

## SONIC PILGRIMAGE – Wachau

I enjoyed so much to have time for my work and thoughts without being distracted from all day work, teaching and other things. It is great to have such a bright and big space, I could borrow good speakers and all equipment I needed. Even the weather was quite chilly and wet for May, I spent a lot of time outside, enjoying the landscape and inhaling the “green”.

My project proposal was to do a “sonic pilgrimage”: Walking old pilgrimage paths and collecting audio and visual material, using this material then for a composition and/or audio visual installation.

During my first days it was raining and I did research about which ways to walk, which paths to take, where to sleep. I decided to walk the Way of St. James from Mautern to Melk - about 45 km. I booked my first night in Maria Langegg at “Haus YaweH-Roi”, which is the only accommodation possibility besides the monastery, which was fully booked. Otherwise I didn't do more strict planning, as I wanted to keep the journey as open as possible and put myself not into a situation where I have to reach a certain place in the end of the day.

Before I left for the longer hike, I first walked the St. James path from Stift Göttweig downhill to Krems.

To get to Göttweig I took a bus, which stops about 1 km away from the monastery. It would have been easy to get there in 15-20 minutes, but as it is the nature of the process of my work, it took much longer. I walked different paths, recorded a lot of „Blätterrauschen“, found already amazing places to sit, to listen, to perceive, to think, to tune-in into the soundscape and environment.

Finally I got to the monastery and did an amazing recording of the “dancing flags“ in front of the monastery.

I then stepped on the path of St. James. I enjoyed the walking and the landscape, stopped here and then to take photos, videos or audio recordings and just took as much time as I needed, which is such a luxury. There was a bell ringing sound in the vineyards, which I found out, were the chains holding the wires for the grapewines, rattled by the wind and clanging towards the metal poles.

Two days later I left for the hike for 3 days. I've started in Mautern and ended the journey in Schönbühel. Starting and ending at the Danube.

My backpack was heavy, full of recording equipment - audio and video - food for 3 days and some clothes.

On the first day I walked until Maria Langegg, which is a distance about 18 km. The sun was out, the air was quite fresh though.

I started happy and took my time, tuned-in into the environment, explored the sound- and landscape and enjoyed the walking. Moving slow.

On one spot there was orange plastic tube lying around in the forest – it looked almost like an art installation and it created an amazing flutter reverb, so I spent

quite some time there, recorded some material and enjoyed to play and experiment. A little bit strange to be in nature and then playing a huge plastic thing laying around, I have to admit...



In the afternoon I took a wrong path and lost my way. I had to turn around, it was a detour about 2 hours. I was questioning myself and the project – the backpack was really heavy and I started to panic a little bit. No phone signal, no internet, my legs were super tired, my back was hurting and for quite a while I didn't know, if I was on the right path. The only thing to do was keep on walking and trust. back on track again I was rewarded by the amazing sound of hundreds of crickets.

In the end it was all good, I reached Maria Langegg and the Haus YaweH-Roi. Jurga, the lady was super nice, I was the only guest, they had a bath tub (after 10 hours on the feet, just perfect!) and I felt very welcome and well hosted. In the Gasthof nearby, I had the best „Kaspressknödel mit Kraut“ in my life.

I could charge all batteries and slept very deep. The next day it rained cats and dogs. I took my time for breakfast in the warm kitchen, had a nice talk with Jurga, She was baking bread, I helped to feed the lambs and had no really “need” to go outside. Jurga offered me to stay, which was very attempting, but I eventually hit the road.





After a while it stopped raining. I walked through the woods, saw a huge fire salamander and took nice video recordings of the fog, played my flute and kept on walking until the ruin of Aggstein where I took a break with an amazing view over the Danube valley.

