

Report by Dora Čechova, August 2020

How was my stay at AIR – ARTIST IN RESIDENCE Niederösterreich Program

I came to the residency at AIR – ARTIST IN RESIDENCE Niederösterreich in August 2020 during coronavirus time. It was a very demanding time for all of us, both for the organizers and for my colleagues, the artists from abroad. The state borders could be closed at any time. So until the last minute I wasn't sure if I could come and spend the whole time in the residency. Due to the coronavirus situation, it was not possible to organize a public reading. I understood and accepted that. However, the residence gave me the opportunity to stay and work on my book.

Advantages and disadvantages of the program

The greatest advantage of the program is time. I took a break from my mother's role, my wife's role, my teacher's role to focus completely on writing.

Living in Literaturhaus Niederösterreich is very comfortable. Studio 22 for writers is a bright apartment with a beautiful view of the Danube. There is everything you need - a bedroom, a kitchen, a bathroom and a writing desk. Literaturhaus is close to the centre of the city, so you can go on wonderful walks along the beautiful banks of the Danube river or rent a bicycle from the common room and ride a bike. It is a great place where you can concentrate on work and relax afterwards.

A great advantage of the program is also meeting and spending time with colleagues from other countries and other artistic disciplines. During my stay I met Nicolás Melmann, a musician from Argentina, Alice Cattaneo, a sculptor from Italy and Frank Hoppmann, a cartoonist from Germany. The team from AIR - ARTIST IN RESIDENCE arranged a meeting for us with leaders of cultural institutions from Krems, where we introduced ourselves and our work. Getting to know the work of other artists is very inspiring. We also met over a glass of wine, because Krems is famous for its producers of good wine and we admired together the genius loci of Krems.

What did I realize during my residency period

I brought a manuscript of my new book with me to the residence. These are short stories I also worked on when I was in the residence in November 2020. I am preparing nine short stories for my publisher Joachim Dvořák from the Czech publishing house Labyrinth. This publishing house has already published two of my books, both short stories books. The name of this new book will be probably Women who need a Men. So far it is a working title. The short stories describe life situations in which women cannot do well without men, need their support and when living together makes sense. For example, there is a story, in which a man allows his wife to leave a disabled daughter in an institution, but he goes to take care of her by himself. There is also a story of a couple of old people, who live separately, but they are not divorced. They spend a Christmas together. And the man decides to return to live with the woman, because she loses her strength to life and needs his care.

During my stay in August, I had to re-read the manuscript, check all expressions, find and correct all ambiguities. I decided to rewrite some parts of the text in order to consolidate the manuscript. I am not finished yet but I did a lot of work. I worked hard all the time and I took full advantage of the time spent in the residency.

What did I miss at the residency and what I appreciate

I appreciate the work of all organizers from AIR – ARTIST IN RESIDENCE program and organizers from LITERATURHAUS NIEDERÖSTERREICH. All of them are very kind and helpful. The organizers prepared a culture program for us. We took part in a guided tour at Forum Frohner with Director Elizabeth Voggender and a trip to Hadersdorf to the Ausstellungshaus Spoerri.

During my stay in August I missed a lot Sabine Güldenfusz, the head of the program and the program coordinator of AIR – ARTIST IN RESIDENCE. She is the heart of the program, a good soul and a great supporter of artists.