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Call of the Forest: Prague exhibition explores people's deep connection with trees

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Culture



Call of the Forest: Prague exhibition explores people's deep connection with trees Length of audio 10:20 Kristýna and Marek Milde: Volání lesa (The Call of the Forest) | Photo:

city and step into the quiet, contemplative world of the forest.

Created by the Czech-born, New York-based artist duo Kristýna and

Marek Milde, it explores the deep and often overlooked connection

Katarína Hudačinová, Kunsthalle Praha

An exhibition titled <u>The Call of the Forest</u>, currently on display at Prague's Kunsthalle, invites visitors to leave behind the noise of the

Developed over the course of more

than two years, The Call of the Forest includes a selection of new, ongoing and earlier works spanning animation, installation, sculpture, and sound. According to Marek Milde, the exhibition is a continuation of the artists' long-standing research into significance of trees.

beautiful.

between people and trees.

Kristýna and Marek Milde: Volání lesa (The the cultural, emotional, and ecological Call of the Forest) | Photo: Katarína Hudačinová, Kunsthalle Praha We have lived in Brooklyn for over two decades. It's a culturally rich environment, but it is also an island, which sometimes seems disconnected from nature. As Czechs, we like to leave the city for the

weekend. It's not as easy to do here, but the nature around New York is

practice. Inspiration often begins with small observations—plants growing through concrete, or spotting people with tree tattoos on the subway. These brief moments where city life and nature meet often become the seeds of our projects."

"This connection to nature has become a strong thread in our art



This tension between city and forest runs through much of their work, including their most recent object in the show, called Arbomobile,

which features a typical New York cab with trees growing out of it. The idea for the artwork came on one of their forest hikes, when they

came across abandoned cars overgrown with vegetation, says Marek Milde: "We were struck by the strength of



Hudačinová, Kunsthalle Praha

Revolution.

vessel of growth. But rather than symbolizing decay, it represents vitality and hope that nature prevails." The trees planted in the cab are all native to North America, many of which have deep historical roots. For instance the Eastern White Pine, which was pictured on one of the flags used during the American

Kristýna and Marek Milde: Volání lesa (The

Call of the Forest) | Photo: Katarína

Hudačinová, Kunsthalle Praha

nature reclaiming human artifacts,"

says Marek Milde. "We decided to

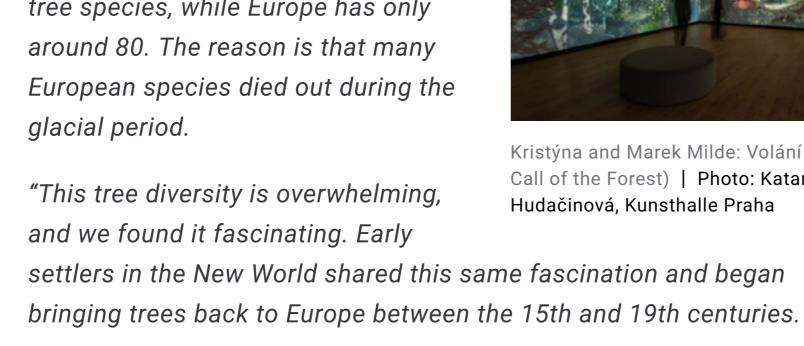
revive the ultimate urban symbol—a

New York yellow taxi—and turn it into a

to their early years in the US, when the unfamiliar landscape caught them by surprise: "Although we were familiar with European forests, we couldn't

Kristýna Milde says their fascination with American trees dates back

recognize many of the trees. We later discovered that America has over 1,200 tree species, while Europe has only



"Many of these trees are now well established in Europe. So, although we consider them European trees today, they originally came from North

America."



the exhibition ends. They're already searching for a permanent

location where the trees can continue to grow. Another key work is The Call of the Forest animation, which brings together tree tattoos collected from people around the world. The idea came from time spent in New York's subway system, says

