

Report: AIR Krems

How was the residency?

The residency at AIR Krems (July 2013) was an incredibly rich and fulfilling experience upon both professional and personal levels.

The one month AIR programme unquestionably enabled me to build upon my current working practices, theoretical ideas and pedagogical methodologies through participating in such an interesting and somewhat challenging environment.

Consequently, through a holistic process of focused research, experiential discoveries and personal reflections in a very specific, and different, cultural context I was able to continue my development as both an artist as well as an arts educator.

Evidently, I owe this amazing experience mainly to the excellent support of Sabine Gueldenfusz who was always present to help me in my endeavors and respond to any requests I made.

Essentially, the residency was an excellent opportunity for me both as an artist as well as an educator.

Specific benefits:

- Challenging and enriching my artistic process
- Great facilities
- Meeting artists working in different media
- Facilitating my personal research
- Being able to accommodate other artists in order to work collaboratively

AIR challenges:

The AIR programme I participated in was undoubtedly a huge success. However, more time would have enabled me to develop more specific ideas that were ignited by the Krems location and socio-political context.

Thus:

-Short time (1 month)

What did you realize during your residency period?

During the 1 month programme a number of overlapping ideas, creative approaches, professional and personal reflections were developed. These are highlighted below.

Personal research:

- Identifying different models and theories of utopia
- The multiple influences Vienna had on Samuel Von Brukenthal, such as: politics, ethics, morals and aesthetics. My main interest was on understanding how he gathered and then curated his collection for the Museum in Sibiu, Romania, which is an example of early enlightenment methodologies and embeds complex curatorial programmes. The basis of his programme and intellectual approach was “enlightenment through culture”
- Looking into diverse museum and curatorial projects such as the Natural Study Museum and National Gallery, including penitentiary systems and labor within penitentiary systems
- Understanding comics and different graphic approaches through visiting the director of the Caricature Museum in Krems
- Developing a more informed understanding of the cultural-political-historical context of Lower Austria, through witnessing the juxtaposition of consistent cultural programmes (such as exhibition spaces), tourism-picturesque processes, local traditions of cultivating apricots and the harsh history of fascism and “the big massacre”

-Planning, negotiating and delivering a workshop programme with a group of Romanian performance/visual artists through observational techniques and exposure to relevant texts such as M. Foucault's Discipline and Punishment

Workshop programme

The (1 week) workshop programme consisted of:

- Observational exercises and performative techniques
- Reading and discussing cultural theory texts relevant to the project proposed by the group
- Differentiated pedagogical methodologies including both group and one to one advising/mentoring strategies throughout different of the project
- Critique of the final performance initiated by the group (highlighted in the statement below)

Workshop group's project statement:

The two piles of matches are the result of 9-hour performance in which we measured the perimeter of the prison by using 22,500 matches. Our aim was to appropriate its walls and its surroundings with a worldwide, small-scale unit of measurement. Through repetition and endurance we were confronted with the two realities separated by the prison walls. The matches were also used as a way to ponder on the relationship between the two realities – between the noticeable walls and what they conceal. Therefore our performance is an attempt to both map a space we did not have access to and to understand the environment around it. It also parallels the repetitive dull work inmates are usually required to do.

What did you miss at the residency?

More time would have enabled me to meet more local people and therefore stimulate a more detailed understanding of the local community(s) and socio-cultural context.

What do you appreciate at AIR-Artist in residence?

As previously stated the AIR residency programme created an excellent opportunity to grow and develop both personally and professionally.

Specific appreciations clearly were:

- Highly supportive staff, especially Sabine and Alexandra
- Openness and willingness to provide information
- Professional facilities