

Report Ona Juciūtė

AIR – ARTIST IN RESIDENCE Niederösterreich

July-August 2021

Two months is an interesting amount of time - seems long enough at first, but end before you know it. I was lucky enough to have an opportunity to spend two months in Krems during the strange Summer'21, that seemed like a break between pandemic waves. Biking and hiking extensively around Wachau region, it was not hard to imagine a civilization that is slowly waking up from a winter's sleep. I was also.

Krems and its' surroundings is a place where it is possible to witness history and contemporary life coexisting in a very peculiar way. It was particularly interesting to see how everyday life blends in with history, old architecture, ancient agricultural habits and festivities today. I was specially interested in some changing industrial sites in Austria overall. I have visited the site of Marmor-Industrie Kiefer near Salzburg and also an abandoned sand stone mine near Krems (in Zohelsdorf). These slowly disappearing or changing industrial landscapes became great inspiration for thinking about surfaces we create for our habitats.

In Krems I have started developing a set of new objects that are a different interpretation of my previous sculptures dealing with wood veneer material and technology. With my artistic practice I often see human homes as a habitat of a specie, trying to avoid terms architecture or interior. As if I could have the ability to see them for a first time. I am trying to create tools to help me see this found world. I am thinking about the relationship between structure and surface, shifts of production and materials. Wood veneering technology is known since ancient Egypt, due to lack of natural lush forests and timber there. It is one of the many examples how humans deal with limited, yet sought after resources and temperamental natural resources. Having a different popularity and role during different epochs - being luxurious and rare due to technological difficulties and becoming mass made cheap commodity ruling yellow price tag Ikea shelves, veneering for me acts as one of many witnesses of human civilization relationship towards nature, expressed via objects and technologies to build those objects we use, want and acquire everyday. Veneer interests me also because it somehow manages to be wood (by its DNA) and not have some crucial wooden qualities at the same time. I try to make objects that act as proof of this strange duality. I choose to produce a system, vaguely reminiscent of shelves, made solely out of wood veneer, that is usually used as a thin top layer. Veneering as logic of covering particular material with a thin layer of a different one is known not only in carpentry, but also in jewelry, food, dentistry, coin minting etc. It seems this is something humans really can not stop doing. I have been exploring different techniques of how this material is treated - if with my earlier made objects it was important to make them in a fast manner, ignoring it's "wooden roots", this time I was focusing more on the actual techniques - fomentation, bending, glueing layers, varnishing, polishing and inlays. I was happy to find out that actually outsourcing this material in Austria (funny coincidence, there is a veneer factory just outside of Krems), was important to me, not so much conceptually, but intuitively - when experiencing the professional industry some different kind of knowledge is born. That apparently became important in my process. These shelving objects were born while slowly looking at what material, that has been industrially treated to be as little capricious as possible, wants and how it behaves with different treatments. I was heating, bending, fomenting, varnishing and polishing these neat fin slices of wood until they started to become different kind of form. My understanding and relationship to veneer technology was altered by many objects that I saw in MAK, Carla stores, antiques in Austria, homes of my friends in Vienna or even my studio at the

residency. It was very important to see veneer being used by an industry that treated this material very differently - where furniture history is written by hand - most important veneering examples are very often unique hand-made objects. In Lithuania it was the opposite - Czechoslovakian mass production during soviet times and German, when “cheap used items from Western Germany” flooded our market and homes interface survived some fundamental changes in the early 90s.

Two month stay in Krems allowed me for the first time to fully experience the luxury of being a full-time artist. Fully equipped studio, financial support, curatorial and administrative aid from AIR Niederösterreich was everything I needed to freely explore the fields of my own practice and surroundings of the residency. I want to personally thank the team of AIR Niederösterreich for their help and natural curiosity that they lead this programme with. Exploring my own practice on the shores of different context within my own pace was priceless. This is exactly what I received here and more. I am sure that stories, materials and contexts I gathered here will continue to appear in my future projects. In Krems I was once again reminded that things are never what they seem at a first glance.



During my stay in Austria I visited these institutions and shows:

Museum of Krems

Landesgalerie in Krems

Paulo Icaro "Idem Est" @ Galerie Stadtpark in Krems

Studio of Johann Feilacher, close to Tulln

Studio of Adriana Affortunati in Krems

Heimo Zobernik retrospective show @ Mumok in Vienna

Anne Mette Hol "Becoming" @ Mumok in Vienna

Mumok collection exhibition "Enjoy" @ Mumok in Vienna

Dominique Gonzalez Foerster "Volcanic Excursion (a Vision)" @ Secession in Vienna

František Lesák "Supposition and Reality" @ Secession in Vienna

Women of Wiener Werkstätte @ Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna

Vienna Biennale for Change 2021 @ Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna

Permanent collection @ Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna

Nicolas Jasmin "a bluff is a colour" @ Croy Nielsen in Vienna

Dominique Knowles "The Solemn and Dignified Burial Befitting My Beloved for All Seasons" @ LAYR in Vienna

After the Revolution @ Sophie Tappeiner in Vienna

Naive art from the infield collection @ Museum Gugging

Gugging Classik and Contemporary @ Museum Gugging

David Tudor "Teasing Chaos" @ Museum der Moderne in Salzburg

Open studios @ Sommerakademie in Salzburg

Rosella Biscotti "Clara and other Specimens" @ Stadtgalerie Zwergelgartenpavillon in Salzburg

Gabriel Abrantes "Animations" @ Salzburger Kunstverein

Daniela Zeilinger "Yonder" @ Salzburger Kunstverein

Randa Mirza "Beirutopia / View from Home" @ Fotohof in Salzburg

and more.