

## **SIMONA DUMITRIU (Bukarest, Rumänien), AIR-Aufenthalt: Dezember 2012**

My residency in AIR Krems took place in December 2012 in the frame of Danube\_Archive, a collaborative project between Iosif Király, Ioana Tudora and myself.

### **Short overview of the proposed collaboration:**

For many centuries the Danube has represented a unifying element, but also one that divided/separated important regions of Europe. Functioning at 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. 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.

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 - especially by Simona Dumitriu and Bogdan Andrei Bordeianu ([www.roarchive.ro](http://www.roarchive.ro)), 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 (writing, film and photography, 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.

### **My concrete contribution during the residency:**

The Danube Archive book is a work in progress. It is being built from at least three very diverse angles – from landscape and visual research to reflections on time and memory in texts and photography, from deadpan visual documentation to poetic interpretation. My primary role for the book is to write a part of the texts and my secondary role is to produce a part of the photographic and video material. During my stay in Krems I had the perfect environment: I was a stranger in a remote quiet town with a traumatic mid-20th century history and I immersed myself in the site-specific aspects of this recent history and of its forming mythology.

I spent my days documenting the surroundings, researching for information and ideas for the narrative of the book, finding it in several separate histories related to Krems, adding to that other narratives that I was already working on and outlining the text for the book. This text, which has the working title A Danube (epic) poem, will also serve as a performance script/ video-project script (written in Romanian, will be translated into English for the bilingual book). It is a freeform text where elisions are created between different Danube stories, some factual some fictional, different interpretations, geographical and temporal displacements. Among the Krems stories: Stalag 17B and the Billie Wilder Stalag 17 film, the Krems Rabbits, Mr. David the Romanian and other immigrants etc. Conceptual keywords for the text/script: collective conscience, social regret, the filling of picturesque with trauma, the performative body as embodiment of collective consciousness, the mythology of trauma as ethnographic foray into the collective conscience, the retrospective gaze and the projective gaze, anachronistic reading and mnemotechnic processes.

With the help of my Platforma project team (Stefan Bandalac, Sabin Garea, Iulia Mocanu) who travelled to Krems in the second half of December, we developed a video project based on the aforementioned outline of the script. We filmed a few small parts of it in Krems and we will finalize the filming in spring in the Cazane and Dobrogea areas of the Danube.

During my stay at AIR Krems I have also written a second video performance script, based on Billy Wilder's script for the 1953 Stalag 17 movie and we found and filmed at the supposed Stalag 17B location near Krems. This video performance is now in the editing stage (production collaboration with Stefan Bandalac, Sabin Garea).

At the end of the residency (it is still ongoing, as Ioana Tudora is currently in Krems) we will put together all the material and draw the outline of the book. We intend also to formulate an exhibition proposal that would include a large selection of the Danube\_Archive photographic material, together with video performances projects such as the ones produced in Krems (and including them), anthropological interviews, historical documentation. The Danube itself is a vast subject and one that is much too often politicized, over-researched, debated to the edge of banality and beyond. We see it in a (hopefully) simple and clear perspective: the perspective of archival theory and memory-related practice, with the river acting also as a wishing fountain of sorts.

My stay in Krems was essential for the development and the production of the aforementioned projects and the AIR Krems and ORTE team was a great collaborator. Both Heidrun and Sabine took time as often as I needed it to discuss my ideas, help me refine them and to point me in the right direction with correct and useful information."