

Interview Uladzimir Hramovich, *People of Salt*, 2024

My name is Uladzimir Hramovich and the work is called *People of Salt*. This work is built from materials connected to labour and political struggle: industrial metal elements, protective helmets and reworked agricultural tools. I am interested in how these materials carry memories and how they change over time, just like history itself. The piece refers to Salihorsk, an industrial city in Belarus shaped by potassium-salt extraction and by the hard physical work of miners.

People of Salt is a fountain-installation made of a long metal basin and transformed objects - The helmets become small fountains that point to labour in the mines - symbolising both work and vulnerability - while the scythes relate to agricultural labour and to historical uprisings, where peasants reshaped their tools into weapons.

Like potassium fertilising soil, the state extracts not only resources, but also the labour and the bodies of people. And after uprisings, those who resist are often erased - they become invisible, absorbed by a system that turns them into "material". They dissolve in official history just like salt dissolves in water.

The work connects two suppressed uprisings in Belarus: the anti-colonial uprising against the Russian Empire in 1863 and the uprising in 2020. Both were violently crushed. *People of Salt* asks what remains after defeat, and how we can keep these histories alive despite political attempts to dissolve them.

In my artistic practice I often work with materials that have strong historical or symbolic meaning: metal, concrete, and found objects from industrial or agricultural environments. I am interested in how these materials hold a kind of potential history, how they contain stories that were not fully told, and how political systems use them to construct narratives about the past.

People of Salt continues this line of research. Many of my works deal with extraction and with the tension between monuments and the people who actually produce them.

I often try to create constructions that feel unstable, as if history itself is shifting.

I also frequently bring together two different temporal realities events that happened far apart in time but share similar dynamics. By placing them next to each other, I speculate and imagine the missing parts of history, the gaps that were erased or never recorded.

So this artwork fits very naturally into my wider practice: it's about material, memory, and the bodies that carry the traces of history.

My favourite place in Neukölln is the canal near Weichselplatz. It's the point where the water splits into three directions and connects Neukölln with Kreuzberg. The neighbourhood slows down there - people walk, sit by the water, talk. For me it's the place where I feel most

connected to Neukölln: this mix of everyday life, movement, crossings, and quiet moments all at once.