//Ksenija Pantelic

This is how it happened

Two bloggers, one feeling more of an an amateur while the other one more of a professional, set one day and talked about the Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts. The talk covered most of the questions that popped to mind when one thinks about the Academy. The diversity of classes, students and lecturing artists, issues of space, the professional and amateurs and the atmosphere. .....

The Diversity

Ksenija Pantelic: Maybe you can talk now ...

Göksu Kunak: My first impressions...First of all as I asked you, what do you think about all these different backgrounds, I love this thing. I am really bored within the school system, institutions and the fact that today every artist has to show themselves to the jury...I think it is good to have this thing here where you can apply and you don't have to be ...

KP: Good?

GK: You don't have to be a graduate from an art academy. In this way you can be more free. Sometimes I find that naivety to be better.

KP: Yes, this is a great experience. I think for everybody, for the professors as well, as they also need to figure out how they will deal with the diversity of their group, organize the chemistry of the group and maybe even make them feel like they are part of the group. To see what the students need and wish for. If it is collaborative work or solo work that they need. I think this is a great open space.

The Space

GK: Yes, it is an open environment, people are relaxed. But what do you think about the space (Hohensalzburg Fortress)? It is in a closed place, what do you think about that? In a way it is good maybe because you stay there and work but then at the same time you can't be in the city...

KP: Yes. I also thought about that. There is a sense of being closed in here. At one point I was thinking about this. For somebody who is in the position of a blogger, the one in the middle, the space may feel too closed in. But if I came here as an artist I would love to have this place just for me-it would be like a safe haven and if you chose to go to the lecture you go to the lecture, if you chose to go to the city, you go to the city. The lunch talks and lecture series organized are open to all, students as well as members of the public. They seem to be organized with two aims in mind-the first one of course is the intention to learn more about the working methods of the lecturing artist, and the second to discuss more in depth the questions explored by the Academy that change each year. This year for example, the questions about professionals and amateurs were put forward by the organizers of the Academy for the lecturing artists to reflect on. Some focused more and some less on such issues in their talks. As there are so many things organized by the Academy in such a short time, I am not surprised that everybody is so focused on what they are doing in their class and trying to find time to go to all of these events. I was thinking is this going to work out or not? And then again I thought about the space and how since it

is ‘closed in’ it seems to work and benefit the students just because of this. If I came here to finish a project, to get the most out of the lecturing professor then …

GK: It would work.

KP: It would work. It works.

GK: It works.

KP: But also, there is a little critique that you have two different schools because of two different locations, the Hohensalzburg Fortress and Alte Saline building in Hallein. But, Alte Saline is closing next year so this is the last year that the Academy is using that space and from next year everything will be moved to the Fortress.

GK: So it will change.

KP: Yes, it will change.

GK: All the students will be in the same space.

KP: But up till now the organizers have tried to balance events between the two spaces. So one time the lunch talk will be in Hallein the other time in Salzburg. There is a lot going on as I mentioned. Discussions and evening lectures organized at the Künstlerhaus, where important curators as well as artists, dealing more with issues of art education and again this notion of the amateur and the professional, gave their talks on such topics. City walks within the series “Exploring Salzburg” this year concentrated more on the cultural workers giving us their own experiences of the city, both in Hallein and Salzburg. This was different from last year where the concentration was more on exploring the different art institutions around the cities. As mentioned before, there were also lunch talks, exhibition openings and the organizers really tried to balance it all, in a sense to create this little democracy thing. One time here, the other time there.

Classes

GK: As far as I have seen there is not just one approach to the classes. Every class has its own topic and way of dealing with things.

KP: Yes, that is great. You really have a diversity of classes you can choose from. Over twenty professors and classes. You can really find what you want to do. I was speaking with some students who have been here for over five years now and they never chose the same class or same way of working. One friend I have met here, he is a painter, now decided to go to the video class. The Academy is open for you to investigate who you are, what the best medium is for you. It is really an open school and it is great. As you said not only is it diverse in the culture of students but also it is diverse in the approaches to classes. It is really no surprise that it has lasted for sixty years now!

Time and Presence

KP: There are all these things that are happening every day and you need to realize that you can’t be present everywhere and all the time. You need to pick a topic and just stick with it. You need to make a choice. What I mean by this is to realize that your filters need to work really quickly and you also need to remember that you must make yourself open to everything that will happen here. For me there are a couple of events that I acknowledge to be major highlights of my time here. I was really impressed by the walk organized by Dorit Ehlers, freelance actor and theatre maker. She took us through this part of Salzburg, Itzling and spoke to us about the

different projects she organized there so that the community would open up like it was open before. She started her projects due to the fact that she also lived in this part of the city and noticed many changes that were causing people to retreat more and more into their houses. The fact that many shops were closing and not opening again made her go into these abandon places and use the space of one of the shops to organize a little meeting space for the community. I really loved her talk since it was a very particular thing she organized. Not to mention above all that this walk also took me to a part of Salzburg that is normally not on my route here. It was nice to enter an area of the town that is not so crowded with tourists. In fact, the "Exploring Salzburg" tours were really something I enjoyed. Just because it was something different, informative and fun since the artists really did their best. Marko Dinic, freelance writer from Serbia living in Salzburg, organized a mini performance for us and took us around the city. That was really amazing as he organized everything to utmost perfection. It was really great!

GK: It must have been a hard thing for you and I think I could relate to you, since during the day you have a lot of input and you need to filter it all. And also to find a good way to inform yourself about what is going on but try not to be too informative or for it to sound just like a plain report.

KP: Yes, it is a challenging thing. Up till now I have collected some interesting talks with students, assistants and I seem to be waiting for a moment when I can link it with what I have already done. There is so much information so I have this impression if I don't try to write an entry per day on the blog, I would be feeling like I am running behind, and I want to feel like I am running while things are happening. You need to be aware that some of the filters you have may not work every day. So many things here can trigger you. This is something that I also spoke about with a lot of students here. All of them came here with one idea and the best experience was felt by the students who were open to everything that was waiting for them here. In a sense, it seems better not to plan everything that you think you will do here to the last detail as it would possibly restrict you and that would be a shame. You can really learn a lot here I think as it is not all just about art production. Life and all its ups and downs are here with us every day too.

//Zur Person

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