

The latest project of the British artist Roger Hiorns, who exhibited at Galerie Rudolfinum in 2015, “buries” a jet fighter MiG-21. In his project, Hiorns references the land art tradition as well as the recent phenomenon of updating traditional rituals in today’s globalized society. From the innate human dream to take flight, powerful machines were born – apparatuses for demonstrating and cementing power, underlining the triumph of enlightenment, technology and progress. The machines are confronted with the man’s last rites. An act of solemn parting. A silent triumph in a dystopian landscape. A terse sculptural happening with an undertone of social criticism. An idea of buried aircraft of different types, in different corners of our planets, and in different contexts.

Roger Hiorns

Studied art at Goldsmiths, University of London. Short-listed for the Turner Prize in 2009. Participated at the Venice Biennale 2013, exhibited at prominent art galleries including Tate Modern in London, MoMA Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City, NY, Armand Hammer Museum of Art at UCLA, Los Angeles, and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Roger Hiorns’ solo exhibitions include IKONGallery, Birmingham (2016), Kunsthau CentrePasquArt, Biel and Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague (2015), Kunsthalle Wien and The Hepworth, Wakefield, United Kingdom (2014), De Hallen, Haarlem, the Netherlands (2012-2013) and MIMA, Middlesbrough, United Kingdom (2012). His work examines mainly the subjects of wasted human potential and energy, authorities manipulating with the individual; to this end, he mainly employs new forms of artistic expression.

The aircraft

Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-21 (NATO reporting name: “Fishbed”) is a supersonic jet fighter/interceptor used since the early 1960s until the present by air forces of more than 50 countries, and is still in active service in several countries. There have been over 10,000 MiG-21 aircraft produced, which makes it the most widely and longest-produced supersonic aircraft. MiG-21 became a legend among fighter aircraft of the Eastern Block during the Cold War. For the first time in the history of serial aircraft production, its designers opted for a wedge-shaped delta wing, which gives the fighter jet an edge in rapid climbs. MiG-21 aircraft was deployed in many armed conflicts, including the Arab-Israeli wars or the Vietnam War. In 1961–2005, the Czechoslovak People’s Army, which later became the Army of the Czech Republic, also had MiG-21 in its hangars. The aircraft was produced under licence also in Aero Vodochody in 1963-1972. MiG-21 MF no. 4313 was produced in 1971 and decommissioned in 1996.

The location

Dolní Břežany has a long history and interesting present. From the nearby Celtic oppida from the

6th century BC, through the Renaissance chateau, to the architecturally unique new cemetery, which is to serve the dynamically growing population of the village. The ELI Beamlines Research Center, run by the Institute of Physics of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, is building the most powerful laser system in the world. With ultra-high power of 10 PW (petawatt) and focused intensities of up to 10^{24} W / cm², it offers its users a unique source of radiation and particle beams. The so-called beamlines will enable pioneering research not only in the field of physics and material science, but also in biomedical and laboratory astrophysics and many other sciences. The Extreme Light Infrastructure (ELI) project is part of a European plan to build a new generation of large research facilities selected by the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI). The MiG-21 aircraft will be buried on the ELI Beamlines land, in a park area accessible to the public.

The project and the environment

Experts from the Koněšín Aircraft Museum will provide preparatory, decontamination and preservation work on the airplane to make sure that the project will not result any substances and materials that could endanger the environment in contact with soil or groundwater.

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