



The Desert Lives

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A film by Oliver Ressler

4K, 55 min., AT 2022

On September 6 2021, building machinery was blockaded at Vienna's Hausfeldstraße metro station in a bid to stop construction of the Lobau freeway and the so-called "Stadtstraße" (city road) planned in conjunction with it. Austrian federal environment minister Gewessler subsequently ordered the cancellation of the Lobau project, but the Vienna city council opted to go ahead with the city road project anyway. In response, wooden structures were erected to ensure that the occupation could continue through the winter.



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This film follows the occupation of the so-called "desert" over five months. "The Desert Lives" is structured around three on-camera discussions in October 2021, December 2021 and January 2022, in which action participants debate the status and prospects of the occupation as it stood at those times. The October 2021 discussion addresses the history of the occupation, the collaboration between various political groups involved, and organizational issues. The next, filmed on December 9, 2021, is an emergency plenary meeting, called immediately after police declared the occupation legally dissolved.

The third discussion took place in January 2022 in a three-floor wooden pyramid, an iconic structure for the resistance. *Lobau bleibt* was subjected to multiple forms of repression by this point, as is clear from the conversation in the pyramid. Jarolim, a law firm representing Vienna city council, had sent threatening legal letters individually to 50 people in an attempt to silence voices critical of the city freeway.

All the buildings appearing in the film, including the pyramid, were evicted and destroyed by police on February 1, 2022. 48 activists were arrested, and the felling of hundreds of trees began.

Despite all this, the climate movement remains as active as ever in Vienna. The struggle against climate-destroying infrastructure goes on.

Director and producer: Oliver Ressler

Participants of the conversations (in the order of appearance): Mira, Conny, Malve, Flo, Stefan, Elena, Alex, Merle, Georg, Juro, Lena, Sascha, Oliver, Lucia

Cinematography: Thomas Parb, Lisbeth Kovačič, Oliver Ressler, Rudolf Gottsberger

Footage: Christoph Schwarz, Victor Kössl

Editing: Janina Herhoffer, Lisbeth Kovačič, Oliver Ressler

Color correction: Rudolf Gottsberger

Sound and sound design: Vinzenz Schwab

Music: Fänge (Daniel Lercher, Vinzenz Schwab, David Schweighart)

Title design: Nils Olger

Photomontage: Mateusz Niechoda

Many thanks to *Lobau bleibt* for the hope and inspiration in times of isolation and destruction, and to Reinhard Braun, Matthew Hyland, Mira Kapfinger, Lisbeth Kovačič.

This film was produced in the framework of "Barricading the Ice Sheets", funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF: AR 526).



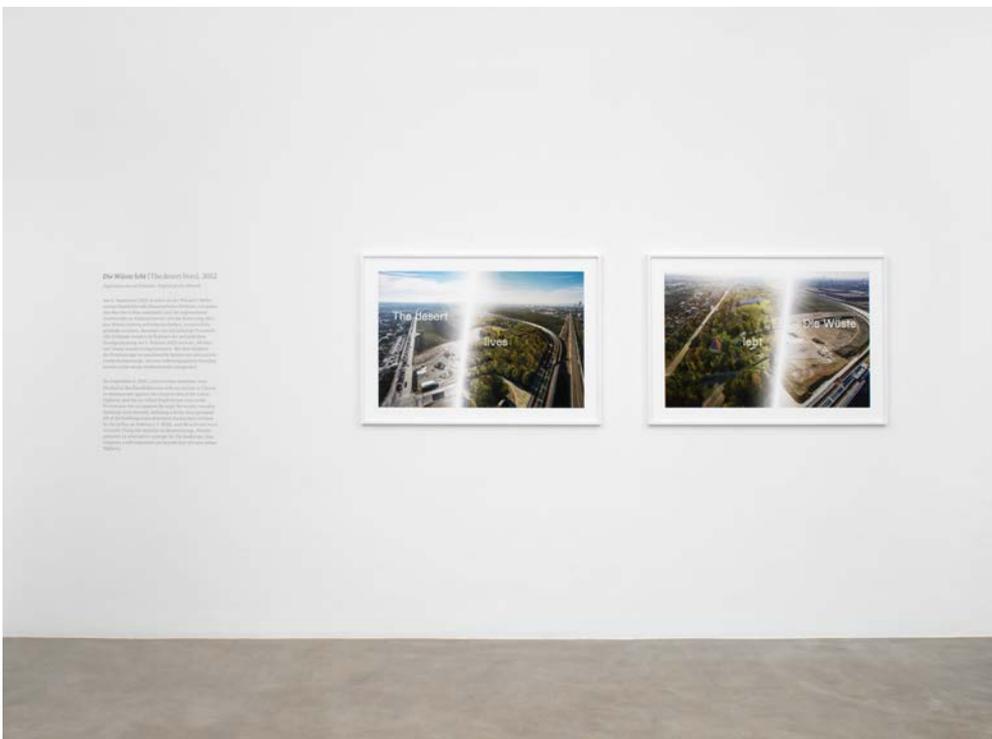
"The Desert Lives", MQ Art Box, MuseumsQuartier, Vienna, 2022. Photo: Alexander Koller



"The Desert Lives", digital print on dibond behind museums glass, framed, 121 x 86 cm, 2022



"The Desert Lives", digital prints on dibond behind museums glass, framed, 121 x 86 cm, 2022. Installation view:
"Barricading the Ice Sheets" (solo show), Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, 2022. Photo: Jens Ziehe



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