

For me the residency served as a kind of reintroduction back into life having spent the prior six months on lockdown in Berlin. Krems remained mostly deserted until mid-May, and the residency building was also in semi-hibernation mode early on, but I was excited to finally be here, back out in the world, in a new context with new things and ideas to explore. Fortunately going outside was still possible during lockdown here so I spent much of the first month wandering around town, up in the hills behind Krems or on my bike in the Wachau / Waldviertel, along the Danube, taking photographs, making sound recordings, and researching things that drew my interest.

One of the first focal points to emerge from these explorations was the Wachau's rich archeological history. In fact there have been four Ice Age sites discovered within the communal border of Krems alone, making it unique throughout Europe. All of these sites, first excavated in the 1890s but also as recently as 2005–15, have since been built on, creating a kind of cultural stratification ripe for artistic investigation: each location encompasses a 30,000-year arc of human history, essentially two bookends of civilization. As part of my photo documentation and research of the Wachtberg/Hundssteig neighborhood in Krems, where the discovery of Gravettian skeletons of twin newborns was made, I was able to meet with the archeologists involved who gave me access to their image archive detailing their work conducted inside what was known as the "Grabungskeller," a cellar specifically constructed to allow the new owner of the property to build his house over the archeologists while they worked away undisturbed underneath. I also met with the director of paleontology at the Natural History Museum in Vienna who allowed me to photograph their collection of artifacts from Krems.

Another area of investigation during the first half of my residency took the form of "field recordings"—not in a traditional sense in terms of location-specific ambient or atmospheric sound but rather listening to telluric currents or naturally occurring electromagnetic energy emanating from the ground itself, "inaudible sound." The earth puts off about a 1/4 volt of energy (the source of many YouTube experimentations with "earth batteries") that can be converted directly into a recording signal via metal rods when inserted into the ground. Curious to discover what I might hear at different locations, I visited various spots including the remains of a Roman-era guard tower up valley along the southside of the Danube, Toter Berg mountain, man-sized caves dug out of a Loess-slope above Krems, the castle ruin at Aggstein, a power plant and a hydroelectric dam east of town and a number of other locations in nature. The sonic signatures of each location varied widely and were characterized by dissimilar lower frequency hums interrupted by occasional unidentifiable variances. Probably the strangest of which was the faint but recognizable signal of a Czech (?) radio station emerging out of a half-dried-out pond in the middle of a forest otherwise filled with the sounds of nature to the unaided ear.

The last part of my residency has been centered around investigations/interventions related to the Galerie Stadtpark building, where I'll be presenting an exhibition this fall that will also feature aspects of the works and/or approaches outlined above. The main premise of the show revolves around bringing to light otherwise unseen, inaccessible, or inaudible aspects of the architecture itself, situating this "ruin in reverse" within a sculptural and acoustic dialogue of negative/dead spaces, archeological methodologies, and subliminal histories resonating within the soil and wider context of Krems itself.

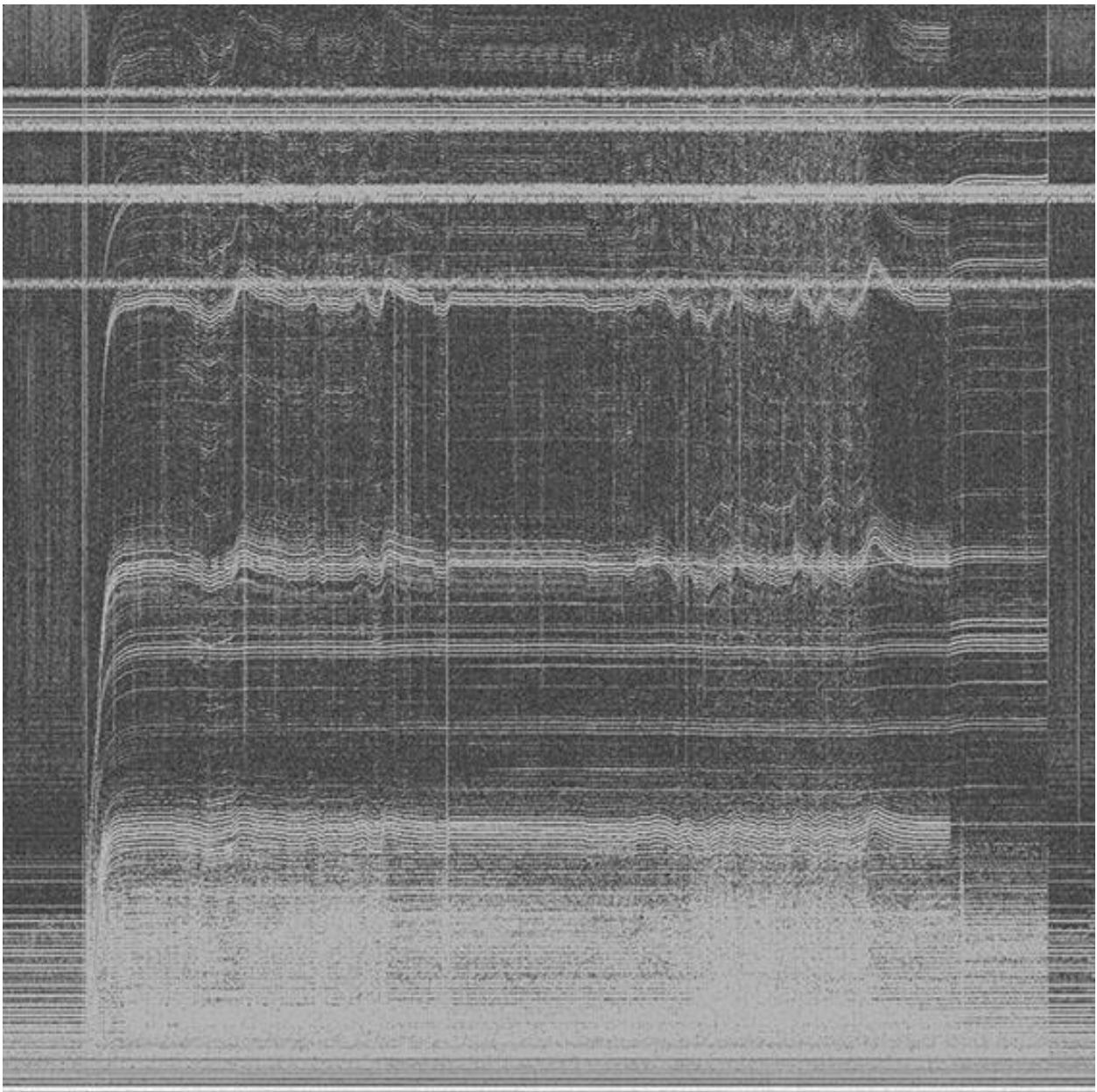
The residency has of course been essential in allowing me the time and space to develop these ideas. I really enjoyed and benefitted from my live/work space, the common studio, the mix of cultural events, museum visits, the monthly Get-Together, and social opportunities with other guests that the program offered. Johan and Flora run things with a professional and personal touch and, along with Andreas Hoffer and David Komary in particular, were all incredibly generous with their time and support. The setting, facilities, financial support as well as the seriousness and openness with which artists are treated here is everything one could hope for in a residency; it was a great way to reemerge back into (mostly) normal life.



Wachtberg-Hundssteig contemporary site, 2021



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Telluric recording (spectrogram), Wachtberg-Hundssteig, 2021