

CODERS and TURN OUR GOLDEN FACES INTO THE SUN

Anastasia Sosunova

Coders
2022
Film, sound, 16' 30"

Turn our golden faces into the sun
2022
Zinc, copper, ink, varnish, temporary
tattoo stickers



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Coders is Anastasia Sosunova's latest video work, forming part of her ongoing research of the coding practice—a placebo-based stress therapy which is an addiction treatment method created by Soviet therapist Aleksandr Dovzhenko in 1984. Although considered a scientifically questionable practice in the contemporary Western world, coding is still present as an underground practice in Post-Soviet countries to this day and demonstrates the demand for alternative healing practices in contemporary Lithuania. In the 16-minute-long film, a personal account of having tried a coding therapy to quit smoking is intertwined with a cathartic soundtrack by Gediminas Žygus, as well as interviews with psychiatrists, toxicologists, anthropologists and in particular, Egle Rindzevičiūtė, author of *Constructing Soviet Cultural Policy: Cybernetics and Governance in Lithuania after World War II* (2008).

The video tells a story of being coded to stop smoking, showing first-person footage gathered by the author. Recounting a journey through the streets, corridors, sessions, calls and meetings, as well as presenting archival footage and conversations with researchers, it aims to understand what it means to be “coded.” What is the relationship between authority and magical thinking? Why are these aspirations to reshape society and the human mind still being employed in programming language? How could we reclaim ownership in the course of healing and transformation?

The blind spots that these questions address, as the artist brings to the fore, permeate technological tools we use and information we consume, forever playing catch up with what is

really going on. Whilst trying to find a trace of a particular branch of narcology, Sosunova simultaneously uses it as a lens to view the issues still relevant in the present: what codes haunt the now?

The installation, which features sculptures of etchings on metal, materializes some of the aspects emerging throughout the film using 90s sci-fi book cover imagery. Sosunova enhances the point of encounter between optimistic faith in advanced technology and the collective subconscious, also expressed through the cyborg figure. Other than contextualizing the success of coding's “secret society” within Lithuania's esoteric resurgence before the collapse of the USSR—a litmus test of the demand for rituals and other healing methods in a secular society, as well as trust and curiosity about new automated technologies that surfaced at the time—it articulates critical considerations around current technological advancement run by supremacist ideals. The figure of the cyborg is thus associated with another fictional creature: the zombie, deprived of its agency and subjugated by what it cannot understand or control.

Anastasia Sosunova is also presenting a lecture-performance based on her research and writings on coding practice, where the manifold of questions related to the method—cybernetic fashion, zombie and cyborg lores, religious patterns, healing, authority and authoritarian politics—will be explored, reenacted and answered together with the participants. To decode the old codes and spells, and perhaps, create other ones for the future.

The text has been adapted from Caterina Avataneo's original text featured in 'They Say We Are Seeking to Understand What's Been Going On' (SixtyEight Art Institute, Copenhagen, Denmark).