

OLIVER RESSLER



Drillbit

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An installation by Oliver Ressler

2021

"Drillbit" consists of two parts. One is a sculpture approximately four meters tall, in which three logs stand on the floor and are tied together with rope at the top. Where the logs meet the floor there are three objects whose purpose is not immediately obvious. They might seem to resemble medieval weapons or instruments of torture, but in fact they are drill heads used in the oil industry to break through layers of rock.



"Drillbit", Digital print on dibond behind museums glass, 97,4 x 137,4 cm, 2021



"Drillbit". Installation view: "Barricading the Ice Sheets" (solo show), Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, 2021.
Photo: Boris Berc

The second part is a large-format photograph (136 x 96cm), positioned within sight of the sculpture. It shows the three conjoined logs again and reveals their purpose. The logs form a *Tripod*, a three-legged construction used in blockades built for civil disobedience action. In these situations there are usually one or two people on a platform or hammock well above the ground, ready to defend the blockade against police attempts to clear it. But there are many more people on the platform in the photograph. The banners they carry indicate the context of climate protest.



"Drillbit". Installation view: "Barricading the Ice Sheets" (solo show), Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, 2021.
Photo: Boris Berc

The tripod in the photograph spans eight kilometers of a freeway tunnel planned for Vienna. If it were to be built, the tunnel would lock the city and surrounding area into an automobile-centric transit system for several more decades. Two logs in the photo stand at the designated points of entry to the tunnel, which under plans approved by all major Austrian political parties would cut straight through the Lobau nature reserve overlooking it.



"Drillbit". Installation view: "Barricading the Ice Sheets" (solo show), Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, 2021.
Photo: Boris Berc

The use of drill heads is an ironic variation on the biblical and proverbial "swords into ploughshares". Destructive tools of the oil industry are recoded as productive tools of civil disobedience. The installation calls for commitment to protect future generations' conditions of life on Earth – which means blockading all new infrastructure built on fossil logic. The quasi-surreal configuration of the picture conveys the complexity and the enormous scale of the undertaking.



"Drillbit" (at the left) and other photographs. Installation view: "Barricading the Ice Sheets" (solo show), Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, 2021. Photo: Boris Berc



"Drillbit". Installation view: "Barricading the Ice Sheets" (solo show), Camera Austria, Graz, 2021. Photo: Markus Krottendorfer

Photograph: Lisbeth Kovacic

Montage: Mateusz Niechoda

3D Prints: Maximilian Klammer

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