

# UNA

## Interview with Sofie Tobiášová and Adam Vít by Diana Khassanova

**You moved from Prague to Collesino, a village in the mountains in Lunigiana, what attracted you there?**

**S:** Lunigiana was actually our second choice after Sicily, but ever since our first visit during an Erasmus exchange after school, we kept returning to the same village again and again. I think the region brings together many contradictory elements, which is what makes it so special. It is both mountains and jungle at once. It feels ancient and medieval, yet also a little trashy, as the region is quite poor. And there is this strange purple light at the end of the day that has stayed with me since the beginning. More than anything, though, we were searching for another way of living and questioning whether it was possible to make art outside the very fixed model of an art career we were taught at university.

**A:** It was a long process defined by coincidence. For a long time we knew that we wanted to move away from the city and live our lives primarily somewhere in nature. Unfortunately, in our country any kind of real estate is absolutely unaffordable, and our budget was very limited. Lunigiana is a place I remembered from a road trip with my parents a long time ago. It is a forgotten corner between three regions, with a very specific identity. It is an area that is still, to a certain extent, a bit wild, and the sense of nature here is quite intense. We were lucky that after years of constant moving we found a place here, where, for some reason, we feel at home - some kind of base in which we can exist even with an absolute minimum of resources.

**How does life in a rural town influence your work?**

**S:** It certainly has an impact on us, as the pace of life here is the complete opposite of what it would be in the city. Things that you can easily ignore in the city often become the main stressors here, and vice versa. We were looking for a place where we would have time to really engage with art, but when we moved in, it felt almost unnecessary to make art here, as if it were something extra—this place doesn't need art. In a way, this prompted new ways of thinking about why and how to make art.

**A:** For us, the question is less about retreat and more about how to reactivate such an environment. This begins with refusing to romanticize it, or to separate it from the so-called spaces of production and capital. It is mainly about how this affects life as such, and about the fact that one can exist under much more sustainable conditions in such a limiting environment. In terms of the work itself, I am interested in working with this “fake” heritage. To a certain degree, this is a place that is not ours and never will be, and it is necessarily saturated with the memories of others, which nevertheless go on to shape our present. This area was also historically very poor, and people here are used to taking care of themselves. For me, the phenomenon of DIY is strongly connected to our Slavic roots, and I enjoy that here it becomes more existential, more embodied.

**This joint exhibition in Milan marks a further step in a series of shows you have presented together across Europe in recent years (Prague, Paris...). How do your artistic practices interact?**

**S:** *I think working together came up really naturally already during university. It is like a conversation between us. There is still something to say. The first exhibition of this kind we actually did was in the Centre for Contemporary Art Futura, in Prague, it was called "Bill Cost". During this time we were both working for Futura doing installation works. There happened to be a one-day gap between shows, so we decided to take a chance. After our shifts, we made pieces from materials we used for installations and did a photoshoot on an iPhone 4. We even shared the work on blogs, and it got published. When our boss found out, we were asked to take it down.*

**A:** *Exhibiting together was never a programmatic decision for us; it always emerged from specific circumstances. I still find the format of a duo show somewhat opaque and never fully know how to approach it. But because dialogue between us has functioned as a kind of ongoing medium for many years, that perhaps makes things easier. At the same time, we've come to realize that working this way can place unnecessary pressure on our relationship, and it's probably not something we want to continue developing. I'm not even sure our works truly interact - they seem to coexist, more than anything, on a daily level.*

**Is there a connection between your preferred mediums and the subject of your work?**

**S:** *To me painting carries inside all the paintings and possible images that exist and while painting, you are confronting it and at the same time you are trying to forget everything and find something new. I suspect I gravitate toward painting more than others because I harbor more ideas suited to this medium.*

**A:** *I think the medium usually emerges from the subject of the work anyway. Material is always loaded with content and signs - some of them are general and accessible to everyone, others are purely personal - and more than their interaction, I am perhaps interested in their flattening, or in searching for some kind of base level.*