

Judith Hamann -- AIR Report

How was the residency? Advantages and disadvantages of AIR – ARTIST IN RESIDENCE NIEDERÖSTERREICH

At the very beginning of my residency, Sabine described the AIR Niederösterreich to us as “the gift of time.” Indeed, my period as artist in residence has been one composed of many gifts: of time, work space, facilities to realise different forms of work, and a sense of quiet temporal expansion in which to do it. Geographically, Krems an der Donau itself as a small town allows for focus, lack of distraction, and quiet work, while also offering natural beauty, and many active cultural institutions within close reach. During my residency, I had the opportunity to meet with staff from the Ernst Krenek institute to look at the composer’s cello work and their Buchla synthesizer. This connection, I hope will lead to future relationships with some of Krenek’s work, or linked to his research and approach.

While in residence there was a rich array of activities available if in need of additional things to do in terms of excursion and visits to museums and exhibitions, however I also deeply needed, and enjoyed the time spent in my studio: playing, recording, composing, mixing, reading, and writing. I was lucky enough to be able to spend several days at Minoritenkirche, an incredible acoustic space, doing some recording and playing which have in turn folded into some of the more long-term musical projects I’ve undertaken here.

What did you realize during your residency period?

My residency proposal originally examined concepts and work outcomes over a longer period than my actual residency, and yet for one month, a lot of headway was made. I hoped to spend more time writing for a collaborative research project on ‘Materialities of Realisation’ with Professor Charles Curtis at UC San Diego, and yet the space and time of the residency allowed for certain tangents to be explored which has proven incredibly valuable for the research base of this ongoing work. Certain ideas, and the time to pursue them through reading a wider range of texts, following clues and contradictions, developing notes, has led to a clearer sense of how a final paper version of the current research interests might unfold.

In terms of my cello work, this period has led to the development of new formal material and techniques, developed over a slow process of practice, shifting spaces, recording, and refining. The seeds planted here have developed into a solo piece, which will see its first public presentations in London, Lisbon, Porto, and Madrid over the course of March 2020.

In parallel, recordings made at Minoritenkirche, my studio, and some field recordings, have found their way into a 35 minute long fixed media composition. This relatively (for me) layered, almost ambient work takes spaces and folds them into each other, the acoustic of the church dissolving into acousmatic spaces, the aftersound of the studio

piano reharmonising a different version of itself. This project, mostly undertaken in the evenings while in residence, will most likely make its way onto a cassette or vinyl release at some point later in 2019/2020. AIR Krems will be acknowledged in any published outcome of this work.

In addition, in collaboration with Veronika Grossberger, we presented three workshops at Sonderschule Krems, working with children with disabilities, using the cello, soundscape and narrative to create an engaging listening experience.

What did you miss at the residency?

The one thing that I would have liked the opportunity to do would have been to meet other musicians working in either Krems, or even Vienna. The Austrian artists I originally proposed to work with were overseas during the month I was offered for my residency and I am relatively unfamiliar with the music scene here apart from them. I did try writing to some contacts passed on by friends but it was too late notice for many of them, as they mostly work in a concert series format, which is programmed quite far in advance.

Even though it was wonderful *not* working to a performance deadline for once, even a somewhat informal showing/performance of some of my work towards the end of the residency would have been a nice way to connect with some other musicians in Krems and lower Austria. I did feel a little disconnected from the work of my host institution here in Krems, but I hope that in future visits to lower Austria, I will be able to find more avenues and opportunities to connect with active musicians and sound artists here.

What do you appreciate at AIR – ARTIST IN RESIDENCE?

I felt very supported by the AIR staff here in the office, who were always very generous with their time, answering questions, helping to make various arrangements for me, and especially many thanks to Paula from NÖ Festival und Kino GmbH. I appreciated how comfortable and easy it was to arrive and settle in to the space, how well equipped the music studio is for working, and how the apartment was set up ready to be worked and lived in. It has been a really rewarding and rich creative and reflective time for me at AIR. I'm very grateful for this experience and the gift of my time here.