

DANUBE ARCHIVE / DONAU ARCHIV

1. WATER LINE

2. RIVERBANK PLACES

For many centuries the Danube has represented a unifying element, but also one that divided/separated important regions of Europe. Functioning in the same time as transitional space and as political border, defined both by tourism and by traffic, linking the Former West to the Former East, the river Danube flows from elegant Vienna and Budapest to the long shorelines of post-communism and post-Yugoslavian war, marked with black market trade relics (such as the hundreds of gasoline stations opened on the Romanian bank of the river during the 90ties), with today's developing industrial structures, and full with contemporary legends and mythology.

The photographs from *Danube Archive*, took over a number of years by the Romanian artist Iosif Kiraly and by members of the group Ro_Archive, show the transition and transformations in scenery, both from a geographical and time-based perspective. Rural or semi-deserted areas of the Romanian riverbank are included in the archive, together with the ample work-in-progress observation of cities such as Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Orsova, Drobeta Turnu Severin, Ruse, Oltenita, Cernavoda, Medgidia, Braila, Galati and the Danube-Black Sea Channel. Our perspective favours comparisons - the oppositions, contrasts and sometimes strangely resembling elements that are to be found in diverse locations on the Danube better our understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the river. As such, during the Krems residency we aim to include important elements of visual documentation, landscape and social research in our large scale archive and gather material for a future book and exhibition with this multi-layered perspective. Our project here has an interdisciplinary angle – Iosif Kiraly (visual arts, photography, architecture), Ioana Tudora (landscape architecture, urban sociology and anthropology), Simona Dumitriu (film and photography, art theory, archive practices). One of the most important aims of all the collaborations done in the frame of Ro_Archive is the development of methodologies, through practice and dialogue, with art as the “missing link” between disciplines. This is an important constant preoccupation that is also reflected in the collaborative aspects of research and production between Kiraly – Dumitriu – Tudora.

The group Ro_Archive (members: Iosif Kiraly, Raluca Nestor, Raluca Ionescu, Bogdan Bordeianu, Simona Dumitriu, Michele Bressan, Bogdan Girbovan, Larisa Sitar, Cosmin Moldovan, Andrei Mateescu) developed a keen interest in research on and about the Danube within their large scale ongoing project of visual research. Based on the model of the post-modern archive, Ro_Archive creates and organizes a digital and virtual database (www.roarchive.ro) of images and texts with relevance for contemporary Romania, observing and archiving its urban and rural transformations. In the same time artistic project and means of preserving the present, Ro_Archive aims to become a mechanism of cultural mnemotechnics, with an already developing interdisciplinary and educational approach, that includes sociology, anthropology, architecture, visual studies.

Danube Archive was started at Iosif Kiraly's initiative, from the necessity to extend the observation beyond borders, in order to accurately document and understand the diversity of social, political and economical factors that have influenced the Danube riverbank landscape and the Romanian cities which were affected by trade transformation, geopolitical strategies etc. In order to observe the patterns and better nuance the differences, the entire course of the river has to be documented, building an archive of water line images and riverbank places, from the large scale urban and industrial scenery to the empty, transitional areas. Such an archive would be an embodiment of zonal politics and legislation, an atlas of human and landscape characteristics, and a multi-layered database of and for urban studies.