Kristýna Milde: "Living in New York, we spend a lot of time in the subway. Especially in



quite a few featured trees." "We were fascinated by this psychological connection people have

summer, we noticed many tattoos, and

with trees, marking their bodies with tree symbols as a way to feel connected. "We thought it would be interesting to

build a collective forest from these

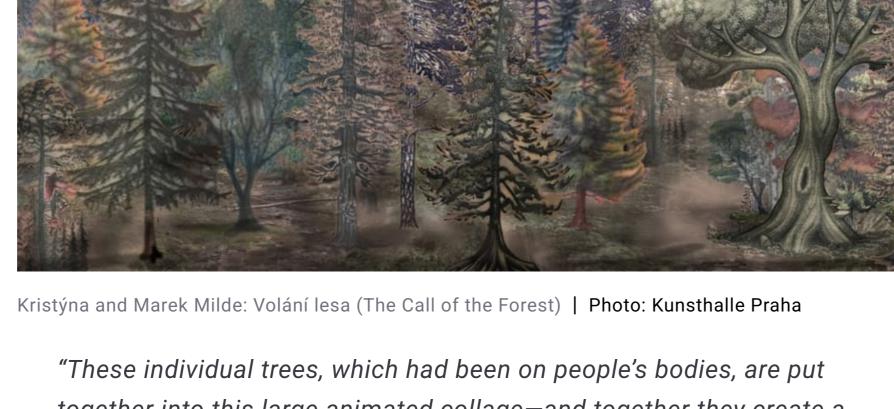
individual tattoos and asked people to send us images and their stories." To their surprise, the idea struck a chord and submissions began arriving from around the world. Working with Prague-based animator

flowing, animated forest. "The tattoos reveal that trees are more than plants—they are emotional landmarks. It was fascinating to explore why people get such tattoos,

<u>Jakub Kouřil</u>, the Mildes transformed these tattoo images into a

especially since we don't have any ourselves," says Marek Milde.

"For many of them, trees symbolize resilience, grounding, or a connection to a place. In the animation, we explore the idea of trees as emotional anchors in both personal and collective memory.

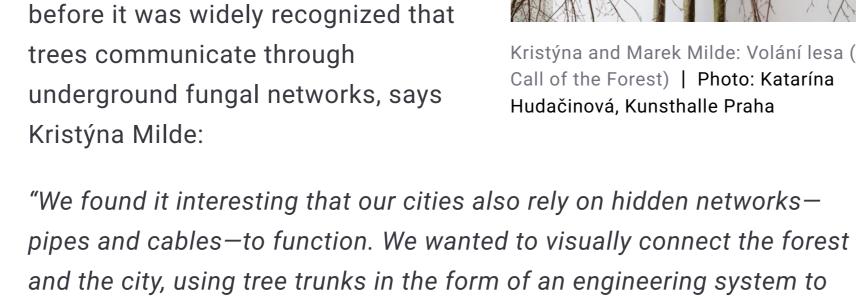


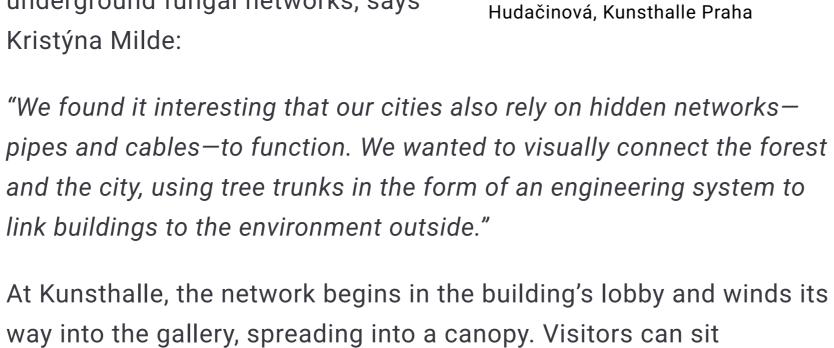
together into this large animated collage—and together they create a forest. "So the forest becomes not only an external landscape, but also an

experience." Another installation, In <u>Tree Net</u>—a play on the word "Internet"—uses tree

internal one—an emotional space visitors are invited to enter and

trunks to mimic the underground pipes and cables that run beneath cities. The concept began back in 2009, well



