

KIERAN BOLAND – REPORT 30.10.13

It is the last night of the residency and I can say I have enjoyed my time at Krems very much. The people associated with it have shown a generosity and interest in the well being of the residents as well as the development, promotion and exhibition of their project work. This is just one of the advantages with AIR-Krems that will continue to attract artists from other parts of the world. The studio and its position on the Donau are without comparison to any other residency I have been on previously. I am asked to also note any the disadvantages. Possibly, one's normal access to an extended social life in a big city is curtailed but this can also be looked at as advantage; one is more inclined to reflection and to focus on the work. The bicycles were much appreciated. I would look on the map in the studio regularly and made sure by the end I visited as many of the little towns and the surrounding woods in every direction as I could. The image of the sun falling behind mountains from the top of Durnstein castle at the end of the day is particularly memorable. I would find myself riding home in the dark frequently, as I did from the ruins of Senftenberg through the rain earlier tonight. I also went in to Vienna many many times and re-visited most of the museums and as many of the contemporary shows that I could.

The project for the residency, *Jestertag* draws on many elements of my previous film/video practice but involved other processes I had not delved into before; most notably 'performing' with strangers in the street. When I first arrived, I began writing a narrative based on the remembrance of long distant memories of a previous trip I made to Vienna and sharing them with strangers in public places captured by a camera set at a considerable distance from the scene. My last trip to Vienna was eighteen years ago; equivalent to a generation. In the videos I appear in an uncomfortably close proximity to a variety of people who not only remain oblivious to any perceived transgression but my presence altogether. The reason for this anomaly is that my memories were prerecorded and silently lip-synced to an audio device hidden in my pocket. I never meet any of the figures that appear in the video. Through post-production, my improvisations with the anonymous individuals who had already exited a scene are merged into a single time frame.

The title *Jestertag* is an amalgam of English and German. In my mind it evokes the English word *yesterday*, perhaps spoken by someone with a German accent. In the past, we know that a Jester walked a fine line in an attempt to entertain at court. *Tag* is both the word for *day* in German and a social media term for the retrospective identification of individuals. The ideas behind the project included exploring the limits of what constitute free speech—in relation to social polarization surrounding surveillance and voyeurism. By implicating my own image, questions concerning the legitimacy of an outsider's observations of a society are stimulated. Through a multiplicity of references to collective memory, we are also encouraged to reconsider our perception of what is mundane, overlooked, and even forgotten.

The recollection of my own memories as an outsider was a ploy used to embody particular ideas in regard to our relationship with past. Why might the image of a stranger smiling at you from across a train station platform be embedded in your memory? How easy or difficult is it to remember experiences from the distant past without the aid of visual clues like photography or through dialogue via shared memories with others? How much time do we devote to thinking of the past and what role does it play (if any) in our present actions? Are we

repeating the past? What might we like to express but can't? What are we really saying? How much do we say is of no importance? What do the words even mean?

I contemplated a few ways to approach the project. One being a fast paced loop depicting my attempt at total recall of everything that occurred in my previous trip so long ago, beginning by stepping off the overnight train from Venice at the Westbahnhof on an early morning in winter when it was still dark and seeing snow for the first time in my life, followed by filming every location that contained a memory before finally boarding an overnight train for Cologne. While this would have been entertaining, it seemed both an unrealistically mammoth task and far too linear to reflect the process of memory. I chose four interlinked memories each of which is preceded by a vignette with another stranger at a tram stop.

The actual process was hidden in plain sight and involved the use of a DSLR camera with a long focal length lens set-up initially using a documentary or fieldwork approach. I used a lens with long focal length so the people within the areas I chose to focus on were sufficiently removed from my activity, showing little to no concern that a camera was pointed in their general direction. As I was placing images of myself next to those of strangers who could not speak back it was important that an empathetic approach was maintained within this shared space. Attaching the camera to a glide rail allowed an extension of the picture frame to create my own composites of multiple time frames in the computer later. Unfortunately I lost this glide-rail towards the end of my time here. On the plus side, its missing weight might save me some baggage excess charges on my return flight to Australia. There were a number of inquisitive passersby from all walks of life who stopped to chat. I would hear a certain tone in "entschuldigung" from a curious individual over my shoulder and know immediately that what followed would be a chat with someone who had some experience with photography. The conversation generally moved on to their impressions of life in Australia and how far away it was. Indeed it is. In addition to the video project of which the images attached are derived, I have made a number of related stand alone photographs as well as work towards some drawings that will be shown in Australia. The video will premiere at DOC Niederösterreich in late November this year.

I would like to express my sincerest thanks and deep gratitude to all the wonderful people associated with AIR Krems. Sabine Gueldenfusz, who is an excellent manager and works very hard - doing the job of at least two people. Alexandra Hennig's interest and enthusiasm for my project from the start has been incredible. In addition to my inclusion in DOC Niederösterreich she has also arranged two exceptional assistants without whom it would have been extremely difficult if not impossible to make the project. The first being Stefanie Proksch-Weilguni, who in addition to refreshing my memories of places throughout Vienna on location scouts with great insight, introduced me to her own circle of friends associated with contemporary art and music. The second was Kathrin Swift in the production phase who was both very reliable and keenly interested in how the project would work which helped immensely. Thanks also to Tanja Muenichsdorfer for our conversations and the introduction to Austrian cakes, the other artists resident during my time, Traude Munk for cleaning up after my mess and last but not least Andy Tetzlaff and the RMIT School of Art.