

DEFENDING THE FUTURE

Oliver Ressler

Opening: 14 dicembre 2023, from 17:00 to 21:00

14.12.2023 – 24.02.2024

The Gallery Apart, Via Francesco Negri 43, Roma

Over the past few years Oliver Ressler has focused primarily on climate breakdown and the multiple strategies and activist practices that seek to stop the catastrophe already underway from worsening. 2023 has been a year of deadly heatwaves, floods and fires, with some of the hottest months ever recorded. It is on track to become the hottest year of the last 120,000. Yet we still see governments worldwide unrestrainedly commissioning construction of new airports, highways and LNG terminals, and providing licenses and funding for new oil- and gas exploration that will lock humanity into fossil fuel use for decades.

Ressler's third solo exhibition at The Gallery Apart addresses various aspects of this global crisis. The 9,5-meter-long ink drawing *Property Will Cost Us the Earth* includes the drawings of 400 animals in the eponymous text. All the mammals, birds, fish, amphibia, reptiles and insects depicted are under threat of extinction. Humanity has already reached a phase known to scientists as the *6th Mass Extinction*; animals and plants are dying out at the fastest rate since the extinction of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. Climate breakdown is primarily driven by burning fossil fuels, the remains of dead plants and animals from past eras. If this rate of extinction continues, what one of the photomontages shows will become a terrible reality: *We're fossils in the making*

More than half the world's original forests have already disappeared (2022) can be read in another photomontage in the exhibition. At a time when the world's largest attempts at reforestation are simply necessary for survival, we still see the ongoing destruction of forests worldwide in the name of profit.

Even though the outlook is bleak, we must not stop fighting for a livable planet. In *Defending the Future* we see two examples of struggle for the preservation of forests and the prevention of mining operations. In the video *Ancestral Future Rising (2023)* we follow the struggle of people in Pacto, close to Ecuador's capital Quito, where the State granted mining concessions for gold, silver, and copper in a region designated by UNESCO as the world's seventh biosphere reserve. The film gathers voices of communities resisting the new round of extraction that would destroy their environment and livelihood. The campaigners invoke ancestral sites of the Yumbo, KituKara and Inca peoples; culture and nature come together to preserve forests endangered by mining.

The video *The Path is Never the Same (2022)* focuses on two complex, self-organizing systems: a forest and an occupation. The Hambacher Forest near Cologne (in Germany) has become the scene of Europe's longest tree-top occupation. Since 2012, about 200 people have been living in this forest to prevent its clearing by the energy company RWE, which wants to extract lignite. The film reflects on the forest as a living space and on the need to confront the climate vandalism perpetrated in the name of "economic activity". The people here organize non-hierarchically, standing – as one activist puts it in the film – "just like the trees, next to each other, on the same level".

This alliance between human and more-than-human life is also the topic of the photo series *Canopy cut down to sand (2023)*. Six photographic images show formations randomly drawn into the sand by waves. The drawings on the beach are astonishing, reminding us of flames. The photos were taken on Vancouver Island in 2022, a year when atmospheric CO₂ reached 417 ppm. No such concentration of greenhouse gas had ever occurred before since humans first lived on the planet. Storms, droughts, heatwaves and wildfires will lead to a conversion from "living" to "dead" across multiple species and on a massive scale. Forests,

an essential source of planetary life, are being burned at an ever-accelerating rate. Each photograph is combined with a few lines freely adapted from Joanne Maria McNally's poem *The Phoenix* (2008).

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

EXHIBITION: Oliver Ressler – Defending the Future

VENUE: The Gallery Apart – Via Francesco Negri, 43, Roma

OPENING: 14/12/2023, from 5pm to 9pm

DURATION: 15/12/2022 – 24/02/2024

EXHIBITION HOURS: from 3pm to 7pm, from Tuesday to Saturday or by appointment

INFO: The Gallery Apart – tel/fax 0668809863 – info@thegalleryapart.it – www.thegalleryapart.it

OLIVER RESSLER, (Knittelfeld, A 1970) is an artist and filmmaker who produces installations, projects in public space, and films on issues such as economics, democracy, migration, the climate crisis, forms of resistance and social alternatives.

Ressler has had solo exhibitions at Berkeley Art Museum, USA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade; Centro Cultural Conde Duque, Madrid; Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum, Egypt; The Cube Project Space, Taipei; Kunsthaus Graz, Graz and comprehensive solo exhibitions at Wyspa Institute of Art, Gdansk; Lentos Kunstmuseum, Linz; Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporaneo – CAAC, Seville; SALT Galata, Istanbul; MNAC – National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest; and Cultural Centre of Belgrade.

Ressler has participated in more than 400 group exhibitions, including Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven; MASSMoCA, North Adams, USA; Centre Pompidou, Paris; the biennials in Prague (2005), Seville (2006), Moscow (2007), Taipei (2008), Lyon (2009), Gyumri (2012), Venice (2013), Athens (2013, 2015), Quebec (2014), Helsinki (2014), Jeju (2017), Kyiv (2017), Gothenburg (2019) and Stavanger (2019), and at Documenta 14, Kassel, 2017 (exhibition organized by EMST).

Ressler has completed forty-two films that have been screened in thousands of events of social movements, art institutions and film festivals. A retrospective of his films took place at Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève in 2013.

In 2002, Ressler won the first prize at the International Media Art Award of the ZKM in Karlsruhe and he is the first prize winner of the Prix Thun for Art and Ethics Award in 2016.

For the Taipei Biennale 2008, Ressler curated an exhibition on the counter-globalization movement, *A World Where Many Worlds Fit*. A travelling show on the financial crisis, *It's the Political Economy, Stupid*, co-curated with Gregory Sholette, has been presented at nine venues (2011-2016).

2019–2023 Ressler has directed *Barricading the Ice Sheets*, a research project on the climate justice movement, funded by the Austrian Science Fund. Configurations of the project were solo exhibitions at Camera Austria, Graz (2021); Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb (2022); Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (n.b.k.), Berlin (2022); Tallinn Art Hall, Tallinn (2022); LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial, Gijón (2023); The Showroom, London (2023).

<http://www.ressler.art>

<https://vimeo.com/oliverressler>

<https://www.instagram.com/oliver.ressler>

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