

Vedere din expoziția **Oliver Ressler. Proprietatea e furt / Oliver Ressler. Property Is Theft** exhibition view
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'Materials for the Dismantling': Interventionism and Documentation in the Work of Oliver Ressler

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Oliver Ressler's career to date is bookended by two moments of ascendance on the part of the Far Right in Europe. In 1994, German nationalist politicians and intellectuals associated with the *Neue Rechte* ('New Right') movement published the manifesto-like anthology *Die selbstbewusste Nation* ('The Self-Confident Nation'). In response, Ressler in collaboration with Martin Krenn produced *The New Right – Materials for the Dismantling* (1995), a series of billboards, installed in various public locations around Vienna, adorned with quotations from the text juxtaposed with critical responses drawn from works by authors including Judith Butler and Ilse Lenz. Given the urgency of the political climate, the work – like much of Ressler's early practice – was understandably interventionist in form. The subtitle, 'Materials for the Dismantling', signals the espousal of an instrumental view of art as contributing directly to an activist cause.

Now, in 2017, the Far Right is once more on the rise across Europe as it is globally, and with even greater virulence than was the case in the mid-1990s. In the intervening years, Ressler's practice has diversified, his interventionist projects having been supplemented by documentary films such as his recent multi-part, ongoing project *Everything's Coming Together while Everything's Falling Apart* (2016-). In the two completed parts of the project, Ressler follows climate change activists at the COP21 UN Climate Change Summit in Paris, and documents a mass act of civil disobedience (successfully) designed to shut down the Lusatia coal-fired power station in Germany. There is never any recourse to the myth of documentary neutrality in these works. On the contrary, they are deeply and shamelessly subjective, personal and committed; as avowedly political as the interventionist practices he has continued to

engage in since 1995. Where these two sides of his work differ, however, is in their conception of the role of art in relation to political movements, and, more specifically, the temporality of art's political efficacy. Whilst interventionism is predicated on the immediacy of direct action, documentary filmmaking – in the form employed by Ressler – is concerned with the more long-termist strategy of developing and sustaining political narratives, particularly those excluded from representation in more mainstream contexts. In this text I argue that a focus on ecological crisis and its political imbrications (a concern throughout Ressler's career, but one that has come to the fore in recent years) has precipitated this diversified and expanded view of art's political potential.

In recent years, Paris has become a crucible for the political troubles that have proliferated globally in the aftermath of the largely post-political period pre-2008. Periodic terrorist attacks on the city and the rise of Marine Le Pen's *Front National* are two sides of the same coin; the unseemly upshots of the city's history of extreme economic, social and racial segregation. In these contexts of tumult and upheaval, in France as elsewhere, the apparent lack of urgency of climate change relative to other issues has relegated ecology to the side-lines of political agendas, public consciousness and media representation. The right is either agnostic towards climate change, or sees it as insignificant in comparison to the more pressing concerns of migration; the left is largely preoccupied with stemming the flow of support for the resurgent right; and the neoliberal centre is busy attempting to re-establish its long-standing hegemony. The most worrying aspect of the contemporary state of ecological debates is not the climate change denial of the likes of Trump and Putin, but the extent to which they have been expunged from discourse.



Ocupă piața / Take The Square
instalație video, 3 canale / 3-channel
video installation
88' (împreună / combined)
2012



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