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Kanton Zürich Fachstelle Kultur Kulturstipendium 2013-2014, Final Report, March 15, 2015

The original proposed budget for the Kulturstipendium was reduced from CHF 18,050 to CHF 8,000, which naturally demanded changes of the scope and scale of the original proposal. Other factors changed the project as well. The original project proposal was as follows:

1. To rent work space and work in the Hochdorf Ceramic Roof Tile Factory, Hochdorf, LU (Ziegelei Hochdorf) in order to learn more about the special clay and techniques they use there and to create and fire sculpture with these materials.
2. To rent studio space at and work in the, Kunstgiesserei St. Gallen, to learn in depth about creating bronze sculpture directly through the traditional lost wax process.
3. To attend silicon rubber casting workshops at Studer Kunststoffe in Wolfwill, AG and to purchase various types of silicon casting rubbers to experiment with.
4. To attend printmaking classes at the Berufsschule für Gestaltung, Zürich. (The Fachstelle Kultur denied this project at the outset of the project)

Two changes occurred at the beginning of the project. The huge industrial Kiln (Brennofen) at Ziegelei Hochdorf went out of service due to technical problems. Unfortunately, the firm experienced financial hardship and I was unable to work in the factory. Fortunately, I was able to find a wonderful working partner in Herr Kurt Schumacher at the Schumacher Ziegelei in nearby Körblingen, LU. It was not possible to work in the factory but I could receive technical advice and to take clay to my studio. Later, I returned with finished work for firing. This reduced costs too. Herr Schumacher was very generous and asked for very little financial compensation for the materials and services he provided.

I was also able to reduce costs by not renting studio space at the Sitterwerk as well. Instead, I commuted six times to St. Gallen, which worked out well. With these and other unexpected reduction of costs, I was able to add a fourth educational project to the list.

4. To work at the Ramseier Metal Fabrication (Ramseier AG, Metalbau) in Ottenbach, ZH, to learn about welding and working with very old scrap iron.

The Projects: A Brief Description

Schumacher Ziegelei Körbligen

Factory workers took me on a tour of the cavernous factory and explained the production of ceramic building blocks. Roof tiles (Ziegel) are no longer produced there. We visited the clay production area and the clay pit near by. Clay is mined and transported to the factory on a small gauge railway. They explained the special characteristics of the clay they use there; which is much different than the clay normally used by sculptors. I learned with experience that this clay has less plasticity. This forces one to create objects that have a more raw character. The clay has a very high paper pulp content, which allows one to model much more freely and build thicker, larger works. This is not the case with normal ceramic clay. I pulled un-fired blocks from the production line, created works in the studio and returned them for firing in the fifty-meter long tunnel kiln. One of these works is a large wall relief

Kunstgiesserei St. Gallen

The ancients often cast their bronze statues through the lost wax process by creating a "core" and adding a thin wax layer over the top. The wax was modeled in detail then encased in more core material. The entire object was heated, causing the wax to melt away. Liquid bronze was then poured in to the empty cavity. This produces a unique cast bronze sculpture. I have always wanted to try this. Workers at the extremely open minded, "artist friendly" Kunstgiesserei St. Gallen created a Gips Schamotte cylinder for me. I then carved it to the rough shape of the desired form. Back at my studio I added and modeled the wax. Back at the foundry, I was advised how to prepare the work for casting.

I returned to help cast the work and to do the finishing and polishing of the bronze in their fully equipped workshop. I would like to create a larger work using this technique. This traditional method is quite exciting and full of wonderful risk: If something goes wrong in the process, the wax work is lost forever.

Another great experience was spending time in the library and the Kesselhaus Josephson. I was also allowed to visit the storage area of the Kesselhaus, where the entire contents of Hans Josephson's studio are deposited (models, studies, unfired clay works, and books). This is not open to the public. Naturally, just spending long days in the foundry is a tremendous learning experience in itself.

Studer Kunststoffe, Fulenbach, AG

Studer Kunststoffe offers a full range of silicon casting rubbers for use in industry, theater, film, and sculpture making. It's a very complex and highly technical field with a lot of chemistry involved. Frau Angela Studier offers workshops to help people learn how to use these products. Although quite expensive, use of these materials is essential to sculpture making today. I attended two days of workshops which increased my knowledge exponentially. I was not aware of all of the various types of silicon rubbers available. After the workshops, I purchased different rubbers and worked with them in my studio, including some used for casting cement and melted tin.

Ramseier AG Metalbau, Ottenbach, ZH

Steel and Iron have been long a part of my sculpture-making process. Unfortunately, my knowledge of welding was not quite up to date with the latest technology. I am especially interested in working with old and rusty scrap iron. I had located 120-year-old iron bars, which had been removed from the Reuss Kanal in Ottenbach and wanted to know how I could use them. Over four days, master welder and metal-worker Herr Gabriele Falcone taught me how to form and weld this material. As a consequence, he has also opened his workshop to me in the future so I can work there on projects as needed.

Conclusion

It is my pleasure to report that all the projects were executed completely, successfully and within the parameters of the reduced budget. It was personally and professionally a wonderful and rewarding experience which exceeded my expectations too. I was able to increase knowledge and skills important to my work as a sculptor tremendously. The period of the Kulturstipendium has had a great influence on my work and working method. I was able to establish important professional contacts for the future. I spent extended periods of in time parts of the country I did not know before. This was exciting for an artist from New York who lives in Switzerland. I teach sculpture often and have already been able to pass newly gained knowledge on to students in different workshops (www.stoneyard.ch).

I would like to thank the Kanton Zürich Fachstelle Kultur for the opportunity to pursue the above-described projects. I am also grateful to the openness, generosity, and warm-heartedness of the following:

Ziegelei Hochdorf: Hans Gyr, Director

Schumacher Ziegelei: Kurt Schumacher, Owner/Director, In the Factory: Valentin Stocker, Pascal Senn

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Studerkunststoffe: Angela and Fred Studer

Ramseier AG: Gabriele Falcone, Factory Director, Foreman, Ramon Fernandez

Transport: Aemtler Car/Transport, Fredi Künz, Assistant: Trudi Staehli

Schumacher Ziegelei Körbligen



Kunstgiesserei St. Gallen



Studer Kunststoffe, Fulenbach, AG



Ramseier AG, Metalbau, Ottenbach, ZH

