

Leslie Hirst

02 APR 2015: I arrive at Krems and am greeted by rainbow over the Donau. It is instant Love. (image 1)

On my first day in Krems, I felt refreshed and clear-headed, in spite of the time period being one of the busiest of my life. With two solo exhibitions approaching in the next month and other projects underway, I would not have been productive without the excellent studio accommodations at AIR Krems and the amazing support by Sabine Gueldenfusz.

I developed a regular routine in Krems rather quickly, which included either a run along the Donau or in the vineyards, or a swim in the Badearena, and work in the studio. (image 2) The nicest part about being in Krems is that taking a break - such as art openings, concerts, readings, abundant nature, or coffee breaks with the other residents - is right at the doorstep. The fluidity that occurs between work, active wellness, and cultural stimulation is excellent.

For eleven weeks in Krems, I continued my love affair with the sky. My daily documentations included three full moons, several firework displays, and the duration of increasingly longer stretches of daylight from morning until night with the approach of the solstice. The sun became my collaborator as I began a new project - making heliographs from objects acquired in Austria. Although I was not able to complete the project during my stay, I spent time experimenting with materials and processes with a technique that is new for me, and I hope to exhibit this work in the near future. (image 3)

05 MAY: Cornelia König arrived to take me to Baden to install my exhibition at Kunstverein Baden. (image 4) Cornelia's organizational skills and good cheer made my two marathon days of installation go smoothly, and she provided a beautiful introduction to Baden as well as the area's *Heurigers*. *Along with Verena Gamper's generous input and abundant knowledge as the exhibition curator, the Skywriting exhibition was an exciting project for me. (Image 5)* (See Verena Gamper's press release attached.)

*Then, back to work to prepare for my next opening: Message Threads, which opened on 30 May at Museo del Merletto in Burano, Italy (part of the 2015 MUVE Contemporaneo Programme in conjunction with La Biennale di Venezia, 56th International Art Exhibition). In total, I completed five new works for this exhibition during my residency at AIR Krems, as well as the catalogue production. (Images 6, 7, 8)* (See Press Release for La Nuova attached.)

With my exhibition openings out of the way, I managed to fill my last week in Krems with a hike to Kuenringer Castle (image 10) and a couple of visits to Vienna.

*Even with a heavy workload, the time spent with the other residents and participating in the community at Krems was wonderful. Meeting the artists and writers and sharing their experiences have provided insight, good humor and a broader outlook on their disciplines. My warm wishes go to Anki Källström, Steve Bates, Michal Skoda, Jens Steiner, Alina Șerban, Martynas Bialobžeskis, Marco Pezzotta and Bettina Spoerri. Thank you, also, to Verena Gamper for frequent chats over coffee, and to David Komary at Galerie Stadtpark for several mind-expanding exchanges. The capable staff at Kunstmeile Krems cheerfully and helpfully provided assistance and answers - even to the most unusual requests. My appreciation also goes out to the good people of Austria who have tolerated my sign language and Google*

Translations. Especially, my gratitude and respect go to Carl Djerassi, whose Foundation made it possible for my stay at AIR Krems, and who passed away in January of this year at the age of 91. I had the honor of conversing with Mr. Djerassi on two occasions - he was a brilliant and enlightened individual. And, of course, Sabine, who was like a Fairy Godmother to me. You are the greatest. I have loved it here, and will have a hard time prying myself away.

12 JUNE: It is my last day in Krems, I awoke to find two balloons taking off over the Donau where the rainbow had been to welcome me eleven weeks earlier. Is this a good sign, or what?! (image 11)









