

Residency Report - January 2022

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I originally applied to the AIR - ARTIST IN RESIDENCE Niederösterreich residency with my second novel „TICK TACK“. When I arrived in Krems almost two years later, this project was in its last phase of corrections and edits. My first week here I focused on these finishing touches at my desk with a beautiful wide view of the Danube and countryside around it.

I then spent the rest of my residency collecting impressions, inspiration, and images for my next project which will deal with the history of catholic religion in Germany - its influence on philosophy, its culture of performance and dramatic imagery, and its history of violence. A big artistic theme in the novel will be an underlying rhythm of denial. I spent a lot of time in Krems exploring how this theme could manifest in language and subject.

Krems offers plenty of catholic imagery from different historical periods. I started, quite appropriately, a kind of pilgrimage around Krems in search of meaning and reflection: I hiked to explore the culture of the wayside shrine, looked at religious imagery on the front of regular houses, and visited a lot of churches, including the ones reclaimed for other kinds of cultural performances like the „Klangraum Krems“.

I found myself drawn to damage: cracks or tears in glass panes or frescos, broken sculptures, crumbling façades. These manifestations of damage and the passage of time inspired me to write fragments of text, little pieces of memory which had broken off the larger narrative.

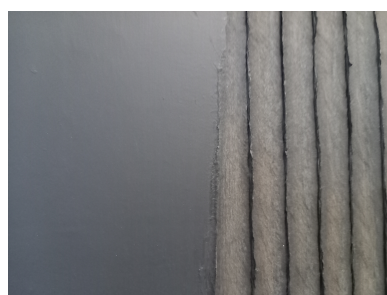
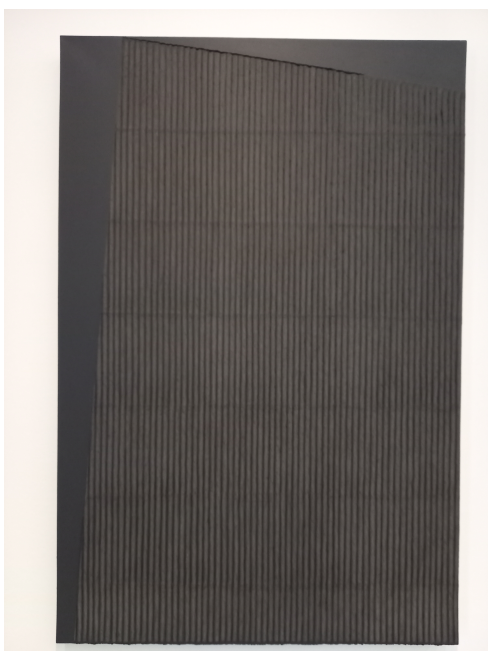


Another source of inspiration were the exhibitions I visited.

The expansive exhibition of Margot Pilz's oeuvre at „Kunsthalle Krems“ made me appreciate and identify with the power of the female artist in claiming her space and her body in a male-dominated environment. The exhibition also demonstrated the variety in artistic expression of her life's work and reminded me to be open to new ideas, new influences, and not get stuck in an artistic vision too narrow.

At the exhibition „Nonnegative“ at „Galerie Stadtpark“ by former AIR resident Meta Drčar I observed how my body intuitively moved in a certain way through this clear-cut, cool space, a playful way, almost a dance. Precision, I realized, seems to be able to invoke softness and play as a contradictory response. I am keeping that in mind for the language of my project.

This brings me to the exhibition that had the most profound effect on me: the work of Park Seo-Bo at „Forum Frohner“. The dispersion of his works amongst those of his colleague and friend Adolf Frohner made them more tangible in their contrast. Both artists were clearly of a similar artistic mindset and still so very different in their execution. Whereas Frohner's works are almost aggressively exploding with emotion, Park Seo-Bo is the opposite: very controlled, very precise, very cold. His language of precision invoked an atmosphere of denial that resonated with me in a visceral way and was quite influential in the way I think about the language of my new project. Even though the work almost physically hits you with its bleakness at first, the closer you get to it, the more softness and vulnerability you can spot: little pieces of life, of imperfection, the frayed edges, the tactility and naturalness of the material he works with. The tour by curator Elisabeth Voggeneder added more meaning to this by putting it in the context of Park Seo-Bo's personal life, his fraught relationship with his wife and family, his harsh egotism and complete focus on his art. He himself and his work ended up being a window into the psyche of my protagonist. I am sure Park Seo-Bo's works will become a point of reference in my book.



The proximity to and exchange with other artists who are working with very different media at AIR Niederösterreich was also very inspiring to me.

Experiencing and discussing the work of composer Francesco Ciurlo gave me idea of possibly writing a libretto for a contemporary opera. The almost mathematical precision of the music fit very well into the type of form I am experimenting with right now - a form that represents control and the emotional response that can evoke.

I also experimented with one of the organizers of the program, the dancer Flora Renhardt, to see how dance and text could interact and influences each other. It was a very fruitful experiment which I plan to continue in the future.

I would like to thank the organizers and sponsors of AIR - ARTIST IN RESIDENCE Niederösterreich for the inspiring and productive month I got to spend in Krems. I think that especially writers, whose work is by nature quite solitary, can gain a lot from the exchange with other art forms and artists.