

## KREMS – AIR

### Ádám Dallos, Hungary

AIR – ARTIST IN RESIDENCE Niederösterreich was an inspirational experience for me. First of all I am really grateful for the help and kindness of Johan Simonsen and for the curatorial support, for lending me books useful for my research to Andreas Hoffer. The time, even if shorter, spent with the other resident artists and the atmosphere of the Wachau Valley will stay in me as a very nice memory.

The studios are spacious, extremely bright and very well equipped. Here I needed to concentrate only on my recent project and on deepening my knowledge in my research.

I also really appreciated in AIR, that it gives connection to other part of arts: parallel to visual arts, there are resident artists from the fields of literature and music. I had the chance to meet and get to know different foreign artists, their approach to art, and their working methods too. Friendships made here are important to me.

During my residency period I have been perfectly informed by the AIR Staff about the events of the city of Krems. I found that the region is rich in natural and human built treasures and in cultural programmes.

I also feel important that contemporary art is not only for those living in big cities and capitals, Krems with its numerous venues and art infrastructure is a very good example that progressive contemporary art can be accessible and visited for persons living in smaller cities too. Many, much bigger cities would be proud to have such a complex Kunsthalle like the one in Krems.

Recent on-going project during the AIR Krems:

In the moment I am writing my DLA dissertation Hidden homoeroticism and the transformations of the Painted Male Nude in the 19th and 20th Centuries. In Krems I wanted to make a side-research of the Austrian painter, Anton Kolig, in connection to the topic of my three-year research.

Anton Kolig is closely related to the thematic of my current artistic program, on account of his depictions of groups of young boys nude, became a cultic figure among the circles interested expressly in homosexually thematized painting. His works are unique in the history of art for their compassionate depiction of the longing of men. The primary goal is to trace the footsteps of Kolig to seek out public and private collections so that I can see his paintings in the original.

Homosexual identity is a new concept; in the past, the terms “inclination”, “attraction” or “sinfulness” were used. Before the turn of the 20th century, the term “homosexual identity” did not exist. Artistic depictions of an amorous gaze directed at the male body was only possible in a very isolated world, visible to only a few; homosexuality was frightening and punishable to the heteronormative society of

the day. Later, in the early 1900s, such attractions were expressed in increasingly lustful gestures and gazes.

Kenneth Clark, in his book entitled *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, compared the ideal of the male body known from antiquity and the Italian Renaissance to the Vitruvian Man – the perfect embodiment of ideas and the human being. Clark does not discuss the homoerotic proclivities of Michelangelo, Leonardo, or Signorelli, he merely points out that during the Renaissance, the male form represented the embodiment of perfection (only to be later replaced by the female form). Even today, in most discussions of Caravaggio or Michelangelo, any mention of their attraction toward men is avoided. In analyses of homoerotically charged masterpieces, the relationship between the artist and his model is described as a “close friendship” or “intimate relationship”. The theme of my research centres on this barely apparent – oftentimes unprovable – but nevertheless perceptually detectable phenomenon of the erotic friendship, where, time and again, the yearning reflected in the model’s eyes connects not with the gaze of the painter; it can only find its answer in the gaze of the viewer.

During my studies I already covered three Hungarian painters who are of special importance to me: László Mednyánszky, Károly Kernstok and Károly Ferenczy. Following László Mednyánszky’s 2003 exhibition at the Hungarian National Gallery, a number of papers expressly discussed his homosexuality and approached his works from a gender perspective. A large number of erotically charged paintings by Károly Kernstok depicting young male nudes – sometimes in pairs – have been left for posterity. Károly Ferenczy have numerous nude paintings depicting boys; in my research, I plan to concentrate on some variants of *Bathing Boys* and *Orpheus*. Krisztina Passuth, in her book entitled *The Painting of the Eight*, also discussed the homoerotic overtones of some male nudes by Ferenczy.

In my dissertation I would like to pair up the above mentioned three Hungarian painters with three of their European contemporaries: the Austrian Anton Kolig, the British Henry Scott Tuke, and the Swedish Eugene Jansson. Kolig and Jansson have ties to late Expressionism. Their male nudes show a centralization of the penis: compositionally positioning the genitals in the centre of the image marks a conscious shift in perspective.

In Kolig’s paintings of a young blond boy, he depicts his model with a skull. The boy’s suggestive gaze connects with that of the viewer, while he places a skull on his genitals, thereby lending an unusual aura to the painting. In other paintings, the boy lays his head on a pillow while holding white drapery with a skull between his hands. Although Kolig’s male nudes are imbued with the atmosphere of academic anatomy lessons, there is a sense of sultriness; the poses, gazes, and facial expression of the models give away their attraction towards one another.