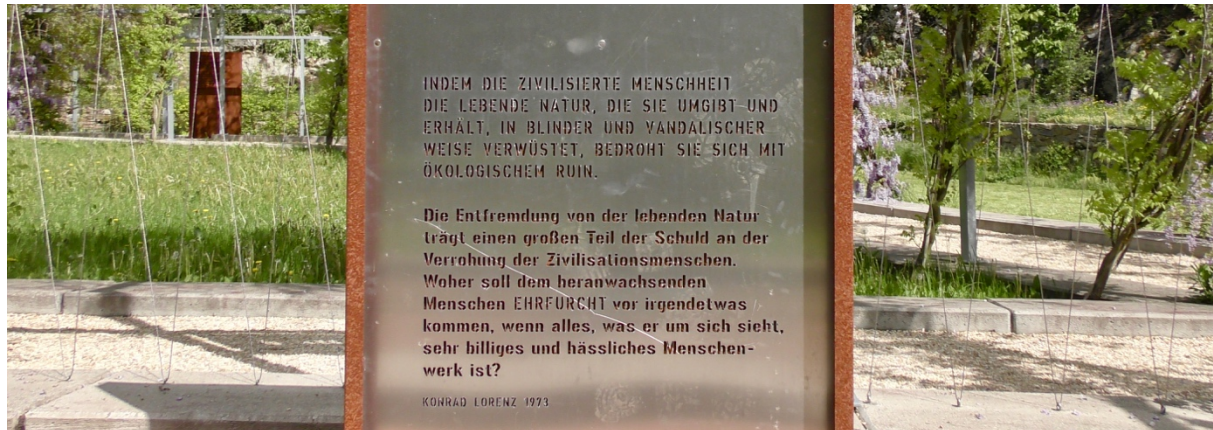
Almost just across where I was sitting, the “Venus of Willendorf” was found in 1908. This figure is about 30000 years old. So, 30000 years ago, people were already walking these paths and living in this valley.

I decided just to walk until Aggsbach Dorf and stay in a Gasthof there. Arriving in this small village there was a small creek and I noticed again how refreshing it is to hear the sound of flowing water. I went to the old blacksmith and did recordings there.

In the Gasthof where I stayed, I ate the worst cooked asparagus in my life. The next day I spend some more time with the water, did tons of recordings and then visited the Kartause Aggsbach (built as a Kartäuser monastery) where I spent about 2 hours in the meditation garden.



The sun was out and I enjoyed the quietness and calmness of this place.



Funny enough, on my whole trip – except at the places where I stayed – I never met anybody. Even in this place, all doors were open, I could go inside, use the bathroom, look at the exhibition, walked in the garden, but nobody was there.

I continued walking, hill up, hill down, passed by quite some wood cuttings, stopped here and then to listen, to play, to record.

I decided not to walk until the monastery in Melk, as the last bit of the way is on the street and that I will end the hike in Schönbühel where I could take the bus back to Krems.

To my trip I brought a small Tibetan bell, which I was hanging sometime in the trees to let the wind play with it. Strange enough, it was moving, but not ringing. But in the end, shortly before Schönbühel, I stopped at a huge oak tree, it was very windy. I did some recordings with the wind playing my flute, recording this with a microphone inside the flute. I then hang the bell in the oak and it was ringing and it merged beautiful to the sound of the crickets. This was the end of the journey. My SD card was almost full, there was just one minute space left.





In Schönbühel I sat down in a small place, almost private garden, where a woman made a delicious gratinated bread for me. I was a little bit anxious to miss the last bus, but she said, that there is always a solution, if I would miss the bus. In worst case she would drive me.

I reached the bus and arriving in Krems, I went immediately to the reading of Simone Lappert, a Suisse writer, who is also a fellow here.

The next day she and I went together to visit the findspot of the “Venus of Willendorf” and visited the Venusium.

The rest of my stay I sorted out the material, named it, organized it and started composing with it.

On my last weekend, the weather cleared up a little bit and I walked up the hill to the cross, which I could see all the time from my window and did some experiments with some Aeolian harp and tambourines and flutes, played by the wind.

The plan is now to create an audio visual installation, optional with some live flute playing to it, with the material I gathered here.

