

Report: Josh Dihle

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

All-in-all, this experience was pretty dreamy. I sketched in cafes, wandered trails in the woods, ran on the Danube, explored medieval castles and towns, feasted on Renaissance paintings and on bratwurst, schnitzel, and apricot pastries. AND I had plenty of time to make my work. I feel like a full sponge ready to go back home to squeeze some of the Austrian magic into the work I started here.

Disadvantages are few and far between. I was in Krems during a bit of a heat wave, so some days in the non-air-conditioned apartment/studio were pretty stifling. Of course, I didn't go to the public pool until my last day in country. It is a GEM, as is this residency.

What did you realize during your residency period?

I worked on four carved wood wall hangings and a suite of drawings that draw from the sights and histories of the region and from my own vocabulary of imagery. I referred to the floral and botanical motifs common in decorative and fine art carvings found in Lower Austria and mashed them together into layered, elaborated carvings and graphite drawings. These works will be expanded into a suite of eight to ten carvings when I return to Chicago, to be shown together in a solo exhibition at the University Club of Chicago in the fall.

What did you miss at the residency?

In my case, a few specialized tools and workspaces might have come in handy. I missed a few power tools and the wood shop I use to make big messes while carving wood. I missed having a lot of room to spread out, but again, that limitation can really be viewed as a means for invention and creativity. I also missed my silly little dog.

What do you appreciate at AIR – ARTIST IN RESIDENCE?

Andreas Hoffer, the curator with whom I worked did an excellent job of finding interesting things to see and do that were relevant to my work. He even arranged a spellbinding studio visit to an incredible sculpture studio near Tulln. The residency's proximity to Vienna is fantastic, because it's an easy day trip to hit some galleries, museums, and cafes, then make a quick return to Krems for peace and quiet and focused working time. The assortment of hand tools and small power tools in the shared studio is a great resource, and the bikes are also vital for getting around. A lot of thought and care has gone into how this residency is set up.