

My residency at AIR Krems: a critical reflection

Sue Morris

My residency at Air Krems was for one month, November 2012, and as I approach its end, I wish it had been for longer. I found it to be an exciting, fulfilling experience with two very positive outcomes. Firstly, it gave me the time and space to develop existing ideas in my practice and engage with new ones, time that is otherwise very precious in my normal life at home in Ireland. And, secondly, it resulted indirectly in my solo exhibition, *Hortus Conclusus*, at the Kunstverein Galerie in Baden bei Wien (25 November 2012 – 28 February 2013).

Developing ideas and practice

The programme provided time, space and all-important funding to reflect on my art practice and to develop and consolidate an artistic project in progress. Freed from the constraints of my usual responsibilities - domestic, work and financial - my thought processes and working methods realized new possibilities. The experience was enhanced by the bright, spacious and excellently equipped studio-apartment and, most especially, the friendly and efficient administrative staff.

Working, thinking, reading and observing, I became increasingly aware that the boundaries between my domestic space, the studio space and my artwork were beginning to dissolve. As I became accustomed to the space, it began to reveal the domestic traces of previous occupants - an assortment of personal ephemera shed light on cultural/individual/artistic values and differences. I took the opportunity to make use of some of these disparate objects and elements and conjoin them in a series of what I call 'Domestic Interventions'. An old chess board, missing its pieces, was reinvented into a game of levitation - *Time, Motion Suspended*; a floral candle holder became one with an iron - *Homage to my Mother*; and a clothes drying rack took its place in the hall, with a set of pegs and a small rubber ball arranged to suggest table football - *Mother and Child*. Alongside this, I began work on a large-scale installation in the spare bedroom, a series of tall, white, woollen columns falling sensuously to the floor and suggesting a strange, dreamlike, semi-transparent forestscape.

Solo Exhibition

I had in mind for this work, my forthcoming exhibition, *Hortus Conclusus* at the Kunstverein Galerie in Baden bei Wien, which will run until the end of February, 2013. As with every exhibition, the artist must negotiate the particularities (and sometimes the peculiarities!) of the space and relate to different staff with different sets of priorities and limitations. Luckily for me in this case, Kunstverein Galerie provided me with an intriguing space and the valuable support of the open, friendly staff, most especially the director, Cornelia König, who was very giving of her time during the three days I spent in Baden installing the show.

The gallery space proved ideal for what I wanted to achieve. For example, the small room at the end of the main gallery space was perfect for the woollen forestscape. It offered an affective sense of scale and forced the viewer to negotiate his/her way through and around the columns. The exhibition opened on Saturday, 25 November, with introductions by Cornelia König and Gemeinderat Hans Hornyik, and a talk by Alexandra Hennig, Curator, AIR – Artist in Residence. Their kind words and their endorsement of my work were very much appreciated and helped settle my opening-night nerves.

Closing remarks

My residency at AIR Krems has been significant in the development and direction of my art practice. Previously preoccupied with dynamics *within* the domestic space, the domestic space is increasingly *becoming* my work. The experience was made all the more memorable for the contact I had with the other resident artists and the warm and generous support I was given by the administrative and curatorial staff at Krems. The network of art institutions, Lower Austria Contemporary, provided me with the opportunity to mount a solo exhibition in Austria. Altogether, the residency has been a very positive, productive and inspirational experience to take back with me to Ireland. I will never forget it.

Projects Realized

`Domestic Intervention`: a mixed media installation

Kunsthalle, Krems, Factory, Atelier 20

`Hortus Conclusus`: a multi media installation

Kunstverein Galerie, Baden bei Wien