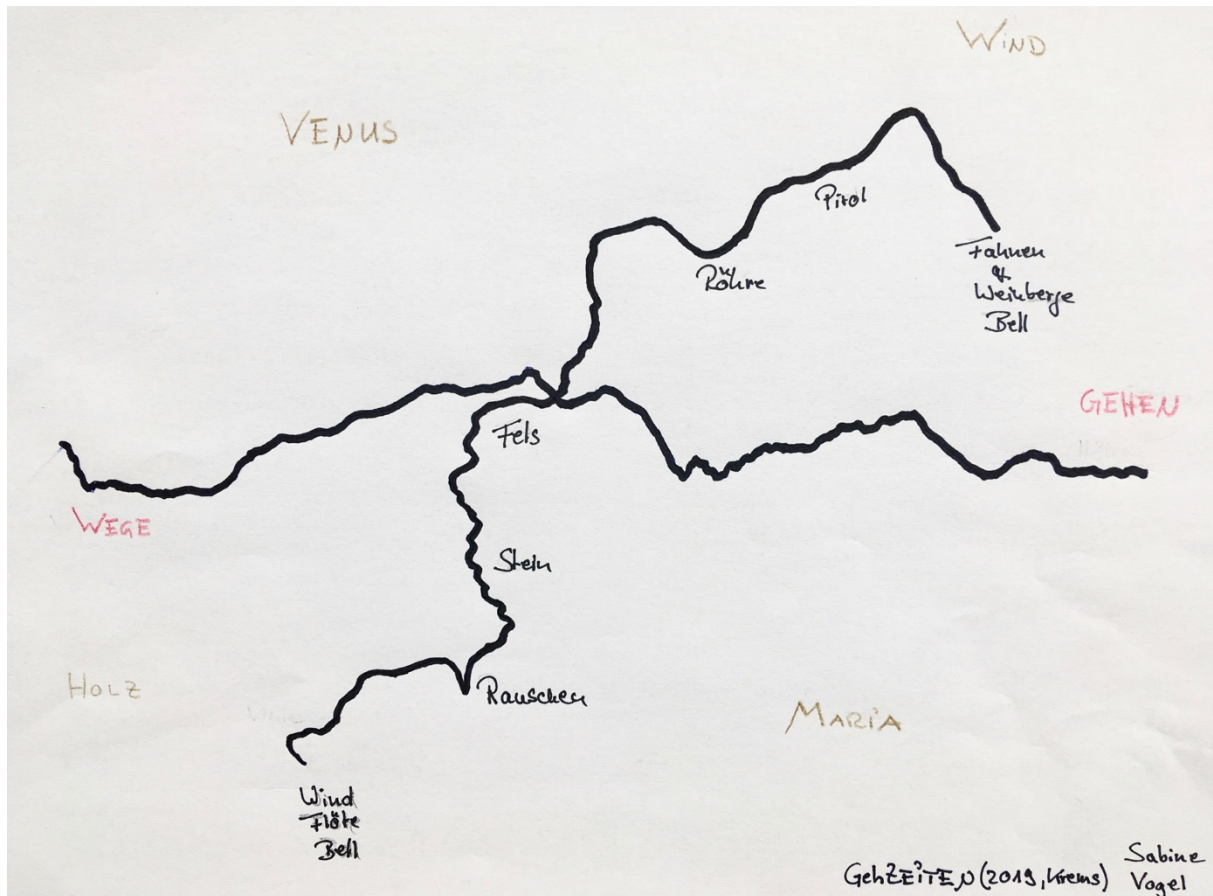
Unfortunately, I had applied just for 1 month, too less time to finish the project here.

Thanks to Jo Aichinger, Sabine Güldenfuß, Johan Nane Simonson and all stuff of AiR Niederösterreich, who made this residency possible for me. It was a really intense experience to do this walk. And as Richard Long writes “my art is the essence of my experience” (Long 2017, p.26) I am pretty sure all what I experienced here will somehow be part of the piece/or pieces I will create.

Also a big thank you to my fellows Simone Lappert (and the continuous exchange of the coffee macchina!!!), Melody Owen, Lucia Simon Medina and Alan Rios Cruz for nice talks and dinners.

- List all projects, workshops, concerts, exhibitions, events etc. that you realized or participated in during your residency.

I realized the graphical score for „GehZEITEN“ and composed some material for it. I also worked (but haven't finished yet) on a sound installation called „Sound Diaries 2019, Halbzeit“, both pieces will be premiered soon at the intersonanzen festival in Potsdam.



Together with Veronika Grossberger I taught on 3 days a workshop at a special school with 5 kids with very different disabilities. The theme was birds and I brought some recordings I took on my journey, but also my flutes. Veronika brought a variety of organ pipes and bird whistles. We played for them and with them. I taught some “Soundpainting” gestures and some of them conducted us. I made an easy patch with bird voices, controlled by a fader controller on my computer and one of the kids played this. It was very touching to see how engaged and happy the kids were.

- Concerts /exhibitions /readings
  - Donau Festival, 3-5<sup>th</sup> of May
  - Krems (Hans Op deBeeck – The Cliff)
  - Susanne Wenger Foundation
  - Ernst Krenek Forum (hopefully)
  - Venusium, Willendorf

- Pilgermuseum, Maria Langegg
- Kartause Aggsbach
- Reading of Simone Lappert and 26<sup>th</sup> other writers of the publisher  
“Bibliothek der Provinz”

I missed my own espresso machine, but Simone and I did quite well in sharing one.

*Sabine Vogel, Krems in May 2019*

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