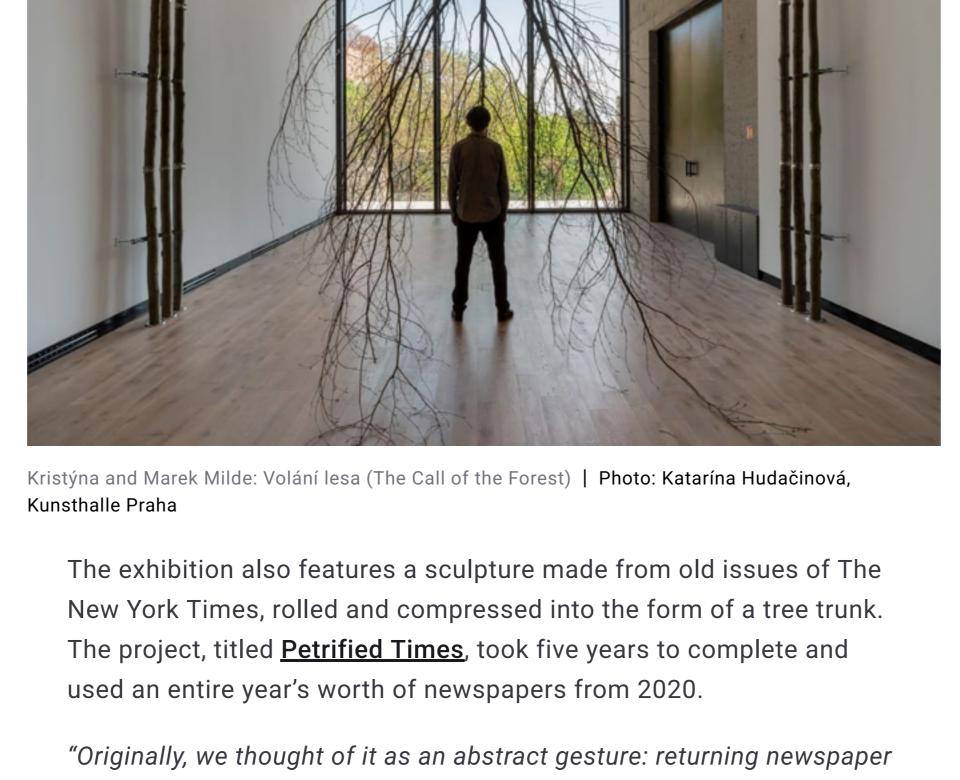


Kristýna and Marek Milde: Volání lesa (The

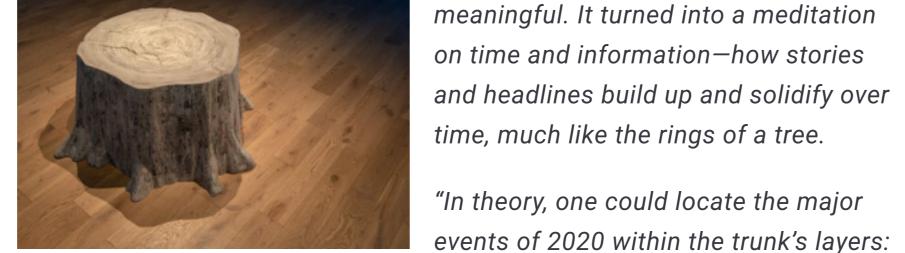
Call of the Forest) | Photo: Katarína

the city.

underneath, just like they would in a forest, but right in the middle of



back into tree mass," says Marek Milde. "But the year 2020 turned out to be historically significant due to the pandemic and global upheaval. "As we worked, the piece became more



the pandemic, the election cycle, and

Call of the Forest) | Photo: Vojtěch

Veškrna, Kunsthalle Praha

Call of the Forest) | Photo: Katarína more." Hudačinová, Kunsthalle Praha In parallel with the sculpture, the artists created a daily poetry series using only New York Times headlines. By the end of the year, they had written 400 short poems. Seven are on display next to the sculpture; the rest appear as a projection onto a curtain made from recycled delivery bags.

from each other. The poems made out of headlines were especially important, because as the year progressed, the headlines became darker. "It became a challenge—almost a sport

