

Report Marlena Novak – Residency: mid-July to mid-August 2018
Exchange artist: School of the Art Institute Chicago

Following questions should be answered in the report:

How was the residency?

My four week period as an AIR resident was productive and very pleasant; the time surged ahead rapidly. As a result of the thoughtful and thorough set-up provided in the studio, and the generous support of the AIR staff, I was able to devote a strong focus to my work.

What did you realize during your residency period?

During my residency period I worked on several different projects – in the daytime I explored the hills and landscape of Krems, Stein, Mautern, Förlhof, Angern, Tulln and filmed the local vegetation including some of the agricultural and river areas for an in-progress speculative fiction project driven by Anthropocene issues titled ‘Timeslips’. In the evening I worked in the studio on a second localStyle (the collaborative platform that I co-founded in 2000 with sound artist/composer Jay Alan Yim) project titled Choral. I used this time period to develop 3D models, execute many 3D software lighting and material tests and achieved significant progress with some of the conceptual and technical aspects of the project. Additionally Andreas Hoffer was able to connect me to the Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna, and this helped me set up a meeting with one of the scientific researchers at NHM. This access to the non-public part of the NHM’s archives and resources was an important part of the background research for the (new, in-progress) 13th section of an ongoing video-installation project (‘Naming Things’) that I’ve already been able to present in Croatia, Wales, Denmark, the US, and Germany.

What do you appreciate at AIR—ARTIST IN RESIDENCE?

From the very beginning, the staff was clearly devoted to helping the resident artists find solutions to their work-related needs. In my case, I needed an additional piece of equipment in the studio and this was provided with minimal delay through the kind and professional efforts of Nadja Klement; she had arranged this within a day after I had made my request. She was always available to assist if any questions arose. I appreciated having several opportunities to meet with curator Andreas Hoffer, who also shared his knowledge of regional information and helped with a range of suggestions and connections.

Although my 4 week period didn’t overlap much with Sabine Güldenfuß, at the point that it did, it was clear that she cares deeply about and works solidly towards the artists progress and their comfort in addition to the many details of the AIR program; all of the wonderful things I had heard about her were easy to understand, even from my brief encounter with Sabine.

I really appreciated the level of privacy at AIR: the live/work space created a haven from unnecessary disruptions and fostered unmediated access to my creative and intellectual work.

Having a cleanly designed and spacious studio (well-equipped with desks and lighting), a well-supplied and efficient kitchen with a generous range of cookware, and a personal washing machine, provided a degree of convenience that minimized daily distractions and allowed me to devote more time to my artistic work.

It was a pleasure to meet other resident artists and get to know their work; the environment at AIR is such that there isn't any pressure to socialize, but engagement is facilitated by several of their nice arrangements: the get-together events, the group visits, trips and the guided tours to different cultural sites.

The range of nearby venues to visit such as Dominikanerkirche, Minoritenkirche, Kunsthalle Krems, Glatt & Verkehrte festival also provided a welcome experience to share with others.

Throughout the residency it was valuable to have a chance to encounter the regional culture at many levels. Although I had visited Austria 5-6 times before, I hadn't had a chance until this period in Krems to approach some of the historical and contemporary perspectives that are relevant to my social/artistic practice.

On the penultimate day of my stay in Krems, I had a lovely and stimulating conversation with David Komary at the Galerie Stadtpark, where we talked about a wide range of topics, from connections between the rhythm of painting and contemporary music, and some particular relationships between materiality, process, and the insight that artists need to gain from looking deeply at their own work, both in time, and over time.

What did you miss at the residency?

I was thoroughly engaged with the work I was doing, the interactions with other residents, and exploring the region; I didn't miss anything in that regard. It was a fulfilling experience.

For constructive discussion, I would say that as we all experienced an unusually sustained and intensive heat wave—which is more likely to be repeated in future years due to climate change—investigating sustainable ways to mitigate the heat might be useful in the future. Perhaps replacing some of the ceiling lighting fixtures with combination ceiling fans/lights would be an energy-efficient way to boost the circulation, and make the portable fans do a better job. But in this sense we are all responding to the effects of our current method of existence...

Thank you for a wonderful residency!!
Marlena Novak