

Report: Oliver Musovik

AIR – ARTIST IN RESIDENCE Niederösterreich, September-October 2023

With no exaggeration I can say that this was my most rewarding and transformative experience with a residency. And I have done a few already, this is my 10th in fact.

When I applied for the residency I proposed a project that would research the forest landscape in and around Krems, investigating the uncanny side of nature. Considering the correspondence I had with the curator David Komary before coming here, in view of the joint exhibition with Desislava Unger in kunstraumarcade, also considering her work, and when I arrived, my initial impressions of Krems - which I found surprisingly closed with walls (not just the wall of the prison) and overgrown in vegetation, I kind of slightly changed the direction, and focused more on those aspects of the overgrown gardens and ruderal vegetation, and less on the woodlands, which anyway seemed a bit far from the city. In his initial invitation for the exhibition David considered an already produced work of mine on the urban greenery, and as that was a digital only work that would have to adjust considerably for a physical gallery, I decided it is better to produce a new work here in Krems.

During September I had a really intensive week of researching new concepts connected primarily with landscape architecture and botany, discovering new ideas around urban vegetation, reading and watching lectures on these topics, but also discovering new artists - the prominent Austrian artist Lois Weinberger (of whom I did not know at all before) being one of them. Those days of intensive research were terribly exciting, felt like something very important is happening, that period gave me much needed confidence in my research based art making process, a newly found sense of purpose, a scientific support to my art, and I consider now this period a pivotal moment in my artistic career (together with only couple of more, like a participation at a group exhibition about 20 years ago, when I discovered other artists with sharing interests and dealing with similar issues around urban space, that gave me sense of community).

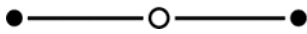
On the realized project

In the artistic photographic research project that I realized, the focus was on the noted ruderal plants and spaces (abandoned gardens, wastelands, leftover spaces) in Krems. The project I developed celebrates the resilience of life in the margins and the intriguing allure of "The Third Landscape." I am drawn to ruderal ecologies, characterized by their tenacity in disturbed or abandoned, residual spaces, challenging conventional notions of botanical beauty and worthiness. These unsung heroes of survival, often dismissed as "weeds," inspire awe with their adaptability.

The Third Landscape, a concept pioneered by visionary landscape designer Gilles Clément, guided my exploration. It represents the untamed spaces where spontaneous vegetation coexists with human intervention—a rebellion of nature, thriving in the gaps between urban and wild, cultivated and neglected.

My working method involved immersive observation and documentation. Extensive fieldwork included cataloging of the diverse ruderal species and capturing their poetic beauty through photography.

This project for me signifies a deeper understanding of these themes and a profound connection with like-minded artists, landscape architects, and botanists striving to decode the secrets of urban vegetation. This endeavor is a natural progression from my previous work on community gardens and urban forests, further developing the narrative of landscape as a social construct.



The work was guided by an organic timeline, with research interwoven into the entirety of the duration of the residency. Clear project organization, the development of edited photo series and the realized exhibition were the key milestones. I completed two series, one of 6 large format photos (I had more, but the gallery space allowed for as much) that I consider now closed, finished, and another that is open, with possibility to grow in different locations and may be developed into an artist's book.

The two works invite viewers to rediscover the overlooked beauty concealed within rural landscapes, catalyzing contemplation about the intricate harmony between humanity and nature, and fostering a newfound reverence for these remarkable spaces.

I think it is important to note that during this research process I was able to transfer effectively my visual note taking style, that involved sticking notes on the studio wall, organizing them, grouping and finding/mapping relations between them, into an enhanced digital space that added active links to references, images, to do lists, with a visual note taking app - Milanote, that from now on will be vital part of my research process. Link to the note board of the project <https://app.milanote.com/1QJnq01AfVN31N?p=qur4bxxA5fy>

On my stay and the residency itself

I did not miss much while at the residency. During September when I was developing the work and was heavily involved in the research process, I needed solitude for deep introspective work and that is what I got here. Later, when I needed reassurance, as I was insecurely delving into a new topic for me, the curator David Komary provided me with support, and guidance that I found really valuable. I actually hope for a continuous relationship with him as curator in future.

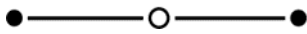
With the arrival of the October residents, the socializing among the residents also increased significantly (in September I did not meet any of the other residents at all). As in October I was pretty much done with the production I was also more open to socialize. I know this is not always aim of a residency, as socializing I find often hinders productivity, and this one in particular by design, with studios fully equipped with kitchens and no shared facilities seems to prefer introspective, concentrated work, rather than socializing among the residents, which is left to initiative of individual residents. In that sense, in my opinion the shared space (studio 25) seem to be a little undefined, and underutilized (only the residents who have studios without balcony, and want access to balcony, for smoking for example, seem to use it more). If a may, if more socializing among the residents is desirable, encouraged, than maybe some joint weekly activities, like shared meal hosted by different resident once per week can be planned.

What was frustrating for me, for my creative process, but that is no fault of anyone, was the nice, sunny weather, when I needed cloud coverage (with no stark shadows) for photographing, that limited my shooting time to about an hour a day, just before sundown.

Not really a remark, but I find it a little strange that most of the events of the artists are not happening at the venues of their hosts, but elsewhere (the reading in the library and not in the Literaturhaus, the architecture talk not in ORTE, my exhibition not in the Stadtpark Galerie), but I understand that there might be reasoning for that approach too - widening the partnership network for example.

I appreciate how structured the residency was. In my previous residency in the summer, there was no expectation of production, there was no presentation planned in any form, so I did not produced anything. While here, having a deadline (the exhibition opening) really drove me, and disciplined me.

As for the duration of the residency, I would say for a residency with expectation of production of



new work, or an exhibition, two months is a minimum, while three would be preferable. (As it is now, my exhibition ends after I leave, and because it is somewhat complicated and costly for me to get my works back, as it involves importing custom costs - as I am coming from outside EU those apply - that might end up being higher than the actual production costs of the works, I am forced to leave my works behind, to be stored here in Austria, and hope to collect them later, on some visit to Austria. I already have an uncollected works stored in Germany.)

At the end I want to thank you for this experience, for the consideration, hospitality and the opportunity. I hope that at least in part I have justified your believe in me.

Oliver Musovik

Krems an der Donau, 22.11.2023

List of projects

- duo exhibition "to all appearances" with Desislava Unger at the kunstraumarcade in Moedling, curated by David Komary (vernissage on 14.10.2023, finissage on 11.11.2023) where I presented two newly produced works (during my stay in Krems):
 - "Overgrown", 2023, Lambda C-Type Prints series of 6 on C-Prints Fujicolor Crystal Archive Photo Paper, 60x90 cm each
 - "Ruderal Herbarium", 2023, series of digital photographs with texts in a vitrine, various dimensions

Attached are PDFs of the two works, the text of the curator in German and some links and press clipping about the show from the Macedonian media.

Links

- social images from the exhibition opening (photo credits in the title of the folder)

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12uHk9Ywj-k6uN0m3ma11pQiWd-rSjfZK?usp=sharing>

- installation views, exhibition views, social images from the opening, all photos by Oliver Musovik

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