

AIR ARTIST IN RESIDENCE Niederösterreich – July & August 2019

We are the artist duo Viltė Bražiūnaitė and Tomas Sinkevičius. We began working together in 2014 in Vilnius, Lithuania, but now Viltė is based in Austria and Tomas resides in Sweden, so we communicate mostly virtually. Residency in Krems became a fixed working space for us between Vienna and Stockholm.

Our residency in Krems started on July 2019, which was later announced as Earth's hottest month on record. While nature was stressed and on the brink of catching fire, Krems was filled with sunbathers and cheerful cyclists pedaling through the local vineyards. Keeping the blinds closed and a fan on all day, we started to work on a video which was inspired by sunlight, the heatwaves sweeping across Europe, escapism and air-conditioned spaces. While in a residence, we scouted three filming locations: agricultural sunflower field in Krems, a tree-house rental in the outskirts of Krems and the headquarters of lighting manufacturer OSRAM in Munich.

Blooming throughout July in the agricultural fields in Krems, sunflowers became a central element in the video. With their tall stalks and bright petals stretched towards the sun, sunflowers have a sun-like appearance and follow the sun from east to west like some solar panel arrays.

Since we had some time in our hands, we often found ourselves drifting from art research to irrelevant content. After binge watching a channel of young Lithuanian vlogger, we started to draw a poetic connection between sunlight and social exposure. We created a fictional character - an eyebrowed sunflower who narrates a video and guides the viewer through video locations. The sunflower will be voiced by a real influencer - a recently emerged profession where people are getting goods, luxurious getaways and services from various businesses in exchange for exposure to the followers on social media.

Just a 20-minute bike ride away from our studio was another video location - a treehouse that is listed a 5-star Krems holiday experience on Airbnb.com. The fully equipped resinous hub above the ground for many travelers becomes a form of escapism to nature. In our video this tree-house functions as a shade for a sun-drained sunflower. By having a treehouse as one of the film locations, we reflect on the engineered environments, where temperature, humidity, and light are tailored to facilitate optimal conditions.

To film the headquarters of lighting manufacturer OSRAM, we traveled to Munich, Germany. Osram is a global corporation working in the fields of illumination, visualization, and sensor technology. For our video, we filmed the sun reflections on the OSRAM skyscraper windows and the light it casts on the ground. The sun reflections on a skyscraper and the way they illuminate the space around the building on a sunny day became a poetic reference to the economy of light.

In AIR-Krems we were granted studio space, funding and time to focus on our art practice. The video in progress is built on our experiences of being close to nature, on the discoveries in Krems and on short trips away. Sunflowers, a treehouse getaway in Krems, and a corporate skyscraper in Munich are three metaphors we use to talk about engineered and natural environments, climate change and invisible dangers such as UV radiation.