

## My AIR Krems Report

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My one-month residency at AIR Krems is an honor and a fantastic opportunity provided by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in partnership with AIR Krems. This unforgettable experience follows my one-semester sabbatical over the late winter and spring. After teaching for 20 years at SAIC, this time to reflect on this my practice and longevity leaves me feeling confident to say that I am well-established as an artist in the local and international community. Others may have already recognized this; however, I have never found a metric for this, but instead have relied on intuition.

My residency at AIR Krems was an important time for reflection on my recent experience, a workshop on public engagement in active listening with university student just before arriving, while attempting to manage three nonprofit organizations without allowing those tasks to distract or preoccupy me away from my own creative process and several projects. This was my own challenge, to use this time for uninterrupted solitude, rest, recreation, reading, balanced with new course preparation, and periods of intensive studio production.

The location of AIR Krems has had a significant influence on me. Both the landscape and soundscape are of great importance in my everyday experience and my professional practice, the latter being focused on sense of place and identity. While there were times of noisy construction work awakening me early in the morning, the field recordings I made may figure in my future compositions and performance. The location of AIR Krems is also a source for paradoxical sentiments that add poignancy to being here.

The AIR facilities, including both the equipment and the studio apartment itself were essential and they made the residency experience unforgettable. The well-designed space with all its windows and light throughout the day was uplifting. On hot days it was easy to keep cool with ...Thanks to the equipment AIR loaned to me and my laptop, I was able to have a good digital audio workstation enabling me to complete first stages of mixing the multitrack recordings made with Carol Genetti and Birgit Ulher, at Experimental Sound Studio during my sabbatical. I would not have been able to bring all this equipment from Chicago. This digital audio workstation was essential for developing my new instrumentation for live performances I plan to give next week in Germany. These use a combination of handheld transducers and other devices shown in our recent artist's presentations in the Kunstmeile Atelier. The private kitchen and laundry make the studio feel luxurious. I may be spoiled by this. The design of the apartment also provides two views of the landscape, creating a sense of poignancy. Looking through the east facing windows I can view the courtyard, the soccer field, the riverboat tour dock, and rolling green hills dotted by villages. A distant old monastery sits atop one very large hill or small mountain. It's idyllic while looking out the opposite side of my apartment is a large prison, though it is not immediately apparent as a clock tower with a minaret dominates the scene, while immediately beyond the hills rise terraced by vineyards. The sun sets behind these hills each evening, enticing me to wander through to see the sky's colors at the day's end. I'm tempted to photograph this; however, the prison is in the foreground and photographing it is explicitly prohibited. So too, at some level is the remote history of the 1945 massacre.

This offers AIR Krems as more than a place to recover and go forward. The location is also a site of historical importance with stories and lessons to tell.

There is a great bookcase stuffed with a hundred books about art and literature, an incredible private library unlike the one I have at home. I could not make time to pour over them all, except for one little book, Virginia Wolff's classic *A Room of One's Own*, published in 1929. I haven't finished reading it but the title and thesis—even as a male—speak to my past and present experience as a student, teacher, and artist.

I want to express my deep gratitude to the AIR staff who have been very professional, helpful, and proactive playing a very important role to connect me with others who have important roles in my field. Among them Jo Achinger, Günther Oberhollenzer, and Petra Hinterhollzer. The AIR has a good program aimed at fostering relationships. These are essential for one's practice. I imagine this exchange will not stop after my departure, and hope presence here establishes a helpful relationship with the AIR staff and its mission and programming. My so-called "social capital" as an artist includes service as President of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology and Executive Director of the World Listening Project. If it is of help, I can connect AIR with cohorts in the Central European region that I am working with. They may benefit soon from knowledge and support of Krems in proximity to Vienna, Prague, Budapest, Ljubljana, Zagreb, and others. Reciprocal exchanges have the potential to benefit AIR Krems also.

What did I realize? I avoided booking concerts, workshops, and exhibitions to occur during the AIR residency to have time to think, process, focus and execute projects. This helped me to strengthen myself as an artist and be a better asset to SAIC's student experience and faculty brain trust. I added social and professional activities before and after this residency to preserve the time I had for this focus and execution. Some of these are chronicled on the "what's new" page of my website for public information. Among these are a 3-day workshop on "How to actively engage people in listening to everyday sounds," for graduate students at the Hochschule Darmstadt's Dieburg Media Campus, on June 12-14.

On July 19, I perform in Landsberg am Lech and on July 20 I perform in the re:flexions sound-art festival at Kunsthalle Abraxas, in Augsburg, Germany. As I left my trusted Springboard in Chicago, a portion of my residency time has been devoted to creating a new live performance set up for these concert dates, to get out of my comfort zone to reconsider my practice and learn new responses to the live situation.

I was able to make final edits with Lou Mallozzi on our chapter for a book to be published, hopefully in September, on the history of radio art from the United States.

I wrote about the Chicago-based Night Out In the Parks Summer Soundwalks series and expect my words will be published very soon by the Chicago Parks Foundation in its "Seeing Green" blog. I am reviewing submissions for The Global Composition conference on sound, media, and ecology to take place in the Hochschule Darmstadt's Dieburg Media Campus, on October 4–7. I plan to be there, too.

Because of my residency, I am also honored to receive an invitation to produce a new work for the esteemed Österreich Rundfunk program, *Radiokunst – Kunstradio*. There always are several important and interesting events around Kunstradio and Volkmar Klien's work in Linz. I have expressed

Aside from my family and household, I did miss not that much except for one thing I am sensing; a sort of cultural gap between the American and European—perhaps only in Germany and Austria—economies of production and consumption in which my aesthetic of hardware hacking feeds upon. I was unable to find a place that sold inexpensive surplus materials and tools that I could use for making my new live performance set up. Encapsulating crudely, I find it interesting that the DIY (do-it-yourself) economy seems absent here. I wonder if that may reflect a deeper sense of respect for design, engineering, and manufacturing here than in North America where mass-produced articles are cheap and disposable, therefore readily available for creative reuse instead of the waste bin. One might say easily, there are rich opportunities and stories to be found in noise and trash. I think most archeologists could tell us how. However, the sounds do not leave their audible traces.

Please note, the images I am sending are screenshots and photos of the handheld devices referred to in this report; artifacts of my process rather than its conclusion which is manifest experientially in listening. My "what's new" page is also public online resource for my events, concerts, and publications at <https://ericleonardson.org/whatsnew/>