverns.

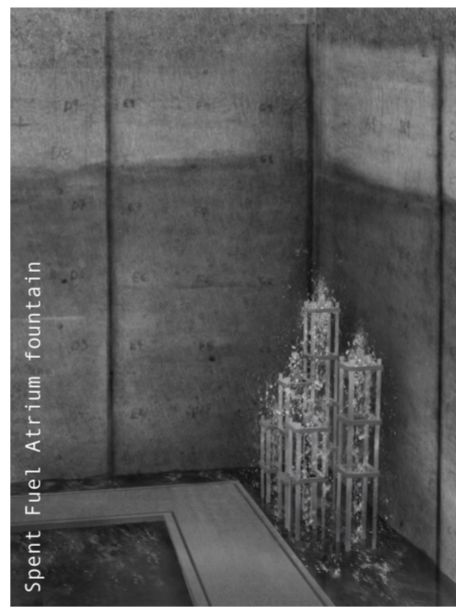
was indeed a belief system that carried the hope of a nation...

Spent Fuel Atrium - Within this atrium space circulation is centred around a latticed fountain sculpture. The intricacy of the individual fountain heads takes reference from the architecture of fuel rod control assemblies. Each of the assembly's is housed within the former storage grid of the spent fuel pool. The tectonics of the column-like fountains reference the meticulous practice of radioactive matter

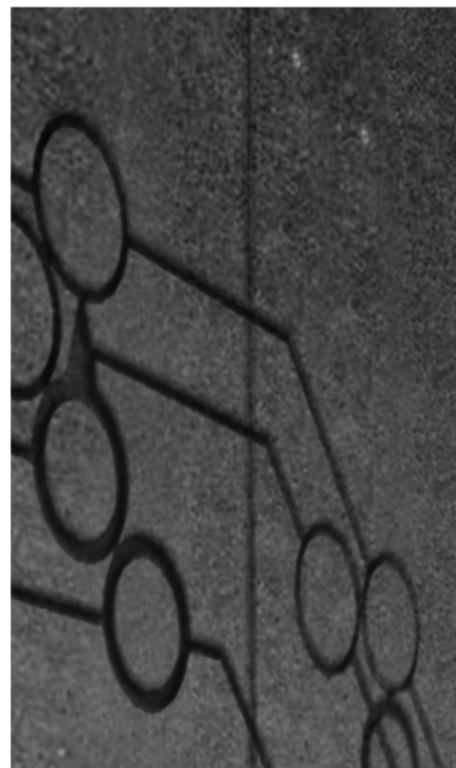
Reactor Organ - At the heart of the Nuclear Sanctuary stands a 20m tall monument. Its silhouette stands to reference the former nucleus of the facility - the reactor. Re-interpreted as an organ, the instrument holds a symbolism of nuclear sacrality. Situated inside the 40m tall arched walls of the cavern, the spaces magnitude denotes a reverence towards the nuclear legacy. Deliberately blurring the lines between that of the nuclear and religion the reactor organ is a monument which stands to represent technological divinity - for the agnostic state of France, the nucle-



Reactor Organ



Spent Fuel Atrium fountain



Decay chart wall relief

being submerged and emerged from the body of water. The multitude of trickling water emphasises the act of ensuring the body of water is kept in flow, vital in order to control temperatures of radioactive waste.

Radiation Markings - The walls of the caverns are lined with small notational wall-writings. Leftover as a result of the meticulous process of decommissioning, the inscribed marks left are the only physical evidence of radiation, a spatial mapping of the intangible. Within the ancillary cavern the 'radiation' is further physicalised through a series of relief works carved out of the sanctuary's walls. Piecing together different segments of the building one can decipher another 'radiation mapping'. Made visible is a 'decay chart' relating to the various elements of nuclear physics, engraved as a form of ornamentation the relief acts as to further preserve the 'presence' of radiation which once permeated the building.

As nuclear people we must continue to question our relationship to science, nature, and modernity...



Site Map

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