

# ŠILAINIAI PROJECT

## Contact

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## Project: Šilainių Bitės (Šilainiai Bees)

20 July – 11 August 2019

## Press Release

Šilainių Bitės is a participatory research project developed by Elizabeth Hudson, who is artist in residence at Šilainiai Project this summer.

Imagining an escaped colony of domesticated bees are looking for a home, members of the Šilainiai community will learn about the needs of bees over the course of a month and consider if/how they can help them. This may culminate in the building of a hive, or it may result in a different action, depending on the group decision of the community. Šilainių Bitės aims to foster agency through thoughtful decision-making and to build active discussion around empathy, needs and rights, as well as the importance of bees.

Bees have a great significance in Lithuanian culture, both past and present. Sixteenth century Lithuanian law gave peasants common rights to harvest “bee trees”. This was a vital supplement to diet and income, but – when taken from wild hives, instead of those managed by beekeepers – it came at the cost of destroyed bee colonies. Today, Lithuanians not involved in apiculture themselves still know about it, from word-of-mouth tips on how to distinguish imported, fake and native honeys to memories of grandparents or neighbours with hives.

Residents in Šilainiai will share their knowledge and learn alongside the artist, through a series of open, non-hierarchical events, including group walks, live builds and a field trip. The knowledge produced in this process will feed into Elizabeth’s wider research on the commons, and will provide an insight into what present-day common rights to and for bees could look like.

In keeping with the ethos of horizontal production and distribution of knowledge, findings from the project will be shared publicly by participants via the honeybee page of Wikipedia.

## Events

### **Roundtable discussion: Rights to Bees? Rights for Bees?**

*Tuesday 30 July, 18:00–19:30*

*Kaunas Vincas Kudirka public library, Šilainiai department*

In this public event, everyone is encouraged to speak. To start the conversation off, two invited speakers will give short presentations on their own work, followed by any thoughts they have on what rights (if any) bees should have and how these might complement or disrupt existing rights to property, the commons etc. Translation between English and Lithuanian will be provided.

Key contributors:

Local beekeeper from Šilainiai

Cross-disciplinary urban bee project Melliferopolis (Ulla Taipale and Christina Stadlbauer) via videolink

Facilitator: Elizabeth Hudson

### **Monday walks**

*22, 29 July and 5 August, 18:30–20:00*

*Meeting at Šilainiai Urban Garden, Susitinkame prie Baltijos g. 43 namo*

A bee-themed take-over of Šilainiai Project's regular local walk programme. Each Monday evening, residents and invited guests/experts will explore Šilainiai, discussing all things bee in the area and watching the behaviour of the district's existing insect inhabitants. Translation between English and Lithuanian will be provided.

### **Field trip**

*Saturday 27 July, 09:00 - 17:00*

This group visit for Šilainiai residents to the Lithuanian Museum of Ancient Beekeeping will give a chance to see a variety of hives in action and learn more about the entangled history of humans and bees.

### **The Make!**

*5–10 August*

Following a Monday Walk prototyping session, when participants will produce models of their own experimental bee homes using materials foraged from the area, residents will discuss the benefits and limitations of the designs and decide on a final course of action. The remainder of the week is open for them to plan and realise a final outcome (if they choose), such as a hive for the community garden, a bee-friendly planting scheme or something as yet unimagined.

## Notes

### **Elizabeth Hudson**

Artist in residence at Šilainiai Project for 2019, Elizabeth Hudson (b. 1990, High Wycombe, UK) is an artist and writer researching commons, public space and the political ambiguities of tradition. She uses participative play and discussion to create poetic actions that enact and critically reflect upon the politics of the everyday.

Elizabeth is a graduate of Glasgow School of Art (2013). She has recently been invited to produce work for: 'The Commons' at International Meeting of Reflection on Community Artistic Practices (EIRPAC/MEXE), Porto (PT), 2019; 'Something Beautiful' at La Vallée, Brussels (BE), 2019 and 'Tilting at Windmills' as part of Glasgow International (UK) 2018. As co-founder of social art curatorial collective VERB, she delivered projects at Art Licks Weekend in London (UK), 2015; Glasgow International (UK), 2016 and New York project space Likky Ruph (US), 2016, and was shortlisted for the Workweek Prize.

[elizabethvhudson.com](http://elizabethvhudson.com)

### Šilainiai Project

A creative platform in the housing estate of Šilainiai, Kaunas (Lithuania), which focuses on active engagement with the site and local community through a variety of creative processes, including collaborative archives, workshops, artist residencies, talks and events. The project was set up by local artist Evelina Šimkutė in 2015 and is run by local creatives.

[silainiaiproject.com](http://silainiaiproject.com)

### Evelina Šimkutė

Šilainiai Project coordinator Evelina Šimkutė (b. 1985, Šilainiai, LT) is an artist and curator working with socially engaged art and creative placemaking practices. In 2012 Evelina graduated from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design (University of the Arts London), before subsequently returning to live and work in Lithuania. Her work is grounded in aspects of site, land, and notions of home. She collaborates with professionals from various fields as well as local community members to create a wide range of outcomes, from walks and happenings in the neighborhood to installations, residencies and events with hybrid forms.

Exhibitions as an artist include solo show 'Objects' at Kabinetas Project Space, Kaunas (LT), 2016; 'In the City' at Hanover Project, Preston (UK), 2014 and 'Play Japanese' participatory installation at Grayson Perry Late, The British Museum, London (UK).

[evelinasimkute.com](http://evelinasimkute.com)

### Funders

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[lkt.lt](http://lkt.lt)

[culturalfoundation.eu](http://culturalfoundation.eu)