"The series, which includes Petrified

Times and Petrified Parallels, evolved

Kristýna and Marek Milde: Volání lesa (The

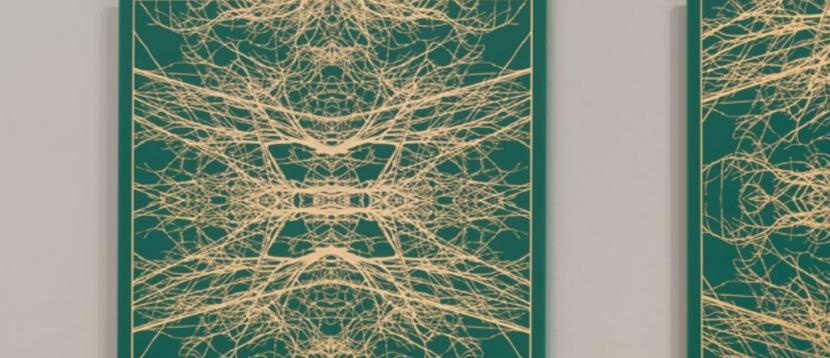
—to find and reshape something positive out of negative news. And now, visitors at Kunsthalle can read some of them." A soundscape composed by Prague-Kristýna and Marek Milde: Volání lesa (The

based Indian musician Abhi

accompanies the exhibition, blending

field recordings from nature with subtle urban noise. The result echoes the exhibition's central message: that the forest is never really far away. "We hope visitors leave with a renewed sense of wonder—and also urgency," Marek Milde concludes. "For us, trees are not just scenic backgrounds. They are central to how we live, breathe, and remember. We want visitors to feel more connected to forests, even in the middle

of the city, and perhaps more inspired to care for them."



Kristýna and Marek Milde: Volání lesa (The Call of the Forest) | Photo: Katarína Hudačinová,

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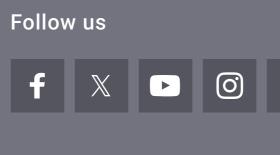
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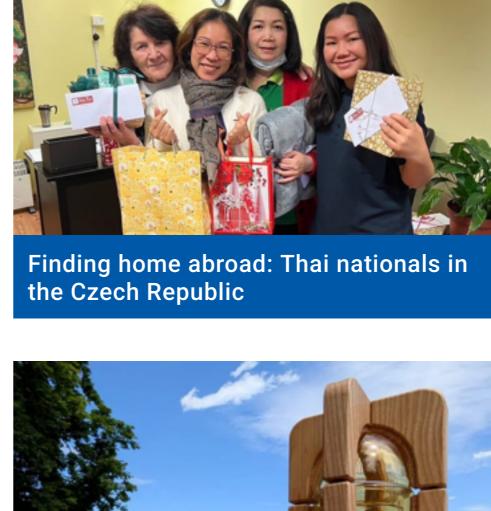
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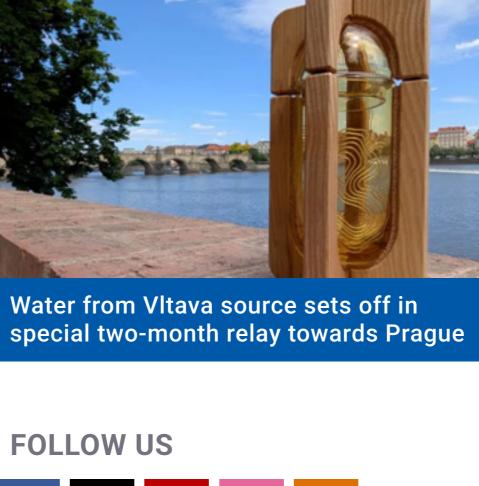
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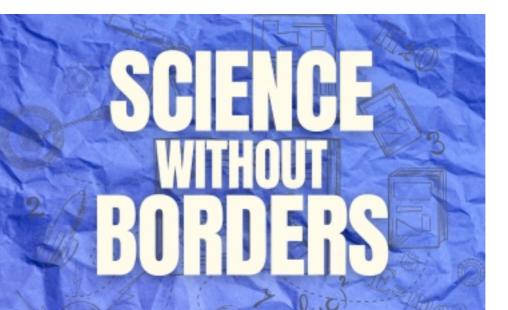
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