

AIR – ARTIST IN RESIDENCE Niederösterreich
Artist Report: Simon Whetham

Residency project: Development of 'Channeling' performance project

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

I have quite a lot of experience of participating in artist residencies and I would say the AIR Niederösterreich programme is one of the best I have experienced. The support I have received has been incredible and very much appreciated, and the time and space to be able to develop my project further has been valuable. Everyone I have met and spent time with has been warm and friendly.

Paula Haslinger, the curator who invited me, is so great to work with. Nothing has been too much trouble when I have needed anything, and the same goes for Flora Renhardt, the current AIR project coordinator.

The two months have flown by so quickly I feel I would benefit from another month, or even another residency! I'll write in more detail below but the composition work that I thought I would be doing while here has not happened, as I have been developing the project more for public presentation and had many other activities that have kept me busy.

The only disadvantage is maybe that I have not had time to travel and visit parts of Austria I wanted to. But this is a minor point and I am sure I will have another opportunity in the future.

What did you realize during your residency period?

My project 'Channeling' began last year during lockdown and in a residency period in Clans in the Alps-Maritimes region of France and has since developed through further residency opportunities with Ferme-Asile, Switzerland and Witte-Rook in The Netherlands. This residency in Krems has allowed me to develop the approach much further through me having a private studio equipped with speakers in which I can actually play quite loud without disturbing the other residents. I presented a very rough new version in Brno, Czechia in late October which didn't go so well but by bringing everything back to Krems I could work through various issues and improve it greatly.

The work will go on to be presented at Rhiz in Vienna and also at the NEXT Festival in Bratislava, Slovakia at the end of November.

I made video and sound documentation of part of the performance and edited it together as a piece that was commissioned by Situated Sounds of Toronto, Canada for their 'Eulogies' online exhibition in November.

I was invited to perform in another event in Vienna and did not wish to present the same project twice in the same month, so composed a new version of 'Forced to Repeat Myself', a work that was released on CD in 2019. The source material for the album featured sound recordings from a tour I made in 2018 and the title alludes to the desire to not

repeat yourself when performing so many times in quick succession. In making this new work I was once again forced to repeat myself...

I was invited to participate in a collaborative exquisite-corpse kind of project by Grünrekorder in Germany and was asked to soundtrack a short video work that the next artist would in turn respond to. This work will be published through their website before the end of the year.

In addition in October I gave an active listening and sound appreciation workshop for children as part of the *Kinder.Kunst.Fest* in Krems.

While here I received the artist copies of a new album of mine, released on cassette by Sound Against Humanity. 'Closed System' is the result of a work commissioned by subnet in Salzburg in 2020 which I made during a remote residency with them, exploring the possibilities of transforming a liquid cooling system for a gaming computer into a playable instrument.

And finally I am in the process of writing a proposal to do a PhD in order to research certain aspects of my practice. This has been in process for almost two years now, but I have been concentrating on it much more during the residency and now feel ready to make the application which is due by the end of November.

What did you miss at the residency?

We gave presentations at the beginning of each month to the other residents and representatives from the various associations working with AIR Niederösterreich to explain what we are working on, but I would have appreciated a final presentation to see how the various projects had developed, and to show my own. I did overcome this a little by inviting people to listen as I made a rehearsal run of 'Forced to Repeat Myself' the night before the event in Vienna.

Also I would have liked to present work in the live music venue Klangraum and also to be introduced to the organisers of the Donaufestival, as I feel my work would fit in their programme well.

What do you appreciate at AIR – ARTIST IN RESIDENCE Niederösterreich?

The people. The other residents are all very pleasant and friendly. We have shared some good moments when we socialize together. Everyone involved in the residency has been incredible as I said before but need to say again. And even the people of Krems I have dealt with have been friendly and extremely helpful.

The town. It's quiet without being too quiet. I need this peace when I am working, especially when recording very small sounds that the devices of my projects make. And to run along the Donau in the morning has become a ritual I will greatly miss!

The studio. As mentioned before, I very much appreciate the private studio space where I can develop my sound work at a relatively high volume level. The space is perfect for what I am doing and it is nice to have a separate bedroom so I can 'switch off' at the end of the day. The facilities are perfect for this stage of the work.